

New York City Voters Support Municipal Grocery Stores

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The rising cost of groceries has driven nearly 50 million people in the United States to skip meals, eat less, and trade down to lower quality items or to use food banks to fill their pantry gaps, and New York City is no exception. With more households going hungry and food supply chains destabilized by climate-related disasters from drought to increasing food-borne illnesses, building diverse, resilient, and high quality food systems that brings down costs for households represents climate action that immediately relieves the everyday burden of getting food on the table.

Municipal grocery stores present a huge opportunity to bring down grocery bills for working class households while also subsidizing and bolstering high quality, stable, and affordable food supply chains. This idea is already popular in New York City. New polling from Climate and Community Institute and Data for Progress shows that **two-thirds of New Yorkers polled (66%) support the creation of municipal grocery stores in New York City, including a strong majority of Democrats (72%), as well as a majority of Independents (64%) and Republicans (54%).**

The environmental benefits of establishing municipal grocery stores can be amplified by implementing values-based procurement, which adheres to guidelines for worker dignity and safety, animal welfare, community economic benefit and local sourcing, impacts to the environment, and health and nutrition, including emphasizing culturally appropriate, well-balanced diets.

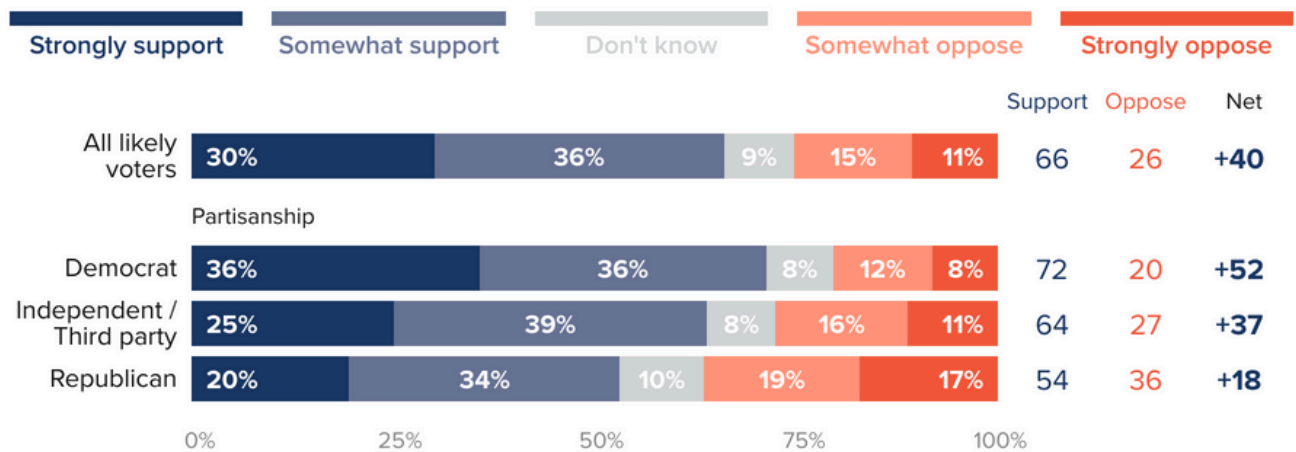
To better understand how the voters in New York City view recent proposals to create a city-level pilot network of municipal grocery stores, Climate and Community Institute partnered with Data for Progress to conduct a representative survey to gauge public opinion. The survey of 854 likely voters in New York City used web panel data. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, geography, and recalled presidential vote. The survey was conducted from March 17 to 24, 2025.

Respondents overwhelmingly support policies to create municipal grocery stores. Two-thirds of respondents support the proposed development of municipal grocery stores (66%), including a strong majority of Democrats (72%), as well as a majority of Independents (64%) and Republicans (54%).

Two-Thirds of New York City Voters Support Creating Municipal Grocery Stores

Some lawmakers have proposed creating municipal grocery stores in New York City to bring down the cost of groceries. These stores would be fully owned by the city government rather than a private entity or corporation.

Do you support or oppose this proposal?



