

From Awareness to Access: Enhancing SNAP Participation Among Middle Eastern and North African Immigrants in North Carolina



Developing a Culturally Attuned Resource to Improve Food Security, Education, and Outreach in the Community

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Background

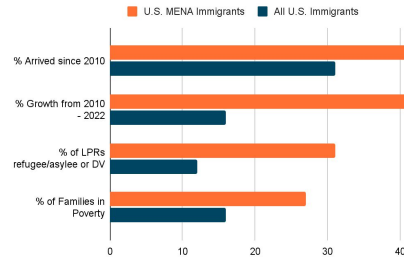
- SNAP is a household-level, food assistance program aimed at mitigating food insecurity and healthcare costs for eligible individuals and families of low socioeconomic status by providing benefits to utilize when purchasing nutritious foods.
- Public charge, sponsor liability, language/literacy barriers, and misinformation are the four main reasons a disproportionate amount of non-citizen households SNAP-eligible remain unenrolled.
- Most federal and state programs and forms of the US do not identify MENA as an ethnicity.
- Less than 50% of eligible immigrant households are enrolled in SNAP.

Methods

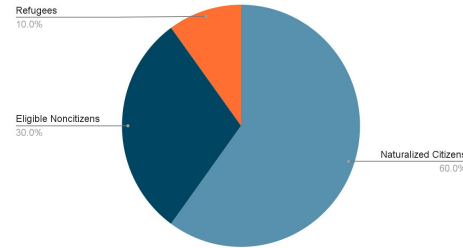
Federal SNAP resources and guidances for non-citizens were found on USDA and State websites. They were briefly analyzed and relevant information for immigrants' and refugees' was extracted into an easy-to-understand booklet. To develop the local EBT-accepting lists, preliminary lists of all major cultural stores of the NC Piedmont. Each business was called, asked, and recorded.

Data Visualization

MENA American Immigrant Population Statuses, FY 2022



SNAP Foreign-Born Participants, FY 2022



Trend of Underrepresentation of MENA in SNAP Participation

- The majority of MENA immigrants in the U.S. are of DV, refugee, or asylee status.
- Immigrants of refugee status are the least represented group among the 10% of SNAP participants foreign-born.
- In NC, MENA immigrant hubs are concentrated in the Piedmont region.



Further Actions

Resource translation is the next major step in pursuit of its dissemination. Distribution among the NC MENA Piedmont community is the short term goal as this initiative is projected to continue development. Affiliated with both a research lab and health nonprofit for refugees, resource lists can be added for regions other than the Piedmont, so as to eventually have the capacity to serve the broader state community. A 'cookbook' section for popular MENA dishes edited to include more nutritious ingredient substitutes, and EBT-accepting purchase locations for uncommon ingredients would be an avenue of interest as well. Federally and health-wise, research continues to fall MENA needs

Results

The lack of racial/ethnic options that accurately identify MENA prevents equitable resource allocation to these communities, including SNAP education and outreach. Thus, the development of a palatable yet comprehensive, culturally attuned SNAP education and outreach resource for the local North Carolina MENA community became one of the first informational initiatives targeted at this population. The resource includes a list of NC Piedmont region's local, cultural stores that accept EBT alongside SNAP information and eligibility outlines.

Curated Resource



References

