



## FACT SHEETS SOURCES & METHODS 2021: COVID-19

**Note:** This fact sheet presents the latest data collected as the COVID-19 pandemic was affecting the United States in 2020 through mid-2021. The situation may have changed since data collection.

**MANY OLDER ADULTS STRUGGLED WITH HUNGER AND ISOLATION BEFORE THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. THE PANDEMIC EXACERBATED THESE ISSUES AND INCREASED THE NEED FOR SERVICES LIKE MEALS ON WHEELS.**

- A. **“Over half [55%] of adults aged 60 and older reported at least one unmet need.”** comes from a Meals on Wheels America survey conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) October 29-November 5, 2020, with 1,535 adults aged 60 and older nationwide. Percentage with at least one unmet need calculated by NORC based on respondents answering “Yes” to one or more needs listed in response to the following survey question: *Do you need help with each of the following at this time, or not? a) Picking up groceries, including food I/you regularly purchase, or other necessities like toilet paper; b) Access to masks, gloves, cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer; c) More affordable food to meet my/your dietary needs; d) Staying socially connected while physically distancing from friends and family outside my/your home; e) Having enough activities to keep busy at home; f) Having access to safe and reliable transportation; g) Being able to maintain a healthy lifestyle; h) Access to quality healthcare; i) Being able to afford prescription medications; j) Being able to afford housing costs.* Full report available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>
- B. **“40% of older adults needed help with having enough activities to keep busy at home and/or with staying socially connected while physically distancing.”** is from a Meals on Wheels America survey conducted by NORC October 29-November 5, 2020, with 1,535 adults aged 60 and older nationwide. Percentage was calculated by Meals on Wheels America based on respondents answering “Yes” to one or both of the following needs listed in response to the following survey question: *Do you need help with each of the following at this time, or not? d) Staying socially connected while physically distancing from friends and family outside my/your home; e) Having enough activities to keep busy at home.* Full report available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>
- C. **“18% needed help with affordable food to meet their dietary needs.”** is from a Meals on Wheels America survey conducted by NORC October 29-November 5, 2020, with 1,535 adults aged 60 and older nationwide. Percentage based on responses to the following survey question: *Do you need help with each of the following at this time, or not? c) More affordable food to meet my/your dietary needs.* Full report available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>

**SENIOR HUNGER, SOCIAL ISOLATION, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION ROSE DRAMATICALLY DURING THE PANDEMIC.**

- D. “The proportion of seniors aged 60 and older who sometimes or often didn’t have enough to eat rose from 2.8% to 4.9% – a 75% increase” is from an October 2020 paper by James P. Ziliak titled *Food Hardship during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Great Recession*. A household was considered “food insufficient” if it reported that it sometimes or often did not have enough food to eat. The proportion of older adults with food insufficiency increased 75%, from 2.8% in 2019 to 4.9% percent in July 2020. Data are for seniors aged 60 and older. Pre-COVID were data from the 2001 to 2019 December Current Population Survey, and data for the period after COVID-19 began were from the Census Bureau’s Household Survey. Paper available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7537182/>
- E. “1 in 4 [24%] adults aged 65 and older reported anxiety or depression during the pandemic.” is from an October 2020 Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) analysis titled *One in Four Older Adults Report Anxiety or Depression Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Data are from a KFF analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s Household Pulse Survey, August 19-31, 2020. Issue brief available at: <https://www.kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/one-in-four-older-adults-report-anxiety-or-depression-amid-the-covid-19-pandemic/>
- “\*This was substantially higher than the one in 10 (11%) older adults with Medicare who reported depression or anxiety in 2018.” is from the 2020 KFF analysis. Data are from the 2018 Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey. Issue brief available at: <https://www.kff.org/medicare/issue-brief/one-in-four-older-adults-report-anxiety-or-depression-amid-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

