

Tennessee

STATUS OF CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION IN TENNESSEE



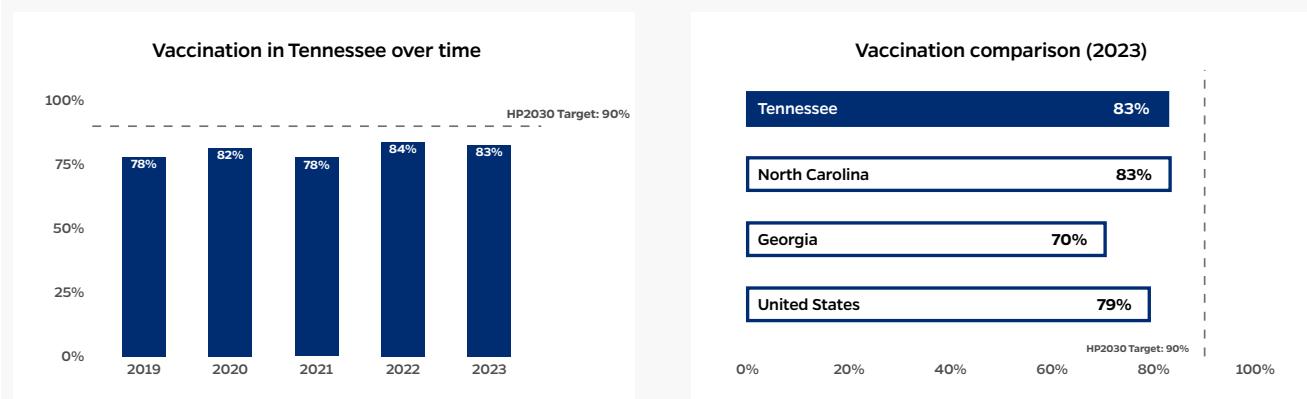
This brief illustrates the current status of childhood immunization in Tennessee and is intended to inform state-level policy decisions and priorities. Takeaways include:

- State-level immunization coverage in Tennessee for MMR vaccination is above national levels.
- Tennessee's non-medical exemption rate among kindergartners is lower than the U.S. median.
- State-level per capita public health spending is higher than the national rate.
- Tennessee has reported 7 cases of measles since January 1, 2025.

VACCINATION COVERAGE

Maintaining sufficient vaccination coverage is critical for establishing community protection. The charts below demonstrate how coverage for two critical vaccines has changed over time in Tennessee and how it compares to neighboring states, national rates, and Healthy People 2030 (HP2030) targets.

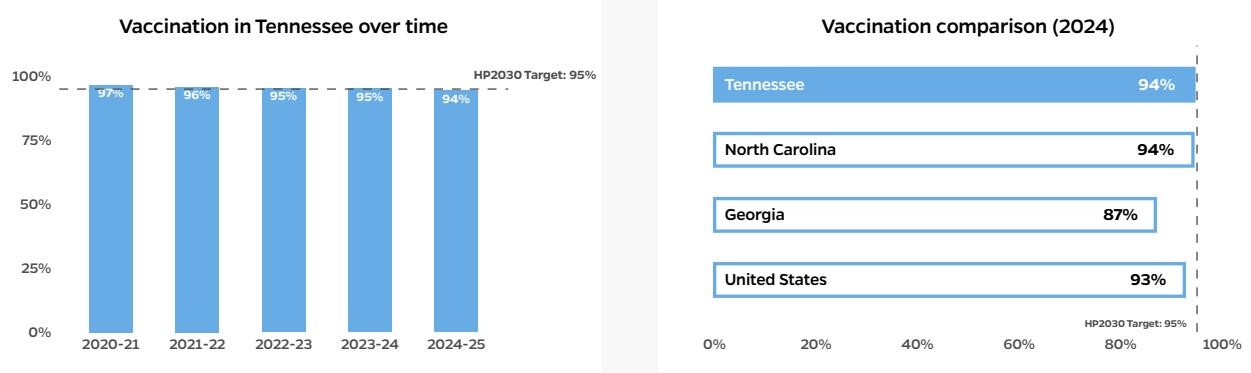
Proportion of 2-year-olds fully protected with DTaP vaccines



In 2023, fewer 2-year-olds were fully vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (received all four doses of DTaP) in Tennessee compared to the previous year. Coverage in Tennessee is below the HP2030 target of 90%.

Source: *ChildVaxView*

Proportion of kindergartners protected with MMR vaccines



In 2024, a lower proportion of kindergartners completed the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine series in Tennessee compared to the previous year. Coverage in Tennessee falls short of the HP2030 target of 95%.

Source: SchoolVaxView

VACCINATION EXEMPTIONS

Many states allow children attending public school to receive vaccination exemptions for religious reasons or for personal reasons, sometimes referred to as “philosophical exemptions.” Higher rates of non-medical exemptions have been linked with increased disease transmission.

Allows personal exemptions?

Allows religious exemptions?

Non-medical exemptions — state

Non-medical exemptions — US median

NO

YES

3.7%

4%

Tennessee's rate of non-medical exemptions among kindergartners during the 2024-25 school year is similar to the state's 2023-24 rate.

Additional details on exemption requirements:

Parents/guardians submit signed statement.

