

**HUNGER'S NEW NORMAL:  
REDEFINING EMERGENCY IN POST-RECESSION NEW YORK CITY**

*A Hunger Safety Net Report*



## ABOUT FOOD BANK FOR NEW YORK CITY



Food Bank For New York City recognizes 30 years as the city's major hunger relief organization working to end food poverty in the five boroughs. As the city's hub for integrated food poverty assistance, the Food Bank tackles the hunger issue on three fronts — food distribution, income support, and nutrition education. Through its network of community-based member programs citywide, the Food Bank helps provide 400,000 free meals a day to New York City residents in need. Its income support services help poor New Yorkers apply for SNAP benefits, and its free income tax services helps those who are employed gain access to the Earned Income Tax Credit, putting millions of dollars back into their pockets and helping them achieve greater dignity and independence. The Food Bank's hands-on nutrition education programs in the public schools reach thousands of children, teens and adults who learn to eat healthfully on a budget. Learn how you can help at [foodbanknyc.org](http://foodbanknyc.org).

### **Warehouse and Distribution Center:**

Hunts Point Co-op Market  
355 Food Center Drive  
Bronx, NY 10474-7000  
Phone: 718-991-4300  
Fax: 718-893-3442

### **Community Kitchen:**

252 West 116 Street  
New York, NY 10026  
Phone: 212.566.7855  
Fax: 212.662.1945

### **Administrative Office:**

39 Broadway, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10038  
Phone: 212-566-7855  
Fax: 212-566-1463  
[www.foodbanknyc.org](http://www.foodbanknyc.org)

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**Gail Quets**, Senior Director, Research and Evaluation  
**Astrid Spota**, Manager, Research and Evaluation  
**Triada Stampas**, Senior Director, Government Relations  
**Zemen Kidane**, Research and Evaluation Assistant

### SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING FOR HELPING TO MAKE THIS REPORT POSSIBLE:

All of the emergency food program participants who generously gave of their time to participate in interviews; staff and volunteers at Food Bank For New York City's network of emergency food programs, who helped recruit study participants; and Food Bank interns and volunteers, who helped conduct interviews.

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## **PART ONE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Emergency food is most often used as the last line of defense against hunger; people turn to food pantries or soup kitchens when income, benefits, and the generosity of friends and family have been exhausted. The findings presented in this report provide insight into the experiences of the approximately 1.4 million New York City residents currently relying on emergency food programs – a number that has increased since 2007, when it stood at approximately 1.3 million.

In order to make food ends meet, most emergency food program participants must stitch together a patchwork of resources *in addition to* emergency food – accessing income support and nutrition assistance programs; relying on their own (often limited) income; and reaching out for support from family and friends. Through the Great Recession and the anemic recovery that has followed,<sup>1</sup> one of the most important pieces of this patchwork has been the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps). This report's findings show:

- **Average SNAP benefits for emergency food program participants have increased considerably.** The average monthly household SNAP allotment for emergency food program participants surveyed was \$228, an increase of 55 percent from \$147 in 2007.<sup>2</sup> This largely reflects an increase to benefits enacted by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) in 2009.<sup>3</sup>
- **Despite increased benefit amounts, SNAP fails to last emergency food program participants through the month.** For three-quarters of emergency food program participants surveyed (75 percent), SNAP benefits lasted only three weeks into the month. This is an improvement from 2007, when a greater percentage of emergency food participants (84 percent) reported running out of benefits within the first three weeks of the month.

At a time when SNAP faces deep and punishing cuts, these findings are a bleak omen. Although it is heartening to report that SNAP benefits for emergency food program participants have increased, SNAP benefits are still not sufficient to keep recipients off soup kitchen and food pantry lines. As of this report's publication, the benefit increase enacted under ARRA is scheduled to be clawed back in November 2013, resulting in across-the-board cuts for every single SNAP recipient. An estimated 76 million meals will be lost in New York City alone – more food than Food Bank For New York City distributes in a year. Additional cuts to SNAP are under consideration by Congress in the Farm Bill. When cuts take effect, even fewer recipients will be able to stretch their SNAP dollars to cover an entire month of grocery bills.

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<sup>1</sup> According to economists, the Great Recession started in December 2007 and ended in June 2009.

<sup>2</sup> The \$147 figure was reported in Food Bank For New York City's *NYC Hunger Safety Net 2007: A Food Poverty Focus report*, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> ARRA was passed as an economic stimulus package during the Great Recession, and included a boost to SNAP benefits. While SNAP benefits are ordinarily indexed to annual changes in food costs, ARRA put into place an up-front SNAP benefit increase that was scheduled to expire when food inflation lifted underlying benefit amounts to the ARRA-boosted level.

Increases in the number of emergency food program participants who receive SNAP reflect a trend begun after release of Food Bank For New York City's 2004 *Hunger Safety Net* report, which revealed that a shocking 69 percent of emergency food participants were not enrolled in SNAP. Strategic investments of public and private dollars for targeted SNAP outreach and application assistance resulted in an increase from 31 percent enrollment in 2004 to 46 percent enrollment in 2007. Continuing outreach, along with a general swell in SNAP participation, resulted in a SNAP participation rate among emergency food program participants of 57 percent in 2012. Without these focused SNAP outreach efforts and the benefit boost ARRA provided, it is unlikely that the city's emergency food system could have performed as well as it did – particularly in light of the fact that by 2012, Food Bank For New York City's network had registered a 25 percent decrease in member soup kitchens and food pantries, representing a loss of approximately 250 agencies.<sup>4</sup>

Emergency food program participants are among the city's most vulnerable citizens. They are overwhelmingly poor – 76 percent have household incomes at or below 100% of the federal poverty level; 86 percent have household incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level; and 94 percent have household incomes at or below 200% of the poverty level. Most often, they are people of color – 50 percent identify as African-American/Black, and 30 percent identify as Hispanic/Latino.

Thirty-six percent of emergency food program participants are unemployed, 24 percent are disabled, and 21 percent are retired. Seven percent are veterans. Approximately one-quarter receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and somewhat less than ten percent receive Social Security Disability Income (SSDI).<sup>5</sup> More than one-half report that they, or their families, are covered by Medicaid. A little over 15 percent report receiving public assistance (or “welfare”). Forty percent of those who rent their living space receive rental assistance in the form of a public housing unit or participation in a Section 8 program. Eleven percent of emergency food program participants report that they are homeless.

Although emergency food program participants remain a particularly disadvantaged group, changes in the economy since the Great Recession have increased program participation by groups who are not conventionally perceived as disadvantaged. Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of participants with a high school diploma or GED increased by 31 percent (from 26 percent to 34 percent), and percent with some higher education or a college degree increased by 25 percent (from 24 percent to 30 percent). In addition, more New Yorkers who identify as Caucasian/White have turned to emergency food. While still a small fraction of emergency food participants overall, the percentage of participants on food pantry and soup kitchen lines who identified as Caucasian/White increased by 55 percent (from 9 percent to 14 percent).

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<sup>4</sup> *Serving Under Stress Post-Recession: The State of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens Today*. Food Bank For New York City, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance programs are the largest of several Federal programs that provide assistance to people with disabilities. Financial need determines eligibility for SSI. To be eligible for SSDI benefits, potential recipients need to have worked for a certain period of time and paid Social Security taxes.

As regards performance, New York City's soup kitchens and food pantries have succeeded in serving as a vital source of needed nutrition. In 2012, almost 60 percent of emergency food program participants reported that most of the produce they ate came from the emergency food program at which they were surveyed, and approximately 40 percent reported that most of the protein they ate came from this program. A majority of EFP participants reported satisfaction with the food they received at the programs they visited.

Many emergency food program participants are accessing nutrition assistance programs besides SNAP, though in many cases, participation is relatively low. Sixty percent of emergency food program participants with school-aged children reported that their children participated in a school breakfast program; seventy percent reported that their children participated in free school lunch. One-third of emergency food program participants with school-aged children participated in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Almost one-half of emergency food program participants with children five years of age or younger (48 percent) reported that their household participated in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Increased participation by emergency food program participants in these programs could help cushion the impact of cuts to SNAP on the emergency food system.

Expiration of the SNAP provision in ARRA, and potential Farm Bill cuts, will take place in a still-weak economy. A slow recovery from the Great Recession has so far failed to restore the jobs that were lost during the downturn.<sup>6</sup> As of December 2012, the unemployment rate in New York City was 8.8 percent, almost double that of 4.8 percent unemployment at the start of the recession in December 2007.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the length of time that unemployed workers remain unemployed hit very high levels during the Great Recession, and the recovery has not succeeded in bringing it back down.<sup>8</sup>

If high levels, and longer periods, of unemployment have played a role in pushing up the number of New York City residents utilizing emergency food services, recent poverty figures underscore the continuing need for these services. The poverty rate, which had been declining before the Great Recession, rose as economic conditions worsened and still has not returned to previous levels. The rate increased to 21.2 percent in 2012, from 20.9 percent the year before, and 20.1 percent the year before that. Currently, approximately 1.7 million New Yorkers are living in poverty.<sup>9</sup>

As unemployment and poverty continue to pose significant challenges, and the number of New Yorkers visiting emergency food programs has increased, New Yorkers' reliance on these services has grown. Emergency food is no longer accessed only for short periods of time due to extenuating circumstances, but is increasingly relied upon as a long-term means of keeping hunger at bay.

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<sup>6</sup> "Chart Book: The Legacy of the Great Recession," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Special Series: Economic Recovery Watch, updated May 3, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Unemployment data as calculated by the New York State Department of Labor in accordance with procedures prescribed by the U.S. Department of Labor.

<sup>8</sup> "Why is Unemployment Duration So Long?" by Rob Valletta and Katherine Kuang. FRBSF Economic Letter, January 30, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau.

More than half of emergency food program participants (60 percent) reported they were long-term visitors; *i.e.*, had been coming for a year or more. Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of emergency food program participants visiting the program at which they were surveyed for less than one year decreased (from 45 percent to 41 percent), and the percentage visiting for one year or more rose (from 56 percent to 60 percent).

On average, food pantry and soup kitchen participants make multiple visits to emergency food programs in a given month. Average number of visits made by soup kitchen participants over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed was 10.6. Average number of visits made by food pantry participants over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed was 3.3. One-half of emergency food program participants reported also making visits to emergency food programs other than the one at which they were surveyed. When total visits are considered (*i.e.*, visits made to both the program at which participants were surveyed and visits made to other programs), average number of total visits made over the last thirty days by soup kitchen and food pantry participants rose to 13.3 and 3.4, respectively. The number of visits participants make to emergency food programs underscores the fact that emergency food is used as a supplement to food obtained by other means.

Almost one-quarter of emergency food program participants reported that other members of their household also visited emergency food programs. Average household size reported by emergency food program participants was 2.0 for those surveyed at soup kitchens, and 3.0 for those surveyed at food pantries. Approximately one-third of emergency food program households contained children, and approximately one-third of emergency food program households contained someone 65 years of age or older.

The importance of emergency food programs to the families they serve cannot be overstated. More than one-half (55 percent) of emergency food program participants noted that without the program at which they were surveyed, they would not have access to healthy, nutritious food. Forty two percent said that they would go hungry without access to this program. When the stakes are this high, it is of concern that even 20 percent of participants, as reported, had visited the program at which they were surveyed only to find that no food was available.

The policy implications of this research are clear. SNAP works when benefit amounts are adequate; cutting SNAP benefits ignores existing need and will only deepen food poverty. The strategies for SNAP outreach which have proven successful among emergency food program participants should be replicated to better connect these same participants to available federal child nutrition programs like the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). Last, in the face of looming cuts to SNAP benefits, protecting – and bolstering – the emergency food supply must remain every policymaker’s imperative.

## **PART TWO: INTRODUCTION**

*Serving under Stress Post-Recession: The State of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens Today* examined the operations of emergency food programs in New York City, nearly five years after the beginning of the Great Recession (December 2007) and approximately three years after the start (June 2009) of a disappointing economic recovery. *Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City* is a companion to this report – it looks at emergency food program use from the point of view of participants. Who are they? How often do they visit emergency food programs, and what kind of experience do they have there? What is the extent of their participation in other nutrition assistance programs, and in income support programs?

Data for *Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City* was collected via a paper survey administered to 1,229 emergency food program participants at 141 emergency food program sites across the five boroughs between November 9, 2011 and July 24, 2012. Data was collected on a variety of topics, including patterns of participation, satisfaction with food service, demographics, household composition, income and employment, participation in income support programs, participation in nutrition assistance programs (like SNAP), housing, and health.

The information presented in this report represents responses from emergency food program participants at both soup kitchens and food pantries. 265 program participants (22 percent) were surveyed at soup kitchens, and 964 (78 percent) were surveyed at food pantries. Where possible, comparisons to 2007 findings (from Food Bank For New York City's *NYC Hunger Safety Net 2007: A Food Poverty Focus*) are made.

Findings provide insight into the experiences of the approximately 1.4 million New York City residents currently relying on emergency food programs. Note that the number of New York City residents relying on emergency food programs has increased since 2007, when it stood at approximately 1.3 million. The new 1.4 million figure comprises 815,000 adults ages 18 to 64 (up 12 percent from 730,000 in 2007), 339,000 children (down 15 percent from 397,000 in 2007), and 204,000 seniors (up 32 percent from 155,000 in 2007).

An increase in the total number of New York City residents relying on emergency food programs is not surprising, given the economic context in which it has taken place. As noted above, New York City and the nation were rocked by the Great Recession in December 2007. Although the beginnings of a recovery were seen as early as June 2009, unemployment has remained a persistent problem, given the extreme job loss created by the recession.<sup>10</sup> As of December 2012, the unemployment rate in New York City was 8.8 percent, almost double that of 4.7 percent unemployment at the start of the recession in

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<sup>10</sup> "Chart Book: The Legacy of the Great Recession," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Special Series: Economic Recovery Watch, updated May 3, 2013.

December 2007.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the length of time that unemployed workers remain unemployed hit very high levels during the Great Recession, and the recovery has not succeeded in pushing these levels back down.<sup>12</sup>

Although unemployment benefits can keep some unemployed workers out of poverty and make reliance on programs like emergency food less necessary, many low-wage workers aren't eligible for benefits, or their benefits run out before they find work.<sup>13</sup> In the current economy, with job seekers outnumbering available jobs, competition for any work, even low-wage work, is fierce, putting less-skilled job seekers at a decided disadvantage. Moreover, even after unemployment rates fall, the consequences of unemployment remain for individuals affected, as resources and support that might otherwise be used to supplement earnings have been drained.<sup>14</sup>

More than one-third (36 percent) of emergency food program participants surveyed for this report reported that they were unemployed. Only six percent of those who were unemployed reported receiving unemployment insurance benefits. Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of emergency food program respondents who were unemployed rose by eight percentage points, or 29 percent. In 2012, nineteen percent of emergency food program participants reported that they were working, and of those working, approximately 60 percent (62 percent) were working less than 35 hours per week.

Approximately one-quarter (27 percent) of emergency food program participants who reported that they were unemployed reported that they had been unemployed for less than one year. Almost 20 percent (19 percent) reported that they had been unemployed for one to two years. More than one-half (53 percent) reported unemployment of more than three years' duration. Between 2007 and 2012, the percentages of unemployed emergency food program participants reporting shorter periods of unemployment dropped, and the percentages of unemployed participants reporting longer periods rose.

If high levels, and longer periods, of unemployment play a role in pushing up the number of New York City residents utilizing emergency food services, recent poverty figures underscore the continuing need for these services. The poverty rate, which had been declining before the Great Recession, rose as economic conditions worsened and still has not returned to previous levels. In 2012, 21 percent (1.7 million) of New York City residents were living below the federal poverty level, registering no change from 21 percent in 2011.<sup>15</sup> Average monthly household income reported by emergency food program participants surveyed for this report (before taxes, and including wages, unemployment insurance,

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<sup>11</sup> Unemployment data as calculated by the New York State Department of Labor in accordance with procedures prescribed by the U.S. Department of Labor.

<sup>12</sup> "Why is Unemployment Duration So Long?" by Rob Valletta and Katherine Kuang. FRBSF Economic Letter, January 30, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> "Poverty in the United States" by Austin Nichols. Urban Institute, Unemployment and Recovery Project, September 12, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> 2012 American Community Survey. (2013). U.S. Census Bureau.

public assistance, Social Security and/or disability benefits) was \$1,045. Approximately three-quarters (76 percent) of emergency food program participants reported a household income that placed them at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level.

As unemployment and poverty continue to pose significant challenges, and the number of New Yorkers visiting emergency food programs has increased, New Yorkers' reliance on these services has also grown. Emergency food is no longer accessed only for short periods of time due to extenuating circumstances, but is increasingly relied upon as a long-term means of keeping hunger at bay.

Although approximately 40 percent of emergency food program participants surveyed reported that they had been visiting the program at which they were surveyed for less than one year, a larger percentage (60 percent) were long-term visitors; *i.e.*, had been coming for a year or more. More than one-quarter (27 percent) of long-term visitors had been visiting for one to two years; and 20 percent had been visiting for three to five years. The remainder (13 percent) had been visiting the emergency food program at which they were surveyed for six or more years. Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of emergency food program participants visiting the program at which they were surveyed for less than one year decreased (from 45 percent to 41 percent), and the percentage visiting for one year or more rose (from 56 percent to 60 percent).

Still, the number of visits participants make to emergency food programs implies that emergency food is used as a supplement to food obtained by other means; *i.e.*, that most program participants do not rely on soup kitchens and food pantries alone for their meals. More than one-half of soup kitchen participants (52 percent) surveyed reported making only one to five visits over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed. Two-thirds (66 percent) reported making ten or fewer visits. Almost two-thirds of food pantry participants (63 percent) reported making only one or two visits over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (also known as SNAP, or Food Stamps) benefits provide emergency food program participants with another means of keeping themselves and their families fed. As the recession brought hard times from which many still suffer, the number of New Yorkers participating in SNAP increased dramatically. As of April 2012, 1.8 million New Yorkers were receiving SNAP benefits, up 64 percent from the start of the recession in December 2007.<sup>16</sup>

Almost 60 percent (57 percent) of emergency food program participants surveyed reported that their household received SNAP benefits. Between 2007 and 2012, receipt of SNAP benefits rose 14 percentage points among program participants surveyed at soup kitchens and 11 percentage points among program participants surveyed at food pantries. Overall, receipt of SNAP benefits rose 11 percentage points. The average monthly SNAP benefit received by emergency food program participants' households was \$228. Among survey respondents who reported that their household was

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<sup>16</sup> Analysis of SNAP data as reported by the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA). This figure has continued to rise, hitting 1.9 million in April 2013.

receiving SNAP benefits, less than one-quarter (24 percent) reported that their benefits lasted four weeks or more. Almost one-half (47 percent) reported that their benefits lasted two weeks or less.

