



Senior Hunger Fact Sheet

February 2017

More than 5 million senior citizens age 60 and older struggle hunger. In the next two decades, the number of seniors is projected to significantly increase and consequently, so is the number of seniors facing hunger.

Seniors face a number of unique medical and mobility challenges that put them at a greater risk of hunger. Many are forced to make the tough choice between buying food and medicine, and others struggle to access food without reliable transportation. Below are a series of facts about senior hunger and the seniors Feeding America serves.

FOOD INSECURITY AMONG SENIORS

- Feeding America serves 7 million seniors age 60 and older each year.
- Additionally, Feeding America serves nearly 6 million “older adults” ages 50-59 each year.
- Elderly households are much less likely to receive help through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) than non-elderly households, even when expected benefits are roughly the same.¹
- In 2014, 5.7 million Americans over the age of 60 were food insecure. This constitutes 9% of all seniors.²
- In 2015, 2.9 million (8%) households with seniors age 65 and older experienced food insecurity.³
- The number of food-insecure seniors is projected to increase by 50 percent when the youngest of the Baby Boomer Generation reaches age 60 in 2025.⁴
- It can be harder for seniors to protect themselves from hunger than it is for the general population. For example, one study found that food-insecure seniors sometimes had enough money to purchase food but did not have the resources to access or prepare food due to lack of transportation, functional limitations or health problems.⁵





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HEALTH AND HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION OF PEOPLE FEEDING AMERICA SERVES

- More than 33% of households Feeding America serves have at least one member who is 60 or older.⁶
- Food-insecure seniors are at increased risk for chronic health conditions, even when controlling for other factors such as income:⁷
 - 60% are more likely to experience depression
 - 53% are more likely to report a heart attack
 - 52% are more likely to develop asthma
 - 40% are more likely to report an experience of congestive heart failure.
- Two out of five (41%) households we serve with an adult age 50 and older have at least one member with diabetes, and more than two-thirds (77%) of the households we serve with an older adult have at least one member who has high blood pressure. These rates increase with age.⁸
- Thirty percent of households Feeding America serves with at least one senior report having a member who has served in the U.S. military. This number is slightly lower (approximately 27%) when including households with a member(s) age 50 and older.⁹

FEEDING AMERICA SENIOR MEAL PROGRAMS

- Twelve percent of meal programs, such as home-delivered meal programs, and 7% of grocery programs, such as senior brown bag programs, are targeted for seniors.

POVERTY AMONG SENIORS

- In 2015, 9% of seniors (4.2 million older adults age 65 and older) lived below the poverty line.¹⁰
- In 2015, under the Supplemental Poverty Measure, seniors make up 14% of people in poverty as compared with 10% under the official measure.¹¹
- In 2015, under the Supplemental Poverty Measure, medical out-of-pocket expenses (MOOP) increase the poverty rate among seniors (8% excluding MOOP, 14% including).¹²



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APPENDIX

- 1) Feeding America, *Baby Boomers and Beyond: Facing Hunger after Fifty*. July 2015.
- 2) Ziliak, J.P. & Gundersen, C. (2016) *The State of Senior Hunger in America 2014: An Annual Report, Supplement*. National Foundation to End Senior Hunger (NFESH).
- 3) Coleman-Jensen, A., Rabbitt, M. P., Gregory, C., & Singh, A. (2016). [Household Food Security in the United States in 2015, Table 2](#). USDA ERS.
- 4) Ziliak, J. & Gunderson, C. (2009, September). Senior Hunger in the United States: Differences across states and rural and urban areas. *University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research Special Reports*. <http://www.mowaa.org/document.doc?id=193>
- 5) Wolfe WS, Frongillo EA, Valois P. (2003). *Understanding the experience of food insecurity by elders suggests ways to improve its measurement*. J. Nutr. 133:2762-2769, 2003.
- 6) Feeding America, *Hunger in America 2014*, National Report. August 2014.
- 7) Feeding America and National Foundation to End Senior Hunger (NFESH). (2014, March). *Spotlight on Senior Health Adverse Health Outcomes of Food Insecure Older Americans*.
- 8) Feeding America, *Hunger in America 2014*, National Report. August 2014.
- 9) Feeding America, *Hunger in America 2014*, National Report. August 2014.
- 10) Wolfe WS, Frongillo EA, Valois P. (2003). *Understanding the experience of food insecurity by elders suggests ways to improve its measurement*. J. Nutr. 133:2762-2769, 2003.
- 11) [The Research Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2015](#). (2016). Table 5A. U.S. Census Bureau.
- 12) Ibid.