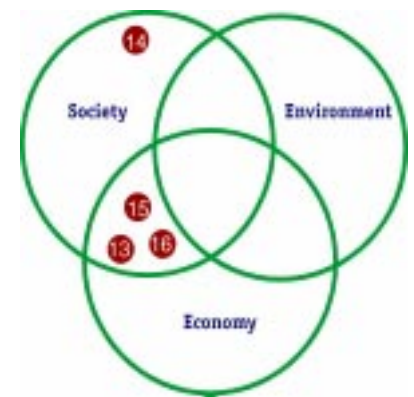


Quality Education

GOAL: A quality, lifelong education equally accessible to all New Jerseyans, whereby individuals learn to be critical thinkers and engaged citizens with an understanding of and respect for the systems that support civilization (social, economic, and environmental); and which provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and personal fulfillment.

New Jersey spent more money per pupil on elementary and secondary school education than any other state in 1999. We are at the national forefront of new educational initiatives, such as charter schools and standards-based reform. New Jersey also ranks among the best states across all categories in a recent study on higher education.* Yet there has been little change in the number of students meeting minimum high school proficiency standards and we have spent years arguing in the courts about the disparities that exist between our rich and poor districts. Such issues are critical not only to parents. An educated citizenry is the foundation of a productive economy and a fully functional society. New Jersey produces fewer higher education degrees relative to population size than many other states, although we have one of the highest percentages of college-educated adults.



What we know

13	Graduation rates recently decreasing	page 29
14	Little change in student/teacher ratio	page 30
15	Little change in number of 11 th grade students meeting minimum high school proficiency.....	page 31
16	Access to higher education shows little recent change	page 32

What we don't know

- We can test students on reading, writing, and arithmetic. We do not have information on characteristics that are harder to test for, including the ability to work with others, to think in innovative ways, and whether students care about being productive members of society.
- We have no consistently available measures of disparities in the education received by students from rich and poor families, of different genders, and from different ethnic groups.
- To sustain our quality of life, it is imperative that our children are taught to understand the basic systems that support us: the economy, the environment, government, and society. We currently have no way to measure how well our children are taught what they need to know to manage these systems.
- There is currently no comprehensive means of tracking lifelong education. Given the quickening pace of economic change, it appears that continuing education long past traditional graduations will become more important.

* DATA SOURCE: NATIONAL CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY AND HIGHER EDUCATION
See the Technical Appendix for more information.

INDICATOR

13

Graduation Rates

Percentage of New Jersey's students who graduate within four years of entering high school: Recently decreasing

Graduation Rates



Importance

Education correlates strongly with future economic and social well-being for everyone. The higher the education level of the state's population, the more robust the state's economy and the greater the economic opportunities for residents. Education is also a critical way that we transmit our values, culture, and shared experience. A high school diploma is a passport to the benefits of American society.

Economic

Without a degree, young people face a difficult battle in the labor

market today and lack opportunities for advancement tomorrow. Education makes people employable and competitive. It also makes them rich in knowledge and experience. For economic development to take place, we need capable, educated workers.

Environmental

Environmental education helps us to make scientifically informed decisions, rather than choices based solely on emotion. Such learning is the foundation of future decisions that will conserve our resources and allow us to live well. Tomorrow's graduates will soon face the task of reducing the

burden that we put on nature today.

Social

Education is central to developing future leaders and effective participants in our state's civil society. People who drop out of school are not qualified for many important kinds of work or future opportunities, and they are less capable of leading us toward the kind of future we want. This is especially worrisome in urban areas with the highest dropout rates. This is where thoughtful leadership and strong communities are most needed.

Things to think about

- High school graduates have a significantly lower unemployment rate than non-graduates.
- Districts such as Trenton and Newark have been offering special night high school programs to help students achieve the credits required for graduation or to prepare them for taking the Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED).
- In 1999, over 5,000 people completed the requirements for a GED.

