



### Families in Need

#### Child Poverty Persists

In 2000, nearly 221,000 New Jersey children lived in families whose income was below the meager federal poverty level of \$14,150 for a family of three. These children represent nearly 11 percent of all New Jersey children. That's a slight decrease in the percent of children living in poverty from 11.3 percent in 1990 to 10.8 percent in 2000.

Still, the number of poor children actually increased 10 percent, from roughly 201,000 in 1990. A high incidence of child poverty stubbornly persisted in the state's urban and rural southern counties. More than 20 percent of children lived in poverty in Hudson, Essex and Cumberland counties. In many counties, the actual number of children living in poverty grew, even when the percent of child poverty shrank slightly.

Just four counties - Camden, Gloucester, Hunterdon and Salem - reduced both the number and percent of children living in poverty.

Other counties, including Passaic, Middlesex and Ocean, saw small increases in both the percent and number of poor children.

Child poverty is perhaps the most important indicator of the well-being of a state's most vulnerable citizens.

New Jersey's increases in child poverty coincided with one of the longest and most robust periods of prosperity ever enjoyed by the state and the nation. It was a prosperity that failed to touch thousands of New Jersey children, even though they live in one of the wealthiest states in the nation.



**CHILD POVERTY  
NUMBER OF CHILDREN LIVING  
BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL**

County	1990	Percent	2000	Percent
Atlantic	6,603	13.2%	8,028	12.8%
Bergen	7,706	4.6%	9,901	4.9%
Burlington	5,485	5.7%	5,699	5.5%
Camden	21,681	16.6%	19,324	14.5%
Cape May	2,557	12.3%	2,612	11.7%
Cumberland	7,074	20.3%	7,262	20.1%
Essex	41,097	22.3%	41,358	20.5%
Gloucester	4,882	8.0%	4,368	6.6%
Hudson	28,896	23.9%	29,596	22.0%
Hunterdon	779	3.0%	665	2.1%
Mercer	7,926	10.9%	8,769	10.6%
Middlesex	9,396	6.6%	12,529	7.2%
Monmouth	8,693	6.5%	11,842	7.5%
Morris	3,108	3.2%	4,244	3.7%
Ocean	8,558	8.8%	11,695	10.0%
Passaic	17,073	15.9%	21,531	17.3%
Salem	2,619	15.9%	2,137	13.3%
Somerset	1,440	2.8%	2,836	3.8%
Sussex	1,570	4.3%	1,642	4.1%
Union	12,057	11.3%	13,417	10.5%
Warren	1,526	6.8%	1,536	5.9%
New Jersey	200,726	11.3%	220,991	10.8%

**MINORITIES MAKE STRIDES AGAINST POVERTY**

While the number of New Jersey families living below the poverty level decreased for all races between 1996 and 1998, African Americans made the most progress, with a 5.3 percent drop in the number living below the poverty line. Hispanics were next, with a 3.9 percent decrease, while white poverty dropped just .8 percent. Still, African Americans and Hispanics continued to struggle with poverty at disproportionate rates.

**New Jersey Families Living Below The Poverty Line,  
By Race**

Race	96-97	99-00
All Families	7.3	5.9
White Families	4.9	4.1
African American Families	19.3	14.0
Hispanic Families	17.1	13.2

**FEDERAL POVERTY LEVELS**

2000

Size of family unit	Poverty guideline	Size of family unit	Poverty guideline
1	\$ 8,350	5	\$19,950
2	\$11,250	6	\$22,850
3	\$14,150	7	\$25,750
4	\$17,050	8	\$28,650

**CHILDREN RECEIVING  
TANF/AFDC AND FOOD STAMPS**

**Welfare Reform Brings Changes**

While the number of families receiving welfare plunged, so did the number of children receiving food stamps, even though many still remained eligible for this nutritional benefit. Only 18 percent of New Jersey's low-income children received food stamps in 1999, compared to 24 percent nationally.

