

Latine Experiences with Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)

Prepared for:



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Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research

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About Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER)

HACER's mission is to provide the Minnesota Latino community the ability to create and control information about itself in order to affect critical institutional decision-making and public policy. General support for HACER has been provided by Minnesota-based philanthropic organizations and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits.

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Executive Summary

Background

The Latine Experiences with SNAP project is a research initiative led by HACER in partnership with Second Harvest Heartland that focuses on the perceptions and experiences the Latine communities in Minnesota have about SNAP by identifying the barriers, misconceptions, and overall concerns they may have. The goal of this project is to reveal a better understanding of SNAP awareness, impressions, and engagement within the Latine and immigrant communities in Minnesota, including knowledge of public charge policy and potential impediments to pursuing SNAP benefits.

Methods

Three focus groups with participants from the Twin Cities Metro Area and interviews with participants living in Greater Minnesota were conducted over Zoom in Fall 2022. The focus groups and interviews were analyzed using NVivo qualitative analysis software. A survey was also conducted in Winter 2022, administered online and in person.¹ Survey data was analyzed using Excel.

Key findings

Focus groups and interviews

- Some misconceptions and misinformation about the SNAP program still exist in the Latine community, especially as it relates to the existence of public charge.
- Relatedly, some Latines are unclear and have questions about what the eligibility requirements are for SNAP.
- The absence of information about the program in Spanish and the absence of interpreters or bilingual staff are huge barriers to access for the SNAP program.

Survey

- Most survey respondents (73%) believed that they would benefit from SNAP; less than half (40%) reported that they know how to apply for SNAP.
- The biggest concern (46%) among respondents about applying for SNAP is that it will negatively impact their residency or citizenship application.
- The largest proportion of survey respondents believe that misinformation has the biggest effect on Latines applying for SNAP (50%)

Conclusions

Misinformation about eligibility requirements and public charge exist in the Latine community, which are complicated by the absence of SNAP information in Spanish and effective interpretation support. Intentional outreach and information in plain Spanish are needed to address these issues.

¹ QSR International 2022. <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home>

Background

Second Harvest Heartland is a midwestern hunger-relief agency located in the Twin Cities that is committed to ending hunger throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin with their extensive services and advocacy. These services provide day-to-day and long-term food support, aid in food assistance programs, and sustainable food systems that can provide consistent support to communities across the states. In addition to food-relief services, Second Harvest Heartland also supports and advocates “for the policies and programs that work to end hunger, like SNAP, school meals and senior nutrition programs.”² More specifically, they have a specialized outreach team to help Minnesotans understand and apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a governmental food assistance program that enables low-income and no-income households to obtain food needed to prepare healthy meals. In 2022, Second Harvest Heartland provided funding to Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER) to collect information about the experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of the Latine³ communities in the metro area and greater Minnesota regarding SNAP eligibility and enrollment.

The Latine Experiences with SNAP project is a research initiative led by HACER that focuses on the perceptions and experiences the Latine communities in Minnesota have about SNAP by identifying the barriers, misconceptions, and overall concerns they may have. The goal of this project is to reveal a better understanding of SNAP awareness, impressions, and engagement within the Latine and immigrant communities in Minnesota, including knowledge of public charge policy and potential impediments to pursuing SNAP benefits. The study aims to answer these questions:

1. How informed about SNAP is the Latine community in Minnesota? What perceptions do Latines in Minnesota have about public charge that may be impacting their decision to enroll in SNAP?
2. What are the barriers preventing Latines in Minnesota from participating in SNAP?
3. What types of messages are most influential in the Latine community?

Throughout the past months, Latines throughout the state that may be eligible to receive SNAP benefits or who have ever struggled to pay their grocery bill, have participated in this project through focus groups sessions, in-depth interviews, or survey completion.

The impetus for this project stems from previous research from the USDA 2022 annual report on food insecurity, announcing that the rate of food insecurity for Latines increased in 2021 to 16.2% (2.3 times higher than their white counterparts).⁴ As food insecurity rises and disproportionately impacts the Latine community, many Latine and immigrant households do not seek out food assistance. As of 2022,

² “About Us.” Second Harvest Heartland. Accessed December 12, 2022. <https://www.2harvest.org/about-us>.

³ *Latine* is a gender-inclusive term for those with origins in Latin America; it is synonymous with Latinx.

⁴ Fatima, Umailla. “Latinos Remain Disproportionately Impacted by Food Insecurity. USDA Can Make Progress on Equity and Racial Justice.” UnidosUS, September 28, 2022. <https://www.unidosus.org/blog/2022/09/28/latinos-remain-disproportionately-impacted-by-food-insecurity-usda-can-make-progress-on-equity-and-racial-justice/>.

“more than 4 million Latinos are eligible, yet remain unenrolled, in SNAP”⁵ due to lack of information, resources, and support, particularly surrounding immigration-related concerns. Research made by the Protecting Immigrant Families (PIF) coalition revealed that three out of every four immigrant families were unaware of the 2021 reversal of the prior administration’s public charge policy.⁶ As such, it is imperative that we investigate the issues and concerns of the Latine and immigrant communities that lead to food insecurity and the underutilization of food assistance programs such as SNAP.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Henriquez, Cecibel. “New Report Shows That Fear in Immigrant Communities Kept Children from Getting the Food They Needed.” No Kid Hungry, December 9, 2021. <https://www.nokidhungry.org/blog/new-report-shows-fear-immigrant-communities-kept-children-getting-food-they-needed>

Methods

To better understand the experiences of Latines with SNAP and to investigate the possible barriers and concerns with enrollment, HACER conducted three focus groups, ten in-depth interviews, and developed a survey to be shared with Latine community members broadly throughout the state, to people of different ages, genders, and backgrounds who have at some point struggled to pay their grocery bills. Participants for each methodology were recruited through:

- social media sites, including Facebook and Instagram;
- HACER's email newsletter, which reaches 941 individuals of all ages, organizations, and communities that live in Minnesota;
- in-person outreach at locations where Latines frequent including Mercado Central, CLUES, and the Mexican Consulate in the Twin Cities;
- a vaccination event in Windom, local organizations in Mankato, St. James, and Madelia, and community contacts in Mankato, Waseca, Austin, St. James, Owatonna, Worthington, Le Center, and Faribault, which are in the Southern Minnesota area;
- promoting at specific convenings, such as the Multicultural Network meetings in Mankato;
- and through a snowball sampling.

A flyer with information on eligibility, dates, and how to participate was developed and was shared through all the avenues mentioned above, including in person outreach (see Appendix 4 for examples of the Spanish and English flyers). Through this approach, participants were encouraged to spread the word and recommend other participants to join the project.

Participants in the focus groups, interviews, and survey received a financial incentive for their participation in the project. Vanilla Visa e-gift cards were offered to those that participated in the focus groups and interviews, and Amazon gift cards were offered to those that completed the survey.

Focus groups

The focus groups sessions were conducted through Zoom on weekday evenings and all three were conducted in Spanish per the request of the majority of the participants in each session. Focus group participants signed a consent form to be in the focus groups. The facilitation guide used for all sessions was developed by the HACER research team with the guidance of the Second Harvest Heartland's SNAP Outreach team. To identify the challenges, misunderstandings, and overall concerns the Latine community may have regarding SNAP eligibility and enrollment, the facilitation guide included questions that focused on the participants' exposure, knowledge, perceptions, and experiences they themselves or others they know have with SNAP benefits. The focus groups sessions were designed to collect general themes, concerns, and viewpoints shared by the Latine and immigrant households. These broad topics aided in the development of the in-depth interview protocol.

Interviews

Ten in-depth interview sessions were conducted through Zoom at the convenience of both the participant and researcher. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Spanish and participants

signed a consent form to participate. The in-depth interview sessions used a semi-structured interview approach such that the course of the conversation varied between participants while still following the set of questions produced with the information gathered from the focus groups sessions. The in-depth interview protocol focused on the following themes: prior knowledge, perceptions, worries, and barriers regarding SNAP, as well as the types of effective information and messaging to overcome barriers and engage the Latine community. The in-depth interview protocol was built using information gathered during the focus group sessions to ensure that we gathered more detailed information about specific topics. Both the interview and focus group protocols included sections that described or elaborated upon topics regarding SNAP so as not to further spread misinformation. As a broad overview, a general description of SNAP and its services were provided along with a distinction between P-EBT and EBT. Additionally, anytime the participant was asked about misconceptions or misinformation regarding SNAP, the proper information that addressed these misconceptions was provided afterwards. Lastly, an educational flyer about public charge and SNAP was provided to all participants.

Survey

The surveys were developed based on the initial findings and themes from the three focus groups sessions and ten in-depth interviews. Only one adult per household was allowed to complete the survey to provide a quantitative perspective in order to develop a clearer understanding of the experiences with and impressions of the SNAP program, as well as the participants' views and opinions on these encounters.

Analysis

The Zoom focus groups sessions and in-depth interviews were recorded with the participants' permission to produce a transcript through NVivo software. Using the NVivo software, the transcripts and notes from each session were qualitatively analyzed in their original language. Microsoft Excel was used to analyze the survey findings.

Limitations

These findings must be interpreted in light of their limitations. First, focus groups and interviews are qualitative in nature, and therefore are not meant to be generalizable to the entire Latine population. Second, HACER aimed to get representation from southern, central, and northern Minnesota but due to the quick turnaround of the project (and additional time needed to recruit and seek out additional partners in the area) and the timing of the project, there were fewer opportunities to conduct in person outreach to get more survey responses, keeping the survey sample smaller than originally planned; the smaller sample makes it more difficult to generalize the findings to all Latines in Minnesota that might be eligible for SNAP services. In addition, there was little representation from seniors (individuals aged 65 or more) in the focus groups and interviews. As noted previously, HACER focused its outreach on places where Latines generally convene and focused on adults of all ages. Seniors were not intentionally excluded from participation in the focus groups, but rather were not among the people who expressed interest in participating in this project. This could be because the focus groups and interviews were

conducted via Zoom. At the time of registration, participants were asked if they would prefer to participate over Zoom or in person and the majority selected to participate over Zoom and no hybrid option was offered. HACER also did not do focused outreach on seniors specifically, which may have impacted who expressed interest in participating and registered.

