

# New York City's SNAP Participation Rate

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# Background

- New York City has approximately 8 and a half million people.
- Over one and a half million receive SNAP benefits each month.
- How do we know if this is the “right” number of people?
- How far does the program reach?

## Need Help With Your Benefits? We're An App Away.

Download the **ACCESS HRA** app to apply for and manage your SNAP and Cash Assistance benefits from your phone. No in-person visit required.



Upload document images



Apply for & manage SNAP benefits



Check your balances



Apply for & manage cash benefits

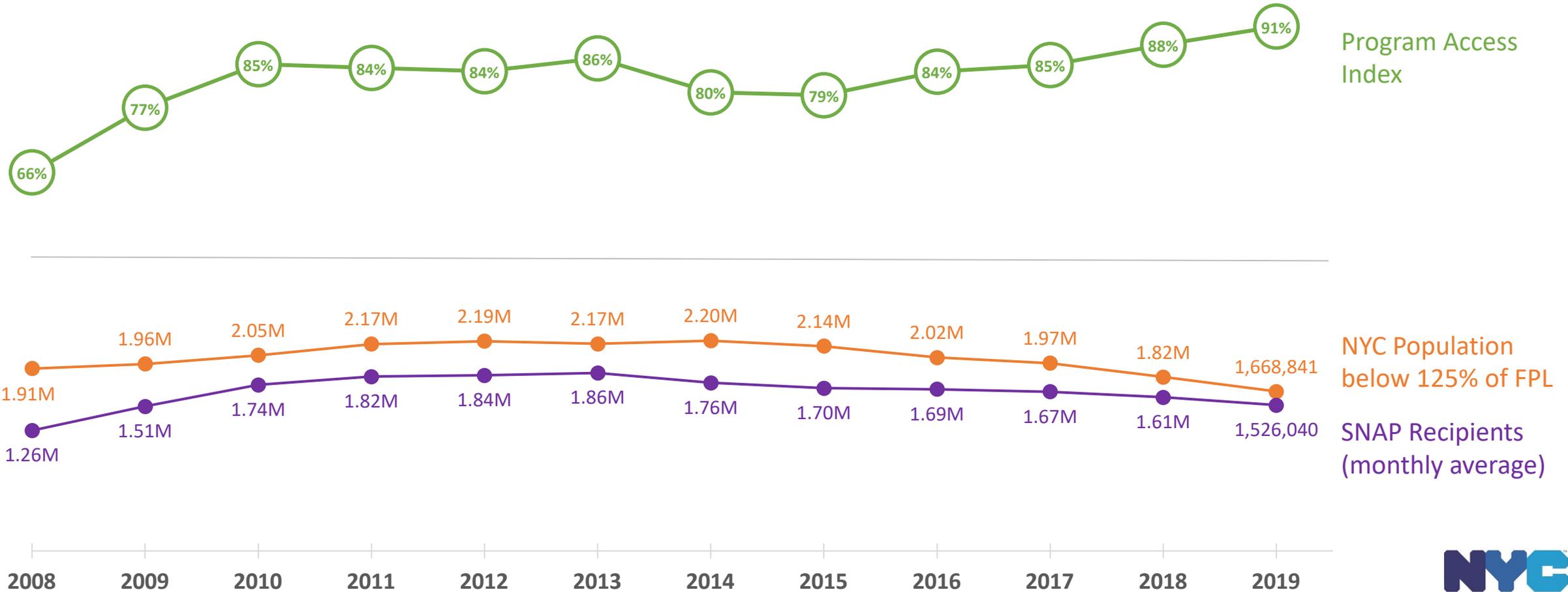


Here For You  
[nyc.gov/accesshra](https://nyc.gov/accesshra)  
Call 311 or Text 311-692



# NYC low-Income Population, SNAP Caseload, and Program Access Index

One metric is the **Program Access Index**: the number of **people who get SNAP** divided by the number of **people with incomes <125% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)**.



Source: NYC Human Resources Administration, ACS 1-year data

# More Robust Understanding is Needed and Desired

We want a better understanding of how far SNAP reaches—and who is missed.

**Take pride in using your SNAP benefits.**

Skip the trip. Download the new **ACCESS HRA** app, and use your SNAP benefits at farmer's markets and grocery stores.

Upload document images

Apply for and manage SNAP benefits

Check your balances

Recertify for cash benefits

Photos are of models used for illustrative purposes only.

