



~~HUNGER~~
FREE
AMERICA

The Affordability Crisis and Hunger:

Soaring Costs for Housing and Other Basics of Living Leave Less for Food

New York City Hunger Report, 2019



Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
I. A Message from Hunger Free America CEO Joel Berg	5
II. Methodology.....	7
III. Food Insecurity and Cost of Living in New York.....	8
Overall Food Insecurity	10
Food Insecurity Among Children	11
Food Insecurity Among Employed Adults.....	12
Food Insecurity Among Older New Yorkers	12
V. Borough-by-Borough Data.....	13
VI. Emergency Food Provider Survey Citywide Results.....	18
Distribution by Borough	18
Program Type.....	18
Changes in Demand.....	19
The Impact of Public Charge.....	20
Resources.....	21
VII. Food Insecurity in New York Metropolitan Area.....	22
VIII. Food Insecurity in New York State	23
IX. Cost of Ending Hunger	23
X. Policy Recommendations.....	24
Proposed New York State Public Policy Steps.....	24
Proposed New York City Public Policy Steps.....	25
XI. References	25
XII. Appendix: 2019 Survey of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens	26
XIII. Acknowledgements.....	33

Executive Summary

Key Findings:

- In New York City, the number of people living in food insecure households — unable to afford an adequate supply of food — decreased by nearly 27 percent during the past six years, declining from 1.42 million people in 2013-2015 to 1.04 million in 2016-2018. However, one in eight of city residents still struggled against hunger.
- In 2016-18, 12.2 percent of the city's population suffered from food insecurity, including 16.2 percent of all children, 7.6 percent of all employed adults, and 10.1 percent of all older New Yorkers.
- The Bronx remains New York City's hungriest borough in every category, with more than one in five Bronx residents (23.1 percent) experiencing food insecurity. This includes 30.5 percent of all children, nearly 15 percent of working adults, and more than 20 percent of older residents (60+).
- The number of children living in food insecure households in New York City is decreasing slightly faster than the overall number of food insecure people. While the number of food insecure individuals in New York City decreased by 27 percent from 2013-2015 to 2016-2018, the number of food insecure children (290,996 in 2016-2018) decreased by 28.7 percent. Additionally, the number of food insecure working adults (300,717 in 2016-2018) experienced a larger drop of 37.5 percent in the same time period, likely due to the minimum wage increase.
- New York City food pantries and soup kitchens fed 10 percent more people in 2019 than the previous year, compared to annual increases of five percent in 2018, six percent in 2017, nine percent in 2016, and five percent in 2015.
- In 2019, 34 percent of pantries and kitchens in New York City were forced to turn people away, reduce their portion sizes, and/or limit their hours of operation due to a lack of resources. In contrast, the proportion of feeding agencies that were forced to reduce food distribution due to lack of resources was 31 percent in 2018.
- Exactly half of respondents who chose to comment on how Public Charge has impacted their organization described a change in the number of immigrants served in the past year due to the Trump Administration's new Public Charge proposed regulation. 28.9 percent of emergency food providers have witnessed an increase in immigrants utilizing their services as a result of disenrollment from the SNAP program. And more than one-third of respondents (35.5 percent) have encountered immigrants who are afraid to utilize food programs out of fear that it may impact their immigration status.
- In the New York City Metropolitan area (including New York City and suburbs in New York State, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), the number of people struggling against hunger decreased by 24.5 percent during the past six years, declining from 2.5 million people in 2013-2015 to 1.9 million in 2016-2018. However, more than 9 percent of Metropolitan region residents still struggled against hunger.

- In 2016-2018, 9.3 percent of the Metropolitan area's population suffered from food insecurity, including 12 percent of all children, 6.5 percent of all employed adults, and 6.7 percent of all older residents.
- In all of New York State, the number of people who can't afford an adequate supply of food decreased by 28 percent during the past six years, declining from 2.9 million people in 2013-2015 to 2.1 million in 2016-2018. However, one in nine State residents still struggled against hunger.
- In 2016-2018, 10.7 percent of the state's population suffered from food insecurity, including 15.2 percent of all children, 6.9 percent of all employed adults, and 6.5 percent of all older residents.
- Hunger Free America calculated how much it would take to end hunger in the city, state, and region, by increasing the food purchasing power of hungry people (through a combination of increased wages and increased government food benefits) in order to equal the food purchasing power of non-hungry people. The cost of ending hunger in this way would be, per year, approximately \$483 million for New York City, \$883 million for the Metropolitan Region, and \$973 million for all of New York State.
- While food insecurity among working adults declined, most likely due to minimum wage increases, the area is still facing a "working hungry epidemic." The number of adults working, but still struggling against hunger, in 2016-2018, was 300,718 in New York City, 632,768 in New York State, and 637,270 in the New York Metropolitan region.

I. A Message from Hunger Free America CEO Joel Berg

How can it be?

How can it be that during the greatest economic boom in decades, there are still more than 1 million New Yorkers struggling against hunger?

To answer that question, permit me to run through some key statistics: the unemployment rate in New York City averaged only 4.6 percent from 2016-2018. During those same three years, the Dow Jones Industrial Average skyrocketed by 32 percent. Not to mention that seventy-two of the wealthiest Americans live in New York State, with the top five wealthiest billionaires having a total net worth of nearly \$154 billion.

Yet, as Hunger Free America finds in this report, from 2016-2018, an average of 1,041,278 New Yorkers — **one in eight of our neighbors** — lived in food insecure households, unable to consistently afford enough food.

Hunger Free America also calculated that 16.2 percent of children in New York City (a total of 290,996 children) lived in food insecure homes from 2016-2018. And 300,718 working adults in New York City as well as 180,738 older New Yorkers also struggled against hunger.

So, how *can* it be that, during a time when the official unemployment rate was very low and the wealthiest New Yorkers were doing better than ever, that so many New Yorkers were still hungry and impoverished?

The answer is simple: hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers earned too little to keep up with soaring costs for housing, health care, child care, and other basic costs of living. Between 2005-2008 and 2015-2017, the cost of living in New York City went from an average of under \$4,000 per month to more than \$5,000 per month. During that time frame, food insecurity levels soared as the recession took its toll. It is only in the last three years that we have seen food insecurity rates return to pre-recession levels.

To add to the issue further, hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who are eligible for federal nutrition safety net assistance fail to receive the help for which they are legally eligible. Without an adequate living wage and the assistance they need to survive, many New Yorkers are left struggling to afford basic necessities.

Unfortunately, the findings in this report we produced for New York City, New York State, and the New York Metropolitan Region mirror the findings of the national report. Hunger has decreased over the last seven years, and it is only now returning to pre-recession rates.

The bottom line is that the U.S. hunger crisis is, at its core, an affordability crisis.

Thus, the only way to end U.S. hunger is to help Americans better afford food, both by raising wages and ensuring a federal nutrition assistance safety net that is adequately-funded and easy-to-access, including benefits such as: SNAP (formerly known as food stamps); meals on wheels and senior center meals for older Americans; WIC for pregnant women and infants; and school breakfasts, lunches, and summer meals for children. Americans also need to be able to easily access affordable childcare, housing, and health care.

We know that safety net programs work. New York City's Human Resources Administration has done a tremendous job of easing access to SNAP and other benefits by making the applications more accessible through the ACCESS HRA online portal and allowing interviews to be conducted via phone.

