

HUNGER FREE ALABAMA

Stop evictions!!!

-Amy in Alabama

Do Better.

Hungry.

Having a roof over my head is primary.

-John in Alabama

Check on poor people. We are not okay. -Meggan in Alabama

COVID-19

Pandemic

HELP.

Help with childcare expenses!! Or allow parents to be home with their children!

-Sara in Alabama

get utilities caught Ashley in Alabama

Jobless.

Listen.

We need the extra \$400 unemployment to survive. -

Brittany in Alabama

Please Help...

Send the next stimulus check, people that are still continuously working need hazard pay, just some form of help! -Alabama

ALABAMIANS

STRUGGLING

Pandemic.

Come out and speak with us so you can see the struggle and feel our pain especially those with children.

- Jerri in Alabama

TO SURVIVE

BASICS OF FOOD, RENT, AND UTILITIES NEEDED MOST

OVERVIEW

From August 28 to September 7, 2020, the SouthStrong campaign surveyed Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants in 12 Southern states. The surveys used to collect the data shared in this report were written and analyzed by the Southern Economic Advancement Project (SEAP), and the conclusions and calls to action belong to the Hunger Free Alabama coalition.

The data analyzed here rely on self-reported information from 137 anonymized surveys in Alabama. Respondents were invited to answer a mixture of multiple choice and open-ended questions about challenges and changes in the wake of the pandemic, experiences using and applying for government benefits, and recommendations and requests for policymakers. Respondents were invited, but not required, to share their first names to be attached to quotes you see here.

The surveys were administered by Propel (www.joinpropel.com), the operators of a financial services app, Fresh EBT (www.freshebt.com). Fresh EBT, used by over 4 million households, is a smartphone app available at no cost to SNAP participants to track and manage SNAP and TANF benefits. The survey, designed by SEAP, was made available through Fresh EBT to randomly selected individuals who opened the app between August 28 – September 7, 2020.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Finding #1 Food insecurity and child care have been the top challenges in the pandemic.

Finding #2 Government aid made a real difference for 2 out of 3 families... but much of it has expired.

Finding #3 Help with food, housing, and utilities are needed now.

FINDING #1: FOOD INSECURITY AND CHILD CARE HAVE BEEN THE TOP CHALLENGES IN THE PANDEMIC

58% of these struggling Alabamians have had trouble buying enough food at some point during the pandemic. Child care issues were the second most frequently mentioned challenge, followed closely by job loss. Respondents talked about the burden of higher food prices, hours being cut from their jobs, depression and stress.

