

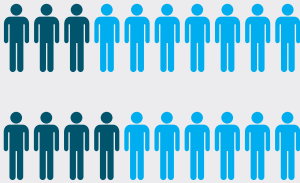
MONITORING POVERTY AND WELL-BEING IN NYC

SPOTLIGHT ON FOOD HARDSHIP:

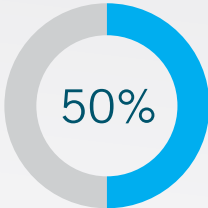
Many New Yorkers
May be Going
Hungry this
Thanksgiving

Christopher Wimer, Matthew Maury, Irwin Garfinkel, and Kent Rigg

Key Findings:



3 IN 10, or nearly 2.6 million, New Yorkers report often or sometimes running out of food each year. **4 OUT OF 10** New Yorkers, about 3.6 million people, experience at least one year where they report at least sometimes running out of food over the course of three years.



HALF OF NEW YORK CITY CHILDREN (about 900,000 children) experience running out of food at least sometimes over a three-year period.



Many working New Yorkers wind up getting **FOOD FROM A PANTRY** each year. Among those using a pantry in the past 12 months, **NEARLY HALF WORKED** at least at some point during that same year, and nearly three in ten worked 11 or 12 months of the year.



Black New Yorkers are more than **5 TIMES** as likely as white New Yorkers to be food insecure in all three years. Hispanic New Yorkers are nearly **8 TIMES** as likely.



Persistently running out of food is much more common in the Bronx than in New York City's other boroughs; **BRONX RESIDENTS** were about **1.6 TIMES** more likely to experience food hardship in comparison to the city as a whole.

THANKSGIVING IS A TIME WHEN MANY NEW YORKERS COME TOGETHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS OVER FOOD. IN THIS SHORT BRIEF, WE SPOTLIGHT THE STRUGGLES SOME NEW YORKERS FACE IN PUTTING FOOD ON THE TABLE, NOT JUST DURING THIS SEASON, BUT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

To examine this issue, we utilize data from the Poverty Tracker, a citywide survey sponsored by Robin Hood in partnership with Columbia University. To see more information on the Poverty Tracker, see the accompanying text box. The United States Department of Agriculture has routinely been collecting detailed measures of food insecurity for the nation as a whole, using a long-standing set of 18 questions. The Poverty Tracker, because our surveys aim to be short, engaging, and frequent, uses a shorter two-question version, which has been found in other studies to broadly capture the experiences of those who would have reported food insecurity using the longer measure.

