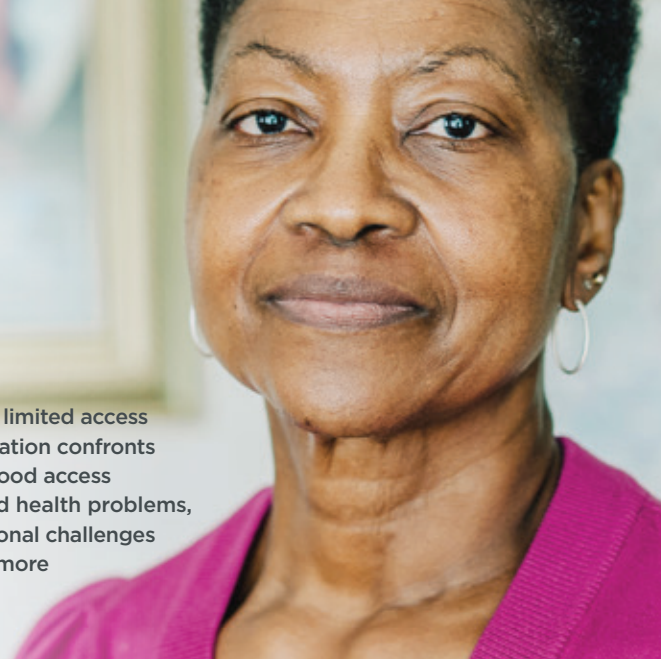




# Senior Hunger in the United States

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



5.3  
MILLION

seniors are food insecure as of 2018.

Food insecurity among seniors has fallen in recent years but remains above pre-recession levels.

A senior is an adult over age 60



That's 1 in 14 seniors.

**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

The size of the senior population is growing...



Every day, 10,000 people turn 65.

1 million

104M  
TOTAL SENIORS  
2050

8M

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



72.6M  
TOTAL SENIORS  
2018

5.3M  
seniors were food insecure.



44M  
TOTAL SENIORS  
2001

2.3M

seniors were food insecure.



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

Though some seniors struggle with low fixed incomes...



AVERAGE MONTHLY SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT

...seniors are more likely to be working than ever before

1 in 3

seniors worked full- or part-time in 2018



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

UTILITIES



HOUSING

HEALTH-RELATED COSTS

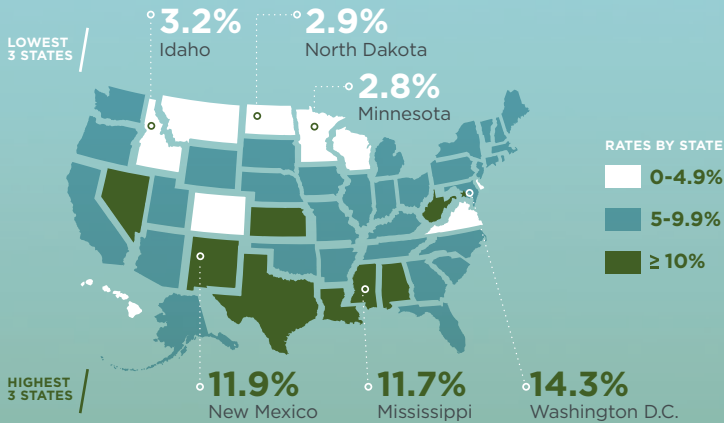


TRANSPORTATION

Many low-income seniors face **spending tradeoffs** that can lead to or 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:



## 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 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.*



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

## FOOD INSECURITY AND HEALTH

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



**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:**



## 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](https://FeedingAmerica.org/StateOfSeniorHunger) or contact [research@feedingamerica.org](mailto:research@feedingamerica.org).