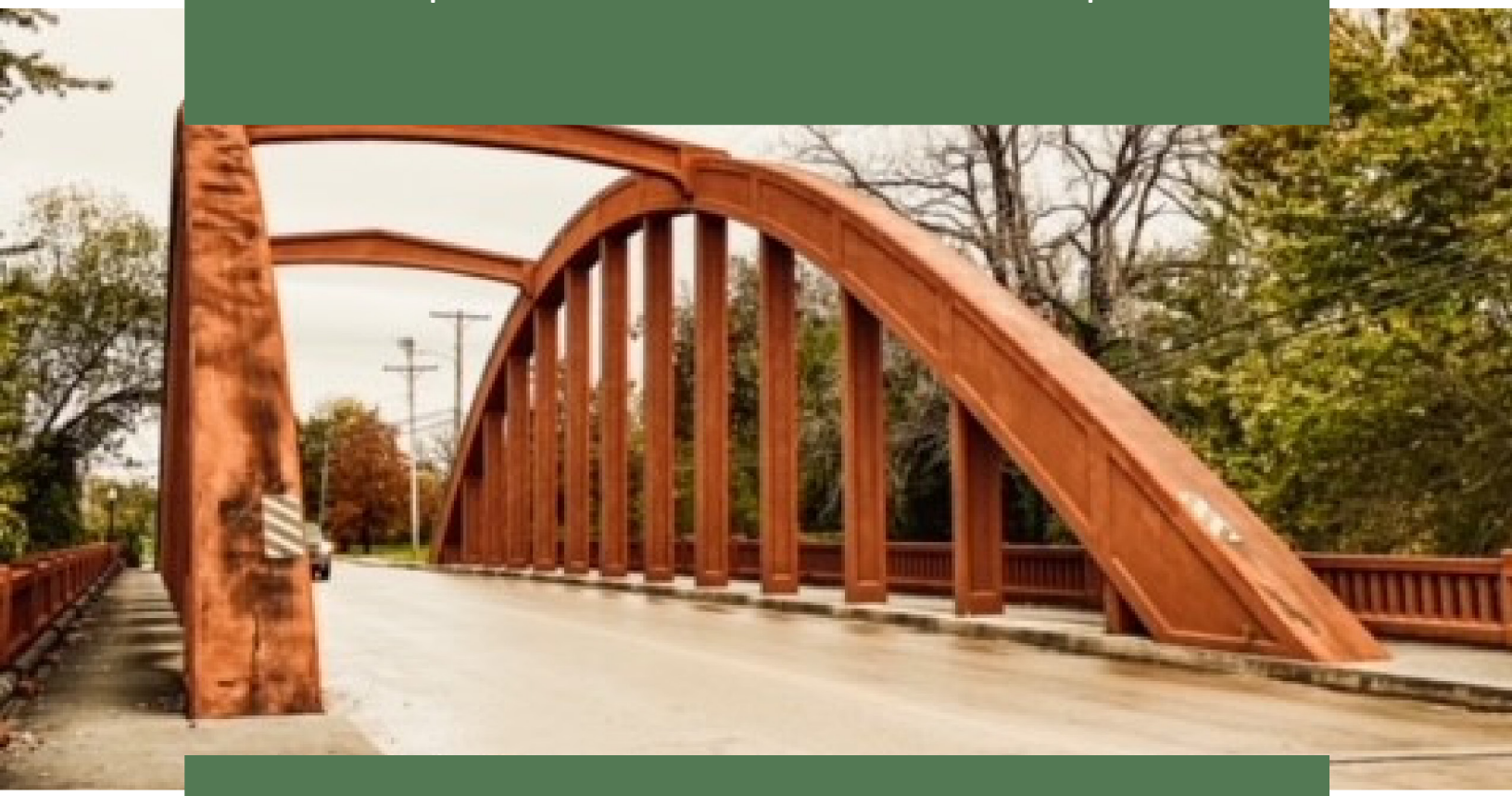
2025

SEK-CAP

Community Assessment

A Comprehensive Needs Assessment Report



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Date Approved: July 17, 2025

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Introduction

SEK-CAP is a private non-profit Community Action Agency serving twelve counties in Southeast Kansas. Our work focuses on improving the lives of individuals and families by identifying and removing barriers to improve our economy and increase our quality of life.










By conducting survey's, gathering feedback, and network weaving, we were able to identify the emerging needs of the region to strengthen our programs and understand the unique challenges facing the individuals and families in our communities. This report contains both demographic and survey assessment data collected and analyzed from reputable online sources and the communities we serve.

The subsequent sections of this report will unfold the key findings obtained through this assessment, shedding light on the critical aspects that need attention. The collaborative efforts involved in this process emphasize our commitment to delivering services that are not only comprehensive, more importantly, aligned with the needs of those living in our communities.

Executive Summary

This 2025–2027 Needs Assessment combines robust quantitative data from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and Feeding America with qualitative insights gathered through community surveys, focus groups, and public meetings. These community engagement efforts ensure that the voices of Southeast Kansans—particularly those with low incomes—are central in shaping program priorities.

Through months of outreach and analysis, housing emerged as the most urgent need across the region, followed closely by early childhood education and transportation. These priority areas reflect barriers to economic stability, educational access, and family well-being—all core areas addressed by both CSBG-funded programs and Head Start services. In alignment with ROMA principles, the findings help illuminate the conditions of poverty, its underlying causes, and potential solutions.

SEK-CAP's service area spans 7,149 square miles in southeast Kansas, bordering Missouri to the east and Oklahoma to the south. We serve the counties of Allen, Bourbon, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Crawford, Elk, Labette, Linn, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson, and Woodson. These communities vary widely in demographics, industry, and infrastructure, but all face common challenges related to poverty, aging populations, limited transportation, and disparities in access to housing, health care, and quality early learning.

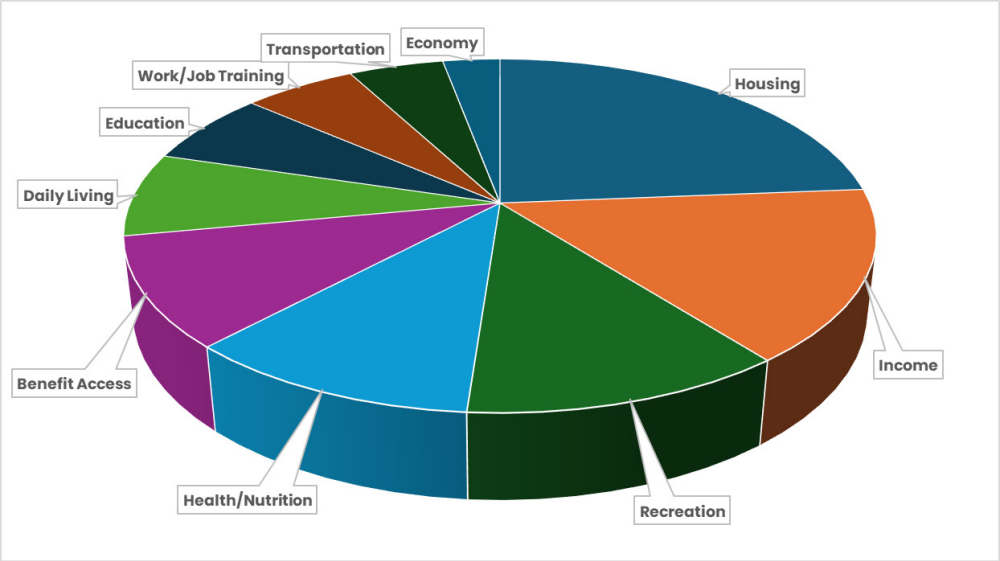
This assessment is conducted for three primary purposes:

1. To meet federal mandates for needs assessments as required by CSBG and the Head Start Act;
2. To inform internal strategic planning and guide the intentional use of limited resorces; and
3. To support regional collaboration by positioning SEK-CAP as a trusted source of data that can be used to drive system-level change across sectors.

At the heart of this effort was the deployment of a newly developed community survey tool. The instrument was disseminated both digitally and in-person using QR codes, website postings, social media, public service announcements, and engagement through community meetings. The survey content was redesigned based on prior CNA cycles, with a focus on capturing emerging issues while maintaining consistency with CSBG and Head Start data requirements.

This Needs Assessment not only identifies critical service gaps but also serves as a call to action for cross-sector collaboration. Its findings will guide SEK-CAP's efforts to reduce poverty, support family resilience, and expand equitable opportunities for all Southeast Kansans—especially young children and vulnerable families.

