

The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the United States



Addressing the Hidden Crisis of Child Food Insecurity

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Data 608 Story 6

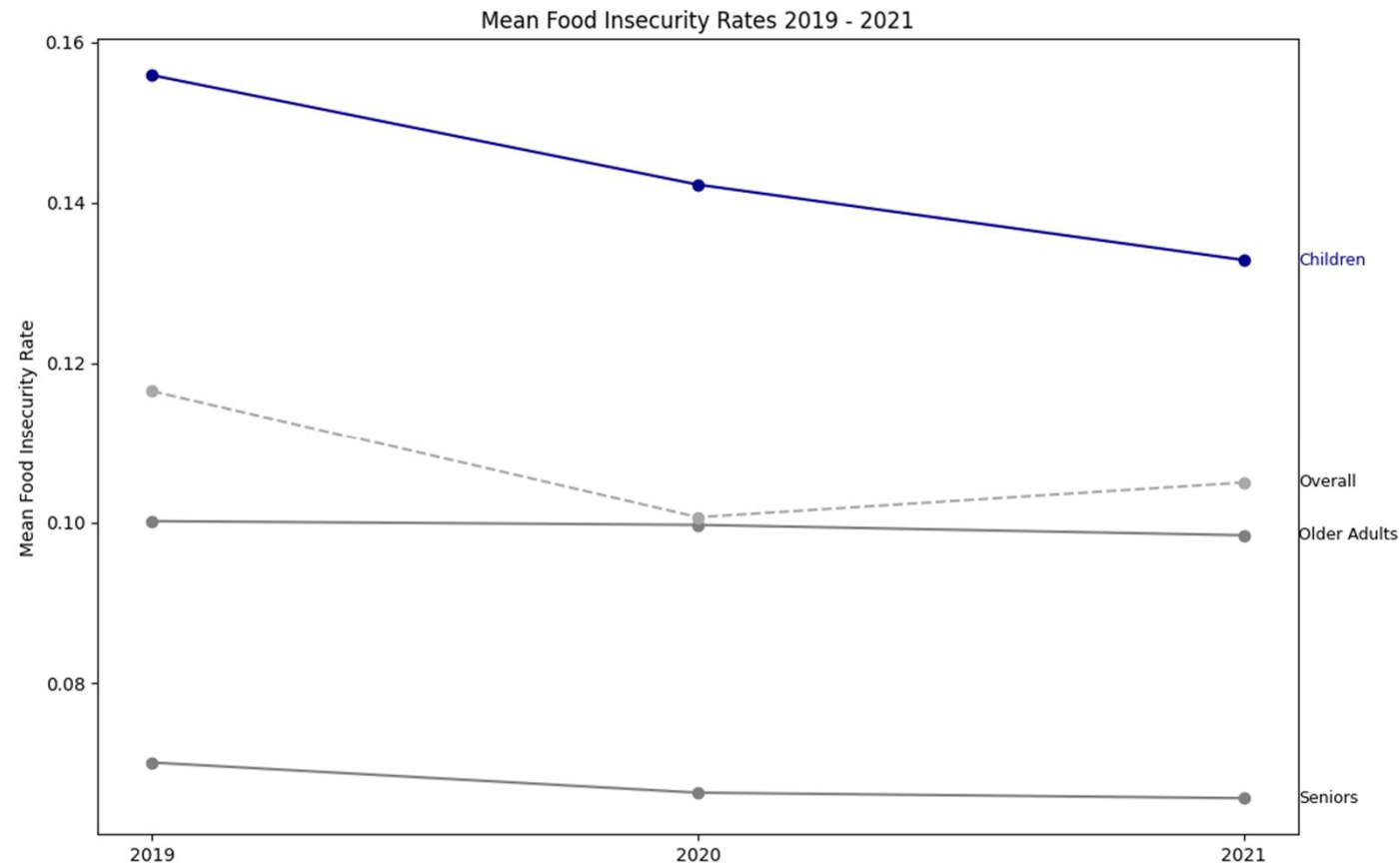
What is Food Insecurity?

- The USDA defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life. This can be a temporary situation for a family or can last a long time. Food insecurity is one way we measure how many people can't afford food.
- More than **44 million people**, including **13 million children** experience food insecurity in the United States.