Knowledge gaps

Graduation rates do not tell us about the quality of the education each student received. Furthermore, graduation rates do not tell us whether these young people are responsible citizens, are healthy, or have a fundamental understanding of important issues and of how the world works. The Department of Education is evaluating potential factors contributing to the recent decline in graduation rates. In particular, the Department is studying the correlation between the decline in graduation rates and the parallel reduction in the dropout rate, especially in the state's special needs districts. Schools are reporting that more students are staying in school through their senior year, but are failing to earn the credits necessary to graduate at the end of four years.

Student/Teacher Ratio

INDICATOR

14

Student/Teacher Ratio

Average number of students per full-time classroom teacher at New Jersey public schools: Little change



Importance

One of the most effective forms of education is student-teacher interaction. The student-to-teacher ratio for New Jersey public schools has recently hovered around 14 students per teacher, which places us second best among states. Our state may be stronger in the future as a result. These average class sizes reflect not only general education classes but also smaller classes, including special education and counseling.

Economic

Businesses invest in machinery, advertising, and materials. Through their taxes, they invest indirectly in an even more critical resource: educated employees, the products of our public schools. An investment in well educated people means far more to our economy than the purchase of any machine or the building of any infrastructure.

Environmental

Education illuminates the connections between our actions and the consequences for the environment and our society. "Thinking skills" are

crucial to fostering environmental awareness. Teachers cultivate such thinking. A quality education instills environmental stewardship values.

Social

In addition to teaching skills and critical thinking, an education teaches children how to behave in social settings. Self-discipline, respect for others, and other key social values can be instilled through classroom experience. Adequate attention from teachers is a critical component of this learning experience.

Things to think about

- The work of teachers can only reach its highest potential when it is complemented by the teaching done by parents.

Knowledge gaps

This indicator does not take into account the quality of teaching or teacher qualifications. It also does not account for the curricula that are taught to our children. The indicator includes classes that have different types of teachers, such as special education and counseling, which are more prevalent in some schools. A better indicator would account for these differences and represent typical general education class sizes.

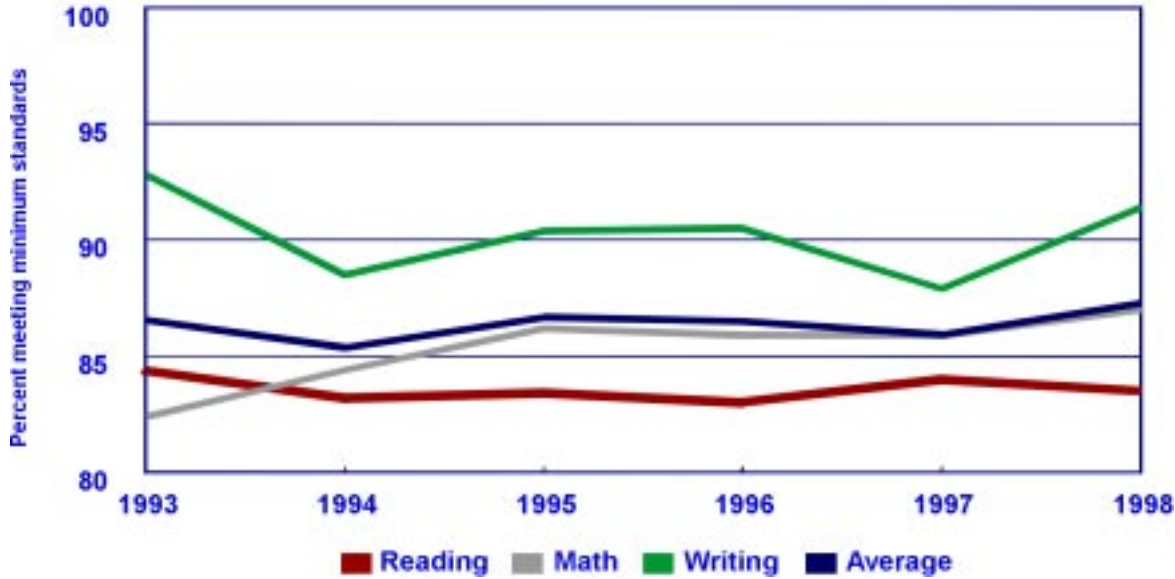
INDICATOR

15

Standardized Test Scores

Percent of 11th grade students meeting the minimum high school proficiency mandated by the state: Little change

