



Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council

Public Benefits Survey 2024 Final Report

The goal of the *Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council's* (CPRAC) Public Benefits Survey is to better understand access barriers and other administrative burdens that may be experienced by New Yorkers who seek assistance through OTDA's *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program* (SNAP), *Public Assistance* (PA) and *Supplemental Security Income* (SSI) benefit programs.

The Public Benefits Survey, an online survey promulgated in 2024, helps fulfill CPRAC's statutory charge to "review agency programs that can be modified, suspended, or otherwise changed to immediately reduce the child poverty rate," including by considering "ways to improve access to public benefits for individuals regardless of their immigration status," and "any other factors that may impact a family, parent, or child's ability to stay above the poverty level, including, but not limited to ...equitable and ready access to programs."¹

This report presents selected findings from an analysis of more than 1,200 survey responses received in 2024. These findings are intended to provide insights into the experiences of people in need of public benefits and will help target specific improvements to the application and benefit maintenance process as well as providing a baseline from which to measure the success of such improvements.

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¹ Social Services Law §131-zz

Introduction

Survey Design, Distribution, and Dates

The Public Benefits Survey is a unique online survey that gathers information from three groups: those currently receiving SNAP, PA and/or SSI; those who had previously received but are not currently receiving these benefits; and those who have never received benefits, either because they applied for but were never determined eligible for benefits or because they never applied for benefits. This inclusive framework allows feedback from the broadest possible target population: all New Yorkers seeking support through OTDA's benefit programs.

The online survey had these design features:

- program specific (separate questions about SNAP, PA, and/or SSI based on initial question about benefit status),
- both quantitative (multiple choice) and qualitative (open-ended, "*In your own words...*" questions),
- available in English and Spanish,
- targeted to each respondent's benefit status and their application processing and case management experience(s),
- completely anonymous, and with no demographic questions (family size, marital status, age, sex, gender, income or education level),
- and formatted to allow respondents to skip questions and/or submit at any time.

For those who were currently receiving benefits, the number of survey questions ranged from 17 – 47, depending on how many benefit programs they reported receiving. For those who indicated they were "not now" receiving or "never" received benefits at all, they only had the option of answering 1 - 2 of the open-ended questions. Questions were organized within the categories of "application processing experience" and "case management experience". Questions for each program were largely the same, with a few additional program specific questions added for PA and SSI recipients.

The survey link was distributed and promoted by Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) Commissioners, CPRAC statutory members, CPRAC advisory members, and OTDA's Facebook and X accounts, so that New Yorkers across the state could provide their feedback. All responses were returned between April 16 and May 31 and between July 1 and December 31, 2024, with the majority received in August, November and December.

Interpretation Caveats

The online data collection method ensured convenience and safeguarded anonymity, which was more likely to foster candid feedback. But this also meant that respondents needed to be both literate *and* computer-literate. As a result, findings may not be representative of *all people in need*. At the same time, it's also possible that this group was able to articulate and provide feedback that accurately represents all benefit applicants and recipients.

Standard statistical tests are helpful in identifying a minimum number of people who need to be randomly sampled from a total population to obtain results that are most likely to reflect the total population. Statistical tests were not needed as the survey link was widely distributed and was open to anyone who had access to the link in order to give as many people as possible the opportunity to provide feedback. If we applied statistical guidance for random samples, the number of responses to the CPRAC survey would meet statistical test standards for representativeness at a 95% confidence interval for SNAP, almost meet the test for PA, and not meet the test for SSI.² Setting aside the possibility of other biases, this would mean that for SNAP and PA, there was a reasonable probability that the results accurately represented both those who responded and those who did not, but this may not be the case for SSI. As a result, this report focuses on the SNAP and PA findings.

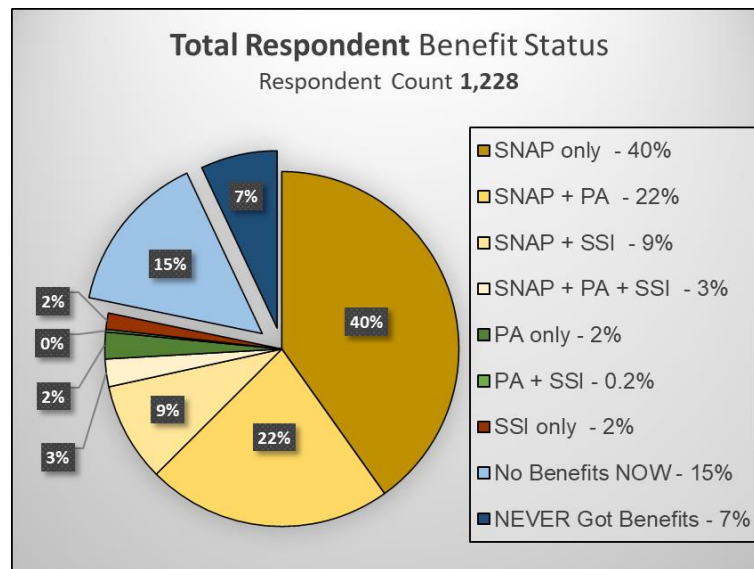
Respondents had the option of submitting the survey without answering all questions. There are many reasons why an individual may choose to skip a question, including confusion with response options, discomfort with choosing a particular response, running out of time, becoming distracted, etc. Additionally, while the survey guaranteed anonymity, recipients may have felt reluctant to submit responses that might present a risk to the public benefit programs upon which they depend. Appendix C shows the “no response” count for each question.

² For large populations, the sample size required for a 95% confidence interval is at least 384. In 2024, we received 910 SNAP responses, 339 PA responses and 163 SSI responses.

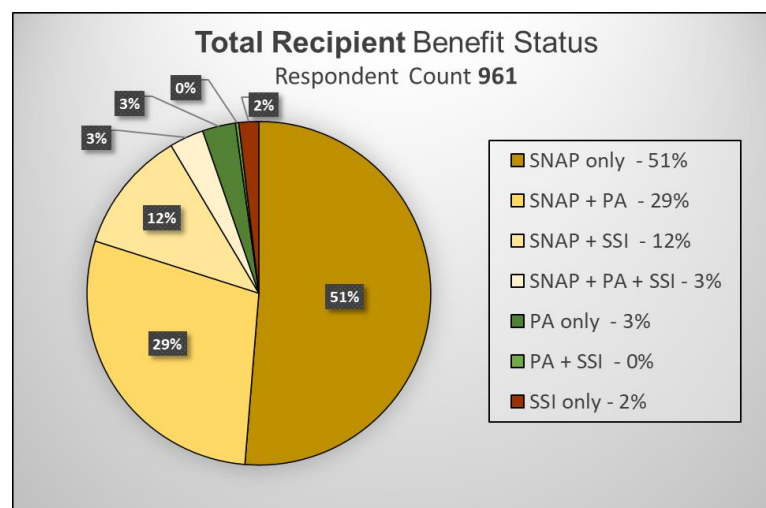
Part 1 – Quantitative Data Summary

Sample Size and Program Status Breakout:

Of the 1,228 surveys analyzed, **78%** of respondents were currently receiving benefits and **22%** of respondents either never received (7%) or were not currently receiving (15%) benefits (blue segments on pie chart below).³ Non-recipient respondents (“NEVER Got Benefits”) were limited to one open-ended question and past-recipient respondents (“NOT NOW”) were limited to two open-ended questions.



The total number of respondents “currently receiving benefits” was **961**. Both the quantitative (multiple choice) and qualitative (open-ended) questions were available to this group. The following quantitative analysis focuses on the 961 respondents who reported they were currently receiving benefits.



³ We received a total of 1,296 survey submissions but set aside 68 non-recipient respondent submissions because the respondent provided no analyzable information to the open-ended questions. Therefore, the total surveys analyzed were 1,228.

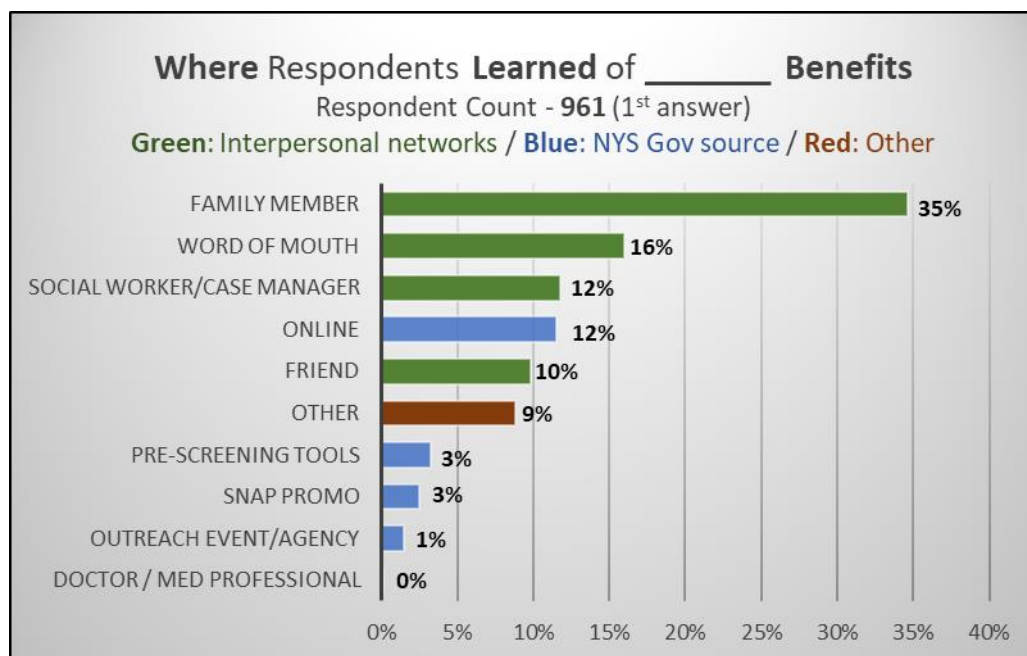
Of these 961 respondents, the largest portion (**95%**) were SNAP related recipients (see yellow segments), whose benefit program status fell into four groups: “SNAP only” (51%), SNAP + PA (29%), and SNAP + SSI (12%) and SNAP + PA + SSI (3%).

It is also important to note that because some respondents applied to, and were receiving, a combination of public benefits, Part 1 calculates the total number of each respondent’s *first answer* to the questions presented below. This is to ensure that respondents receiving benefits from multiple programs are not over-represented. Respondents that received SNAP always saw the SNAP questions first so for 95% of respondents, the first response was the SNAP response. These were followed by the PA questions, and then the SSI questions. **Appendix C** provides a breakdown of all quantitative responses by program.

Program Awareness:

Although survey results were generated exclusively online, when asked where respondents learned of OTDA benefit programs, the majority (**73%**) relied on *interpersonal networks* (green bars on chart), including learning from a “family member” (35%), “word of mouth” (16%), “social worker/case worker” (12%), and a “friend” (10%).

