

NYC PANDEMIC HUNGER CRISIS:

SAFETY NET SOARS
WHILE CHARITIES
STRUGGLE

~~HUNGER~~
FREE
AMERICA

New York City Hunger Report, 2020

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Executive Summary

Key Findings:

New York City

- New York City food pantries and soup kitchens fed 65.1 percent more people in 2020 than the previous year, compared to annual increases of ten percent in 2019, five percent in 2018, six percent in 2017, nine percent in 2016, and five percent in 2015
- In 2020, 36.6 percent of pantries and kitchens in New York were forced to turn people away, reduce their portion sizes, and/or limit their hours of operation due to a lack of resources. In contrast, the proportion of feeding agencies that were forced to reduce food distribution due to lack of resources was 15.9 percent in 2019.
- The citywide SNAP (formerly called Food Stamps) caseload in March 2020 was 1,483,230, and this figure rose by 222,107 people (15 percent) to 1,705,337 in September 2020. The increase in caseload from March 2020 to April 2020 – an increase of 68,714 people – was the largest one-month increase in NYC’s history since 1980.
- SNAP benefits received by NYC residents in March 2020 totaled \$217,906,749 and rose by \$80,783,417 (37 percent) to \$298,690,166 in August 2020.
- These increases in SNAP dwarfed the increase in all the charities combined, as SNAP provides an estimated 15 times the dollar amount of food distributed by emergency feeding programs. If the current NYC SNAP caseload and spending remains flat from September 2020, the SNAP program will provide \$3.6 billion in federally-funded food dollars to low-income New York City residents in the next 12 months.

New York State (Outside of New York City)

- 14.8 percent of food pantry and soup kitchen respondents reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2020.
- 70.4 percent of respondents who reported an increase in people served since the start of Covid-19 attributed the increase to adults having lost their jobs and/or incomes. 40.7 percent of organizations attributed the increase to the loss of school meals, while 22.2 percent of pantries and kitchens cited the closing of senior centers as a reason for the increase in services needed.
- In March 2020, 2,561,187 state residents (including those in NYC) received SNAP, obtaining \$355,020,610 in federally-funded benefits. By August 2020, the caseload had

increased to 2,756,187 people, and the total amount of benefits received that month had increased to \$488,159,706. Thus, the caseload increased by eight percent, and the benefits amount increased by 38 percent over just those five months, the most rapid increase in the history of the modern SNAP/Food Stamp Program since it was created in 1977. This increase also dwarfed the increase in all the charities combined. If the current caseload and spending remains flat from August 2020, the SNAP program will provide \$5.9 billion in federal-funded food dollars to low-income New York State residents in the next 12 months.

Table 1 - Comparison of EFP Usage in NYC, NYS, and Nationwide

	NYC	NYS (excluding NYC)	NYS (including NYC)	Nationwide
Did not distribute enough food to meet demand	25.4%	3.7%	21.7%	11.2%
Increase in people due to loss of school meals	29.9%	40.7%	31.8%	42.1%
Increase in people due to senior centers closed	45.7%	22.2%	41.6%	28.6%
Increase in people due to adults losing jobs/income	80.3%	70.4%	78.6%	75.9%
Increase in people due to immigrants scared to get government help	48.8%	22.2%	44.2%	22.6%
Have not seen an increase in people	12.6%	22.2%	14.3%	18.8%
Increase in people due to other reasons	15.0%	11.1%	14.3%	18.1%
Forced to turn people away, reduce food distributed, or limit	15.9%	3.7%	13.8%	4.8%

hours due to lack of resources in 2019				
Forced to turn people away, reduce food distributed, or limit hours due to lack of resources in 2020	36.6%	14.8%	32.9%	22.5%
Experienced a reduction in staff/volunteers due to COVID-19	52.4%	57.7%	53.3%	71.2%

I. A Message from Hunger Free America CEO Joel Berg

“Worser” isn’t a word in English but it should be. Since the 1980s, things have gone from bad to worse for low-income Americans. Since the pandemic, they’ve gone from worse to worser.

America’s – and New York State’s and New York City’s -- sky-high levels of hunger, poverty, and homelessness – even pre-pandemic – exemplify the decline of the U.S. middle class, and vast racial and gender disparities in our society. These are the central domestic challenges of our times.

In 2018, when the economy was still strong overall, Hunger Free America found that while the number of people unable to afford an adequate supply of food decreased in New York City, the Metropolitan region, and New York State over the previous six years due to rising wages and low unemployment, because the costs of housing and other basic living expenses were so high, hunger was just as high then as it was before the recession. We found that 1.04 million City residents – one in eight – were food insecure in 2016-2018. The City had 290,996 children who lived in food insecure households and 300,717 working adults who were food insecure.

The Bronx remained New York City’s hungriest borough in every category, with more than one in five Bronx residents (23.1 percent) experiencing food insecurity. This included 30.5 percent of all children, nearly 15 percent of working adults, and more than 20 percent of older residents (ages 60+).

Statewide in New York, a whopping 2.1 million state residents, including 15 percent of all children and 7 percent of all working adults, lived in food insecure homes from 2016-2018.

The pandemic and the national economic collapse during the last eight months has made tens of millions of Americans who were previously poor and hungry poorer and hungrier, and pushed tens of millions of others, previously treading water just above the poverty line, into poverty and hunger.