Standardized Test Scores



Importance

Imagine trying to get through a day - or a career - without knowing how to read well. Imagine trying to buy a house and secure a mortgage without knowing basic mathematics. A large number of us in New Jersey face these difficulties. As with many issues in our state, there is a large but diminishing gap among those of us from different races.

Economic

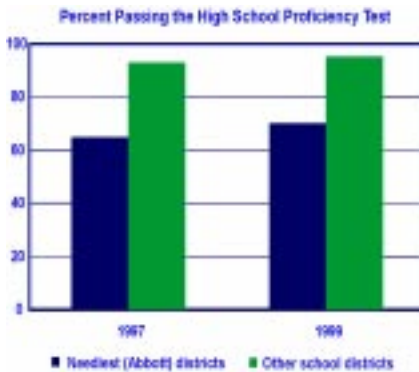
Employers depend on capable workers who know their basic skills, including reading, writing, and math. If our school system fails to instill such proficiency, industry suffers and incomes decline.

Environmental

Those of us with the benefit of an effective high school education are better able to create opportunities to protect and enhance our environment.

Social

Those of us who do not learn to read and write well at an early age are disadvantaged the rest of our lives. This disadvantage is the root of other social disadvantages, such as unequal life expectancies, unequal wages, and high unemployment. Unequal test results are a good proxy for these other important issues.



Things to think about

- Public school tests cover basic skills, but not such crucial attributes as the ability to work with others, the wisdom to make responsible choices for our future and our environment, or the desire to work hard.
- Some studies have shown that the value of education, literacy, and other attributes measured by test scores are more important to our economy than the value of the machines, assembly lines, and financial capital used by our businesses.

Knowledge gaps

In the past 20 years during which New Jersey has conducted standardized testing, no one test has been given consistently to public school students in our state, making comparisons of results difficult. The state recently implemented testing of "Core Curriculum Content Standards," beginning with the fourth and eighth grades. Once the data from the new standards are collected regularly, they will provide information needed to make year-to-year comparisons.

Note: See the Technical Appendix for a change in the description of this indicator since the 1999 Sustainable State Project Report.

INDICATOR

16

Access to Higher Education

Undergraduate enrollment in New Jersey colleges and universities: Little recent change



Importance

College education increases our earnings, expands our horizons, generates more opportunities, and supplies our industries and government with more capable workers. Some of us take it for granted that we and our children will go to a college or university. Others see this opportunity as beyond reach. This indicator reflects our state's capacity to accept new students for higher education. College enrollment per capita has risen in New Jersey since 1965, but has remained relatively stable since 1975.

Economic

New Jerseyans who have been to college earn more than those of us who have not. They also have a wider range of job opportunities and more job security. Some of our most dynamic industries, such as high technology and pharmaceuticals, depend very heavily on workers who have a college education and even advanced degrees. These companies choose to locate in places where the market offers such workers.

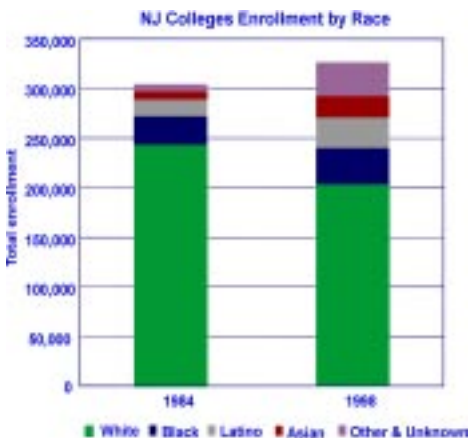
edgeable innovators who make advances in science, economics, management, and other areas with the help of a college education. College expands our horizons and helps us to see issues and connections, such as those between economic, social, and environmental issues.

