

Increased Food Insecurity during COVID-19

In August 2020, Foodshare conducted a survey in Hartford and Tolland Counties to better understand changes in food access as a result of COVID-19. A total of 512 participants completed the survey which was targeted to those with higher need for food assistance. As a result, the sample is not representative of the general population.

Food insecurity has increased

32%

since COVID

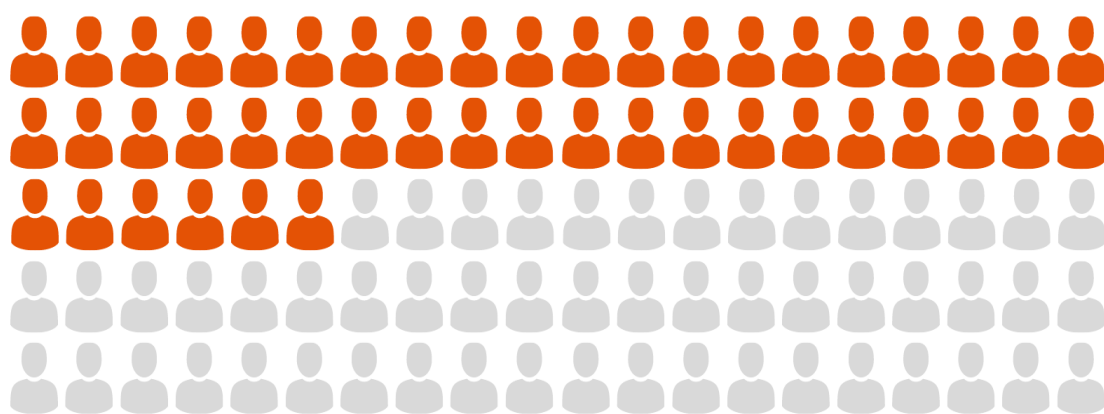
Who is over-represented?

- Women (60% of sample)
- Hispanics (14%), Blacks (13%)
- Households making under \$50,000 per year (48%)

Key Findings

1 Food insecurity has increased sharply.

46% of respondents are currently food insecure



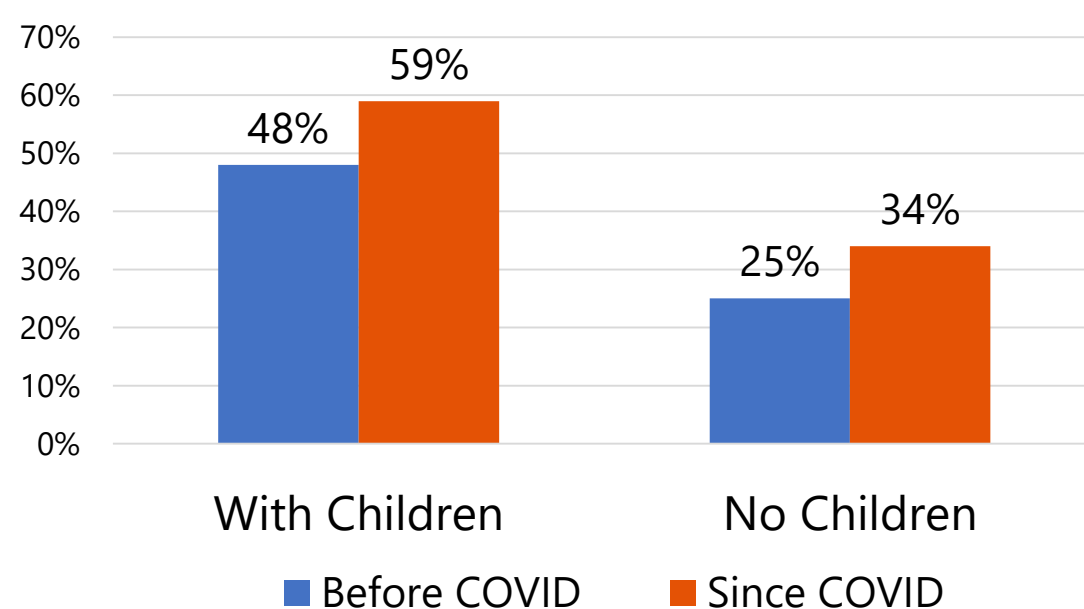
This increase in food insecurity was experienced by every income group, but those who were already food insecure were hit especially hard. Almost 3 in every 10 people who were food insecure before COVID (29%) have experienced worsening food insecurity since the pandemic. In addition to problems accessing quality foods and a balanced diet, these households have changed their eating habits and reduced the amount of food they consume because they cannot afford to buy more.

2 Households with children are more likely to be food insecure.

Households with children have been almost twice as likely to be food insecure than households without children, both before and since COVID.

Additionally, despite having higher baseline rates of food insecurity, almost 1/4 of families with children under the age of 18 (23%) have experienced a rise in food insecurity, compared to 16% of those without children. **Around 3/5 of respondents with children under the age of 18 (59%) are food insecure.**

Food Insecurity by Household Composition



NOTE: The survey used the date on which the World Health Organization gave COVID-19 pandemic status so the time after **March 11, 2020** is considered "since COVID."

