



## SOURCES & METHODS: OLDER AMERICANS ACT NUTRITION PROGRAM FACT SHEET UNITED STATES 2021

**Note:** In order to provide the most recent and accurate sources, some facts are from different sources than were used in previous years. Generally, caution should be taken if comparing data with data from previously published fact sheets.

### SENIOR HUNGER AND ISOLATION ARE GROWING PROBLEMS – WHICH HAVE BEEN EXACERBATED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

#### Before the pandemic:

- A. **“1 in 3 [31%] seniors felt lonely”** is from a special data file request from a September 2018 AARP Research report by A. Oscar and C. Thayer titled *Loneliness and Social Connections: A National Survey of Adults 45 and Older*. Estimate calculated by Meals on Wheels America and is for adults ages 60 and older living in the United States. Full report available at: [www.aarp.org/research/topics/life/info-2018/loneliness-social-connections.html](http://www.aarp.org/research/topics/life/info-2018/loneliness-social-connections.html)
- B. **“1 in 8 [13%] seniors was threatened by or experienced hunger”** is from an August 2021 Feeding America report by J. Ziliak and C. Gunderson titled *The State of Senior Hunger in America in 2019*. Estimate is for adults ages 60 and older living in the United States (excluding territories) who are considered “marginally food insecure” (including those who are “food insecure” and “very low food secure”) using data analyzed data from the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey (CPS). Full report available at (*Appendix Table 3a: The Extent of Senior Marginal Food Insecurity in 2019*): [www.feedingamerica.org/research/senior-hunger-research/senior](http://www.feedingamerica.org/research/senior-hunger-research/senior)
- C. **“1 in 4 [24%] seniors lived alone”** is from the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS). Estimates are for the Household Only sample of the population age 60 and older living in the United States (including territories). Data available in the Administration for Community Living (ACL) AGing, Independence, and Disability Program Data Portal (AGID) Custom Tables (*ACS Demographic Data*): <https://agid.acl.gov/CustomTables/ACS/Year/> (Table filters – Year: 2019; Elements: Living Alone > Total Counts and Percentages > Living alone; Stratifiers: Age 60 and Above, All Sexes Total, Household Only Sample; Geography: United States + D.C. & Territories).
- D. **“1 in 10 [10%] experienced poverty”** is from the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS). Estimates are for the Total Non-Institutionalized population age 60 and older living in the United States (including territories) at or below 100% of the Census Bureau official poverty threshold. Data available in the Administration for Community Living (ACL) AGing, Independence, and Disability Program Data Portal (AGID) Custom Tables (*ACS Demographic Data*): <https://agid.acl.gov/CustomTables/ACS/Year/> (Table filters – Year: 2019; Elements: Poverty Status > Total Counts and Percentages > Below poverty level; Stratifiers: Age 60 and Above, All Sexes Total, Total Non-Institutionalized Population; Geography: United States + D.C. & Territories).
- E. **“Nearly 1 in 3 [30%] lived with a disability”** is from the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) Demographic Data, based on disability status data for 2008-2013.

Estimate is for the Total Non-Institutionalized population ages 60 and older living in the United States (including territories). Calculated by Meals on Wheels America by subtracting total No disability percentage from 100%. Data available in the Administration for Community Living (ACL) AGing, Independence, and Disability Program Data Portal (AGID) Custom Tables (ACS Demographic Data): <https://agid.acl.gov/CustomTables/ACS/Year/> (Table filters – Year: 2019; Elements: Disability Status 2008-2013 > Percentages > No disability; Stratifiers: Age 60 and Above, All Sexes Total, Total Non-Institutionalized Population; Geography: United States + D.C. & Territories).

