

MONITORING POVERTY AND WELL-BEING IN NYC

**SPOTLIGHT ON HUNGER:**

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Food hardship in  
New York City is  
rising as New Yorkers  
wait for a second  
federal stimulus bill

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# KEY FINDINGS



## FOOD HARDSHIP HAS BEEN A WIDESPREAD PROBLEM IN NEW YORK CITY FOR YEARS.



Prior to COVID-19, **ONE IN THREE** New Yorkers reported that they often or sometimes ran out of food or worried they would run out of food before there was money to buy more.



New Yorkers who have been hardest hit by the current economic crisis were already facing extraordinarily high rates of food hardship prior to the outbreak and **MORE THAN HALF** of Black and Hispanic New Yorkers faced food hardship in the year prior.



## BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, FOOD PANTRIES HELPED MANY NEW YORKERS GET BY IN TIMES OF NEED — BUT SINCE THEN, THEY HAVE BECOME A LIFELINE FOR MILLIONS.

Prior to COVID-19, roughly **12 PERCENT** of New Yorkers **USED A FOOD PANTRY** at least once in a 12-month period and **25 PERCENT** of New Yorkers facing food hardship used food pantries.

**12%**  
ALL NEW YORKERS

**25%**  
NEW YORKERS EXPERIENCING  
FOOD HARDSHIP



But since the pandemic, **FOOD PANTRIES** and the financial support provided through **THE CARES ACT** HAVE HELPED PREVENT MILLIONS OF NEW YORKERS FROM GOING HUNGRY.



In September and October of 2020, **32 PERCENT** of adults reported that they used a food pantry at least once in the 12-months prior, an increase of more than **250 PERCENT** relative to January and February.



## FOOD PANTRIES HAVE BECOME ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT AS PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION AND OTHER SUPPORTS PROVIDED THROUGH THE CARES ACT HAVE EXPIRED.

In September and October, **51 PERCENT** of New Yorkers experiencing food hardship turned to food pantries to help feed themselves and their families, a **200 PERCENT INCREASE**.



Even New Yorkers who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits have had to increase their pantry usage because SNAP could not meet their needs during this crisis. In July and August of 2020, roughly **60 PERCENT** of SNAP recipients reported using food pantries compared to **27 PERCENT** in January and February.

**CARES Act**

## NEW YORK CITY'S FOOD PANTRIES AND THE CARES ACT BUFFERED AGAINST A DRAMATIC INCREASE IN FOOD HARDSHIP.

**APRIL**

In the immediate months after the COVID-19 outbreak in New York City (April to June), when CARES Act supports and other benefits were still in effect, rates of food hardship remained at roughly the same level as they were in January and February (**36 PERCENT**).

**36%**

**JUNE**

**SEPT**

As the benefits of the CARES Act began to expire, rates of food hardship have risen substantially. By September and October, **42 PERCENT** of New Yorkers we surveyed reported that they often or sometimes ran out of food or worried they would run out of food before there was money to buy more.

**OCT**

**42%**

With the expiration of key provisions in the CARES Act, we are seeing **SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN FOOD HARDSHIP**. Policies like the CARES Act that provide cash-based supports are key to staving off further increases in food hardship.

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# Introduction

Thanksgiving is traditionally a time to gather with family and friends over a shared meal. This Thanksgiving, however, will be starkly different, as New York City and the country continue to grapple with the health and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and millions of New Yorkers struggle to feed themselves and their families. As COVID-19 spread across the U.S., food pantries saw a dramatic increase in need as families waited for emergency food assistance in lines that wrapped around city blocks or extended miles down roads. But for many New Yorkers, this is not a challenge that is unique to this crisis. Before the pandemic, one in three adults (or 2.4 million adults) in New York City were unsure if they could afford enough food to get through the month.

This report uses Poverty Tracker data collected before and after the COVID-19 outbreak to examine changes in food-related hardships and food pantry use in response to the pandemic and the economic downturn in New York City. We also examine how policies such as the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act may have mitigated increases in food hardship and how rates of food hardship and pantry use have changed since the benefits provided through the CARES Act have dwindled.

The results suggest that the robust support provided through the CARES Act buffered against an increase in the already high rate of food hardship in New York City. But key provisions in the legislation expired at the end of July and were not replaced by a second round of federal support. Since then, New Yorkers have been more likely to run out of food without money to buy more and are turning to food pantries at unprecedented levels to secure enough food for themselves and their families. At 14.1 percent, the unemployment rate in New York City remains at the highest level in decades.<sup>1</sup> The evidence in this report shows how the economic crisis continues to threaten many New Yorkers' ability to meet their basic needs and to acquire enough food to get by, particularly in the absence of another federal stimulus package.

## THE POVERTY TRACKER

Launched in 2012, the Poverty Tracker surveys a representative sample of New Yorkers every three months, providing critical information on the dynamics of poverty and other forms of disadvantage in the city. In addition to measures on poverty and disadvantage, the Poverty Tracker collects a wealth of information on other topics such as employment, assets and debts, and health.

