



## **FACT SHEET**

### ***NYC Hunger Experience 2012: One City, Two Realities***

Food Bank For New York City contracts with the Marist Institute for Public Opinion to conduct telephone interviews on food affordability and hunger- and nutrition-related issues with a random and representative sample of New York City residents. Socio-demographic data collected during these interviews allows for the identification of differences within and among particular populations. Results contained in this report are based on an analysis of trend data from 2003 (the earliest year the poll was conducted) through 2012, additional trend data available from 2008 through 2012 only, and questions asked in 2011 or 2012 for the first time.

#### **HUNGER EXPERIENCE POLL**

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##### **NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS**

- In 2012, almost one in three New York City residents (32 percent) experienced difficulty affording needed food. This percentage represents approximately 2.6 million people.
- Although the percentage of New York City residents having difficulty affording food has dropped since the height of the recession in 2008, when it stood at 48 percent, it has yet to decrease to the level it was at the start of the poll in 2003 (25 percent).
- To cope with food affordability challenges, almost one in three New York City residents (30 percent) purchased less food to save money, down from almost two in five (38 percent) in 2011; and almost one in five residents (17 percent) purchased less healthy food, down from one in five (20 percent) in 2011.
- To save food or money, almost one in three New York City residents (32 percent) ate smaller meals; almost one in four (22 percent) ate meals at friends' or relatives' homes; more than one in six (17 percent) skipped meals; almost one in six (16 percent) eliminated holiday meals or Sunday dinners; and more than one in ten (13 percent) served fewer family members at mealtime.
- To stretch their grocery dollar, almost one in three New York City residents (30 percent) reported buying less meat, poultry, or fish; almost one in four (22 percent) reported buying less dairy (e.g., milk, yogurt, cheese); and one in five (20 percent) reported buying less fresh fruits and vegetables.
- To stretch their grocery dollar, one in three New York City residents (33 percent) bought more pasta or rice; almost one in three (32 percent) bought more beans, eggs, or nuts; and more than one in four (28 percent) bought more bread or cereal.
- Despite utilization of food conservation strategies and tradeoffs, 17 percent of New York City residents reported that they had been unable, during the last twelve months, to pay for food because they had to pay for rent. Sixteen percent reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for utilities; 14 percent, because they had to pay for transportation; and 13 percent, because they had to pay for medicine or medical care.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

- In 2012, a higher percentage of low-income New York City residents had difficulty affording needed food than residents in other income groups. More than half of New York City residents with annual household incomes of less than \$25,000 (53 percent) reported difficulty, up 6 percent from 2011 (50 percent).
- The next lowest income bracket, including residents with annual household incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,999, also showed increases in percentage of residents having difficulty affording food. In 2012, more than two in five residents with annual household incomes of between \$25,000 and \$49,999 (43 percent) reported having difficulty affording food, up 5 percent from 2011 (41 percent).
- In contrast, the percentage of New York City residents in higher-income groups having difficulty affording food decreased since 2011. In the \$50,000 to \$74,999 bracket, the percentage of residents having difficulty decreased by 31 percent – from 32 percent in 2011 to 22 percent in 2012. In the \$75,000 or more bracket, this percentage decreased by 25 percent – from 16 percent in 2011 to 12 percent in 2012.
- In all income brackets, the percentage of residents having difficulty affording food increased from 2003. Among residents with annual household incomes of less than \$25,000, difficulty increased by 8 percent from 2003 (49 percent); among residents with annual household incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,999, difficulty increased by 105 percent from 2003 (21 percent); among residents with annual household incomes of between \$50,000 and \$74,999, difficulty increased by 57 percent from 2003 (14 percent); and among residents with annual household incomes of \$75,000 or more, difficulty increased by 200 percent from 2003 (4 percent).

## HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

- Households with children continue to have greater than average difficulty affording food. In 2012, almost two in five New York City households with children (39 percent) had difficulty affording needed food.
- Although the percentage of New York City households with children having difficulty affording needed food has dropped since the height of the recession in 2008, when it stood at 56 percent, it has yet to decline to the level it was at the start of the poll in 2003 (32 percent).
- To cope with food affordability challenges, more than one in three New York City households with children (35 percent) purchased less food to save money, down from more than two in five (41 percent) in 2011; and almost one in four (23 percent) purchased less healthy food, up from more than one in five (22 percent) in 2011.
- To save food or money, almost one in three New York City households with children (32 percent) ate smaller meals; more than one in five (22 percent) ate meals at friends' or relatives' homes; almost one in five (18 percent) eliminated holiday meals or Sunday dinners; almost one in five (18 percent) served fewer family members at mealtime; and more than one in seven (15 percent) skipped meals.
- To stretch their grocery dollar, more than one in three New York City households with children (34 percent) reported buying less meat, poultry, or fish; one in four (25 percent)

reported buying less dairy (e.g., milk, yogurt, cheese); and almost one in four (23 percent) reported buying less fresh fruits and vegetables.

