

# Food Lines Across America Are Getting Longer and It's Just the Beginning

It is already happening. There has been a lot of talk that demand at America's overwhelmed food banks will surge once funding for the food stamp program ends in early November, but the truth is, we are already witnessing a surge. So what will happen if the current government shutdown persists for an extended period? On one recent evening, the line at a food bank in downtown Kansas City "snaked through the parking lot, down a driveway and into the street."

*On a recent Thursday evening, the line of cars waiting to pick up food at Redemptorist Social Services Center in midtown snaked through the parking lot, down a driveway and into the street.*

*Demand for free food is soaring across Kansas City, as job cuts increase, food inflation remains persistently high and federal food assistance is slashed by the Trump administration.*

*Julie McCaw, executive director at Redemptorist, called the situation "alarming." Families with working parents, senior citizens and people who simply cannot find work increasingly are turning to food pantries like hers for help.*

Sadly, this is just the beginning.

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At one location in San Francisco, the lines "typically extend a city block", but the president and CEO of that facility openly admits that the lines are "about to get longer."

*Each week, as president and CEO of the San Francisco social justice nonprofit Glide, I walk past the lines of people who wait for our free meal program. Those lines typically extend a city block.*

*They're about to get longer.*

If you need to go to a food bank in the coming weeks, I recommend getting there very early.

Because once the food is gone, there is nothing left to hand out.

That happened recently at the Capital Area Food Bank in Maryland, but fortunately, a truck with more supplies arrived just in time.

*The Capital Area Food Bank started the morning with 300 boxes, enough for 150 families to receive two boxes each. They ran out halfway through distribution.*

*Cheers erupted as another truck backed into the shopping center parking lot. Federal workers, in a line that wrapped around the shopping center and into the neighborhood, clapped and cheered at the sight of reinforcements arriving at the emergency food distribution site.*

If the line at that food bank is long enough to wrap around a shopping center now, what is it going to look like in a few weeks?



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In New Mexico, more than a fifth of the entire population is on food stamps, and demand at local food banks is rapidly increasing.

*Marissa Brown, who runs the Roadrunner Food Bank distribution, says the line has increased by approximately 50 households to 225 each week. She estimated a line once composed mostly of unhoused people pushing carts is now probably 60% people with roofs over their heads.*

*“We are just seeing more of our neighbors who are housed coming, too, because it’s just hard for everyone,” Brown told Source New Mexico as people worked their way through the line Friday morning. “We’re really pleased that we can just expand that reach to anyone who might need it, but it certainly has expanded.”*

Neighboring Texas is experiencing a similar surge in demand.

In fact, it is being reported that at food banks throughout the state, the lines are “growing longer every day.”

*The West Texas Food Bank is sounding the alarm. As the federal government shutdown continues, thousands of West Texans – including federal employees and families depending on SNAP benefits – are left wondering how they’ll put food on the table.*

*The Food Bank is stepping in to fill the gap, but shelves are emptying faster than they can be restocked. Demand has surged across the 19 counties served by the organization, with lines growing longer every day.*

*“We are seeing fear in people’s eyes,” Libby Stephens, CEO of the West Texas Food Bank, said in a news release. “Parents will skip meals so their children can eat. Families who have always been the ones giving help will find themselves asking for it. We will do everything we can, but our resources are already stretched to the limit. We desperately need the community’s help more than ever.”*

We haven’t seen anything like this in a long time.

In our nation's capital, federal workers who are suddenly without paychecks are lining up at a food bank in southeast DC to get free food and supplies.

*Federal workers lined up around the corner outside of the Capital Area Food Bank in Southeast Washington, D.C., on Friday after missing their first full paycheck since the now 24-day government shutdown began.*

*The food bank, set up specifically for federal workers, provided boxed meals, household goods and personal hygiene items to over 250 federal employees on Friday, according to Wil Stroman, a local pastor who is helping organize a food bank for federal workers every Friday until the shutdown ends.*

This is why it is so important always to have a sizable emergency fund.

If you suddenly lose your job or some temporary emergency happens, you will still need to pay your bills and feed your family.

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Yes, it is great that the food banks are there. But they can only do so much.

We haven't even reached November yet, and one food bank in Huntington, West Virginia, is already rationing potatoes.

*Cynthia Kirkhart, the CEO of Facing Hunger Foodbank in Huntington, West Virginia, has already had to explain to customers this year why the organization is rationing bags of potatoes.*

*The food bank, which also serves households in Kentucky and*

*Ohio, has had to shrink its allotments as higher food costs and surging need strain its budget.*

I never imagined that we would be talking about rationing potatoes in November 2025, but here we are.

When things start to go bad, they tend to do so very quickly, and you definitely don't want to be caught without enough food when things really start hitting the fan.

These are such perilous times.

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I hope the government shutdown is resolved soon so our food banks don't get absolutely crushed by a tsunami of new demand.

But right now, we are being told that this shutdown is likely to last much longer, and that is not good news for any of us.

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