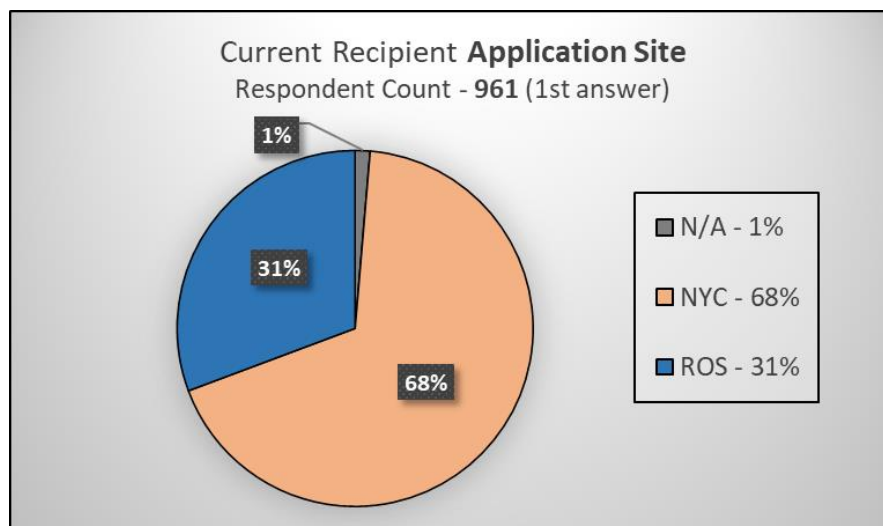
A smaller portion, or **19%** of respondents (blue bars on chart), indicated they learned about OTDA benefit programs from *NYS government resources*, including “online” searches (12%), “pre-screening tools” (3%), “promotional materials” (3%), or an “outreach event/agency” (1%).



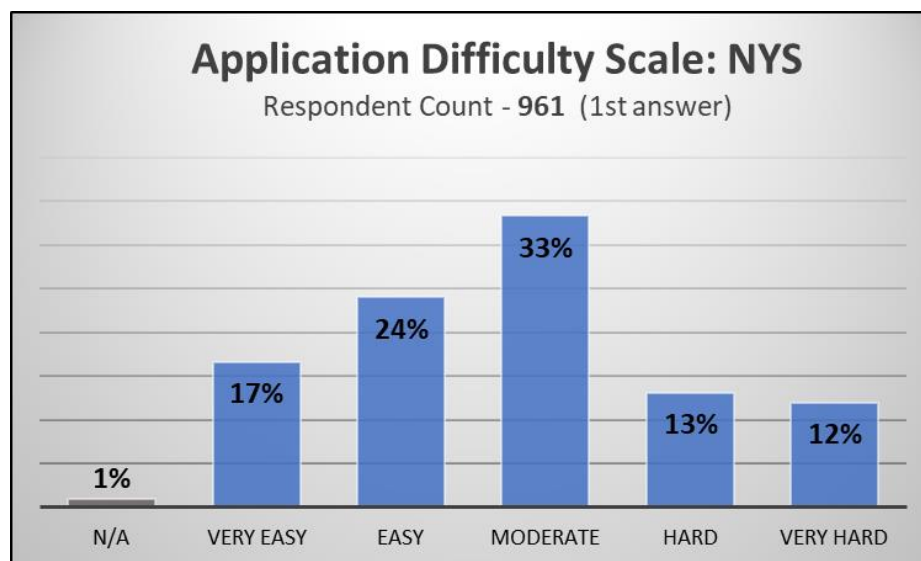
This result highlights the importance of ongoing outreach efforts, in particular, initiatives that connect and provide support for target populations *within their own communities*.

Application Measures:

Of the 961 total respondents, 68% applied for benefits in New York City (NYC), 31% applied outside of NYC in the “Rest of State” (ROS), while only 1% of respondents did not identify their location.



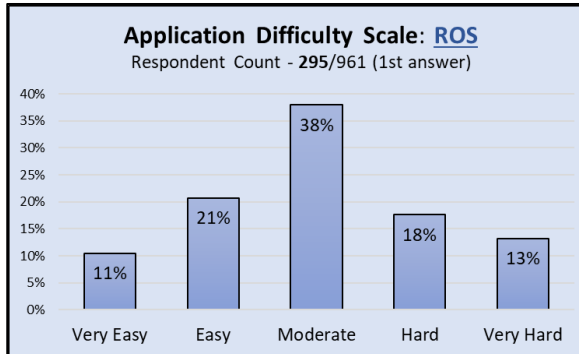
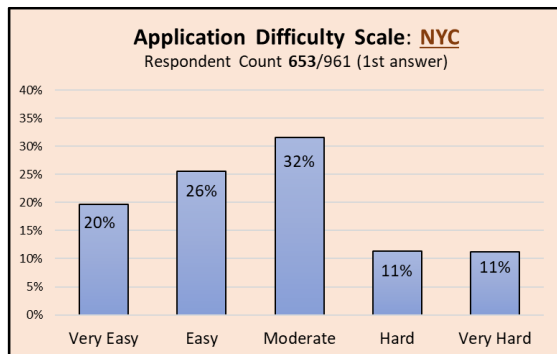
Of the total respondents that applied for SNAP, PA, and/or SSI benefits, **41%** indicated that, overall, the application was *either* “very easy” (17%) or “easy” (24%). This favorable result may be influenced by the fact these survey respondents had a computer literacy advantage.



The largest single segment was “moderate” at 33%, while a total of **25%** reported that their application experience was either “hard” (13%) or “very hard” (12%).

When these results are divided into NYC and ROS subgroups, the data suggests that respondents in ROS had a *harder time* (31%) on the applications than those in NYC (22%). This

is indicated by combining the “hard” and “very hard” response tallies on the Application Difficulty Scales below.

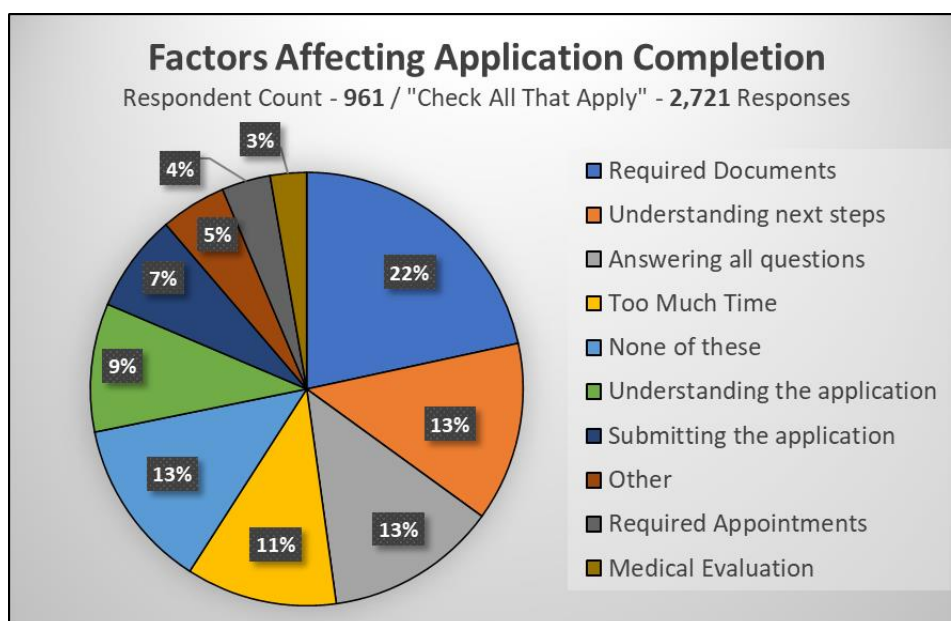


Some multiple-choice questions allowed respondents to “check all that apply” for their answers. This was intended to capture the broader dynamics of the application and case management experience, including where multiple factors may have affected a respondent’s experience, rather than one single factor. Thus, the response count is higher for “check all that apply” questions (as in the 2,721 responses totaled below) than the sample size (961 respondents).

When asked to choose among commonly identified factors (if any) that affect the application process, only (13%) responded “None of these”.

Factors Affecting Application Completion "Check All That Apply"		
Count		Percent
588	Required Documents	22%
364	Understanding next steps	13%
349	Answering all questions	13%
307	Too Much Time	11%
346	None of these	13%
261	Understanding the application	10%
199	Submitting the application	7%
134	Other	5%
99	Required Appointments	4%
74	Medical Evaluation	3%
2,721	Total	100%

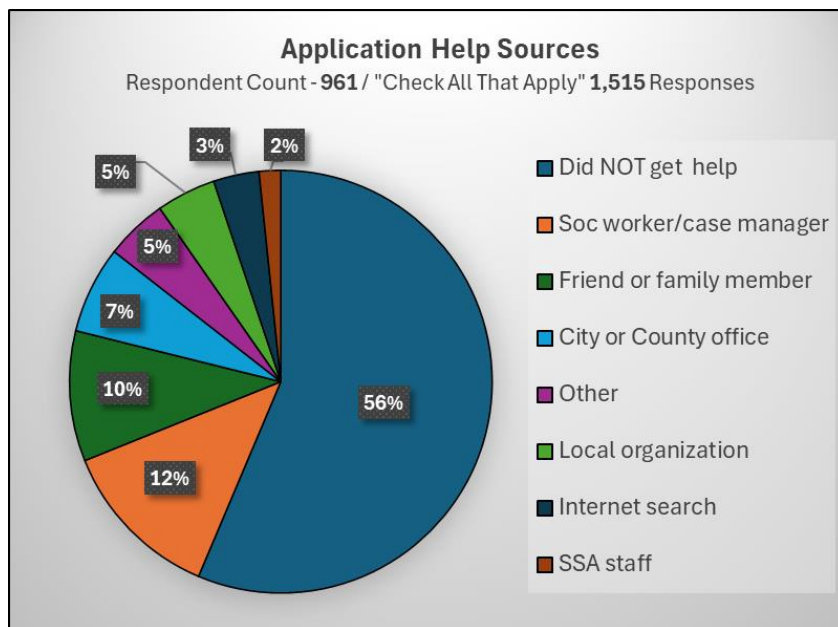
The highest portion of respondents chose “required documents” (22%) from among the factors affecting application completion. The other top five factors chosen were “understanding next steps” (13%), “answering all questions” (13%), “too much time” (11%) and “none of these” (11%), which were almost evenly distributed, as shown on the pie chart below.



Respondents were also asked to identify which sources of help, if any, they used during the application process. This question also allowed respondents to choose more than one option, so the response count (1,515 responses) is higher than the sample size (961 respondents). More than half (56%) of responses indicated that they “**did not** get help.” Again, this relatively favorable response is likely to reflect the fact that all survey respondents were computer literate. It should be noted that responses indicating that a person “did not get help” does not necessarily indicate that a person did not “need” or “seek” help – rather, it is only a reflection of whether they received help during the process.

Application Help Sources "Check All That Apply"		
Count		Percent
854	Did NOT get help	56%
190	Soc worker/case manager	13%
151	Friend or family member	10%
101	City or County office	7%
72	Other	5%
69	Local organization	5%
53	Internet search	3%
25	SSA staff	2%
1,515	Total	100%

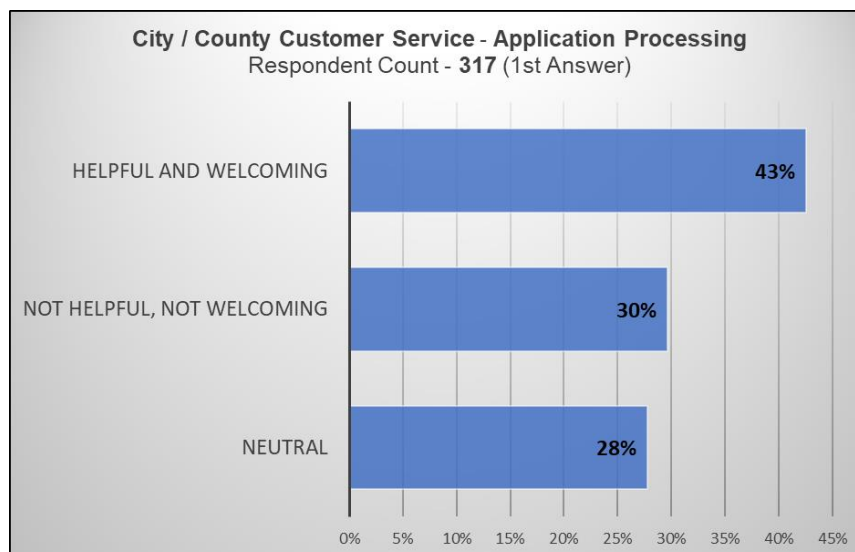
Among the other top Application Help Sources chosen were “social worker / case worker” (13%), “friend or family member” (10%), “city or county office” (7%) and “other” (5%), as shown on the pie chart below.



