

National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes

---

# Postsecondary Achievement of Deaf People in Tennessee: 2019-2023

Carrie Lou Bloom

Jeffrey Levi Palmer

Jonah Winninghoff



**NDC**  
National Deaf Center  
on Postsecondary Outcomes

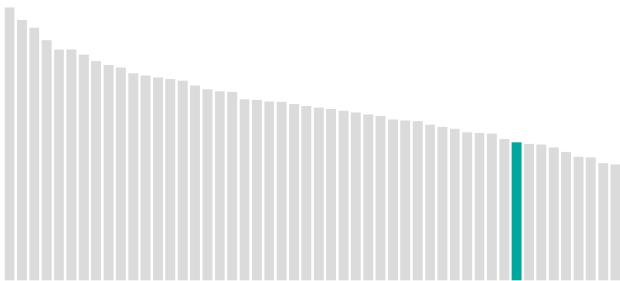


## INTRODUCTION

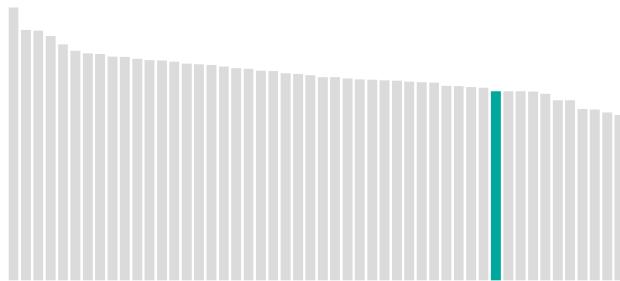
This report uses the American Community Survey (ACS), a national survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, to provide an overview of employment and educational outcomes for deaf people in your state. Over 207,000 deaf people participate in the survey annually, making it a premier source for identifying improvement opportunities in your state. Due to smaller sample sizes or unstable estimates, some data may not be available for your state. We recommend combining these data with community conversations and local data sources to understand better what resources deaf people need in your area.

## STATE RANKING AMONG DEAF PEOPLE

**Bachelor's degree completion**  
**#42** out of 50



**Employment**  
**#40** out of 50



## KEY FINDINGS: TENNESSEE

- 47% of deaf people complete at least some college.
- 16.1% fewer deaf people complete bachelor's degrees than hearing people.
- Fewer deaf people with additional disabilities have completed a bachelor's degree.
- 50.9% of deaf people are employed.
- The employment rate for deaf people with additional disabilities is 28.7%.

In this report, we use the term *deaf* in an all-inclusive manner to include people who may identify as deaf, deafblind, deafdisabled, hard of hearing, late-deafened, and hearing impaired. NDC recognizes that, for many people, identity is fluid and can change over time or with the setting.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

On the national level, fewer deaf people completed high school or a college degree than their hearing peers. The data below (Figure 1) show how your state compares to national averages for educational attainment. More detailed national statistics are available on the [NDC Data Dashboard](#).

