Section 3. Opportunity

The Where We Stand (WWS) series produced by East-West Gateway (EWG) has compared the St. Louis region to other large metropolitan areas since 1992. WWS ranks St. Louis among the 50 most populous Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) in the United States (the peer regions) on a broad range of topics important to the region.

In November 2024, EWG published the ninth edition of WWS, with an accompanying suite of additional resources. This edition of WWS took a different approach than was used for past editions. The central motivation for changing the WWS formula was to contribute more directly to efforts to make St. Louis a *successful* region. WWS 9 is intended as an introduction to a larger conversation about where we as a region stand, where we are going, and how we plan to get there together.

WWS9 digs into 12 key topic areas grouped into three broad categories. The first group, Growth Metrics, includes population change, employment change, and unemployment. The second group, Livability Metrics, comprises racial disparity, homeownership, housing affordability, vacancy rates, crime, and infant mortality. The third group, Opportunity Metrics, consists of income and income inequality, education, poverty, and well-being.

This document is a portion of the full document. Access the additional chapters, entire eighth edition, additional data, updates, white papers, and past editions at www.ewgateway.org/wws.

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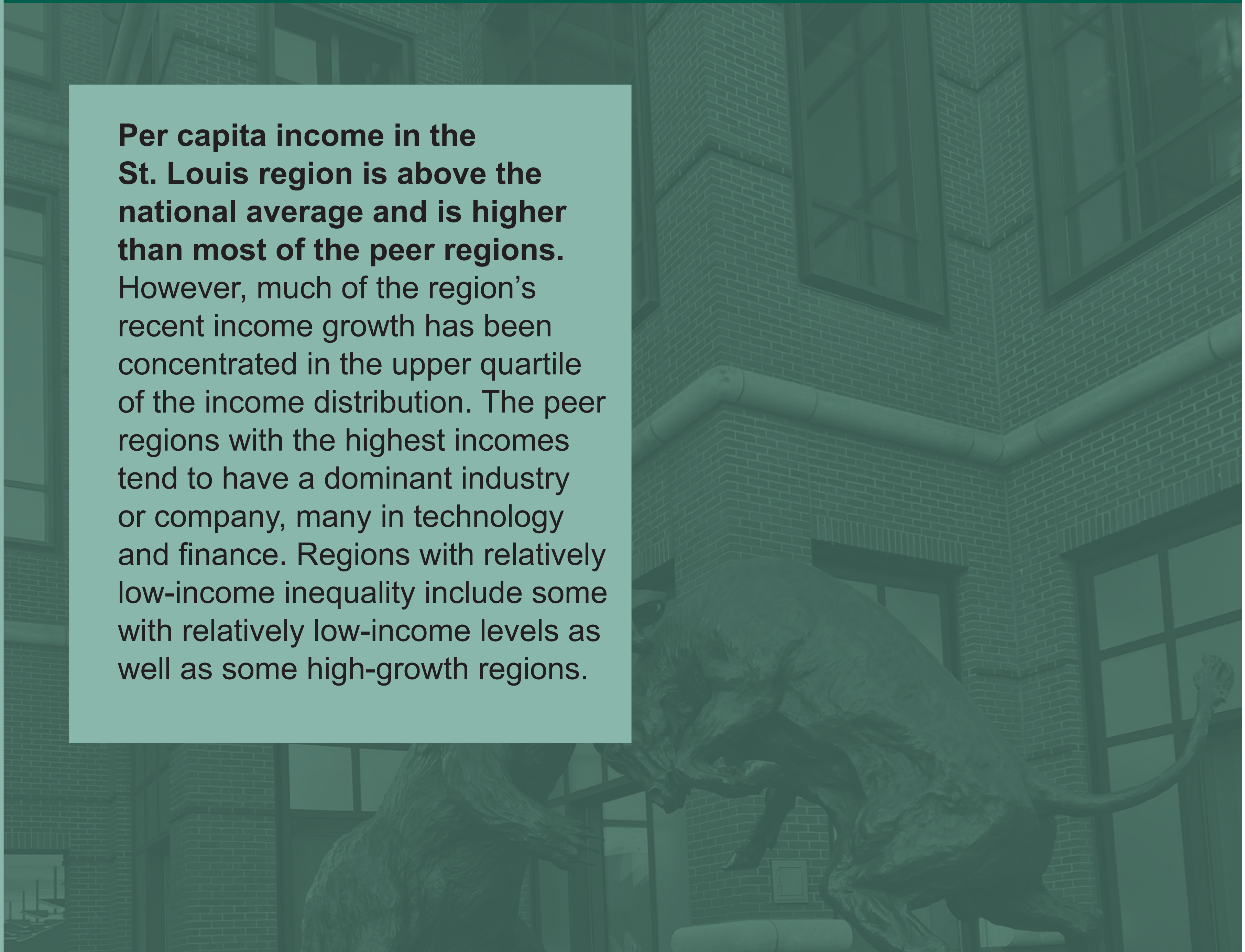
OPPORTUNITY

INCOME
EDUCATION

POVERTY
WELL-BEING

Income

Per capita income in the St. Louis region is above the national average and is higher than most of the peer regions. However, much of the region's recent income growth has been concentrated in the upper quartile of the income distribution. The peer regions with the highest incomes tend to have a dominant industry or company, many in technology and finance. Regions with relatively low-income inequality include some with relatively low-income levels as well as some high-growth regions.



Measuring Success: Income

What is being measured? There are several ways to measure regional income levels. Here, we review six measures. Per capita income and median household income are two of the most commonly used income metrics. Average wage per job and purchasing power offer a different perspective. In addition, two measures of income inequality are provided.

Per capita income is the broadest measure of income. It includes income that is earned (proprietors' income, wage and salary, and employer contributions to social insurance), financial income (received from stock dividends and other financial assets, including interest and rent), and income received from transfers (government benefits and Social Security). As measured by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), per capita income is higher than in other estimates because it includes employer contributions to social insurance and adjustments for homeownership.[9-01]

Median household income represents what a household at the 50th percentile receives in income, with half of the population receiving more and half receiving less.

Average wage per job measures the income of wage and salary workers. This is the only one of the four income metrics that estimates income by place of work. The other three are by place of residence.

Purchasing power adjusts per capita income for cost of living.

Income Inequality: The Gini coefficient (or index) is a commonly used measure of income inequality based on household income data. Scores on the index range from zero, representing a community that has perfectly equal distribution of income across the population, to a score of one, which would be perfectly unequal with one person in the community receiving all the income.

Income Gap: Ratio of household income of those at the 80th percentile on the income distribution to those at the 20th percentile.

9-01 One component of BEA's estimation of per capita income is employer contributions to pension and insurance funds and social insurance funds (a component of earned income), which makes the figure higher than other estimates discussed in this document as well as other estimates of per capita income, such as those reported by the U.S. Census Bureau as part of the American Community Survey (ACS). The per capita incomes reported by BEA are substantially higher than those reported by the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. For example, for 2022, BEA reports a U.S. total population per capita income of $65,470. The U.S. Census Bureau reports an income that is 63.9% of this, $41,804. WWS uses the BEA reported data for the overall per capita income but uses the ACS data for the income by race and ethnicity.

What makes this a good measure of success? Generally, income is intertwined with opportunity and the perception of opportunity and well-being. Insufficient income affects an individual's ability to meet basic needs. Once basic needs are met, individuals may balance other goals with income maximization.

In addition, each variable has its own qualities that make it a good measure of success.

Per capita income estimates the total amount of money flowing into households and offers a convenient measure of the overall prosperity of a region. Higher per capita income levels indicate the amount of money available in a region to support businesses, fund philanthropy and provide a tax base for local governments.

Purchasing power adjusts for cost of living in U.S. regions, providing an estimated comparison of how far one's income will go in different regions.

Median household income is not as susceptible to outliers as the other variables and is more representative of an intuitive definition of income because it does not include employer contributions and imputations for rent.

Average wage per job is an estimate of the average amount of income that people earn from employment. It does not include income that is not from employment, such as Social Security or dividends. The measures of income inequality can provide another perspective and a greater understanding of the range of how people in the community are doing.

- The Gini index offers an indication of how much the income in the region is skewed to the highest income earners (based on percentiles).
- The income gap measure provides a more intuitive estimate of the difference of incomes of people in the highest fifth of household incomes and the lowest fifth.

What is problematic about this measure? Per capita income, median household income, and average wage per job do not take cost of living into account. It may be possible for a household to have a higher standard of living on a lower income by relocating from an area with a high cost of living to one with a low cost of living.

Purchasing power provides a reasonable approximation of differences in cost of living, but it is a highly modeled exercise that relies on many assumptions about typical baskets of goods consumed by households in different regions.

All four of the income measures have a few challenges in common. They do not provide the detail that is needed to understand the varying levels of income among the people that live in a community. These values can rise if the highest-income households are becoming wealthier, even if those in the middle and bottom are not enjoying higher income levels.

They also assume that higher income is always preferred and do not consider other values or circumstances that may take higher priority. A person may choose a lower income in favor of a more rewarding job, a job closer to home, or one that allows for a better life-work balance.[9-02] Further, people have different expenses from each other and at different points in their lives. For example, a minimum wage job may be fine for a teenager but may not be sufficient for a person who needs to pay rent, buy groceries, pay for childcare, and pay for car insurance.

The average or median can change due to factors that do not indicate success, such as a reduction in the number of low-wage jobs or out-migration of lower-income families.

In addition, per capita income, average wage per job, and purchasing power can be influenced by a small number of outlier cases. A small proportion of the population that earns high incomes can result in an average that does not reflect the lived experience of most of the population.

The Gini index does not have an intuitive meaning while the income gap is limited by the range of incomes. The income gap measure looks only at two points on the income distributions and ignores disparities between the general population and more elite percentiles, such as the top 10% or top 1%. These disparities have been shown to account for rising levels of inequality in the United States in recent years.[9-03]

Further, a community can score favorably on metrics of income inequality if they have a relatively equal distribution of incomes that are all low. This can also be true if all incomes are high, which can indicate a lack of diversity.

9-02 Puentes, R., & Warren, D. (2006). One-fifth of America: A comprehensive guide to America's first suburbs. Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/200509.pdf
9-03 Alvaredo, F., Atkinson, A. B., Piketty, T., & Saez, E. (2013). The top 1 percent in international and historical perspective. Journal of Economic Perspectives, 27(3), 3-20.

What Makes a Region Successful?

Thoughts from a survey of St. Louis region residents

"Successful regions have good economic development, attracting a large number of investments and enterprises, creating employment opportunities, and people have a high standard of living." –St. Louis County Resident (original survey submission in Chinese)

"Increase in high quality and high paying jobs." –City of St. Louis Resident

Peer Region Analysis: Income

Northern coastal regions on both the Atlantic and Pacific consistently rank at the top of all four-income metrics. Two MSAs in the middle of the country, **Austin** and **Denver,** also rank in the upper tier on these metrics.

Regions that have relatively high incomes tend to have a driving industry or dominant company; they are often technology and finance hubs:

- The **San Jose** MSA is virtually synonymous with Silicon Valley and has the densest concentration of technology jobs in the nation.
- **Seattle,** home to both Amazon and Microsoft, is a technology leader.
- **Washington, D.C**. benefits from its status as the nation's capital and has a disproportionate number of high-paying federal jobs and jobs supported directly or indirectly by federal contractors.
- **New York** has long been the nation's leading region in financial services.
- **Boston** and **San Francisco** enjoy a competitive edge in both technology and finance.
- **Austin** has become a leading technology hub in recent years. Twenty percent of its wages are derived from computer systems design, information, or computer manufacturing.
- **Denver** does not have a dominant industry, but 30% of its wages come from employment in professional and business services.

