

Share of Children with Unemployed Parents Reach Historic Highs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The COVID-19 pandemic has led to high rates of unemployment across the United States. Families with children, in particular, have reported high rates of unemployment and hardship in the months after the onset of the crisis with potential long-term consequences for child well-being and development. This paper details the increase in the share of children with an unemployed parent after the onset of the pandemic. The evidence offers four key takeaways.

First, the share of children with an unemployed parent (unemployed defined as jobless and looking for work) has reached historic highs in the U.S. since the onset of the pandemic. In April 2020, 21.7 percent of children had at least one unemployed parent, the highest rate observed in the more than 50 years that comparable data have been available. By August 2020, the share of children with an unemployed parent dropped to 11.3%, just below the peak of 13.2% during the Great Recession in 2009.

Second, the share of children with an unemployed parent varies substantially by race/ethnicity and geographic location. In April 2020, one in every four Hispanic children had at least one unemployed parent, though the share declined to less than one in five by August. More than 16% of Black children lived with at least one unemployed parent in August, roughly twice the rate of white children. Geographically, Las Vegas serves as the epicenter of parental unemployment, with 35.8% of children having at least one unemployed parent, on average, over the months of April through August. More than one in five children in Detroit, New Orleans, the New York City metro area, Boston, Sacramento, and Orlando had at least one unemployed parent, on average, over April-August.

Key Findings

- The share of children with an unemployed parent (unemployed defined as jobless and looking for work) has reached historic highs in the U.S. since the onset of the pandemic.
- In April 2020, around 25 percent of Hispanic and Black children had at least one unemployed parent. Even in August, more than 16 percent of Black children lived with at least one unemployed parent, roughly twice the rate of white children.
- Las Vegas serves as the epicenter of parental unemployment, with 35.8% of children having at least one unemployed parent, on average, over April through August.
- Mothers face elevated risks of unemployment relative to fathers, in part due to gender imbalances in domestic care responsibilities and more children participating in distance learning.
- Families with children who experience joblessness report particularly high rates of food insufficiency, missed rent payments, and frequent anxiety relative to families with children who do not experience joblessness.



Third, the burden of unemployment is not distributed evenly within households. Mothers face elevated risks of unemployment relative to fathers. The share of children with an unemployed mother reached 18.8 percent in April 2020, again the highest rate recorded in at least 50 years, before falling to 10% in August. The share of children with an unemployed father reached 14.4% in April and 6% in August. Evidence from the Census Household Pulse Survey suggest that gender imbalances in domestic care responsibilities, combined with more children participating in distance and at-home learning, contribute to higher rates of unemployment among mothers than for fathers.

Fourth, families with children who experience joblessness report particularly high rates of food insufficiency, skipped/delayed rent payments, and frequent anxiety relative to families with children who do not experience joblessness. Moreover, families with children, independent of parents' employment status, tend to experience higher rates of hardship than childless families throughout the crisis.

Combined, the economic crisis, the necessary turn to distance learning for many school-aged children, gendered norms around domestic caregiving, and inadequate income support for families with children have contributed to historically high rates of parental unemployment, particularly for mothers, and elevated rates of hardship and anxiety for families with children. Urgent policy action is likely needed to prevent long-lasting, detrimental effects on child well-being and development.

Parental Unemployment Has Reached Record Highs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This study presents evidence on the share of children (age 17 and younger) with an unemployed parent. To start, I define several terms that will be used throughout this study.

Definition of Terms

Unemployment refers to the share of parents who are active in the labor force but who were not employed in the past week. Unemployment is not a measure of non-employment, which would include parents who are jobless but are out of the labor force.

When measuring **parental unemployment** among children, I only measure the employment status of parents who live in the same household as their child, so if a child has a non-resident parent who is not employed, that is not counted.

