

# One-third of U.S. families struggling to meet basic needs

May 5 2020

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The COVID-19 pandemic is straining many families' abilities to meet

basic needs, according to a study published April 28 by the Urban Institute.

Michael Karpman, of the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., and colleagues used data from the institute's online Health Reform Monitoring Survey. The analysis included responses from 9,032 adults (aged 18 to 64 years) collected between March 25 and April 10, 2020.

The survey shows that four in 10 adults (41.5 percent) reported that their families have lost jobs, [work hours](#), or work-related income because of the pandemic. Families of Hispanic adults (56.9 percent) and adults with incomes below poverty (51.1 percent) were most likely to report these work-related losses. Nearly one-third of all respondents reported that their family is reducing spending on food, 43.1 percent put off major purchases, and 27.9 percent drew down savings or increased credit card debt, all of which were higher among families that lost work or income. Overall, just under one-third of respondents reported being unable to pay the rent or mortgage, unable to pay utility bills, being food insecure, or going without [medical care](#) in the past month. More than 45 percent of black and Hispanic [adults](#) reported that their families experienced one or more of these hardships.

"The pandemic has shed a spotlight on long-standing inequities that have taken a toll on low-income Americans and people of color," Mona Shah, senior program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which funded the study, said in a statement. "If families are unable to stay in their homes, can't afford food, or have to skip needed medical care, this crisis will worsen the already enormous problem of inequality in America."

**More information:** [Survey Findings](#)

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