

Food Insecurity in Dane County

Focus on Older Adults

Area Agency on Aging of Dane County Nutrition & Wellness Committee Meeting, 11/12/25

Presented by Devika Suri, MS, MPH, PhD

Data & Research Curator, Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin

devika.suri@secondharvestsw.org



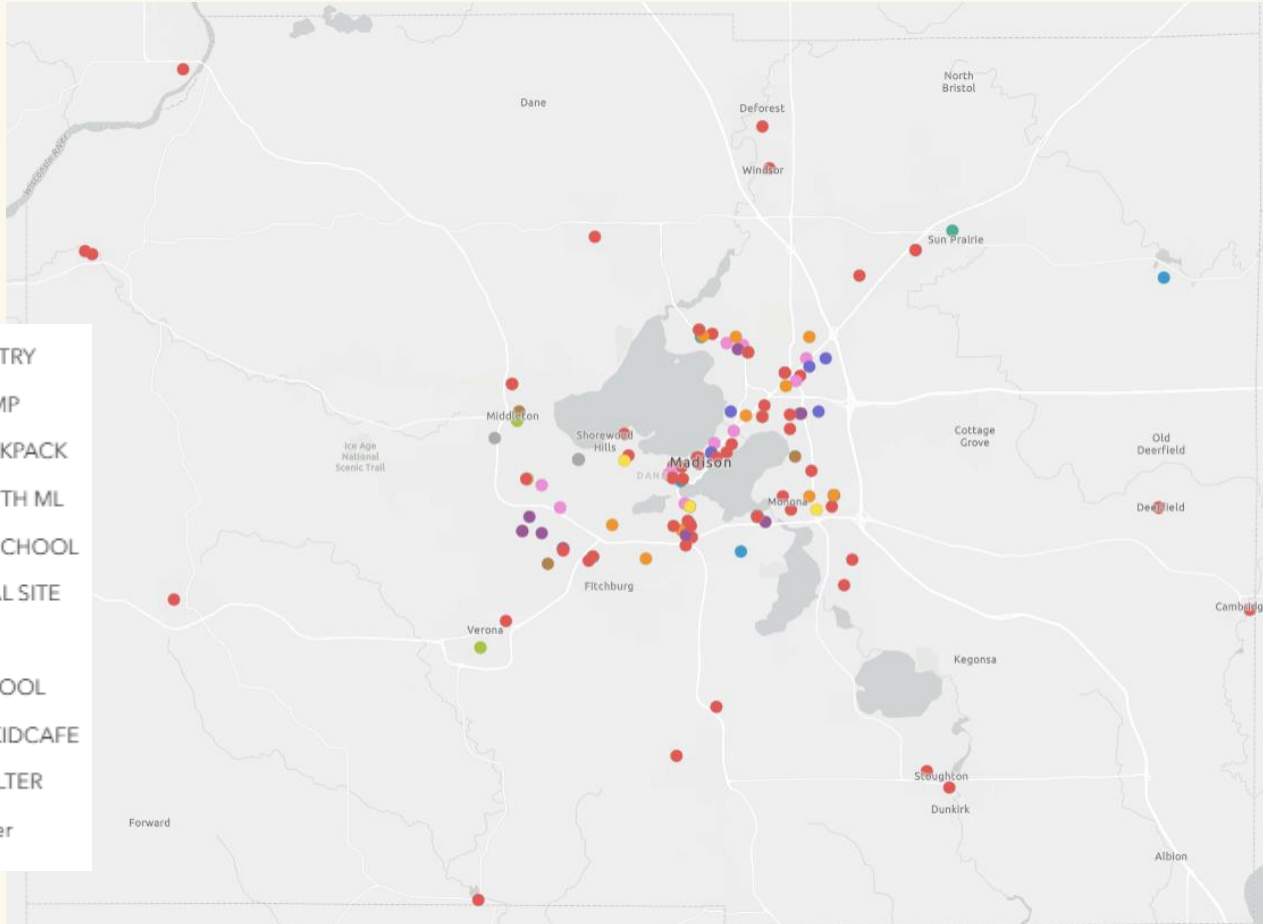
Presentation Outline

- Food insecurity in Dane County
- Food insecurity and population trends among older adults
- Food resources for older adults in Dane County





Second Harvest Foodbank works with 285 partners & programs to distribute food across 16 counties in Southern Wisconsin



- **141 Dane County partners:**
 - Food Pantries & Mobile Pantries (drive-thru)
 - Schools and Colleges
 - Community Centers & Cultural Orgs
 - Places of Worship
 - Meal Sites
 - Shelters & Residential Facilities
- Majority of partners receive **more than half of their food** from Second Harvest.
- SHF is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit, mostly privately funded, thus **not directly affected by Gov shutdown**