Figure 1  
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

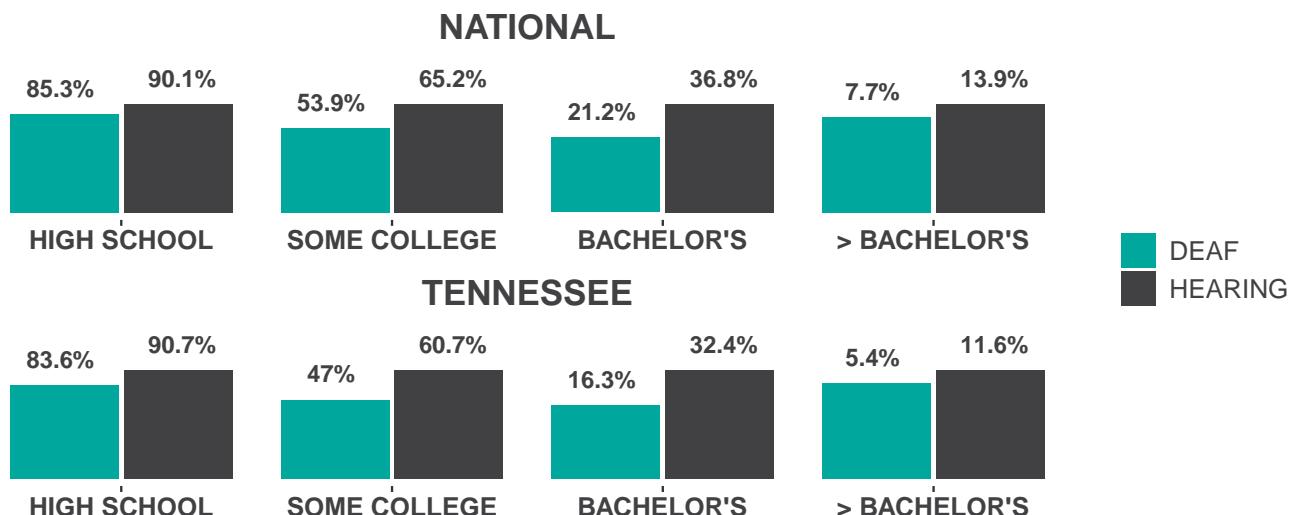


Figure 2  
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN TENNESSEE BY GENDER

This table provides a breakdown of educational attainment in Tennessee, categorized by gender (Men vs. Women) and deaf status (Deaf vs. Hearing). The columns represent different levels of education: HIGH SCHOOL, SOME COLLEGE, BACHELOR'S, and > BACHELOR'S.

	HIGH SCHOOL	SOME COLLEGE	BACHELOR'S	> BACHELOR'S
DEAF MEN	83.0%	45.0%	14.8%	4.6%
HEARING MEN	89.1%	55.9%	29.5%	10.1%
DEAF WOMEN	84.6%	50.3%	18.7%	6.7%
HEARING WOMEN	92.2%	65.2%	35.1%	13.0%

*Figure 3*  
**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN TENNESSEE BY RACE AND ETHNICITY**

	DEAF	HEARING	HIGH SCHOOL	SOME COLLEGE	BACHELOR'S	> BACHELOR'S
ASIAN DEAF			--	--	--	--
ASIAN HEARING			90.4%	76.1%	60.1%	31.9%
BLACK DEAF			89.0%	46.4%	11.5%	4.2%
BLACK HEARING			90.3%	56.1%	23.8%	8.9%
LATINE DEAF			--	--	--	--
LATINE HEARING			66.6%	39.6%	19.9%	7.3%
MULTIRACIAL DEAF			--	--	--	--
MULTIRACIAL HEARING			91.9%	65.6%	32.9%	11.9%
NATIVE AMERICAN DEAF			--	--	--	--
NATIVE AMERICAN HEARING			87.7%	56.2%	18.0%	7.2%
WHITE DEAF			83.6%	47.1%	16.9%	5.4%
WHITE HEARING			92.9%	62.9%	34.6%	11.9%

Many deaf people have additional disabilities of varying types, which contribute to their unique strengths and needs. National data show that 45.8% of deaf people have any type of additional disability. Across the nation, deaf people with additional disabilities experience more barriers in educational systems, which results in lower educational attainment rates. Educational attainment varies by type of disability.

*Figure 4*  
**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN TENNESSEE BY DISABILITY**

	HIGH SCHOOL	SOME COLLEGE	BACHELOR'S	> BACHELOR'S
DEAFBLIND	74%	35.7%	11.4%	3%
DEAFDISABLED	81.9%	42%	10.2%	4%
DEAF WITHOUT ADDITIONAL DISABILITY	89.2%	55.4%	22.2%	7.4%

## SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

Deaf people receive supplemental security income (SSI) benefits at different rates across the nation. Among the deaf population ages 16–64 , 10.3% are recipients of SSI benefits, while in Tennessee, 11.2% of deaf people receive SSI benefits.