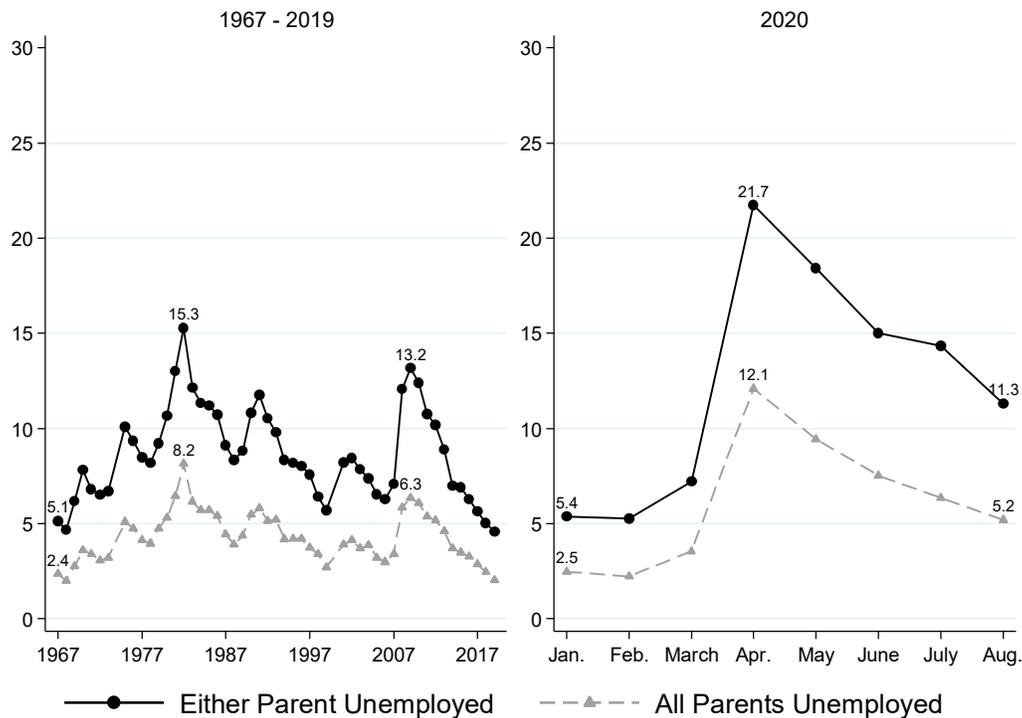
I use a broad definition of **parent** that is not exclusive to biological parents, but includes stepparents and cohabiting partners (see Appendix I for more details).

Either parent unemployed indicates that at least one parent of the child in the household is unemployed.

All parents unemployed indicates that all parents of the child in the household are unemployed. Thus, for single-parent households, either parent unemployed and all parents unemployed are identical.

The time series begins in 1967, the earliest year for which comparable data are available.

Figure 1. Share of children with either or all parents unemployed, 1967

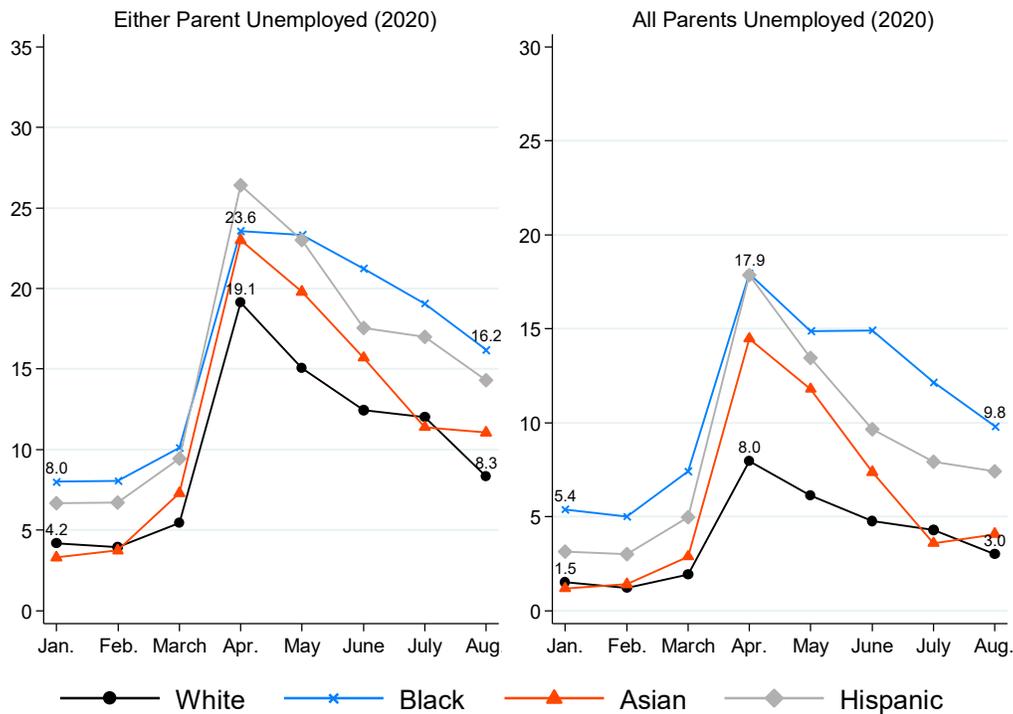


Note: Y-axis represents share of children with unemployed either or all parents unemployed. Unemployment refers to joblessness among adults who are active in the labor force. Data: U.S. Current Population Survey.

