Fact Sheet: SNAP Enrollment Trends in New York City | June 2019

On October 10, 2018, the Department of Homeland Security published a proposed rule change that would, if finalized, greatly expand the applicability of "public charge" inadmissibility.[1] Announcement of the published rule was preceded by widely reported rumors of its release in 2017 and earlier in 2018.

The New York City Department of Social Services (DSS), in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), presents an analysis of SNAP enrollment data during this time period. In the last two years, non-citizen immigrants who are eligible for and lawfully receiving SNAP benefits[2] have either left the SNAP caseload or have decided not to enroll, at a higher rate than U.S. citizens in the program. In the past year we have seen the difference widen. While we cannot definitively prove that the public charge proposal has caused these changes to SNAP participation, we identify an important correlation that, reinforced by anecdotal and survey evidence, suggests a chilling effect: eligible immigrant families are avoiding SNAP out of fear of potential immigration consequences.[3] There is no other identifiable factor that has caused the magnitude of this drop among eligible non-citizens and not citizens, and in fact this decline has occurred despite the City's ongoing and increased efforts to expand SNAP enrollment among eligible immigrant New Yorkers.

Eligible non-citizen New Yorkers are forgoing SNAP benefits at a much faster rate than U.S. citizen New Yorkers.

• SNAP helps 1.6 million New Yorkers—or nearly 20 percent of the City's population—put food on the table and feed their families. This includes approximately 200,000 eligible non-citizens.

• Across all five boroughs and compared to eligible U.S. citizens, many more eligible non-citizen New Yorkers are either withdrawing from or not enrolling in SNAP. The rate of decline for eligible non-citizens is double that of eligible citizens.

-The decline among eligible non-citizens began in 2017 and has been accelerating under the current Presidential Administration.

Year-over-year change in SNAP caseload by citizenship

	Non-citizen	Citizen
1/16 - 1/17	+1.1%	+1.2%
1/17 - 1/18	-6.2%	-3.2%
1/18 - 1/19	-10.9%	-2.8%

Year-over-year change in SNAP enrollment (January 2018 to January 2019) by borough

	Non-citizen	Citizen
Bronx	-11.6%	-3.1%
Brooklyn	-12.0%	-2.9%
Manhattan	-10.6%	-2.8%
Queens	-9.7%	-2.4%
Staten Island	-5.7%	-2.4%

[1] Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds, 83 Fed. Reg. 51114 (proposed Oct. 10, 2018).

[2] Non-citizens refer to non-citizen immigrants who are eligible for SNAP, such as lawful permanent residents (known as green card holders), refugees, and asylees, as well as those residing with an eligible and/or U.S. citizen children under the age of 18. See https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligibility/citizen/non-citizen-policy.

[3] See Bernstein, Hamutal, Gonzalez, Dulce, Karpman, Michael, and Zuckerman, Stephen, *With Public Charge Rule Looming, One in Seven Adults in Immigrant Families Reported Avoiding Public Benefit Programs in 2018*, Urban Institute (2019), available at https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/public-charge-rule-looming-one-seven-adults-immigrant-families-reported-avoiding-public-benefit-programs-2018 and *NYC Fact Sheet: Public Charge Messaging Survey Findings*, NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (2019), available at https://www1.nyc.gov/site/immigrants/about/research-evaluations.page.

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**Year-over-year change in SNAP enrollment
(January 2018 to January 2019) by race/ethnicity[4]**

	Non-citizen	Citizen
Asian/Pacific Islander	-10.5%	-1.2%
Black/African American	-12.3%	-4.6%
Hispanic	-13.8%	-6.4%
White	-11.5%	-4.5%

Economic Impact

We can estimate that a chilling effect may have caused the steeper decline among eligible non-citizens compared to eligible citizens. Between January 2017 and January 2019 there was a drop-off/non-participation rate over two times higher than would be expected among eligible non-citizens on the SNAP caseload.

• This translates into about 25,000 more individuals leaving the caseload over the two year period than expected, resulting in around $40 million in lost SNAP benefits, which would multiply into approximately $72 million in lost economic activity.

• These losses will be compounded in the coming years if this trend is not reversed.

Economic Impact (in millions)

Direct Loss in SNAP Benefits — ($40)
Loss in Economic Activity — ($72)
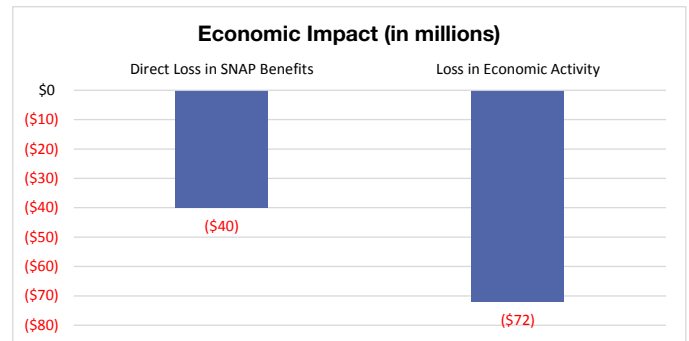
Methodology and Data Notes

• The analysis looked at year-to-year changes between eligible U.S. citizen and non-citizens.

• Between 2017 and 2019, we estimate that, potentially due to a chilling effect, 25,000 more eligible non-citizens left the SNAP caseload than we would have expected. We calculated this based on the difference between the rates of decline for eligible non-citizens versus U.S. citizens over the two years. Our assumption here is that had there not been a chilling effect, eligible non-citizens would have withdrawn from SNAP at the same rates as eligible U.S. citizens. For instance, between January 2016 and January 2017, the trends in enrollment were virtually identical between eligible non-citizens and U.S. citizens with a modest overall increase of about one percentage point each.

• The overall economic impact was then derived using a multiplier generated by the USDA, which has estimated that for every SNAP dollar spent, a total of $1.79 in economic activity is generated.[5]

• Declines in participation include people who are otherwise eligible for SNAP but are (1) opting not to apply, (2) actively dis-enrolling from SNAP, or (3) choosing not to re-certify their eligibility, which is required to maintain their benefits receipt. It is important to also note individuals may also choose not to re-certify or to dis-enroll because of their improved economic situations.

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[4] Data reported here is only for categories of race with the most people in them. These data represent almost 90 percent of the DSS caseload.

[5] Kenneth Hanson, *The Food Assistance National Input-Output Multiplier (FANIOM) Model and Stimulus Effects of SNAP*, United States Department of Agriculture (2010), available at https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/44748/7996_err103_1_.pdf.

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