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Hunger Dips in NY City & State, But Still Higher Than Pre-Recession;

New York Still in Grip of “Working Hunger” Epidemic;

Bronx Still Hungriest Borough, With 1 in 3 Kids Food Insecure

City Pantry and Kitchen Usage Increases Six Percent, and Many Unable to Keep Up;

Advocates Say G.O.P. Tax, Health Care, and Spending Bills Would Increase Hunger

While hunger in New York City and State dropped significantly over the last six years, the number of city and states residents unable to afford an adequate supply of food is still greater than a decade ago. Despite unemployment dropping and wages rising, hunger rates are still far higher before the start of the recession, according to a new report by Hunger Free America, based on an analysis of federal data.

Citywide, the number of New Yorkers struggling against hunger dropped by 15 percent over the past six years, but was still 15 percent higher than a decade ago. In 2014-2016, 1.2 million New Yorkers (one in seven of the city’s population) lived in food insecure homes, compared to 1.4 million in 2011-2013 and 1.0 million in 2004-2006.

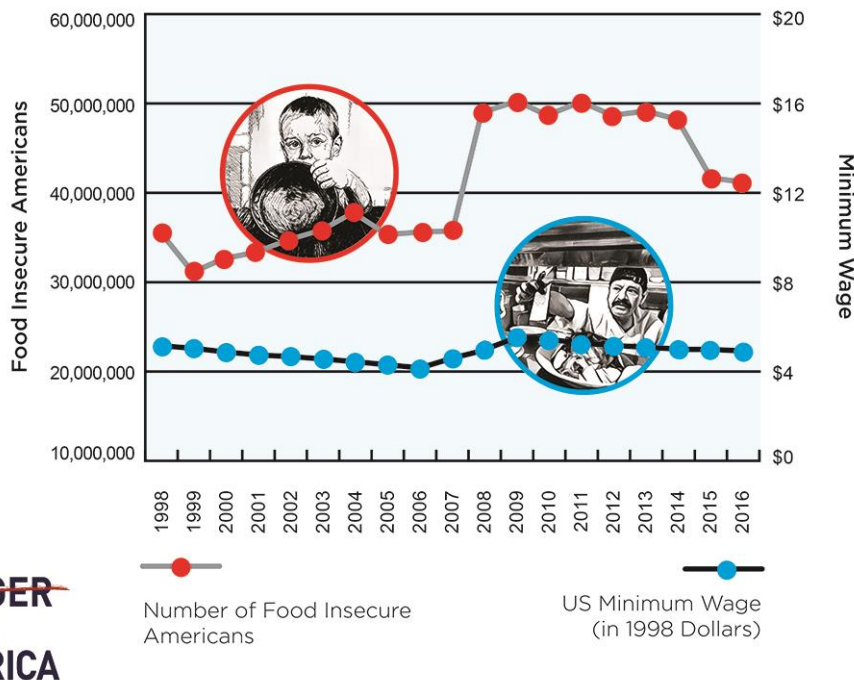
Statewide, the number of New Yorkers struggling against hunger dropped by 12 percent over the past six years, but was still 25 percent higher than it was a decade ago. In 2014-2016, 2.5 million state residents (one in eight of the state’s population) lived in food insecure homes, compared to 2.9 million in 2011-2013 and 2.0 million in 2004-2006.

Fully one out of every ten working adults in New York City and State was food insecure in the years 2014-2016. Fully 388,671 adults in the city and 841,625 adults in the state lived in households that couldn’t afford enough food. These are slight reductions from last year, likely because of the increase in the minimum wage in the state and city. Hunger Free America just released a companion report that demonstrates that states that hiked their own minimum wages were less likely to have workers struggling against hunger.

Said, Joel Berg, CEO of Hunger Free America, “While unemployment decreased and wages rose during the last few years of the Obama Administration, it is shameful that America, New York State, and New York City all *still* have higher levels of hunger than before the great recession. We still face a nation, state, and local epidemic of the ‘working hungry.’ Nationwide, the abysmally low minimum wage clearly is a chief cause of hunger. Yet, just at a time when the nation needs even more jobs, even higher wages, and even more robust anti-hunger safety net programs, Republicans in Washington are scheming to cut the safety net and eviscerate health care – which would clearly make hunger soar – just to fund even more tax cuts for the mega-wealthy.

Hunger Free America, formerly called the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, is releasing the report at an event at Part of the Solution (POTS), a leading Bronx soup kitchen and food pantry, flanked by governmental and nonprofit leaders and community activists. The Bronx remains New York City’s hungriest borough in every category, with one in every four people (25.9 percent) experiencing food insecurity. Nearly 29 percent of children (28.8 percent) and 22 percent of seniors in the Bronx are food insecure. Nearly half (48.8 percent) of the Emergency Food Providers surveyed in the Bronx indicated they could not meet demand, and 65.9 percent indicated they were seeing more clients at their kitchens and/or pantries.

