

GEARY COUNTY FOOD SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

August 2021

This report offers a glimpse of the current food system in Geary County, Kansas, and is an update to the 2017 Community Food System Assessment. The food system includes how we produce, buy, eat, and dispose of food in Geary County. These findings will be used to inform the Geary County Food System Plan, which will provide a road map for local actions and policy changes.

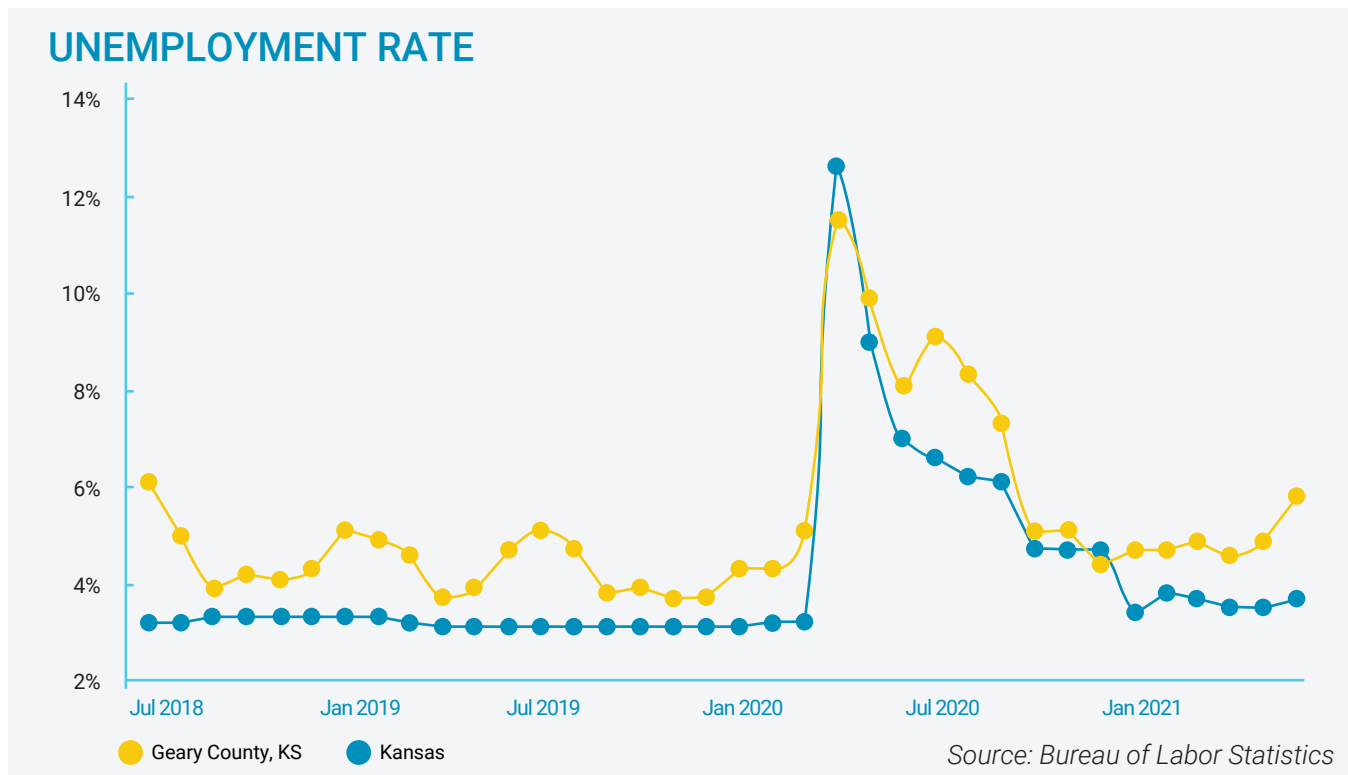


LOCAL REGION

Geary County is a rural county in north central Kansas with the majority of the population residing in Junction City. Compared to the rest of the state, Geary County is racially and ethnically diverse.

