

# “Just Getting By”: New York City Nutrition Services for Seniors

## **Executive Summary**

Continuing an investigation into the growing hunger crisis in New York City, the Office of the Public Advocate created a set of indicators to show need for nutrition services among seniors and the capability of existing services to meet the need. The report shows that existing senior nutrition services fall far short of being able to serve the eligible population. Should the economic downturn continue, senior services will be hard pressed to respond. In any case, statistics show that the senior population is continuing to grow, and the City must plan for future needs.

The report uses a number of indicators to rank boroughs by need and by available service. The combined number of points of all variables indicates a borough’s overall need and overall available services.

The variables used to determine need are:

- Population over 65
- Minority percentage of population over 65
- Recent immigrant population over 65
- Number over 65 below the poverty level

The variables used to determine available senior nutrition services are:

- Number of senior centers
- Number of group meals served
- Number of Meals-on-Wheels clients.

## **Some findings:**

- New York City’s 937,401 seniors are getting older and more diverse and their numbers are increasing.
- More than half of the users of New York’s senior center users feel they are “just getting by”.
- Brooklyn and Queens have the largest senior populations of the five boroughs, each with about 282,000.
- Brooklyn has 23,293 recent immigrants over 65, the highest number in the five boroughs. Recent immigrants are more likely than the native born to live below the poverty line.
- In Brooklyn, 59% of seniors are minorities, the largest minority percentage among the five boroughs. Nationwide the senior population is growing faster in minority communities.

- Manhattan serves 2,068,984 meals at senior centers annually, closely followed by the Bronx with 1,039,329 annually.
- Brooklyn has an estimated 30,022 homebound seniors, the highest number in the five boroughs, but only 16% are currently served by Meals-on-Wheels.
- Only 18% of the homebound seniors citywide are served by Meals-on-Wheels.
- New York City has only one senior center for every 3638 seniors. There is only one senior center for every 465 seniors living below the poverty line.
- Queens has 5423 seniors per center, the highest ratio in the five boroughs. If Queens centers served all seniors living below the poverty line, only three meals a year would be available to them.

### **Rankings:**

- Brooklyn demonstrated the highest overall need for senior services, followed by Queens, Manhattan, Bronx and Staten Island.
- Brooklyn also demonstrated the greatest number of services available to seniors, followed by Manhattan, Queens, the Bronx and Staten Island.

### **The report recommends that the City:**

1. Conduct and publish an annual comprehensive assessment of senior nutrition needs;
2. Increase senior participation in food stamps program;
3. Improve outreach effort for available senior nutrition services;
4. Create a Master Plan for senior nutrition services.

## INTRODUCTION

The Administration on Aging's *Profile of Older Americans 2000* reports, "In 2011, it is estimated nationally that the baby-boom generation will begin to turn 65, and by 2030, it is projected that one in five people will be age 65 or older." According to Census 2000, New Yorkers over the age of 60 comprise 17.5% of the population, slightly higher than the national average of 16.2%. This population is expected to increase substantially in decades to come.

As New Yorkers age, their need for food, shelter, health care and other benefits and services increases. The Public Advocate's Office views access to these services as essential to helping seniors maintain a sense of independence and a decent standard of living. This report finds that access to some of these services may not be readily available to a significant number of seniors living near or below the poverty level. Moreover, difficulty in accessing senior services, such as group meals in senior centers, can be compounded by chronic health conditions and social isolation. The problem of access to services is exacerbated by the steady influx of older immigrants, a high need population, over the past decades.

The City must insure that services are in place for the diverse and growing population of New York seniors. The Public Advocate's Office conducted this study to determine whether the City could adequately meet the nutritional needs of its senior population. While there are vital senior needs other than meals, this report limits its scope to nutritional services.

The report has four sections. The first section reviews methodology. The second section describes the study population. Section three analyzes nutritional needs of senior population and the City's capacity to meet those needs. Section four contains the Public Advocate's recommendations.

