

Dēmos

ORGANIZE  
TENNESSEE

# TENNESSEE'S MISSING VOTERS

A STATE AND COUNTY ANALYSIS





## Introduction

Over 5.3 million Tennessee residents are part of the Citizen Age Voting Population (CVAP),<sup>1</sup> yet more than 2.3 million eligible Tennesseans are what we describe as “missing voters”: U.S. citizens aged 18 and over who have not voted in the past three general federal elections. Year after year, Tennessee has some of the lowest voter turnout in the country. In the 2020 presidential election, only four states had lower turnout.<sup>2</sup> And in 2022, Tennessee had the worst youth voter turnout in the entire country.<sup>3</sup>

Tennessee also lags behind most of the country in voter registration rate, placing in the bottom 10 states as of 2022.<sup>4</sup> Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett has blamed low voter turnout on the lack of competitive elections and “people just not placing the priority on going to vote.”<sup>5</sup> There’s no doubt the lack of competition is partially to blame.<sup>6</sup> In the 2022 midterm elections, 53% of state legislator races had no challengers.<sup>7</sup> However, our analysis reveals that it’s not the whole story.

In this report, Dēmos and Organize Tennessee analyze who Tennessee’s 2.3 million “missing voters” are and some of their reasons for not voting. We obtained and analyzed available

data on the citizen voting age population in Tennessee, with a focus on 12 specific counties. What we found was not a disinterested electorate but voters thwarted from exercising their fundamental right to vote due to systemic underinvestment and discriminatory voter suppression laws aimed primarily at Tennessee’s Black and brown communities. Tennessee provides a useful case study in understanding the racialized impacts of structural voter suppression laws and tactics.

We present our findings in two parts. The first part of this report provides a description of missing voters across Tennessee, an analysis of statewide barriers to voting, and recommendations to increase registration and turnout across the state. In the second part, we examine missing voters in Organize Tennessee’s 12 priority counties (Davidson, Knox, Fayette, Hamilton, Haywood, Madison, Montgomery, Rutherford, Shelby, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson). This two-part analysis provides a rich account of the structural barriers that are shaping low voter turnout in Tennessee and sheds light on a path forward for Tennessee and other similarly situated states.



# Methodology

## DEFINITIONS

**Citizen Age Voting Population (CVAP):** CVAP is the number of citizens ages 18 and over. Depending on the data set, the CVAP can include people not eligible to vote for policy reasons, including felony disenfranchisement.

We define **missing voters** as members of the CVAP who do not vote in a given election. Missing voters can be split into two main groups:

**Infrequent voters:** In every election, a sizeable number of people who are registered do not vote. For purposes of this report, we define infrequent voters as registered voters who have not participated in any of the past three general federal elections (2018, 2020, or 2022).

**Unregistered voters:** Unregistered voters are US citizens aged 18 and older who are not registered to vote.

**Young voters:** For purposes of this report, young voters are registered voters aged 18-34.

In order to develop a profile of the Tennessee electorate, we used a combination of U.S. Census data and commercial voter files that we obtained from the Catalist Corporation. For estimates of the CVAP, we used data from the 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, when available. For Fayette and Haywood counties, for which CVAP estimates were not available, we used the 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates and substituted overall county racial estimates in lieu of CVAP estimates. To determine racial estimates, we used the “Asian alone,” “Black or African American alone,” or “White alone” categories, so multiracial

individuals are not double counted in estimates of the Asian, Black, or white population. To develop estimates for the Latino population, we used “Hispanic or Latino (of any race),” as Latino is an ethnic rather than racial category under U.S. Census policy.

## Registration, Turnout, and Inactivity Rates

Registration rates are notably difficult to measure due to the unreliability of self-reported data and the undercount of unregistered people in commercial files. In many cases, researchers prefer using data collected by the Current Population Survey (CPS), as the Census Bureau’s practices are standardized and provide a more useful baseline to compare across states and elections. However, CPS data related to registration and turnout is unavailable at the county level.

For these reasons, we used the overall registration rates reported by the 2020 CPS multiplied by the CVAP to determine the total number of unregistered voters in Tennessee. However, to examine the electorate by age and race, we used Catalist’s Tennessee voter file for state and county breakdowns. While the CPS does provide registration rates by age and race, we wanted to be able to compare county registration rates against the state average, hence the need to use a single data source.

To determine turnout rates, we used data from the 2020 Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS). EAVS determines turnout by dividing turnout by the CVAP instead of turnout divided by the number of registered voters. This represents a more accurate account of the proportion of missing voters, as it includes all eligible voters instead of only eligible voters who are registered. Using only registered voters as a denominator inflates democratic participation because requiring voter registration itself may be a barrier. To determine infrequent-voter rates, we used Catalist data to determine whether registered voters had participated in any of the last three general federal elections.



## Part I: Statewide Analysis

### Who are Tennessee's Missing Voters?

Through our analysis, we estimate there are approximately 2.3 million missing voters in Tennessee: 1.36 million unregistered voters and 970,000 infrequent voters (registered voters who did not vote in one or more of the last three general federal elections). **Black, Asian, and Latino voters are overrepresented in Tennessee's missing voter population.**

	Total	Percent
<b>Citizens 18 years and over</b>	5,321,396	(X)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	2,569,692	48.3%
Female	2,751,704	51.7%
<b>Race</b>		
White	4,080,090	76.7%
Black	811,928	15.3%
Asian	72,997	1.4%
Latino	159,844	3.0%

Estimates of Tennessee's Citizen Voting Aged Population by Age<sup>9</sup>

Age Group	Total <sup>a</sup>	Percent
18-34	1,434,232	28.4%
35-49	1,174,238	23.2%
50-64	1,272,768	25.2%
65+	1,172,784	23.2%

### NOTES ON DATA

We use a combination of data sources to approximate an accurate profile of the Tennessee electorate. However, voter registration data is imperfect. Many sources, including the U.S. Census and state voter files, undercount or are missing unregistered Black and Latino voters<sup>10</sup> and other historically marginalized voters, including young voters, low-income voters, disabled voters, and more.

**For these reasons, we believe that the share of Black and brown voters and young voters who are not registered to vote is even higher than what our analysis finds.**

For a more in-depth discussion on our use of data sources, see the methodology section above.

Black, Asian, and Latino people are all overrepresented in Tennessee’s unregistered voter population, while white voters are underrepresented. This pattern is true statewide, as well as in the 12 priority counties we analyzed. Tennessee’s unregistered voter population also skews young, with voters aged 18-34 more likely to be unregistered than voters in older age groups. However, young white voters are still registered at significantly higher rates (84.0%) compared to young Asian (65.4%), young Black (67.6%), and young Latino (58.8%) voters.

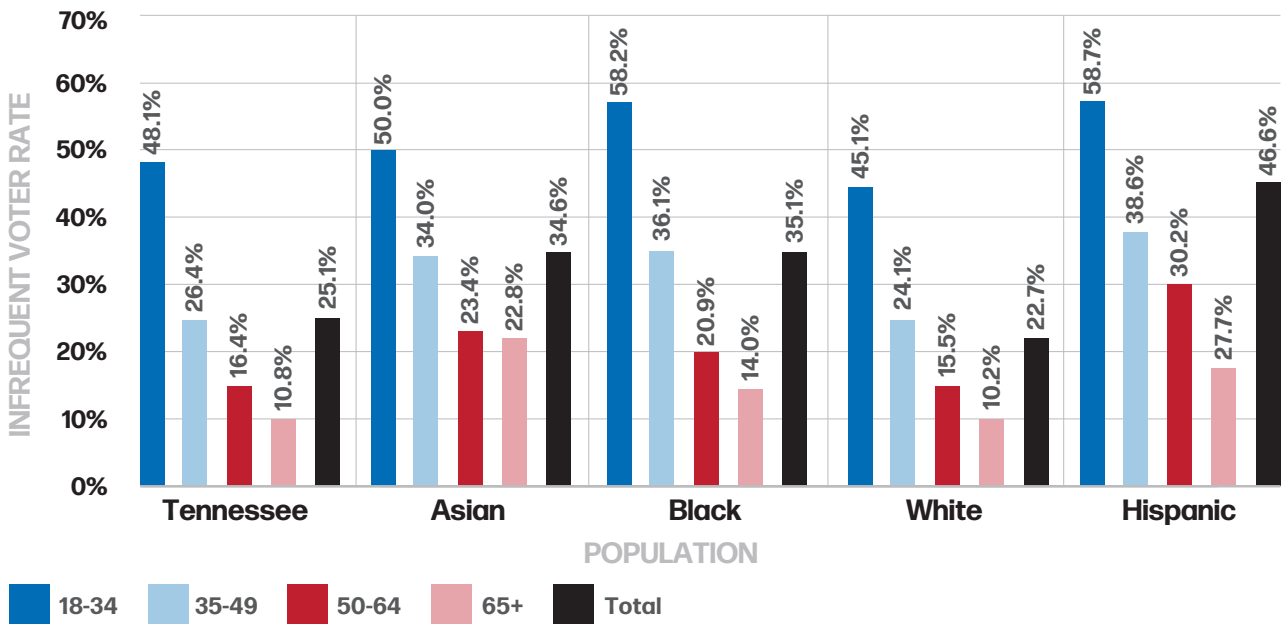
### INFREQUENT VOTERS

In Tennessee, infrequent voters are more likely to be Black, Asian, and Latino than white. Black, Asian, and Latino voters had higher rates of nonparticipation in the last three general election cycles than white voters across all age groups. As with the unregistered voter population, the infrequent-voter population also skews younger. Young Tennessee voters have the highest rates of nonparticipation among all age groups, with nearly half (48.1%) being infrequent voters. Young white voters have the smallest percentage of infrequent voters at 45.1%, while 50.0% of young Asian, 58.2% of young Black, and 58.7% of young Latino voters are infrequent voters.

