

# NYC POVERTY TRACKER SYMPOSIUM



+ *DATA TRAINING*

May 18, 2023



In a partnership with Robin Hood and Columbia University, the Poverty Tracker documents the dynamics of poverty in New York City and provides a window into the lives of the millions of New Yorkers who experience poverty, hardship, and disadvantage. The Poverty Tracker follows a representative panel of approximately 2,000 to 3,000 New York City households.

Unlike typical surveys of poverty that take an annual snapshot, the Poverty Tracker surveys a representative sample of New Yorkers every three months for several years, collecting data on the impacts of disadvantage across New York City. Since the study's launch, our team has collected information on income, material hardships, health, and well-being every year to track the dynamics of disadvantage in New York City.

We collect detailed information on household composition, employment, service utilization, assets and debts, and the impacts of major events such as the COVID crisis in order to understand how New Yorkers are faring over time. We continue to [expand the scope of the study](#). In 2017, we launched the Early Childhood Poverty Tracker. In 2020, we recruited a Mandarin-speaking sample.

[Download data: https://www.povertycenter.columbia.edu/poverty-tracker-data](https://www.povertycenter.columbia.edu/poverty-tracker-data)

# The State of Poverty and Disadvantage in New York City



# Background

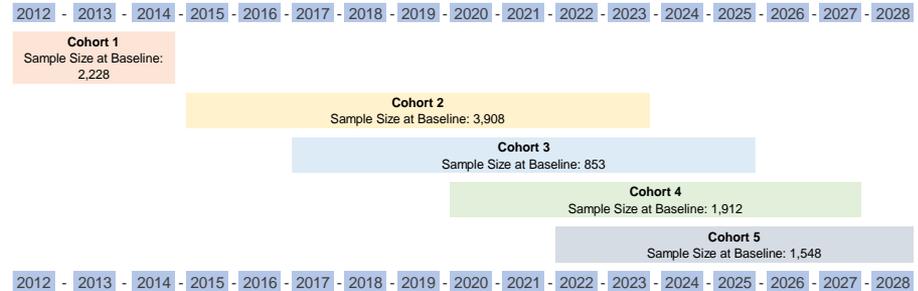
*A longitudinal study of poverty and disadvantage in New York City.*

- It doesn't just measure **poverty**, but collects data about **hardship** and **disadvantage** and **wellbeing** in their many forms.

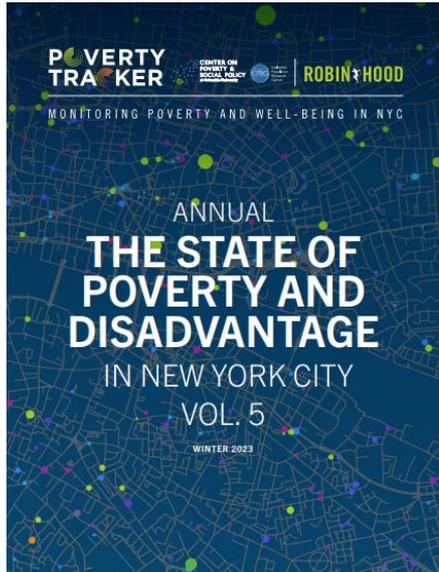


- Longitudinal** study that checks in with the **same New Yorkers** from each of the study's cohorts multiple times a year for several years

- Rotating cohort design** allows us to refresh the sample every two years.



- (1) How New Yorkers are faring each year; (2) the changes and persistence of these experiences over time; and (3) the policies, programs, life events and circumstances associated with reducing and exacerbating poverty and economic insecurity.**



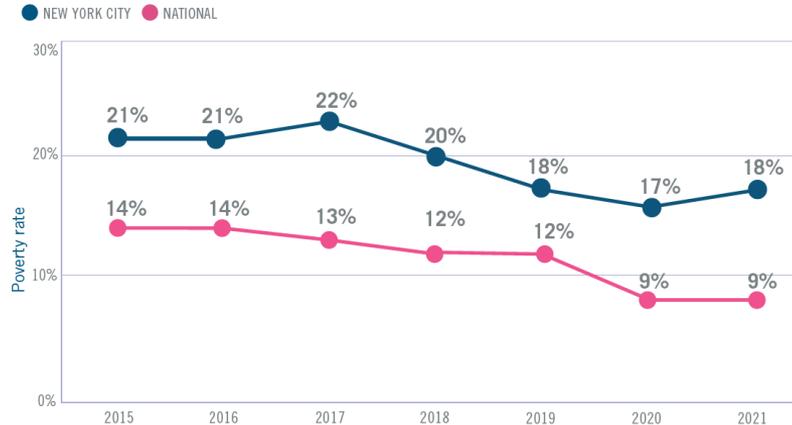
- Covers experiences in **2015 to 2021**
- Annual **poverty rates** and effects of government policy  
*(including policies expanded in response to the pandemic)*
- Annual rates of **material hardship** and **health problems**
- **Overlapping** experiences of **disadvantage**  
*(poverty, material hardship, or health problems)*

# Income Poverty, 2015 - 2021

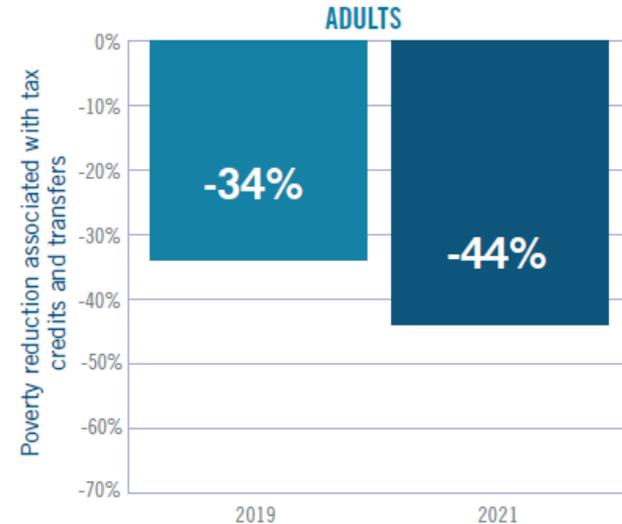
*Measured using the Supplemental Poverty Measure*

Comprehensive income data allows us to evaluate the effects of different policies, like tax credits and government transfers, on the New York City poverty rate.

Adult poverty rates in New York City and nationally (2015–2021)

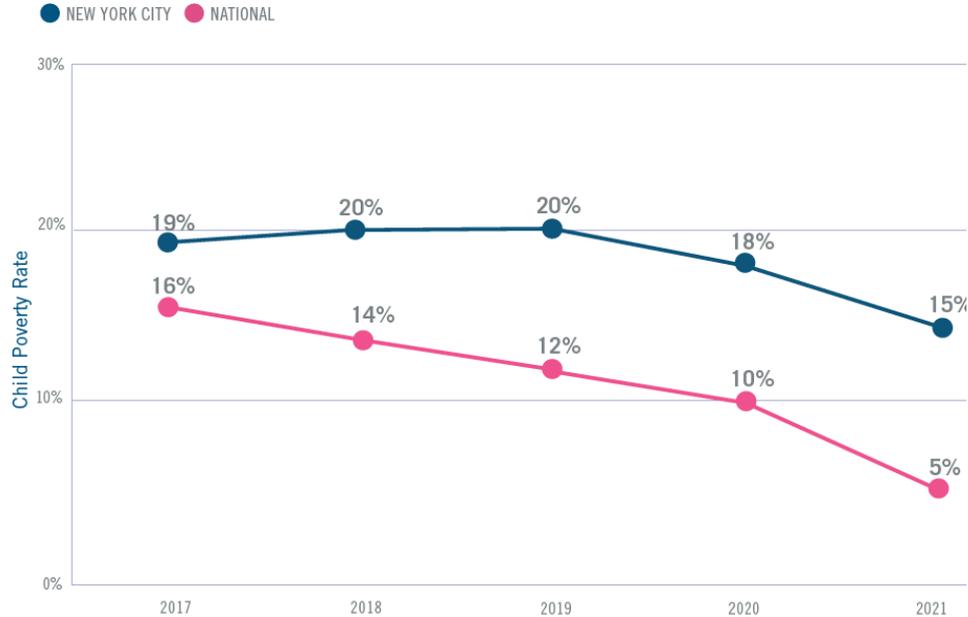


Source: New York City results based on annual Poverty Tracker survey data, all Poverty Tracker cohorts. National results based on authors' calculations using the Current Population Survey, retrieved from IPUMS-CPS, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