Since the pandemic hit, tens of millions of Americans lost jobs and/or a significant portion of their income. Many of the 29 million U.S. children who received free or reduced-price school meals failed to get them. Many of the hundreds of thousands of older Americans who received meals at senior centers failed to get them.

New York State and City faced similar problems. The City of New York estimated that 2 million city residents had become food insecure, and Hunger Free America believes that is likely an

accurate estimate. That means one in four New York City residents are now struggling against hunger.

Statewide in New York, according to federal data analyzed by Northwestern University, food insecurity more than doubled this year, from 10.5 percent to 22.9 percent

While the dollar amount of food provided by charities is dwarfed by the dollar amount of food provided by government nutrition assistance programs – both when the economy is strong and when it is weak – food charities still play an important role in filling in the gaps in the safety net, especially for immigrants and low-income working people ineligible for many government programs. Because many of the neighborhood-based food charities are staffed by employees and volunteers who are above the age of 60, and thus especially vulnerable to COVID-19, many of them shut down during the pandemic, further depriving hungry Americans of vital sources of food.

Hunger Free America, along with leading physicians, has documented how the hunger crisis makes it even harder to keep COVID-19 in check. New York's hungriest neighborhoods also have the highest death and infection rates. Malnourished older adults are more likely to require institutionalization, which further increases their odds of contracting and spreading COVID-19. A large body of scientific evidence has shown the connection between malnourishment and compromised immunity. The World Health Organization acknowledges: "the combination of communicable diseases and malnutrition (as) a major public health problem, particularly among infants and children... Both undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies increase the morbidity and mortality from communicable diseases. The relationship is synergistic; malnutrition compromises natural immunity leading to increased susceptibility to infection and more frequent and severe episodes of communicable diseases." Even in "normal" times, hunger and obesity are related. Healthy food is often more costly and less readily available in low-income neighborhoods. Heavily processed food, which tends to have more sugar and sodium, is cheaper and easier to ship and store in this crisis. Therefore, impoverished Americans who increasingly rely on these foods also face greater likelihood of developing diabetes and heart disease, adding to their risk of dying from COVID-19.

This report illustrates that -- while charitable food pantries and soup kitchens are vital in fighting hunger -- their role is dwarfed by that of the government food safety net.

Throughout the crisis, the City and State governments have worked rapidly to meet the growing need for food. The City ramped up its Grab and Go meals program for kids and expanded to all New Yorkers in need, postponed SNAP recertification processes, and implemented a home meal delivery service for vulnerable New Yorkers. Simultaneously, New York State instated the Pandemic-EBT program without an application process for children to receive funds to cover

meals while schools were closed, and has continued to allow SNAP households to receive the maximum benefit amount for which they are eligible.

But more needs to be done to end hunger in America. The federal government, New York State, and New York City need to guarantee living wage jobs for all adults able to work, ensure that quality health care, housing, and childcare are affordable, and provide an adequate federal nutrition safety net to ensure that everyone has access to nutritious food.

Let's work together to build the movement necessary to make that a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joel Berg". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Joel Berg

CEO, Hunger Free America

II. Methodology

Survey of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens

Our 2020 survey of food pantries and soup kitchens was sent to a list of agencies in New York that were believed to operate food pantries, soup kitchens, and/or some variety of emergency food program (EFP). This list of agencies was extracted from Hunger Free America's national database of feeding programs and *Neighborhood Guides to Food and Assistance*, which is regularly updated and maintained.

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

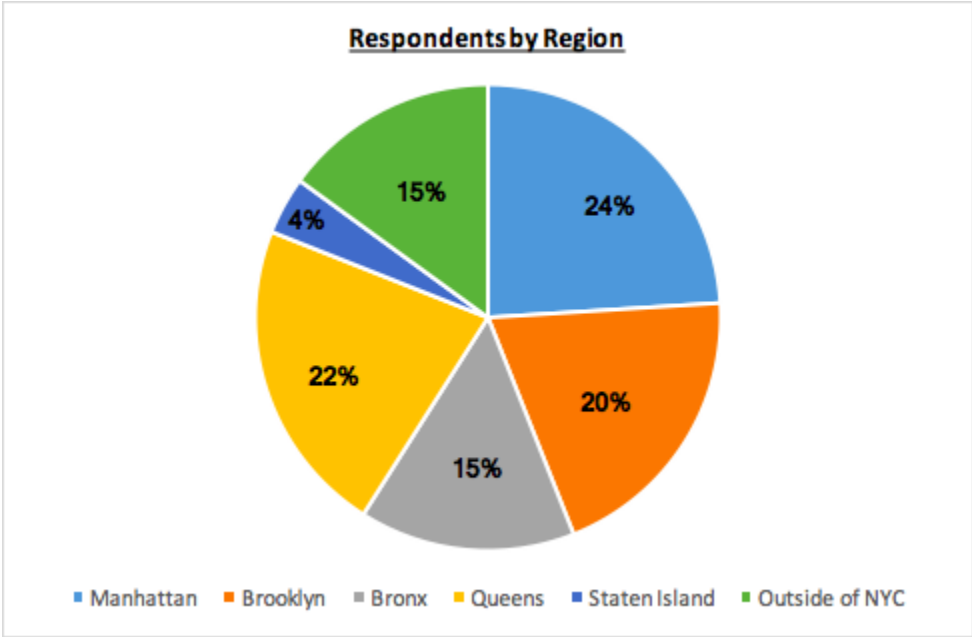
In total, 198 responses were collected. Responses were analyzed by HFA staff and volunteers, with follow-up calls being made to those responses which required clarification.

