



Improving Food Security for New York's Children

The Promise

All children and families in New York have access to nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and cultural traditions, fortifying them to lead healthy, active lives. New Yorkers eligible for food assistance can access benefits that help their families achieve food security without undue bureaucratic hurdles, intrusive application processes, or long processing delays.

The Challenge

New York families face high rates of food insecurity, with roughly **one in six** (15.8%) households with children reporting to the US Census Household Pulse survey that they faced food insecurity sometimes or often between January and September of 2024.¹ Respondents reported sharp disparities in food insecurity depending on race, with rates for households selecting two or more races or other with children at 53.73%, Latino at 26.97%, Black at 24.20%, and Asian at 19.08%, compared to 8.91% for white households with children.² Food insecurity in children can lead to an increased risk of a variety of negative health outcomes, including a higher risk of developmental delays and obesity, and adverse effects on mental health.³






What We Know

Food insecurity in New York is widespread, impacting New Yorkers in urban, rural, and suburban communities. Some counties are hit harder than others, such as the Bronx and Kings Counties, which are also counties with some of the largest populations of Black and Latino residents.⁴ New York ranks among the top ten states that have experienced statistically significant growth in food insecurity since 2018.⁵ Between 2021 and 2023, approximately 12.3% of households statewide reported experiencing food insecurity, compared to 10.5% in 2018 to 2020.⁶

Administrative barriers

Thousands of income-eligible families who could benefit from food assistance are not participating in food safety net programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) due to administrative barriers such as cumbersome paperwork and recertification requirements, and difficulties scheduling appointments and interviews.⁷ In the case of WIC, nearly half of those eligible in New York are not utilizing it.⁸ This is the case even though WIC regulations allow adjunctive eligibility, which enables State agencies to automatically deem a participant in other federal benefits programs, such as Medicaid, income-eligible for WIC.

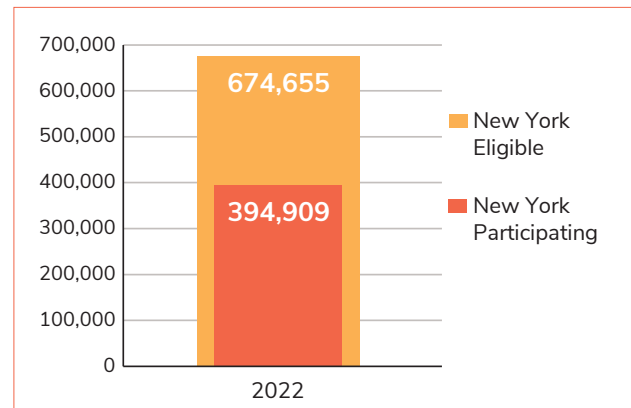
Five Counties with Children Facing the Highest Food Insecurity Rates (2022)

Bronx County		33.2%
Kings County		25.3%
Broome County		20.2%
Franklin County		20.2%
Chautauqua County		20.1%

New York State's rate for children facing food insecurity is **18.8%**

Source: Feeding America (2024). 2022 Food Insecurity New York

Nearly Half of Eligible New Yorkers Do Not Participate in WIC



Source: Food and Nutrition Services. (2024). WIC Coverage Rates by State and Participant Category, 2022.

SNAP participation rates are also low: between 2018 and 2020, just 70% of eligible children in New York participated in SNAP.⁹ Too often, eligible families are unaware of the program and rely on word of mouth and provider referrals.¹⁰

Barriers due to immigration status

Federal requirements preclude many immigrant families from participating in SNAP due to their immigration status. Approximately **64,600 immigrant families with children** living in New York are income-eligible for SNAP, but are excluded from the program due to their immigration status.¹¹ Another 132,000 New York children living in mixed-status households receive SNAP benefits, but at a level that does not reflect the full size of the household because some household members are excluded due to their immigration status.¹² Further, many families do not enroll eligible family members in benefit programs, including eligible children, due to fear surrounding their immigration status.¹³

