



## ABOUT THE FOOD BANK FOR NEW YORK CITY

Food Bank For New York City recognizes 25 years as the city's major provider of food to New Yorkers in need. The organization works to end food poverty and increase access to affordable, nutritious food for low-income New Yorkers through a range of programs and services that focus on food sourcing and distribution, education and nutrition, financial empowerment, disaster relief, policy and research.

Food Bank For New York City sources and distributes food to more than 1,000 food assistance organizations, assisting the approximately 1.3 million New Yorkers who access emergency food. The Food Bank provides food safety, networking and capacity-building workshops; manages nutrition education programs for schools, after-school and emergency food programs; operates food stamp outreach and education programs; operates senior programs, a soup kitchen and food pantry; coordinates the largest Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program in the country; and develops policy and conducts research to inform community and government efforts to end food poverty throughout New York City.

The Food Bank recently received its fourth consecutive 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for effective and fiscally responsible management. Only 6 percent of charities rated have received such a rating, demonstrating the Food Bank's continued commitment to addressing the issue of food poverty in a responsible manner. For every dollar donated to the Food Bank, 96 cents goes toward food acquisition, distribution and programs. For additional information, visit [foodbanknyc.org](http://foodbanknyc.org)

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# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## INTRODUCTION

The *NYC Hunger Experience Report Series* tracks annual trends in difficulty affording food among New York City residents. The Food Bank For New York City contracts with Marist College Institute for Public Opinion to conduct telephone interviews with a random and representative sample of city residents. Socio-demographic findings identify which populations throughout the five boroughs are having the greatest difficulty affording food throughout the year in order to inform policy solutions and address the problem of food poverty. This research includes six years of trend analysis from 2003 (the earliest year the poll was conducted) through 2008.<sup>1</sup>

Data for 2007 were collected in February 2008 and released in *NYC Hunger Experience 2008*. This report, *NYC Hunger Experience 2008 Update: Food Poverty Soars as Recession Hits Home*, (reflecting 2008 data collected in November) was expedited in order to gain information on how the current recession is impacting New Yorker City residents.

Recent data have confirmed what New Yorkers have been experiencing for some time – the U.S. officially entered into a recession in December of 2007. Since then, 1.9 million jobs have been lost and the pace has only been accelerating over the past few months (average monthly job losses were more than 400,000 from September through November as compared to approximately 80,000 earlier in the year) pushing the unemployment rate up from 6.5 percent in October to 6.7 percent in November, the highest since 1993 and up two percentage points from a year ago. Job losses in November reached 533,000 (the largest monthly loss since the 1970s) and there are now 10.3 million people unemployed in the U.S. (up by more than 3 million since last year). In addition, under-employment levels (people who work part-time yet want a full-time position) rose to 12.5 percent in November (the highest on record since tracking began in 1994) an increase of 621,000 people since October and up by 2.8 million from last year. In total, there are 19.6 million people in the U.S. who are unemployed or under-employed — approximately one out of every eight people in the labor market. Economists expect unemployment to continue to rise and predict that it will increase to 9 percent or more in 2009.<sup>2</sup>

**Difficulty Affording Food:** In the midst of job losses, rising costs and the credit crunch resulting from the economic crisis, the number of New Yorkers having difficulty affording food has spiked to approximately 4 million in 2008, almost doubled from approximately 2 million in 2003 (the earliest data available) and up from 3.1 million in 2007, a 26 percent increase. While hardship is not a new experience for millions of New Yorkers, as we have seen a steady increase in difficulty affording food since 2003, the rise within the last eight months (from February to November 2008) represents the highest increase in the history of the poll. It should be noted that as the November 2008 poll reflects difficulty affording food over the past year, the data capture findings since the start of the recession. Therefore, the dramatic rise in difficulty is likely an indicator of how New Yorkers feel about their financial situation in the midst of the crisis and rising costs (from 2003 to 2007, the cost of groceries in the New York metro area has increased by 15 percent and increased an additional 7 percent from January to October 2008).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The 2008 data were collected in November 2008 and, therefore, reflect New York City residents' experiences from November 2007 through November 2008. Poll questions on New Yorkers concerns that they may need food assistance are new for 2008 and no trend analysis is available.

