

Policy Brief:

HEROES Act

The Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act, known as the HEROES Act, was introduced in the House of Representatives on May 12, 2020. The HEROES Act serves as a response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Children's Defense Fund-New York urges members of Congress to support the HEROES Act to help children and families struggling with food insecurity and unemployment brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.*

COVID-19 is devastating vulnerable populations. The negative impact of Coronavirus is particularly affecting Black and Latino communities, exacerbating previous issues, such as food insecurity and unemployment, at an alarming rate.

Black and Latino communities are disproportionately affected by the Coronavirus. In New York State:

- Blacks or African American communities make up 14% of the population, but 25% of the people who died from Coronavirus.
- Hispanic or Latinx communities make up 19% of the population, but 26% of the people who died from Coronavirus.
- For comparison, White communities make up 55% of the population, but only 34% of the people who died from Coronavirus.¹

The government has created legislation to address many effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The HEROES Act was proposed as the newest bill to help people whose lives have been affected negatively by Coronavirus.

Among other provisions, the HEROES Act includes:

- Requirements for employers to create and enforce control plans for infectious disease exposure;
- An extension of the moratorium on certain evictions and foreclosures;

* This policy brief was written as part of the 2020 CDF-NY Summer Policy Series under the advisement of CDF-NY staff. Molly Osinoff is the primary author of this paper.

¹ "Racial Data Dashboard- New York." The COVID Tracking Project. 2020. <https://covidtracking.com/race/dashboard#state-ny>.

- Additional payments of up to \$1,200 per individual;
- An expansion of paid sick days, family leave, medical leave, unemployment compensation, nutrition and food assistance programs, housing assistance, and payments to farmers; and
- Expansions of loans and grants to small business and nonprofit organizations through the Paycheck Protection Program.²

The HEROES Act also includes important funding for domestic food and nutrition services to “prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.”³

- \$3 billion dollars to remain available for Child Nutrition Programs;
- \$1.1 billion dollars to remain available to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC);
- \$10 billion dollars to remain available to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and
- \$150 million dollars to remain available for emergency food assistance.⁴

Food insecurity is a prevailing issue in our country. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many more families to become food insecure as it is increasingly difficult for families to put food on their tables.

Food insecurity continues to be an issue that affects New Yorkers. In 2019, 10.5% of New York households reported that they were “food insecure,” and 18.6% of children in New York lived below the poverty line.⁵

The SNAP program is one of the most crucial anti-hunger programs in the United States. In Fiscal Year 2019, 2,661,000 New York residents participated in the SNAP program, which is 14% of the population, or 1 in every 7 people.⁶ Food insecurity is especially apparent among children. More than 58% of SNAP participants in New York are members of families with children.⁷

The University of Chicago’s COVID Impact Survey and the Survey of Mothers with Young Children reports that at the end of April 2020:

- More than 20% of American households were experiencing food insecurity.
- More than 40% of American households of mothers with children younger than twelve years old were experiencing food insecurity.

² U.S. Congress. 2020. “H.R.6800-The Heroes Act.” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6800/text?r=48&s=1>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

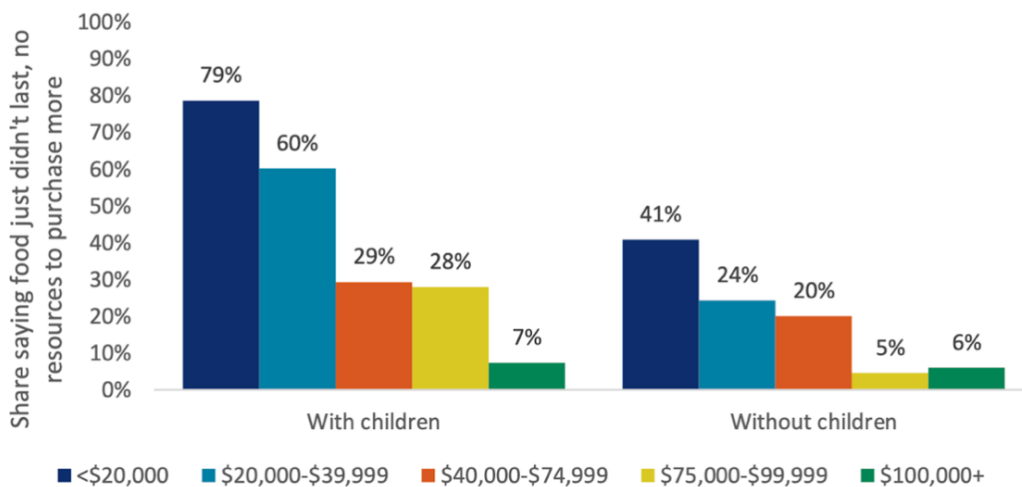
⁵ Nchako, Catlin and Lexin Cai. 2020. “A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP: State-by-State Fact Sheets.” Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#New_York