Insufficient benefits

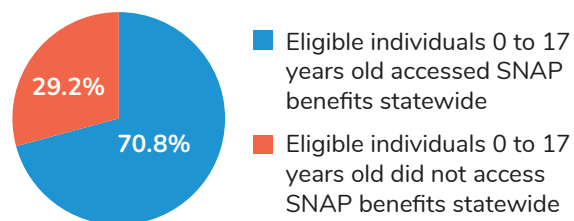
In 2023, the maximum SNAP benefit amount in about 98% of counties across the United States did not meet modest food cost levels.¹⁴ New York County had the most significant gap nationwide, with meal costs worth 100% more than the SNAP benefits. Although there were more significant gaps between actual food costs and SNAP benefits in urban areas, SNAP benefits were also insufficient in meeting the needs of people living in rural regions. For example, in Essex County, a modestly priced meal costing \$3.77 was 33% more than what the maximum SNAP benefit covered.

The Policy Solutions

Food insecurity is preventable, and New York can take action to ensure no child or adult goes hungry. To ensure all New Yorkers have access to nutritious foods, New York should:

- ▶ Increase coordination between WIC and SNAP and other public benefits programs, such as Medicaid, to ensure all eligible New Yorkers are aware of, and can participate in the programs, and ensure programs are adequately resourced to serve additional families as barriers are reduced.
- ▶ Ensure all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, have access to nutritious and culturally responsive food, including by investing state funds to make food benefits programs available to all income-eligible residents.
- ▶ Ensure that food security benefits levels are adequate to meet families' nutrition needs.

Eligible New York Children Participating in SNAP (2018-2020)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility & access.

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Looking back, I feel that if I hadn't changed doctors, I might never have known about WIC or my eligibility for it. The only visible information was a couple of basic posters in the doctor's office, and there was minimal mention of WIC during initial intake and screening.

—New mother and WIC participant, Albany, New York

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¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). [Household pulse survey: Data tables](#).

² Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). [Food insecurity: Literature summary](#). Healthy People 2030. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

³ Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). [Food insecurity: Literature summary](#). Healthy People 2030. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

⁴ Health Resources and Services Administration. (n.d.). [III.B. Overview of the State - New York - 2023](#).

⁵ Rabbitt, M.P., Reed-Jones, M., Hales, L.J., & Burke, M.P. (2024). [Household food security in the United States in 2023 \(Report No. ERR-337\)](#). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

⁶ Rabbitt, M.P., Reed-Jones, M., Hales, L.J., & Burke, M.P. (2024). [Household food security in the United States in 2023 \(Report No. ERR-337\)](#). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

⁷ Schweitzer, Justin. (2022). [How to address the administrative burdens of accessing the safety net](#). Center for American Progress.

⁸ Kessler, C., Bryant, A., Munkacsy, K., & Farson Gray, K. (2024). [National- and State-level estimates of WIC eligibility and WIC program reach in 2022](#). U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) eligibility & access](#).

¹⁰ Raising NY. (2024). [From Barriers to Opportunity: Confronting Systemic Barriers to Early Childhood and Poverty-Reduction Programs](#).

¹¹ New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. (2024). [Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council 2024 recommendations and progress report](#).

¹² Monkovic, M. (2024). [Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2022](#). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support

¹³ Gonzalez, D., & Bernstein, H. (2023). [One in four adults in mixed-status families did not participate in safety net programs in 2022 because of green card concerns](#). Urban Institute.

¹⁴ Waxman, E., Gupta, P., Gundersen, C., Spinner, B., Baird, C., Marconi, R., Chartoff, B., Kenney, R., Lei, S., & Peiffer, E. (2024). [Does snap cover the cost of a meal in your county?](#) Urban Institute.

*For all sources and computations, go to <https://scaany.org/sonyc-sources-2025/>