

Food Insecurity among Seniors

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Acknowledgement

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The Measurement of Food Insecurity in the United States

Current Population Survey

- December Supplements from 2001 to 2017
 - Supplements used to establish the official estimates of food insecurity in the United States
- Nationally representative (with weights) sample of 50,000 households
- Full set of questions from Household Food Security Module
- Define a senior as age 60 and older

Definitions of Categories of Food Insecurity

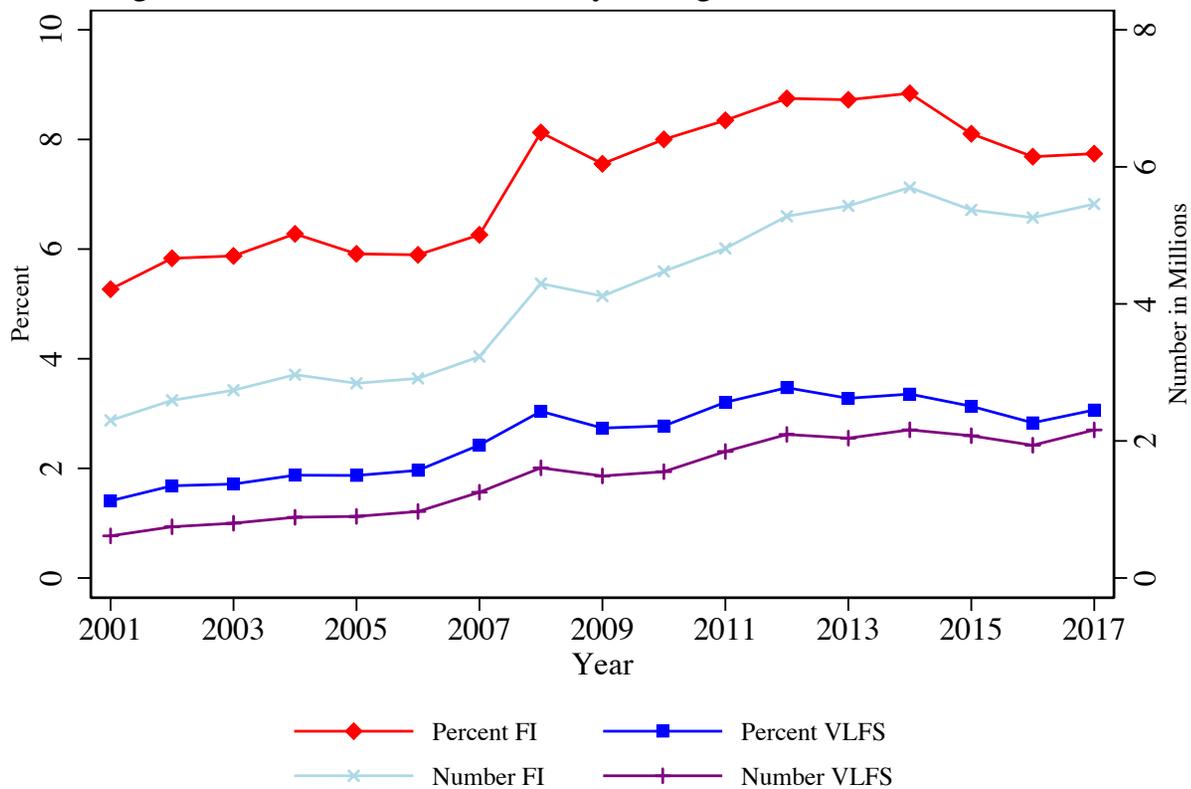
- A household is placed into food security categories based on responses to 18 questions on the Household Food Security Module
- Examples of questions
 - “I worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more”
 - “Did you or the other adults in your household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food”
 - “Were you ever hungry but did not eat because you couldn’t afford enough food”
 - “In the last 12 months did you or other adults in your household ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn’t enough money for food?”