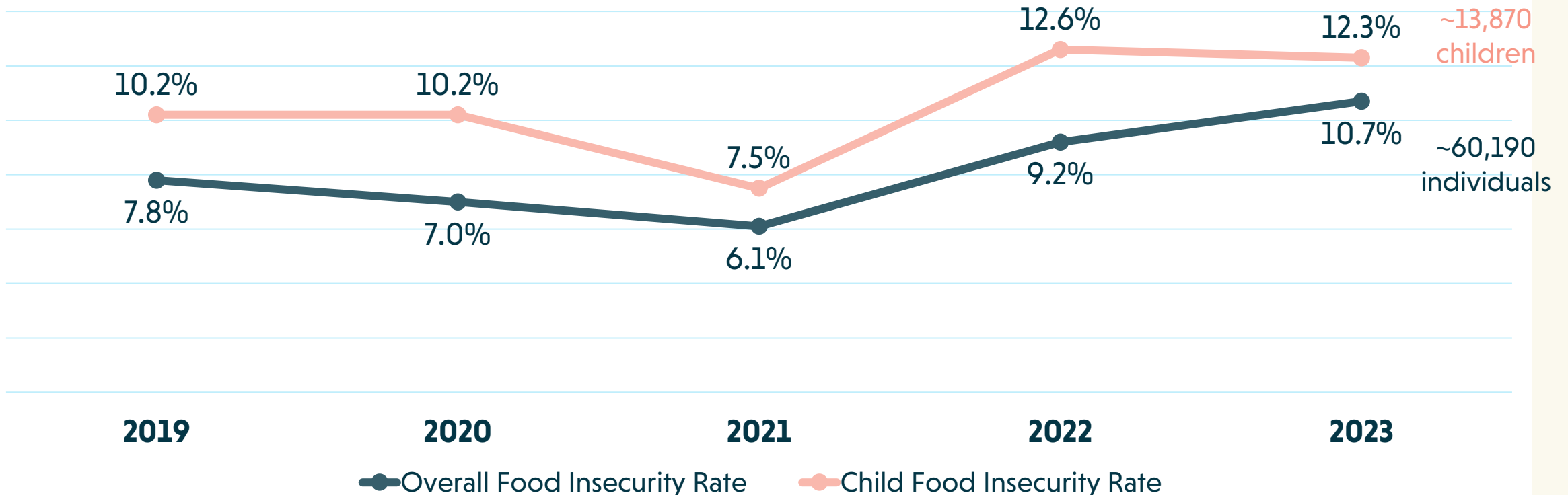
Food Insecurity in Dane County

Food insecurity is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food (USDA definition).

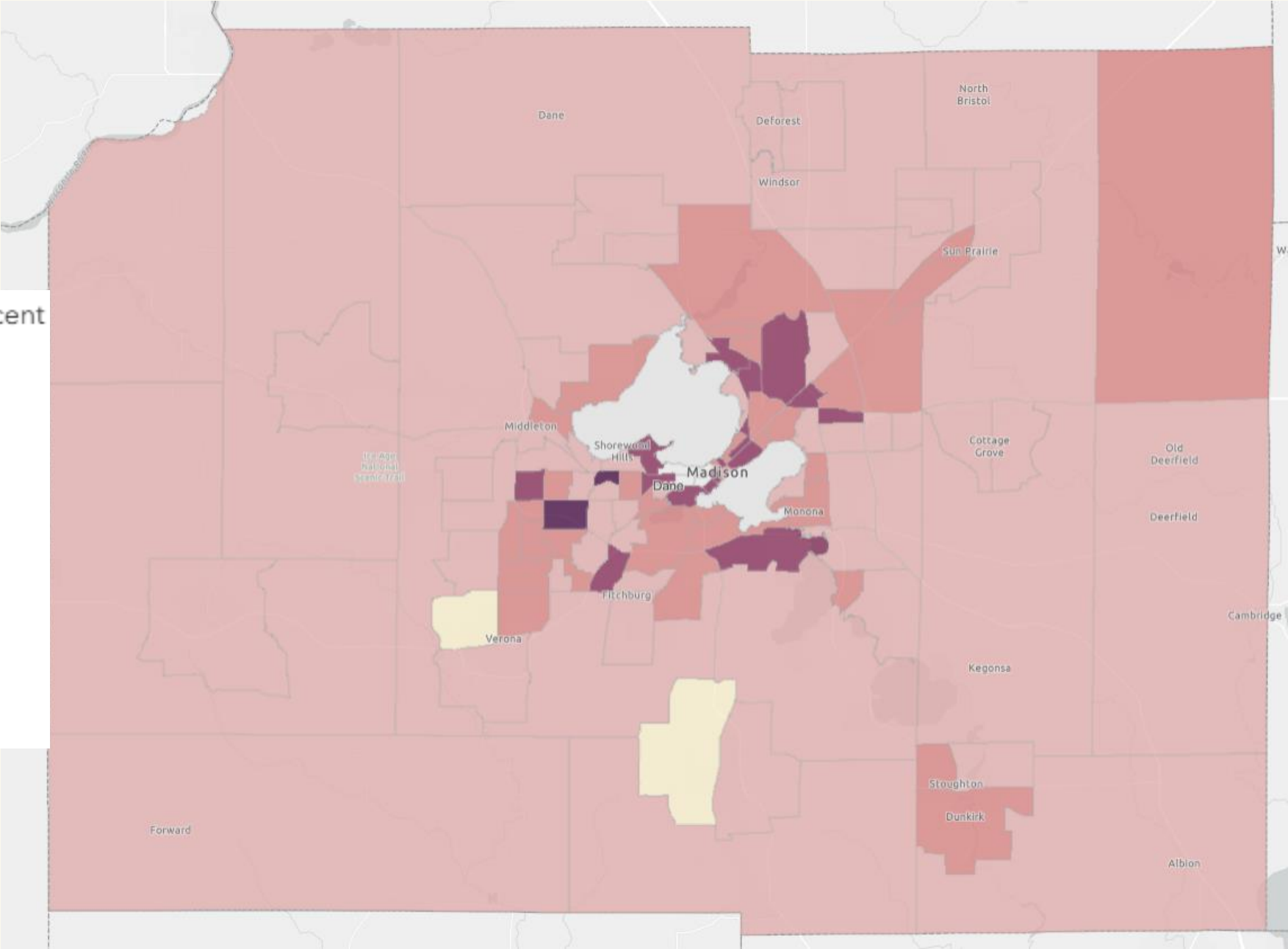
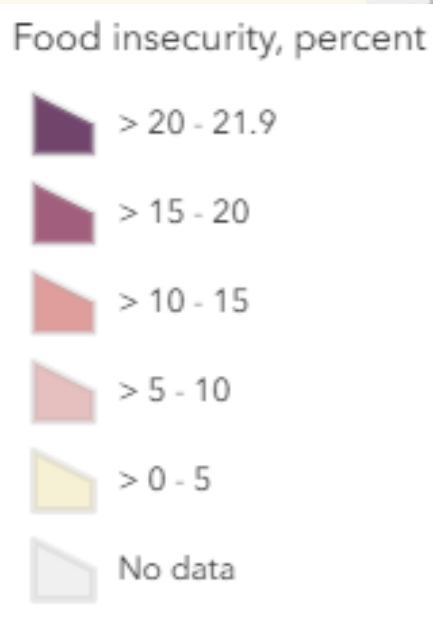


