



## Where We Stand: 8th Edition

### Update 8: St. Louis Employment in the COVID-19 Pandemic

December 2020

The first COVID-19 case in the St. Louis 15-county MSA was documented on March 8, 2020. The first death was on March 20<sup>th</sup>. (See Figure 1.) Since that time and through November 15<sup>th</sup> there have been 110,893 COVID-19 cases in the St. Louis MSA and 2,045 deaths. In the United States there have been more than 11 million cases, with 246,000 deaths attributed to the virus. These include incidents considered to be confirmed, presumptive, or probable. Box 1 (Page 2) provides further details about the definitions for COVID-19 cases and deaths as well as details about the data used in this report.

In late March and early April, measures were taken by individuals, businesses, and government to slow the spread of the virus. The effect on employment has been of historic proportions. The virus itself and the shutdown of the economy have had significant effects on people throughout the country and the St. Louis region.

The purpose of this report is to inform local discussions about the pandemic and the recession. The first section provides data on COVID-19 cases and deaths. The second section uses national data to describe how the current recession compares to previous recessions and examines how employment trends have unfolded throughout the pandemic. The final section provides a look at how the St. Louis region ranks among the 50 most populous regions<sup>1</sup> (referred to as the peer regions) on employment during the pandemic with a specific look at how demographic groups have been affected differently.

The current economic recession has resulted in greater employment losses than any previous recession since World War II. The effect has been felt across the country, and the world, but has been harsher in some areas than others. The St. Louis region did not experience as large of a decline in employment as many of the peer regions, but there are still many St. Louis workers who are unemployed. In St. Louis, and across the country, the industries that have been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic are those in which black and female workers are more likely to work than their white and male counterparts, furthering divides that already existed.

The data in this report was used to frame a discussion among local representatives of the business, local government, social services, and academic communities at the East-West Gateway Annual Meeting on November 19, 2020. Their remarks provided a deeper understanding of how the region is weathering the pandemic, touched on some silver linings, and offered hope for the future. Quotes from the discussion are highlighted throughout the report.

**Figure 1: A Timeline of COVID-19 Events**  
St. Louis MSA and United States, 2020

● St. Louis MSA ● United States



<sup>1</sup> Opportunity Insights, Economic Tracker, [www.tracktherecovery.org](http://www.tracktherecovery.org)

<sup>2</sup> COVID-19 Data Repository by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University

<sup>3</sup> Illinois, Executive Order 2020-32 (April 30, 2020), <https://www2.illinois.gov/Pages/Executive-Orders/ExecutiveOrder2020-32.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> The city of St. Louis, St. Louis County, City Mandatory Mask Requirement to Slow Spread of COVID-19, July 1, 2020, <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/news/city-and-county-require-mandatory-masks.cfm>

<sup>5</sup> Franklin County, Commission Order No. 2020-554 (November 19, 2020), [https://www.franklinmo.org/vertical/sites/%7B785730E807-248F-430C-88E4-922288E63B07%7D/uploads/2020-554\\_Mask\\_Mandate.pdf](https://www.franklinmo.org/vertical/sites/%7B785730E807-248F-430C-88E4-922288E63B07%7D/uploads/2020-554_Mask_Mandate.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Jefferson County, Health Director of Jefferson County Order No. 20-11-25-01 and County Executive Order No. 20-109 (November 25, 2020), <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/571035cc9f745646c523426b/1/5fb6e8357acc6192aab3d05/1606346816526/jefferson-county-health-order-no.-20-11-25-01.pdf>

1 *Where We Stand* tracks the St. Louis region among the 50 most populous Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), which are geographic entities delineated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). MSAs are areas with "at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties."

## Box 1: Data Notes

**COVID-19 Cases and Deaths:** The COVID-19 data in this report is from the beginning of the pandemic through November 15<sup>th</sup>. The source is Johns Hopkins University (JHU). The data was downloaded on November 30<sup>th</sup>. The JHU team endeavors to verify the data and revise it when corrections are found. Since revisions are most common within two weeks of initial reporting, more recent data are not included in this report. Data are subject to further revisions.

JHU data on COVID-19 cases and deaths include incidents that have been confirmed, presumptive, and probable. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a case is classified as “COVID-19” when there is a positive test confirming the existence of the virus or if the patient meets a specified combination of clinical criteria, epidemiological evidence, laboratory evidence, or is recorded on a death certificate as “a cause of death or a significant condition contributing to death.” Throughout this report COVID-19 cases and COVID-19 deaths refer to confirmed, presumptive, and probable cases and deaths.

The number of reported cases and deaths often differ according to various sources. There are many factors that can contribute to these discrepancies, including the following (not an exhaustive list):

- There are lags in data reporting. Most sources revise the data as they obtain new information. Those revisions take time to reach all who are reporting the data. Further, all sources are not consistent in how and when they update their data.
- Death certificates can take one to two weeks or longer to process. Death counts can include provisional COVID-19 deaths and may be adjusted up or down after all death certificates are processed. Therefore, data for the most recent time periods are particularly subject to change.
- The location to which a case is attributed may change when investigation leads to knowledge that the patient resides in a different jurisdiction than originally recorded.
- Definitions on what is included in the number of cases or deaths may vary between sources. For example, some sources include probable cases while others do not.

**Employment:** The employment data in this report is from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Employment Statistics (CES) and the Current Population Survey (CPS). Most of the data are non-seasonally adjusted. The one exception is data on the U.S. recessions on Page 8, which uses seasonally adjusted data. CES estimates are based on surveys of businesses and government agencies. Data are collected each month during the week of the 12th. The September and October 2020 data are preliminary and subject to revisions.

## EWG Video Presentations

On Thursday, November 19, 2020, East-West Gateway hosted the 55<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, which included the Outstanding Local Government Achievement Awards ceremony and three afternoon informational sessions:

- The St. Louis Economy in the COVID-19 Pandemic
- The St. Louis Region’s Cyber Threat Landscape
- An Implementation Update on the Metro Security Strategy

View the videos of the event at <https://www.ewgateway.org/annual-meeting-2020/>.

## COVID-19 ZIP Code Map

Each Thursday, East-West Gateway GIS staff update the COVID-19 Cases by ZIP Code map for the St. Louis eight-county region. View that map at <https://ewgateway.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=57f7a1021713468ca3a78c0cc3145db6>

## STL Response COVID-19 Dashboard

[STL Response COVID-19 Dashboard](#) is a crowd-sourced website. Hundreds of St. Louisans contribute resources, news, and data that are relevant to people across the St. Louis region. The dashboard is maintained by the [St. Louis Regional Data Alliance \(RDA\)](#).

## COVID-19 Cases and Deaths

Throughout the eight months of the pandemic, the St. Louis region has mostly had higher rates of cumulative COVID-19 documented cases and deaths than most of the peer regions and similar rates to that of the country as a whole. The virus is affecting people of all demographic groups, but across the country, people of color have been more likely to contract the virus and suffer subsequent serious illness or death.

### COVID-19 Cases

The first confirmed U.S. case of COVID-19 was in the Seattle region on January 20<sup>th</sup>.<sup>2</sup> About half (24) of the peer regions recorded a positive case of COVID-19 before St. Louis. On March 8<sup>th</sup>, the first case of COVID-19 was recorded in St. Louis, as well as in four of the peer regions, including Kansas City. By March 14<sup>th</sup> all of the peer regions had recorded as least one case of COVID-19.

From March 8<sup>th</sup> through November 15<sup>th</sup>, 110,893 cumulative cases of COVID-19 were documented in the St. Louis MSA. Among the peer regions, this ranked the region as having the 9th largest cumulative case rate with 3,955.9 cases per 100,000 population, as shown in Table 1.

Map 1 (Page 4) displays the rates as of November 15<sup>th</sup> for the peer regions. The highest rates are mostly among regions in the South and in some of the most populous regions.

### St. Louis Panel Discussion

*“If you ever get a chance to come out and be a part of one of these large-scale distributions [of food kits], **you will be proud of the fact that you have 250 individuals, on average...black, white, and all races, young, old, middle-aged, rich, poor, and middle-income. And so, we bring everyone together as a bridge to try to make St. Louis one community with one goal of helping the people that need it the most. And that is really what our region should be all about.**” ~ Michael McMillan, Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis*

**Table 1**  
**COVID-19 Cumulative Case Rate**

Confirmed, presumptive, and probable COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population, 11/15/2020

1	Milwaukee	5,837.4
2	Miami	5,778.8
3	Salt Lake City	5,434.7
4	Nashville	4,893.6
5	Memphis	4,745.3
6	Chicago	4,579.8
7	Birmingham	4,543.0
8	Las Vegas	4,213.9
9	St. Louis	3,955.9
10	Minneapolis	3,918.2
11	New Orleans	3,915.5
12	Phoenix	3,836.5
13	Oklahoma City	3,777.2
14	Jacksonville	3,698.5
15	Kansas City	3,640.7
16	New York	3,627.6
17	Louisville	3,622.3
18	Dallas	3,523.4
19	Houston	3,406.7
20	Orlando	3,400.0
21	Atlanta	3,391.7
	<b>United States</b>	<b>3,367.5</b>
22	Indianapolis	3,259.2
23	Charlotte	3,215.2
24	Riverside	3,205.5
25	San Antonio	3,196.7
26	Providence	3,105.7
27	Tampa	3,093.0
28	Los Angeles	3,063.1
29	Columbus	3,009.6
30	Detroit	2,783.9
31	Cincinnati	2,762.7
32	Washington, D.C.	2,704.5
33	Boston	2,696.5
34	Baltimore	2,648.8
35	Philadelphia	2,626.4
36	Austin	2,513.8
37	Raleigh	2,374.6
38	Richmond	2,300.6
39	Hartford	2,232.1
40	Denver	2,224.2
41	Cleveland	2,126.4
42	Virginia Beach	2,035.9
43	San Diego	1,940.1
44	Buffalo	1,813.3
45	Sacramento	1,733.5
46	San Francisco	1,699.3
47	Pittsburgh	1,616.9
48	San Jose	1,503.1
49	Seattle	1,477.0
50	Portland	1,319.6

