



Getting Food to All Hungry New Yorkers

A Met Council Analysis of Kosher and Halal Meals Distributed Through GetFoodNYC

Met Council on Jewish Poverty

Co-President, Ben Tisch Co-President, Joseph Allerhand Chair, Richard Mack CEO, David G. Greenfield

Letter from our CEO David G. Greenfield

For nearly 50 years, Met Council has helped New York's neediest move from crisis to stability. Our mission was never more challenging than when hundreds of thousands of our fellow New Yorkers were suddenly plunged into crisis with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yet with the help of our major supporters, including UJA-Federation of New York, Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, and countless other foundations and individuals who gave generously, our ten different departments helped more than 305,000 New Yorkers in dire need. Our Kosher Food Network distributed an astounding 15.2 million pounds of food in 2021. We're on track to distribute over 20 million pounds in 2021 proving that the need is only growing.

City and State funding was essential in this effort. Met Council was proud to play a leading role with New York's emergency food providers in advocating for and securing these desperately needed funds and the creation of the Nourish New York program to benefit emergency food providers and New York farmers. We're especially grateful to the New York City Council and Speaker Corey Johnson for their leadership and support of emergency food funding.

To provide essential nutrition and ongoing human connection to our community's most vulnerable when they were home-bound and isolated, we established an emergency food home delivery program for thousands of Holocaust survivors who were stuck at home alone. We launched a mobile pantry that brings food access directly to communities that lack other sources of emergency food, or whose pantries closed due to the pandemic. And we expanded our Digital Pantry network, which provides access to food in a way that maximizes dignity, client choice and efficiency, while significantly reducing waste.

Rooted deeply in communities, we understand their needs and can reach them where they are. And our expertise in culturally competent food distribution led us to become a voice for other groups in New York City with special food needs. Working closely with City and State officials, other leaders in the emergency food field, and local halal pantries we ensured that the needs of kosher- and halal-observant households were not overlooked during this crisis. We are proud to have partnered with GetFoodNYC and are grateful that New York City tracked data on the program's usage and made that data publicly available.

This report mines that data, and from it we learn that as many as one in five New Yorkers enrolled in the program requested kosher or halal food. This first-time opportunity to examine citywide demand for food by category as well as by ZIP code offers insight into the size and geographic distribution of at least part of the kosher- and halal-observant food insecure population, and the importance of funding, policies and legislation to meet their needs.

We must ensure that food-insecure New Yorkers of all backgrounds, cultures and religions can access emergency food that meets their dietary and cultural requirements. This data, and the recommendations that follow, highlight the needs we must address together to make this goal a reality.

Thank you to every front-line worker that toiled day and night to ensure the needs of struggling New Yorkers. Your work inspired our collective efforts.

David G. Greenfield

CEO, Met Council on Jewish Poverty

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

City Resources

Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP)

- The NYC Human Resource Administration's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) provides shelf stable and frozen foods to enrolled food pantries and soup kitchens. EFAP is administered by Food Bank for NYC.

Pandemic Food Reserve Emergency Distribution (P-FRED)

- Fresh produce and some shelf-stable food items are distributed via wholesale provider Driscoll to food pantries, soup kitchens, and COVID pop-up locations throughout New York City.

State Resources

Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP)

- HPNAP focuses on providing healthy foods and New York State-grown foods to hungry New Yorkers.
- Grants to direct providers, like Met Council, support mostly food purchases, but also staffing, rent, utilities, food service disposables, food transportation and food service equipment.
- In addition, in NYC, two agencies, Food Bank for NYC and United Way of NYC, serve as HPNAP grant makers to redistribute funds to smaller food pantries and soup kitchens. Food Bank administers the program as a line of credit in the Food Bank wholesale inventory to its grantees, and United Way administers the program as a line of credit with the wholesaler Driscoll.
- The flexibility of this funding is prized by emergency food providers.

Nourish New York

- The Nourish New York Initiative launched in Spring 2020 after sustained advocacy led by Met Council and partners from City Harvest, Food Bank for New York City, Catholic Charities, and United Way of New York City. It supports New York State farmers and producers by funding food banks for direct purchases.

Federal Resources

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

- Through TEFAP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) purchases a variety of nutritious, high-quality USDA foods from American producers and light processors, and makes those foods available to State distributing agencies.
- States provide the food to local agencies that they have selected, usually food banks, which in turn distribute the food to local organizations, such as soup kitchens and food pantries that directly serve the public.
- TEFAP foods are funded by appropriation and by the discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture, which causes great fluctuations in the levels of TEFAP product available over time.

Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP)

- The program is governed by a National Board composed of representatives of the American Red Cross; Catholic Charities, USA; The Jewish Federations of North America; National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA; The Salvation Army; and United Way Worldwide. The Board is chaired by a representative of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- In New York, this funding is administered by United Way. Funds can be used for a wide range of social services expenses, namely food, housing, and the staff and materials needed to operate these programs.
- This funding is flexible and as such, emergency food providers consider it the gold standard.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2020, faced with an unprecedented surge in demand for emergency food as the global COVID-19 pandemic spread and the economy collapsed, public officials acted quickly by launching GetFoodNYC and other crisis response initiatives. GetFoodNYC delivered food to elderly, infirm, and other homebound New Yorkers who were most at risk of death and illness from COVID-19. The program adapted swiftly to widespread demand, and over time introduced alternatives that were responsive to cultural needs including kosher, halal, vegetarian, Latin, and pan-Asian food options.

From the program's inception through the end of September 2021, GetFoodNYC delivered 128.7 million meals, helping feed vulnerable, food insecure New Yorkers and enabling them to remain safe in their homes.¹ Met Council was proud to play a key role in providing most of New York's kosher food during the pandemic, and for the first time we are sharing the data tracked by the GetFoodNYC program to examine citywide demand for emergency food by category (kosher, halal, vegetarian, Latin, pan-Asian, and non-specialty) as well as by ZIP code. As a certified enroller for the program and the largest kosher food network operator in the country, Met Council analyzed and mapped the data to better understand the kosher- and halal-observant communities served by the program.

Our analysis of the data found that of the 128.7 million meals delivered, nearly 27 million were kosher (13.7 percent) or halal (7.2 percent). Demand for both kosher and halal food was distributed across all five boroughs, with the highest demand in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx.² Kosher meals were a significant portion of all GetFoodNYC deliveries in many ZIP codes across the City. These numbers should not be a surprise, as New York is home to the largest Jewish and Muslim populations in the United States.

Beyond our key role in GetFoodNYC, Met Council was instrumental in creating a new state-wide emergency food program known as Nourish NY together with our partners United Way of NYC, Food Bank for the City of New York, City Harvest and Catholic Charities. During the pandemic, we at Met Council also launched home delivery program for over two thousand elderly holocaust survivors each month, rolled out new mobile food pantries to reach minority neighborhoods without access to emergency food, and offered emergency food assistance to halal food pantries during the pandemic.

Given our work, the need for kosher and halal food from GetFoodNYC was likely even greater than what we see here. In addition, some communities of kosher- and halal-observant New Yorkers require elevated levels of certification that could not be fulfilled within the existing parameters offered by the GetFoodNYC program. Delivery of food on Saturdays (the Jewish Sabbath) or Jewish holidays caused some kosher-observant households to either withdraw from the program or feel uncomfortable with participating. The data does not enable us to quantify these populations that could not or would not participate.

Nevertheless, the City of New York's efforts to make sure no one went hungry likely enabled many kosher- and halal-observant individuals to receive emergency food for the first time.



Although **one in five New Yorkers enrolled in the program requested kosher or halal food**, the City's emergency feeding system has only a limited number of providers with the expertise and experience to provide food that adheres to religious dietary requirements and is culturally appropriate.

