POVERTY TRACKER

CENTER ON POVERTY & SOCIAL POLICY
at Columbia University

COLUMBIA | CPRC
Columbia Population Research Center

ROBIN HOOD

MONITORING POVERTY AND WELL-BEING IN NYC

SPOTLIGHT ON:

LIFE IN NEW YORK CITY DURING COVID-19

Michael Williams

Introduction

In the spring of 2020, COVID-19 ravaged New York City, changing life beyond imagination. Alongside the virus, fear spread across the city. The economy was pummeled, as businesses were forced to close or operate remotely. Millions of workers were sent home, not knowing if they would see their next paycheck and worrying about how they would make rent. At home, millions of children and their parents had to abruptly adjust to the realities of remote learning. The pandemic affected, and continues to affect, nearly all aspects of life in New York City.

The Poverty Tracker data allows us to look across the population to understand the impacts that the pandemic has had on life in New York City. Here we focus on four domains:[1]

| EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME | HOUSING SECURITY | FOOD HARDSHIP | INTERNET ACCESS AND REMOTE LEARNING |

About The Poverty Tracker

Launched in 2012, the Poverty Tracker surveys a representative sample of New Yorkers every three months, providing critical information on the dynamics of poverty and other forms of disadvantage in the city. In addition to measures on poverty and disadvantage, the Poverty Tracker collects a wealth of information on other topics such as employment, assets and debts, and health.

The Poverty Tracker has monitored the impacts that COVID-19 and the related economic downturn has had on life in New York City since the onset of the pandemic. The majority of the results presented in this report come from the Poverty Tracker's COVID-19 Surveys, which were specifically designed to quantify the pandemic's impact on employment and experiences of material hardship and disadvantage.

In this spotlight, we present key findings from the data for policymakers and other stakeholders trying to address the ongoing crises.

[1] See Appendix A to learn about how this data was collected.

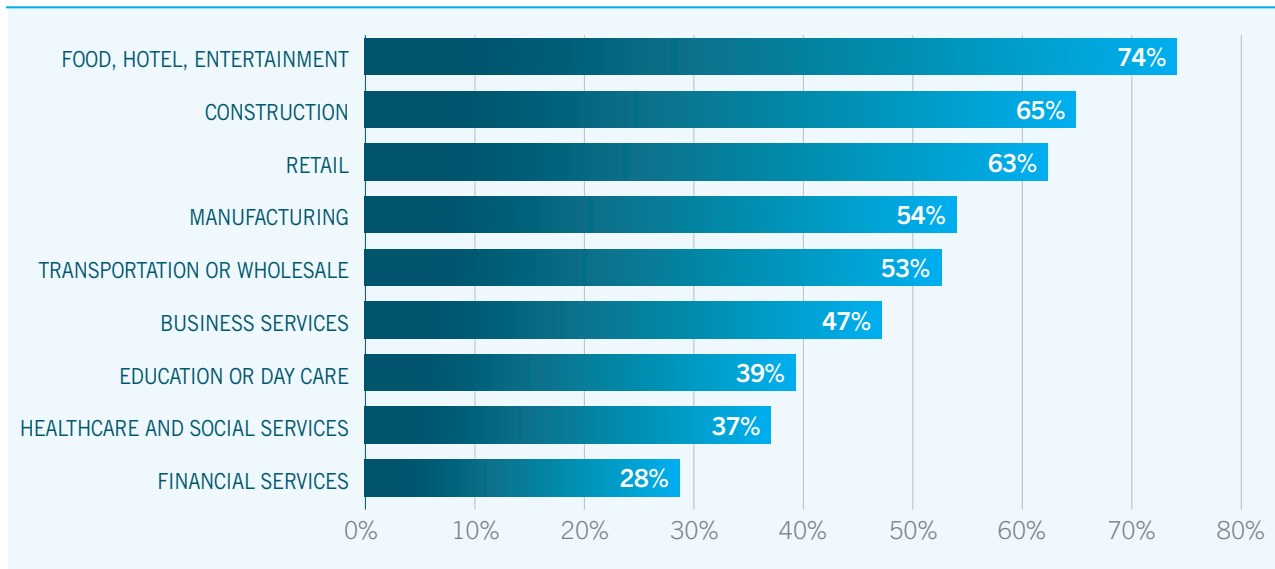# Section 1:

Employment and Income

COVID-19 caused widespread damage to New York City's economy. Thousands of businesses were forced to close, some permanently. Unemployment spiked, as did economic insecurity. These consequences are being especially felt in Black[2] and Latino[3] communities. More than half of Black and Latino workers lost employment income in the early months of the pandemic (55 and 59 percent respectively), compared to 43 percent of white New Yorkers.