<sup>2</sup> *Jobs Picture: Job losses accelerate at an alarming rate in November*. (2008). Economic Policy Institute.

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index.

**Loss of Household Income:** In addition, as residents' financial situations deteriorate, more and more New Yorkers are using up their savings. Almost one out of four or 1.9 million New York City residents would not be able to afford food for themselves and their families immediately after losing their household income (up from 1.3 million in 2003 and from 1.6 million in 2007) and 3.7 million would not be able to afford food within three months of losing their household income (up from 3.3 million in 2003).

**Concern About Needing Food Assistance:** In this current climate of skyrocketing unemployment, a staggering 3.5 million people are concerned about the possibility of needing food assistance within the next year. More than 2 million of those concerned have never accessed assistance before and would be turning to a soup kitchen, food pantry or the Food Stamp Program (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) for the first time. Already, 1.3 million New York City residents rely on emergency food organizations, up 24 percent from 1 million in 2004.<sup>4</sup> Soup kitchens and food pantries throughout the five boroughs are also facing rising costs and anecdotal reports show they lack food at a time when demand is increasing.

Findings show that low and middle-income New Yorkers, households with children and seniors are among the most vulnerable. The percent of residents with difficulty affording food include:

- 73 percent of New Yorkers with household incomes of less than \$25,000 per year, a 49 percent increase from 49 percent in 2003.
- 59 percent of New Yorkers with household incomes of \$25,000 to \$49,999 per year, almost tripled from 21 percent in 2003.
- 56 percent of New York City households with children, an increase of 75 percent from 32 percent in 2003.
- 47 percent of seniors ages 65 and older, more than doubled from 23 percent in 2003.

The poll findings are consistent with research by Columbia University showing that throughout the U.S, residents need at least 200 percent of the poverty level (approximately \$34,000 for a family of three) to afford necessities and that in New York City, residents need an income of at least 250 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately \$43,000 annually for a family of three) to meet basic needs.<sup>5</sup> Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau show that 3.1 million New York City residents (38 percent) live below 200 percent of poverty and 4.4 million (53 percent) live below 300 percent of poverty (approximately \$51,000 for a family of three).<sup>6</sup>

The findings are also consistent with recent data showing that 56 percent of voters in New York City report that they are worse off financially than they were a year ago and 49 percent describe their finances as not good or poor, as released by Quinnipiac University in November 2008.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *NYC Hunger Safety Net 2007: A Food Poverty Focus.* (2007) Food Bank For New York City.

<sup>5</sup> *Measuring Income and Poverty in the United States.* (2007). National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University. (Living expenses taken into account include rent and utilities, food, child care, health insurance, transportation, payroll and income taxes and other basic necessities).

<sup>6</sup> *American Community Survey.* (2007). U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>7</sup> *Press Release: New Yorkers Are Suffering and Will Spend Less This Year, Quinnipiac University Poll Finds.* (November 26, 2008). Quinnipiac University.