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<sup>1</sup> New York State Department of Labor estimate for September 2020. See New York State Department of Labor (2020).

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# About our Approach

**The Poverty Tracker fielded surveys in every month from November 2019 to October 2020, and these surveys asked respondents the following questions related to their food security:**

- In the past 12 months, how often did you worry whether food would run out before you got money to buy more?
- In the past 12 months, how often did the food you purchase not last and you did not have enough money to buy more?
- In the past 12 months, did you receive free food from a church, food pantry, or food bank?<sup>2</sup>

Respondents can answer often, sometimes, or never to the first two questions. These responses are used to measure food hardship, which is defined as sometimes or often running out of food or worrying food would run out before the end of the month without enough money to buy more. The second question is used to quantify the share of adults who are receiving emergency food assistance.

**This report uses the Poverty Tracker data on food security collected between November 2019 and October 2020 to answer the following questions:**

1. How common was food hardship and food pantry use before the COVID-19 outbreak among New Yorkers in the Poverty Tracker sample?
2. How have rates of food hardship and food pantry use changed since the pandemic, and what role might the policy response (specifically the CARES Act) have played in mitigating the effect of the economic downturn on food hardship?
3. Has pantry use changed among those facing food hardship or among SNAP recipients, and what does this say about the intensity of food hardship that New Yorkers are experiencing right now?

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<sup>2</sup>The introduction to this question reads, “Many New Yorkers receive assistance from community organizations. This next set of questions is about any assistance you may have received from these organizations in the past 12 months.”

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# Findings

## **FOOD HARDSHIP AND FOOD PANTRY USE BEFORE THE PANDEMIC:**

**FOOD HARDSHIP HAS BEEN WIDESPREAD IN NEW YORK CITY FOR YEARS, AND THE NEW YORKERS WHO HAVE BEEN HARDEST HIT BY THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS WERE ALREADY FACING EXTRAORDINARILY HIGH RATES OF FOOD HARDSHIP PRIOR TO THE OUTBREAK.**

The Poverty Tracker defines food hardship as sometimes or often running out of food or worrying food would run out before the end of the month without enough money to buy more.

Before the pandemic, one in three adult New Yorkers in the Poverty Tracker sample reported that they faced one of these forms of food hardship in a 12-month period (Table 1).

**THIS MEANS 2.4 MILLION ADULTS IN NEW YORK CITY EXPERIENCED FOOD HARDSHIP BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2018 AND FEBRUARY 2020.**

Rates of food hardship differed substantially by demographics.

**BLACK AND HISPANIC NEW YORKERS IN THE SAMPLE WERE MORE THAN THREE TIMES AS LIKELY TO HAVE FACED FOOD HARDSHIP THAN WHITE NEW YORKERS IN THE SAMPLE** (Table 1).<sup>3</sup>

Foreign-born New Yorkers were also substantially more likely to face food hardship than those born in the U.S. (42 percent vs. 33 percent), as were New Yorkers with a high school degree or less relative to those with a college degree (54 percent vs. 21 percent).

The economic fallout driven by COVID-19 hit New Yorkers of color, low-wage workers, and New Yorkers without a high school degree hardest, as people in these groups were more likely to have lost employment income because of COVID-19.<sup>4</sup> Here, we see that **THE NEW YORKERS WHO BORE THE BRUNT OF THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN WERE ALREADY FACING EXTRAORDINARILY HIGH RATES OF FOOD HARDSHIP BEFORE THE PANDEMIC.**

While food hardship was a widespread problem in New York City before the pandemic, use of food pantries was less common. Roughly 12 percent of adult New Yorkers in the Poverty Tracker sample reported that they had received free food from a food pantry when asked in the months prior to the pandemic<sup>5</sup> (Table 1). As one might expect, pantry use was more common among New Yorkers who faced higher levels of food hardship, but again, was much less widespread than food hardship itself. These results suggest that, before the pandemic, New Yorkers were better able to meet their food needs without assistance from food pantries.

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<sup>3</sup> In this report, the term “Black New Yorkers” refers to the population of Black New Yorkers who do not identify as Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or Latinx.

<sup>4</sup> Collyer, Huq, Washington, and Wimer (2020).

<sup>5</sup> This result is specific to reports from November 2019 through February 2020.

Table 1

Food hardship and pantry use among adults in the Poverty Tracker sample prior to the COVID-19 outbreak <sup>6</sup>

	EXPERIENCED FOOD HARDSHIP	RECEIVED FREE FOOD FROM A FOOD PANTRY
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>RACE AND ETHNICITY</b>		
BLACK, NON-HISPANIC	50%	15%
HISPANIC	52%	15%
WHITE, NON-HISPANIC	15%	7%
<b>IMMIGRATION STATUS</b>		
U.S. BORN	33%	13%
FOREIGN BORN	42%	10%
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>		
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE OR LESS	54%	16%
SOME COLLEGE	44%	13%
COLLEGE DEGREE OR HIGHER	21%	9%

Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data collected between November 2019 and February 2020, second and third panels.