**AS PURCHASING POWER OF MINIMUM WAGE SINKS,
US HUNGER STAYS SKY HIGH**



Other findings of the study:

- 19.1 percent of the children in the city (one in five) and 12.7 percent of the children in the state (one in eight) lived in food insecure homes in 2014-2016.
- Countering the trend of decreasing hunger, the percentage of seniors facing hunger increased citywide and statewide. Compared to 2013-2015 data, the number of food insecure seniors in New York City increased 16.5 percent (from 171,197 to 199,379, respectively). Statewide, 8.7 percent

of seniors are food insecure, an estimated 362,817 people, nearly double the rates a decade ago (4.5 percent in 2004-2006).

- In 2017 New York City food pantries and soup kitchens fed 6 percent more people than the year before, on top of an increase of 9 percent in 2016, 5 percent in 2015, and 7 percent in 2014.
- 37.9 percent of the city’s pantries and kitchens indicated they were not distributing enough food to meet demand, and 35.4 percent indicated they had to turn people away, reduce the amount of food, or limit their hours of operation.
- Nearly a third of the emergency food providers indicated that they do not engage their clients, staff, volunteers, or board members in advocacy (32.3 percent for clients; 29.4 percent for staff, volunteers, and board members).
- President Trump has proposed slashing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) - formerly called the Food Stamp Program – by \$192 billion, and House Republicans have also proposed major cuts to the program. Yet 93 percent of the people who run food pantries and soup kitchens in New York City said such cuts would cause their clients to struggle even more.



“It is unconscionable that, in the richest city in the history of the world,” said Berg, “one in five children still can’t always count on enough food. It is equally unacceptable that a third of our food pantries and soup kitchens lack the resources to meet the growing need. The sky-high hunger level of New York and America harms health, hampers education, traps families in poverty, fuels obesity, eviscerates hope, and thus drags down our entire economy and places our national security at risk. Hunger harms us all. In

contrast, ending hunger lifts us all. We must build the movement needed and force our political system to enact the economic policies and social programs necessary to end U.S. hunger once and for all.”

The study, “Working New York Still Hungry: New York City and State Hunger Report,” is available on Hunger Free America’s website, <http://www.hungerfreeamerica.org/media-research/research>, through which anyone can also donate or volunteer, or find food if they need it.

Quotes from Elected Officials, Advocates, and Partners:

“Nearly one in six adults and one in every five children in the United States live in hunger. That’s more than 41 million Americans and 13 million children who live daily with food insecurity. These numbers are simply unacceptable. I commend Hunger Free America and Hunger Free NYC for this extraordinary effort to provide information on how we can better serve our seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, and low-income residents so they are no longer unable to feed themselves or their families in one of the most economic prosperous nations in the world.”

-Rep. Adriano Espaillat (NY-13)

“In the wealthiest country in the world, millions of Americans struggle every day to put food on the table. And the majority of those who go hungry are children, seniors, low-income workers, veterans, and people with disabilities. This is simply unacceptable. Hunger has threatened our most vulnerable citizens for far too long, I applaud Hunger Free America for their work to permanently end hunger and food insecurity.” –

Joe Crowley, House Democratic Caucus Chairman

“New York is the greatest city in the world and it is simply unacceptable that so many New Yorkers go to bed hungry. I commend Hunger Free America for their ongoing commitment to ending the meal gap and thank them for comprising this important report that will guide the Council in devising meaningful policy to take a bite out of hunger.”

-Council Member Vanessa L. Gibson, 16th District

“No child, New Yorker, or human being anywhere, should ever go hungry. While food insecurity is an unconscionable reality for too many of us, we must continue to right this wrong. I applaud Hunger Free America for the work they do to help the hungry and for the up-to-date information they provide so that we can address the problem of hunger head-on.”

-NYC Council Member Rafael Espinal

“A critical component of POTS’ extensive poverty fighting efforts is to face food insecurity and hunger in a comprehensive and holistic way. POTS believes it is incredibly important to understand the dynamics of who is hungry and why so we can work together to address the needs of this community to build a more equitable New York.” **-Deputy Executive Director of POTS, Christina Hanson**

“This report from Hunger Free America shines a light, not just on the need for continued support and funding for individual soup kitchens and food pantries like ours, but on the need for a systematic change to the way that we approach hunger in America. A more just and equitable wage structure, including a living wage, comprehensive job training and placement programs, and an end to homelessness will all do far more to alleviate hunger than emergency food programs ever will. In the meantime, until such changes are made, elected officials and citizens alike need to understand that increased funding for charitable food programs is a necessity, unless they want Americans starving to death. Man cannot live on failed government promises alone.” – **Cassandra Agredo, Xavier Mission – Manhattan**

"Project Hospitality served 1,760,000 last year to more than 24,000 Staten Island families. Low wage working families choose between food on their table, roof over their heads and clothes on their backs. As pantries we are a band-aid to a gaping wound called poverty. Livable wages and affordable housing are the long term solutions to the suffering caused by hunger in our borough and throughout the city"