Findings

Focus groups

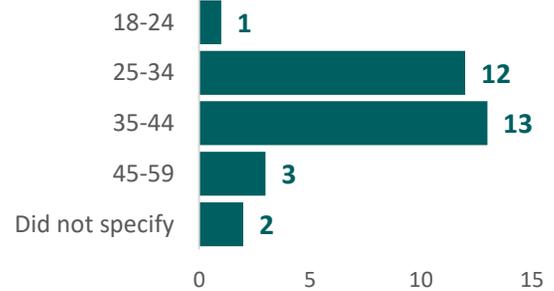
Participant Demographics

Focus groups were conducted with participants that lived in the Twin Cities Metro Area; 31 individuals participated across all focus groups. All participants identified as having Latine heritage and all spoke Spanish. The largest proportion of participants (41%, n=13) were between ages 35-44. Household size among participants varied from 1-7 individuals per household. When asked about they had previously applied for SNAP, about half of the participants (45%, n=14) responded that they had applied in the past.

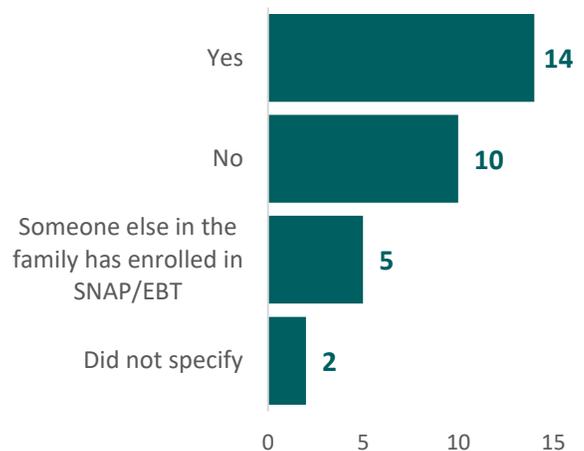
Prior knowledge and perceptions of SNAP

Participants began the focus group session by discussing their familiarity with SNAP, introduced as both EBT and food stamps. From these three sessions, three participants were enrolled in SNAP at the time of the focus group, three others were not enrolled but knew of someone who was, and one participant had been enrolled but no longer qualifies. Outside of these seven participants, one other participant stated that they were familiar with the program. Lastly, four participants stated that they believed the program was very beneficial to families. The remaining 19 participants did not state that they had been enrolled, knew of anyone who was enrolled, nor were familiar with the program. Despite this lack of participation when asked these questions, many who did not say they were familiar with the program did otherwise state that they had questions or misconceptions that they wanted addressed. As one way of understanding the large number of participants that had not applied, some participants elaborated that they had not applied to SNAP because of these questions and misconceptions. In particular, participants began discussing amongst themselves or asking the facilitator questions about eligibility requirements, potential dangers of enrolling, the role immigration status plays with SNAP, and so on.

Age of focus group participants (N=31)



Ever applied for SNAP/EBT (N=31)



"I am not in the program and, to be honest, I have not applied because one hears many things. As such, I would like to have a little bit more knowledge about SNAP."

"My perception is that it is a program that is very beneficial when families find it difficult to get the means to meet their needs."

Unfamiliarity with and misconceptions about SNAP

It is important to identify the differences in the experiences trusted to us by the participants when it comes to their worries about enrollment. While a participant may state that they are worried about enrollment, their reasons for these worries may be a result of either a lack of information/unfamiliarity with SNAP or misconceptions about the program. These two factors similarly lead to hesitancy and lack of enrollment, giving rise, in part, to the under enrollment of Latine communities in food assistance programs. To begin with the participants' unfamiliarity with SNAP, a plethora of participants were uncertain of their eligibility for the program. Regarding eligibility, participants had many questions about income requirements to enroll in SNAP, citizenship/work status required to enroll, and the process they needed to go through to enroll. Following this unfamiliarity with the program, participants also had to grapple with misconceptions that they had about the program, such that applying would hinder their applications for citizenship, that they may accidentally commit fraud, or that it would affect their children later in life.

When it came to the income requirements of SNAP, some participants stated that they were unsure of how much money they needed to make to be eligible. This eligibility question was further complicated by the fact that income was not necessarily the only financial variable taken into account for eligibility. This further caused confusion amongst participants as one participant stated that while they have a reasonable income, their monthly bills and payments were exhaustive, leaving them with little money for groceries at the end of the month. Participants with similar considerations were unsure if their monthly payments or financial obligations would be taken into consideration when it came to eligibility. Participants noted that without interpretation support, to have such questions unanswered has served as a barrier to overcome when applying to SNAP. Additionally, three separate participants shared stories of knowing people who did not financially struggle who had qualified in SNAP. For these three participants, they believed these acquaintances were taking advantage of the program and that they did not want to do the same, even if they have greater financial need.

In regard to citizenship/work status required to enroll, many participants shared questions about eligibility as fundamental of if one needed to have legal status to enroll in SNAP. However, the question of immigration status was complicated as one participant in particular wondered if their work visa was sufficient to enroll, or if they needed to be a resident or citizen. Another participant shared that they had received advice from lawyers to avoid enrolling in programs such as SNAP, even if a person has the documentation required to live/work in the United States. This advice caused confusion as this participant has also heard from other sources that they would be able to apply without any danger to their immigration status or future application to citizenship.

“Actually, I have my work visa and everything ... but if I were to apply, would I experience harm because I do not have papers?”

“One can have problems in the future, so this fear gets into one's head and I tell myself, if I need it, I'll apply, but best not to get into problems, I'll leave it alone.”

As far as uncertainty about enrollment process goes, many participants pointed to a general lack of knowledge and information present in their communities as the cause. As fundamental as where to go

or what forms to fill, participants were unsure of where to begin if they decided to enroll in the program. This final uncertainty is one of the many compounding factors as it shows that even if one were to address their other questions about income or immigration status requirements, they may still have to figure out how to engage in the application process itself.

Lack of information is one of the many barriers that prevent Latine communities from enrolling in SNAP. Another is the mounting misinformation that pervades throughout immigrant and Latine communities. Throughout the focus groups, participants shared their experiences and perceptions of the program and illuminated many of the misconceptions present in their communities.

Firstly, many participants held deep rooted uncertainty about applying as a result of the belief that application for the program would hinder their application to citizenship or affect their immigration status negatively. Additionally, some held similar beliefs, without knowing the term public charge. The impression that receiving governmental assistance in some way impacted one's current immigration status or future application to citizenship was pervasive. Confusion was present for participants that were undocumented, residents, and citizens alike as many were cautious of the impact programs such as these could have on their status. For the undocumented participants, there was the additional consideration that many worked under different names so when having to declare income, the discrepancy would be noted. While one must have a social security number to apply to governmental assistance such as SNAP, this fact was not clearly known by a majority of the participants as the exact rules and eligibility criteria of the program were unclear. Added to this, many were cautious about the possibility that trying to apply would lead to further investigation into their status rather than rejection.

Lastly, there was a similarly pervasive idea that enrollment in SNAP would later impact one's children. There were many ways, however, that participants believed it may later impact their children. From most to least common, participants believed that children who benefit from a parent's enrollment in SNAP would have to pay back that money once they turned 18. Participants often commented that they believed their children will have to pay higher taxes as a result of either being enrolled in SNAP by their parents or by receiving SNAP benefits from their parents. The next misconception is that some participants believed that enrolling a child in SNAP would be documented on their record for the rest of their lives. While the exact worry was not outlined, it was implied that by having this participation on one's record, one would be penalized in some form or another later in life. In this case, the fear is that the parent would be making a permanent impact on the child that may have an impact on them when they grow up. The least common misconception, though present, nonetheless, is that children who were enrolled in SNAP would be the first to be drafted during wartime when they come of age. Despite there being no draft nor war in the U.S. currently,

"The concern would be like that it can harm us as immigrants to take that program or can harm our children being immigrant parents."

"There are many people who say that when a person or a child has the program, when he grows up he is going to pay on his taxes or something."

"Another one I heard was that they said that, if the parents asked the government for the children, in case of a war, the first ones who were going to go to war were those children."

parents feared the possibility that enrolling their children in SNAP would result in a sort of public charge or permanent record that would cause the government to choose these children first during wartime.

While many participants shed light on their perceptions, beliefs, and reservations of SNAP, most also exercised a certain cautiousness with their fear. Typically, when describing something they had heard about SNAP, a participant would preface or add afterwards that they are not certain whether the information they received was true or not. Rather than declarative statements where participants were certain their children would be drafted during wartime, for example, participants presented their concerns as questions. The unfamiliarity with the program and the misconceptions that plagued it both lead to hesitancy within participants as many decided not to apply to SNAP.

Barriers to enrollment

Barriers for enrollment similarly results in under enrollment of Latine communities in SNAP but differs than unfamiliarity and misconceptions as this section points to structural and cultural variables that impact these communities. This section also differs from in in-depth interviews as a result of being a sample of a different geographical population. Participants that live in the metro area may have different experiences due to their proximity to bigger cities, access to resources, and so forth than those outside of the metro area. While there were many barriers discussed by participants, the largest and most pervasive barrier was accessibility as a result of language barriers, eligibility requirements, and application length.

Firstly, language barriers in the process of enrolling to SNAP were mentioned in each focus group by multiple participants. These barriers were so ubiquitous because of the many forms they can take and because every participant was subject to them as Spanish-speakers. Most commonly, participants spoke about their previous experiences with governmental offices or with SNAP applications when discussing the difficulty of applying to things such as SNAP as a Spanish-speaker. In the interview portion of SNAP applications, participants stated that there were very few, if any, Spanish-speakers to conduct their interview. In these cases, interpreters would be asked to join the interview or application process. However, interpreters were similarly scarce as participants described having to wait on hold for long periods of time before getting help with interpretation. When interpreters were present, one participant described feeling like the interpreter was presenting information inaccurately and not trusting how they were being interpreted. In general, participants shared a common sentiment that not having Spanish-speakers present throughout the process made it more daunting. Participants shared that language was also an issue during the written form portion of the application process. Some participants had the experience that they were unable to find forms to fill out that were written in Spanish. Specifically, one participant stated that while they were able to access forms in Spanish, the rights and responsibilities form was written in English. Others stated that while being able to speak and

“But I think that one of the challenges I had more was the language and the people they had there at the time. Instead of supporting you, nothing happened, you wouldn’t get the right information.”

