Cities With the Most Impacted Workforces During Coronavirus
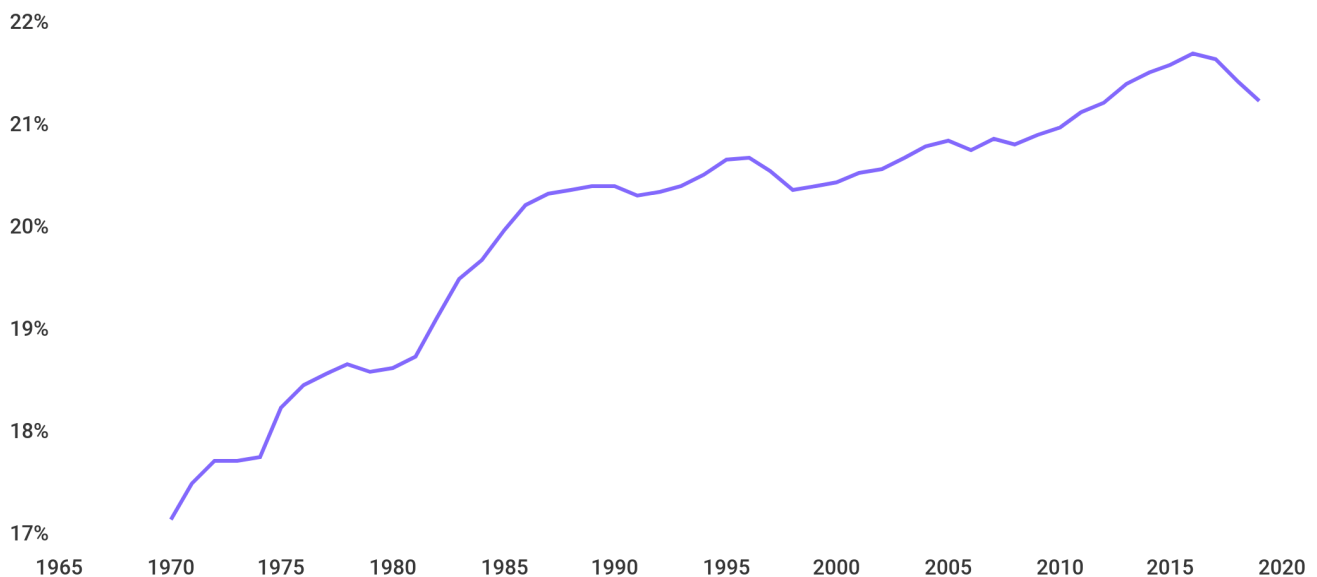
Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic has led to an unprecedented economic shutdown as thousands of "nonessential" businesses have closed their doors. The crisis disproportionately affects the 21.3% of American workers in retail, leisure, and hospitality who not only face lack of work, but also suffer from long-standing, below-average wages. According to the latest annual data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average hourly wage for workers in the *retail trade* and *leisure and hospitality* sectors was just $19.70 and $16.55 in 2019, compared to $28 per hour across all workers.

Overall, the share of workers in retail, leisure, and hospitality increased steadily from 1970 to 2016 when it peaked at 21.8%. This trend was largely driven by an increasing share of employment in [restaurants and bars](#), while employment in retail stagnated. Even though the last few years have seen a modest decline in the share of workers in these two sectors overall, more than one-fifth of all U.S. workers were employed in either *retail trade* or *leisure and hospitality* in 2019, totaling over 32 million workers.

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The share of workers in retail, leisure & hospitality is declining after 2016 peak

