

An Uneven Recovery: Women of Color, Disabled Women, and LGBT Adults Still Struggle to Afford Basic Necessities

By Sarah Javaid

Women of color, disabled women of color, and LGBT adults continue to struggle to afford basic necessities such as food and housing, and that struggle will only worsen if the federal government cuts key anti-poverty programs. The pandemic exacerbated existing racial and gender inequities in the U.S. economy, hitting women, especially Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, and disabled women the hardest. These groups continue to bear the brunt during an uneven economic recovery. And while the overall unemployment rate in April 2023 was 3.4%, unemployment rates for Black women (4.4%), Latinas (4.1%), and disabled women ages 16 to 64 (7.1%) remained higher, particularly when compared to white men (2.9%).¹

Many families continue to grapple with affording basic necessities in their households during the ongoing economic recovery. Rising prices of essentials, like food, over the last year have undercut economic well-being for many,² while pandemic relief programs that helped families pay their bills—such as the stimulus checks, the expanded Child Tax Credits, and Unemployment Insurance—are no longer available. In fact, 35% of adults reported being financially worse off in 2022 than they were a year earlier, the highest share since 2014.³ Further cutting anti-poverty programs will propel women, LGBT people, and their families, especially those from underserved communities, further into severe food and housing insecurity. In 2021, these anti-poverty programs vastly reduced the number of people who lived in poverty. For example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) moved 2.8 million people out of poverty, including nearly 1.2 million women, and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) moved 5.4 million people out of poverty, including 2.9 million children and 1.5 million women.⁴ Robust, permanent public investments in the care economy, accessible and affordable housing, health care and income supports will ensure that women, LGBT people, and families can meet their basic needs. Until investments addressing the underlying, systemic inequalities in our economy are made, women, LGBT people, and families will continue to be left behind.

This factsheet provides an analysis of week 57 (collected April 26 – May 8, 2023) of the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey measuring the social and economic impact of COVID-19 on households.⁵ It shows:

Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas were more likely than white, non-Hispanic men to:

- Not have enough food to eat.
- Not be able to afford enough food for their children to eat if they themselves were also experiencing food insufficiency.
- Be behind on their rent and mortgage payments.

Disabled⁶ women of color⁷ were more likely than nondisabled white, non-Hispanic men to:

- Not have enough food to eat.
- Be behind on their rent and mortgage payments.⁸

LGBT⁹ adults of color were more likely than non-LGBT white, non-Hispanic adults to:

- Not have enough food to eat.
- Be behind on their rent payments.

Comparison groups (white, non-Hispanic men, nondisabled white, non-Hispanic men, and non-LGBT white, non-Hispanic adults) are provided throughout this analysis to demonstrate the inequities and discrimination that people with intersecting identities experience. These comparison groups represent some of the most advantaged groups and show how women of color, disabled women of color, and LGBT adults of color fare compared to them. The term LGBT is used (instead of LGBTQI+) because these Census Household Pulse data are specifically from lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals and not necessarily a larger LGBTQI+ community. See footnote 9 for more information.

Disabled women of color, women of color, and LGBT adults of color were especially likely to not have enough food to eat in the prior seven days.

