



Children in the States

TENNESSEE

September 2015

Child Population

1,494,526 children lived in Tennessee in 2014; 34 percent were children of color.

- 66 percent were White
- 9 percent were Hispanic
- 20 percent were Black
- 2 percent were Asian
- 3 percent were two or more races
- <1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native
- <1 percent were Pacific Islander

Child Poverty

More than 1 in 4 (26.2 percent) of Tennessee's children were poor in 2014, a total of 384,065 children.¹

- Tennessee ranked 42nd in child poverty among states.²
- More than 1 in 9 children lived in extreme poverty at less than half the poverty level.
- The youngest children were the poorest age group. Nearly 3 in 10 children under age 6 were poor; nearly half of the poor children were extremely poor.

Children of color in Tennessee are disproportionately poor.

- Nearly 1 in 2 Black children and nearly 1 in 2 Hispanic children were poor in 2014, compared more than 1 in 6 White children.

Child Hunger and Homelessness

Child poverty in Tennessee leads to unacceptable child homelessness and hunger.

- More than 14,000 Tennessee public school students were homeless in the 2012-2013 school year.
- In 2014, nearly 2 full-time minimum-wage jobs were necessary to afford a fair market rent two-bedroom apartment in Tennessee and still have enough left over for food, utilities and other necessities.
- More than 25 percent of children lived in households that lacked access to adequate food in 2013. More than 34 percent of children ages 10-17 were overweight or obese in 2011-2012. Tennessee ranked 38th of 50 states in child food security and 41st in percent of children overweight and obese.
- More than 36 percent of Tennessee children relied on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to meet their nutritional needs in an average month in FY2013.
- Nearly 86 percent of Tennessee children receiving a free and reduced-price lunch during the school year did not participate in Summer Nutrition Programs – ranking Tennessee 28th of 50 states in ensuring children have adequate summer nutrition.

Child Health

Although the majority of Tennessee's children have access to health coverage, it does not guarantee enrollment in coverage or access to care, which can jeopardize their education and their futures.

- In 2013, 90.9 percent of eligible children participated in TennCare (Medicaid) or CoverKids, Tennessee's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). In FY2013, a total of 790,923 Tennessee children ages 0-18 were enrolled in TennCare, and 106,473 in CoverKids.
- More than 85,000 Tennessee children ages 0-17 (5.7 percent) were uninsured in 2013. The state had the 23rd lowest rate of uninsured children among states.

¹ A family of four was poor if it was living on less than \$23,834 a year, \$1,986 a month, \$458 a week and \$65 a day, and extremely poor if living on less than \$11,917 a year, \$993 a month, \$229 a week and \$33 a day.

² The state ranked 1st is the best for children for that outcome and the state ranked 50th is the worst for children.

- In 2012, 64,000 uninsured children ages 0-18 were eligible for TennCare or CoverKids but not enrolled.

Early Childhood and Education

Lack of early childhood investments deprives children of critical supports in the early years and reduces school readiness.

- In 2013, the average annual cost of center-based child care for an infant was \$5,857– 27 percent less than the average annual in-state tuition and fees at a public four-year college in Tennessee.
- On average, 39 percent of Tennessee's 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in public or private preschool from 2011-2013. Only 32 percent of children from families with incomes under 200 percent of poverty were enrolled.
- Tennessee's state-funded preschool program met 9 of the 10 quality benchmarks set by the National Institute for Early Education Research in 2012-2013.

Tennessee's schools fail to educate all children, closing off a crucial pathway out of poverty.

- In 2013, 66 percent of Tennessee's fourth grade public school students were unable to read at grade level and 60 percent were unable to compute at grade level.
 - 85 percent of Black fourth graders could not read at grade level and 85 percent could not compute.
 - 79 percent of Hispanic fourth graders could not read at grade level and 78 percent could not compute.
- 83 percent of Tennessee public high school students graduated on time in 2012, placing Tennessee 20th among states. 76 percent of Black students graduated on time compared to 86 percent of White students.
- Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to drop out of school. During the 2011-2012 school year, 13 percent of Tennessee public secondary school students received at least one out-of-school suspension, placing Tennessee 37th among 48 ranked states. For Black and Hispanic students, the percentages were 29 percent and 11 percent, respectively.

Children Facing Special Risks

Many vulnerable children need treatment, services and permanent families.

- In Tennessee, 10,377 children were abused or neglected in 2013 – 7 out of 1,000 children.
- On the last day of FY2013, there were 8,270 Tennessee children in foster care.

Too many Tennessee children are involved in the juvenile justice system.

- 31,540 children were arrested in Tennessee in 2012 – a rate of 4,669 out of 100,000 children ages 10-17.
- 783 children and youth were in residential placement in 2011. 57 percent of children in residential placement were Black, 3 percent were Hispanic, and 37 percent were White.
- 8 Tennessee children were in adult jails in 2013.
- Tennessee spent 3.1 times as much per prisoner as per public school student in FY2012.

Tennessee ranked 38th out of 41 ranked states in preventing child and teen gun deaths.

- A total of 80 children and teens were killed by guns in Tennessee in 2013 – a rate of 4.8 out of 100,000 children and teens.

For sources please visit www.childrensdefense.org/cits