Figure 1 presents the share of children with *either* parent unemployed (solid black line) or *all* parents unemployed (dashed gray line) from 1967 through August 2020. From 1967 to 2019, the peaks of parental unemployment occurred amidst the recessions in 1982 and 2009. In 1982, 15.3% of children lived with at least one unemployed parent, while 8.2% of children had each of their parents unemployed. In 2009, the share of children with either parent unemployed climbed to 13.2%, while 6.3% of children had all parents unemployed.

The right panel shows that in January 2020, 5.4% of children lived with either parent unemployed. This level was close to those observed in 1967 and was among the lowest rate recorded from 1967 onward. After the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, parental unemployment spiked to record highs. In April 2020, the share of children with an unemployed parent climbed to 21.7%. Put differently, more than one in every five children in the U.S. had a parent who was unemployed as of April. Meanwhile, more than one in every 10 children (12.1%) had all of their parents unemployed as of April. Both of these estimates are substantially higher than the peaks observed in 1982 and 2009, and this remains true when evaluating the monthly estimates of parental unemployment within 1982 and 2009 (not depicted). By August 2020, however, unemployment rates had recovered slightly, yet still rivaled the rates observed in 2009 during the Great Recession. The share of children with either parent unemployed was 11.3% in August, while the share of children with all parents unemployed was 5.2%.

Figure 2. Share of children with either or all parents unemployed by race, 2020



Note: Y-axis represents share of children with either (left) or all (right) parents unemployed. Unemployment refers to joblessness among adults who are active in the labor force. Race/ethnicity category refers to race/ethnicity of the child. “White” refers to non-Hispanic white. Data: U.S. Current Population Survey.

Unemployment has not hit all families equally. Figure 2 presents results by the race/ethnicity of the child. For brevity, the results are now shown specifically for the months of 2020. At the start of the year, 8% of Black children and 4.2% of white (non-Hispanic) children had at least one unemployed parent. In August 2020, however, 16.2% of Black children and 8.3% of white children had at least one unemployed parent. Moreover, 9.8% of Black children had each of their parents unemployed (see right panel) in August 2020—more than three times the rate of white children.

Hispanic and Asian children also saw notable increases in parental unemployed, particularly in April 2020. At that time, more than 1 in 4 Hispanic children had at least one unemployed parent. Asian children went from having the lowest share of unemployed parents in January (under 4%) to among the highest (23%) in April. By August 2020, however, the share of Asian children with an unemployed parent fell to just under 12%, still three times higher than the Asian share in January 2020. Around 15% of Hispanic children had at least one unemployed parent in August 2020. The breakdown by race/ethnicity suggests the crisis has spared no racial/ethnic group, but that Black and Hispanic children continue to face the highest rates of parental unemployment.

Similarly, the share of children with unemployed parents varies notably across geographic location. Appendix I presents state-level estimates. As shown there, the share of children with either parent unemployed ranges from 7.5% in Nebraska to 29.8% in Nevada over a five-month average of April to August 2020. Table 1 presents results across large metro areas over multi-month averages from January-March and April-August. Striking disparities emerge.