“Because the time you have to be waiting for someone to interpret for you, this what you are going to say to her and what she is going to say to you, then it becomes a little difficult.”

read some amount of English, the legal jargon and language of the document was too difficult to understand. As a whole, these barriers made it more difficult for participants to enroll in SNAP. If they were able to overcome these barriers, the overarching impact is that the process was far more difficult and time-consuming for Spanish-speakers. To that end, one participant stated that they viewed their American acquaintance enroll in SNAP far more easily than they were able to themselves.

Secondly, as far as eligibility requirements go, many participants stated that the income inclusion criteria were prohibitive. In particular, participants shared that they were told they did not qualify due to their income, but that their income was seasonal, unstable, or not enough to cover both monthly expenses and groceries.

Lastly, participants pointed to the length of the application as being prohibitive. The number of questions and the amount of time that one is required to be attentive to the application requirements were both more than many participants could offer. In the case of one participant, they were on the phone for hours answering questions, while another stated that once they heard the length of the application they decided not to apply for SNAP.

“The only thing is that there are enough, enough questions. I was on the phone for two hours.”

Participant recommendations

In light of the lack of information, misinformation, and barriers that impede Latine communities from enrolling in SNAP, participants were asked to share areas they could be supported by organizations such as Second Harvest Heartland. Participants shared the kinds of messages and information that would be helpful to receive and the ways in which they would like to receive this information.

The majority of participants wanted more information about the risk of applying to SNAP with varying immigration statuses and more information about eligibility. Participants asking for more information about the risk of applying to SNAP with varying immigration statuses stated that it would be helpful for them to have the advantages and disadvantages of applying clearly laid out. According to these participants, it would help assuage their worry about applying and help them make a more informed decision given their specific circumstances. This need for this information also applies to children of these participants as one person asked for clarity of the ways it can impact children, both with legal status and undocumented.

“Like that, if you know that the legal process will not affect you, or if you know if you are illegal, you will not be removed for applying to SNAP. I think communicating these things is important because it is in the larger myths or stigmas...”

In regard to the modes of messaging that would be most helpful to the participants spoken to, the vast majority shared that information through the internet would be the more helpful way of reaching them.

In particular, participants shared that it would be effective to reach them with this information through social media such as Instagram and Facebook. Other participants stated that it would be best for them to be reached by e-mail and ads. Outside of the internet, many participants pointed to in-person outreach as a crucial means of reaching Latine communities. Participants noted that building upon the trust of Latine communities with Latine-based organizations, outreach by Spanish-speaking advocates helps bridge the barrier of distrust and hesitancy that many feel around topics such as these. Participants shared that in-person outreach included workshops, community spaces such as church, door knocking, and community events.

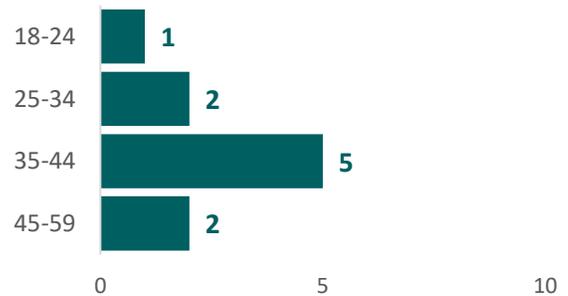
“Where I turn are non-profit organizations. They have a lot of information and many help centers, so I go a little more to them.”

Interviews

Participant Demographics

Interviews were conducted with participants that lived in Greater Minnesota; 10 individuals were interviewed. All participants identified as having Latine heritage and all spoke Spanish. The largest proportion of participants (50%, n=5) were between ages 35-44. Household size among participants varied from 1-5 individuals per household.

Age of focus group participants (N=10)



Prior knowledge and perceptions of SNAP

Through the in-depth interviews, it was found that many of the participants had impressions of the program either through personal experience or through having heard of it at other times. There were some participants still, however, that had never heard of the program. Additionally, while the in-depth interview participants echoed many of the same impressions and prior knowledge of SNAP that the focus group participants had, there were key differences as well. To begin, the most common relationship with SNAP the participants had was that they were formerly enrolled and no longer qualified. Two other participants had previously applied to the program but stated that they were not enrolled. Of the remaining four participants, two were not enrolled but had acquaintances that had been a part of the program. None of the participants were currently enrolled at the time of the interview. While some participants had some knowledge with the program in name, many participants also self-reported that they were unfamiliar with basic aspects of the program such as eligibility, impact on immigration status, type of support and so forth. One reoccurring theme is that many of the participants expressed an interest in wanting to apply to SNAP and that not knowing the eligibility requirements was the main reason they

“Well, I would like to know where you can get it or what scope the program has that can benefit you. What does it consist of? And who is eligible for that program?”

had not applied. Lastly, the biggest difference in perception between focus group and in-depth interview participants, is that many participants expressed frustration with the income eligibility requirements. Participants stated feeling like they had to be in extreme poverty to meet the income eligibility requirements. One participant explained that even after applying and enrolling, they only received \$70 a month to support their four children.

Unfamiliarity with and misconceptions about SNAP

It is important to identify the differences in the experiences trusted to us by the participants when it comes to their worries about enrollment. While a participant may state that they are worried about enrollment, their reasons for these worries may be a result of either a lack of information/unfamiliarity with SNAP or misconceptions about the program. These two factors similarly lead to hesitancy and lack of enrollment, giving rise, in part, to the under enrollment of Latine communities in food assistance programs. Additionally, this lack of information allows for misinformation to take its place, making many scared to learn more or apply to the program. Overall, the most common and ubiquitous concerns the in-depth interview participants had were the impact SNAP would have on their immigration status, the possibility of receiving a public charge, and that their income would be too high to qualify. Unique to the in-depth interviews, some participants also expressed that they had no concerns about the program. They either had all the information they wanted or were curious about the program but did not describe either state as causing them concern.

Concern about the impact of SNAP on immigration and immigration status through public charge or some other means was common amongst the in-depth interview participants. Many participants stated that being undocumented or having a unique immigration status made it very difficult to learn about the program as they feared that governmental offices, such as those where you go to apply for SNAP, were places where they could be identified as undocumented or where they could get into trouble. One participant described their fear as causing them to stay far away from these programs and feeling like their access to information and resources was limited due to their status. Another participant identified that it was difficult to get close to anyone who may be able to provide help or answer questions about the program because they were undocumented. These individuals' experiences were repeated across interviews as the majority of participants stated that they knew this as a concern for themselves or for their peers. As such, it is difficult for individuals with varying immigration statuses to address their unfamiliarity or misconceptions due to the fear of asking official

"The first thing that I saw as positive, I said, I don't have to be an American to apply. But from then on I have no idea what else I need or if I can really apply to it. What requirements are needed, do I have to have children?"

"Many times people do not approach the programs because they do not know if their immigration status limits them to get benefits."

"The fact that their stay here is legal limits them from moving to a place like this because many times people are afraid to go there to seek information about help because their immigration status is not good."

SNAP employees for help. This concern is amplified by the fact that many did not know the documentation requirements for applying so they did not want to begin the process and realize they had to give some form of identification.

As with the focus group participants, some participants here stated that they were concerned about the income eligibility requirements of SNAP and that they may not apply. For these participants, this caused them concern because they felt as though they needed assistance to help make ends meet but that they may not qualify for SNAP. Many times, participants associated this concern with feeling like SNAP did not always consider the appropriate financial variables when deciding if one qualifies. This concern was also tied to the perception that some participants that their peers with far more money or resources were able to qualify for SNAP while others with far less were not.

In regard to misinformation participants had heard about the program, some participant stated that they were concerned about the possibility that applying would later impact their children. Similar to the focus group, participant stated that they worried their children would have to pay back the money gained from SNAP when they were older. Oftentimes, participants would believe that this would be through increased taxes.

"That for example, once they earn taxes, then they will deduct it from their taxes."

Barriers to enrollment

Barriers to enrollment similarly results in under enrollment of Latine communities in SNAP but differs than unfamiliarity and misconceptions as this section points to structural and cultural variables that impact these communities. This section also differs from the focus groups as a result of being a sample of a different geographical population. Participants that live outside of the metro area may have different experiences due to their distance from bigger cities, access to resources, and so forth. While there were many barriers discussed by participants, the largest and most pervasive barrier was language as nearly every participant described this as making it difficult to apply, qualify, or learn more about SNAP. Second to this was the strictness of the eligibility requirements. And lastly participants stated that the lack of outreach and information about the program hindered their applying.

In regard to language, participants identified this as a barrier for a number of reasons as it made it more difficult to learn about the program, apply to SNAP, and participate in the interview portion of the application. Most of the participants pointed to the difficulty of having to find a Spanish-speaker to help them through the application process. For the participants that did feel comfortable going into the governmental offices to apply, they stated that one would have to wait for a long time to be receive interpretation services. This made it difficult to ask and answer questions asked of them. One participant said that the language barrier made it difficult to be explained and assured about the program. Additionally, when it came to the written part of the application, participants had trouble finding Spanish translated forms or assistance when it came to answering the forms. Those

"The language was what affected me a lot. And where one applies, there they don't even have a person who speaks Spanish. Pure American people."

who were able to find interpreters said that they felt that they were not perfectly understood by the SNAP representative and hoped that it was the representative themselves who spoke Spanish.

"Well, it's difficult, because since they didn't give you the documents in Spanish, I still didn't know much English."

When it came to strictness, participants stated that they felt like the program has inflexible and rigid rules which did not accommodate the reality of their life's responsibilities. In particular, a few participants pointed to the scheduled interview as being very rigid because one was given a time for an interview, regardless of their availability, and if they were to miss it, they would have to start their application over. These participants described having to miss the call due to being at work and being fearful of getting in trouble for being on their phone during their shift. Participants also described frustration with the strictness of the income eligibility requirements. One participant described that it was an obstacle for them to demonstrate the need they had for this kind of support.

As described before, participants stated that their lack of information about the program was the biggest barrier they faced. Without knowing the eligibility requirements for SNAP, the way to begin their application, or the impact it may have on them or their kids, many participants against applying. This barrier is also the conglomeration of many others as it is exacerbated by factors such as language, which make it more difficult to address lack of information. As a result, where there is uncertainty, lack of information, and barriers that inhibit education, there is misinformation that spreads furthering these uncertainties and concerns about SNAP.

