Senior Hunger in the United States

As of 2017, 5.5 million seniors age 60 and older in the U.S. experience food insecurity. As the senior population grows, so will the challenge of ensuring older adults have access to enough nutritious food. Economic constraints lead some seniors to eat less or skip meals. Food insecurity negatively impacts health and complicates seniors’ ability to maintain good health while aging. While many programs exist to support seniors, more must be done to address senior food insecurity in the U.S.

**Food insecurity means** having limited access to enough food due to a lack of money. Food insecurity is strongly associated with income, but it is not limited to people living in poverty.*

* A single person living in poverty earns under $12,140/year or $1,012/month.

**The size of the senior population is growing...**

- **5.5 MILLION** seniors are food insecure as of 2017.
  - That’s about 1 in 12 seniors.
- **104M** total seniors in 2050
- **70.5M** total seniors in 2017
- **44M** total seniors in 2007
- **2.3M** seniors were food insecure.
- **5.5M** seniors were food insecure.

...and the number of food-insecure seniors will likely increase, too.

- **8M** At the current rate, the number of food-insecure seniors may grow to more than 8 million.

**Seniors face tradeoffs**

Many low-income seniors face spending trade-offs that can lead to and worsen food insecurity.

**1 in 5** seniors work at least part-time.

**Some seniors struggle with low fixed incomes.**

**Other seniors stay employed to meet basic needs, due to:**

- **LIFE EXPECTANCY**
- **SAVINGS**
- **HEALTHCARE COSTS**

**AVERAGE MONTHLY SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT**

- **$1,461**

**UTILITIES**

**HOUSING**

**TRANSPORTATION**

**HEALTH COSTS**

The senior food insecurity rate has fallen in recent years but remains above pre-recession levels.

**ABOUT SENIOR FOOD INSECURITY**

**5.5M** seniors were food insecure.

**2.3M** seniors were food insecure.

**1 in 5** seniors work at least part-time.

**1 in 12** seniors.
Disability & disease decrease capacity for stable employment and increase healthcare costs.

Poorer nutrition increases risk for disease and challenges of disease management.

Food-insecure seniors are more likely to have chronic health conditions.

**FOOD-INECURE SENIORS ARE:**
- **78%** more likely to experience depression
- **55%** more likely to experience asthma
- **40%** more likely to experience chest pain
- **21%** more likely to experience limitations in activity
- **10%** more likely to experience high blood pressure

CONCLUSION

Food security is important for individuals of every age. For seniors, proper nutrition can be especially critical, yet challenging for some due to limited financial resources and declining health and mobility. The current state of senior hunger and the anticipated growth of the senior population underscore the critical roles the public and private sectors both have in addressing senior food insecurity. Conducting research to better understand the circumstances of food-insecure seniors and to drive evidence-based solutions and innovative partnerships will help to better meet the needs of the aging population.

For sources of data in this document or more information about senior hunger research, programs, and policy work at Feeding America, visit feedingamerica.org/stateofseniorhunger or contact research@feedingamerica.org.