



The Experience of Food Insecurity in Kosher Households in New York City

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Preface

This study was commissioned by Gemiluth Chessed of Greater New York.

Many individuals and organizations came together to make the study a reality.

Food assistance organizations across New York City distributed the survey to their clients. Their efforts to combat food insecurity are extraordinary and inspiring, and we are honored by their partnership.

Several individuals helped identify, contact, and encourage participation from food assistance organizations: Jessica Chait at Met Council, Perry Landman-Hopman at City Harvest, Yehudis Robinson at Sister to Sister, and Rabbi Simon Taylor and Chagit Bender at the Orthodox Union.

Several Jewish communal professionals and volunteers shared their time and insights about kosher food assistance in New York City: Rabbi Avraham Berns at A&S Community Fund, Jessica Chait at Met Council, Blumie Eidelman at Staten Island Kollel, Debbie Hes at the Jewish Community Council of Washington Heights-Inwood, Bev Israel at Bikur Cholim of Staten Island, Aron Katz at Tomchei Shabbos of Queens, Alex Rapaport at Masbia, and Rabbi Yitzi Weinberg at Flatbush Community Fund. Alan Rosenstock at Tomche Shabbos of Rockland County provided perspective on food assistance in the greater New York area.

Three anonymous women shared their personal struggles to feed their families and gave feedback on the survey questionnaire.

Emanuel Kalendarev at Ohel Joseph and Brukho Toxsur translated the survey questionnaire into Russian. Harry Noll translated open-ended survey responses from Russian to English.

This study would not have been possible without the expert management of Cheryl Noll.

Acharon acharon chaviv, we are grateful to the men and women who completed the survey. We hope the results of this study justify their trust in us.

Gratitude notwithstanding, the author takes full responsibility for the design of this study, its conduct, and the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Key takeaways and questions

This report takes a close look at the needs and experiences of New Yorkers who keep kosher and are anxious about having enough food or need help to obtain food every month.

The primary takeaway from the study is that survey respondents valued forms of food assistance that allowed them to purchase the specific foods that met their individual food preferences and dietary restrictions.

Respondents' diets were inelastic—that is, their eating habits stayed about the same, regardless of what foods were easily available. 58% of respondents were unwilling to eat unfamiliar foods in order to save money.

Respondents' diets were also highly individual and idiosyncratic. Many factors played into food choices; for example, about one third of respondents lived with someone who had a dietary restriction such as lactose intolerance, and many parents explained that their children were picky. 10% of respondents ate poultry with hashgacha from KP Poultry but not Empire Kosher, and 11% did the opposite. No single type of chicken, meat, or fish was a staple protein food for more than two-thirds of respondents.

Because their diets were highly individual and inelastic, respondents valued forms of food assistance that allowed them to select their own food. SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program), which provides monthly funds on an EBT card to buy food, was the most valued form of food assistance overall: 95% of SNAP recipients said the SNAP benefits were essential or very important in ensuring that they had enough food. Grocery gift cards were the most valued form of private food assistance: 89% of respondents who received grocery gift cards said they were very important or essential in ensuring they had enough food. 32% of respondents asked Jewish community leaders to provide grocery gift cards.

Asked what changes would make them feel more comfortable going to a food pantry or community kitchen, 63% of respondents said they needed more food that met their preferences or dietary needs. The one-size-fits-all pantry box was less valuable to them.

There were two other key takeaways from the study:

- **Time, mobility, and transportation constraints made it difficult for some survey respondents to access low-cost retail food and food assistance.** Only half (52%) of respondents chose their primary grocery store because of pricing. Many made choices based on convenience factors like a “one-stop shop” or accessible location or hours. 14% of respondents said that delivery options are one reason they chose their

primary grocery store. 55% of respondents said they would be more comfortable going to a food pantry or community kitchen if it had extended hours, a more convenient location, or shorter lines or wait times.

- **Asking for food assistance was embarrassing for survey respondents, and they worried about being judged by others.** 80% of respondents felt embarrassed asking for food assistance, and 73% worried that others would judge them for accepting it. Respondents explained that one of the benefits of grocery gift cards is that it feels more dignified to shop in a regular retail store. Going to food pantries and community kitchens was uncomfortable for some respondents. 28% of respondents would be more comfortable going if the location or parking were more discreet. Some respondents asked for online ordering and delivery in order to save them the embarrassment of going to a food pantry.

These findings raise a number of important questions for communal leaders.

1. Should food pantries adopt client choice models, allowing clients the opportunity to select their own food rather than receiving a one-size-fits-all pantry box? How could an online ordering system or other similar system facilitate the move toward client choice models?
2. Should food pantries offer home delivery in order to increase access and further protect the privacy of the client? If so, how should food pantries balance their need for efficiency with the need for high-touch, highly customized services?
3. Which kosher protein foods should be distributed through food assistance organizations? Given the varied diets of individual families, how can food assistance providers maximize the number of households with access to at least one of their staple protein foods while maintaining efficiency?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of offering grocery gift cards or store credit as an alternative to food products? How do grocery gift cards compare to food pantries in terms of amount of food product per donor dollar? Do grocery gift cards better reach food insecure families who would never seek assistance from a food pantry?
5. What changes might give food insecure families easier access to less expensive retail food stores?
6. SNAP benefits are fixed across the continental United States, and the real value of these benefits is lower in New York City and in other areas with high cost of food. How can policy makers address the geographic variation in food prices?¹

Read on for detailed findings.

Whose stories are we telling?

The present study was designed to uncover the detailed experience of food insecure individuals in kosher households. Survey respondents were not a representative sample; instead, they described the variety of needs and suggested possible programmatic and policy interventions to meet those needs.

The survey covered all five boroughs of New York City. See Table 1.

Table 1. Borough

	Num.	Pct.
Bronx	51	11%
Brooklyn	176	36%
Manhattan	124	25%
Queens	71	14%
Staten Island	70	14%
Total	492	100%

The survey included households of many different sizes. See Table 2.

Table 2. Number of individuals in household

1	17%
2	28%
3	15%
4	14%
5 or more	25%
Total	100%

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

45% of households included children; 11% were headed by a single parent; 28% were seniors living alone.

18% of respondents completed the survey in Russian.

Where possible, this report highlights different needs and experiences across New York City boroughs and in households with different social and demographic characteristics.

Method

Data for this study were collected through an open-access online survey. The survey was available in English and Russian.

Emergency food assistance providers that serve the kosher community in New York City shared the survey link with their clients. These organizations included food banks, pantries, community kitchens, and Tomche Shabbos organizations.

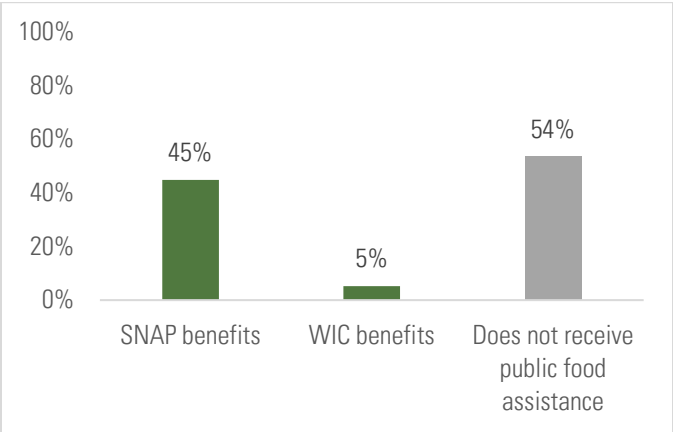
Responses were collected from January 22 to April 15, 2024. A total of 492 individuals responded to the survey. Of these, 453 completed the entire survey, and 39 completed part of the survey.

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked an open-ended question: “What could Jewish community leaders do to help you obtain enough affordable, nutritious food every day?” 54% of respondents answered this question. Their suggestions are described in detail on page 22, and they help inform the interpretation of the data throughout.

Public food assistance

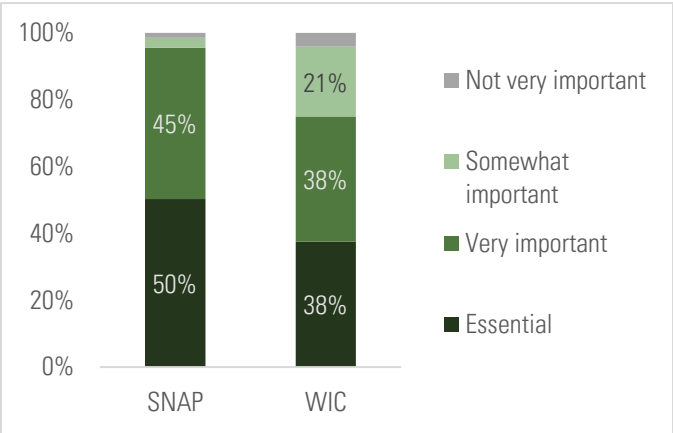
46% of survey respondents were receiving either SNAP or WIC benefits. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Proportion receiving public food assistance



Most survey respondents who were receiving SNAP or WIC benefits found the benefits “essential” or “very important.” See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Importance of public food assistance



Among those receiving public food assistance. Values less than 5% not labelled.

Of all survey respondents, regardless of the types of food assistance they received, a total of 43% said that SNAP benefits were very important or essential in ensuring that they had enough to eat. No form of private food assistance helped as many respondents. In open-ended comments, 7 respondents asked Jewish community leaders to somehow help increase SNAP and WIC benefits. See page 22 for more on the open-ended question.

Policy Context: SNAP and WIC benefits

U.S. public food assistance programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), have proven successful in alleviating food insecurity and its consequences.²

Despite the proven success of SNAP and WIC, the real value of these benefits is lower for kosher households in New York City than for many other households. There are two reasons for this.

