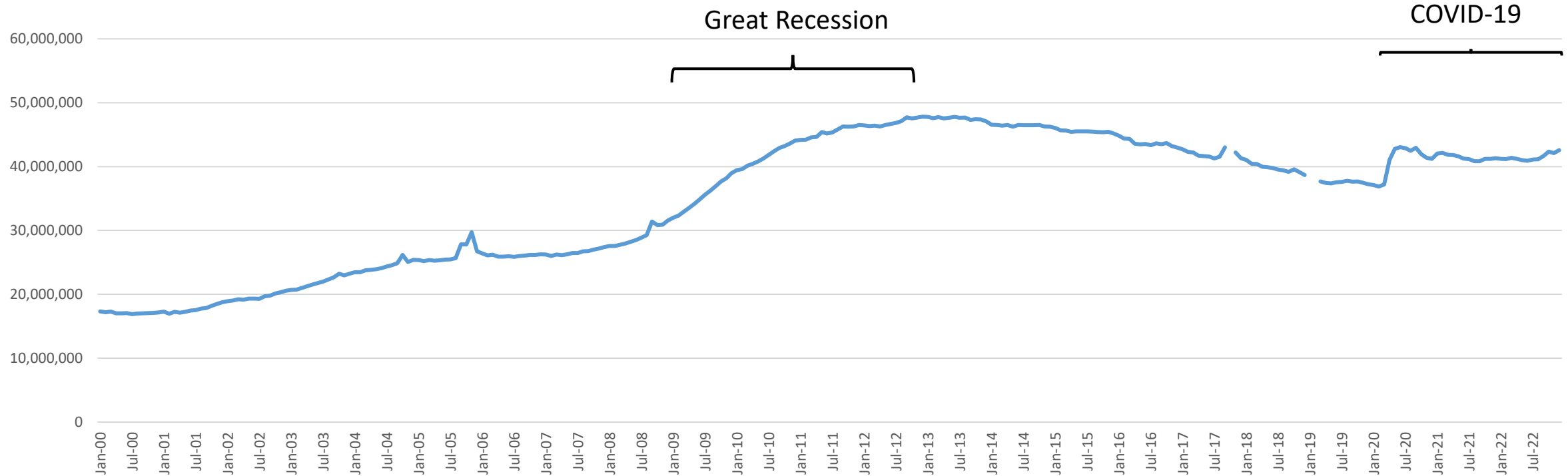# Race and Ethnicity in SNAP Administrative Records

James Noon, Maria Perez-Patron, Mehrgol Tiv, and Renuka Bhaskar,
U.S. Census Bureau

Session B-4: Equity in STEM, Health, Poverty,
and Race and Ethnicity Identification
2023 FCSM Research and Policy Conference
October 24, 2023

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# Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), 2000-2022



Source: SNAP National Data Bank estimates available from USDA

- Largest nutrition assistance program aimed at reducing domestic hunger by providing low-income households benefits that can be used to purchase food at authorized retailers

- SNAP has been shown to reduce food insecurity, improve health outcomes and has provided essential assistance in economic downturns and disaster situations

# Race and Ethnicity in SNAP applications

- State agencies that administer SNAP are required to collect data on participants' race and ethnicity to help Food and Nutritional Services (FNS) to:
  - Ensure that program benefits are distributed without regard to race, color, or national origin
  - Determine how effectively FNS programs are reaching potential eligible persons and beneficiaries

- The application form must clearly indicate that the information is voluntary and that it will not affect the eligibility or the level of benefits

**A. HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS**

*Fill in the blanks for everyone that lives with you. List your own name first. Social Security number and Citizenship are optional for members not applying for benefits.* Use the codes below to complete the Citizenship, Race and Ethnicity columns. Enter each code that applies, using at least one code for each person.
**Ethnicity Codes:** 1= Hispanic or Latino, 2=Not Hispanic/Latino
**Race Codes: you can choose one or more race code -** 1=American Indian/Alaskan Native, 2=Asian, 3=Black/African American, 4=Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 5=White
**Citizenship/Immigration Code:** 1=United States Citizen, 2=Permanent Resident, 3=Asylee, 4=Alien granted conditional entry, 5=Parolee 1 year or more, 6=Alien whose deportation is withheld, 7=Refugee, 8=Battered alien spouse, child, or parent of child(ren)

Note: You do not have to give information about your race or ethnicity. If you do, it will help show how we obey the Federal Civil Rights Law. We will not use this information to decide if you are eligible. If you do not give us your race, it will not affect your application. The case manager will enter a race code for statistical purposes only. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 allows us to ask for this information.