Nationally, Hunger Free America has proposed a groundbreaking plan for federal, state, and local governments to create online HOPE (Health, Opportunity, and Personal Empowerment) accounts and action plans that combine improved technology, streamlined case management, and coordinated access to multiple federal, state, city, and nonprofit programs that already exist. Technology has fundamentally revamped the lives of most Americans, usually for the better, but now it's time to use digital technology – combined with policy improvements – to boost the long-term self-sufficiency of our lowest-income residents and simplify their lives.

We have also proposed that the new federal Child Nutrition Reauthorization Bill, now pending in Congress, ensure that every child in America can access free, nutritious school lunches and breakfast, after-school suppers and snacks, and summer meals without filling out paperwork.

We also know that higher wages make a difference – big time. Our national report found – yet again – that states with higher minimum wages have lower levels of hunger among working people. Across New York State, where the minimum wage is now \$11.10, food insecurity among working adults is down to 6.9 percent — more than 2 percentage points lower than the national average of 9.3 percent. While we always keep in mind the old research maxim that “correlation doesn't equal causality” and we cannot say for certain that the *only* reason fewer workers go hungry in such states is due to higher minimum wages, it is obvious that having higher incomes makes it more likely for workers to be able to afford food.

Hunger in America defies all stereotypes. It is among White, Black, Latinx, and Asian people. It's in the suburbs, rural areas, and urban cities. It impacts active-duty military families and veterans. It touches people with disabilities. It harms our neighbors.

Together, we can enact the policies and programs necessary to end hunger once and for all.

Hunger drains our nation both spiritually and economically. That's why our motto is “ending hunger lifts us all.” Let's make that happen. Now, more than ever, we all need such uplift.

II. Methodology

Federal Food Insecurity Data

Data from this report was gathered from the USDA's Food Security Supplement to the December 2018 Current Population Survey (CPS). In total, 37,300 households completed the Food Security Supplement, which is nationally representative after applying the Food Security Supplement weights. Data was analyzed by Hunger Free America staff using the U.S. Census Bureau's DataFerret tool.

Citywide data was analyzed by county, with "citywide" being comprised of Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, and Richmond counties. While Staten Island (Richmond County) is applied in the citywide data, the sample size is insufficient to conduct an accurate separate analysis specific to the county. The metropolitan area is defined as the New York - Newark - Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA Metropolitan Statistical area, which encompasses 26 counties across three states.

All analyses used the 12 Month Food Security Summary variable, HRFS12M1, which is the same variable used by the USDA to analyze overall household food insecurity. Data on employed adults was obtained by layering those classified as "employed" in the PREXPLF demographic variable. Calculations for food insecure seniors used the PRTAGE variable, restricted to those 60+ years old. The analysis on food insecurity among children used the PRTAGE variable as well, restricted to those 17 years and younger.

Numbers were calculated as three year averages to increase statistical accuracy due to the relatively small sample size at the county and metropolitan area levels. In order to obtain food insecurity data at the individual level as opposed to the household level, person-level weighting was used in this analysis. Food insecurity figures represent those classified by the USDA as having "low" and "very low" food security.

The cost of ending hunger in each of the areas was estimated using the overall number of individuals living in food insecure households previously obtained from the Food Security Supplement. The number of food insecure individuals was then multiplied by the difference in median weekly food spending per person between food-secure households and food-insecure households, as reported by the USDA (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2019). This number was then multiplied by the amount of weeks in a year, producing the final cost estimation.

It is important to note that the statistics on food insecurity from the USDA should be interpreted as "individuals living in food insecure households" as opposed to "food insecure individuals". This is due to the fact that the food security survey measures food security status at the household level. Because household members experience food

insecurity differently, with some members being more affected than others, this distinction is necessary.

Survey of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens

Our 2019 survey of NYC food pantries and soup kitchens was sent both digitally and in paper format to a list of 705 agencies in New York City that were believed to operate food pantries, soup kitchens, and/or some variety of emergency food program (EFP). This list of agencies was extracted from Hunger Free America's database that is used to produce our *Neighborhood Guides to Food and Assistance*, which is regularly updated and maintained.

HFA staff and volunteers followed up via phone and email with organizations that did not respond to our original request for information. Responses were collected through either mail, fax, or online using Survey Monkey, a web-based data collection service. All responses received through mail and fax were entered into the Survey Monkey database.

In total, 200 responses were collected, equating a response rate of 28.4%. Responses were analyzed by HFA staff and volunteers, with follow-up calls being made to those responses which required clarification.

III. Food Insecurity and Cost of Living in New York

The time period between 2016 and 2018 marked some of New York's lowest hunger rates in the last decade, as this report later describes. With the proportion of individuals living in food insecure households dropping below pre-recession rates across many categories, New York residents benefited from a multitude of federal nutrition assistance safety net programs and a growing economy, marked by lower unemployment. The significant increase in the state minimum wage was also clearly a major factor in this hunger reduction. Despite the drop in food insecurity rates, the number of individuals living in food insecure households has only recently returned to pre-recession numbers in many categories. However, as progress is being made in the fight against hunger, the rising cost of living poses a serious threat to continued progress.

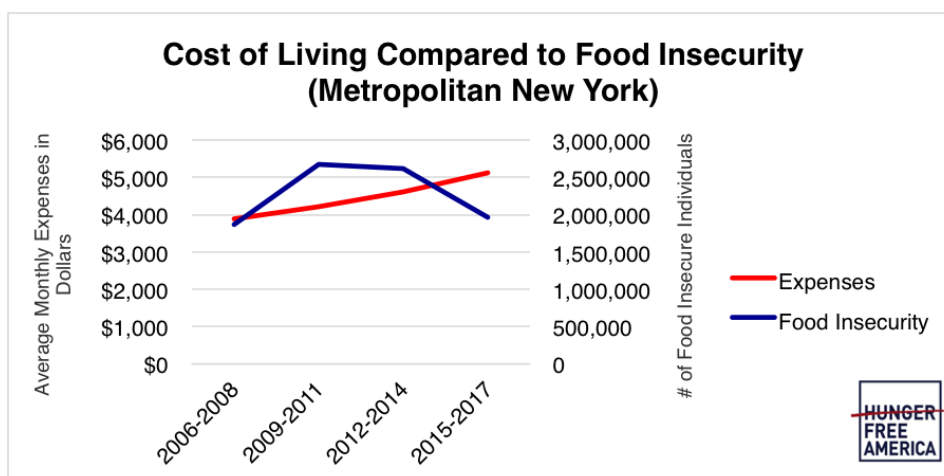
New York City experienced economic growth for the ninth consecutive year, with its lowest level of unemployment (4.1 percent) in at least the last 43 years and an increase of 3.5 percent in inflation-adjusted ("real") wages (NYC Rent Guidelines Board, 2019). Despite these positive economic indicators, many New Yorkers still struggled to pay for rent, food, and other basic costs of living. Between 2010 and 2017, rents in New York City were found to rise twice as fast as wages (StreetEasy, 2017). Not only did the rise in

rent outpace wages, it also impacted low-income New Yorkers disproportionately. The rise in asking rent was found to increase the fastest for the least expensive homes when comparing five different price tiers. Furthermore, an analysis of data from the *American Community Survey* revealed that the bottom 20% of household income levels decreased by an average of 0.2% in inflation-adjusted income, while the top 20% of household income levels increased by an average of 1.4% between the years of 2006 and 2017 on a year-to-year basis (NYC Rent Guidelines Board, 2019).

