



New Jersey Sustainable STATE OF THE STATE

Ten Years of Top Ten Trends

Since 2015, Sustainable Jersey has tracked progress towards sustainability at the state level in an annual Sustainable State of the State Report. For our tenth anniversary, we decided to take a step back and look at the key trends we must influence to achieve a sustainable future. The fact that **only two out of the ten are moving in a positive direction, and several have reached critical levels**, underscores how essential our work together is.



ENERGY

Annual greenhouse gas emissions from energy consumption have declined since 2006.

However, the recently released report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that **limiting global warming to a safe level would require even more rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in energy, land, urban and infrastructure systems.**



ECOSYSTEMS & DEVELOPMENT

The amount of land that has been developed has been steadily increasing at the expense of forest, wetlands, and agricultural land. Over the past decade, the rate of development has slowed, as nearly all non-preserved land has been covered by buildings or pavement.



WATER

The ability of New Jersey's lakes, rivers and streams to support essential services has **declined** over the past several decades. For example, just under a quarter of the state's water bodies were found to fully support safe recreation and fewer than 0.5% were found to be safe for fish consumption.

While the **percentage of community drinking water systems that meet quality standards has fluctuated** at a high level, those standards do not cover the many new chemicals and prescription drugs that are appearing in our drinking water.



HOUSING

Over the past decade, the fraction of **households spending a burdensome amount (30% or more) of their income on housing** has come down slightly, but it still represents over two-fifths of the population.



AIR QUALITY

While some improvement has occurred over the past decade, air pollution is very unevenly distributed in the state, leaving certain **neighborhoods and vulnerable populations regularly exposed to dangerous levels** of fine particulate matter and ozone.



WASTE

In the past few years, **a crisis in the recycling market has led to increased diversion of waste to incinerators and landfills.**

Meanwhile, over the past 10 years, the total amount of municipal solid waste generated per year has not decreased as needed.



SOCIAL WELL-BEING

The rate of **violent crime reported in New Jersey is 8th lowest in the nation** and has been steadily declining. However, **this statistic conceals the wide range of local variation in public safety.** Rates of incarceration have also come down significantly.



ECONOMY

Since the recession, there has been a near steady trend towards increasing income inequality. While the **incomes of the wealthiest 20% have grown steadily, the poverty rate is higher**, leaving more than 30% of the population unable to meet basic needs in 2016.

Meanwhile, the general dynamism of the economy has decreased as rates of business starts and failures have continued a long downward trend, suggesting that the economy has become less entrepreneurial.



EDUCATION

The percentage of **students successfully completing high school within four years of entry is high and increasing.** There are significant, but decreasing, gaps in the rates among White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian students.



HEALTH

After decades of progress, **the rate of preventable premature deaths has begun to creep upwards.** Similarly, although the gap among racial groups has narrowed, it remains persistently high. And, where you live still strongly predicts how long you live.

*** For more information:**
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