Median Household Income

In dollars, 2022

1	**San Jose**	**148,900**
2	San Francisco	128,151
3	Washington, D.C.	117,432
4	Seattle	106,909
5	Boston	104,299
6	Denver	98,975
7	San Diego	98,928
8	Austin	94,604
9	Raleigh	92,739
10	Salt Lake City	91,891
11	New York	91,562
12	Minneapolis	91,341
13	Baltimore	90,505
14	Portland	89,312
15	Sacramento	89,237
16	Los Angeles	87,743
17	Hartford	85,723
18	Atlanta	84,876
19	Philadelphia	84,123
20	Chicago	82,914
21	Phoenix	82,884
22	Dallas	82,823
23	Riverside	82,803
24	Providence	81,784
25	Richmond	81,388
26	Nashville	80,034
27	Jacksonville	77,583
28	Charlotte	77,154
29	Indianapolis	75,824
30	Columbus	75,777
31	Kansas City	75,280
32	Cincinnati	75,062
33	Houston	74,863
United States		**74,755**
34	Virginia Beach	74,556
35	**St. Louis**	**74,531**
36	Orlando	71,857
37	Detroit	71,265
38	Milwaukee	70,898
39	Las Vegas	70,797
40	Miami	70,769
41	Pittsburgh	70,607
42	San Antonio	70,538
43	Louisville	69,547
44	Tampa	69,290
45	Buffalo	68,698
46	Birmingham	67,242
47	Oklahoma City	66,301
48	Cleveland	65,198
49	Memphis	64,008
50	**New Orleans**	**61,602**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (B19013)

Average Wage per Job

In dollars, 2022

1	**San Jose**	**168,183**
2	San Francisco	126,019
3	Seattle	100,479
4	Boston	96,341
5	New York	95,390
6	Washington, D.C.	93,880
7	Denver	83,367
8	Austin	83,175
9	Los Angeles	79,609
10	Chicago	78,869
11	San Diego	78,272
12	Houston	76,685
13	Hartford	76,563
14	Dallas	76,110
15	Baltimore	75,980
16	Atlanta	75,864
17	Portland	75,704
18	Philadelphia	75,493
19	Minneapolis	75,099
20	Charlotte	74,188
21	Sacramento	73,857
22	Raleigh	73,162
23	Miami	73,039
24	Detroit	70,859
United States		**70,282**
25	Salt Lake City	70,080
26	Nashville	70,060
27	Phoenix	69,535
28	Pittsburgh	68,715
29	Richmond	68,144
30	Tampa	67,316
31	Cincinnati	67,183
32	Columbus	67,156
33	Cleveland	67,104
34	Jacksonville	67,032
35	Kansas City	66,913
36	**St. Louis**	**66,560**
37	Milwaukee	66,016
38	Indianapolis	65,994
39	Birmingham	64,472
40	Providence	63,865
41	Orlando	63,590
42	Memphis	63,339
43	New Orleans	63,290
44	Las Vegas	62,278
45	Louisville	61,935
46	San Antonio	61,370
47	Virginia Beach	61,311
48	Buffalo	60,955
49	Riverside	58,610
50	**Oklahoma City**	**58,532**

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis (CAINC4)

Regions with relatively high incomes tend to have the following positive attributes: larger proportions of adults with a bachelor's degree as well as with advanced degrees, lower poverty rates, a larger proportion of high-wage jobs, and lower rates of heart disease. However, higher income regions are more likely to have relatively large disparities in income per capita between race and ethnic groups. Regional rankings on income are also associated with relatively higher levels of employment in the STEM field and in retail.

The **St. Louis** region has relatively high average income levels, particularly when cost of living is considered. However, the region has below average median incomes and a below average wage per job. This suggests that much of the region's prosperity is concentrated in the upper quartile of the income distribution, and that creating a broader base of prosperity remains a challenge for the region.

From 2019 to 2022, St. Louis ranked 6th on growth in per capita income. Most of the growth was attributable to financial income rather than earned income. Financial income is from stock dividends, interest and rent. For more discussion on this topic, see the working paper on income at ewgateway.org/wws

Per Capita Income

In dollars, 9799

1	**San Jose**	**141,516**
9	San Francisco	691,318
1	Boston	45,709
5	Seattle	49,661
2	Denver	05,300
8	New York	05,705
3	Washington, D.C.	01,767
0	Miami	33,319
4	Los Angeles	38,552
67	Minneapolis	32,685
66	Austin	32,664
69	San Diego	35,198
61	Nashville	35,712
65	Philadelphia	31,946
62	Chicago	39,269
68	Baltimore	36,597
63	Raleigh	37,890
60	Dallas	37,541
64	Hartford	84,303
20	**St. Louis**	**69,698**
96	Portland	84,512
99	Indianapolis	80,364
91	Houston	80,155
95	Richmond	80,972
92	Milwaukee	80,622
98	Sacramento	88,457
93	Pittsburgh	82,349
United States		**65,470**
90	Cincinnati	82,921
94	Charlotte	82,628
17	Salt Lake City	82,702
16	Atlanta	85,673
19	Providence	81,358
11	Kansas City	81,563
15	Cleveland	89,496
12	Jacksonville	89,394
18	Birmingham	89,989
13	Phoenix	86,057
10	New Orleans	86,076
14	Louisville	86,547
57	Detroit	86,199
56	Columbus	86,990
59	Oklahoma City	87,803
51	Tampa	87,746
55	Las Vegas	24,627
52	Virginia Beach	23,031
58	Memphis	28,557
53	Buffalo	28,565
50	San Antonio	22,607
54	Orlando	21,424
50	**Riverside**	**50,407**

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis (CAINC5)

Purchasing Power

Personal income per capita adjusted for regional price levels in constant dollars, 2022

1	**San Jose**	**106,066**
2	San Francisco	90,665
3	Boston	72,595
4	Seattle	70,000
5	Denver	68,202
6	Nashville	66,221
7	Austin	65,662
8	Washington, D.C.	64,419
9	New York	64,252
10	Indianapolis	63,349
11	Minneapolis	63,072
12	Philadelphia	62,880
13	**St. Louis**	**62,283**
14	Milwaukee	62,023
15	Raleigh	62,018
16	Pittsburgh	60,556
17	Richmond	60,312
18	Cincinnati	60,302
19	Baltimore	60,234
20	Miami	60,217
21	Houston	59,779
22	Kansas City	59,450
23	Chicago	59,237
24	Birmingham	59,002
25	Dallas	58,823
26	Salt Lake City	58,765
27	Cleveland	58,400
28	Los Angeles	58,384
29	Charlotte	58,093
30	Louisville	57,543
31	Hartford	57,443
32	Oklahoma City	57,388
33	New Orleans	57,016
United States		**56,419**
34	Columbus	56,260
35	Atlanta	56,079
36	San Diego	56,070
37	Portland	55,152
38	Detroit	55,104
39	Jacksonville	55,028
40	Memphis	53,086
41	Providence	52,990
42	Las Vegas	52,935
43	Sacramento	52,627
44	Tampa	52,065
45	Buffalo	51,909
46	Phoenix	51,523
47	Virginia Beach	51,034
48	San Antonio	50,120
49	Orlando	46,424
50	**Riverside**	**40,914**

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis (MARPI)

The income gap examines only two points on the income distribution, while the Gini coefficient considers the entire income distribution, including the highest-income percentiles. This results in large differences in the rankings with almost one-third (14) of the peer regions differing by 10 or more rankings on the two methods.

Generally, favorable scores on these measures of inequality are associated with population and employment growth, in-migration, housing starts, and developed land per capita. These regions also tend to have less racial segregation and younger populations. While there is a tendency for these regions to have relatively low-income levels (e.g. **Riverside** and **Virginia Beach**), some regions, such as **Salt Lake City, Raleigh,** and **Nashville**, are regions with high employment growth.

Regions with the highest levels of inequality, based on the Gini Index, can be grouped into three broad categories:

- Sunbelt regions, including **Orlando, Houston, Birmingham, Tampa, New Orleans, and Miami.**
- Coastal regions with a disproportionate number of very high-income households and usually relatively unaffordable housing, including **San Jose, San Francisco, Boston, Los Angeles,** and **Philadelphia.**
- Midwestern industrial regions that have struggled with low or negative population growth, such as **Cleveland** and **Chicago.**

St. Louis is about in the middle on both measures of income inequality and less unequal than the nation. However, from 2019 to 2022, the top quartile of the region's income distribution increased its share of regional income, while all other quartiles saw decreasing shares.

Income Inequality

Gini coefficient, 2022

1	**New York**	**0.518**
2	Miami	0.515
3	Los Angeles	0.500
4	San Francisco	0.500
5	Boston	0.494
6	New Orleans	0.493
7	Birmingham	0.489
8	Tampa	0.489
9	San Jose	0.487
10	Cleveland	0.486
United States		**0.486**
11	Chicago	0.483
12	Philadelphia	0.483
13	Orlando	0.482
14	Houston	0.482
15	Memphis	0.480
16	Milwaukee	0.478
17	Detroit	0.477
18	Charlotte	0.477
19	Louisville	0.476
20	Seattle	0.474
21	Oklahoma City	0.474
22	Buffalo	0.473
23	Pittsburgh	0.473
24	Hartford	0.472
25	Cincinnati	0.472
26	Las Vegas	0.471
27	**St. Louis**	**0.470**
28	Dallas	0.470
29	Indianapolis	0.469
30	Columbus	0.467
31	Baltimore	0.465
32	Kansas City	0.464
33	Providence	0.464
34	Richmond	0.463
35	Austin	0.461
36	Atlanta	0.460
37	Sacramento	0.460
38	San Diego	0.459
39	Portland	0.458
40	San Antonio	0.456
41	Nashville	0.456
42	Phoenix	0.455
43	Jacksonville	0.453
44	Minneapolis	0.452
45	Denver	0.450
46	Virginia Beach	0.449
47	Washington, D.C.	0.448
48	Raleigh	0.445
49	Riverside	0.437
50	**Salt Lake City**	**0.426**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (B19083)

Income Gap

x atio of income of those at the 65th percentile on the income distribution to those at the 85th percentileW8588

1	**New York**	**6.11**
8	New Yrleans	3,36
2	Los Angeles	3,19
1	Boston	3,15
3	Ohiladelphia	3,22
9	Ran Srancisco	3,24
0	Miami	3,87
6	Birmingham	3,85
7	Cleveland	3,48
45	Buffalo	3,48
44	Baltimore	3,57
48	Orovidence	3,53
42	Detroit	3,51
41	Memphis	1,73
43	Hartford	1,72
49	Houston	1,78
40	Chicago	1,78
United States		**4.92**
46	Oittsburgh	1,66
47	Milwaukee	1,61
85	Fampa	1,06
84	Yklahoma City	1,00
88	Cincinnati	1,08
82	Ran Diego	1,90
81	Reattle	1,99
25	**St. Louis**	**4.63**
89	Racramento	1,98
80	x ichmond	1,39
86	Ran Antonio	1,39
87	Indianapolis	1,38
25	Dallas	1,35
24	Columbus	1,17
28	Charlotte	1,12
22	Louisville	1,12
21	x iverside	1,18
23	Kansas City	1,14
29	Yrlando	1,15
20	Las Vegas	1,26
26	Oortland	1,29
27	Virginia Beach	1,29
15	T ashingtonWD,C,	1,23
14	Denver	1,28
18	Atlanta	1,87
12	Ran Jose	1,87
11	x aleigh	1,89
13	Austin	1,83
19	Jacksonville	1,82
10	Minneapolis	1,88
16	OhoeniP	1,56
17	Nashville	1,50
50	**Salt Lake City**	**3.81**

Rource. : ,R, Census BureauW American Community Rurvey 4U ear Estimates (B47565)

Case Study

A closer look at income in Nashville reveals some of the challenges with using just one of these variables as a measure of performance. The region has higher average earnings per job than the nation but lower average wages per job. The difference is due to proprietors' income, largely accounted for by high-earning owners of health care businesses and, to a lesser extent, owners of arts entertainment, sports, and related businesses.

For this discussion, it is important to understand how BEA accounts for multiple types of income. Total income includes income that is earned, financial income, and income from social transfers. Earned income, or earnings, can be divided into two broad categories: compensation of wage and salary employees and proprietors' income.

Compensation of wage and salary employees is further divided into two components: wages and salaries and supplements to wages and salaries (employer contributions to health care and retirement). Proprietors' income refers to income of business owners. Table 9-01 breaks down averages for components of earnings, for the United States and Nashville. (Note, the WWS table for "average wage per job" is the wage and salary income, not including the supplements.)