ALL NEW YORK WORKERS

LOW-WAGE WORKERS

49%

57%
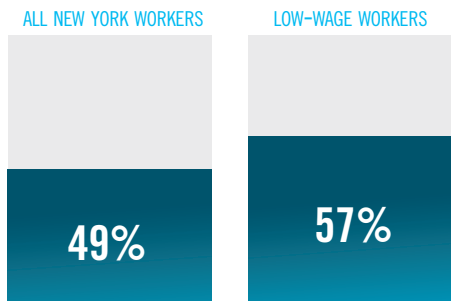
NEARLY HALF (49 percent) of all New York City workers lost employment income since March of 2020. **MORE THAN HALF** (57 percent) of low-wage workers[4] in New York City lost employment income at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The likelihood of losing employment income varied substantially by industry. The food, hotel, and entertainment industry was the hardest hit, with **ALMOST THREE IN FOUR** of its workers reporting lost employment income. The construction and retail industries were also hit hard, with **NEARLY TWO IN THREE** workers losing employment income. On the other end of the spectrum, workers in the financial services industry reported the lowest rate of lost employment income at **28 PERCENT.**

SHARE OF WORKERS IN THE SAMPLE[5] WHO LOST EMPLOYMENT INCOME BY INDUSTRY

Industry	Percent
FOOD, HOTEL, ENTERTAINMENT	74%
CONSTRUCTION	65%
RETAIL	63%
MANUFACTURING	54%
TRANSPORTATION OR WHOLESALE	53%
BUSINESS SERVICES	47%
EDUCATION OR DAY CARE	39%
HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES	37%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	28%

[2] In this report, we refer to Black non-Latino and white non-Latino New Yorkers as Black and white New Yorkers, respectively. In addition, when we say, "New Yorkers," we are referring to adults in New York City.

[3] See Appendix B for an overview of how the Poverty Tracker identifies respondents' race and ethnicity.

[4] Defined as workers with wages below $20 per hour.

[5] See Appendix A for a discussion of the results that pertain to the Poverty Tracker sample versus the city's population.

One in five New Yorkers **(20 PERCENT)** who lost employment income because of COVID-19 were already in poverty, more than twice the rates of those who transitioned to remote work and did not lose employment income **(9 PERCENT)**.

Despite significant expansions to unemployment benefits, many people faced difficulty accessing such benefits and other means of support.

New Yorkers who lost their jobs also struggled to access unemployment benefits. The most commonly cited reason **(39 PERCENT)** was that the application website did not work. **OVER A THIRD** of New Yorkers who tried to apply could not finish an application due to busy phone lines or getting disconnected before speaking with someone.[6]

SHARE OF WORKERS IN THE SAMPLE WHO WERE LAID OFF AND ENCOUNTERED THE FOLLOWING CHALLENGES WHEN APPLYING FOR UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

FOUND THAT THE WEBSITE DIDN'T WORK	39%
KEPT GETTING DISCONNECTED WITHOUT TALKING TO ANYONE	36%
COULDN'T COMPLETE THE APPLICATION BECAUSE THE PHONE LINES WERE BUSY	35%
COULDN'T COMPLETE THE APPLICATION BY PHONE OR ONLINE AND WEREN'T ABLE TO APPLY IN PERSON	23%
WERE TOLD THAT YOU DON'T QUALIFY FOR BENEFITS	10%
DEALT WITH ANY OF THE ABOVE ISSUES	54%

Knowledge of New York State's paid family and medical leave program does not appear to be widespread. Of New Yorkers who took time off from work due to having COVID-19, caring for an ill family member, or providing childcare, just **9 PERCENT** received pay from New York State's paid family and medical leave program.

Black workers have disproportionately continued to work on-site as essential workers during the pandemic — being put at a greater risk of exposure to COVID-19. Roughly **31 PERCENT** of Black workers continued to work on-site at the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak, compared to **14 PERCENT** of Latino workers and **10 PERCENT** of white workers.

To get by during this pandemic, New Yorkers are changing their spending habits and how they cover necessary expenses. Many of these changes could compromise their future economic security.

Almost **TWO-THIRDS** of New Yorkers in the Poverty Tracker sample cut back on spending. For those who lost employment income, this figure stands at **83 PERCENT.**

Many New Yorkers are relying more on their savings and credit cards. **OVER A THIRD** of New Yorkers in the sample and **MORE THAN HALF** of New Yorkers who lost employment income have used money from their savings account. At the same time, **32 PERCENT** of New Yorkers in the sample and **41 PERCENT** of New Yorkers who lost employment income are using their credit card more often than usual.

[6] Of those who dealt with these challenges when applying for unemployment insurance, 85 percent eventually received unemployment insurance benefits.