Definitions of Food Insecurity Categories

- Marginally food insecure
 - 1 or more affirmative responses
- Food insecure
 - 3 or more affirmative responses
- Very Low Food Secure
 - 8 or more affirmative responses (households with children)
 - 6 or more affirmative responses (households without children)

Extent of Senior Hunger

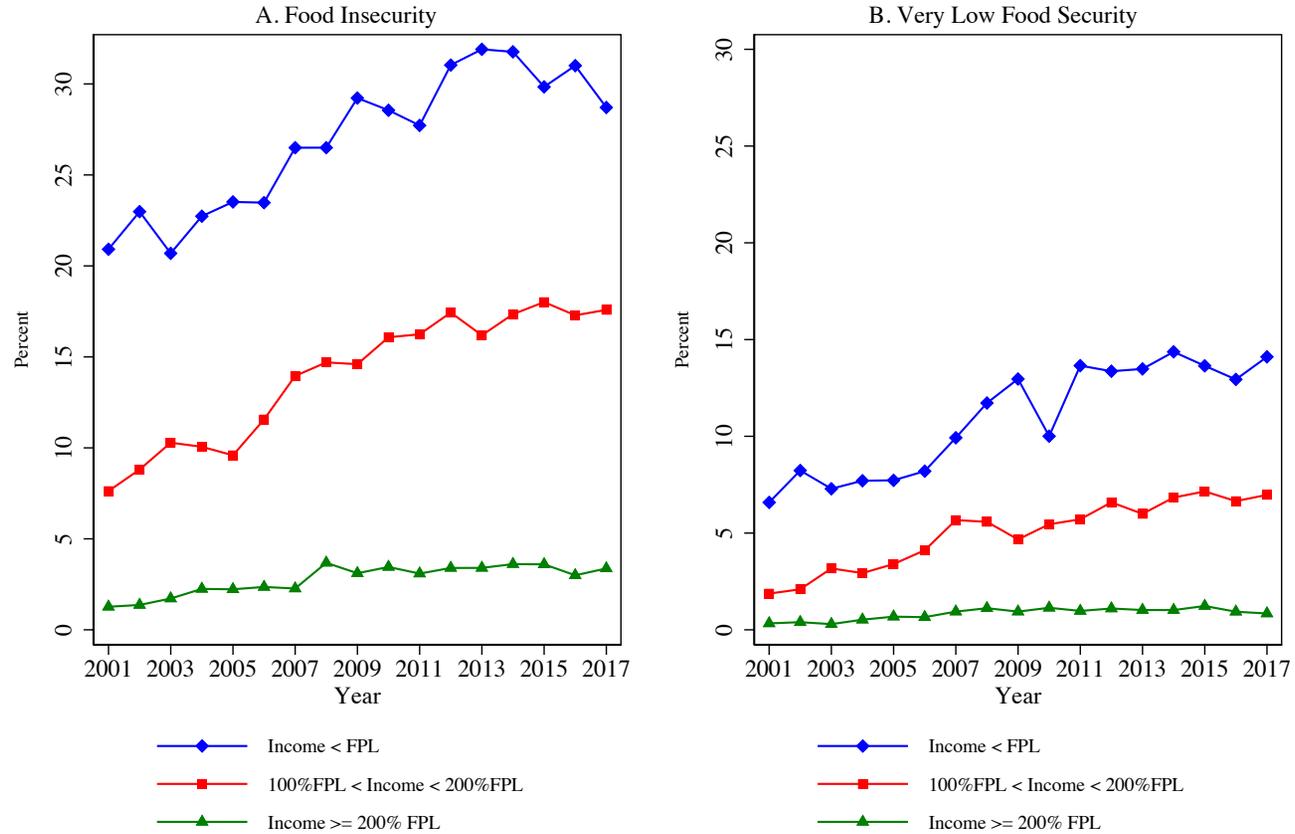
Figure 1. Trends in Food Insecurity among Senior Americans