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

- 17.4% of mothers with children under age 12 reported that, since the pandemic started, “the children in my household were not eating enough because we just couldn’t afford enough food.”⁸
 - By comparison, in 2018, only 3.1% of mothers with children under age 12 reported that their children were not eating enough because they could not afford enough food.⁹

Food Insecurity in the United States by Household Income and Presence of Children, April 2020¹⁰



Households with children experience significantly more food insecurity than households without children of the same income. The COVID Impact Survey shows that in April 2020, 34.5% of households with children in America were experiencing food insecurity, which is more than three times the predicted rate for March 2020 of 11.6%.¹¹

Food insecurity is exacerbated for Latino and Black families in New York, who report, among households with children, more cases of “sometimes not having enough food” or “often not having enough food” than White and Asian families.¹²

⁸ Ibid.

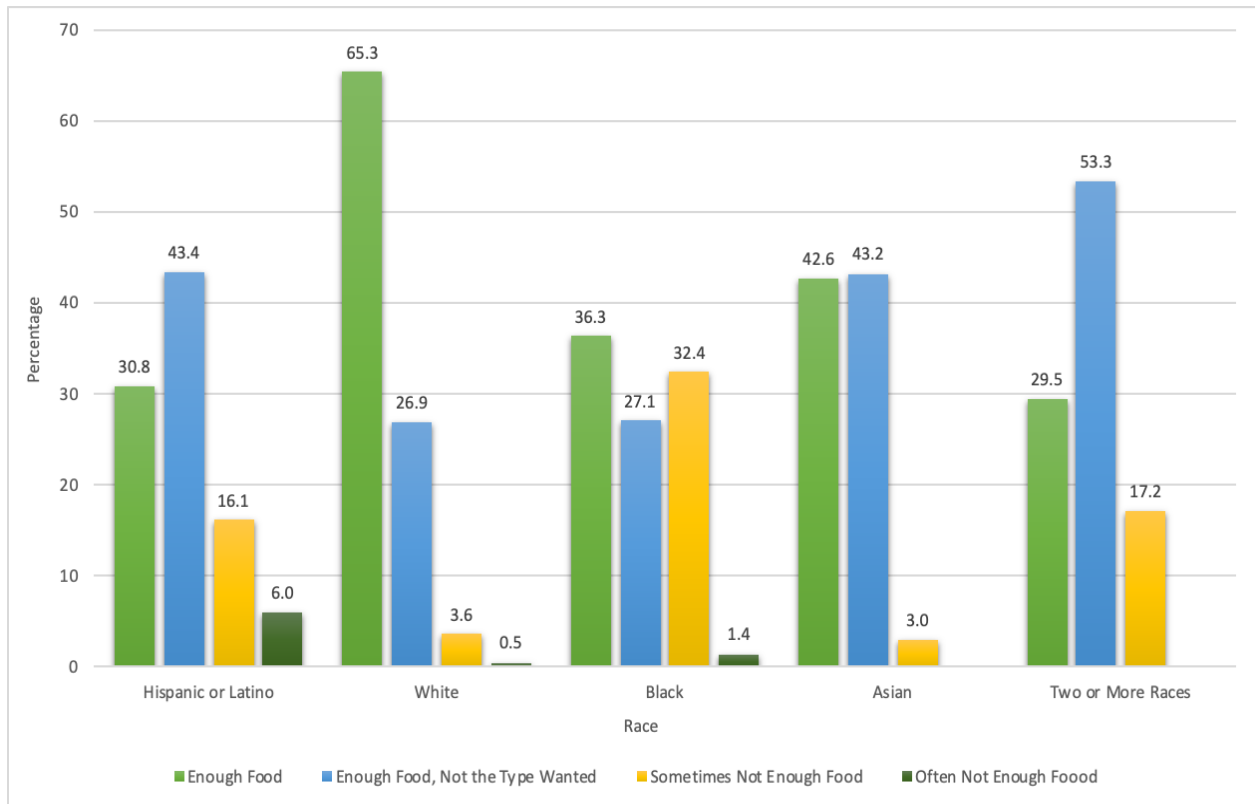
⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Schanzenbach, Diane and Abigail Pitts. 2020. “Estimates of Food Insecurity During the COVID-19 Crisis: Results from the COVID Impact Survey, Week 1 (April 20-26, 2020). Evanston, IL: Northwestern Institute for Policy Research. https://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/documents/reports/food-insecurity-covid_week1_report-13-may-2020.pdf.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² “Table 3b. Food Sufficiency for Households with Children, in the Last 7 Days, by Select Characteristics” on “Household Pulse Survey May 28-June 2.” United States Census Bureau. 2020. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/demo/hhp/hhp5.html>