Note: Due to sample size constraints, we are unable to produce estimates for Asian New Yorkers, multiracial New Yorkers, and New Yorkers of other races and ethnicities.

## FOOD HARDSHIP AND FOOD PANTRY USE DURING THE PANDEMIC:

**BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, FOOD PANTRIES HELPED MANY NEW YORKERS GET BY IN TIMES OF NEED — BUT SINCE THEN, THEY HAVE BECOME A LIFELINE FOR MILLIONS.**

With Poverty Tracker data, we can monitor rates of food hardship and pantry use during the ongoing pandemic to understand the changing landscape of food-related needs. Figure 1 presents the rates of food hardship and food pantry use among New Yorkers in the sample from November 2019 to October 2020, and the results show a significant increase in the use of food pantries since the onset of the pandemic. As discussed, before the pandemic, roughly 12 percent of adults reported that they used a food pantry, and this was the average rate of use into April of this year.

**BY MAY AND JUNE, HOWEVER, FOOD PANTRY USAGE NEARLY DOUBLED, AND IT CONTINUED TO CLIMB THROUGH THE SUMMER MONTHS AND INTO THE FALL. BY SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 32 PERCENT OF NEW YORKERS IN THE SAMPLE REPORTED THAT THEY HAD VISITED A FOOD PANTRY IN THE 12 MONTHS PRIOR (A THREE-FOLD INCREASE FROM JANUARY AND FEBRUARY OF THE SAME YEAR).<sup>7</sup>**

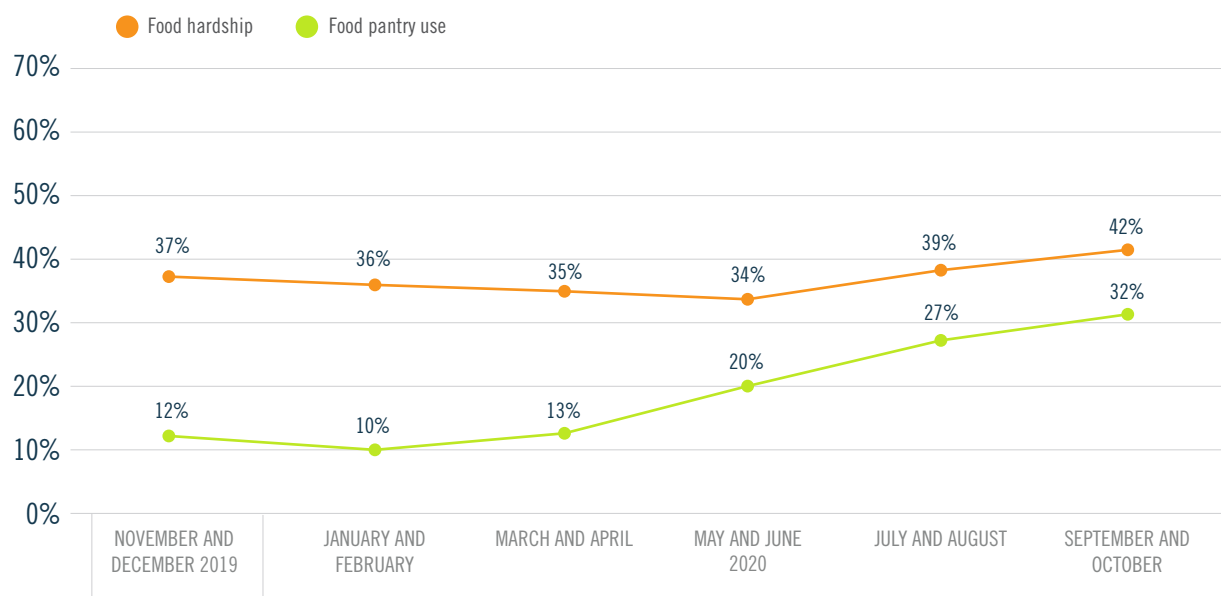
<sup>6</sup>These results are specific to reports from November 2019 through February 2020.

<sup>7</sup>This finding falls in line with a survey of food pantries conducted by the Food Bank for New York City. Their survey found that the average number of people served by the city's emergency food assistance providers more than doubled since the COVID-19 outbreak. See Koible and Figueroa (2020).

New Yorkers who were more likely to have lost employment income because of COVID-19, including New Yorkers born in other countries, New Yorkers of color, New Yorkers with a high school degree or less, are those who have been most likely to seek emergency food assistance from a food pantry in the months since the outbreak (Table A1 in Appendix A).<sup>8</sup> We see the largest increase in pantry use among Hispanic New Yorkers and New Yorkers born outside of the United States (Table A1 in Appendix A). These are also the groups that were disproportionately left out of key benefits in the CARES Act.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 1

### Rates of food hardship and food pantry use among New Yorkers surveyed by the Poverty Tracker



Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data collected between November 2019 and October 2020; second, third, and fourth panels.