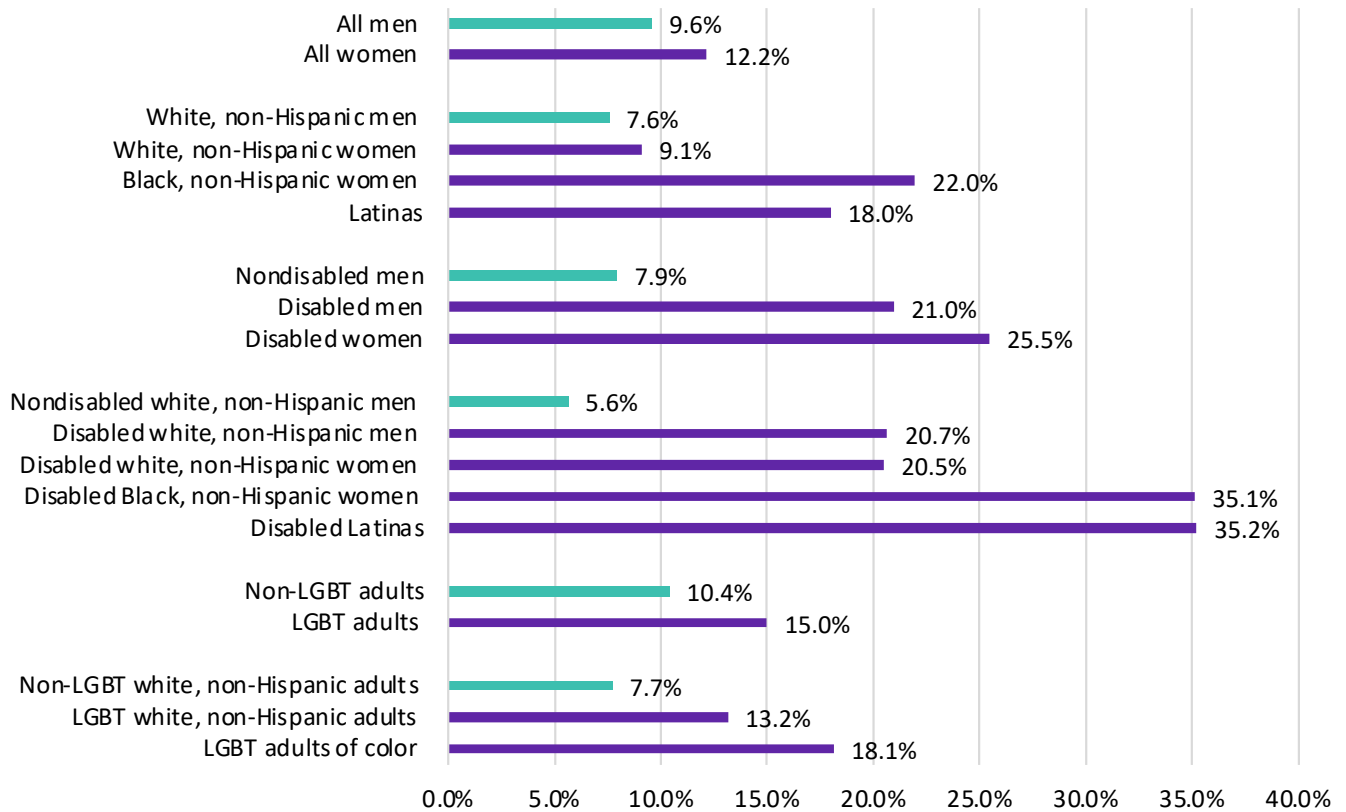
Nearly one in eight adult women (12.2%) overall reported sometimes or often not having enough food to eat in the prior week, and they were more likely than adult men (9.6%) to do so. Black, non-Hispanic women (22.0%) were nearly three times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men (7.6%) and over two times more likely than white, non-Hispanic women (9.1%) to not have enough food to eat. Latinas (18.0%) were over two times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men and nearly two times more likely than white, non-Hispanic women to not have enough food to eat in the prior seven days.

Disabled Black, non-Hispanic women and disabled Latinas were over six times more likely than nondisabled white, non-Hispanic men to not have enough food to eat.

Over one in four disabled women (25.5%) reported not having enough food to eat in the prior seven days. Disabled Black, non-Hispanic women (35.1%) and disabled Latinas (35.2%) were over six times more likely than nondisabled white, non-Hispanic men (5.6%) to lack enough food to eat. Among disabled adults, Black, non-Hispanic women and Latinas were more likely than white, non-Hispanic women (20.5%) and white, non-Hispanic men (20.7%) to report not having enough food to eat in the prior seven days.

Over one in seven LGBT adults (15.0%) reported not having enough food to eat compared to 10.4% of non-LGBT adults. Among LGBT adults, adults of color (18.1%) were over two times more likely than non-LGBT white, non-Hispanic adults (7.7%) to sometimes or often not have enough food to eat. In addition, 13.2% of white, non-Hispanic LGBT adults lacked enough food to eat. As food prices have increased dramatically,¹⁰ many people are struggling to afford enough food. Experiencing food insufficiency can have long-term health effects, such as diabetes and hypertension, as well as mental health consequences, including anxiety and depression,¹¹ some of which can be greater for women than men.¹² These health conditions can then require greater use of health care services, which may in turn result in higher health care expenses.

Share Who Reported Not Having Enough Food to Eat in the Previous Seven Days by Selected Demographics (April 26 – May 8, 2023)



Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020–2022 Household Pulse Survey, using data from week 57 (collected April 26 – May 8, 2023). Survey respondents self-identified as male, female, transgender, or none, self-identified their sexual orientation, self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, and self-identified via six questions if they had a disability. Refer to footnotes for more information.

