



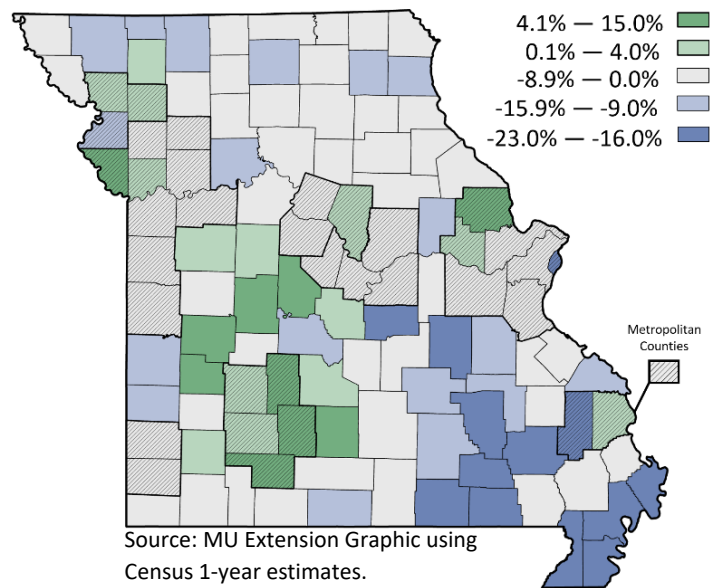
Missouri Economy Indicators

Declining Youth Population

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Missouri, like much of the Midwest, is experiencing a decline in its youth population. From 2013-23, more than three-quarters of Missouri counties (88) saw a decrease in the population of residents under 15 years old, while roughly a quarter (27) experienced growth. The largest declines were concentrated in the state's southeast and northern regions, while the most significant growth occurred in metro areas. Platte, Christian, and Lincoln counties—representing the Kansas City, Springfield and St. Louis metropolitan areas, respectively—experienced the most growth. Meanwhile, the city and county of St. Louis, as well as Jefferson County, saw the greatest declines among all counties. Overall, Missouri had 37,648 fewer residents under age 15 in 2023 than in 2013, a 3.2% drop. As older workers retire, fewer younger workers are available to replace them.

Change in Missouri's Population Under 15 Years Old (2013-23)

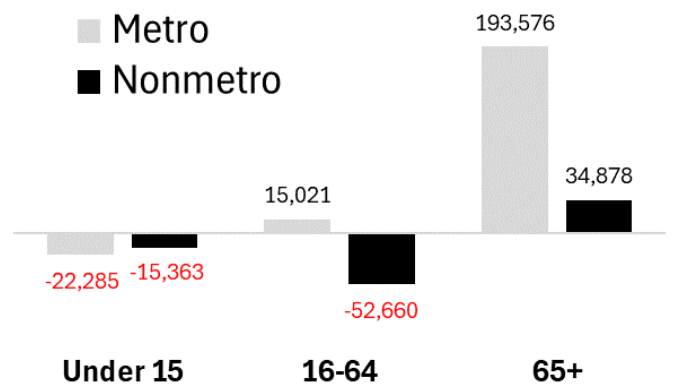


Missouri's Widening Age Gap

While the youth population declined, the 65+ population grew by more than 25% from 2013-23, an increase of nearly 230,000.

Youth population decline varied across the state. In nonmetro counties, the population under 15 decreased by more than 15,000 (5.3%). Metro counties saw a larger decline of more than 22,000 youth, but a smaller percentage decrease (-2.6%).

Missouri Population Change (2013-23)



Source: MU Extension Graphic using Census 1-year estimates.

