



Jan 21, 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On January 21, 2020, the United States reported its first case of Covid-19. In the year that has passed, misinformation has swirled about mask-wearing, cures, vaccines, and even whether or not the pandemic itself is a hoax. But with some 400,000 dead, today 1 in 3 Americans know someone who died from the virus¹ and the impact of this slow-moving disaster is everywhere:

- The nation has lost 8.5 million jobs and unemployment claims are 3 times higher than at the peak of the Great Recession.
- Only 57% of adults are employed—a level lower than at the depth of the Great Recession. The Covid recession has been particularly hard on women who lost 156,000 jobs in December.
- Small businesses have suffered, with nearly 1 out of 3 now closed.
- 29 states are projecting tax revenue decreases of 10% or more for fiscal year 2021, which will impact education, healthcare, disaster response, and more.
- The constitutionally-mandated census has been thrown into disarray—leaving many southern and rural states at risk of being undercounted.
- Teachers and students have been forced into unknown territory, and an estimated 3 million K-12 students are unable to continue learning amidst upended school situations.
- The continued imbalance of Internet access, combined with the shift to digital solutions in response to the pandemic prevents many from accessing school, work, doctors, and knowledge about the virus. 1 in 6 Black households and nearly 1 in 4 American Indian/Alaska Native households lack internet access.

- Health insurance is disproportionately lacking for Hispanic/Latinx and American Indian/Alaska Native adults, with 1 in 4 lacking coverage even before the pandemic.
- For every 2 Covid deaths, 1 additional death has occurred in the U.S. compared to the average across the previous three years.
- American Indian/Alaska Natives, Black, and Hispanic individuals were 1.5-2 times more likely to be hospitalized due to Covid in December. This gap was smaller than in May because Covid hospitalizations for whites surged to nearly triple their May rate.
- The majority of adults in 7 states anticipate they will be evicted or foreclosed upon in the next two months.
- Anxiety levels, now quadruple what they were before Covid, are even more severe for low-income families that are struggling with compounding crises.
- Magnifying the misery of the pandemic, 2020 brought an unprecedented 22 billion-dollar weather and climate disasters to the U.S., including 7 hurricanes, a derecho scouring the Midwest with hurricane-force winds, and record-breaking wildfires across the West.
- This pandemic year has also seen a surge in civic engagement. Record-breaking numbers of people voted in the 2020 election—nearly 160 million up from 139 million in 2016. And more than 20,000 protests have taken place across the country, 96% of them peaceful.

The incoming Biden-Harris administration and other newly elected leaders around the country will inherit the largest economic, health and governmental crisis in nearly a century. History has shown that crises accelerate pre-existing trends and permanently change societies and civic life. With the promise of widespread vaccinations in sight, the next months and years will be defined by the recovery – and an equitable recovery requires data.

As we head into the second year of the Covid crisis, Pandemic to Prosperity will continue to track changes to these and other indicators to measure progress as the nation endeavors to simultaneously manage the resulting health and economic crises, navigate entrenched racial inequities and the now-tangible impacts of climate change, and ultimately build the foundation for a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Pandemic

Lives and Livelihoods

To begin to recover from any disaster, an assessment of damages is a necessary first step. In the case of Covid, the damage is not related to a single event. Instead, pandemic-related damages will continue to unfold until effective vaccines are universally distributed. As such, tracking Covid-related damage will require monitoring more than one metric over multiple months.

This section tracks a select number of highly-vetted indicators to examine the extent of Covid-related damage to lives and livelihoods. It examines how people's lives are faring, and how this impact differs across different sections of society. It also looks at damage to livelihoods state by state.

Much of the current discussion about the pandemic is limited to indicators focusing on the health and economic impacts. In later sections of this report, these indicators serve as a backdrop for a unique analysis of the complex interactions between the pandemic and our nation's civic health.

As more data becomes available, additional metrics will be added to this section to better assess how states and the federal government are protecting lives and livelihoods.

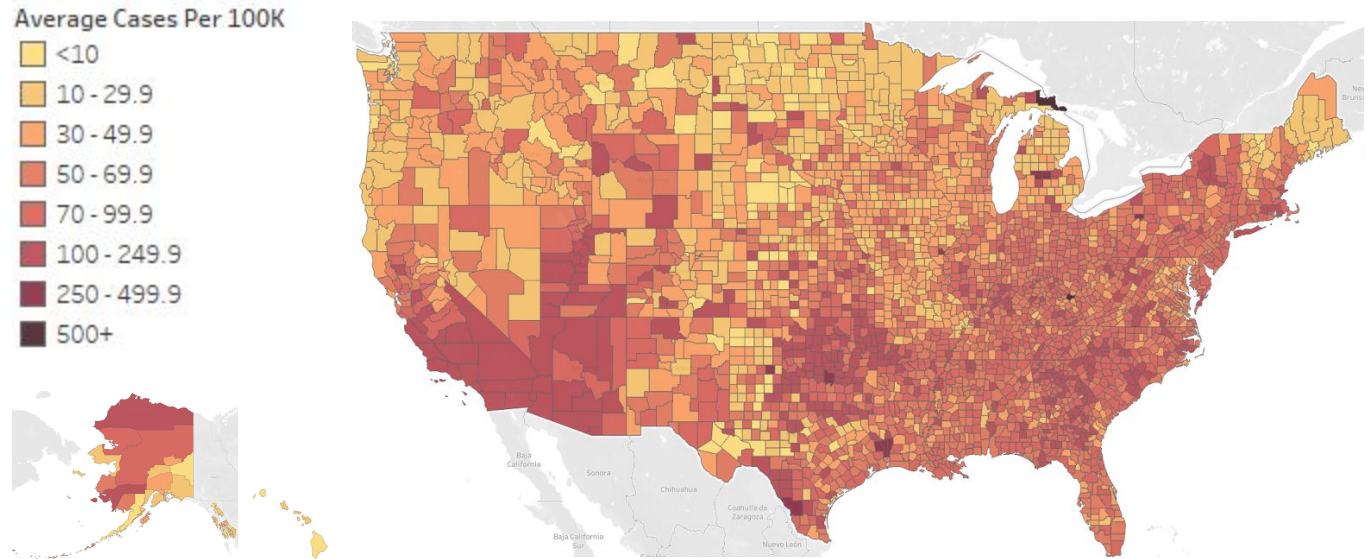
Indicators in this section

- New daily Covid cases in the past week
- Covid-associated hospitalization rates by race/ethnicity
- Excess deaths during the pandemic
- Total jobs lost
- Small business closures
- Unemployment claims
- Damages from weather and climate events

Most counties in the nation are Covid hotspots, with the Northwest, the Northern Plains, and Maine faring relatively better.

Average daily cases per 100,000 population in past week, by county

Analysis of state and local health agencies and hospitals data as of January 15, 2021



Source: [The New York Times](#)

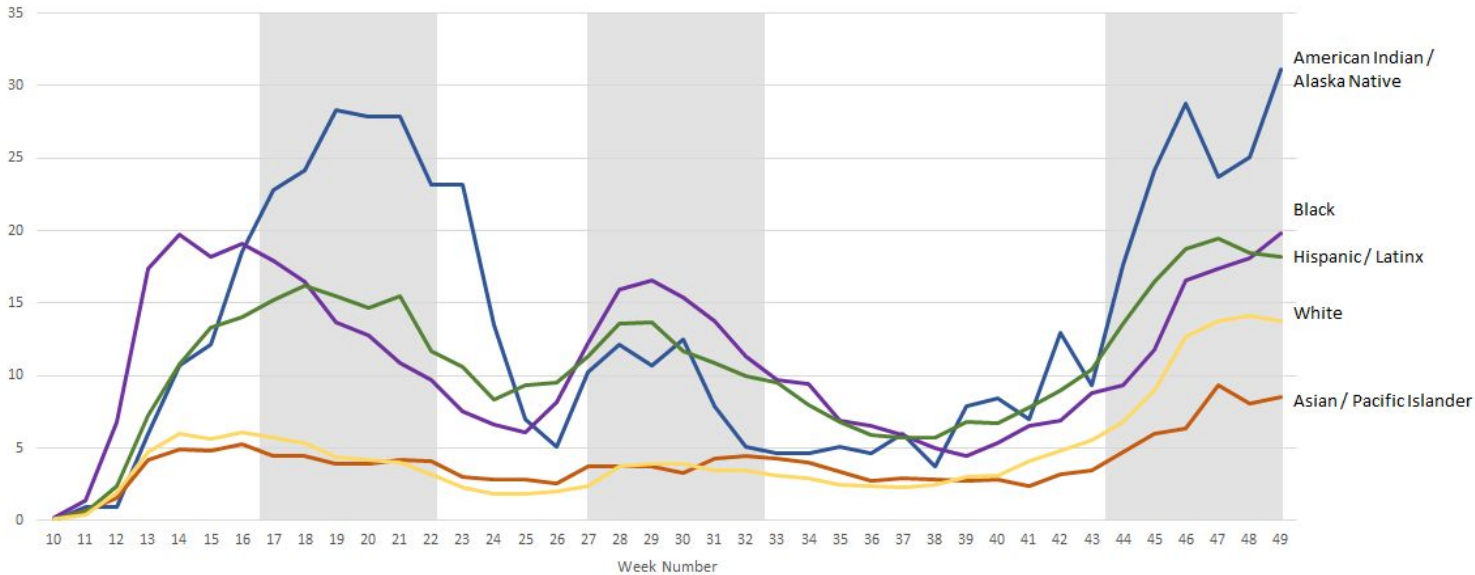
The nation is now deep into the third wave of infection. Even as vaccines roll out to frontline workers, residents in nursing homes, and people above certain age thresholds, the situation remains dire in most communities.

Many areas of extraordinarily high rates of infection indicate imminent threats to health system capacity, given anticipated hospitalizations. The more transmissible genetic variant of the virus has been detected in an increasing number of states and CDC experts expect it will become the most dominant variant by March, meaning that public health measures that barely kept the virus at bay may no longer be sufficient.^{1,2} For example, some scientists are now recommending that people use hospital-grade masks, rather than cloth, when indoors and to limit time indoors doing activities such as grocery shopping that were previously considered relatively safe when wearing a mask.^{3,4}

Local news reports in the summer and fall often included officials attributing spikes in new cases to flare ups in nursing homes or correctional facilities, or superspreader events such as weddings or socializing at bars.^{5,6,7} Now, the spread is so uncontrolled that leaders generally can't point to any single source, and attribute cases to activities like people interacting more indoors due to winter weather, holiday travel and gatherings, as well as pandemic fatigue.⁸

As of the first week of December, American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, and Hispanic individuals are 1.5 - 2 times more likely to have severe Covid impacts than white people.

Covid-associated hospitalization rates, March 2 - December 6, 2020
By race and ethnicity



Source: [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)

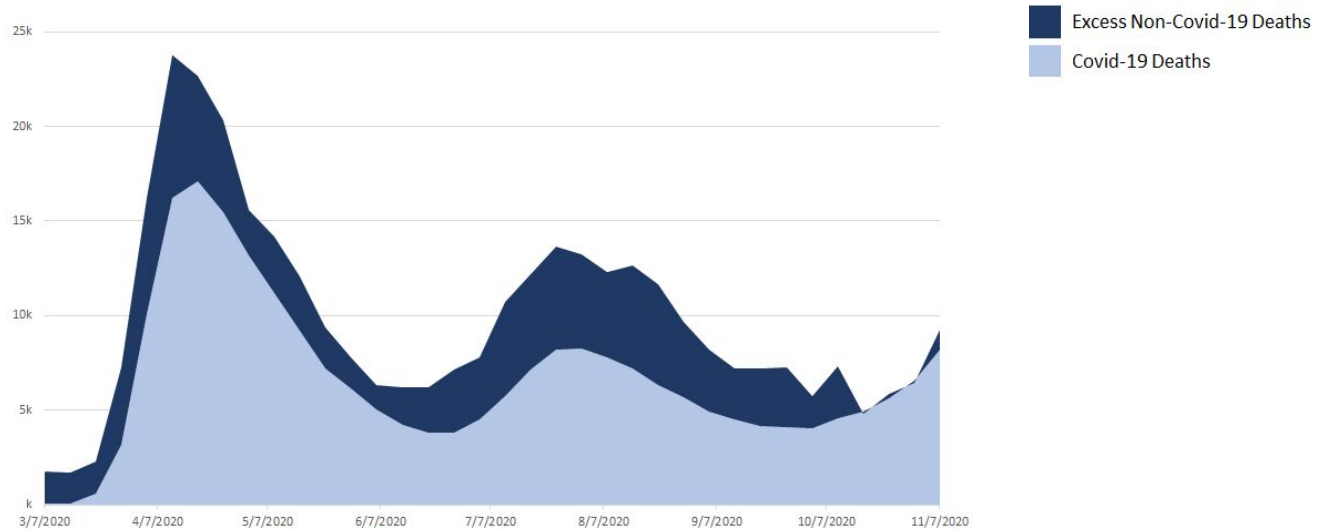
As shocking as nationwide case rates are, hospitalizations are even more alarming—revealing large disparities between racial groups. Available data on hospitalizations, as of December 6, 2020, reveals that American Indian, Black, and Hispanic/Latinx individuals are around 1.5 to 2 times more likely to have severe Covid impacts than white people. This is down from the disparity during the first wave of the pandemic when American Indians were being hospitalized at 6 to 10 times the rate of whites. However, it’s not because outcomes for people of color are getting better, it’s because more white people are now requiring hospitalization. This graph also elucidates the truism that crises exacerbate disparities—the gap between racial outcomes increases during the peak pandemic waves, and then the lines coalesce during breaks.

