

# Missouri Economy Indicators

## Urban and Rural Business Churn

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As of May 2025, Missouri recorded more than 11,000 new business applications from employers likely to hire workers, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This number marks a significant increase from the 9,800 applications filed by the same time in 2024 and reflects strong entrepreneurial momentum in the Show-Me State. Over the past five years, annual business applications have surged, averaging more than 24,400 between 2020 and 2024 — a 30% increase compared to the 18,700 annual average from 2015 to 2019.

Application data indicates intent to start a business, but actual openings and closures provide a more complete view of business survival. Using the Census Bureau’s Business Dynamics Statistics latest data, from 2022, we can see business entries and exits, known as business churn, across Missouri’s urban metropolitan and micropolitan counties, as well as in rural counties outside these urban centers.

### Top Business Entries Differ by Urban and Rural Counties

Although most businesses are started in urban counties, due to greater market size, relative business openings can be better understood when taking population into account. *Health Care & Social Assistance* saw the highest number of new Missouri business entries in 2022, with 39 openings per 100,000 residents, largely in urban areas. *Professional & Technical Services* firms were also more likely to start in urban counties. In contrast, rural counties saw relatively more new businesses in *Construction* and *Retail Trade*.

### Top Business Entries per 100,000 Missourians

Business Sector	MO	MO	MO
		Urban	Rural
Construction	25	24	32
Retail Trade	25	24	31
Professional & Tech. Services	21	22	10
Health Care & Social Assist.	39	42	21
Accomm. & Food Services	21	21	24

Sources: MU Extension graphic using 2022 data from the U.S. Census Business Dynamics Statistics (BDS) program.

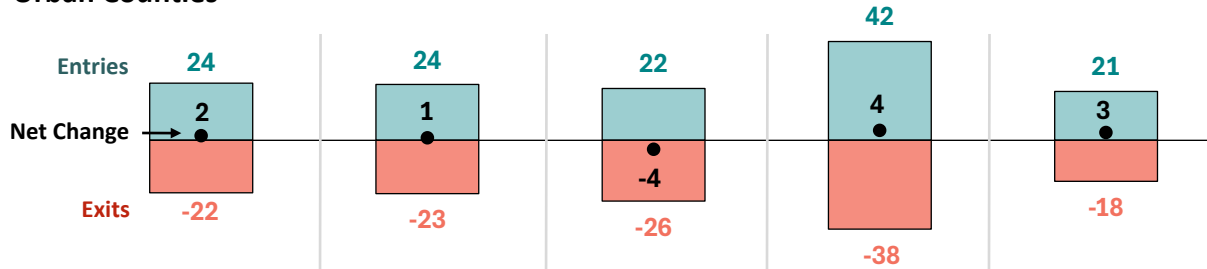
### Business Churn in Urban and Rural Counties

While new businesses open each year, a comparable number of older firms often close (see chart on the following page). In 2022, *Health Care & Social Assistance* had the highest number of new business entries in Missouri’s urban areas, with 42 firms per 100,000 residents. However, it also saw the most exits, with 38 firms closing. Despite the high turnover, the sector posted a modest net gain of four firms per 100,000. Among the top five sectors for new business entries in urban areas, only *Professional & Technical Services* experienced a net decline, losing four firms per 100,000 residents. *Health Care & Social Assistance* recorded the strongest net growth, followed by *Accommodation & Food Services* — primarily restaurants — which added three firms per 100,000 Missourians.

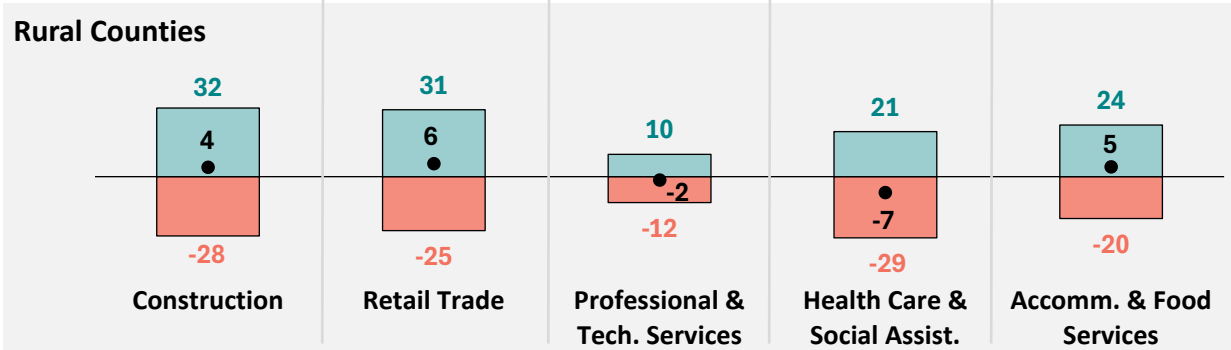
In 2022, Missouri’s rural areas experienced high business churn. *Construction* led all sectors in new business entries, with 32 firms per 100,000 residents starting that year, while 28 firms exited, resulting in a net gain of four businesses per 100,000. Other sectors with strong net growth included *Retail Trade*, which added six businesses per 100,000 residents, and *Accommodation & Food Services*, with an increase of five per 100,000.

## Business Entries/Exits per 100,000 Missourians

### Urban Counties



### Rural Counties



Sources: MU Extension graphic using 2022 data from the U.S. Census BDS program. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Sectors such as *Construction* and *Retail Trade*, where many rural businesses are starting, often rely on hands-on experience rather than formal business training. For these ventures to survive and thrive, owners often need access to professional and technical support to help them navigate challenges such as accounting and workforce development. Yet these services, especially in areas such as legal or financial advising, are more concentrated in urban counties. That means rural entrepreneurs may not have easy access to the same expertise. Strengthening rural support systems can help close that gap, turning promising startups and existing firms into long-lasting contributors to local economies.

## Additional Resources

- Missouri [Small Business Development Centers](#) (SBDC) offer free resources and counseling to help businesses launch, grow and adapt in today’s increasingly competitive environment.
- The [Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities \(CEC\) Conference](#) will be held Sept. 30–Oct. 2, 2025, in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. The event brings together community leaders, business owners, and support organizations to share strategies for supporting rural entrepreneurs.

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