Source: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity>

Introduction to Food Insecurity in the US

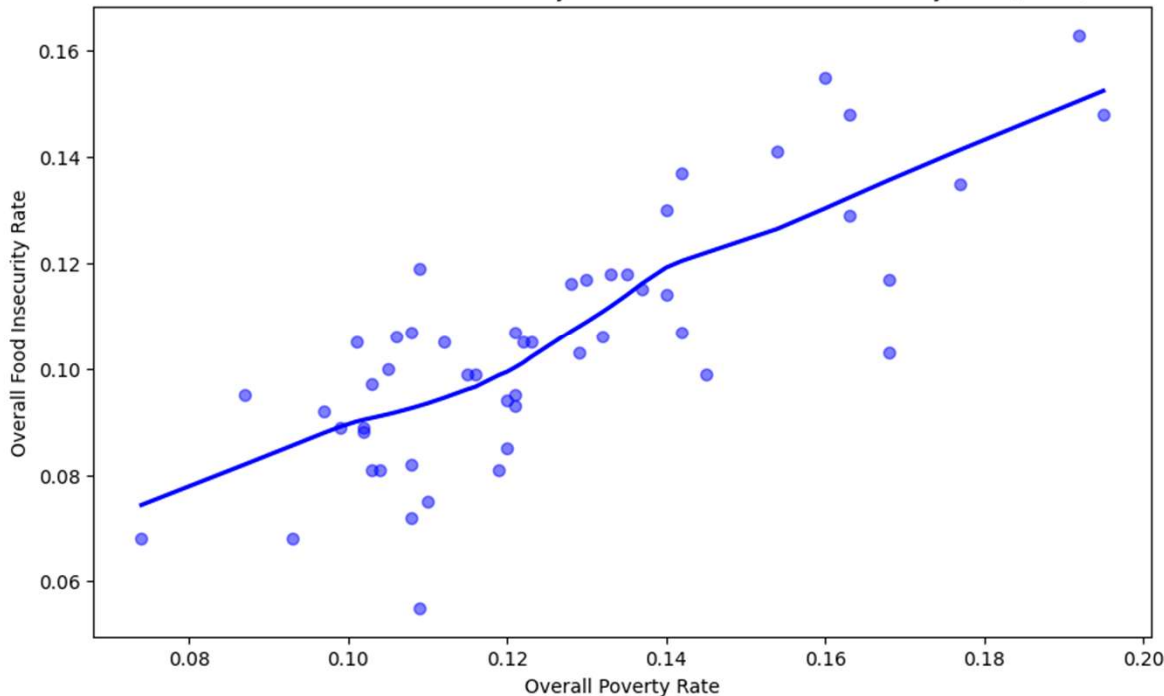
From 2019-2021, the US appeared to be making strides in combating food insecurity as rates remained flat and appear to decrease for children, but the data hides another story...



The Correlation of Poverty & Food Insecurity

A Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.8 indicates a strong positive relationship between poverty and food insecurity. In 2021, the correlation was indicative of increases in both poverty and food insecurity rates.

Correlation Between Overall Poverty Rate and Overall Food Insecurity Rate (2021)