### UNREGISTERED VOTERS

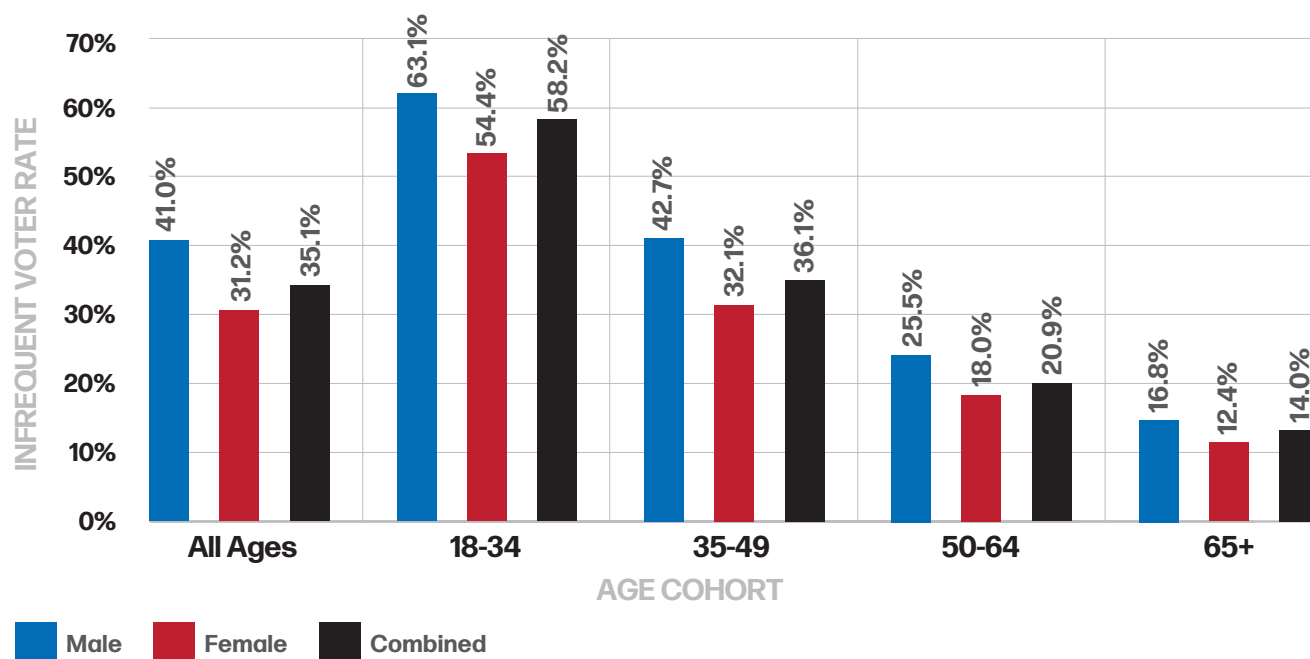
	Citizen Voting Age Population	Share of CVAP	Share of Un-registered Voters	Gap Between Unregistered Voters Share and CVAP Share
Asian	72,997	1.4%	1.8%	+0.4%
Black	811,928	15.3%	25.1%	+9.8%
White	4,080,090	76.7%	64.5%	-12.2%
Latino	159,844	3.0%	6.5%	+3.5%

Infrequent Voter Rates by Race and Age



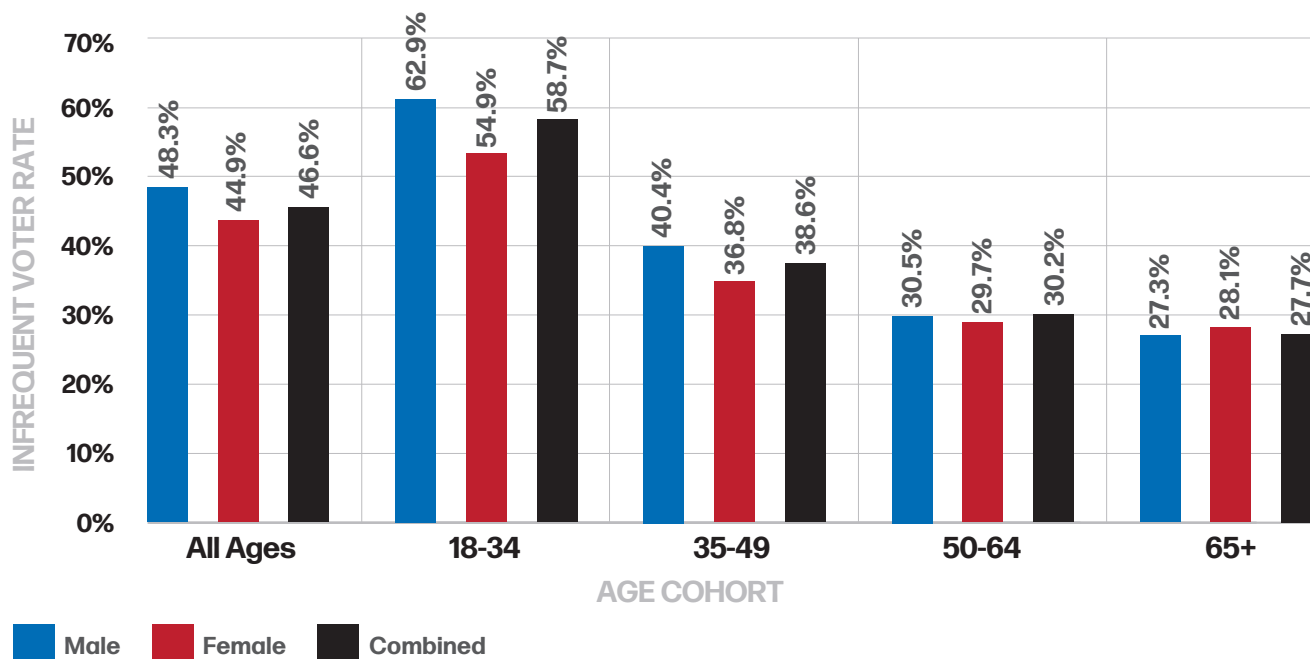
This chart shows the infrequent voter rates by race and age. The first section is Tennessee’s overall population followed by Asian, Black, White, and Latino populations. Across race, youth voters have the highest rate of inactivity. Latino voters overall have the highest rate of inactivity. Data is from Catalyst’s Tennessee voter file.

### Black Infrequent Voter Rate by Age and Gender



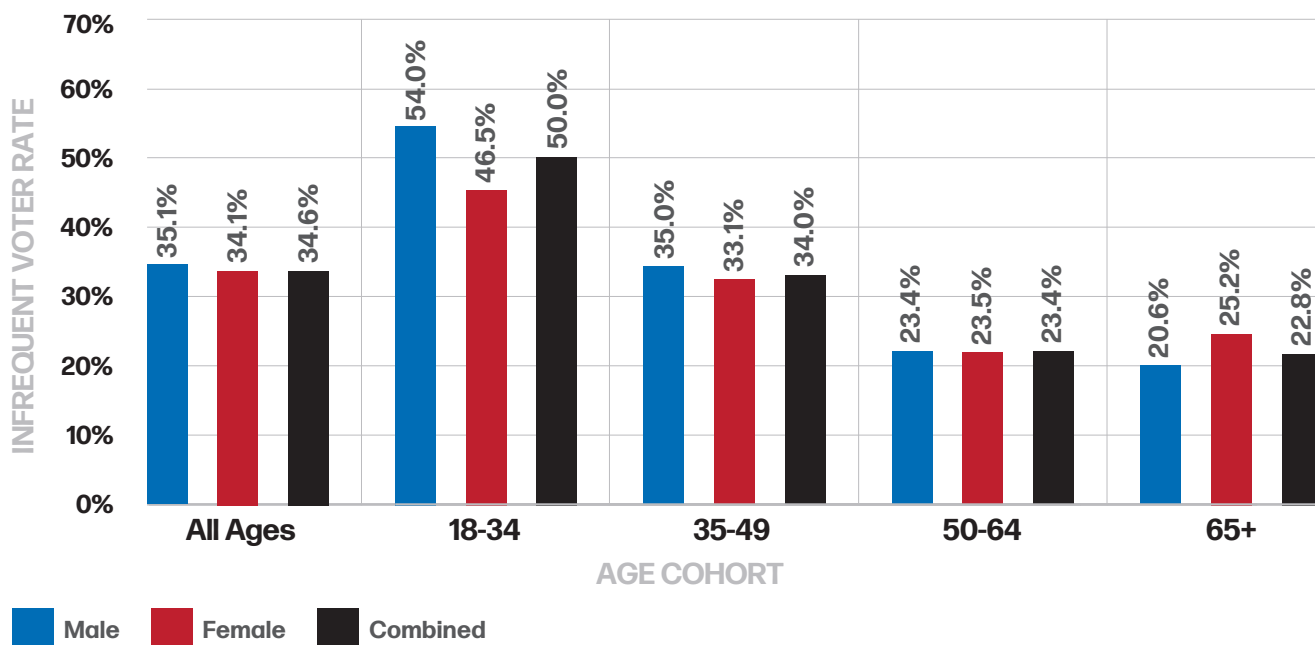
**Black Voters:** Statewide, Black men (72.7%) are only slightly less likely to be registered to vote than Black women (75.8%). However, Black men are significantly more likely to be infrequent voters (41.0%) than Black women (31.2%).

### Hispanic Infrequent Voter Rate by Age and Gender



**Latino Voters:** Latino voters have the highest percentage of infrequent voters in the state (46.6%). Among young Latino voters, a larger percentage of men (62.9%) are infrequent voters than women (54.9%). However, this gender gap narrows or goes away altogether for older Latino voters.