Hunger Free America compared the average cost of living in the New York City Metropolitan area with food insecurity numbers and found a gradual increase in expenses, while the number of food insecure individuals (1.9 million) returned to pre-recession levels (figure 1). Living expenses for this analysis were sourced from New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer's *Affordability Index*. When considering the long period of economic growth the metropolitan area has experienced, the number of individuals living in food insecure households should be well below pre-recession numbers. Much of this stagnation in progress can be attributed to the increasingly high cost of living. During this same time period of analysis (2016-2017), the average household share of income remaining after paying for living expenses decreased by nearly 2%, with an average of 18.9% remaining in 2017. When analyzing more vulnerable households, the differences were much greater. The average share of income remaining for a single adult household decreased by 9%, while the share of income remaining for a single parent with two children dropped by 5%, from -21% to -26%. A negative share of income remaining indicates that a household cannot afford basic necessities and must make alternative choices to reduce costs, such as the utilization of food assistance programs.

High costs of living and low wages are strong inhibitors to the movement against hunger. By increasing the affordability of basic human necessities, New York could have a much larger decrease in food insecurity levels. Many of the responses from Hunger Free America's 2019 survey of NYC food pantries and soup kitchens describe the rising cost of living as one of the largest challenges facing food insecure individuals, as highlighted in later sections of this report.

Figure 1 – Cost of Living in New York Metropolitan Area Compared to Number of Food Insecure Individuals



IV. Food Insecurity in New York City

Overall Food Insecurity

Across New York City, 12.2% of the population, or 1.0 million people, are living in food insecure households (table 1). These figures represent a drop in both number and prevalence in food insecurity below pre-recession levels.

The Bronx remains New York City's hungriest borough in terms of prevalence, with 23.1% of residents (263,550 people) living in food insecure households. Brooklyn contains the highest number of individuals living in food insecure households, reaching 377,475 people in the 2016-18 time period.

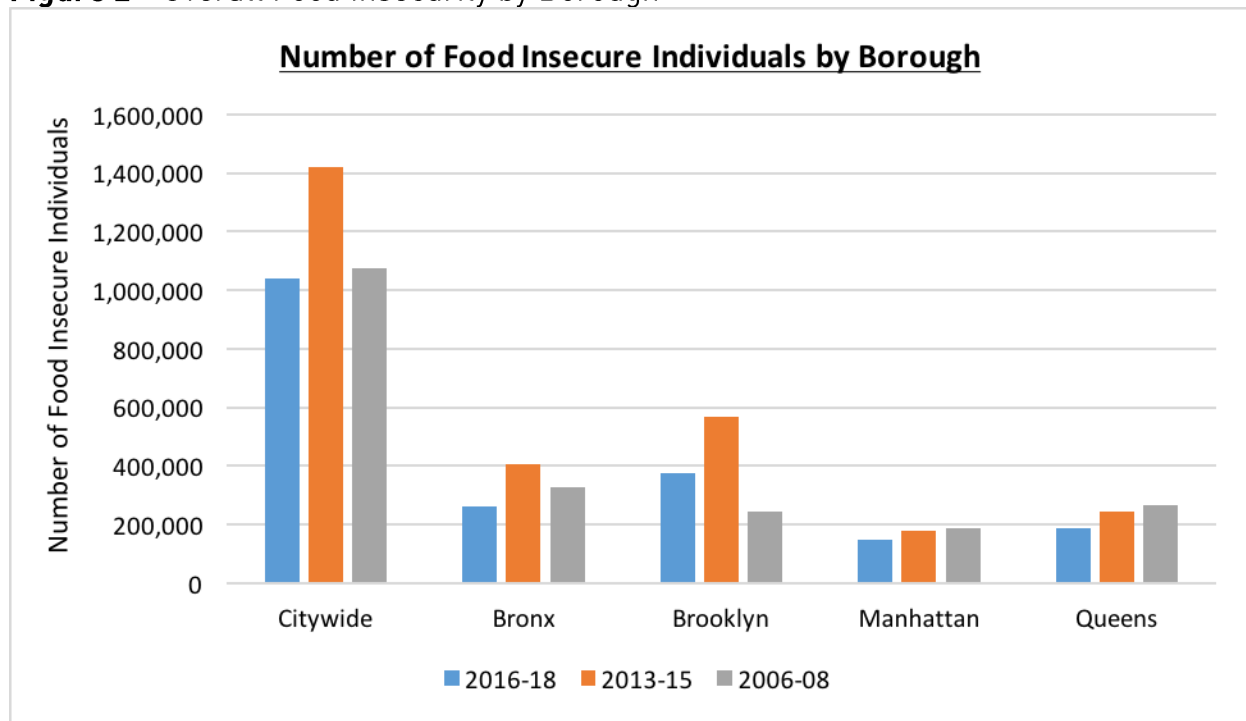
Trends over the last decade for Citywide, Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens align closely, with both the rate and number of food insecure individuals dropping below pre-recession levels. The rate and number of food insecure individuals in Brooklyn is below 2013-15 averages, but remains higher than before the recession.

Table 1 – Overall Food Insecurity in New York City

	Citywide	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan*	Queens
2016-18 Average	1,041,278 (12.2%)	263,550 (23.1%)	377,475 (12.0%)	150,645 (9.6%)	189,178 (8.0%)
2013-15 Average	1,418,297 (16.8%)	407,201 (31.5%)	568,775 (19.4%)	177,769 (10.3%)	244,863 (10.8%)
2006-08 Average	1,073,053 (14.5%)	326,334 (28.5%)	244,314 (11.0%)	186,661 (13.7%)	268,796 (11.2%)

*Low samples could result in errors for data in Manhattan

Figure 2 – Overall Food Insecurity by Borough



Food Insecurity Among Children

Trends in food insecurity among children tracked closely with overall food insecurity rates, with Citywide, Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens experiencing its lowest number and prevalence of hunger in the last decade (table 2). The rate of food insecure children in Brooklyn during the 2016-18 time period (12.6%) has dropped below pre-recession rates (14.6%), with the number of food insecure children (90,622) remaining higher than the 2006-08 time period (85,094). However, Brooklyn did experience a notable 51% decrease in the number of food insecure children from the 2013-15 average (184,355).

Table 2 – Food Insecurity Among Children in New York City

	Citywide	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan*	Queens
2016-18 Average	290,996 (16.2%)	72,366 (30.5%)	90,622 (12.6%)	42,990 (16.3%)	61,334 (12.2%)
2013-15 Average	408,179 (22.5%)	117,901 (37.0%)	184,355 (25.4%)	29,482 (10.7%)	72,030 (16.2%)
2006-08 Average	342,141 (19.5%)	129,850 (35.4%)	85,094 (14.9%)	52,969 (24.0%)	69,990 (12.8%)

*Low samples could result in errors for data in Manhattan

Food Insecurity Among Employed Adults

The rate and number of food insecure employed adults Citywide and in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens maintained overall food insecurity trends, with decreased levels from that of a decade ago (table 3). Prevalence (8.6%) and number (115,102) of food insecure employed adults in Brooklyn remained higher than pre-recession levels, with an 82% increase in the number of food insecure employed adults from the 2006-2008 time period.

