

TENNESSEE

Tennessee has a population of 7 million people, making it the 15th-most populous state in the U.S.

Sixteen percent (16.7%) of the population is Black (compared to 13.6% nationally); 73% of the population is white; 6% is Hispanic; 2% is Asian; and .5% is American Indian and/or Alaska Native.¹

Legislative Profile

- Governor Bill Lee (R) does not support reproductive autonomy.
- The Tennessee State House does not support reproductive autonomy.
- The Tennessee State Senate does not support reproductive autonomy.

Policy Profile: Access to Health Care

AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE^{2 3 4}

- Tennessee has not accepted federal Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). As a result:
 - » 1,623,017 people are covered by Medicaid/CHIP as of October 2021.
 - » 339,000 additional Tennessee residents would be covered if the state accepted expansion.
 - » 118,000 people have no realistic access to health insurance without Medicaid expansion.
- The uninsured rate for Black people in Tennessee is 12.7%. The national average uninsured rate for Black people is 10.9%.
- Tennessee's state Medicaid program includes extended eligibility for 12 months postpartum for those making less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

HEALTH IMPACT FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC^{5 6}

- The Black population accounted for 17% of all deaths in Tennessee, a percentage that is about the same as the state's population (16.7%).

- The white population comprises 80% of deaths (higher than the overall state population) and the Hispanic population accounts for 3% of deaths, less than the overall state population.
- Only ten percent (10.4%) of Black people in Tennessee have received a full COVID-19 vaccine series. For white people, a little over half have received the full series (53%); for Asian people in Tennessee, 1.6% of the total population is vaccinated.

ABORTION RIGHTS^{7 8}

- Abortion is completely banned in Tennessee with very limited exceptions as a result of a law that went into effect in 2022.
- Exceptions include procedures that are necessary to save the pregnant person's life, to preserve the pregnant person's physical health, and if the fetus is not expected to survive the pregnancy.
- The abortion rate in Tennessee in 2020 was 8.4 procedures per 1000 women.

FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES^{9 10}

- Tennessee does not have expanded eligibility for coverage of family planning services under Medicaid.
- People of any age can buy emergency contraception (EC) without a prescription. People ages 16 and older and/or those who are married can get a prescription for birth control without parental permission.
- Tennessee does not require emergency rooms to provide EC or information about EC to rape survivors.

SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION¹¹

- Tennessee state law requires schools to teach sexual health education only in locations where the pregnancy rate has reached a certain level among 15- and 17-year-olds (19.5 pregnancies for every 1,000 teenage girls). Tennessee state law requires STD/STI and HIV/AIDS prevention education.

- Abstinence must be stressed as the only completely effective protection against pregnancy and STDs/STIs.
- Students do not need permission of parents or guardians to participate in classes, but parents or guardians can opt their child out of it.

Systemic Disparities

MATERNAL AND INFANT MORTALITY^{12 13 14 15}

- The pregnancy-related mortality ratio in Tennessee in 2020 was 58.5 deaths per 100,000 live births, representing a 51% increase from 2017—2019.
- From 2017—2020, 113 women in Tennessee died from pregnancy-related causes. The vast majority (89%) of these deaths were deemed to be preventable.
- Black women in Tennessee were 2.5 times more likely to die than white women (68.4 and 27.8 per 100,000 live births, respectively); this mirrors the overall U.S. mortality rate for Black women (69.9), which is 2.6 times the rate of white women (26.6).
- New data from the CDC indicate that the nation's maternal mortality rate increased in 2021, to 32.9 deaths for every 100,000 live births. The U.S. mortality rate for Black women was 69.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, 2.6 times the rate of white women.
- Pregnant people who live in a state like Tennessee that banned abortion post-Dobbs were up to three times more likely to die during pregnancy, childbirth, or soon after giving birth. Babies born in those states were almost 30% more likely to die during the first month of life.
- The Black infant mortality rate in Tennessee was 12 deaths for every 1,000 live births; the U.S. rate is 10.4/1,000 live births. For whites, the rate is 5.7/1,000, compared to 4.4/1,000 nationally.

TENNESSEE'S WAGE GAP



BLACK WOMEN MAKE **68 CENTS** FOR EVERY \$1.00 A WHITE MAN MAKES, A WAGE GAP OF **32 CENTS**.

National Women's Law Center (NWLC), *Wage Gap by State for Black Women—March 2023*, Washington (DC): NWLC, 2023. Online: <https://nwlc.org/resource/wage-gap-state-black-women/>

AMONG BLACK WOMEN, **22%** LIVE IN POVERTY, COMPARED TO **14%** OF ALL WOMEN AGED 18 AND OLDER AND ALMOST **THREE TIMES** AS THAT OF WHITE WOMEN (12%).

Black individuals in Tennessee comprise 42% of the prison population, compared to only 17% of the overall state population.

STDs, INCLUDING HIV/AIDS¹⁶

- Of the total new diagnoses of STDs/STIs in 2021 where race/ethnicity was reported:
 - » There were 254 new diagnoses of Syphilis in women in Tennessee: 51% were among Black women, 46% were among white women, and 3% were among Hispanic women.
 - » There were 24,922 new diagnoses of Chlamydia in Tennessee: 47% were among Black women, 43% were among white women, and 9% were among Hispanic women.
 - » There were 8,396 new diagnoses of Gonorrhea: 56% were among Black women, 39% were among white women and 3% were among Hispanic women.
- Among the women who received an HIV diagnosis in Tennessee in 2022, 51% were Black women, 41% were white women, 3% were multi-racial, and 4% were Hispanic women.
- In 2021, of the AIDS-related deaths among women in Tennessee, 52% were among Black women, 37% were white women, 7% were multi-racial, and 4% were Hispanic.

