



WHY SHOES?

Giving Seniors opportunities for mobility, healthy living, and life-changes through shoes. The mission of Samaritan's Feet Seniors is to serve and inspire hope and dignity in our aging population by providing shoes as the foundation to a spiritual and healthy life.

Our population is aging—Americans are living longer and healthier lives. Ten thousand Baby Boomers turn 65 every day, and one in every five Americans will be 60 or older by 2030¹. Additionally, the global population is aging, too. In 2020, there were an estimated 727 million persons aged 65 years or over worldwide. The population of people over 60 is projected to more than double by 2050, reaching over 1.5 billion.²

This demographic shift opens opportunities to tap into the wisdom and experience of our aging population to meet pressing challenges. Harnessing this growing resource could help address critical challenges including health care, fall prevention, and increased mobility while making independent living a reality for more Seniors, combatting opioid abuse, and more.

However, while this aging population increase brings an abundance of opportunities, we also find challenges, especially in those with economic insecurity.

Domestic Statistics:

- More than 15 million older adults are economically insecure.
- Over the next 10 years, the number of elderly Americans without homes could triple.
- In 2019, nearly 6 in 10 older adults considered to be in fair or poor health had incomes below 200% of the poverty level, compared with about 3 in 10 older adults in good or excellent health.
- As of late 2020, 95% of Americans killed by COVID-19 were 50+, with the odds getting worse as people age—a plurality of covid deaths occurred in those over 85.
- Nearly 1 in 10 households that include Americans 65+ cannot buy enough food—this is more than during the Great Recession from 2007 to 2009.
- As of 2020, 8.9% of people ages 65+ have incomes below the official poverty threshold under the official poverty measure. However, this number increases to 12.8% based on the SPM poverty thresholds.³

¹ [By 2030, All Baby Boomers Will Be Age 65 or Older \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/boomers.html)

² https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/global_health.pdf

³ [Elderly Poverty Statistics \(2021\): Senior Poverty Rate | Consumer Affairs](https://www.consumeraffairs.gov/2021/04/elderly-poverty-statistics-2021-senior-poverty-rate/)

- Older women are more likely to live in poverty than men because of wage discrimination and having to take time out of the workforce for caregiving.⁴
- Over half of Black and Hispanic seniors aged 65+ have incomes below 200% of the Federal poverty line.⁵
- In 2018, 7.3 million older Americans faced the threat of hunger, representing 10% of adults aged 60+ in the U.S.⁶

Global Statistics:

- In 2000, for the first time in history, there were more people over 60 than children below 5.
- Women in 2020 account for 55% of the global population aged 65+.
- By 2030, those over 60 will outnumber those under 15, with the fastest growth of the aging population in the developing world.
- The share of older persons in the global population is expected to increase from 9.3% in 2020 to 16.0 % in 2050.⁷
- Between 2010 and 2050, the number of older people in less developed countries is projected to increase more than 250%, compared with a 71% increase in developed countries.
- The 85+ population is projected to increase 351% between 2010 and 2050.
- By mid-century, one in six people globally will be aged 65+.
- The top five countries with the oldest population in 2020 (in order) are: China, India, United States, Japan, and the Russian Federation.

These statistics provide evidence that the senior population is growing significantly, along with their needs. Thus, Samaritan's Feet has established Samaritan's Feet Seniors to better address this demographic. Poverty affects older adults differently than other demographics—these individuals are especially vulnerable to economic instability when their physical health, cognitive abilities, and social networks decline.

The aging process is associated with changes to the aspect, biomechanics, structure, and function of the foot. It may present itself through foot conditions, pain, disability, and other overall health problems that constitute a major public health concern.⁸

Also, the prevalence of epidemiological research found an increase in foot problems as a consequence of increasing life expectation. Several studies also suggested that such

⁴ [Older Women and Poverty \(justiceinaging.org\)](https://justiceinaging.org/)

⁵ [How Many Seniors Live in Poverty? – Issue Brief – 9262 | KFF](#)

⁶ [2020-The State of Senior Hunger in 2018.pdf \(feedingamerica.org\)](#)

⁷ https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/global_health.pdf

⁸ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28826743/>

foot disorders currently affect between 71% and 87% of older patients and are a frequent cause of medical and foot care.⁹

Thus, these problems are extremely common conditions in the general population, especially in the elderly. Foot problems are common in seniors and are associated with balance impairment, increase risk of falls, difficulty putting on shoes, fractures, restricted mobility, and performance of activities of daily living that can produce serious physical, mental, and social consequences for our aging population. Seniors with a history of multiple falls have greater foot impairment than non- or once-only fallers.¹⁰

Incorrectly fitting footwear is common in seniors and is strongly associated with forefoot pathology and foot pain. These findings highlight the need for footwear assessment in the management of foot problems in older people.¹¹

A variety of disorders can affect the feet. There are several systemic diseases, or diseases that affect the whole body, that either display symptoms in the feet or affect the health of the feet. Common systemic diseases that affect the overall health of the feet, and the patient's ability to walk comfortably, include gout, diabetes mellitus, neurological disorders, and arthritis.¹²

Lack of proper footwear can have a negative impact on an individual's health and well-being, the ability to live independently, community involvement, and economic stability.