"Well, that key information to know what I have to do in order to receive that help."

Participant recommendations

In light of the lack of information, misinformation, and barriers that impede Latine communities from enrolling in SNAP, participants were asked to share areas they could be supported by organizations such as Second Harvest Heartland. Participants shared kinds of messages and information that would be helpful to receive and the ways in which they would like to receive this information. Firstly, participants stated that it would be helpful to have all of the eligibility requirements, as it relates to documents and information needed, clearly laid out. As one participant stated, this allows for people to more quickly decide whether this program is right or them or not and to move forward more quickly with this information. To have this information would solve the confusion that generally impacts Latine communities around SNAP. In addition to this, participants stated that it is important to them to clearly know the impact this may have on their immigration status, their children, and so forth. To address misinformation in a clear and forward way would stop it from spreading within communities and give individuals the power to address misinformation in their

"When you start with that question, you need help, and you start reading. Look, there's going to be this and this and this. Such help from SNAP. The benefits are these, you will need this, since they are opening the information to you in one go and you know if you grab it or not, but when the information is as direct and in a way as you need it, it is that part that brings people faster."

daily life should they hear it repeated by a peer. Participants stated that it would be most helpful to have this information communicated by a Spanish-speaker that is willing to respond to questions so that these communities can have their specific needs met and have their specific questions answered.

Regarding the ways in which these participants would like to receive this message, the vast majority of participants shared that they would rather have outreach through in-person contact in trusted places. More specifically, participants shared that churches, schools, and supermarkets were good places to reach people as those are the places where immigrants and Latine community members congregate. Particularly, for those that work full-time and do not have time for recreation, the supermarket or church are the few places that they would have the time to go to. Along this line of thought, almost every participant stated that workshops would be the best medium to receive information as that would allow them to ask questions and learn about the program from a trusted person. In contrast with the focus group participants, not many interview participants stated that information via social media would be useful to them.

"People in looking for God, if you have a problem or are in despair, you look for God. Where people gather is in the churches."

"It's harder, it's more difficult, but not impossible, but especially in the churches and the places that the community says, which are the clinics where they provide low-cost help. And above all, also workshops, but in those places or in schools too..."

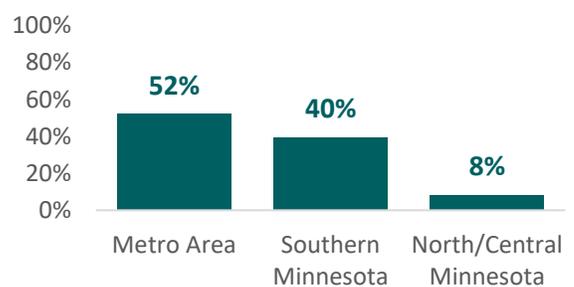
Survey

Respondent demographics

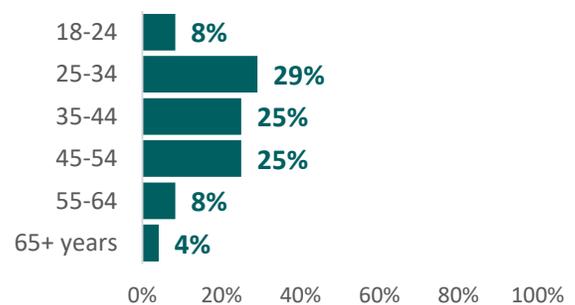
A total of 65 individuals submitted the survey about their perceptions and experiences with SNAP. Out of the 65 submissions, all completed the screening questions and were deemed eligible to participate based on currently living in Minnesota and identifying as having Hispanic, Latine, or Spanish origins. However, only 48 completed the core questions beyond the screening questions. The results shown moving forward highlight the responses from the 49 the completed the core questions.

The majority of respondents (52%, n=25) lived in the metro area. In terms of age, the largest proportion of the respondents were between 25-34 years (29%, n=14), then 35-44 years (24%, n=12), and 45-54 years (24%, n=12). The majority of respondents also indicated that their primary language is Spanish (57%, n=28), followed by a combination of English and Spanish (41%, n=20), and English only (2%, n=1).

Regions respondents live in (N=48)



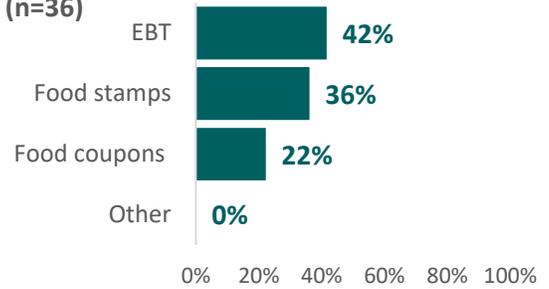
Age (n=48)



Perceptions of SNAP benefits

Prior to the survey, of the 48 respondents that answered the question, 75% (n=36) had heard of SNAP; 52% (n=25) had heard of SNAP by a different name. Of the 36 respondents that had heard of it by a different name, the most mentioned name that was used synonymously with SNAP was “EBT” (42%, n=15).

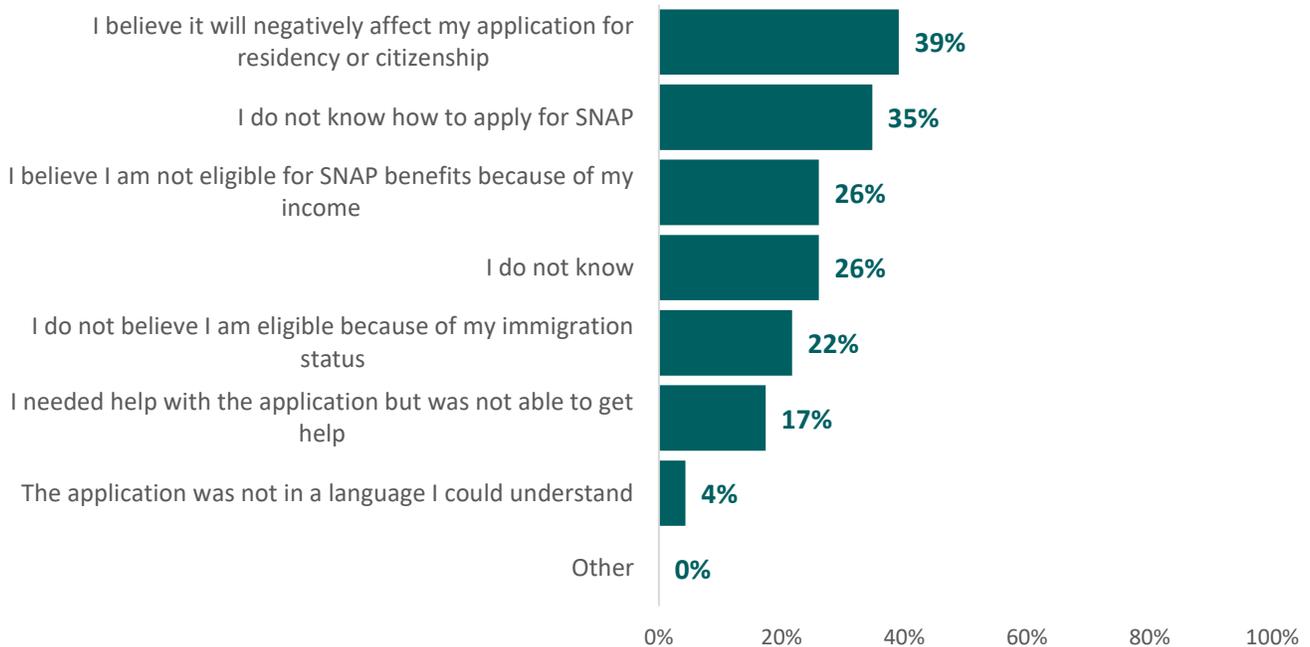
Other names heard of for SNAP (n=36)



Applying for SNAP benefits

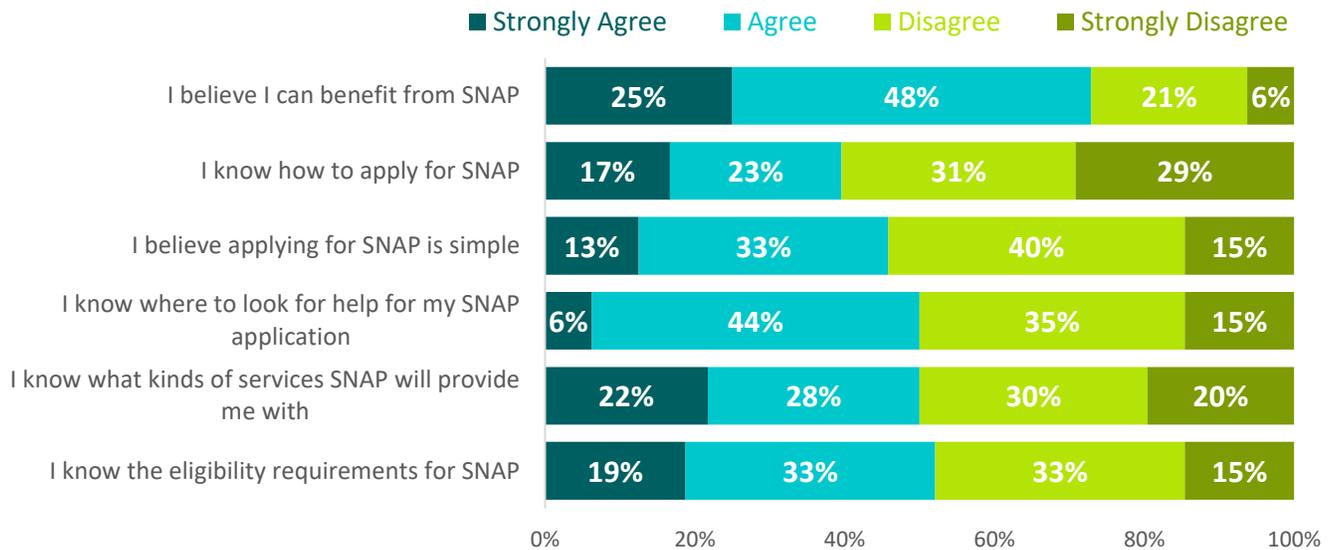
Of the survey respondents, 46% (n=23) had previously applied for SNAP benefits. Of those who had not applied for SNAP benefits and answered the question of why they had not (n=23), the two most common responses were “I believe it will negatively affect my application for residency or citizenship” (39%, n=9) and “I do not know how to apply for SNAP” (35%, n=8).