Racial disparities in health outcomes have existed long before Covid, and only partially explain the divide in this pandemic. Emerging research points to occupational exposure as a key driver of higher infection rates.¹ Populations of color most impacted by Covid are over-represented in front-line work such as agriculture, food processing, transportation, janitorial work, and caregiving, and thus are not granted the privilege of working from home.^{2,3} Plus the cumulative health impacts of living in unsafe neighborhoods, breathing polluted air, having less access to healthy foods or quality medical care, and a lifetime of experiencing racial discrimination contribute to higher rates of comorbidities such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity that are associated with greater morbidity and mortality in Covid cases.^{4,5,6,7,8,9}

For every 2 known Covid deaths, 1 additional person has died above the level of expected deaths, based on historic norms.

Excess deaths, Covid and non-Covid related

Above expected levels from average through November 7, 2020



Source: [CDC](#)

Soon after the pandemic began, emergency room staff noticed that their normal flow of patients with chest pain, appendicitis, bowel obstruction, and strokes had slowed to a trickle. Other healthcare providers noticed patients canceling care for cancer treatment, orthopedic issues, and chronic disease.^{1,2,3} Nearly 1 in 3 families have missed a well-child visit since the pandemic began.⁴ At the same time, many patients seeking care have found their doctors' offices shuttered or shifting to telehealth.^{5,6}

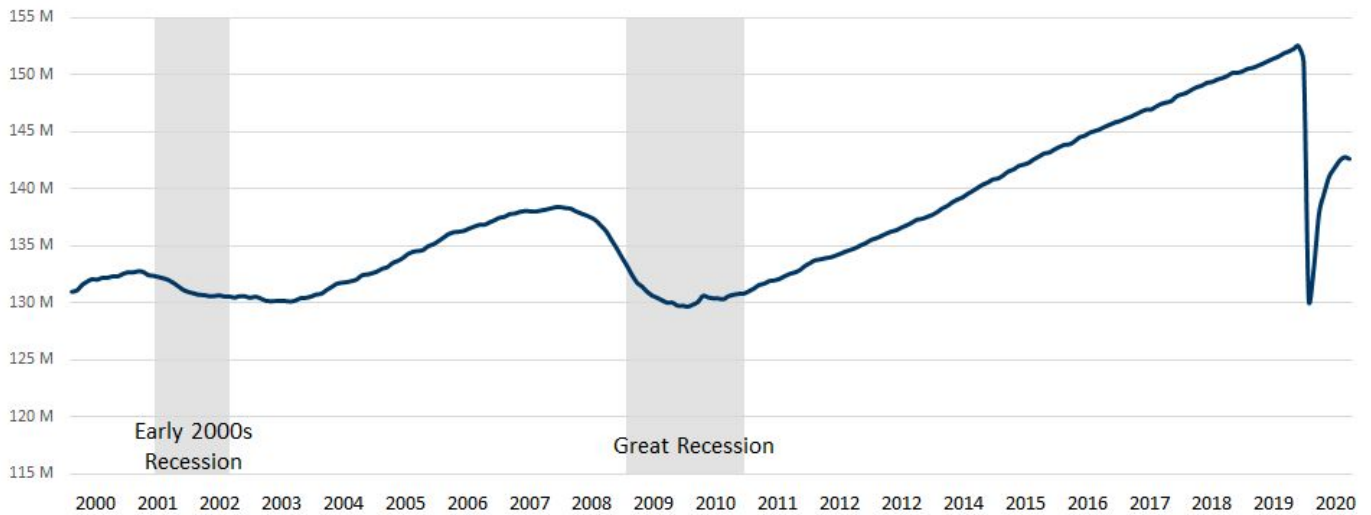
It is not surprising in this context that for every 2 known Covid deaths, 1 additional person has died beyond the number expected.⁷ Such "excess deaths" reflect a variety of challenges. Some of these excess non-Covid deaths could have been misclassified and were actually Covid cases, some may have been patients reluctant to seek care in a pandemic, others may have fallen victim to cracks in the healthcare system, and many could not afford to seek care without health insurance. A research letter this fall to the *Journal of the American Medical Association* noted that the U.S. ranks among the highest nations experiencing excess deaths, and attributes this in part to "weak public health infrastructure and a decentralized, inconsistent U.S. response to the pandemic."⁸

The weak public health infrastructure also applies to data reporting. This chart only goes through November 7 because the lag in states reporting deaths makes any more recent data potentially misleading.⁹ As a result, this analysis does not include the third wave happening this winter. However, one can surmise that with the sharp increases in case rates and ICU utilization since this date, the strain on community healthcare infrastructure has only grown worse.

The impact of Covid on mortality has especially hit Black and Hispanic/Latinx populations. A recent study published by the National Academy of Sciences projects that for 2020, Covid will reduce average life expectancy in the United States by 1.13 years, with Black and Latinx populations estimated to lose 3 to 4 times the life expectancy as the white population. The authors warn that this troubling trend may continue due to the virus itself, and "long-term health, social, and economic impacts of the pandemic."¹⁰

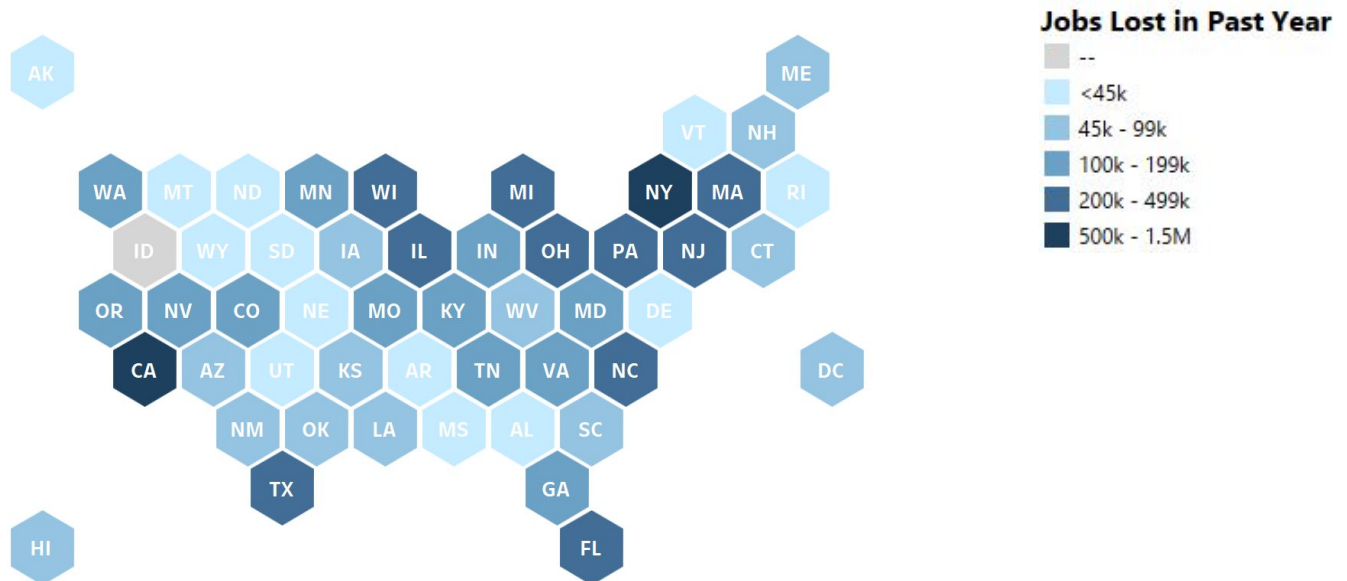
The U.S. lost 140,000 jobs in December—the first decline since April. Overall the economy has 8.5 million fewer jobs than in March when shutdown began.

Total jobs by month, U.S. Seasonally adjusted



Source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) Note: Data for Nov 2020 and Dec 2020 are preliminary

Loss of jobs by state, November 2020 compared to November 2019 Seasonally adjusted

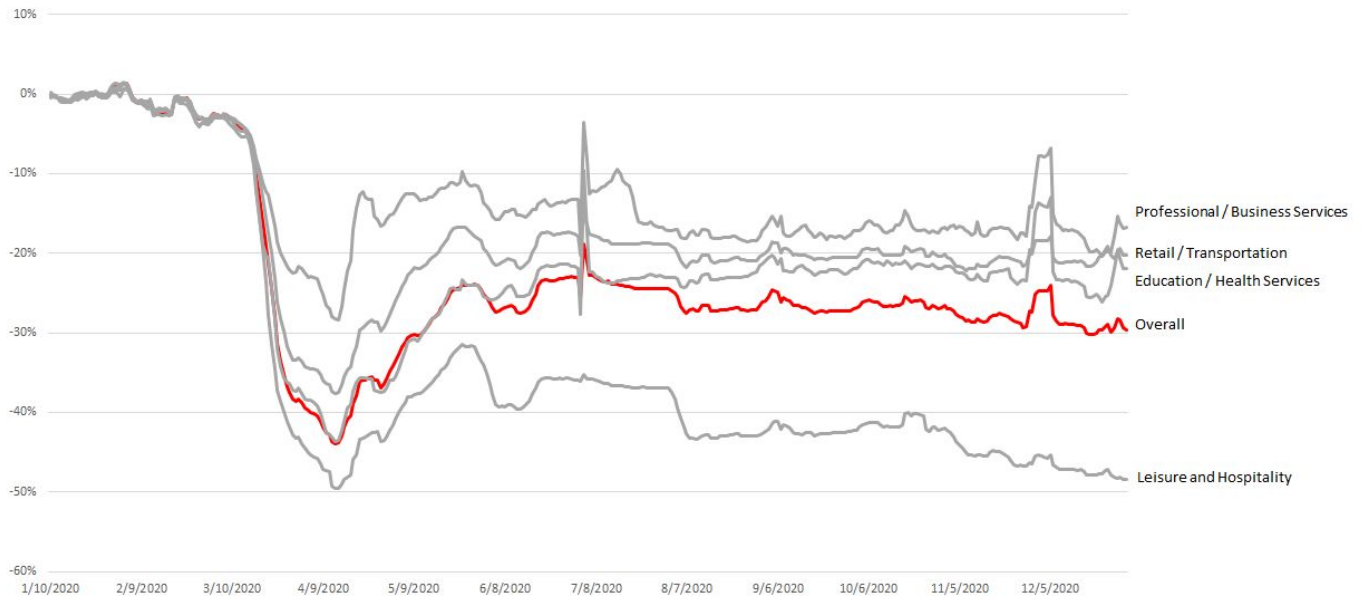


Source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) Note: Data for Nov 2020 are preliminary.

In December, when jobs typically increase due to holiday spending, the nation lost a net 140,000 jobs for the first time since spring. Women accounted for 156,000 of those experiencing job losses, while men gained jobs. Although retail jobs grew by 120,000 jobs in December and other sectors also experienced growth, the extremely hard-hit leisure and hospitality sector lost nearly a half million jobs in just one month. As a result, the U.S. is down 8.5 million jobs in December compared to March 2020. The economy is down 9.4 million jobs compared to the previous December. All total, 12 states have lost more than 200,000 jobs as compared to one year earlier.

Nearly 1 in 3 small businesses in the U.S. that were open in January 2020 are now closed. Businesses serving higher-income neighborhoods have been particularly hard hit by a large drop in demand.

Percent change in number of small businesses open, December 30, 2020
7-day moving average, indexed to Jan 4-31, 2020, and seasonally adjusted



Source: [Opportunity Insights](#) Note: "Open" is defined as having financial transaction activity. Small businesses are defined by SBA thresholds for annual revenues, which vary by 6-digit NAICS codes.

