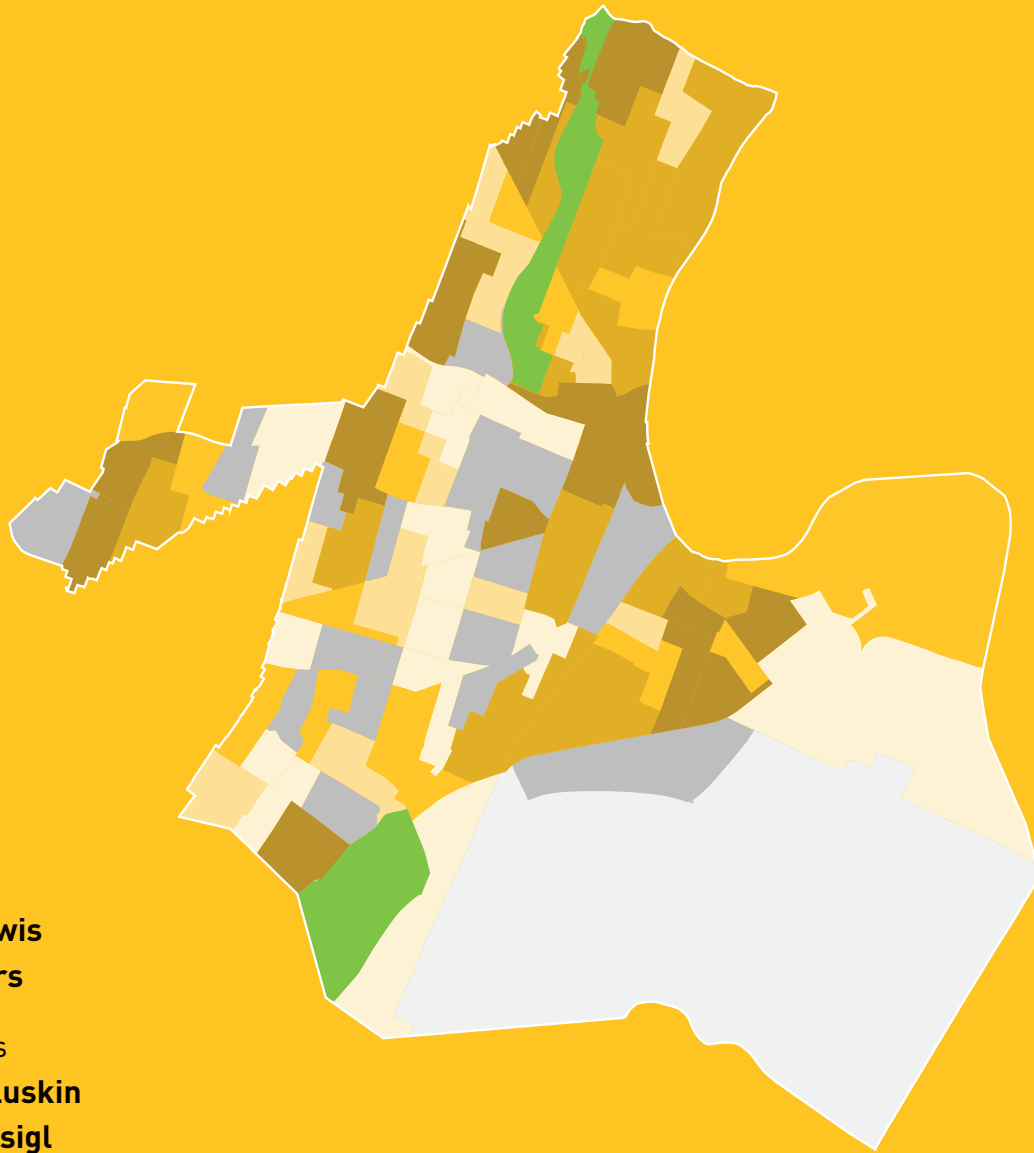


THE MEASURE OF AMERICA SERIES

# A PORTRAIT OF **NEWARK**



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THE MEASURE OF AMERICA SERIES

A PORTRAIT OF  
**NEWARK**

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# Foreword

Robert Clark, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Newark Opportunity Youth Network

The City of Newark is home to a thriving community of deeply committed individuals who are passionate about improving the lives of all those who reside in Newark. Our city is full of dedicated advocates, strong community organizations, and public officials who are motivated by a vision to create a brighter future for Newark. Providing equal access to opportunities and developing pathways that will lead to a better standard of living for residents are two essential building blocks that are needed to reach this goal. In order to address the challenges at hand, we must know where to begin.

*A Portrait of Newark*, a report developed by Newark Opportunity Youth Network in partnership with Measure of America and a broad set of community stakeholders, provides a deep analysis of the current state of Newark's many residents and identifies areas of opportunity for the city. The *Portrait* reveals persistent inequities in the health, education, and overall well-being of Newark's citizens, but the data were particularly stark for the city's youth. In Newark, nearly one in every five individuals between ages 16 and 24 are neither working nor in school. While Newark has grappled with the rate of youth disconnection for many years, our young people are especially vulnerable following the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, which contributed significantly to Newark's disconnection rates.

The *Portrait* reveals that if the myriad challenges faced by students, both before and after the pandemic, remain unaddressed, it will be a continued issue for cities and will result in higher rates of high school dropout, fewer students transitioning from high school to postsecondary education, and fewer entry-level workers with the skills needed for many jobs in the coming years.

*A Portrait of Newark* paints a nuanced picture of a diverse community and is designed to equip community stakeholders with the information they need to promote change and identify where investment is needed. What is clear is that our young people need our help. Investing in our youth is not only about individual success; it's about strengthening the fabric of our communities. When young people are equipped with a strong foundation for success, it only benefits those around them.

At Newark Opportunity Youth Network, we are committed to bettering the lives of young people across the five wards and have developed initiatives that are designed to reengage opportunity youth through education, workforce development, policy advocacy, and systems building. Alongside our partner organizations, we at NOYN recognize the continued need for change across our

city. As we continue our work together to provide the young people of Newark with adequate resources and pathways to success, the *Portrait* should serve as a catalyst for future investment, program development, youth leadership opportunities, and legislative solutions.

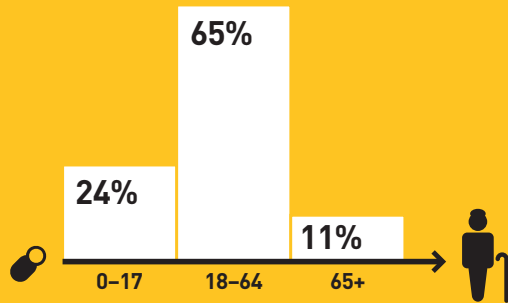
The challenges facing Newark are not unique. Cities and communities across the United States grapple with persistent inequalities, and this report serves not just as a guide for Newark but as a call to action for cities, states, and policymakers across the nation. The chance to uplift young people is a powerful opportunity to engage the greatest resource available to the survival of our communities. Let this report be the spark that ignites a national conversation to ensure that every young person, regardless of their background, has the opportunities and resources to thrive.



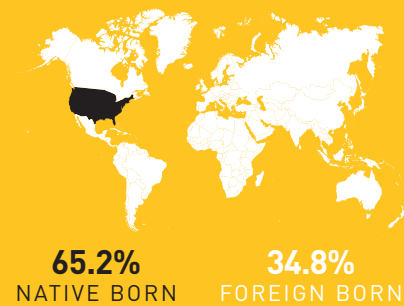


# Who Are We?

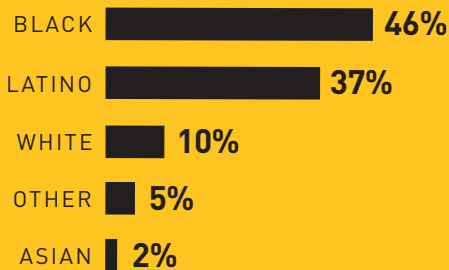
## AGE



## BIRTHPLACE



## RACE / ETHNICITY



## EMPLOYMENT



## ON-TIME HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE



85.1%

## CHILD POVERTY RATE



34.6%

## YOUTH DISCONNECTION



18.4%

# Understanding Human Development



IN THIS SECTION

What Is Human Development?

How Is Human Development Measured?

# What Is Human Development?

The framework that guides this work is the **human development approach**. Human development is an expansive, hopeful concept that values, above all, human freedom—not just legal or theoretical freedom, but the real, actual freedom to decide for ourselves what to do, how to live, and who to be. Formally defined as the process of improving people’s well-being and expanding their freedoms and opportunities, the human development approach puts people at the center of analysis. It is concerned with how political, social, environmental, and economic forces interact to shape the range of choices open to us.

The human development concept is the brainchild of the late economist Dr. Mahbub ul Haq. In his work at the World Bank in the 1970s, and later as minister of finance in his home country, Pakistan, Dr. Haq argued that existing measures of human progress failed to account for the true purpose of economic growth and development: to improve people’s lives. Economic growth, he believed, was only valuable when translated into concrete achievements for people: healthier children, more literacy, greater political participation, cleaner environments, more widely shared prosperity, and greater freedom.

Working with Harvard professor and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and other gifted social scientists and statisticians, Dr. Haq devised not only the idea of human development but also a way to measure it: the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI measured the degree to which people were able to live long and healthy lives, have access to knowledge, and enjoy a decent standard of living. He introduced this new way of thinking about and measuring progress in the first Human Development Report, which was released in 1990 under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme. The report ranked all the world’s countries not by the size of their economies but rather by the well-being of their people. Since then, the annual Human Development Report has served as the global gold standard for tracking human progress. In addition, more than 160 countries have produced national human development reports in the last two decades; these reports have raised taboo subjects, brought to light long-ignored inequities, and spurred public debate and political engagement.

In 2007, Measure of America adapted the approach and index, which were designed with developing countries in mind, to the context of an affluent democracy and, in 2008, released a first-ever American Human Development Report.<sup>1</sup> Since then, organizations and communities across the country have worked with Measure of America to understand community needs and shape evidence-based policies and people-centered investments using this powerful approach.

The human development approach rests on a robust conceptual framework: Amartya Sen’s seminal work on capabilities.<sup>2</sup> Capabilities can be understood as a person’s tool kit for living a freely chosen, flourishing life of value. Capabilities shape the actual possibilities open to people, govern the real freedom they have

to lead the kind of lives they want to live, and ultimately determine what a person can do and become. Someone rich in capabilities has a full tool kit for making their vision for a good life a reality; someone with few capabilities has fewer options and fewer opportunities; many rewarding paths are blocked. We tend to think of capabilities as an individual’s skills and talents. In the human development approach, the word’s meaning is far more expansive. Valued capabilities include good health, access to knowledge, sufficient income, physical safety, religious freedom, political participation, love and friendship, dignity and societal respect, equality under the law, social inclusion, access to the natural world, self-expression, agency, the ability to influence decisions that affect one’s life, and more.<sup>3</sup>

Some capabilities are built through one’s own efforts, such as working hard in school, eating a healthy diet, and getting physical exercise; others are the result of the conditions and institutions around a person, such as having access to high-quality schools, stores that sell nutritious food, and parks in which to safely walk or jog; many result from the interplay between the two. Some capabilities are bestowed on people through an accident of birth: having rich parents or well-connected relatives or belonging to a dominant social group. Capabilities can stem from legally protected rights, such as freedom of conscience or assembly, or freedom from arbitrary detention or family violence. They can be reinforced or eroded by the state of the economy, the state of the natural environment, the state of public discourse, or the state of our democracy.

A core premise of the capability approach is that expanding people’s real freedoms is both the point and the proof of progress.<sup>4</sup> Real, or effective, freedom differs from formal freedom. A US citizen headed to the ballot box has the right—the formal freedom—to cast a vote for president, but the need to be at work, the lack of someone to care for her disabled partner in her absence, or an hours-long wait at her official polling station may mean that she does not have the real freedom to do so.<sup>5</sup> Everyone in Newark has the formal freedom to attend medical school; by law, Rutgers Medical School is open to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, national origin, or disability status. But too often the real freedom of, for instance, a young person growing up in Newark to do so is constrained by limited finances, a lack of information, underresourced neighborhood high schools, and formidable obstacles to attending and completing college. Formal freedoms, in these and other cases, are necessary but not sufficient for real freedom.

Another important idea in the human development framework is the concept of **human security**.<sup>6</sup> Human security is concerned with the safety and freedom of human beings, rather than the integrity and protection of the state against foreign intervention and civil disorder. Critical to human security are questions of resilience and vulnerability. While human development can be understood as people’s freedom *to*—to choose what to do and who to be and make those choices

How is the **economy** doing?



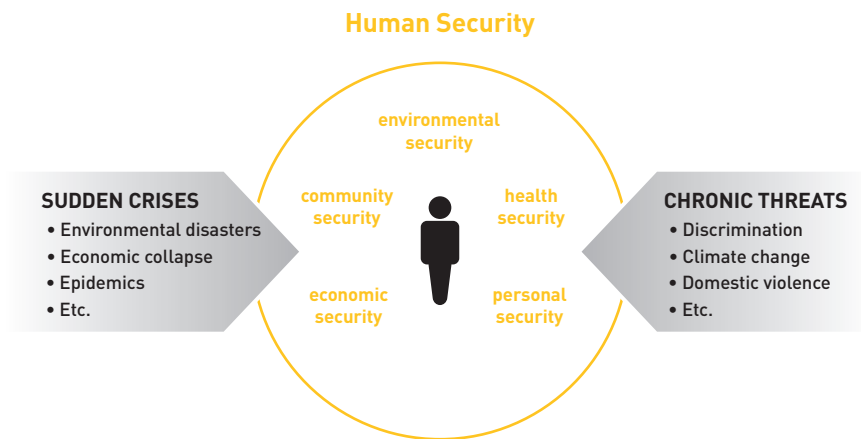
**TRADITIONAL**  
Approach

How are **people** doing?



**HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**  
Approach

reality—human security can be understood as people’s freedom *from*—from fear and want, from violations of their rights, from both chronic and sudden threats to their lives and livelihoods. Whereas human development is concerned principally with expanding choices and opportunities, human security is more concerned with protection and prevention; it is preoccupied with security in the face of downturns and crises and with the ability of all people to exercise choices in an environment that is safe and free. The United States Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey and the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice in 2014 found that the Newark Police Department engaged in unconstitutional policing that violated the rights of Newark residents; the resulting consent decree and the police department reforms it mandated can be understood as designed to protect residents’ human security.<sup>7</sup>



## How Is Human Development Measured?

Trying to measure all the facets of the expansive concepts of human development would be madness. Thus, the United Nations Human Development Index as well as the adapted American Human Development Index featured in this report measure just three fundamental capabilities: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living (see **FIGURE 1**). Why only three areas, and why these three in particular? People around the world view them as core building blocks of a life of value, freedom, and dignity. Healthy lives, good educations, and decent wages are not controversial aims. In addition, these foundational capabilities make possible other capabilities, such as adequate housing in safe neighborhoods. They are also bedrocks of human security. And from a practical perspective, these are areas that one can measure comparatively easily with reliable and regularly collected proxy indicators.

It is tempting to include indicators of a host of important capabilities—such as adequate, affordable housing, food security, and political participation—in a well-being index. Indexes with large numbers of indicators can be tricky, however. Using many indicators can lead to counting the same phenomenon two or three times, to confusing results, and to a false equivalence between fundamental and derivative issues. A housing indicator, for instance, may be counting the same thing, to a large degree, as an earnings indicator—how much money a person has to pay for life’s essentials. Indexes that include a large number of indicators can be difficult to explain and understand, diluting their advocacy power. And including many indicators can limit the places and demographic groups for which unique scores can be calculated. It is important, however, to be realistic about the limitations of a parsimonious index like this one.

The American Human Development Index is not the end of a discussion on well-being; it is the start. Once disparities in basic outcomes have been identified using the index and its constituent parts, the critical task is to examine the *why*—the underlying conditions like power disparities, historical realities, past and present policy choices, and more that have led to different outcomes for different groups of people. For this exploration, a whole host of other indicators is required—indicators that are featured throughout the report.

Now for the technical part. The American Human Development Index for Newark is comprised of the following indicators:



**A Long and Healthy Life** is measured using life expectancy at birth. Measure of America calculates life expectancy using mortality data from the New Jersey Department of Health and population data from the US Census Bureau. For estimates for the Newark population as a whole as well as for all gender, nativity, and race/ethnicity combinations, we used 2017–2021 mortality data from the New Jersey Department of Health. For census tracts, we used CDC/USALEEP life expectancy estimates.

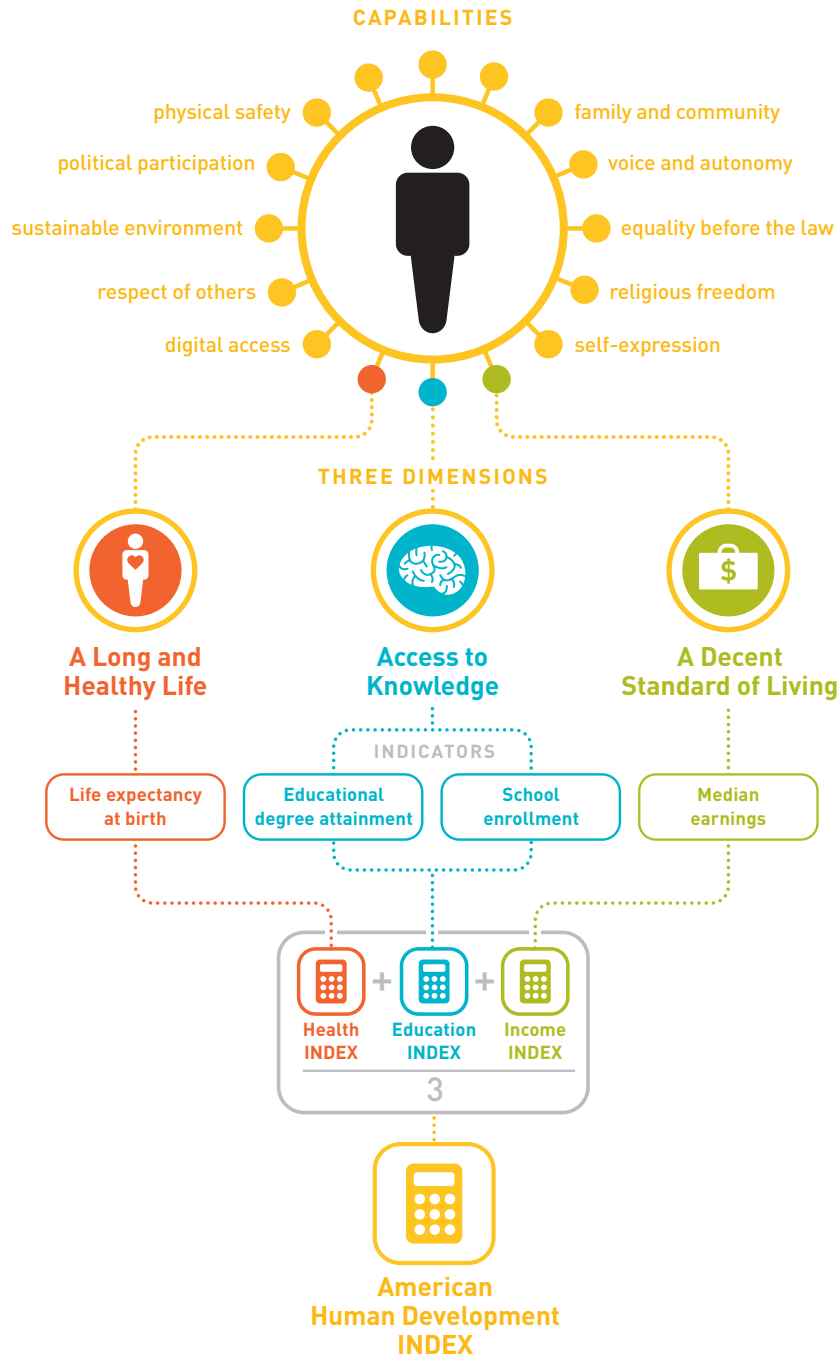


**Access to Knowledge** is measured using two indicators: school enrollment for the population 3 to 24 years of age and educational degree attainment for those ages 25 and older. A one-third weight is applied to the enrollment indicator and a two-thirds weight to the degree attainment indicator to reflect the relative importance of earning degrees as compared to attending school. Both are from the US Census Bureau's 2018–2022 American Community Survey.



**A Decent Standard of Living** is measured using median earnings of all full- and part-time workers ages 16 and older from the same 2018–2022 American Community Survey.

FIGURE 1 Calculating the American Human Development Index





The three components are weighted equally on the premise that each is equally important for human well-being.

In broad terms, the first steps for calculating the index are to compile or calculate the four indicators that constitute it: life expectancy, school enrollment, educational degree attainment, and median personal earnings. Because these indicators use different scales (years, dollars, percentages), they must be put on a common scale so that they can be combined. Three subindexes, one for each of the three dimensions that make up the index—health, education, and earnings—are created on a scale of 0 to 10. The process requires the selection of minimum and maximum values—or “goalposts”—for each of the four indicators. These goalposts are determined based on the range of the indicator observed from the data and also taking into account possible increases and decreases in years to come. For life expectancy, for example, the goalposts are 90 years at the high end and 66 years at the low end. The three subindexes are then added together and divided by three to yield the American Human Development Index value. (A more detailed technical description can be found in the Methodological Note).

In this report and others, the index score is presented for the whole population—the score for Newark is 4.10 out of 10—as well as for different slices of the population. For this report, index scores are presented by **demographic group** and by **place**.

The pages that follow present the results of the overall HDI; explore in greater detail the constituent parts of the HDI, namely health, education, and earnings; explore youth well-being; and make recommendations for how to increase the HDI scores for everyone, particularly for the groups with the lowest scores.

**BOX 2 Why Don't All Groups and Places Have an HDI Score?**

You will notice that on some maps, specific areas appear in gray, and that in some tables, values for certain groups or locales are missing. **Gray areas and missing values indicate that the data for that place or demographic group are not statistically reliable.**

Most of the cases of unreliability in this report stem from having a sample size that is too small to allow for statistically reliable calculations.

“Rolling up” five years worth of data (2018–2022) increases reliability; using just the most recent year improves timeliness but makes it impossible to calculate rates for small populations. It’s a trade-off, and we generally err on the side of granularity.

Ideally, we would be able to provide scores not just for large demographic groups like Black and white Newark residents, but also for smaller ones, such as the long-settled Portuguese community in the Ironbound or the Puerto Rican community historically centered in Lower Broadway. Unfortunately, we cannot provide statistically stable scores for populations that fall below a certain population threshold. Combining several years of data gets us to this threshold for some groups, but not all.

Another limitation in our ability to provide everyone an HDI score stems from the way in which the data we use for the index are collected. We would like, for example, to calculate scores for LGBTQ residents, but are unable to do so because the American Community Survey does not provide a way for people to report information about their sexual and gender identities beyond marking the box for male or female. For similar reasons, calculating scores for specific populations that face disproportionate challenges, such as young adults aging out of the foster care system, people who are homeless, or people who have been incarcerated, is also impossible. We try to address these gaps by bringing in other data sources but understand that this is not ideal. In short, we can only calculate scores for groups that are given the chance to self-identify on the American Community Survey and that are sufficiently large as to allow reliable calculations. Right now, the survey only asks respondents to report their gender (just male or female), their race, if they are or are not Hispanic or Latino, if they are US or foreign born, their country of origin if they are foreign born, and the language they speak at home.

### BOX 3 Why the American Human Development Index?

Dashboards and indexes that seek to capture and quantify concepts of well-being, mobility, inclusion, equity, prosperity, security, and sustainability are thick on the ground. What does the American Human Development Index add to New Jersey's heavily populated data landscape? Several features make the HDI particularly useful for understanding and addressing inequities in Newark.

- **HDI scores are available by neighborhood and demographic group.** Indicators and scores at the state or county level are useful for many purposes, but they fail to capture the often-stark differences between men and women, racial and ethnic groups, and cities and neighborhoods. Looking only at Essex County data, for example, might lead us to assume that the countywide figure of 37.4 percent of adults age 25 and older with at least a bachelor's degree applies to Newark as well, when in fact the rate in Newark is less than half that, 16.7 percent; adding gender and race/ethnicity, we see that 55.4 percent of Asian women in Newark hold bachelor's degrees—much higher than the county figure—compared to 9.3 percent of Newark's Latino men.

- **The HDI directly measures inequality in a way that is easy to grasp and noncontroversial.** The HDI synthesizes a complex reality into a single number that allows for easy

comparisons between groups. The wide variation in HDI scores along its 10-point scale makes plain the extent of fundamental disparities among Newark residents. Many organizations today are seeking to apply an equity lens to their work; the HDI is such a lens. The components that make up the index—living a long and healthy life, getting a good education, and earning a decent wage—are not controversial aims. They are universally valued, intuitively understood measures that, even in this age of extreme polarization, are widely accepted, and how these factors translate into human flourishing—or languishing—is readily understood.

- **It supplements money metrics with human metrics.** An overreliance on economic metrics such as GDP can provide misleading information about the everyday conditions of ordinary people's lives and the opportunities available to them. For example, using money as the sole gauge of well-being in Newark would lead us to conclude that white men, who earn the most (\$50,600), have the best life outcomes. While that may be true economically, it is not true in terms of health. Latina women, who earn less than half what white men do, can expect to live 84.0 years, 4.6 more than white men. Similarly, Asian Newark residents, who earn far less than white men, live 11.9 years longer. Nearly a dozen more years to walk the earth is an

invaluable outcome that money metrics miss.

- **It rests on a robust framework developed by world-renowned scholars.** The American HDI rests on a robust conceptual framework—the capabilities approach of Nobel laureate Amartya Sen—and is based on a road-tested international tool that is the global gold standard for measuring human well-being. Leading scholars from the social sciences, mathematics and statistics, and philosophy have engaged with and built upon human development concepts for decades, yielding a rich body of work in support of this powerful idea: the true measure of progress is the degree to which all people are able to imagine and attain the kind of life they value.<sup>8</sup> The rich engagement of scholars from a range of disciplines from all corners of the earth in creating, exploring, researching, and building upon the HDI sets it apart from other well-being exercises.

- **The HDI connects different sectors to show problems, and their solutions, from a people-centered perspective.** The cross-sectoral American HDI broadens the analysis of the interlocking factors that create or obstruct opportunities and fuel both advantage and disadvantage. It captures the key interrelated conditions that enable people to realize their full potential—or that hold them back.