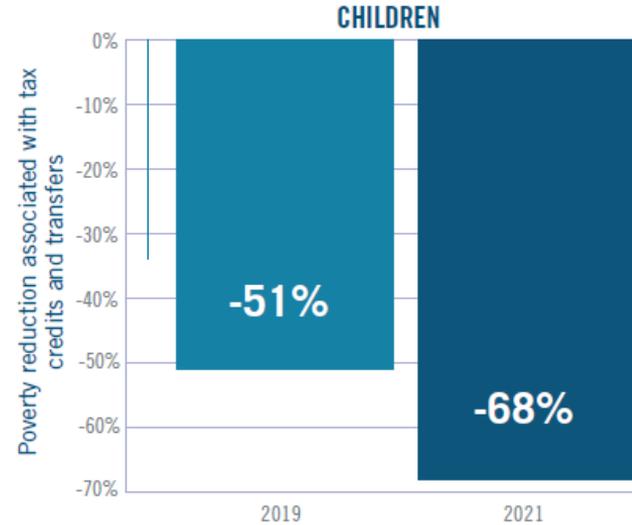


# Income Poverty, 2015 - 2021

Child poverty rates in New York City and nationally (2017–2021)



Source: New York City results based on annual Poverty Tracker survey data, all Poverty Tracker cohorts. National results based on authors' calculations using the Current Population Survey, retrieved from IPUMS-CPS, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).



# Poverty Tracker Measure of Material Hardship

## MEASURES OF MATERIAL HARDSHIP

The Poverty Tracker measures material hardship in five domains: food, housing, bills, general financial hardship, and medical care (see definitions below). New Yorkers who face one or more of these forms of material hardship in a year are identified as having faced material hardship.



**FOOD  
HARDSHIP**

Running out of food or often worrying that food would run out without enough money to buy more.



**SEVERE HOUSING  
HARDSHIP**

Having to stay in a shelter or other place not meant for regular housing, or having to move in with others due to cost.



**SEVERE BILLS  
HARDSHIP**

Having utilities cut off due to lack of money.



**SEVERE FINANCIAL  
HARDSHIP**

Often running out of money between paychecks or pay cycles.



**MEDICAL  
HARDSHIP**

Not being able to see a medical professional due to cost.

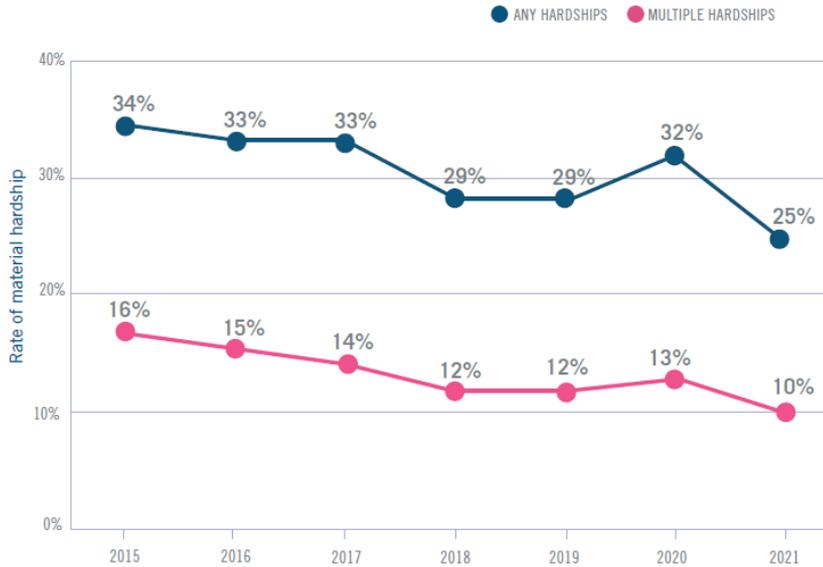


**MATERIAL  
HARDSHIP**

Facing any of these forms of hardship.

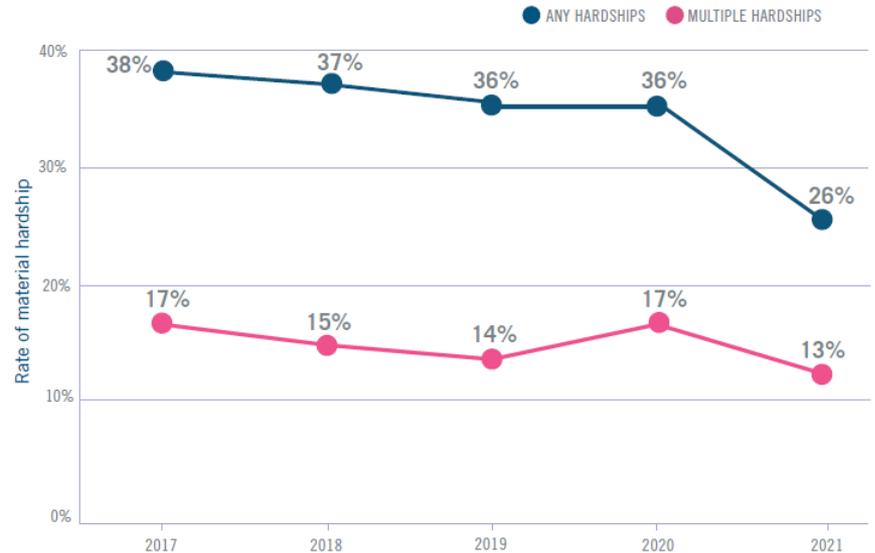
# Material Hardship, 2015 - 2021

Rates of material hardship among adults in New York City (2015–2021)



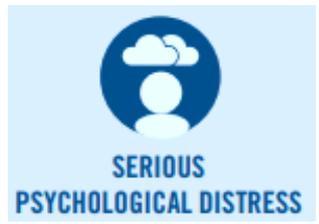
Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data, all Poverty Tracker cohorts.