Nashville's average earnings stands at $80,172, 12% higher than the U.S. average of $71,586. However, the average wage and salary in Nashville is slightly below the national average. Therefore, Nashville's advantage in average earnings is attributable to proprietors' income. The average business owner in Nashville received $73,401 in proprietors' income in 2022, more than double the U.S. average of $32,899.

The health care and social assistance industry accounts for 40% of the difference between higher proprietors' earnings in the region those in the United States. Another 30% of the difference can be attributed to the arts, entertainment, and recreation industry. Almost all of the higher earnings in the latter industry are from performing arts, spectator sports, and related industries.

Nashville's prominent position in country music is well known, so it is not surprising that this industry accounts for a large proportion of proprietors' earnings. Nashville's dominance in health care is not as well known, but in terms of income is even more significant. In 1968, a team of Nashville physicians formed a company called HCA Healthcare, which began aggressively buying hospitals across the nation. In 1996, the firm was reported to own 340 hospitals, 135 outpatient surgery offices, and 200 home health care agencies in 38 states. This dynamic corporation pursued mergers, acquisitions, and spinoffs, helping to make Nashville a national leader in the for-profit hospital business, and health care more generally. In 2012, seven of the 15 largest hospital holding companies were located in Nashville. In 2017, Nashville was home to four privately held companies in the health care field worth more than $1 billion. These large privately held companies contributed to the growth of proprietors' income, which contributed greatly to Nashville's overall growth in earnings.

Table 9-01. Decomposition of Average Earnings per Job

United States and Nashville, 2022

	U.S.	Nashville
Average Earnings per Job (in dollars)	**71,586**	**80,172**
>> Average Wage and Salary Compensation (wages and supplements, in dollars)	**84,912**	**82,762**
>>> Average Wage and Salary	70,282	70,060
>>>> Average Supplements to Wages and Salaries	14,630	12,702
>> Average Proprietors' Income (in dollars)	**32,899**	**73,401**
Total Employment	**212,442,000**	**1,554,201**
>> Wage and Salary Employment	158,015,000	1,124,078
>> Proprietors' Employment	54,427,000	430,123

Note: The WWS table "average wage per job" is the wage and salary income not including the supplements.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

EWG Region Analysis: Income

Among the counties in the East-West Gateway (EWG) region there are large differences on the three variables for which there is local data. See Table 9-02.

- St. Louis County has the highest per capita income, as measured by BEA, which includes more types of income than then other metrics.
- Monroe County and St. Charles County are in a virtual tie for the highest median household income (MHI) in the region. However, Monroe County has the lowest average wages per job by place of employment.
- Jobs in St. Louis County and the city of St. Louis offer the highest average wages in the region. However, the city has the lowest MHI.

Table 9-02. Income Metrics

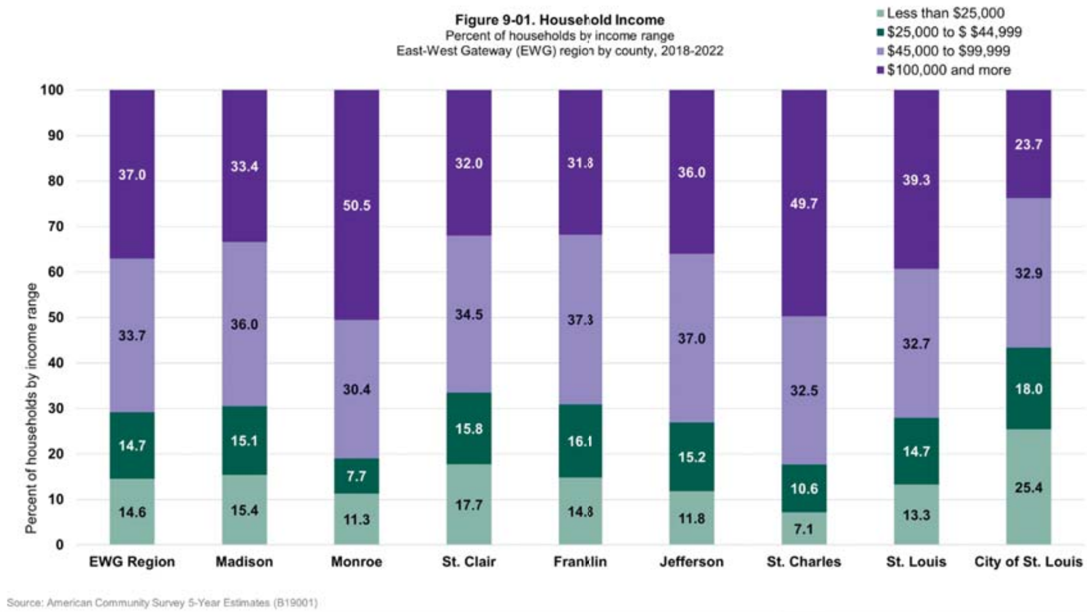
East-West Gateway (EWG) region by county, 2022

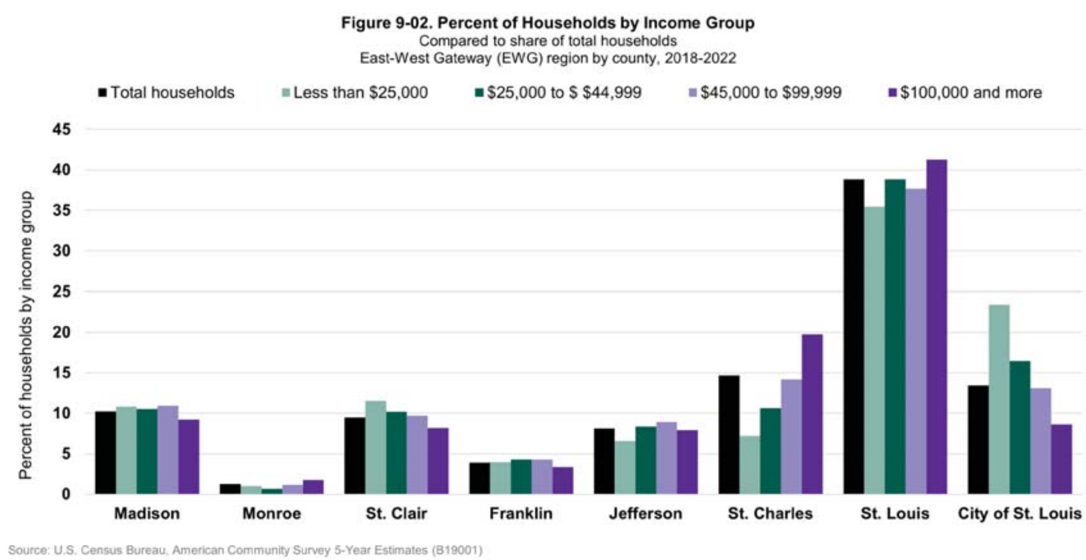
County	Per Capita Personal Income ($)	Average Wages per Job ($)	Median Household Income ($)
Madison	55,991	55,231	71,759
Monroe	68,762	45,764	100,685
St. Clair	54,666	58,065	68,915
Franklin	53,957	50,509	70,111
Jefferson	51,143	48,311	77,217
St. Charles	64,563	58,089	99,596
St. Louis	93,405	73,888	78,067
City of St. Louis	55,771	73,073	52,941
EWG Region	62,282	57,866	77,411

Sources: Per Capita Personal Income: Bureau of Economic Analysis (CAINC30); Average Earnings per Job: Bureau of Economic Analysis (CAINC30); Median Household Income: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2018-2022 (B19001)

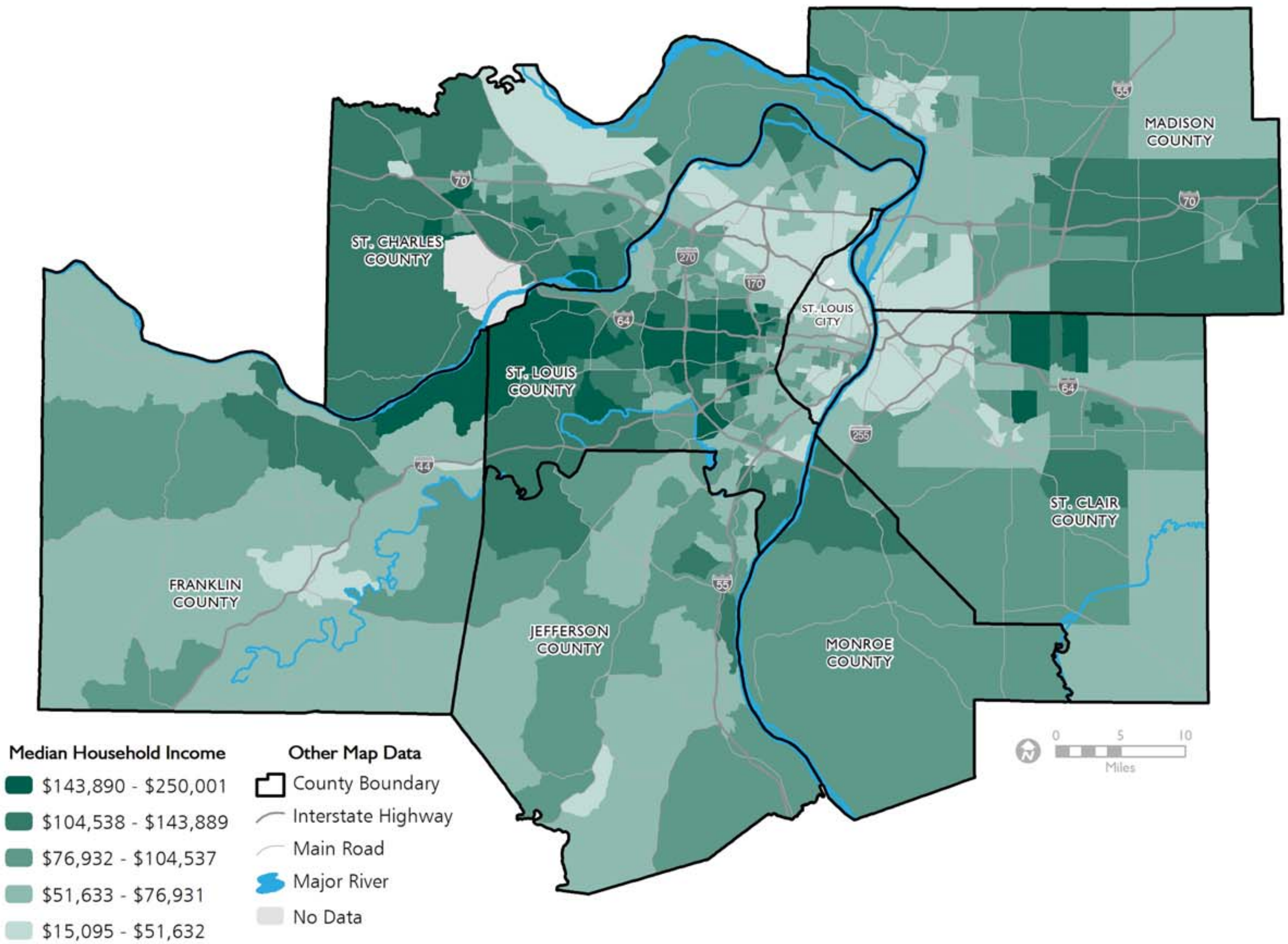
There is income diversity in every county. In each county, at least 7% of the population receives under $25,000 per year in income, and at least 23% receives over $100,000.

- In St. Charles and Monroe counties, about half of the households receive over $100,000 per year. These counties also have the lowest proportion of households receiving under $25,000 per year.
- The city of St. Louis has the largest share of households in under $25,000 category, and the smallest share in the over $100,000 category. See Figure 9-01.
- The distribution of households at each income range is similar to the distribution of total households across the counties. There are two exceptions. The city of St. Louis has relatively high proportions of those in the lowest income groups and a low share of those in the highest group. St. Charles County has a higher share of residents in the highest income group compared to total households and a relatively low share of low-income households. See Figure 9-02
- The map shows the distribution of income within the counties, at the tract level. The lowest median incomes are present in the northern parts of the city of St. Louis and St. Louis County, the western portion of St. Clair County and small spots in Franklin and Jefferson counties. The highest incomes are along the central corridor of St. Louis County and into St. Charles County. See Map 9-01.