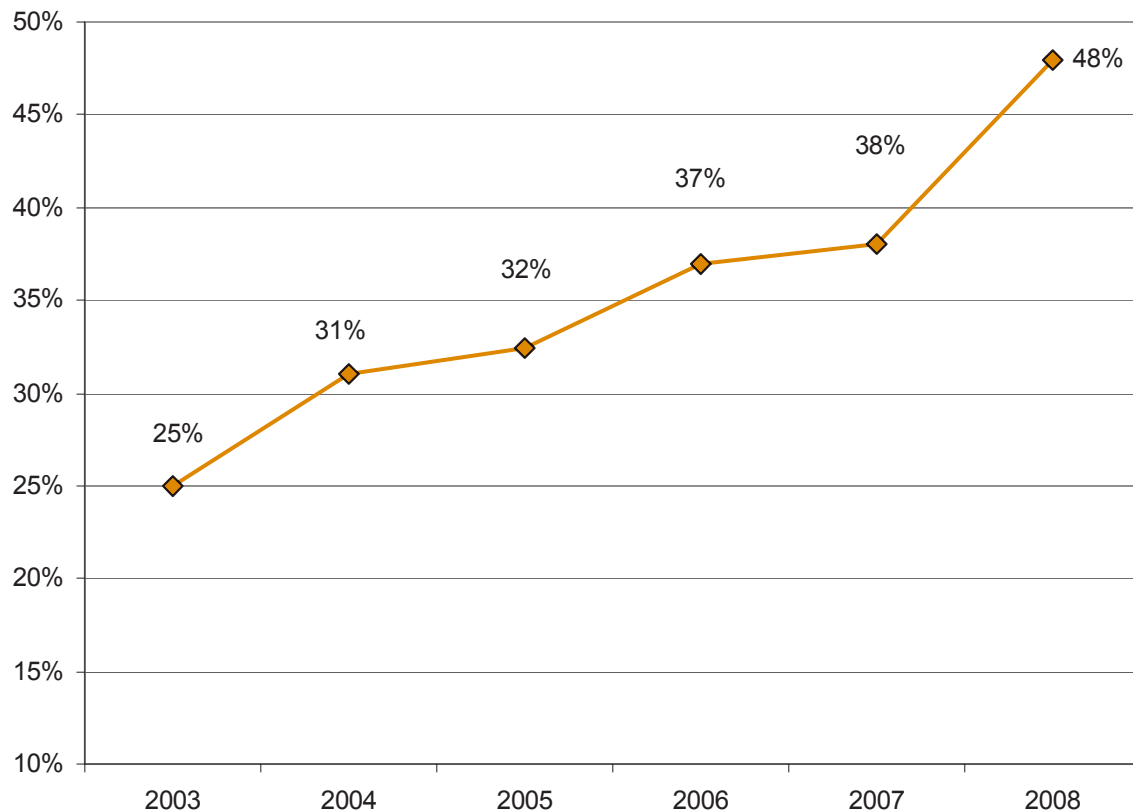
## NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS

### ***Half of New Yorkers having difficulty affording food in 2008, doubled since 2003...***

In 2008, approximately 4 million New Yorkers experienced difficulty affording needed food, approximately double the number five years ago and up 26 percent since 2007 – the highest percent increase since poll data have been collected.

- Approximately 4 million New York City residents (48 percent) had difficulty affording food for themselves and their families in 2008, up from 2 million in 2003 and 3.1 million in 2007.

**Percentage of New York City Residents Experiencing Difficulty Affording Needed Food 2003 to 2008**



### ***One out of four New Yorkers lack savings to fall back on...***

As costs rise and residents' financial situations deteriorate, an increasing number of New Yorkers are using up their savings and would have nothing to fall back on if they were to lose their household income.

- Almost one out of every four (23 percent) or 1.9 million New York City residents would not be able to afford food for themselves and their families immediately after the loss of their household income, a 35 percent increase from 1.3 million in 2003 and a 15 percent increase from 1.6 million in 2007. *A total of 3.7 million residents (45 percent) would not be able to afford food within three months, up from 3.3 million or 40 percent in 2003.*

### ***Two million New Yorkers concerned about needing food assistance for the first time...***

Throughout New York City, 3.5 million residents are concerned about the possibility of needing food assistance within the next year, not surprising given the rising number of New Yorkers who are having a difficult time affording food and lack savings to fall back on. More than 2 million of those concerned would be accessing food assistance including soup kitchens, food pantries or the Food Stamp Program (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) for the first time.

- Approximately 3.5 million New York City residents (42 percent) are concerned that they may need to turn to food assistance such as food stamps (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) or emergency food organizations (soup kitchens and food pantries) within the next 12 months.
- Among New Yorkers who are concerned about needing food assistance in the next year, 59 percent or 2.1 million have never received food assistance in the past.

Among residents concerned about needing food assistance for the first time, many are low-income households, households with children and seniors as described in the next sections.

