



## Missouri Economy Indicators COVID-19 and Paid Leave

VOL. 3, ISSUE 13, 24 OCT. 2022

Long COVID could be keeping 2 million to 4 million U.S. workers out of the workforce, according to [new data](#) from the Brookings Institution. Long COVID refers to ongoing health problems that last months or longer following a bout of COVID-19. Its symptoms include fever, fatigue, shortness of breath, difficulty thinking or concentrating (“brain fog”), headaches, sleep problems, digestive issues, joint or muscle pain and blood clots. [One study](#) found that 12%-17% of COVID patients still experience three or more symptoms 12 weeks after a COVID diagnosis. Those experiencing significant symptoms had reduced labor force participation by 70%.

In January 2022, long COVID accounted for approximately 15% of the 10.6 million unfilled U.S. jobs. When considering lost wages, long COVID is estimated to cost between \$105 billion and \$235 billion a year. Additionally, COVID-19 illnesses and health effects [are estimated](#) to have reduced the U.S. labor force by 500,000 people (0.2% of adults). The illness likely has a costly impact on Missouri’s workforce, too.

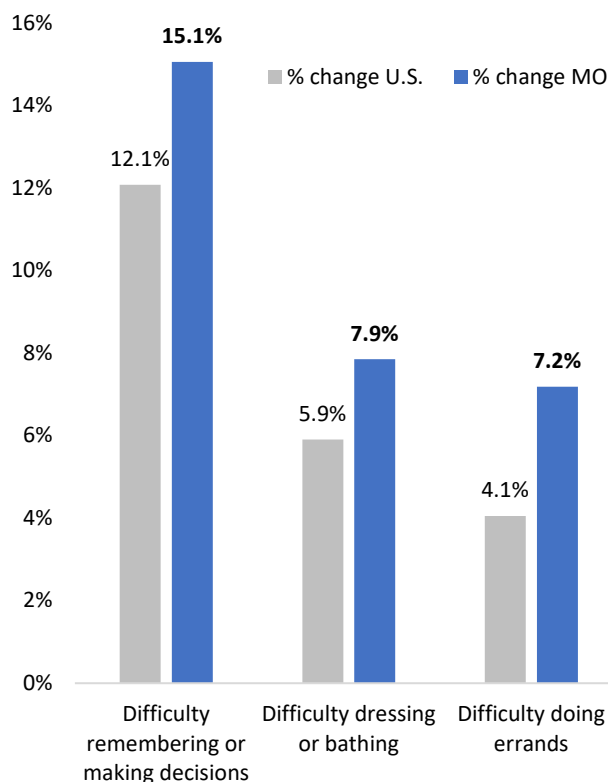
### Missourians Indicate Changes in Disability and Long COVID Characteristics

Nationwide, the percentage of American workforce participants who have a disability is up 19% from pre-pandemic levels. This increase in the working-disabled population could partially be due to lingering effects of COVID-19 infections.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s most recent Current Population Survey show the percentage of Missourians reporting difficulty remembering or making decisions — an analog for “brain fog” — is up 15% from pre-pandemic levels and sits 3 percentage points higher than the U.S. average. (See figure.) The shares of Missourians reporting difficulty dressing, bathing and doing errands also outpaces the national average.

The [U.S. Census’ Household Pulse Survey](#) recently added questions to assess long COVID prevalence. From July 27-Aug. 8, 2022, the survey found 37.4% of Missourians who previously had COVID-19 reported symptoms lasting three months or longer — compared with 33.2% of all Americans.

### Change in Missourians Reporting Disability Characteristics (March 2020 - August 2022)



Source: MU Extension graphic using U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey microdata from March 2020 and August 2022

## Employer Paid Leave Access in Missouri

As long COVID cases continue to rise, employer-provided paid leave programs can reduce the related economic burden. In 2009, 60% of Missouri workers were eligible to receive paid sick leave, but that number grew nationally in the past decade.

A new [study](#) by the MU Institute of Public Policy analyzes the need for paid leave across Missouri industries and occupations. Need is classified based on the reason for leave. *Paid sick leave* refers to time taken for one’s own health, and *paid family leave* is used for short-term family reasons such as caring for an unwell spouse, parent or child or addressing an unmet childcare need. Of working Missourians, 7.5% need paid sick leave, and 5.9% need paid family leave. Missourians working in the arts, entertainment, recreation and food services industry have the greatest need for paid sick leave. (See table.)

Employees younger than 30 and those who work for firms with fewer than 50 employees tend to have a greater need for *paid sick leave* and *paid family leave*. Small businesses are particularly susceptible to understaffing and economic burdens caused by long COVID, seasonal influenza or workplace injuries because they rely on only a few employees to sustain business operations. Within the workplace, management and nonmanagement occupations in public-facing industries, such as education and childcare, retail and food services, tend to have varying leave availability. This difference is most notable in Missouri’s education and childcare industries, where 7% of managers and 27% of nonmanagers lack access to paid leave.

### Additional Resources

- The U.S. departments of Justice and Health and Human Services issued [legal guidance](#) that clarifies how and when long COVID can be considered a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- The U.S. Department of Labor issued [guidance](#) for employers regarding how to support employees afflicted by long COVID. The guidance explains how to help employees obtain a definitive diagnosis of impairment and keep employees engaged and supported in the workforce.

All Missouri Economy Indicators briefs in this series are available at [tinyurl.com/ExceedEconomyIndicators](https://tinyurl.com/ExceedEconomyIndicators)

Authors: Adrienne Ohler, Associate Extension Professor, [adrienne.ohler@missouri.edu](mailto:adrienne.ohler@missouri.edu)  
 Luke Dietterle, Extension Specialist, [luke.dietterle@missouri.edu](mailto:luke.dietterle@missouri.edu)

## Percent of Missouri Workers Estimated to Need Paid Leave

	Need Own Sick Leave	Need Family Leave
<b>Age</b>		
Under 30	11.7%	10.3%
30-59	6.1%	4.8%
60 and over	6.1%	2.5%
<b>Employer Size</b>		
1-49 employees	9.0%	6.0%
50-999 employees	7.2%	5.8%
1,000 or more employees	6.7%	5.7%
<b>Industry</b>		
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative services	3.0%	5.3%
Public administration	4.1%	4.8%
Mining, quarrying and extraction	4.2%	21.8%
Manufacturing	5.1%	4.4%
Transportation and warehousing	9.5%	5.4%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services	16.4%	8.0%
<b>Occupation</b>		
Management, business, and financial	4.2%	3.3%
Construction and extraction	6.3%	8.8%
Sales	8.1%	7.1%
Installation, maintenance, and repair	8.2%	7.1%
Production	8.9%	5.1%
Services	14.0%	8.7%

Source: “Research on Paid Leave in Missouri” MU Institute of Public Policy, as contracted by the Missouri Foundation for Health.