



# Middlesex County Rental Housing Profile

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**RUTGERS**

Edward J. Bloustein School  
of Planning and Public Policy

RALPH W. VOORHEES  
CENTER FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



## **New Jersey State of Affordable Rental Housing**

The New Jersey State of Affordable Rental Housing (NJSOARH) project is exploring the landscape of affordable rental housing in New Jersey. The project has two main areas of focus. First, the team is assembling information about existing government supported affordable rental housing. Second, the team is exploring the processes that shape housing insecurity.

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## **We Enthusiastically Thank...**

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### **Advisory Committee**

Holly City Development Corporation

Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey

Latino Action Network Foundation

Monarch Housing Associates

New Jersey Citizen Action

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## Executive Summary

### Growth in the Number and Share of Renters

Middlesex County experienced a net increase of 26,481 renter households since 2000. All municipalities saw growth in the number of renter households over this period, with the largest increases observed in Perth Amboy, Woodbridge, New Brunswick, and Edison. The share of households that rent increased from 33% to 38% of all households since 2000. Almost all Middlesex County municipalities experienced a net increase in the share of households that rent over this period. In twelve municipalities, the share of households that rent grew by more than 5%.

### Rental Housing and Renters are Very Diverse

Middlesex County's rental housing stock spans all housing types from single family homes to apartments in large high-rise or garden-style developments of 50 or more units. Most municipalities contain a mix of unit sizes from studio apartments to three or more bedroom units. Middlesex County renters are also very diverse spanning all age groups, incomes, races, and ethnicities.

### Rents Have Increased

Median gross rent is higher than the state average and increased more than \$350 or 26% over the past decade. All Middlesex County municipalities experienced rent increases during this period, and affordability is a challenge for many households.

### Rent Burden is Pervasive

Forty-four percent of renter households in Middlesex County are rent burdened, meaning they devote more than 30% of income to rent. Twenty-one percent are severely cost burdened, meaning they devote more than 50% of household income to rent. The largest numbers and shares of rent burdened households are in Perth Amboy and New Brunswick where over half of renter households are cost burdened and over 30% are severely rent burdened.

### Most Low-Income Renters Are Cost Burdened

Most low-income renters in Middlesex County are cost burdened, and low-income households are much more likely to live in housing that is unaffordable than wealthier households. Among renter households with incomes less than 50% of the area median (less than \$61,600 annually), 84% or 40,700 are cost burdened, and 23,000 or 47% are severely rent burdened.

### Assisted Housing is Located Throughout the County

Federally assisted housing is located throughout the county. All but two small municipalities contain project-based federally assisted units, and all municipalities contained households with a Housing Choice Voucher.

### Approximately 7,000 Units are Federally Assisted, and Need Outpaces Demand

There are approximately 7,900 federally assisted housing units in Middlesex County spanning several programs including Public Housing, Section 202 Housing for the Elderly, Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA) housing, and units constructed or preserved using Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). Additionally, roughly 5,900 households receive a Tenant-Based Voucher for use in the private rental market, including in LIHTC properties. Need for affordable housing greatly outpaces demand. Federal programs serve some of the county's most vulnerable renters including those with very low incomes, older adults, and people with disabilities. However, long wait lists and eligibility requirements mean that many households that need affordable housing do not receive assistance. Nationally, only one in four households eligible for federal housing assistance receives it.

### Some Municipalities have Rent Control

Twelve of Middlesex County's 25 municipalities have a rent control ordinance that put limits on annual rent increases. Not all rental units qualify and each municipality varies in terms of the types of rental units for which the ordinance applies. Fifteen municipalities have no rent control ordinance.

## Introduction

The New Jersey State of Affordable Rental Housing (NJSOARH) project is exploring the landscape of affordable rental housing in New Jersey. As part of this project, we are publishing county rental housing profiles that bring together data on rental housing and related information for the county and its municipalities. The aim of these reports is to serve as a resource to better understand the landscape of rental housing in the county, patterns and trends, and affordability challenges. This report is divided into seven sections:

- Section 1: Renter Households
- Section 2: Rental Housing Characteristics
- Section 3: Renter Characteristics
- Section 4: Rental Housing Costs and Affordability
- Section 5: Unhoused Persons and Homelessness Programs
- Section 6: The Landscape of Housing Assistance
- Section 7: Rent Control Ordinances

## About Middlesex County

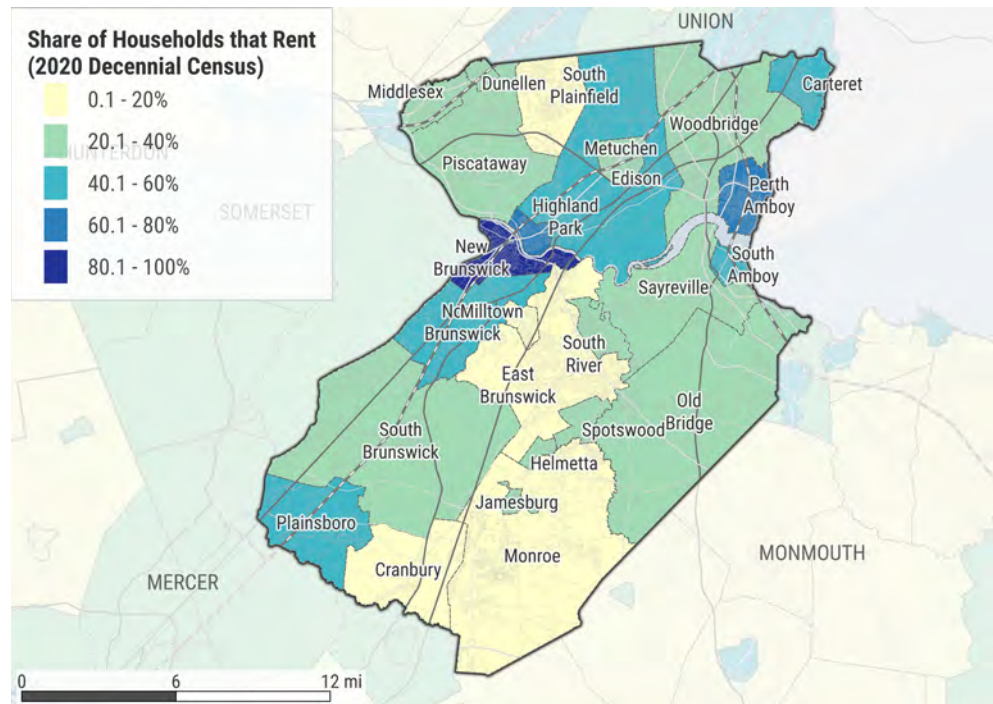
Middlesex County (population 863,162) is located in the central part of New Jersey, beginning east at the Raritan Bay and running west to Route 27. There are 25 municipalities in Middlesex County (12 boroughs, 10 townships, and three cities). Edison and Woodbridge are the two largest municipalities with populations of 107,588 and 103,639, respectively. Its central location provides county residents with excellent transportation access along the Northeast Corridor train line to New York City and Philadelphia and includes portions of the New Jersey Turnpike and Garden State Parkway. Middlesex county is home to many large employers including Rutgers University and a thriving biomedical sector. Many different people call Middlesex County home including immigrants from all over the world and students. Development has occurred at different stages throughout the county, and buildings constructed in the 17th and 18th century mix with new construction.



## Section 1: Renter Households

Middlesex County has 114,915 renter households according to the 2020 Census (see Table 1). The largest number of renter households (15,021) live in Edison followed by Woodbridge (13,317), and New Brunswick (12,610). Thirty-eight percent of households in the county rent. New Brunswick has the largest share of renter households at 82% followed by Perth Amboy (69%), Highland Park (60%), and Plainsboro (55%). Five municipalities have fewer than 20% renters (see Fig.1). Middlesex county experienced a net increase of 26,481 renter households from 2000 to 2020, and all municipalities saw an increase over this period. The largest increase is observed in Perth Amboy with a net increase of 3,288 renter households followed by Woodbridge (3,161), New Brunswick (2,984), and Edison (2,304). The share of households that rent also increased from 33% in 2000 to 38% in 2020. Helmetta saw the largest increase at 20%, but it has a small population. Rentership rates increased by 16% in Carteret, 11% in Metuchen, and 10% in Perth Amboy.

**Fig. 1: Share of Households that Rent**



Data Source: 2020 Census

**Table 1: Number and Share of Renter Households Over Time**

	2000		2010		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Carteret boro	2,229	31.7	2,992	39.4	3,996	47.6
Cranbury twp	151	13.8	200	15.2	183	13.8
Dunellen boro	757	30.9	915	35.7	985	37.6
East Brunswick twp	2,616	16.0	2,480	14.8	3,373	19.5
Edison twp	12,717	36.2	12,102	34.6	15,021	40.8
Helmetta boro	82	11.0	113	12.7	328	31.2
Highland Park boro	3,424	58.0	3,456	58.8	3,828	60.6
Jamesburg boro	695	31.9	763	35.1	764	36.1
Metuchen boro	973	19.5	1,130	21.6	1,744	30.0
Middlesex boro	1,259	24.9	1,254	25.2	1,600	30.2
Milltown boro	431	16.4	432	16.6	446	17.1
Monroe twp	653	5.2	1,077	6.5	1,881	9.3
New Brunswick city	9,626	73.7	10,747	76.1	12,610	82.0
North Brunswick twp	5,070	37.2	5,684	39.1	6,705	44.6
Old Bridge twp	6,552	30.6	6,931	29.2	8,170	32.6
Perth Amboy city	8,664	59.5	9,949	64.5	11,892	69.4
Piscataway twp	5,080	30.8	5,220	30.6	6,574	36.4
Plainsboro twp	5,066	58.0	4,792	51.0	5,327	54.8
Sayreville boro	4,830	32.3	4,715	30.2	6,264	37.0
South Amboy city	1,062	35.8	1,151	34.1	1,516	40.5
South Brunswick twp	3,201	23.8	3,452	22.9	3,991	24.9
South Plainfield boro	783	10.9	1,271	16.1	1,584	19.3
South River boro	1,724	30.8	1,912	33.8	2,157	37.9
Spotswood boro	633	20.4	572	18.3	659	20.6
Woodbridge twp	10,156	29.4	10,729	31.0	13,317	36.6
<b>County total</b>	<b>88,434</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>94,039</b>	<b>33.4</b>	<b>114,915</b>	<b>38.2</b>

Data Source: 2000, 2010 and 2020 Census.

## Section 2: Rental Housing Characteristics

### Building Types

Middlesex County contains a mix of rental building types. An estimated 18% of rental units are single family (attached or detached) homes, which is similar to the statewide figure of 20%. A quarter of all rental units are in two to four unit buildings (compared to 30% statewide); 34% are in five to 19 unit buildings (versus 22% statewide); 9% are in 20 to 49 unit buildings (versus 10% statewide), and 13% are in 50 or more unit buildings (compared to 18% statewide). In Edison, Woodbridge, Old Bridge, North Brunswick, Sayreville, Piscataway, Plainsboro, South Brunswick, and East Brunswick, more than 30%

of units are in five to 19 unit buildings. In Perth Amboy, Highland Park, Carteret, South River, and South Amboy, more than 30% of units are in two to four unit buildings. Units in 20 to 49 unit buildings are prevalent in Woodbridge and Highland Park. New Brunswick contains the largest number of units in 50 or more unit buildings. The largest shares of units in 50 or more unit buildings are in Metuchen (28%), East Brunswick (25%), and New Brunswick at (24%). Municipalities with large shares of single family rentals include Monroe, South River, East Brunswick, and South Plainfield (see Fig. 2A & 2B).