# What the Human Development Index Reveals



IN THIS SECTION

Introduction: Newark in the Regional Context

Variation by Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Nativity

Variation by Geography: Wards and Census Tracts

## Introduction: Newark in the Regional Context

A Measure of America study focused on the tri-state area found that Newark had the lowest level of well-being among the 170 neighborhood-and-town clusters that together make up the New York metropolitan area.<sup>1</sup> That study found that Newark shared many challenges with tri-state cities and neighborhoods like Paterson, Trenton, and Elizabeth, New Jersey; Bridgeport and Waterbury, Connecticut; and neighborhoods in Brooklyn and the Bronx—that, like Newark, had rich industrial pasts and thriving middle- and working-class communities but that suffered a series of shocks starting in the 1960s. These shocks included racial tensions, police violence (leading, in Newark, to the 1967 riots, also known as the Newark Rebellion), white flight, abandonment of downtowns, decades of disinvestment, and ever-deepening residential segregation by race and ethnicity, income, and occupational category—and the resulting concentration of disadvantage in low-income Black and Latino communities.<sup>2</sup>

Residential segregation can be detrimental to people’s well-being because where you live gives form to your daily routine and defines key aspects of your quality of life. It affects the jobs, schools, and community amenities like parks and grocery stores you and your family have access to; determines your level of exposure to risks of all sorts, among them crime, pollution, noise, harsh policing, and Covid-19; influences the condition and value of your home; and shapes the social world and life chances of your children. Where you live can reinforce ties to your community’s history, traditions, and cultural heritage in ways that give you strength, or it can represent a painful form of abandonment or displacement. For those excluded from opportunity-rich communities like those found in many of Newark’s nearby suburbs—either financially or by virtue of past and present discrimination and structural racism, or both—segregation harms well-being and hinders mobility.

Despite residential segregation and concentrated disadvantage, however, Newark has incredible resources in the form of strong community ties and neighborhood identities, deeply rooted ethnic enclaves, thriving community organizations, and a virtual army of people dedicating their working lives to improving the well-being of the people of Brick City. Newark also has tremendous financial resources: a vast transportation infrastructure that includes the port and the airport; a host of resource-rich educational, arts-related, and private-sector anchor institutions; and a huge influx of cash from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. **The challenge—and the opportunity—is to ensure that the people who live in Newark enjoy their fair share of the economic bounty the city attracts and creates.**

Where you live can reinforce ties to your community’s history, traditions, and cultural heritage in ways that give you strength, or it can represent a painful form of abandonment or displacement.

# Variation by Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Nativity

Newark’s score on the American Human Development Index (HDI) is 4.10 out of 10, lower than that of Essex County (5.67) and New Jersey as a whole (6.35). Newark residents have shorter lives, lower levels of educational attainment and enrollment, and lower earnings than their fellow New Jerseyans. A great deal of variation exists within Newark’s population, however. The inequalities in well-being separating different demographic groups in Newark are the focus of the rest of this section.

**Women** in Newark have a higher HDI score than **men**, 4.28 compared to 3.81. This trend persists for Black and Latino residents, but white men have a higher HDI score than white women due to their much higher earnings.

Newark’s score on the American Human Development Index (HDI) is 4.10 out of 10, lower than that of Essex County (5.67) and New Jersey as a whole (6.35).

**TABLE 1 Human Development Index by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity in Newark**

RANK	HDI	LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (years)	EDUCATION INDEX (out of 10)	MEDIAN EARNINGS (\$)	YOUTH DISCONNECTION (%)
<b>NEW JERSEY</b>	6.35	79.6	6.39	51,500	9.4
<b>NEWARK</b>	4.10	77.0	3.75	33,300	18.4
<b>GENDER</b>					
1 Women	4.28	80.6	3.93	28,300	16.3
2 Men	3.81	73.2	3.57	37,900	18.8
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>					
1 Asian	6.90	91.3	6.98	32,000	
2 White	5.70	83.9	4.15	41,300	9.1*
3 Latino	4.19	80.8	3.14	30,000	16.9
4 Black	3.59	71.9	3.90	35,400	22.3
<b>GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY</b>					
1 Asian Women	6.77*	94.3	8.02	26,000*	
2 White Men	5.63	79.4	4.42	50,600	
3 White Women	5.40	88.2	3.89	29,200	
4 Latina Women	4.13	84.0	3.46	23,100	18.4
5 Black Women	3.99	75.9	3.96	32,900	18.6
6 Latino Men	3.95	77.5	2.86	34,200	15.6
7 Black Men	3.22	67.4	3.82	39,900	26.4
Asian Men		87.8	6.03		

Sources: Life expectancy: Measure of America calculations using mortality data from the New Jersey Department of Health, 2017–2021. Education, Earnings, and Youth Disconnection: US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2018–2022. Note: Estimates with an asterisk have a higher degree of uncertainty. Life expectancy for Asian population (including men and women) is for Essex County.

**Asian** residents, who account for just 2.0 percent of the city’s population, have the highest HDI score of any group, 6.90, thanks to their extremely high life expectancy and strong educational outcomes. The populations of Newark as a whole and its Black, Latino, and white residents were large enough for us to calculate reliable estimates of life expectancy at birth, but at just over 6,000 people, the Asian population was too small. For this reason, we used the Asian population of Essex County as the basis for our health calculations. The Asian Essex County life expectancy is a striking 91.3 years, 94.3 years for women and 87.8 years for men. Nearly half of Asian residents living in Newark have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher, the highest rate among any racial or ethnic group by a significant margin. By comparison, one in four white residents hold bachelor’s degrees. Median personal earnings for Asians are \$32,000, however, less than one might assume given their educational levels.

**White** residents of Newark make up 10.0 percent of the city’s population. They have the second-highest HDI score, 5.70, and the highest median personal earnings, \$41,300, driven by the outsized earnings of white men. White life expectancy, 83.9 years, is the second highest, but the gap between women and men is the largest of all racial and ethnic groups: white women live 88.2 years on average—8.8 years longer than white men. White men, however, outearn white women by a broad margin: for every dollar a white man makes, a white woman makes about 58 cents. The white population of Newark differs from the white population of the state and country in that nearly half of white Newark residents were born outside the United States, an unusually large proportion. This difference could help to explain white Newark residents’ comparatively long life expectancy; typically, Asian residents live the longest and Latino residents the second-longest, but in Newark, white residents hold that second spot, buoyed by the better health that immigrants tend to enjoy. In addition, the share of white foreign-born adults without a high school diploma is atypically high, 36.7 percent, which pulls the Education Index for white residents well below what we usually see for this demographic group.

Newark’s **Latino** residents are the second largest of the city’s racial and ethnic groups, making up 37.2 percent of the population. They have the second-lowest HDI score, 4.19; the highest rate of adults over 25 who lack a high school diploma (roughly one in three); and the lowest median earnings, \$30,000. Life expectancy for Latino residents in Newark is 80.8 years. Latina women, with a score of 4.13, live 84.0 years, longer than members of all other groups except for white women and Asian residents. Latina women and Latino men have similar educational outcomes, but men earn \$11,100 more.

**Black** residents make up 45.6 percent of Newark’s total population; they are the largest racial and ethnic group in Newark. They have the lowest HDI score of any group, 3.59, as well as the second-lowest Education Index score, 3.90, and the lowest life expectancy, 71.9 years. For **Black men**, these scores are still more

Black men score just 3.22 on the HDI, a value very much affected by their comparatively short life expectancy, just 67.4 years on average.

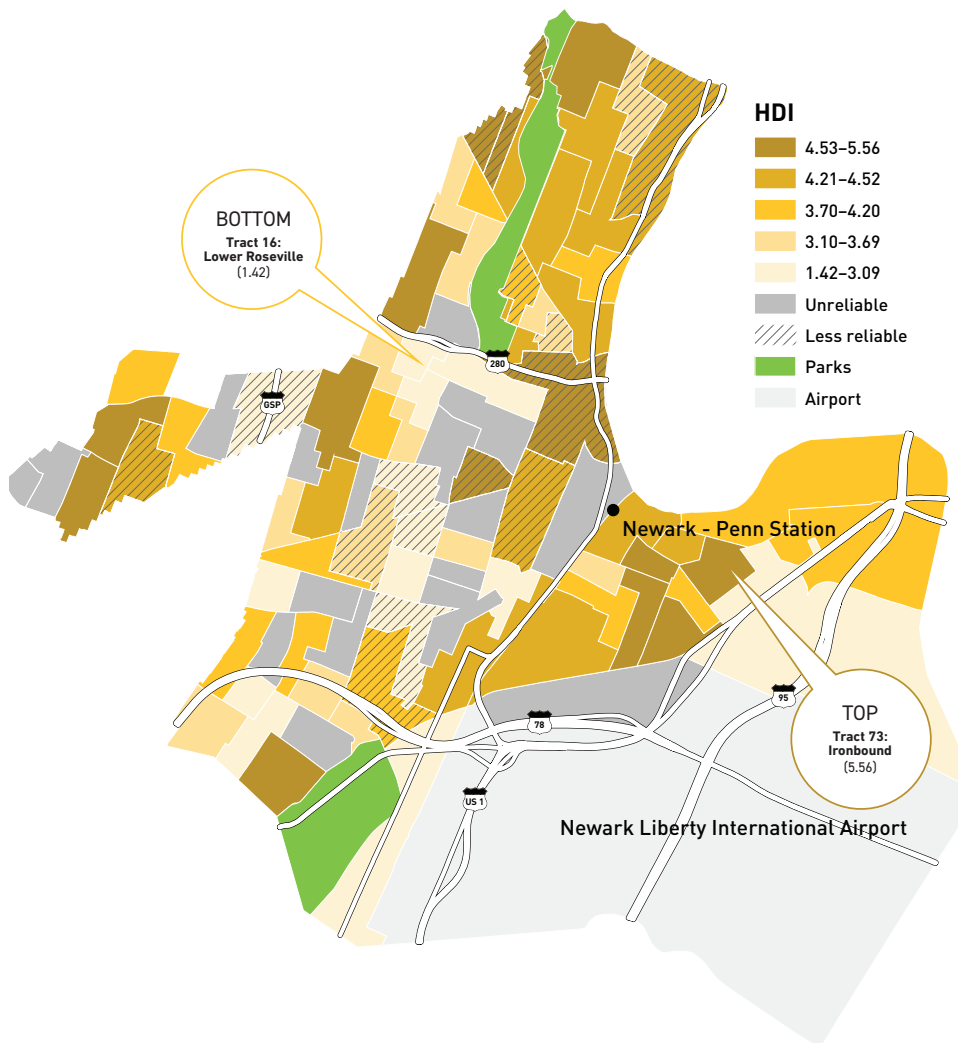
concerning: Black men score 3.22 on the HDI, a value very much affected by their comparatively short life expectancy, just 67.4 years on average. Black boys and young men living in Newark also have the highest rate of youth disconnection of any group for which data are reliable, with more than one in four neither working nor in school. The well-being outcomes for **Black women**—the largest race-by-gender group in Newark, accounting for one in every four residents—are better than men's. Black women's HDI score is 3.99 out of 10, and 18.6 percent hold at least a bachelor's degree, higher than Newark's overall rate. Although they live longer than Black men, Black women's life expectancy, 75.9 years, is shorter than that of Newark women overall, 80.6 years. Black women have more education than Black men, but they earn \$7,000 less per year.

**US-born residents** of Newark can expect to live 73.7 years on average, significantly less than **foreign-born residents**, 82.8 years. Across the country, immigrants tend to have a longer life expectancy than people born in the US. While those who are born in the US typically earn more (in Newark, median personal earnings of US-born residents are \$34,400, compared to \$32,200 for those who are foreign born) and have higher rates of degree attainment (82.6 percent of US-born adults hold at least a high school diploma, compared to 72.2 percent of foreign-born adults), this difference in life expectancy is enough to earn foreign-born residents a higher HDI score, 4.45, compared to 3.85 for native-born residents.



# Variation by Geography: Wards and Census Tracts

Tract 73 in the East Ward is the highest-scoring census tract, with a score of 5.56. Tract 16 in the West Ward has the lowest score, an extremely concerning 1.42. Every ward has high- and low-scoring census tracts. In the North Ward, no tract scores below 3.36, and the scores tend to be higher than in other parts of town; it has the highest median tract score, 4.24. The East Ward is home to the highest-scoring tract. Both the South and West Wards have tracts that score below 2.00, evidence of severe well-being challenges.



Variation in HDI by Ward

WARD	MEDIAN HDI	LOWEST HDI TRACT	HIGHEST HDI TRACT
Central	3.54	2.15	4.52
East	4.07	3.00	5.56
North	4.24	3.36	5.22
South	3.54	1.90	5.02
West	3.77	1.42	5.44

Sources: Measure of America calculations using NJ Department of Health, 2017-2021 and US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2018-2022.

# A Long and Healthy Life



IN THIS SECTION

Introduction

Variation by Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Nativity

Variation by Geography: Wards and Census Tracts

# Introduction

Living a long and healthy life is our most important capability. Being alive—avoiding premature death and being protected from arbitrary denial of life—is quite simply the prerequisite for the development and exercise of all other capabilities. And being healthy—attaining the highest possible standard of physical and mental health—maximizes the likelihood that we will realize our full potential and, as a result, lead flourishing, freely chosen lives. Health is both a cause and a consequence of a person’s overall well-being. Poor health imperils human security and can profoundly limit a range of capabilities, from agency and autonomy to employment and asset-building to political participation and social inclusion. And those capabilities, in turn, affect people’s health; feeling powerless, experiencing loneliness and isolation, suffering toxic stress borne of economic insecurity or racism, living in overcrowded conditions—these challenges erode our physical and mental well-being.

The ways in which the vastly disparate conditions of people’s daily lives affect their health have never been more apparent than in 2020, when many affluent New Jersey residents were able to protect themselves from Covid-19 to a degree utterly unattainable by those whose livelihoods required their physical presence—to deliver meals or groceries, to work in drug stores, to care for the elderly—or who lived in overcrowded housing, as many in Newark do. The disproportionate exposure of low-income, Black, and Latino communities to Covid-19 was tragically apparent in the rolls of those lost to the virus (see **BOX 1**).



Living a long and healthy life is our most important capability.



## **BOX 1 Covid-19 as a Leading Cause of Death**

In early 2021, the terrifying pace of Covid-19 deaths reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicated that the disease had become the number-one cause of death in the United States.<sup>1</sup> As vaccines became available later that year, the mortality rate began to fall; according to mortality statistics from the CDC, Covid-19 was the fourth-leading cause of death in the United States in 2022. Despite the slightly lower ranking, the disease still tragically took the lives of approximately 245,000 people in the United States in 2022.<sup>2</sup> That year, nearly 200,000 positive cases were confirmed in New Jersey, and some 1,000 residents died from the disease; 61 of those deaths were in Essex County alone.<sup>3</sup>

Covid-19 is likely still a significant cause of death in Essex County. The above trends suggest that the continued spread of the virus will ultimately decrease the state’s life expectancy overall and will magnify disparities in life expectancy between racial and ethnic

groups in the state.<sup>4</sup> These alarming developments are already apparent in the national data. A June 2021 study found that US life expectancy fell by 1.87 years between 2018 and 2020, largely due to Covid-19; this decrease was more than eight times the average decrease in other affluent nations. The study also found that decreases in US Black and Latino life expectancies were two to three times greater than the decrease in the white life expectancy, effectively wiping out gains made over the last decade in closing the Black-white life span gap.<sup>5</sup> While Covid-19 is ranked as the third- or fourth-leading cause of death across all of Essex County’s major racial and ethnic groups, the age-adjusted mortality rate reveals stark disparities. For white residents of Essex County, the age-adjusted Covid-19 death rate is 29.0 per 100,000, and for Asian residents, 31.8. But for Latino and Black residents, the death rates are 63.8 and 64.0, respectively, double the white and Asian death rates.<sup>6</sup>

The American Human Development Index uses life expectancy at birth as a proxy for a long and healthy life. Life expectancy at birth is defined as the number of years that a baby born today can expect to live if current patterns of mortality continue throughout that baby's lifetime. This measure, which captures mortality by all causes and at all ages, is a classic yardstick of population health. Life expectancy does not, of course, tell the full story of our health, and living a *long* life and living a *healthy* life are not synonymous. In general, though, those who manage to elude all causes of mortality until their eighties or nineties are healthier than the average person. In addition, life expectancy at birth is an easily understood gauge of which groups are living into old age and which are experiencing premature death, and it helps to focus attention on why these gaps exist.

Life expectancy at birth accounts for one-third of the overall HDI. For this report, Measure of America calculated life expectancy using mortality data from the New Jersey Department of Health and population data from the US Census Bureau. For estimates for the Newark population as a whole as well as for all gender, nativity, and race/ethnicity combinations, we used 2017–2021 mortality data. (Using several years' worth of data rather than one makes it possible to calculate statistically reliable life expectancy estimates for smaller population groups.) For Asian residents, we used life expectancy data for Essex County as a whole; Newark's Asian population was too small to produce statistically reliable estimates. We used CDC/USALEEP data for census tract-level estimates.

This chapter presents Newark residents' life expectancy at birth by gender, by race and ethnicity, by nativity, and by census tract. It also reviews the leading causes of death and notable health disparities among these groups to reveal striking, socially determined differences in health outcomes that are avoidable and unjust.

Two key concepts inform this analysis. The first is the notion of the **social determinants of health**, defined by the World Health Organization as “the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and age, as well as the systems put in place to deal with illness. These circumstances are in turn shaped by a wider set of forces: economics, social policies, and politics”<sup>7</sup> (see **BOX 2**). Central to this approach is the idea that while doctors and medicines are critical once we fall ill or are injured, the main drivers of health disparities between groups lie not in the health-care system but in the conditions of people's daily lives. Safe neighborhoods, clean air, full-service grocery stores, healthy school lunches, places to exercise safely, educational equality, employment that offers security, dignity, and agency: these and other things like them are key to keeping people healthy.

The second (and related) concept that informs this analysis is **health equity**. Health inequities are health differences that are avoidable and unfair and that adversely affect a socially disadvantaged group; this disadvantage can be based on race and ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation,

Health inequities are health differences that are avoidable and unfair and that adversely affect a socially disadvantaged group.

disability status, or other characteristics linked to discrimination and social exclusion. At its most basic level, health equity means that everyone should have an equal opportunity to live a long and healthy life. Creating this equality of opportunity requires “societal action to remove obstacles such as poverty and discrimination and their consequences—including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs, education, housing, environments, and health care”<sup>8</sup>—in other words, it requires attention to making the social determinants of health more equitable, fair, and just across groups.

Health equity means that everyone should have an equal opportunity to live a long and healthy life.

**BOX 2 The Social Determinants of Health**

The social determinants of health are defined as the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and age, as well as the systems put in place to deal with illness. These circumstances are shaped by a wider set of forces: economics, social policies, and politics.  
 —World Health Organization



	SOCIETY	COMMUNITY	INDIVIDUAL
<b>BENEFICIAL</b>	Civil Rights Equality Under the Law Responsive Government Health and Safety Regulations Public Health Campaigns Environmental Protection Laws Worker Protections Income Supports Family-Friendly Policies	Civic Organizations Doctors and Hospitals Neighborhood Safety Sidewalks and Bike Paths Safe, Clean Parks Good Jobs High-Quality Childcare Public Transportation Grocery Stores Social Cohesion Good Schools	Loving, Stable Relationships Family Support Friendship Regular Exercise Good Nutrition Adequate Sleep Living Wages Safe, Affordable Housing Strong Educational Background Consistent Health-Care Provider
<b>HARMFUL</b>	Bias and Discrimination Harmful Gender Norms Economic Downturns Natural Disasters	Environmental Hazards Residential Segregation Poor Community-Police Relations	Health-Risk Behaviors Loneliness Stress Exposure to Violence

## Variation by Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Nativity

Life expectancy at birth in Newark, 77.0 years, is 1.6 years shorter than life expectancy in Essex County and 2.6 years shorter than life expectancy in New Jersey as a whole.

Life span within Newark varies to a startling extent when broken down by gender and by racial and ethnic group. Female life expectancy in Newark is 80.6 years and male life expectancy is 73.2 years. Newark women outlive their male counterparts by 7.4 years, on average—larger than the gender gap at the national level, about 6 years.<sup>9</sup> Around the globe, women tend to live longer than men, indicating some biological differences between the sexes that advantage women, particularly when it comes to the leading cause of death, heart disease.<sup>10</sup> But the striking variation in male-female life expectancy gaps among different countries around the world and among different racial and ethnic groups in the United States points to the existence of social, cultural, and economic contributors as well (see **BOX 3**).



### **BOX 3 Gender and Health**

Gender norms—which define what individuals are expected to do and be in specific social contexts—create differing patterns of health-promoting and health-risk behaviors. Risk-taking, violence and domination, and avoidance of health care are ways that some men have been taught to demonstrate masculinity.<sup>11</sup> As a result, compared to girls and women, boys and men are more likely to die by homicide, by suicide, and as a result of unintentional

injuries like car crashes;<sup>12</sup> are more likely to engage in risky substance use;<sup>13</sup> are more likely to be exposed to health risks at work;<sup>14</sup> and more often resort to violence.<sup>15</sup> All these factors conspire to lower male life expectancy in ways that are not natural or inevitable but rather are the result of internalized social norms about what it means to be a man or a woman in our society—norms that can and do change.

As mentioned above, at just over 6,000 people, Newark's **Asian** population is too small to allow for the reliable calculation of life expectancy at birth. For this reason, we used the Asian population of Essex County as the basis for our calculations. The Asian Essex County life expectancy is a striking 91.3 years; 94.3 years for women and 87.8 years for men.

**White** Newark residents have the second-longest life expectancy, 83.9 years. White women have a life expectancy of 88.2 years; white men, 79.4 years. In most places in the United States, the white population has a shorter life expectancy than the Latino population, for reasons discussed in **BOX 4**: The Latino Health Paradox. In Newark, the opposite is true. What explains this departure from the norm?

The white population of Newark differs from the white population of the state and country in that nearly half of white Newark residents were born outside the United States, and foreign-born residents in general live longer than US-born residents. This larger-than-typical share of immigrants among Newark's white population could account for their relatively high life expectancy.

Newark's **Latino** residents have a life expectancy of 80.8 years, 2.8 years longer than the Newark average. A Latina baby girl born today can expect to live 84.0 years; a Latino baby boy, 77.5 years.



#### BOX 4 The Latino Health Paradox

The world over, people with more education tend to live longer. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon. People with higher levels of educational attainment tend to have better access to high-quality health care and are more likely to comply with treatment regimens, to use seat belts, to refrain from smoking, and to embrace new treatments and technologies.<sup>16</sup> They also tend to have jobs with good benefits and to earn more, enabling them to live in stable, adequate housing in safe neighborhoods

with high-quality schools and other services and to avoid the toxic stress caused by economic insecurity.

This positive correlation between education and life expectancy is considerably weakened for Latinos in the United States, a phenomenon known as the Latino Health Paradox; although they have the lowest levels of educational attainment and the lowest earnings (in Newark as well as in the state and country), Latinos live longer than whites. Research around positive birth outcomes among Latinos

points to protective aspects of Latino cultures, such as strong social support and family cohesion, that help bolster better health outcomes, particularly for mothers and infants.<sup>17</sup> Research has shown that the health advantages of foreign-born Latinos tend to wear off the longer they are in the United States, possibly because immigrants are more likely to adopt the less-healthy preferences and behaviors of the larger society over time.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, Covid-19 has eroded the Latino life expectancy advantage nationally.<sup>19</sup>

**Black** residents of Newark have a life expectancy of 71.9 years, about five years less than the Newark average and nearly eight years less than the state average. The life expectancy for Black women is 75.9 years, and for Black men, a shockingly low 67.4 years. The gap between Essex County Asian women and Newark Black men is an astonishing 26.9 years.

Individual and structural racism increase the frequency and severity of stressors to which Black people are exposed throughout their lives. These stressors include experiencing violence, being discriminated against for employment or housing, suffering anxiety related to economic insecurity or access to high-quality education, and enduring medical mistreatment, such as receiving inadequate care for pain. Some of the disproportionate stress that Black Newark residents face stems from the fact that they are more likely to live below the poverty line and in segregated neighborhoods than their white counterparts (itself a consequence of racism). But while education and affluence attenuate the impact of racism, they do not eliminate it.

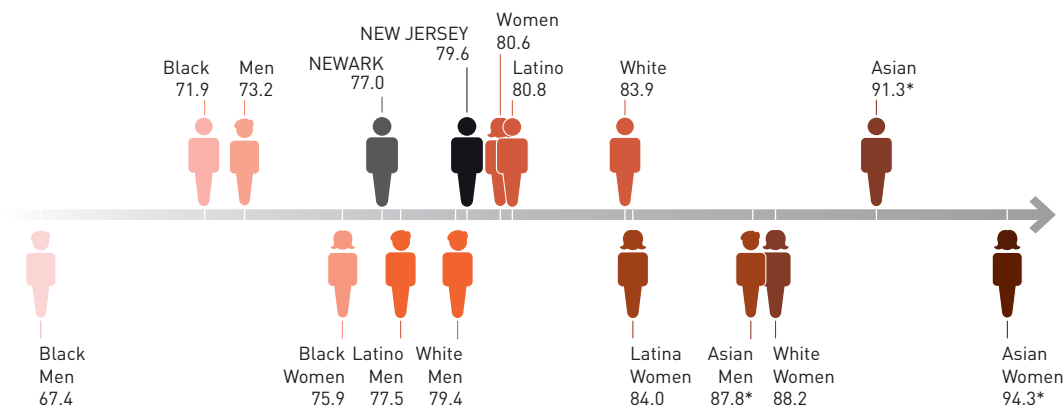
**Black women have the highest maternal mortality rate in the state.**

Chronic stressors and traumatic events—like being the victim of a crime, having an incarcerated parent, or losing a loved one to Covid-19—have cumulative negative effects, and Black people experience greater exposure to both factors across their life course than people of other racial and ethnic groups. Chronic stress is not only psychologically harmful; it also damages the cardiovascular and other systems by constantly stimulating the fight-or-flight response and thus flooding the body with cortisol, adrenalin, and other hormones, causing excessive wear and tear on the body. The accumulation of stressors and the physiological response to them can be identified through a combination of several markers, such as blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and urinary epinephrine and cortisol, which together are referred to as the allostatic load. A high allostatic load is associated with worse health outcomes.<sup>20</sup>

Chronic stress is not only psychologically harmful; it also damages the cardiovascular and other systems by constantly stimulating the fight-or-flight response.

