

Tracking Houstonians' Experience with Hardship and Recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic, Using Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File (January 6-March 29, 2021)

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Introduction

It has been more than a year since March 13, 2020, when a national emergency was declared regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.¹ The pandemic has caused a variety of interruptions and hardships for US households, including unemployment, food insufficiency, housing insecurity, health concerns, educational modifications, etc. This report uses the Household Pulse Survey, a bi-weekly survey conducted by the Census Bureau, to understand the impact of the pandemic for adults and households in the metro area of Houston and in Texas, focusing on the first quarter in 2021, including six data collection periods: January 6-18, January 20-February 1, February 3-15, February 17-March 1, March 3-15, and March 17-29.² This report will be updated periodically to track the progress of recovery from the pandemic.

In the first quarter of 2021, compared to the rest of Texans and Americans, Houstonians reported experiencing more hardship in employment income and in paying their usual household expenses: 54% of Houstonians had someone in their household who experienced income loss since the onset of the pandemic, and 43% of Houstonians found it very or somewhat difficult for their household to pay for usual expenses during the week prior to when they were surveyed. Moreover, childcare appeared to be one of the major reasons why women were not working: for those who did not work during the prior week and who were not retired, 17% of Houston women said they did not work because they had to care for children not in school or daycare, significantly higher than 1% reported by Houston men, a common pattern nationwide. Texans reported higher proportions of food insecurity and lack of health insurance than other Americans: 13% of Texans said their household often or sometimes did not have enough food to eat during the prior week, and 21% of Texans had no health insurance. In general, respondents with children in their households, as well as non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic respondents, reported higher proportions of hardship in most topics compared with those without children, non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Asian respondents.³

https://lrl.texas.gov/legeLeaders/governors/displayDocs.cfm?govdoctypeID=5&governorID=45

¹ https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-declaring-national-emergency-concerning-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak/: Texas governor issued the stay-at-home executive order effective on March 20, 2020, and extended it to April 30, 2020.

² Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey.html. The survey was conducted weekly during Phase 1 (April-July 2020) and has been conducted bi-weekly since Phase 2 (August 2020).

³ For the simplicity, "White," "Asian," and "Black" are used in this report to refer "non-Hispanic White," "non-Hispanic Asian," and "non-Hispanic Black" hereafter.



The Household Pulse Survey was initiated in April 2020 by the Census Bureau to measure the socioeconomic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on American households in biweekly rounds of data gathering, with quick data release, roughly 2 to 4 weeks after each data collection period. The Census Bureau has also documented potential challenges in non-sampling errors, such as nonresponse errors and coverage errors, which are likely to be exacerbated during the pandemic and have unknown effects on the accuracy of estimates. ⁴ The estimates presented in this report thus need careful interpretation when the nonresponse rates are non-negligible, such as in the proportions regarding housing insecurity. Moreover, readers are cautioned not to overinterpret moderate differences across groups and geographic areas, since small differences in proportions may merely reflect sampling errors and/or non-sampling errors.

Contents

Introduction	i
Employment/Teleworking	1
Difficulty Paying Regular Expenses	4
Food Insufficiency	6
Housing Insecurity	. 7
Health Insurance Enrollment and Mental Health	. 8
Computer/Internet Availability for Children's K-12 Education1	10
Appendix	11
Vaccination & Attitudes	11
Housing Insecurity Questions in Household Pulse Survey1	13
Proportion of Adults without Health Insurance by State	14

⁴ Census Bureau has conducted a nonresponse bias report (https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/demo/technical-documentation/hhp/2020 HPS NR Bias Report-final.pdf) and tracked the person-level coverage ratios (see Source and Accuracy Statements for details https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/technical-documentation.html). As noted in the reports, respondents with lower socioeconomic status are more likely to skip a question or be under-covered in the sample.