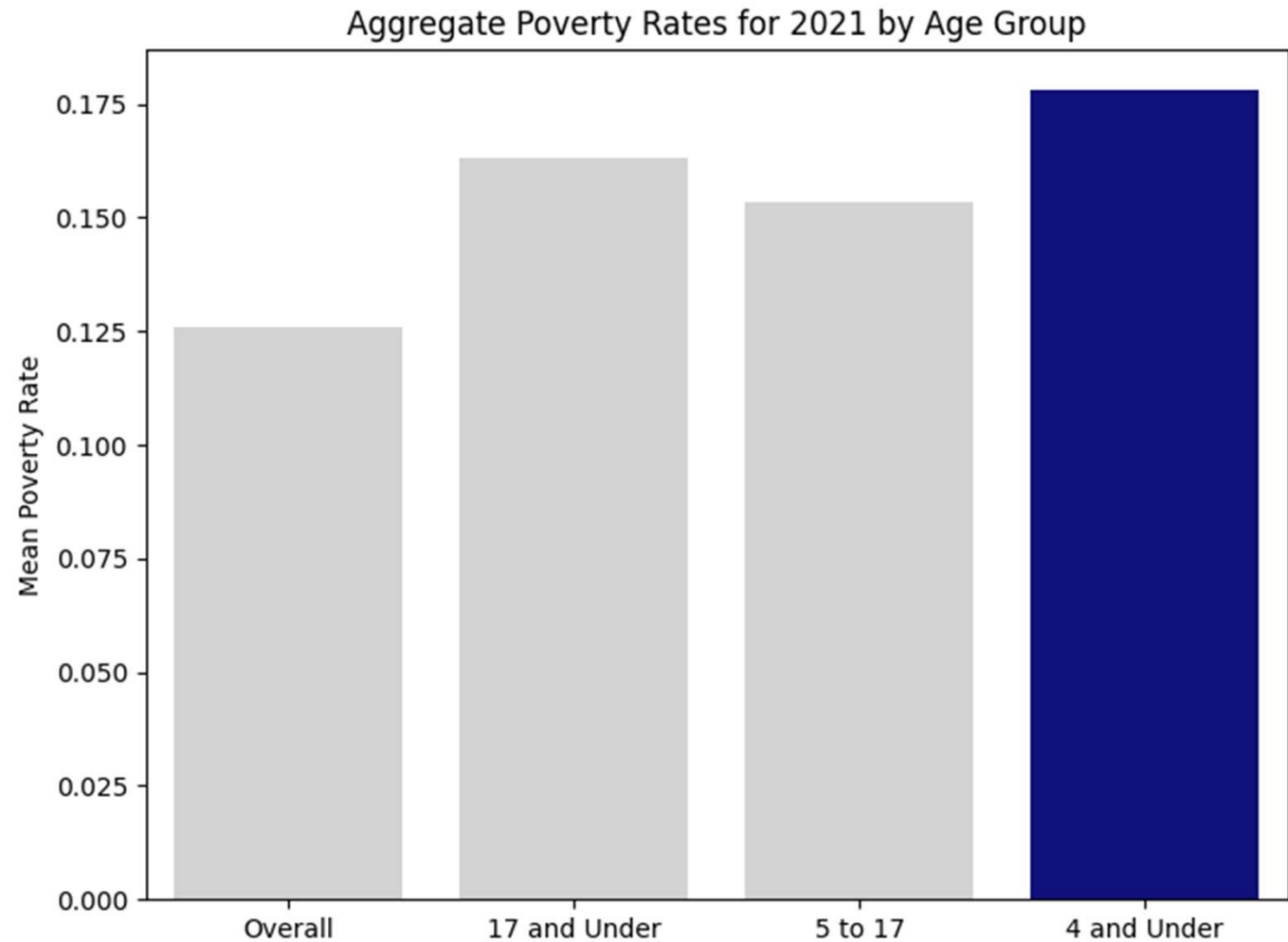


Pearson Correlation Coefficient
(Overall Poverty Rate vs. Overall Food Insecurity Rate, 2021)