Although they have a longer life expectancy than Black men, Black women also face distinct health inequities, such as maternal mortality and morbidity. Over the past 20 years, the maternal mortality rate in the United States has more than doubled, and racial and ethnic gaps are ever-present.<sup>21</sup> New Jersey, the country’s richest state by some measures, performs poorly in terms of both racial disparities in maternal mortality and the high maternal death rate for Black mothers. The maternal mortality rate for Black women in the state is 39.2 deaths per 100,000 live births, more than 6.5 times higher than white women’s rate of 5.9 per 100,000.<sup>22</sup> This troubling disparity is echoed across other health complications associated with childbirth. Compared to white mothers as well as Asian and Latina mothers, Black mothers have the highest rates, by wide margins, for the majority of severe maternal morbidity cases—cases involving significant negative short- or long-term

**LIFE EXPECTANCY BY GENDER AND BY RACE AND ETHNICITY IN NEWARK**



Source: Measure of America calculations using mortality data from the New Jersey Department of Health, 2017–2021.  
 Note: Estimates with an asterisk have a higher degree of uncertainty. Life expectancy for Asian population (including men and women) is for Essex County.



consequences to a woman’s health following labor or delivery, excluding death.<sup>23</sup> And although the New Jersey infant mortality rate is relatively low compared to that of other states, the rate for Black infants (9.1 deaths per 1,000 live births) is two to three times that of any other major racial or ethnic group.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps most troubling is the reality that an astounding 90 percent of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable; critical interventions include ensuring high-quality, holistic care during pregnancy and building expectant mothers’ knowledge about pregnancy-related health issues.<sup>25</sup> In 2023, the state announced plans to launch a Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center in Trenton, which will both provide care services and support research to address racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes.<sup>26</sup>

### VARIATION BY NATIVITY

Newark residents born in the United States live shorter lives than their foreign-born (or immigrant) counterparts, 73.7 years compared to 82.8 years—a gap of 9.1 years.

### LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH

Reliable data on the leading causes of death were available for Essex County but not for Newark alone. For this reason, this section focuses on Essex County as a whole.

Heart disease and cancer top the list of leading causes of death in Essex County, as in the state and nation (see **BOX 5**). These two leading causes of death are the top-ranked across racial and ethnic groups and for women and men. After cancer and heart disease, however, the leading causes of death in Essex County differ by race and ethnicity and by gender—further evidence of health inequalities and differing social determinants of health among different demographic groups.

The top five causes of death for men in Essex County mirror the top five causes of death nationally, with a slightly different order. For men, **accidents** rank higher as a leading cause of death than for women. The accidents category (also called unintentional injuries) includes unintentional drug overdoses, motor vehicle crashes, falls, and drownings. As discussed in **BOX 3: Gender and Health**, men are more likely to engage in risky behaviors (like speeding) that can cause unintentional injuries (like motor vehicle crashes). They are also more likely to be exposed to health risks at work that can cause accidental death. The word “accidents” is somewhat misleading, as it suggests that these deaths could not have been foreseen or prevented. In fact, the opposite is true: most deaths in this category are preventable.

For nearly all major demographic groups in Essex County, **sepsis** is one of the top 10 causes of death, different from the nation as a whole. Sepsis is a life-threatening response to an infection. It is a treatable disease, and early identification is critical and can be life-saving; however, sepsis disproportionately

Heart disease and cancer top the list of leading causes of death in Essex County, as in the state and nation.

impacts patients who are elderly or have severe comorbidities, cases in which sepsis-related mortality may not be preventable through better hospital care.<sup>27</sup> Essex County has the second-highest sepsis mortality rate in New Jersey, which has the highest sepsis mortality rate of all 50 states.<sup>28</sup> In the United States in 2020, there were 9.7 sepsis deaths per 100,000 people. In New Jersey, there were 17.7, 1.8 times higher than the national rate. Black residents of New Jersey fare the worst, with a significantly higher age-adjusted sepsis mortality rate than all other major racial and ethnic groups.<sup>29</sup>

**BOX 5 Leading Causes of Death in Essex County**



ESSEX COUNTY	GENDER		RACE AND ETHNICITY			
	MEN	WOMEN	ASIAN	BLACK	LATINO	WHITE
1 <b>Heart disease</b>	Heart disease	Heart disease	Cancer	Heart disease	Cancer	Heart disease
2 <b>Cancer</b>	Cancer	Cancer	Heart disease	Cancer	Heart disease	Cancer
3 <b>Accidents</b>	Accidents	Covid-19	Covid-19	Accidents	Accidents	Accidents
4 <b>Covid-19</b>	Covid-19	Stroke	Stroke	Covid-19	Covid-19	Covid-19
5 <b>Stroke</b>	Stroke	Accidents	Diabetes	Stroke	Diabetes	Alzheimer's
6 <b>Diabetes</b>	Diabetes	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	Accidents	Diabetes	Stroke	Stroke
7 <b>Sepsis</b>	Sepsis	Sepsis	Nephritis	Sepsis	Sepsis	Chronic lower respiratory diseases
8 <b>Chronic lower respiratory diseases</b>	Chronic lower respiratory diseases	Alzheimer's		Chronic lower respiratory diseases	Liver disease	Sepsis
9 <b>Alzheimer's</b>	Assault	Diabetes		Assault	Influenza (Flu) and Pneumonia	Diabetes
10 <b>Nephritis</b>	Nephritis	Influenza (Flu) and Pneumonia		Nephritis	Nephritis	Influenza (Flu) and Pneumonia

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC WONDER, 2016–2020.

For women and for white residents of Essex County, **Alzheimer's disease** is a more frequent cause of death than it is for the county as a whole. Women live longer than men, and age is the most important risk factor for Alzheimer's disease. Nonetheless, women and white residents in Essex County have a higher age-adjusted mortality rate for Alzheimer's disease than in the country as a whole. Further research is needed to investigate other biological, social, and environmental mechanisms that may increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

For men and for Black residents of Essex County, **assault** is the ninth-leading cause of death. Assault does not appear in the top ten leading causes for any other group. The age-adjusted mortality rate for men and Black residents is far higher than for Essex County as a whole, 21.3 and 25.0, respectively, as compared to 11.9 per 100,000. In the United States, the age-adjusted mortality rate for assault is 6.4, far lower than Essex County. In other words, Black Essex County residents are four times as likely to die as a result of an assault than the average American.

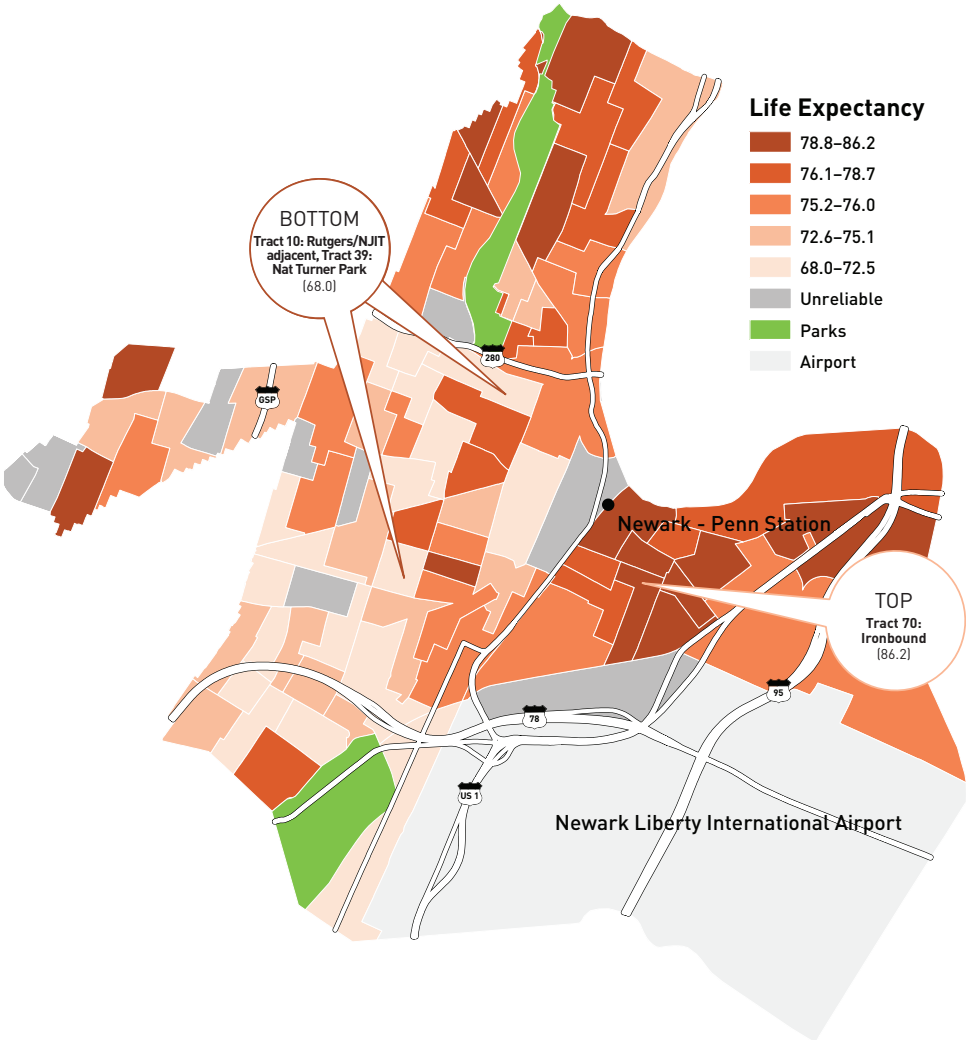
In addition to the leading causes of death, Newark stands out from other US cities on several other health indicators.<sup>30</sup> Newark has 58.7 opioid overdose deaths per 100,000 residents, compared to an average of 19.4 per 100,000 in US cities overall, a threefold difference.<sup>31</sup> It also has higher rates of smoking: in Newark, 19.6 percent of adults reported smoking, compared to an average of 14.6 percent in other cities.<sup>32</sup>

In terms of general health behaviors, 36.2 percent of adults in Newark report being physically inactive in the past 30 days, compared to an average of 23.4 percent in other cities.<sup>33</sup> Thirty percent of young people in New Jersey high schools are obese or overweight.<sup>34</sup> Newark shows better rates than other cities of visiting doctors for a checkup in the last year: 74.9 percent of Newark adults report visiting a doctor for a checkup, compared to an average of 70.5 percent in other cities.<sup>35</sup>

Newark has a higher rate of teen births than other cities, with 27.6 teen births per 1,000 girls and women ages 15–19, compared to an average of 19.5 in other cities.<sup>36</sup> In New Jersey, the teen birth rate is 9.2.<sup>37</sup> Newark also shows a lower rate of prenatal care than other cities: mothers in 57.2 percent of births in Newark received prenatal care that began in the first trimester, compared to an average of 77.8 percent in other cities.<sup>38</sup> In 11.1 percent of live births in Newark, babies have a low birthweight, compared to an average of 8.7 percent in other cities.<sup>39</sup>

# Variation by Geography: Wards and Census Tracts

Life expectancy by census tract ranges from a high of 86.2 years in tract 70, which lies in the Ironbound in the East Ward, to a low of 68.0 years in two tracts: tract 10, which is adjacent to the campuses of Rutgers University and New Jersey Institute of Technology, and tract 39, in the Nat Turner Park area, both in the Central Ward. The East Ward has the highest median tract life expectancy; the South Ward, the lowest.



Variation in Life Expectancy by Ward

WARD	MEDIAN LIFE EXPECTANCY	LOWEST LIFE EXPECTANCY TRACT	HIGHEST LIFE EXPECTANCY TRACT
Central	75.4	68.0	79.2
East	78.9	74.5	86.2
North	77.7	73.9	85.9
South	72.5	68.2	78.0
West	75.3	70.6	82.2

Sources: Measure of America calculations using mortality data from the New Jersey Department of Health, 2017-2021.

**BOX 6 Environmental Justice in Newark**

Most people recognize the connection between living in a clean environment and enjoying a long and healthy life, and the effects of pollution on physical health are well documented and widely known. The concept of environmental justice—the idea that everyone, regardless of income or race and ethnicity, has the same rights to protection from environmental risks and participation in the decisions that affect their communities—brings to the fore other connections between the environment and human well-being: income and education, which to a large extent determine political power and affect who gets a say in environmental decisions, and, as a result, who is exposed to environmental hazards.<sup>40</sup> Historically disenfranchised communities—communities of color and low-income communities—tend to bear the brunt of environmental harm, while those who benefit most from polluting activities are best positioned to escape it. Research in this vein has found that both socioeconomic standing and race—independent of income—determine exposure to environmental hazards.<sup>41</sup>

A striking example of environmental injustice is found in Newark's Ironbound neighborhood, a community largely composed of immigrants and people of color. The neighborhood ranks high on the demographic indicator of linguistic isolation (linguistic isolation is a concentration of families in which everyone over 14 years of age speaks English "less than well").<sup>42</sup> Around 50,000 people live in this residential community bordering and

interspersed with industrial sites.<sup>43</sup> Due to the large number of industrial facilities, warehouses, and freight trucks, residents have dubbed one 10-mile stretch of the Ironbound along Doremus Avenue as the "chemical corridor."<sup>44</sup>

The Ironbound neighborhood is also located in close proximity to Port Newark–Elizabeth, the third-largest seaport in the United States, which is covered with diesel particulate pollution from transportation and

**Historically disenfranchised communities—communities of color and low-income communities—tend to bear the brunt of environmental harm.**

industry that are co-located with the port.<sup>45</sup> The Ironbound ranks in the 92nd percentile for diesel particulate matter exposure nationally and in the 96th percentile for the respiratory hazard index and the 94th percentile for air toxics cancer risk in New Jersey.<sup>46</sup> These environmental toxins permeate different areas of life: they impact not only health but also education. One in four Newark children have asthma, the leading health-related cause of absences for Newark's children from kindergarten to third grade. Elementary education is critical for building social and academic skills; chronic absenteeism

in this time has been shown to have adverse long-term impacts on education.<sup>47</sup>

It may seem strange that this highly polluted area is home to the census tract with Newark's longest life expectancy: how could life expectancy be long in an area flooded with environmental toxins? One answer is that this area is home to a large share of immigrants (60.5 percent of the population of census tract 70 is foreign born).<sup>48</sup> Not only do immigrants have better health and longer life expectancies than people born in the United States in general, but because many residents did not live their whole lives in this neighborhood, the health effects of environmental toxins may not (yet) be apparent. In addition, just 2.3 percent of this tract's population is Black, and Newark's Black residents have the city's shortest life expectancies. But the effects of toxins on children's health are clear, as mentioned above. Even within the neighborhood, though, life expectancy varies; neighboring census tract 68 in the Ironbound has a life expectancy of 75.6 years, a full decade less than census tract 70.

In 2023, New Jersey's landmark environmental justice legislation took effect. The law requires denial of permits if an environmental justice analysis determines that a proposed new facility places undue harm on an already overburdened community.<sup>49</sup> While this legislation cannot rectify past environmental harms, it may prevent additional hardship for the Ironbound and neighborhoods like it.

# Access to Knowledge



IN THIS SECTION

Introduction

Variation by Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Nativity

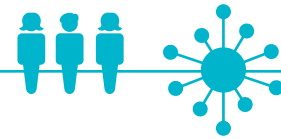
Variation by Geography: Wards and Census Tracts

# Introduction

Education is a means to many desirable economic ends—from better jobs to bigger paychecks. Earnings move in lockstep with educational attainment, with bachelor’s degree holders earning about double, on average, what high school graduates earn, and those with professional degrees earning one and a half times what college graduates take home.<sup>1</sup> But the benefits of education extend far beyond our bank accounts. For society as a whole, higher levels of educational attainment are associated with less crime and lower rates of incarceration—issues with which Newark struggles—as well as greater civic engagement, tolerance of difference, and support for the rights of others.<sup>2</sup> For individuals, more education is associated with longer lives and better health, including a reduced risk of dementia and chronic disease, better mental health, and fewer health-risk behaviors. It is also associated with more stable interpersonal relationships, higher marriage rates, and lower divorce rates; greater resilience and ability to adjust to change; and more effective coping skills.<sup>3</sup> Education is not just about mastering academic subjects or developing technical skills; it’s also critical to learning about oneself and the world. Education builds confidence, agency, and self-sufficiency; confers status and dignity; and helps people envision and realize better futures for themselves and for their communities.

Unlike the vast majority of European and Asian countries, which fund education fairly equitably from a central national budget and set clear national standards, the United States relies heavily on local funding and enshrines the concept of local control almost as an end in itself. As a consequence, the quality, nature, and scope of educational opportunities vary sharply by place, race, and socioeconomic status. The residential segregation by race and income that characterizes northern New Jersey magnifies and entrenches these inequalities. Compared to white children, Black children from low-income neighborhoods are more likely to attend underfunded schools with less-qualified and less-experienced teachers, fewer counselors, more overcrowding, limited course offerings, fewer advanced classes, and fewer and worse-quality books, laboratories, libraries, and computers.<sup>4</sup> The result is a well-documented achievement gap. This gap is in evidence in Newark, where three-quarters of students are economically disadvantaged, nine in ten are Black or Latino, one in five are English-language learners, and one in seven are in a special education program.<sup>5</sup> The Covid-19 pandemic made things worse (see **BOX 1**: Covid-19’s Impact on Newark’s Students).

Education is not just about mastering academic subjects or developing technical skills; it’s also critical to learning about oneself and the world.



### BOX 1 Covid-19's Impact on Newark's Students

The Covid-19 pandemic had significant impacts on Newark's students, especially with regard to learning loss and absenteeism. Newark's public school district serves more Black, Latino, and low-income children than any other school district in New Jersey, and when the pandemic hit in 2020, New Jersey's poorest school districts were the first to turn to remote learning.<sup>6</sup> Internet access became closely tied to access to education. This presented a formidable obstacle for low-income students, as household poverty is the most reliable predictor of slower internet speeds. Newark also has the lowest average

download speed among New Jersey's five largest cities.<sup>7</sup> Another challenge is high rates of absenteeism; 32 percent of Newark's students were considered chronically absent in fall 2020.<sup>8</sup> Drops in test scores between 2019 and 2023 illustrate the effects of these absences; in 2023, Newark's students scored two years behind the national average in math, compared to one year behind in 2019.<sup>9</sup> Similar trends were observed in English, with the share of students passing the English language arts assessment dropping from 36 percent in 2019 to 27 percent in 2022.<sup>10</sup> State-funded preschool enrollment also saw sharp declines from 2019 to 2020

across New Jersey, but especially in Newark, with nearly 18 percent fewer students enrolled.<sup>11</sup> Though chronic-absenteeism rates have fallen, they are still higher than they were pre-pandemic.<sup>12</sup> Newark's public school district addressed drops in test scores by mandating summer school, but not everyone could take part; only students within 10 points of passing the state's math test and with an attendance rate of 95 percent or higher were able to participate.<sup>13</sup> The students most likely to fall behind in education because of Covid's effects have yet to receive the resources they need to recoup lost learning.

The American Human Development Index measures access to knowledge using two indicators that are combined into the Education Index. The first is school enrollment for the population between the ages of 3 and 24; this indicator captures everyone who is currently in school, from toddlers in preschool to young adults in college or graduate school. The second indicator is educational degree attainment for the population ages 25 and older: the share of adults with high school diplomas, four-year bachelor's degrees, and graduate and professional degrees.<sup>14</sup> The degree attainment indicator does not include career and technical education credentials or certifications; although such credentials are important gateways to many careers, uniform, comparable definitions, forms of accreditation, and statistics about them are not available (see **BOX 2**: What about Associate Degrees and Technical Certificates?). Also keep in mind that when we discuss people with high school diplomas, we are referring to adults ages 25 and older, not to today's high schoolers or today's high school graduation rate unless otherwise noted. Today's high school students are discussed in **BOX 4**: High School Outcomes in Newark.

"Before the pandemic I used to go to school every day, I was really involved. But, once the pandemic happened, [it was like] everything just started to crumble.... When we went back, I would stay for about a period or two and then walk out. Now I realize that that pushed me back even further."



Newark young person



The school enrollment indicator counts for one-third the weight of the Education Index, and the degree attainment indicator counts for the remaining two-thirds; these relative proportions reflect the difficulty of as well as the payoff for earning a degree as compared to simply enrolling in school. Data for both indicators come from the annual American Community Survey of the US Census Bureau. While access to education is critical, so is the quality of that education. Unfortunately, no comparable, reliable indicators for educational quality are available across the country, so none are included in the index. We incorporate such measures into the analysis when they exist (see **BOX 3**: Third-Grade Reading Proficiency, a Bellwether Indicator and **BOX 4**: High School Outcomes in Newark).



### **BOX 2** What about Associate Degrees and Technical Certificates?

The American Human Development Index does not include indicators on the attainment of associate degrees or vocational certificates. Because these degrees and the courses of study required to complete them are extremely diverse, no uniform national standards of accreditation for them exist, and, until recently, there was very little academic research on the long-term effects

of sub-baccalaureate education. In contrast, the literature on the myriad benefits of bachelor's and graduate degree attainment—from superior earnings, job satisfaction, benefits, and working conditions to better health, social and critical-thinking skills, and life satisfaction—is robust.<sup>15</sup>

Though not included in the index, associate degrees and vocational

certificates offer many pathways to secure livelihoods and can open to the door to higher education for first-generation students and others facing barriers to four-year degree programs. Community and technical colleges provide educational opportunities that allow students to gain job skills, move up in their fields, and transfer to four-year colleges.

### **BOX 3** Third-Grade Reading Proficiency, a Bellwether Indicator

Third grade marks a crucial point in a child's academic career; by the end of third grade, students are expected to transition from learning to read—reading itself is the focus of lessons—to reading to learn—reading becomes the chief means of accessing information across subjects. Missing this benchmark has significant long-term effects: students who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade tend to have more academic, behavioral, and social problems and are four times less likely to graduate from high school, resulting in a host of poor outcomes, including lower lifetime earning potential.<sup>16</sup> Children who live in poverty, especially Black and Latino children (who are more

likely to live in poverty than white students), disproportionately lack reading proficiency, one factor that makes them less likely to graduate from high school.<sup>17</sup>

In Newark public schools, where over 90 percent of students are Black or Latino and over 80 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, fewer than one in five third-graders passed their English language arts tests in 2023.<sup>18</sup> At five Newark schools, just a single student in an entire third-grade class was reading at grade level.<sup>19</sup> Some public officials blame the Covid-19 pandemic for third-graders' low scores, but others argue that Newark's third-grade reading levels have been

declining since 2019, suggesting the problem runs deeper than missed school. In 16 Newark schools pre-pandemic, fewer than one in four students were reading at grade level.<sup>20</sup> In 2023, Newark mayor Ras Baraka announced a 10-point Youth Literacy Action Plan to address low reading levels that includes increasing access to books, providing tutoring for students both during and outside of school, and calling on parents to encourage more reading at home. The program, run in collaboration with community-based organizations, is based on research indicating that access to books and increased tutoring can make the greatest impact on reading scores.<sup>21</sup>

Newark trails Essex County and New Jersey as a whole across educational attainment indicators. The share of Newark adults ages 25 and older who lack a high school diploma, 22.1 percent, is more than double the state rate (9.4 percent). State residents are two and one-half times as likely to hold a four-year bachelor's degree as Newark residents and three times as likely to hold a graduate degree. A hopeful sign is that Newark's children and young adults are nearly as likely to be enrolled in school as young people across the state, 76.1 percent as compared to 80.6 percent.



#### BOX 4 High School Outcomes in Newark

High school is a critical time for young adults; they make formative decisions about their educations and careers that can affect the rest of their lives. Indicators like on-time graduation and postsecondary enrollment can signal which students, schools, and school districts require greater resources and support.

As of 2022, the on-time four-year graduation rate in the Newark Public School District was 85.1 percent, below the rate for New Jersey as a whole, 90.9 percent.<sup>24</sup> Graduation rates vary widely among different demographic groups, however. The female graduation rate is 89.2 percent, while the male graduation rate is much lower, 81.5 percent. Certain groups have concerningly

low rates: students with disabilities (70.5 percent graduation rate), homeless students (54.7 percent), and students in foster care (42.9 percent) all have rates that fall well below the district average.<sup>25</sup>

The gap between Newark and New Jersey as a whole is wider still when it comes to postsecondary enrollment. In 2021, less than half, 48.2 percent, of Newark's high schoolers enrolled in higher education, compared to nearly three-quarters, 73.3 percent, of high schoolers in New Jersey overall.<sup>26</sup> It is likely that Covid-19 had an impact on the size of the enrollment disparity, as Newark's rate dropped from 57.9 percent in 2019 to 49.4 percent in 2020, while New Jersey's rate only dropped

from 76.3 to 73.7 percent over the same time period.

The high school a Newark student attends also plays a pivotal role in the likelihood they will graduate on time. Just under half of the district's high schools are magnet schools; these schools are selective and admit students based on academic performance and attendance records.<sup>27</sup> The average graduation rate among the district's six magnet schools is 95.5 percent, while the traditional high schools average a graduation rate of 82.1 percent. This gap persists when it comes to postsecondary enrollment, as magnet schools average a 72.4 percent postsecondary enrollment rate, compared to open-enrollment schools' average of only 36.7 percent.<sup>28</sup>

## Variation by Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Nativity

Women have higher Education Index scores than men, on average, in Newark and in the country overall. Newark women ages 25 and up are more likely than their male counterparts to have high school, bachelor's, and graduate degrees, and the city's girls and young women are slightly more likely to be enrolled in school than its boys and young men.

Nationally and in most states, metro areas, and counties, Education Index scores follow the same pattern: Asian residents have the highest score, followed by white, Black, and Latino residents. Newark follows suit.

Newark women ages 25 and up are more likely than their male counterparts to have high school, bachelor's, and graduate degrees.