## I. METHODOLOGY

### A. Rationale for Determining Community Need for Senior Nutritional Services

Five variables were used to assess the need for nutritional services in each of the City's five boroughs.

- Number of New York City residents 65 or older;
- Percentage of New York City minority residents 65 or older;
- Number of recent immigrant population 65 or older;
- Percentage of residents 65 or older living below the federal poverty level;
- Number of estimated high need seniors, based on age and income criteria:
  - Age: Over 80 living alone or with elderly spouse
  - Income: Annual income less than \$15,000 for singles; \$20,000 for couples.

### Explanation of variables

- **Population 65 and over**

Individuals 60 and over are eligible to receive food services in group settings, such as senior centers, or in a home setting under Title III-C of the Older American's Act.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Administration on Aging, *Fact Sheet: Elderly Nutrition Program Evaluation*, 2000.

- **Percentage of minority residents age 65 and older**

Title III requires states and local agencies to target services to elderly individuals with the greatest economic or social need, particularly low income minority elderly.<sup>2</sup> According to an American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) report, *A Portrait of Older Minorities*, “Minority groups have increased risk of poor education, substandard housing, poverty, malnutrition, and generally poor health”<sup>3</sup>.

- **Recent immigrant population age 65+**

This group is among the neediest in New York City. It is also the population least likely to take advantage of social and health resources. Immigrants tend to have higher poverty rates and lower educational levels than native-born residents.<sup>4</sup>

- **Number of residents aged 65 or older below the poverty level**

Title III requires that states and area agencies target services to elderly individuals with the greatest economic or social need.<sup>5</sup>

- **Number of residents over 80, with annual income less than \$15,000 for singles and \$20,000 for couples; or living alone or with elderly spouse**

The New York Public Interest Group’s Community Mapping Assistance Project used the above criteria to estimate the number of homebound elderly population in need of home delivered meals for CityMeals-on-Wheels.

## **B. Rationale for Determining Availability of Senior Services**

Three variables were used determine the availability of nutritional services in each of the City’s five boroughs.

- Number of senior centers
- Number of congregate meal units contracted
- Number of Meals-on-Wheels clients

### **Explanation of variables**

- **The number of senior centers per borough**

Most seniors access government-sponsored nutritional services through senior centers.

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<sup>2</sup> Administration on Aging, *Facts and Figures: Statistics on Minority Aging in the U.S.*, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> American Association for Retired Persons (AARP), *A Portrait of Older Minorities*, November 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, *Immigrant’s Health Care: Coverage and Access*, August 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Administration on Aging, *Fact Sheet: Elderly Nutrition Program Evaluation*, 2000.

- **The number of group meals contracted per borough**

The 2000- 2001 data on contractual services was provided by the Department for the Aging's District Resource Statement.

- **The number of Meals-on-Wheels clients per borough**

The number of Meals-on-Wheels clients provides the population of homebound elderly who currently served home-delivered meals.

### **C. Methodology of Assessing Need**

The following approach was used to assess need for senior services:

- The five need variables and the three service variables were ranked separately by borough, and assigned an inverse point system for each variable. For example, the borough with the highest rank was given five points
- Points were tallied for all five need variables for each borough and ranked in descending order. The higher a borough ranks, the greater the need for senior services
- The points were tallied for all three service variables for each borough and ranked in descending order. The higher the rank of a borough, the greater the level of services offered for seniors, and vice versa.
- Service points were deducted from the needs score to achieve a final score for need, ranked in descending order.

### **D. Methodology of Assessing Unmet Needs**

The calculations described below reveal whether the City has the capacity to meet the demand for service if all eligible seniors participated.

