

## Senior Hunger

In the U.S., roughly 5 million low-income adults aged 60+ rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to stay healthy and make ends meet. On average, households with elderly individuals receive \$125 per month to help put food on the table. Here are some more key facts about SNAP and senior hunger.



## Too many seniors are going hungry

- **Millions of older Americans are at risk for hunger.** In 2016, 8.6 million older Americans faced the threat of hunger, representing 13.6% of U.S. adults aged 60+. (NFESH, 2018)
- **Food insecurity is high among older adults.** The food insecurity rate for all senior households was 7.8% in 2016, down slightly from the year before but up from 5.5% in 2001. At the same time, the percentage of seniors facing the threat of hunger has more than doubled. (USDA, 2017)

## Too few seniors are enrolled in SNAP

- **3 out of 5 seniors who qualify for SNAP do not apply.** This means that 5.2 million seniors miss out on benefits. Older Americans who qualify for SNAP are significantly less likely to participate in the program than other demographic groups.

- **Several factors contribute to the low participation rate.** Many seniors face barriers related to mobility, technology, and stigma and are discouraged by widespread myths about how the program works and who can qualify.

## Some groups of seniors are more affected

Seniors are more likely to be food insecure if they:

- **Live in a southern state:** 9 of the 10 states with the highest rates of senior food insecurity are in the south (Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, North Carolina, Texas, South Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia).
- **Have a disability:** Almost one-third of food insecure seniors are disabled.
- **Are younger:** Nearly 65% of food insecure seniors are younger than age 69.

- **Live with a grandchild:** Nearly one in every five seniors living with grandchildren is food insecure.
- **Are African American or Hispanic:** 17% of African American seniors and 18% of Hispanic seniors are food insecure, compared to 7% of Caucasian seniors.



## SNAP is a good investment

- **SNAP improves health outcomes.** Food insecure seniors are worse off for a wide array of health outcomes. They have lower nutrient intakes and are more likely to suffer from diabetes, depression, limitations in activities of daily living (ADLs), high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, heart attacks, gum disease, and asthma.
- **SNAP stimulates the economy.** Every \$1 in additional SNAP benefits generates \$1.73 in local economic activity.
- **SNAP supports jobs.** \$1 billion in SNAP benefits would generate 8,900 full-time jobs.

### BenefitsCheckUp®

NCOA's BenefitsCheckUp® is the nation's most comprehensive free, online service to screen seniors with limited income for benefits. It includes more than 2,000 public and private benefits programs from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Over 7 million people have used BenefitsCheckUp® to identify benefits valued at over \$30 billion to help them pay for food, medicine, health care, rent, utilities, and other daily needs. Download your state's SNAP application at [BenefitsCheckUp.org/getsnap](https://BenefitsCheckUp.org/getsnap) or complete a full screening at [BenefitsCheckUp.org](https://BenefitsCheckUp.org).

## NCOA's role

NCOA provides several resources that help eligible individuals find and apply for benefits that pay for food.

### Senior SNAP Initiative

With generous support from the Walmart Foundation, NCOA has awarded over \$2 million in grant funding to community-based organizations to assist older adults (i.e., age 60 and over) in applying for and enrolling in SNAP. NCOA supports their and other organizations' efforts through outreach and enrollment tools that can be found on our website at [ncoa.org](https://ncoa.org).

### About NCOA

*The National Council on Aging (NCOA) is a respected national leader and trusted partner to help people aged 60+ meet the challenges of aging. Our mission is to improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are struggling. Through innovative community programs and services, online help, and advocacy, NCOA is partnering with nonprofit organizations, government, and business to improve the health and economic security of 10 million older adults by 2020. Learn more at [ncoa.org](https://ncoa.org) and @NCOAging.*

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