Emergency food program participants may simultaneously utilize SNAP benefits and emergency food services, or they may wait until their SNAP benefits and other resources are exhausted before turning to soup kitchens or food pantries. One thing is clear: without the meals SNAP benefits can buy, New York City's emergency food network would be under pressure to provide more additional meals than it could conceivably supply. The more food that can be purchased with SNAP dollars, the less reliant on emergency food a family has to be. That is why Food Bank regards SNAP outreach as an extraordinarily important part of its mission. In *Serving under Stress Post-Recession: The State of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens Today*, we reported that approximately one-half of soup kitchens (51 percent) had information about SNAP available on-site, and that 44 percent had made referrals to SNAP offices (or to other organizations processing SNAP applications). More than one-half of food pantries (56 percent) had information about SNAP available on-site, and one-half (50 percent) made referrals to SNAP offices or other organizations processing SNAP applications.

Emergency food program participants are also eligible for food assistance programs besides SNAP. Sixty percent of emergency food program participants with school-aged children surveyed reported that their children participated in a school breakfast program; seventy percent of emergency food program participants with school-aged children reported that their children participated in a free lunch program. Almost one-half of emergency food program participants with children five years of age or younger (48 percent) reported that their household participated in WIC. The reason most commonly cited for lack of participation in WIC (reported by 29 percent of non-participating survey respondents with children five years of age or younger) was simply that they were not aware of the program. Only one-third (33 percent) of emergency food program participants with school-aged children reported participation in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Again, the reason most commonly cited for lack of participation in the Summer Food Service Program (reported by 32 percent of non-participating survey respondents) was lack of knowledge about the program.

Keeping emergency food program participants informed not just about SNAP, but about all other nutrition assistance programs available to them (especially WIC and the Summer Food Service Program), and increasing eligible families' participation in these programs, would presumably reduce their reliance on emergency food, relieving pressure on a system struggling to serve everyone in need. Outreach on behalf of these programs is therefore as important as outreach on behalf of SNAP.

Of course, not all low-income families and individuals are eligible for SNAP (citizenship and residency requirements apply) and they may be ineligible, or lack access to, other nutrition assistance programs as well. Also, as seen above, to put enough food on the table, many families surveyed combined participation in SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs with reliance on soup kitchens and food pantries. While outreach to increase participation in SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs is important, it is also important that emergency food programs continue to serve those who enter their doors with dignity and quality service.

Generally, emergency food program participants reported positive experiences with the soup kitchens and food pantries they frequented. Almost three-quarters of emergency food program participants overall (70 percent) reported that they were “very much” satisfied with service at the emergency food program at which they were surveyed. Program participants’ responses reflected positively on recent efforts to increase the amount of fresh produce distributed – almost 60 percent (57 percent) reported that most of the fresh fruits and vegetables they ate came from the program at which they were surveyed. (*Serving under Stress Post-Recession: The State of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens Today* reported that 88 percent of soup kitchens used fresh vegetables in their meals preparation, and 89 percent used fresh fruits. Eighty-eight percent of food pantries distributed fresh vegetables; and 85 percent, fresh fruits.) Forty-four percent of emergency food program participants overall reported that most of the protein they ate came from the program at which they were surveyed; and 55 percent said that without the program at which they were surveyed, they would not have access to healthy, nutritious food.

The most frequently given explanation for dissatisfaction with a food program that was visited (reported by only eight percent of respondents) was simply that there was not enough food served or distributed. Twenty percent of emergency food program respondents reported that they had, at least once, visited the program at which they were surveyed only to find that there was no food available. The latter fact aligns with the finding, reported in *Serving under Stress Post-Recession: The State of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens Today*, that 63 percent of soup kitchens and food pantries reported running out of food (or particular types of food required to produce adequate pantry bags or nutritious, balanced meals) at some point during the previous twelve months.

When emergency food program participants report that they are unable to receive service at a program they frequent, or an emergency food program reports that it has run out of food, the importance of relieving pressure on an emergency food system which provides so many with access to healthy, nutritious meals is highlighted. As noted above, one extremely important means of doing this is to ensure that all emergency food program participants who are eligible to participate in SNAP and nutrition assistance programs like WIC, school meals, and the Summer Food Service Program, do so. Participation in these programs can reduce, or eliminate, some families’ reliance on emergency food, and preserve quality service for those with nowhere else to turn.

Unfortunately, as this report goes to press, the SNAP program finds itself under attack. In November 2013, dramatic cuts to SNAP will take effect, and an estimated 76 million meals will be lost to New York City residents. Worse yet, current versions of the Farm Bill, which is negotiated by Congress every five years and determines funding not only for SNAP, but for emergency food distributed to soup kitchens and food pantries (through the federal Emergency Food Assistance Program, or TEFAP) also propose heavy cuts to SNAP, which could result in the loss of approximately 70 million to 130 million meals or more.

The impact of cuts like these like these could cripple the emergency food system, as many more New Yorkers turn to it in an attempt to alleviate hunger, and those that use it in combination with SNAP

benefits begin to rely on it more heavily. The satisfactory experience which most emergency food program participants report could easily become a thing of the past, as lines get longer, pantry bags get smaller, and emergency food program participants confront shortages at soup kitchens. Anti-hunger advocates, including Food Bank For New York City, are advocating hard against SNAP cuts. Emergency food program participants can themselves play a role in protecting SNAP benefits, thereby helping to protect the stability of the emergency food system, by voting for anti-hunger advocates and SNAP supporters – as noted in the report that follows, 77 percent of emergency food program participants are U.S. citizens, 85 percent of those reporting citizenship are registered to vote, and 92 percent of those registered to vote voted in the past.

### **PART THREE: KEY FINDINGS**

- The number of unique individuals accessing emergency food programs registered a small increase from 2007 – rising from 1,281,061 in 2007 to 1,357,692 in 2012, even as approximately 250 food pantries and soup kitchens closed their doors.
- Therefore, as the emergency food program network has contracted, remaining food pantries and soup kitchens have managed to serve even more individuals than they did before.
- Many emergency food program participants are also SNAP recipients (*i.e.*, receive Food Stamps). Fifty seven percent of EFP participants reported that their household participated in SNAP.
- Between 2007 and 2012, receipt of SNAP benefits rose 14 percentage points (or 32 percent) among EFP participants surveyed at soup kitchens, and 11 percentage points (or 24 percent) among EFP participants surveyed at food pantries.
- Most EFP participants who reported receiving SNAP benefits had a household benefit level of less than \$200 per month.
- Less than one-quarter (24 percent) of EFP participants receiving SNAP benefits reported that their benefits lasted four weeks or more. Almost one-half (47 percent) reported that their benefits lasted two weeks or less.
- Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of EFP participants reporting that their benefits lasted four weeks or more increased eight percentage points (or 50 percent). The percentage of EFP participants reporting that their benefits lasted two weeks or less decreased 13 percentage points (or 22 percent).
- Emergency food is no longer accessed only for short periods of time due to extenuating circumstances, but is also relied upon as a long-term means of dealing with persistent hunger.
- A majority of EFP participants reported satisfaction with the food they received at the programs they visited, which serve as vital sources of nutrition.
- Almost 60 percent of EFP participants reported that most of the produce they ate came from the emergency food program at which they were surveyed, and approximately 40 percent reported that most of the protein they ate came from this program.
- Between 2007 and 2012, the number of EFP participants who had higher education rose six percentage points (or 25 percent).
- A majority of EFP participants are persons of color, but between 2007 and 2012, the percent Caucasian/White rose five percentage points (or 55 percent).

## **PART FOUR: REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Length of EFP Use**

- More EFP participants reported that they had visited the program at which they were surveyed for one year or more than reported that they had visited for less than one year.
- Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of EFP participants who reported visiting the program at which they were surveyed for one year or more rose.

### **Frequency of EFP Use**

- Two-thirds of EFP participants surveyed at soup kitchens reported making ten or fewer visits over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed.
- Almost two-thirds of EFP participants surveyed at food pantries reported making one or two visits over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed.
- Average number of visits made by soup kitchen participants over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed was 10.6.
- Average number of visits made by food pantry participants over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed was 3.3.

### **Visiting Other Programs**

- One-half of EFP participants reported making visits to EFP's other than the one at which they were surveyed.

### **Total Frequency of EFP Use**

- Slightly less than two-thirds (64 percent) of participants who visited soup kitchens reported making ten or fewer total visits over the last thirty days.
- One-half of EFP participants who visited food pantries reported making one or two total visits over the last thirty days.
- Average number of total visits made over the last thirty days by soup kitchen participants was 13.3.
- Average number of total visits made over the last thirty days by food pantry participants was 3.4.

### **Lack of Food**

- Twenty percent of EFP participants reported that they had, at least once, visited the program at which they were surveyed only to find that they could not receive food.

### **EFP Participation by Other Household Members**

- Almost one-quarter of EFP participants surveyed reported that other members of their household also visited EFP's.

### **Knowledge of EFP's**

- Word of mouth was the most frequently used method by which EFP participants reported that they had first learned about the programs at which they were surveyed.

### **Commuting to EFP's**

- Almost 60 percent of EFP participants reported that it took no longer than 15 minutes for them to get from their home to the program at which they were surveyed.
- Almost three-quarters of EFP participants reported that they walked to the program at which they were surveyed.

### **EFP Program Satisfaction and Impact**

- The vast majority of EFP participants reported that they were “very much” or “somewhat” satisfied with the program at which they were surveyed.
- One-half (50 percent) of EFP participants reported that most of the food they ate came from the food program at which they were surveyed.
- More than 40 percent of EFP participants reported that they would go hungry without the emergency food they received from the program at which they were surveyed.
- Fifty-five percent of EFP participants reported that they would not have access to healthy, nutritious food without the emergency food they received from the program at which they were surveyed.

### **Racial/Ethnic Identity**

- One-half of EFP participants surveyed identified as African-American.
- Thirty percent of EFP participants surveyed identified as Hispanic/Latino.

### **Birthplace**

- More than one-half of EFP participants (55 percent) reported being born in the United States.
- Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of EFP participants reporting that they were born in the United States declined.

### **Citizenship**

- Approximately three-quarters of EFP participants reported that they were U.S. citizens.
- Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of EFP participants reporting U.S. citizenship declined.

### **English Language Ability**

- Almost three-quarters of EFP participants reported that their ability to speak English was “excellent” or “good.”

### **Education**

- More than one-third of emergency food program participants surveyed had less than a twelfth grade education. Another one-third (approximately) had graduated from high school or obtained a high school equivalency degree. A final one-third (approximately) had been to college or held a two-year, four-year, or advanced degree.
- Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of EFP participants surveyed who reported less than a twelfth grade education declined, and percentages of EFP participants who reported high school degrees, GED’s, or higher education rose.

### **Gender**

- EFP participants surveyed at soup kitchens were much more likely to be male; and EFP participants surveyed at food pantries, much more likely to be female.
- Between 2007 and 2012, soup kitchen participants showed an increase in percent female (four percentage points) and a decrease in percent male (five percentage points).

### **Age**

- Almost three-quarters of EFP participants surveyed reported that they were between the ages of 30 and 64.
- Almost one-quarter (24 percent) of EFP participants surveyed reported that they were age 65 or over.

- Emergency food program participants surveyed at food pantries were more than twice as likely to be age 65 or over than emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens.

### **EFP Households**

- Average household size reported by EFP participants was 2.0 for those surveyed at soup kitchens, and 3.0 for those surveyed at food pantries.
- EFP participants surveyed at soup kitchens were more likely to report living alone than EFP participants surveyed at food pantries.
- EFP participants surveyed at soup kitchens were less likely than EFP participants surveyed at food pantries to report living with their own children, living with a spouse or partner, living with grandchildren, or living with other relatives.
- Approximately one-third of EFP households contain children.
- Approximately one-third of EFP households contain someone 65 years of age or older.

### **Income**

- Mean income reported by EFP participants surveyed at soup kitchens was lower than that reported by EFP participants surveyed at food pantries (\$950 vs. \$1075).
- Between 2007 and 2012, mean income rose for EFP participants surveyed at soup kitchens (by 19 percent) and for EFP participants surveyed at food pantries (by 8 percent).

### **Poverty**

- Approximately three-quarters of EFP participants reported a household income that placed them at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Almost 95 percent of EFP participants reported a household income that placed them at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

### **Employment**

- Over one-third of EFP participants reported that they were unemployed.
- Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of EFP participants reporting unemployment rose.
- Between 2007 and 2012, percentages of unemployed EFP participants reporting short periods of unemployment dropped, and percentages of unemployed EFP participants reporting long periods of unemployment rose.

- EFP participants surveyed at soup kitchens were more than twice as likely as those surveyed at food pantries to report being unemployed for more than five years.

### **Income Support Programs**

- Approximately one-quarter of EFP participants overall reported receiving Social Security benefits.
- Among EFP participants age 65 and above, almost two-thirds reported receiving Social Security benefits.
- EFP participants surveyed at food pantries were more than twice as likely as participants surveyed at soup kitchens to report receipt of Social Security benefits.
- Approximately one-quarter of EFP participants reported receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Less than ten percent of EFP participants reported receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).
- Sixteen percent of EFP participants reported receiving public assistance (or “welfare.”) EFP participants surveyed at soup kitchens were more likely than EFP participants surveyed at food pantries to report receipt of public assistance.

### **SNAP**

- Almost sixty percent of EFP participants reported receiving SNAP benefits.
- Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of EFP participants receiving SNAP benefits rose in every borough.
- The average SNAP benefit for EFP participants surveyed at soup kitchens was \$221, and the average SNAP benefit for EFP participants surveyed at food pantries was \$231.
- Only approximately one-quarter of EFP participants reported that their SNAP benefits lasted four weeks or more.

### **Other Nutrition Assistance Programs**

- Almost one-half of EFP participants in households with children five years of age or younger reported that their household participated in WIC.
- Sixty percent of EFP participants in households with school-aged children reported that their children participated in a school breakfast program.

- Approximately three-quarters of EFP participants in households with school-aged children reported that their children participated in a free or reduced-price lunch program.
- Approximately one-third of EFP participants in households with school-aged children reported that their children participated in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

### **Health Insurance**

- Approximately 85 percent of EFP participants reported that they, or their family, had health insurance coverage.
- Approximately one-quarter of EFP participants reported that they, or their families, were covered by Medicare.
- More than one-half of EFP participants reported that they, or their families, were covered by Medicaid.
- Less than ten percent of EFP participants carried private insurance for themselves or their families.

### **Health**

- Almost one-third of EFP participants reported suffering from hypertension.
- Approximately 20 percent of EFP participants reported suffering from diabetes.
- Approximately 20 percent of EFP participants reported suffering from asthma.

### **Housing**

- Approximately three-quarters of EFP participants reported that they rented their apartment.
- Almost 60 percent of EFP participants who rented reported that they lived in private housing, *i.e.*, did not receive rental assistance in the form of a public housing unit or participation in a Section 8 program.
- Only 5 percent of EFP participants reported that they owned their own home.
- Approximately ten percent of EFP participants reported that they were homeless.
- EFP participants surveyed at soup kitchens were approximately four times as likely as those surveyed at food pantries to be homeless.

## **Voting**

- Among EFP participants that reported citizenship, 85 percent said that they were registered to vote.
- Among registered voters, over 90 percent said that they had voted in the past.

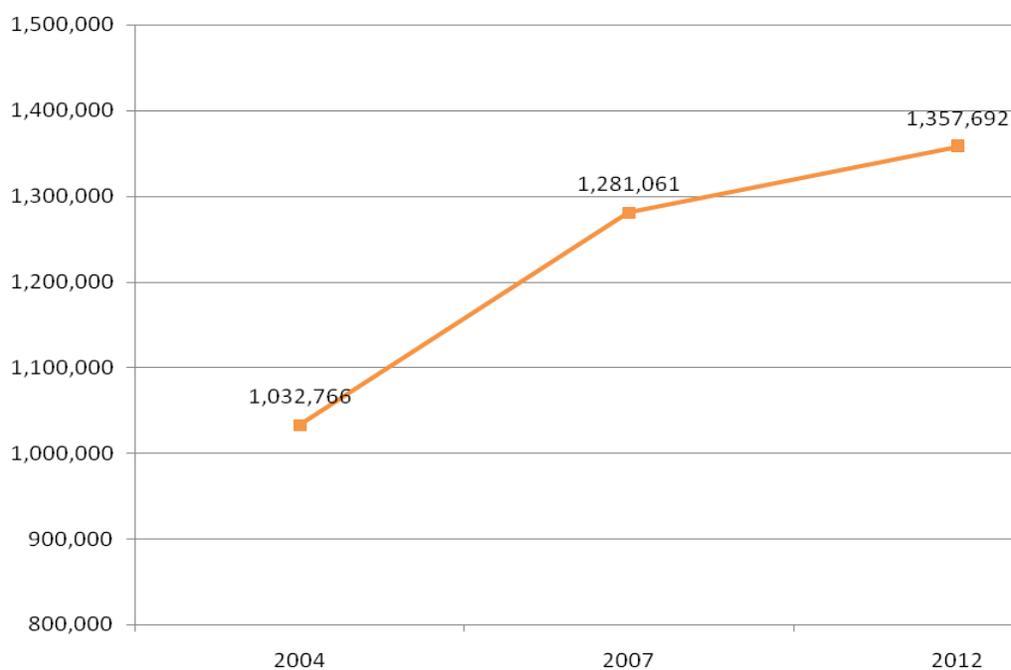
## PART FIVE: FINDINGS

### NUMBER OF UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS SERVED

Approximately 1.4 million New York City residents currently rely on emergency food programs. The number of New York City residents relying on emergency food programs has increased since 2007, when it stood at approximately 1.3 million. (See Figure 1.) The new 1.4 million figure comprises 339,000 children (down 15 percent from 397,000 in 2007), 815,000 adults ages 18 to 64 (up 12 percent from 730,000 in 2007), and 204,000 elderly (up 32 percent from 154,000 in 2007). (See Table 1.)

**Figure 1**

**People Served by New York City EFPs, 2004 to 2012**



**Table 1**

**Number of People Served by New York City EFPs by Age, 2012<sup>17</sup>**

Age Served	2007	2012
Children	397,000	339,000
Adults	730,000	815,000
Elderly	154,000	204,000

<sup>17</sup> Estimates are based on total percentages of children, adults, and elderly across all emergency food program households, as reported by survey respondents. (See page 45.)

