



The role of SNAP for racial equity of food security in the U.S.

Laura J. Samuel; Bonnielin K. Swenor; Jiafeng Zhu; Pallavi Dwivedi; Elizabeth A. Stuart; Sarah L. Szanton; Deidra Crews; Boeun Kim; Qiwei Li; Nicholas S. Reed; Roland J. Thorpe, Jr.

Background

- Americans who are Black have higher rates of food insecurity than those who are White or Asian, even after accounting for income differences^{1,2}
- Although there is good evidence that SNAP reduces food insecurity,^{3,4} the role of SNAP in addressing racial equity is under-studied

1. Myers AM, Painter MA. Food insecurity in the United States of America: an examination of race/ethnicity and nativity. *Food Secur.* 2017;9(6):1419-32.

2. Walker RJ, Garacci E, Dawson AZ, Williams JS, Ozieh M, Egede LE. Trends in Food Insecurity in the United States from 2011-2017: Disparities by Age, Sex, Race/Ethnicity, and Income. *Popul Health Manag.* 2021;24(4):496-501.

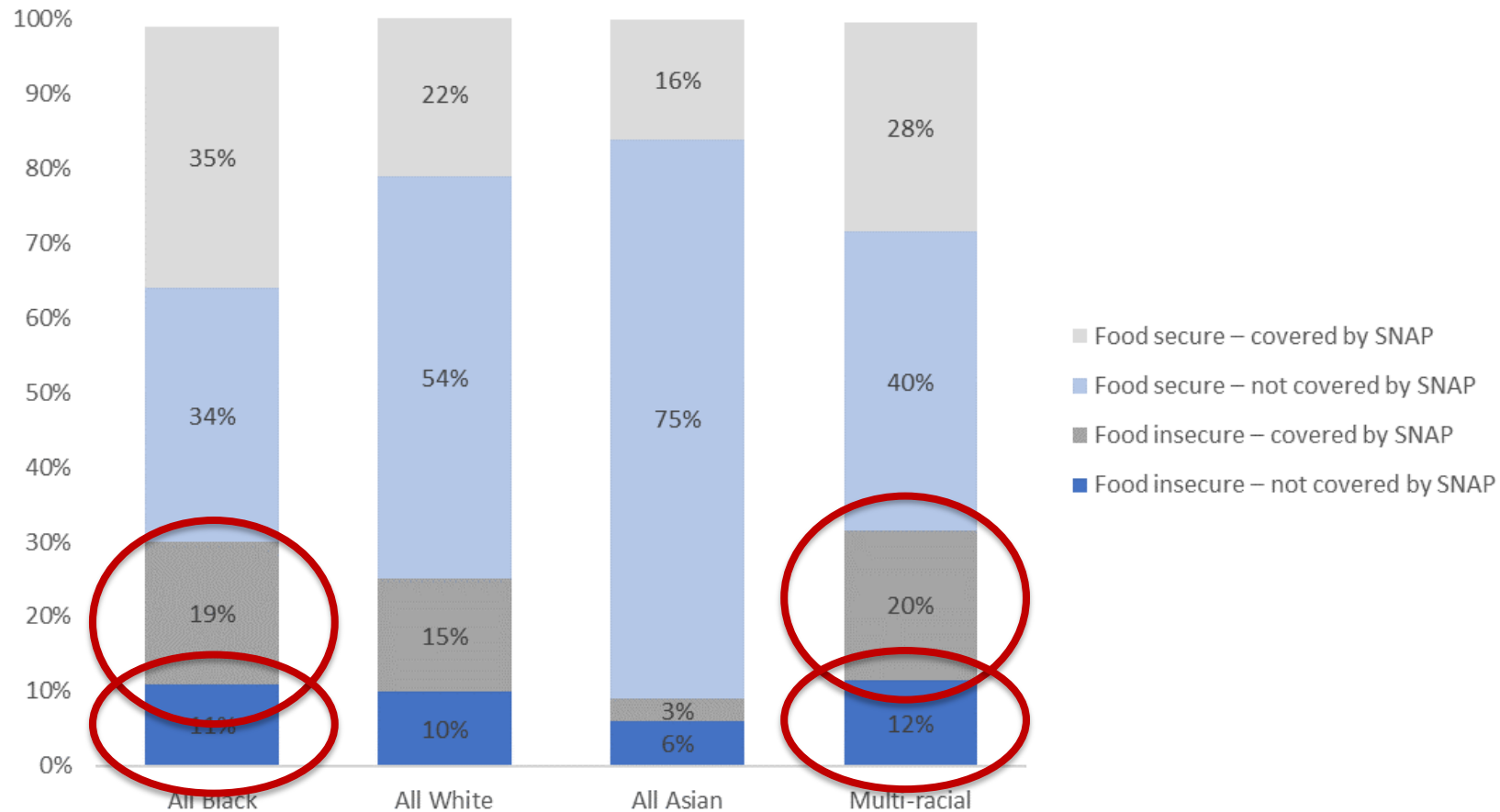
3. Ratcliffe C, McKernan SM, Zhang S. How Much Does the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Reduce Food Insecurity? *Am J Agr Econ.* 2011;93(4):1082-98.