Correlates of Senior Hunger

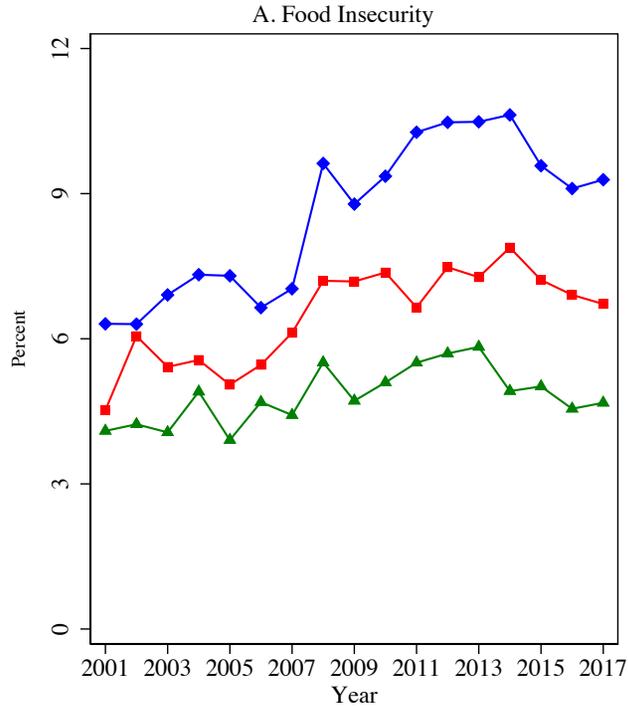
Food Insecurity Risk Declines with Income