RANK	LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL [% of adults 25+]	AT LEAST HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA [% of adults 25+]	AT LEAST BACHELOR'S DEGREE [% of adults 25+]	GRADUATE DEGREE [% of adults 25+]	SCHOOL ENROLLMENT [% ages 3 to 24]	EDUCATION INDEXES
<b>All NJ</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>90.6</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>80.6</b>	<b>6.39</b>
<b>All Essex County</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>87.0</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>79.6</b>	<b>5.87</b>
<b>All Newark</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>77.9</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>76.1</b>	<b>3.75</b>
<b>Gender</b>						
1 Women	21.6	78.4	18.1	5.6	76.9	3.93
2 Men	22.5	77.5	15.2	4.8	75.3	3.57
<b>Race/Ethnicity/Gender</b>						
Asian	15.1	84.9	49.1	24.9	82.5	6.98
Asian Men	17.2	82.8	42.8	19.5*	78.9	6.03
Asian Women	13.0	87.0	55.4	30.4*	86.9	8.02
Black	14.7	85.3	17.4	5.0	74.0	3.90
Black Men	14.8	85.2	15.9	5.2	73.9	3.82
Black Women	14.6	85.4	18.6	4.9	74.0	3.96
Latino	31.7	68.3	11.0	2.8	78.0	3.14
Latino Men	31.9	68.1	9.3	2.3*	76.1	2.86
Latina Women	31.5	68.5	12.7	3.4	80.2	3.46
White	26.5	73.5	25.0	9.9	76.4	4.15
White Men	25.1	74.9	23.4	8.9	79.7	4.42
White Women	28.0	72.0	26.6	11.0	73.0	3.89

Note: \* Less reliable.

**Asian** residents of Newark have the highest Education Index score in the city, 6.98. Half of all Asian adults have at least a bachelor's degree, and one-quarter have graduate degrees. The school enrollment rate for Asian children and young adults, 82.5 percent, is the highest of all racial and ethnic groups. Asian women have the highest Education Index score of any race/gender combination, 8.02. They also have higher rates of degree attainment than Asian men in every category as well as a higher school enrollment rate. Asians are not a monolithic group, of course. Unfortunately, Newark's Asian population is too small to allow us to calculate rates for Asian subgroups, though such an analysis would be possible at the state level.

Education-based immigration restrictions and the transfer of sociocultural norms from migrants' countries of origin may account for the comparative educational success of Asian residents, even those with low incomes. Immigration reform in 1965 brought a wave of Asian immigrants to the United States, many of them highly skilled and credentialed compared to both the population in the United States and the population in their home countries. Though many were not able to find work in their fields of expertise due to language barriers, discrimination, and other factors, this social capital (highly educated parents) combined with institutions and practices (like afterschool and weekend learning programs) positioned second-generation children to succeed in school. In addition to these supports, children may benefit from higher expectations from teachers and positive social stereotypes with regard to academic achievement.<sup>22</sup>

**White** Newark residents have the next-highest Education Index score, 4.15. White women score lower on the index than their male counterparts, 3.89 compared to 4.42. Adult white women are less likely than white men to have graduated high school but more likely to hold bachelor's and graduate degrees. As mentioned in the health section, about half of Newark's white residents are immigrants, many hailing from Brazil, where their educational opportunities may have been limited. Newark's white immigrants are nearly three times as likely as US-born whites in the city to lack a high school diploma, 36.7 percent and 13.3 percent, respectively.

**Black** Newark residents rank third in terms of education outcomes, with a score of 3.90. Black adults are more likely to hold a high school diploma than the average Newark resident and about as likely to hold one as the average Essex County resident. They are less than half as likely to have a bachelor's degree than Essex County residents, however. Black women are more likely than their male counterparts to have earned a bachelor's degree but have similar outcomes on the other education indicators.

Newark's **Latino** residents have the lowest overall levels of educational attainment. One in three adults 25 and older lack a high school diploma, and the share of adults with a bachelor's degree, 11.0 percent, is less than one-third the Essex County rate. Latina women are more likely to have a bachelor's degree than Latino men, 12.7 percent and 9.3 percent, respectively; nonetheless, Latina women make significantly less than Latino men— a difference of more than \$11,000.

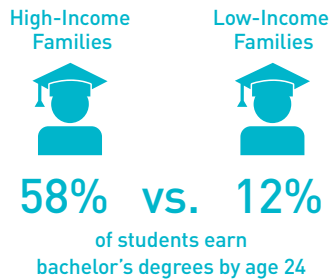
Nearly half, 44.6 percent, of Newark's Latino residents were born outside the United States. As is the case with Asian residents, disparities in educational outcomes among the foreign born stem from the different backgrounds various immigrant groups bring with them. Unlike Asian immigrants, who are more likely to have graduated college than the average adult living in either their countries of origin or the United States, immigrants from Mexico and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean are less likely to be college graduates.<sup>23</sup> While Asian children benefit from high academic expectations as a result of positive stereotyping, Latino children (as well as Black children) are often harmed by negative stereotypes about their academic achievement.

**TABLE 5 Education Index by Race and Ethnicity and Gender in Newark**

	EDUCATION INDEX	HIGHEST DEGREE ATTAINED				SCHOOL ENROLLMENT
		Less than high school	High school diploma	Bachelor's degree	Graduate degree	
<b>NEWARK</b>	<b>3.75</b>	22.1%	61.2%	11.5%	5.2%	<b>76.1%</b>
<b>ASIAN</b>	<b>6.98</b>	15.1	35.8	24.2	24.9	<b>82.5</b>
<b>Asian Male</b>	<b>6.03</b>	17.2	40.0	23.4	19.5*	<b>78.9</b>
<b>Asian Female</b>	<b>8.02</b>	13.0	31.6	25.1	30.4*	<b>86.9</b>
<b>BLACK</b>	<b>3.90</b>	14.7	67.9	12.4	5.0	<b>74.0</b>
<b>Black Male</b>	<b>3.82</b>	14.8	69.3	10.7	5.2	<b>73.9</b>
<b>Black Female</b>	<b>3.96</b>	14.6	66.8	13.7	4.9	<b>74.0</b>
<b>LATINO</b>	<b>3.14</b>	31.7	57.3	8.2	2.8	<b>78.0</b>
<b>Latino Male</b>	<b>2.86</b>	31.9	58.8	7.1	2.3*	<b>76.1</b>
<b>Latina Female</b>	<b>3.46</b>	31.5	55.7	9.3	3.4	<b>80.2</b>
<b>WHITE</b>	<b>4.15</b>	26.5	48.6	15.1	9.9	<b>76.4</b>
<b>White Male</b>	<b>4.42</b>	25.1	51.5	14.5	8.9	<b>79.7</b>
<b>White Female</b>	<b>3.89</b>	28.0	45.3	15.7	11.0	<b>73.0</b>

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2018–2022.

Note: Estimates with an asterisk have a higher degree of uncertainty.

**BOX 6 Expanding College and Postsecondary Career and Technical Education**

Family socioeconomic status plays a major role in college enrollment and completion rates. Nationwide, 58 percent of students from high-income families earn bachelor's degrees by age 24, compared to just 12 percent of students from low-income families—a nearly fivefold difference. The share of low-income young people who earn bachelor's degrees is only six percentage points higher today than it was in 1965, while the share of high-income young people who obtain four-year college degrees has shot up 18 percentage points.<sup>29</sup> A 10-year longitudinal

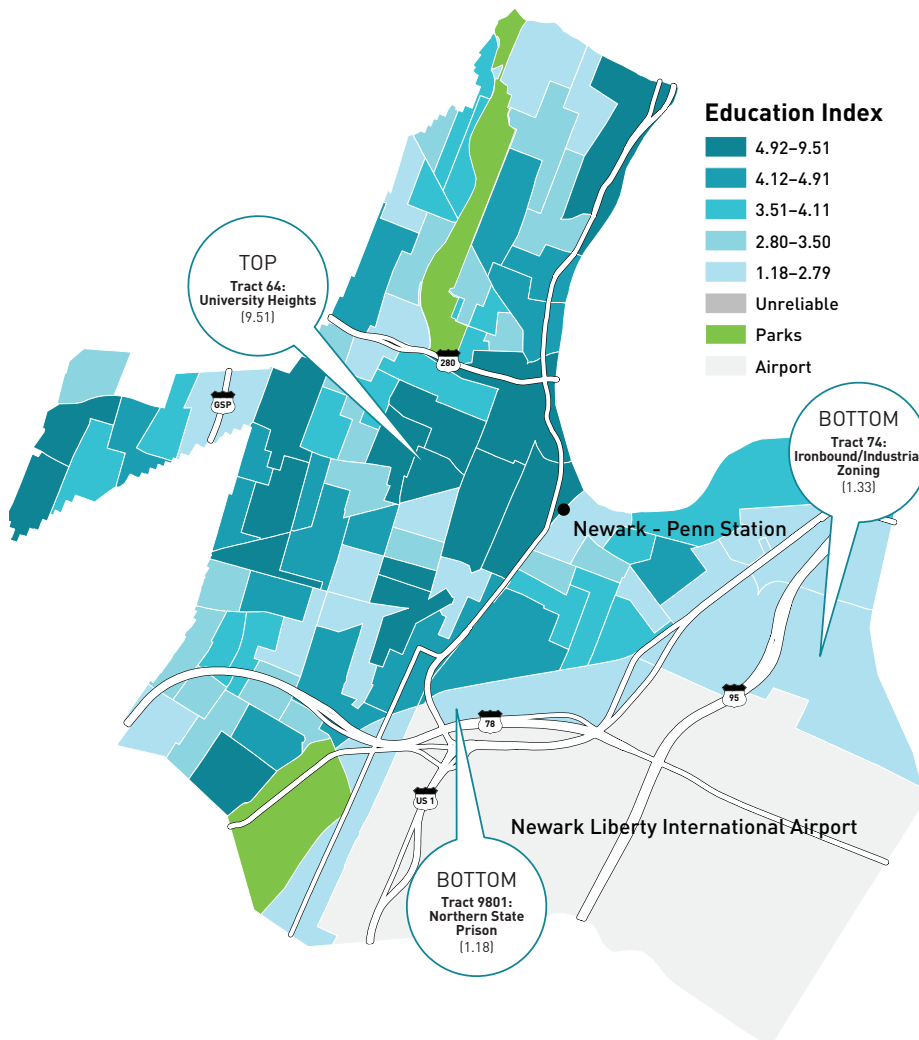
study by the National Center for Educational Statistics found that even low-income young people at the top of their class were much less likely to earn bachelor's degrees than high-income students at the bottom of their class.<sup>30</sup> Statistics like these show what Newark's families and young people know firsthand: even the city's most academically capable young people face far more barriers to college than their peers in the neighboring suburbs. Challenges related to academic preparation, family expectations and knowledge about college, financial resources, and—related to that—the need to work all conspire to impede college matriculation and completion for low-income young people.

A four-year degree, of course, is not the only route to meaningful connection in young adulthood. While the empirical research about the impacts of career and technical education (CTE) is thin, a number

of reports suggest that taking CTE courses in high school leads to higher rates of high school completion, increased earnings in the first seven years after high school, and even higher test scores, although many of these benefits appear to accrue more for young men than for young women.<sup>31</sup> Evidence strongly suggests that CTE courses must be accompanied by wraparound counseling and support to ensure that students stay engaged in their programs and establish meaningful work connections in their field. To make these programs as effective as possible, considerations should also include transportation support, as lack of a reliable means to travel to and from school presents a major barrier to connection for communities across America,<sup>32</sup> and the facilitation of career and technical student organizations, which have been shown to improve student outcomes, particularly among young women.<sup>33</sup>

# Variation by Geography: Wards and Census Tracts

All Newark’s wards are home to a wide range of educational outcomes. The Central Ward has the greatest disparities, with one census tract scoring 1.89 on the Education Index and another a sky-high 9.51. The East Ward faces the greatest overall challenges in terms of both adult educational attainment and school enrollment; it is home to the lowest-scoring tract (1.18) and has the lowest median score. The tract with the lowest Education Index score is home to the Northern State Prison, and its ranking is likely due to the very low educational outcomes of the people incarcerated in this facility. The second-lowest-scoring census tract is also in the East Ward, in the Ironbound/Industrial Zoning area, with an index score of 1.33.



Variation in the Education Index by Ward

WARD	MEDIAN EDUCATION INDEX	LOWEST EDUCATION INDEX TRACT	HIGHEST EDUCATION INDEX TRACT
Central	4.41	1.89	9.51
East	3.37	1.18	4.90
North	3.50	2.27	5.43
South	3.53	1.78	5.78
West	3.94	1.87	5.77

Sources: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2018–2022.

# A Decent Standard of Living



IN THIS SECTION

Introduction

Variation by Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Nativity

Variation by Geography: Wards and Census Tracts



## Introduction

Money alone is an incomplete gauge of well-being; that idea is central to the human development approach. A good life is built on much more: physical health, safety and security, love and friendship, freedom to practice one’s faith, equality before the law, being treated with dignity and respect, and having a say in the decisions that affect us, to name just a handful.<sup>1</sup> But while money isn’t everything, it’s not nothing, either; adequate financial resources are a critical ingredient for a freely chosen, flourishing life. Newark residents at the bottom of the earnings scale face material deprivation, chronic insecurity, social exclusion, and, as Covid-19 tragically reminded us, heightened vulnerability to shocks of all sorts, from environmental disasters to economic downturns to pandemics. In short, money matters for expanding our choices and opportunities. It also matters for protecting and safeguarding the foundations of human well-being.

Adequate material resources are particularly critical for children and young adults; roughly one in four Newark residents live in poverty, more than double the national rate, and the child poverty rate is higher still, 35.8 percent.<sup>2</sup> The effects of material deprivation are cumulative, both in terms of *multiple years of living in poverty and multiple deprivations experienced at once* (e.g., experiencing overcrowding, exposure to lead, poor nutrition, excessive noise, and high levels of family discord simultaneously). While responsive parenting can mitigate its effects, poverty has long been recognized as a potent threat to child development and the successful transition to adulthood. It adversely affects physical health, cognitive ability, school performance, behavioral and emotional health, and teen outcomes like childbearing, contact with the criminal justice system, and youth disconnection.<sup>3</sup> Life itself is at stake: in urban areas, children in the poorest 20 percent of households are twice as likely to die before their first birthdays as children in the richest 20 percent, and poor children are more likely to die than affluent children at every age.<sup>4</sup> Nine in ten children who never lived in poverty earn a high school diploma by age 20, compared to roughly six in ten persistently poor children. In young adulthood, fewer than one in five persistently poor children are consistently connected to work or school and are no longer poor by their late twenties.<sup>5</sup>

The proxy for a decent standard of living in the American Human Development Index is median personal earnings: the wages and salaries of all workers ages 16 and up (see **BOX 1**). The median personal earnings figures in this chapter may strike readers as low. This may be because people are used to seeing household income figures—which include not only the earnings of all workers in a household (for instance, both workers in a married or cohabitating couple, or the earnings of a single parent and her adult child) but also all other sources of income, such as stock dividends, rental income, and business income. (We present racial and ethnic gaps in household income in **BOX 2**). It also may be because earnings for some groups of Newark residents are actually startlingly low.

While money isn’t everything, it’s not nothing, either; adequate financial resources are a critical ingredient for a freely chosen, flourishing life.

**BOX 1 Measuring Living Standards in the American Human Development Index**

Many different measures are used to understand and compare living standards across groups and places. **The American Human Development Index uses median personal earnings, the wages and salaries of all full- and part-time workers 16 years of age and older**, obtained annually through the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Median personal earnings differ from other income and earnings measures in important ways and are a meaningful proxy for a decent standard of living.

**Personal ← vs. → Household**

Using personal earnings rather than household earnings allows us to compare the relative command women and men have over economic resources. While many households are headed jointly by married couples, who typically pool their incomes, more than half are not. The share of married-couple households has been falling since the 1970s; it fell below the halfway mark in 2011 and is continuing a downward trend. In addition, not all married couples stay that way. Cohabiting couples who share resources can also part company.

**Part-Time ← vs. → Full-Time**

The earnings of part-time workers are included in median personal earnings. While some workers prefer not to or do not need to work full time, others work part time because they cannot find full-time jobs or affordable child care, or they have responsibilities, such as elder care, that make full-time work impossible.

**Earnings ← vs. → Income**

Earnings are the wages or salaries people earn from their paid jobs. Income is a broader category that includes not just earnings, which make up the largest share of income for most Americans, but also pensions and Social Security benefits, child support payments, public assistance, annuities, stock dividends, funds generated from rental properties, and interest. Earnings are typically lower than income.

**Median ← vs. → Average**

The median gives a better indication than the average of how the ordinary worker is faring. The median earnings figure is the midpoint of the earnings distribution—half the population is earning more than the median amount and half is earning less. In contrast, averages can be misleading in situations of high inequality; the presence of a few people taking home enormous sums will pull the average far above what the vast majority are actually earning.

**BOX 2 What about Wealth?**

Neither earnings nor income includes wealth. Wealth (or net worth) is the total value of everything a person owns—a house or other real estate, stocks, businesses, retirement savings, and more—minus anything he or she owes, including debts like unpaid mortgage principal.

Disparities in wealth eclipse disparities in income or earnings, in New Jersey and across the United States. Unfortunately, wealth is extremely hard to measure; first, the values of assets like stocks and real estate are constantly changing; and second, the very wealthiest are likely to be missed in random sampling and often don't participate in surveys. In addition, very few surveys provide reliable wealth data about individual racial and ethnic groups or small geographic areas like counties.

For all these reasons, wealth cannot be incorporated into the American Human Development Index.

Nonetheless, wealth is a critical human development issue. Wealth provides essential economic security today and expanded opportunities tomorrow. In the short term, wealth can mitigate the effects of shocks, from societal catastrophes, such as the Covid-19 pandemic or Superstorm Sandy, to personal disasters like a death in the family, a mental health crisis, or even a costly car repair. A few hundred dollars in the bank can be the difference between replacing the alternator or losing a job for want of a car to get to work. Over the long term, homeownership is the chief means by which working- and middle-class people build wealth, and a paid-off house has long been the bedrock

of economic security after retirement. Homeownership is also a cushion against income volatility and a way to access credit to pay for large expenses. Wealth allows parents to invest in their children's futures by buying houses and apartments in areas with good schools, saving and paying for college, and offering help with a first car or mortgage, setting their children on a path to financial independence.

Historically, families of color, especially Black families, were systematically excluded from buying homes and property and accessing loans and credit. Past discrimination casts a long shadow into the present: in Essex County today, **just 28 percent of Black households own the home they live in, compared to 34 percent of Latino households and 68 percent of white households.**<sup>6</sup>

# Variation by Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Nativity

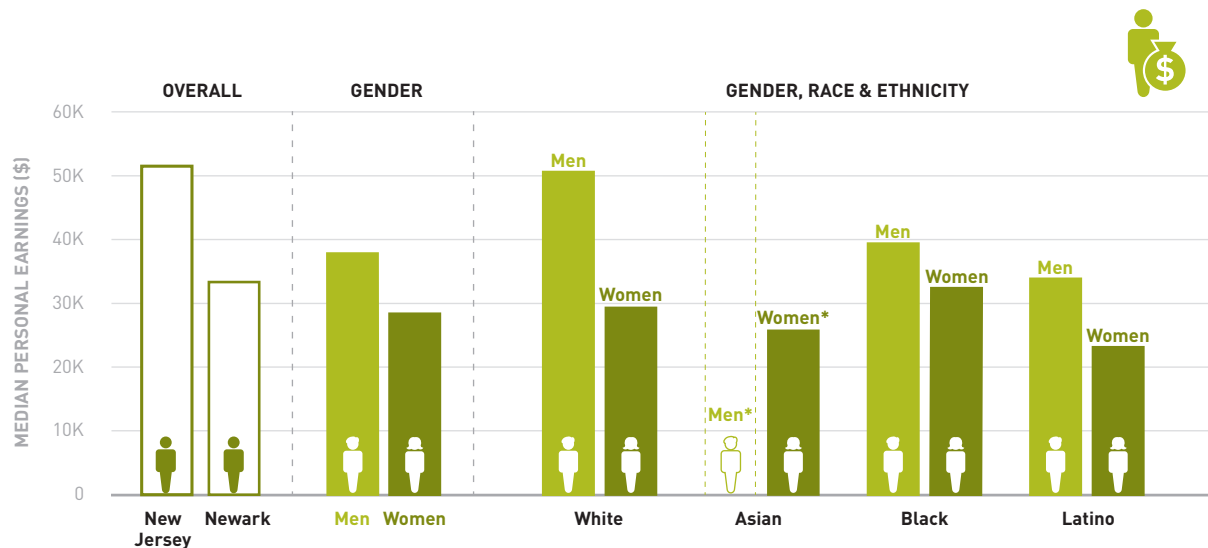
The typical Newark resident earns \$33,300 per year, \$10,400 less than the Essex County median of \$43,700 and \$18,200 less than the New Jersey median of \$51,500. It is also important to note the huge earnings gulf between *workers who commute into Newark from other towns* and *workers who live in Newark*. The median household income for a Newark commuter is more than \$91,000, nearly three times higher than the median household income of a Newark resident.<sup>7</sup> High-paying jobs are available in Newark, but too few residents can access them.

Earnings vary between women and men, racial and ethnic groups, and US-born and foreign-born residents. Latina women in Newark earn the least, \$23,100, less than half of what the top-earning group, white men, take home, \$50,600, a pattern in evidence in most places Measure of America has studied, (see **BOX 3**).

Women in Newark earn less than men, \$28,300 compared to \$37,900; this pattern is seen across Newark’s racial and ethnic groups, though the size of the earnings gap varies. The gender gap has a variety of causes rooted in socialization, cultural norms, and stereotypes around gender as well as outright wage discrimination.<sup>8</sup> Girls and boys are often encouraged to study different subjects in high school and college, with boys more likely to pursue courses of study that prepare them for careers in computer science, engineering, and math, among the highest-paying fields.<sup>9</sup>

Latina women in Newark earn the least, \$23,100, less than half of what the top-earning group, white men, take home, \$50,600.

**BOX 3 Median Earnings by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity in Newark**

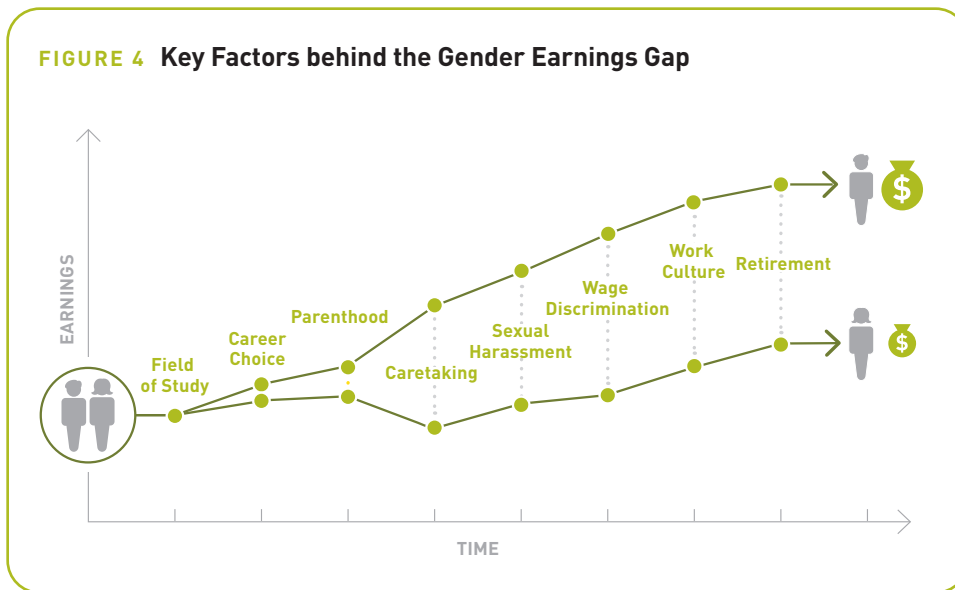


Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2018–2022.

Note: Earnings for Asian women are less reliable, and earnings for Asian men could not be calculated due to small sample size.

As adults, women disproportionately shoulder responsibilities for domestic tasks and caretaking, a phenomenon the Covid-19 pandemic put in the spotlight. Women in the US spend 1.5 hours more per day on unpaid labor than men do, the equivalent of a full day’s work each week.<sup>10</sup> Research shows that employers regard mothers and fathers differently than one another and than nonparents when it comes to pay; women experience a “motherhood penalty” and men reap a “fatherhood bonus” when they have children.<sup>11</sup> A woman’s salary declines 4 percent, on average, for each child she has, whereas a man’s salary increases 6 percent for each child.<sup>12</sup> And wage discrimination continues to be a factor. Even when working in the same occupational category, and even in female-dominated occupations, men tend to earn more than women (see **BOX 5**: Women’s Wages).

**FIGURE 4** Key Factors behind the Gender Earnings Gap



**BOX 5 Women's Wages**

While the gender pay gap has narrowed over time, there has been little progress in the past 20 years, and disparities by race and ethnicity persist. Currently, for every dollar paid to white men, white women earn 80 cents, Black women earn 67 cents, and Latina women earn only 57 cents.<sup>13</sup> Newark is no exception to this trend, as Black, Latina, and white women all earn less than their male counterparts. What accounts for these gaps?

One important factor may be the types of industries in which members of each group tend to work. There are five major occupational categories designated by the Census Bureau: management, business, science, and arts; service; sales and office; natural resources, construction, and maintenance; and production, transportation, and material moving. In Newark, most women work in the service sector, the lowest-earning occupational category in the state.<sup>14</sup> Over 40 percent of Black, Latina, and white women hold service jobs, which include health-care support, personal care, cleaning, protective service, and food service.<sup>15</sup> Newark's men are more spread out across sectors; over half of white men are in natural resources, construction, and maintenance or management occupations, the latter being the most lucrative by far; around

one in four Black men work management, service, and production jobs each; and the top industry for Latino men is natural resources, construction, and maintenance.<sup>16</sup>

Still, one in five women in Newark work in management, business, science, and arts occupations, and one in five men are in the service industry. Since both women and men work in every sector, occupational categories can't be the only reason behind the wage gap. In reality, there are additional factors. For one, earnings can vary widely within sectors; for example, doctors and phlebotomists both work in health care, but the former earn nearly six times more than the latter, on average.<sup>17</sup> Further, race and gender can influence how much workers earn even within the same job category. In Essex County, nine in ten registered nurses (RNs) are women, yet they still tend to earn less than the male RNs they vastly outnumber. Median earnings for white male RNs are the highest, \$74,000, while Black women, who account for over 40 percent of all RNs in the county, have median earnings of just \$60,000.<sup>18</sup>

In all, these aspects of the labor market contribute to gendered wage gaps and, when combined with additional factors such as societal norms, social expectations, and discrimination, keep these gaps from closing. These gaps



matter, both for reasons of fairness and equality and for the well-being of all Newark families, as women's wages account for an increasingly large share of household incomes. In single-mother households, women's wages must cover the lion's share of their families' expenses, and in most married-couple households today, women's wages are critical to making ends meet. In 2022, husbands were the primary or sole breadwinners in only 55 percent of (opposite-sex) marriages. Both partners earned around the same amount in 29 percent of marriages, and women were the primary or sole breadwinners in 16 percent. These percentages remain around the same when broken out by race, except for Black wives: one in four (26 percent) earn more than their husbands, and 34 percent earn about the same. Regardless of which spouse is earning more, though, women consistently spend more time on household responsibilities than their husbands.<sup>19</sup>

The median earnings of white Newark residents, \$41,300, are higher than those of any other racial or ethnic group. The gaps between white earnings and those of other racial and ethnic groups are largely driven by white men's particularly high earnings, nearly \$50,600. White women, on the other hand, earn \$29,200, a difference of over \$20,000 compared to their male counterparts. Essex County is home to the largest Black-white and Latino-white gaps in median household income among the state's 21 counties. The median household income for white Essex County households, \$125,100, is \$70,400 more than the income for Black households and \$64,900 more than the income for Latino households.<sup>20</sup>

The typical **Black** worker earns \$35,400. The personal earnings gap between Black men (\$39,900) and women (\$32,900) is the smallest of the four racial and ethnic groups in this study, \$7,000. Black women earn \$4,600 more than Newark's women in general and more than women of each other racial and ethnic group—\$3,700 more than white women, \$6,900 more than Asian women, and \$9,800 more than Latina women.