Figures

Figure 1: Proportion of adults who had someone in their household lose employment income since March 13, 2020,
by geography and with/without kids in household
Figure 2: Proportion of adults who had someone in their household begin teleworking due to Covid-19, by geograph
and with/without kids in household
Figure 3: Proportion of adults who had someone in their household lose employment income since March 13, 2020,
by geography and race/ethnicity
Figure 4: Proportion of adults who had someone in their household begin teleworking due to Covid-19, by geography and race/ethnicity
Figure 5: Proportion of adults who did not work during the prior week due to caring for children not in school or daycare, by geography and gender
Figure 6: Proportion of adults whose households had found it very or somewhat difficult to pay for usual expenses
during the prior week, by geography and with/without kids in household
during the prior week, by geography and race/ethnicity
Figure 9: Proportion of adults whose households often or sometimes did not have enough to eat during the prior week, by geography and race/ethnicity
Figure 10: Proportion of renters whose households were not caught up on rent payments, by geography and with/without kids in household
Figure 11: Proportion of homeowners with a mortgage or loan whose households were not caught up on payments, by geography and with/without kids in household
Figure 12: Proportion of adults who had no health insurance, by geography and with/without kids in household
Figure 13: Proportion of adults who had no health insurance, by geography and race/ethnicity Figure 14: Proportion of adults who felt nervous, anxious, or on edge nearly every day or more than half the days during the prior week, by geography and gender
Figure 15: Proportion of adults who felt down, depressed, or hopeless nearly every day or more than half the days in the prior week, by geography and gender
Figure 16: Proportion of adults with children enrolled in K-12 whose children did not always have a computer or other digital device available for educational purposes, by geography and race/ethnicity
Figure 17: Proportion of adults with children enrolled in K-12 in whose children did not always have internet available for educational purposes, by geography and race/ethnicity1
Appendix Tables and Figures
Table A1: Non-response rate on housing tenure question1
Table A2: Proportion of uninsured adults by state1
Figure A1: Proportion of US adults who had received at least one Covid-19 vaccine by March 29, 2021
Figure A2: Proportion of Houston metro area adults who had received at least one Covid-19 vaccine by March 29, 2021
Figure A3: Proportion of renters whose households were not caught up on rent payments, by geography and race/ethnicity
Figure A4: Proportion of homeowners with a mortgage or loan whose households were not caught up on payments,
by geography and race/ethnicity1

Employment/Teleworking

Among Houstonians with kids in household, as well as Hispanic and Black Houstonians, higher shares reported that someone in the household experienced income loss, compared with Houstonians without kids, White and Asian Houstonians

Overall, 54% of Houstonians said that someone in their household had a reduction in employment income since the onset of the pandemic, higher than the US share of 47%; while 38% of Houstonians said someone in their household had started teleworking, similar to 38% in Texas and 39% nationwide but lower than 42% in Dallas (see Figure 1 & Figure 2). More than half (59%) of Houstonians with kids in the household and 65% of Houston Hispanics had someone in their household experience income loss (see Figure 3); while fewer Houstonians with kids in the household (37%) and Houston Hispanics (29%) had someone in their household start teleworking due to Covid-19 (see Figure 4).

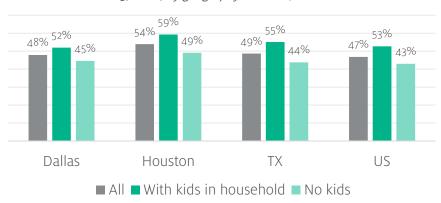


Figure 1: Proportion of adults who had someone in their household lose employment income since March 13, 2020, by geography and with/without kids in household

Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question. Numbers are weighted by person level weight. Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

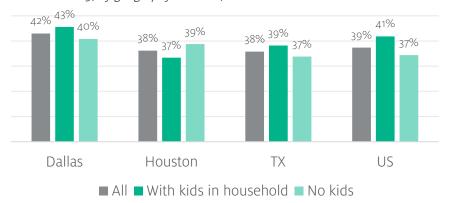


Figure 2: Proportion of adults who had someone in their household begin teleworking due to Covid-19, by geography and with/without kids in household

Dallas Houston TX US

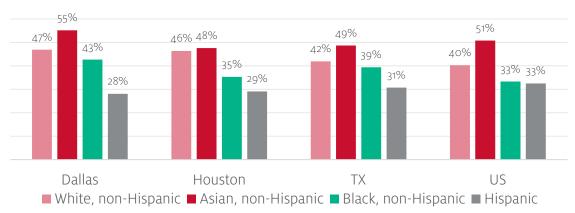
White, non-Hispanic Asian, non-Hispanic Black, non-Hispanic Hispanic

Figure 3: Proportion of adults who had someone in their household lose employment income since March 13, 2020, by geography and race/ethnicity

Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question. Numbers are weighted by person level weight.

Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

Figure 4: Proportion of adults who had someone in their household begin teleworking due to Covid-19, by geography and race/ethnicity



Women were more likely to say they did not work because of caring for children

During the first quarter of 2021, 57% of Houston men and 53% of Houston women said they worked for pay or profit during the prior week. For those who did not work and were not retired, when asked about the main reason for not working, 17% of Houston women said they were caring for children not in school or daycare, a prevalence significantly greater than the 1% reported by Houston men (see Figure 5).⁵ In the Dallas metro area, Texas and the US, the corresponding gaps between women and men, although smaller than in Houston, were also significant.

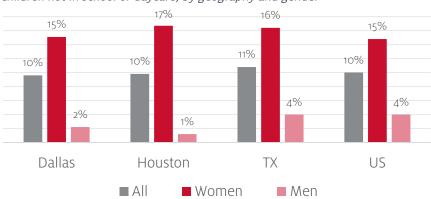


Figure 5: Proportion of adults who did not work during the prior week due to caring for children not in school or daycare, by geography and gender

Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question and who were retired. Numbers are weighted by person level weight.

Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

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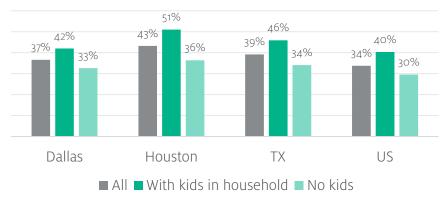
⁵ The questions regarding employment status in Household Pulse Survey do not allow us to distinguish between "unemployment" and "out-of-labor-force," in which the former is currently not working but actively looking for job, and the latter is currently not working and not looking for work. See detailed definitions of unemployment and out-of-labor-force from the Current Population Survey: https://www.bls.gov/cps/cps httpm.htm.

Difficulty Paying Regular Expenses

More than half of Houstonians with kids in household, as well as Black and Hispanic Houstonians, said it had been difficult for their household to pay for their usual expenses during the prior week

Overall, 43% of Houstonians said it had been very or somewhat difficult for their household to pay for their usual expenses during the prior 7 days, higher than the 39% of respondents in Texas and the 34% nationwide.6 In particular, adults with kids in household struggled more than those without kids: 51% of Houstonians with kids in household said it had been very or somewhat difficult for their household to pay for the usual expenses, while 36% of Houstonians without kids in household said it had been very or somewhat difficult (see Figure 6). This may be due to having more mouths to feed, but is not limited to a sole factor: while on average, respondents with children in their household do have larger household size than those without children, as noted in Figure 1, respondents with children in their household also have higher share of "someone in the household lost employment income."

Figure 6: Proportion of adults whose households had found it very or somewhat difficult to pay for usual expenses during the prior week, by geography and with/without kids in household



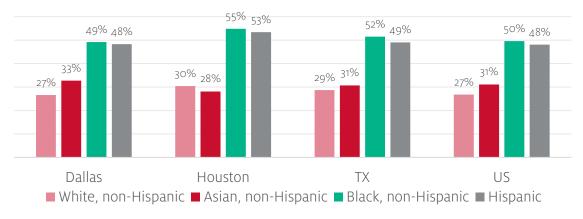
Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question. Numbers are weighted by person level weight. Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

6 Houston has the highest rate amongst the most populous five metro areas in the US: 37% in Dallas, 34% in

Chicago, 38% in New York City, and 41% in Los Angeles. The 43% in the Houston metro area is statistically higher than Dallas, Chicago, New York City metro areas at 1% significance level, but is not statistically different from 41% in Los Angeles metro area.