- The total population of seniors over 60 in each borough was divided by the total number of available senior centers in each borough to determine the senior per senior center ratio.
- The total population of seniors over 65 living below the poverty level in each borough was divided by the total number of available senior centers for each borough to determine how many seniors are living below poverty level per center.
- The total population of seniors over 60 in each borough was divided by the total number of congregate meal units served in each borough to determine the number of meals received by senior over 65 per year in each borough.
- The total population of seniors over 65 living below the poverty level in each borough was divided by the total number of congregate meal units served in each borough to determine the number of meals received by senior over 65 living below poverty per year in each borough.

These ratios determined which boroughs had the highest senior per senior center ratio, indicating which have the least available services and the greatest need.

### **E. Data Limitations**

Most data about available resources was provided by New York City's Department for the Aging District Resource Statement. There are limits to this data. The District Resource Statement only provides data on the number of contracted meals served at senior center throughout the City, not

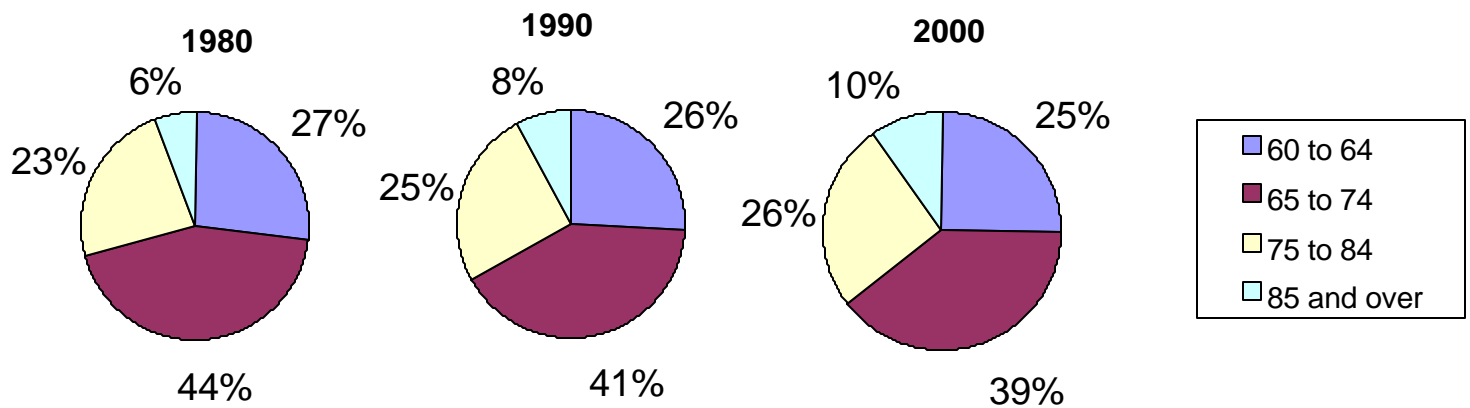
the number of clients served by each center. As a result we cannot determine the percentage of the population being served congregate meals. Instead, we chose to examine the service needs based on total number of congregate meals divided by the eligible population. In this way, we were able to determine whether or not the City could adequately meet the demand for services if all eligible seniors participated.

## II. OVERVIEW OF STUDY POPULATION

### 1. Who Are New York’s Seniors?

#### A. New York City’s Senior Population Is Getting Older

Census 2000 reports 1,252,206 people (16%) over the age of 60 in New York City.<sup>6</sup> Between 1980 –2000, the number over 85 increased from 6% to 10% of the total 60+ population.<sup>7,8,9</sup> This trend, attributed to the increase in life expectancy, is expected to continue in the coming decades.