We must ensure that New York's emergency feeding system recognizes and addresses the diverse dietary needs and requirements of all food insecure New Yorkers and is prepared for the next crisis. Based on our analysis of the data from GetFoodNYC and our experience as an emergency food provider, Met Council makes the following recommendations:

Funding Solutions

1. Increase emergency food funding to reflect the widespread need for kosher and halal food.

- Increase acquisition of kosher- and halal-certified food to at least 20 percent of all City-funded emergency food.
- Increase funding for New York State programs: Nourish New York and Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP).

2. Enable more flexibility with food funding so that food pantry operators can meet the specific dietary requirements of their communities.

- Provide funding as lines of credit or cash-in-hand, and allow funding to be used for operating expenses, including rent and salaries.
- Streamline the City's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) by removing its procurement process from the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to enable purchase of a much wider array of culturally relevant foods.

Policy Solutions

3. Ensure awareness and sensitivity to kosher and halal needs in policy-making bodies.

- Create a division of kosher and halal food within the New York State Office of General Services.
- Expand the Mayor's Office of Food Policy's Governance Initiatives to include kosher and halal foods and appoint a Deputy Director to oversee the initiative.
- Expand the FeedNYC Policy Committee on New York Hunger Resources to include providers with kosher and halal expertise.
- Bring in relevant community-based organizations (CBOs) to City tables during initial planning sessions of new programs, even during a crisis.

4. Incorporate cultural competency into NYC and State Request for Proposals (RFP) requirements.

- The long-awaited request for proposals for a new EFAP contract is an opportunity to incorporate a requirement that programs offer culturally appropriate foods.

5. Increase and Improve Data Collection.

- Have the New York State Office of General Services Division of Food Distribution track and publish data on the distribution of kosher and halal food to food banks across the State.
- Continue New York City's collection and sharing of disaggregated data on emergency food program requests and program utilization and solicit public input about data collection at a new program's inception.

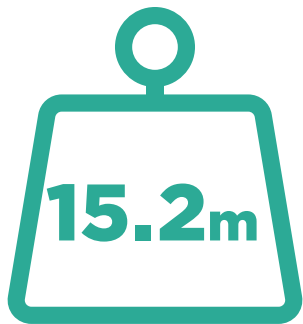
6. Increase access to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

- Support changes to SNAP that broaden eligibility, reduce barriers to enrollment (such as by extending the waiver that allows clients to apply by telephone and for complete applications to be considered without an interview), and increase SNAP benefit levels.

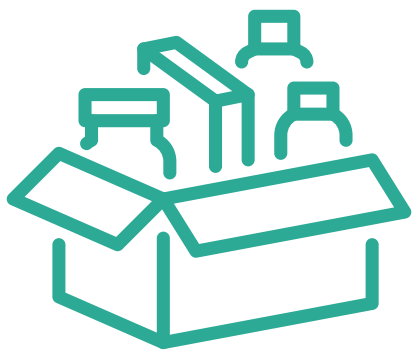


Legislative Solutions

7. **Amend Local Law 52/2011** (which established reporting requirements for many food-related initiatives) to include data specific to kosher and halal food.³
8. **Amend Local Law 41/2020** to expand the jurisdiction of the Mayor's Office of Food Policy to include addressing food insecurity in the kosher- and halal-observant communities.⁴
9. **Enact a State law to require the creation of an Office of Kosher and Halal food within the New York State Office of General Services Division of Food Distribution** and require it to track and publish data on the distribution of emergency kosher and halal food to food banks across the State.



**POUNDS OF FOOD
DISTRIBUTED BY
MET COUNCIL IN 2020**



**769,285 KOSHER
FOOD BOXES DELIVERED
BY MET COUNCIL**

INTRODUCTION

New York City is home to the largest Jewish and Muslim populations in the country.⁵ These populations often have specific dietary requirements that must be accommodated when addressing food insecurity. These requirements also create challenges for emergency food providers.

Met Council, America's largest Jewish organization dedicated to fighting poverty, has a food pantry network that specializes in providing culturally appropriate food to meet the needs of kosher- and halal-observant clients. **In 2020, Met Council distributed 15.2 million pounds of food including more than 764,000 kosher meals as part of GetFoodNYC**, an emergency food program established to address the surge in demand for food during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the height of the pandemic, two million New Yorkers experienced food insecurity. GetFoodNYC provided home-delivered food to New Yorkers who were the most vulnerable to COVID-19: the elderly, people with compromised immune systems, and other homebound New Yorkers unable to access private delivery options. GetFoodNYC distributed more than 128.7 million meals and responded to hundreds of thousands of requests from food insecure New Yorkers from March 2020 through September 2021.⁶ Met Council participated as both a distributor of food boxes during the first six-month period, and as a certified enroller for the full duration of the program.

GetFoodNYC underwent several changes from its launch in March 2020 to the end of the program in October 2021. When the program started, there were no culturally competent food options. However, a kosher option was introduced in April 2020, followed almost immediately by halal, and over the next few months residents could request other non-standard options including pan-Asian, Latin, or vegetarian to accommodate diverse communities across the City.

Over the course of the program, the City collected data, which it aggregated and made publicly available, including monthly breakdowns by ZIP code of the number of meals distributed overall and by category (standard, halal, kosher, Latin, pan-Asian, and vegetarian). This created the first, real-time opportunity to examine citywide demand for kosher and halal food. By analyzing and mapping the data, we can better understand the kosher and halal communities that were served by the program.

This report highlights the New York City neighborhoods in which a significant portion of emergency meals distributed were kosher or halal. Given the high proportion of kosher- and halal-observant households across the City, the report also offers policy recommendations to help New York City and State better meet the needs of all food insecure residents.



METHODOLOGY

The GetFoodNYC program dataset reflects self-declared food insecurity. Enrollees had to attest that they were unable to go out and get food for themselves, did not have someone else in the household or a nearby neighbor who could get food for them, and were unable to afford food delivery from a restaurant or grocery store.^{7,8}

For each month, the dataset provides the total number of meals delivered and includes a breakdown by ZIP code of the number of deliveries by category (standard, halal, kosher, Latin, pan-Asian, and vegetarian). The program allowed clients to order three days of food at a time and sent a box containing either nine meals or three days' worth of groceries per delivery equal to nine meals.

For the purposes of this analysis, we examined the data in several different ways.

First, we segmented the data by month covering every month from March 2020 to September 2021, the last full month with data publicly available at the time of our analysis.⁹

