



2024

# Strengthening the Safety Net

EMERGENCY RELIEF REPORT

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# About This Report

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This report provides information on trends in disaster relief, housing insecurity, and the growing need for third-party relief funds, utilizing data from Canary's employer-sponsored programs.

For this report we focused on the data from our employer-sponsored programs. While a majority of our work remains rooted in these programs, we have increasingly applied our platform, technology, and services to new use cases with community foundations, philanthropic organizations, and private equity firms. While these newer partnerships share many of the same characteristics, their unique program parameters could skew the data in ways that don't deliver the actionable insights leaders need for successful

employee relief funds. Rest assured, we've included essential details about these special programs in a later section.

The data in this report helps confirm what we've long believed: [emergency relief is no longer a nice-to-have offering; it's a need-to-have tool.](#)

Emergency relief provides a foundation of stability by addressing the most immediate financial crises employees face. It is a vital first step toward reducing stress, restoring peace of mind, and empowering individuals to think about and plan for their future.

Connect with Canary to learn more  
[contact@workwithcanary.com](mailto:contact@workwithcanary.com)



# About this report

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As **Human Resources and Benefits leaders**, the challenge is clear: financial stress isn't just an individual problem — it's an organizational one.

Addressing this issue is critical to fostering a stable, engaged, and productive workforce.

Emergency relief programs also align closely with **Environmental, Social, and Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility leaders'** goals of advancing equity, sustainability, and social impact. Such programs provide tangible support that reduces disparities, builds resilience, and demonstrates a commitment to fostering inclusion within the workforce.

Finally, the case is equally compelling for **CEOs and organizational leadership**. Financial stress affects employees and business outcomes, from productivity to retention. Creating a safety net isn't just an act of compassion — it's a strategic investment in your organization's long-term success and stability.



# The Landscape of Financial Instability



# Key trends to watch



## Rising demand for natural disaster support

As natural disasters become more frequent and unpredictable, the demand for immediate financial assistance is only growing. The ability to respond quickly is becoming increasingly vital, and many organizations are finding it challenging to manage these urgent needs internally.



## Surge in housing insecurity-related grant requests

Requests related to eviction and forced move are on the rise, reflecting a broader national concern around housing insecurity. This issue is largely driven by the growing gap between wages and the increasing cost of living.



## Growing need for third-party relief funds

Third-party relief funds, like [Canary's Grant Circle](#), are becoming an essential resource for organizations as their teams face increasingly uncertain times. These funds help organizations quickly and effectively address the financial needs of their work community, providing critical support while maintaining flexibility, adding privacy, and autonomy in the process.



# The need is growing

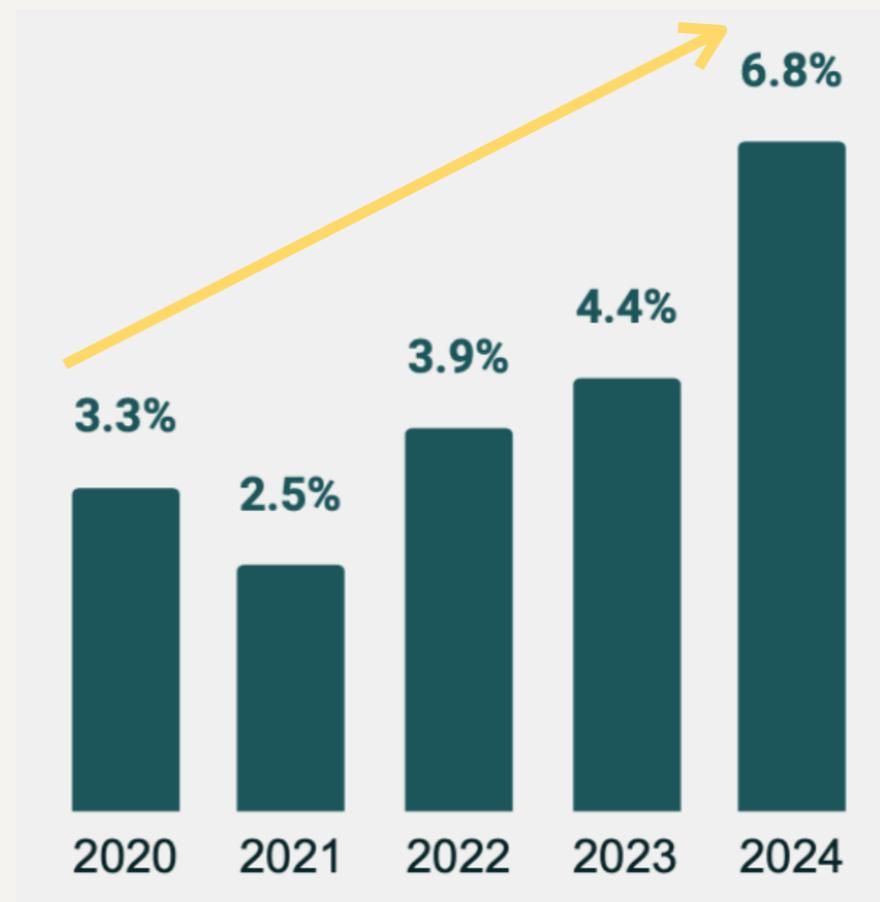
As financial stress continues to impact individuals across the country, even a relatively small charitable grant can make a significant difference. **The most common requests we receive year after year are strikingly consistent and focused on basic necessities like housing, food, and, this year, car repairs.** This pattern bears repeating, as it underscores what we already know, thanks to PwC. [PwC's 2023 Employee Financial Wellness Survey](#), found that 49% of individuals find it difficult to meet household expenses on time each month.

