The Positive Impacts of Public Benefits on Older Adults’ Well-Being and Food Insecurity

In 2021, the National Council on Aging (NCOA) and Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) completed a quasi-experimental study examining whether enrolling in public benefits programs impacts food insecurity and well-being outcomes in older adults. Older adults were asked to complete a questionnaire at the time they were seeking assistance with enrolling in benefits and again six months later. The analyses compared the participants who were enrolled in additional benefits at follow-up to those who were enrolled in the same number or fewer benefits at follow-up.

### Study Participants

#### Gender
- Men: 31%
- Women: 69%

#### Race/Ethnicity
- White: 55%
- Black: 30%
- Mixed: 7%
- Hispanic: 5%
- American Indian/Native American: 2%
- Asian: 1%

#### Marital Status
- Married: 78%
- Divorced, Widowed, Never Married, Separated: 22%

#### Age
- 50–64: 25%
- 65–74: 48%
- 75–84: 18%
- 85+: 9%
Food Insecurity

The study found that older adults who became enrolled in additional benefits experienced significant reductions in their levels of food insecurity.

Men aged 75+ experienced the greatest decreases in food insecurity.

Social and Emotional Well-Being

The study found significant positive impacts to well-being among older adults who became enrolled in additional benefits.

Older respondents (age 65+), women, and Black respondents experienced the greatest improvements in well-being.