



## 2022 Census Data on Income & Poverty in Tennessee

March 7, 2024

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### Key Takeaways

- Tennessee saw continued rising incomes while poverty rates held steady in 2022.
  - Median household incomes trended upward over the last decade for black, white, and Hispanic Tennesseans, but differences in their purchasing power also grew.
  - Racial and ethnic differences in the poverty rate varied over the last decade but ultimately shrank.
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The U.S. Census Bureau released new data in September 2023 on income, poverty, education, and health insurance coverage in 2022. These metrics paint a picture of the social and economic circumstances across America. Here's what stands out from the 2022 income and poverty estimates in Tennessee.\*

### Income and Poverty in Tennessee

**Tennessee saw continued increases in income in 2022 while poverty rates held steady.** Median household income in the state reached \$65,200 last year, meaning half of households had less income and half had more (**Figure 1**). (1) After adjusting for inflation, however, the differences in 2021 and 2022 income estimates were not statistically significant due to the margins of error (**Figure 2**). (2) (1) Meanwhile, [official poverty rates](#) held relatively steady at 13.3% among all Tennesseans — compared to 13.6% in 2021 — and 17.6% among children — compared to 18.1% the prior year (**Figure 3**). (1) These trends unfolded as [earnings grew at every level of education over the last decade](#) — especially among Tennesseans with the least education. See **Table A1** in the Appendix for the 2021–2022 data.

**Tennessee has higher poverty rates and lower income levels than the U.S., but those gaps narrowed over the last decade.** In 2010, the official poverty rate was 2.4 percentage points higher in Tennessee than nationwide, and the child poverty rate was 4.1 points higher. By 2022, those gaps had

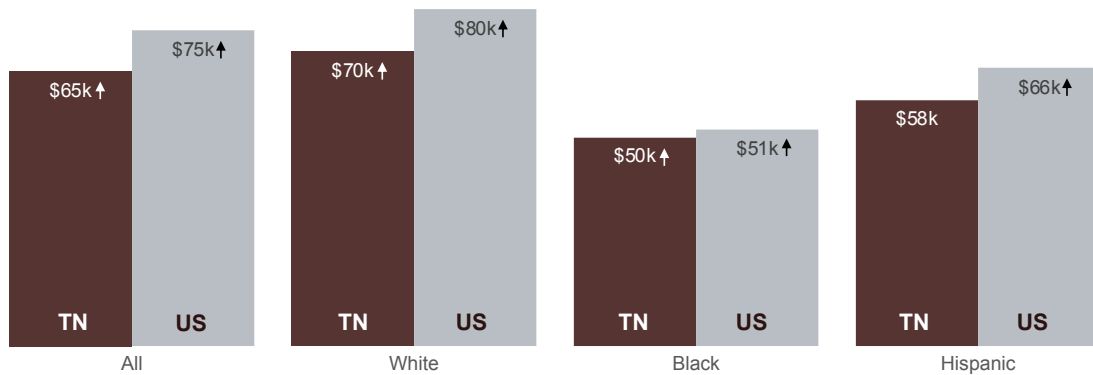
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\* Due to the margins of error, the difference in some 2021 and 2022 estimates is not statistically significant. The Census Bureau's American Community Survey generates estimates based on a sample of the total population. The margin of error measures the likely range of the true value if every person were surveyed. When the error margins for two values overlap, the difference may simply be due to sampling or estimation issues. To learn more about the importance of samples, [read our tips for interpreting statistics](#)

narrowed to 0.7 and 1.3 points, respectively (**Figure 4**). Meanwhile, our median household income remained about \$10,000 lower than the national amounts throughout 2010-2022, after adjusting for inflation.

