

**SOUTHSTRONG**

PEOPLE FIRST. EQUITY CENTERED

We matter. -Lakeshia in Mississippi

Hungry. -Jeremiah in Mississippi

**Do Better.**

**Hungry.**

Come out to the community and check on people. -Patricia in Louisiana

sh congress to pass a new stimulus

**COVID-19**

check. -Tiffany in Louisiana

**Pandemic**

Help out the low income families. We

**HELP.**

struggle to eat, to pay our bills, and to have affordable housing! -Matthew in

izens the \$194.00

**Jobless.**

Louisiana

to buy nutrition on

**Listen.**

in Georgia

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

Kentucky

**Please Help...**

**Stimulus Check**

Can't work because I have no one to watch my children during this pandemic. -Nica in

Mississippi

**Pandemic.**

**2300 SOUTHERN VOICES  
CALL FOR HELP**

**BASICS OF RENT, UTILITIES, AND FOOD NEEDED MOST**

Come out and speak with us so you can see

the struggle and feel our pain especially those with children. - Jerri in Alabama

# METHODOLOGY

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From August 28 to September 7, 2020, the SouthStrong campaign surveyed Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants in 12 Southern states. The surveys used to collect the data shared in this report were written and analyzed by the Southern Economic Advancement Project (SEAP), and the conclusions and calls to action belong to SEAP and their SouthStrong COVID-19 recovery campaign.

The data analyzed here rely on self-reported information from 2,308 anonymized surveys. Respondents were invited to answer a mixture of multiple choice and open-ended questions about challenges and changes in the wake of the pandemic, experiences using and applying for government benefits, and recommendations and requests for policymakers. Respondents were invited, but not required, to share their first names to be attached to quotes you see here.

The surveys were administered by Propel ([www.joinpropel.com](http://www.joinpropel.com)), the operators of a financial services app, Fresh EBT ([www.freshebt.com](http://www.freshebt.com)). Fresh EBT, used by over 4 million households, is a smartphone app available at no cost to SNAP participants to track and manage SNAP and TANF benefits. The survey, designed by SEAP, was made available through Fresh EBT to randomly selected individuals who opened the app between August 28 – September 7, 2020, in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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Finding #1 Food insecurity and job loss have been top challenges in the pandemic.

Finding #2 Government aid made a real difference for many...but much of it has expired.

Finding #3 Help with food, housing, and utilities are needed now.

# CALL TO ACTION

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State and local leaders still have millions of dollars in CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Funds. They have until December 31st to spend the funds. Families need that aid now! Contact your governor, county commission, and mayor to let them know you want them to spend Coronavirus Relief Funds on housing, utility, and food assistance.

Click here to find the contact information for your elected officials:  
<https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>.

Moreover, Congress needs to pass a robust stimulus package that includes direct aid to individuals and families, extra SNAP benefits, and expanded unemployment insurance. Contact Congress today!

Click here to find the contact information for your elected officials:  
<https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>.

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

**59%** of respondents have had trouble buying enough food at some point during the pandemic. That struggle was the most frequent challenge across racial groups and in every state. Job loss was the second most frequent challenge overall; however, in several states, child care issues were higher than job loss among challenges. In open-ended responses, these struggling Southerners talked about the burden of higher food prices, loss of work hours, depression and stress, car repossessions, and challenges of disability.

## CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN



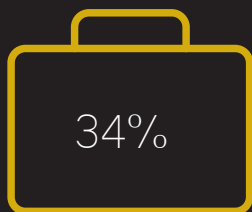
Trouble Buying Enough Food



Housing Issues



Healthcare Issues



Loss of Job



Childcare Issues



Pay Cut

# FINDING #1 CONTINUED

Half of respondents have had problems applying for or receiving at least one type of assistance (UI, stimulus check, SNAP, P-EBT, Medicaid). Unemployment insurance and stimulus checks were the most challenging to receive overall, but there was variation across states. Black Southerners had higher shares of difficulty with UI, and white and Hispanic Southerners reported greater difficulty receiving stimulus checks. Challenges included busy phone lines, no responses from agencies, difficult websites, long wait times (weeks and months), and one benefit causing ineligibility in another benefit.