- F. **“Food insecurity rates were higher for Black [15.2%] and Hispanic seniors [of any race, 13.5%], and these disparities have only worsened with COVID-19. Black/African American seniors’ risk of food insecurity [15.2%] is more than twice that of white seniors [5.9%]”** is from an August 2021 Feeding America report by J. Ziliak, C. Gunderson, J. Hilvers, & M. Hake titled *The State of Senior Hunger in America in 2019*. Estimate is for adults ages 60 and older living in the United States (excluding territories) who are considered “food insecure” (including those who are “very low food secure”). Full report available at: [www.feedingamerica.org/research/senior-hunger-research/senior](http://www.feedingamerica.org/research/senior-hunger-research/senior)

**COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS AGING AND NUTRITION SERVICES FOR SENIORS, LIKE MEALS ON WHEELS, HAVE STRUGGLED TO MEET THE NEED FOR THESE ESSENTIAL SERVICES. DEMAND HAS ONLY INCREASED DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**

Before the pandemic:

- G. **“85% of local Meals on Wheels programs surveyed saw at least some unmet need in their communities”** are from the Meals on Wheels America *More Than a Meal® Comprehensive Network Study* survey conducted by Trailblazer Research between 2018 and 2019. Figure is based on data from 407 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America that provided home-delivered meals and answered the survey rating scale question: *Overall, our program is... 1) Leaving a lot of people that need HOME-DELIVERED meals unserved ... 7) Serving HOME-DELIVERED meals to just about everyone in our community that needs one.* Figure is based on respondents who indicated a ranking of “1” through “6.” Executive summary available at: [www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/more-than-a-meal/comprehensive-network-study](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/more-than-a-meal/comprehensive-network-study)
- H. **“12,000 Americans are turning 60 each day”** is from the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau Annual Population Estimates and the December 2020 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Vital Statistics System data brief titled *Mortality in the United States 2019*. Estimate calculated by Meals on Wheels America using the total estimated population of adults age 59 living in the United States subtracted by the number of annual estimated deaths among the age group and then dividing by 365 days. Annual estimated deaths calculated by applying an age-specific mortality rate (b.) to the estimated population of adults age 59 in 2019 (a.).
- Population estimate is for the total U.S. resident population age 59 in the 50 states, D.C. and Puerto Rico in 2019. Data available in Census Bureau National Population Estimates Tables (*Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Single Year of Age and: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019*): [www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-national-detail.html](http://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-national-detail.html)
  - Age-specific mortality rate reflects the number of deaths per 100,000 people among individuals age 55-64 years in the United States in 2019. Data available in the CDC National Vital Statistics System data brief, *Mortality in the United States 2019*. Estimate is from information collected by National Center Health Statistics for death certificates

filed in 50 states and D.C. Full data brief available at: [www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db395.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db395.htm)

- I. **“By 2060, 1 in 3 [29%] Americans are projected to be 60 and older” and “Projected number of seniors by year”** graph figures are from the 2017 U.S. Census Bureau National Population Projections. Estimate base is for the resident population age 60 and above on July 1, 2016 in 50 states and D.C. and is used for projecting the U.S. population from 2017 to 2060. Data available in the Census Bureau National Population Projections Tables (*Table 3. Detailed age and sex composition of the population*): [www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/popproj/2017-summary-tables.html](http://www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/popproj/2017-summary-tables.html)

**THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT (OAA) NUTRITION PROGRAM IS THE ONLY FEDERALLY SUPPORTED PROGRAM DESIGNED TO MEET THE NUTRITIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS.**

- J. **“OAA services, like congregate and home-delivered meals, aim to serve groups of older adults living in the community with the greatest social or economic need, such as those who: have low income; are a racial or ethnic minority; live in a rural community; have limited English proficiency; and/or are put at risk of institutionalization”** is from Section 305 of the *Older Americans Act of 1965*, as amended by P.L. 116-131 and enacted in March 2020. Official compilation of law available on the Administration for Community Living (ACL) website (*2020 Reauthorization of the OAA*): <https://acl.gov/about-acl/authorizing-statutes/older-americans-act>
- K. **“Established under the OAA 50 years ago, in 1972, the Title III-C Nutrition Program aims to: reduce hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; promote socialization; and improve the health and well-being of older adults by assisting them in gaining access to nutrition and other disease prevention and health promotion services and delaying the onset of adverse health conditions”** is from Section 330 of the *Older Americans Act of 1965*, as amended by P.L. 116-131 and enacted in March 2020. Official compilation of law available on the Administration for Community Living (ACL) website (*2020 Reauthorization of the OAA*): <https://acl.gov/about-acl/authorizing-statutes/older-americans-act>
- L. **“Meals provided through the OAA Nutrition Program are designed to meet the unique nutrition and health requirements of older adults, and meals are often tailored to meet specific medical needs and cultural preferences”** is from Section 339 of the *Older Americans Act of 1965*, as amended by P.L. 116-131 and enacted in March 2020. Official compilation of law available on the Administration for Community Living (ACL) website (*2020 Reauthorization of the OAA*): <https://acl.gov/about-acl/authorizing-statutes/older-americans-act>

