



Income, Poverty, Education, and Insurance Coverage in Tennessee in 2020

January 10, 2022

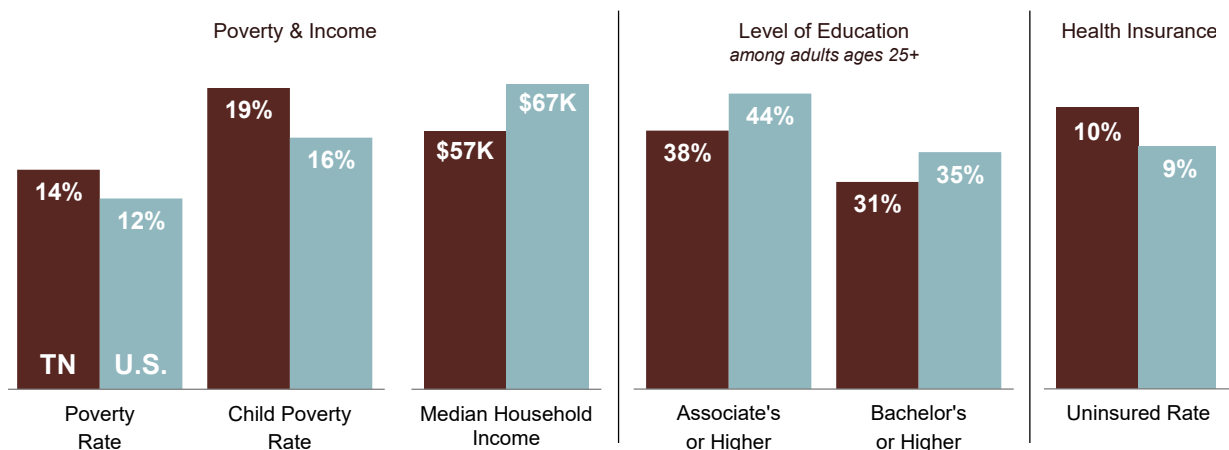
Key Takeaways

- Tennessee lagged the U.S. on several key indicators of socioeconomic success in 2020.
- Due to pandemic-related disruptions, these estimates are not considered comparable to prior years, which makes it difficult to assess how the pandemic affected Tennesseans in 2020.

The U.S. Census Bureau released new data in November on income, poverty, education, and health insurance coverage across the U.S. in 2020 (**Figure 1**). Here are our top takeaways for Tennessee.

Figure 1. Tennessee Lagged the U.S. on Several Key Indicators of Socioeconomic Success in 2020

Key Indicators from the 2020 American Community Survey Estimates



*To account for pandemic-related disruptions, the 2020 ACS 1-year estimates use a new experimental estimation methodology and are not considered comparable to prior years' ACS data. Source: 2020 American Community Survey 1-Year Experimental Estimates (1)

Income & Poverty

An estimated 14% of Tennesseans and 19% of Tennessee children were in households with incomes below the official poverty line in 2020. Both rates were higher than the national rates. The overall poverty rate was the 12th highest in the country while child poverty was the 13th highest. (1)

Tennessee's median household income was about \$57,000 in 2020. In other words, half of Tennessee households earned less than \$57,000 in 2020, and half earned more. This is about 15% lower than the national median income and the 9th lowest among all states. (1)

Education

About 38% of Tennesseans 25 and older had at least an associate's degree in 2020, and about 31% had at least a bachelor's degree. Nationally, about 44% had at least an associate's and 35% at least a bachelor's. Tennessee's share with at least an associate's was the 10th lowest in the country, and those with at least a bachelor's was the 15th lowest. (1)

Health Insurance Coverage

About 1 in 10 Tennesseans did not have health insurance coverage in 2020. Nationally, about 9% were uninsured. Tennessee's uninsured rate was the 12th highest in the country. (1)

