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HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

# Ending Hunger in Tennessee

Tennessee is the 20th hungriest state in the country.

## Hunger and Poverty Snapshot

- **One in 8 households** struggles to put food on the table.<sup>i</sup>
- **1,790,803 people live** in counties with poverty rates of 20 percent or more.<sup>ii</sup>
- **23,134 veterans** live below the poverty line.<sup>iii</sup>

## We Can End Hunger by 2030

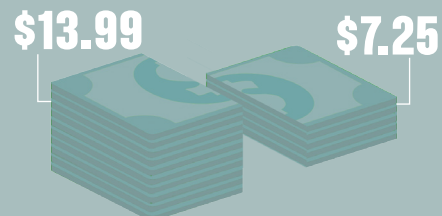
The United States has made significant progress against hunger and poverty over the past 50 years. But too many people, including people in Tennessee, are being left behind.

Ending hunger and poor nutrition in Tennessee and in the United States calls for comprehensive strategies that promote racial, gender, and class equity and take into account the many differences in personal, family, and community circumstances. Even more important, it requires the political will to turn these ideas into legislation. The United States should:

- **Create jobs that pay.** Millions of workers are paid so little that they cannot feed their families. The best, most lasting way to end hunger is to ensure that people have access to [jobs that pay](#)<sup>viii</sup> enough to support their families. The United States can move in the right direction by making essential improvements through legislation and policies. Some examples of these changes are raising the minimum wage, strengthening the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits, and expanding access to the supports that workers need in order to do their jobs, such as paid sick and parental leave and affordable child care. The federal budget should reflect reducing income inequality as a top priority in addition to expanding the economy.
- **Invest in people.** To be successful, people must have access to the tools they need. Government plays an important role in ensuring that everyone has their basic needs met and benefits from equitable opportunities. All people, regardless of race, gender, class, or other factors, should have access to nutritious food, health care, education, and housing to empower families and individuals to overcome hunger and become financially stable. [Targeted investments](#) should be made in communities with the highest hunger rates, including communities of color, communities of concentrated poverty, and communities with many people who are returning from incarceration and/or immigrants.<sup>ix</sup>
- **Strengthen the safety net.** Most people need some help at some point in their lives and everyone should have access to help in hard times. The United States should strengthen national nutrition programs such as school meals, summer meals, SNAP, and WIC. It should maintain other social programs such as Medicaid. Essential social programs should be a consistent national priority and they should be provided in an equitable manner.



When women flourish, so do their children.



An individual must earn **\$13.99** per hour in Tennessee to provide for a family, yet, the state minimum wage is **\$7.25**.<sup>vi</sup>



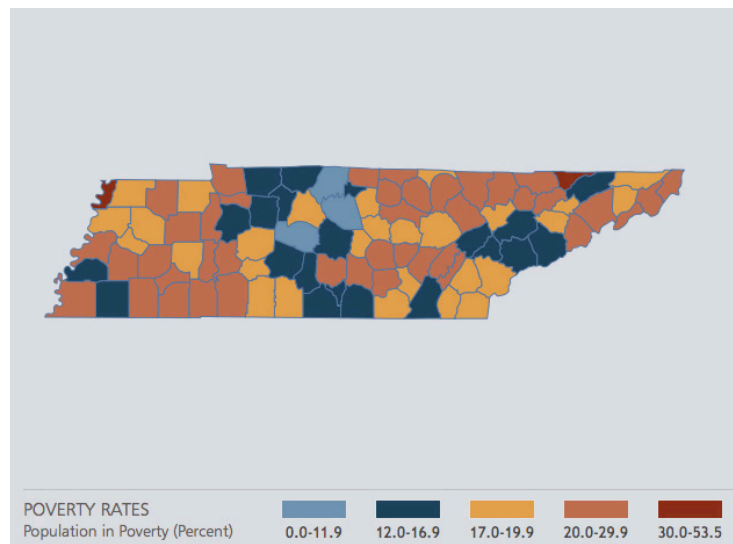
Ending hunger in America is feasible. What we need is the political will to do so. Go to [bread.org/elections](http://bread.org/elections) for Bread's full 2020 election platform.