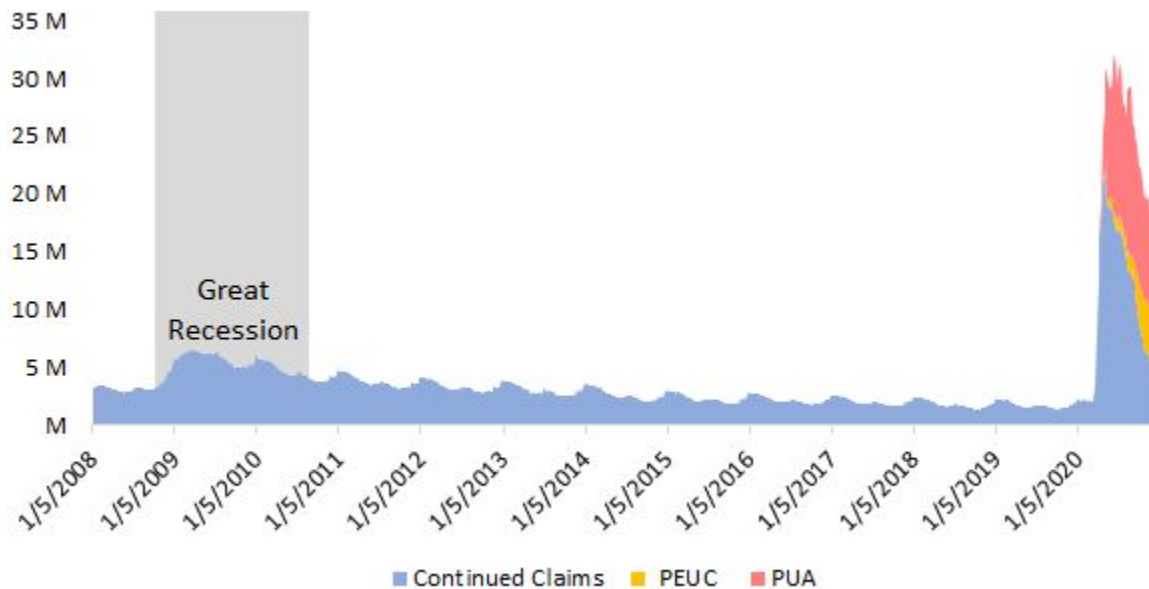
The Covid-triggered recession has taken a tremendous toll on small businesses. Initial public health measures that closed or restricted business activity resulted in fully 44% of small businesses that were open in January closed by April. By summer, as more states began to ease restrictions, many businesses reopened but 23% of small businesses remained closed. However, despite restrictions being lifted, depressed demand due to concerns about the virus itself caused the closure of a sizable number of small businesses through the summer and into October. By October 31st, 27% of small businesses were closed. Then the next Covid wave struck, bringing various restrictions on business operations and growing fears of the virus causing nearly 30% of small businesses to be closed by December 30th. An analysis by Opportunity Insights found that demand has decreased most dramatically in higher-income neighborhoods, and small businesses serving these neighborhoods have suffered the largest decreases in revenue.¹

Small businesses in leisure and hospitality have been hit particularly hard, with 48% of these businesses closed as of December 30th. But even 17% of small businesses in professional and business services are closed, as are 20% of small businesses in trade and transportation, and 22% of small businesses in education and health sectors.

As of December 19th, more than 18 million Americans were receiving unemployment, nearly 3 times higher than the peak of the Great Recession.

Continuing unemployment claims (regular program) Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), and Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC)

Through Dec 19, 2020



Source: [Department of Labor](#), [Economic Policy Institute](#) Note: Reflects non-seasonally adjusted numbers, due to change in counting methods. PUA and Continued Claims should not overlap but in some instances may due to counting errors.

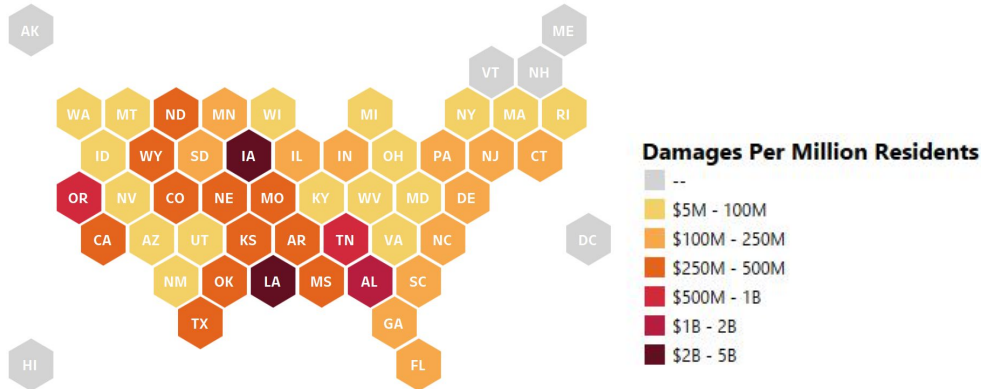
There were almost 5 times more unemployment claims during the peak of the Covid pandemic compared to the peak of the Great Recession. While workers receiving unemployment have declined from a high of 32 million in June to roughly 18 million by mid-December, a large part of the December decrease may be due the limited number of weeks for which recipients could claim benefits. Most states provide a maximum of 26 weeks of benefits, after which the unemployed could receive Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) for an additional 11 weeks. For many, these weeks likely ended in the fall months, as indicated by the steep decline in continuing state plus PEUC employment claims September through December 2020. Another program, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), provided benefits for 39 weeks to some workers who were not eligible for the regular assistance, such as freelancers, gig workers, and contractors. For many of these folks, benefits may have ended in December as well.

On December 28th, the President signed another Covid relief bill that extends the unemployment eligibility period for 11 weeks until March 14th and provides an additional \$100 in weekly unemployment for PUA recipients and \$300 for other workers. For many of the unemployed, there may have been a gap in eligibility. Once they recertify, unemployment claims are likely to increase again.¹ Unemployment benefits are critical for stimulating the economy. Research from Opportunity Insights concludes that while the effects of direct payments and the Paycheck Protection Program on consumer spending has been minimal, social safety net programs like unemployment benefits have the potential to spur demand and support jobs.²

In 2020, Louisiana had five major hurricane strikes and Iowa was hit by a derecho causing each over \$2 billion in damages per million residents.

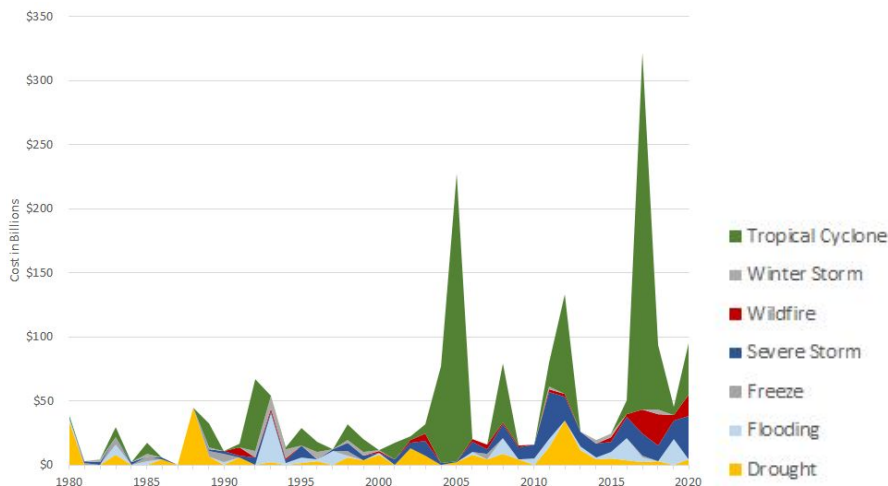
U.S. billion-dollar weather and climate disasters, 2020

Cost per million residents



U.S. billion-dollar weather and climate disasters

Cost by disaster-type



Source: NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) [U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters](#) (2021).

Note: These billion-dollar events account for >80% of the damage from all recorded U.S. weather and climate events.

The shock of the Covid pandemic in the U.S. was compounded for many communities and families by a record number of disasters in 2020. The U.S. had 22 billion-dollar weather and climate disasters in 2020, eclipsing the previous annual record of 16 in 2017. The 2020 billion-dollar events included an unprecedented 7 hurricanes among a record-breaking number of named storms (12) that made landfall in the U.S. Many central states were struck by a derecho – a line of severe thunderstorms with winds exceeding 100 miles per hour causing hurricane-like impacts. 2020 also had record-breaking wildfires which burned more than 10 million acres across the West. Despite these records, Hurricanes Katrina (2005) and Harvey (2017) caused even greater damage. Disasters are not just damaging. They are deadly. Since 1980, hurricanes have caused the most deaths followed by heatwave/droughts.¹

Prosperity

The previous section examined how the pandemic has affected the lives and livelihoods of people across the country. The next section moves on from the “damage assessment” to track measures that will be important as we move to recovery from the Covid crisis.

This Prosperity section examines measures of high-functioning governments and civic institutions that are essential for community well-being and prosperity. Importantly, this section ends with metrics that assess how people are doing during the pandemic across geography, race, and gender.

Government

Governments – local, state, and federal – are being asked to do a lot during the Covid crisis. We start with metrics that assess how states are performing relative to common metrics for Covid risk levels, the projected tax revenues states will need for their myriad public functions, challenges the pandemic presents for generating fair and accurate 2020 Census data, and the number of ballots cast and protests happening state by state. For each indicator, we provide a brief, evidence-based set of findings and implications to help readers quickly grasp a top-level overview of how each state is doing.

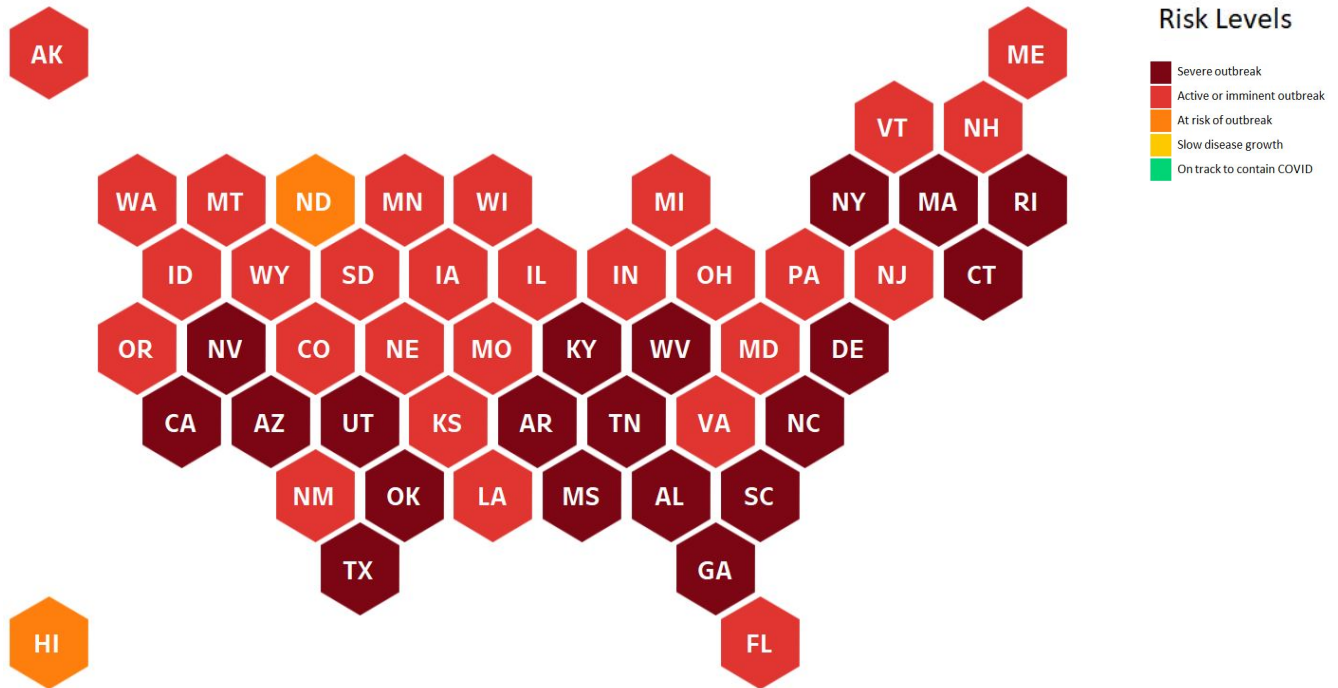
Indicators in this section

- Covid risk levels
- FY 2020, 2021 preliminary estimates of decline in tax revenues
- 2020 Census self-response rates by state
- Variability of census self-response rates within states
- Total ballots counted by state in presidential elections (2004-2020)
- Civil unrest per capita

Most states are facing severe or imminent risk of Covid outbreaks. No states are currently at low risk.