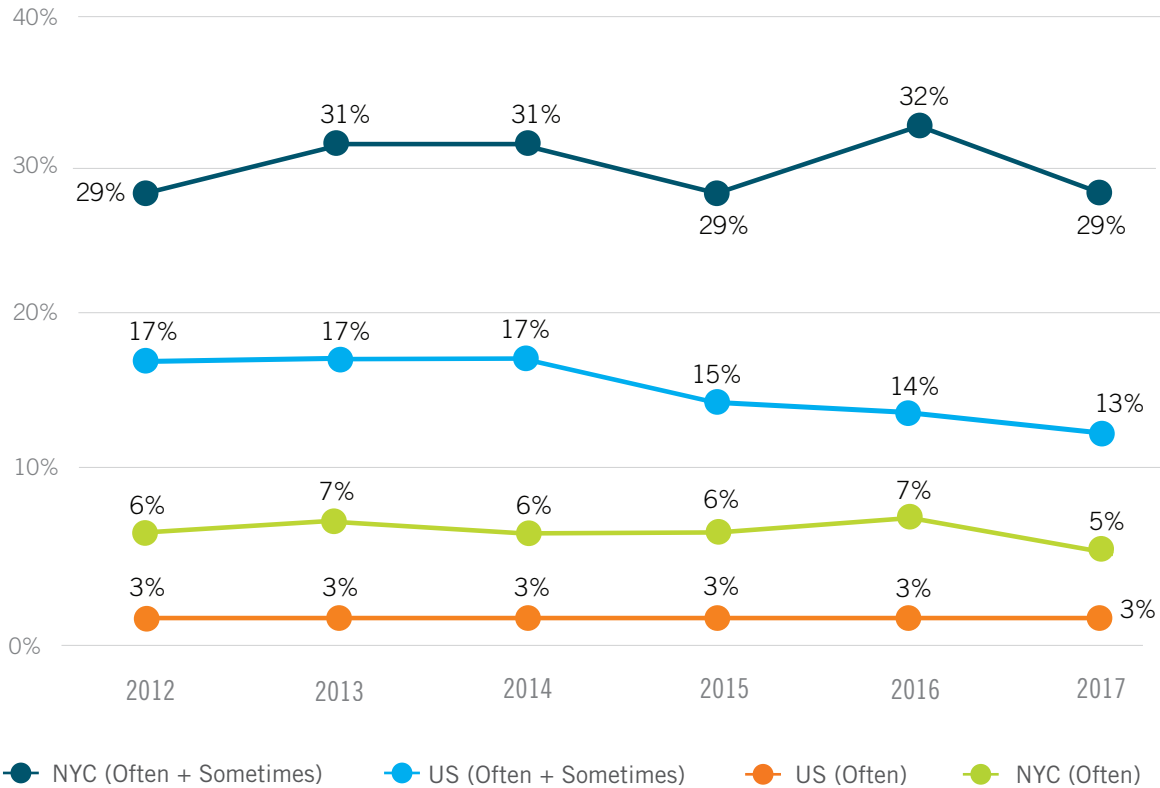
THE POVERTY TRACKER follows representative samples of New Yorkers over time, interviewing them every three months. The survey has been instrumental in documenting and tracking the dynamics of poverty and other forms of disadvantage and well-being over time. One such form of disadvantage is what is known as **food insecurity** or **food hardship**. The two questions in the Poverty Tracker ask: (1) **how often the respondent worries about running out of food before having money to buy more**; and (2) **how often the respondent actually runs out of food before having money to buy more**. In both cases, the choices are never, sometimes, or often. These two questions are part of the Department of Agriculture’s “gold standard” 18-question measure, which provides us an opportunity to first look at levels and trends in reported levels of food insecurity and hardship in both the nation and New York City. Note that the food hardship rates we report throughout this report are based on these individual items, whereas the USDA would calculate a food insecurity rate based on multiple affirmative responses across the full 18-item food security scale. Thus, our national numbers will differ from published food insecurity rates given these definitional differences. In this brief, we focus primarily on actually running out of food.

How many New Yorkers are food insecure?

Every year around 30 percent, nearly 2.6 million New Yorkers, report running out of food. Figure 1 shows the results, from 2012, when the Poverty Tracker was launched, to 2017, the most recent year of data collection. Figure 1 also shows that rates in New York City are higher than the national average, though the trends appear similar. About 5 percent of New Yorkers and 3 percent of Americans often run out of food over the five-year period.

Figure 1

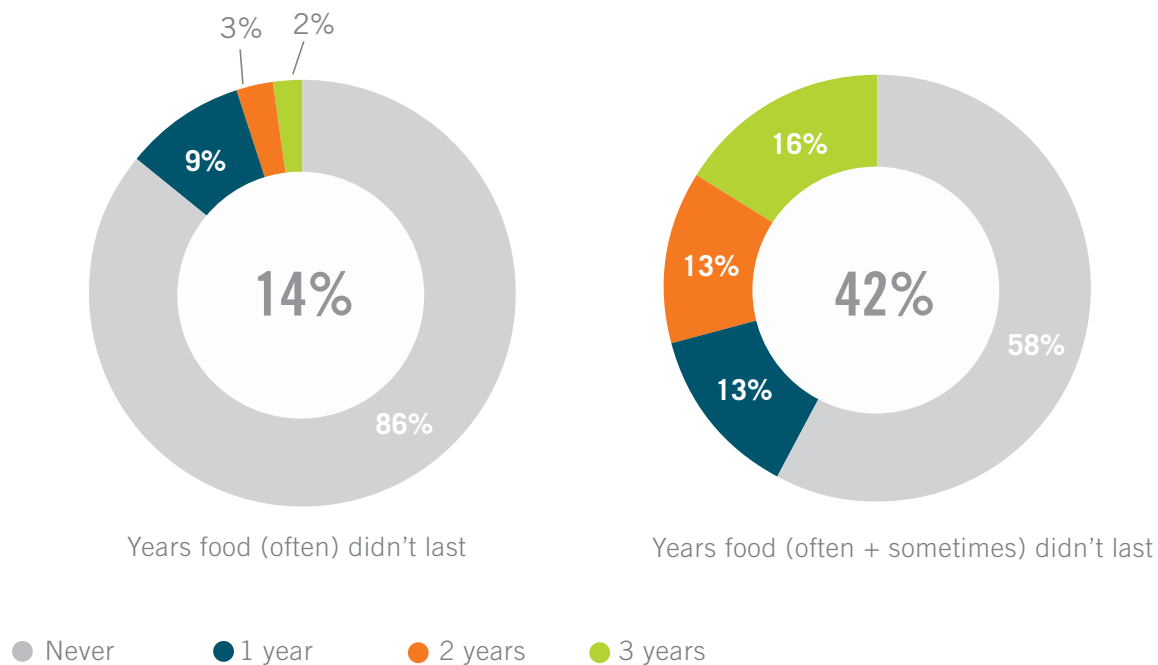
Trends in Running Out of Food in NYC Mirror National Trends, Though NYC Rates are Higher



