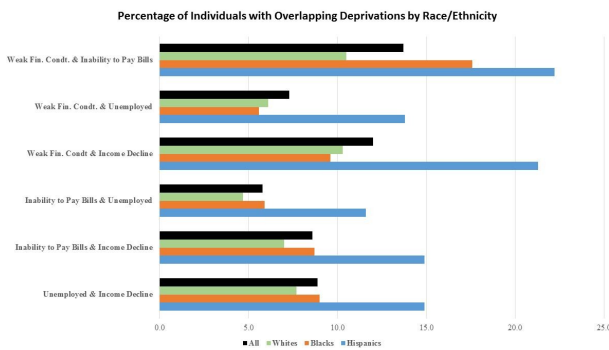


# Many Americans reported economic hardships even early in the COVID-19 pandemic

16 December 2020



Overlapping deprivations by race/ethnicity. Source: Authors calculations using SHED, April 2020, data. All percentage values are calculated using sample weights. The groups, except the Hispanic, are as follows: i) White, non-Hispanic, ii) Black, non-Hispanic. For the sake of illustration, individuals belonging to "Other" race and "2+Races" are not included. Credit: Dhongde, 2020 (PLOS ONE, CC BY)

Significant proportions of U.S. respondents were experiencing economic hardships even early in the COVID-19 pandemic, with Hispanic citizens being particularly affected, according to research by Shatakshee Dhongde at the Georgia Institute of Technology, U.S., publishing in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* on December 16, 2020.

The COVID-19 [pandemic](#) has impacted not just the health but also the economic wellbeing of citizens worldwide, and the U.S. has been especially hard hit. Between April 3 and April 6, 2020, as the CDC recorded over 374,000 confirmed U.S. COVID-19 cases, the Federal Reserve Board surveyed 1,030 U.S. respondents about their households. The survey compiled data on four indicators of economic deprivation: overall financial condition, loss of employment, reduction in income, and

inability to pay bills in full. Shatakshee Dhongde analyzed the results of this survey to determine the deprivations experienced by respondents.

She found significant deprivation among respondents: almost 25 percent reported facing hardships in at least two of the four indicators. One quarter of respondents saw their incomes fall compared to the previous month, and 13 percent were unable to pay their monthly bills. Young adults and those without a [college education](#) experienced a disproportionate loss of economic wellbeing. Dr. Dhongde also found that Hispanic respondents were experiencing relatively more [deprivation](#): over 37 percent of these respondents faced hardships in at least two of the four indications, and 8 percent reported hardships in all four areas.

The data in this study is self-reported rather than externally assessed, and this survey at a single time point cannot confirm whether or not the hardships reported by respondents result from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the study suggests that many Americans were struggling to make ends meet even early on in the pandemic, with some racial/[ethnic groups](#) experiencing heightened [economic hardships](#).

Dhongde adds: "The paper highlights the plight of Americans during the early months of the economic crisis set in motion amid the coronavirus pandemic. It sheds light on how economic disparities deepened along racial/ethnic lines."

**More information:** Dhongde S (2020) Multidimensional economic deprivation during the coronavirus pandemic: Early evidence from the United States. *PLoS ONE* 15(12): e0244130. [doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0244130](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0244130)

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