Reasons for not applying to SNAP (n=23)



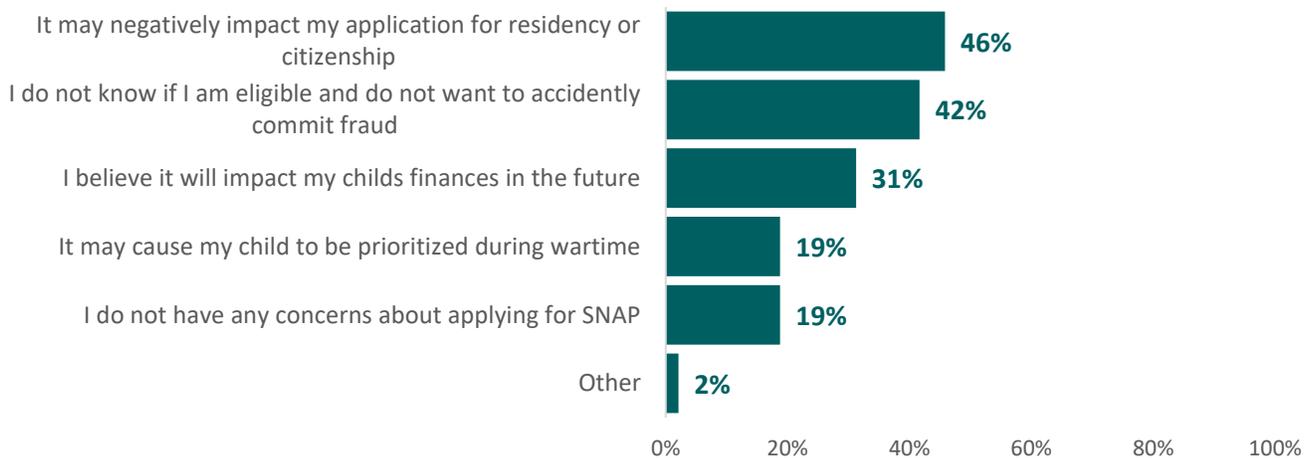
Respondents also shared their perceptions of SNAP. The statement that had the highest level of agreement (73%, n=35) was “I believe I can benefit from SNAP”. On the other end, the statement that had the least agreement (40%, n=20) was “I know how to apply for SNAP”.

Respondent perceptions of SNAP (N=48)



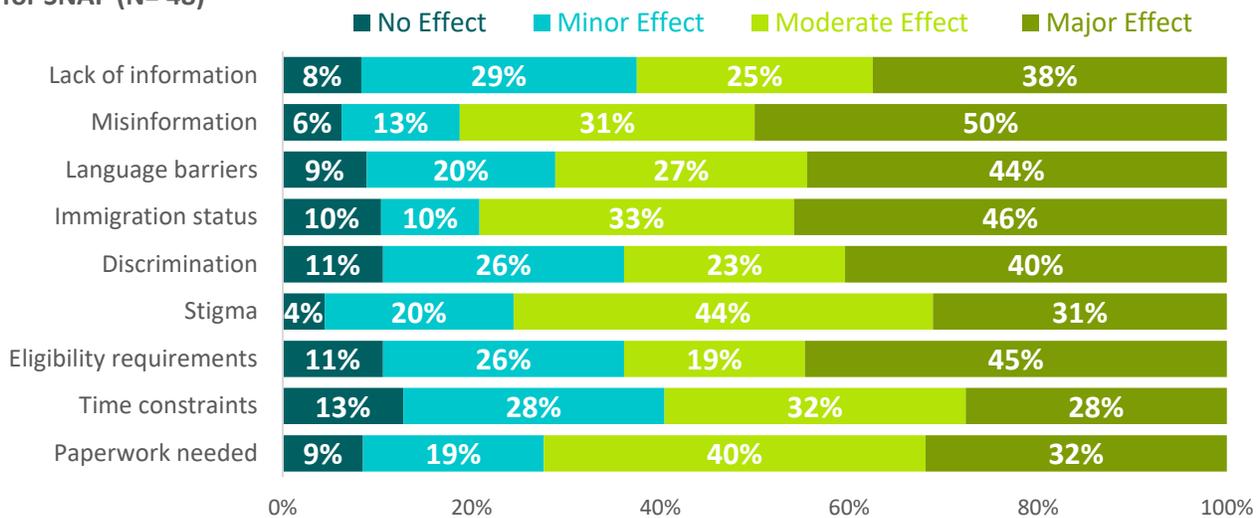
When asked about concerns about applying for SNAP, the largest proportion of respondents (46%, n=22) reported the concern that applying could “negatively impact their application for residency or citizenship”.

Concerns about applying for SNAP (N=48)



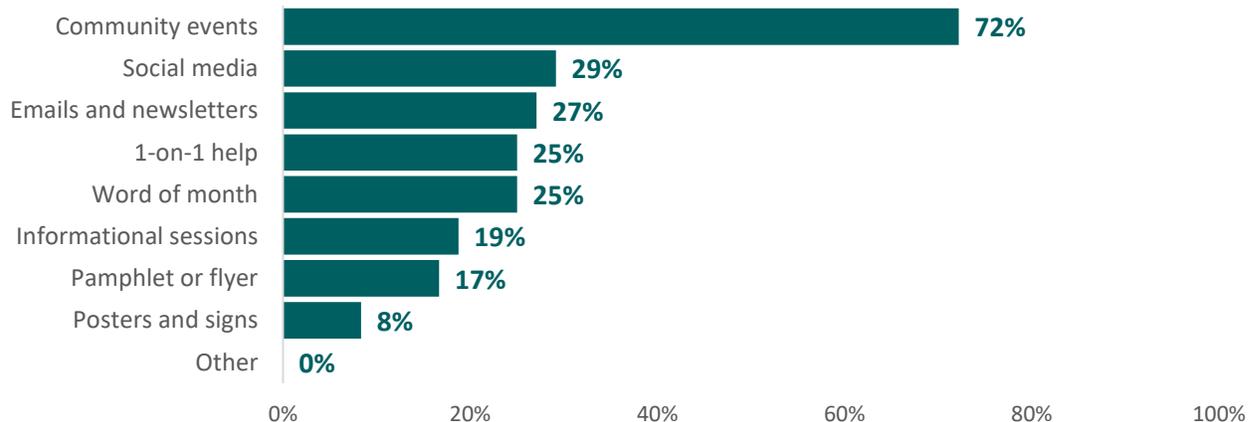
Regarding the effect different factors have on Latine communities applying for SNAP, the largest proportion of respondents reported “misinformation” as having a major effect (50%), followed by immigration status (46%).

Effect respondents believe the following factors have on Latine communities applying for SNAP (N= 48)



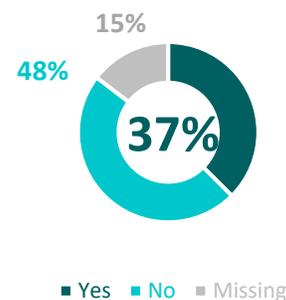
Almost three quarters of respondents (72%) reported outreach at community events as their preferred method for receiving information about SNAP.

Respondents' preferred ways of receiving more information about SNAP (N=48)



Just over a third (37%) of respondents reported having experienced barriers to applying for SNAP in the past. When asked to elaborate on their experience, few comments were offered; those that did expand on their answer mentioned not having an interpreter available when seeking services, their legal status making them ineligible to receive SNAP benefits, and general concerns about eligibility and impact on the future.

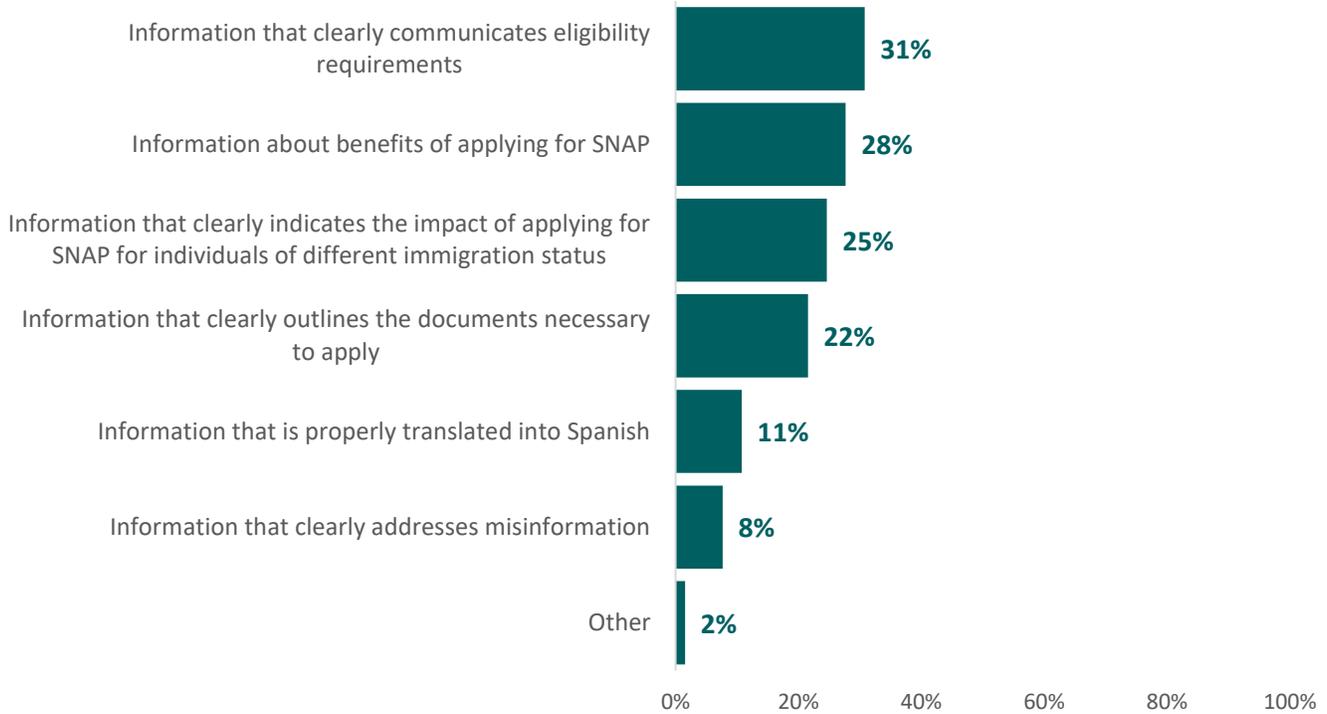
Ever experienced any barriers applying to SNAP (N=48)



Participants were also asked about what type of information they think would be most effective to help Latines apply for SNAP. The largest proportion of participants reported that information that clearly communicates

eligibility requirements would be the most effective (31%), followed by information about the benefits for applying for SNAP (28%).