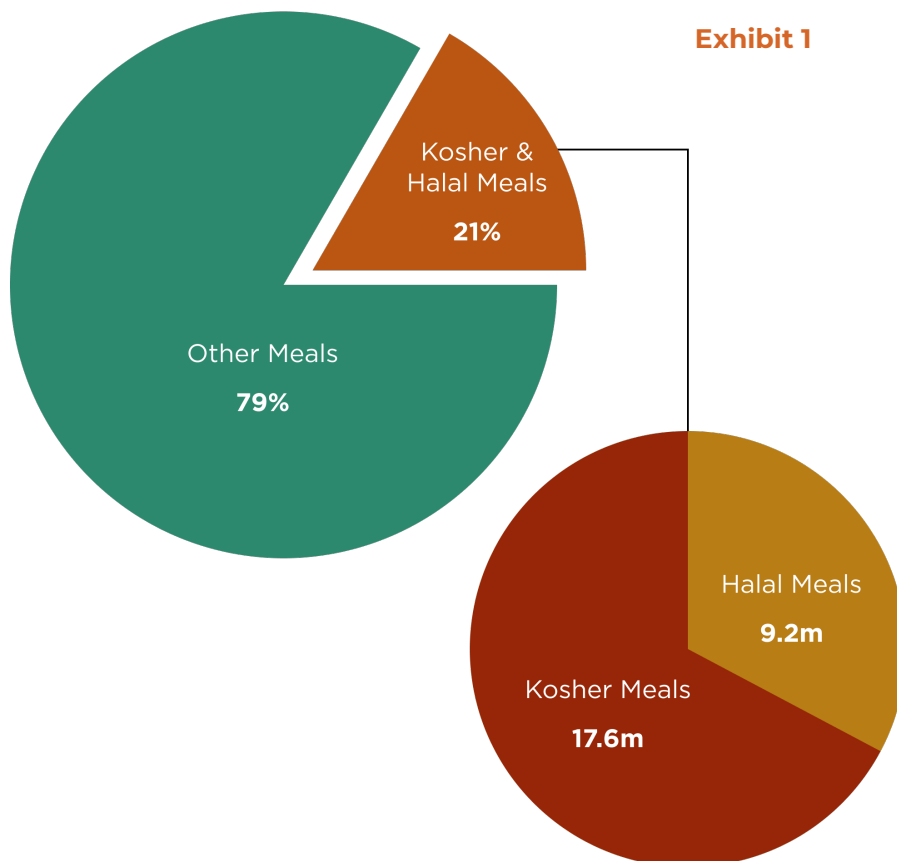
Next, we examined the total monthly deliveries for all meals, kosher meals, and halal meals by ZIP code. With these numbers in hand, we looked at each month in two key ways:

- Raw numbers reported by the City of New York.
- Percentages calculated by dividing the kosher and halal meal deliveries by the corresponding monthly totals.

With this information, we were able to develop a deeper understanding of where the likely kosher- and halal-observant food insecure populations are located within New York City.

Lastly, we looked in-depth at the data from June 2020, which was the month with the highest utilization over the life of the program. We developed choropleth maps (maps that use color to visually represent data) to conduct a geospatial analysis of this month.¹⁰ Specifically, these maps use color to visually represent total meals delivered, kosher meals as a percent of all meals, halal meals as a percent of all meals, and combined kosher and halal meals as a percentage of all meals delivered in June 2020.

FINDINGS



From March 2020 through September 2021, GetFoodNYC delivered 128,680,553 meals across the five boroughs.

In that same period, 17,643,510 kosher meals and 9,226,680 halal meals were delivered through the GetFoodNYC program in New York City.

Kosher and halal meals made up 13.71 percent and 7.17 percent, respectively, of all deliveries. Combined, one in five deliveries made through this citywide emergency food program were either kosher or halal food.¹¹ Our analysis shows that kosher and halal food made up about 21 percent of all food delivered in New York City over the life of the program (Exhibit 1). Specifically, **in 2020, during the months that represent the height of GetFoodNYC utilization, kosher and halal meals were up to 25 percent of monthly meals distributed (Exhibit 2).**

Exhibit 2

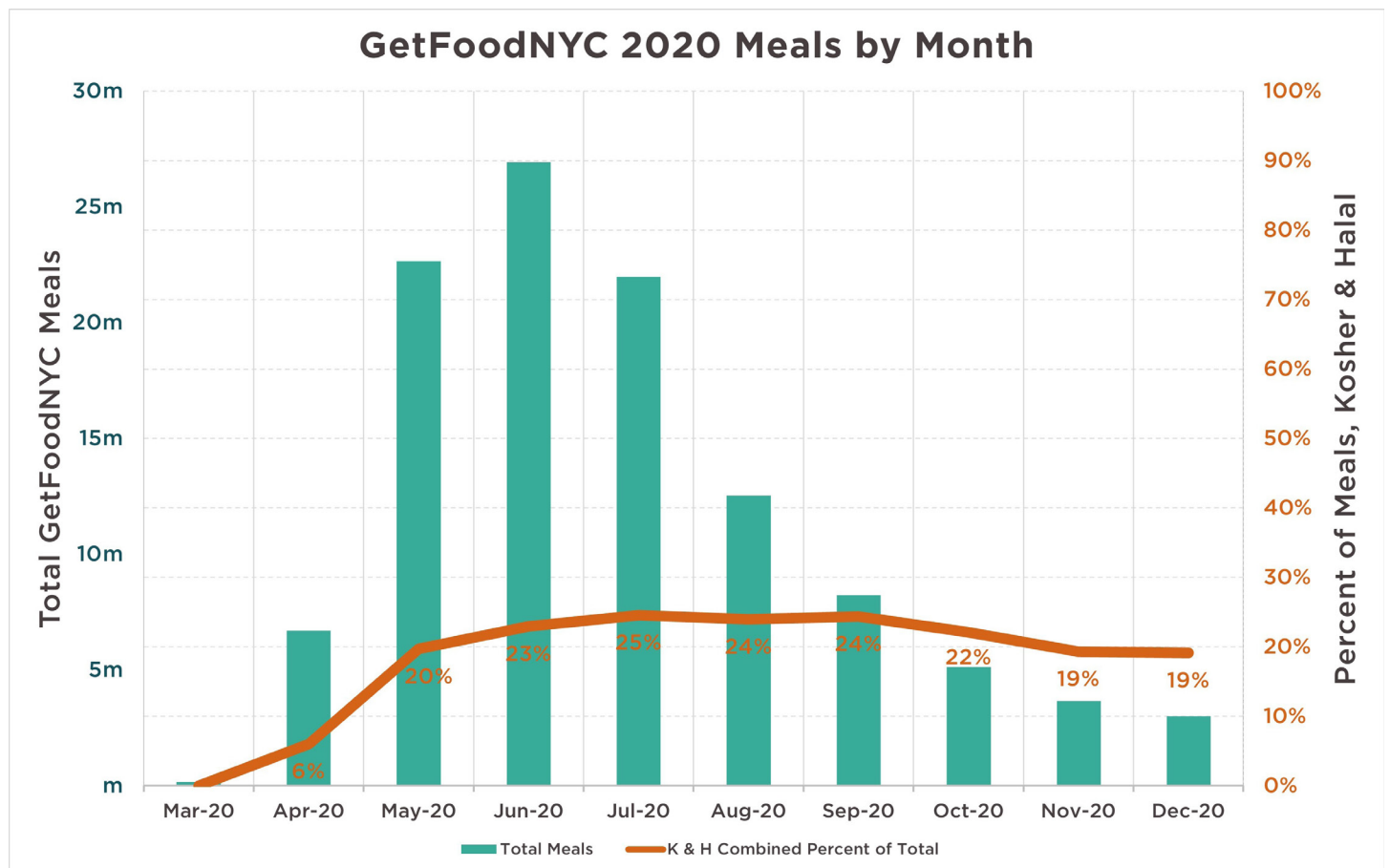
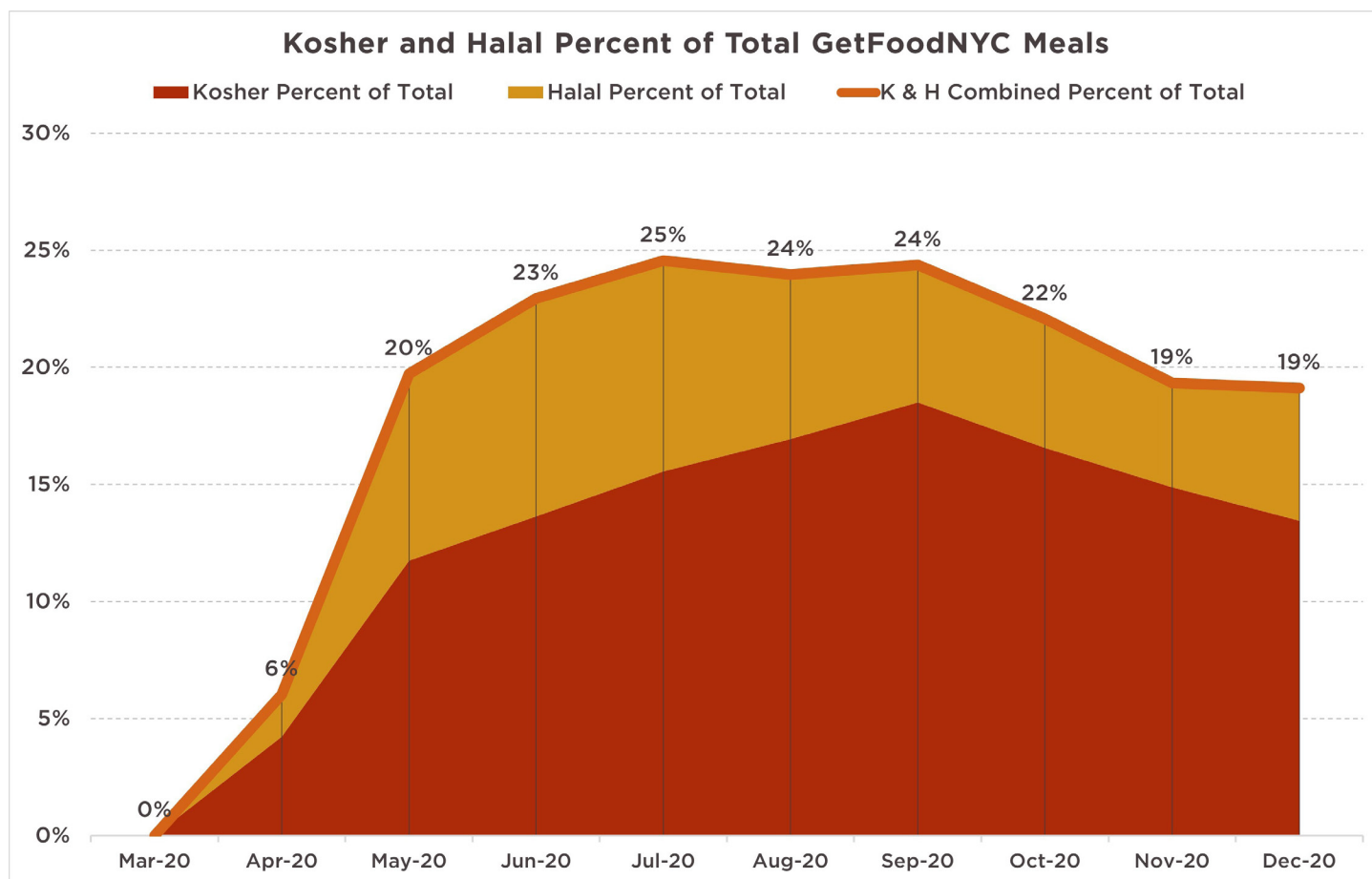


