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Latino Economic Inequality in New York City: Income and SNAP Recipiency, 2013–2023

Oswaldo A. Mena Aguilar

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Latino Economic Inequality in New York City: Income and SNAP Reciprocity, 2013–2023

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The Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies is a research institute that works for the advancement of the study of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States in the doctoral programs at the CUNY Graduate Center. One of its major priorities is to provide funding, research, and mentoring opportunities to Latino students at the Ph.D. level.

The Latino Data Project was developed in 2003 with the goal of making information available on the dynamically growing Latino population of the United States and especially New York City through the analysis of extant data available from a variety of sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Institute for Health, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and state and local-level data sources.

All Latino Data Project reports are available at <http://clacls.gc.cuny.edu>.

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Executive Summary

This Latino Data Project report examines the economic well-being of Latino households in New York City between 2013 and 2023. It focuses on two indicators: household income and participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)¹.

The data reveals a troubling paradox: while median Latino household income in New York City grew between 2013 and 2023, inequality within the Latino community deepened dramatically, and Latino households fell further behind all other racial/ethnic groups.

The median Latino household income rose from \$46,998 in 2013 to \$52,223 in 2023, which represents an increase of 11% after adjusting for inflation². However, Latino households still had the lowest median income in 2023 compared to all other racial/ethnic groups. Non-Hispanic black households had median incomes of \$57,600; Asian households had median incomes of \$81,400; and non-Hispanic white households had median incomes of \$108,498.

Income inequality, or the difference between those who earn the most compared to those who earn the least, grew between 2013 and 2023 within the Latino population. While the highest-earning 10% of Latino households gained \$67,101 between 2013 and 2023 – a 25.7% increase in income – the lowest-earning 10% lost \$1,176, which represents a 16.6% decrease in income. As a result, the gap between rich and poor Latinos became much wider by 2023 than it had been ten years earlier.

Among the largest Latino national subgroups, Colombian and Ecuadorian households were the ones with the highest income levels in 2023. Colombian households had median incomes of \$ 69,100 and for Ecuadorian households it was \$ 69,500. Dominican and Puerto Rican households had the lowest median household incomes among the largest Latino nationalities, with \$45,609 and \$45,020, respectively.

¹ All data in this report uses Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) five-year samples. See Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Daniel Backman, Grace Cooper, Julia A. Rivera Drew, Stephanie Richards, Renae Rodgers, Jonathan Schroeder, and Kari C.W. Williams. IPUMS USA: Version 16.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V16.0>.

² All dollar amounts are inflation adjusted to 2023 dollars using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U, U.S. city average, annual averages)—a standard measure of inflation tracking prices paid by urban consumers for a fixed market basket. Each year’s income nominal value is scaled by the ratio of the CPI of 2023 to the CPI of the corresponding year.

Median household income also varied according to educational attainment and sex. Households headed by someone with a college degree had median household incomes of \$98,919, three times the income of a household headed by someone without a college degree who had median incomes of \$30,559 in 2023. Male-headed households earned about \$19,500 more per year in 2023 than female-headed households.

The level of participation in the SNAP program for Latino households remained unchanged during the study period, with one in every three Latino households receiving SNAP benefits – or 34% – in 2023. Latino households had the highest SNAP participation compared to other racial and ethnic groups, followed by non-Hispanic black households with a 26% participation. Non-Hispanic whites were the racial/ethnic group with the lowest participation at 9%.

SNAP use was concentrated among those with the lowest incomes in 2023, with about 68% of the poorest Latino households receiving SNAP, compared to only 12% of richest households.

As expected, Dominican and Puerto Rican households – the households with the lowest median incomes – were also the households with the highest SNAP participation rates with 45% and 39% respectively.

SNAP reciprocity also varied by the sex and educational attainment. In 2023, as much as 41% of female-headed Latino households received SNAP benefits, compared to only 24% of male-headed Latino households. In the same year, 51% of household-heads with less than a high school degree received SNAP benefits, compared to 13% of household-heads with a BA degree or higher.

Notably, participation by citizenship status reversed over the decade: non-citizen household enrollment dropped from 40% to 32%, while citizen household enrollment remained similar, slightly rising to 37% from 36%.

In conclusion, while Latino household incomes grew modestly over the decade, gains were unevenly distributed. The poorest Latino households lost ground while the richest pulled further ahead, and Latino households fell further behind other racial/ethnic groups in New York City. Latino households were also those that most frequently received SNAP benefits over the study period.

Latino Economic Inequality in New York City: Income and SNAP Reciprocity, 2013–2023

Section I

Race and ethnic composition

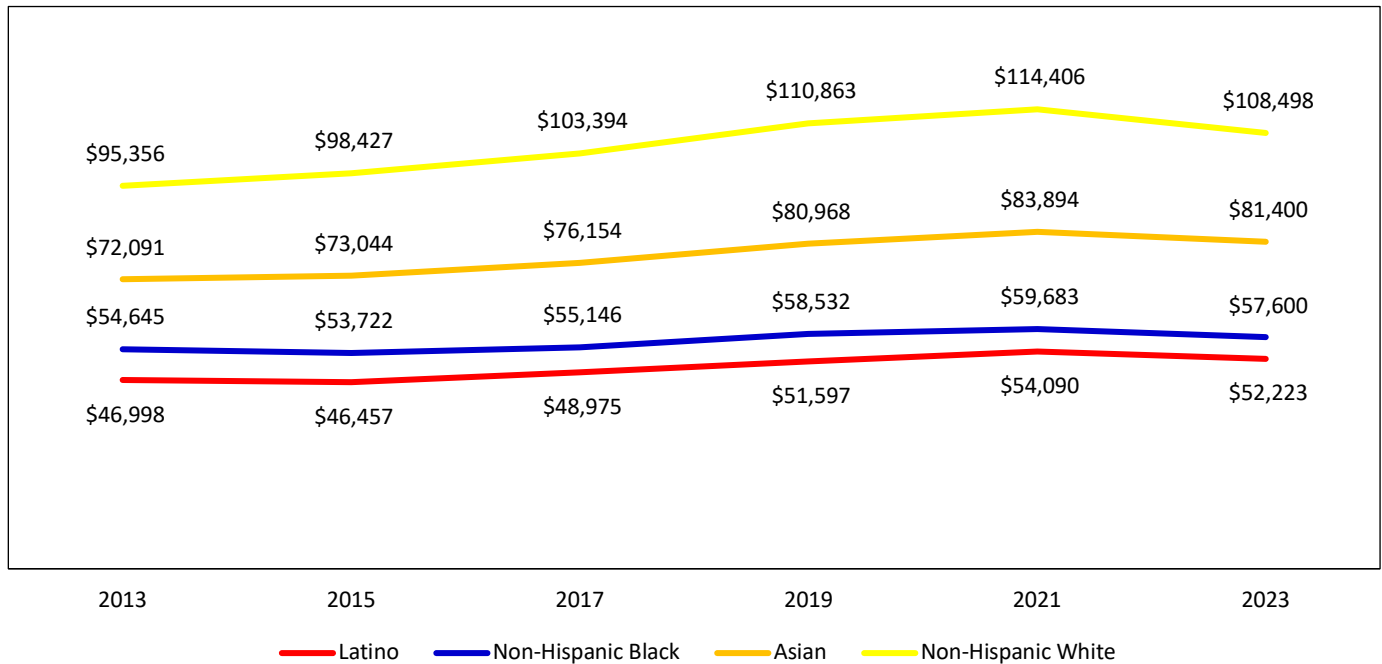
Between 2013 and 2023, real median household income rose across all racial and ethnic groups in New York City, but significant disparities persisted (Figure 1). Importantly, incomes peaked around 2021 and then dipped by 2023. After peaking in 2021 at \$54,090, Latino income fell 3.5% by 2023 relative to that year. Relative to 2013, Latino-headed households experienced an overall real income increase of 11.1% over the decade, rising from \$46,998 in 2013 to \$52,223 in 2023. However, despite this growth through the period, Latino households remained in the bottom of the income distribution relative to other races and ethnicities.

Non-Hispanic black-headed households saw their median income grow from \$54,645 to \$57,600 in real terms: an increase of 5.4% over the decade. From a 2021 peak of \$59,683, income of non-Hispanic black-headed households declined 3.5% by 2023. While Latinos initially earned 14.0% less than non-Hispanic black households in 2013, the gap narrowed to 9.3% by 2023, reflecting faster growth among Latino households. Regardless, Latino households remained below this and all other races and ethnicities.

Asian-headed households reported consistently high- and growing-income levels, rising from \$72,091 to \$81,400 (a 12.9% increase in real terms). From a 2021 peak of \$83,894, Asian income slipped 3.0% by 2023. At the top of the distribution, non-Hispanic white-headed households reported a median income increase from \$95,356 to \$108,498: a 13.8% rise in real terms, which represented the steepest increase among all races and ethnicities in New York City through the decade analyzed in this report. From a 2021 peak of \$114,406, non-Hispanic white income fell 5.2% by 2023.