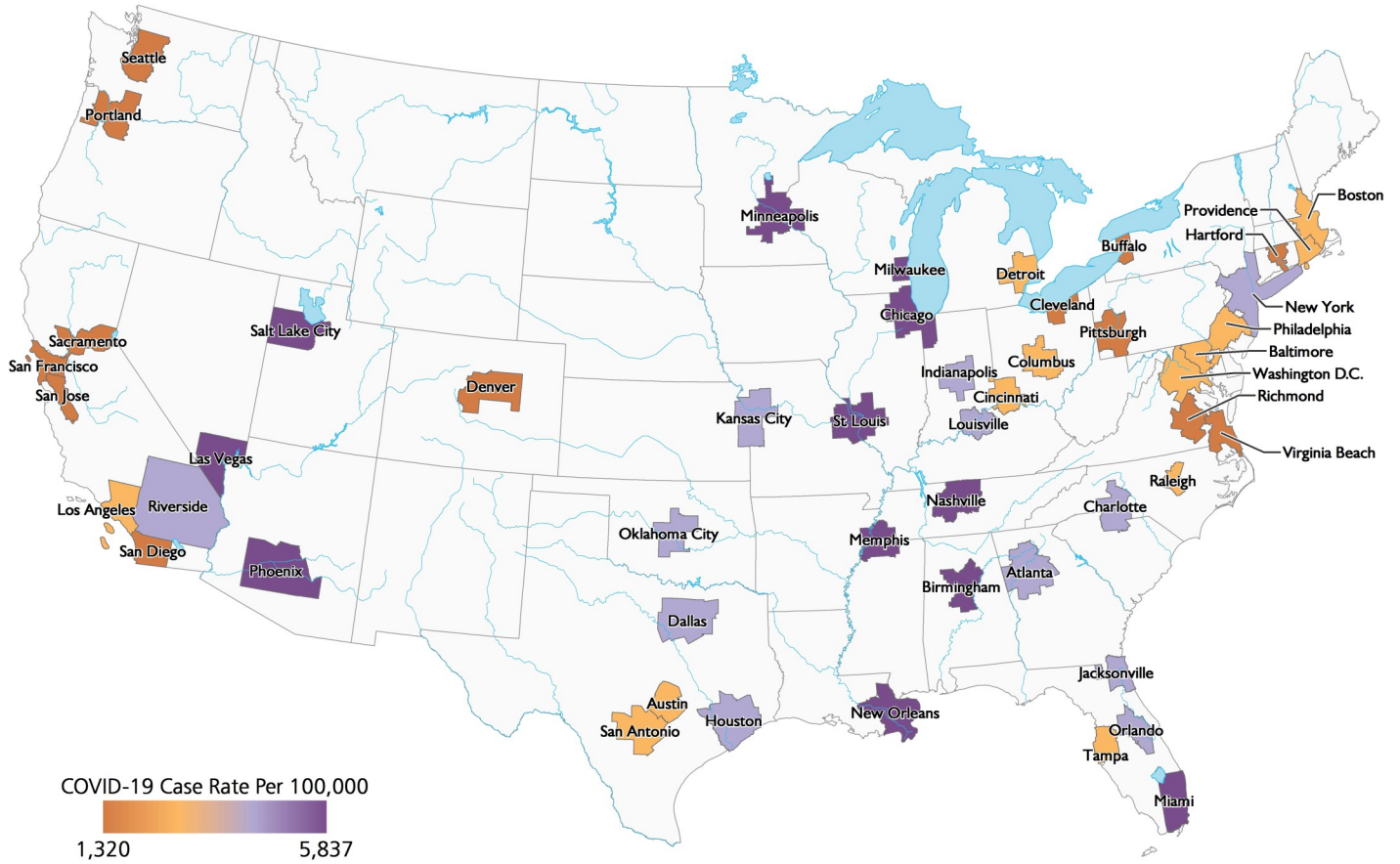
Source: Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University

<sup>2</sup> The first U.S. COVID-19 case was January 20<sup>th</sup> according to the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention.

# Map 1: COVID-19 Cumulative Case Rate

Confirmed, presumptive, and probable COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population

St. Louis MSA and Peer Regions, 11/15/2020



Source: Johns Hopkins University

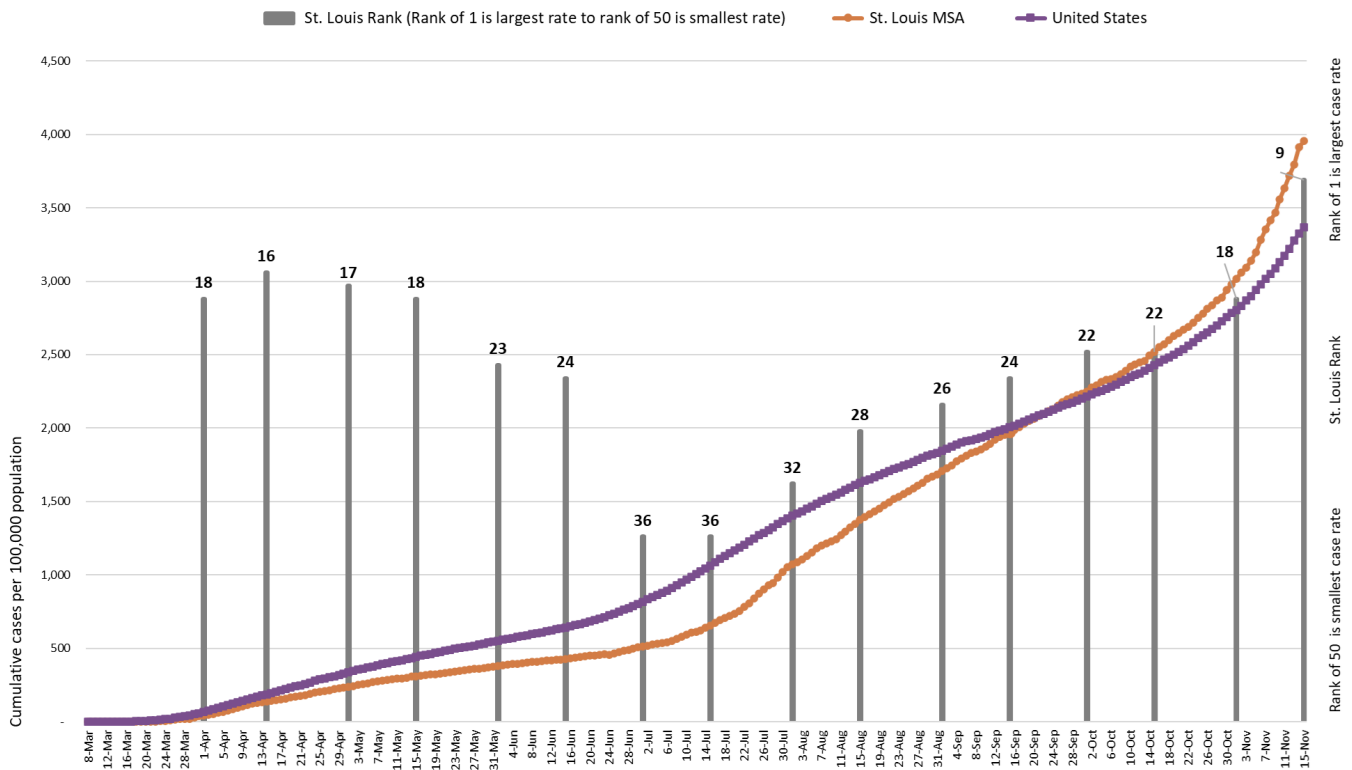
11/15/20



Over the span of the pandemic, the cumulative case rate in the St. Louis region relative to the peer regions and the United States has fluctuated. Figure 2 displays the St. Louis MSA and U.S. rates of cumulative cases for the length of the pandemic along with the bi-monthly rank of St. Louis among the peer regions. Table 2 (Page 3) displays the cumulative rate for St. Louis among the peer regions as of November 15<sup>th</sup>.

The rate of COVID-19 cases per population for the region was just below the national average until about September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Since that time, the region has recorded a higher rate than the United States as a whole. In April and May, the rate for the region was higher than that of most peer regions. Throughout July and August, the rate for the region was lower than that of most of the regions. In September and October, the region returned to having a higher rate than most of the peer regions. In the first half of November, the rate for the region climbed, and became one of the 10 highest among the peer regions.

**Figure 2: COVID-19 Cumulative Case Rate, St. Louis MSA and United States  
And St. Louis Rank Among the 50 Peer Regions**  
March 8 to November 15, 2020



Source: Johns Hopkins University

## COVID-19 Deaths

The first U.S. COVID-19 death was also in the Seattle region, on February 29<sup>th</sup>. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, St. Louis and three other regions recorded their first death, joining 24 of the peer regions. By March 31<sup>st</sup> all of the peer regions had recorded at least one COVID-19 death.

Total COVID-related deaths in the St. Louis region numbered 2,045 residents as of November 15<sup>th</sup>. Among the peer regions, this ranks as the 13<sup>th</sup> largest COVID-19 cumulative death rate, with 73 deaths per 100,000 population, as seen in Table 2.

Figure 3 (Page 7) displays the St. Louis MSA and U.S. death rates for the length of the pandemic along with the bi-monthly rank of St. Louis among the peer regions. The COVID-19 death rate for the St. Louis MSA has been similar to, but lower than, that of the country as a whole over the course of the pandemic. The gap widened over the past two months. Among the peer regions, St. Louis has had a higher cumulative death rate than most of the peer regions since mid-April.