Fig. 2A: Number of Rental Units by Units in Structure

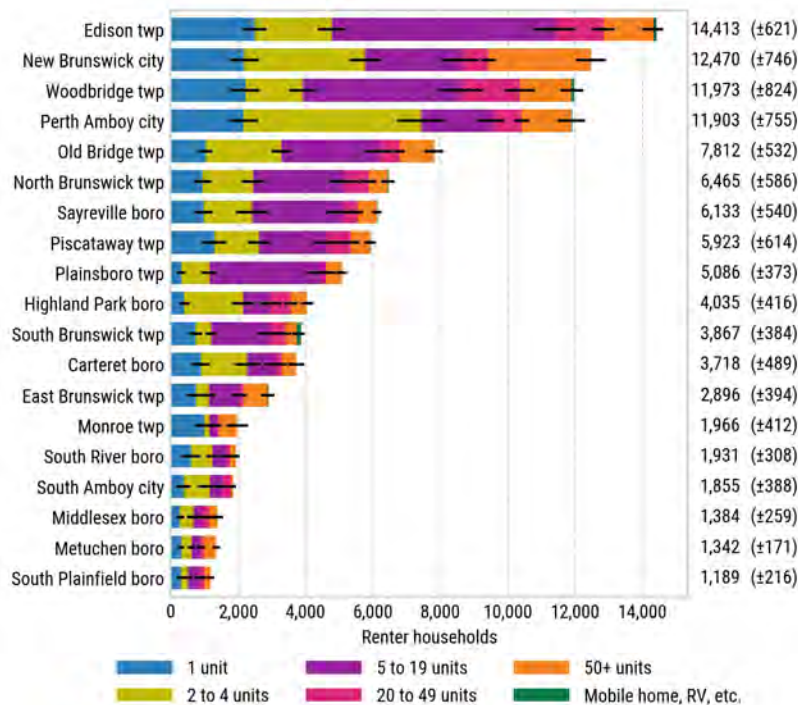
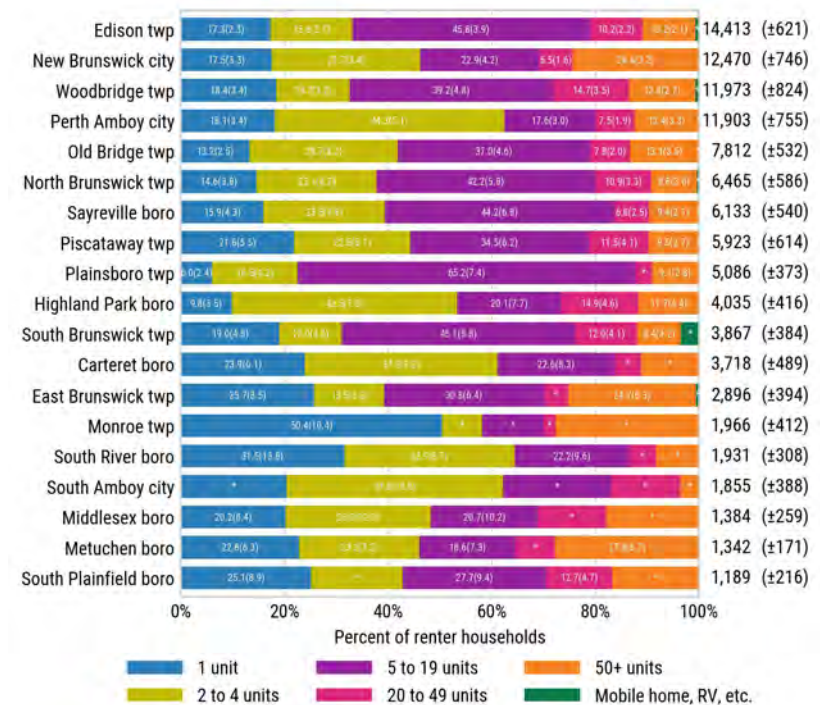


Fig. 2B: Share of Rental Units by Units in Structure



Data Source: 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey. The numbers to the right of the chart represent the estimated total number of renter households, with the margin of error indicated in parentheses. The black bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. Municipalities with fewer than 1,000 rental units are excluded from figures. An “\*” refers to imprecise estimates resulting from a small number of households.

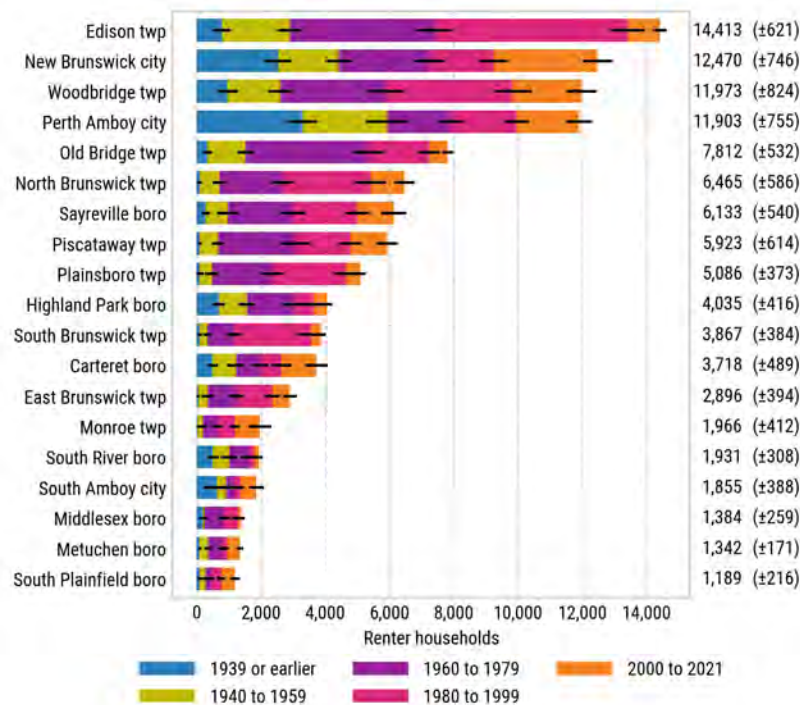
## Section 2: Rental Housing Characteristics, continued

### Age of Rental Housing Stock

Data on year of construction provides a timeline as to when each community was developed as well as insights into the quality and safety of the rental housing stock. Older housing units may have stood the test of time as a result of high-quality construction. But, they also may pose health and safety hazards such as lead paint, lead pipes, or asbestos and may be more costly and difficult to maintain.

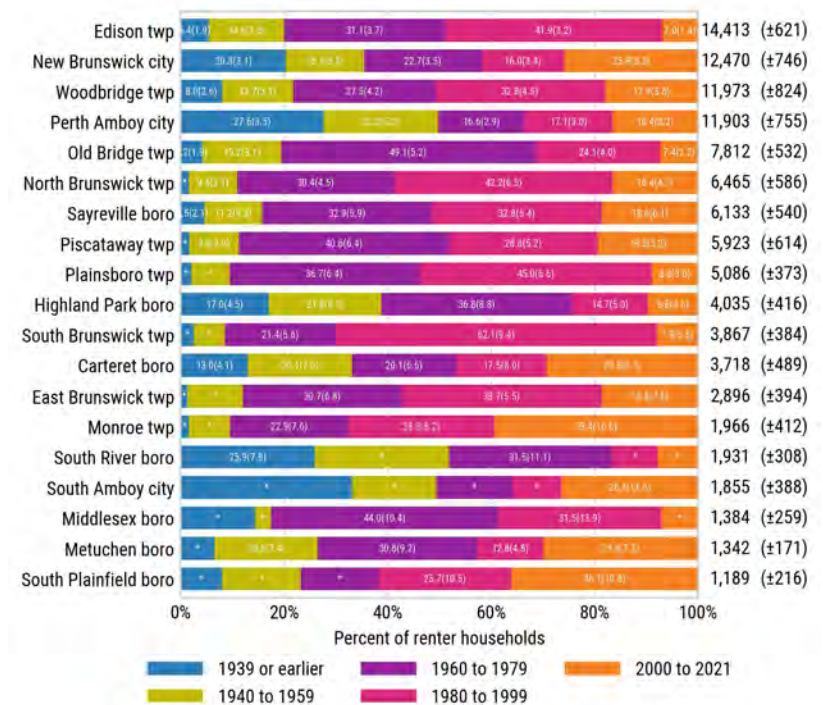
Rental units in Middlesex County tend to be newer compared to other parts of the state. Twenty-five percent of rental units were constructed prior to 1960 compared to 38% statewide. The largest shares of units were constructed between 1960 and 1979 (29%) and 1980 and 1999 (29%).

Fig. 3A: Number of Rental Units by Year Built



The largest number and share (roughly half) of units built prior to 1960 is in Perth Amboy. Highland Park and New Brunswick also have large shares of units built prior to 1960. (Note that estimates are not calculated for some municipalities given high margins of error, designated by an “\*”). The largest number of units built after 2000 is in New Brunswick followed by Woodbridge and Perth Amboy. Monroe, South Plainfield, Metuchen, Carteret, South Amboy, and New Brunswick have large shares of units built after 2000 (see Fig. 3A & 3B).

Fig. 3B: Share of Rental Units by Year Built



Data Source: 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey. The numbers to the right of the chart represent the estimated total number of renter households, with the margin of error indicated in parentheses. The black bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. Municipalities with fewer than 1,000 rental units are excluded from figures. An “\*” refers to imprecise estimates resulting from a small number of households.



## Section 2: Rental Housing Characteristics, continued

### Rental Unit Size

Different household types have varying rental housing needs. Large families need affordable units with multiple bedrooms while persons living alone or older adults are more likely to need smaller, one-bedroom units. Approximately 6% of rental units in Middlesex County are studio apartments, which is similar to the statewide figure of 7%. One bedroom units comprise 37% of the rental housing stock (compared to 33% statewide). Forty percent of rental units have two bedrooms (compared to 36% statewide), and 18% have three or more bedrooms (compared to 23% statewide).

Most Middlesex County municipalities contain a mix of unit sizes. The largest number and share of studio apartments is in New Brunswick. One and two bedroom units comprise the majority of units in all municipalities. Large units with three or more bedrooms are prevalent in Perth Amboy, Carteret, and South River (see Fig. 4A & 4B).

Fig. 4A: Number of Rental Units by Number of Bedrooms

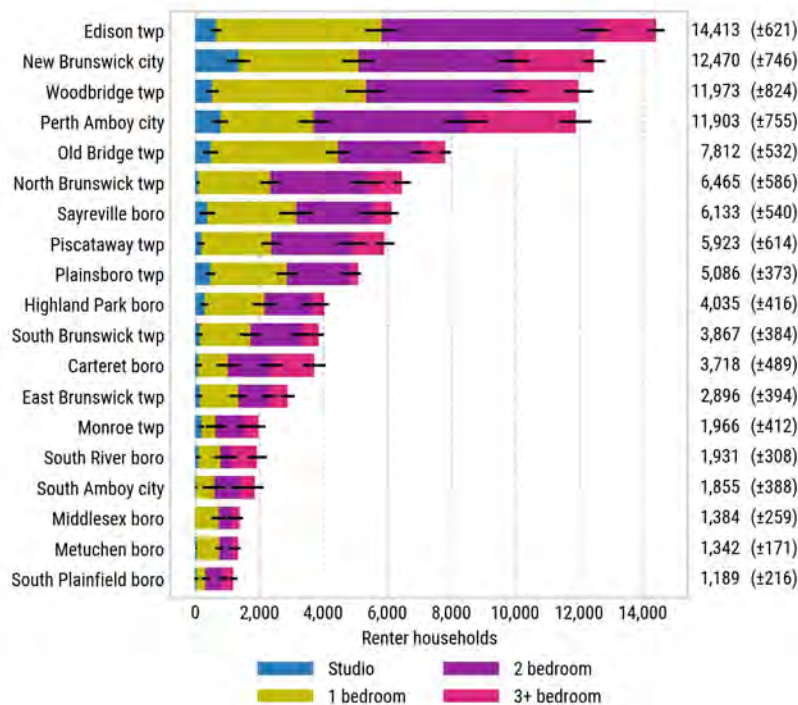
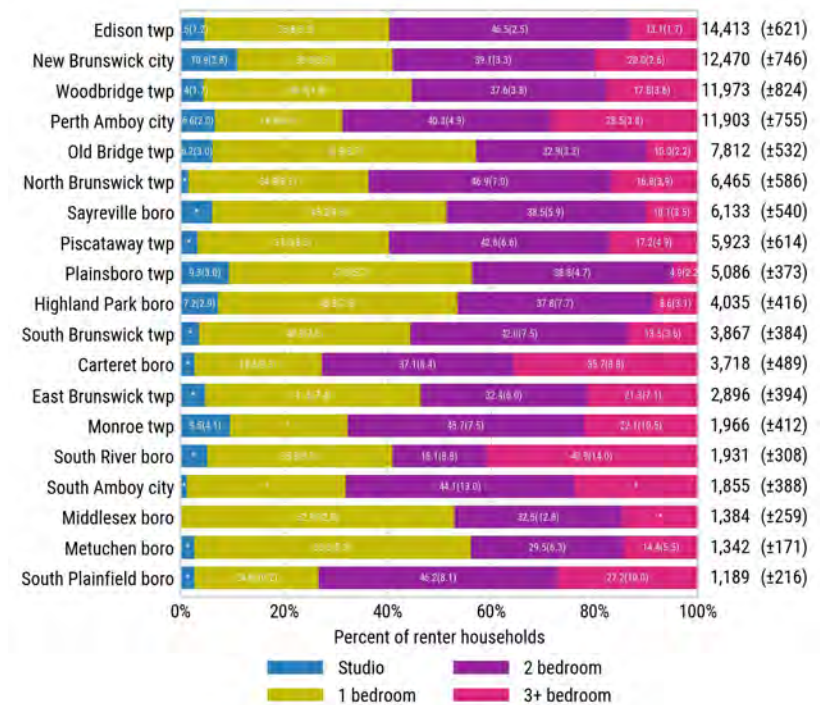