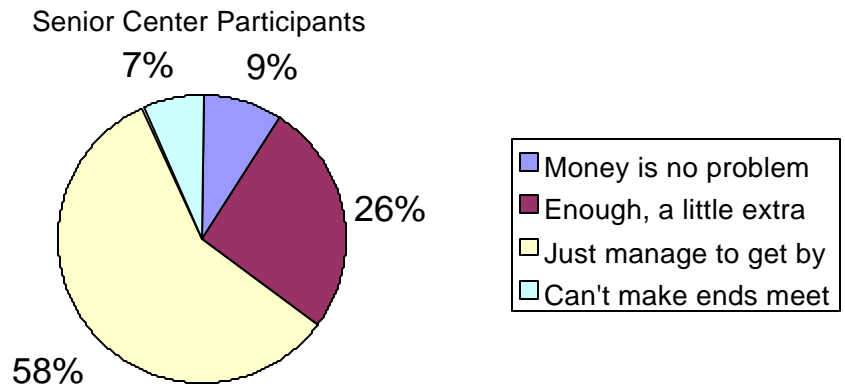
<sup>6</sup> U.S Census Bureau, *2000 Census of Population and Housing*.

<sup>7</sup> U.S Census Bureau, *1980 Census of Population and Housing*.

<sup>8</sup> U.S Census Bureau, *1990 Census of Population and Housing*.

<sup>9</sup> U.S Census Bureau, *2000 Census of Population and Housing*.

**B. More than Half the Senior Center Participants Feel They Are Just Getting By<sup>10</sup>**  
 The high cost of living in New York City puts financial strain on seniors living on fixed incomes.

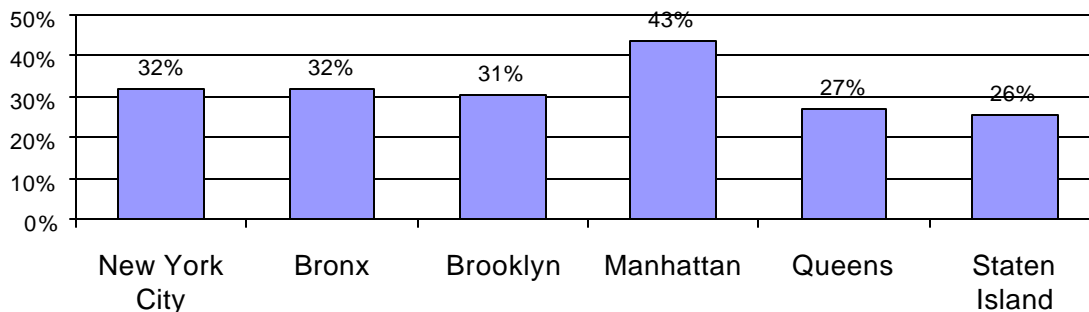


Consequently, senior centers are a necessary resource to help make ends meet.

**C. A Third of New York City Seniors Live Alone<sup>11</sup>**

Seniors who live alone require more financial assistance and social support. They have a substantially higher poverty rate than seniors who live with one other non-senior household member (12% higher) or one senior household member (11% higher).

In New York City, 299,824 individuals over the age of 65 live alone. This constitutes 32% or almost one third of the total senior population. On a borough level, 43% of the over 65 population in Manhattan live alone, followed by the Bronx with 32%, Brooklyn with 31%, Queens with 27% and Staten Island with 26%.



<sup>10</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, *Senior Center Utilization Study*, Report 1, 2001.

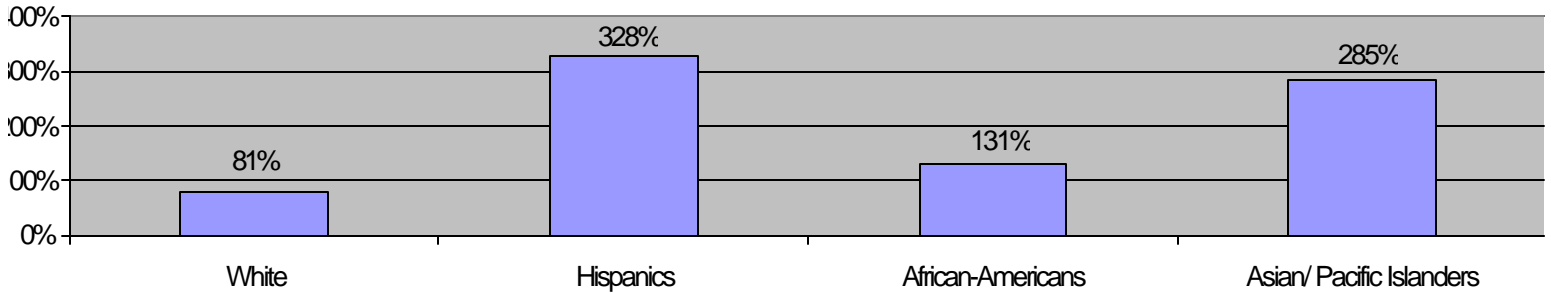
<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

