



MISSOURI COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

MISSOURI
POVERTY REPORT
2022

INTRODUCTION

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SOURCES

Missouri Community Action Network produces this biannual report to examine poverty in the state by utilizing data from a variety of sources, including the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Food Research and Action Center, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and the US Census Bureau.

The goal is to create an objective snapshot of poverty in Missouri. This report is not intended to be a definitive or even comprehensive source on poverty in the state. Rather, it is an entry point to the wealth of data that can guide our efforts to address poverty within our communities.

Sound public policy should be informed by verifiable, quality data. The figures and statistics presented in this report can help us determine the efficacy of public policy measures, and in turn, guide our efforts at the local, state, and national level.

Since our last Poverty Report the United States and the State of Missouri experienced the COVID-19 Pandemic. This once in one-hundred-year event impacted the health, employment, and poverty of Missourians from all backgrounds. The timing of the Pandemic impacted the 2020 Census. Experts and advocates continue to assess the accuracy of the census given difficulties conducting typical in person counts.









We recognize that these major events affect the Poverty Report and the quality of available data. Some data on aspects of the Pandemic is not yet available. This report is not solely focused on the pandemic. The data shows the interconnected nature of life's necessities: economic and family security, education, food and nutrition, health, and housing and energy. These are the five elements of poverty and create an overall framework we can use to examine the data presented in this report.

This year's report features a section on the anti-poverty measures in Missouri and the COVID-19 pandemic. By presenting this information, we hope to continue the conversation around the role of emergency responses to alleviate poverty during times of national crisis as well as foundational programs and services necessary to empower individuals and families to move out of poverty and achieve a level of economic security or independence.

It is our intention that this report be used as a tool by legislators, advocates, nonprofits, schools, churches, and other stakeholders to create a broader understanding of poverty and the impact it has on our state. We encourage you to utilize the sources listed at the end of this report to further explore the information. It is only through an unbiased interpretation of data that we can begin to enact measures that truly help all Missourians thrive.

MEASURING POVERTY

2022 POVERTY GUIDELINES

Persons/Household	Gross Income
1 	\$13,590
2 	\$18,310
3 	\$23,030
4 	\$27,750
5 	\$32,470
6 	\$37,190
7 	\$41,910
8 	\$46,630

Official Poverty Measure

The official poverty measure (OPM) was created in 1963 and is based on the cost of the minimum food diet in current prices, and then multiplied by three for different family sizes. This poverty measure does not consider typical household expenses, though, such as gas to get to work, childcare, prescriptions, and a host of other costs families regularly encounter. The poverty calculation also does not take into account the value of federal benefits, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Low-Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Supplemental Poverty Measure

The Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) considers other factors, such as family resources, including income and benefits such as SNAP, subsidized housing, and LIHEAP. Census data released in 2021 shows that when taken as a three-year average from 2018-2020, the Missouri SPM was 2.7% lower than the official poverty measure (US Census Bureau).¹

In Missouri, the SPM by a 3-average (2018-2020) was 8.1%. The official poverty measure for that same time period was 10.8% (US Census Bureau).²

2022 Poverty Guidelines

The Poverty Guidelines are determined by the Department of Health and Human Services and updated annually. Amounts are based on the number of persons in a family per household. For families or households with more than eight people, \$4,720 added for each additional person (US Department of Health and Human Services).³

50%, 100% and 200% of Poverty

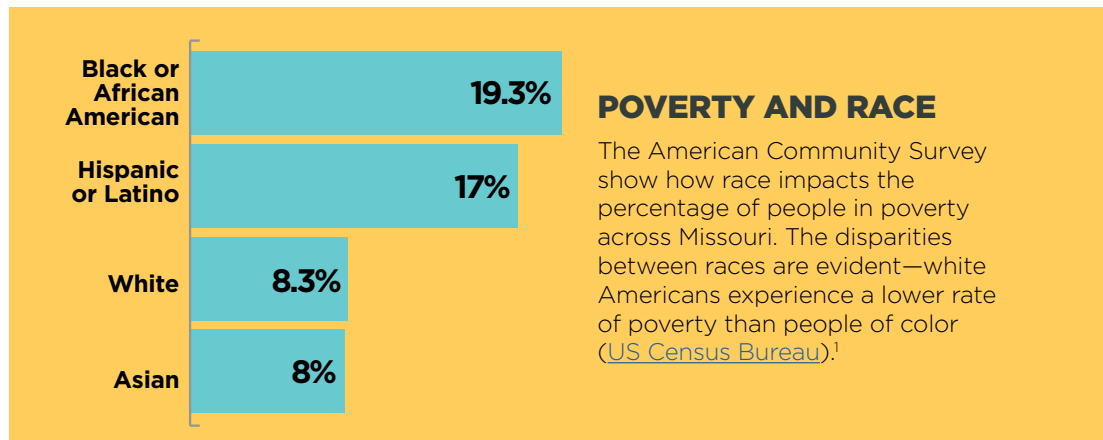
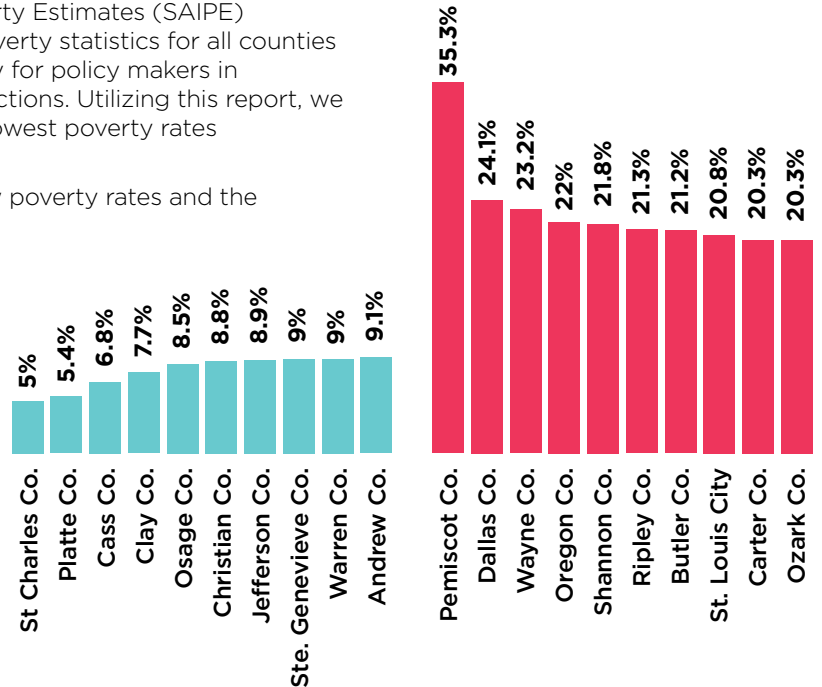
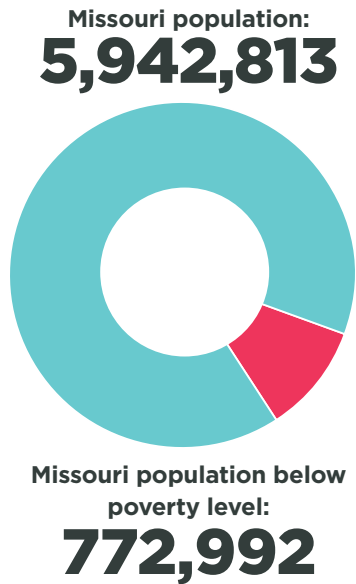
Sometimes, data refers to “100% of the federal poverty level (FPL)” or “200% FPL.” These levels are used to indicate the severity of poverty. For example, a household of five people with \$31,417 adjusted gross income would be considered in poverty, or 100% FPL. 50% of poverty would be half of that, or \$15,708. The 50% poverty threshold represents extreme poverty. Conversely, 200% FPL for a family of five would be \$62,834 (US Census Bureau).⁴

Although the poverty level is updated annually, the methodology for determining poverty rates has seen little change since it was developed. Take inflation. Year to year, inflation outpaces the change in poverty level—the cost of goods increases while lower-income populations have a higher cost burden. These thresholds help illustrate what families require to meet basic needs.

LOCAL SNAPSHOT OF POVERTY

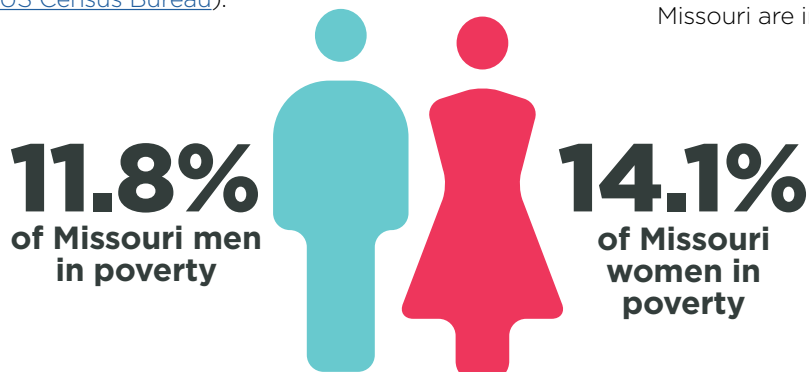
The US Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program provides annual estimates of income and poverty statistics for all counties and states in the nation. The program is used primarily for policy makers in deciding the allocation of federal funds to local jurisdictions. Utilizing this report, we get a view of Missouri counties with the highest and lowest poverty rates ([US Census Bureau](#)).⁴

Observe the difference between the counties with low poverty rates and the counties with high poverty rates.