Table 1. Share of children with unemployed parents by metro area

Metro Area	April—August 2020		January—March 2020	
	Either Parent Unemployed	All Parents Unemployed	Either Parent Unemployed	All Parents Unemployed
Las Vegas-Paradise, NV	35.8%	20.1%	4.6%	2.2%
Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI	28.8%	18.5%	4.8%	2.1%
New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA	24.6%	15.5%	10.0%	7.2%
New York-Northern N.J. -Long Is., NY-NJ-PA	24.4%	13.9%	7.7%	3.4%
Sacramento-Arden Arcade-Roseville, CA	24.2%	7.8%	7.3%	2.4%
Cleveland-Lorain-Mentor, OH	22.2%	11.6%	11.3%	6.7%
Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	22.1%	13.1%	5.8%	1.0%
Orlando, FL	21.9%	12.1%	5.4%	2.1%
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami Beach, FL	21.7%	13.1%	5.6%	2.5%
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	21.5%	11.7%	6.9%	3.3%
Louisville, KY/IN	21.4%	11.5%	4.9%	1.1%
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	20.3%	10.4%	5.8%	4.6%
Riverside-San Bernadino, CA	20.0%	11.0%	4.5%	3.5%
Burlington-South Burlington, VT	19.6%	9.9%	3.3%	2.4%
Columbus, OH	19.3%	10.0%	7.6%	5.0%
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA/NJ/DE	19.1%	10.1%	6.6%	3.0%
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	19.0%	9.3%	6.6%	0.6%
Pittsburg, PA	18.8%	13.2%	7.0%	3.8%
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI	18.3%	8.3%	4.6%	2.0%
Birmingham-Hoover, AL	18.2%	11.3%	6.1%	3.3%

Share of Children with Unemployed Parents Reach Historic Highs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Metro Area	April—August 2020		January—March 2020	
	Either Parent Unemployed	All Parents Unemployed	Either Parent Unemployed	All Parents Unemployed
Urban Honolulu, HI	16.2%	8.1%	1.4%	0.2%
Houston-Baytown-Sugar Land, TX	16.1%	9.4%	9.1%	4.0%
Washington, DC/MD/VA	15.8%	7.4%	5.9%	1.6%
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	15.5%	7.6%	5.2%	0.9%
Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro, TN	15.3%	7.4%	4.0%	0.0%
Cincinnati-Middleton, OH/KY/IN	15.2%	6.3%	5.3%	3.8%
Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR/WA	15.1%	7.4%	6.1%	2.4%
Providence-Warwick, RI-MA	14.5%	6.8%	7.1%	1.9%
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	14.5%	6.6%	5.7%	1.8%
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	14.4%	6.2%	6.0%	2.9%
Memphis, TN/AR/MS	14.2%	4.4%	5.7%	4.8%
Sioux Falls, SD	13.9%	7.3%	4.2%	1.5%
Manchester-Nashua, NH	13.7%	3.8%	3.0%	0.7%
Indianapolis, IN	13.3%	3.7%	3.9%	1.5%
San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA	13.2%	5.8%	5.3%	1.7%
Denver-Aurora, CO	12.7%	6.1%	5.5%	2.4%
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN/WI	12.7%	3.7%	3.6%	1.6%
Tulsa, OK	12.4%	5.4%	6.9%	1.5%
Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, AR-MO	12.1%	4.2%	5.9%	0.8%
Oklahoma City, OK	11.5%	3.8%	3.5%	1.7%
St. Louis, MO/IL	11.4%	6.4%	8.5%	5.2%
Kansas City, MO/KS	11.3%	3.7%	3.6%	0.0%
Salt Lake City, UT	11.3%	2.9%	1.2%	0.1%
Wichita, KS	11.0%	6.1%	4.0%	1.3%
Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI	10.9%	5.7%	14.2%	6.5%
Baton Rouge, LA	10.9%	3.0%	1.8%	0.2%
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ	10.9%	7.2%	6.7%	3.4%

Metro Area	April—August 2020		January—March 2020	
	Either Parent Unemployed	All Parents Unemployed	Either Parent Unemployed	All Parents Unemployed
Billings, MT	10.7%	6.4%	6.1%	0.4%
Albuquerque, NM	10.2%	2.7%	6.4%	1.6%
Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, NC/SC	9.8%	3.8%	3.4%	0.8%
Boise City-Nampa, ID	9.7%	3.5%	6.6%	1.4%
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	9.5%	6.0%	4.3%	1.6%
Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE/IA	9.0%	4.2%	7.2%	1.7%
Baltimore-Towson-Columbia, MD	8.8%	4.4%	4.9%	2.3%
Ogden-Clearfield, UT	8.5%	0.3%	2.5%	1.0%
Austin-Round Rock, TX	8.3%	3.4%	3.7%	0.9%
San Antonio, TX	7.4%	2.3%	7.3%	1.9%
Little Rock-North Little Rock, AR	7.0%	1.8%	2.7%	1.0%
Fargo, ND/MN	6.6%	1.3%	0.8%	0.0%
Provo-Orem, UT	6.0%	0.9%	5.3%	0.4%

Note: Only metro areas with sample of at least 250 respondents in each time period included. Due to small sample sizes, comparisons across place should be made with caution.