- Language other than English spoken at home: 15.9%
- Median age: 26.4 years
- In workforce: 51.9%
 - » Unemployment rate, 2020: 4.5% (compared to 3.5% for Kansas)
 - » Current unemployment, April 2021: 4.9%
- Median Household Income: \$53,133 (compared to \$59,157 for Kansas)
- Poverty Rate: 11.7%
 - » Childhood poverty rate: 21%

Source: US Census 2020, US Census ACS 5-year 2019



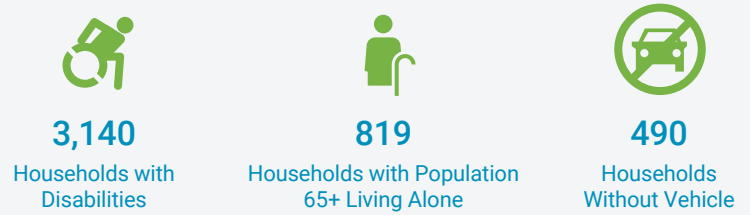
Key Trends

- Regional population is increasing and has a higher unemployment rate and lower household income compared to the State of Kansas.
- The government released data from the 2020 census showing large increases in the populations of people who identify as Hispanic across the United States. This is also true in Geary County.

POVERTY



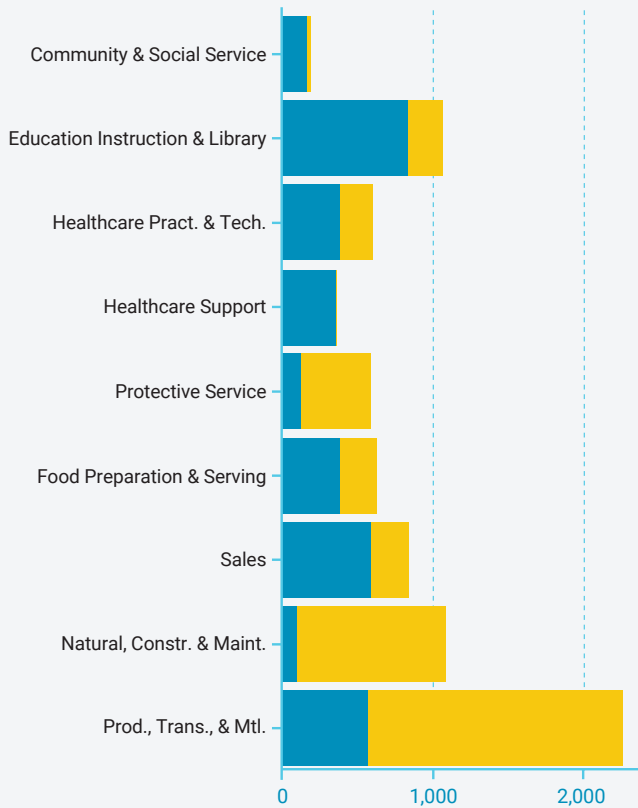
AT-RISK POPULATION



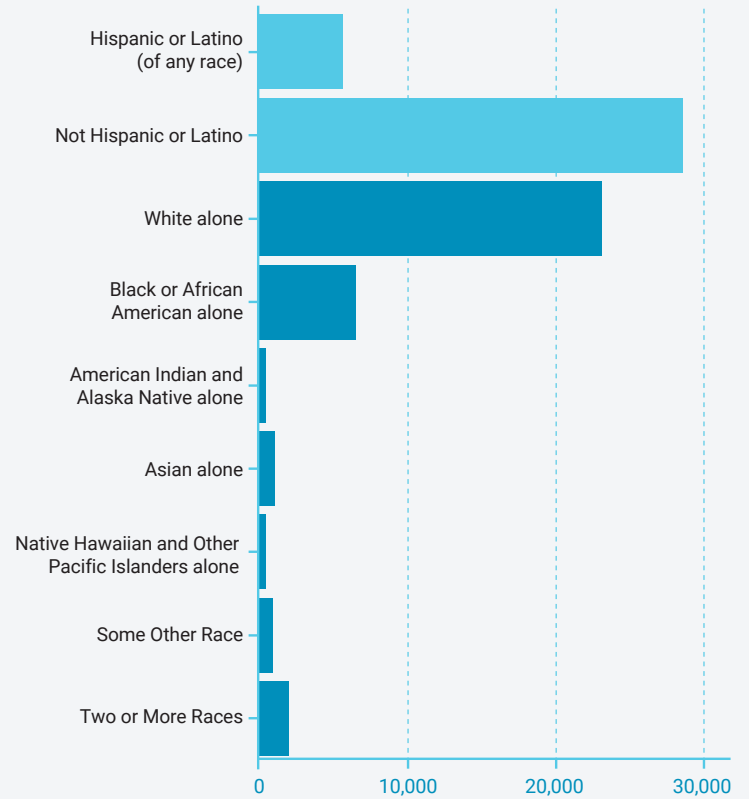
OCCUPATION BY SEX

(Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over)

■ Females ■ Males



HISPANIC ORIGIN AND RACE



AGRICULTURE LANDSCAPE

Farms and farmers are the backbone of our local food system; they are the producers that grow and raise the food we eat. Geary County boasts a rich agriculture sector, with 60% of the county's total acreage in farmland, primarily producing corn and soybeans and raising cattle.

- 213 Farm Operations in 2017, an 11% decrease since 2012
- 155,153 acres are in production
- Average farm size: 728 acres
- Median farm size: 140 acres
- Price per acre: \$2,301
- Total Farm Sales in 2017: \$31,833,000
 - » Livestock: \$16,962,000
 - » Vegetable/Fruit: less than \$5,000
- Number of Producers: 357
- Average Age of Producers: 59.1 years

	# of operations	Acres in production
Cattle Operations, Beef	93	
Pork Operations	10	
Chicken (layers) Operations	16	