Black, non-Hispanic women, Latinas, and disabled women who did not have enough food to eat were especially likely to report their children also not having enough to eat.

Among women who did not have enough food to eat in the prior seven days, nearly two in three (65.8%) reported the children in their household also often or sometimes did not have enough food to eat. In comparison, 55.3% of men who were food insufficient reported the same. Black, non-Hispanic women (78.1%) and Latinas (70.7%) experiencing food insufficiency were both more likely than white, non-Hispanic men (51.3%) to report children in their household also did not have enough food to eat. Additionally, Black, non-Hispanic women experiencing food insufficiency were more likely than white, non-Hispanic women (57.4%) to report their children also not having enough food to eat.

Nearly seven in 10 disabled women (67.9%) experiencing food insufficiency reported children in their household did not have enough food to eat, compared to 52.9% of nondisabled men. In addition, 61.7% of disabled men who were food insufficient reported their children not having enough food to eat as well.¹³ Not having enough food to eat as a child can have immediate effects on children's health, as well as lifelong chronic physical and mental health concerns, including diabetes, hypertension, depression, and anxiety.¹⁴

Over one in four disabled women of color, one in five Black, non-Hispanic women, and one in six Latinas and LGBT adult renters were behind on their rent payments.

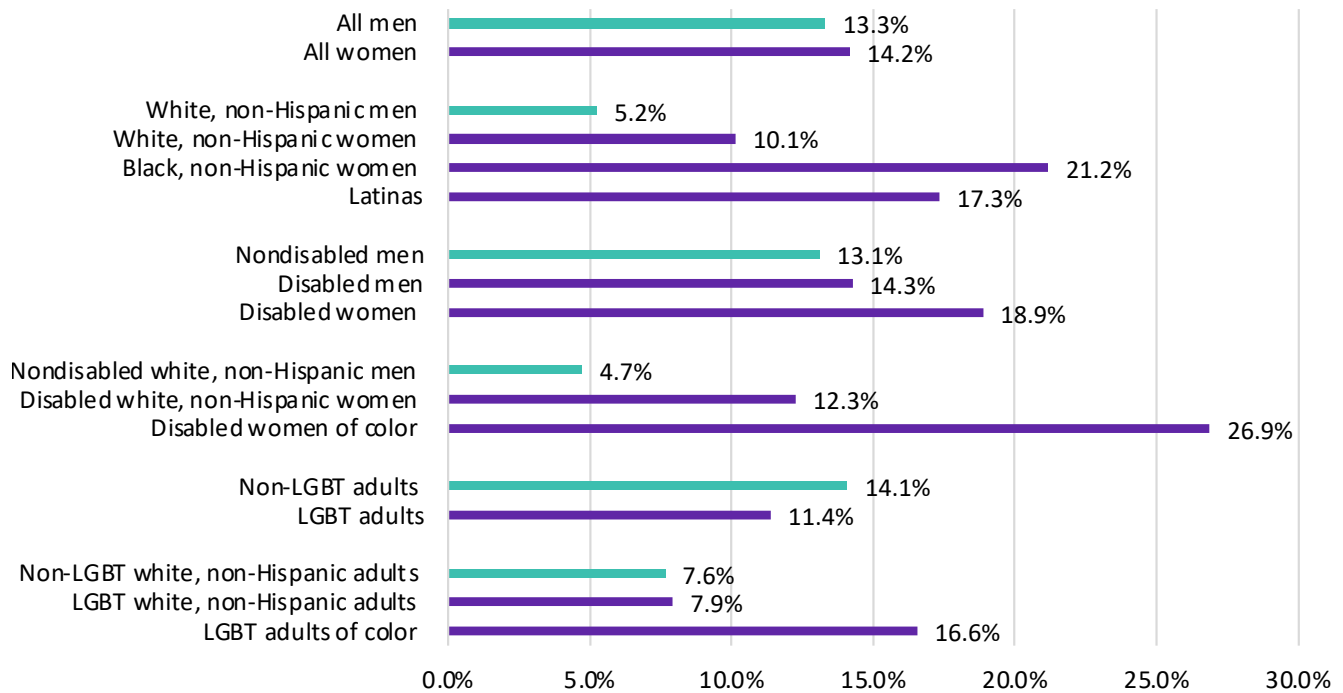
One in seven women who rent (14.2%) were behind on their rent payments. In comparison, 13.3% of men who rent reported the same. Among renters, Black, non-Hispanic women (21.2%) were four times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men (5.2%) and over two times more likely than white, non-Hispanic women (10.1%) to be behind on their rent payments. Latinas (17.3%) who rent were over three times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men and were also more likely than white, non-Hispanic women to be behind on their rent payments.