Main Findings



Community Needs Assessment Survey Results

Survey Results

Survey results reveal key insights into the community's perceived strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth across a broad range of domains. Housing emerged as the most pressing area of concern, accounting for 23.68% of identified community needs, particularly around the availability of affordable units, emergency rental assistance, and stable living conditions. Income-related challenges followed closely at 15.71%, with respondents citing barriers to earning a living wage and achieving financial security. Recreation made up 11.76% of responses, underscoring the demand for safe, accessible programs and facilities for youth and families. Health & Nutrition comprised 10.83%, pointing to the need for improved access to medical, dental, and mental health services, as well as healthy food options and nutrition assistance. Benefit access represented 10.03%, highlighting difficulty in accessing programs like SNAP, Medicaid, and housing subsidies. Daily living concerns (7.68%) included limited digital literacy, internet affordability, and civic engagement. Educational needs (6.71%) and work/job training gaps (5.79%) focused on childcare access, vocational training, and support for justice-involved individuals. Transportation issues (4.87%) pointed to limited public and shared transit options, while economic concerns (2.92%) indicated a need for more diverse employment opportunities and local commerce. Overall, the findings point to the urgent need for coordinated investment in housing, income stability, and community services to enhance residents' quality of life.

Demographics

All demographic information presented in this report for both the region and state were collected from the American Community Survey (ACS) which is put out by the U.S. Census Bureau. We have included demographic data from our region (Allen, Bourbon, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Crawford, Elk, Labette, Linn, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson and Woodson Counties) along with the state data for comparison.

Population

According to the U.S. Census Bureau available data, the total population for the report area fell -4,632 persons between 2018 and 2023. Since 2020, the population has continued to decline across the region. The chart below highlights the stead decline our region has seen over the past six years.

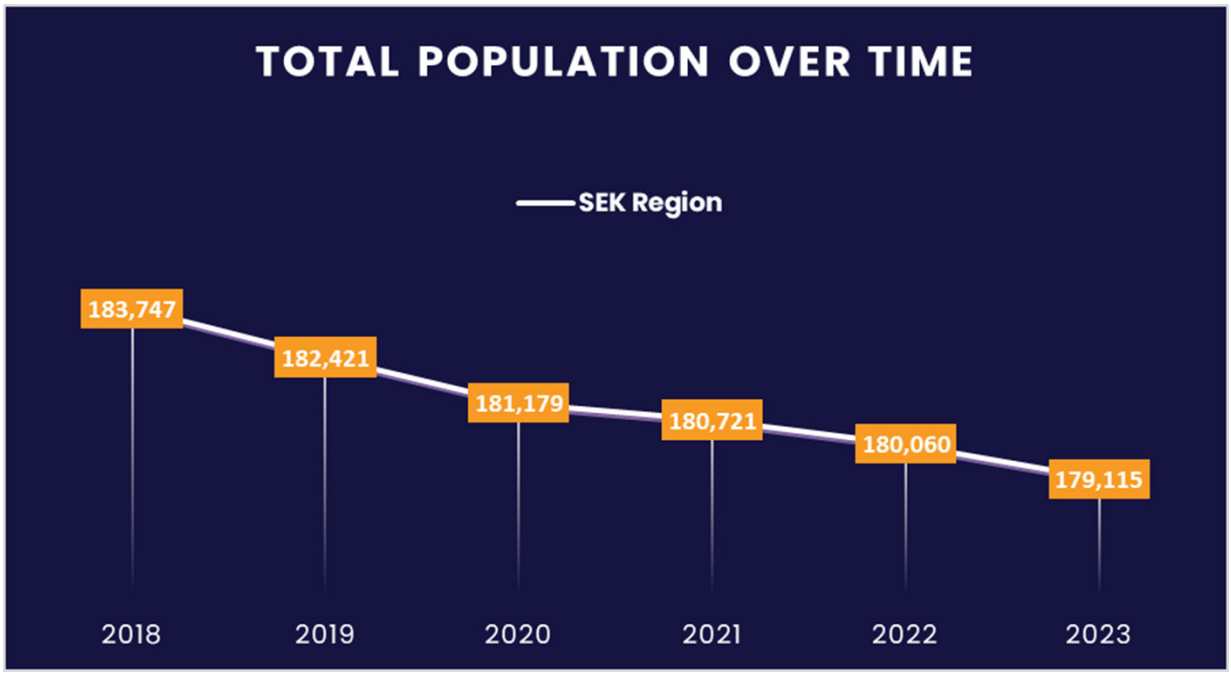


Chart 1: Total Population Over Time

Area Median Income (AMI)

The Median Household Income (AMI) in the region is $56,103. This is $16,536 lower than the state's AMI at $72,639. In our area, Bourbon County has the highest AMI at $67,555; this county is closer to larger cities, which offers citizens the ability to work in an urban setting and live in a rural area. The county with the lowest median income is in Woodson which is $48,152. This county is very rural and the job market is not as robust as other counties.

Age

The age distribution across Southeast Kansas reveals that the majority of the region's population falls within the working-age range of 18 to 64 years. However, despite this core demographic presence, the region has experienced a steady decline in total population—losing over 4,600 residents between 2018 and 2023. This decline is partly attributed to the outmigration of younger adults and families who seek better economic and educational opportunities in more urbanized areas. Additionally, the relatively smaller proportions of residents under age 18 suggest a declining birth rate and reduced family formation, further compounding long-term demographic challenges. These shifts indicate that while the adult population remains the largest age cohort, the region may struggle to replenish and retain its younger generations, thereby weakening the labor force pipeline and increasing the burden on aging infrastructure and services.

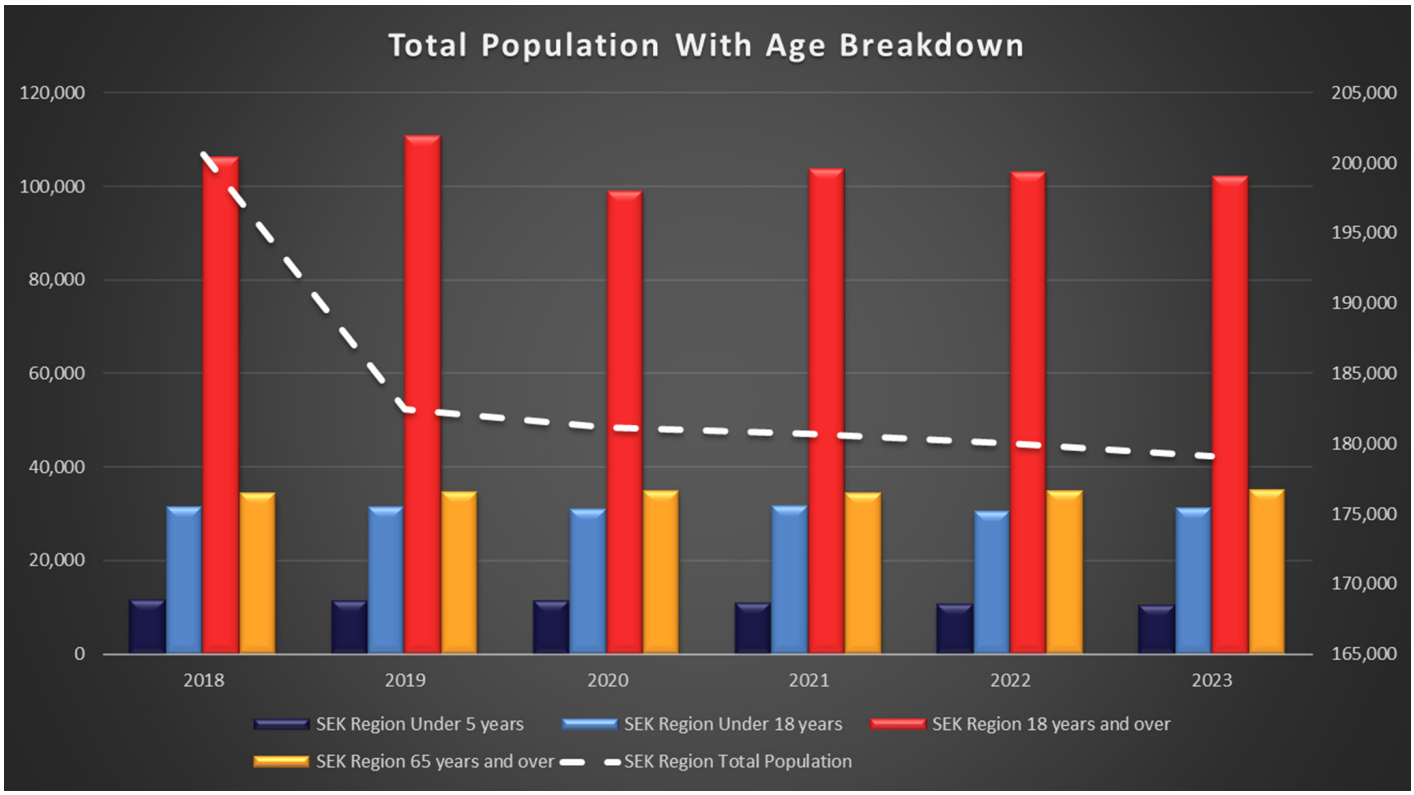


Chart 2: Age Breakdown

Male/Female

Historically, the region has had a slightly higher population of females compared to males, a trend that remained consistent until 2021. Recent data show a notable reversal, with males now slightly outnumbering females across the area. This shift correlates with the ongoing population decline and is likely driven by the outmigration of women, particularly those of childbearing and working age. The reasons may include limited access to affordable healthcare, childcare, and employment in traditionally female-dominated fields—factors that often influence relocation decisions for women and families.