Note: For the models behind these estimates, see Appendix B.

**COMBINED, NEW YORK CITY'S FOOD PANTRIES AND THE CARES ACT BUFFERED AGAINST A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN FOOD HARDSHIP IN THE MONTHS RIGHT AFTER THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK. BUT AS THE BENEFITS OF THE CARES ACT DWINDED, RATES OF FOOD HARDSHIP HAVE RISEN.**

Figure 1 also shows that in the early months of the pandemic, rates of food hardship remained relatively stable. In March, April, May, and June (at the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak in New York City), the rate of food hardship among adults in the sample was the same as it was in January and February. By the summer, however, the trend changes. We see food hardship increasing in July and August, and rising further in September and October, peaking at 42 percent.

<sup>8</sup> Collyer, Huq, Washington, and Wimer (2020).

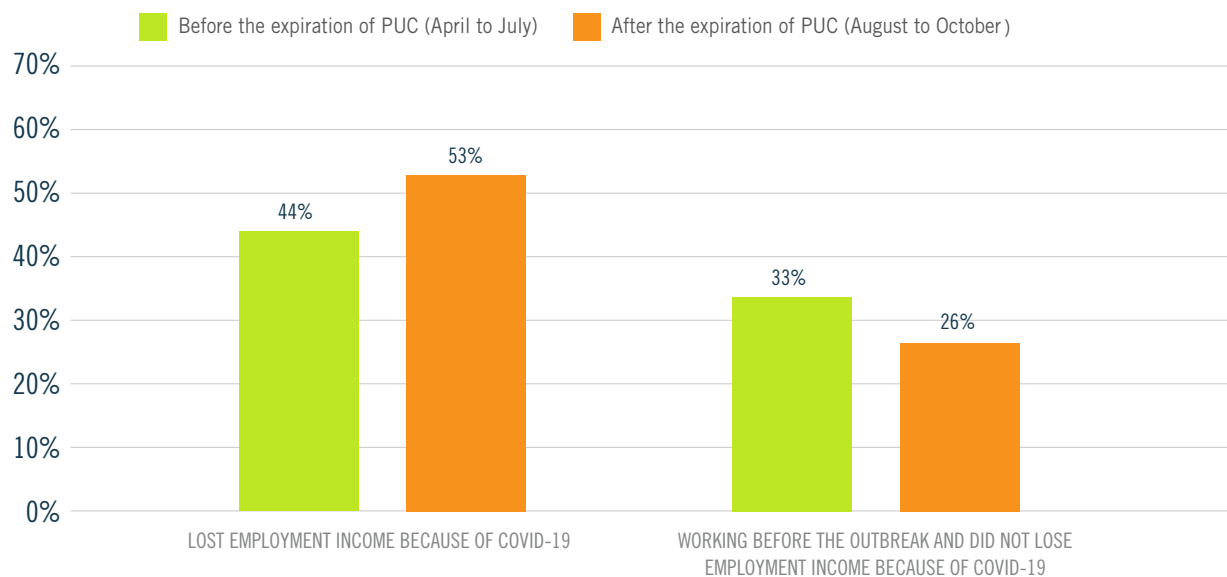
<sup>9</sup> See textbox for a description of the CARES Act and Curran and Collyer (2020) for an overview of the populations that were disproportionately left out of the benefits of the legislation.

The results in Figure 1 show the prevalence of food hardship increasing at the same time as key provisions in the CARES Act are expiring (see textbox for a description of the CARES Act). In April and May, many New Yorkers received stimulus payments through the CARES Act, as well as enhanced unemployment benefits through the CARES Act Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUC) payments of \$600 per week. The CARES Act PUC program expired on July 31st, and we see pantry use begin to increase in May and June and then hardship rates increase in July and August as these CARES Act benefits fall.<sup>10</sup> **NEW YORKERS WE SURVEYED REPORT THE HIGHEST RATES OF FOOD HARDSHIP AND PANTRY USE IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, AFTER THE KEY COMPONENTS OF THE CARES ACT (THE STIMULUS CHECKS AND PUC) HAD BEEN EXHAUSTED.**

We find additional evidence of the increase in food hardship in response to the expiration of PUC when looking at the changes in food hardship by employment status (Figure 2). New Yorkers in the sample who lost employment income because of COVID-19 saw a significant increase in food hardship (roughly 9 percentage points) after the expiration of PUC relative to months when PUC was available (Figure 2). On the other hand, the rate of food hardship has fallen among those who were working before the outbreak and have not lost employment income (from 33 percent to 26 percent).

Figure 2

### Rates of food hardship before and after the expiration of Pandemic Unemployment Compensation by employment status



Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data collected between April 2020 and October 2020; fourth panel.

<sup>10</sup> See Parolin, Curran, Matsudaira, Waldfogel, and Wimer (2020) for evidence of how the CARES Act prevented against a large increase in the poverty rate since the COVID-19 outbreak.



