

The State of Child Hunger in NYC

Spring 2026

The need for food assistance in New York City is persistently high as families across the five boroughs face an ongoing affordability crisis. Food, childcare, and housing expenses are out of reach for many families on already-tight budgets, making it even harder for our neighbors to afford the nutritious foods their families need to thrive. Many parents are forced to make impossible choices, such as paying their rent or buying groceries for their children. These challenges are often exacerbated during the summer months, when access to free school meals may become more limited.



NYC Families Are Facing High Levels of Need

1 in 4

NYC children does not always know where their next meal will come from.¹

1M+

Average monthly visits to food pantries and soup kitchens among NYC families with children in 2025.²

97%

Increase in visits to food pantries by children and their families, compared to 2019.²

Households with Children Face the Highest Rates of Income Inadequacy



42% of families with children reported needing more money to meet their household food needs—6 percentage points higher than the citywide average.³



\$33,300 is the average cost for childcare alone for a family with a preschooler and school-age child in Queens.⁴

Families earning too much to qualify for federal benefits, yet unable to afford necessities⁴



¹ *Map the Meal Gap 2025 (2023 Data)* Feeding America

³ *Spotlight on: Food Budget Shortfalls in New York City*, Robin Hood

² City Harvest analysis of FeedNYC data

⁴ *Overlooked and Undercounted in New York City 2026*

“
My kids are 14 and 9.
[This food] will help me,
because at the moment,
I don't have too much.
”

Yadira

Participant, Sunset Park Mobile Market

Share Lunch Fight Hunger is City Harvest's annual spring fundraising campaign to help feed NYC children and families who are in need during the summer months, when access to free school meals may become limited. To learn more, start fundraising, or donate, visit CityHarvest.org/ShareLunch.

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RESCUING FOOD FOR NYC