## Race and Ethnicity

COVID-19 affects people of all races and ethnicities, but people of color across the country have been disproportionately affected, both in regard to the virus itself and in employment loss. Figure 4 provides the case and death rates by race and ethnicity for instances in which the race and ethnicity are known. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that such data are only available for about half of COVID-19 cases and 79 percent of COVID-19 deaths.

White non-Hispanic people make up about 60 percent of the total U.S. population. According to the data from CDC as of November 24<sup>th</sup>, whites account for a slightly lower proportion (56.4 percent) of COVID-19 deaths and about 51.1 percent of COVID-19 cases. Asians also make up a larger proportion of the population than COVID-19 cases and deaths. Hispanics and Latinos account for a smaller proportion of the COVID-19 deaths (15.1 percent) than in the total population (18.4 percent), but this population group accounts for a disproportional share of the COVID-19 cases (25 percent). The share of cases and deaths for all other groups are larger than their share of the whole population. Non-Hispanic blacks account for 12.4 percent of the population, 14.8 percent of COVID-19 cases, and 19 percent of COVID-19 deaths.

**Table 2**  
**COVID-19 Cumulative Death Rate**

Confirmed and probable COVID-19 deaths per 100,000 population, 11/15/2020

1	New York	234.1
2	Hartford	149.2
3	Boston	145.5
4	New Orleans	137.3
5	Detroit	132.3
6	Providence	124.8
7	Miami	112.3
8	Philadelphia	107.1
9	Chicago	95.3
10	Phoenix	81.6
11	Indianapolis	77.7
	<b>United States</b>	<b>75.0</b>
12	Buffalo	73.6
13	<b>St. Louis</b>	<b>73.0</b>
14	Las Vegas	71.4
15	Birmingham	70.8
16	Memphis	69.8
17	San Antonio	69.7
18	Tampa	67.5
19	Baltimore	67.2
20	Los Angeles	66.6
21	Washington, D.C.	66.3
22	Atlanta	59.9
23	Minneapolis	58.0
24	Milwaukee	58.0
25	Jacksonville	55.0
26	Houston	55.0
27	Louisville	53.4
28	Riverside	53.0
29	Orlando	51.0
30	Nashville	50.1
31	Richmond	48.4
32	Cleveland	47.7
33	Kansas City	47.2
34	Charlotte	43.2
35	Columbus	42.5
36	Dallas	42.0
37	Denver	40.4
38	Pittsburgh	37.2
39	Austin	35.4
40	Cincinnati	34.4
41	Virginia Beach	33.6
42	Seattle	33.4
43	Oklahoma City	32.7
44	Salt Lake City	29.1
45	San Diego	27.7
46	Sacramento	27.7
47	Raleigh	27.5
48	San Francisco	25.2
49	San Jose	23.1
50	Portland	19.1

Source: Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University

**Figure 4: COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by Race and Ethnicity**

United States, COVID-19 Data as of November 24, 2020

	Percent of 2019 U.S. Population	Percent of Cases with Race Data	Percent of Deaths with Race Data
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander Non-Hispanic	0.2	0.4	0.2
American Indian / Alaska Native Non-Hispanic	0.7	1.1	0.9
Multiple/Other Non-Hispanic	2.7	4.6	3.9
Asian Non-Hispanic	5.6	3.0	4.4
Black Non-Hispanic	12.4	14.8	19.0
Hispanic/Latino	18.4	25.0	15.1
White Non-Hispanic	60.0	51.1	56.4

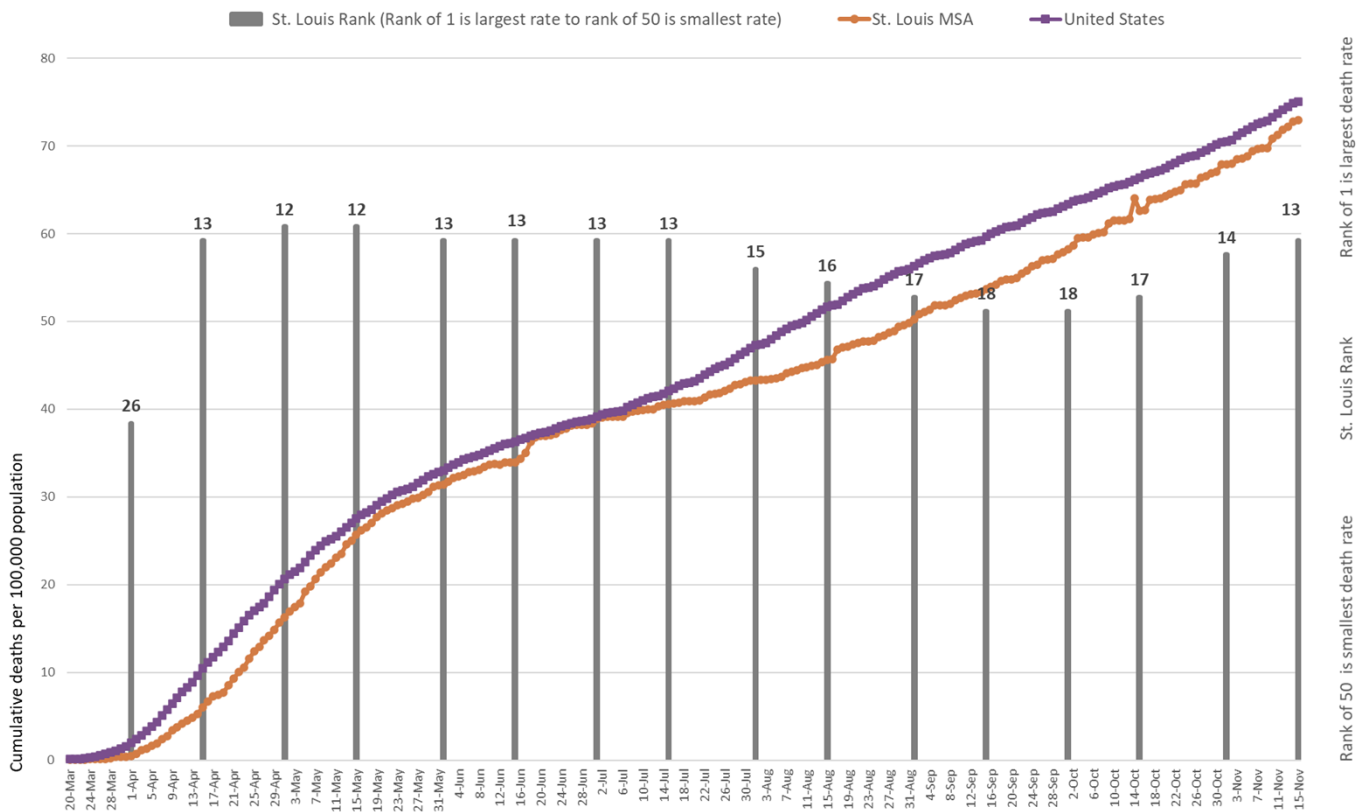
Note: Race and ethnicity is reported to CDC by states for about half of total U.S. cases and 79 percent of deaths. Percentages are based on the number of cases and death for which race and ethnicity was reported.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2019 1-Year Estimates

Several factors make black and brown individuals more likely to be exposed to the COVID-19 virus. People of color are more likely than their white counterparts to work in healthcare, service, and production industries. These jobs often cannot be performed remotely and increase exposure to the virus. Further, people of color are more likely to live in densely populated areas and multi-family housing as well as commute by public transportation, which all also increase exposure to the virus (Artiga, 2020; Opiel, 2020).

There are additional factors that make black and brown persons more susceptible to severe illness or death from COVID-19. These factors include persistent racial disparities in social and economic factors, including access to health care, quality food, education, employment, safe communities, and healthy neighborhoods. These disparities are linked to a disparity in health outcomes, such as higher rates of chronic conditions, which make a person more susceptible to severe illness and death from COVID-19 (FSA, 2015).

**Figure 3: Covid Death Rate, St. Louis MSA and United States  
And St. Louis Rank Among the 50 Peer Regions**  
March 20 to November 15, 2020



Source: Johns Hopkins University

## National Employment Perspective

From February through April 2020, 20.8 million people lost their jobs in the United States, the largest employment loss that the country has experienced since the Great Depression. By October, many of those jobs returned, but employment was still down by 7.6 million. Workers across all industries and all demographic groups have experienced jobs losses, but black and brown workers, as well as women, have been hit the hardest.<sup>3</sup>

### U.S. Recessions

Employment losses in the current recession are the greatest of any recession since World War II. Figure 5 depicts employment declines for the past 12 recessions, with labels for the five most recent (1981, 1990, 2001, 2007, and 2020). The vertical dimension shows the percent decline in employment compared to pre-recession levels. The horizontal dimension shows the number of months employment remained below pre-recession levels. For example, at the lowest point of the recession that began in 2007, employment was down by more than 6 percent;

it took more than six years to return to pre-recession levels of employment. Prior to the current recession, this was the sharpest economic downturn since the Great Depression.

This year, from February through April, employment declined by 15 percent. After eight months, most of those jobs have returned, with October employment 7 percent below the pre-recession level. Even so, the current level of job loss, relative to pre-recession levels, remains greater than in any of the previous recessions.

