



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on July 19, 2018

Food Stamp Use Way Down

The number of Americans on food stamps has dropped significantly, [according to Bloomberg News](#). “Food-Stamp Use Is Still at Recession-Era Levels Despite Job Gains,” ran the headline over its story about a double-digit dive in the use of the welfare program.



But that drop in usage isn't good news, and the subheadlines explain why: “Enrollment remains elevated as expansion leaves poorest behind” and “Republicans in Congress want to tighten work requirements.”

17-percent Drop

The headline writer omitted the word “bad” before Republicans, but in any event, the numbers show that the economic recovery is having its intended effect. Fewer Americans are collecting food on the dole. *Bloomberg* put a dark spin on the figures:

Judging by the number of Americans on food stamps, it doesn't feel like one of the best job markets in almost a half century and the second-longest economic expansion on record.

Enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, better known as food stamps, fell to 39.6 million in April, the most recent government data show. That's down from a record 47.8 million in 2012, but as a share of the population it's just back to where it was as the economy emerged from the longest and deepest downturn since the Great Depression.

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What's more “elevated SNAP use displeases congressional Republicans, who want a shift toward more job training in the five-year farm bill that's taking shape. Democrats say continued support is needed as an uneven rebound leaves behind millions.”

So 8.2 million fewer Americans are using the program, a 17.15 percent drop since the glory days of the Obama Economy. How decreasing numbers means “elevated SNAP use” we are not given to know, but in any event *Bloomberg* did find a professor at Tufts University to explain that the news is good.

“We're many years into an economic expansion after the Great Recession and just now we're starting to enjoy dips in SNAP participation,” said Professor Parker Wilde of the university's nutrition school. More jobs and more employment, he told *Bloomberg*, mean more people buying food and fewer getting it from the government.

Another reason SNAP claims have dropped, [Bloomberg says](#), “is tightening for able-bodied adults ages 18 to 49 who don't have dependents and have been jobless for more than three months.”

Bottom Line? Millions of Americans who were receiving food stamps under the president who promised “change” aren't receiving them now.

The numbers, by the way, [have been dropping](#) for some time, as [The New American has reported](#).



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Obama and Bush

Under President Obama, food stamp use dramatically increased. The number of Americans on food stamps [rocketed 70 percent](#) to 47.8 million by the end of 2012, just three years after he took office. That's more than 14 percent of the population.

By 2015, it had dropped to 45 million, about one in seven Americans.

Yet Obama didn't start the food stamp bonanza. That began under President George W. Bush, when the economy was doing well.

As [Ryan McMacken of the Mises Institute noted](#), "It stands to reason that the post-2008 surge in food stamp participation has indeed been driven by a weak economy in part." Yet "food stamp use increased during the non-recessionary Bush years between 2001 and 2008. In fact, during that period, food stamp participation increased 62 percent."

Why was that? Because Bush greatly expanded the program. Writing in the *Washington Examiner*, [Veronique de Rugy explained](#) what Bush did:

The 2002 Farm Bill expanded eligibility to noncitizens, increased benefits for families with more children, adjusted benefits for inflation and made it easier to enroll. Further easing of eligibility requirements followed in the 2008 Farm Bill, which contained more than 30 provisions relating to food stamps, including higher minimum benefits. As the data show, spending after changes in eligibility grew by \$185 billion between 2002 and 2008.

Similarly, the 2009 stimulus bill scrapped limits on SNAP benefits to adults without children and raised the maximum benefit by 13.6 percent through 2014. According to the Congressional Budget Office, about 20 percent of the \$198 billion growth in between 2009 and 2011 can be attributed to the new eligibility standards, and hence will not go away once the economy recovers.

States abandoned asset tests, she wrote. Thus, [CNN reported](#), in a county in New Jersey where the median income was \$91,000 and residents lived in million-dollar houses, food stamp use jumped 240 percent from 2006 to 2012.



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