Example: MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

# State SNAP data sharing with the U.S. Census Bureau



States with current SNAP data sharing agreements as of March 2023
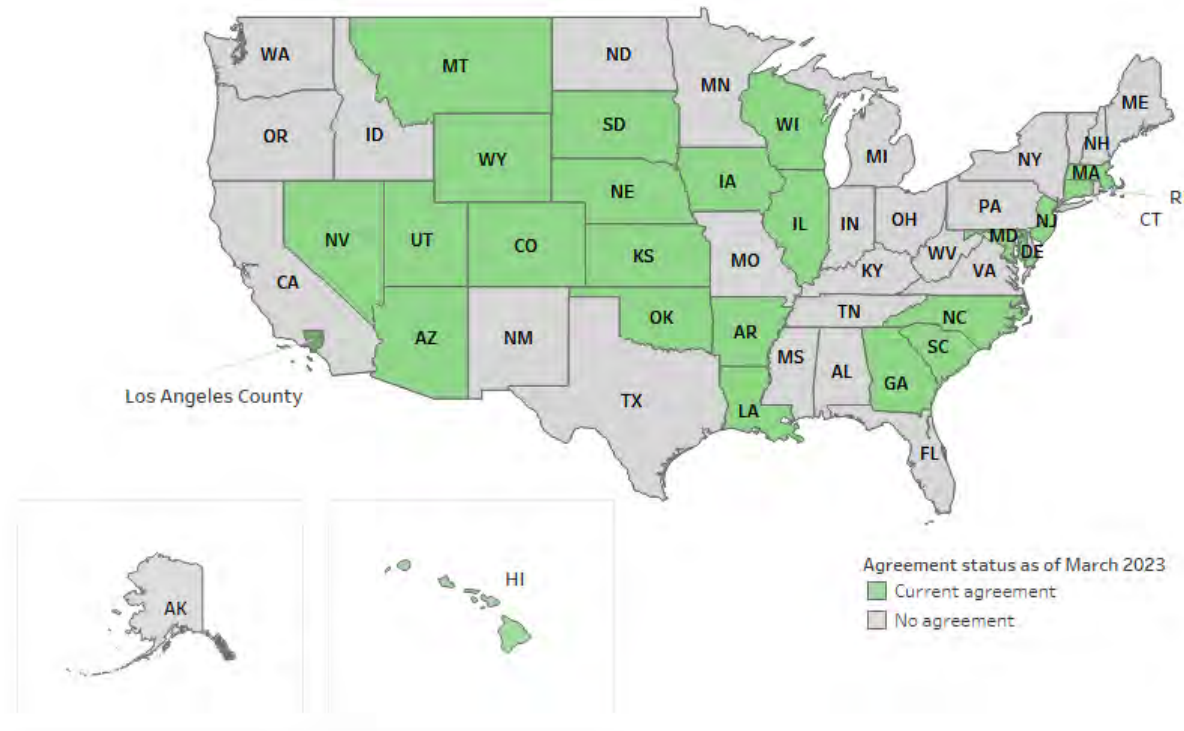
As part of a joint project with USDA Economic Research Service and FNS, the U.S. Census Bureau has acquired SNAP data from several states

# Research Questions

1. To understand the availability and quality of race and ethnicity data in state SNAP administrative records

2. To compare SNAP data on race and ethnicity to Census and survey responses
   - How well do race and ethnicity SNAP data match Census Bureau data?

