

Immigrant Food Stamp Use Plummeted after Trump Took Office

-Claire Brown, *New Food Economy*

It's no secret that the Trump administration has long wanted to minimize the number of people who use food stamps. It has supported legislation that would impose strict work requirements on people participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).¹ Internal emails from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in April suggested that the agency may allow states to drug-test food aid applicants.² And the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [in October] published rules that say food stamp use will be a "heavily" weighted factor when considering applications for green cards.³

That last rule hasn't even gone into effect yet. But new research shows it might not matter. Preliminary data from a survey of more than 35,000 mothers of young children indicate a nearly 10 percent drop in SNAP enrollment among immigrant families who are eligible. The findings³, presented ... at the American Public Health association's annual meeting, found that immigrant mothers' participation in SNAP steadily increased from 2007 to 2017. Then, in the first half of 2018, the numbers suddenly dropped - by a lot. In 2017, 43 percent of eligible families who had been in the country for less than five years were participating in the program. By mid-2018, that figure had plummeted to 34.8 percent.

Allison Bovell-Ammon, lead researcher for the study and deputy director of policy strategy at Boston Medical Center's Children's HealthWatch, emphasized that SNAP eligibility rules didn't change between 2017 and 2018, so the drop is likely due to families' fear of potential repercussions for receiving food aid. "These findings demonstrate that rhetoric and the threat of policy changes, even before changes are enacted, may be causing families to forgo nutrition assistance," she said in a press release.⁴

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[In November], conservative news outlet Breitbart reported what it surely considered to be Trump-related good news⁵ - not related, certainly, to the recent spate of work requirements: Nationwide SNAP enrollment is at its lowest in nearly a decade. More than 3 million people have left the program since the president's first full month in office. Meanwhile, according to the Boston Medical Center research, food insecurity among immigrant families who have been in the country for less than five years has risen from 9.9 percent in 2017 to 17.8 percent today.

1) <https://newfoodeconomy.org/farm-bill-2018-2/>

2) <https://newfoodeconomy.org/trump-drug-test-snap-food-stamp-recipients-welfare/>

3) <https://newfoodeconomy.org/trump-green-card-food-stamps-penalty/>

4) <https://www.apha.org/news-adn-media/news-releases/apha-newes-releases/2018/annual-meeting-snap-participation>

5) <https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2018/11/11/food-stamp-participation-reaches-lowest-level-nearly-decade/>