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As discussed earlier, New Yorkers who lost employment income because of COVID-19 already faced higher levels of food hardship before the pandemic than did those who have not lost employment income. The results in Figure 2 show how PUC played a key role in safeguarding against a further increase in food hardship in the initial months of the pandemic for those who lost employment income. The results also point to how the lack of additional federal support for unemployed individuals since the expiration of PUC is leading more and more people to run out of food without money for more. In addition, the fact that food hardship is falling for those who have not lost employment income falls in line with reports on the diverging experiences of workers who lost income and those who have not. Workers with secure employment are spending less and saving more,<sup>11</sup> while those who lost employment income are facing devastating hardships — particularly since the bulk of the support provided through the CARES Act expired. These trends show how the pandemic is deepening income inequality and inequality in New Yorkers' ability to meet their fundamental needs. When we look at citywide rates of food hardship, we must also remember that these population level averages mask opposing trends among different segments of the New York City population.

Overall, the CARES Act appears to have played a key role in preventing a dramatic increase in rates of food hardship in the spring and early summer of 2020. But as its impacts faded, we see rates of food hardship increasing and more New Yorkers turning to food pantries to secure food for themselves and their families. While the city's emergency food assistance providers help meet the needs of New Yorkers, organizations that operate food pantries and food banks see cash and in-kind transfers provided through legislation like the CARES Act and SNAP as a more efficient means of alleviating food hardship — particularly during times of unprecedented demand.<sup>12</sup> We discuss the role that the SNAP program has played during the pandemic later in this report.

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<sup>11</sup> See U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Personal Saving Rate (2020)* and Pinsker (2020).

<sup>12</sup> Charles (2020).

## CORONAVIRUS AID, RELIEF, AND ECONOMIC SECURITY (CARES) ACT

In March of 2020, the federal government signed into law the CARES Act, a \$2 trillion relief package in response to COVID-19 and the economic crisis. The bill provided relief to the healthcare industry, American businesses, and individuals. Important to this analysis, the CARES Act provided direct payments to individuals and families, known as stimulus checks (or “recovery rebates”), and expanded unemployment benefits.

The stimulus checks provided a one-time payment of \$1,200 to every eligible adult, and \$500 for every eligible child under the age of 16. Eligibility was based on income, household size, and work authorization; families with a combined income of over \$150,000 were ineligible.

### THE UNEMPLOYMENT EXPANSIONS INCLUDED THREE KEY PROVISIONS:

1. **PANDEMIC EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION** (PEUC) extended benefit allotment time by 13 weeks;
2. **PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION** (PUC) provided an additional \$600 weekly to all recipients through the end of July 2020; and
3. **PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE** (PUA) made benefits more accessible to those who would not traditionally qualify for UI, such as independent contractors and part-time workers.

The CARES Act provided a great deal of support to individuals and families, but there were also groups who were left out of these benefits. For example, all members of immigrant families (even if they hold U.S. citizenship or green-cards) were ineligible for the stimulus checks if at least one adult in the family filed their federal taxes with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).<sup>13</sup> Dependents aged 17 and over who were claimed by their families for tax purposes were also ineligible for the stimulus check. In total, thirty million income-eligible individuals did not qualify for the stimulus checks for these reasons.<sup>14</sup>

## FOOD HARDSHIP AND PANTRY USE IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Data from the Early Childhood Poverty Tracker (ECPT) shed light on the prevalence of food hardship and pantry use among households with young children (under age 5).

Results from the ECPT show that before the pandemic, 44 percent of households with young children in the sample said that they often or sometimes ran out or worried about food running out before the end of the month and roughly 13 percent received food from a food pantry.

**Since the outbreak, we see pantry use among households with young children more than double, and 31 percent of households with young children reported receiving food from a food pantry in the summer of 2020.**

<sup>13</sup> An ITIN is a tax processing number that is made available to individuals who do not have a social security number.

