

HUNGER IN NEW YORK: FACT SHEET

THE ISSUE: IN 30 SECONDS

More than 46 million Americans — including 1.8 million New York City residents — rely on food stamps (SNAP) to keep food on the table; in Westchester County, an estimated 200,000 residents are hungry or at-risk of hunger. In both areas, women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and the working poor are especially at risk. On July 11th, the House of Representatives approved a Farm Bill which excluded SNAP benefits entirely, which may result in billions of dollars in cuts from the program.¹

THE ISSUE: AN OVERVIEW

“Hunger is caused by food poverty, a lack of geographic and/or financial access to nutritious food. In New York City, one of the richest cities in the world, food poverty is around every corner. Throughout the five boroughs, approximately 1.4 million people — mainly women, children, seniors, the working poor and people with disabilities — rely on soup kitchens and food pantries. Approximately 2.6 million New Yorkers experience difficulty affording food for themselves and their families.

Financial pressures such as unemployment, health care issues, housing issues, and low wages continue to strain the budgets New Yorkers with low to moderate incomes. Low-income New Yorkers often have to choose between providing enough food for themselves or their families and paying the month's rent or utility bills. Middle-income New Yorkers are also feeling the pressure, increasingly reporting difficulty affording groceries. With food prices steadily rising, *struggling* New Yorkers' ability to buy food for themselves and their families is at a crisis level.

To make matters worse, approximately 3 million New Yorkers live in low-income neighborhoods that lack access to affordable, nutritious food. With their budgets already strained, and the prevalence of low-cost, low-quality food in these neighborhoods, these residents face significant challenges in maintaining a healthy lifestyle — leading to high concentrations of diet-related conditions such as diabetes, obesity and hypertension.”²

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What foods can/can't be purchased with SNAP benefits?

SNAP benefits can be used to buy foods for the household to eat, such as breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables, meats, fish and poultry, dairy products. They can also be used to buy seeds and plants which produce food for the household to eat. SNAP benefits CANNOT be used to buy beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes or tobacco; any nonfood items, such as pet foods, soaps, paper products and household supplies; vitamins and medicines; food that will be eaten in the store; and hot foods.³

What is the average monthly SNAP benefit for a family of 4 in New York?

In 2012, the average monthly benefit per household in New York State was \$274.94.⁴

How many people in the US use SNAP benefits? Who are they?

SNAP eligibility rules require that participants be at or below 130% of the Federal Poverty Level. Recent studies show that 49% of all SNAP participants are children (age 18 or younger), with almost two-thirds of SNAP children living in single-parent households. In total, 76% of SNAP

¹ Feeding America, <http://feedingamerica.org>

² Food Bank of NYC, <http://www.foodbanknyc.org/food-poverty-in-nyc>

³ USDA, http://asktheexpert.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/5267

⁴ USDA, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/19SNAPavg\\$HH.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/19SNAPavg$HH.htm)

benefits go towards households with children, 16% go to households with disabled persons, and 9% go to households with senior citizens.

According to demographic data, 43% of SNAP participants are white, 33% are African-American, 19% are Hispanic, 2% are Asian, and 2% are Native American.

As of August 2011, 45.8 million persons were participating in SNAP.⁵

**LOCAL
ORGANIZATIONS**

Food Bank of NYC
<http://www.foodbanknyc.org>

Food Bank for Westchester
<http://www.foodbankforwestchester.org>

New York Common Pantry
<http://www.nycommonpantry.org>

Westchester Coalition for the Hungry & Homeless
<http://www.westchestercoalition.org/>

**CONNECTIONS TO
JUSTICE**

Food Justice: Do all Americans have the right to be able to afford food, especially food that is also healthy? Or is cutting SNAP benefits a good way to balance our country's budget in the long-term, even if some individuals and families will struggle right now? As long as food costs money, there will be questions about affordability and whether or not all individuals, regardless of employment status and income, have a right to adequate food and nutrition.

⁵ Snap to Health, <http://www.snaptohealth.org/snap/snap-frequently-asked-questions>