The 1.4 million New Yorkers that rely on emergency food programs represent 16 percent of the city's population (which was 8,336,697 in 2012, according to the U.S. Census Bureau).

## PATTERNS OF UTILIZATION

### Length of Use

The data indicate that emergency food is no longer accessed only for short periods of time due to extenuating circumstances, but also relied upon as a regular means of keeping hunger at bay. Although 41 percent of emergency food program participants surveyed reported that they had been visiting the program at which they were surveyed for less than one year, a larger percentage (60 percent) were longer-term visitors; *i.e.*, had been coming for a year or more. As shown in Table 2, more than one-quarter (27 percent) had been visiting for one to two years; and 20 percent had been visiting for three to five years. The remainder (13 percent) had been visiting the emergency food program at which they were surveyed for six or more years.

Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of emergency food program participants visiting the program at which they were surveyed for less than one year decreased (from 45 percent to 41 percent), and the percentage visiting for one year or more rose (from 56 percent to 60 percent). (See Table 2.)

**Table 2**

**Length of Time Visiting Program among EFP Participants, 2007 and 2012**

Time Visiting Program	2007 <sup>18</sup>	2012 <sup>19</sup>
First Time	6%	9%
Less than one month	3%	6%
1 to 3 months	13%	13%
4 to 6 months	7%	7%
More than 6 months/less than one year	16%	6%
1 to 2 years	17%	27%
3 to 5 years	23%	20%
6 to 10 years	9%	8%
More than 10 years	7%	5%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>1,081</i>	<i>1,224</i>

<sup>18</sup> Total is more than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>19</sup> Total is more than 100 percent because of rounding error.

As shown in Table 3, 41 percent of program participants surveyed at soup kitchens reported visiting the program at which they were surveyed for less than one year; a similar percentage of program participants surveyed at food pantries (40 percent) reported visiting for less than one year. Higher percentages of participants surveyed, at both soup kitchens (59 percent) and food pantries (59 percent), reported visiting the programs at which they were surveyed for more than a year.

**Table 3**

**Length of Time Visiting Program among EFP Participants by Soup Kitchen/Food Pantry, 2012**

Time Visiting Program	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry <sup>20</sup>
First Time	6%	10%
Less than one month	6%	6%
1 to 3 months	14%	12%
4 to 6 months	9%	7%
More than 6 months/less than one year	6%	5%
1 to 2 years	22%	28%
3 to 5 years	19%	20%
6 to 10 years	10%	7%
More than 10 years	8%	4%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	263	961

As shown in Table 4, the percentage of emergency food program participants visiting the program at which they were surveyed for more than one year was highest in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

**Table 4**

**Length of Time Visiting Program among EFP Participants by Borough, 2012**

Length of Time Visiting Program	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens <sup>21</sup>	Staten Island <sup>22</sup>
Less than one year	45%	39%	37%	42%	46%
1 to 2 years	24%	24%	24%	32%	30%
3 to 5 years	23%	23%	21%	16%	15%
6 to 10 years	4%	8%	12%	6%	7%
More than 10 years	4%	6%	6%	5%	3%
<i>Total Respondent (n)</i>	208	377	231	334	74

<sup>20</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>21</sup> Total is more than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>22</sup> Total is more than 100 percent because of rounding error.

## Frequency of Use

Participant access to both food pantries and soup kitchens is dependent on programs' days and hours of operation.<sup>23</sup> The data on participant visits presented below reflects a combination of need and access. Participants report the number of visits they actually make – it should not be assumed that participants would not have made more visits if opportunities to do so had existed. Also note that because soup kitchens provide meals and not groceries, soup kitchen participants visit them more regularly than food pantry participants visit pantries, to which providers may restrict food-related visits to once or twice per month.

As shown in Table 5, more than one-half of soup kitchen participants (52 percent) made one to five visits over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed. Two-thirds (66 percent) made ten or fewer visits.

**Table 5**

**Number of Visits over Last Thirty Days, 2012  
Soup Kitchen Participants**

Number of Visits	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
1 to 5	130	52%
6 to 10	36	14%
11 to 20	47	19%
21 to 30	29	12%
More than 30	8	3%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	250	100%

As shown in Table 6, almost two-thirds of food pantry participants (63 percent) made one or two visits over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed. Almost 30 percent (29 percent) made four or more visits. Note that some emergency food programs offer non-food services, and survey respondents who reported more than one or two visits per month may have made some visits, not to pick up a pantry bag, but to access a non-food service. Also, if food was unavailable at initial visits, repeat visits may have been made.

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<sup>23</sup> As reported in *Serving under Stress Post-Recession: The State of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens Today*, most food pantries (83 percent) are open every week in a given month; the remainder are open less frequently. Less than one-quarter (22 percent) of food pantries are open more than one or two times per week. (Note that food pantries do not necessarily allow participants to come every time they are open.) Almost all soup kitchens (96 percent) are open every week in a given month, and almost forty percent (39 percent) are open more than one or two days per week.

**Table 6**

**Number of Visits over Last Thirty Days, 2012  
Food Pantry Participants**

Number of Visits	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses	
1	371	42%	} 63%
2	189	21%	
3	71	8%	
4	191	22%	} 29%
More than 4	62	7%	
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>884</i>	<i>100%</i>	

As shown in Table 7, the average number of visits made by soup kitchen participants over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed was 10.6; the average number of visits made by food pantry participants over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed was 3.3.

**Table 7**

**Average Number of Visits over Last Thirty Days, 2012**

Average Number of Visits	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
	10.6	3.3	4.9
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>932</i>	<i>1,182</i>

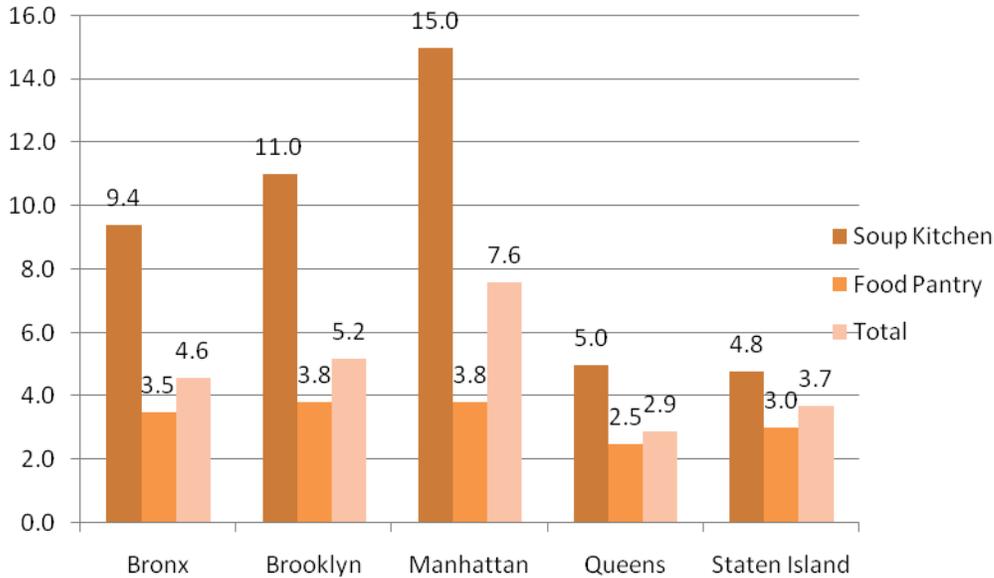
As illustrated by Figure 2, across the five boroughs, the average number of visits made by soup kitchen participants over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed was highest in Manhattan (15.0) and lowest in Staten Island (4.8).<sup>24</sup> There was less variation among boroughs as regards average number of visits made by food pantry participants (over the last thirty days to the program at which they were surveyed).

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<sup>24</sup>Results for Staten Island should be interpreted with caution give the small sample size for this borough – 75 surveys were completed at emergency food programs in Staten Island.

**Figure 2**

**Average Number of Visits over Last Thirty Days by Borough, 2012**



**Visiting Other Programs**

As shown in Table 8, one-half of emergency food program participants overall (50 percent) reported that they visited not just the program at which they were surveyed, but other programs as well. Program participants surveyed at soup kitchens were approximately as likely as program participants surveyed at food pantries to report that they visited other programs. (Participants were asked only if they visited other programs, not if they had visited other programs over the last thirty days.)

**Table 8**

**Do EFP Participants Visit Other Programs, 2012**

Visiting Other Programs	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
I visit only this program	48%	51%	50%
I visit other programs as well	52%	49%	50%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>264</i>	<i>940</i>	<i>1204</i>

As shown in Table 9, emergency food program participants surveyed in Staten Island were more likely than emergency food program participants surveyed in other boroughs to report visiting emergency food programs besides the one at which they were surveyed. Program participants surveyed at food pantries in Staten Island were more likely than program participants surveyed at soup kitchens in Staten Island to report visiting other programs.<sup>25</sup>

**Table 9**

**Do EFP Participants Visit Other Programs by Borough, 2012**

	I visit only this program			I visit other programs as well		
	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
Bronx	53%	15%	49%	48%	52%	51%
Brooklyn	41%	57%	54%	59%	43%	46%
Manhattan	45%	51%	49%	55%	49%	51%
Queens	61%	51%	53%	39%	49%	47%
Staten Island	53%	30%	35%	47%	70%	65%

“Total” number of visits made by emergency food program participants includes visits they made to the program at which they were surveyed *and* visits they reported making to other programs over the last thirty days. As shown in Table 10, almost one-half of participants who visited soup kitchens (47 percent) reported making one to five total visits over the last thirty days. Slightly less than two-thirds (64 percent) made ten or fewer total visits.

**Table 10**

**Total Number of Visits over Last Thirty Days, 2012  
Soup Kitchen Participants**

Total Number of Visits	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
1 to 5	131	47%
6 to 10	48	17%
11 to 20	47	17%
21 to 30	34	12%
More than 30	19	7%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	279	100%

<sup>25</sup> Results for Staten Island should be interpreted with caution give the small sample size for this borough – 75 surveys were completed at emergency food programs in Staten Island.

As shown in Table 11, one-half of participants who visited food pantries (50 percent) made only one or two total visits over the last thirty days. Approximately 40 percent (39 percent) made four or more visits. As noted above, participants making more than one or two visits per month may have been visiting more frequently to avail themselves of non-food services or because food was unavailable at an initial visit.

**Table 11**

**Total Number of Visits over Last Thirty Days, 2012  
Food Pantry Participants**

Total Number of Visits	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
1	277	30%
2	189	20%
3	98	11%
4	171	19%
More than 4	189	20%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>924</i>	<i>100%</i>

As shown in Table 12, the average number of total visits made over the last thirty days by soup kitchen participants was 13.3; the average number of total visits made over the last thirty days by food pantry participants was 3.4.

**Table 12**

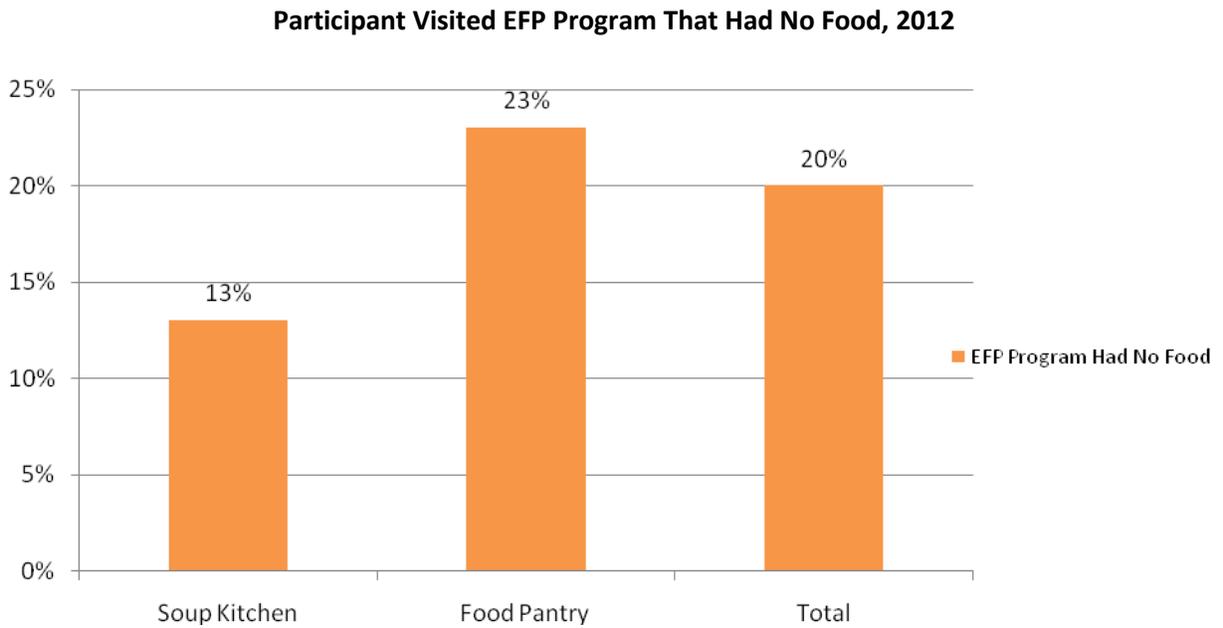
**Average Number of Total Visits over Last Thirty Days, 2012**

Average Number of Visits	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
	13.3	3.4	5.6
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>254</i>	<i>903</i>	<i>1,157</i>

**Response to Lack of Food**

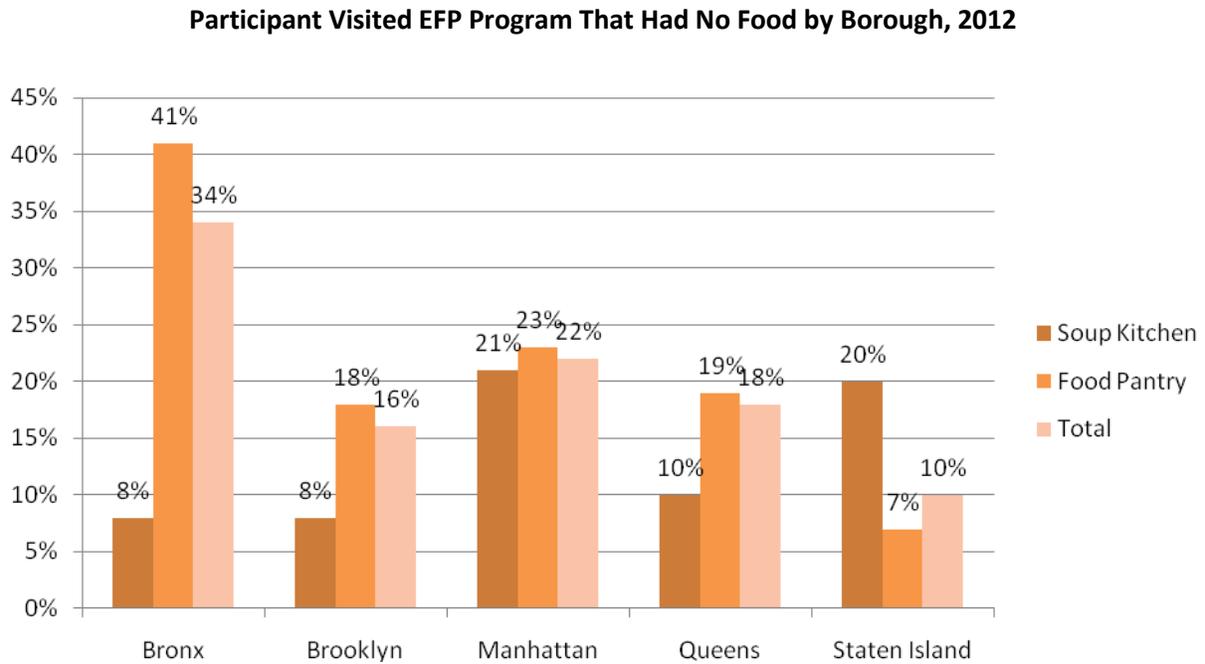
One reason for visits to multiple soup kitchens or food pantries may be that program participants sometimes arrive at a first soup kitchen or food pantry, only to find that there is no food, or not enough food, to be had. Twenty percent of emergency food program participants reported that they had, at least once, visited the program at which they were surveyed only to find that there was no food available. Food pantry participants were more likely to report this experience than soup kitchen participants (23 percent vs. 13 percent). (See Figure 3.)

**Figure 3**



As illustrated by Figure 4, emergency food program participants surveyed in the Bronx were much more likely than emergency food program participants surveyed in other boroughs to report that they had visited an emergency food program that had no food for them. Participants surveyed at food pantries in the Bronx were more than five times more likely to report this experience than participants surveyed at soup kitchens in the Bronx (41 percent vs. 8 percent).

**Figure 4**



As shown in Table 13, approximately one-third of emergency food program participants (34 percent) surveyed reported that when confronted with a lack of food, they visited another program in an attempt to obtain some. Less than one-quarter (18 percent) were able to use their own money to purchase food. Some participants (10 percent) were able to rely on friends and family. A fairly large percentage (10 percent) simply had to go hungry. Thirty-five percent of survey respondents noted “other” means of handling the situation. When asked to explain, many of these respondents reported waiting for another food distribution or mealtime at the same soup kitchen or food pantry from which food had been initially unavailable.

