

COVID-19 Is Making Women's Economic Situation Even Worse

BY JASMINE TUCKER AND CLAIRE EWING-NELSON

COVID-19 has exposed how the work performed primarily by women has long been and continues to be undervalued, even as the rest of the country is depending on it as never before. Women are the majority of workers risking their lives to provide health care, child care, and other essential services while simultaneously being overrepresented in many of the occupations feeling the brunt of COVID-related job losses. This reality combined with the already high rates of economic insecurity women were experiencing before this crisis began¹ and lost earnings due to the gender wage gap² mean that women have no financial cushion to weather the current crisis.

Between February and April, women lost over 12.1 million jobs, completely erasing all of their job gains over the past decade.³ Only half of those jobs have returned, but many are in the leisure and hospitality sector (which includes businesses like bars and restaurants) or retail trade, meaning they are at risk of being lost again if states need to shut back down to control surging coronavirus cases. And even after recent gains, Black women and Latinas continue to be hard hit by the jobs crisis. While the overall unemployment rate dropped to 8.4% last month, approximately 1 in 8 Black women (12.0%) and 1 in 10 Latinas (10.5%) remained unemployed in August.⁴

Between April 23, 2020 and July 21, 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau collected 12 weeks' worth of data measuring the social and economic impact of COVID-19 on households. This analysis is based on data collected during this first phase of the Household Pulse Survey.⁵ In week 12 of the survey period (July 16 - July 21),⁶ more than half of people were in a household where someone had lost employment income since March. More than 1 in 3 people expected someone in the household to lose employment income in the next four weeks. Nearly 1 in 8 people reported that, over the last 7 days, they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat. More than 1 in 4 missed last month's rent or mortgage payment or aren't sure they will be able to make next month's payment on time.⁷

And while these are stark figures, they mask even harsher realities experienced by Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas, especially those in households with kids, who are far too often going without adequate food or the ability to make their rent or mortgage payment.

Key findings from this fact sheet include:

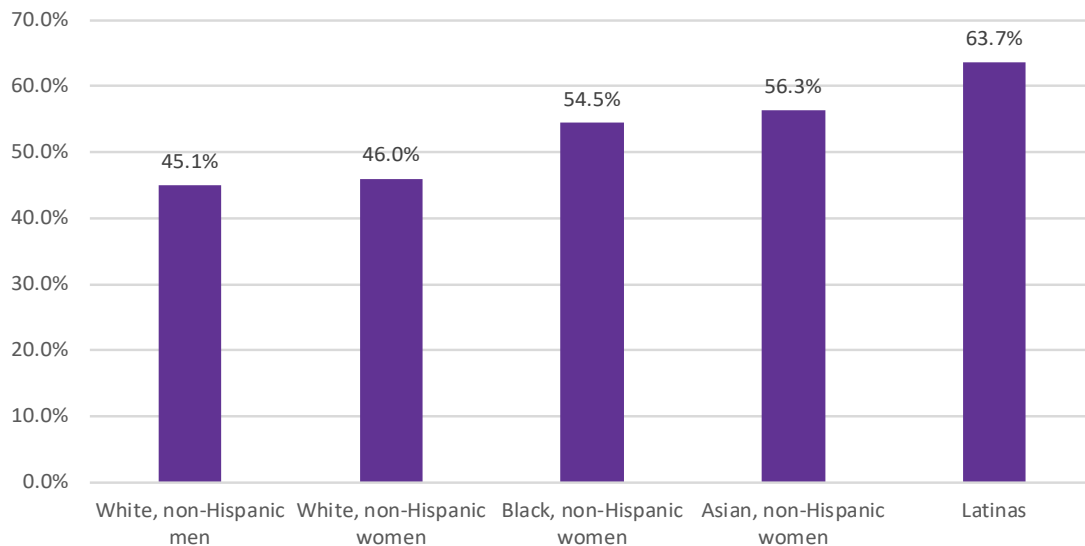
- More than half of Black, non-Hispanic women (54.5%), Asian, non-Hispanic women (56.3%), and Latinas (63.7%) reported a loss of income since March, compared to 45.1% of white, non-Hispanic men and 46.0% of white, non-Hispanic women.
- More than 1 in 5 Black, non-Hispanic women (21.5%) and Latinas (21.1%) reported not having enough food in the past week, making them three times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men (7.0%) to report experiencing food scarcity.
- More than 2 in 5 Black, non-Hispanic women (40.8%) and Latinas (44.6%) reported facing housing insecurity, compared to 15.4% of white, non-Hispanic men.