- Remove obstacles to earning a decent living.** Discriminatory practices should be ended and the playing field should be leveled for communities at higher risk of hunger by providing targeted support. These include people of color, women, and children, particularly women and children of color. Laws against racial, gender, and other forms of discrimination should be enforced, and a racial, gender, and class equity lens should be applied to all nutrition, anti-hunger, and anti-poverty programs and policies. The needs of communities living in concentrated poverty and/or persistent poverty, in urban, rural, metropolitan, and tribal contexts should be a priority. Immigration is a hunger issue on [both sides of the border](#).<sup>x</sup> Reform should address the push factors that force people to migrate from their home countries and, for those already here, prioritize family unity, human dignity, work opportunities, and responsible pathways to U.S. citizenship. Reforms that enable undocumented people to earn a living and equitably participate in national life should also be enacted.
- Reforms should be enacted that enable people returning from incarceration, also known as returning citizens, to earn a living and participate equitably in society. [Mass incarceration perpetuates hunger](#) and poverty.<sup>xi</sup> Sentencing and reentry reform should promote racial and gender equity and remove obstacles for individuals to attain good jobs, safe and affordable housing, and access to programs such as SNAP as needed.

The map shows the levels of poverty by county. Counties with rates of 20 percent of poverty or more (shaded in red below) are considered areas of concentrated poverty. In those areas, hunger rates are higher, and problems, including poor housing conditions and fewer job opportunities, increase these rates.<sup>xii</sup>

## Poverty in Tennessee

### Poverty Rates for General Population



### Poverty Rates by Race

The state poverty rate is **17 percent**<sup>xiii</sup>, however, people of color are more likely to experience poverty<sup>xiv</sup> in Tennessee and across the nation.

#### Tennessee Poverty Rates:

- **Whites: 13%**
- **Latinos: 30%**
- **African Americans: 27%**
- **Indigenous: 18%**
- **Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 33%**

To learn more about racial inequities and how to reverse them to end hunger, go to [bread.org/racialequity](https://bread.org/racialequity).

### Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> USDA, ERS, Household Food Security in the United States in 2018.

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year data. Table S1701.

<sup>iii</sup> The poverty line for an individual in 2019 was \$12,490. U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year data. Table B21007.

<sup>iv</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year data. Table B17001.

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B17001

<sup>vi</sup> Dr. Amy K. Glasmeier and MIT, Living Wage Calculator. Hourly living wage based on standard four-person household with two adults and two children. Living wages for single parent households are much higher. Published January 2019.

<sup>vii</sup> Bread estimations based on data from 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5 Year data. Tables B17001B, B17001C, and B17001E, B17001H, B17001I.

<sup>viii</sup> "The Jobs Challenge: Working to End Hunger by 2030." 2018 Hunger Report. Bread for the World Institute. <https://www.bread.org/library/2018-hunger-report-the-jobs-challenge>

<sup>ix</sup> Gamblin, Marlysa. "Applying a Racial Equity Lens to End Hunger." Bread for the World Institute. [Bread.org/racialequity](https://bread.org/racialequity)

<sup>x</sup> Gamblin, Marlysa and Jordan Teague. "Undocumented Immigrants Face Hunger on Both Sides of the Border." Bread for the World Institute. June 2017. <https://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/briefing-paper-undocumented-immigrants-face-higher-poverty-rates-june-2017.pdf>

<sup>xi</sup> Gamblin, Marlysa. "Mass Incarceration: A Major Cause of Hunger." Bread for the World Institute. February 2018. <https://www.bread.org/sites/default/files/downloads/briefing-paper-mass-incarceration-february-2018.pdf>

<sup>xii</sup> The map was developed by the Housing Assistance Council, [www.ruralhome.org](http://www.ruralhome.org), based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

<sup>xiii</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table S1701.

<sup>xiv</sup> See endnote vii.