### Figure 1. White, Black, and Hispanic Tennesseans All Have Lower Median Incomes than Their Counterparts Nationwide

Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity (2022)

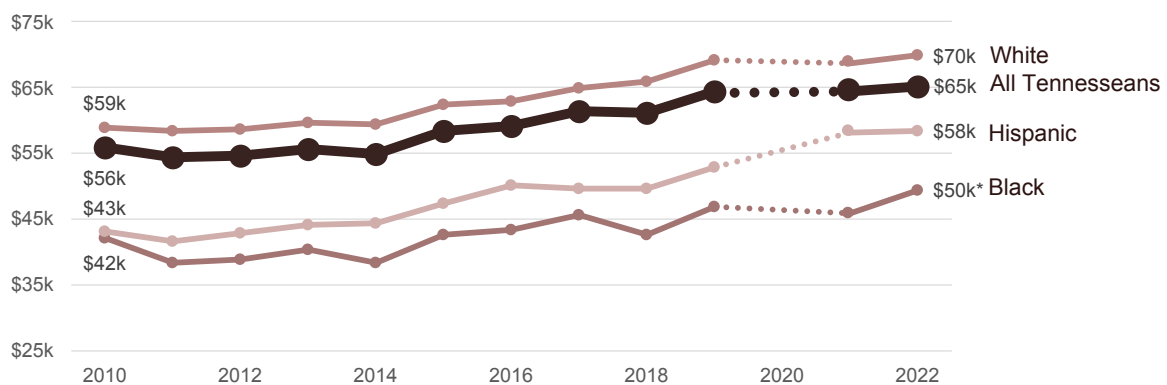


↓↑ Denotes a statistically significant change from 2021 (not adjusted for inflation). Due to the margins of error, the difference in other 2021 and 2022 estimates is not statistically significant. Note: Reflects the race/ethnicity of the homeowner or lease/mortgage holder (or one of them if multiple exist). Some Hispanic individuals also appear in the categories for black and white residents.

Source: 2021-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

### Figure 2. Household Incomes Have Trended Up for Black, Hispanic, and White Tennesseans, But at Different Rates

Median Household Income in Tennessee by Race/Ethnicity (in 2022 dollars) (2010-2022)

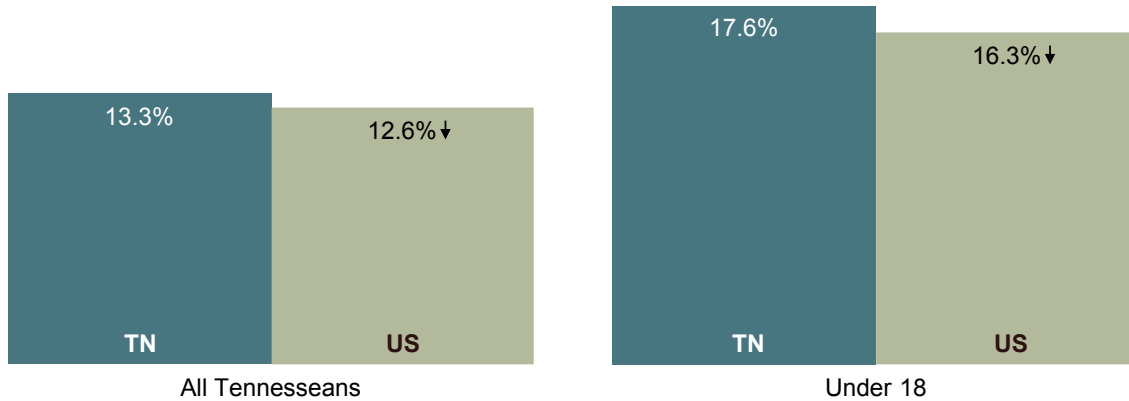


\*Denotes a statistically significant change from 2021. Due to the margins of error, the difference in all other 2021 and 2022 estimates is not statistically significant. Notes: Reflects the race/ethnicity of the homeowner or lease/mortgage holder (or one of them if multiple exist). Inflation-adjusted median incomes are shown in 2022 dollars using the CPI-U. Some Hispanic individuals also appear in the categories for black and white residents. Due to pandemic-related disruptions, detailed ACS 1-year estimates are unavailable for 2020.