Food insecurity in Dane County has risen since 2021

Food insecurity rate overall and among children, Dane County, 2019-2023



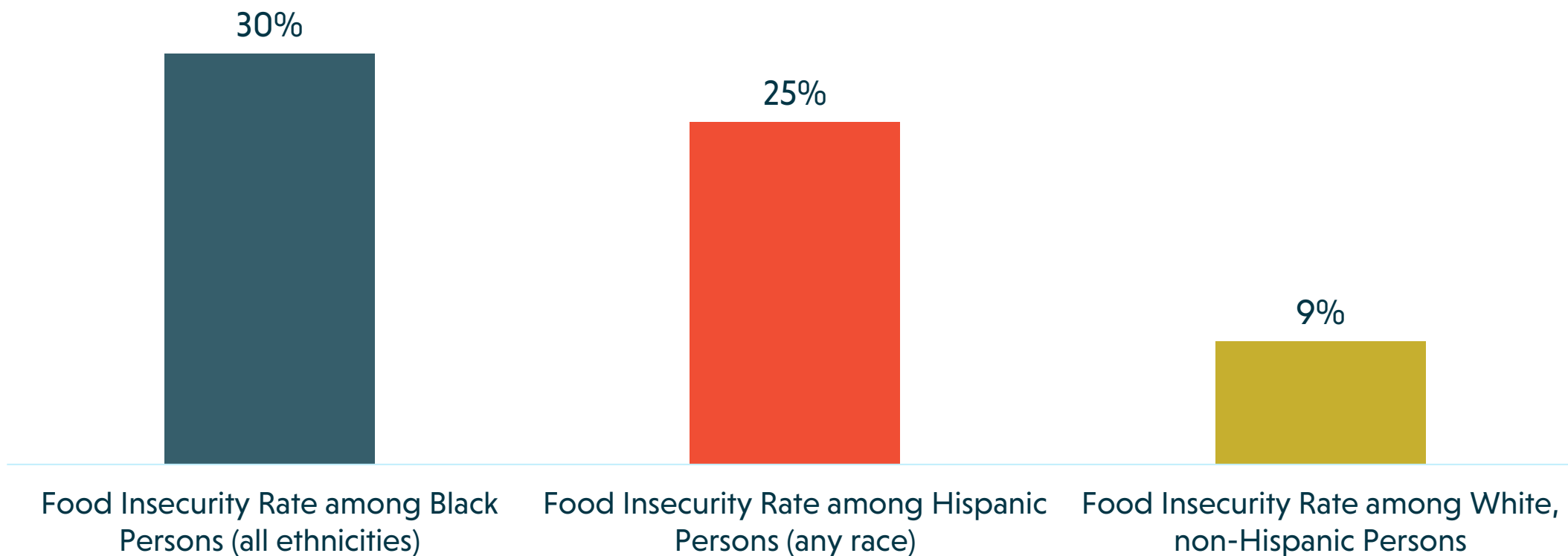
Food insecurity rate by Census tract, Dane County, 2023





Food insecurity is higher among Black and Hispanic Dane residents

Food Insecurity Rate by Race/Ethnicity, Dane County, 2023





Almost half of food insecure Dane County residents are **NOT** eligible for SNAP

48% of food insecure residents are ABOVE threshold for SNAP eligibility

42% of food insecure children are in households ABOVE 185% of federal poverty level



