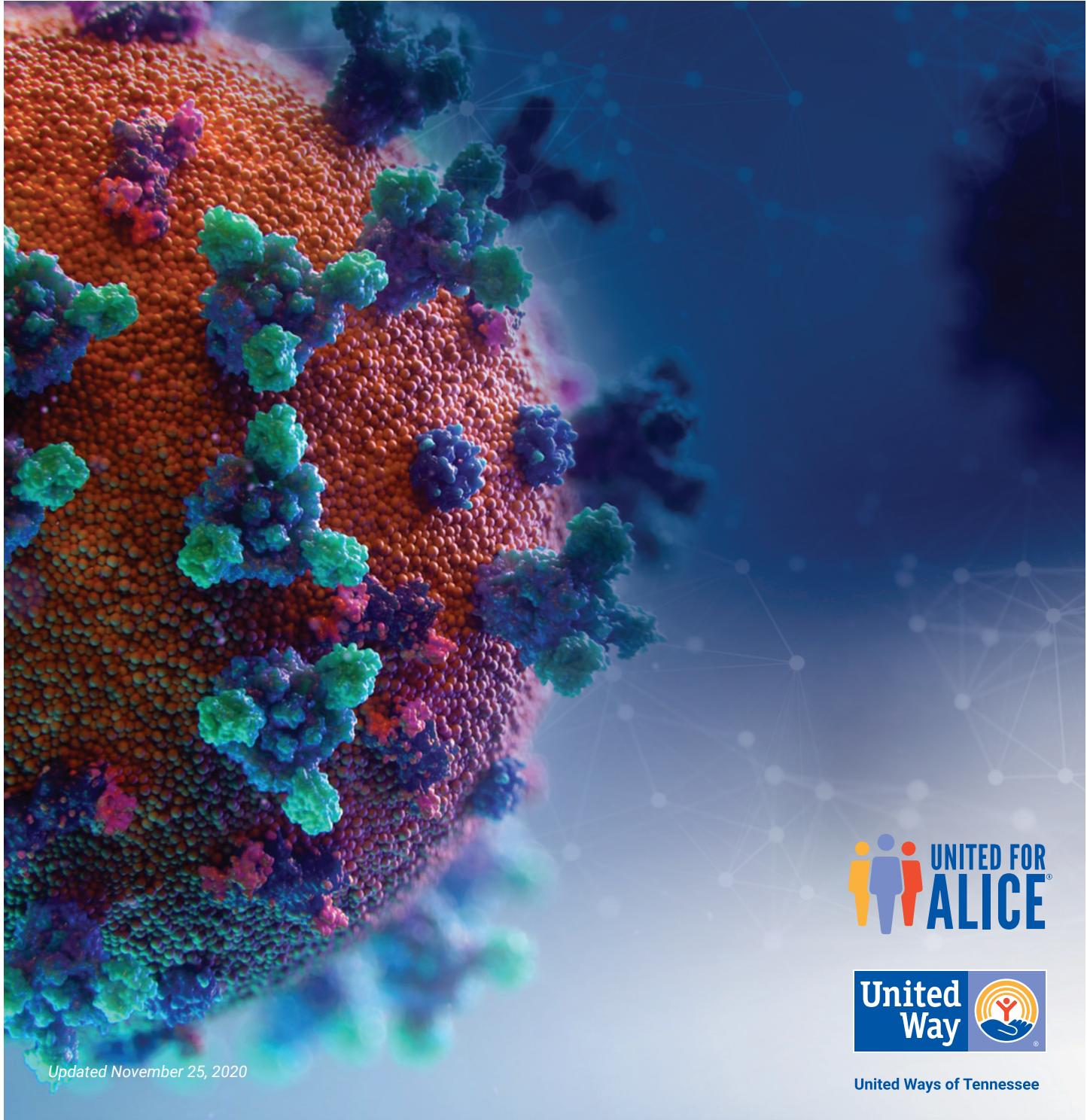


COVID-19 IMPACT SURVEY

2020 Tennessee Results Report



Updated November 25, 2020



United Ways of Tennessee

SURVEY OVERVIEW

From September 7–30, 2020, over 2,000 people living in Tennessee responded to a survey about how their households have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic since March 1, 2020. This survey was conducted by United Ways of Tennessee in partnership with United For ALICE, a center of innovation, research, and action around financial hardship. Participants were recruited by local United Ways and through state-wide media outreach; as such, this survey relied on convenience sampling *and is not a representative sample of the state population*. However, the results of this survey provide important insights into the issues Tennessee households are facing during this time of profound uncertainty.