March 17–24, 2025 survey of 854 New York City likely voters

Climate & Community INSTITUTE DATA FOR PROGRESS

This support is consistent: in a follow-up question where the survey provided more context via arguments for and against municipal grocery stores, support remained at 63%. The main reason voters cite for supporting this proposal is how much they would save on groceries from shopping at a municipal grocery store compared to shopping at a privately owned one. When New Yorkers are presented with both arguments for and against municipal grocery stores and asked to pick the one closest to their view, close to a two-thirds majority (63%) say the city government should create municipal grocery stores, since they will offer lower grocery prices for low- to middle-income residents, while prioritizing these stores in neighborhoods that lack healthy food options and grocery options in general. **85% of New Yorkers are paying more for groceries and food now** compared to last year and **91% of New Yorkers are concerned about how inflation impacts how much they pay to get food on the table.**

Among Other Products, Voters Are Concerned About the Impacts of Inflation on Groceries and Food in the Next Year

For each of the following products, please say how concerned, if at all, you are about inflation impacting how much you pay for it in the next year:

Survey respondents who selected: *Very concerned or Somewhat concerned*

	All likely voters	Democrat	Independent / Third party	Republican
Groceries and food	91%	93%	94%	82%
Housing costs, such as rent or mortgage payments	80%	82%	80%	74%
Utility bills, such as water or electricity bills	79%	76%	87%	79%
Health care or health insurance	78%	79%	82%	72%
Household goods, such as appliances or furniture	73%	73%	80%	68%
Transit, such as tolls or subway fares	71%	71%	79%	63%
Car costs, including insurance and gas	57%	55%	59%	59%

March 17–24, 2025 survey of 854 New York City likely voters



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New York City Voters Report Experiencing Higher Prices for Various Products in the Past Year, Including for Groceries and Food

In the last year, have you experienced a change in prices for the following products? That is, are you paying more, about the same, or less?

Survey respondents who selected: *I am paying more*

	All likely voters	Democrat	Independent / Third party	Republican
Groceries and food	85%	85%	89%	80%
Utility bills, such as water or electricity bills	65%	62%	69%	69%
Housing costs, such as rent or mortgage payments	53%	53%	58%	50%
Household goods, such as appliances or furniture	53%	49%	58%	61%
Transit, such as tolls or subway fares	51%	50%	50%	51%
Car costs, including insurance and gas	40%	37%	35%	51%
Health care or health insurance	39%	38%	40%	44%

March 17–24, 2025 survey of 854 New York City likely voters



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Four out of five households in New York report finding it harder to afford groceries over the last year. And food-related health care expenses top \$1.3 trillion annually, with the vast majority of food sold in grocery stores linked to diabetes, cancer, heart disease, air, soil and water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. Big food companies maintain their market dominance through deep-pocketed advertising and promotions that limit the ability of more sustainable products to reach consumers, especially in low-income communities. This is what food activists refer to as “food apartheid,” where there are two food systems with huge income and racial disparities. Food access therefore overlaps considerably with the needs of communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis, as our food supply exacerbates racial, economic, and quality of life/health disparities while creating enormous wealth for a small number of mega-corporations. These issues intersect with other problems communities face in accessing healthy, affordable food, like the fact that neighborhoods on the frontlines of the climate crisis are also often food deserts, making racial, economic, and health disparities worse.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Building diverse, resilient and high quality food supply chains is a critical strategy to repair the environment, empower workers, address racial and economic injustice and ensure all people have access to good, healthy food.

A new proposal for New York City would establish a pilot program of municipal grocery stores to provide accessible, affordable groceries to New Yorkers—an alternative to price gouging that can help ensure the city has more control over food distribution while generating choice and economic power for communities. This pilot program of five grocery stores across boroughs would buy and sell wholesale and be exempt from property tax or rent to reduce costs. The resources needed to establish this program are infrastructure within the city's control, and include recouped funds from the City FRESH program as well as new City revenue. Grocery store planning and rollout would be driven by communities, incorporating the food preferences of people in the neighborhood.

The concept is not only popular; it is imminently feasible. In fact, publicly owned grocery stores are quite common and already exist at scale—in the US military. Every branch of the military has its own exchange system that provides goods and services for enlistees, paid for by the public. These include groceries/commissaries, department stores, gas stations and convenience stores, and can also include ancillary services like barbers, laundries and lawn and garden shops. The exchanges provide tax-free shopping and discount goods and

services. Exchanges also keep their costs down by operating as cost (not profit) centers with a two to three percent markup, and budgeting labor and administrative expenses, rent/occupancy and utility costs centrally and not through each operating unit. Commissary prices are 25-30% lower than typical retail prices, saving military families and veterans over \$1.6 billion in 2023. It would not be too much of a stretch to municipalize this model, especially if there were a large scale, committed effort to build multiple locations quickly and leverage some of the other best practices in the grocery industry, such as the efficient and low cost warehouse format of Costco or the limited assortment and high volumes of discounters such as Aldi. Leveraging these operational practices alongside the PX commissary model could make municipal grocery stores the cheapest option in the city. And public grocers could also include free delivery, further reducing food insecurity by bringing good food to anyone's doorstep, without the high surcharges of delivery apps.

