



# Missouri Economy Indicators

## Outdoor Recreation

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Outdoor recreation generates economic activity for states, regions, and communities. These activities draw tourists and their spending, and make communities more attractive places to live. The economic impacts of outdoor recreation result not only from travel and tourism related to hiking, hunting, skiing or visiting amusement parks, but also from manufacturing recreational products such as vehicles, sporting equipment or outdoor apparel. Several data sources communicate the scale and scope of the outdoor recreation economy. For instance, the Missouri Division of Tourism tracks visitor activity to and within the state. Moreover, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) recently released state-level data that track outdoor recreation's economic contributions.

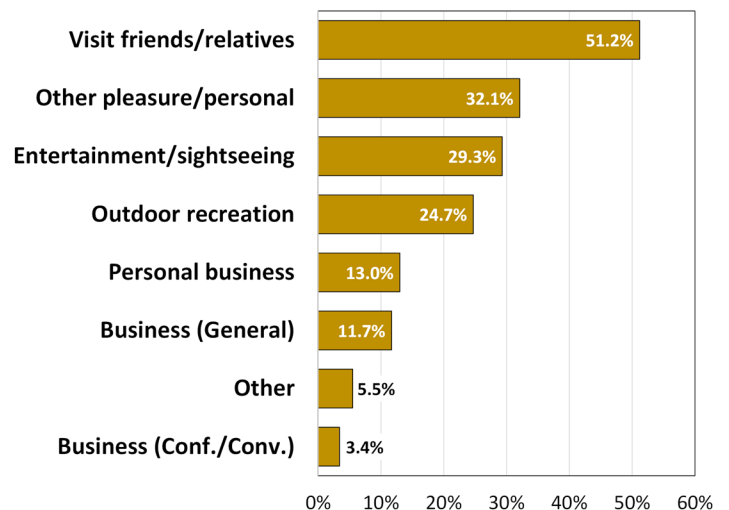
### Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

According to the Missouri Division of Tourism, almost 25% of travelers identified outdoor recreation as one reason for visiting the state in fiscal year 2021. Outdoor recreation was the trip's primary purpose for 11% of Missouri visitors.

Branson and the Lake of the Ozarks were the state's most visited nonmetro areas. They ranked second and fifth, respectively, in the state overall.

Missouri state parks represent key outdoor attractions. The number of park visitors grew by 22% between 2019 and 2021. Roaring River, Bennett Spring and Lake of the Ozarks state parks were the most visited parks. All three attracted more than 1.6 million visitors in 2021.

### Traveler Purposes for Visiting Missouri (FY 2021)



Source: MU Extension graphic using data from the Missouri Division of Tourism

### Tourism Represents Just One Contributor to the Outdoor Recreation Economy

When estimating outdoor recreation's economic impact, the U.S. BEA accounts for activities such as travel and tourism, boating, biking, hunting, outdoor concerts, and equipment manufacturing. In 2021, Missouri's outdoor recreation activities contributed almost 83,400 jobs, or 2.9% of total state employment. The U.S. average was 3%. These activities also led to \$7.9 billion in [value added](#)—or 2.2% of state gross domestic product (GDP). By comparison, outdoor recreation comprised 1.9% of total U.S. GDP. Of the outdoor recreation activities occurring within Missouri, boating and fishing; hunting, shooting and trapping; and RVing contributed the most to state GDP. Areas near Branson, the Lake of the Ozarks, and the broader Ozarks region draw visitors from Missouri and elsewhere to partake in these activities.