## **SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS: INCOME, HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN, SENIORS**

### ***Recession and rising costs hit low and middle-income New Yorkers hard...***

The percentage of middle-income residents with difficulty affording food is rising rapidly, a trend that has steadily been worsening over the past several years. These results demonstrate that wages and benefits are not keeping pace with the increasing cost of basic necessities causing many families to worry about needing assistance in the next year.

- Among residents with household incomes of \$50,000 to \$74,999:
  - 43 percent experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 14 percent in 2003 (more than triple) and up from 27 percent in 2007 (a 59 percent increase).
  - More than one-third (36 percent) are concerned about needing food assistance in the next year, among them 75 percent have never received assistance in the past.
- Among New Yorkers with annual household incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,999:
  - 59 percent experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 21 percent in 2003 (almost triple) and up from 42 percent in 2007 (a 40 percent increase).
  - More than one-half (53 percent) are concerned about needing assistance within the next year, among them 61 percent have never received assistance in the past.

Already struggling to put food on the table, New Yorkers with the lowest incomes would be impacted the most by job losses and other economic hardships. As the effects of layoffs in the financial sector begin to have full impact and cause job losses in the service sector, low-income working families with no savings will be in dire need. Staggering percentages are already concerned about needing emergency food or food stamps.

- Among New York City residents with annual household incomes less than \$25,000 per year:
  - Approximately three-quarters (73 percent) experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 49 percent in 2003 (a 49 percent increase) and up from 57 percent in 2007 (a 28 percent increase).
  - 43 percent would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 30 percent in 2003 (a 43 percent increase) and up from 29 percent in 2007 (a 48 percent increase).
  - Almost three-quarters (72 percent) are concerned that they may need food assistance in the next year, among them 43 percent have never received assistance in the past.

### ***More than half of households with children having difficulty...***

New York City households with children remain among the most vulnerable. More than one-half experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, a trend that has been increasing. As their financial situation deteriorates and more families are forced to dip into savings, a rising number would be unable to make ends meet after losing their household income.

- In 2008, 56 percent of households with children had difficulty affording needed food, up from 32 percent in 2003 (a 75 percent increase) and up from 45 percent in 2007 (a 24 percent increase).
- One-quarter (25 percent) of New York City households with children would be unable to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 20 percent in 2003 (a 25 percent increase) and up from 22 percent in 2007 (a 14 percent increase).
- Almost one-half (47 percent) of New York City households with children are concerned they will need to turn to food assistance within the next year, among them 53 percent have never received food assistance in the past.

### ***Rising numbers of seniors have difficulty affording food and lack savings...***

Living on fixed incomes and facing rising costs, the percentage of New York City seniors having difficulty affording food has more than doubled in the past five years. As a result, many seniors who historically had more savings than other age groups now have nothing to fall back on.

- In 2008, 47 percent of New York City seniors age 65 and older experienced difficulty affording needed food, up from 23 percent in 2003 (more than double) and up from 32 percent in 2007 (a 47 percent increase).
- Almost one out of every four (23 percent) New York City seniors would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their income, up from 19 percent in 2003 (a 21 percent increase) and up from 17 percent in 2007 (a 35 percent increase).
- Almost one-half (46 percent) of New York City seniors 65 and older are concerned that they may need to rely on food assistance within the next year, among them 63 percent have never received food assistance in the past.

New Yorkers ages 50 to 64 who are aging into retirement are in a worse situation than seniors today. A rising number are living paycheck to paycheck even before they stop working and see their incomes reduced. Compounding the situation, New Yorkers in this age group who may be losing investments in the current recession will likely not have enough time to make up for their loss of retirement savings. As the number of seniors in the city is expected to rise by as much as 45 percent in the next two decades,<sup>8</sup> we are facing a situation that could reach crisis levels.

- Approximately one-half (49 percent) of New Yorkers ages 50 to 64 experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, double the amount from 25 percent in 2003 and up from 44 percent since 2007 (an 11 percent increase).
- More than one out of every five (21 percent) New Yorkers ages 50 to 64 would be unable to afford food immediately after losing their income, up from 14 percent in 2003 (a 50 percent increase).
- Approximately one-half (48 percent) of New Yorkers ages 50 to 64 are concerned that they may need to turn to food assistance within the next year, among them 58 percent have never received food assistance in the past.