III. Emergency Food Provider Survey Results

Distribution by Region

Out of the respondents to our NYS Annual Hunger Survey, 24.2% operated in Manhattan, 19.7% operated in Brooklyn, 14.6% operated in the Bronx, 22.2% operated in Queens, 4.0% operated in Staten Island, and 15.2% operated outside of NYC (figure 1).

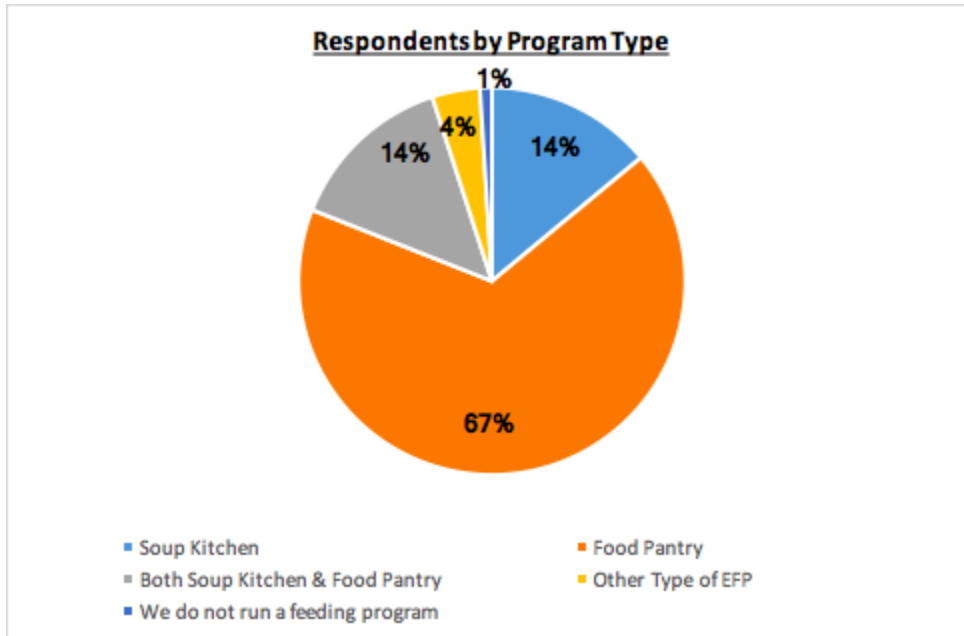
Figure 1 – Respondents by Region



Program Type

Out of the respondents, 14.1% were soup kitchens, 66.7% were food pantries, 14.1% were both a soup kitchen and food pantry, and 4.0% operated other emergency food programs, like mobile trucks, senior congregate feeding sites, and brown bag programs (figure 2). 96.4% were open to the public and only 3.6% require a referral to be served.

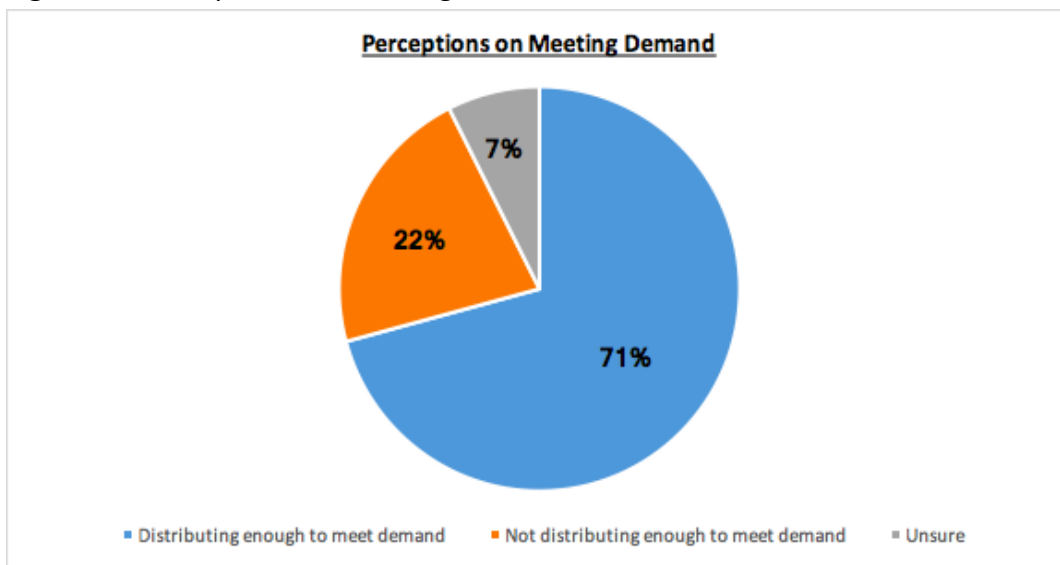
Figure 2 – Respondents by Program Type



Changes in Demand

70.8% of respondents indicated that they distributed enough food to meet their current demand, while more than a fifth of respondents (21.7%) said they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand (figure 3). The remaining 7.5% of respondents were unsure if they were meeting demand.

