



Attitudes Towards Hunger in New York City: How New Yorkers View Hunger

**Prepared by
Food Bank For New York City
Government Relations, Policy & Research Division**

About Food Bank For New York City

The mission of the Food Bank For New York City is to end hunger by organizing food, information and support for community survival and dignity. As the city's largest hunger-relief organization, the Food Bank collects, warehouses and distributes food to more than 1,000 nonprofit community food programs throughout the five boroughs. The organization also offers ongoing support to its network of food programs through nutrition and food safety workshops, networking sessions and education tools that help build capacity and improve efficiency. The Food Bank serves as a resource center for member agencies, legislators, the media and the public.

The Food Bank's Government Relations, Policy & Research division regularly conducts research to ascertain trends regarding the degree of hunger throughout the city, socio-demographic profiles of programs and clients, changes in demand for food assistance and community needs assessments.

A member of America's Second Harvest and the largest food bank in the country, the Food Bank provides 61 million pounds of food annually to more than 1,000 community food programs citywide including soup kitchens, food pantries, and shelters. The food provided enables programs to serve more than 200,000 meals each day to individuals and families seeking emergency food assistance to avoid going hungry.

Main Office and Warehouse

Hunts Point Co-op Market
355 Food Center Drive
Bronx, NY 10474
Phone: 718-991-4300
Fax: 718-893-3442

Manhattan Office

90 John Street
Suite 702
New York, NY 10038
Phone: 212-566-7855
Fax: 212-566-1463

www.foodbanknyc.org

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Executive Summary

With the recent increase of economic and political insecurity in the world, and the declining availability of employment opportunities in the New York City area, citizens are feeling bleak. Moreover, when the most prosperous country in the world cannot afford to provide food to all its citizens there is reason to worry. Without a healthy population, it is difficult to have a thriving economy since people, that is, human capital, are every nation's greatest resource.

According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the most basic fundamental human necessities are all physiological; that is, the human body needs food, water, shelter, air and a proper temperature to merely function.¹ Based on this model, all other desires will be pushed aside as attention and resources are prioritized to meet these basic needs. Thus, barriers to food, whether due to economic, political and/or other constraints would translate into a myriad of social maladies as more energy and resources are directed towards merely satisfying hunger. This is exemplified in our nation's increasing poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment figures just to name a few. In turn, policies would need to be implemented to address these issues. For example, a new policy has been implemented in New York City to offer all children free breakfast. This move is based on studies showing that children who eat regular healthy meals are more attentive in school. Another such example is the USDA's initiative to provide non-fat dry milk to faith-based and community organizations which might assist in alleviating the nine cent/gallon price hike announced in October 2003. (*The New York Times*, 2003).

¹ Abraham Maslow was a well known psychologist who established the theory of a hierarchy of needs, based on the premise that human beings are motivated by unsatisfied needs, and that certain lower needs need to be addressed before higher needs can be satisfied. For further information see Norwood, George (1996) *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, <http://www.connect.net/georgen/maslow.htm>, June and/or Maslow, Abraham (1970) *Motivation and Personality*, 2nd ed., Harper & Row.

Providing further nutritional resources to the nation is crucial not only to counteract the rising poverty rates and soaring prices of staple goods, but also to address other societal issues such as the country's obesity rate. In New York City, 43% of city elementary school kids are overweight and/or obese (*New York Daily News*, 2003). This is problematic particularly since there has been recent evidence linking the rise in obesity with the rise in poverty.² In reaction to this epidemic, School Chancellor Joel Klein has proposed a new fitness curriculum that would promote more physical activity (*New York Daily News*, 2003), while the USDA had recently restructured its food pyramid and decreased the number of daily recommended calories.

Figures are publicized weekly showing that the poor are becoming increasingly poorer as the nation's nutritional level continues to decline. For instance, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that the number of poor Americans increased by more than 1 million since 2002, totaling 34.6 million people now living below the official federal poverty line (12.1%) – a .4% rise since 2002.³ Further, they also report that the number of people who had no health insurance rose to 43.6 million since 2001, a jump of about 6%, while those without health coverage rose from 14.6% to 15.2%. While the recession officially ended in November of 2001, poverty rates in the United States have continued to climb along with the number of citizens not able to afford to buy food for their families. Therefore, it is essential that we pose the question “How aware is the public that hunger and access to food is a problem?”

There has been a wide range of public awareness studies focusing specifically on the food industry (e.g., public perceptions of food safety, genetically modified

² For example, a study published in August in the *International Journal of Obesity* found that 6.4% of children in the wealthiest quarter of the Canadian population were obese, compared with 12.8% of those in the poorer quarter. The heaviest children live in single-parent homes, with 46% either overweight or obese. The article argues that there is a direct relationship between the rise in obesity and the rise in poverty. See Evenson, Brad (2003) “When Rich and Poor Kids Eat the Same Diet, Poor Ones Get Fatter.” *National Post (Canada)*. September 12, 2003.

³ See the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey for further information. <http://www.census.gov/acs/www>

crops, irradiated foods etc). Yet, very few studies have looked at the issue of hunger. This is very surprising since some social theorists might argue that in order to enact social change, one must first understand the current views and thoughts of the issues at hand. While the problem of hunger is an important issue to voters, especially those located in urban America, it has not been a very prominent issue in the American political debate. This is shocking since the emergency food system depends heavily on federal subsidies (Alliance to End Hunger, 2002).

An integral part of the Food Bank For New York City's mission is to work towards eradicating hunger by collecting and organizing information that can be used to address gaps in research, particularly within the areas that affect our constituents. In line with the Food Bank's mission, we have undertaken this study to determine New Yorkers' attitudes towards hunger. This study was aimed at answering the following questions: (1) Are New York City residents aware that hunger is a problem and has this sentiment increased within recent years? (2) Are working New Yorkers finding it difficult to afford to purchase food for their families? And, most importantly, (3) Are the people most in need of food resources knowledgeable of where to find them? Our primary goal was to determine if the need for emergency food assistance had increased in the recent years, and if so, whether people knew how to locate a nearby emergency food program.

The outcomes of the research will be used by the Food Bank For New York City to guide a more in-depth analysis of the gaps in emergency food services. Already, the results initiated the Food Bank to revamp its 24-hour, toll free phone service, 866-NYC-FOOD, to help New Yorkers locate food programs where they can receive food, volunteer or donate.

This follow-up study to the Food Bank's earlier mapping project⁴ will be aimed at analyzing whether there are pockets/gaps in services and demand for emergency food, and if so, identify where those gaps are located throughout the five boroughs. Among the goals of the mapping project are: (1) To use socioeconomic demographic information to provide a comprehensive picture of the economic status of New York City at the Borough, Congressional, State Senate, State Assembly, City Council, School, and Community Board district levels as it relates to emergency food services; (2) To determine and analyze the gaps in availability of services within the aforementioned district levels; and (3) To present this information in an easily accessible format to serve as a reference guide for the Food Bank, its members, its affiliates and the emergency food community as a whole.

Key Findings

New Yorkers are VERY aware that hunger is an issue in New York City.

- Overall, 82% of residents in New York City believe hunger is a problem.
- Within each borough, more than 75% of residents responded hunger was either a major problem or somewhat of a problem.
- In terms of race, 91% of New York City African-Americans believe hunger is a problem, closely followed by White (83%) and Latino (81%) residents.

The economic decline of the past three years has impacted ALL New Yorkers.

- Over 60% of New Yorkers, at ALL income levels, believe it has become increasingly difficult for families to afford to feed themselves over the past three years.

⁴ See the Food Bank's 2000 mapping study "Who Feeds the Hungry?"

- This is the same across race, where over 60% of White, African-American, and Latino respondents found affording food within the last three years increasingly difficult.

Households within the lower income brackets, families with children, and Latinos would be hardest hit by unemployment.

- Immediately within the first month of losing their job, 30% of all households making \$25,000 or less would not be able to afford to buy food. This number would rise to 66% within the following 6 months. This is very problematic since average per capita income for boroughs such as the Bronx and Brooklyn is reported at less than \$25,000 (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2002).
- Almost 50% of households with children would not be able to afford to buy food within the first three months of losing their job.
- Over half of Latinos (53%) would not be able to feed their families within the first three months of losing their job, increasing to 67% within six months of unemployment. Latinos are also the group the Census Bureau reports has been hardest hit by the economic conditions of the recent years (*The New York Times*, 2003).

Within the last year, Latinos and households making less than \$25,000 could not afford to eat.

- Almost half of all households making \$25,000 or less could not afford to purchase food within the last year (49%). Shockingly, 22% of households in this income bracket responded that buying food was so difficult, there were times during the year that they did not purchase food at all.
- While both African-Americans and Latinos experienced the decline in the economy throughout the past year, 47% of Latinos responded that there

was a time during the past year when they could not afford to purchase food, this is in comparison to 32% of the African-American community.

While New Yorkers are familiar with food programs, they do not know where to access food within their own neighborhoods. Further, knowledge of local food resources is low amongst the groups who need it the most.