**ACCESS HRA** Here For You  
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**NYC**  
Department of Social Services

**Need help buying food?**

Download the new **ACCESS HRA** app, to apply for **SNAP** benefits and buy food at markets and stores.

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**ACCESS HRA**  
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**NYC**  
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# NYC's SNAP Participation Rate

A more sophisticated measure is the SNAP Participation Rate (PR), which uses ACS data to estimate the SNAP-eligible population, constructing a better denominator for the same calculation.



// Census.gov > Our Surveys & Programs > American Community Survey (ACS) > American Community Survey Data

## AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS)

Data Tables & Tools

Data via FTP

Summary File Data

Variance Replicate Tables

Race/Ethnicity and American Indian & Alaska Native Data

Custom Tables

< Back to American Community Survey (ACS)



## American Community Survey Data

New Data Every Year!

The American Community Survey collects data on an ongoing basis, January through December, to provide every community with the information they need to make important decisions

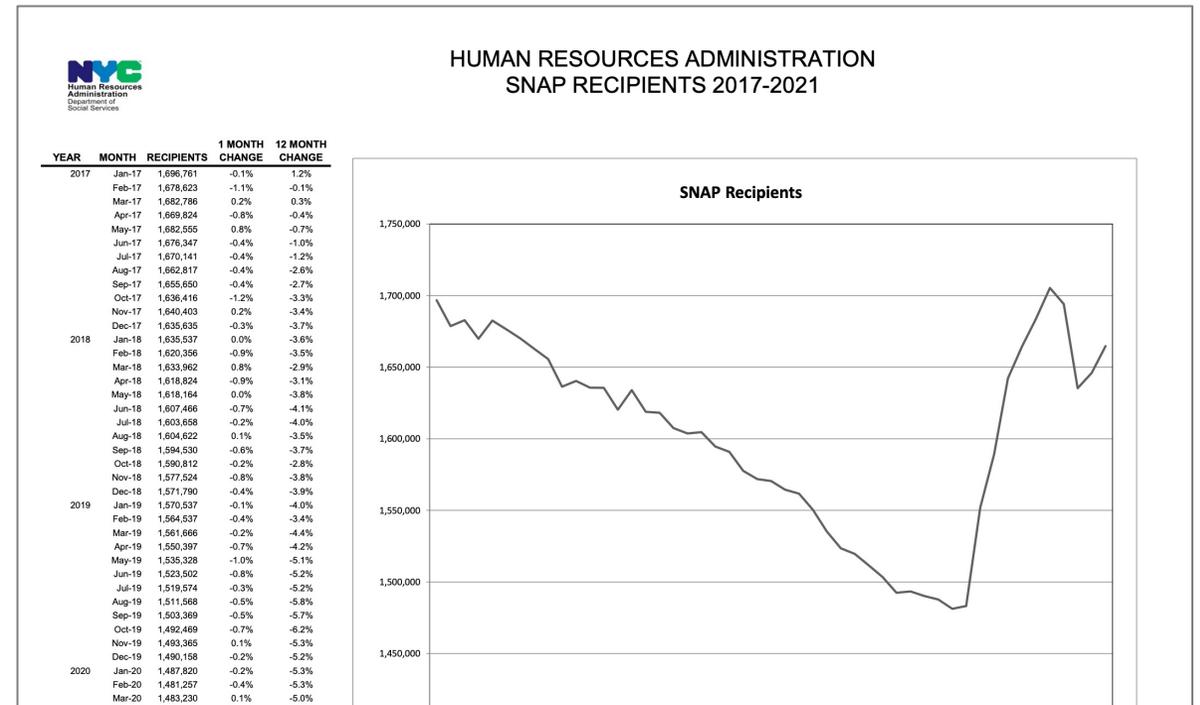
We release new data every year, in the form of estimates, in a variety of tables, tools, and analytical reports.

### Data Tables and Tools

The Data Tables and Tools pages provide explanations and links to our most popular data tables on data.census.gov.