Figure 3 – Perceptions on Meeting Demand

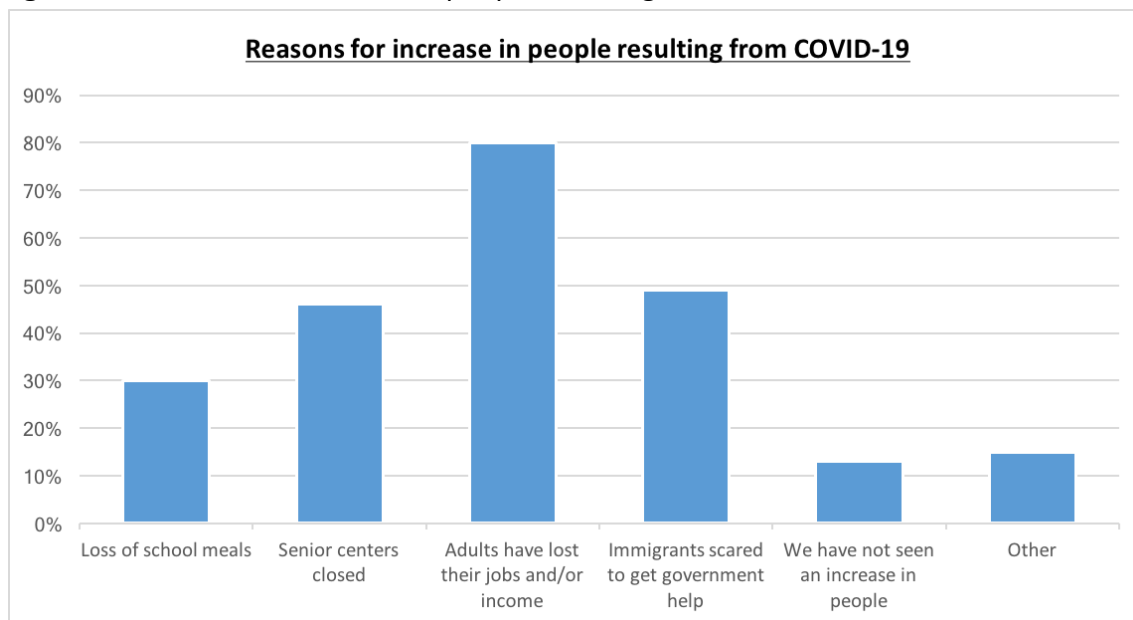


Food pantries and soup kitchens experienced an estimated 65.1% increase in the number of people served in 2020. This is in addition to an increase of 10% in 2019, 5% in 2018, 6% in 2017, 9% in 2016, 5% in 2015, and 7% in 2014.

When asked if respondents knew of any feeding programs that have shut down in the past year, or if any new programs had opened up since last fall, 16.7% responded yes. This is more than double the response to the same question in 2019 (6.5%).

Respondents were also asked about what reasons have driven an increase in people since the start of COVID-19's spread. The primary reason was adults losing their jobs and/or income (78.6%), followed by immigrants being scared to receive government help (44.2%), senior centers closing (41.6%), and loss of school meals (31.8%) (figure 4). 14.3% of respondents cited other reasons, such as immigrants losing jobs in restaurants, homebound clients, parents staying home with children due to remote learning, decreased access to natural supports (i.e. family members), increased homelessness, word of mouth from shelters, and general increases with no known specific causes. Some also described initial increases at the start of the pandemic, followed by a reduction due to school meals, an increase in food stamps, and an increase in local efforts to provide food. Many noted demand has recently increased as school meals dwindle and temporary offices close. 14.3% stated they have not seen an increase in people since the start of COVID-19's spread.

Figure 4 – Reasons for increase of people resulting from COVID-19



Resources

32.9% of respondents reported that they were forced to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2020. This number has more than doubled from the 13.8% who reported the same for 2019. Each year we ask respondents to reflect on this question for both the current and previous year. Historically, this number has stayed around 33% with changes between the two years only changing at a magnitude of a few percentage points. In 2019, 34% said they had to turn people away in 2019 compared to 31% in 2018. In 2018, 34% said they had to turn people away in 2018 compared to 33% in 2017. It is likely that COVID-19 may have affected the respondents' perception of this question and/or their recollection of the previous year.

More than half of respondents (53.3%) reported experiencing a reduction in staffing/volunteer assistance since the start of COVID-19. 44.7% said they had not experienced a reduction in staffing or volunteers, while the remaining 2.0% were unsure.

Nearly one fourth of respondents (24.7%) said they could use more skilled volunteers, while 34.2% said they could use more volunteers to serve customers/clients directly. One in five respondents (20.2%) reported they could use more volunteers to advocate for their populations/government funding for their programs. 7.0% of respondents said they could use more volunteers but do not have the staff to manage them, while 51.9% said they did not need more volunteers.

