

# A NEW JERSEY THAT WORKS FOR WORKING PEOPLE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
FALL 2016

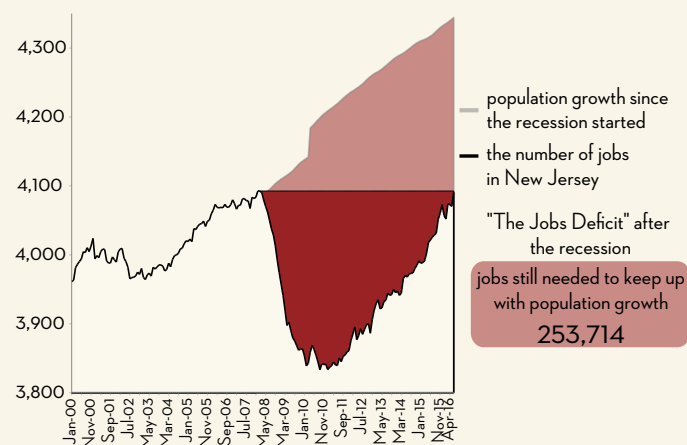
New Jersey's economy has not recovered from the recession like it could – and should – have. Economic difficulties that began with losses in manufacturing jobs throughout the 1980s have persisted. Despite a diverse population and a shift in land use from sprawling suburban growth to more infill development, job numbers and GDP are growing too slowly. And what growth there is, isn't distributed equally. New Jersey struggles with extreme racial and economic disparities that distribute the benefits of the economy not as shared prosperity, but to the wealthy.

State policy can and must lift up working people and their families, creating a more equitable and inclusive New Jersey. The State must act to raise labor market standards, creating more jobs that pay good wages and provide full benefits. State economic development strategy should also adopt higher standards, ensuring that only businesses that provide good jobs are incentivized with public funds. Housing and transportation policy at the state level should direct resources and planning toward more connected, dense neighborhoods that are either near job centers or within easy, affordable transit access to job opportunities; key to this will be ensuring that affordable housing is available, especially in areas with increasing development. Additionally, policy shifts can uphold the civil rights of people of color and immigrants, while also protecting these communities from disproportionate health and economic impacts of environmental degradation. The report summarized here discusses a selection of such policies.

## JOBS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Vision: State government lifts up workers by systematically and strategically using its own investments to build a strong, high-quality job base; by raising the wage floor; and by improving access to jobs.**

Total Jobs (in Thousands)  
New Jersey, January 2000 – June 2016



## Key Recommendations

- ✓ Leverage public spending to strengthen job quality
- ✓ Increase accountability and transparency in economic development
- ✓ Strengthen private sector standards on minimum wage, paid family and sick leave
- ✓ Improve access to jobs for workers, especially those with past convictions

Source: COWS and Economic Policy Institute analysis of Current Employment Statistics survey data

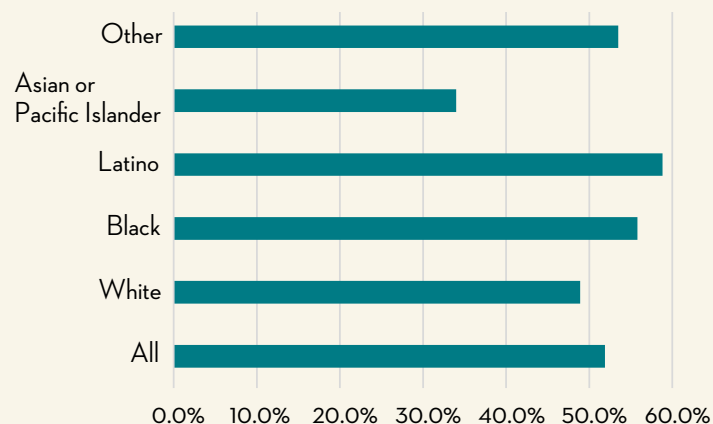
## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Vision:** State government strengthens programs that protect tenants; and promotes preservation and development of affordable housing near reliable transit options.

### Key Recommendations

- ✓ Preserve existing affordable housing stock
- ✓ Maintain foreclosed and vacant properties and convert them to affordable housing
- ✓ Plan for transit-oriented development
- ✓ Increase funding for urban affordable housing
- ✓ Strengthen tenant financial and health protections

Housing Burden by Tenure and Race/Ethnicity  
New Jersey, Renters, 2012



Source: PolicyLink/PERE National Equity Atlas, [www.nationalequityatlas.org](http://www.nationalequityatlas.org)

*“If there were more affordable housing options, it would literally be the key to a better life for me and my family...”*

Lina Estepan  
Food Service Worker, Hackensack High School

Like many single mothers, Lina Estepan does it all. She works two jobs while taking care of her children. Despite the extra work hours, Lina had to move out of a home and community she loves in Bergen County—an area with good quality schools-- because her rent went up. Now she lives even farther away from work, spends more time commuting, and less time with her family.