## EMPLOYMENT RATES

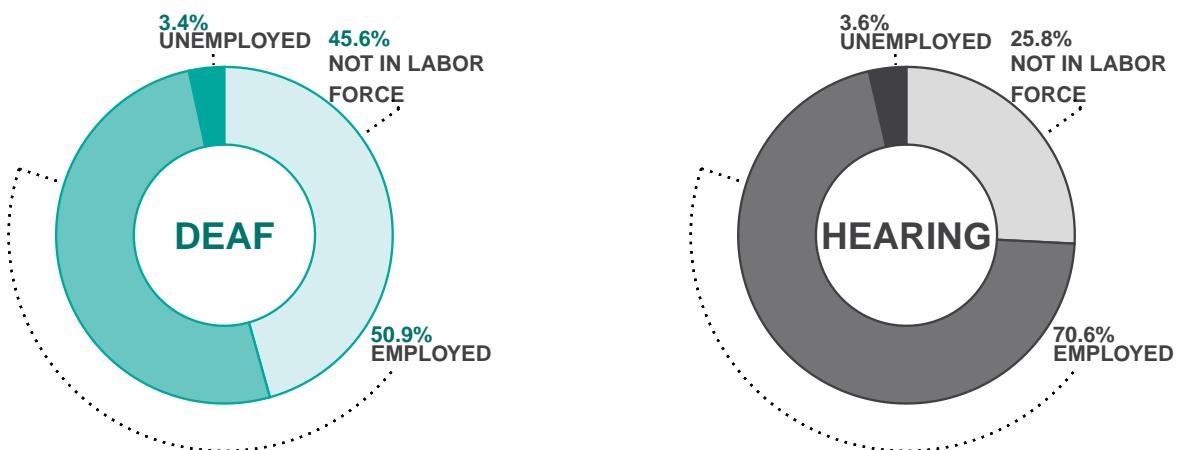
On the national level, fewer deaf people have jobs than their hearing peers. Almost half of deaf people are not in the labor force. The data shown below show how your state compares to national employment rates. Employment also varies across gender, race, ethnicity, and disability. More detailed statistics are on the [NDC Data Dashboard](#).