Source: 2010-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

### Figure 3. Tennessee’s Official Poverty Rates Remain Higher than National Rates

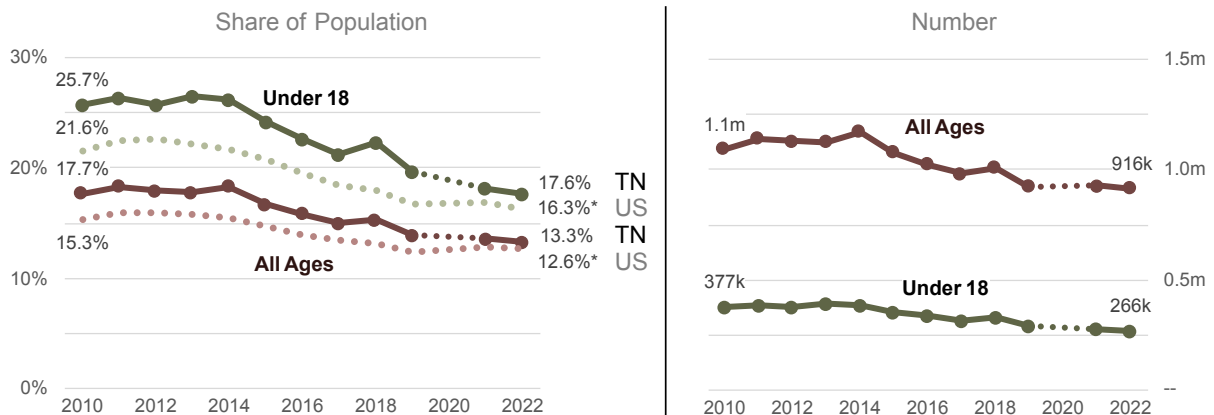
Individuals with Household Incomes Below the Federal Poverty Level (2022)



↓↑ Denotes a statistically significant change from 2021. Due to the margins of error, the difference in all other 2021 and 2022 estimates is not statistically significant.  
 Source: 2021-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

### Figure 4. Both the Share and Number of Tennesseans in Poverty Reached Historic Lows in 2022

Individuals with Household Incomes Below the Federal Poverty Level (2010-2022)



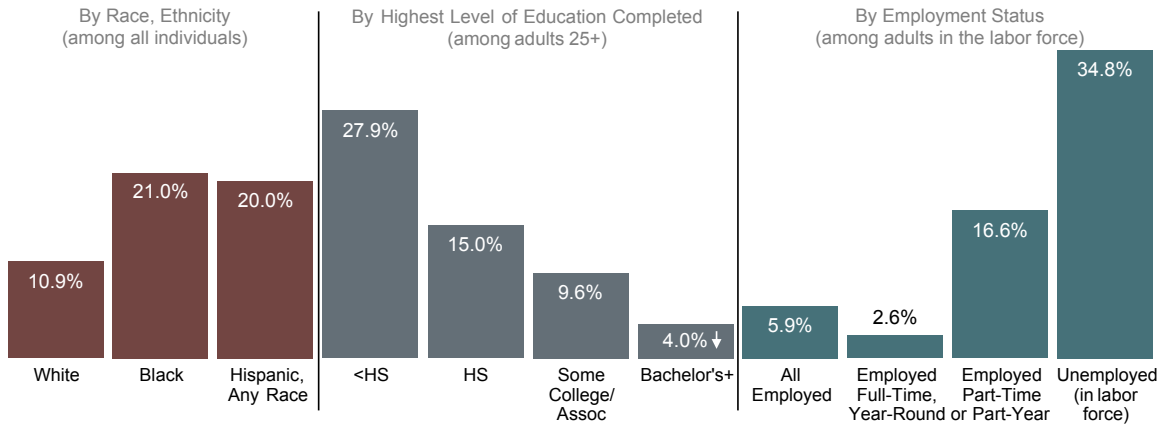
\*Denotes a statistically significant change from 2021. Due to the margins of error, the difference in all other 2021 and 2022 estimates is not statistically significant. Note: Due to pandemic-related disruptions, detailed ACS 1-year estimates are unavailable for 2020.  
 Source: 2010-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

## Demographic Variation

Tennessee’s poverty rate and median income vary across race, ethnicity, education level, employment, and household type. In 2022, black Tennesseans, adults without a high school diploma, and unemployed adults had the highest poverty rates, while white residents, college graduates, and full-time workers had the lowest (Figure 5). In terms of household type, poverty rates were lowest for married couples without children and highest for female-headed, non-married households with children. (Figure 6). (1)

## Figure 5. Poverty Rates in Tennessee Vary by Race/Ethnicity, Education, and Employment

Individuals with Household Incomes Below the Federal Poverty Level (2022)