Among lesser chosen application help sources were “local organization” (5%), “internet search” (3%), and “SSA staff” (2%), which only applied to those receiving SSI benefits.

Given that OTDA works with local districts in providing support for NYS public benefit programs, respondents were then asked, “If you got help filling out your _____ application from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?”

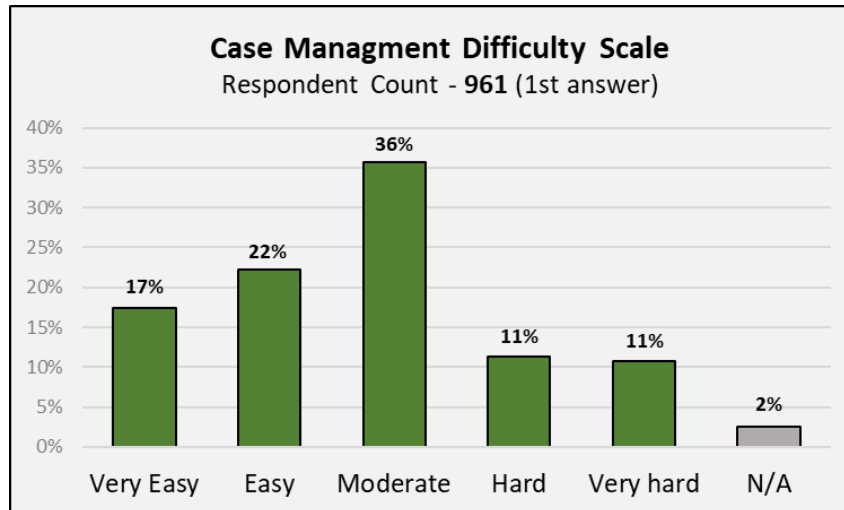
Of those respondents that did receive “City or County” help on their application, 43% felt the customer service was “helpful and welcoming,” 30% felt the customer service was “not helpful, not welcoming” and 28% felt “neutral” about the service.



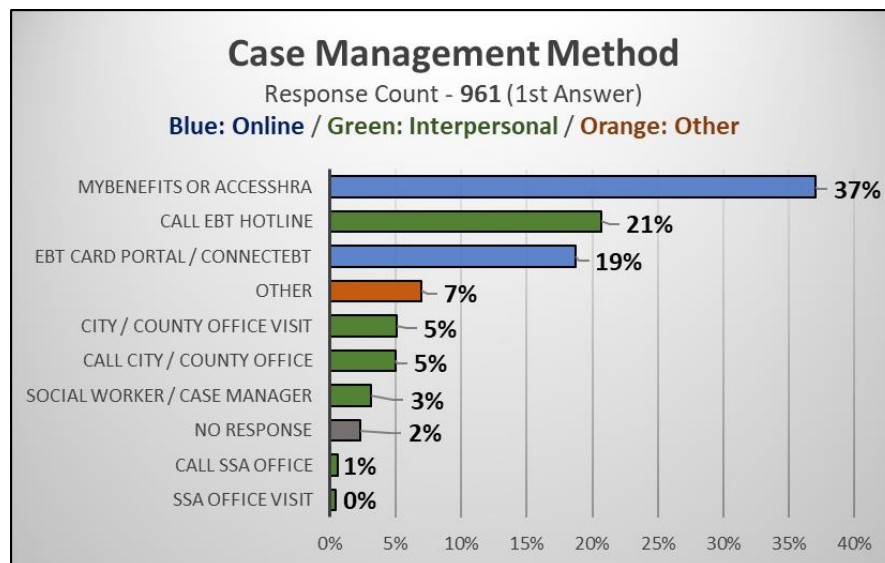
Case Management:

Next, the focus of the survey focused on respondents' experiences managing their public benefits case(s).

Of these, **39%** of recipients reported that managing their case was “very easy” (17%) or “easy” (22%). Another **36%** reported that their case management experience was “moderate,” with **22%** reporting their experience was “hard” (11%) or “very hard” (11%).



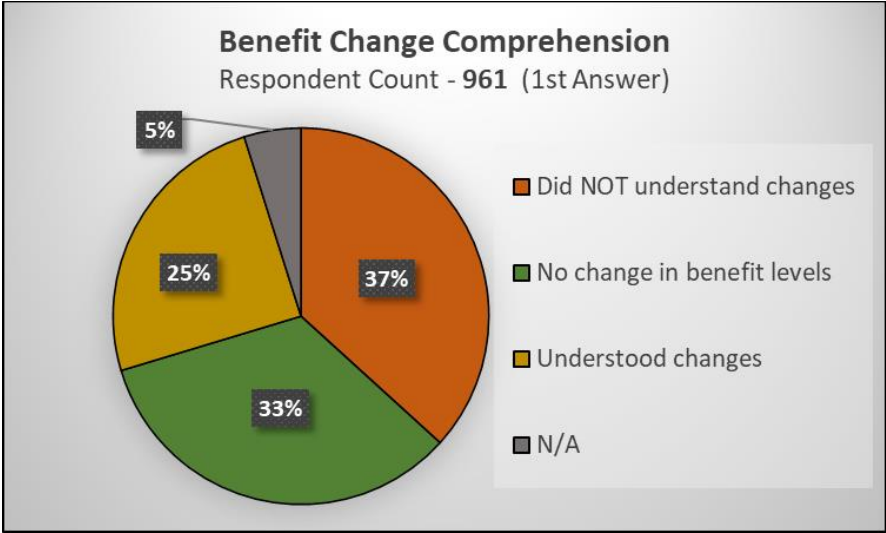
When asked which method recipients used to manage their case (including recertifying as required, reporting changes in circumstance, etc.) over half, or **56%**, indicated they used online tools (blue bars on chart) such as “My Benefits / Access HRA” (37%) or the Connect EBT portal (19%).



Over one-third (**35%**) of these recipients sought assistance via direct verbal communication or through interpersonal networks when managing their cases (green bars on chart above),

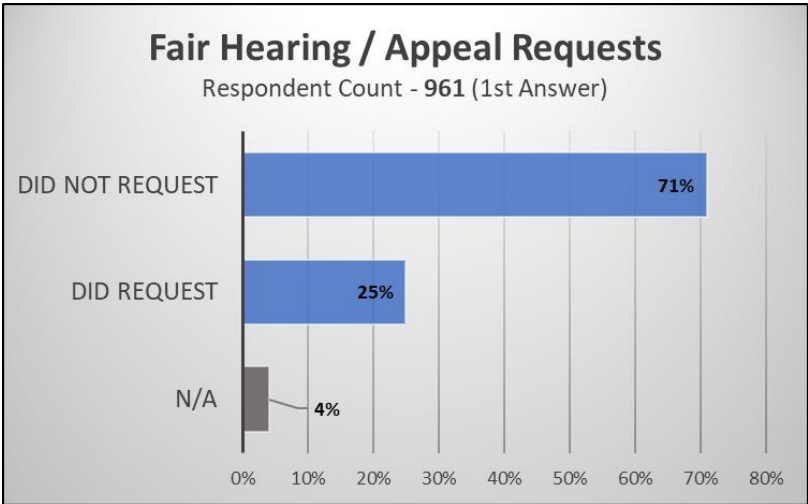
including calling an EBT hotline (21%), visiting a city or county office (5%), calling a city or county office (5%), contact with social worker/case manager (3%), and/or calling an SSA Office (1%).

During receipt of programs, public benefit recipients in NYS may experience changes in their benefit levels related to changes in circumstance and eligibility. Respondents were therefore asked, “If you experienced changes in _____ benefit levels (including losing your benefits altogether), did you understand what those changes were based on?”



As shown in the chart above, (37%) of respondents **did not** understand why changes occurred in the level of benefits they received, 33% had no change in benefit levels, and 25% did understand why changes occurred when their benefit levels changed.

When asked if respondents ever requested a fair hearing or appeal related to their SNAP, PA, or SSI case, 71% reported that they **did not** make such a request, 25% responded that they did make a request, while 4% had no response to this question.



OTDA works with local districts in providing support for case management. For this reason, recipients were also asked to identify one or more sources of help they relied on when managing their cases, including whether they got help from the government via OTDA or a local district. Of the options provided, the most common option chosen was “I manage my case myself” (29%), either alone or in combination with other case management help sources.

Case Management Help Sources		
Count		Percent
530	Self-manage	29%
337	Call City or County	19%
332	City or County Office Visit	18%
215	Social worker/case manager	12%
133	Other	7%
100	Call NYS OTDA	6%
72	Local organization	4%
56	Call SSA Office	3%
34	Visit SSA Office	2%
1,809	Total	100%

Among the other choices, **64%** of respondents (green rows in table above) reported that they relied on *interpersonal resources* for assistance, which includes communication with OTDA, local districts, and/or social workers/case managers.

Of these, the top five help sources for case management support included: 19% who *called* a City or County office, 18% who *visited* a City or County office, 12% who contacted a social worker or case manager, 6% who called NYS OTDA and 4% who contacted a Local Organization.

Recipients were then asked, “If you got help managing your _____ case from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?”

Of those recipients who did receive “City or County” help, equal numbers thought the customer service was “helpful and welcoming,” “neutral,” or “not helpful, not welcoming.” Responses to all the questions are provided in **Appendix C** by program. Note that respondents receiving multiple benefit programs will appear in more than one group of responses.

Part 2 – Qualitative Data Summary

Sample Size and Analytic Method:

Two qualitative questions were presented to the 1,142 respondents who were *currently receiving benefits* at the time they took the survey (961) or *had received benefits in the past* (181):

Application Stage Question: “In your own words: was there anything else about **applying** for _____ that was a **problem** , or **slowed you down** , in getting it done? **What changes would make it easier** for you? If you learned a close friend was applying for _____ , what **advice would you give** them? Any **additional comments** about the application? Please explain as best as you can.”

Case Management Stage Question: “In your own words: what is the hardest part of **maintaining** your _____ **benefits** ? If you learned a close friend was having difficulty managing their _____ benefits, what **advice would you give** them? **What changes** would make it easier for you? Any additional comments about maintaining _____ benefits?”

This open-ended format allowed respondents to include as many types of experiences as they wished to describe. For respondents receiving more than one benefit, these questions were only asked once, at the end of the application questions and at the end of the case management questions.

A total of **824** respondents provided answers to at least one of the two qualitative questions.