These trends sustained a large and persistent income gap: Latino headed households earned 50.7% less than their non-Hispanic white counterparts in 2013, and 51.9% less by 2023, with the absolute gap widening by about \$7,900. Despite gains across all groups—and the pullback after 2021—the racial income hierarchy remained largely unchanged and Latino-headed households remained disproportionately concentrated at the bottom of the city’s income hierarchy.

Figure 1
 Median Household Income in Inflation Adjusted 2023 dollars by Race/Ethnicity of the Head of Household. New York City, 2013–2023

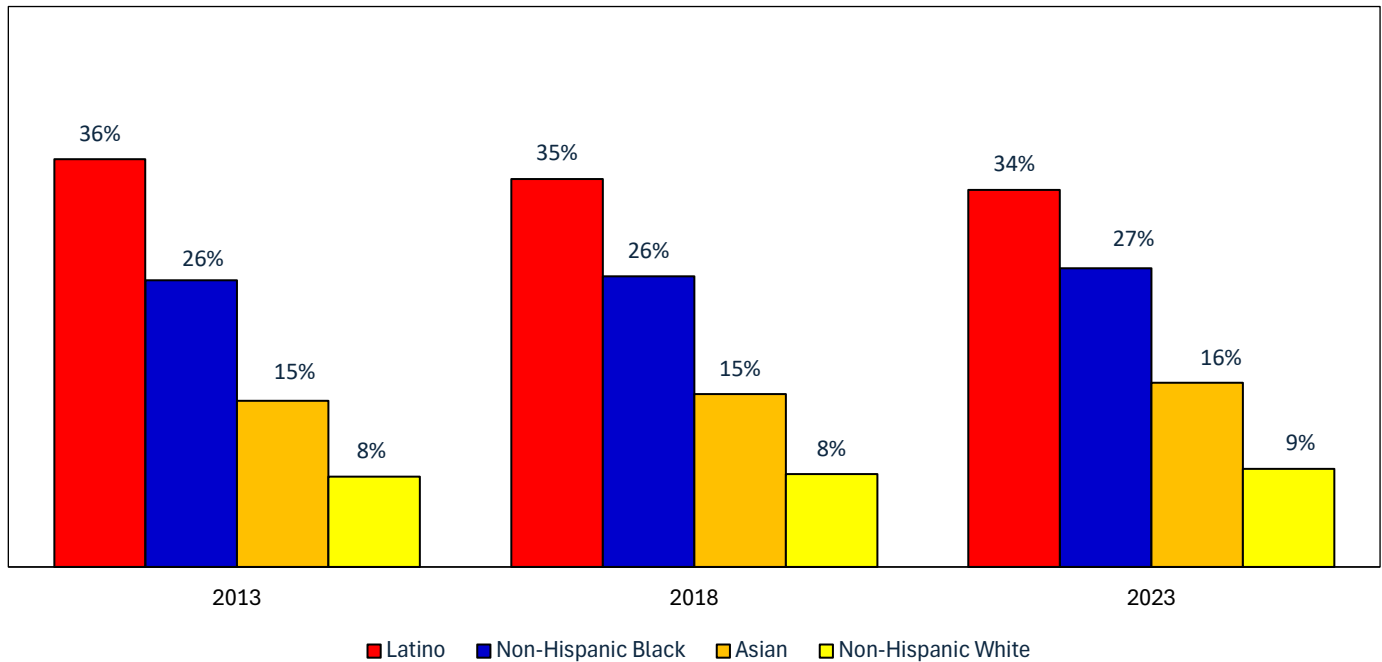


The share of households receiving SNAP benefits declined modestly among most racial and ethnic groups in New York City between 2013 and 2023, yet clear disparities persisted (Figure 2). Latino-headed households consistently reported the highest SNAP participation, though rates fell slightly from 36.0% in 2013 to 34.0% in 2023; a 2 percentage-point drop, or a relative decline of 5.6%.

Non-Hispanic black-headed households saw virtually no change in participation, with rates holding steady around 26.0–27.0% throughout the decade. Asian-headed households reported a modest increase from 15.0% to 16.0%, while non-Hispanic white households remained at the bottom of the distribution, but rising from 8.0% to 9.0%.

Despite modest declines, Latino households were still 2.78 times more likely to receive SNAP than their non-Hispanic white counterparts in 2023, and over 25.0% more likely than non-Hispanic black households. These persistent disparities reflected the enduring impact of racialized income gaps, structural inequality, and differential access to economic security. Latino-headed households remained disproportionately reliant on food assistance.

Figure 2
SNAP Reciprocity (%) by Race/Ethnicity of the Head of Household
New York City, 2013–2023



Latino Nationality

Figure 3 displays the real median income of the five largest Latino nationalities and non-Hispanic households from 2013 relative to 2023. Puerto Rican-headed households saw their income increase from \$39,935 to \$40,609: an absolute gain of \$674, or 1.7%. Dominican households, the lowest-earning group at the start of the period, experienced faster growth, rising from \$39,192 to \$45,020: a \$5,828 increase or 14.9% gain, which placed them above Puerto Ricans at the end of the period.

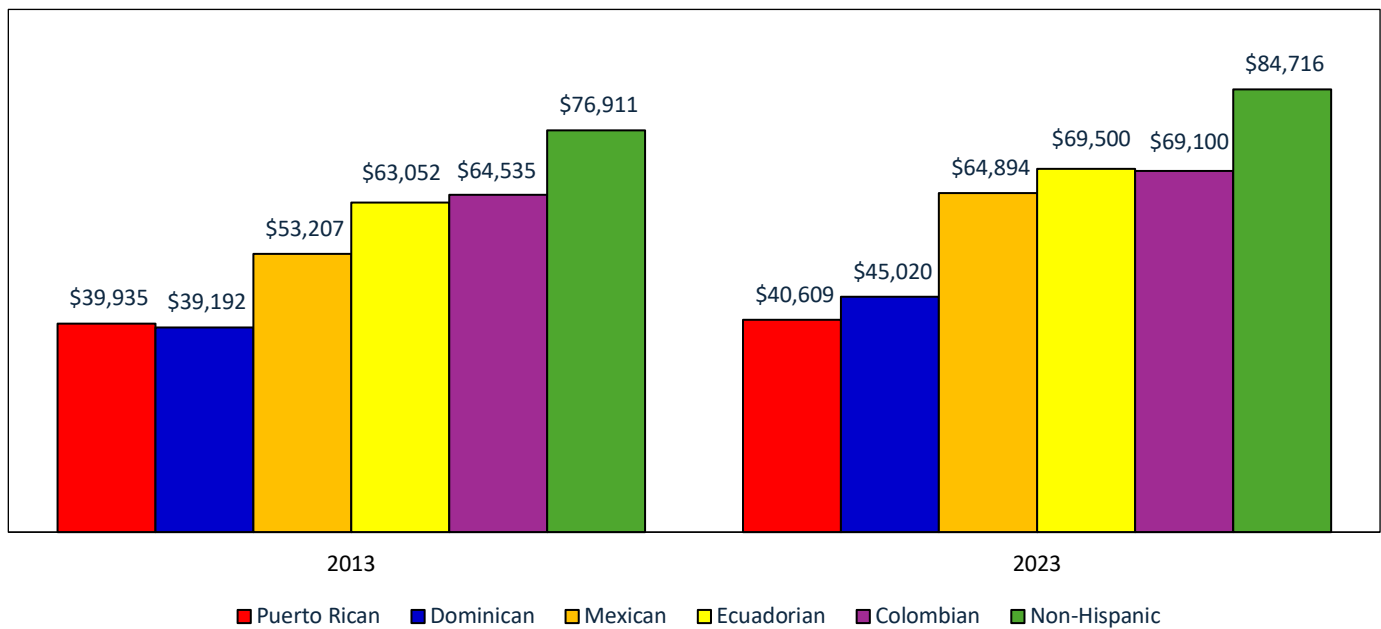
Mexican-headed households reported the highest relative increase of any of the five largest Latino nationalities in New York City, a 22.0% rise that increased median income from \$53,207 in 2013 to \$64,894 in 2023. Ecuadorian and Colombian households began the decade with the highest income levels among Latinos and remained at the top in 2023. Ecuadorians’ income rose from \$63,052 to \$69,500 (a 10.2% increase in real terms), while Colombian’s income increased from \$64,535 to \$69,100 (an increase of 7.1%).

Nonetheless, all Latino subgroups’ income remained well below non-Hispanic households’ income levels; median income for them rose from \$76,911 to \$84,716 over the decade (a 10.1% increase in real terms). By 2023, the income gap between non-Hispanic and Puerto Rican households reached \$44,107, meaning that

Puerto Rican-headed households earned just 48.0% of what non-Hispanic households earned. Even the highest-earning Latino subgroups (Colombians and Ecuadorians) trailed non-Hispanic household median incomes by over \$15,000.

These patterns highlight enduring stratification within the Latino population, with Caribbean-origin households consistently reporting the lowest incomes and South American groups faring better. However, despite income gains across all nationalities, Latino-headed households remained disproportionately concentrated at the bottom of the city’s income hierarchy.

