



# **Issue Brief: Food Insecurity and Economic Conditions in New Hampshire and the Nation**

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Family Assistance Advisory Council (FAAC)

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# Overview of Issue Brief

- Food insecurity and who is impacted
- Levels throughout the Great Recession and subsequent recovery
- Elevated levels of food insecurity for longer in New Hampshire than the nation overall
- The uneven recovery from the Great Recession, economic security indicators, and policy landscape that may be correlated with food insecurity levels in New Hampshire
- The role of nutritional aid programs
- The current COVID-19 crisis, the economic challenges facing Granite Staters, and the risks of increased food insecurity levels

# Food Insecurity

Households are considered food insecure if they indicated that, at some point in the last year, they were unable to acquire adequate food for one or more household members because they had insufficient money and other resources for food

*– United States Department of Agriculture*

Food insecurity has profound negative impacts on children and adults, including the risk of developmental impairments, worse performance at school, and behavioral and social problems

# Higher Levels of Food Insecurity

## Across Groups

- Households:
  - With children
  - Headed by single parents
  - Headed by individuals identifying as Black or Hispanic
  - Living in poverty or near poverty (up to 185% Federal Poverty Thresholds)

## Across Geographies

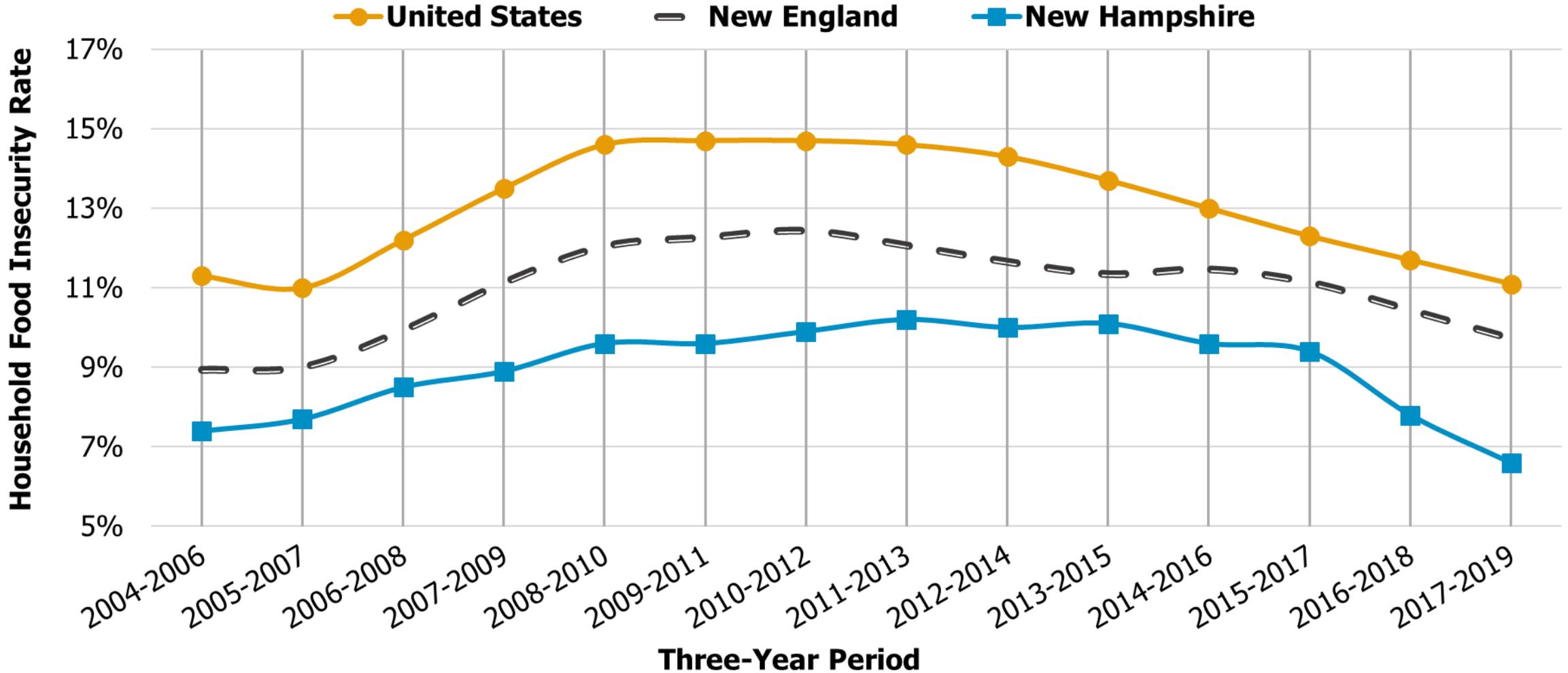
- Households:
  - In principal cities
  - In rural areas
- In New Hampshire:
  - Estimated levels of nutritional need are higher in population centers like Manchester and Nashua, and in rural regions

