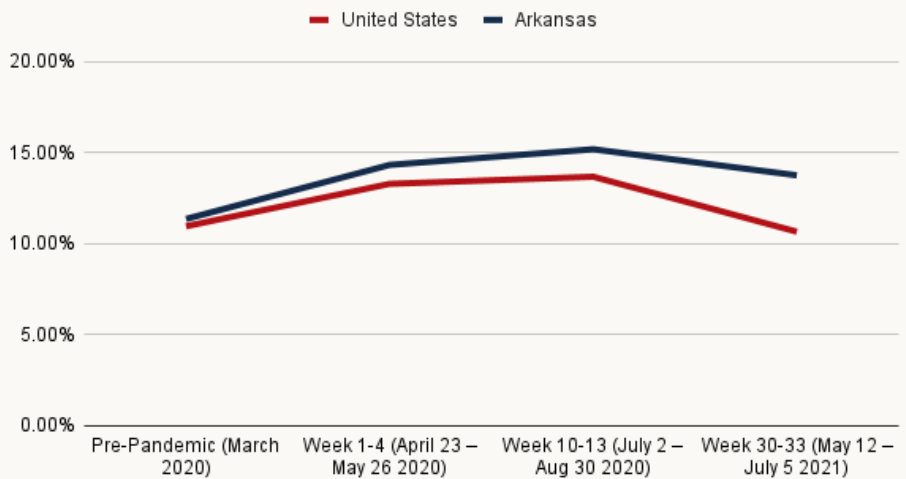


# Arkansas Hunger Data: Pandemic Edition

Every child needs access to an adequate amount of healthy food to thrive. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, too many of Arkansas's children were facing hunger, especially our Black and Hispanic or Latino children. There is a growing understanding that even when accounting for social and economic factors, disparities among races continue to exist due to structural racism. These are the policies, practices, rules, and standards that have intentionally excluded Black, Indigenous and Other People of Color from the economic progress of the state as a whole.

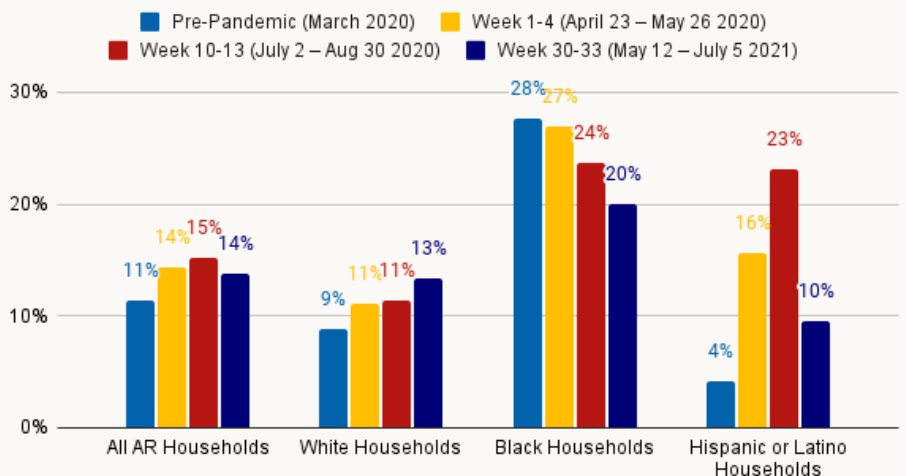
While data collection issues keep us from having a full picture of the situation, it's clear the ongoing pandemic has mostly exacerbated hunger rates. This increase seems to have peaked in 2020 and has returned to near pre-pandemic levels for most of the country, though not quite yet in Arkansas. Thankfully, the expansion and prepayment of the Child Tax Credit is expected to help thousands of children and their families.

Households with children experiencing hunger



Source: author analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables

Arkansas households with children experiencing hunger



In absolute numbers, it is White households with children that make up the the largest population, at approximately 58,000 households.