MEET ALICE

When COVID-19 hit, just over 830,000 Tennessee households were already one emergency away from financial crisis – a 10-year record high – setting the stage for the unprecedented economic impact of the pandemic. These households are **ALICE**: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. With income above the Federal Poverty Level, ALICE households earn too much to qualify as “poor,” but are still unable to cover the basics of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and technology in the counties where they live. Combining ALICE households and households in poverty, 47% of Tennessee households were **below the ALICE Threshold** before the pandemic.

Throughout this document, gold boxes will highlight statistically significant differences between respondents above and below the ALICE Threshold.

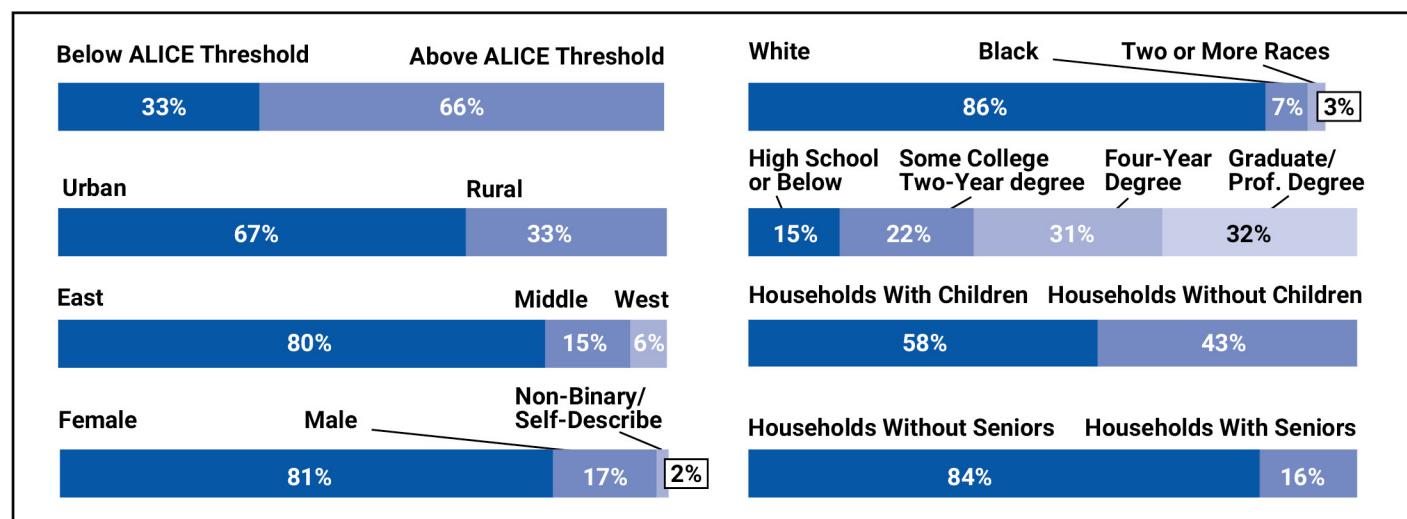
RURAL AND URBAN COUNTIES

Households in rural and urban areas often face distinct challenges, and it is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these differences.

Throughout this document, light gold boxes will highlight statistically significant differences between respondents in rural and urban counties.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Of the 2,709 people who opened the survey link, 2,001 submitted valid surveys (which include known location; all surveys taken by people who live outside of Tennessee were excluded). Respondents are broken down by demographic and geographic groups below. Demographic questions were asked about the respondent themselves, although for other questions they were asked to respond on behalf of their household. (See erratum note on p. 11).