County	Children Receiving Welfare			Children Receiving Food Stamps		
	1996	2002	Change	1996	2002	Change
Atlantic	7,091	2,445	-66%	9,569	5,968	-38%
Bergen	4,682	1,205	-74%	6,934	3,558	-49%
Burlington	4,908	1,474	-70%	6,690	3,529	-47%
Camden	23,527	7,019	-70%	29,693	15,505	-48%
Cape May	2,078	431	-79%	3,324	1,623	-51%
Cumberland	6,673	2,127	-68%	9,325	6,369	-32%
Essex	51,291	18,059	-65%	67,536	34,697	-49%
Gloucester	4,193	1,086	-74%	5,562	2,484	-55%
Hudson	31,108	8,773	-72%	39,511	20,792	-47%
Hunterdon	280	43	-85%	443	187	-58%
Mercer	8,405	3,708	-56%	10,520	6,762	-36%
Middlesex	9,827	2,471	-75%	12,923	5,301	-59%
Monmouth	7,192	2,601	-64%	10,787	6,824	-37%
Morris	1,445	307	-79%	2,275	674	-70%
Ocean	6,165	1,375	-78%	10,659	6,381	-40%
Passaic	13,397	5,125	-62%	19,631	16,981	-13%
Salem	1,662	593	-64%	2,361	1,504	-36%
Somerset	1,611	592	-63%	2,539	1,220	-52%
Sussex	517	148	-71%	1,038	505	-51%
Union	12,001	3,866	-68%	14,765	8,475	-43%
Warren	982	359	-63%	1,771	1,179	-33%
New Jersey	199,035	63,807	-68%	267,856	150,518	-44%

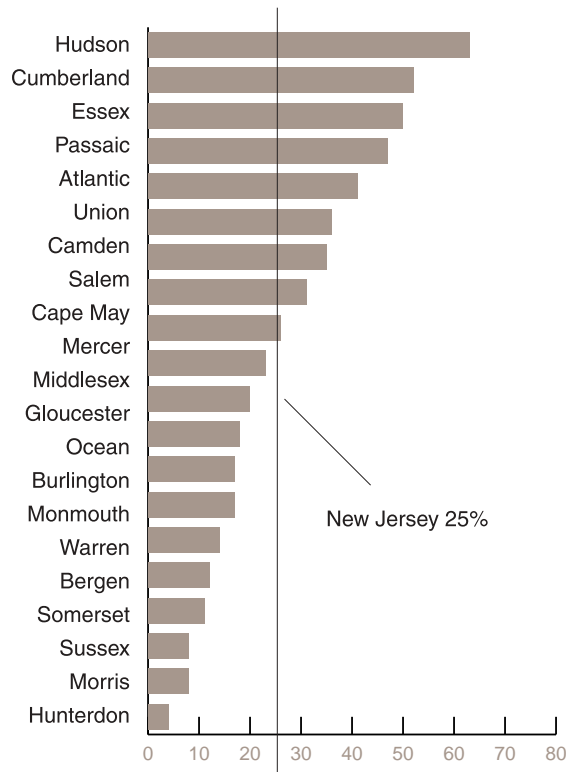
*Note: This table reflects the falling welfare rolls and a corresponding drop in food stamp recipients, pre- and post-welfare reform. In 1997, New Jersey launched WorkFirst New Jersey, which required recipients to work to receive benefits and set limits on the amount of time they could receive assistance.*

**NUMBER OF CHILDREN RECEIVING  
FREE OR REDUCED SCHOOL LUNCH**

**More Children Receive Free School Lunch**

While welfare rolls and food stamp participation plummeted, the number of children receiving free or reduced lunch increased 25 percent. This suggests that more families still need help to feed their children. Both the food stamp and school meals programs are vital to ensuring that poor children get the nutrition they need to grow into healthy adults.

**Children Receiving Free/Reduced School Lunch,  
Percent of Enrollment**



County	1995-96	2001-02	Change
Atlantic	11,789	16,611	41%
Bergen	9,648	14,458	50%
Burlington	8,652	12,361	43%
Camden	24,355	27,911	15%
Cape May	3,440	4,389	28%
Cumberland	10,890	14,146	30%
Essex	54,079	59,765	11%
Gloucester	6,386	8,838	38%
Hudson	41,875	49,026	17%
Hunterdon	573	686	20%
Mercer	11,735	13,653	16%
Middlesex	16,920	25,581	51%
Monmouth	13,142	16,711	27%
Morris	3,707	5,301	43%
Ocean	9,555	12,828	34%
Passaic	29,056	35,914	24%
Salem	2,651	3,563	34%
Somerset	3,199	5,072	59%
Sussex	1,504	2,341	56%
Union	22,410	26,423	18%
Warren	1,973	2,419	23%
New Jersey	287,539	357,997	25%



### **More Mothers Seek Food For Their Babies**

During the six years following welfare reform, all but four counties - Atlantic, Essex, Hunterdon and Sussex - saw increases in the number of mothers seeking help to feed their babies and young children. The Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman Infant and Children (WIC) provides formula and nutritionally-balanced meals to needy families. Cumberland saw the greatest jump at 30 percent, while Essex served 6 percent fewer families. Statewide, 13 percent more mothers used the WIC program.



