

Economic Distress & COVID-19

Policy Recommendations

While policymakers recently passed legislation for stimulus relief, they must continue to consider the huge economic toll that the pandemic has had on many Americans, particularly for lower income Americans and communities of color. This distress is likely to remain long after the end of the pandemic.



Stimulus Packages

1. **Financial assistance in the form of stimulus checks is imperative** to ensuring Americans can eat and pay for other household expenses, beyond the March 2021 stimulus.
2. **Priority for stimulus should be for low-income Americans and those who have lost a job or at least hand of their income** during COVID-19.
3. **Stimulus packages should include continued unemployment benefits** at a livable rate for those who have suffered from job loss during the pandemic.



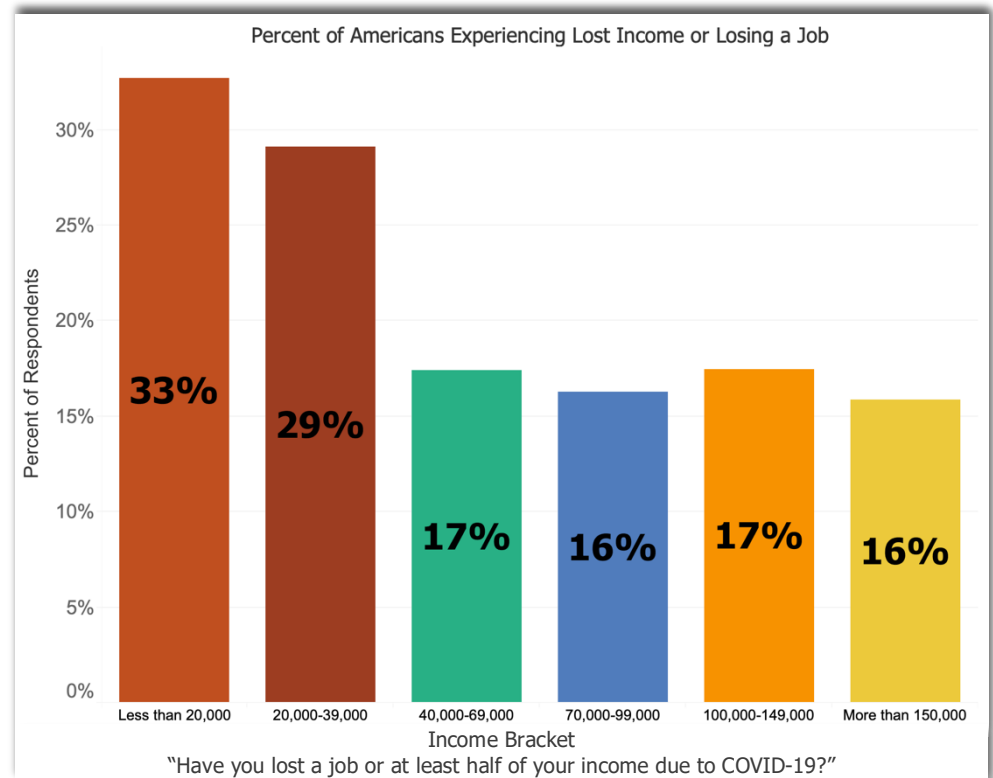
Create Long-term Solutions

Policymakers must create long term solutions such as raising minimum wage, expanding unemployment assistance, and enhancing infrastructure to provide food to low income families and others with temporary financial need.

One in five Americans lost a job or at least half of their income due to COVID-19 as of December 2020.

21% of Americans reported either losing their jobs or more than half of their income. Black, Hispanic, and Native Americans reported higher rates of economic distress than White Americans. Americans making less than \$40,000 per year are disproportionately either losing their jobs or income due to COVID-19 compared to middle or higher-income Americans.

More than 55% of Americans are concerned about covering basic household costs.



While 1/5 of Americans are experiencing economic distress, Black and Hispanic Americans are struggling at a higher rate. For example, 26.7% of Black Americans have lost a job or at least half of their income due to COVID-19.

30.4%

of Hispanic Americans lost a job or at least half of their income due to COVID-19 compared to 18.4% of White Americans.