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<sup>8</sup> *New York City Population Projections by Age/Sex and Borough, 2000 – 2030 Report*. (2006). New York City Department of City Planning.

## FINDINGS

### NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS

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**Difficulty Affording Food:** In 2008, 48 percent or approximately 4 million New York City residents experienced difficulty affording needed food for themselves and their families, up from 2 million or 25 percent in 2003 (almost double) and up from 3.1 million or 38 percent in 2007 (a 26 percent increase).

**Loss of Household Income:** Approximately one out of every four (23 percent) or 1.9 million New York City residents would be unable to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 1.3 million or 17 percent in 2003 (a 35 percent increase) and up from 1.6 million or 20 percent in 2007 (a 15 percent increase).

**Concerned About Needing Assistance:** Approximately 42 percent or 3.5 million New York City residents are concerned that they may need to turn to food assistance such as food stamps (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) or emergency food organizations (soup kitchens and food pantries) within the next 12 months.

Among New Yorkers who are concerned about needing food assistance in the next year, 59 percent or 2.1 million have never received food assistance in the past.

### HOUSEHOLD INCOME

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**Difficulty Affording Food:** Approximately three-quarters (73 percent) of New York City residents with annual household incomes less than \$25,000 experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 49 percent in 2003 (a 49 percent increase) and up from 57 percent since 2007 (a 28 percent increase).

Among New Yorkers with annual household incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,999, 59 percent experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 21 percent in 2003 (almost triple) and up from 42 percent in 2007 (a 40 percent increase).

Among residents with household incomes of \$50,000 to \$74,999 per year, 43 percent experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 14 percent in 2003 (more than triple) and up from 27 percent in 2007 (a 59 percent increase).

**Loss of Household Income:** Among residents with annual household incomes of \$25,000 or less, 43 percent would immediately not be able to afford food after losing their household income, up from 30 percent in 2003 (a 43 percent increase) and up from 29 percent in 2007 (a 48 percent increase).

Among New York City residents with household incomes of \$25,000 to \$49,999 per year, 26 percent would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 16 percent since 2003 (a 63 percent increase).

**Concerned About Needing Assistance:** Among residents with annual household incomes less than \$25,000, almost three-quarters (72 percent) are concerned that they may need food assistance in the next year.

More than one-half (53 percent) of residents with household incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,999 per year are concerned that they may need food assistance in the next year.

More than one-third (36 percent) of residents with household incomes of \$50,000 to \$74,999 are concerned about needing food assistance within the next 12 months.

## EDUCATION

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**Difficulty Affording Food:** Among New Yorkers with a high school degree or less, 60 percent experienced difficulty affording needed food in 2008, up from 39 percent in 2003 (a 54 percent increase) and up from 51 percent in 2007 (an 18 percent increase).

In 2008, more than one out of every three (36 percent) New York City residents with a college degree had difficulty affording needed food, up from 11 percent in 2003 (more than triple) and up from 35 percent in 2007 (a 3 percent increase).

Among residents with a graduate or professional degree, one out of every four (25 percent) experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 10 percent in 2003 (more than double) and up from 16 percent in 2007 (a 56 percent increase).

**Loss of Household Income:** One-third (33 percent) of New Yorkers with a high school degree or less would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 21 percent in 2003 (a 57 percent increase) and up from 26 percent in 2007 (a 27 percent increase).

Among New York City residents with a college degree, 15 percent would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 11 percent since 2003 (a 36 percent increase) and up from 12 percent in 2007 (a 25 percent increase).

**Concerned About Needing Assistance:** Among New Yorkers with a high school degree or less, 59 percent are concerned about needing food assistance in the next year.

One out of every three (33 percent) New Yorkers with a college degree is concerned about needing food assistance within the next year.