Covid risk levels as of January 15, 2021

Based on daily new cases, infection growth $R(t)$, and positive test rate



Source: [Covid Act Now](#)

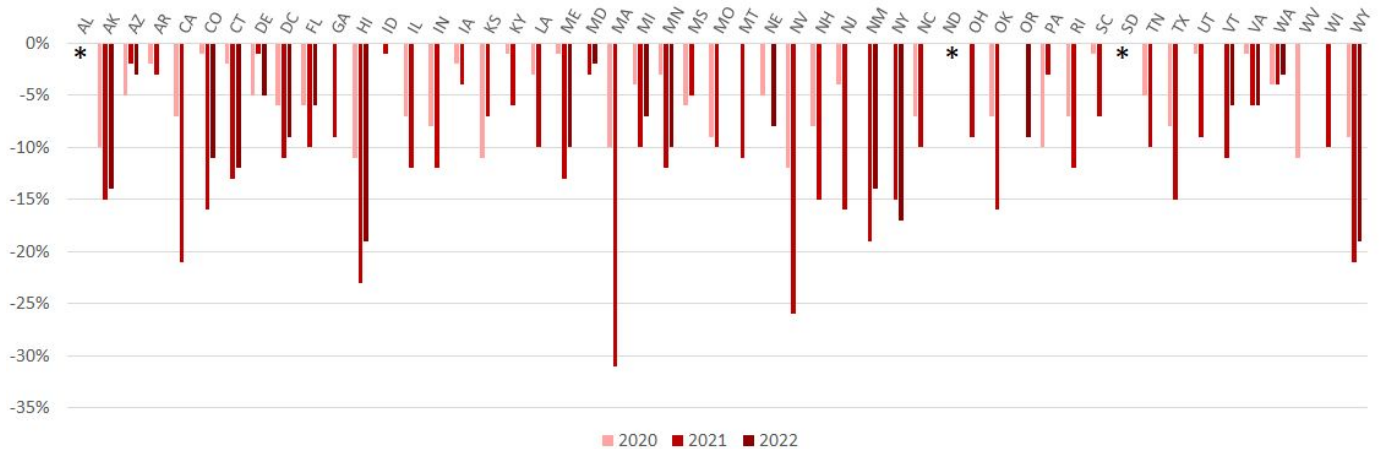
Public policy and community behaviors should be informed by community risk levels, which are more than just case rates. **Covid Act Now** uses three metrics in their risk score – in addition to daily new cases adjusted for population, they include a metric of how many people one infected person passes the virus on to.¹ More transmissible variants of the virus would, for example, increase this number and thus increase the overall risk.

Lastly, this risk score includes a positivity rate, which is what percentage of tests for the virus come back positive. If more than 10% of the tests are positive, that means a community is not testing enough, and for every positive test, there are many others who go undetected. This indicator is widely used in gating criteria that set thresholds for phased re-opening of schools and businesses, but one should be cautious about reading too much into these numbers because the U.S. does not have systemic Covid surveillance and testing varies across different settings. For example, many universities have regular or random Covid testing requirements for students, staff, and faculty. Presumably, their positivity rate would be lower than communities where people only get tested when they have symptoms or may have been exposed.^{2,3}

For leaders setting state or local policies, or engaging communities around safe reopening plans, composite metrics on outbreak risk levels can be useful, if rough, measures. The bottom line is that the entire nation is currently in the red zone. Of course, local conditions can vary within a state, but the virus does not respect municipal or institutional boundaries.

7 states are projecting tax revenue reductions of 10% or greater for fiscal year 2020, increasing to at least 29 states for FY 2021, and dropping to 9 for FY 2022.

FY 2020, 2021, and 2022 preliminary estimates of decline in tax revenues by state, as of January 8
Percent decline in tax revenues



Source: [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#)

Note: Some states do not have published projections for one or more years

*Alabama, North Dakota, and South Dakota do not have published tax revenue projections.

The economic crisis spurred by Covid hits states directly, especially in terms of reduced income and sales tax revenues. State tax collections have declined by 4.4% in fiscal year 2020 according to new Census data.¹ Hardest hit in fiscal year 2020 was Nevada, with a loss of 12%, followed by Kansas, Hawaii, and West Virginia, each with an 11% reduction. These losses were due in large part to unemployment, reduced production, and lagging tourism.^{2,3,4}

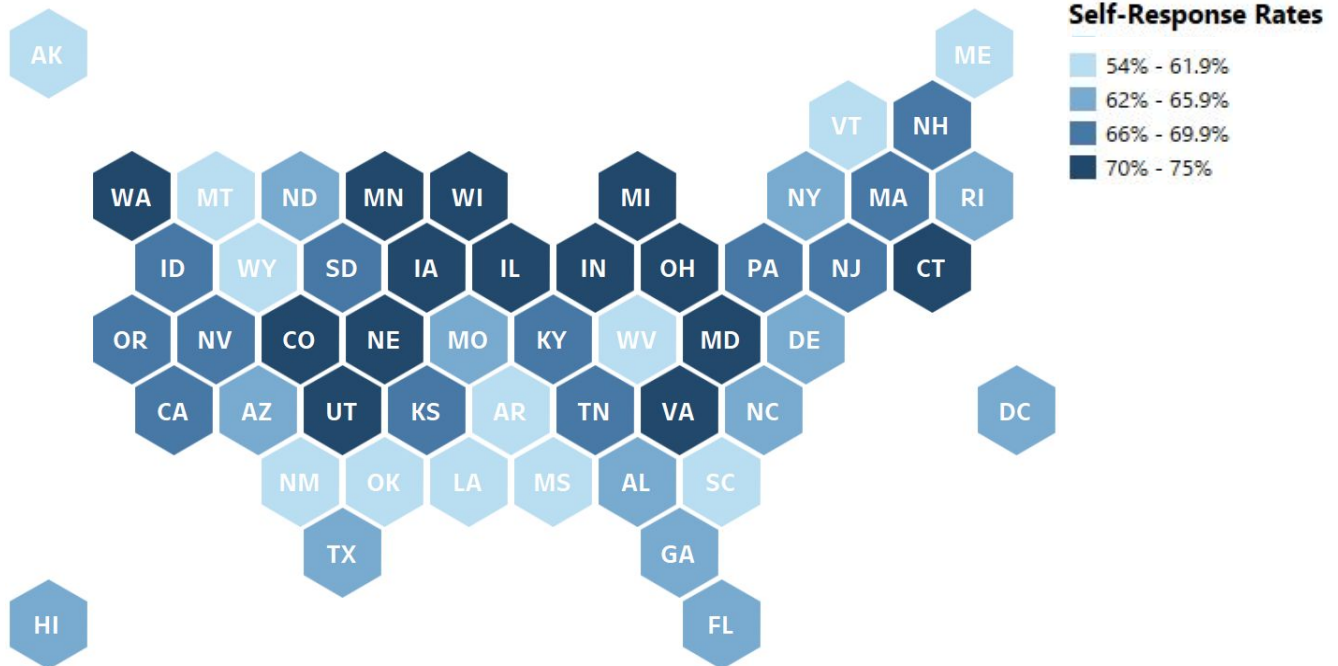
For fiscal year 2021, 29 states are projecting a tax revenue reduction of 10% or more. Loss of jobs in service industries and travel, specifically, will have a major impact on the tax revenues of states such as Massachusetts and Nevada, which are projecting losses of 31% and 26% respectively.^{5,2} Hawaii will also be affected by the loss of tourism, projecting a 23% loss in tax revenues.⁴ Energy-producing states such as Wyoming and New Mexico are projecting declines of 19-21% driven in large part by losses in oil & gas.^{6,7} Projections show that this reduction will continue for fiscal year 2022 for Hawaii and Wyoming, both with a reduction of 19%.^{4,6}

This revenue loss will negatively impact states' ability to fund the essential services they provide such as education, disaster preparedness and response, public spaces, and transportation.⁸ Additionally, states may have to reduce their own spending on contracts, which are a reliable source of revenue for local companies supporting the public sector.⁹ Also troubling is the impact these reductions could have on a state's ability to mount a robust public health response to Covid. For example, a recent NPR survey found that despite adding 20,000 new tracers since October, only 2 states – Hawaii and Montana – are appropriately staffed for contact tracing.¹⁰

Southern and more rural states had lower self-response rates for the 2020 Census, and therefore may be more vulnerable to data quality issues.

2020 Census self-response rates

By state



Source: [U.S. Census Bureau](https://www.census.gov)

The timing of this pandemic was unfortunate for the constitutionally-mandated census of all persons every ten years. The census asks about all persons living in each household in the U.S. on April 1, 2020 – a date that fell just as Covid consumed the nation’s news cycles. This census was already expected to be a difficult one, with record-high levels of distrust in government and digital divide issues.¹

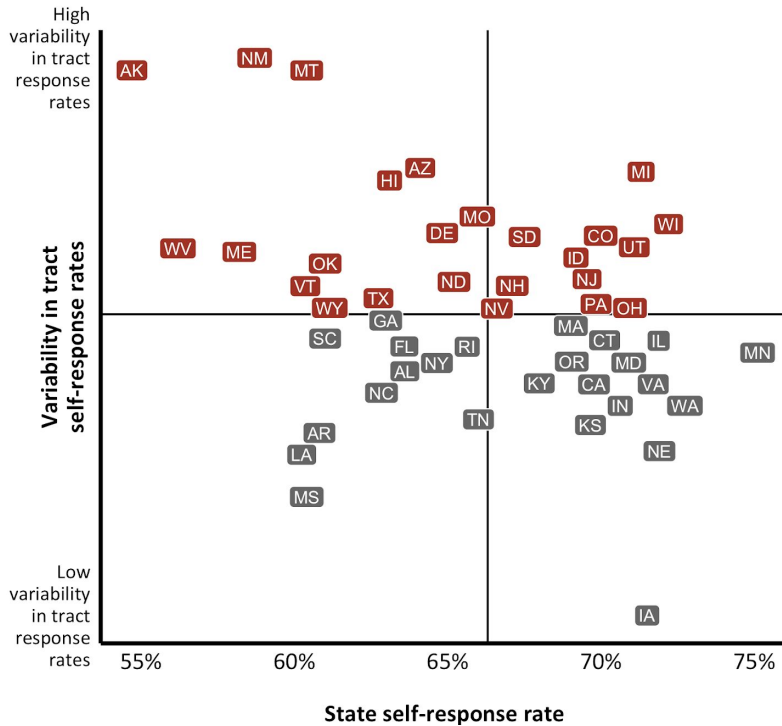
This map shows what percentage of households responded on their own to the census by phone, internet, or paper. The American Statistical Association 2020 Census Quality Indicators Task Force report notes that it “is widely recognized that self-response from the household provides the most accurate data and low self-response is a predictor that an area will be hard-to-enumerate.”²

20 percentage-points separate the state with the highest self-response rate (MN at 75.1%) and lowest (AK at 54.7%). Compounding this challenge, after the self-response phase, the census experienced extreme headwinds in the follow-up door-knocking due to the pandemic, wildfires, hurricanes, and intense politicization of what should be a non-political process. As a result, the normal processes of knocking on doors and spending time to carefully process and quality check the data have been less than ideal.^{3,4}

Because census numbers are used to divide up congressional seats and state legislatures, electoral college votes, and federal funding by state, every state needs a complete and accurate count in order for those divisions to be fair. Lower self-response rates, coupled with the subsequent challenges to a complete count, may impact the fair apportionment of political power and money among states to a degree yet to be measured. States and jurisdictions can support granting the Census Bureau more time to complete its work, and to make more robust the process for including additional local data.

Alaska, New Mexico, Montana, Arizona and Michigan had the highest in-state variability in census self-response – with risks for fair representation and distribution of services and resources.