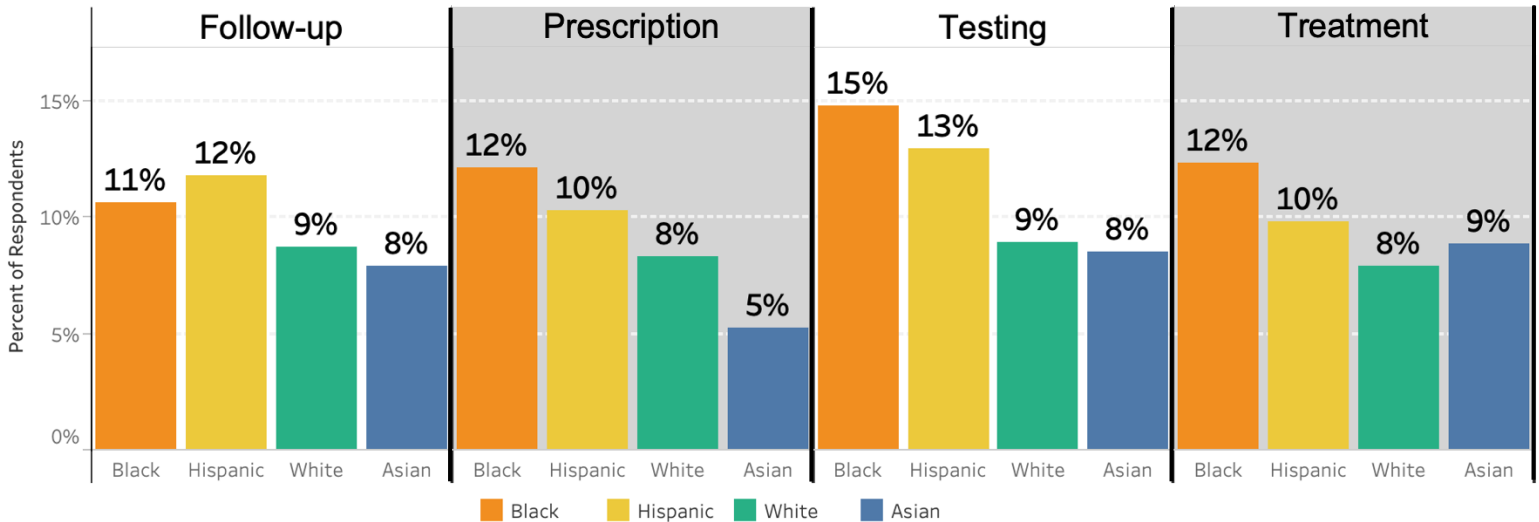
70%

of those who lost jobs or at least half of their income during the COVID-19 pandemic are food insecure.

Economic Distress & Food Security

Most Americans who are experiencing economic hardship are also struggling to feed themselves and their families healthy meals on a regular basis. In December 2020, 70% of Americans who are experiencing economic distress reported that they cut meal size, ate less than they should, or were hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food.

Americans Who Skipped or Delayed Routine Medical Care Due to Economic Hardship



More than

1/5

Americans are concerned about covering basic household costs.

Economic Distress Affects Ability to Receive Routine Medical Care

Low-income Americans and those experiencing economic distress due to COVID-19 are having to make difficult choices about food and medical treatment. **Black and Hispanic Americans are skipping or delaying routine medical treatment at a higher rate than white or Asian Americans.** It's important that the disparate economic impact of COVID-19 informs policymakers for stimulus packages and recovery policies. Not all Americans are experiencing the pandemic the same and many Americans are facing severe financial impact.

Acknowledgements: This brief is a product of the National Pandemic Pulse Survey, supported by a Johnson & Johnson Foundation Grant to Prof. Alain Labrique, Department of International Health at the Bloomberg School of Public Health. Authors: Jeffrey Edwards, Rachel Hill, Anna Kalbarczyk, Dustin Gibson, Smisha Agarwal Contact: jedwar88@jhu.edu

About National Pandemic Pulse

To better understand the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 pandemic among low-income and minority communities in the United States, researchers at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health launched the National Pandemic Pulse surveys. These population-representative surveys are administered across the United States, matching US Census estimates to gauge different aspects of population response to the pandemic – ranging from adherence to anxiety, access to testing and care, vaccine perceptions, food insecurity, among others. The sample was selected to be representative of the US population by age, gender, education, and income for each US Census region. The survey specifically oversampled Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx populations to analyze the impacts of COVID-19 by race and ethnicity, where these classifications are seen as proxy socioeconomic constructs. Round 2 of the nationwide survey, implemented between 12/15/2020 – 12/23/2020, had 8,565 respondents. It covered the following modules: risk perceptions, pregnancy experiences, pandemic anger, trust in science, vaccine hesitancy, testing access, economic distress, food insecurity, and mental health. Results are currently under peer-review.