## Asian Infrequent Voter Rate by Age and Gender



**Asian Voters:** Young Asian voters have significantly higher rates of nonparticipation than older Asian voters. Asian voters have higher rates of nonparticipation than white and Black voters across all age groups.

## Barriers to Voting

Our analysis revealed that Tennesseans face numerous structural barriers that may contribute to low registration and turnout across the state. These barriers disproportionately impact Black and brown communities and disabled voters.

### BARRIERS TO REGISTRATION

Tennesseans face significant barriers to voter registration. After the 2020 presidential election, the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey estimated 15.1% of Tennessee's CVAP were unable to register due to registration issues.<sup>b</sup> Ten percent were unable to register due to disability or illness issues.<sup>c</sup> In the Cost of Voting Index, which measures how difficult it is for voters to register and vote, Tennessee ranked 38 out of 50.<sup>11</sup> According to this index, some of the reasons voters find registering to vote in Tennessee so difficult are:

- The lack of same-day registration or automatic voter registration

- The requirement that voters submit a voter registration application 30 days before election day<sup>12</sup>

Lack of same-day or automatic voter registration—both of which have been linked to increased registration and turnout among people of color<sup>13</sup>—may help explain why Tennessee's Black, Asian, and Latino populations have lower registration rates than the white population.

The CPS also estimates that an additional 9% of Tennessee's CVAP are "ineligible to vote."<sup>14</sup> We include ineligible voters in our analysis of missing voters because most CVAP estimates encompass all U.S. citizens of voting age, regardless of whether they are eligible to vote or not due to policy reasons. Additionally, because voter eligibility is a policy issue, including ineligible CVAP in our missing voters profile enables a more robust analysis of structural barriers that

<sup>b</sup>We defined registration issues as respondents who answered "did not meet registration deadlines" or "did not know where or how to register."

<sup>c</sup>We defined disability or illness issues as respondents who answered "permanent disability or illness" or "concerns about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic."



may contribute to low registration and turnout in Tennessee. Broken down by race, 19.5% of Asian, Black, and Latino respondents reported being ineligible to vote, as compared to only 5.7% of white respondents. Ineligibility also disproportionately affected those with lower incomes: Respondents with a household income of less than \$40,000 a year also reported higher levels of ineligibility compared to those with higher household incomes.<sup>15</sup>

The racial disparities in Tennessee's ineligible voter population are due in part to the state's felony disenfranchisement policies. Tennessee's draconian felony disenfranchisement laws and procedures, which include an arduous two-step rights restoration process,<sup>d</sup> are some of the more restrictive in the country.<sup>16</sup> Felony disenfranchisement laws were originally created in the wake of the Civil War to prevent newly freed Black citizens from exercising political power, and they continue to disproportionately disenfranchise Black and brown voters in the modern day. The Sentencing Project estimates that more than 8% of the adult Tennessee population is disenfranchised, including at least 15% of the Black voting-eligible population and over 6% of the Latino voting-eligible population.<sup>17</sup>

States with a greater percentage of Black voters who cannot vote because of a felony conviction also experience lower *overall* Black voter turnout, even among Black voters not directly affected by felony disenfranchisement laws.<sup>18</sup> This is likely due to the "communal nature of voting;" communities often collectively participate in the process by sharing transportation, information about candidates and election deadlines, or encouragement.<sup>19</sup> When members of a community are ineligible, it can break community norms around voting and lower total turnout rates.

## BARRIERS TO VOTING

Once Tennesseans clear the initial hurdle of voter registration, additional barriers can prevent many from actually making it to the polls. Barriers to voting in Tennessee include these:

- Onerous restrictions on absentee ballot

voting, including requiring a qualifying reason to receive a mail ballot<sup>20</sup>

- The lack of uniform early voting windows that mean some counties open early voting locations for shorter hours than others<sup>21</sup>
- Strict voter identification laws that prevent residents without IDs, or who do not match the physical appearance on their ID, from voting<sup>22</sup>
- Polling location closures or consolidation<sup>23</sup>

These barriers often affect areas with large Black electorates. For example, Shelby County, the county with the highest share of Black voters in the state, had the lowest Black registration rate and second-highest Black nonparticipation rate of the counties analyzed. In recent elections, changes to Shelby County's polling locations caused confusion, and in some cases, prevented people from voting.<sup>24</sup> Research on polling location closures and consolidation shows that closures are often a voter suppression tactic targeted at Black and Latino neighborhoods and precincts.<sup>25</sup> Closures often result in longer wait times at the polls, voter confusion, and transportation challenges for voters who are farther away from available polling locations. Coupled with other restrictive registration and voting requirements, these changes to polling locations contribute to the lower turnout rates we see for Black voters.

Lack of language access also prevents many voters of color from accessing the ballot in Tennessee. The majority of Tennessee's naturalized immigrant population is Asian, Black, or Latino,<sup>e</sup> and an estimated 30% of Tennessee's naturalized immigrant population speaks English "less than 'very well.'"<sup>26</sup> However, not a single jurisdiction in Tennessee is currently covered under Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights

<sup>d</sup>For more information on Tennessee's felony disenfranchisement laws and rights restoration process, see Think Tennessee, "State of Our State: Rights Restoration," (2020), [https://thinktennessee.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/state-of-our-state-policy-brief\\_-rights-restoration\\_final-updated.pdf](https://thinktennessee.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/state-of-our-state-policy-brief_-rights-restoration_final-updated.pdf); and Think Tennessee, "Tennessee's Voting Rights Restoration Process is Overly Complicated," (2024), <https://www.thinktennessee.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/tns-voting-rights-restoration-process-is-overly-complicated.pdf>.

<sup>e</sup>The ACS estimates that of Tennessee's naturalized immigrant population, 30.9% are Asian, 21.9% are Latino, and 11.5% are Black.



Act (VRA), which guarantees multilingual ballots to language-minority communities that reach certain population thresholds.<sup>27</sup> Nor does Tennessee have any state-level policies that require bilingual poll workers, translated ballots, or any other measures that improve access for Tennessee voters who are not comfortable voting in English. Tennessee, in fact, has the opposite: a law that establishes English as the state's official and legal language and requires all governmental communications and publications, "including ballots," to be in English.<sup>28</sup> Although an opinion published by a former state attorney general suggests that this law cannot prohibit government agencies from providing translated materials, *in addition* to English-language materials, the law may deter counties from voluntarily undertaking language access measures.

Though voter files do not account for disability status, CPS survey data suggest that disabled people also comprise a notable portion of missing voters in Tennessee. Specifically, the CPS estimates that 22% of Tennessee's registered voters did not vote because of a disability or illness issue.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, MIT's Election Protection Index ranks Tennessee the second-worst state for disability access in voting.<sup>30</sup> And disability or illness issues hindering electoral participation were reportedly more common among voters of color than white voters; 30.9% of POC respondents reported disability or illness issues as their reason for not voting, compared to only 19.4% of white respondents. Voters aged 65 and up and voters with a household income of less than \$40,000 a year also reported higher levels of disability or illness issues.

Tennessee's fastest-growing age group is 65 years and older, indicating the need for accessible elections is only growing. In addition to the 22% of registered voters who did not vote because of a "disability or illness issue," 13.7% did not vote due to logistical issues,<sup>f</sup> and 9% reported "registration issues (i.e. didn't receive absentee ballot or not registered in current location)." Overall, we can infer that approximately 45% of potential registered voters who did not vote were impacted by a structural issue that could be fixed by creating pro-voter policies that remove onerous barriers, increase flexibility when

voting, and accommodate voters' language and accessibility needs. Registered Tennessee voters name several barriers to voting that could be ameliorated by more accessible, pro-voter policies.

### ADDITIONAL ROADBLOCKS TO WIDESPREAD PARTICIPATION

According to CPS data, over a third of Tennessee's registered voters voluntarily opted out of participating in the 2020 election. Specifically, the CPS estimates that 13.0% of registered voters did not vote because they "didn't like the candidates or campaign issues," while 22.0% were "not interested, felt [their] vote wouldn't make a difference." While several different factors could help explain why Tennessee voters chose not to vote, the lack of competitive elections is one of the main reasons cited for Tennessee's low turnout.<sup>31</sup> The lack of competitive elections is due in part to Tennessee's partisan lean, but other reasons, including racial gerrymandering, are structural. In 2021, the Tennessee state legislature approved racially gerrymandered maps that carved up Nashville's congressional district and split a state Senate district in the Memphis area; both had been strongholds for Black and brown voters.<sup>32</sup> The congressional map received an "F" grade from Princeton's Gerrymandering Project for racial gerrymandering.<sup>33</sup> Racial gerrymandering leads to less competitive elections, which dissuades voters from turning out. Though it's too early to measure the effects of the 2021 racial gerrymander on nonparticipation, it's likely this will influence Black and brown turnout in these districts in the years ahead.

<sup>f</sup> We defined logistical issues to include responses of "too busy, work or school schedule," "transportation problems," or "inconvenient hours, polling place or hours or lines too long" as reasons for not voting.

## State-level Recommendations

A healthy and thriving democracy must include the 2.3 million voters who are currently “missing” from Tennessee’s elections. The overrepresentation of Black and brown voters among Tennessee’s missing voter population, along with Tennessee’s history of restrictive voting policies, demands election policies that proactively address glaring racial disparities in voter registration and turnout. Our analysis also demonstrates a vital need for state elected officials to enact measures that will increase access for young voters, voters with disabilities, and voters with limited English proficiency. We recommend that policymakers take these steps:

- Remove the two-step process for restoring voting rights,<sup>8</sup> with the long-term goal of ending felony disenfranchisement
- Extend the voter registration window and implement same-day registration
- Standardize early vote hours to require early vote locations to be open 7:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m. each day
- Allow for no-excuse absentee ballot voting, drop boxes, and in-person ballot return at places like county election offices
- Reduce election day wait times by providing sufficient numbers of polling places for each community and requiring at least 12 hours of election day voting in Tennessee
- Increase state election funding for voter education, especially education directed at Asian, Black, Latino, and/or youth voters
- Pass a state-level language access law that provides necessary interpretation and translated voter materials
- Implement curbside voting and provide additional funding for county election commissions to implement accessible polling locations standards, including providing adequate ramps and equipment to ensure voters with disabilities have the necessary accommodations to vote

These policies represent a floor—though certainly not a ceiling—of reforms that will secure access to the ballot for millions of Tennesseans. They would benefit all Tennesseans by making it easier and simpler to register and vote. These reforms would also significantly decrease the racial registration and turnout gaps in the state, decrease barriers for disabled voters, and make voting more accessible overall.

