



I BTC

Adopt the Medicaid expansion.

Shelley in North Carolina

Do Better.

Hungry. Having enough money to feed my family. I go to a food bank and EBT and it still barely gets me by! -Allison in North Carolina

It's just hard to survive.

-Kamili in North Carolina

COVID-19 Pandemic

HELP. Homelessness with my 14yr old. Homeless children should be a top priority. -Julian in North Carolina

to lose my home. I'm a mother of two children.

Jobless. Listen.

I'm behind on all my bills, and will be homeless with my children if I can't catch up.

Please Help... -Holly in North Carolina

Think about the people. We barely make it by during regular times. It's 10 times harder now. - M.M. in Tarboro, NC

NORTH CAROLINIANS

STRUGGLING

Pandemic. Help. Your people are hurting. -Sheri in Garner, NC

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 North Carolina Budget & Tax Center and their partners.

The data analyzed here rely on self-reported information from 317 anonymized surveys in North Carolina. 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 job loss have been the top challenges in the pandemic.

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

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

CALL TO ACTION

The COVID-19 crisis has left thousands of North Carolina families struggling to make ends meet.

13 percent of North Carolina adults report that children in their household aren't getting enough to eat because they can't afford enough food , and 13 percent of renters in our state don't make enough to afford their rent on time, according to the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey. This hardship will continue until Congress passes legislation strong enough to support our state through the length of the immediate crisis and the long recovery.

Instead of focusing on providing the relief our state needs, Congress has put COVID-19 relief on hold to focus on filling the US Supreme Court vacancy left by the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. It is time for Congress to step up and put people before politics. COVID relief is too important to be pushed to the back burner. Our North Carolina children and families are suffering needlessly due to the inaction of our lawmakers.

CALL TO ACTION CONTINUED

This week, please call Senator Thom Tillis's office at (202) 224-6342 and Senator Richard Burr's office at (202) 224-3154 and ask that Congress pass a strong COVID relief package that keeps our economy going and keeps struggling families from going hungry or losing their homes. Tell them the relief package must provide substantial and long-term support to get us through this crisis and ensure a just recovery, including:

- Increased food aid to help the hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians struggling to get enough to eat.
- A nationwide moratorium on eviction and significant rental assistance for the 1.2 million North Carolinians at risk of eviction.
- Utility assistance for those facing shut offs as the weather gets colder.
- A \$600 per week boost to Unemployment Insurance benefits for the duration of the crisis for the nearly 600,000 North Carolina workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

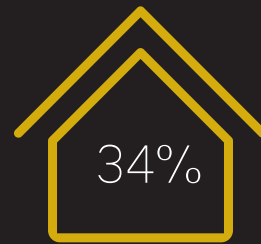
FINDING #1: FOOD INSECURITY AND JOB LOSS HAVE BEEN THE TOP CHALLENGES IN THE PANDEMIC

56% of these struggling North Carolinians have had trouble buying enough food at some point during the pandemic. Job loss was the second most frequently mentioned challenge, followed closely by housing and child care issues. Respondents talked about the burden of higher food prices, hours being cut from their jobs, depression, and stress.

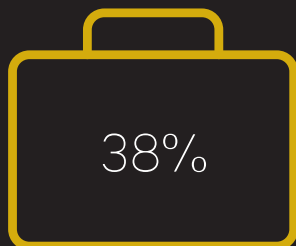
TOP 4 CHALLENGES SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN



Trouble Buying Enough Food



Housing Issues



Loss of Job



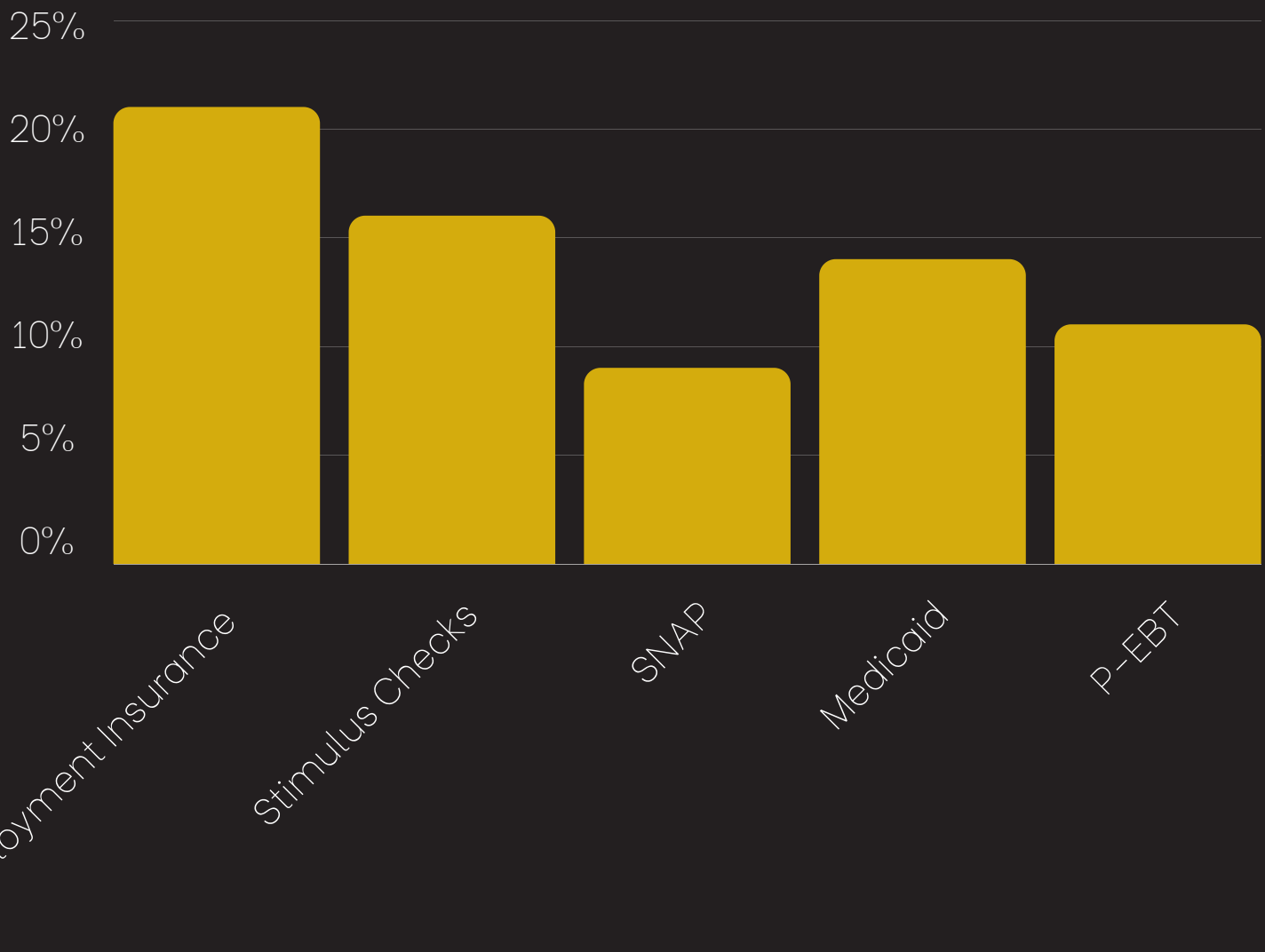
Childcare Issues

FINDING #1: CONTINUED

About half of respondents (**49%**) 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.

49% HAD PROBLEMS APPLYING TO OR RECEIVING AT LEAST ONE TYPE OF AID

HAD A PROBLEM WITH:



THE VOICES OF THE IMPACTED

Lost my place because I didn't have any money coming in.
Couldn't work because the schools were closed and
I didn't have childcare.

-Ginni in Carteret County, NC

No food on shelves. Had to go to other towns for food. All
pricing went up. You get half of what you normally buy
because of high prices. Electric bill higher because home
all the time.

-Sara in Mooresboro, NC

I had savings. I've had a stable job. This pandemic hit us
hard in areas we thought we were prepared for. Fishing for
assistance has been challenging, and we shouldn't have
to in times like these.

-Valerie in Kenansville, NC

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

In spite of challenges applying for or receiving certain aid, **57%** 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 **about 40%** 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.



FAMILY AND FRIENDS ARE
A SOURCE OF SUPPORT
FOR

49%

OF THESE STRUGGLING
LOUISIANANS.

THE VOICES OF THE IMPACTED

What has made a real difference?

Definitely unemployment when they were doing the extra \$600. While I was getting it, I was able to catch up on bills.

P-EBT helped as well so I could put food on the table.

-Dnai in Mooresville, NC

The stimulus check, SNAP, and unemployment due to being laid off of my waitress job.