Correlation: 0.80

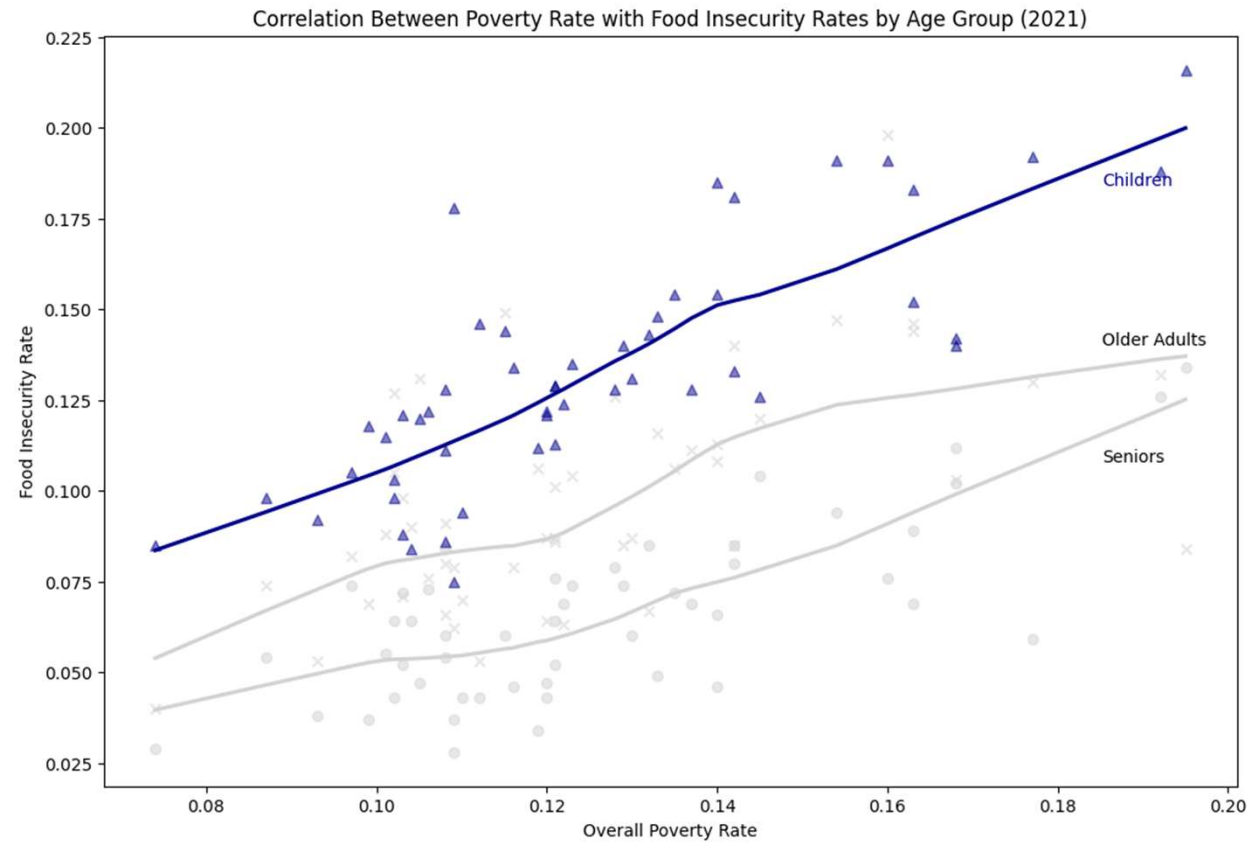
Poverty Affects Children the Most

In 2021, the poverty rate had a greater impact on children over adults and affected children 4-and-under the most.



Poverty & Food Insecurity Correlation by Age Groups

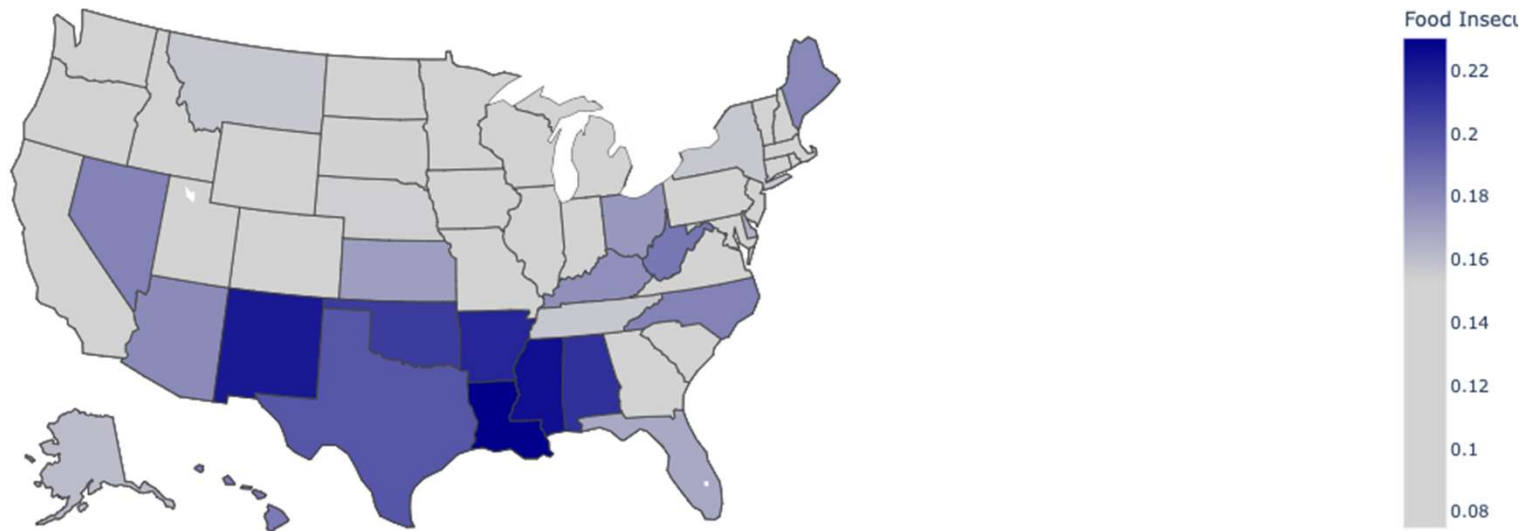
The story of food insecurity is really one of childhood food insecurity and childhood poverty. While the correlation remains for adults and seniors, rates for children significantly outpace their older counterparts.