Exhibit 2 showcases the total meals distributed from March 2020 through December 2020 on the left axis compared to the percent of distributed meals that were kosher and halal, as shown on the right axis. The total number of meals starts to decline after June 2020, but kosher and halal meals hold steady or even rise slightly through September 2020.

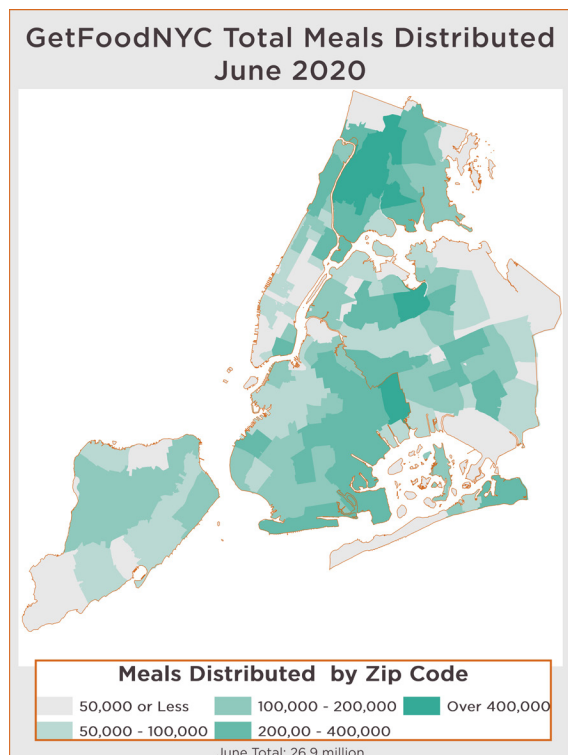
Exhibit 3



When we separate out kosher and halal percentages (Exhibit 3), we can see that both kosher and halal trend at similar rates. In August and September of 2020, kosher continues to grow while halal begins a slight decline. In October and November both then show small declines before halal rises a bit in December.

KOSHER AND HALAL NEED

Exhibit 4



When GetFoodNYC was first established, the program did not offer any kosher or halal options. As a result, no kosher or halal meals were distributed in March 2020. A kosher meal option was introduced on April 21, 2020, and halal meals followed shortly thereafter with Ramadan.¹² May was the first full month in which kosher and halal food was available through GetFoodNYC.¹³

For an in-depth analysis of the geographic allocation of meal distributions, we use data from June 2020, when the GetFoodNYC program was at its peak utilization and both kosher and halal options were fully established.

As seen in Exhibit 4, as indicated with the darkest shaded patches, Central Bronx, pockets of Eastern Brooklyn, and Central Queens were the neighborhoods receiving the largest number of GetFoodNYC deliveries.