Table 3 – Food Insecurity Among Employed Adults in New York City

	Citywide	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan*	Queens*
2016-18 Average	300,718 (7.6%)	68,065 (14.8%)	115,102 (8.6%)	50,005 (5.8%)	43,682 (3.8%)
2013-15 Average	481,286 (12.6%)	113,727 (27.1%)	172,552 (13.7%)	74,752 (7.9%)	110,908 (9.9%)
2006-08 Average	327,561 (9.8%)	84,260 (20.0%)	63,347 (7.0%)	51,020 (6.8%)	123,222 (11.0%)

**Low samples could result in errors for data in Manhattan and Queens*

Food Insecurity Among Older New Yorkers

Between 2016-18, an estimated 180,738 older New Yorkers (ages 60 years and up) lived in food insecure households in New York City, representing 10.1% of the population (table 4). This is down from 216,394 older New Yorkers (14.0%) in 2013-15, however it is still 52% higher than pre-recession numbers (118,762). A small sample size of older New Yorkers limited the ability to accurately report on borough-specific food insecurity figures, however we anticipate the boroughs followed similar trends to Citywide numbers.

Table 4 – Food Insecurity Among Older New Yorkers (60+)

	2006-08	2013-15	2016-18
Citywide Food Insecurity Among Older New Yorkers (60+)	118,762 (10.0%)	216,394 (14.0%)	180,738 (10.1%)

V. Borough-by-Borough Data

Bronx

"We have been distributing food for the past ten years in the south Bronx community to the less privileged and the poor. Our problem is that we don't have enough food for all the people who show up for food."

– **Rev. Joseph Kuffour, Executive Director Inspirational Gospel Food Pantry**

"Everything is so expensive, it's hard to pay all the bills and buy enough food for your family."

– **Bertha Burke, Coordinator, Woodycrest United Methodist Church (Soup Kitchen)**

"We continue to see an increase in the number of our clients due to their inability to provide themselves with adequate food. Many of our guests say that high rent and low paying or no jobs have them in a position where they cannot afford to buy food and need assistance. Many have seen huge cuts to their benefits or no longer receive benefits. Our agency is very grateful to receive generous grants to be able to meet the current needs of our guests, but we know that this may be temporary, especially as we see the number of guests steadily increase."

– **Cheryl Seeley, Director of Food Programs, St. Peter's Love Kitchen, St. Peter's Love Pantry**

"People face hunger because there is a great lack of income coming in. So many folks work but do not have enough money to even eat."

– **Pastor Roslyn Shoulders, Director, Shiloh Temple Apostolic Church**

Federal Data for 2016-2018

- 23.1% - nearly one in four – residents lived in food insecure households, the highest rate of any other borough.
- 30.5% - nearly one in three – children lived in food insecure households
- 14.8% - nearly one in six - employed adults lived in food insecure households
- 20.3% - one in five – older residents lived in food insecure households

Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen Survey Data

- 33.3% of respondents reported they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand
- The proportion of organizations who reported an increase in the past year:
 - 75.9% in the overall number of people served
 - 44.8% in homeless populations
 - 44.8% in employed individuals

- 72.4% in families with children
- 51.7% in people 60+ years
- 41.4% in immigrants
- 51.7% in people who have lost or had reductions in SNAP benefits
- 42.9% reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2019

Brooklyn

“In gentrifying communities, services improve but the cost to those living on fixed incomes are often exiled into other communities because they can no longer afford the rent, basic medical assistance, food or other life-giving necessities. Many folks double up or share apartments, live in unregulated housing arrangements, use the shelter system for permanent housing or choose to be homeless because what is available to them is uninhabitable or lacks safety. They must make a daily choice between rent, basic medical care/meds, and food. Individuals and families are faced with a challenge as to how to live in a community that changes quickly and how best to use their personal resources to maintain homes, healthcare, food and basic necessities. The biggest challenge continues to be finding adequate paying jobs to keep pace with rising costs. Nearly impossible in NYC.”

– **Sr. Caroline Tweedy, RSM, Executive Director, St. John's Bread and Life**

“People face hunger in New York because they are not making enough money to provide for their families, pay rent, utilities, insurance — and not to mention buy food and clothing.”

– **Cathy Lovell, Executive Director, Maranatha S.D.A. Church Food Pantry**

“I personally believe that people face hunger in New York because of the increase in the cost of living. It has become too expensive for families to provide a decent meal for their families on a daily basis.”

– **Charlene Williams, Social Ministries Coordinator, The Salvation Army Brooklyn Brownsville Corps.**

Federal Data for 2016-2018

- 12% - one in nine - residents lived in food insecure households. This equates to 377,475 individuals, which is the most of any other borough.
- 12.6% - one in eight - children lived in food insecure households
- 8.6% of employed adults lived in food insecure households
- 11.4% - one in nine - older residents lived in food insecure households

Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen Survey Data

- 22.0% of respondents reported they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand
- The proportion of organizations who reported an increase in the past year:
 - 65.0% in the overall number of people served
 - 52.5% in homeless populations
 - 45.0% in employed individuals
 - 62.5% in families with children
 - 62.5% in people 60+ years
 - 52.5% in immigrants
 - 50.0% in people who have lost or had reductions in SNAP benefits
- 28.9% reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2019

Manhattan

“Where we see a need we address the need. We adjust our programming to meet those needs. Weather it’s through our Brown Bag Lunch Program, our Backpack Pantry Program, our Sunday Supper, our Daily Soup Kitchen, our Intergenerational Urban Garden. We’re in the Community for the Community.”

– **Michael Ottley, Chief Operating Officer, Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen**

“Emergency food helps to maintain food security, but when you start talking about the root causes of hunger and long-term solutions, the idea becomes how do we lift people out of systemic poverty, and then you have to start thinking about housing and fair wages and the building of a safety network. It’s not something that will be built overnight.”

– **Greg Silverman, Executive Director of the West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH)**

“College students are struggling to survive. They fear for the health of their younger brothers and sisters, children and parents while they’re taking an exam. We help to reduce the struggle of having to balance classes and being able to feed yourself or your family in and out of school. Academics are only one part of the college experience, and unfortunately for nearly one half of all students, hunger and homelessness becomes part of the experience.”

– **Mary Sherman, Program Coordinator, The Maverick Friendly Market**

Federal Data for 2016-2018

- 9.6% - one in ten - residents lived in food insecure households
- 16.3% - one in six - children lived in food insecure households

- 5.8% of employed adults lived in food insecure households
- 5.8% of older residents lived in food insecure households

Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen Survey Data

- 27.0% of respondents reported they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand
- The proportion of organizations who reported an increase in the past year:
 - 75.7% in the overall number of people served
 - 40.5% in homeless populations
 - 51.4% in employed individuals
 - 56.8% in families with children
 - 78.4% in people 60+ years
 - 59.5% in immigrants
 - 43.2% in people who have lost or had reductions in SNAP benefits
- 29.4% reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2019

Queens

“People appreciate the help they receive from the food pantry to help supplement their monthly bills. New York’s cost of living is very high. Rent is going through the roof, so folks do not have much left in order to survive, so they look forward to the assistance they receive on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Toiletries are very appreciated, household supplies are like gold when we receive such items. We appreciate the work of the Food Bank of NYC and United Way for their strong support. Their work is priceless in advocating for the underprivileged and needy people of our city,”

- **Cynthia Green, Administrative Assistant/Food Pantry Director, The Gospel Tabernacle Food Pantry**

“Although the economy seems to be booming in Washington, it has not trickled down to the members of our community. TCAH community members are consistently struggling between paying medication and co-pays or rent and utilities. Due to this struggle, we have an increase in the working poor and seniors. They depend on our growing services to help fill that financial gap and alleviate the tension each month.