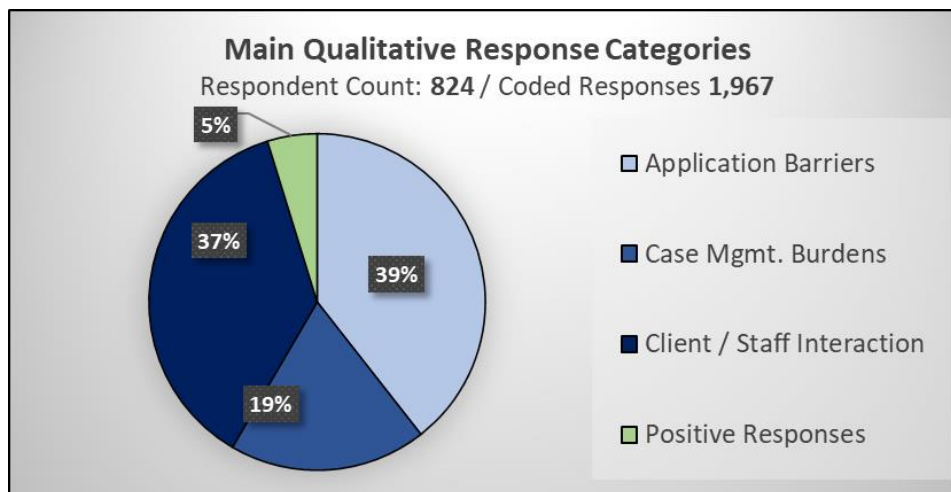
To ensure reliability, a blind Peer Review Panel was established within OTDA, which included nine staff members from various bureaus and levels of expertise. After an initial analysis of the entire transcript, a triangulated, *consensus coding* method was utilized (by dividing randomized portions of respondents’ statements for independent coding) to code the topic(s) or subcategory contained in client responses. Each panel member coded statements according to an initial list of main categories and sub-categories but the process was also open to additional categorical adjustments. A third, and final, coding reconciliation process between two analysts resolved any inconsistencies and increased the credibility of the statistical conclusions drawn from the data. This three-step method ensured validity, and reduced bias by incorporating multiple diverse perspectives.

The consensus coding method described above resulted in a total of **2,162** responses that could be assigned to at least one sub-category. There were 195 responses (9% of all statements) that included “advice” and **1,967** responses coded to four other main response categories shown below.

Main Qualitative Response Categories		
776	Application Barriers	39%
374	Case Mgmt. Burdens	19%
723	Client / Staff Interaction	37%
94	Positive Responses	5%
1,967		100%

As the blue segments in the chart below show, the majority (**95%**) of the qualitative responses fell into three main descriptive categories:

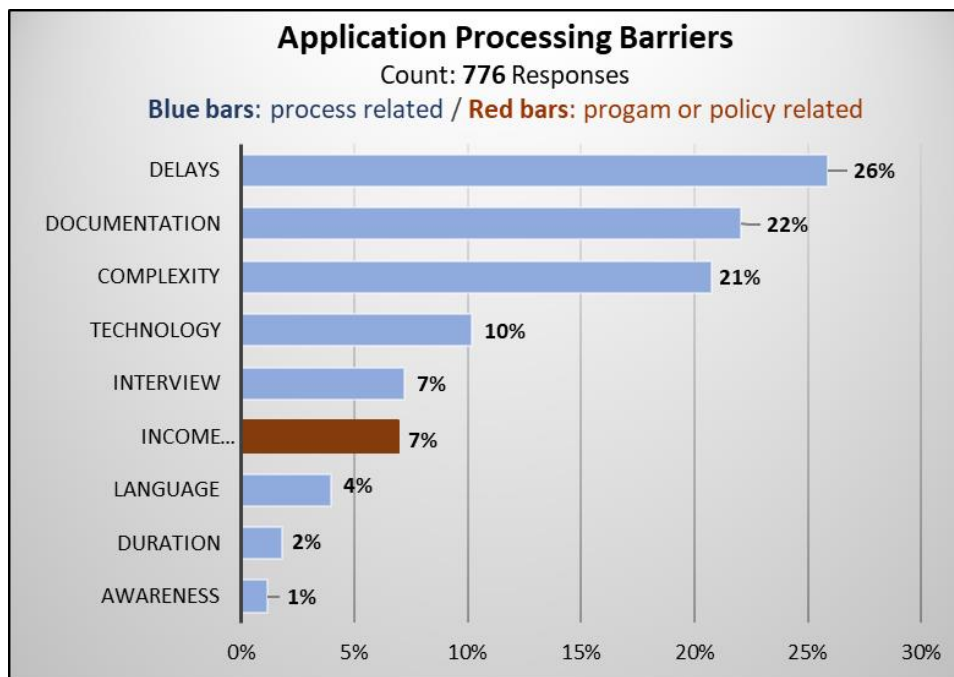
- 39% (776) references to application barriers,
- 19% (374) references to case management burdens,
- 37% (723) references to client/staff interactions (customer relations).



Of the remaining statements, 5% (94) included references to positive experiences (green segment on chart). **Appendix B** provides a selection of actual client statements to illustrate how applicable responses fell into various coding categories.

Application Process Barriers:

Of the 1,967 answers, **39%** (776) described their experiences during the application process. Only 7% of these (red bar on chart below) involved “income ineligibility” – a policy level barrier. The other **93%** described a variety of application processing barriers (blue bars on chart).

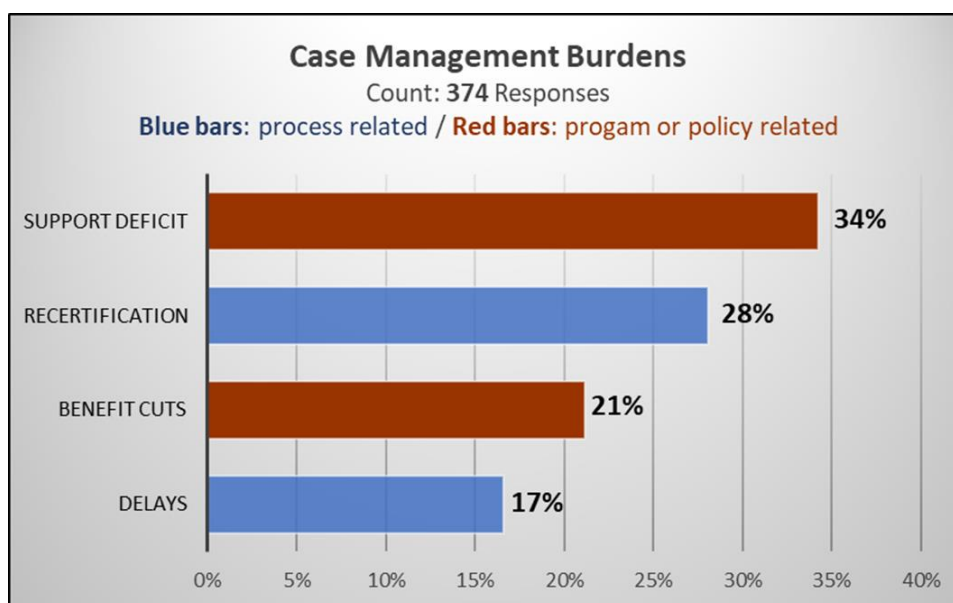


1% - Awareness; not aware of benefit programs, not aware of how to apply or where to start.

- 2% - Duration;** too much time spent filling out application, gathering documents, going to the office, calling the district, etc.
- 4% - Language;** deficiencies in English (administrative jargon) or foreign language version of application that causes confusion/difficulty.
- 7% - Income Ineligibility;** denial of benefits due to factors other than citizenship status (high income, etc.)
- 7% - Interview;** delays, confusion, difficulty, displeasure, etc. with the required interview process.
- 10% - Technology;** problems with the online application (i.e., upload failures, inability to record changes in status, etc.)
- 21% - Complexity;** confusion, displeasure, frustration, etc. with procedures, policies, interpretation, etc. of the application.
- 22% - Documentation;** references to "paperwork," proof of identity, or other documentation required, in addition to application form itself.
- 26% - Delays;** "wait time," turnaround time, stoppages, status updates, etc. in regard to application processing.

Case Management Burdens:

Of the 1,967 answers, **19%** (374) of respondents described experiences associated with managing their cases after they entered an OTDA program or programs. Of these, **55%** (red bars on chart below) involved program/policy level burdens. The other **45%** (blue bars on chart) described process related burdens.



17% - Delays; "wait time," turnaround time, or stoppages that occur after clients have been approved for receipt of benefits.

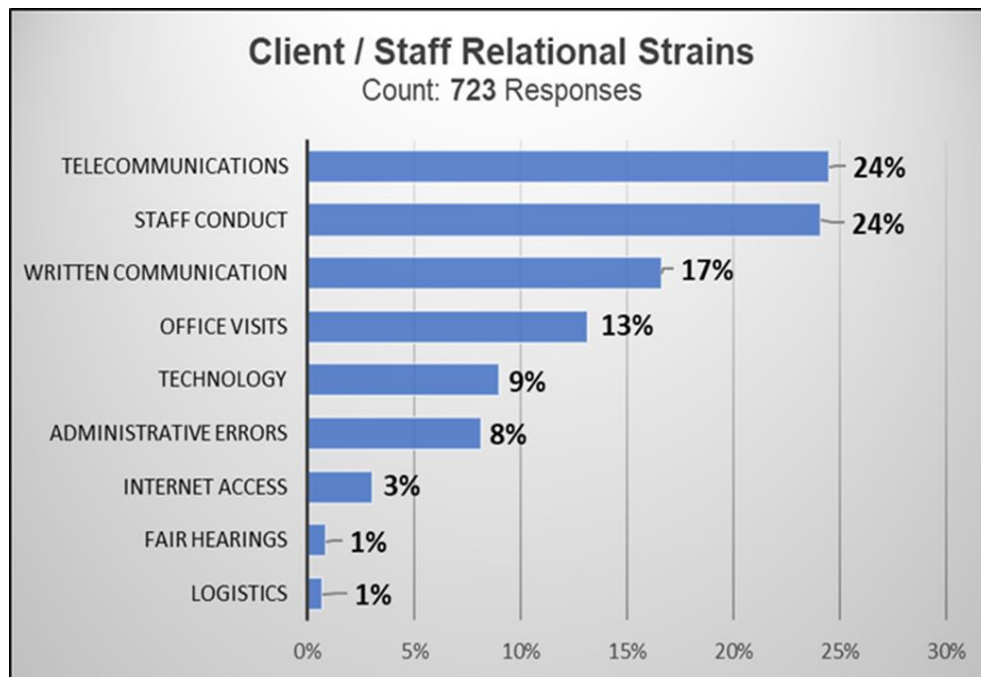
21% - Benefit Cuts; suspension or reduction in benefit amounts received, lack of consistency, experience of a benefits cliff

28% - Recertification; references to the Recertification process.

34% - Support Deficit; benefit amounts that are insufficient as compared to cost of living.

Client / Staff Relational Strains:

Of the 1,967 answers, **37%** (723) described customer service experiences that may have occurred during *either* the application process and/or the case management process.



1% - Fair Hearings; references to the fair hearing process

1% - Logistics; appointment scheduling, general logistics, transportation to appointments, etc.

3% - Internet Access; no access to the internet, lack of device

- 8% - Administrative Errors;** mistakes made by case workers/administrative staff on "the system" causing delays/misrepresentation of recipient status.
- 9% - Technology;** online/telecommunications technical failures during application submission, system crash, status updates, such as "system was down," tech problems, digital illiteracy
- 13% - Office Visit;** in-person visit to district offices and/or physical spaces when seeking direct assistance, including but not limited to excessive wait times, insufficient office hours, etc.
- 17% - Written Communications;** any other form of communications, such as hard copy mail, email, chat boxes, digital communications, app notifications/alerts/messages etc.
- 24% - Staff Conduct;** one-on-one interaction with, and conduct of, case workers and other administrative staff.
- 24% - Telecommunications;** interaction with call center staff, or any other telephone support services.

It is important to note that the relational strains described by respondents involve structural challenges within the Public Benefits system, such as limited office hours, technology issues, and client-to-staff ratios. As such, barriers in the application process and/or case management burdens described by applicants and/or recipients *are also often experienced* by caseworkers and the telecommunications staff.

