

DESCRIPTION

Food insecurity is a growing problem among all ages, including older and younger people. While food insecurity among children is a significant issue because adequate food during childhood can affect health throughout their lives.¹ The impact of food insecurity on seniors may be exacerbated by other challenges this population faces such as battling acute and chronic health problems and moving with limited mobility.² The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.³ Visits to food shelves is one way to measure food insecurity.

HOW WE ARE DOING

From 2006 to 2013, visits to food shelves by households, children, adults and seniors in Ramsey County steadily increased and reached record numbers in 2013, with a drop off in 2014.⁴ Since then, the number of visits by adults and senior has increased slightly while visits by children and overall households appears to have remained steady.⁵ Ramsey County is on trend with neighboring counties and with Minnesota with regard to food shelf visits.⁶

DISPARITIES

Children in the household increase the presence of food insecurity: 17 percent of households in the United States with children are food insecure compared to 11 percent of households without children. About 50 percent of households with children who are food insecure are cared for by single women. Nationally, twice as many immigrant households experience food insecurity in comparison to nonimmigrant households. African-American, American Indians, and Hispanics experience higher rates of food insecurity than whites.⁷

RISK FACTORS

Research shows that young, low-income families with children are the most food insecure population in America.² In addition, high rates of food insecurity are found nationally among: Blacks and Hispanics, unmarried individuals, renters, people living with a disability, workers who have become unemployed, those with a lower level of education, those living in poverty and those living alone.⁸

WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

Saint Paul- Ramsey County Public Health administers many programs and services that can reduce the reliance of households and children on food shelves to meet their nutritional needs. The Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP), works with partners to improve access to healthy foods in schools, child care, health care, workplaces and communities. For example, a partnership with Mounds View School District involved installing raised vegetable garden beds at elementary and middle schools. These garden beds yielded many hundreds of pounds of fresh vegetables for not only students but also (continued on next page)

Information to note

- The number of children whose families visited food shelves in Ramsey County has remained steady from 2015 to 2017, while the number of adults and seniors has risen slightly.
- The number of annual visits to food shelves in Ramsey County has a similar trend to neighboring counties and Minnesota.

Community voice

"Free access to fruits and veggies, food shelves having grocery stores with healthy choices."

- White Male, age 25-34

48 respondents shared the positive impact food shelf access has on their health.

¹ Food Insecurity in Early Childhood. Center for the Study of Social Policy. <https://www.cssp.org/publications/general/document/Food-Insecurity-Early-Childhood.pdf>. Accessed October 2018.

² Food Insecurity Among Older Adults: 2015 Update. AARP Foundation. https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/aarp_foundation/2015-PDFs/AF-Food-Insecurity-2015Update-Final-Report.pdf. Published September 2014. Accessed October 2018.

³ Definitions of Food Security. U.S. Department of Agriculture. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx>. Updated September 5, 2018. Accessed October 2018.

⁴ Visits to food shelves in Minnesota by County- 5 Year comparison (2016 & 2012). Hunger Solutions. <http://www.arcgis.com/apps/StoryMapBasic/index.html?appid=2feca3935fa24a509ebf86ddef9ccef5>. Accessed October 2018.

⁵ Minnesota Indicators. Kids Count Data Center. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#MN/5/0/char/0>. Accessed October 2018.

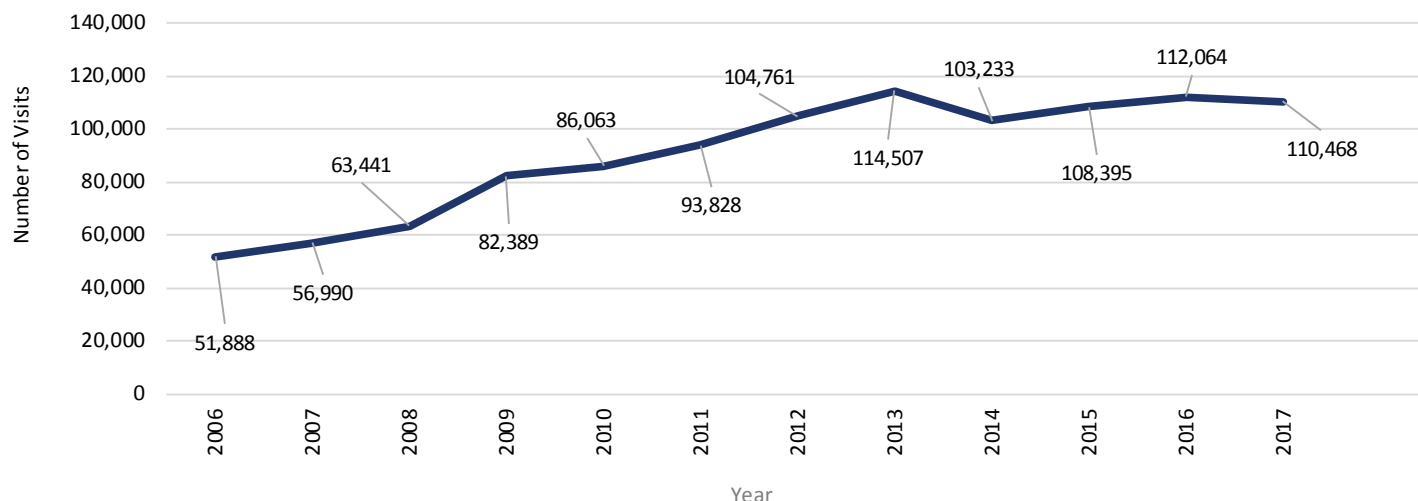
⁶ Personal communication with Hunger Solutions, Saint Paul MN, October 2018.