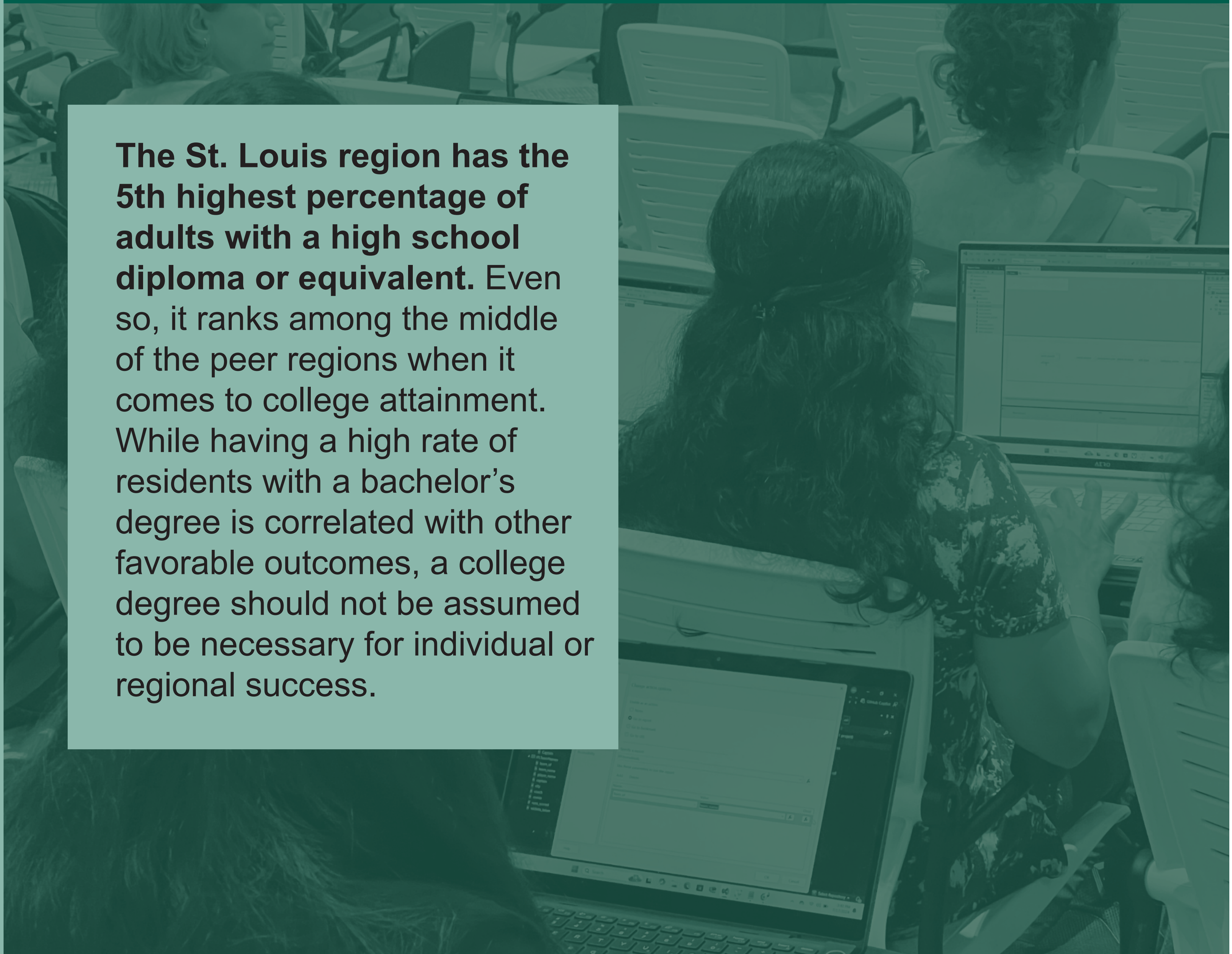


Map 9-01. Median Household Income, 2018-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (B19013), 2018-2022; East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Education



The St. Louis region has the 5th highest percentage of adults with a high school diploma or equivalent. Even so, it ranks among the middle of the peer regions when it comes to college attainment. While having a high rate of residents with a bachelor's degree is correlated with other favorable outcomes, a college degree should not be assumed to be necessary for individual or regional success.

Measuring Success: Education

What is being measured? These measures show the percentage of the population aged 25 years and older by attained education level, including the percentage of the population that has not earned a high school (HS) diploma or equivalent and the percentage that has earned at least a bachelor's degree.

What makes this a good measure of success? The percent of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher is often used to measure the success of a region or community. Adults with this level of education tend to earn higher incomes and there are many other societal benefits that are associated with a more educated workforce and population. As Greater St. Louis Inc. (GSL) states, "An educated workforce supports local business growth and is key to global competitiveness. Educational attainment is correlated with earning potential, while equity is critical to building a strong workforce."[10-01] The percent of adults without a HS diploma recognizes that the lack of a high school diploma can exclude workers from employment opportunities.

What is problematic about this measure? Both metrics assume that a certain level of education is valuable for individuals and is needed for jobs in the community. Neither metric accounts for adults with trade school education and other skill building training or certificate programs. Requirements of a degree for jobs, particularly when the degree is not actually needed, can exclude people from the applicant pool, decrease opportunity for economic mobility, and create a mismatch between the workforce and available jobs. Further, attainment of a college degree does not guarantee a job that matches an individual's education level, and large student debt burdens may be a barrier to individual success. Also, individuals that do not have a high school diploma may still be successful.

10-01 Greater St. Louis Inc. Measuring Growth-Appendix - STL 2030 Progress. https://stl2030progress.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2030_Measuring-GrowthAppendix_PDF_Final.pdf

What Makes a Region Successful?

Thoughts from a survey of St. Louis region residents

"The next generation finishes college and wants to live there/stay." –City of St. Louis Resident

"Viability with stable employers that attract college-educated residents that support schools and sustainability." –Jefferson County Resident

Peer Region Analysis: Education

The most favorable ranks on these two metrics are occupied by different regions. Only **Minneapolis, Raleigh,** and **Seattle** are among the 10 most favorable on both metrics. These regions also have relatively high average income levels. Regions that rank favorably on the bachelor's degree metric also tend to be favorable on several of the other WWS vitality metrics discussed in this report. However, some regions that do not have high rates of bachelor's degrees are quite successful in other areas. The high school (HS) diploma metric does not have similarly strong associations with other variables.

The 10 regions with the highest proportion of college graduates are among the top 11 regions for median household income. High levels of college attainment are also associated with favorable scores on vacancy, poverty, the well-being score, and GDP per capita.

College attainment is not strongly associated with employment gains. Of the 10 regions with the highest levels of college attainment, only two (**Raleigh and Austin**) are in the top 10 for job growth in either the short term (2019 to 2023) or longer term (2010 to 2023).

Regions that are among the most unfavorable for percentage with a bachelor's degree or higher are varied. They tend to have relatively low GDP and employment-population ratios. They also tend to rank among the most unfavorable on the income variables, particularly average wage per job and per capita income, but they are mixed when it comes to poverty rates.

Salt Lake City is unusual in that it ranks in the middle on both education metrics but is among the most favorable on a relatively large number of vitality metrics, including poverty, concentrated poverty, median household income, and income inequality. It is also in the top 10 for employment growth, both for 2010 to 2023 and 2019 to 2023.

Regions with high rates of adults lacking a high school diploma also tend to have high proportions of foreign-born residents. Of the 10 regions with the highest percentage of adults with less than a high school education, seven are also in the top 10 for foreign-born population. **New Orleans** is the only one of these regions where immigrants make up less than 40% of this educational cohort. In **Dallas, Houston, Las Vegas, Miami, New York,** and **Riverside**, more than 60% of adults without a high school diploma were born outside the United States.

The **St. Louis** MSA is in the middle of the pack on bachelor's degrees but is among the most favorable on adults that do not have a high school education. **Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, Kansas City,** and **Milwaukee** are similar to **St. Louis** and also have relatively low percentages of population lacking a high school diploma.

No High School Diploma or Equivalent

Percent of adults aged 18 and older, 1711

1	**Los Angeles**	**18.0**
1	Riverside	69.8
4	Houston	62.3
2	Las Vegas	64.1
8	Miami	64.7
0	New Oork	61.8
9	Dallas	61.1
5	San Antonio	66.0
3	San Jose	66.1
67	New Yrleans	67.3
66	Providence	67.5
61	Phoenix	67.0
64	San Francisco	67.0
United States		**10.4**
62	San Diego	67.4
68	Chicago	67.4
60	Yklahoma City	67.7
69	Memphis	3.0
65	Birmingham	3.0
63	Sacramento	3.2
17	Yrlando	3.2
16	Indianapolis	3.1
11	Salt Lake City	5.3
14	Detroit	5.5
12	Tampa	5.9
18	Atlanta	5.8
10	Charlotte	5.8
19	Louisville	5.1
15	Cleveland	5.6
13	Austin	9.3
47	Columbus	9.3
46	Washington, D.C.	9.3
41	Boston	9.5
44	Baltimore	9.9
42	Philadelphia	9.9
48	Denver	9.0
40	Hartford	9.0
49	Nashville	9.0
45	Virginia Beach	9.0
43	Cincinnati	9.8
27	Jacksonville	9.8
26	Buffalo	9.2
21	Portland	9.4
24	Richmond	9.6
22	Seattle	0.3
28	Milwaukee	0.5
46	**St. Louis**	**6.7**
29	Kansas City	0.0
25	Raleigh	0.0
23	Minneapolis	8.5
50	**Pittsburgh**	**4.8**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 6-Oear Estimates (B68771)

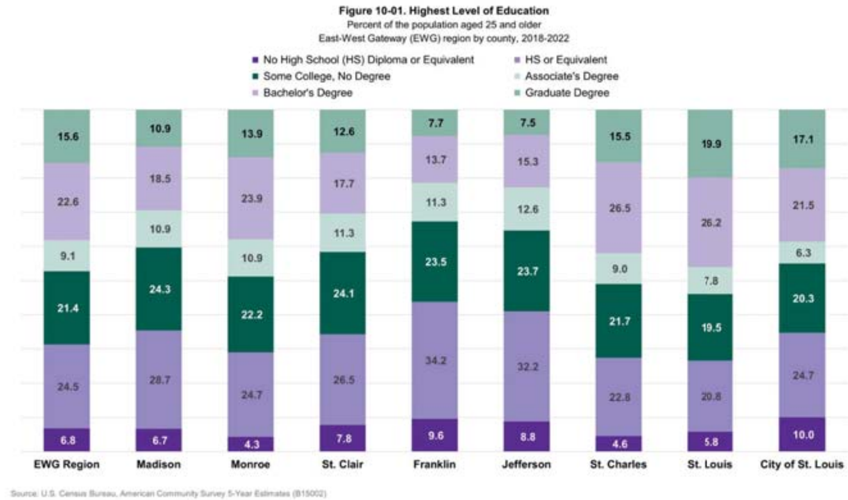
Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Percent of adults aged 08 and older, 0400