**D. The Senior Population Is Growing Faster in Minority Communities<sup>12</sup>**

In New York City, between 1990 and 1997, the senior minority population increased from 34% to 45%. The numbers of Blacks, Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander seniors in the City increased by 27%, 24% and 52% respectively between 1990 and 1997.

The Administration on Aging projects that minority populations nationwide will make up 25.4% of the senior population by 2030, up from 16.1% in 1999. Between 1999 and 2030, the white population 65+ will increase by 81% compared with 219% for older minorities, including Hispanics (328%), African-Americans (131%), American Indians, and Asians/Pacific Islanders (285%).<sup>13</sup>

**Projected Increase in the National Senior Population 1999-2030**



<sup>12</sup> American Association for Retired People, *A Portrait of Older Minorities*, November 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Administration on Aging, *Profile of Older Americans*, 2000.



### III. WHAT ARE THE NUTRITIONAL NEEDS OF NEW YORK'S SENIORS?

#### A. Needs by Borough

- **Total senior population over 65<sup>14</sup>**

Altogether, 937,401 seniors over 65 reside in New York City; 30% live in Queens and Brooklyn. The balance of seniors lives in Manhattan, Bronx and Staten Island.

Rank	Borough	Population over 65	Points
1	Queens	282,678	5
2	Brooklyn	282,658	4
3	Manhattan	186,086	3
4	Bronx	134,564	2
5	Staten Island	51,415	1

- **Percent of residents age 65 or older living below the federal poverty level<sup>15</sup>**

Brooklyn has the highest percentage (22%) of seniors over 65 living below the poverty level, followed by Manhattan (19%), Queens (13%), Bronx (12.8%) and Staten Island (10%)

Rank	Borough	% of Population over 65 below poverty level	Points
1	Brooklyn	22	5
2	Manhattan	19	4
3	Queens	13	3
4	Bronx	12.8	2
5	Staten Island	10	1

- **Number of recent immigrant population 65 or older<sup>16</sup>**

Brooklyn has the highest number of recent immigrants over the age of 65. Over the past ten years, the new senior immigrant population grew by 23,293 in Brooklyn, many residing in the Sheepshead Bay, Gerritsen Beach, Bensonhurst and Borough Park. Queens had the second highest increase in senior immigrant population, followed by Manhattan, Bronx and Staten Island. A Kaiser Commission report on Medicaid and the uninsured found, "Recent immigrants use fewer services and are more likely than native-born to be living below the poverty rate." As a result, we can regard boroughs with large populations of recent immigrants, such as Brooklyn and Queens, as having high need for services.

<sup>14</sup> NYC Department of Planning, *Demographic Profiles*, August 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> *Immigration trends from US Immigration & Naturalization Service at www.infoshare.org.*

Rank	Borough	Recent Immigrant Population over 65	Points
1	Brooklyn	23,293	5
2	Queens	14,363	4
3	Manhattan	5,572	3
4	Bronx	3,833	2
5	Staten Island	827	1

- **Percent of New York City minority residents age 65 or older<sup>17</sup>**

The Bronx has the highest percentage of minority seniors over the age of 65, followed by Manhattan (46%), Brooklyn (41%), Queens (37%) and Staten Island (12%).