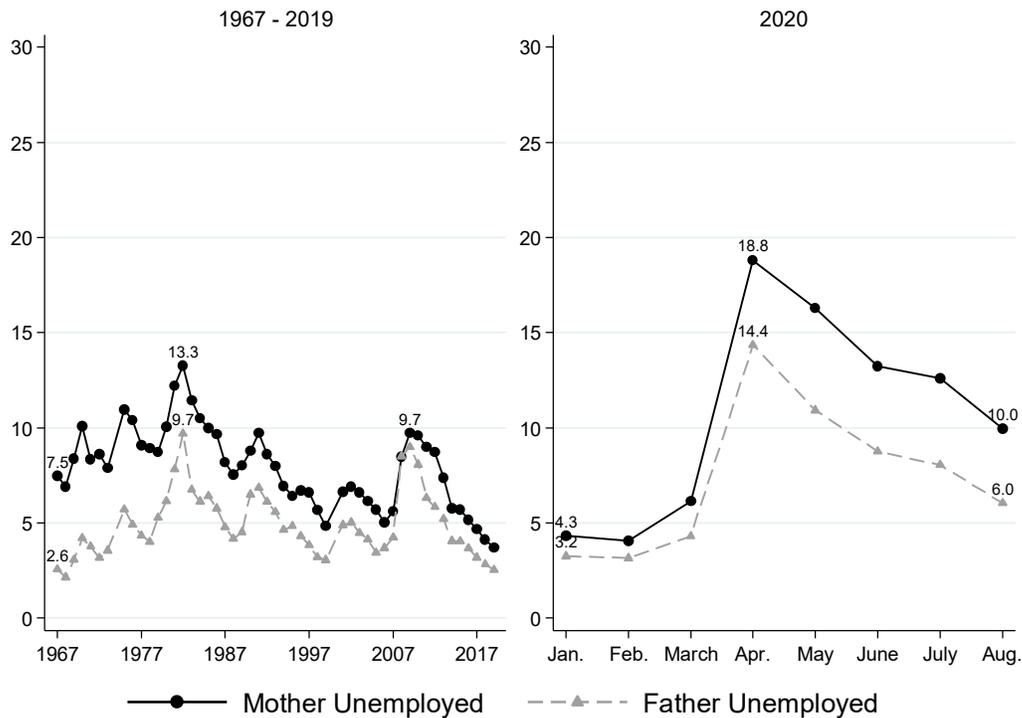
In Las Vegas, an estimated 36% of children had at least one unemployed parent over April to August 2020, the highest among all large metro areas, compared to 5% before the pandemic. One in five children in Las Vegas had each of their parents unemployed over April to August, again the highest among all large metro areas.

Detroit, New Orleans, the New York City area, and Sacramento are the other four large metro areas where around 25% of children had at least one unemployed parent over April to August. In contrast, fewer than 8% of children in areas like Fargo, ND; San Antonio, TX; and Provo, UT had unemployed parents over April to August.

Mothers More Likely Than Fathers to Face Unemployment

The results thus far have demonstrated that the share of children with unemployed parents has climbed to historic highs, with notable disparities by race/ethnicity and geographic location. Even within households, however, the burden of unemployment is not distributed evenly. Figure 3 shows the share of children with an unemployed mother (solid black line) and father (dashed gray line) from 1967 through August 2020.

Figure 3. Share of children with unemployed mother or father, 1967 through 2020



Note: Y-axis represents share of children with unemployed mother or father. Unemployment refers to joblessness among adults who are active in the labor force. Data: U.S. Current Population Survey.

The share of children with an unemployed mother has consistently been higher than the share with an unemployed father, other than a brief moment of parity amidst the Great Recession in 2009. In January 2020, however, the difference between mothers and fathers was 1.1 percentage point (4.3% of children with an unemployed mother compared to 3.2% with an unemployed father). In April 2020, rates for both increased (18.8% of children with an unemployed mother and 14.4% with an unemployed father), with the difference between mothers and fathers climbing to 4.4 percentage points. By August 2020, the share of children with either unemployed mothers and fathers declined to 10% (mothers) and 6% (fathers), though the percentage-point difference between maternal and paternal rates remains at 4 percent, the highest absolute gap since the 1970s.