**\$750** median grant size

## Top 3 expenses covered



## Average annual relief fund usage



# Data that echoes a national narrative

We all know the headlines. The ones that warn us of the financial precarity prevalent in our communities:

- “63% of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck”
- “Nearly 4 in 10 Americans lack enough money to cover a \$400 emergency expense”
- “Financial stress is a \$4.7B productivity problem for businesses”

This past year, the severity of these headlines was reinforced by the usage of our emergency relief solution, which increased significantly in 2024.



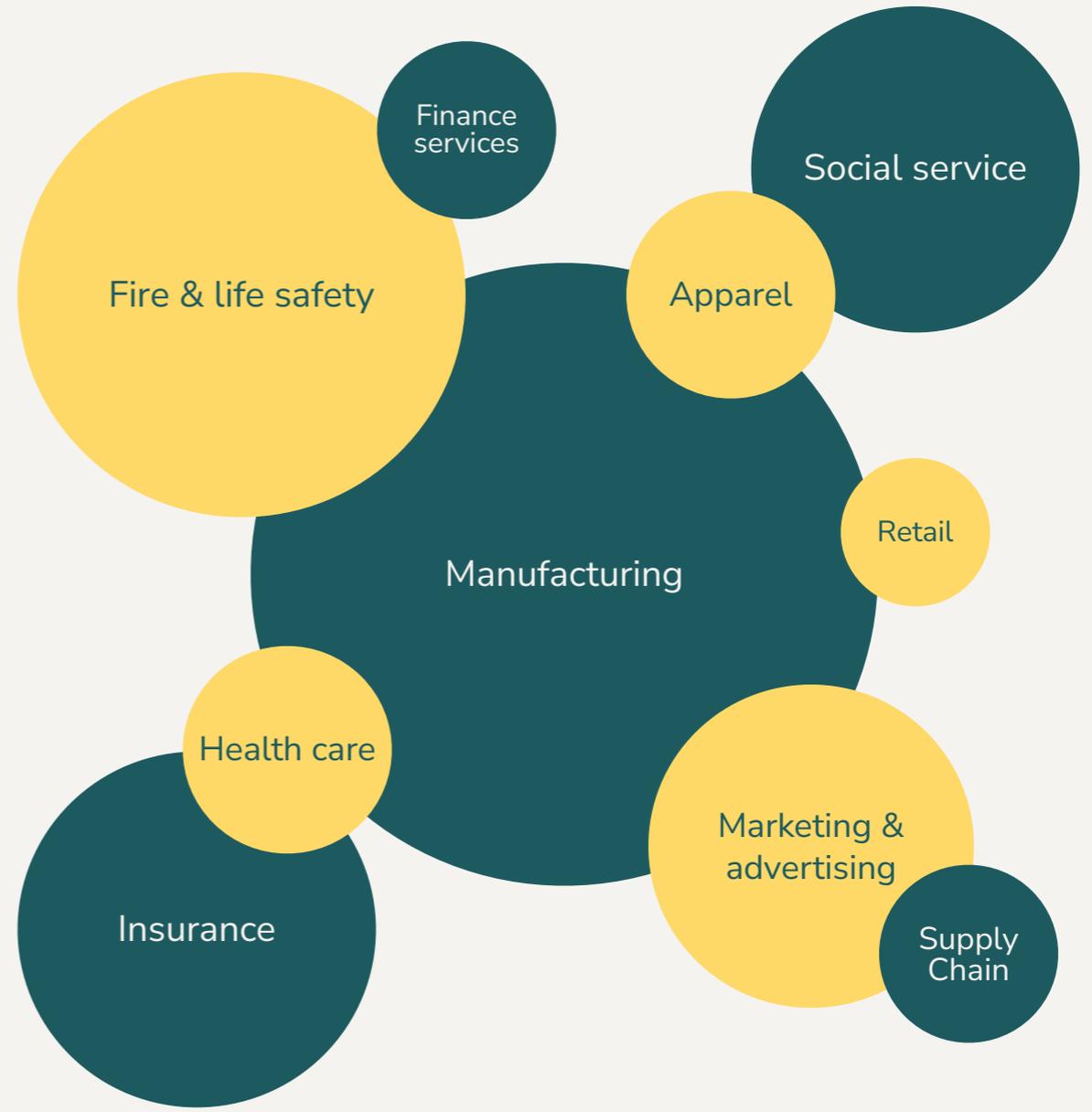
# The Size and Scope of the Need



# The rising demand for emergency funds

The industries showing the largest shifts in emergency fund usage are those with frontline and distributed workforces. Industries with high usage tend to have decentralized teams that require flexible financial support systems. Many of these sectors, such as manufacturing, retail, and healthcare, rely heavily on hourly or frontline workers who may face unpredictable financial challenges. The increase in emergency fund usage in these industries highlights the critical role that financial assistance programs play in bridging income gaps, reducing stress, and improving workforce stability. As businesses continue to adapt to evolving labor needs, providing accessible emergency support will become an essential tool in attracting and retaining employees