Median earnings for **Asian** residents are \$32,000. Earnings for Asian men are not statistically reliable, but women’s earnings are \$26,000. The comparatively low earnings of Newark residents of Asian descent, particularly Asian women, stand in marked contrast to their strong education outcomes. Nearly half of Newark’s Asian adults ages 25 and older have at least a bachelor’s degree, higher than any other group in Newark and higher than the state average, 42.3 percent, and one in four have a graduate or professional degree. Asian women have the highest education score of all race/gender combinations, 8.02, yet the second-lowest earnings. People with higher levels of education tend to earn more, so this mismatch is noteworthy. This gap may exist because immigrants who completed higher education in Asia are sometimes unable to obtain high-wage jobs in the US due to licensing requirements, immigration status, English proficiency, discrimination in hiring or promotion, or simply a lower value placed on foreign educational credentials.<sup>21</sup> Immigrants living in Newark tend to make slightly less than US-born residents, \$32,200 compared to \$34,400. Another possibility is that a sizeable share of Asian residents are students attending one of Newark’s many undergraduate or graduate programs; students tend to have low earnings.

**Latino** residents earn the least, \$30,000. The earnings of Latino men and women vary sharply, however. Latina women make just \$23,100, the least of all groups studied in this report. Latino men earn \$34,200. Latina workers take home 68 cents for every dollar earned by Latino men. Newark’s US-born Latino residents earn more than its foreign-born residents, \$31,500 and \$29,500, respectively.



**BOX 6 Housing in Newark**

Stable, safe, and secure housing is paramount to enjoying a decent quality of life. Where you live determines the jobs you are able to access, the schools your children attend, and the very air you breathe. Housing also offers a route to financial security through homeownership.

In Newark, 66.8 percent of residents rent. This is far higher than the national rate of renting, 30.8 percent.<sup>22</sup> Affordability is one of the city’s primary challenges: in the last 20 years, housing costs have increased by about 27 percent while income has decreased by more than 10 percent when adjusted for inflation.<sup>23</sup> Over half of Newark renters are cost-burdened, meaning they spend

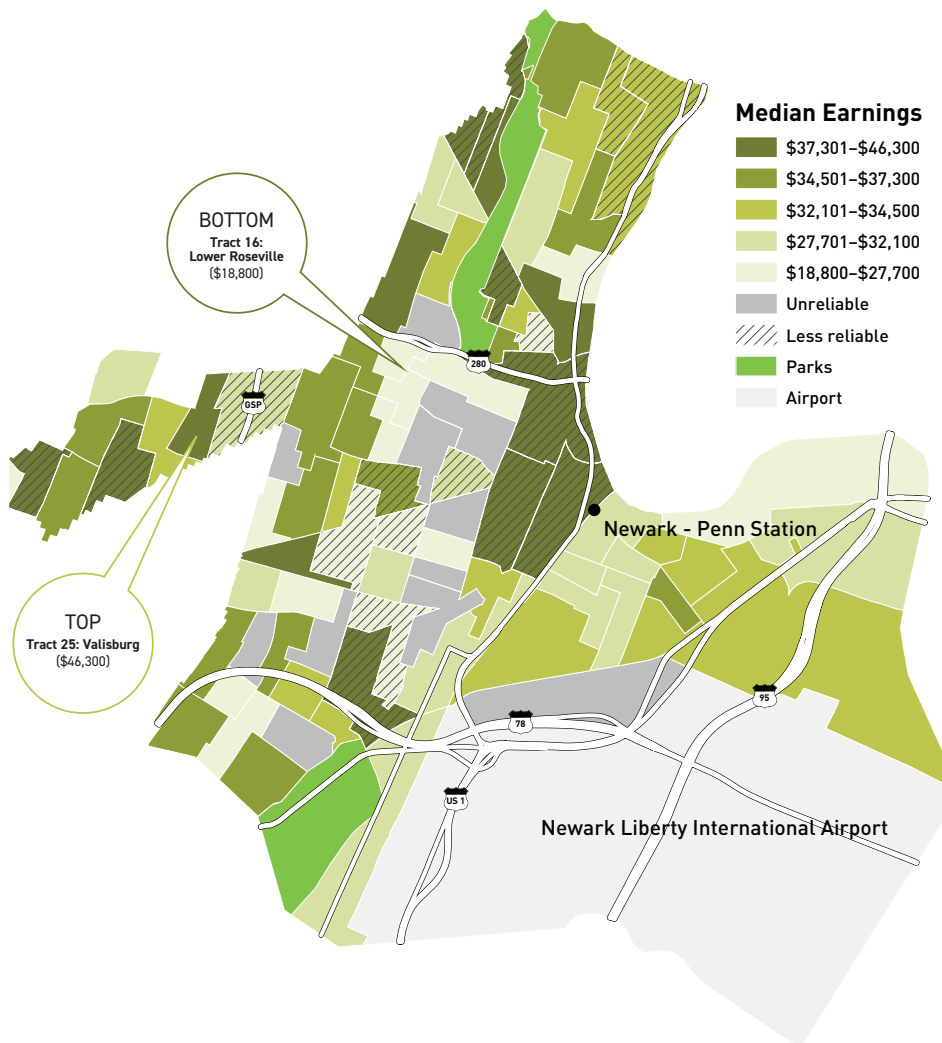
more than 30 percent of their income on housing; nearly one-third of renters in Newark spend more than half of their income on rent.<sup>24</sup> Based on Newark renters’ incomes, the Regional Plan Association estimated that the city requires an additional 16,234 units renting for about \$750 a month to meet current affordable-housing needs.<sup>25</sup>

Homeownership can be a valuable wealth-building tool, but far more homeowners are cost-burdened in Newark (51 percent) than in New Jersey (29 percent) or the US (21 percent) as a whole. This is partly due to the fact that Newark homeowners have similar monthly housing costs as homeowners in

New Jersey as a whole, but a significantly lower median income.<sup>26</sup> Residents are not the primary purchasers of homes for sale in Newark: almost half of all purchases are made by institutional buyers, mostly corporations who buy homes to rent to Newark residents. Concern has been raised that these institutional investors may increase rent prices and decrease neighborhood stability. The wards that are most impacted by these buying trends (predominantly Black and once middle-class neighborhoods in the South and West Wards) have experienced a decline in homeownership even though the rate of homeownership is increasing in Newark overall.<sup>27</sup>

# Variation by Geography: Wards and Census Tracts

Median personal earnings range from \$18,800 in tract 16 to \$46,300 in tract 25, two and one-half times as much; both tracts are in the West Ward. Each ward shows a wide variety of earnings among its census tracts, but the earnings in the median tract of each ward are fairly similar, ranging from \$32,300 to \$35,000.



Variation in Median Earnings by Ward

WARD	MEDIAN OF MEDIAN PERSONAL EARNINGS (\$)	LOWEST MEDIAN EARNINGS TRACT (\$)	HIGHEST MEDIAN EARNINGS TRACT (\$)
Central	33,300	24,600	38,800
East	32,300	25,200	35,300
North	34,500	27,700	38,300
South	33,000	23,600	41,100
West	35,000	18,800	46,300

Sources: US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2018–2022.

# Youth Disconnection



Introduction

Newark in Context

Characteristics of Opportunity Youth

Variation by Geography

Conclusion

IN THIS SECTION



## Introduction

The youth disconnection rate—the share of young people ages 16 to 24 who are neither working nor in school—is a strong indicator of a community’s resources and a telling gauge of its residents’ access to opportunity. During their teens and early 20s, young people develop many of the capabilities required to live flourishing lives: they gain knowledge and earn credentials, develop social skills and networks, come to understand their strengths and preferences, and learn to handle stressful events and regulate their emotions, to name just a few. Through their experiences in the classroom, on the sports field, during internships and first jobs, as members of clubs and student organizations, and in community or service groups, they have opportunities to develop a sense of mastery and agency as well as to make mistakes they can learn from in a supportive environment. At school and on the job, connected young people build relationships with encouraging adults whose job it is to help them imagine their futures, get their minds around the many different routes to rewarding and well-paid careers, set short- and long-term goals, and lay the groundwork to realize them; they have a chance to learn about the world and support to envision their potential role in it.

But what about young people who leave high school before graduation, are unable to transition from high school to college or career and technical education programs, or struggle to find or hold onto jobs? Out-of-school, out-of-work youth, who are disproportionately Black and Latino and tend to live in low-income communities, also have dreams and aspirations, but have far less support to make them a reality.

**Disconnected youth** are young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school. Here in the United States, organizations that work with this population began to use the term “**opportunity youth**” in 2012. Within this report, the terms “disconnected youth” and “opportunity youth” appear interchangeably; they refer to the same group (16- to 24-year-olds not in school and not working) and have the same data source (the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey). Measure of America has been using a consistent definition and methodology for calculating disconnection since 2012.

In Newark, **18.4 percent of teens and young adults ages 16 to 24 are not in school and not working: 7,500 young people**. The Newark rate is 7.5 percentage points higher than the national rate (10.9 percent) and 9.0 points higher than the rate in New Jersey as a whole (9.4 percent). Unlike their connected peers, who tend to have knowledgeable guides to help them navigate the transition to adulthood, these young people often struggle to see a way forward.

“Virtual school was probably the worst thing that ever happened. A lot of kids dropped out because of it, there were a whole lot of absences, everyone’s on their phone. We [had] a choice to make, and [not everybody] made the right choice.”



Newark young person

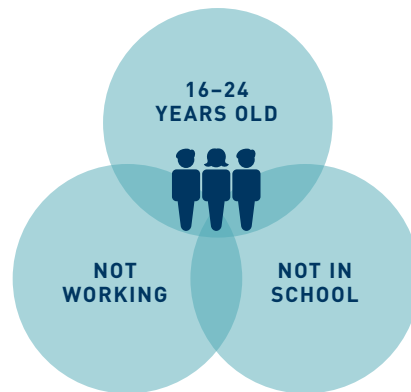
**FIGURE 1 Opportunity Youth in Newark**

40,700  
POPULATION  
16-24 YEARS OLD

**18.4%**  
ARE DISCONNECTED

**7,500**  
YOUNG ADULTS

NEARLY 1 IN 5



Unfortunately, Covid-19's harmful and potentially persistent effects made connection more difficult for Newark's young people. In Newark, the youth disconnection rate had been on a general decline for several years from peaks in 2013 and 2015 (see **FIGURE 2**). Covid-19's arrival overturned the trend, leaving Newark with a disconnection rate of 22.0 percent in 2021—a sharp jump from its rate of 15.6 percent in 2019. **While New Jersey and the country as a whole have experienced a sharp recovery since the height of Covid-19, Newark's disconnection rate remains above pre-pandemic levels.**

Though Covid-19 affected everyone, its burden fell disproportionately on low-income communities of color, which are also disproportionately home to the highest rates of youth disconnection. And there are reasons to be concerned that the effects of the pandemic on the young people in these communities will reverberate well into the future: recent research by the [Education Recovery Scorecard](#) project showed that by 2022, the typical student in the country's poorest school districts had lost three-quarters of a year in math learning, twice the decline seen in the richest districts, and also lost more ground in reading than their more affluent peers; these sharp losses worsened the wide and long-standing gap in learning outcomes between rich and poor districts. If not successfully addressed, this learning loss will result in higher rates of high school dropout, fewer students transitioning from high school to postsecondary education, and fewer entry-level workers with the skills needed for many jobs in the coming years. While some school districts clawed back lost ground from 2022 to 2023, many poorer school districts across the nation still lag behind their 2019 achievement levels. **The Newark Public School District lost roughly half a grade level in reading and more than a full grade level in math from 2019 to 2023** (as shown [here](#)).

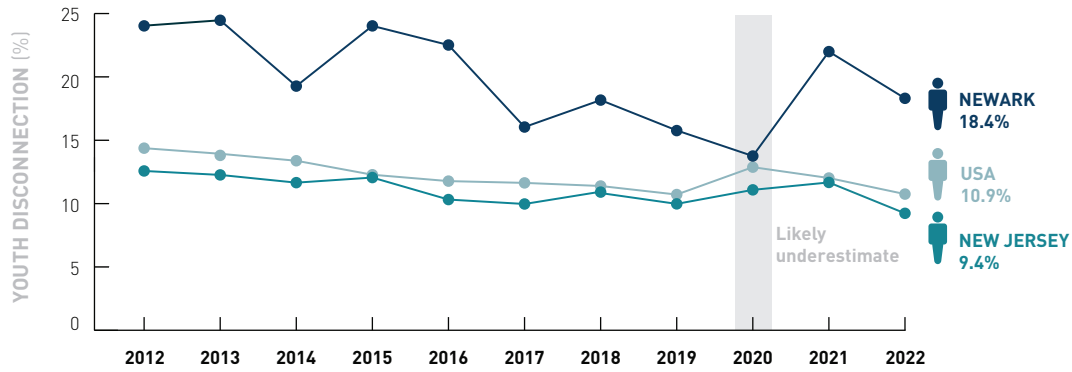
The large share of young people who are neither working nor in school will mean more adults whose long-term well-being and economic security are at risk. Using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, the gold-standard longitudinal study of American families that has run since 1968, Measure of America determined that by the time they reach their 30s, **people who worked or were in school throughout their teens and early 20s earn \$38,400 more per year and are 45 percent more likely to own a home, 42 percent more likely to be employed, and 52 percent more likely to report excellent or good health than those who had been disconnected as young people.**<sup>1</sup> Research shows that youth disconnection is associated with lower levels of educational attainment, higher rates of substance use, worse health, less stable relationships, and more criminal activity. For young people who are already parents, the chances that their children will grow up in poverty increase with disconnection.<sup>2</sup> Early successes, caring mentors, well-resourced institutions, and lucky breaks can set a young person on the path to a flourishing adulthood; closed doors, adverse events, underinvestment, and limited connections can block off a host of rewarding and joyful paths, leading to a future of limited horizons and unrealized potential.

## Newark in Context

In this section, data for Newark and the geographies we compare it to are from 2022, the year of the most recent available American Community Survey. In subsequent sections that cover characteristics of opportunity youth and young adults, five-year pooled estimates are used for Newark as a whole and for neighborhood-by-neighborhood analysis. These five-year rollups allow for greater reliability for smaller populations, such as racial and ethnic groups, mothers, young people with a disability, and so on.

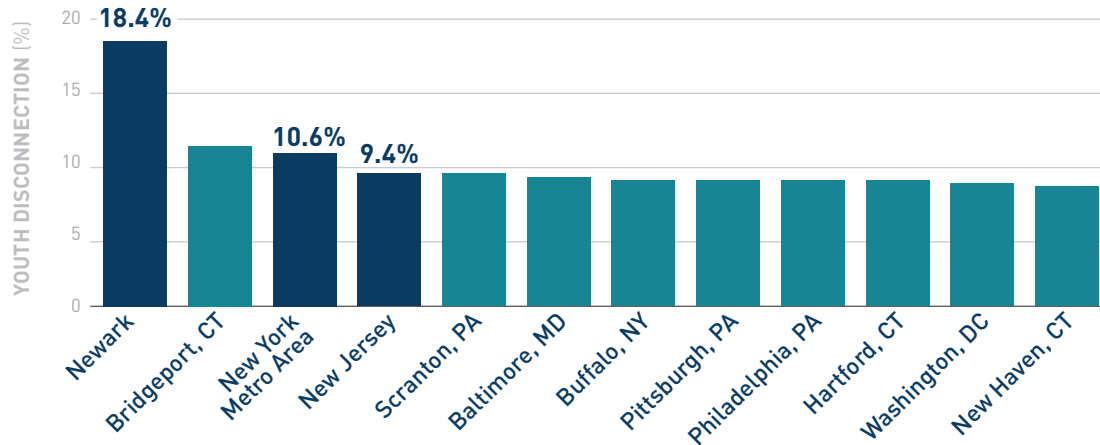
Youth disconnection rates vary widely in communities across the United States; state rates range from 4.4 percent in North Dakota to 15.5 percent in Louisiana. New Jersey, with a disconnection rate of 9.4 percent, ranks 17th among the 50 states and Washington, DC. Newark has roughly twice the share of young adults out of school and out of work as other metro areas in the Northeast, such as New Haven (8.5 percent); Washington, DC (8.6 percent); Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, and Hartford (all 8.7 percent); Baltimore (9.0 percent); Scranton (9.3 percent); and Bridgeport (11.1 percent). The New York City metro area, which includes Newark and Jersey City as well as Long Island and counties in the Lower Hudson Valley and Connecticut, has a disconnection rate of 10.6 percent (see **FIGURE 3**).

**FIGURE 2 Youth Disconnection Rate in Newark, 2012–2022**



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2012–2022.

**FIGURE 3 Newark Has a High Disconnection Rate Compared to Other Northeast Cities**



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2022.

# Characteristics of Opportunity Youth

Stubborn gaps in disconnection rates nationally among different youth populations suggest that **economic growth by itself is not enough**; specific groups of young people face disproportionate barriers to school and work and require targeted support. This section explores how different groups of youth are faring, with a view to identifying some of the drivers of disconnection in Newark.

The following estimates are based on 2018–2022 data from the US Census Bureau. Rolling up five years of survey data trades timeliness for granularity: since the number of people surveyed is larger across five years, we can talk with more specificity about the characteristics of smaller groups of young adults.

Newark’s overall youth disconnection rate across this five-year period is 17.6 percent, slightly lower than its single-year 2022 rate of 18.4 percent. Throughout this section, references are made to 2022 disconnection rates in the United States and New Jersey to provide context.

## BOX 4 What Do All These Numbers Mean?

In this section, percentages are presented in two ways.

### 1. RATE OF YOUTH DISCONNECTION AMONG A PARTICULAR GROUP:

How many young people in a particular group are disconnected?

$$\frac{(\# \text{ of young women who are disconnected})}{(\text{total } \# \text{ of young women})} \times 100 =$$



**16.3%**

of all young women in Newark are disconnected

### 2. RATE OF A PARTICULAR ATTRIBUTE AMONG DISCONNECTED YOUTH:

How many disconnected youth have a particular attribute?

$$\frac{(\# \text{ of young women who are disconnected})}{(\text{total } \# \text{ of disconnected youth})} \times 100 =$$



**45.7%**

of all disconnected youth in Newark are women

## GENDER

In Newark, boys and young men are more likely to be disconnected than girls and young women, 18.8 percent compared to 16.3 percent.

Incarceration is a key driver of young men's higher disconnection rate in Newark. Among Newark's noninstitutionalized youth, young men have a disconnection rate of 15.7 percent, slightly lower than young women at 16.2 percent. Approximately 900 young men ages 16–24 are institutionalized within Newark city limits (the census counts people where they live, so young adults who lived in Newark but are incarcerated elsewhere are not counted by the census as residing in Newark); 100 of these young men are enrolled in some form of prison education.

Young men of color, especially young Black men, face distinct challenges to remaining connected to school and work: they disproportionately face harsh discipline in schools and aggressive policing in their communities; are vastly overrepresented in juvenile detention centers, jails, and prisons; face job discrimination and high rates of unemployment; and suffer America's highest homicide rates. In the 2019–2020 school year, 5.2 percent of young men in the New Jersey public school system were suspended, more than double the rate of young women (2.4 percent).<sup>3</sup> The juvenile and adult justice systems are overwhelmingly male, with young men accounting for around 92 percent of all juvenile arrests and 95 percent of the incarcerated youth population in the state.<sup>4</sup>

Data from the Vera Institute of Justice show that in [Essex County](#), Black residents are overwhelmingly overrepresented in the prison population compared to other racial and ethnic groups. One positive development is that the share of the Essex population incarcerated in prisons has decreased over the last 20 years, along with jail admissions.

**It's important to note that Newark's girls and young women have an unusually high disconnection rate.** In New Jersey, the United States as a whole, and other major metro areas, young women tend to be connected to work and school at higher rates than young men for the noninstitutionalized population. It is unusual that in Newark, setting aside the young men who are incarcerated, girls and young women are faring worse than the noninstitutionalized boys and young men. This atypical pattern is partially attributable to a greater share of young women in Newark who are mothers compared to girls and young women in New Jersey and the United States as a whole. Motherhood is discussed later in this chapter.

"I had caught a case, and I couldn't really go to school because I was fighting cases for the judge and all that. I went to the juvenile detention center. So, I couldn't go to school for my whole tenth-grade year."



Newark young person

**BOX 5 Youth Disconnection among LGBTQ Youth**

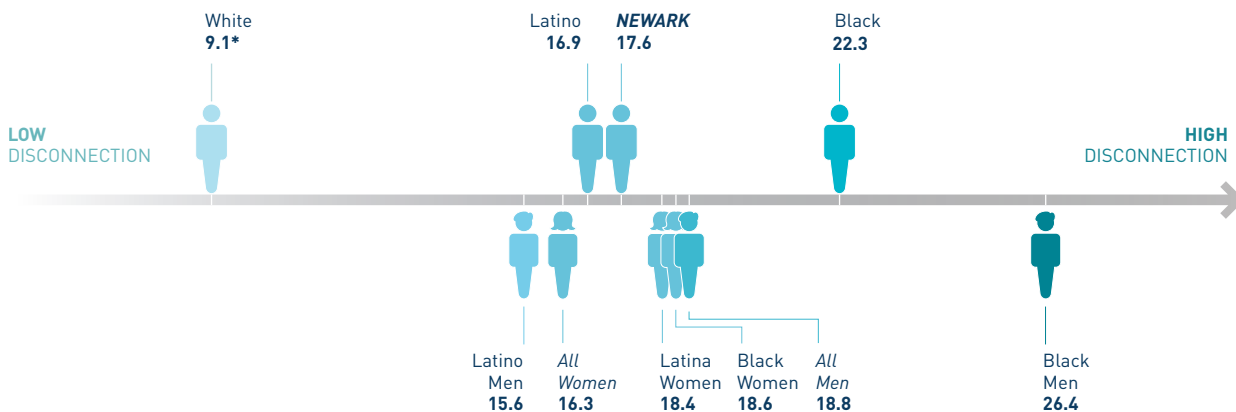
The US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS), the source of some of the data for our youth disconnection research, does not currently ask questions about either sexual orientation or gender identity. Male and female are the only gender options available on the ACS, leaving no option for those who identify as nonbinary. For these reasons, Measure of America cannot provide youth disconnection rates for LGBTQ young people. Such data would be very useful for those working

to understand and address youth disconnection, as research suggests that LGBTQ youth disproportionately experience harassment and discrimination in schools and workplaces and are more likely than straight, cis-gender young people to face mental health challenges.<sup>5</sup> In addition, in this report we refer to girls and women, boys and men; this is because we are talking about the data we have, which, as noted above, sort people into only two categories, male and female.

**RACE AND ETHNICITY**

In Newark, the disconnection rate for Black youth, 22.3 percent, is the highest among the city’s major racial and ethnic groups. Latino young adults have a disconnection rate of 16.9 percent, and white youth have a rate of 9.1 percent (see below). The Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander (NHOPI) and Native American populations in Newark are too small to allow for reliable estimates.

**Youth Disconnection by Race and Ethnicity and by Gender (%)**



Note: Estimates with an asterisk have a higher degree of uncertainty.

Black youth make up 43.2 percent of the total youth population in Newark and 54.9 percent of the opportunity youth population. Latino youth comprise 35.5 percent of the total youth population and 34.0 percent of the opportunity youth population. White youth constitute 11.1 percent of the total youth population and 5.7 percent of the opportunity youth population, though these estimates are less reliable due to the relatively small white population in Newark. As mentioned earlier in the report, roughly half of Newark’s white residents are immigrants,

chiefly Brazilians (whom the census defines as white, not Latino). The white population in Newark is too small to provide reliable estimates by gender. Black young people have a large gender gap in disconnection rates, with 18.6 percent for Black girls and young women compared to 26.4 percent for their male counterparts. The gender gap is not only smaller, but reversed, for Latino young people—the disconnection rate for girls and young women is 18.4 percent, while the rate for their male counterparts is 15.6 percent.

The category “Latino” is extremely broad, however, and rates vary widely by subgroups. Among Latino subgroups, the highest disconnection rate was found among Central American youth (30.5 percent), followed by Dominican youth (17.8 percent), Puerto Rican youth (17.1 percent), and then South American youth (12.5 percent); estimates for Dominican and South American youth are less reliable.

### Youth Disconnection by Latino Subgroup (%)



Note: Estimates with an asterisk have a higher degree of uncertainty.

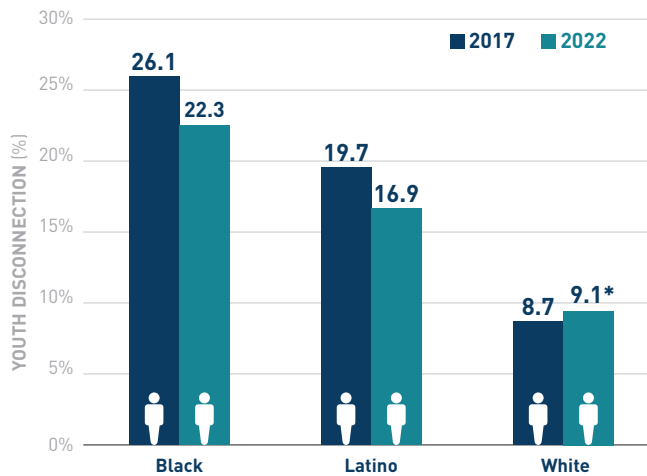
In Newark, as in New Jersey and the nation overall, Black youth face disproportionate barriers to remaining connected and typically have higher rates of disconnection.