The remainder of this factsheet will address each area in more depth.

Black, non-Hispanic women, Asian, non-Hispanic women, and Latinas were all more likely than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts to report someone in their household had lost employment income since March.

In the most recent week of data (July 16 - 21), more than half (51.1%) of people said they or someone in their household lost employment income since March 13, 2020 – the day COVID-19 was declared a national emergency. Men (51.4%) were slightly more likely than women (50.7%) to report a loss of employment income in their household. But these figures mask differences by race and ethnicity. Less than half of white, non-Hispanic men (45.1%) and white, non-Hispanic women (46.0%) reported a loss of income since March, compared to 54.5% of Black, non-Hispanic women, 56.3% of Asian, non-Hispanic women, and 63.7% of Latinas.

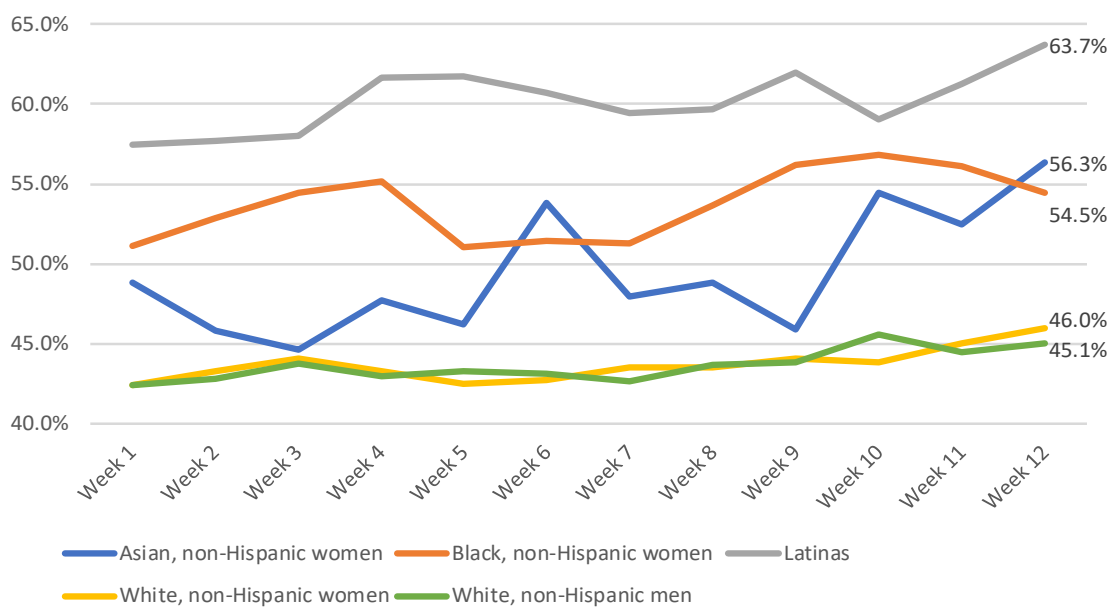
Share Who Reported Loss of Employment Income in Household Since March by Selected Demographics (July 16 - 21)



Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Household Pulse Survey, using data from week 12 (July 16 – 21). Survey respondents self-identified their sex as either male or female and self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.

Since the pandemic began, Black, non-Hispanic women, Asian, non-Hispanic women, and Latinas have consistently reported higher rates of lost employment income in their households than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.

Share Who Reported Loss of Employment Income in Household Since March by Selected Demographics



Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Household Pulse Survey, using data from April 23 – July 21. Survey respondents self-identified their sex as either male or female and self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.