Overall, this polling demonstrates widespread support for a municipal grocery program that would bring down the cost of groceries for New Yorkers. The most important benefit for New Yorkers of having a municipal grocery store open near them is making groceries more affordable compared to a privately owned grocery store (48%). Other benefits tested are only most important to about 10% of the electorate each, underscoring the salience of affordability as a concern. Finally, when New Yorkers are presented with both arguments for and against municipal grocery stores and asked to pick the one closest to their view, close to a two-thirds majority (63%) say the city government should create municipal grocery stores, since they will offer lower grocery prices for low- to middle-income residents, while prioritizing these stores in neighborhoods that lack healthy food options and grocery stores in general. A strong majority of Democrats (70%), as well as a majority of Independents (53%) and Republicans (55%), agree with this sentiment.

Public sector grocery stores could therefore be a part of an expansive, holistic tool kit to repair and reorganize New York City's food supply into one based on solidarity and sustainability that provides plenty for everyone. As food prices climb and government officials claim people in the US no longer need cheap consumer goods, there couldn't be a better time for public sector grocery stores.

Errol Schweizer is a grocery industry expert who has worked almost every retail and supply chain job, from stock clerk to National VP of Grocery.

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Appendix

Survey methodology

From March 17 to 24, 2025, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 854 likely voters in New York City using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, geography, and recalled presidential vote. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error associated with the sample size is ± 3 percentage points. Results for subgroups of the sample are subject to increased margins of error. Partisanship reflected in tabulations is based on self-identified party affiliation, not partisan registration. For more information please visit dataforprogress.org/our-methodology. N=854 unless otherwise specified. Some values may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Survey questions

Landscape

In the last year, have you experienced a change in prices for the following products? That is, are you paying more, about the same, or less?

– Groceries or food

Response	Total	D	I	R
I am paying more	85%	85%	89%	80%
I am paying about the same	11	11	9	16
I am paying less	2	3	1	2
Does not apply to me	1	1	1	1
Don't know	1	1	0	2

In the last year, have you experienced a change in prices for the following products? That is, are you paying more, about the same, or less?

– Utility bills, such as water or electricity

Response	Total	D	I	R
I am paying more	65%	62%	69%	69%
I am paying about the same	21	22	20	19
I am paying less	2	1	1	3
Does not apply to me	11	14	9	7
Don't know	2	2	1	2

In the last year, have you experienced a change in prices for the following products? That is, are you paying more, about the same, or less?

– Car costs, including insurance and gas

Response	Total	D	I	R
I am paying more	40%	37%	35%	51%
I am paying about the same	16	16	15	17
I am paying less	2	2	1	4
Does not apply to me	40	43	46	23
Don't know	3	2	3	4

In the last year, have you experienced a change in prices for the following products? That is, are you paying more, about the same, or less?

– Housing costs, such as rent or mortgage

Response	Total	D	I	R
I am paying more	53%	53%	58%	50%
I am paying about the same	34	36	25	36
I am paying less	2	2	3	3
Does not apply to me	8	6	10	9
Don't know	3	2	5	1

In the last year, have you experienced a change in prices for the following products? That is, are you paying more, about the same, or less?

– Household goods, such as appliances or furniture

Response	Total	D	I	R
I am paying more	53%	49%	58%	61%
I am paying about the same	25	28	20	20
I am paying less	3	4	1	2
Does not apply to me	14	14	15	12
Don't know	5	5	6	5

In the last year, have you experienced a change in prices for the following products? That is, are you paying more, about the same, or less?

– Health care or health insurance

Response	Total	D	I	R
I am paying more	39%	38%	40%	44%
I am paying about the same	36	39	28	35
I am paying less	3	2	1	6
Does not apply to me	15	15	18	11
Don't know	7	6	12	5

In the last year, have you experienced a change in prices for the following products? That is, are you paying more, about the same, or less?

