



Everyone isn't as blessed financially as others and if the money is there...help us. Get it together. We're better than this! -Cheryl
Do Better.

Hungry. To give enough money to hold everybody until they can go back to their job. -Lynette

I lost two of my three jobs and I'm still struggling. -Mia in Jefferson County

**COVID-19
Pandemic**

HELP. Please, please get us the second stimulus check quickly and any other help possible. -Audrey

so much and fell behind on all my bills. -Patricia in Radcliff

Jobless. Listen.

I need to find help with my electric and water. I need help bad.

Please Help... -Marsha

With my kids being home, more food is used which leads me to run out rather quickly. I received P-EBT, but it isn't enough. -Taylor

KENTUCKIANS

STRUGGLING

Pandemic.

CARE! Don't just talk about it, be about it.

TO SURVIVE

- Sara

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 Kentucky Center for Economic Policy and Kentucky Equal Justice Center.

The data analyzed here rely on self-reported information from 175 anonymized surveys in Kentucky. 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

Congress must pass additional aid to struggling families that lasts until the pandemic is behind us and Kentuckians are back on their feet. The U.S. House has now passed two badly-needed aid packages that would provide relief to hungry, economically insecure Kentuckians, but the Senate has failed to act. Despite the President's recent actions to halt negotiations, it is still up to the Senate to agree to a package that:

- Increases SNAP maximum benefits by 15% to help all families but especially very low-income families who were left out of an earlier increase.
- Restarts the federal supplemental Unemployment Insurance payments and ensures workers don't run out of weeks.
- Boosts Medicaid funding to keep people covered and healthy.
- Helps Kentuckians with their utilities and rent.

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

70% of these struggling Kentuckians 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 issues. Respondents talked about the burden of higher food prices, hours being cut from their jobs, depression, and stress.

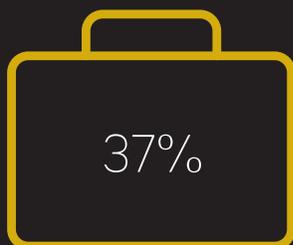
TOP 4 CHALLENGES SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN



Trouble Buying Enough Food



Housing Issues



Loss of Job



Childcare Issues

THE VOICES OF THE IMPACTED

Families with children are at a complete loss because at least one parent must remain home to care for the kids but that is a huge hit in income with nothing to replace it.

– Emma in Lexington

I lost two of my three jobs and I'm still struggling.

– Mia in Jefferson County

Lost so much and fell behind on all my bills.

– Patricia in Radcliff

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

Severe hardship in the pandemic and recession has been lessened by government aid, with 61% of respondents saying 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 42% 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, along with LIHEAP. Interestingly, Kentucky was the only state with several respondents naming LIHEAP as one of the most helpful programs in the pandemic. While helpful, much of the aid has expired or will expire soon.



FAMILY AND FRIENDS ARE
A SOURCE OF SUPPORT
FOR ABOUT

50%

OF THESE SURVEYED
KENTUCKIANS.

THE VOICES OF THE IMPACTED

What has made a real difference?

School lunches given out daily in our neighborhood along with the food stamp increase.

–Angela in Walker

The increased food stamps have been an absolute blessing! Someone from church bought some laundry detergent and toilet paper for me. And some cleaning stuff. These things have made my life a lot less stressful.

–Kristie in Berea

Unemployment and the extra CARES funds helped me manage my rent and other necessary bills. This month I'm not able to pay my rent because the help has lapsed.

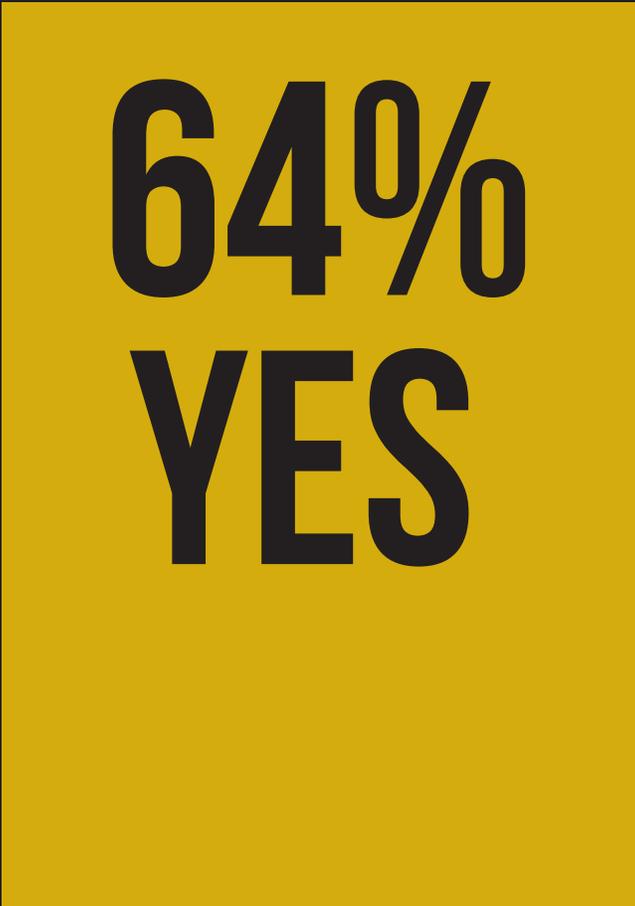
–Melissa in Jefferson County

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

Overwhelmingly, these struggling Kentuckians 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?

64%
YES



WHAT ISSUES ARE YOU MOST CONCERNED ABOUT?

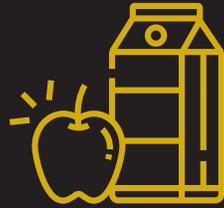
Covid-19 Support and Relief 71%

Housing 52%

Economy/Jobs 51%

Education 47%

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

Everyone isn't as blessed financially as others and if the money is there...help us. Get it together. We're better than this! -Cheryl

Since Covid things have been really tight. I'm not even sure what I'm going to do about food this week. With my kids being home, more food is used which leads me to run out rather quickly. I received P-EBT, but it isn't enough.

-Taylor

CARE! Don't just talk about it, be about it. If you really care about us as citizens, don't evict people and their children, help with utilities, just be there for us! We're not animals, we're human beings and we didn't ask for this to happen to us. Now that we need help, you all aren't doing your part. -Sara

WHAT I WANT POLICYMAKERS TO KNOW...

I need to find help with my electric and water. I need help bad. Husband lost his job due to Covid-19 and has not found another yet due to his age and health. If I ever get caught up, I will be okay with the bills. -

Marsha

To give enough money to hold everybody until they can go back to their job. -Lynette

We need that second stimulus check. Families like mine are struggling very bad. Without it we will not make it. Please, please get us the second stimulus check quickly and any other help possible.

-Audrey