Figure 5  
EMPLOYMENT RATES

### NATIONAL



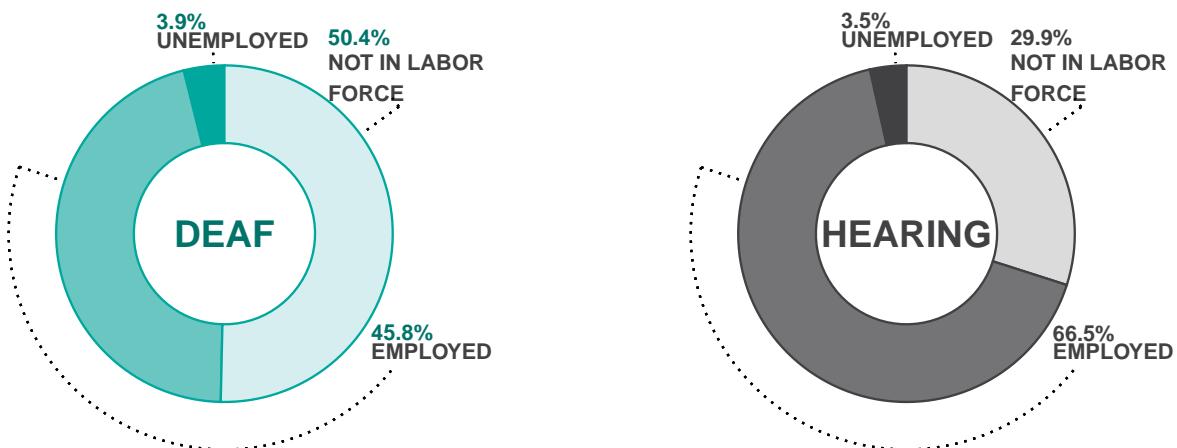
### TENNESSEE



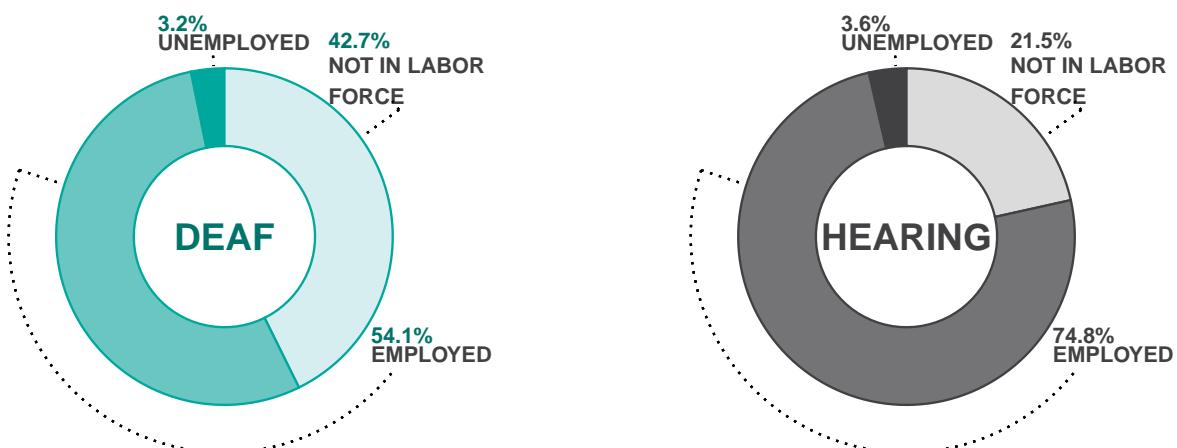
*Figure 6*  
**EMPLOYMENT RATES IN TENNESSEE BY GENDER**