# Methods

1. To understand the availability and quality of race and ethnicity data in state SNAP administrative records

   ➤ **We will evaluate the availability and completeness of race and ethnicity information in administrative records**

2. To compare SNAP data on race and ethnicity to Census and survey responses

   • How well do race and ethnicity SNAP data match Census Bureau data?

   ➤ **We will compare the distribution of race and ethnicity responses in the Administrative Records compared to Census Bureau Data (Title 13 data coming from responses to Census and ACS data)**
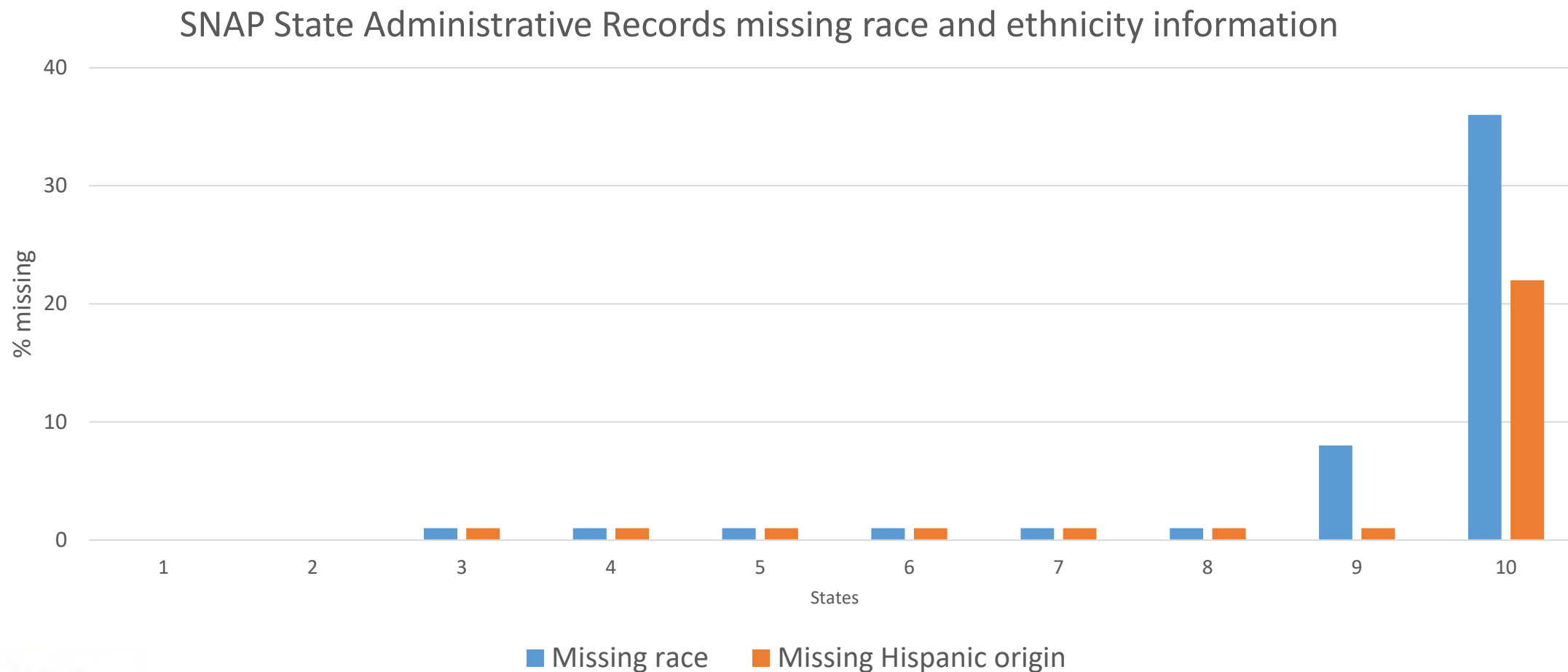
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# Data

- State SNAP administrative records for 2019
  - Only participants with Protected Identification Keys (PIKs) are included in the analysis
    - PIKs are assigned to protect privacy and allow record linkage*
    - Very high rate of PIK assignment
    - z

