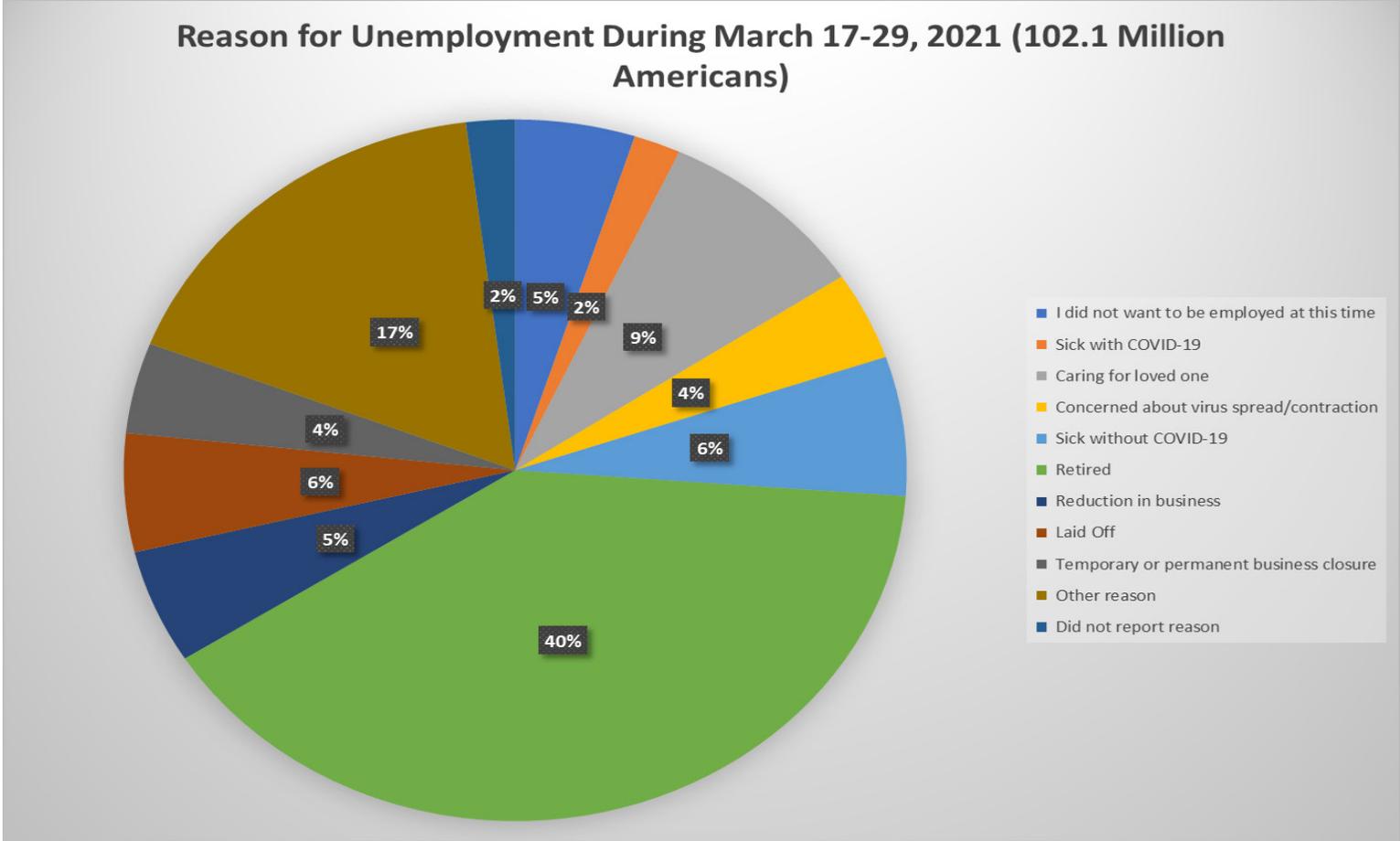


What Survey Data Tells Us About Unemployment During the Pandemic

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Many people in the US are still feeling the financial impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. A recent survey was conducted by the US Census Bureau, which asked respondents about personal reasons for unemployment from March 17-29, 2021. Over 102.1 million Americans with varying levels of educational attainment participated in the survey. In addition to reasons for unemployment, the use of government aid and other sources to meet spending needs were examined. Highlighted in this report is the correlation between reasons for unemployment, level of educational attainment, and the use of supplemental finances during unemployment.