## AGE

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**Difficulty Affording Food:** Approximately one-half (49 percent) of New Yorkers ages 50 to 64 experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 25 percent in 2003 (almost double) and up from 44 percent in 2007 (an 11 percent increase).

In 2008, 47 percent of New York City seniors ages 65 and older experienced difficulty affording needed food, up from 23 percent in 2003 (more than double) and up from 32 percent in 2007 (a 47 percent increase).

**Loss of Household Income:** Among residents ages 50 to 64, more than one out of every five (21 percent) would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 14 percent in 2003 (a 50 percent increase).

Almost one out of every four (23 percent) New York City seniors would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their income, up from 19 percent in 2003 (a 21 percent increase) and up from 17 percent in 2007 (a 35 percent increase).

**Concerned About Needing Assistance:** Almost one-half of New Yorkers ages 50 to 64 (48 percent) and seniors 65 and older (46 percent) are concerned that they may need to turn to food assistance within the next year.

## HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

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**Difficulty Affording Food:** In 2008, 56 percent of households with children had difficulty affording needed food, up from 32 percent in 2003 (a 75 percent increase) and up from 45 percent in 2007 (a 24 percent increase).

**Loss of Household Income:** One-quarter (25 percent) of household with children would be unable to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 20 percent in 2003 (a 25 percent increase) and up from 22 percent in 2007 (a 14 percent increase).

**Concerned About Needing Assistance:** Almost one-half (47 percent) of New York City households with children are concerned they will need food assistance within the next year.

## RACE / ETHNIC IDENTITY

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**Difficulty Affording Food:** Among Latino/Hispanic residents in New York City, 60 percent experienced difficulty affording needed food in 2008, up from 47 percent in 2003 (a 28 percent increase) and up from 50 percent in 2007 (a 20 percent increase).

More than one-half (55 percent) of Black/African-American residents experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 32 percent in 2003 (a 72 percent increase) and up from 40 percent in 2007 (a 38 percent increase).

One-third (34 percent) of White residents experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 13 percent in 2003 (more than double) and up from 25 percent in 2007 (a 36 percent increase).

**Loss of Household Income:** One-quarter (25 percent) of Latino/Hispanic residents in New York City would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 20 percent in 2003 (a 25 percent increase).

Almost one-third (31 percent) of Black/African-American residents would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 19 percent in 2003 (a 63 percent increase) and up from 22 percent in 2007 (a 41 percent increase).

Among White residents, 14 percent would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their household income, consistent with 14 percent in 2003 and up from 13 percent in 2007 (an 8 percent increase).

**Concerned About Needing Assistance:** More than one-half (56 percent) of Latino/Hispanic residents are concerned that they may need to turn to food assistance within the next year.

More than one-half (56 percent) of Black/African-American residents are concerned that they may need to turn to food assistance within the next year.

Approximately one-quarter (23 percent) of White residents are concerned that they may need to turn to food assistance within the next year.

## GENDER

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**Difficulty Affording Food:** More than one-half (53 percent) of women in New York City experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 28 percent in 2003 (an 89 percent increase) and up from 42 percent in 2007 (a 26 percent increase).

Among men in New York City, 43 percent experienced difficulty affording food in 2008, up from 22 percent in 2003 (almost doubled) and up from 35 percent in 2007 (a 23 percent increase).

**Loss of Household Income:** Almost one-quarter (24 percent) of women in New York City would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 20 percent in 2003 (a 20 percent increase) and consistent with 24 percent in 2007.

More than one out of every five (21 percent) men in New York City would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their household income, up from 15 percent in 2003 (a 40 percent increase) and up from 16 percent in 2007 (a 31 percent increase).

**Concerned About Needing Assistance:** Among women in New York City, 45 percent are concerned that they may need to turn to food assistance within the next year.

Among men, 39 percent are concerned that they may need food assistance within the next year.

## **BOROUGH**

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**Difficulty Affording Food:** The Bronx has the highest percent of residents with difficulty affording food, followed closely by Brooklyn, Staten Island and Queens, as outlined below.