### Data Profiles

### Narrative Profiles

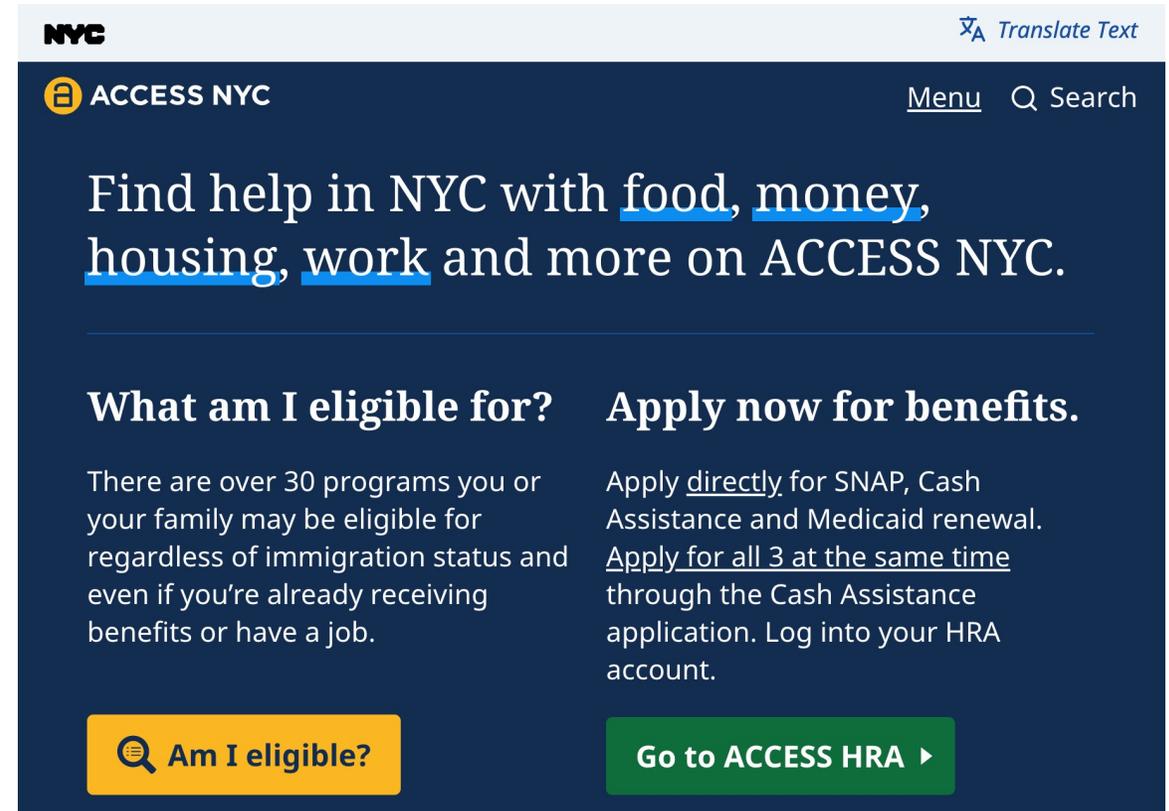


[www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html)

[www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/about/facts.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/about/facts.page)

# SNAP Eligibility in New York

- **Income:** 130% of FPL, or 150% with earned income
- **Age and disability:** 200% of FPL for a person over 60 or with a disability
- **SNAP Unit:** People who share food and eat meals together
- **Immigration status:** Citizens, refugees/asylees, and legal permanent residents (LPRs)—except adults are ineligible during first 5 years in LPR status
- **Student status:** College students must work 20 hours a week, have federal work study, or have small children
- **Categorical eligibility:** SSI, Cash Assistance recipients



The screenshot shows the top portion of the ACCESS NYC website. At the top left is the NYC logo, and at the top right is a 'Translate Text' link. Below the logo is the 'ACCESS NYC' header with a menu icon and a search bar. The main heading reads: 'Find help in NYC with food, money, housing, work and more on ACCESS NYC.' Below this, there are two columns of text. The left column is titled 'What am I eligible for?' and contains the text: 'There are over 30 programs you or your family may be eligible for regardless of immigration status and even if you're already receiving benefits or have a job.' Below this text is a yellow button with a magnifying glass icon and the text 'Am I eligible?'. The right column is titled 'Apply now for benefits.' and contains the text: 'Apply directly for SNAP, Cash Assistance and Medicaid renewal. Apply for all 3 at the same time through the Cash Assistance application. Log into your HRA account.' Below this text is a green button with the text 'Go to ACCESS HRA ▶'.

Screenshot of NYC's SNAP eligibility screening tool on the ACCESS HRA website.

