

Missouri Economy Indicators

Population and Migration

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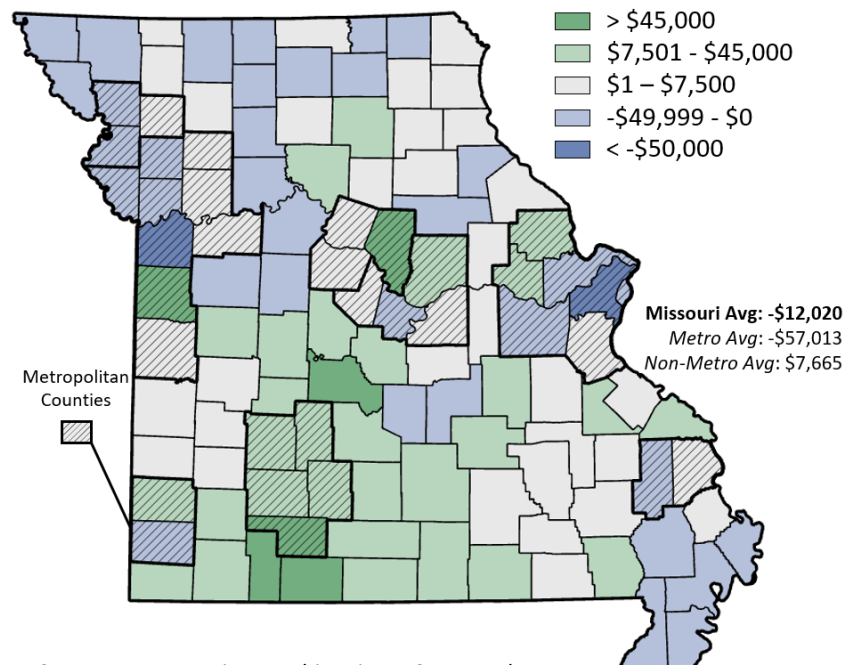
The U.S. Census Bureau's latest report reveals Missouri's population in 2023 reached 6,196,156, positioning it as the 18th largest state in the nation. Missouri ranked 19th in the last decennial census, conducted in 2020. This population shift can be attributed to two significant factors: *natural change* and *net migration*. *Natural change* refers to the difference between births and deaths within a population; a natural decrease occurs when deaths outnumber births, while the opposite scenario results in a natural increase. *Net migration* reflects the difference between population in-migration and out-migration—how many individuals are moving into an area versus those moving away. In Missouri's case, there has been a notable shift in net migration. Between 2012 and 2015, the state saw significant out-migration, losing roughly 5,000 to 7,000 residents annually. However, since 2019, there has been a steady inflow of migrants, peaking with 11,178 in 2021. This indicates a positive migration trend and an increase in the state's appeal as a place to live.

Migration and Income

From 2012 to 2021, Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) outflows exceeded inflows by 3.9%, indicating an overall outflow of income from Missouri. A negative net AGI in Missouri implies that higher-income earners are leaving the state, while relatively lower-income individuals are arriving.

People relocate for various reasons, including job opportunities and retirement. Given Missouri's relatively [low cost of living](#), it is likely attracting migrants seeking to maximize their purchasing power. This is evident in AGI growth among in-migrants to Missouri's southern counties, where living expenses tend to be lower than the state average.

Change in AGI due to Net Population Migration (2012-21)



Source: MU Extension graphic using U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Population Migration Data (2011-2021)

In- and Out-State Migration

From 2012 to 2021, Missouri experienced significant population gains from neighboring Illinois (21,835) and Kansas (13,876). New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts also contributed to the top five sources of inbound

migration. Conversely, two neighboring states—Arkansas (-3,515) and Oklahoma (-4,570)—were among the top five destinations for individuals leaving Missouri, alongside Texas (-14,388) and Florida (-13,878).

Migration trends indicate that moderate-income earners and Millennials were the most likely groups to relocate. The highest migration activity occurred among people with incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000. Individuals between 26 and 35 were the most mobile, with a 34% outflow compared to a 32% inflow.

Following the 26 to 35 age group, migrants between 36 and 45 showed the next highest mobility, although the direction of migration reversed with a 25% inflow versus a 17% outflow. Individuals aged 46 to 55 also experienced a greater inflow (12%) than outflow (10%). Conversely, Missourians under the age of 25 had the lowest net migration, with a 14% inflow and a 20% outflow.

Missouri Migration Inflow and Outflow (2012-21)

	State	Number of individuals outflow	Number of individuals inflow	Net number of individuals
Top 5 Inflow	Illinois	116,114	137,949	21,835
	Kansas	176,884	190,760	13,876
	New York	18,152	21,788	3,636
	New Jersey	6,897	8,639	1,742
	Massachusetts	7,267	8,819	1,552
Top 5 Outflow	Arkansas	57,884	54,369	-3,515
	Oklahoma	38,723	34,153	-4,570
	Georgia	32,649	27,951	-4,698
	Florida	89,136	75,258	-13,878
	Texas	121,286	106,898	-14,388

Source: MU Extension graphic using U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Population Migration Data (2011-2021)

Internal Missouri Migration

Internal migration refers to the movement of people within a state. Between 2012 and 2021, metro counties, on average, lost 689 residents to other counties within Missouri. Non-metro counties experienced an average gain of 188 new residents from elsewhere in the state during this period. However, it's noteworthy that three of the top five counties with the highest inflow were metropolitan: Christian (5,362), Platte (4,692) and Clay (2,961). Camden (3,690) and Taney (3,152) rounded out the list. On the flip side, St. Louis City (-7,577) and County (-25,687) saw the greatest outflow to other counties within the state. Mirroring the southward trend for out-going Missourians, residents relocated within the state are also shifting towards the southern regions.

Additional Resources and Notes

- The United Van Lines [National Movers Study](#) helps explain where and why Americans move each year. In 2023, Missouri's inbound flows (50.9%) slightly exceeded outbound flows (49.1%). The top reasons for moving to the state were work (31.4%) and family reasons (30.4%), while the most significant reasons for leaving were also work (37.2%) and retirement (14.0%).
- [IRS migration data](#) from 1990 to 2011 are available as single ZIP files containing migration inflow and outflow files for each state.

All Missouri Economy Indicators briefs in this series are available at <http://muext.us/MissouriEconomyIndicators>

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