Recommended Policy Changes

This year we provided programs surveyed with a list of potential policy changes that have been suggested to fight hunger and asked feeding programs to check all of the policy recommendations they felt would reduce hunger in their area (table 2). The results were as follows:

Table 2 – Percentage of Respondents That Supported Select Policy Recommendations

Enable low-income people to get higher paying jobs and/or save for the future without losing government food benefits	68.1%
Make it easier for eligible people to obtain all key government benefits—with one easy application – through a computer or smartphone	66.7%

Increase the national minimum wage and index future raises to the rate of inflation	65.3%
Increase the minimum SNAP benefit from \$16 to \$30 per month	65.3%
Increase the purchasing power of SNAP benefits, which, at the start of this year, equaled about \$1.34 per meal	64.6%
Make all school meals universal, free, and nutritious, regardless of family income	64.6%
Make WIC benefits an entitlement, so any low-income pregnant woman or child under 5 can get this extra nutrition assistance	62.5%
Enable state and local government agencies, as well as local charities, to work hand-in-hand with low-income people and families to give them more money while jointly agreeing to long-term plans to help those people and families get ahead in the long-run by getting better jobs, saving more money, obtaining more education and job training, purchasing their own homes, and/or putting away more money for their retirement.	54.7%
Implement a green jobs program to create many living wage jobs on projects to protect the environment and improve public health	47.9%
Enable anyone who performs a year of full-time community service get significant government help paying for college, buying a first home, or starting a new business	45.1%
Eliminate the SNAP requirement that full-time college students work 20 hours per week in addition to their studies to get that food aid*	38.9%
Other	9.7%

*The state of New York has recently eliminated this requirement for CUNY and SUNY community college students who are enrolled at least half the time in a vocational program.

Of those who responded “Other,” recommendations were universal healthcare, higher income brackets for government benefits, more affordable housing, rent stabilization, improved mental health assistance, improved translation assistance for benefits, implementation of the Green New Deal, integration of emergency feeding programs with food production systems, change in immigration policy, more job creation, and universal basic income.

IV. SNAP Caseload

Caseload data from HRA indicates a 13.4% increase in SNAP recipients in September 2020 when compared to the number of recipients from September 2019. Queens experienced the largest increase in SNAP cases, with 17.4% more recipients in September 2020 than the previous year.

Borough	Sept 2019 SNAP recipients	Sept 2020 SNAP recipients
Manhattan	215,995	238,151
Brooklyn	535,454	600,231
Bronx	422,714	482,279
Queens	271,041	318,071
Staten Island	58,165	66,605
Total	1,503,369	1,705,337

V. Regional Data

Bronx

“We deal with a large homeless population. To solve this is to find homes for these people so they can become productive citizens. Affordable housing is needed; and then work from there. People can become very productive if they have an affordable place to live. This carries down to hunger, especially in NYC.”

- **Erbin Cobian, President and Founder, Manna of Life Ministries**

“Our church was blessed to receive grants where we had purchasing power to buy food from Food Bank of NY and Driscoll Foods. If we did not receive those grants there would be no way we would be able to run our pantry from the church. We do receive some offering but due to the pandemic and the church being closed, the offerings are not coming as they were. We rely on the grants.”

- **Ms. Vernetta Chambers, Administrator, Fellowship Covenant Church**

“We have all experienced a tremendous amount of challenges this year due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, however, it is because of volunteers and dedicated staff that we were able to get through each tough moment. We look forward to continue serving throughout this crisis!”

- **Melanie Snape-Blackwood, Executive Director, Bronx Bethany Community Corporation**

EFP Survey and SNAP Caseload Data

- 6.9% of respondents reported knowing about a feeding program that has shut down or opened in the last year
- 18.2% of respondents reported they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand
- The proportion of organizations who reported an increase in people since the start of COVID-19's spread due to the following reasons:
 - 19.1% - Loss of school meals
 - 38.1% - Senior centers closed
 - 81.0% - Adults have lost their jobs and/or income
 - 61.9% - Immigrants scared to get government help
 - 14.3% - Have not seen an increase in people
 - 14.3% - Other
- 52.4% reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2020
- 54.6% reported a reduction in staffing/volunteer assistance since the start of COVID-19
- 14.1% increase in SNAP recipients from Sept. 2019 to Sept. 2020

Brooklyn

“The hunger gap continues to widen not only in NYC but across the US. Unless we take bold, decisive actions to address the systemic inequalities that perpetuate poverty and need within poor and low-income communities, especially communities of color, we will continue to reinforce generational cycles of poverty and an unhealthy power dynamic that sees the most vulnerable constantly struggling because they do not have the tools, access, or resources they need to thrive.”

- **Racquel Grant, Development Director, The Campaign Against Hunger**

“People that are working, should be paid a higher wage so that they can live properly and pay their bills. These people work long hours, and still can't make ends meet.”

- **Cathay Lovell, Executive Director, Maranatha S.D.A.Church Food Pantry**

“Fresh healthy food is a right that all families should have access to at an affordable price. Although, we have been able to feed so many families it is a reminder that we are living in a world that functions with a system where the average family has to choose if their rent is going to get paid this month or if there's going to be food in the household. It is truly sad and something has to change.”

- **Jasmine Bethancourt, Culinary Educator, RiseBoro Pop-up Pantry**

“There has been an increase in people losing job, homes. More people are homeless. We have seen an increase in the diversity of our clients and most of them are men. Our success is that throughout the pandemic we continued to provide a hot meal and snacks to clients.”