Food Insecurity and Very Low Food Security of Seniors by Poverty Status

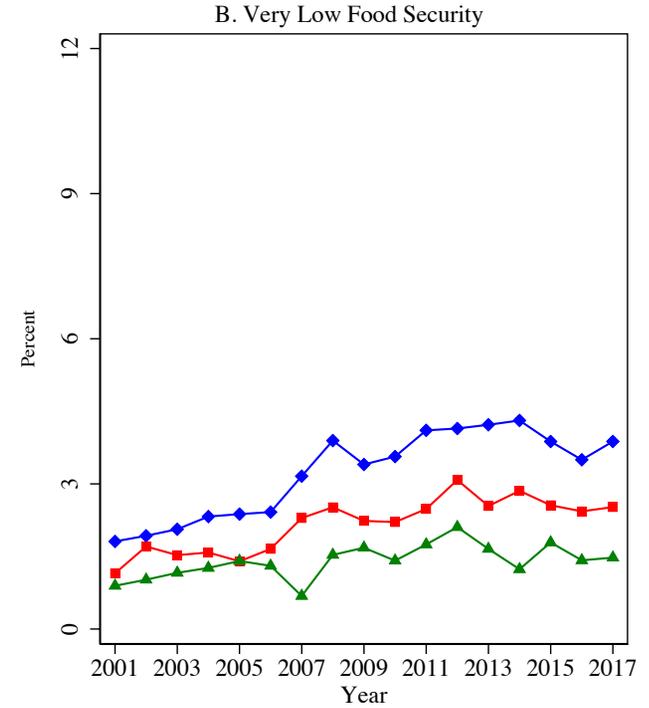


Food Insecurity Risk Declines with Age

Food Insecurity and Very Low Food Security of Seniors by Age



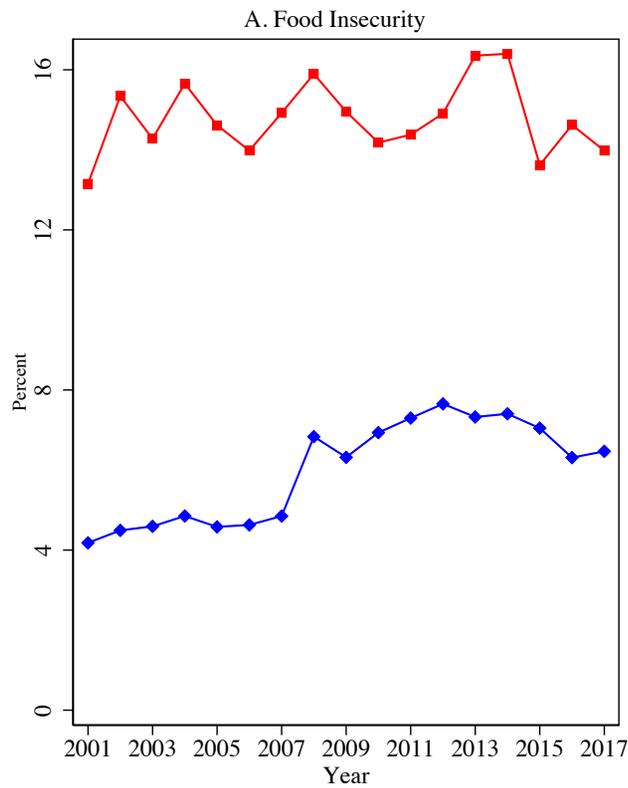
- ◆ 60-69 years old
- 70-79 years old
- ▲ 80+ years old



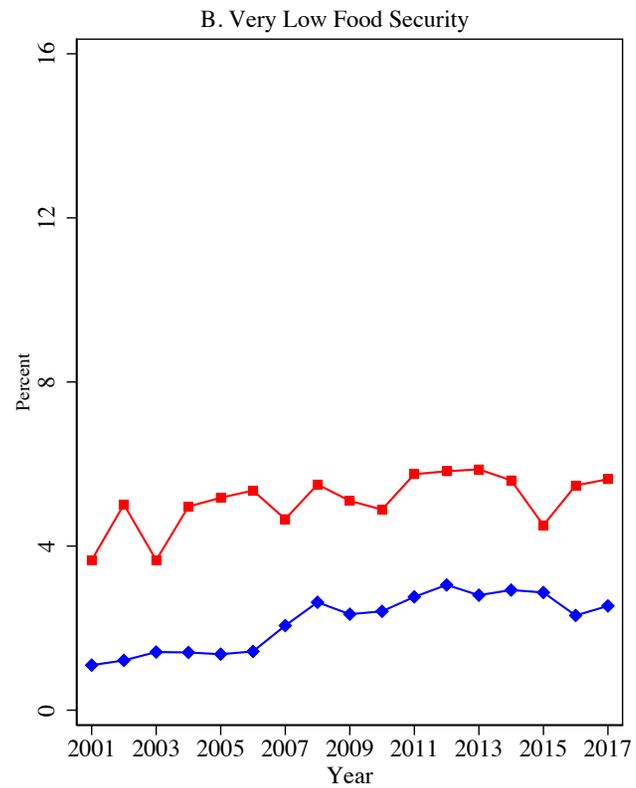
- ◆ 60-69 years old
- 70-79 years old
- ▲ 80+ years old