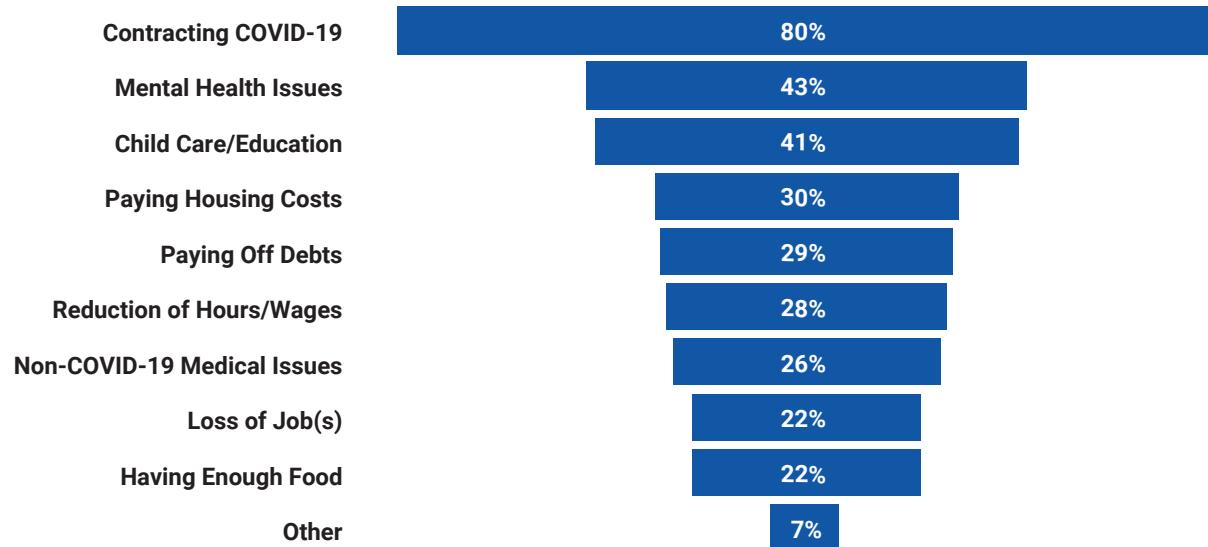


Note: Due to rounding, some percentages may total 101%. For the ALICE Threshold grouping, income could not be determined for 1% of respondents. For race/ethnicity, other groups were reported but made up less than 2% each of respondents.

HOUSEHOLD CONCERNs DURING THE PANDEMIC

Respondents were asked to select which of the following concerns their households are facing during the pandemic. Most respondents (80%), regardless of income or location, said contracting COVID-19 was their biggest concern.

Q. What are your household's concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic? Select all that apply



Respondents below the ALICE Threshold were significantly more likely than respondents above the ALICE Threshold to say they were concerned about child care/education (48% vs. 36%), mental health issues (47% vs. 39%), having enough food (44% vs. 9%), paying off debts (41% vs. 21%), having a reduction of hours/wages (37% vs. 21%), medical issues other than COVID-19 (30% vs. 23%), and loss of job(s) (28% vs. 18%).

Respondents in rural counties were significantly less likely than respondents in urban counties to say they were concerned about getting COVID-19 (76% vs. 81%) and about mental health issues (37% vs. 46%).

Other concerns noted by participants included inability to engage in religious and/or social events, voting safety, reliable internet access, and being distanced from family and friends.

When respondents were asked their **biggest concern**, basic needs like child care, housing, and food moved up in the ranking across all groups, with the top three biggest concerns being contracting COVID-19, paying housing costs, and child care/education (in that order). One participant shared:

“It’s hard to pick just one [concern]. Of course, no one wants COVID, so I guess that’s number one, and we have missed a lot of services our daughter needs because of remote learning issues. But none of it matters if you are worrying about food, housing, and paying bills all the time.”

CHALLENGES IN MEETING BASIC NEEDS

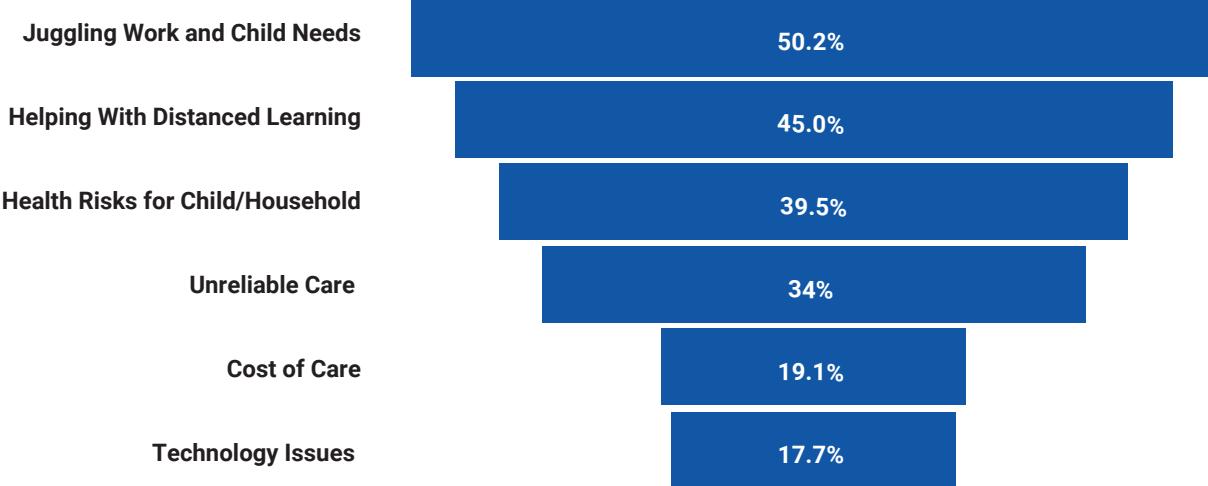


CHILD CARE AND FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Of respondents with children, **20%** said their household had trouble meeting basic child care needs, including different forms of care like daycare/early learning for households with young children, and afterschool/summer care and juggling new remote/hybrid schedules for households with school-age children.