Fig. 4B: Share of Rental Units by Number of Bedrooms



Data Source: 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey. The numbers to the right of the chart represent the estimated total number of renter households, with the margin of error indicated in parentheses. The black bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. Municipalities with fewer than 1,000 rental units are excluded from figures. An “\*” refers to imprecise estimates resulting from a small number of households.

## Section 3: Renter Characteristics

### Size of Renter Households

Understanding patterns in local household composition illuminates demand for certain types of rental units and whether the existing landscape of rental units is meeting that demand. Figure 5A contains the number of renter households by the size of the household, and Figure 5B contains the share of renter households by size.

Renter households tend to be slightly larger in Middlesex County compared to other parts of the state. Thirty percent of renter households are single person households (compared to 36% statewide); 28% are two person households (compared to 27% statewide); 18% are three person households (compared to

16% statewide; and 24% are four or more person households (compared to 21% statewide). All Middlesex County municipalities contain a mix of household sizes. Large shares of single person households are in Monroe (59%), Highland Park (45%), Old Bridge (43%), and Plainsboro (42%). Municipalities with large shares of two person households include South Amboy, Middlesex, North Brunswick, and Metuchen. Three person households are prevalent in Carteret, Piscataway, Perth Amboy, and Edison. Large shares of four or more person households reside in South River (43%), Perth Amboy (32%), New Brunswick (31%), Edison (31%), and Carteret (30%) (see Fig. 5A & 5B).

Fig. 5A: Number of Renter Households by Size

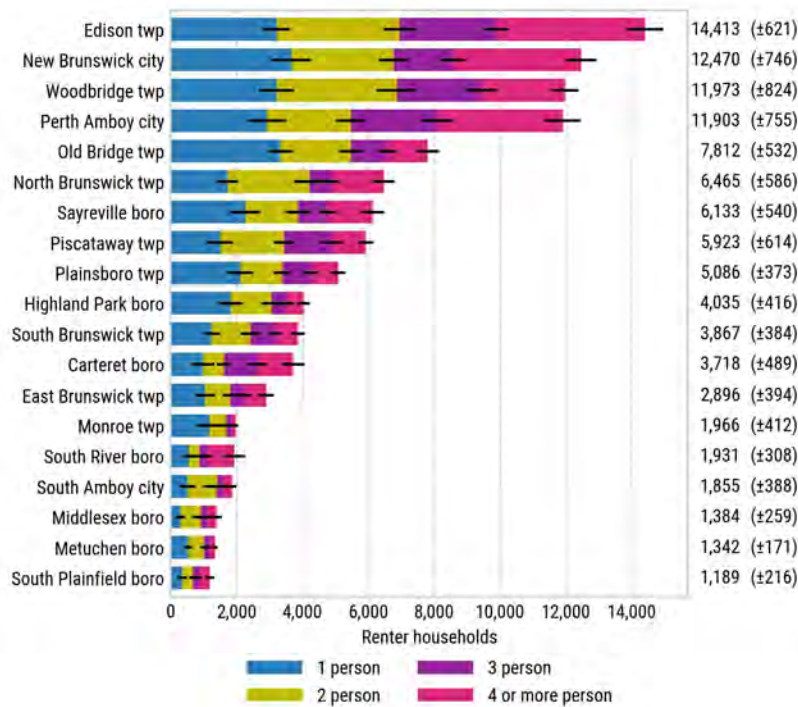
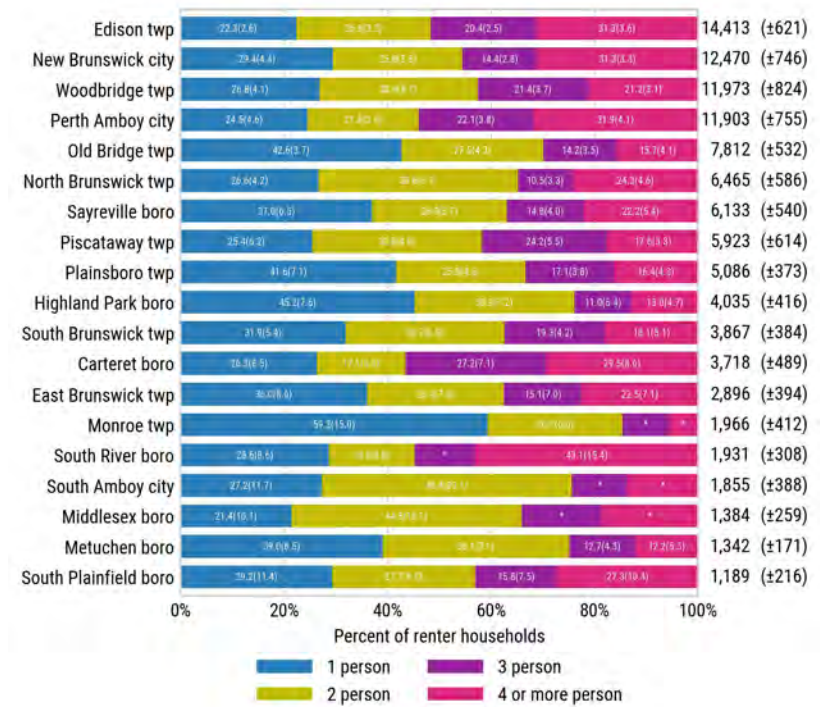


Fig. 5B: Share of Renter Households by Size



Data Source: 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey. The numbers to the right of the chart represent the estimated total number of renter households, with the margin of error indicated in parentheses. The black bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. Municipalities with fewer than 1,000 rental units are excluded from figures. An “\*” refers to imprecise estimates resulting from a small number of households.

## Section 3: Renter Characteristics, continued

### Householder Race

Middlesex County is very racially and ethnically diverse, and that diversity is reflected in the county’s renter demographics. The Census Bureau treats race and ethnicity as separate categories. Therefore, Figures 6A and 6B show householder race for all ethnicities, and Figures 7A and 7B on the following page contains information about householder ethnicity.

Asian renter householders make up more than 30% of renter households in Edison (45%), Plainsboro (42%), and South Brunswick (38%). White renter householders (both Hispanic/Latino and not Hispanic/Latino) comprise more than half of renters in Monroe (93%), South Amboy (69%), Metuchen, (68%),

Old Bridge (62%), Highland Park (60%), Middlesex (60%), South River (60%), East Brunswick (52%), and Sayreville (51%). Municipalities with large shares of Black renters include North Brunswick (33%), Piscataway (30%), South Plainfield (29%), and Carteret (28%). Householders that identify as some other race (who are largely Hispanic/Latino) comprise large shares of renters in Perth Amboy (28%), South River (25%), Carteret (22%), and New Brunswick (19%). The largest shares of householders of two or more races are in Perth Amboy (15%), Plainsboro (6%), Edison (6%), and New Brunswick (6%) (see Fig. 6A & 6B).

Fig. 6A: Number of Renter Householders by Race

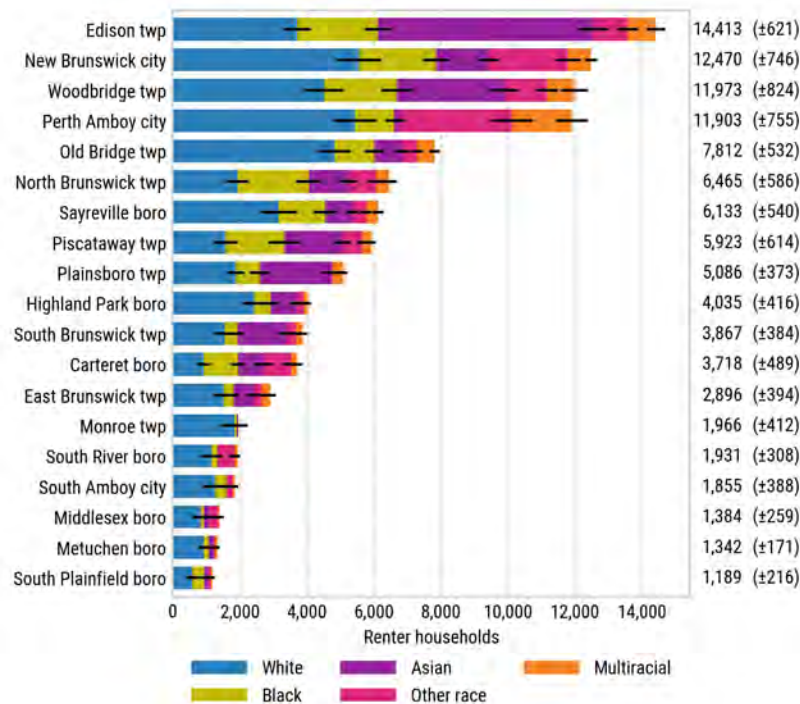
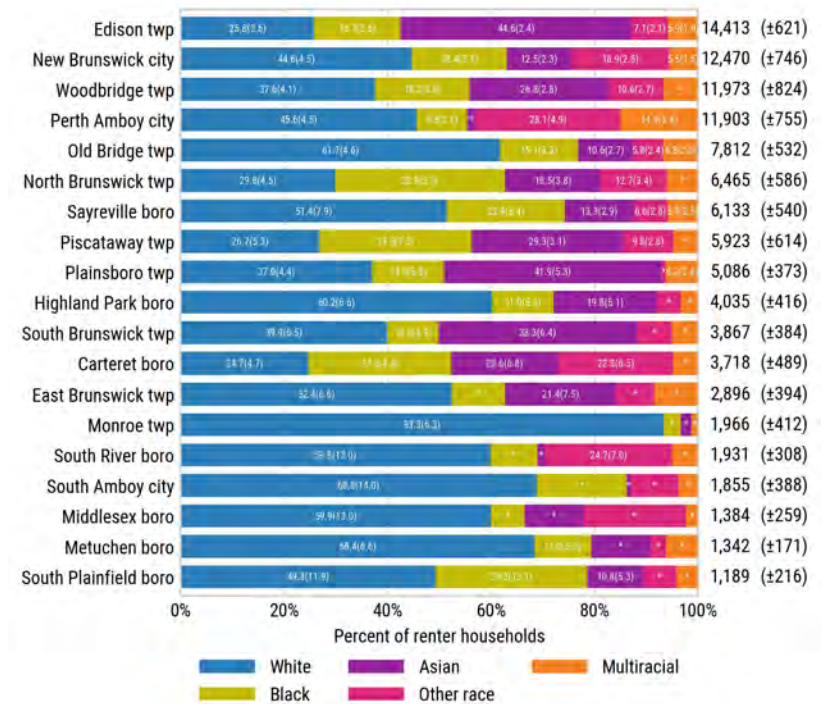


Fig. 6B: Share of Renter Householders by Race



Data Source: 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey. The numbers to the right of the chart represent the estimated total number of renter households, with the margin of error indicated in parentheses. The black bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. Municipalities with fewer than 1,000 rental units are excluded from figures. An “\*” refers to imprecise estimates resulting from a small number of households.

