

Rethinking Food Insecurity in New York City



Borough by Borough

RETHINKING FOOD INSECURITY IN NYC BY RETHINK FOOD

The pandemic continues to have a dramatic impact on food hardship, with rates surging across the U.S.—especially among communities of color: **38 million people currently suffer from food insecurity, and 22% of Black and 17% of Latinx communities experienced food hardship compared to 7% of white households.**¹

In addition, **inflation rates have risen by more than 8%**—the highest in over 40 years.² This has worsened food hardship and put additional strain on emergency food programs that face increasing demand for meals.

Meanwhile, 108 billion pounds of food is thrown away in the U.S. each year, making it the number one item in our landfills and equaling several dozen billion meals that are not making their way to our most vulnerable communities.³

This data underscores the importance and urgency of our work. There is enough food in the system, but it's not getting into the hands of those who need it.

At Rethink Food, we exist to bridge the gap between food that goes to waste and food-insecure communities. Since its founding, Rethink Food has provided **over 8.3 million meals** to local communities across New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Nashville, Washington D.C., and Miami; **directed \$32.5 million** to restaurants and food establishments; **partnered with 75% minority and women-owned businesses** and directed 75% of funds to them; and **used 1.5 million pounds of excess food.**

This report is a **'borough by borough' overview on the still-growing need** our community partners see in their communities across New York City and **Rethink Food's impact and progress** against our commitment to consistently and sustainably provide meals to communities.

To also read our Summer 2022 Report, [click here.](#)



¹ Lacko, A. M., & Henchy, G. (2021). Hunger, Poverty, and Health Disparities During COVID-19 and the Federal Nutrition Programs' Role in an Equitable Recovery. Washington, DC: Food Research & Action Center.

² MacLachlan, M., & Sweltzer, M. (2022, May 25). Summary findings, Food Price Outlook 2022. USDA ERS - ³ Feeding America <https://www.feedingamerica.org/our-work/our-approach/reduce-food-waste> ⁴ Xu, A., & Ojeda, R. H. (2022, April 18). As food pantries close, immigrant communities' needs grow. The City. Retrieved from <https://www.thecity.nyc/2022/4/18/23031114/food-pantries-close-immigrant-need-grows>

1 | MANHATTAN

Rethink Food's Impact since 2017



2.1M
MEALS



10.2M
DOLLARS
DIRECTED



31
RESTAURANTS



9
CBOS

TESTIMONIAL



KARL CHANG, THE BOWERY MISSION

The state of food insecurity in Manhattan continues to worsen due to the effects of inflation, sustained unemployment, and fragile public health post-pandemic.

Karl Chang, Executive Director of Partnerships at the Bowery Mission, spoke with Rethink Food regarding **the importance of providing prepared, nutritious meals to their community.**

"The pandemic exacerbated the issue among those already on the margins. Food-insecure individuals previously fell into a situation where the need was much more apparent."

In partnership with Rethink Food, the Bowery mission has distributed over 47,000 meals to their neighbors. These meals not only relieve their staff of preparation labor but assure that they can complete their goal of serving three meals per person daily. This is made possible through the Rethink Certified Program, where we work with restaurant partner Tacombi and the Rethink Food Commissary Kitchen to provide community meals.

“

RESTAURANT
TESTIMONIAL

So, it comes full circle.

I could feed people. People are donating. That then brings my staff back in to work, and now people have jobs. They feel hope,”

Chef JJ Johnson, FIELDTRIP

”

Chef JJ Johnson has been a partner with Rethink Food since June 2020. Together we've distributed a total of **110,000 nutritious and culturally-celebrated meals to community-based organizations in neighboring Harlem.**

NEED IN MANHATTAN

Food Insecurity in NYC outpaced the rest of the country, with a 36% surge post-pandemic.

SOURCE: CITY HARVEST

New York City residents make up half of all food insecure people living in New York State.

SOURCE: FOOD BANK

67% of Manhattan-based organizations' Emergency Food Programs reported serving clients coming from the Bronx in addition to Manhattan residents, causing a general lack of resources and scarcity of EFP supplies.

SOURCE: CITY HARVEST

2 | BROOKLYN

Rethink Food's Impact since 2017



2.2M
MEALS



10.1M
DOLLARS
DIRECTED



28
RESTAURANTS



12
CBOS

“

RESTAURANT
TESTIMONIAL

Community is everything.

Community is love.
Community is hope.
Community is what binds us all.

Latoya Meaders, Collective Fare

”

Latoya Meaders' Collective Fare has been a Rethink Certified Restaurant Partner since April 2020. Through Collective Fare's community-based organization—Collective Food Works—our partnership has enabled the preparation and distribution of **over 260,000 meals to individuals throughout Brooklyn.**

NEED IN BROOKLYN

In Brooklyn, food Insecurity rates rose from 4% in 2019, to 18% in 2021. And in certain neighborhoods in the 9th Congressional District, there was an 84% increase in food insecurity from 2019 to 2021.

SOURCE: FEEDING AMERICA

20.4% of Brooklyn residents polled claimed that they have been "unable to purchase food" because of financial complications of COVID-19.