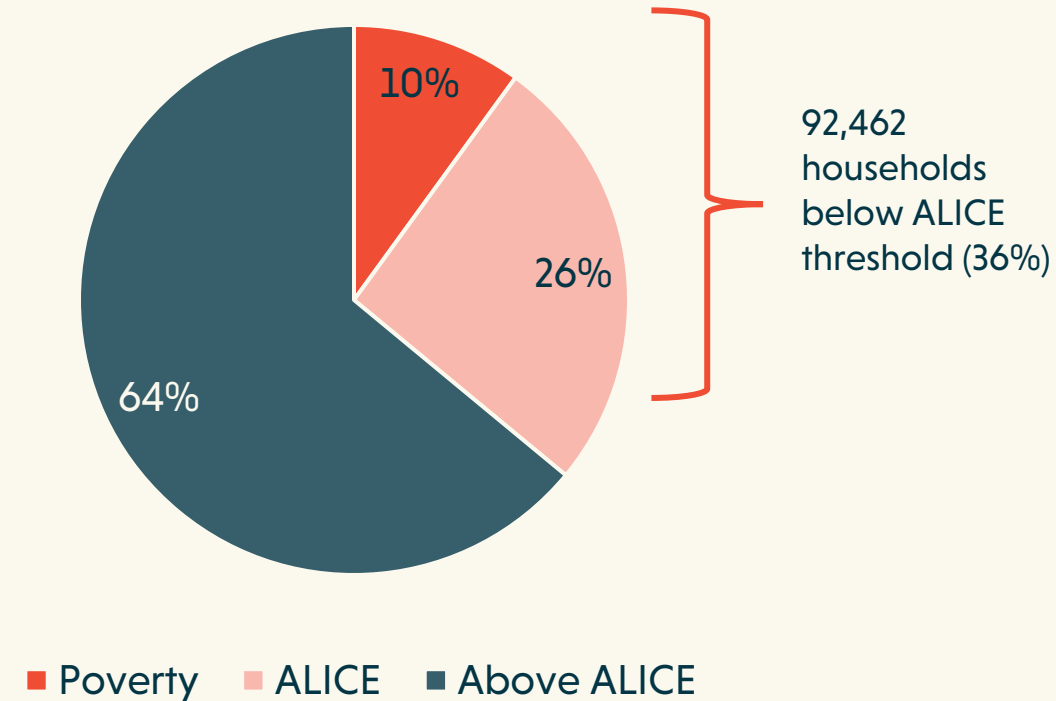


ALICE Report 2025

ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed
— households with income above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) but less than the basic cost of living in their county

	Single adult	Family of four
2023 Federal Poverty Level	\$14,580	\$30,000
2023 ALICE Survival Budget (Dane County)	\$34,800	\$81,216
<i>ALICE Stability Budget (WI)</i>	<i>\$47,868</i>	<i>\$113,940</i>

Percent of households by income category, Dane County, 2023



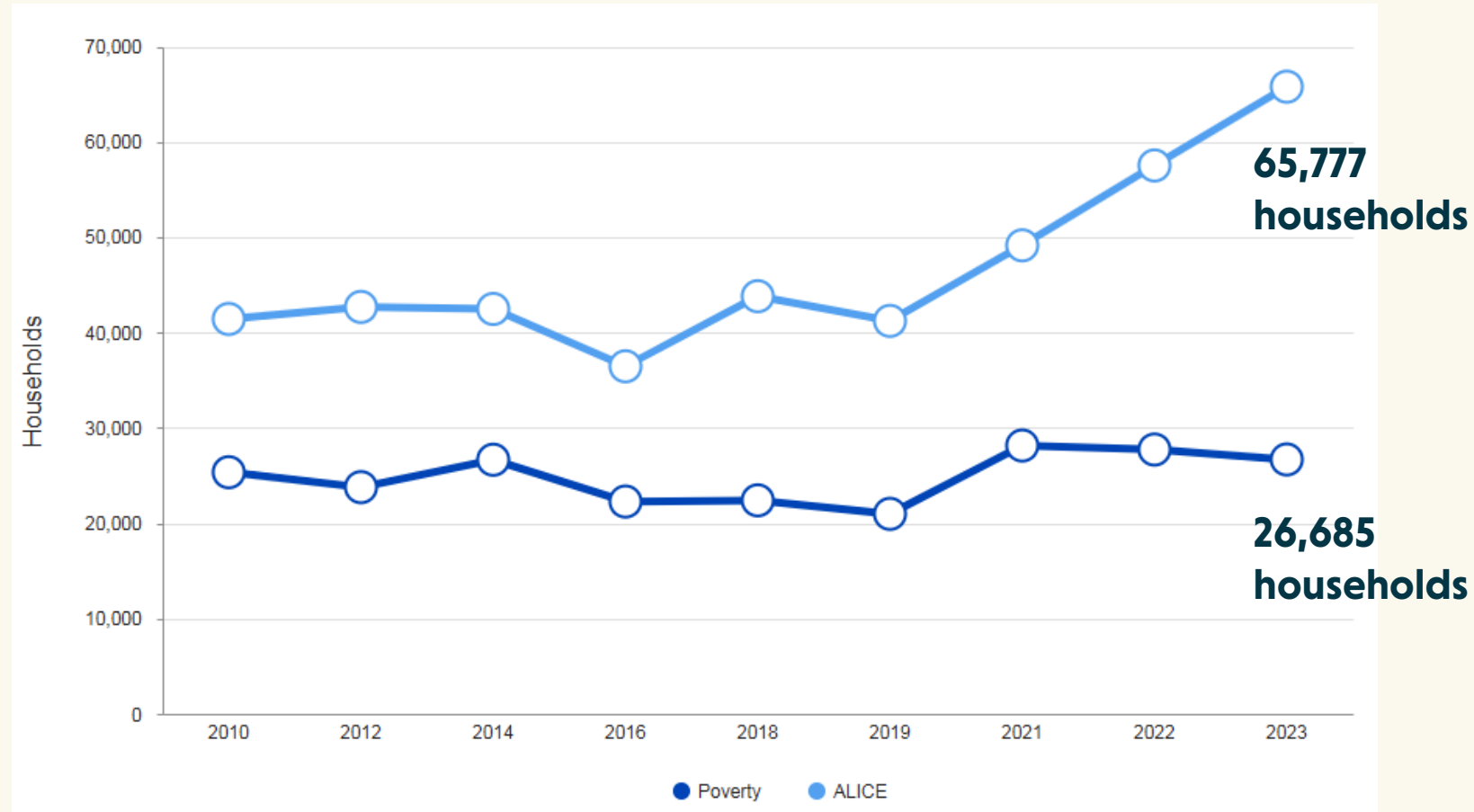
Source: <https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/wisconsin>