**Table 13**

**Response to Lack of Food at EFP, 2012**

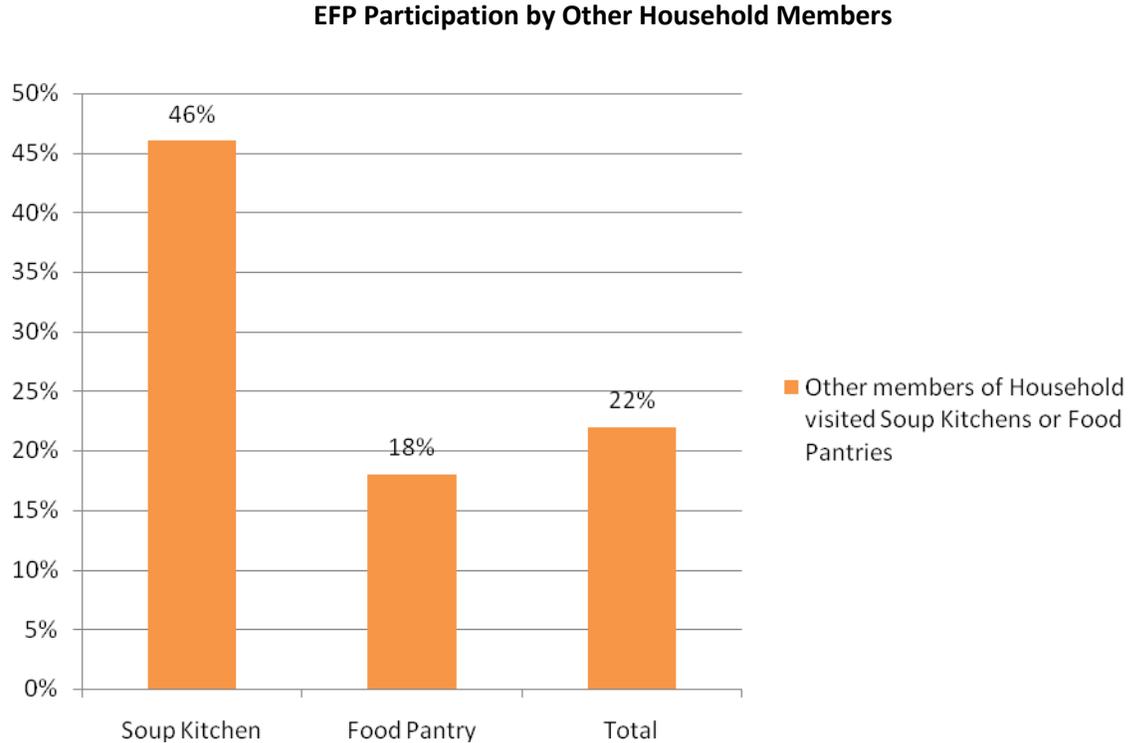
Response to Lack of Food	Percentage of Responses
Visited another food program	34%
Used my own money to purchase food	18%
Borrowed money from family/friends to purchase food	4%
Received food from family or friends	4%
Ate with family or friends	2%
Skipped meals/went hungry	10%
Other	35%

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100 percent, because survey respondents were asked to “check all that apply.”

**EFP Participation by Other Household Members**

In addition to reporting that they visited more than one emergency food program, some survey respondents reported that they were not the only members of their households to visit soup kitchens or food pantries. Overall, almost one-quarter of emergency food program participants surveyed (22 percent) reported that other members of their households also visited soup kitchens or food pantries. Expectedly, more program participants surveyed at soup kitchens (46 percent) reported that members of their households visited emergency food programs than did program participants surveyed at food pantries (18 percent), presumably because soup kitchen visitors can feed only themselves with a visit, whereas food pantry visitors can return home with enough food to feed the rest of their household. (See Figure 5.)

**Figure 5**



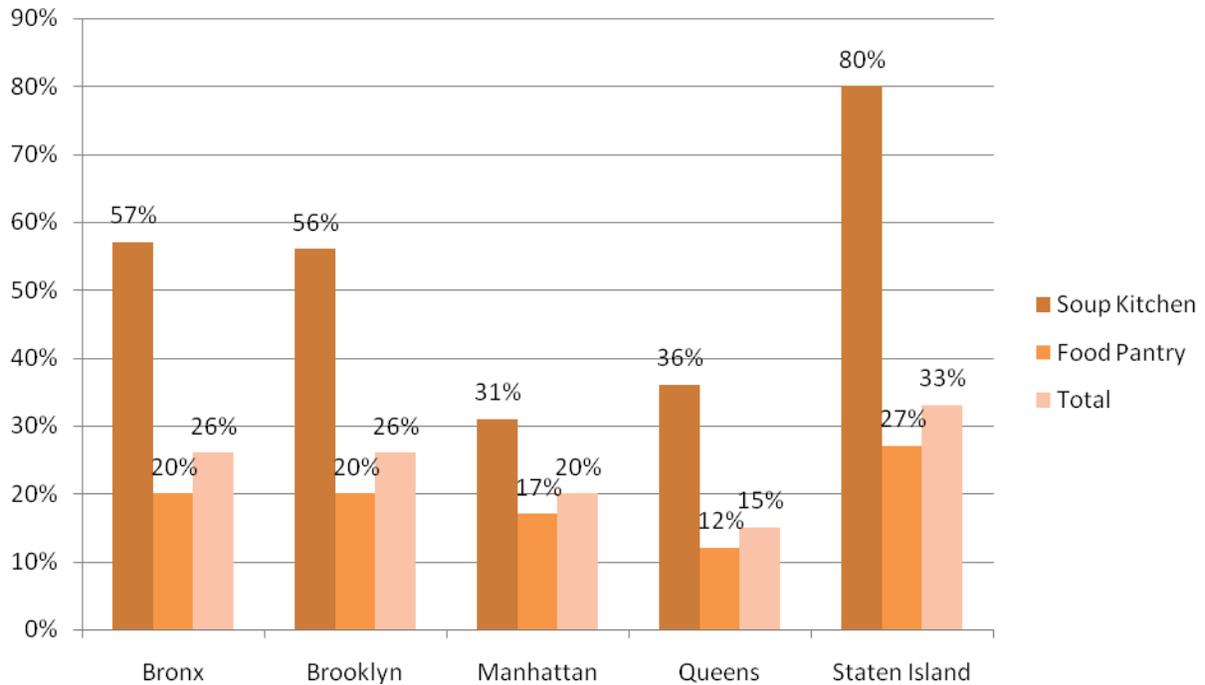
As illustrated by Figure 6, emergency food program participants in Queens were less likely than emergency food program participants in other boroughs to report that other members of their household also visited emergency food programs. In Staten Island, emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens were approximately three times more likely than those surveyed at food pantries to report that other members of their household also visited emergency food programs.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Results for Staten Island should be interpreted with caution give the small sample size for this borough – 75 surveys were completed at emergency food programs in Staten Island.

**Figure 6**

**EFP Participation by Other Household Members by Borough, 2012**



**Knowledge of EFP's**

How do emergency food program participants learn about the programs they turn to for help? Apparently, they use very informal means to find the resources they need. As shown in Table 14, 60 percent of emergency food program participants surveyed reported that they had first heard about the program at which they were surveyed by simple word of mouth. Almost 20 percent (19 percent) had seen the program as they walked by. Almost 15 percent (13 percent) first heard about the program at which they were surveyed from a faith-based agency, another agency, or community-based organization. Few emergency food program participants reported first hearing about the program at which they were surveyed via Food Bank For New York City's on-line directory or New York City's information hotline.

**Table 14****How Participant First Heard About Program, 2012**

First Heard About Program	Percentage of Responses <sup>27</sup>
Word of mouth	60%
Saw program as I walked by	19%
Referral from Agency/Organization	8%
Referral from Church/Religious Organization	5%
Food Bank For NYC online directory	1%
NYC Info Hotline	1%
Advertisement/local media	1%
Other	4%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>1211</i>

As shown in Table 15, across the five boroughs, the proportions of emergency food program participants reporting how they first heard about the program at which they were surveyed were similar. Emergency food program participants in the Bronx were more likely than emergency food program participants in other boroughs to have seen a program as they walked by.

**Table 15****How Participant First Heard About Program by Borough, 2012**

How Participant First Heard About Program	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island
Word of mouth	56%	62%	57%	64%	60%
Saw program as I walked by	26%	21%	21%	15%	13%
Referral from Agency/Organization	10%	6%	9%	7%	9%
Referral from Church/Religious Organization	4%	4%	6%	6%	8%
Food Bank For NYC online directory	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%
NYC Info Hotline	1%	0%	0%	2%	3%
Advertisement/local media	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Other	1%	5%	6%	4%	5%
<i>Total Respondent (n)</i>	<i>206</i>	<i>366</i>	<i>233</i>	<i>331</i>	<i>75</i>

<sup>27</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

## Commuting to EFP's

As shown in Table 16, almost 60 percent of emergency food program participants surveyed (58 percent) reported that it took no longer than 15 minutes for them to get from their home to the program at which they were surveyed. Approximately one-quarter (26 percent) reported that it took 16-30 minutes. Only 15 percent of emergency food program participants reported that their travel time was longer than 30 minutes. (Note that this does not imply that every hungry New Yorker is near an accessible soup kitchen or food pantry. The individuals surveyed for this report were those who had been able to access a food pantry or soup kitchen and not those who remained hungry because they could not.)

Soup kitchen participants were less likely than food pantry participants (80 percent vs. 86 percent) to live within 30 minutes of the program at which they were surveyed.

**Table 16**

**Length of Time Participant Commutes to EFP, 2012**

Length of Commute	Soup Kitchen <sup>28</sup>	Food Pantry	Total <sup>29</sup>
1 to 15 minutes	57%	59%	58%
16 to 30 minutes	23%	27%	26%
31 to 45 minutes	9%	7%	7%
46 to 60 minutes	6%	5%	5%
More than 60 minutes	4%	2%	3%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	262	961	1223

*Note: Brackets in the original table indicate that 80% of Soup Kitchen participants and 86% of Food Pantry participants live within 30 minutes of the program. A bracket also indicates that 15% of participants live more than 30 minutes away.*

As shown in Table 17, the percentage of emergency food program participants that had to commute more than thirty minutes to get to a soup kitchen or food pantry was highest in Manhattan (21 percent) and Staten Island (20 percent).

**Table 17**

**Length of Time Participant Commutes to EFP by Borough, 2012**

Length of Commute	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens <sup>30</sup>	Staten Island
30 minutes or less	91%	85%	79%	86%	80%
More than 30 minutes	9%	15%	21%	13%	20%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	208	375	230	335	75

<sup>28</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>29</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>30</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

Almost three-quarters of emergency food program participants overall (71 percent) reported that they walked to the program at which they were surveyed. Approximately one-quarter (24 percent) took a bus or subway. Soup kitchen participants were more likely than food pantry participants (78 percent vs. 69 percent) to report walking; they were also more likely than food pantry participants (27 percent vs. 23 percent) to report taking a bus or subway. Food pantry participants were more likely to report taking a car than soup kitchen participants (10 percent vs. 3 percent), perhaps because of the need to transport groceries. (See Table 18.)

**Table 18**

**Mode of Travel to EFP, 2012**

Mode of Travel	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
Walk	78%	69%	71%
Bicycle	3%	2%	2%
Bus	16%	16%	16%
Subway	11%	7%	8%
Car	3%	10%	9%
Taxi or car service	0%	0%	0%
Other	1%	1%	1%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	265	962	1227

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100 percent, because survey respondents were asked to “check all that apply.”

As shown in Table 19, emergency food program participants in the Bronx were more likely to walk to the emergency food program at which they were surveyed than emergency food program participants in other boroughs; emergency food program participants in Queens and Staten Island were less likely to do so.

**Table 19**

**Mode of Travel to EFP by Borough, 2012**

Mode of Travel	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island
Walk	81%	73%	73%	60%	63%
Bicycle	3%	1%	3%	3%	1%
Bus	12%	19%	11%	17%	29%
Subway	3%	9%	19%	4%	0%
Car	2%	7%	1%	19%	13%
Taxi or car service	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	3%	0%	1%	2%	0%
<i>Total Respondent (n)</i>	208	378	233	335	75

## **EFP Program Satisfaction and Impact**

As shown in Table 20, almost three-quarters of emergency food program participants overall (70 percent) reported that they were “very much” satisfied with the emergency food program at which they were surveyed. Less than ten percent (8 percent) reported that they were not satisfied, or just “a little bit” satisfied. Interestingly, soup kitchen participants were much more likely than food program participants to report that they were “very much” satisfied (81 percent vs. 68 percent).

**Table 20**

**Satisfaction with EFP, 2012**

Satisfaction with EFP	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
Yes, very much	81%	68%	70%
Yes, somewhat	16%	23%	22%
Yes, a little bit	2%	4%	4%
No	1%	5%	4%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	259	927	1186

*Note: Brackets in the original table indicate that 3% of soup kitchen participants and 9% of food pantry participants are included in the 'Yes, a little bit' and 'No' categories, totaling 8% of the total respondents.*

Emergency food program participants in the Bronx expressed less satisfaction with the emergency food program at which they were surveyed than residents of other boroughs. (See Table 21.)

**Table 21**

**Very Much Satisfied with EFP by Borough, 2012**

Yes, very much	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
Bronx	88%	57%	63%
Brooklyn	85%	73%	76%
Manhattan	71%	70%	72%
Queens	85%	68%	71%
Staten Island	71%	63%	65%

The most frequently given explanation for dissatisfaction with a food program was simply that there was not enough food served or distributed there. Forty percent of emergency food program participants overall who said they were not satisfied made this point. Thirty-seven percent of those surveyed thought the food served or distributed did not contain enough variety. Less than ten percent complained that the food they were served or received didn't taste good (9 percent) or wasn't nutritious (7 percent). "Other" comments from soup kitchen participants included the observation that what they were served depended on the time of their arrival, and sometimes they were not served at all. "Other" comments from food pantry participants included that expired foods were distributed and that not enough fresh foods (including meat and milk) were available. (See Table 22.)

**Table 22**

**Reasons for Dissatisfaction with EFP, 2012**

Reasons for Dissatisfaction	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
There isn't enough of it	0%	44%	40%
It isn't nutritious	0%	8%	7%
It doesn't taste good	0%	10%	9%
There isn't enough variety	40%	37%	37%
Other	60%	40%	42%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	5	52	57

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100 percent, because survey respondents were asked to "check all that apply."

As shown in Table 23, one-half (50 percent) of emergency food program participants overall reported that most of the food they ate came from the food program at which they were surveyed. More than 40 percent (42 percent) reported that they would go hungry without the food they received, and more than one-half (55 percent) reported that they would not have access to healthy, nutritious food. Almost 60 percent (57 percent) reported that most of the fresh fruits and vegetables they ate came from the program at which they were surveyed. Forty-four percent reported that most of the protein they ate came from the program at which they were surveyed.

Results for soup kitchens and food pantries were comparable, although soup kitchen participants were more likely to report that most of the protein they ate came from the food program at which they were surveyed, and food pantry participants were more likely to report that without the food program at which they were surveyed, they would not have access to healthy, nutritious food.

**Table 23****Impact of EFP Participation, 2012**

Impact of Participation	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
Most of the food I eat comes from this program	49%	50%	50%
Without this food program, I would go hungry	43%	42%	42%
Most of the fruits and vegetables I eat come from this food program	55%	58%	57%
Most of the protein I eat comes from this food program	51%	42%	44%
Without this food program, I would not have access to healthy, nutritious food	50%	56%	55%

As shown in Table 24, across the five boroughs, the proportions of emergency food program participants reporting agreement with statements indicating the impact of their emergency food program participation were similar. However, emergency food program participants in Queens were less likely than emergency food program participants in other boroughs to state that they would go hungry without the program at which they were surveyed. Participants in Manhattan were more likely to state that most of the protein they ate came from the program at which they were surveyed. Participants in Staten Island were more likely to state that they would not have access to healthy, nutritious food without the program at which they were surveyed.<sup>31</sup>

**Table 24****Impact of EFP Participation by Borough, 2012**

Impact of Participation	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island
Most of the food I eat comes from this program	46%	50%	50%	52%	54%
Without this food program, I would go hungry	46%	40%	46%	37%	51%
Most of the fruits and vegetables I eat come from this food program	59%	56%	60%	57%	61%
Most of the protein I eat comes from this food program	43%	43%	51%	42%	44%
Without this food program, I would not have access to healthy, nutritious food	56%	54%	55%	53%	63%

<sup>31</sup> Results for Staten Island should be interpreted with caution give the small sample size for this borough – 75 surveys were completed at emergency food programs in Staten Island.

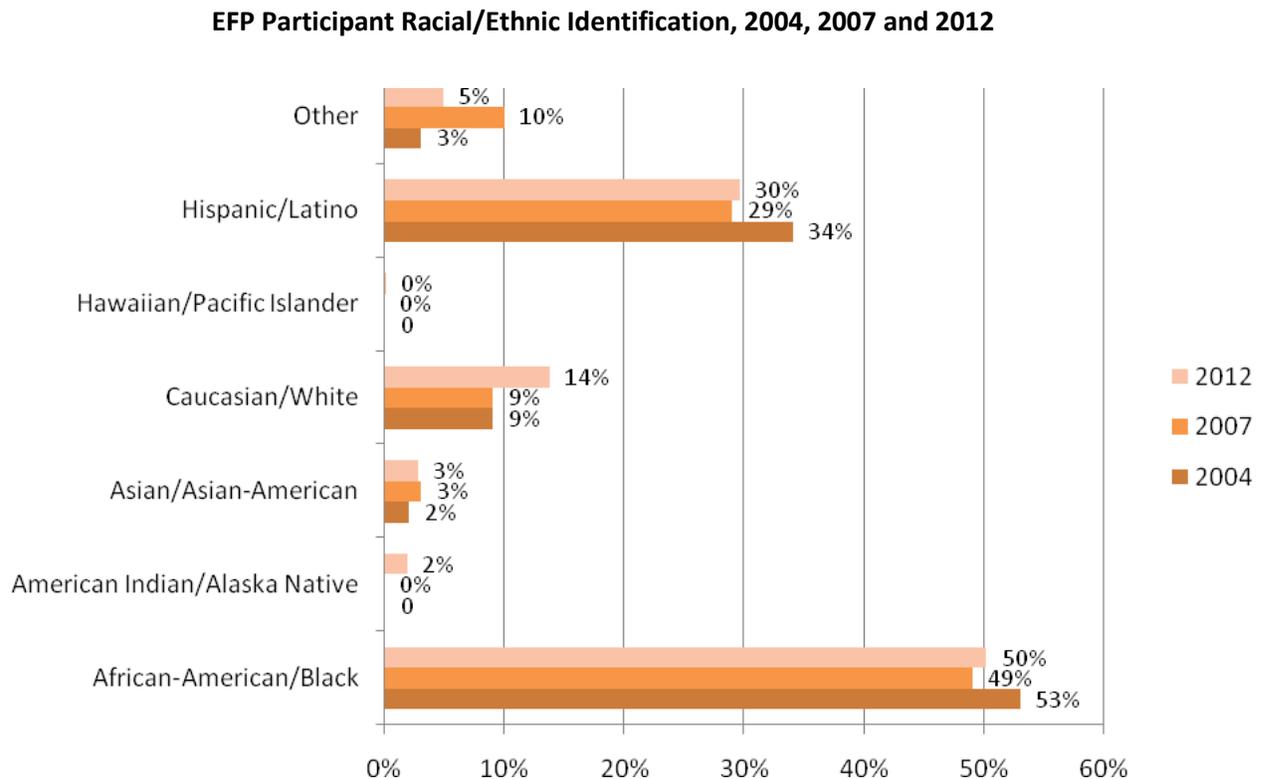
## DEMOGRAPHICS: WHO USES EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAMS?

