



# **New York City's Meal Gap**

## 2016 Trends Report

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## What Is the Meal Gap?

Food security is an indicator of whether, within a household, all household members have access to adequate, healthy food at all times. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) measures household food security every year, in partnership with the U.S. Census, through an 18-item survey.<sup>1</sup> Based on their responses to those 18 questions, households are grouped into one of three categories: food security; low food security (characterized by reduced quality, variety or desirability of food); and very low food security (evidence of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake). Households are classified as *food insecure* if they fall into the second or third group.<sup>2</sup>

Food insecurity indicates a lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members, and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. In the United States, food insecurity is primarily a function of insufficient financial resources for food.

The *Meal Gap* represents food insecurity as a number of missing meals that result from insufficient household resources to purchase food.<sup>3</sup> In short, the Meal Gap is the difference, measured in meals, between a household being food insecure and food secure.

Because it accounts for variation in food costs across the country, it provides a clearer illustration of the effects of resource shortfalls in households experiencing food insecurity. As a metric, the Meal Gap is therefore highly useful to policymakers, advocates and service providers because it can estimate food insecurity at various geographies: from the state level down to the county level, and even, in New York City, the community district or neighborhood level. Because the Meal Gap can be mapped, it shows us where hunger lives, helping public and private anti-hunger efforts direct food and services to communities where need is highest. The City of New York adopted the Meal Gap as its official metric of food insecurity in 2014.<sup>4</sup>

The Meal Gap also creates a common metric – the meal – against which both food and non-food interventions can be measured. For example, Food Bank For New York City supplies food for approximately 63 million meals every year, but also connects eligible New Yorkers to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), which provides an average benefit of \$147 per person – enough for 43 meals – every month.

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<sup>1</sup> “U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module: Three-Stage Design, With Screeners.” United States Department of Agriculture, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> “Definitions of Food Security.” United States Department of Agriculture, 2014. A fourth category, “marginal food security,” is sometimes used to identify households at or very near the threshold between food security and food insecurity.

<sup>3</sup> Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Crumbaugh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. *Map the Meal Gap 2016: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level*. Feeding America, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> *New York City Food Policy: 2014 Food Metrics Report*. <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/foodpolicy/downloads/pdf/2014-food-metrics-report.pdf> (accessed September 6, 2016).

## What Does the Meal Gap Look Like in New York City?

New York City had a Meal Gap of approximately 242 *million* in 2014 (the most recent year for which data is available), with 16.4 percent of residents categorized as food insecure.<sup>5</sup> The food insecurity rate among New York City's children was even higher, with nearly one in four (22.3 percent, or approximately 399,000 children) experiencing food insecurity.

The table below illustrates the Meal Gap and other key measures of food insecurity in New York City and by borough for the most recent data available, as well as changes from the previous year, and since 2009, the first year Meal Gap data was analyzed.<sup>6</sup> Notably, while New York City's Meal Gap has not changed appreciably in the past year, it has grown by nearly eight percent in the six-year period observed – a time characterized by economic recovery from the Great Recession.<sup>7</sup> A key driver of this phenomenon appears to be the considerable increase in food costs – a more than 16 percent rise over six years.

	2009	2013	2014	% Change, 2013-14	% Change, 2009-14
<b>Meal Gap</b>					
<b>NYC</b>	<b>224,364,570</b>	<b>240,849,400</b>	<b>241,956,200</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>
Bronx	48,838,538	46,476,300	46,767,800	0.6%	-4.2%
Brooklyn	78,079,512	88,895,900	90,993,300	2.4%	16.5%
Manhattan	37,790,055	43,562,900	43,000,400	-1.3%	13.8%
Queens	50,218,556	53,133,300	52,653,700	-0.9%	4.8%
Staten Island	9,437,906	8,780,900	8,541,100	-2.7%	-9.5%