CHANGES IN SPENDING AND USE OF SAVINGS AND CREDIT SINCE MARCH 2020

	ALL ADULTS	WORKERS WHO LOST EMPLOYMENT INCOME
CUT BACK ON SPENDING	63%	83%
USED SAVINGS FROM BANK OR CREDIT UNION ACCOUNT	36%	52%
USED CREDIT CARD MORE THAN USUALLY WOULD	32%	41%
DELAYED PAYMENTS ON CREDIT CARDS OR OTHER LOANS	19%	29%
RECEIVED FINANCIAL HELP FROM FAMILY AND/OR FRIENDS	12%	15%
USED MONEY FROM RETIREMENT SAVINGS	12%	14%
RECEIVED FINANCIAL HELP FROM COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, NON-PROFITS, AND/OR RELIGIOUS GROUPS	11%	10%
SOLD BELONGINGS	9%	13%

Note: See Appendix Table A1 for these results broken out by demographic groups.

The economic fallout from the pandemic has major ramifications for New Yorkers' ability to support themselves now and in the future. Rising unemployment and the increasing reliance on savings and credit cards threatens to create economic insecurity that lasts beyond the pandemic.
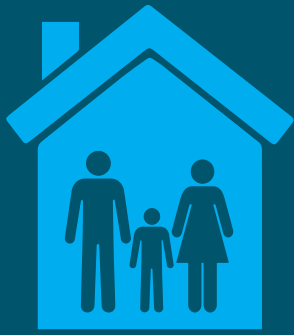
Section 2:

Housing Security

About two-thirds of New Yorkers are renters, and many of them are struggling to pay their rent on time. This challenge is even greater for certain groups. Housing affordability has long been an issue in New York City, but it has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

ONE IN FOUR renters in the Poverty Tracker sample could not pay their rent at some point during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, ONE IN FIVE renters were unable to make rent payments. This is a substantial increase, but it also highlights the struggle New Yorkers faced pre-pandemic in meeting their rent obligations. Of renters in the sample who missed a rent payment during the pandemic, 84 PERCENT were unable to pay their full rent for two or more months since March 2020.

NEARLY A THIRD of renters living below 200 percent of the poverty threshold missed a rent payment during the pandemic.

ROUGHLY A THIRD of renters who lost employment income were unable to make a rent payment at some point during the pandemic. Additionally, CLOSE TO HALF of renters living below 200 percent of the poverty threshold who lost employment income missed a rent payment.

SHARE OF RENTERS IN THE POVERTY TRACKER SAMPLE WHO HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO MAKE RENT SINCE THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