**EVEN PRE-PANDEMIC, MANY SENIORS FACED CHALLENGES OF PAYING FOR HOUSING AND OTHER NECESSITIES, IN ADDITION TO FOOD.**

- F. “In 2018, 53% of renters aged 62 and up were cost burdened, meaning they paid more than 30% of their income for rent and utilities.” is from a February 2021 Justice in Aging issue brief titled *Low-Income Older Adults Face Unaffordable Rents, Driving Housing Instability and Homelessness*. Data were for renter households with at least one person aged 62 and older in the household. Data are from National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) tabulations of data from the 2018 America Community Survey. Issue brief available at: <https://justiceinaging.org/issue-brief-low-income-older-adults-face-unaffordable-rents-driving-housing-instability-and-homelessness/>
- G. “In late 2020, 18% of adults aged 60 and older reported needing help with being able to afford prescription medications.” is from the Meals on Wheels America survey conducted by NORC October 29-November 5, 2020, with 1,535 adults aged 60 and older nationwide. Percentage based on responses to the following survey question: *Do you need help with each of the following at this time, or not? i) Being able to afford prescription medications*. Full report available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>

**WITH HELP FROM EMERGENCY PANDEMIC RELIEF FUNDING, MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAMS GREATLY INCREASED THEIR HOME DELIVERY SERVICES.**

- H. **“At their highest numbers served during the pandemic, programs reported delivering an average of about 100% more home-delivered meals weekly than they were before the pandemic began.”** is from the Meals on Wheels America COVID-19 July 2021 Network Pulse Survey conducted by Meals on Wheels America June 29-July 12, 2021, with 258 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage increase in home-delivered meals was calculated based on responses to the following survey question: *What was the average number (#) of home-delivered meals served per week before COVID-19, at your highest point, and what is it now? If you don't know or if this question is not applicable, please write "Don't know" or "Not applicable."* Data are from 180 Meals on Wheels America members that completed the survey and answered this question (# meals served before the pandemic began and at their highest numbers). Full report available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>
- I. **“As of July 2021, programs were still serving an average of 57% more meals weekly than they were before the pandemic began.”** is from the Meals on Wheels America COVID-19 July 2021 Network Pulse Survey conducted by Meals on Wheels America June 29-July 12, 2021, with 258 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage increase in home-delivered meals was calculated based on responses to the following survey question: *What was the average number (#) of clients served home-delivered meals per week before COVID-19, at your highest point, and what is it now? If you don't know or if this question is not applicable, please write "Don't know" or "Not applicable."* Data are from 179 Meals on Wheels members that completed the survey and answered this question (# meals served before the pandemic began and # served at the time of the July 2021 survey). Full report available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>
- J. **“In November 2020, four out of five [82%] local programs agreed, ‘New clients are here to stay.’”** is from the Meals on Wheels America COVID-19 Member Impact Study survey conducted by Trailblazer Research November 10–24, 2020, with 351 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage based on respondents who answered “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to the following survey question: *How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statement(s)? New clients are here to stay.* Data are from 241 Meals on Wheels America members that completed the survey and answered this question. Executive summary available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>

**PROGRAMS QUICKLY ADAPTED SERVICES TO SAFELY MEET CLIENTS' NEEDS DURING THE PANDEMIC.**

- K. **“98% of local programs said they had reworked one or more areas of service or operation because of COVID-19. 90% reworked home-delivered meal options and logistics.”** is from the Meals on Wheels America COVID-19 Member Impact Study survey conducted by Trailblazer Research November 10-24, 2020, with 351 programs that were

members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage of programs that reworked one or more areas was calculated based on responses to the survey question: ***Because of COVID-19, which areas did you/your program have to rework? Please select all that apply:*** *Staffing (paid & volunteer); Home-delivered meals options and logistics (who, what, how, when); Visit/well checks; Local partnerships; Data/tracking efforts; Healthcare contracts; Budgets; None of the above.* Data are from 335 Meals on Wheels America members that completed the survey and answered this question. Executive summary available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>

