

Missouri Economy Indicators

Commuting Trends

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The past two years have changed where some people do their jobs, with remote or partial-remote (hybrid) work schedules replacing the need for daily commutes. Although remote or hybrid work will likely continue, a majority of workers will still regularly commute to their jobs (see [Remote Work Trends](#) brief for more details). Increasingly, workers travel to jobs located outside of their home counties. This out-commuting trend demonstrates the importance of “thinking regionally” when considering economic development efforts.

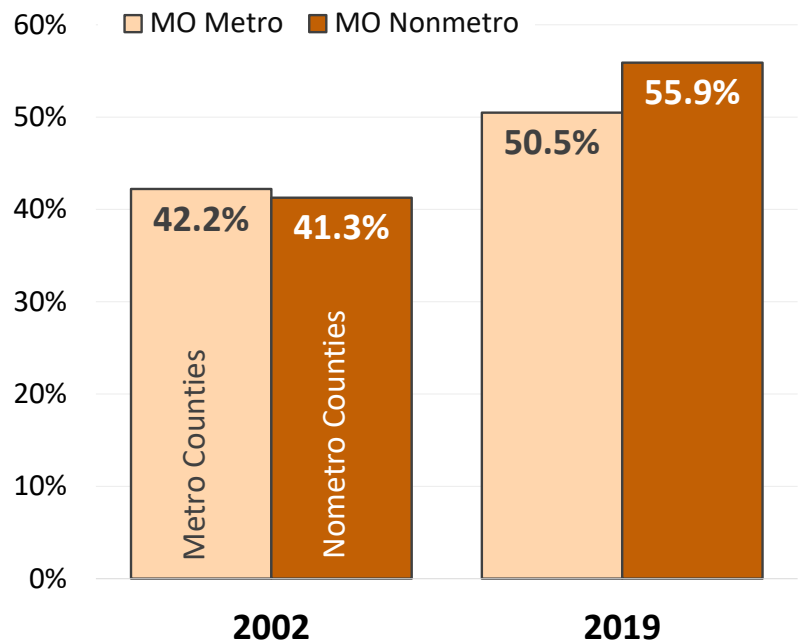
Commutes Outside Home Counties Increase

Roughly four in 10 Missouri workers commuted to jobs outside of their home counties in 2002. Missouri metro and nonmetro county workers had similar out-commutes that year. By 2019, clear differences emerged in commuting patterns.

Half (50.5%) of Missouri metro county workers commuted outside of their home counties in 2019 — an 8 percentage point increase from 2002. In 2019, 56% of nonmetro workers commuted to another county for employment — a nearly 15 percentage point increase from 2002.

See the notes section for details on the commuting data used in this brief.

Percent of Missouri Commuters Leaving Their Home Counties for Work



Source: MU Extension graphic using U.S. Census LEHD data

Commuters Increasingly Connect Missouri’s Regional Economies

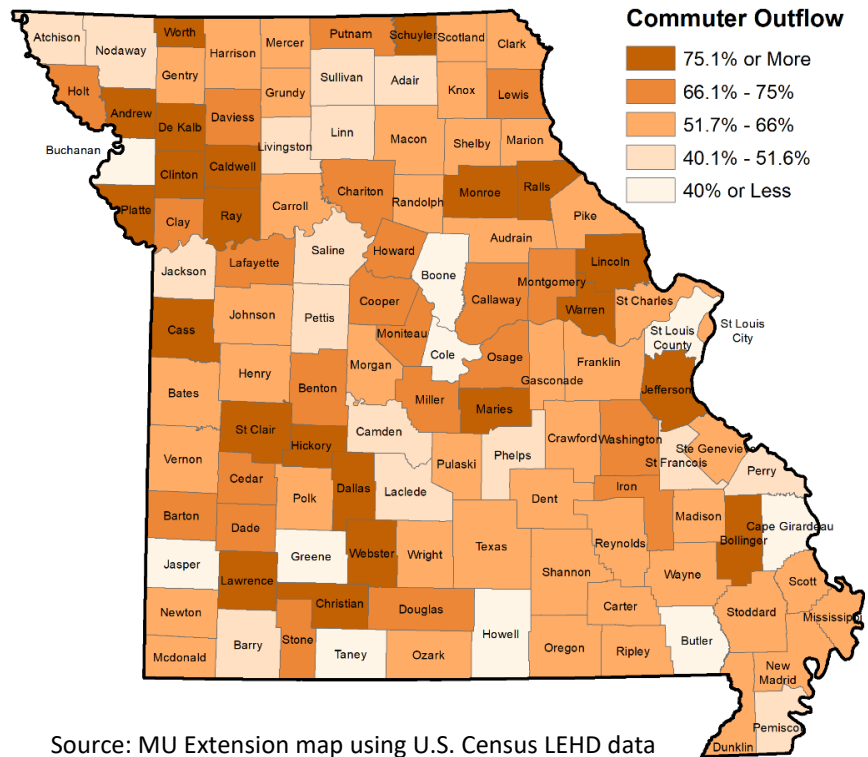
The increase in Missouri worker out-commuting during the past two decades demonstrates the growing ties communities have with their surrounding regions. More than half (50.5%) of Missouri metro county workers commuted to counties other than where they lived for employment in 2019 compared with 44% of U.S. metro county workers. From 2002 to 2019, the 8 percentage point increase in Missouri metro county out-commuters also outpaced the 5 percentage point growth in U.S. metro county out-commuting.

The 15 percentage point growth in Missouri nonmetro county out-commuting — from 41% to 56% during the 17-year period — also outpaced national trends. U.S. nonmetro county out-commuting levels reached 54% in 2019 — an increase of 11 percentage points from 2002 to 2019. Workers in Missouri, more so than the average U.S. worker, commute outside of their home counties to meet regional workforce needs.

The 2019 county commuting map shows these regional connections. Larger cities, such as Springfield (Greene County), provide many jobs for local residents. Only 22% of payroll workers who lived in Greene County commuted out of the county for work in 2019. Greene County’s abundant job opportunities also attract workers who live nearby. For example, in Dallas County, roughly eight in 10 workers travel to jobs outside the county.

Out-commuters spend their income on housing, food and other expenses in the more rural counties where they live. This economic interdependence is nothing new, but in the past two decades, commuting data show that regional economies have become more important more quickly in Missouri than in the nation overall.

Percent of Missouri Commuters Leaving Their Home Counties for Work, 2019



Source: MU Extension map using U.S. Census LEHD data

Additional Notes

- The data in this brief are from the U.S. Census Bureau’s [Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics](#) (LEHD) program, which tracks commuting for wage and salary workers employed by a business or organization. For a couple reasons, LEHD data will generally show higher commuting levels than data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS). The LEHD data do not include the self-employed, who generally travel less for work and would lower the ACS commuting estimates. Some multiunit firms also report employees as working from one central headquarters instead local business sites, which can lead to higher commute estimates in the LEHD data.
- Developed by the MU Extension CARES team, the Missouri Map Room provides the latest county and census tract commuting inflow and outflow maps: cares.page.link/F1QW

All briefs in the economy indicators series and future updates will be available at tinyurl.com/ExceedEconomyIndicators

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