Among renters, 18.9% of disabled women were behind on their rent payments compared to 14.3% of disabled men and 13.1% of nondisabled men. Disabled women of color (26.9%) who rent were nearly six times more likely than nondisabled white, non-Hispanic men (4.7%) to be behind on their rent payments. They were also over two times more likely than disabled white, non-Hispanic women (12.3%) to be behind on their rent payments.

Black, non-Hispanic women were four times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men to be behind on their rent payments.

Among renters, 11.4% of LGBT and 14.1% of non-LGBT adults were behind on their rent. LGBT adults of color (16.6%) were over two times more likely than LGBT white, non-Hispanic adults (7.9%) and non-LGBT white, non-Hispanic adults (7.6%) to be behind on their rent.

Share Who Reported Being Behind on Their Rent by Selected Demographics (April 26 – May 8, 2023)



Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020–2022 Household Pulse Survey, using data from week 57 (collected April 26 – May 8, 2023). Survey respondents self-identified as male, female, transgender, or none, self-identified their sexual orientation, self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, and self-identified via six questions if they had a disability. Refer to footnotes for more information.

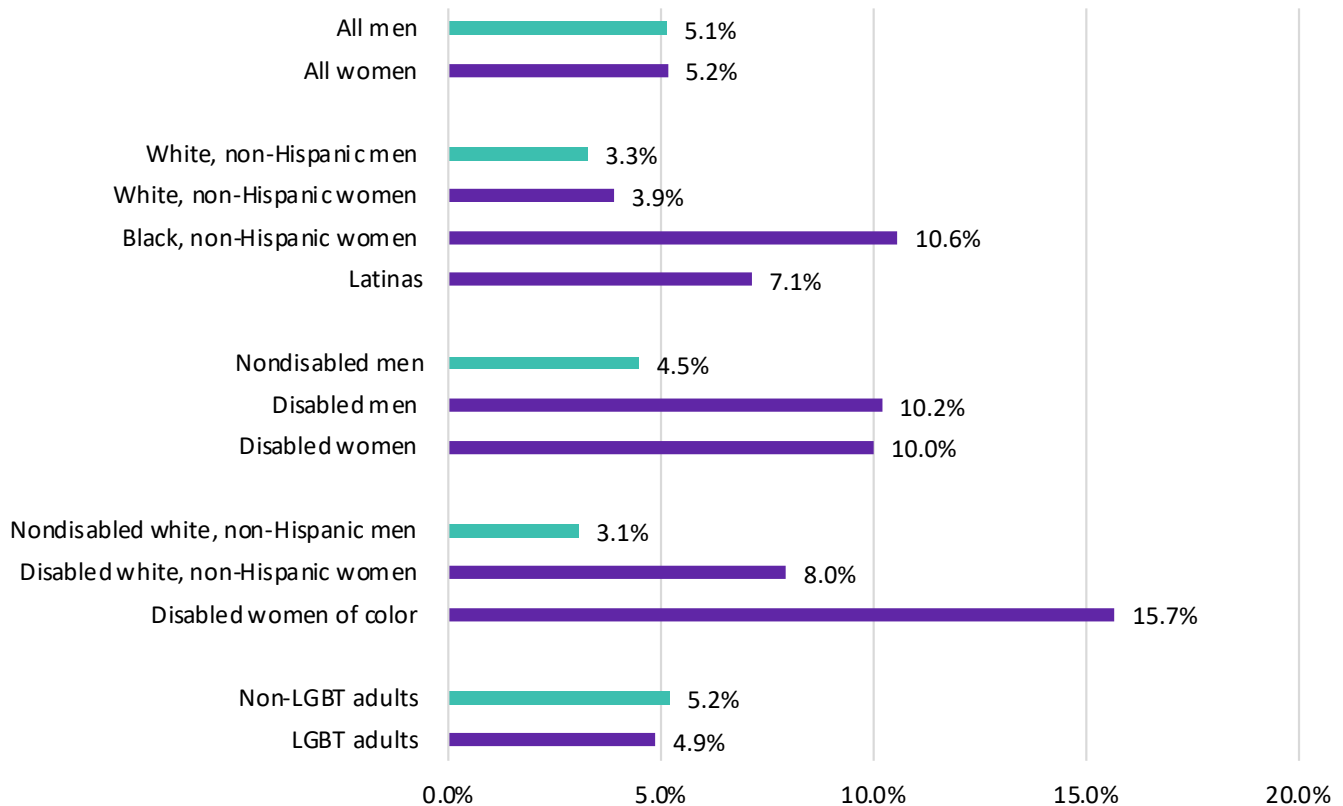
Disabled women of color were especially likely to be behind on their mortgage payments.