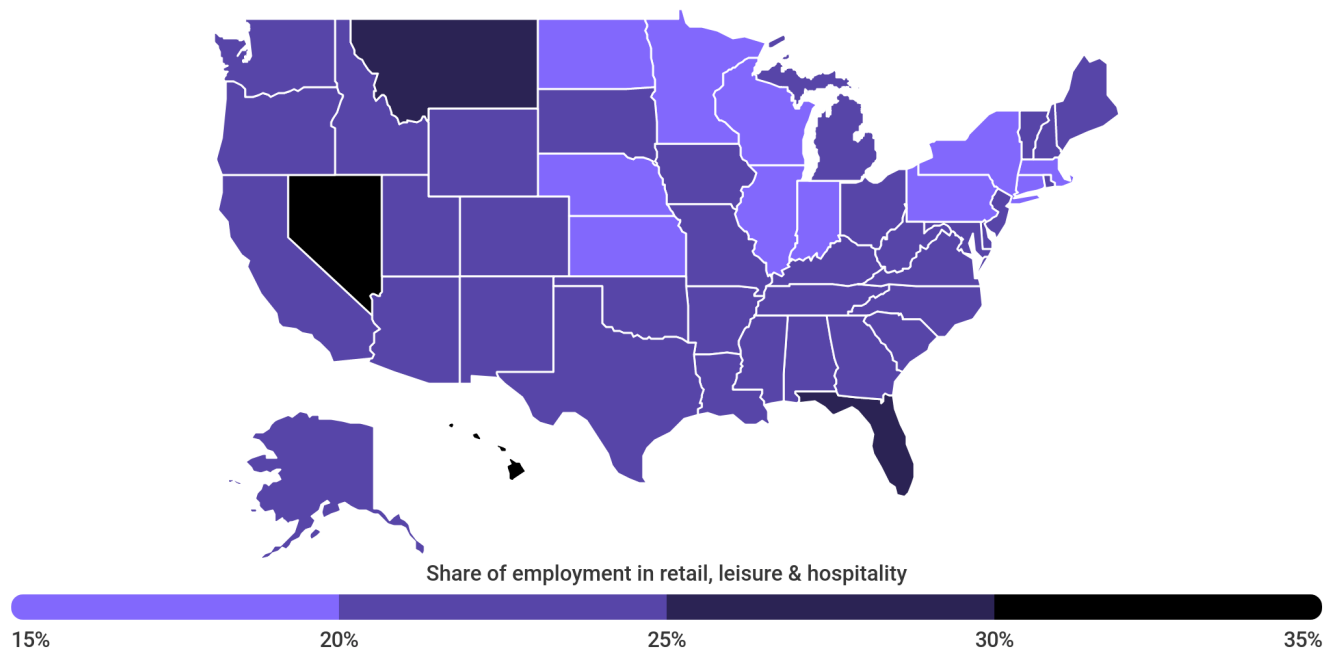Employment in retail, leisure & hospitality

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics's Current Employment Statistics Survey

The share of employment in these industries varies widely across cities and states based on local economic conditions and levels of tourism. Nevada and Hawaii lead the nation in the share of employment in retail, leisure, and hospitality at 35.5% and 30.1%, respectively. At the low end, Kansas and Minnesota both have about 19% of their workforce employed in these sectors.

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Nevada has the largest share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality in the nation

Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality

| 15% | 20% | 25% | 30% | 35% |

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics's 2019 Current Employment Statistics Survey

To find the locations with the workforces most impacted by COVID-19, researchers at Volusion used data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, and the U.S. Census Bureau. The researchers ranked metro areas according to the share of workers employed in the *retail trade* and *leisure and hospitality* industries. Researchers also looked at the total number of *retail trade* workers, the total number of *leisure and hospitality* workers, the cost of living, and the percent of residents below the poverty level.

To improve relevance, only metropolitan areas with at least 100,000 people were included in the analysis. Additionally, metro areas were grouped into the following cohorts based on population size:

- Small metros: 100,000-349,999
- Midsize metros: 350,000-999,999
- Large metros: 1,000,000 or more

Here are the metropolitan areas with the largest share of employment in retail, leisure, and hospitality, making their workforces especially vulnerable during the coronavirus pandemic.