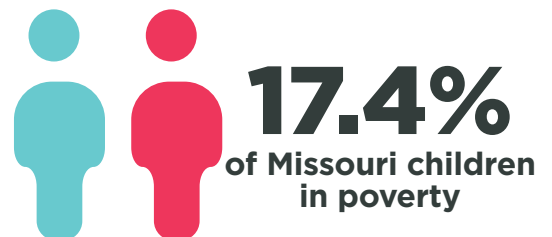
POVERTY AND GENDER

The ACS also shows us the disparity between males and females. Women face a 2.3% higher rate of poverty than men ([US Census Bureau](#)).¹

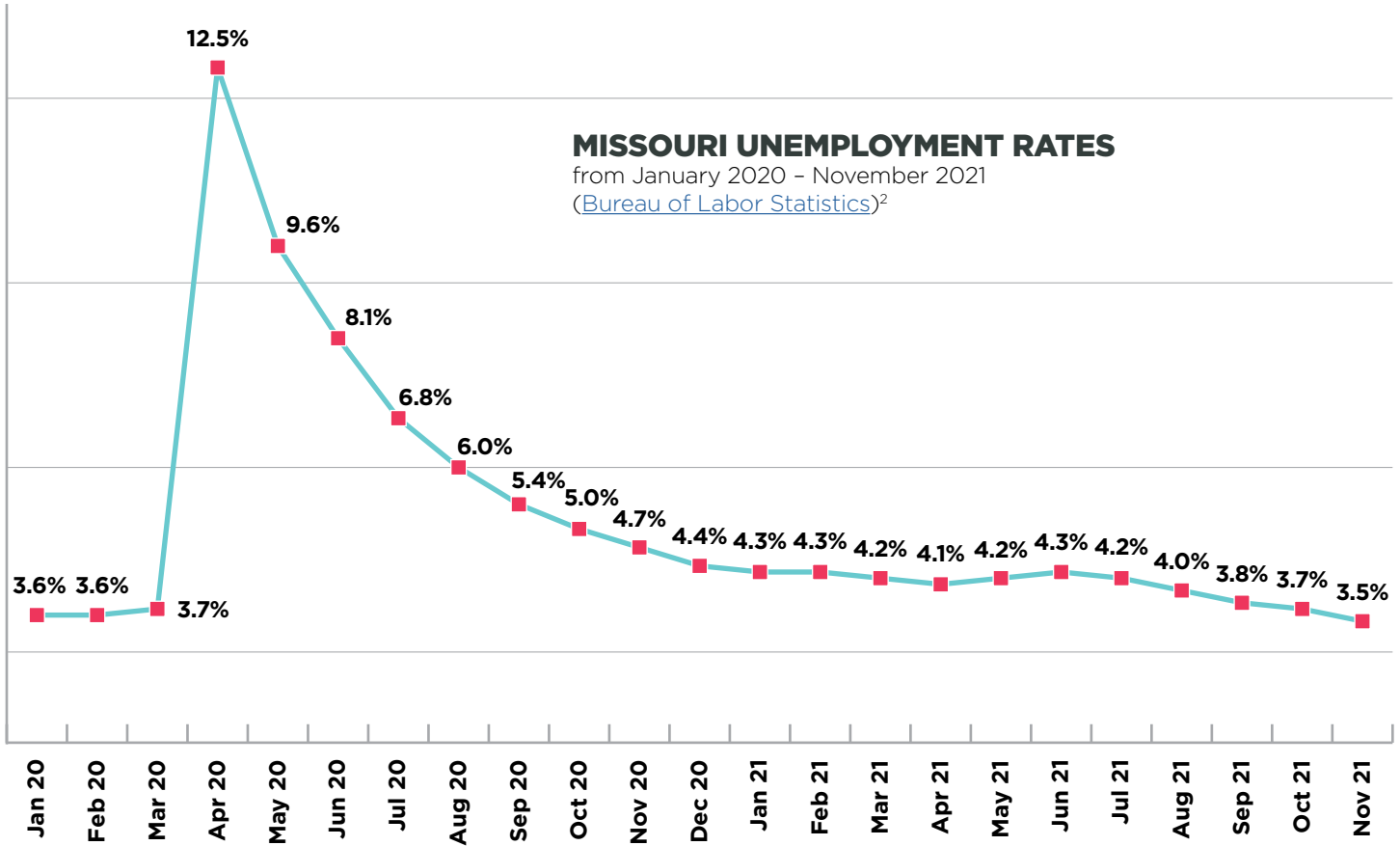


CHILDREN IN POVERTY

Children who grow up in poverty often lack food, shelter, healthcare, and education they need to thrive. This can have a profound impact on future economic stability. According to the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 17.4% of Missouri children live in poverty; 19.3% of children under 5 years of age in Missouri are in poverty ([US Census Bureau](#)).¹



ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SECURITY



Economic and family security is the foundation for the well-being of an individual or family—in many ways, it's the starting point of what sets a family up for success. Numerous factors impact economic and family security, including the local economy, availability of jobs, minimum wage regulations, and taxes. For example, the minimum wage in Missouri is less than the living wage, as calculated by geography, race, and gender.

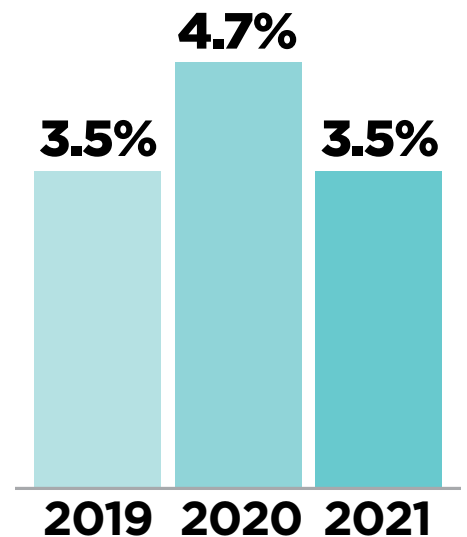


Nov. 2021 (Bureau of Labor Statistics)¹

EMPLOYMENT & UNEMPLOYMENT

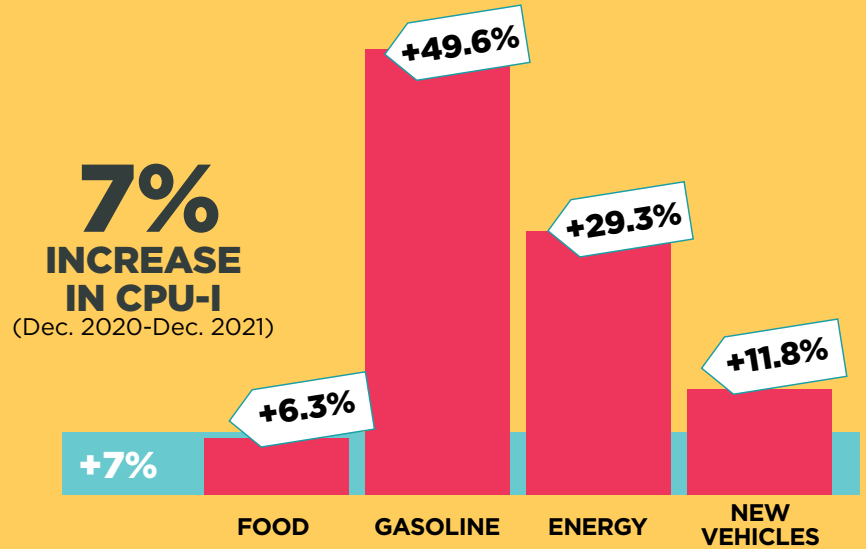
Employment is the greatest impactor of economic and family security. The unemployment rate in Missouri has fallen steadily over the last decade, from 9.3% in Jan. 2011 to 3.7% in March of 2020. Then many businesses closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and Missourians were left without employment. The unemployment rate for April 2020 reflects that, rising sharply to 12.5%. However, by November 2021, it had fallen below pre-pandemic rates to 3.5% ([US Bureau of Labor Statistic](#)).¹

Missouri Unemployment 2019 vs 2020 vs 2021
([Bureau of Labor Statistics](#))¹



INFLATION

Inflation impacts all Americans, but has an additional cost burden to low-income citizens, who are exponentially affected by rising prices. Inflation is not always factored into federal appropriations for public assistance, reducing the purchasing power of benefits. Inflation is also a federal concern to regulate and reduce. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, inflation was 7.0% from Dec. 2020 to Dec. 2021, the largest annual percent change since 1981 (Bureau of Labor Statistics).³