1	**San Jose**	**55.8**
0	Washington, D.C.	83.8
6	San Francisco	86.7
3	Austin	80.1
8	Boston	81.3
7	Raleigh	84.2
9	Denver	35.3
2	Seattle	37.5
5	Minneapolis	38.1
14	Baltimore	33.3
11	New Oork	36.5
10	San Diego	36.4
16	Philadelphia	30.6
13	Richmond	30.1
18	Atlanta	31.2
17	Portland	31.9
19	Hartford	31.7
12	Chicago	31.1
15	Nashville	31.1
04	Charlotte	34.9
01	Columbus	34.4
00	Kansas City	65.9
06	Dallas	65.3
03	Milwaukee	65.6
08	Indianapolis	62.8
26	**St. Louis**	**38.1**
09	Pittsburgh	62.1
02	Salt Lake City	69.5
05	Los Angeles	69.7
64	Miami	69.4
61	Yrlando	67.5
60	Cincinnati	67.5
66	Providence	67.9
63	Jacksonville	67.8
68	Sacramento	67.0
67	Cleveland	67.1
69	Houston	67.4
62	Buffalo	67.4
65	Birmingham	67.4
United States		**35.7**
34	Louisville	68.6
31	Tampa	68.4
30	Phoenix	63.5
36	New Yrleans	63.9
33	Virginia Beach	63.9
38	Detroit	63.8
37	Yklahoma City	63.4
39	San Antonio	60.9
32	Memphis	61.5
35	Las Vegas	09.1
50	**Riverside**	**24.1**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Oear Estimates (B18440)

EWG Region Analysis: Education

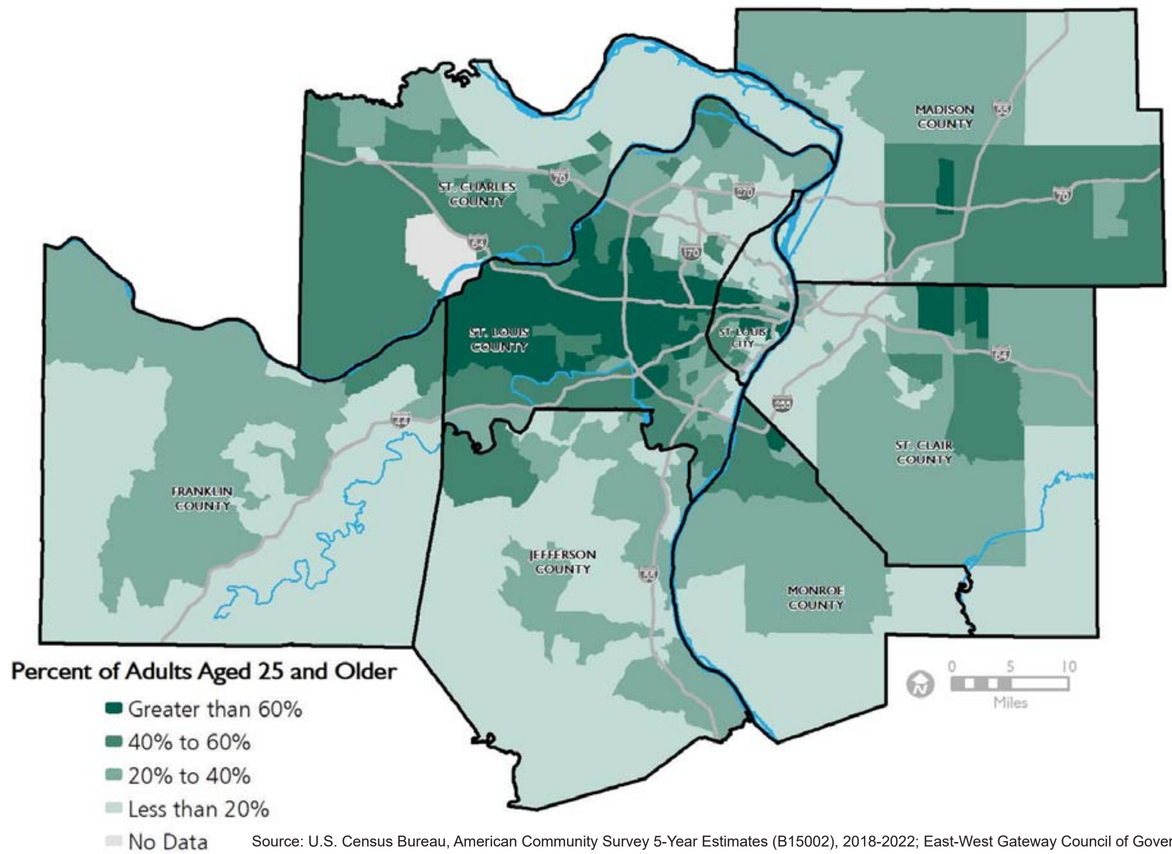


Compared to the U.S. population, each county in the EWG region has a lower percentage of adults without a high school diploma (HS) or equivalent and half of the counties have a higher percentage of adults with at least a bachelor's degree. Figure 10-01 provides the percent of the adult population in each county and the region as whole by the highest level of education attained.

Within the region, St. Louis County has the highest percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher followed by St. Charles County and the city of St. Louis. St. Louis County also has the highest percentage of adults with graduate or professional degrees, followed by the city of St. Louis.

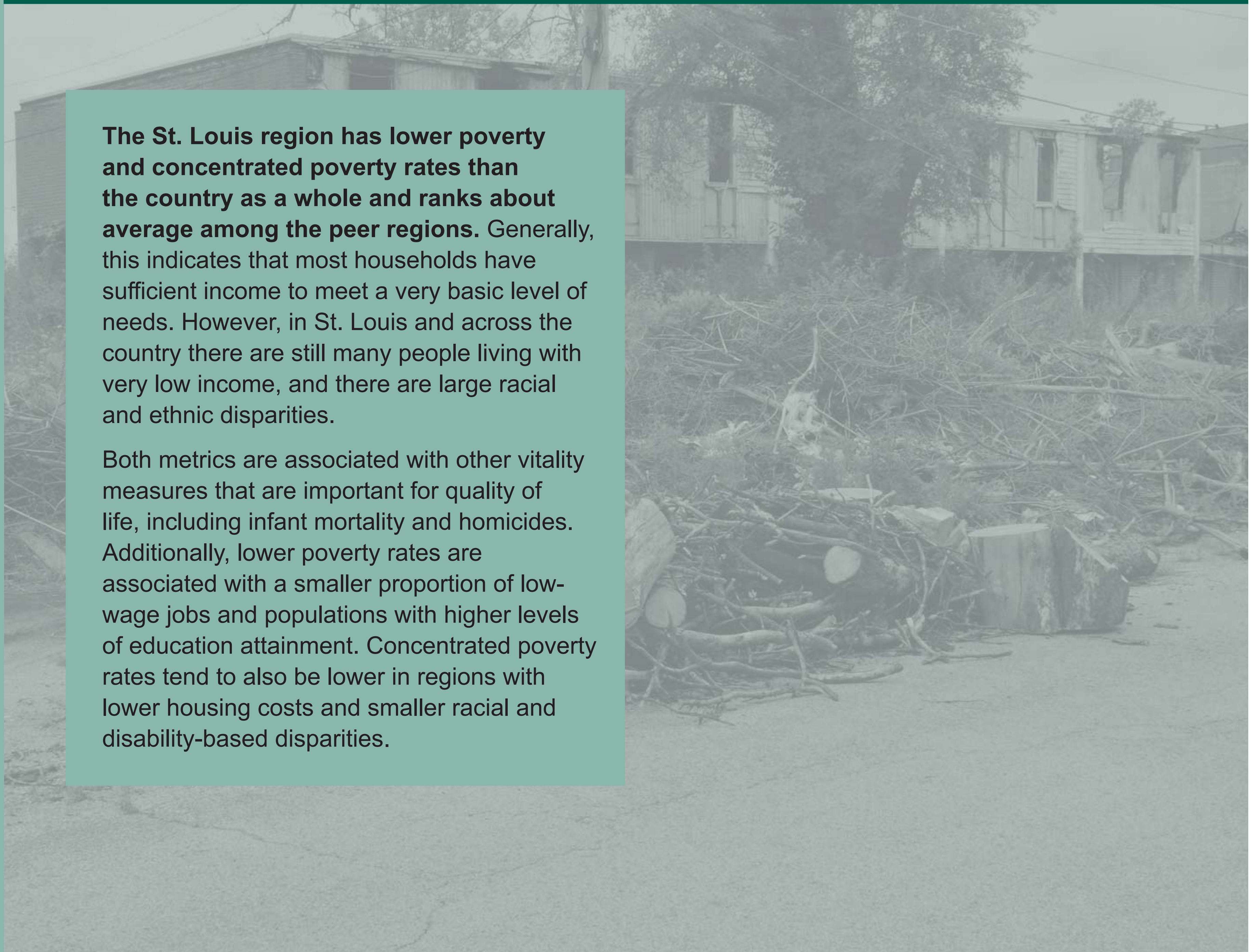
Map 10-01 depicts the percent of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher by census tract for the EWG region. Tracts in which more than 60% of adults have a college degree are concentrated in a contiguous block that stretches from the Midtown and Central West End neighborhoods in the city of St. Louis to Chesterfield and Wildwood in west St. Louis County. Other tracts with more than 60% college attainment can be found in Illinois around the cities of Edwardsville, O'Fallon, and Columbia.

Map 10-01. Bachelor's Degree or Higher 2018-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (B15002), 2018-2022; East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Poverty



The St. Louis region has lower poverty and concentrated poverty rates than the country as a whole and ranks about average among the peer regions. Generally, this indicates that most households have sufficient income to meet a very basic level of needs. However, in St. Louis and across the country there are still many people living with very low income, and there are large racial and ethnic disparities.

Both metrics are associated with other vitality measures that are important for quality of life, including infant mortality and homicides. Additionally, lower poverty rates are associated with a smaller proportion of low-wage jobs and populations with higher levels of education attainment. Concentrated poverty rates tend to also be lower in regions with lower housing costs and smaller racial and disability-based disparities.

Measuring Success: Poverty

What is being measured? Poverty status is determined by comparing household income to income thresholds based on household size.[11-01]

The definition of concentrated poverty is a poverty rate of 40%, measured at the census tract level. Poverty researchers have used this threshold since at least the 1980s and have found it to be a good indicator of communities with a distinct set of challenges.[11-02]

What makes this a good measure of success? The poverty rate is the most commonly used measure of economic deprivation. It generally indicates the number of people in a region that lack sufficient income to meet a very basic level of need. Economic segregation, measured by concentrated poverty, is associated with increased crime, reduced opportunities for wealth building, and poorer financial well-being as well as relatively poor access to amenities, jobs, goods, and services compared to other communities in the region. Further, poverty and concentrated poverty may increase costs to local governments.

What is problematic about this measure? Poverty levels do not include all of the population that does not have enough income to meet basic needs because thresholds do not capture current living expenses and are not sensitive to geographic cost differences. The poverty threshold was developed in the 1960s and the method has long been recognized as outdated and a serious understatement of income sufficient for basic needs.[11-03] In addition, poverty thresholds are the same across the country, not accounting for a wide range in cost of living between the peer regions. The threshold in 2023 for a family of four for anywhere in the country was $30,900.

The outdated methods behind the official poverty measure have long been noted. A 1995 study found that a family of four with two children needs anywhere from 150% to 350% of the official poverty threshold to meet basic needs, depending on location.[11-04]

What Makes a Region Successful?

Thoughts from a survey of St. Louis region residents

"Finding remedies for the crime, equity, and poverty issues the region faces must happen in order for the region to thrive again." –St. Louis County Resident

"Successful regions have good economic development, attracting a large number of investments and enterprises, creating employment opportunities, and people have a high standard of living." –St. Charles County Resident

11-01 ACS Definitions Document https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/subject_definitions/2022_ACSSubjectDefinitions.pdf
11-02 Jargowsky, Paul and Mary Jo Bane. 1990. "Ghetto Poverty: Basic Questions", in Inner-City Poverty in the United States, edited by Laurence E. Lynn and Michael G.H. McGeary, Committee on Urban Policy, National Research Council; Wilson, William Julius. 1987. The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner-City, the Underclass, and Public Policy. University of Chicago Press.
11-03 For more information on criticisms of the official poverty measure, see the WWS Poverty Working Paper at www.ewgateway.org/wws
11-04 Constance Citro and Robert Michael. Measuring Poverty: A New Approach. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1995.

Peer Region Analysis: Poverty

The regional ranks on these two metrics are closely related, with communities tending to be favorable or unfavorable on both. Regional performance on these metrics is also associated with on other vitality metric rankings, including measures of income and well-being. The national rates on both metrics have improved in recent years with the St. Louis MSA following this trend. Within the **St. Louis** region there are familiar patterns of higher rates in the core of the region.