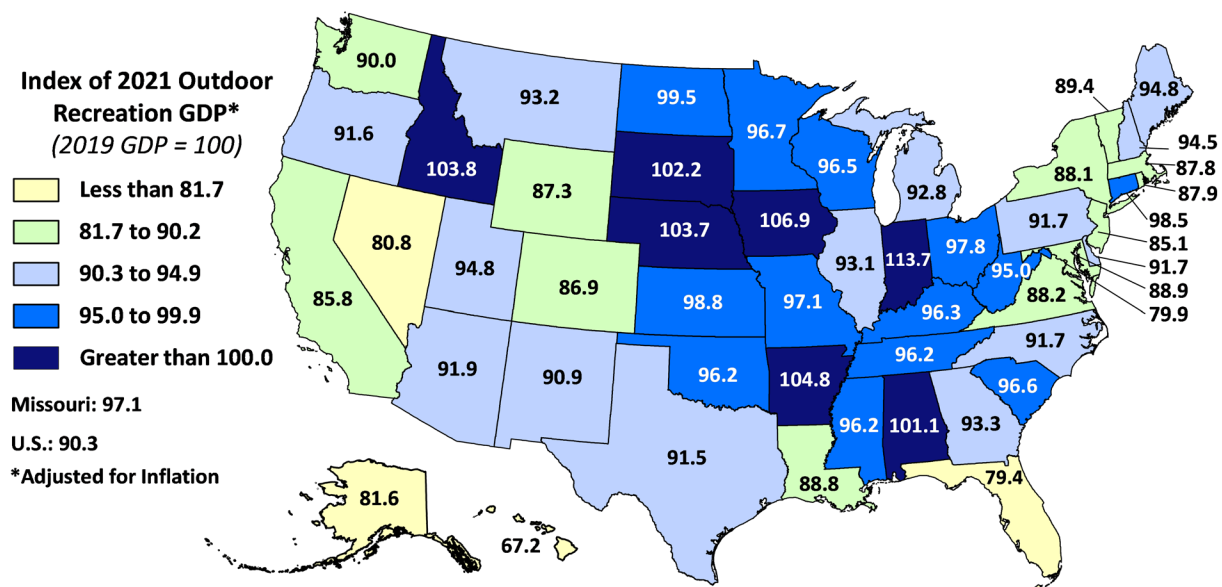
The state's manufacturing sector (e.g., boat building in Lebanon, Missouri) accounted for 19.7% of GDP generated by Missouri's outdoor recreation activities in 2021. Manufacturing was an important driver of the outdoor recreation economy in places such as Indiana (57.8% of the state's total outdoor recreation GDP), Mississippi (24.7%) and Iowa (24.3%). Overall, outdoor recreation's relative contribution to total state GDP was greatest in smaller, less diverse economies such as those in Hawaii (4.8%), Montana (4.4%), Vermont (4.1%), Wyoming (3.6%) and Alaska (3.6%).

## For the Outdoor Recreation Economy, the Post-Pandemic Recovery Continues

As the pandemic subsided, outdoor recreation became an attractive and safe option for consumers. In many states, however, these activities had not returned to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2021. In terms of its contribution to GDP, the national outdoor recreation economy was only 90.3% as large in 2021 as it had been in 2019. Only seven states saw outdoor recreation's GDP contribution exceed pre-pandemic levels. By the end of 2021, Missouri's outdoor recreation economy had returned to 97.1% of its 2019 level—a figure consistent with data in several neighboring states.

Overall, the outdoor recreation economy most recovered in the Midwest and some southern states. In these states, more local activities, outdoor pursuits within driving distance (e.g., weekend hunting, camping, or fishing trips), and related manufacturing generated much of the outdoor-related economic output. Manufacturing has been particularly important in places such as Indiana, where significant growth in recreational vehicle manufacturing—particularly around Elkhart, Indiana—led to the fastest growth of any state's outdoor recreation economy between 2019 and 2021. By contrast, states with the slowest recoveries in terms of outdoor recreation-related GDP—Hawaii, Florida, Alaska, and Nevada—often rely more on destination travel that requires greater time and resource commitments.

Outdoor Recreation GDP, 2019 and 2021 Comparison



Source: MU Extension graphic using data U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

### Additional Resources and Notes

- The Missouri Division of Tourism publishes [several reports](#), including an [annual visitor profile](#), to describe the state's tourism sector. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources also releases [annual reports](#) about state park usage.
- The U.S. BEA website provides more information about [outdoor recreation](#), and it publishes [state fact sheets](#), including one for [Missouri](#). The BEA uses the terms "value added" and "GDP" interchangeably.
- Several years ago, the National Recreation and Park Association released a [report that studied the relationship between economic development and parks and recreation](#). That report includes case studies of how communities use recreation assets to support economic development. For instance, through its "[Roanoke Outside](#)" initiative, Roanoke, Virginia, has made outdoor recreation the central element of its economic development efforts.

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

Author: Dr. Mark C. White, Associate Extension Professor, [whitemc@missouri.edu](mailto:whitemc@missouri.edu)