## Section 3: Renter Characteristics, continued

### Householder Ethnicity

Figures 7A and 7B contain information about the ethnicity of renter householders. Data are for all ethnicities regardless of race. For example, a renter who is of Hispanic/Latino origin could identify as white, Black, or some other race. A quarter of all Middlesex County renter householders are of Hispanic/Latino origin, and more than half of Hispanic/Latino households rent.

Over 80% of renter householders in Perth Amboy are Hispanic/Latino. Other municipalities with large shares of Hispanic/Latino renters include New Brunswick (46%), South River (39%), Carteret (35%), Woodbridge (28%), Middlesex (28%), Sayreville (23%), and North Brunswick (20%). Over 80% of renter householders are not Hispanic/Latino in 12 municipalities (see Fig. 7A & 7B).

Fig. 7A: Number of Renter Households by Ethnicity

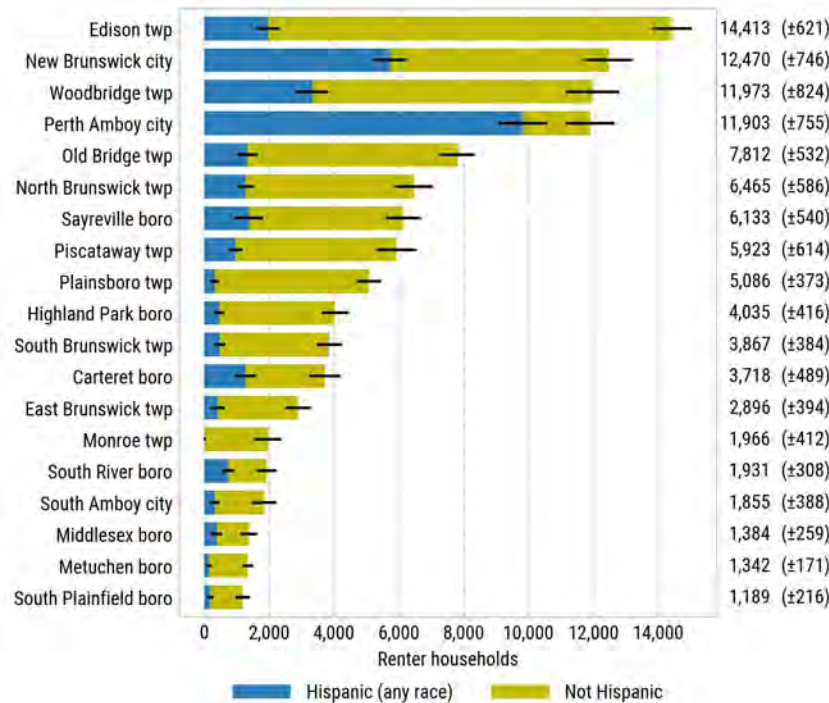
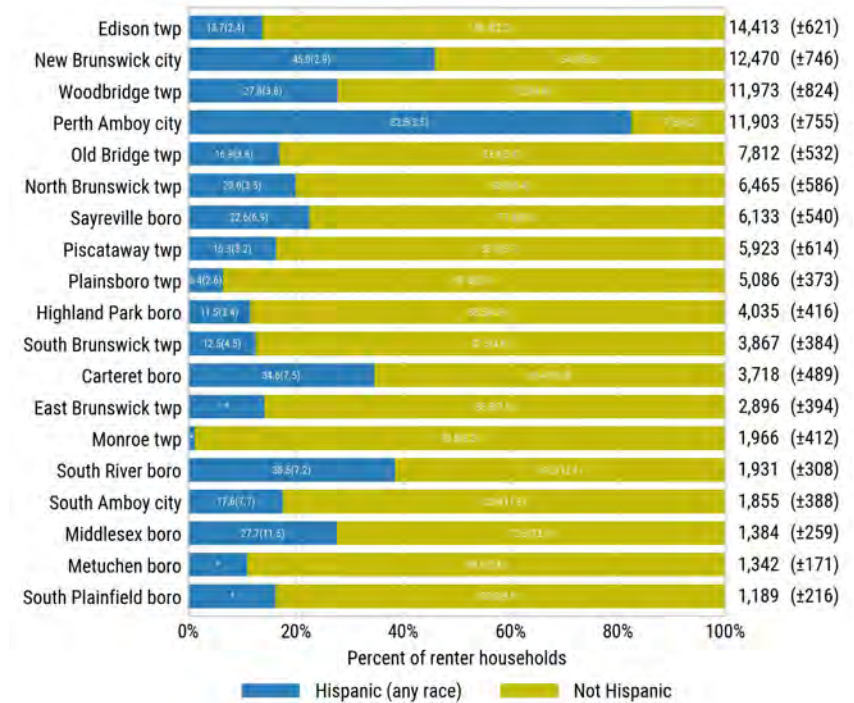


Fig. 7B: Share of Renter Households by Ethnicity



Data Source: 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey. The numbers to the right of the chart represent the estimated total number of renter households, with the margin of error indicated in parentheses. The black bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. Municipalities with fewer than 1,000 rental units are excluded from figures. An "\*" refers to imprecise estimates resulting from a small number of households.

## Section 3: Renter Characteristics, continued

### Age of Householder

Renters of different age groups have varying housing needs. Older adults may require units that are physically accessible for people with mobility impairments as they age and housing in close proximity to services and amenities like grocery stores. Younger households might face affordability and other challenges.

Most municipalities in Middlesex County contain a mix of renter ages. The largest number of renter householders age 65 or older are in Woodbridge, Old Bridge, Edison, and Perth Amboy. Two-thirds of renters in Monroe are age 65 or older, reflecting a large share of units in age restricted (55+) and senior

developments. East Brunswick, Metuchen, and Old Bridge also have large shares of older adults. Young householders age 15 to 24 comprise 15% of renter households in New Brunswick, 6% in Piscataway, and 5% in Highland Park. This is in part driven by proximity to Rutgers University. Perth Amboy also has a notable share of young householders. Householders age 25 to 34 comprise the largest shares of renters in Highland Park and Plainsboro, and renters age 35 to 44 make up the largest share in Edison. Renters age 45 to 64 comprise the largest share of renter householders in more than half of Middlesex County municipalities (see Fig. 8A & 8B).

Fig. 8A: Number of Renter Households by Age of Householder

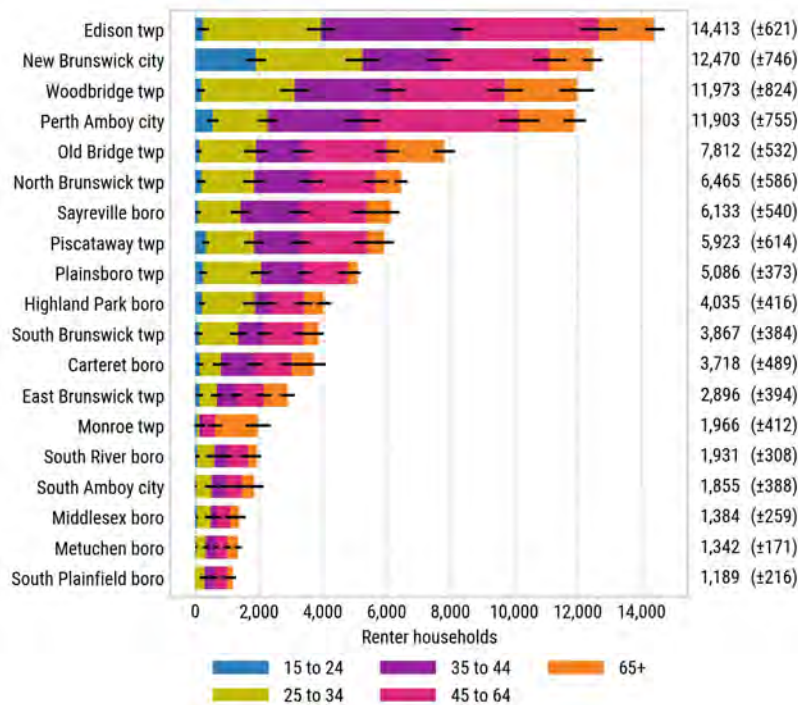
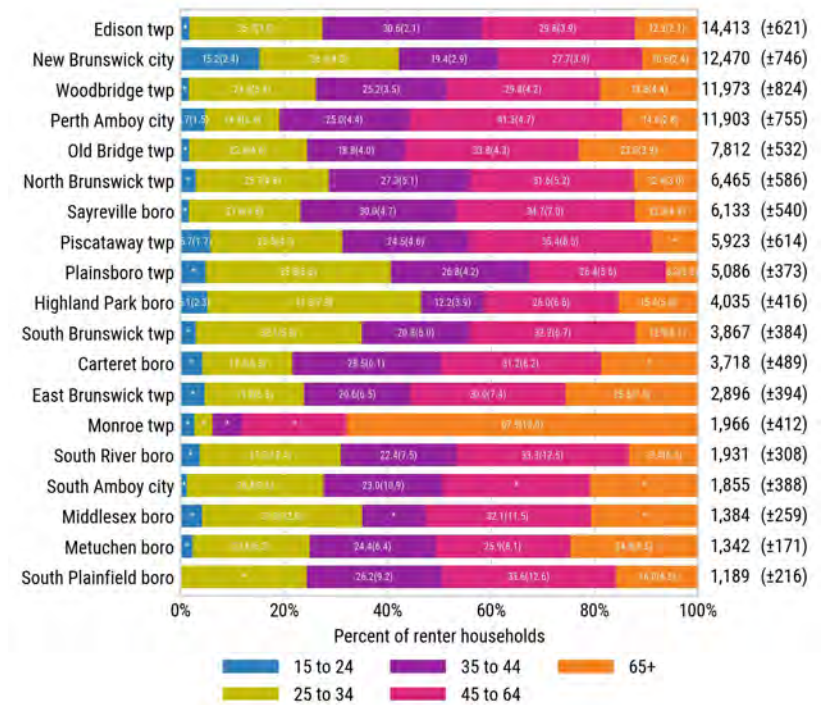


Fig 8B: Share of Renter Households by Age of Householder



Data Source: 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey. The numbers to the right of the chart represent the estimated total number of renter households, with the margin of error indicated in parentheses. The black bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. Municipalities with fewer than 1,000 rental units are excluded from figures. An "\*" refers to imprecise estimates resulting from a small number of households.

## Section 4: Rental Housing Costs and Affordability

### Household Annual Income

Low-income households face significant challenges finding housing that is safe and affordable. Moderate and middle-income households can also face affordability challenges in communities with high rents and a scarcity of affordable units. However, devoting a large share of household income to housing is most challenging for low-income households who have less income left over for other household expenses such as food or healthcare. Understanding renter income distribution can help communities plan for future rental housing needs.

Figures 9A and 9B show the number and share of renter households in each municipality by household income. The largest number of renter households with annual incomes less than \$35,000 are in New Brunswick and Perth Amboy. Low-income renters in New Brunswick include both low-income families and students. Municipalities with large shares of renter households with incomes below \$35,000 include New Brunswick (42%), Perth Amboy (36%), East Brunswick (33%), and Monroe (33%). Renters with incomes greater than or equal to \$100,000 comprise more than 40% of renter households in Plainsboro, South Plainfield, North Brunswick, Edison, Piscataway, South Amboy, and South Brunswick (see Fig. 9A & 9B).