3 Rates of job disruption are linked to food insecurity.

59% of respondents who experienced a job disruption are currently food insecure.

NOTE: For the purpose of this survey, a job disruption is defined as someone in the household experiencing a job loss, working reduced hours, or being furloughed.

57% of respondents have experienced a job disruption since March 2020, but these disruptions were not felt equally. Households that experienced job disruptions were already more likely to be food insecure pre-COVID, indicating that economic shocks hit those who were the most vulnerable.

Those who experienced a job disruption are

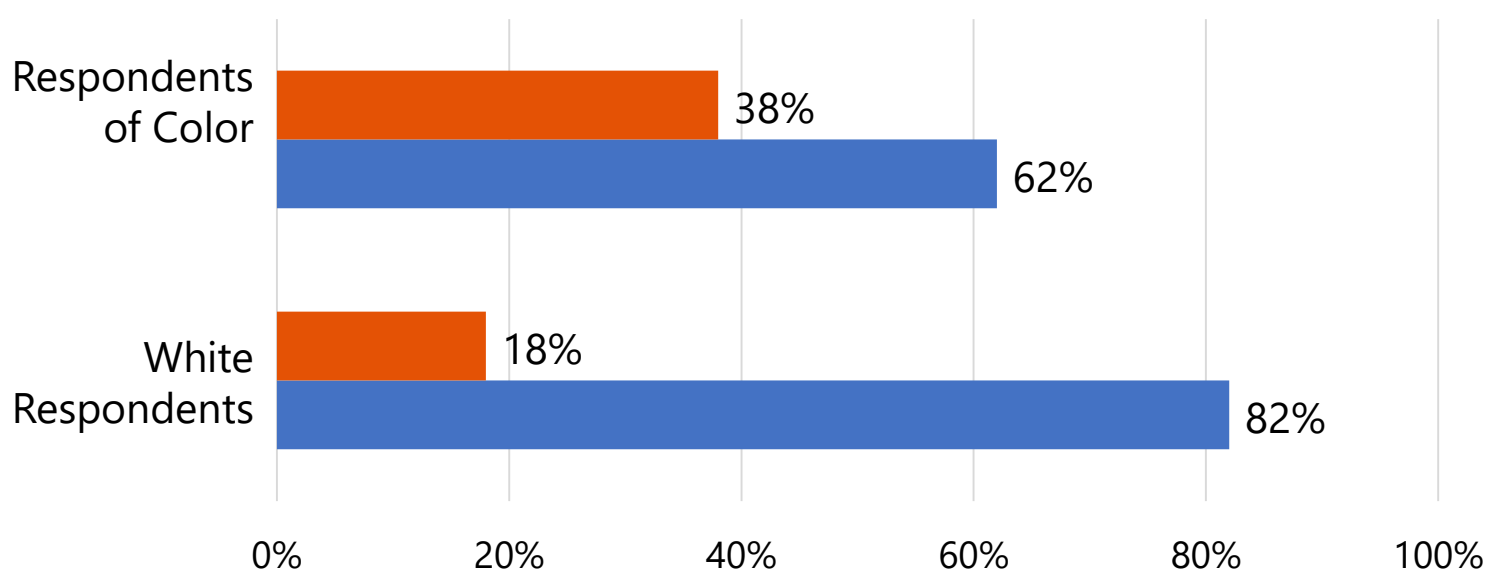
2.6x

more likely to have become food insecure

4 People of color are bearing the brunt of both job disruptions and food insecurity.

Food Secure Respondents After a Job Disruption

■ Became Food Insecure ■ Stayed Food Secure



3 in every 5 respondents of color (59%) are currently food insecure, and 64% experienced a job disruption.

As well as being more likely to have experienced a job disruption, respondents of color were more likely to have become food insecure because of it. 38% of respondents of color who experienced a job disruption transitioned from being food secure to being food insecure, compared to 18% of white respondents.

72% of Hispanics have experienced a job disruption.
As a result, they are:

1.5x

more likely than non-Hispanics to be food insecure

2.6x

more likely than whites to have become food insecure since COVID

Programmatic and Policy Recommendations

- Federal nutrition assistance programs, particularly SNAP, can expand benefits and eligibility requirements to aid more families in need.
- State and federal stimulus aid should target those experiencing job disruptions, including those receiving unemployment benefits during COVID.
- With disruptions to traditional schooling, food banks and food pantries can consider alternative ways to serve families with children who typically receive free or reduced-price school meals.
- Food banks and food pantries can leverage local media outlets to raise awareness of food assistance programs available in the area, particularly for those experiencing food insecurity for the first time.
- The resources and food provided by food assistance programs should reflect the cultural makeup of the groups in most need of their services.

In partnership with:



The National Food Access and COVID Research Team (NFACT) is a national collaboration of researchers committed to rigorous, comparative, and timely food access research during the time of COVID. We do this through collaborative, open access research that prioritizes communication to key decision-makers while building our scientific understanding of food system behaviors and policies. To learn more visit nfactresearch.org.



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