<b>Food Insecurity Rate</b>					
<b>NYC</b>	<b>16.2%</b>	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>16.4%</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>
Bronx	21.2%	18.8%	18.7%	-0.5%	-11.8%
Brooklyn	18.4%	19.8%	20.0%	1.0%	8.7%
Manhattan	14.0%	15.3%	15.1%	-1.3%	7.9%
Queens	13.2%	13.3%	13.1%	-1.5%	-0.8%
Staten Island	11.7%	10.6%	10.3%	-2.8%	-12.0%

<b># of Food Insecure Individuals (Est.)</b>					
<b>NYC</b>	<b>1,342,920</b>	<b>1,360,740</b>	<b>1,370,530</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
Bronx	292,320	262,580	264,910	0.9%	-9.4%
Brooklyn	467,340	502,240	515,420	2.6%	10.3%
Manhattan	226,190	246,120	243,570	-1.0%	7.7%
Queens	300,580	300,190	298,250	-0.6%	-0.8%
Staten Island	56,490	49,610	48,380	-2.5%	-14.4%

<sup>5</sup> Gundersen *et al.*, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> By economists' definitions, the Great Recession, which began in December 2007, officially ended in June 2009.

	2009	2013	2014	% Change, 2013-14	% Change, 2009-14
<b>Weighted Cost per Meal</b>					
<b>NYC</b>	\$ 2.91	\$ 3.26	\$ 3.38	3.8%	16.4%
Bronx	\$ 2.71	\$ 3.13	\$ 3.32	6.1%	22.4%
Brooklyn	\$ 2.63	\$ 3.13	\$ 3.23	3.2%	22.7%
Manhattan	\$ 3.72	\$ 4.37	\$ 4.58	4.8%	23.0%
Queens	\$ 2.79	\$ 3.06	\$ 3.17	3.6%	13.8%
Staten Island	\$ 2.77	\$ 3.19	\$ 3.33	4.4%	20.1%

At the borough level, Brooklyn has seen the largest increase in its Meal Gap – a gap that has widened by nearly 13 million meals in six years. The borough also boasts the highest food insecurity rate, as well as the largest number of food-insecure individuals.

The next several pages show the Meal Gap across New York City at the Public Use Micro Data Area (PUMA) level, the Census units that approximate the Community Districts into which New York City is divided.<sup>8</sup> For each borough, the Meal Gap is listed by PUMA/Community District for the last three years for which data is available, and each district's rank (highest to lowest) within that borough for the given year.