More than half of Black and Hispanic Houstonians experienced some difficulty paying the usual expenses of their household: 55% of Black and 53% of Hispanic adults reported that it had been very or somewhat difficult (see Figure 7), higher than the rates of White and Asian adults (30% and 28%, respectively).

Figure 7: Proportion of adults whose households had found it very or somewhat difficult to pay for usual expenses during the prior week, by geography and race/ethnicity



Food Insufficiency

One in four Black Houstonians reported that their household often or sometimes did not have enough food to eat; Texans reported a higher proportion of food insufficiency than other Americans

Overall, 15% of respondents in Houston said their household often or sometimes did not have enough food to eat during the prior week, as opposed to 14% in Dallas and 13% in Texas, all higher than the 11% of respondents nationwide (see Figure 8). In Texas, Houston and Dallas 17-18% of adults with children in household expressed a problem with insufficient food. 25% of Black and 20% of Hispanic Houstonians reported often or sometimes not having enough food for their household to eat, similar to the 20% and 18%, respectively, reported nationally (see Figure 9).

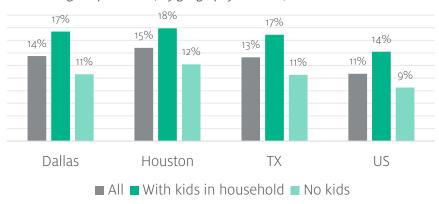


Figure 8: Proportion of adults whose households often or sometimes did not have enough to eat during the prior week, by geography and with/without kids in household

Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question. Numbers are weighted by person level weight. Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

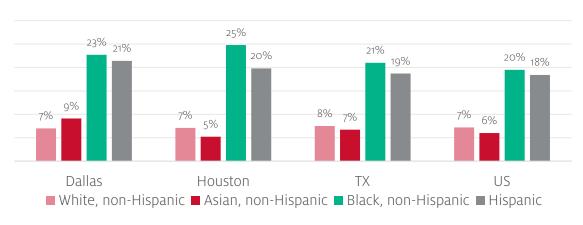


Figure 9: Proportion of adults whose households often or sometimes did not have enough to eat during the prior week, by geography and race/ethnicity

Housing Insecurity

One in four Houston renters were not caught up with payments

In Houston, 25% of renters and 16% of homeowners with a mortgage or loan said they were not caught up with housing payments, while the national levels were 18% and 10%, respectively (see Figure 10 & Figure 11). Moreover, 36% of Houston renters with kids in household and 20% of mortgaged homeowners with kids in household were not caught up on housing payments.⁷

36% 28% 26% 24% 25% 19% 18% 18% 15% 13% 13% 13% Dallas Houston ΤX US ■ All ■ With kids in household ■ No kids

Figure 10: Proportion of renters whose households were not caught up on rent payments, by geography and with/without kids in household

Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question. Numbers are weighted by person level weight. Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

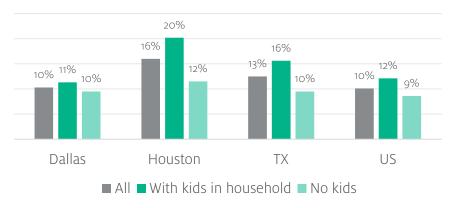


Figure 11: Proportion of homeowners with a mortgage or loan whose households were not caught up on payments, by geography and with/without kids in household

Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question. Numbers are weighted by person level weight. Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

7

⁷ Check the appendix for the potential problems and additional information on the housing insecurity in the Household Pulse Survey.

Health Insurance Enrollment and Mental Health

21% of adults in Texas had no health insurance, highest among all US states

In Texas, health insurance coverage was lower than all other states in the US: 21% of adults in Texas reported being uninsured (see Table A2). In Houston, the share of uninsured adults was 22%, similar to 20% in Dallas, both of which were higher than the 13% in Los Angeles, 9% in New York City, and 8% in Chicago. Notably, 25%, or one-in-four, adults with children in household were uninsured in Houston and Dallas, higher than those without kids (see Figure 12). Among racial/ethnic groups in Houston, 34% of Hispanics were uninsured, 22% of Blacks, 10% of Asians, and 13% of Whites (see Figure 13).

