GUIDE TO DATA: DEFINITIONS & SOURCES

Each section of the 2026 Data Dashboard combines data from various sources to paint a clear picture of health and nutrition access in Tennessee. Use this guide to understand where the data comes from and how to interpret the data represented for each county. Please forward any questions to communicationstjc@tnjustice.org.

DEMOGRAPHICS

2026 Data Point	Source Name	Data Year	Description
Population	US Census Bureau	2025	Use the excel titled " cc-est2025-alldata-47." Filtered excel by the following variables: AGEGRP- 0 = Total, YEAR- 7 = 7/1/2025, STNAME- Tennessee.
Population Growth	World Population Review	2026	Growth indicators (in %) compare 2020 population numbers to 2026 population estimates.
Race/Ethnicity	US Census Bureau	2025	Use the excel titled " cc-est2025-alldata-47." Filtered excel by the following variables: AGEGRP- 0 = Total, YEAR- 7 = 7/1/2025, STNAME- Tennessee. For race/ethnicity calculations, we totaled the Male and Female numbers under each race/ethnicity; for race totals, we reported Not Hispanic numbers.
Rural Area	**County Health Rankings & Roadmaps**	**2020**	**Based on the 2020 Decennial Census Demographic and Housing Characteristics File. Displayed as the color-coded map for the Demographics map.**
Voter Turnout	TN Secretary of State	2024	Based on the November 4, 2024 Election, Voter Turnout is defined by the rate of registered voters who participated in the election.
Broadband Access	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps	2020-2024	Broadband access constitutes consistent high-speed internet services.

PUBLIC BENEFITS ENROLLMENT

2026 Data Point	Source Name	Data Year	Description
TennCare Enrollment	TN Division of TennCare	2026	The average TennCare Medicaid Enrollment from January 2026 to July 2026 was taken to establish the numbers for the dashboard.
CoverKids Enrollment	TN Division of TennCare, CoverKids	2026	The average CoverKids Enrollment from January 2026 to July 2026 was taken to establish the numbers for the dashboard.
Marketplace Average Premium	**Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services**	**2026**	**This metric comes from the average monthly cost that Marketplace enrollees are required to pay to keep their health insurance. Displayed as the color-coded map for the Public Benefits map.**
SNAP Enrollment	TN Dept of Human Services	2026	The average SNAP Enrollment from January 2026 to July 2026 was taken to establish the numbers for the dashboard.
WIC Enrollment	TN Department of Health	2026	The average WIC Participation from January 2026 to July 2026 was taken to establish the numbers for the dashboard. The Tennessee Justice Center submitted a records request for the data.
School Meals Participation	TN Department of Education	SY24-SY25	The Tennessee Justice Center submitted a records request for data from the 2024-2025 school year.
TANF Enrollment	TN Department of Human Services	2025	The average TANF Enrollment from January 2025 to December 2026 was taken to establish the numbers for the dashboard. The Tennessee Justice Center submitted a records request for the data.

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

2026 Data Point	Source Name	Data Year	Description
Pre-term Birth Rate	March of Dimes	2024	Preterm birth is defined as a live birth before 37 completed weeks of gestation.
TennCare Live Births	TCCY's FUTURE Data Dashboard	2022	TennCare live births are defined as women who were enrolled in TennCare at the time of birth as a percentage of all live births.
Low Birth Weight	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps	2018-2024	Low birthweight is defined as under 5 pounds, 8 ounces. Data is sorted by race and ethnicity.
Infant Mortality Rate	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps	2017-2023	Infant mortality rate is the number of infant deaths before 1 year per 1,000 live births. Data is sorted by race and ethnicity.
Access to Maternity Care	**March of Dimes**	**2021-2024**	**Maternity care deserts are defined as counties without a hospital or birth center offering obstetric care and without any obstetric clinicians. Low access to care is defined as a county with one or fewer hospitals or birth centers that provide obstetric care, few obstetric clinicians (fewer than 60 per 10,000 births) or a high proportion of women without health insurance (greater than or equal to 10% reproductive aged women). Moderate access to care is defined as living in a county with access to one or fewer hospitals/birth centers and few obstetric clinicians or adequate health insurance coverage (less than 10% of women of reproductive age uninsured). Full access to maternity care can be defined by the availability of two or more hospitals or birth centers providing obstetric care in that county or at least 60 clinicians offering obstetric care. Displayed as the color-coded map for the Maternal & Child Health map.**
Maternal Vulnerability Index	Surgo Health	2021	The Maternal Vulnerability Index uses six themes (reproductive healthcare, physical healthcare, mental health & substance abuse, general healthcare, socioeconomic determinants, and physical environment) to identify where and why mothers are most vulnerable to health outcomes. Each county is assigned a relative maternal vulnerability score with 0 being the least vulnerable and 100 being the most).