- Less than 4 out of 10 New Yorkers are knowledgeable of a food program within their community (38%). This is the same for households with children.
- Although 87% of respondents in both boroughs remarked that hunger was a problem in New York City, only 24% of residents in Staten Island and 35% of residents in the Bronx are aware of a local food program.
- Even though 86% of women reported that hunger was a problem, only 4 out of 10 know of a local food program (40%).
- While 85% of Latinos would not be able to afford food after six months of unemployment, as many as 59% do NOT know where to access an emergency food provider in their vicinity.
- An astounding 64% of African-Americans reported that hunger was a problem (91%), and within this group, more than half also indicated that it was a MAJOR problem (57%).

Introduction

While food stamp enrollment in New York City remains at a terrible low of 4% (in comparison to the nationwide score of 25% or even the statewide number of 10%), demand for emergency food continues to grow as providers rush to meet this demand. Most recently, evidence can be found as locally as in Brooklyn where the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty announced in September 2003 that their kosher pantry had tripled in size since its inception 5 years ago. The expansion was due primarily to the increased demand for emergency food among households in Brooklyn (*New York Daily News*, 2003).

Yet, this is not surprising since the Census Bureau recently released its report on the number of Americans living in poverty, which is estimated to have grown for a second consecutive year by more than 1.3 million, an increase to 12.4% from 12.1% in 2001 (*The New York Times*, 2003). This had led some experts to note that this is in fact an indicator of a slowing economy regardless of the recent news that employment figure showed an increase in the last few months (*The New York Times*, 2003). While the adjusted poverty line figures have yet to be released, in 2001, a family of two adults and two children would have had to have a total household income of \$17,960 to be ranked as living below the poverty line.

However, food insecurity is not only relegated to the income levels falling at or below poverty lines. A recent survey commissioned by the Consumer Federation of America and Provident Financial Corporation found that half of adult Americans with annual incomes between \$25,000 and \$75,000 are worried about their financial condition (*New York Post*, 2003). The data from our study points to a similar fear amongst New Yorkers at all income levels. Further, another study of 25 major cities revealed that amongst those who were hungry there is an ever increasing number of single mothers who are stuck in low-wage jobs,

married couples who can't keep up with increasing housing costs and able-bodied people who are unable to find employment (*Chicago Tribune*, 2003).

What can we decipher from all of these trends? Hunger no longer discriminates. That is, we may all be susceptible to needing food assistance, regardless of employment status or income range. While the Food Bank found trends amongst respondent replies, indicating that certain groups were far worse off than others, a crucial discovery was that the majority of New Yorkers were experiencing some sort of difficulty meeting the food requirements of their families.

The Results section of this report details the findings of the study conducted by the Food Bank For New York City. The section begins with an overview of the findings for all residents throughout New York City. It is then followed by the findings broken down according to borough, age, gender, racial categories, income range, and education level. Supporting graphs and figures are provided wherever trends are noticeable.

Methodology

Survey Instrument

The survey administered to gather the data for this study was developed by the Food Bank For New York City in conjunction with Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. Marist College was contracted to collect and consolidate the data through phone interviews throughout August 2003. The data was collected via telephone calls made on August 13th, 14th, 18th, and 22nd. The telephone numbers were selected based on a complete list of telephone exchanges throughout the city. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each borough was represented in proportion to its population.

Sample Population

The randomly selected sample of New York City residents was comprised of 937 adults 18 years of age or older located throughout the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island. The telephone numbers chosen for this study were based on a complete list of telephone exchanges throughout New York City. The exchanges were selected in order to ensure that each borough was represented in proportion to its population.

Data Analysis

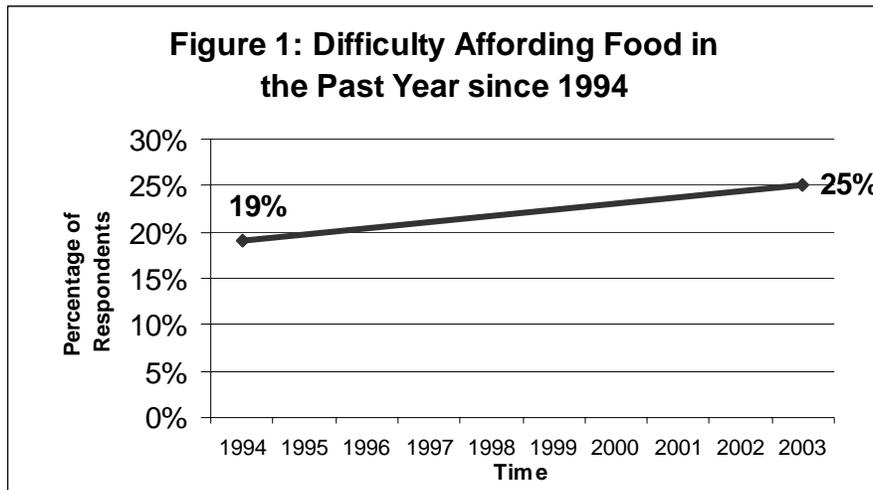
When interpreting findings from this research study, certain cautions should be exercised. First, SPSS was used to compile the results of the survey. While the findings are statistically significant at +/- 3.5%, the error margin increases for cross-tabulation. Second, this project was aimed at capturing major trends amongst demographic groups across a general time period. Thus, because we did not specifically request information concerning the boundaries of time periods, and used phrases such as “over the past three years” and “during the past year,” to describe the time frames, we cannot assume the consistency of the responses for these questions. Third, for certain categories, we have sorted the

data into major groups and presented only the most significant information such as for race and ethnicity, education level and household income.

Additionally, the disaggregated data collected for this study could be further analyzed and incorporated into a more extensive project to provide further insight into the correlation between perceptions of hunger and variables such as education level completed, family income, and age.

Results Overview: Hunger is a Real Problem

According to the most recent poverty statistics for the United States, poverty is on the rise as household income continues to decline (Census Bureau, 2003). In 2001, there were 32.9 million impoverished Americans, a 1.3 million increase from the 2000 count of 31.6 million (Census Bureau, 2002). Today, that number has risen to 34.8 million—that is 1.9 million more people in poverty since 2001, and 3.2 million more since 2000 (Census Bureau, 2003). Understandably, paralleling this increase in poverty is an increase in difficulty in affording food. One out of 4 (25%) New Yorkers who responded to our survey say that affording food within the last year was difficult; this is a 6% increase from a 1994 survey (19%) and justifies the Food Bank For New York City's annual increase in food distribution over the past four years. See Figure 1 below.



The diminishing availability of financial resources also justifies why a little over 8 out of 10 New Yorkers perceive that hunger is a problem in New York City (82%) with a slightly increased number amongst households with children (85%). In fact, the Census Bureau reports that nationwide, median household income since 2000 has declined by \$500 from 2001 to 2002 (Census Bureau, 2002). New Yorkers are not only hearing about the declining figures in recent years but are

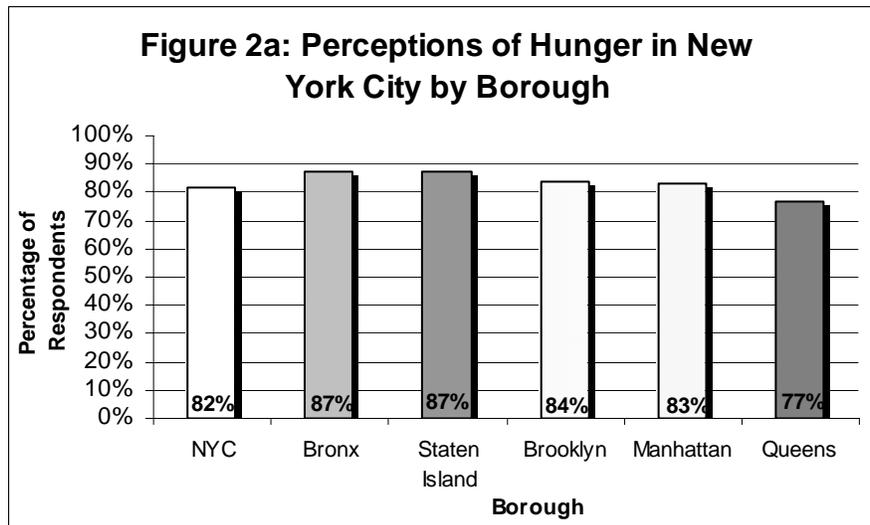
also feeling it. Over 60% of respondents reported that hunger in New York City has increased in the last three years (67% amongst households with children). Similarly, 69% of residents do not believe they would be able to afford to buy food six months after losing their job. While a quarter of New Yorkers found it difficult affording to purchase food in the past year, only 10% report that they did not purchase food at all. However, these figures increase amongst households with children where 30% of respondents had difficulty accessing food for their families, with 11% not purchasing food.

Section 1: Attitudes Towards Hunger by Borough

This section breaks down the data collected from respondents by borough. This borough-based analysis draws out the differences in attitudes towards hunger in terms of perception of hunger as a problem, perceptions of affordability of food, affordability of food and knowledge of food programs.

