

Data: A Tool to Advance Equity

LSNJ Anti-Discrimination Justice Initiatives

The Melville “De” Miller, Jr. Justice Series

Shivi Prasad
Director, Poverty Research Institute
Legal Services of New Jersey
June 15th, 2022



“Without data
you’re just
another person
with an opinion.”

- W. Edwards Deming,
Data Scientist

Effective Policies Need Hard Data

- To address an issue, we first need to acknowledge there is a problem.
- Convince others – to make a change there needs to be wide acceptance
- Need good data

~ Data separates facts from opinions ~

Uses of Data: Creation of Effective Policies

- Gain a Deeper Understanding
 - Persistence (short-term, long-drawn)
 - Trajectory Overtime (up and down, seasonal, etc.)
 - Geography (Areas)
 - Demographics (Populations)
- Identify a Problem/ Make an Informed Decision
- Present an Argument for System Change/Creation of New Policy
- Better Target Resources/Allocation of Budget Dollars

Overall: Improve Outcome and Costs

Data Can Also Help Us In Studying the “Effectiveness” of Existing Policies

- Studying the Effectiveness of Certain Strategies
- Review Progress & Mid-Course Correction

Analysis of data also shows where there is missing data or there is gap in knowledge

Analyzing Data to Assess Change

- Improvement in Data Collection/ Access
- Change in Methodology
- Improvement in Reporting
- Better Knowledge or Awareness
- Community Outreach - encourage people to feel comfortable reporting bias incidents to law enforcement
- Social and Political Factors
- A Combination of Factors

Presenting Data

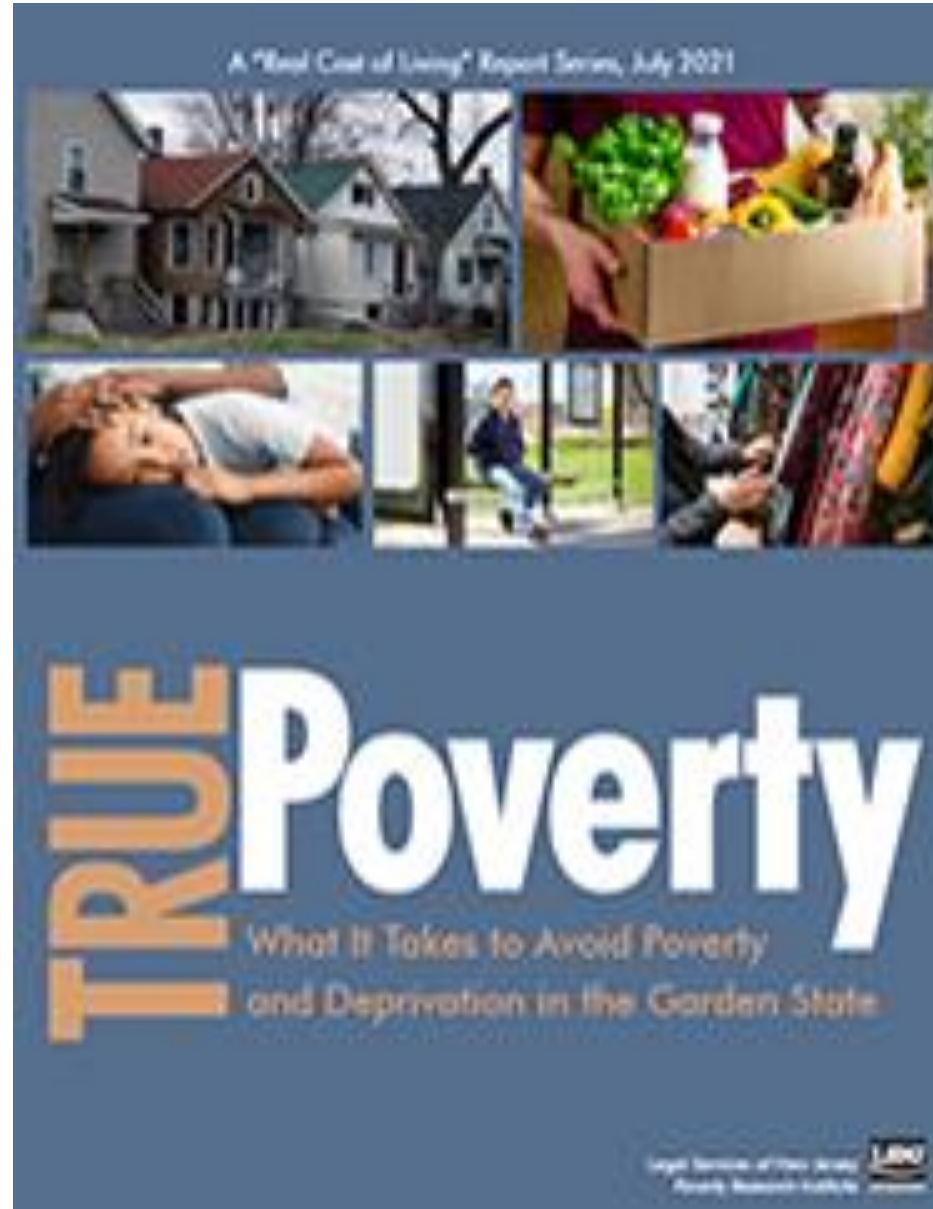
- Data visualization is equally important
- Analyze data to create meaningful information
- Easily understandable Infographics