	ALL SOUTHERN STATES	STATE WITH HIGHEST SHARE REPORTING DIFFICULTY APPLYING/RECEIVING
PROBLEMS WITH AT LEAST ONE PROGRAM	51%	GEORGIA (61%)
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE	19%	GEORGIA (27%)
STIMULUS CHECKS	19%	TENNESSEE (31%)
SNAP	13%	MISSISSIPPI (23%)
P-EBT	12%	MISSISSIPPI (22%)
MEDICAID	11%	GEORGIA (20%)

# FROM THE MOUTH OF ....

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

– Emma in Kentucky

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Took over 2 months to get approved which caused me to get 2 months behind on rent.

Therefore, I almost got evicted.

–J.K. in North Carolina

# ...THE IMPACTED

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

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In spite of challenges applying for or receiving certain aid, 58% of respondents said programs or assistance made a real difference for them and their family in managing the pandemic. SNAP was the most frequently mentioned program, which is not surprising since all respondents received SNAP benefits and those benefits continue today.

Beyond regular SNAP benefits, the most helpful aid was

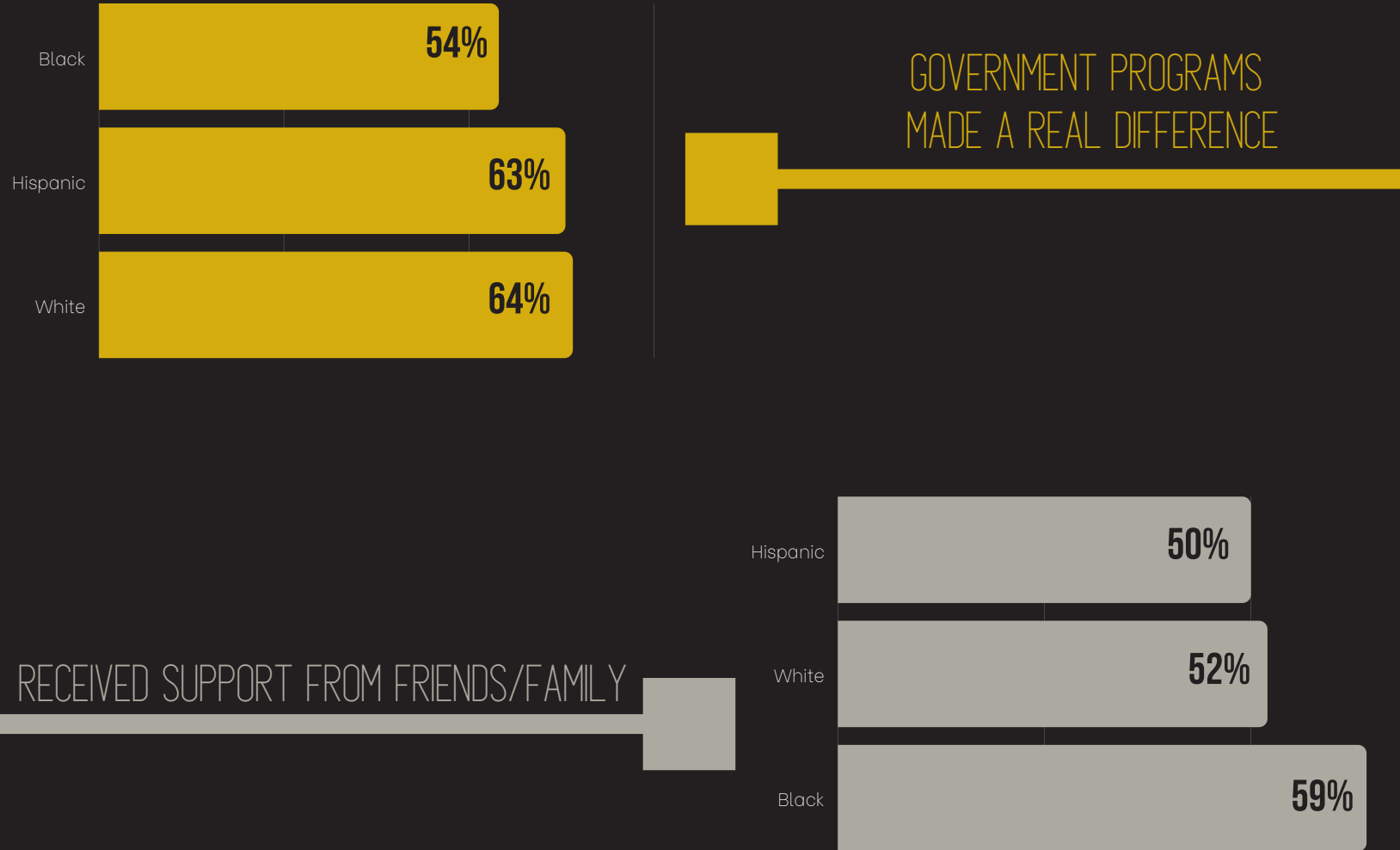
- UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE
- STIMULUS CHECK
- P-EBT
- EXTRA SNAP {MAX ALLOTMENT}
- UTILITY ASSISTANCE
- MEDICAID