- Census Bureau Race and Hispanic origin responses
  - From Census 2000, 2010 Census, and American Community Survey (ACS) data for 2001-2019
  - Keep most recent response to questions on race and Hispanic origin
  - As reported, no proxy or edited responses

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# To compare SNAP state administrative data on race and ethnicity to Census and survey responses

1) Restrict to individuals who participated in SNAP at any time in 2019 and that were assigned a PIK

2) Recode race/ethnicity variables into consistent categories across states, as possible, and tabulate for all participants

3) Link state SNAP data to previous Census/ACS race and ethnicity responses by PIKs

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# Results

# 1. To understand the availability and quality of race and ethnicity data in state SNAP administrative records



SNAP State Administrative Records missing race and ethnicity information

■ Missing race   ■ Missing Hispanic origin

# 1. To understand the availability and quality of race and ethnicity data in state SNAP administrative records



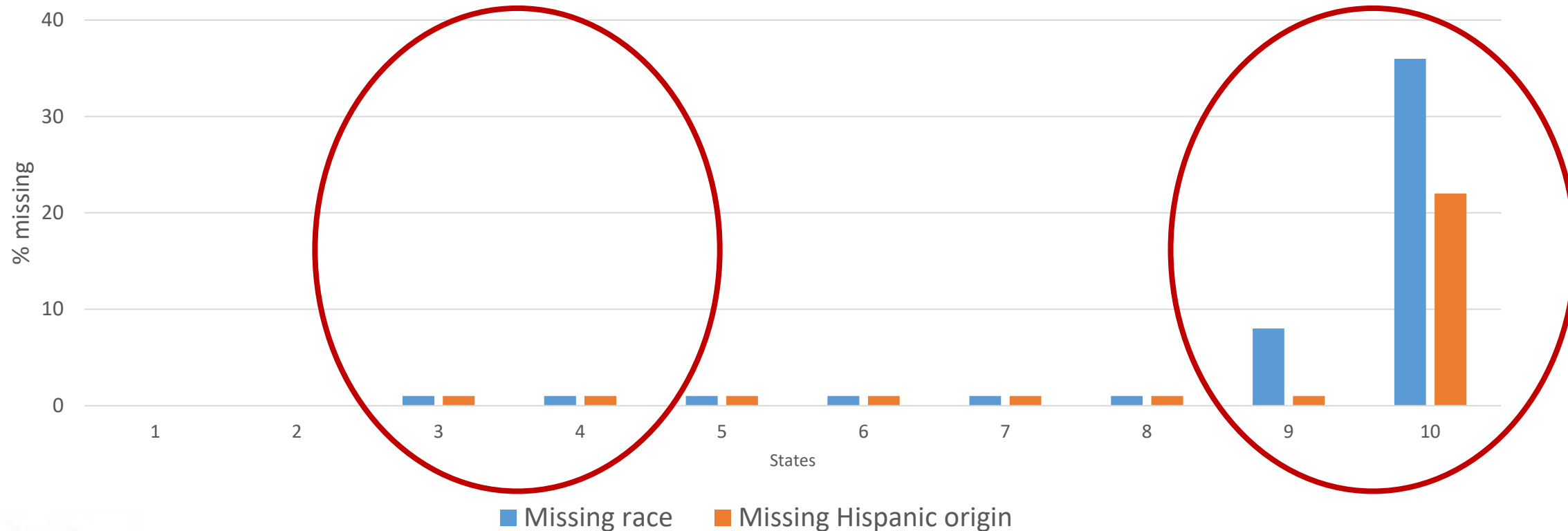SNAP State Administrative Records missing race and ethnicity information

Source: State SNAP administrative records for 2019
AIAN = American Indian or Alaska Native; NHPI = Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
Approved for disclosure under: CBDRB-FY22-CES014-044; CBDRB-FY24-CES005-002.