Exhibit 5

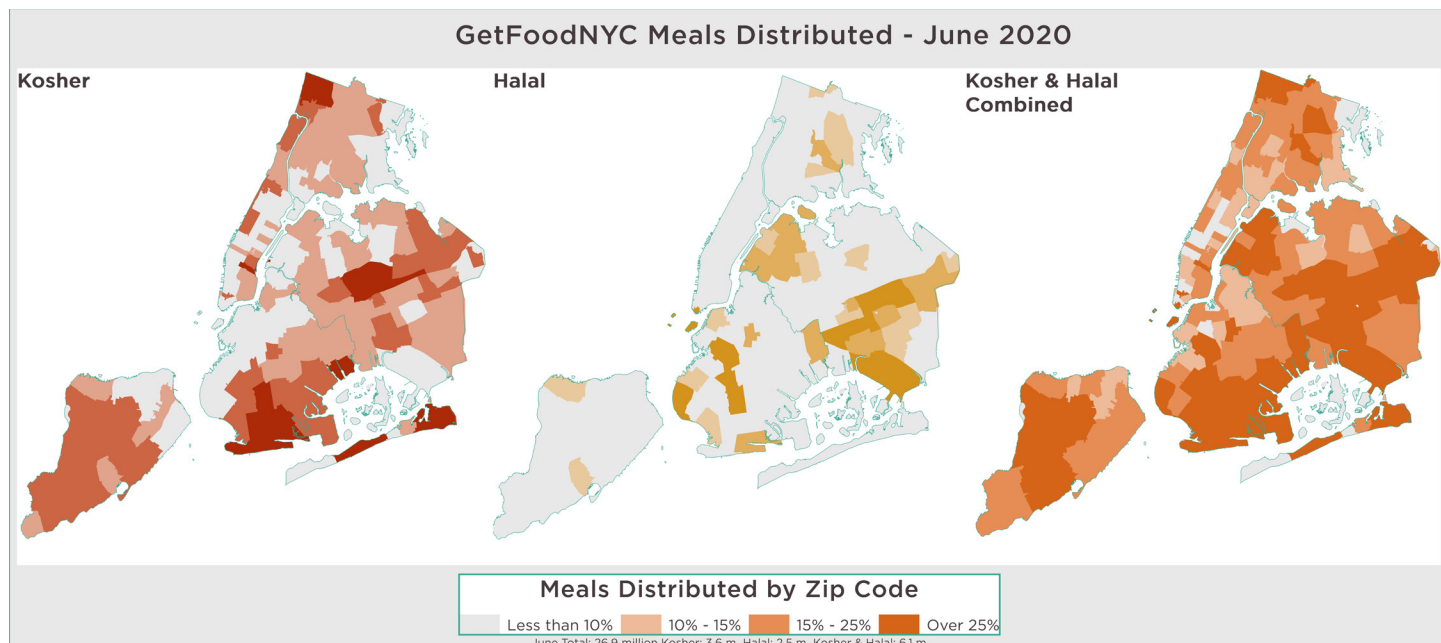
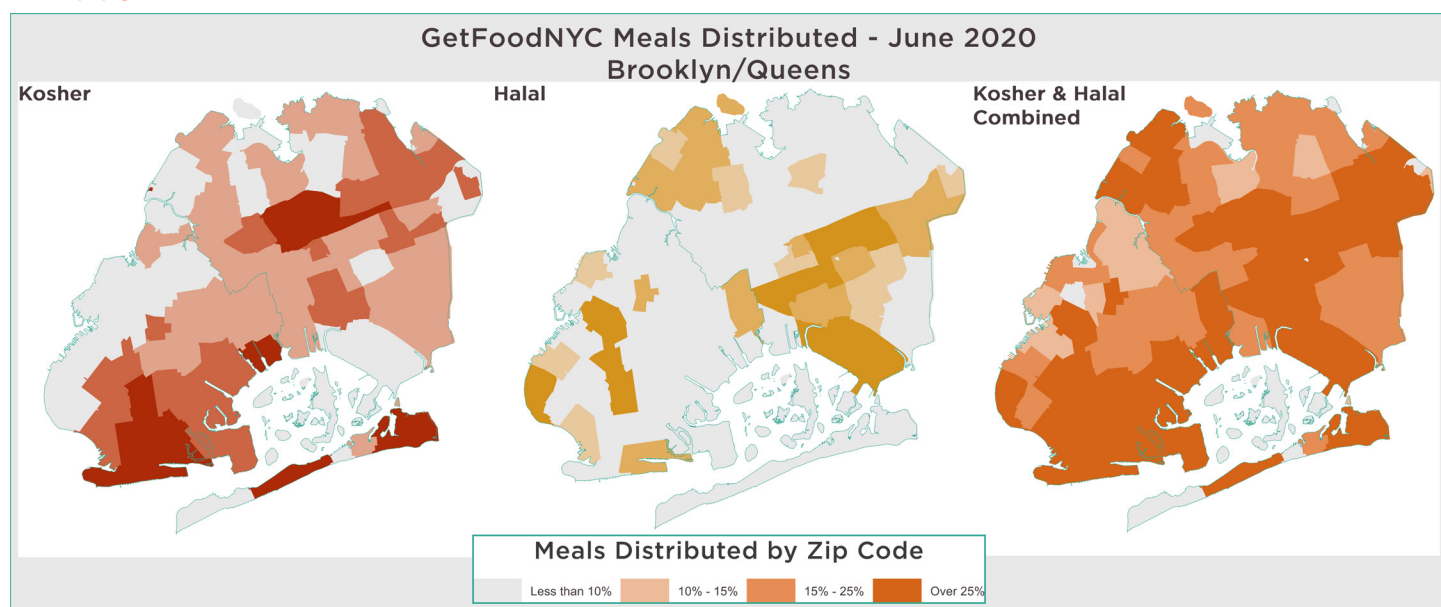


Exhibit 5 depicts kosher, halal, and combined kosher and halal meals distribute as a percentage of total meals distributed in June 2020.

Many of the same neighborhoods that had high numbers of food deliveries overall (Exhibit 4) also had high numbers of kosher or halal deliveries (e.g., Southern Brooklyn and Central Queens). At the same time, kosher and halal also have distinct neighborhood profiles. Areas with high kosher meal distribution percentages are concentrated in places like the Northwest Bronx, Central Staten Island, Southern Brooklyn, Eastern Queens, and the Rockaways.

From these maps, we see that kosher meal distributions are a significant portion of all meal distributions in many ZIP codes across the City.

Exhibit 6



The vast majority of concentrated kosher and halal meal distributions were in Brooklyn and Queens. Exhibit 6 focuses on these two boroughs, to highlight hotspots in Southern Brooklyn, Far Rockaway, and Central Queens. The areas with the greatest percent of halal meals are Central and Southeast Queens and Central/Western Brooklyn.

In addition to these neighborhoods, we also see notable concentrations of halal food recipients in Central Bronx, Western Queens, and Southern Brooklyn (Exhibit 5 & 6). Exhibits 8 and 9 in the appendix showcase similar maps of the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island.

Combining all the monthly figures from March 2020 through September 2021, the ten ZIP codes with the largest total number of kosher and halal GetFoodNYC meal distributions are listed in the following tables. Many ZIP codes cover multiple neighborhood tabulation areas, but for many observers the neighborhood name has more resonance than a ZIP code.¹⁴

Exhibit 7

GetFoodNYTC Top Ten Kosher Neighborhoods by ZIP Code

Kosher Meals	% of Total Requests	Neighborhood Tabulation Area (NTA)	ZIP Code
719,769	52.9%	Seagate, Coney Island, West Brighton	11224
687,414	45.4%	Brighton Beach, Sheepshead Bay, Gerritsen Beach, Manhattan Beach	11235
580,665	50.9%	Borough Park, Flatbush, Kensington, Ocean Parkway, Flatbush, Midwood, Ocean Parkway South	11230
470,475	39.7%	Georgetown, Marine Park, Bergen Beach, Mill Basin, Homecrest, Madison	11229
396,684	34.0%	Far Rockaway, Bayswater, Hammels, Arverne, Edgemere	11691
368,526	38.2%	Bensonhurst West, Bensonhurst East, Homecrest, Gravesend	11223
325,044	10.4%	Mount Hope, Fordham South, University Heights, Morris Heights	10453
304,185	10.7%	Highbridge, West Concourse	10452
302,475	11.1%	Allerton, Pelham Gardens, Bronxdale, Norwood, Williamsbridge, Oroville	10467
302,361	11.5%	Fordham South, Kingsbridge Heights, Van Courtland Village	10468

GetFoodNYTC Top Ten Halal Neighborhoods by ZIP Code

Kosher Meals	% of Total Requests	Neighborhood Tabulation Area (NTA)	ZIP Code
349,605	34.4%	Briarwood, Jamaica Hills, Fresh Meadows, Utopia, Jamaica, Jamaica Estates, Holliswood, Kew Gardens Hills, Pomonok, Flushing Heights, Hillcrest	11432
293,289	13.5%	Cypress Hills, City Line, East New York, Ozone Park, Woodhaven	11208
260,973	31.9%	Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights	11209
240,813	14.3%	Bronxdale, East Tremont, Parkchester, Pelham Parkway, Schuylerville, Throgs Neck, Edgewater Park, Soundview, Castle Hill, Clason Point, Harding Park, Westchester, Unionport, Van Nest, Morris Park, Westchester Square	10462
224,169	19.7%	Borough Park, Kensington, Ocean Parkway, Flatbush, Midwood, Ocean Parkway South	11230
205,290	13.6%	Brighton Beach, Sheepshead Bay, Gerritsen Beach, Manhattan Beach	11235
199,584	20.7%	Baisely Park, Briarwood, Jamaica Hills, Jamaica, Kew Gardens, Kew Gardens Hills	11435
193,461	47.3%	Carroll Gardens, Columbia Street, Redhook, Flatbush, Park Slope, Gowanus, Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Wingate, Windsor Terrace	11215
189,792	21.4%	Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park	11419
171,081	10.5%	Elmhurst, Maspeth, Rego Park	11373

DISCUSSION



New York City's emergency food system is complex, especially for communities with specific dietary requirements. One single program or pantry rarely meets the full needs of a food insecure family. With this consideration it is important to remember that the data represented in this report does not reflect the full picture of food insecurity in our City.