# FINDING #2 CONTINUED

Stimulus checks were one-time, and the extra \$600 weekly unemployment insurance has expired. P-EBT and extra SNAP are expiring soon. The low levels of some benefits—particularly UI weekly benefits—were mentioned by many, especially in Florida.

Family and friends are a source of support for about half (55%) of these struggling Southerners. Only one-quarter (24%) reported receiving help from nonprofits, charities, or religious organizations.

Black Southerners were less likely to say programs made a real difference for them and more likely to rely on friends and family than other racial/ethnic groups:





# FROM THE MOUTH OF ....

MOST HELPFUL ASSISTANCE?

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SNAP: We never went hungry.  
-SG in South Carolina

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UI & P-EBT: Definitely unemployment when they were doing the extra \$600. While I was getting it, I was able to catch up on bills. P-EBT helped as well so I could put food on the table.  
-Dnai in North Carolina

...THE IMPACTED

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

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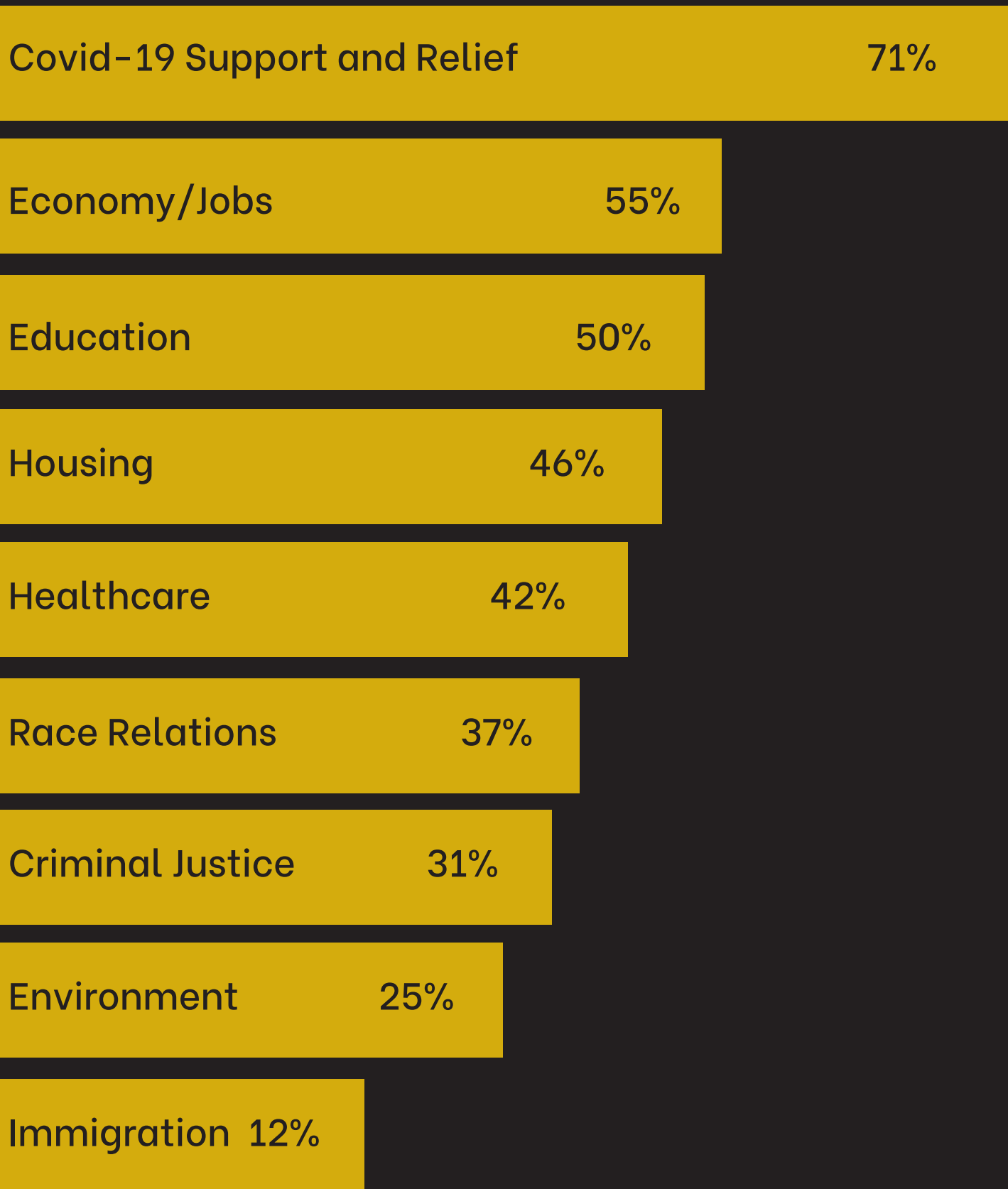
Overwhelmingly, these struggling Southerners said they cannot pay for housing, electricity, water, and food. They spoke again and again of job loss, cutbacks in work hours, higher food prices, rent increases, and higher utilities due to being at home