Qualitative statements regarding customer service interactions were provided by respondents in both the 2024 OTDA Public Benefits survey and the CPRAC Public Hearing testimonies heard on April 29th, 2024, and were closely aligned in substance. These statements, which primarily described challenges and negative experiences, reflect problems that are typical of understaffing and “worker burnout,” which have been well documented elsewhere in public sector studies.⁴

To that end, staff stressors may be additional factors that contribute to respondents’ negative experiences in the application and case management stages. These stressors may manifest in the relations between client/staff in the form of communication failures, perceived disrespect, frustrating treatment patterns, cultural competency issues, and other factors.

Positive Experiences:

Of the 1,967 applicable answers, **5%** (94) described *positive experiences* in seeking support from OTDA programs. Of these, 72% (68) described a positive experience in the application process, and 28% (26) did so for their case management experience. **Appendix B** also includes a selection of these statements.

⁴ *Ratcliff, M. (2024). *Social Workers, Burnout, and Self-Care: A Public Health Issue*. Delaware Journal of Public Health, 10(1), 26–29. <https://doi.org/10.32481/djph.2024.03.05>

*Soskis, B., & Tomasko, L. (2023, March 3). *Addressing Burnout Is Critical to the Social Sector’s Success*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/addressing-burnout-critical-social-sectors-success>

Positive Experiences	68	Application Process	72%
	26	Case Management	28%
	94		100%

Examples of Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Responses

Combining multiple choice and qualitative survey results helps increase understanding of the challenges that people may have faced during the application process, benefit level changes, and customer service experience.

Example 1: Factors Affecting the Application Process

“On a scale of 1 to 5, what was it like for you to fill out the _____ application?”

Here are six examples where respondents rated their application experience and mentioned the application process in a qualitative statement:

- A respondent receiving SNAP only, who rated their application process as “Very Easy” noted: *“[Translated from Spanish] I had no problem with my application, and if I find out of a friend who wants to apply for the benefits, I will send them directly to the office where I received the assistance complete the form.”*
- A respondent receiving SNAP only, who rated their application process as “Very Easy” noted: *“When applying some of the documents could be simplified.”*
- A respondent receiving SNAP only, who rated their application process as “Moderate” noted: *“The application is a little long but doable.”*
- A respondent receiving SNAP only, who rated their application process as “Moderate” noted: *“Workers advising you to do different things, slowed down the application process.”*
- A respondent receiving SNAP and PA, who rated their application process as “Hard/Very Hard” noted: *“The fact that everything is done remotely, makes it impossible to get assistance. A person applying for assistance isn’t allowed to walk into a Center anymore, you’re told to call the number and wait for someone to pick up your call. 9 out of 10 times, the call is disconnected. There is no clear explanation for documents that are required, and no one calls to interview you after the documents are uploaded/submitted.”*
- A respondent receiving SNAP and SSI, who rated their application process as “Hard/Very Hard” noted: *“I was discouraged by all of this. I need help so I asked a family member. ... Every agent I speak to is very rude and upsetting.”*

Example 2: Benefit Level Change Comprehension

“Have your _____ benefit levels been consistent, or have you experienced changes in benefit levels?”

“If you experienced changes in your _____ benefit levels (including losing your benefits altogether), did you understand what those changes were based on?”

Here are five examples of the kinds of qualitative statements received from respondents who indicated their benefits changed, AND noted they did not understand that change, AND expressed qualitative sentiments related to that change in their responses to open-ended questions:

- A respondent receiving SNAP only, who indicated they “did NOT understand why my benefits changed” noted: *“...I applied online for SNAP and our family qualified. When it was time to recert, the local DSS worker called me and said I did not qualify by a lot. I knew that my income had not changed that much and was worried that they would consider my case as fraud. Fortunately, the local caseworker was willing to listen as I explained how we had initially qualified...”*
- A respondent receiving SNAP only, who indicated they “did NOT understand why my benefits changed” noted: *“Working in a salon industry you have two busy months during the summer. That’s when you cut them off and then it takes about 4 months to get it again.”*
- A respondent receiving SNAP and PA, who indicated they “did NOT understand why my benefits changed” noted: *“Honestly, the hardest part about it is when you get a job that’s remotely a dollar above, you’re taken off in a spur of the moment with children when you already couldn’t afford anything while you was on the Public Assistance and SNAP.”*
- A respondent receiving SNAP and PA, who indicated they “did NOT understand why my benefits changed” noted: *“They’ve made soo many mistakes including forgetting to put money on my card, accidentally canceling my benefits, changing my benefit level with no explanation. They even sent me contradicting letters saying 2 different things.”*
- A respondent receiving SSI only, who indicated they “understood why my benefits changed” noted: *“...If you earn a little more money, they deduct benefits, and the reality is that you need to earn more money because help is not enough.”*

Example 3: Customer Service Experiences (Client / Staff Relations)

“If you got help filling out your _____ application, where did you get that help?” AND “How do you get help managing your _____ case or ask questions about your benefits?”

Among the respondents who answered these questions, we reviewed those who reported that they got help filling out their application or managing their benefit cases at a city or county office. To understand the reported quality of their application and/or case management experience, we cross-checked those respondents’ answers to these quantitative questions:

“If you got help filling out your _____ application from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?”

“If you got help managing your _____ case from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?”

Here are five examples of the kinds of qualitative responses received from respondents who indicated they got help from a City or County office either applying for benefits or managing their case, AND who answered the question about the helpfulness of that assistance, AND who described that experience in response to open-ended questions:

- A respondent receiving SNAP only, who indicated that the help they received related to their application was “Helpful and welcoming” noted: “[Translated from Spanish] *The only upsetting thing is to wait on the phone, but I understand that it’s normal because there are many people applying, perhaps all at the same time. Apart from that, everything was excellent.*”
- A respondent receiving SNAP only, who indicated that the help they received related to their application was “Not helpful, not welcoming” noted: “*The case workers are the hardest part they are rude and they make u feel horrible about your situation.*”
- A respondent receiving SNAP and PA, who indicated that the help they received related to the management of their case was “Helpful and welcoming” noted: “[Translated from Spanish] *Everything was fine, thank you. Just more assistants who speak Spanish are needed. That would be great. Thank you.*”
- A respondent receiving SNAP and PA, who indicated that the help they received related to the management of their case was “Not helpful, not welcoming” noted: “*If I have a question about my case, I have to go to the city office because it’s pointless calling them. They have not enough agents answer the phones. If I go to the city office for maintaining cases, I’m sure that it’s going to be a min 3-4 hour event. It’s a lot of people in the waiting line but just a few people who service them.*”
- A respondent receiving SNAP and SSI, who indicated that the help they received related to the management of their case was “Helpful and welcoming” noted: “*Everything is great except the staff almost never answers the phone when you called at the HRA offices. ... Please answer the phone when people are trying to call about their cases because sometimes you can’t make it in person especially when the kids have a break from school, and you have nobody to watch them.*”

“Never Received” Responses:

Respondents who selected that they had “never” received SNAP, PA, or SSI benefits saw four qualitative questions in a single free-text space, as follows:

“If you have not received these benefits, please describe why. If you applied, were you found ineligible or have you not applied? If you were found ineligible, did you understand why?”

Eighty-six respondents provided a reason why they were not eligible, with the most common reason being that they were income-ineligible (31%), ineligible with no reason given (19%) and ineligible because of citizenship rules (19%). The remaining respondents mentioned some of the

same barriers as those who were receiving or had received benefits (complexity, administrative delays, document requirements, interview requirements, and staff conduct.)

Part 3 – Conclusion

Quantitative Results - Overall, the survey results for multiple choice questions were normally distributed, with data symmetrically spread and most responses clustering around a centralized or “moderate” experience. Efforts must be made to continually improve experiences so that more people have an easy or very easy experience and fewer people have a hard or very hard experience.

Although some respondents reported that they made good use of online tools in applying for and managing public benefits, a substantial portion of respondents reported that they rely on direct, interpersonal networks within their communities to learn more about public benefits, find help with their application process, and get the support they need in managing their cases.

Other key findings point to the need for improvements in processing requirements. For instance, the highest portion of respondents chose “required documents” (22%) from among those factors that presented a barrier to application completion. Figuring out ways to reduce the amount of documentation required or make it easier to collect/compile documentation would help to address this commonly reported barrier.

Additional research, and a close examination of results at the county level will continue to yield more specific administrative areas of improvement as well as best practices and alternative support structures.

Qualitative Results - In addition to several areas of structural strain (i.e., application process barriers and case management burdens), a substantial number of respondents reported adverse experiences in their direct interaction with government staff. These client / staff relational challenges include communication issues, perceived disrespect, frustrating treatment patterns, cultural competency concerns, extensive delays, etc. Improvements in application processing and case management procedures will likely help improve interactions our clients describe having with case workers and other staff members and reduce feelings of negative experience.

Future analysis, including continuous examination of client feedback, will allow us to execute reforms needed in three key areas:

1. Streamlining and improving efficiency and simplicity of the application process, including the use of plainer language, shortening the overall application, fewer application requirements where possible, and making those requirements more succinct and understandable;
2. Making it easier for New Yorkers to manage their benefits, including improvements in customer service initiatives and more effective communication regarding case management requirements and/or changes to existing benefits;
3. Identifying challenging factors confronting both staff and clients that may contribute to process challenges for all and considering steps to alleviate these through increased support for district staffing and human resource development.

If enhancement initiatives in these areas are collectively addressed, we will very likely see a greater, positive, and long-term impact on the delivery of critical public benefit programs to our clients.

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Appendix A: All survey questions listed by benefit program

What follows are the questions asked in OTDA's 2024 Public Benefits Survey. Specific questions asked of each respondent were dependent on which program(s) they reported receiving. Respondents who reported receiving more than one program were asked questions related to those programs, but with questions ordered slightly differently than the illustration below.

Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council Public Benefits Survey

We would like to ask a few questions about how these New York State public benefits programs have worked for you:

- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; formerly known as "food stamps");
- PA (Public Assistance; can also refer to Temporary Assistance or Cash Assistance. This also includes homeless shelter, utility and/or rental assistance through the program);
- SSI (Supplemental Security Income)

The survey should take a few minutes, depending on how many benefits you are receiving. If you do not have time to complete the entire survey, please scroll to the bottom and click "Submit" so that we can record the questions you answered. Your responses to this survey are voluntary and your identity will remain anonymous. Thank you for giving us your feedback.

What Benefits Are you Receiving?

Based on your answer to the following question, we will ask a few questions about applying for and managing each benefit. If you are not receiving SNAP, PA, and/or SSI right now, but have applied for or received them in New York State in the past, you can share about your experience in the comment boxes. If you have never received SNAP, PA, or SSI in New York State, you can share why you didn't apply or why you did not receive any of these programs.

1. Are you currently or have you ever received SNAP, PA, and/or SSI as a New York State resident? If you have never received SNAP, PA or SSI as a New York State resident, please select the last option.
 - Currently receiving SNAP only
 - Currently receiving PA only
 - Currently receiving SSI only
 - Currently receiving SNAP and PA
 - Currently receiving SNAP and SSI
 - Currently receiving PA and SSI
 - Currently receiving SNAP, PA, and SSI
 - Not receiving SNAP, PA, or SSI currently, but received in the past
 - Never received SNAP, PA, or SSI (did not apply or applied and found ineligible)

SNAP Application and Management

2. Where did you learn about SNAP?

- ☐ Family member
- ☐ Friend
- ☐ Social worker/case manager
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ SNAP promotional materials (TV, subway, flyer, pamphlet, social media post)
- ☐ Outreach at event or from a community agency
- ☐ Pre-screening tools
- ☐ Online
- ☐ Other

3. Did you apply for SNAP in New York City or outside of New York City?

- ☐ New York City
- ☐ Outside of New York City

4. If you applied outside of New York City, in which county did you apply?

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very easy” and 5 being “very hard,” what was it like for you to fill out the SNAP application form?