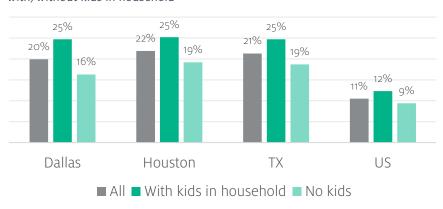


Figure 12: Proportion of adults who had no health insurance, by geography and with/without kids in household

Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question. Numbers are weighted by person level weight. Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

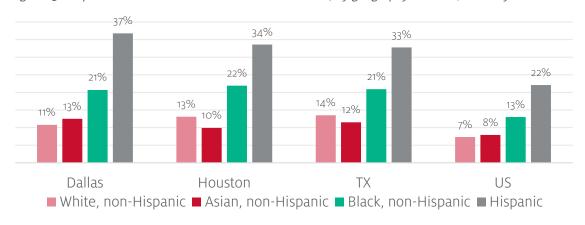


Figure 13: Proportion of adults who had no health insurance, by geography and race/ethnicity

Nearly one third of Houstonians reported feeling anxious more than half the time during the prior week

In Houston, 31% of adults reported feeling anxious, nervous, or on edge more than half the time during the prior week, and 22% reported feeling depressed, down, or hopeless, similar to the rates nationally (see Figure 14 & Figure 15). Women had a higher rate of anxiety and depression than men: 36% of women in Houston, in Dallas and nationally and 37% of women across Texas reported feeling anxious more than half the time during the prior week, higher rates than the 25% reported by Houston men and the 29% reported by men nationally. Twenty three percent of Houston women reported feeling depressed more than half the time during the prior week, similar to the 20% reported by men in Houston; while 25% of women in Dallas and across Texas, and 24% of women nationally reported feeling depressed, higher than the 20% in Dallas and the 21% reported by men across Texas and nationally.

36% 36% 37% 32% 29% 29% 25% Dallas Houston TX US

Figure 14: Proportion of adults who felt nervous, anxious, or on edge nearly every day or more than half the days during the prior week, by geography and gender

Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question. Numbers are weighted by person level weight. Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

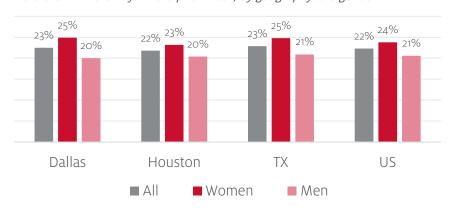


Figure 15: Proportion of adults who felt down, depressed, or hopeless nearly every day or more than half the days in the prior week, by geography and gender

Computer/Internet Availability for Children's K-12 Education

Children in Black and Hispanic households had higher shares of non-constant access to computer/digital devices and the internet for K-12 education

Seventy three percent of Houstonians with children enrolled in K-12 public or private school during the 2020-2021 school year reported that classes normally taught in person were moved to a distance-learning format, similar to 75% nationwide.8 Overall, 29% of Houstonians with children in household reported that children did not always have a digital device available for K-12 education, and 27% did not always have the internet available, higher than 21% and 24%, respectively, reported nationally. Among racial/ethnic groups, 30% of Black and 34% of Hispanic Houstonians reported non-constant access to digital device for children's K-12 education, and 35% of Black and 28% Hispanic Houstonians reported non-constant access to the internet (see Figure 16 & Figure 17).

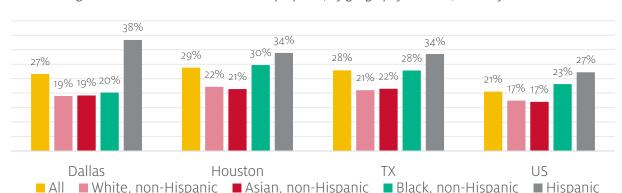


Figure 16: Proportion of adults with children enrolled in K-12 whose children did not always have a computer or other digital device available for educational purposes, by geography and race/ethnicity

Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question. Numbers are weighted by person level weight.

Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

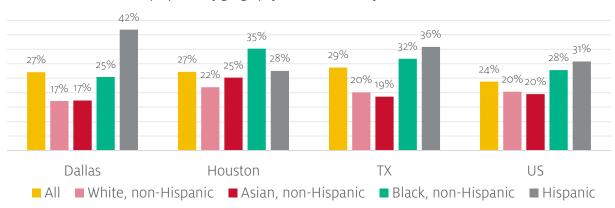


Figure 17: Proportion of adults with children enrolled in K-12 in whose children did not always have internet available for educational purposes, by geography and race/ethnicity

⁸ It is undistinguishable whether children's K-12 education was required to change or was voluntarily changed to distance-learning format from the question-and-answer options provided in the Household Pulse Survey.

Appendix

Vaccination & Attitudes

Almost half of American adults reported having received at least one dose of Covid-19 vaccine as of March 20219

During the data collecting period of March 17-29, 2021, 47% adults in the US and 48% adults in Houston metro area said they had received at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine (see Figure A1 & Figure A2). Among Houstonians who had not received any vaccines during the data collection period of March 17-29, 2021, about 23% expressed hesitancy in receiving the vaccine (9% said they definitely would not get a vaccine, and 14% said they probably would not get a vaccine); among the reasons for hesitancy expressed by these Houstonians, the most common (44%) was being "concerned about possible side effects of a COVID-19 vaccine," followed by "plan to wait and see if it is safe and may get it later" (34%).

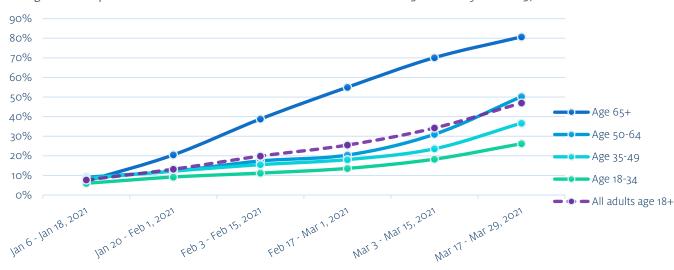


Figure A1: Proportion of US adults who had received at least one Covid-19 vaccine by March 29, 2021

⁹ Official sources on administered vaccine tracker: Harris County / City of Houston COVID-19 Data Hub https://covid-harriscounty.hub.arcgis.com/pages/vaccine-info; CDC COVID Data Tracker COVID-19 Vaccinations in the United States https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccinations.

¹⁰ In Texas, people aged 65 and older have been eligible to receive a vaccine since December 29, 2020, people aged 50 to 64 have been eligible since March 15, 2021, and everyone aged 16 and older have been eligible since March 29, 2021. https://dshs.texas.gov/covidvaccine/

90% 80% 70% 60% 50% - Age 65+ 40% Age 50-64 30% 20% **-** Age 35-49 10% •— Age 18-34 Jan 6 - Jan 18, 2021 Jan 20 - Feb 1, 2021 Feb 3- Feb 15, 2021 Feb 17 - Mar 1, 2021 🌘 🕳 All adults age 18+ Mar 3- Mar 15, 2021 Mar 17 - Mar 29, 2021

Figure A2: Proportion of Houston metro area adults who had received at least one Covid-19 vaccine by March 29, 2021

Housing Insecurity Questions in Household Pulse Survey

In the Household Pulse Survey, questions on whether the household has caught up on housing payments were preceded by and conditional on the housing tenure question. The tenure question had a non-negligible share of non-respondents: more than one-fourth of the respondents did not answer the question nationally (See Table A1). One of the factors that may contribute to the overall higher non-response rate could be that housing questions were placed toward the end of the survey. The higher non-response rate was generally correlated with younger age, lower education, lower income, and being non-white. Houston had a higher non-response than Dallas, Texas and the rest of the US, and Asians and Hispanics in Houston had higher non-response rates than Whites and Blacks. Therefore, it is likely to be imprecise to compare differences across groups and geographic areas since the non-response rates are not random.