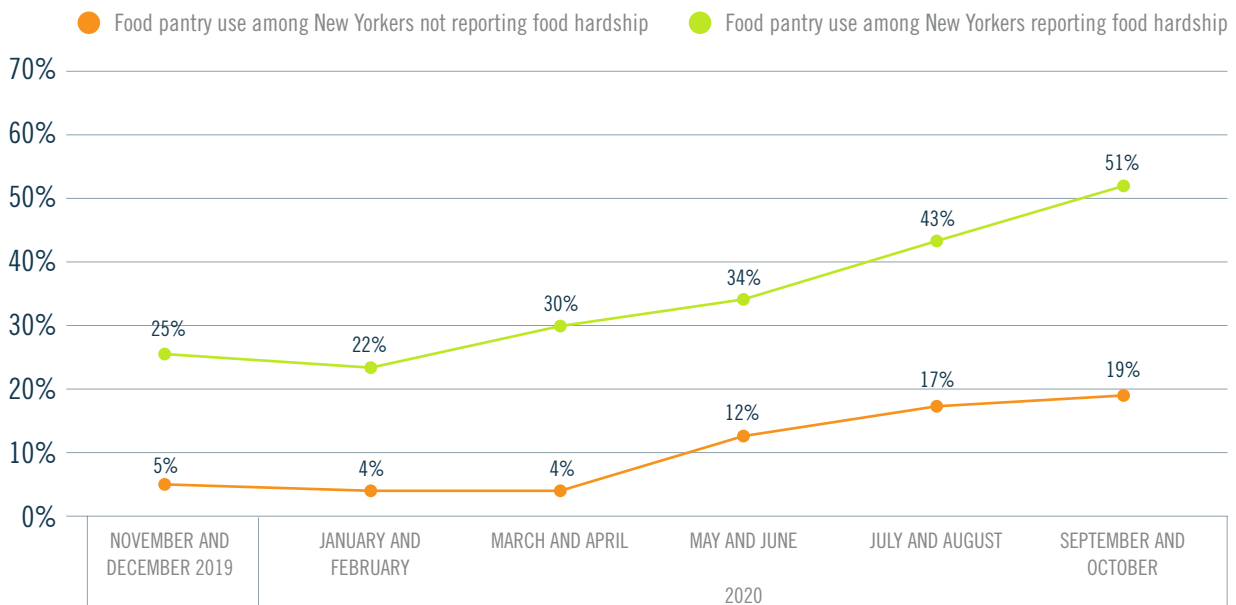
<sup>14</sup> Curran and Collyer (2020).

**FOOD PANTRY USE DURING THE PANDEMIC AMONG NEW YORKERS EXPERIENCING FOOD HARDSHIP: THERE HAS ALSO BEEN A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN PANTRY USE AMONG THOSE FACING FOOD HARDSHIP, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE EXPIRATION OF PUC, SUGGESTING THAT EXPERIENCES OF FOOD HARDSHIP ARE BECOMING MORE INTENSE.**

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, roughly a quarter of New Yorkers facing food hardship used food pantries, but the use of pantries among this group has risen steadily since then, and was highest in September and October (51 percent; Figure 3). Figure 3 also shows that New Yorkers who have not reported experiences of food hardship have been more likely to receive emergency food assistance since the beginning of the pandemic. For this group, the emergency food assistance could be offsetting the likelihood of food hardship.

Figure 3

Food pantry use among New Yorkers by food hardship status



Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data collected between November 2019 and October 2020; second, third, and fourth panels.

**FOOD PANTRY USE AMONG SNAP RECIPIENTS:**

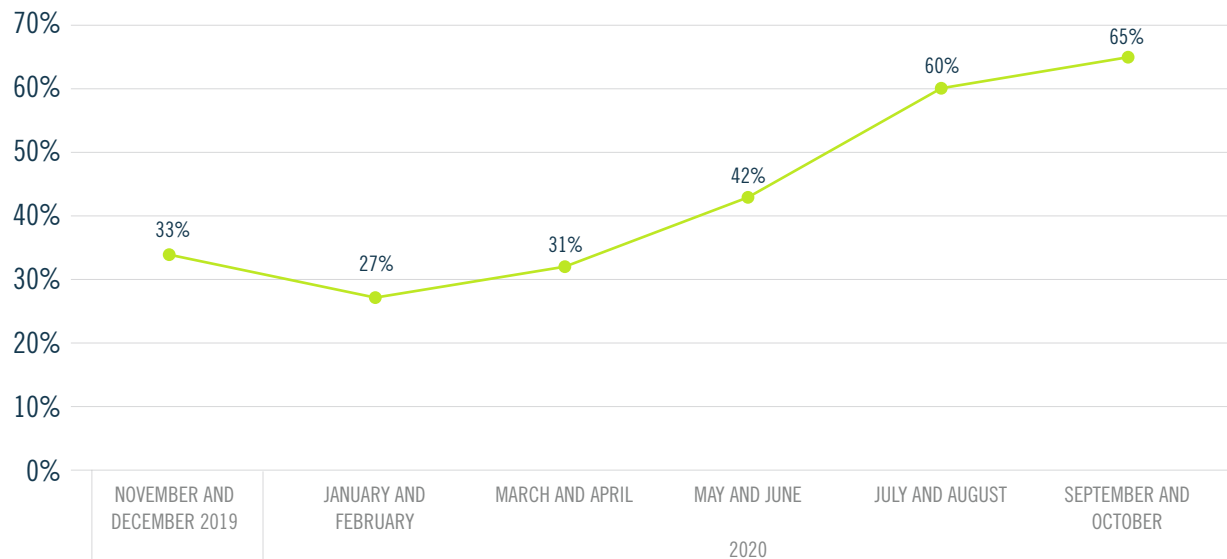
**NEW YORKERS IN THE POVERTY TRACKER SAMPLE WHO RECEIVE SNAP BENEFITS ARE INCREASINGLY TURNING TO FOOD PANTRIES TO KEEP THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES FED.**