# Calculating the Participation Rate Step-by-Step (2019 numbers shown)

1. Total NYC population, excluding group quarters | 8,139,943
2. Remove ineligible immigrants
  - a. Adult noncitizens who have arrived within 5 years
  - b. Estimated number of undocumented adults and temporary nonimmigrant adults
3. Add back estimated number of LPRs with less than five years in the US who are eligible because of SSI, refugee status, or military connection
4. 7,418,834 individuals remain; of these:
5. Count number of individuals in household where everyone gets SSI | 121,308
6. Count number of people who get SSI or are 60+, gross income <200% FPL | 879,029
7. Count number of people who get SSI or are 60+, gross income >200% FPL but meet net income and asset test | 27,036
8. Count non-SSI, <60-year-old people, gross income 150% for working families and 130% for non-working families | 1,015,062
9. Add up all red numbers | 2,042,435

# Calculating the Participation Rate Step-by-Step

1,526,042 Average Monthly SNAP Recipients

2,042,435 Estimated SNAP-Eligible New Yorkers

=

SNAP Participation

Rate: 74.7%

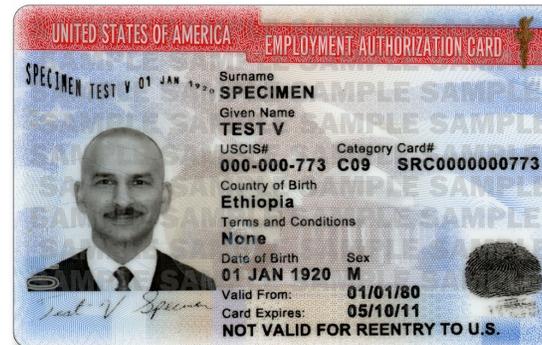


# SNAP Participation rate is an ESTIMATE

- Census households (HHs) include all people in a residential unit, while SNAP units include only people who share food and meals. Our use of Census HH may undercount the denominator by excluding SNAP units that live in larger HHs and may be *SNAP-eligible* on their own—but *ineligible* when the income of all HH members is considered.
- ACS income is over the past 12 months, but SNAP eligibility is income at the time of application.
- Not all elements of the PR are available in ACS data. For example, non-citizen identifier doesn't distinguish between green card holders, students, temporary visitors, etc.

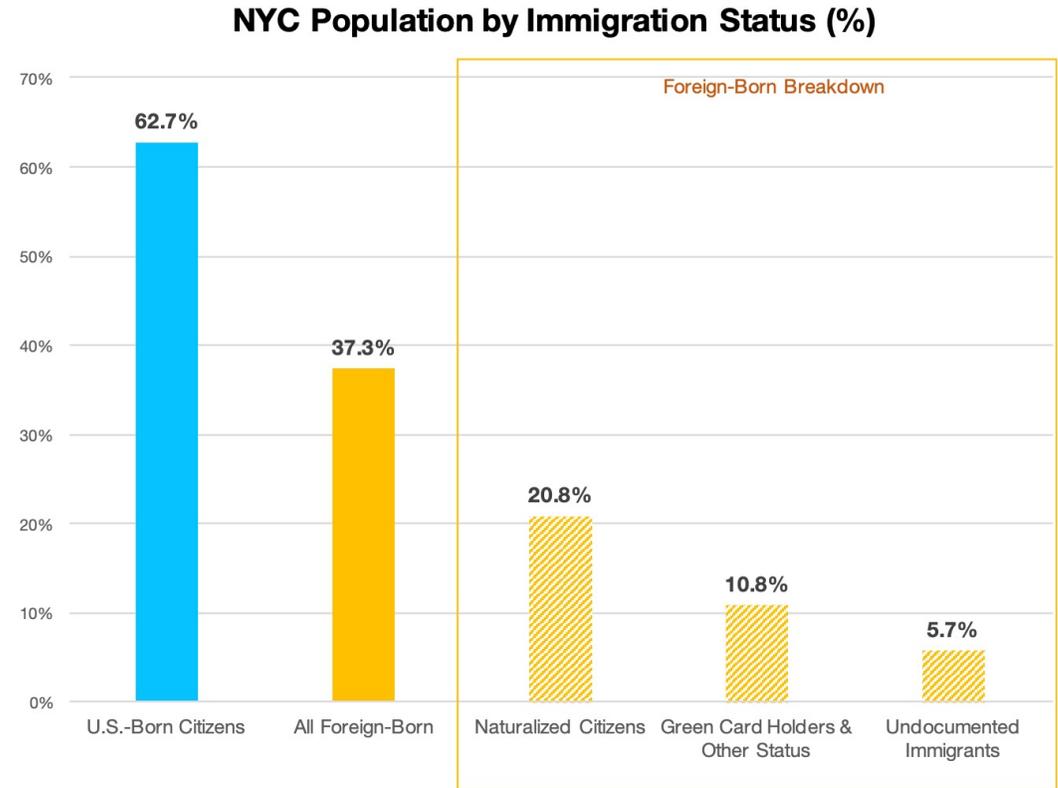
**CIT**                      **Character**    **1**  
 Citizenship status  
 1 .Born in the U.S.  
 2 .Born in Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Is.  
    .Northern Marianas  
 3 .Born abroad of American parent(s)  
 4 .U.S. citizen by naturalization  
 5 .Not a citizen of the U.S.