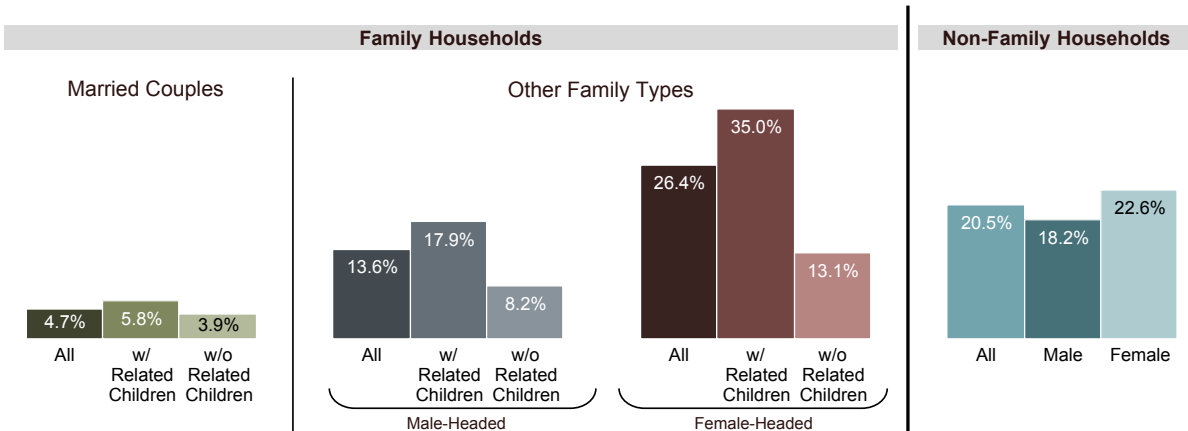


↓↑ Denotes a statistically significant change from 2021. Due to the margins of error, the difference in all other 2021 and 2022 estimates is not statistically significant. Note: Some Hispanic individuals also appear in the categories for black and white residents.

Source: 2021-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

## Figure 6. Married Tennesseans Without Children Have the Lowest Poverty Rate Among Household Types

Poverty Rates by Family Type, Head-of-Household Gender, and Presence of Children (2022)



Family households have at least two people related by blood, adoption, or marriage. The household head is the homeowner or lease/mortgage holder (or one of them if multiple exist).

Source: 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

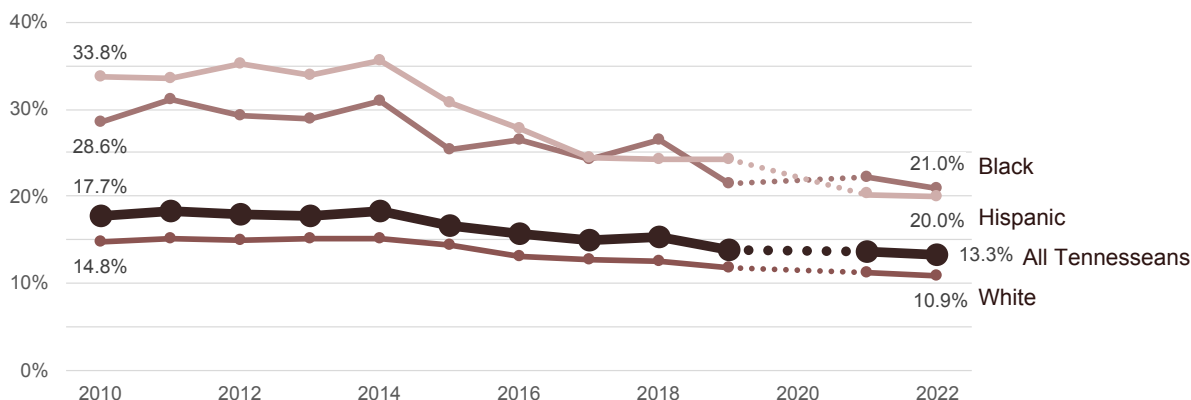
**Racial and ethnic differences in the poverty rate varied over the last decade but ultimately shrank (Figure 7).** (1) In 2010, the poverty rate among Hispanic Tennesseans was 19 percentage points higher than for whites and 5 points higher than that of black residents. By 2022, the rate among Hispanic Tennesseans was 9 points higher than for white Tennesseans and 1 point lower than that of black residents. Meanwhile, the gap between black and white Tennesseans shrank from 14 points to 10. The poverty rate for all three groups peaked in 2014. Since then, black Tennesseans experienced the largest

drop in the number of people under poverty — 32% or about 105,000 people. White Tennesseans saw about a 26% drop (198,000) and Hispanics a 22% drop (25,000).