Information that would be most effective to help Latines apply for SNAP (N=48)



Finally, participants were asked whether there is anything they think organizations working with Latines should know. Of the 48 respondents, 15 (31%) offered specific suggestions. The comments offered are presented below.

Themes	Comments
Latines need for more information in general on SNAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “That there is more information on Facebook, Instagram and all types of social media” • “More information” • “What range they [SNAP] use to determine benefits” • “Need to be clear that this organization is general and useful” • “Offer meetings on Zoom on this topic. There are many of us who have heard of this program, but we don’t have that much information.” • “About public charge.”
More information is needed on immigration status as it relates to applying for SNAP or other government programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It is important to make campaigns that help Latino people to get benefits from the US government even when they are not legal, or the visa types constrain them to get certain benefits. It is important to help the government

	<p><i>create financial benefits that really support the Latino community no matter what the status is.”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The information on the conditions of immigration status must be more precise.”</i> • <i>People are afraid of receiving aid for immigration status and that the government will find them.”</i>
Organizations need to provide interpreters that interpret accurately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I hope they can help with the interpreters in Spanish to apply, many times the information is not correct.”</i> • <i>“I think it is important to have, whenever possible, an interpreter so that people are correctly informed, and this is not an impediment to participate in organizations.”</i>
Organizations need to have a better understanding of Latine needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“They need to understand and get to know about the Latin needs, concerns and help us overcome those barriers. It will be nice to have a space or time to learn more about these type of services.”</i>
There is a need for support completing the application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Sometimes there’s a need for more help to complete this type of application.”</i>
Positive general comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Appreciate that they always want to provide us with info”</i>
Critical feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I don’t think they are doing it well up until now”</i>

Conclusion

This descriptive study shed light on the perceptions and experiences of Latines with SNAP. The study aimed to answer three primary questions:

1. How informed about SNAP is the Latine community in Minnesota? What perceptions do Latines in Minnesota have about public charge that may be impacting their decision to enroll in SNAP?
2. What are the barriers preventing Latines in Minnesota from participating in SNAP?
3. What types of messages are most influential in the Latine community?

The data collected through the focus groups, interviews, and survey offer some answers to these questions.

How informed about SNAP is the Latine community in Minnesota?

The findings from this study suggest that some Latines have little accurate information about SNAP, and that in fact there is still a lot of misinformation and myths circulating in the community. Notably, during the focus groups and interviews, the participants asked the facilitator specific questions about the program, further confirming that there are individuals that may be eligible or need this type of nutrition assistance but have not been connected to accurately and timely information that is in the individual's preferred language.

What perceptions do Latines in Minnesota have about public charge that may be impacting their decision to enroll in SNAP?

Consequences to applying for SNAP or other public benefits continue to be of concern to Latines; for those that are undocumented, there is still concern that accepting public benefits will hinder their ability to obtain legal status in the future. This misconception was once reality as the previous presidential administration made it so that one may receive a public charge by enrolling in SNAP. Although this policy is no longer present, many participants entered the focus group conversations with this idea still in mind. Importantly, participants also had questions about eligibility if they were in the U.S. on a visa. While this may also be categorized as misinformation regarding SNAP as it relates to public charge, this lack of information about program eligibility points to the complicated nature of SNAP as it is intertwined with the nuanced topic of immigration.

What are the barriers preventing Latines in Minnesota from participating in SNAP?

The need for materials in Spanish and interpretation services rose to the top as a barrier to accessing SNAP for Latines. Participants detailed the challenges they have had getting appropriate help in Spanish; including long wait times on the phone, not having written information in Spanish, complicated legal jargon, and feeling like an interpreter wasn't accurately conveying the message they needed when trying to communicate with SNAP program staff. This points to the reality that it was more tedious for Latine communities to participate in this program than their White American, English-speaking counterparts.

In addition, some participants noted that they felt the SNAP program was too strict or prohibitive in its eligibility requirements. This particularly had an impact on those who had "unstable" or seasonal

income. As is the case with many Latine individuals living in Minnesota, there are many seasonal workers who make the majority of their income during specific times of the year or who do not have sufficient income for the non-working months.

What types of messages are most influential in the Latine community?

One of the key points to highlight from participants is that they were very interested in having information on eligibility requirements for SNAP clearly laid out. To know if they are eligible would get rid of the fear of many participants of applying as they would not be entering the process blindly. This would also help address many of the myths and stigmas that surround SNAP. As stated earlier, many participants share a fear that they may accidentally commit fraud or get into trouble if they apply and do not meet the eligibility requirements. With more information, Latine communities would better know the resources they are eligible for and entitled to and those that they are not able to access.

Recommendations

Given the results of this study, HACER recommends the following to reach Latines in Minnesota with information on SNAP:

1. When conducting outreach, **emphasize that public charge is no longer applicable** and be very clear about the eligibility requirements for SNAP. This can be done by creating materials in Spanish about SNAP and addressing these common misconceptions, so that more Latines feel comfortable reaching out to organizations for more information and assistance when applying for SNAP.
2. Use **various methods** to engage Latines, including **attendance at in person outreach events so that Latines have a face they can ask questions to**, and **social media**. While this may require more effort, time and person power, these methods of outreach also make use of word-of-mouth which is one of the primary ways information is disseminated in immigrant, Latine communities. These outreach methods similarly allow community members to ask questions which helps each person tailor their own educational experience, while giving the outreach organization an idea of the kinds of concerns communities have.
3. SNAP and other public programs should aim to **hire bilingual staff** that have a clear understanding of the program in both languages, and can therefore explain and meaningfully engage with those applying to the program. While interpreters are an extreme asset, information can get lost in translation, which can lead to miscommunication between the applicant and SNAP program staff.
4. Organizations that offer information or services related to SNAP should **partner with Latine-led and Latine-serving organizations as outreach partners** and to help bridge the gap of information for those seeking SNAP services.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Focus Group Protocol

Facilitator –

Notetaker –

Facilitator: Hello everyone and thank you for coming today. My name is Nicolas Diaz de Leon/Rodolfo Gutierrez, and I am a Research Associate at HACER. I will be moderating this conversation today and will be leading with questions to learn more about your experiences, impressions, and knowledge as it relates to SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) services, eligibility, and enrollment. Although the program is referred to as SNAP, many also know it as food stamps or EBT. On this call, we also have _____, who is going to be our NOTETAKER with us today to assist me and take notes during our discussion. I appreciate all of you taking the time to be here today and for your willingness to share your experiences. Our hope is that by the end of this conversation, we will develop a clearer idea of the information, concerns, and barriers the Latine community in Minnesota may have as it relates to SNAP. This project is funded by Second Harvest Heartland, a Twin Cities food bank that is dedicated to ending hunger in Minnesota and western Wisconsin through providing day-to-day or longterm food support, aid in food assistance programs, and sustainably setting up food systems to provide consistent support to communities across the state. Through HACER's partnership with Second Harvest Heartland, information about how to best support Latine communities through SNAP education and enrollment will be gathered. The first is a consent form that outlines the project where you will be able to officially agree to participate. Also, the information we gather in this form is necessary to compensate each of you for your participation. The second is a demographic form to gather more information on each of you. This form will not have your name attached to it.

While I will be asking questions today to address these topics during our time together, I would like this to be an open conversation. This is a safe space where there are no right or wrong answers. Our only goal is to understand your experiences and knowledge, so all information, all opinions, all questions and so on are valuable and valid. Feel free to talk amongst each other and follow up on others' points, however, please do be respectful of everyone's point of view. If the conversation deviates too far off track, I may step in to get us back on track. Lastly, if we are spending too much time on one question, I may interrupt to make sure that your voices are heard for all questions we have prepared today.

I would also like to inform you that this conversation will be recorded for notetaking purposes. While **NOTETAKER** does a great job of taking notes, they are not able to get all the details in real time. Recording helps us ensure that we get the best details and that we accurately understand and report what you share. I can promise you that no names will be used in any final reporting or shared by me outside this conversation. Your identities are confidential. I ask that you all do the same; whatever is mentioned during this conversation should stay within this room and no names or identifying information should be repeated. To preserve that anonymity, you may also keep your camera turned off during the session if you would like and you may also change your screen name to something different, such as "Participant 5". Lastly, this recording will be saved on a password protected computer and will only be shared with the researchers working on this project at HACER. Information gathered in this project will also be visible to our funders at Second Harvest Heartland. Additionally, the final report created

for this project may be made public but will not contain any identifiable information. If anyone does not feel comfortable with us recording this session, we will make do with the notes that we are able to take. This will not in any way affect your relationship with any organization involved in this project or any of its members.

As we get ready to start, I ask that you please mute yourselves if you are not already. If you need to step out to make a call, to use the restroom, or to address something at home, that is totally fine. As I mentioned, this is just a conversation, so please make yourselves comfortable.

I will give everyone a second to mute their mics or to turn off your cameras or change your names if you would like. I will begin recording now.

As a reminder, the SNAP program also refers to food stamps and EBT.

