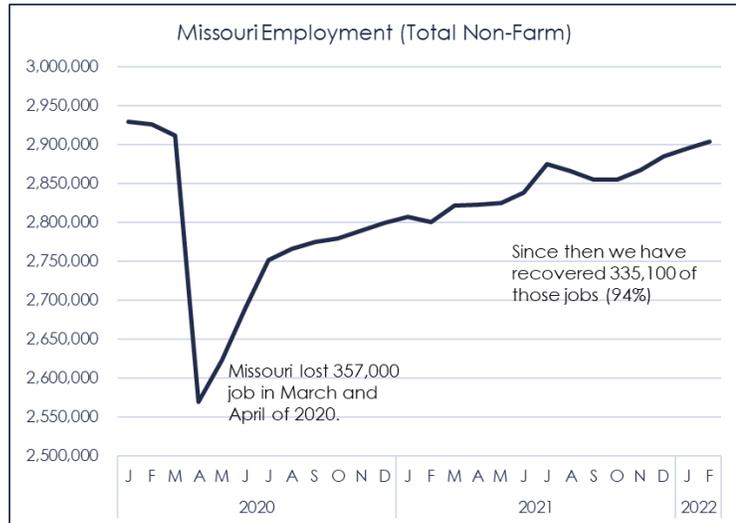




Jobs and population growth.

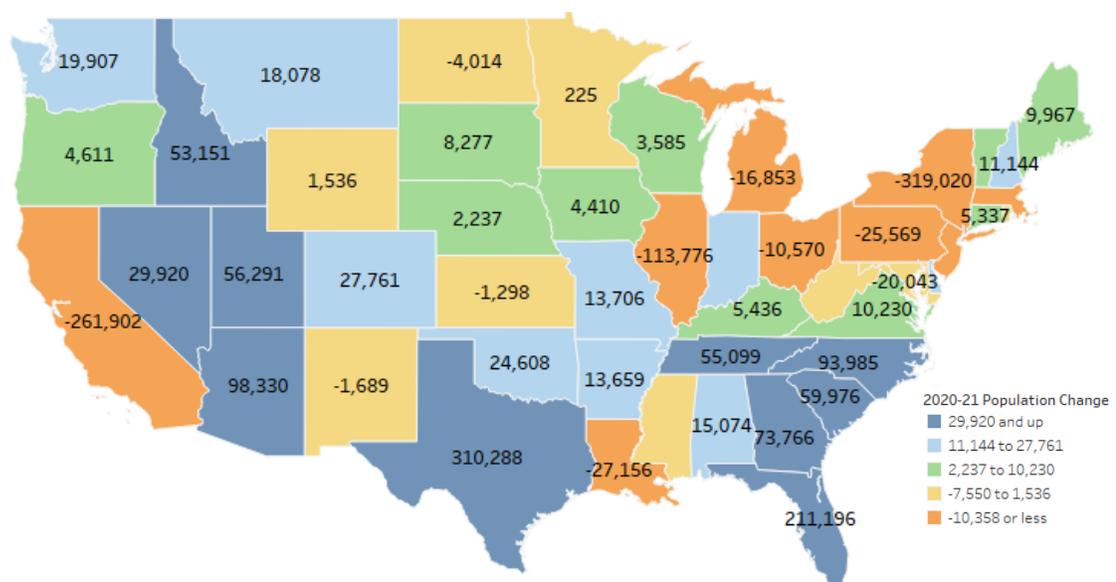
Latest numbers – Missouri’s jobs recovery continued in February as 9,200 jobs were added across the state. The retail trade sector was the fastest-growing sector with 3,300 new jobs followed by professional/business services (+1,900) and leisure/hospitality (+1,600). With this new growth, Missouri has recovered 94% of the jobs lost during the shutdown in March and April of 2020. Along with the strong job growth, Missouri’s February unemployment rate fell slightly to 3.7%. The U.S. unemployment rate for February was 3.8% and now stands at 3.6% for March.