Vegetable Farms	3	Less than 5
Fruit/Orchard Operations	3	Less than 5

- New and Beginning Farmers: 74
- Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Farmers: 11
- Farm Organically: N/A
- Practice Rotational grazing: 31%
- Sell Direct to Consumer: 3%
- Average Income per Operation: \$48,322

Source: USDA Agricultural Census, 2017

The Local Food MarketSizer® estimates unmet demand for locally produced food in a chosen geographic area. The Marketsizer® reports there is unmet demand for local dairy, poultry/eggs, and fruit/vegetable products in Geary County. This shows that there is potential to meet some of the demand for local products with food that is produced locally.

Local Quotient is the percentage of category food sales produced within the area. A result of greater than 100% indicates that local demand could be met entirely with local production if it were directed to these markets through a local food system.

Local Food Demand is the approximate value of category wholesale sales which could come from local sources if supply were available.

Unmet Market for Local Food is the difference between the value of local food demand and area production (supply)

ESTIMATES FOR UNMET DEMAND FOR LOCALLY PRODUCED FOOD

GEARY COUNTY, KANSAS	Dairy	Meat	Poultry & Eggs	Fruits & Veggies
Local Quotient	0%	239%	0%	0%
Local Food Demand	\$3,100,000	\$2,800,000	\$990,000	\$7,700,000
Unmet Market for Local Food	\$3,100,000	*	\$990,000	\$7,700,000

Source: NVA Marketsizer©

Key Trends

- Most farm operations in the county produce commodities for global markets.
- Farmers are getting older, with the average age near 60.
- Between 2007 and 2012, the number of farms decreased by 11%.
- Average net farm income in Geary County was \$48,322 which is on par with the State of Kansas average.

