

## **How Many New Yorkers are Hungry?**

- In 2008, nearly 2.7 million New Yorkers live in poverty, making the poverty rate 14.2% of the population. The poverty rates in Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, and Albany are all above 25%.<sup>10</sup>
- With about one in five children living in poverty in 2008, New York has one of the highest childhood poverty rates. Of New York families with children, 16.3% live below the poverty line.<sup>7,9</sup>
- Food insecurity households in New York rose from an average rate of 9.4% in 2002 to 10.4% in 2005. In 2005 3.2% of the state population experienced food insecurity with hunger, meaning they had to skip meals or cut back on food due to financial difficulties.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2006 emergency food programs (EFPs) served 500,000 people in New York State and 300,000 people in New York City each week with food stamps, soup kitchens, and food pantries. Overall, 2.1 million New Yorkers access food pantries each week. Of New Yorkers served by EFPs, 65% are food insecure. 64% of the people living in New York City who receive EFP benefits are food insecure.<sup>1</sup>
- EFP clients are made up of people from varying economic backgrounds: 9% of New Yorkers who utilize EFPs are homeless. 67% of New Yorkers using EFPs have incomes at or below the poverty line; additionally 35% of EFP clients come from households where one or more adults are employed at least part-time.<sup>1</sup>

## **Who Are the Hungry?**

- Of the number of people receiving assistance from charitable food programs in 2006, 30% of them were children and 11% were seniors.<sup>1</sup>
- 58% of clients receiving assistance from EFPs are women; 42% are men.<sup>3</sup>
- 45% of EFP clients in New York are African American; 27% White; 24% Hispanic; and 5% American Indian, Pacific Islander, Asian or Alaskan Native.<sup>3</sup>

## **Is the Level of Hunger Increasing in New York?**

- The number of families in New York participating in the federal food stamp program was 2,004,511 in June 2008, up from 1,801,707 in June 2007.<sup>5</sup>
- Over the past four years, emergency food programs in New York State have seen a 75% increase in clients; EFPs in New York City have seen a 65% increase, in addition to a general increase in clients under the age of 18, especially during the summer months.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2006, 55% of food pantries in NY and 84% in New York City turned people away at least once during the year due to food shortage.<sup>1</sup>

## Why Do We Need Emergency Food Programs?

- In 2007, New York's unemployment rate was 4.5%; as of July 2008, 5.2% of New Yorkers were unemployed – approximately 500,000 people.<sup>7</sup>
- More than half of New Yorkers who live between 100% and 200% poverty reported facing one hardship in terms of meeting their food, economic, housing or health needs. Low-income families with children are at greater risk for facing multiple hardships: nearly half reported facing more than three hardships.<sup>8</sup>
- Of New Yorkers who are eligible to receive assistance through the Food Stamp Program, only 53% actually take advantage of this federal program. Additionally, Hunger in America reported that the monthly allotment of food stamps only lasts an average of 2.6 weeks.<sup>4,7</sup>
- A study by the Fiscal Policy Institute found that nearly 30% of working families in New York do not earn enough to cover basic needs, meaning they face a financial gap between their monthly earnings and expenses such as food and housing.<sup>6</sup>
- The welfare grant in New York has not been raised in 18 years, despite the increase in the cost of food and supplies caused by inflation. The overall welfare grant is now less than 50% of the federal poverty level, \$291 a month for a family of three.<sup>5</sup>
- In 2006 37% of low-income households in New York State had to choose between food and utilities, 34% between food and housing, and 24% between food and health care. With the rising costs of groceries, heating, and medical care, the number of people facing these difficult decisions will only increase.<sup>2</sup>

1. Hunger in America: The New York City and State Report, 2006
2. Bread for the World, *Healthy Food, Farms, and Families*, 2007
3. Feeding America, *Hunger Almanac*, 2007
4. USDA Economic Research Service, *New York Data Sheet*, 2008
5. Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, *Temporary and Disability Assistance*, 2007, 2008
6. Schuyler Center, *Growing Up In New York*, 2008
7. The Fiscal Policy Institute, *New York's Rising Unemployment – The Other Crisis in Albany*, 2008
8. Community Service Society, *Unheard Third 2008: Economic Insecurity and Federal Priorities*
9. Food Bank for New York City: *Growing Up Hungry in New York City*, 2006
10. New York State Community Action Association, *Poverty Report 2008*