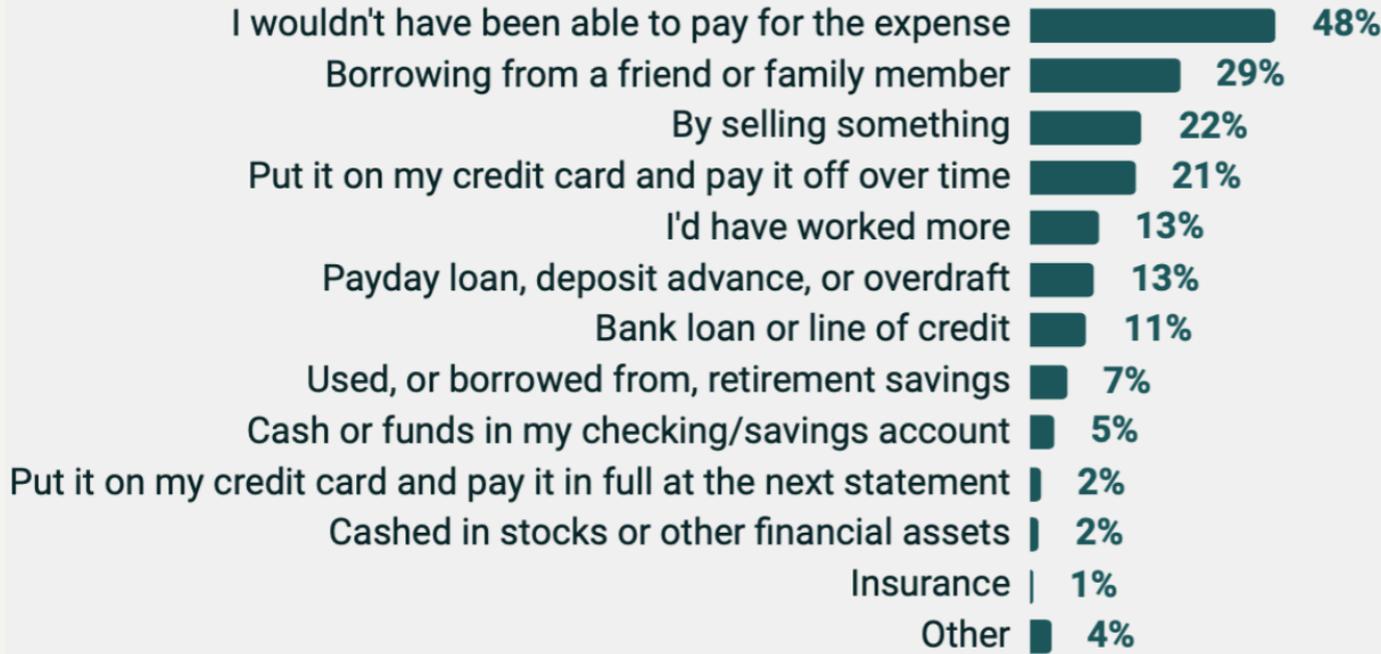
Usage rates by industry



# The scale of employees' financial struggles

These findings support what we know: Emergency relief funds are a crucial part of a portfolio approach to supporting financial well-being. It is vital for organizations to also consider the benefits of offering other tools, like emergency savings programs, low-cost loan options, early wage access, financial education and coaching, and more.

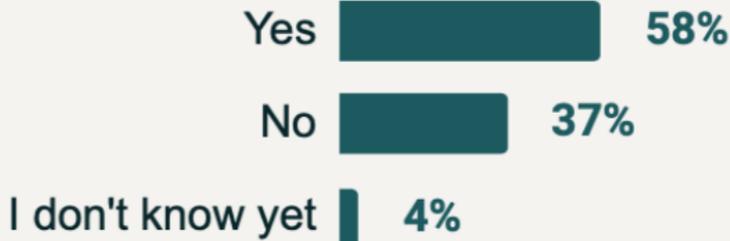
**Q: What would have happened had you not been able to pay for the expense?**



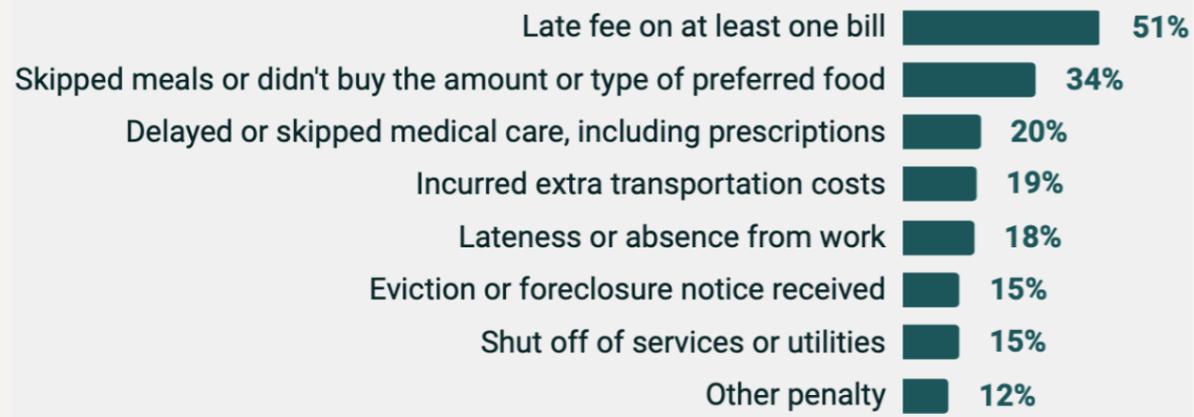
**Q: Was the grant enough to cover your financial need?**