Share of children in families facing material hardship (2017–2021)

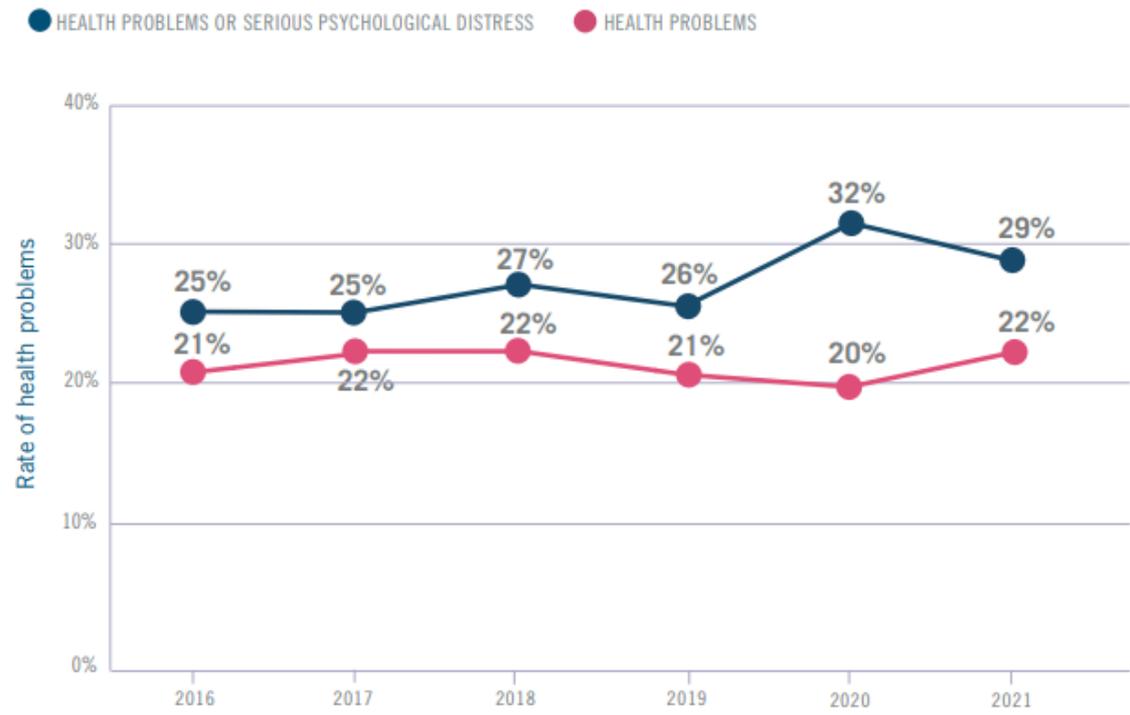


Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data, second, third, fourth, and fifth Poverty Tracker cohorts.

# Health Problems, 2016 - 2021



Rates of health problems among adults in New York City (2016-2021)



Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data, second, third, fourth, and fifth Poverty Tracker cohorts.

# Any Disadvantage, 2015 - 2021

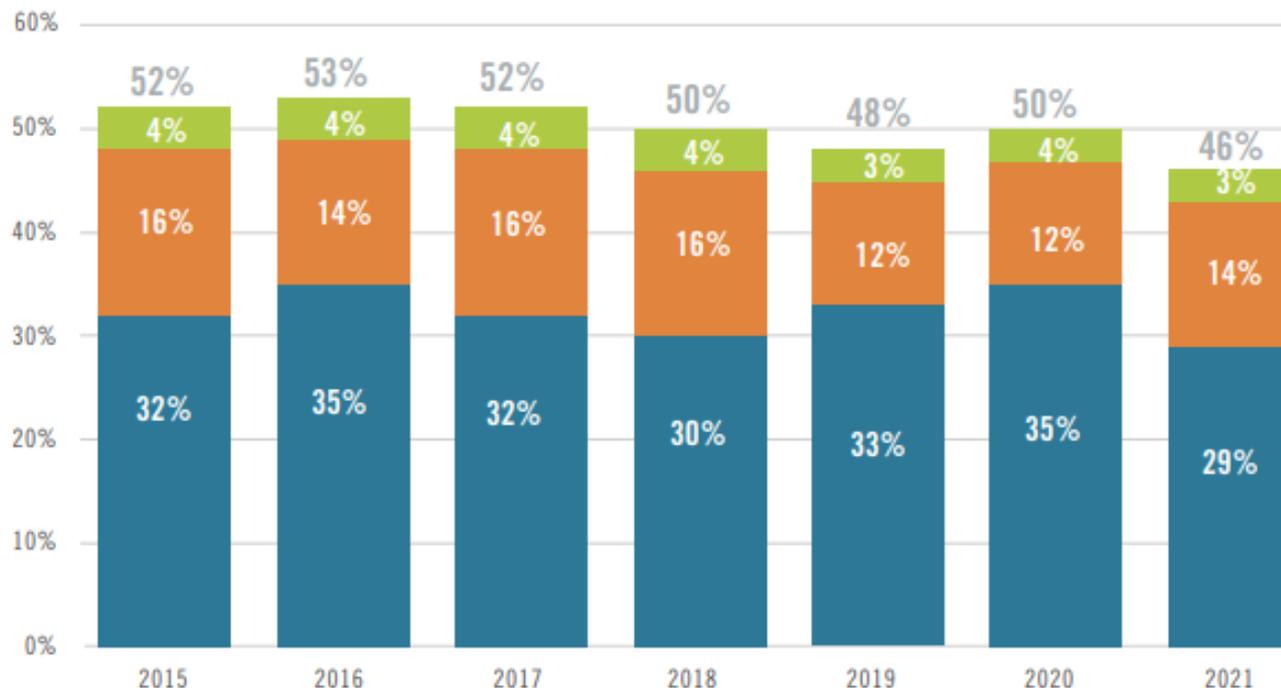


## DISADVANTAGE

poverty,  
material hardship, or  
health problems

Share of adult New Yorkers facing disadvantage (2015–2021)

■ THREE FORMS OF DISADVANTAGE ■ TWO FORMS OF DISADVANTAGE ■ ONE FORM OF DISADVANTAGE



# Takeaways

- Multidimensional measures, rotating cohorts, and longitudinal design provides more comprehensive understanding.
- Can produce local-area estimates that tell us about the effects of national-, state-, and city-level policy.
- Shows the extent of the challenges the city faces as well as insights into what works in addressing these pressing problems.

The background is a solid dark blue color with a pattern of lighter blue plus signs scattered across it. The plus signs are of varying sizes and are distributed across the entire frame, creating a subtle, repeating pattern.

# Poverty and Disadvantage among Asian New Yorkers

# About Asian Americans

- Nationwide:
  - Fastest growing racial and ethnic group in the U.S. (2000-2019)
  - 19.9 million in 2020, 6% of overall population
  - Projections: the largest immigrant group (36%) in 2055; will surpass 46 million by 2060
- New York City:
  - Home to nation's largest Asian American population; More than doubled since 1990
  - 1.5 million in 2020, 17.3% of city's population
- Incredibly diverse
- Chinese: The 3<sup>rd</sup> most spoken language in the U.S.
- Disadvantages: hidden behind “Model minority” myth

## Asian Americans in Data Representation and Social Services

- Among the most understudied racial and ethnic groups
- Often underrepresented in many data sources, specifically data on poverty and economic disadvantage
- Economically disadvantaged groups are most likely to be underrepresented: recent immigrants, those with limited English proficiency or limited internet access, low-income families, etc.
- Masks the experiences of disadvantaged Asian Americans and perpetuates the stereotype that few Asian Americans live in poverty or need social services
- Asian American community only received 1.4% of the total value of NYC's social service contracts while representing 14% of NYC's population (2002-2014)

***It's important to have accurate and timely data on poverty and disadvantage among Asian Americans.***

# Poverty Tracker's Oversample of Chinese New Yorkers

- In 2020, PT began to survey in Mandarin and recruited an over-sample of New Yorkers of Chinese descent
- Increased the representativeness of Asian New Yorkers in general and Chinese New Yorkers in particular
- The only source of longitudinal information on poverty (Supplemental Poverty Measure) and other forms of disadvantages among Asian New Yorkers
- Language limitation: Asian New Yorkers being interviewed in English, Mandarin, or Spanish

# Poverty Tracker's Oversample of Chinese New Yorkers

## Sampling method

Year	Method	Complete Screener	Eligible/Agree to join in the study	Complete Baseline
2020	Random digit dial (RDD)	400	284 (71%)	206 (73%)
2020	WeChat group	349	249 (71%)	226 (91%)
2022	Respondent-driven sampling (RDS)	296	272 (92%)	250 (92%)
2024	<i>RDD or ABS</i>	<i>400-800</i>		