-Terry Troia, Executive Director, Project Hospitality

"Bed-Stuy Campaign Against Hunger (BSCAH) is one of the largest direct providers of emergency food and related services that address poverty in New York City. What sets us apart from similarly mission organizations is that we focus on dignity, empowerment and we understand the need of the community we serve. Currently, we're experiencing an increase up to 50%, in new clients, of which 40% of them were adversely affected and displaced by Hurricane Maria. Due to this enormous influx, we are desperately in need of your support and bi-lingual volunteers"

- Dr. Melony Samuels, Bed-Stuy Campaign Against Hunger

"Far too many New Yorkers, many of them families with young children, face hunger and food insecurity. The consequences of not having enough nutritious food to eat can be devastating - especially on children. Public Health Solutions' WIC and SNAP programs help ensure tens of thousands of families throughout the city receive food assistance. We are proud to partner with Hunger Free America to raise public awareness about the need, and those who are potentially eligible for food benefits." **-Lisa David, CEO and President of Public Health Solutions**

"While hunger is a problem in the US, impacting one in eight Americans; it is a crisis in our area impacting one in five people, meaning that 20% of our neighbors don't know where their next meal is coming from... Or if they'll have one at all." **- Philabundance - Philadelphia**

"Hunger emerges the strongest and most persistently among populations that are already vulnerable and disadvantaged. Ending Hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition are great acts of humanity. There's no better time to support Hunger Free America than right now."

- Barbara Hart, Staten Island Food Action Board

"Hunger does not discriminate! Let's all give what we can so no one goes hungry."

- Fernando Villa, the Bronx Food Action Board

"Inspirational Food Pantry have had a big success for feeding 1000 people per month to \$4,500 per month, but the biggest challenge is that we still need more funding to be able to feed more people than what we currently feed." **- Joseph Kuffour, Executive Director, Inspirational Food Pantry – the Bronx**

"The problem of Hunger is simply a symptom of the real issue: Income inequality. The failure to sacrifice minimum-wage growth in furtherance of greater corporate profit is a direct driver of the widespread increase in overall poverty that our economy has experienced. We need to fix this fast: The anger level among the general population of "working poor" families who have been living in multigenerational poverty is rapidly becoming uncontrollable. We see it every day."

- Otto Starzmann, Chief Production Officer, RIVER FUND – Brooklyn and Queens

"Not sure how to solve the hunger problem in New York, but I do know we need the Federal Government's help to feed the hunger in this area."

- Daisy Clemetson, Director, Our Lord Soup Kitchen and Pantry – the Bronx

"Hunger in NYC, through all seasons has become an expensive service. How can we give if we are limited?"

- Tanesha Williams, Volunteer, Bethel Gospel Tabernacle - Queens

“The reason people are hungry in NY and America is because after they pay high rents, there is nothing left for food or either they do not have jobs. Salaries do not compete with the economy of today's prices.”
– **Connie Green, Executive Director, United Grand Chapter OES - Brooklyn**

“The Alliance for Positive Change strongly recommend more funding sources for emergency food assistance. In addition the Island Harvest eligibility is complicated for instance, CBO's are unable to utilize that resource. We need our government to set better priorities when it comes to funding allocations that serve the American people.” – **Fulvia Alvelo, V.P., the Alliance for Positive Change - Manhattan**

“There should be no reason for people in the US to face hunger because there are so many resources available for them but believe it or not people don't know where to go.”
– **Nat Liengsirawat, Director, AIDS Center of Queens County - Queens**

“With the hostile climate in Washington, it's been more important than ever that our low-income, working poor, elderly and immigrant families know we are there for them. Now, we have to rally together to oppose any cuts to SNAP that would have such a terrible impact on the community.”
– **Lucia Russett, Director of Advocacy, LSA Family Health Service - Manhattan**

“Corporations need to help. People need to work together. Government should help the poor. Agencies should not be caring entire burden. Would be about true unity. Government cutting people's benefits is going to be affecting the people.”
– **Danette Rivera, Executive Director, J.I.T.A Community Outreach Center - Queens**

“The food pantry used to serve up to 2000 per month and it was successful getting the food resources, however there is no fund to pay the rent and the director had to close it down.”
– **Argentina Ortiz, Director, Liberation and Healing Pentecostal Church - Manhattan**

“For the past 2 years we noticed an increased in the number of people who need pantry services due to SNAP budget cut, even though we try to accommodate everyone and we do sometimes run low on food we never turn away clients. If we have an increase in funding we will be able to better serve our hungry clients.”
– **Youma, Food Pantry Coordinator, African Services Committee - Manhattan**

“To stop hunger, we must have more jobs. Jobs, so that more people would be employed and fed themselves.” – **Ed Herzberg, Food Coordinator, the Salvation Army - Manhattan**

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