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Small & midsize metros with the most retail, leisure & hospitality workers

SMALL CITIES	PERCENT*	MIDSIZE METROS	PERCENT*
1. Kahului-Wailuku-Lahaina, HI	44.3%	1. Myrtle Beach-Conway-North Myrtle Beach, SC-NC	42.7%
2. Atlantic City-Hammonton, NJ	42.2%	2. Naples-Marco Island, FL	33.4%
3. Punta Gorda, FL	35.2%	3. Gulfport-Biloxi, MS	32.0%
4. Barnstable Town, MA	34.4%	4. Salisbury, MD-DE	31.9%
5. East Stroudsburg, PA	34.4%	5. Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach, FL	31.1%
6. Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin, FL	33.6%	6. Cape Coral-Fort Myers, FL	30.5%
7. Sebastian-Vero Beach, FL	31.3%	7. Salinas, CA	29.6%
8. Santa Fe, NM	30.6%	8. North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton, FL	28.8%
9. Panama City, FL	30.3%	9. Asheville, NC	28.4%
10. Bend, OR	29.2%	10. Ocala, FL	28.1%
11. St. George, UT	29.1%	11. Port St. Lucie, FL	27.2%
12. Wilmington, NC	28.9%	12. Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent, FL	26.7%
13. Muskegon, MI	28.9%	13. Savannah, GA	26.3%
14. Medford, OR	28.7%	14. Urban Honolulu, HI	26.1%
15. Wenatchee, WA	28.5%	15. Reno, NV	25.7%

* Percentage of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality

15 Large Metros With the Most Retail, Leisure & Hospitality Workers

15. Austin - Round Rock - Georgetown, TX

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 21.9%
- **Total retail workers:** 109,200
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 135,600
- **Cost of living:** 0.5% above average
- **Percent below the poverty level:** 11.2%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

14. Charlotte - Concord - Gastonia, NC-SC

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 22.1%
- **Total retail workers:** 128,800
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 144,000
- **Cost of living:** 6.2% below average
- **Percent below the poverty level:** 11.2%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

13. Tucson, AZ

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 22.2%
- **Total retail workers:** 41,700
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 44,600
- **Cost of living:** 4.9% below average
- **Percent below the poverty level:** 16.2%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

12. Raleigh - Cary, NC

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 22.2%
- **Total retail workers:** 70,500
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 73,800
- **Cost of living:** 3.8% below average
- **Percent below the poverty level:** 8.9%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

11. Virginia Beach - Norfolk - Newport News, VA-NC

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 22.3%
- **Total retail workers:** 85,100
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 92,500
- **Cost of living:** 2.4% below average
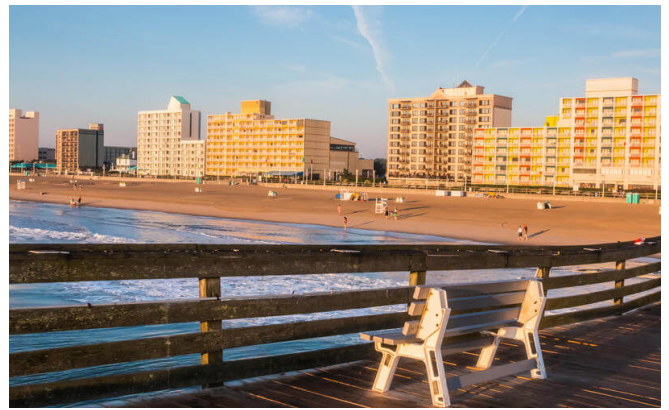- **Percent below the poverty level:** 11.2%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

10. Providence - Warwick, RI-MA

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 22.4%
- **Total retail workers:** 64,300
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 69,900
- **Cost of living:** 0.3% below average
- **Percent below the poverty level:** 12.1%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

9. San Diego - Chula Vista - Carlsbad, CA

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 23.1%
- **Total retail workers:** 145,400
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 202,400
- **Cost of living:** 16.0% above average
- **Percent below the poverty level:** 11.4%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

8. Riverside - San Bernardino - Ontario, CA

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 23.1%
- **Total retail workers:** 181,300
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 175,200
- **Cost of living:** 7.2% above average
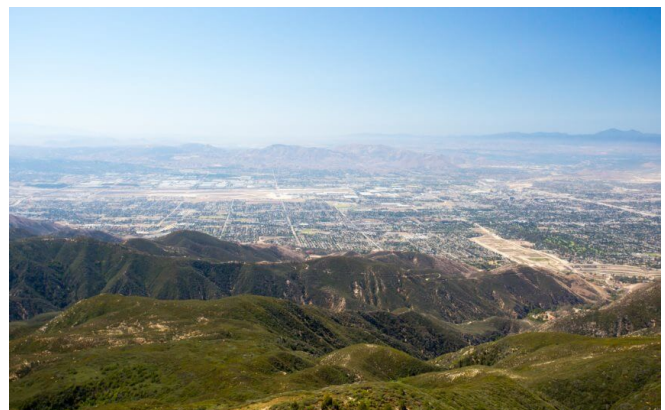- **Percent below the poverty level:** 13.7%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