TOP 3 CHALLENGES SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN



Trouble Buying Enough Food



Loss of Job



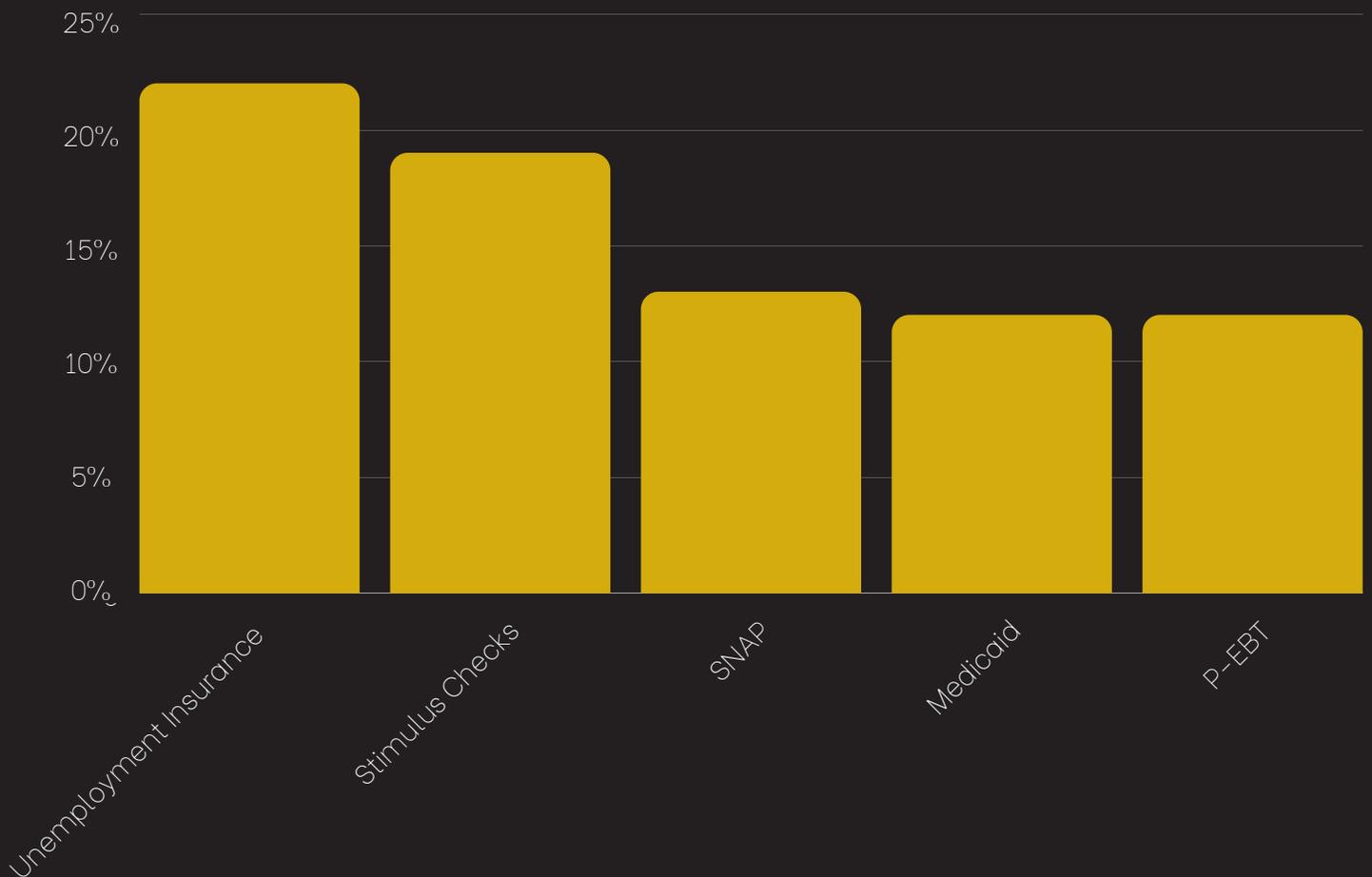
Childcare Issues

FINDING #1: CONTINUED

More than half of respondents (56%) have had problems applying for or receiving at least one type of assistance (UI, stimulus check, SNAP, P-EBT, Medicaid). Unemployment insurance and stimulus checks were the most challenging to receive. Challenges included busy phone lines, no responses from agencies, difficult websites, long wait times (weeks and months), and one benefit causing ineligibility in another benefit.

56% HAD PROBLEMS APPLYING TO OR RECEIVING AT LEAST ONE TYPE OF AID

HAD A PROBLEM WITH:



THE VOICES OF THE IMPACTED

I had to move in with family. We lost our health insurance. I have to have surgery, but can't afford it. My kids are home schooling, and I don't have the internet service I need. I lost my car, house and my children's school work is in jeopardy. –Meggan in Jasper, AL

Not working enough hours and being behind on my bills and not being able to have enough money to buy food.
--Shaniya in Enterprise, AL

FINDING #2: GOVERNMENT AID MADE A REAL DIFFERENCE FOR 2 OUT OF 3 FAMILIES...BUT MUCH OF IT HAS EXPIRED.

In spite of challenges applying for or receiving certain aid, 66% of respondents said programs or assistance made a real difference for them and their family in managing the pandemic. Food assistance programs were the most frequently mentioned programs—with 53% of respondents saying food programs made a real difference in the pandemic. Stimulus checks and unemployment insurance were the two other most frequently mentioned programs. While helpful, much of the aid has expired or will expire soon.

EXTRA SNAP BENEFITS

RECEIVED EXTRA SNAP IN JUNE

62%

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS ALLOWED ME TO
PURCHASE ENOUGH FOOD TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE MONTH

76%

FINDING #2: CONTINUED

Family and friends are a source of support for about half (51%) of these struggling Alabamians. More than half (53%) have visited a food pantry or free food site since the pandemic began, according to a separate survey.

THE VOICES OF THE IMPACTED

What has made a real difference?

JCCEO for utility payments, Alabama Power in providing no disconnections to accounts, Alabama WIC for keeping my service active, and stimulus for helping balance for my family! #Thankful.

-Dominique in Birmingham, AL

Food stamps helped take the pressure off at least providing food for my children.

-Kenisha in Jasper, AL

FINDING #3: HELP WITH THE BASICS OF FOOD, HOUSING, AND UTILITIES ARE NEEDED NOW

Overwhelmingly, these struggling Alabamians said they cannot pay for housing, electricity, water, and food due to job loss, wage cuts, and loss of work hours. At the same time, they spoke again and again about food price increases, rent increases, and higher utilities due to being at home more. Covid-19 support and relief was the top concern by far.

WORRIED THAT YOU MAY NOT HAVE STABLE HOUSING IN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS?

47%
YES

WHAT ISSUES ARE YOU MOST CONCERNED ABOUT?

Covid-19 Support and Relief

75%

Education

56%

Economy/jobs

53%

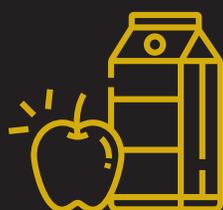
Healthcare

49%

Housing

43%

YOUR STATE HAS MONEY TO SPEND TO HELP PEOPLE IN THE
PANDEMIC. WHICH OF THESE WOULD BE MOST USEFUL?
TOP THREE RESPONSES



FOOD ASSISTANCE



HELP PAYING UTILITIES



RENT

Check on poor people. We are not okay. –Meggan in Jasper, AL

A second round of stimulus checks to help purchase food, pay bills and rent.
–Resident in Montgomery, AL

Having a roof over my head is primary. –John in Dothan, AL

Helping get utilities caught up.
–Ashley in Alabama

WHAT I WANT POLICYMAKERS TO KNOW...

Come out and speak with us so you can see the struggle and feel our pain especially those with children. –Jerri in Eutaw, AL

Help with childcare expenses!
Or allow parents to be home with their children! –Sara in Huntsville, AL

We need the extra \$400 unemployment to survive.
–Brittany in Mobile, AL

Send the next stimulus check, people that are still continuously working need hazard pay, just some form of help!
–Resident in Mobile, AL