Social

College can provide thinking and evaluation skills that help us make the best decisions for our communities and ourselves. To live and work effectively we need to be as knowledgeable as possible about our economy, society, and environment.

Environmental

Solutions to our environmental problems will come from knowl-



Things to think about

- New Jersey has some of the preeminent universities in the world. Two of them, Rutgers and Princeton, predate the state of New Jersey.
- More than 1/3 of New Jersey first-time freshman go to college outside New Jersey. We are the highest net exporter of students.
- There is a shortage of lawyers, doctors, and other highly educated people choosing to work in the public sector for lower salaries. This is due in part to the high cost of their education.

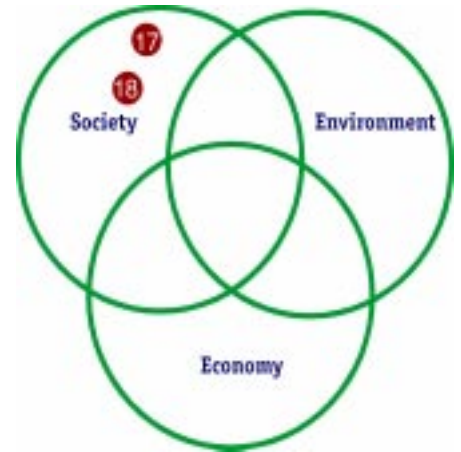
Knowledge gaps

Enrollment does not tell us how many opportunities exist for New Jerseyans to go to college. Opportunities are created through access to a good elementary and secondary school education and through resources given to institutions of higher education. Knowing how many of us enroll in college does not tell us about the quality of the education that we receive.

Good Government

GOAL: A statewide system of governing that is efficient, effective, trustworthy, and responsive to citizens and their needs; and that actively promotes good citizenship and effective participation in decision-making.

New Jerseyans played a prominent role in shaping the initial documents and direction of American democracy. Our state continues to shape democracy's direction today, with landmark initiatives regarding sex offenders, better land-use planning, and sustainability as highlighted in this report. Even so, our research shows that most New Jerseyans cannot name either of our two U.S. senators, and half of us do not know which party controls the Legislature. If our general knowledge of key public affairs and issues is as weak, our tradition of democracy could be imperiled. Indeed, our state's voter turnout is declining. With today's pace of rapid change and increasingly complex issues, we need more than ever a set of representatives we can work with and trust. Our lack of knowledge about and participation in politics works against our need for an efficient, effective, trustworthy, and responsive government.



What we know

- 17 Little change in knowledge of government..... page 34
- 18 Voter turnout decreasing..... page 35