- To stretch their grocery dollar, almost two in five New York City households with children (38 percent) bought more pasta or rice; more than one in three (37 percent) bought more bread or cereal; and more than one in three (35 percent) bought more beans, eggs, or nuts.
- Despite utilization of food conservation strategies and tradeoffs, more than one in five households with children (22 percent) reported that they had been unable, at some point during the last twelve months, to pay for food because they had to pay for rent. Almost one in five households with children (19 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for utilities. Almost one in six households with children (15 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for transportation. More than one in ten households with children (12 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for medicine or medical care.

## **LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN**

- In 2012, almost three in four New York City households with children with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 (70 percent) had difficulty affording needed food. The percentage having difficulty is up 30 percent from 2011 (54 percent), representing the biggest increase since the start of the poll in 2003 and the biggest increase of any population group in this year's poll.
- Although the percentage of New York City households with children with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 having difficulty affording food has dropped since the height of the recession in 2008, when it stood at 77 percent, it has yet to decline to the level it was at the start of the poll in 2003 (58 percent).
- To cope with food affordability challenges, more than two in five New York City households with children with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 (45 percent) purchased less food to save money, down from almost half (48 percent) in 2011; and more than one in three (35 percent) purchased less healthy food, up from almost one in three (30 percent) in 2011.
- To save food or money, almost half of New York City households with children with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 (48 percent) ate smaller meals; one in three (33 percent) ate meals at friends' or relatives' homes; almost one in three (30 percent) eliminated holiday meals or Sunday dinners; more than one in four (29 percent) served fewer family members at mealtime; and one in four (25 percent) skipped meals.
- To stretch their grocery dollar, more than half of New York City households with children with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 (54 percent) reported buying less meat, poultry, or fish; two in five (40 percent) reported buying less dairy (e.g., milk, yogurt, cheese); and almost two in five (38 percent) reported buying less fresh fruits and vegetables.
- To stretch their grocery dollar, more than half of New York City households with children with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 (55 percent) bought more bread or cereal; more than half (52 percent) bought more pasta or rice; and half (50 percent) bought more beans, eggs, or nuts.

- Despite utilization of food conservation strategies and tradeoffs, two in five New York City households with children with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 (40 percent) reported that they had been unable, at some point during the last twelve months, to pay for food because they had to pay for rent. More than one in three households with children with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 (34 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for utilities. One in four households with children with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 (25 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for transportation. More than one in five households with children with annual household incomes of less than \$25,000 (22 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for medicine or medical care.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

- In 2012, more than half of unemployed New York City residents (54 percent) had difficulty affording needed food, representing a 32 percent increase from 2011 (41 percent).
- To cope with food affordability challenges, more than half of unemployed New York City residents (52 percent) purchased less food to save money, up from more than two in five (46 percent) in 2011; and almost one in three (30 percent) purchased less healthy food, up from almost one in four (24 percent) in 2011.
- To save food or money, half of unemployed New York City residents (50 percent) ate smaller meals; more than one in three (36 percent) ate meals at friends' or relatives' homes; almost one in three (30 percent) skipped meals; almost one in four (24 percent) eliminated holiday meals or Sunday dinners; and almost one in five (19 percent) served fewer family members at mealtime.
- In order to stretch their grocery dollar, more than half of unemployed New York City residents (52 percent) reported buying less meat, poultry, or fish; almost two in five (38 percent) reported buying less dairy (e.g., milk, yogurt, cheese); and almost two in five (38 percent) reported buying less fresh fruits and vegetables.
- In order to stretch their grocery dollar, almost three in five unemployed New York City residents (58 percent) bought more pasta or rice; more than half (52 percent) bought more beans, eggs, or nuts; and almost half (47 percent) bought more bread or cereal.
- Despite utilization of food conservation strategies and tradeoffs, more than one in three unemployed New York City residents (36 percent) reported that they had been unable, at some point during the last twelve months, to pay for food because they had to pay for rent. Almost one in three unemployed residents (30 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for utilities. More than one in four unemployed residents (26 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for transportation. One in five unemployed residents (20 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for medicine or medical care.