State self-response rates by variability across census tracts within the state
 Quadrants based on median level



Source: [U.S. Census Bureau](https://www.census.gov)

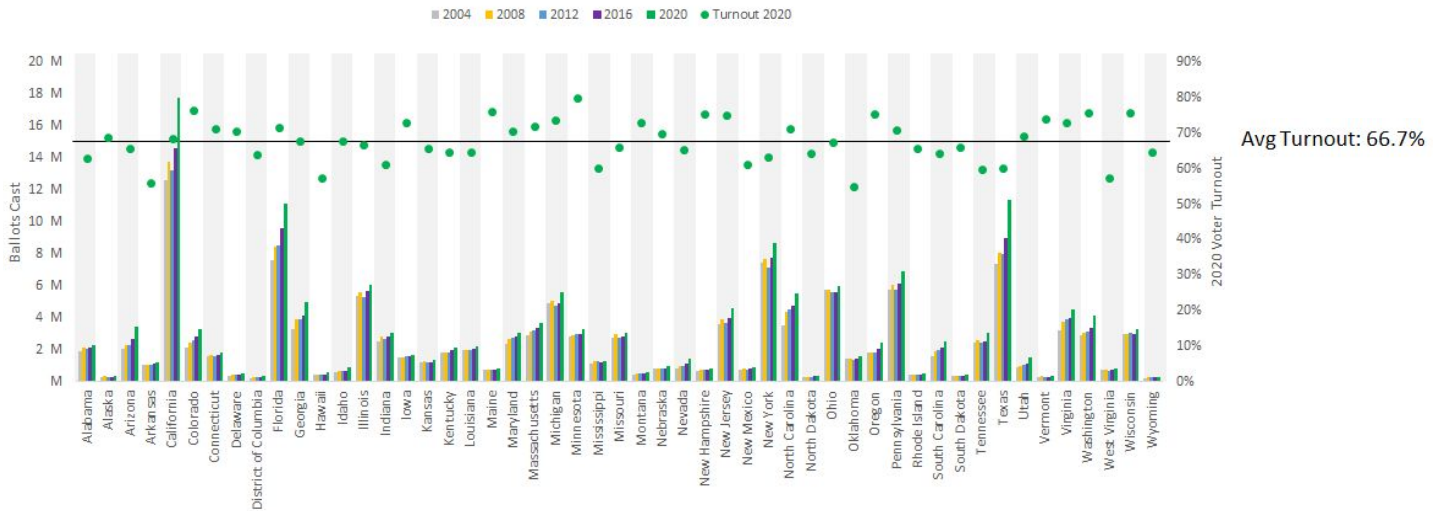
States with low self-response rates shown in the previous indicator (and the left side of this one) risk losing political representation and federal funds to other states if door-knocking and the processing that follows are not able to fill in the gaps to achieve high quality data. But an uneven response rate *within* a state – even one with high overall self-response, such as Michigan – means political and funding equity may be at risk there. Michigan has many census tracts (areas about the size of a neighborhood) with high self-response (e.g., 94.7% in the affluent, mostly white suburban area of Jenison, MI) and some very low (such as a low-income, majority African American tract with a 20.2% rate on Detroit’s East Side). Similarly, New Mexico had low overall self-response, but still had tracts with very high rates such as 89.9% in Whiterock, a bedroom community of Los Alamos. Meanwhile, a tract in the Alamo Navajo Indian Reservation had the state’s lowest rate of 9.3%.

Greater variability in self-response (states in red) indicates greater risk to fairness in voting representation, distribution of resources, and planning for disaster response, schools, and other services. Moreover, research shows such variability is not randomly distributed. In previous censuses, indigenous people, people of color, and renters were undercounted, and white people and property owners overcounted.¹ When using 2020 census data for policy, programming, or resource allocation, decision makers in states with high variability of response rates should be aware of the possible limitations of neighborhood-level data in their communities, so that areas not well counted by the census are not left behind.

Nearly 160 million people cast votes in the November 2020 election, up from 139 million in the 2016 election. The greatest increases were in Texas, Florida, and California – the three most populous states in the nation.

Total ballots counted by state
Presidential elections 2004-2020

Voter Turnout by state
2020 presidential election



Source: [United States Election Project, Statista](#)

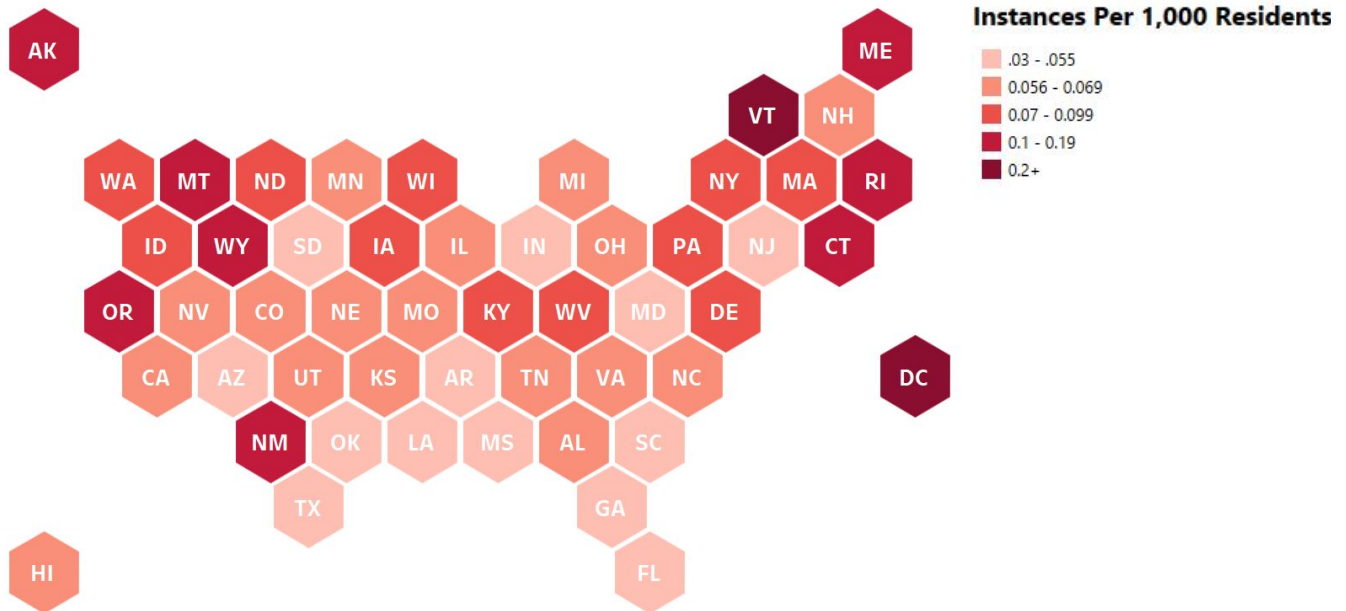
The number of ballots cast in the 2020 presidential election greatly surpassed the 2016 presidential election, as voters across the political spectrum expressed strong feelings about the importance of this election.¹ Voters in California, Texas, and Florida increased by more than 1 million. And 10 other states experienced an increase of more than 500,000 ballots cast. All 13 of these states ranked among the nation’s 15 most populous states according to the Census Bureau’s most recent estimates.²

Voter turnout overall was estimated at only 66.7% of all eligible voters, with Minnesota experiencing the greatest voter turnout at 80% and Oklahoma experiencing the lowest voter turnout at 55%. The states with the greatest increase in voters did not have the highest voter turnout rates, with Florida at 71.7%, California at 68.5%, and Texas at 60.4%. Georgia, which received substantial media attention for its unexpected surge in Democratic voters, had only average voter turnout at 67.7%.³ With substantial continued efforts to engage voters, each of these states could conceivably experience increasing voter participation in the future.

Since April, protests have taken place across all 50 states. Protests per capita have been highest in Washington DC and Vermont.

Civil unrest instances per 1,000 residents

April 1, 2020 - January 8, 2021



Source: [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data \(ACLED\) Project and Bridging Divides Initiative](#)

Over 20,000 protests have taken place in the U.S. since April 1 – occurring across every state. Washington, D.C. has seen the largest per capita prevalence of demonstrations followed by Vermont, Oregon, Maine, Wyoming, Alaska, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Montana. From April 2020 to January 2021, protests in the U.S. shifted significantly from demonstrations against racial injustices, as highlighted by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, to Covid-related concerns of labor leaders, health workers, teachers, and students, and most recently to Stop the Steal protests against the results of the 2020 election.¹ BLM-linked protests were more than twice as likely to be broken up by law enforcement than right-wing protests. And more often than not (51% of the time) authorities used force such as tear gas or rubber bullets at BLM-linked demonstrations. When law enforcement intervened to break up right-wing demonstrations, force was used only $\frac{1}{3}$ of the time.² Armed individuals were more likely to have been present at Stop the Steal demonstrations. While violent protests command the most media attention, 96% of all protests since April 1 have been peaceful. In the days following the Jan 6th attack on the Capitol, peaceful protests continue across many states and still outnumber violent protests.

The United States has a long history of protests as an important and effective form of civic activism.³ Research on Civil Rights era *peaceful* protests revealed that those demonstrations were effective in swaying public sympathy toward the protestors and yielded substantive policy reforms.^{4,5} In 2009, Tea Party demonstrations generated additional support for Republican candidates and yielded more conservative policy making.⁶ Studies on the effects of *violent* protests have generated mixed conclusions with 1960s violent protests yielding greater support for “social control”⁴ while the 1992 Los Angeles riots yielded a liberal shift in voting patterns.⁷

Prosperity Institutions

Beyond governments, American society has always depended on a wide array of civic institutions to provide critical information to constituents, hold governments accountable, and support families and workers to be healthy, educated, and productive. This section examines civic institutions—and whether they are fair, effective, and healthy.

This issue of *Pandemic to Prosperity* examines the ability of people to access information they need to make informed decisions during a pandemic. We examine local news and internet access to assess communities' ability to receive critical information and remain connected in a world that is dramatically more digital than just a few months ago. We also examine changes in college enrollment, K-12 attendance, and health insurance availability by race and ethnicity.

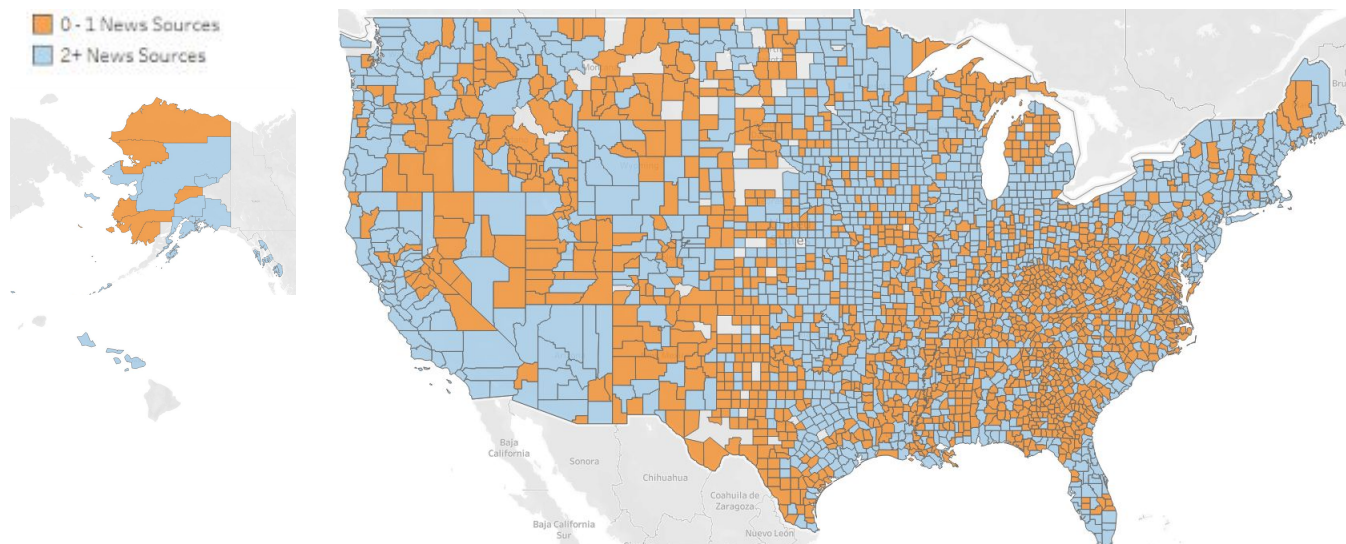
Indicators in this section

- Counties with no or only one newspaper with high Covid rates
- Internet access by race/ethnicity
- Estimates of missing K-12 students
- Undergraduate and graduate student enrollment change by race/ethnicity
- Health insurance coverage by race/ethnicity

More than half of counties experiencing high rates of new cases of Covid are in news deserts, meaning a critical vehicle for delivering trusted information during the pandemic is absent.

Counties with no or only one newspaper (“news deserts”) that also have high Covid rates

News deserts as of 2020, Covid cases as of January 15, 2021



Source: [UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media](#); [New York Times Covid-19 data](#); inspired by [Brookings research](#)

Note: Counties with ≥ 50 cases/100k people in the past week are classified as “high rate” of new cases for this analysis. Blank counties on the map have Covid rates below threshold.