Of respondents with children, just over half said that they were concerned about juggling work and children's needs.

Q. Since March 1, 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, what child care issues or concerns have members of your household had? Select all that apply



Employment impacts were of particular concern. In a separate question, 40% of respondents with children said that child care issues impacted household members' ability to work during the pandemic: 17% said one or more household members was working reduced hours due to child care issues (including daycare and afterschool care), and 5% said one or more household members had quit a job to care for children since the beginning of the pandemic.

Respondents with children below the ALICE Threshold were significantly more likely than respondents with children above the ALICE Threshold to say that a household member had to work reduced hours (20% vs. 15%) or quit a job (9% vs. 2%) due to child care issues since the beginning of the pandemic. While most respondents with children reported income from one or more jobs, those **below the ALICE Threshold** were significantly less likely to do so (83% vs. 98%), and were less likely to have income from investments (3% vs. 10%).

Respondents in rural counties were significantly more likely to be concerned about technology issues related to child care (23% vs. 15%). **Respondents in urban counties** were significantly more likely to be concerned about juggling work and child needs (56% vs. 40%), helping children with distanced learning (50% vs. 36%), and the cost of care (21% vs. 15%).

Respondents with children were significantly more likely than respondents without children to be below the ALICE Threshold. They were also significantly more likely (at least twice as likely) to say they struggle with basic needs of housing, child care, food, transportation, and technology (all except health care, which both groups struggled with similarly). Housing concerns, food access, and employment impacts were of particular concern for respondents with children, and even more so for households with children living below the ALICE Threshold. For example, 47% of households with children below the ALICE Threshold were concerned about providing enough food for the household, significantly higher than households without children (13%) and households with children above the ALICE Threshold (11%). A similar significant trend was found for concerns about paying housing expenses (56% vs. 21% vs. 18%).

Before the pandemic, respondents with children reported the following care arrangements: Formal K-12 school (71%); paid center-based child care or paid before/after school care (26%); paid or non-paid arrangement with a friend, neighbor, or family member (19%); or a different child care arrangement (6%).

The pandemic has put a strain on households both with young children (0-5) and with school-age children (6-17). For both groups, their biggest child care concern was juggling work and children's needs. However, households with young children were significantly more likely to be concerned about cost of care than households with older kids (26% vs. 15%), and households with older children were significantly more likely to be concerned about helping children with distanced learning (50% vs. 37%) and internet/device access issues (22% vs. 11%). In addition, 14% of families with school-age children said they have had difficulty getting food through a school food program. Respondents with children in the household also wrote about specific issues related to remote/hybrid learning schedules and difficulty accessing off-hours care, like afterschool or summer care.

“I feel that child care resources or alternatives are not available for my preschool-age child who attends public preschool. They don’t have afterschool care and the day ends at 1:45-2:00. This option is not feasible unless you have flexibility in your job.”

Compared to respondents without children, respondents with children were...

- Significantly more likely to say that employment for one or more household members was impacted by the pandemic (39% vs. 31%).
- Significantly more likely to report that their household relies on hourly work (64% vs. 36%), and these hourly workers were significantly more likely to report that they were working fewer hours due to the pandemic (40% vs. 27%).
- Significantly more likely to say that they were looking for work at the time of the survey (26% vs. 20%). As for barriers to finding work, respondents with children living below the ALICE Threshold were significantly more likely than households with children above the ALICE Threshold to say that child care (53% vs. 33%), transportation (9% vs. 1%), and technology issues (7% vs. 1%) were barriers.
- Significantly more likely to have experienced difficulty paying housing expenses (36% vs. 23%), paying off debts (32% vs. 24%), or providing enough food for the family (28% vs. 14%), and to say that they're concerned about a reduction in hours/wages due to the pandemic (31% vs 23%).
- Significantly more likely to have applied for government assistance (30% vs. 9%), borrowed from family or friends (25% vs. 13%), and taken out a personal loan or car loan (14% vs. 7%) to meet needs during the pandemic.
- Significantly more likely to say they had to purchase additional technology, including computers (21% vs. 12%), mobile phones (9% vs. 5%), printers (16% vs. 9%), or tablets (8% vs. 3%), and to have purchased or upgraded internet service (24% vs. 13%). Still, they were significantly more likely to say their household doesn't have enough devices for school, work, and/or telemedicine appointments (59% vs. 34%). Respondents with school-age children in the household report greater technology needs than families with young children and families with no children.