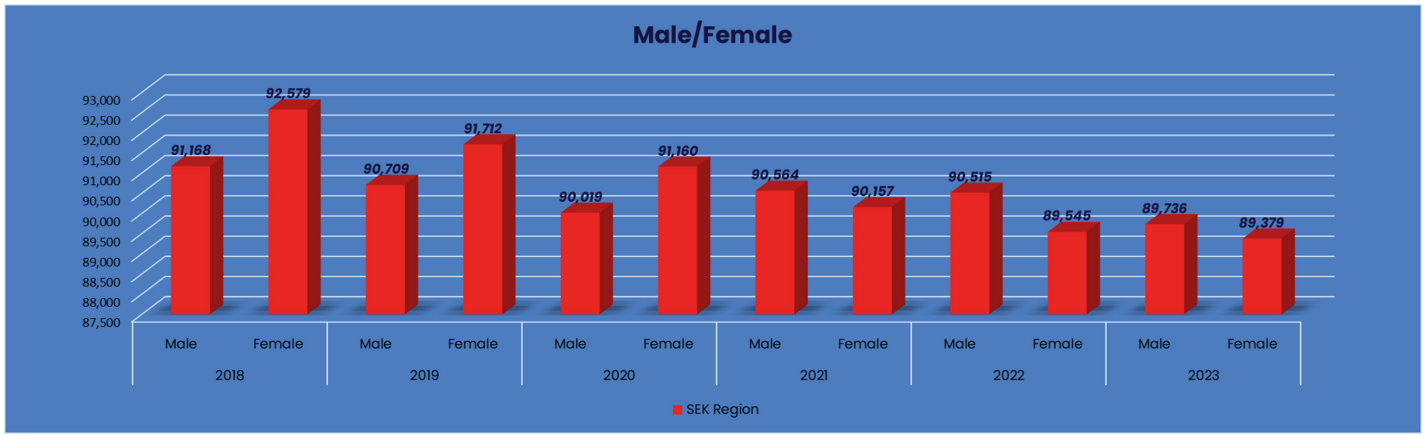


Chart 3: Sex Breakdown

As a result, the gender imbalance may further exacerbate the challenges tied to family development, community stability, and long-term population recovery. These demographic dynamics underscore the need for strategic investments in workforce development, family support services, and equitable access to opportunity to retain a balanced and vibrant population.





Race and Ethnicity

Southeast Kansas is predominately white (85%) however, there are some counties that are more racially diverse such as Montgomery, where 4.2% are Black, 7.5% are multi-racial, and 7.7% are Hispanic/Latino. For the past 30 years, we have learned from the U.S. Census Bureau that the national poverty rate has been static at 12.7%. However, by race, the poverty rate is 21.2% for Blacks and 18.0% for Hispanics while white – not Hispanic is at 8.7%. As we become more racially and ethnically diverse, needs and expectations for traditional services provided by SEK-CAP may need to adjust. The chart below details the race/ethnicity breakdown.

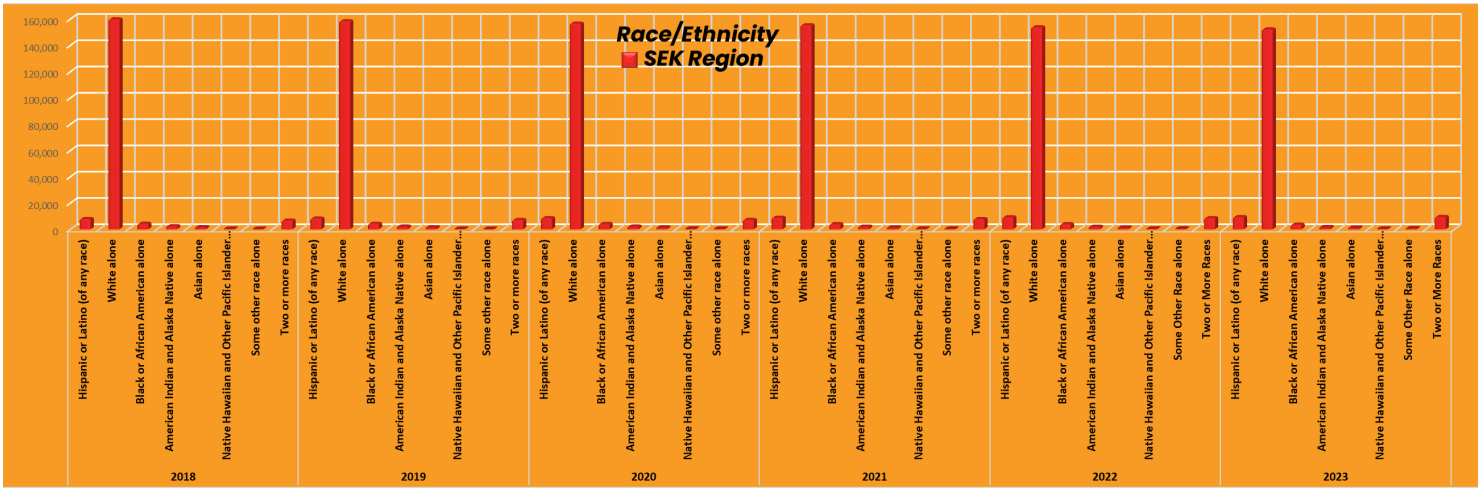


Chart 4: Race and Ethnicity

Education Attainment

In southeast Kansas, there are six counties with community colleges, and/or, a university while high school graduates in the remaining six counties must travel greater distances for advanced learning opportunities. When added to other core components of poverty such as transportation, affordable housing, access to health care (medical, dental and mental), child care, job opportunities, and healthy foods, this reality aligns itself alarmingly with the challenge of breaking the epidemic of poverty. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the average High School graduation rate is 92.4%, while the average Bachelor's Degrees earned averaged 22.3%. The county with the highest graduation rate was Chautauqua with a rate of 95.4%.

Poverty

Poverty creates a variety of factors that negatively affect individuals, families and communities. Those living in poverty often lack safe housing, healthy foods, early childhood education, transportation, proper medical attention, and income to afford basic human needs. This socioeconomic condition is a result of many factors - social, physical, and economical. High poverty rates can hinder growth economically and be associated with unemployment, urban decay, poor education and poor public health. The 2023 U.S. Census Bureau poverty data estimates 14.9% of the population, or a total of 27,412 individuals are living below the poverty level within our report area, a rate much greater than the state of Kansas (11.2%) and the United States (12.5%). Those counties with the highest concentration of people living below the poverty level is Crawford, Chautauqua, and Elk.





Chart 5: Poverty

Poverty

Those individuals working in poverty in our area average 7.2% or 6,472. The average number of children ages 0-5 living in poverty for our area is 1,895 or 20.1%. That percentage is higher than the state average of 15.8% and the national average of 17.6%. The number of families living below poverty for our area is 10.5%. Among the older population, ages 65 years old and older, the average of those living under the poverty level is 11.1%. There are 13.3% of men in poverty compared to the 16.6% of females in poverty. In youth ages 5-17 the average is 16.2% while adults 18-64 averaged 15.7% in poverty.

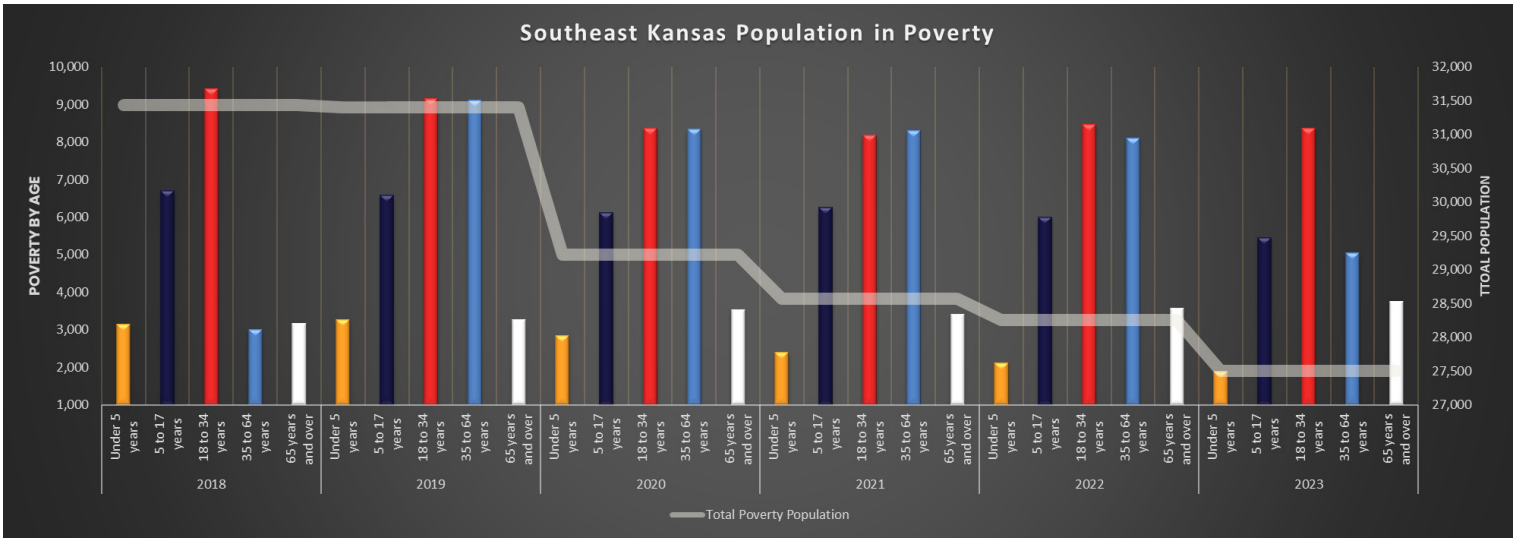


Chart 6: Poverty by Age

Those individuals living at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Line were 20.43% of the total population or 36,592 individuals. Those who are at 200% at below were 37.52%. or 67,202 individuals showing poverty rates that exceed both the state and national trends.