**Median household incomes trended upward over the last decade for black, white, and Hispanic Tennesseans, but differences in their purchasing power also grew (Figure 2).** (1) (2) Adjusted for inflation, Tennesseans’ median household income grew most quickly over the last decade among Hispanics (up 35%). Both white and black Tennesseans’ incomes were up by about 18%. In dollar terms, the difference between white and Hispanic incomes shrank by nearly \$4,500, while the gap between white and black incomes grew by \$3,400.

### Figure 7. Poverty Rates Trended Down for Hispanic, Black, and White Tennesseans, But at Different Rates

Percent of Individuals with Incomes Below the Poverty Level by Race/Ethnicity (2010-2022)



\*Denotes a statistically significant change from 2021. Due to the margins of error, the difference in all other 2021 and 2022 estimates is not statistically significant.

Source: 2010-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

### Geographic Variation

**Income and poverty rates vary by geography in Tennessee.** The Census Bureau’s September 2023 data release includes 2022 estimates for counties with populations above 65,000. Among the 21 Tennessee counties with available data (1):

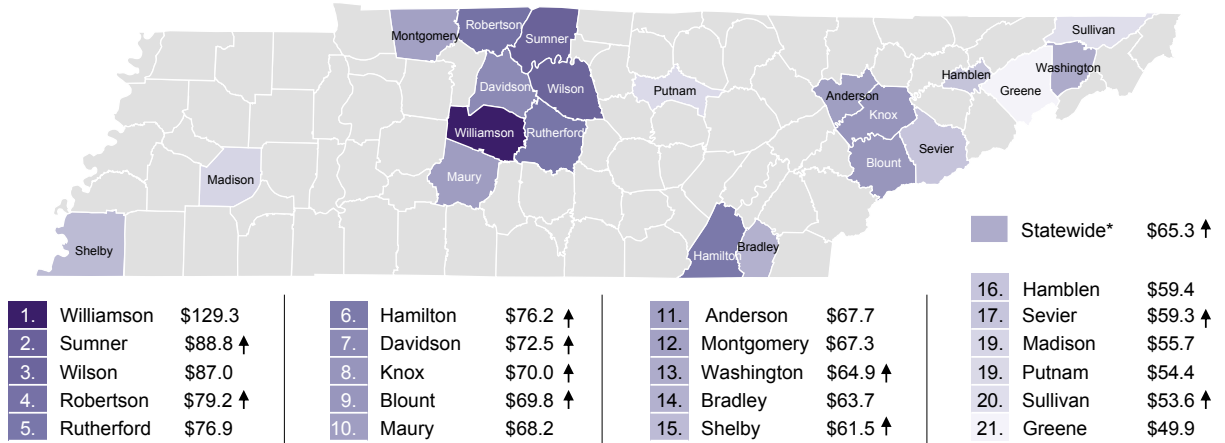
- Median Household Income** — Median household income ranged from over \$129,000 in Williamson County to about \$49,900 in Greene County (**Figure 8**). Ten counties experienced a statistically significant increase between 2021 and 2022 (not accounting for inflation). Due to the margins of error, the changes for the other 11 counties are not statistically significant.
- Poverty Rate** — The official poverty rate varied from 3.8% in Williamson County to 22.5% in Putnam County (**Figure 9**). From 2021 to 2022, statistically significant changes occurred in Greene (up 9 points) and Putnam (up 10 points) Counties.
- Child Poverty** — Meanwhile, the poverty rate among residents younger than 18 ranged from 3.4% in Williamson County to 30.9% in Putnam County (**Figure 10**). Statistically significant

changes occurred in Greene (up 20 points), Madison (down 12 points), and Putnam (up 16 points) Counties.

See **Table A1** in the Appendix for county-specific data for 2021-2022.

