

Paths to Reducing Food Insecurity among Older Adults

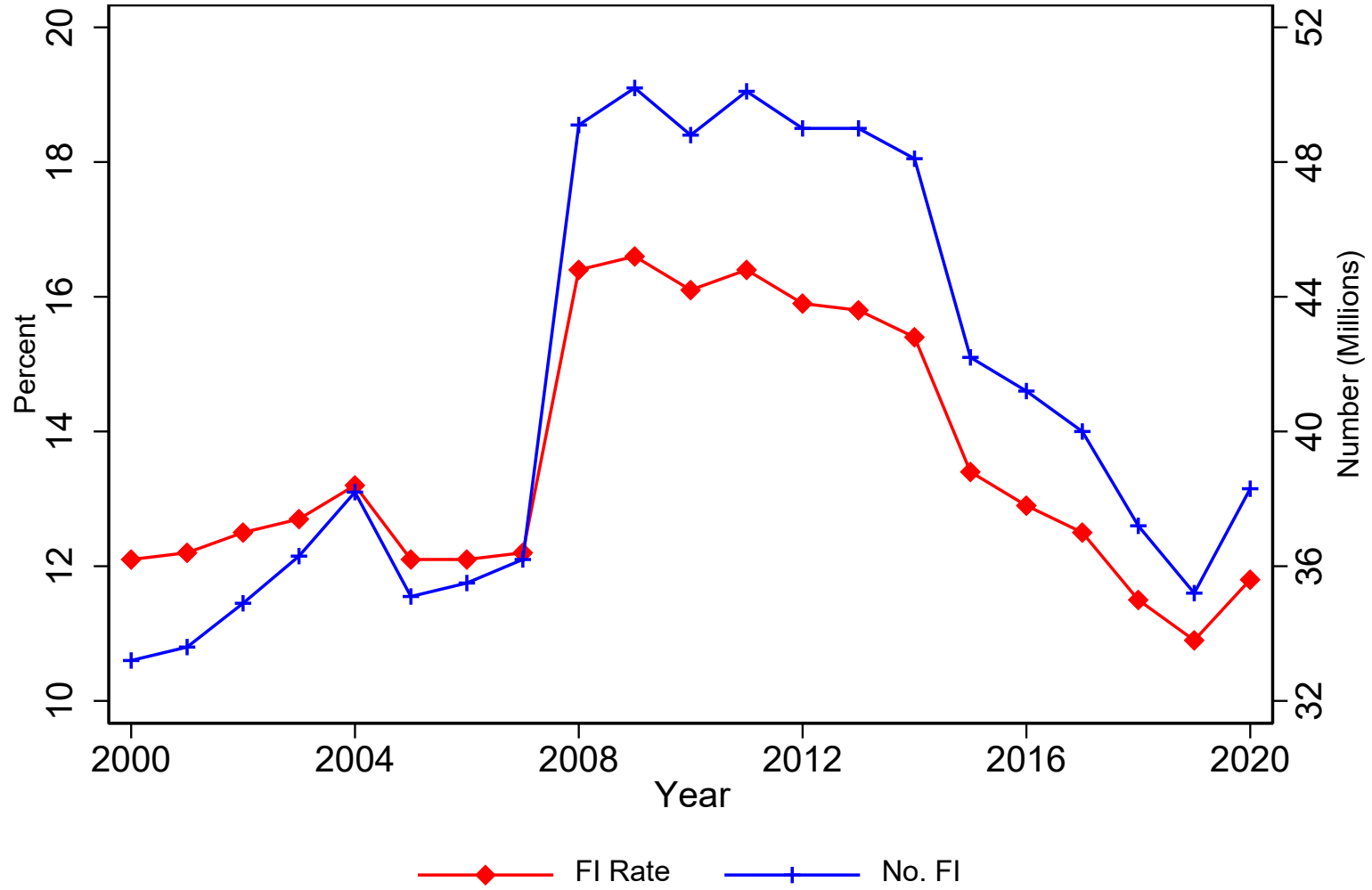
Craig Gundersen

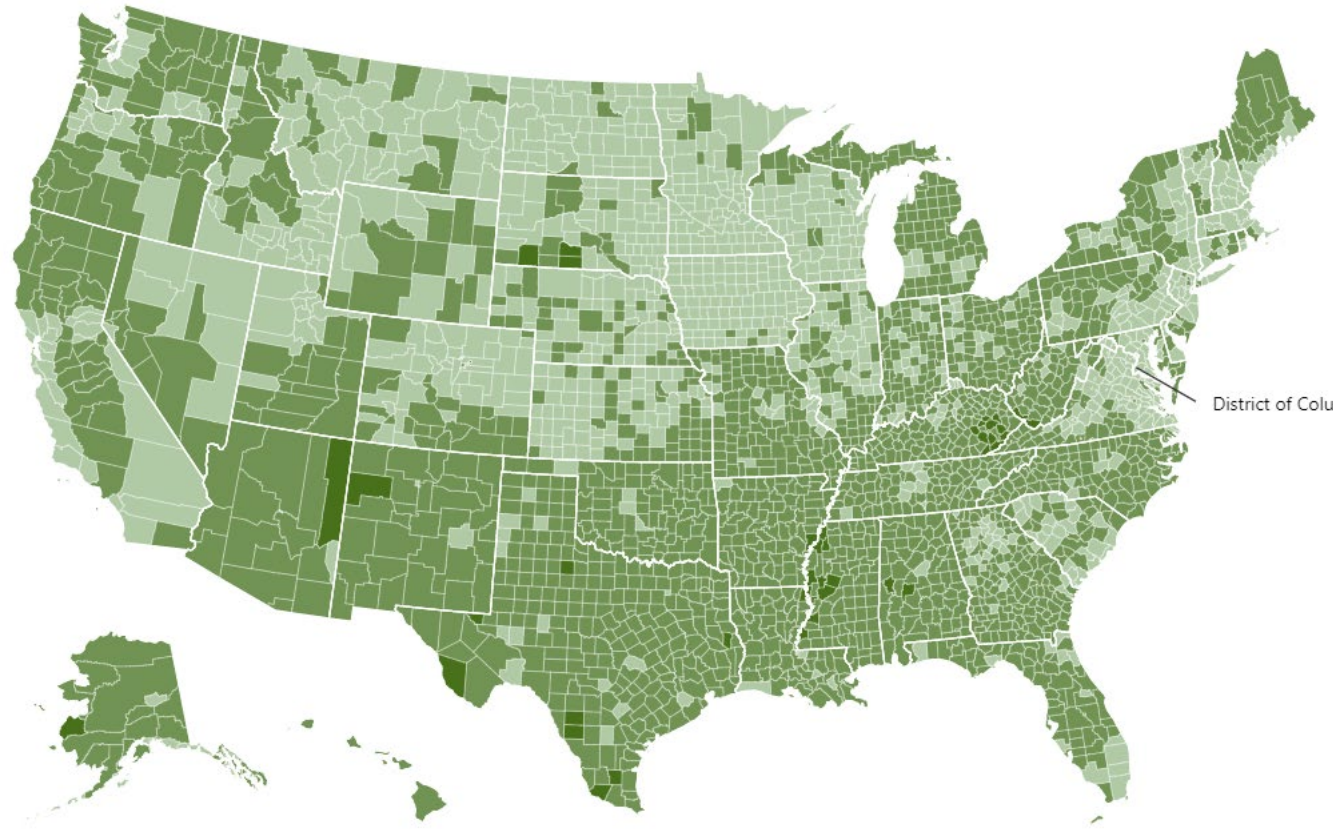
Snee Family Endowed Chair

Defining Food Insecurity

- A household's food insecurity status is based on responses to 18 questions in the Core Food Security Module (CFSM)
- Examples of questions:
 - “I worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more”
 - “Did you or the other adults in your household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food”