**THE OAA NUTRITION PROGRAM OFFERS HOME-DELIVERED MEALS AS WELL AS CONGREGATE NUTRITION SERVICES AT SITES LIKE SENIOR CENTERS – WHICH PROVIDE MORE MOBILE SENIORS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SOCIALLY CONNECT.**

- M. **“223 million meals were provided to 2.4 million older adults through the OAA Nutrition Program in 2019” and “Meals/Seniors Served”** table figures are from the 2019 Administration for Community Living (ACL) State Program Reports. Figures are for the United States (including territories) in the 2019 federal fiscal year. Data available in the ACL AGing, Independence, and Disability Program Data Portal (AGID) Custom Tables (*State Program Reports*): <https://agid.acl.gov/CustomTables/SPR/Year/>
  - a. **“Meals served”** figure reflects meals served to qualified individuals in his/her place of residence or a congregate or group setting. Table filters – Year: 2019; Elements: Units >

Counts > Congregate Meals + Home-Delivered Meals; Stratifiers: All Age Groups;  
Geography: All U.S. Totals > 50 States + D.C. & Territories.

**THE OAA NUTRITION PROGRAM IS A SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP AND RECEIVES THE LARGEST PORTION OF FEDERAL FUNDING APPROPRIATED FOR PROGRAMS THROUGH THE OAA.**

- N. “Expenditures for OAA Title III-C Nutrition Services, 2019” chart figures and “Nationally, the OAA funds 40% of the total cost to provide nutrition services; the other 60% of funding that serves seniors each year comes from state and/or local sources, private donations from foundations, corporations and individuals, and federal block grants.” are from the 2019 Administration for Community Living (ACL) State Program Reports. US dollars (US\$) and percentage figures are calculated by Meals on Wheels America and reflect expenditures by nutrition programs receiving some amount of federal funding through Title III of the Older Americans Act (OAA) in the United States (including territories) for the 2019 federal fiscal year and excludes data from programs that only receive funding through private and/or other non-OAA funding sources alone. Data available in the ACL AGing, Independence, and Disability Program Data Portal (AGID) Custom Tables (*State Program Reports*): <https://agid.acl.gov/CustomTables/SPR/Year/>
- a. “Total” expenditures figure reflects outlays/payments made using OAA Title III federal funds plus other program income spent to provide allowable nutrition services. US\$ calculated by adding expenditures for “Congregate Meals” + “Home-Delivered Meals.” Tables filters – Year: 2019; Elements: Expenditures > Total Expenditures > Congregate Meals + Home-Delivered Meals; Stratifiers: All Age Groups; Geography: All U.S. Totals > 50 States + D.C. & Territories.
  - b. “OAA” expenditures figures reflect outlays/payments made using OAA Title III federal funds to provide allowable nutrition services. US\$ calculated by adding expenditures for “Congregate Meals” + “Home-Delivered Meals.” Percentage represents the proportion of “OAA” Title III expenditures that make up of “Total” expenditures and is calculated by dividing “OAA” expenditures by “Total” expenditures in US\$ and multiplying by 100%. Tables filters – Year: 2019; Elements: Expenditures > Title III Expenditures > Congregate Meals + Home-Delivered Meals; Stratifiers: All Age Groups; Geography: All U.S. Totals > 50 States + D.C. & Territories.
  - c. “Other” expenditures figures reflect program income other than OAA Title III funds, such as state, local and private dollars, spent by programs receiving OAA Title III funding to provide allowable nutrition services and includes the combined expenditures for “Congregate Meals” + “Home-Delivered Meals.” US\$ calculated by subtracting the “OAA” expenditures (b.) from the “Total” expenditures” (a.) in US\$. Percentage represents the ratio of expenditures from other (non-OAA) sources (i.e., state and/or local sources, private donations from foundations, corporations and individuals, and federal block grants) that make up of “Total” expenditures and is calculated by dividing “Other” expenditures by “Total” expenditures (a.) in US\$ and multiplying by 100%.