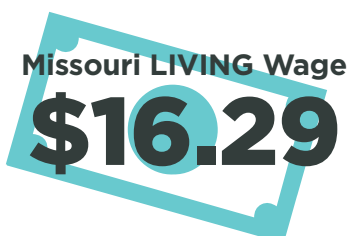
MINIMUM WAGE

As of Jan. 2022, Missouri's minimum wage was \$11.15. Several states, including Missouri, have enacted gradual minimum wage increases to take effect over the next several years. Six states do not have a state-mandated minimum wage ([MO Dept. Of Labor](#)).⁴



LIVING WAGE

The living wage is the hourly rate that an individual in a household must earn to support themselves. Missouri's hourly living wage is \$16.29 for a single adult; for a couple with two kids, both parents would need to make \$37.10 an hour. The living wage calculator was created by Dr. Amy K. Glasmeier in 2004. The tool is used to help communities and employers understand the actual hourly wage that allows people to support themselves at a basic standard of living ([Living Wage Calculator](#)).⁵

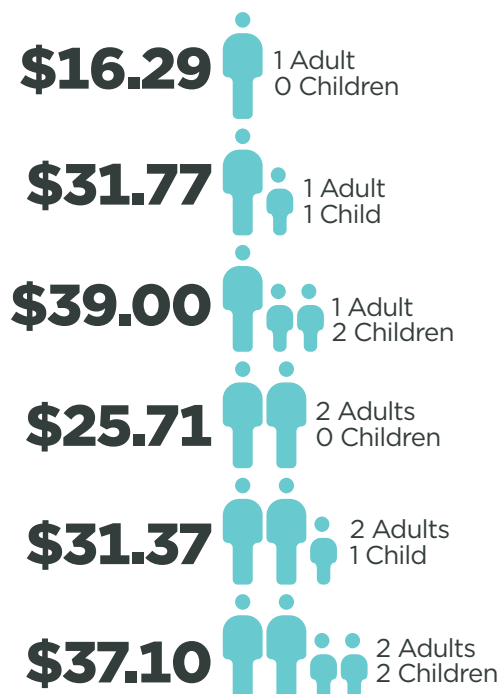
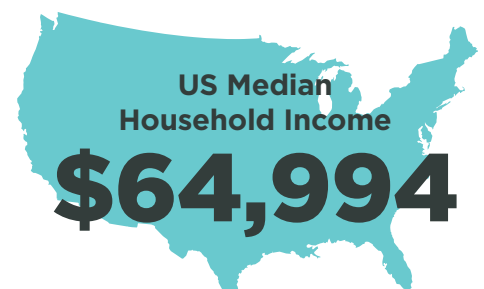
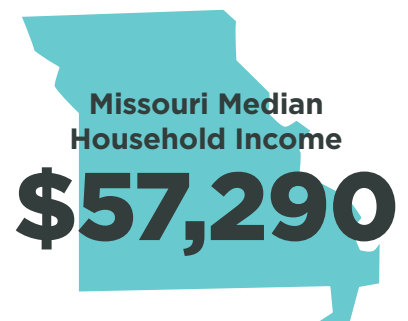


Before taxes, a Missouri working full time for 40 hours a week at the state minimum wage earns:



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The median income of households in Missouri was \$57,290 in 2020. The US median income was \$64,994 ([US Census Bureau](#)).⁶



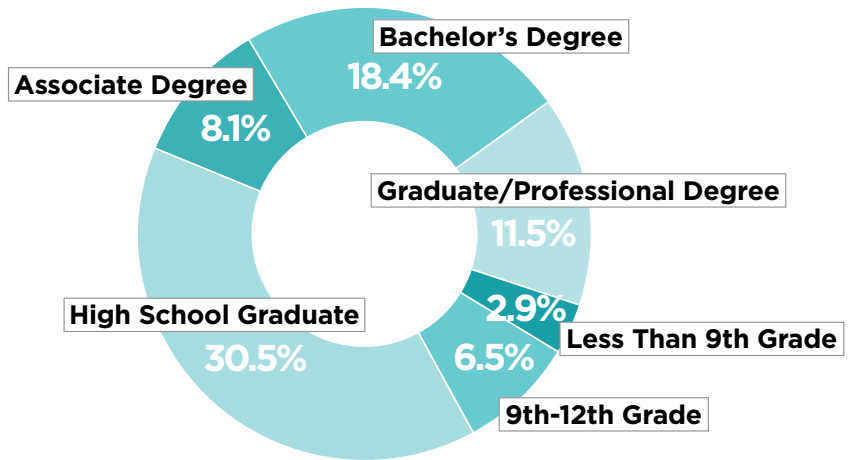
EDUCATION

Studies consistently show that education attainment increases employment rates and earnings, which have a pronounced impact on economic and family security. Education can include traditional four-year colleges and universities, trade schools, apprenticeships, and bridge programs. Education is a key strategy in reducing poverty. There are significant barriers for low-income students to participate in education after high school. The cost of higher education continues to climb while wage growth has been stagnant. Student loan debt creates future hardships for graduates.

The foundation of education in the early years is just as important. Education for children is critical as it provides opportunity for growth and development, setting them up for long-term success and giving them a greater chance of ending the cycle of generational poverty. The poverty rates for high school graduates are lower than those without a high school diploma or equivalent.

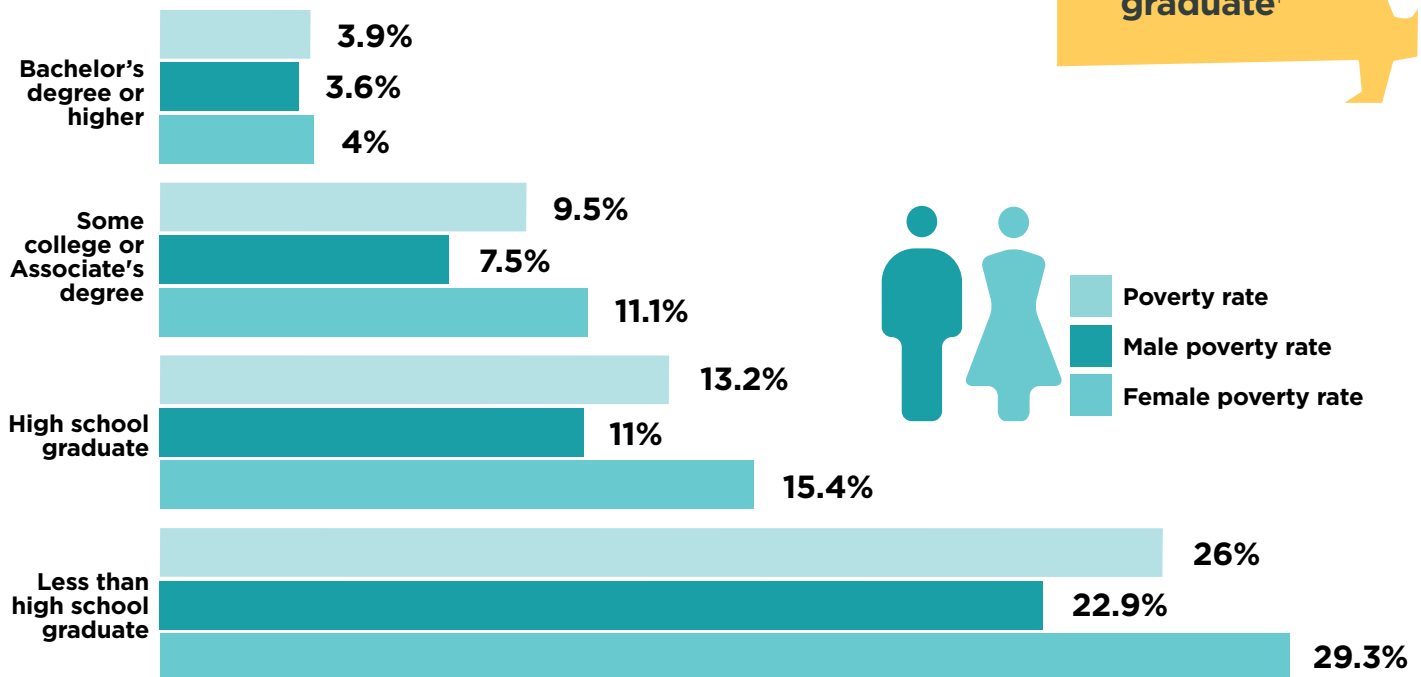
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN MISSOURI

30.5% of Missourians 25 years and older have a high school diploma or equivalency, and 9.4% of Missourians have less than a high school diploma. As the level of education increases, the more skills are developed and the more access a person has to better paying occupations. 18.4% of Missourians have a bachelor's degree; 11.5% have a graduate or professional degree ([US Census Bureau](#)).¹