Additionally, community groups have emphasized that more outreach from candidates,<sup>34</sup> increased voter education,<sup>35</sup> and increased language access<sup>36</sup> are critical in getting eligible Asian and Latino voters (whose turnout and registration rates are even lower than those of the Black community) to register and vote. For Black voters, increased voter education funding and the abolishing of felony disenfranchisement laws would dramatically improve their access to the ballot and help them navigate targeted voter suppression tactics, such as changing polling locations. Moreover, reducing restrictions on absentee voting, increasing the availability of drop boxes, eliminating strict voter ID laws, and ensuring accessible polling places would make voting more accessible for disabled and aging voters. Similarly, organizations that focus on youth voting say that young voters are passionate about elections and the issues, but policies that make it harder to register to vote and lack of education or outreach contribute to lower participation by that population.<sup>37</sup> In short, there are exponential benefits in reducing structural barriers to registration and voting in Tennessee, and it is imperative that the state act quickly to improve access for its 2.3 million missing voters.

---

<sup>8</sup>For recommendations on how to streamline the current process, see Think Tennessee, “Tennessee’s Voting Rights Restoration Process is Overly Complicated,” (2024), <https://www.thinktennessee.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/tns-voting-rights-restoration-process-is-overly-complicated.pdf>.



## Part II: Missing Voters in the Counties

While many of Tennessee's election policies are set at the state level, county election commissions and other election officials also influence who votes, or is able to vote, in each county. Through our analysis, we find many broad trends remain true across the Organize Tennessee's 12 priority counties (Davidson, Knox, Fayette, Hamilton, Haywood, Madison, Montgomery, Rutherford, Shelby, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson). Tennessee's missing voters are disproportionately young and people of color. Young Black and Latino men are the subsections of the population with the highest nonparticipation rates, though a high percentage of all young Black, Asian, and Latino voters are infrequent voters.

However, when comparing county to county, notable differences appear. Williamson and Wilson counties consistently performed better than the other counties we studied. Though

both counties have higher proportions of white voters than many of the other counties analyzed, all racial groups overperformed the Tennessee average. Conversely, Shelby County performed consistently worse than other counties analyzed and held the second highest infrequent-voter rate. Shelby County has the highest proportion of Black voters in the state, but it also has the lowest Black voter registration rate of the counties observed, which indicates county election policies might be preventing Black voters from registering.

Overall, all counties have room to improve on both registration and turnout. Counties hold an important role in ensuring all eligible voters are able to register and vote. Improvements in voting access on the county level, while supported by enacting statewide pro-voter policies, will go far in ensuring all Tennessee voters can access the ballot.



## Analysis

Of the counties observed, Davidson County has a below-average voter registration rate and the third-highest infrequent-voter rate. While Black voters make up 25.4% of the CVAP in Davidson, Black voters are 30.8% of the unregistered population, a 5.4-point gap. Though there is still room for improvement, Davidson's youth voter infrequent-voter rates are lower than the statewide average—a positive sign for the second youngest county in Tennessee.

### COUNTY OUTLINE

**715,884**  
Population size

**520,577**  
Citizen Voting Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

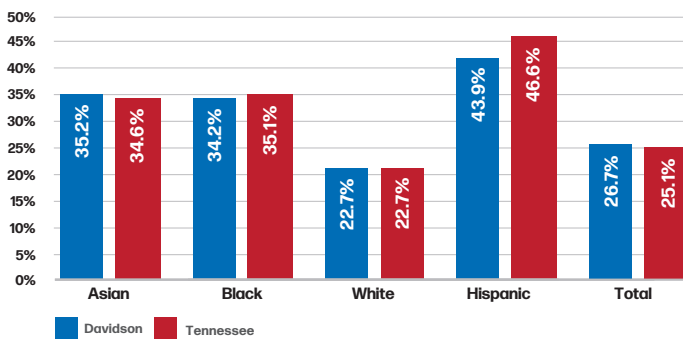
**#2**  
Rank for urban population

**#2**  
Median Age Rank

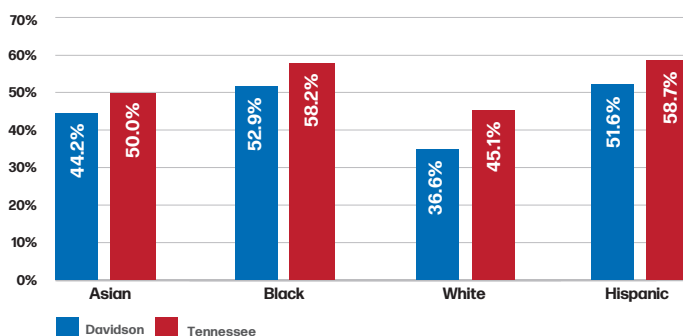
**33.9**  
Median age

**1,124 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

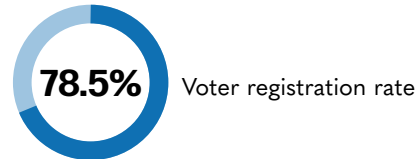
### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race

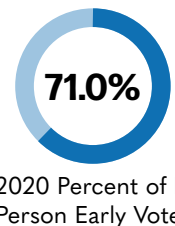
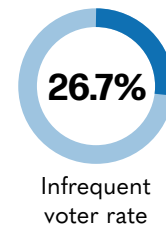
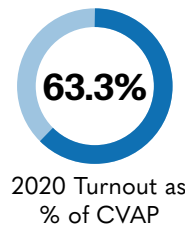


### VOTER DATA



Asian 60.4% Black 75.1%

Hispanic 53.6% White 82.7%



In 2020, there was **1** polling location for every **466.08** voters

**#66**  
Election Day Polling Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	0.8 points	3.0%	2.2%
Black	5.4 points	30.8%	25.4%
White	-10.9 points	52.7%	63.6%
Hispanic	5.7 points	10.2%	4.5%



## Analysis

Of the counties observed, Fayette has a high voter registration rate and the second-lowest infrequent-voter rate. While Asian, Black, and Latino voter registration rates are higher than the state average, there is still a large gap between the share of Black unregistered voters and the county population.

### COUNTY OUTLINE

**42,899**  
Population size

**33,964**  
Citizen Voting Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

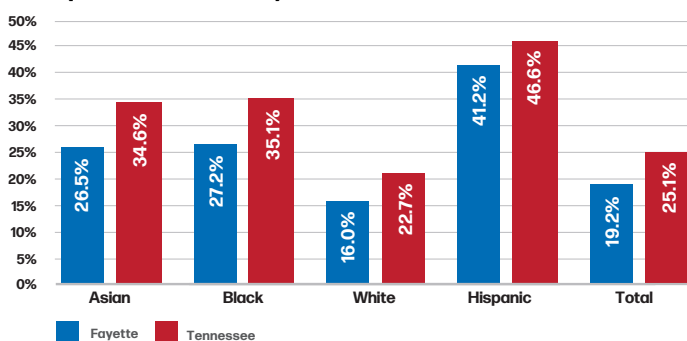
**#44**  
Rank for urban population

**#89**  
Median Age Rank

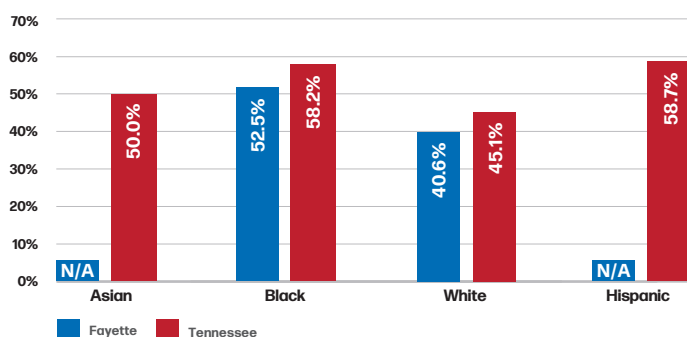
**47.6**  
Median age

**793 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

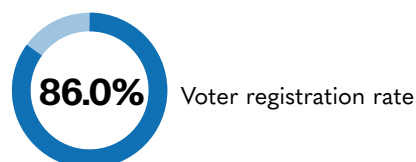
### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



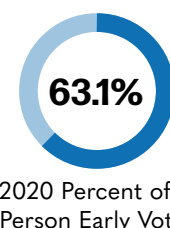
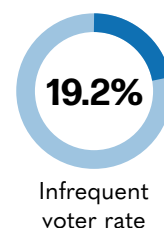
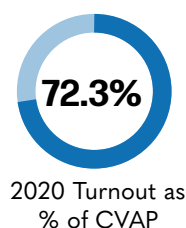
### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race



### VOTER DATA



Asian	61.9%	Black	80.2%
Hispanic	54.7%	White	89.0%



In 2020, there was **1** polling location for every **516.31** voters

**#73**  
Election Day Polling Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	0.4 points	1.1%	0.7%
Black	11.9 points	38.8%	26.9%
White	-11.8 points	54.9%	66.7%
Hispanic	0.4 points	3.6%	3.2%



## Analysis

Compared to the other counties observed, Hamilton has an average infrequent-voter rate and average voter registration rate.

