



SPOTLIGHT ON SENIOR HUNGER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Both Feeding America and the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger strive to raise awareness about the pressing issue of senior hunger in the United States. Both organizations agree that research on senior hunger is not only imperative for raising awareness about the issue but also critical for finding sustainable solutions to address the nutritional needs of older adults.

ABOUT FEEDING AMERICA

Feeding America is the nation's network of more than 200 food banks and the largest hunger-relief charity in the United States. Each year, Feeding America secures and distributes three billion pounds of food and grocery products through 61,000 agencies nationwide. Our agency network provides emergency food assistance to an estimated 37 million people in need annually, including 3 million adults 65 years of age and older.



ABOUT THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION TO END SENIOR HUNGER

The National Foundation to End Senior Hunger identifies and assesses the challenge of senior hunger by funding senior-specific research, fostering local collaboration and engaging diverse partners. Through research, education and community partnerships the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger works to create the tangible and replicable solutions necessary to reverse the escalating number of seniors in the lifecycle of hunger.





START WITH UNDERSTANDING

Feeding America and the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger believe that addressing the problem of senior hunger requires a thorough understanding of the problem, and that research provides the critical foundation on which to build that understanding.

By understanding the characteristics and risk factors of the population in need, communities can better identify strategies for reaching seniors who need food assistance. This brief, based on research conducted by Dr. James P. Ziliak and Dr. Craig G. Gundersen, provides information on the number of food insecure seniors 60 years of age and above living in the United States in 2011, as well as trends in food insecurity among older

adults over the past decade. This report also examines demographic information on food insecure seniors¹ to gain a better understanding of how food insecurity impacts certain segments of the senior population.

¹ Food Insecurity is the USDA's measure of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members; or limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods. (Coleman-Jensen, A., M. Nord, M. Andrews & S. Carlson. (2012). Household Food Security in the United States in 2011. USDA ERS.)



METHODOLOGY

In December of each year, households respond to a series of 18 questions (10 if there are no children present) that make up the Core Food Security Module (CFSM) in the Current Population Survey (CPS). Each question is designed to capture some aspect of food insecurity and, for some questions, the frequency with which it manifests itself. Respondents are asked questions about their food security status in the last 30 days as well as over the past 12 months. The researchers focused on

the questions referring to the past year. A household is food insecure if they respond in the affirmative to 3 or more questions out of 18 taken from the Core Food Security Module (10 questions for households without children). Researchers James Ziliak and Craig Gundersen documented the state of hunger among senior Americans ages 60 and older in 2011 using data from the CPS. In their report they concentrated on the category of food insecurity established by the USDA.

MAJOR FINDINGS

In 2011, almost one in every 12 seniors above the age of 60 in the United States was food insecure. That represents 4.8 million seniors nationwide, which is more than double the number of food insecure seniors in 2001.

Based on historical trends, this dramatic increase in need was not anticipated. In the mid-2000s, based on data from 2001-2005, a study projected that in 2025 there would be 3.9 million food insecure seniors.² However, with the onset and continuing effects of the Great Recession this projection became a reality in 2009. There has been a substantial increase in food insecurity among seniors since the start of the Great Recession. Compared to 2007, the number of food insecure seniors was 50% higher in 2011.

The dramatic increase in need among seniors has had and will continue to have profound impacts on the demand for nutrition assistance. A Feeding America study found that in 2009 over half of seniors aged 65+ accessing food pantries were recurrent clients, meaning they have used a pantry every month for at least 12 months.³ Given the nationwide increase in the number of seniors struggling with food insecurity and need for ongoing food assistance among many seniors, it is imperative that we protect and strengthen nutrition programs to support healthy aging.

² Ziliak, J. & Gundersen, C. (2008). *The Causes, Consequences and Future of Senior Hunger in America*. University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research and Iowa State University.

³ Echevarria, S., R. Santos, E. Waxman, E. Engelhard & T. Del Vecchio. (2012). *Food Banks: Hunger's New Staple*. Feeding America.

TRENDS IN FOOD INSECURITY AMONG SENIOR AMERICANS

— Percent at Risk of Hunger
— Number at Risk



DISABILITIES

Seniors living with a disability are more likely to be food insecure than their counterparts. Additionally, almost one-third of food insecure seniors are disabled. This suggests that service providers and policy makers should be cognizant of barriers that prevent seniors with disabilities from accessing nutrition programs.

4.8M

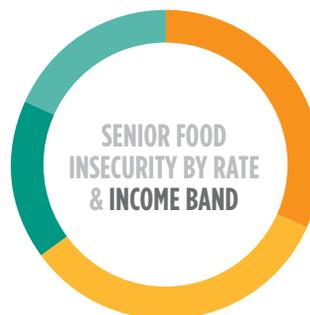
4.8 MILLION AMERICAN SENIORS (THAT'S NEARLY 1 IN 12) ARE FOOD INSECURE.