## **GENDER**

- Female New York City residents are consistently more vulnerable to food affordability issues than male residents. In 2012, there was a six percentage point difference in the proportions of male residents (28 percent) and female residents (34 percent) having difficulty affording food.
- To cope with food affordability challenges, one in three female New York City residents (33 percent) purchased less food to save money, down from two in five (40 percent) in 2011; and almost one in five (19 percent) purchased less healthy food, up from 18 percent in 2011.
- To save food or money, one in three female New York City residents (33 percent) ate smaller meals; almost one in five (19 percent) ate meals at friends' or relatives' homes; almost one in six (16 percent) skipped meals; more than one in seven (15 percent) eliminated holiday meals or Sunday dinners; and almost one in seven (14 percent) served fewer family members at mealtime.
- Male residents used some food conservation and strategies more often than female residents – for instance, they skipped meals more frequently (men, 18 percent; women, 16 percent); they ate meals at friends' or relatives' homes more frequently (men, 24 percent; women, 19 percent); and they were more likely to eliminate holiday meals or Sunday dinners (men, 16 percent; women, 15 percent).
- In order to stretch their grocery dollar, almost one in three female New York City residents (31 percent) reported buying less meat, poultry, or fish; almost one in four (23 percent) reported buying less dairy (e.g., milk, yogurt, cheese); and one in five (20 percent) reported buying less fresh fruits and vegetables.
- In order to stretch their grocery dollar, more than one in three female New York City residents (35 percent) bought more beans, eggs, or nuts; more than one in three (34 percent) bought more pasta or rice; and almost one in three (30 percent) bought more bread or cereal.
- Despite utilization of food conservation strategies and tradeoffs, almost one in five female New York City residents (18 percent) reported that they had been unable, at some point during the last twelve months, to pay for food because they had to pay for rent. More than one in seven female residents (15 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for utilities. Almost one in seven female residents (14 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for transportation. More than one in ten female residents (13 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for medicine or medical care. Male residents were more likely than female residents to pay for utilities instead of food (men, 17 percent; women, 15 percent).

## **AGE**

- New York City residents ages 50 to 64 reported the most difficulty affording needed food in 2011. In 2012, more than one in three New York City residents ages 50 to 64 (35 percent) experienced difficulty affording food. This represents a 40 percent increase from 2003 (25 percent).
- To cope with food affordability challenges, one in three New York City residents ages 50 to 64 (33 percent) purchased less food to save money, down from two in five (40 percent) in 2011.

percent) in 2011; and almost one in five (19 percent) purchased less healthy food, up from two in five (20 percent) in 2011.

- To save food or money, more than one in four residents ages 36 to 49 (26 percent) and 65 and older (26 percent) ate meals at friends' or relatives' homes, compared to almost one in six residents ages 50 to 64 (16 percent). Residents ages 18 to 34 were less likely to serve fewer members at mealtime (9 percent) than other age groups, but were more likely to eliminate holiday meals or Sunday dinners (27 percent).
- New York City residents ages 36 to 49, and residents ages 50 to 64, were more likely than residents in other age groups to pay for basic necessities instead of food, with a few exceptions. A higher percentage of New York City residents ages 65 and older reported paying for medicine or medical care instead of food (16 percent); and a higher percentage of residents ages 18 to 35 reported paying for child care instead of food (7 percent), and tuition or student loans instead of food (15 percent).

## **EDUCATION**

- New York City residents with some college or an Associate's degree had the highest percentage of difficulty affording food. Forty-four percent of residents with some college or an Associate's degree experienced difficulty affording food during 2012, representing an increase of 19 percent from 2011 (37 percent) and an increase of 100 percent from 2003 (22 percent).
- The percentage of New York City residents with a high school degree or below (38 percent), or some college or an Associate's degree (36 percent), that reported purchasing less food to save money was higher than that of residents with a college degree (26 percent) or a graduate/professional degree (17 percent). Approximately two in five residents with a high school degree or below (42 percent) and some college or an Associate's degree (40 percent) reported eating smaller meals to save food or money, compared to more than one in four residents with a college degree (26 percent) and more than one in ten residents with a graduate/professional degree (13 percent).
- Residents with a high school degree or below, and those with some college or an Associate's degree, reported buying less meat, poultry, or fish (41 percent and 32 percent, respectively); less dairy (34 percent and 26 percent, respectively); and less fresh fruits and vegetables (29 percent and 25 percent, respectively) compared to residents at other levels of educational attainment.
- More than one in four New York City residents with a high school degree or below (26 percent) reported paying for rent instead of food. This percentage is higher than residents at other levels of educational attainment.