SOURCE: NY FOOD POLICY

In Kings County, 24.7% of children and youth are living below the poverty line, leaving them more vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity.

SOURCE: NYS COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



TESTIMONIAL

AGAPE FOOD RESCUE

Agape Food Rescue—in Brownsville, Brooklyn—is a **volunteer-powered, grassroots non-profit** that organizes direct action projects to help feed food-insecure community members.

Its mission is to instill hope for East New York and Brownsville residents through services with dignity. Beyond meal distributions, Agape promotes nutrition and increasing self-sufficiency to build stronger foundations for future generations.

"What we really want to do is make sure people can get food with dignity. A lot of people can get something to eat, but getting something that tastes good, something that they can enjoy... everything else that's twirling around them can start to feel better." - Jeannette Lugo, Agape Food Rescue

Through Rethink Food's partnership with Agape Food Rescue, we have distributed over 31,900 meals over the last year.

3 | QUEENS

Rethink Food's Impact since 2017



394K
MEALS



1.9M
DOLLARS
DIRECTED



11
RESTAURANTS



7
CBOS



TESTIMONIAL

FATHER MIKE, HUNGRY MONK

"We started serving near Lincoln Park about five years ago, and many of the clients that were there originally are still living in that park on the street" - Father Mike Lopez, Hungry Monks.

Inspired by the Benedictine command of Hospitality for "all who knock at the door," Hungry Monk aims to "Do Good" for community members experiencing homelessness or food insecurity. In addition to meal distributions, rehabilitation services, and shelter in their church, their team also moves their mission to the street to bring hot community meals via the Hungry Monk Rescue Truck.

Hungry Monk has been a steadfast partner since early 2020, distributing over 150,000 nutritious and culturally celebrated meals cooked by our restaurant partners for our neighbors in Ridgewood, Queens, and Bushwick, Brooklyn.

It is through the work of our community partners that Rethink Food can achieve a localized, borough by borough impact in New York City. Organizations like Hungry Monk are essential in the execution of our mission.



RESTAURANT TESTIMONIAL

Tasty's Diner has been a staple in the Ridgewood community since 1968.

We are extremely grateful for our partnership with Rethink. Not only have we been able to remain open during the pandemic, but also hire new staff, all while providing delicious meals for our community. This truly has been a win for everybody.



George Lagos, Tasty's Diner

As a Rethink Certified partner, Tasty's Diner has distributed **over 54,700 nutritious meals to the Queens community.**

NEED IN QUEENS

In Queens, NY, 13.8% of children are facing food insecurity.

SOURCE: FEEDING AMERICA

It is estimated that over 274,120 individuals in Queens County are food insecure.

SOURCE: FEEDING AMERICA

193,158 households in Queens receive SNAP benefits - an increase of 2,289 households since the pandemic began.

SOURCE: NYC OPEN DATA

4 | THE BRONX

Rethink Food's Impact since 2017



872K
MEALS



4.6M
DOLLARS
DIRECTED



11
RESTAURANTS



8
CBOS



TESTIMONIAL

SHANA MCCORMACK, RAP4BRONX

"We're seeing the need continue to grow with inflation and just what's going on in the world. There's still a lot of uncertainty; there's still a lot of unemployment." - Shana McCormick, RAP4BRONX.

*Our partner RAP4BRONX has grown to be a **substantial operator in the New York City food relief space and a resourceful organization for communities** to access services and help them build sustainably healthy futures.*

RAP4BRONX uses a holistic approach to address systemic inequities, working with Senior residences, NYCHA developments, Houses of Worship, individual and family temporary housing locations, and various other community-based organizations to help alleviate the stress of community members who find themselves vulnerable in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Together, Rethink Food & Rap4Bronx have distributed over 490,000 meals to New Yorkers impacted by food insecurity.

RESTAURANT TESTIMONIAL



We can change the community,

we can make it stronger, we can make it brighter, we can make change and that's what this world needs. If you are a part of change then you're on the right track.

Termisha Henry, Taste So Good



Since joining as a Rethink Certified partner in August of 2020, Termisha Henry and Tyshawn Jones of Taste So Good have been preparing delicious, nutritious meals for distribution throughout the Bronx. To date, they've distributed over 117K meals in partnership with Rethink Food.

NEED IN THE BRONX

In the South Bronx, half of households receive SNAP benefits - the highest percentage of any NYC neighborhood.

SOURCE: NYC FOOD POLICY ORGANIZATION

Only 4% of Bronx residents are meeting the suggested nutritional standards put in place by the US Dietary Guidelines, in comparison to 11% citywide.

SOURCE: NYC FOOD POLICY ORGANIZATION

One in four Bronx residents faces food insecurity, which is 1.7 times greater than the state average.

SOURCE: BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP

At Rethink Food, we believe that by creating better connections across the food system, we're empowering change.

**WE'RE INCREASING EQUITABLE
FOOD ACCESS FOR OUR MOST
VULNERABLE NEIGHBORS**

**AND, ULTIMATELY, CREATING
A MORE SUSTAINABLE AND
EQUITABLE FOOD SYSTEM.**

Rethink Food