POVERTY RATES BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

US Census data reveals higher poverty rates for Missourians with lower educational attainment. The poverty rate is higher for females than males at each of the four educational attainment levels. The data shows poverty rates for Missourians 25 years and older ([US Census Bureau](#)).¹

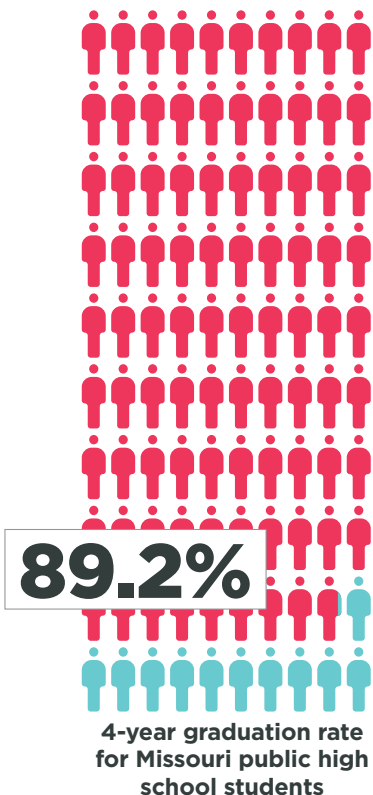


EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Education plays a part in economic security. The following data reflects earnings for full-time, salaried workers persons aged 25 and older in the US. These education categories reflect only the highest level of educational attainment and do not consider completion of training programs such as apprenticeships and other on-the-job training. As education attainment increases, median annual earnings increase and unemployment decrease—a combination that illustrates increased economic security. Missourians with less than a high school diploma have an unemployment rate more than twice that as those with a bachelor’s degree ([Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)).²

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

In 2019 the 4-year graduation rate for Missouri public high school students was 89.2%. The overall dropout rate was 1.6% ([Missouri Department of Education and Secondary Education](#)).⁴



Earnings and unemployment rate by educational attainment

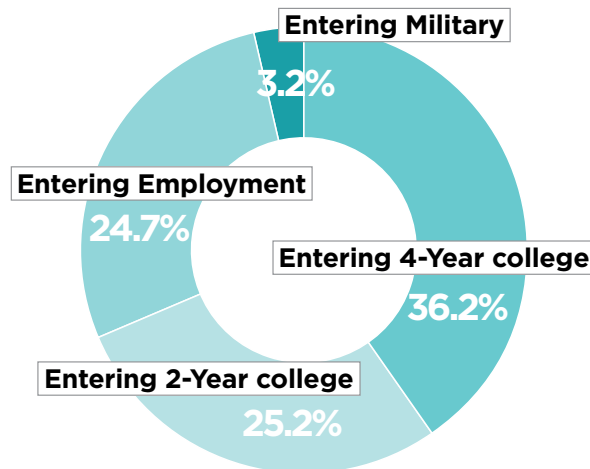
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
Less than high school diploma	\$619	11.7%
High school diploma	\$781	9.0%
Some college, no degree	\$877	8.3%
Associate’s degree	\$938	7.1%
Bachelor’s degree	\$1,305	5.5%
Master’s degree	\$1,545	4.1%
Professional degree	\$1,893	3.1%
Doctoral degree	\$1,885	2.5%

Median Income Based on Educational Attainment and Gender ([US Census Bureau](#))¹

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Less than high school graduate	\$25,089	\$30,051	\$19,096
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	\$31,391	\$37,726	\$24,978
Some college or associates degree	\$35,924	\$43,537	\$30,577
Bachelor’s degree	\$50,856	\$62,067	\$42,427
Graduate or professional degree	\$63,088	\$79,013	\$55,110

WHERE MISSOURI STUDENTS GO

Missouri students follow one of five paths after graduation. 61.3% of students pursue continued education whether at a technical institution, 2-year college, or 4-year college/university. Almost a quarter entered the workforce after graduating from high school ([Missouri Department of Education and Secondary Education](#)).⁵



STUDENT DEBT

While education increases future earnings and lowers unemployment, student debt can create economic hardships for college graduates. The average debt for a Missouri college graduate was \$28,713 ([The Institute of College Access and Success](#)).³

\$28,713

Average debt of Missouri college graduates 2019-2020



56%

Of Missouri college students graduate with debt

FOOD & NUTRITION

FOOD SECURITY VS INSECURITY

The USDA always defines food security as access by people to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity is the state of being without reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food. Missouri ranks as the 34th highest for food insecurity at 11.5%, which is higher than the national average of 10.7% ([USDA](#)).¹



FOOD INSECURITY IN MISSOURI

Food insecure households are those that are not able to afford an adequate diet in the past 12 months. According to the US Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, 11.5% of Missouri households experienced low or very low food security, compared to the national average of 10.7%. The prevalence of food security varies considerably from state to state, ranging from 5.7% in New Hampshire, to 15.3% in Mississippi ([USDA](#)).¹



SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

The mission and purpose of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is to improve the diets of low-income households by increasing food access and food purchasing ability. SNAP benefits are available to recipients on an Electronic Benefits Transfer card for individuals and families to make purchasing decisions based on their specific dietary needs. SNAP is available for household-level incomes less than 130% of the poverty level ([USDA](#)).²



340,865
Missouri families participated in SNAP
(monthly average) FY2020

715,447
Missourians participated in
SNAP FY2020



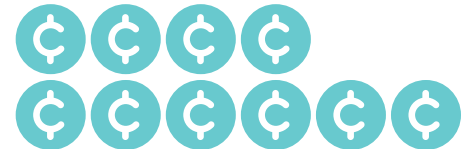
\$1,342,772,664
Distributed in SNAP benefits FY2020

Food is one of life's most basic necessities. Without access to nutritious food, people are at greater risk of disease and health issues, as well as reduced mental focus at work for adults and at school for students. Yet this basic need is a struggle for many Missourians.

Food insecurity and hunger continue to plague our state, and COVID increased those difficulties. The economic fallout from the pandemic forced many families to seek food at local food banks, even with increased assistance.

There are numerous barriers to nutritious food, including a household's low income, the affordability of food, and access to food depending on where one lives. Food deserts exist in both urban and rural locations. Whatever the barriers, the numbers show Missourians experience food insecurity at rates higher than the national average.

\$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.50 in economic activity



Average monthly SNAP benefits FY2019
([Center for Budget and Policy Priorities](#))³

All households: \$250

Households with children: \$425

Working households: \$354

Households with seniors: \$106

Households with non-elderly disabled individuals: \$170

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

The free and reduced-price lunches offered by schools through the National School Lunch program help address food insecurity on the student level. When school districts see participation past a certain threshold, all students across the district may be eligible for this program, increasing access to a food insecurity solution that benefits the entire school community ([USDA](#)).⁴



Missouri Students participated in the National School Lunch program in FY2021

SENIOR FARMER MARKET PROGRAM

The federal Senior Farmers Market Program (SNFMP) is designed to provide low-income seniors with access to locally grown fruit and vegetables ([USDA](#)).⁵



Missouri seniors participated in SNFMP in FY2020



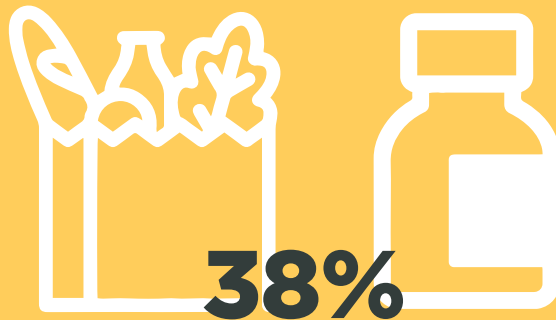
Missouri farmers participated in SNFMP in FY2020

FOOD PANTRIES IN MISSOURI

In 2021, Feeding Missouri, a nonprofit organization dedicated to alleviating hunger in the state, commissioned a study by the University of Missouri Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security to better understand food pantry clients. The study used online, telephone, and in-person surveys in the spring and summer of 2021 to gather information. They found that 54% of clients received half of their food from pantries, 41% of clients have at least one child under 18 years of age, and 17% of households included at least one veteran ([Feeding Missouri](#)).⁶



Of households served in Missouri get at least half of their food from pantries



Of households had to choose between food and medicine/medical care in the past year



HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH

Most Missourians have access to health care through employer-provided insurance, but this system leaves those at the lowest levels of income at a severe disadvantage as insurance is rarely provided by their employer. The issues with this system became apparent during the COVID pandemic, as low-income families struggled to maintain access to healthcare.

In this health care system, low-income families often pay-out-of-pocket for health care while higher income individuals receive employer subsidies.