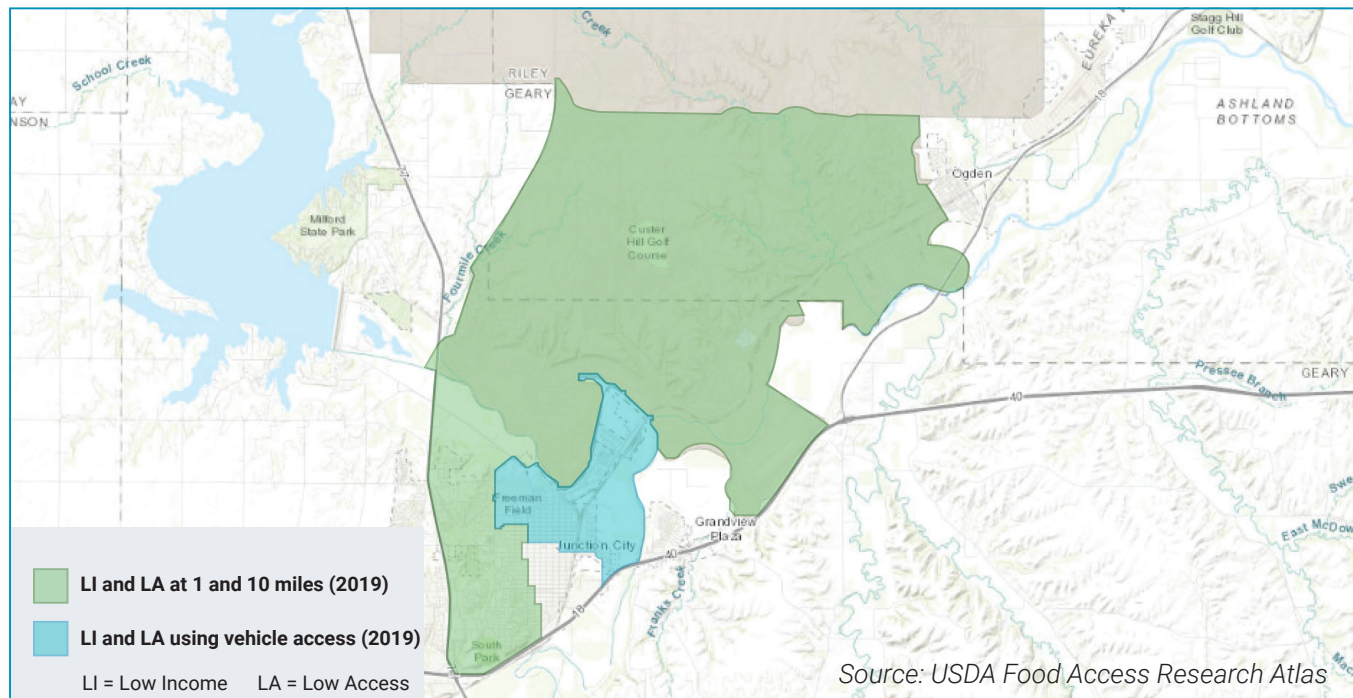
FOOD ACCESS

Access to healthy food options is essential to healthy eating habits which are, in turn, essential to good health. Food access considers a consumer's ability to physically get to places where healthy foods are available for purchase, the affordability of healthy food options; and the availability of assistance to ensure consumers have the means to purchase healthy food.

- Food insecurity rate, 2019: 14%
- Households enrolled in SNAP: 5.3%
 - » Of the 1,481 households eligible for SNAP, only 34.5% are enrolled
- Children enrolled in free/reduced lunch: 56% of 7,228 enrolled youth during the 2019-2020 school year
- 34.1% of people in Geary County have low access to a store; this is a 9.4% increase from 2010-2015
 - » 16.1% of children
 - » 33.1% of seniors
 - » 11.8% of low-income people
 - » 47.30% of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)
- 2.25% of households in all of Geary County are without a car and have low access to a store
- Food access that is correlated with economic and household hardship: 94.6 (high)

Sources: USDA ERS Food Access Research Atlas, 2019; Map the Meal Gap, 2019

FOOD ACCESS MAP OF GEARY COUNTY



USDA measures food insecurity by income status and distance from the nearest supermarket or grocery store. This map highlights the low-income census tracts in Geary County where a significant number of residents are 1 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from a grocery store or supermarket.

Food distribution is provided by:

The Geary County Food Pantry provides access to food for low-income individuals. They provide:

- Food boxes three times per week at various sites around Junction City.
- TEFAP (commodity food) boxes monthly.
- Food boxes monthly to low income seniors.
- Wheels of H.O.P.E. is a mobile food pantry in Junction City which provides monthly deliveries.