About 5% of New Yorkers, and 3% of Americans, often run out of food in any given year.

FIGURE 2

For Some New Yorkers, the Experience of Running Out of Food Lasts Years



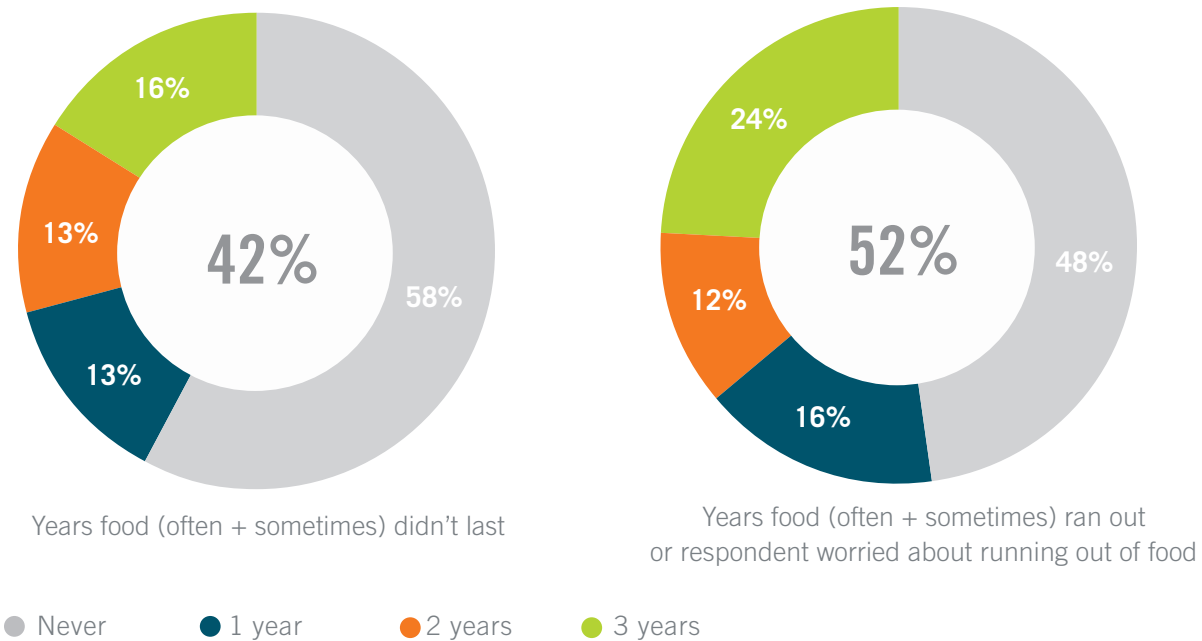
Half of New Yorkers worry about running out of food

In Figure 2, we see that a large share of New Yorkers — about four in ten, or 3.6 million people — experienced at least one year where they at least sometimes ran out of food, and 16 percent — or 1.4 million New Yorkers — at least sometimes experienced this difficulty in all three years of the survey. Nearly one million children live in families whose food ran out at least sometimes across the three years of the survey. Figure 3

4 in 10 New Yorkers experienced at least one year where they at least sometimes ran out of food, and 16% experienced this difficulty in all three years of the survey.