# Trends in Food Insecurity

- USDA uses averages of three-year periods, analysis over time is a rolling average
- The Great Recession (Dec. 2007 – June 2009) resulted in large increases in food insecurity levels across the nation
- Nationally, food insecurity levels started a slow, steady, and statistically significant decline beginning in the 2011-2013 period
- In New Hampshire, food insecurity levels may not have begun to decline significantly until the 2016-2018 period

# Estimated Household Food Insecurity

*In New Hampshire, New England, and the United States*



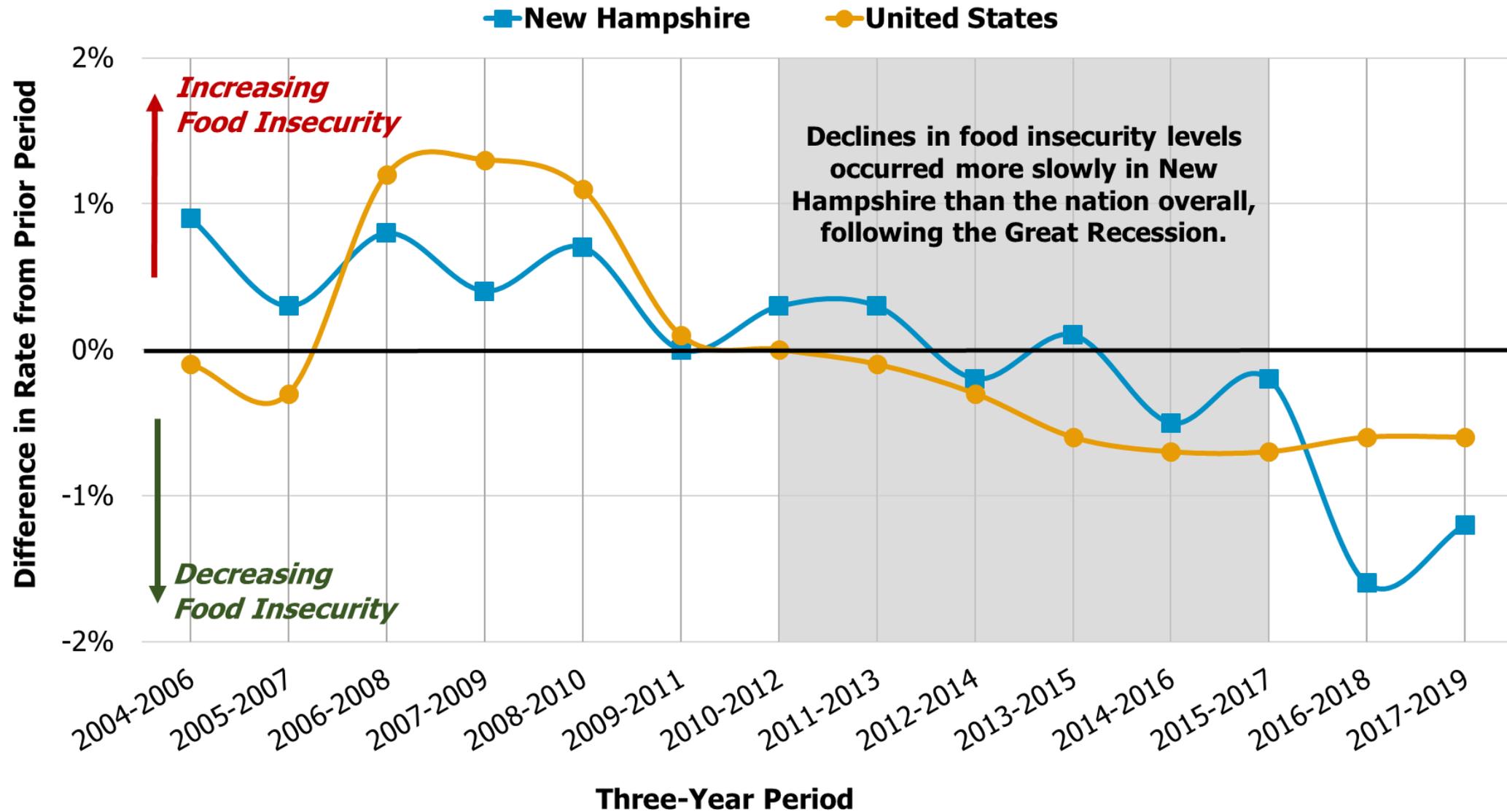
Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, Household Food Insecurity in the United States  
 Notes: Each period of data represents an average of three years of data comprised. Household food insecurity estimates for New England were calculated using weighted averages based on state level data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service.