### Figure 8. In Tennessee’s Most Populous Counties, Median Household Incomes Ranged from \$49,900 to \$129,300

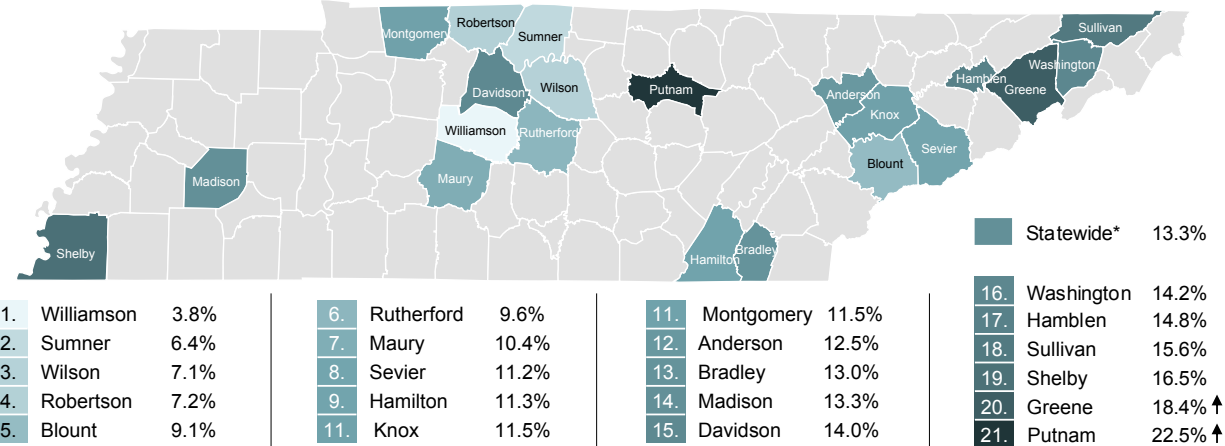
Median Household Income (in thousands) (2022)



↓↑ Denotes a statistically significant change from 2021 (not adjusted for inflation). Due to the margins of error, the difference in all other 2021 and 2022 estimates is not statistically significant. \*One-year estimates are unavailable for the 74 grey counties due to small sample sizes, but the statewide estimate includes every county.  
Source: 2021-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

### Figure 9. In Tennessee’s Most Populous Counties, Official Poverty Rates Ranged from 3.8% to 22.5%

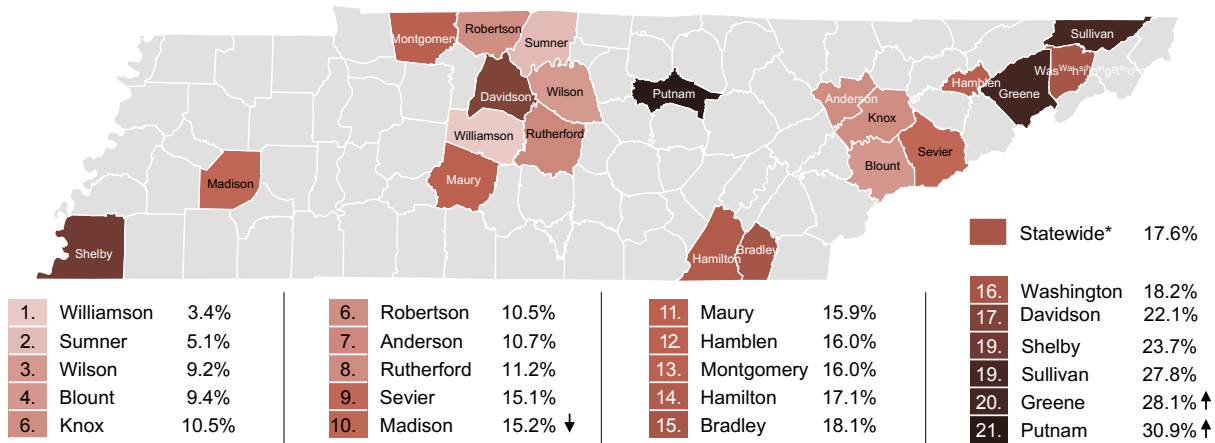
Percent of All Individuals with Household Incomes Below Poverty (2022)



↓↑ Denotes a statistically significant change from 2021. Due to the margins of error, the difference in all other 2021 and 2022 estimates is not statistically significant. \*One-year estimates are unavailable for the 74 grey counties due to small sample sizes, but the statewide estimate includes every county.  
Source: 2021-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