We know that the uptake of this program for kosher and halal meals could have been much higher, but some communities of kosher- and halal-observant

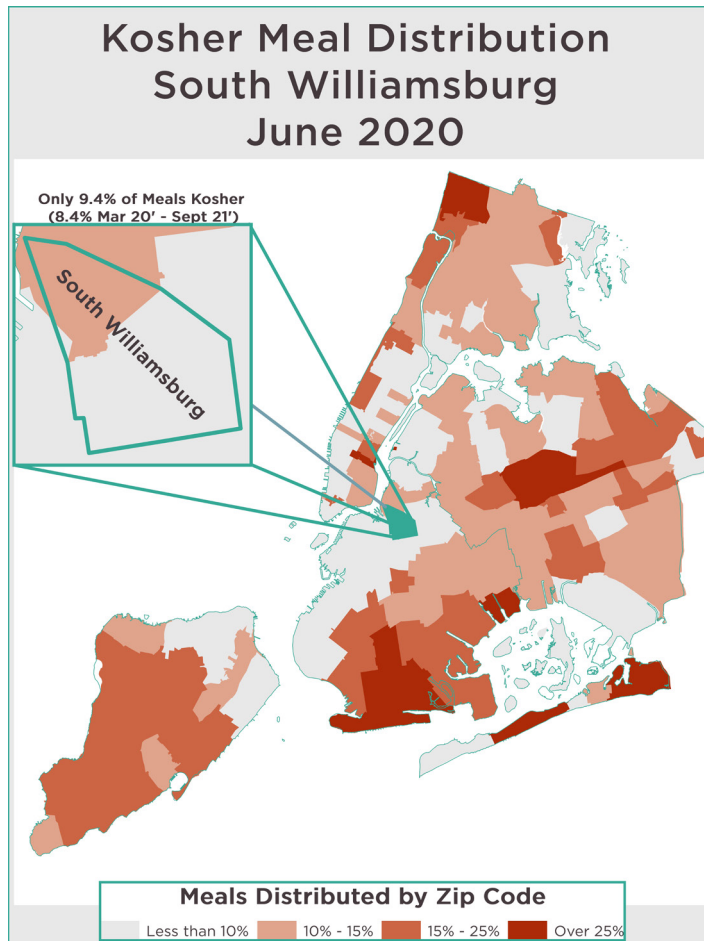
New Yorkers require certain elevated levels of certification that were not able to be specifically requested within the parameters in the GetFoodNYC program. There were also kosher-specific issues, such as receiving delivery on Saturdays (the Jewish Sabbath) or Jewish holidays that caused people to either drop out or prevented them from feeling comfortable with participating in the program.

Changes in enrollment rates were likely affected not only by changes in the trajectory of the pandemic and the economy, but also by changes in the GetFoodNYC program. Over time, more certified enrollers, a phone hotline, and a digital application portal helped expand access. However, recertification became more difficult as the reapplication window shrank from once a month to every two weeks, then every three days, then back to biweekly. These changes brought confusion. Seniors, people with limited English proficiency, and others had trouble navigating these new systems.¹⁵



In addition, the GetFoodNYC program shifted from providing delivery of shelf-stable groceries to providing only prepared meals. This change prompted some people to drop out of the program as it was widely reported that prepared meals lacked in quality and consistency.¹⁶ Halal meals in particular were reported to be unappetizing, dehydrated, military-style Meals Ready to Eat, lacking the dignity and cultural awareness that is so fundamental in the provision of emergency food.¹⁷ Disappointment with the quality of the food may have led people to change their food request from one type (e.g., halal or Latin) to another (e.g., kosher

or vegetarian) at the point of their renewal. Others dropped out of the program altogether because of a perceived decline in the quality of the meals.



Aside from these general patterns, it is also essential to understand the broad range of cultural differences and specific needs from neighborhood to neighborhood when providing emergency food to communities with specific dietary requirements such as kosher and halal. For instance, the GetFoodNYC data shows very low program uptake in South Williamsburg even though there is a large population of low-income ultra-Orthodox households in this neighborhood. The Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011 found that 78 percent of Jewish households in this neighborhood had incomes under \$50,000, 76 percent reported that they could not make ends meet or were just managing, and 84 percent of households reported that they keep kosher.¹⁸ Lack of GetFoodNYC uptake is likely due to the households in this community requiring stricter kosher certifications than kosher households in other parts of the City, as well as the population skewing younger. Less than 5 percent of people in Jewish households in Williamsburg are

age 65+; the population is predominantly comprised of young families with many children.¹⁹

Despite all these challenges that likely reduced the number of kosher and halal participants in the program, we see that approximately one in five meals sought from this program was kosher or halal. Demand for both kosher and halal food was widespread across all five boroughs, with the highest demand in Brooklyn and Queens.

Even as the economy began to recover and demand for GetFoodNYC declined, demand for kosher and halal food declined at a slower rate. This shows that there is a significant and persistent need for kosher and halal emergency food. Yet, there are a limited number of providers with the expertise and experience to provide food that adheres to religious dietary requirements and is culturally appropriate.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that one in five enrollees in the program requested kosher or halal food, Met Council makes the following recommendations to ensure that New York's emergency feeding system is culturally competent and able to recognize and address the diverse dietary needs and requirements of all food insecure New Yorkers.

Funding Solutions

1. Increase emergency food funding to reflect the widespread need for kosher and halal food.

- Increase acquisition of kosher- and/or halal-certified food to at least 20 percent of all City-funded emergency food. Since kosher- and halal-observant New Yorkers make up 21 percent of enrollees in GetFoodNYC and, that may undercount the kosher and halal population that is food insecure, at least 20 percent of all City-funded emergency food should be kosher and/or halal certified and allocated to agencies that can effectively store and distribute that food in a culturally competent way.
 - Increase funding for New York State programs Nourish New York, Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP), and the federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP). Nourish New York should have increased funding and be made permanent. This State program has the dual benefit of supporting farmers and families in need.
 - HPNAP and EFSP are models for funding that are flexible and responsive to diverse communities' needs.

2. Enable more flexibility with food funding so that food pantry operators can meet the specific dietary requirements of their communities.

- Increased flexibility for current and future streams of emergency food funding is extremely helpful for communities' dietary and cultural needs. Funding should be provided as lines of credit or cash-in-hand, and funding should be available to be used prospectively for operating expenses, including rent and salaries.
- Streamline the City's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) by removing its procurement process from the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to enable purchase of a wider array of culturally appropriate foods. There are often significant delays and shortages in deliveries to the City by DCAS vendors. EFAP also has a very short product list, due in part to the difficulty of procurement. There are no fresh products (e.g., fresh produce) included on the list, nor are there many kosher or halal items

available. All these issues could be remedied by removing EFAP food from DCAS and moving the model to something like the City's Pandemic Food Reserve Emergency Distribution (P-FRED) program or United Way's administration of HPNAP, both of which give a line of credit at a local distributor of fresh foods which approved pantries could use directly. Adopting such a model would mean that pantries could order a much wider array of culturally relevant foods, including fresh produce and protein.