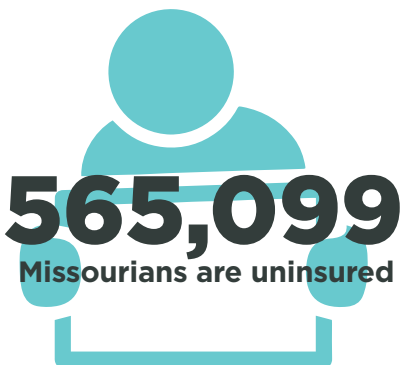
Health and longevity are influenced by income but determining the unique contributing factor can be difficult because income and health intersect with many other social determinants of health, including access to housing, workplace safety, racial segregation, social support, food insecurity, and more.

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE IN MISSOURI

Most Missourians receive health insurance coverage through employer-sponsored plans, but this system leaves those at the lowest levels of income at a severe disadvantage as insurance is rarely provided for part-time employees. At the federal level, Medicare provides coverage to seniors. At the state level, Medicaid covers citizens at 138% of the federal poverty level. Together, 90.6% of Missourians are insured ([US Census Bureau](#)).¹

90.6%

Of Missourians are insured



MEDICAID IN MISSOURI

MO Healthnet is Missouri's Medicaid program. In November 2020, Missourians approved a constitutional amendment that increased eligibility for the public health program to 138% of the federal poverty level. According to the Missouri Department of Social Services, 1,146,253 Missourians were enrolled in MO HealthNet as of November 2021 ([Missouri Department of Social Services](#)).²

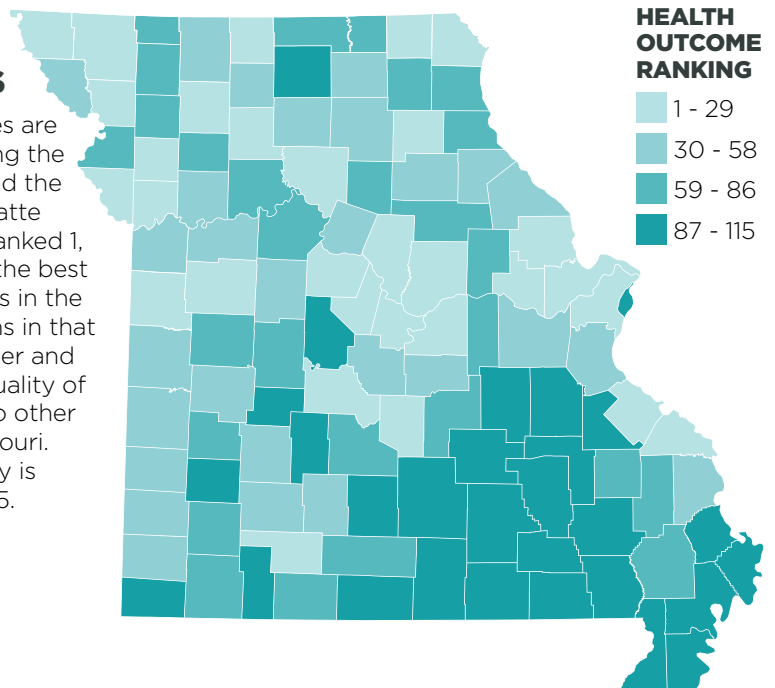


MISSOURI COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS

Numerous factors impact how well and how long a person lives, from access to affordable housing or a good education for children. The County Health Rankings model, created by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, shows how these factors work together to illustrate both health outcomes and health factors ([University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute County Health Rankings](#)).³

HEALTH OUTCOMES

Health outcomes are determined using the quality of life and the length of life. Platte County, MO is ranked 1, meaning it has the best health outcomes in the state, i.e., citizens in that county live longer and have a better quality of life compared to other counties in Missouri. Pemiscot county is ranked last at 115.



HEALTH FACTORS

Health factors represent community conditions and are measured in four categories



HEALTH BEHAVIORS

- Tobacco use
- Diet & exercise
- Alcohol & drug use
- Sexual activity



SOCIAL & ECONOMIC FACTORS

- Education
- Employment & income
- Family & social support
- Community safety



CLINICAL CARE

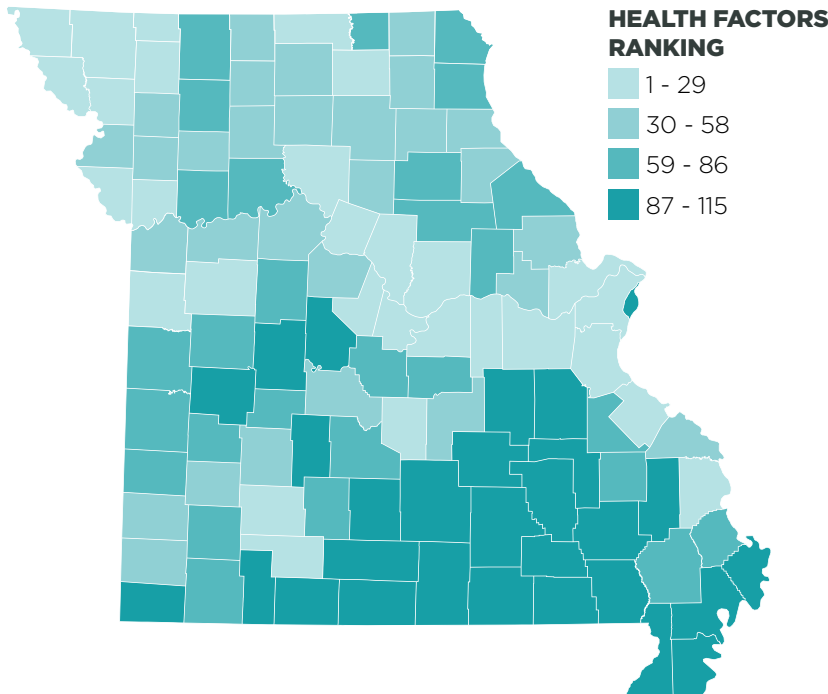
- Access to care
- Quality care



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Air & water quality
- Housing & transit

The county with the highest ranking has factors in its communities that lead to positive health outcomes. Conversely, the lowest ranked county has many factors that negatively impact its citizens' health.

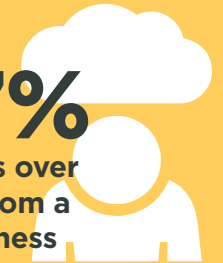


MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN MISSOURI

The Status Report on Missouri's Substance Use and Mental Health is published by the Missouri Department of Mental Health to gauge the prevalence of substance abuse and mental health disorders in the state. The report released in 2021 captured data during 2020, the initial year of the COVID pandemic ([Missouri Department of Mental Health](#)).⁴

22.7%

Missourians over 18 suffer from a mental illness



5.6%

Of Missourians over 18 suffer from a serious mental illness



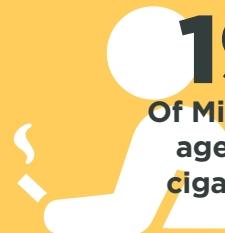
24.1%

Of Missouri population ages +12 binge drank in the past month



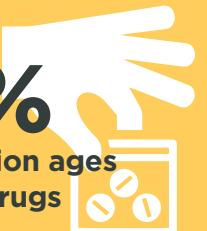
19.7%

Of Missouri population ages +12 smoked a cigarette in the past month



10.6%

Of Missouri population ages +12 used illicit drugs



HOUSING & ENERGY

What happens when your housing is unaffordable, affordable housing does not exist, or you face the choice between rent and food? What if you're one paycheck or emergency away from eviction? In the worst case, you could be homeless. In many other cases, you will likely have to settle for substandard housing, including a home that is energy inefficient.

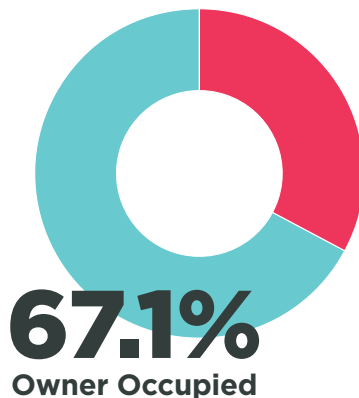
Even with stable housing, there's a strong correlation between homeownership and wealth. Young adults' homeownership rate increases with household income. This effect is compounded by parental homeownership status. Income disparities also perpetuate disparities in housing.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the precarious housing situation of millions of Americans. In response to the economic fallout, the federal government and numerous states and municipalities instituted eviction bans. However, even with these measures, one in six adults in the US were behind on rent as of information collected in Sept.-Oct. 2021 ([Food Research and Action Center](#)).¹

HOUSING AND FAMILY LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IN MISSOURI (US Census Bureau)²



