

Yours, Mine, and Hours:

An Analysis of the Community Food Connection Program



November 26, 2024

**New York City
Independent
Budget Office**

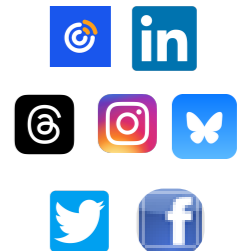


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Introduction

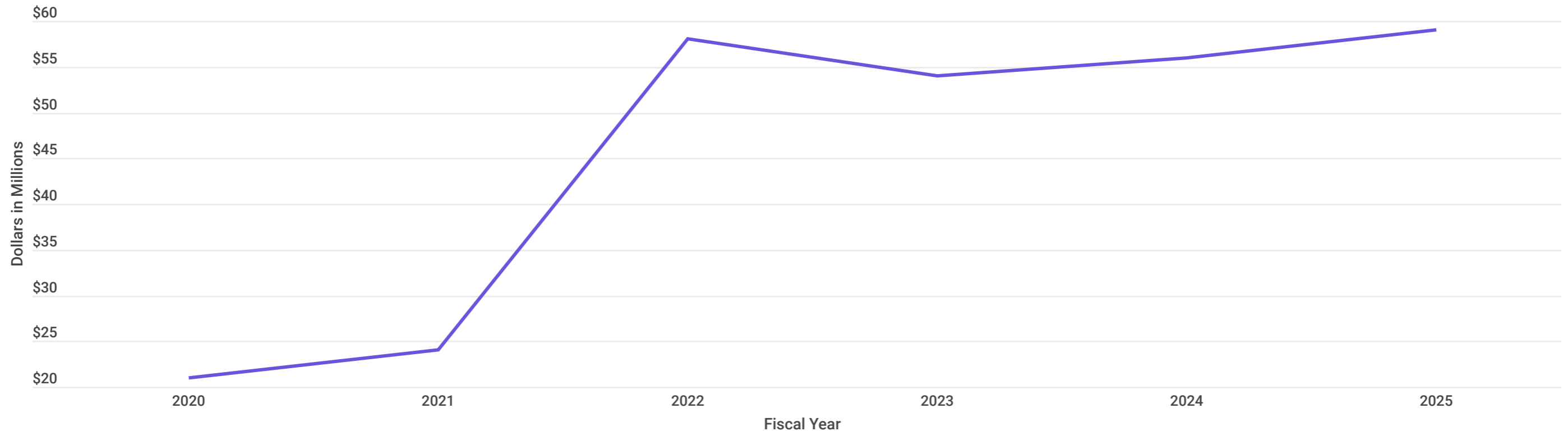
- At the request of the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute, IBO examined the Human Resources Administration's (HRA) Community Food Connection (CFC) program. IBO's analysis covers the program budget, the changes in utilization of Community Food Connection sites over time, the number of sites available to New Yorkers, and the number of hours these sites are open monthly.
- HRA's CFC program, formerly known as the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP), funds more than 500 food pantries and soup kitchens citywide. Through this program, organizations receive a credit allocation which can then be used to purchase goods from a vendor as frequently as needed.
- It is important to note that CFC funding is not representative of all funding for food pantries and soup kitchens, and sites that receive this type of funding might also receive funds from other sources, both public—through state and federal programs such as the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program and the Emergency Food and Shelter Program—and private.

Summary of Findings

- IBO's analysis of this program is based on the list of active sites that was published by HRA in August 2024 and all funding provided to the program, inclusive of city and federal dollars. HRA updates this list regularly and the numbers in this report may differ from the [current iteration](#) of the list.
- IBO found that there was a substantial infusion of federal stimulus funds in the program in 2022 after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and an increase in the number of sites the following year (all years refer to City fiscal years). Funding for the program has since remained around 2022 levels.
- IBO's analysis also revealed that there is variation in the number of sites by borough and the availability of sites—as measured by the number of hours that sites are open—does not seem to align with rates of food insecurity in the City, particularly in the Bronx.