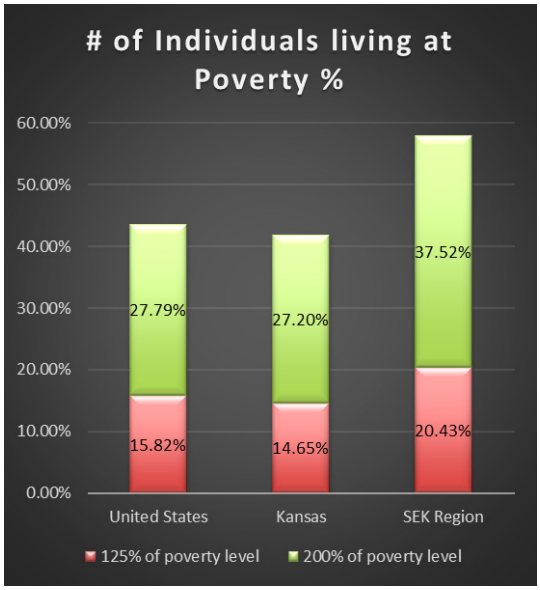


Chart 7: Poverty by 125% & 200% FPL

Race/Ethnicity

Our region is predominately white (85%), of which 14.1% live in poverty. Among African American's the rate is 28.5%, while American Indian/Alaskan Natives averaged 27% and Hispanic/Latino were 23.8% in poverty.

Health/Nutrition

A healthy community is one in which all residents have access to a quality education, safe and healthy homes, adequate employment, transportation, physical activity, and nutrition, in addition to quality health care. Our challenge in Southeast Kansas is to become known for being more-healthy than statistics show that we are right now. Many state, regional, and local health-related agencies, citizens-at-large, not-for-profit groups, and others are working hard each day to address this issue.

County Health Rankings

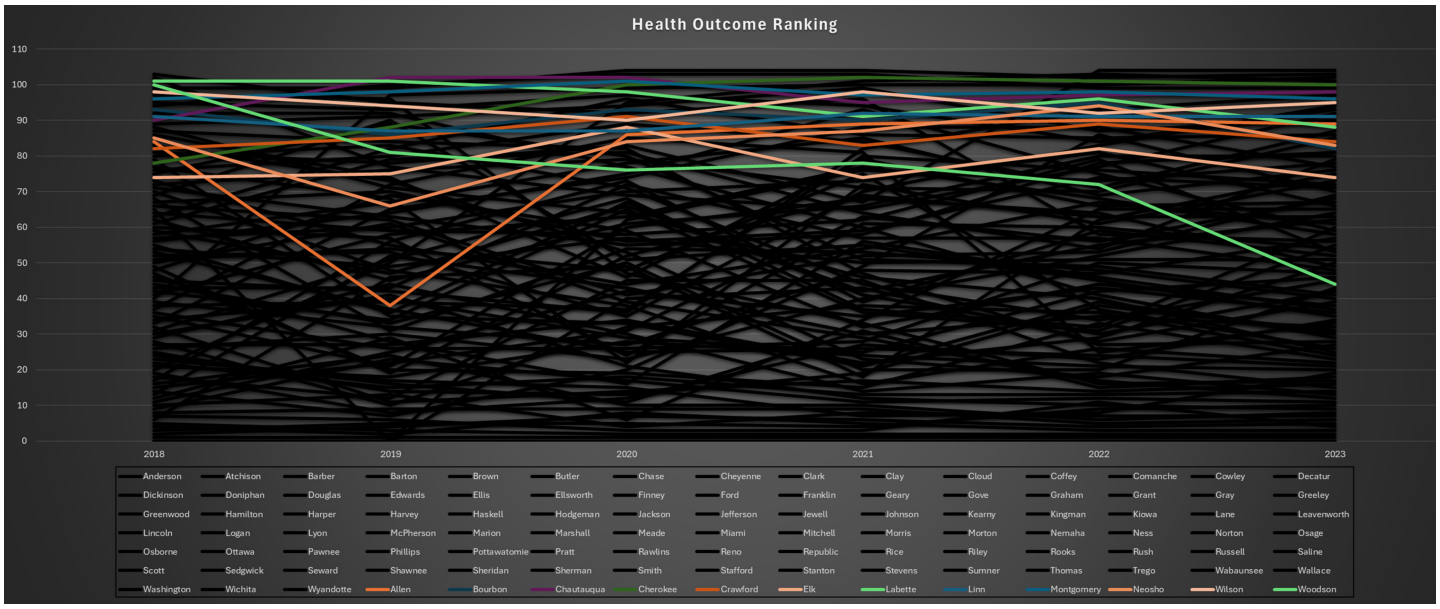
"The County Health Rankings, a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, measure the health of nearly all counties in the nation and rank them within states. The major goal of the Rankings is to raise awareness about the many factors that influence health and that health varies from place to place. Counties in each of the 50 states are ranked according to summaries of a variety of health measures. Those having high ranks, e.g. 1 or 2, are considered to be the "healthiest," while 105 are considered to be "unhealthiest." Counties are ranked relative to the health of other counties in the same state. The chart above show the Health, Social & Economic, and Physical Environment Rankings for the region, compared to the highest ranked out of 105 counties in Kansas. The Health Factors include: health behaviors such as adult obesity, access to exercise opportunities, and teen births. The Social & Economic Factors include: graduation rates, poverty, crime, and income inequality. The Physical Environment Factors include: severe housing problems, air pollution, and driving to work. The counties that rank the lowest in all three categories are Montgomery, Labette, and Neosho. This means that the overall quality of living in these counties is poor. Factors that contribute to this ranking include high rates for adult smoking, excessive drinking, income inequality, severe housing problems, and violent crimes. The county with a higher ranking, making it a healthier place to live is Allen. Overall, our entire area falls in the lowest quartile among the entire state of Kansas.

	Health Outcomes	Health Factors
Allen	89	90
Bourbon	82	83
Chautauqua	98	102
Cherokee	100	95
Crawford	84	94
Elk	74	103
Labette	88	96
Linn	91	101
Montgomery	96	99
Wilson	83	92
Woodson	95	100

Chart 8: Health Rankings by County

County Health Rankings

Below are charts highlighting the entire state of Kansas and where our region falls at the highest (worst) quartile of the state, by overall health outcomes and health factors.