Figure 3
 Median Household Income in Inflation Adjusted 2023 dollars by Nationality of the Head of Household
 New York City, 2013–2023



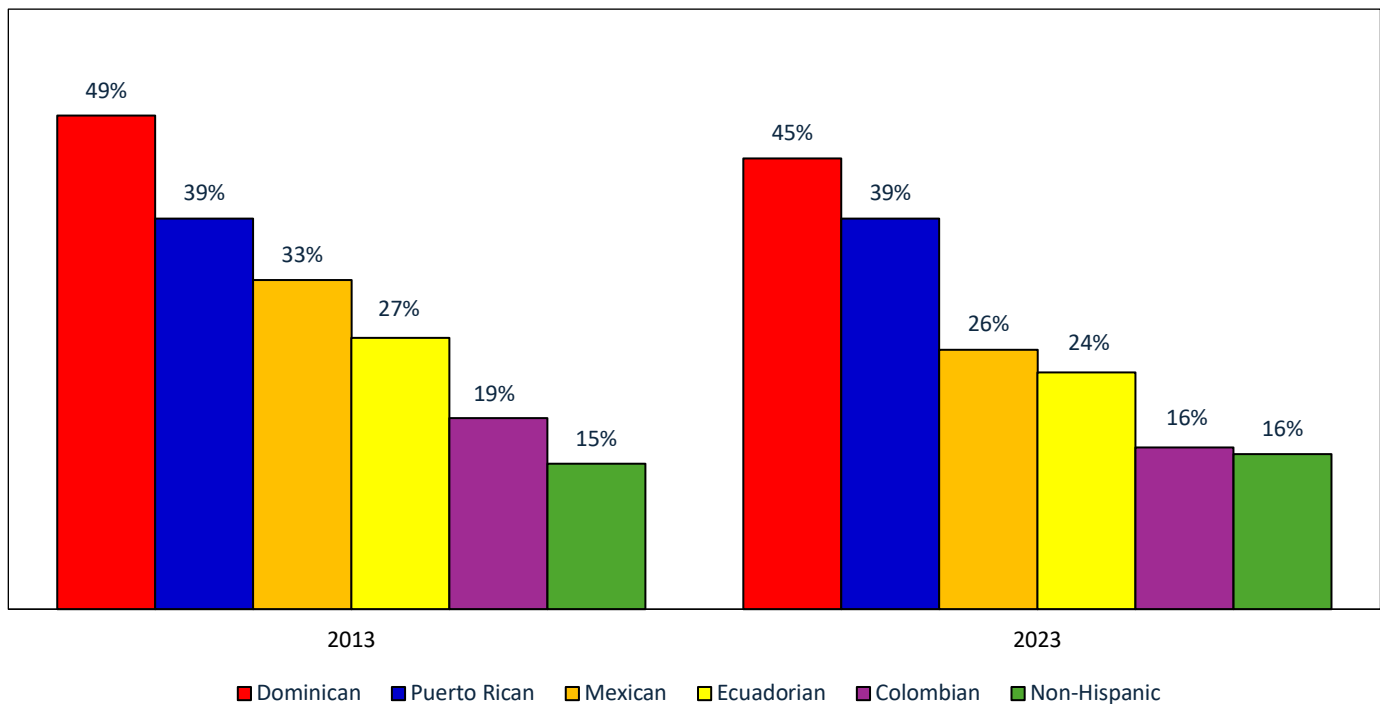
SNAP reciprocity declined modestly among all major Latino subgroups in New York City in the period analyzed, but substantial variation across groups persisted (Figure 4). Matching the observed trends in terms of income, Dominican-headed households consistently reported the highest SNAP participation, though rates fell slightly from 49.0% in 2013 to 45% in 2023: a 4 percentage-point drop, or a relative decline of 8.2%.

Puerto Rican households held steady at 39.0% SNAP reciprocity over the decade, showing no net change. Mexican and Ecuadorian-headed households reported moderate declines in SNAP usage: from 33.0% to 26.0%

for Mexicans (a 7-point or 21.2% relative drop) and from 27.0% to 24.0% for Ecuadorians (a 3 point or 11.1% decline). Colombian households showed a slightly steeper reduction, from 19.0% to 16.0% (–3 points, or –15.8%). Notably, Colombian-headed households matched non-Hispanic households in 2023, both reporting 16.0% participation; the lowest across all groups.

By 2023, Dominican-headed households were nearly three times more likely to receive SNAP than their Colombian or non-Hispanic counterparts, while Puerto Rican households were more than twice as likely. These enduring disparities highlight how national origin continues to shape Latino access to public assistance programs. Latino-headed households (particularly those of Caribbean origin) remained disproportionately reliant on food assistance during the period analyzed.

Figure 4
SNAP Reciprocity by Nationality of the Head of Household. New York City, 2013–2023



Section II

Median income distribution and SNAP reciprocity. Latinos in New York City

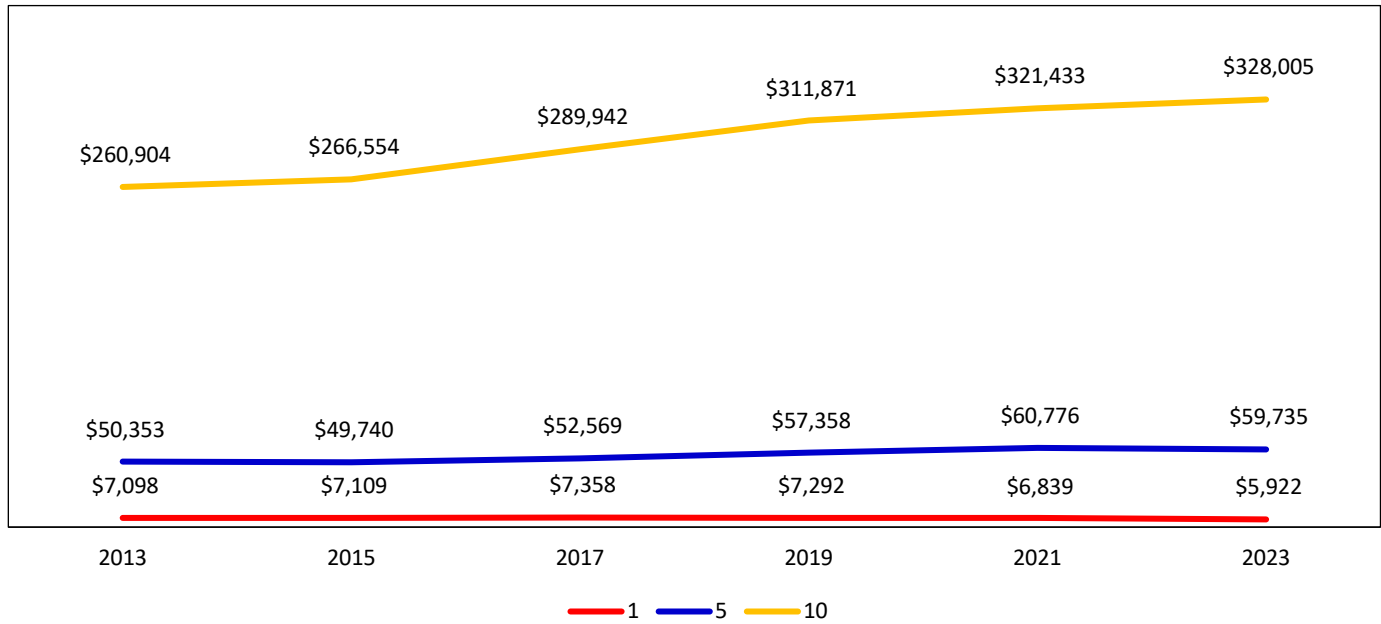
The following section focuses exclusively on Latinos, examining income and SNAP reciprocity patterns by income bracket, sex, educational level, household age structure, and head of household citizenship status, starting with income distribution. All figures account for inflation and are reported in 2023 dollars.

Between 2013 and 2023, income gains among Latino-headed households in New York City were highly uneven, with substantial growth in real terms at the top income deciles, moderate increases in the middle deciles, and decline at the bottom decile. Median income for households in the 10th decile (the top 10%) rose from \$260,904 to \$328,005, an absolute increase of \$67,101 or 25.7% in relative terms. Middle-income households (the 5th decile) also experienced growth, with income rising from \$50,353 to \$59,735, a gain of \$9,382 or 18.6%.

In sharp contrast, Latino households in the bottom decile (the bottom 10%) saw their median income decline by \$1,176 over the decade—from \$7,098 in 2013 to \$5,922 in 2023: a relative loss of –16.6%. This divergence translated into a dramatic widening of the internal income gap: in 2013, the top Latino income decile earned 36.8 times the income of the bottom decile; and by 2023, it earned 55.4 times as much.

These sharply stratified trends underscore the growing inequality within the Latino population. While middle- and upper-income households made notable gains, the lowest-income households remained virtually excluded from the decade's income growth.

