



Report available at: <https://www.aecf.org/resources/kids-families-and-covid-19/>

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### **Illinois data show families of color struggling during COVID crisis; economic security and health are greatest concerns**

*Data Across 50 States Show Struggles with Hunger, Housing, Health Insurance and Mental Health, Annie E. Casey Foundation Finds*

**CHICAGO** — Nearly a quarter of Black adults in households with children report sometimes or often not having enough food to eat in the past week. Coupled with additional U.S. Census Bureau data where 32% of the same group indicated little or no confidence in their ability to make their next rent or mortgage payment, state data show the precarious situation many Illinois children face during the COVID-19 pandemic.

These facts are just two of the data points that indicate the impact of the economic downturn due to the pandemic on Illinois families. In Illinois, and nationally, families of color are bearing the brunt of the pandemic, according to *Kids, Families and COVID-19: Pandemic Pain Points and a Roadmap for Recovery*, a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation analyzing how families are faring during the COVID-19 crisis.

This KIDS COUNT® report examined data from weekly surveys conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau that demonstrate how families across the country are challenged to meet basic needs during this global public health crisis while managing school, work and mental health. The Foundation finds that the concurrent health and economic crises are exacerbating trends that show vulnerable families are unable to fulfill basic needs.

By measuring food security, the ability to make rent or mortgage payments, health insurance status and mental health concerns, the Casey Foundation identified four pain points for children and families that require immediate action. Percentages of families with children who have experienced challenges as measured by these four indicators are listed below:

- **FOOD SECURITY:** In Illinois, Black (24%) and Latinx (18%) adults sometimes or often did not have enough food to eat in the past week more frequently than the state rate

(14%) and more frequently than white adults (10%). Nationally, 14% said they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat.

- **HOUSING STABILITY:** Black (32%) and Latinx (25%) Illinoisans more frequently have little or no confidence in their ability to pay their next rent or mortgage payment on time than whites (15%), and are also higher than the state rate (20%). In the U.S., 18% had slight or no confidence they would make the next rent or mortgage payment on time.
- **AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE:** 10% of Illinoisans did not have health insurance, with Latinxs lacking it at 22%, Black Illinoisans at 15%, and white Illinoisans at 4%. Nationally, 12% did not have health insurance.
- **MENTAL HEALTH:** 18% of Illinoisans felt down, depressed or hopeless, with 17% of Black Illinoisans, 13% of Latinxs, and 21% of whites feeling this way. In the U.S., 21% felt down, depressed or hopeless.

“This unprecedented crisis has only amplified the pain and inequalities experienced by many Illinois families for decades,” said Tasha Green Cruzat, executive director of Voices for Illinois Children, powered by YWCA Metropolitan Chicago, Illinois’s member of the KIDS COUNT® network. “In the coming weeks and months, we call upon Illinois legislators to respond boldly to these crises so that we can keep Illinois’ families and children out of harm’s way.”

The report shows how urgent state and federal intervention is to the health and well-being of families with children. Communities as broad and diverse as Chicago, Carbondale, Danville and Quincy will require support if Illinois families and children are to weather this crisis.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation urges policymakers and child advocates to unite across differences and put COVID-19 response at the top of 2021 agendas to ensure that children have what they need to survive and thrive. The Foundation calls on elected officials and other decision makers to:

- ***Put racial and ethnic equity first in policymaking*** by using disaggregated data and engaging community stakeholders. This should ensure that the policymaking process is informed by the diverse perspectives of those hardest hit by the crisis and created in partnership with communities. This approach should underpin any concrete policy actions.
- ***Prioritize the physical and mental health of all children*** by guaranteeing that any vaccine will be available without cost as a factor and by retaining and strengthening the Affordable Care Act. To promote mental health, particularly in times of crisis, policymakers should work to reduce the student-to-school-counselor ratio in all school settings to levels recommended by mental health professionals.
- ***Help families with children achieve financial stability and bolster their well-being*** by expanding access to unemployment insurance for part-time and gig economy workers, low-wage workers and students and by expanding child care access. Additionally, policymakers should eliminate barriers to accessing Temporary Assistance

for Needy Families (TANF), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC). And beyond any temporary housing assistance programs aimed at heading off a foreclosure or eviction crisis, federal policymakers should expand the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, and increase the overall availability of public housing.

- ***Ensure schools are better funded, more equitably funded and ready to meet the needs of students disparately affected by the pandemic*** by boosting school funding to protect against the economic impact of the pandemic, build maintenance-of-equity requirements into relief packages and address disparities in technology access at home and in the classroom.

### **Release Information**

The *2020 KIDS COUNT® report* will be available December 14 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Additional information is available at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *KIDS COUNT®* report can use the KIDS COUNT® Data Center at [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org).

### **About Voices for Illinois Children, Powered by YWCA Metropolitan Chicago**

Voices for Illinois Children is an independent advocacy organization that champions strong public policies and investments for all children in our state.

### **About the Annie E. Casey Foundation**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org). *KIDS COUNT®* is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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