# Poverty Tracker's Oversight

Sampling method

Year	Method
<b>2020</b>	<b>Random digit dial (RDD)</b>
2020	WeChat group
2022	Respondent-driven sampling (RDS)
<b>2024</b>	<i>RDD or ABS</i>



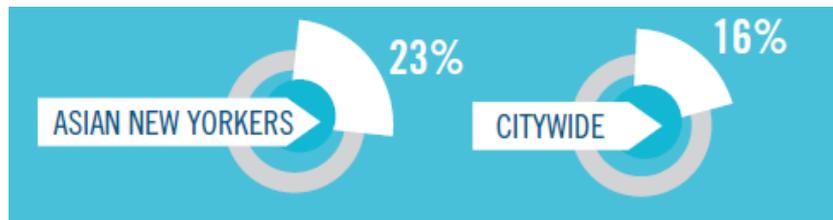
# Poverty Tracker's Oversample of Chinese New Yorkers

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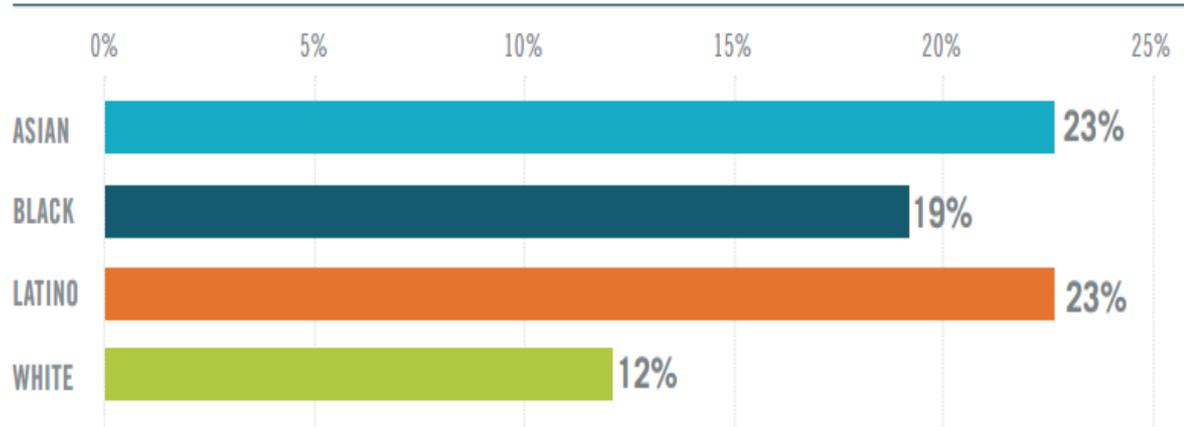
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2024	<i>RDD or ABS</i>	<i>400-800</i>		

# Poverty

- 1-in-4 lived in poverty
- 7% higher than city level
- Similar to Black and Latino New Yorkers
- Double % of white New Yorkers



Poverty rates among adult New Yorkers by race and ethnicity, 2020

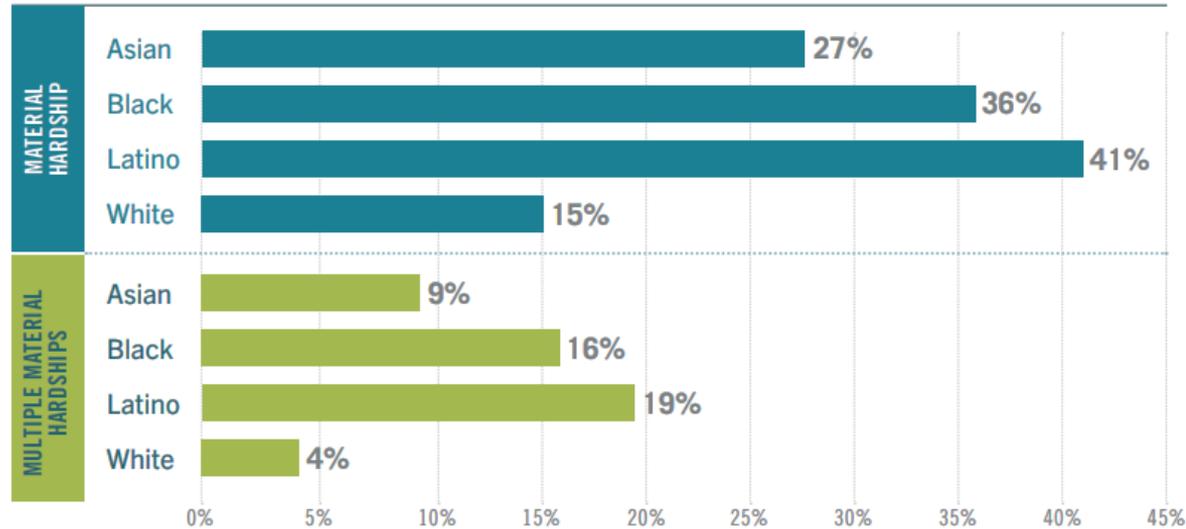


Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data; second, third, and fourth cohorts. Results based on three-year average.

# Material Hardship

- More than ¼ faced material hardship
- In-line with city level
- Double % of White New Yorkers
- Lower than what might be expected >> additional research is needed

Rates of material hardship among adult New Yorkers by race and ethnicity, 2020

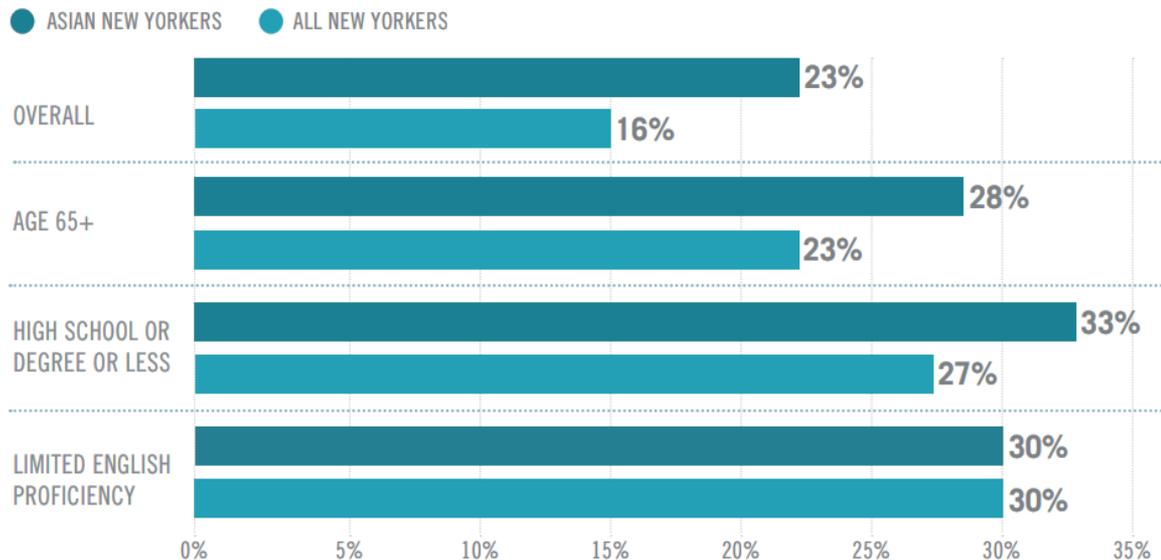


Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data; second, third, and fourth cohorts. Results based on three-year average.

