

The novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, pandemic is a global health concern and the focus of many efforts to understand, contain, and treat this disease. In addition to these tremendous efforts, we must also consider the coronavirus' impact on Missouri's economy. Like the health impact data, timely indicators are limited at the moment. However, this periodic Missouri Economy Indicators Update series will highlight some figures to watch and potential resources that can help businesses navigate this situation.

## Missouri Unemployment

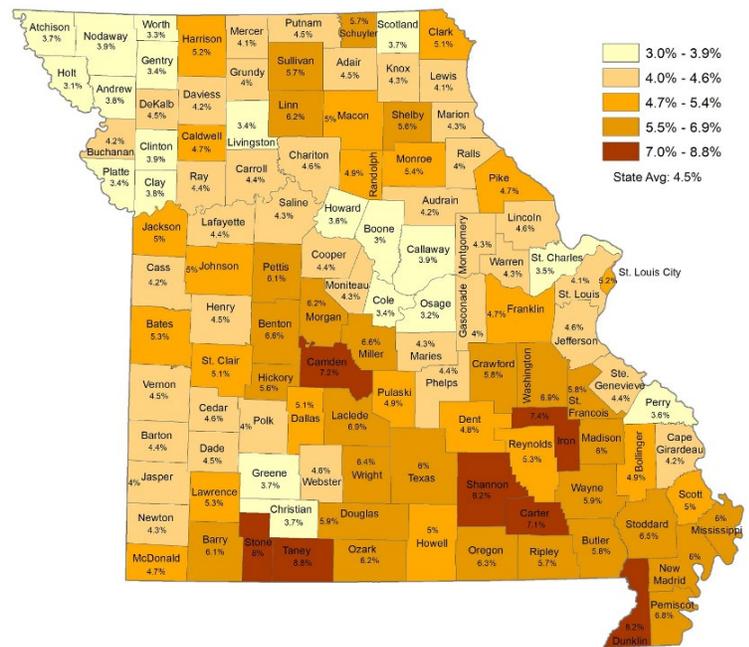
Every month the Bureau of Labor Statistics and partner state agencies produce unemployment statistics for each county. Preliminary numbers are not adjusted for seasonal trends and can show higher unemployment rates in places impacted by activities such as tourism. March 2020 figures, for example, show that tourism-focused counties such as Taney and Camden have higher unemployment rates than surrounding counties which is typically the case before summer travels take off.

During this time of rapid unemployment across many sectors, however, the seasonal adjustments normally applied to this information are less important given how unusual the circumstances are around COVID-19 business closures.

Data source: Bureau of Labor Statistics and MERIC

## County Unemployment Rates – March 2020

Not-Seasonally Adjusted



## Missouri Unemployment Claims Related to COVID-19

The number of unemployment claims has increased significantly since COVID-19 started impacting Missouri. Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations data shows that, as of April 18, over 370,000 Missourians have filed for unemployment due to COVID-19 since March 15.\* These filings account for 90 percent of total unemployment filings in Missouri during that time. Unsurprisingly the highest number of claims over that time period have been filed in Missouri's most populous counties. The only exception was Taney county, the home of Branson, which was in the top ten of counties with COVID-related claims but is not a top ten county in population.

## COVID-Related Claims

By focusing on the number of COVID-19 unemployment claims as a percent of the labor force, we are better able to see how this pandemic is impacting Missouri's workforce.

Statewide, 12 percent of Missouri's labor force filed unemployment claims between 3/15 and 4/18 due to COVID-19. Thirty-three counties have rates higher than 12 percent, while 82 counties have rates lower than the statewide percentage. Taney County has been the hardest hit, with 35 percent of its labor force filing claims due to COVID-19. The City of St. Louis, Camden County, and Stone County also had a sizeable portion of their labor force (over 18 percent) file COVID-related claims. The concentration of layoffs in tourism-focused areas, such as Branson (Taney and Stone Counties), is hitting when employers are typically scaling up jobs for the summer season. Many rural counties – particularly agricultural counties in northern and western Missouri – have seen fewer than six percent of their labor force file unemployment claims during the same period. However, many of these same counties – particularly those with meat processing operations – have witnessed their claims rising in the last couple weeks.

Data sources: Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations and the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC)

\*Weekly unemployment claims may include some duplications.

## Additional Resources

- **Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations** offers information for businesses and workers facing unemployment at: <https://labor.mo.gov/coronavirus>
- **Missouri Coronavirus Mapping Hub** has a variety of COVID-19-related mapping and datasets at: <https://missouri-coronavirus-gis-hub-mophep.hub.arcgis.com/>
- **Missouri Small Business Development Center COVID-19 Resource Page** has a small business guide to the CARES act, video guides, and other resources at: <https://sbdc.missouri.edu/sbdc-covid-19-resources>

*This brief is the fourth in a series to explore economic indicators, impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and to highlight resources that may help our businesses during this difficult time. Future updates will be available in the coming weeks at: <https://tinyurl.com/ExceedEconomyIndicators>*

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## COVID-Related Unemployment Claims as a Percent of County Labor Force

UI Claims from 3/15/20 - 4/18/20

