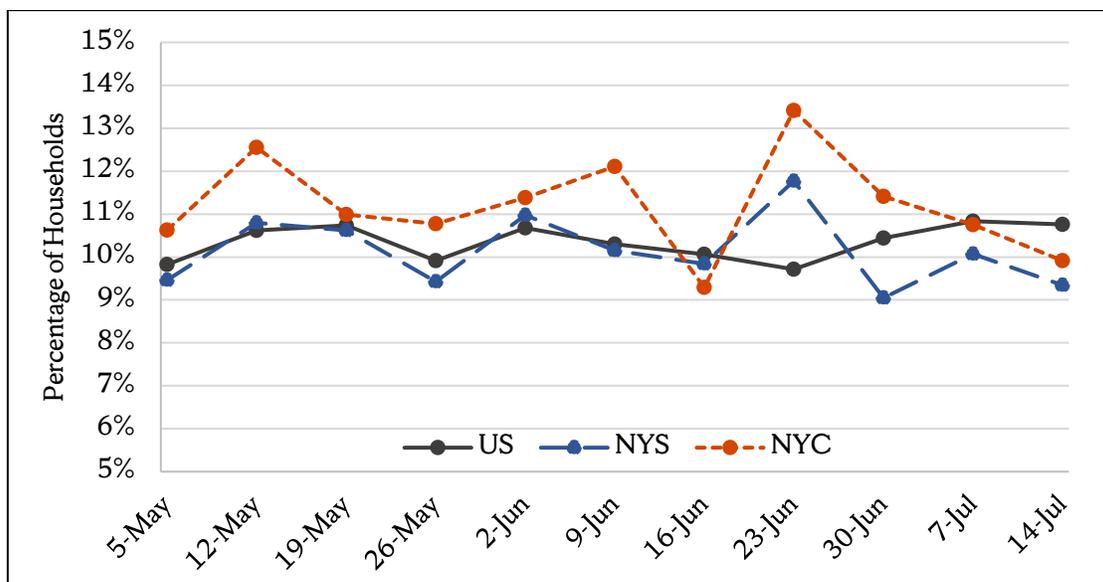


## Food Insufficiency During the Coronavirus Response

Lauryn Quick and Colleen Heflin

The coronavirus pandemic has created widespread economic disruption, exacerbating American household food insufficiency. Food insufficiency means that households are unable to meet their basic needs and is associated with negative health consequences for individuals of all ages. Figure 1 shows trends in household food insufficiency (April 23 to July 14, 2020) for the U.S., New York State, and the NYC metropolitan area using data from the U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey. Nationally, approximately 10.4% of households reported sometimes or often not having enough food to eat over the 11-week period. The lowest level of food insufficiency, 9.7%, was reported in the week ending June 23. However, levels of food insufficiency rebounded and remained at the highest reported levels, 10.8%, from early to mid-July. New York State food insufficiency tracked closely with national estimates until mid-June, when NYS estimates of food insufficiency increased to their highest reported level, 11.8%, before dropping below reported national levels in late June and throughout July. For the New York City metropolitan area, food insufficiency averaged 11.2% over the reporting period, which is 0.9 percentage points higher than the national level and 1.1 percentage points higher than the state average. However, levels of food insufficiency in New York City have dropped over time—totaling 3.5%—since the week ending June 23. Although food insufficiency is currently falling across New York State and in New York City, national levels are increasing. Despite recent trends, the overall picture suggests that food insufficiency is higher than normal, and current levels have not improved compared to the conditions reported earlier in the pandemic response period.



**Figure 1. Household Food Insufficiency during the Coronavirus Response Period**

Data Source: [U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey](#), May 5-July 14.

Note: Week 1 covers 13 days (April 23-May 5), while the following weeks cover six-day periods. The food insufficiency measure represents the percentage of households that indicated they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat during the prior 7 days. The New York City Metropolitan Statistical Area geography covers households located in the New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area.

From February to April 2020, national enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) increased by 16.6% as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and state agencies temporarily provided households with the maximum monthly allotment for which they are eligible and simplified the administrative processes to apply and recertify for benefits.<sup>1</sup> Within New York State, SNAP enrollment increased by 7% in May 2020 relative to February.<sup>2</sup> However, overall levels of food insufficiency remain high. Emergency unemployment compensation is set to expire at the end of this week, and the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a significant public health threat throughout the country. As a consequence, more households will likely be eligible for and rely on SNAP benefits to feed their families and to fill the income gaps associated with the ongoing economic impacts of the public health crisis and response.

## References

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## About the Authors

**Lauryn Quick** (lsquick@syr.edu) is a graduate research assistant with the Maxwell School Center for Policy Research and an incoming doctoral student in the Department of Public Administration and International Affairs. **Colleen Heflin** (cmheflin@maxwell.syr.edu) is a Professor of Public Administration and International Affairs, Faculty Affiliate at the Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion and Aging Studies Institute, and Senior Research Associate with the Center for Policy Research in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

The mission of the Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion at Syracuse University is to improve population health through applied research and evaluation, education, engaged service, and advocating for evidence-based policy and practice change.