Evidence from Census Household Pulse Survey (CHPS) suggests that unequal sharing of care responsibilities among mothers and fathers, exacerbated by school closures and a turn to at-home learning across much of the country, contribute to the large maternal-paternal gaps in unemployment. Among all unemployed mothers in the CHPS sample who lost their job after the onset of the pandemic, 30% report care responsibilities as their primary reason for not being employed as of July 2020.¹² Among fathers of a similar age, however, the rate who attribute care responsibilities as their primary reasons for unemployment is only 15%.

1 U.S. Census Bureau. 2020. *Census Household Pulse Survey, Phase 1*.

2 Heggeness and Fields. 2020. *Working Moms Bear Brunt of Home Schooling While Working During COVID-19*. U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/08/parents-juggle-work-and-child-care-during-pandemic.html>

The care burden appears to be particularly large among parents whose children are experiencing distance or at-home schooling due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For unemployed mothers with children experiencing distance learning, the share reporting care responsibilities as their primary reason for unemployment is higher (36%) than for unemployed mothers whose children are attending school in-person (29%). This pattern suggests that school closures have increased the care burden for parents, and for mothers in particular, likely contributing to their elevated rates of unemployment.³ Moreover, this study's focus on unemployment (jobless and searching for work) understates the employment and caregiving imbalances, as labor force participation has consistently been lower for mothers relative to fathers.

Children With Unemployed Parents Face Elevated Rates of Hardship

The lack of employment, in itself, does not necessarily lead to poverty or hardship among families. But when joblessness is coupled with a lack of income transfers to offset earnings losses and little support for domestic caregivers, unemployment can quickly translate into elevated rates of hardship. Indeed, July 2020 evidence from the CHPS demonstrates that unemployed parents with children report high rates of food insufficiency (24.1 percent), missed or delayed rent payments (29.7%), and frequent anxiety (45.9 percent).

In contrast, parents not experiencing unemployment reported lower rates of food insufficiency (11.5%), missed or relayed rent payments (15.7%), and frequent anxiety (36.8%), though these values nonetheless reflect widespread hardship even among families who have not experienced job loss. Note, moreover, that rates of hardship are consistently higher among households with children than for childless households, independent of employment status.

These findings suggest that parental unemployment may have direct consequences for child well-being and development.⁴ Prior evidence demonstrates that reduced economic resources and elevated stress increase the likelihood that a child will struggle in school, need to repeat a grade, or have behavioral challenges in the classroom.⁵ Moreover, long-term unemployment, such as job loss lasting six months or more, may have particularly deleterious consequences for a family's poverty status and a child's physical well-being.⁶ In the longer run, children who experience longer durations of poverty and/or more income volatility are less likely to attain a college degree.⁷ They are also more likely to be unemployed themselves in young adulthood or, if employed, to earn a lower wage.⁸ Even among families who are eventually able to recoup their lost earnings, repeated swings of income volatility can still have negative consequences on a child's well-being.⁹ Put simply, the consequences of the current crisis may affect the well-being and development of today's children well into the future.¹⁰

3 Heggeness, Misty (2020). *Why Is Mommy So Stressed? Estimating the Immediate Impact of the COVID-19 Shock on Parental Attachment to the Labor Market and the Double Bind of Mothers*. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/research/institute-working-papers/why-is-mommy-so-stressed-estimating-the-immediate-impact-of-the-covid-19-shock-on-parental-attachment-to-the-labor-market-and-the-double-bind-of-mothers>

4 Isaacs, Julia (2013). *Unemployment from a child's perspective*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/23131/1001671-Unemployment-from-a-Child-s-Perspective.PDF>

5 Stevens, Ann Huff, and Jessamyn Schaller. 2011. "Short-run effects of parental job loss on children's academic achievement." *Economics of Education Review* 30 (2):289-299. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2010.10.002>.

6 Michael B. Coelli, "Parental Job Loss and the Education Enrollment of Youth," *Labour Economics* 18, no. 1 (2010): 25-35;

7 Duncan, Greg J., and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn. 1997. *Consequences of growing up poor*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

8 Mayer, Susan E. 1997. *What money can't buy: family income and children's life chances*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press.

9 Hardy, Bradley L. 2014. "Childhood Income Volatility and Adult Outcomes." *Demography* 51 (5):1641-1665. doi: [10.1007/s13524-014-0329-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-014-0329-2).

10 Parolin, Zachary. 2020. "Unemployment and child health during COVID-19 in the USA." *The Lancet Public Health* 5 (10):e521-e522. doi: [10.1016/S2468-2667\(20\)30207-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(20)30207-3).