## **RACE/ETHNICITY**

- During 2012, Latino/Hispanic and Black/African-American residents in New York City had the most difficulty affording food. Almost two in five Latino/Hispanic residents (39 percent) experienced difficulty affording needed food in 2012, down by 3 percent from 2011 (40 percent), and down by 17 percent from 2003 (47 percent). Among Black/African American residents, 35 percent experienced difficulty affording needed food in 2012. This percentage represents a 20 percent decrease from 2011 (44 percent) and a 9 percent increase from 2003 (32 percent).

- Latino/Hispanic residents in New York City (39 percent) were more likely than Black/African-American residents (34 percent) and White/Caucasian residents (23 percent) to report buying less food to save money. Similarly, Latino/Hispanic residents were more likely to report eating smaller meals to save food or money (39 percent) than Black/African-American (34 percent) or White/Caucasian residents (21 percent).
- Latino/Hispanic residents were more likely than Black/African-American and White/Caucasian residents to report buying less healthy food to save money (24 percent versus 20 percent and 11 percent, respectively).
- More than one in four Latino/Hispanic residents and Black/African-American residents (26 percent) reported buying less fresh fruits and vegetables, compared to more than one in ten White/Caucasian residents (12 percent). Both Latino/Hispanic and Black/African American residents (28 percent) were more likely to report buying less dairy, and to report buying less meat, poultry, or fish (37 percent and 36 percent, respectively) than White/Caucasian residents (13 percent and 21 percent, respectively).
- Latino/Hispanic (27 percent) and Black/African-American residents (21 percent) were more likely than White/Caucasian residents (7 percent) to pay for rent instead of food and to make all other financial tradeoffs.
- Almost one in four Latino/Hispanic residents (23 percent) would not be able to afford food immediately after losing their annual household income and almost half (48 percent) would not be able to afford food within three months, a decrease of 2 percent since 2011 (49 percent) and of 9 percent since 2003 (53 percent). Although White/Caucasian residents were the least likely not to be able to afford food after losing their annual household income, they were the only group to register an increase from 2011.

## **BOROUGH**

*Note: this survey was conducted prior to Super Storm Sandy, which had severe local impacts in many New York City communities. This borough analysis does not reflect any food affordability issues caused by the storm.*

- More Bronx residents reported difficulty affording needed food than residents in any other New York City boroughs. Forty-three percent of Bronx residents experienced difficulty affording needed food in 2012, followed by 31 percent of Brooklyn residents, 31 percent of Queens residents, 28 percent of Manhattan residents, and 20 percent of Staten Island residents.
- Many residents in all boroughs bought less meat, poultry, or fish to stretch their grocery dollar. Almost one in three Bronx residents (32 percent); almost one in three Queens residents (31 percent); almost one in three Staten Island residents (29 percent); and almost one in three Brooklyn residents (28 percent) reported buying less meat, poultry, and fish. Manhattan was the only borough to show an increase in residents buying less meat, poultry, and fish since 2011 (29 percent).
- More than one in four Staten Island residents (27 percent); more than one in five Bronx and Queens residents (24 percent); and almost one in five Manhattan and Brooklyn residents (20 percent and 19 percent, respectively) reported eating meals at friends' or relatives' homes.

With the exception of Queens and Staten Island, paying for rent instead of food was the financial tradeoff most frequently made by residents of all boroughs, followed by paying for utilities instead of food.

## **VETERAN HOUSEHOLDS**

- Almost one in three New York City veteran households (29 percent) reported difficulty affording food, representing an increase of 16 percent from 2011 (25 percent).
- More than one in three New York City veteran households (37 percent) reported that they had eaten smaller meals to save food or money, up from almost one in three (32 percent) in 2011; almost one in three veteran households (32 percent) reported that they had bought less food to save money, up from more than one in four (28 percent) in 2011; and almost one in six veteran households (15 percent) reported that they had skipped meals, up from more than one in seven (14 percent) in 2011.
- Almost one in five New York City veteran households (19 percent) reported buying less fresh fruits and vegetables to stretch their grocery dollar; one in five (20 percent) reported buying less dairy (e.g., milk, yogurt, cheese); and almost one in three (29 percent) reported buying less meat, poultry, or fish.

Almost one in six New York City veteran households (16 percent) reported that they had been unable, at some point during the last twelve months, to pay for food because they had to pay for rent. Almost one in six veteran households (16 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for utilities. Almost one in six (16 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for transportation. More than one in six (17 percent) reported that they could not pay for food because they had to pay for medicine or medical care.