- **Novellette McFarquhar, Assistant Coordinator, United Community Baptist Church (UCBC)**

EFP Survey and SNAP Caseload Data

- 18.9% of respondents reported knowing about a feeding program that has shut down or opened in the last year
- 37.5% of respondents reported they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand
- The proportion of organizations who reported an increase in people since the start of COVID-19's spread due to the following reasons:
 - 38.7% - Loss of school meals
 - 51.6% - Senior centers closed
 - 83.9% - Adults have lost their jobs and/or income
 - 45.2% - Immigrants scared to get government help
 - 9.7% - Have not seen an increase in people
 - 9.7% - Other
- 43.8% reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2020
- 46.4% reported a reduction in staffing/volunteer assistance since the start of COVID-19
- 12.1% increase in SNAP recipients from Sept. 2019 to Sept. 2020

Manhattan

“Access to food is a universal human right and ending hunger is our collective responsibility! We need to support a living wage, access to healthy and affordable food for our communities, particularly our black, indigenous, and people of color. We face a hunger crisis due to systemic

and structural oppression that keeps our most marginalized communities from accessing adequate basic social safety nets due to rampant discrimination and harm against our communities.”

- **Jessica Penaranda, Director of Outreach, Trinity Church Wall Street**

“The homeless population around Columbia University has increased significantly in the past months and we are serving up to 50% more of what we used to serve in the past.”

- **Ricardo Bustamante, Senior Program Coordinator, Community Impact Soup Kitchen**

“Our program has worked hard to develop a friendly, supportive and cooperative relationship with the local precinct. Police officers have come several times to help us serve our mostly Chinese-speaking pantry visitors; the most helpful of these being an officer who speaks five Chinese dialects. We believe that all community-based organizations should reach out to their local precinct – not only in challenging times, but for many reasons. The NYPD has a lot of community level activities and projects that would welcome participation by community partners like hunger-relief programs... Great and good social change can genuinely begin by developing mutuality, and respectful relationships, among service organizations, protective service and even faith communities. We all want the same thing, don't we? A better neighborhood. A better city. A better world.”

- **Edwin Chinery, Executive Director, Ascension Outreach, Inc.**

“Since the Coronavirus pandemic began in March 2020, Vision Urbana has been a pioneer for the Pantry Home Delivery Program by providing food provisions and nutritious and balanced meals to over 2,000 older individuals every week. This program is an essential component of assuring food security and health for our seniors, families, and individuals whose lives have been dramatically impacted by this pandemic that still today threatens our City and community... VU Pantry Express also offers one-on-one [SNAP] application assistance, which is the most effective form of outreach... If we are to continue this successful approach we will need additional support. With additional support VU would replicate and enhance its successful Pantry Home Delivery Program with its added services approach to emergency food assistance to those most vulnerable in our community.”

- **Eric Diaz, Executive Director, Vision Urbana, Inc.**

EFP Survey and SNAP Caseload Data

- 16.7% of respondents reported knowing about a feeding program that has shut down or opened in the last year
- 22.9% of respondents reported they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand

- The proportion of organizations who reported an increase in people since the start of COVID-19's spread due to the following reasons:
 - 15.2% - Loss of school meals
 - 36.4% - Senior centers closed
 - 69.7% - Adults have lost their jobs and/or income
 - 42.4% - Immigrants scared to get government help
 - 12.1% - Have not seen an increase in people
 - 30.3% - Other
- 26.5% reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2020
- 65.6% reported a reduction in staffing/volunteer assistance since the start of COVID-19
- 10.3% increase in SNAP recipients from Sept. 2019 to Sept. 2020

Queens

"It's always hard for single parent families when the parents want to get into the work force and then become disqualified for benefits. People shouldn't lose access to help for their children by getting a higher paying job. Bring the cost of living down"

- **Karen Tinsley, Supervisor, All Nations Baptist Church Community Food Pantry**

"Food should be considered a human right. It should be taken off the roles of being a commodity. Because when you have a commodity you create an investment at the cost of the consumer. Food should not be something people should have to worry about."

- **Pedro Rodriguez, Executive Director, La Jordana**

"We are all facing crisis in this time and in this new life we [are] living in. Due to this Covid 19 Pandemic we face challenges in the lost of jobs, financially, schools, poverty, lost of apartment and business... Thank God that people are getting food and support through these Food pantry organizations that can change lives of people and looking forward to a new beginning. The population of people getting meals every Saturday makes a difference to know that people are getting by and depending on these meals. Life is different now and we have to make ends meet so people would not lose it and don't know where to go. I see a smile on people face and families coming by the Food Pantry church knowing that they will not starve... We have seen an increase of people showing up on Saturdays with their shopping cart ready to receive food that they can use."

- **Ms. Nina Perez DeJesus, Volunteer Worker, Agape Christian Center**

“I believe we should be sensitive to everyone who can't afford to provide enough food for their household and family: senior citizens have to make a choice between medicine and food, disabled people have to rely on do they have enough money for their rent or food, the immigration people seem to be afraid to come in because they feel that they'll be reported and deported. I believe that anyone who's in hunger and need food for their household should feel free to come and get the food that they need from our pantries.”

- **Cynthia Bryant, Founder, Jesus is Justice Mission Inc.**

“Thank City Harvest, Food Bank and United Way for their dedication and commitment.”