### COUNTY OUTLINE

**369,027**  
Population size

**287,178**  
Citizen Voting Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

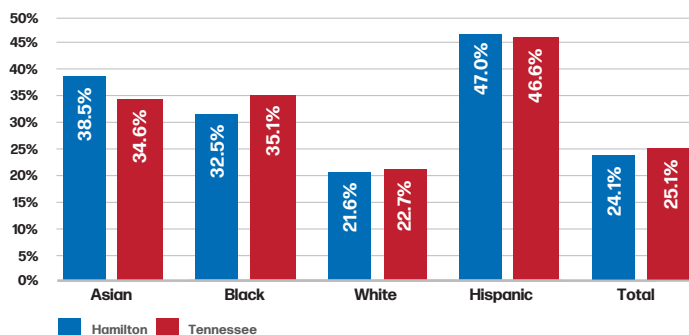
**#4**  
Rank for urban population

**#13**  
Median Age Rank

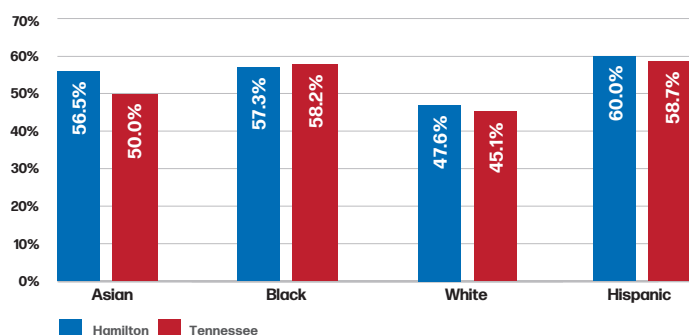
**39.3**  
Median age

**962 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



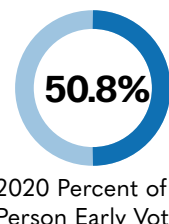
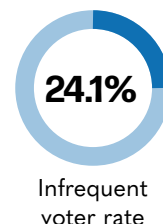
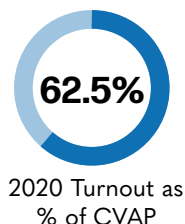
### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race



### VOTER DATA



Asian	58.5%	Black	75.1%
Hispanic	61.0%	White	85.9%



In 2020, there was **1** polling location for every **783.37** voters

**#90**  
Election Day Polling Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	0.5 points	2.2%	1.7%
Black	8.7 points	25.2%	16.5%
White	-10.3 points	64.1%	74.4%
Hispanic	3.0 points	6.0%	3.0%



## Analysis

Haywood County's registration rate is the second-lowest of the counties observed, behind Shelby County. Overall, Haywood's infrequent-voter rate is slightly higher than the state average; however, Black infrequent-voter rates are 5.4 points lower than the state average. Haywood has the second-largest proportion of Black voters of the counties observed, behind Shelby County.

### COUNTY OUTLINE

**17,715**  
Population size

**13,713**  
Citizen Voting Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

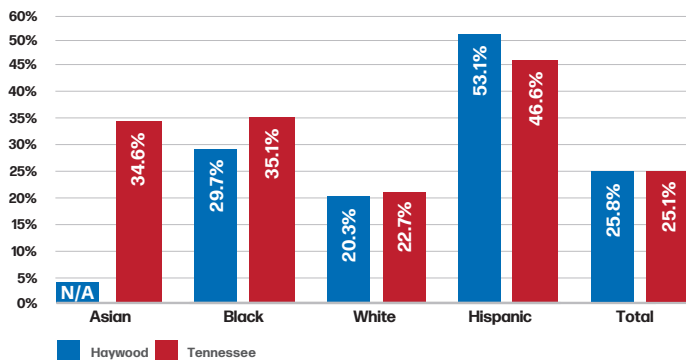
**#48**  
Rank for urban population

**#39**  
Median Age Rank

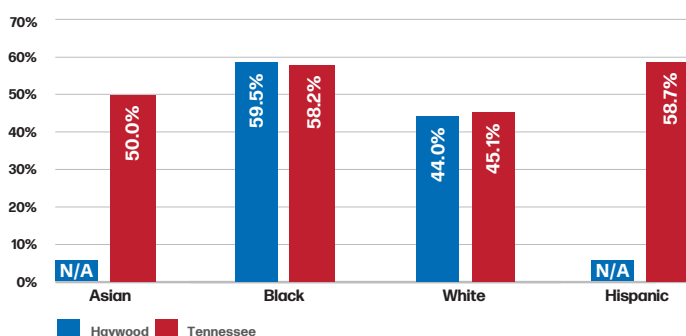
**42.8**  
Median age

**1,821 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

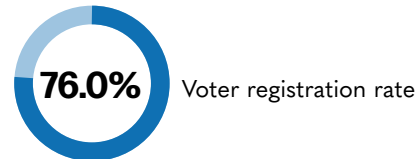
### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race



### VOTER DATA

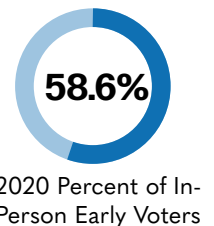
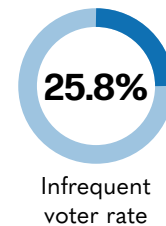
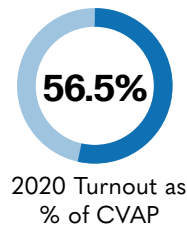


**Asian** 56.0%

**Black** 74.0%

**Hispanic** 48.0%

**White** 79.0%



In 2020, there was **1** polling location for every **183.64** voters

**#11**  
Election Day Polling Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	0.2 points	0.3%	0.1%
Black	6.3 points	56.3%	50.0%
White	-6.1 points	37.6%	43.7%
Hispanic	0.3 points	4.6%	4.3%



## Analysis

Knox County has average voter registration rates and lower-than-average infrequent-voter rates compared to the state. However, compared to other urban counties, it has a high voter registration rate and low infrequent-voter rates.

### COUNTY OUTLINE

**486,812**  
Population size

**380,839**  
Citizen Voting Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

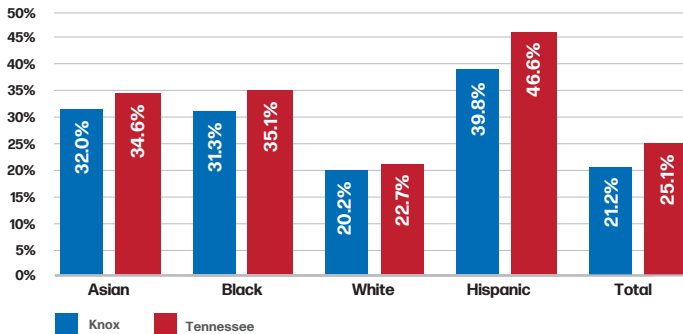
**#3**  
Rank for urban population

**#6**  
Median Age Rank

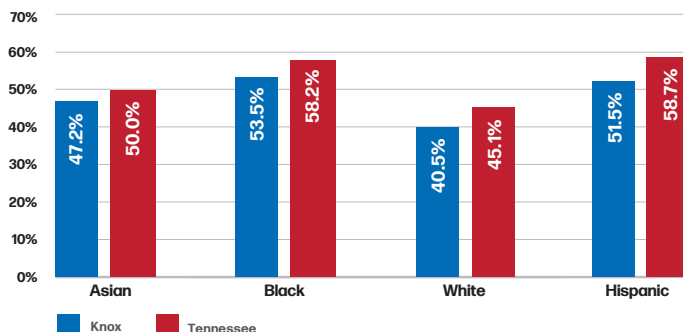
**37.9**  
Median age

**1,157 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

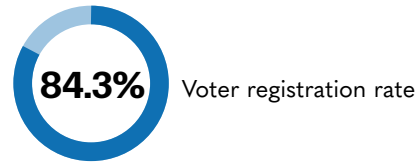
### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race



### VOTER DATA

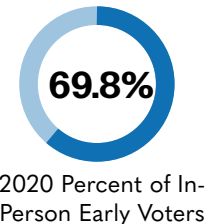
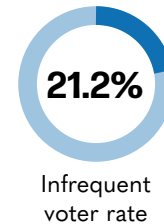
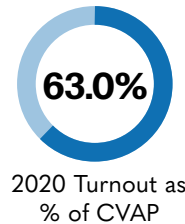


**Asian** 58.3%

**Black** 72.4%

**Hispanic** 55.2%

**White** 86.2%



In 2020, there was **1** polling location for every **713.27** voters

**#87**  
Election Day Polling Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	0.8 points	2.5%	1.7%
Black	3.6 points	11.2%	7.6%
White	-5.5 points	79.2%	84.7%
Hispanic	2.3 points	5.1%	2.8%





## Analysis

Compared to the Tennessee average, Madison County has higher infrequent-voter rates for young Asian, Black, and Latino voters and about average infrequent-voter rates for young white voters.