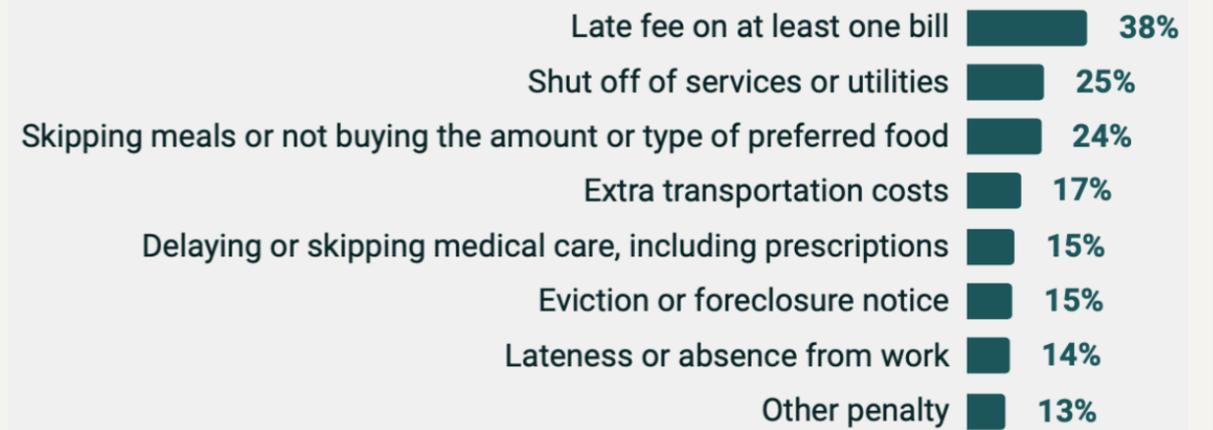
**Q: Did you use additional resources to cover your financial need?**



**Q: Before receiving the grant, did any of the following happen because of the financial hardship that led you to request a grant?**



