1. Title
COVID-19 and Disadvantage in New York City: A Study Using Data from the Robin Hood and Columbia University Poverty Tracker and Early Childhood Poverty Tracker

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3. Abstract
Within two weeks, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically altered life in New York City, wreaking havoc on the personal and economic health of the City’s population. This study employs data from the Robin Hood and Columbia University Poverty Tracker and Early Childhood Poverty Tracker – two longitudinal studies of well-being in New York City – to analyze the impact of the pandemic on poverty and disadvantage. (See Data Description to learn more about the data that the Poverty Tracker and the Early Childhood Poverty Tracker are collecting in response to COVID-19). As part of this project, we will produce multiple papers on the impacts of the pandemic. The first paper will examine its effects on workforce participation, income, and the use of social programs (specifically unemployment and food assistance) as stabilizers. Later papers will examine the immediate impact of COVID-19 on severe material hardships, such as running out of food and falling behind on rent, as well as the poverty rate. Another paper will examine the experiences of COVID-19 related discrimination among New Yorkers of Chinese descent.

4. Data Description
Launched in 2012, the Poverty Tracker is a longitudinal study that tracks the trends and dynamics of well-being and disadvantage in New York City by surveying roughly 3,500 households every three months. The surveys collect information on health, material hardship, and income poverty, alongside multiple other indicators of economic stability and well-being. Our complementary study, the Early Childhood Poverty Tracker, focuses on households with young children. The Early Childhood Poverty Tracker collects the same set of comprehensive measures as the Poverty Tracker, as well as information regarding experiences unique to young children and their caretakers.
In response to COVID-19, we will continue to measure poverty and disadvantage in New York City using our existing survey instruments, and we will thus capture the impact that the pandemic has had on these outcomes. The Poverty Tracker quantifies disadvantage and well-being in New York City using three core indicators: (1) income poverty, as measured under the Supplemental Poverty Measure; (2) severe material hardship, including food, housing, utilities, financial, and medical hardship; and (3) health problems, such as facing a work-limiting health condition or self-reporting poor health. The Poverty Tracker also collects information on life satisfaction (measured using Cantril's Ladder) and mental distress (measured using the six-item Kessler Psychological Distress Scale).

In addition, we have developed survey instruments to capture experiences specific to the pandemic. Topics on these surveys cover the loss of work related to COVID-19, the use of social programs to steady income through the pandemic, and the experiences of discrimination among New Yorkers of Chinese descent.

The papers that make use of this rich data source will shed light on the many ways that COVID-19 has affected the well-being of New York City’s population.

5. JEL codes for the project
   D31 D63 D78
   H53 H50
   I31 I32 I38
   J6 J63 J64 J68

6. Keywords
   COVID-19, poverty, material hardship, health, life satisfaction, mental distress, social policy, food assistance, unemployment insurance