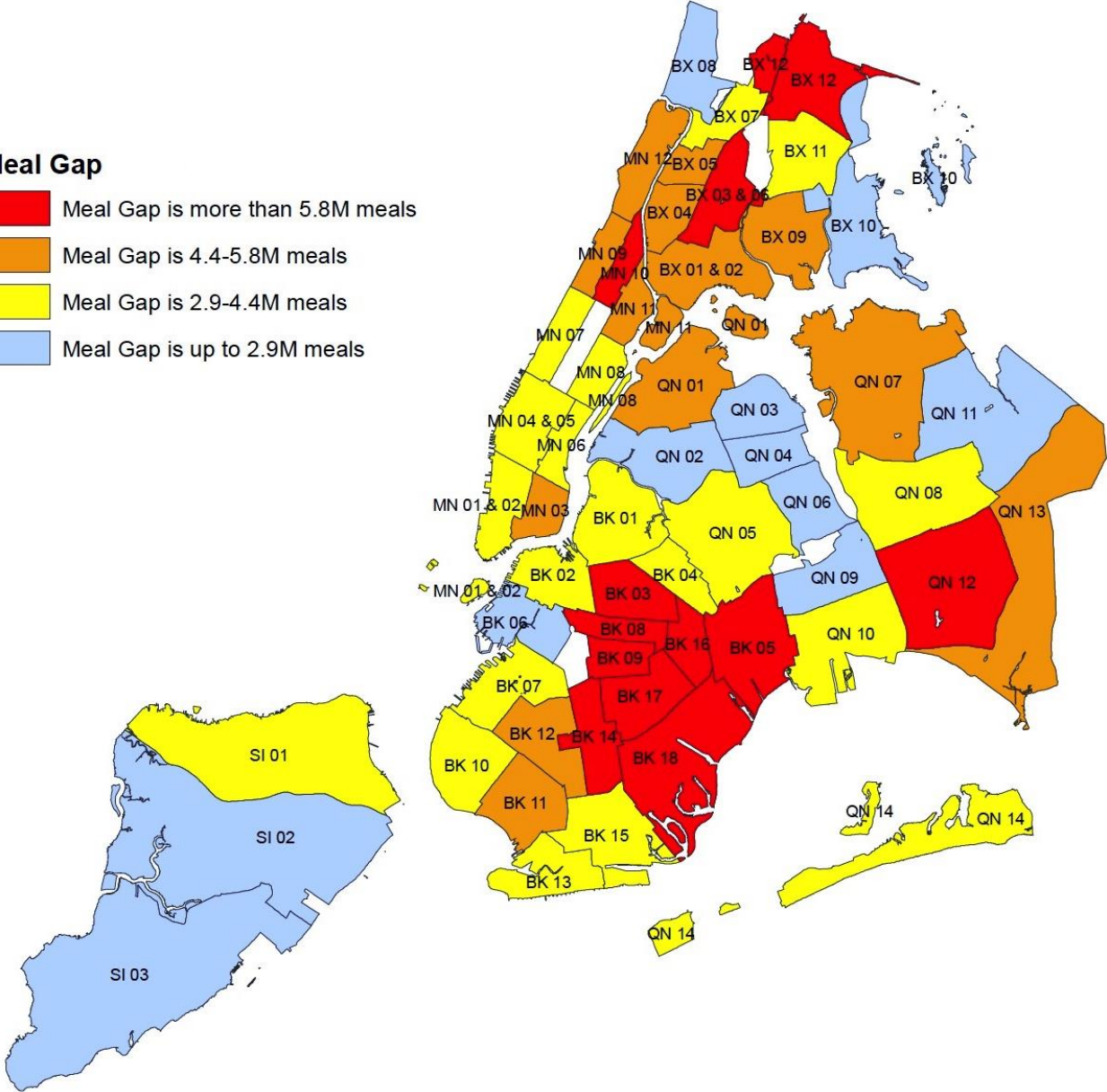
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<sup>8</sup> Food Bank For New York City analysis based on Gundersen *et al*, 2016. In cases where an individual Community District's populations is relatively sparse (such as Manhattan's midtown business district), the PUMA will combine that district with an adjacent one, in order to ensure PUMAs represent areas of comparable population.

# New York City's Meal Gap by Community District

## Meal Gap

- Meal Gap is more than 5.8M meals
- Meal Gap is 4.4-5.8M meals
- Meal Gap is 2.9-4.4M meals
- Meal Gap is up to 2.9M meals



## The Bronx

Community District(s)	2012 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2013 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2014 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	Change, 2013-14	Change, 2012-14
Bronx Community Districts 1 & 2: Hunts Point, Longwood & Melrose	7,016,611 2	5,788,676 2	5,637,546 4	-151,130 -3%	-1,379,065 -20%
Bronx Community Districts 3 & 6: Belmont, Crotona Park East & East Tremont	7,552,253 1	6,386,901 1	6,700,229 1	313,328 5%	-852,024 -11%
Bronx Community District 4: Concourse, Highbridge & Mount Eden	6,169,139 4	5,107,135 6	5,126,873 5	19,738 0%	-1,042,266 -17%
Bronx Community District 5: Morris Heights, Fordham South & Mount Hope	6,293,361 3	5,276,449 5	5,105,643 6	-170,806 -3%	-1,187,718 -19%
Bronx Community District 7: Bedford Park, Fordham North & Norwood	4,774,531 7	3,978,990 7	3,808,397 7	-170,593 -4%	-966,134 -20%
Bronx Community District 8: Riverdale, Fieldston & Kingsbridge	2,815,584 10	2,433,796 10	2,448,908 10	15,112 1%	-366,676 -13%
Bronx Community District 9: Castle Hill, Clason Point & Parkchester	6,120,933 5	5,596,070 4	5,667,139 3	71,069 1%	-453,794 -7%
Bronx Community District 10: Co-op City, Pelham Bay & Schuylerville	3,045,671 9	2,834,925 9	2,890,426 9	55,501 2%	-155,245 -5%
Bronx Community District 11: Pelham Parkway, Morris Park & Laconia	3,930,026 8	3,446,205 8	3,532,469 8	86,264 3%	-397,557 -10%
Bronx Community District 12: Wakefield, Williamsbridge & Woodlawn	6,056,245 6	5,627,151 3	5,850,169 2	223,018 4%	-206,076 -3%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>53,774,356</b>	<b>46,476,300</b>	<b>46,767,800</b>	<b>291,500</b>	<b>-7,006,556</b>