FIGURE 3

Rates of Food Hardship are Higher if You Count Worrying about Food Costs



shows that when we add worrying about running out of food, the rates are somewhat higher. Here, over 50 percent of New Yorkers at least sometimes worry about running, or actually run out of food in at least one year, while nearly one in four New Yorkers worries about running, or runs out of food at least sometimes over all three years.

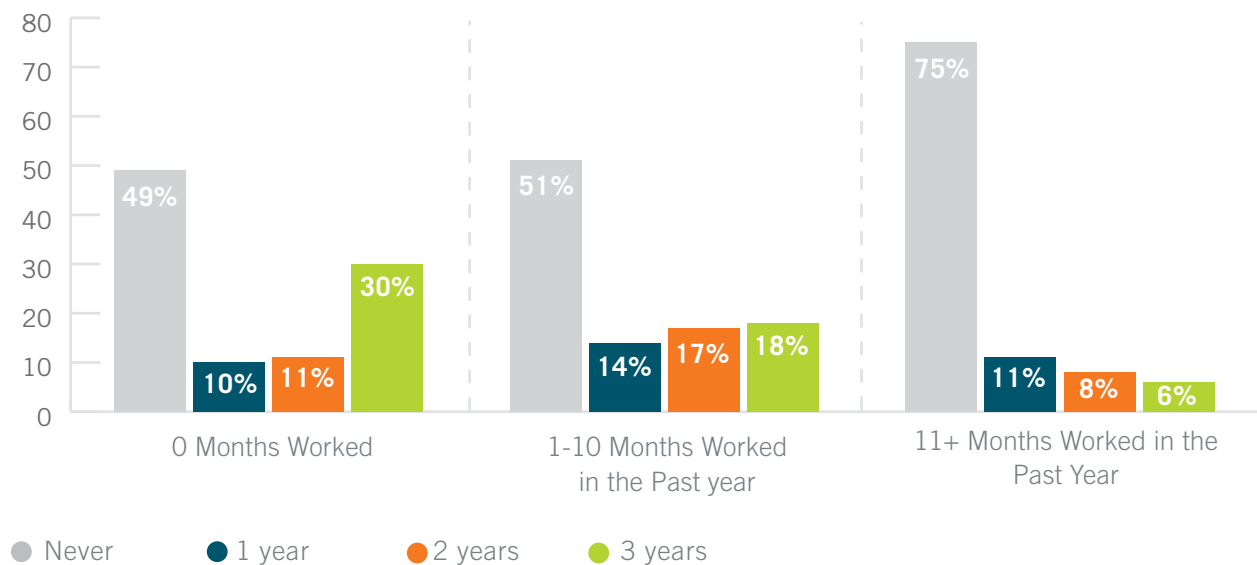
Over 50 percent of New Yorkers at least sometimes worry about running, or actually run out of food in at least one year.

Working full-time doesn't wholly prevent food hardship

Although employment helps reduce the rate of food insecurity for New Yorkers, we see that many part-time and full-time workers still run out of food. Figure 4 shows the persistence of running out of food based on the number of months New Yorkers are working throughout the year. As one would expect, running out of food is most common and persistent among non-workers. Among New Yorkers who don't work, three in ten often or sometimes run out of food in all three years in which they were surveyed. But we also see that even working consistently throughout the whole year, does not fully protect some New Yorkers from running out of food. Two in ten part-year workers, and six percent of full-year workers still run out of food at least sometimes across three consecutive years. Forty-nine percent of part-year workers and 25 percent of full-year workers experience at least one year in which they run out of food.