Food Insecurity for Children in the US 2019 - 2021

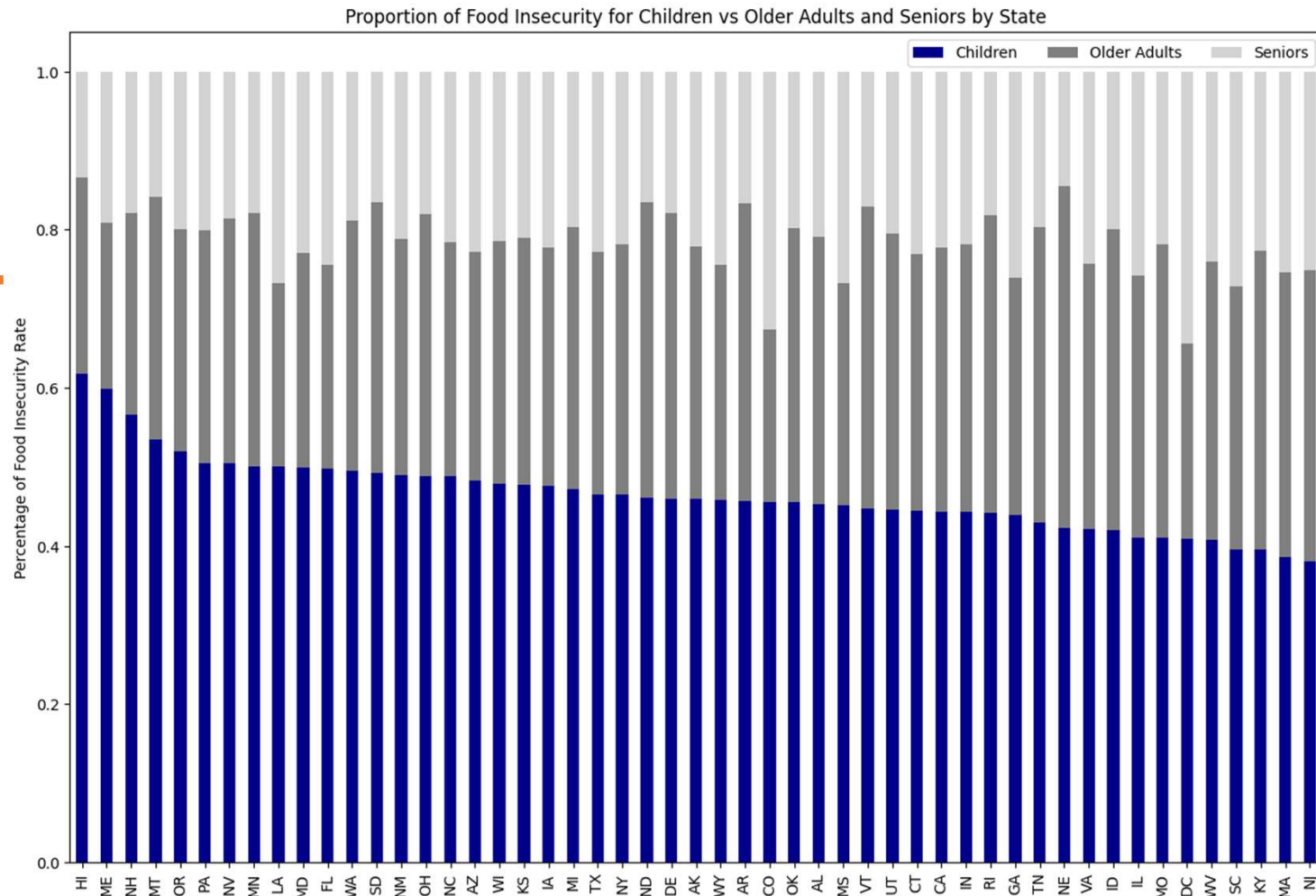
From 2019- 2021, the problem of childhood food insecurity was concentrated in the Southern US States. These States represent about 50% of the childhood food insecurity population.