**CITWP**                    **Numeric**        **4**  
 Year of naturalization write-in  
 bbbb .Not eligible - not naturalized  
 1939 .1939 or earlier (Bottom-coded)  
 1940 .1940 - 1944  
 1945 .1945 - 1947



# SNAP Participation rate is an ESTIMATE: Immigrant Numbers

- We use estimates from the New York City Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity (OEO) and Mayor's Office for Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) regarding the number of undocumented immigrants and other categories of immigrants.
- We've used other sources for the undocumented immigrant estimate in previous years; all estimates were based on Census ACS data, augmented with information from other sources.
- Identifying Permanent Residents with fewer than 5 years is inexact; ACS gives year but not month.



Source: MOIA, State of Our Immigrant City, 2019. Figure based on analysis of U.S. Census Bureau 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample as augmented by NYC Opportunity

## SNAP Participation rate is an ESTIMATE: Other factors

- SSI receipt is taken from ACS, and research shows it is underreported.
- We apply the shelter deduction to everyone, which may overcount the denominator.
- We don't estimate medical expenses or child support payments, which may undercount the denominator.
- We don't estimate college students who are ineligible because of the work requirement, which may overestimate denominator.

# USDA's Participation Rates Are Also Estimates



## Reaching Those in Need:

### ESTIMATES OF STATE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PARTICIPATION RATES IN 2017



all eligible people and working poor people for fiscal year 2017. These estimates can be used to assess recent program performance and focus efforts to improve access.

#### Participation rates in fiscal year 2017

An estimated 84 percent of eligible people received SNAP benefits in fiscal year 2017. Participation rates varied widely from State to State, however. In 20 States and the District of Columbia, the rates were significantly higher (in a statistical sense) than the national rate, and in 19 States, the rates were significantly lower.

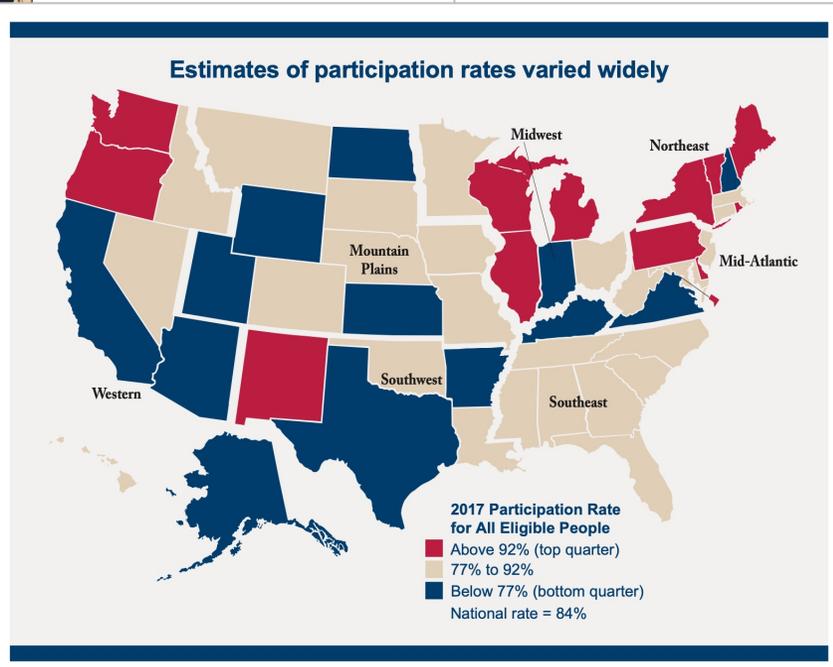
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to eligible, low-income individuals and households in need. SNAP is the largest domestic nutrition assistance program administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). During fiscal year 2017, the program served nearly 38 million people in an average month at a total annual cost of nearly \$54 billion in benefits.