Food Insecurity in New York State Among Households with Children by Race (May 28-June 2, 2020)¹³



The COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on the economy. Since many places of work closed due to the pandemic, millions of people have been left unemployed - exacerbating the food insecurity that families are facing.

Unemployment Rate (%) in New York State Areas (April 2019 vs. April 2020)¹⁴

Place	April 2019	April 2020
Metro Areas	3.6	15.1
Albany-Schenectady-Troy	3.3	12.5
Binghamton	4.2	15
Buffalo-Niagara Falls	3.9	19.2
Dutchess-Putnam	3.2	14.1
Elmira	3.8	15.9
Glens Falls	4.4	15.7
Ithaca	3.2	10.1

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “State Labor Department Releases Preliminary April 2020 Area Unemployment Rates.” New York State Department of Labor. 2020. <https://labor.ny.gov/stats/pressreleases/prlaus.pdf>

Place	April 2019	April 2020
Kingston	3.2	14.6
Nassau-Suffolk	3.1	16
New York City	3.7	14.6
Orange-Rockland-Westchester	3.3	14.3
Rochester	3.7	14.9
Syracuse	3.8	16.3
Utica-Rome	4.1	15.1
Watertown-Fort Drum	5.4	16.9
Non-Metro Areas	4.4	14.4

The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in tremendous increases in unemployment levels. Every county in New York has been affected by unemployment (See Appendix A). Buffalo-Niagara Falls area reported the highest rate of unemployment in April 2020 at 19.2%. The number of private sector jobs in New York State in April 2020 decreased by 1,764,600 jobs, or 21.4%, which was the largest employment decrease in a single month on record. Further, New York State experienced an increase in the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate by 10.4 percentage points, which was the largest increase over a single month since 1976.¹⁵

Percentage Decrease in Private Sectors Jobs (April 2019-2020) by NY Area¹⁶

Place	% Decrease in Private Sector Jobs
Albany-Schenectady-Troy	19.4%
Binghamton	16.6%
Buffalo-Niagara Falls	23.2%
Dutchess-Putnam	17.1%
Elmira	15.6%
Glens Falls	20.8%
Ithaca	16.2%
Kingston	14.3%
Nassau-Suffolk	24.6%
New York City	21.8%
Orange-Rockland-Westchester	24.6%
Rochester	21.3%
Syracuse	22.0%
Utica-Rome	20.9%
Watertown-Fort Drum	19.4%
Non-Metro Areas	16.2%

¹⁵ "NYS Economy Loses More Than 1.7 Million Private Sector Jobs in April 2020." New York State Department of Labor. 2020. <https://labor.ny.gov/stats/pressreleases/pruistat.shtm>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Certain job sectors have been particularly impacted by COVID-19. Between April 2019 and April 2020, the leisure and hospitality sector experienced the largest decline in the number of jobs; 638,000 jobs were lost. The trade, transportation, and utilities sector had the second largest number of jobs lost over the past year: 357,300. This decrease in jobs will particularly affect men; in New York, approximately 77.9% of workers in the transportation and utilities sector are men.¹⁷ The third largest decrease in employment occurred in the educational and health services sector where 227,200 jobs were lost.¹⁸ Women will be particularly affected by this decrease, as women constitute approximately 73% of workers in the education and health services industry in New York.¹⁹