- ☐ 1 – Very Easy
- ☐ 2 – Easy
- ☐ 3 – Moderate
- ☐ 4 – Hard
- ☐ 5 – Very Hard

6. Please identify any factors that may have impacted the completion of your SNAP application. Check all that apply.

- ☐ Understanding the application – language confusing or difficult to understand
- ☐ Understanding next steps – including period reporting, recertifying, etc.
- ☐ Gathering all required documents
- ☐ Answering all questions
- ☐ Submitting the application
- ☐ Application took too much time
- ☐ None of these
- ☐ Other (Please describe in your own words later in the survey)

7. If you got help filling out your SNAP application, where did you get help? Check all that apply.
- ☐ City or County office
 - ☐ Local organization
 - ☐ Social worker/case manager
 - ☐ Friend or family member
 - ☐ Internet search
 - ☐ Other
 - ☐ I did not get help filling out the application
8. If you got help filling out your SNAP application from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?
- ☐ Helpful and welcoming
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Not helpful, not welcoming
 - ☐ I did not get help from a City or County office
9. In your own words: was there anything else about applying for SNAP that was a problem, or slowed you down, in getting it done? What changes would make it easier for you? If you learned a close friend was applying for SNAP, what advice would you give them? Any additional comments about the application? Please explain as best as you can.
10. Once you were in the SNAP program and receiving SNAP benefits, how hard was it to manage your case on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very easy” and 5 being “very hard”?
- ☐ 1 – Very Easy
 - ☐ 2 – Easy
 - ☐ 3 – Moderate
 - ☐ 4 – Hard
 - ☐ 5 – Very hard
11. How are you checking your SNAP balance and managing your SNAP case (including recertifying as required, reporting changes in circumstance, etc.)?
- ☐ In person at a City or County office
 - ☐ Phone calling a City or County office
 - ☐ MyBenefits or AccessHRA
 - ☐ The EBT card portal- CONNECTEBT
 - ☐ By calling the EBT hotline
 - ☐ Social worker/case manager
 - ☐ Other
12. Have your SNAP benefit levels been consistent, or have you experienced changes in benefit levels?
- ☐ Consistent benefit levels
 - ☐ Changing benefit levels

13. If you experienced changes in SNAP benefit levels (including losing your benefits altogether), did you understand what those changes were based on?
- ☐ I understood why my benefits changed
 - ☐ I did not understand why my benefits changed
 - ☐ I did not experience changes in benefit levels
14. Have you ever requested a fair hearing related to your SNAP case?
- ☐ Did not request a fair hearing
 - ☐ Did request a fair hearing
15. How do you get help managing your SNAP case or ask questions about your benefits? Check all that apply.
- ☐ In person from a City or County office
 - ☐ Phone calling a City or County office
 - ☐ Phone calling OTDA
 - ☐ Local organization
 - ☐ Social worker/case manager
 - ☐ Other
 - ☐ I manage my case myself
16. If you got help managing your SNAP case from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?
- ☐ Helpful and welcoming
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Not helpful, not welcoming
 - ☐ I did not get help from a City or County office
17. In your own words: What is the hardest part of maintaining your SNAP benefits? If you learned a close friend was having difficulty managing their SNAP benefits, what advice would you give them? What changes would make it easier for you? Any additional comments about maintaining SNAP benefits?

PA Application and Management

2. Where did you learn about PA?
- ☐ Family member
 - ☐ Friend
 - ☐ Social worker/case manager
 - ☐ Word of mouth
 - ☐ Pre-screening tools
 - ☐ Online
 - ☐ Other

3. Did you apply for PA in New York City or outside of New York City?
- ☐ New York City
 - ☐ Outside of New York City
4. If you applied outside of New York City, in which county did you apply?
5. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very easy” and 5 being “very hard,” what was it like for you to fill out the PA application form?
- ☐ 1 – Very Easy
 - ☐ 2 – Easy
 - ☐ 3 – Moderate
 - ☐ 4 – Hard
 - ☐ 5 – Very Hard
6. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “I fully understood” and 5 being “did not understand at all,” did you feel you understood the requirements when signing the PA application?
- ☐ 1 – I fully understood
 - ☐ 2 – Mostly understood
 - ☐ 3 – Partially understood
 - ☐ 4 – Some confusion
 - ☐ 5 – Did not understand at all
7. Please identify any factors that may have impacted the completion of your PA application. Check all that apply.
- ☐ Understanding the application – language confusing or difficult to understand
 - ☐ Understanding next steps – including appointments, such as child support, employment and training, or drug and alcohol assessment
 - ☐ Gathering all required documents
 - ☐ Answering all questions
 - ☐ Getting to required appointments after applying
 - ☐ Submitting the application
 - ☐ Application took too much time
 - ☐ None of these
 - ☐ Other (Please describe in your own words later in the survey)
8. If you got help filling out your PA application, where did you get help? Check all that apply.
- ☐ City or County office
 - ☐ Local organization
 - ☐ Social worker/case manager
 - ☐ Friend or family member
 - ☐ Internet search
 - ☐ Other
 - ☐ I did not get help filling out the application

9. If you got help filling out your PA application from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?
- ☐ Helpful and welcoming
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Not helpful, not welcoming
 - ☐ I did not get help from a City or County office
10. In your own words: What is the hardest part of maintaining your PA benefits? If you learned a close friend was having difficulty managing their PA benefits, what advice would you give them? What changes would make it easier for you? Any additional comments about maintaining PA benefits? Please explain as best as you can.
11. Once you were in the PA program and receiving PA benefits, how hard was it to manage your case on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very easy” and 5 being “very hard”?
- ☐ 1 – Very Easy
 - ☐ 2 – Easy
 - ☐ 3 – Moderate
 - ☐ 4 – Hard
 - ☐ 5 – Very hard
12. How are you managing your PA case (including recertifying as required, reporting changes in circumstance, etc.)?
- ☐ In person at a City or County office
 - ☐ Phone calling a City or County office
 - ☐ MyBenefits or AccessHRA
 - ☐ The EBT card portal- CONNECTEBT
 - ☐ Phone calling the EBT hotline
 - ☐ Social worker/case manager
 - ☐ Other
13. Have your PA benefit levels been consistent, or have you experienced changes in benefit levels?
- ☐ Consistent benefit levels
 - ☐ Changing benefit levels
14. If you experienced changes in PA benefit levels (including losing your benefits altogether), did you understand what those changes were based on?
- ☐ I understood why my benefits changed
 - ☐ I did not understand why my benefits changed
 - ☐ I did not experience changes in benefit levels

15. Have you ever requested a fair hearing related to your PA case?

- ☐ I requested a fair hearing
- ☐ I did not request a fair hearing

16. How do you get help managing your PA case or ask questions about your benefits? Check all that apply.

- ☐ In person from a City or County office
- ☐ Phone calling a City or County office
- ☐ Phone calling OTDA
- ☐ Local organization
- ☐ Social worker/case manager
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I manage my case myself

17. If you got help managing your PA case from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?

- ☐ Helpful and welcoming
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Not helpful, not welcoming
- ☐ I did not get help from a City or County office

18. In your own words: What is the hardest part of maintaining your PA benefits? If you learned a close friend was having difficulty managing their PA benefits, what advice would you give them? What changes would make it easier for you? Any additional comments about maintaining PA benefits?

SSI Application and Management

2. Where did you learn about SSI?

- ☐ Family member
- ☐ Friend
- ☐ Social worker/case manager
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Doctor or medical professional
- ☐ Pre-screening tools
- ☐ Online
- ☐ Other

3. Did you apply for SSI in New York City or outside of New York City?

- ☐ New York City
- ☐ Outside of New York City

4. If you applied outside of New York City, in which county did you apply?

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very easy” and 5 being “very hard,” what was it like for you to fill out the SSI application form?
- ☐ 1 – Very Easy
 - ☐ 2 – Easy
 - ☐ 3 – Moderate
 - ☐ 4 – Hard
 - ☐ 5 – Very Hard
6. Please identify any factors that may have impacted the completion of your SSI application. Check all that apply.
- ☐ Understanding the application – language confusing or difficult to understand
 - ☐ Gathering all required documents
 - ☐ Answering all questions
 - ☐ Going through medical evaluation
 - ☐ Submitting the application
 - ☐ Application took too much time
 - ☐ None of these
 - ☐ Other (Please describe in your own words later in the survey)
7. If you got help filling out your SSI application, where did you get help? Check all that apply.
- ☐ City or County office
 - ☐ SSA staff
 - ☐ Local organization
 - ☐ Social worker/case manager
 - ☐ Friend or family member
 - ☐ Internet search
 - ☐ Other
 - ☐ I did not get help filling out the application
8. If you got help filling out your SSI application from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?
- ☐ Helpful and welcoming
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Not helpful, not welcoming
 - ☐ I did not get help from a City or County office
9. If you lived alone when you applied or when your SSI application was approved, did you realize that a SNAP case would automatically be opened for you?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ I did not live alone when I applied for SSI or when my application was approved

10. If you lived alone when your application for SSI was approved, did you receive a notice in the mail that a SNAP case was also opened for you?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ I did not live alone when my SSI application was approved
11. In your own words: was there anything else about applying for SSI that was a problem, or slowed you down, in getting it done? What changes would make it easier for you? If you learned a close friend was applying for SSI, what advice would you give them? Any additional comments about the application? Please explain as best as you can.
12. Once you were in the SSI program and receiving SSI benefits, how hard was it to manage your case on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very easy” and 5 being “very hard”?
- ☐ 1 – Very Easy
 - ☐ 2 – Easy
 - ☐ 3 – Moderate
 - ☐ 4 – Hard
 - ☐ 5 – Very hard
13. How are you managing your SSI case (including recertifying as required, reporting changes in circumstance, etc.)?
- ☐ In person at a City or County office
 - ☐ In person at SSA office
 - ☐ Phone calling a City or County office
 - ☐ Phone calling an SSA office
 - ☐ MyBenefits or AccessHRA
 - ☐ Social worker/case manager
 - ☐ Other
14. Have your SSI benefit levels been consistent, or did you experience changes in benefit levels?
- ☐ Consistent benefit levels
 - ☐ Changing benefit levels
15. If you experienced changes in SSI benefit levels (including losing your benefits altogether), did you understand what those changes were based on?
- ☐ I understood why my benefits changed
 - ☐ I did not understand why my benefits changed
 - ☐ I did not experience changes in benefit levels
16. Have you ever requested a review or appeal related to your SSI case?
- ☐ I requested a review or appeal related to my case
 - ☐ I did not request a review or appeal related to my case

17. How do you get help managing your SSI case or ask questions about your benefits? Check all that apply.

- ☐ In person at a City or County office
- ☐ In person at SSA office
- ☐ Phone calling a City or County office
- ☐ Phone calling SSA office
- ☐ Phone calling OTDA
- ☐ Local organization
- ☐ Social worker/case manager
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I manage my case myself

18. If you got help managing your SSI case from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?

- ☐ Helpful and welcoming
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Not helpful, not welcoming
- ☐ I did not get help from a City or County office

19. In your own words: What is the hardest part of maintaining your SSI benefits? If you learned a close friend was having difficulty managing their SSI benefits, what advice would you give them? What changes would make it easier for you? Any additional comments about maintaining SSI benefits?