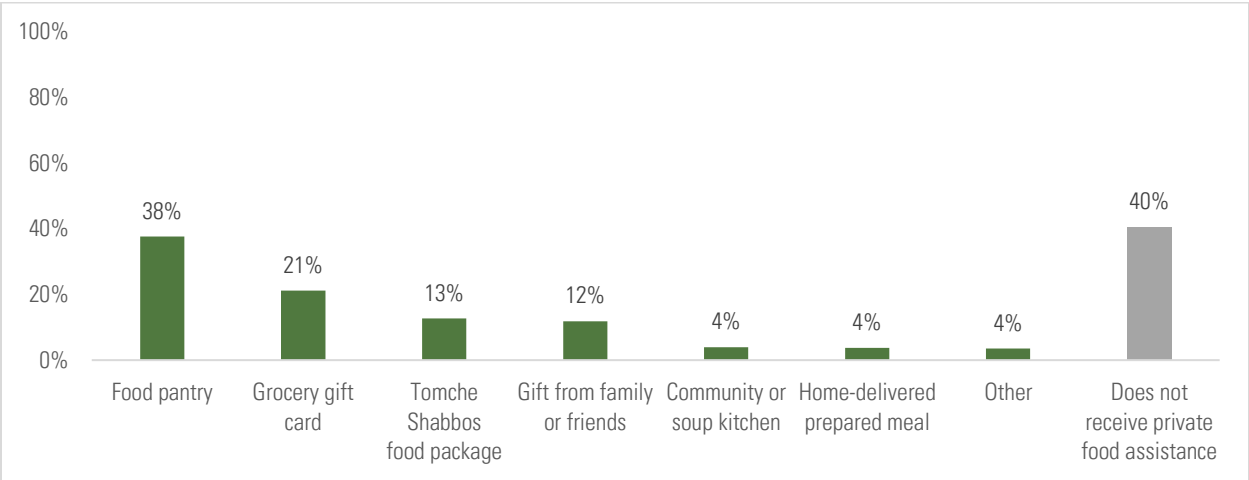
First, SNAP and WIC benefit levels are fixed across the continental United States. Therefore, the real value of these benefits is lower in areas with high cost of food—including New York.³

Second, SNAP benefit levels are based on the cost of foods and beverages that would make up a healthy diet for the majority of Americans. It does not account for the varying cost of foods that are culturally appropriate and acceptable for ethnic and religious subgroups, including kosher foods.⁴

Private food assistance

In addition to public food assistance, survey respondents received a variety of forms of private food assistance, including food from pantries and other frontline agencies such as community kitchens. Food pantries were the most prevalent form of private food assistance among respondents. See Figure 3. Food pantries are discussed in detail on page 5.

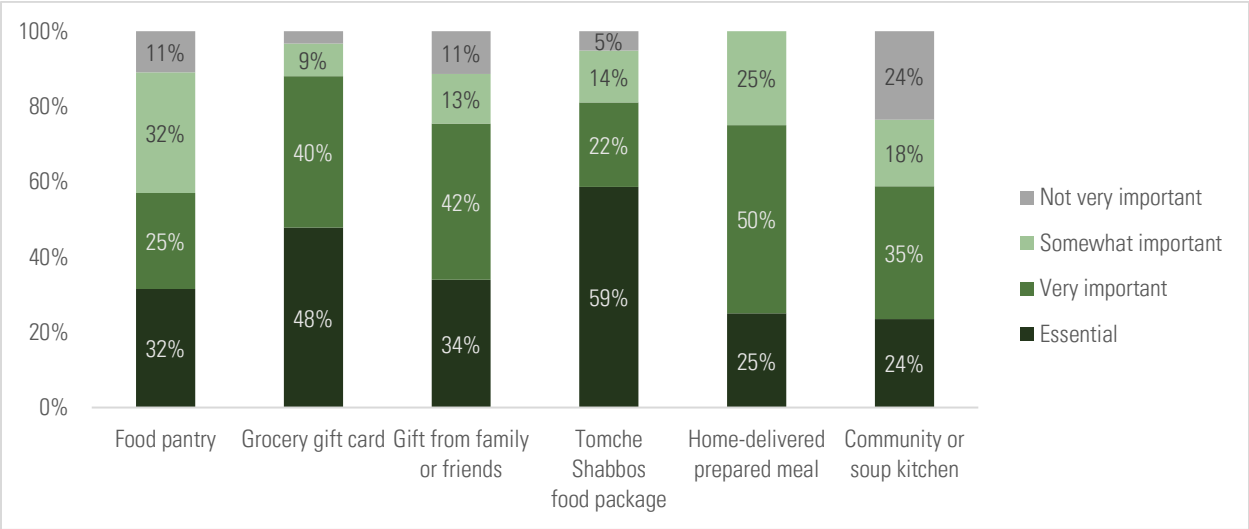
Figure 3. Sources of private food assistance



Responses are not mutually exclusive.

While food pantries were the most *prevalent* form of private food assistance, grocery gift cards were the most *valued* form of private food assistance. See Figure 4. Grocery gift cards are discussed in detail on page 7.

Figure 4. Importance of private food assistance



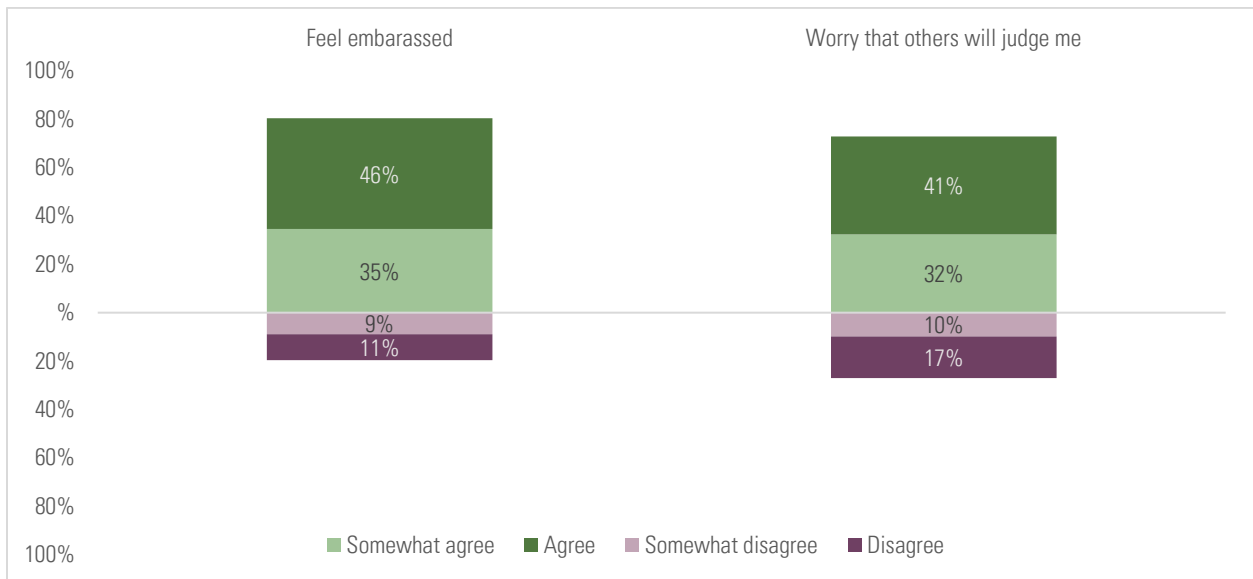
Among those receiving private food assistance. Values less than 5% not labelled.

Stigma

Other research has demonstrated that the social stigma associated with poverty leads many individuals to conceal that they are anxious about having enough food or need help to obtain food. They may also internalize stigma, leading to increased risk of depression, stress, and anxiety.⁵

Most survey respondents who received private food assistance felt embarrassed and worried that others would judge them for accepting it. See Figure 5.

Figure 5. Embarrassment and worry related to food assistance



Those receiving private food assistance only.

Embarrassment and fear of being judged colored respondents' experiences with private food assistance.

I don't need everyone seeing me have to beg for every basic human necessity.

Manhattan respondent

It's not comfortable going to Flatbush Community Fund to pick up food or any free items for that matter... No way am I going to Masbia and embarrassing myself.

Brooklyn respondent

Food pantries

38% of survey respondents received food from food pantries. Food pantries were the most prevalent form of private food assistance, albeit not the most valued. See Figure 4 on page 3.

Survey respondents were asked what changes would make them more comfortable seeking assistance from a food pantry or community kitchen. See Figure 6 below.

First, respondents wanted more foods that match their dietary preferences and needs. This request came from households with and without children, and with and without food restrictions.

If I would get a food package from Masbia, most or lots of it would be put out on street for people to take, depending on the week. If it's not the food preferences that my family has, and also considering my daughter with allergies, it is practically useless and garbage for me.

Brooklyn respondent

Figure 6. Desired changes at food pantries and community kitchens



Those receiving private food assistance only. Responses are not mutually exclusive.

Policy Context: TEFAP and CFC

Many food pantries in New York City receive food and administrative funds from the government through the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and from New York City's Community Food Connection (CFC).

Of the 126 food products available through TEFAP, only eight require kosher certification, and none of those are fresh protein. CFC provides more kosher products, but they do not provide kosher meat, poultry, or milk. Food pantries and other frontline agencies must solicit donations in order to provide fresh, kosher protein products.

Second, respondents wanted easier access to food pantries. 57% of respondents wanted either extended hours, a more convenient location, or shorter lines or wait times.

Often, these large distributions require a car. In Boro Park, many people don't have a car, and hiring a taxi to wait in line and then fill the car and then bring it in is over \$100. Especially for single moms and disabled families, this is a huge burden.

Brooklyn respondent

Third, respondents wanted more discreet locations or parking. The respondents who worried that others would judge them for accepting food assistance were significantly more likely to want more discreet locations or parking.