Her commute takes a toll because she has such a busy schedule every day. After she finishes her day job preparing and serving food for hundreds of students at Hackensack High School, she picks up her children from school, feeds them and gets them ready for bed. Then, she heads to her night job from 8pm to 5am. As a result, she only gets two or three hours of sleep every night.

If Lina could afford a home closer to her job, she could send her children to better schools and spend more quality time with them. “I love Bergen County, it’s where I work and used to live but I was forced to move because homes and living expenses are so high in this area,” said Lina Estepan. “If there were more affordable housing options, it would literally be the key to a better life for me and my family as well as other low wage workers who would like to live near where they work.”



## TRANSPORTATION

**Vision:** State government recommits to building and funding New Jersey's transit system and creating an economic future that takes advantage of New Jersey's strategic location.

### Mode of Transportation to Work by Race New Jersey, 2014

	White	Black	Asian	Latino
Drove alone	79.4%	66.8%	61.0%	57.2%
Carpooled	5.6%	8.8%	11.1%	13.6%
Public Transit	7.2%	16.5%	19.6%	14.5%
Walked, biked or other	2.9%	4.9%	4.4%	12.3%

Source: COWS computation from 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Table B08105 B, D, I, H  
Totals do not sum to 100%, as 'worked at home' was not included.

### Key Recommendations

- ✓ Sufficiently fund and increase support for alternatives to driving within the Transportation Trust Fund
- ✓ Prioritize affordability for low-income residents within public transportation system
- ✓ Expand public transportation in strategic areas to connect workers to the state's good job centers and address their unique transportation needs

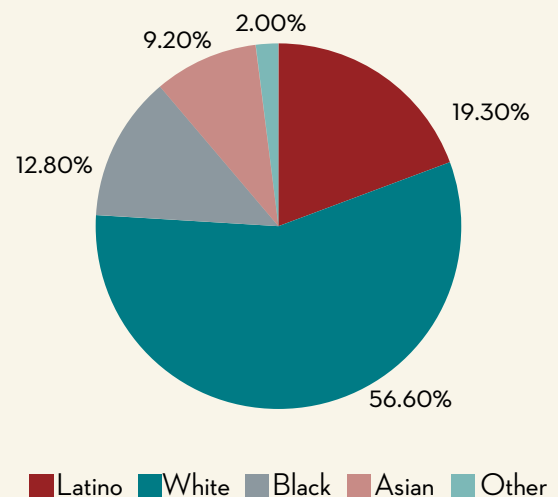
## CIVIL RIGHTS

**Vision:** State government reinvigorates civil rights by implementing meaningful reforms that make the criminal justice system fair for all.

### Key Recommendations

- ✓ Reduce the state's incarcerated population with a focus on decreasing racial disparities and decriminalizing minor offenses
- ✓ Prioritize transparent and accountable policing practices such as community oversight, strong body-camera policies, ending the practice of civil forfeiture, and requiring data collection during police stops, arrests, and incidents of violence
- ✓ Build a welcoming state for undocumented immigrants by keeping local law enforcement out of immigration enforcement, reforming detention, granting driver's license access, and access to institutional financial aid

### Population Share by Race/Ethnicity New Jersey, 2014



Source: 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Table DP05

## JOBS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Vision: State government policy reduces air pollution, including greenhouse gases; and prepares for the inevitable impacts of climate change in an equitable way.

### Key Recommendations

- ✓ Increase energy efficiency and renewable energy generation
- ✓ Promote environmental justice
- ✓ Improve water infrastructure
- ✓ Promote an efficient built environment

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*“I make poverty wages working at Newark Airport. I can’t afford to buy a car so public transportation is my only option.”*

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Nancy Vazquez

Skycap, Newark Liberty International Airport

For more than 20 years, Nancy Vazquez has worked at Newark Airport. Until recently, she earned just over \$2 per hour working as a sky cap. Her meager hourly pay was supposed to be augmented by tips but she says gratuity has dramatically declined recently. Nancy and her colleagues decided they wanted to improve their working conditions at the airport so they began to organize. Their fight proved to be successful in 2015 when the Port Authority raised wages to \$10.10 per hour for thousands of airport workers. Nancy continues to work toward securing at least a \$15 minimum wage.



She is one of thousands of residents who would benefit from a plan that calls for extending the PATH train to Newark Airport. “I make poverty wages working at Newark Airport. I can’t afford to buy a car so public transportation is my only option,” said Nancy Vazquez. “Currently I have to take two buses to get to work and that takes a toll. That’s why I support a plan that would extend the PATH train to Newark Airport. This would cut down on my transportation costs and time commuting and provide other riders with a convenient way to travel to the airport.”

Full report available at [www.cows.org](http://www.cows.org).

## AUTHORS

Mel Meder, Satya Rhodes-Conway, Laura Dresser, and Andrew Wolf

## ABOUT COWS

COWS is a nonprofit think-and-do tank, based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, that promotes “high road” solutions to social problems. These treat shared growth and opportunity, environmental sustainability, and resilient democratic institutions as necessary and achievable complements in human development. Through our various projects, we work with cities around the country to promote innovation and the implementation of high road policy. COWS is nonpartisan but values-based. We seek a world of equal opportunity and security for all.

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