Figure 5
 Median Household Income in Inflation Adjusted 2023 dollars by Income Decile (1st, 5th, and 10th) Latinos in New York City, 2013–2023

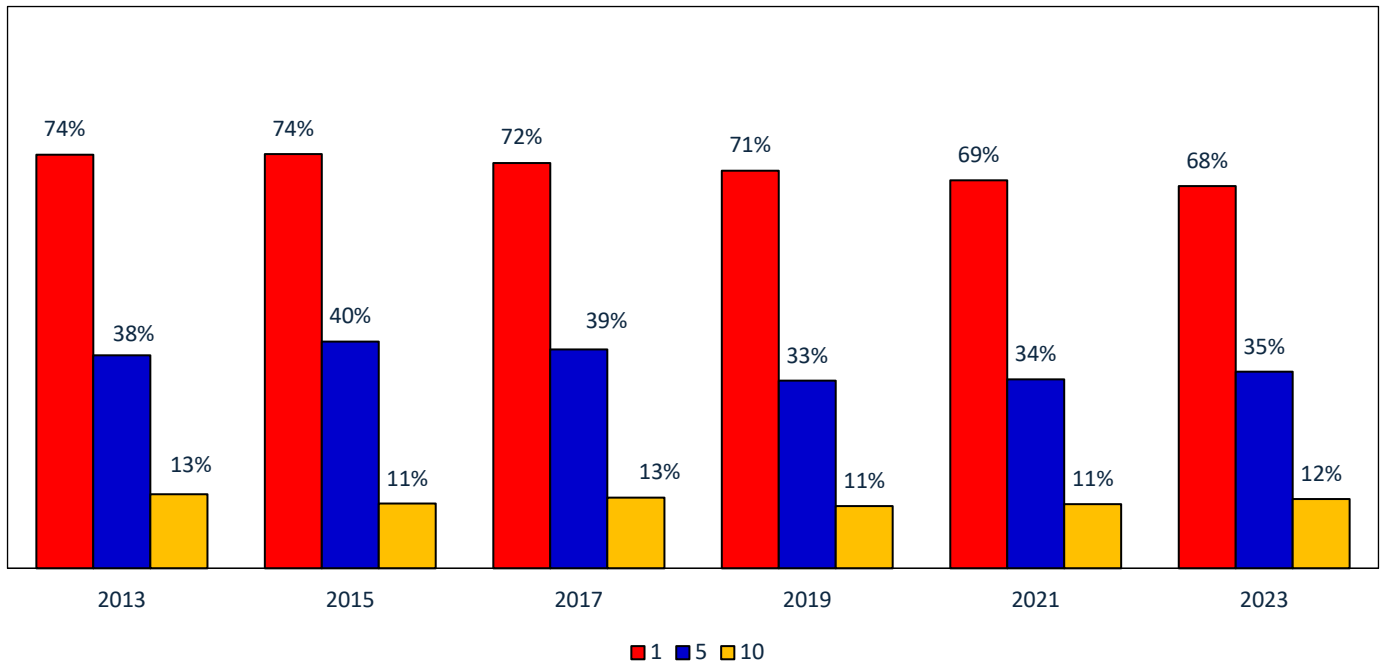


Concerning alimentary support, SNAP reciprocity among Latino-headed households in New York City declined modestly overall between 2013 and 2023 but remained stratified by income level (Figure 6). Among households in the bottom decile (1st), SNAP participation dropped from 74.0% in 2013 to 68.0% in 2023—a 6 percentage-point decline, or 8.1% in relative terms. Despite this modest improvement, more than two-thirds of the poorest Latino households still relied on SNAP at the end of the decade.

Households in the middle of the income distribution (the 5th decile) registered less decline in participation, falling from 38.0% to 35.0%: a 3-point drop. In contrast, SNAP usage among households in the top decile (10th) remained relatively low and stable, fluctuating between 11.0% in 2013 and 12% in 2023.

By 2023, the lowest-income Latino households were nearly six times more likely to receive SNAP benefits than their highest-income counterparts at the top decile. This is to be expected, as SNAP is a means-tested program that targets recipients of low income.

Figure 6
SNAP reciprocity by Income Decile (1st, 5th, and 10th)
Latinos in New York City, 2013–2023



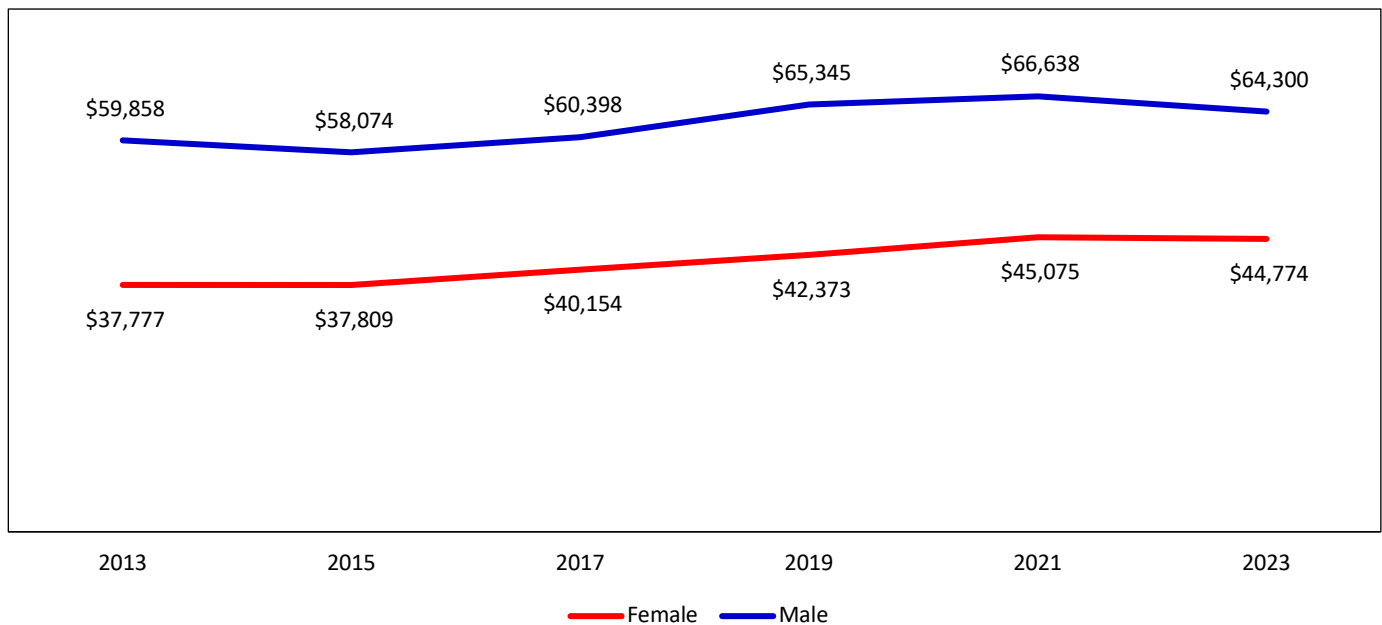
Sex

From 2013 to 2023, real median household income rose faster for female-headed Latino households in New York City compared to male-headed ones, but this was insufficient to overcome income gaps by sex over the decade (Figure 7). Female-headed household’s median income rose from \$37,777 in 2013 to \$44,774 in 2023: an increase of \$6,997 or 18.5% in relative terms. Male-headed household’s median income also grew, from \$59,858 in 2013 to \$64,300 in 2023: an absolute gain of \$4,442, or a 7.4% increase in real terms.

Both the relative and the absolute dollar increase for female headed households was larger over the decade. Regardless, the absolute and relative income gap remained wide. In 2013, female-headed households earned 36.9% less than their male counterparts (a gap of about \$22,081 in 2023 dollars). By 2023, this gap had narrowed slightly to 30.4%, with women heads of households earning \$19,526 less than their male counterparts. Though the relative disparity shrank by over six percentage points, income levels among male-headed households remained significantly higher in absolute terms.

These trends suggest that while income gains occurred across the board, disparities based on sex in access to stable, high-earning employment or occupational sectors persisted. Latino-female-headed households remained disproportionately concentrated at the bottom of the city’s income hierarchy.