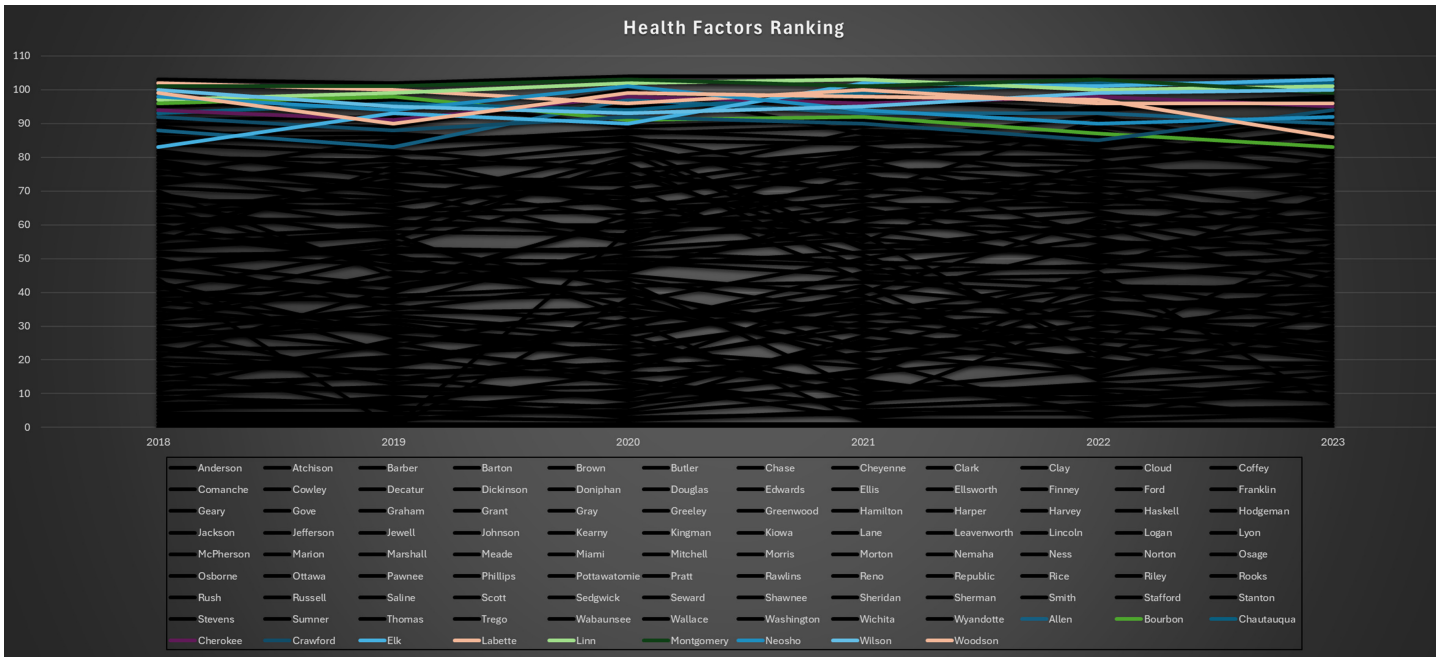


Chart 9: County Health Outcomes and Health Factors

Economic Stability

The definition of economic security is the condition of having stable income or other resources to support a standard of living now and in the foreseeable future. It is understood that those living in poverty in Southeast Kansas are not economically secure. The data in this chapter quantifies the difference (s) between our region and the State of Kansas as we take a closer look at: unemployment, living wage, and area median income.

Workforce

Overall, the report area experienced an average unemployment rate of 4.1% which is higher the state of Kansas at 3.3%, but only slightly lower than the national level of 4.3%. The highest concentration of unemployment lies in Allen County, where it currently sits at 6.9%.

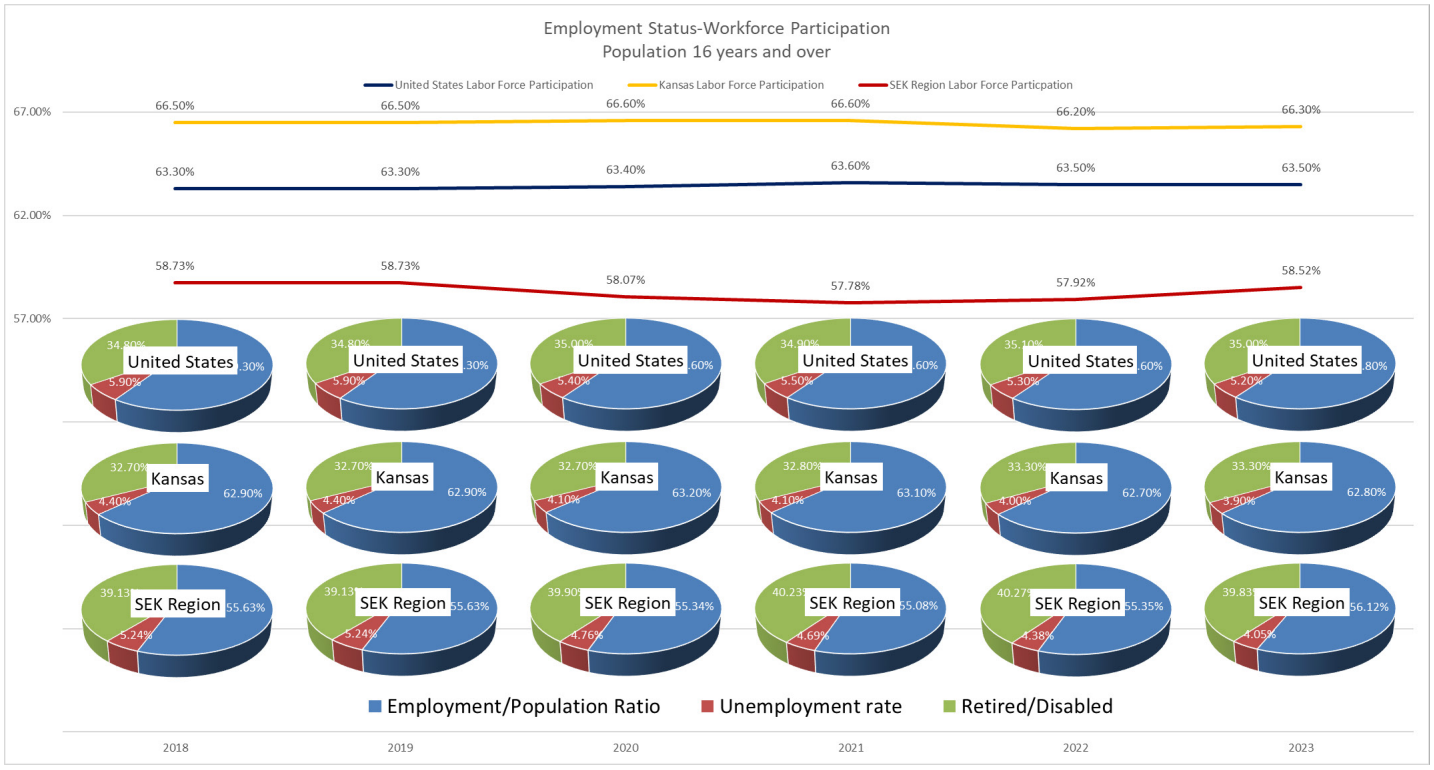


Chart 10: Workforce Participation

Living Wage

The Department of Urban Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology collected, processed, and aggregated data to determine what a living wage would be in every county in America. Below is a chart showing the living wage compared to the poverty wage, and minimum wage for the region, the state and the nation.

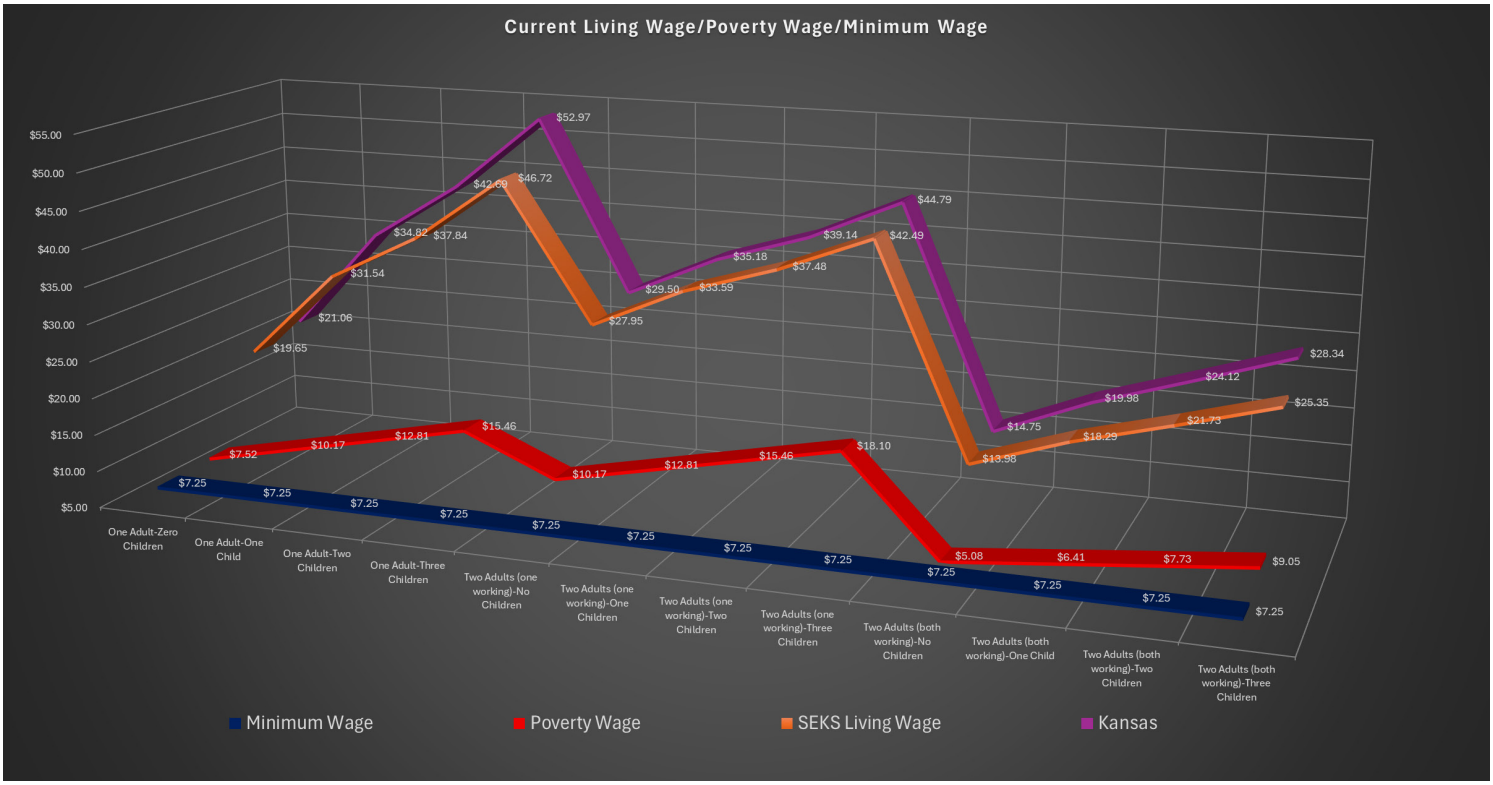


Chart 11: Living Wage

The calculations determine the rate that would allow residents to meet a minimum standard of living.