 - “Were you ever hungry but did not eat because you couldn't afford enough food”
 - “Did a child in the household ever not eat for a full day because you couldn't afford enough food”
- Categories
 - food insecure if have 3 or more affirmative responses
 - very low food secure (VLFS) if 8 or more affirmative responses (6 or more for households without children)

Trends in Food Insecurity: Full Population





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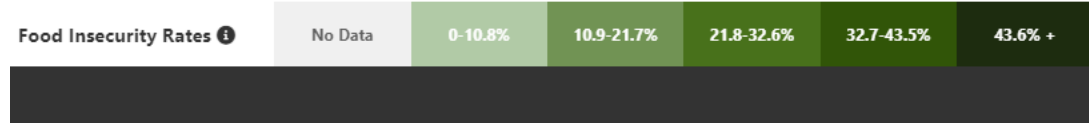
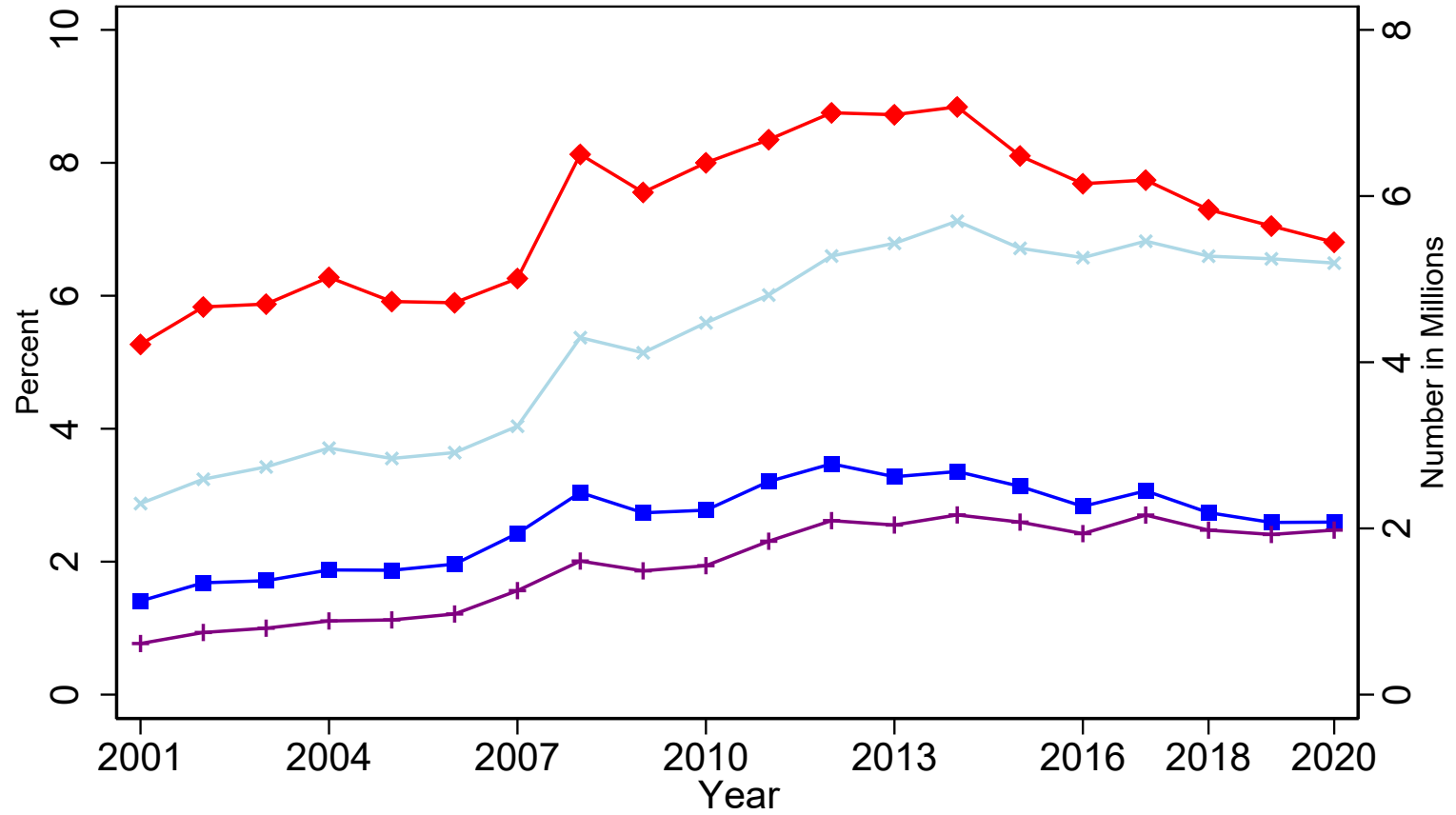
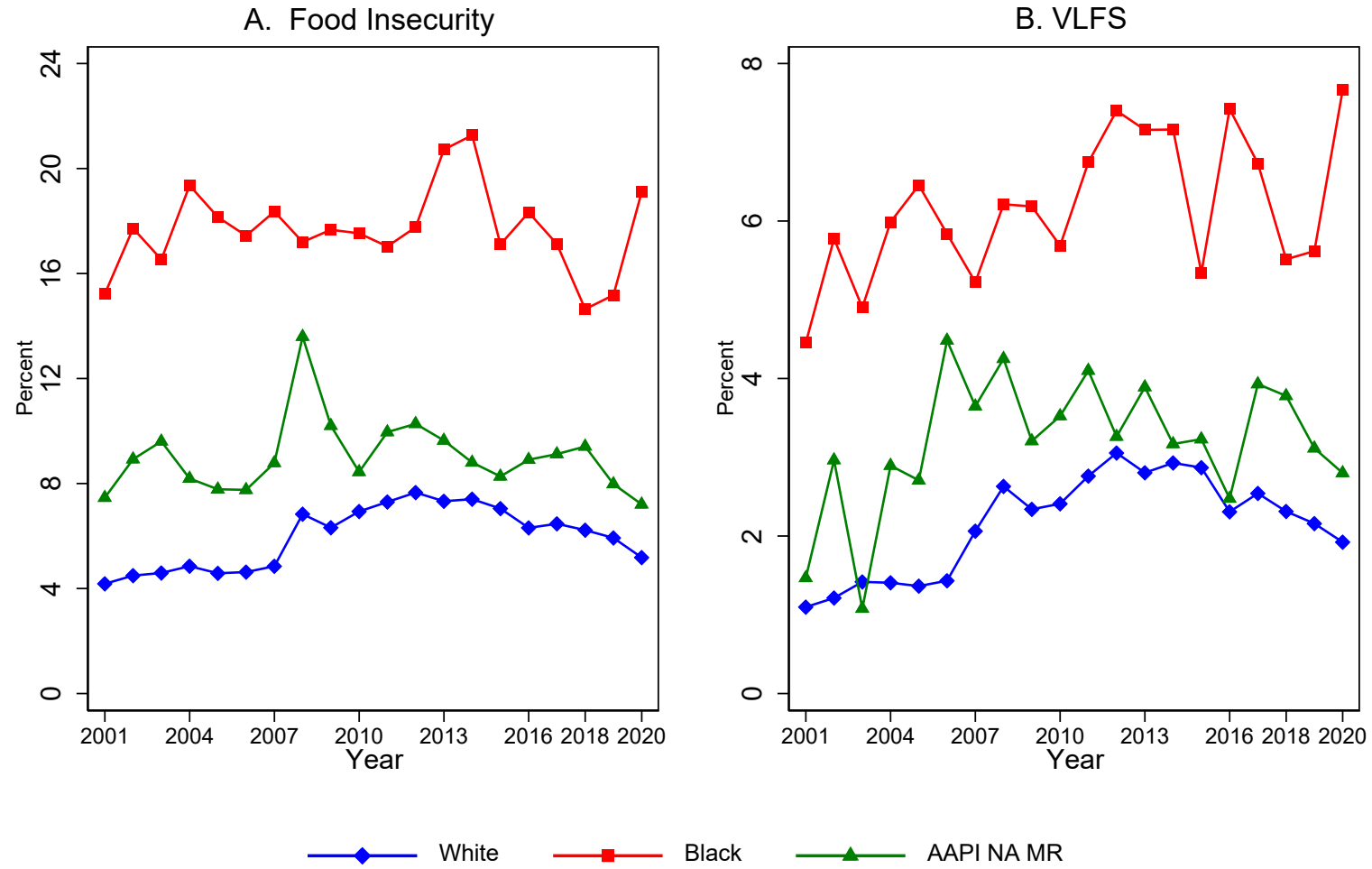