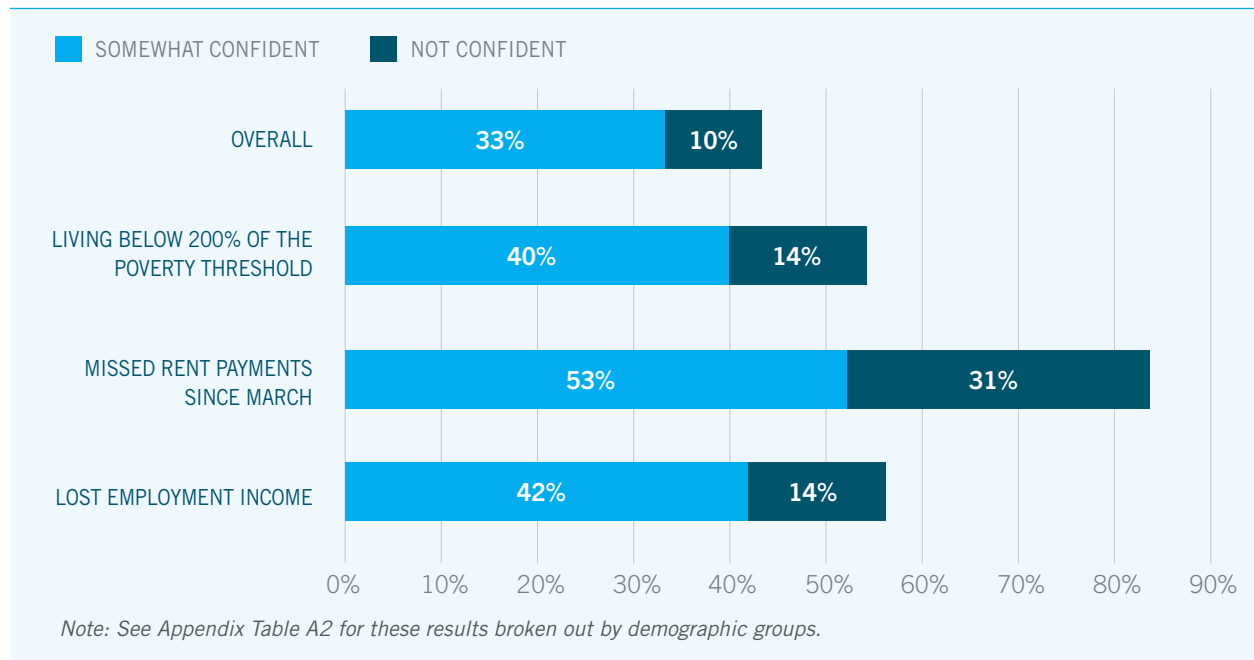| OVERALL	LIVING BELOW 200% OF THE POVERTY THRESHOLD	LOST EMPLOYMENT INCOME	LIVING BELOW 200% OF THE POVERTY THRESHOLD WHO LOST EMPLOYMENT INCOME
26%	31%	35%	45%
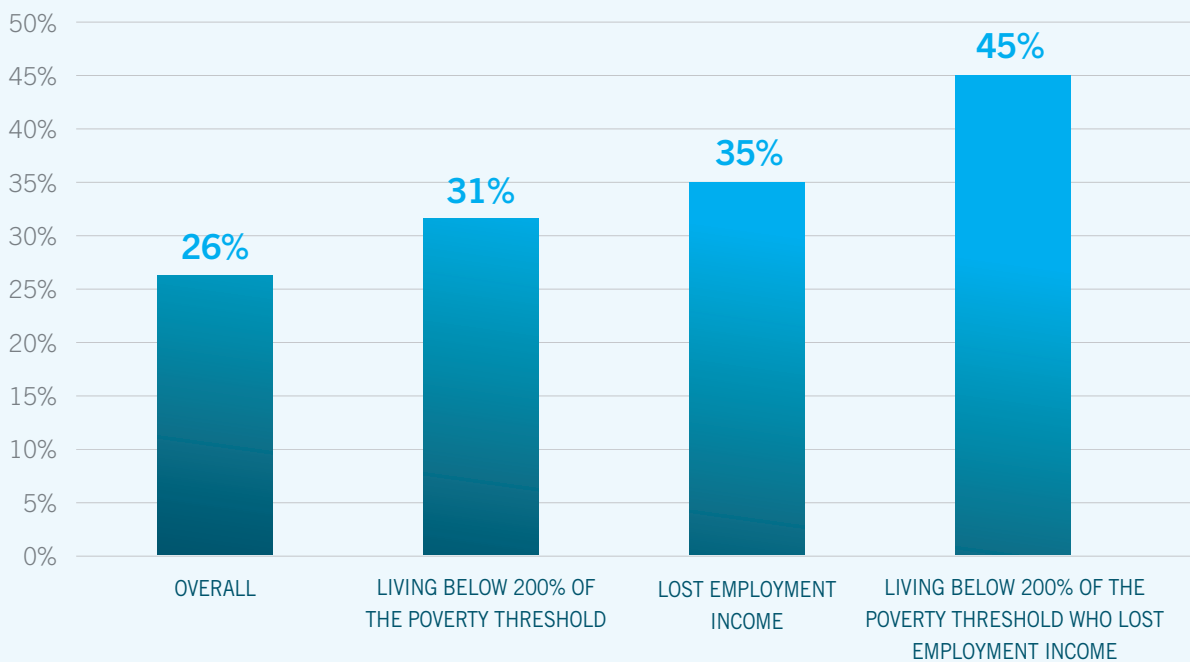
Note: See Appendix Table A2 for these results broken out by demographic groups.

New Yorkers are worried about their ability to make future rent payments. This concern exists across all demographics, but is pronounced among certain groups.

When asked if they were very, somewhat, or not at all confident that they would be able to make their next rent payment, more than **40 PERCENT** of renters said they were somewhat or not at all confident.

SHARE OF RENTERS WHO ARE SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT OR NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE THEIR NEXT RENT PAYMENT

Note: See Appendix Table A2 for these results broken out by demographic groups.

MORE THAN HALF of renters living below 200 percent of the poverty threshold were not at all or only somewhat confident that they will meet their next rent payment. Of the **25 PERCENT** of renters who previously missed a rent payment, a large majority **(84 PERCENT)** were not at all confident or only somewhat confident that they will meet their next rent payment. Renters who lost employment income report a similar level of confidence (**56 PERCENT** were not at all or only somewhat confident).

MORE THAN HALF of Black and Latino renters in the sample are only somewhat or not at all confident that they will make their next rent payment on time, compared to **A QUARTER** of white renters in the sample (see Appendix A).

MORE THAN ONE IN THREE renters born in the U.S. are somewhat or not at all confident they can make their next rent payment on time. **MORE THAN HALF** of renters born in another country are somewhat or not at all confident about their ability to meet their next rent payment (see Appendix A).