- **Nancy Scott, Co-Director, Bethany Baptist Church Food Pantry**

EFP Survey and SNAP Caseload Data

- 18.2% of respondents reported knowing about a feeding program that has shut down or opened in the last year
- 21.1% of respondents reported they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand
- The proportion of organizations who reported an increase in people since the start of COVID-19's spread due to the following reasons:
 - 38.9% - Loss of school meals
 - 50.0% - Senior centers closed
 - 88.9% - Adults have lost their jobs and/or income
 - 52.8% - Immigrants scared to get government help
 - 13.9% - Have not seen an increase in people
 - 5.6% - Other
- 35.1% reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2020
- 42.9% reported a reduction in staffing/volunteer assistance since the start of COVID-19
- 17.4% increase in SNAP recipients from Sept. 2019 to Sept. 2020

Staten Island

“The Food Bank is doing a great job. Actually in our community, no one should go hungry. Our Food Pantry opens 2x a week and they are allowed to come once a week.”

- **John Rocco Carlo, Sr. Pastor, Christian Pentecostal Church Food Pantry**

EFP Survey and SNAP Caseload Data

- 12.5% of respondents reported knowing about a feeding program that has shut down or opened in the last year
- 28.6% of respondents reported they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand
- The proportion of organizations who reported an increase in people since the start of COVID-19's spread due to the following reasons:
 - 50.0% - Loss of school meals
 - 66.7% - Senior centers closed
 - 66.7% - Adults have lost their jobs and/or income
 - 33.3% - Immigrants scared to get government help
 - 16.7% - Have not seen an increase in people
 - 16.7% - Other
- 14.3% reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2020
- 57.1% reported a reduction in staffing/volunteer assistance since the start of COVID-19
- 14.5% increase in SNAP recipients from Sept. 2019 to Sept. 2020

NYS (not including NYC)

"Our food services increased by 350% during our COVID response, but so did our hope."

- **Bree Barker, Corps Officer, The Salvation Army, Saratoga Springs**

"One thing that has helped us throughout this pandemic has been the milk, cheese, eggs and meat, etc provided by the government free of charge which they purchased from farmers. This was a huge help when our already over stretched budget was stretched even more during this pandemic."

- **Denise Dunham, Director, Mount Ida Community Food Pantry**

"Some of our clients have to rely on us for food due to disease status, so programs should target those marginalized due to ability level and social determinants to health."

- **William, Community Advocate Coordinator, ACR Health Emergency Food Pantry**

"If we had more resources, we could get more food to people. Poverty is the number one cause of food insecurity in our community, and there are a lot of reasons for that."

- **Jonathan Kramer, Pastor, Valley Worship Center Food Pantry**

"If the government created a rule that places that sell food sell more nutritious food. The area has very limited nutritious options that are affordable. Grants to purchase food from the food

bank should be made available. Food banks should provide toiletries, cleaning items, PPE, so people don't feel like they need to choose between food or toilet paper.”

- **Stephanie, Coordinator, PEACE Inc. Westside Family Resource Center**

“On Long Island as a result of covid and its accompanying on the local economy, demand for emergency food has increased by 70%. LI Cares will be distributing 17 million pounds of food. With increases in demand, with such high increases, the nation’s charitable sector cannot do it alone. We need increased support from federal and state governments to enable non profits to meet the increased needs in our communities.”

- **Mike Haynes, Chief Government Affairs Officer, Long Island Cares Inc - The Harry Chapin Food Bank**

“Other food banks in our area limit food distributions to once per month and require registration paperwork. We believe people who can afford to buy their own groceries will do so rather than come to a food bank where choices are limited and may not reflect their personal needs and preferences. We were fortunate to receive regular, timely donations of freshly harvested vegetables from a nearby gardening project, and cannot emphasize enough how greatly appreciated these were by the people who received food through our pantry. It is often difficult for food pantries to keep produce fresh, but fresh fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet, and anything that can be done to connect food pantries with sources of timely fresh produce and funding for refrigeration equipment to keep it in the best possible condition is a huge benefit for the people who rely on food pantries.”

- **Margaret Tomlinson, Executive Director, Catskill Community Center**

EFP Survey and SNAP Caseload Data

- 23.3% of respondents reported knowing about a feeding program that has shut down or opened in the last year
- 3.7% of respondents reported they did not distribute enough food to meet current demand
- The proportion of organizations who reported an increase in people since the start of COVID-19’s spread due to the following reasons:
 - 40.7% - Loss of school meals
 - 22.2% - Senior centers closed
 - 70.4% - Adults have lost their jobs and/or income
 - 22.2% - Immigrants scared to get government help
 - 22.2% - Have not seen an increase in people
 - 11.1% - Other

- 14.8% reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person, or limit their hours of operation because they lacked enough resources in 2020
- 57.7% reported a reduction in staffing/volunteer assistance since the start of COVID-19

VI. Conclusion

The pandemic and accompanying economic collapse have caused massive increases in the number of food insecure Americans across the country and in New York State. EFPs and city and state governments have worked to meet this need by boosting feeding assistance operations, however, poverty and hunger are still on the rise. EFPs are meeting a critical need in their communities with limited resources, especially for individuals who are ineligible for many government programs. Nevertheless, charity alone is not sufficient enough to end hunger in the US, even before the pandemic. With the federal safety net providing an estimated 15 times the dollar amount of food distributed by EFPs, it is critical that the federal government provides an adequate federal nutrition safety net to ensure all Americans have access to nutritious food.