Number of households in "ALICE gap" increasing in Dane County

Households in Dane County with income below Federal Poverty Level and households with income between FPL and ALICE threshold

May partly explain dramatic increase in demand we're seeing within the charitable food system...





Evidence of current increased need

- Majority of Second Harvest partners have seen an increase in visits for the past two years in a row
- SNAP cuts + Gov shutdown causing further increase in need
- 6 large pantries in Dane County just published press release: *Delayed SNAP Benefits Cause Significant Increases in Demand at Area Food Pantries* (11/4/25)
<https://www.riverfoodpantry.org/blog/press-releases/delayed-snap-benefits-cause-significant-increases-in-demand-at-area-food-pantries/>



"Last Tuesday, we saw our highest number of customers ever in our food pantry," said Goodman Community Center's Director of Food Resources, Francesca Frisque.

Local Food Insecurity and Population Growth Trends among Older Adults

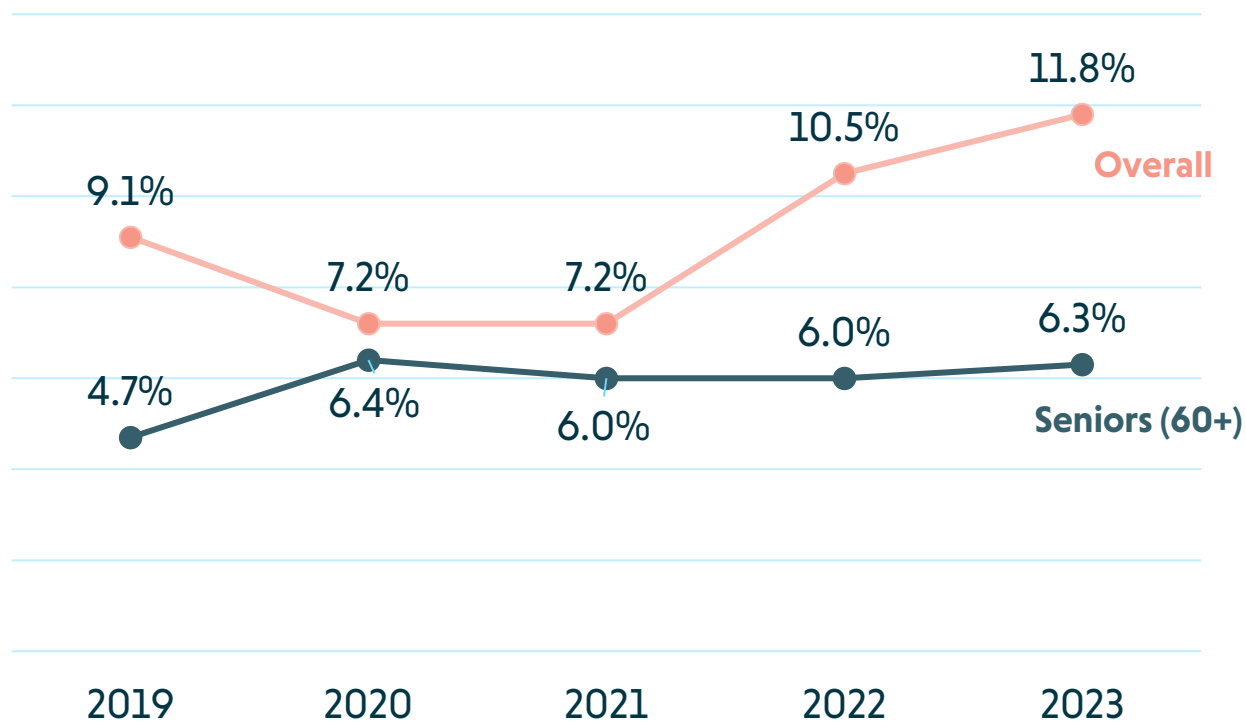


Senior Food Insecurity



Wisconsin:

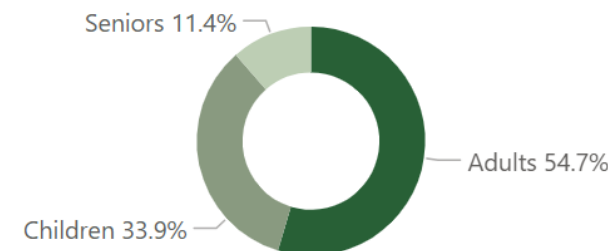
Food insecurity rate among seniors (60+) in Wisconsin, 2019-23



Dane County:

- Nearly **5,000 seniors supported monthly** through SHF Dane County partners (pantries, meal sites, shelters, etc)
 - SHF partners have reported increases in visits for 2 years in a row
- **11% of individuals supported** at SHF Dane County partners **are seniors**
 - 13% seniors at Dane mobile pantries