- **Tamara Dawson, Director of Programs, The Campaign Against Hunger**

“We have many people from different cultures coming in to get fed and to get food. The high costs of rents are ridiculous, and the prices of food are too high. People can’t live any more on their income living in NY, so many move away where they can afford the living situation. Food is needed everywhere, especially among poor communities.”

- **Nina Perez, Kitchen Worker/Assistant, Agape Christian Center**

Federal Data for 2016-2018

- 8% of residents lived in food insecure households
- 12.2% - one in nine - children lived in food insecure households
- 3.8% of employed adults lived in food insecure households
- 5.9% of older residents lived in food insecure households

Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen Survey Data

- 34.1% of respondents reported they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand
- The proportion of organizations who reported an increase in the past year:
 - 68.3% in the overall number of people served
 - 34.1% in homeless populations
 - 31.7% in employed individuals
 - 65.9% in families with children
 - 63.4% in people 60+ years
 - 51.2% in immigrants
 - 34.1% in people who have lost or had reductions in SNAP benefits
- 45.0% reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2019

Staten Island

“Funding for staffing is essential since volunteers come and go.”

- **Laura Del Prete, Associate Vice President of the Community Access Center, Community Health Action of Staten Island Food Pantry**

Because of the small sample size, we are not able to report statistically significant food security data for Staten Island. However, poverty data tracks closely with food insecurity data. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2018, 11.9% of all Staten Island residents, lived below the meager federal poverty line.

Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen Survey Data

- 27.3% of respondents reported they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand
- The proportion of organizations who reported an increase in the past year:
 - 54.5% in the overall number of people served
 - 27.3% in homeless populations
 - 27.3% in employed individuals

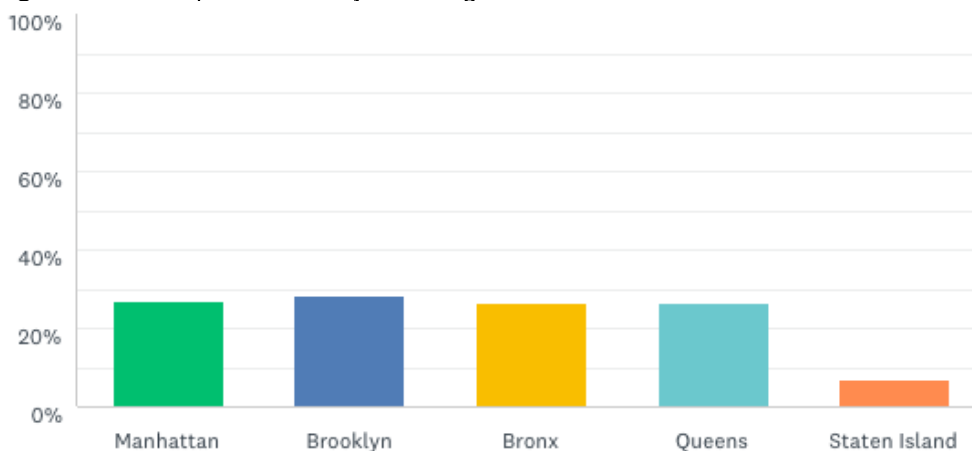
- 54.5% in families with children
- 36.4% in people 60+ years
- 45.5% in immigrants
- 45.5% in people who have lost or had reductions in SNAP benefits
- 9.1% reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2019

VI. Emergency Food Provider Survey Citywide Results

Distribution by Borough

Out of the respondents to our Annual Hunger Survey, 26.5% operated in Manhattan, 28.0% operated in Brooklyn, 26.0% operated in the Bronx, 26.5% operated in Queens, and 7.0% operated in Staten Island (figure 3).

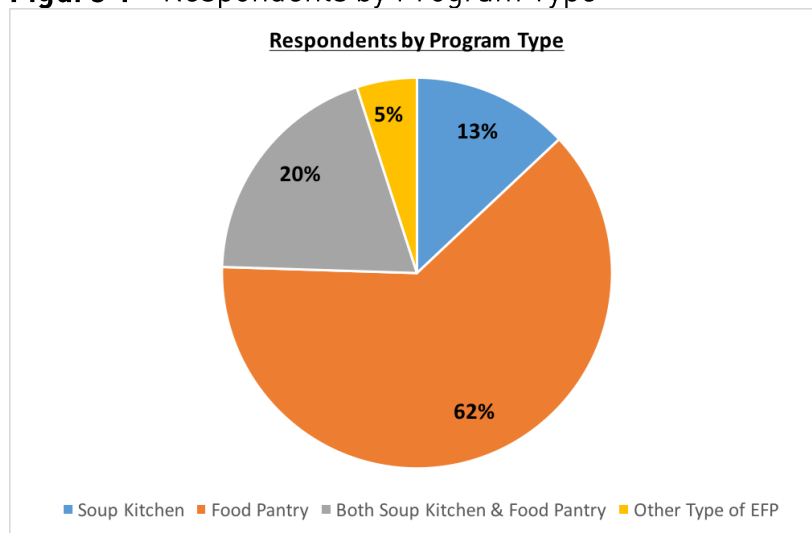
Figure 3 – Respondents by Borough



Program Type

Out of the respondents, 12.5% were soup kitchens, 62.5% were food pantries, 19.5% were both a soup kitchen and food pantry, and 5.0% operated other emergency food programs, like mobile trucks, senior congregate feeding sites, and brown bag programs (figure 4). 98.0% were open to the public.