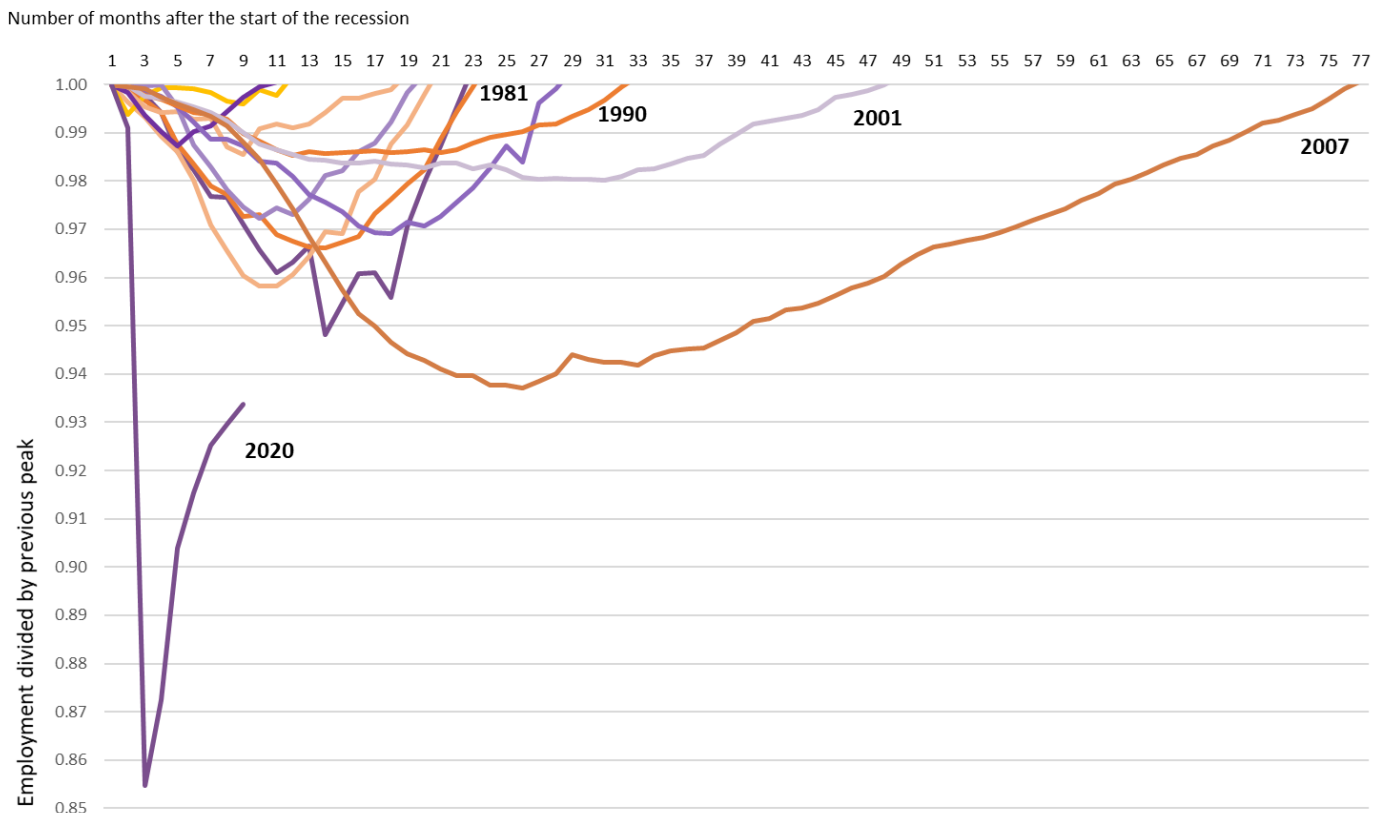
### St. Louis Panel Discussion

**Steve Johnson**, AllianceSTL, offers some reasons for optimism about the future business climate in St. Louis, reporting that he has been **pleasantly surprised at the level of interest that large companies have in St. Louis.**

*"I have been surprised that the activity has stayed as strong as it has.... It gives me a sense of optimism that business is looking forward, they are looking down the road...they are making plans for the future, and we are extremely busy."*

**Figure 5: U.S. Recessions, Length, and Severity of Employment Loss**

Ratio of Seasonally-Adjusted Monthly Employment Relative to Previous Peak  
United States, 1948 to 2020



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

<sup>3</sup> The total employment change numbers in this paragraph are non-seasonally adjusted. Data used for Figure 5 are seasonally adjusted.



## COVID-19 Recession Impact by Industry

The recession has not affected all industries in the same way. Figure 6 shows declines in employment with purple representing change between February and April, and orange representing change from February to October. Every industry experienced a decline in employment between February and April.

For most industries, a proportion of the jobs have been regained, but employment remains lower than it was in February. There are three exceptions. Two industries —mining and logging and government—have lost additional jobs between April and October. A third exception, the construction industry, had 3.5 percent more jobs in October than it did in February. However, employment in the industry was 2.5 percent lower than it was in October 2019. By comparison, the industry has seen year-over-year increases for at least the past nine years, with an average annual increase of 3.4 percent.

The most seriously affected industry is “leisure and hospitality,” which includes restaurants and hotels. Half of the jobs in this industry were lost from February through April. As of October, over half of the jobs lost have been recovered. Still, employment in leisure and hospitality was 17.8 percent lower in October than it was in February.

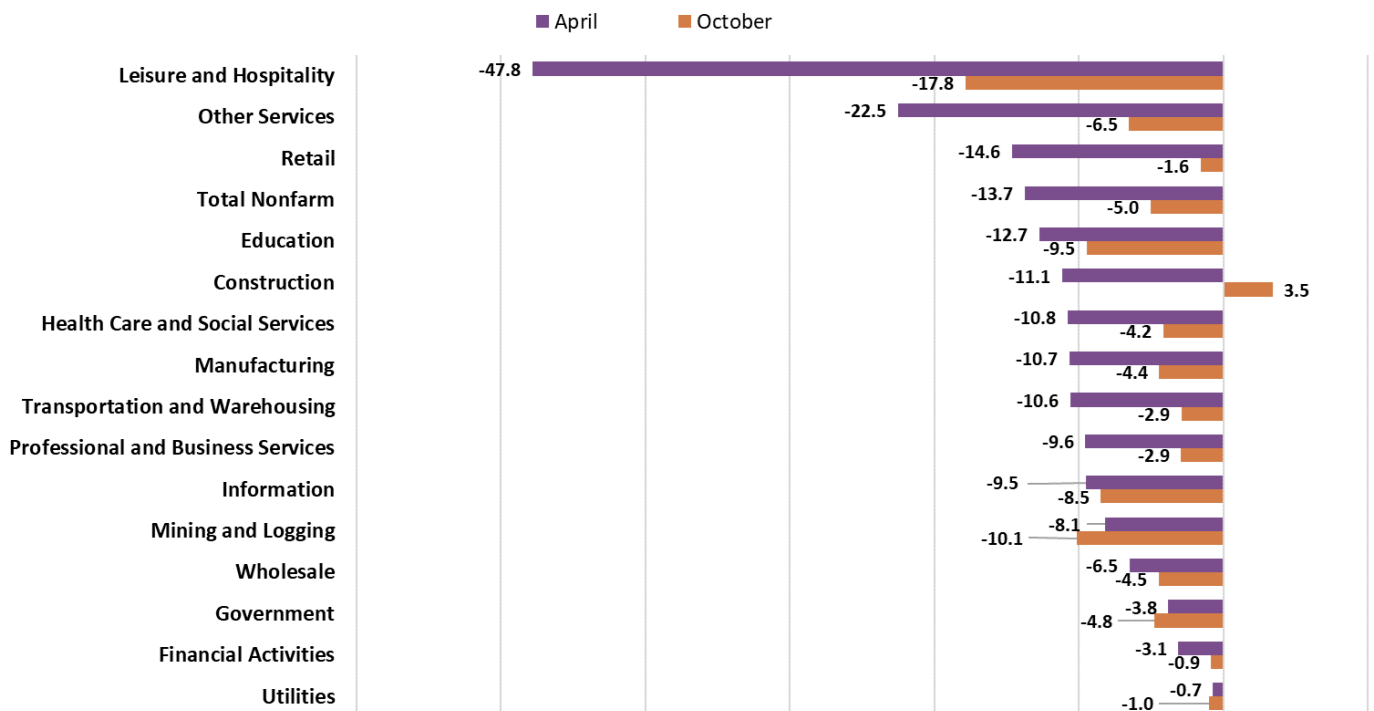
### St. Louis Panel Discussion

**Dr. Anne Winkler**, UMSL, noted that the current economic downturn differs from past recessions in that **currently, sectors such as leisure and hospitality, health care, and government are the industries most affected.**

Winkler called the current economic downturn a “**she-cession**” because women are **disproportionately employed in these industries**, and therefore have seen greater job losses.

**Figure 6: Percent Employment Loss Relative to February by Industry**

United States, April 2020 and October 2020



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

## COVID-19 Recession Impact on Demographic Groups

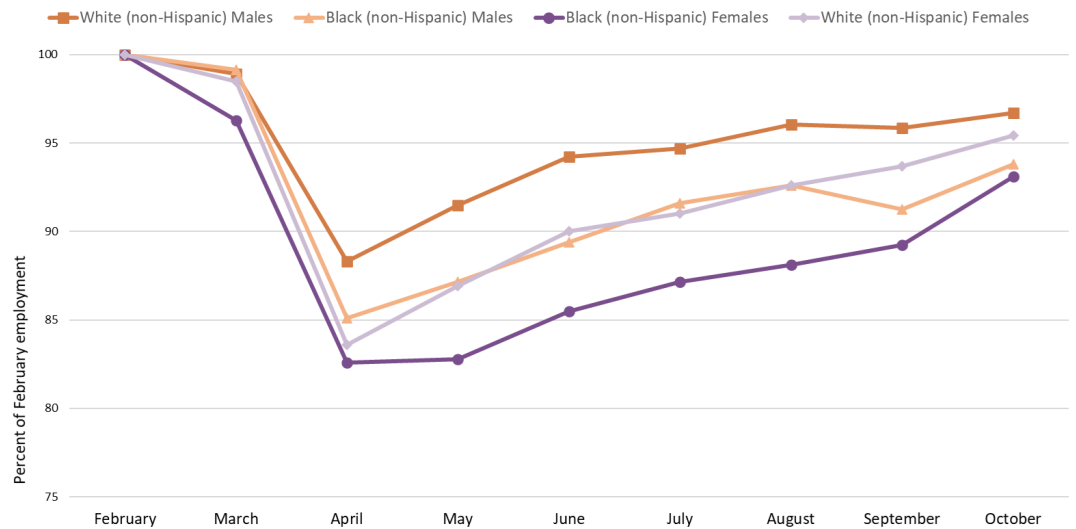
Over the course of this recession, employment losses for black and brown workers have been greater than losses for whites, and women have experienced sharper job losses than men. Figures 7 and 8 display employment levels for males and females by race and ethnicity. Employment levels are scaled so that February employment is equal to 100. On both figures, the employment levels of white males are provided for comparison purposes.

