

Missouri Economy Indicators

Population Trends

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According to the 2020 decennial census, Missouri had a population of 6,154,744, ranking it the 19th largest U.S. state. By 2024, that number had grown to 6,245,466—a 1.5% increase. While this growth is a positive trend, it masks important underlying dynamics. To fully understand population change, two key components must be considered: **natural change** and **net migration** (see sidebar for definitions).

Between 2020 and 2024, 40% of U.S. states (including Missouri) experienced a natural decrease in population. Missouri ranked 39th in natural change, with 11,261 more deaths than births, a trend partly driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. Missouri mitigated this natural decrease and ranked 20th in net migration by gaining 101,152 more residents.

Among Missouri’s border states, only Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma saw both a natural increase and positive net migration. Notably, Tennessee experienced the largest total population gain, despite a natural decrease. On a national level, Florida had the highest net migration (adding more than 1.9 million new

Natural Change and Net Migration

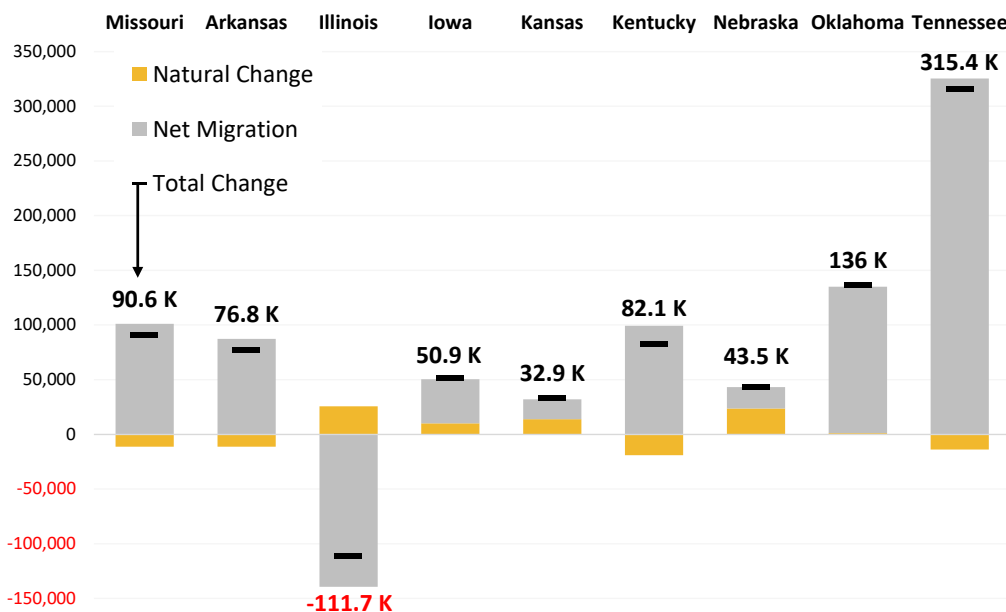
Natural change is the difference between births and deaths in a population. A natural decrease occurs when deaths outnumber births, while a natural increase happens when births exceed deaths.

Net migration is the difference between the number of people moving into an area (in-migration) and those moving out (out-migration). This figure includes both domestic and international migration.

migrants) but ranked last in natural change, with 102,012 more deaths than births.

As the chart illustrates, natural change and net migration can move in opposite directions, reinforcing the need to examine both components to understand population dynamics. Together, they offer a comprehensive look at the forces impacting population change.

Change in Population, 2020-24



Source: MU Extension graphic using 2020-24 U.S. Census Population Estimates

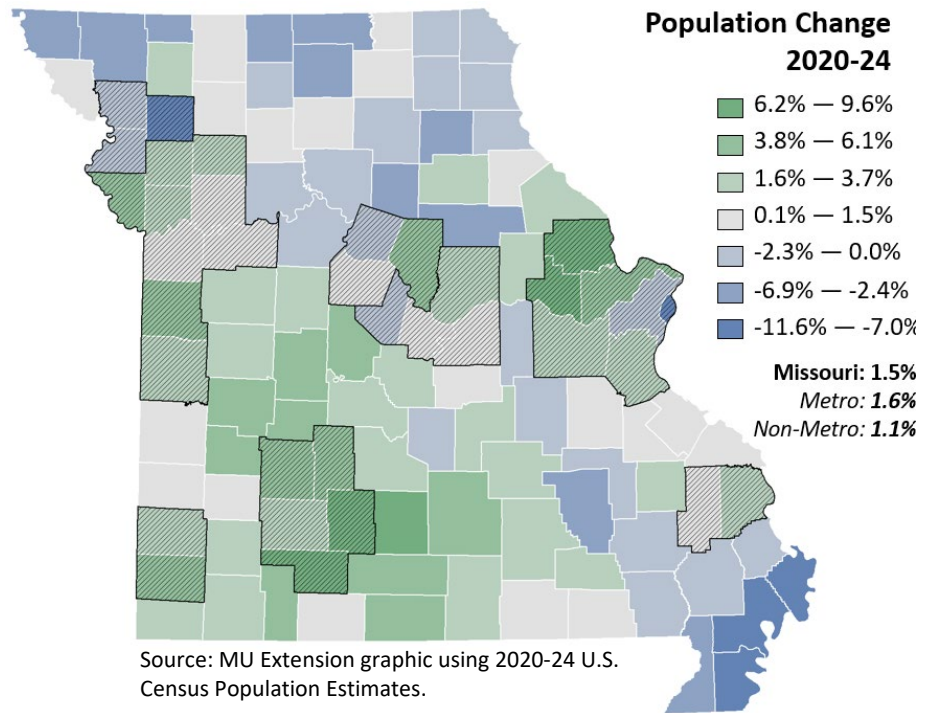
Post-Pandemic Population Dynamics

Before COVID-19 (2010-19), 57% of Missouri's counties experienced a natural increase in population. During this period, Missouri's metro areas saw natural growth of 2.1%, compared to 0.4% for nonmetro areas. Of the 51 counties experiencing a natural decrease during this time, 86% were nonmetro.

Between 2020 and 2024, COVID-19 contributed to a natural decrease in Missouri, with an excess of 11,261 deaths over births, resulting in a population decrease of -0.2%. Nonmetro counties experienced a -1.3% decline, mitigated somewhat by a small natural increase in metro counties (0.2%). Over the past four years, only 21% of Missouri counties saw a natural increase. Missouri mirrors national trends. In 2024, 66% of U.S. counties experienced a natural decrease, up from 46% in 2019, but down from the 2021 peak of 73%.

Between 2020 and 2024, 82% of Missouri counties experienced positive net migration, up from 74% in the previous decade. Missouri gained 101,152 new residents between 2020 and 2024—58% through international migration and 42% from domestic migration. During this period, the state ranked 28th in international migration and 17th in domestic migration. Taking both natural change and net migration into account, Missouri ranked 19th nationally in population growth, matching its rank as the 19th largest state by population.

Total Population Change, 2020 – 24



Additional Notes and Resources

- The University of Missouri's [Center for Applied Research and Engagement Systems](#) (CARES) offers data visualizations on a range of topics, including health, the environment, agriculture, safety, education and the economy. The CARES [Map Room](#) allows users to explore trends over time, including rates of natural population change and migration for 2024, among many topics.
- The U.S. Census Bureau publishes data-driven stories tied to its latest releases. A 2025 [feature](#) highlights how some metropolitan areas that experienced population declines during COVID-19 are bouncing back.

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