

Education and Earnings in Tennessee

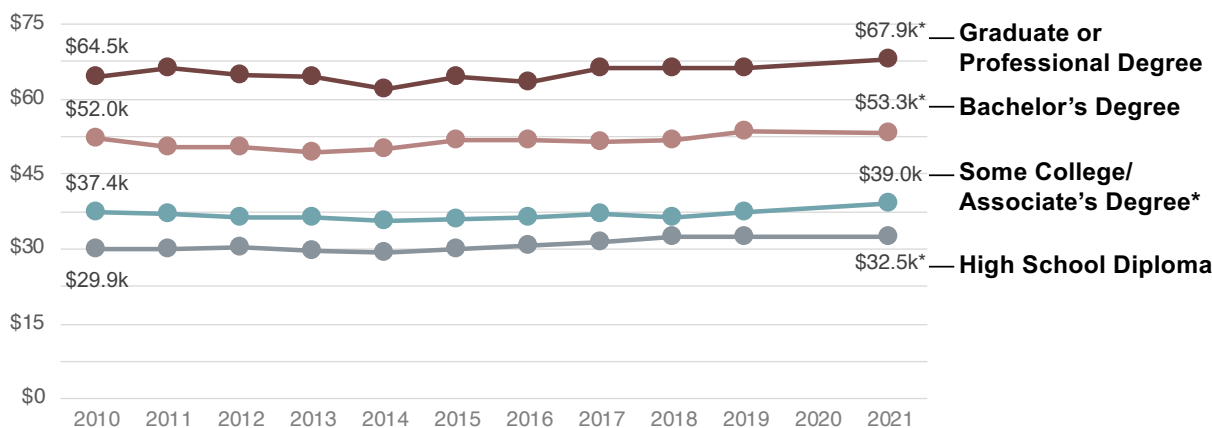
Higher levels of education continue to be associated with higher earnings in Tennessee (Figure 6).

In 2021, for example, Tennesseans with just a bachelor's degree had median earnings of about \$53,000. In other words, half of the people in that group made more and half earned less. For comparison, median earnings were 37% lower for Tennesseans with only some college or an associate's degree — about \$39,000.

Over the last decade, median earnings have grown for Tennesseans at every level of education (Figure 6). (1) (3) After adjusting for inflation, the greatest increase occurred for earnings of those with a high school diploma, which were 9% higher in 2021 than in 2010. Earnings grew more slowly for those with some college or an associate's degree – up 4% – and those with a bachelor's degree or with a graduate or professional degree – up 3% and 5% respectively.

Figure 6. In Tennessee's Most Populated Counties, 19–62% of Adults Age 25+ Have at Least a Bachelor's Degree

Median Earnings for Tennesseans by Highest Level of Education (in 2021 dollars) (2010-2019)



Inflation-adjusted median earnings are shown in 2021 dollars using the CPI-U. (3) Note: Due to pandemic-related disruptions, detailed ACS 1-year estimates are not available for 2020. * Due to the margins of error, the difference in 2019 and 2021 estimates is not statistically significant.

Sources: 2010-2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (1)

References

1. **U.S. Census Bureau.** 2010-2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. [Online] September 2022. 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. 2019-2021 Census Data on Tennesseans' Education Levels

American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (2019-2021)

	Total Population		% of Adults 25+ with an Associate's Degree or Higher		% of Adults 25+ with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	
	2019	2021	2019	2021	2019	2021
Tennessee	6,829,174	6,975,218	36.1%	38.3%*	28.7%	30.5%*
Anderson	76,978	77,576	31.4%	37.6%	21.3%	27.6%*
Blount	133,088	137,605	29.3%	34.2%	23.3%	25.2%
Bradley	108,110	110,162	29.6%	31.8%	22.5%	21.4%
Davidson	694,144	703,953	51.9%	52.0%	45.7%	46.6%
Greene	69,069	70,621	25.3%	26.7%	19.0%	21.0%
Hamilton	367,804	369,135	44.1%	44.1%	35.1%	36.1%
Knox	470,313	486,677	46.5%	49.4%	37.7%	40.5%*
Madison	97,984	98,775	34.2%	35.6%	27.1%	29.3%
Maury	96,387	104,760	35.5%	36.6%	25.1%	26.5%
Montgomery	208,993	227,900	43.9%	38.8%	30.9%	28.2%
Putnam	80,245	81,188	34.2%	37.0%	28.4%	30.0%
Robertson	71,813	74,098	26.8%	30.3%	21.2%	21.1%
Rutherford	332,285	352,182	39.6%	44.3%	30.8%	37.7%*
Sevier	98,250	99,517	25.9%	30.3%	19.0%	19.2%
Shelby	937,166	924,454	37.7%	41.1%*	31.7%	34.3%*
Sullivan	158,348	159,265	34.2%	35.7%	26.3%	24.6%
Sumner	191,283	200,557	38.8%	40.3%	30.6%	29.9%
Washington	129,375	134,236	40.4%	42.7%	31.7%	34.9%
Williamson	238,412	255,735	67.5%	69.5%	61.8%	62.0%
Wilson	144,657	151,917	43.0%	44.1%	35.1%	37.4%

* Indicates a statistically significant change from 2019. Due to the margins of error, the difference in all other 2019 and 2021 estimates is not statistically significant. Due to pandemic-related disruptions, detailed ACS 1-year estimates are not available for 2020.

Notes: Because of small sample size, one-year estimates are not available for the 75 TN counties with populations below 65,000. However, statewide estimates include residents of every county.

Source: 2019-2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

ⁱ Due to the margins of error, the difference in some 2019 and 2021 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](#).