Employment of white males decreased 12 percent from February to April. About three-fourths of those jobs had returned as of October, when employment for white males was about 3 percent lower than in February.

For all of the other demographic groups, the initial job loss was steeper, and recovery has not been as robust. For black men, employment declined by 15 percent by April. Many of the jobs returned by August, when employment was down 7 percent. Some of those jobs were lost in September, when employment of black males declined again. October brought slightly higher employment levels with jobs down by 6 percent relative to February.

For black females, the loss was even greater, and not as many jobs have been recovered. In April, employment of black females was down 17 percent. In September it was still 11 percent lower than in February, and 7 percent lower in October.

**Figure 7: Employment Level Relative to February**  
United States, 2020



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

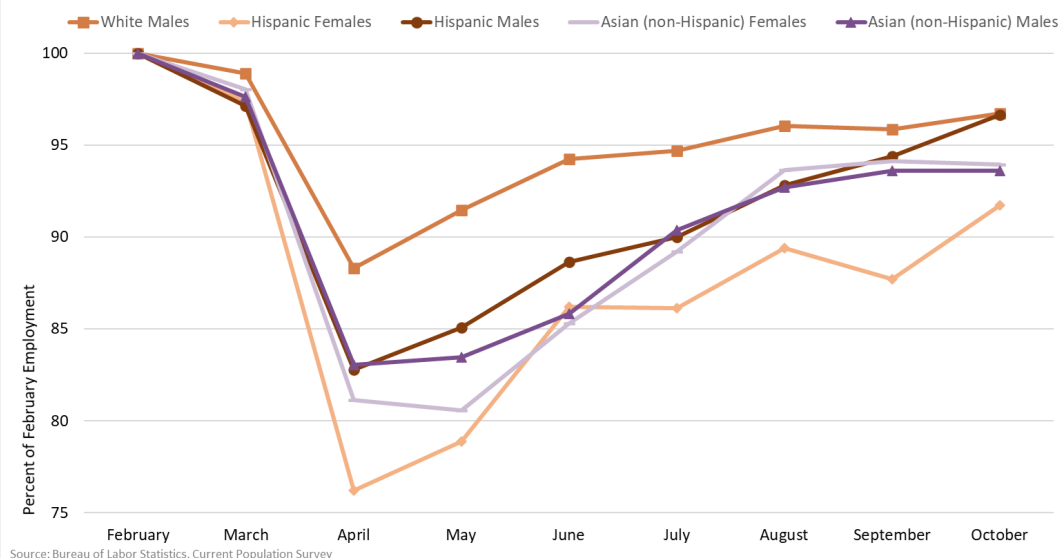
Employment of white females declined at a similar rate to that of black workers but has seen more of a recovery. In April, employment of white females had declined 16 percent; by October the rate was 5 percent lower than in February.

Hispanic females have been affected more than any of the other groups discussed in this report. In April, employment of Hispanic females had declined 24 percent and, as of October, job losses were 8 percent lower than in February, the lowest among all of the population groups.

Hispanic males experienced a similar loss as other black and brown population groups with a 17 percent decrease from February to April. However, the recovery of jobs has been more in line with that of white males with employment 3 percent lower in October relative to February.

Asian females had the second largest decline among the population groups with a 19 percent decrease from February to April. Asian males saw a 17 percent decrease over that time period. For both Asian males and females, employment was 6 percent lower in October than in February.

**Figure 8: Employment Level Relative to February**  
United States, 2020



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

## Where St. Louis Stands Among the Peer Regions

Since the pandemic began in the United States, employment in St. Louis has fared better than in most of the peer regions and in the country as a whole. However, there are many people in the region who are unemployed or underemployed.

By the beginning of April 2020, most regions were experiencing some combination of state and local policies to contain the spread of COVID-19. These policies, as well as changes in consumer behavior, led to April 2020 being the worst month for employment across all regions since the start of the pandemic.

From April to October 2020, employment in all of the peer regions increased. However, as of October, employment remained lower in all of the peer regions and the United States than it was in February 2020, and lower than it was in October 2019.

Similar to the national pattern, the hardest-hit industry across most peer regions has also been leisure and hospitality. This industry has been the most affected by the policies put in place to reduce the spread of the virus since traveling, gatherings of large groups, and the use of indoor spaces have been restricted at times.

The effect of the policies on industries has most likely been felt locally by black workers and female workers, as seen nationally. As of 2019, both groups of workers in the region were employed at higher rates in the most affected industries than their white and male peers.

## Change in Employment, February to October 2020

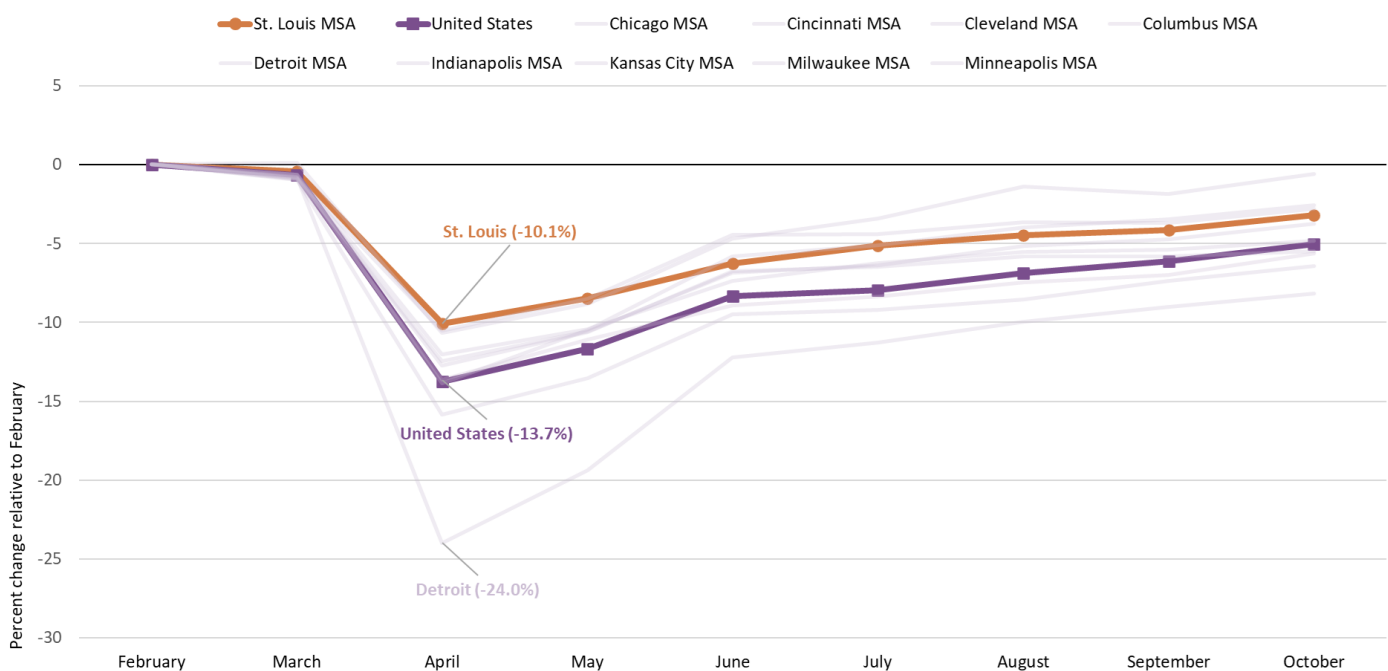
Employment throughout the pandemic has followed a similar pattern among the peer regions and for the country as a whole, with very large declines from February to April, job gains from April to October, and October employment remaining lower than it was in February. St. Louis has followed this trend as well, although compared to most of the peer regions, St. Louis had a smaller decline in employment followed by less of an increase in employment during recovery.

Figure 9 displays the change in employment for St. Louis, the United States as a whole, and the Midwest peer regions. It shows a similar trajectory of employment among all of the geographies throughout 2020. April 2020 was the worst month for employment across all regions and the United States, following implementation of COVID-19 containment policies. The large decline in April was followed by a rebound, both of which have been less dramatic in St. Louis than in the Midwest peer regions. St. Louis is currently following a pattern similar to its performance in the Great Recession, with a smaller initial decline followed by a less dramatic recovery.

In St. Louis, from February to April, employment dropped by 10.1 percent (139,000 jobs). St. Louis ranked 8th among the peer regions, with a smaller decline in employment than all of the Midwest peer regions and the United States as a whole, as shown in Figure 9 and Table 3 (Page 12). In the United States, employment declined by 13.7 percent, or about 20.8 million jobs. Detroit had the largest decline in employment among the peer regions with a decline of 24 percent (487,000 jobs).

**Figure 9: Percent Change in Employment Relative to February**

United States and the Midwest Peer regions, non-seasonally adjusted  
February 2020 to October 2020



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

Between April and October 2020, all of the peer regions and the country as a whole experienced increases in employment, as shown in Table 4. St. Louis ranked 41st with a smaller increase in employment (7.6 percent/94,500 jobs) than most of the peer regions. However, the region had fewer jobs to regain than did most of the peer regions.

With respect to employment in October 2020 relative to February 2020, St. Louis has experienced a smaller decline than many of the peer regions, as seen in Table 5. Still, there were nearly 44,500 fewer jobs in the region in October than there were in February, a time period in which the region usually experiences an increase of nearly 36,000 jobs.