FOOD

Overall, **15%** of respondents said their household had trouble meeting food needs.

Of respondents who had trouble meeting food needs...

- 83% said they could not afford the amount or kind of food their household wanted to buy
- 59% said the food their household wanted to buy was not available or out of stock
- 37% said they did not feel safe shopping for food due to the pandemic
- 17% said they had difficulty getting food from a food pantry
- 16% said food retailers and/or restaurants they wanted to visit were closed
- 10% had difficulty getting food through a school food program

Respondents below the ALICE Threshold were significantly more likely than households above the ALICE Threshold to say their household had trouble meeting food needs (34% vs. 4%).



HOUSING

Overall, **14%** of respondents said their household had trouble meeting housing needs, such as finding or paying for housing.

Of respondents who had trouble meeting housing needs, 59% said they were concerned about eviction or foreclosure (and 19% were very concerned).

Respondents below the ALICE Threshold were significantly more likely than households above the ALICE Threshold to say their household had trouble meeting housing needs (30% vs. 5%).

“ We are living rent free right now due to family taking us in – we had to move at the beginning of the pandemic because we could not afford rent with previous jobs. If we were paying for rent right now, affording basics would be tight with the need to pay off student loans. ”



HEALTH CARE

Overall, **11%** of respondents said their household had trouble meeting health care needs.

Of respondents who had trouble meeting health care needs...

- 48% said they had difficulty getting care (for a non-COVID-19 related issue)
- 33% said health insurance didn't cover needed services
- 23% said they lost health insurance
- 12% said they had trouble getting a test for COVID-19
- 8% said they had trouble applying for Medicaid/TennCare

When asked if any household members have health issues, 68% said one or more people have chronic health issues (like diabetes or a heart condition), 22% have a mental health issue, 21% have a physical disability, and 20% have another type of health issue.

Respondents below the ALICE Threshold were significantly more likely than households above the ALICE Threshold to say their household had trouble meeting health care needs (18% vs. 7%).

"A family member [of mine] has had medical issues since the pandemic. He suffered a stroke. Quarantine and the inability to 'go out' has hindered and stalled his recovery. We cannot have people visit because he is high-risk. Also, it puts a strain on the fragile mental health of someone recovering."



TECHNOLOGY

Overall, **11%** of respondents said their household had trouble meeting technology needs.

Of **all** respondents (not only those with trouble meeting technology needs)...

- 91% said they have reliable internet service at home (3% said they can't afford reliable service and 2% said reliable service was not available where they live)
- 83% said they have been required to use technology for work, school, and/or telemedicine during the pandemic (and 9% have been required to use technology for all three)
- 69% said they have purchased or upgraded technology due to the pandemic (19% purchased or upgraded an internet subscription, 17% bought a computer, 13% bought a printer, 7% bought a mobile phone, and 6% bought a tablet)

For those using telemedicine (18% of respondents)...

- 58% used it for well visits/check-ups
- 44% used it for sick visits
- 43% used it for mental health counseling (and 2% for substance use support)
- 31% used it for management of a chronic health issue

Respondents in rural counties were significantly less likely to have reliable internet service at home compared to households in urban counties (84% vs. 95%), with lack of availability being an issue for 8% and affordability being a concern for 5% of rural households (both significantly higher than for respondents in urban counties). In addition, **respondents in rural counties** were significantly more likely to have purchased a mobile phone to meet technology needs (9% vs. 6%).



TRANSPORTATION

Overall, **4%** of respondents said their household had trouble meeting transportation needs.

Of respondents who said their households have trouble meeting transportation needs...

- 66% said they had trouble maintaining a personal vehicle
- 31% said they had trouble keeping up with vehicle payments
- 24% did not feel safe riding public transportation due to the pandemic
- 21% said public transportation has not been available for needed routes
- 9% have faced reduced carpool options
- 8% said public transportation has been operating fewer hours

Of respondents who were looking for work at the time of the survey, 6% said that transportation was a barrier to finding a job.

Most respondents reported owning a vehicle (90%). For the 10% who did not own a personal vehicle, they were significantly more likely to say that they had trouble meeting transportation needs compared to respondents with a vehicle (12% vs. 4%).

Respondents below the ALICE Threshold were significantly more likely than respondents above the ALICE Threshold to say they had difficulty meeting transportation needs (10% vs. 1%).

“Although we are both working, there was a time one of us was not due to the shutdown, and it impacted our ability to keep our car payments on time, so we are in danger of losing our only vehicle. We were able to sell jewelry and furniture to pay our utilities and are now trying to catch everything back up, but one month without income can really make it difficult. It also has affected our mental health at times.”