### COUNTY OUTLINE

**98,585**  
Population size

**75,253**  
Citizen Voting Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

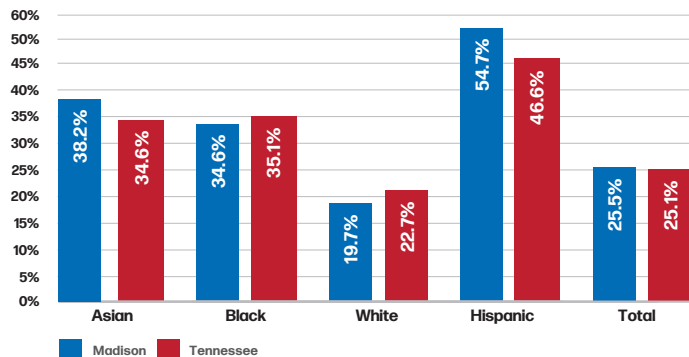
**#14**  
Rank for urban population

**#21**  
Median Age Rank

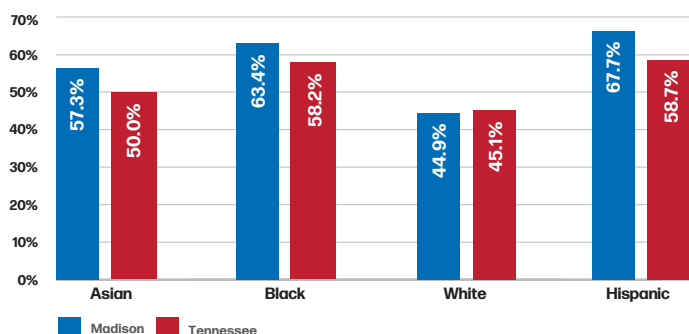
**40.0**  
Median age

**1,434 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

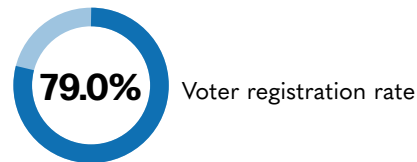
### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



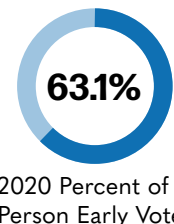
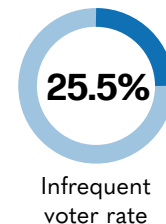
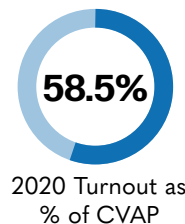
### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race



### VOTER DATA



Asian	62.0%	Black	74.0%
Hispanic	45.0%	White	84.0%



In 2020, there was **1** polling location for every **419.90** voters

**#61**  
Election Day Polling Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	0.4 points	1.5%	1.1%
Black	10.4 points	45.6%	35.2%
White	-7.8 points	46.2%	54.0%
Hispanic	-0.1 points	4.5%	4.6%



## Analysis

Compared to the other counties observed, Montgomery County has the highest infrequent-voter rate and the highest youth infrequent-voter rate, even though it is the youngest county in Tennessee. Montgomery County also has a lower voter registration rate than the state average, though Latino voter registration rates are higher than the state average.

### COUNTY OUTLINE

**227,841**  
Population size

**167,017**  
Citizen Voting Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

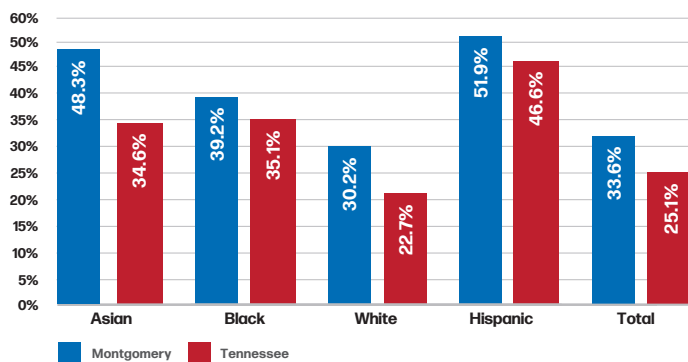
**#7**  
Rank for urban population

**#1**  
Median Age Rank

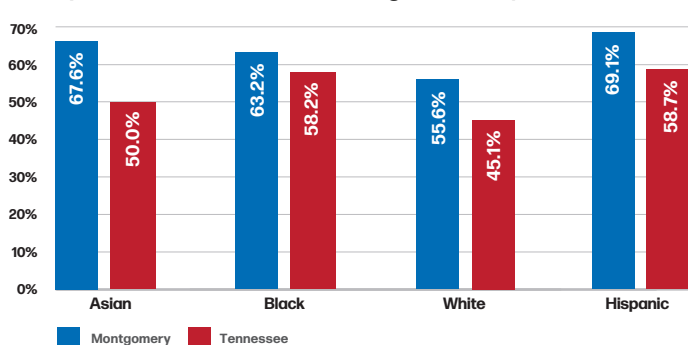
**31.3**  
Median age

**708 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

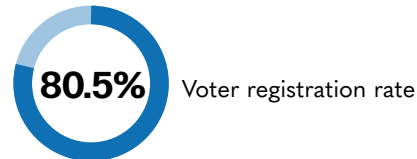
### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race

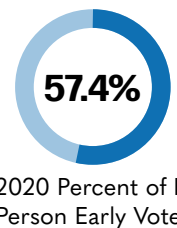
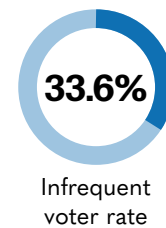
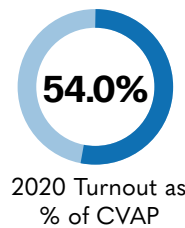


### VOTER DATA



**Asian** 56.9% **Black** 74.3%

**Hispanic** 66.7% **White** 84.6%



In 2020, there was 1 polling location for every **579.97** voters

**#77**  
Election Day Polling Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	N/A	1.7%	N/A
Black	6.8 points	27.9%	21.1%
White	-9.1 points	54.6%	63.7%
Hispanic	-2.5 points	11.4%	8.9%



## Analysis

Compared to the other counties observed, Rutherford has an average registration rate. Rutherford's infrequent-voter rates are close to the Tennessee average, with the exception of Asian voters, whose infrequent-voter rates are higher than Asian voters across the state. Though Rutherford is the third youngest county in Tennessee, youth infrequent-voter rates are higher than the state average with the exception of young Black voters.

### COUNTY OUTLINE

**351,202**  
Population size

**256,313**  
Citizen Voting Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

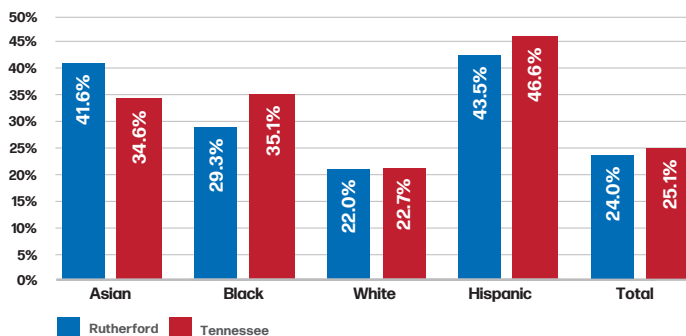
**#5**  
Rank for urban population

**#3**  
Median Age Rank

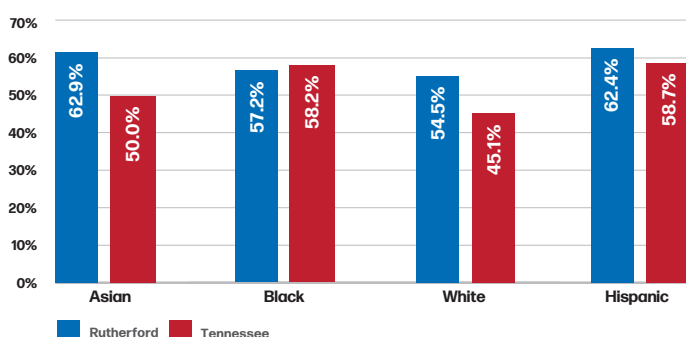
**34.4**  
Median age

**871 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



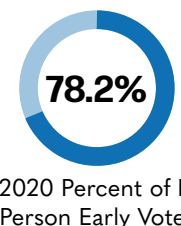
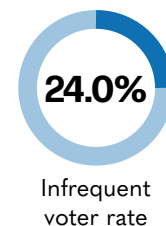
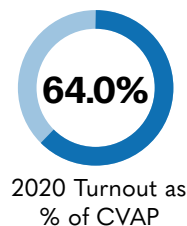
### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race



### VOTER DATA



Asian	53.4%	Black	76.9%
Hispanic	53.3%	White	86.9%



In 2020, there was **1** polling location for every **1,136.21** voters

**#93**  
Election Day Polling Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	0.0 points	3.8%	3.8%
Black	3.1 points	18.4%	15.3%
White	-11.6 points	60.8%	72.4%
Hispanic	8.4 points	13.0%	4.6%



## Analysis

Shelby County has the lowest voter registration rate and second-highest infrequent-voter rate of the counties observed. While Shelby County has the highest proportion of Black voters in the state, it also has the lowest Black voter registration rate of the counties observed. There are likely multiple voter suppression policies specific to Shelby County preventing Black voters from registering and voting, including recent polling location changes

### COUNTY OUTLINE

**923,352**  
Population size

**652,863**  
Citizen Voting Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

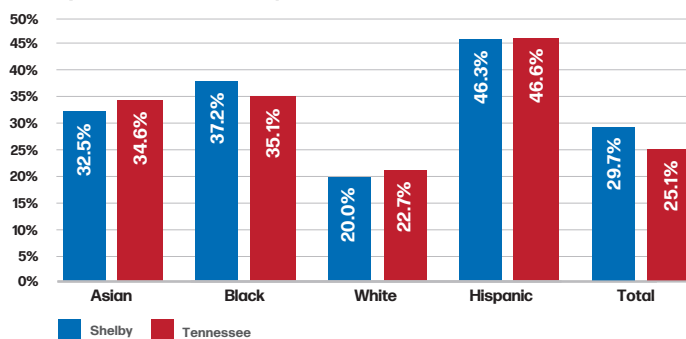
**#1**  
Rank for urban population

**#5**  
Median Age Rank

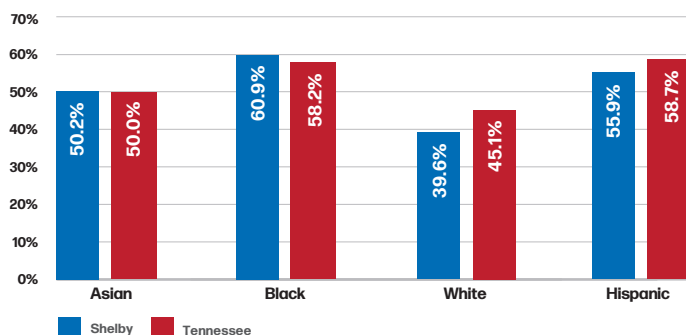
**36.5**  
Median age

**1,541 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



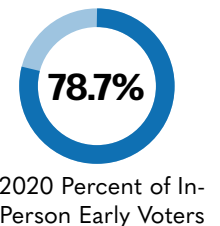
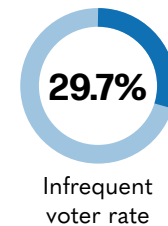
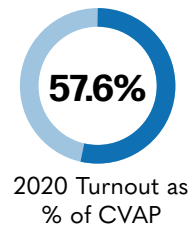
### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race



### VOTER DATA



Asian	54.1%	Black	70.3%
Hispanic	46.6%	White	83.4%



In 2020, there was **1** polling location for every **593.01** voters

**#79**  
Election Day Polling Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	0.5 points	2.7%	2.2%
Black	10.0 points	64.9%	54.9%
White	-14.0 points	24.3%	38.3%
Hispanic	3.5 points	6.0%	2.5%





## Analysis

Compared to other counties observed, Sumner has the third-highest voter registration rate and below-average infrequent-voter rates. Sumner also has one of the highest Black voter registration rates of the counties observed.