SNAP provides an important support for “working poor” people—people who are eligible for SNAP benefits and live in households in which someone earns income from a job. In fiscal year 2018, 43 percent of all SNAP participants lived in households that had earned income. That was up from 30 percent of all participants in 1999, the year in which passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act placed more emphasis on work for public assistance recipients.

The SNAP participation rate is the percentage of eligible people in the United States who actually participate in the program. Vigil (2019) examined national SNAP participation rates and rates for socioeconomic and demographic subgroups of people. This research brief presents estimates of State SNAP participation rates for

BY KAREN CUNNINGHAM

- Similar assumptions need to be made for the USDA's national and state-level participation rates (done for the USDA by Mathematica).
- USDA does not account for New York State-specific expanded eligibility rules.

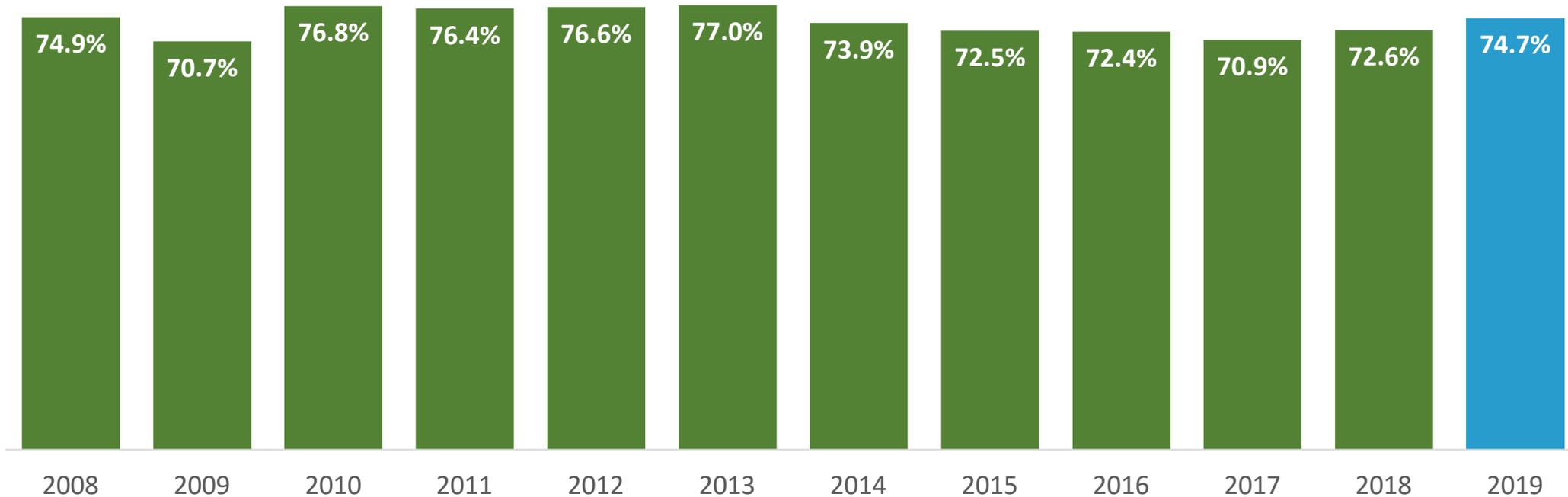


- USDA and NYC participation rates can't be compared.
- USDA PR for New York State in 2017 was 93%.
- USDA take a different approach than NYC DSS; uses multiple data sources: CPS and ACS, USDA SNAP data, IRS Tax return data, SIPP.

## Using the Results: Trends over time

The SNAP participation rate estimate provides valuable insight into trends in SNAP take-up in NYC from year-to-year.