Many New Yorkers are behind on rent and unsure of their ability to make their next rent payment. Renters are under tremendous pressure to find a way to pay back rent while also paying future rent. This has led to increasing fears of a looming eviction crisis once the eviction moratoriums at the federal and state level end.

Section 3:

Food Hardship

The pandemic is exacerbating food hardship, a long existing issue in New York City.

Before the pandemic, food hardship[7] was widespread — **ROUGHLY 30 PERCENT** of New Yorkers sometimes or often ran out of food or worried food would run out.

When support provided through federal policies was greatest in the early months of the pandemic, rates of food hardship were relatively stable. When these supports dried up, rates of food hardship rose. By September and October of 2020, **42 PERCENT** of New Yorkers in the Poverty Tracker sample faced food hardship.

Food hardship is faced by all demographic groups in New York City. However, certain groups contend with higher rates of food hardship.

RACE/ ETHNICITY	RATE OF FOOD HARDSHIP
BLACK	50%
LATINO	57%
WHITE	17%

NOTE: See Appendix Table A3 for these results broken out by demographic groups. Due to sample size constraints, we do not present results for Asian New Yorkers or New Yorkers who are multiracial or fall into another racial or ethnic group. See Appendix B for a discussion of these limitations in the body of this report.

MORE THAN HALF of Latino New Yorkers in the sample reported an experience of food hardship since March 2020, the highest rate of any racial or ethnic group in the city. White New Yorkers in the sample faced the lowest rate of food hardship at **17 PERCENT.**

Many New Yorkers are relying on food pantries and other meal services as a way to make ends meet during this difficult time.

Before the pandemic, **ROUGHLY 10 PERCENT** of New Yorkers visited a food pantry at one point in a year. Since March 2020, **A THIRD** of New Yorkers in the sample received free groceries or meals from a food pantry, church, or any place that provides free food.

JUST UNDER HALF of Bronx residents in the sample have visited a food pantry, compared to **28 PERCENT** of Manhattan residents.

BOROUGH	RATE OF PANTRY USE
BRONX	45%
BROOKLYN	41%
MANHATTAN	28%
QUEENS	29%

NOTE: See Appendix Table A4 for these results broken out by demographic groups. Due to sample size constraints, we do not present results for residents of Staten Island in the body of this report.

New Yorkers have long struggled with high levels of food hardship. The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated this challenge. Many New Yorkers are relying on food pantries and community organizations to help them meet their food needs.

---

[7]Food hardship is defined as sometimes or often running out of food or worrying food would run out before you had money to buy more.

Section 4:

Internet Access and Remote Learning

The pandemic created a need for remote learning and placed a spotlight on the importance of internet access. Unfortunately, many New Yorkers do not have access to the internet at home. For households with children, this poses a serious impediment to learning in an age of remote education.

MORE THAN ONE IN SEVEN households with children **(15 PERCENT)** do not have access to a computer with internet access.

ROUGHLY 18 PERCENT of New Yorkers in the Poverty Tracker sample do not have a computer or tablet that has internet access. Brooklyn and the Bronx have the highest rates at **23 PERCENT** and **22 PERCENT**, respectively, compared to Manhattan where **14 PERCENT** lack a computer with internet access.

NEW YORK CITY
18%

## BRONX
22%

QUEENS
14%

MANHATTAN
14%

BROOKLYN
23%

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS LACKING A COMPUTER WITH INTERNET ACCESS

NEARLY ONE IN FOUR Black and Latino New Yorkers in the sample lack access at home to a computer or tablet with internet access. By comparison, just under **ONE IN EIGHT** white New Yorkers in the sample **(12 PERCENT)** do not have access to a computer with internet.

BLACK AND LATINO
NEW YORKERS

WHITE
NEW YORKERS
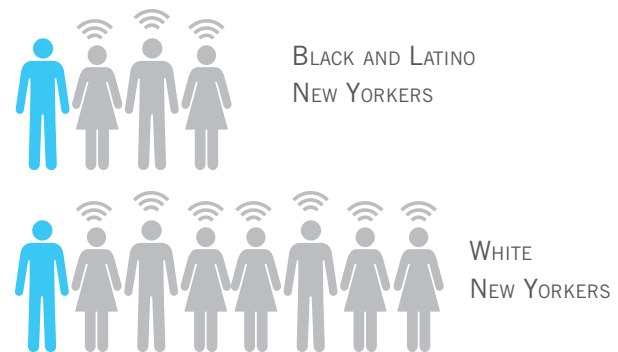
Many parents in New York City are worried about how their children are faring in this new remote environment.