Conclusion

The share of children with an unemployed parent has climbed to historic highs after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. In April 2020, 21.7% of children had at least one unemployed parent. Despite slight recoveries in the preceding months, the share of children with an unemployed parent in August (11.3%) still rivals the rates observed during the peak of the Great Recession in 2009. Black and Hispanic children, in particular, face elevated rates of parental unemployment. Moreover, geographic disparities are large. Las Vegas, where 36% of children has at least one unemployed parent over April to August 2020, currently serves as the epicenter of parental unemployment. At the state level, Nevada features the highest rate of children with an unemployed parent (29.8%), while Nebraska features the lowest rate (7.5%).

Within households, maternal unemployment remains at elevated rates relative to paternal unemployment. In April, the share of children with an unemployed mother reached 18.8% (compared to 14.4% for fathers), the highest rate since at least 1967. Results from the Census Household Pulse Survey suggest that gendered imbalances in domestic childcare responsibilities, combined with more children participating in distance or at-home learning, have contributed to higher rates of maternal unemployment. Mothers are twice as likely as fathers to attribute their current unemployment status to care responsibilities.

High unemployment, combined with income transfers that have not offset declines in prior earnings for many families, has contributed to high rates of hardship among families with children, and for families experiencing unemployment in particular. These patterns of hardship may contribute to long-lasting effects on the well-being and development of children across the country.

Federal and state policy decisions have potential to blunt the rise in hardship and the associated long-term costs for children. First, policymakers should ensure adequate income support for families with children. The expiration of the Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (\$600 per week unemployment bonus) has exacerbated the consequences of unemployment; restoring the benefits would help to ensure that families can afford their basic needs throughout the duration of the crisis. State governments, meanwhile, should ensure that their TANF resources are being used to directly support low-income families with children.¹¹ Long-term, the U.S. should join nearly all other high-income countries in adopting a child allowance to ensure that, even after the crisis, fewer families with children live in poverty.

Second, policymakers should place heavy emphasis on providing children with a safe return to school, as well as ensuring safe, affordable childcare placements for preschoolers. As discussed, more than one-third of mothers whose school-aged children have experienced distance learning report that care responsibilities are their primary cause for unemployment during the pandemic. Until children are able to safely return to school or care facilities, parents will face an increased care burden which, when coupled with a lack of adequate income support, will further contribute to rising poverty and hardship.

Put simply, the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the costs of not offering families with children a source of unconditional income support and of providing little support for domestic care work. Without quick policy action, children may suffer the consequences of the current crisis for decades to come.

¹¹ Parolin, Zachary. 2019. "Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the Black-White Child Poverty Gap." *Socio-Economic Review Online First*. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwz025>.

Appendix I. Share of children with unemployed parent by state

State	April—August 2020		January—March 2020	
	Either Parent Unemployed	All Parents Unemployed	Either Parent Unemployed	All Parents Unemployed
Alabama	16.3%	9.0%	6.1%	2.4%
Alaska	14.4%	7.7%	6.9%	4.6%
Arizona	13.2%	8.4%	6.6%	3.1%
Arkansas	10.2%	3.6%	5.3%	1.9%
California	19.8%	10.1%	6.8%	3.5%
Colorado	12.5%	5.7%	5.4%	3.2%
Connecticut	18.2%	8.7%	7.5%	1.9%
Delaware	13.7%	7.7%	3.2%	2.4%
DC	12.6%	8.5%	9.6%	7.0%
Florida	16.5%	9.4%	4.8%	2.4%
Georgia	12.5%	5.6%	5.3%	2.7%
Hawaii	21.2%	11.0%	2.9%	1.7%
Idaho	8.8%	3.1%	3.9%	0.8%
Illinois	16.0%	7.4%	4.9%	1.7%
Indiana	14.4%	5.6%	4.0%	1.4%
Iowa	13.3%	3.8%	5.2%	1.4%
Kansas	13.4%	7.3%	5.7%	0.5%
Kentucky	15.7%	7.4%	6.3%	2.7%
Louisiana	16.5%	8.9%	8.1%	6.1%
Maine	13.1%	5.1%	6.7%	4.2%
Maryland	12.6%	5.4%	4.7%	2.6%
Massachusetts	20.7%	10.9%	5.7%	1.2%
Michigan	23.1%	13.4%	5.5%	2.8%
Minnesota	12.0%	3.0%	3.6%	1.5%
Mississippi	15.1%	8.0%	7.4%	4.8%
Missouri	10.1%	4.1%	6.9%	4.3%
Montana	11.9%	5.5%	5.5%	1.7%
Nebraska	7.5%	2.9%	6.7%	3.2%
Nevada	29.8%	14.3%	6.7%	3.3%
New Hampshire	15.0%	5.2%	2.8%	0.3%
New Jersey	17.1%	9.1%	6.2%	1.7%
New Mexico	12.5%	6.5%	6.1%	2.4%
New York	24.8%	13.4%	8.2%	3.9%
North Carolina	12.0%	6.1%	7.8%	4.6%
North Dakota	10.2%	4.4%	2.3%	1.4%