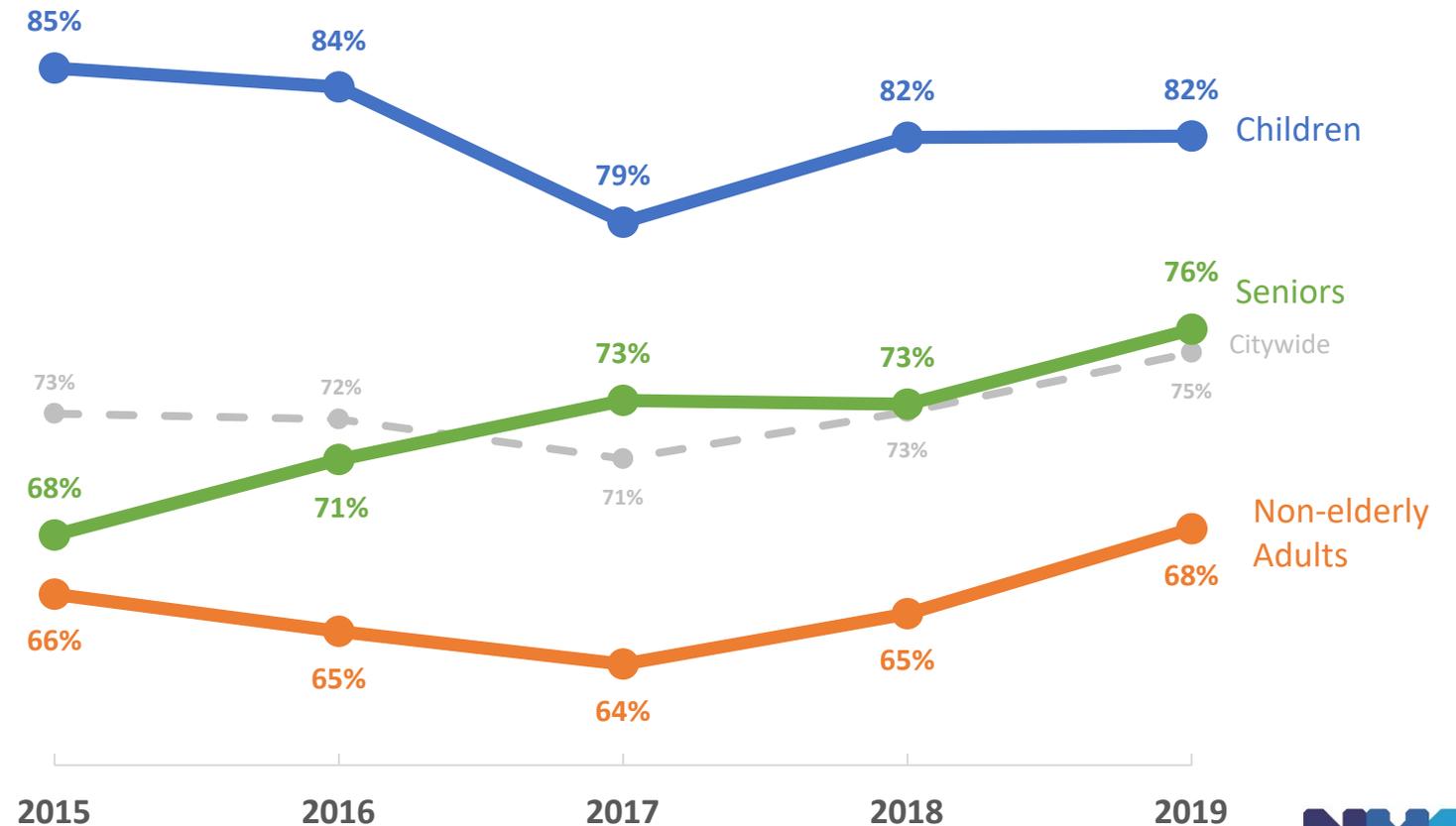
NYC SNAP Participation Rate, 2008-2019



## Using the Results: Subgroup analysis

- We also break the PR down by age categories.
- Our senior rate is higher than national estimates from the USDA would suggest: they estimate the senior rate at 48% for 2017.
- NYC's high rate of participation by seniors likely reflects SSI auto-enrollment and extensive outreach efforts to this population.
- NYC Local Law 134 requires us to estimate a PR for seniors and report it to City Council yearly.

SNAP Participation Rate by Age, 2015-2019



Thank you!



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