According to their calculations, two Kansas adults supporting two children should each earn $21.72 per hour.

2 Adults Both Working Full-Time

2 Adults

$8.79 (2019)

$13.97 (2025)

2 Adults 1 Child

$12.50 (2019)

$18.29 (2025)

2 Adults 2 Children

$14.42 (2019)

$21.72 (2025)

Industry

Southeast Kansas supports a diverse and resilient regional economy. Agriculture and agribusiness remain foundational, bolstered by strong activity in crop and livestock production, agricultural machinery manufacturing, and food processing. Manufacturing and heavy industry also play a significant role, with companies such as AZZ, Pitt Plastics, Pitsco, Triple T Foods, and Sugar Creek Packing operating in Crawford County. Ash Grove Cement in Chanute and Acme Foundry in Coffeyville further exemplify the region's industrial strength. The area's historical ties to coal and energy resources continue to influence its infrastructure and industrial base.

Healthcare and social services serve as major employment sectors, with Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center in Chanute, Coffeyville Regional Medical Center, and Four County Mental Health Center maintaining a strong regional presence. The education and public sectors are equally vital, featuring anchor institutions like Pittsburg State University, Neosho County Community College, and numerous Unified School Districts. These organizations not only provide stable jobs but also drive workforce development and community engagement. Additionally, retail, hospitality, and tourism—including grocery and casino operations—contribute to local economic vitality.

On a county level, Crawford County is home to major employers such as AZZ, Pitt Plastics, Pitsco, Triple T Foods, and Sugar Creek Packing alongside Pittsburg State University. Montgomery County includes Coffeyville Resources, John Deere, Acme Foundry, Textron Aviation, Coffeyville Regional Medical Center, Four County Mental Health Center, USD 445, and Walmart. Neosho County features Neosho Memorial, Orizon, Ash Grove Cement, Chanute Manufacturing, and Neosho County Community College. Public services, healthcare, and manufacturing remain constant employment anchors throughout the region.



Industry

The region actively invests in workforce development and economic growth. Local governments and organizations are promoting demand-driven training in high-need sectors such as logistics, IT, and advanced manufacturing. For instance, Pitt Plastics recently broke ground on a 200,000 square foot expansion in Pittsburg, expected to be completed by January 2025. Infrastructure investments—especially in broadband, transportation, and downtown revitalization—further support sustainable regional growth. This ongoing commitment to industry diversification and community infrastructure solidifies Southeast Kansas as an enduring economic hub within the state.

Sources:

- Kansas Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Overview
- Kansas Department of Commerce – Key Industry Sectors
- Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce – Major Employers in Crawford County
- Chanute Regional Development Authority – Top Employers
- Montgomery County Action Council – Business & Industry Reports
- Four County Mental Health Center – Service Areas & Staff
- City of Coffeyville – Industrial & Manufacturing Employers
- KOAM News Now – Pitt Plastics Expansion Announcement
- Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission – Economic Development Reports



Housing

After a meticulous assessment process, our main findings include an increasing need for housing. Survey respondents rated housing across the board as not only a growing need, but a major concern as we move into a future of uncertainty. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 87,361 houses in our report area. Of those, 80.1% are owner occupied, while 19.9% are renter occupied; this does not account for vacant homes. The National Low Income Housing Coalition publishes an annual report titled Out of Reach, wherein they use standardized Fair Market Rent (FMR) costs from the U.S. Office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to determine what a renter needs to earn in order to afford housing while not being rent-burdened. Being rent-burdened is defined as spending more than 30% of the household income on housing. According to this report, in order to rent a 2 bedroom dwelling that meets the HUD quality standards and avoid being rent burdened, a renter would need to earn $17.70 per hour. In order to afford a 2 bedroom rental at fair market rent, an individual would have to work a minimum of 98 hours per week.

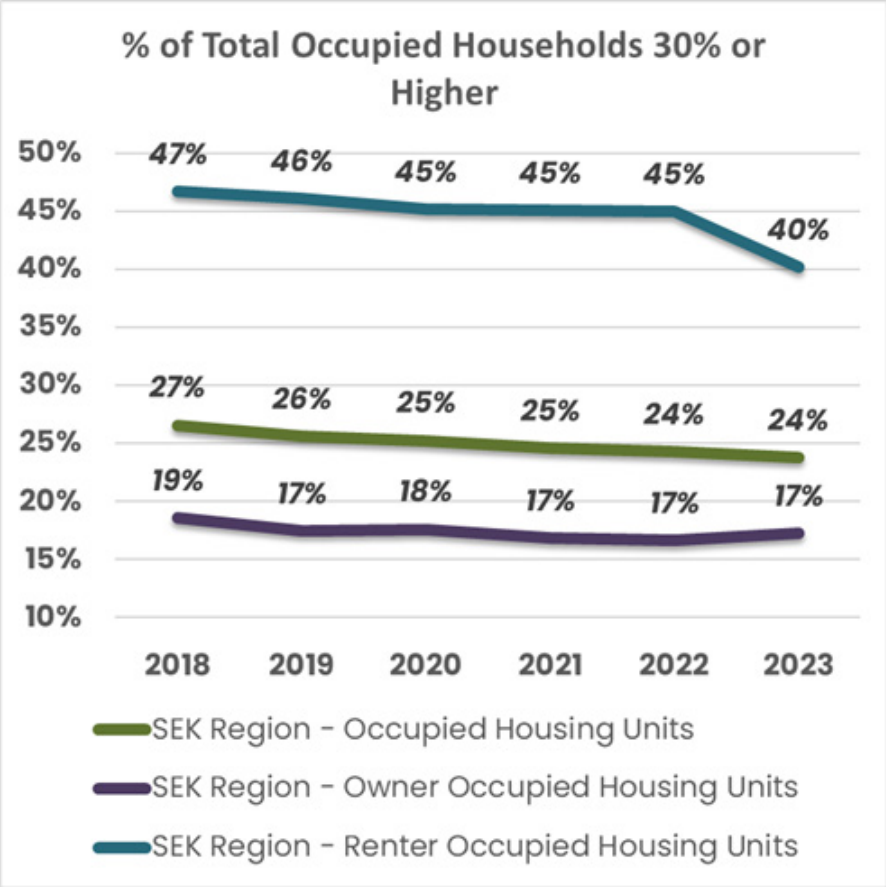


Chart 12: Households Spending 30% or Higher

Currently the state minimum wage in Kansas is $7.25, and 40% of renter occupied households are spending 30% or more of their monthly income. Of owner occupied homes, 17% of housing costs are greater than 30%.

Housing Need

According to the National Low Income Coalition, "Across Kansas, there is a shortage of rental homes affordable and available to extremely low income households (ELI), whose incomes are at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area median income (AMI). Many of these households are severely cost burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing. Severely cost burdened poor households are more likely than other renters to sacrifice other necessities like healthy food and healthcare to pay the rent, and to experience unstable housing situations like evictions."

The median housing costs exceed the median household income as seen in the chart below.