7. Tampa - St. Petersburg - Clearwater, FL

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 23.2%
- **Total retail workers:** 158,400
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 163,200
- **Cost of living:** 1.1% below average
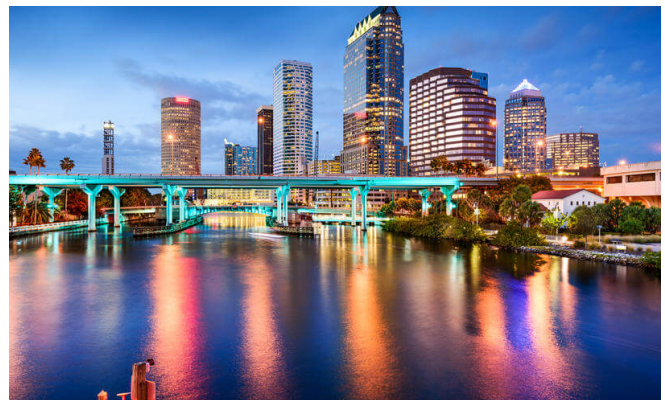- **Percent below the poverty level:** 13.4%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

6. Jacksonville, FL

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 23.3%
- **Total retail workers:** 82,000
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 86,800
- **Cost of living:** 4.6% below average
- **Percent below the poverty level:** 12.2%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

5. San Antonio - New Braunfels, TX

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 23.4%
- **Total retail workers:** 113,600
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 138,800
- **Cost of living:** 5.6% below average
- **Percent below the poverty level:** 15.4%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

4. Miami - Fort Lauderdale - Pompano Beach, FL

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 24.6%
- **Total retail workers:** 335,700
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 332,900
- **Cost of living:** 8.4% above average
- **Percent below the poverty level:** 14.0%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

3. New Orleans - Metairie, LA

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 26.1%
- **Total retail workers:** 60,400
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 91,800
- **Cost of living:** 4.8% below average
- **Percent below the poverty level:** 17.5%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

2. Orlando - Kissimmee - Sanford, FL

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 32.1%
- **Total retail workers:** 150,600
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 275,800
- **Cost of living:** 1.7% below average
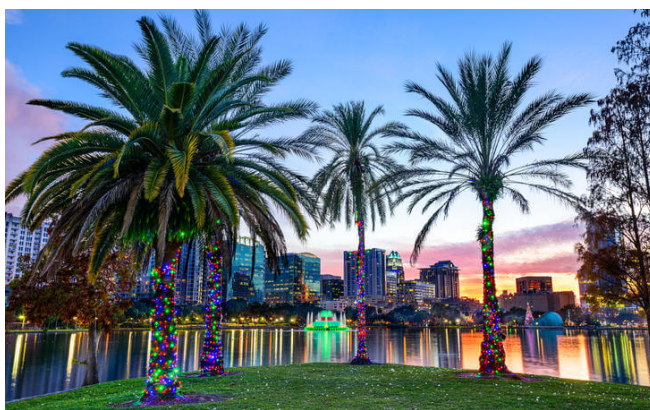- **Percent below the poverty level:** 13.9%