4. Nord M, Golla AM. Does SNAP Decrease Food Insecurity? Untangling the Self-Selection Effect. Washington, DC: Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture; 2009. Contract No.: 85.

Methods

- 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation
- Analyzed households (not people)
 - Included 4,974 households likely eligible for SNAP (incomes $\leq 130\%$ of the poverty threshold)
- Measures:
 - 6-item household USDA Food Insecurity Module
 - Household racial composition: Entirely Black, entirely White, entirely Asian, multiple races/multi-racial
 - Household SNAP use in the past 12 months

Food insecurity and SNAP participation rates



Racial identity and food insecurity (n=4974)

	Total sample PR (95% CI)
Race	
All White (ref.)	
All Black	1.18 (1.04, 1.33)
All Asian	0.48 (0.31, 0.75)
Other racial groups/multi-racial	1.25 (1.06, 1.46)

Adjusted for Hispanic ethnicity, U.S. Region, number of children and adults, nativity, presence of older adult and income

Racial identity and food insecurity (n=4974)

	Total sample PR (95% CI)	SNAP participating PR (95% CI)	Non-SNAP participating PR (95% CI)
Race			
All White (ref.)			
All Black	1.18 (1.04, 1.33)	0.82 (0.69, 0.96)	1.47 (1.23, 1.76)
All Asian	0.48 (0.31, 0.75)	0.50 (0.24, 1.04)	0.53 (0.30, 0.91)
Other racial groups/multi-racial	1.25 (1.06, 1.46)	1.05 (0.85, 1.28)	1.31 (1.03, 1.66)

Adjusted for Hispanic ethnicity, U.S. Region, number of children and adults, nativity, presence of older adult and income



Summarizing

- U.S. racial disparities in food insecurity among low income adults who do not participate in the SNAP program, but not among those who do participate.
- Results may be due to
 1. SNAP's ability to reduce food insecurity
 2. Race-based barriers to SNAP for Black households with food insecurity



Strengths & Limitations

- National survey
- Food insecurity measures
- Cross-sectional → cannot conclude that SNAP reduces food insecurity

Conclusions & Implications

- Universal screening for food insecurity
 - Recommended by CMS and the White House
- Research is needed to evaluate SNAP eligibility criteria, enrollment and recertification processes and practices to see if there are disproportionate barriers for individuals living in predominately Black communities
- More effort is needed to address affordability and access to food

Acknowledgements

Funding for this work was provided by the Johns Hopkins University Discovery Award. LJS was supported by the National Institute on Aging (K01AG054751). RJT was supported by the National Institute on Aging (K02AG059140) and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (U54MD000214). NSR was supported by the National Institute on Aging (K23AG065443).