



Arab-American Family
Support Center

FOOD SECURITY PROGRAM EVALUATION RESULTS

Examining the impact of culturally-
responsive food-security initiatives

NOVEMBER 2021



AAFSC's FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMS

The Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC) provides a range of culturally and linguistically competent, trauma-informed social services to support immigrants and refugees throughout New York City. While our doors are open to all, we have gained expertise serving Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) communities. Across the organization, we speak 32 different languages and are representative of our client base. As part of our broader health initiatives, we support individuals in achieving food security through our SNAP Enrollment Program, resource navigation, direct food distribution, and emergency funding.

The communities we serve suffer from systemic barriers to healthy food access and experience higher rates of hunger, malnutrition, obesity, diabetes, and isolation. In addition, many of the immigrants we serve recently dis-enrolled in their public benefits due to fear of deportation and family separation created by the executive administration's changes to the definition of public charge. While there has consistently been a need for our services, COVID-19 adds a new dimension of risk and severity. Compared with pre-pandemic levels, we have witnessed a 357% increase in demand for our SNAP enrollment services. The community members that we support have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic because of pre-existing food insecurity and harmful political rhetoric and policies that prevent immigrants from utilizing essential benefits.

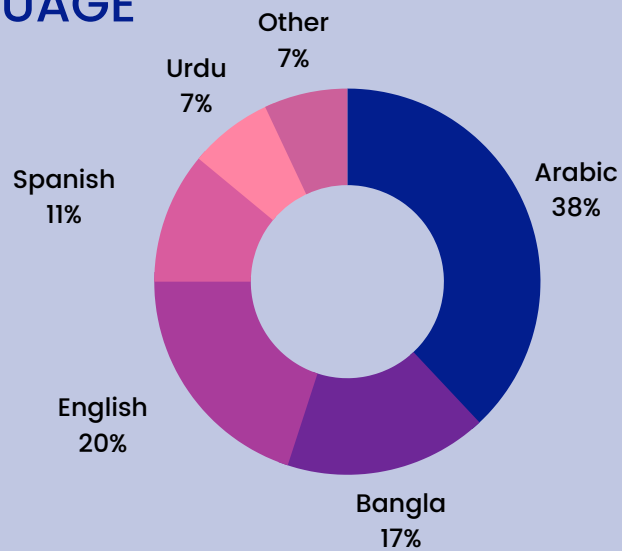
Food security is foundational to our work promoting health and well-being in immigrant and refugee communities. In the face of rising need, AAFSC has expanded our food security initiatives to address the layers of institutional barriers that deter food access and help the most vulnerable families often left out of traditional government services. Through our Community Health & Well-Being Program, we support families enroll in SNAP benefits to ensure they are able to maintain reliable access to healthy food through local markets. Understanding that some individuals are ineligible for or unwilling to enroll in SNAP due to immigration-related concerns, our Emergency Relief Fund – which has distributed \$500,000 during the COVID-19 pandemic – steps in to provide financial assistance to families facing a crisis. During the pandemic, AAFSC has expanded our efforts to provide direct food distribution to vulnerable families. We partnered with GetFoodNYC to facilitate food deliveries to individuals with compromised health conditions and coordinated the distribution of culturally-appropriate boxes of food to 275 families, filling a gap in NYC's food distribution efforts which often do not account for Halal-observant families.

Understanding that food-security is a deep-rooted issue for low-income families, AAFSC implemented a long-term evaluation tool to assess the impact of benefits enrollment long after our direct case management services are complete. Utilizing the Vital Hunger Signs scale – a validated food-insecurity screening tool – we connect with families one year following their enrollment in SNAP to determine if they continue to experience the symptoms of food insecurity. In doing so, we are evaluating the efficacy of our food assistance support and ensuring that we maintain our wrap-around presence for families in need. As the economic and social effects of COVID-19 continue to impact immigrant and refugee communities, AAFSC is dedicated to monitoring and responding to the evolving need for responsive and innovative food insecurity interventions. The following report captures the nature of this need and the impact of culturally and linguistically competent initiatives in promoting food security.