ROUGHLY 66 PERCENT of parents in the Poverty Tracker sample reported being extremely or very concerned about their children falling back academically because of the pandemic. The same percentage of parents **(66 PERCENT)** reported being worried about their children being bored or under-stimulated.

Around **71 PERCENT** of parents from households living below 200 percent of the poverty threshold reported being extremely or very concerned about their children falling back academically, as compared to **59 PERCENT** of parents from households living above 200 percent of the poverty threshold.

The pandemic interrupted the education of millions of children in New York City. Remote learning provides a way to keep many students academically engaged. However, many children are still at risk of falling behind because they lack adequate internet access and the stimulation of an in-person classroom. This has the potential to widen already troubling gaps in academic success between more- and less-advantaged children in the city.

Conclusion

For almost an entire year, COVID-19 has altered day-to-day life in New York City. The data highlighted in this Spotlight provides new insight into how New Yorkers have been impacted, and how they are adjusting to a new reality.

Jobs and economic security are a major area of concern. The pandemic has made it difficult for many New Yorkers to earn a reliable income from employment. It has forced many to use their savings and to increase their use of credit. Certain groups are being hit harder economically. All of this contributes to greater economic insecurity and widening inequality.

Increased economic insecurity has major implications for housing security, both today and in the future. Many New Yorkers are struggling to pay their rent. In a city with historically high levels of rent burden, the pandemic has added another level of stress to existing housing concerns.

New Yorkers, while struggling to pay rent, are also worried about running out of food. The pandemic has exacerbated existing rates of food hardship in the city. New Yorkers are also increasingly relying on food pantries in order to get food.

The pandemic has also highlighted inequities in internet access. A sizable population of New Yorkers do not have internet access at home. In a world that has gone remote, this places these New Yorkers at a major disadvantage. This especially holds true for children in these households who need internet access for remote learning.

Overall, the pandemic's impacts on New York City should inform discussions about policies that can help New Yorkers deal with the short- and long-term effects of this crisis.

Appendix A

Survey data used in this report

The majority of the results presented in this report come from the Poverty Tracker's COVID-19 Survey. The survey aims to provide a comprehensive look at the pandemic's impact on measures of hardship and disadvantage. The survey was fielded to a representative sample of New Yorkers, with a field period covering late August 2020 to early April 2021. The data presented in this report relies on the 1,722 surveys completed by the end of December 2020. By the end of the field period, we expect to have approximately 2,000 respondents in total. Results will continue to be updated as new data are collected.

The data collected in the survey were grouped into several modules, each focused on a different aspect of hardship or a topic related to the pandemic. Two modules focused on housing status as a means of measuring the pandemic's impact on households' ability to meet rental or mortgage obligations. Modules on employment and cash needs help paint a picture of whether and how households are meeting financial obligations in light of rising unemployment. Modules on food and utility hardships ask about the alternative methods, such as food pantries or bill payment assistance programs, that households are using to meet their needs. The survey also asks about other topics related to the pandemic. As remote work and learning rise in importance, the survey collects data on households' access to internet and thoughts on remote learning. Finally, the survey collects data on other topics, such as health and medical care during the pandemic, experiences of discrimination faced by Asian New Yorkers, and respondents' use of networks of support in helping get through this difficult time.

In addition to results from the COVID-19 Survey, this report features results from other Poverty Tracker analyses on the impacts of COVID-19. The results examining the share of New Yorkers who lost employment income come from a report released in October of 2020, and the results discussing the impacts of the pandemic on food hardship were featured in a report released in November 2020.

Many of the results discussed in the report pertain to the Poverty Tracker sample (as opposed to the city's population) because we cannot yet produce survey weights for most of the data collected in 2020. Our traditional weighting method involves using data from the American Community Survey (ACS). ACS data on the composition of the city's population in 2020 will not be available until the fall of 2021. At that point, we will develop survey weights for all of the Poverty Tracker data collected in 2020. Note that the results pertaining to the sample may differ somewhat compared to the city's population as a whole, but we will not be able to assess these differences until we produce survey weights. Results from prior analyses, however, show us that the difference between the weighted and unweighted results are often small.

Lastly, we have been able to produce survey weights for some data collected since the COVID-19 outbreak, specifically data on the impacts of the pandemic on employment and income. We discuss the results calculated using this data in the context of the city's population.