Figure 7
 Median Household Income in Inflation Adjusted 2023 dollars by Sex of the Head of Household
 Latinos in New York City, 2013–2023

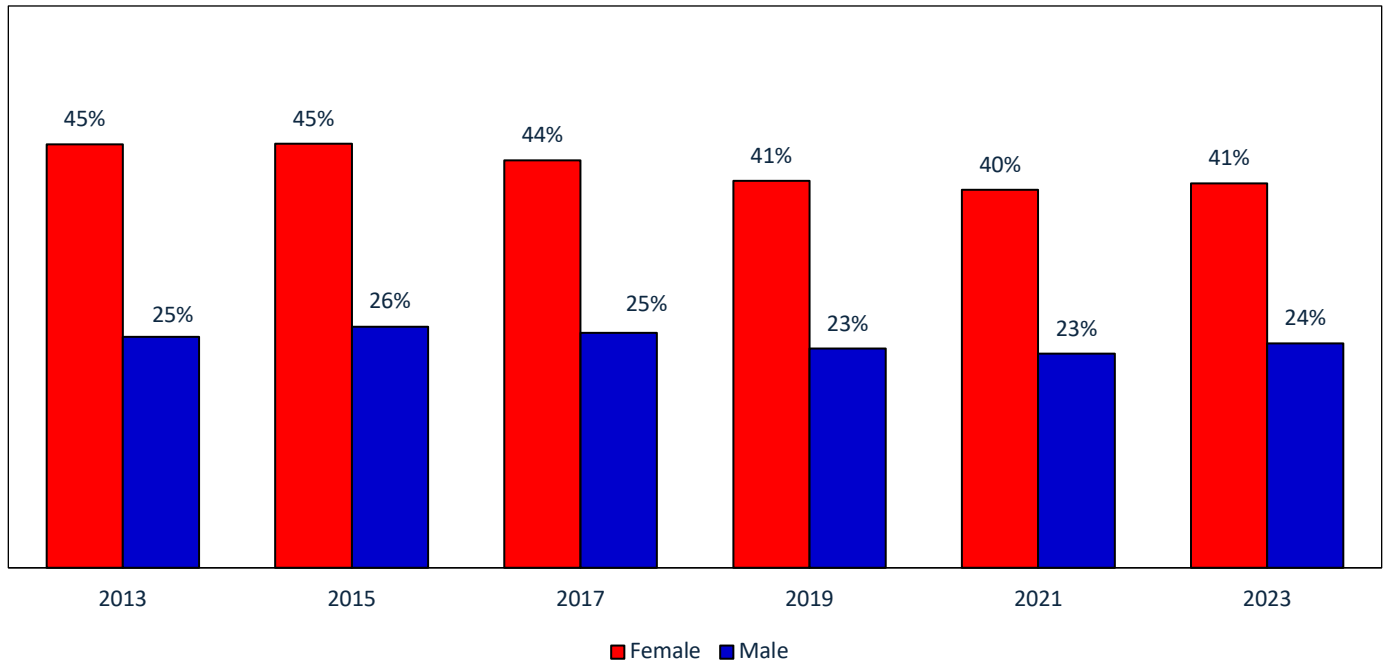


Between 2013 and 2023, SNAP reciprocity declined modestly among Latino-headed households in New York City, yet clear disparities by sex persisted (Figure 8). Female-headed Latino households consistently reported the highest rates of SNAP use compared to male-headed Latino households. In 2013, 45% of female-headed households received SNAP benefits, compared to 25% of male-headed households; a 20 percentage-point gap. By 2023, these figures had shifted slightly to 41.0% and 24.0%, respectively, narrowing the gap by only one point.

While both female and male-headed households experienced a modest decline in program participation (4 percentage points less for female headed households and 1 point less for male-headed ones), differences between female and male headed household participation remained large and stable.

These persistent differences likely reflect broader structural inequalities, including income disparities, caregiving burdens, and unequal access to employment. Latino-headed households—especially those led by women—remained disproportionately reliant on food assistance.

Figure 8
SNAP Reciprocity by Sex of the Head of Household
Latinos in New York City, 2013–2023



Education

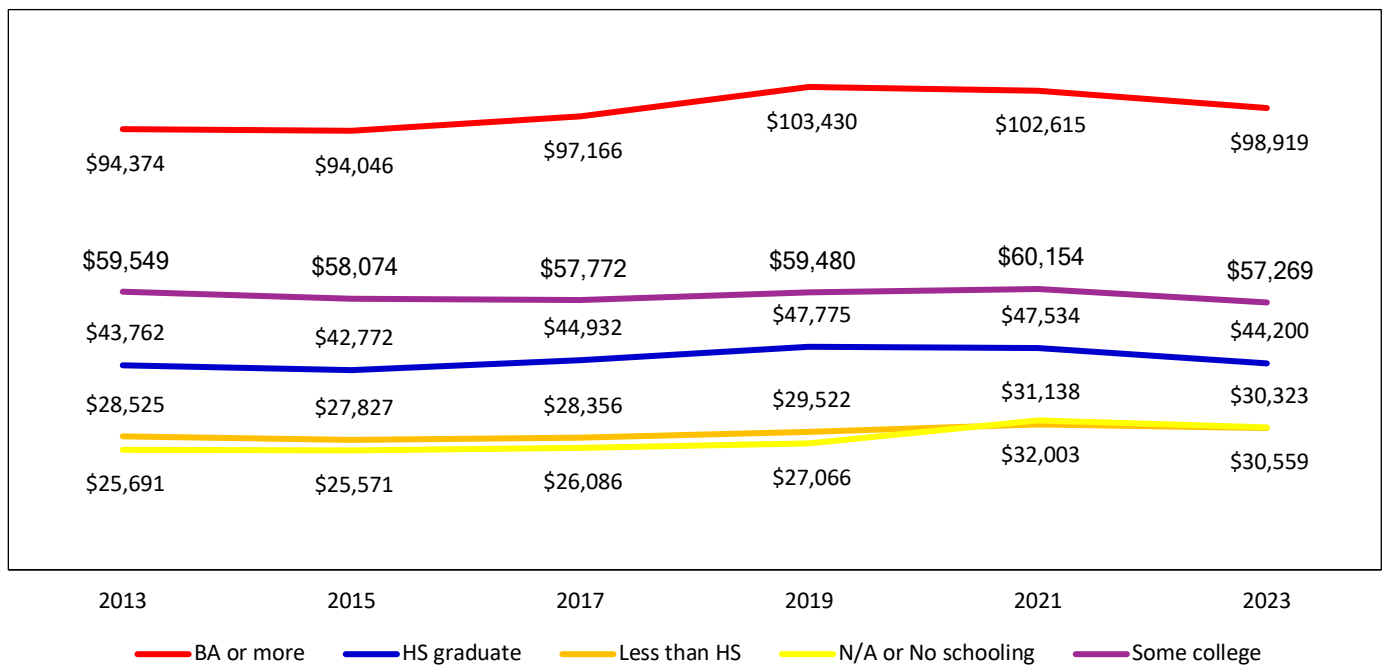
From 2013 to 2023, real median household income rose across all educational attainment levels among Latino households in New York City except for those having some, but not full, college education. However, gaps between groups remained large and persistent when accounting for educational attainment (Figure 9). Latino heads of households with a bachelor’s degree or more saw income grow from \$94,374 to \$98,919: an increase of \$4,545 or 4.8%. Latino household-heads with some college education, however, experienced an income decrease by the end of the decade, moving from \$59,549 to \$57,269, a reduction of -\$2,280 or -3.8% in relative terms.

High school graduate heads of households saw their median income slightly increase from \$43,762 to \$44,200, a gain of \$438 or 1.0% in relative terms. Household heads with less than a high school diploma saw their median

income rise from \$28,525 to \$30,323: an increase of \$1,798 or 6.3%, while household heads with no schooling registered growth from \$25,691 to \$30,559, a \$4,868 increase or 18.9%. Despite these changes, the absolute gap between households of the most and least educated household-heads was of \$68,683 in 2013 and \$68,360 in 2023—essentially unchanged over the decade.

By the end of the decade, Latino college-educated heads of households saw their households earn more than twice as much as household-heads with high school degrees, and over three times the income of households whose heads had no formal education. These persistent disparities underscore the powerful role of educational attainment in shaping Latino economic outcomes.

Figure 9
Median Household Income in Inflation Adjusted 2023 dollars by Educational Attainment of the Head of Household. Latinos in New York City, 2013–2023