**Q: Did the grant help you avoid any of the following?**

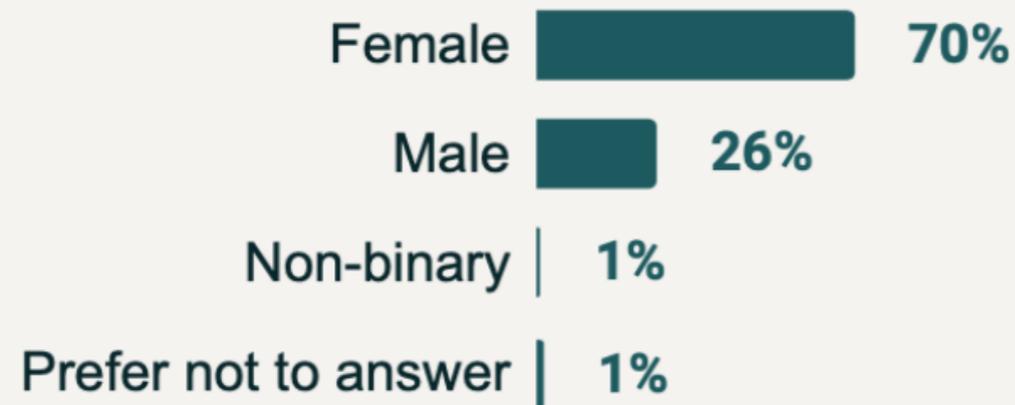


# Who We Serve Today: A Snapshot of Support

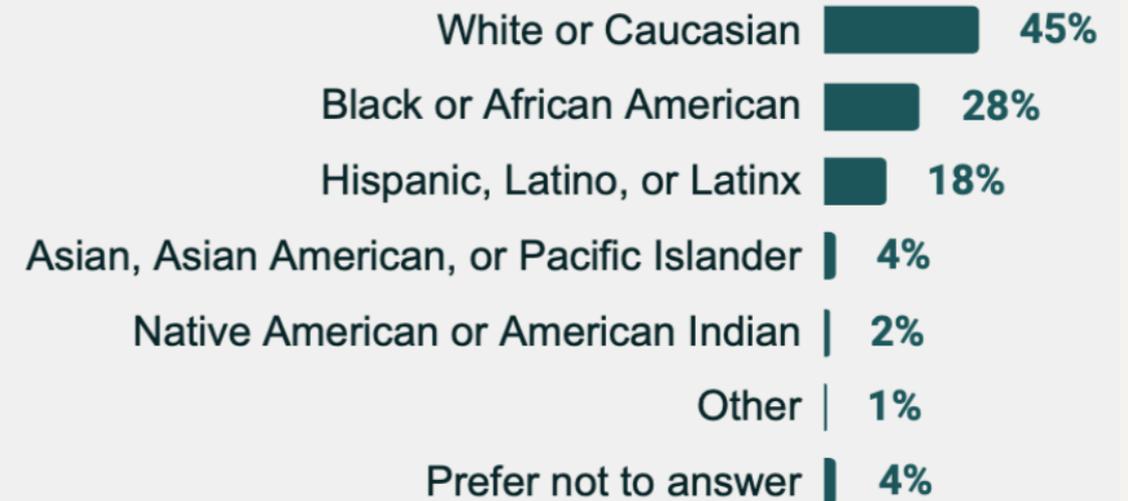


# A snapshot of grantee demographics

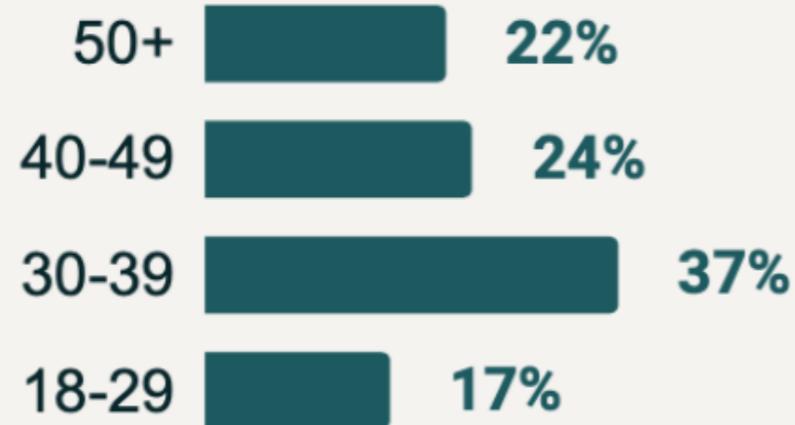
## Gender



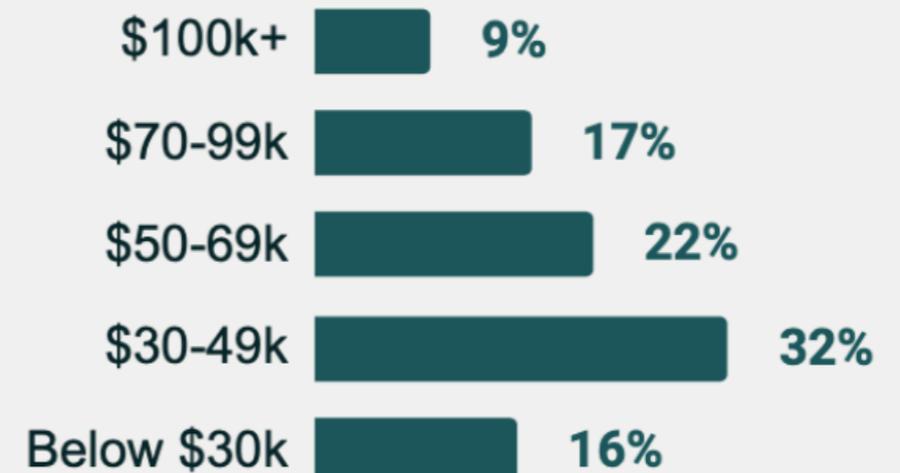
## Race



## Age



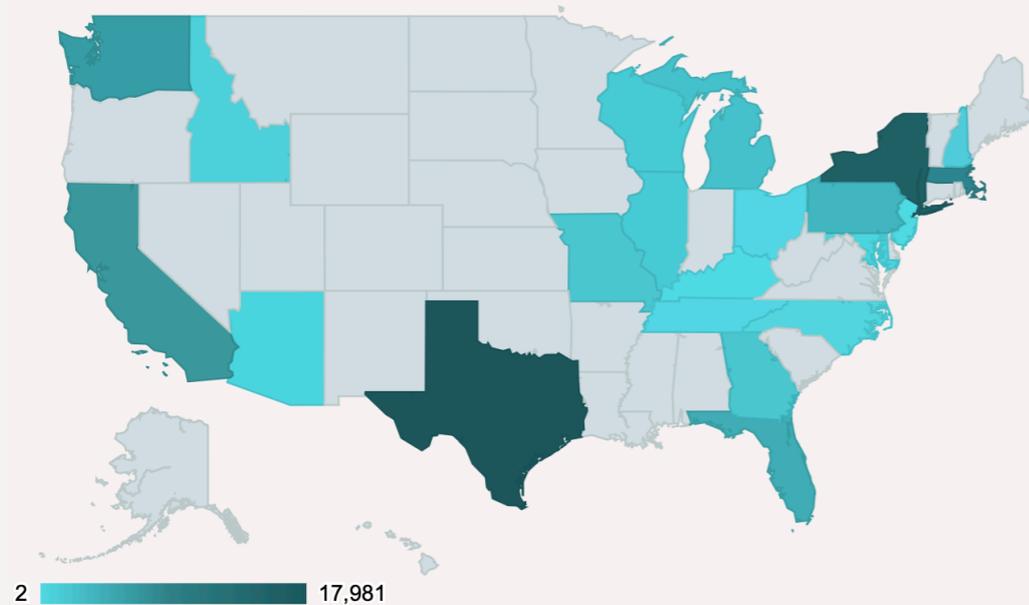
## Household income



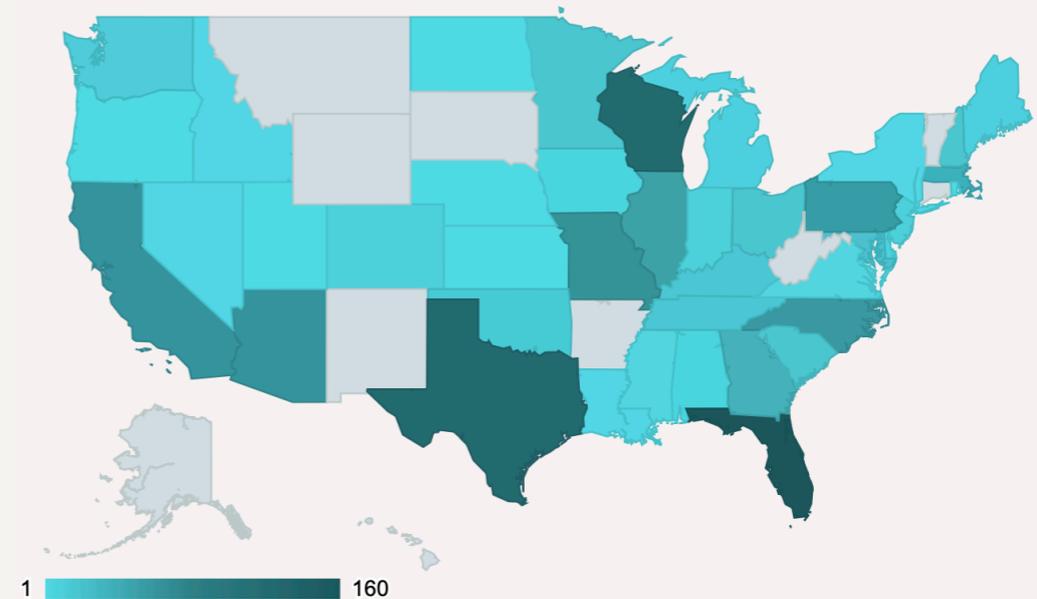
# Reaching communities across the country

