

Together at the Table:

SUPPORTING THE NUTRITION, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF GRANDFAMILIES

There are more than **2.5 million children** in the U.S. growing up in “grandfamilies”, meaning they are being raised by relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, etc.) or close family friends without their parents in the home. Research shows grandfamilies are the best option for children who can't be raised by their parents: compared to children in foster care with non-relatives, children raised by relatives have better mental and behavioral health outcomes, greater stability and a stronger sense of belonging. Yet these families often face high rates of hunger and food insecurity.

The impact of household food insecurity is severe: it can harm the health, nutrition, and economic security of children and adults. It has particularly harmful short- and long-term effects on children.

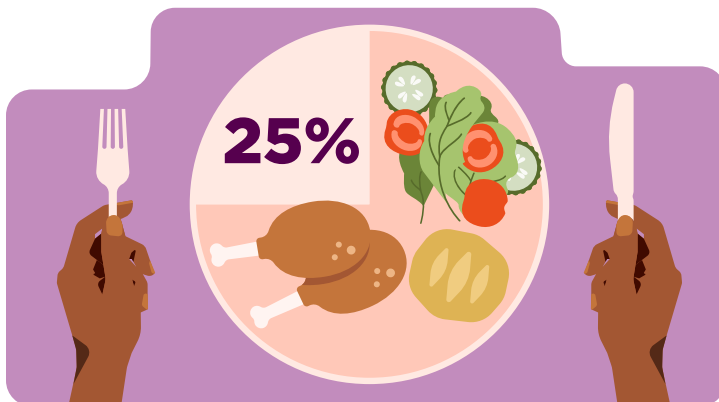
Policy changes are necessary to ensure access to adequate nutritious food for grandparents, other relatives and close family friends who step forward to care for a child whose parents cannot care for them. Grandfamily caregivers shouldn't be forced to choose between paying the rent, affording needed medications, or feeding themselves and the children in their care.



Food insecurity means families do not have the resources they need to have consistent and reliable access to enough food to live an active, healthy life.

SNAPSHOT OF WHAT FOOD INSECURITY AMONG GRANDFAMILIES LOOKS LIKE BETWEEN 2019 AND 2020

25% of grandparent-headed households with grandchildren and no parent present experienced food insecurity. That is **MORE THAN TWICE THE NATIONAL RATE.**



The rate of food insecurity among grandparent-headed households with grandchildren and no parents is **60% HIGHER** than the rate of all households with children (25% vs. 15%).

The rate of food insecurity for older (aged 60+) grandparent-headed households with grandchildren and no parents is **MORE THAN THREE TIMES HIGHER** than the rate of similar households with no children (22% vs. 7%).

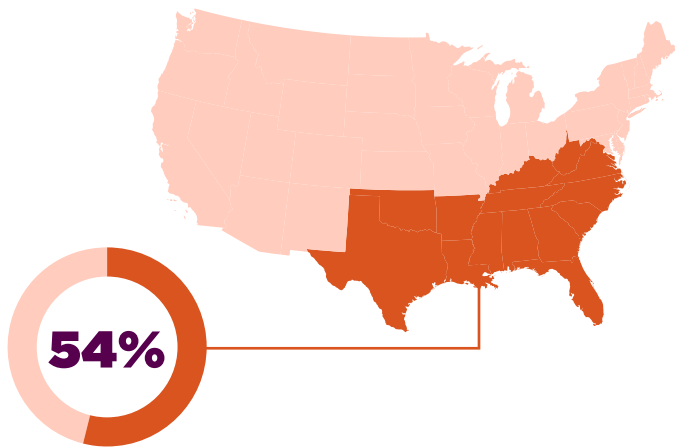


Read Generations United's 2022 State of Grandfamilies report, *Together at the Table: Supporting the Nutrition, Health and Well-Being of Grandfamilies*, to understand how grandfamilies are at increased risk for food insecurity and ways our policies can better support them. [Click here to view the full report.](#)

(Data from Food Research & Action Center analysis of 2019 and 2020 Current Population Survey)

SNAPSHOT OF FACTORS PUTTING GRANDFAMILIES AT RISK

Grandfamilies are at increased risk of food insecurity due to factors such as poverty, racial discrimination, disability, marriage status, employment status, geography, and accessibility.



MORE THAN HALF (54%) of grandparent-headed households live in the South - the states that have food insecurity rates above the national average.



A large number of grandparent-headed households live in **RURAL AREAS** and are likely to experience food insecurity at a higher rate, in part because food sources are often further away from home and transportation options are sparse.

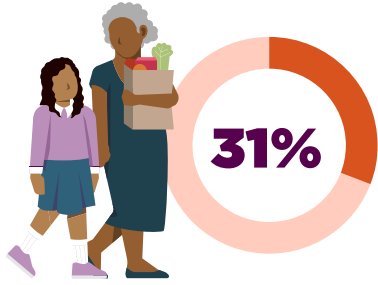


Grandfamilies are disproportionately African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, and, in some areas, Latino. Yet, years of **SYSTEMIC RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION** have led to disproportionate rates of food insecurity, as well as difficulties accessing support systems and inequitable supports for grandfamily caregivers and the children they raise.