Source: NCSL, SchoolVaxView

PUBLIC HEALTH SPENDING

Low levels of public health spending are thought to contribute to suboptimal immunization rates. Nationally, Tennessee ranks 20th in public health spending.

State dollars dedicated to public health per capita (2022-23)

State

National

\$132

\$124

Source: America's Health Rankings

UNIVERSAL VACCINE PURCHASING

In states with Universal Purchase programs, the state government purchases all recommended vaccines for all children, regardless of insurance status. These initiatives can help to address disparities in vaccine coverage and support equitable vaccine access.

Universal Purchaser?

NO

Source: AIM

SUPPORT FOR IMMUNIZATION

Strong policy commitment to immunization is critical for effective vaccination programs. The state legislature has recently introduced several bills that would affect state-wide childhood vaccination, a selection of which are described below. The arrows below indicate whether these bills would strengthen (↑) or weaken (↓) vaccine safety nets.



TN HJR 28 (Not enacted) – Would forbid the state from compelling any individual to undergo medical treatment, including vaccination, even during a declared emergency



TN SB 263; TN SB 318 (Enacted) – Prohibits the enforcement or recognition of requirements or mandates issued by the World Health Organization as the basis for any official action



TN SB 1272 (Enacted) – States that a child in state custody cannot be denied school admission due to lack of immunization or inability to provide immunization records



TN SB 827; TN HB 1003 (Enacted) – Remove vaccine requirements for students attending fully online private schools



TN HB 1157 (Enacted) – Prohibits the state or local health department from promoting, distributing, or endorsing FDA-regulated products for uses not specified in their official labeling



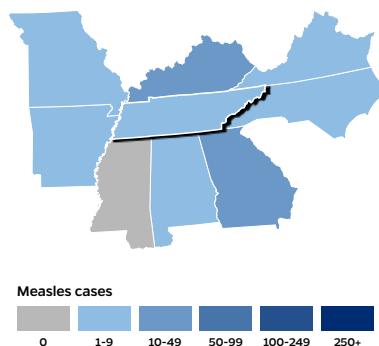
TN HB 1156, TN SB 1030 (Not enacted) – Would remove the responsibility of parents or guardians to ensure that their child receives vaccines recommended by CDC/AAP guidelines

Source: AIM, LegiScan, NCSL

DISEASE STATUS

Measles outbreaks can indicate insufficient vaccination coverage within a population. Disease may spread across state borders when vaccine coverage is low. The map below visualizes the number of measles cases reported in Tennessee and neighboring states between January 1, 2025 and October 24, 2025.

7 measles cases in Tennessee



Source: U.S. Measles Tracker, IVAC.



Vaccines can help prevent expensive disease outbreaks. A 2018–19 measles outbreak in Washington was estimated to cost **US\$47,479** per case for both direct medical and public health response expenses.

Source: Pike, 2022

DATA SOURCES

Vaccination coverage:

- DTaP: CDC, ChildVaxView Interactive! <https://www.cdc.gov/childvaxview/about/interactive-reports.html>. DTaP, ≥ 4 Doses, States/Local Areas, Birth Years/Cohorts 2017–2021, Age 24 months. Updated Aug 2024.
- MMR: CDC, SchoolVaxView Interactive! <https://www.cdc.gov/schoolvaxview/data/index.html>. MMR, States, School Years 2021–22, 2022–23, 2023–24, 2024–25. Updated July 2025.

Vaccination exemptions:

- Status: NCSL, State Non-Medical Exemptions From School Immunization Requirements. <https://www.ncsl.org/health/state-non-medical-exemptions-from-school-immunization-requirements>. Updated July 2025. Rates: CDC, SchoolVaxView Interactive! <https://www.cdc.gov/schoolvaxview/data/index.html>. Exemption – Non-Medical Exemption, States, School Years 2023–24 and 2024–25. Updated July 2025.

Public health spending:

- Public Health Funding in United States, America's Health Rankings, United Health Foundation. https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/PH_funding. Accessed July 2025.

Universal vaccine purchasing:

- Association of Immunization Managers, Policy Maps – Universal Vaccine Purchase Program. <https://www.immunizationmanagers.org/resources/aim-policy-maps/>. Updated April 2025.

Support for immunization:

- Association of Immunization Managers, Legislative Round-ups. <https://www.immunizationmanagers.org/resources-tools/immunization-program-policy-toolkit/legislative-round-ups/>. LegiScan. <https://legiscan.com/>. Accessed July 2025.
- NCSL State Public Health Legislation Database. <https://www.ncsl.org/health/state-public-health-legislation-database>. Accessed Sept 2025.

Disease status:

- International Vaccine Access Center, U.S. Measles Tracker. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/ivac/resources/us-measles-tracker>. Accessed July 22, 2025.

Measles outbreak cost:

- Pike J, Melnick A, Gastañaduy PA, et al. Societal Costs of a Measles Outbreak. *Pediatrics*. 2021;147(4):e2020027037. doi:10.1542/peds.2020-027037

Note: The high-level data included in this report do not reflect statewide variation in vaccination coverage or disease status. Further, state reporting policies may limit data completeness. For any data-related questions, please contact ivac@jh.edu.