Policy Solutions

3. Ensure awareness and sensitivity to kosher and halal needs in policy-making bodies.

- Create a Division of Kosher and Halal Food within the New York State Office of General Services. Its role would be to address equity and religious and cultural competency within the State's emergency feeding systems.
- Expand the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP)'s Governance Initiatives to include kosher and halal foods and appoint a Deputy Director to oversee the initiative. MOFP has played a critical role in advancing key, citywide priorities and in its February 2021 Food Forward plan cited access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food as its first priority. Adequate staffing must be identified to actualize this priority.
- Expand the FeedNYC Policy Committee on New York Hunger Resources to include kosher and halal providers. This influential committee is comprised of City Harvest, Food Bank for NYC, United Way of NYC, NYC Human Resources Administration Emergency Food Assistance Program, and NYS Department of Health Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program. It sets requirements and best practices for emergency food providers in New York City, and allocates most of the food, funding, and equipment available to pantries and soup kitchens. Critical food policy decisions are made at this table; therefore, it is paramount that organizations expert in meeting the needs of kosher- and halal-observant communities are given a seat at this table.
- Bring relevant community-based organizations (CBOs) to the table with elected officials and government agencies during initial planning sessions of new programs, even during a crisis. CBO leaders are ready, willing, and able to advise policy makers and administrators on how to best meet the needs of the communities they serve. This early and ongoing collaboration will lead to more successful program design and implementation.

4. Incorporate cultural competency into NYC and State Request for Proposals (RFP) requirements.

- The long-awaited request for proposals for a new EFAP contract is an opportunity to incorporate a requirement that programs offer culturally appropriate foods into the citywide emergency feeding network. This can be accomplished by (1) adjusting the program model to allow for more flexible funding structures, as referenced in Recommendation Two, and (2) apportioning at least 20 percent of the EFAP contract as an award to a proposal or proposals that demonstrate cultural competence in procuring, warehousing, and distributing kosher and halal foods.

5. Increase and Improve Data Collection.

- Have the New York State Office of General Services Division of Food Distribution track and publish data on the distribution of kosher and halal food to food banks across the State.
- Continue New York City's collection and sharing of disaggregated data on emergency food program requests and program utilization and solicit public input about data collection at a new program's inception. This information is critical to informing program planning. It was invaluable that City officials shared the GetFoodNYC utilization data, and this type of transparency should be celebrated, continued, and strengthened. The collection, disaggregation, and dissemination of quality data to nonprofit partners makes the entire emergency food network more responsive and efficient. While we recognize and encourage the City and State to capture data, data must be collected, stored, and distributed in ways that do not inadvertently harm, put at risk, or increase stigma for vulnerable community members. Lastly, data should be made available, in real time, whenever possible, to CBOs and advocates.

6. Increase access to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

- Support changes to SNAP that broaden eligibility, reduce barriers to enrollment and increase SNAP benefit levels. Public benefits programs, particularly SNAP, are vital tools for reducing food insecurity and emergency food reliance in New York City. NYC Human Resources Administration, via the State, has administered SNAP program changes to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic to increase access to SNAP, which we applaud. This includes issuing waivers that allow clients to apply via telephone without an application signature and for complete applications (with all required documents) to be considered without an interview. This waiver should be extended through 2022, and the City should seek to permanently reduce the requirements and documentation needed to enroll in and recertify SNAP benefits.

Legislative Solutions

7. **Amend Local Law 52/2011 (which established reporting requirements for many food-related initiatives) to include data specific to kosher and halal food.** For example, the law should also require the City to report the total number of kosher and halal meals served by City agencies or their contractors, including but not limited to meals served in public schools, hospitals, senior centers, correctional facilities, and homeless shelters, and not including food sold in vending machines or by a concessionaire, sorted by agency.
8. **Amend Local Law 41/2020 to expand the jurisdiction of the Mayor's Office of Food Policy to include addressing food insecurity in kosher- and halal-observant communities.**
9. **Enact a State law to require the creation of an office of kosher and halal within the New York State Office of General Services Division of Food Distribution and require it to track and publish data on the distribution of emergency kosher and halal food to food banks across the State.**



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APPENDIX

Exhibit 8

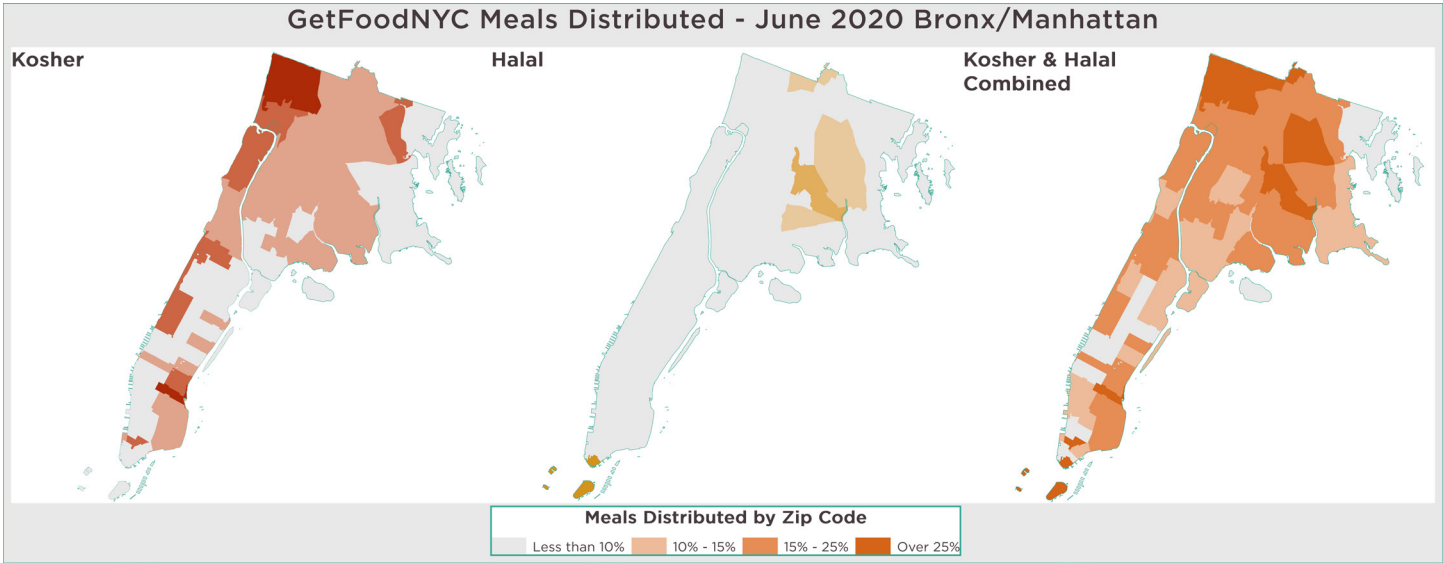
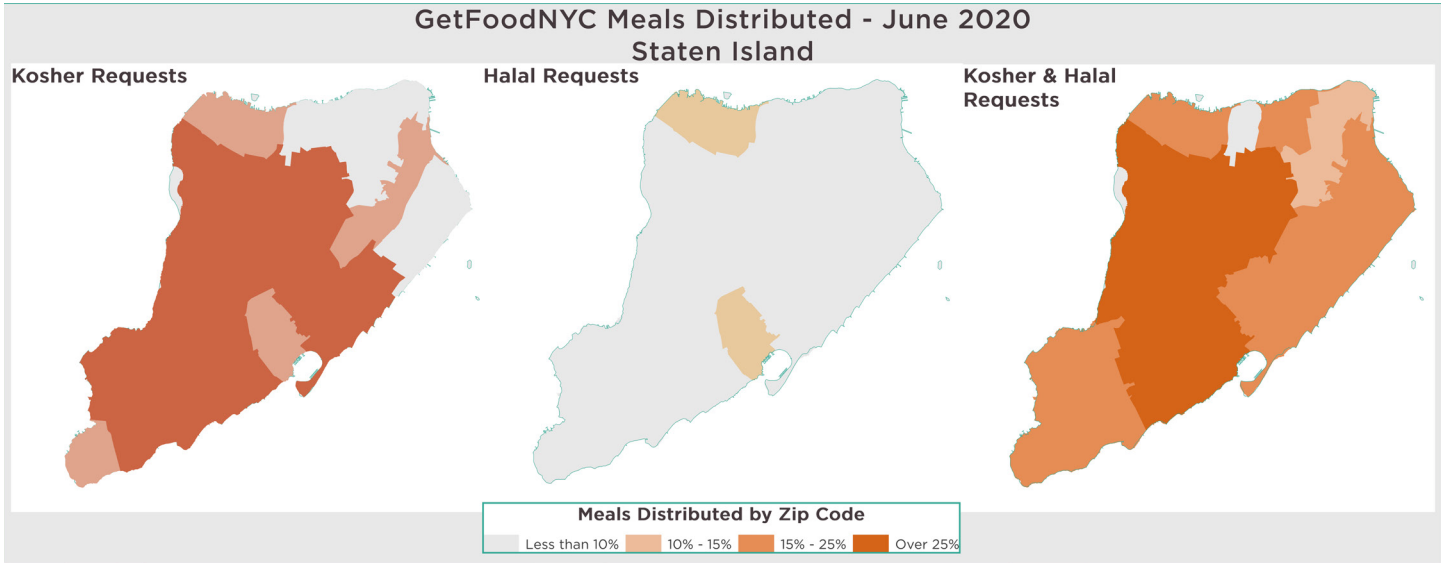