*Bronx:* 54 percent in 2008, up from 37 percent in 2003 (a 46 percent increase) and up from 50 percent in 2007 (an 8 percent increase).

*Brooklyn:* 51 percent in 2008, up from 24 percent in 2003 (more than double) and up from 39 percent in 2007 (a 31 percent increase).

*Manhattan:* 34 percent in 2008, up from 22 percent in 2003 (a 55 percent increase) and up from 30 percent in 2007 (a 13 percent increase).

*Queens:* 50 percent in 2008, up from 23 percent in 2003 (more than double) and up from 39 percent in 2007 (a 28 percent increase).

*Staten Island:* 51 percent in 2008, up from 18 percent in 2003 (almost triple) and up from 36 percent in 2007 (a 42 percent increase).

**Loss of Household Income:** The Bronx has the highest percentage of residents unable to afford food immediately after losing their household income, followed by Queens and Brooklyn.

*Bronx:* 30 percent in 2008, up from 20 percent in 2003 (a 50 percent increase) and up from 29 percent in 2007 (a 3 percent increase).

*Brooklyn:* 21 percent up from 17 percent in 2003 (a 24 percent increase) and up from 20 percent in 2007 (a 5 percent increase).

*Manhattan:* 18 percent up from 17 percent in 2003 (a 6 percent increase) and up from 11 percent in 2007 (a 64 percent increase).

*Queens:* 25 percent up from 15 percent in 2003 (a 67 percent increase) and up from 19 percent in 2007 (a 32 percent increase).

*Staten Island:* 12 percent in 2008, a decrease from 21 percent in 2003 and 37 percent in 2007.

**Concerned About Needing Assistance:** The Bronx has the highest percentage of residents concerned about needing food assistance in the next year, followed by Brooklyn and Queens.

*Bronx:* 53 percent are concerned about needing food assistance in the next year.

*Brooklyn:* 46 percent are concerned about needing food assistance in the next year.

*Manhattan:* 31 percent are concerned about needing food assistance in the next year.

*Queens:* 44 percent are concerned about needing food assistance in the next year.

*Staten Island:* 35 percent are concerned about needing food assistance in the next year.

Among the 2.1 million New Yorkers concerned about needing food assistance for the first time, 18 percent are Bronx residents, 31 percent are Brooklyn residents, 11 percent are Manhattan residents, 33 percent are Queens residents and 6 percent are Staten Island residents.

## METHODOLOGY

### **SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

The Food Bank commissioned the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion to conduct a survey to determine residents' ability to afford food. Data were collected by phone interview, which consisted of three questions developed by the Food Bank in collaboration with Marist College.

### **SAMPLE POPULATION**

This year, telephone interviews were conducted using random digit dialing on November 17, 18 and 19, 2008. A total of 938 NYC residents ages 18 and older were interviewed. Interviews were administered in English and Spanish by trained interviewers from a centralized location. Up to three attempts to establish contact were made per telephone number.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

A final weighted data set that reflects interview responses was provided to the Food Bank by Marist College. To ensure proportionality, borough statistics were weighted by population using data from the 2007 U.S. Census. In addition to statistics for the total population of NYC, the data set included cross-tabulations by variables such as borough, households with children, household income, education, employment, age, race and gender. Results are significant at the  $\pm 3.5$  percent level. Changes and trends in residents' ability to buy food needed by their household were determined by comparing the 2008 survey results to statistics obtained from identical questions asked by Marist College for the Food Bank reflecting data for 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. The question on concern about needing food assistance is new and no comparison data is available.

### **STUDY LIMITATIONS**

While efforts were made to ensure sample randomness, proportionality and consistency, there are several limitations to this study.

First, as residents selected themselves to participate in the telephone survey, there is the potential for there to be a self-selection bias in the data.

Second, although the overall findings are statistically significant at the  $\pm 3.5$  percent, the margin of error increases for statistics obtained through cross-tabulation.

Finally, the interviews were conducted by Marist College Institute for Public Opinion only in English and Spanish. Because there are considerable populations of NYC residents who speak languages other than those used for the interview, a bias may have been introduced.



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