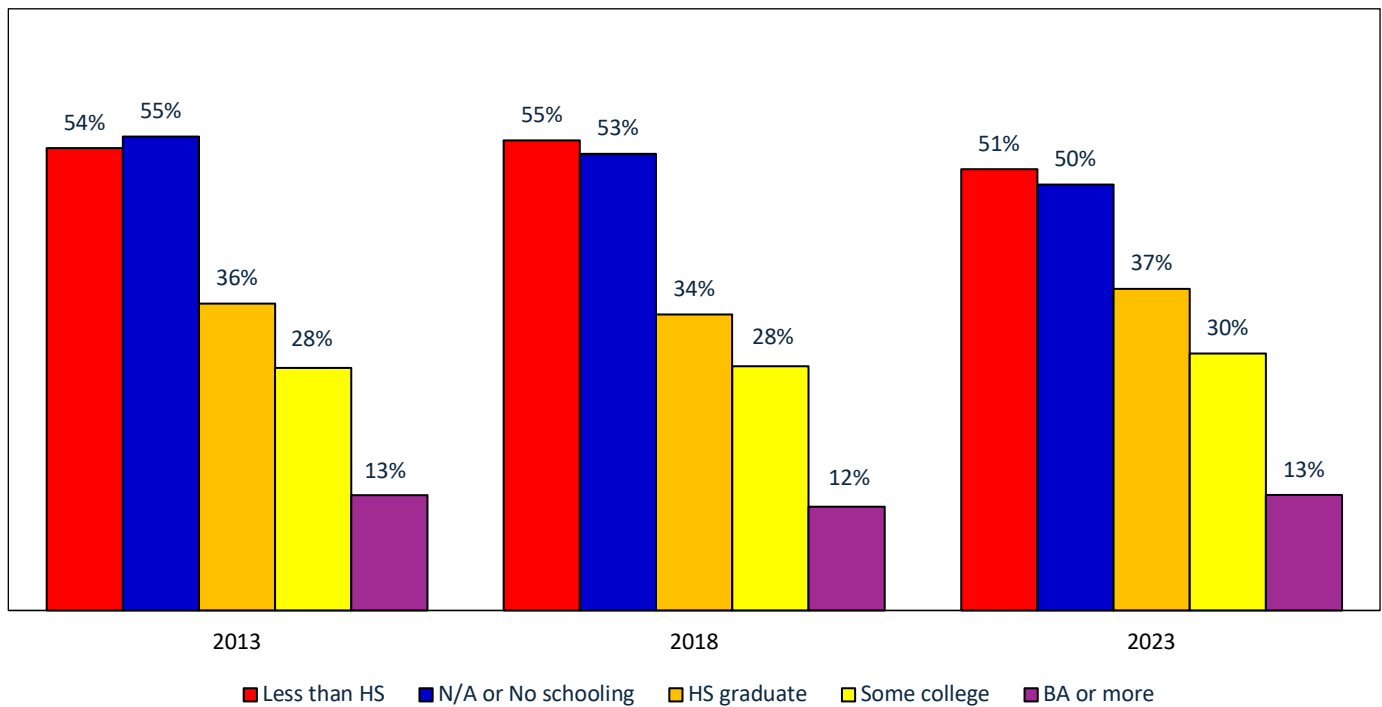
Reflecting trends in income, SNAP reciprocity rates among Latino households declined slightly overall, but remained strongly stratified by the educational attainment of their household heads from 2013 to 2023 (Figure 10). Household heads with less than a high school diploma reported the highest participation rates of their households during the decade, falling modestly from 54.0% in 2013 to 51.0% in 2023, a 3-point drop, or a 5.6%

relative decline. Household heads with no reported schooling or missing education data followed a similar pattern for their households, declining from 55.0% to 50.0%.

Households headed by high school graduates fluctuated only slightly, ending at 37.0% in 2023; 1 point higher than in 2013. Meanwhile, SNAP reciprocity among households headed by individuals with some college increased modestly from 28.0% to 30.0%, while households headed by someone with a bachelor’s degree or more remained stable at 13% throughout the decade.

By 2023, households where the head had no schooling were nearly four times more likely to receive SNAP than households with college-educated heads. These figures highlight the enduring relationship between limited access to schooling and reliance on food assistance.

SNAP Reciprocity by Educational Attainment of the Head of Household
Latinos in New York City, 2013–2023



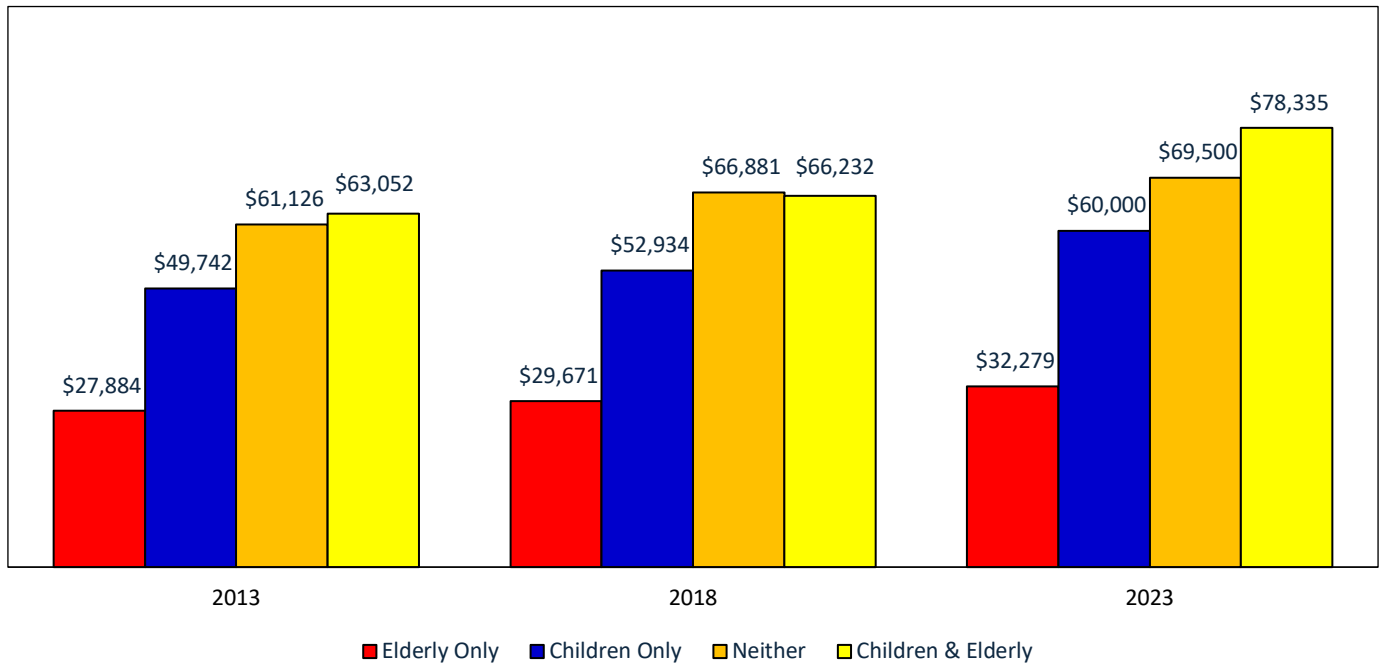
Households with children, with elderly, with both, and with neither³

Between 2013 and 2023, real median household income increased across all types of Latino households in New York City, but the pace and scale of those gains varied significantly by age composition (Figure 11). Households with both children and elderly members saw the largest absolute increase, rising from \$63,052 in 2013 to \$78,335 in 2023: a gain of \$15,283, or 24.2%. Households with neither children nor elderly also recorded gains in real terms over the decade, having their median income rise from \$61,126 to \$69,500 (a gain of \$8,374, or 13.7% in relative terms) and consistently ranking these households second in terms of median income.

Households with only children dependents saw their income rising from \$49,742 to \$60,000 (an absolute increase of \$10,258 or a 20.6% gain in relative terms). In contrast, households composed exclusively of elderly members had the lowest incomes throughout the decade. Although their median income increased from \$27,884 to \$32,279 (rising \$4,395 or 15.8%), they remained below the median income of multigenerational households by 2023. These trends suggest that income-earning potential is closely linked to household composition, with multigenerational and working-age-only households faring best, while elderly-only households face income constraints.

³ The groupings for this section were done by the author based on the ages reported by the IPUMS ACS 5-year microdata. Following widespread conventions in the literature, the cutoff age for children was 18 years and the cutoff age for elders was 65 years.

Figure 11
 Median Household Income in Inflation Adjusted 2023 dollars by Household Age Composition. Latinos in New York City, 2013–2023

