The State of America’s Children® in
TENNESSEE
2021 Factsheet

Child Population
- 35 percent were children of color: 19 percent were Black; 10 percent were Hispanic; 2 percent were Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander; and <1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native.

Child Poverty
- 20 percent of Tennessee’s children were poor in 2019—a total of 290,815 children—and children of color were disproportionately poor.
- 31 percent of Black, 26 percent of Hispanic and 14 percent of white children were poor.
- 8 percent of children were extremely poor (their family had income below half the poverty level).
- 22 percent of children under 6 were poor.

Income and Wealth Inequality
- $77,500 was the median income for white families with children compared with $40,500 for Black and $41,600 for Hispanic families in 2019.

Housing and Homelessness
- 17,766 unhoused children were enrolled in public schools during 2017-2018.
- 2.4 full-time jobs at minimum wage were needed for a family to afford a two-bedroom rental unit at fair market rent in 2020.

Child Hunger and Nutrition
- 18 percent of children lived in food-insecure households in 2018.
- 28 percent of children relied on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in FY2018.
- 89 percent of children receiving free or reduced-price lunch during the 2018-2019 school year did not participate in Summer Nutrition Programs in 2019.

Child Health
- 80,472 children ages 0-18 (5 percent) were uninsured in 2019.
- 830,091 children ages 0-18 were enrolled in TennCare (Medicaid) and CoverKids (Children’s Health Insurance Program) in 2019.

Early Childhood
- $10,780 was the average annual cost for an infant in center-based child care in 2019.
- 22 percent of 4-year-olds were enrolled in state-funded preschool during 2018-2019.

Education
- 82 percent of Black, 79 percent of Hispanic and 57 percent of white 4th grade public school students were not proficient in reading in 2019.
- 85 percent of Black, 78 percent of Hispanic and 63 percent of white 8th grade public school students were not proficient in reading in 2019.
- 84 percent of Black, 83 percent of Hispanic and 93 percent of white students graduated high school on time during 2017-2018.
- 19 percent of Black, 4 percent of Hispanic and 4 percent of white public secondary students had at least one out-of-school suspension in 2015-2016.

Child Welfare
- 9,859 children were abused or neglected in 2019.
- 9,290 children were in foster care on the last day of FY2019.

Youth Justice
- 537 children were in residential placement in 2017. 53 percent were Black; 8 percent were Hispanic; and 36 percent were white.
- 9 children were in adult jails or prisons in 2019.

Gun Violence
- 102 children and teens were killed with guns in 2019.

Note: All numbers in this factsheet are included in the Children’s Defense Fund’s The State of America’s Children® 2021 report, and most have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Facts for states and the District of Columbia were omitted when data were not available. Citations for all data may be found in The State of America’s Children® 2021.