Number of Jobs Lost by Industry Sector in New York State (April 2019-April 2020)²⁰

Sector	Number of Jobs Lost
Leisure and Hospitality	638,000
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	357,300
Education and Health Services	227,200
Professional and Business Services	190,500
Construction	157,700
Other Services	124,300
Manufacturing	84,100
Government	60,300
Financial Activities	35,800
Information	9,500
Natural Resources and Mining	400

Call to Action

The HEROES Act will provide, among numerous other benefits to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, essential funding for domestic nutrition programs. As the number of households experiencing food insecurity in New York rises, and New Yorkers continue to suffer from unprecedented levels of unemployment, it will become increasingly difficult for families to put food on their tables. Children who are not properly fed suffer socially, academically, mentally, and physically. Their health and development depend on their ability to obtain enough nutritious food. We must call upon our leaders in the Senate to support the HEROES Act.

¹⁷ “Industry by Sex for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over.” United States Census: American Community Survey. 2020. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=0400000US36&t=Industry&tid=ACSST5Y2018.S2403&vintage=2017&hidePreview=false&layer=VT_2017_040_00_PY_D1&cid=S2403_C01_001E.

¹⁸ “NYS Economy Loses More Than 1.7 Million Private Sector Jobs in April 2020.” New York State Department of Labor. 2020. <https://labor.ny.gov/stats/pressreleases/pruistat.shtm>.

¹⁹ “Industry by Sex for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over.” United States Census: American Community Survey. 2020. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=0400000US36&t=Industry&tid=ACSST5Y2018.S2403&vintage=2017&hidePreview=false&layer=VT_2017_040_00_PY_D1&cid=S2403_C01_001E.

²⁰ Ibid.

Appendix

A: Increase in Unemployment Rate between May 2019 and May 2020 by New York State County

County	Increase in Unemployment Rate	County	Increase in Unemployment Rate
Albany County	8.5%	Niagara County	17.4%
Allegany County	8%	Oneida County	11.2%
Bronx County	11.5%	Onondaga County	12.6%
Broome County	10.7%	Ontario County	10.9%
Cattaraugus County	12.7%	Orange County	11%
Cayuga County	11.4%	Orleans County	11.6%
Chautauqua County	11.1%	Oswego County	12.1%
Chemung County	12.1%	Otsego County	8.2%
Chenango County	7.6%	Putnam County	10.8%
Clinton County	10.8%	Queens County	13.2%
Columbia County	7.9%	Rensselaer County	8.9%
Cortland County	9.5%	Richmond County (Staten Island)	10.4%
Delaware County	8%	Rockland County	10.3%
Dutchess County	10.9%	Saint Lawrence County	8.6%
Erie County	14.8%	Saratoga County	10.1%

County	Increase in Unemployment Rate	County	Increase in Unemployment Rate
Essex County	11.4%	Schenectady County	9.8%
Franklin County	9.2%	Schoharie County	7.7%
Fulton County	10.5%	Schuyler County	12.2%
Genesee County	10.7%	Seneca County	11.8%
Greene County	10.4%	Steuben County	11%
Hamilton County	5.8%	Suffolk County	13.2%
Herkimer County	10.5%	Sullivan County	9.5%
Jefferson County	11.5%	Tioga County	11%
Kings County (Brooklyn)	10.8%	Tompkins County	6.9%
Lewis County	8.4%	Ulster County	11.3%
Livingston County	10.1%	Warren County	12.3%
Madison County	12.3%	Washington County	9.9%
Monroe County	11.3%	Wayne County	10.6%
Montgomery County	9.9%	Westchester County	10.8%
Nassau County	12.6%	Wyoming County	11.3%
New York County (Manhattan)	7.6%	Yates County	9.8%

Source: "Employed, Unemployed, and Rate of Unemployment By Place of Residence For New York State and Major Labor Areas, May 2020." New York State Department of Labor. <https://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/pressreleases/prtbur.pdf>