**AMID COVID-19, THE OAA NUTRITION PROGRAM HAS SERVED AS A LIFELINE FOR OLDER ADULTS AND THEIR FAMILIES AS THE NEED AND DEMAND FOR NUTRITION AND SOCIALIZATION SERVICES HAVE SKYROCKETED ALONG WITH OPERATING EXPENSES FOR COMMUNITY-BASED NUTRITION PROGRAMS.**

- O. “At their highest numbers served during the pandemic, programs reported serving an average of about 100% more home-delivered meals and serving home-delivered meals to 84% more seniors weekly than they were before the pandemic began” is from the July 2021 Meals on

Wheels America *COVID-19 Network Pulse Survey* conducted by Meals on Wheels America 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?* Data are from 180 Meals on Wheels America members that answered this question and reported # meals served before the pandemic began and at their highest numbers. Full report available at: [www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio)

- P. **“82% of local programs agreed, ‘New clients are here to stay’”** is from the November 2020 Meals on Wheels America *COVID-19 Member Impact Study* survey conducted by Trailblazer Research 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 the following statement?: New clients are here to stay.* Data are from 241 Meals on Wheels America members that answered this question. Executive summary available at: [www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio)
- Q. **“88% of local programs said costs had increased due to purchase of personal protective equipment and safety supplies, meal production expenses and/or labor costs”** is from the November 2020 Meals on Wheels America *COVID-19 Member Impact Study* survey conducted by Trailblazer Research with 351 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage is based on respondents who answered “True” in response to the following response options in 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 answered this question and indicated a response of “h” through “i.” Executive summary available at: [www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio)
- R. **“96% of local programs predicted that food and production costs would remain high”** is from the November 2020 Meals on Wheels America *COVID-19 Member Impact Study* survey conducted by Trailblazer Research with 351 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage is based on respondents who answered “Agree” or “Strongly agree” to the following survey question: *How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: Food & production costs will stay high.* Data are from 240 Meals on Wheels America members that answered this question. Executive summary available at: [www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio)

**EMERGENCY COVID-19 FUNDING PROVIDED THROUGH THE OAA NUTRITION PROGRAM HELPED LOCAL MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAMS SERVE A LOT MORE SENIORS DURING AN UNPRECEDENTED TIME, BUT MORE SUPPORT IS NEEDED TO MEET THE EXISTING NEED AND AVOID SCALING BACK OR DISCONTINUING SERVICE.**

- S. **“86% of local programs said there was unmet need for home-delivered meals in their community”** and **“29% of local programs said they would need to nearly double or more than double their home-delivered efforts to serve the unmet need for home-delivered meals in their community”** are from the November 2020 Meals on Wheels America *COVID-19 Member Impact Study* survey conducted by Trailblazer Research with 351 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentages are based on responses to the following rating scale 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” ... 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”.*

Data are from 247 Meals on Wheels America members that answered this question (excluding those who answered “Don’t know”). Executive summary available at:

[www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio)

- T. **“48% of local programs said they would not be able to support their current client base without continued increased funding”** is from the July 2021 Meals on Wheels America *COVID-19 Network Pulse Survey* conducted by Meals on Wheels America 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 answered this question. Full report available at: [www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio)
- U. **“74% of local programs believed they would lose the financial support but keep the clients”** is from the November 2020 Meals on Wheels America *COVID-19 Member Impact Study* survey conducted by Trailblazer Research with 351 programs that were members of Meals on Wheels America. Percentage is based on respondents who answered “Agree” or “Strongly agree” to the following survey question: *How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Attention/interest will wane and we'll lose the financial support but keep the clients.* Data are from 238 Meals on Wheels America members that answered this question. Executive summary available at: [www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/learn-more/research/covid-19-research-portfolio)

**WITH GREATER FEDERAL INVESTMENTS IN THE OAA NUTRITION PROGRAM, SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY WILL BE ENABLED TO CONTINUE EXPANDED OPERATIONS, ADDRESS CURRENT GAPS IN SERVICES AND GROW TO MEET THE FUTURE NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS IN THE YEARS TO COME.**