

# Food Insecurity Among the Aging Population

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## Background

This study focused on exploring the following:

What are the experiences of the older adults while providing nutritious and adequate food for their families? What challenges do they encounter? And what resources are available to meet their nutrition need?

This is important because it provides insights into how older adults navigate the changing landscape of family responsibilities and nutrition related decision-making (Leung & Wolfson, 2021).

## Methods

- The study used qualitative methods, using one-on-one interviews to collect data. The research involved older adults aged 55 years and above. The participants were recruited using online platforms. A total number of 5 participants from low-income background, who were working, and retired were selected from area within Brampton. Finally, participants were informed of the research purpose.
- Interviews consisted of open-ended questions. The responses were coded and grouped into themes. Next, the study used thematic analysis to interpret the data.
- Additionally, the study considered ethical principles including obtaining informed consent, confidentiality, and explaining the potential risks and benefits.

## Key Findings

Key themes emerging from the study are

**Affordability and Accessibility:** This theme highlights various challenges older adults face while providing nutritious and adequate food for their families. Financial constraints, declining health, social isolation, and limited mobility were among the challenges that exacerbated older adults' vulnerability to food insecurity. One of the participants stated

*"Food commodities have become more expensive, and because of that, I cannot provide much food for my family (Female, widowed, aged 64)"*

**Relationships, Living Alone, and Providing for others:** This theme emphasizes the need of older adults to network with others to address challenges related to food provision. One of the interviewee commented

*"Sometimes my friends go to the grocery stores and food bank on our behalf (male, aged 63)"*

**Planning and strategies to overcome food challenges:** This theme prioritizes ways older adults can navigate food challenges, promote their nutritional well-being, and cultivate healthy eating habits for themselves and family. One of the participants commented

*"I get food from the food bank and because of my mobility issue I rely on TTC too (Male, divorced, aged 65)."*

## Discussion

- The study found that financial constraints are associated with food insecurity. This is similar to Leung & Wolfson's (2021) claiming that households with low-income experienced food insecurity because they cannot afford food commodities that meet their required diet.
- Additionally, food security is dependent on the economic productivity of a given population. Leroux et al. (2018) study found that many older people surviving today and living healthier had financial security at younger age.
- The unique contribution of our study is offering evidence-based recommendation for intervention on food insecurity.

## Implications for policy and/or practice

Policy makers and practitioners should utilize research findings to inform the development of policies aimed at addressing the nutritional requirements, preventing health concerns, and improving the overall quality of life among older adults.

## References

- Leroux, J., Morrison, K., & Rosenberg, M. (2018). Prevalence and predictors of food insecurity among older people in Canada. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(11), 2511. doi: [10.3390/ijerph15112511](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15112511)
- Leung, C. W., & Wolfson, J. A. (2021). Food insecurity among older adults: 10-year national trends and associations with diet quality. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 69(4), 964-971. doi: [10.1111/jgs.16971](https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.16971)