Not receiving SNAP, PA, or SSI currently, but received in the past

1. In your own words: Was there anything else about applying for benefits that was a problem, or slowed you down, in getting it done? What changes would make it easier for you? If you learned a close friend was applying for benefits, what advice would you give them? Any additional comments about the application? Please explain as best as you can.

2. In your own words: What was the hardest part of maintaining your benefits? If you learned a close friend was having difficulty managing their benefits, what advice would you give them? What changes would have made it easier for you? Any additional comments about maintaining benefits?

Never Received SNAP, PA, or SSI

1. If you have not received these benefits, please describe why. If you applied, were you found ineligible or have you not applied? If you were found ineligible, did you understand why?

Appendix B: Example Qualitative Responses by Main Response Category

Application Barriers

A respondent not receiving benefits now: *“The process requires way too much time, assumes literacy, and you might not even get approved. The constraints are too specific and too much jargon for the layperson to understand.”* [Application Complexity / Language Barriers]

A respondent receiving SNAP only: *“Having to submit all the documents. I don’t live near transportation and had to travel to town to apply for the benefits.”* [Documentation Barriers]

A respondent not receiving benefits now: *“I wasn’t sure if I was eligible because I have roommates and didn’t understand what household meant. When applying I first got denied because I was working a gig job at restaurant and wasn’t paid on a bi-weekly basis, and they were confused by that.”* [Application Complexity & Seasonal/Sporadic Income]

Case Management Burdens

A respondent receiving SNAP only: *“I have no idea when I need to recertify, have gotten kicked off and didn’t know why, or why I should reapply when they have the information already. I need updates on what’s next, when I will get benefits, and a system that considers different family arrangements.”* [Recertification Issues]

A respondent not receiving benefits now: *“The places never calling back...You send the same paperwork to snap and heap but they make you send it separately. Seems like the whole program is to deter us from trying to get help.”* [Process Delay]

A respondent receiving SNAP only: *“The program does not seem set up to deal with occasional or seasonal jobs. For example, forms require clients to say how much they earn every week. A lot of people in poverty may not work the same hours or earn the same amount regularly...”* [Seasonal/Sporadic Pay]

Client / Staff Interaction

A respondent receiving PA only: *“The issue is only accessing help through the center in person. They’re rude and judgmental and will have people wait more than 4 hours just to answer a question. They don’t answer the phone when you call.”* [Staff Conduct / Delays]

A respondent not receiving benefits now: *“...workers on several occasions lost my paperwork or failed to pass it along to the right person which resulted in me being denied several times. I would always encourage others to get proof that they turned things in.”* [Administrative Error]

A respondent receiving SNAP only: *“It is hard when you work during the same hours offices are open so unable to make it in person, yet the phones are never answered.”* [Site Visit Issue]

A respondent receiving SNAP only: *“Online application allows you to submit documents, but they never make it to your case worker.”* [Online Application Failure]

Positive Experiences

A respondent not receiving benefits now: *"Applying online is the best its so convenient."*

A respondent receiving SNAP only: *"It was great because my case manager walked me through the process."*

A respondent receiving SNAP only: *"The application is much easier now compared to 10 years ago."*

A respondent receiving SNAP and PA: *"Maintaining my SNAP has been easy and the caseworkers are super nice and very helpful."*

Advice

A respondent not receiving benefits now: *"I would advise to be vigilant and check your HRA account regularly for notices. Respond promptly to any notices from HRA. Keep records of notices, names of HRA representatives you spoke with Know what your benefits amount is and what your rights are."*

A respondent receiving SNAP only: *"I would advise them to go to their main office branch and speak face to face with a case manager or Call them on the phone if they are unable to make it to the office."*

A respondent receiving SNAP and SSI: *"Be Patient"*

A respondent receiving SNAP only: *"Reach out to community advocate for assistance."*

Appendix C: All quantitative responses by benefit program

The 961 total respondents currently receiving at least one benefit provided information about 1,421 benefit cases. This appendix presents survey results by benefit program in four groups:

1. Responses about SNAP by SNAP only recipients
2. Responses about SNAP by those receiving SNAP plus at least one additional benefit
3. Responses about PA by those receiving either PA only or with another benefit
4. Responses about SSI by those receiving either SSI alone or with another benefit

Respondents in multiple benefit programs appear in more than one group of responses.

For questions 6, 7 and 15 (check all that apply), a small number of respondents (not shown) did not check any options.

SNAP only recipients

1. Are you currently or have you ever received SNAP, PA, and/or SSI as a New York State resident?		
	Count	Percent
SNAP only	493	100%

SNAP+ recipients

1a. Are you currently or have you ever received SNAP, PA, and/or SSI as a New York State resident?		
	Count	Percent
SNAP + PA	275	66%
SNAP + SSI	111	27%
SNAP + PA + SSI	31	7%
	417	100%

Program Awareness

2. Where did you learn about SNAP?		
	Count	Percent
No Response	4	1%
Family member	103	21%
Friend	54	11%
Online	56	11%
Other	89	18%
Outreach Event	12	2%
Pre-screening tools	7	1%
SNAP promo	26	5%
Social worker/case manager	69	14%
Word of mouth	73	15%
Total	493	100%

Program Awareness

2a. Where did you learn about SNAP?		
	Count	Percent
No Response	2	0%
Family member	91	22%
Friend	33	8%
Online	35	8%
Other	94	23%
Outreach Event	16	4%
Pre-screening tools	9	2%
SNAP promo	22	5%
Social worker/case manager	65	16%
Word of mouth	50	12%
Total	417	100%

NYC / ROS Regional Distribution

3. Did you apply for SNAP in New York City or outside of New York City (ROS)?		
	Count	Percent
No Response	10	2%
NYC	293	59%
ROS	190	39%
Total	493	100%

NYC / ROS Regional Distribution

3a. Did you apply for SNAP in New York City or outside of New York City (ROS)?		
	Count	Percent
No Response	3	1%
NYC	323	77%
ROS	91	22%
Total	417	100%

NYC / ROS County Distribution

4. If you applied outside of New York City, in which county did you apply?

Separate Listing Required

NYC / ROS County Distribution

4a. If you applied outside of New York City, in which county did you apply?

Separate Listing Required

Application Difficulty SCALE

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "very easy" and 5 being "very hard," what was it like for you to fill out the SNAP application form?

	Count	Percent
No Response	5	1%
Very Easy	82	17%
Easy	124	25%
Moderate	162	33%
Hard	65	13%
Very Hard	55	11%
Total	493	100%

Application Difficulty SCALE

5a. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "very easy" and 5 being "very hard," what was it like for you to fill out the SNAP application form?

	Count	Percent
No Response	6	1%
Very Easy	82	20%
Easy	86	21%
Moderate	148	35%
Hard	47	11%
Very Hard	48	12%
Total	417	100%

Application Difficulty FACTORS

6. Please identify any factors that may have impacted the completion of your SNAP application. Check all that apply.

	Count	Percent
Answering all questions	200	12%
Medical Evaluation	-	-
No parts particularly hard	33	2%
None of these	198	12%
Other	88	5%
Required Appointments	-	-
Required Documents	372	23%
Submitting the application	117	7%
Too Much Time	186	12%
Understanding next steps	259	16%
Understanding the application	159	10%
Total	1,612	100%

A small # of respondents did not choose any option; not shown

Application Difficulty FACTORS

6a. Please identify any factors that may have impacted the completion of your SNAP application. Check all that apply.

	Count	Percent
Answering all questions	102	13%
Medical Evaluation	-	-
No parts particularly hard	11	1%
None of these	94	12%
Other	46	6%
Required Appointments	-	-
Required Documents	175	22%
Submitting the application	54	7%
Too Much Time	96	12%
Understanding next steps	131	17%
Understanding the application	73	9%
Total	782	100%

Application Help Source

7. If you got help filling out your SNAP application, where did you get help? Check all that apply.

	Count	Percent
City or County office	70	7%
Did NOT get help	572	59%
Friend or family member	94	10%
Internet search	37	4%
Local organization	41	4%
Other	39	4%
Social worker/case manager	109	11%
SSA staff	-	-
Total	962	100%

Application Help Source

7a. If you got help filling out your SNAP application, where did you get help? Check all that apply.

	Count	Percent
City or County office	32	7%
Did NOT get help	264	58%
Friend or family member	43	9%
Internet search	18	4%
Local organization	20	4%
Other	18	4%
Social worker/case manager	61	13%
SSA staff	-	-
Total	456	100%

City/County Customer Service

8. If you got help filling out your **SNAP** application from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?

	Count	Percent
No Response	39	8%
Helpful / welcoming	77	16%
Did NOT get help	291	59%
Neutral	44	9%
NOT helpful / welcoming	42	9%
Total	493	100%

City/County Customer Service

8a. If you got help filling out your **SNAP** application from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?

	Count	Percent
No Response	24	6%
Helpful / welcoming	47	11%
Did NOT get help	265	64%
Neutral	32	8%
NOT helpful / welcoming	49	12%
Total	417	100%

10. Once you were in the **SNAP** program and receiving **SNAP** benefits, how hard was it to manage your case on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "very easy" and 5 being "very hard"?

	Count	Percent
No Response	11	2%
Very Easy	101	20%
Easy	124	25%
Moderate	172	35%
Hard	41	8%
Very Hard	44	9%
Total	493	100%

10a. Once you were in the **SNAP** program and receiving **SNAP** benefits, how hard was it to manage your case on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "very easy" and 5 being "very hard"?

	Count	Percent
No Response	10	2%
Very Easy	56	13%
Easy	82	20%
Moderate	155	37%
Hard	63	15%
Very Hard	51	12%
Total	417	100%

11. How are you checking your **SNAP** balance and managing your **SNAP** case (including recertifying as required, reporting changes in circumstance, etc.)?

	Count	Percent
No Response	10	2%
EBT hotline	114	23%
Visit City/Co. office	18	4%
MyBenefits / AccessHRA	168	34%
Other	38	8%
Phone City/Co. office	29	6%
Social worker/case manager	13	3%
EBT portal- CONNECTEBT	103	21%
Total	493	100%

11a. How are you checking your **SNAP** balance and managing your **SNAP** case (including recertifying as required, reporting changes in circumstance, etc.)?

	Count	Percent
No Response	10	2%
EBT hotline	84	20%
Visit City/Co. office	20	5%
MyBenefits / AccessHRA	171	41%
Other	28	7%
Phone City/Co. office	16	4%
Social worker/case manager	12	3%
EBT portal- CONNECTEBT	76	18%
Total	417	100%

12. Have your **SNAP** benefit levels been consistent or have you experienced changes in benefit levels?

	Count	Percent
No Response	25	5%
Changes	209	42%
Consistent	259	53%
Total	493	100%

12a. Have your **SNAP** benefit levels been consistent or have you experienced changes in benefit levels?