---

**WOMEN**

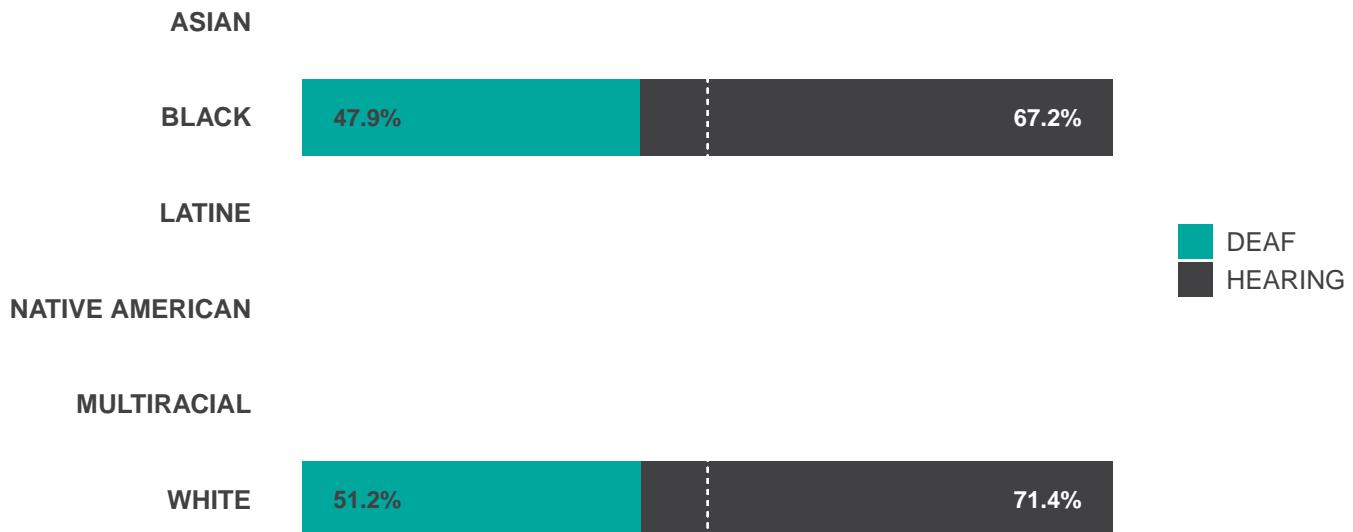


**MEN**



*Figure 7*  
**EMPLOYMENT RATES IN TENNESSEE BY RACE AND ETHNICITY**

---



*Figure 8*  
**EMPLOYMENT RATES IN TENNESSEE BY DISABILITY**

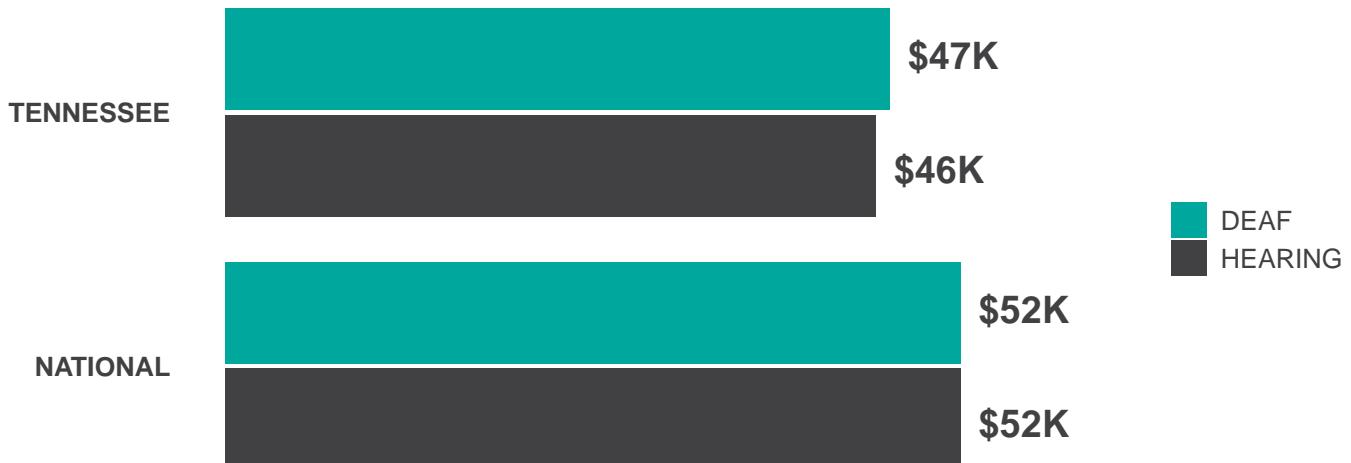
---



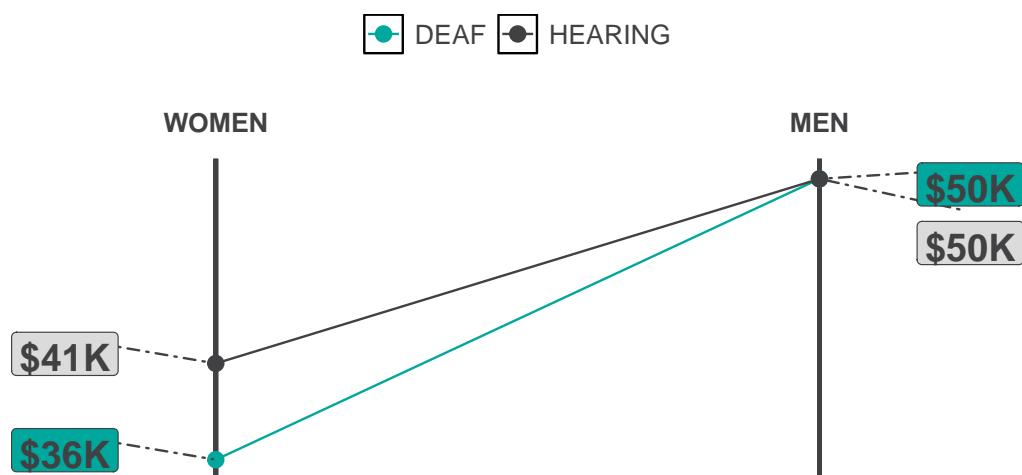
## EARNINGS

National data show lower median earnings among deaf people who are employed full-time. Earnings also vary across gender, race, ethnicity, and disability status.

