

# COVID-19 RELATED FOOD INSECURITY

**Food insecurity: not having reliable access to nutritious foods that are needed to live an active and healthy life**



Restrictions in 2020 to slow the spread of COVID-19 impacted day-day life and led to the closure of businesses, schools and childcare centers in the U.S.

Risk of food insecurity (FI) increased significantly as a result, mostly impacting families already at risk of FI, low-income families and families of color.



## What did we look at ?

We wanted to learn more about changes in household FI risk from pre-pandemic to early-pandemic.

We looked at income, race, locale, COVID-19 related illness or economic hardships which we thought would increase FI risk. We also looked at participation in school meals and/or the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) stimulus which we thought would protect families from FI.

## What did we learn ?

### Factors Impacting FI Risk

- FI risk did not change much from pre- to early pandemic but there were differences based on race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. This is similar to findings around the country, indicating that certain populations are at a higher risk for FI and the pandemic worsened FI risk for these populations.



In families who were food secure pre-pandemic:

- risk of early-pandemic FI was **2.1x** higher for non-Hispanic Black families and **3x** higher for other families as compared to non-Hispanic White families.

### Participant Demographics

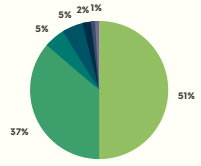
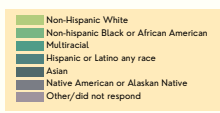


Chart 1

Early pandemic FI risk was:

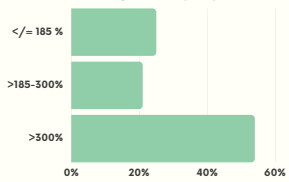
- more than **2x** higher for families who experienced economic hardship (temporary or permanent job loss or reduced hours ) than families who did not experience hardship.

Compared to families with incomes >300% FPL early-pandemic FI risk was:

- **3.2x** higher for families >185-300% FPL and **2.5x** higher for families ≤185% FPL.



### Distribution of Families by Federal Poverty Level (FPL)



Graph 1

# Protective Factors

Percentage of Families Who Received CARES Stimulus Payment

- Families who received the CARES stimulus payment had a **50% reduction** in risk of early-pandemic FI.

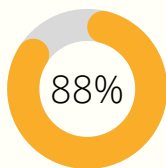
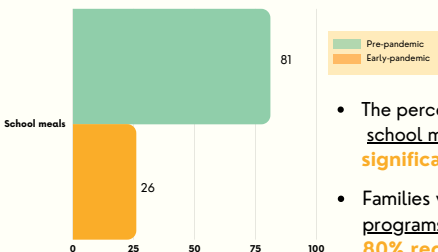


Chart 2

Percentage of Families Using School Meals



Graph 2

- The percentage of families participating in school meal programs **decreased significantly** from pre to early pandemic.
- Families who participated in school meal programs pre- and early-pandemic had a **80% reduction** in FI risk.

## Why does it matter?

Mitigating FI risk and providing stimulus payments and school meals may reduce disparities in response to pandemics.

Food security strengthens families' ability to care for themselves and their children through better nutrition and support for health-related social needs.

Having access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods helps children be healthy, beyond just their physical health.

We need policymakers to think about providing additional support to families who are most vulnerable so these families have the resources they need to help their children grow and develop.

## What can I do?

Reach out to elected officials and encourage them to support policies that advance research on FI and expand current programs or create new programs that may protect families from FI.

To find out who your elected officials are and how you can contact them, visit: <http://mdelect.net/>



Project Website: [marylandschoolwellness.org](http://marylandschoolwellness.org)

For question or to learn more, please email: [rdeitch1@jhu.edu](mailto:rdeitch1@jhu.edu)

Link to full article:

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/public-health-nutrition/article/prepandemic-to-earlypandemic-changes-in-risk-of-household-food-insecurity-among-maryland-families-with-children/6E33C51337B79A084E88DF8775612F21>

Link to resources:

[Baltimore City Food Access](#)

[Maryland Hunger Solutions](#)

[Maryland Food Bank](#)

[USDA Food & Nutrition Services](#) (contains info on SNAP & WIC)