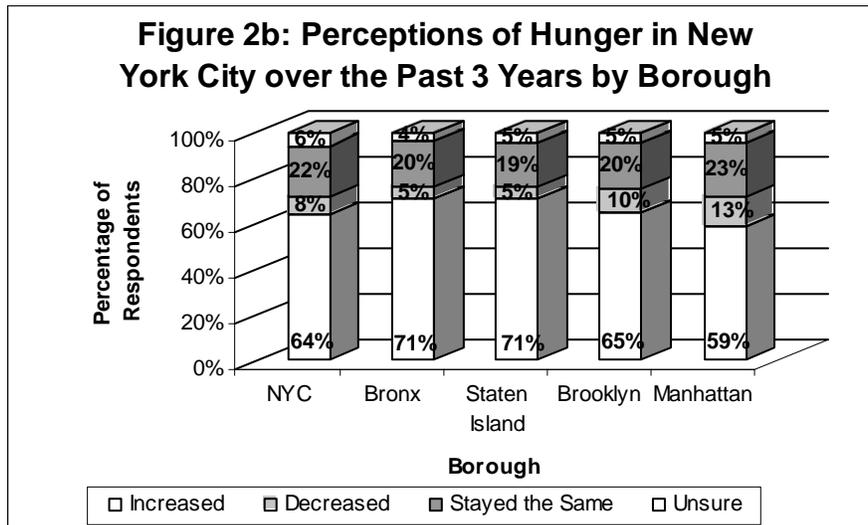
Perception of Hunger as a Problem

When asked how big a problem hunger was in New York City, the Bronx and Staten Island tied for highest ranking -- 87% of residents living in the Bronx and 87% in Staten Island responded that hunger was either somewhat of a problem or a major problem. Queens ranked as the lowest in perceiving hunger as a problem. However, regardless of the ranking, hunger is clearly a topic of conversation amongst New Yorkers with more than 3 out of 4 residents in each of the boroughs responding that hunger was either a major problem or somewhat of a problem. See Figure 2a below.



Perception of Affordability of Food

Similarly, when asked to share their perceptions regarding whether the number of people who could not afford to feed themselves or their families in New York City had changed in the last 3 years, the Bronx and Staten Island again ranked the highest at 71% followed by Brooklyn at 65%. Queens and Manhattan were the lowest at 59%; but again, over 50% of residents in all five boroughs believe hunger has increased in the last three years (See Figure 2b below).



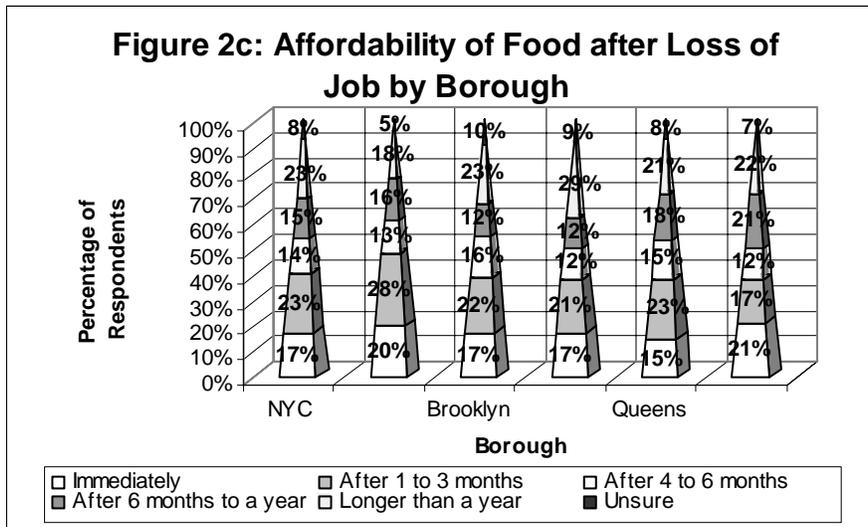
Affordability of Food

In August 2003, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the unemployment rate rose to 6.4 % (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2003). This is the highest level in nine years, and accounts for the loss of 30,000 jobs. With unemployment rising, the future for families who cannot afford to purchase food appears dark -- especially since many would not be able to feed their families within the first three months of losing their jobs. Respondents from the Bronx reported that half of their residents would be immediately affected within the first three months of unemployment (48%). Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island were all about the same within the first 3 months (38-39%); however, after four months, more than 50% of all residents in ALL boroughs would be significantly impacted

by unemployment. These rates continue to increase for the six-month mark, primarily in the Bronx (77%), Queens (71%) and Staten Island (71%).

It is evident that the declining economy has hit some areas harder than other. One such area is the Bronx, where, compared to the rest of New York City, residents are finding it harder to provide for their families. For instance, almost 4 out of 10 Bronx residents had trouble affording food within the last year (37%). The statistics for the rest of New York City are as follows:

- 24% for Brooklyn
- 22% for Manhattan
- 23% for Queens
- 18% for Staten Island



Residents in the Bronx are not only the worst off in encountering difficulty affording food but in purchasing food all together (See Table 1 below). Over the past year, 37% of Bronx respondents either did not purchase food or had difficulty purchasing food (13% did not purchase food at all).

Table 1: Difficulty Affording Food in the Past Year by Borough

Borough	Did not purchase food	Difficulties paying but always bought food	Total
NYC	10%	15%	25%
Bronx	13%	24%	37%
Brooklyn	11%	14%	25%
Manhattan	10%	12%	22%
Queens	8%	15%	23%
Staten Island	4%	14%	18%

Knowledge of Food Resources

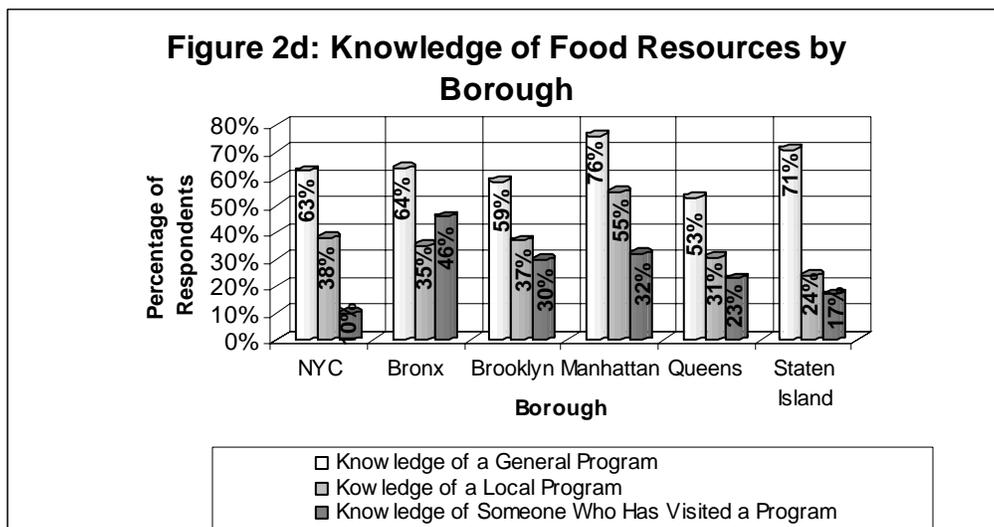
Problematically, even though 87% of Bronx residents indicated that hunger was a problem and that they had experienced first hand the overall national economic decline of the past few years, as many as 65% did not know how to locate local food programs. Further, as many as 65% of residents responded that they had never even heard of any program that could provide food for their families (See Figure 2d on the next page).

Moreover, while the results of the poll were the most extreme for the Bronx, the remaining four boroughs followed another trend: they all specified a higher knowledge of general food programs in New York City than both local programs or knowing others who had visited a program. For example, in Staten Island where like the Bronx, 87% of those questioned reported that hunger was either a major or somewhat of a problem, 69% replied that they did not know of a local food program. Enigmatically, as high as 71% of residents HAD heard of some

type of program, yet less than 2 out of 10 respondents knew of someone who had visited a program during the past year.

On the other hand, the results for Manhattan were somewhat of the reverse of the Bronx and Staten Island. For example, knowledge of local resources (55%), knowing someone who had recently visited a food program (32%), and knowledge of general resources (76%) were all fairly high when compared to the other boroughs. In fact, other than knowledge of someone visiting a food program, residents in Manhattan seemed to be the most knowledgeable of food resources (See Figure 2d below).

Yet, among the five boroughs, knowledge of general food programs was the lowest in Queens (53%) and Brooklyn (59%); Queens and Brooklyn also had the lowest ranking in knowing someone who had visited a program recently--23% and 30% respectively. In terms of local programs, only 37% of Brooklyn residents responded that they knew of a program, which, remarkably was the second highest next to Manhattan. While Queens, at 31% was the second lowest. Clearly, information concerning accessible neighborhood resources is needed.



Section 2: Attitudes Towards Hunger by Age

This section breaks down the data collected from respondents by age. Very few studies have specifically looked at the relationship between food insecurity and age. There is one particularly notable study that looked at hunger and the adult population from a medical perspective. This study found hunger and food insecurity to be prevalent among adult patients seeking medical care at a public hospital in Minneapolis, Minnesota.⁵ Issues related to an older population will become a growing concern for many adults as: (1) the median age in the U.S. rises in the next decade; and (2) healthcare, and social welfare programs reorganize to meet the demands of this demographic group.