FIGURE 4

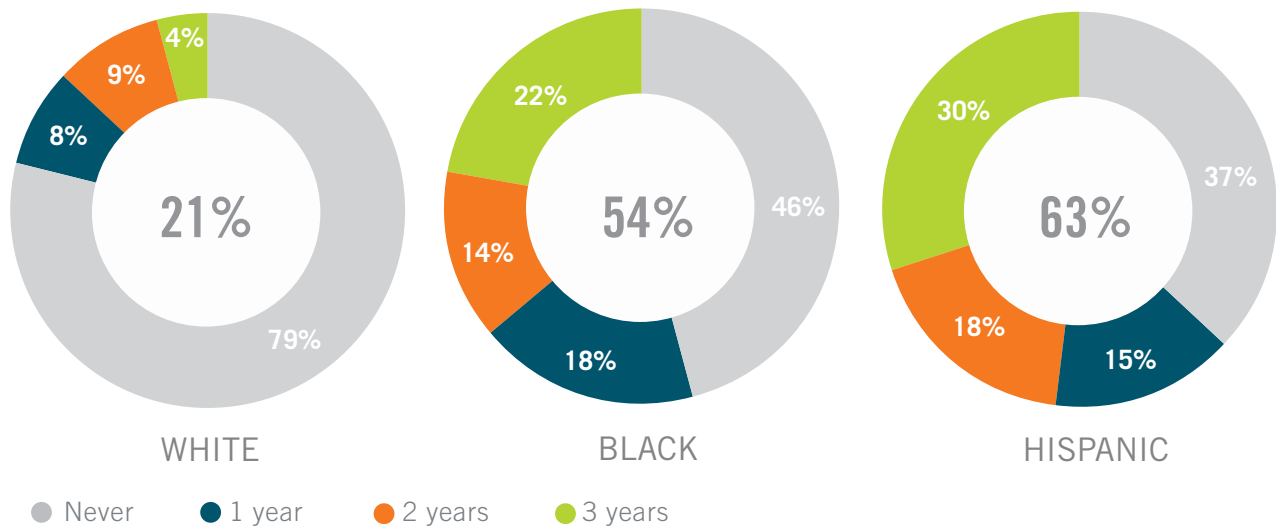
Working New Yorkers Run Out of Food, Too



We also see that work, even working consistently throughout the whole year, does not fully protect some New Yorkers from running out of food.

FIGURE 5

Black and Hispanic New Yorkers Experienced Much More Persistence in Running out of Food



New Yorkers face alarming racial disparities in food insecurity

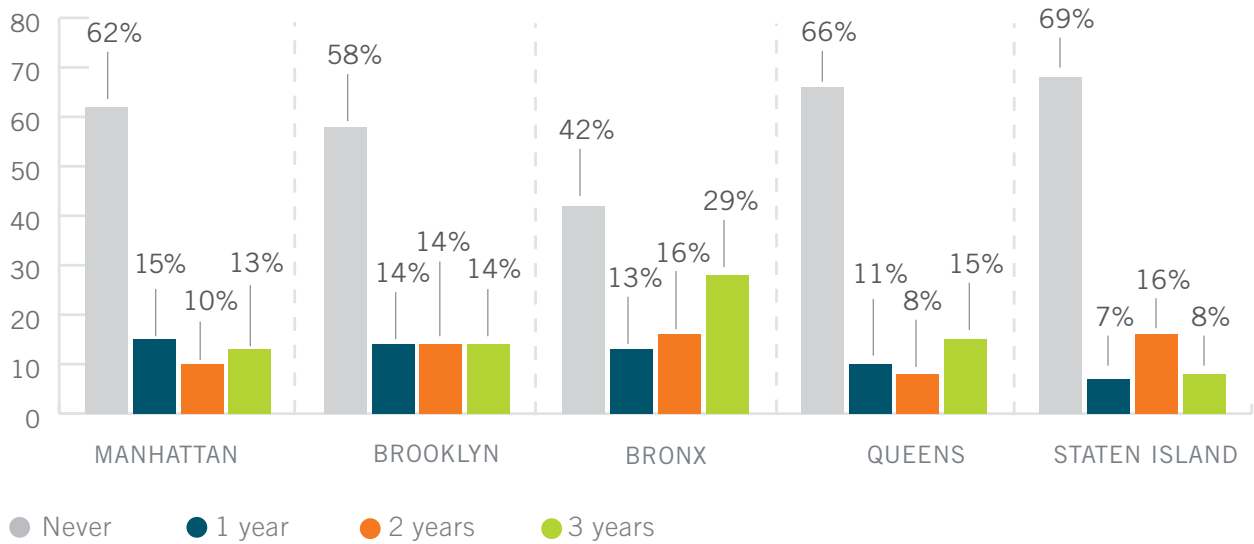
The persistence of running out of food is much more prevalent for some New Yorkers than others. Figure 5 shows the persistence of running out of food by race/ethnicity for white non-Hispanic, black non-Hispanic, and Hispanic New Yorkers (sample size precludes an analysis of Asian and other races and ethnicities). It indicates that persistently running out of food is much more common for black and Hispanic New Yorkers, at 22 percent and 30 percent, respectively, than for whites (4 percent). Put differently, nearly one in four black New Yorkers and three in ten Hispanic New Yorkers ran out of food in every one of three consecutive years.