How is Data Interpreted? Centering on Equity

- Contextualized: Historical, Social or Political
- The Language used should not separate or create hierarchy/ Us vs. them/ “othering”
- Blaming the Victim
- Distinguish Correlation versus Causation

True Poverty in New Jersey

How much income
do you need to
make it “on your
own” without any
public or private
support and,
without making
tradeoffs?



2019: FPL: \$20,598 (3-Person Family)

Annual Gross Median rent in 2019: \$17,316

84.1%



2019

1960: FPL: \$2,654

Annual gross median

Rent: \$888

33.5%



1960

What is Poverty?



"Poverty is not just a number but a state of deprivation that varies based on individual living circumstances"

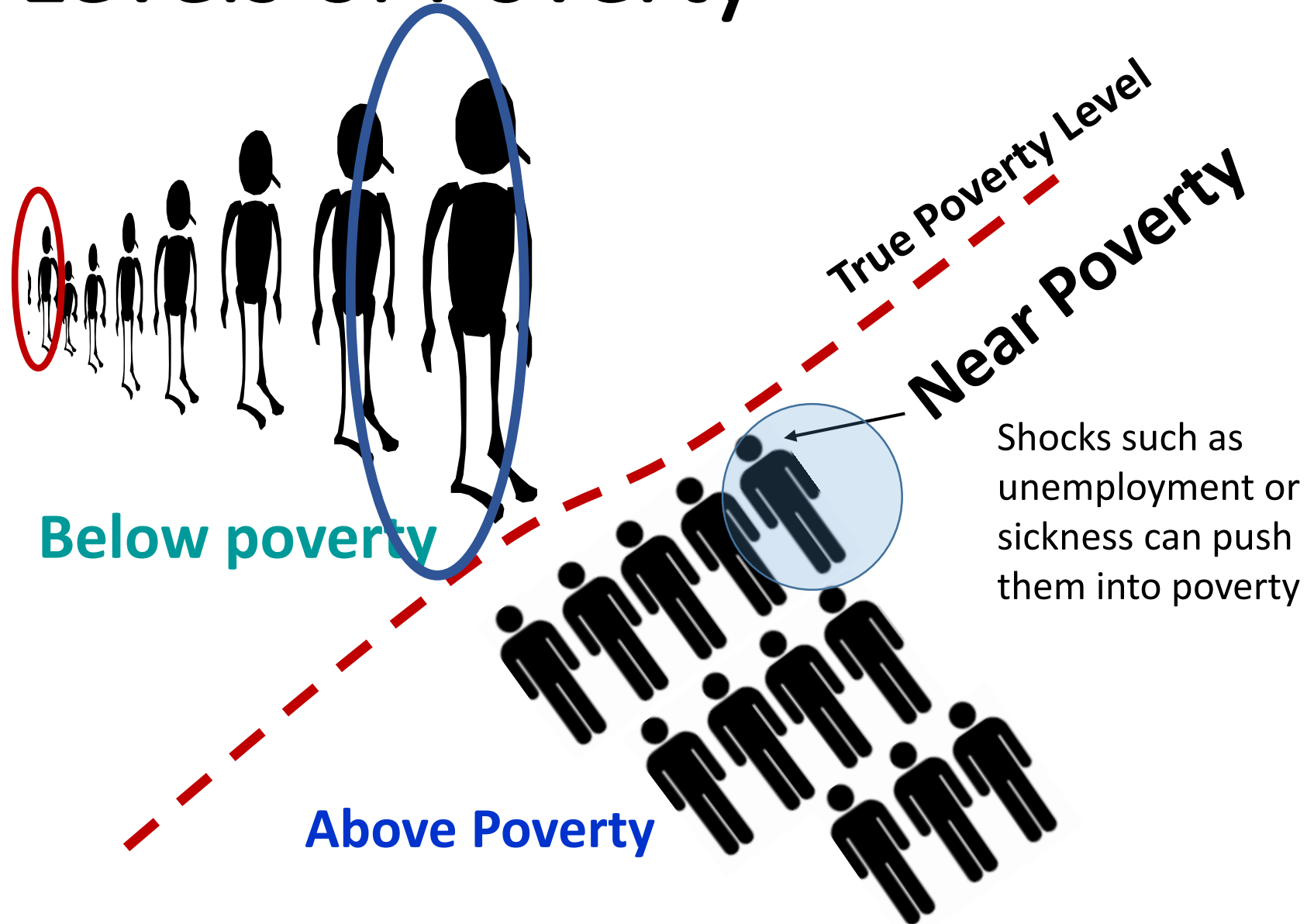
"A single threshold will never capture hardships of all families because of the uniqueness of personal circumstances"

What comes closest to capturing the hardships of the majority?