Regions that are favorable on these metrics have some common characteristics:

- The 10 regions with the lowest poverty rates also tend to rank among the most favorable on concentrated poverty, bachelor's degrees, income disparity, all four measures of income, homicides, vacancy rate, and the well-being score.
- West and Northwest peer regions generally rank among the most favorable of the peer regions on both metrics. However, these regions also tend to have higher costs of living, which raises the possibility that this measure underestimates the amount of economic hardship in these regions.
- Regions with high median household incomes tend to have lower rates of poverty and concentrated poverty, including **Salt Lake City; Denver; San Jose; Seattle; Washington, D.C.; and Raleigh.**
- Regions with the highest poverty rates tend to also be the least diverse (based on the diffusion score) and have relatively low median incomes, high rates of concentrated poverty, and low well-being scores.

Further, poverty and concentrated poverty have moderate to strong relationships with adverse health outcomes, including rates of heart disease, homicides, and HIV. In general, Southern and Midwest peer regions such as **New Orleans, Memphis, Detroit,** and **Cleveland** rank less favorably. **St. Louis** ranks better than most of the Midwest peer regions.

Poverty Rate

Individuals living in poverty as a percent of total population, 0900

1	**New Orleans**	**15.7**
0	Memphis	46.8
1	Oklahoma City	43.3
3	Houston	43.1
6	San Antonio	43.0
5	Birmingham	41.2
8	Detroit	41.7
7	Cleveland	41.8
2	Buffalo	41.6
49	Miami	41.0
44	Las Vegas	41.4
40	Los Angeles	40.2
41	New York	40.7
United States		**12.6**
43	Columbus	40.3
46	Milwaukee	40.3
45	Tampa	40.1
48	Louisville	40.4
47	Orlando	40.9
42	Riverside	40.9
09	Virginia Beach	44.7
04	Cincinnati	44.7
00	Philadelphia	44.3
01	Pittsburgh	44.0
03	Chicago	44.0
06	Sacramento	44.0
05	Providence	44.9
08	Jacksonville	44.9
28	**St. Louis**	**11.0**
02	Indianapolis	49.7
19	Phoenix	49.7
14	Richmond	49.8
10	Kansas City	49.8
11	San Diego	49.5
13	Dallas	49.1
16	Baltimore	49.4
15	Hartford	49.4
18	Atlanta	49.9
17	Nashville	2.7
12	Charlotte	2.7
39	Portland	2.6
34	Austin	2.3
30	San Francisco	2.0
31	Boston	2.0
33	Minneapolis	7.7
36	Seattle	7.5
35	Denver	7.1
38	Washington, D.C.	8.2
37	Raleigh	8.2
32	Salt Lake City	8.3
50	**San Jose**	**7.3**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 4-Year Estimates (B48994)

Concentrated Poverty

Percent of poor residents living in census tracts with a poverty rate of 40% or more, 2018-2022

1	**Memphis**	**23.2**
2	Milwaukee	20.9
3	Detroit	20.3
4	Cleveland	20.2
5	Buffalo	18.8
6	Cincinnati	17.9
7	New Orleans	17.1
8	Philadelphia	14.8
9	Birmingham	13.7
10	Louisville	13.5
11	New York	13.2
12	Columbus	13.2
13	Houston	10.9
14	Baltimore	9.1
United States		**9.0**
15	Hartford	8.9
16	Chicago	8.6
17	Indianapolis	8.5
18	Richmond	8.3
19	Jacksonville	8.2
20	**St. Louis**	**8.2**
21	Oklahoma City	8.1
22	Austin	7.5
23	Pittsburgh	7.1
24	Dallas	6.9
25	Minneapolis	6.9
26	San Antonio	6.2
27	Atlanta	5.7
28	Virginia Beach	5.6
29	Miami	5.3
30	Kansas City	4.6
31	Sacramento	4.5
32	Charlotte	4.1
33	Las Vegas	4.0
34	Nashville	3.9
35	Phoenix	3.9
36	Tampa	3.8
37	Los Angeles	3.4
38	Boston	3.4
39	San Diego	3.3
40	San Francisco	3.3
41	Orlando	3.2
42	Raleigh	2.8
43	Providence	2.5
44	Washington, D.C.	1.8
45	Seattle	1.7
46	Portland	1.2
47	Riverside	1.0
48	San Jose	0.6
49	Denver	0.3
50	**Salt Lake City**	**0.2**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (B17001)

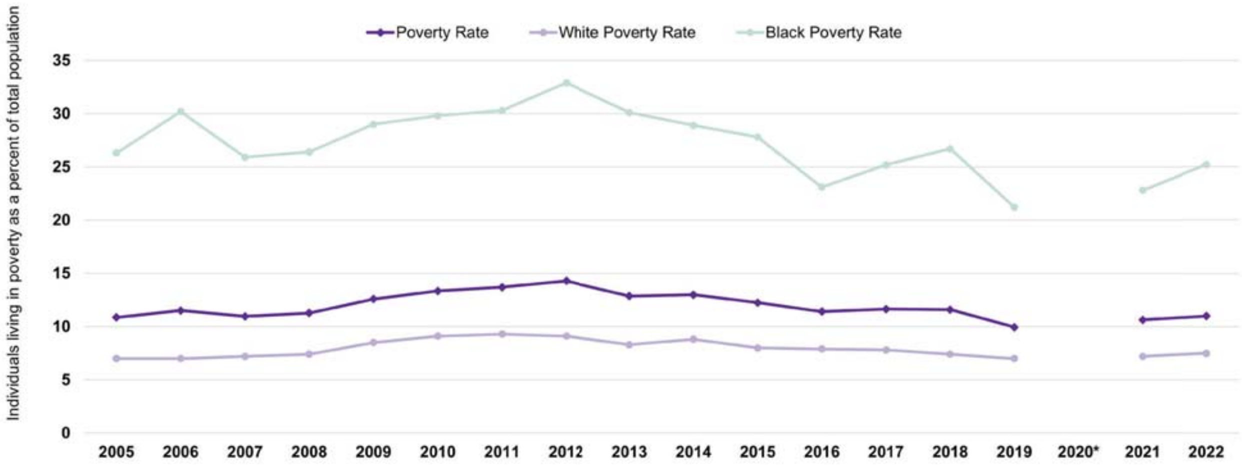
EWG Region Analysis: Poverty

Poverty and concentrated poverty rates in the St. Louis MSA have been improving and generally follow national trends. However, more than one in 10 residents of the region are in poverty, and there are large differences between Black and white residents.

Figure 11-01 shows the poverty rate by year and race for the St. Louis MSA. The poverty rate rose for the region from 11% in 2007 to 14.3% in 2012, following the Great Recession. It fell to a low of 9.9% in 2019. Since then, it has increased to 10.4% (in 2023), following the COVID-19 pandemic.[11-05] Nationally, the poverty rate has been higher over the same period but followed the same trend. Federal stimulus payments during the pandemic assisted families, but these payments are not factored into the official poverty measure. See the working paper on poverty at ewgateway.org/wws for more discussion on how this factored into measures of poverty.

Figure 11-01. Poverty Rate By Race

St. Louis MSA, 2005 to 2022



Note: American Community Survey 1-year estimates were not released for 2020 due to concerns over data quality resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates (S0201)

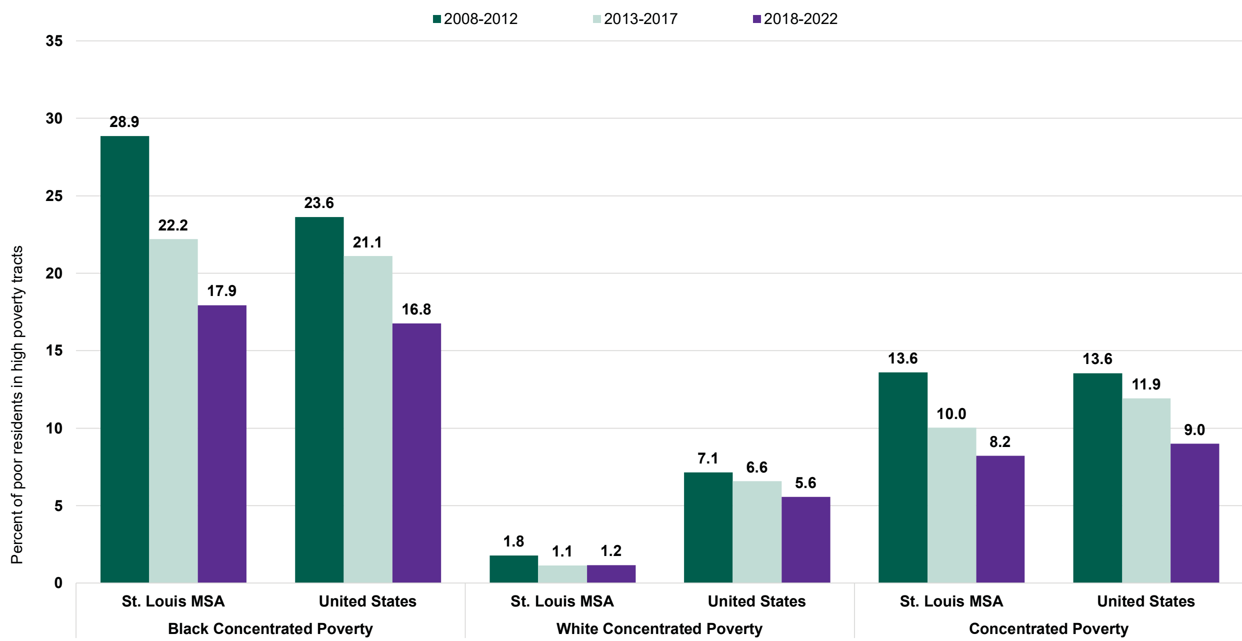
11-05 The regional poverty rate in 2020 is not known because the Census Bureau was not able to conduct the American Community Survey that year because of the pandemic.

Regionally and nationally, concentrated poverty has decreased. This is largely due to decreases in concentrated poverty among the Black population with a 5.4 percentage point decrease in the St. Louis MSA and an 11-point decrease for the country from 2008-2012 to 2018-2022. See Figure 11-02. These decreases may represent improvements in financial well-being but may also be the result of domestic migration, changes in the way people self-identity, and reporting errors.

Map 11-01 shows poverty rates in the EWG region, with significant concentrations in the northern parts of the city of St. Louis and St. Louis County and in the western portion of St. Clair County.