Nationally, the employment recovery has been slower than in St. Louis. Total U.S. employment in October remained 5 percent (7 million jobs) lower in October than it was in February 2020. The largest decline in employment among the peer regions was in Orlando, 10.1 percent or 135,000 jobs. Indianapolis, with a 0.6 percent decline in employment (just over 6,000 jobs), experienced the smallest decline among the peer regions.

**Table 3**

**Change in Employment**

Percent change in employment, non-seasonally adjusted, February to April, 2020

1	Birmingham	-8.2
2	Oklahoma City	-8.4
3	Salt Lake City	-8.8
4	Washington, D.C.	-9.4
5	Virginia Beach	-9.5
6	Phoenix	-9.6
7	Dallas	-9.9
8	St. Louis	-10.1
9	Richmond	-10.2
10	Kansas City	-10.5
11	Indianapolis	-10.7
12	Memphis	-10.7
13	San Antonio	-10.8
14	Houston	-10.9
15	Atlanta	-11.1
16	Denver	-11.3
17	Austin	-11.3
18	Tampa	-11.9
19	Jacksonville	-12.0
20	Chicago	-12.0
21	Minneapolis	-12.4
22	San Jose	-12.6
23	Milwaukee	-12.8
24	Portland	-12.8
25	Riverside	-13.2
26	Charlotte	-13.3
27	Hartford	-13.4
28	Baltimore	-13.4
29	Orlando	-13.4
30	Columbus	-13.6
31	Nashville	-13.7
	<b>United States</b>	<b>-13.7</b>
32	Cincinnati	-13.9
33	Sacramento	-14.2
34	Miami	-14.4
35	Raleigh	-14.5
36	San Diego	-14.7
37	Seattle	-15.2
38	Philadelphia	-15.2
39	Los Angeles	-15.6
40	San Francisco	-15.6
41	Cleveland	-15.9
42	Louisville	-16.5
43	Boston	-16.6
44	Pittsburgh	-17.1
45	Providence	-17.1
46	New Orleans	-18.2
47	Buffalo	-19.0
48	New York	-19.2
49	Las Vegas	-23.4
50	Detroit	-24.0

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

**Table 4**

**Change in Employment**

Percent change in employment, non-seasonally adjusted, April to October, 2020

1	Detroit	20.8
2	Las Vegas	18.0
3	Buffalo	17.3
4	Providence	15.0
5	Louisville	15.0
6	Pittsburgh	14.3
7	Cincinnati	13.1
8	New York	12.8
9	Philadelphia	11.4
10	Indianapolis	11.3
11	Cleveland	11.2
12	Boston	11.1
13	Hartford	10.7
14	Seattle	10.4
15	New Orleans	10.3
	<b>United States</b>	<b>10.1</b>
16	Nashville	10.0
17	Austin	9.9
18	Minneapolis	9.9
19	Baltimore	9.7
20	Raleigh	9.7
21	Atlanta	9.4
22	Denver	9.4
23	Columbus	9.3
24	San Diego	8.9
25	Charlotte	8.9
26	Sacramento	8.8
27	Jacksonville	8.6
28	Memphis	8.6
29	Kansas City	8.6
30	Virginia Beach	8.5
31	Miami	8.4
32	Los Angeles	8.4
33	Milwaukee	8.3
34	Salt Lake City	8.2
35	Chicago	8.2
36	Dallas	7.8
37	San Jose	7.8
38	San Antonio	7.8
39	Tampa	7.8
40	Riverside	7.6
41	St. Louis	7.6
42	San Francisco	7.4
43	Portland	7.3
44	Oklahoma City	7.3
45	Phoenix	7.3
46	Richmond	6.3
47	Houston	6.2
48	Birmingham	6.2
49	Washington, D.C.	5.3
50	Orlando	3.9

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

**Table 5**

**Change in Employment**

Percent change in employment, non-seasonally adjusted, February to October, 2020

1	Indianapolis	-0.6
2	Salt Lake City	-1.3
3	Oklahoma City	-1.7
4	Virginia Beach	-1.8
5	Austin	-2.5
6	Birmingham	-2.5
7	Cincinnati	-2.6
8	Atlanta	-2.7
9	Kansas City	-2.8
10	Dallas	-2.9
11	Denver	-3.0
12	Phoenix	-3.0
13	Memphis	-3.0
14	St. Louis	-3.2
15	Minneapolis	-3.8
16	San Antonio	-3.8
17	Louisville	-4.0
18	Hartford	-4.1
19	Jacksonville	-4.4
20	Richmond	-4.5
21	Washington, D.C.	-4.7
22	Providence	-4.7
23	Chicago	-4.8
24	Buffalo	-5.0
25	Baltimore	-5.0
	<b>United States</b>	<b>-5.0</b>
26	Tampa	-5.1
27	Nashville	-5.1
28	Pittsburgh	-5.3
29	Houston	-5.4
30	Milwaukee	-5.5
31	Philadelphia	-5.5
32	Charlotte	-5.6
33	Columbus	-5.6
34	San Jose	-5.8
35	Raleigh	-6.2
36	Seattle	-6.3
37	Portland	-6.4
38	Cleveland	-6.4
39	Riverside	-6.6
40	Sacramento	-6.7
41	San Diego	-7.0
42	Miami	-7.2
43	Boston	-7.4
44	Detroit	-8.2
45	Los Angeles	-8.5
46	New York	-8.8
47	San Francisco	-9.4
48	Las Vegas	-9.6
49	New Orleans	-9.8
50	Orlando	-10.1

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics



## Change in Employment, 2020 Compared to 2019

Another method to assess how the economy is doing is a year-to-year comparison. As may be expected, employment was lower in the United States and all of the peer regions in October 2020 compared to October 2019, as shown in Table 6.

In St. Louis, employment was 5.1 percent lower this October than last, equal to 72,000 fewer jobs. While this is a significant difference, it is average relative to the peer regions, ranking 22nd, and it is a smaller difference than for the country as a whole.

For the United States, employment in October 2020 was 6 percent lower than in October 2019, equal to more than 9 million jobs.

Las Vegas has had the largest difference in employment among the peer regions, 10.5 percent (109,000 jobs). Austin has had the smallest difference, 1.9 percent (21,000 jobs).

Regions have been affected differently, with the number of days under stay-at-home orders and the size of the leisure and hospitality industry playing important roles. There is some clustering among the peer regions based on the percent change in employment between October 2019 and October 2020, as shown on Map 2 (Page 14).

Generally, peer regions in the Northeast and along the West Coast were under stay-at-home orders for a greater number of days and had larger declines in employment than most of the other peer regions.

The peer regions in the South, where there tended to be fewer days under stay-at-home orders, are shaded in orange, indicating they had smaller losses in employment. Two significant exceptions to this are New Orleans and Orlando. These two peer regions, along with Las Vegas, have large leisure and hospitality industries, are more reliant on travel than other MSAs, and saw steep declines in employment.

### St. Louis Panel Discussion

**Steve Johnson**, AllianceSTL, noted that the consolidation of five regional economic development agencies into **Greater St. Louis Inc.** gives him optimism about St. Louis:

*“We haven’t always played well together. And so the fact that we can make a big statement like this about defragmenting...the civic infrastructure and coming together as the **business and civic community to speak with one voice**, and take on big projects, and have a big bold agenda is exactly **the right thing for St. Louis to do right now.**”*

**Table 6**  
**Change in Employment**

Percent difference in employment,  
non-seasonally adjusted,  
October 2019 to October 2020