In 2000, the Census Bureau reported that 26% of the population was under the age of 18, 62% between 18 and 64, and 12% was 65 or older (Census Bureau, 2000). The age group ranging from 50 to 54 experienced the largest percentage growth in the years 1990-2000 (55% increase) (Census Bureau, 2000). The second fastest growing age group ranged from 45 to 49 (45% increase) (Census Bureau, 2000). These two ranges are inclusive of the baby boomers as well as indicative of an aging population. The results of our study mirrored this change in age distribution as older New Yorkers overall showed a greater sensitivity toward hunger issues than those under 35 years.

⁵ See Nelson, K., "Hunger in an Adult Population," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Volume 279, no. 15, April 15, 1998. The authors suggest that this is likely to be typical of other public hospital populations. Medical researchers found that out of the 567 patients interviewed (52% of whom had incomes below \$10,000), 24% reported decreasing the size of meals or skipping meals because they could not afford food, 12% said they did not have enough food, 13% reported not eating for an entire day because they could not afford food, and 14% said they were hungry but didn't eat because they could not afford food. In addition, 28% reported that their food supply would not last until they had money to buy more, 28% reported putting off paying a bill in order to buy food, and 27% reported receiving emergency food during the past year.

Table 2: Perceptions of Hunger by Age

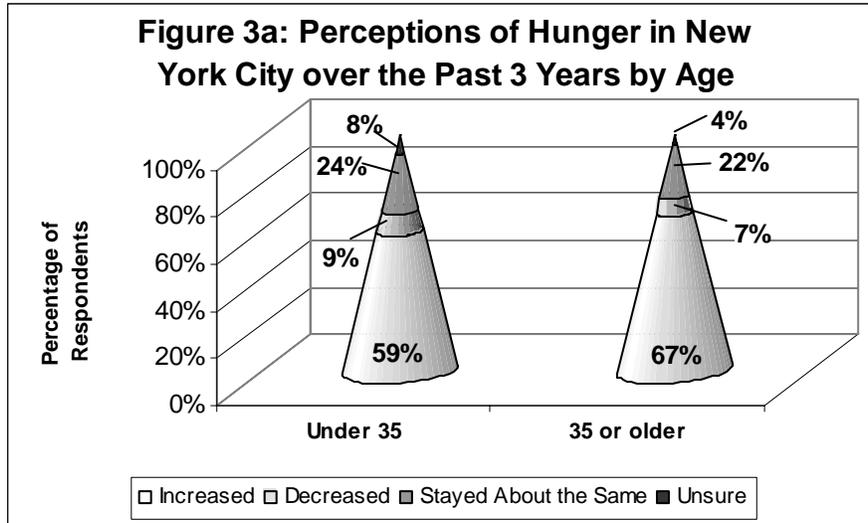
Age	Major Problem	Somewhat of a Problem	Total
Under 35	39%	45%	84%
35 or older	42%	43%	85%

Perception of Hunger as a Problem

When questioned whether hunger was a problem, over 8 out of 10 of all respondents, at all age levels indicated some type of concern (84% of respondents under 35, and 85% 35 or older). The 35 years or older group showed a slightly greater concern for hunger as a major problem (3% more than the group under 35). See Table 2 above.

Perception of Affordability of Food

Similarly, while more than half of respondents at all ages perceived that food insecurity had grown over the last few years, as many as 67% of those over 35 responded that hunger had increased over the last 3 years (8% more than those under). See Figure 3a on the next page. On the other hand, while respondents over the age of 35 seemed more concerned with hunger, it appeared that those under 35 would be more affected by a loss of income. According to our poll results, citizens under the age of 35 would experience greater food scarcity within the first 6 months of unemployment, about 11% more than those over 35. See Table 3 on the next page. Interestingly, respondents over age 35 begin to tip the scale more towards themselves at the 6-month mark.



Affordability of Food

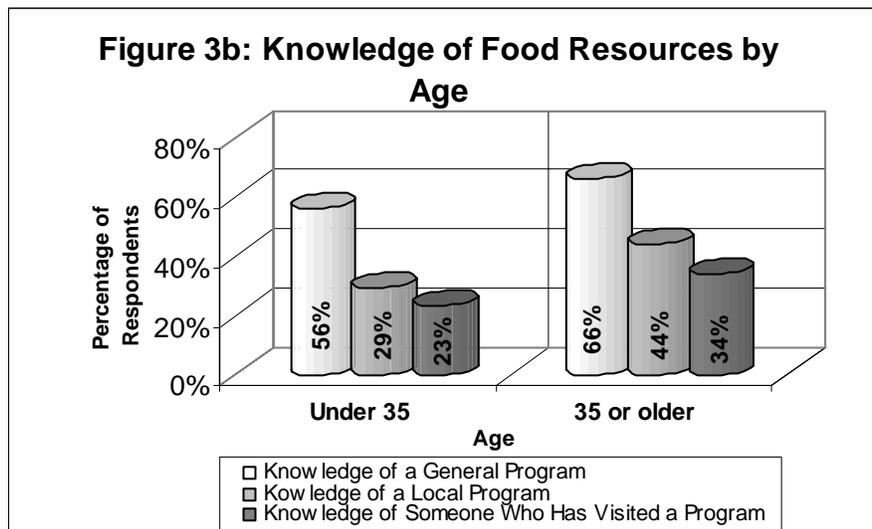
Contrasting these trends in attitudes toward hunger is the actual difficulty experienced in affording food. While younger adults believed they would be most impacted by a loss of income, and older adults exemplified a greater concern for hunger, the two categories did not differ in terms of difficulty affording food in the past year. That is, 25% of respondents, regardless of age, encountered difficulty making ends meet within the past year. In terms of purchasing food at all, 10% of adults 35 and older and 8% of adults under 35 years did not purchase food at all.

Table 3: Affordability of Food after Loss of Job by Age

Age	Immediately	After 1 to 3 months	After 4 to 6 months	Total
Under 35	19%	27%	15%	61%
35 or older	16%	21%	13%	50%

Knowledge of Food Resources

The study examined the correlation between knowledge of services and age. The results of our poll show that in this category, there is the greatest amount of difference than in any other demographic category, that is, older adults are more knowledgeable in terms of general programs in New York City, local programs in their neighborhoods, and familiarity with someone who has used a program in the past year, than adults under the age of 35 years. See Figure 3b below for further details. Within categories, more than 20% of respondents at all age levels indicated more knowledge of general programs than of local programs or of knowing someone who had visited a food program in the last year. There was less of a distinction within the local programs and in terms of knowledge of someone who had used a program between both age categories. However, on the same lines as results throughout the poll, awareness about local food resources was low.



Section 3: Attitudes Towards Hunger by Gender

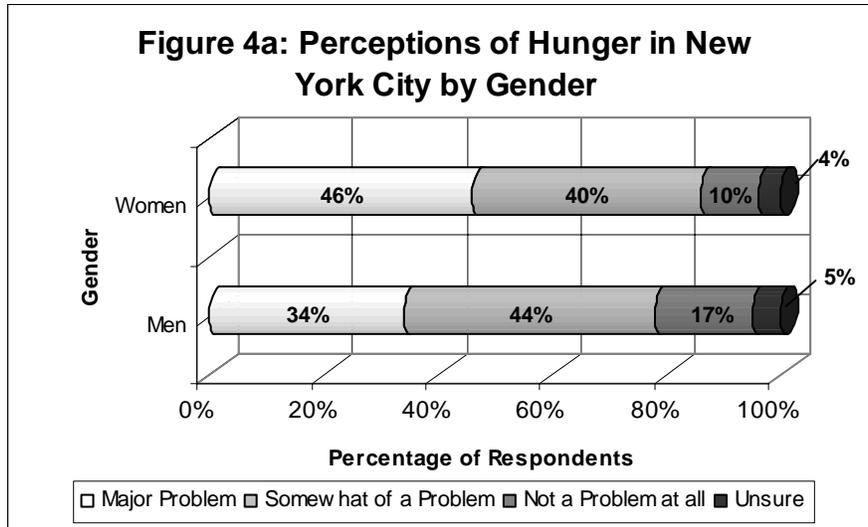
A 2000 United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF) report stated: "It is a common saying that 'the poor are always with us.' And often, the poor are women and children. In many places, women and girls are the last to eat when food is scarce."⁶ While the report was specifically geared towards women in developing countries, the same trend is evident in the United States. The recent report by the Census Bureau shows that almost half of children living in female-headed households (48.6 %) live below the poverty line (Census Bureau, 2003). Further, in 2000, the Census Bureau reported that females comprised the majority of the American population at 50.9% (Census, 2000). In New York State, this figure was slightly higher at 51.8%.

Our figures are consistent with these trends: Overall, women are more concerned with and suffer greater food scarcity than men in terms of attitude as well as reality. A reality different than the perception of a hungry person as a homeless, and unemployed male (*Chicago Tribune*, 2003).