In crafting solutions, it is important to keep in mind that different groups of disconnected young people—for instance, young women and young men, Black young people and white young people—face different challenges. A one-size-fits-all solution that does not take into account issues like racial bias in policing or race and gender biases in hiring could lead to improvements that are not shared equally among all youth.

There’s a bright spot in this otherwise difficult story of yawning gaps between racial, ethnic, and gender groups. As shown in **FIGURE 6**, connection for Black and Latino youth and young adults in Newark has improved from 2013–2017 to 2018–2022. This change was most significant for Black youth—the disconnection rate for Newark’s Black teens and young adults decreased 14.6 percent across these time periods—a sign of a welcome and positive trend, but not one whose continuation can be taken for granted. The disconnection rates for white youth in Newark are so similar across these time periods that they are effectively equivalent.



**FIGURE 6** Disconnection Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 2017 and 2022



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2013–2017 and 2018–2022.

Note: \*Estimate is less reliable.

**BOX 7** Immigration and Opportunity Youth in Newark

In Newark, young people who are not citizens make up 17.5 percent of the overall youth population, compared to 8.6 percent in New Jersey and only 5.5 percent in the United States as a whole. In crafting solutions, it is important to be cognizant of the unique barriers to connection that these 7,200 noncitizen or undocumented young people face, such as financial and administrative obstacles to attending college and vulnerability in the labor market. It’s also important to note that **the undocumented population is generally undercounted** in large administrative surveys, such as the American Community Survey undergirding this report. That said, the disconnection rate for noncitizens is estimated to be slightly lower than that of citizens—16.9 percent compared to 17.7 percent. It is likely that this estimate understates the true rate of disconnection for noncitizen youth, however.

In New Jersey, 6,000 undocumented students graduate high school each year.<sup>6</sup> In 2013, New Jersey enacted a policy that allowed eligible undocumented students

and DACA recipients to pay in-state college tuition rates, and in 2018, enacted another policy that allowed them to qualify and apply for state financial aid.<sup>7</sup> While these bills provide substantial resources to the undocumented community, taking advantage of these resources requires significant administrative work and awareness that may limit the number of individuals who are able to do so. For example, qualifying for these programs requires providing an affidavit that says the student has filed an application to legalize their lawful status or will do so once eligible. And even with the assistance of state financial aid, costs may still limit the enrollment of undocumented young people in these programs.

Throughout New Jersey, immigrants make valuable contributions to the labor market: 42 percent of STEM workers and 49 percent of health aides are first-generation immigrants.<sup>8</sup> For undocumented youth, however, quality employment can be difficult to find, and those who are able to find work are particularly vulnerable to workplace exploitation.

**POVERTY**

Poverty creates many barriers to connection and has a systemic, intergenerational effect on limiting access to opportunities. In Newark, as in the United States overall, living in poverty increases the likelihood that a young person will be disconnected. (Poverty thresholds vary by household size; the threshold for a one-person household in 2022 was \$14,880, whereas the threshold for a five-person household was \$35,510.)<sup>9</sup> **More than one in four of the area’s youth living in poverty are disconnected (28.5 percent), compared to 14.1 percent of youth not living in poverty.** The poverty rate for Newark youth is 23.6 percent; for disconnected youth, the poverty rate is even higher: 38.3 percent.

**DISABILITY**

Living with a disability is still a barrier to full participation in society for too many Americans. Nearly one-third (31.1 percent) of all youth with a disability in Newark are disconnected, which is greater than the rate in the United States overall: 25.4 percent. The Census Bureau considers a person to have a disability if they report difficulty with hearing, seeing even with glasses, walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, doing errands alone, concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.<sup>10</sup> (This designation is based on people’s responses to the ACS and does not necessarily indicate a medical diagnosis.) **In Newark, youth with disabilities make up 14.0 percent of the disconnected youth population but only 7.9 percent of the total youth population.** This proportion is similar to that of the United States overall, where youth with disabilities make up 20.0 percent of the disconnected youth population and 8.6 percent of the total youth population.

Nationally, the number of young people with disabilities increased significantly following Covid-19. Over the course of the pandemic, the youth population increased by 0.6 percent while the disabled youth population increased by 18.4 percent. The increase was greatest among youth with cognitive disabilities.<sup>11</sup> Long Covid’s impact on cognitive functioning, the mental health impacts of lockdowns, and greater awareness of disabilities may have contributed to these increases.<sup>12</sup>

“A lot of the students who were considered problematic...they were labeled as a problem child just because they learn things a little bit differently. Also these teachers, they would give us those assessments that are like, ‘What kind of learner are you?’ but then proceed to never follow up on the other types of learners.”



Newark young person



**BOX 8 Juvenile Justice**

While juvenile arrest rates have fallen in recent years, incarceration continues to affect some of Newark’s young residents. Involvement in the justice system, especially as a young adult, can have lifelong effects. For some, difficulties can stem from issues in the classroom, where high rates of absenteeism and disciplinary action can fuel a school-to-prison pipeline.<sup>13</sup> Those who enter the system, especially those who end

up in a youth prison, are at risk of mistreatment and abuse.<sup>14</sup> Once involved in the justice system, it can be hard to leave completely; recidivism rates are high, with over two-thirds of young adult offenders being rearrested within three years.<sup>15</sup> Essex County accounts for over one-quarter, 26.7 percent, of all commitments to the state’s juvenile justice system, the largest share from any county.<sup>16</sup> After being committed,

young residents may find themselves going to either one of three secure facilities or one of ten residential community homes (RCHs) in the state. With all three secure facilities located an hour south of Newark, and only one RCH in Newark—a reentry center that can accommodate up to 25 young men—involvement in the justice system also often involves displacement and separation from family and other support systems.<sup>17</sup>



**BOX 9 Covid-19’s Lasting Impacts on Mental Health and Cognitive Disabilities**

The Covid-19 pandemic shattered normalcy for all groups; for young people, though, the effects were particularly acute. Disruptions to school, work, and socializing not only affected their mental health and emotional well-being but, for some, their cognitive functioning as well.

The negative mental health effects of Covid-19 were most pronounced among young adults and communities of color.<sup>18</sup> In New Jersey in 2021, 21.6 percent of young adults ages 18–24 reported having frequent poor mental health days, more than double the share in 2018, 9.2 percent.<sup>19</sup> Support is not distributed equitably across New Jersey public schools: from 2008 to 2020, mental health staff increased for white and Asian students, but decreased for Black and Latino students.<sup>20</sup> Newark public schools recently received an \$8.9 million federal grant to support equity-based mental

health programs, which should help increase access to necessary assistance for Newark’s young people.<sup>21</sup>

There’s an important distinction between young people with mental health challenges and those with cognitive disabilities—these are different categories, though they may overlap at times. For some, however, mental health challenges can be so acute that they become disabling. Between 2019 and 2021, the disability rate for young people ages 16–24 across the United States sharply increased, resulting in an additional 457,400 young adults identifying as having a disability. A majority of the increase was found among young people who identified as having a cognitive disability, defined by the Census Bureau as a person who has “serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.”<sup>22</sup>

“If a child is not able to focus because there’s certain things going on at home that’s plaguing them, then no matter what school environment that you put them in, they’re not going to thrive. No matter what, no matter what resources, academic resources that you give them. I think the first thing that I would probably focus on for a supportive school environment is making sure that the student is all right mentally. Because you can have the smartest person in the world, but if they’re not okay mentally, then I don’t know. I feel like their intelligence can’t be used as well as if they were okay mentally.”



Newark young person

**HEALTH: INSURANCE, FOOD SECURITY, OBESITY, AND TEEN BIRTHS**

In Newark, 19.3 percent of youth do not have health insurance of any type. These young people are more likely to be disconnected than their insured peers—24.5 percent of those without insurance are disconnected, compared to 16.0 percent of those with insurance. However, the widest gap exists between youth with private insurance—a subset of those with health insurance—and those without. Only 9.8 percent of youth with private insurance are disconnected, compared to 24.2 percent with public insurance (primarily Medicaid) and 24.5 percent of those who are uninsured.

The obesity rate in New Jersey has risen over the past 10 years. In 2021, 14 percent of New Jersey high schoolers were obese (and 16 percent were overweight), an increase from the 11 percent obesity rate in 2011.<sup>23</sup> Newark has 27.6 teen births per 1,000 women ages 15–19, higher than the average rate in other US cities, 19.5 births per 1,000, and New Jersey as a whole, with a teen birth rate of 9.2.<sup>24</sup> Put another way, in 2021, 5.8 percent of all births in Newark were to teenagers (compared to 2.2 percent in New Jersey overall).<sup>25</sup>

In Newark, 18.3 percent of young people who live in a household that receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits are disconnected.

Nearly one in four (23.7 percent) young people in Newark live in households that receive these benefits. Receiving SNAP benefits can be a proxy for severe poverty—the share of youth living in poverty, 23.6 percent, is similar to the share receiving SNAP benefits.

## MOTHERHOOD AND MARRIAGE

**The disconnection rate among mothers ages 16–24, 34.8 percent, is much higher than that of young women without children, 15.0 percent.** Mothers in Newark make up 14.3 percent of the female opportunity youth population but only 6.7 percent of young women overall.

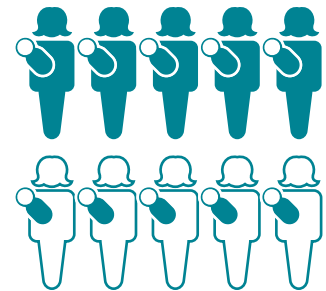
Similar to the situation for mothers, the disconnection rate among married young people, 42.2 percent, is higher than that among unmarried youth, 16.8 percent. Some married partners may choose to divide household responsibilities in such a way that one person works for pay and the other does not. While the partner who is not working for pay may be doing valuable domestic or child-rearing work, research shows that being out of the workforce, be it to raise children or for some other reason, limits later career trajectories and earnings.<sup>26</sup>

In New Jersey, 12 percent of children had a family member who either quit a job, did not take a job, or had to significantly change a job due to childcare issues in 2021.<sup>27</sup> For young mothers, burdensome childcare costs can be a significant barrier to working or attending school—in New Jersey, center-based childcare for toddlers costs 34 percent of a single mother’s income, on average.<sup>28</sup> When childcare costs are high and the cost of childcare approaches parity with the post-tax wage someone can earn, women are less likely to enter or remain in the labor force.

Among the most striking findings of this report is how pervasive poverty is among the city’s young mothers—alarmingly, **half of young mothers in Newark live in poverty**. This poverty rate is far higher than that of Newark’s young women as a whole (23.7 percent, compared to 23.6 percent of young men) and even surpasses that of opportunity youth as a whole (38.3 percent). It is worth noting that the poverty line accounts for the number of individuals in a household, so if a family grows but their income remains the same, the household moves closer to the poverty line, as this family now has the additional expenses of raising a child. This high poverty rate among young mothers also negatively affects the current and future well-being of their children. Research shows that living in poverty in early childhood can have serious health, educational, and employment repercussions later in life.<sup>29</sup>

Becoming a mother is a common life experience; 86 percent of US women have at least one child by the end of their reproductive years.<sup>30</sup> But the timing for doing so varies sharply for connected and disconnected women. Connected young women tend to postpone parenthood to pursue other options in their teens and early 20s, such as continuing their educations or building their careers. For young women who lack such options, having a child may offer a rewarding role and an attainable route to adult standing.<sup>31</sup>

### Half of Young Mothers in Newark Live in Poverty



The point of this discussion is not to suggest that there is a right or wrong time to have a child, but rather to acknowledge that having a baby affects educational and career prospects, that educational and career prospects affect the decision to have a baby, and that disconnection during emerging adulthood, no matter the reason, affects long-term economic prospects.

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

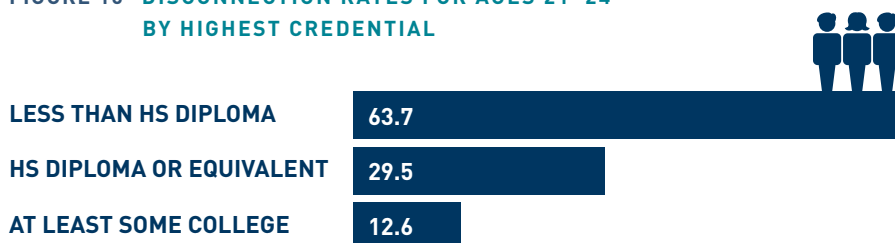
Among all youth ages 16 to 24 in Newark, three in ten have not yet finished high school, roughly one-third have a high school diploma but no further education, and two-fifths have at least some postsecondary education. The impact of having less education becomes clear when looking at the outcomes for youth ages 21 to 24, an age range by which many if not most young adults have finished their formal schooling. For this cohort, disconnection is most common among youth with lower levels of education. Nearly two-thirds of youth ages 21 to 24 who have less than a high school diploma are disconnected (63.7 percent), compared to 29.5 percent of those with a high school diploma but no further education and 12.6 percent of those who have at least some college-level education (see **FIGURE 10**). Higher levels of educational attainment result in more opportunities for employment and are also associated with a host of noneconomic benefits, including better health, more stable relationships, and a greater ability to adjust to change. These findings also highlight the need for opportunities for youth who haven't completed college as well as alternatives to higher education that put young people on the path to well-paying jobs.

Earlier this year, Newark opened a Re-engagement Center through a partnership between the city and Newark public schools. This new center aims to connect young people to education and career pathways through services such as school placement advising, academic program referrals, professional development and skill training, and social support services.<sup>32</sup>

### HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

About half of Newark's opportunity youth have high school diplomas but have not begun any further education. The fact that **54.0 percent of youth who are neither working nor in school have a high school diploma** may come as a surprise to many readers. Who are these disconnected diploma-holders?

**FIGURE 10 DISCONNECTION RATES FOR AGES 21–24 BY HIGHEST CREDENTIAL**



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2018–2022.

First, they are more likely to be young women than young men. Young women who complete high school and do not continue on to higher education are more likely to be disconnected (35.3 percent) than their male counterparts (26.5 percent). What could explain this higher disconnection rate among women? There is a slight difference in labor force participation between genders in this cohort: 69.0 percent of young men whose highest educational credential is a high school diploma participate in the labor force (meaning they have a job or are looking for work), compared to 62.1 percent of young women. The root of this gendered disconnection gap could be labor force participation: nearly four out of ten young women with a high school diploma are not looking for work, compared to three out of ten young men.

For both women and men, limited access to higher education may keep many young people from continuing their educations beyond high school. Further, while a high school degree was once sufficient for a living-wage job, the labor market now heavily favors those with education beyond high school. This points to a need for more accessible postsecondary pathways for high school graduates—whether through higher education, apprenticeships, technical education, or careers that do not require a four-year degree.

While a high school degree was once sufficient for a living-wage job, the labor market now heavily favors those with education beyond high school.

### MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS AND LABOR MARKET PROJECTIONS

Middle-skill jobs are commonly defined as jobs that require education or training beyond high school but not a four-year college degree. This could consist of an associate degree, a professional certification, an apprenticeship, or moderate- to long-term on-the-job training. In New Jersey, an estimated 53 percent of jobs are middle-skill.<sup>33</sup> There's no hard-and-fast definition, but for the purposes of this analysis, we will look at labor market outcomes for young adults 16 to 24 who have a high school diploma or GED but no bachelor's or higher degree. Young adults with associate degrees are part of this "middle-skill" category.

These jobs are not evenly distributed across gender or racial and ethnic groups. In Newark, 25,100 young adults ages 16–24 are in the "middle-skill" category, and 5,300 have jobs that earn them \$20,000 or more each year. Of those who earn \$20,000 or more, 61 percent are young men and 39 percent are young women. **Young men are more than one and a half times more likely than young women to be employed in a higher-paying middle-skill role.** There are differences by race and ethnicity, too: in Newark, one in four Latino or white young adults with a high school diploma but not a bachelor's degree earn \$20,000 or more a year, whereas only one in seven Black young adults with the same educational credentials earn \$20,000 and up.

Finding and creating well-paying employment pathways for young adults without advanced degrees, particularly in middle-skill jobs, is crucial to promoting connection. Special attention needs to be paid to ensuring that these careers are open to Black young men and women.

In Essex County, four of the top ten occupational areas with the forecasted greatest average number of annual job openings between 2020 and 2030 have average annual wages greater than \$40,000.<sup>34</sup> Of these four occupational areas, two are dominated by men (light truck or delivery service drivers and heavy and tractor trailer truck drivers), and two are dominated by women (waitstaff and hairdressers).<sup>35</sup> These female-dominated occupations tend to earn between \$17,300 and \$6,100 less each year, respectively, than the male-dominated occupations; **better-paid high-growth middle-skill jobs are currently overwhelmingly the domain of men.**

### LABOR FORCE STATUS & WORK EXPERIENCE

Youth who are disconnected may be spending their time in any number of ways, including actively seeking employment. The survey data count youth who are unemployed and actively looking for work as “in the labor force” and those who are not looking for work as “out of the labor force.” The 5,100 disconnected young people out of the labor force may be discouraged workers who have given up seeking employment, they may be caring for children or other family members, or they may be doing something else. All told, **seven out of ten opportunity youth in Newark are not actively looking for work.** While some disconnected youth have previously held a job, many have not, and a lack of work experience often makes it difficult for youth to obtain employment. In Newark, **66.0 percent of opportunity youth—4,800 young people—have not worked in the past five years.**

The disconnection rate for those ages 21 to 24 who have never worked or who last worked more than five years ago is 58.7 percent. **These 1,800 relatively older youth who are out of school and with no recent work experience face significant barriers to connection.** Difficulty finding and securing quality entry-level job opportunities could contribute to disconnection rates for young men and women in this category. Apprenticeships, work-study programs, and work-oriented volunteering programs—giving individuals skills and experience they can add to their resume—might be useful interventions.

### HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Household and family characteristics—like neighborhood-level poverty and resources—tend to drive young people’s disconnection from work and school. Of the 239,800 youth in New Jersey who are between 16 and 18 and legally children, only 1.2 percent of those living with both parents are disconnected. This rate nearly triples for children living with just one parent—3.4 percent of children living with one parent are disconnected—and quadruples for children not living with any parent, of which 4.9 percent are not in school and not working.<sup>36</sup> These numbers are lower than the New Jersey average for youth ages 16–24 (10.4 percent) because children in the 16–18 age range are largely still enrolled in mandatory education; 3.7 percent of New Jerseyans between 16 and 18 years old are disconnected. This illustrates how, through no fault of their own, some children

“Because of my age and my education, I can’t really get jobs with higher pay, and those jobs tend to respond faster and be more professional.”



Newark young person



and young adults have fewer opportunities than other young adults who grew up in households with more resources and stability.

Overcrowding—defined as having more than one person per room of the house (such as three people living in a one-bedroom apartment)—is a proxy for poverty, housing instability, and vulnerability to Covid-19 spread. Research indicates that overcrowding has a negative impact on physical and mental well-being, that it can impede early childhood development, and that it plays a role in transmitting poverty intergenerationally.<sup>37</sup> For young adults 16–24 in Newark, 14.1 percent live in overcrowded housing. Of these 5,800 youth and young adults, 16.6 percent are not in school and not working.

Access to broadband is another important measure of housing quality and a proxy for the opportunities available to young adults. Covid-19 made clearer than ever that high-speed broadband can no longer be treated as an optional luxury. Remote learning, working from home, and seeing a doctor virtually—trends that are here to stay in one way or another—are only possible with fast, reliable internet. In Newark, young adults who live in housing with broadband have slightly lower rates of disconnection from work and school, 14.3 percent, while **those with no internet at home (3,000 youth and young adults) have double the rate of disconnection, 28.6 percent.**

Access to transportation—primarily personal cars—is another key means by which young adults can access the opportunities available to them. Young adults living in a household with no vehicles (9,800 in Newark) are disconnected from work and school at a rate of 25.0 percent, while those with less than two people per car have a disconnection rate of 12.7 percent. All told, **59.7 percent of opportunity youth in Newark live in a household with either more than three people per car or no car at all.** Solutions designed to reach these young adults need to keep this aspect of their experience in mind, as it complicates accessing education, services, trainings, and job opportunities.





**FIGURE 10** Characteristics of Opportunity Youth in Newark

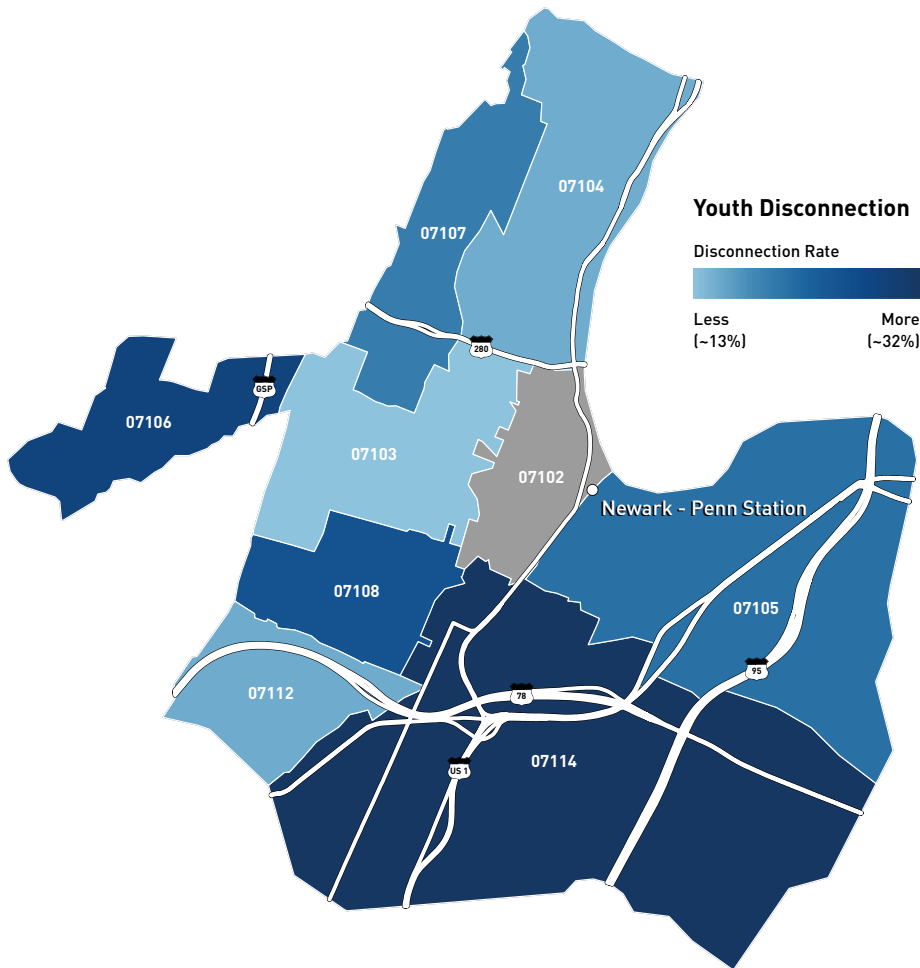
CHARACTERISTIC	SHARE OF YOUTH WITH THIS CHARACTERISTIC (%)		SOMEONE WHO IS DISCONNECTED IS	OPPORTUNITY YOUTH IN NEWARK (#)
<b>Living in poverty</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>1.9</b> times as likely to live in a household below the poverty level	<b>2,500</b>
<b>Has a disability</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>2.1</b> times as likely to have a disability	<b>1,000</b>
<b>Young women with children*</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>2.8</b> times as likely to be a mother than other young women	<b>500</b>
<b>Receives SNAP</b>	<b>23.5</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>1.0</b> equally as likely to receive SNAP	<b>1,800</b>
<b>Receives Medicaid</b>	<b>31.6</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>1.5</b> times as likely to receive Medicaid	<b>3,400</b>
<b>No health insurance</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>1.5</b> times as likely to have no health insurance	<b>2,000</b>
<b>Noncitizen</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>1.0</b> equally as likely to be a noncitizen	<b>1,200</b>
<b>No internet at home</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>1.9</b> times as likely to have no internet at home	<b>900</b>
<b>No cars in household</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>33.9</b>	<b>1.6</b> times as likely to live in a household with no cars	<b>2,400</b>

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2018–2022.

\*Estimates indicate share of young women, rather than share of all youth.

## Variation by Geography

The opportunity youth population is a slice of a slice of the overall Newark population. As a result, unlike in the health, education, and income sections of this report, we are unable to provide accurate fine-grained analysis of youth disconnection at the census tract level. As past Measure of America research shows that youth disconnection is highly correlated with the HDI score of a neighborhood, such information would be a useful yardstick. Measure of America has obtained a custom tabulation of youth disconnection at the level of ZIP Code Tabulation Area (the Census geography for ZIP Codes). Since ZIPs are smallish geographies, we can only give broad estimates for which ZIP codes within Newark have higher or lower rates of youth disconnection.



ZIP codes 07114 and 07106 have the highest rate of youth disconnection; in these two ZIP codes, around **one in three to one in four Newark residents 16–24 are out of school and out of work**. These ZIP codes encompass most of southern Newark, including the southern parts of the East Ward and South Ward. ZIP codes 07104, 07103, and 07112 have the lowest disconnection rates; in these neighborhoods, around one in six to one in eight young Newark residents are not in school and not working. Newark’s highest-disconnection neighborhoods have **twice the share of young adults out of school and out of work** than its lowest-disconnection neighborhoods. Measure of America’s research around the nation has shown, time and time again, that some of the widest gaps in neighborhood-level disconnection exist between neighborhoods that are a stone’s throw away—not on the other side of the country.

## Conclusion

Each and every young adult deserves the opportunity to build skills and begin a career that puts them on the path to a freely chosen life of value. Data in this chapter show that disconnected young people share many challenges with one another, but also differ in important ways. Maintaining a focus on the priority areas addressed in the agenda for action (which follows this section), along with place- and population-based programming, will help reach those most affected by or at risk of disconnection. Prioritizing high school completion, building pipelines to jobs and postsecondary programs paired with support to excel in them, focusing on youth in poverty, reconnecting discouraged young adults to the labor market, supporting youth with disabilities, and enabling young mothers to pursue their educational and career goals are all worthy objectives in and of themselves and will have a positive effect on youth connection.

