In 2018, 5.3 million seniors in the U.S. were food insecure, which means having limited access to enough nutritious food to live a healthy lifestyle. Currently in 2020, as the nation confronts the global COVID-19 pandemic, seniors are facing unprecedented health and food access challenges. Food-insecure seniors are more likely to develop nutrition-related health problems, which is particularly problematic given the unique health, financial, and nutritional challenges that can come with aging. Even with the support of existing senior programs, more work must be done to address this public health concern.

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**About Senior Food Insecurity**

**Food insecurity means** having limited access to enough nutritious 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 in 2018 earned under $12,140/year or $1,012/month

**1 in 3 seniors** worked full- or part-time in 2018

Seniors are the fastest-growing group of workers in the country!

Many low-income seniors face spending tradeoffs that can lead to or worsen food insecurity.
Senior food insecurity rates vary by state.

Seniors are more likely to experience food insecurity if they are:

- Racial/Ethnic Minorities
- Disabled
- Unemployed
- Divorced, Separated, or Never Married
- Living with Grandchildren
- Female

Public programs that address seniors' nutritional needs include:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
- Congregate and home-delivered meals, like Meals on Wheels

SNAP plays a key role in reducing food insecurity.

5.1 million senior households receive, on average, $121/month in SNAP benefits.

Yet fewer than half of SNAP-eligible seniors are enrolled (48%).

The rising number of seniors participating in SNAP is a notable exception to the national trend of falling caseloads.

Food insecurity and health

Disability and disease contribute to employment instability and income challenges.

Inadequate nutrition can increase the negative effects of disabilities and chronic health conditions.

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

Food-insecure seniors are:

- 233% more likely to experience depression
- 90% more likely to experience asthma
- 57% more likely to experience congestive heart failure
- 32% more likely to experience limitations in activity
- 19% more likely to experience high blood pressure

CONCLUSION

Food security is important for individuals of every age. For seniors, obtaining adequate nutrition can be an especially critical challenge 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 important roles of the public and private sectors in addressing senior food insecurity. Feeding America conducts research to better understand the circumstances of food-insecure seniors and to drive evidence-based solutions.

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.