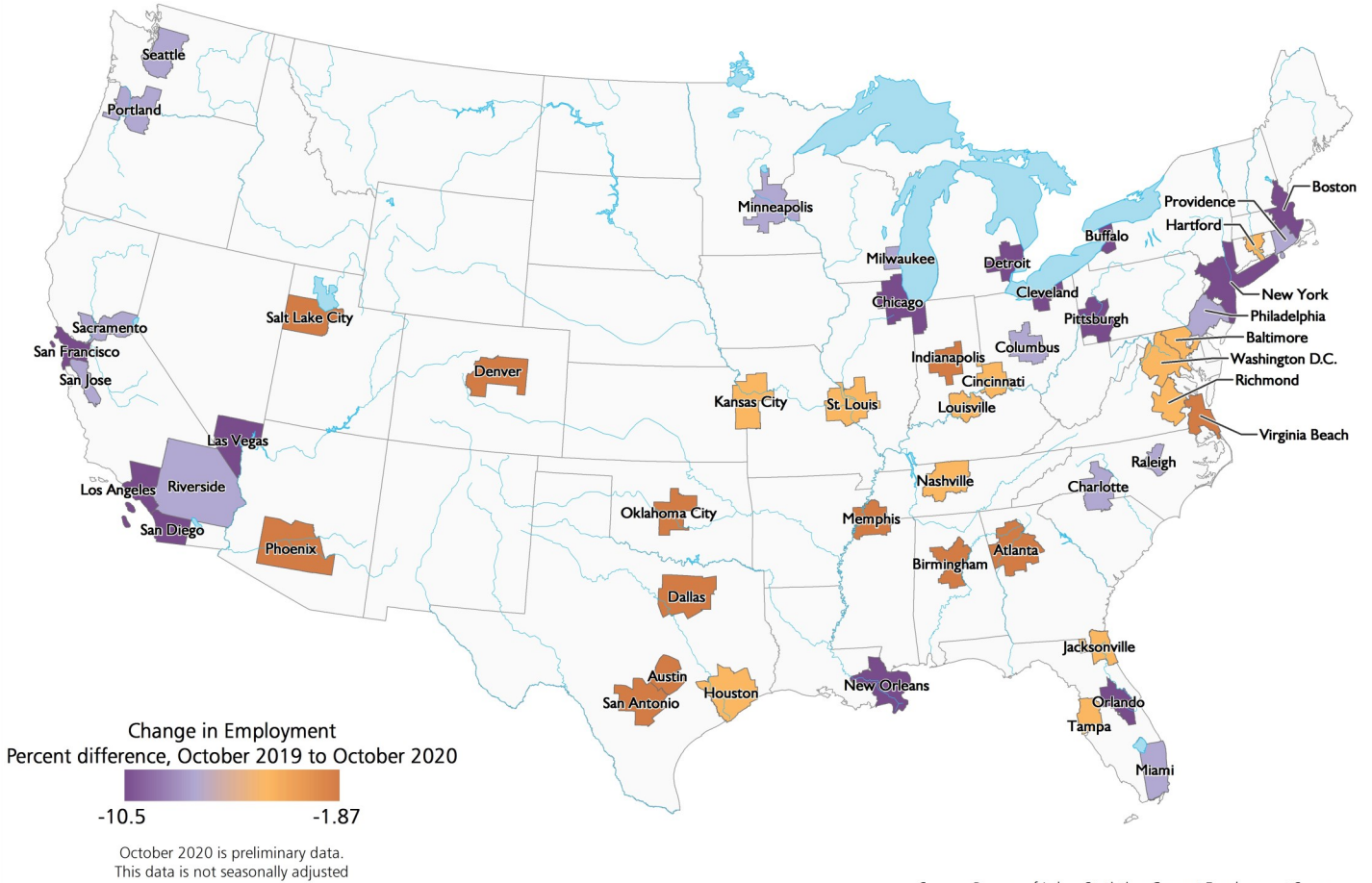
1	Austin	-1.9
2	Salt Lake City	-1.9
3	Indianapolis	-2.1
4	Dallas	-2.3
5	Phoenix	-2.4
6	Virginia Beach	-3.0
7	Atlanta	-3.1
8	Birmingham	-3.3
9	Oklahoma City	-3.5
10	Denver	-3.6
11	Memphis	-3.6
12	San Antonio	-3.9
13	Kansas City	-4.0
14	Jacksonville	-4.0
15	Tampa	-4.1
16	Cincinnati	-4.2
17	Richmond	-4.5
18	Hartford	-4.7
19	Houston	-4.8
20	Nashville	-5.0
21	Louisville	-5.0
22	St. Louis	-5.1
23	Washington, D.C.	-5.1
24	Baltimore	-5.8
25	San Jose	-5.9
	<b>United States</b>	<b>-6.0</b>
26	Charlotte	-6.0
27	Minneapolis	-6.2
28	Raleigh	-6.3
29	Columbus	-6.4
30	Providence	-6.5
31	Miami	-6.6
32	Sacramento	-6.6
33	Seattle	-6.7
34	Philadelphia	-6.7
35	Milwaukee	-6.7
36	Riverside	-6.9
37	Portland	-7.0
38	San Diego	-7.0
39	Buffalo	-7.1
40	Pittsburgh	-7.1
41	Chicago	-7.1
42	Cleveland	-8.1
43	Los Angeles	-8.3
44	Detroit	-9.0
45	Boston	-9.2
46	Orlando	-9.3
47	New Orleans	-9.7
48	San Francisco	-9.8
49	New York	-10.1
50	Las Vegas	-10.5

Source: Bureau of Labor  
Statistics, Current Employment  
Statistics



## Map 2: Change in Employment

Percent difference in employment, non-seasonally adjusted  
St. Louis MSA and Peer Regions, October 2019 to October 2020



12/01/20

## Regional Change in Employment by Industry

From October 2019 to October 2020, among all industries, the leisure and hospitality industry experienced the largest decline in employment. This is true for St. Louis, the United States, and most of the peer regions. The typical means of operation for the industry often requires large gatherings and use of indoor spaces, which have both been significantly restricted by policies put in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This has caused many businesses in the industry to adapt, temporarily close, reduce staff hours, and/or permanently close.

Figure 10 displays change in employment between October 2019 and October 2020 by industry for the St. Louis MSA. The leisure and hospitality industry had a 19.5 percent decline in employment, equal to 29,000 fewer jobs this year compared to last.

While the leisure and hospitality industry had significantly more job losses than any other industry in St. Louis, there were sizeable absolute declines in employment in other industries as well. The five industries in St. Louis with the largest absolute decline in employment are leisure and hospitality (29,400), government (14,900), professional and business services (9,800), health care and social services (5,000), and wholesale (4,400).

In St. Louis, just two industries experienced an increase in employment compared to October 2019. Financial activities and other services had modest year-over-year gains in jobs, adding 600 and 2,900 jobs, respectively. The “other services” category is a catch-all category for all services that are not included specifically in other industries, including equipment repair, grantmaking, dry cleaning, and personal care services.<sup>4</sup>

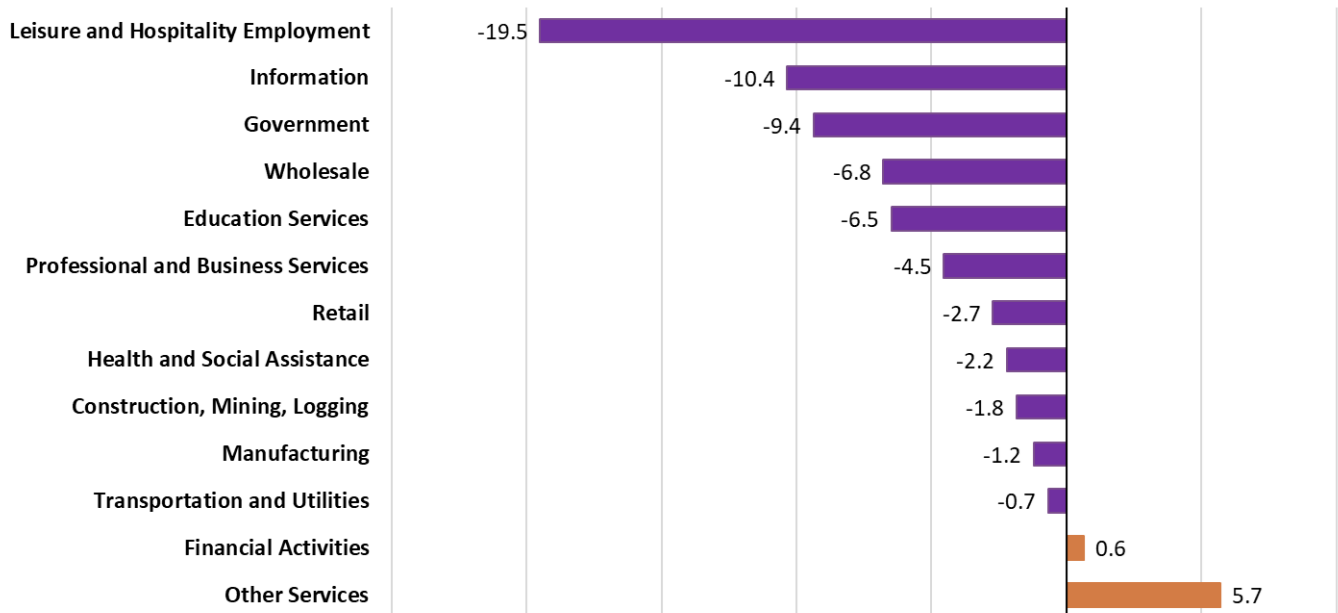
## St. Louis Panel Discussion

Dr. Anne Winkler, UMSL, cautioned that official statistics may actually understate the level of economic hardship being experienced:

*“Unemployment rates are potentially misleading especially in a crisis like this and in the great recession because to be included as unemployed you have to have searched in the last few weeks and if you haven’t you’re not included in the unemployment statistics. In terms of the depth of pain, unemployment is missing the full impact of what’s happening, especially the official rate that’s reported usually.”*

**Figure 10: Percent Difference in Employment by Industry**

St. Louis MSA, non-seasonally adjusted  
October 2019 to October 2020



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

<sup>4</sup> For further detail, see the Bureau of Labor Statistics website <https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag81.htm>.

### Distribution of Workers by Industry, Sex, and Race

Data are not available by demographic group for the St. Louis MSA for 2020. However, 2019 data shows that in St. Louis, black and female workers are employed at higher rates than their white or male counterparts in some of the industries most affected by the pandemic. Thus, black and female St. Louis workers are likely experiencing more disruptions to their employment due to the recession, as seen at the national level.

Five industries accounted for more than 80 percent of all the jobs lost in the St. Louis region: leisure and hospitality, government, professional and business services, healthcare and social assistance, and wholesale. Across these industries black workers and female workers are employed at higher rates. Approximately, 48.8 percent of black workers compared to 39.4 percent of white workers, and 49.1 percent of female workers compared to 34.4 percent of male workers are in one of these five industries.

