



# SENIOR HUNGER IN THE UNITED STATES

Millions of seniors 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 and/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.



## ABOUT SENIOR FOOD INSECURITY



**4.9**  
MILLION

seniors are food insecure as of 2016.



That's about **1 in 12** seniors.

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

The size of the senior population is growing...



Every day, 10,000 people become a senior.

**104M**  
TOTAL SENIORS  
2050

**8M**

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



**63M**  
TOTAL SENIORS  
2016

**4.9M**

seniors were food insecure.



**44M**  
TOTAL SENIORS  
2007

**2.3M**

seniors were food insecure.



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

**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.\*

**\$990/mo**



\* A single person living in poverty earns under \$11,880/year or \$990/month.

Some seniors struggle with low fixed incomes.



**\$1,404**  
AVERAGE MONTHLY SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT

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

↑ LIFE EXPECTANCY

↓ SAVINGS

↑ HEALTHCARE COSTS



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

UTILITIES



HOUSING

HEALTH COSTS

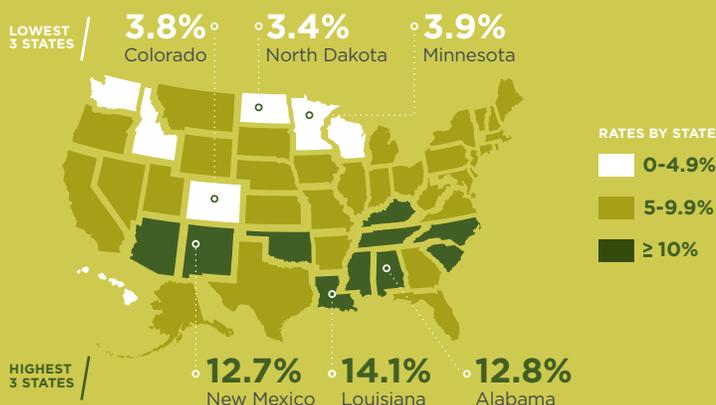


TRANSPORTATION

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

## ABOUT SENIOR FOOD INSECURITY

Senior food insecurity rates vary by state.



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



## FOOD INSECURITY AND HEALTH

Poor health can be both a cause and a consequence of food insecurity.



**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-INSECURE SENIORS ARE:



## SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAMS

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 & home-delivered meals, like Meals on Wheels

SNAP plays a critical role in reducing food insecurity.

Nearly 5 million senior households receive, on average, **\$124/month** in SNAP benefits.

However, only **2 in 5** SNAP-eligible seniors are enrolled.

**FEEDING AMERICA**

The Feeding America network of food banks serves 7 million seniors annually through grocery programs, meal programs, and benefit outreach.

## 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 underscores the critical roles the public and private sectors both have addressing senior food insecurity. Harnessing research to better understand the circumstances of low-income seniors and to build evidence-based solutions involving 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, contact [research@feedingamerica.org](mailto:research@feedingamerica.org).