Food Insecurity Risk Rises Among Minorities

Food Insecurity and Very Low Food Security of Seniors by Race



◆ White ■ Nonwhite



◆ White ■ Nonwhite

Additional Risk Factors

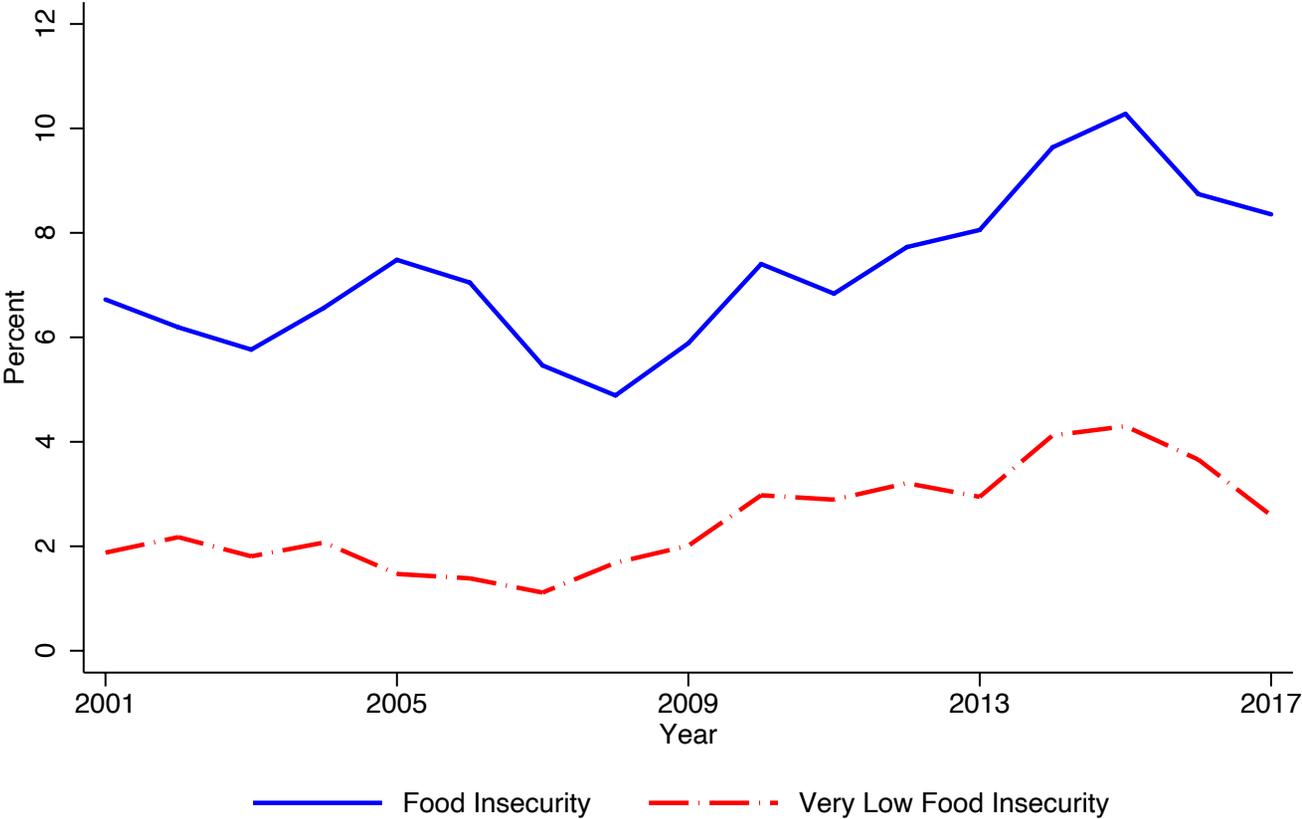
- Controlling for age, income, and race we also find that risk of food insecurity increases among those
 - Without a high school degree
 - Who are divorced or separated
 - Who have a grandchild living in the household
 - Who are disabled

Bringing it Home

Food Insecurity in Kentucky among Seniors

- In a typical year food insecurity among seniors in Kentucky exceeds the national average
- Very low food security in Kentucky is comparable to national average in recent years