Trusted local news sources are key to the success of public health campaigns, countering mis- and disinformation, holding local governments accountable, and getting word out about testing and vaccinations.¹

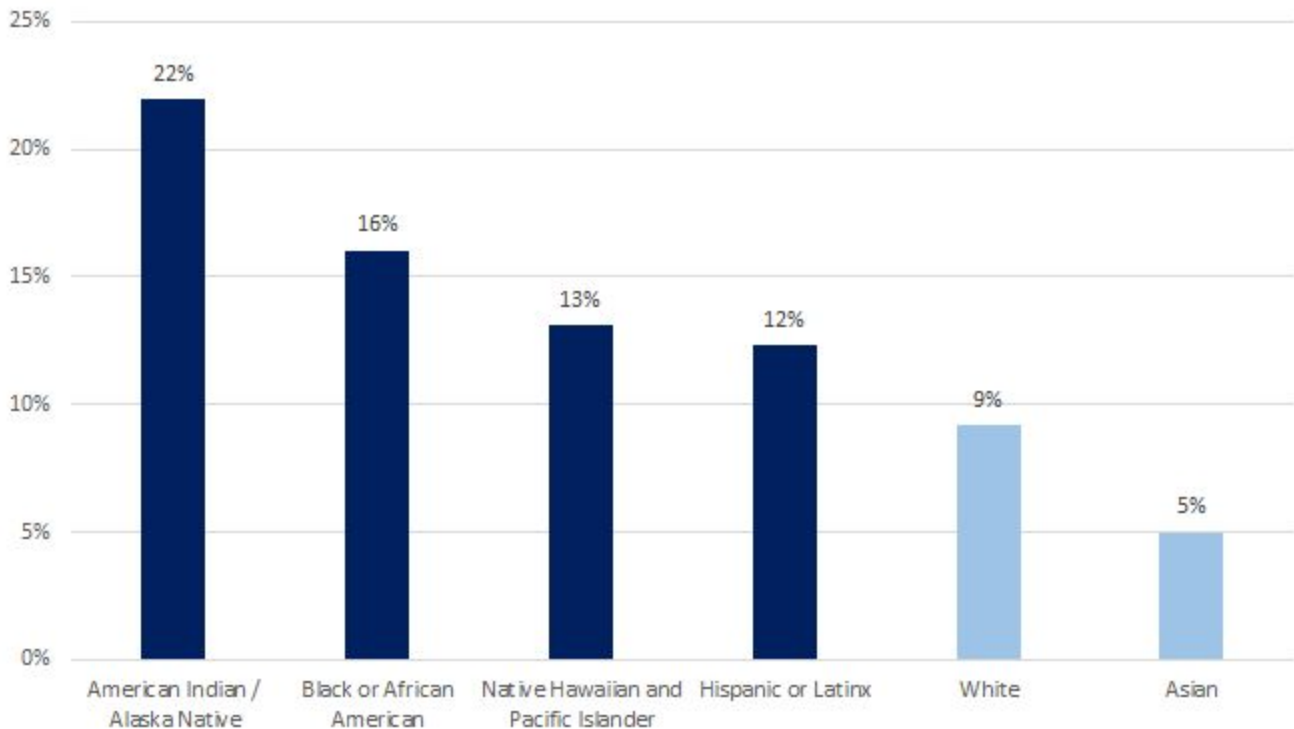
However, more than half of counties with high Covid rates are also in what experts describe as “local news deserts” that have either no newspaper or only one (often a weekly or a thinly staffed daily).² Local newspapers are especially critical as we enter the vaccination phase of the pandemic. For example, when vaccines opened up for residents ages 65 and older, the South Central Health District in middle Georgia was concerned about how they would get consent forms to eligible residents, as there was no budget for printing. Many health districts post their forms online so residents can print them at home or submit electronically. However, the owner of the local paper notes that, “Most of those in our area do not have access to the internet, much less a printer.”³ The Tri-County Connector published the consent form for the vaccine on the front page of their newspaper so residents could simply cut the form out of the paper, fill it out, and bring it to the vaccine site.

Even before the pandemic, local newspapers were being squeezed out by competition for advertising dollars from tech giants such as Google and Facebook, and being hollowed out in purchases by private equity funds.⁴ The news desert situation is getting worse with the pandemic, with Poynter research identifying 60 closures of local newsrooms due to the Covid crisis.⁵

Nearly 1 in 4 American Indian and Alaska Native individuals are without a computer or internet access at home, a gap more than twice as large as that of white and Asian households.

Internet access by race/ethnicity, 2019

Percent of individuals in households without a computer, or without broadband or dial-up internet access



Source: [United States Census Bureau](#)

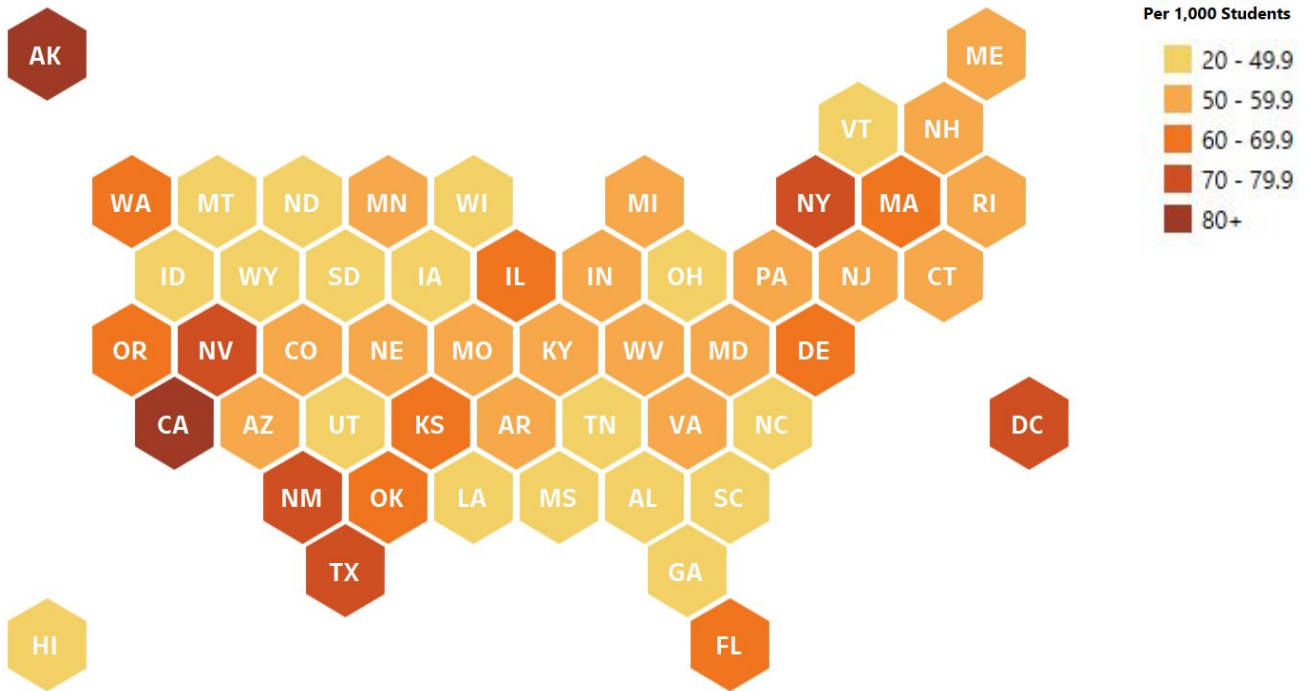
According to the Census Bureau, there is a 17 percentage point difference between the group with the greatest access to the internet and the group with the least access. Nearly 1 in 4 American Indian/Alaska Native individuals either do not have a computer or do not have access to the internet in their household, compared to only 9% of white and 5% of Asian individuals.

Lack of access to the internet has especially harmful consequences during the pandemic, as it limits safe access to telehealth, education, news, worship, and communication with the outside world. Troubling anecdotes are emerging of instances of internet-savvy individuals snatching up limited vaccine appointments, leaving none for those who need to schedule by phone.¹

Reliance on the internet for education has become paramount this year, and children without access are falling behind.² 1 in 5 parents with school-aged children at home are not confident that their children will be able to complete schoolwork given their lack of access to a computer or internet, and 43% of lower-income parents have reported their children having to finish homework via cell phones because of this lack of access.³

Students across the country are missing from school since the start of the pandemic.

Projected estimate of children in marginalized communities absent from school, since start of pandemic
Per 1,000 students



Source: [Bellwether Education Partners](#), [National Center for Education Statistics](#)

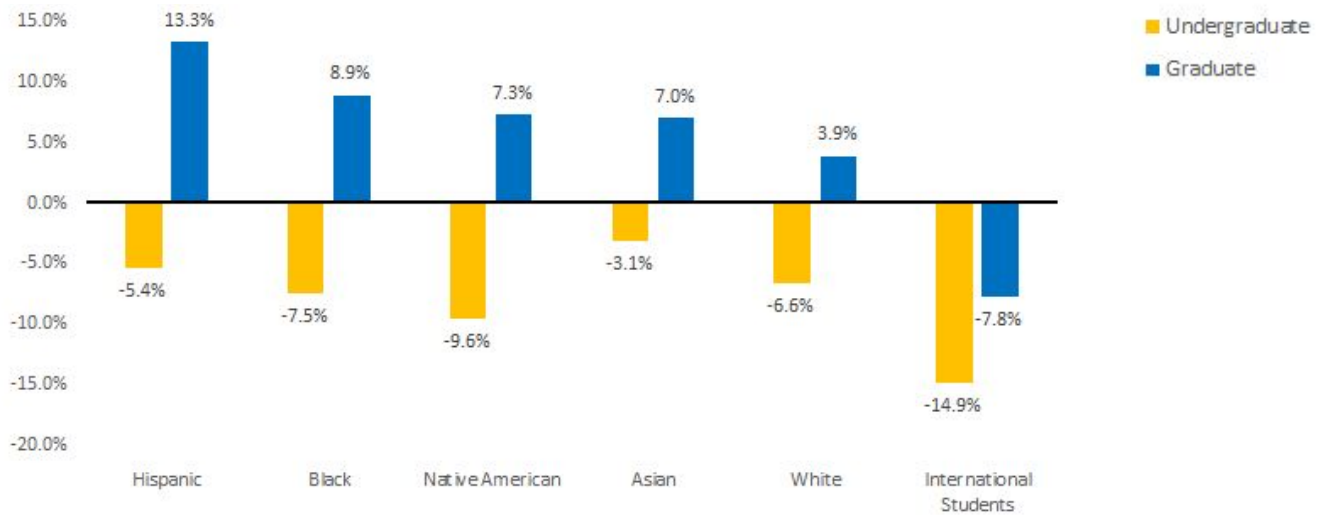
Lack of access to the internet and computers, students acting as caretakers or taking jobs, and decreased services for students with disabilities all contributed to an observable (but challenging to precisely quantify) drop in school attendance among K-12 students during the pandemic. Education think tank Bellwether Education Partners looked at available data on English learners, students in foster care, and other vulnerable groups to estimate that 1-3 million students could be missing from schools based on marginalized populations in each state.

In addition to this estimate, they reported several district-level findings: “In Los Angeles, 15%-20% of English learners, students in foster care, students with disabilities, and homeless students didn’t access any of the district’s online educational materials from March through May...In Washington, D.C., back-to-school family surveys found that 60% of students lacked the devices and 27% lacked the high-speed internet access needed to successfully participate in virtual school...In Miami-Dade County, 16,000 fewer students enrolled this fall compared with last year.”^{1,2,3,4}

Actual school attendance data needed to determine the full scale of the issue is not readily available, and many teachers are frustrated with the opaqueness in scoping and dealing with the problem.⁵ In the meantime, it is clear that these initial estimates and anecdotes indicate a drastic problem for students this year.⁶

Graduate school enrollment is up almost 3% compared to Fall 2019, while undergraduate enrollment is down more than 4%.

Fall 2020 enrollment changes compared to same time last year by race/ethnicity
76 percent of colleges reporting as of October 22, 2020



Source: [National Student Clearinghouse](#)

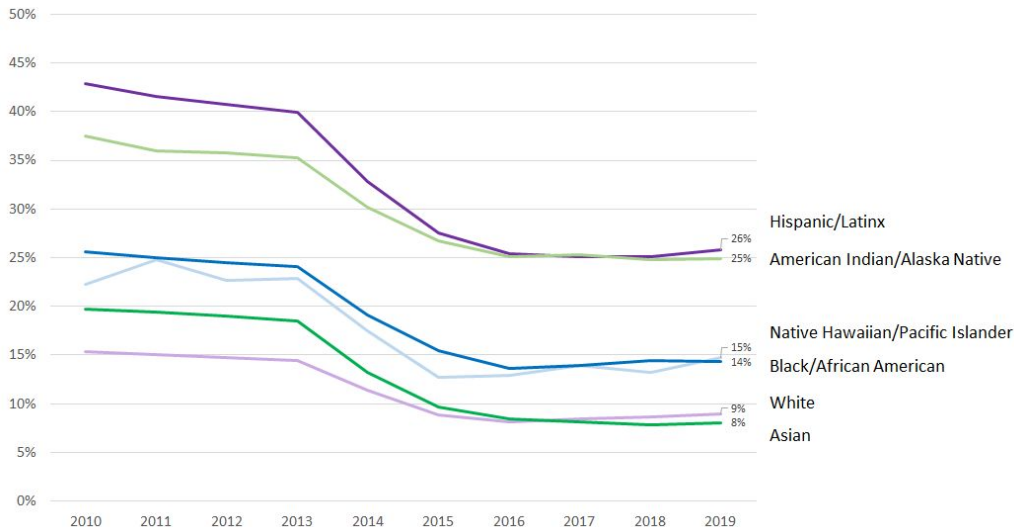
Graduate school enrollment increased 2.9% in Fall 2020 compared to the previous year, with Hispanic/Latinx, Black, and Native American students experiencing the greatest gains. The increase in graduate enrollment is an acceleration of a trend that was underway pre-pandemic when graduate enrollment increased 1.4% from Fall 2018 to Fall 2019. It is not unusual for college enrollment to increase during recessions as young people opt for education when job opportunities are thin.¹ The exception was international students for whom graduate enrollment dropped nearly 8% in Fall 2020, likely due to travel bans and other regulatory restrictions. However, one survey found that the vast majority of these students requested deferrals suggesting graduate student enrollment in graduate programs may recover once restrictions are lifted.²

Undergraduate enrollment dropped significantly this fall, with decreases across all racial/ethnic groups. Native American and international students experienced the largest declines. Community colleges saw the largest drop in enrollment which contributed to the reversal of an upward trend in Hispanic students enrolling in undergraduate programs. But even for-profit colleges experienced a small decline in enrollment in Fall 2020. The overall 4.4% drop in undergraduate enrollment is an acceleration of pre-pandemic trend when undergraduate enrollment dropped nearly 1% in Fall 2019.