more. Covid-19 support and relief was the top concern by far in every state and across every racial/ethnic group. In open-ended responses, the most frequent requests were another stimulus check, rent and utility assistance, and the continuation of extra SNAP benefits.

WORRIED THAT YOU MAY NOT HAVE STABLE  
HOUSING IN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS?

**58%**  
**YES**

# WHAT ISSUES ARE YOU MOST CONCERNED ABOUT?

COVID-19 SUPPORT AND RELIEF IS THE TOP CONCERN.



YOUR STATE HAS MONEY TO SPEND TO HELP PEOPLE IN THE  
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.  
WHICH OF THESE WOULD BE MOST USEFUL?

Help with Rent 37%

Help Paying for Utilities 29%

Food Assistance 20%

Childcare Assistance 2%

Help with Medical Bills 2%

Transportation Assistance 2%

Jobs Program 1%

PPE for Work 1%

Check on poor people. We are not okay. –Meggan in Alabama

The MS people are in dire need of help. We can't fight this alone. –Mallery in Mississippi

We are still in a crisis. –Shakia in Florida

Help get utilities caught up. –Ashley in Alabama

# WHAT I WANT POLICYMAKERS TO KNOW...

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

Help with utilities and help with food. Being home has made these go up. –Brooke in Louisiana

In small towns [there is a] lack of resources available. –Dayne in Louisiana

Keep the extra food stamps coming. I'm diabetic and it does help. –Cathy in Georgia

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