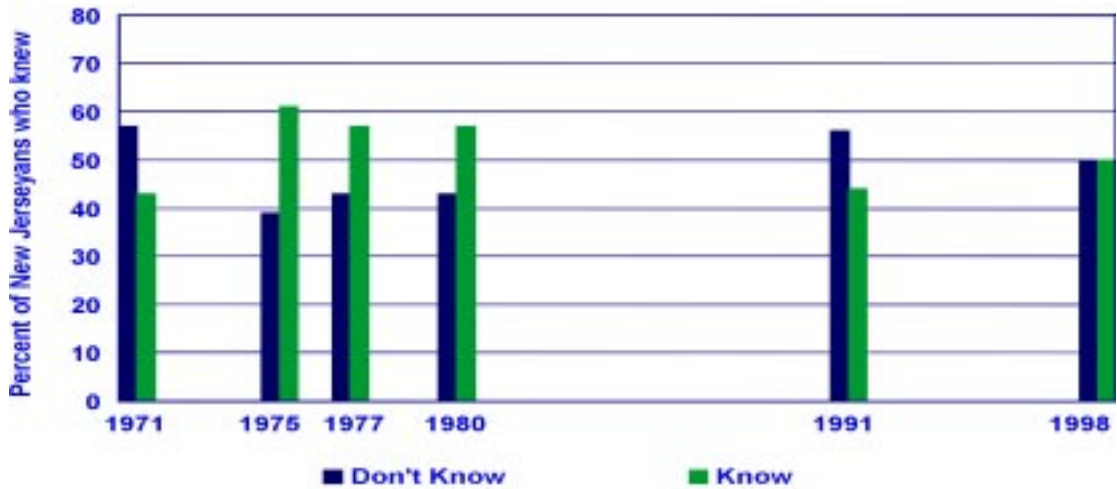
What we don't know

- Although we do know that we have the highest density of local governments in the nation with 566 municipalities, 618 school districts, 21 counties, and numerous local authorities, we do not have good measures of the efficiency of state and local government.
- To be most effective, public participation in government should be more informed. We have no way to measure how good we are as citizens in getting our voices heard in government.
- The level of government action (local, state, federal) should meet the level of the problem (local, regional, national). We have no way to measure the right balance between governmental activity at the local, state, and federal levels.

INDICATOR
17

Knowledge of Government

Percent of survey respondents who knew which party was in control of the State Legislature: Little change



Importance

While the numbers have slightly increased, in 1998 only half of us knew which party controlled the State Legislature; this is a significant drop from 62 percent in 1975. Such knowledge is an indicator of the vibrancy and health of our democracy. When we vote, our opinions on all of the pressing issues of the state are boiled down to choosing one party or another. How can we hold government responsible, and have a basis for our voting decisions, if we do not even know who is in power?

Economic

Our government has a profound impact on the functioning of our

economy, as demonstrated by daily news coverage of what government is doing to regulate industries and promote economic health. However, if a majority of citizens lack the knowledge to express themselves within our government, we cannot be certain that government actions within the economy will serve our best interests.

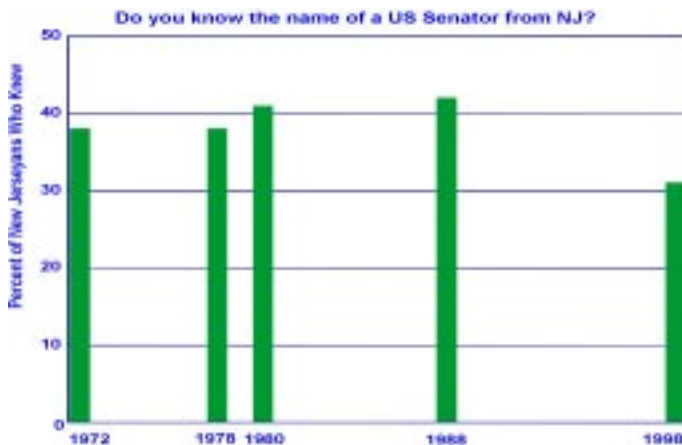
Environmental

The stakes are high when our government makes laws on how much pollution can be released, on where development can take place, on energy policy, and on other environmental issues. We can make these decisions reflect what's best for our environment and ourselves,

but only if we are knowledgeable about the issues and familiar with our representatives.

Social

Our social structure is based upon an open and democratic dialogue between citizens and leaders. Those of us who are unaware of the political party in power will find it difficult to take part in a democratic dialogue and hold government accountable for its actions. Without this kind of interaction, we are hindered as a society in our ability to respond to New Jersey's many pressing problems.



Things to think about

- U.S. Senators are among the most visible and media recognized of our elected leaders.
- In a two-party system such as ours, decisions on all public issues are generally boiled down to voting for a candidate representing one party or the other.

Knowledge gaps

The ability to name the governing party or Senators only represents one form of citizen engagement. Important measures we do not have include knowledge of other state and local government leaders and of current public issues. These survey data are not collected regularly and have not been updated since 1998.