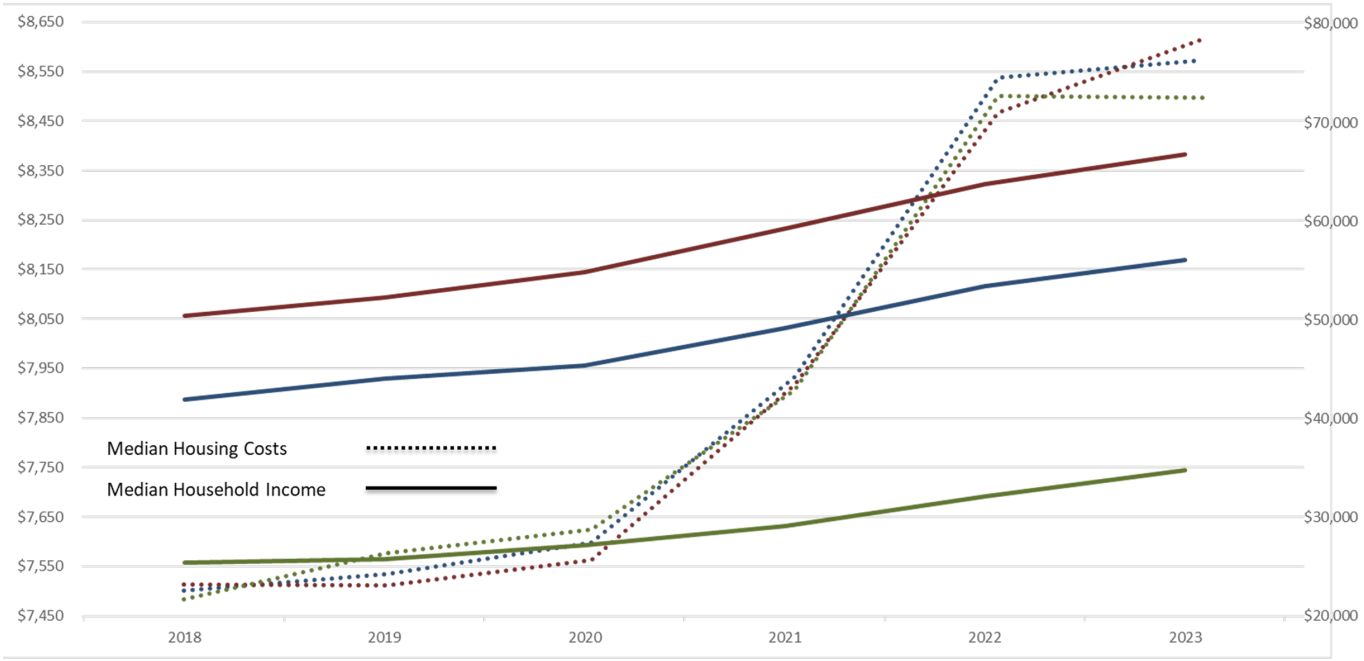


Chart 13: Housing Costs

According to the 2021 Housing Study put out by the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation (KHRC) other barriers southeast Kansans face around housing is, "an increase in older housing stock, inconsistencies between wages and housing costs, and lack of modern rental options."



The housing stock in our area continues to age with property owners unable and in some cases unwilling to make necessary repairs to keep homes safe. In our area, 50.4% of homes were built before 1979. The number of occupied housing units in our area is 62.1%, making the number of aged homes being occupied higher than the state's average of 57.4% aged homes compared to 89.8% occupied.

Homelessness

The Kansas Balance of State Continuum of Care conducted a point-in-time count of the homeless population in the state of Kansas in January 2023. Those counted included households with at least one adult and one child, households with only children, and households without children. This count, required by HUD, does not capture an accurate number of people experiencing homelessness, and only provide a snapshot of one night. Additionally, this does not include an account of those in other unstable housing situations. In southeast Kansas there were 54 unsheltered individuals, and 58 in temporary shelter. Of the 113 emergency shelter beds, 83 are reserved for domestic violence survivors only. 178 beds are reserved for rapid rehousing, and 6 are transitional housing beds.

The Regional Coordinated Entry System documents the number of households facing homelessness during the course of one year. In our area for the period of 10/1/2022 to 9/30/2023, there were 505 households experiencing homelessness; of those, 395 persons were in literal homeless situations, 5 persons in temporary situations, 5 persons in institutions, 30 persons in housing at risk and 1 unknown.

According to the 2023 GAP Analysis, "Southeast Kansas offers 113 emergency shelter beds, 83 beds dedicated to Domestic Violence, and 178 rapid rehousing beds but has no PSH beds available. With 30 individuals identified as chronically homeless, the lack of PSH beds creates a significant gap in long-term housing solutions. The region also provides 6 transitional housing beds, which are essential but not sufficient for the growing population of homeless individuals in the region. HMIS identified 241 individuals with one or more disability in the South East Region, suggesting the need for expanded long term housing supports." Since the publishing of this report Catholic Charities has begun operations of a Public Supportive Housing (PSH) program.

Shelter Capacities/Type

Catholic Charities	Rapid Rehousing	110 Beds in HMIS
City of Pittsburg	Rapid Rehousing	68 Beds in HMIS
Hope Unlimited, Inc. Victim Service Provider	Emergency Shelter	12 Beds in HMIS
Safehouse Crisis Center Victim Service Provider	Emergency Shelter	71 Beds in HMIS
Hannah's House	Emergency Shelter	18 Beds not integrated in HMIS
Home Sweet Home	Emergency Shelter	12 Beds not integrated in HMIS
Crawford County Mental Health Center	Traditional Housing	6 Beds not integrated in HMIS

Education

Early Childhood

One of the barriers to gaining employment in the region is a family's inability to access quality, reliable, safe, early childhood education and care. Quality, private care can be expensive, and low-income families often find themselves with limited options. Therefore, they turn to subsidized childcare or early childhood education, such as Head Start and Early Head Start or unlicensed, unregulated care. Even Head Start and Early Head Start, still have their limitations in terms of providing childcare to the workforce. Within our area, there is still a severe shortage of resources provided to infants and toddlers.

Total Population Children Ages 0-5

The U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey's 5 year data states that there are 10,493 children ages 0-5 living throughout the 12 county region. That equates to an average of 5.6% of the total population.

Children Ages 0-5 in Poverty

The rate of poverty for this age varies based on geography. For example, the highest rate of childhood poverty is in Elk County, where it reaches 38.3%, and the lowest is in Linn County, where it sits at 9.4%. Throughout the service area the rate of poverty among this age group is 20.1%. This rate is higher than the state average of 15.8%.

Based on this data there are 1,895 children in the report area who are eligible for Early Head Start/Head Start services based on poverty status alone. The majority of these children are located in Crawford (385 children) and Montgomery (419 children) counties.

Languages Spoken at Home

Throughout the service area, the racial and ethnic populations continue to grow. An average of 1.6% of children ages 0-5 hear and/or speak Spanish, while 0.4% hear and/or speak Asian/Pacific Islander language. 97.1% of children hear and/or speak English as their primary language.



Expectant Mothers: Pre & Post Natal Care

The Kansas Health Matters data set shows an average of 78.3% of pregnant mothers received prenatal care during their first trimester. Mothers who smoked during their pregnancy averaged 12.7% throughout the region. Birth's per 1,000 totaled 126 during 2023. Babies born prematurely averaged 9.6% during the same year.

Teen Pregnancy

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment shows the rate of teen pregnancy among girls aged 15-19 totaled 7.4%. This rate increased from 2019's rate of 13%. The U.S. Centers for Disease and Prevention Control reports, "children of teenage mothers are more likely to have lower school achievement and drop out of high school, have more health problems, be incarcerated at some time during adolescence, give birth as a teenager, and face unemployment as a young adult."

Low Birth Weight

The Stanford Children's Health defines low birth weight as a term used to describe babies who are born weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces. The average newborn weighs around 8 pounds. Babies born with low birth weight in the area is 7.9%.



Child Immunization Rates

Newborn babies are born with antibodies they receive from their mothers. That built up immunity doesn't last past the first year. It is important to immunize children to protect their health. Children who go without being immunized are at greater risk of vaccine-preventable diseases, hospitalizations, and premature deaths. The average percentage of infants who were fully immunized by 24 months in our area was 68%, according to Kansas Health Matters. The county with the highest rate is Chautauqua County at 81.7%, and the lowest rate was in Montgomery County at 20.3%.

Children in Foster Care

The Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) documents 270 children in out of home placements throughout our area. Crawford County has the highest number at 80 children, while Chautauqua and Elk Counties have the lowest number at 3 and 0 children respectively.

Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness

Research efforts to obtain homelessness data for ages 0-5 were unsuccessful. There are several reasons we were unsuccessful; a) there are no national, regional, state, or local websites whose focus is related to homelessness data at the level we wanted for this Regional Assessment Report; b) the nature of homelessness is that people living in that condition do not have a home, thus the difficulty of collecting information from them; and c) local annual efforts to count the homeless are limited to one day and that effort does not lend itself to conversations with the homeless to ask questions of them about important questions such as the number of children between the ages of 0-5 or any other age. Our Tenant Based Rental Assistance program documents the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness who are currently waiting to receive rental assistance. According to this list there are currently 32 children ages 0-5 experiencing homelessness. This information does not list county specific data for which we would hope.

McKinney Vento Report

This report documents the number of identified students experienceing homelessness during an academic year.

District	USD	Reported Number of Students
Pittsburg	USD 250	248
Woodson	USD 366	79
Galena	USD 499	34
Jayhawk	USD 346	34
Riverton	USD 404	25
Fort Scott	USD 234	24
Coffeyville	USD 445	24
Baxter Springs	USD 508	23
Frontenac	USD 249	23
Labette County	USD 506	15
Iola	USD 257	12
Cherryvale	USD 447	11

This section had no data available which means that less than 10 students were identified.

Marmaton Valley	USD 256	Parsons	USD 503
Humboldt	USD 258	Oswego	USD 504
Uniontown	USD 235	Pleasanton	USD 344
Cedar Vale	USD 285	Caney Valley	USD 436
Chautauqua Co Community	USD 286	Independence	USD 446
Columbus	USD 493	Erie-Galesburg	USD 101
Northeast	USD 246	Chanute	USD 413
Cherokee	USD 247	St. Paul-Chetopa	USD 505
Girard	USD 248	Altoona-Midway	USD 387
West Elk	USD 282	Neodesha	USD 461
Elk Valley	USD 283	Fredonia	USD 484

Chart 14: McKinney Vento Report 2023-2024

Food Insecurity/Nutrition

Children who live in rural areas, often face an increased rate of hunger due to barriers like food deserts. According to Feeding America, "three-quarters of the counties with the highest rates of food insecurity are in rural areas." In our region, the percentage of children facing food insecurity is 23%. Kansas Health Matters reports that there were 3,683 families receiving SNAP benefits which averaged out to 44.5%.

