



News Release

Heather Collier, 573-475-7573
hcollier@semofoodbank.org

New Feeding America Study Finds 5.5 Million Seniors Faced Hunger in 2021

In Missouri, 1 in 13 Seniors Were Food Insecure, Higher than the National Rate

April 26, 2022 – Feeding America today released *The State of Senior Hunger in America in 2021*, a study about seniors facing hunger in the United States. The report sheds light on the extent to which food insecurity – or having limited access to enough food to live a healthy lifestyle – affects individuals aged 60 and older.

The report shows that out of 78 million seniors age 60 or older in the United States, 5.5 million were food insecure in 2021, the most recent year for which data is available. In Missouri, the food insecurity rate for seniors was nearly 8% (110,253 seniors), higher than the national rate and an increase from 2020 numbers (7.3% or 95,785 individuals). Missouri also ranked in the top 10 nationally for Very Low Food Security among seniors, with 3.6%, or 50,643 individuals, falling into that category.

“Unfortunately, these numbers do not come as a surprise,” said Joey Keys, chief executive officer of Southeast Missouri Food Bank. “This study looks at data from 2021, but we know we are serving more seniors across our service area through our partners and programs. Many seniors live on fixed incomes and when prices rose last year, many sought food assistance for the first time. We’ve also increased the number of senior food boxes we distribute in 2023 to help meet this need.”

Nationally, food insecurity among seniors did not change significantly between 2020 and 2021, going from 6.8% to 7.1%. However, consistent with the overall population, seniors of color experience food insecurity at disproportionately higher rates compared to their white counterparts as well as the overall food insecure population. In 2021, Black seniors were 3.8 times as likely and Latino seniors were 3 times as likely to experience food insecurity compared to white seniors, compared to 2.9 times and 2.5 times respectively for the overall food insecure population.

“If we as a country decide once and for all to end food insecurity in this country, think of what that would mean for our senior neighbors facing hunger,” said Tom Summerfelt, Chief Research Officer at Feeding America. “Food insecurity is so closely tied to health, which becomes especially critical as we age. Also, medical expenses are a key driver of food insecurity, particularly in our elders. Food can work as medicine. Addressing food insecurity among seniors would help reduce chronic health conditions and could result in healthier communities overall.”

Southeast Missouri Food Bank is a member of the Feeding America network of food banks and provides food and services to 80,000 people in southeast Missouri each month. The food bank provides 5,505 seniors with food commodity boxes each month, as well as helping connect them with SNAP and Medicaid benefits.

For the seventh consecutive year, The State of Senior Hunger in America was produced by Feeding America. The study was conducted by researchers Dr. James P. Ziliak and Dr. Craig Gundersen. The full reports can be found [here](#).

The study was funded by the Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation through its Fill Your Tank program, a multi-year initiative launched in 2016 to address food insecurity in communities around the world. Enterprise's commitment to Feeding America supports senior hunger and child hunger initiatives in communities across the United States.

Learn more about senior hunger at www.semofoodbank.org and join the conversation about The State of Senior Hunger using #SolveSeniorHunger.

#

About Southeast Missouri Food Bank

The mission of Southeast Missouri Food Bank is to end hunger and leverage the power of food to build healthy communities. The food bank provides food to 140 charitable and disaster relief programs in Southeast Missouri. These member agencies include food pantries, soup kitchens, domestic violence and homeless shelters. Southeast Missouri Food Bank also holds regular mobile food distributions and provides monthly boxes of food to 5,500 senior citizens and weekend backpacks of food during the school year to nearly 1,200 students in 30 school districts. The food bank's 16-county coverage area includes Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Dunklin, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Perry, Reynolds, Ripley, Scott, Ste. Genevieve, Stoddard and Wayne counties. Those interested in helping can do so by making a tax-deductible contribution, donating food, or scheduling a time to volunteer. Visit semofoodbank.org for more information.

About Feeding America

Feeding America® is the largest hunger-relief organization in the United States. As a network of more than 200 food banks, 21 statewide food bank associations, and over 60,000 agency partners, including food pantries and meal programs, we helped provide 5.2 billion meals to tens of millions of people in need last year. Feeding America also supports programs that prevent food waste and improve food security among the people we serve; brings attention to the social and systemic barriers that contribute to food insecurity in our nation; and advocates for legislation that protects people from going hungry. Visit www.feedingamerica.org, find us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter