



# Children in the States

# TENNESSEE

July 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 (26.5 percent) of Tennessee's children were poor in 2013, a total of 389,536 children.<sup>1</sup>**

- Tennessee ranked 43<sup>rd</sup> in child poverty among states.<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly 1 in 8 children lived in extreme poverty at less than half the poverty level.
- The youngest children were the poorest age group. More than 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.**

- More than 2 in 5 Black children and nearly 1 in 2 Hispanic children were poor in 2013, compared to nearly 1 in 5 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 38<sup>th</sup> of 50 states in child food security and 41<sup>st</sup> 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 28<sup>th</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup> lowest rate of uninsured children among states.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> The state ranked 1<sup>st</sup> is the best for children for that outcome and the state ranked 50<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 37<sup>th</sup> 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 38<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.childrensdefense.org/cits)