### Participants' Racial/Ethnic Identity

As illustrated by Figure 7, one-half (50 percent) of emergency food program participants surveyed identified as African-American/Black. Almost one-third (30 percent) identified as Hispanic/Latino. Fourteen percent identified as Caucasian/White. Three percent identified as Asian, and two percent, as American Indian/Alaska Native. Five percent identified as "other." (Percentages add to more than 100% because respondents had the option of checking more than one category.)<sup>32</sup>

Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of emergency food program participants identifying as Caucasian/White increased by five percentage points, or 55 percent.

Figure 7



<sup>32</sup> During survey administration, if a respondent spoke only Spanish or Chinese, it was sometimes, but not always, possible to administer the survey in that language. Lack of fluency in English may have prevented Asian speakers from responding to the survey, thereby lowering the percentage of Asian/Asian-Americans in the survey sample.

As shown in Table 25, Brooklyn had the highest percentage (62 percent) of African-American/Black emergency food program participants. The Bronx (48 percent) and Manhattan (43 percent) had the highest percentage of Hispanic/Latino emergency food program participants.

**Table 25**

**EFP Participant Racial/Ethnic Identification by Borough, 2012**

Race/Ethnic Identification	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island
African-American/Black	43%	62%	42%	47%	49%
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	2%	0%	3%	3%
Asian/Asian-American	0%	2%	3%	5%	3%
Caucasian/White	5%	18%	10%	17%	14%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Hispanic/Latino	48%	15%	43%	25%	36%
Other	5%	4%	5%	6%	3%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	198	363	218	318	73

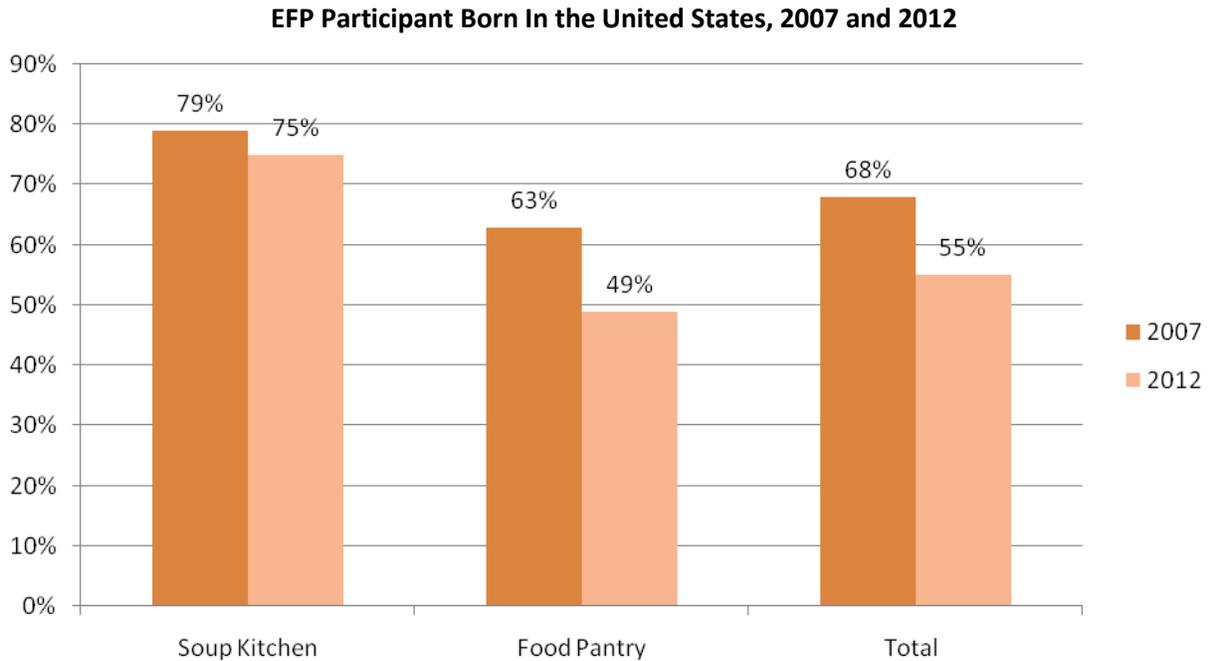
### **Participants' Birthplace**

Overall (*i.e.*, across both soup kitchens and food pantries), more than one-half of emergency food program respondents surveyed (55 percent) reported being born in the United States.

Between 2007 and 2012, percentage of respondents reporting that they were born in the United States declined, for those surveyed at food pantries, by 14 percentage points; and, overall, by 13 percentage points. Percentage of respondents reporting that they were born in the United States declined, for those surveyed at soup kitchens, by only four percentage points. (See Figure 8.)

Nineteen percent of respondents reporting birth outside the United States reported being born in the Dominican Republic; 12 percent reported being born in Jamaica; eight percent reported being born in Guyana; five percent, in Haiti; and five percent, in Mexico. Smaller percentages reported being born elsewhere.

**Figure 8**

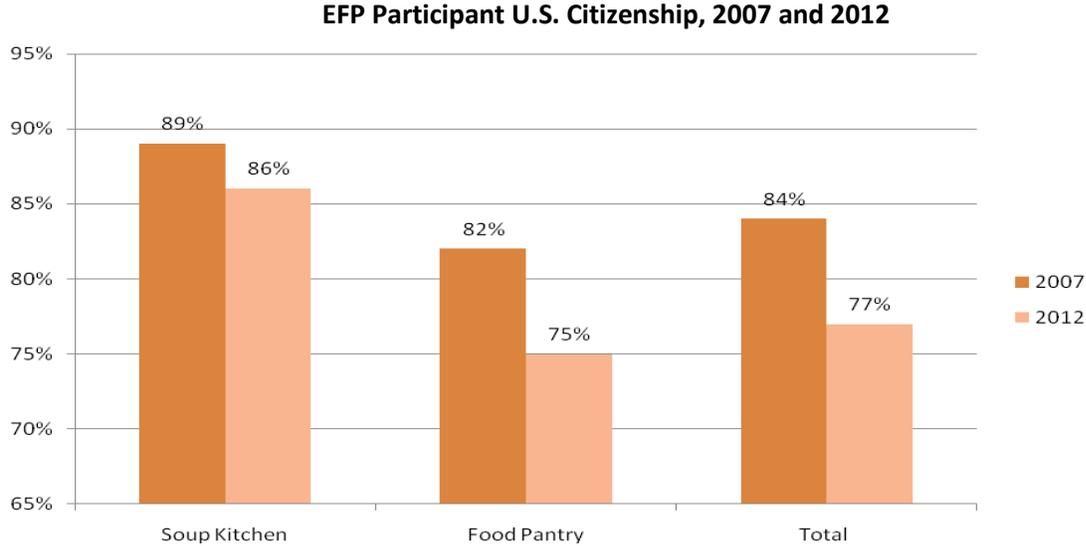


**Participants’ Citizenship**

Overall (*i.e.*, across both soup kitchens and food pantries), 77 percent of emergency food program respondents reported that they were U.S. citizens. (An additional 16 percent reported that they were legal residents.)

Between 2007 and 2012, percentage of respondents reporting U.S. citizenship declined, for those surveyed at food pantries, by seven percentage points; and, overall, by seven percentage points. Percentage of respondents reporting U.S. citizenship declined, for those surveyed at soup kitchens, by only three percentage points. (See Figure 9.)

**Figure 9**



**Participants’ English Language Ability**

As shown in Table 26, overall (*i.e.*, across both soup kitchens and food pantries), almost two-thirds of emergency food program respondents surveyed (63 percent) reported that their ability to speak English was “excellent.” Another 15 percent (for a total of more than three-quarters, or 78 percent) reported that their ability to speak English was “good.” Less than one-quarter (22 percent) reported that their ability to speak English was non-existent, “poor,” or “fair.” Soup kitchen participants were more likely than food pantry participants to report that their ability to speak English was “excellent” or “good” (88 percent vs. 76 percent).<sup>33</sup>

Respondents who reported that they were most comfortable speaking a language other than English mentioned the following languages: Armenian, Creole, Filipino, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian Polish, Russian, and Spanish. (Spanish was mentioned most frequently.)

Between 2007 and 2012, overall figures showed only small changes in emergency food program participants’ ability to speak English.

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<sup>33</sup> Program participants who had poor English language skills may have declined to take the survey more often than other potential respondents, resulting in a higher percentage of respondents reporting “excellent” or “good” English language ability in the survey sample.

**Table 26**

**EFP Participant English Language Ability, 2007 and 2012**

English Language Ability	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total	
	2007	2012	2007	2012	2007	2012
Excellent	59%	71%	59%	61%	59%	63%
Good	19%	17%	18%	15%	18%	15%
Fair	11%	8%	11%	10%	11%	9%
Poor	7%	3%	7%	7%	7%	7%
Does not speak English at All	4%	0%	6%	7%	5%	6%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	352	214	738	868	1,090	1,082

**Participants' Education Level**

As shown in Table 27, overall (*i.e.*, across both soup kitchens and food pantries), more than one-third of emergency food program participants surveyed (35 percent) had less than a twelfth grade education. Another one-third (34 percent) had graduated from high school or obtained a high school equivalency degree. A final one-third (30 percent) had been to college or held a two-year, four-year, or advanced degree. The education levels of those surveyed at soup kitchens and food pantries were similar.

Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of respondents with less than a twelfth grade education dropped (by 15 percentage points), and the percentage of respondents with a high school diploma or GED rose (by eight percentage points). The percentage of respondents who had been to college or had a two-year, four-year, or advanced degree also rose (by six percentage points).

**Table 27**

**EFP Participant Education Level, 2007 and 2012**

Education Level	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total	
	2007	2012 <sup>34</sup>	2007	2012	2007	2012
Less than Grade 12	50%	35%	50%	35%	50%	35%
Graduated from high school/GED	23%	35%	28%	34%	26%	34%
Some college	14%	17%	11%	12%	12%	13%
Associate's Degree (2-year degree)	4%	7%	5%	7%	5%	7%
Bachelor's Degree (4-year degree)	6%	4%	4%	9%	5%	8%
Graduate or Professional Degree	3%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Other	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	361	254	747	910	979	1164

<sup>34</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

## **Participants' Gender**

As shown in Table 28, overall (*i.e.*, across both soup kitchens and food pantries), 42 percent of emergency food program participants surveyed were male, and 57 percent were female. Soup kitchen participants were much more likely to be male (63 percent male; 37 percent female); and food pantry participants, much more likely to be female (64 percent female; 36 percent male).

Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of emergency food program participants who were female rose (by four percentage points) and the percentage of participants who were male declined by four percentage points. Although the percentage male and percentage female remained stable for food pantry participants between 2007 and 2012, soup kitchen participants showed an increase in percent female (four percentage points) and a decrease in percent male (five percentage points).

**Table 28**

**EFP Participant Gender, 2004, 2007 and 2012**

	Soup Kitchen			Food Pantry			Total		
<b>Gender</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>
Female	44%	33%	37%	63%	64%	64%	56%	53%	57%
Male	56%	68%	63%	37%	37%	36%	44%	46%	42%
Transgendered	N/A	N/A	0%	N/A	N/A	0%	N/A	0%	0%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	344	372	257	642	808	964	986	1,180	1,188

N/A = Not Available

## **Gender of All Members in Participants' Households**

As shown in Table 29, taking into account all members of the households to which emergency food program participants surveyed belonged, 52 percent are female and 48 percent are male. When all members of households of emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens are considered, 56 percent are male, and 44 percent are female. When all members of households of emergency food program participants surveyed at food pantries are considered, 54 percent are female, and 46 percent are male.

**Table 29**

**Gender Composition of EFP Households, 2007 and 2012**

Gender	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total	
	2007	2012	2007	2012	2007	2012
Male	58%	56%	48%	46%	51%	48%
Female	42%	44%	52%	54%	49%	52%
Transgendered	N/A	0%	N/A	0%	N/A	0%

N/A = Not Available

**Participants' Age**

As shown in Table 30, almost three-quarters (71 percent) of emergency food program participants surveyed were between ages 30-64. Almost one-quarter (24 percent) were age 65 or over.<sup>35</sup> Emergency food program participants surveyed at food pantries were more than twice as likely to be age 65 or over than emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens.

Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of emergency food program participants between the ages of 30 to 49 dropped by six percentage points, reflecting small increases in every other age category.

**Table 30**

**EFP Participant Age, 2004, 2007 and 2012**

Age	Soup Kitchen			Food Pantry			Total		
	2004	2007	2012	2004	2007	2012	2004	2007	2012
18 to 29	6%	5%	8%	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%	6%
30 to 49	50%	44%	38%	37%	35%	30%	42%	38%	32%
50 to 64	28%	37%	42%	29%	37%	38%	28%	37%	39%
65 to 79	12%	13%	10%	24%	21%	23%	20%	19%	20%
80 to 96	2%	1%	2%	5%	3%	4%	4%	2%	4%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	336	363	249	635	802	896	971	1,165	1,145

<sup>35</sup> Children (*i.e.*, participants under age 18) were not surveyed at either soup kitchens or food pantries.

**Age of All Members in Participants’ Households**

Taking into account all members of the households to which emergency food program participants surveyed belonged, 25 percent were children under age 18. Sixty percent were working-age adults (ages 18 to 64), and 15 percent were adults age 65 and older.

Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of children declined by six percentage points, and the percentage of adults rose by six percentage points (three points for adults age 18 to 64, and three points for adults age 65 and above). (See Table 31.)

**Table 31**

**Age Composition of EFP Households, 2004, 2007 and 2012**

Age	Soup Kitchen			Food Pantry			Total		
	2004 <sup>36</sup>	2007	2012	2004	2007	2012	2004 <sup>37</sup>	2007	2012
0 to 17	24%	21%	19%	28%	34%	26%	26%	31%	25%
18 to 64	65%	70%	70%	55%	53%	58%	58%	57%	60%
65 and above	10%	9%	11%	17%	13%	16%	15%	12%	15%

**Participants’ Veteran Status**

As shown in Table 32, veterans are among those who rely on food pantries and soup kitchens for emergency food. Seven percent of those surveyed at food pantries and soup kitchens were veterans.

**Table 32**

Veteran Status	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
Yes	6%	7%	7%
No	94%	93%	93%
Total Responding (n)	238	740	978

<sup>36</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>37</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

## HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND COMPOSITION

### Household Size

As shown in Table 33, the average household size for emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens was two; for emergency food program participants surveyed at food pantries, three.

No change in average household size, for either soup kitchens or food pantries, occurred between 2007 and 2012.

**Table 33**

**EFP Participant Average Household Size, 2007 and 2012**

Average Household Size	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
<b>2004</b>	3	3	3
<b>2007</b>	2	3	3
<b>2012</b>	2	3	3

One-half (50 percent) of emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens reported that they lived alone. Only approximately one-quarter (27 percent) of emergency food program participants surveyed at food pantries reported the same. Emergency food program participants surveyed at food pantries were less likely to live alone and more likely to have larger households than emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens. (See Table 34.)

**Table 34**

**Number of People in Household, 2012**

Number of People in Household	Soup Kitchen <sup>38</sup>	Food Pantry	Total
1	50%	27%	32%
2	20%	23%	22%
3	9%	17%	15%
4	9%	15%	14%
5	7%	9%	9%
6	3%	5%	4%
More than 6	3%	4%	4%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>263</i>	<i>959</i>	<i>1222</i>

<sup>38</sup> Total is more than 100% because of rounding error.

### **Relationship of Participant to Members of His/Her Household**

Table 35 contains the percentages of emergency food program participants (living with at least one other person) who report particular household relationships – overall, and by soup kitchen and food pantry. Fifty-eight percent of emergency food program participants lived with their children; 38 percent lived with a spouse or partner; 17 percent lived with their grandchildren; 13 percent lived with other relatives; 12 percent lived with non-relatives; 11 percent lived with a parent (mother or father); 11 percent lived with a sibling; and one percent lived with a grandparent.

Emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens were less likely than emergency food program participants surveyed at food pantries (44 percent vs. 60 percent) to report living with their own children, living with a spouse or partner (32 percent vs. 39 percent), or living with grandchildren (10 percent vs. 18 percent). Emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens were more likely than emergency food program participants surveyed at food pantries to report living with non-relatives (20 percent vs. 11 percent) or to report living with a sibling (15 percent vs. 10 percent).

Between 2007 and 2012, overall (*i.e.*, across both soup kitchens and food pantries), the percentage of emergency food program participants living with their own children declined by four percentage points.

**Table 35**

**Relationship of EFP Participant to Household Members, 2007 and 2012**

Relationship to Household Members	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total	
	2007	2012	2007	2012	2007	2012
Own Children	49%	44%	66%	60%	62%	58%
Spouse/Partner	35%	32%	41%	39%	40%	38%
Grandchildren	12%	10%	19%	18%	18%	17%
Other Relatives	16%	12%	15%	13%	15%	13%
Non-Relatives	18%	20%	8%	11%	10%	12%
Mother	8%	10%	9%	8%	9%	8%
Sibling	11%	15%	8%	10%	9%	11%
Father	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Grandmother	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Grandfather	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%

NOTE: "Own children" can be any age; *i.e.*, are not necessarily under age 18. Percentages add to more than 100 percent, because survey respondents were asked to "check all that apply."

**Children or Elderly in Household**

Thirty-four percent of all households to which emergency food program participants surveyed belonged contained a child (*i.e.*, an individual under 18 years of age). Only 19 percent of households to which program participants surveyed at soup kitchens belonged contained a child; whereas 39 percent of households to which program participants surveyed at food pantries belonged contained a child. (See Table 36.)

**Table 36**

**EFP Households with Children, 2007 and 2012**

	Soup Kitchen			Food Pantry			Total		
	2004	2007	2012	2004	2007	2012	2004	2007	2012
Household with Children	38%	23%	19%	51%	48%	39%	46%	40%	34%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	345	364	249	642	788	894	987	1,152	1,143

Thirty-one percent of all households to which emergency food program participants surveyed belonged contained someone 65 years of age or older. Eighteen percent of households to which program participants surveyed at soup kitchens belonged contained someone 65 years of age or older; whereas 35 percent of households to which program participants surveyed at food pantries belonged contained someone 65 years of age or older. (See Table 37.)