Transportation

Access to safe, reliable transportation was regularly identified as a need throughout the region, particularly among the more rural communities. These discussions included not only transportation for individuals to access education, employment, healthcare, goods and services, but also for industry.

Southeast Kansas is under served by four-lane highways, limiting the number and types of industry that would be interested in locating in the region. KDOT recently completed the U.S. Highway 69 from Fort Scott to Pittsburg as a four-lane system. The remainder of Highway 69, from Pittsburg to the border with Oklahoma and connecting to Interstate 44, remain two lane. The other US highways that transect the region, 54 on the north end of the report area, 169, the north/south connector through the center of the report area, 400, the east/west connector to Wichita, 160 and 166, both of which travel east/west across the bottom of the report area, all remain two lanes. The rail system in this area is fairly robust and appears to have adequate capacity for the industries located here. The only downfall is the two-lane road system when a four-lane is needed to move freight from rail yards to other locations, which may limit interest in outside entities relocating in the region. There are a total of fifteen airports in the region, home to over 230 based aircraft's. The airports with the most use are located in Chanute and Pittsburg.

Vehicle Access

The U.S. Census Bureau's, American Community Survey 5-year data documents 169,524 people living in the CTD #10 service area. Of those people, 26,388 are living in a state of poverty. Many of these areas are rural and access to transportation is difficult to access. Of these 6.8% have no access to a vehicle and are completely transit dependent. 31.1% of those same individuals have access to only one vehicle. The Census Bureau documents the average household to contain 2.4 people, therefore we can project that in homes with only one vehicle, there is another person who is transit dependent.

Trends

The demographics in our service area continues to follow two trends. The first being that many people continue to leave our region for more urban area. Typically, these outward migrants are those with the means to be mobile; therefore those left behind are the most vulnerable, impoverished and often find themselves confined to the most rural, under-served communities in our service area, where housing is more affordable. The second trend we continue to see is many of the elderly that are left behind are aging in place, remaining in communities with little or no services for nutrition, healthcare, and/or human engagement. Because of these two trends, we see the demand for general public transportation increasing, as young people who live in remote towns need access to education and employment and as elderly people need access to food, healthcare, and socialization.

Roads

Maintaining high quality roads is critical to the economic well-being of the region. Additionally, road improvements need to be made across the region, which will provide the ability to move commerce quickly and safely. Safe and high quality roads are important for both businesses and region's citizens who commute to and from work daily. Road infrastructure needs to be maintained to allow safe travel.



Conclusion

To achieve meaningful and sustainable change in Southeast Kansas, collaborative action among community leaders, organizations, and residents is essential. Rather than competing for limited resources, stakeholders—including public housing authorities, nonprofit and for-profit partners, educational institutions, and municipalities—must coordinate efforts to maximize impact and leverage collective assets. Through this unified approach, we can address pressing needs and transform systems that perpetuate poverty and inequity.

Housing remains a top priority. Local partnerships must work together to expand access to affordable, stable housing through innovative development, supportive services, and effective use of existing funding streams. Similarly, transportation infrastructure, particularly for employment access and public transit, requires coordinated investment. Businesses, local governments, and educational providers can help secure the matching funds necessary to meet Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) requirements and expand regionally targeted transit solutions.

Despite historical economic and social challenges, Southeast Kansas is poised for renewal. Strengthening local pride, shifting community narratives, and elevating success stories will foster a more hopeful regional identity. This begins with clear messaging around current initiatives, measurable outcomes, and inclusive planning.

Education and workforce development must be aligned to prepare youth and adults for success in the local economy. Collaboration between school districts, higher education, Head Start programs, and regional employers can ensure that individuals—particularly those from low-income households—have access to relevant training, mentorship, and career pathways.

Expanding access to information and outreach will help ensure that residents are aware of local employment, health, housing, and educational resources. Targeted efforts must be made to reach underserved populations, including rural residents, young children, the elderly, and families experiencing homelessness or language barriers.

Ultimately, this assessment affirms that Southeast Kansas has both the will and the capacity to create meaningful change. By acting on the needs identified in this report, and by implementing strategic, community-led solutions, the region can improve quality of life, reduce disparities, and promote equity for all who live here.

Access to Health Services

CHC/SEK:

Pittsburg
Arma
Baxter Springs
Coffeyville
Columbus
Ft. Scott
Independence
Iola
Mount City
Parsons

Mental Health Centers:

CMHC of Crawford County
Four County MHC
Labette Center for MH
Southeast KS MHC
Spring River MH&W

Other Health Services:

Allen County Regional Clinic
Altamont Community Clinic
Ashley Clinic Chanute
Cherryvale Family Medicine
Chetopa Community Clinic
CRMC Medical Group
Morris & Hill Medical Clinic
Labette Health
Mercy Clinic
NMRMC Family Medicine
St. John Clinic
Girard Medical Center
Independence Family Medicine
The Family Physicians
Tallgrass Rural Health Clinic
Yates Center Medical Center

Access to Housing Services

Housing Authorities:

Iola
Humboldt
Ft. Scott
Columbus
Galena
Pittsburg
Frontenac
Girard
Howard
Parsons
Pleasanton
Independence
Cherryvale
Chanute
Neodesha

HUD Multifamily/Low Income Housing Tax Credit/USDA/Other:

Iola
Humboldt
Moran
Ft. Scott
Uniontown
Bronson
Sedan
Cedar Vale
Columbus
Galean
Baxter Springs
PIttsburg
Girard
Arma
Mulberry
McCune
Longton
Parsons
Oswego
Chetopa
Altamont
Mound Valley
Pleasanton
La Cygne
Mound City
Prescott
Independence
Cherryvale
Caney
Coffeyville
Chanute
Erie
Thayer
Neodesha
Fredonia
Yates Center
Toronto

Access to Transportation Services

Allen Regional Transit (A.R.T.)
Allen County Services to the Elderly
CHC CareVan
Connections Transportation
CLASS LTD
Elk County Council on Aging
Foster Grandparents Program
Linn County Transportation
Thanks Program, Inc.
SEK-CAP, Inc.
Tri-Valley
Southeast Kansas Mental Health Center
Four County Mental Health Senior Services
Tri-Ko (LN)

Sources

Chart 1: Total Population over Time
U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ACS 5-year Table:DP05

Chart 2: Age Breakdown
U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ACS 5-year Table:S0101

Chart 3: Sex Breakdown
U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ACS 5-year Table:S0101

Chart 4: Race and Ethnicity
U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ACS 5-year Table:P1

Chart 5: Poverty
U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ACS 5-year Table:S1701

Chart 6: Poverty by Age
U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ACS 5-year Table:S1701

Chart 7: Poverty by 125% & 200%
U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ACS 5-year Table:S1701

Chart 8: Health Ranking by County
University of Wisconsin Population Health Institut, County Heatlh Rankings

Chart 9: County Health Outcomes & Factors
University of Wisconsin Population Health Institut

Chart 10: Workforce Participation
U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ACS 5-year Table:S2301

Chart 11: Living Wage
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Living Wage Calculator

Chart 12: Households Spending 30% or Higher
U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ACS 5-year Table:S1901

Chart 13: Housing Costs
U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, ACS 5-year Table:S2503

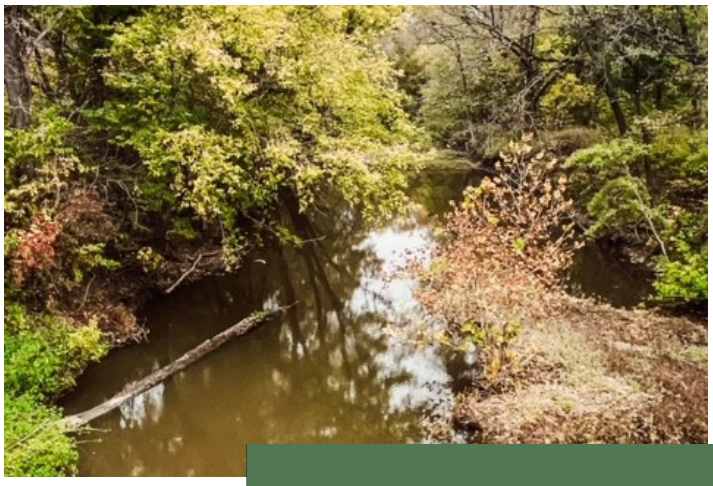
Chart 14: McKinney Vento Report 23-24
Kansas State Department of Education, McKinney Vento Report: 2023-2024

Questions about information in this document can be send to reporting@sek-cap.com or engagement@sek-cap.com

Disclaimer:
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