Financial hardship affects employees across all demographic groups, spanning genders, races, ages, and income levels. Additionally, a significant portion of support went to employees in locations outside their employer's headquarters, reflecting the realities of modern, dispersed workforces driven by national footprints and remote work. For leaders, this underscores the importance of implementing an equitable, flexible emergency relief program that can effectively address the diverse needs of today's workforce.

## Client Headquarters Locations



## Grantee Locations



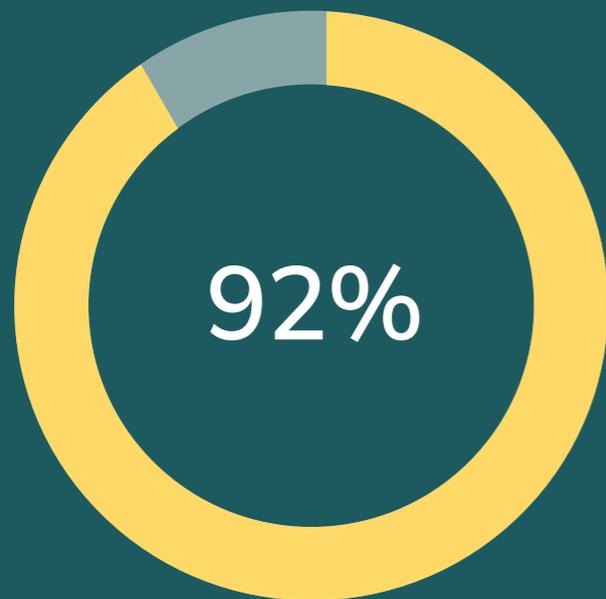
While the majority of grantees are in the U.S., Canary is committed to expanding our impact beyond our own backyard, supporting international workforces.





# A sense of relief & gratitude

Emergencies often bring financial challenges that employees may feel uncomfortable sharing with their managers. Access to a confidential resource like **Grant Circle** provides critical relief and reassures employees that their employer has their back and truly values their well-being.



of grantee survey respondents agree that the **Grant Circle** makes them feel better about working for their organization



“We are so thankful for the easy process of applying for this. I couldn’t ask for a better place to work, where the employer really cares about their employees and offers such amazing things to help us in a time of need. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for relieving the stress of this unexpected expense.”



**Emergency event:** Car issue  
**Expenses covered:** Car repair

“Words can’t fully capture how much this assistance means to me. I am truly fortunate to work for an organization that values its employees and steps up to provide such meaningful support when it is most needed.”



**Emergency event:** Death in the family  
**Expenses covered:** Funeral or burial



“I have never had an employer help me with my personal issues. Thank you for reviving my faith in humanity, just as it had been shattered to pieces this last year. I can't thank you enough and don't have the words to express my gratitude.”

**Emergency event:** Domestic issue  
**Expenses covered:** Minimum debt payment



# Beyond the workplace

While Canary's roots are in employer-sponsored emergency relief, we now deliver critical financial support to a broader range of individuals through innovative partnerships with:

- **Private equity firms:** we are the chosen provider for HCAP Partners, Blue Point Capital, and KKR portfolio companies.
- **Philanthropic organizations:** we run several programs for The Change Reaction to help support hardworking individuals in Los Angeles and Santa Fe.
- **Community foundations:** we deliver financial support to communities in need with the Santa Fe Community Foundation supporting their Empty Stocking Fund and the Cloudsplitter Foundation.

These partnerships help us offer a sense of financial stability and peace of mind to individuals who might not typically have relief funds available through their workplace. This work demonstrates our technology's versatility and the transformative power of emergency relief to uplift diverse communities.



# Philanthropy in action

Philanthropy has the power to transform lives, and Canary partners with mission-driven organizations, like The Change Reaction, to deliver emergency financial support where it's needed most. Together, we help individuals overcome financial hardships and build a more stable future.



**\$4.2M+** donated to individuals in need

**2k+** individuals helped across all programs



Delivering emergency financial support to school staff in partner schools in Los Angeles and Santa Fe.



Helping frontline workers in Los Angeles access emergency financial support.



Supporting hardworking Angelenos on their path to achieving self-sufficiency.



# Relief rooted in community

Strong communities are built on supporting each other, and Canary partners with local organizations to ensure individuals have access to emergency financial relief when they need it most.



## Help in the Adirondacks

“Supporting home health care workers in the Adirondacks when they experience financial hardship is a priority for Cloudsplitter. Our Grant Circle has empowered our community to access emergency funds in a time of need, quickly and efficiently, thanks to the Canary team.”



CHENELLE PALYSWIAT, GRANTS AND ADMINISTRATION AT CLOUDSPLITTER FOUNDATION



## Help in Santa Fe over the holidays

**\$407,864** donated to individuals in need

**321** grants dispersed

“I’m in tears that this process was so easy and now I will be able to get my car fixed. My next donation to any organization will be to the Grant Circle to pay it forward to the next person in need here in Santa Fe. Community is best when it comes together to help each other.”