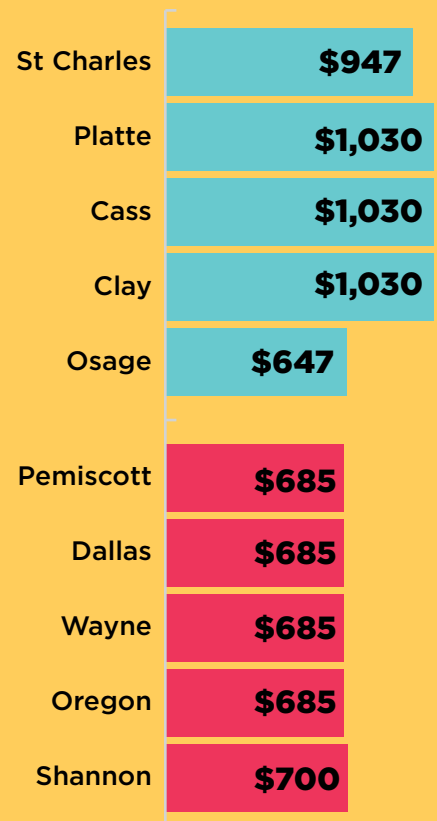
Media value of home



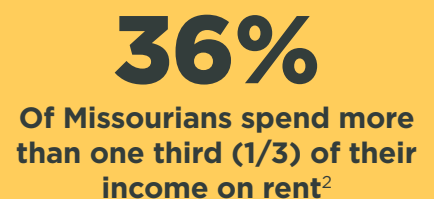
PRICE OF HOUSING

The price of housing varies greatly by location. Here is the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom apartment for the 5 counties with the lowest poverty rate and the 5 counties with the highest poverty rates ([HUD](#)).³

Fair Market Rent for 5 lowest poverty rate counties and 5 highest poverty rate counties (Effective April 1, 2021)



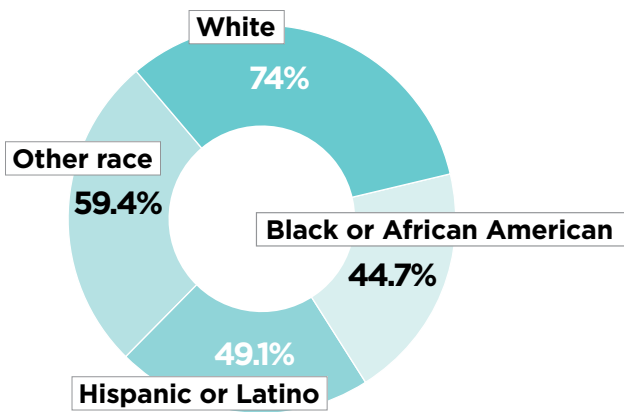
AVERAGE RENT IN MISSOURI AND AFFORDABILITY



HOMEOWNERSHIP BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

Homeownership matters. Owning a home is an important tool for building financial stability. Homeownership impacts future generations. Young adults are more likely to own a home if their parents were homeowners. Homeownership also plays a critical role in the intergenerational transfer of wealth. Disparities in homeownership rates among races and ethnicities reflect historic poverty trends for the same demographics. Black Americans face a higher poverty rate and a lower homeownership rate ([Federal Reserve Economic Data](#)).⁴

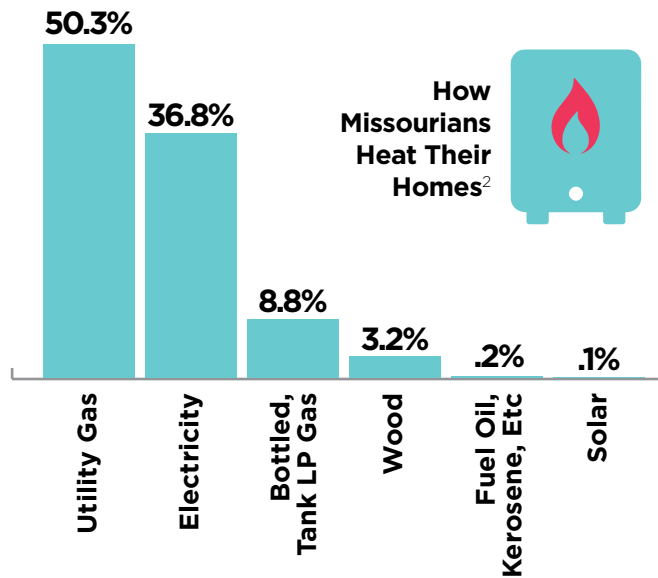
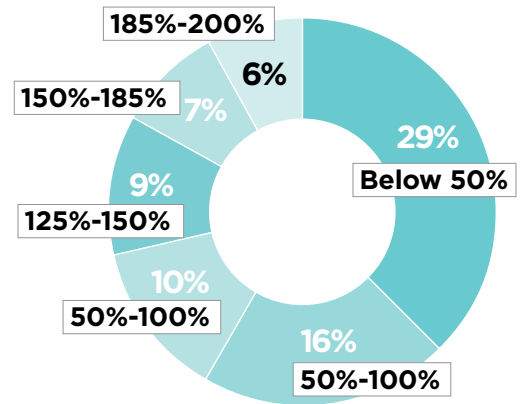
Homeownership Rates in America (2020)⁴



ENERGY BURDEN

The cost of home energy is a significant financial burden for low-income Missouri households. Missouri households with incomes of below 50% of the federal poverty level pay 29% of their annual income on their home energy bills. Low-income households are not the only ones affected by energy unaffordability. Bills for households with incomes between 150% and 185% of the federal poverty level pay 7% of their income; households with incomes between 185% and 200% of the federal poverty level pay 6% of their income. The percentage of income spent on home energy costs for people with higher income levels is 3% ([US Census Bureau](#)).²

Home Energy Burden to Poverty Level



MISSOURI FAIR MARKET RENT AND HOUSING WAGE

The Out of Reach Report, published by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, outlines the hourly wage one must make in each state to afford a 1- or 2-bedroom rental home without paying more than 30% of income on housing. In 2021, the fair market rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$867. To afford this level of rent and utilities—without paying more than 30% of income on housing—a household must earn \$16.66 hourly to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent. This is known as the state housing wage ([National Low-Income Housing Coalition](#)).⁵

65 Hours

Per week at minimum wage to afford a 2-bedroom rental home

1.6 FULL-TIME JOBS

At minimum wage to afford a 2-bedroom rental home (at FMR)

\$16.66 vs **\$11.15**
State housing wage vs Minimum wage (2021)

Rent affordable to SSI recipient

\$238

\$536

Rent affordable with full-time job paying minimum wage

THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET

The term social safety net refers to assistance provided to vulnerable families and individuals to improve their lives. Many programs comprise this “net,” including unemployment, SNAP, Medicare, and more. Social security is the largest social insurance safety net program in the United States.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government invested billions into social safety net programs to prevent millions of Americans from falling into poverty. The measures included increased unemployment benefits, SNAP funds, LIHEAP support, and rental/mortgage assistance. It was the largest push to help working families and individuals since the New Deal policies enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

There is much debate over the efficacy of these programs. The waters are even more muddied by a lack of timely data. There is often a 2-3-year lag in information on utilization of programs and their effect on families and local communities. This prevents policymakers from having an accurate picture of how services help, or don't help, low-income citizens.

The programs are often underfunded and underutilized. For example, only 16.1% of the total eligible population in Missouri received LIHEAP in 2020. Meanwhile, only 57.1% of eligible families in the US use WIC. In Missouri, around 13% of eligible individuals don't participate in the WIC program.

LIHEAP

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally funded program that assists low-income households with paying their utility bills. The program plays a critical part in helping individuals in poverty pay their energy costs. In FY2020, LIHEAP benefits in Missouri prevented the loss of service 76,145 times.

As of Aug. 1, 2021, the average annual LIHEAP benefit was \$334. This was less than the average benefit for high burden households, which is \$313. In fact, LIHEAP assistance pays a smaller share of the home energy bill for high burden households. ([Dept. Of Health and Human Services](#)).³

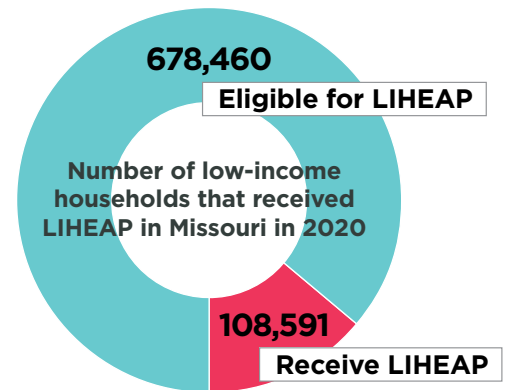
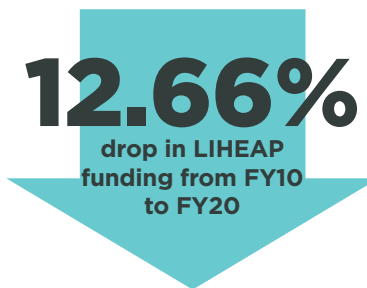
LIHEAP by the Numbers ¹