EMPLOYMENT CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

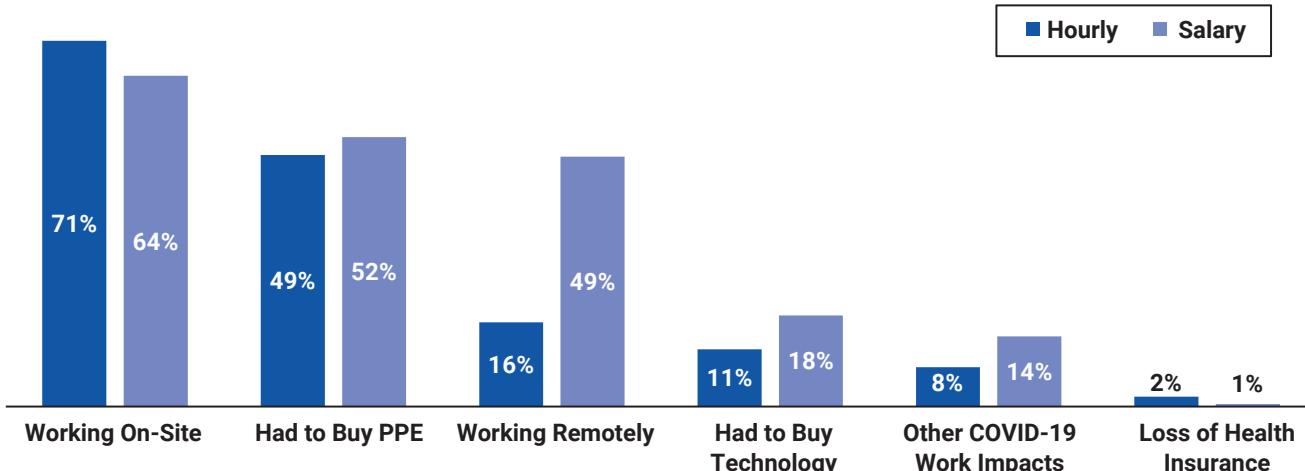
At the time of the survey, 88% of households had income from one or more jobs, 20% had Social Security or other retirement income, 13% had income from investments, 6% were receiving unemployment insurance, 3% had another source of income, and 1% reported no source of income.

Participants were asked how the pandemic has impacted employment for household members since March 1, 2020. Most respondents said that employment hadn't changed for any household members during this period (64%). However, some respondents reported that members of their household had experienced layoffs (14%), lost jobs (12%), changed jobs (8%), gotten a new job (8%), or retired (4%).

These big employment shifts, however, are not the only way that the pandemic has impacted workers. Among households where at least one person was working, respondents reported major changes in the work lives of household members, and these impacts varied based on whether workers were paid hourly or with a salary. About half of respondents (48%) relied on at least one hourly-paid worker. Most workers in both groups continued to work on-site, but salaried workers were much more likely to report working remotely during the pandemic (when they previously worked on-site).

Q. Which of the following have occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any?

Select all that apply



For workers in hourly-paid jobs, **respondents below the ALICE Threshold** were significantly more likely than respondents above the ALICE Threshold to say someone in their household was working fewer hours (39% vs. 25%) due to the pandemic.

For workers in both hourly-paid and salaried jobs, **respondents in rural counties** were significantly more likely to report that household members were continuing to work on-site, and **respondents in urban counties** were significantly more likely to be working remotely. **Respondents in urban counties** were also significantly more likely to report that someone in their household had to purchase protective gear.

Among the 8% of respondents with hourly jobs and 14% of respondents with salaried jobs who reported “other” work impacts from the pandemic, those impacts also varied by employment type. The most common impacts noted for salaried workers included increased hours, increased workload, and increased complexity of job. Some of these workers worked from home at the beginning of the pandemic and now are back on-site, while others are working a hybrid schedule of both remote and on-site. For hourly workers, “other” impacts tended to be related to health (worked in higher-risk jobs, contracted COVID-19, had to quarantine due to exposure at work).