# Vulnerable Subgroups

- Aged 65 or older
- with a high school degree or less
- with limited English proficiency

Poverty rates among subgroups of Asian New Yorkers, compared to citywide averages, 2020

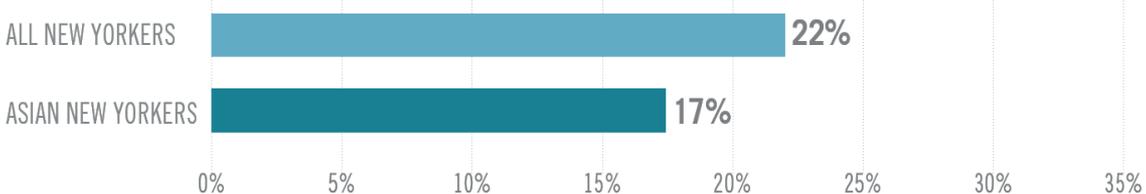


Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data; second, third, and fourth cohort.

# Health & Well-being

- Less health problems
- Higher serious psychological distress
- Lowest life rating

Prevalence of health problems among Asian New Yorkers compared to citywide average, 2020



Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data; second, third, and fourth cohort.

Prevalence of serious psychological distress and average life rating overall and among Asian New Yorkers, 2020

	PREVALENCE OF SERIOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS	AVERAGE LIFE SATISFACTION RATING
All New Yorkers	11%	6.58
Asian New Yorkers	14%	6.07

Source: Annual Poverty Tracker survey data; second, third, and fourth cohort.

# Implications

- Greater attention to the experiences of Asian New Yorkers facing economic disadvantage is needed
- Policies and culturally/linguistically supportive programs serving these vulnerable populations are essential
- Asian Americans need to be sufficiently represented in all data sources used to make policy-related decisions

# References

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# Effects of the New York City Paid Safe and Sick Leave Law



# Background

- Paid sick leave is a workplace policy associated with benefits for workers, businesses, and communities
- NYC implemented a Paid Safe and Sick Leave Law in 2014
  - Requires employers to provide workers with 1 hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked to address their own illness or care for ill family members
  - Leave accrues over time
- We aimed to understand how the Law changed access to paid sick leave among New Yorkers and to assess which communities are less likely to use paid sick leave after policy implementation

# Benefits of Paid Sick Leave

Paid sick leave has been associated with benefits for workers, businesses, families, and consumers by:

- Reducing the spread of communicable disease
- Reducing worker time off due to illness and injury
- Reducing turnover and job separation
- Increasing ability to care for ill family members

# Unequal Access in the United States

- Women, Black and Latinx workers, workers with low educational attainment, and immigrants less likely to have access to paid sick leave
- Only 59% of service sector workers have access to paid sick leave compared to 93% of managerial/professional workers

# Data

## Poverty Tracker

The ability to add and repeat questions in the Poverty Tracker allows for the evaluation of emerging local policies in real time

- Panels and surveys fielded before and after the law was passed (2012-2019)
- Multiple post-law waves ensure that we can capture how the impact of the policy change as workers accrue sick leave over time

Analytic sample: 2985 NYC adults who reported working for pay in the year prior to the survey

# Measures

## Poverty Tracker Questions:

- **Use** of sick leave
  - “During the past 12 months, about how many days did you miss work at a job or business because you or someone you care for was ill or injured?”
- **Payment** for sick leave
  - “Were you paid for the days you missed because of illness or injury?”

## Outcomes: Change in proportion of working New Yorkers who:

1. **Took** sick leave and paid for **all** time off;
2. **Took** sick leave and paid for **some** time off;
3. **Took** sick leave and **not paid for any** time off;
4. **Did not take** any sick leave.

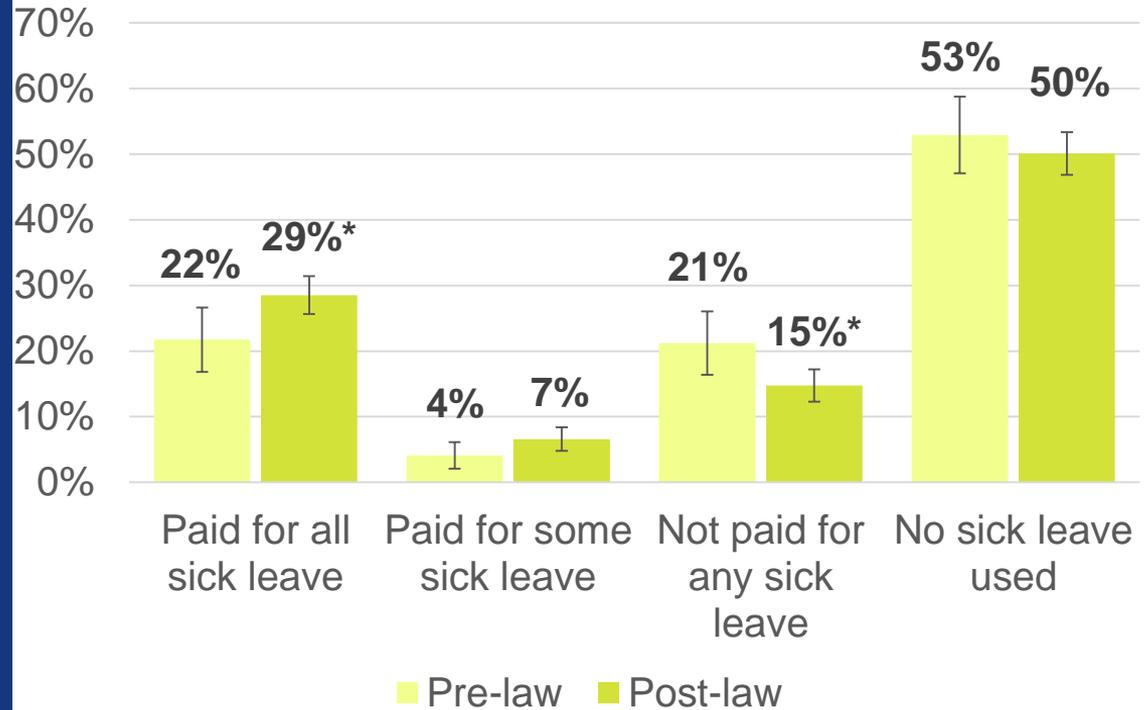
# Methods

Weighted Wald Tests were used to test for city-wide changes in each outcome post-law.