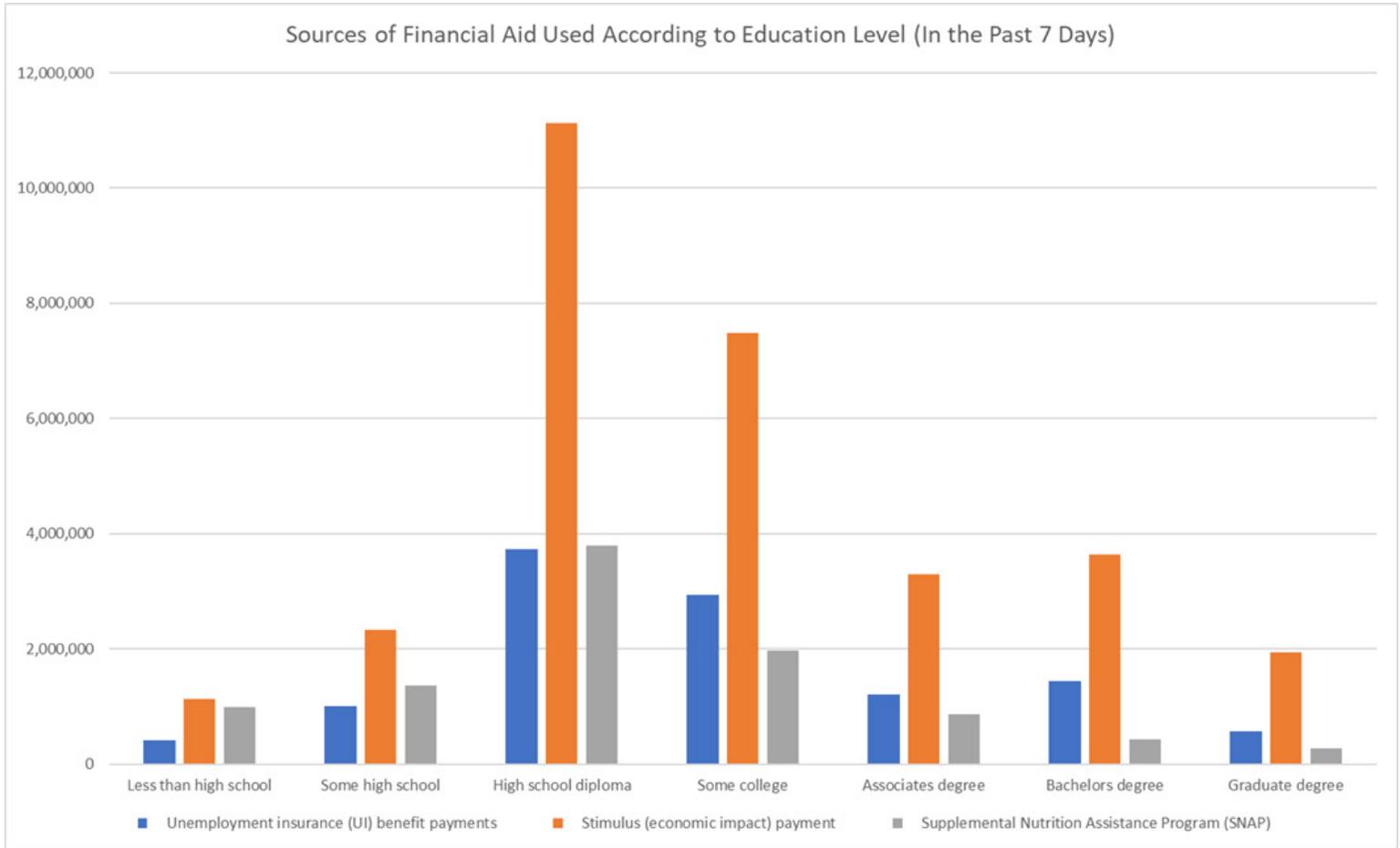
The survey found that 40.6 million Americans were retired, 6.5 million were unemployed due to an illness not related to the coronavirus, and 5.5 million were laid off by their employer. Fear of contracting or spreading COVID-19, the temporary closure of their employer, and many other reasons for unemployment were expressed by the respondents .

