

Census 2020 Covid-19



Louisiana Budget Project

September 2021

Federal aid amid Covid-19 helps millions

The Covid-19 pandemic caused tremendous hardship in 2020. But timely federal aid and safety net programs dampened the blow and effectively kept millions of Americans out of poverty, according to the latest U.S. Census data. Louisiana, though, has suffered through a string of natural disasters in addition to the pandemic. While critical federal action helped alleviate suffering in the first year of the pandemic, the need for aid remains.

Key Findings

- ❖ Job and wage loss would have driven millions into poverty last year. Instead, robust government aid actually lowered poverty during the pandemic. At **11.4% the official poverty rate**, which doesn't account for all government aid, increased by 1 percentage point from 2019 to 2020 representing 37.2 million people. But at **9.1% the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM)**, an updated measure of poverty that *does* account for government assistance, decreased by 2.7 percentage points from 2019 to 2020.
- ❖ As millions of Americans lost their jobs due to the pandemic in 2020, national annual median income decreased to **\$67,500 in 2020, a drop of 2.9% from 2019**. Income inequality remained at its historic high with a Gini Coefficient of 0.489.
- ❖ National health insurance coverage held steady: an estimated **8.6% of people in America were uninsured** in 2020. The adult uninsured rate among Medicaid Expansion states (8.9%) was about half that of the adult uninsured rate for non-expansion states (17.6%) continuing a trend from 2019.

About Census and Covid-19

Each fall, the U.S. Census Bureau releases detailed data about poverty, income and health insurance coverage for each state and the nation as a whole. The data in this report were released in September 2021, and would normally provide detailed information about Louisiana during 2020, the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Bureau's data collection was heavily disrupted from March through September in 2020 due to the pandemic. While experimental estimates will eventually be released for state-level data, the majority of this report is based on the Current Population Survey and primarily offers insight into national-level statistics.

The last section of this report includes data from the Census Bureau's ongoing Household Pulse Survey, which provides the most up-to-date information about the ways Louisianans are experiencing hunger, housing insecurity and unemployment, providing further evidence of the need for continued federal aid.

Federal aid reduces poverty

The Supplemental Poverty Measure fell below the official poverty rate in 2020 for the first time since the number was first reported in 2009. Federal pandemic aid going directly to families primarily through stimulus checks drove the rate to its lowest-ever level.

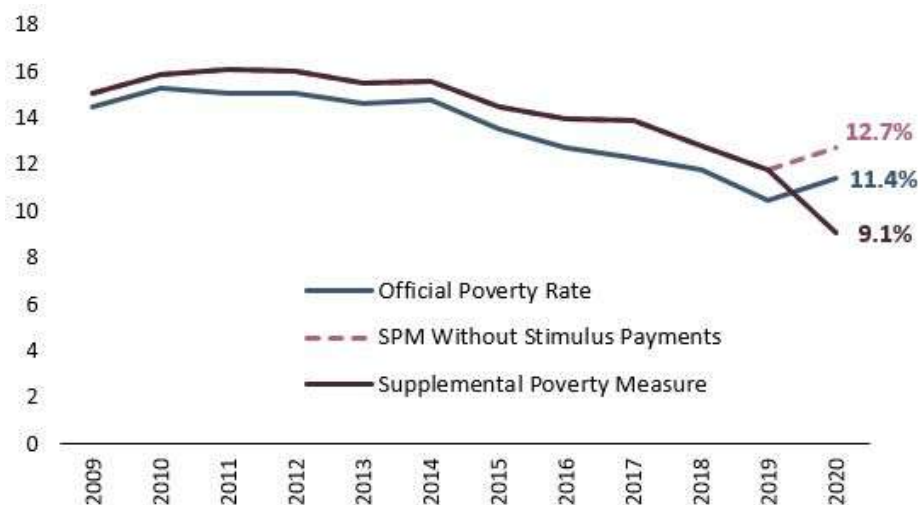
Spotlight: Supplemental Poverty Measure

The official poverty measure was created in the early 1960s when President Lyndon Johnson declared war on poverty. While it is the longest running measure of economic hardship reported by the Census Bureau, it is a flawed measure that routinely undercounts the number of people unable to meet their basic needs.