-ANONYMOUS EMPTY STOCKING FUND GRANTEE



# Investing in financial stability

Private equity firms are uniquely positioned to drive financial stability across their portfolio companies. Grant Circle helps firms like HCAP Partners, Blue Point Capital, and KKR strengthen their commitment to workforce.

“Blue Point has always been committed to supporting the well-being and prosperity of our portfolio company employees, and the Blue Point Cares Program is a meaningful, tangible way to extend that support, especially during some of life’s toughest moments.”



JONATHAN PRESSNELL, PARTNER  
AT BLUE POINT CAPITAL PARTNERS

“It is more important than ever that businesses and investors work together to provide good quality jobs and offer resources to help workers manage financial emergencies.”



TOM WOELFEL, SENIOR DIRECTOR  
OF IMPACT AT HCAP PARTNERS



# From Crisis to Stability



# The case for emergency relief

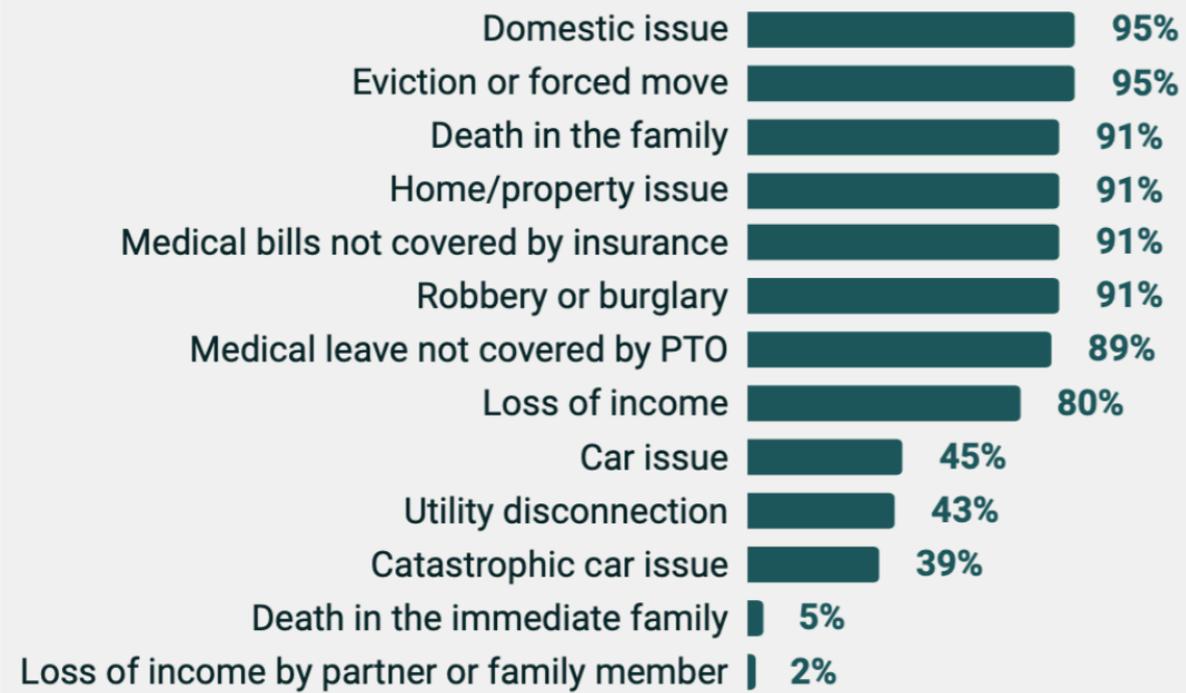
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Canary works closely with organizations to structure programs that address various employee emergencies, reflecting the diverse challenges workforces face today. By offering standard hardship categories — including newly defined subcategories for medical expenses such as medical issues not covered by insurance and medical leave not covered by PTO, and the addition of the utility disconnection category — our programs meet employees where they are.

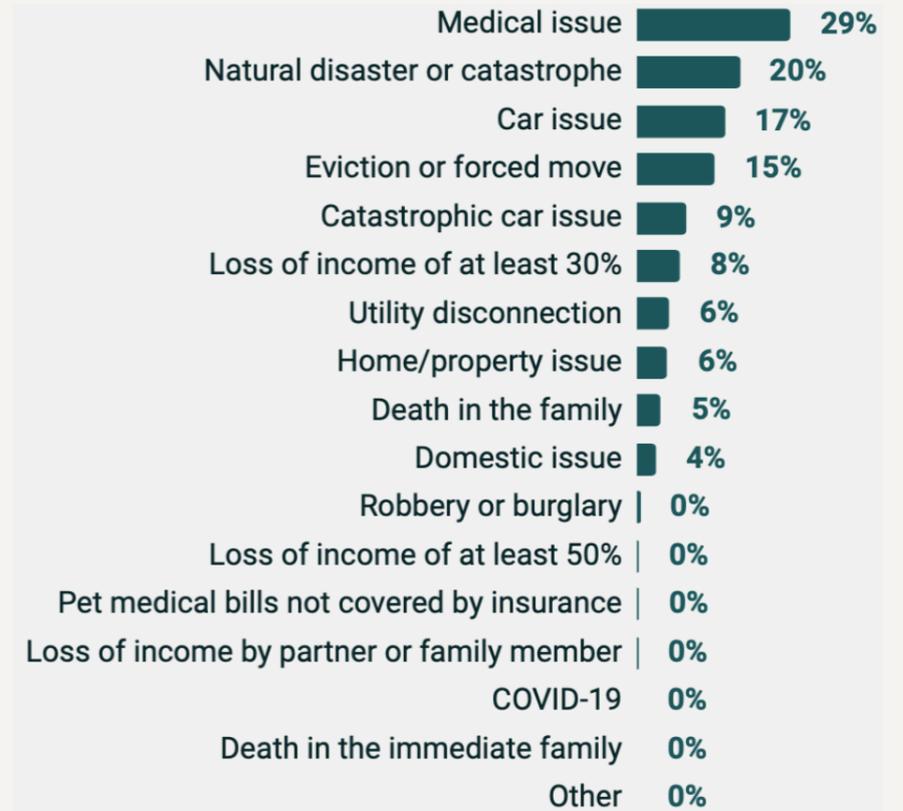
A majority of surveyed grantees reported lower financial stress just four months after receiving a grant, highlighting the transformative impact of timely relief, especially when finances are one of the top causes of stress for employees.



