

STIMULUS PAYMENTS WERE ESSENTIAL FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Many American households with young children have been experiencing significant difficulties paying for basic needs like food, shelter, and utilities since the coronavirus pandemic began.

Data from our RAPID-EC national survey of families with young children illustrate a chain reaction of hardship that has been occurring as a result of these difficulties – parents who can't

pay for basic needs are experiencing more emotional distress, and when parents are struggling, our data show that their children also experience more emotional distress.

In 2020 and 2021, stimulus money provided an important financial relief. Long-term relief for families benefits us all.

88%

of families received the first stimulus check

82%

of families received the second stimulus check



Fortunately, millions of American families received stimulus money and pandemic unemployment payments as part of government-funded COVID-19 relief packages.

Data from our survey of households indicate that families with young children urgently needed this money to pay for basic needs (food, housing, utilities), as well as other essentials such as childcare, transportation,

costs associated with distance learning, and the bills and credit card debt accumulated since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

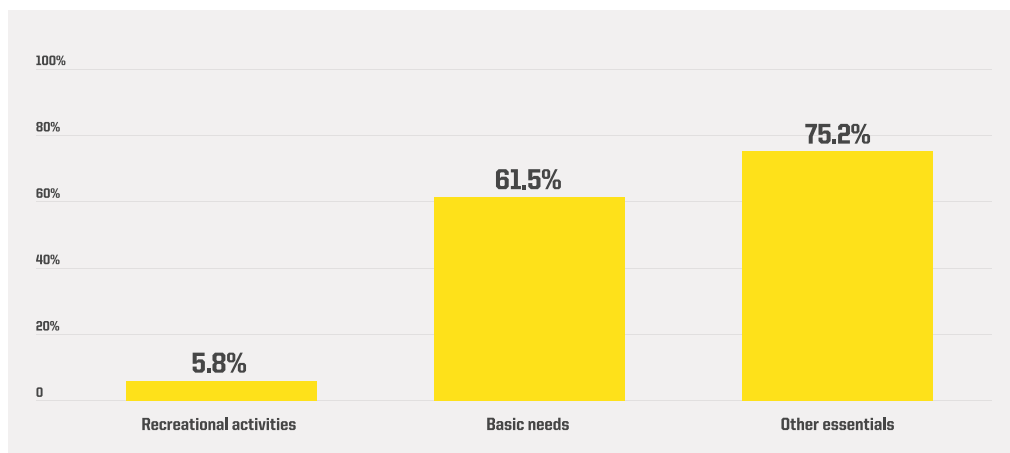
The majority of households with young children in our survey – even those with higher incomes – used stimulus money and pandemic unemployment to keep their families fed, clothed, warm, and safe.

“The first stimulus check in 2020 helped me to pay for extra childcare needs.”