People in households with children present (58.8%) were even more likely than those overall to report lost employment income in their household since March. **Asian, non-Hispanic women in households with kids (64.1%) and Latinas in households with kids (69.0%) were especially likely to report lost employment income in their household.**

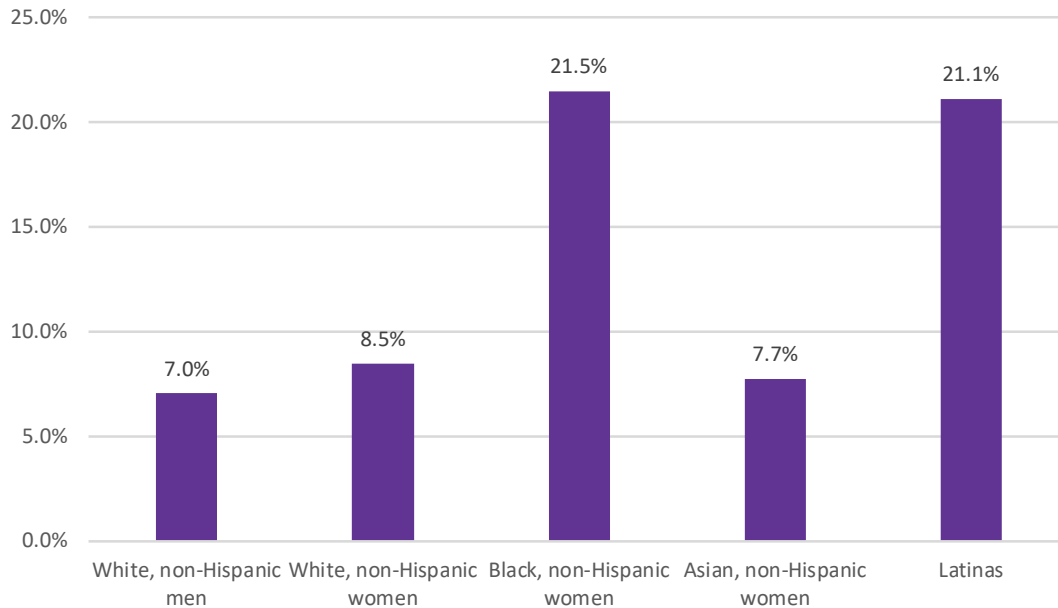
The income losses people have already experienced may be just the beginning – more than one third of men (35.8%) and women (34.7%) said they expected they or someone in their household would lose employment income in the next four weeks because of the pandemic. More than two in five Black, non-Hispanic women (41.3%) and Asian, non-Hispanic women (42.4%), and over half (50.6%) of Latinas expected their households to lose employment income in the next month.

Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas were three times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men to report not having enough food.

During the week of July 16 - 21, nearly 1 in 8 people said they sometimes or often did not have enough food during the previous 7 days.⁸ Food insecurity across the country is projected to increase, particularly for those struggling to make ends meet, and for those working in the service sector or in the leisure and hospitality industry who jobs may be at risk if businesses are forced to shut back down to control surging coronavirus cases.⁹