Proportion of Adults, Children & Seniors (60+) Supported
For all selected years (does not include SHF mobiles)

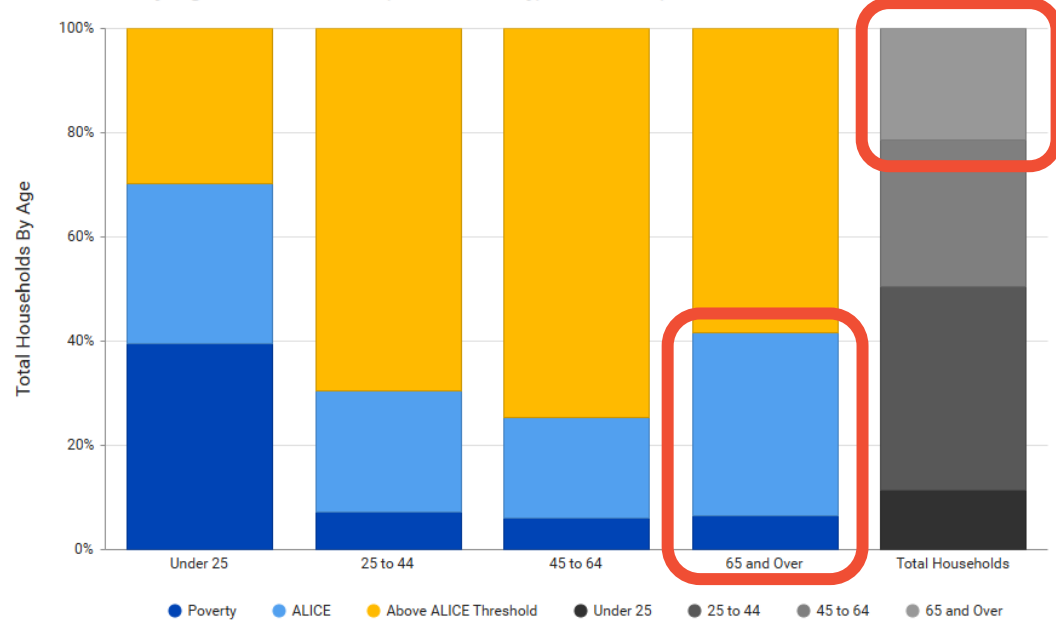




42% of Senior Households Are Below ALICE Threshold (vs 36% for all ages)

Dane County Household Income Category by Age Group

Households by Age of Householder, Dane County, Wisconsin, 2023



65 and Over

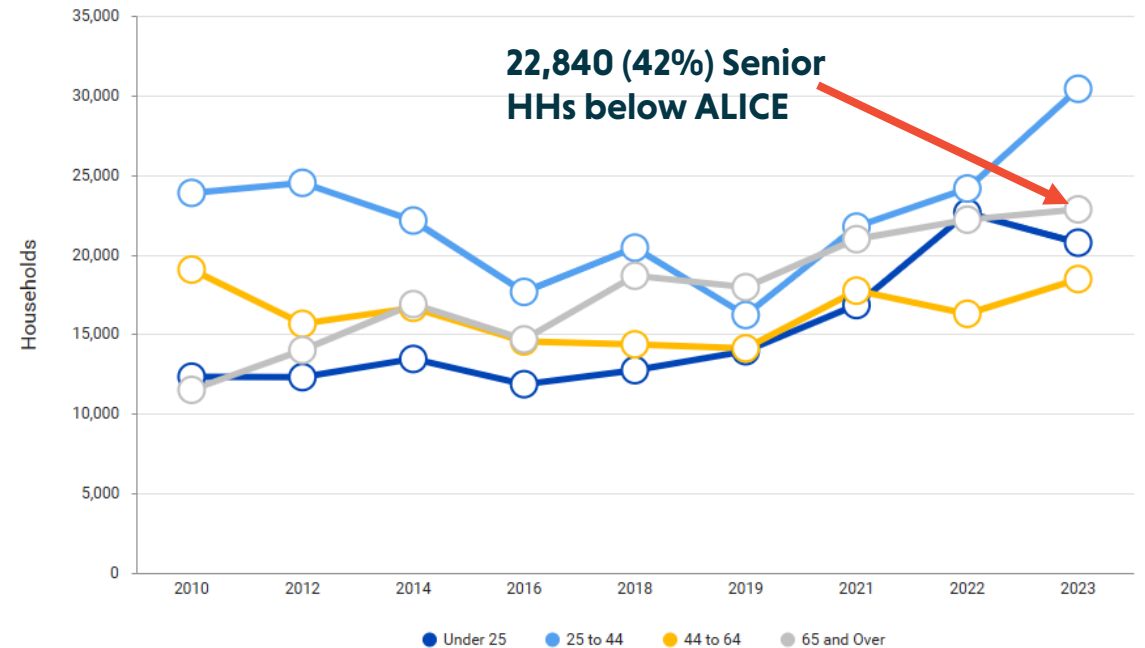
Above ALICE Threshold:	32,045
ALICE:	19,280
Poverty:	3,560