Figure 1. Trends in Food Insecurity among Senior Americans



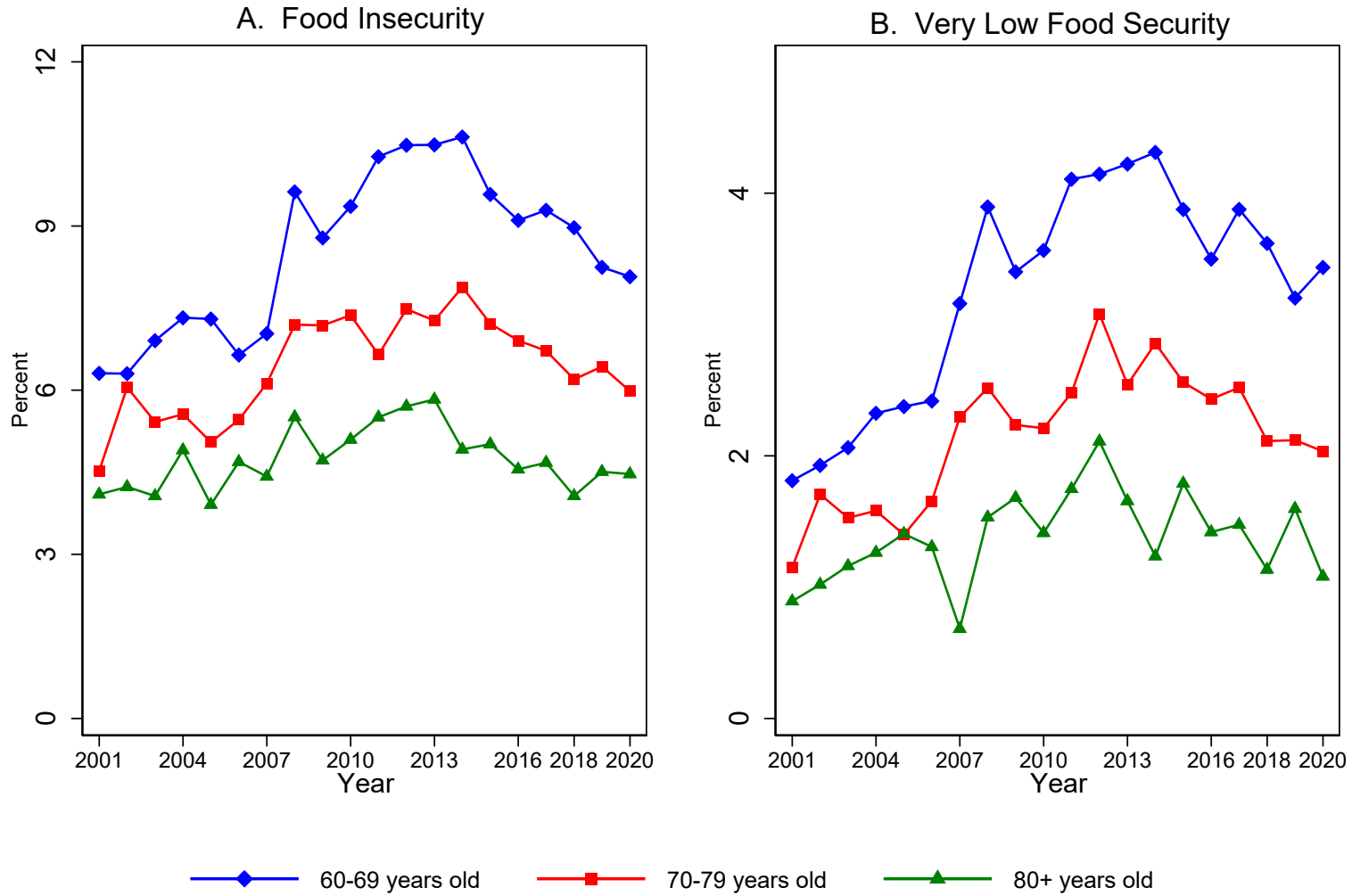
—◆— FI Rate —■— VLFS Rate
—×— No. FI —+— No. VLFS

Figure 3. Trends in Senior Americans Food Insecurity by Race



Note: 'AAPI NA MR' denotes Asian American, Pacific Islander, Native American, and people who identify as multi-racial

Figure 5. Trends in Senior Americans Food Insecurity by Age



The Extent of Senior Food Insecurity in 2020

By Income

Below the Poverty Line	26.5%
Between 100% and 200% of the Poverty Line	15.6
Above 200% of the Poverty Line	2.9
Income Not Reported	5.7

By Hispanic Status

Hispanic	13.2
Non-Hispanic	6.1

By Marital Status

Married	4.0
Widowed	8.5
Divorced or Separated	12.7
Never Married	12.8

By Metropolitan Location

Non-Metro	7.3
Metro	6.7

The Extent of Senior Food Insecurity in 2020

By Employment Status

Employed	4.7%
Unemployed	20.1
Retired	5.2
Disabled	21.6

By Grandchild Present

No Grandchild Present	6.3
Grandchildren Present	17.8

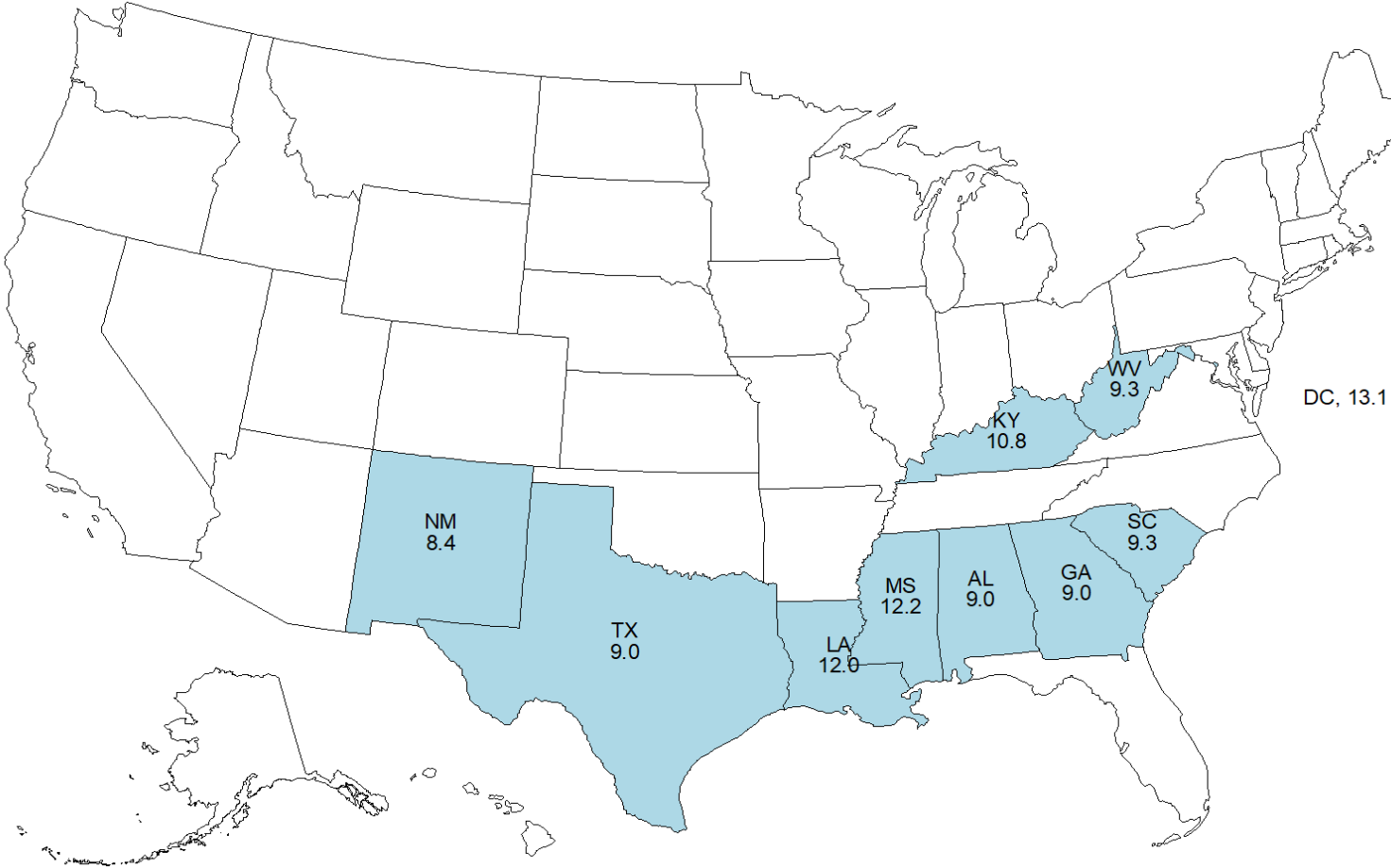
By Homeownership Status

Homeowner	4.4
Renter	18.3

By Disability Status

Without a disability	5.3
With a disability	11.6

Top 10 States for Rates of Food Insecurity among Seniors



Top 10 States for Rates of Very Low Food Security among Seniors

