

Older adults with food insecurity face faster decline in executive function

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Food insecurity is common among community-dwelling older adults and

is associated with a decline in executive function, according to a study published online March 24 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Boeun Kim, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.N., from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and colleagues assessed whether [food insecurity](#) is associated with a faster decline in cognitive function among community-dwelling [older adults](#). Analysis included data from a nationally representative sample of 3,037 Medicare beneficiaries, age 65 years and older, participating in the National Health and Aging Trends Study from 2012 through 2020.

The researchers found that over seven years, 12.1 percent of older adults experienced food insecurity at least once, which was associated with a faster decline in executive function in a fully adjusted model (mean difference of annual change in executive function score for food insecurity versus not, -0.04 points). There was no association observed between food insecurity and changes in immediate and delayed memory (0.01 [95 percent confidence interval, -0.05 to 0.08] and -0.01 [95 percent confidence interval, -0.08 to 0.06], respectively).

In the nationally representative sample, participants who experienced any food insecurity over the seven years were more likely to be older, female, part of racial and ethnic minority groups, not living with a partner, obese, and to have [lower income](#), lower educational attainment, [depressive symptoms](#), social isolation, and disability compared to those who did not experience any food insecurity.

"These findings suggest that older adults who report food insecurity may be at higher risk of accelerated decline in executive function," the authors write. "Intervention studies are needed to determine whether food assistance programs addressing food insecurity can prevent and/or delay executive function decline among older adults."

More information: Boeun Kim et al, Food Insecurity and Cognitive Trajectories in Community-Dwelling Medicare Beneficiaries 65 Years and Older, *JAMA Network Open* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.4674](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.4674)

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