Among the 11% of respondents who suggested another change, the majority asked for online ordering and delivery. For some of these respondents, the logistics of getting to a food pantry were a barrier. Others were embarrassed to be seen going to a food pantry. 22 respondents also requested online ordering and delivery in open-ended comments. See page 22 for more on the open-ended question.

Provide an online platform for ordering and delivery, saving us the shame of going to a food bank.

Brooklyn respondent

I am part of the Council of Jewish Organizations distribution, and they deliver before the big holidays. The fact that it's delivery makes it discreet and not so uncomfortable for me.

Brooklyn respondent

Policy context: SNAP OPP

The SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot (OPP) was authorized in 2014 in order to test the feasibility of allowing SNAP recipients to use their EBT cards for online purchases, which requires a complex technical infrastructure. The OPP expanded rapidly following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Rigorous evaluation concluded that the availability of online ordering lowered barriers to food access for households with time, mobility, and transportation constraints. The OPP decreased food insufficiency among low-income adults by 2 percentage points.⁶

Grocery gift cards

21% of survey respondents received food assistance in the form of grocery gift cards. Respondents who received these gift cards rated them as the most important in ensuring that they have enough food to eat. See Figure 4 on page 3.

In open-ended comments, 76 respondents asked Jewish community leaders to provide more grocery gift cards or store credit. Respondents explained that they value the ability to purchase the foods that work for their family, especially those with food restrictions or children who are picky eaters. See page 22 for more on the open-ended question.

In addition to providing respondents with the widest range of food choices, respondents pointed out that grocery gift cards are discreet. It is not obvious to the store staff or other customers that a gift card is a form of food assistance, which reduces embarrassment.

It would be lovely if there would be more gift cards or credit to grocery stores available. Then I could buy the foods that I need and that my family likes.

Brooklyn respondent

Policy context:
TEFAP program rules

In order to receive food and administrative funds from the government through the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) or Community Food Connection (CFC), a food assistance agency must distribute food to the general public. Further, no explicitly religious activities can occur at distribution sites, and it must be clear that receipt of foods is not contingent on participation in any religious activity.

Organizations that serve the Jewish community exclusively or exist to facilitate Shabbat observance are not eligible to receive food from TEFAP and CFC.

Tomche Shabbos

Tomche Shabbos was founded in 1975 by a resident of Borough Park and eventually spread to other Jewish communities in the New York area and around the world. Tomche Shabbos organizations pack the ingredients of a traditional Shabbat meal in boxes and deliver the boxes as discreetly as possible to the homes of food insecure families in the Jewish community.⁷

13% of survey respondents received weekly food packages from Tomche Shabbos. Most Tomche Shabbos recipients found the food packages very important or essential in ensuring that they have enough food. See Figure 4 on page 3.

In open-ended comments, 2 respondents mentioned that they would like more or different foods in the Tomche Shabbos boxes. Their comments echoed many comments about choice in food pantry distributions. See page 22 for more on the open-ended question.

A lot of the free food from tomchei shabbas are not things we eat or more than we can eat, so maybe instead of so many beans, rice, and grape juice, we can get more useful items like milk and cheese.

Brooklyn respondent

Family and friends

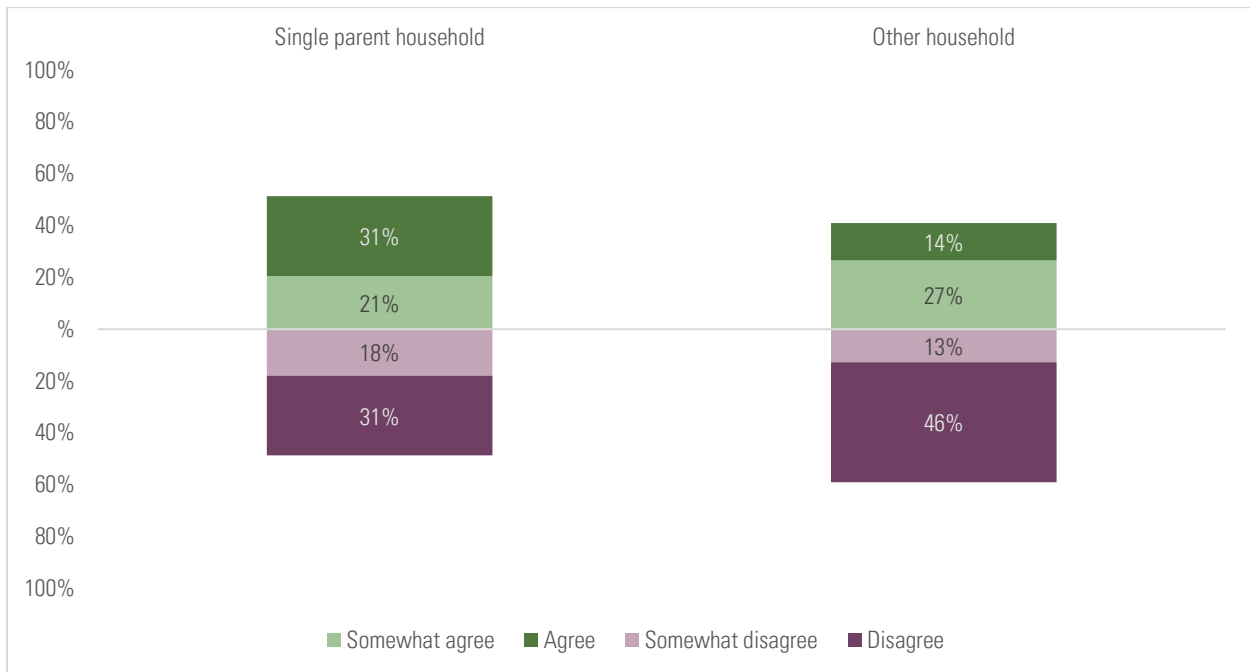
12% of survey respondents received food help from family and friends. For those who did receive these gifts, most found it very important or essential in ensuring that they have enough food to eat. See Figure 4 on page 3.

Many respondents also relied on invitations from friends and family in order to have enough food for Shabbat and Yom Tov. See Table 3. Single parent households were especially likely to use Shabbat invitations as food assistance. See Figure 7.

Table 3. Rely on invitations in order to have enough food for Shabbat and Yom Tov

Disagree	44%
Somewhat disagree	13%
Somewhat agree	27%
Agree	16%
Total	100%

Figure 7. Rely on invitations in order to have enough food for Shabbat and Yom Tov, by single parent household



Food shopping and debt

The price of food in the New York area rose 2.5% between January and December 2023.¹² When shopping for food, survey respondents balanced a need for low prices with other constraints, including accessibility and time.

Most survey respondents shopped for food at three or more different stores each week. See Table 4 below.

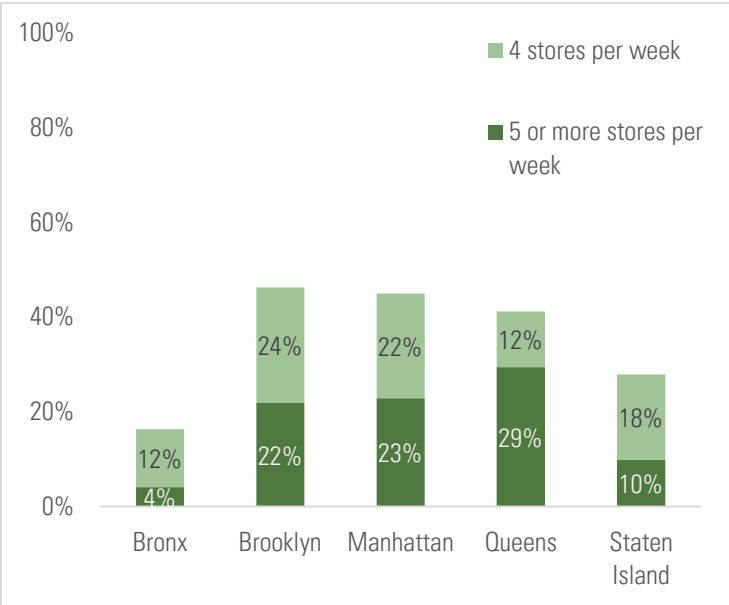
Table 4. Number of food stores per week

One	4%
Two	21%
Three	36%
Four	21%
Five or more	19%
Total	100%

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Respondents in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens were particularly likely to shop at four, five, or more stores per week. See Figure 8.