The SPM was developed to provide a more accurate picture. It differs from the official measure in several significant ways, including: calculating the cost of covering basic needs, the resources available to meet basic needs (including from safety net programs), who is counted as part of a household, and differences in the cost of living between geographic areas.

Federal aid lifts millions out of poverty amid dire economic conditions in 2020

National Official Poverty Rate and Supplemental Poverty Measure from 2009 to 2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Community Population Survey, Liana E. Fox and Kalee Burns, "The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2020 Current Population Reports" September 2021

Safety Net programs make the difference

The federal safety net played a vital role in helping families through the unprecedented hardship of the Covid-19 pandemic.

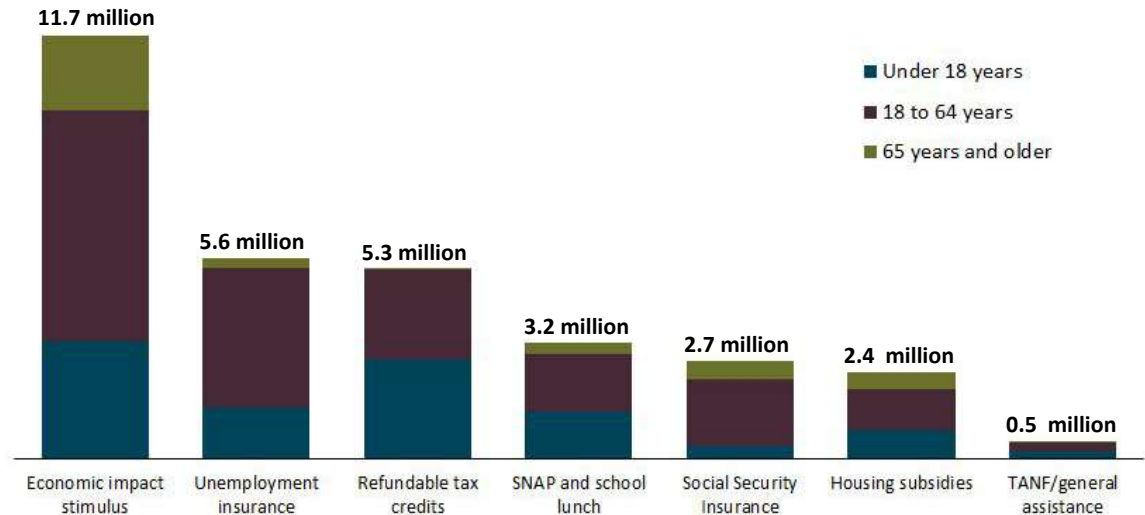
Public programs help with basic needs such as food, housing and income supports. These safety-net programs play a vital role in lifting families out of poverty each year.

In 2020, more families needed assistance than in previous years, and more assistance went to low-income families in the form of economic stimulus payments and federal unemployment benefits to combat the economic impacts of Covid-19.

As a result, last year, nearly 29.8 million people were lifted out of poverty—both by traditional anti-poverty programs and by Covid emergency relief.

Safety Net lifts millions out of poverty amid Covid-19 recession

Number of people lifted out of poverty in 2020 by Federal Safety Net programs



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2020 Current Population Reports by Liana E. Fox and Kalee Burns, September 2021, Table 7: Effect of Individual Elements on the Number of Individuals in Poverty: 2019 and 2020.



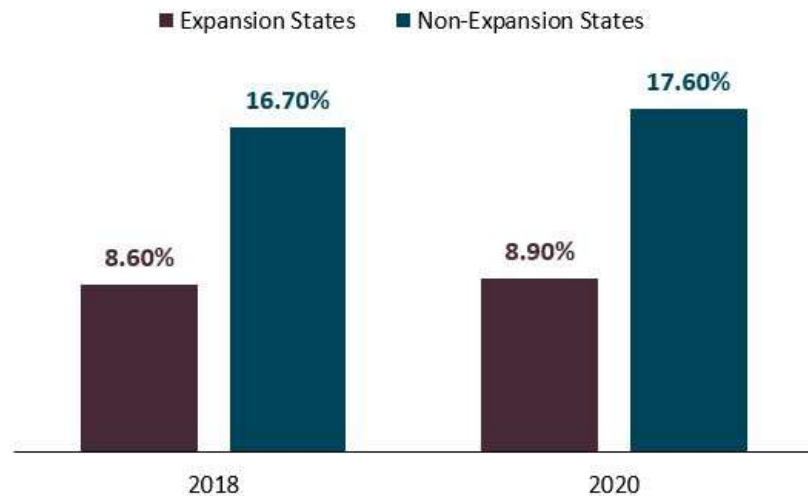
Louisianans benefit from Federal aid

In Louisiana, safety net and federal aid programs played a critical role in easing economic hardship and helping families pay their bills each month. Much more is still needed to ensure people can stay in their homes and continue to rebuild amid a continuing pandemic. Though state-level data is not available through Census at this time, critical federal aid was delivered to Louisianans:

