

# Job losses hit Americans hard in pandemic, report confirms

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American families that suffered job losses during the pandemic are

struggling to pay their bills and afford food, and many have turned to government help, a new study finds.

Researchers analyzed data from nearly 7,700 adults who took part in an Urban Institute survey in December 2019 and from more than 7,700 who took part in a December 2020 survey.

Despite major nationwide [job losses](#), there were overall declines in food insecurity (from 23.9% to 20.5%), utility shutoffs (from 3.8% to 2.6%), and difficulty paying medical bills (from 18.8% to 14.9%) among study participants between December 2019 and December 2020.

However, rates were still much higher among adults who had job losses in their families due to the pandemic.

Compared to those without [family](#) job losses, adults with family job losses were two times more likely to report food insecurity (33.2% vs. 16%), nearly three times more likely to report problems paying utility bills (20.2% vs. 7.2%), and nearly four times more likely to report problems paying the rent or mortgage (20.3% vs. 5.3%) in 2020.

Adults whose families did not lose jobs but faced work furloughs, reductions in work hours, or lost income were also more likely to report [food insecurity](#) (23.1%), problems paying the rent or mortgage (11.9%), and other financial struggles.

To replace lost income and help cover their [basic needs](#), many families with job losses turned to safety net programs and other relief measures.

The study found that three-quarters (75.5%) of adults whose families lost jobs during the pandemic and about half (49.5%) of adults whose families experienced furloughs, had [work hours](#) reduced, or lost income said their families received support from [unemployment insurance](#),

Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, rental assistance, or charitable food programs in 2020.

The Urban Institute study was released April 14 and was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

"When it comes to how family economic well-being has changed during the pandemic, these findings show a complex picture," said Michael Karpman, a senior research associate at the Urban Institute.

"The strong federal response helped millions of families pay for food, housing, and [health care](#), but families that experienced job loss continue to face serious hardship," Karpman said in an institute news release.

"Relief measures likely mitigated some of the recession's effects on families who lost jobs and income," said Avenel Joseph, vice president of policy at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "While more upstream structural change is needed, making these temporary relief policies permanent would at least help families meet their basic needs in an increasingly unequal economy."

**More information:** The American Institute of Stress has more on [financial stress and the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

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