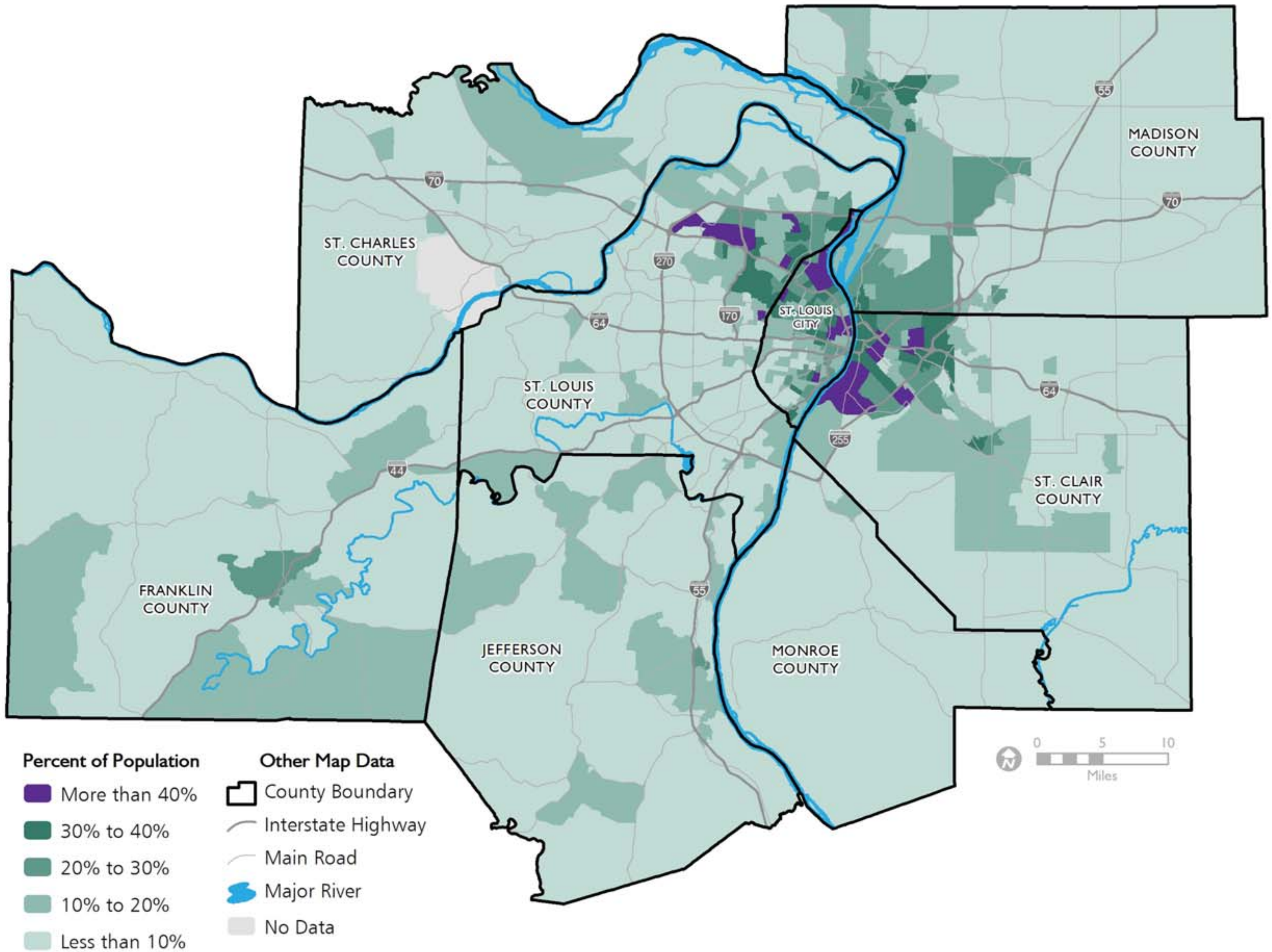
Poverty is not limited to the urban core with some people living in poverty in each county of the region. The communities with the most significant poverty rates are concentrated in the urban core but there are also tracts with rates greater than 20% in Franklin and Madison counties.

Figure 11-02. Concentrated Poverty by Race
Percent of poor residents living in census tracts with a poverty rate of 40% or more
St. Louis MSA and United States, 2008-2012, 2013-2017, and 2018-2022



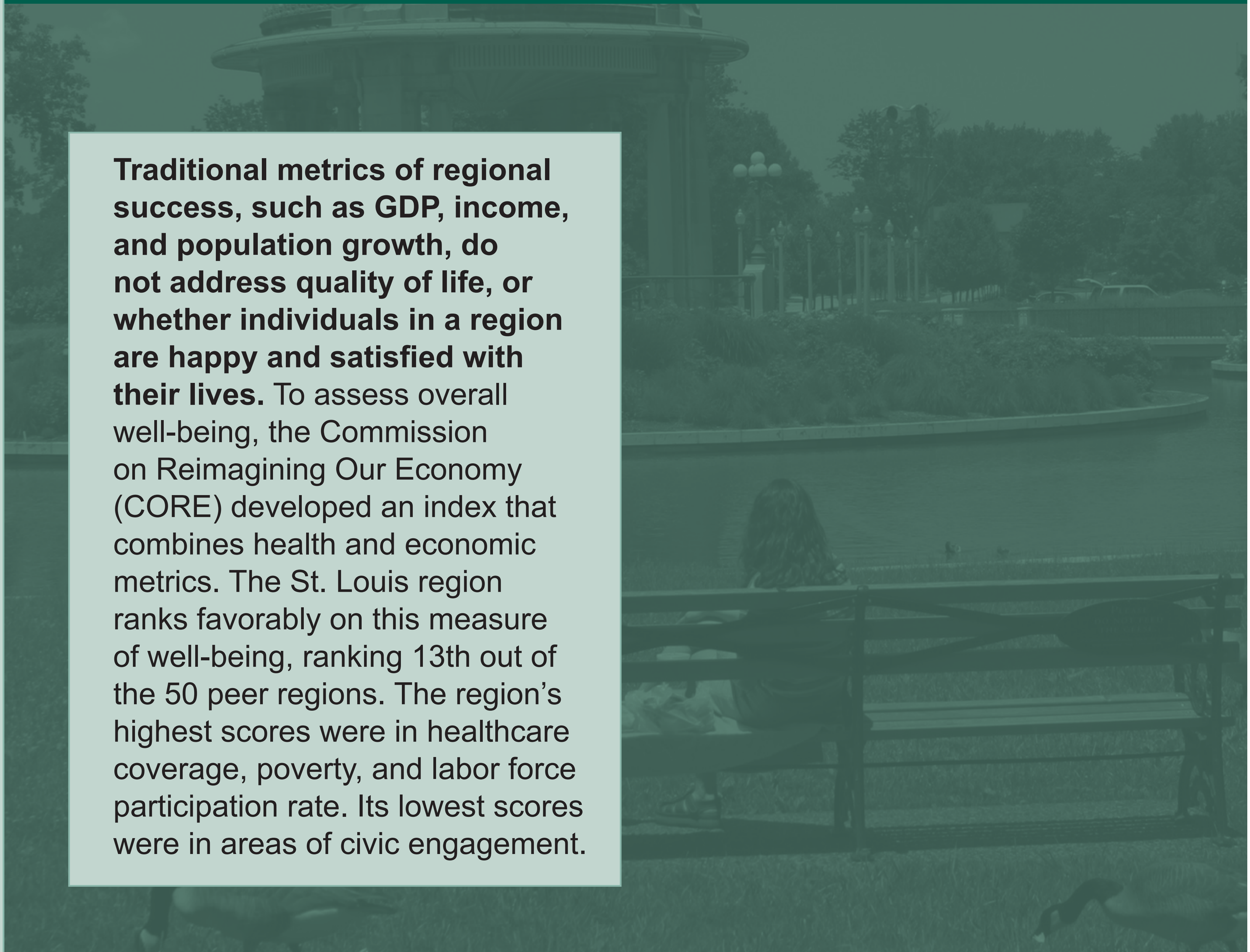
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates (B17001, B17001B, B17001H)

Map 11-01. Poverty & Concentrated Poverty, 2018-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (B17021), 2018-2022; East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Well-Being



Traditional metrics of regional success, such as GDP, income, and population growth, do not address quality of life, or whether individuals in a region are happy and satisfied with their lives. To assess overall well-being, the Commission on Reimagining Our Economy (CORE) developed an index that combines health and economic metrics. The St. Louis region ranks favorably on this measure of well-being, ranking 13th out of the 50 peer regions. The region’s highest scores were in healthcare coverage, poverty, and labor force participation rate. Its lowest scores were in areas of civic engagement.

Measuring Success: Well-Being

What is being measured? Exercises in regional metrics aim to assess which conditions lead to fulfilling, satisfying, and happy lives among residents. Since life satisfaction is highly subjective, it is very difficult to measure at a regional scale.

Despite difficulties with measuring happiness, the concept is at the core of an exercise like WWS. Many respondents to the WWS survey expressed this in different ways when asked to define a successful region.

> "People who live here are able to have a quality life, where they have access to opportunity, are able to be healthy, and can live their lives connected to their family, friends, and community."

> "High quality of life (health, access to food, access to nature, quality public education, low stress from housing/transport/crime issues), Innovation beyond just business (eg, art/culture). Efficient and effective government."

> "A successful region, to me, is one that provides a lot of opportunities to pursue goals and life fulfillment. This could be hobbies, careers, or relationships. It should also provide a sense of safety and a healthy environment through strong public services."

The CORE (Commission on Reimagining Our Economy) Score is an index that was developed by a commission formed by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The score is designed to measure how people are faring, with 11 indicators in four categories:

- Economic security: the ability of households to consistently meet their needs sustainably and with dignity
- Economic opportunity: the possibility of creating a better life
- Health: the physical well-being of individuals and their ability to access basic care
- Political efficacy: the degree to which Americans are participating in their democracy, have a voice in elections, and are represented by their elected officials

What makes this a good measure of success? The Commission consulted over 200 experts and held 31 listening sessions around the country to arrive at this measure of well-being. The rationale for this measure, as explained in the Commission's final report was: to "shift the focus from how the economy is doing to how Americans are doing."[12-01] The score "offers a people-centric view of how Americans are doing" using diverse indicators. "While traditional metrics capture economic growth or the state of the stock market, the Commission's new measurement, the CORE Score, speaks to how Americans live."[12-02]

What is problematic about this measure? Although the index components were selected based on an extensive series of listening sessions, the index does not directly measure whether individuals in different regions are happy or satisfied with their lives. The determinants of life satisfaction may vary considerably among individuals.

The index assumes that higher labor force participation rates are conducive to well-being, but some households may voluntarily make the choice for one or more adults to stay out of the labor force to maximize family quality of life.

The index does not address measures of disparities in economic outcomes among racial or other social groups.

As with most indices that combine several quantitative measures to arrive at a single score, it is difficult to know how much each component should be weighted, and which components are driving differences among regions.

12-01 GDP and the Dow are up. But what about American well-being? Wall Street Journal, 4-27-2024
12-02 Advancing a People-First Economy, 2023 https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/publication/downloads/2023_CORE_People-First-Economy.pdf

Peer Region Analysis: Well-Being

Among the peer regions, CORE scores range from a low of 4.43 in **Riverside** to a high of 6.34 in **Minneapolis**. Scores can range from zero to 10 with 10 being the best possible score. In 2021, the peer region average was about in the middle on this range at 5.43. The score for the United States was slightly lower at 4.91. The peer Midwest regions are all above the peer region average.

Map 12-01 shows well-being scores for the 50 peer regions. The top 10 scores included a mix of both fast-growing regions, such as **Raleigh** and **Denver**, and slow-growing regions such as **Milwaukee** and **Pittsburgh**. Conversely, the 10 regions with the lowest scores included fast-growing metros such as **Las Vegas** and **Orlando**, and slower-growing regions such as **Memphis** and **New Orleans**.

The St. Louis MSA is in the highest third of regions, with a score of 5.75. The MSA scores the highest in the categories of overall health with high points for healthcare coverage followed by poverty and labor force participation rate, which all had scores higher than seven. The worst score for the **St. Louis** MSA was on political voice with a poor score specifically in civic participation. See Figure 12-01.