Figure 8. Number of food stores per week, by borough



Policy context: FRESH and HFFI

Between 1990 and 2010, there was a burst of research on “food deserts”—areas characterized by poor access to retail stores selling healthy and affordable food. It was believed that food deserts contributed to poorer diet and diet-related health outcomes for people with low incomes and people of color.⁸

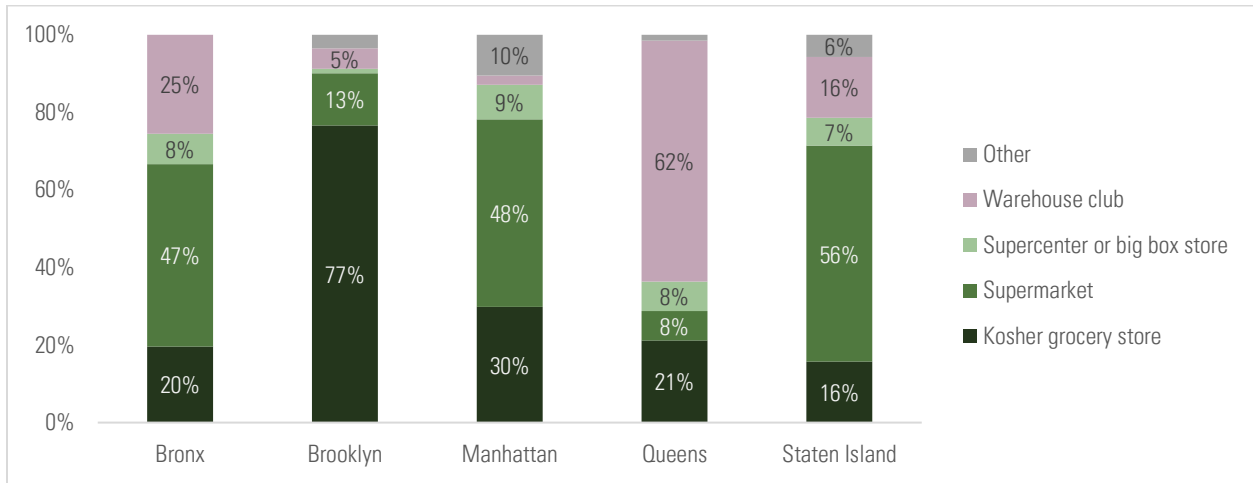
In 2009, the City of New York began the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health program (“FRESH”). FRESH provided zoning incentives and tax benefits to property owners who agreed to build a full-service food market in communities where access to fresh food was limited. Thirty FRESH stores opened, and 21 additional stores were in development in 2023.⁹

In 2010, the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiatives (HFFI) began providing grants and loans for the development or renovation of healthy food retail in underserved communities. HFFI has awarded more than \$320 million to food access projects.¹⁰

Data collected in the years following the launch of these initiatives has shown little evidence that food deserts have a meaningful effect on diet and diet-related health outcomes. Individuals make similar food choices regardless of whether they live in a food desert.¹¹

Survey respondents in Brooklyn did most of their food shopping at kosher grocery stores, while those in Queens did most of their shopping at warehouse clubs like Costco. Respondents in Staten Island and Manhattan were most likely to do their shopping in supermarkets like ShopRite. See Figure 9.

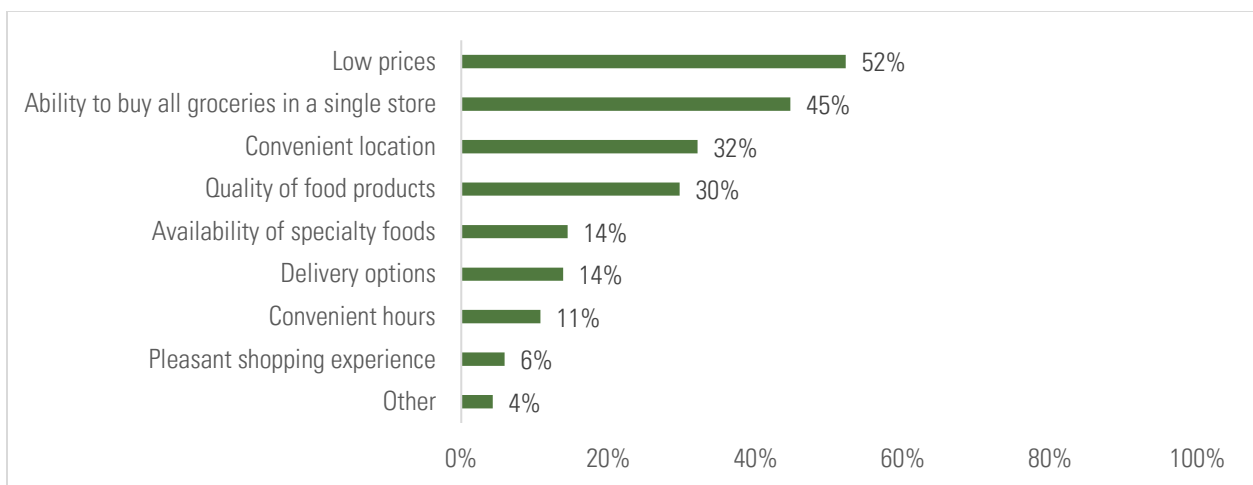
Figure 9. Primary food store type, by borough



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Price was the most important reason respondents chose their primary store, but the ability to purchase all their groceries in one place and at a convenient location were also major factors. See Figure 10. Respondents who did most of their food shopping at kosher grocery stores were more likely to value the “one-stop shop.”

Figure 10. Reasons for choosing primary food store



Respondents could choose up to 3 responses.

In open-ended comments, 33 respondents asked Jewish community leaders to somehow lower food prices in retail stores. A few suggested subsidizing the cost of kosher supervision. See page 22 for more on the open-ended question.

Persuade vendors to charge less. The price of kosher meat and poultry is astronomical, so we buy very little.

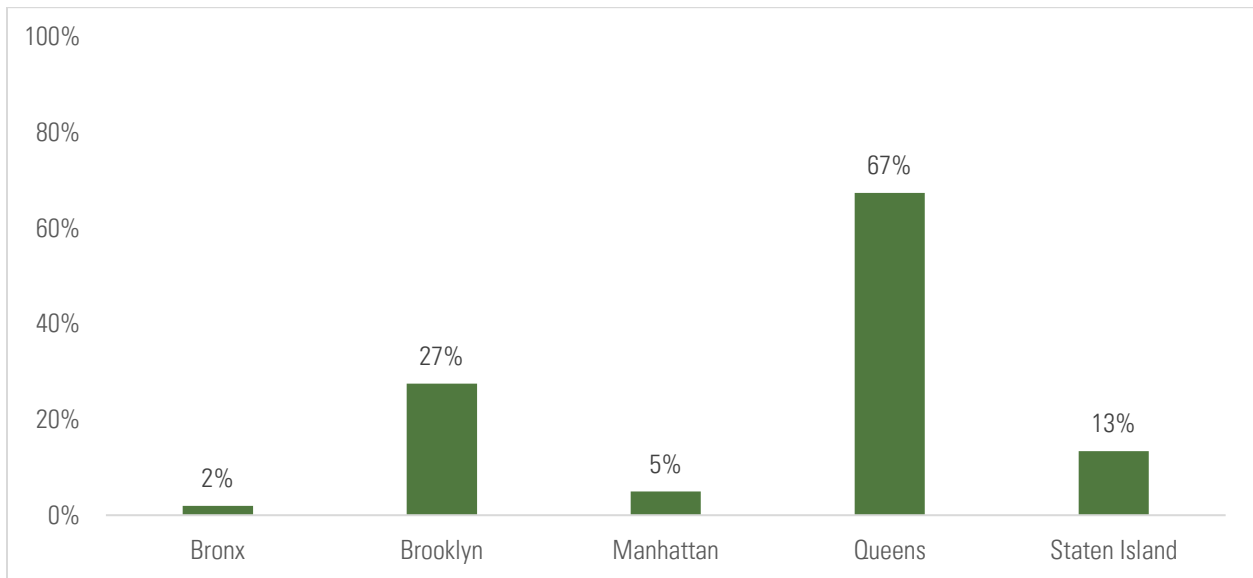
Manhattan respondent

We both work and can barely keep our head above water ... Food prices have skyrocketed lately.

Brooklyn respondent

19% of respondents sometimes got food from a grocery store and agreed to pay for it at a later date. This strategy was far more common in Queens than in other boroughs. See Figure 11. Single-parent households were more likely to use this strategy than other types of households, and 27% of single parents were in debt to a grocery store at the time of the survey, compared to 12% of other respondents.

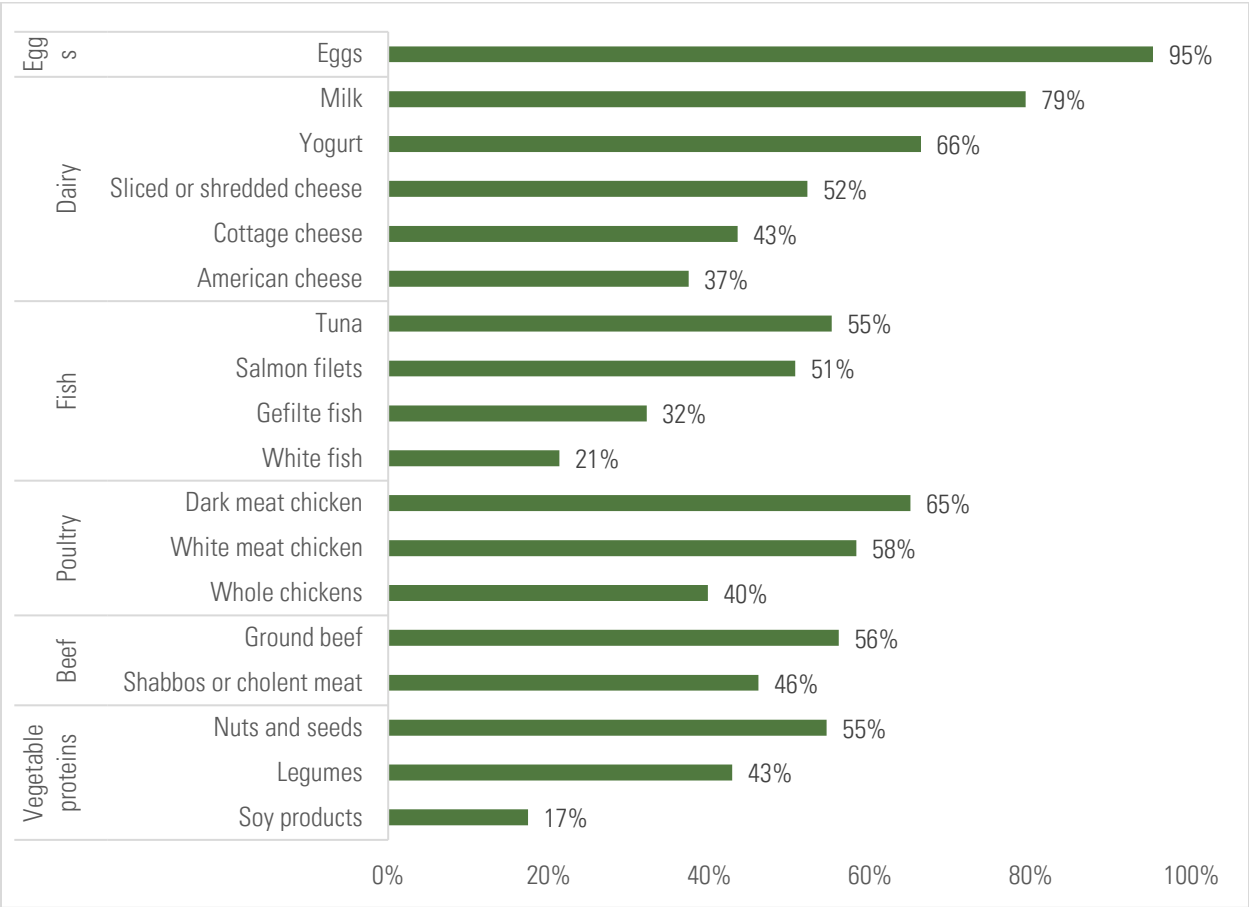
Figure 11. "Buy now, pay later" at grocery stores, by borough



Protein food preferences

Survey respondents were asked whether 18 different protein foods were staples in their homes. Eggs were a staple protein food in the homes of virtually all survey respondents, and 79% considered milk a staple protein. Aside from these two foods, there was wide variation among respondents, and no single food was a staple for more than two thirds of respondents. See Figure 12.