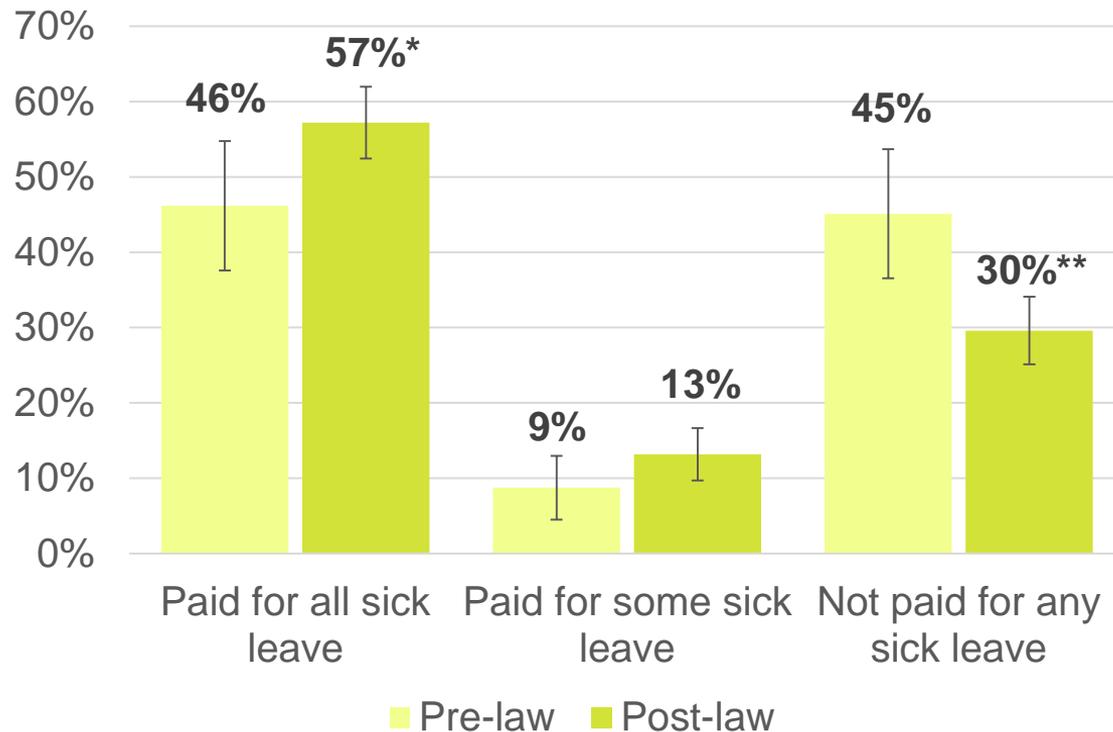
Multinomial logistic regressions were used to predict use of sick leave and payment for sick leave by demographic characteristics

- Included a set of interactions between the pre/post-law variable and the demographic characteristic of interest.
- Standard errors were clustered at the respondent level.
- Control for demographic and employment-related characteristics associated with receipt and use of PSL

# Use of Sick Leave and Paid Sick Leave Pre- and Post- NYC's 2014 Law



# Payment among Sick Leave Users Pre- and Post- NYC's 2014 Law



# Some Workers Continue to Face Barriers Post-Law

After the PSST is implemented, there is a significant decrease in the proportion of workers who do not receive payment for any sick days taken (RRR= 0.456)

Some workers remain less likely to be paid for any sick days

- Workers without post-secondary education (2.5 times); Latinx workers (1.5 times)

Some workers remain more likely to not take any sick days, suggesting barriers

- Workers without post-secondary education (1.6 times); Latinx workers (1.8 times); Immigrants (1.4 times)

Women are less likely report not taking sick days, suggesting they are using the policy more than their male counterparts to address health concerns or care for family

# Discussion

- New York City's Paid Safe and Sick Leave law was successful in expanding access to paid sick leave for workers, but inequities persist
- Inequalities remained after implementation: less educated, Latino, and foreign-born workers remain less likely to use sick leave following the implementation of the policy

# Conclusion

- These results offer guidance to other jurisdictions implementing paid sick leave policies, suggesting the need for targeted education and enforcement efforts to ensure policies reach workers who continue to face barriers to accessing paid sick leave
- The ability to integrate data collection into an existing mechanism in real-time allows for rigorous evaluation of policy initiatives



*Food hardship and pantry use across the  
pandemic*

# Background

- Rates of **food hardship** in New York City were **persistently high** before the COVID-19 pandemic.
- At the peak of the pandemic, New Yorkers were faced with uncertainty as to how rent would be paid and how to keep food on the table.
- In an effort to buffer these new challenges, actions were taken at the federal, local and state level to help address these concerns.
- This included a substantial expansion of emergency food assistance programs
- Food pantries made operational changes to meet the increased need

# Poverty Tracker's repeated measures

## Food Hardship

- Sometimes or often running out of food or worrying food would run out before they had had money to buy more;
- Severe food hardship is defined as often facing these situations.

## Pantry Use

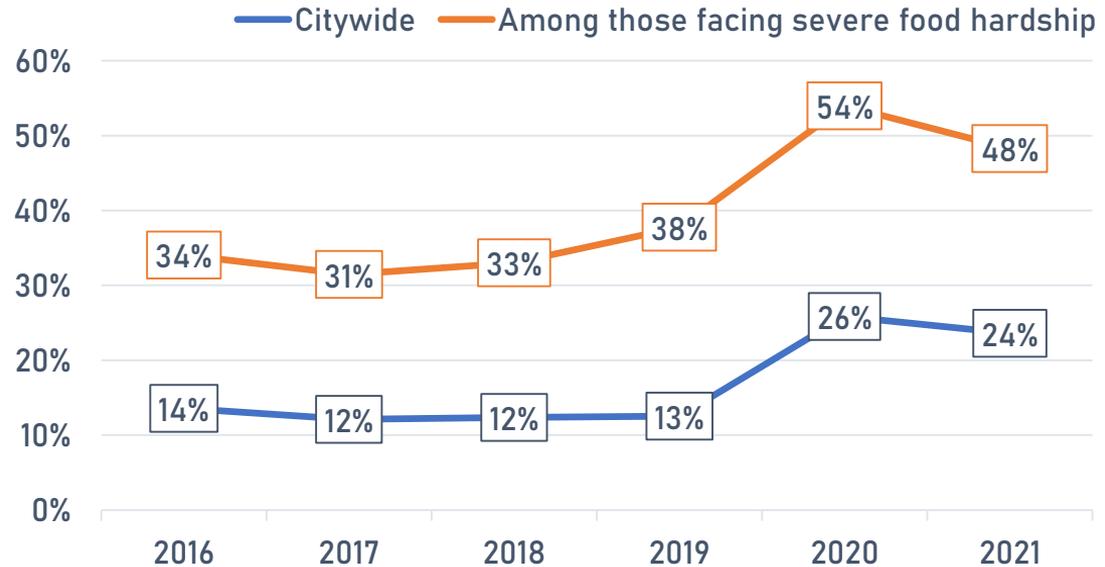
- Annually the Poverty Tracker asked respondents, in the past 12 months, did you or anyone in your household receive free food from a food pantry or food bank?
- Among those who received assistance we also asked about the frequency of pantry use.