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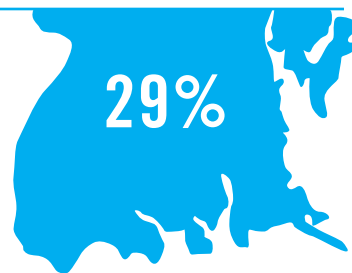
Persistently running out of food also varies across New York City's five boroughs. Figure 6 shows higher levels of persistently running out of food in the Bronx. In total, 29 percent of Bronx residents ran out of food often or sometimes in all three years in which they were surveyed. This contrasts greatly with New York's other boroughs, which fall between 8 and 15 percent.

FIGURE 6

Persistently Running out of Food was also Elevated in the Bronx



In total, 29 percent of Bronx residents ran out of food often or sometimes in all three years in which they were surveyed

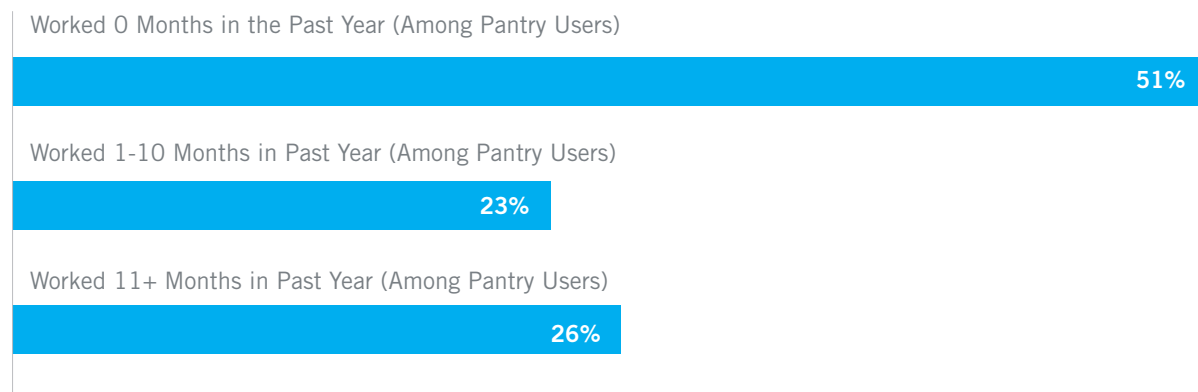


Assistance for food hardship

When families struggle with affording food, two major sources of help are available to them: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, and free food from food pantries (many of which the Robin Hood Foundation supports). Using our most recent data, we find that over 20 percent of New Yorkers benefit from SNAP over the course of a year, and about 10 percent benefit from free food from a food pantry. Notably, Figure 7 shows that many pantry users in New York City also work. Roughly half of pantry users report at least some work in the same years in which they use their pantries, and over a quarter work all year. Of the remainder, the vast majority (over 70 percent) are either aged or have severe health problems. As we have shown in previous work, and earlier in this brief, often work alone is not enough to allow New Yorkers to meet routine expenses in such a high-cost city.

Figure 7

A Sizable Proportion of New Yorkers Receive Help from Food Programs, and Many Recipients Work



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While Thanksgiving provides many New Yorkers the chance to come together over a shared meal, this brief reminds us that, for many New Yorkers, simply being able to put food on the table is a regular struggle. Many turn to SNAP or to local food pantries to help make up for shortfalls in their family budgets. And some New Yorkers have it much worse than others. While many New Yorkers certainly have much to be thankful for, it is worth taking a step back to consider the situation of the many who have less.