*Figure 9*  
**MEDIAN EARNINGS FOR PEOPLE**

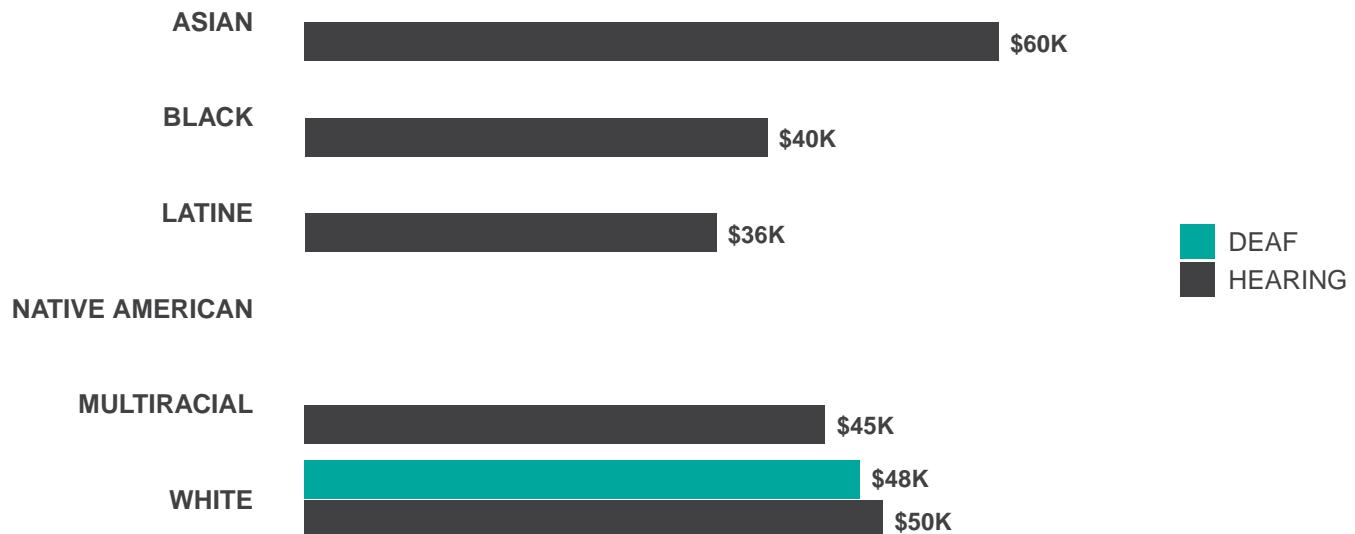


*Figure 10*  
**MEDIAN EARNINGS FOR PEOPLE IN TENNESSEE BY GENDER**



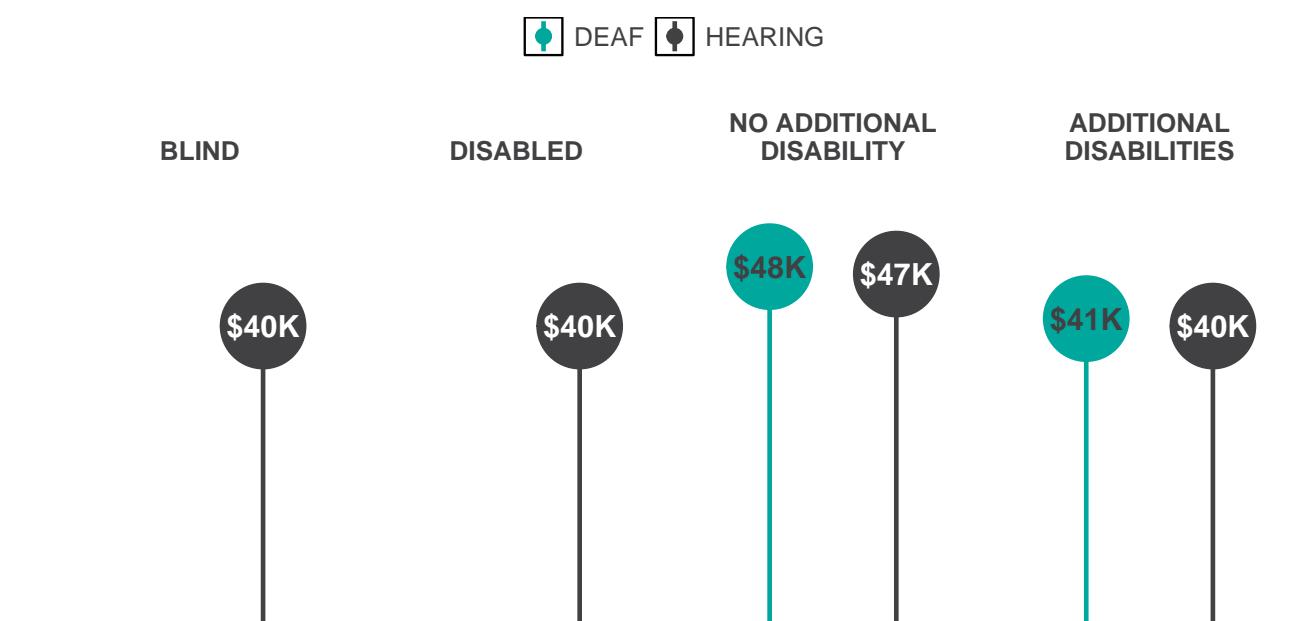
*Figure 11*  
**MEDIAN EARNINGS FOR PEOPLE IN TENNESSEE BY RACE AND ETHNICITY**

---



*Figure 12*  
**MEDIAN EARNINGS FOR PEOPLE IN TENNESSEE BY DISABILITY**

---



## METHOD

### Where do this data come from?

The data for this report come from the American Community Survey (ACS), an annual, nationwide survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau. Unlike the Census, which everyone fills out, the ACS is filled out by just a sample of people in each community, and their answers are used to generate estimates. More information may be found at [www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/about.html](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/about.html).

### What does the word **deaf** mean in this report?

The ACS gathers information about functional limitations rather than disability or identity labels. In this report, anyone who answers yes to question 18a “**Is this person deaf or does he/she have serious difficulty hearing?**” is considered deaf. Unfortunately, this dataset has no information about sign language use or the type of school attended (e.g., mainstream vs. deaf school).

### Why are some data not available in this report?

When examining subgroups within the deaf community, such as deafblind people, there are instances where the sample size is too small or the standard error is too large to present these estimates reliably. In such cases, the data points are excluded from the report. Please feel free to contact us for more information or any specific requests.

For more Frequently Asked Question, visit our website: [www.nationaldeafcenter.org/datafaqs](http://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/datafaqs)

### Technical Information

- Dataset: Public Microdata Sample (PUMS), 5-year Estimates (2019-2023)
- Age Range: 16–64 for employment data, 25-64 for educational data
- Weighting: Person Weight (PWGT)
- Sample Size: 5,378 (Tennessee), 207,327 (United States)
- Minimum sample size to report: 351
- Maximum relative standard error to report: 30%

### THIS REPORT MAY BE CITED AS:

Bloom, C. L., Palmer, J.L., & Winninghoff, J. (2025). *Postsecondary achievement of deaf people in Tennessee: 2023*. National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes, The University of Texas at Austin. [www.nationaldeafcenter.org](http://www.nationaldeafcenter.org).

This document was developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, OSEP #H326210002. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.