– Transit, such as tolls or subway fares

Response	Total	D	I	R
I am paying more	51%	50%	50%	51%
I am paying about the same	32	32	34	31
I am paying less	4	4	2	4
Does not apply to me	11	11	12	11
Don't know	3	3	2	2

For each of the following products, please say how concerned, if at all, you are about inflation impacting how much you pay for it in the next year:

– Groceries and food

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very concerned	71%	73%	72%	65%
Somewhat concerned	20	20	22	17
Only a little concerned	5	4	4	9
Not concerned at all	3	2	2	6
Does not apply to me	1	1	0	2
CONCERNED (TOTAL)	91%	93%	94%	82%
NOT CONCERNED (TOTAL)	8	6	6	15
CONCERNED (NET)	+83	+87	+88	+67

For each of the following products, please say how concerned, if at all, you are about inflation impacting how much you pay for it in the next year:

– Utility bills, such as water or electricity bills

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very concerned	54%	52%	60%	55%
Somewhat concerned	25	24	27	24
Only a little concerned	7	8	5	8
Not concerned at all	6	6	4	8
Does not apply to me	8	11	4	5
CONCERNED (TOTAL)	79%	76%	87%	79%
NOT CONCERNED (TOTAL)	13	14	9	16
CONCERNED (NET)	+66	+62	+78	+63

For each of the following products, please say how concerned, if at all, you are about inflation impacting how much you pay for it in the next year:

– Car costs, including insurance and gas

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very concerned	39%	37%	43%	40%
Somewhat concerned	18	18	16	19
Only a little concerned	7	8	4	10
Not concerned at all	5	4	3	9
Does not apply to me	31	33	35	21
CONCERNED (TOTAL)	57%	55%	59%	59%
NOT CONCERNED (TOTAL)	12	12	7	19
CONCERNED (NET)	+45	+43	+52	+40

For each of the following products, please say how concerned, if at all, you are about inflation impacting how much you pay for it in the next year:

– Housing costs, such as rent or mortgage

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very concerned	56%	56%	62%	48%
Somewhat concerned	24	26	18	26
Only a little concerned	9	8	8	11
Not concerned at all	5	4	3	8
Does not apply to me	6	5	8	7
CONCERNED (TOTAL)	80%	82%	80%	74%
NOT CONCERNED (TOTAL)	14	12	11	19
CONCERNED (NET)	+66	+70	+69	+55

For each of the following products, please say how concerned, if at all, you are about inflation impacting how much you pay for it in the next year:

– Household goods, such as appliances or furniture

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very concerned	42%	42%	46%	39%
Somewhat concerned	31	31	34	29
Only a little concerned	12	12	8	16
Not concerned at all	7	8	5	10
Does not apply to me	8	8	7	7
CONCERNED (TOTAL)	73%	73%	80%	68%
NOT CONCERNED (TOTAL)	19	20	13	26
CONCERNED (NET)	+54	+53	+67	+42

For each of the following products, please say how concerned, if at all, you are about inflation impacting how much you pay for it in the next year:

– Health care or health insurance

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very concerned	55%	57%	61%	45%
Somewhat concerned	23	22	21	27
Only a little concerned	9	10	3	13
Not concerned at all	6	4	6	11
Does not apply to me	7	7	10	4
CONCERNED (TOTAL)	78%	79%	82%	72%
NOT CONCERNED (TOTAL)	15	14	9	24
CONCERNED (NET)	+63	+65	+73	+48

For each of the following products, please say how concerned, if at all, you are about inflation impacting how much you pay for it in the next year:

– Transit, such as tolls or subway fares

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very concerned	42%	45%	45%	31%
Somewhat concerned	29	26	34	32
Only a little concerned	12	13	8	15
Not concerned at all	9	10	7	8
Does not apply to me	7	5	7	13
CONCERNED (TOTAL)	71%	71%	79%	63%
NOT CONCERNED (TOTAL)	21	23	15	23
CONCERNED (NET)	+50	+48	+64	+40

Would you consider the quality and cost of food products at the grocery store you visit most often to be:

Response	Total	D	I	R
A top priority to address	58%	59%	62%	49%
An important issue, but not as urgent as other issues	37	36	32	43
Not necessary to address at all	3	3	2	7
Don't know	2	2	4	1

Some lawmakers have proposed creating municipal grocery stores in New York City to bring down the cost of groceries. These stores would be fully owned by the city government rather than a private entity or corporation.

Do you support or oppose this proposal?

Response	Total	D	I	R
Strongly support	30%	36%	25%	20%
Somewhat support	36	36	39	34
Somewhat oppose	15	12	16	19
Strongly oppose	11	8	11	17
Don't know	9	8	8	10
SUPPORT (TOTAL)	66%	72%	64%	54%
OPPOSE (TOTAL)	26	20	27	36
SUPPORT (NET)	+40	+52	+37	+18

Some lawmakers have proposed creating municipal grocery stores in New York City to bring down the cost of groceries. These stores would be fully owned by the city government rather than a private entity or corporation.