TPL in New Jersey

On average, for the majority of families True Poverty is **300% FPL**

Levels of Poverty



Poverty

Disproportionalities and Disparities

DISPROPORTIONALITIES & DISPARITIES DATA

While viewing the data, it is crucial to be mindful that existing and persistent disproportionalities and disparities in **True Poverty** are rooted in systemic, institutional and structural barriers to economic and life opportunities.



PRI's Upcoming Report on Concentrated Poverty

What is Concentrated Poverty?

- **Poverty** means not having enough income to meet basic needs
- The effects of poverty are usually experienced at the individual or the family/household level
- When impoverished residents live in neighborhoods where an overwhelming share is composed of people with low incomes, they face poverty at a different level – **Concentrated Poverty**

Concentrated Poverty

- The clustering imposes an additional strain which is more harmful than their own poverty
- Impoverished individuals living in concentrated poverty not only immediate poverty effects such as lack of access to basic necessities but concentration intensifies and perpetuates poverty itself

Concentrated Poverty:

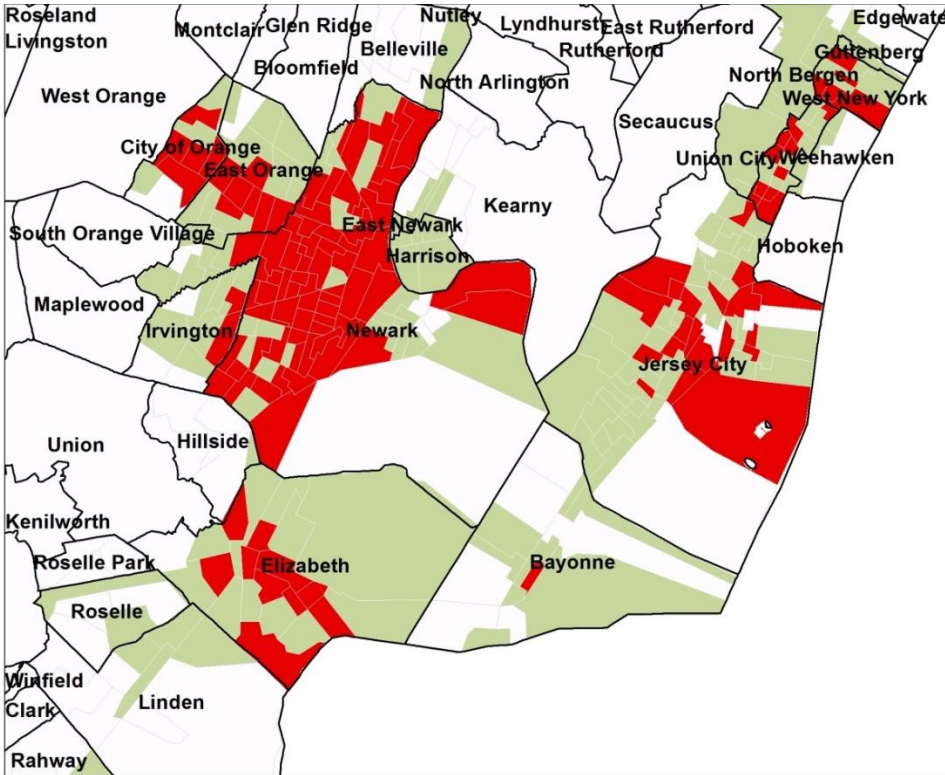
New Jersey Census Tracts

1990 to Now

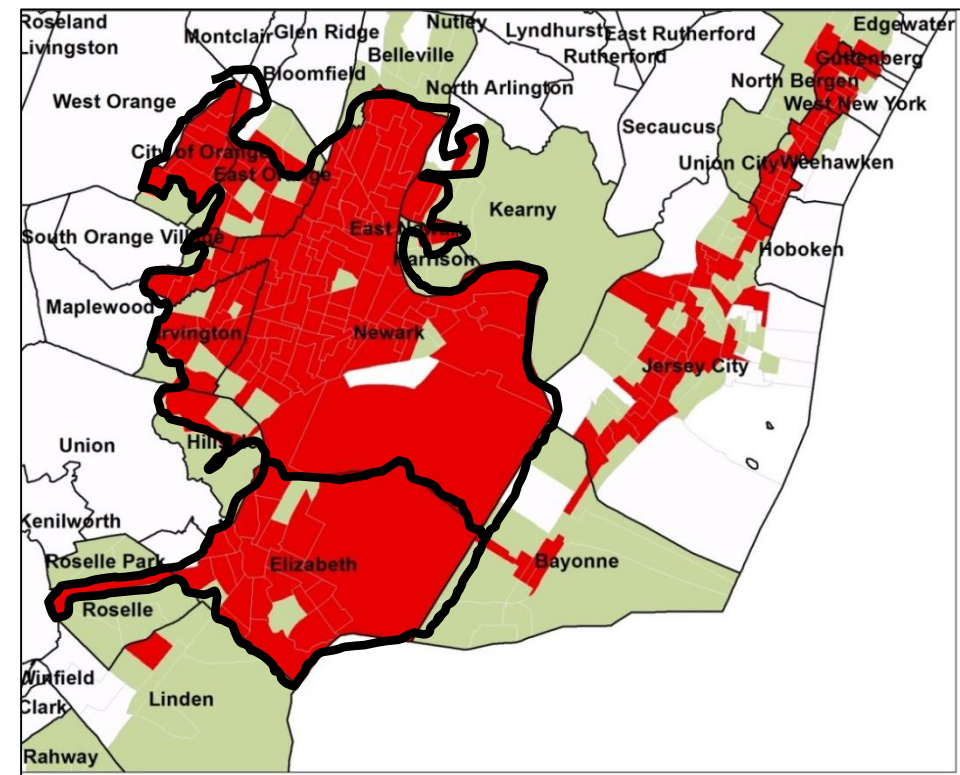
Concentrated: 40% below 200% FPL

High Poverty: 20% below 200% FPL

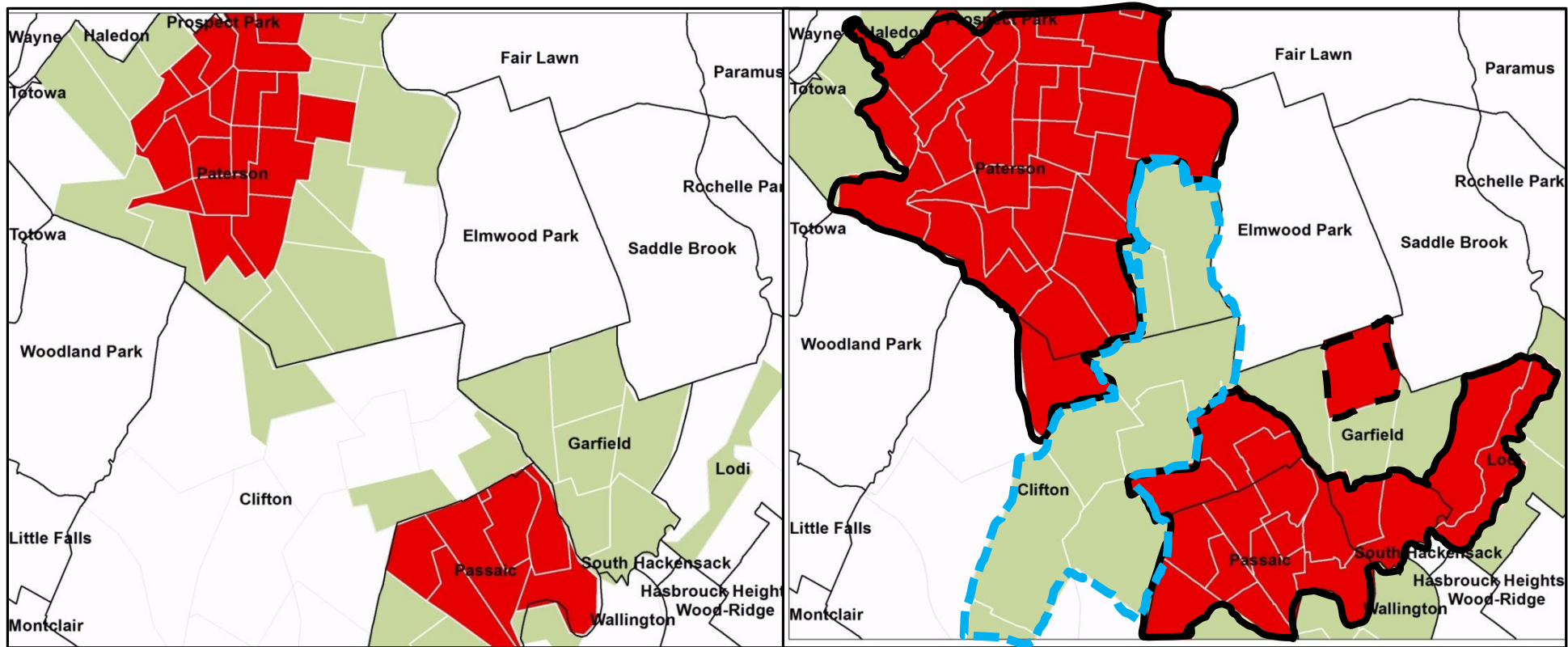
Northeastern New Jersey



1990