HEALTH DISPARITIES

2026 Data Point	Source Name	Data Year	Description
Community Conditions	**County Health Rankings & Roadmaps**	**2025**	**Community Conditions (CC) is an index that measures health factors using data from across the year 2017-2024. The CC is based on the following components: (1) Health Infrastructure (health promotion and harm reduction, clinical care), (2) Physical Environment (housing and transportation, air, water and land, and civic and community resources), and (3) Social and Economic Factors (education, income, employment and wealth, and safety and social support). We reported the health group each county was assigned based on z-score calculations with the metrics composing the CC index. Community Conditions groups range from 1 (healthiest) to 10 (least healthy). Displayed as the color-coded map for the Health Disaprities map.**
Life Expectancy	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps	2021-2023	Life expectancy is defined as the average number of years people are expected to live. The data is sorted by race is race and ethnicity.
TennCare Enrollment	TN Division of TennCare	2026	The average TennCare Medicaid Enrollment from January 2026 to July 2026 was taken to establish the numbers for the dashboard.
Number of Uninsured Children	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps	2023	This metric dictates the number of children who are without health insurance. The data is reported using both the number and percentage of uninsured children.
Number of Uninsured Adults	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps	2023	This metric dictates the number of children who are without health insurance. The data is reported using both the number and percentage of uninsured adults.

2026 Data Point	Source Name	Data Year	Description
Population to Primary Care Physicians Ratio	County Health Ranks & Roadmaps	2022	This metric is the ratio of the population to primary care physicians, shown as the number of residents per one primary care physician (for example, 1,500:1).
Share of Population with Medical Debt in Collections	Urban Institute	2025	This metric is the share of the general with medical debt in collections.
Safety Net	Uninsured Adult Healthcare Safety Net Annual Report 2025	2025	A safety net is a provider that will deliver healthcare services regardless of an individual's ability to pay, income, or insurance status. In this particular map, we report whether a county has a dental or primary care safety net.
Rural Health Closures	Cecil G. Sheps Center For Health Services Research	2026	A closed hospital is defined as "a facility that stopped providing general, short-term, acute inpatient care."
Population to Provider Ratios: Dental, Pediatric, Obstetric, TennCare	Uninsured Adult Healthcare Safety Net Annual Report 2025	2025	Counties designated as Bottom 30 have the lowest population to provider ratios. Counties designated as Top 30 have the highest population to provider ratios.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

2026 Data Point	Source Name	Data Year	Description
Fatal and Nonfatal Overdoses	TN Department of Health	2024	Separate files for fatal and nonfatal overdoses. For nonfatal statistics, we filtered by year (2024), inpatient/outpatient deaths (all drugs), and rate/count. Total nonfatal overdose death counts and rates reported in the dashboard were calculated by totaling the counts/rates reported for both inpatient stays and outpatient visits, for each county.

2026 Data Point	Source Name	Data Year	Description
Mental Healthcare Providers	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps	2025	Mental Health Provider ratio is the ratio of a county's population to a single provider, if providers were spread evenly across the population.
Mental Well-Being Index	Belmont Data Collaborative 2024 Report: Connecting the Dots: Mental Health and Student Success in Tennessee	2014-2021	The Mental Well-Being Index (MWBI) was created using data from across the year 2014-2021. The MWBI is comprised of 4 components: (1) Highly Detrimental US Society Problems, (2) Socioeconomic Status & Opportunities or Accruing Wealth, (3) Basic Needs in Terms of Housing, Food, Transportation, and Health Care, and (4) Immediate & Global Physical Environment. Each category has different numbers of variables that comprise it; there are 21 total individual variables that collectively comprise the MWBI. TJC reported the MWBI as is, rounding to the nearest hundredth.
Behavioral Health Safety Net	TN Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services	N/A	This metric is based on a sortable and searchable provider list divvied by county in alphabetical order with the total number of locations for each county. No source date is provided.
Suicide Rate	County Health Rankings & Roadmaps	2023	Suicide rate is age-adjusted to account for different age.
Population Health and Well-Being	**County Health Rankings & Roadmaps**	**2025**	**Population Health and Well-being (PHWB) is an index that measures health outcomes using data from across the year 2017-2022. The PHWB is based on the following components: (1) Length of Life (life span) and (2) Quality of Life (physical health, mental health, and life satisfaction). We reported the health group each county was assigned based on z-score calculations with the metrics composing the PHWB index. Health groups range from 1 (healthiest) to 10 (least healthy). Displayed as the color-coded map for the Behavioral Health map.**