Missouri as a population destination? – Missouri’s jobs numbers are not the only ones that are increasing. Recent population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau showed that Missouri added 13,706 new residents between 2020 and 2021. This ranks us 17th in the nation, and ahead of most of our neighboring states.

Texas saw the most growth, with 310,288 new residents, while New York saw the biggest drop (-319,020). This data release was of particular interest because it gives us the first look at the impact of COVID-19 on national population distribution. [There were certainly some unusual trends.](#)

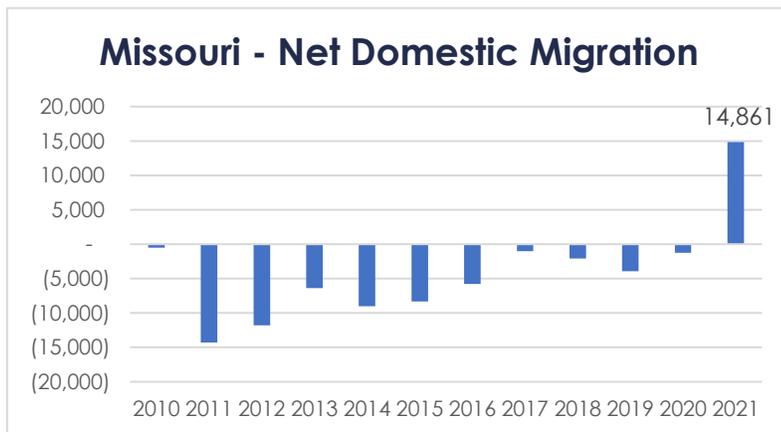
Population Change 2020-2021



Nationally, 2021 was the slowest year of population growth in U.S. history. We grew by just 0.1%. We also saw declines in some of the nation's largest metro areas and modest growth in small towns and rural areas, which have generally struggled with population growth in the previous decade.

This national trend played out in Missouri as well. We saw more widespread population growth occurring in more rural areas throughout the state. Over 70% of our counties (82 of 115) experienced population growth between 2020 and 2021. While some rural counties saw a return to population growth, the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area lost nearly 9,000 residents. If we zoom into St. Louis further, its declines were concentrated in St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and the Illinois-side of the MSA. St. Louis' western suburbs, in contrast, saw strong growth. In fact, St. Charles County was the fastest in Missouri, with 3,723 new residents.

The most interesting part of this data release was Missouri's net domestic migration number, which is actually a very useful economic development indicator. Net domestic migration is the difference between the number of people moving into a state (not including international in-migration) and those moving out. Migration is an economic development variable to look at because, while people move for many reasons, economic opportunity is one of the most common "pull" factors. People tend to move into areas that are providing economic opportunity.



In the last ten years, Missouri has had negative domestic migration, with more people leaving Missouri than entering it. The out-migration has been much lower in recent years (2017-2020) than earlier in the decade, but 2021 was a sharp reversal of the negative trend, with nearly 15,000 more people moving into Missouri than moved out.

Of course, one year's worth of data does not make a trend, but this data is both interesting and encouraging for

Missouri. During much of the past decade, U.S. population and economic growth tended to concentrate on the coasts. This new 2021 population data suggests that trend could be changing. The pandemic looks to be something of an inflection point for the U.S. economy: businesses are reassessing their situations and are increasingly looking to the interior of the country to find new sources of workforce talent and lower costs. A [recent report from Brookings](#) spotlights this trend, identifying Kansas City and St. Louis as rising technology metros.

In Summary – Missouri's recovery from the COVID-19 recession has been steady, even in the face of compounding national and global hurdles like inflation and supply chain issues. The recovery has rightly captured our attention, but this new population data should be a call for Missouri to prepare to play a bigger role in the U.S. economy. As Missourians, we know our state provides many unique opportunities for its residents. The population growth figures might be an early indicator that others are seeing these opportunities as well.

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