The findings tell an unsurprising truth: those with higher levels of educational attainment experienced more job security than those with less education. If a respondent held a graduate degree, they were less likely to endure a layoff than a respondent with an associate's or bachelor's degree; just 3.2% of graduate degree holders were laid off during the time of the survey, compared to 6.4% of bachelor's degree holders, and 5.3% of associate degree holders.

Not only did the survey reveal varying levels of job security among the respondents, but it also provided potential insights into the financial stability of their employers. Bachelor's degree holders and those who hold a high school diploma were similarly impacted by job loss due to temporary or permanent business closures (3.6% for each group). However, those who have some or no high school education were affected by business closures at almost double the rate (7.2%). This observation suggests that the financial stability of the employer during the pandemic played a substantial role in the respondent's job security, and it is implied that those with higher levels of education are more likely to work for employers that are equipped to financially withstand a time of crisis.

Unemployment is difficult for many to navigate, as most look to find supplemental income during this period. When examining the ways that people met their financial needs in the last 7 days of unemployment, it was found that those who had never attended college were much more likely to use government assistance, such as SNAP (Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program) and stimulus payments than those who had attended college. Even though those with college degrees also relied on stimulus payments, for example, this same group met their spending needs in ways that signify more financial independence. Respondents with higher levels of educational attainment relied on their savings and additional revenue streams established before the pandemic at a higher rate than respondents with lower levels of education.