# Extended Elevated Levels of Food Insecurity

- Levels of food insecurity appeared to remain elevated in New Hampshire despite declining steadily around the nation
- Real period-over-period changes indicate elevated levels for longer in New Hampshire throughout the recovery
- Relative food insecurity levels to the three-year period immediately preceding the Great Recession indicate elevated levels relative for longer in New Hampshire as well

# Real Changes in Household Food Insecurity

In New Hampshire and the United States

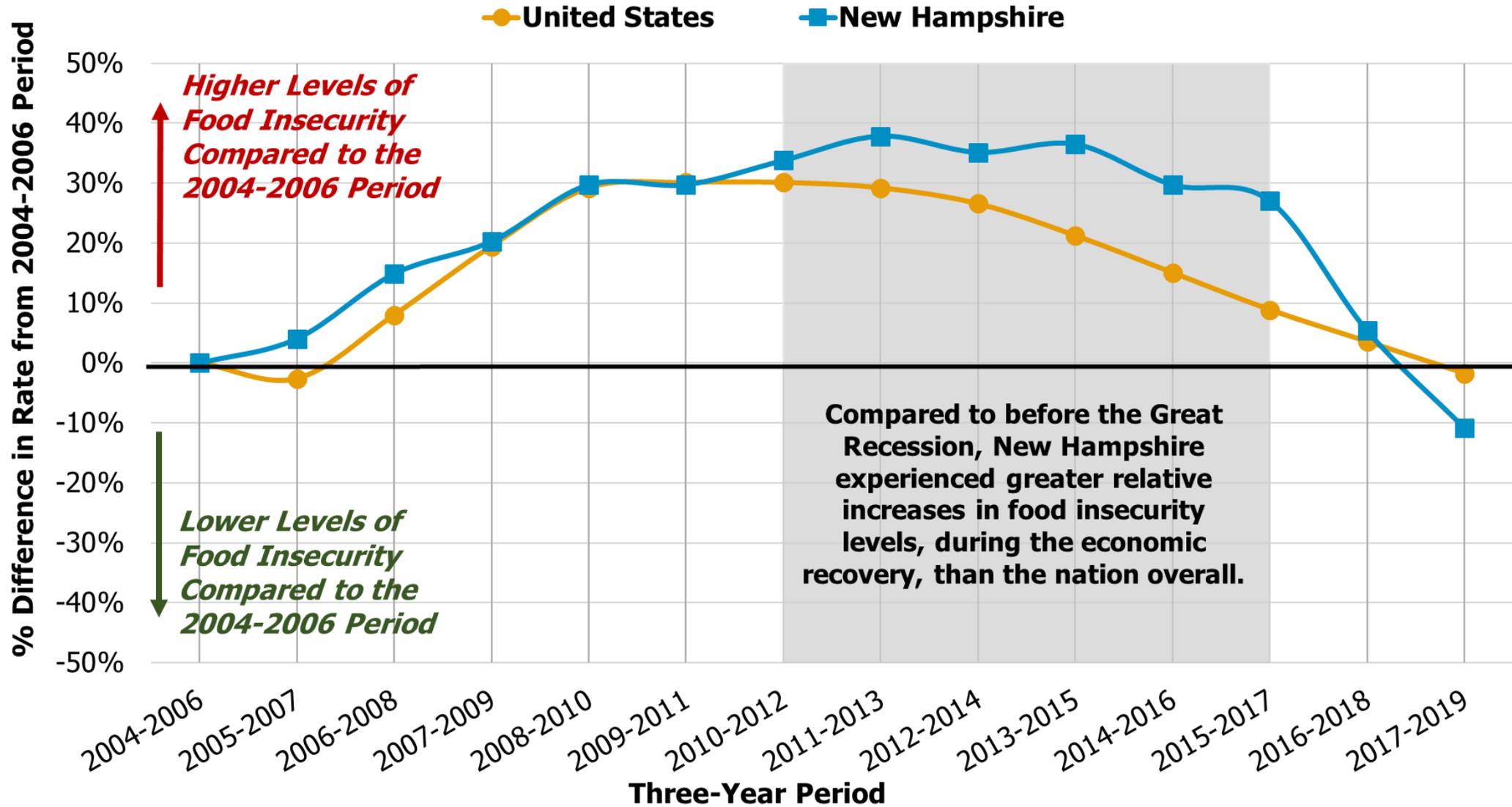


Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, *Household Food Insecurity in the United States*

Note: Each period of data represents an average of three years of data.

# Relative Changes in Household Food Insecurity

Indexed to the 2004-2006 Period, In New Hampshire and the United States



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, Household Food Insecurity in the United States

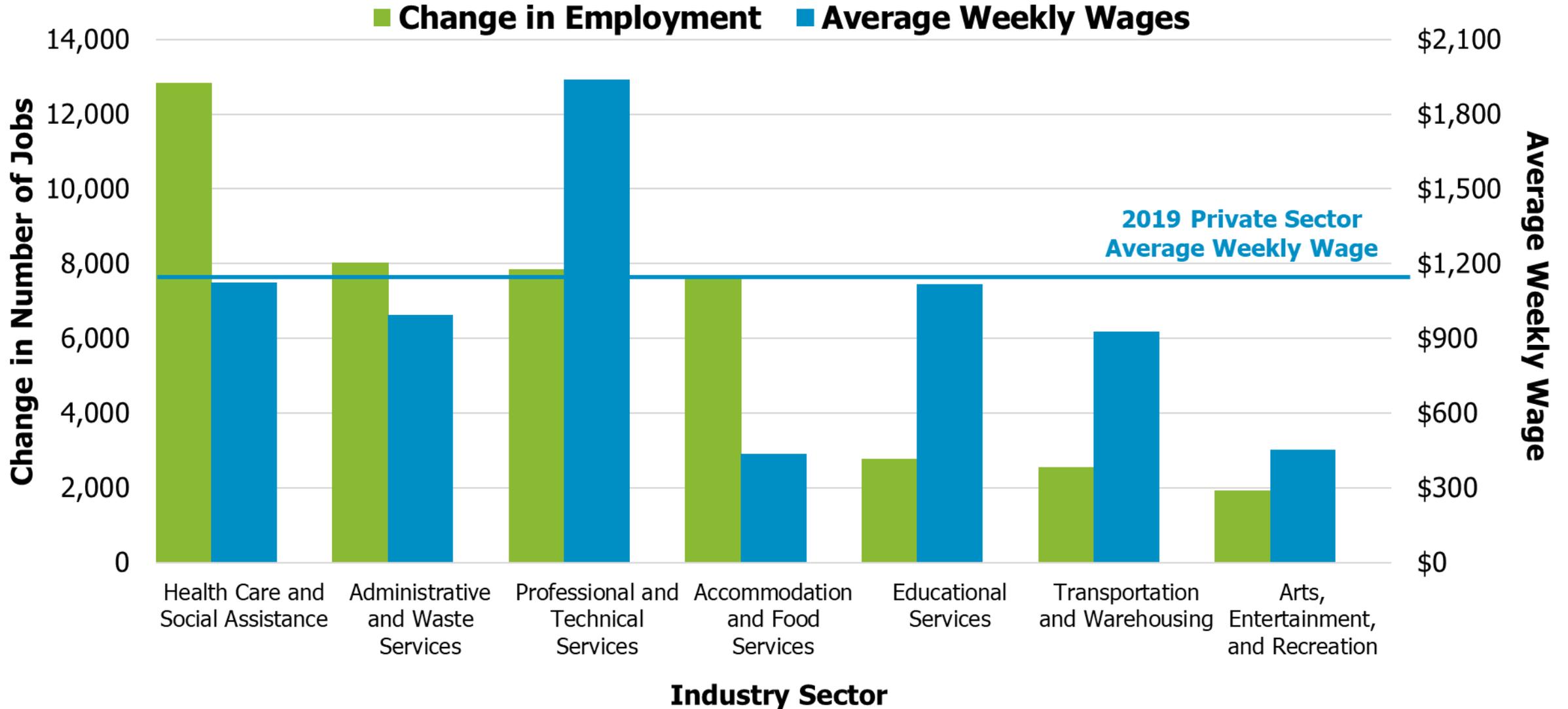
Notes: Each period of data represents an average of three years of data comprised.