In addition to these steps, above all, at-risk youth need the kind of support from communities and institutions that other young people take for granted: safe places to live and food on the table; caring adults to help them navigate the often-bewildering transition from childhood to adulthood; opportunities to try new things, to fail, and to try again; and experiences that build self-knowledge, agency, and confidence as well as hard and soft skills. They need encouragement, trust, kindness, and love—not harsh discipline and not zero-tolerance. They need society to give them what it gives more fortunate young people, not just “a” chance, but many chances.

Each and every young adult deserves the opportunity to build skills and begin a career that puts them on the path to a freely chosen life of value.

# Conclusion and Recommendations



The development of this report was guided by a panel of knowledgeable, passionate advisors deeply committed to Newark and all who call the city home (see the acknowledgements for a list). This group worked together with the Measure of America team to identify a set of priority action areas, listed below, necessary to ensure a future in which all Newark's residents can flourish.

More specifically, they sought to identify key steps required to:

- Improve the health, educational outcomes, and living standards of all Newark residents;
- Close the well-being gaps between different neighborhoods and demographic groups in Newark—and between Newark and the rest of the state; and
- Ensure that all the city's young people are plugged in to the community, health, school, training, childcare, transportation, and employment resources they need to transition to thriving adulthoods.

The profound disparities in well-being and opportunity identified in this report did not spring up out of nowhere; they are rooted in several interlinked social and economic problems that together circumscribe the life chances of some while easing the paths of others. These structural inequities expose some people to risks of all sorts, from violence to poverty, while allowing others to protect themselves from both sudden shocks and chronic disadvantage. Addressing these thorny structural issues—racism, gender inequality, poverty, income inequality, and residential segregation—and the historical realities that gave rise to them is a complex challenge. Nonetheless, it is critical to acknowledge the ways they hinder progress toward equity and freedom for all and to work to dismantle them.

One purpose of an index like this one is to identify areas where **investment in people** is an urgent priority. In each and every ward are neighborhoods that score 3.5 or less on the ten-point American Human Development Index. **These locations should be at the top of the list for place-based pilot programs and investments of all sorts from public and philanthropic sources, designed in partnership with the communities themselves.**

Another purpose of the index is to encourage holistic thinking about the interconnected challenges that communities face. Advisors identified three urgent priority areas: childcare, transportation, and universal broadband internet services. Directing increased support and attention to these priority areas is a key step toward fostering better outcomes across health, education, living standards, and youth well-being while also addressing the time poverty that so many low-income families face. It is important to note that programs and policies in many of the priority areas below are already underway throughout the city. Newark is filled with people—teachers, nonprofit leaders, public servants, community organizers, and others—who are working tirelessly every day to improve life in the city. What is often lacking is sufficient resources so that these efforts can be improved and expanded.



Newark is filled with people—teachers, nonprofit leaders, public servants, community organizers, and others—who are working tirelessly every day to improve life in the city.

**Childcare.** American families have been forced to cobble together childcare arrangements largely on their own for decades. During the pandemic, the utter inadequacy of this flimsy, every-family-for-itself patchwork became impossible to ignore. The situation is hardest for low-income families whose resources for childcare are limited, shift workers whose nonstandard hours make finding childcare difficult, service workers whose schedules change from week to week, single parents, young mothers who are neither working nor in school, and families whose children require special care due to a disability. **Newark’s families need universal, publicly funded, high-quality care for infants and toddlers and affordable before- and after-school childcare that keeps children safe and helps them learn.** Comprehensive childcare services would benefit the city on multiple levels: parents need these services to work and for peace of mind, mothers in particular need them to secure greater equality in the workplace, children need them for physical safety and healthy cognitive and emotional development, and society needs them to ensure that all families have the resources required to flourish. Creating a stable childcare system requires that childcare workers are paid fairly, receive benefits, and have the knowledge and skills they need to help Newark’s smallest residents thrive. Siting licensed childcare facilities in public schools (many of which are not fully occupied due to enrollment declines) would save time for parents, allow for the extension of the school day to better match working hours, allow schools to integrate afterschool care with tutoring, lower the setup costs for new centers, and put important community assets (school buildings) to work for residents.

**Transportation.** Newark is among the world’s busiest, most vital transportation hubs, with cargo ships, airplanes, trains, trucks, and cars passing through as they move goods and people throughout the region, across the country, and around the globe. In April 2022, volunteers organized by the South Ward Environmental Alliance found that some 5,000 trucks passed through their streets in just three hours on their way to Newark Airport, Port Newark, and the numerous industrial sites like waste transfer stations and warehouses positioned among the homes, schools, and parks of the surrounding neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> **Yet paradoxically, the Newark residents living at the center of this vast transportation nexus have limited means of getting around the 27 square miles of their own city—all while experiencing transportation’s downsides, particularly exposure to air and noise pollution.** Newark’s parents face formidable challenges getting their children to and from childcare and school (sometimes different schools in different parts of town) and getting themselves to and from work. Young people seeking training opportunities or trying to get a foothold in the labor market often lack a way to reliably get to a class or job, creating an insurmountable barrier to connection.

Newark’s families need universal, publicly funded, high-quality care for infants and toddlers and affordable before- and after-school childcare that keeps children safe and helps them learn.

Expanding bus routes, increasing the reliability and frequency of service, running express buses between neighborhoods and far-away schools during commuting hours, and waiving fares—ideally for everyone but at least for those ages 25 and under, for parents with children in Newark schools, and for all SNAP recipients and public housing residents (using these last two categories as proxies for poverty)—are all priorities that wouldn't require lengthy new construction projects. It is critical to ensure that Newark residents enjoy their share of benefits from the vast transportation infrastructure—such as good jobs in highway and other infrastructure construction projects—rather than just bearing its burdens.

**Broadband.** As our collective experience during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic made abundantly clear, high-speed broadband can no longer be treated as an optional luxury; **it must be viewed as a public utility akin to electricity and running water.** Gaps in internet access have created an opportunity chasm between the broadband haves and have-nots. Remote learning, working from home, and seeing a doctor virtually—the new normal since 2020—are only possible with a laptop or desktop computer connected to fast, reliable internet; a smartphone can work in a pinch, but enjoying the full benefits of internet access requires a computer. Even with the worst disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic largely behind us, broadband remains critical for conducting job searches, working on school projects, paying bills, accessing government benefits, and completing myriad other important tasks. A 2021 study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia found that prime-age workers (people ages 25–54) with a home computer connected to broadband participate in the labor force at a much higher rate than prime-age workers without access to a broadband-enabled computer.<sup>2</sup> Closing the digital divide with infrastructure, affordable and subsidized services, skill-building, and help paying for computers will promote equity and inclusion for everyone.

Gaps in internet access have created an opportunity chasm between the broadband haves and have-nots.

In addition to these three cross-cutting priorities, advisors also made specific recommendations to improve health, education, and employment outcomes. They are listed below.

## Health

**Improve the conditions of daily life.** While access to affordable, quality health care is vital, health disparities cannot be solved by doctors and medicine alone. Access to healthy food to eat, clean air to breathe, safe places to play and exercise, secure jobs that reduce the damaging stress of economic uncertainty, good schools in which to learn and grow, and safe homes and neighborhoods in which to build thriving families and communities—a set of factors known as the social determinants of health—are essential for long and healthy lives.

**Increase access to healthy foods.** In 2022, the New Jersey Economic Development Agency designated 50 areas in the state as food deserts—meaning that residents had poor access to full-service grocery stores and fresh fruits and vegetables—and many Newark neighborhoods were high on the list.<sup>3</sup> Food deserts are more often than not found in low-income communities of color and are correlated with lower life expectancies and a greater prevalence of chronic health conditions like heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. Without access to nearby full-service grocery stores, residents must rely on corner stores, convenience stores, and fast-food outlets, places where healthy food is scarce.

Weekly farmers' markets, commonplace in nearby suburban towns, could improve Newark residents' access to fresh produce, particularly as SNAP EBT cards can typically be used. Public-private partnerships to establish food co-ops and state support through the Food Desert Relief Tax Credit Program would help offset the high initial investment required to establish new grocery stores. Partnerships between schools and farmers' markets (held on school grounds in the afterschool hours) could ensure that families have easy access to healthy foods while increasing children's familiarity and comfort with a wide range of healthy produce and making school meals more nutritious.

**Address leading causes of death by minimizing health risks and supporting healthy habits.** Heart disease and cancer are the leading causes of death in Newark as well as in the country as a whole. What differs significantly, however, is when and how different groups begin to accumulate risk factors for these maladies; the age at which they fall ill; the kinds of medical treatments, economic resources, and social supports to which they have access; and the age at which they die. These health inequities are rooted in social, political, and economic inequalities. Delaying or avoiding these illnesses depends in large part on minimizing health risks by avoiding tobacco, eating a healthy diet, engaging in regular exercise, moderating alcohol use, and refraining from drug use. Yet the ability to maintain healthy habits depends very much on the neighborhoods in which we live.



While access to affordable, quality health care is vital, health disparities cannot be solved by doctors and medicine alone.



At a basic level, disparities in health behaviors are less a matter of individual willpower than of the widespread inequalities that determine whether one grows up in an environment that supports and encourages these behaviors. Healthy eating is often limited, for example, by threadbare budgets or the unavailability of healthy foods; similarly, the motivation and emotional support needed to significantly change one's diet or avoid or cease using addictive substances are often severely constrained by socioeconomic factors that make everyday life significantly more difficult. Aid to programs like Girltrek—a group that uses walking as a mass movement for health justice for Black women—and other community efforts that support people in realizing their health goals is a worthy investment.

**Improve access to health care, including preventative care.** This report has emphasized the ways in which the conditions of our daily lives affect our health. This is not to imply, however, that health-care is unimportant; access to high-quality, affordable, nearby, nondiscriminatory health care services that treat all patients with compassion and respect—regardless of age, income, race or ethnicity, language or national origin, gender or sexual identity, type of insurance, body size, health behaviors, or health history—is critical to people's well-being. Having a regular source of primary care (as opposed to relying on emergency rooms) is particularly important. Newark today suffers from too few primary care doctors and long wait times for appointments, making it more difficult not only to get care when sick but also to access the types of preventative care—blood work to flag high cholesterol or diabetes, cancer screenings, blood pressure readings, smoking cessation counseling, and more—that can head off serious illness.

**Expand and improve culturally sensitive reproductive health care to support the health and well-being of Newark's girls, young women, and mothers, particularly Black women.** Improved reproductive health care, particularly maternal-child health care, is vital to addressing stark racial disparities in maternal mortality and morbidity as well as infant mortality. Maternal mortality is a bellwether indicator of the quality of a health-care system and the degree of racial and gender inequality in a given place. A tragedy that is largely preventable, maternal mortality is evidence of poor access to high-quality reproductive health-care services of all sorts. Reproductive health-care services that treat women with respect and compassion are essential to women's health, well-being, and rights. Such services allow women to choose if and when to have children, to time and space their pregnancies, to enjoy healthy pregnancies and safe deliveries, and to identify infections and cancers and have them treated. Providing access to comprehensive sex education, compassionate reproductive health-care services, free menstrual management supplies like pads and tampons in schools, and subsidized or free birth control is key to ensuring that Newark's girls and young women are fully able to participate in all aspects of life and make decisions about their own bodies, families, and futures.

Mental health needs are more urgent than ever, given Covid-19's unprecedented toll on the psychological well-being of thousands of Newark residents.

**Improve, expand, and continue to destigmatize mental health care.** No discussion of health is complete without a discussion of mental health. This is particularly true for children, as traumatic events or chronically stressful environments during childhood can cause severe and lasting harm. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)—incidents of abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction during the first 18 years of life—have dramatic and well-documented impacts on the brain and on mental and physical health in adulthood. Mental health needs are more urgent than ever, given Covid-19’s unprecedented toll on the psychological well-being of thousands of Newark residents. All disasters put survivors at risk of psychological distress, but the unique and widespread conditions of the pandemic— isolation at home, separation from loved ones, uncertainty and anxiety about the future, grief and constant news of death, unemployment and economic distress—joined forces to create a particularly acute mental health crisis. The current shortage of behavioral health-care providers, particularly those who accept Medicaid, calls out for urgent prioritization of training such professionals, incentives like higher pay, expanded access to telehealth appointments, and a reduction in the provider administrative burden.<sup>4</sup>

## Education

**Address inequalities in early childhood.** Research from a host of fields, from neuroscience and economics to sociology and public health, has found that childhood exposure to the material deprivations, stress, and instability that tend to accompany deep poverty creates lasting scars, affecting physical and mental health, educational achievement, economic outcomes, and parenting behaviors across the life course. Support to families with infants and small children, especially young, first-time parents, can mitigate these effects by reducing family stress, increasing community support and connectedness, and building parental knowledge, skills, confidence, and happiness. **Home visitation programs**, in which specially trained professionals visit new mothers before birth and for up to two years afterward, have been shown to improve birth outcomes, enhance child development, lower the incidence of child maltreatment and accidental injury, improve maternal health and use of health care, reduce harsh parenting, improve the provision of stimulating activities, improve school performance, and even reduce the likelihood of high school dropout and contact with the juvenile justice system. High-quality home visitation has been proven to ease the stress many new parents face by connecting them to resources, alleviating loneliness, increasing confidence, and broadening knowledge of age-appropriate expectations for behavior. Research indicates that social support improves parents’ mental and physical health, coping and emotion regulation, and self-efficacy.<sup>5</sup> As discussed above, expanded access to affordable, high-quality, center-based early childhood care is critical for a host of reasons. Continued outreach to ensure that families



Though we are now four years out from the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, it continues to cast a shadow on the educational outcomes of too many children in Newark.

take advantage of the free, **full-day preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds** available in Newark is very important, including through addressing language barriers that might keep families from learning about the services available to them.

**Address persistent Covid-19-fueled learning loss.** Covid-19 affected everyone, but its burden fell disproportionately on low-income communities of color. Though we are now four years out from the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, it continues to cast a shadow on the educational outcomes of too many children in Newark. Recent research by the Education Recovery Scorecard project showed that by 2023, the typical student in the country’s poorest school districts had lost three-fourths of a year in math learning, twice the decline seen in the richest districts, and also lost more ground in reading than their more affluent peers; these sharp losses worsened the wide and long-standing gap in outcomes between rich and poor districts. Between 2019 and 2023, Newark students lost over a year’s progress in math.<sup>6</sup> High-quality, “high-dosage” tutoring is key to addressing learning loss, stemming the widening gap in student achievement, and improving student outcomes. Successful tutoring programs share several characteristics: they are run by teachers, other school employees, or students studying to be teachers rather than by parents or other volunteers; they are conducted during school hours or right before or after the school day; and they are held at least three times per week rather than just once or twice.<sup>7</sup>

**Identify and address learning disabilities.** Identification and treatment of learning differences like dyslexia in the early school years can mean the difference between school success and years, perhaps lifetimes, of challenges. Unidentified learning disabilities can have a litany of negative effects: poor grades, having to repeat a grade, disengagement and dropout, social exclusion and marginalization, poor self-esteem, inappropriate special education placements, disproportionate discipline, increased risk of incarceration, and limited employment options. While some 15 percent of the US population has some kind of disability, nearly half the prison population does.<sup>8</sup> Protecting children and young adults from this kind of pain and tragic loss of potential requires that all children are tested and provided accommodations and support like direct instruction and classroom modifications for learning differences. Testing should occur in elementary school but also again in later years, as some disabilities only become apparent as school becomes more demanding. Ensuring that young people in juvenile facilities, who are separated from mechanisms like Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 plans, and youth who are overaged and under-credited, get the help they need to thrive is critical.

**Act on early-warning signs and focus on keeping young people in school.**

Research suggests that acting on early-warning signs like failing core academic subjects or missing 18 days of school or more is key to helping young people stay

Research suggests that acting on early-warning signs like failing core academic subjects or missing 18 days of school or more is key to helping young people stay in school until graduation.

in school until graduation. Other critical measures to keep youth connected include developing a system with robust and accessible school-to-work alternatives; providing wraparound counseling, career mentoring, remedial learning, and other support for at-risk youth; and fostering positive school climate characterized by sensitivity to cultural differences and feelings of connectedness and belonging. Absenteeism has emerged in the post-Covid-19 era as a serious challenge to learning and engagement—the national rate of chronic absenteeism post-Covid, 28 percent, is twice what it was before the pandemic. In November 2022, about one-third of Newark students were chronically absent. Addressing chronic absences with understanding, compassion, persuasion, and tenacity in the form of text messages, letters, and visits to the home rather than through punitive measures is a promising approach.<sup>9</sup>

## Living Standards

**Help Newark residents access the city’s higher-paying jobs currently dominated by commuters.** Newark is an economic powerhouse, and commuters from across the state and region flock to the city for well-paying jobs in its anchor institutions. But Newark residents too often find themselves shut out of these opportunities. Finding ways to ensure that people who live in the city are able to access the higher-paying jobs dominated by commuters requires partnerships between high schools and community colleges and the business community to create clear pathways to in-demand, high-wage jobs. Other avenues, such as quotas and subsidized employment, should also be considered.

**Raise wages.** In New Jersey, the minimum wage is \$15.13, but the living wage is \$24.76 for a single adult and \$42.67 for an adult with one child.<sup>10</sup> Though the gradual increase in the state minimum wage from \$8.60 in 2018 to over \$15 today has been welcome, it’s still simply not enough for one person, let alone a family, to live on, especially given the high inflation of recent years. A clear way to improve the economic well-being of struggling families, brighten the prospects for children growing up in poverty, and address stark racial and ethnic disparities is lifting the wages of the lowest-paid workers.

**Equip women for jobs in nontraditional fields.** Money and jobs are pouring into Newark and the surrounding region, thanks to the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. For example, just one part of the vast Gateway Program, the Hudson Tunnel Project, will bring some 72,000 new direct and indirect jobs to the area.<sup>11</sup> Yet as megaprojects break ground in their city and nearby, women, particularly Black and Latina women, have been left on the sidelines. Women in nontraditional sectors, such as the skilled building and construction, utility, and maintenance trades, are few and far between, making up just 3 percent of those



As megaprojects break ground in their city and nearby, women, particularly Black and Latina women, have been left on the sidelines.

who work in those fields.<sup>12</sup> These male-dominated jobs, which are open to workers without college degrees, offer high wages, good benefits, and the protections of union membership. For women to take advantage of these opportunities, they need exposure to and training for nontraditional careers in high school, targeted recruitment by unions for apprenticeships, and supports like reliable, flexible childcare, particularly as worksites often open in the early morning hours and can sometimes run through the night. Unions have an important role to play in combating the sexism, harassment, discrimination, and stereotyping that can make these careers unappealing to and even unsafe for women. Money from the infrastructure bill creates a once-in-a-generation opportunity to introduce transformative changes for women in the skilled trades, opening up routes to higher wages and economic security for Newark's women.

**Protect and expand access to affordable housing.** Housing is a critical human development issue, a fulcrum of opportunity that governs which schools our children attend, which jobs we can easily access, and even the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink. Stable, affordable housing free of hazards such as mold, peeling paint, and fraying electrical wires is particularly important for children, whose health and safety can be deeply compromised by poor housing conditions, whose school outcomes and emotional health are put at risk by the instability of frequent moves, and whose development is threatened by toxic stress caused by financial insecurity and overcrowding.

Newark's families face steep barriers to safe, stable, and affordable housing. More than two in three Newark households are renters, and half of them spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing—essentially paying more in rent than they can afford. Protecting and improving existing federally subsidized public housing is essential, as is building more affordable housing, particularly housing that is well-served by public transportation, as nearly half of Newark's renters don't have access to a car.<sup>13</sup> As Newark's improved amenities attract more affluent residents, protecting rental households from displacement is critical. By one estimate, meeting the housing needs of current residents would require more than 16,000 additional units renting for roughly \$750 per month.<sup>14</sup>

**Connect young people to careers.** Addressing youth disconnection will require a variety of tactics, focusing on both education and employment. In the realm of employment and earnings, three areas are critical: barriers to employment, transportation and housing, and career-track employment.

- **Youth with caretaking responsibilities, youth with disabilities, and justice-system-involved youth face particularly steep barriers to employment.** In Newark, 34.8 percent of young mothers are not working or in school, 2.3 times the rate among young women without children. Once a young woman becomes a mother, joining or reconnecting to

Newark's families face steep barriers to safe, stable, and affordable housing.

the labor market becomes more difficult. Affordable childcare, flexible work schedules, and benefits like sick leave are crucial to reducing disconnection among young mothers. Ensuring that low-income teenage girls have access to the types of school and work opportunities worth postponing motherhood for is critical, as is ensuring that all young people have access to family-planning information and services, as discussed above. Youth with disabilities still face far too many impediments to full participation in society, despite laws requiring school, workplace, and public accommodations. In Newark, 31.1 percent of youth with disabilities are disconnected, nearly double the rate for youth without a disability.

- **Low-income young people share the transportation woes of low-income people more broadly**, struggling to pay public transit fares and often facing long commutes with multiple transfers and inconsistent service. When affordable housing is far away from job openings, the resulting “spatial mismatch” is particularly troublesome for young people; a recent study found that youth unemployment is lower in cities with better public transportation, and that cities that improve public transit systems see greater reductions in youth unemployment even after accounting for economic growth, population density, and demographic change.<sup>15</sup> Homelessness and housing instability exacerbate the impact of poor transportation. In addition to the stress of lacking a consistent place to live, the challenges of commuting from different parts of a city or town can make it difficult to reliably get to work.
- Many young people begin their working lives in low-wage jobs in sectors such as food service, childcare, or retail. These jobs can be crucial for supporting a young person’s independence, higher education, or family responsibilities, but on their own, they rarely lead to professional advancement or a stable career. **Building pathways to careers, particularly the types of careers that are abundant in Newark but out of reach to too many of its residents, is critical, and the private sector has an important role to play.**

# Indicator Tables and Maps

The following indicator tables were prepared using the latest available official government data. All data are standardized in order to ensure comparability.

To download Excel files for the indicators, go to:

[www.measureofamerica.org/newark](http://www.measureofamerica.org/newark)

## Newark Human Development Index by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity

RANK	HDI	LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (years)	LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL (% of adults 25+)	AT LEAST BACHELOR'S DEGREE (% of adults 25+)	GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE (% of adults 25+)	SCHOOL ENROLLMENT (% ages 3 to 24)	MEDIAN EARNINGS (\$)	HEALTH INDEX	EDUCATION INDEX	INCOME INDEX	YOUTH DISCONNECTION (%)
<b>New Jersey</b>	<b>6.35</b>	<b>79.6</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>80.6</b>	<b>51,500</b>	<b>5.67</b>	<b>6.39</b>	<b>7.01</b>	<b>9.4</b>
<b>Newark</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>77.0</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>76.1</b>	<b>33,300</b>	<b>4.57</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>18.4</b>
<b>Gender</b>											
1 Women	<b>4.28</b>	80.6	21.6	18.1	5.6	76.9	28,300	6.07	3.93	2.86	16.3
2 Men	<b>3.81</b>	73.2	22.5	15.2	4.8	75.3	37,900	2.98	3.57	4.88	18.8
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>											
1 Asian	<b>6.90</b>	91.3	15.1	49.1	24.9	82.5	32,000	10.00	6.98	3.71	
2 White	<b>5.70</b>	83.9	26.5	25.0	9.9	76.4	41,300	7.46	4.15	5.48	9.1*
3 Latino	<b>4.19</b>	80.8	31.7	11.0	2.8	78.0	30,000	6.16	3.14	3.26	16.9
4 Black	<b>3.59</b>	71.9	14.7	17.4	5.0	74.0	35,400	2.47	3.90	4.40	22.3
<b>Gender and Race/Ethnicity</b>											
1 Asian Women	<b>6.77*</b>	94.3	13.0	55.4	30.4*	86.9	26,000*	10.00	8.02	2.27*	
2 White Men	<b>5.63</b>	79.4	25.1	23.4	8.9	79.7	50,600	5.58	4.42	6.89	
3 White Women	<b>5.40</b>	88.2	28.0	26.6	11.0	73.0	29,200	9.25	3.89	3.07	
4 Latina Women	<b>4.13</b>	84.0	31.5	12.7	3.4	80.2	23,100	7.49	3.46	1.45	18.4
5 Black Women	<b>3.99</b>	75.9	14.6	18.6	4.9	74.0	32,900	4.12	3.96	3.90	18.6
6 Latino Men	<b>3.95</b>	77.5	31.9	9.3	2.3*	76.1	34,200	4.81	2.86	4.17	15.6
7 Black Men	<b>3.22</b>	67.4	14.8	15.9	5.2	73.9	39,900	0.59	3.82	5.24	26.4
Asian Men		87.8	17.2	42.8	19.5*	78.9		9.08	6.03		

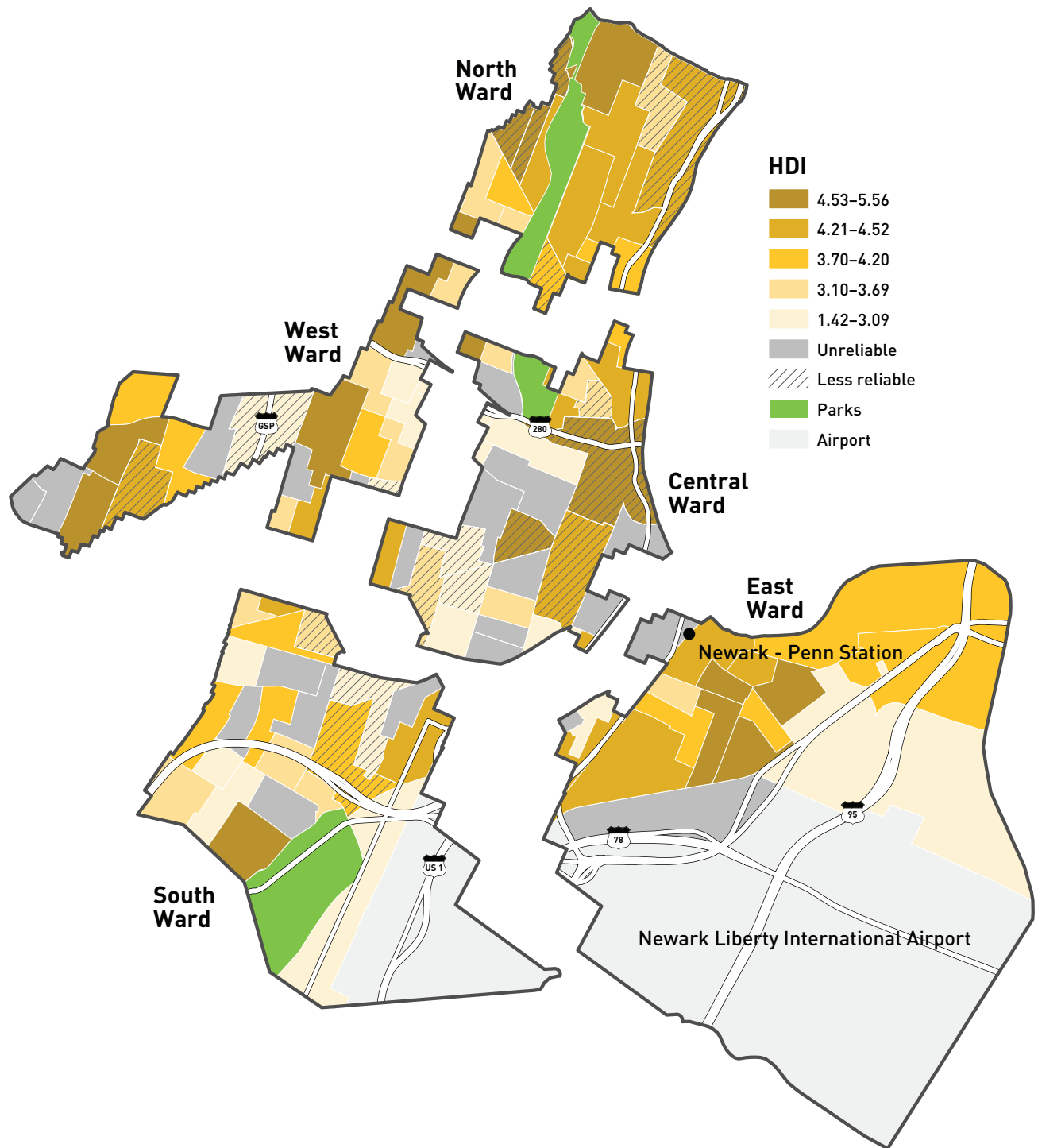
**DATA SOURCES:**

**Life expectancy:** Measure of America calculations using mortality data from the New Jersey Department of Health, 2017–2021. **Education, Earnings, and Youth Disconnection:** US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2018–2022. Youth disconnection estimates for New Jersey and Newark overall are 1-year estimates for 2022.