1. Let's start by doing some introductions.
 - a. If you could each, please introduce yourselves, I will pick based on the order you appear on my Zoom screen. **What is your favorite fall activity?**
2. Who here is familiar with SNAP, which is also called EBT and food stamps? Can a few people share what they know about SNAP?
 - a. SNAP is a governmental food assistance program that enables low-income and no income households to afford more healthy foods and improve families' food purchases, particularly those to be prepared or eaten at home.
 - b. Facilitator should provide an explanation of EBT vs P-EBT, if necessary. [P-EBT and EBT are very similar cards, but they are different programs. P-EBT was specifically during the pandemic when schools were closed and students who were eligible for free or reduced lunch weren't able to receive their school lunch. P-EBT used information from the educational benefits form to reach out to families of students that qualified for free or reduced lunch. EBT, on the other hand, has a specific application and enrollment process. For more information, please see the SNAP fliers or visit the Minnesota Department of Human Services website.](#)
 - c. Facilitator should provide a high-level explanation of SNAP if nobody is familiar with it, it's not very clear, or there are misconceptions. Make note there will be fliers at the door with more info on SNAP and a way to get help with the process. [Note for HACER: SHH will provide SNAP fliers; clients can reach out directly to us \(using info on fliers\) for more information and support with an application.](#)
3. What perceptions do you have of SNAP?
 - a. *Probe:* What have you heard from family, friends, and neighbors about SNAP?
 - b. Do you know SNAP by another name that we haven't already mentioned?
 - c. For those who aren't familiar with SNAP what questions do you have about the program?
 - i. Note for HACER: Don't try to answer these questions in real time. Again, direct people to the fliers and have them reach out to us to get answers.
4. What kind of concerns, if any, do you have about applying for SNAP?
 - a. Have you heard stories from friends, family members, or other community members, either positive or negative, about applying for SNAP?
 - b. Have you heard of public charge? What have you heard?

- i. For those who have heard of public charge, does this affect how you feel about SNAP? Does it impact your willingness to apply for SNAP?
 - ii. If you haven't heard of public charge, have you heard friends or community members say that getting SNAP could have an impact on someone's ability to get US citizenship?
 - iii. *Facilitator to explain what public charge was with an emphasis that it is no longer being considered and that SNAP does not impact citizenship applications.*
 - 1. *"Public charge" is a ground of inadmissibility. Grounds of inadmissibility are reasons that a person could be denied a green card, visa, or admission into the United States. An immigration officer must decide whether that person is likely to become dependent on certain government benefits in the future, which would make them a "public charge." **This is no longer being considered and SNAP does not impact citizenship applications.***
5. Do you think, in general, there are barriers for Latino communities when it comes to applying for SNAP?
 - a. What are these barriers? (Example: language barriers, accessibility barriers, lack of outreach, stigma, etc.)
 - b. Have you experienced any barriers while trying to apply for SNAP services?
 - i. *Probe:* If you have not tried to enroll in SNAP, what has prevented you from applying?
 6. Have you applied for SNAP benefits before? If so, how was this experience?
 7. With these barriers and perceptions of SNAP in mind, what kind of information or messages would be most effective in getting Latino community members to apply for the SNAP benefits they are entitled to?
 8. Where do you look for and find information about resources that might help your family?
 - a. Where would you expect to get information about SNAP?
 9. What advice would you give to an organization that wants to share information about SNAP to the Latino community? (Example: in-person outreach, emails, informational sessions, etc.)
 - a. *Probe:* Where should they share information?
 - b. *Probe:* How should they share information?
 - c. What do you want these organizations to know about the Latino community? Such as community values, communication styles, or anything else.

Thank you for your participation in this conversation, we are glad to hear your perspective and your experiences. If you have any questions after this meeting, you are more than welcome to email either Rodolfo or Nicolas. You will be receiving a flyer with contact information that you can refer to to have any questions answered about SNAP, or any of the topics discussed today. Additionally, if you have peers that may be interested in participating in this project, feel free to give them Nico's contact information at Nicolas@hacer-mn.org. You will be receiving your vanilla gift card for \$40 via mail within three weeks.

Appendix 2. In-Depth Interview Protocol

Facilitator –

Notetaker –

Facilitator: Hello and thank you for coming today. My name is Nicolas Diaz de Leon/Rodolfo Gutierrez, and I am a Research Associate at HACER. I will be moderating this conversation today and will be leading with questions to learn more about your experiences, impressions, and knowledge as it relates to SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) services, eligibility, and enrollment. Although the program is referred to as SNAP, many also know it as food stamps or EBT. On this call, we also have _____, who is going to be our NOTETAKER with us today to assist me and take notes during our discussion. I appreciate you taking the time to be here today and for your willingness to share your experiences. Our hope is that by the end of this conversation, we will develop a clearer idea of the information, concerns, and barriers the Latine community in Minnesota may have as it related to SNAP. This project is funded by Second Harvest Heartland, a Twin Cities food bank that is dedicated to ending hunger in Minnesota and western Wisconsin through providing day-to-day or long-term food support, aid in food assistance programs, and sustainably setting up food systems to provide consistent support to communities across the state. Through HACER's partnership with Second Harvest Heartland, information about how to best support Latine communities through SNAP education and enrollment will be gathered. The first is a consent form that outlines the project where you will be able to officially agree to participate. Also, the information we gather in this form is necessary to compensate you for your participation. The second is a demographic form to gather more information on you. This form will not have your name attached to it.

While I will be asking questions today to address these topics during our time together, I would like this to be an open conversation. This is a safe space where there are no right or wrong answers. Our only goal is to understand how your experience and understanding of SNAP, so all information, all opinions, all questions and so on are valuable and valid.

I would also like to inform you that this conversation will be recorded for notetaking purposes. While NOTETAKER does a great job of taking notes, they are not able to get all the details in real time. Recording helps us ensure that we get the best details and that we accurately understand and report what you share. I can promise you that no names will be used in any final reporting or shared by me outside this conversation. Your identity is confidential. To preserve that anonymity, you may also keep your camera turned off during the session if you would like and you may also change your screen name to something different, such as "Participant 5". Lastly, this recording will be saved on a password protected computer and will only be shared with the researchers working on this project at HACER. Information gathered in this project will also be visible to our funders at Second Harvest Heartland. Additionally, the final report created for this project may be made public but will not contain any identifiable information. If you do not feel comfortable with us recording this session, we will make do with the notes that we are able to take. This will not in any way affect your relationship with any organization involved in this project or any of its members.

I will give you a second to mute your mic or to turn off your camera or change your name if you would like. I will begin recording now.

As a reminder, the SNAP program also refers to food stamps and EBT.

Facilitator Questions

1. Let's start by doing some introductions.
 - a. If you could each, please introduce yourselves, I will pick based on the order you appear on my Zoom screen. **What is your favorite fall activity?**
2. Are you familiar with SNAP, which is also called EBT and food stamps? Can you share what you know about SNAP?
 - a. Facilitator should provide an explanation of EBT vs P-EBT, if necessary. [Note for HACER: We anticipate there will be some confusion based on our recent experience that many people will be thinking of P-EBT which is very different than EBT. So, we want to make sure that we clarify and the conversation to follow focuses on SNAP.]
 - b. Facilitator should provide a high-level explanation of SNAP if nobody is familiar with it, it's not very clear, or there are misconceptions. Make note there will be fliers at the door with more info on SNAP and a way to get help with the process. Note for HACER: SHH will provide SNAP fliers; clients can reach out directly to us (using info on fliers) for more information and support with an application.
3. Have you applied for SNAP benefits before? If so, how was this experience?
4. What perceptions do you have of SNAP?
 - a. *Probe:* What have you heard from family, friends, and neighbors about SNAP?
 - b. Do you know SNAP by another name that we haven't already mentioned?
 - c. If you are not familiar with SNAP, what questions do you have about the program?
 - i. Note for HACER: Don't try to answer these questions in real time. Again, direct people to the fliers and have them reach out to us to get answers.
5. What kind of concerns, if any, do you have about applying for SNAP?
 - a. Have you heard stories from friends, family members, or other community members, either positive or negative, about applying for SNAP?
 - b. Have you heard of public charge? What have you heard?
 - i. If you have heard of public charge, does this affect how you feel about SNAP? Does it impact your willingness to apply for SNAP?
 - ii. If you haven't heard of public charge, have you heard friends or community members say that getting SNAP could have an impact on someone's ability to get US citizenship?
 1. Facilitator to explain what public charge was with an emphasis that it is no longer being considered and that SNAP does not impact citizenship applications.
6. Do you think there are barriers for Latino communities when it comes to applying for SNAP?
 - a. What are these barriers? (Example: language barriers, accessibility barriers, lack of outreach, stigma, etc.)
 - b. Have you experienced any barriers while trying to apply for SNAP services?
 - i. *Probe:* If you have not tried to enroll in SNAP, what has prevented you from applying?
7. With these barriers and perceptions of SNAP in mind, what kind of information or messages would be most effective in getting Latino community members to apply for the SNAP benefits they are entitled to?
8. Where do you look for and find information about resources that might help your family?

- a. Where would you expect to get information about SNAP?
9. What advice would you give to an organization that wants to share information about SNAP to the Latino community? (Example: in-person outreach, emails, informational sessions, etc.)
 - a. *Probe:* Where should they share information?
 - b. *Probe:* How should they share information?
 - c. What do you want these organizations to know about the Latino community? Such as community values, communication styles, or anything else.

Thank you for your participation in this conversation, we are glad to hear your perspective and your experiences. If you have any questions after this meeting, you are more than welcome to email either Rodolfo or Nicolas. You will be receiving a flyer with contact information that you can refer to to have any questions answered about SNAP, or any of the topics discussed today. Additionally, if you have peers that may be interested in participating in this project, feel free to give them Nico's contact information at Nicolas@hacer-mn.org. You will be receiving your vanilla gift card for \$40 via mail within three weeks.

Appendix 3. Survey



Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research

Latine Experiences with Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)

Date: _____

Only one adult per household can complete the survey

You have been invited to complete a survey for our research project, conducted by Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER) on behalf of our client, Second Harvest Heartland. Your participation is voluntary, and your answers will remain anonymous. It will take 5-10 minutes to complete the survey and as a thank you for your time, eligible participants, will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card. On the last page, you will have the opportunity to share your contact information to receive your gift card; this page will be removed, and your answers will **not** be linked to your survey responses. We, HACER, will be in contact with you to give you your gift card through email; you must provide a valid and working email address to receive it.

Our hope is that by completing this survey, we will be able to develop a clearer idea of your experiences with and perceptions of the SNAP program, and your thoughts and opinions on these experiences.