Supporters of municipal grocery stores say this proposal would put people over profit by reducing food costs for low to middle-income households and providing residents with easy access to fresh and healthy food options, especially for those who currently live in neighborhoods where access to these options is limited.

Opponents of municipal grocery stores say this proposal would put too much of a financial strain on the city's budget and would force the city government to de-prioritize addressing other more important issues, including sanitation and policing. They say the city has other, more important crises to deal with than the cost of groceries.

Knowing what you know now, do you support or oppose this proposal?

When thinking about your shopping habits, how likely, if at all, would be to shop at a municipal grocery store if one were open in your area and the following were true?

- Saved you money on groceries

Response	Total	D	I	R
Strongly support	28%	34%	21%	17%
Somewhat support	35	34	33	38
Somewhat oppose	16	16	17	16
Strongly oppose	11	7	12	22
Don't know	10	8	17	7
SUPPORT (TOTAL)	63%	68%	54%	55%
OPPOSE (TOTAL)	27	23	29	38
SUPPORT (NET)	+36	+45	+25	+17

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	53%	58%	56%	39%
Somewhat likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	23	22	21	28
Only a little likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	11	10	12	13
Not likely at all to shop at a municipal grocery store	7	6	7	12
Wouldn't have an impact on my shopping habits	5	5	4	8
LIKELY (TOTAL)	76%	80%	77%	67%
NOT LIKELY (TOTAL)	18	16	19	25
LIKELY (NET)	+58	+64	+58	+42

When thinking about your shopping habits, how likely, if at all, would you be to shop at a municipal grocery store if one were to open in your area and the following were true?

– A convenient walk or transit ride from where you currently live

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	44%	49%	42%	34%
Somewhat likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	25	25	26	25
Only a little likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	14	13	11	18
Not likely at all to shop at a municipal grocery store	8	7	8	12
Wouldn't have an impact on my shopping habits	9	6	12	12
LIKELY (TOTAL)	69%	74%	68%	59%
NOT LIKELY (TOTAL)	22	20	19	30
LIKELY (NET)	+47	+54	+49	+29

When thinking about your shopping habits, how likely, if at all, would be be to shop at a municipal grocery store if one were open in your area and the following were true?

– Sold the same products as you purchase at a privately owned grocery store

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	46%	53%	40%	32%
Somewhat likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	27	25	29	28
Only a little likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	12	10	13	17
Not likely at all to shop at a municipal grocery store	8	7	9	13
Wouldn't have an impact on my shopping habits	7	5	9	10
LIKELY (TOTAL)	73%	78%	69%	60%
NOT LIKELY (TOTAL)	20	17	22	30
LIKELY (NET)	+53	+61	+47	+30

When thinking about your shopping habits, how likely, if at all, would be be to shop at a municipal grocery store if one were open in your area and the following were true?

– Partnered with local businesses in your area to sell their products

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	40%	46%	36%	28%
Somewhat likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	30	30	31	28
Only a little likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	12	11	8	17
Not likely at all to shop at a municipal grocery store	8	5	12	13
Wouldn't have an impact on my shopping habits	11	9	13	14
LIKELY (TOTAL)	70%	76%	67%	56%
NOT LIKELY (TOTAL)	20	16	20	30
LIKELY (NET)	+50	+60	+47	+26

When thinking about your shopping habits, how likely, if at all, would be be to shop at a municipal grocery store if one were open in your area and the following were true?

– Adopted climate-sustainable business practices

Response	Total	D	I	R
Very likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	34%	41%	31%	18%
Somewhat likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	27	28	21	29
Only a little likely to shop at a municipal grocery store	13	13	14	15
Not likely at all to shop at a municipal grocery store	9	6	12	16
Wouldn't have an impact on my shopping habits	17	12	23	22
LIKELY (TOTAL)	61%	69%	52%	47%
NOT LIKELY (TOTAL)	22	19	26	31
LIKELY (NET)	+39	+50	+26	+16

Below are some potential benefits of having a municipal grocery store in your community.

Of the following, which do you think is the most important benefit of having a municipal grocery store open near you?

Response	Total	D	I	R
Making groceries more affordable	48%	48%	48%	48%
Improving food quality and health outcomes for residents in my community	11	11	11	8
Providing access to healthy food options in underserved areas	9	10	8	7
Creating competition for privately owned grocery stores and helping reduce grocery store monopolies	9	9	9	10
Supporting the local economy in my neighborhood by creating jobs and improving wages	9	8	10	10
Stabilizing access to food products during certain crises, including climate disasters or economic downturns	7	9	5	7
Don't know	7	5	10	10