Rank	Borough	% of Minority Population over 65	Points
1	Bronx	59	5
2	Manhattan	46	4
3	Brooklyn	41	3
4	Queens	37	2
5	Staten Island	12	1

- **Number of estimated high-need homebound population<sup>18</sup>**

Brooklyn has the highest estimated homebound population with 30,022 estimated homebound elderly who may be eligible for home-delivered meals. Queens has 24,315, Manhattan 19,952, the Bronx 14,839, and Staten Island 4,739. The criterion to estimate this number was set by NYPIRG's CMAP for Citymeals-on-Wheels.

Rank	Borough	High Need Population	Points
1	Brooklyn	30,022	5
2	Queens	24,315	4
3	Manhattan	19,952	3
4	Bronx	14,839	2
5	Staten Island	4,739	1

<sup>17</sup> NYC Department of Planning, *Demographic Profiles*, August 2002.

<sup>18</sup> NYPIRG's CMAP for Citymeals-on-Wheels, 2001.

## Overall high needs ranking

Brooklyn is the borough with the highest need for senior services, followed by Queens, Manhattan, Bronx and Staten Island.

Rank	Borough	Total Points for Need
1	Brooklyn	22
2	Queens	18
3	Manhattan	17
4	Bronx	13
5	Staten Island	5

### B. Services by Borough

#### *Senior Centers*

Rank	Borough	Number of Senior Centers	Points
1	Brooklyn	103	5
2	Manhattan	86	4
3	Bronx	69	3
4	Queens	69	3
5	Staten Island	17	1

New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) sponsors 344 senior centers. These centers provide group and home-delivered meals as well as nutritional education. This report looks at both overall senior population and the senior population under the poverty level in comparison to the number of senior centers in each borough. The goal is to determine how prepared DFTA is to accommodate the City’s growing senior citizen population. Congregate and home-delivered meals are the primary means by which food is delivered to seniors.

Rank	Borough	Number of Congregate Meal Units Served	Points
1	Manhattan	2,068,984	5
2	Brooklyn	1,939,329	4
3	Bronx	1,567,571	3
4	Queens	1,271,837	2
5	Staten Island	447,215	1

### 1. Group Meal Services

According the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, “As seniors age, there is often a decrease in functional ability, which has been associated with poor dietary intake, which further deteriorates their mobility.”<sup>19</sup> Seniors living alone who have difficulty shopping or preparing

<sup>19</sup> Walker, D and R. Beauchamp, *The relationship of loneliness, social isolation, and physical health to dietary adequacy of independently living elderly*, *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 1991; 91(3):300-4.

meals, often rely on convenience food may be lower in nutritional content and higher in cost. In addition, many seniors living in cities are isolated. Not only do group meals offer affordable nutrition, they provide seniors the opportunity for social support and to participate in group activities.

All 1,251,655 New York City seniors qualify for group meals provided at senior centers throughout the City.<sup>20</sup> The only qualification is that the individual be over 60. In 2000-2001, approximately 7,334,538 group meals were contracted by Department of the Aging.<sup>21</sup>

- **New York City**

New York City has one senior center for every 3638 seniors and one senior center for every 465 seniors over the age of 65 living in poverty. If every eligible senior over the age of 60 used a local senior center, six meals per person would be available annually. If all individuals over 65 years old below the poverty level used senior centers, 46 meals per person would be available annually.

- **The Bronx**

The Bronx has one senior center for every 2625 seniors. The Bronx has one senior center for every 386 seniors living below the federal poverty level. If every eligible senior over the age of 60 used a local senior center, nine meals per person would be available annually. If all individuals over 65 years old below the poverty level used senior centers, 59 meals per person would be available annually.

- **Brooklyn**

Brooklyn has one senior center for every 3671 seniors. Brooklyn has one senior center for every 573 seniors living below the federal poverty level. If every eligible senior over the age of 60 used a local senior center, five meals per person would be available annually. If all individuals over 65 years old below the poverty level used senior centers, 33 meals per person would be available annually.