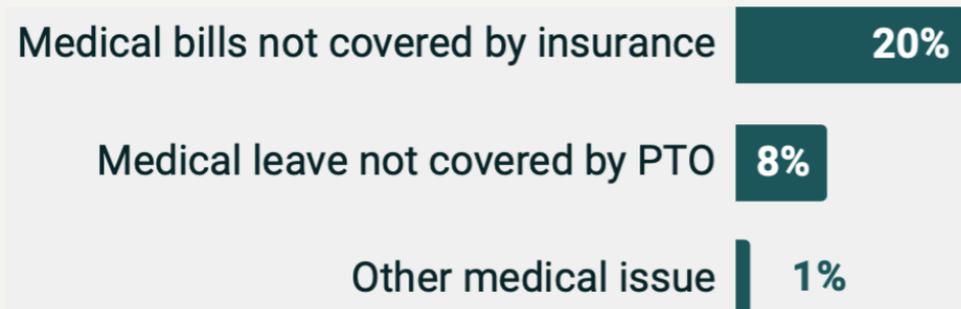
## % of employers opted into hardship categories



## Most common hardships

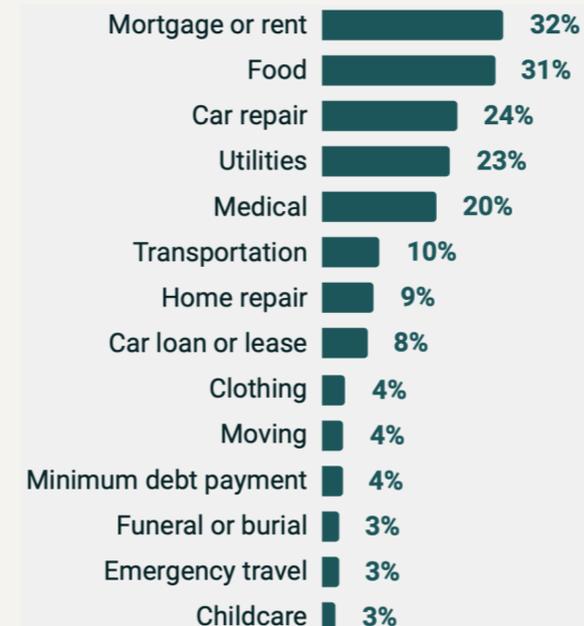


## Medical issues by category



In 2024, we split what had previously been a single category for medical issues to two distinct issues - medical bills not covered by insurance, and medical leave not covered by PTO. ***This change better reflects the needs of the employee populations we serve.***

## Top expenses



59% of grantees with high financial stress at onboarding reported experiencing **lower financial stress four months after receiving a grant.**

75% of grantees indicated that the grant provided **breathing room to figure out their next steps.**



# Real lives, real impact

Behind every grant is a story of resilience and hope. These anonymous quotes highlight how Canary meets urgent needs with speed and compassion, making a lasting difference for individuals and their families.

“I am blown away by how incredibly fast this process was. My kids and I are so grateful and this money will help us to put a roof over our heads. Thank you so much for being such a blessing to others during their time of need.”



**Emergency event:** Eviction or forced move

**Expenses covered:** Moving costs

**Response time:** 3 days from application to approval



“This grant ensured I would be able to put food on the table for my family for the rest of the month and diapers for my daughter, all the while making it possible to keep my car payment on track and my tank full of gas.”

**Emergency event:** Medical leave not covered by PTO

**Expenses covered:** Food, diapers, gas

**Response time:** 3 days from application to approval



# Navigating the path toward financial stability in communities

We work with leaders that recognize that when individuals thrive, communities thrive. Financial instability is a main driver of stress that negatively affects work, mental and physical health, self-esteem personal relationships, and sleep. So, Canary partners with employers, community foundations, philanthropic organizations, and more to help get community members back on their feet when times get tough. We work with organizations of any size and in any industry to deliver emergency grants to the people who need them most because we know the right money at the right time matters.

Set some time with our emergency relief experts to learn how we can support the financial stability of your community today.

CONTACT US

CANARY IS A TRUSTED SOLUTION FOR PEOPLE-FIRST ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING:

Visionworks



PAYCHEX



# About Canary

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At Canary, we began with a clear mission: to enable our clients to give individuals money at pivotal moments in their lives with dignity and efficiency.

We connect the latest technology and payments innovations to the innate and enduring human desire to help each other. [Grant Circle, our emergency relief solution](#), provides individuals with their fastest path to financial relief in times of crisis.

We believe that the right money at the right time matters: it gives people the peace of mind and confidence to recover from emergencies and to invest in their futures.