# Race and Hispanic origin distribution for 2019 State SNAP Administrative Records

| Race | State A | State B | State C | State D |
|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| White Alone | 58.6 % | 65.7 % | 32.7% | 44.8% |
| Black Alone | 26.6 % | 11.1 % | 29.5% | 15.1% |
| AIAN alone | 1.1 % | 11.1 % | <1% | <1% |
| Asian alone | 3.2 % | 1.1 % | <1% | 3.9% |
| NHPI alone | 1.9 % | <1% | <1% | <1% |
| Some Other Race alone | - | - | 35.8% | - |
| Two or More Races | 8.4 % | 2.7 % | <1% | - |
| Missing | <1% | 8.0 % | <1% | 35.7% |
| **Hispanic Origin** | | | | |
| Hispanic | 29.9 % | 34.2 % | 31.6% | 26.9% |
| Non-Hispanic | 70.0 % | 65.8 % | 68.4% | 50.8% |
| Missing | <1% | <1% | 0% | 22.3% |

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Source: State SNAP administrative records for 2019
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# 2. To compare SNAP data on race and ethnicity to Census and survey responses

- How well do race and ethnicity SNAP data match Census Bureau data?

  ➢ **We will compare the distribution of race and ethnicity responses in the Administrative Records compared to Census Bureau Data (Title 13 data coming from responses to Census and ACS data)**

# Availability of previous Census responses for 2019 SNAP participants

| % with Census responses available | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **State A** | **State B** | **State C** | **State D** |
| **Race** | **63%** | **56%** | **63.2%** | **66.1%** |
| White alone | 63.6 | 61.1 | 73.0 | 77.8 |
| Black alone | 64.1 | 59.1 | 60.8 | 64.0 |
| AIAN alone | 43.9 | 23.6 | 59.0 | 62.2 |
| Asian alone | 69.6 | 55.7 | 64.5 | 69.0 |
| NHPI alone | 57.3 | 56.9 | 70.0 | 49.4 |
| Some other race | 51.9 | 45.8 | 56.2 | --- |
| Two or more races | 51.9 | 45.8 | 64.7 | --- |
| Missing Race | --- | 56.8 | 66.1 | 52.2 |
| **Hispanic origin** | **63%** | **63%** | **62.1%** | **66.6%** |
| Hispanic | 54.4 | 56.6 | 57.9 | 62.0 |
| Non-Hispanic | 67.0 | 66.5 | 64.1 | 72.6 |
| Missing Ethnicity | --- | --- | --- | 58.6 |

# Availability of previous Census response for 2019 SNAP participants by Age

| | % with Census responses available | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **State C** | | **State D** | |
| **Age** | **Race Available** | **Ethnicity Available** | **Race Available** | **Ethnicity Available** |
| 0-4 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 1.7 |
| 5-9 | 7.5 | 7.3 | 8.2 | 8.0 |
| 10-17 | 70.5 | 68.5 | 67.4 | 67.8 |
| 18-64 | 84.8 | 83.6 | 82.7 | 84.0 |
| 65+ | 84.7 | 83.4 | 83.6 | 82.0 |

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# How well do race and ethnicity SNAP data match Census Bureau data?



Match Rate in Linked SNAP-Census Records

Source: SNAP 2019, Census 2000, 2010 Census, and 2001-2019 ACS 1-year data.
Note: Disclosure Approval # CBDRB-FY22-CES014-044; CBDRB-FY24-CES005-002