**Table 37**

**EFP Households with Elderly, 2007 and 2012**

Elderly in Household?	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total	
	2007	2012	2007	2012	2007	2012
Households with Elderly	N/A	18%	N/A	35%	N/A	31%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	N/A	249	N/A	894	N/A	1,143

N/A = Not Available

## INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

### Monthly Income

As shown in Table 38, overall (*i.e.*, across both soup kitchens and food pantries), average monthly household income reported by emergency food program participants surveyed (before taxes, and including wages, unemployment insurance, public assistance, Social Security and/or disability benefits) was \$1,045. One-half of all emergency food program participants had average monthly incomes below \$833. Average monthly income reported by program participants surveyed at soup kitchens (\$950) was lower than that reported by program participants surveyed at food pantries (\$1,075).

Between 2007 and 2012, average monthly income reported by program participants surveyed at soup kitchens rose by \$153, or 19 percent; average monthly income reported by program participants surveyed at food pantries, by \$78, or eight percent.

**Table 38**

**Monthly Income of EFP Households, 2007 and 2012**

Income	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total	
	2007	2012	2007	2012	2007	2012
Mean (average)	\$797	\$950	\$997	\$1,075	\$932	\$1,045
Median (midpoint)	\$624	\$700	\$750	\$833	\$710	\$833
<i>Total responding (n)</i>	<i>265</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>534</i>	<i>430</i>	<i>804</i>	<i>565</i>

### Annual Income

Overall (*i.e.*, across both soup kitchens and food pantries), 70 percent of emergency food program participants surveyed reported an annual household income of less than \$15,000 per year. (See Table 39.) Emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens were more likely than emergency food program participants surveyed at food pantries (75 percent vs. 69 percent) to have household incomes of less than \$15,000 per year. (See Table 39.)

**Table 39**

**Annual Income of EFP Households, 2012**

Income	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
\$0 to \$999	29%	15%	18%
\$1,000 to \$4,999	13%	8%	9%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	23%	23%	23%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	10%	23%	20%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	10%	11%	11%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	5%	6%	6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	5%	7%	7%
\$35,000 to \$44,999	3%	4%	4%
\$45,000 to \$54,999	1%	2%	2%
\$55,000 to \$85,000	1%	1%	1%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>164</i>	<i>559</i>	<i>723</i>

**Below Poverty Level**

Approximately three-quarters (76 percent) of emergency food program participants reported a household income that placed them at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level. Almost 95 percent (94 percent) reported a household income that placed them at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. (See Table 40.)

**Table 40**

**Poverty Level of EFP Households, 2007 and 2012**

	At or Below 100 % Poverty Level		At or Below 130 % Poverty Level		At or Below 200% Poverty Level	
	2007	2012	2007	2012	2007	2012
Household Income Below Poverty	77%	76%	87%	86%	96%	94%

## **Employment Status**

As shown in Table 41, overall (*i.e.*, across both soup kitchens and food pantries), more than one-third of emergency food program participants (36 percent) reported that they were unemployed. Approximately one-quarter (24 percent) described themselves as disabled; and approximately 20 percent (21 percent), as retired. Nineteen percent of emergency food program participants reported that they were working.<sup>39</sup>

Program participants surveyed at food pantries were twice as likely as participants surveyed at soup kitchens to be retired. Program participants surveyed at soup kitchens were more likely than program participants surveyed at food pantries (47 percent vs. 33 percent) to report unemployment.

Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of emergency food program respondents who were unemployed rose by eight percentage points. The percentage of emergency food program respondents who reported disability declined by seven percentage points.

**Table 41**

**Employment Status of EFP Participants, by Soup Kitchen/Food Pantry, 2012**

	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total		
	2007 <sup>40</sup>	2012	2007 <sup>41</sup>	2012	2004 <sup>42</sup>	2007 <sup>43</sup>	2012
Retired	13%	12%	22%	24%	26%	19%	21%
Employed	20%	18%	22%	19%	19%	21%	19%
Unemployed	36%	47%	25%	33%	31%	28%	36%
Disabled	30%	23%	32%	24%	25%	31%	24%

<sup>39</sup> Note that employment data was not collected on members of emergency food program participants' households. Program participants who reported themselves as unemployed may have had working family members.

<sup>40</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>41</sup> Total is more than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>42</sup> Total is more than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>43</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

As shown in Table 42, Queens has the highest percentage of retired emergency food program participants and the lowest percentage of employed emergency food program participants.

**Table 42**

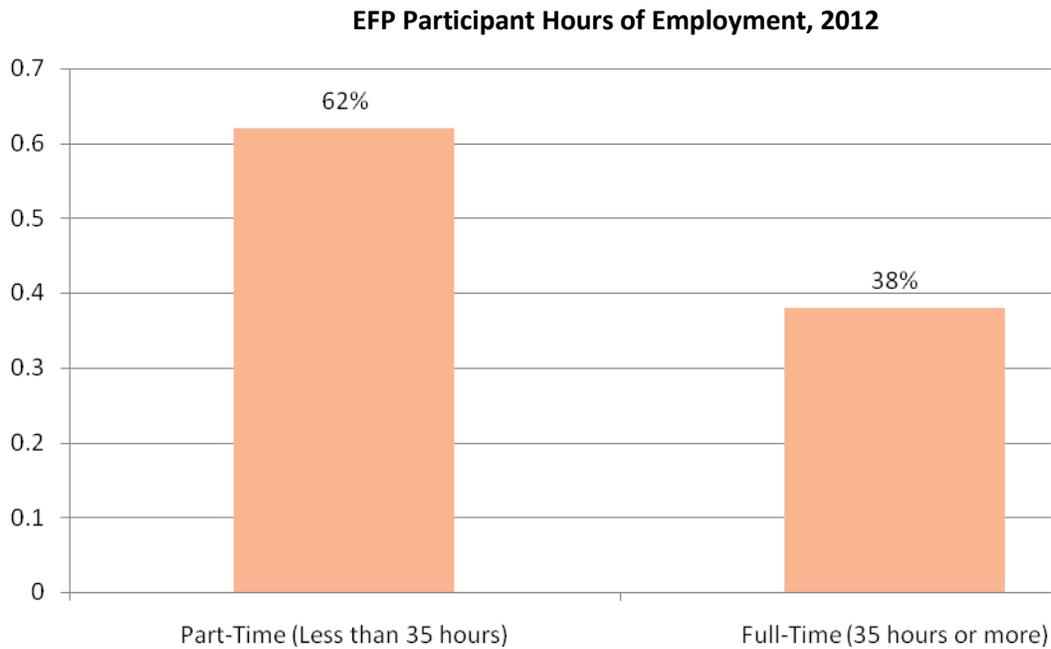
**Employment Status of EFP Participants, by Borough, 2012**

Employment Status	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island
Retired	21%	24%	20%	30%	8%
Employed	13%	19%	15%	3%	19%
Unemployed	35%	36%	41%	40%	38%
Disabled	31%	22%	23%	27%	34%
Total Respondent (n)	201	355	225	244	73

**Hours of Employment**

Among emergency food program participants that reported employment, approximately 60 percent (62 percent) were working less than 35 hours per week. Approximately 40 percent (38 percent) reported working 35 hours per week or more. (See Figure 10.)

**Figure 10**



## Length of Unemployment

As shown in Table 43, approximately one-quarter (27 percent) of emergency food program participants who reported that they were unemployed reported that they had been unemployed for less than one year. Almost 20 percent (19 percent) reported that they had been unemployed for one to two years. More than one-half (53 percent) reported unemployment of more than three years duration.

Emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens were more than twice as likely as those surveyed at food pantries to report being unemployed for more than five years.

Between 2007 and 2012, the percentages of unemployed emergency food program participants reporting short periods of unemployment dropped, and the percentages of unemployed participants reporting long periods of unemployment rose. For instance, the percentage reporting less than six months of unemployment dropped by 18 percentage points, and the percentage reporting three to five years of unemployment rose by 15 percentage points.

**Table 43**

**EFP Participant Time Unemployed, 2007 and 2012**

Time Unemployed	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total	
	2007 <sup>44</sup>	2012 <sup>45</sup>	2007 <sup>46</sup>	2012 <sup>47</sup>	2007 <sup>48</sup>	2012 <sup>49</sup>
Less than Six Months	33%	16%	27%	10%	29%	11%
Six Months to Less than One Year	14%	11%	25%	18%	20%	16%
One Year to Two Years	20%	19%	10%	20%	15%	19%
Three Years to Five Years	15%	23%	20%	36%	18%	33%
More than Five Years	19%	32%	19%	15%	19%	20%
Total Responding (n)	104	110	126	274	230	384

<sup>44</sup> Total is more than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>45</sup> Total is more than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>46</sup> Total is more than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>47</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>48</sup> Total is more than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>49</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

### **Receipt of Unemployment Insurance**

Although over one-third (36 percent) of emergency food program participants reported that they were unemployed (see Table 41), only six percent of unemployed participants reported that they were currently receiving Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. (See Table 44.)

**Table 44**

**EFP Participant Receiving Unemployment Insurance, 2012**

	<b>Soup Kitchen</b>	<b>Food Pantry</b>	<b>Total</b>
Unemployed EFP Participants Receiving UI	5%	7%	6%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	113	265	378

### **INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

#### **Social Security**

As shown in Table 45, approximately one-quarter of emergency food program participants overall (24 percent) reported receiving Social Security benefits. Program participants surveyed at food pantries were more than twice as likely as participants surveyed at soup kitchens to report receiving Social Security benefits. Among emergency food program participants age 65 and above, almost two-thirds (64%) reported receiving Social Security benefits. Program participants age 65 and above surveyed at food pantries were more likely than program participants age 65 and above surveyed at soup kitchens to report receipt of Social Security benefits.

**Table 45**

**EFP Participants Receiving Social Security, 2007 and 2012<sup>50</sup>**

<b>Participant receives Social Security</b>	<b>Soup Kitchen</b>		<b>Food Pantry</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>
All Participants	N/A	13%	N/A	27%	N/A	24%
Age 65 and above	N/A	44%	N/A	67%	N/A	64%

<sup>50</sup> Retirement benefits are only one kind of Social Security benefit. Other kinds of Social Security benefits include “dependent” or “survivor” benefits.

### Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)<sup>51</sup>

As shown in Table 46, approximately one-quarter of emergency food program participants overall (26 percent) reported receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

**Table 46**

#### **EFP Participants Receiving SSI, 2007 and 2012**

Receives SSI	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total	
	2007	2012	2007	2012	2007	2012
	20%	25%	22%	26%	22%	26%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>242</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>879</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>1121</i>

N/A = not available

As shown in Table 47, seven percent of emergency food program participants overall reported receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

**Table 47**

#### **EFP Participants Receiving SSDI, 2007 and 2012**

Receives SSDI	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total	
	2007	2012	2007	2012	2007	2012
	7%	6%	6%	8%	6%	7%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>242</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>879</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>1121</i>

N/A = not available

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<sup>51</sup> Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance programs are the largest of several Federal programs that provide assistance to people with disabilities. Financial need determines eligibility for SSI. To be eligible for SSDI benefits, potential recipients need to have worked for a certain period of time and paid Social Security taxes.

## **Public Assistance**

As shown in Table 48, the overall percentage of emergency food program participants receiving public assistance benefits (or “welfare”) remained relatively stable between 2007 and 2012, although an increase in public assistance receipt was seen for program participants surveyed at soup kitchens.

**Table 48**

**EFP Participants Receiving Public Assistance, 2007 and 2012**

<b>Receives Public Assistance</b>	<b>Soup Kitchen</b>		<b>Food Pantry</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>
EFP Participants Receiving Public Assistance	12%	21%	15%	14%	14%	16%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	358	254	764	911	1122	1165

## **NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

### **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)**

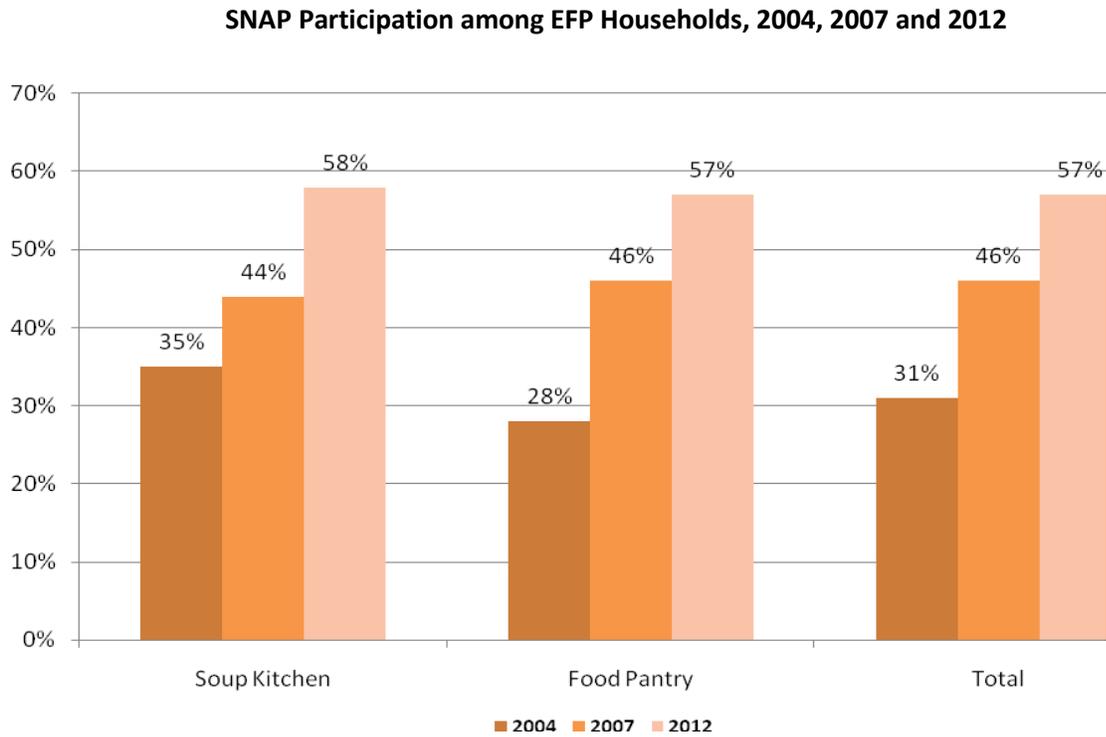
As shown in Table 49, almost 60 percent (57 percent) of emergency food program participants surveyed reported that their household received SNAP benefits. No difference in SNAP benefit receipt was seen between emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens and those surveyed at food pantries.

**Table 49**

<b>Receives SNAP Benefits</b>	<b>Soup Kitchen</b>	<b>Food Pantry</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	58%	57%	57%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	257	945	1202

As illustrated by Figure 11, between 2007 and 2012, receipt of SNAP benefits rose 14 percentage points among program participants surveyed at soup kitchens and 11 percentage points among program participants surveyed at food pantries. Overall, receipt of SNAP benefits rose 11 percentage points.

**Figure 11**



As shown in Table 50, SNAP participation among EFP households increased in every borough between 2007 and 2012. Participation increased the most (by 54 percent) in Queens. In Brooklyn, participation increased by 30 percent; in Staten Island, by 24 percent; and in the Bronx, by 22 percent. Participation increased the least (by ten percent) in Manhattan.

**Table 50**

**SNAP Participation among EFP Households by Borough, 2004, 2007 and 2012**

Household Participates in SNAP			
	2004	2007	2012
Bronx	35%	55%	67%
Brooklyn	29%	46%	60%
Manhattan	37%	59%	65%
Queens	23%	28%	43%
Staten Island	40%	46%	57%

As shown in Table 51, more than three-quarters of emergency food program participant households (78 percent) receiving SNAP benefits received \$200 or less per month. Among soup kitchen program participant households, 85 percent received \$200 or less per month; among food pantry program participant households, 76 percent received \$200 or less per month.

**Table 51**

**SNAP Benefits among EFP Households, 2012**

Monthly SNAP Benefit	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
\$1 to \$100	6%	7%	7%
\$101 to \$200	79%	69%	71%
\$201 to \$300	5%	10%	9%
\$301 to \$400	4%	9%	8%
\$401 to \$500	4%	4%	4%
Over \$500	1%	1%	1%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>483</i>	<i>617</i>

The average monthly SNAP benefit for emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens differed only slightly from the average monthly SNAP benefit for emergency food program participants surveyed at food pantries. (See Table 52.)

**Table 52**

**Average Monthly SNAP Benefit among EFP Households, 2012**

Monthly SNAP Benefit	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total
Mean (average)	\$221	\$231	\$228
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>141</i>	<i>507</i>	<i>648</i>

The average monthly SNAP benefit received by the households of emergency food program participants also participating in SNAP did not differ across the five boroughs, with the exception of Staten Island, the estimate for which was based on a very small number of respondents. (See Table 53.)

**Table 53****Average Monthly SNAP Benefit among EFP Households by Borough, 2012**

Monthly SNAP Benefit	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total	Total Responding (n)
Bronx	\$212	\$233	\$229	128
Brooklyn	\$235	\$226	\$228	213
Manhattan	\$202	\$231	\$222	137
Queens	\$234	\$226	\$226	125
Staten Island	\$211	\$256	\$250	45

Among survey respondents who reported that their household was receiving SNAP benefits, less than one-quarter (24 percent) reported that their benefits lasted four weeks or more. Almost one-half (47 percent) reported that their benefits lasted two weeks or less. (See Table 54.)