Budget Changes Over Time

CFC Budget Increased Almost 200 Percent Between 2020 and 2022



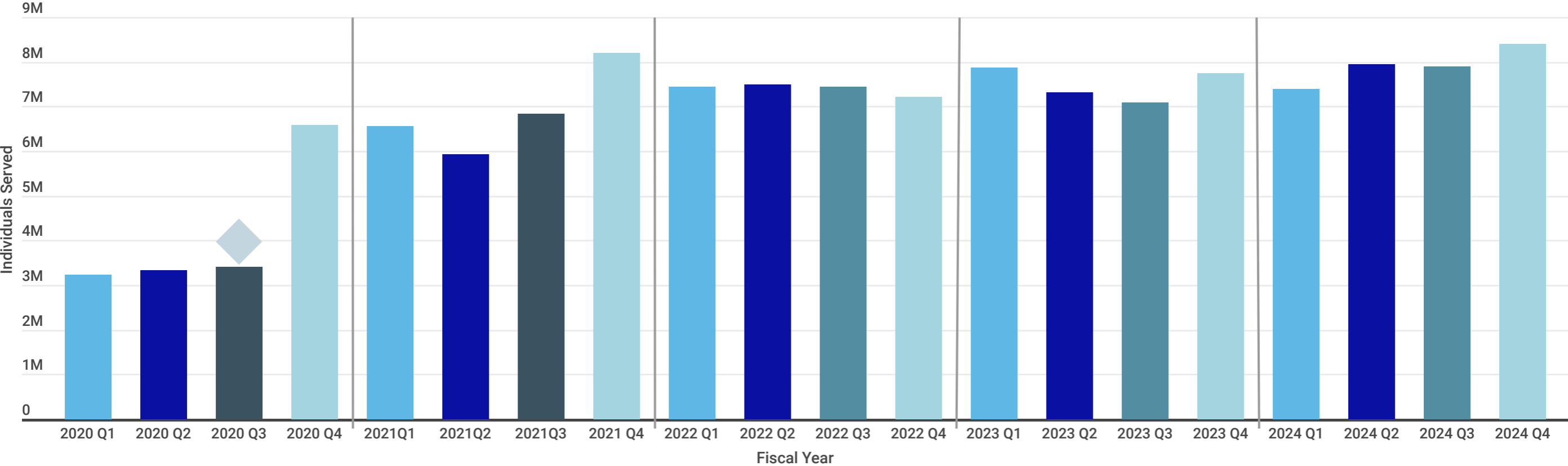
SOURCE: IBO analysis of Financial Management System data

- IBO analysis of the period from 2020 to 2025 (all years refer to City fiscal years) revealed that the CFC budget ranged from \$21 million in 2020 to \$58 million in 2022.
- There was a significant budget increase in 2022 where funding rose from \$23 million to \$58 million due to the introduction of federal pandemic relief funds through the American Rescue Plan Act. These funds were replaced with City funds in subsequent years.

CFC Pantries Now Serve More Than Twice as Many Individuals as in 2020

- The number of individuals served by CFC food pantries doubled at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, then increased further to more than 8 million in 2021.
- The number of individuals served has remained relatively stable since then, reaching a high of 8.4 million in the last quarter of 2024.

The Number of Individuals Served by Food Pantries Has Increased and Remained Elevated Since the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic



SOURCE: Human Resources Administration Community Food Connection [quarterly report](#).

NOTE: The count of individuals served is based on family size. A person may visit a pantry and pick up food for a family of three, and it would be recorded as three individuals served. Individuals may also visit a pantry multiple times in a reporting period, or visit multiple pantries in a reporting period, and thus may be counted multiple times in the data.