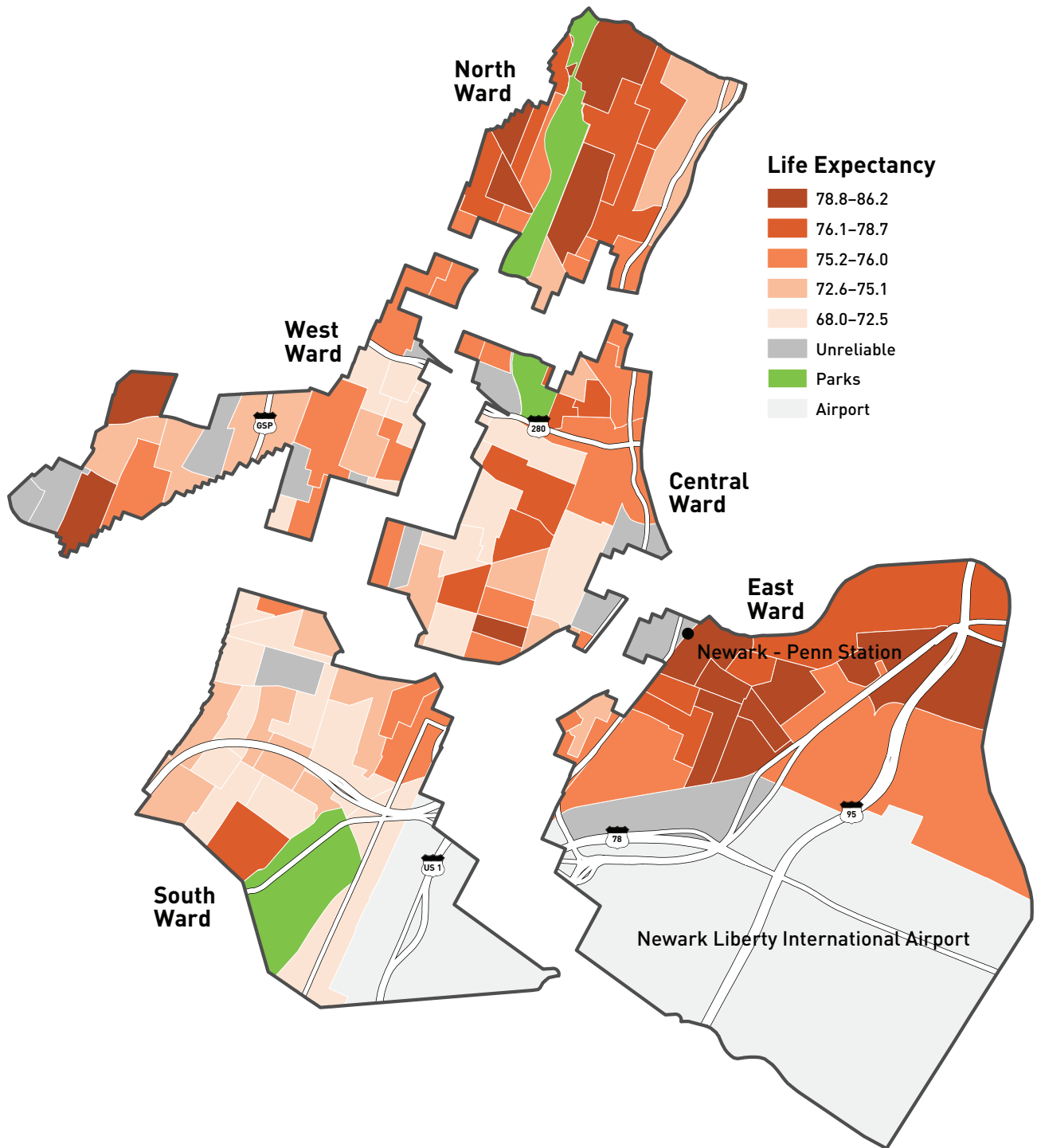
\*Estimates with an asterisk have a higher degree of uncertainty. Life expectancy for Asian population (including men and women) is for Essex County.



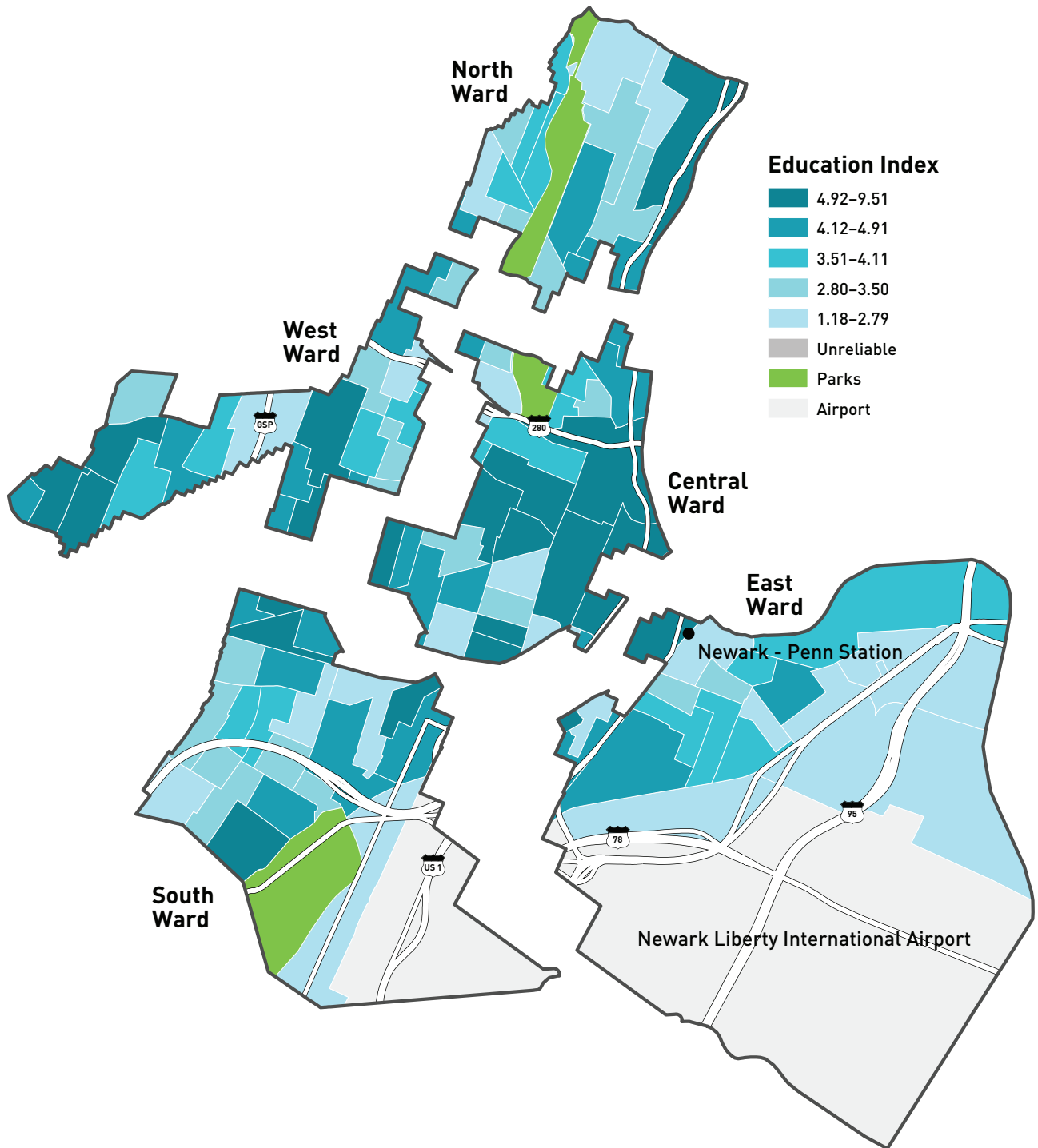
# Human Development Index



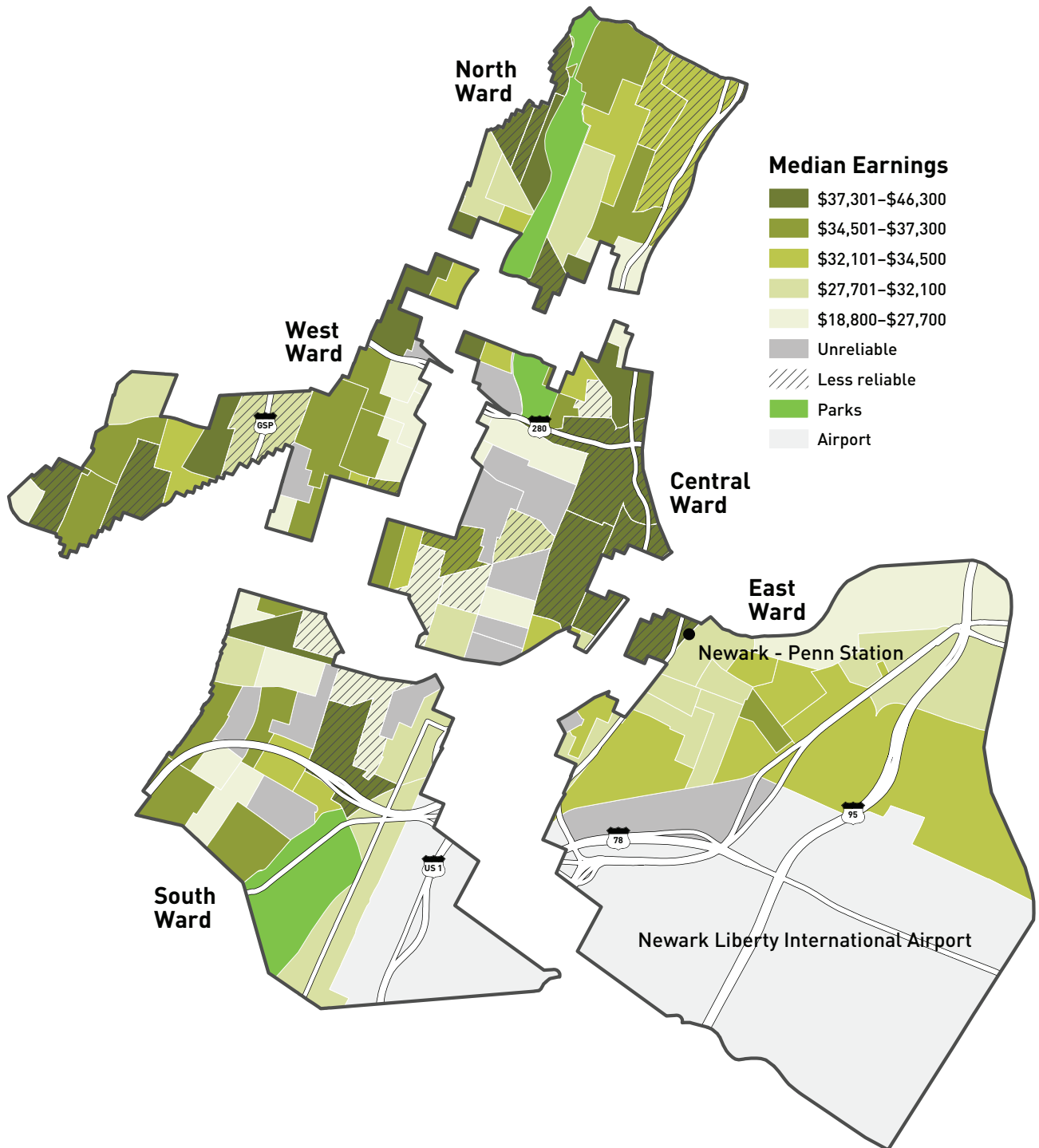
# Life Expectancy at Birth



# Education Index



# Median Personal Earnings



# Methodological Note

## Human Development

Human development is about what people can do and be. It is formally defined as the process of improving people's well-being and expanding their freedoms and opportunities. The human development approach emphasizes the everyday experiences of ordinary people, encompassing the range of factors that shape their opportunities and enable them to live lives of value and choice. People with high levels of human development can invest in themselves and their families and live to their full potential; those without find many doors shut and many choices and opportunities out of reach.

The human development concept was developed by the late economist Mahbub ul Haq. In his work at the World Bank in the 1970s, and later as minister of finance in his own country of Pakistan, Dr. Haq argued that existing measures of human progress failed to account for the true purpose of development—to improve people's lives. In particular, he believed that the commonly used measure of gross domestic product failed to adequately measure well-being. Working with Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and other gifted economists, Dr. Haq published the first Human Development Report, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme in 1990. Measure of America's work is inspired by and rooted in this approach.

## The American Human Development Index

The human development approach is extremely broad, encompassing the wide range of economic, social, political, psychological, environmental, and cultural factors that expand or restrict people's opportunities and freedoms. But the American Human Development Index, like the UN Human Development Index (HDI) upon which it is based, is a comparatively narrow composite measure that combines a limited number of indicators into a single score. The HDI is an easily understood numerical gauge that reflects what most people believe are the basic ingredients of human well-being: good health, access to education, and sufficient income. The value of the HDI ranges from 0 to 10, with a score of 10 being the maximum possible that can be achieved on the aggregate factors that make up the index.

## Data Sources

The American Human Development Index for *A Portrait of Newark* was calculated using several datasets. Mortality data used to calculate life expectancy are from the New Jersey Department of Health. The education, earnings, and population data all come from the American Community Survey (ACS), a product of the US Census Bureau. The ACS is an ongoing survey that collects data from a representative percentage of the population every year using standard sampling methods.

For populous groups and places, one year of data is often sufficient to obtain a statistically reliable estimate. For less populous groups and places, one-year estimates are often either unreliable due to small population sizes or simply not available. Therefore, multiyear life expectancy and ACS estimates are used for these smaller groups and geographical areas. Source notes below all tables in *A Portrait of Newark* show the exact year or years of data presented.



### **HEALTH: A long and healthy life is measured using life expectancy at birth.**

Life expectancy at birth was calculated by Measure of America using mortality data obtained with special agreement from the New Jersey Department of Health and population data from the US Census Bureau American Community Survey. Estimates for all groups use 2017–2021 data for broad comparability, even though single-year data are available and reliable for New Jersey as a whole. For Asian residents, we used life expectancy data for Essex County as a whole; Newark’s Asian population was too small to produce statistically reliable estimates. We used USALEEP data for census–tract-level estimates.

Life expectancy was calculated using abridged life tables using the Chiang II methodology. These abridged life tables aggregate death numerators and population denominators into age groups, rather

than using single years of age as in complete life tables. The aggregated groups are ages under 1, 1–4, 5–9, 10–14...80–84, and 85 and older. The upper age band is capped at 85 and over. Age-specific mortality rates are used within the life table to calculate the probability of a death event at each age interval. These probabilities are then applied to a hypothetical population cohort of newborns. Life expectancy at birth in a geographic area can be defined as an estimate of the average number of years a newborn baby would live if they experienced the particular area’s age-specific mortality rates for that time period throughout their life.

HDI estimates by census tract uses life expectancy estimates from the US Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project (USALEEP) of the National Center for Health Statistics. They use 2010–2015 data and the methodology is explained in detail here: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/usaleep/usaleep.html>.



### **EDUCATION: Access to education is measured using two indicators:**

net school enrollment for the population ages 3 through 24 and degree attainment for the population ages 25 and older (based on the proportions of the adult population that has earned at least a high school diploma, at least a bachelor’s degree, and a graduate or professional degree). All educational attainment and enrollment figures come from Measure of America analysis of data from the US Census Bureau ACS. Multiyear 2018–2022 estimates were used in all calculations.



### **INCOME: A decent standard of living is measured using the median personal earnings of all workers ages 16 and older.**

Median personal earnings data come from the US Census Bureau ACS. Multiyear 2018–2022 estimates were used in all calculations.



**YOUTH DISCONNECTION:** The youth disconnection rate is the percentage of young people ages 16 to 24 who are neither working nor in school. While youth disconnection is not a component of the HDI, it is a key measure of community well-being and a featured indicator in this report. Youth disconnection rates were calculated by Measure of America using data from the US Census Bureau ACS. Nationwide, statewide, and Newark-wide estimates use 1-year 2022 data. The rest of the estimates use 5-year 2018–2022 data, with the exception of ZIP data, which were obtained as a custom tabulation from the US Census Bureau for years 2017 to 2021.

## Calculating the American Human Development Index

The first step in calculating the HDI is to calculate a subindex for each of the three dimensions separately. This is done in order to put indicators that use different scales—years, dollars, etc.—onto a common scale from 0 to 10. In order to calculate these indices—the health, education, and income indices—minimum and maximum values (goalposts) must be chosen for each underlying indicator. Performance in each dimension is expressed as a value between 0 and 10 by applying the following general formula:

**FORMULA**  
 Dimension Index =  $\frac{\text{actual value} - \text{minimum value}}{\text{maximum value} - \text{minimum value}} \times 10$

Since all three components range from 0 to 10, the HDI, in which all three indices are weighted equally, also varies from 0 to 10, with 10 representing the highest level of human development. The

goalposts were determined based on the range of the indicator observed in all possible groupings in the United States, taking into account possible increases and decreases in years to come.

The goalposts for the four principal indicators that make up the American Human Development Index are shown in the table below. To ensure that the HDI is comparable over time, the health and education indicator goalposts do not change from year to year, while the income goalposts are only adjusted for inflation using the CPI-U-RS from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Because earnings data and the earnings goalposts are presented in dollars of the same year, these goalposts reflect a constant amount of purchasing power regardless of the year, making Income Index results comparable over time. In cases where an estimate for a population group or geographic area falls above or below the set goalpost for that indicator, a maximum value of 10 or a minimum value of 0 is imputed for the purposes of calculating the HD Index.

INDICATOR	Maximum value	Minimum value
Life expectancy at birth	90 years	66 years
Educational attainment score	2.0	0.5
Combined net enrollment ratio	95%	60%
Median personal earnings*	\$79,283	\$18,739

\*Earnings goalposts were originally set at \$55,000 and \$13,000 in 2005 dollars.

There is a degree of sampling and nonsampling error inherent in data from the Census Bureau’s annual ACS. Not all differences between estimates for two places or groups may reflect a true difference between those places or groups. Comparisons between similar values on any indicator should be made with caution since these differences may not be statistically significant.

## Geographic and Population Groups Used in This Report

**Census tracts are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county, and are geographic units designated by the US Census Bureau.** Tracts generally have a population size that falls between 1,200 and 8,000 people, with an optimum size of 4,000. Tracts used in this report were delineated for the 2020 Census. There are 88 tracts within the Newark city limits, including special tracts like the one that contains Newark Liberty International Airport.

**Wards** are Newark-specific political geographies. Newark is divided into five political wards.

**Racial and ethnic groups** in this report are based on definitions established by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and used by the US Census Bureau and other government entities. Since 1997 the OMB has recognized five racial groups and two ethnic categories. The racial groups are Native Americans, Blacks, Asians, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders, and whites. The ethnic categories are Latino and not Latino. People of Latino ethnicity may be of any race. In this report, these racial groups include only non-Latino members of these groups who self-identify with that race group alone and no other. Census data also include some detail on the specific ancestries of the resident population. Detailed race and ancestry data were used to identify members of the **largest Latino/Hispanic subgroups** in Newark for the purposes of this report.

### EXAMPLE

#### Calculating the HDI for Newark



##### HEALTH Index

Life expectancy at birth for Newark is 77.0 years. The Health Index is then:

$$\text{Health Index} = \frac{77.0-66}{90-66} \times 10 = \mathbf{4.57}$$



##### EDUCATION Index

In 2022, 77.9 percent of Newark's residents 25 years and older had at least a high school diploma, 16.7 percent had at least a bachelor's degree, and 5.2 percent had a graduate or professional degree. Therefore, the Educational Attainment score is  $0.779 + 0.167 + 0.052 = 0.998$ . The Educational Attainment Index is then:

$$\text{Educational Attainment Index} = \frac{0.998-0.5}{2.0-0.5} \times 10 = \mathbf{3.32}$$

School enrollment (net enrollment ratio) was 76.1 percent, so the Enrollment Index is:

$$\text{Enrollment Index} = \frac{76.1-60}{95-60} \times 10 = \mathbf{4.60}$$

The Educational Attainment Index and the Enrollment Index are then combined to obtain the Education Index. The Education Index gives a 2/3 weight to the Educational Attainment Index and a 1/3 weight to the Enrollment Index to reflect the relative ease of enrolling students in school as compared with the relative difficulty of completing a meaningful course of education (signified by the attainment of degrees):

$$\text{Education Index} = \frac{2}{3} \mathbf{3.32} + \frac{1}{3} \mathbf{4.60} = \mathbf{3.75}$$

##### INCOME Index



Median personal earnings for the typical worker in Newark in 2022 were \$33,259, which we round to \$33,300 throughout this report. The Income Index is then:

$$\text{Income Index} = \frac{\log(33,259) - \log(18,739)}{\log(79,283) - \log(18,739)} \times 10 = \mathbf{3.98}$$

##### HUMAN DEVELOPMENT Index



Once these indices have been calculated, the HDI is obtained by taking the average of the three indices:

$$\text{HDI Index} = \frac{\mathbf{4.57} + \mathbf{3.75} + \mathbf{3.98}}{3} = \mathbf{4.10}$$



## Accounting for Cost-of-Living Differences

Cost of living varies across New Jersey and the country. Any comparisons with other cities or national data in terms of food, shelter, and clothing, therefore, must take this into account. There is currently no suitable nationwide measure, official or not, of the cost of living that could be used as a basis for adjusting for differences across regions. The Consumer Price Index (CPI), calculated by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, helps in understanding changes in the purchasing power of the dollar over time. The CPI is sometimes mistaken for a cost-of-living index, but in fact it is best used as a measure of the change in the cost of a set of goods and services over time in a given place. Additionally, cost-of-living variations within compact regions, such as states or cities or between neighborhoods in the same urban area, are often more pronounced than variations between states and regions. Further, while costs vary across the nation, they are often higher in areas with more community assets that are conducive to higher levels of well-being. For example, neighborhoods with higher housing costs are often places with higher-quality public services such as schools, recreation facilities, and transport systems and safer and cleaner neighborhoods. Thus, to adjust for cost of living would be to explain away some of the factors that the HDI is measuring.

## Maps

In Variation by Geography: Wards and Census Tracts for the Human Development Index and Median Personal Earnings, census tract calculations with a higher degree of uncertainty due to small sample sizes were not considered for the lowest and highest value callouts. All tracts with a higher degree of uncertainty are labeled as “less reliable” in each map legend.

# Notes

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## What the Human Development Index Reveals

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## A Long and Healthy Life

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## A Decent Standard of Living

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## Conclusion & Recommendations

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# A PORTRAIT OF NEWARK

While many measures tell us how the **economy** is doing, *A Portrait of Newark* tells us how **ordinary people** are doing.

*A Portrait of Newark* is an exploration of how Newark residents are faring. It examines well-being and access to opportunity using the human development framework and index, presenting American Human Development Index scores for Newark census tracts, wards, and demographic groups, and examining a range of critical issues, including health, education, living standards, and youth disconnection.

*A Portrait of Newark* includes a special section on opportunity youth—teenagers and young adults ages 16–24 who are neither working nor in school. During their teens and early 20s, young people develop many of the capabilities required to thrive as adults: they gain knowledge and earn credentials, develop social skills and networks, and come to understand their strengths and preferences. But what about young people who leave high school before graduation, are unable to transition from high school to college or career and technical education programs, or struggle to find jobs? Out-of-school, out-of-work youth also have dreams and aspirations, but have fewer resources and far less support to make them a reality. *A Portrait of Newark* explores the characteristics of this population and makes recommendations for helping them build flourishing lives.



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**Measure of America** is a nonpartisan project of the Social Science Research Council. It creates easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding well-being and opportunity in America and stimulates fact-based dialogue about these issues. Through hard copy and online reports, interactive maps, and custom-built dashboards, Measure of America works closely with partners to breathe life into numbers, using data to identify areas of need, pinpoint levers for change, and track progress over time.

## ABOUT THE DESIGN

**Humantific** is an internationally recognized SenseMaking for ChangeMaking firm located in New York and Madrid.

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**Newark Opportunity Youth Network** launched in 2016 with a multi-pronged approach to improving outcomes for opportunity youth in Newark—and across New Jersey. Support for this report was provided by the Solon E. Summerfield Foundation, Inc.

