

New Yorkers Choosing Between Food, Utilities, Rent Amid Rising Costs

New Yorkers Still Struggling to Afford Food, Facing Difficult Trade-Offs; Families Accruing Debt to Pay for Nutritious Food Through Credit Cards and Buy Now, Pay Later Plans

Food Costs Continue to Rise, Damaging Finances and Forcing Trade-Offs

A new poll¹ conducted by Aspect Strategic on behalf of No Kid Hungry New York highlights the damaging impact of rising food prices on New Yorkers' well-being. The vast majority (84%) of New Yorkers say the cost of food is rising faster than their income, showing [no improvement since this time last year](#).

Rising food costs are wreaking havoc on New Yorkers' financial health. Three-quarters (74%) say their financial situation has suffered in the past 12 months due to the cost of food, with half (50%) saying their debt has increased in this timeframe due to the cost of food—[roughly the same as last year's debt findings](#). Over a quarter (28%) have used "buy now, play later" (BNPL) plans like Afterpay or Klarna to cover the cost of food.

Families (respondents with children 18 and under in their household) in particular are struggling. A majority of families (57%) and 65% of families of color accrued debt due to food costs over the past year. An alarming four-in-ten (39%) are using BNPL plans to afford food, including nearly half (48%) of families of color.

Two-in-three New Yorkers are facing difficult choices between buying food and paying for other essentials.

Families are even more likely to face these challenging decisions, with 74% reporting difficult trade-offs with half (47%) choosing between food and paying a utility bill.

Select all that apply. In the past 12 months, have you had to choose between buying enough nutritious food for your household and:

	All	Families
Paying a utility bill	39	47
Paying your rent or mortgage	36	43
Paying for gas, a car repair, or transportation	31	36
Saving for retirement	29	30
Getting health care, medical treatment, or medicine for you or your child	23	24
Paying/saving for education expenses	15	24
Paying for childcare	5	12
None of these	33	26
At Least 1 of These	67	74

What are the specific ways that the rising cost of food has impacted your household's financial situation?

I work 40+ hours a week ...I have to pay a portion of my bills such as national grid, Wi-Fi, phone, gas etc. just to be able to afford food. I feel guilty eating a sandwich because that's one less lunch for the kids. I'm literally in debt because I have to feed my family.

Multiracial Mom, 35 to 49, Onondaga County

The rise in food prices mean that sometimes certain food items can't be replenished until payday, which means that my children have to go without. It's stressful, as a man, to not be able to provide for my children's needs when they need it.

Black Dad, 50 to 64, Bronx County

We keep opening 0 interest balance transfer cards and racking up debt. I'm lucky to have good credit!

White Mom, 35 to 49, Suffolk County

Sometimes we have to choose whether we are going to pay this bill or get food items that we might need, because sometimes it's one or the other.

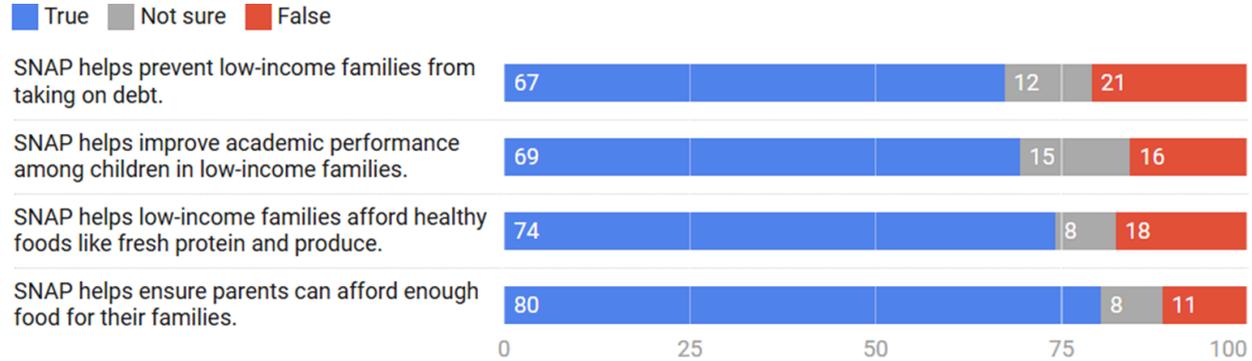
Hispanic Dad, 50 to 64, Kings County

¹ Aspect Strategic used a combination of SMS messages and online advertisements to recruit 1,512 survey respondents reflective of the adult population in New York. The survey was conducted February 3-10, 2026, and the margin of error is 2.5% overall, and larger for subgroups. Post-stratification weighting was performed on age, race/ethnicity, gender, education, region, and political party identification. Weighting parameters were based on U.S. Census and voter file data. See full question text [here](#).

Widespread Belief that SNAP Positively Impacts Families

A large majority of New Yorkers believes that SNAP benefits low-income families and children in myriad ways.

Two-thirds say the program helps prevent low-income families from taking on debt (67% say this is true) and improves academic performance among children in participating families (69%). Even more believe SNAP helps families afford healthy, fresh food (74%) and ensures parents can afford enough food for their families (80%).



Current and former SNAP participants underscored these beliefs when asked how SNAP benefits have helped them, with many expressing deep gratitude and crediting SNAP for getting their families through a difficult time in their lives.

How have SNAP grocery benefits helped you?

A lifesaver during the pandemic, for us and others in the neighborhood

Multiracial Dad, 35 to 49, Queens County

They have helped me get healthier snacks for my child as well as quality meats and vegetables.

White Mom, 18 to 34, Orange County

I lost my job of 17 years and it's nice knowing that my taxes helped save me in the long run. Anyone that doesn't agree with snap doesn't understand what it's like not to have.

Black Dad, 35 to 49, New York County

SNAP grocery benefits helped my family during a time when money was tight and every dollar mattered. It gave us peace of mind knowing we could afford groceries and put healthy meals on the table without having to choose between food and other necessities.

Hispanic Mom, 18 to 34, Bronx County

When I was in school to further my career, SNAP benefits helped my family to keep us above water financially and helped remove fear and stress that that I could succeed in school and further my career.

White Dad, 35 to 49, Albany County

Strong Opposition to SNAP Cuts, Bipartisan Demand for Action on Hunger

New Yorkers are strongly opposed to reductions in SNAP funding. A majority (62%) oppose, and half (52%) strongly oppose the SNAP funding cuts enacted as part of the 2025 budget law.

Across the partisan spectrum, New Yorkers want their elected officials to take action on hunger. Nearly all (93%) respondents agree that child hunger should not exist in New York, and 85% would like to see the state's elected officials do more to end childhood hunger. Nine-in-ten (90%) believe this should be a shared, bipartisan goal.

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? [% Agree]

	All	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Child hunger should not exist in New York.	93	95	95	88
Elected officials in New York should do more to end childhood hunger.	85	94	84	72
Ending childhood hunger in New York should be a shared, bipartisan goal.	90	97	90	82