Fig. 9A: Number of Renter Households by Income

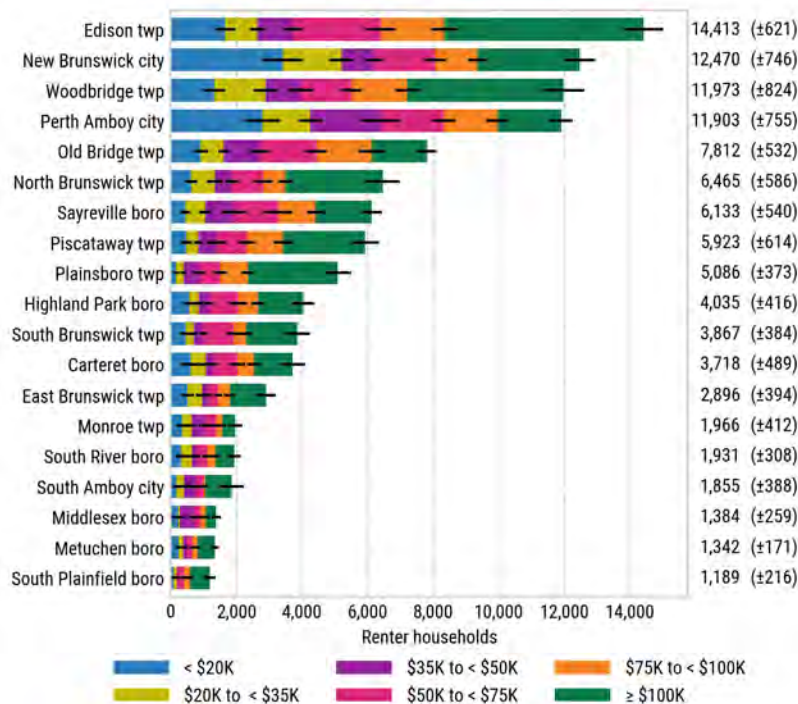
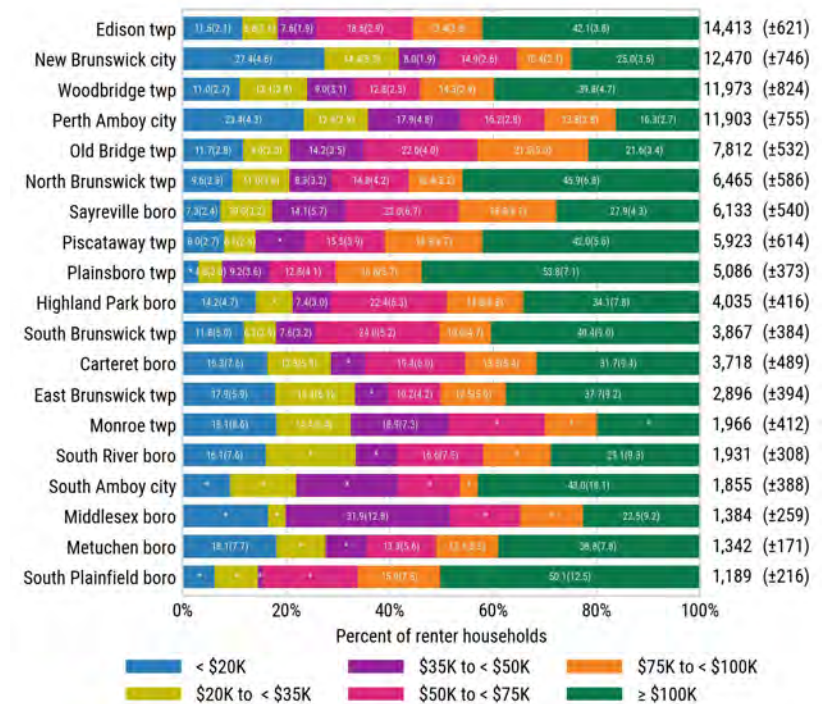


Fig. 9B: Share of Renter Households by Income



Data Source: 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey. The numbers to the right of the chart represent the estimated total number of renter households, with the margin of error indicated in parentheses. The black bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. Municipalities with fewer than 1,000 rental units are excluded from figures. An “\*” refers to imprecise estimates resulting from a small number of households.

## Section 4: Rental Housing Costs and Affordability, continued

### Rental Costs

Median gross rent in Middlesex County is \$1,739 according to data from the 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey, which is higher than the New Jersey median of \$1,577. Perth Amboy, New Brunswick, and Old Bridge have the largest numbers and shares of units with rents less than \$1,250 per month. Over 35% of units rent for \$1,500 to \$1,999 per month in Edison, Perth Amboy, Piscataway, Plainsboro, Highland Park, and South Brunswick. Municipalities with the largest shares of units renting for \$2,000 or more per month include

Metuchen (45%), North Brunswick, (44%), South Plainfield (42%), East Brunswick (41%), and Carteret (40%). A large share of rental units in Monroe township is occupied without cash rent, meaning the unit may be owned by friends or relatives who allow occupancy without charge. This likely reflects a the large number of age restricted (55+) and senior living developments in the township (see Fig 10A & 10B).

Fig. 10A: Number of Rental Units by Gross Rent

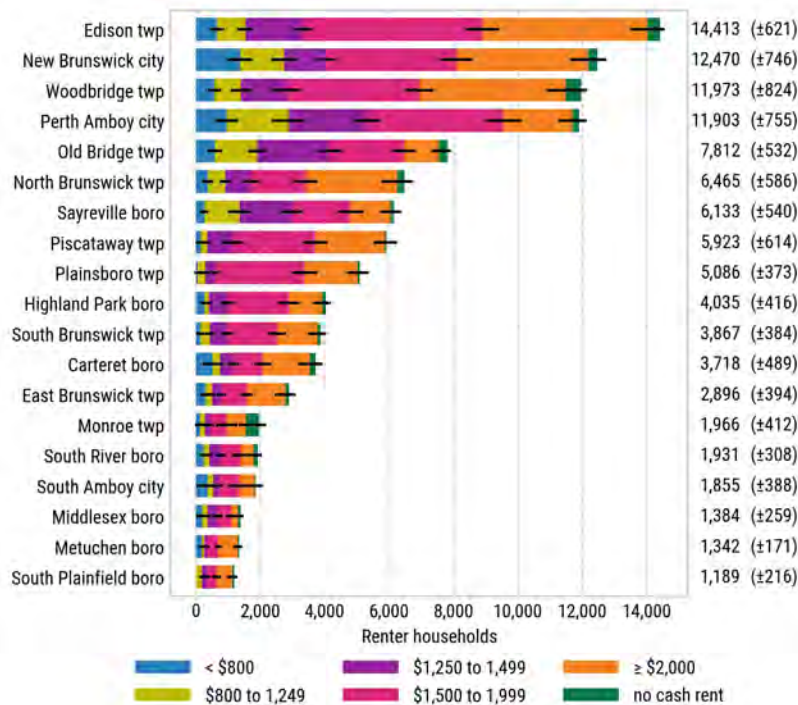
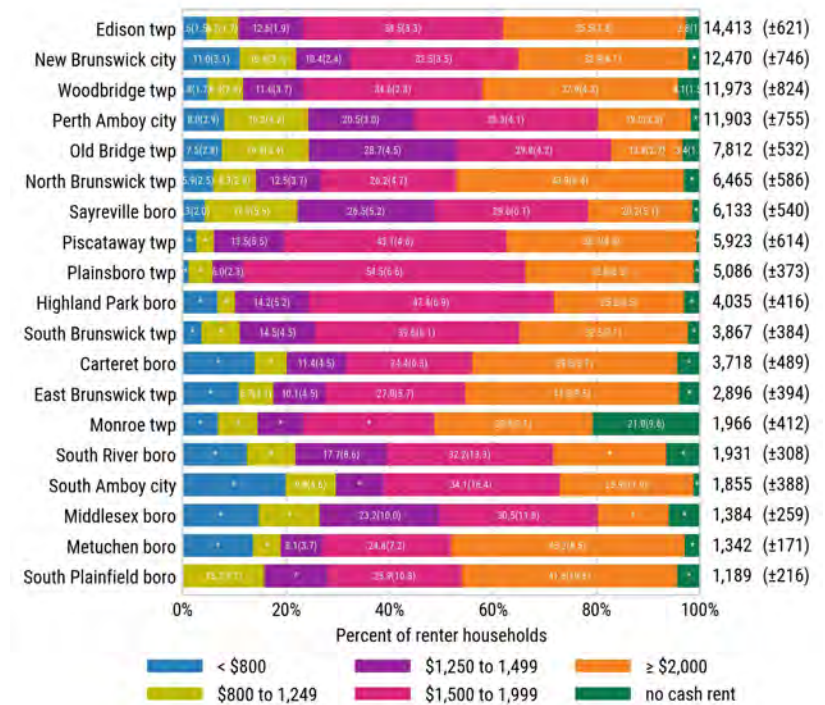


Fig. 10B: Share of Rental Units by Gross Rent



Data Source: 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey. The numbers to the right of the chart represent the estimated total number of renter households, with the margin of error indicated in parentheses. The black bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. Municipalities with fewer than 1,000 rental units are excluded from figures. An “\*” refers to imprecise estimates resulting from a small number of households.

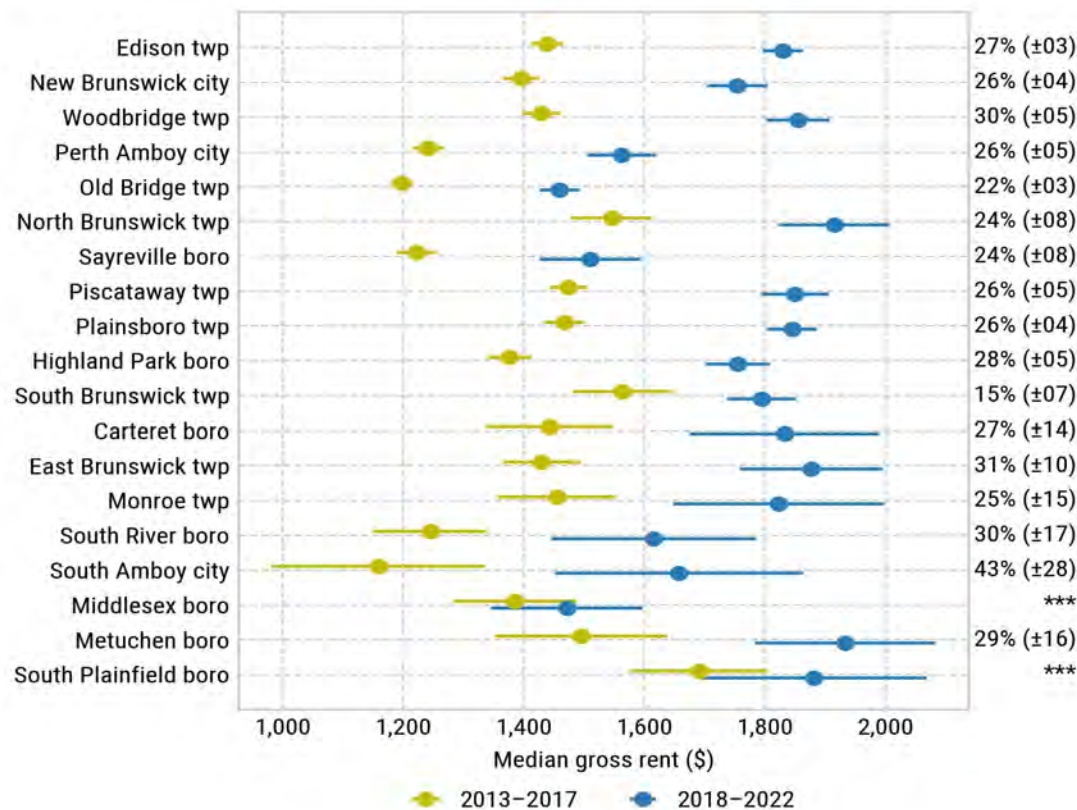
## Section 4: Rental Housing Costs and Affordability, continued

### Median Gross Rent over Time

Median gross rent in Middlesex County grew from \$1,384 per the 2017 Five-Year American Community Survey (ACS) to \$1,739 per the 2022 Five-Year ACS, which is an increase of \$355 or 26%. Figure 11 shows the change for each municipality over this period. The green dots show median gross rent from the 2017 ACS in 2017 adjusted dollars, which includes survey responses from 2013 to 2017. The blue dot shows median gross rent for the 2022 Five-Year ACS in 2022 adjusted dollars, which includes survey responses from 2018 to 2022.