Voter Turnout

Percent of registered voters casting ballots in statewide general elections: Decreasing



National presidential elections



State legislative elections

Importance

Voting is the fundamental way that we exercise our right to self-government. Voter turnout is the basic measure of how many of us are exercising this right. Through voting, we express our desires and set our priorities for less poverty, more jobs, a cleaner environment, less crime, and better education. When we vote, we fulfill an opportunity that few people have had throughout history, and for which people in this country and others have fought and died. Turnout for national (and gubernatorial) elections has declined only slightly. However, turnout for legislative/local elections has declined dramatically, reaching a record low turnout of just 31

percent of registered voters in 1999.

Economic

Voting is about economics. It puts into government the decision-makers who will promote job growth, fight for our social values, and commit themselves to ensuring that our economy is the foundation of our social and environmental health.

Environmental

Not voting leaves decisions about our water, air, parks, forests, wetlands, open spaces, and hazardous materials in the hands of other people, sometimes those who have a vested or financial interest in the outcome.

By voting, we can act to ensure

that decisions about the environment are in the best interest of all New Jerseyans, instead of that of a vocal or influential minority.

Social

When we vote, we exercise our most fundamental right as citizens of a democracy. A decline in voting may signal a negative change in how invested we are as citizens of a common state or country, and in how much of ourselves we are willing to give to build a common future. By voting, we participate in a public dialogue about New Jersey that brings us together and makes us a more unified society.

Knowledge gaps

This indicator only measures the percent of registered voters who vote. It does not take into account people who are eligible but not registered. It does not take into account the significance of recent increases in the number of voters due to automatic voter registration initiatives, such as the program run by Motor Vehicles Services. We interact with our government in many other ways besides voting, including through campaign contributions, letters to newspapers, and direct conversations. In the future, it will be worthwhile to create measures of these interactions.

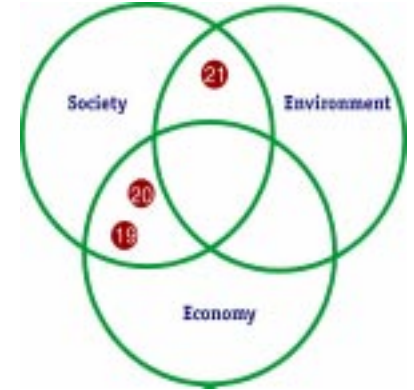
Things to think about

- In countries where voting has only recently become a privilege, voter turnouts are very high: for example, 92 percent in Uzbekistan and 91 percent in Kazakhstan.
- Voter turnout varies substantially, depending on what offices are up for election. In elections where candidates are on TV and widely known, such as for governor or president, voter turnout has been fair to good. However, in elections for local office - the elections that often affect us the most - voter turnout is dismal. 1999 saw the lowest voter turnout in recent history.

Decent Housing

GOAL: A variety of desirable housing options for all New Jerseyans, at every income level.

Sandwiched between two major cities in neighboring states, New Jersey has long provided an opportunity for home ownership not available to city dwellers. As a result, we have become a state where the majority of people live in suburbs. Sprawling ever outward, we are losing our diversity of housing types. New housing options in New Jersey are largely limited to “cookie cutter” subdivisions. There is good news: average incomes have risen more than housing prices in recent years, suggesting that some of us who could not afford to buy homes in the past are now able to do so. Rent costs have remained stable.