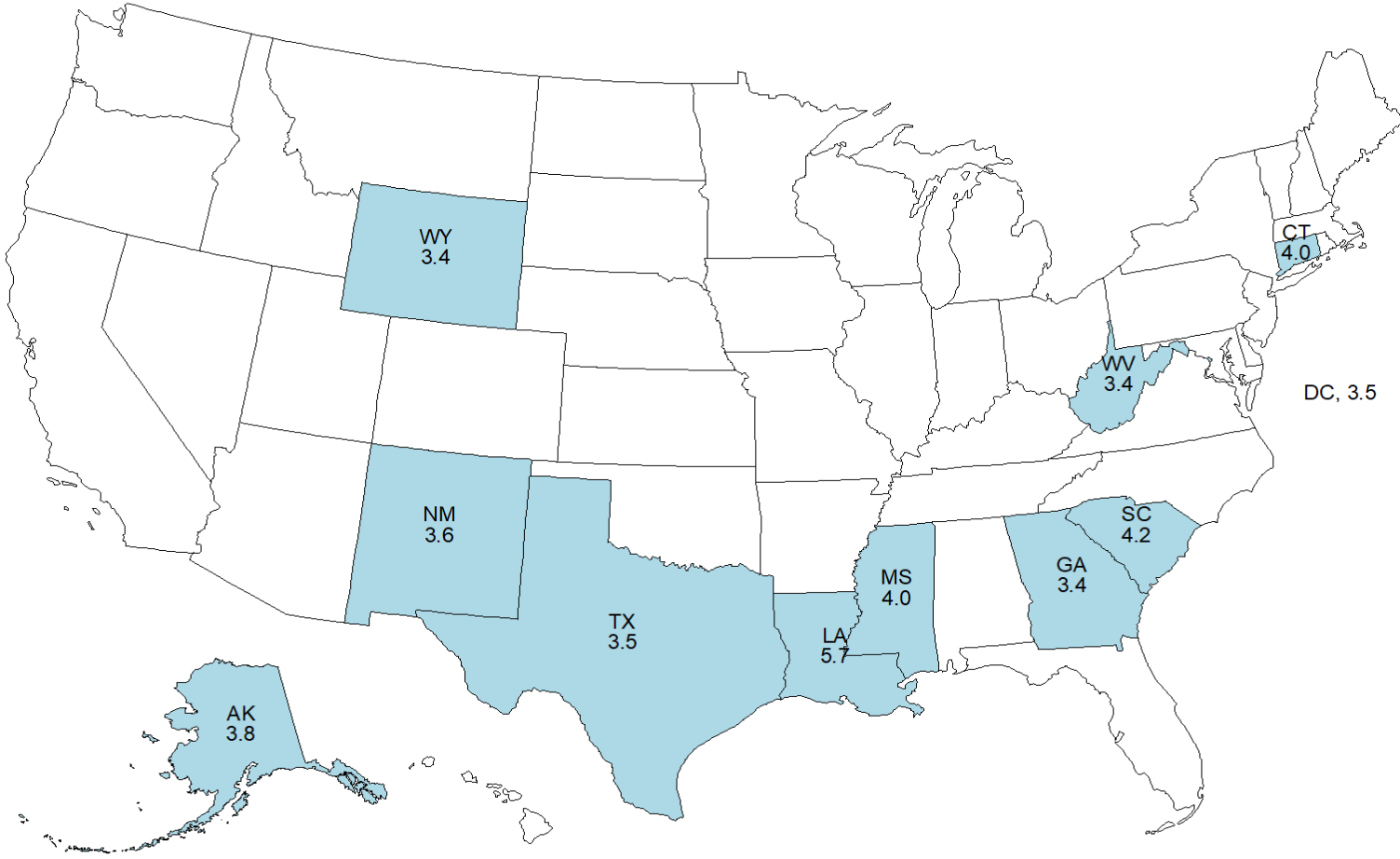


Figure 1. Trends in Food Insecurity among Older Americans

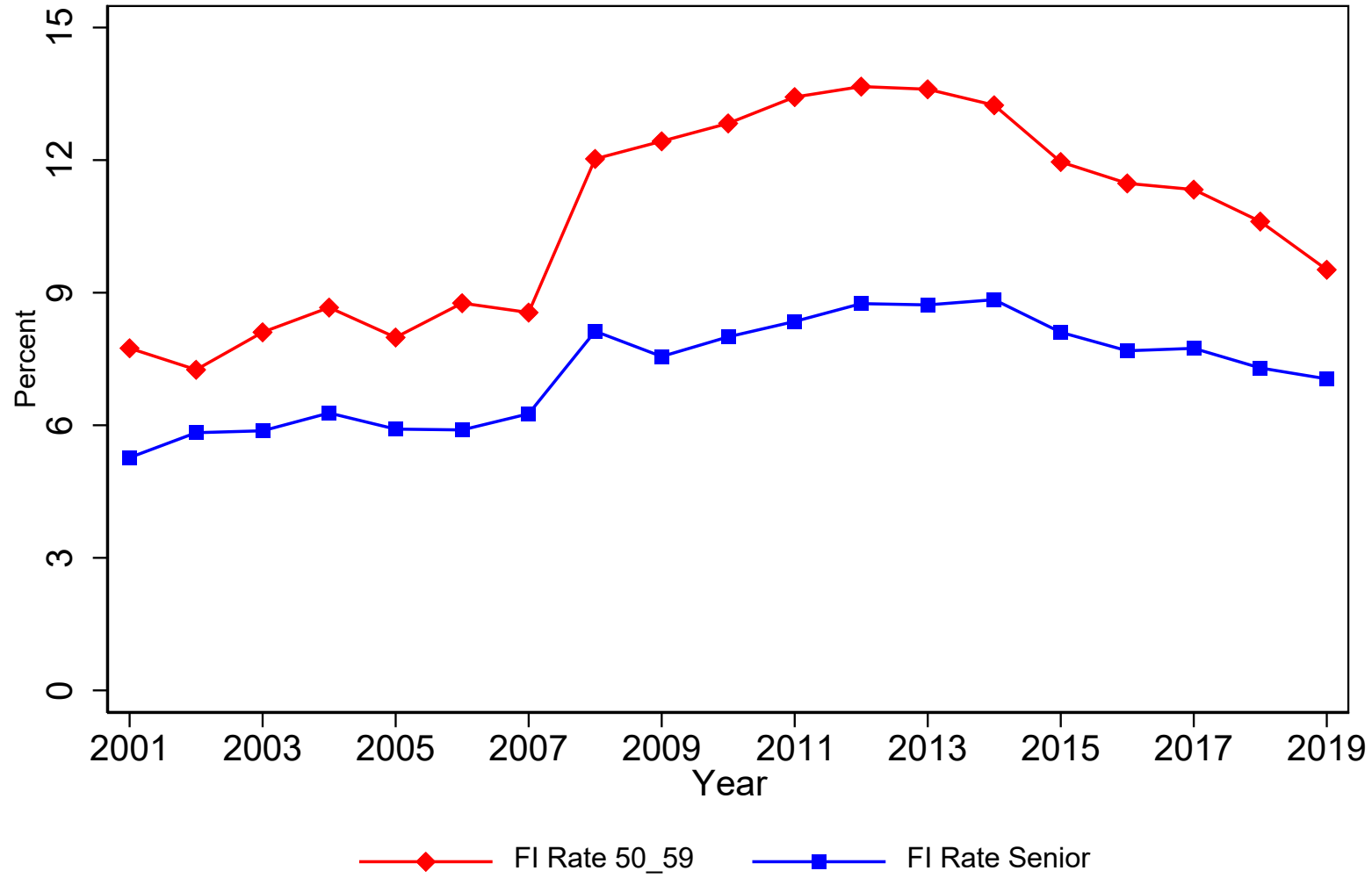


Figure 1. Trends in Food Insecurity among 50 to 59 Year Olds

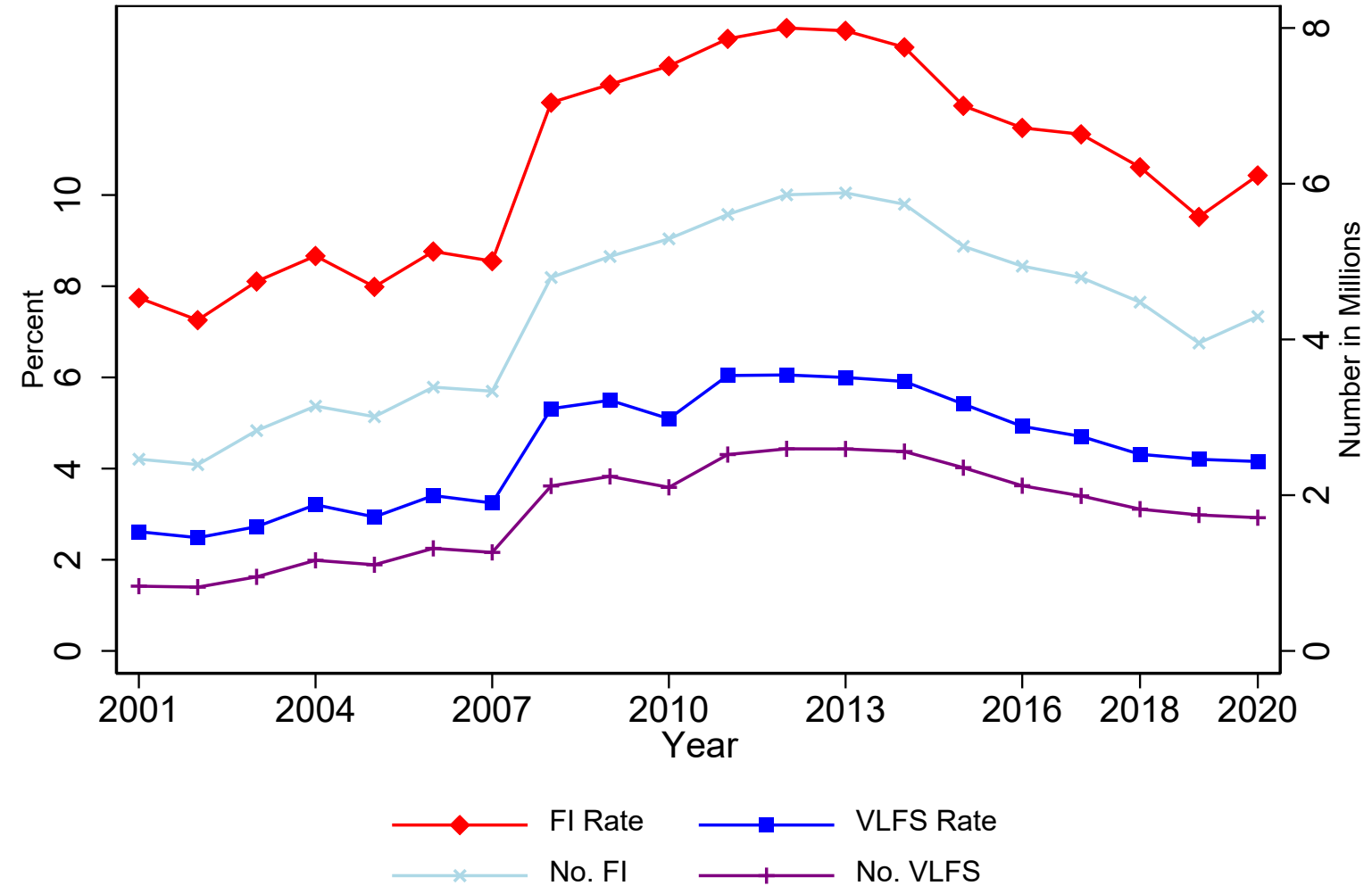
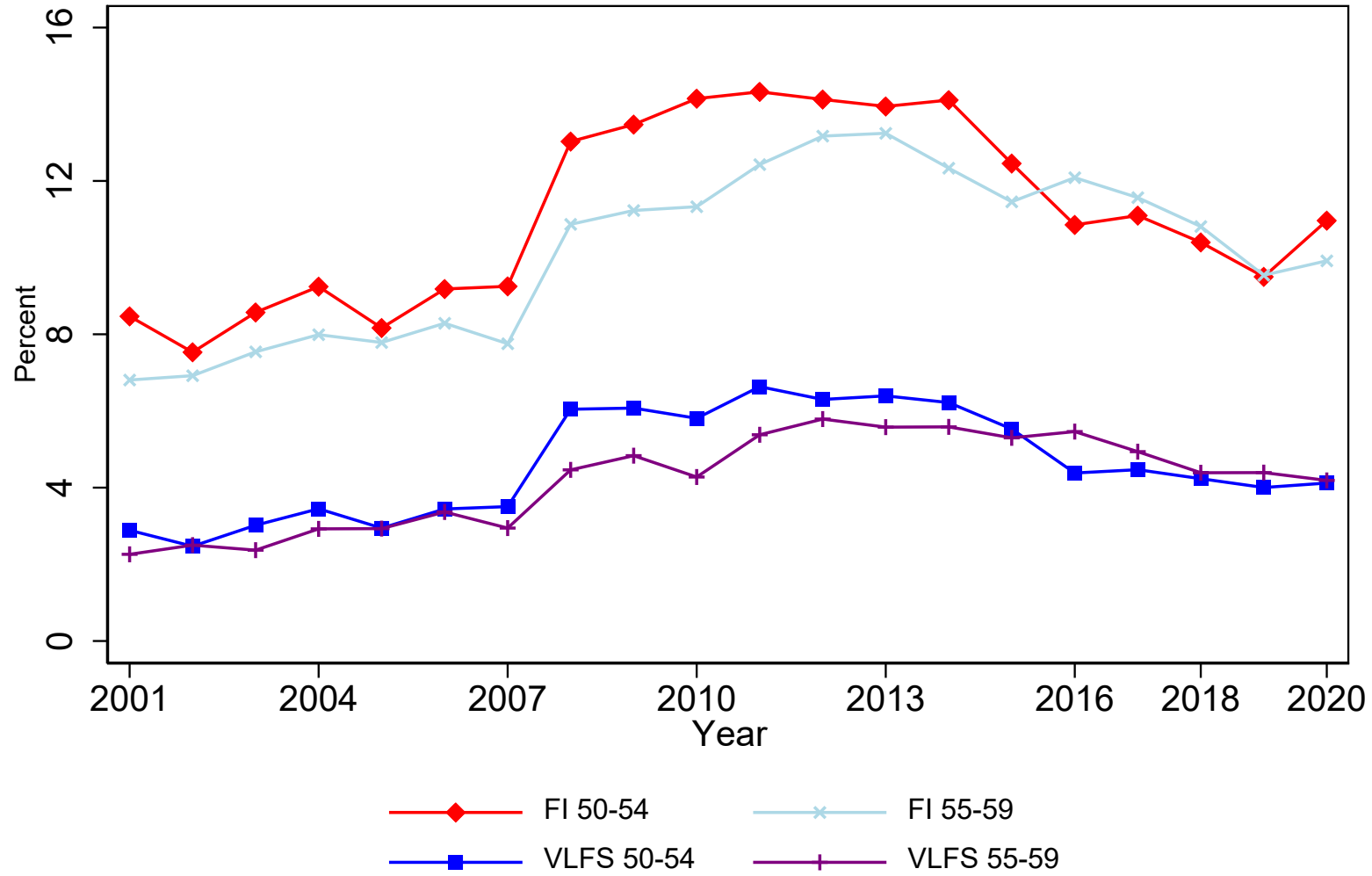
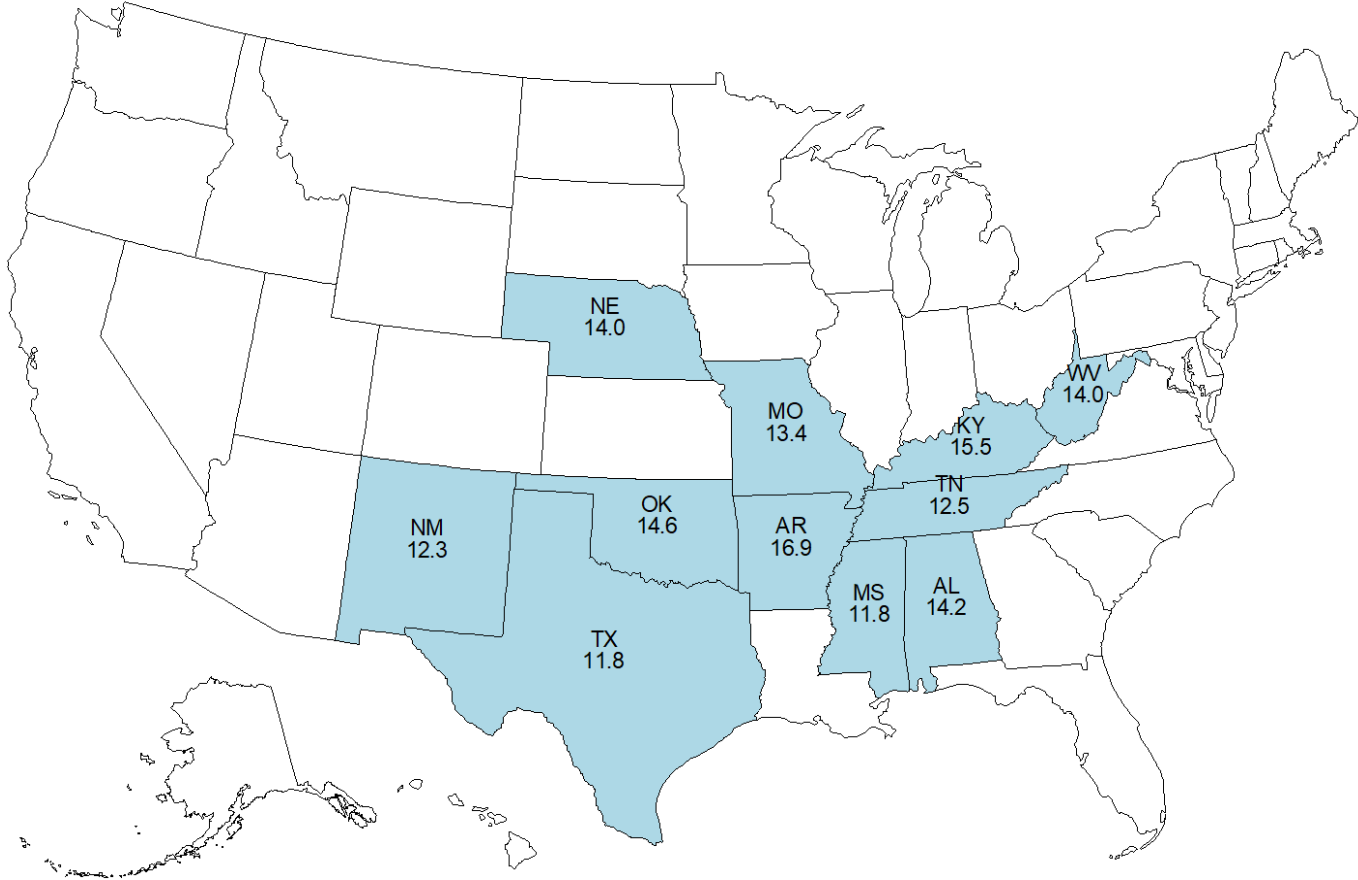