Pre-Requisite Questions

1. Which state do you reside in? _____
2. Have you ever worried about how you will pay for your bills?
 - Yes
 - No
3. Do you identify as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish? (Select all that apply)
 - No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
 - Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
 - Yes, Salvadorian
 - Yes, Puerto Rican
 - Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin not listed (please specify):

Pre-Survey Information

SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) is a federal nutrition assistance program that enables income-eligible households to afford more food to be prepared at home.

Throughout this survey we will use the term SNAP, but many know this program as food stamps or EBT.

To clarify: P-EBT is a **different** nutrition program, though benefits come on a card similar to SNAP. P-EBT was specific to the pandemic, and the program assisted the households of students who were eligible for free or reduced lunch. It did not require families to apply to receive the benefits. SNAP/EBT, however, has a specific application and enrollment process.

This is a survey about SNAP, not P-EBT. Even if you have never heard of SNAP, answer the questions to the best of your ability. Any and all responses are valuable and valid.

Your experience and knowledge of SNAP

4. Prior to this survey, had you ever heard of SNAP?

- Yes
- No

5. Prior to this survey, had you ever heard of SNAP by a different name?

- Yes (If “Yes”, continue to 7b) 
- No

6. Have you ever applied for SNAP?

- Yes (if yes, please skip to question 8)
- No (if no, please go to question 7)

7. If you answered “No” to question 6, why not?

- I do not know how to apply for SNAP
- The application was not in a language I could understand
- I needed help with the application but was not able to get help
- I believe I am not eligible for SNAP benefits because of my income
- I believe it will negatively affect my application for residency or citizenship
- I do not believe I am eligible because of my immigration status
- I do not know
- Other: _____

7b. What other names have you heard it described as?

- Estampillas / Food Stamps
- EBT
- Cupones de alimentos
- Other:

Perceptions of the SNAP program

8. How strongly do you disagree or agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe I can benefit from SNAP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to apply for SNAP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe applying for SNAP is simple	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know where to look for help for my SNAP application	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how enrolling in SNAP would benefit me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the eligibility requirements for SNAP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. What concerns, if any, do you have about applying for SNAP? (Select all that apply)

- I believe it will impact my child's finances in the future
- It may cause my child to be prioritized during wartime
- It may negatively impact my application for residency or citizenship
- I do not know if I am eligible and do not want to accidentally commit fraud
- I do not have any concerns about applying for SNAP
- Other: _____

Barriers for Latine Communities

10. How much of an effect do you believe the following factors have on Latino communities applying for SNAP?

	No effect	Minor effect	Moderate effect	Major effect
Lack of information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Misinformation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language barriers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Immigration status	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discrimination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stigma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eligibility requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time constraints	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paperwork Needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Have you ever experienced any barriers to applying for SNAP?

- If yes, what was your experience?

- If no, what was your experience?

Education and Outreach

12. What are your most preferred ways of receiving more information about SNAP? (Select only two)

- Informational Sessions
- 1-on-1 help
- Social media
- Emails and newsletters
- Posters and signs
- Pamphlet or flyer
- Word of mouth
- Community Events (resource fair, school events, church events)
- Other: _____

13. What kind of information would be most effective to help Latinos apply for SNAP? (Select only two)

- Information about benefits of applying for SNAP
- Information that clearly communicates eligibility requirements
- Information that clearly indicates the impact of applying for SNAP for individuals of different immigration status
- Information that clearly outlines the documents necessary to apply
- Information that clearly addresses misinformation
- Information that is properly translated into Spanish
- Other: _____

14. Is there anything else you think it is important for organizations working with Latino communities to know?

Demographic Information

15. What is your city of residence: _____

16. What is your zip code: _____

17. What is your age?

- Under 18 years old
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+ years

18. What is your primary language?

- Spanish only
- A combination of English and Spanish
- English only



Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research

Contact Information to receive gift card

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. **In order for HACER to send you your \$10 Amazon gift card, for completing the survey, you must enter your contact information.**

Some of your comments and topics you bring up in the survey might be shared **without** your name attached in final reports that we share publicly outside of HACER. We will share demographic information you provide (such as the county you live in and your age), in aggregate (as a group) in final reports that we will share publicly outside of HACER. Your name and contact information will **not** be shared or connected to your comments or demographic information in any reports that we share publicly.

First and last name:

Email (**you must have a functioning email that you have access to in order to receive the gift card**)

Phone number:

Would you like to be added to our contact list to learn about more opportunities like these in the future?

- Yes
- No

Appendix 4. Promotional materials

Focus group flyers (Spanish, English)



¿ALGUNA VEZ HA TENIDO PROBLEMAS PARA PAGAR EL SUPERMERCADO?

¿Alguna vez ha tenido problemas para llegar a fin de mes y ha necesitado ayuda para salir adelante?

Únase a nosotros para conversar sobre SNAP y EBT (cupones de alimentos), un programa gubernamental de asistencia alimentaria que brinda a las personas que califican fondos para pagar los alimentos. Se llevarán a cabo tres grupos de enfoque con participantes elegibles para comprender mejor la percepción de SNAP de las comunidades latinas. Esta información se utilizará para ayudar a las familias latinas a recibir el apoyo alimentario al que tienen derecho.

DEBE SER DE HERENCIA LATINA Y RESIDIR DENTRO DEL ÁREA METRO PARA PARTICIPAR

25 de Octubre
27 de Octubre
1 de Noviembre

6:00pm -7:30pm

vía **ZOOM OR EN PERSONA**

Una Tarjeta de Regalo de Vanilla Visa de \$40 está disponible para aquellos que participen

Contacto:
Nicolas Diaz de Leon
nicolas@hacer-mn.org

Regístrate Aquí:
tinyurl.com/SHH-FG




HAVE YOU EVER STRUGGLED TO PAY YOUR GROCERY BILLS?

Have you ever had trouble making ends meet and needed help to get by?

Join us for a conversation about SNAP & EBT (food stamps), a governmental food assistance program that provides individuals that qualify with funds to pay for groceries. Three focus groups will be conducted with eligible participants to better understand the Latine communities' perception of SNAP. This information will be used to help Latine families receive the food support they are entitled to.

MUST BE OF LATINO HERITAGE AND RESIDE WITHIN THE METRO AREA TO PARTICIPATE

October 25th
October 27th
November 1st

6:00pm -7:30pm

via **ZOOM OR IN-PERSON**

\$40 Vanilla Visa Gift Card is available for those who participate

Contact:
Nicolas Diaz de Leon
nicolas@hacer-mn.org

Register Here:
tinyurl.com/SHH-FG




Interview flyers (Spanish, English)



¿ALGUNA VEZ HA TENIDO PROBLEMAS PARA PAGAR LOS ALIMENTOS?

¿Alguna vez ha tenido problemas para llegar a fin de mes y ha requerido asistencia económica?

Únase a nosotros para una conversación 1 a 1 sobre SNAP y EBT (o cupones de alimentos), un programa gubernamental de asistencia alimentaria que brinda a las personas que califican fondos para pagar los alimentos. Se realizarán entre 8 y 10 entrevistas en profundidad con participantes elegibles para comprender mejor la percepción de SNAP de las comunidades Latinas y las formas en que SHH puede ayudarlos a comprender la elegibilidad y la inscripción.

Solo fuera del área metropolitana.

Una Tarjeta de Regalo de Vanilla Visa de \$40

está disponible para aquellos que participen

Las entrevistas se programarán entre:
10 de Oct. - 11 de Nov.
Según la disponibilidad de cada participante.

vía ZOOM
OR EN PERSONA

Contacto:
Nicolas Diaz de Leon
nicolas@hacer-mn.org



Regístrate Aquí:
tinyurl.com/SHH-Interview






HAVE YOU EVER STRUGGLED TO PAY YOUR GROCERY BILLS?

Have you ever had trouble making ends meet and required financial assistance?

Join us for a 1-on-1 conversation about SNAP & EBT (or food stamps), a governmental food assistance program that provides individuals that qualify with funds to pay for groceries. 8-10 in-depth interviews will be conducted with eligible participants to better understand the Latine communities' perception of SNAP and ways in which SHH can support them in understanding eligibility and enrollment. **Outside of metro area only.**

\$40 Vanilla Visa Gift Card

is available for those who participate

Interviews will be scheduled between
Oct. 10th - Nov. 11th
According to the availability of each participant

via ZOOM
OR IN-PERSON

Contact:
Nicolas Diaz de Leon
nicolas@hacer-mn.org



Register Here:
tinyurl.com/SHH-Interview





Survey flyers (Spanish, English)



¿ALGUNA VEZ HA TENIDO PROBLEMAS PARA PAGAR EL SUPERMERCADO?

¿Alguna vez ha tenido problemas para llegar a fin de mes y ha necesitado ayuda para salir adelante?

Responde a esta encuesta sobre SNAP y EBT (cupones de alimentos), un programa gubernamental de asistencia alimentaria que brinda a las personas que califican fondos para pagar los alimentos. La participación en la encuesta se utilizará para comprender mejor la percepción de SNAP de la comunidad Latine. Esta información se utilizará para ayudar a las familias latines a recibir el apoyo alimentario al que tienen derecho.

PARA PARTICIPAR DEBE SER DE HERENCIA LATINA Y RESIDIR DENTRO DE MINNESOTA

Para participar en la encuesta, responde antes del **28 de Diciembre**

Una Tarjeta de Regalo de Amazon de \$10 está disponible para aquellos que participen

Contacto:
Nicolas Díaz de Leon
nicolas@hacer-mn.org

Responder Aquí:
tinyurl.com/2c64sjw3





HAVE YOU EVER STRUGGLED TO PAY YOUR GROCERY BILLS?

Have you ever had trouble making ends meet and needed help to get by?

Respond to this survey about SNAP & EBT (food stamps), a governmental food assistance program that provides individuals that qualify with funds to pay for groceries. Participation in the survey will be used to better understand the Latine community's perception of SNAP. This information will be used to help Latine families receive the food support they are entitled to.

MUST BE OF LATINO HERITAGE AND RESIDE WITHIN MINNESOTA TO PARTICIPATE

To participate in the survey, please respond by **December 28th**

\$10 Amazon Gift Card is available for those who participate

Contact:
Nicolas Díaz de Leon
nicolas@hacer-mn.org

Respond Here:
tinyurl.com/2c64sjw3