## Figure 10. In Tennessee’s Most Populous Counties, Child Poverty Rates Ranged from 3.4% to 30.9%

Percent of All Individuals Under 18 with Household Incomes Below the Federal Poverty Line (2022)



↓↑ Denotes a statistically significant change from 2021. Due to the margins of error, the difference in all other 2021 and 2022 estimates is not statistically significant. \*One-year estimates are unavailable for the 74 grey counties due to small sample sizes, but the statewide estimate includes every county.  
 Source: 2021-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

### References

1. **U.S. Census Bureau.** 2010-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. [Online] September 2023. Available via <http://data.census.gov>.
2. **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.** Consumer Price Index: CPI-U. [Online] Accessed from <https://www.bls.gov>.

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## Table A1. Tennessee 2021-2022 Income and Poverty Data

American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (2021-2022)

	Total Population		Median Household Income		Poverty Rate		Under 18 Poverty Rate	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
<b>Tennessee</b>	6,975,218	7,051,339	\$59,695	\$65,254*	13.6%	13.3%	18.1%	17.6%
<b>Anderson</b>	77,576	78,913	\$60,364	\$67,746	15.0%	12.5%	17.8%	10.7%
<b>Blount</b>	137,605	139,958	\$62,102	\$69,756*	8.8%	9.1%	12.5%	9.4%
<b>Bradley</b>	110,162	110,616	\$56,139	\$63,659	9.6%	13.0%*	10.3%	18.1%
<b>Davidson</b>	703,953	708,144	\$65,348	\$72,473*	15.0%	14.0%*	22.4%	22.1%
<b>Greene</b>	70,621	71,405	\$56,488	\$48,918	9.5%	18.4%*	8.5%	28.1%*
<b>Hamblen</b>	n/a	65,168	n/a	\$59,418	n/a	14.8%	n/a	16.0%
<b>Hamilton</b>	369,135	374,682	\$66,096	\$76,219*	12.5%	11.3%	17.0%	17.1%
<b>Knox</b>	486,677	494,574	\$64,894	\$69,999*	12.1%	11.5%	11.4%	10.5%
<b>Madison</b>	98,775	99,245	\$53,720	\$55,666	17.4%	13.3%	26.7%	15.2%*
<b>Maury</b>	104,760	108,159	\$68,840	\$68,157	10.3%	10.4%*	20.2%	15.9%
<b>Montgomery</b>	227,900	235,201	\$63,331	\$67,264	11.2%	11.5%	14.1%	16.0%
<b>Putnam</b>	81,188	82,382	\$52,278	\$54,373	12.3%	22.5%	15.4%	30.9%*
<b>Robertson</b>	74,098	75,470	\$65,139	\$79,171*	11.2%	7.2%	11.4%	10.5%
<b>Rutherford</b>	352,182	360,619	\$78,201	\$76,857	8.6%	9.6%	10.5%	11.2%
<b>Sevier</b>	99,517	98,789	\$50,239	\$59,315*	14.9%	11.2%	19.4%	15.1%
<b>Shelby</b>	924,454	916,371	\$54,841	\$61,516*	17.9%	16.5%	24.1%	23.7%
<b>Sullivan</b>	159,265	160,820	\$48,063	\$53,585*	17.9%	15.6%	30.1%	27.8%
<b>Sumner</b>	200,557	203,858	\$70,092	\$88,764*	8.3%	6.4%	8.9%	5.1%
<b>Washington</b>	134,236	136,172	\$56,009	\$64,899*	14.7%	14.2%	19.7%	18.2%
<b>Williamson</b>	255,735	260,815	\$117,927	\$129,275	3.5%	3.8%	3.5%	3.4%
<b>Wilson</b>	151,917	158,555	\$80,960	\$87,003	7.9%	7.1%	6.8%	9.2%

\*Denotes a statistically significant change from 2021. Due to the margins of error, the difference in all other 2021 and 2022 estimates is not statistically significant.

Notes: Because of the small sample size, 1-year estimates are unavailable for the 74 TN counties with populations below 65,000. However, statewide estimates include residents of every county.

Source: 2021-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates