Age and Sex are Associated with Willingness to Accept Food Assistance
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Abstract
Volunteers were recruited via Research Match to examine relationships between age, sex, and the likelihood of accepting food assistance. Older individuals and males were less likely to accept food assistance than younger individuals and females.

Background/Objective
To improve food security, nutrition advocates recommend reducing the stigma associated with food assistance programs and resources. Development and testing of stigma-reducing interventions requires analysis of characteristics associated with the willingness to accept food assistance. The purpose of this cross-sectional study was to examine relationships between age and sex, and the likelihood of accepting food assistance.

Methods
Research Match volunteers (N=221) were recruited to complete demographics (i.e., age and sex) and the 17-item Food Resource Acceptability Questionnaire (FRAQ) (α=.88) via online RECap surveys. The FRAQ, which measures the likelihood of an individual being willing to accept food assistance, consists of two subscales – the stigma associated with food assistance and the belief that food is a basic human right. Pearson’s correlation and independent t-test were conducted.

Results
Age had a significant negative correlation with FRAQ, with older individuals being less likely to accept food assistance (r=-.227, p<.001). Age was also negatively correlated with the subscale scores: stigma (r=-.22, p<.001) and “food is a basic right.” (r=-.21, p=.002).

Males had lower mean FRAQ score (N=46, M=49, SD=9) than females (N=175, M=52, SD=7), t=2.13, p=.018, with men being less likely to accept food assistance than females.

Conclusion
Anticipation of stigma related to food assistance develops because of previously experienced stigma. Older adults are more likely to have experienced these incidents of stigma related to food assistance. In this study, women were more willing than men to accept food assistance. Since individuals report stigma as a leading cause of the unwillingness to accept food resource assistance, more research is needed to evaluate stigma-reducing interventions specific to food insecurity and food assistance.