As a result of Bill Pay Assistance



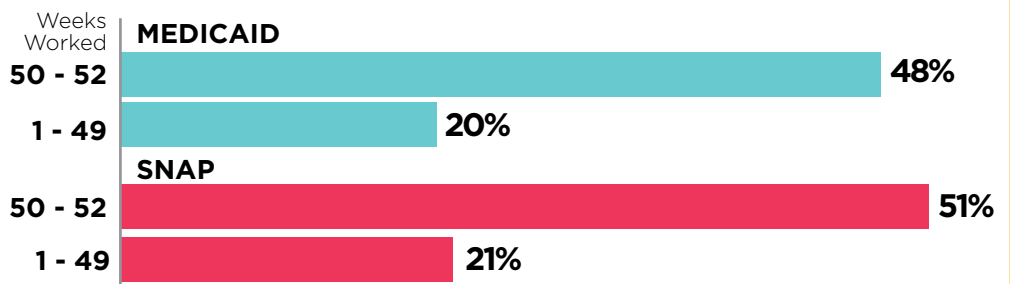
As a result of Equipment repair or replacement



WORKING POOR

Most of the recipients in safety net programs are employed. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, approximately 70 percent of adult wage earners enrolled in SNAP and Medicaid worked full-time hours (35 hours or more a week) ([US GAO](#)).²

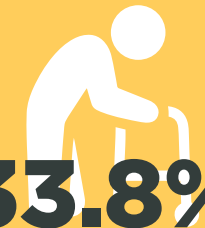
Estimated percentage of wage-earning enrollees/recipients (Ages 19-64)



Of LIHEAP recipients in Missouri:



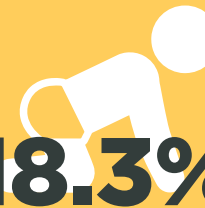
Have at least one vulnerable member



Have an elderly members (60+ years of age)



Have at least one disabled member



Have at least one child under six

WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN PROGRAM

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a federal nutrition program that provides low-income nutritionally at-risk pregnant women, postpartum mothers, infants, and children up to 5 years old with nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care. Despite the importance of the program, it is underutilized, and participation continues to drop. In 2018, around 57% of eligible individuals in the US received WIC, and just 44.2% of eligible children. ([Food Research and Action Center](#)).⁴

\$25.59

Average monthly benefit per person in Missouri

-9.7%

Decrease in participation nationally from 2020-2021

104,293 VS 94,223

(Mar. 2019 – Feb. 2020 average)

(Mar. 2020 – Feb. 2021 average)



MEDICAID EXPANSION

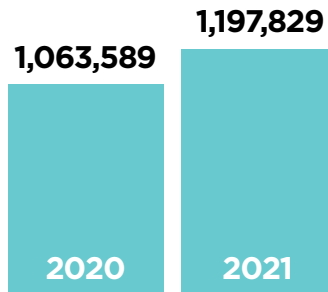
MO HealthNet is Missouri’s Medicaid system, which provides healthcare to citizens under a certain percent of the federal poverty level. In November 2020, Missouri voters approved a constitutional amendment that increased eligibility to 138% of the federal poverty level, expanding access to approximately 275,000 Missourians.

19,200

Fewer deaths for states that expanded Medicaid than those who didn’t ([CBPP](#))⁵

15,600

Estimated deaths attributed in non-expansion states to the failure to provide Medicaid coverage ⁵



Missourians eligible for Medicaid ([Missouri Department of Social Service](#))⁶

11%

of state population on SNAP
698,700 Missouri residents used SNAP (FY 2021)

SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides low-income families with benefits to purchase sufficient food. The program helps 13% of the total population in the United States afford groceries. In Missouri, 11% of the population participates in SNAP. Around 13% of eligible individuals do not participate in the program ([CBPP](#)).⁷



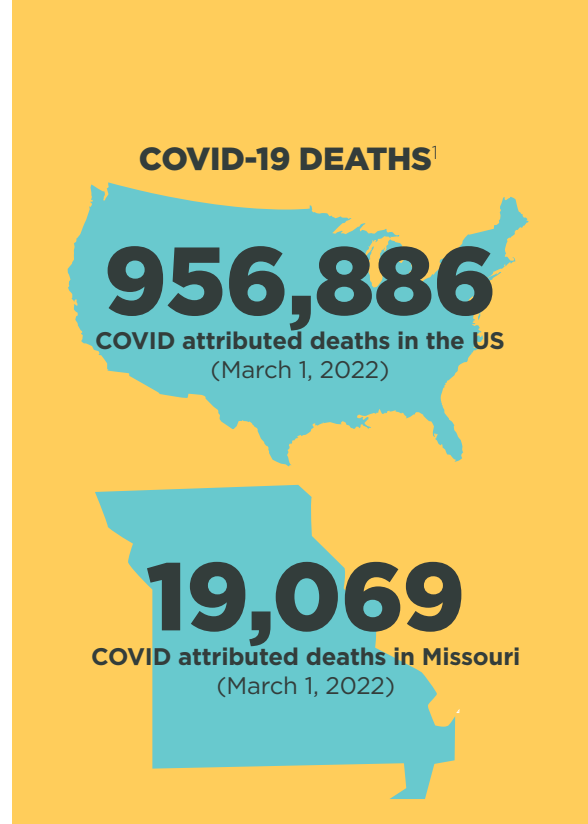
COVID-19 + IMPACT

On January 20, 2020, the first COVID case was reported in the United States. By March a national emergency was declared, and Congress acted quickly to assist millions of Americans who were suddenly without work or income.

Meanwhile, hospitals overflowed with patients. By January 1, 2021, 6,899 Missourians had lost their life to the virus. That number would increase to 16,074 by the end of 2021 (CDC).¹

We are still examining the effects of COVID on poverty. There has always been a delay in receiving data, but the pandemic exacerbated the lag in information. The 2020 Census experienced difficulties in collecting data due to concerns around COVID.

It will take years for us to truly understand the full effect of the pandemic on people in poverty. We are beginning to get an idea of COVID's impact on Missouri's low-income citizens and the federal government's subsequent response.



GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COVID

As businesses, schools, and other organizations closed their doors, Americans were faced with record unemployment. The job loss was immediate and widespread. The loss of income placed millions of citizens in danger of falling into poverty. In response, the federal government enacted a series of measures directed at assisting families and individuals. The Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law on March 27, 2021. The \$2 trillion legislation provided grants to help small businesses and nonprofits, direct stimulus payments to individuals, billions in food programs, and funds to state and local governments to respond to the emergency (Center for American Progress).²

5.5M

Kept out of poverty by unemployment insurance

11.7M

People lifted out of poverty by the first two stimulus checks

5.3M

People kept above poverty line by refundable tax credits

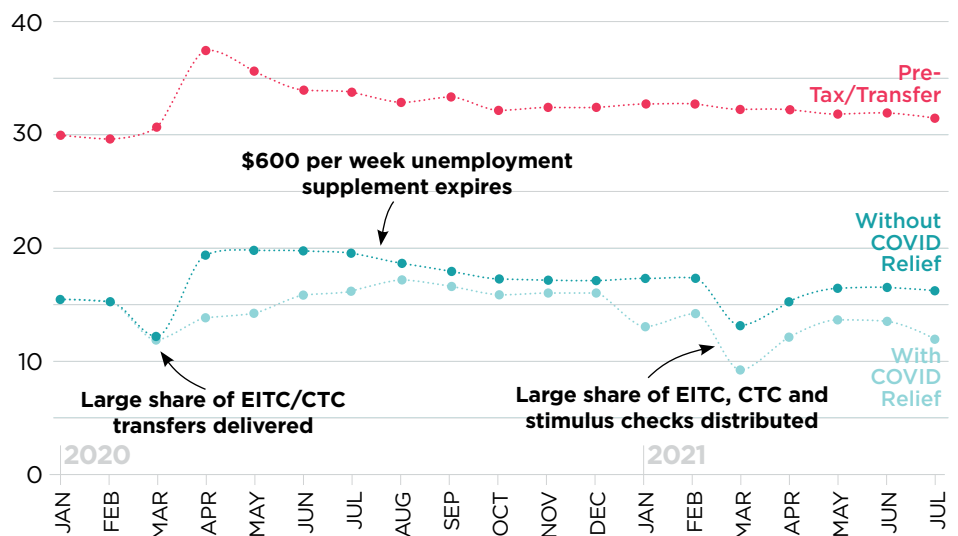
POVERTY RATE DURING COVID

According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the federal government's response to the COVID pandemic prevented an estimated 53 million people out of poverty during 2020. Without that assistance, the poverty rate would have increased during the same period by 2.8%. In short, the government's assistance had its intended effect—citizens were stopped from falling into poverty.

However, the assistance did little for families already living in poverty, especially those unable to access the increased benefits and stimulus payments. The CARES assistance was temporary, meaning those families that were lifted out of poverty faced the same factors that put them into poverty once the benefits ended.