## Share of New Yorkers who received free food from a food pantry, 2016 to 2021



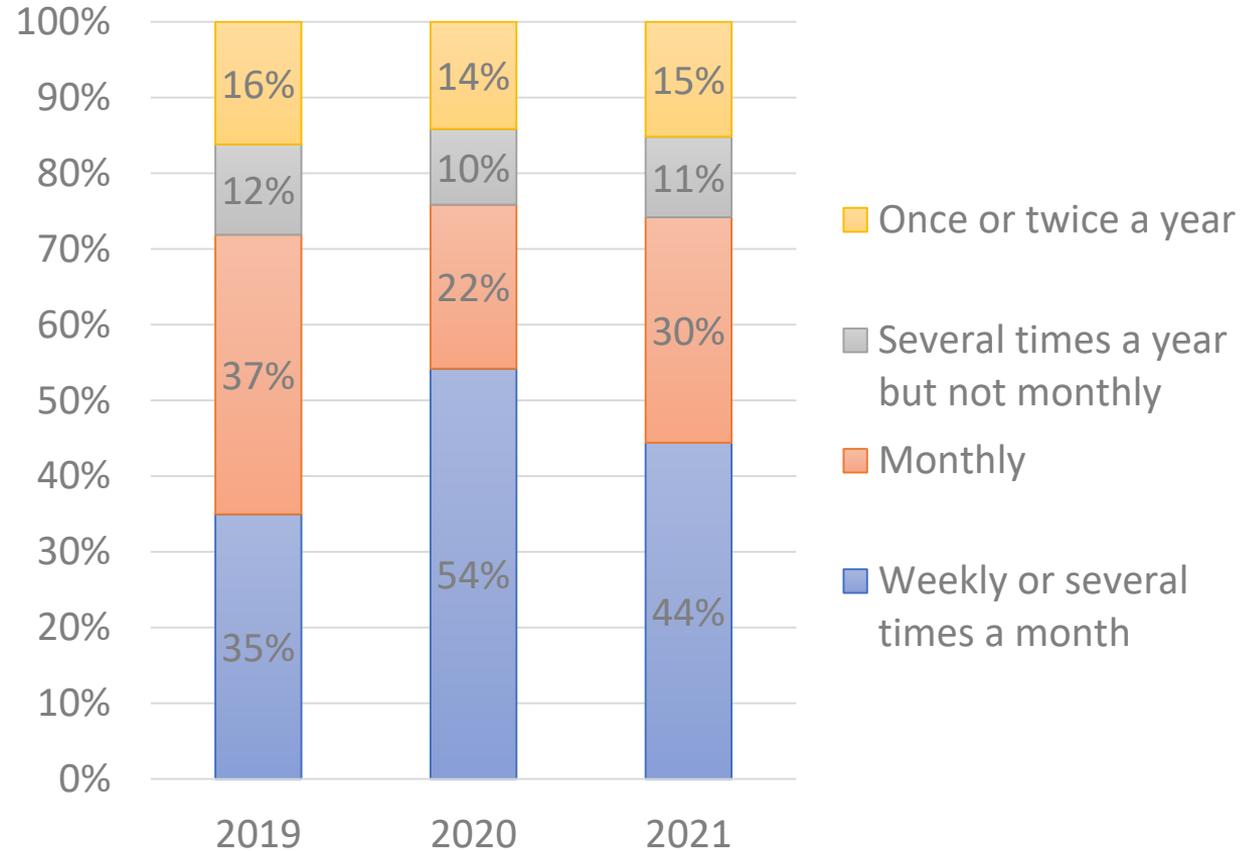
- Before 2020, roughly 13% of New Yorkers received emergency food assistance at least once in the calendar year.
- Between 2019 and 2020, this number doubled, and it remained high in 2021.

## Share of New Yorkers who received free food from a food pantry, 2016 to 2021



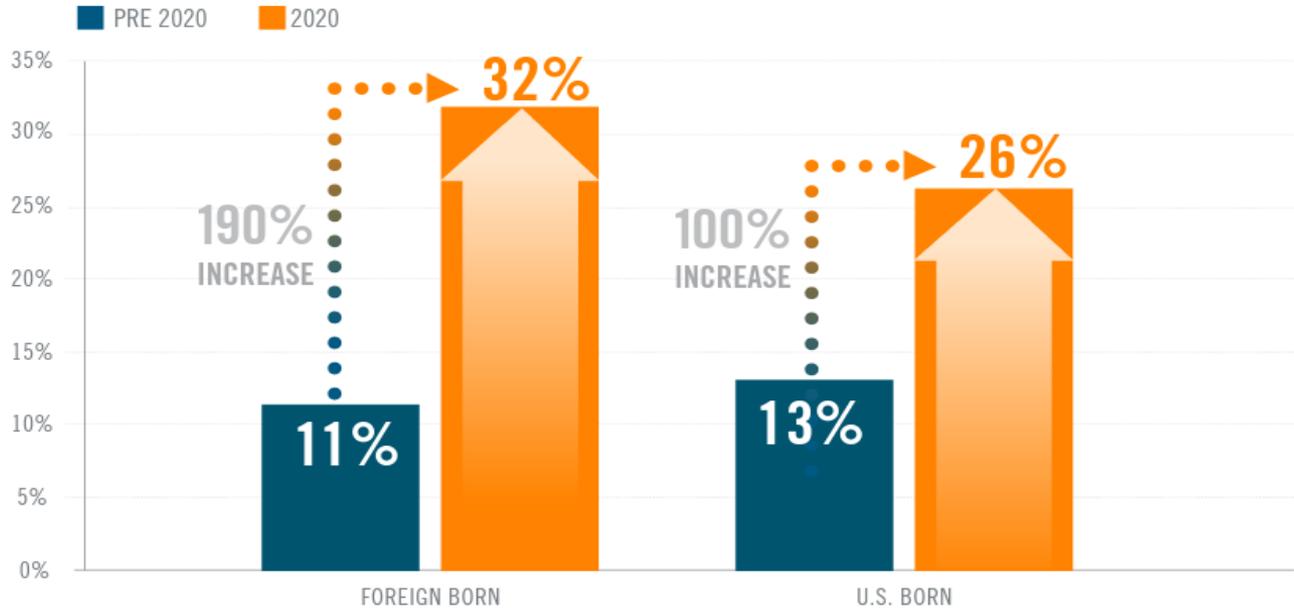
- Increased pantry use was also notable among New Yorkers facing food hardship

## Frequency of pantry use (among pantry users), 2019 - 2021



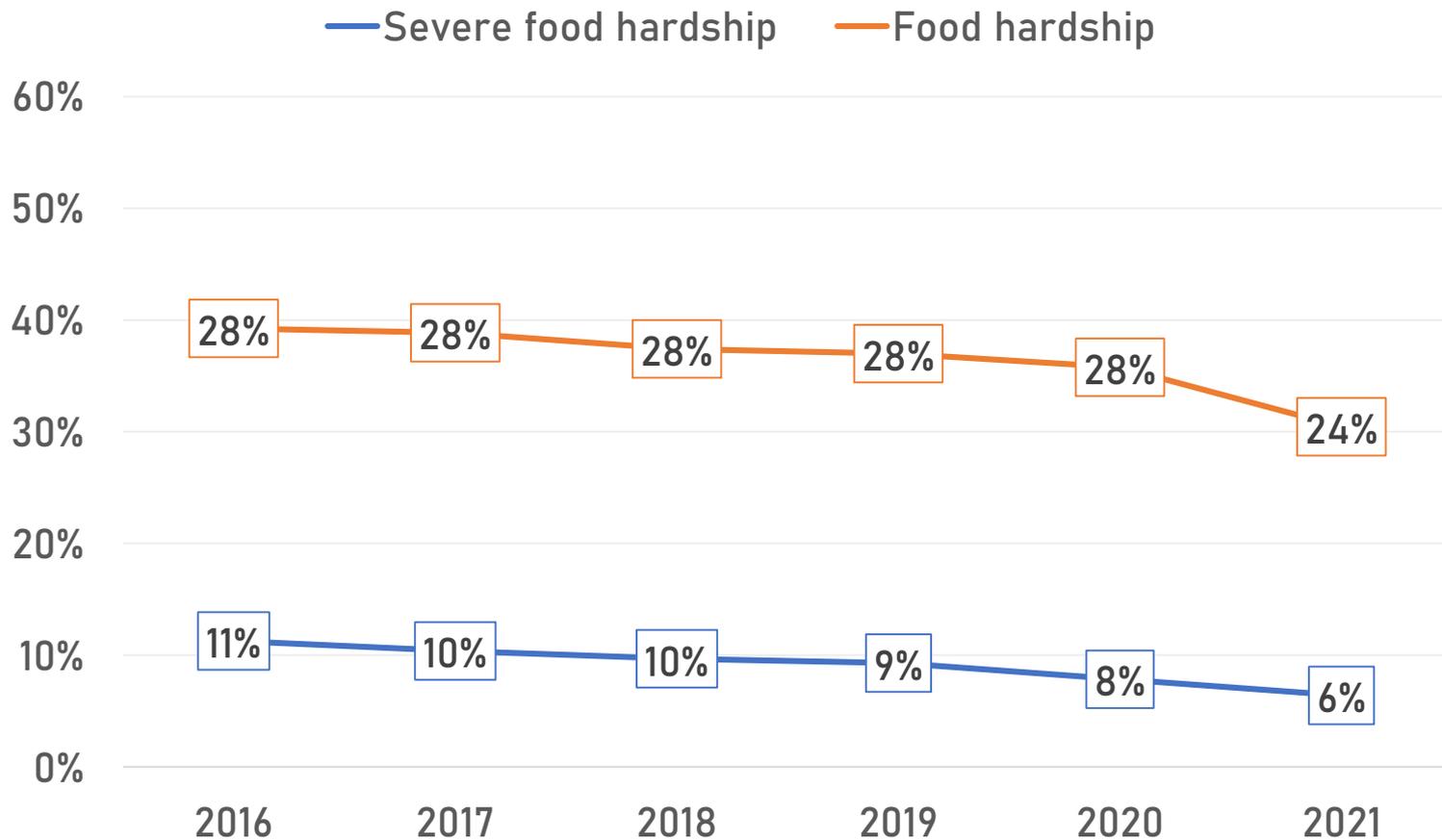
- Among pantry users, there was also an increase in frequency of pantry visits