Total Households

65 and Over:	54,885
45 to 64:	72,965
25 to 44:	100,110
Under 25:	29,568

Dane County ALICE + Poverty Households, by Age Group, 2010-2023

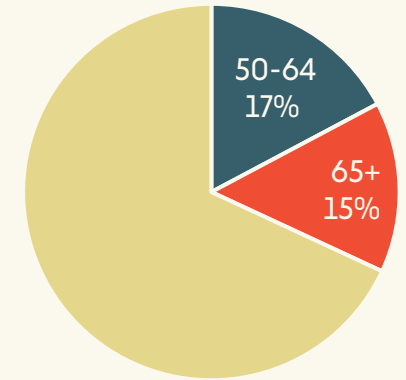
Households by Age of Householder Over Time, Dane County, Wisconsin, 2010-2023



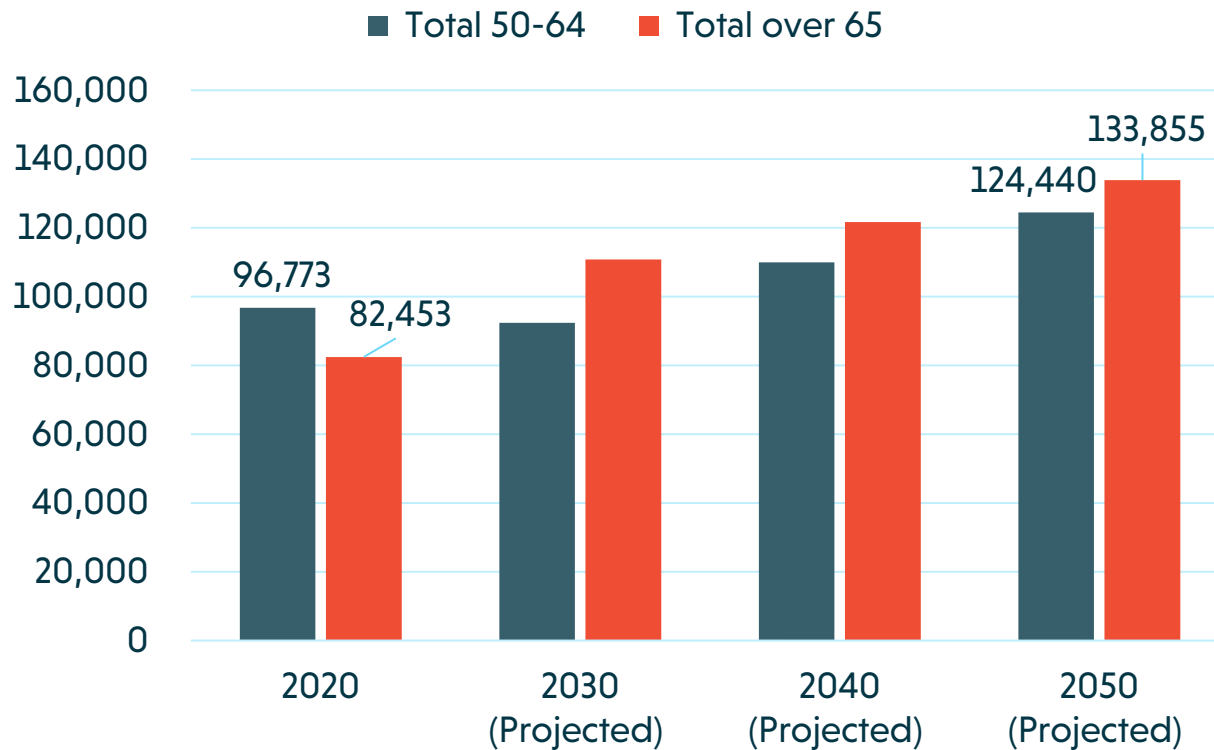


Older adult population projected to grow 62% in Dane County by 2050

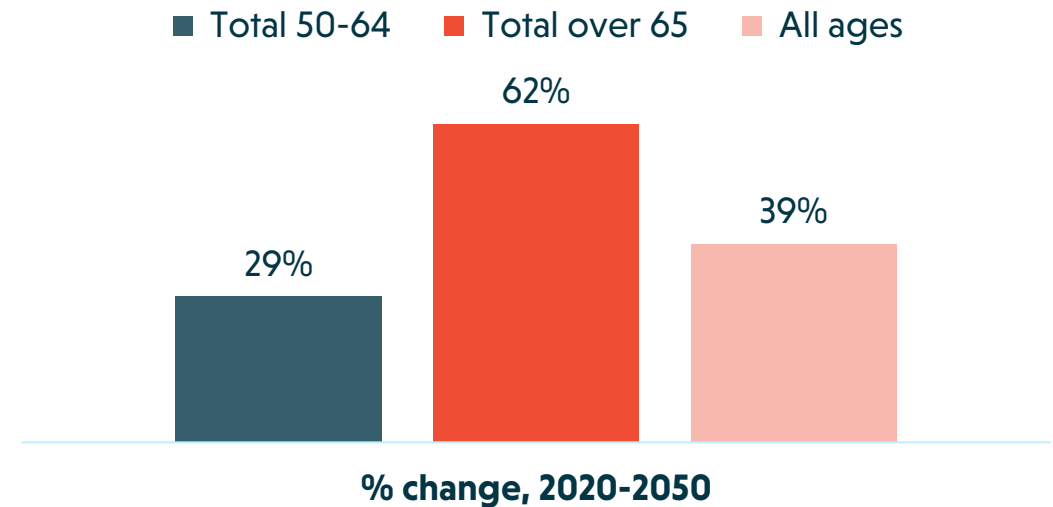
Proportion of older adults in Dane County population, 2020