Food Insecurity among Seniors in Kentucky

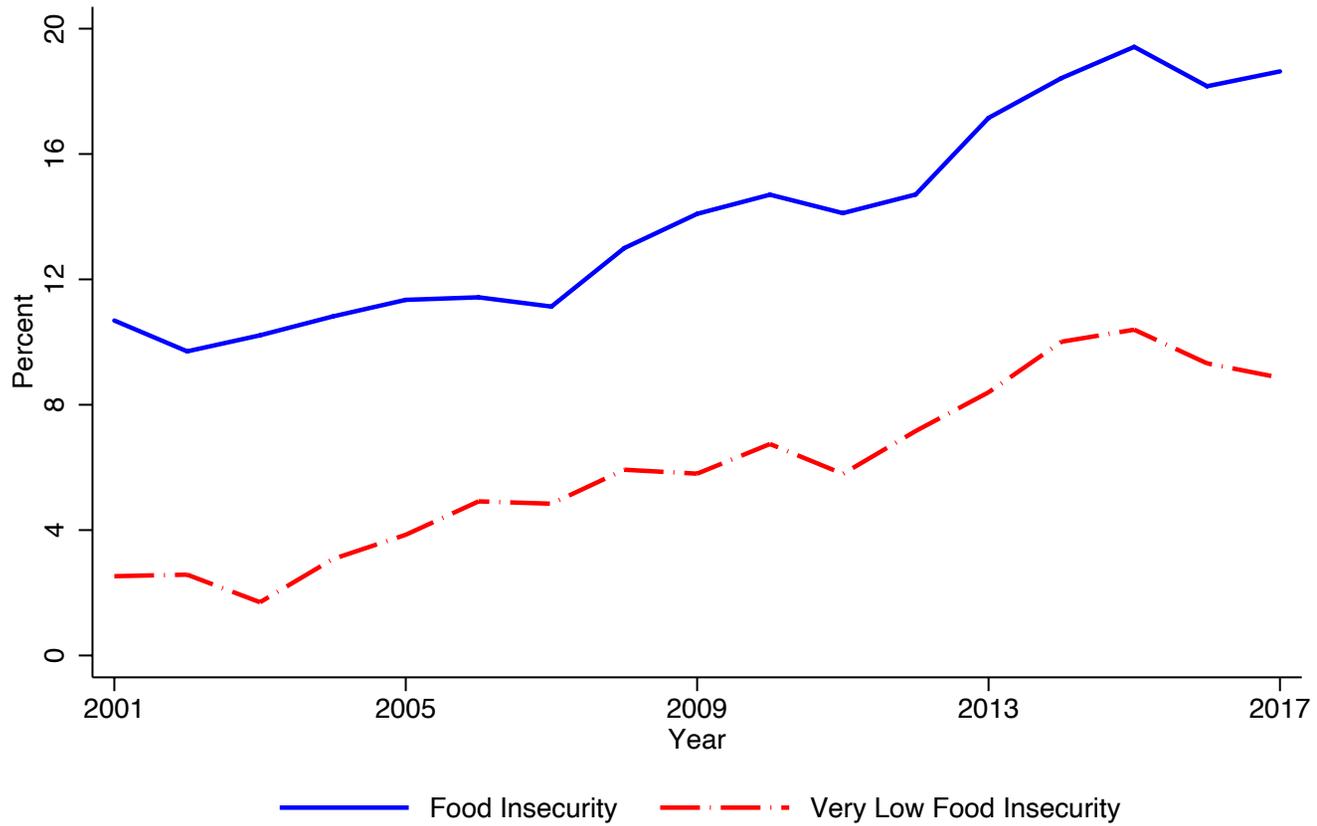


3-year moving averages; 2-year averages in first and last year

Uncertain Headwinds:

