

Older Adults and Food Stamps

Recent Research

Nationally, 80% of impoverished older adults don't get food stamps

Food insecurity in older adults is associated with

- Worsened disease/disability
- Depression
- Stress/strain
- Caregiver strain
- Hospitalization
- Earlier death

Who is at risk?

- Oldest old (85+ years of age)
- Men
- Isolated (no children in the home; not getting other services)

Key Sources:

Fuller-Thomson, E., & Redmond, M. (2008). Falling through the social safety net: food stamp use and nonuse among older impoverished americans. *The Gerontologist*, 48(2), 235

Nicoll, K. L. (2015). Why Do Eligible Households Not Participate in Public Antipoverty Programs?: A Review. *Journal of Poverty*, 19(4), 445-465.

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Resources and Coffee Break notes

We would expect that older adults' level of *need* (e.g., their health and income status) would be the most important factor in whether they get food stamps or not. However, research suggests that it is older adults' *enabling characteristics* (e.g., education, use of other social assistance programs) that are most predictive of whether they get food stamps.

This suggests a need for broader outreach and education, especially among vulnerable older adults and their families

Why might older adults not use SNAP benefits?

- Lower (actual or perceived) nutritional needs
- Fewer competing costs (e.g., no longer paying a mortgage or rent)
- Lack of knowledge about eligibility or how to apply
- Lack of support/assistance in applying
- Intimidated by EBT cards
- Stigma

What does that mean for UWEX educators?

Opportunity to raise awareness among individuals, families, and community partners

E.g., "Public service announcements" in other programs targeting older adults *and their families*.

E.g., Lunch and learns; Caregiver Cafes; StrongWomen. Even if it isn't relevant for the individual, it may be relevant for their neighbor, their parent, etc.

Notes