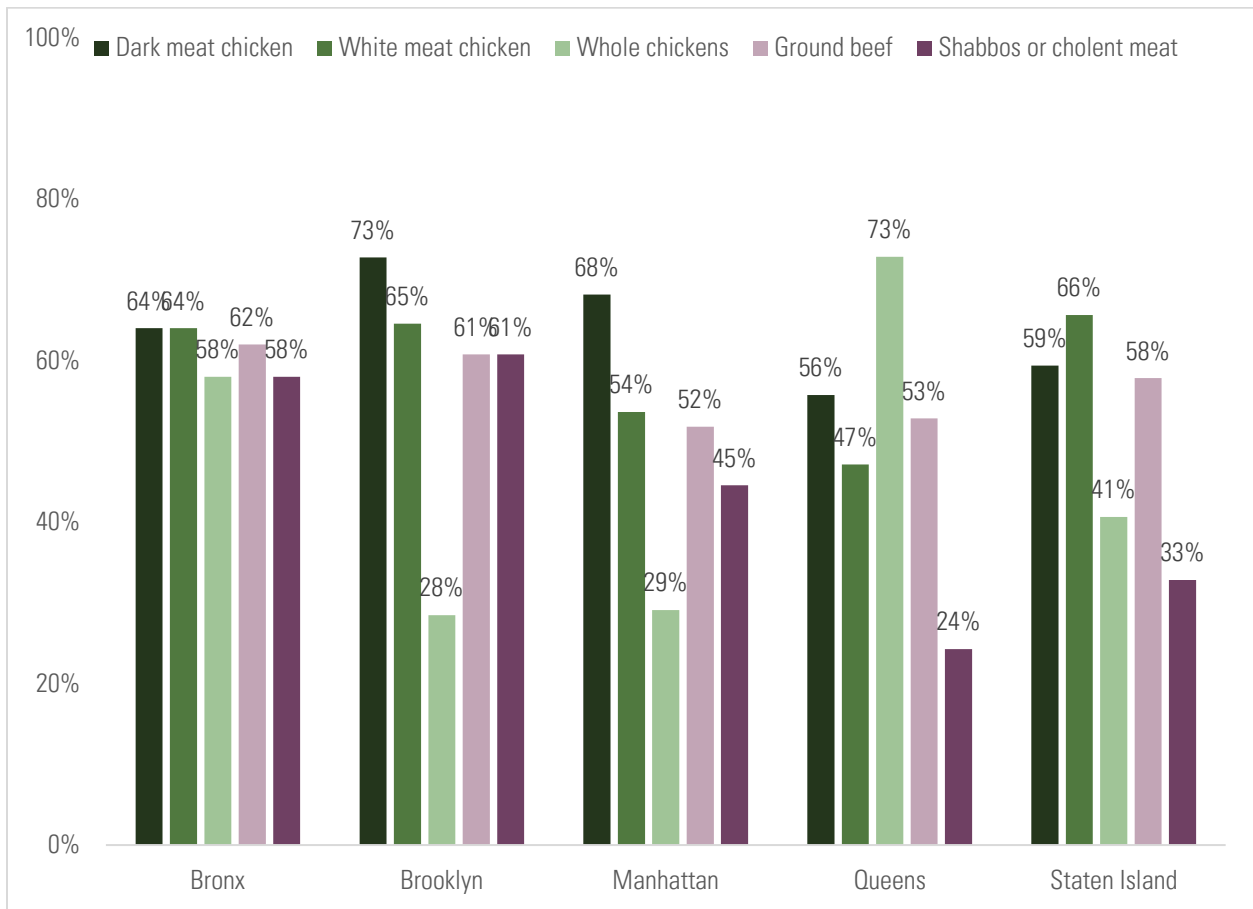
Figure 12. Staple protein foods



Responses are not mutually exclusive.

83% of respondents considered either dark meat chicken or white meat chicken a staple protein. These two types of chicken were eaten relatively evenly across each of the five boroughs. Whole chickens were a particular staple in Queens, and Shabbos or cholent meat was popular in Brooklyn. See Figure 13.

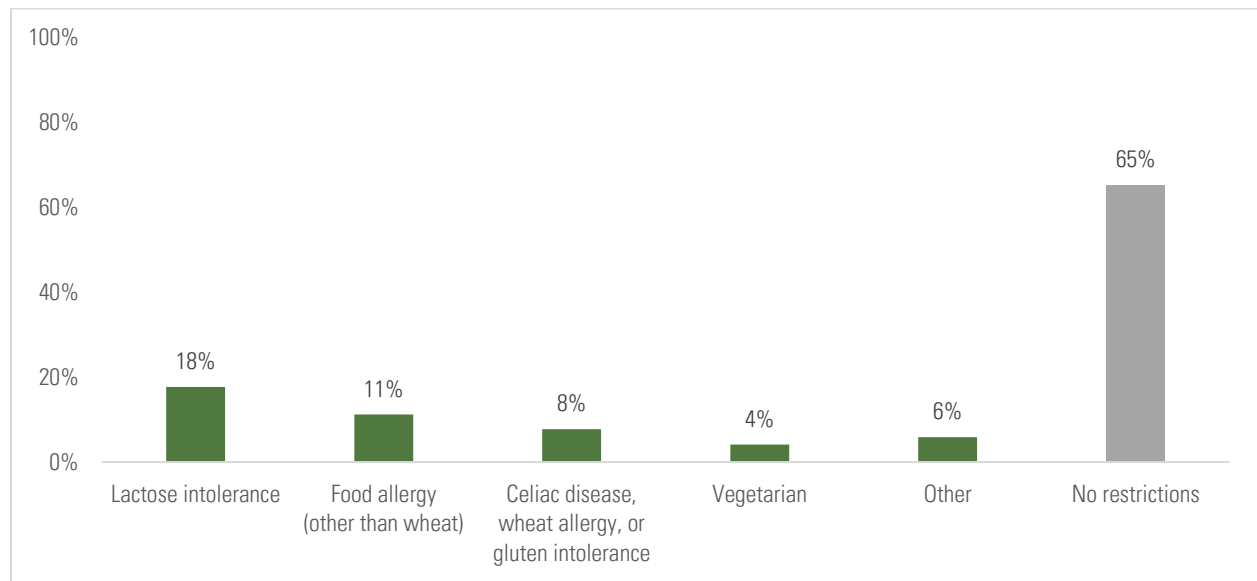
Figure 13. Chicken and beef staples, by borough



Food restrictions

35% of survey respondents were living with someone who had a dietary restriction. Lactose intolerance, prevalent among Ashkenazi Jews,¹³ was the most common restriction. See Figure 14. Dietary restrictions not specified included those stemming from diabetes or Crohn's disease.

Figure 14. Dietary restrictions



Responses are not mutually exclusive.

22% of survey respondents with a dietary restriction say that the availability of specialty foods drives their choice of grocery store.

One daughter is egg free, nut free, and dairy free, as well as gluten free, and the few available nutritious products that I can buy her are extremely expensive, and even ingredients for baking are expensive. I use chickpea flour and gluten free blend and gluten free oats and gluten free oat bran a lot, and those are all expensive.

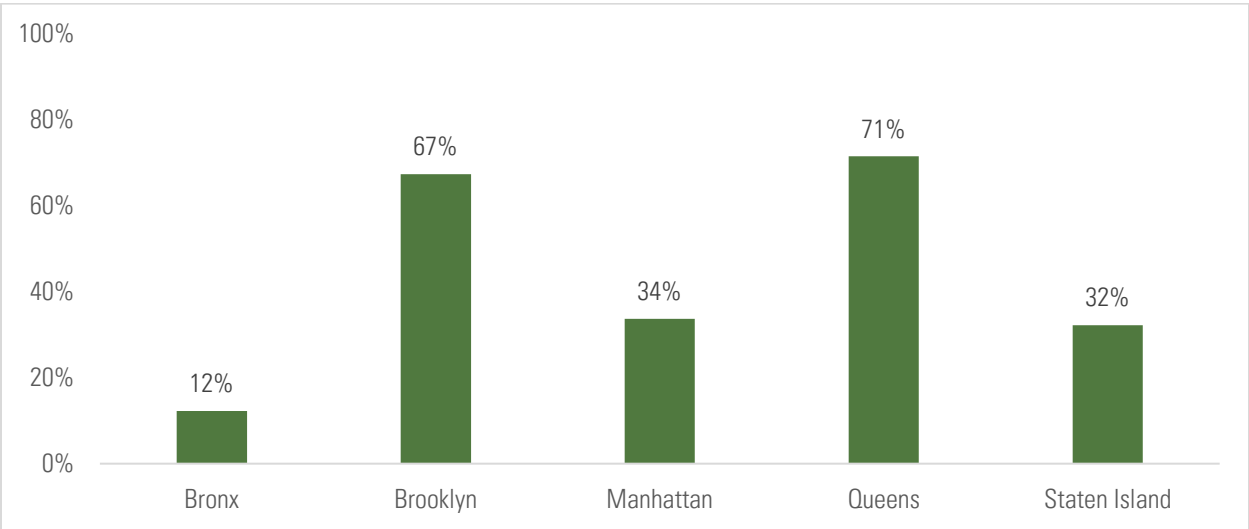
Brooklyn respondent

Kashrut considerations

About half (48%) of survey respondents keep Cholov Yisroel in their homes.