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

1. Las Vegas - Henderson - Paradise, NV

- **Share of employment in retail, leisure & hospitality:** 39.0%
- **Total retail workers:** 109,300
- **Total leisure & hospitality workers:** 294,100
- **Cost of living:** 2.5% below average
- **Percent below the poverty level:** 13.9%
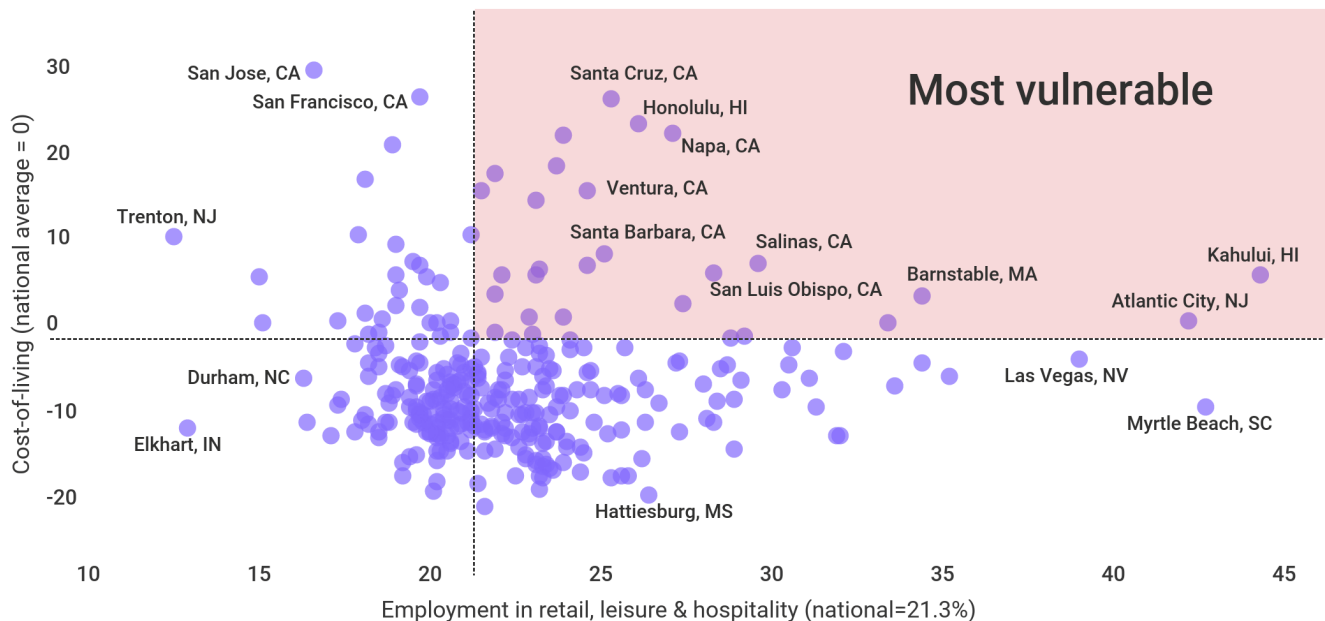

Photo Credit: Alamy Stock Photo

Detailed Findings & Methodology

Tourist destinations dominate the metropolitan areas with the largest share of employment in retail, leisure, and hospitality. With employment shares well above the national level of 21.3%, these metros face a greater impact during the economic shutdown. Thousands of retail, leisure, and hospitality workers in these metros have lost their jobs or had their hours reduced.

While cost of living is not correlated with the share of employment in retail, leisure, and hospitality, workers in these industries who also live in expensive areas are especially vulnerable. Many desirable California communities with service-driven economies fall into this bucket, including San Diego, Santa Cruz, Napa, Salinas, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura, among others.

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Most vulnerable metros have high living costs and more workers in retail, leisure & hospitality

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics's 2019 Current Employment Statistics Survey

To determine the metros with workforces most impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, researchers at Volusion analyzed the latest data from the *Bureau of Labor Statistics's 2019 Current Employment Survey (CES)*, the *Bureau of Economic Analysis's 2017 Regional Price Parity (RPP)* dataset, and the *U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 American Community Survey (ACS)*. Using CES data, the researchers ranked metros according to the share of non-farm employment in the *retail trade* and *leisure and hospitality* industries. In the event of a tie, the metro with the larger number of retail, leisure, and hospitality workers was ranked higher. The cost of living comes from the *RPP* dataset, and the percent of residents below the poverty level is from the *ACS*.

View the full results of the study [here](#).

About Volusion

Volusion is an all-in-one ecommerce solution that helps entrepreneurs build and manage successful online businesses. Since 1999, our dedicated team of developers, marketers, designers, and technical support experts have been passionate about helping merchants operate and grow their stores, whether startup or established. Two decades later, Volusion has earned dozens of accolades and powered over 150,000 successful online businesses.

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