

LONG ISLAND

NYS comptroller: Food prices in region that includes Long Island increased by 25% since 2019



A shopper at Lidl n Center Moriches in 2020. Credit: Randee Daddona

By Robert Brodsky

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Food prices in the New York metropolitan region, including on Long Island, have spiked 25% since 2019 and more than 56% in the past decade, while low-income households are paying significantly more to fill their refrigerator and take their family out to eat than before the pandemic, according to a [report](#) released Wednesday by state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

The report found that food costs for downstate New Yorkers in 2022-2023 represented the fourth largest share of average household spending at \$11,288 or 12.5%, exceeding the national average of \$9,664, according to figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Households making less than \$15,000, meanwhile, spent almost 70% of their income on food, the data shows.

Statistics exclusively for Long Island were not available, DiNapoli's office said.

WHAT NEWSDAY FOUND

- **Food prices in the New York** metropolitan region, including on Long Island, spiked 25% since 2019 and more than 56% in the past decade, according to a report released Wednesday by state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.
- **Throughout the state**, 11.3% of households, or about 875,000 families, experienced food insecurity between 2020 and 2022, in part due to the expiration of pandemic-era federal assistance programs.
- **Food banks on Long Island** said they've seen a major uptick in individuals seeking assistance in recent years, while at the same time they are experiencing a reduction in funding after federal programs were cut by the USDA.

"Food prices rose sharply during the pandemic, putting more New Yorkers at risk of going hungry," DiNapoli said in a statement. "Now the implementation of tariffs and potential cuts to federal food and other support programs may exacerbate the problem. State and local efforts to promote access to high quality, affordable food are more important than ever to reduce food insecurity and ensure New York's families have enough to eat."

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Across the metropolitan area, which includes Long Island, food costs grew 56.2% between 2012-13 and 2022-23, exceeding the 46.4% increase nationally, in part due to higher labor costs, inflation and supply chain disruptions, the report found.

Meanwhile, the costs to eat out at restaurants, including fast food, and at vending machines, increased 43.6% over that same 10-year period, data shows.

Throughout the state, 11.3% of households, or about 875,000 families, experienced food insecurity — defined as being unable to afford food for one or more household members — between 2020 and 2022, in part due to the expiration of pandemic-era federal assistance programs, the report found. The Bronx had the highest percentage of city residents experiencing food insecurity at just over 20%, the data shows.

"Hunger among New Yorkers has reached its highest level in years, even higher than the during the worst of the COVID pandemic," said David Sandman, president and CEO of NYHealth, which released a [report](#) last month that found more than 2 million residents statewide are now threatened by food insufficiency, surpassing the earliest

days of the pandemic. "When people don't know where their next meal is coming from, they can't be healthy, meet their basic needs and their children can't learn on empty stomachs."

Paule Pachter, chief executive of Long Island Cares-The Harry Chapin Regional Food Bank, said Nassau and Suffolk counties are experiencing similar levels of food insecurity.

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From 2023-2024, Long Island Cares experienced a 30% increase — or an additional 65,000 Long Islanders — of individuals coming into its food banks, soup kitchens and pantries to seek assistance, Pachter said. Those numbers are in addition to the estimated 221,000 Long Islanders already experiencing food insecurity, he said.

The main reason, he said, "is the cost of nutritious foods like eggs, milk, lean proteins, the cost of chicken and so on," he said. "And given all the other expenses that families on Long Island have ... it's cutting in to people being able to purchase the food that they need."

The outlook, Pachter said, is unlikely to improve anytime soon.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is expected to cut about \$1 billion in funding this year for the Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program and the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement, which supplies food for students and food banks, respectively.

Locally, Long Island Cares had a 250,000-pound food allocation from the USDA [canceled without explanation](#) while Island Harvest, another food bank, said \$1.7 million in funding for a senior meal program had been "[frozen](#)" by the USDA.

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"The big picture is not very promising, and we haven't really experienced the impact that the proposed tariffs are going to have yet," Pachter said. "I'm very worried. And food banks across the country are very worried."



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