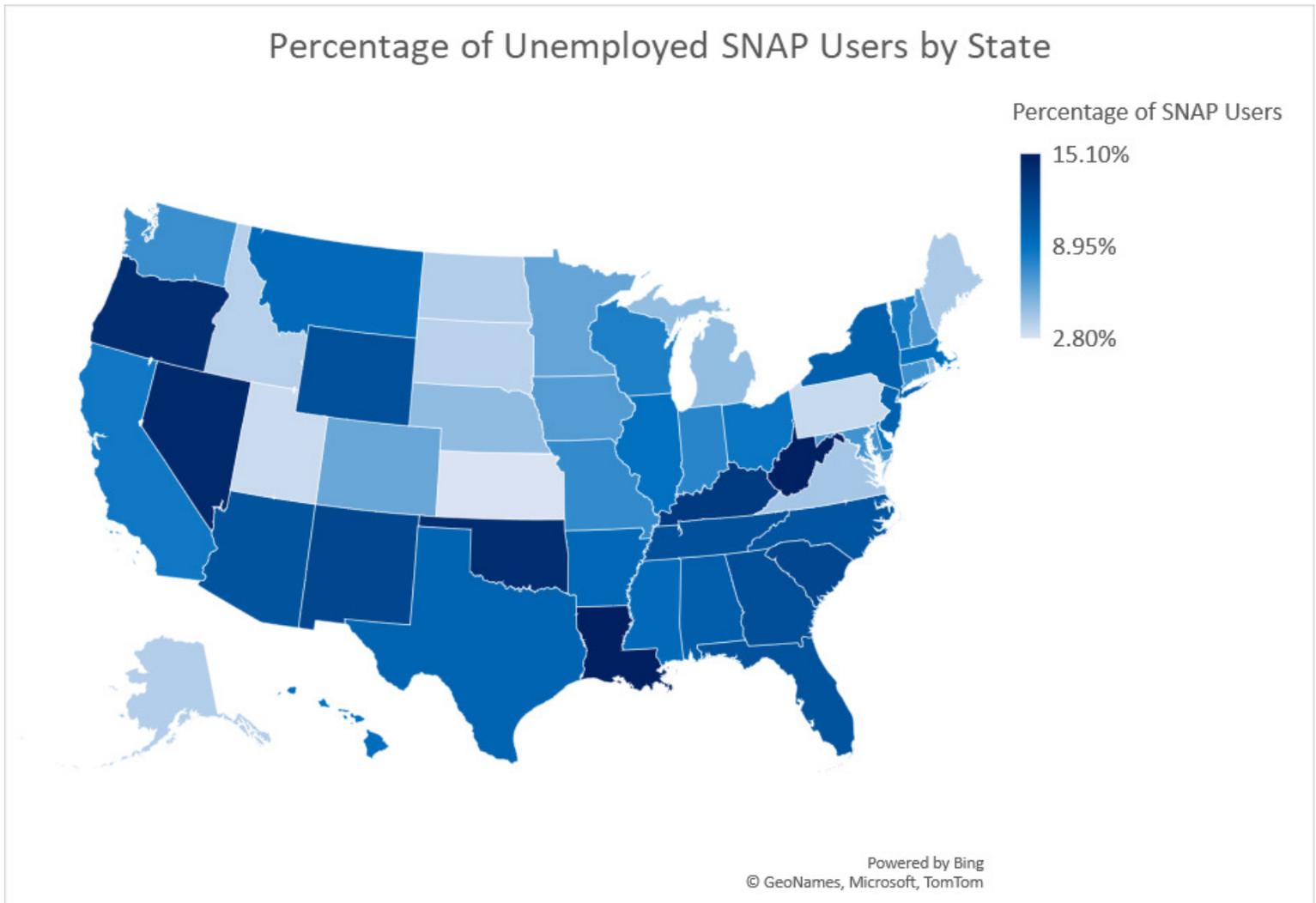
Sources of Financial Aid Used According to Education Level (In the Past 7 Days)



Caption: This graph shows that although groups used stimulus payments regardless of education level, those who did not attend college used SNAP at a greater rate than those who have at least some college education. Respondents with lower educational attainment also showed a greater and more evenly distributed use of government resources than respondents with higher educational attainment.

When probing the use of supplemental income sources based on geographic region, the survey found that respondents from southern states (from Maryland to Florida) used SNAP 69% more than midwestern states (from Ohio to North Dakota). Supplemental income sources according to level of education were not consistently reported across regions, but determining the education breakdown of each region would emphasize the vitality of educational attainment in maintaining financial stability. If this data were to reflect that a region's population has a significantly higher level of educational attainment than others, than this information would further explain the use of SNAP and other government-issued aid in each region.

Percentage of Unemployed SNAP Users by State



Caption: This map shows that southern states - mostly shaded dark blue - had the highest percentage of unemployed respondents who used SNAP in the last 7 days of the survey period. Midwestern states - mostly represented by a higher shade of blue - had the lowest percentage of SNAP users.

This study illuminates the fact that those with lower levels of educational attainment experience more professional and financial hardship than those who are more educated during a time of crisis. Though this study is a clear example of the professional and financial importance of education, it also serves as an example of why closing the education gap is necessary to close the wealth gap in America.

Source:

“Employment Table 3. Educational Attainment for Adults Not Working at Time of Survey, by Main Reason for Not Working and Sources Used to Meet Spending Needs”. *Week 27 Household Pulse Survey: March 17-29*. US Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2021/demo/hhp/hhp27.html>. Accessed June 8, 2021.