## Increase in food pantry use among foreign-born and U.S.-born New Yorkers



- Pantry use among foreign-born New Yorkers tripled from 2019 to 2020

# Share of New Yorkers facing food hardship, 2016 to 2021



# Food Insecurity Among Older Adults in New York City: Does Location Matter?



# Introduction

- Approximately 29.8% of older adults with income below the poverty line experience food insecurity, including 18% with incomes between the 100% and 200% of the poverty line (Ziliak & Gunderson, 2017).
- In addition to individual income, previous studies have found that location and environmental factors are important factors in determining food insecurity.
- However, very limited studies have focused on food insecurity among older adult populations and how it relates to their location, especially those living in urban areas.

# Research Question and Hypothesis

What are the associations between on distance to grocery stores, neighborhood disadvantage, social cohesion, and food insecurity among older adults in New York City ?

*Hypothesis 1: Older adults living **closer to grocery stores** have **lower incidences of food insecurity**.*

*Hypothesis 2: Older adults living in **neighborhoods with less disadvantage** have **lower incidences of food insecurity**.*

*Hypothesis 3: Older adults living in **more social cohesive neighborhoods** have **lower incidences of food insecurity**.*

# Methodology

## Three sources of data:

- **Individual:** Two years of annual survey data from Poverty Tracker study (2015-16), limited to New York City residents aged 65 and above (baseline sample = 710)
- **Neighborhood:** American Community Survey
- **Locations of grocery stores:** ReferenceUSA

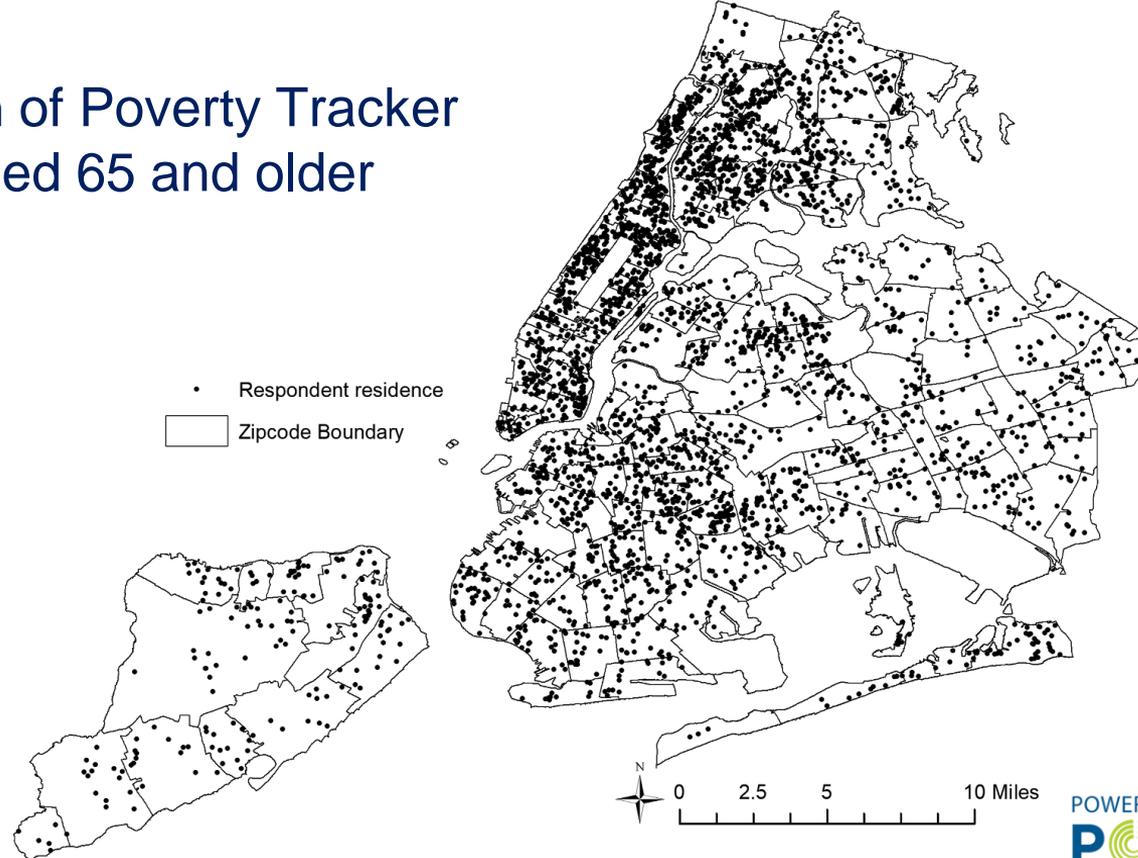
## Measures:

- Food insecurity using two survey items from the US Department of Agriculture (included on Poverty Tracker)
- Distance to the nearest grocery stores
- Neighborhood disadvantage
- Social cohesion

## Analysis:

- ArcGIS, descriptive statistics, logistic regression (STATA)

## Spatial distribution of Poverty Tracker respondents aged 65 and older



# Sample characteristics

	Full sample (N = 710)
Food insecure	26.62%
Distance to grocery stores (in miles)	
0.00–0.25	26.11%
0.26–0.50	34.59%
0.51–0.75	15.63%
More than 0.75	23.66%
Neighborhood disadvantage (–1.85–2.49)	0.10 (0.91)
Social cohesion (1-5)	3.59 (0.63)

- Of the whole sample, 26.62% of older adults in NYC reported to be food insecure
- More than half of older adult respondents lived within a 0.50 mile distance from the nearest grocery stores
- On average, most older adult respondents lived in neighborhoods with economic disadvantages (M = 0.10)
- The mean score for older adults living in a socially cohesive community was 3.59 out of 5

# Logistic regressions

	% Changes
Distance to grocery stores (0-0.25 miles as ref)	
0.26-0.50	+50% *
0.51-0.75	+84% *
More than 0.75	+19%
Neighborhood disadvantage	+25% *
Social cohesion	- 18% +

- Living more than 0.25 miles to the nearest grocery store is related to increased risk of food insecurity
- Living in disadvantaged neighborhoods was also associated with greater risk of being food insecure
- Social cohesion was related to a decreased risk of food insecurity, though it is marginally significant.

# Discussion

**Main finding:** Location matters!

Living **further away** from the nearest grocery store increases the risk of food insecurity

- Suggests that accessibility remains an issue

Living in **disadvantaged neighborhoods** increases the risk of food insecurity

- Suggests that food insecurity is related to aggregated poverty

More **socially cohesive neighborhoods** are associated with lower risks of food insecurity

- Mutual support and social network: share food when needed

Policy implications:

- Community food assistance and programs to foster social cohesion

**P**  **VERTY**  
**TR**  **CKER**

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