

# New data tracks COVID's impacts

## Census Bureau contacts households in 'pulse' surveys

By NEAL FRIED

Since the pandemic began, the U.S. Census Bureau has taken weekly 20-minute "pulse" surveys to find out how COVID-19 has affected households. More than 13,000 Alaskans are invited to participate each week.

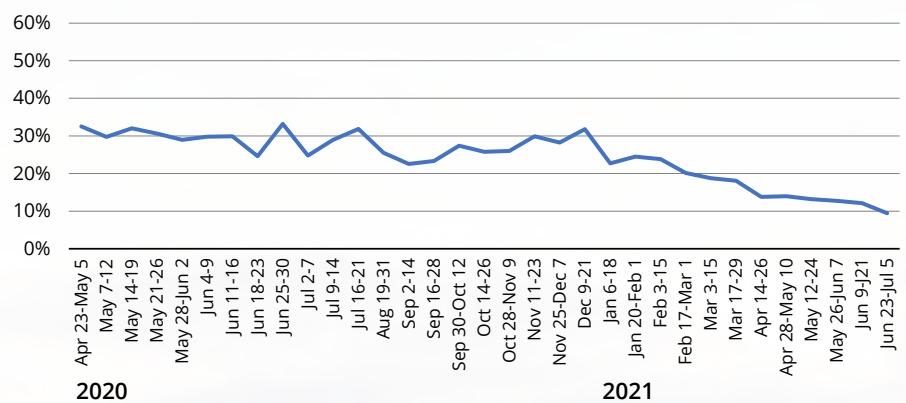
Among other questions about food scarcity, housing insecurity, and medical care delays, the survey asks whether anyone in the household expects to lose employment income in the next four weeks. Lost income doesn't necessarily mean a lost job; it can also come from reduced hours, furloughs, or temporary layoffs.

When the survey began in late April of 2020, a little over 30 percent of households expected to lose employment income in the coming weeks. That percentage didn't change much throughout 2020, although it did bounce around between the low 20s and the low 30s.

A downward trend developed in early 2021, and the percentage declined through at least the first six months of this year. The share of Alaska households expecting income loss fell to around 10 percent in early July.

The survey also asks whether households actually *did* lose employment income during the previous

### Alaska households that expected to lose employment income in the next four weeks



Note: While most survey periods were five days, the intervals and gaps were not always consistent.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey

four weeks, but those results aren't available in comparable form across the full period and they have obvious data quality issues. These survey data also have large margins of error.

The Census Bureau's Pulse Survey is a new experimental project, so no pre-pandemic data exist for comparison. This new way to document the social and economic effects of one of the most consequential and unusual events in Alaska's history will become increasingly useful, though, as it collects more data.

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