All municipalities in Middlesex County saw increases in median gross rent over this period. The largest increase is observed in South Amboy at 43%. However, large margins of error, particularly for the 2022 figure, make discerning trends over time difficult. Other municipalities with large increases include East Brunswick (31%), Woodbridge (30%), and South River (30%). Median gross rent increased 27% in Edison, 26% in New Brunswick, 30% in Woodbridge, and 26% in Perth Amboy (see Fig. 11).

**Fig. 11: Change in Median Gross Rent Over Time**



Data Source: 2017 and 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey. The numbers to the right of the chart represent the estimated percentage increase in median gross rent, with the margin of error indicated in parentheses. The blue and green horizontal bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. “\*\*\*” denotes an unreliable estimate due to very large margins of error. Municipalities with fewer than 1,000 rental units are excluded from the figure.



## Section 4: Rental Housing Costs and Affordability, continued

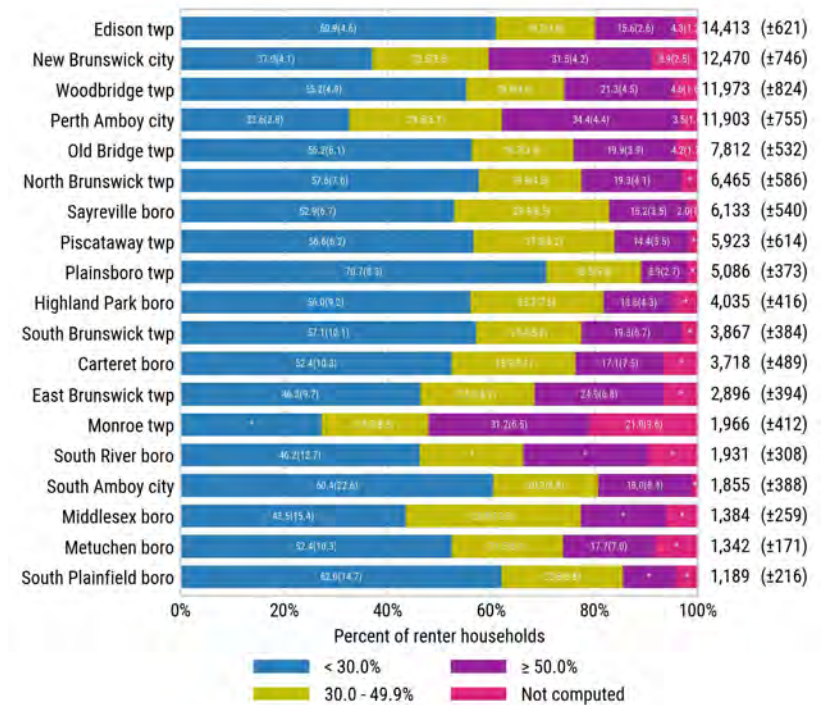
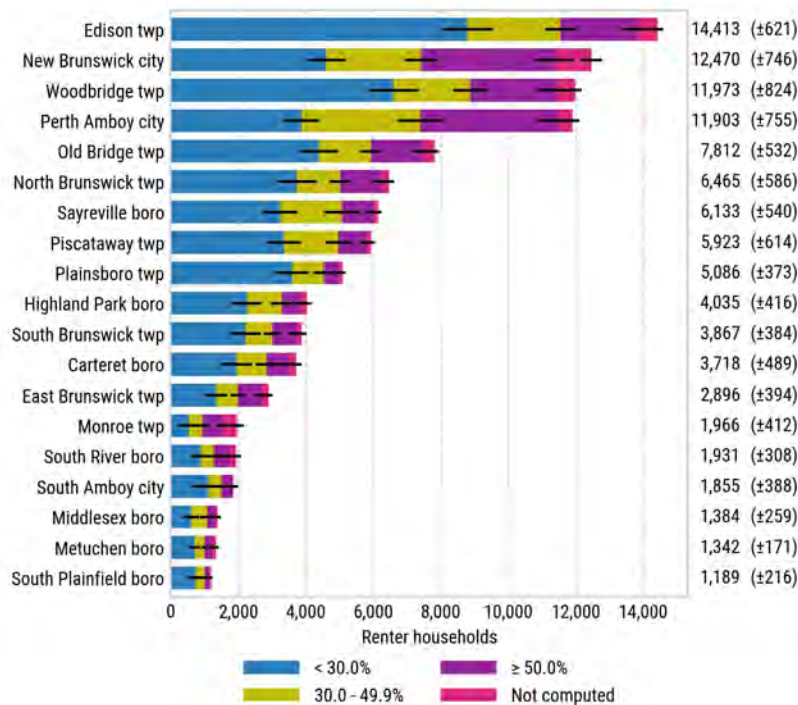
### Rent Burden

According to criteria established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), households are considered rent burdened if they devote more than 30% of their income towards housing costs. Severely rent burdened households are those that spend 50% or more of income on housing costs.

In Middlesex County, 44% of renters are rent burdened (compared to 48% statewide). Twenty-one percent are severely rent burdened (compared to 25%

statewide). All Middlesex County municipalities contain rent burdened and severely rent burdened households. The largest numbers of rent burdened households are in Perth Amboy and New Brunswick. In Perth Amboy, 64% of renter households are rent burdened and 34% are severely rent burdened. In New Brunswick, 54% are rent burdened and 32% are severely rent burdened. Additionally, more than half of renter households are estimated to be rent burdened in Monroe (see Fig. 12A and 12B).

**Fig. 12A: Gross Rent as a Pct. of Household Income (# of Households)** **Fig. 12B: Gross Rent as a Pct. of Household Income (% of Households)**



Data Source: 2022 Five-Year American Community Survey. The numbers to the right of the chart represent the estimated total number of renter households, with the margin of error indicated in parentheses. The black bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. Municipalities with fewer than 500 rental units are excluded from figures. An "\*" refers to imprecise estimates resulting from a small number of households.

## Section 4: Rental Housing Costs and Affordability, continued

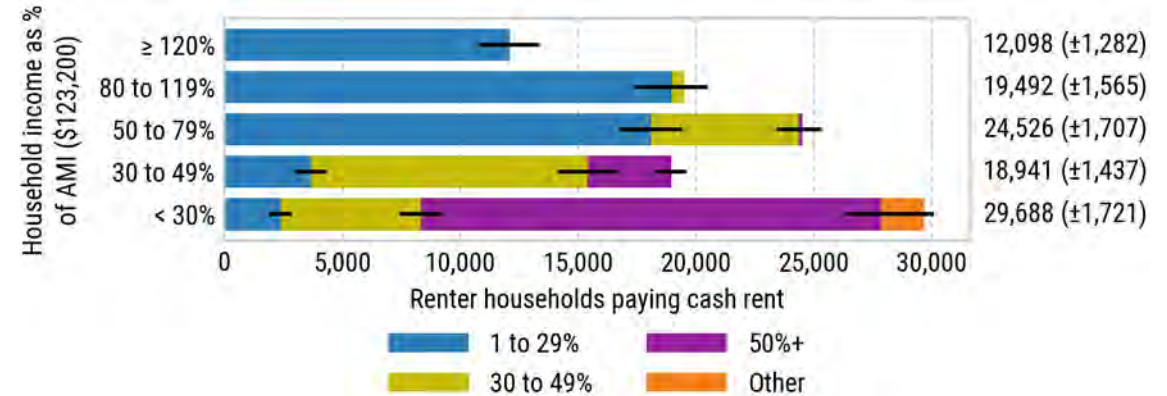
### Rent Burden by Income

Low-income households are more likely to be rent burdened than their wealthier counterparts. Figures 13A and 13B present gross income as a percentage of household income by area median income (AMI). Data are available at the Public Use Microdata (PUMA) level and represent all renters in Middlesex County. According to HUD guidelines, households are considered rent burdened if they devote more than 30% of their income toward rent, and severely rent burdened if they devote more than 50% of income to rent.

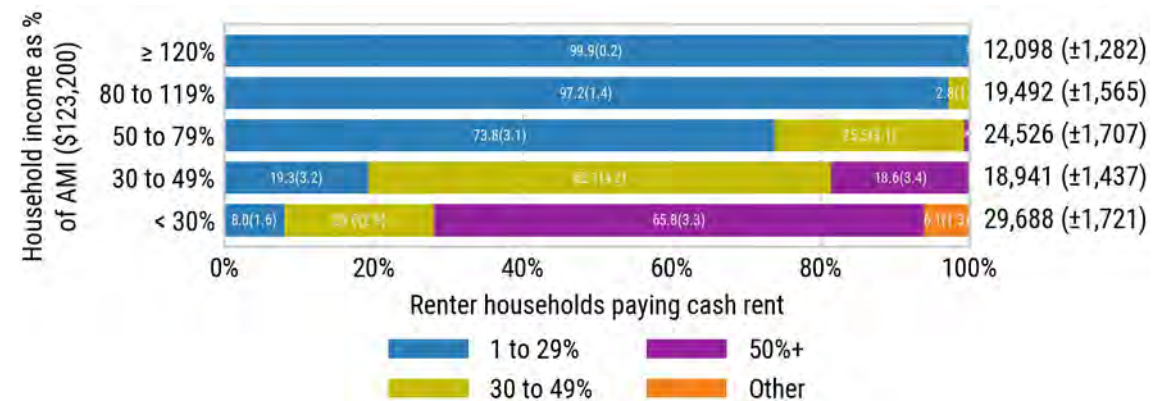
The majority (86%) of Middlesex County's estimated 29,688 renter households with incomes less than 30% of the area median (less than \$37,000 annually) are rent burdened, and 66% are severely rent burdened. The orange bars in Figures 13A & 13B represent households with zero or negative incomes, many of whom may be receiving some form of federal housing assistance. For households with incomes between 30% and 49% of AMI, an estimated 81% are rent burdened and 19% are severely rent burdened. Combined, this means roughly 40,700 or 84% of renter households with incomes below 50% of AMI (less than \$61,600 annually) are rent burdened, and 23,000 or 47% are severely rent burdened in Middlesex County.

Few higher-income renters are rent burdened. Almost all renter households with incomes above 80% of the area median have rental costs that are less than 30% of household income.

**Fig. 13A: Rent Burden by Household Income in Middlesex County (# of Households)**



**Fig. 13B: Rent Burden by Household Income in Middlesex County (% of Households)**



Data Source: 2021 Five Year American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMA). The black bars on the chart indicate the margin of error for each estimate. An "\*" refers to imprecise estimates resulting from a small number of households.