Source: author analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables

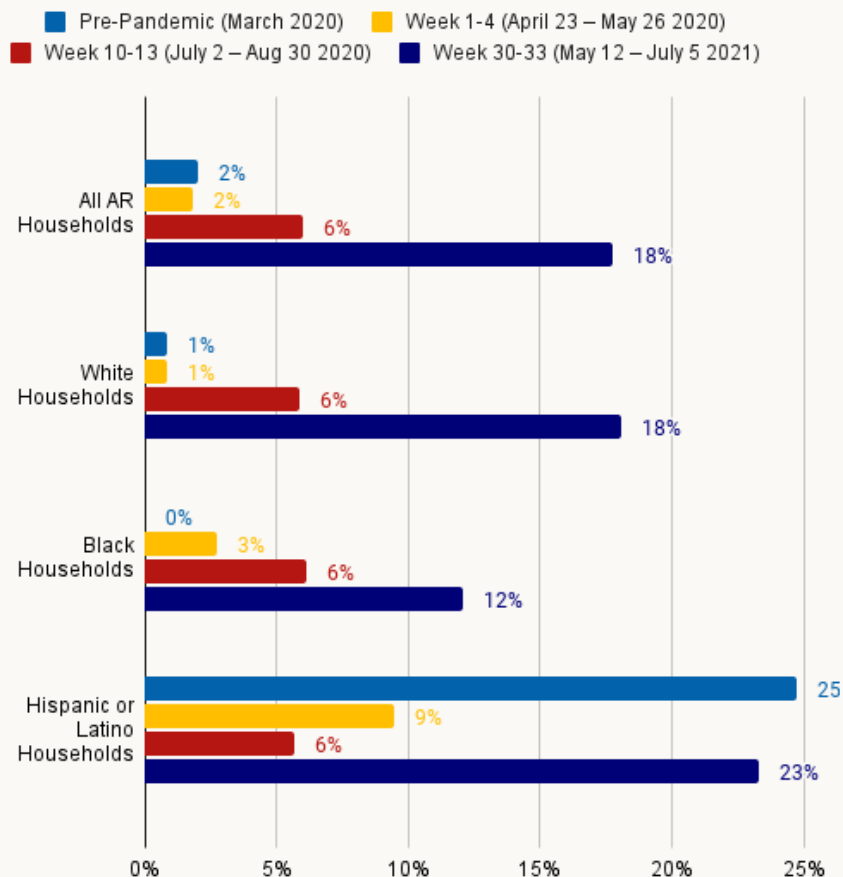
## Notes about the data:

Due to data collection methods for the new Household Pulse Survey, it is difficult to get reliable numbers, particularly on the ethnic and racial disparities in Arkansas. Some data on race and ethnicity are excluded from the graph entirely because of small sample sizes. Granular data regarding particular communities, such as Arkansas's Marshallese families, just aren't available.

This is not an issue unique to the pandemic. Many federal and state programs in Arkansas do a poor job of tracking all children by race. We must do better tracking all racial and ethnic groups to ensure we have information that tells the full story of children from Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

Because the Household Pulse Survey is intended to provide timely information, no in-person outreach or direct mail was used to solicit responses – only emails and texts. The U.S. Census Bureau acknowledged this would lead to lower response rates .

### Arkansas households not responding to Pulse Surveys



At pre-pandemic rates, approximately 106,000 families with children in Arkansas did not have enough food to eat regardless of race, and that should be an unacceptable statistic for all Arkansans.

## Direct payments to families

Despite the surge in cases, hospitalizations and deaths in the summer of 2021, which could compromise the economic rebound, there is reason to believe the numbers of families with children who are experiencing hunger will begin to decline at a faster rate. In July, checks from the expanded Child Tax Credit (CTC) payments included in the American Rescue Plan began going out to millions of households across the country. In Arkansas, more than 660,000 children stand to benefit.

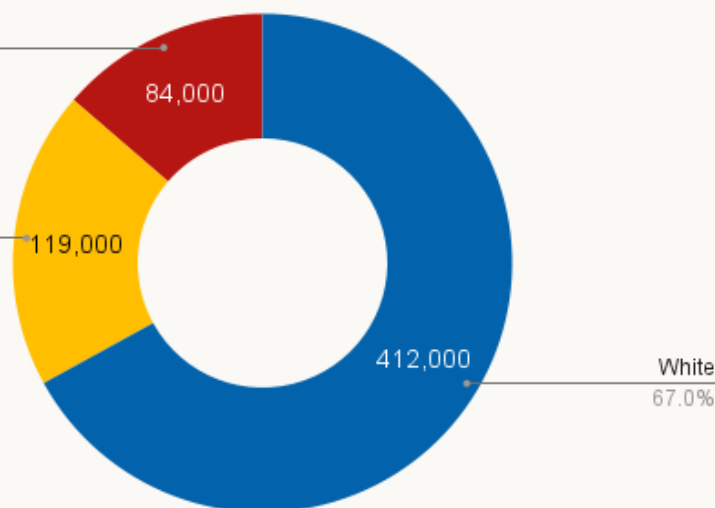
The CTC benefit is now fully refundable at \$3,000 per child age 6 to 17 and \$3,600 per child age 5 and below. Half the total credit amount is being paid in advance monthly payments, with many parents receiving \$250-\$300 per month, per child, depending on age.

### Number of Arkansas children eligible for expanded CTC

Total 661,000 children

Hispanic or Latino  
13.7%

Black  
19.3%



Source: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/american-rescue-plan-act-includes-critical-expansions-of-child-tax-credit-and>

However, not all households with children who should receive a payment have yet. That's likely because the IRS does not have the information necessary for many families with lower incomes, who would not have previously qualified for the CTC, but who do this year due to changes included in the American Rescue Plan.

State leaders must become more proactive in connecting families with resources, especially as we continue to struggle through the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Qualifying children who received payments in July 2021

585,000



### Average Payment Amount per Household

**\$437**

Source: [https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/eecl1a41a-e362-453c-bc11-d49c9af2cb8a/ctc-fiscal-impact-final-2021-07-30.pdf](https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/eecl1a41a-e362-453c-bc11-d49c9af2cb8a/ctc-fiscal-impact-final-2021-07-30.pdf)