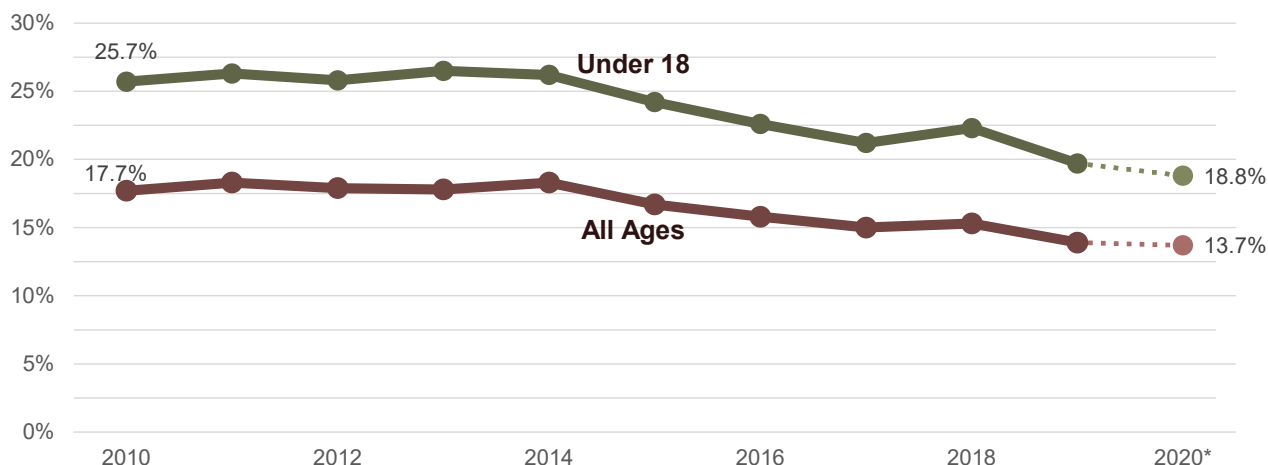
The Impact of COVID-19 on Data Collection

Data limitations make it difficult to assess how the COVID-19 pandemic affected Tennesseans in 2020. Each year, the ACS produces estimates based on a sample of the U.S. population. If the sample is too small or doesn't accurately reflect the population in some key way, these estimates will likely be incorrect. Disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally shifted who the Census Bureau was able to reach and who responded to the survey. To account for these changes, the Census Bureau changed how they weighted survey responses to produce estimates for the larger population. They also released far fewer estimates than in years past. Because both the sample surveyed and the estimation methods differ from prior years, the 2020 estimates are not considered comparable to prior estimates. (2)

With these limitations in mind, **Figures 2-5** provide Tennessee data back to 2010 for each measure. (2)

Figure 2. The Share of Tennesseans in Poverty Has Fallen Since 2014, Especially Among Children

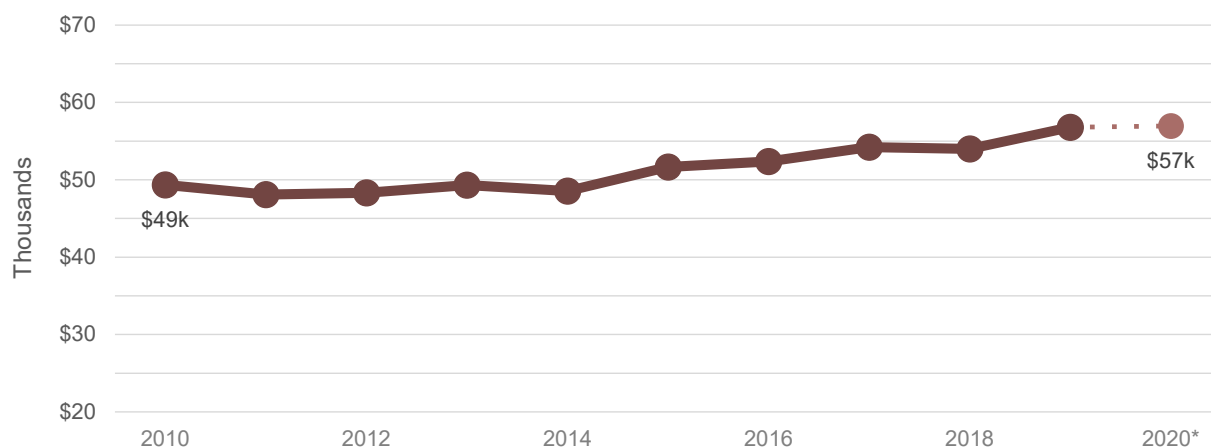
Percent of Tennesseans in Households with Incomes Below the Federal Poverty Level (2010-2020)



*To account for pandemic-related disruptions, the 2020 ACS 1-year estimates use a new experimental estimation methodology and are not considered comparable to prior years' ACS data. Sources: 2010-2020 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (3) (1)

Figure 3. Household Incomes Have Trended Up for the Average Tennessean Since 2014