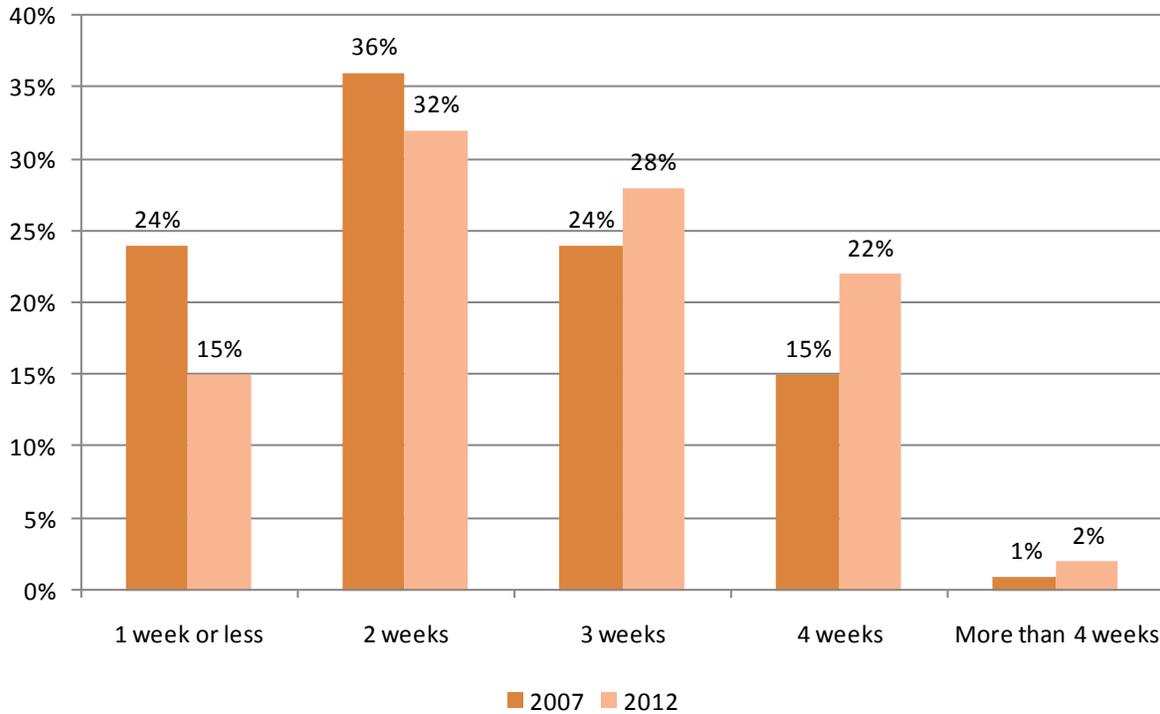
**Table 54****Number of Weeks Monthly SNAP Benefits Last among EFP Households, 2012**

Number of Weeks Monthly SNAP Benefits Last	Soup Kitchen	Food Pantry	Total	
1 week or less	13%	16%	15%	47%
2 weeks	29%	33%	32%	
3 weeks	26%	29%	28%	24%
4 weeks	28%	21%	22%	
More than 4 weeks	5%	2%	2%	
Total Responding (n)	145	512	657	

Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of respondents reporting that their benefits lasted one week or less, or two weeks, declined; and the percentage reporting that their benefits lasted three weeks, four weeks, or more than four weeks, rose. (See Figure 12.)

Figure 12

Number of Weeks Monthly SNAP Benefits Last among EFP Households, 2012



The reason most commonly cited for lack of household participation in SNAP (reported by 25 percent of non-SNAP-participating survey respondents) was that their income was too high for the household to be eligible or that the household was ineligible for some other reason. Thirteen percent of survey respondents reported that they had been denied SNAP or that their SNAP benefits had been terminated. Almost twenty percent (17 percent) claimed that they did not want or need to participate in SNAP. Ten percent thought the SNAP application process was too hard. Many of those who mentioned an “other” reason for not participating cited being undocumented and lacking legal residency in the United States. (See Table 55.)

**Table 55****Reason Household Does Not Participate in SNAP, 2012**

Reason Household does not Participate in SNAP	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Not Aware of Program	23	6%
Don't Know Where to Apply	25	6%
Application Process is Too Hard	41	10%
Don't Have Time to Apply	27	7%
Household Income is Too High/Not Eligible	102	25%
Don't Have An Address	5	1%
Benefits Are Too Low	2	0%
Benefits Were Denied/Terminated	53	13%
Don't Need/Want to Participate	69	17%
Other	72	18%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	403	100%

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100 percent, because survey respondents were asked to “check all that apply.”

**WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children)**

Almost one-half of emergency food program participants with children five years of age or younger (48 percent) reported that their household participated in WIC. (In 2007, 54 percent of emergency food program participants whose households included children five years of age or younger reported participation in WIC.)

The reason most commonly cited for lack of participation (reported by 29 percent of non-participating survey respondents with children five years of age or younger) was simply that they were not aware of the program. Almost twenty percent (16 percent) claimed that they did not want or need to participate in WIC. Almost ten percent (9 percent) said that they did not know where to apply to the program, and another ten percent (9 percent) said they did not have time to apply to the program. Seven percent reported that they had been denied WIC benefits or that their WIC benefits had been terminated. (See Table 56.)

**Table 56****Reason Household Does Not Participate in WIC, 2012**

<b>Reason Household does not Participate in WIC</b>	<b>Percentage of Responses</b>
Not aware of WIC program	29%
Don't know where to apply to WIC program	9%
WIC application process too hard	7%
Don't have time to apply to WIC program	9%
Household income too high	3%
Benefits are too low	0%
Benefits were denied/terminated	7%
Don't need/want to participate in WIC program	16%
Other	21%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>58</i>

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100 percent, because survey respondents were asked to “check all that apply.”

**School Breakfast Program**

Sixty percent of emergency food program participants with school-aged children reported that their children participated in a school breakfast program. (In 2007, 59 percent of emergency food program participants with school-aged children reported that their children participated in a school breakfast program.)

The reason most commonly cited for lack of participation by emergency food program participants with school-aged children (reported by 33 percent of survey respondents) was that their children liked to have breakfast at home. Twenty-eight percent of survey respondents said that their child didn't feel comfortable participating. Twelve percent thought that school breakfast was served too early. “Other” reasons mentioned included breakfast service not being available at their child's school. (See Table 57.)

**Table 57****Reason Household Does Not Participate in School Breakfast Program, 2012**

<b>Reason Household does not Participate in School Breakfast Program</b>	<b>Percentage of Responses</b>
Not aware of school breakfast program	9%
Didn't know I could participate in school breakfast program at my child's school	2%
Child likes to have breakfast at home	33%
Breakfast is served too early	12%
Food allergies/special dietary needs	0%
Child doesn't like food	5%
Child doesn't feel comfortable participating	28%
Don't need/want to participate in school breakfast program	1%
Other	14%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>113</i>

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100 percent, because survey respondents were asked to "check all that apply."

**School Lunch Program**

Seventy percent of emergency food program participants with school-aged children reported that their children participated in a free lunch program. An additional four percent reported that their children participated in a reduced-price lunch program. (In 2007, 71 percent of emergency food program participants with school-aged children reported that their children participated in a free lunch program. Eight percent reported that their children participated in a reduced-price lunch program.)

The reason most commonly cited for lack of participation (reported by 28 percent of non-participating survey respondents) was that their children did not want or need to participate in a free or reduced-price lunch program. Sixteen percent of survey respondents said that they were not aware of a free or reduced-price lunch program. Twelve percent reported that their children did not like the program food. "Other" reasons mentioned by emergency food program participants were that they preferred to pack lunch for their children, that lunch lines were long, or that their children were too embarrassed to participate. (See Table 58.)

**Table 58**

**Reason Household Does Not Participate in Free/Reduced Price School Lunch Program, 2012**

<b>Reason Household does not Participate in Lunch Program</b>	<b>Percentage of Responses</b>
Not aware of free/reduced lunch program	16%
Don't know where to apply for free/reduced lunch program	7%
Free/reduced lunch program application process is too hard	3%
Don't have time to apply to free/reduced lunch program	1%
Household income too high	3%
Food allergies/special dietary needs	0%
Child doesn't like food	12%
Child doesn't feel comfortable participating	4%
Don't need/want to participate in free/reduced lunch program	28%
Other	31%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	<i>68</i>

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100 percent, because survey respondents were asked to “check all that apply.”

**Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

Only one-third (33 percent) of emergency food program participants with school-aged children reported that their children participated in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). (In 2007, 39 percent of emergency food program participants with school-aged children reported that their children participated in SFSP.)

The reason most commonly cited for lack of participation (reported by 32 percent of non-participating survey respondents) was that they did not know about the Summer Food Service Program. Almost one-quarter (24 percent) said that they did not want or need to participate in the program. “Other” reasons mentioned by emergency food program participants were that their children were enrolled in summer camp or day programs or that the family spent summers outside the city. (See Table 59.)

**Table 59**

**Reason Household Does Not Participate in Summer Food Service Program, 2012**

Reason Household does not Participate in SFSP	Percentage of Responses
Not aware of SFSP program	32%
Program is too far	4%
Not here during the summer	11%
Food Allergies/Special Dietary Needs	0%
Child doesn't like food	2%
Child doesn't feel comfortable participating in program	8%
Don't need/want to participate	24%
Other	19%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	229

NOTE: Survey respondents were asked to “check all that apply.”

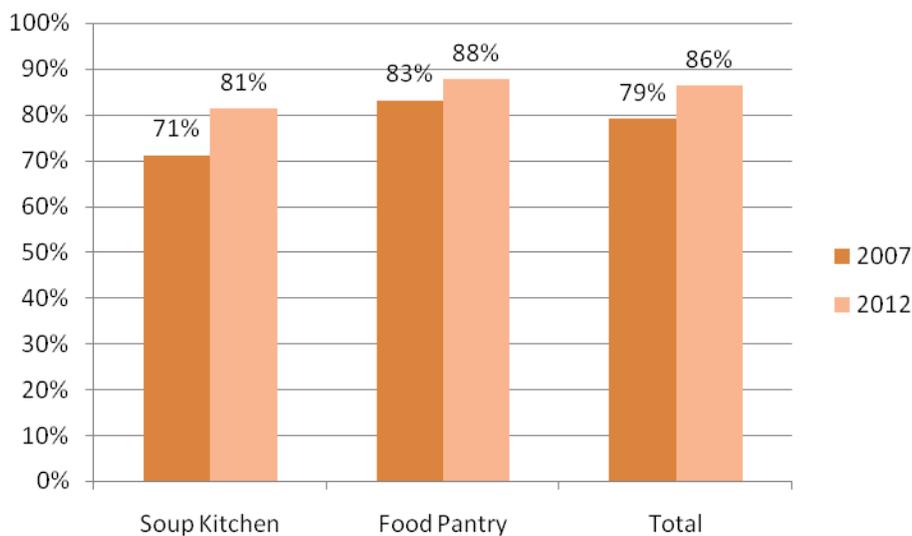
**HEALTH INSURANCE AND HEALTH CONDITIONS**

**Health Insurance**

For 2007, percentages in Figure 13 represent the number of emergency food program participants surveyed who reported that they were covered by some form of health insurance. For 2012, percentages represent the number of emergency food program participants surveyed who reported that either they or their family were covered by health insurance.

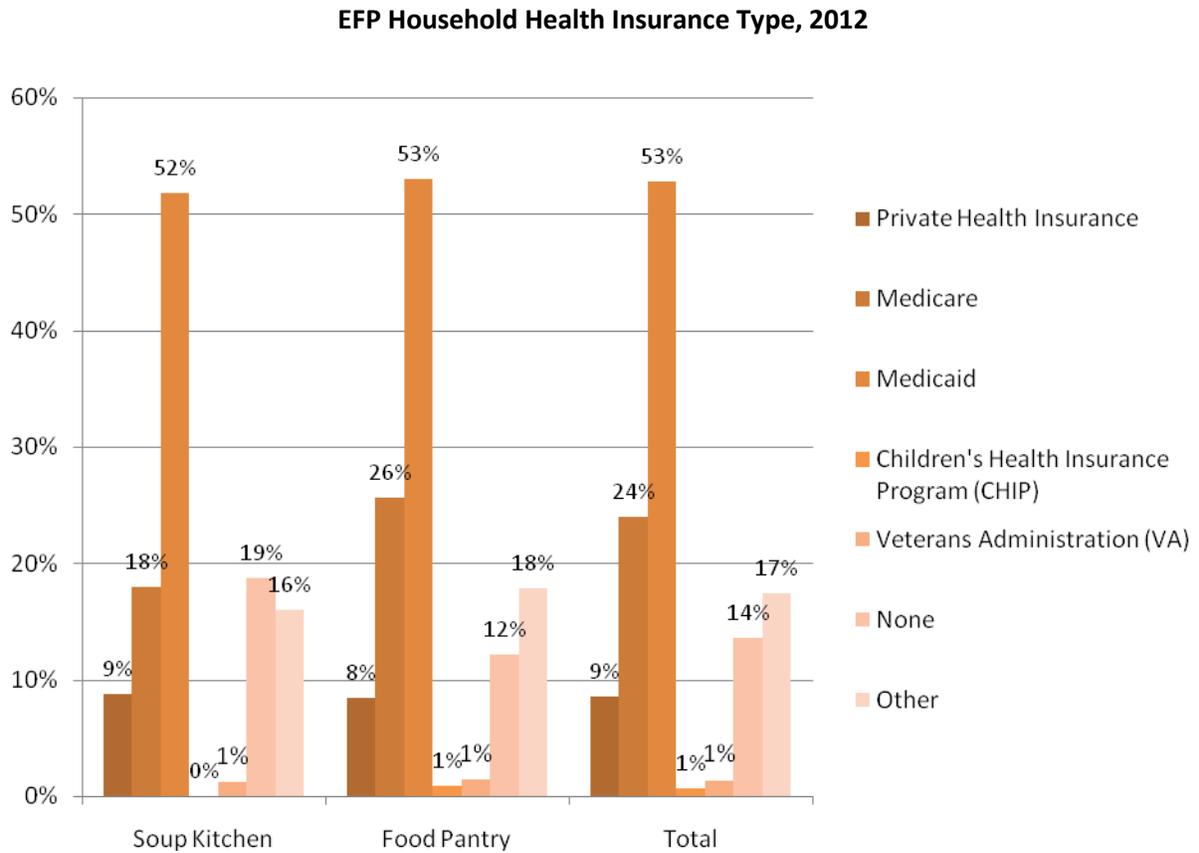
**Figure 13**

**EFP Participants with Health Insurance, 2007 and 2012**



As illustrated by Figure 14, more than one-half (53 percent) of emergency food program participants, or their families, were covered by Medicaid. Approximately one-quarter (24 percent) were covered by Medicare. Less than ten percent carried private insurance.

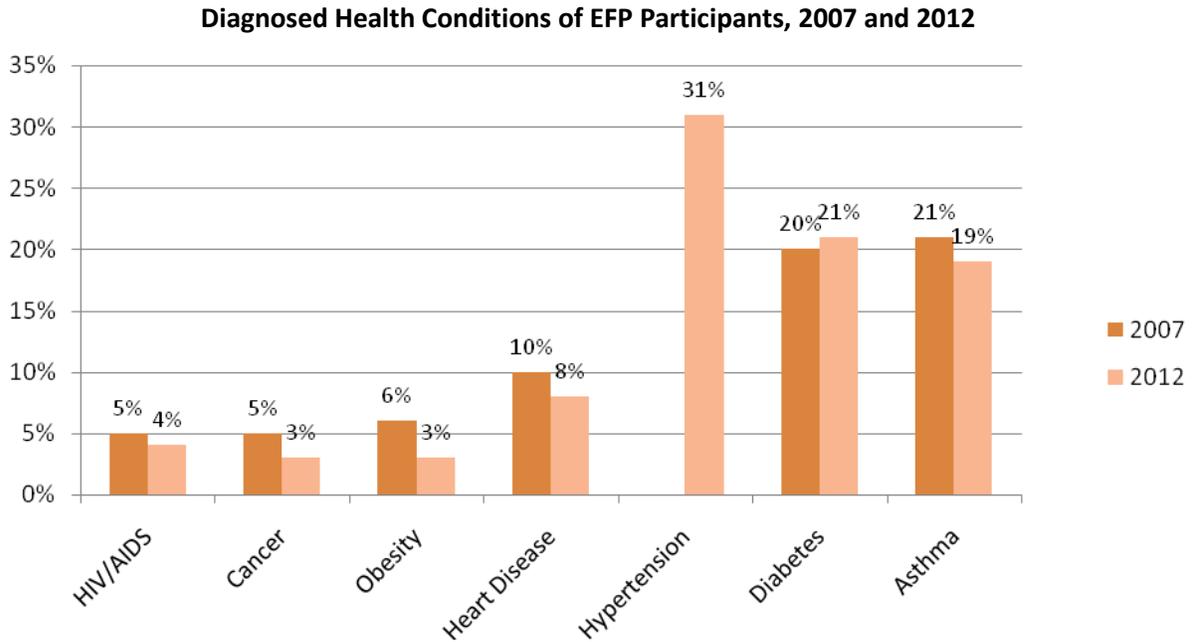
**Figure 14**



**Health Conditions**

As illustrated by Figure 15, approximately one-third (31 percent) of emergency food program participants surveyed reported suffering from hypertension. (Data on hypertension is not available for 2007.) Approximately 20 percent (21 percent) reported suffering from diabetes and approximately 20 percent (19 percent) reported suffering from asthma.

**Figure 15**



As shown in Table 60, respondents surveyed at emergency food programs in the Bronx reported high levels of asthma, diabetes, and heart disease. (Respondents surveyed at emergency food programs on Staten Island reported slightly higher levels of asthma than those in the Bronx.)<sup>52</sup> Hypertension was the most frequently reported diagnosed health condition, reported by 36 percent of emergency food program participants surveyed in Brooklyn, 34 percent of those surveyed in Queens, and 32 percent of those surveyed in the Bronx.

**Table 60**

**Diagnosed Health Conditions of EFP Participants by Borough, 2012**

Diagnosed Health Condition	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island
Asthma	23%	21%	19%	12%	26%
Diabetes	26%	19%	18%	22%	20%
Heart Disease	11%	9%	5%	8%	9%
Hypertension	32%	36%	26%	34%	16%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	198	340	223	306	69

<sup>52</sup> Results for Staten Island should be interpreted with caution give the small sample size for this borough – 75 surveys were completed at emergency food programs in Staten Island.

## HOUSING

### Housing Type

As shown in Table 61, the majority of emergency food program participants (approximately three-quarters, or 76 percent) rent their housing. Over ten percent (11 percent) are homeless. Small percentages of emergency food program participants own their own homes, are living temporarily with family or friends, or report some other kind of housing situation.

Emergency food program participants surveyed at soup kitchens are approximately four times as likely as those surveyed at food pantries to be homeless.