-Collisa in Greenville, NC

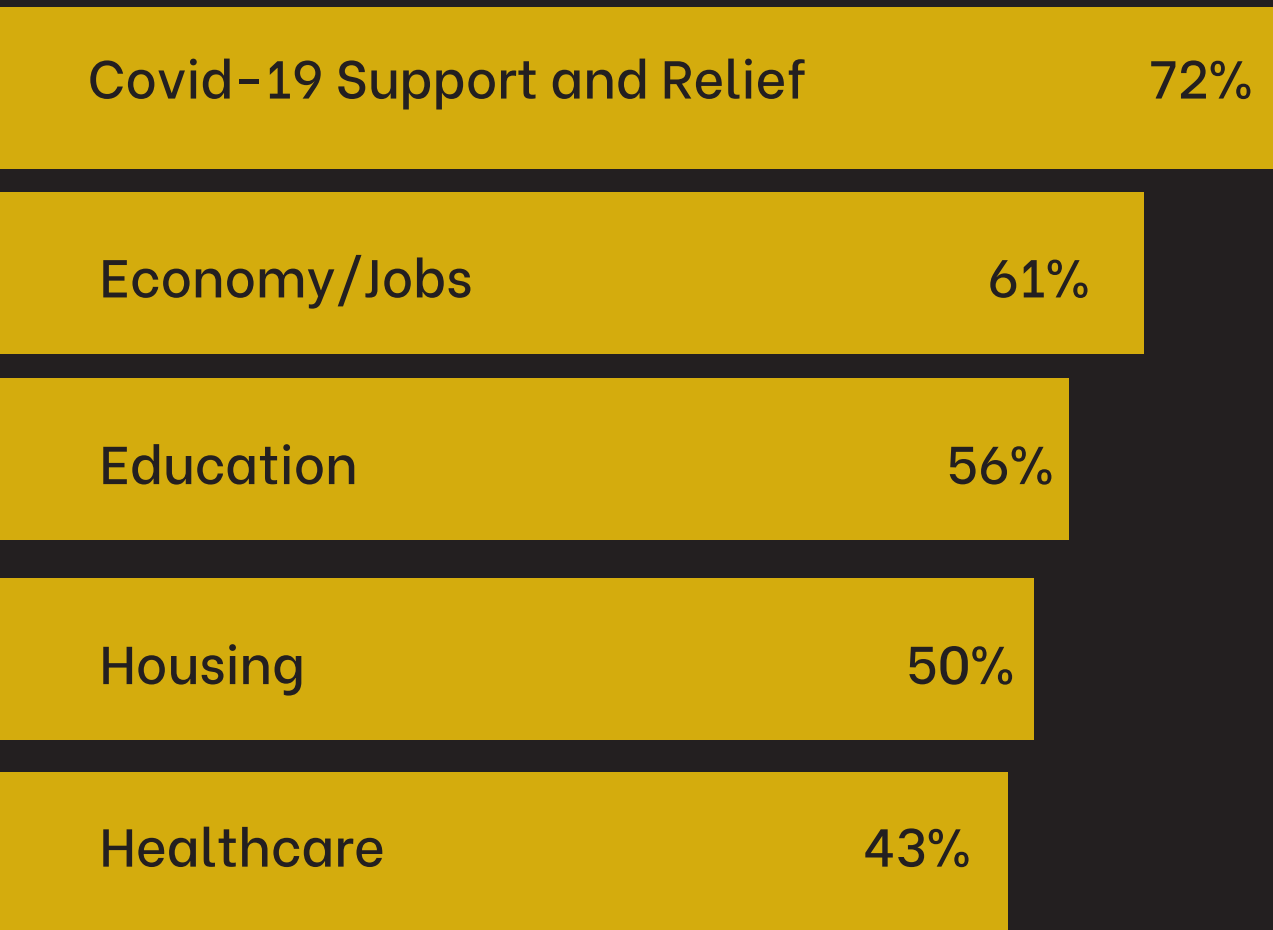
FINDING #3: HELP WITH THE BASICS OF FOOD, HOUSING, AND UTILITIES ARE NEEDED NOW

Overwhelmingly, these struggling North Carolinians 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?

62%
YES

WHAT ISSUES ARE YOU MOST CONCERNED ABOUT?



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



HELP WITH RENT

Adopt the Medicaid expansion.
–Shelley in Clayton, NC

Please keep helping with
extra food stamps to feed
kids at home. –Tomica in
Hope Mills, NC

Help. Your people
are hurting. –Sheri in
Garner, NC

Homelessness with my 14yr old.
Homeless children
should be a top priority.
–Julian in Buncombe County, NC

WHAT I WANT POLICYMAKERS TO KNOW...

Think about the people. We
barely make it by during regular
times. It's 10 times harder now. –
M.M. in Tarboro, NC

Think about the people. We
barely make it by during regular
times. It's 10 times harder now. –
M.M. in Tarboro, NC

It's just hard to
survive. –Kamili
in Leland, NC

I am about to lose my home. I'm a single
mother of two children. I have taken a pay
cut and I'm trying to work as many hours as I
can. I'm behind on all my bills, and will be
homeless with my children if I can't catch
up. –Holly in Greensboro, NC