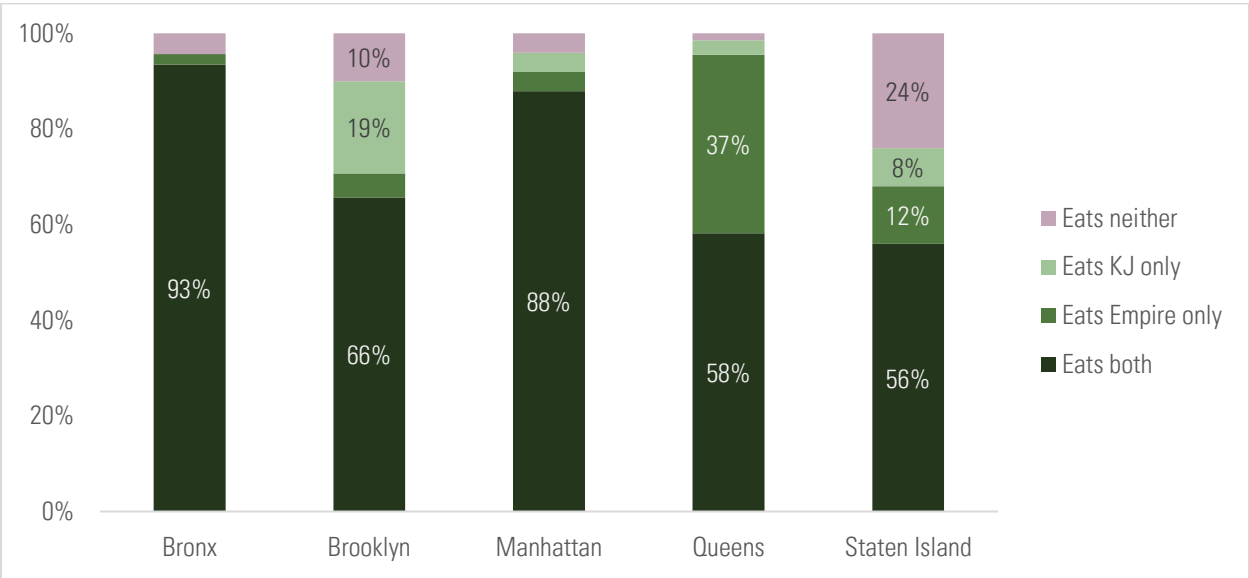
The majority of respondents in Brooklyn and Queens keep Cholov Yisroel. Fewer do the same in other boroughs. See Figure 15.

Figure 15. Cholov Yisroel, by borough



Most respondents—72%—ate poultry with hashgacha from both Empire Kosher and KJ Poultry. There was stronger demand for Empire poultry in Queens and for KJ in Brooklyn. See Figure 16.

Figure 16. Poultry hashgacha, by borough

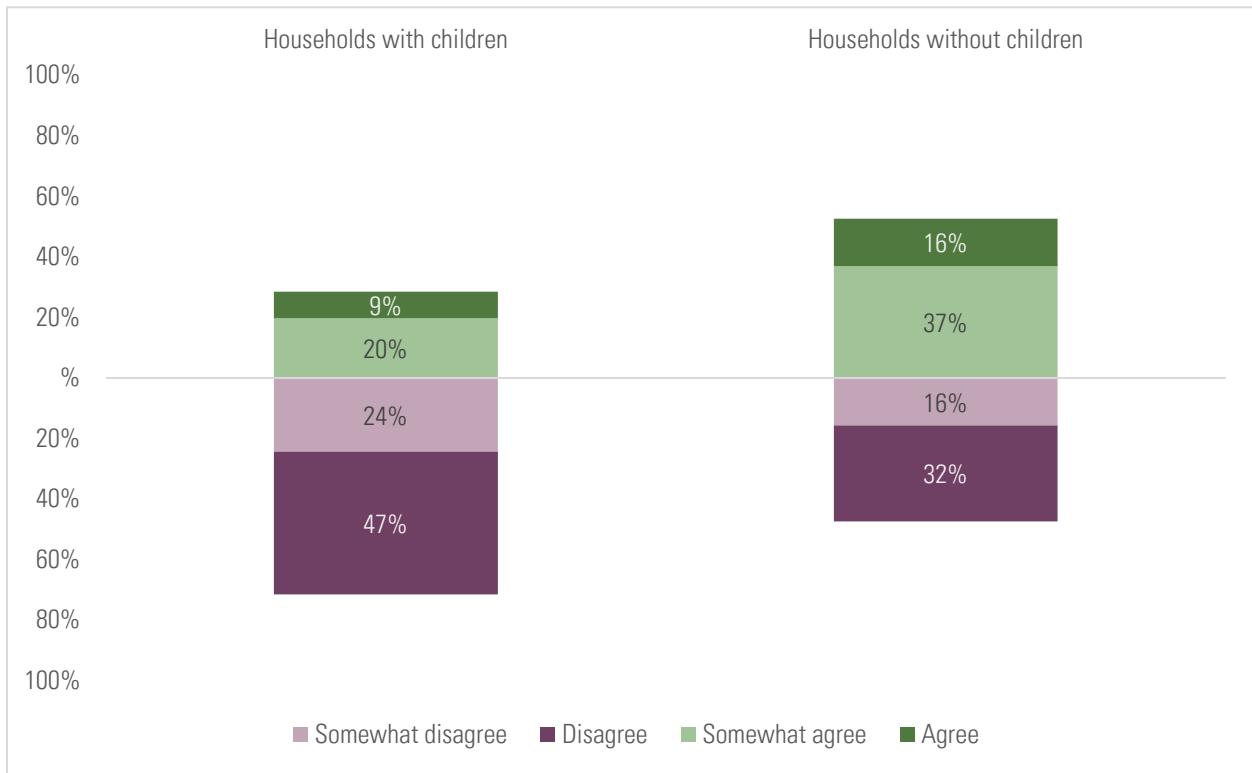


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Unfamiliar foods

58% of survey respondents were not willing eat unfamiliar foods in order to save money. This was especially true of households with children. See Figure 17 below.

Figure 17. Willingness to eat unfamiliar foods in order to save money, by children in household



My kids are older and would not eat food they don't like. They would rather go hungry, which is problematic.

Brooklyn respondent

Policy context:
FRESH and HFFI

Food pantry users and SNAP recipients (two overlapping but distinct populations) have poor diet quality relative to dietary recommendations and relative to the general population.¹⁴ There have been a number of proposals and attempts to address this disparity by interventions in SNAP and the food pantry system. Examples include restricting the purchase of sugar-sweetened beverages with SNAP benefits, incentivizing the purchase of fruits and vegetables with SNAP benefits, and nutrition education for food pantry clients.¹⁵

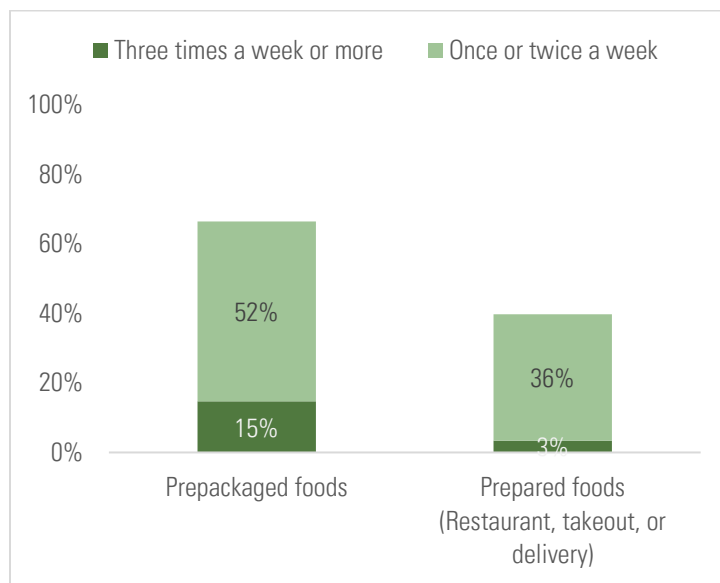
Some critics call these interventions “food bullying”¹⁶ or “food shaming.”¹⁷ They object to the paternalism embedded in these policies, especially given that most Americans fail to meet the USDA’s dietary guidelines for Americans.

Healthy choices

Ultra-processed foods comprise more than half of Americans’ daily calories.¹⁸ These foods, which include frozen food, fast food, soft drinks, packaged cookies, cakes, and salty snacks, have a strong, negative effect on health.¹⁹

Few survey respondents ate prepackaged foods, such as frozen pizza, chicken nuggets, and instant noodle soups, more than once or twice a week. Virtually none ate prepared foods from restaurants more than once or twice a week. See Figure 18 below. 28% never eat either of these types of foods.