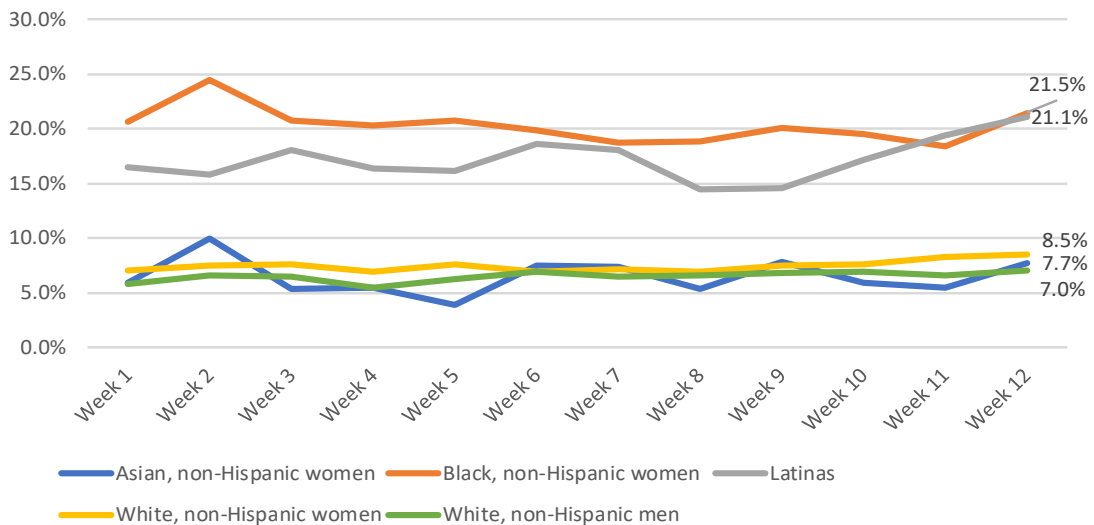
Women (12.5%) were slightly more likely than men (11.6%) to report not having enough food in the previous 7 days, but these figures were far worse for Black, non-Hispanic women (21.5%) and Latinas (21.1%) who were three times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men (7.0%) to report not having enough food in the prior week. And rates were slightly higher for Black, non-Hispanic women (24.8%) and Latinas (21.9%) in households with children.

Share Who Reported Experiencing Food Insufficiency in the Previous Week by Selected Demographics (July 16 - 21)



Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Household Pulse Survey, using data from week 12 (July 16 – 21). Survey respondents self-identified their sex as either male or female and self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin. Food insufficiency is defined as often or sometimes not having enough food in the prior 7 days.

Share Who Reported Experiencing Food Insufficiency in the Previous Week by Selected Demographics

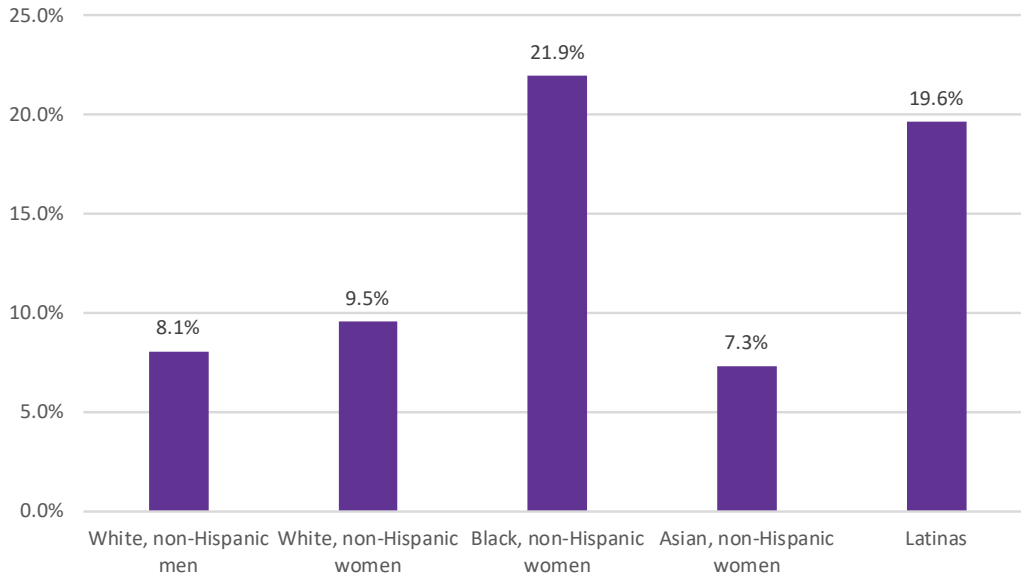


Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Household Pulse Survey using data from April 23 – July 21. Survey respondents self-identified their sex as either male or female and self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin. Food insufficiency is defined as often or sometimes not having enough food in the prior 7 days.

Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas were more than two and a half times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men to report housing insecurity.