The Number of CFC-Funded Sites Varies Across Boroughs

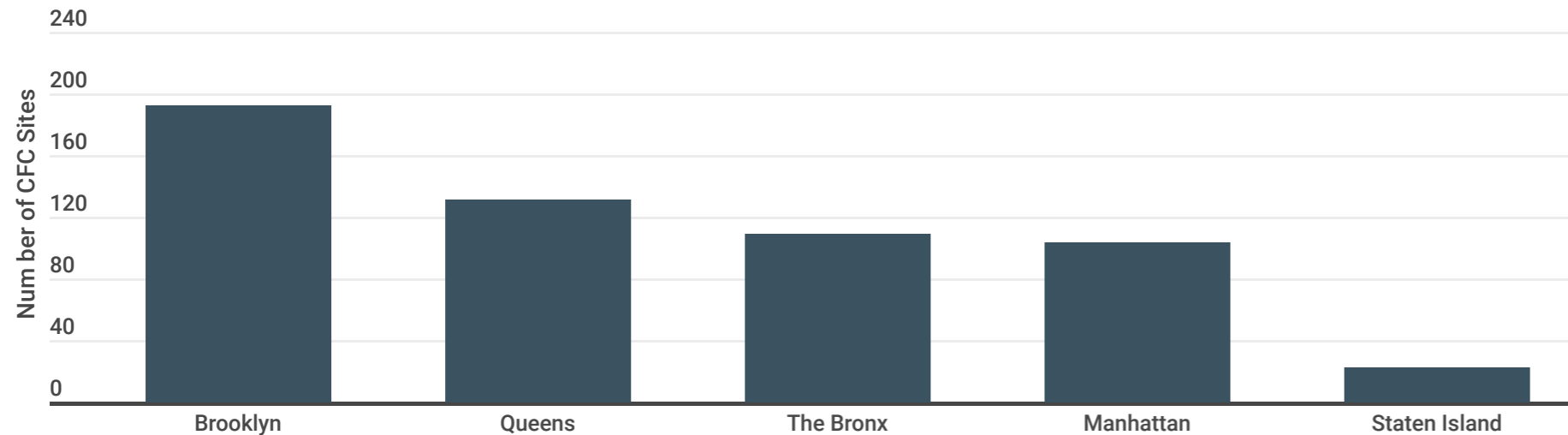
- The number of CFC sites remained relatively stable from the beginning of 2020 through the first quarter of 2023. The largest increase in the number of sites between quarters occurred between the first two quarters of 2023, where the total number of sites increased from 587 to 630.
- Overall, between the beginning of 2020 through August 2024, there was a 25% increase in the number of CFC sites as the number of sites grew from 563 to 704.
- In August 2024, HRA published a list of 557 active CFC food pantries and soup kitchens. It should be noted that the published list is not inclusive of some sites. For example, programs at colleges or other restricted locations, sites that serve clients on probation, or sites that serve clients who are survivors of domestic violence are not included. Because these sites are not open to the general public, they were not included in the analysis.
- An analysis of these site locations shows that Brooklyn has the most sites (192) while Staten Island has the fewest (22).
- Brooklyn has 83 more sites than the Bronx, but when population is factored in, Brooklyn and the Bronx both have 7 sites per 100,000 people.
- Of the 477 listed food pantries, 68 carried specific designations: 28 were certified kosher, 20 were certified halal, 11 were mobile, 6 were for HIV & AIDS clients, and 3 were for Veterans.
- Of the 80 listed soup kitchens, just 6 carried specific designations: 3 were certified kosher and 3 were mobile.

Borough	Number of CFC Sites	Population (2020)	Number of Sites per 100,000 People
Brooklyn	192	2,736,074	7
Bronx	109	1,472,654	7
Manhattan	103	1,694,251	6
Queens	131	2,405,464	5
Staten Island	22	495,747	4