Well-Being Score

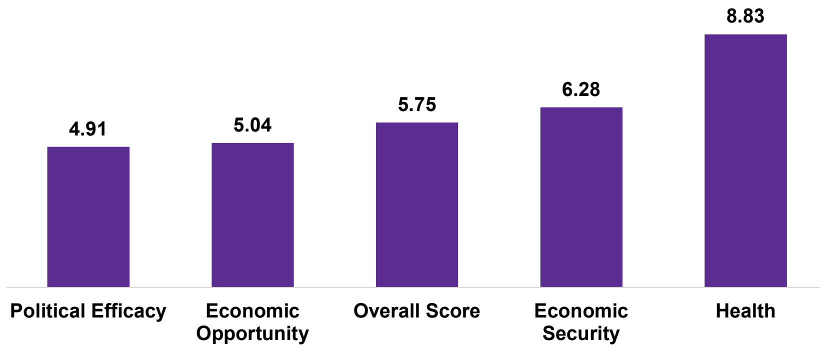
CORE Score, 2021

1	**Minneapolis**	**6.34**
2	Washington, D.C.	6.15
3	Boston	6.14
4	San Francisco	5.96
5	San Jose	5.96
6	Raleigh	5.86
7	Seattle	5.85
8	Milwaukee	5.85
9	Denver	5.83
10	Pittsburgh	5.83
11	Baltimore	5.79
12	Austin	5.78
13	**St. Louis**	**5.75**
14	Cincinnati	5.74
15	Philadelphia	5.73
16	Kansas City	5.72
17	Cleveland	5.70
18	Hartford	5.69
19	Buffalo	5.67
20	Columbus	5.64
21	Indianapolis	5.63
22	Chicago	5.63
23	Portland	5.59
24	Richmond	5.52
25	Detroit	5.52
26	Providence	5.51
27	New York	5.50
Peer Average		**5.43**
28	Salt Lake City	5.40
29	Nashville	5.39
30	Atlanta	5.35
31	Charlotte	5.35
32	Virginia Beach	5.32
33	Jacksonville	5.30
34	San Diego	5.20
35	Louisville	5.15
36	Sacramento	5.14
37	Dallas	5.12
38	Oklahoma City	5.10
39	Tampa	5.05
40	Phoenix	5.05
41	Birmingham	4.94
42	Los Angeles	4.92
43	Miami	4.91
44	New Orleans	4.89
45	Orlando	4.88
46	Houston	4.75
47	San Antonio	4.74
48	Memphis	4.67
49	Las Vegas	4.50
50	**Riverside**	**4.43**

Source: CORE Score

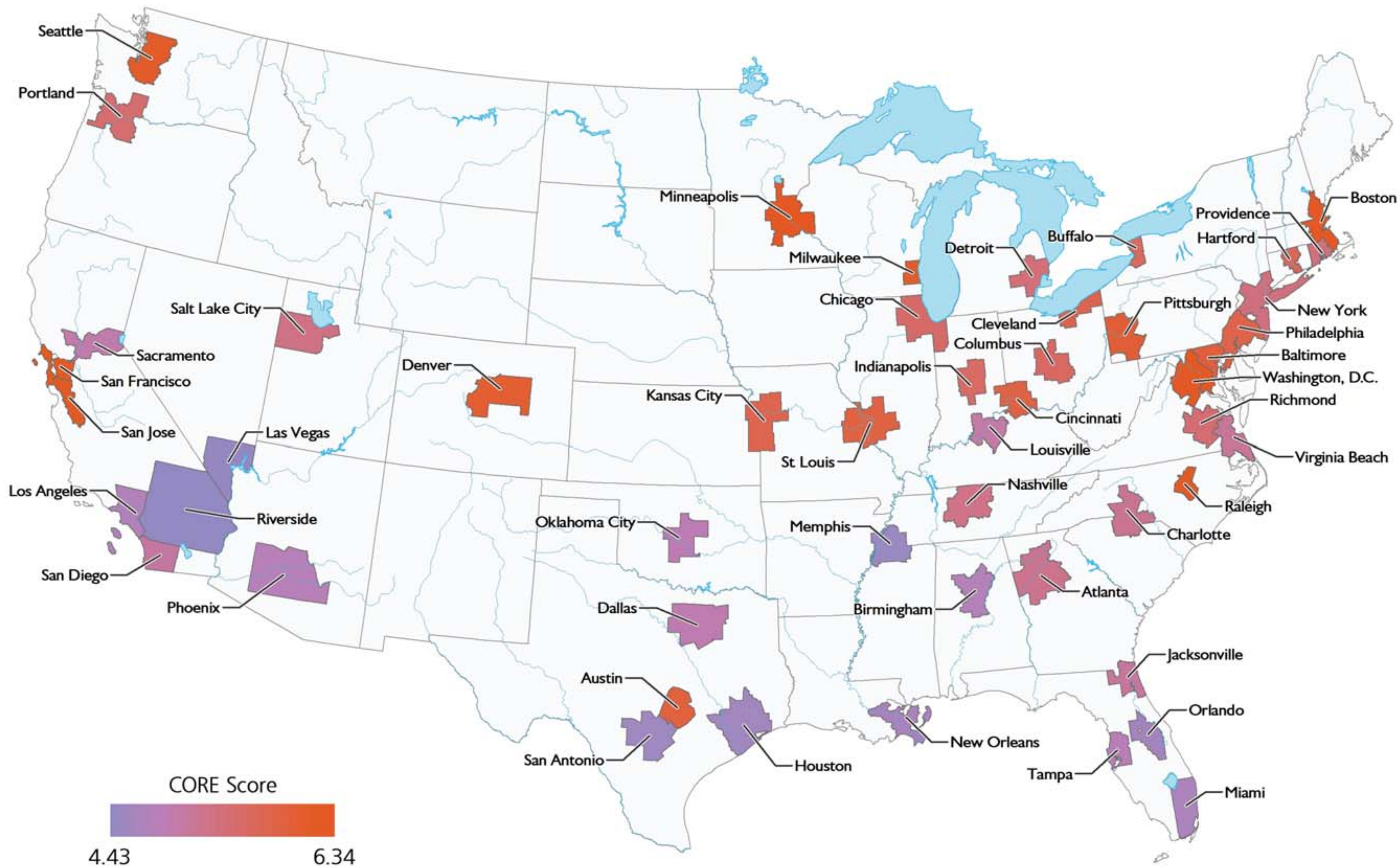
Figure 12-01. Core Score by Category

St. Louis MSA, 2021



Source: CORE Score

Map 12-01. CORE Score, Peer Regions, 2021



Source: CORE Score, 2021

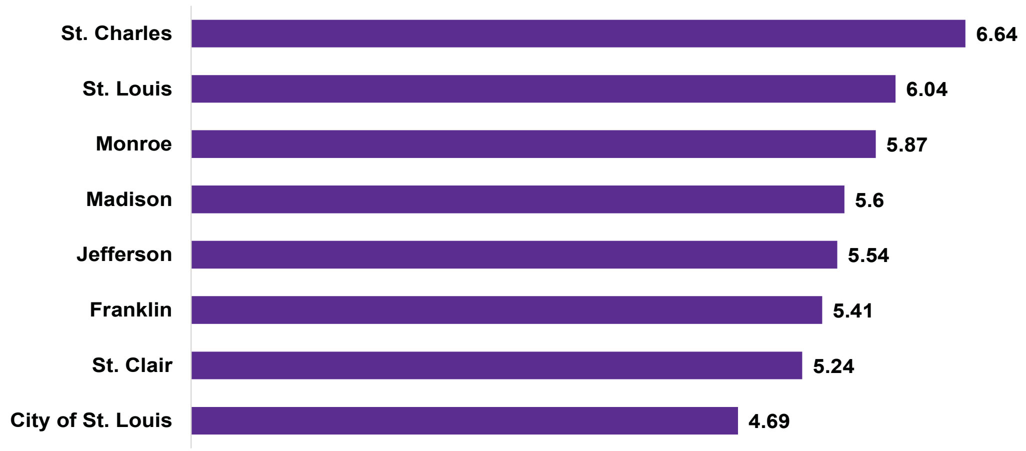
EWG Region Analysis: Well-Being

In the EWG region, the aggregate CORE score appears to be strongly influenced by economic metrics. The highest-ranking counties on the CORE score were St. Charles and St. Louis counties. These counties ranked highest on measures of household financial resilience, economic opportunity, education level, and wage growth. The lowest CORE scores were in St. Clair County and the city of St. Louis. These two jurisdictions were the lowest ranking on measures of economic security, poverty, and wage growth. Most of the counties in the region had higher scores than the national average and most of the peer regions. See Figure 12-02.

The county rankings on individual components of well-being varied. The top-ranked jurisdictions for civic participation were Monroe County and the city of St. Louis. The top two for health insurance coverage were Madison and St. Charles counties.

Figure 12-02. Well-Being (CORE) Score

East-West Gateway (EWG) region by county, 2021



Source: CORE Score

Opportunity

What are our goals and performance measures for opportunity? *The following are the goals and performance measures established in East-West Gateway's long-range transportation plan (LRP), 2030 Measuring Progress from Greater St. Louis Inc. (GSL), and OneSTL's regional plan for sustainability.*

GSL identified median household income (MHI) growth as one of its four north star metrics with a goal to increase overall MHI by an annual average of 4.4% through 2030 and to reduce the Black-to-white gap in MHI by 50% ($18,000) by 2030. The agency recognizes the importance of closing the gap for "strengthening families and the economy."

The agency tracks several additional data points that are related to the WWS opportunity vitality metrics, including occupation-average annual wage distribution by race, cost of living, and educational attainment. Related to well-being, under the category of "quality of life" the agency recognizes that "talent is attracted to great places to live." They measure this by several metrics related to parks, art, and entertainment.

OneSTL also has several related metrics for this section, including personal income per capita, the Gini index, poverty and concentrated poverty, education attainment, voter participation, and racial disparity in median household income.

What is St. Louis doing for opportunity? The following are a sampling of activities, programs, plans, and studies.

Forward through Ferguson was created to implement and advocate for the recommendations laid out in the Ferguson Commission report, focusing on systemic change to address racial and economic inequality in the St. Louis region.

The Federal Reserve Bank Institute for Economic Equity is working to support an economy that works for people of all races, ethnicities, genders, and no matter where a person lives. The institute examines how people interact with the economy with the goal of addressing structural and institutional disparities that inhibit people from participating in and benefiting from the economy.

City of St. Louis Equity Indicators Project measures racial equity across 72 indicators that highlight the three priority areas of the Ferguson Commission: youth at the center, opportunity to thrive, and justice for all.

LaunchCode, headquartered in St. Louis and founded in 2013, is a not for profit that runs a free program to train and place program participants in high-demand tech jobs. The program has a focus on building cohorts of diverse backgrounds. A large proportion of the program's graduates have been from marginalized or underrepresented communities.

UMSL established the **Geospatial Collaborative** to develop the next generation of geospatial scientists. The collaborative will work with students from university level to programs for students in kindergarten through high school. Additionally, they will provide programing to other faculty at universities and industry partners.

Missouri Works Initiative is a program with a goal to eliminate barriers to help connect people in Missouri to careers in different building trades. The program hopes to help people develop “life-sustaining” careers.

Mission: St. Louis provides a number of programs to empower St. Louisans to break the cycle of poverty. The multi-generational approach includes programs that help students prepare for high school, adults achieve stable employment, seniors and people with disabilities remain in their homes, and community members stay out of conflict and free.

Access to Care Data Book is an annual publication by the Regional Health Commission, which is a part of Community Health Commission-Missouri. The report reviews the strength of the health care safety net in St. Louis County and the city of St. Louis for those who do not have health insurance or are underinsured.

Employment Connection services nearly 2,000 people a year who face barriers to employment. The agency was established to assist ex-offenders in finding employment, recognizing the role a job can have in reducing the likelihood of recidivism. The agency now also provides services for substance abusers, unhoused, high school dropouts, women on welfare, veterans, and non-custodial fathers.

The Community Action Agency of St. Louis County (CAASTLC) is working to end poverty and help those currently in poverty. CAASTLC does this by providing services to 44,000 people a year and through innovative programs, such as the Community Action Poverty Simulation. This program provides policymakers, services providers, and others with a better understanding of what life is like for people who live in poverty.

The Missouri Job Center of St. Charles County offers employment services, such as career exploration, job search assistance, and skills training to help individuals improve their employability and earning potential. They have programs that help job seekers acquire skills and experience while earning income, including Registered Apprenticeships, On-the-Job Training (OJT), and youth programs.

The **Jackie Joyner-Kersee Foundation** has a mission to “carry out Jackie’s dream to provide youth in East St. Louis the opportunity to Win in Life.” The organization provides after school programming, youth athletics, youth education programs, and summer camps. The youth education programs contain a focus on in demand knowledge with its STEAM programming (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math).

St. Louis Artworks (SLAW) offers paid apprenticeships that use art to teach teenagers art, life, communication, and jobs skills. The youth focus on personal health, fiscal literacy, and environmental stewardship and have the opportunity to practice public speaking while building a portfolio of work.

A **Where We Stand** update in January 2020 drew on nearly 50 years of economic data to document the changes in income in the St. Louis region compared to the peer regions and the nation as a whole. The analysis provides a look at changes decade by decade, finding that there is increased concentration of income and wealth in a handful of metropolitan regions.

What else is St. Louis doing? T*ell us what to add to the database of regional goals, performance measures, activities, plans, programs, and studies at www.ewgatewayorg/wws.*