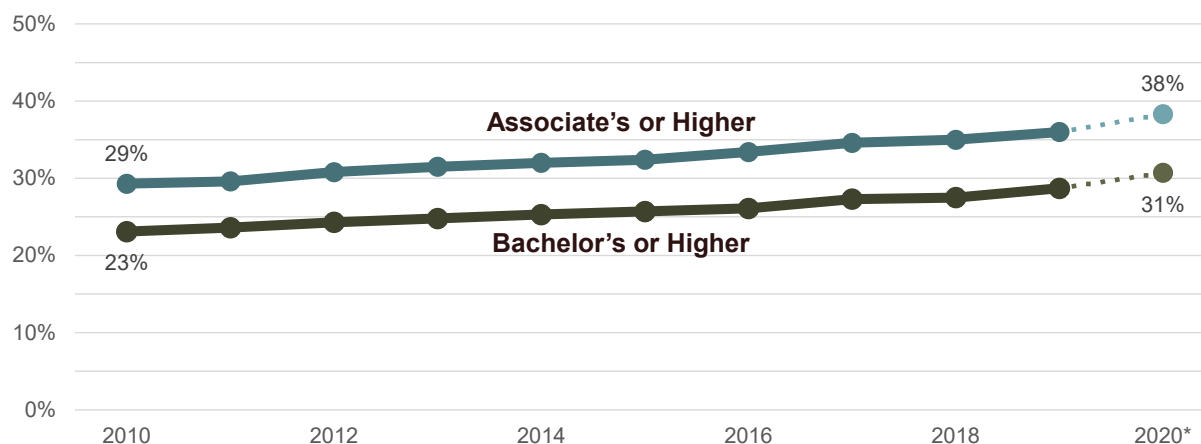
Median Household Income in Tennessee (in 2020 dollars) (2010-2020)



*To account for pandemic-related disruptions, the 2020 ACS 1-year estimates use a new experimental estimation methodology and are not considered comparable to prior years' ACS data. Sources: 2010-2020 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (3) (1) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics' CPI-U-RS (4)

Figure 4. Educational Attainment in Tennessee Has Steadily Climbed Over the Last Decade

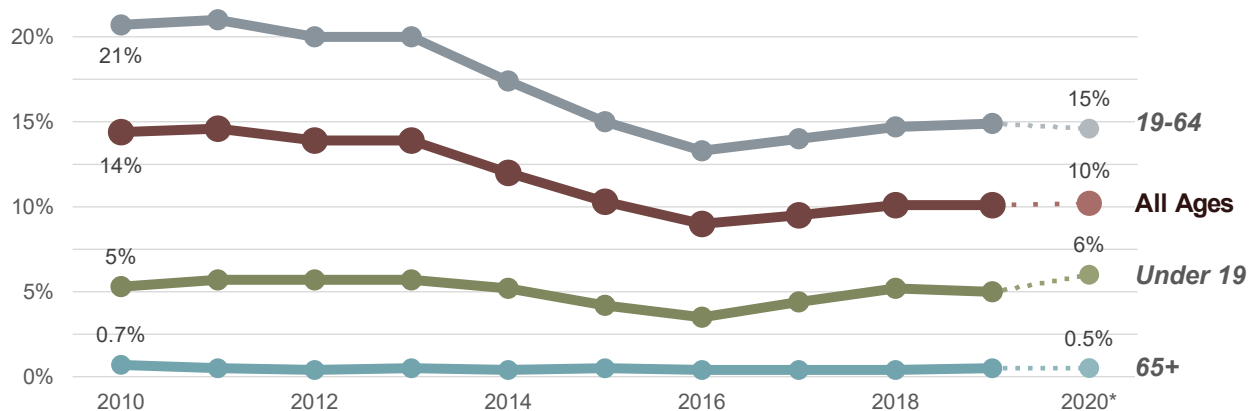
Highest Level of Education Attained by Tennesseans Ages 25+ (2010-2020)



*To account for pandemic-related disruptions, the 2020 ACS 1-year estimates use a new experimental estimation methodology and are not considered comparable to prior years' ACS data. Sources: 2010-2020 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (3) (1)

Figure 5. Tennessee's Uninsured Rates Have Held Steady Since About 2016

Percent of Tennesseans Who Were Uninsured by Age (2010-2020)



*To account for pandemic-related disruptions, the 2020 ACS 1-year estimates use a new experimental estimation methodology and are not considered comparable to prior years' ACS data. Sources: 2010-2020 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (3)

References

1. **U.S. Census Bureau.** 2020 ACS 1-Year Experimental Data Tables. [Online] November 30, 2021. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/experimental-data/1-year.html>
2. —. An Assessment of the COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on the 2020 ACS 1-Year Data. [Online] October 27, 2021. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2021/acs/2021_CensusBureau_01.pdf
3. —. 2010-2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. [Online] 2011-2020. Data accessed via <http://data.census.gov>
4. **U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics.** CPI-U-RS. [Online] March 12, 2021. Data accessed from <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/research-series/r-cpi-u-rs-home.htm>

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