**Kentucky has highest food
insecurity rate among 50-59 year
olds**

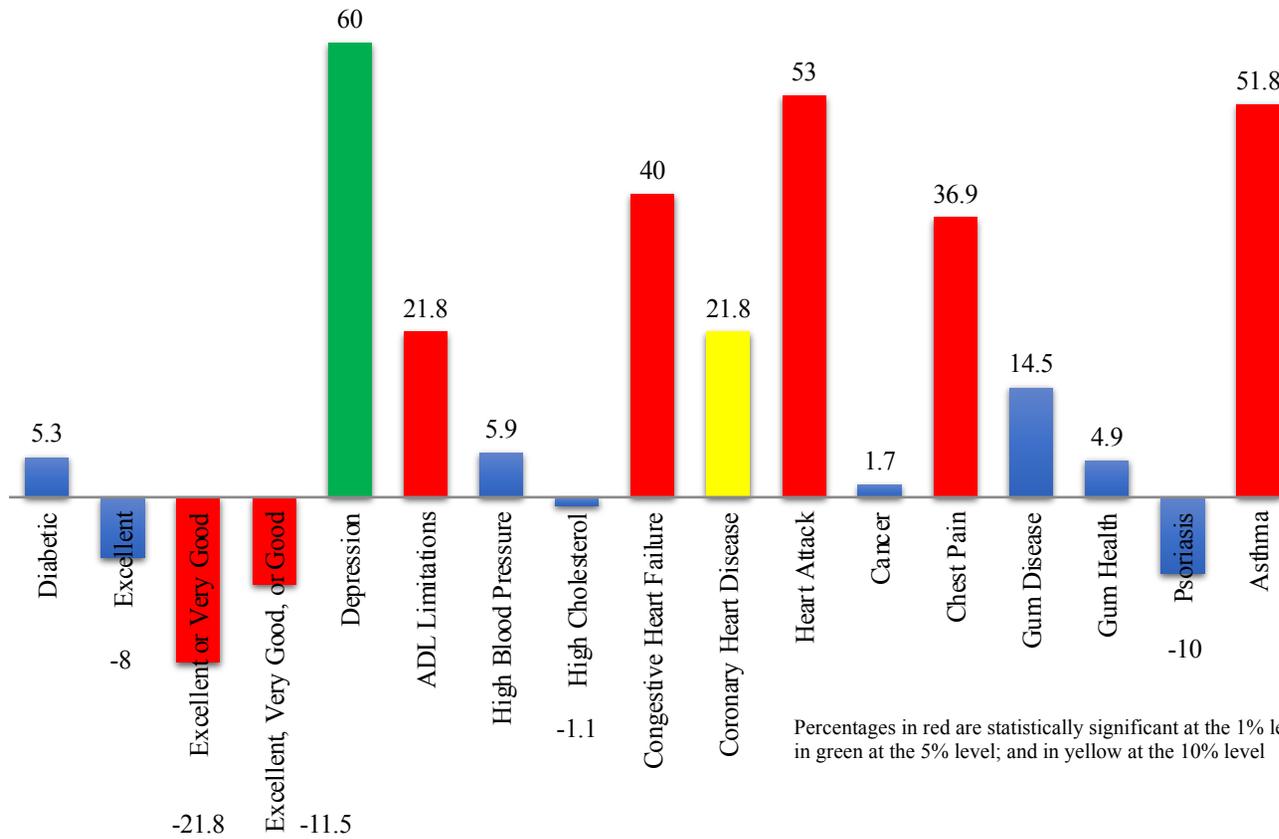
Food Insecurity among 50–59 year olds in Kentucky



3-year moving averages; 2-year averages in first and last year

Health Consequences of Food Insecurity

Regression-Adjusted Estimates of the Effect of Food Insecurity on Health Outcomes of Seniors 60+ (Percent Change Relative to Average of Food Secure Seniors)



Percentages in red are statistically significant at the 1% level; in green at the 5% level; and in yellow at the 10% level

What Can be Done?

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Encourage participation
 - Over 60
 - Between 40 and 60
 - Address barriers for grandparents raising grandchildren
 - Entering program
 - Benefit levels
 - Reevaluate minimum benefit levels
- Reach out to the socially isolated
- Help those with mobility issues
- Recognize importance of informal food assistance programs
 - For those receiving SNAP
 - For those ineligible for SNAP



Thank you!

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References

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- Ziliak, J., C. Gundersen, and M. Haist. 2008. *The Causes, Consequences, and Future of Senior Hunger in America*.