State	April—August 2020		January—March 2020	
	Either Parent Unemployed	All Parents Unemployed	Either Parent Unemployed	All Parents Unemployed
Ohio	19.4%	9.7%	6.3%	3.8%
Oklahoma	12.1%	5.5%	4.6%	1.5%
Oregon	14.1%	6.3%	4.4%	1.7%
Pennsylvania	19.6%	9.2%	6.7%	3.3%
Rhode Island	17.7%	10.5%	9.2%	1.8%
South Carolina	11.6%	4.4%	2.5%	1.9%
South Dakota	11.7%	5.6%	3.0%	1.6%
Tennessee	13.1%	6.8%	4.0%	1.4%
Texas	14.6%	7.9%	6.5%	2.9%
Utah	8.5%	1.9%	2.9%	0.8%
Vermont	17.3%	7.3%	6.0%	1.3%
Virginia	10.8%	5.7%	4.2%	0.7%
Washington	16.1%	8.7%	7.3%	2.4%
West Virginia	19.0%	8.4%	5.0%	1.8%
Wisconsin	13.0%	6.4%	6.1%	3.1%
Wyoming	11.6%	4.2%	3.5%	0.8%

Appendix II. Data and Methods

Data: The primary data source used in this study is the U.S. Current Population Survey. Yearly estimates of unemployment from 1967 through 2018 are pulled from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC). The estimate for 2019 averages the unemployment rates across each of the 12 Basic Monthly Files. Monthly estimates within 2020 are pulled from the Basic Monthly Files. The employment and demographic data used are identical over the ASEC and monthly surveys. In each, employment status refers to the respondent’s activities over the preceding week as of the time of the survey.

Data on the share of unemployed parents attributing their employment status to care responsibilities, and hardship among families with children, are pulled Wave 12 (sample covering July 16-21) of the [U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey](#).

Measuring unemployment among parents of children: As detailed in this study, unemployment refers specifically to the share of adults who are active in the labor force who are currently jobless. This measure of unemployment is distinct from non-employment, which excludes jobless adults who are not active in the labor force. To address for potential misclassification of unemployed adults in the CPS files, I set adults who are employed but away from work for “other reasons” as unemployed.

Measuring unemployment among parents of children: This analysis uses the mother and father points within the IPUMS-provided CPS files to link children (age 17 and under) with their parents in cases where the children still live with their parents.¹² The relationship identifiers are not limited to biological mothers or fathers. The mother indicator, for example, includes stepmothers, adoptive mothers, and the unmarried partner of a child’s father. Children with two mothers or two fathers in the household (in the case of same-sex couples) are taken into account, so that “all parents unemployed” would indicate, for example, that both mothers (or fathers) are unemployed.

Measuring hardship and the source of unemployment: Within the Pulse survey, current food insufficiency (‘curfoodsuf’ variable) applies when the respondent reports “sometimes” or “often not enough to eat” over the last 7 days. Frequent anxiety (“anxious” variable) applies when the respondent reports feeling anxiety “more than half the days” or “nearly every day” over the prior 7 days. Missed or late rent or mortgage payment uses the “mortlth” variable to indicate whether the respondent “paid last month’s mortgage or rent on time”. In all cases, respondents with missing values (or “did not report”) are excluded from the estimates of the mean value. The “main reason for not working” is found in the “rsnowrk” variable. This study follows Heggeness and Fields (2020) in measuring the source of unemployment outcomes among adults aged 25-44 who have children in the household. However, this study only measures the outcome among families who have experienced job loss after the onset of the pandemic (positive responses to “wkrloss” variable).

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¹² Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Renae Rodgers, Steven Ruggles and J. Robert Warren. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 7.0 [dataset]*. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.18128/DO30.V7.0>