# Economic and Policy Conditions

- Uneven economic recovery from the Great Recession
- Changes in employment opportunities
- Limited income growth for low-wage workers
- More significant relative declines in purchasing power than the nation overall
- Different policies to support lower-income individuals and families in New Hampshire

# Job Growth in New Hampshire by Industry, 2008-2019

*Private Sector Industries, 2019 Average Wages*

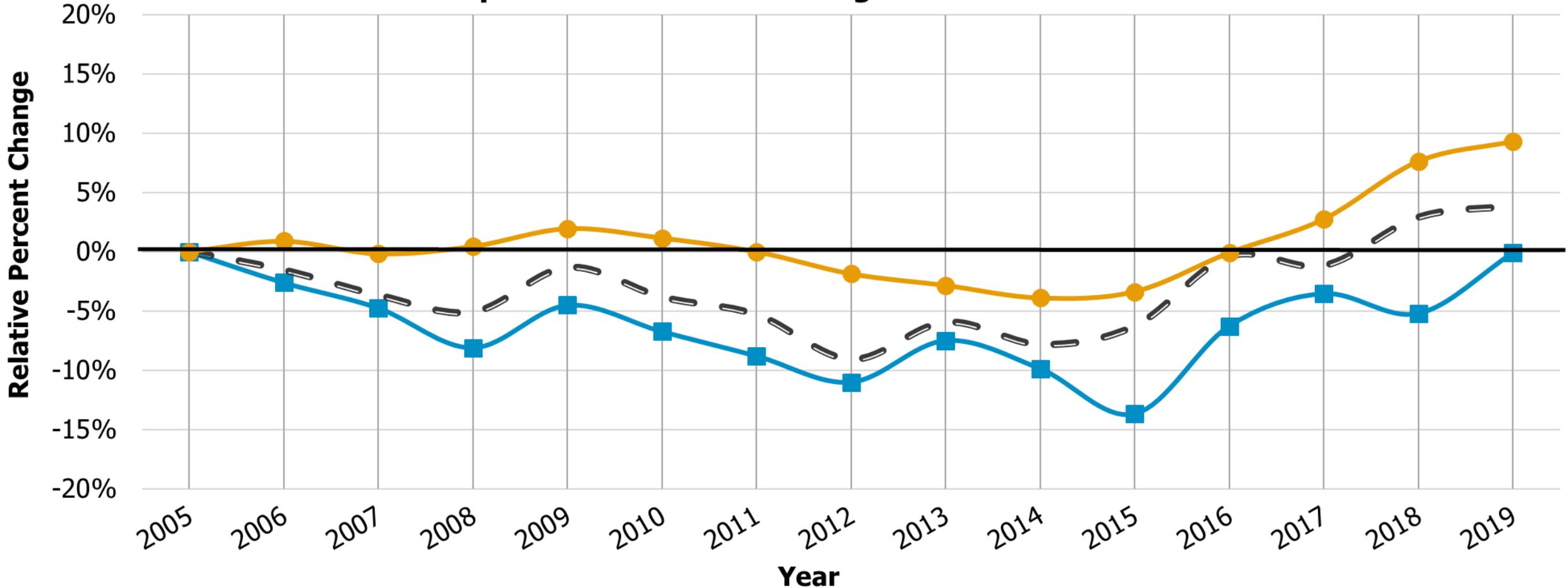


Source: New Hampshire Employment Security, Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, Covered Employment and Wages

# Changes in 20th Percentile Inflation-Adjusted Wages

*By Relative Income, Indexed to 2005, Includes All Income from Work, All Workers Age 16 and Up*