Among those with mortgages, 5.2% of women and 5.1% of men reported being behind on their mortgage payments. Among those with mortgages, Black, non-Hispanic women (10.6%) were over three times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men (3.3%) and nearly three times more likely than white, non-Hispanic women (3.9%) to be behind on their mortgage payments. Among those with mortgages, Latinas (7.1%) were over two times more likely than white, non-Hispanic men and nearly two times more likely than white, non-Hispanic women to be behind on their mortgage payments.

Disabled women with mortgages (10.0%) were over two times more likely than nondisabled men with mortgages (4.5%) to be behind on their mortgage payments. In addition, 10.2% of disabled men with mortgages were behind on their payments. Among those with mortgages, disabled women of color (15.7%) were over five times more likely than nondisabled white, non-Hispanic men (3.1%) to be behind on their mortgage payments. They were also nearly two times more likely than disabled white, non-Hispanic women (8.0%) to be behind on their mortgage payments.

Among those with mortgages, 4.9% of LGBT adults and 5.2% of non-LGBT adults were behind on their mortgage payments.

Share Who Reported Being Behind on Mortgage Payments by Selected Demographics (April 26 – May 8, 2023)



Source: NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2020–2022 Household Pulse Survey, using data from week 57 (collected April 26 – May 8, 2023). Survey respondents self-identified as male, female, transgender, or none, self-identified their sexual orientation, self-identified their race and whether they were of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, and self-identified via six questions if they had a disability. Refer to footnotes for more information.

The data shows that women of color, disabled women of color, and LGBT adults, and their families, need support to meet their basic needs.

This data shows that many women, in particular Black, non-Hispanic women, Latinas, and disabled women of color, and LGBT adults, and their families still struggle to have enough to eat and afford their rent and mortgage payments. Public benefit programs not only help close the gaps between insufficient income and the growing cost of basic needs, but also support economic mobility and security in the long term. Despite the clear and evident need for robust public benefits and income supports, some policymakers are arguing to cut back on them, which would increase the economic insecurity of women, LGBT people, people with disabilities, and their families, destabilize communities, and undermine the health of our economy more broadly. It is imperative that Congress protect and expand supports that allow women and their families to meet basic needs and address longstanding inequities in the economy, to foster an economy where all can thrive.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank May Amoyaw, Melissa Boteach, Sarah Hassmer, Amy Matsui, Kat Menefee, Karen Schulman, Beth Stover, Shengwei Sun, Jasmine Tucker, Hilary Woodward and the rest of the NWLC Communications Team, and Andres de la Roche for their design, review, and dissemination of this factsheet.