Projected population of older adults through 2050, Dane County



Projected population change 2020-2050, Dane County



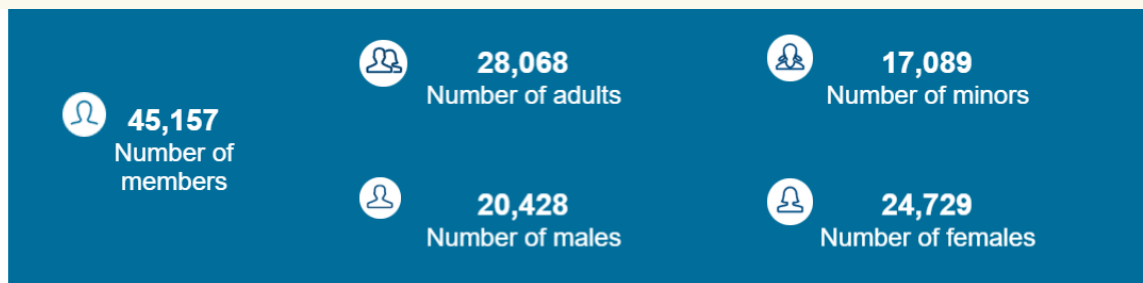
Source: County Age-Sex Population Projections, 2020-2050, WI Dept of Administration, Division of Intergovernmental Relations, Demographic Services Center https://doa.wi.gov/Pages/LocalGovtsGrants/Population_Projections.aspx



Foodshare (SNAP) and Older Adults

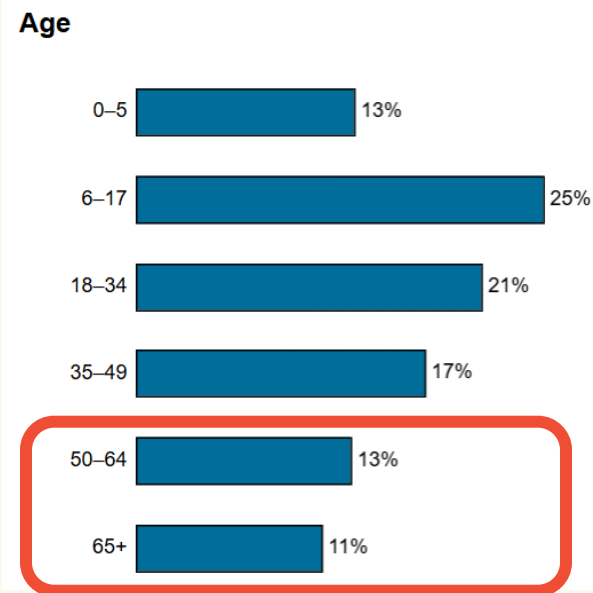
As of 11/7/25, FoodShare November benefits were distributed to WI members' QUEST cards

FoodShare Members in Dane County, October 2025



~1 out of 4 FoodShare recipients in Dane County is an older adult

- 5,900 age 50-64
- 5,000 age 65+



SNAP Matters for Older Adults

SNAP has many economic and health benefits for older adults



- food security
- food purchasing power
- preventative health care use
- medication adherence



- poverty
- depression risk
- nursing home admission and costs
- hospitalizations and hospital costs

Figure 5: Hunger is a Health Issue for Older Adults, Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

Wisconsin Department of Health Services. FoodShare Wisconsin Data.

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare/rsdata.htm>

Senior Hunger Research. Feeding America. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/senior-hunger-research>



Food Insecurity and Health in Older Adults

Multiple Chronic Health Conditions

Approximately

77%

of older adults 65 years and older have two or more chronic health conditions and older adults with multiple chronic conditions are at greater risk for food insecurity.^{10, 11}



Almost **two-thirds** of all deaths among older adults are due to heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes.¹¹



Adults with good diet quality are shown to have **decreased risks** of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, neurodegenerative diseases, frailty, and all-cause mortality—all of which are experienced at a greater rate in the older adult population.¹²

Mental Health

1 in 4

older adults experience a mental health problem including depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, or dementia.¹¹

Despite depression not being a normal part of the aging process, older adults are at increased risk for experiencing loneliness and depression due to experiencing two or more chronic health conditions.¹¹

1 in 3 older adults experiences limitations in activities such as preparing meals and housekeeping.

— Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Prioritizing Health Equity & Food Security: Spotlight on Older Americans. *Feeding America 2024.*

https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/FA_HealthEQ_OlderAdults_2024_f.pdf

Food Resources for Older Adults in Dane County



Food Resources for Seniors



Federal/State programs

- SNAP/FoodShare
- Senior Farmer Market Nutrition Program
- Elderly Nutrition Program, TEFAP, Commodity Supplemental Food Program



<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/aging/nutrition.htm>

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02735-23.pdf>

Local food resources

- Charitable food system: Pantries, meal sites, etc
 - Second Harvest's Find Food - <https://www.secondharvestsw.org/find-food-near-you/>
- Senior-specific programs, meal delivery
 - Senior nutrition program - <https://www.danecountyhumanservices.org/Disability-and-Aging/Senior-Services/Senior-Nutrition-Program>
- Food resources and other support:
 - United Way's 211 - <https://www.unitedwaydanecounty.org/get-help-211/>

Thank you!

Devika Suri (she/her)

Data and Research Curator

Devika.suri@secondharvestsw.org

Lori Peppard (she/her)

Community Representative for Dane County

Lori.peppard@secondharvestsw.org