REPRODUCTIVE CANCERS¹⁷

- In Tennessee, the age-adjusted rate of new breast cancer cases is 116.8 cancers for every 100,000 women. The rate for Black women is 109.5 for every 100,000 women; for white women, the rate is 116.9 and for Hispanic women it is 68.8.
- The breast cancer mortality rate for Black women in Tennessee is 27.5 deaths for every 100,000 women, compared to 20.9 per 100,000 for white women.
- The age-adjusted cervical cancer rate is 6.8 cases for every 100,000 women in Tennessee. The rate for Black women is 6.8 per 100,000 women; the rate for white women is 6.5.
- The cervical cancer mortality rate for Black women is 3.5 deaths for every 100,000 women and 2.9 per 100,000 for white women.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE^{18 19 20}

- In Tennessee, Black women make 68 cents for every dollar that a white man makes, creating a wage gap of 32 cents.
- The lifetime wage gap for Black women in Tennessee is \$702,960; a Black woman has to work until age 79 to make what a white man does by age 60.
- In Tennessee, 35% of women-headed households live in poverty. Among Black women, 22% live in poverty, compared to 14% of all women aged 18 and older and almost three times as that of white women (12%).

LGBTQIA+ LIBERATION^{21 22}

- Tennessee has no state laws in place that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity with respect to employment, housing, public accommodations, or in credit and lending policies. The state bans cities and counties from passing nondiscrimination laws.
- State law explicitly defines “sex” to exclude transgender people.
- Tennessee bans best practice medication and surgical care for transgender youth. The ban on surgical care for minors went into effect July 1, 2023.
- State law protects LGBTQIA+ parents with respect to adoption or foster care. State family leave laws do not include LGBTQIA+ inclusive definitions of “spouse” or “partner.”

CRIMINAL JUSTICE^{23 24 25}

- Black individuals in Tennessee comprise 42% of the prison population, compared to only 17% of the overall state population.
- Black individuals are 3.3 times more likely as white individuals to be incarcerated.
- Tennessee denies the right to vote to more people with a felony conviction than 49 other states. Tennessee is one of three states where more than 8% of the population is disenfranchised (the other two states are Alabama and Mississippi).
- Tennessee denies voting rights to 21% of Black voting-age citizens, 4 times the national average.
- Tennessee does not have anti-shackling legislation to protect the health of pregnant inmates.

BLACK WOMEN IN TENNESSEE ARE 2.5 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DIE DURING CHILDBIRTH THAN WHITE WOMEN (68.4 AND 27.8 PER 100,000 LIVE BIRTHS, RESPECTIVELY)

THE VAST MAJORITY (89%) OF MATERNAL DEATHS WERE DEEMED TO HAVE BEEN PREVENTABLE.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN^{26 27 28}

- Almost two-fifths (39.6%) of women in Tennessee and 36.8% of men experience intimate partner physical violence (IPV), intimate partner rape, and/or intimate partner stalking in their lives.
- In 2020, 90 Tennesseans were murdered in domestic violence incidents; firearms were used in approximately 60% of these homicides.
- Black women in Tennessee experience higher rates of IPV than women of other racial/ethnic groups; 49% of Black women have reported experiencing IPV, compared to 38% of white women.
- Since 2015, police have killed 16 women in Tennessee; 2 were black, 11 were white, the rest were of unknown race/ethnicity.

*Tennessee denies
voting rights to 21%
of Black voting-age
citizens, 4 times the
national average.*

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We are a national partnership focused on lifting up the voices of Black women leaders at the national, regional, and state level in our ongoing policy fight to secure Reproductive Justice for all women and girls.



**IN OUR OWN VOICE:
NATIONAL BLACK WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE AGENDA**
601 13th St., NW, Suite 650 N • Washington, DC 20005 • 202-545-7660 • www.blackrj.org

Strategic Partners



P.O. Box 292516
Los Angeles, CA 90029
(323) 290-5955
www.bwwla.org



55 M Street SE | Suite 940
Washington, D.C. 20003
(202) 548.4000
www.bwhi.org



The Beatty Building
5907 Penn Avenue, Suite 340
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15206
(412) 450-0290
newvoicesrj.org



P.O. Box 10558
Atlanta, Georgia 30310
(404) 505-7777
www.sisterlove.org



1750 Madison Avenue
Suite 600
Memphis, Tennessee 38104
(901) 222-4425
sisterreach.org



P.O. Box 89210
Atlanta, GA 30312
(404) 331-3250
www.sparkrj.org



501 Wynnewood Dr, Ste 213
Dallas, Texas, TX 75224
(972) 629-9266
theafiyacenter.org



1226 N. Broad Street
New Orleans, LA 70119
(504) 301-0428
wwav-no.org

Acknowledgments

Authors

Regina Davis Moss, PhD, MPH, MCHES, President & CEO,
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Because the Reproductive Justice framework encompasses bodily integrity and autonomy, our use of the term "women" includes cis, femmes, trans, agender, gender non-binary, and gender non-confirming individuals.