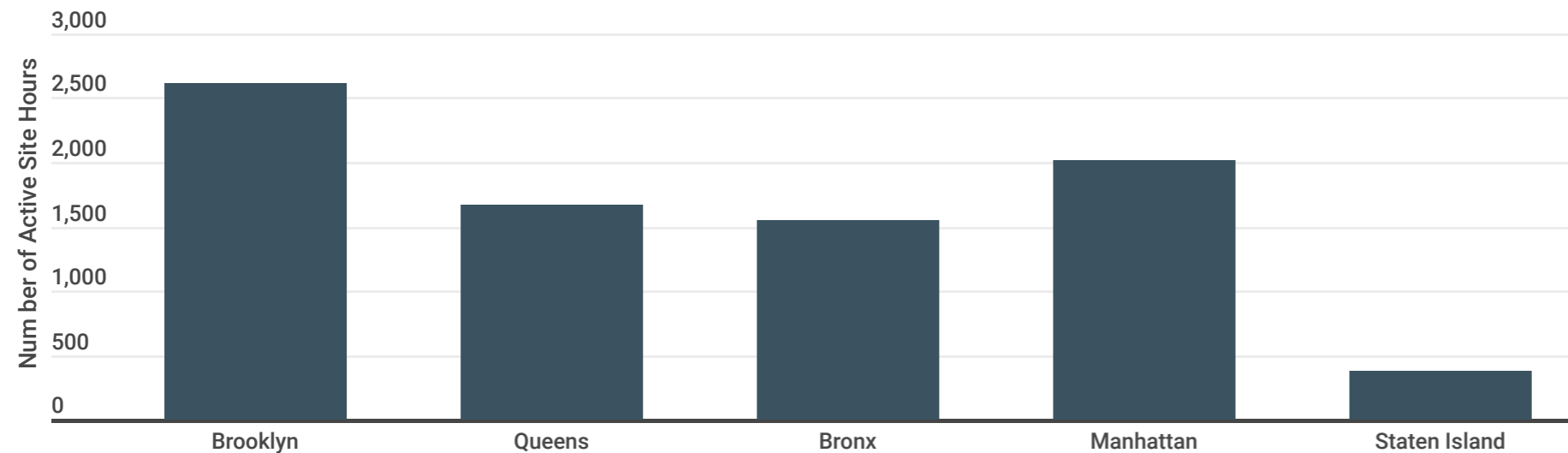
SOURCES: IBO analysis of Human Resources Administration Community Food Connection [active sites list](#); U.S. Census Bureau

Comparing Number of Sites and Site Hours

In August 2024 Brooklyn Had the Highest Number Of CFC Sites While Staten Island Had the Lowest



Having More Sites Does Not Equate to Having More Active Site Hours



SOURCE: IBO analysis of Human Resources Administration Community Food Connection [active sites list](#)

- Using the HRA active sites list, IBO calculated the cumulative hours that all CFC sites are open per borough as of August 2024.
- The findings show that Brooklyn, with the most sites, also has the most active hours available to clients. Similarly, Staten Island, with the least sites, also has the lowest number of active hours available.
- However, IBO found that although Manhattan has the second lowest number of sites (103), it has the second highest number of active site hours. This suggests that the sites in Manhattan are open for more days and/or for longer hours than the sites in the Bronx or Queens.

