NEW JERSEY COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS
we can. we must. we will.

NO PLACE TO CALL HOME

Understanding New Jersey's Skyrocketing Homelessness Crisis



New Jersey is facing an unprecedented crisis of rising homelessness. As rents and housing costs soar, New Jersey faces **a severe shortage of over 280,000 affordable homes** for households under 50% AMI.[1]

Our homeless response system was temporarily bolstered by COVID-era federal aid and eviction protections. Those supports are gone. What remains is a system **overburdened, underfunded, and over capacity.**

BY THE NUMBERS: A Crisis Escalating

- Homelessness **increased 70%** in NJ over the **past 4 years.**[2]
- **Unsheltered homelessness increased 45%** year-over-year in New Jersey.[3]
- **60%** of the over 42,500 New Jerseyans experiencing homelessness last year **were homeless for the first time.**[4]
- Over **172,000 New Jerseyans** were homeless or sought out homelessness prevention services in NJ **– meaning more people *were homeless or at-risk of homelessness* than Paterson, the 3rd largest city in NJ.**[5]

Demand vs. Capacity

- By the end of 2025, **nearly 3 people were entering homelessness for every 1 person exiting into housing**.[6]
- As of April 2025, shelters across New Jersey operated at **94% to 128%** average occupancy, and nearly every shelter in the state maintained a waiting list.[7]

What It Takes to Afford Housing in NJ

- In New Jersey, a worker must earn **$43.89/hour** — the equivalent of **working 2.8 full-time minimum wage jobs —** to afford a modest, fair market 2-bedroom rental.[8]

Homelessness in New Jersey is *not inevitable*. It is the result of policy choices, system gaps, and underinvestment—*and it can be solved with the right strategy, political will, and sustained commitment.*

The Face of Homelessness in New Jersey: The Demographics Are Changing



- **Aging population: Around 1 in 3 people** experiencing homelessness in NJ were **55 or older**.[9] The proportion of homeless adults ages 65+ will **triple by 2030** from a decade prior.[10]
- **Children: 0-1** is the age when a person in the U.S. is **most likely** to enter a shelter or transitional housing.[11] **More than 16,000 school-aged children** in NJ were homeless last school year.[12]
- **Working poor: 53%** of homeless people living in shelters nationwide were **employed.**[13]
- *What's not changing:* **The persistent racial and disability inequities. 54%** of unhoused New Jerseyans **are Black**. **At least 30%** of homeless residents report one or more **disabilities**.[14]

When Outside is a Death Sentence: The Deadly Cost Homelessness

Over the 2026 July 4th holiday weekend, **at least nine unhoused New Jersey residents** died during an historic four-day heat wave. **At least three other people** are believed to have died inside overheated vehicles that had become their only shelter because they had nowhere else to go.

The mortality rate for a non-elderly homeless person was **3.5x higher** than their housed peers. Experiencing homelessness has a mortality risk equivalent to **nearly 20 years of aging.**[15]

Pay Now – or Pay Far More Later:

When housing and shelter are unavailable, people may cycle through far more expensive crisis systems:

- **$203/day** for a NJ jail[16]
- **$876.50–$1,300/day** for a public psychiatric hospital[17]
- **$685–$3,510/day** for a private psychiatric hospital[18]
- **$18,000–$44,000/year** in average emergency room costs.[19]

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Learn more about homelessness, support our advocacy, and join the movement to end homelessness in New Jersey.

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