Key Trends

- Food insecurity increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and 2021 projections suggest that food insecurity in the county will rise to 15%. This is greater than the state average of 12.9%.
- In Geary County, 5.3% of households are enrolled in SNAP. Of the 1,481 households eligible for SNAP, only 34.5% are enrolled.
- Between 2012 and 2016, Free & Reduced Price Lunch eligibility in Geary County schools rose 9.6%, from 34.4% to 37.7% of students.
- Available and accessible healthy foods remains a challenge in Junction City where the majority of the population in Geary County resides. Unfortunately, food access disproportionately affects people of color and seniors.

FOOD BUSINESS AND CONSUMPTION

Food consumption depends upon the type of retail options available. The existing landscape of food infrastructure and retail outlets can signal the maturity of the local food system. Understanding what exists can help identify gaps in the system, and show where there are potential market opportunities for local producers.

Local Food Business Infrastructure

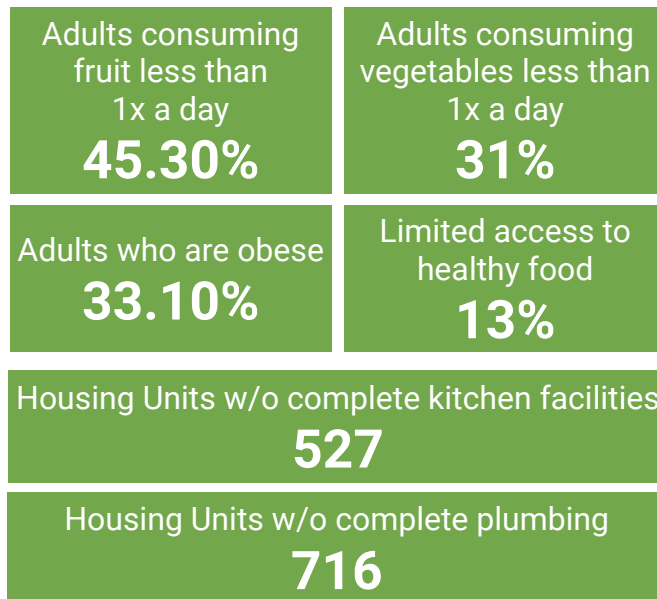
- » There is 1 **meat processor/locker**- Diamond Meat Processing in Junction City
- » There is 2 **seasonal farmer's market** held in Junction City and one on-farm market
- » There are 3 **value-added producers**

Food Retail Landscape

- » There are 4 grocery stores and 2 specialty food stores
- » There are 26 fast food restaurants
- » There are 23 full service restaurants*

In Geary County, 40% of consumer food dollars are spent on foods prepared away from home. Estimates for expenditures per capita on fast food in Geary County are \$608/year.