The pre-existing disparity in health insurance coverage across racial and ethnic groups set the stage for disparities in Covid outcomes.

Lack of health insurance coverage by race/ethnicity

Population age 18-64



Source: [Census Bureau's American Community Survey](#) Note: Data for 2017 - 2019 covers 19-64 year olds.

Health insurance increases access to necessary health care for individuals, both during times of illness, and in the form of preventative care.^{1,2} A lack of health insurance coverage can lead to untreated illness or injury.³ When many people lack health insurance, societal costs increase through greater use of expensive emergency room visits and lost worker productivity.² Examining health insurance coverage for individuals 18–64 years old is particularly important because those under 18 and above 64 are often eligible for public forms of health insurance (Medicaid, CHIP, Medicare) that lead to higher rates of coverage.⁴

Since 2010, rates of the uninsured have dramatically dropped with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Because states varied as to when they rolled-out certain aspects of the ACA, such as the expansion of Medicaid, there was a gradual decrease in the number of uninsured between 2010 and 2019. During this time frame, white and Asian populations had the lowest rates of uninsured adults, while Hispanic/Latinx and American Indian/Alaska Native populations had the highest rates of uninsured adults. According to the most recent data, 1 in 4 Hispanic/Latinx and American Indian/Alaska Natives were without health insurance in 2019 before the onset of the pandemic.

During the pandemic, affordable health insurance has been tenuous given the millions of people who have lost their jobs and access to their employer-sponsored health insurance.^{5,6} The Urban Institute reports that an estimated 3.5 million people may be uninsured due to the pandemic.⁷ With the compounding impact of job loss, lack of access to healthy foods, and exposure to pollution, certain race groups that are extremely vulnerable to Covid are even more vulnerable because of their lack of health insurance. Access to telehealth services is also not equitable, with internet access not consistently available across racial groups.⁸

Prosperity

People

At the end of the day, governments and institutions are responsible for ensuring the well being of the communities they serve. This section examines outcomes for people since the onset of the Covid crisis.

While much of the most meaningful data on how people are faring will not be available until months after the date it reflects, this section examines key economic metrics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, as well as a timely survey from the U.S. Census Bureau (the Household Pulse Survey) that assesses the human impact of the Covid crisis across America, and an analysis of unemployment benefits relative to basic costs in each county. For each indicator, we provide a brief explanation of findings and implications to weave together an overview of how Americans are faring during the pandemic.

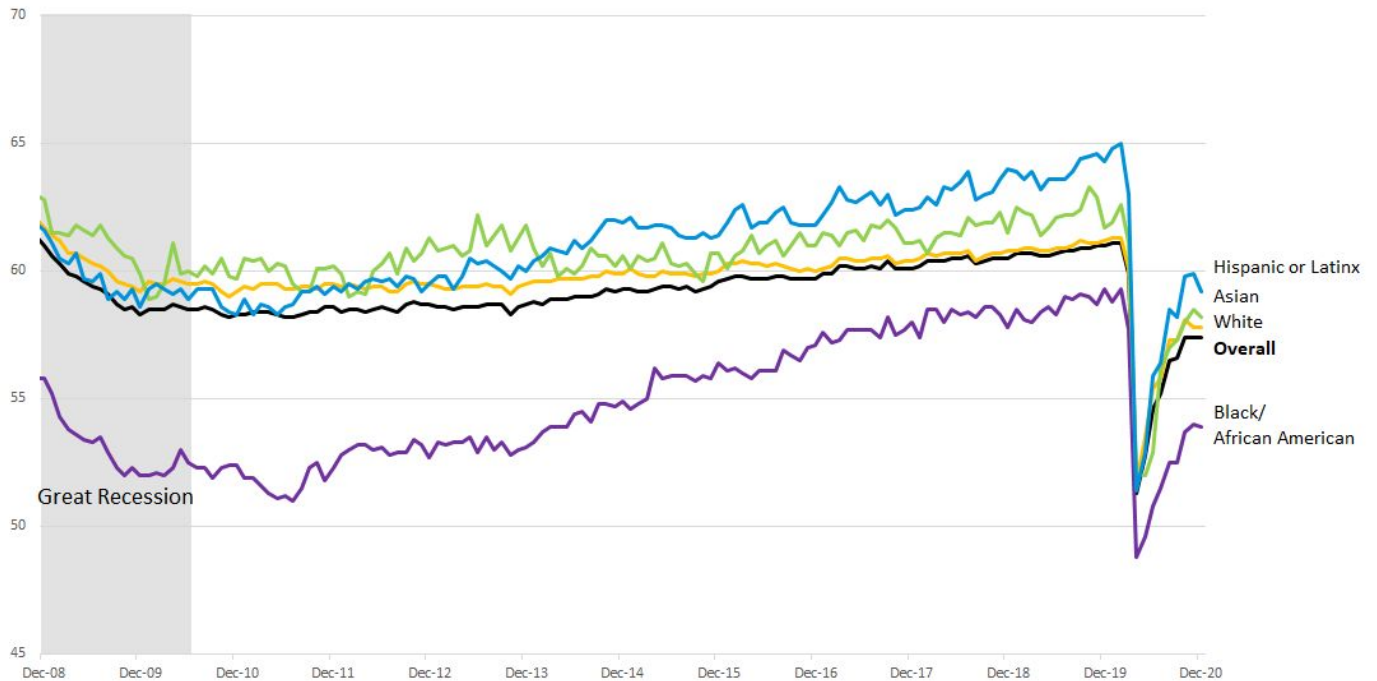
Indicators in this section

- Employment rate by race/ethnicity
- Employment rate by gender
- Food insecurity by state
- Likelihood of eviction or foreclosure by state
- Anxiety by income level

The December employment rate of 57% remains below the lowest point during the Great Recession. While the white employment rate remained steady from November to December, all other groups experienced a decline.

Employment rate by race/ethnicity

Employment-population ratio of civilian, non-institutionalized workforce age 16+, seasonally adjusted



Source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

In December 2020, the employment rate for adults was only 57% – below the lowest point during the Great Recession and well below February of this year, when 61% of all adults had employment. In April, employment rates plunged to 51%. Since April, employment rates were increasing month by month but stalled out at 57% in October.

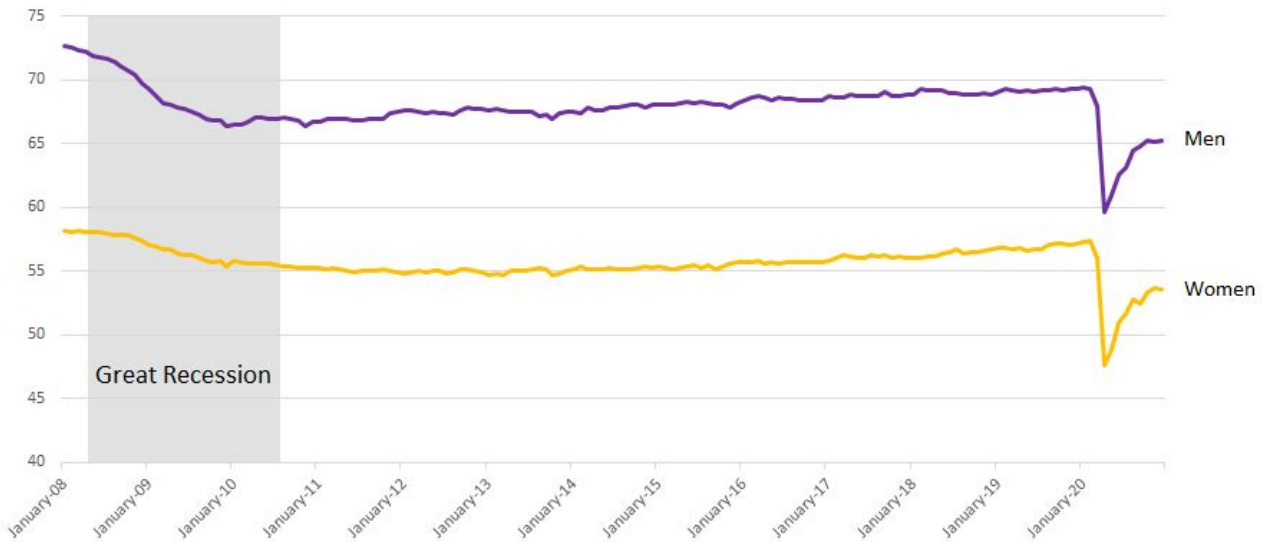
In December, only 54% of all Black individuals had employment. White and Asian adults had employment of 58%. Hispanic or Latinx adults remained highest at 59% with many employed in essential positions in agriculture, food processing, and janitorial services.^{1,2,3}

Just as the Great Recession had long lasting negative impacts on the share of adults with employment (as depicted in this graphic), some economists worry that many adults will become discouraged and stop looking for work all together due to the depth and length of the current recession.⁴

While employment rates for both men and women remain well below the lowest point during the Great Recession, women’s employment has been particularly hard hit during the Covid recession.

Employment rate by gender

Employment-population ratio of civilian, non-institutionalized workforce age 20+, seasonally adjusted



Source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

Women’s employment rate fell slightly in December, while men’s employment rate actually increased.

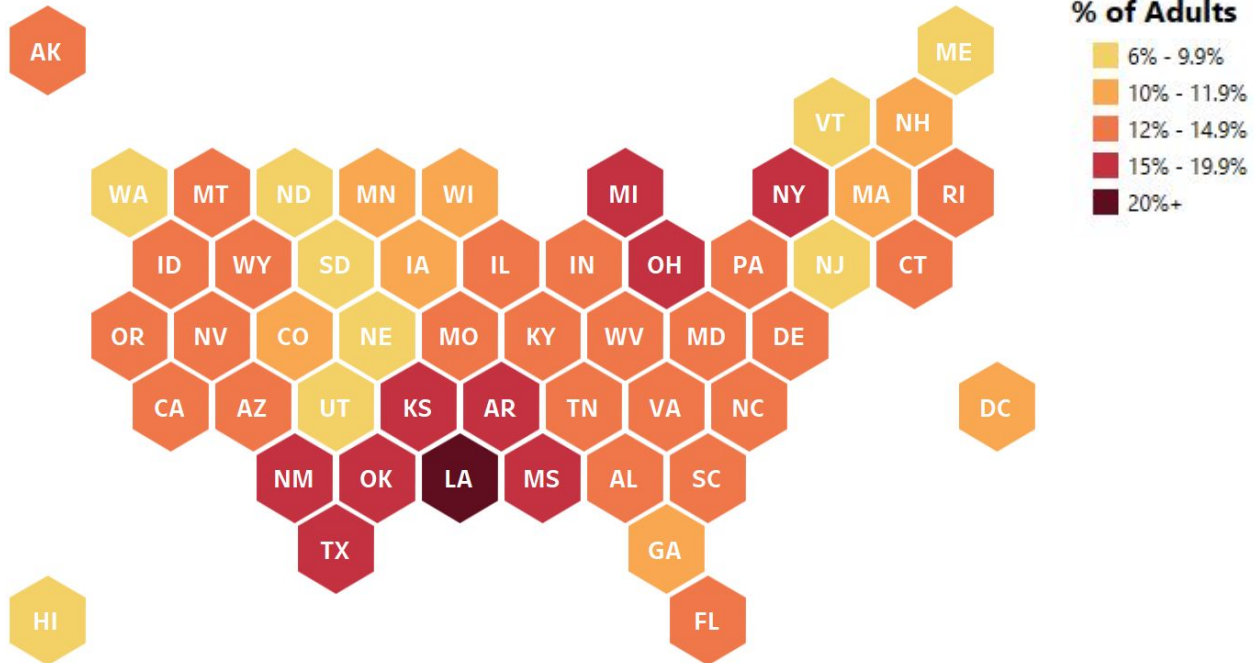
Since the beginning of the Covid recession, women have been more deeply impacted because they are more often employed in the low-wage service jobs in restaurants and retail that have evaporated. Moreover, 1 in 4 women in the U.S. have children under 14 at home and are disproportionately responsible for at-home childcare duties. This fall, many mothers found themselves unable to work or unable to advance meaningfully in their careers as childcare centers are unavailable or schools require remote learning.^{1,2}

Between November and December, the leisure and hospitality sector lost nearly half a million jobs as Covid’s long dark winter descended on the country, chilling leisure activities. Women as a whole lost 156,000 jobs, while men gained in employment such that the economy lost a net of 140,000 jobs in December.