- ❖ **Economic Impact or Stimulus Payments** - Louisianans received a total of [6.9 million stimulus checks worth \\$11.7 billion](#) over three rounds of federal stimulus payments distributed between 2020 and 2021. The 2020 SPM includes the first two rounds of payments totaling [4.5 million checks worth \\$6 billion](#) in Louisiana. These stimulus checks were the strongest anti-poverty tools deployed in the United States aside from Social Security in 2020.
- ❖ **Unemployment Insurance** - Louisiana workers received [\\$9.3 billion](#) in unemployment benefits from April 2020 to July 2021, including critical new Federal UI benefits of [\\$7.7 billion](#) (Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PUEC), and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and [\\$1.6 billion](#) from Louisiana's relatively meager state benefits.
- ❖ **Child Tax Credits** - While expanded federal Child Tax Credits are not reflected in 2020 Census numbers, approximately 897,000 Louisiana children have received two Advance Child Tax Credit payments worth \$459 million in [July](#) and [August](#) 2021. The September payment will add approximately \$229 million more in support to Louisiana's children and families.

Medicaid expansion keeps adult uninsured rate low amid pandemic

Adult (age 18 to 64) uninsured rate in Medicaid expansion and non-expansion states



Note: Medicaid expansion as of January 1, 2020 for 2020 data. Medicaid expansion status as of January 1, 2018 for 2018 data. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2019 and 2021 Annual Social and Economic Supplement



Medicaid expansion keeps uninsured rates low

Louisiana expanded Medicaid eligibility to low-income adults in 2016 and has seen a drop in the uninsured rate each year since.

While state uninsured rate data were not released with this year's Census, the Bureau did release a comparison of uninsured rates in expansion and non-expansion states. The evidence is compelling.

Uninsured rates in expansion states, including Louisiana, are half of those in non-expansion states. This keeps medical costs affordable for those who need care and can least afford it.

Covid-19 Impact on Families

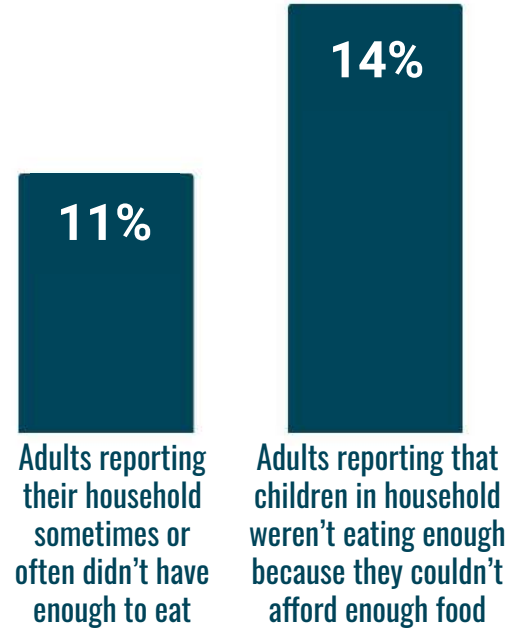
The Household Pulse Survey provides the most up-to-date information from the Census Bureau on the impact of Covid-19 on American households. The data provided here were compiled by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in their special series “Covid Hardship Watch,” from U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey data, including Louisiana-specific impacts.

These data reflect survey results from August, 2021.

Louisiana Households struggle to afford food

- **321,000** Adults reporting their household didn't have enough to eat.
- **177,000** Adults reporting that children in their household weren't eating enough because they couldn't afford enough food.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, data reflective of August 4-30, 2021.
Retrieved from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' Covid Hardship Watch.