What we know

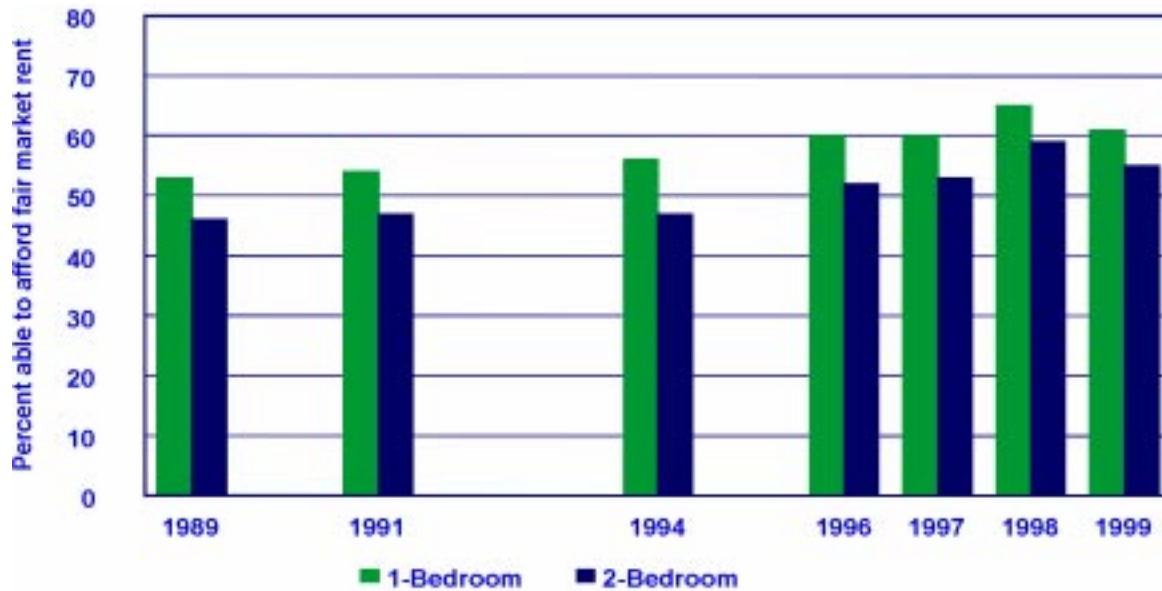
19	Little recent change in the number of New Jerseyans who can afford to rent	page 37
20	Income increasing faster than housing prices	page 38
21	Little change in housing choice	page 39

What we don't know

- We do not have consistent data to describe the quality and state of repair of these homes.
- We do not have data to describe the neighborhoods these homes are located in; whether children who live in these homes have other children to play with nearby; whether these homes are located in safe neighborhoods; or whether these homes are located near amenities such as parks, shopping and entertainment.
- These data do not adequately tell us how much financial strain New Jerseyans endure in meeting their housing needs.

Rent Affordability

Percent of New Jersey renters able to afford fair market rent with 30 percent of their income: Little recent change



Importance

Housing is a fundamental need of all people. Families who struggle to find affordable housing have to use their energy and resources for meeting this basic need, rather than for other necessities like food and medical care, or discretionary spending including further education. At the end of the 1980s, about half of us who rent were able to afford market rates using 30 percent of our income. The percentage of us who can afford to rent has risen somewhat. Still, affordable rent eludes many.

Things to think about

- To be considered affordable, rent must be 30 percent or less of income.

Economic

Affordable housing is essential to the economic well-being of our citizens and the economic success of our state. Businesses have difficulty maintaining a workforce without affordable places for workers to live. Our economy is held back when significant numbers of us have little money to spend and invest due to the high cost of housing.

Environmental

Substandard housing can pose environmental health and safety problems. Housing is also part of the human environment. Living in shabby or unaffordable housing

makes it difficult for us to feel connected to our environment and take responsibility for its well-being.

Social

Housing is the backbone of a community. If housing is too expensive or of poor quality, it is harder for residents to become connected to that community and develop a sense of belonging. In many of our poorer areas, little money is left over after the rent is paid, so few resources are available to pay for quality education and social programs that can aid in breaking the cycle of poverty.

Knowledge gaps

The definition of "fair market rent" has changed during the period in which data were collected. This definition should be standardized. We do not have data to ascertain whether some people might prefer different thresholds of affordability. Also, these data cover the entire state and so do not show the considerable regional variations in both incomes and rental prices.