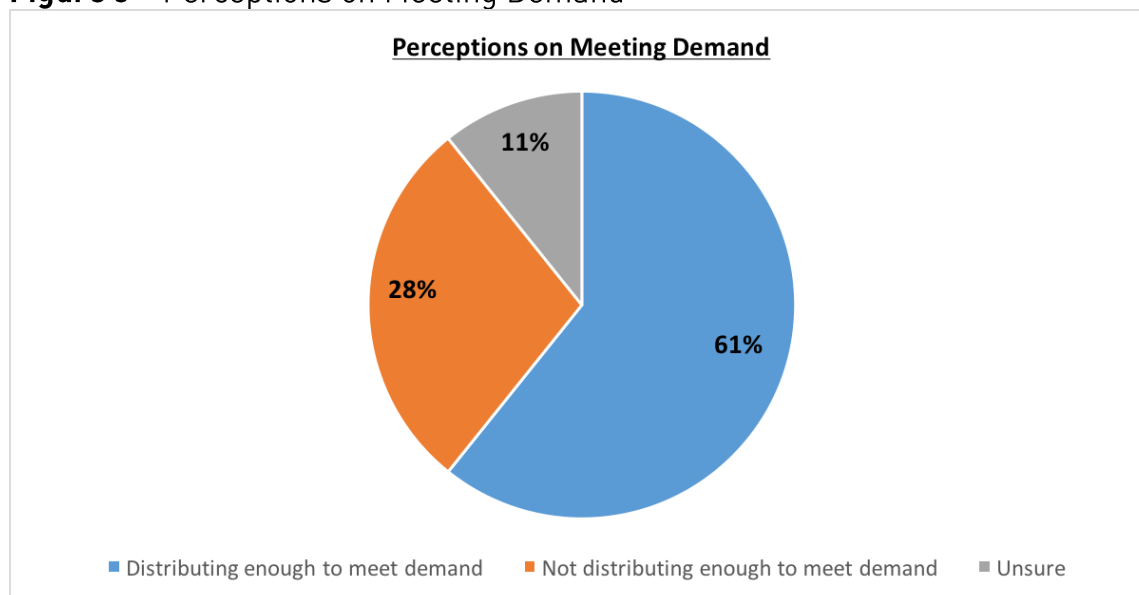
Figure 4 – Respondents by Program Type



Changes in Demand

60.8% of respondents indicated that they distributed enough food to meet their current demand, while more than a fourth of respondents (28.5%) said they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand (figure 5). The remaining 10.8% of respondents were unsure if they were meeting demand.

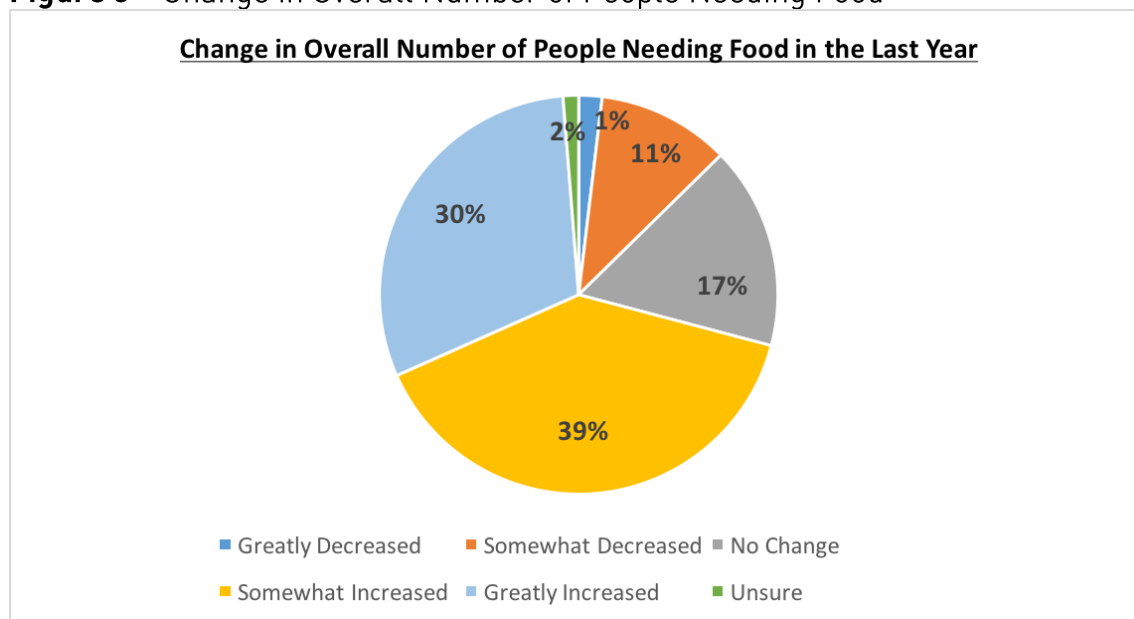
Figure 5 – Perceptions on Meeting Demand



Food pantries and soup kitchens experienced an estimated 9.7% increase in the number of people served in 2019. This is in addition to an increase of 5% in 2018, 6% in 2017, 9% in 2016, 5% in 2015, and 7% in 2014.

When asked how the overall number of people needing food has changed in the last year, 30.4% reported that it had greatly increased, while 39.2% said it had somewhat increased (figure 6). Collectively, 12.7% reported that the number of people needing food had decreased and 16.5% reported no change. When asked about specific populations, 42.4% reported an increase in homeless populations, 41.8% reported an increase in employed individuals, 63.3% reported an increase in families with children, 62.7% reported an increase in senior citizens/elderly, 51.3% reported an increase in immigrants, and 44.3% reported an increase in people who have lost or had reductions in their SNAP benefits.

Figure 6 – Change in Overall Number of People Needing Food



It is important to note the persistent increase in demand facing emergency food programs is in conjunction with the decrease in overall food insecurity witnessed in recent years. Although food insecurity is dropping in New York City, it is evident that food pantries and soup kitchens are a strong contributor to this success.

The Impact of Public Charge

Hunger Free America asked emergency food providers about any impacts they may have witnessed due to proposed changes to the Public Charge rule published on August 14, 2019. The new regulations included a condition that Green Card applicants would be considered a public charge if they were likely to become dependent in the future on

benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), among others. Between January 2018 and January 2019, a 10.9% decrease in eligible non-citizen SNAP caseloads was reported by the New York City Department of Social Services and Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. This drop is significant when compared to the 2.8% decrease in eligible citizen caseloads for that same time period. Although unable to definitively attribute the decline to the proposed changes to the public charge ruling, evidence suggests eligible immigrants are afraid to enroll due to the potential consequences on immigration status.

The results of our 2019 Survey of NYC Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens suggest that public charge has had a varying but significant impact on emergency food providers. Exactly half (50.0%) of the respondents who chose to comment on the topic described a change in the number of immigrants served in the past year due to public charge. 28.9% of emergency food providers have witnessed an increase in immigrants utilizing their services as a result of disenrollment from the SNAP program. More than a third of respondents (35.5%) have encountered immigrants who are afraid to utilize food programs out of fear that it may impact their immigration status.

While utilization of food pantries and soup kitchens is not considered to be a public charge, the fact that many of these food providers check IDs and record names for internal record keeping is enough to scare many immigrants. As a result, many immigrants have stopped visiting food pantries and soup kitchens, or have begun sending other people who are legal residents to pick up food for them. One respondent described how their program has stopped asking for IDs to comfort fearful customers and has since witnessed a large increase in immigrants utilizing their program. Another program managed educational outreach surrounding public charge and observed positive impacts. One program described a decrease in immigrant populations due to a rumor that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was monitoring soup kitchens in their area.

More than one third (34.2%) of respondents said they were unsure of any impacts; many of these respondents attributed their uncertainty to the fact that they do not ask about immigration status. The remaining 15.8% of respondents said they have experienced no change, with a few noting that they expect to eventually see some effects.

Resources

34.4% of respondents reported that they were forced to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2019. This number is up slightly from the 31.2% who reported the same for 2018.

Nearly one third of respondents (29.8%) said they could use more skilled volunteers, while 36.1% said they could use more volunteers to serve customers/clients directly. Nearly one in five respondents (19.0%) reported they could use more volunteers to advocate for their populations/government funding for their programs. 8.2% of respondents said they could use more volunteers but do not have the staff to manage them, while 46.2% said they did not need more volunteers.