- 1 Sarah Javaid and Brooke LePage, (May 5, 2023), "In April, Women Gained 57% of Jobs Added to the Economy." National Women's Law Center, <https://nwlc.org/resource/in-april-women-gained-57-of-jobs-added-to-the-economy/>.
- 2 Sarah Javaid and Shengwei Sun, (March 2023), "Lacking Robust Supports, Black, Non-Hispanic Women, Latinas, LGBT Adults, and Disabled Women Endure Persistent Hardship." National Women's Law Center. <https://nwlc.org/resource/lacking-robust-supports-black-non-hispanic-women-latinas-lgbt-adults-and-disabled-women-endure-persistent-hardship/>; The Federal Reserve Board, (May 2023), "Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2022," <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/2022-report-economic-well-being-us-households-202305.pdf>.
- 3 Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, (May 22, 2023), "Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2022," <https://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerscommunities/shed.htm>.
- 4 Sarah Hassmer, Amy Matsui, Kat Menefee, and Shengwei Sun, (May 18, 2023), "By the Numbers: Data on Key Programs for the Well-Being of Women & Their Families," National Women's Law Center. <https://nwlc.org/resource/by-the-numbers-data-on-key-programs-for-the-well-being-of-women-lgbtq-people-and-their-families/#>.
- 5 Unless otherwise noted, all numbers appeared in this fact sheet are from NWLC analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, "Measuring Household Experiences During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic, 2020-2023 Household Pulse Survey," Census.gov, <https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/household-pulse-survey.html>. As a Census Bureau's experimental data product, the Household Pulse Survey was designed to quickly and efficiently collect data regarding household's experiences during the pandemic. The survey was conducted virtually, and the overall response rates are significantly lower than most federally sponsored surveys, raising concerns about nonresponse bias (For more on nonresponse bias for the 2020 Household Pulse Survey, see https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/demo/technical-documentation/hhp/2020_HPS_NR_Bias_Report-final.pdf). Other potential sources of error of the Household Pulse Survey data include measurement, coverage, processing, and item nonresponse. All results in this analysis should therefore be interpreted with caution. The U.S. Census Bureau completed phase 1 of the Household Pulse Survey on July 31, 2020. Phase 2 of the Household Pulse Survey began on August 19, 2020. Phase 3 began on October 28, 2020. Phase 3.1 began on April 14, 2021. Phase 3.2 began on July 21, 2021. Phase 3.3 began on December 1, 2021. Phase 3.4 began on March 2, 2022. Phase 3.5 began on June 1, 2022. Phase 3.6 began on September 14, 2022. Phase 3.7 began on December 9, 2022. Phase 3.8 began on March 1, 2023. However, the questionnaire in phases 2, 3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8 are different and longer than in phase 1. Some questions are phrased differently compared to previous phases, and questions have been asked in different orders. There are also higher nonresponse rates to questions in phase 2, 3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8 compared to phase 1. Previous NWLC analyses of the Pulse Survey are available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/nwlc-analysis-of-u-s-census-bureau-covid-19-household-pulse-surveys/>. "Weeks" is the term used by the Census Bureau to define separate data collections in all phases, but "weeks" may be shorter or longer than a seven-day period. Refer to each data collection for more information.
- 6 The U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey asks respondents six questions related to disability and if a respondent answers "yes – a lot of difficulty" to any one or more of the questions, they are categorized as having a disability. The questions are as follows: "Do you have difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses?" "Do you have difficulty hearing, even when using a hearing aid?" "Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?" "Do you have difficulty with self-care, such as washing all over or dressing?" "Using your usual language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example, understanding or being understood?" This follows methodology created by the Center for Disease Control. For more information, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/functioning-and-disability.htm>.
- 7 Women of color includes all women who are not white, non-Hispanic. Calculations for women of color grouped together are used if sample sizes are too small for reliable detailed racial and ethnic data breakdowns.
- 8 Calculations for disabled Latinas are not included due to insufficient sample sizes and therefore it cannot be determined if disabled Latinas were more likely than nondisabled white, non-Hispanic men to be behind on their rent payments.
- 9 The U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey asks questions about a person's sex assigned at birth, current gender identity, and sexual orientation. People whose sex at birth is the same as their current gender identity and who select "Straight" on the sexual orientation question are counted as "non-LGBT." People whose sex assigned at birth is not the same as their current identity, who indicate they are transgender, and/or who indicate they are gay, lesbian, or bisexual are counted as "LGBT." Survey respondents self-identified their gender as "male," "female," "transgender," or "none of the above." This report considers women to be any person whose current gender identity is "female." This includes cisgender women, and it may also include some transgender women (since some transgender women may have selected "female" rather than "transgender" to best describe their gender identity). This follows methodology created by the Center for Disease Control. For more information, see: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/11/census-bureau-survey-explores-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity.html>.
- 10 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (May 17, 2022), "Food prices up 10.8 percent for year ended April 2022; largest 12-month increase since November 1980," <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2022/food-prices-up-10-8-percent-for-year-ended-april-2022-largest-12-month-increase-since-november-1980.htm>.
- 11 Gundersen, Craig, and James P. Ziliak. "Food Insecurity and Health Outcomes." *Health Affairs* 34, no. 11 (November 2015): 1830-39. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2015.0645>.
- 12 Maynard, Merryn, Lesley Andrade, Sara Packull-McCormick, Christopher M. Perlman, Cesar Leos-Toro, and Sharon I. Kirkpatrick. "Food Insecurity and Mental Health among Females in High-Income Countries." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 15, no. 7 (July 2018): 1424. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15071424>.
- 13 Calculations for LGBT adults were not included due to insufficient sample sizes.
- 14 Nagata, Jason M., Kyle T. Ganson, Henry J. Whittle, Jonathan Chu, Orlando O. Harris, Alexander C. Tsai, and Sheri D. Weiser. "Food Insufficiency and Mental Health in the U.S. During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 60, no. 4 (April 1, 2021): 453-61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2020.12.004>.