**■ New Hampshire**      **— New England**      **● United States**



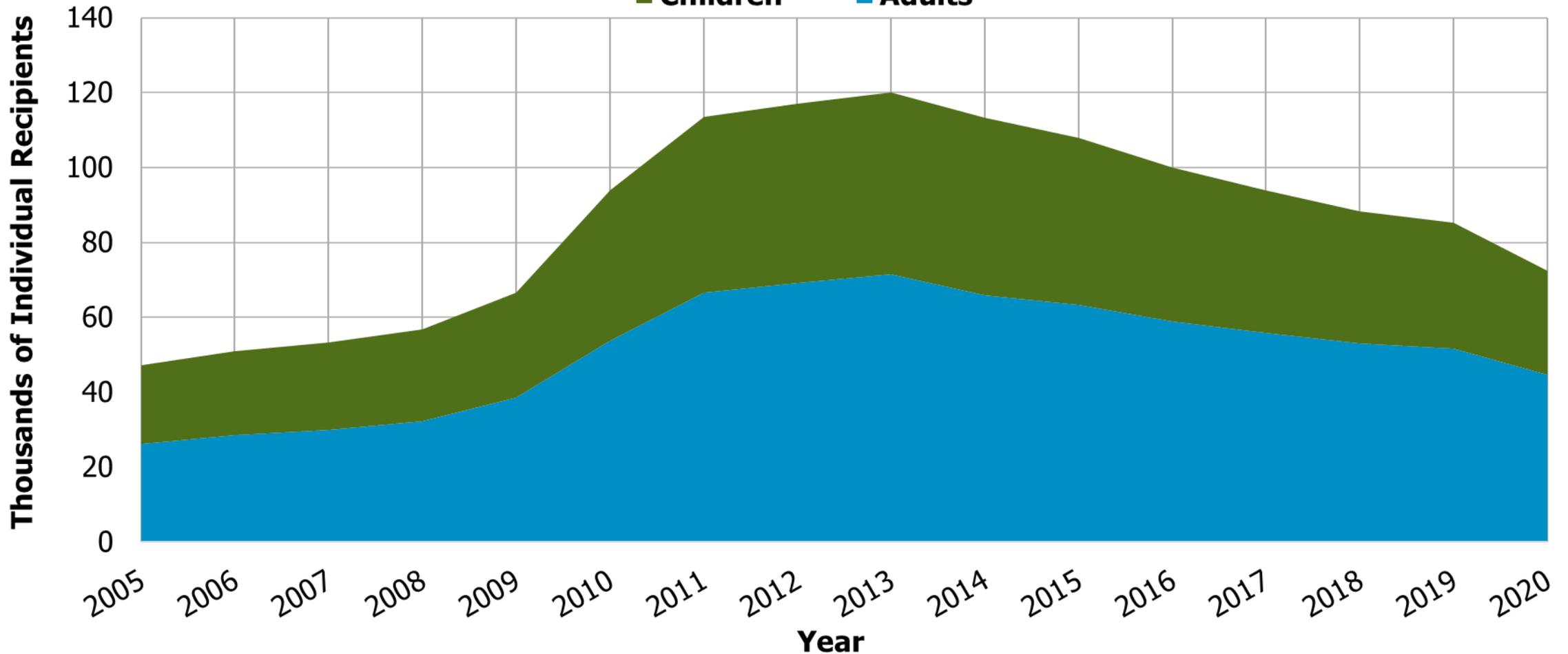
Note: Inflation adjustment using Consumer Price Index-Urban-Research Series (current methods). Includes workers aged 16 years and older.

Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data

# New Hampshire Food Stamp Program Recipients

*Month of January Snapshot*

■ Children ■ Adults



Source: N.H. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Division of Family Assistance, Data Accessed October 2020

# Different Policy Conditions in Other States

Policy landscapes in other states may have aided in boosting the incomes and overall economic security of lower-wage individuals and families