### COUNTY OUTLINE

 **200,582**  
Population size

 **153,896**  
Citizen Voting  
Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

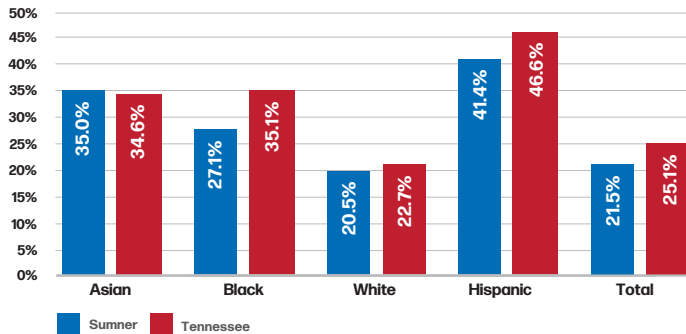
 **#8**  
Rank for urban  
population

 **#15**  
Median Age  
Rank

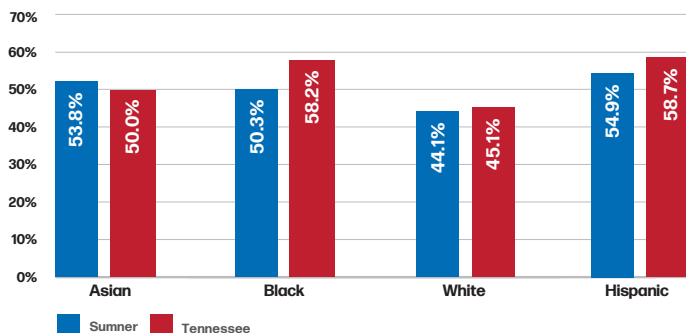
 **39.5**  
Median age

 **1,159 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

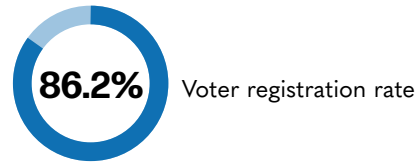
### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race

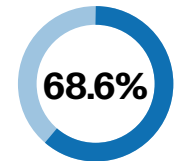


### VOTER DATA

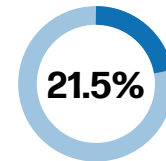


**Asian** 68.5% **Black** 81.6%

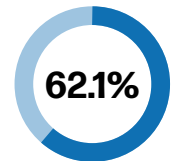
**Hispanic** 59.6% **White** 87.4%



2020 Turnout as  
% of CVAP



Infrequent  
voter rate



2020 Percent of In-  
Person Early Voters



In 2020, there was  
**1** polling location for  
every **1,000.93** voters



**#92**  
Election Day Polling  
Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	0.5 points	1.9%	1.4%
Black	-0.3 points	8.3%	8.6%
White	2.0 points	82.1%	80.1%
Hispanic	0.3 points	6.5%	6.2%



## Analysis

Of the counties observed, Williamson County has the highest voter registration rate and the lowest infrequent-voter rate. Williamson has one of the higher proportions of white voters; however, Asian, Black, and Latino voters also have demonstrably lower infrequent-voter rates than compared to the state as a whole. While Williamson has the worst election day polling location to voter ratio in the state, that is partially accounted for by their high early voting share (the highest in the state).

### COUNTY OUTLINE

**256,209**  
Population size

**185,499**  
Citizen Voting Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

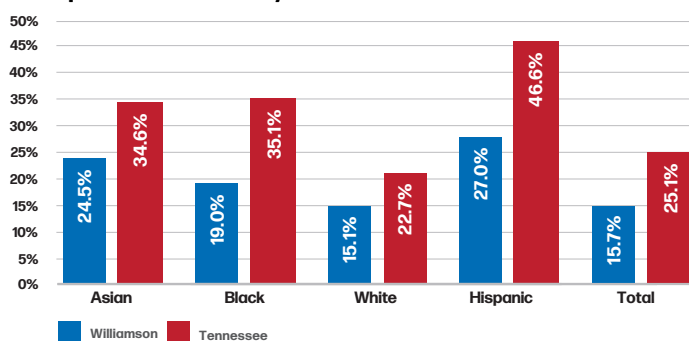
**#6**  
Rank for urban population

**#15**  
Median Age Rank

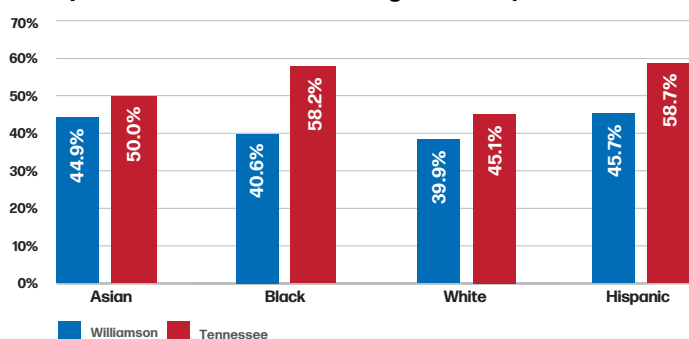
**39.4**  
Median age

**427 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



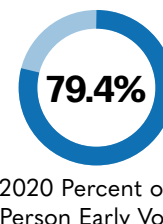
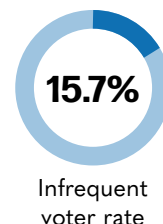
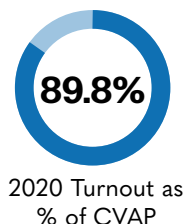
### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race



### VOTER DATA



Asian	67.4%	Black	84.9%
Hispanic	66.9%	White	92.8%



In 2020, there was **1** polling location for every **1,466.64** voters

**#95**  
Election Day Polling Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	71 points	10.3%	3.2%
Black	N/A	5.5%	N/A
White	-11.3 points	74.3%	85.6%
Hispanic	4.3 points	7.9%	3.6%



## Analysis

Of the counties observed, Wilson County has the second-highest voter registration rate and the third-lowest infrequent-voter rate. Wilson has one of the higher proportions of white voters; however, Asian, Black, and Latino voters also have lower infrequent-voter rates than compared to the state as a whole. While Wilson has the second-worst election day polling location to voter ratio in the state, that is partially accounted for by their high early voting share (the third-highest in the state).

### COUNTY OUTLINE

**152,010**  
Population size

**117,870**  
Citizen Voting Age Population

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

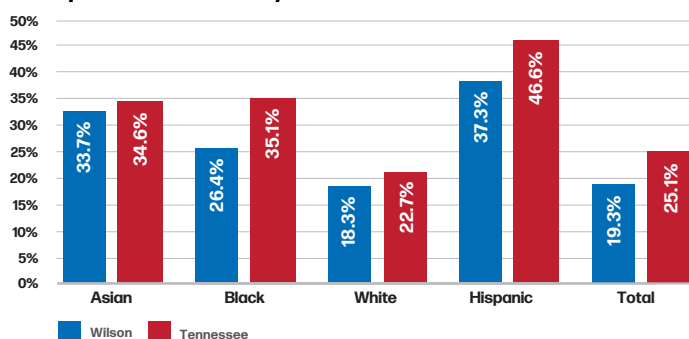
**#11**  
Rank for urban population

**#23**  
Median Age Rank

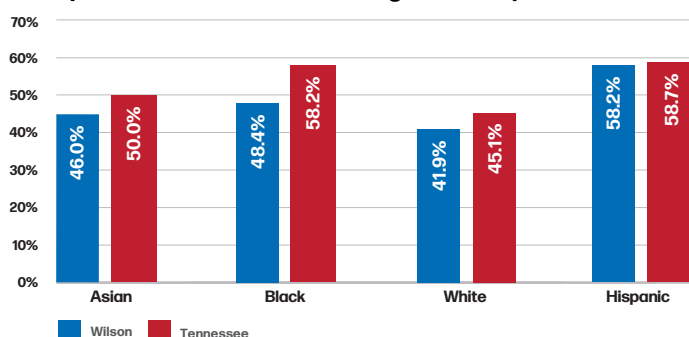
**40.1**  
Median age

**925 per 100K**  
Incarceration Rate

### Infrequent Voter Rates by Race



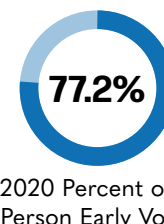
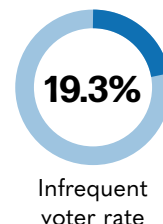
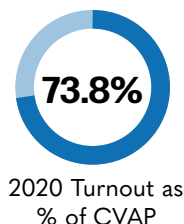
### Infrequent Voter Rates for Voters Aged 18-34 by Race