VII. Food Insecurity in New York Metropolitan Area

In the New York Metropolitan area, 1,905,938 people were food insecure (9.3% of residents) from 2016-18 (table 5). Trends in food insecurity for the Metropolitan area are similar to the citywide and national trends. The percentage of individuals living in food insecure households has fallen below pre-recession rates, however the number of food insecure individuals is still higher than the 2006-08 time period. Trends for children, employed adults, and older residents were similar to overall trends, with the exception of the number falling below 2006-08 levels for children and employed adults.

Relative to the rate of hunger in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island combined (12.2%), food insecurity is slightly less prevalent in the greater Metropolitan area (9.3%) than in the five boroughs. However, food insecurity should still be a large focus at the Metropolitan level with nearly one in ten individuals living in food insecure households (1.9 million people).

Table 5 – Food Insecurity in the New York Metropolitan Area

	2006-08	2013-15	2016-18
Average Number of Food Insecure	1,868,126	2,524,401	1,905,938
Average Percentage of Food Insecure	10.8%	12.8%	9.3%
Average Number of Food Insecure Children	617,960	743,311	518,443
Average Percentage of Food Insecure Children	14.7%	16.9%	12.0%
Average Number of Food Insecure Employed Adults	648,217	885,219	637,270
Average Percentage of Food Insecure Employed Adults	7.7%	9.6%	6.5%
Average Number of Food Insecure Older New Yorkers (60+)	215,626	361,443	303,839

Average Percentage of Food Insecure Older New Yorkers (60+)	7.4%	9.2%	6.7%
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VIII. Food Insecurity in New York State

More than 10.7% of New York State residents, or 2.1 million people, lived in food insecure households (table 6) from 2016-2018. This includes 15.2% of children in the state (627,383), 6.9% of employed adults (632,768), and 6.5% of older New Yorkers (292,546).

The proportion of food insecure individuals in New York State dropped below pre-recession rates, with the number of individuals living in food insecure households approaching pre-recession numbers. The number of food insecure children and employed adults is below 2006-08 levels.

Table 6 – Food Insecurity in New York State

	2006-08	2013-15	2016-18
Average Number of Food Insecure	2,095,572	2,923,823	2,099,585
Average Percentage of Food Insecure	12.1%	15.0%	10.7%
Average Number of Food Insecure Children	688,627	916,375	627,383
Average Percentage of Food Insecure Children	17.0%	21.6%	15.2%
Average Number of Food Insecure Employed Adults	709,650	868,888	632,768
Average Percentage of Food Insecure Employed Adults	8.6%	9.6%	6.9%
Average Number of Food Insecure Older New Yorkers (60+)	225,808	397,291	292,546
Average Percentage of Food Insecure Older New Yorkers (60+)	7.2%	9.8%	6.5%

IX. Cost of Ending Hunger

Hunger Free America calculated how much it would take to end hunger in the city, state, and region, by increasing the food purchasing power of hungry people (through a combination of increased wages and increased government food benefits) in order to

equal the food purchasing power of non-hungry people. The cost of ending hunger in this way would be, per year, approximately \$483 million in New York City, \$883 million total in the Metropolitan region, and \$973 million total in New York State in addition to all current spending (table 7).

Table 7 – Cost of Ending Hunger

	Number of Food Insecure (2015-17 Average)	Cost of Ending Hunger
New York State	2,099,585	\$973,209,143
New York Metropolitan Area	1,905,938	\$883,449,149
NYC Citywide	1,041,278	\$482,657,968

X. Policy Recommendations

Proposed New York State Public Policy Steps

1. The State should aggressively and universally implement the new law requiring that all high-needs schools in the state serve breakfast in the classroom.
2. The State should take concrete steps to make it easier for post-secondary school students to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) benefits, formerly known as Food Stamp benefits.
3. The State should implement a state-level H.O.P.E. (Health, Opportunity, and Personal Empowerment) accounts and action plans. HOPE accounts would combine improved technology, streamlined case management, and coordinated access to multiple federal, state, city, and nonprofit programs that already exist. The accounts would enable families to use any smart device or computer to learn about the public and philanthropic programs for which they are eligible—including aid to improve health, nutrition, job training and placement, housing, income, etc.—and then apply for all of these programs at once from the convenience of their device, drastically reducing the opportunity costs of low-income Americans seeking social services. Such accounts would also be able to include any private savings that people are able to accrue. The proposal includes the option of allowing low-income families to partner more in depth with government and nonprofit organizations by voluntarily agreeing to long-term HOPE action plans that will provide more aid and then specify exactly how all parties will work together to help the families earn, learn, and save better to ensure greater economic opportunity. For more information, see: <https://www.progressivepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/REPORT-Fighting-Poverty-with-HOPE.pdf>

4. The Governor and/or the State Legislature should end the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers and make overall minimum wages automatic as the cost-of-living increases.
5. The Legislature should increase funding for both the NOEP SNAP outreach program and the HPNAP Program, which funds food banks, soup kitchens, and food pantries.
6. Given the Trump Administration's repeated attempts to restrict SNAP access for immigrants and Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs), the Legislature should authorize and fund a State program to provide grocery funding for such excluded people through EBT cards.

Proposed New York City Public Policy Steps

1. The New York City Department of Education (DOE) DOE should aggressively and universally implement the new law requiring that all high-needs schools in the state serve breakfast in the classroom.
2. NYC DOE should serve school lunches at appropriate lunch hours.
3. The City should implement a city-level H.O.P.E. pilot project to make it easier to combine the increased use of digital technology with policy improvements to simplify the lives and boost the long-term self-sufficiency of our lowest-income residents by making it easier for families to obtain and use benefits and manage their finances digitally.
4. The Mayor and Council should increase funding to nonprofits for SNAP outreach, EFAP, and other vital anti-hunger and anti-poverty tasks.
5. The Mayor and Council should fund a pilot project to pay for meals for parents at summer meals sites at which the federal government pays for meals for children.
6. CUNY should better direct work-study slots to make more students eligible for SNAP.
7. The City Council should advocate for all the state policy steps proposed above.

XI. References

Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh. 2019. *Household Food Security in the United States in 2018*. ERR-270, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

NYC Comptroller Scott M. Stringer's Office. 2019. *Affordability Index*.

NYC Department of Social Services and NYC Mayor's Office. 2019. *Fact Sheet: SNAP Enrollment Trends in New York City, June 2019*.

NYC Rent Guidelines Board. 2019. *2019 Income and Affordability Study*.

XII. Appendix: 2019 Survey of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens

September 19th, 2019

Dear Food Pantry or Soup Kitchen Contact:

Hunger Free New York City – a division of Hunger Free America (formerly the New York City Coalition Against Hunger) – again requests your participation in our Annual Hunger Survey.

Every day, you and your team tirelessly serve New York City's most vulnerable residents. Every year, we collect and use this data to advocate on behalf of you and your clients. By responding to this survey, you help us tell the stories of your program and your clients to City Hall, Albany, Washington, and the media. **You can also use the survey to help us know which kinds of volunteers you need.**

Given the efforts of President Trump to cut billions from SNAP, strip immigrants of rights, and gut the overall safety net, ***this year's survey is more urgent than ever.***

In addition, this survey helps us provide the most up-to-date information to New Yorkers in need of immediate assistance, and makes sure your program is included in our *Neighborhood Guides to Food & Assistance* if you choose to be included in such guides. Your participation helps ensure that these guides are accurate so that people in need can find help as quickly and efficiently as possible. If you would like electronic versions of the guides and/or to order paper copies, please do so here:

<https://www.hungerfreeamerica.org/neighborhood-guides-food-assistance>

To make your life easier, we've shortened the survey and made it easier for you to quickly and conveniently complete it online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RN5MTVL>

Paper surveys can be faxed to: **646-350-3833** or mailed to: HFNYC, Attn: Survey, 50 Broad St. Suite 1103, New York, NY 10004. **The deadline to respond is Friday, October 12th.**

If you have any questions or would like assistance in completing the survey, please contact Angelica Gibson at AGibson@hungerfreeamerica.org or 646-350-3833.