We include the proportions of those who were not caught up on housing payments by race/ethnicity below (see Figure A₃ & Figure A₄) but suggest that readers avoid drawing strong conclusions across racial/ethnic groups due to the unknown effects of non-response errors.

Table A1: Non-response rate on housing tenure question

Housing owned or rented	Houston	Dallas	Texas	US
Non-response rate	30%	27%	28%	26%
By with/without kids in household				
With kids in household	33%	29%	29%	28%
No kids in household	27%	25%	27%	24%
By race/ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	26%	23%	24%	22%
Asian, non-Hispanic	36%	29%	32%	30%
Black, non-Hispanic	28%	30%	29%	33%
Hispanic	34%	31%	32%	32%

_

¹¹ The original question wording is: "Is your house or apartment 1) Owned by you or someone in this household free and clear? 2) Owned by you or someone in this household with a mortgage or loan (including home equity loans)? 3) Rented? 4) Occupied without payment of rent?"

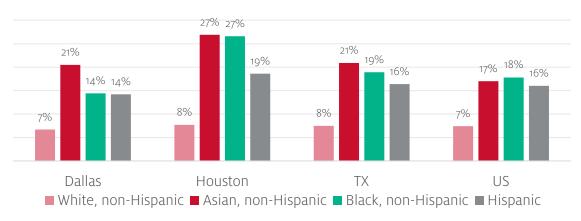
31% 31% 29% 28% 27% 28% 24% 24% 22% 22% 19% 13% 12% 10% 7% Dallas Houston ■ White, non-Hispanic ■ Asian, non-Hispanic ■ Black, non-Hispanic ■ Hispanic

Figure A3: Proportion of renters whose households were not caught up on rent payments, by geography and race/ethnicity

Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question. Numbers are weighted by person level weight.

Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

Figure A4: Proportion of homeowners with a mortgage or loan whose households were not caught up on payments, by geography and race/ethnicity



Note: Graph excludes individuals who did not respond to the question. Numbers are weighted by person level weight.

Source: US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey Public Use File. Data collecting periods are Jan 6-18, Jan 20-Feb 1, Feb 3-15, Feb 17-Mar 1, Mar 3-15, Mar 17-29, 2021. UH IRWGS analysis.

Proportion of Adults without Health Insurance by State

Table A2: Proportion of uninsured adults by state

State	Share Of Uninsured Adults	State Rank
USA	10.5%	
Alabama	13.3%	6
Alaska	13.1%	7
Arizona	11.6%	13
Arkansas	9.1%	21
California	10.6%	17
Colorado	7.9%	30
Connecticut	6.6%	40

Delaware	5.6%	47
District Of Columbia	5.0%	51
Florida	13.1%	8
Georgia	15.3%	4
Hawaii	6.1%	43
Idaho	11.2%	14
Illinois	8.1%	29
Indiana	8.8%	22
Iowa	5.9%	45
Kansas	10.9%	15
Kentucky	6.6%	39
Louisiana	10.9%	16
Maine	6.1%	44
Maryland	5.6%	46
Massachusetts	5.5%	49
Michigan	6.7%	38
Minnesota	6.3%	42
Mississippi	15.6%	3
Missouri	10.4%	18
Montana	8.4%	27
Nebraska	6.7%	37
Nevada	12.9%	9
New Hampshire	6.9%	36
New Jersey	8.6%	25
New Mexico	9.3%	20
New York	7.5%	33
North Carolina	12.3%	11
North Dakota	8.2%	28
Ohio	7.8%	31
Oklahoma	15.8%	2
Oregon	8.7%	23
Pennsylvania	6.5%	41
Rhode Island	5.5%	50
South Carolina	12.1%	12
South Dakota	9.6%	19
Tennessee	12.5%	10
Texas	21.3%	1
Utah	8.6%	26
Vermont	5.6%	48
Virginia	7.2%	34
Washington	7.8%	32
West Virginia	8.6%	24
Wisconsin	7.1%	35
Wyoming	14.7%	5