**Table 61**

**Housing Type for EFP Participants, 2007 and 2012**

Housing Type	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total	
	2007 <sup>53</sup>	2012	2007	2012 <sup>54</sup>	2007 <sup>55</sup>	2012
Rent	67%	59%	85%	78%	79%	76%
Own	3%	4%	9%	6%	7%	5%
Homeless	26%	27%	4%	7%	11%	11%
Living Temporarily with Family/Friends	1%	8%	1%	5%	1%	5%
Other	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%	3%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	361	265	766	946	1,127	1,206

<sup>53</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

<sup>54</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

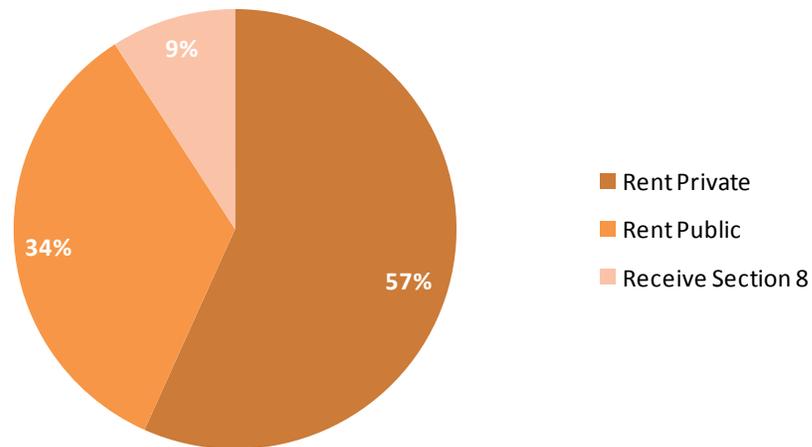
<sup>55</sup> Total is less than 100 percent because of rounding error.

## Rental Type

As illustrated by Figure 16, almost 60 percent (57 percent) of emergency food program participants who rent live in private housing, *i.e.*, do not receive rental assistance in the form of a public housing unit or participation in a Section 8 program.<sup>56</sup>

**Figure 16**

**Rental Type for EFP Participants Who Rent, 2012**



As illustrated by Figure 17, Queens has the highest percentage of emergency food program participants who rent private housing, followed by Staten Island.<sup>57</sup> Manhattan has the highest percentage of emergency food program participants who rent public housing.

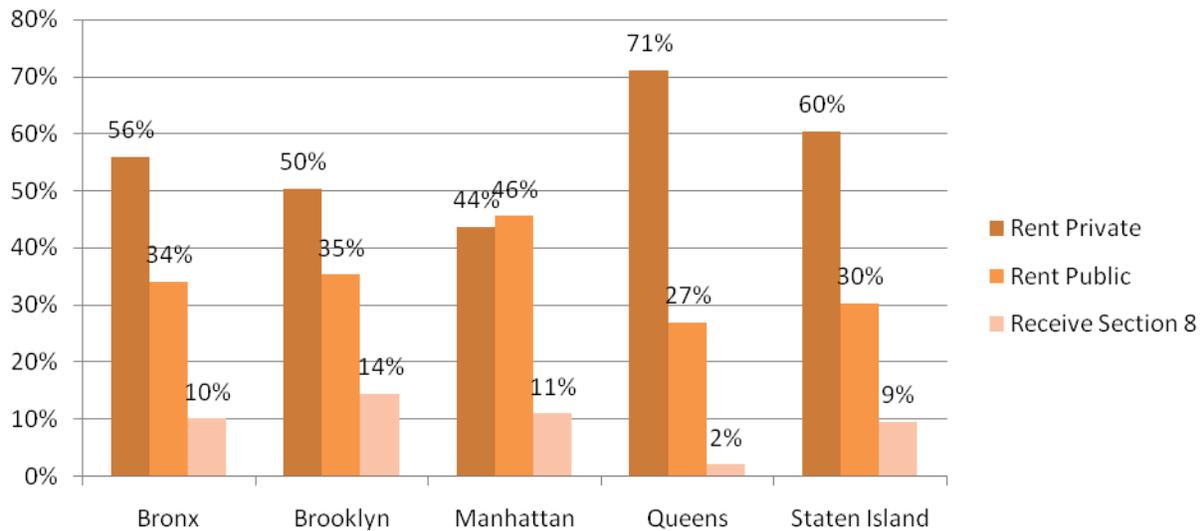
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<sup>56</sup> The Section 8 program issues vouchers to low-income households that they can use to rent housing in the private market.

<sup>57</sup> Results for Staten Island should be interpreted with caution give the small sample size for this borough – 75 surveys were completed at emergency food programs in Staten Island.

**Figure 17**

**Rental Type for EFP Participants Who Rent by Borough, 2012**



**VOTER REGISTRATION AND HISTORY**

As noted earlier, 77 percent of emergency food program participants reported that they were U.S. citizens; 16 percent, that they were legal residents. (See Figure 9.)

Among emergency food program participants that reported citizenship, 85 percent said that they were registered to vote. Among registered voters, 92 percent said that they had voted in the past. (See Table 62.)

**Table 62**

**EFP Participant Voter Registration/ Voting History, 2007 and 2012**

Voter Registration Status (among citizens)	Soup Kitchen		Food Pantry		Total	
	2007	2012	2007	2012	2007	2012
Registered to Vote	82%	80%	88%	86%	86%	85%
Total Responding (n)	311	206	617	673	928	879
Voting History (among registered voters)						
Has Voted in Past	90%	91%	94%	92%	93%	92%
Total Responding (n)	249	171	537	602	786	773

Across the five boroughs, the proportions of citizens registered to vote are quite similar. As regards voting history among registered voters, Brooklyn and Staten Island had lower percentages emergency program participants reporting that they had voted in the past. (See Table 63.)

**Table 63**

**EFP Participant Voter Registration/ Voting History by Borough, 2012**

	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island
<b>Voter Registration Status (among citizens)</b>					
Registered to Vote	86%	83%	85%	87%	85%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	150	278	163	230	58
<b>Voting History (among registered voters)</b>					
Has Voted in Past	87%	95%	93%	91%	84%
<i>Total Responding (n)</i>	131	242	146	203	51

## **PART SIX: POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Emergency food is the last line of defense against hunger. A food pantry or soup kitchen is a source of needed food to which individuals and families turn when income, benefits, and the generosity of friends and family have been exhausted. The safety net against hunger is resourced both publicly, through a suite of government programs (e.g., SNAP, WIC, school and summer meals) designed to provide access to adequate nutrition year-round, and privately, through the charitable donations of individuals, foundations, and corporations. This detailed look at the 1.4 million New Yorkers who rely on emergency food illustrates the interconnectedness and complementarity of all of these programs in real people's lives – but also reveals the gaps where connections do not exist but could be made.

Of the myriad conclusions that can be drawn from this report, a number have distinct implications for public policy, and point to ways in which the hunger safety net can be strengthened and the emergency food system that nourishes one in six New York City residents can be leveraged to better connect participants to the sustainable food and income supports available through other programs.

### **SNAP**

The 2012 data show an increase in the number of emergency food program participants who receive SNAP, the continuation of a trend that began in the period following release of Food Bank For New York City's 2004 Hunger Safety Net report, which showed that a shocking 69 percent of emergency food participants, many income-eligible, were not enrolled in SNAP. Strategic investments of public and private dollars targeting emergency food program participants for SNAP outreach and application assistance resulted in an increase in enrollment from 31 percent in 2004 to 46 percent enrollment by 2007. Since 2007, continuing outreach efforts, along with a general swell in SNAP participation among New York City residents, have resulted in an increase in the percentage of emergency food program participants enrolled in SNAP to 57 percent.<sup>58</sup>

In early 2009, in the throes of the Great Recession, Congress and the White House passed the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA). Recognizing that low-income Americans would be vulnerable in such a massive economic upheaval, ARRA included a number of measures to increase their security in uncertain times, including an up-front increase to SNAP benefits, scheduled to expire when food inflation lifted underlying benefit amounts to the ARRA-boosted level.<sup>59</sup>

Comparing data collected for Food Bank's Hunger Safety Net report in 2007, before the recession, to data collected while this benefit increase was still in place in 2012, it is possible to see the impact of the increase. Most notably, the percentage of emergency food participants enrolled in SNAP who reported that their benefits lasted past the third week of the month increased by 56 percent between 2007 and 2012, from 16 percent to 25 percent.

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<sup>58</sup> Conversely, 42 percent of SNAP recipients access emergency food.

<sup>59</sup> SNAP benefits are indexed annually to changes in food costs.

Benefit adequacy remains an issue, particularly in New York City, where the cost of food and the rate of food inflation routinely exceed national averages. 2012 data show that most emergency food participants who receive SNAP receive a *household* allotment of \$200 or less for food for the month. In a city where food-secure households spend nearly three dollars per person per meal,<sup>60</sup> these benefits are hardly generous. Nevertheless, in light of the heightened need and numerous emergency food program closures that took place during the recession, this finding offers both a measure of hope – more emergency food participants are receiving SNAP, and the benefits they receive are lasting longer – and a warning: the demand placed on the emergency food system could have been far greater without this benefit increase.

Less than two years after passing ARRA, Congress and the White House enacted a clawback of the SNAP benefit increase included in the Act that will result in across-the-board cuts to SNAP benefits in November 2013. The resultant loss – the equivalent of 76 million meals in New York City alone – actually exceeds Food Bank For New York City’s annual food distribution. A promise by the White House to work with Congress to restore the funding needed to avoid benefit losses was not fulfilled – and Congress is considering additional cuts to SNAP benefits as part of Farm Bill deliberations.

While we will never know who the ARRA benefit increase kept off food pantry and soup kitchen lines through the worst of the recession, we will see who is forced to join these lines by the sudden loss of needed SNAP dollars. Washington’s SNAP-cutting strategies will leave vulnerable New Yorkers worse off – with emergency food providers unprepared to meet additional need. Congress should instead be looking at ways to permanently ensure that households receive adequate SNAP benefits, by changing the basis for benefit amounts and/or by indexing benefit amounts to regional variations in the cost of food.<sup>61</sup>

In light of looming SNAP cuts, State and City government agencies should also work to ensure that community-based organizations offering SNAP application assistance are well versed in underutilized deductions available to SNAP applicants (*e.g.*, expenses related to dependent care and medical care) to ensure households receive the full SNAP allotment to which they are entitled. In addition, public and private players in the emergency food system must redouble their efforts to ensure that emergency food participants and members of their households are effectively connected not only to SNAP, but to any other nutrition assistance programs to which they might be entitled.

### **Child Nutrition Programs**

Child nutrition programs, such as school meals and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), remain distressingly underutilized by households that participate in emergency food programs. In New York

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<sup>60</sup> According to research conducted by Feeding America, the average cost of a meal prepared in a food secure home in New York City is \$2.94 per person – or approximately \$267 per month.

<sup>61</sup> SNAP benefits are based on the average cost of what is known as the Thrifty Food Plan, a market basket of foods designed to provide a minimum level of nutrition. Anti-hunger advocates have called for the adoption of a different market basket – the Low-Cost Food Plan – a slightly more substantial mix of foods, costing approximately 30 percent more than the Thrifty Food Plan, as the basis for SNAP benefit allotments.

City's public schools, free breakfasts are available to every child, and with the elimination of the reduced-price category in New York City's fiscal year 2014 budget, free lunches became available to approximately 75 percent of students. Many factors contribute to low participation in free school meals programs – stigma among the most deleterious. That participation among emergency food program participant households with children – arguably families with the most acute and obvious food needs – is only 60 percent for school breakfast, and 70 percent for school lunch, suggests that a two-pronged approach is needed: (1) directly addressing barriers to participation; and (2) targeting outreach and education households that receive emergency food.

Successful strategies that address barriers to school meals participation are well documented. School breakfast participation increases dramatically when breakfast is served in first-period classrooms. Unfortunately, in New York City the norm is a cafeteria breakfast served 30 minutes before the start of the school day – which segregates participating students (contributing to stigma) and causes scheduling difficulties for some families. An initiative launched in 2007 by then-Schools Chancellor Joel Klein to offer Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) was discontinued after a target of 300 schools was reached. Some participating schools launched the program in as few as two classrooms. It comes as little surprise, then, that school breakfast participation among emergency food program participant households remains essentially unchanged since 2007, when the percentage of households participating was 59 percent.

School lunch participation increases dramatically – especially among high school and middle school students – when schools adopt universal school meals (USM).<sup>62</sup> Young children are less sensitive to distinctions made on the basis of income, but as students get older, their awareness of these differences increases, and their participation in the school meals programs drops, presumably as a result of the stigma they feel when they are singled out for this benefit. USM reverses this trend and allows all children, no matter what their age, the opportunity to receive a nutritious, balanced lunch 180 days of the school year without embarrassment or fear.

While the federal government covers the bulk of the cost of school lunch and breakfast programs, New York State and/or City government could elect to cover the non-federal share of program costs, rendering school meals free to every student. The National School Lunch Program offers a number of provisions that, applied strategically, could maximize federal reimbursements for meal costs and minimize the investment required of State and/or City government for implementation.

In 2012, participation by emergency food program households in SFSP stood at a dismal 33 percent. (In 2007, the comparable percentage for SFSP breakfast was 31 percent; and for SFSP lunch, 37 percent.) One barrier to participation in SFSP is lack of knowledge about the program opportunity among households that receive emergency food. Lack of awareness is also a barrier to participation in WIC.

Much as SNAP outreach strategies were crafted to target emergency food participants once low levels of enrollment were discovered, the relatively low levels of participation among emergency food program participant households across the range of child nutrition programs calls for a similar strategy. The data

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<sup>62</sup> *Community Eligibility: Making High-Poverty Schools Hunger Free*. Food Research and Action Center, 2013.

show that SNAP outreach among emergency food participants has worked to increase participation rates, and it can serve as a model for a thoughtful, targeted strategy to increase participation in child nutrition programs as well.

### **Emergency Food**

While SNAP and child nutrition programs can help keep food-impooverished families off food pantry and soup kitchen lines, this report clearly shows that for many of the 1.4 million New Yorkers who rely on emergency food, a food pantry or soup kitchen is part of a multi-pronged strategy to put food on the table – at least at current participation levels and benefit amounts.

Importantly, more than half of emergency food program participants identify emergency food as their main source of produce, and for nearly half, it is also their main source of protein. This speaks at once both to the tremendous efforts expended over several years to improve the nutritional quality of emergency food, and to how costly these products can be, relative to other foods at neighborhood supermarkets, grocery stores and bodegas.

Approximately one in five emergency food participants in New York City has already been turned away from a food pantry or soup kitchen at some point due to lack of sufficient food. Emergency food providers already ration existing food supplies, providing, on average, 5.8 meals per pantry bag rather than the standard of nine meals per person; despite rationing, more than 60 percent of food pantries and soup kitchens are experiencing food shortages.<sup>63</sup> In light of looming SNAP cuts, protecting – and bolstering – the emergency food supply ought to be every policymaker’s imperative.

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<sup>63</sup> *Serving Under Stress Post Recession: The State of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens Today*. Food Bank For New York City. 2012.

## **PART SEVEN: METHODOLOGY**

An initial sample of 125 sites was drawn in September 2011 from 745 active soup kitchens and food pantries in Food Bank For New York City’s network, as displayed in Table A:

**Table A**

<b>Borough</b>	<b>Distribution of SK</b>	<b>Distribution of FP</b>	<b>Distribution of Programs</b>	<b>HSN 2012 Soup Kitchen Sample</b>	<b>HSN 2012 Food Pantry Sample</b>	<b>Total Sample Size</b>
<b>Bronx</b>	21%	79%	21%	5	21	26
<b>Brooklyn</b>	22%	78%	33%	9	33	42
<b>Manhattan</b>	34%	66%	21%	9	17	26
<b>Queens</b>	17%	83%	21%	4	22	26
<b>Staten Island</b>	18%	82%	4%	1	4	5
<b>Total</b>	23%	77%	100%	28	97	125

To ensure proportionality, sites were randomly selected from each borough according to the number and distribution of food pantries and soup kitchens across boroughs as of September 2011. Within boroughs, sample selection was aligned with percentage soup kitchens and percentage food pantries.

As seen in Table B, an initial target of 1,250 for total number of emergency food program participants surveyed was set. To ensure proportionality, number of interviews attempted per site was based on the total population in New York City (according to the U.S. Census 2010 American Community Survey), as distributed across the five boroughs.

**Table B**

<b>Borough</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Population Distribution</b>	<b>HSN 2012 Sample Size</b>	<b># of Interviews Conducted Per Site</b>
<b>Bronx</b>	1,386,657	17%	212	8
<b>Brooklyn</b>	2,508,340	31%	387	9
<b>Manhattan</b>	1,586,698	19%	238	9
<b>Queens</b>	2,233,841	27%	338	13
<b>Staten Island</b>	469,363	6%	75	15
<b>Total</b>	8,184,899	100%	1,250	

Sometimes, sites in the initial sample drawn did not produce enough emergency food program participant interviews for particular boroughs and program types, so additional sites were chosen at random and added to the total number of sites visited, as displayed in Table C:

**Table C**

	<b>HSN 2011 Soup Kitchen Sample</b>	<b>HSN 2012 Food Pantry Sample</b>	<b>Total Sample Size</b>
<b>Bronx</b>	6	23	29
<b>Brooklyn</b>	10	36	46
<b>Manhattan</b>	11	17	28
<b>Queens</b>	5	25	30
<b>Staten Island</b>	3	5	8
<b>Total</b>	35	106	141

When sites produced too many interviews to ensure the proportionality described in Table B, excess surveys were eliminated at random. The total number of interviews on which analyses in the report are based, broken down by borough and type of emergency food program, is displayed in Table D:

**Table D**

	<b>Number of Interviews, Food Pantry</b>	<b>Number of Interviews, Soup Kitchen</b>	<b>Sum of Interviews</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
<b>Bronx</b>	40	168	208	17%
<b>Brooklyn</b>	81	297	378	31%
<b>Manhattan</b>	80	153	233	19%
<b>Queens</b>	49	286	335	27%
<b>Staten Island</b>	15	60	75	6%
<b>Total</b>	265	964	1,229	100%

NOTE: Usually, participants surveyed at an emergency food program in a particular borough reported that they were a resident of that borough. 31 percent (N=378) of survey respondents reported that they were residents of Brooklyn; 28 percent (N=338) that they were residents of Queens; 19 percent (N=230) that they were residents of the Bronx; 16 percent (N=199) that they were residents of Manhattan; and six percent (N=75) that they were residents of Staten Island. Five respondents lived outside of New York City, and four did not report residence.

All survey administrators underwent training in the survey and how to administer it before being sent into the field. At emergency food program sites, program participants were approached at random and asked if they would allow the survey to be administered. Not everyone who was approached agreed to participate, introducing some self-selection bias into the sample. No more than one person per household was interviewed, and the survey was administered only to program participants age 18 or older. Potential respondents were told that their participation in the survey was voluntary and that their answers would be kept confidential. No names were ever recorded. Most surveys were administered in English; however, Spanish language versions of the survey instrument were made available at every site.