VII. Appendix: 2020 Survey of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens



October, 2020

Dear Food Pantry, Soup Kitchen, and Food Program Contact:

Hunger Free America is a nationwide direct service and advocacy organization. We're writing to ask your assistance in providing data that will enable us to help educate elected and appointed government officials, funders, and the news media on the extent of hunger in America, and the operational challenges faced by programs such as yours. We estimate that this survey will only take you 12 minutes to complete.

Every day, you and your team tirelessly serve our nation's most vulnerable residents. Every year, we collect and use this data to advocate on behalf of you and your clients. By responding to this survey, you help us tell the stories of your program and your clients to key decision-makers and opinion-leaders. **You can also use the survey to tell us which kinds of volunteers, if any, you need.**

Given this year's COVID-19 crisis and the push for some to cut billions from the nutrition safety net, ***this year's survey is more urgent than ever.***

In addition, this survey helps us provide the most up-to-date information to Americans in need of immediate assistance, and makes sure your program is included in our national database of feeding programs to support the USDA's National Hunger Hotline, if you would like to be included. Your participation helps ensure that our data is accurate so that people in need can find help as quickly and efficiently as possible. If you would like to view our database, which we are adding new data to everyday, you can do so here: <http://findfood.hungerfreeamerica.org>

To make your life easier, we've shortened the survey and made it easier for you to quickly and conveniently complete it online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/76Xbfd5>

Paper surveys can be faxed to: **646-350-3833** or mailed to: HFA, Attn: Survey, 50 Broad St. Suite 1103, New York, NY 10004. **The deadline to respond is Friday, November 13th.**

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

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

Sincerely,



Joel Berg, Chief Executive Officer, Hunger Free America

2020 Survey of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens

Please consider completing this survey ONLINE at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/76Xbfd5>

If you do not know the answer to any question or part of a question, please check “unsure” or leave blank. Otherwise, return this completed survey to us by **Friday, November 13th**, by mail to **HFA, 50 Broad St, Suite 1103, New York, NY 10004**, or fax to **646-350-3833**.

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

Section 1: General Program Information

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

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

2. Your food program / agency formal name: _____

3. Your name: _____

4. Your title / role: _____

5. What is your organization's mailing address?

Street address: _____

City: _____, State: _____ ZIP: _____

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

Same as the mailing address above

If different, please fill out all below:

Street address: _____

City: _____, State: _____ ZIP: _____

7. Phone number of agency / program:

8. Fax Number of agency / program:

-

9. E-mail Address: _____

10. Website: _____

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

Yes

No

12. What are your days and hours of operation?

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

Notes on hours (i.e. 3rd Saturdays): _____

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

- Yes
- No

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

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

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

- No

Section 2: Program Demand

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

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

17. Have you seen an increase in people coming since the start of COVID-19's spread due to any of the following reasons?

- Loss of school meals
- Senior centers closed
- Adults have lost their jobs and/or income
- Immigrants scared to get government help
- We have not seen an increase in people
- Other (please specify) _____

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

At any time in 2019:

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

At any time in 2020:

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

19. Have you experienced a reduction in staffing/volunteer assistance since the start of COVID-19?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

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

<i>Time period</i>	<i>Total</i>
September 2019	
All of 2019	
September 2020	
Expected estimate for ALL of 2020, including months that have not yet occurred	

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

<i>Time period</i>	<i>Total</i>
September 2019	
All of 2019	
September 2020	
Expected estimate for ALL of 2020, including months that have not yet occurred	

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

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

If so, please specify: _____

24. How do you currently manage your volunteers?

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

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

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Not satisfied

HungerVolunteer is a free volunteer management software that can be used to manage your events and volunteers. If you are interested in signing up, please visit

<https://www.hungerfreeamerica.org/civCRM/hunger-organization-registration>

26. What is your preferred form of communication from HFA?

- Email
- Phone
- Hard copy/Mail
- All of the above

27. Which of the following policy changes do you think would reduce hunger in your area? (check *all* that apply)

- Increase the national minimum wage and index future raises to the rate of inflation
- Enable low-income people to get higher paying jobs and/or save for the future without losing government food benefits
- Increase the purchasing power of SNAP benefits, which, at the start of this year, equaled about \$1.34 per meal
- Make all school meals universal, free, and nutritious, regardless of family income

- Eliminate the SNAP requirement that full-time college students work 20 hours per week in addition to their studies to get that food aid
- Implement a green jobs program to create many living wage jobs on projects to protect the environment and improve public health
- Make it easier for eligible people to obtain all key government benefits– with one easy application – through a computer or smartphone
- Increase the minimum SNAP benefit from \$16 to \$30 per month
- Make WIC benefits an entitlement, so any low-income pregnant woman or child under 5 can get this extra nutrition assistance
- Enable anyone who performs a year of full-time community service get significant government help paying for college, buying a first home, or starting a new business
- Enable state and local government agencies, as well as local charities, to work hand-in-hand with low-income people and families to give them more money while jointly agreeing to long-term plans to help those people and families get ahead in the long-run by getting better jobs, saving more money, obtaining more education and job training, purchasing their own homes, and/or putting away more money for their retirement.
- Other (please specify) _____

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

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

THANK YOU!

VIII. Acknowledgements

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

This report was written by Angelica Gibson and Joel Berg and edited by Nicole Aber. Cover photo by Lori Azim.

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