Note: Due to rounding error, the sums of the Meal Gaps by community district may not equal the borough totals.

## Brooklyn

Community District(s)	2012 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2013 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2014 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	Change, 2013-14	Change, 2012-14
Brooklyn Community District 1: Greenpoint & Williamsburg	4,473,881 12	4,405,189 11	4,230,546 12	-174,643 -4%	-243,335 -5%
Brooklyn Community District 2: Brooklyn Heights & Fort Greene	3,860,880 14	3,911,824 14	3,995,959 13	84,135 2%	135,079 3%
Brooklyn Community District 3: Bedford-Stuyvesant	6,353,787 2	6,483,486 2	6,831,068 3	347,582 5%	477,281 8%
Brooklyn Community District 4: Bushwick	4,612,234 11	4,132,580 13	4,269,443 11	136,863 3%	-342,791 -7%
Brooklyn Community District 5: East New York & Starrett City	6,372,279 1	6,149,149 5	6,373,047 5	223,898 4%	768 0%
Brooklyn Community District 6: Park Slope, Carroll Gardens & Red Hook	2,476,748 18	2,396,421 18	2,155,509 18	-240,912 -10%	-321,239 -13%
Brooklyn Community District 7: Sunset Park & Windsor Terrace	4,355,595 13	4,141,288 12	3,830,870 15	-310,418 -7%	-524,725 -12%
Brooklyn Community District 8: Crown Heights North & Prospect Heights	5,572,643 7	5,652,124 7	5,898,863 6	246,739 4%	326,220 6%
Brooklyn Community District 9: Crown Heights South, Prospect Lefferts & Wingate	5,500,676 8	5,490,639 8	5,857,514 8	366,875 7%	356,838 6%
Brooklyn Community District 10: Bay Ridge & Dyker Heights	3,162,481 17	3,389,452 17	3,260,522 17	-128,930 -4%	98,041 3%
Brooklyn Community District 11: Bensonhurst & Bath Beach	4,770,935 10	5,044,853 10	4,955,978 10	-88,875 -2%	185,043 4%
Brooklyn Community District 12: Borough Park, Kensington & Ocean Parkway	5,074,588 9	5,256,714 9	5,046,774 9	-209,940 -4%	-27,814 -1%
Brooklyn Community District 13: Brighton Beach & Coney Island	3,688,754 15	3,794,759 16	3,798,001 16	3,242 0%	109,247 3%