Louisiana Households struggle to afford housing

- 198,000 Adult renters are not caught up on rent.
- 1,052,000 Adults report that paying for usual expenses such as food, rent or mortgage, car payments, medical expenses, or student loans in the last seven days was somewhat or very difficult compared to 27% nationally.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, data collected August 4-30, 2021.
Retrieved from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' Covid Hardship Watch.

Louisiana workers struggle with unemployment

- **6.9%** of Louisiana workers are unemployed, based on May through July 2021 averages. The U.S. average for the same period is 5.7%.
- **133,000** Number of jobless claims by Louisianans in the week ending August 14, 2021.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, data collected August 4-30, 2021.
Retrieved from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' Covid Hardship Watch.

6.9%

Louisiana Unemployment Rate, May-July 2021

133,000

Number of jobless claims by Louisiana workers for unemployment benefits in the week ending Aug. 14, 2021



Related LBP Reports

This report is the latest in a series of publications based on the Census Bureau data. Related LBP publications in the series include:

- ❖ “[Poverty in Louisiana: Census 2019](#)” a chart book on poverty and income,
- ❖ “[Louisiana Children Health Uninsured Rates Census 2019](#)” and
- ❖ “[Louisiana loses ground on uninsured rate along with the nation](#),” a policy brief on overall health insurance coverage in Louisiana in 2019.

These and many other LBP publications may be found on our website at labudget.org.

What’s next?

Congress can play a critical role in building a stronger, more equitable economy that works for all Louisianans, including those struggling to rebuild from natural disasters and the economic hardship caused by the pandemic. The economic recovery legislation being developed on Capitol Hill must address the weaknesses in our economy laid bare by the pandemic, and should include these important components:

- ❖ strengthen the nation’s weak [unemployment insurance system](#),
- ❖ invest in [affordable housing](#),
- ❖ make the full [Child Tax Credit](#) permanent for families with low or no earnings,
- ❖ [reduce food hardship](#) and much more.

Lawmakers can fund these priorities by closing loopholes that allow the wealthiest people and corporations to pay little or no federal income tax, and by strengthening IRS enforcement to ensure those at the top pay their fair share. Together we can [Invest in Louisiana](#) and ensure every family has what they need to thrive.

About the Census

American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS), is an ongoing yearly survey conducted by the Census Bureau that provides data that gives communities up-to date information for planning and policy decisions. In addition to providing demographic information, the Survey asks about a variety of individual and household attributes, including income, family relationships, housing, etc. Because the Survey provides information at the local level, the ACS offers a larger sample than the CPS and other nationally representative samples, surveying more than 3 million people every year. Normally, this data can be used to provide state- and local-level data, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic disrupting survey collection through much of the spring and summer of 2020, the Census Bureau was unable to meet its data quality standards for normal release. Consequently, state and local data will be released in November, 2021 as experimental estimates due to significant nonresponse bias.

Current Population Survey

The Current Population Survey (CPS), which is conducted jointly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Census Bureau, is one of the oldest, largest and most well- recognized surveys in the United States. Because of its longevity - its beginnings date back to the 1930s - it is immensely useful in providing information on employment, income, and education among other statistics over long periods of time. The survey is administered throughout the year with special supplemental questions added to individual months. It is the basis for the majority of the data in this report and provides mostly national level data.

Household Pulse Survey

After the onset of Covid-19, the Census Bureau initiated the Household Pulse Survey to quickly gather information about how the pandemic was impacting U.S. households. The Pulse Survey has been administered on a weekly or bi-weekly basis since April 2020 in 3 phases with multiple subsets. The current phase, 3.2, will come to an end in October 2021.



Louisiana Budget Project

For further information:

Stacey Roussel

Policy Director

stacey@labudget.org

The Louisiana Budget Project (LBP) monitors and reports on public policy and how it affects Louisiana's low- to moderate-income families. We believe that the lives of Louisianans can be improved through profound change in public policy, brought about by: creating a deeper understanding of the state budget and budget-related issues, looking at the big picture of how the budget impacts citizens, encouraging citizens to be vocal about budget issues that are important to them, and providing insight and leadership to drive the policy debate.

This chart book was created by Stacey Roussel, Jackson Voss and Richard Davis. This work was made possible by generous financial support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, and individual donors. LBP is a member of the State Priorities Partnership, coordinated by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and the Economic Analysis and Research Network, managed by the Economic Policy Institute.