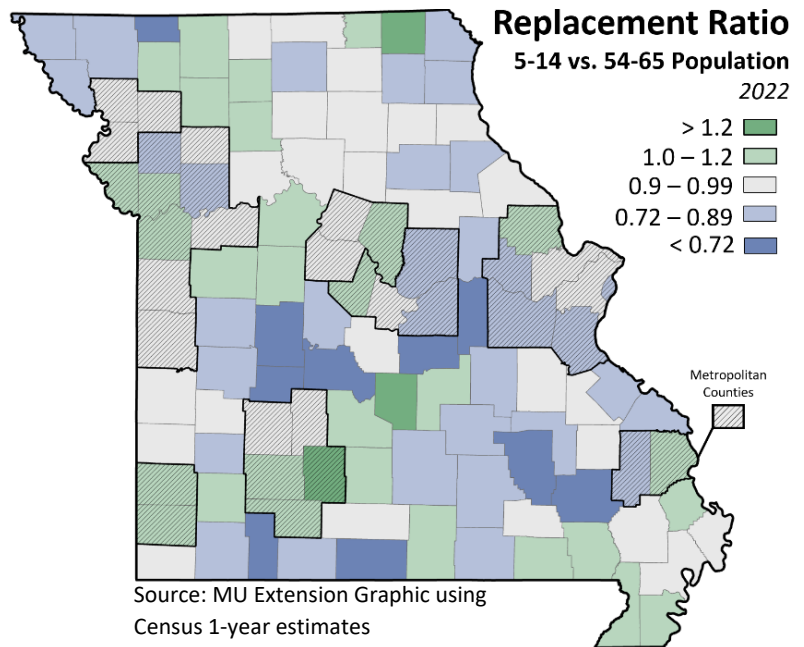
Population trends diverged for the working-age population. The working-age population (ages 16-64) in metro counties grew by 15,021 between 2013 and 2023 (0.5%), while nonmetro counties declined by 52,660 (-5.4%). All counties saw significant growth in their population of residents aged 65 and older, with metro counties growing by 193,576 and nonmetro counties by 34,868. The working age-population trend suggests that metro counties may be attracting workers and residents from surrounding nonmetro counties, making it more challenging for employers in nonmetro areas to fill open positions.

Replacement Ratio

The replacement ratio measures a county's potential for future workforce expansion or contraction by comparing the number of individuals entering the workforce to those leaving it. Counties with a ratio greater than 1 are expected to have more future workers than future retirees, and vice versa. The youth cohort (ages 5-14) represents the future workforce, and the senior cohort (ages 54-65) represents those expected to retire in the next decade.

A little less than one-third of Missouri's counties (33) are projected to have growing workforces, with more new workers than retirees, while 82 counties may experience a workforce decline.

The highest replacement ratios are clustered in southwest Missouri and the Kansas City metro, with other high-ratio counties scattered across the state. In contrast, some of the smallest replacement ratios are found in tourism and retirement counties near Lake of the Ozarks, Branson and Truman Lake. Note that these calculations do not account for future changes in population due to migration, which can significantly affect workforce size in individual counties.



Impact on the Workforce

The combination of a declining youth population and a growing senior population presents new challenges and opportunities for communities and employers. Aging populations will increase demand for healthcare services and require modifications to local housing. Caring for a growing senior population may be challenging as many communities face a shrinking workforce. A declining youth population will also make it harder for colleges to maintain enrollment, for the military to meet recruitment goals and for employers to replace retiring workers. However, a tightening labor market will create new job opportunities for [youth entering](#) the workforce. Regardless, employers must be creative in [training](#) and retaining their existing workforce. Collaborating with Career Technical Education programs, colleges and MU Extension can be one approach. More information on local data and workforce training resources can be found in the resources section.

Additional Notes and Resources

- Local school district population trends: [Department of Elementary and Secondary Education \(DESE\)](#)
- Programs to retool and retain the workforce: [The MU Career Accelerator](#) & [Recovery Friendly Workplaces](#)
- Education and training programs: [Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development](#) & [DESE](#)
- MEI reports on Missouri Population Trends: [Vol.5 Issue.9 Population Trends](#) & [Vol.5 Issue.5 Aging Workforce](#)

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

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