Hunger affects all genders, but it disproportionately affects and impacts women.

- More than a third (35.3%) of single parent families headed by a woman are food insecure. In comparison, the rate of food insecurity in single parent households headed by a man is 21.7%.

- Women are most often the primary caretakers of children; responsible for food procurement and preparation; and possessed of lower purchasing power than men, making them particularly vulnerable to coping with hunger in ways that are unsustainable and/or risky to their health or the health of their children.

- Older women are likely to have less income to live on during retirement, and more likely to be food insecure. This is due to a combination of factors, including working in lower paying jobs and pay inequality, spending less years in the work force due to family caregiving responsibilities, having less access to jobs with strong pension and retirement accounts, and, on average, living longer than men. Of the seniors that the food bank serves through its Grocery Plus program, 68% are women.

Hunger has specific negative health impacts on women and the children they carry.

Women who are food insecure are more likely to be overweight or obese.

- A study of more than 5,200 women from across the U.S. found that women living in food insufficient households had higher rates of being overweight than those in food sufficient households.

- Food insecure mothers are more likely to skip meals so that their children can eat. Skipping meals to stretch food budgets can have harmful effects on the body’s metabolism, and can lead to excess weight gain over time.

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1 US Census Bureau, 2014
Hunger during a mother’s pregnancy has negative impacts for babies.

- Pregnant women who experience food insecurity are more likely to experience birth complications than women who are food secure\(^7\).
- Inadequate access to food during pregnancy has been shown to increase the risk for low birth weight in babies\(^8\).

The food bank supports the health of women and their children by increasing access to nutritious food and enabling partner organizations to direct more resources towards support programs.

- **13 of our partners, including Mary House, Friends of Guest House, and Montgomery Avenue Women’s Center, are offer services specifically for women.** These include child care services, shelter from domestic abuse, transitional housing, and health care. Because these partners receive food from the food bank, they can direct more resources towards these programs.

- **Our Grocery Plus program** provides income-eligible seniors in DC with supplemental groceries each month, serves 3,536 women each month. That’s 68% of the total seniors served through the program.

- **Our Family Markets Program** offers mothers (and fathers) access to groceries through free, market-style food pantries where parents can select food with their children at school.

- Government programs play an important role in helping to fill in the hunger safety net along with the food bank’s services. **USDA’s WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) program** safeguards the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care.

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