Use of savings and credit cards, by demographic subgroup

	USED SAVINGS FROM YOUR BANK OR CREDIT UNION ACCOUNT	USED YOUR CREDIT CARD MORE THAN YOU USUALLY WOULD	DELAYED PAYMENTS ON CREDIT CARDS OR OTHER LOANS
BELOW 200% OF THE POVERTY THRESHOLD	40%	34%	21%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT			
HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE OR LESS	37%	34%	20%
SOME COLLEGE	41%	37%	22%
COLLEGE DEGREE	35%	28%	17%
RACE/ETHNICITY			
ASIAN*	38%	26%	13%
BLACK	40%	34%	23%
LATINO	42%	37%	25%
MULTIRACIAL OR ANOTHER RACE/ETHNICITY*	32%	28%	18%
WHITE	31%	28%	13%
BOROUGH			
BRONX	34%	30%	23%
BROOKLYN	38%	35%	21%
MANHATTAN	30%	24%	15%
QUEENS	41%	33%	19%
STATEN ISLAND*	28%	28%	19%
IMMIGRATION STATUS			
BORN IN THE U.S.	34%	30%	16%
BORN IN ANOTHER COUNTRY	42%	34%	24%

Note: The results above are specific to changes made since March 2020.

Interpret with caution due to sample size constraints.

Rental payments, by demographic subgroup

	UNABLE TO MAKE A RENT PAYMENT IN AT LEAST ONE MONTH SINCE MARCH 2020	NOT AT ALL OR ONLY SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT IN ABILITY TO MAKE NEXT RENT PAYMENT
BELOW 200% OF THE POVERTY THRESHOLD	31%	54%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE OR LESS	32%	50%
SOME COLLEGE	27%	53%
COLLEGE DEGREE	20%	40%
RACE/ETHNICITY		
ASIAN*	11%	41%
BLACK	30%	53%
LATINO	33%	55%
MULTIRACIAL OR ANOTHER RACE/ETHNICITY*	29%	44%
WHITE	14%	26%
BOROUGH		
BRONX	32%	44%
BROOKLYN	22%	44%
MANHATTAN	21%	33%
QUEENS	28%	44%
STATEN ISLAND*	22%	37%
IMMIGRATION STATUS		
BORN IN THE U.S.	22%	37%
BORN IN ANOTHER COUNTRY	33%	54%

*Interpret with caution due to sample size constraints.

Food hardship and pantry use, by demographic subgroup

	FACED FOOD HARDSHIP SINCE MARCH 2020	RECEIVED FREE FOOD FROM A CHURCH, FOOD PANTRY, OR FOOD BANK SINCE MARCH 2020
BELOW 200% OF THE POVERTY THRESHOLD	51%	43%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE OR LESS	53%	44%
SOME COLLEGE	49%	40%
COLLEGE DEGREE	23%	23%
RACE/ETHNICITY		
ASIAN*	26%	19%
BLACK	50%	40%
LATINO	57%	46%
MULTIRACIAL OR ANOTHER RACE/ETHNICITY*	47%	32%
WHITE	17%	22%
BOROUGH		
BRONX	45%	41%
BROOKLYN	38%	45%
MANHATTAN	31%	28%
QUEENS	40%	29%
STATEN ISLAND*	24%	19%
IMMIGRATION STATUS		
BORN IN THE U.S.	33%	31%
BORN IN ANOTHER COUNTRY	48%	36%

Note: Food hardship is defined as sometimes or often running out of food or worrying food would run out before having money to buy more. On the Poverty Tracker COVID Survey, respondents are asked how often they faced these hardships since March of 2020.

*Interpret with caution due to sample size constraints.

Internet access by demographic subgroup

	DOES NOT HAVE A COMPUTER WITH INTERNET ACCESS
BELOW 200% OF THE POVERTY THRESHOLD	25%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	
HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE OR LESS	34%
SOME COLLEGE	21%
COLLEGE DEGREE	7%
RACE/ETHNICITY	
ASIAN*	7%
BLACK	24%
LATINO	24%
MULTIRACIAL OR ANOTHER RACE/ETHNICITY*	15%
WHITE	12%
BOROUGH	
BRONX	23%
BROOKLYN	22%
MANHATTAN	14%
QUEENS	14%
STATEN ISLAND*	12%
IMMIGRATION STATUS	
BORN IN THE U.S.	15%
BORN IN ANOTHER COUNTRY	23%

*Interpret with caution due to sample size constraints.

Source: Poverty Tracker COVID Survey, third and fourth panels.

Appendix B.

How the Poverty Tracker identifies respondents' race and ethnicity

The Poverty Tracker identifies the race and ethnicity of adults in the sample using questions asked by the Census Bureau on various population-level surveys[8] to ensure that we are surveying a representative sample of New York City's racial and ethnic groups. The questions read:

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

1. Yes
2. No

What is your race? Are you…

1. White
2. Black or African American
3. Asian
4. American Indian or Alaska Native
5. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
6. Or something else

We combine responses to these questions into the following racial and ethnic groups:

1. Asian, non-Latino
2. Black, non- Latino
3. Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin[9]
4. Multiracial or another race or ethnicity, non-Hispanic
5. White, non-Latino

In this report we refer to New Yorkers who identified as "Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin" as Latino New Yorkers,[10] and to Black non-Latino and white non-Latino New Yorkers as Black and white New Yorkers, respectively. In addition, when we say, "New Yorkers," we are referring to adults in New York City.