- L. **“47% of programs had tapped local partnerships to help fill gaps, provide emergency meals, etc.”** is from the Meals on Wheels America COVID-19 July 2021 Network Pulse Survey conducted by Meals on Wheels America June 29-July 12, 2021, with 258 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage based on respondents who answered “True” in response to the following survey question: ***Which of the following are true for you? (Check all that apply): We've tapped local partnerships to help fill gaps, provide emergency meals, etc.*** Data are from 225 Meals on Wheels America members that completed the survey and answered this question. Full report available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>
- M. **“47% of programs were serving congregate clients in alternative formats, such as drive-thru or curbside pick-up.”** is from the Meals on Wheels America COVID-19 July 2021 Network Pulse Survey conducted by Meals on Wheels America June 29-July 12, 2021, with 258 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage based on respondents who answered “True” in response to the following survey question: ***Which of the following best describes your congregate dining program today? (Check all that apply): Open in different format: serving congregate clients via a drive-thru or pick-up type format.*** Data are from 144 Meals on Wheels America members that offered congregate prior to COVID-19 and completed the survey and answered this question, excluding those that never offered congregate. Full report available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>
- N. **“56% of programs had at least some clients participating in a service they developed to address social isolation.”** is from the Meals on Wheels America COVID-19 Member Impact Study survey conducted by Trailblazer Research November to December 2020. Percentage is based on responses to the following survey question: ***What percent of your Meals on Wheels senior clients participate in another program you've developed to help with social isolation?*** Data are from 238 Meals on Wheels America members that completed the survey and answered this question. Executive summary available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>

**THE NEED IS GREATER THAN THE MAJORITY OF MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAMS CAN MEET WITHOUT MORE RESOURCES.**

- O. **“In late 2020, nearly nine in 10 programs [86%] said there was an unmet need for home-delivered meals in their community.”** is from the Meals on Wheels America COVID-19 Member Impact Study survey conducted by Trailblazer Research November

10-24, 2020, with 351 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage is based on responses to the following survey question: *If you were to provide nutrition support to all the seniors in your area that needed it, you would need to increase your home-delivered meal efforts by:* a) up to 10% to serve the HD needs of seniors here; b) 10% - 24% to serve the HD needs of seniors here; c) 25% - 49% to serve the HD needs of seniors here; d) 50% - 75% to serve the HD needs of seniors here; e) nearly double our program to serve the HD needs of seniors here; f) more than double our program to serve the HD needs of seniors here; g) Not applicable. We believe that all seniors in our community that need HD meals are getting it; h) Don't know. Data are from 247 Meals on Wheels America members that completed the survey and answered this question, excluding those who said, "Don't know" (35 respondents of 282 total). Executive summary available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>

- P. **"In 2021, nearly half (48%) of programs said they would not be able to support their current client base without continued infusions of funding beyond their typical funding."** is from the Meals on Wheels America COVID-19 July 2021 Network Pulse Survey conducted by Meals on Wheels America June 29-July 12, 2021, with 258 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage is based on the number of respondents who answered "True" in response to the following survey question: *Which of the following are true for you? (Check all that apply):* e) *We've been able to survive with grants and loans, but will not be able to support our current client base without continued infusions of cash beyond our typical reimbursements, contracts, etc.* Data are from 225 Meals on Wheels America members that completed the survey and answered this question. Full report available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>

**PLUS, PROGRAMS' COSTS HAVE GONE UP DURING THE PANDEMIC.**

- Q. **"88% of programs said their operational costs had increased"** is from the Meals on Wheels America COVID-19 Member Impact Study survey conducted by Trailblazer Research November 10-24, 2020, with 351 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage is based on respondents who answered "True" in response to the following survey question: *Which of the following are true for you? (Check all that apply):* h) *Our safety supply costs/budget have increased;* i) *Our meal production costs have increased;* j) *Our labor costs have increased (because of additional hours and/or decreased volunteers).* Data are from 238 Meals on Wheels America members that completed the survey and answered this question. Executive summary available at: <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio>

**MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAMS REQUIRE SUSTAINED AND EXPANDED FUNDING TO CONTINUE PROVIDING EXISTING SERVICES TO MEET THE UNMET NEED AND TO ADDRESS SENIOR HUNGER AND ISOLATION IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.**