



Feature

## The Legal Job Market in Missouri

**With just under 6 million residents, the Midwestern state of Missouri is the 18th most populous in the United States. The state has plenty to offer, including some of the most exciting cities, such as St. Louis, known as the Gateway to the West, and home to the magnificent Gateway Arch that overlooks the river.**



For all its wonders, is Missouri a great place to start a legal career?

### Top Law Firms in Missouri

Missouri is home to some of the top law firms in the world. The most notable is Bryan Cave, LLP, one of the largest firms in the world. Although the firm has offices in more than two dozen cities around the globe, its headquarters are in St. Louis. The Missouri office employs about 250 attorneys. Branches in Kansas City and Jefferson City are also quite large in their own right. Although the St. Louis and Kansas City offices focus on business and economic law, the Jefferson City branch is more focused on legislative law.

Kansas City is also home to the second largest legal firm in the state: Shook, Hardy & Bacon. The firm was established more than a century ago and has grown to include more than 1,500 full-time employees, including more than 500 attorneys. Because of its size, the firm covers a wide range of legal topics, including business, tax, employee, health and insurance law, and more.

Thompson Colburn, another large law firm in Missouri, has a staff of more than 300 attorneys and deals with a diverse number of fields, including environmental, business, and intellectual property law. The firm has a location in St. Louis with other offices in Chicago and Washington, DC.

Missouri is also home to a large number of other legal firms. In fact, all of the top 20 largest in the state have close to or more than 50 attorneys on staff. Many of them cover a wide range of practice areas and do pro bono work in their community. The Kansas City and St. Louis metropolitan areas are the two main areas in which to look if you are interested in securing a position with a large firm.

### Attorney Outlook for the Future

In the central region of the state, the outlook for attorneys is very good. More than 300 openings are expected to be

available in just this part of the state. However, the annual salary for an attorney here is just over \$78,000 per year. This is about \$30,000 less than the median salary for lawyers nationwide.

In the northeastern portion of the state, lawyers can also expect to see decent job growth when compared to other jobs. Plus, the average salary is approximately \$96,000, which is still less than the national average, but higher than what you can expect to find in the central portion of the state.

One of the best areas of the state for attorneys is expected to be Kansas City, which is also the state's largest city. Not only is growth expected in this area for lawyers, but the average pay is \$106,000 — about \$4,000 higher than the national average.

Throughout the rest of the state, including the St. Louis metropolitan area, growth will be small or stagnant. On the bright side, the need for lawyers is not expected to be reduced and the career is still one of the top-paying professions.

### The Missouri Bar Exam

One of the toughest parts of becoming an attorney is passing the bar exam. In order to practice law in any state, you must either pass that state's examination or have them accept your passing score from another state's Bar. Some states will accept scores only from their state, or only from certain other states, but Missouri is not one of those. They will accept your scores from other states as long as you have not failed their state examination and you passed the exam within the last 19 months.



Even if you do have to take the Missouri bar exam, it is not as difficult as the ones in some states. California and Delaware are considered two of the most difficult states in which to receive a passing grade. Nevada, Florida, and New York are also considered



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challenging. Missouri does not make that list, nor is it one of the easiest to pass. Maryland, New Jersey, and Indiana give some of the easier Bar exams to pass.

The total weighted score required to pass the exam in Missouri is 1300.

### Quality of Living in Missouri

There are many benefits of living in Missouri, both inside and outside of St. Louis, which is the state's largest metropolitan area. For one, the cost of living in Missouri is lower than the national average. The consumer price index in Missouri is about five points lower than in the rest of the country. While that may not be much, it can make a big difference over time. Even if you do decide you want the hustle and bustle of a major U.S. city and decide to try your legal luck in St. Louis, you'll find that of the top 20 metro

areas in the country it is the second most affordable. Out of this group, only Houston, Texas is less expensive.

Although attorney jobs in St. Louis may be harder to come by than in other parts of the state, the city has so much to offer that it may be worth extra searching for law jobs to relocate there. Besides the Gateway Arch, the city is home to major league sports teams, amazing shopping, great schools, world-class museums, one of the country's most impressive and affordable zoos, and a gorgeous botanical garden. The city also has one of the most diverse populations in the Midwest and is centrally located — travel to other large cities in the Midwest, such as Chicago, is convenient.

The rest of Missouri is also a nice place to start a legal career.

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