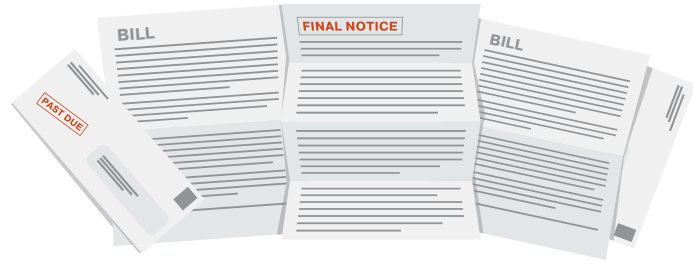
Read more about why grandfamilies experience higher rates of food insecurity on pg. 22.

SNAPSHOT OF ADDITIONAL FACTORS AFFECTING GRANDFAMILIES' WELL-BEING



Poverty

31% of grandchildren being raised by their grandparents in a grandparent-headed household without parents in the home are living under the poverty level, compared to 16% of all children nationwide.



Financial challenges

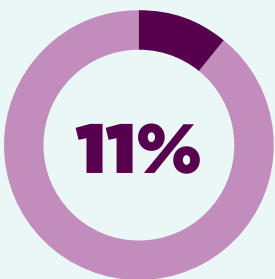
By taking on the full-time care of children, grandfamilies face new or increased financial challenges, including housing, lack of affordable child care and loss of employment (to care for the child) or fixed income, leaving fewer funds to feed the grandfamily.



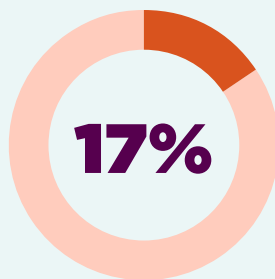
Hunger effects on children

For children, hunger produces short- and long-term dangers:

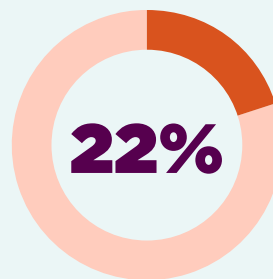
- It impairs a child's ability to concentrate and perform well in school
- Is linked to higher levels of behavioral and emotional problems from preschool through adolescence
- It leaves them vulnerable to eating disorders and complicated needs, habits and preferences surrounding food
- It can cause decreased nutrition quality and inadequate healthy food intake.



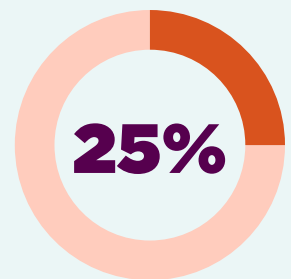
NATIONAL RATE



LATINO HOUSEHOLDS



BLACK HOUSEHOLDS



AMERICAN INDIAN & ALASKA NATIVE HOUSEHOLDS

The national rate of food insecurity in 2020 was 11%. However, Black households (22%) and Latino (17%) households faced much higher rates of food insecurity. In a survey of [American Indians and Alaska Natives](#), half of survey respondents reported that they have experienced food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Read more about the inequities experienced by grandfamilies on page 18.

WHAT ARE GRANDFAMILIES' CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS?



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- ▼ The SNAP application process can be difficult to navigate, particularly for people who lack technology capacity or for whom English is a second language.
- ▼ SNAP eligibility is based on household income, with no option to base it on the income of the child only. Many grandfamilies have household incomes slightly too high to qualify, yet struggle to adequately feed the children they are raising while also caring for their own needs.



Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

- ▼ Children living with an unlicensed kinship foster care parent are not automatically eligible for WIC benefits, though they may be automatically eligible through other avenues.
- ▼ If a child has been receiving support from WIC while living with a parent, when a grandparent caregiver takes over raising the child, WIC benefits are not always easily transferred or given to the caregiver or child.



Child Nutrition Programs

- ▼ Children in grandfamilies outside foster care are not categorically eligible for free and reduced-price school meals, though may be eligible through other avenues.
- ▼ Summer meals reach only a small portion of the children with low incomes who participate in the school lunch program.
- ▼ Grandfamilies living in rural areas where there are limited or no summer programs have limited access to participating summer meal sites.



Read more about the benefits and challenges grandfamilies face in accessing supports on page 34.

SOLUTIONS

Federal nutrition programs are proven, cost-effective public interventions that have numerous benefits for grandfamilies. However, grandfamilies continue to struggle in accessing benefits from these programs.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS OUTLINED IN THIS REPORT INCLUDE:



Support the development and use of kinship navigator programs to connect grandfamilies to food and nutrition supports.



Help grandfamilies cover meal costs when school is out through a nationwide summer EBT program.



Improve access to SNAP by making a “child-only” benefit that is based on the needs of the child as opposed to household income and by increasing outreach to grandfamilies.



Improve WIC outreach for grandfamilies to help reach more grandfamilies and connect them with benefits for which they are eligible.



Ensure automatic access to free and reduced-price school meals for children living in grandfamilies.



Create combined food and nutrition programs for older and younger people, including members of grandfamilies.



Read a complete list of solutions that can help reduce food insecurity among grandfamilies on page 51.

ABOUT GENERATIONS UNITED

For more than three decades, Generations United has been the catalyst for policies and practices stimulating cooperation and collaboration among generations, evoking the vibrancy, energy and sheer productivity that result when people of all ages come together. We believe that we can only be successful in the face of our complex future if generational diversity is regarded as a national asset and fully leveraged. The National Center on Grandfamilies is a critical part of Generations United’s mission and strives to enact policies and promote programs that support families where children are raised by their grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, or close friends, and Generations United’s new National Technical Assistance Center on Grandfamilies and Kinship Families seeks to help systems break down their silos and improve supports for the families.