Every second of every day, an older adult (age 65+) suffers a fall in the United States, making falls the leading cause of injury and death amongst seniors. Over 36 million adults fall each year, resulting in more than 32,000 deaths. Every year, about 3 million older adults are treated in emergency departments for a fall injury, with one out of every five falls causing an injury, such as broken bones or a head injury. Each year, at least 300,000 seniors are hospitalized for hip fractures caused by falling.¹³

The available evidence indicates that although foot pain is common and disabling in older people, conservative interventions such as routine foot care, footwear advice, and foot orthoses are effective at reducing foot pain and may also assist in maintaining mobility and independence in this age group.¹⁴

⁹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28826743/>

¹⁰ [Foot disorders in the elderly: A mini-review - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

¹¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28826743/>

¹² [Chronic foot pain in older people - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

¹³ <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/features/older-adult-falls/index.html>

¹⁴ [Chronic foot pain in older people - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

Research has identified many conditions that contribute to falling, called risk factors. Many risk factors can be changed or modified to help prevent falls. Three of those risks are difficulties with walking and balance, foot pain, or poor footwear. Shoes that are associated with increased risk of falling include: wearing shoes with inadequate fixation (no laces, straps, or buckles), increased heel height (greater than 4.5 cm), narrow heel (less than 20% width of the heel), and a reduced contact area of the sole and smooth tread. Providing interventions for older individuals with foot pain and high plantar pressures may result in a reduced risk of falling. These interventions could include footwear with better cushioning under areas of high pressure as well as podiatric care, which includes lesion debridement or orthotic treatment.¹⁵

Additional foot problems are (in order of prevalence): hallux valgus, lesser toe deformities, plantar calluses, and corns on the toes. The presence of foot problems was associated with decreased performance on functional ability tests such as stair ascent and alternate stepping. This suggested that certain forefoot deformities could compromise balance in elderly patients during dynamic gait.¹⁶

Why shoes? Over 30 years ago, a young Nigerian boy, Manny Ohonme, received his first pair of shoes at the age of nine. It changed his life and now he wants give others that same opportunity for change and impact. Samaritan's Feet wants to inspire hope through the gift of shoes, the act of washing feet, and encouragement to those who need it most. Samaritan's Feet believes that a new a pair of shoes and the act of foot-washing can:

- Provide protection for older adults from falls, while increasing mobility and independence.
- Protect feet and decrease the possibility of getting a foot-borne disease.
- Propel towards a more comfortable, happy life while inspiring dignity and hope.

Samaritan's Feet takes the responsibility and opportunity to promote good health as well as sharing hope very seriously. Samaritan's Feet partners with medical personnel and organizations to provide treatment, supplies, and proper medication for those in need.

By the establishment of Samaritan's Feet Seniors, we are expanding our reach and mission of not only zero shoeless children but zero shoeless seniors. In addition to our message of hope and washing the feet of those in need, the Senior program will give Seniors a pair of anti-slip, lightweight shoes to improve foot health and mobility, while also providing them with dignity and hope. This will help those already suffering from foot-borne diseases and immobility. Shoes help provide, protect, and propel.

Since its founding in 2003, Samaritan's Feet has distributed and washed the feet of over 8.2 million people. Samaritan's Feet has served in over 440 U.S. cities and in 108 countries while establishing affiliate offices in Argentina, Brazil, Hong Kong, Nigeria, Peru,

¹⁵ [Preventing Falls in The Elderly: Where DPMs Can Have an Impact | Podiatry Today](#)

¹⁶ [Preventing Falls in The Elderly: Where DPMs Can Have an Impact | Podiatry Today](#)

Philippines, and South Africa, so that we can serve effectively on the front lines in our battle against this epidemic.

In 2021, Samaritan's Feet will serve over 1,000,000 individuals around the world. We have worked diligently towards our mission of creating a world with zero shoeless children and now we add to that mission, zero shoeless seniors.

Join Samaritan's Feet today in the effort to eliminate this epidemic and change the world forever. For more information on Samaritan's Feet Seniors program email seniors@samaritansfeet.org and please visit our website at www.samaritansfeet.org.