Sources: USDA ERS Food Environment Atlas, 2015



Source: Kansas Health Matters

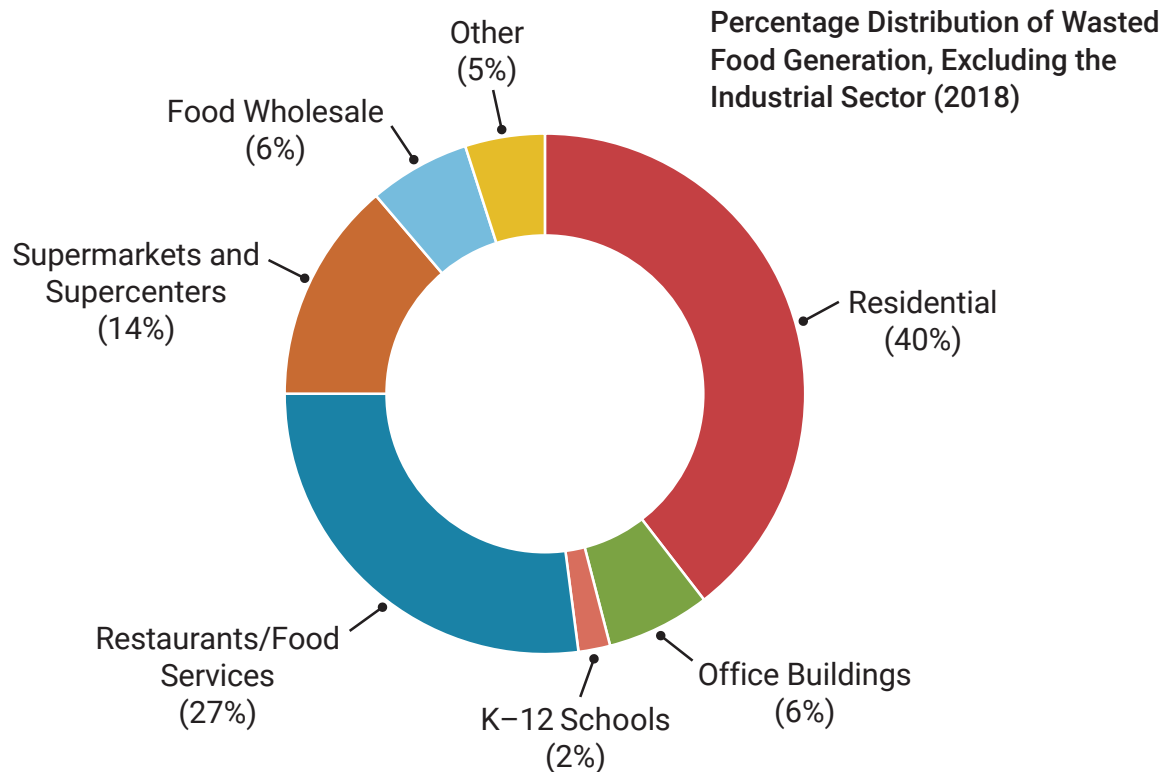
*Data from 2015 does not reflect the COVID-19 pandemic related closures

Key Trends

- Nationally, and in Kansas, rates of obesity have been rising steadily since the 1960s. Contributing factors include limited access to quality and affordable healthy food.
- Kansas is seeing closure of small, rural grocery outlets.
- There are relatively few infrastructure components for local food in Geary County with only one farmer's market and one meat processor. This hampers the County's current capacity to build a resilient local food system.

FOOD WASTE


National studies suggest that up to 40% of all food produced is wasted. Loss occurs at each step in the food system. The amount of waste varies by the type of product, ease of transportation, and how long it stays good on the shelf or in the refrigerator. Farmers may leave a crop in the field if they lack labor to harvest or a market to profitably sell their products. While approximately 40% of food waste occurs from the industrial sector, the largest volumes of food waste occur at the consumer or household level. Environmental, social, and economic costs arise when the food we produce ends up in landfills.



Source: EPA Wasted Food Report, 2018

Key Trends

- The average household wastes 338 pounds of food per year.
- Consumer confusion about “date labeling” on packaged foods, such as “use by” or “best by,” contributes to food waste.
- Improper storage can make perishable foods spoil more quickly.
- Retailers want to sell foods in “abundance,” leading to over purchasing and large portion sizes.
- Composting is one way to redirect food waste. In Geary County, there are 3 facilities that compost yard waste and/or manure.



This report was prepared for the Live Well Geary County (LWGC) Food Policy Council with support from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas Pathways to a Healthy Kansas project

The LWGC Food Policy Council was established in 2016 to identify the benefits and challenges of, and opportunities for a successful, sustainable local food system. The Council was established after community members in 2014 identified high food insecurity and food waste as key issues plaguing the community.

To support the residents of Geary County, to increase access to quality food, address hunger and food insecurity, influence policy and decision making, and to ensure an environmentally sustainable and socially just food system, the council:

- Fosters City-Community partnerships;
- Convenes and engages diverse stakeholders to identify and propose innovative solutions to improve the local food system;
- Provides guidance to the City on local food issues;
- Serves as a platform for collaborative, coordinated action; and
- Increases access to healthy, affordable, local foods.

Food Policy Council members are appointed by the City Commission by the recommendation of Live Well Geary County.

**To learn more: livewellgearycounty.org/food-policy-council
Or follow us on Facebook: [@livewellGC](https://www.facebook.com/livewellGC)**