Unlike workers in salaried jobs, workers who are paid by the hour also faced fluctuating hours. Among households where at least one person in the household was working, **36% of respondents said household members in hourly-paid jobs were working fewer hours during the pandemic.**

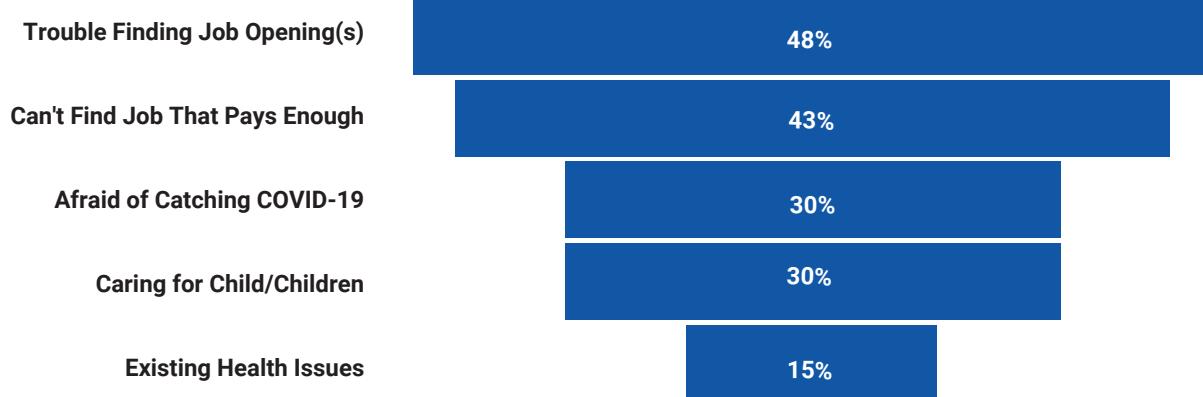
When asked why households members in hourly-paid jobs were working fewer hours...

- 80% of respondents said it was because their employer had less business or needed fewer staff
- 23% of respondents said it was because of caregiving needs (for children, seniors, or a person with a disability)
- 10% of respondents reported it was due to fear of catching COVID-19
- 5% of respondents said it was because of other (non-COVID-19) health issues

Almost one in four respondents (24%) said that someone in their household was looking for work (a new job or more hours) at the time the survey was conducted. These respondents were asked a follow-up question regarding barriers to finding work.

Q. What barriers are members of your household facing in looking for work, if any?

Select all that apply



Among those looking for work, **respondents below the ALICE Threshold** were significantly more likely than respondents above the ALICE Threshold to say caring for children (40% vs. 17%), fear of catching COVID-19 (35% vs. 24%), transportation issues (11% vs. 1%), internet or computer issues (7% vs. 1%), and trouble filling out job applications (4% vs 1%) limited their ability to find work.

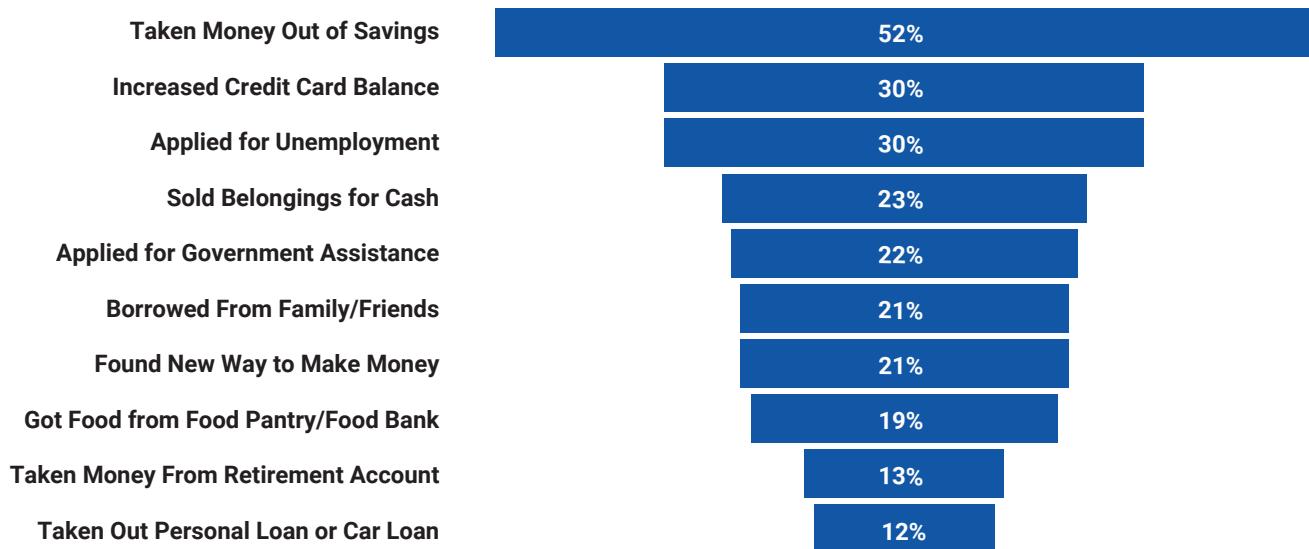
“I work for a small, local, family-owned business and was never technically ‘laid off,’ so therefore I did not qualify for unemployment. Even as things reopened, lack of child care and lack of internet...prevented me from being able to work from home.”