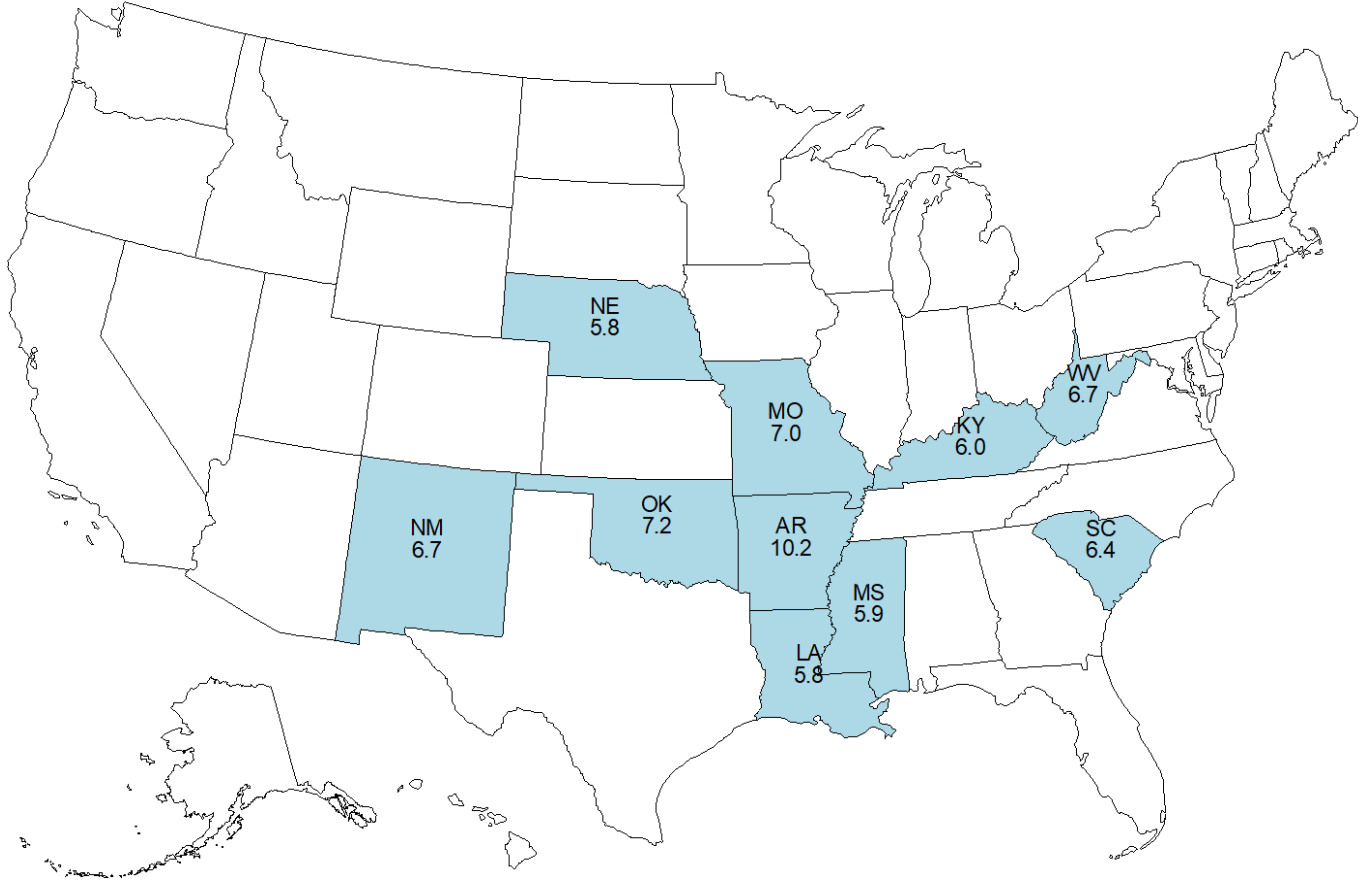
Figure 5. Trends in Food Insecurity among 50-59 Year Olds by Age



Top 10 States for Rates of Food Insecurity among 50-59 Year Olds



Top 10 States for Rates of Very Low Food Security among Seniors



Health Consequences

- Lower nutrient intakes for food insecure persons
- Negative health outcomes for seniors
 - 74 percent more likely to be diabetic
 - over twice as likely to report fair or poor general health
 - 3 times more likely to suffer from depression
 - 20 percent more likely to report at least one ADL limitation
 - 19 percent more likely to have high blood pressure
 - 71 percent more likely to have congestive heart failure
 - 89 percent more likely to report having gum disease
 - 78 percent more likely to have asthma
- similar results for 50-59 year olds

SNAP

- In existence for over 50 years
- Available to eligible Americans of all ages
 - largest “near-cash” assistance program
- Central goal is to reduce food insecurity
 - succeeds
- Why does it succeed?
 - reaches those most in need
 - provides a substantial amount of money for food
 - maximum of \$459 per month for a family of two
 - entitlement program
 - can be used at virtually all retail food outlets
 - gives dignity and autonomy to recipients

Threats to SNAP

- Deemphasizing food insecurity
 - move to “nutrition security”
 - no measure of this
 - culturally insensitive in approach
 - blames those who are not able to obtain “right foods”
- Restrictions on purchases
 - primarily coming from “nutrition security” advocates
 - will lead to
 - falls in participation in SNAP
 - increases in food insecurity
 - especially a problem for older Americans

Ways to Enhance

- Make into a modified UBI
 - would almost completely eliminate food insecurity
- Other enhancements in near-term
 - Make entering program easier
 - once on SNAP, older Americans tend to stay on program
 - need to consider outreach specific to older Americans
 - Remove asset test (or set much higher)
 - many older Americans are ineligible due to this
 - don't want to discourage savings
 - especially important for older Americans
 - Higher minimum amounts
 - many older Americans feel that the costs exceed the benefits
 - More frequent adjustments for inflation