Figure 18. Frequency of eating prepackaged and prepared foods



Households with children were far more likely to eat these convenience foods. See Figure 19. The primary reason was that parents do not have time to prepare food from scratch. These foods were also easy for children to prepare themselves, and the children asked for them. See Figure 20.

Figure 19. Frequency of eating prepackaged foods, by children in household

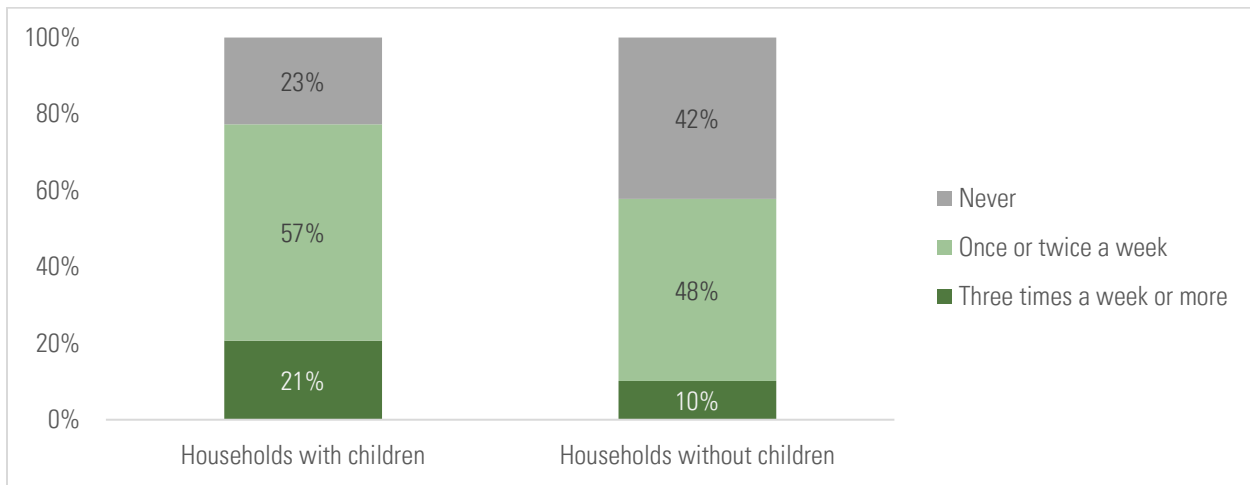
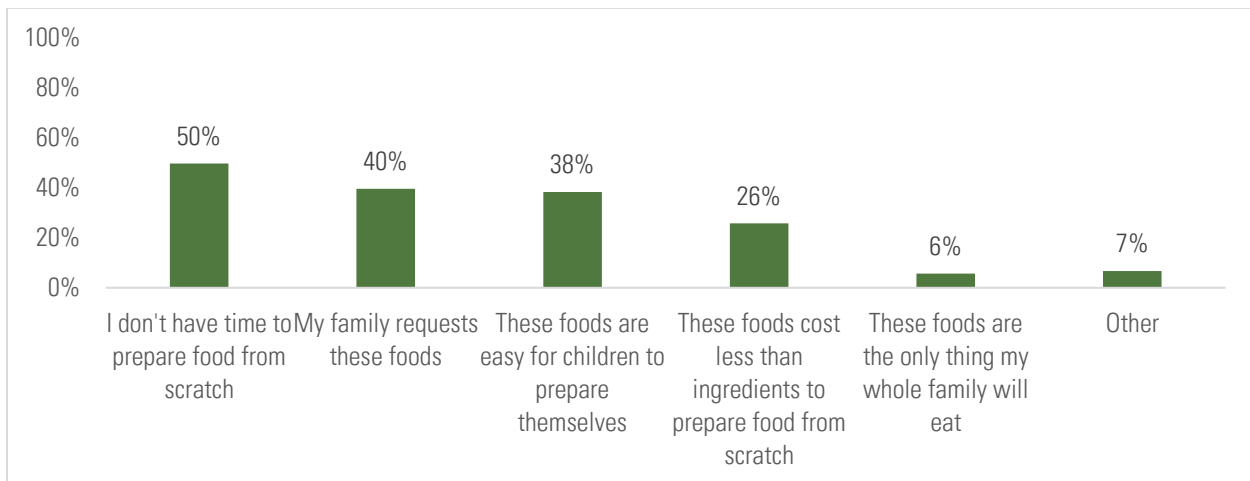


Figure 20. Reasons for eating prepackaged and prepared foods



Households with children only. Responses are not mutually exclusive.

In open-ended comments, 14 respondents asked for healthier food options at pantries, especially fresh fruits and vegetables. See page 22 for more on the open-ended question.

We are working hard to maintain a healthy diet and find that the cost of fruits and vegetables is rising. Healthy items in general are more expensive. We recently received food from the JCC including mangos, grapes, and clementines. These are items that we purchase rarely due to the high cost. When we receive these items, it is a fantastic treat for us.

Manhattan respondent

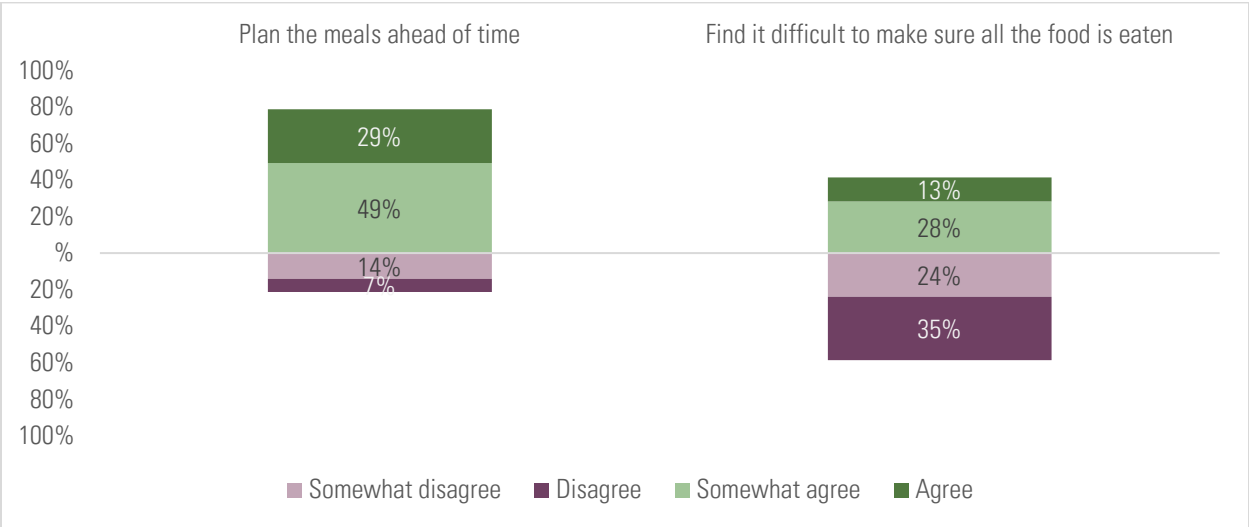
Please make sure to have HEALTHY options. Just because someone is poor, it doesn't mean that they should eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches 24/7 and gefilte fish with sugary grape juice for Shabbos.

Bronx respondent

Food waste

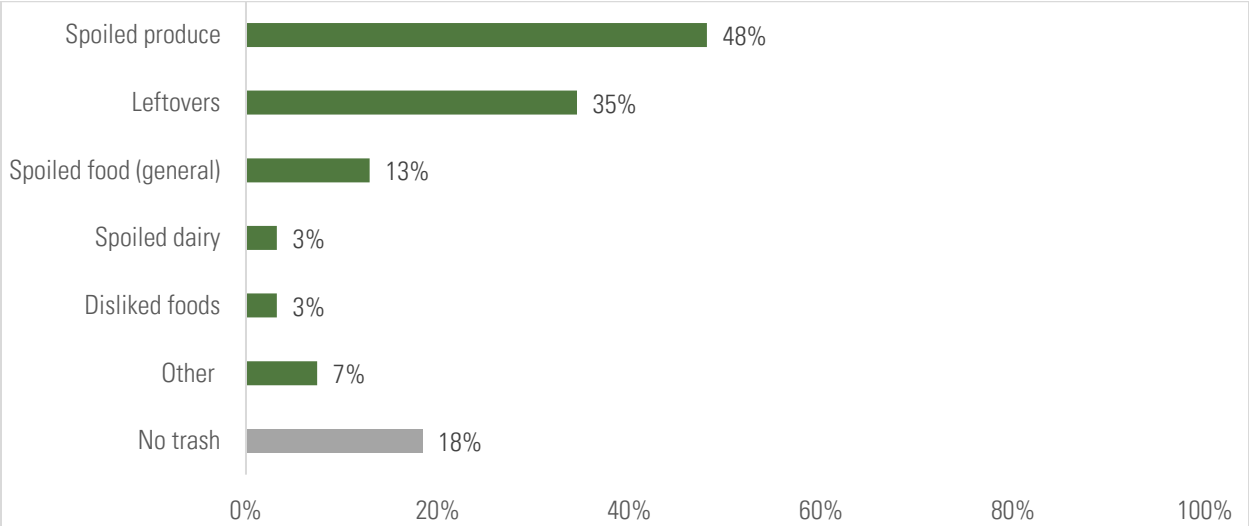
Most survey respondents plan their meals ahead of time, but regardless, many find it difficult to make sure all the food they purchase is eaten. See Figure 21. Russian-speaking respondents had the most difficulty with food waste: 82% agreed or somewhat agreed that they find it difficult to eat all their food, compared to 34% of other respondents.

Figure 21. Meal planning



Survey respondents were asked what types of foods most often end up in their garbage at home. Half (52%) said that they throw away spoiled produce. 37% said they throw away leftovers. Only 18% said that they never or rarely throw away food. See Figure 22.

Figure 22. Foods thrown out



Responses are not mutually exclusive.