ACTIONS TAKEN TO MEET NEEDS

When asked what their household is doing to get by during the pandemic, over half of respondents said that they had taken money out of a savings account. The next most common actions were increasing a balance on a credit card and applying for unemployment.

Q. Which of the following have occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any?

Select all that apply



Respondents below the ALICE Threshold were significantly more likely than respondents above the ALICE Threshold to say that they had taken money out of savings (36% vs. 27%), applied for government assistance (31% vs. 4%), received food from a food pantry/food bank (28% vs. 3%), borrowed from family/friends (26% vs. 5%), applied for unemployment (26% vs. 13%), sold belongings for cash (25% vs. 8%), increased balance on a credit card (22% vs. 15%), found a new way to make money (17% vs. 9%) or taken out a personal loan (11% vs. 5%).

Respondents in rural counties were significantly less likely than respondents in urban counties to say that they took money out of a savings account (47% vs. 54%); however, this was still the number-one thing respondents did to get by in both rural and urban areas.

The options available to respondent households in weathering this crisis depend greatly on existing household assets. In addition to the employment income mentioned in the previous section, 89% of respondents said they had a bank account; 65% said they had a 401(k), IRA, or other investment; 61% said they owned a home with a mortgage; 58% reported that they owned a vehicle with no auto loan; 51% said they owned a vehicle with a loan; 18% reported they owned a home with no mortgage, and 13% said they owned all or some of a business.

While most respondents said that they had a bank account, those **below the ALICE Threshold** were significantly less likely than those above the ALICE Threshold to have one (82% vs. 93%). Similarly, respondents **below the ALICE Threshold** were significantly less likely to say that they owned a vehicle with (46% vs. 53%) or without (49% vs. 62%) a loan, had a 401(k), IRA, or other investment (32% vs. 81%), owned a home with (40% vs. 71%) or without (15% vs. 20%) a mortgage, or owned all or part of a business (8% vs. 16%).

“ Because of the loss of work of two of the three people in my household...we cannot pay our bills, car loans, etc. Our three credit cards have been cancelled due to nonpayment, damaging our credit score. There are things happening that I never thought could so quickly destroy your life. ”

THIS STATEWIDE SURVEY PROJECT WAS A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE FOLLOWING UNITED WAYS:

United Ways of Tennessee

United Way of Anderson County

United Way of Bedford County

United Way of Benton County

United Way of Blount County

United Way of Bristol TN/VA

United Way of Dickson County

United Way of Franklin County

United Way of Greater Chattanooga

United Way of Greater Kingsport

United Way of Greater Knoxville

United Way of Greater Nashville

United Way of Greene County

United Way of Hamblen County

United Way of Hawkins County

United Way of Highway 55

United Way of Humphreys County

United Way of Loudon County

United Way of Maury County

United Way of McMinn and Meigs Counties

United Way of Monroe County

United Way of Obion County

United Way of Rhea County

United Way of Roane County

United Way of Rutherford and Cannon Counties

United Way of Sevier County

United Way of Sumner County

United Way of the East Tennessee Highlands

United Way of the Greater Clarksville Region

United Way of the Mid-South

United Way of the Ocoee Region

United Way of West Tennessee

United Way of Wilson County and the Upper Cumberland



Special Thanks

We are grateful to our sponsor, Tennessee Afterschool Network, for providing support for this statewide survey.

About United For ALICE

United For ALICE is a driver of innovation, shining a light on the challenges **ALICE** (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households face and finding collaborative solutions. Through a standardized methodology that assesses the cost of living in every county, this project provides a comprehensive measure of financial hardship across the U.S. Equipped with this data, ALICE partners convene, advocate, and innovate in their local communities to highlight the issues faced by ALICE households and to generate solutions that promote financial stability. This grassroots movement represents United Ways, corporations, nonprofits, and foundations in Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Hawai'i, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. Learn more at UnitedForALICE.org.

Erratum Note: In the previously issued version of this document, an error in the database lead to the incorrect ALICE Threshold categorization for households with income above \$100,000. That issue has been corrected in this version. All statistical analyses of the differences between these groups have been updated (shown in gold boxes throughout the document).

For more information about these survey results or to be connected to your local United Way, please contact Mary Graham, President and CEO, United Ways of Tennessee, at mary.graham@uwtn.org. To learn more about United Ways of Tennessee, visit www.uwtn.org.



United Ways of Tennessee