In the most recent survey week (July 16 – 21), more than 1 in 8 people reported not making last month’s rent or mortgage payment on time. Women (13.2%) were slightly more likely than men (12.4%) to report missing their payment. About 1 in 5 Black non-Hispanic women (21.9%) and Latinas (19.6%) reported not making their rent or mortgage payment on time, compared to 8.1% of white, non-Hispanic men.

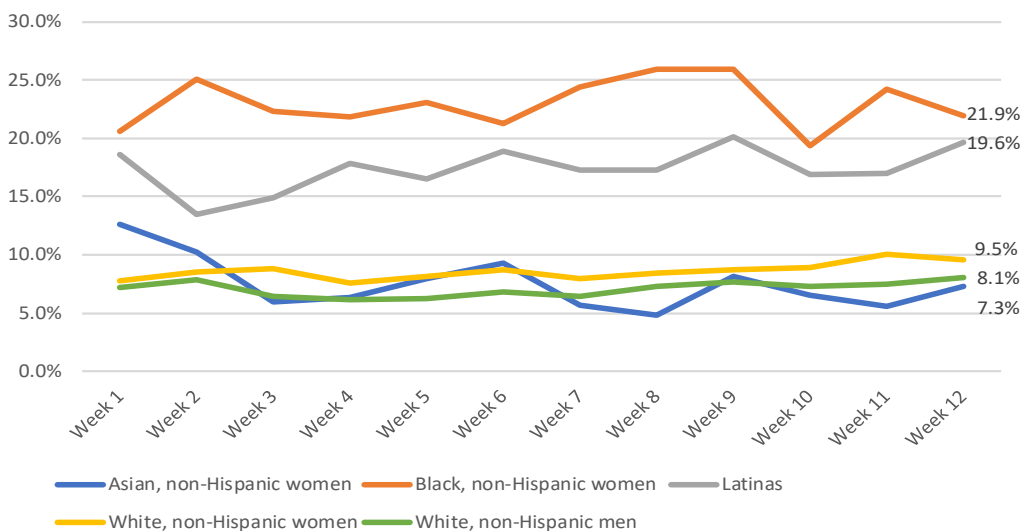
Share Who Didn't Make Last Month's Rent or Mortgage Payment On Time by Selected Demographics (July 16 -21)



Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Household Pulse Survey, using data from week 12 (July 16 – 21). Survey respondents self-identified their sex as either male or female and self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.

Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas have consistently reported not making last month’s rent or mortgage at double-digit rates that have consistently been higher than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.

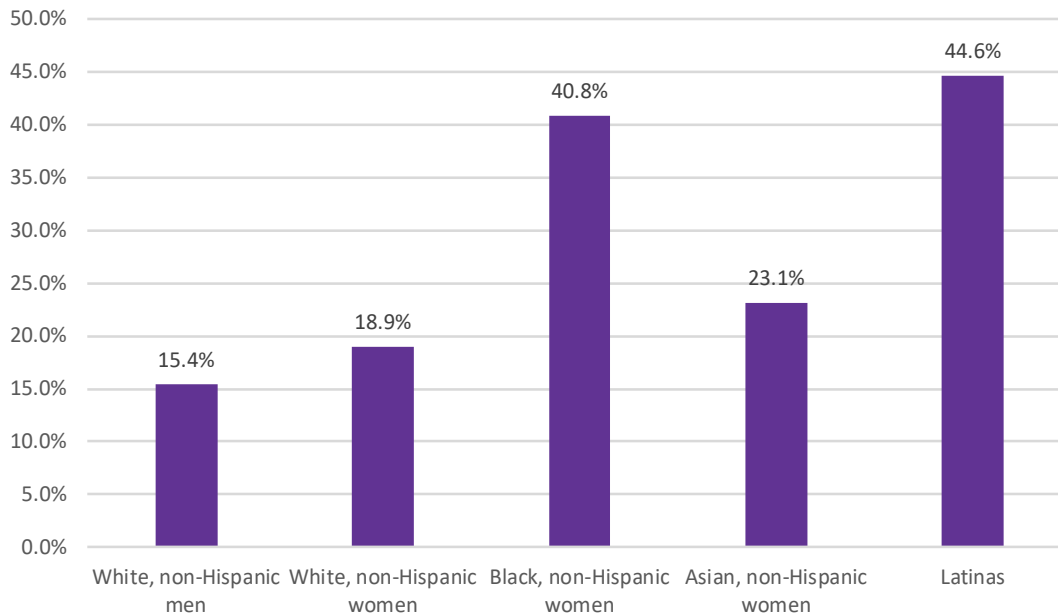
Share Who Didn't Make Last Month's Rent/Mortgage Payment On Time by Selected Demographics



Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Household Pulse Survey using data from April 23 – July 21. Survey respondents self-identified their sex as either male or female and self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.

In addition, more than 1 in 4 (26.6%) people reported experiencing housing insecurity – meaning they did not pay last month’s rent or mortgage on time, and/or that they have slight or no confidence in being able to pay next month’s rent or mortgage payment on time. Men (26.2%) and women (26.9%) were similarly likely to face housing insecurity. But Black, non-Hispanic women (40.8%) and Latinas (44.6%) were more than two and a half times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men (15.4%) to report being housing insecure. These rates were even higher for Black, non-Hispanic women (45.2%) and Latinas (48.8%) in households with children.

Share Who Reported Housing Insecurity by Selected Demographics (July 16 - 21)



Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Household Pulse Survey, using data from week 12 (July 16 - 21). Housing insecurity is defined as not making last month’s rent or mortgage payment on time and/or having slight or no confidence that next month’s payment will be made on time. Survey respondents self-identified their sex as either male or female and self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on the economy; millions of jobs have been lost in recent months with many permanently lost and others at risk if coronavirus cases surge and states are forced to shut back down. Women – especially Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas – are struggling to make ends meet. Much of the analysis throughout this factsheet reflects data collected during the week of July 16 – 21, *ten days before* the expiration of the critical \$600 in unemployment insurance benefits enacted through the CARES Act. As a result, data collected by Census in phase 2 of this pulse survey could show even more people being forced to go without enough to eat or the ability to pay next month’s rent or mortgage on time. The current economic situation is dire for too many – it’s time to act before things get worse.

- 1 Jasmine Tucker and Julie Vogtman, NWLC, When Hard Work is Not Enough: Women in Low-Paid Jobs (Apr. 2020), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/when-hard-work-is-not-enough-women-in-low-paid-jobs/>.
- 2 Maya Raghu and Jasmine Tucker, NWLC, The Wage Gap Has Made Things Worse for Women on the Front Lines of COVID-19 (Mar. 2020), available at <https://nwlc.org/blog/the-wage-gap-has-made-things-worse-for-women-on-the-front-lines-of-covid-19/>.
- 3 NWLC calculations based on BLS, historical data for Table B-5: Employment of women on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector, seasonally adjusted, available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab5.htm> (last visited September 4, 2020). Between the end of the Great Recession in July 2010 and the start of the COVID-19 crisis in February 2020, women gained 11.1 million jobs.
- 4 Claire Ewing-Nelson, NWLC, Jobs Gains Continued to Slow in August, and Women Are Still Short Over 6 Million Jobs Since the Start of the Pandemic (Sept. 2020), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/august-jobs-report/>.
- 5 U.S. Census Bureau, Measuring Household Experiences during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic, 2020 Household Pulse Survey, available at <https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/household-pulse-survey.html>. Survey respondents self-identified their sex as either male or female and self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.
- 6 Week 12 responses were collected between July 16 and July 21.
- 7 U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, Week 12, Interactive Data Tool, available at <https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/table>.
- 8 U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, Week 12, Interactive Data Tool, available at <https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/table>.
- 9 Feeding America, The Impact of the Coronavirus on Food Insecurity (Apr. 2020), available at https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Brief_Impact%20of%20Covid%20on%20Food%20Insecurity%204.22%20%28002%29.pdf.