UP 2X

THE SENIOR FOOD INSECURITY RATE HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED SINCE 2001.

LIVING ABOVE THE POVERTY LINE

While seniors living below the poverty line experience higher rates of food insecurity than their peers with higher incomes, more than two-thirds of those reporting income live above the poverty line. Oftentimes seniors living above the poverty line do not have access to government assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), that help mitigate the risk of food insecurity.



Below Federal Poverty Line (FPL)

31.9%

Above 200% of FPL

16.9%

Between 100-200% of FPL

33.1%

Didn't Report Income

18.0%

YOUNGER SENIORS

The likelihood that a senior will experience food insecurity declines as they age. Every year for the last decade, younger seniors have experienced higher rates of food insecurity than their older counterparts; in 2011, nearly 65% of food insecure seniors were below the age of 69. Given that an estimated 10,000 Baby Boomers will turn 65 everyday until 2030, service providers and policy makers should be aware of the need among seniors in this age range.⁴



60-64

39.1%

70-74

14.8%

65-69

25.6%

75-80

8.6%

80 and older

11.9%

10,000

BABY BOOMERS WILL TURN 65 EVERYDAY UNTIL 2030.

⁴ D'Vera Cohn and Paul Taylor (2010). *Baby Boomers Approach 65—Glumly*. Pew Research Social and Demographic Trends.

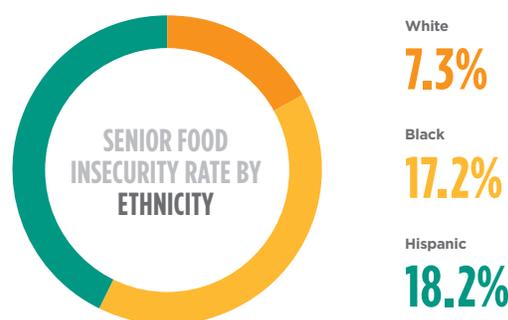
LIVING WITH GRANDCHILDREN

The prevalence of food insecurity is higher among seniors living in a household with a grandchild present. In 2011, nearly one in every five seniors living with grandchildren was food insecure. The number of grandparents living with grandchildren has significantly increased since the early 1990s. In 2009, 7.8 million children lived with at least one grandparent, a 64% increase since 1991.⁵ The higher rates of food insecurity among seniors living with a grandchild highlights the need for service providers and policy makers to apply an intergenerational approach when trying to meet the nutritional needs of these seniors.

experience higher rates of food insecurity than White and Non-Hispanic seniors. Furthermore, the projected increase in the number of Non-White seniors is substantially higher than the projected increase in the number of White seniors.⁶ Given the higher rates of food insecurity among Non-White older adults and expected population growth trends, service providers and policy makers need to ensure that culturally appropriate nutrition services for are available for older adults.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

It is well-documented that some racial and ethnic groups in the United States are disproportionately at risk of food insecurity. This reality holds true for the senior population as well. Black and Hispanic seniors



STATE-LEVEL ESTIMATES OF FOOD INSECURITY AMONG SENIORS IN 2011

AK	6.3%	GA	8.3%	MD	6.3%	NH	5.1%	SC	9.3%
AL	11.2%	HI	7.0%	ME	7.1%	NJ	8.4%	SD	5.4%
AR	12.9%	IA	6.0%	MI	6.9%	NM	8.0%	TN	11.8%
AZ	6.3%	ID	4.4%	MN	4.8%	NV	10.4%	TX	10.4%
CA	9.5%	IL	8.6%	MO	11.4%	NY	7.2%	UT	6.3%
CO	6.0%	IN	6.6%	MS	11.6%	OH	7.1%	VT	4.8%
CT	6.8%	KS	6.5%	MT	7.3%	OK	6.8%	VA	3.7%
DC	6.2%	KY	8.0%	NC	9.5%	OR	7.9%	WA	7.6%
DE	5.5%	LA	9.4%	ND	4.1%	PA	8.7%	WV	7.6%
FL	8.9%	MA	6.2%	NE	6.4%	RI	10.4%	WI	6.2%
								WY	6.8%

SOURCE: Ziliak, J. & Gundersen, C. (2013). *Spotlight on Food Insecurity among Senior Americans 2011*. University of Kentucky and University of Illinois.

⁵ Rose M. Kreider and Renee Ellis (2011). *Living Arrangements of Children: 2009*. U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging. (2010). *A profile of Older Americans: 2010*



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