NUTRITION

2026 Data Point	Source Name	Data Year	Description
SNAP Enrollment	TN Dept of Human Services	2026	The average SNAP Enrollment from January 2026 to July 2026 was taken to establish the numbers for the dashboard.
WIC Enrollment	TN Department of Health	2026	The average WIC Participation from January 2026 to July 2026 was taken to establish the numbers for the dashboard. The Tennessee Justice Center submitted a records request for the data.
School Meals Participation	TN Department of Education	SY24-SY25	The Tennessee Justice Center submitted a records request for data from the 2024-2025 school year.
Food Insecurity	**County Health Rankings**	**2023**	**Food insecurity is defined as limited or uncertain access to nutritious and affordable foods. The metric is reported using both the number and rate of those experiencing food insecurity. Displayed as the color-coded map for the Nutrition map.**
Tennessee Summer Nutrition Initiative	TN Dept of Human Services	2026	In lieu of Summer EBT, these are the 13 counties who received nutrition assistance during summer 2026.
Access to Food Stores	USDA Food Environment Atlas	2019	This constitutes low access to food stores for both the general population and those enrolled in SNAP.

2026 Data Point	Source Name	Data Year	Description
Number of Grocery Stores	USDA Food Environment Atlas	2020-2023	This represents the amount of grocery stores within a specific county including those that are both SNAP- and WIC-authorized.
Adult Obesity Rate	County Health Rankings	2023	The percentage of adults (age 18 and older) with a body mass index greater than or equal to 30 km/m2 (squared).
Adult Diabetes Rate	County Health Rankings	2023	The percentage of adults (age 18 and older) diagnosed with diabetes.

ECONOMIC STABILITY

2026 Data Point	Source Name	Data Year	Description
Median Household Income	**US Census Bureau**	**2024**	**Displayed as the color-coded map for the Economic Stability map.**
Household Poverty Rate	United for ALICE	2024	The percentage of poverty households was calculated by dividing the number of poverty households by the total number of households for each county.
Unemployment Rate	US Bureau of Labor Statistics	2025	This metric is reported using both the unemployment count and the unemployment rate (%).
Cost of Living	ThinkTennessee	2025	The dollar amount represents the annual income a two-parent, one-child family needs to afford the essentials.

2026 Data Point	Source Name	Data Year	Description
ALICE Rate	United for ALICE	2024	ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) represents households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level but not enough to afford the basics where they live. The percentage of ALICE households was calculated by dividing the number of ALICE households by the total number of households; similarly, the percentage of households above the ALICE threshold was calculated by dividing the number of households above ALICE the threshold by the total number of households.
Severe Housing Problems	US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	2018-2022	For each county, we manually pulled the following metrics: total number of "Household has at least 1 of 4 Severe Housing Problems" and the total number of households. The reported percentage of population with severe housing problems was calculated by dividing "Household has at least 1 of 4 Severe Housing Problems" by "Total."
Basic Needs Index	Belmont Data Collaborative 2024 Report: Connecting the Dots: Mental Health and Student Success in Tennessee	2017-2021	The Basic Needs Index (BNI) was created using data from across the year 2017-2021. The BNI is comprised of 6 variables: (1) Eviction Filing Rate, (2) Rent as Percent of Gross Income, (3) Housing Costs (Owners) as Percent of Gross Income, (4) Food Insecurity, (5) Percent Households with No Vehicle, and (6) Percent Population with No Health Insurance. The BNI is 1 out of the 4 components collectively comprising the MWBI mentioned earlier in the data guide. TJC reported the BNI as is, rounding to the nearest hundredth.
Rent-to-Income Ratio	Jasnia	2024	Data is not displayed for counties where the vacancy rate is below 1.5% or in very few cases where renter household income is not available. TJC reported "Rent/Income" as is, as a percentage.