- **Manhattan**

Manhattan has one senior center for every 2901 seniors. Manhattan has one senior center for every 399 seniors living below the federal poverty level. If every eligible senior over the age of 60 used a local senior center, eight meals per person would be available annually. If all individuals over 65 years old below the poverty level used senior centers, 60 meals per person would be available annually.

- **Queens**

Queens has one senior center for every 5423 seniors. Queens has one senior center for every 514 seniors living below the federal poverty level. If every eligible senior over the age of 60 used a local senior center, three meals per person would be available annually. If all individuals over 65 years old below the poverty level used senior centers, 36 meals per person would be available annually.

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<sup>20</sup> U.S Census Bureau, *2000 Census of Population and Housing*.

<sup>21</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, *District Resource Statement: Fiscal and Service Reports for Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001*.

- **Staten Island**

Staten Island has one senior center for every 4039 seniors. Staten Island has one senior center for every 284 seniors living below the federal poverty level. If every eligible senior over the age of 60 used a local senior center, seven meals per person would be available annually. If all individuals over 65 years old below the poverty level used senior centers, 93 meals per person would be available annually.

*The statistics suggest that the City will be strained to meet the demand for senior nutritional services as the population grows and use increases. If just seniors currently at the poverty level participated at their maximum potential, the City would face a crisis.*

### Senior Group Meal Needs & Services

	<b>Number of Seniors Per Senior Center</b>	<b>Number of Seniors in Poverty per Senior Center</b>	<b>Number of Meals Available Per Senior Per Year</b>	<b>Number of Meals Per Year Available Per Senior in Poverty</b>
<b>New York City</b>	<b>3638</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Bronx</b>	<b>2625</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Brooklyn</b>	<b>3671</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Manhattan</b>	<b>2901</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Queens</b>	<b>5423</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Staten Island</b>	<b>4039</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>93</b>

## 2. Home Delivered Meals

The New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) administers the home-delivered meals program called Meals-on-Wheels for the homebound elderly. The program is a public/private partnership between DFTA and Citymeals-on-Wheels. The partnership awards contracts to a network of 120 community-based organizations to provide one home-delivered meal per day, including weekends and holidays, to eligible seniors. DFTA funds the weekday service, while Citymeals-on-Wheels funds weekend and holiday meals. The meal centers are in a variety of locations, including senior centers, churches, synagogues and community centers. To be eligible for the Meals-On-Wheels services, a person must be over 60 years old and unable to shop or prepare meals as a result of a chronic disability. According to New York Public Interest Research Group’s Community Mapping Assistance Project (CMAP), it is estimated that there are 93,687 seniors in high need of home-delivered meals in New York City. Unfortunately, the program is able to serve only 18% (17,164) of them.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Map prepared by NYPIRG’s Community Mapping Assistance Project (CMAP).

- **Boroughs**

**Brooklyn** has the highest estimated eligible population of 30,022 homebound seniors with the home-delivery program serving only 16%.

**The Bronx** has an estimated eligible population of 14,839 with only 18% served.

**Manhattan** has an estimated eligible population of 19,952 with only 20% served.

**Queens** has an estimated eligible population of 24,315 with only 22% served.

**Staten Island** with the lowest eligible population still served only 10%.

Rank	Borough	Number of Clients Served Home Delivered Meals	Points
1	Queens	5,304	5
2	Brooklyn	4,714	4
3	Manhattan	4,034	3
4	Bronx	2,622	2
5	Staten Island	487	1

- **New York City**

The results from a mid-1990s telephone survey conducted by the New York State Office for the Aging found that out of all New York City residents eligible for home-delivered meals, only 24% were receiving meals.<sup>23</sup> In addition, Citymeals-on-Wheels data shows that on average, 500 seniors are on waiting lists to receive home delivered meals on any given day. The study results mentioned above in conjunction with our analysis, indicates that the nutritional needs of a growing number of the homebound elderly population are currently being unmet by available services.