The following section breaks down the data collected from respondents by gender.

⁶ Source: UNICEF <http://www.pbs.org/now/politics/womenlabor.html>

Perception of Hunger as a Problem



46% of women responded that hunger was a MAJOR problem in New York City in comparison to 34% of men. While women also scored higher on total responses to hunger being a problem, both categories (86% for women, 78% for men) were high.

Perception of Affordability of Food

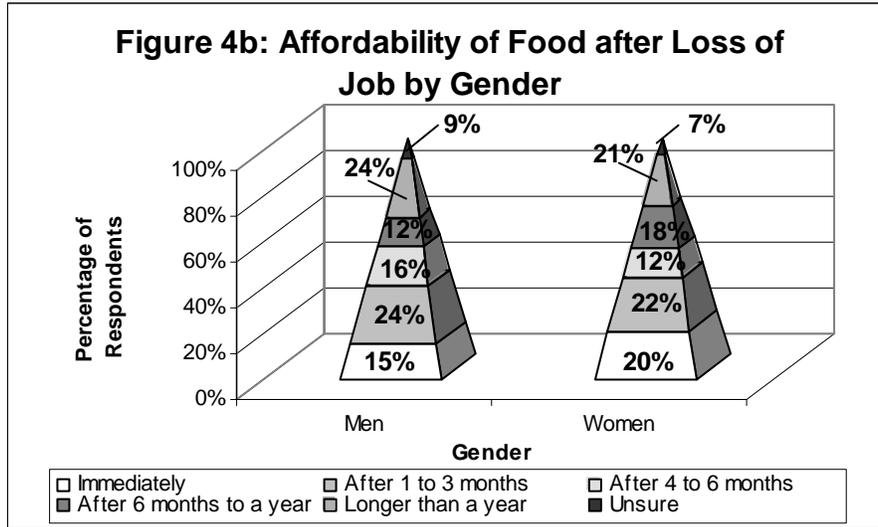
Similarly, even though more than 6 out of 10 respondents in both categories expressed that hunger had increased over the past three years, women were 3% ahead of men (65% to 62% respectively).

Table 4: Perceptions of Hunger in New York City over the Past 3 Years by Gender

Gender	Increased	Decreased	Stayed About the Same	Unsure
Men	62%	9%	23%	6%
Women	65%	8%	21%	6%

Along the same lines, 20% of women also believe they would not be able to afford food immediately after the loss of a job or household income, 5% greater

than men (15%). At the one to three month mark, women still lead at 44% compared to 39% of men. This trend remains consistent throughout the rest of the results with 72% of women and 67% of men not being able to afford to eat after six months of unemployment. See Figure 4b below.



Affordability of Food

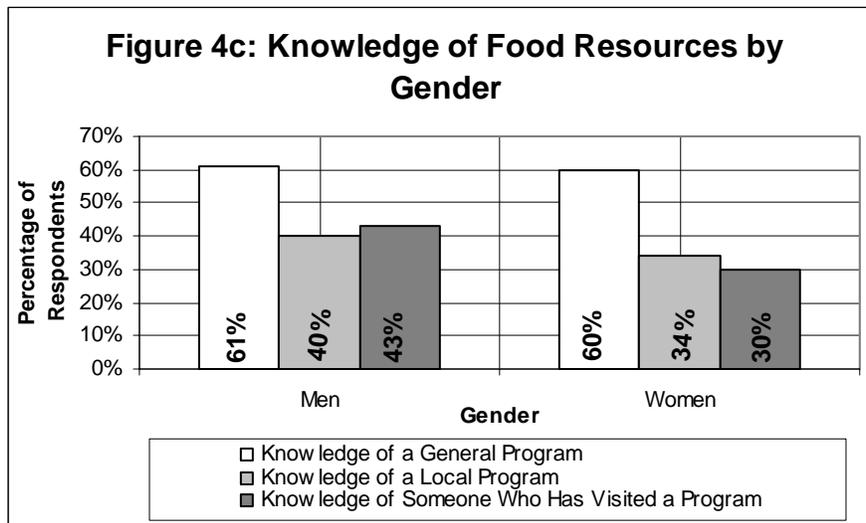
As many as 28% of women found difficulty affording food over the last year, 6% more than men (22%) (See Table 5 below), with 11% of women and 8% of men not buying food at all at some point during the past year.

Table 5: Difficulty Affording Food in the Past Year by Gender

Gender	Very difficult	Somewhat difficult	Total
Men	6%	16%	22%
Women	9%	19%	28%

Knowledge of Food Resources

In terms of knowledge of emergency food resources, women showed a greater knowledge of local resources as well as familiarity with someone who had used a program over the past year. Men on the other hand showed a greater knowledge of general food programs throughout New York City by about 2%. Amongst the categories, knowledge of general programs for both males and females was more than 20% greater than that of local sources and knowledge of someone actually using a program. Finally, as with the responses throughout other demographic categories, familiarity with someone who had visited a program over the last year came in last with as few as 3 out of 10 respondents within both categories knowing of someone. See Figure 4c below.

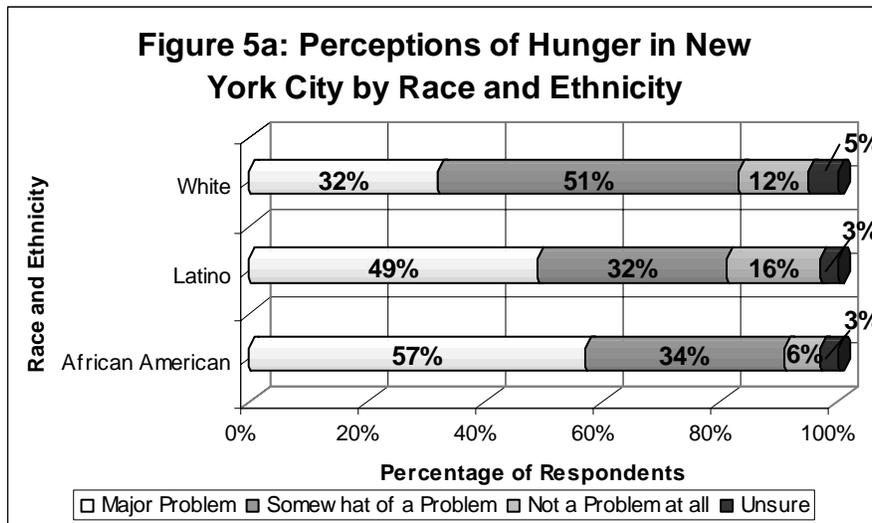


Section 4: Attitudes Towards Hunger by Race and Ethnicity

This section breaks down the data collected from respondents by race and ethnicity. The results of the opinion poll showed significant differences in attitudes towards hunger amongst different racial groups with Latinos having the toughest time in meeting their food needs. The significant difference among racial groups is not surprising since research shows race and ethnicity are important factors that influence food security (Ribar and Hamick, 2003).

Perception of Hunger as a Problem

57% of African-Americans believe hunger is a MAJOR problem; they are followed by Latino respondents at 49% and White respondents at 32%. In terms of overall concerns about hunger, the African-American respondents remained on top at 91%, followed by 83% of White respondents and 81% of Latinos. See Figure 5a below .



Perception of Affordability of Food

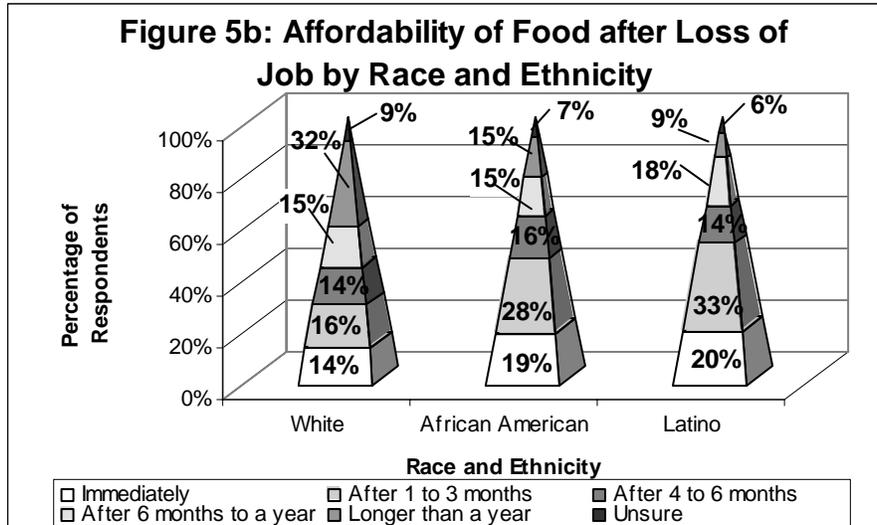
The perceptions of the changes in hunger over the past three years showed similar results amongst racial categories; while Latinos led at 69%, they were closely followed by African-Americans (68%) and Whites (63%). Interestingly, the percentage of responses stating that hunger had actually remained unchanged was similar between the groups, at about 20% (See Table 6 below for details).

