



# Missouri Economy Indicators

## Manufacturing by Employer Size

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Missouri is home to nearly 7,200 manufacturers that employ 274,000 people. A critical export-oriented sector, manufacturing is Missouri’s third largest source of private sector jobs, behind only health care and social assistance and retail trade. Large machinery and automotive producers come to mind when thinking about manufacturing, but most Missouri companies run small operations that conduct a range of production activities across the state.

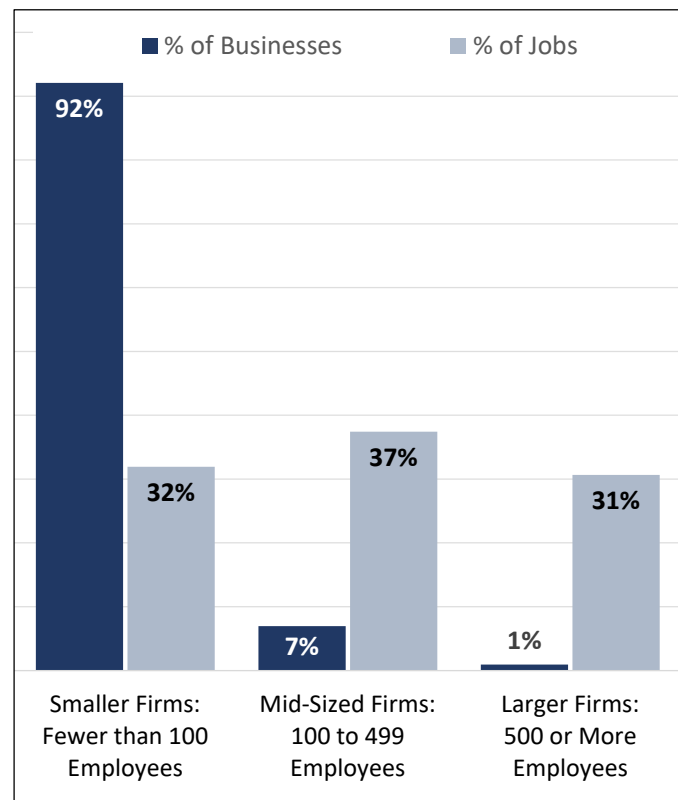
### Missouri Manufacturing by Employer Size

Smaller firms — those with fewer than 100 employees — accounted for 92% of all Missouri manufacturers in fourth-quarter 2021. More than 6,600 smaller firms employed 87,470 workers at that time, or 32% of the manufacturing workforce.

Missouri’s 501 mid-sized manufacturers — those with 100 to 499 employees — made up 7% of Missouri companies and 37% of manufacturing jobs by the end of 2021.

In 2021, larger firms with at least 500 workers accounted for 1% of Missouri manufacturers and 31% of manufacturing jobs. Missouri had fewer than 70 large manufacturers, but their share of employment indicates their importance to overall Missouri manufacturing activity. Many larger firms receive supplies from smaller Missouri manufacturers.

**Percent of Missouri Manufacturing Businesses and Jobs by Employer Size**  
Fourth-quarter 2021



Sources: MU Extension graphic using U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and MERIC data

### Most Common Types of Manufacturing by Employer Size

Smaller Missouri manufacturing companies produce diversified products, but two industries — fabricated metal and machinery manufacturers — did support more than one in four manufacturing jobs during fourth-quarter 2021. Small architectural and structural metal manufacturing and machine shops employed the most workers in fabricated metal production. Metalworking machinery manufacturers, such as those that make dies and tools, employed the most workers in machinery manufacturing.

Mid-sized Missouri manufacturers were also highly diversified in 2021. Their employees make a range of goods such as food, chemicals, plastics and rubber, metal, machinery and transportation equipment. Jobs in larger Missouri plants are predominantly found in transportation equipment, food and machinery manufacturing.

### Smaller Manufacturer Employment Trends

At the end of 2021, Missouri had roughly 6,600 smaller manufacturers. Most had modest employment; jobs per establishment averaged 13. In the two years prior to the pandemic — from fourth-quarter 2017 to 2019 — smaller manufacturers grew total employment by 0.4%. Manufacturers with 100 employees or more grew jobs by 4.8%.

In the two following years, manufacturing employment declined during the pandemic’s initial phase. However, smaller firms had gained 1.2% in jobs by the end of 2021 compared with employment at the end of 2019. At the end of 2021, employment in mid-sized and larger firms was 1.4% below job levels in late 2019.

Smaller chemical manufacturers, particularly those that make agricultural chemicals, had strong job growth prior to the pandemic and that growth continued in the next two years. Beverage and tobacco manufacturing also had impressive job growth prior to 2020. After initial employment losses in early 2020, these industries regained jobs. By the end of 2021, they employed 6% more workers than in the two years prior. Growth in brewery and distillery employment led the job gains.

### Smaller Missouri Manufacturing Industries with Greatest Percent Increase in Jobs, 2019-21

*Fourth-quarter 2021 jobs and multiyear comparisons*

| Industry Description                  | 2021          | 2017 Q4     | 2019 Q4     |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                       | Q4 Jobs       | - 2019 Q4   | - 2021 Q4   |
|                                       |               | % Chg.      | % Chg.      |
| Chemical Manufacturing                | 6,233         | 9%          | 7%          |
| Plastics & Rubber Products Mfg.       | 5,681         | -3%         | 7%          |
| Furniture & Related Mfg.              | 3,730         | -5%         | 6%          |
| Beverage & Tobacco Mfg.               | 2,696         | 12%         | 6%          |
| Fabricated Metal Mfg.                 | 14,436        | 0%          | 6%          |
| <b>All Smaller Manufacturing Jobs</b> | <b>87,470</b> | <b>0.4%</b> | <b>1.2%</b> |

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and MERIC.

Plastics and rubber manufacturers, along with furniture producers, had declining employment prior to 2020. Due to pandemic-driven demands for different packaged foods and home and office remodeling, these manufacturers scaled up employment in the past two years.

### Additional Resources and Notes

- This analysis used fourth-quarter 2017, 2019 and 2021 census of employment and wages data from the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) and the [Missouri Economic Research and Information Center](#) (MERIC).
- The [Partnership to Enhance Innovation, Resilience and Agility in Missouri's Manufacturers](#) leverages faculty and students from the four University of Missouri System campuses to serve manufacturers through educational outreach and company-specific projects. If a company in your community could benefit from matching funds to conduct assessments, training or technology exploration, then see this [one-page flyer](#) for more details.

All briefs in the economy indicators series and future updates will be at [tinyurl.com/ExceedEconomyIndicators](https://tinyurl.com/ExceedEconomyIndicators)

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