Before the pandemic, roughly one in three SNAP recipients had received food from a food pantry, and this trend held into the early months of the pandemic (Figure 4). **BUT BY JULY, THE SHARE OF SNAP RECIPIENTS USING FOOD PANTRIES DOUBLED, WITH ROUGHLY 60 PERCENT OF SNAP RECIPIENTS ALSO VISITING FOOD PANTRIES.** These results suggest that the pandemic and the related economic fallout have left SNAP recipients with less money to use towards covering their food budget, leading many to turn to food pantries in an attempt to make ends meet. While the value of SNAP benefits increased under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act,<sup>15</sup> these results suggest that the increase was not large enough to offset the need for emergency food assistance.

<sup>15</sup> The Families First Coronavirus Response Act gave states the authority to provide SNAP recipients with supplementary benefits up to the maximum benefit allotment under current law and instituted the Pandemic EBT program for school-aged children. See Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2020).

Figure 4

### Food pantry use among SNAP recipients



Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data collected between November 2019 and October 2020; second, third, and fourth panels.

While these results show a significant increase in pantry use among SNAP recipients, the increase in SNAP enrollment in New York City has not been as dramatic. Table 2 presents the number of SNAP recipients in New York City for each month in 2020, as reported by the Human Resource Administration (HRA).<sup>16</sup> Since January 2020, the number of SNAP recipients in the city increased by roughly 200,000 individuals (an increase of 13 percent), which is substantially smaller than the increase in use of food pantries of more than 200 percent.

There are a few possible explanations as to why we are seeing a less significant increase in SNAP enrollment relative to pantry use. First, to slow the spread of COVID-19, many enrollment offices have been temporarily closed. Currently, only six of the city’s sixteen SNAP Centers are open.<sup>17</sup> While New Yorkers are encouraged to apply online, many have reported problems with the HRA application portal that prevent them from applying or receiving assistance.<sup>18</sup> In addition, many immigrants and those without legal immigration status are hesitant to seek SNAP benefits out of fear of triggering a public charge classification.<sup>19</sup> While applying

<sup>16</sup> As of this writing, these counts have only been made available through August, 2020

<sup>17</sup> See the HRA website for up-to-date information on SNAP Centers across the city. [Access here.](#)

<sup>18</sup> Shahrighian (2020).

<sup>19</sup> “Public charge” is a term used by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to describe individuals applying for residency in or entry to the U.S. whom the Department deems as likely to receive government benefits at any point in the future. Being deemed a “public charge” can be used as grounds for inadmissibility to the U.S. or denial of residency status. Information on the public charge ruling from 2019 is [available here.](#)

for SNAP cannot be used to categorize an individual as a public charge when they are applying for residency, studies have found that there has been a chilling effect in response to the recent public charge ruling that has left many immigrants fearful of applying for SNAP.<sup>20</sup> These challenges in accessing SNAP benefits could be driving more New Yorkers to rely on emergency food assistance and food pantries. While organizations that operate pantries see SNAP as a more efficient method for addressing food hardship, the barriers to accessing SNAP compromise this method and may lead more New Yorkers to rely of food pantries.

Table 2

Number of SNAP recipients in New York City, by month

	NUMBER OF SNAP RECIPIENTS	SNAP RECIPIENTS AS A PORTION OF THE NEW YORK CITY POPULATION
JANUARY 2020	1,487,820	18%
FEBRUARY 2020	1,481,257	18%
MARCH 2020	1,483,230	18%
APRIL 2020	1,551,944	19%
MAY 2020	1,589,098	19%
JUNE 2020	1,642,256	20%
JULY 2020	1,664,464	20%
AUGUST 2020	1,683,674	20%

Source: New York City Human Resource Administration (2020).

<sup>20</sup> Amandaloro, Gallagher, Bowles, and Dvorkin (2020).

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# Conclusion

Food hardship was already a problem in New York City before the COVID-19 outbreak, with a third of adults reporting that they often or sometimes ran out of food or worried food would run out before they had enough money to buy more. Food pantry use was less common, however, and before March 2020, only 12 percent of adults reported that they used a food pantry in the span of 12 months. Since the outbreak, we have seen New Yorkers increasingly turning to food pantries in order to secure enough food for themselves and their families. Combined, income from the CARES Act and the food provided by the city's pantries appear to have staved off a substantial increase in food hardship in the early months of the pandemic, but as the impact of the CARES Act stimulus has waned, we see rates of food hardship in the city rising.

Our findings emphasize how important the income provided through the CARES Act stimulus payments and PUC were in guarding against food hardship. Food hardship is now not only becoming more common, but also more severe. Before the outbreak, roughly a quarter of New Yorkers who faced food hardship also received food from food pantries; but in September and October of this year, more than half of people who reported some form of food hardship turned to a food pantry. This is also true when looking at use of food pantries among SNAP recipients, suggesting that, right now, SNAP benefits are not doing enough to cover families' needs. In addition, SNAP enrollment is not increasing at nearly the same rate as we see pantry use increasing. Some explanations for this include the barriers that people face when enrolling in SNAP which are, in some ways, greater than those associated with visiting a food pantry.