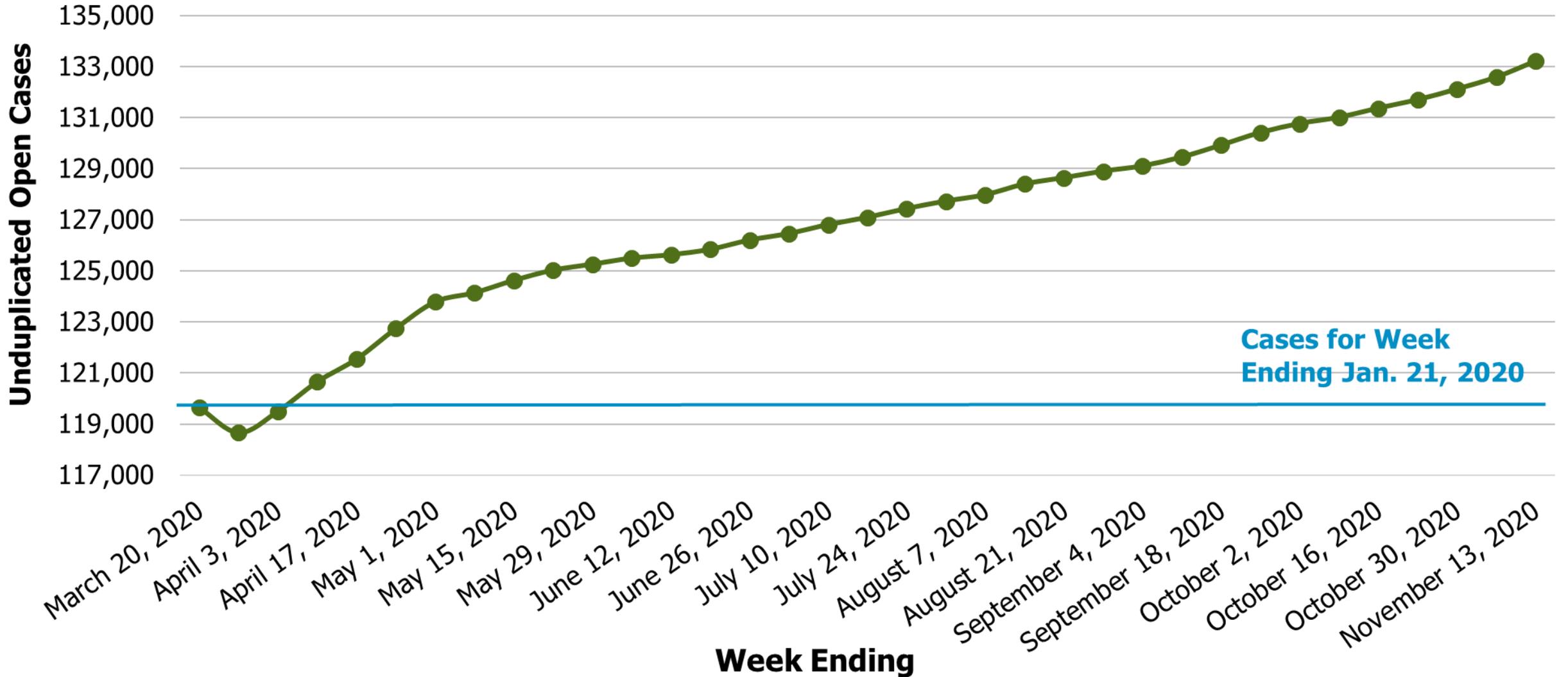
- Minimum wage
- State-level Earned Income Tax Credits
- Housing assistance
- Childcare assistance
- Other direct assistance and aid

# The COVID-19 Crisis

The COVID-19 crisis has had the most severe economic impacts on those with the fewest resources

# Weekly Open Economic Assistance Caseload

*Unduplicated Open Cases For Economic Assistance in New Hampshire, Since Week Ending March 20, 2020*



Source: New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Economic and Housing Stability, Data Published November 2020

# Hardships Resulting from the Pandemic

- U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey:
  - Nearly half of New Hampshire adults reported a loss of household employment income between March and July
  - By mid-October, about 1 in 5 households expected future employment income losses and about 1 in 3 reported difficulty paying for usual expenses
  - From April to early November, about 1 in every 20 households in New Hampshire indicated there was either sometimes or often not enough to eat in the last 7 days (food scarcity)
- Challenges may indicate increased food insecurity

# Key Takeaways

- Certain groups experienced heightened levels of food insecurity
- Throughout the latter half of the recovery from the Great Recession, levels of food insecurity appeared to remain elevated in New Hampshire despite declining steadily around the nation
- Several trends in New Hampshire throughout the recovery from the Great Recession appear to be correlated with the elevated levels of food insecurity in New Hampshire
  - Changes in employment opportunities
  - Limited income growth and declines in purchasing power
  - Different policy landscape to support lower-income individuals and families in New Hampshire

# Key Takeaways

- The current COVID-19 crisis has disproportionately impacted more vulnerable Granite Staters who were most affected by the Great Recession
- The COVID-19 crisis will likely lead to further increases in food insecurity levels
- Providing aid to vulnerable populations most impacted by economic downturns is key to mitigating financial hardships and stimulating the economy

# Food Insecurity and Economic Conditions in New Hampshire and the Nation

Issue Brief and Summary available online:

<http://nhfpi.org/research/health-policy/food-insecurity-and-economic-conditions-in-new-hampshire-and-the-nation.html>

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