Remember, information is power. Together, we can build the movement necessary to end hunger!

Sincerely,



Joel Berg, Chief Executive Officer, Hunger Free America

2019 Survey of NYC Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens

Please consider completing this survey ONLINE at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RN5MTVL>

If you do not know the answer to any question or part of a question, please check “unsure” or leave blank. Otherwise, return this completed survey to us by **Friday, October 12th**, by mail to **HFNYC, 50 Broad St, Suite 1103, New York, NY 10004**, or fax to **646-350-3833**.

Questions? Call Angelica Gibson at AGibson@hungerfreeamerica.org or 646-350-3833.

1. Do you want to have your program listed in HFNYC's 2020-21 *Neighborhood Guide to Food and Assistance*?

- ☐ Our program is already listed and would like to be listed in 2020-21
- ☐ Our program is already listed but edits are needed.
The following edits are needed in our listing:

- ☐ Our program is already listed but would like to be removed
- ☐ Please include us
- ☐ Do not include us

Section 1: General Program Information

2. Which of the following best describes your program? (*Check ONE*)

- ☐ Soup kitchen
- ☐ Food pantry
- ☐ Both soup kitchen & food pantry
- ☐ Other type of emergency food program (*explain*) _____
- ☐ We have never run a feeding program (*if you check this box, we'll take you off our list*)
- ☐ We previously ran a feeding program and it closed on (*date*) _____

3. Your food program / agency formal name:

4. Your name: _____

5. Your title / role: _____

6. What is your organization's mailing address?

Street address:

City: _____, State: _____ ZIP: _____

7. What is the address at which you provide your primary services to the public?

☐ Same as the mailing address above

If different, please fill out all below:

☐ Street address:

City: _____, State: _____ ZIP: _____

8. Phone number of agency / program: - -

9. Fax Number of agency / program:

10. E-mail Address:

11. Website:

12. In which borough(s) do you physically serve or distribute food?

☐ Manhattan

☐ Brooklyn

☐ Bronx

☐ Queens

☐ Staten Island

13. Is your location wheelchair accessible (sloped curbs, ramps, and elevators, when necessary)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

14. What are your days and hours of operation?

<u>Days</u>	<u>Opening</u>	<u>Closing</u>	<u>Opening</u>	<u>Closing</u>
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<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Monday</u>				
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Tuesday</u>				
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Wednesday</u>				
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Thursday</u>				
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Friday</u>				
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Saturday</u>				
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Sunday</u>				

15. Is your food program open to the public (*either by walk-in or referral*)?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

16. Please provide any additional requirements/instructions that clients/customers need to meet/follow in order to receive food from your program (such as ID, previous registration, etc.) and/or indicate if it's open to only certain populations (seniors, residents of certain zip codes only, people with HIV, etc.):

17. Do you know of any food pantries, soup kitchens, or brown bag programs that have shut down in the last year, or any new programs that have opened up since last fall?

- ☐ Yes
Please provide any information on name(s), location(s), and any other contact information on the program(s) if available:

- ☐ No

Section 2: Program Demand

18. Does your program currently distribute enough food to meet demand? (*Check ONE*)

- ☐ YES, we distribute enough food to meet our current demand.
☐ NO, we don't distribute enough food to meet our current demand.
☐ Unsure

19. Please indicate *how* the number of people you serve has changed in the last year

(October 2018 through September 2019):

In the last year...	<i>Greatly decrease d</i>	<i>Somewha t decrease d</i>	<i>No change</i>	<i>Somewha t increased</i>	<i>Greatly increase d</i>	<i>Unsure</i>
Overall number of people needing food						
Homeless people						
Employed individuals						
Families with children 18 or younger						
People 60 years and older						
Immigrants						
People who have lost OR had reductions in their SNAP (food stamps) benefits						

20. Have the recently proposed rules concerning “public charge” affected the number of immigrants you served in the past year? *Please see the documents attached to the end of this survey if you are not familiar with public charge to learn more.*

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

21. Please describe how the proposed changes to “public charge” has impacted the number of immigrants that utilize your food program. (Ex. Are you seeing more immigrants because they are getting fewer public benefits? Are some immigrants afraid that utilizing your food program could impact their immigration status? Both? Please briefly explain below)

22. **FOR ALL PROGRAMS (FOOD PANTRIES & SOUP KITCHENS):** How many estimated **people** did you serve?

<i>Time period</i>	<i>Total</i>
September 2018	
All of 2018	
September 2019	
Expected estimate for ALL of 2019, including months that have not yet occurred	

23. **Soup Kitchens ONLY:** How many estimated **meals** did you provide?

<i>Time period</i>	<i>Total</i>
September 2018	
All of 2018	
September 2019	
Expected estimate for ALL of 2019, including months that have not yet occurred	

24. Were you forced to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit your hours of operation because you lacked enough resources?

At any time in 2018:

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

At any time in 2019:

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

Section 3: Program Resources

25. Please select one or more of the following responses that describe your organization's volunteer needs. (Please check ALL that apply)

- ☐ We could utilize more skilled volunteers to do things like accounting, website design, marketing, planning, and grant writing.
☐ We could use more volunteers to advocate for our populations/government funding for our programs
☐ We could use more volunteers to serve our clients/customers directly
☐ We could use more volunteers but do not have the staff to manage them

- ☐ We do not need more volunteers
- ☐ We have other skilled volunteer needs.
If so, please specify:_____

26. How do you currently manage your volunteers?

- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Spreadsheet
- ☐ Volunteer management software
- ☐ Other (please specify:_____)

27. What is your satisfaction with your current volunteer management tools?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Not satisfied

28. What is your preferred form of communication from HFA/NYC?

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Hard copy/mail
- ☐ Phone
- ☐ All of the above

29. We would love to quote you in our report, so please tell us anything else you think we and/or policy makers should know. Feel free to explain the successes achieved by your agency and/or the challenges you face. We would also love to know why you think people face hunger in New York and what we need to do to end hunger in America. You may use the back of the last page or attach another sheet of paper if necessary.

30.

- ☐ **Please check here if we have your permission to quote the statement above – all or in part – in our annual survey report.**

If you would like to order copies of our *Neighborhood Guides to Food and Assistance*, please email us at guides@hungerfreenyc.org or call us at 646-350-3833. You can find all of our guides here: <https://www.hungerfreeamerica.org/neighborhood-guides-food-assistance>

THANK YOU!

XIII. Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we wish to thank the hundreds of soup kitchens and food pantries that took great care and time to respond to our annual survey. We also wish to thank all of the volunteers who helped in gathering survey responses and contributed to producing this report.

This report was written by Angelica Gibson, Joel Berg, and Nicole Aber, with support from Jim Wengler.

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