

FACT SHEET

Energy Insecurity in the United States

Trends, Disparities, and a Widening Crisis: 2024 RECS Update

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Fact sheet data source: US Energy Information Administration, Residential Energy Consumption Survey [RECS] 2020 and 2024, <https://www.eia.gov/consumption/residential/data/2024/>.

What Is Energy Insecurity?

Energy insecurity (EI) is the inability to adequately meet household energy needs. EI has three dimensions:

Economic

Financial strain associated with utility bill payments, towards which a disproportionate share of household income is allocated (i.e., energy burden).

Physical

Housing deficiencies and inefficiencies that induce higher utility bills, thermal discomfort, and extreme indoor temperatures; power outages.

Coping

Adaptive strategies households use to prevent, respond to, and manage physical and economic energy-related hardships.

Prevalence: 2020 vs. 2024

Among all US households in 2024, **43.6 million (32.9%)** experienced some form of EI—up from **33.6 million (27.2%)** in 2020. This represents a 21% relative increase in just four years.

Indicator	2020 households	2020 rate	2024 households	2024 rate	PP change
Experienced any form of energy insecurity	33.6M	27.2%	43.6M	32.9%	▲ +5.7 pp
Reduced or went without food or medicine to pay energy costs	24.6M	19.9%	32.9M	24.8%	▲ +4.9 pp
Left home due to unhealthy indoor temperatures	12.2M	9.9%	17.6M	13.2%	▲ +3.3 pp
Received a disconnection or delivery stop notice	12.4M	10.0%	16.2M	12.2%	▲ +2.2 pp
Was unable to use air-conditioning equipment	6.4M	5.1%	8.2M	6.2%	▲ +1.1 pp
Was unable to use heating equipment	4.9M	4.0%	6.8M	5.2%	▲ +1.2 pp

Notes: 2024 data are preliminary. Rate = households reporting any energy insecurity ÷ total households in category. PP = percentage points.

Key Takeaways

- Energy insecurity reached its **highest recorded level in 2024** across all indicators.
- The indicator with the largest percentage point increase from 2020 to 2024 was **households trading food or medicine for energy bills**: rising from 19.9% to 24.8%.
- The steepest increases occurred among demographic groups previously less exposed. **Middle-income** households (\$60,000–\$100,000/year) saw a 12-point jump (20.1% to 32.1%) in EI. Non-Hispanic **White** households rose 6.3 points, more than double the increase seen among historically, and still highly, exposed groups including Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans.
- **Working-age** householders (under 60) experienced the largest age-group increase, at +6.5 points, while **seniors** (60+) saw a 4.8-point rise, such that now 1 in 4 (up from 1 in 5) seniors are exposed to EI. Households with children reached a new EI peak of 42.3% in 2024.
- **Renters** remain far more exposed than owners (47.8% versus 25.7%), but both groups worsened at similar rates. **Rural dwellers** saw a 6.9-point increase, while urban residents experienced a more modest rise (28% in 2020 to 33% in 2024).
- While **energy efficiency measures** can ease EI, even households in adequately insulated homes and with double-pane windows saw substantial gains (~+6 points)—though this increase was not as high as for homes with single-pane windows (+7.0 points).
- **Warm-weather** regions posted the sharpest increases. The mixed-dry/hot-dry region (Southwest) rose 10 points to 41.5%—the largest of any climate category. The hot-humid region (Southeast/Gulf Coast) rose 5.5 points to 35.6%, while cold-weather regions saw smaller gains (+4.7 points).
- **Data gaps**: The 2024 RECS data are preliminary and already likely undercount current conditions, as they predate recent energy price volatility. Compared to 2020, 2024 data show a substantial rebound and widening crisis following the expiration of pandemic-era protections, inflation, and growing economic pressures.
- **Implications**: More frequent data collection and quicker public release are needed to track this escalating crisis. Actionable responses include utility disconnection protections, expanded financial assistance, and enhanced home energy programs targeting insulation, windows, and heating and cooling equipment upgrades.



Energy insecurity by population characteristics (% of households reporting any EI)

Category	2020 rate	2024 rate	PP change	% change
All households	27.2%	32.9%	+5.7 pp	+20.9
Race / ethnicity				
White alone (non-Hispanic)	20.1%	26.4%	+6.3 pp	+31.3%
Black or African American alone	52%	55.1%	+3.2 pp	+6.1%
Hispanic or Latino	47%	50%	+3.0 pp	+6.4%
Asian alone	25.2%	29.3%	+4.0 pp	+15.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native alone	51.9%	56.6%	+4.8 pp	+9.2%
Annual income				
Under \$15,000	57.1%	61.7%	+4.6 pp	+8.1%
\$15,000–\$29,999	46.1%	51.4%	+5.3 pp	+11.5%
\$30,000–\$59,999	34.7%	41.4%	+6.7 pp	+19.3%
\$60,000–\$99,999	20.1%	32.1%	+12.0 pp	+59.7%
\$100,000–\$199,999*	~9.0%	18.2%	+~9.2 pp	+~102%
\$200,000 or more	3.4%	7.5%	+4.1 pp	+120.6%
Age and household composition				
Householder under 60	33%	39.5%	+6.5 pp	+19.7%
Householder 60 or older	19.2%	24%	+4.8 pp	+25.0%
With children under 18	37.2%	42.3%	+5.1 pp	+13.7%
Without children under 18	23.3%	29.4%	+6.2 pp	+26.2%
Housing tenure				
Owner-occupied	20.4%	25.7%	+5.3 pp	+26.0%
Renter-occupied	41%	47.8%	+6.8 pp	+16.6%

*The \$100K–\$199K 2024 bracket does not map precisely onto 2020 brackets (\$100K–\$149K and \$150K+). The 2020 rate shown (~9.0%) is an estimate; treat proportional change as approximate.

Energy insecurity by place characteristics (% of households reporting any EI)

Category	2020 rate	2024 rate	PP change	% change
Housing type				
Single-family detached	22.2%	27.7%	+5.5 pp	+24.8%
Apartment (2–4 units)	44.9%	48.2%	+3.3 pp	+7.4%
Apartment (5+ units)	30.6%	39%	+8.4 pp	+27.5%
Mobile home	47%	51.4%	+4.4 pp	+9.4%
Insulation quality				
Well insulated	19.2%	24.4%	+5.2 pp	+27.1%
Adequately insulated	23.9%	30.1%	+6.2 pp	+25.9%
Poorly insulated	46%	51.7%	+5.7 pp	+12.4%
Not insulated	51%	54.1%	+3.1 pp	+6.1%
Window type				
Single-pane glass	36.7%	43.7%	+7.0 pp	+19.1%
Double-pane glass	22.1%	27.6%	+5.5 pp	+24.9%
Urban / rural				
Urban	27.9%	33.3%	+5.4 pp	+19.4%
Rural	24%	30.9%	+6.9 pp	+28.8%
Census region				
Northeast	25.3%	30%	+4.7 pp	+18.6%
Midwest	24.3%	29.9%	+5.6 pp	+23.0%
South	29.9%	35.4%	+5.6 pp	+18.7%
West	26.9%	33.5%	+6.6 pp	+24.5%
Climate region				
Very cold / cold	23.6%	28.3%	+4.7 pp	+19.9%
Mixed-humid	28.6%	33.7%	+5.1 pp	+17.8%
Mixed-dry / hot-dry	31.5%	41.5%	+10.0 pp	+31.7%
Hot-humid	30.1%	35.6%	+5.5 pp	+18.3%
Marine	23%	25.5%	+2.5 pp	+10.9%