Table 6: Perceptions of Hunger in New York City over the Past 3 Years by Race and Ethnicity

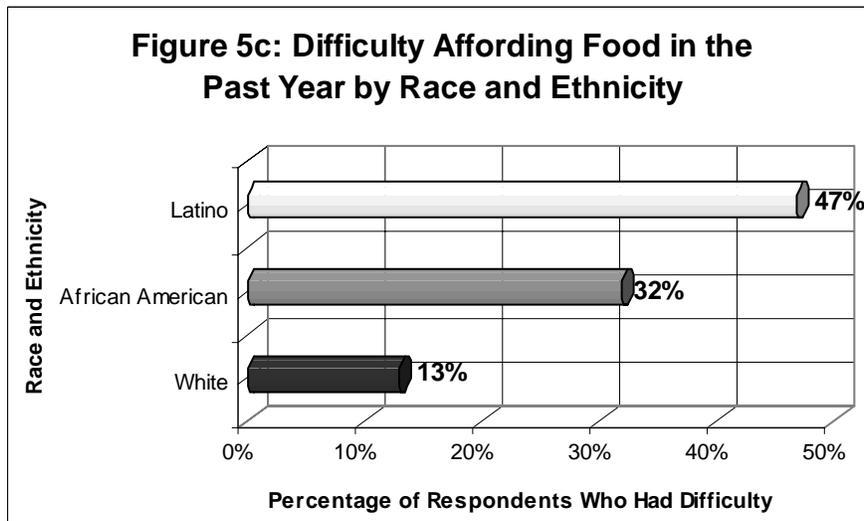
Race and Ethnicity	Increased	Decreased	Stayed About the Same	Unsure
White	63%	7%	24%	6%
African American	68%	9%	24%	4%
Latino	69%	6%	19%	2%

Affordability of Food

The question regarding food affordability after loss of household income showed that 2 out of 10 Latinos would immediately not be able to afford food (20%) , followed by African-Americans at 19% and Whites at 14%. These figures would increase within the next three months to 53% Latino, 47% African-American and 30% White. See Figure 5b on the next page.

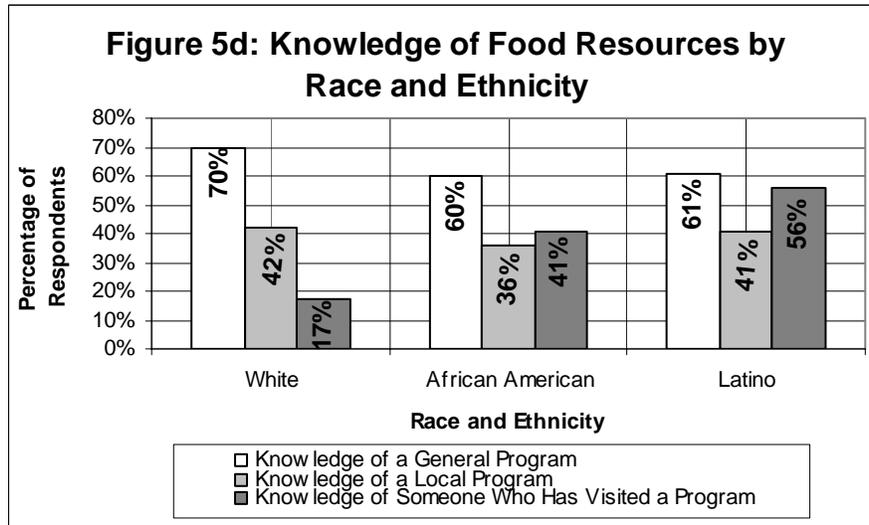


At almost half of the respondents (47%), Latinos showed the greatest amount of difficulty affording food during the past year. This was 15% greater than African-American respondents (32%) and 34% more than White respondents (13%) See Figure 5c below.



In actual figures, 18% of Latinos reported that there were times during the past year when they not only could not afford to eat, but did not purchase food at all. They were followed by African-Americans at 15%. Further behind were Whites at 3%.⁷

Knowledge of Food Resources



In terms of where to go to access food, 60% of respondents in all categories had some type of familiarity with a food program in New York City. However, at 56%, a greater percentage of Latinos expressed knowing someone who had visited a food program within the last year. They were followed by African-Americans at 41%. Interestingly, White respondents indicated the greatest knowledge of local food programs at 42%, followed closely by Latinos at 41%. The White category also showed the greatest familiarity with food programs in general, almost 10% more than African-Americans and Latinos. See Figure 5d above.

⁷ For further details please contact the Food Bank For New York City

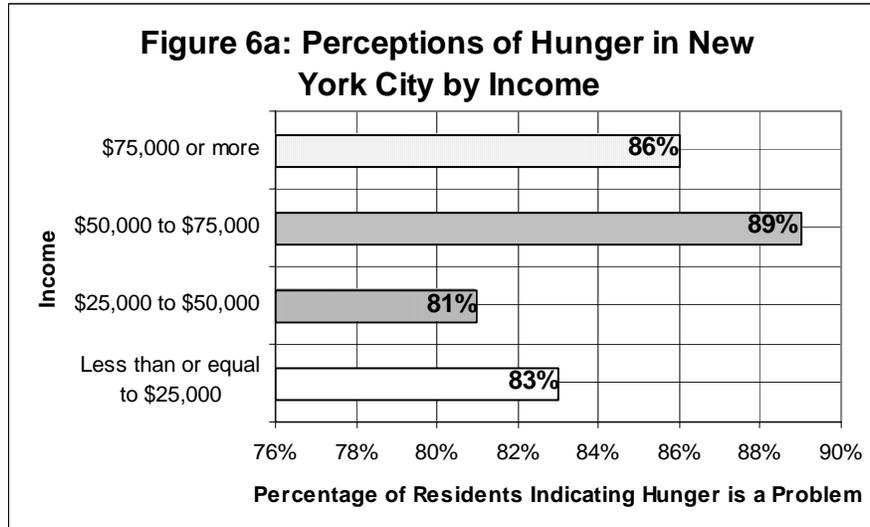
Section 5: Attitudes Towards Hunger by Income

This section breaks down the data collected from respondents by income.

Perception of Hunger as a problem

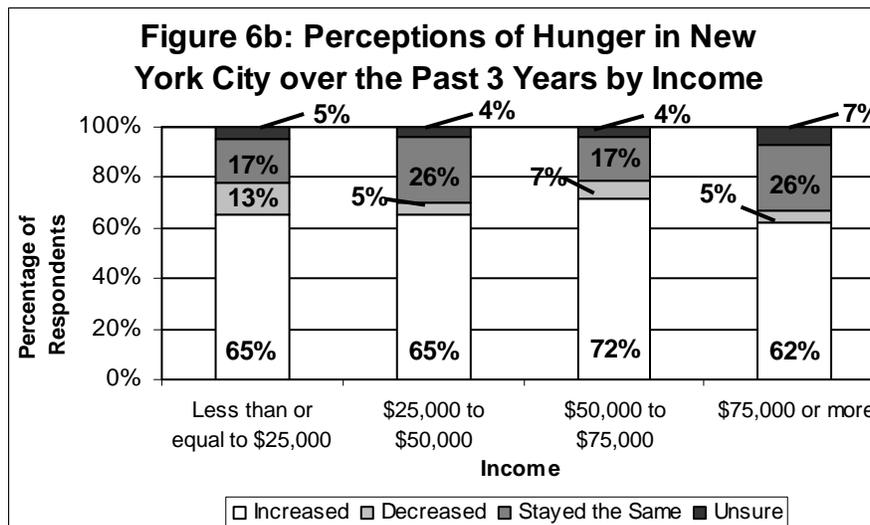
A multitude of studies have examined the relationship between food insufficiency and income.⁸ Most studies have indicated that there is a direct correlation between these two variables; that is, food insufficiency falls with rising income (Rose et al, 1998). Following this assumption, it would seem that in terms of magnitude, the lowest income bracket in New York City would feel that hunger is the most problematic. According to our study, this is not the case. While more than 8 of 10 respondents do see hunger as problematic, the group within the range of \$50,000 to \$75,000 indicated the greatest concern (89%) (See Figure 6a on next page). Recent research shows that this could be linked to middle-income America's growing insecurity to sufficiently meet major emergencies (Consumer Federation of America, 2003).

⁸ According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), food sufficiency/insufficiency and food security/insecurity are based on the same concepts, however as measured, they are slightly different. For example, food sufficiency measures the results from responses 3 and 4 of a survey question developed by USDA and National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) where household heads were asked whether the household had: (1) Enough to eat and the kinds of food wanted; (2) Enough to eat but not always the kinds of food wanted; (3) Sometimes not enough to eat, or (4) Often not enough to eat. In other words, food insufficiency is defined by whether the household sometimes or often did not have enough to eat. On the other hand, food security measures the result from a series of 18 survey questions. See: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/> These questions were developed by the USDA and they provide more detail on the household's situation. Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. Most researchers prefer data from the food security questions because of the detail that they provide (USDA, 2003).