Child Food Insecurity Rates 2019 - 2021

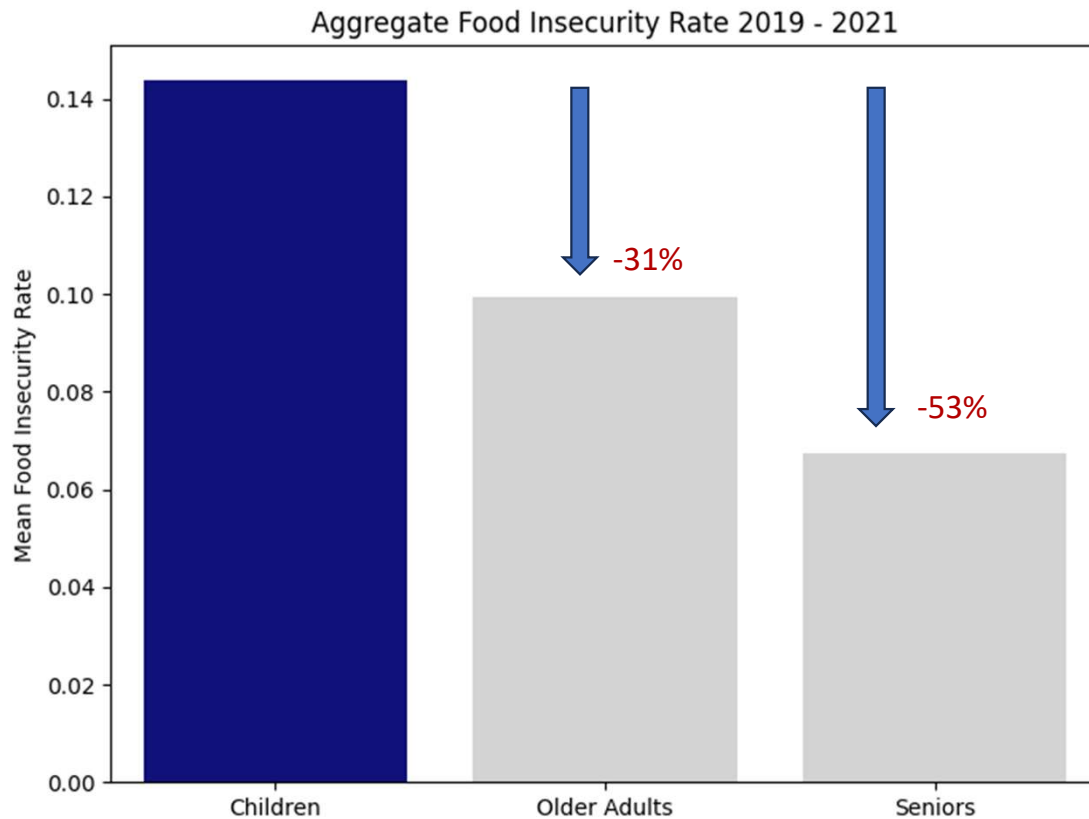


State-Level View of Food Insecurity

Children comprise the largest proportion of food insecurity compared to adults and seniors in all 50 US states and DC.



Food Insecurity Over Time as Children Age



Food insecurity reduces as children age into adults and seniors but are still likely to belong to the 69% of adults and 47% of seniors that are food insecure. Food Insecure children are likely to be food insecure adults.

Call to Action

To Address Childhood Food Insecurity:

- 1. Expand Nutrition Assistance:** Increase funding for SNAP and WIC to cover more families in poverty, with a special focus on children's nutritional needs.
- 2. Boost Early Childhood Nutrition:** Invest in school and community-based nutrition programs to ensure accessible, healthy meals for children from low-income families.
- 3. Enhance Local Food Access:** Support policies to improve local food systems, making healthy food more accessible in underserved areas and food deserts.

Conclusion

- 1.Strong Correlation:** There is a strong, undeniable correlation between poverty levels and food insecurity rates, particularly impacting children.
- 2.Breaking the Cycle:** Effective strategies to reduce poverty and improve food access are key to breaking the cycle of food insecurity as children age. Far too many food insecure children grow up to be food insecure adults and seniors.
- 3.National Priority:** Tackling child food insecurity must be a national priority to ensure a healthier, more equitable future for all children – particularly in Southern US states that have a concentration of both poverty and food insecurity

Data Sources

2021 Poverty Estimates

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/county-level-data-sets/county-level-data-sets-download-data/>

2019 – 2021 Food Insecurity Survey

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/map-the-meal-gap/by-county>