Exhibit 9



ENDNOTES

- ¹ "GetFoodNYC COVID-19 Emergency Food Distribution, Historical data about meal distribution," accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/contact/services/COVID-19GetFoodNYCHistDist.shtml>. For the purposes of this report, all data and metrics related to GetFoodNYC as reported by the City of New York will be referred to as either "meals distributed" or "meals." This is the term used by the City of New York on the website (above) that hosts all GetFoodNYC data. We believe these to be individual counts of meals that were part of distributions of food boxes or similar packages that contained nine individual meals per box.
- ² Of the top 10 ZIP codes receiving kosher food and the top 10 ZIP codes receiving halal food, eight were in Brooklyn (of which two were on both the kosher and halal top 10 lists), five were in Queens, and five were in the Bronx.
- ³ New York City, NY, Local Law 52/2011. Int. No. 615-A (2011) <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/foodpolicy/downloads/pdf/LL-52-Legislation-Text.pdf>
- ⁴ New York City, NY, Local Law 41/2020 (2020) <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=8247400&GUID=EBF584CF-D0DE-42B6-A40E-FBE0959E62D1>
- ⁵ Estimates vary, but reputable sources regularly place New York City or the New York Metropolitan Statistical Area at the top in terms of both Jewish and Muslim populations. Some of these sources include: "American Jewish Population Project," accessed October 8, 2021, <https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/constructs/2016/population-estimates.html>; "Jewish Americans in 2020," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project (blog), May 11, 2021, <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/>; "How Many Muslims in NYC?," A Journey through NYC Religions (blog), July 13, 2015, <https://nycreligion.info/muslims-nyc-area/>; "Muslims in Metro New York (Part 1) – One Million Muslims," Global Gates (blog), February 22, 2016, <https://globalgates.info/resources-information/muslims-in-metro-new-york-part-1-one-million-muslims/>.
- ⁶ GetFoodNYC provided boxes containing prepared meals or grocery items for the equivalent of 9 meals per box. For consistency, we will simply refer to "meals". This program ran through October of 2021, but we only had access to data through September 2021.
- ⁷ These requirements aimed to limit the program to those facing food insecurity. The City and State issued stay-at-home orders lasting from March to June 2020 to reduce virus transmission, and during that period usage of the GetFoodNYC program may have included some who could not access food but previously had not been food insecure.
- ⁸ Senior centers and community-based organizations were tasked with enrolling clients in the GetFoodNYC program. As such, food-insecure individuals who had a relationship with a community provider had assistance enrolling in the program and likely enrolled at greater rates than food-insecure individuals who were not connected to such organizations.
- ⁹ Though kosher and halal meals were not available until April 2020 the total meals and the percentages of kosher and halal meals calculated over this time period include March 2020 data.
- ¹⁰ See Exhibits 4,5, 6, 8 and 9.
- ¹¹ About 5,300 meals, were either not associated with a specific ZIP code or were linked to a ZIP code outside of the five boroughs of New York City. Due to this negligible number of meals, this data was not excluded from this calculation.
- ¹² Intarasuwan, K. (2020, April 21) NYC Includes Kosher Meals in Free Food Program After Calls From Jewish Caucus. NBC New York. Retrieved November 10, 2021 from <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/nyc-to-include-kosher-meals-in-free-food-program-after-calls-from-jewish-council/2382938/>
- ¹³ Kirker, K., (2020, May 18) City Moves to Meet Need for Culturally Diverse Emergency Food. Gotham Gazette. Retrieved November 10, 2021 from <https://www.gothamgazette.com/city/9403-new-york-city-meet-need-for-culturally-diverse-emergency-food-halal-kosher-coronavirus>
- ¹⁴ Neighborhood Tabulation Areas, or NTAs, are aggregations of census tracts that are subsets of New York City's 55 Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs). Primarily due to these constraints, NTA boundaries and their associated names may not definitively represent neighborhoods.
- ¹⁵ Blau, R. (2020, August 25). City Food Delivery Changes Could Be Leaving Many Seniors Hungry. The City. Retrieved November 21, 2021 from <https://www.thecity.nyc/2020/8/25/21401772/city-food-delivery-changes-senior-citizens>
- ¹⁶ Todd, A. (2020, May 24). Snacks and "gourmet salads": The wide variety of meals offered by NYC's Food Program. Gothamist. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://gothamist.com/food/snacks-and-gourmet-salads-wide-variety-meals-offered-nycs-food-program>.
- ¹⁷ Moloney, S. (2021, January 21). Update: DSNY Addresses Food Complaints, Says Some May Not Be Linked to "Get Food NYC" Program. Norwood News. Retrieved November 12, 2021 from <https://www.norwoodnews.org/dsny-addresses-food-complaints-says-some-may-not-be-linked-to-get-food-nyc-program/>
- ¹⁸ UJA Federation of New York, Cohen, S., Ukeles, J., & Miller, R. (2012, June). Jewish Community Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011 Geographic Profile. <https://www.ujafedny.org/api/v2/assets/785690/>
- ¹⁹ Ibid



About Met Council

Met Council is America's largest Jewish charity dedicated to serving the needy. Met Council's ten different departments are staffed by experts who helped over 305,000 clients in 2020 and continuously advocate on behalf of all needy New Yorkers. Our holistic programs range from 100% affordable housing at 20 locations to our award-winning family violence program to comprehensive Holocaust survivor assistance to senior programming to crisis intervention to the largest free kosher food distribution program in the world. Our network of 101 food pantries, 20 affordable housing sites, and 15 JCCs provide services directly in neighborhoods across New York.

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