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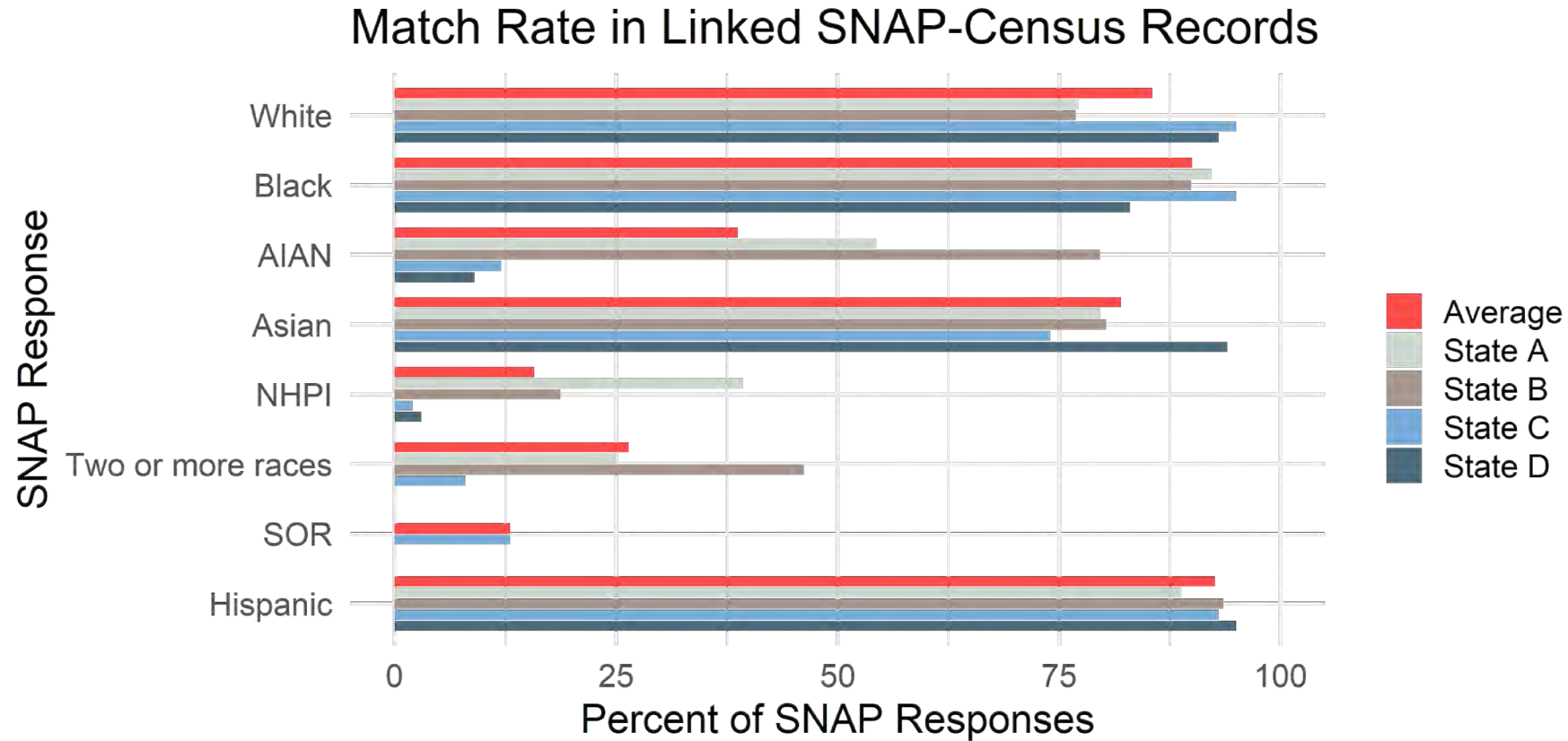


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Note: Disclosure Approval # CBDRB-FY22-CES014-044; CBDRB-FY24-CES005-002

# Discussion

- The general patterns of race agreement between ARs and Census Bureau data are similar to previous research using Medicaid and other administrative data (Fernandez et. al, 2018; Rastogi and O'Hara, 2012)
  - White alone and Black alone populations tend to have high agreement rates
  - While AIAN, NHPI, and Two or More Races populations have low agreement rates

- We see some differences too
  - High match rates among AIAN in State B
  - High match rates among Hispanics as well as non-Hispanics in both states, both fairly diverse states, unlike Bhaskar et al., 2014 and Rastogi and O'Hara, 2012

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# Next Steps

- Expand analysis to additional states

- Include 2020 Census data to increase linkage rate

- Linkage to Census records with more consistent timing

- Evaluate SNAP race and Hispanic origin distributions over time and further explore more detailed race coding in SNAP data

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# Thank you!

For comments or questions:  james.noon@census.gov