⁷ RTI International, Center for Health and Environmental Modeling. Current and prospective scope of hunger and food security in America: a review of current research. http://www.rti.org/sites/default/files/resources/full_hunger_report_final_07-24-14.pdf. Published July 2014. Accessed October 2018.

⁸ Echevarria S, Santos R, Waxman E, Engelhard E, Del Vecchio T. Food banks: Hunger's new staple. Feeding America. 2009. <http://www.feedingamerica.org/research/hungers-new-staple/hungers-new-staple-full-report.pdf>. Accessed October 2018.

the local food shelf.⁹ The Women, Infants, and Children Program provides vouchers for families to purchase nutritious foods for pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children at WIC eligible grocery stores and farmers' markets.¹⁰

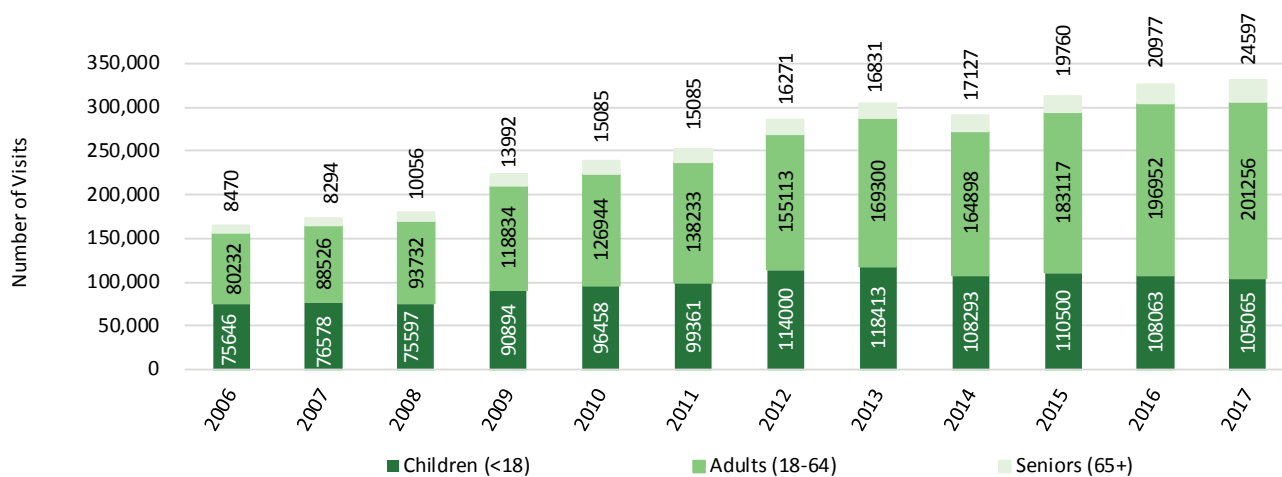
Household Visits to Food Shelves in Ramsey County, 2006-2017



Note: Households and children were counted every time a person from the household visited a food shelf.

Source: Hunger Solutions.¹¹

Visits to Food Shelves in Ramsey County by Age Group, Ramsey County, 2006-2017



Note: Households and children were counted every time a person from the household visited a food shelf.

Source: Hunger Solutions.¹¹

⁹ Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP). Ramsey County. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/health-medical/public-health-initiatives/statewide-health-improvement-program-ship>. Accessed October 2018.

¹⁰ WIC (Women, Infants and Children). Ramsey County. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/assistance-support/support-families/wic-women-infants-and-children>. Accessed October 2018.

¹¹ Hunger Solutions <http://www.hungersolutions.org/hunger-data/>. Accessed October 2018.