	Count	Percent
No Response	18	4%
Changes	195	47%
Consistent	204	49%
Total	417	100%

13. If you experienced changes in <i>SNAP</i> benefit levels (including losing your benefits altogether), did you understand what those changes were based on?		
	Count	Percent
No Response	27	5%
No Changes	168	34%
Did NOT Understand	161	33%
Understood Changes	137	28%
Total	493	100%

14. Have you ever requested a fair hearing related to your <i>SNAP</i> case?		
	Count	Percent
No Response	21	4%
Did NOT Request	387	78%
DID Request	85	17%
Total	493	100%

15. How do you get help managing your <i>SNAP</i> case or ask questions about your benefits? Check all that apply.		
	Count	Percent
Call City or County	251	21%
Call NYS OTDA	70	6%
Call SSA Office	-	0%
City or County Office Visit	206	18%
Local organization	47	4%
Other	89	8%
Self Manage	360	31%
Social worker/case manager	149	13%
SSA Office Visit	-	0%
Total	1,172	100%

16. If you got help managing your <i>SNAP</i> case from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?		
	Count	Percent
No Response	23	5%
Helpful & Welcoming	116	24%
I did NOT get help	181	37%
Neutral	86	17%
NOT helpful, NOT welcoming	87	18%
Total	493	100%

13a. If you experienced changes in <i>SNAP</i> benefit levels (including losing your benefits altogether), did you understand what those changes were based on?		
	Count	Percent
No Response	22	5%
No Changes	136	33%
Did NOT Understand	167	40%
Understood Changes	92	22%
Total	417	100%

14a. Have you ever requested a fair hearing related to your <i>SNAP</i> case?		
	Count	Percent
No Response	24	6%
Did NOT Request	262	63%
DID Request	131	31%
Total	417	100%

15a. How do you get help managing your <i>SNAP</i> case or ask questions about your benefits? Check all that apply.		
	Count	Percent
Call City or County	106	17%
Call NYS OTDA	52	8%
Call SSA Office	-	0%
City or County Office Visit	113	18%
Local organization	33	5%
Other	52	8%
Self Manage	224	36%
Social worker/case manager	45	7%
SSA Office Visit	-	-
Total	625	100%

16a. If you got help managing your <i>SNAP</i> case from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?		
	Count	Percent
No Response	21	5%
Helpful & Welcoming	56	13%
I did NOT get help	160	38%
Neutral	93	22%
NOT helpful, NOT welcoming	87	21%
Total	417	100%

PA + recipients**1b.** Are you currently or have you ever received SNAP, PA, and/or SSI as a New York State resident?

	Count	Percent
PA	30	9%
PA + SSI	3	1%
SNAP + PA	275	81%
SNAP + PA + SSI	31	9%
Total	339	100%

SSI + recipients**1c.** Are you currently or have you ever received **SSI** as a New York State resident?

	Count	Percent
SSI	18	11%
PA + SSI	3	2%
SNAP + SSI	111	68%
SNAP + PA + SSI	31	19%
Total	163	100%

Program Awareness**2b.** Where did you learn about **PA** ?

	Count	Percent
No Response	1	0%
Family member	72	21%
Friend	25	7%
Online	35	10%
Other	58	17%
Outreach Event	-	-
Pre-screening tools	23	7%
SNAP promo	-	-
Social worker/case manager	77	23%
Word of mouth	48	14%
Total	339	100%

Program Awareness**2c.** Where did you learn about **SSI** ?

	Count	Percent
No Response	7	4%
Family member	28	17%
Friend	9	6%
Online	9	6%
Other	26	16%
Doctor or medical professional	34	21%
Pre-screening tools	2	1%
SNAP promo	-	-
Social worker/case manager	33	20%
Word of mouth	15	9%
Total	163	100%

NYC / ROS Regional Distribution**3b.** Did you apply for **PA** in New York City or outside of New York City (ROS)?

	Count	Percent
No Response	1	0%
NYC	290	86%
ROS	48	14%
Total	339	100%

NYC / ROS Regional Distribution**3c.** Did you apply for **SSI** in New York City or outside of New York City (ROS)?

	Count	Percent
No Response	3	2%
NYC	93	57%
ROS	67	41%
Total	163	100%

NYC / ROS County Distribution**4b.** If you applied outside of New York City, in which county did you apply?

Separate Listing Required

NYC / ROS County Distribution**4c.** If you applied outside of New York City, in which county did you apply?

Separate Listing Required

Application Difficulty SCALE

5b. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very easy” and 5 being “very hard,” what was it like for you to fill out the **PA** application form?

	Count	Percent
No Response	4	1%
Very Easy	59	17%
Easy	79	23%
Moderate	117	35%
Hard	40	12%
Very Hard	40	12%
Total	339	100%

Application Difficulty SCALE

5c. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very easy” and 5 being “very hard,” what was it like for you to fill out the **SSI** application form?

	Count	Percent
No Response	8	5%
Very Easy	16	10%
Easy	28	17%
Moderate	45	28%
Hard	29	18%
Very Hard	37	23%
Total	163	100%

PA Application COMPREHENSION Scale (PA question only)

5b.2 On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “I fully understood” and 5 being “did not understand at all,” did you feel you understood the requirements when signing the **PA** application?

	Count	Percent
No Response	5	1%
Fully understood	114	34%
Mostly understood	97	29%
Partially understood	57	17%
Some confusion	54	16%
Did not understand at all	12	4%
Total	339	100%

Application Difficulty FACTORS

6b. Please identify any factors that may have impacted the completion of your **PA** application. **Check all that apply.**

	Count	Percent
Answering all questions	82	11%
Medical Evaluation	-	-
No parts particularly hard	8	1%
None of these	73	10%
Other	39	5%
Required Appointments	99	14%
Required Documents	135	19%
Submitting the application	48	7%
Too Much Time	75	11%
Understanding next steps	105	15%
Understanding the application	50	7%
Total	714	100%

Application Difficulty FACTORS

6c. Please identify any factors that may have impacted the completion of your **SSI** application. **Check all that apply.**

	Count	Percent
Answering all questions	67	17%
Medical Evaluation	74	19%
No parts particularly hard	5	1%
None of these	29	7%
Other	7	2%
Required Appointments	-	-
Required Documents	81	21%
Submitting the application	34	9%
Too Much Time	46	12%
Understanding next steps	-	-
Understanding the application	52	13%
Total	395	100%

Application Help Source

7b. If you got help filling out your **PA** application, where did you get help? **Check all that apply.**

	Count	Percent
City or County office	27	7%
Did NOT get help	221	60%
Friend or family member	30	8%
Internet search	11	3%
Local organization	19	5%
Other	10	3%
Social worker/case manager	50	14%
SSA staff	-	-
Total	368	100%

City/County Customer Service

8b. If you got help filling out your **PA** application from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?

	Count	Percent
No Response	22	6%
Helpful / welcoming	42	12%
Did NOT get help	209	62%
Neutral	27	8%
NOT helpful / welcoming	39	12%
Total	339	100%

Application Help Source

7c. If you got help filling out your **SSI** application, where did you get help? **Check all that apply.**

	Count	Percent
City or County office	4	2%
Did NOT get help	61	32%
Friend or family member	28	15%
Internet search	7	4%
Local organization	9	5%
Other	23	12%
Social worker/case manager	31	16%
SSA staff	25	13%
Total	188	100%

City/County Customer Service

8c. If you got help filling out your **SSI** application from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?

	Count	Percent
No Response	15	9%
Helpful / welcoming	27	17%
Did NOT get help	90	55%
Neutral	21	13%
NOT helpful / welcoming	10	6%
Total	163	100%

SSI / SNAP Approval Awareness

8c2. If you lived alone when you applied or when your **SSI** application was approved, did you realize that a **SNAP** case would automatically be opened for you?

	Count	Percent
No Response	9	6%
Did NOT live alone	54	33%
No	66	40%
Yes	34	21%
Total	163	100%

SSI / SNAP Approval Awareness

8c3. If you lived alone when your application for **SSI** was approved, did you receive a notice in the mail that a **SNAP** case was also opened for you?

	Count	Percent
No Response	9	6%
Did NOT live alone	54	33%
No	66	40%
Yes	34	21%
Total	163	100%

10b. Once you were in the **PA** program and receiving **PA** benefits, how hard was it to manage your case on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very easy” and 5 being “very hard”?

	Count	Percent
No Response	14	4%
Very Easy	47	14%
Easy	60	18%
Moderate	117	35%
Hard	49	14%
Very Hard	52	15%
Total	339	100%

10c. Once you were in the **SSI** program and receiving **SSI** benefits, how hard was it to manage your case on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “very easy” and 5 being “very hard”?

	Count	Percent
No Response	14	9%
Very Easy	22	13%
Easy	35	21%
Moderate	61	37%
Hard	15	9%
Very Hard	16	10%
Total	163	100%

11b. How are you managing your **PA** case (including recertifying as required, reporting changes in circumstance, etc.)?

	Count	Percent
No Response	14	4%
EBT hotline	57	17%
Visit City/Co. office	160	47%
MyBenefits / AccessHRA	16	5%
Other	25	7%
Phone City/Co. office	15	4%
Social worker/case manager	21	6%
EBT portal- CONNECTEBT	31	9%
Total	339	100%

11c. How are you managing your **SSI** case (including recertifying as required, reporting changes in circumstance, etc.)?

	Count	Percent
No Response	12	9%
Phone SSA office	41	31%
Visit City/Co. office	11	8%
MyBenefits / AccessHRA	17	13%
Other	23	17%
Phone City/Co. office	8	6%
Social worker/case manager	21	16%
Visit SSA office	30	23%
Total	133	100%

12b. Have your **PA** benefit levels been consistent or have you experienced changes in benefit levels?

	Count	Percent
No Response	16	5%
Changes	162	48%
Consistent	161	47%
Total	339	100%

12c. Have your **SSI** benefit levels been consistent or did you experience changes in benefit levels?

	Count	Percent
No Response	19	12%
Changes	43	26%
Consistent	101	62%
Total	163	100%

13b. If you experienced changes in **PA** benefit levels (including losing your benefits altogether), did you understand what those changes were based on?

	Count	Percent
No Response	21	6%
No Changes	105	31%
Did NOT Understand	151	45%
Understood Changes	62	18%
Total	339	100%

13c. If you experienced changes in **SSI** benefit levels (including losing your benefits altogether), did you understand what those changes were based on?

	Count	Percent
No Response	17	10%
No Changes	66	40%
Did NOT Understand	32	20%
Understood Changes	48	29%
Total	163	100%

14b. Have you ever requested a fair hearing related to your **PA** case?

	Count	Percent
No Response	17	5%
Did NOT Request	185	55%
DID Request	137	40%
Total	339	100%

14c. Have you ever requested a review or appeal related to your **SSI** case?

	Count	Percent
No Response	18	11%
Did NOT Request	117	72%
DID Request	28	17%
Total	163	100%

15b. How do you get help managing your **PA** case or ask questions about your benefits? **Check all that apply.**

	Count	Percent
Call City or County	79	18%
Call NYS OTDA	26	6%
Call SSA Office	0	0%
City or County Office Visit	111	25%
Local organization	19	4%
Other	28	6%
Self Manage	126	29%
Social worker/case manager	47	11%
SSA Office Visit	0	0%
Total	436	100%

16b. If you got help managing your **PA** case from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?

	Count	Percent
No Response	25	7%
Helpful & Welcoming	41	12%
I did NOT get help	105	31%
Neutral	68	20%
NOT helpful, NOT welcoming	100	29%
Total	339	100%

15c. How do you get help managing your **SSI** case or ask questions about your benefits? **Check all that apply.**

	Count	Percent
Call City or County Office	11	5%
Call NYS OTDA	7	3%
Call SSA Office	56	26%
City or County Office Visit	15	7%
Local organization	7	3%
Other	16	8%
Self Manage	45	21%
Social worker/case manager	21	10%
SSA Office Visit	34	16%
Total	212	100%

16c. If you got help managing your **SSI** case from a City or County office, how did you feel about the customer service?

	Count	Percent
No Response	19	12%
Helpful & Welcoming	28	17%
I did NOT get help	66	40%
Neutral	37	23%
NOT helpful, NOT welcoming	13	8%
Total	163	100%