Perception of Affordability of Food

This is a similar case as above. for those questioned whether the number of people who could not afford to feed themselves or their families had increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the past three years. For instance, almost a third of all respondents at all income levels remarked that hunger was on the rise. However, almost three quarters of household income (72%) earners between \$50,000 to \$75,000 indicated that hunger had indeed increased (See Figure 6b below).



Difficulty meeting the fundamental needs of one's family is slowly creeping its way up the economic ladder with weekly announcements of lay offs and downsizing of businesses. About half (49%) to two-thirds (66%) of all respondents with household income \$75,000 or less believe they would not be able to afford to eat within six months of unemployment (See Table 7 below). In terms of immediacy, 30% of households earning \$25,000 or less claim that a loss in income would result in a loss of food affordability within the first month; increasing to more than 50% within the first three months.

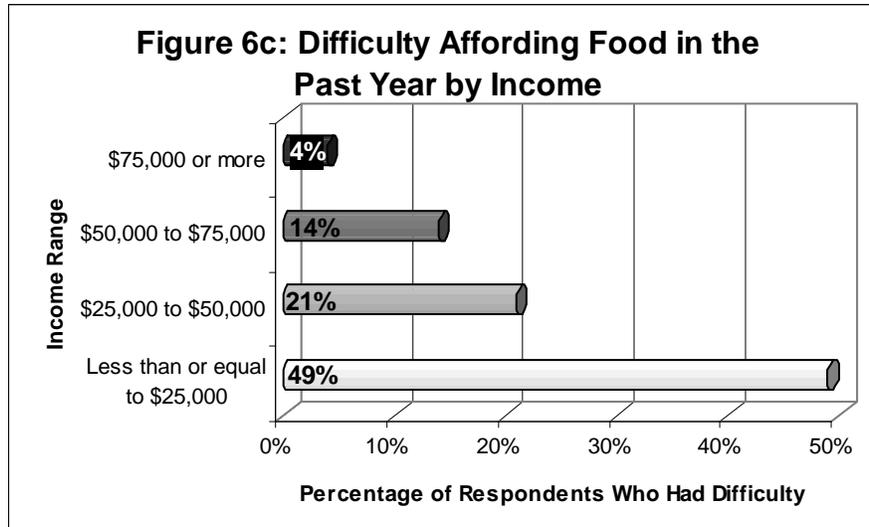
Table 7: Affordability of Food after Loss of Job by Income

Household Income	Immediately	After 1 to 3 months	After 4 to 6 months	Total
Less than or equal to \$25,000	30%	23%	13%	66%
\$25,000 to \$50,000	16%	34%	14%	64%
\$50,000 to \$75,000	10%	23%	16%	49%
\$75,000 or more	7%	12%	13%	32%

Affordability of Food

The above assumptions correspond with the *actual* difficulty families making \$25,000 or less have had over the past year. That is, almost half of all respondents (49%) within this income bracket could not afford to buy food that was needed for them or their families -- the results of which are almost double the difficulty of the other ranges (See Figure 6c on the next page). Employment loss would further exasperate this situation and has, with more than 2 of 10

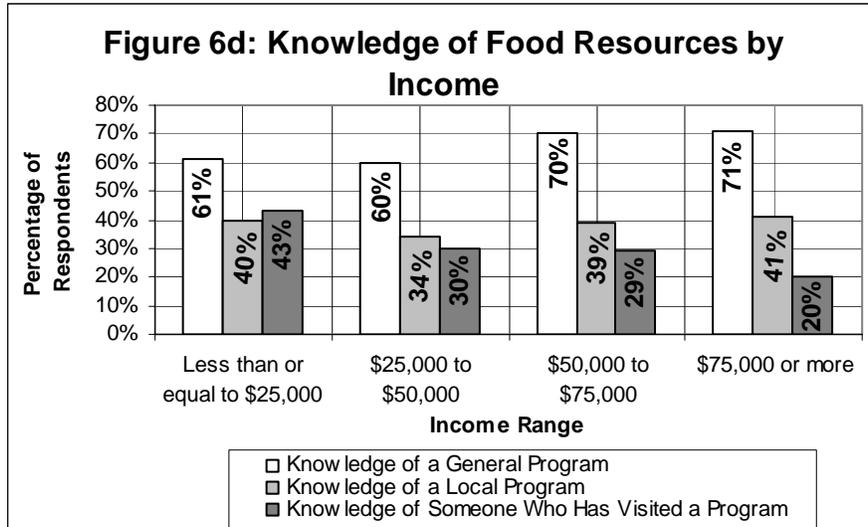
citizens reporting that there were times during the past year in which they did not buy food at all (22%) -- an additional 27% experiences great difficulty.⁹



Knowledge of Food Resources

In terms of knowledge of food resources, more than 60% of all groups expressed a familiarity with some type of general program; however, similar to the results for the individual boroughs, the groups expressed much lower knowledge of local resources or of even knowing someone who had visited a food program within the last year. Those within the \$25,000 or less income range were the most familiar with knowing someone who did not have enough to eat and had used the services of a food pantry, community food program, or soup kitchen during the past year (43%). While, ironically enough, households within the highest income bracket were the most familiar with both, programs that served all of New York City (71%) as well as their neighborhoods (41%) (See Figure 6d on the next page).

⁹ While all citizens in all income levels reported difficulty during the past year, no other group was as significant. Although, we must note that respondents at ALL income levels reported not purchasing food at some point during the year.

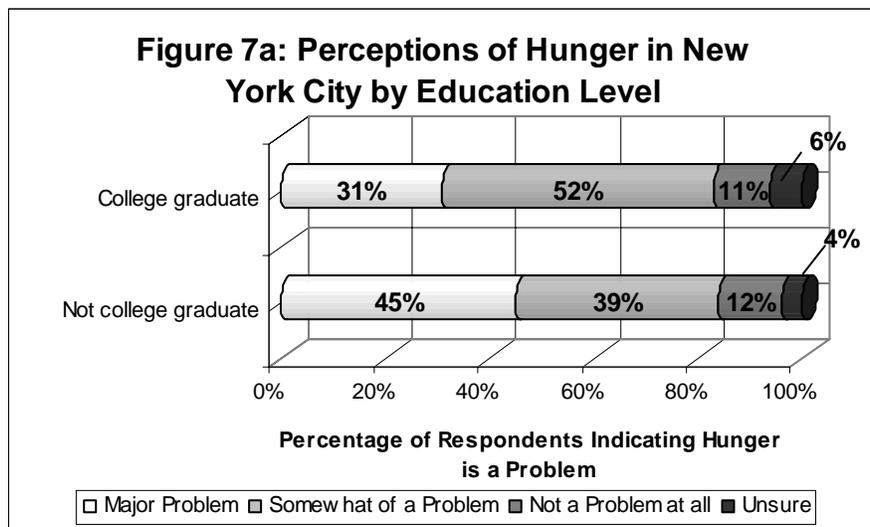


Section 6: Attitudes Towards Hunger by Education Level

In addition to food insufficiency decreasing as income increases, earlier studies have also indicated that people with more years of education experience less food insecurity (USDA, 2003). This section breaks down the data collected from respondents by education level.

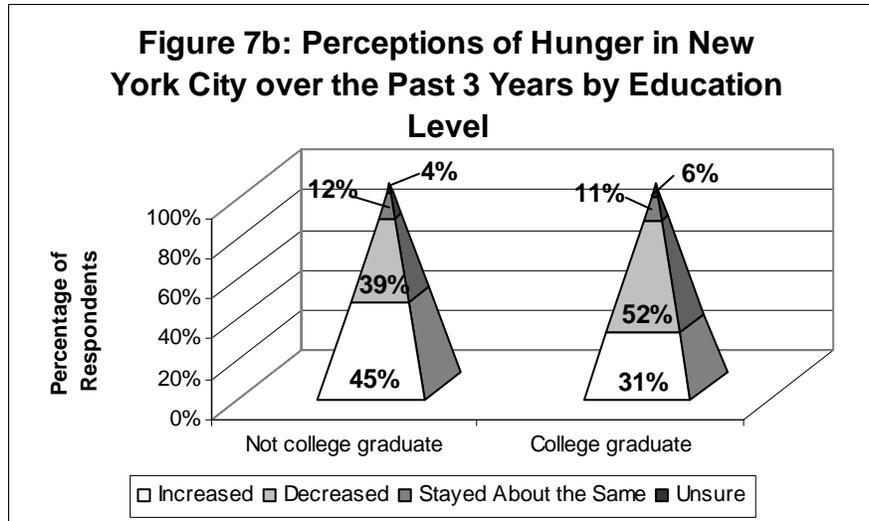
Perception of Hunger as a Problem

Our research did indeed find that people with more years of education experience less food insecurity; however, to place it in the context of what New Yorkers are thinking about hunger overall, data shows very little difference between college graduates (83%) and non college graduates (84%). Both groups, regardless of educational background concur that hunger is either a major or somewhat of a problem or in New York City (See Figure 7a below).