Overall, New York City's food pantries have done an incredible job addressing the unprecedented level of need since the COVID-19 outbreak. But the cash support provided through the CARES Act also played a key role in combatting food hardship — which was already too common in New York City. With the expiration of key provisions in the CARES Act, we are seeing more New Yorkers running out of food without money to buy more. Legislation that provides cash-based supports, such as a second federal stimulus bill, is vital to staving off further increases in food hardship in New York City and to ensuring that New Yorkers are able to meet their basic needs.

# Appendix A

Table A1

Food pantry use among New Yorkers in the Poverty Tracker sample before and after the COVID-19 outbreak

	NOVEMBER 2019 TO FEBRUARY 2020	MARCH 2020 TO OCTOBER 2020	PERCENTAGE POINT INCREASE
<b>OVERALL</b>	12%	23%	11%
<b>RACE AND ETHNICITY</b>			
BLACK, NON-HISPANIC	15%	26%	11%
HISPANIC	15%	34%	19%
WHITE, NON-HISPANIC	7%	15%	8%
<b>IMMIGRATION STATUS</b>			
U.S. BORN	13%	23%	10%
FOREIGN BORN	10%	25%	15%
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>			
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE OR LESS	16%	32%	16%
SOME COLLEGE	13%	27%	14%
COLLEGE DEGREE OR HIGHER	9%	16%	7%

Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data collected between November 2019 and February 2020; second, third, and fourth panels.

Note: Due to sample size constraints, we are unable to produce estimates for Asian New Yorkers, multiracial New Yorkers, and New Yorkers of other races and ethnicities.

# Appendix B

Table B1

## Model predicting the rate of food hardship by month

	<b>DEPENDENT VARIABLE: FOOD HARDSHIP</b>
NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER	0.0230 (0.0267)
JANUARY AND FEBRUARY	0.0199 (0.0292)
MARCH AND APRIL	0.00764 (0.0350)
JULY AND AUGUST	0.0490* (0.0290)
SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER	0.0821** (0.0385)
SOME COLLEGE	-0.0763*** (0.0185)
COLLEGE +	-0.229*** (0.0167)
FOREIGN BORN	0.0402*** (0.0155)
BLACK, NON-HISPANIC	0.182*** (0.0186)
ASIAN, NON-HISPANIC	0.0698** (0.0318)
MULTIRACIAL OR ANOTHER RACE	0.192*** (0.0323)
HISPANIC	0.230*** (0.0191)
FEMALE	0.0764*** (0.0137)
ANOTHER GENDER	-0.105 (0.178)
AGE 35 - 50	0.0200 (0.0201)
AGE 51-64	-0.00267 (0.0196)
AGE 65 +	-0.0909*** (0.0204)
HAS A CHILD	0.0810*** (0.0174)
HAS A SPOUSE OR DOMESTIC PARTNER	-0.114*** (0.0145)
CONSTANT	0.339*** (0.0334)
OBSERVATIONS	4,363
R-SQUARED	0.197

STANDARD ERRORS IN PARENTHESES

\*\*\* P<0.01, \*\* P<0.05, \* P<0.1



Table B2

## Model predicting the rate of food pantry use by month

	DEPENDENT VARIABLE: USE OF FOOD PANTRIES IN THE 12 MONTHS PRIOR
NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER	-0.0675*** (0.0218)
JANUARY AND FEBRUARY	-0.0865*** (0.0238)
MARCH AND APRIL	-0.0631** (0.0284)
JULY AND AUGUST	0.0712*** (0.0236)
SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER	0.121*** (0.0313)
SOME COLLEGE	-0.0412*** (0.0151)
COLLEGE +	-0.105*** (0.0136)
FOREIGN BORN	-0.0138 (0.0126)
BLACK, NON-HISPANIC	0.0925*** (0.0151)
ASIAN, NON-HISPANIC	0.00148 (0.0258)
MULTIRACIAL OR ANOTHER RACE	0.102*** (0.0263)
HISPANIC	0.126*** (0.0155)
FEMALE	0.0162 (0.0112)
ANOTHER GENDER	-0.239* (0.145)
AGE 35 - 50	0.0735*** (0.0163)
AGE 51-64	0.0866*** (0.0159)
AGE 65 +	0.0749*** (0.0166)
HAS A CHILD	0.0398*** (0.0142)
HAS A SPOUSE OR DOMESTIC PARTNER	-0.0642*** (0.0118)
CONSTANT	0.143*** (0.0272)
OBSERVATIONS	4,357
R-SQUARED	0.101

STANDARD ERRORS IN PARENTHESES

\*\*\* P&lt;0.01, \*\* P&lt;0.05, \* P&lt;0.1

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