There were differences in the poverty rate depending on which measure was used. During 2020, the official poverty measure (OPM) increased by 1%, from 10.5% to 11.4%. Meanwhile, the supplemental poverty measure (SPM) shows that poverty decreased from 11.8% in 2019 to 9.1% in 2020, thanks to historic federal aid. (Center for American Progress).²

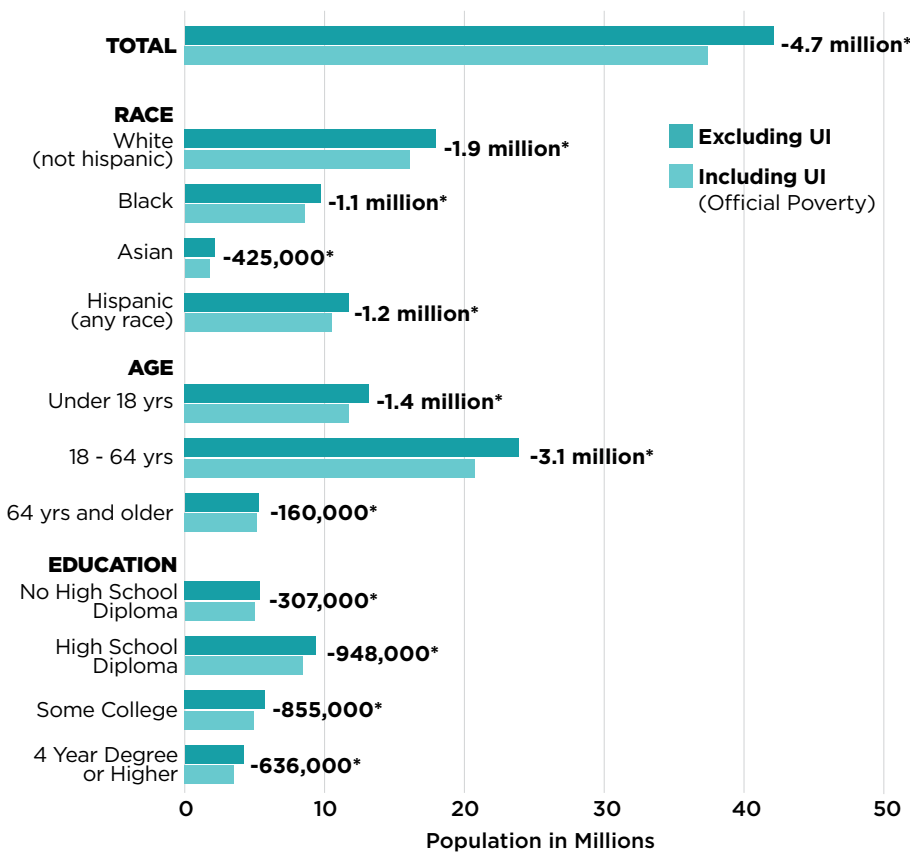
Monthly Poverty Rate During COVID-19 (Food Research and Action Center)³



UNEMPLOYMENT AND COVID

When COVID-19 first began, shutdowns throughout the country resulted in extensive job loss. In response, the federal government enacted the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The measure expanded unemployment insurance by \$600/per week, increased eligibility, and extended the benefits for 13 weeks. The payments lowered the overall poverty rate by 1.4%. Without unemployment insurance, 4.7 million people would have been in poverty ([Center for American Progress](#)).²

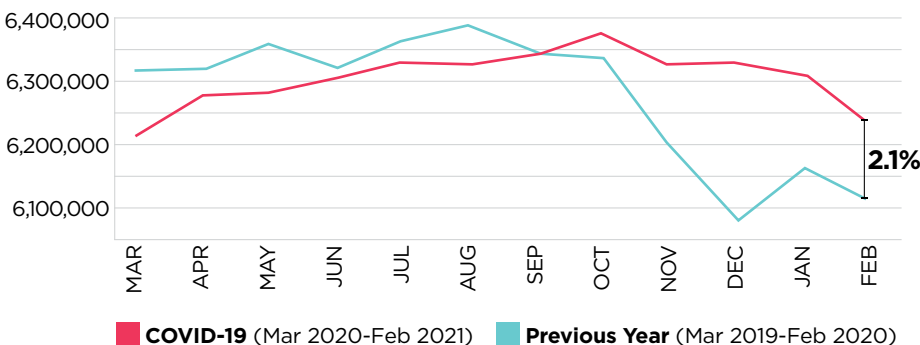
Impact of Unemployment Insurance (UI) on the number of people in Poverty: 2020 (Population as of March of the following year)



WIC PARTICIPATION DURING COVID

During the pandemic, WIC waivers increased access to the benefits, resulting in a national 2.1% increase in participation. Yet here in Missouri, the number of recipients fell by 12.6%. ([Food Research and Action Center](#)).⁴

Total Number of WIC Participants by Month, First Year of COVID-19 compared to the previous year



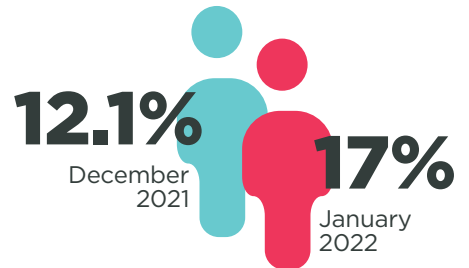
ENHANCED CHILD TAX CREDIT

In March 2021, Congress approved the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the second measure passed by the federal government in response to the COVID pandemic. Among the provisions, ARPA expanded the Child Tax Credit (CTC) so more families would receive it, increased the amount, and eliminated the requirement for taxpayers to have at least earned \$2500 in income to claim the credit.

The results were immediate. The first payment in July 2021 kept 3.8 million children from poverty. The child poverty rate fell from 15.9% in June 2021 to 12.2% in Nov. 2021. ([Columbia University Center on Poverty & Social Policy](#))⁵

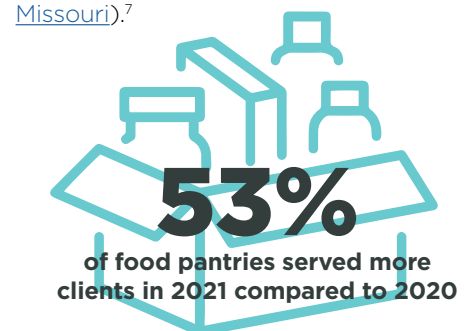
Within the first month of the benefits ending in January 2022, child poverty increased from 12.1% to 17%. ([Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy](#)).⁶

Child Poverty Rate



FOOD PANTRIES DURING COVID

The [Food Assistance & Hunger in the Heartland 2021 Report](#) provides an idea of how food insecurity affected Missourians during the pandemic. The study gathered data from clients and pantries on characteristics of pantries and clients. It found food pantry use increased sharply during 2021 when compared to 2020. ([Feeding Missouri](#)).⁷



CONCLUSION

The Missouri Poverty Report provides a starting point to analyze the level of poverty in the state and the impacts of COVID-19. In March 2020, the Pandemic led to the declaration of a national emergency. As businesses and organizations closed, unemployment skyrocketed from 3.7% to 12.5%. Families faced limited access to food. Individuals couldn't afford rent or mortgages. These difficulties were faced by all Missourians, but disproportionately impacted low-income families.

The federal government provided more than \$2 trillion in assistance to individuals, families, and

businesses. It was the largest expansion of the social safety net since the 1930s. It is estimated that 5.5 million people nationally were kept above the poverty line through unemployment insurance, and 11.7 million were lifted out of poverty by the first two stimulus checks. The enhanced child tax credit, paid in monthly installments, significantly lowered child poverty.

Then those programs expired. Within the first month of ending the enhanced CTC, child poverty jumped by 41%. Meanwhile, households with low incomes have been slower to recover jobs from the pandemic than high

wage earners. Employers report difficulty in finding qualified workers and the unemployed struggle with childcare, transportation, and the skills needed for the available jobs.

Missouri CAN looks forward to working with the Governor, the Legislature, advocates, and concerned citizens to strengthen anti-poverty measures that can expand opportunity and economic security to all Missourians.

For more information on this report or on Missouri CAN's work to fight poverty please contact info@communityaction.org or call 573.634.2969.

MISSOURI COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

Missouri Community Action Network is the state association for Missouri's Community Action agencies. Community Action Agencies provide services at the local level to help lift people out of poverty. Nineteen (19) Community Action Agencies cover every county in the state, ensuring no Missourian is without access to the tools they need to lead financially stable lives. MCAN educates Missouri on the impact of poverty and advocates on behalf of low-income citizens. For more information on MCAN, including how to get involved in Community Action, visit www.communityaction.org or email info@communityaction.org. To find your local Community Action Agency, visit www.communityaction.org/gethelp.

Community Action Agencies throughout Missouri provide citizens paths out of poverty through local services, including utility assistance, rental assistance, Head Start, Weatherization, job training through SkillUp, and more.

If you or someone you know is struggling, visit www.communityaction.org/gethelp to find the closest agency.

GET
HELP

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