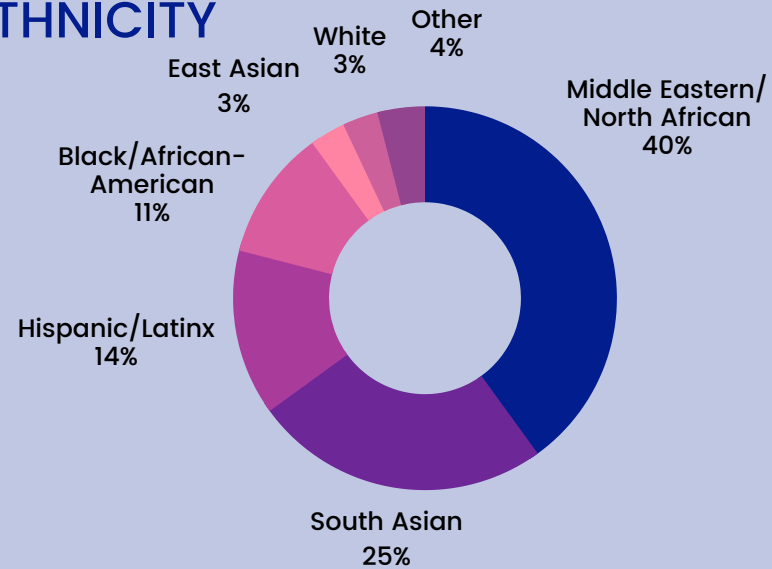


COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

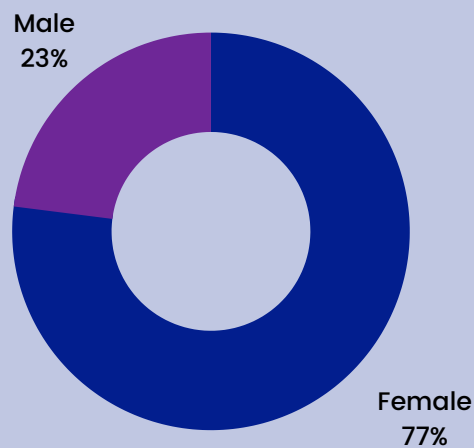
LANGUAGE



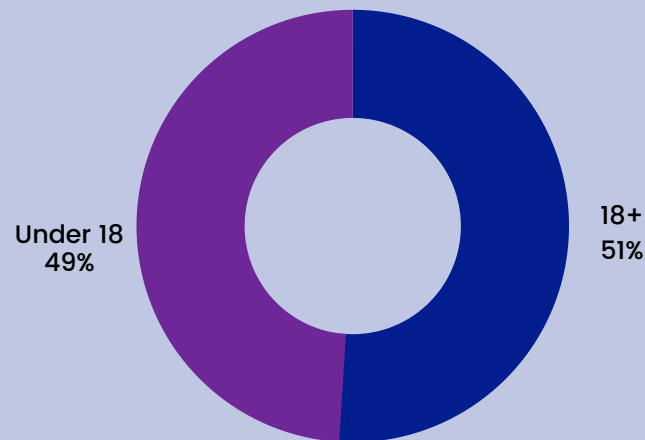
RACE/ETHNICITY



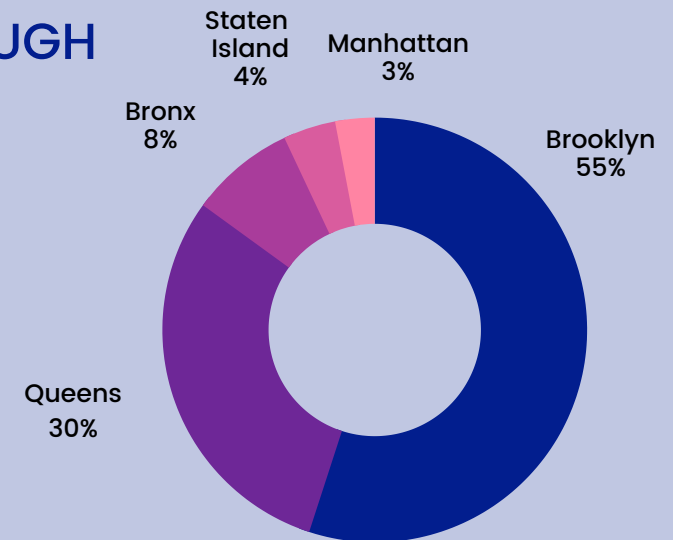
GENDER



AGE

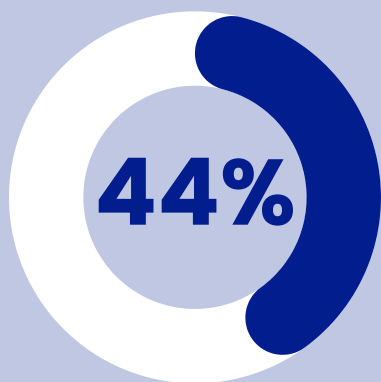


BOROUGH

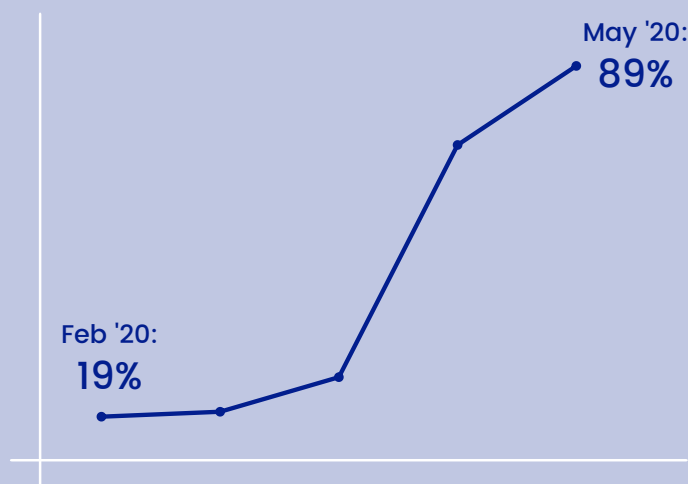


LANDSCAPE OF NEED

Results from AAFSC's Community Needs Assessment* show:



of respondents do not have adequate access to food



significant increase in the percentage of respondents reporting inadequate food access during the pandemic

357%

increase in demand for food assistance services, compared to pre-pandemic levels

Read the full report at aafscny.org/our-impact



FOOD SECURITY IMPACT SNAPSHOT

927

individuals enrolled in SNAP
and GetFood benefits

275

families received
culturally-appropriate food
through our direct food
distribution efforts

94%

of SNAP recipients are
food-secure one year after
receiving case
management support

78%

of families receiving SNAP
enrollment support are new
enrollees accessing support
for the first time

63%

of the \$500,000 distributed
through AAFSC's
Emergency Relief Fund are
used to buy food



WHAT'S NEXT?

The Arab-American Family Support Center is proud to have scaled our efforts to address the rising need for food assistance in our communities. Throughout the pandemic, AAFSC's Community Health & Well-Being Program continues to offer uninterrupted comprehensive resource navigation services to clients, connecting them to a variety of supportive services designed to combat the causes and symptoms of food insecurity, while overcoming the linguistic, cultural, technical, and eligibility barriers that often hinder adequate food access for immigrant families.

The significant increase in AAFSC's service utilization rates, as well as results from a longitudinal evaluation of our SNAP enrollment program, strongly indicate that our services are effective in connecting families to the support they need and cultivating long-term food security for low-income families. At a time when immigrant and refugee families continue to experience disproportionate economic and health impacts of COVID-19, AAFSC is committed to reducing food insecurity through our culturally and linguistically competent case management approach.



AAFSC's Research Institute is a hub for research & evaluation that measures community needs and analyzes the impact of culturally and linguistically-responsive programs and initiatives. For more reports and insights, visit our Impact page at aafscny.org/our-impact.



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To support the immigrant and refugee families that AAFSC serves, please donate today at aafscny.org/donate

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