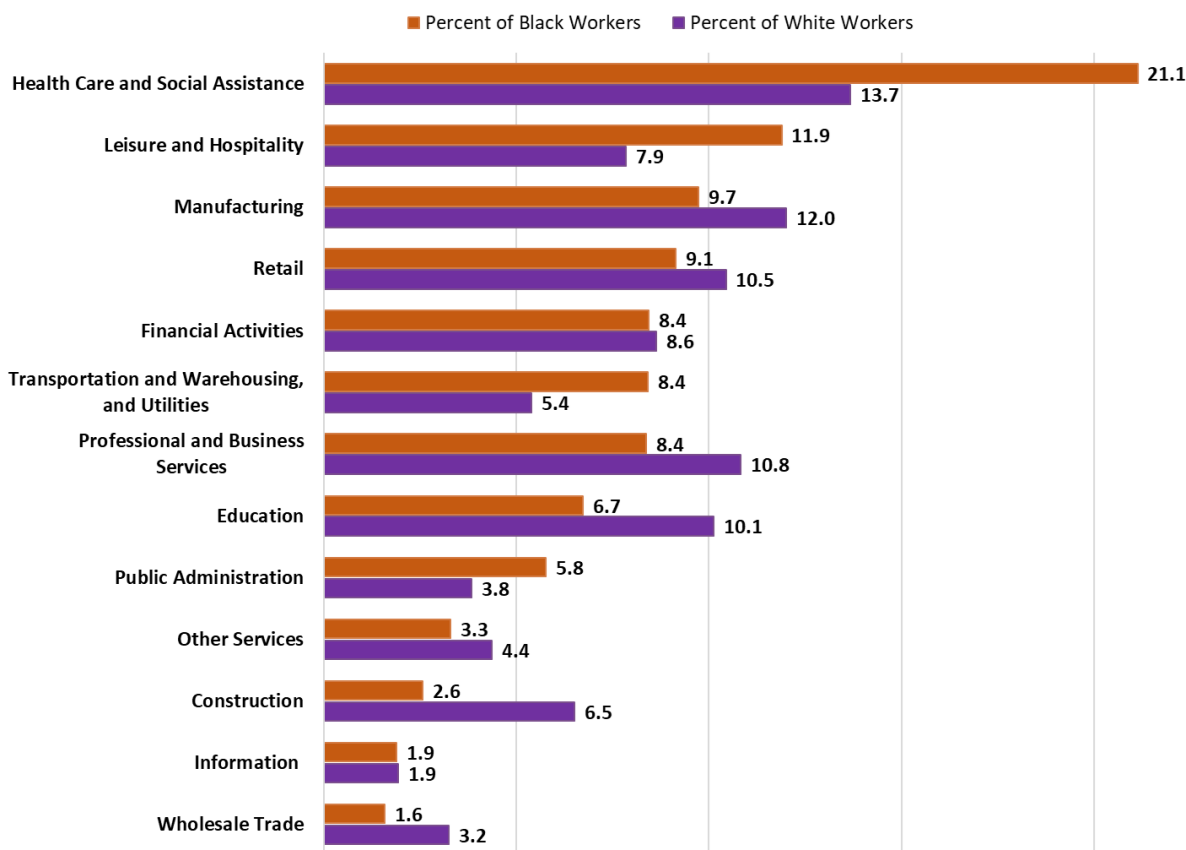
In St. Louis, as of 2019, black workers were 54 percent more likely than white workers to be employed in the health care and social assistance industry, as shown in Figure 11. Additionally, black workers were employed at a higher rate (11.9 percent) than white workers (7.9 percent) in the leisure and hospitality industry, which is the industry most affected by the current economic downturn.

### St. Louis Panel Discussion

**Michael McMillan**, Urban League, reports that since February, the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis has **provided supplies for more than 75,000 people**, through drive-through events and through partnerships with churches. Mr. McMillan remarked,

*“Sadly, as you might imagine from the statistics that you just showed, **people have been reduced to basic survival**. So, we have been forced to pivot to help people with food, toiletries, and of course PPE materials, but also trying to stay in their homes—rental assistance, mortgage assistance, utility assistance, and to try to find new ways to **pivot those who have lost jobs to actually changing their careers to work with companies that are hiring today.**”*

**Figure 11: Percent of Employed Adults by Industry and Race**  
St. Louis MSA, 2019



Source: IPUMS-USA, University of Minnesota

Nearly a quarter of all female workers in St. Louis, as of 2019, were employed in the health and social assistance industry, as shown in Figure 12. Female workers were also employed at twice the rate of males in the education industry, 13 percent compared to 5.9 percent. In the leisure and hospitality industry, females were employed in the industry at nearly the same rate as males, 9 percent, and 8.8 percent, respectively.

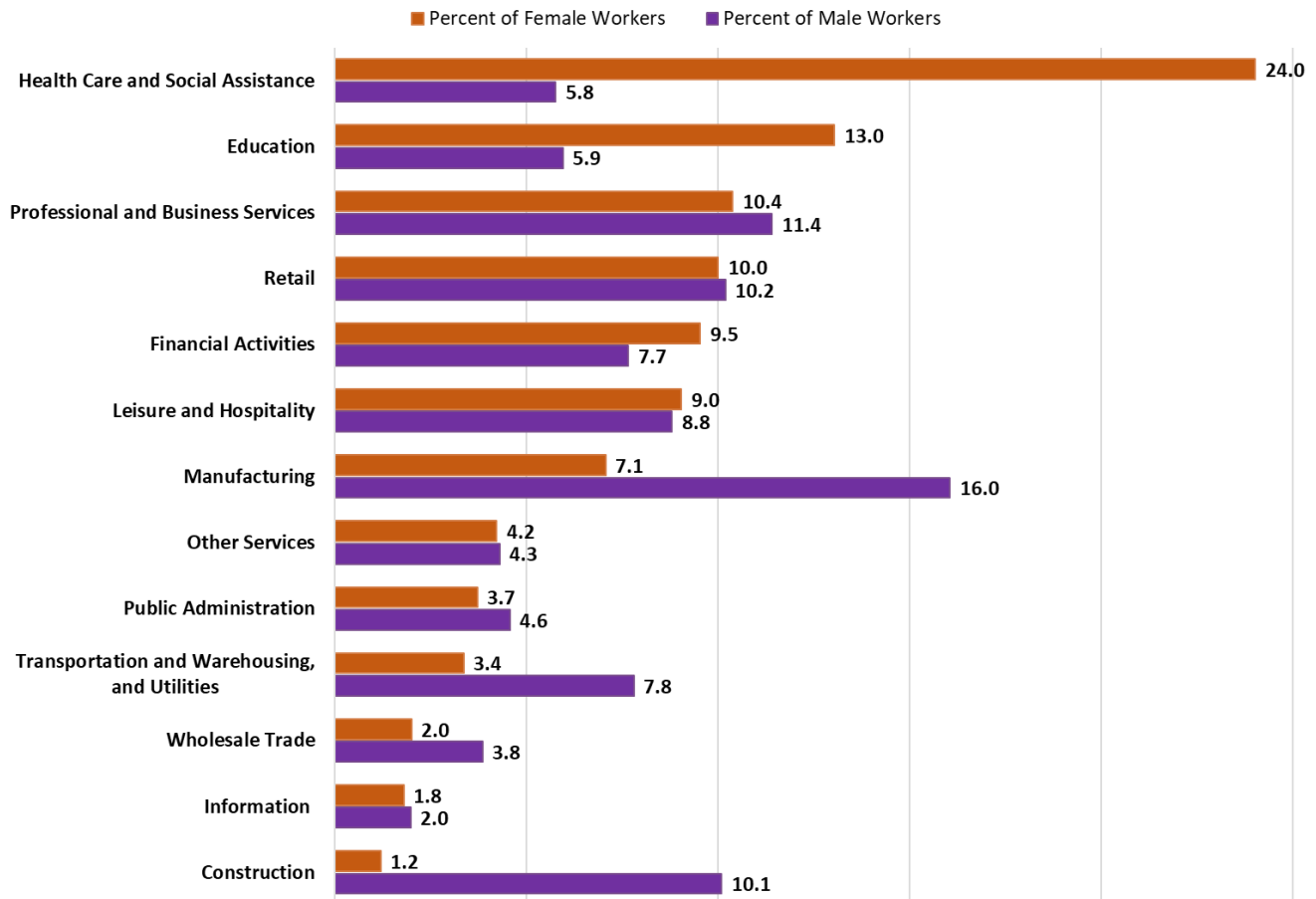
### St. Louis Panel Discussion

**David Gipson**, city of Clayton, explained that the impact on local governments varies by the type of commercial activity in cities. Cities with big box stores have actually seen increases in sales tax revenues, while cities that rely on offices, restaurants, and hotels have been hurt. However, he sees stronger communities growing out of the pandemic:

*“And so what I think we’re going to see on a micro scale is stronger communities, because people came together and on a larger scale I think we’re going to see a lot more cooperation. I see that spirit of cooperation continuing from city to city. I’ve had some really encouraging and interesting conversations in just the last few weeks about opportunities down the road to work more with other cities and make things more efficient. So, I think that’s going to be a byproduct of all of this and certainly a positive.”*

**Figure 12: Percent of Employed Adults by Industry and Sex**

St. Louis MSA, 2019



Source: IPUMS-USA, University of Minnesota

## Conclusion

East-West Gateway research staff used the data presented in this report to frame a discussion among a panel of local leaders on November 19, 2020. The boxes throughout the report highlight some of the comments made by the panelists.

They remarked that the data represents what they are seeing on the ground in St. Louis as well as what they hear from colleagues throughout the country. Each panelist provided insight into what they are seeing, including:

The Urban League has increased food kit distribution significantly, a feat for which they have received much community support to accomplish. The business community is feeling the pain of reduced service industry activity, but AllianceSTL has the most activity in the pipeline in six years, working with businesses that are planning projects in St. Louis.

Some local governments are facing deficits with several of their revenue sources affected by the pandemic, but some local governments have received increased revenue from the pandemic-influenced change in spending, and many local governments are finding new ways to collaborate.

Finally, as documented in this report, the economy in St. Louis has not been damaged as badly as some other regions. Still, many workers, particularly among women, black, and brown people, are struggling to obtain basic needs. For many of these workers, the loss of income is exacerbated by a health crisis and a child care crisis. All of the panelists acknowledged that coming months will continue to be challenging, but they are encouraged by the collaboration they see among different sectors of the St. Louis community.

See the boxes throughout this report for quotes from the discussion. You can also view the video of the discussion on this topic as well as other videos for the East-West Gateway 55th Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony at <https://www.ewgateway.org/annual-meeting-2020/>.

Thank you to our panelists for an informative and interesting conversation:

- ◇ Dr. Anne Winkler, Department Chair and Professor  
Department of Economics, University of Missouri - St. Louis
- ◇ David Gipson, City Manager, City of Clayton and  
President, St. Louis Area City Management Association
- ◇ Michael McMillan, President & CEO, Urban League of  
Metropolitan St. Louis
- ◇ Steve Johnson, President & CEO, AllianceSTL



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