Community District(s)	2012 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2013 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2014 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	Change, 2013-14	Change, 2012-14
Brooklyn Community District 14: Flatbush & Midwood	5,729,884 6	5,812,747 6	5,873,204 7	60,457 1%	143,320 3%
Brooklyn Community District 15: Sheepshead Bay, Gerritsen Beach & Homecrest	3,491,434 16	3,876,558 15	3,865,084 14	-11,474 0%	373,650 11%
Brooklyn Community District 16: Brownsville & Ocean Hill	6,252,176 4	6,235,505 3	6,890,757 2	655,252 11%	638,581 10%
Brooklyn Community District 17: East Flatbush, Farragut & Rugby	6,077,495 5	6,208,186 4	6,616,561 4	408,375 7%	539,066 9%
Brooklyn Community District 18: Canarsie & Flatlands	6,332,043 3	6,514,425 1	7,243,599 1	729,174 11%	911,556 14%
<b>Brooklyn Totals</b>	<b>88,158,512</b>	<b>88,895,900</b>	<b>90,993,300</b>	<b>2,097,400</b>	<b>2,834,788</b>

Note: Due to rounding error, the sums of the Meal Gaps by community district may not equal the borough totals.

## Manhattan

Community District(s)	2012 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2013 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2014 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	Change, 2013-14	Change, 2012-14
Manhattan Community Districts 1 & 2: Battery Park City, Greenwich Village & Soho	3,041,843 10	3,055,997 10	2,929,871 9	-126,126 -4%	-111,972 -4%
Manhattan Community District 3: Chinatown & Lower East Side	5,474,989 3	5,207,524 3	5,066,241 3	-141,283 -3%	-408,748 -7%
Manhattan Community Districts 4 & 5: Chelsea, Clinton & Midtown Business District	3,566,576 8	3,473,896 8	3,367,966 8	-105,930 -3%	-198,610 -6%
Manhattan Community District 6: Murray Hill, Gramercy & Stuyvesant Town	3,141,519 9	3,154,652 9	2,925,121 10	-229,531 -7%	-216,398 -7%
Manhattan Community District 7: Upper West Side & West Side	4,254,500 6	4,252,576 6	4,007,916 6	-244,660 -6%	-246,584 -6%
Manhattan Community District 8: Upper East Side	4,235,389 7	4,251,407 7	3,939,719 7	-311,688 -7%	-295,670 -7%
Manhattan Community District 9: Hamilton Heights, Manhattanville & West Harlem	4,587,982 5	4,278,326 5	4,465,450 5	187,124 4%	-122,532 -3%
Manhattan Community District 10: Central Harlem	5,883,104 2	5,714,008 2	6,300,973 1	586,965 10%	417,869 7%
Manhattan Community District 11: East Harlem	4,965,776 4	4,338,454 4	4,548,222 4	209,768 5%	-417,554 -8%
Manhattan Community District 12: Washington Heights, Inwood & Marble Hill	7,095,592 1	5,836,139 1	5,565,856 2	-270,283 -5%	-1,529,736 -22%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>46,247,270</b>	<b>43,562,900</b>	<b>43,000,400</b>	<b>-562,500</b>	<b>-3,246,870</b>

Note: Due to rounding error, the sums of the Meal Gaps by community district may not equal the borough totals.

## Queens

Community District(s)	2012 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2013 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2014 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	Change, 2013-14	Change, 2012-14
Queens Community District 1: Astoria & Long Island City	4,953,217 4	4,713,362 4	4,755,505 4	42,143 1%	-197,712 -4%
Queens Community District 2: Sunnyside & Woodside	2,961,271 11	2,638,241 12	2,661,962 12	23,721 1%	-299,309 -10%
Queens Community District 3: Jackson Heights & North Corona	3,913,388 6	2,857,220 10	2,715,853 11	-141,367 -5%	-1,197,535 -31%
Queens Community District 4: Elmhurst & South Corona	3,487,699 8	2,924,943 8	2,851,549 9	-73,394 -3%	-636,150 -18%
Queens Community District 5: Ridgewood, Glendale & Middle Village	3,433,215 9	3,164,857 7	2,929,390 7	-235,467 -7%	-503,825 -15%
Queens Community District 6: Forest Hills & Rego Park	2,301,607 13	2,327,074 13	2,240,495 13	-86,579 -4%	-61,112 -3%
Queens Community District 7: Flushing, Murray Hill & Whitestone	5,813,568 2	5,775,432 2	5,543,537 3	-231,895 -4%	-270,031 -5%
Queens Community District 8: Briarwood, Fresh Meadows & Hillcrest	3,863,023 7	3,936,672 5	3,992,143 5	55,471 1%	129,120 3%
Queens Community District 9: Richmond Hill & Woodhaven	3,393,088 10	2,895,683 9	2,810,093 10	-85,590 -3%	-582,995 -17%
Queens Community District 10: Howard Beach & Ozone Park	2,732,320 12	2,740,369 11	2,924,411 8	184,042 7%	192,091 7%
Queens Community District 11: Bayside, Douglaston & Little Neck	1,829,994 14	1,957,428 14	1,819,042 14	-138,386 -7%	-10,952 -1%
Queens Community District 12: Jamaica, Hollis & St. Albans	8,433,639 1	8,352,412 1	9,464,831 1	1,112,419 13%	1,031,192 12%
Queens Community District 13: Queens Village, Cambria Heights & Rosedale	5,069,417 3	5,069,873 3	5,682,579 2	612,706 12%	613,162 12%