### VOTER DATA



Asian	57.2%	Black	81.7%
Hispanic	64.9%	White	89.0%



In 2020, there was **1** polling location for every **1,138.22** voters

**#94**  
Election Day Polling Location Rank

	Gap between Share of Unregistered Pop. and CVAP	Share of Unregistered Population	Share of CVAP
Asian	2.9 points	4.3%	1.4%
Black	N/A	7.5%	N/A
White	-4.3 points	81.0%	85.3%
Hispanic	2.9 points	5.8%	2.9%

## Source Page for County Profiles

1. Catalyst, "Tennessee Voter File," 2024, accessed May 10, 2024.
2. Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR), "Tennessee County Profiles," <https://www.tn.gov/tacir/tennessee-county-profiles-redirect.html>, accessed June 19, 2024.
3. Think Tennessee, "State of Our Counties," [https://www.thinktennessee.org/state-of-our-counties/#dashboard\\_top](https://www.thinktennessee.org/state-of-our-counties/#dashboard_top), accessed June 19, 2024.
4. U.S. Census Bureau, "ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates," American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2022.DP05?q=voting>, accessed May 9, 2024.
5. U.S. Census Bureau, "ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates," American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2022.DP05?q=citizen>, accessed June 19, 2024.
6. U.S. Census Bureau, "Citizen, Voting-Age Population by Selected Characteristics," American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S2901, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2022.S2901?q=voting>, accessed June 6, 2024.
7. U.S. Election Assistance Commission, "In-Person Voting 1-Polling Places," Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) Data Interactive, 2020, <https://www.eac.gov/research-and-data/studies-and-reports>, accessed June 19, 2024.
8. U.S. Election Assistance Commission, "Turnout," Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) Data Interactive, 2020, <https://www.eac.gov/research-and-data/studies-and-reports>, accessed June 19, 2024.
9. Vera Institute for Justice, "Jail + Prison Incarceration rate per 100,000 residents age 15-64," *Vera Incarceration Trends*, 2020, <https://trends.vera.org/>, accessed June 19, 2024.





# Endnotes

1. U.S. Census Bureau, "Citizen, Voting-Age Population by Selected Characteristics," *American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S2901, 2022*, accessed June 25, 2024, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSTTY2022.S2901?q=tennessee>.
2. MIT Election Data and Science Lab, "Election Performance Index" (2020), <https://elections.mit.edu/#/data/map?view=indicator-profile&indicator=T&year=2020>.
3. CIRCLE, "State-by-State Youth Voter Turnout Data and the Impact of Election Laws in 2022" (2023), <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/state-state-youth-voter-turnout-data-and-impact-election-laws-2022>.
4. MIT, *supra* note 2.
5. Sarah Best, "Secretary of State Hargett addresses voting integrity, low voter turnout, human trafficking," *Jackson Sun* (2024), <https://archive.ph/AFQd3#selection-415.0-415.91>.
6. Mary Darby, "2022 Election Results," *Think Tennessee* (2022), <https://www.thinktennessee.org/press/2022-tennessee-election-results/?emci=13b94ad7-e561-ed11-ade6-14cb651ee1db&emdi=505adcfe-1a62-ed11-ade6-14cb6534a651&ceid=10939981>.
7. *Ibid.*
8. U.S. Census Bureau, "Citizen, Voting-Age Population by Selected Characteristics," *American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S2901, 2022*, accessed June 25, 2024, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSTTY2022.S2901?q=tennessee+voting+age+population>.
9. U.S. Census Bureau, "Citizen, voting age populations by age groups in Tennessee," *ACS 1-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample, 2022*.
10. Miriam McKinney Gray, "Surfacing Missing Voters," *Democracy and Power Innovation Fund* at 4, 7-10 (2024) [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ed\\_3ol34JX-kJvT8oxZlwCipmmaCrX7n/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ed_3ol34JX-kJvT8oxZlwCipmmaCrX7n/view).
11. Scot Schraufnagel, Michael J. Pomante, and Quan Li, "Cost of Voting in the American States: 2022\*" *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy* 21:3, at 224 (2022), <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/epdf/10.1089/elj.2022.0041>.
12. Tenn. Code § 2-2-109(a), (b).
13. Laura Williamson and Jesse Rhodes, "Same Day Registration: How Registration Reform Can Boost Turnout Among Black and Latinx Voters," *Dēmos* at 2, 3 (2021), <https://www.demos.org/policy-briefs/same-day-registration-how-registration-reform-can-boost-turnout-among-black-and>; Liz Kennedy, Lew Daly, and Brenda Wright, "Automatic Voter Registration: Finding America's Missing Voters," *Dēmos* at 11-16 (2016), <https://www.demos.org/research/automatic-voter-registration-finding-americas-missing-voters>.
14. U.S. Census Bureau, "Current Population Survey, November 2020: Voting and Registration Supplement", (2020).
15. *Ibid.*
16. Jamie McGee, "Restoring voting rights after a felony is rare in Tennessee. This year, the process got harder," *Tennessee Lookout* (2023), <https://tennesseelookout.com/2023/12/07/restoring-voting-rights-after-a-felony-is-rare-in-tennessee-this-year-the-process-got-harder/>.
17. Christopher Uggen et al., "Locked Out 2022: Estimates of People Denied Voting Rights," *The Sentencing Project* at 6, 9-10 (2022), <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/locked-out-2022-estimates-of-people-denied-voting-rights/>.
18. Bridgett A. King and Laura Erickson, "Disenfranchising the Enfranchised: Exploring the Relationship Between Felony Disenfranchisement and African American Voter Turnout," *Journal of Black Studies* 47, no. 8 (2016): 804, 812, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26174229>.
19. Marc Mauer, "Thinking About Prison and its Impact in the Twenty-First Century," *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law* [Vol 2:607] at 616 (2005), <https://core.ac.uk/reader/159576450>.
20. Tenn. Code § 2-6-201; Tenn. Code § 2-6-401.
21. Tenn. Code § 2-3-201.
22. Tennessee Secretary of State, "Guide on ID Requirements when voting," <https://sos.tn.gov/elections/voter-id-requirements>; see also Iliana Hagenah, "How photo ID laws and provisional ballots target the most marginalized Southerners," *Scalawag* (2020), <https://scalawagmagazine.org/2020/10/voter-id-laws-tn-trans/>.
23. Arianna Poindexter, "Memphis voting activists, clergy express concerns over possible voter suppression," *Action News 5* (2022), <https://www.actionnews5.com/2022/03/10/memphis-voting-activists-clergy-express-concerns-over-possible-voter-suppression/>.
24. Joyce Peterson, "Shelby County Election Commission eliminates more voting precincts," *Action News 5* (2022), <https://www.actionnews5.com/2022/02/22/shelby-county-election-commission-eliminates-more-voting-precincts/>.
25. Voting Rights Lab, "Polling Place Consolidation: Negative Impacts on Turnout and Equity," at 4-7 (2020), <https://votingrightslab.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Polling-Place-Consolidation-Negative-Impacts-on-Turnout-and-Equity.pdf>.
26. Migration Policy Institute, "State Immigration Data Profiles: Tennessee," (2022), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/language/TN/US>.

27. 52 U.S.C. § 10503.
28. Tenn. Code § 4-1-404.
29. U.S. Census Bureau, *supra* note 14.
30. MIT, *supra* note 2.
31. Think Tennessee, “Election 2022: Tennessee’s elections were secure, but opportunities to increase voter engagement remain,” at 4, 5 (2022), <https://www.thinktennessee.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/2022-Election-After-Action-Report-1.pdf>.
32. Complaint, *Tennessee State Conference of the NAACP et. al v. Lee*, No. 3:23-CV-00832 (M.D. Tenn. Aug. 9, 2023), [https://www.lawyerscommittee.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/show\\_temp-pl-85.pdf](https://www.lawyerscommittee.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/show_temp-pl-85.pdf).
33. Gerrymandering Project, “Tennessee 2022 Final Congressional Map - Enacted,” (2022), <https://gerrymander.princeton.edu/redistricting-report-card?planId=recn5lkz916p7wN5m>.
34. Michael Powell et al., “Real Talk: Understanding Texas Latino Voters Through Meaningful Conversation,” *The Texas Organizing Project Education Fund (TOPEF) and Culture Concepts* 43-44, 69-70 (2020), <https://www.houstontx.gov/specialevents/hha2021/balli-cecilia-texas-latino-voter-study-slides-117.pdf>; see also Caitlin Kim, “Why Asian Americans Don’t Vote,” *New America* (2017), <https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/why-asian-americans-dont-vote/>.
35. *Ibid.* at 64, 65; see also Stephanie Cho et al., “Strengthening the Asian American Electorate,” *Human Rights Magazine*, Vol. 45, No. 3, [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human\\_rights\\_magazine\\_home/voting-in-2020/strengthening-the-asian-american-electorate/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/voting-in-2020/strengthening-the-asian-american-electorate/).
36. Asian Americans Advancing Justice, “Voices of Democracy: Asian Americans and Language Access During the 2012 Elections” (2013), <https://www.advancingjustice-aajc.org/sites/default/files/2016-10/Voices%20of%20Democracy.pdf>; see also Abby Cruz and Cristina Corujo, “Why Spanish-language voting ballots are critical for democracy, advocates say,” *ABC News* (January 14, 2022), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/spanish-language-voting-ballots-critical-democracy-advocates/story?id=82242985>.
37. Abby Kiesa et al., “CIRCLE Growing Voters,” CIRCLE at 45-52 (2022), [https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2024-05/circle\\_growing\\_voters\\_report.pdf](https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2024-05/circle_growing_voters_report.pdf).