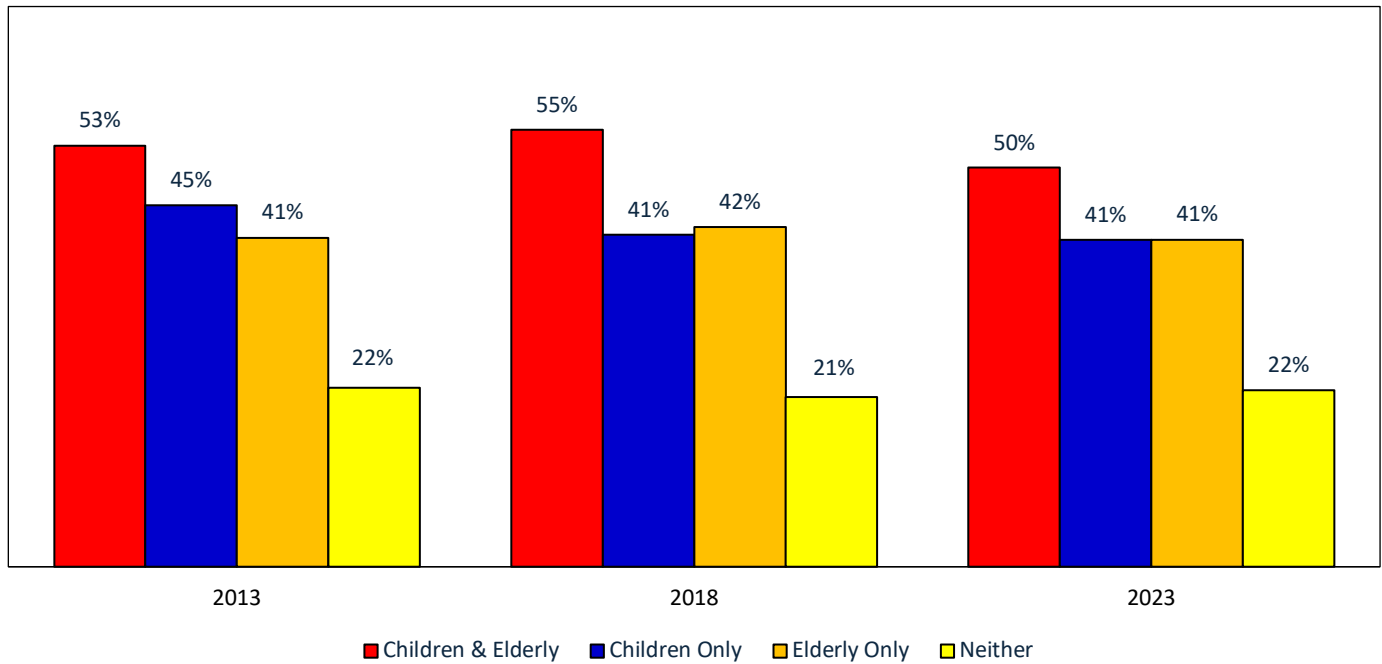


From 2013 to 2023, SNAP reciprocity among Latino households in New York City declined modestly overall but remained closely tied to the age composition of the household (Figure 12). In 2013, households with both children and elderly members reported the highest participation at 53.0%, rising to 55.0% in 2018 before falling to 50.0% in 2023: a net decline of 3 percentage points. Households with only children dependents, and those with only elderly members, tracked each other closely in 2023, both reporting 41.0% SNAP participation.

As would be expected, Latino households with neither children nor elderly consistently reported the lowest SNAP usage, with rates holding steady around 22.0% of households over the decade. Notably, between 2018 and 2023, reciprocity dropped among multigenerational and elderly-only households, while remaining flat for child-only households and slightly increasing for those with neither groups.

These patterns highlight how caregiving responsibilities (whether for children, the elderly, or both) remained associated with reliance on food assistance. By 2023, however, differences across household types had narrowed considerably, suggesting a partial leveling of need among diverse Latino family structures.

Figure 12
SNAP Reciprocity by Household Age Composition
Latinos in New York City, 2014–2023

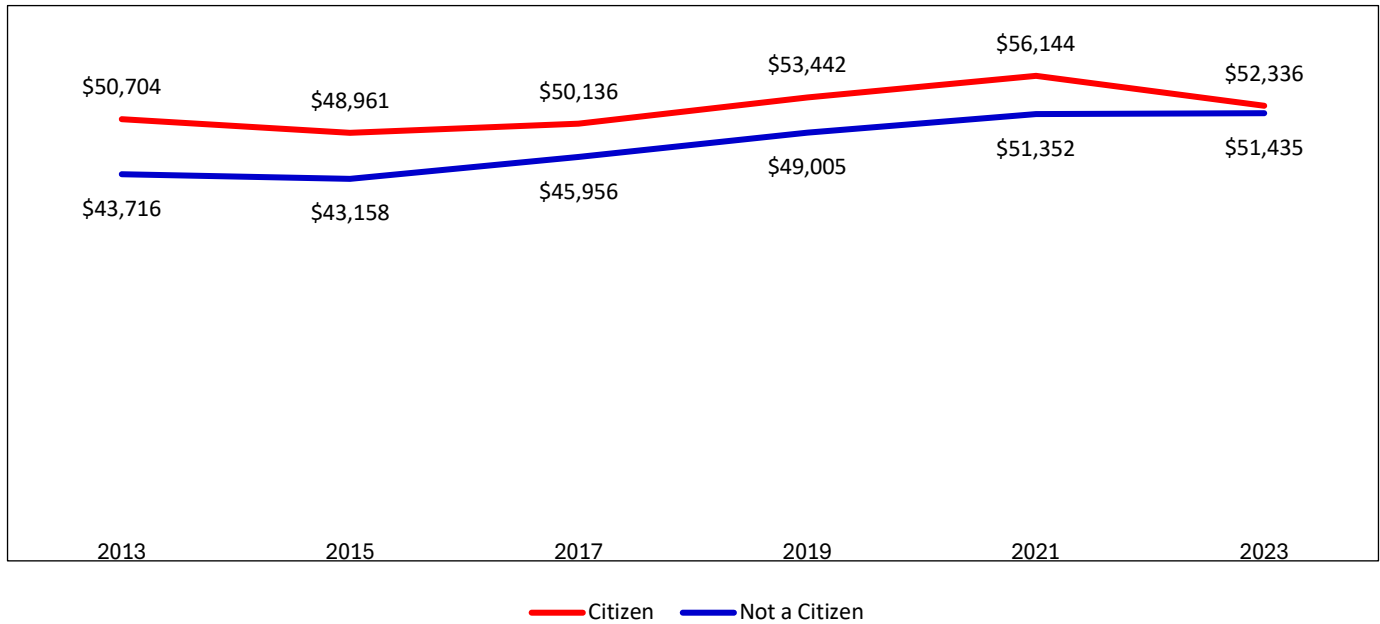


Citizenship

Between 2013 and 2023, real median household income rose steadily for both citizen and non-citizen Latino-headed households in New York City, but the pace of growth differed. Households headed by citizens rose from \$50,704 in 2013 to \$52,336 in 2023: a gain of \$1,632, or 3.2% in relative terms after accounting for inflation. Non-citizen households, which started from a lower base of \$43,716 in 2013, rose to \$51,435 by 2023—a higher increase in both absolute dollars (\$7,719) and relative (17.7%) terms.

As a result, the income gap between the two groups narrowed dramatically. In 2013, non-citizen households earned 13.8% less than citizen-headed households; by 2023, the difference had shrunk to just 1.7%. As mentioned, this reduction in the gap was driven by faster income growth among non-citizens, as their rate of growth outpaced that of citizens by nearly 15 percentage points.

Figure 13
 Median Household Income in Inflation Adjusted 2023 dollars by Citizenship Status of
 the Head of Household
 Latinos in New York City, 2013–2023

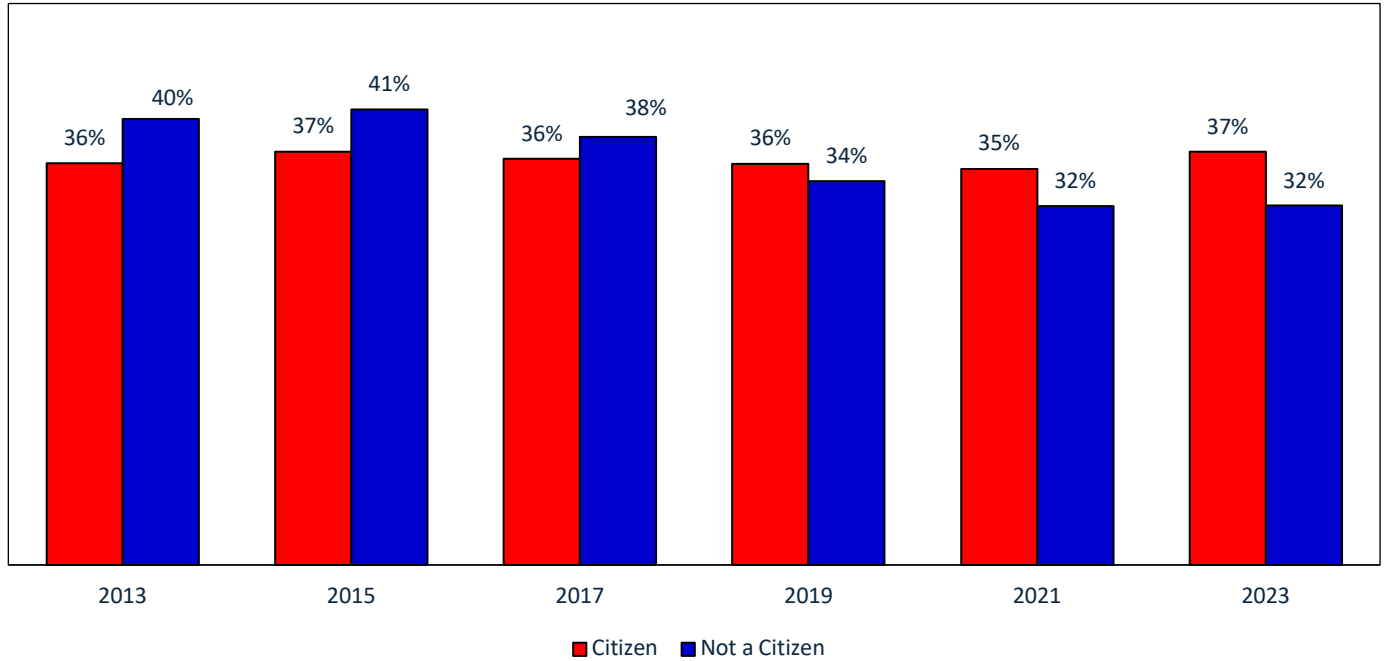


Lastly, concerning food assistance, Figure 14 shows that between 2013 and 2023, SNAP reciprocity declined modestly among Latino households regardless of citizenship status, yet a notable shift occurred in relative participation. In 2013, non-citizen households had the highest participation rate at 40.0%, compared to 36.0% among citizen households (a 4-point gap). By 2023, that gap had reversed: SNAP usage among non-citizens fell to 32.0%, while citizen households ticked up slightly to 37.0%, creating a 5-point gap in the opposite direction.