More than 1 in 10 adults report their households have gone hungry during the pandemic. Louisiana ranks highest at more than 1 in 5.

Food insecurity by state, December 9 - 21, 2020

Percentage of adults who report their household sometimes or often went hungry in the last 7 days



Source: [U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey](#)

14% of the United States has reported food insecurity consistently during the past several weeks. States with the highest levels tend to be in the South, while those in the Northeast face less, though not zero, food insecurity. The pre-existing geography of food deserts has been exacerbated by the pandemic, with job losses reducing a household's ability to cover the basic costs of food.

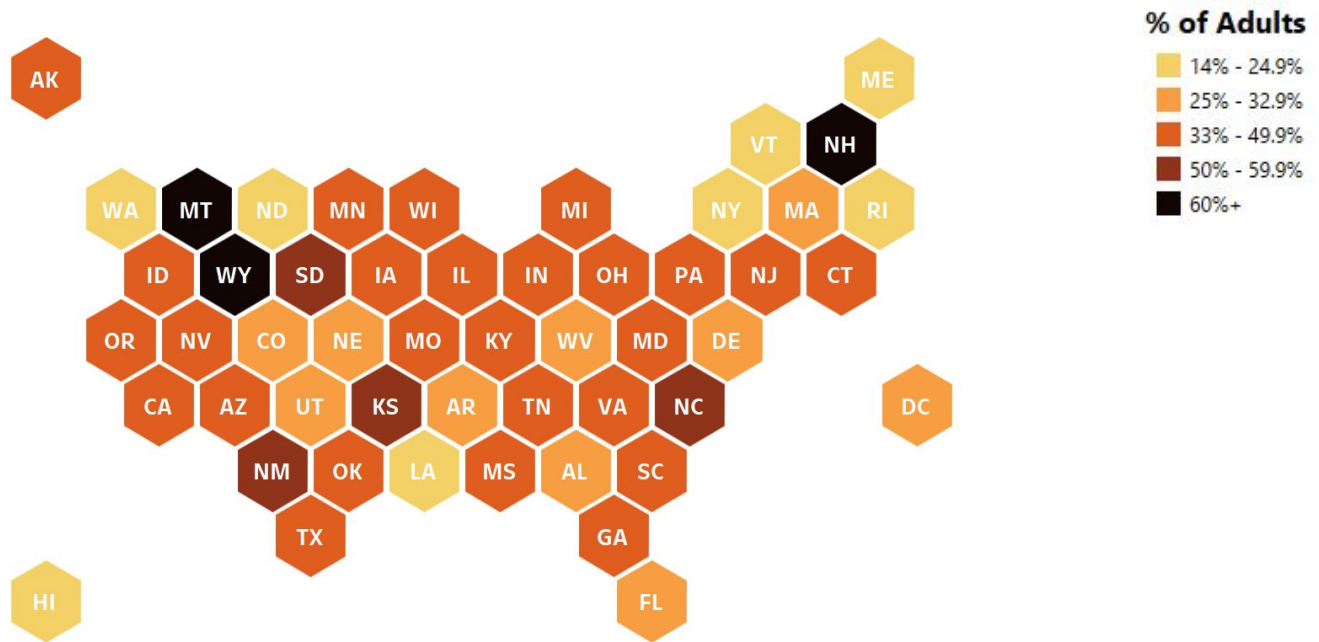
Louisiana has been hit especially hard this year, with both hurricanes and the pandemic leaving many in dire need of support. As of the holidays, the state of Louisiana has distributed \$674 million for emergency food assistance.¹ The philanthropic community is also stepping in to help address the need. For example the Food Bank of Northwest Louisiana and Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana were recipients of MacKenzie Scott's donations this year.^{2,3}

Though difficult to quantify, the role of food pantries, community volunteers, local emergency food programs, and increased flexibility for federal food programs are most certainly buffering the full impact of the pandemic on hunger.^{4,5,6} Even so, an estimated 9-17 million children in the U.S. report sometimes or often going hungry.⁷ Not only are there differences in food security across states during the current crisis, but historical data shows a persistent racial disparity, with Black and Hispanic households going hungry at rates twice that of white households.⁸ For those living in food deserts, a cruel twist of biology comes into play; food insecurity is linked to conditions such as diabetes and obesity, and those comorbidities are also among the most common risk factors for worse Covid outcomes.^{9,10}

The majority of adults in Kansas, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming anticipate they will be evicted or foreclosed upon in the next two months.

Likelihood of eviction or foreclosure, December 9 - 21, 2020

Percentage of adults living in households where eviction or foreclosure in the next two months is either very likely or somewhat likely.



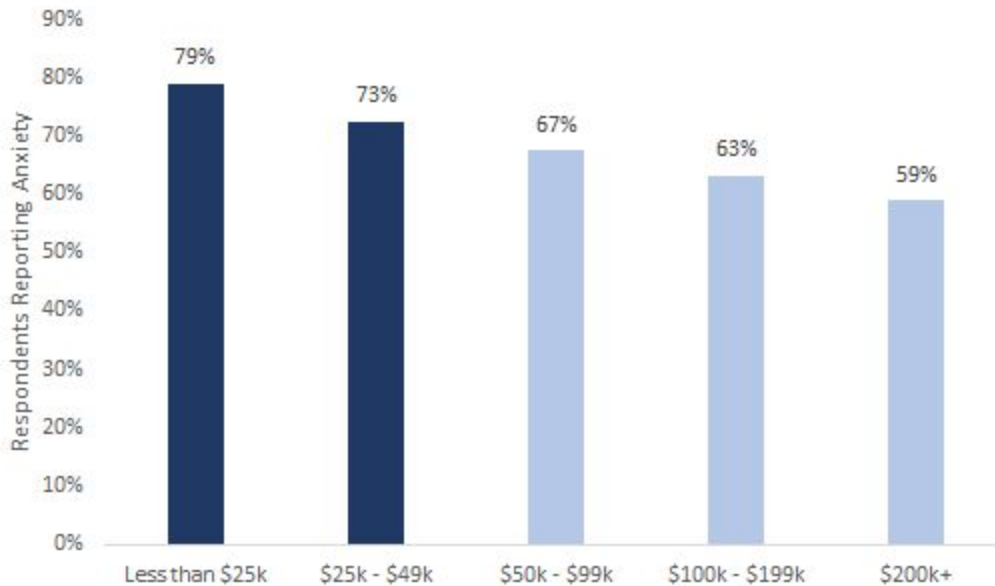
Source: [U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey](#)

With 8.5 million fewer jobs across the U.S. and the economy losing net 140,000 jobs in December, many Americans are pessimistic about their housing situations. More than 1 in 3 adults in 32 states report they are likely to be evicted or foreclosed upon in the next two months. This is true across a wide swath of states. The current federal moratorium on all evictions for nonpayment of rent is effective until January 31st. The incoming administration has plans to extend the moratoria on eviction and foreclosures until September 30, 2021 and increase funding for rental assistance.¹ However, enforcement of eviction moratoria varies greatly across localities and landlords can find reasons to evict other than nonpayment of rent.² In addition, at the end of the moratoria, mortgages and rents due could be enormous.³

69% of adults reported anxiety over the last week. Those making below \$50k per year reported feeling anxious at rates 10 percentage points higher than those making \$50k and above.

Instances of anxiety, December 9 - 21, 2020

Percentage of respondents who suffered from anxiety in the last 7 days



Source: [U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey](#)

Mental health has undoubtedly been affected by the Covid pandemic. As many find themselves in more isolated situations, coupled with the stress of the pandemic and the economic downturn, cases of anxiety and depression have increased.

According to the Census Pulse Survey, 69% of adults reported feeling anxiety over the last 7 days. This number increases as household income decreases. Among those earning less than \$25K, 79% report feeling anxiety. Those who have experienced a loss of employment during the pandemic experience anxiety at a rate 19 percentage points higher than those who have not experienced that same loss. And women face anxiety at a rate 12 percentage points higher than men, shedding light on the disparate impact the pandemic has had on women.¹

The Kaiser Family Foundation found in July that the mental health of 53% of adults in the United States had worsened due to concerns over the pandemic, up from 32% in March.² They point to a link between social isolation and poor mental health, adding that job loss can exacerbate these outcomes. Psychiatrists writing in The New England Journal of Medicine recently noted that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) resulting from pandemic anxiety has the potential for long-lasting consequences.³ Additionally, long-term effects from Covid are now becoming clear, with a UK study finding that “nearly 20 percent of Covid-19 patients developed a mental health issue – like depression, anxiety, or dementia – within 3 months of diagnosis.”⁴

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About this series

History has shown that large-scale crises accelerate pre-existing trends, exacerbate inequities, and permanently change societies and civic life. Large scale disasters produce an enormous break in the status quo followed by continuous change. Crises drive up the demand for data as decision makers grapple with understanding rapidly changing conditions. The enormous shock of the Covid twin health and economic crises that began in 2020 yielded measurable civil unrest and was compounded by increasing natural and climate disasters. Objective data is needed to ensure that recovery efforts in the months and years ahead lead to a more just and equitable society. *Pandemic to Prosperity* offers a comprehensive overview of the Covid-related impacts on our lives and livelihoods, governments, civic institutions, and overall well being.

Pandemic to Prosperity is a trusted, relevant, and highly-vetted source of information crucial for steering society toward a fair and complete recovery and yielding a better union than before the pandemic. This report series analyzes disparate data, adding top-level insights about the implications of each indicator, what each indicator reveals, and how the indicators are interrelated. Such an objective, unbiased resource is essential in a world where there is almost too much data to process and verified facts are often overcome by disinformation.

Recovery from the pandemic and deep economic crisis will vary across communities, and different populations will face various barriers to achieving shared prosperity. *Pandemic to Prosperity's* thoughtfully-curated data serves to illuminate the challenges facing the nation's most vulnerable. In addition, this reliable source of wide-ranging, impartial information will be valuable in aligning public and private sector efforts and reflect progress made, or the lack thereof, over time.

The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) developed the *Pandemic to Prosperity* series. It builds on NCoC's data infrastructure and advocacy network developed for its national *Civic Health Index*, and leveraging the authors' success with *The New Orleans Index*, which informed many public and private decisions and actions post-Katrina. This series is designed to enable a solid understanding of the damage to lives and livelihoods as the pandemic continues to unfold, especially as we enter the era of vaccines, and the nation grapples with new shocks and stressors such as disasters and civil unrest; it will also examine aspirational goals around strong and accountable government, functioning institutions from child care to internet access to local news availability, effective civic participation, and outcomes for people by race regarding employment, health, housing, and more. With each new report in the series, indicators will change as the recovery transitions. This report highlights mostly state-level metrics with breakdowns by race, gender, and age where available, relying on both public and private data sources.

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Acknowledgments

Substantive contributors to this *Pandemic to Prosperity* report:

Seth Amgott, Census research and strategic communications

Cameron Blossom, Communications and design

John Kilcoyne, Project support

Ryan McGibony, Data Science Lead, Civis Analytics

Elaine Ortiz, Data quality review

Dr. William Pewen, Epidemiologist

Kevin Soo, Data Scientist, Civis Analytics

For their valuable advice and comments on the indicators selected and preliminary findings, the authors would like to thank:

Andrew Aurand, Lamar Gardere, Sarah Beth Gehl, Tanya Gulliner-Garcia, Robert Habans, Clara Hendrickson, Amy Howell, Allyson Laackman, Jeanine Abrams McLean, Usha Pasi, Sanjiv Rao, Sally Ray, Regine Webster and the Board of Directors of NCOC: Garrett Graff, Michael Weiser, Barry Byrd, Lattie Coor, Phil Duncan, Paula Ellis, Eric K. Federling, Hon. Bob Graham, Gail Leftwich-Kitch, A.G. Newmyer

Suggested citation format:

Ross, D., Plyer, A., Laackman, E., & Coates, J. (2021, January 21). *Pandemic to Prosperity: Chronicling the Path from Response to Recovery*. Retrieved from National Conference on Citizenship website: <https://ncoc.org/P2P>

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This report is dedicated to all of the data heroes—in state, local, federal government, institutions, nonprofits and volunteer organizations—who make these types of analyses possible.



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