In open-ended responses, 8 respondents described throwing away food they receive from food pantries, Tomche Shabbos, and other private food assistance organizations. 4 of them noted that they often received spoiled or near-spoiled food, especially produce. See page 22 for more on the open-ended question.

The food in the tomche shabbos boxes often gets thrown away. The apples/potatoes are mushy or rotten. Low quality grape juice. We don't eat beans. Don't use a whole bag of barley or potatoes every week.

Queens respondent

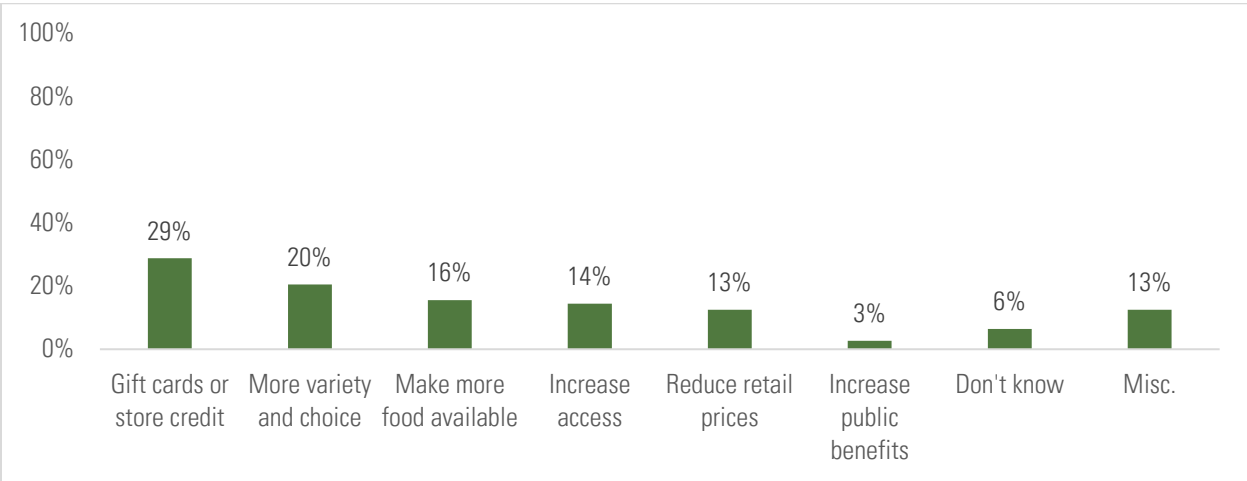
I used to have Masbia delivery, which was very convenient, but 50% of their food I would give to my neighbors as we either don't consume it or they gave way too much for a family of my size. Also most of their foods are close to the expiration date. I won't eat stale food or feed that to my kids.

Brooklyn respondent

Respondent sentiments

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked an open-ended question: “What could Jewish community leaders do to help you obtain enough affordable, nutritious food every day?” 54% of respondents answered this question. See Figure 23.

Figure 23. Requests of Jewish community leaders



Responses are not mutually exclusive.

The most common request was for grocery store gift cards or store credit: 29% wanted this type of support. See page 7 for more on grocery store gift cards.

20% of respondents wanted more variety and choice in foods available from food pantries, Tomche Shabbos, and other sources. 23 asked for more fresh protein foods, 14 asked for more fresh produce, and 12 asked for healthier options in general.

14% of respondents had difficulty accessing food assistance. The largest number of these (22) wanted online order and delivery. See page 6 for more on online order and delivery. In addition, 5 wanted pantries to be open later, 4 wanted kosher food to be sold in a more convenient location, and 5 needed help connecting to resources. For example, 2 respondents did not know how to request food from Tomche Shabbos.

13% of respondents wanted Jewish community leaders to help lower the retail price of food, and 3% wanted increases in SNAP and WIC benefits.

16% of respondents simply wanted more food to be available, and 6% of respondents didn't know how anyone could help.



Key takeaways and action steps from this study can be found on page iv.

Notes

¹ Think tanks have proposed policy changes that would address geographic variation in food prices. See, e.g., James P Ziliak, “Modernizing SNAP Benefits” (Hamilton Project, Brookings Institution, May 2016), <https://www.hamiltonproject.org/publication/policy-proposal/modernizing-snap-benefits/>.

² Craig Gundersen and James P Ziliak, “Food Insecurity Research in the United States: Where We Have Been and Where We Need to Go,” *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy* 40, no. 1 (2018): 119–35, <https://doi.org/10.1093/aep/ppx058>.

³ Qingxiao Li and Metin Çakır, “Thrifty Food Plan Panel Price Index and the Real Value of SNAP Benefits,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3669951>.

⁴ Angela M. Babb, “America’s ‘Thrifty Food Plan’: Hunger, Mathematics, and the Valuation of Nutrition Assistance,” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no. 4 (July 2020): 983–1004, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2019.1664889>.

⁵ Valerie A Earnshaw and Allison Karpyn, “Understanding Stigma and Food Inequity: A Conceptual Framework to Inform Research, Intervention, and Policy,” *Translational Behavioral Medicine* 10, no. 6 (December 1, 2020): 1350–57, <https://doi.org/10.1093/tbm/ibaa087>; Ali Pourmotabbed et al., “Food Insecurity and Mental Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” *Public Health Nutrition* 23, no. 10 (2020): 1778–90, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S136898001900435X>; Anna Grace Tribble et al., “Food Insecurity and Mental Health: A Meta-Analysis,” *SSRN Scholarly Paper* (Rochester, NY, January 15, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3520061>.

⁶ Kyle Jones et al., “The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Online Purchasing Pilot’s Impact on Food Insufficiency,” *Food Policy* 121 (November 1, 2023): 102538, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2023.102538>.

⁷ Joseph Berger, “Yehoshua Hershkowitz, 92, Founder of a Kosher Meal Program, Dies,” *The New York Times*, December 28, 2017, sec. Obituaries, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/28/obituaries/yehoshua-hershkowitz-dies-founded-kosher-meal-program.html>.

⁸ Julie Beaulac, Elizabeth Kristjansson, and Steven Cummins, “A Systematic Review of Food Deserts, 1966-2007,” *Preventing Chronic Disease* 6, no. 3 (June 15, 2009): A105; Renee E. Walker, Christopher R. Keane, and Jessica G. Burke, “Disparities and Access to Healthy Food in the United States: A Review of Food Deserts Literature,” *Health & Place* 16, no. 5 (September 2010): 876–84, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2010.04.013>.

⁹ NYC Department of City Planning in partnership with the NYC Economic Development Corporation, “FRESH By the Numbers: Food Retail Expansion to Support Health Now Serves 1.2M New Yorkers & Growing,” February 2023.

¹⁰ “About the Healthy Food Financing Initiative,” America’s Healthy Food Financing Initiative, accessed February 12, 2024, <https://www.investinginfood.com/about-hffi/>.

¹¹ Chen Zhen, “Food Deserts: Myth or Reality?,” *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 13, no. 1 (2021): 109–29, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-resource-101620-080307>; Carolyn Dimitri and Stephanie Rogus, “Food Choices, Food Security, and Food Policy,” *Journal of International Affairs* 67, no. 2 (2014): 19–31.

¹² Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Consumer Price Index, New York-Newark-Jersey City — December 2023,” January 11, 2024, https://www.bls.gov/regions/northeast/news-release/consumerpriceindex_newyork.htm.

¹³ Theodore M. Bayless, Elizabeth Brown, and David M. Paige, “Lactase Non-Persistence and Lactose Intolerance,” *Current Gastroenterology Reports* 19, no. 5 (April 18, 2017): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11894-017-0558-9>.

¹⁴ Specifically, intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and dairy is low; intake of meat and alternatives and proteins is within recommendations. Heather A. Eicher-Miller, “A Review of the Food Security, Diet and Health Outcomes of Food Pantry Clients and the Potential for Their Improvement through Food Pantry Interventions in the United States,” *Physiology & Behavior* 220 (June 1, 2020): 112871, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.physbeh.2020.112871>; Anja Simmet et al., “The Dietary Quality of Food Pantry Users: A Systematic Review of Existing Literature,” *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* 117, no.

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¹⁵ Ruopeng An et al., “A Systematic Review of Food Pantry-Based Interventions in the USA,” *Public Health Nutrition* 22, no. 9 (June 2019): 1704–16, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980019000144>; Sara N. Bleich et al., “Strengthening the Public Health Impacts of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Through Policy,” *Annual Review of Public Health* 41, no. 1 (2020): 453–80, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040119-094143>; Eicher-Miller, “A Review of the Food Security, Diet and Health Outcomes of Food Pantry Clients and the Potential for Their Improvement through Food Pantry Interventions in the United States”; Katherine Engel and Elizabeth H. Ruder, “Fruit and Vegetable Incentive Programs for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participants: A Scoping Review of Program Structure,” *Nutrients* 12, no. 6 (June 2020): 1676, <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12061676>.

¹⁶ Michele Payne and Nicole Rodriguez, “How Does Food Bullying Cost Hungry People?,” Food Bullying Podcast, accessed February 6, 2024, <https://causmatters.com/how-does-food-bullying-cost-hungry-people/>.

¹⁷ Psyche A. Williams-Forsson, *Eating While Black: Food Shaming and Race in America* (Chapel Hill, UNITED STATES: University of North Carolina Press, 2022), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/brandeis-ebooks/detail.action?docID=6977960>.

¹⁸ Filippa Juul et al., “Ultra-Processed Food Consumption among US Adults from 2001 to 2018,” *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 115, no. 1 (January 1, 2022): 211–21, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/nqab305>.

¹⁹ Marilena Vitale et al., “Ultra-Processed Foods and Human Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Prospective Cohort Studies,” *Advances in Nutrition* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 2024): 100121, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.advnut.2023.09.009>.