HUNGER FREE KANSAS Data Walk

Accessible Version

What this shows:

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal program that provides benefits to low-income individuals and families to purchase groceries from authorized retailers. The program aims to reduce food insecurity, improve nutrition and support better health outcomes. During fiscal year (FY) 2024 in Kansas, an average of 188,710 Kansans received SNAP benefits.

SNAP Program:

A History of Key Changes in Kansas and the U.S.

1964-1971
Food Stamp Act — Emergence of Pilot Food Stamp Program

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Food Stamp Act, making it a federal pilot program to help low-income families afford food. This built on over 20 years of research and other legislative proposals beginning with the food stamp pilot initiative during the Great Depression, which aided hungry families and absorbed farm surpluses. Kansas tested the Food Stamp Program in 1967 and officially adopted it in 1971.

1977
Food and Agriculture Act

Robert "Bob" Dole, U.S. Senator (R) from Kansas and a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, helped lead bipartisan efforts to reform the Food Stamp Program. His work with South Dakota U.S. Senator George McGovern (D) modernized the program, making it more accessible by:

- Eliminating the requirement for participants to purchase food stamps upfront, which had been a financial barrier for many low-income families.
- Simplifying the application process and encouraging more eligible families to participate.

1996
Welfare Reform

The federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) introduced stricter rules:

- Adults without dependents had a **three-month limit on benefits unless they worked at least 20 hours weekly.**
- People with **drug-related felony convictions were banned from the Food Stamp Program,** unless the state chose to opt out (Kansas did not).

2008
Food, Conservation, and Energy Act

The program was renamed **SNAP** instead of "Food Stamps." Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards became the standard for distributing benefits.

2009
Great Recession Response

To help families struggling during the recession, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) increased SNAP benefits by **13.6% and waived the three-month limit on benefits** temporarily until 2013, when benefits returned to normal levels.

2015
Kansas HOPE Act

Kansas enacted **some of the nation's strictest SNAP rules** with the Hope, Opportunity, and Prosperity for Everyone or HOPE Act, including:

- Increasing **work requirement hours** for adults without dependents from 20 hours to 30 hours (or 55 hours for 2 parent households) weekly.
  - Anyone who does not meet the requirements will lose their benefits for 3 months after the first violation, 6 months after the second, and 1 year for any additional violations.
- **Requiring everyone's income in the household is counted — even non-citizens who can't get benefits.** This can make the household income look higher, but those non-citizens aren't counted in the household size, which can reduce the benefit amount the family gets.
- Requiring SNAP recipients to **comply with child support enforcement** to keep benefits.
- **Banning Kansas from expanding eligibility** beyond federal guidelines.
- **Stopping outreach efforts** to encourage SNAP enrollment.

2020
COVID-19 Response

During the pandemic, Congress **temporarily increased** SNAP benefits and made it easier to qualify. This included a **15% benefit boost** helped struggling families **until September 2021** and states received extra funding to process the surge in applications.

2021
SNAP Benefit Increase

The USDA **updated the Thrifty Food Plan**, which determines SNAP benefit amounts. This led to a **21% permanent increase** in maximum benefits to better match food prices. After this change, the estimated maximum SNAP benefit increased to $2.38 per meal. Prior to 2020, it was $1.97 per meal.

2024
Farm Bill Extension

Congress extended Farm Bill provisions, including nutrition programs, through Sept. 30, 2025.

Note: This timeline highlights key events that were selected based on their impact on eligibility, benefit levels and program administration, particularly within Kansas.
Source: Kansas Health Institute analysis (as of March 2025) of select key policy changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at the federal and state levels using data from: U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (2023 and 2021); Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP); U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service (2001 and 2019); Kansas Department for Children and Families (2017 and 2025); Congressional Research Service (2023); Feeding America (2021); Urban Institute (2021).

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