



# Missouri Economy Indicators

## Tourism Job Trends

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Tourism plays a vital role in Missouri’s economy, with visitors contributing to local businesses as they explore the state’s scenic areas, attractions, and entertainment options. According to the Missouri Division of Tourism’s [annual report](#), the top activities for overnight visitors in 2024 included shopping (28%), sightseeing (22%), attending celebrations (15%), and visiting landmarks or historic sites (15%). In 2024, visitor spending supported nearly 320,000 tourism-related jobs in Missouri, representing 11.8% of all private-sector employment.

Restaurants and other food/drinking establishments dominate the tourism workforce, making up three out of four jobs in the industry. Along with lodging (9%), these businesses account for 83% of tourism employment, with the remaining 17% of jobs in performing arts, amusement, recreation, and related activities. From 2021 to 2024, Missouri’s tourism workforce grew by 35,600 jobs—a 12.5% increase—as it recovered from pandemic-related declines in 2020. However, most industries grew slower than the 17% national average over the same period. An exception was performing arts and sports, which grew by 38% in Missouri and outpaced the national rate (33%). This surge was driven by expanding entertainment venues and professional sports business employment.

**Missouri Tourism Jobs, 2021-24**

Tourism-Related Industries	2021 Jobs	2024 Jobs	% Job Chg.
Food & Drink	216,090	236,970	10%
Lodging	24,054	28,647	19%
Perform. Arts, Sports, & Related	12,048	16,637	38%
Outdoor Amusement & Rec.	10,814	12,506	16%
Other Amusement & Recreation	9,149	10,742	17%
Other Tourism-Related Services	8,913	10,365	16%
Museums, Zoos, & Parks	3,317	4,125	24%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>284,384</b>	<b>319,992</b>	<b>12.5%</b>

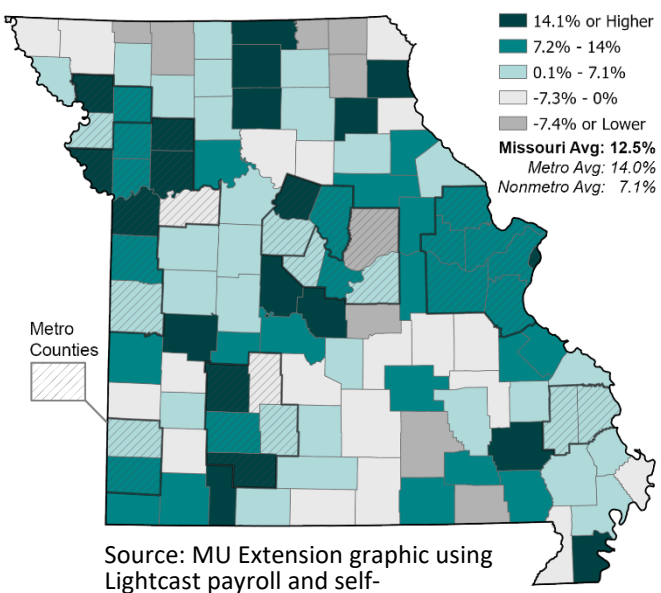
Source: MU Extension graphic using Lightcast payroll and self-employment job estimates.

### Tourism Job Growth Strongest in Missouri’s Large Metros

Several rural counties in northern and southeast Missouri saw significant percentage increases in tourism jobs from 2021 to 2024, though their overall employment gains were modest compared to more populous counties.

In highly urban counties, tourism job growth was both strong and substantial. In the Kansas City metro, Jackson and Platte counties saw increases of 23% and 19%, respectively, adding more than 8,400 jobs. Similarly, in the St. Louis metro, St. Louis City and County grew by 25% and 14%, respectively, contributing more than 12,000 tourism jobs.

**Percent Change in Tourism Jobs, 2021-24**



Source: MU Extension graphic using Lightcast payroll and self-employment job estimates.

