
Food Security Shouldn't Take a Summer Vacation

Lauren Bauer, Krista Ruffini, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, and Natalie Tomeh

Technical Appendix

August 2022

Census Household Pulse Survey

We use data from the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey ("Pulse") to estimate within-pandemic levels of food insufficiency and to identify differences in reported food insufficiency by state. The Pulse is ideal for this analysis because it allows us to capture changes over time at a high frequency. All individual-level data are from this survey. Additional documentation from the Census Bureau on the Pulse can be found [here](#).

The measure that we show is food insufficiency. The Pulse asks respondents whether, in the past seven days, their household was able to consume the quantity and types of food it wanted; enough, but not of the type of food it wanted; sometimes was not able to eat enough; or often was not able to eat enough. We examine whether a household reports it was sometimes or often not able to get enough to eat in the previous seven days, i.e. food insufficiency.

The Pulse does not ask each household member's age; therefore, we define families with school-aged children as those with any child in the household who were enrolled in school or homeschooled in the fall of 2020. The Pulse does not ask about the age of each child in a household. We are therefore unable to explore whether changes in food security are particularly pronounced for households with older or younger children, or the effect of different Pandemic EBT benefit amounts on measures of food hardship.

Pandemic EBT Disbursements

To identify the timing and dollar amount of Pandemic EBT resources, we start with the USDA's [state-level disbursements for May 2022](#). States are categorized into "No PEBT," "Low PEBT," and "High PEBT" based on their reported total cost of the Pandemic EBT program in May 2022. States that released less than one full month's share of Pandemic EBT in May—approximately one eighth, or 13 percent, of the total fiscal year cost of the program in that state—are considered "Low PEBT." States that released greater than or equal to that amount in May are considered "High PEBT."

While USDA reports Pandemic EBT disbursements by Massachusetts, New Mexico, Kentucky, and Virginia in May, we independently verified that the funds were released after May 9th, the last day of the survey window. These states are therefore included in the "No PEBT" group along with those that reported a zero dollar cost of the program in May. These are descriptive relationships; future work will identify the causal relationship between Pandemic EBT and measures of food hardship for the 2021–22 school year and the summer of 2022. Table 1 shows details of the data underlying Figure 2.

TABLE 1.

Percent of Households Reporting Food Insecurity by Value of Pandemic EBT Disbursement

	No PEBT	Low PEBT	High PEBT
Income under \$50k, with school-age children	29.6%	29.0%	23.9%
Income under \$50k, without children	16.8%	17.3%	15.8%
All households, with school-age children	14.4%	16.0%	12.8%
All households, without children	8.7%	9.1%	10.0%

Source: Census Household Pulse Survey (2022); USDA (2022); authors' calculations.

Note: States that did not disburse Pandemic EBT at all or by May 9 include AL, AZ, CT, DC, HI, ID, IN, IA, KS, KY, ME, MA, MD, MN, MT, NV, NH, NJ, ND, NM, SC, and VA. States that disbursed less than 13 percent of their SY21–22 Pandemic EBT in May include: AK, AR, CA, CO, FL, GA, IL, LA, MS, MO, NE, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SD, TN, TX, VT, and WA. States that disbursed more than 13 percent of their SY21–22 Pandemic EBT in May include: DE, MI, NY, NC, UT, WV, WI, and WY.