**WOMEN, INFANT & CHILDREN  
RECEIVING BENEFITS**

County	1996	2002	Change
Atlantic	4,182	3,855	-8%
Bergen	4,085	5,301	30%
Burlington	4,606	5,295	15%
Camden	10,325	11,156	8%
Cape May	1,372	1,827	33%
Cumberland	3,438	5,156	50%
Essex	23,422	22,209	-5%
Gloucester	3,301	3,684	12%
Hudson	19,881	22,227	12%
Hunterdon	376	348	-7%
Mercer	6,446	7,478	16%
Middlesex	7,516	10,430	39%
Monmouth	5,087	6,065	19%
Morris	1,976	2,300	16%
Ocean	8,301	8,932	8%
Passaic	13,154	16,092	22%
Salem	1,032	1,263	22%
Somerset	2,267	2,873	27%
Sussex	1,142	1,099	-4%
Union	9,762	11,028	13%
Warren	1,238	1,296	5%
New Jersey	132,909	149,914	13%



### **New Jersey's Working Poor Families Reap State and Federal Tax Credits**

More than 200,000 working poor families received an average of \$360 in a state income tax credit for the 2001 tax year. The New Jersey Earned Income Tax Credit, signed into law in August 2000, provides annual credits to working families earning less than \$20,000 a year.

The state sent more than \$77 million back to low-income taxpayers for tax year 2001, up about \$27 million from the program's first year. The additional funding increased the average check amount from \$233 to \$360, as the program is being phased in to equal 20 percent of the federal tax credit. The program is slated to reach that level in fiscal year 2004.

In 1998, nearly 430,000 low-income taxpayers received the federal EITC, amounting to \$687.6 million in benefits. The federal tax credit is more generous than the state credit, available to workers with one child who earn less than \$28,281 and to workers with more than one child who earn less than \$32,121.

### **State vs. National EITC Income Requirements**

State	Families Earning Less Than \$20,000
Federal	One-Child Families Earning Less Than \$28,281
	Two or More Child Families Earning Less Than \$32,121

**STATE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT CLAIMS**  
TAX YEAR 2001

County	Number	Total Amount	Average Check
Atlantic	9,073	\$ 3,372,478	\$372
Bergen	10,022	3,560,546	\$355
Burlington	5,845	2,026,787	\$347
Camden	16,211	5,836,131	\$360
Cape May	2,442	874,095	\$358
Cumberland	5,907	2,143,547	\$363
Essex	33,577	12,269,478	\$365
Gloucester	4,272	1,489,754	\$349
Hudson	27,080	10,024,799	\$370
Hunterdon	476	162,695	\$342
Mercer	7,715	2,733,491	\$354
Middlesex	13,420	4,775,962	\$356
Monmouth	8,341	2,965,088	\$355
Morris	3,378	1,171,995	\$347
Ocean	8,891	3,245,957	\$365
Passaic	20,098	7,289,436	\$363
Salem	1,280	449,053	\$351
Somerset	2,762	956,811	\$346
Sussex	1,116	382,724	\$343
Union	14,046	5,040,805	\$359
Warren	1,252	442,297	\$353
Unknown	16,815	5,847,129	\$348
New Jersey	214,019	\$77,061,061	\$360

**FEDERAL EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT CLAIMS**  
TAX YEAR 1998

County	Number	% of Total Federal Tax Filers
Atlantic	20,687	17%
Bergen	26,720	6%
Burlington	15,215	8%
Camden	33,742	14%
Cape May	5,974	12%
Cumberland	12,274	20%
Essex	63,360	19%
Gloucester	10,627	10%
Hudson	53,306	20%
Hunterdon	1,893	3%
Mercer	17,196	11%
Middlesex	29,831	9%
Monmouth	21,189	7%
Morris	9,690	4%
Ocean	19,816	9%
Passaic	39,967	18%
Salem	3,540	13%
Somerset	5,578	4%
Sussex	3,757	6%
Union	30,050	12%
Warren	3,478	7%
New Jersey	427,890	11%