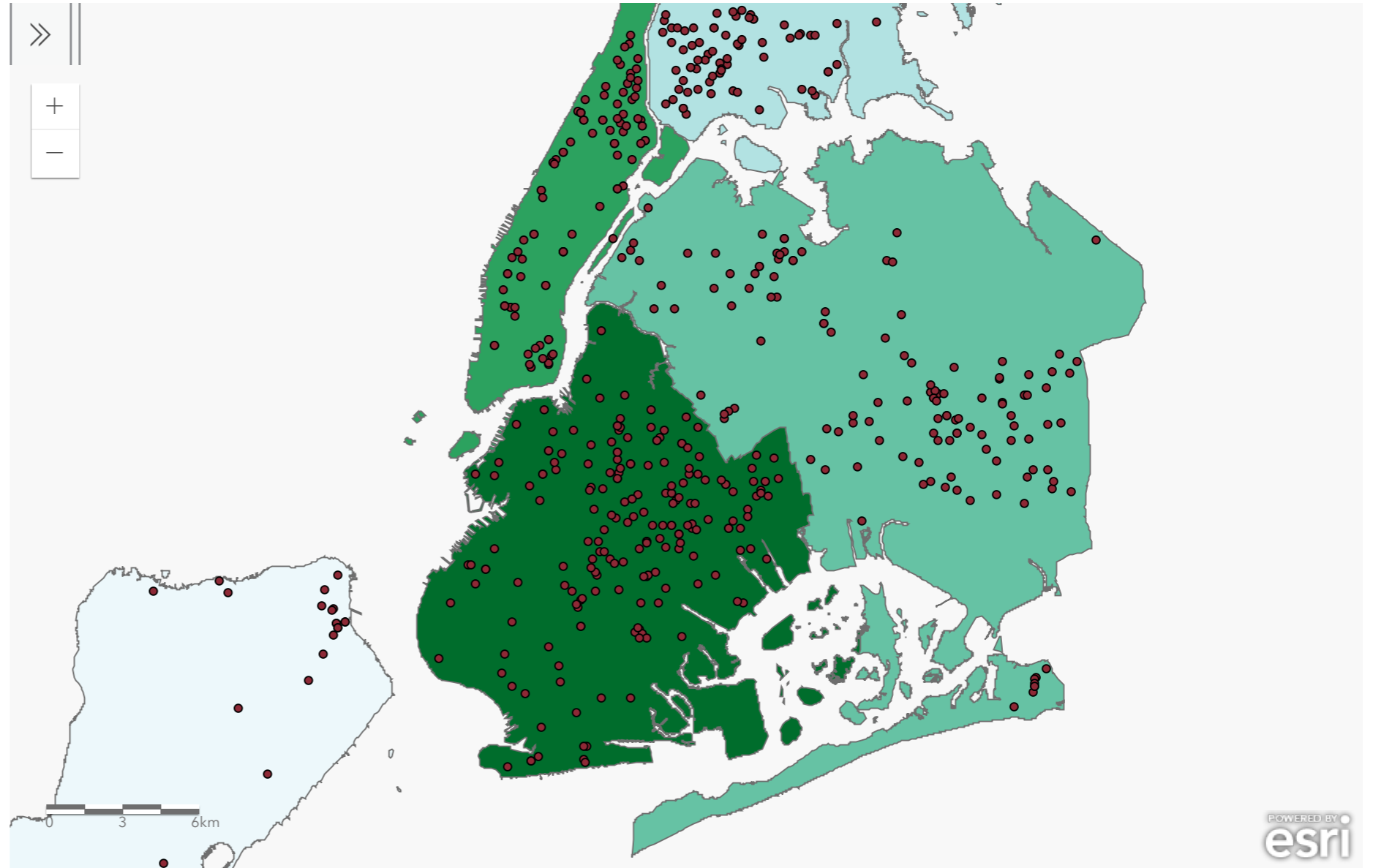
Comparing Number of Sites and Site Hours, *continued*

- As a comparison of need and service availability, Bronx has the highest food insecurity rate of the boroughs, but has the second lowest number of active site hours.

On the map, click on each borough to see the cumulative hours per month that all sites are open, or click on a site to see how many hours per month it is open.

Borough	Food Insecurity Rate (2022)	Number of Active Site Hours
Bronx	20.2%	1,547
Brooklyn	15.2%	2,607
Manhattan	14.9%	2,015
Queens	12.5%	1,666
Staten Island	11.5%	370

SOURCE: Dewey, A., Harris, V., Hake, M., & Engelhard, E. (2024). Map the Meal Gap 2024: An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2022. Feeding America.



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Conclusion

- There has been sustained investment in the Community Food Connection program since 2022, though the program budget has not been baselined at current levels.
- CFC-funded food pantries served 8.4 million individuals in the last quarter of fiscal year 2024. Considering that the total New York City population is nearing 9 million, and approximately 1.3 million experience food insecurity, the data suggest that a portion of New Yorkers rely on food pantries and soup kitchens for multiple meals.
- The Bronx has the highest food insecurity rate and has the second lowest number of active site hours, despite its tie with Brooklyn for the highest number of sites per 100,000 people. While people can and do visit CFC pantries outside of their home borough, there is a mismatch between where people live, where there is need, and where the pantries are located and open the longest.