---

[8] Historically, the Census asks race and origin questions to gain an understanding of the makeup of the population and to help construct civil rights protections for all. These questions have helped to reveal gaps within various social policies and to address the economic, educational, and infrastructural needs of different communities. See Brumfield, Goldvale, and Brown (2019).

[9] With these groupings, New Yorkers who indicate that they are of "Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin" are grouped together, regardless of their response to the question about their race. The majority of New Yorkers who identify as Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin (62 percent) do not identify with a particular racial group (i.e., they respond "something else" when asked about their race). Roughly 25 percent identify as white and 13 percent identify as Black.

[10] The Poverty Tracker uses the question from the Census Bureau listed above to identify if individuals are of "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin." We must use this question in order to weight the sample to Census Bureau data and to make it representative of the city's population. When identifying New Yorkers who say yes to this question, we use the term Latino instead of Hispanic or Spanish origin. Hispanic is a term originally used in the U.S. by the Census Bureau to refer to a very diverse group of people who were linked by their history of colonization by Spain or by their Spanish origin (see Gershon, 2020). The term is thus thought to exclude many people with origins in Latin America who do not speak Spanish – including people with origins in Brazil and/or within many indigenous groups. The term Latino, on the other hand, is more inclusive of all people with origins in Latin America. Latino, however, is also gendered, and many people choose to identify as Latinx to remove the gender binary implied in the term. There is also a debate around the term Latinx, with some identifying with the term and others not, or doing so only use in specific settings (see Salinas, 2019). Because the Poverty Tracker is weighted to Census Bureau data, and because the term Latino is more consistent with the Census Bureau's question wording, we have chosen to use the term Latino in this report.

There are, however, limitations to this methodology. This type of classification is one-dimensional while one's identity is much more robust and intersectional. In addition, our results present averages for groups of people, but averages do not reflect the experiences of all individuals. One's personal experiences may diverge significantly from the results we present. And while our questions are relatively specific, each person might interpret them differently, resulting in subjective answers. While there are limitations in this methodology, our examination is intended to show the differential impact that the pandemic has had on New Yorkers who fall into different racial and ethnic groups, documenting how the pandemic has exacerbated the inequities between racial and ethnic groups that preceded it.[11]

Experiences of Asian and multiracial New Yorkers

Results for Asian New Yorkers and multiracial New Yorkers are not presented in the body of this report, but they can be found in Appendix A. We urge readers to interpret these results with caution due to sample size constraints. We have not emphasized results for multiracial New Yorkers because of limited sample size, as is often the case with this type of analysis.[12] We have not presented these results for Asian New Yorkers because the data behind our estimates come from surveys conducted in English and Spanish and contain only a small group of Asian New Yorkers, which limits the representativeness of the Asian population and the capacity for comparative analysis with other racial/ethnic groups.

In 2020, the Poverty Tracker began to oversample in neighborhoods with a high concentration of New Yorkers of Chinese origin and to interview respondents in Mandarin. These surveys will enable the Poverty Tracker to better capture information on the experiences of disadvantage in New York City's Asian community. This data will be available later in 2021. We recognize that the Asian community is diverse and many different Asian languages are spoken in New York City. However, Mandarin is the most common Asian language spoken in the city and Mandarin-speaking New Yorkers are the largest group missing in various data sources. The Poverty Tracker is the only source of longitudinal information on disadvantage and the data collected will be vital to understanding the experiences of Asian New Yorkers going forward and how these experiences have been impacted by the pandemic.

[11] See The state of poverty and disadvantage in New York City, Volume 3 for an overview of how the likelihood of facing poverty and disadvantage in New York City varied with one's race or ethnicity before the pandemic and how racism, discrimination, and public policy choices fueled these disparities and inequities.

[12] For example, as of this writing, the Census Bureau does not report specific results for multiracial individuals in the United States in their annual Supplemental Poverty Measure report.

References

Brumfield, C., Goldvale, C., and Brown, C. (2019). Race and origin questions in context: Understanding the 2020 census. Center on Poverty and Inequality, Georgetown Law. Access here.

Gershon, L. (2020). Where the term Hispanic comes from. JSTOR Daily. Access here.

Salinas Jr, C. (2020). The complexity of the "x" in Latinx: How Latinx/a/o students relate to, identify with, and understand the term Latinx. Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 19(2), 149-168. Access here.