Rank	Borough	Total Points for Service
1	Brooklyn	13
2	Manhattan	12
3	Queens	10
4	Bronx	9
5	Staten Island	3

<sup>23</sup> New York State Office for the Aging & New York State Department of Health, *Nutrition Survey of the Elderly in New York State*, December 1996.

## IV. PUBLIC ADVOCATE RECOMMENDATIONS

The statistics show that a majority of eligible seniors are going without any assistance from the Department of the Aging (DFTA). If all eligible persons used the services, or even if there was a significant increase in usage, the City could not adequately provide meals. Furthermore, the City's neediest seniors—those living below the poverty level—cannot be adequately served if utilization increases.

Evidence from advocates and policy makers suggests that many seniors are meeting their nutritional needs from other sources. For example, the Hunter College Graduate School of Social Research reports that 53% of food pantries in the City are serving more senior citizens, which indicates a growing need among this population.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly the City does not have enough resources to meet the nutritional needs of its senior population. Therefore, the Department for the Aging and the Human Resources Administration (HRA) should work together to increase participation in federal and state-funded programs that will aid the City in addressing this population's needs. The City should focus on increasing senior use of federal food stamps.

At a time when its seniors are facing great needs and a shortage of services, the City must take urgent action to help them. While it is reorganizing the Department for the Aging, the City must capitalize on this opportunity to improve services for its elderly.

The Office of the Public Advocate recommends the following:

### **Conduct and Publish Annual Comprehensive Needs Assessment**

While statistics and anecdotes clearly illustrate pressing needs among the City's elderly, it is difficult to establish exactly how well social services are performing in meeting those needs—especially how services are delivered in particular neighborhoods. The dearth of data hinders improvement in the Department for the Aging's service delivery. It also hampers advocacy by senior citizens and their representatives, depriving the City of informed allies in the quest for more aid.

The Department for the Aging must regularly conduct and make public a comprehensive needs assessment of senior citizens in New York. This could combine a survey of random samples of seniors along with more thorough compilation and analysis of statistical data from the department's programs.

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<sup>24</sup> Hunter College Graduate School for Social Research, *The Continuing Crisis of New York City Emergency Food Pantries*, August 2002.

### **Increase Senior Participation in Food Stamp Programs**

Low incomes bar many seniors from adequate food or medical care, and it is beyond the City's means to single-handedly meet their needs. Fortunately, federal programs offer a way for the City to serve the nutritional needs of its needy seniors without substantially impacting its budget.

The food stamp program offers monthly benefits to eligible senior citizens. The federal government pays all food stamp benefits, while the City and state share only in administrative costs. Even though 17% of elderly people in the City live below the poverty line, only 11% of households with members over age 60 participated in the food stamp program. Clearly, the program is not reaching all those it could.

The Department for the Aging and the Human Resources Administration should press to increase participation in food stamps, Supplemental Security Income, the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage program and other income-support and nutrition assistance programs. The City can do this by simplifying application procedures, improving caseworker training and spreading the word about the benefits available to seniors in need.

### **Improve Outreach Effort**

Senior services provided by the City often remain invisible to New York's elderly. Whether the service is food stamps or a senior center, many seniors do not know that the services exist, whether they qualify, where to get them or how to access them if they are homebound.

The Department for the Aging must forcefully, repeatedly and creatively reach out to elderly New Yorkers in all communities. While television, radio, print and street-side advertising—in several languages—is important, the department can also use existing resources to amplify its message. Simple messages about available services could be printed on utility bills and supermarket receipts, relayed through doctors and nurses and delivered to local community groups, schools and religious organizations.

### **Create a Master Plan for Senior Services**

Statistics indicate the senior population will continue to grow for several decades. The City must begin planning now to meet the needs of this population. The City must produce a demographic study of senior population growth and a master plan for creating the services this population will require.