Worthy of noting, there was a slight distinction in terms of the degree of magnitude within categories. 14% more non college graduates (45%) replied that hunger was a MAJOR problem compared to college graduates (31%). On the other hand, 13% more college graduates (52%) than non college graduates

(39%) responded that hunger was **SOMEWHAT** a problem (See Figure 7a above).



Perception of Affordability of Food

Upon review of all responses other than the perception of hunger as a problem, non degree residents indicated experiencing significantly more food insecurity than degree residents. For instance, when questioned whether hunger had increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the past three years, 14% more non college graduates (45% versus 39% of college graduates) expressed that the number of people who could not afford to feed themselves or their families in New York City had **INCREASED** (See Figure 7b above). This is in contrast to 21% of college graduated New Yorkers (52% versus 31% of non college graduates) replying that hunger had actually **DECREASED** in the past three years (See Figure 4b below). Similarly, within the first six months of unemployment, 6 out of 10 non degree residents (60%) would not be able to afford food; this is in contrast to 45% of college degree recipients (See Table 8 on the next page).

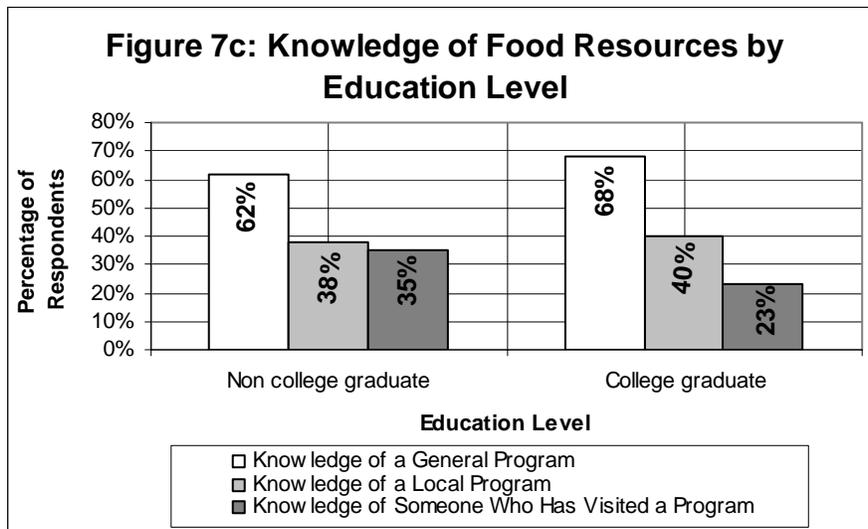
Table 8 Affordability of Food after Loss of Job by Education Level

Education	Immediately	After 1 to 3 months	After 4 to 6 months	Total
Not college graduate	20%	25%	15%	60%
College graduate	11%	20%	14%	45%

Affordability of Food

In terms of actual difficulty affording food over the last year between the two groups, non college graduate residents experienced three times more difficulty meeting the needs of their families (32% versus 10% respectively). Additionally, there were twice as many more non degree respondents that had such hardship during the past year, that there were actual times they did not purchase food at all.

Knowledge of Food Resources



As far as knowledge of resources, when comparing the two groups, both expressed a significantly greater knowledge of general programs than of local programs or a familiarity with knowing someone who had recently visited a program in the last year (See Figure 7c above). Yet, the college degree

respondents indicated a greater knowledge of both general resources in New York City (68%) and local resources (40%) than the non college group.

Conclusion: What Have We Learned?

The primary goal of this study was to determine if the need for emergency food assistance had increased in the recent years, and if so, whether people knew how to locate a nearby program. The questions we sought answers to were:

- (1) Are New York residents aware that hunger is a problem and has this sentiment increased within the recent years?
- (2) Are working New Yorkers finding it difficult to afford to purchase food for their families? And,
- (3) Are the people most in need of food resources knowledgeable of where to find them?

We began with a brief introduction of many of the issues facing New Yorkers today and why qualifying how New Yorkers perceive hunger is imperative to handling our response to the growing demand for emergency food in New York City. This was followed by an explanation of the methodology and a category by category explanation of the survey results broken down by Borough, Age, Gender, Race, Income and Education Level. This section provides a synopsis of what we have learned through this endeavor. We suggest that the reader reviews the findings within the *Results* section of the paper for a more comprehensive explanation.

Are New York City residents aware that hunger is a problem?

Our results show that affording food since 1994 has become increasingly difficult in New York City, and has risen from 19% to 25%, an increase of 6%. This justifies why 82% of all New Yorkers responded that they perceive hunger to be either a problem or a major problem in New York City. Surprisingly, the same trend is evident when the data is disaggregated according to demographic categories. For example, more than 75% of the respondents within each borough, across household income ranges of \$25,000 to over \$75,000, regardless of education level, racial categories, age, and gender concurred that

hunger was indeed a problem. This points us to the deduction that not only are residents experiencing hardship, but are also unsure about their abilities to provide for their families within this economy.

Has this sentiment increased within the recent years?

Our findings reveal that within the last three years, New Yorkers have increasingly become more sensitive to issues of hunger and poverty with over 60% of respondents agreeing that they perceive that hunger has increased over the past three years. While this can be correlated to the residual effects of 9/11 (See Food Bank For New York City (2002) *Changes in Demand for Food Assistance at New York City Emergency Food Programs after September 11, 2001*), this is also a response to the declining economy, drop in median income, increase in health care costs and number of unemployed individuals. Additionally, this trend is consistent amongst all of the demographic categories we looked at except education level where the percentage of respondents who replied that hunger had increased over the past few years ranged from 31-45%. While still significant, this may be indicative of a weak correlation between education and food security. However, further research would need to be conducted since we did not inquire about the actual level of education such as whether the respondent was a high school graduate or, had attained any schooling post-college level.

Are working New Yorkers finding it difficult to afford to purchase food for their families?

Overall, as many as 25% of New Yorkers had difficulty affording to purchase food in the past year with a shocking 11% of households with children reporting that they did not have enough to purchase food at all. Here is where the data begins to deviate within demographic categories. For instance, as many as 37% of folks in the Bronx found it harder to pay their monthly bills AND feed their families, this is 12% greater than in Brooklyn where the percentage, like the general figure for all of New York City, was 25%. Further, almost half of the households (49%)

making \$25,000 or less (more than \$18,000 less than the average household income for New York State), reported that they had difficulty affording food. This is 28% greater than the difficulty encountered by the next hardest struck income range which fell between \$25,000 and \$50,000 (21%). By race and ethnicity, Latinos led the way at 47% encountering difficulty (34% greater than whites (13%), and 15% greater than African-Americans (32%)). The breakdown by education and gender ranged from 22% to 25%, which was similar to the overall difficulty New Yorkers had in general. Clearly, while education and gender remain significant, race and ethnicity, income and borough are by the far the most significant variables to food security, regardless of employment status.

Are the people most in need of food resources knowledgeable of where to find them?

Further, not only are residents finding it more difficult to purchase food after paying their monthly bills and expenses, but our findings also show that those that are most in need do not know where to access emergency food locally. Overall, knowledge of food resources were determined in primarily two ways; how familiar residents were of general programs and how familiar they were of local programs. A third question that respondents were asked is how familiar they were with individuals who had used an emergency food program. Originally, this question was asked to determine whether there was a direct correlation between food insecurity and familiarity with emergency program visitors. It then became clear that responses to this question would be inaccurate since there could be many reasons why respondents might answer yes or no and thus, while it is evident that a correlation exists, without further research we cannot conclude what that relationship is.

However, all across the board, we found that knowledge of food resources were at a terrible low amongst all New Yorkers, regardless of demographic categories. Knowledge of local programs was at the lowest amongst those same groups that responded that they had encountered the greatest amount of difficulty meeting

the food requirements for their household. Further, the results of our study clearly indicates the importance of accessing a local food provider during our current economic environment and also reinforces the need for the Food Bank's 24-hour, toll free phone service, 866-NYC-FOOD.

Where do we go from here?

The research findings of this study not only reinforces what we already know through other social indicators such as level of food stamp participation, employment rates, and poverty levels among others, but also emphasizes the need to take a closer look at the areas and demographic categories most susceptible to an increase in demand for emergency food assistance. The results also highlight the need to analyze more closely the relationship between food insecurity in New York City and certain demographic categories such as education level and familiarity with a visitor of a food pantry or soup kitchen.

Further, the findings in this report will be used by the Food Bank For New York City to guide a more in-depth analysis of the gaps in emergency food services. This follow-up study to the Food Bank's earlier mapping projects will be aimed at analyzing the gaps in services and demand for emergency food.

We would like to conclude by noting that while this study hopes to have answered a few of the questions lingering within the emergency food community, we acknowledge that there are many ways to interpret data and that often our search for answers leads to further questions. Thus, we welcome any comments, suggestions, feedback or requests for more information.

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For more information about the study, please contact:

Veronica Olazabal Hendrickson
Director of Policy and Research
Government Relations, Policy & Research Division
Food Bank For New York City
355 Food Center Drive
Bronx, NY 10474
Phone: 718-991-4300
Fax: 718-893-3442
Email: vhendrickson@foodbanknyc.org