## Section 5: Unhoused Persons & Homelessness Programs

The New Brunswick/Middlesex County Continuum of Care (CoC) is the local planning body that coordinates housing and services for homeless families and individuals in Middlesex County. Each year, every CoC must submit “Point-in-Time” (PIT) data to HUD on the number of persons experiencing homelessness within the CoC’s jurisdiction on a designated night in January. “Homelessness” is defined in the PIT data as residing in emergency shelters or transitional housing or sleeping in places not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g., abandoned buildings, train stations, or camping grounds) on the night of the count. This is a narrow definition of homelessness and does not capture those who are unstably or impermanently housed such as “couch surfers” or persons staying temporarily with family or friends. There were 660 unhoused persons in Middlesex County on the evening of the 2023 PIT count. Note not all shelters report PIT data (i.e., shelters not receiving HUD funding and some domestic violence shelters). Most unhoused persons (79%) were residing in emergency shelters, four people were in transitional housing, and 21% were unsheltered (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Number of Unhoused Persons (Sheltered and Unsheltered)**

	Unhoused Persons	
	#	%
Emergency Shelters	519	79%
Transitional Housing	4	<1%
Unsheltered	137	21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data Source: 2023 HUD PIT count as published by the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Financing Agency (NJHMFA) and Monarch Housing Associates.

Of the 447 households counted in the PIT, 90 or 20% were households with children under age 18. Of these, 89 were in emergency shelters and one was unsheltered. Of the 356 households comprised of only adults, 64% were in emergency shelters, four people were in transitional housing, and 35% were unsheltered. There was one unaccompanied minor in an emergency shelter (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Household Characteristics for Unhoused Persons**

	Households w/ Adults & Children	Households with Only Adults (Incl. Single Adults)	Households with Only Children	Total
Emergency Shelters	89	228	1	318
Transitional Housing	0	4	0	4
Unsheltered	1	124	0	125
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>447</b>

Data Source: 2023 HUD PIT count as published by NJHMFA and Monarch Housing Associates.

Unhoused persons in Middlesex County span all age groups. Twenty-seven percent of unhoused persons were children under age 18. Thirty-four or 5% were young adults age 18 to 24. Thirty-one (5%) were adults age 65 and older, including 11 persons who were unsheltered (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Age of Unhoused Persons**

Age	Emergency Shelters	Transitional Housing	Unsheltered	Total
0-5	84	0	1	85
6-17	92	0	2	94
18-24	29	4	1	34
25-34	75	0	27	102
35-44	73	0	37	110
45-54	67	0	30	97
55-64	74	0	28	102
65+	20	0	11	31
Info missing	5	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>660</b>

Data Source: 2023 HUD PIT count as published by NJHMFA and Monarch Housing Associates.

## Section 5: Unhoused Persons & Homelessness Programs, continued

There are 12 emergency shelter programs in Middlesex County. Eight are brick-and-mortar emergency shelters and four are tenant-based scattered site/voucher programs. The County has one transitional housing program. There are 30 permanent supportive housing programs, 14 of which are single/multiple site brick-and-mortar units and 16 of which are tenant-based scattered site/voucher programs. There are four rapid re-housing programs, all of which are

tenant-based/voucher programs, and 21 other permanent supportive housing programs, all of which are single/multiple site brick-and-mortar units. Some beds in certain programs are reserved for special populations including 184 reserved for veterans, 301 for those who are chronically unhoused, and 17 for youth (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Beds and Units by Program Type**

	# of Facilities/ Programs	Family Units	Year-Round Beds				Seasonal	Overflow/ Voucher	Subset of Total Bed Inventory		
			Family	Adult- Only	Child- Only	Total			Chronic	Veteran	Youth
Emergency Shelters	12	47	96	71	0	167	0	370	na	0	0
Transitional Housing	1	0	0	5	0	5	na	na	na	0	5
Permanent Supportive Housing	30	213	489	308	0	797	na	na	301	183	6
Rapid Re-Housing	8	26	84	42	0	126	na	na	na	1	0
Other Permanent Housing	21	45	127	104	0	231	na	na	na	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,326</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>17</b>

Data Source: 2023 HUD Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Housing Inventory Count Report.

## Section 6: The Landscape of Housing Assistance

### Federally Assisted Units

Multiple federal programs together comprise the landscape of assisted housing in Middlesex County. There are roughly 7,900 brick-and-mortar assisted units in Middlesex County. In addition, there are 7,200 Housing Choice Vouchers (see Table 7 on page 21). Vouchers exist in two forms: 1) Tenant-Based Vouchers for use in the private rental housing market (which may include Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties); and 2) Project-Based Vouchers tied to units in specific buildings (of which there are at least 1,359 in Middlesex County).

The first column of Table 6 on the next page contains the total number of units with select federal project-based assistance by municipality. Subsequent columns contain the number of units with each type of federal subsidy. Roughly 1,200 or 15% of units receive multiple forms of federal assistance (e.g., a Public Housing unit with a LIHTC subsidy). Therefore, some units are counted more than once in the “Units Assisted” columns, but are only counted once in the first column of Table 6.

All but two municipalities (Helmetta and Milltown) in Middlesex County contain project-based federally assisted units. 4,084 units receive a LIHTC subsidy. LIHTC units are located in fifteen of the county’s municipalities. The Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA) program assists 2,058 units. Twelve municipalities have Section 8 PBRA units. There are at least 1,359 Project-Based Vouchers in the County. Carteret, Highland Park, New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, and Woodbridge have Project-Based Vouchers. There are 671 Public Housing Units in the county. Carteret, Edison, New Brunswick and South Amboy have Public Housing units. The Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program supports 668 units in the county. East Brunswick, Middlesex, New Brunswick, Piscataway, South Brunswick, South River, and Spotswood have Section 202 units. U.S. Department of Agriculture programs support 196 units in Middlesex County. Jamesburg and South Brunswick have USDA units. The Section 811 program, which provides supportive housing for people with disabilities funds 42 units in the county spread across seven municipalities.

Combined, roughly 7% of all rental housing units in Middlesex County receive some form of project-based federal assistance. In Cranbury, 49% of the township’s rental units are federally assisted. However, Cranbury has fewer than 200 rental units. Thirty percent of Spotswood’s units receive project-based federal assistance followed by 17% in South Amboy, and 11% in Carteret. Fewer than 5% of rental units in Dunellen, Monroe, Piscataway, and Plainsboro receive project-based federal assistance (see Table 6).



## Section 6: The Landscape of Housing Assistance

### Federally Assisted Units, continued

Table 6: Select Federally Assisted Project-Based Units by Municipality

	Total Units	Units Assisted by Select Programs (units can be assisted by more than one program)						Sec. 811	% of Rental Units with Fed. Assist.
		LIHTC	Sec. 8 PBRA	RAD PBV	Public Hsg.	Sec. 202	USDA		
Carteret	439	22	165	178	74	0	0	0	11%
Cranbury	90	90	0	0	0	0	0	0	49%
Dunellen	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0%
East Brunswick	183	0	144	0	0	118	0	0	5%
Edison	1,230	825	239	0	160	0	0	6	8%
Highland Park	181	157	0	124	0	0	0	0	5%
Jamesburg	72	0	0	0	0	0	72	0	9%
Metuchen	122	0	122	0	0	0	0	0	7%
Middlesex	86	0	0	0	0	86	0	0	5%
Monroe	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0%
New Brunswick	1,175	496	420	72	285	38	0	0	9%
North Brunswick	538	333	205	0	0	0	0	0	8%
Old Bridge	477	265	203	0	0	0	0	9	6%
Perth Amboy	766	766	0	420	0	0	0	0	6%
Piscataway	13	1	7	0	0	7	0	5	0%
Plainsboro	197	197	0	0	0	0	0	0	4%
Sayreville	400	100	300	0	0	0	0	0	6%
South Amboy	254	102	0	0	152	0	0	0	17%
South Brunswick	288	120	54	0	0	73	124	11	7%
South Plainfield	103	100	0	0	0	0	0	3	7%
South River	148	0	74	0	0	148	0	0	7%
Spotswood	198	0	125	0	0	198	0	0	30%
Woodbridge	925	510	0	565	0	0	0	0	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,893</b>	<b>4,084</b>	<b>2,058</b>	<b>1,359</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>7%</b>

Data Source: NJHMFA 2022 and HUD 2024. Data were compiled using an NJSOARH process which involved geocoding datasets, triangulating with other data sources, and manually checking uncertain results. The first column contains the total number of units with select federal project-based assistance. Subsequent columns contain the number of units with each type of federal subsidy. Some units have multiple subsidies and are counted more than once in the "Units Assisted" columns, but are only counted once in the first column. Share of rental units with federal assistance is estimated by dividing the total number of assisted units by the number of rental units per the 2020 Census. "RAD" refers to Rental Assistance Demonstration, and "PBV" refers to Project-Based Vouchers.

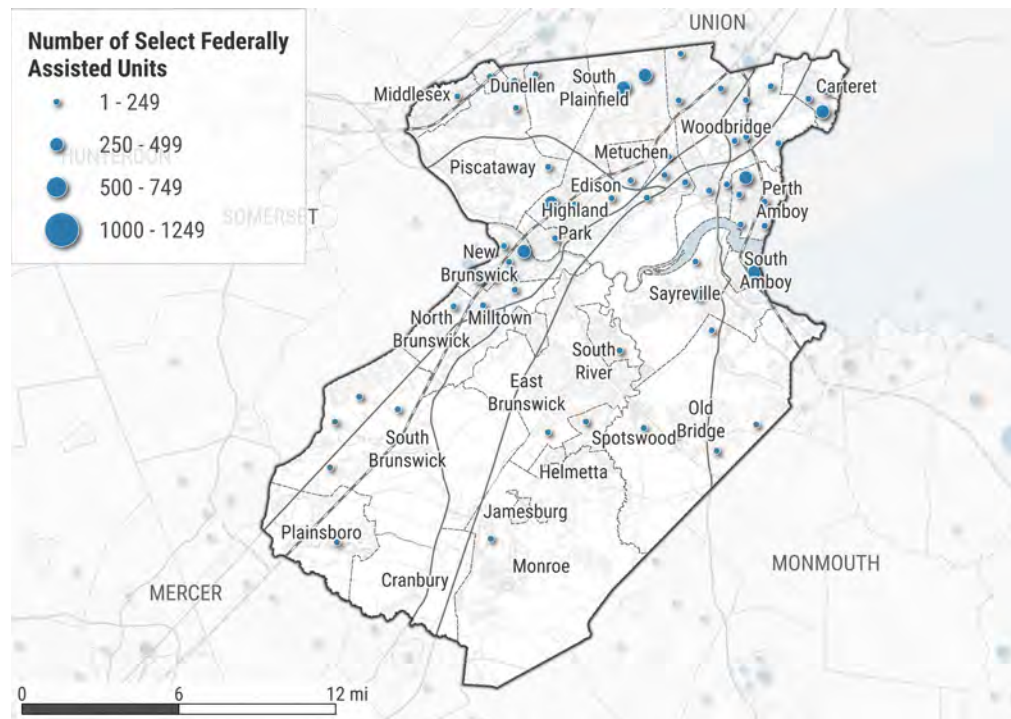
## Section 6: The Landscape of Housing Assistance, continued

### Location of Federally Assisted Units

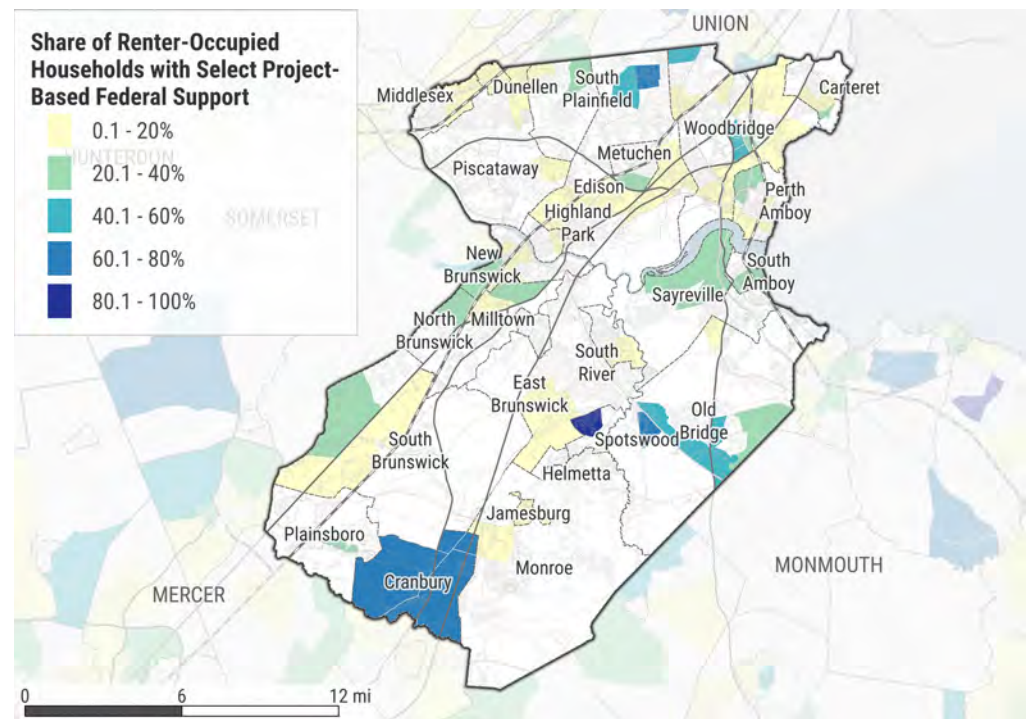
Figure 14A depicts the number of project-based federally assisted units by census tract in Middlesex County (not including Tenant-Based Vouchers). Federally assisted units are spread throughout the county, with larger numbers concentrated in the more densely populated areas in the north and middle of the county. Fewer units are in the southern portion of the county. Large numbers of federally assisted units are in New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Edison, Carteret, and South Amboy.

