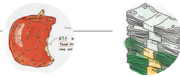


WORKING LESS TO PROVIDE MORE CARE

HOW THE PANDEMIC HAS AFFECTED FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

By Elaine Waxman and Poonam Gupta

In December 2020, we surveyed adults living with children younger than age 6 to understand how they were faring nine months into the COVID-19 pandemic.



We found that both adults and kids in these households were facing significant challenges. Among these adults,



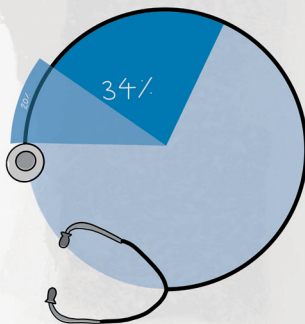
27% experienced food insecurity in the previous year.



42% were in households where someone lost a job or was laid off, had their work hours reduced, or lost income because of the pandemic.



And among adults reporting that they or their spouse lost their job or were laid off,



34% missed a well-child checkup for their child, 20% of whom cited fear of exposure to the coronavirus as their primary concern for not going.



21% said their children's diet quality was worse than before the pandemic.

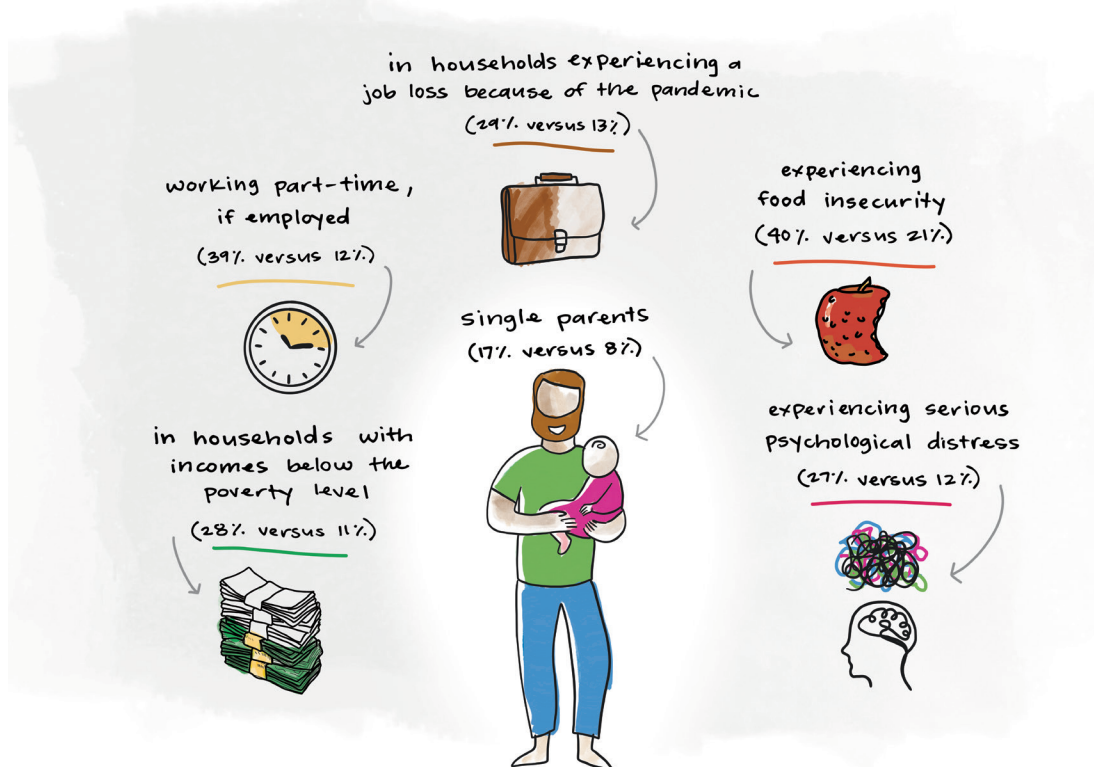


As the pandemic closed child care options and adults took on more caregiving responsibilities at home, many adults had to work fewer hours to take care of children. We found that

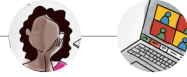
1 in 5 adults living with young children was working fewer hours because of increased caregiving responsibilities.



Compared with adults living with young children who were providing more child care but not working less, adults who were working less because of caregiving responsibilities were more likely to be



Many adults living with young children wanted to work more, but half of these adults said child care responsibilities had a severe or moderate impact on their ability to work; only 30 percent of adults living with only older children said the same.



What's more, many adults had both a child younger than age 6 and a child between ages 6 and 18 learning at home, creating even greater caregiving needs.

37% of adults with a young child also had a school-age child learning at home.



These survey results show that many adults living with young children have experienced challenges balancing work and child care during the pandemic. These challenges could continue for months because young children cannot yet be vaccinated and recent research suggests that child care options have become more expensive during the pandemic and may remain hard to find. These families need several supports to ensure they have the health and economic stability they need to thrive.

ABOUT THE DATA

This publication draws on data from a nationally representative sample of adults ages 18 to 64 who participated in the December 2020 round of the Urban Institute's Well-Being and Basic Needs Survey (WBNS). The WBNS is an internet-based survey designed to monitor changes in individual and family well-being as policymakers consider changes to federal safety-net programs. For each round of the WBNS, we draw a stratified random sample (including a large oversample of adults in low-income households) from the KnowledgePanel, a probability-based internet panel maintained by Ipsos that includes households with and without internet access.

Our analytic sample for this publication consists of 3,409 adults living with children under age 19, including 1,528 adults with children under age 6 and 1,881 adults who were not living with children under age 6 but who were living with children ages 6 to 18. The sample includes adults in the core survey sample as well as additional oversamples of Black and Hispanic/Latinx adults with children under age 6. Survey weights adjust for unequal selection probabilities and are poststratified to the characteristics of nonelderly adults based on benchmarks from the Current Population Survey and the American Community Survey; separate weights are constructed for adults with children under age 6 and other adults with children to produce nationally representative estimates for these populations. Participants can complete the survey in English or Spanish.

For further information on the survey design and content, see Michael Karpman, Stephen Zuckerman, and Dulce Gonzalez, "The Well-Being and Basic Needs Survey: A New Data Source for Monitoring the Health and Well-Being of Individuals and Families" (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2018).

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