This reversal reflects both declining enrollment among non-citizens and stable or slightly rising participation among citizens. Between 2015 and 2023, non-citizen reciprocity dropped by 9 percentage points (from 41.0% to 32.0%), while citizen participation rose from 36.0% to 37.0%, remaining essentially flat. By 2023, citizen households were 16.0% more likely to receive SNAP than non-citizens.



Figure 14
SNAP Reciprocity by Citizenship Status of the Head of Household
Latinos in New York City, 2013–2023



Conclusion

This report has traced patterns in median household income and SNAP reciprocity among Latino households in New York City between 2013 and 2023, highlighting how these outcomes vary across income level and household age composition, and across the head of household's national origin, educational attainment, sex, and citizenship status.

Between 2013 and 2023, median household income rose across all races and ethnicities in New York City. However, households headed by Latinos consistently reported the lowest median income throughout the decade. Their median income increased from \$46,998 in 2013 to \$52,223 in 2023: an absolute rise of \$5,225, or an 11.0% gain. Regardless, Latino households rate of growth lagged that of non-Hispanic whites and Asians, which meant that the income gap with those households remained unchanged in the period analyzed. And while Latino's income increased at a faster rate than non-Hispanic black-headed household's income, Latino headed households remained at the bottom of the city's income distribution.

Inequality also persisted within households headed by Latinos. Households in the top decile experienced sharp and sustained increases, while growth for the middle of the distribution was comparatively modest. In turn, income of households at the bottom shrunk after accounting for inflation. By 2023, the richest 10% of Latino households earned more than 55 times the income of the bottom 10%, compared to a ratio of about 36.8 to 1 in 2013. This widening gap suggests increasing internal inequality within the Latino population: rather than lifting all boats equally, income growth has disproportionately benefited those already at the top.

Among the five largest Latino national-origin groups in New York (Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Mexicans, Colombians, and Ecuadorians), Puerto Rican and Dominican headed households reported the lowest median incomes throughout the period. Colombians and Ecuadorians consistently reported the highest. While experiencing the fastest rate of growth, households headed by Mexicans remained in the middle of the income distribution through the decade.

Sex continued to stratify income over the decade of analysis. Median income among female-headed households grew from \$37,777 to \$44,774, an absolute increase of \$6,997 (or an 18.5% gain) while income for male-headed households rose from \$59,858 to \$64,300: an absolute increase of \$4,442, or a 7.4% gain. As a result, the income

gap narrowed both in absolute dollars and in relative terms: female-headed households earned about \$22,081 less than male-headed households in 2013 (a 36.9% gap) and about \$19,526 less in 2023 (a 30.4% gap).

Educational attainment showed itself to be closely associated with income outcomes. Throughout the period analyzed, Latino households headed by someone with a bachelor's degree or higher remained at the top. In 2023, they earned \$98,919, a 4.8% increase in real terms from their median income of 94,374 in 2013. The college income premium, however, seems to only have benefited those with a full degree, as households whose head had only some college education saw a 3.8% reduction in median income in real terms in 2023 relative to 2013. As a result, the gap between college graduates and those with some college education widened from \$34,825 in 2013 to \$41,650 in 2023 after accounting for inflation. On the other hand, median income for Latino households whose heads had a high school diploma remained essentially unchanged, experiencing a mere 1.0% increase in real terms in the period of analysis. Lastly, Latino households with heads with no reported education had the highest rate of growth, experiencing a 18.9% increase in income and surpassing households with less than high school diplomas by 2023.

Household age composition also shaped economic outcomes. By 2023, multigenerational households (those with both children and elderly members) emerged as the highest earners, reaching \$78,335 in median income, while elderly-only households reported the lowest median income at \$32,279. Working-age households with no dependents also recorded earnings rising from \$61,126 to \$69,500 (an absolute increase of \$8,374, or a 13.7% gain) while households with children only increased from \$49,742 to \$60,000—an absolute increase of \$10,258, or a 20.6% gain. These patterns reflect the compounding effects of age, dependency, and labor force participation.

Citizenship status revealed an important shift for median household income. The income gap between non-citizen and citizen Latino households shrunk dramatically. Between 2013 and 2023, median income of households with non-citizen household heads rose in real terms from \$43,716 to \$51,435 (an absolute increase of \$7,719, or a 17.7% gain) while median income of households headed by citizens rose from \$50,704 to \$52,336—an absolute increase of \$1,632, or a 3.2% gain. The considerably higher rate of growth among households headed by non-citizen heads narrowed that the median income difference to just 1.7% by 2023.

SNAP reciprocity followed the income stratification trends. Latino-headed households consistently reported the highest participation rates across racial and ethnic groups, though their usage declined modestly—from about 36.0% of households enrolled in 2013 to about 34.0% in 2023. Among Latino nationalities, Puerto Rican and Dominican headed households consistently reported the highest SNAP participation, while Colombian headed households reported the lowest.

Within the Latino population, SNAP use was sharply stratified by income. Despite a fall of about 6 percentage points from 2013, about 68.0% of the lowest-income households received SNAP in 2023, compared to just about 12.0% in the top decile. Educational attainment was also reflected in SNAP usage. Households with heads with less education were up to four times more reliant on food assistance than households whose heads had college degrees. The sex of household heads also showed substantial differences: about 41.0% of female-headed households received SNAP in 2023, compared to just about 24.0% of male-headed households. By household composition, multigenerational and elderly-only households reported similarly high reciprocity (about 50.0% and 41.0% of households, respectively), while households without dependents remained the least likely to receive assistance (about 22.0% of these households were enrolled). The most dramatic trend reversal occurred in the domain of citizenship. In 2013, households with non-citizen heads were more likely to receive SNAP than citizen-headed households (about 40.0% vs about 36.0%). But by 2023, the pattern had flipped: SNAP participation among non-citizen headed households dropped to about 32.0%, while citizen-headed households rose slightly to about 37.0%.

These findings paint a portrait of selective and unequal progress. Latino household income rose across most demographic groups, but never enough to reach income gains of other race and ethnic groups, and gains were concentrated at the top, with key divides by sex, education, and national origin remaining entrenched. At the same time, food assistance usage declined overall, but not evenly across demographic groups, with growing evidence that immigration status and household structure increasingly mediate access. The story of Latino New York between 2013 and 2023 is thus one of rising incomes paired with persistent vulnerability and a deepening social divide.

Methodological notes.

Reciprocity of SNAP across the top income decile

Relatively high reciprocity of SNAP across the top income decile is surprising and warrants further inquiry. While it may seem counterintuitive at first, there are several policy-consistent reasons why some households in the top income decile may still report receiving SNAP benefits. While SNAP is a means-tested program intended to serve low-income individuals and families, a small share of households in the top income decile may appear in administrative or survey data as recipients. This phenomenon is best understood by recognizing the difference between reported household income and individual program eligibility, as well as known limitations in the design of both SNAP eligibility rules and household-level aggregation in survey data. First, SNAP eligibility is determined at the household unit level—typically defined by those who purchase and prepare food together. However, the ACS and similar surveys aggregate income at the full household level, including income from all co-residing members, even if they are not part of the SNAP unit (e.g., adult children, roommates, or subfamilies).

As a result, a person who qualifies for SNAP due to low personal income (e.g., a single mother or elderly adult) may live in a household whose total income places it in a higher decile, leading to apparent inconsistencies when aggregating by total household income. Second, income volatility and timing of benefits may contribute to misalignment in measurement. SNAP eligibility is based on monthly income thresholds, while surveys like the ACS report annual income. A household may have qualified for benefits during a period of job loss or instability but report higher income by the time of the survey. This dynamic is particularly relevant in households with unstable work or seasonal employment, common in sectors like construction, food service, or gig work. Third, categorical eligibility rules allow certain individuals to receive SNAP even if income tests are exceeded—especially in states with Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) policies.

For example, if a household qualifies for a non-cash Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)-funded service, it may automatically qualify for SNAP without a strict income test. Moreover, households with elderly or disabled members may qualify with higher income limits and deductions, including for medical expenses. Lastly, survey error and reporting inaccuracies are also a known factor. Studies have found both undercounting and overreporting of SNAP participation in the ACS. According to research from the Urban Institute and Census Bureau, small shares of higher-income households may misreport participation or income levels, leading to



apparent anomalies in survey-based analyses. See Wimer, C. et al. (2016). “Understanding SNAP Participation and Eligibility.” Columbia University / Center on Poverty and Social Policy, S. Census Bureau. (2020). *Understanding SNAP Measurement in the ACS*.