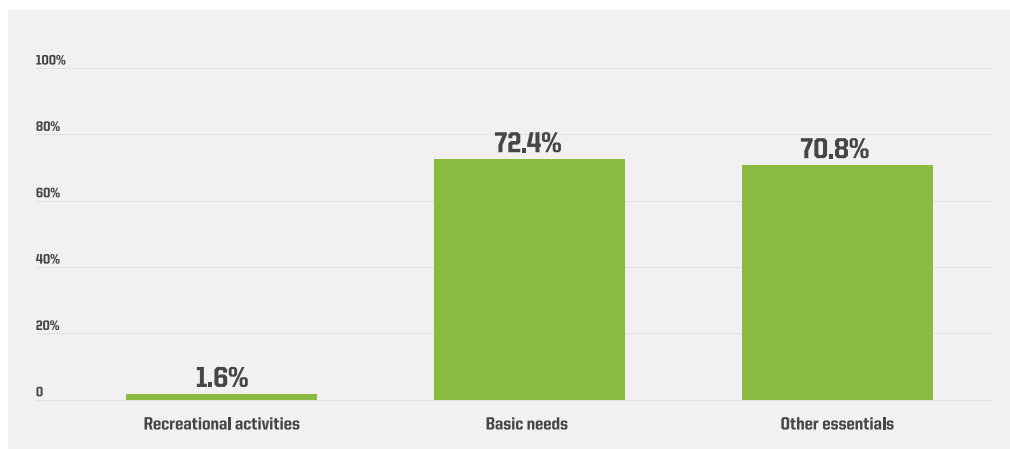
Parent in Pennsylvania

MOST HOUSEHOLDS SPENT THE FINANCIAL RELIEF ON BASIC NEEDS AND ESSENTIALS

Percent of households that used the 1st and 2nd stimulus payments to pay for basic needs



Percent of households that used pandemic unemployment relief to pay for basic needs



We asked caregivers to indicate how they spent their families’ pandemic relief money by checking any or all of the following categories:

Basic needs: food, rent, mortgage, utilities and telecommunications

Other essentials: vehicle payments, transportation, paying down credit card, student loans, or other debts clothing, household supplies and personal care

Recreational activities: movies, restaurants, vacations

Families with young children use stimulus money and unemployment to meet basic needs and other essentials.

- Nearly three-quarters (72%) of families spent unemployment benefits on basic needs like food and housing. More than half of families (62%) spent their stimulus checks on basic needs.

- Three quarters of families (75%) used their stimulus checks for essential purchases such as vehicle payments.
- A similar proportion of families (71%) used pandemic unemployment for essential purchases.

“It helped us purchase distance learning equipment for our children - computers, desks, chairs, etc.”
Parent in California

HOUSEHOLDS ACROSS ALL INCOME LEVELS SPENT THEIR PANDEMIC FINANCIAL RELIEF ON BASIC NEEDS AND ESSENTIALS

Percent of households that used stimulus and unemployment to pay for basic needs, across income levels. We used the ASPE federal poverty guidelines on income per household size to determine % at or above Federal Poverty Level (FPL)



- As expected, the proportion of families who spent their pandemic relief money on basic needs and essential purchases, or used it to pay off debt was highest for lower income families.
- However, even among middle- and upper- income households, the majority report using pandemic relief for basic/essential needs or to pay off debt.

“It meant we had a little more breathing room and less panic when I was furloughed.”
Parent in California

The Bottom Line: The stimulus checks provided to Americans were a vital resource to families with young children. That many families used the stimulus checks for basic needs demonstrates how these households have been faring.

Families with young children thrive with support: Many families with young children are continuing to have difficulties affording basic needs.

The weight of this financial hardship creates stress and anxiety which affects both parents and children.

With resources to address financial hardships, all families can thrive and support positive early childhood development.

It is urgent that we act to reduce this pressure on families.

With RAPID-EC's data in hand, you can:

- Forward this fact sheet to your networks
- Encourage policymakers to prioritize families with young children in relief aid

“It was a lifesaver. It helped me buy diapers, wipes, clothing for myself and child, bills, etc. The check helped my household so much, because that was \$1,700 of necessities I wouldn't have been able to acquire without it.”

Parent in Los Angeles

“Expenses actually went up being at home, especially utilities and food, so it filled in the gaps in my budget.”

Parent in Michigan



ABOUT THE RAPID-EC PROJECT

RAPID-EC is under the Direction of Philip Fisher, PhD, Director of the Center for Translational Neuroscience at the University of Oregon

The RAPID-EC project is an early childhood family well-being survey designed to gather essential information in a continuous manner regarding the needs, health promoting behaviors, and well-being of children and their families during the COVID-19 outbreak and recovery in the United States. The survey focuses on better understanding child development (and parents' concerns about development over time), caregiver mental health and wellbeing, and caregiver needs and utilization of resources.

RAPID-EC collects data from 1,000 caregivers in all 50 states twice per month. The survey collects snapshots of data across time with the ability to assess trends longitudinally.

Twice per month, the team posts analyses of survey findings, including policy recommendations and resources for additional reading.

1000+

surveyed
bi-weekly

52

surveys

9,000+

unique
households

50

US states

