



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 more than 40%** 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 jail¹⁶
- **\$876.50–\$1,300/day** for a public psychiatric hospital¹⁷
- **\$685–\$3,510/day** for a private psychiatric hospital¹⁸
- **\$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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