Community District(s)	2012 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2013 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2014 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	Change, 2013-14	Change, 2012-14
Queens Community District 14: Far Rockaway, Breezy Point & Broad Channel	3,984,438 5	3,779,785 6	3,963,909 6	184,124 5%	-20,529 -1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>56,169,885</b>	<b>53,133,300</b>	<b>52,653,700</b>	<b>-479,600</b>	<b>-3,516,185</b>

Note: Due to rounding error, the sums of the Meal Gaps by community district may not equal the borough totals.

## Staten Island

Community District(s)	2012 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2013 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	2014 Meal Gap (Number/Rank)	Change, 2013-14	Change, 2012-14
Staten Island Community District 1: Port Richmond, Stapleton & Mariner's Harbor	4,237,335 1	4,316,053 1	4,256,215 1	-59,838 -1%	18,880 0%
Staten Island Community District 2: New Springville & South Beach	1,897,753 2	2,220,292 3	2,119,272 3	-101,020 -5%	221,519 12%
Staten Island Community District 3: Tottenville, Great Kills & Annadale	1,856,733 3	2,244,573 2	2,244,509 2	-64 0%	387,776 21%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7,991,821</b>	<b>8,780,900</b>	<b>8,541,100</b>	<b>-239,800</b>	<b>549,279</b>

Note: Due to rounding error, the sums of the Meal Gaps by community district may not equal the borough totals.

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## About Food Bank For New York City

Food Bank For New York City has been the city's major hunger-relief organization working to end hunger throughout the five boroughs for more than 30 years. Nearly one in five New Yorkers relies on Food Bank for food and other resources. Food Bank takes a strategic, multifaceted approach that provides meals and builds capacity in the neediest communities, while raising awareness and engagement among all New Yorkers. Through its network of more than 1,000 charities and schools citywide, Food Bank provides food for approximately 63 million free meals per year for New Yorkers in need. Food Bank For New York City's income support services, including food stamps (also known as SNAP) and free tax assistance for the working poor, put more than \$150 million each year into the pockets of New Yorkers, helping them to afford food and achieve greater dignity and independence. In addition, Food Bank's nutrition education programs and services empower more than 45,000 children, teens and adults to sustain a healthy diet on a low budget. Working toward long-term solutions to food poverty, Food Bank develops policy and conducts research to inform community and government efforts. Learn how you can help at [foodbanknyc.org](http://foodbanknyc.org).



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## Food Bank For New York City

### Main Office

39 Broadway, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10006  
t: 212.566.7855 | f: 212.566.1463

### Warehouse / Distribution Center

Hunts Point Cooperative Market  
355 Food Center Drive, Bronx, NY 10474  
t: 718.991.4300 | f: 718.893.3442

### Community Kitchen & Food Pantry

252 West 116th Street, New York, NY 10026  
t: 212.566.7855 | f: 212.662.1945



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