Fig. 14B shows the share of all rental units that have some form of project-based federal assistance by census tract (excluding private market tenant-based Housing Choice Vouchers). Census tracts in which more than 20% of rental units are federally assisted are peppered throughout the county in the following municipalities: Carteret, Woodbridge, Edison, South Plainfield, Metuchen, Perth Amboy, South Amboy, Sayreville, New Brunswick, North Brunswick, South Brunswick, Spotswood, Old Bridge, Plainsboro, and Cranbury.

**Fig. 14A: Total Federally Assisted Units by Census Tract**



**Fig. 14B: Share of Rental Units with Federal Assistance by Census Tract**



Data Source: NJHMFA 2022 and HUD 2024. Data were compiled using an NJSOARH process which involved geocoding datasets, triangulating with other data sources, and manually checking uncertain results. Total renter occupied units used to calculate shares in Fig. 14B is from the 2020 Census.

## Section 6: The Landscape of Housing Assistance, continued

### Housing Choice Vouchers

There are approximately 7,200 Tenant- and Project-Based Housing Choice Vouchers in use in Middlesex County in 2023. All municipalities in the county contain voucher holders. Perth Amboy has the largest number at 1,760 followed by Woodbridge at 1,265 and New Brunswick and 895 (see Table 7).

**Table 7: Number of Housing Choice Vouchers by Municipality**

Municipality	Number of Vouchers	Municipality	Number of Vouchers
Carteret	539	North Brunswick	334
Cranbury	3	Old Bridge	277
Dunellen	32	Perth Amboy	1,760
East Brunswick	70	Piscataway	182
Edison	639	Plainsboro	72
Helmetta	3	Sayreville	296
Highland Park	350	South Amboy	157
Jamesburg	16	S. Brunswick	118
Metuchen	12	South Plainfield	24
Middlesex	24	South River	58
Milltown	23	Spotswood	30
Monroe	90	Woodbridge	1,265
New Brunswick	895	<b>County Total</b>	<b>7,269</b>

Data Source: 2023 HUD Picture of Subsidized Households (PSH) and represent total reported households. In cases where a geography had fewer than 11 reported households and the data are suppressed, total units is reported.

### Characteristics of HUD Units and Households

HUD programs house roughly 19,000 people across six programs in Middlesex County. The average number of people per unit ranged from 1.0 for 811 units to 2.0 for Public Housing and Housing Choice Vouchers, reflecting the different populations they serve. More than half (54%) of units are studio/efficiency/one bedroom units, 27% are two bedroom units, and 19% are three or more bedroom units (see Table 8). The average time tenants spent on a waiting list before receiving a HUD-assisted unit was 25 months (over two years).

**Table 8: Characteristics of HUD-Subsidized Units**

	# of Units	# of People	People Per Unit	Bedroom Size		
				0-1BR	2BR	3+BR
Public Housing	647	1,228	2.0	39%	34%	27%
Hsg. Choice Vouchers	7,241	14,701	2.0	45%	32%	23%
Mod Rehab	3	na	na	na	na	na
Proj. Based Sec. 8	2,059	2,812	1.4	85%	10%	5%
202/PRAC	387	446	1.2	100%	0%	0%
811/PRAC	44	46	1.0	72%	22%	7%
<b>All HUD Programs</b>	<b>10,381</b>	<b>19,237</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>19%</b>

Data Source: 2023 HUD PSH. Voucher totals, which includes total reported households, may differ from Table 7 given the data come from different geographic aggregations. Mod Rehab units are not included in subsequent tables due to a lack of data.

This is shorter than the statewide average of 33 months, or 2.75 years. The average length of time a household has been in their unit is over 10 years (124 months). Long waiting lists and little turnover reflect the difficulty of accessing HUD housing and the strong need for affordable units. Average gross rent in assisted units was \$531, which for most programs is set at 30% of a household's income. HUD rents are considerably lower than market rate rents, and if these units are lost, it is unlikely households would be able to find unsubsidized units that are affordable (see Table 9).

**Table 9: HUD Program Waiting List and Tenure**

	Months on Waiting List	Months Since Moved In	Avg. Gross Rent
Public Housing	49	129	\$539
Housing Choice Vouchers	23	125	\$583
Proj. Based Sec. 8	na	126	\$373
202/PRAC	na	94	\$400
811/PRAC	na	134	\$432
<b>All HUD Programs</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>\$531</b>

Data Source: 2023 HUD PSH.



## Section 6: The Landscape of Housing Assistance, continued

HUD programs serve some of Middlesex County's most vulnerable renter households. Average annual household income (irrespective of household size) ranged from \$16,001 for residents in Project Based Section 8 units to \$23,638 for Housing Choice Voucher recipients. Eleven percent of households have annual incomes less than \$10,000, and 81% of households have incomes less than 30% of area median family income (see Table 10).

**Table 10: HUD Program Household Income Characteristics**

	Avg. Household Income	Share with Incomes <\$10k	Share with Inc. <30% AMI
Public Housing	\$23,157	11%	79%
Hsg. Choice Vouchers	\$23,638	11%	78%
Proj. Based Sec. 8	\$16,001	16%	92%
202/PRAC	\$17,953	10%	87%
811/PRAC	\$18,536	4%	89%
<b>All HUD Programs</b>	<b>\$21,863</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>81%</b>

Data Source: 2023 HUD PSH.

More than half of Middlesex County households in HUD subsidized housing had a householder or spouse age 62 or older, and 8% had a householder or spouse age 85 or older. Twenty-six percent of households include children under age 18, and 21% of residents have a disability (see Table 11).

Thirty-two percent of householders in HUD assisted housing identify as Black (both Hispanic/Latino and non-Hispanic/Latino); 25% are white (not Hispanic/Latino); 7% are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 37% are Hispanic/Latino (of any race). One percent are of two or more races (see Table 12).

**Table 11: HUD Program Household Demographics**

	Pct. Age 62+	Pct. Age 85+	Pct. of Households with Children	Pct. with a Disability
Public Housing	45%	3%	35%	12%
Housing Choice Vouchers	40%	4%	32%	24%
Proj. Based Sec. 8	84%	22%	6%	11%
202/PRAC	100%	23%	0%	2%
811/PRAC	39%	0%	0%	96%
<b>All HUD Programs</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>21%</b>

Data Source: 2023 HUD PSH.

**Table 12: Householder Race/Ethnicity**

	Public Housing	Hsg. Choice Vouchers	Proj. Based Sec. 8	202/PRAC	811/PRAC	All HUD Progr.
Non-Hispanic/Latino	60%	57%	80%	84%	91%	<b>63%</b>
Black	29%	36%	11%	8%	15%	<b>30%</b>
Nat. Amer./AK Nat.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>
Asian/Pacific Isl.	2%	2%	25%	19%	0%	<b>7%</b>
White	29%	19%	38%	51%	72%	<b>25%</b>
Hispanic/Latino	40%	43%	20%	16%	9%	<b>37%</b>
Black	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	<b>2%</b>
White	38%	40%	11%	7%	9%	<b>33%</b>
Other	1%	0%	9%	9%	0%	<b>2%</b>
Multiple Races	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	<b>1%</b>

Data Source: 2023 HUD PSH. Note that missing data and rounding may result in figures not totaling to 100%.

## Section 7: Rent Control Ordinances

Over 100 municipalities in New Jersey have some form of a rent control ordinance that limits the amount rent can increase each year for certain units. Twelve of Middlesex County's 25 municipalities have a rent control ordinance. Rent increase caps range from 2% to 7.5% or are pinned to the Consumer Price Index. Some ordinances specify different limits based on certain conditions, such as whether water or heat is included in rent. Thirteen

municipalities (Carteret, Cranbury, Dunellen, Helmetta, Jamesburg, Middlesex, Milltown, Monroe, Plainsboro, South Amboy, South Plainfield, South River, and Spotswood) do not have a rent control ordinance. For a more comprehensive discussion of rent control in New Jersey, see NJSOARH's report Rent Control in New Jersey.

**Table 13: Municipalities with Rent Control**

Municipality	Units Covered	Link to Ordinance	Municipality	Units Covered	Link to Ordinance
East Brunswick	1+	<a href="https://www.eastbrunswick.org/DocumentCenter/View/1228/Rent-Control-Ordinance-PDF">https://www.eastbrunswick.org/DocumentCenter/View/1228/Rent-Control-Ordinance-PDF</a>	Old Bridge	3+	<a href="https://ecode360.com/7013390">https://ecode360.com/7013390</a>
Edison	3+	<a href="https://ecode360.com/34711072">https://ecode360.com/34711072</a>	Perth Amboy	1+	<a href="https://ecode360.com/35014655">https://ecode360.com/35014655</a>
Highland Park	3+	<a href="https://ecode360.com/10613141">https://ecode360.com/10613141</a>	Piscataway	3+	<a href="https://ecode360.com/34884813">https://ecode360.com/34884813</a>
Metuchen	1+	<a href="https://ecode360.com/13501735">https://ecode360.com/13501735</a>	Sayreville	3+	<a href="https://library.municode.com/nj/sayreville_borough/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CHXIIBUHO_12-6RECO">https://library.municode.com/nj/sayreville_borough/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CHXIIBUHO_12-6RECO</a>
New Brunswick	1+	<a href="https://library.municode.com/nj/new_brunswick/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT5BULIRE_CH5.80RECO#TOPTITLE">https://library.municode.com/nj/new_brunswick/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT5BULIRE_CH5.80RECO#TOPTITLE</a>	South Brunswick	3+	<a href="https://library.municode.com/nj/south_brunswick_township/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CH78OFMIPR_ARTVRECO">https://library.municode.com/nj/south_brunswick_township/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CH78OFMIPR_ARTVRECO</a>
North Brunswick	2+	<a href="https://ecode360.com/8536376">https://ecode360.com/8536376</a>	Woodbridge	5+	<a href="https://ecode360.com/35043236">https://ecode360.com/35043236</a>

Data Source: 2022 NJ Department of Community Affairs Rent Control Survey

## Conclusion

The Middlesex County rental housing profile is intended to provide easy access to information about rental housing. The report provides this information at the county level, while also presenting a within-county analysis of municipal conditions. Many of the figures contained in the report rely on American Community Survey data, which, as a survey, has a margin of error. As such, one

should proceed with caution when interpreting data for municipalities with small populations. Together, these data can be used with other information to further a holistic understanding of rental housing conditions and challenges in the county.