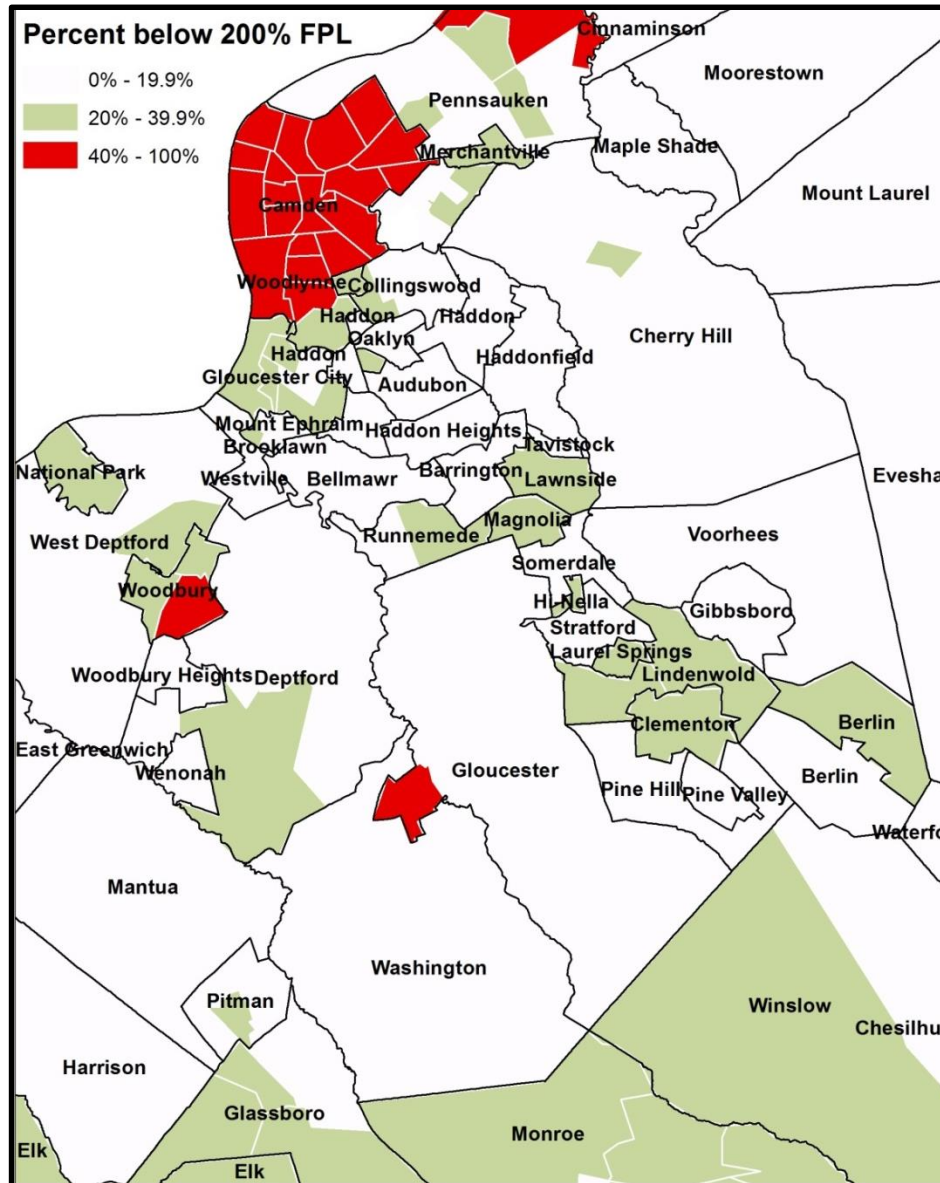
Now



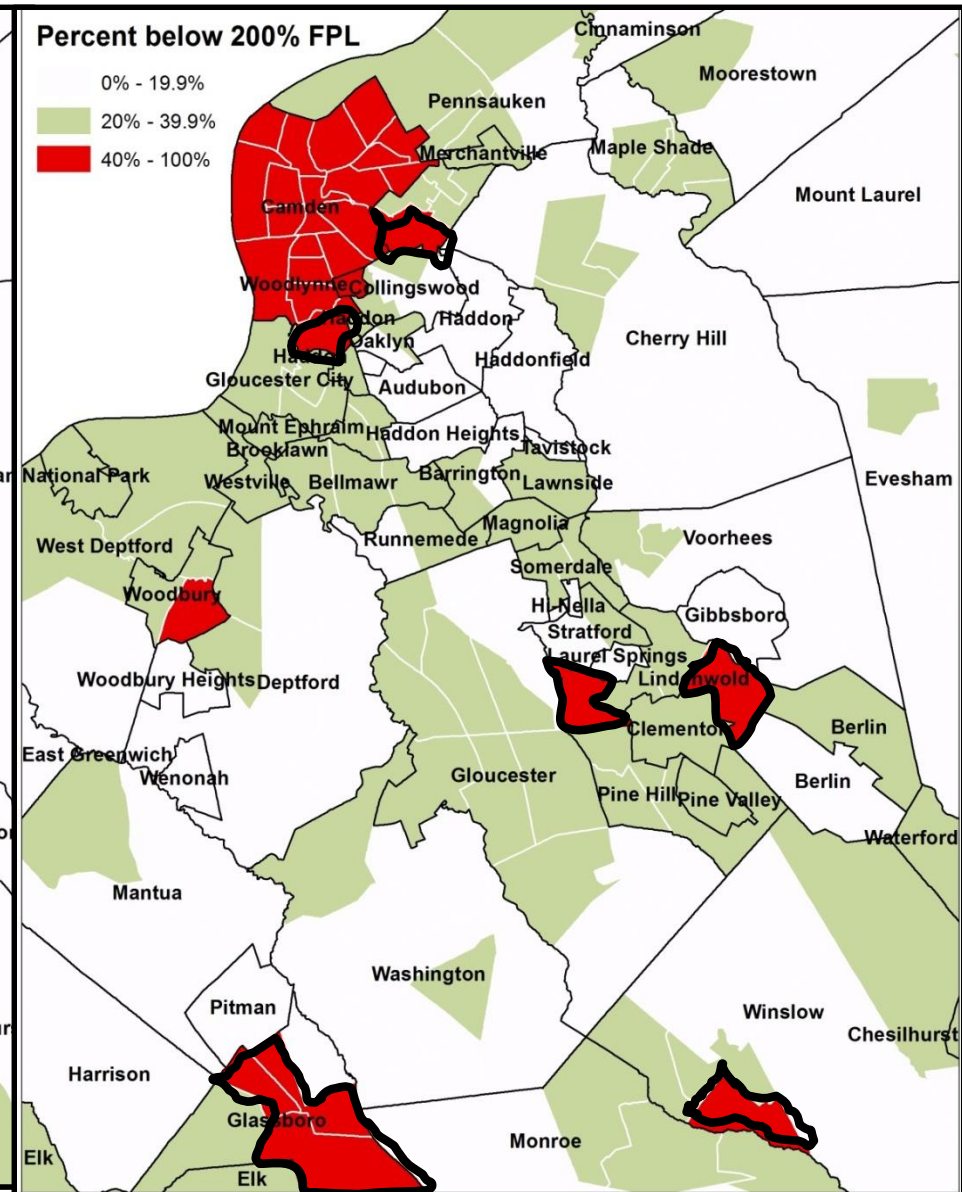
1990

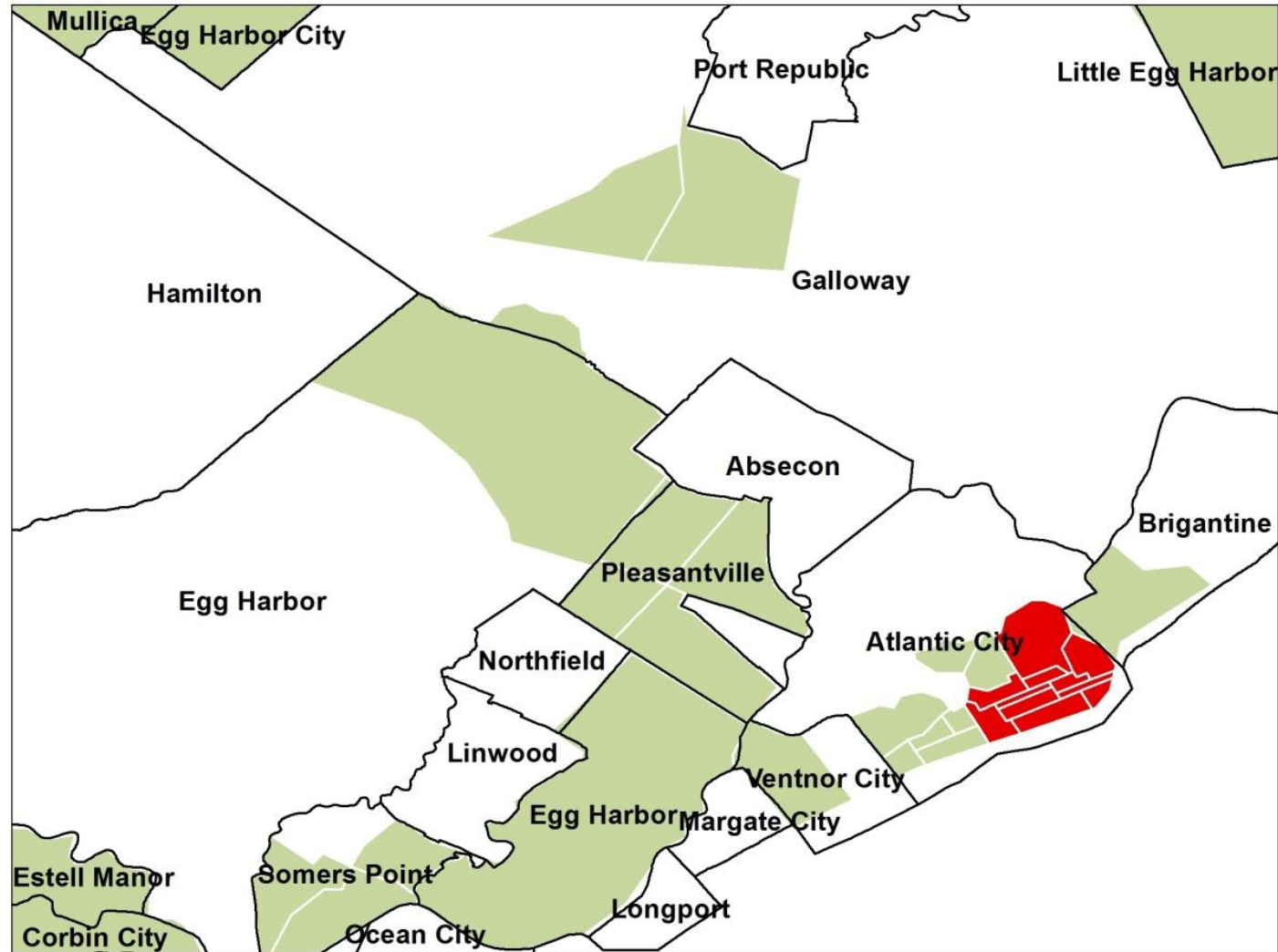
Now

1990

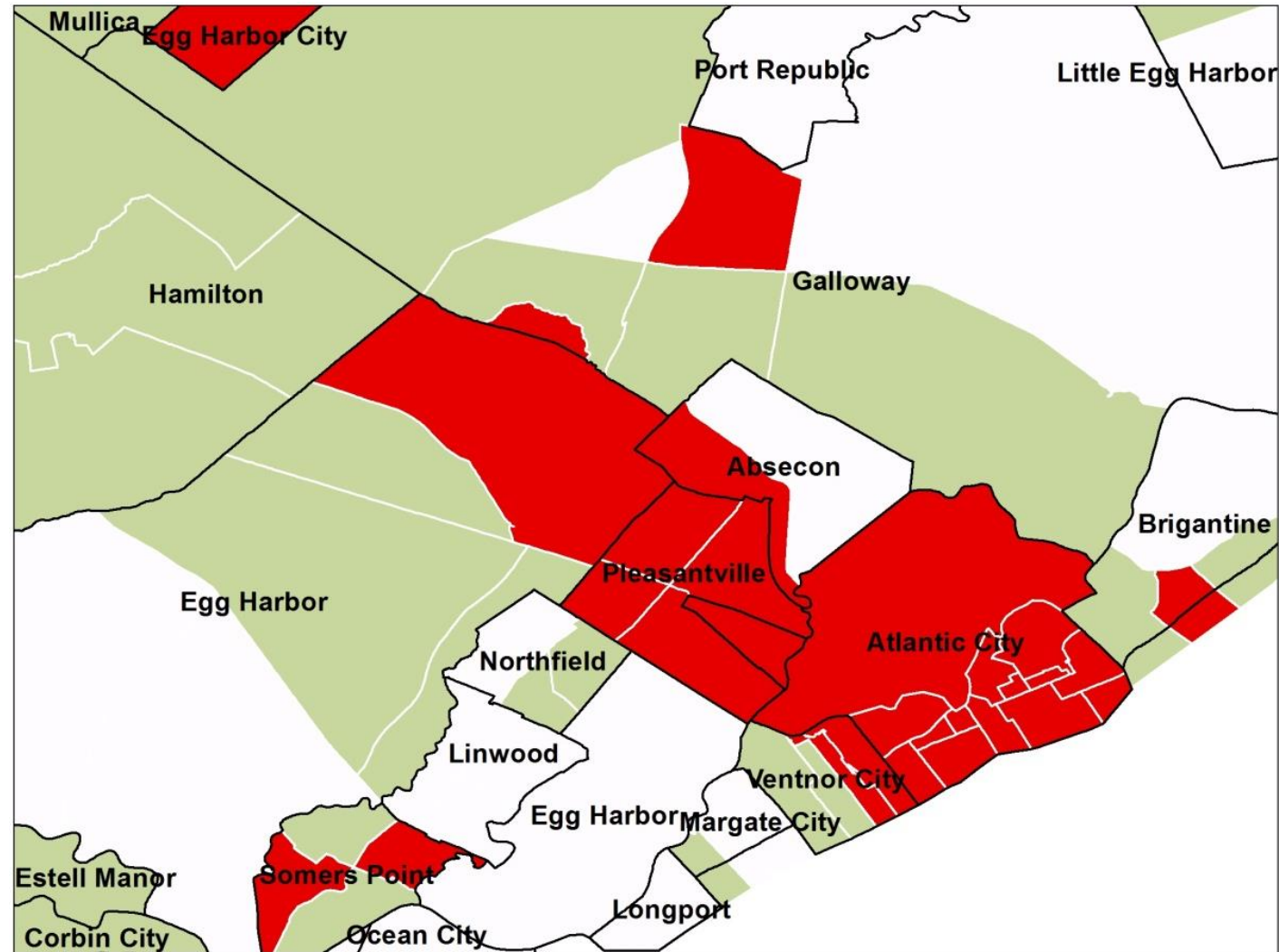


Now



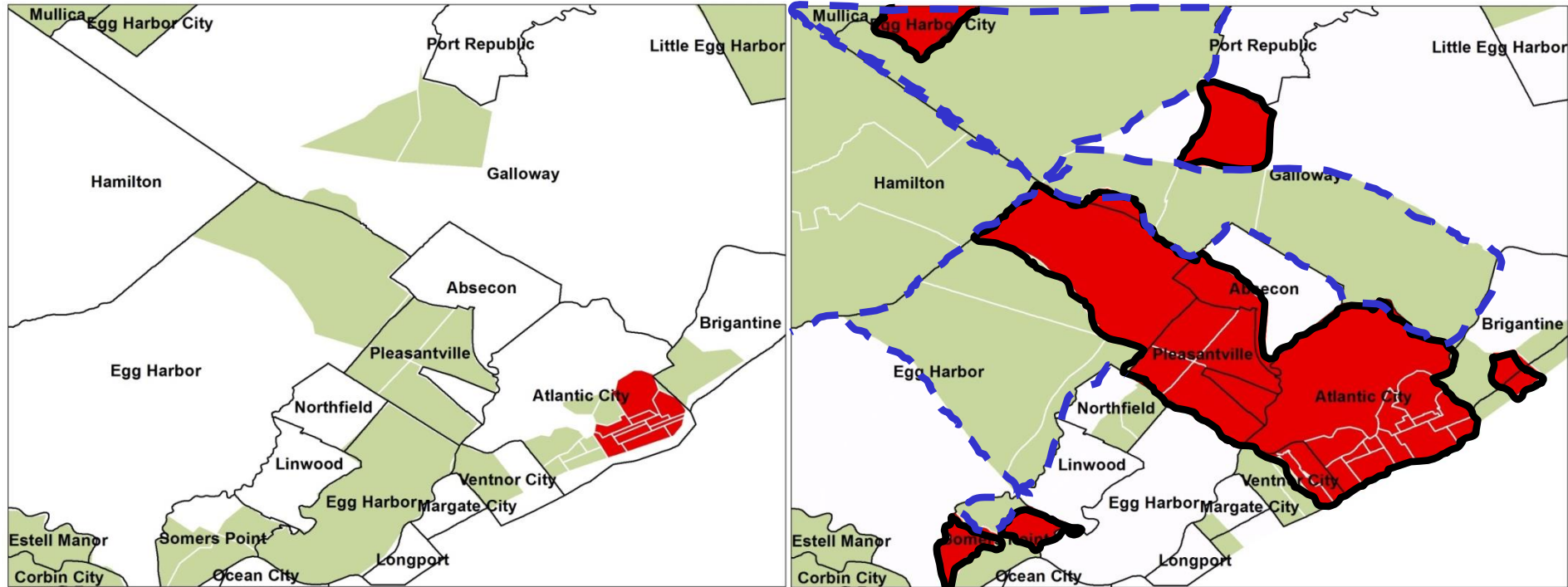


Atlantic City Region 1990



Atlantic City Region Now

Atlantic City Region

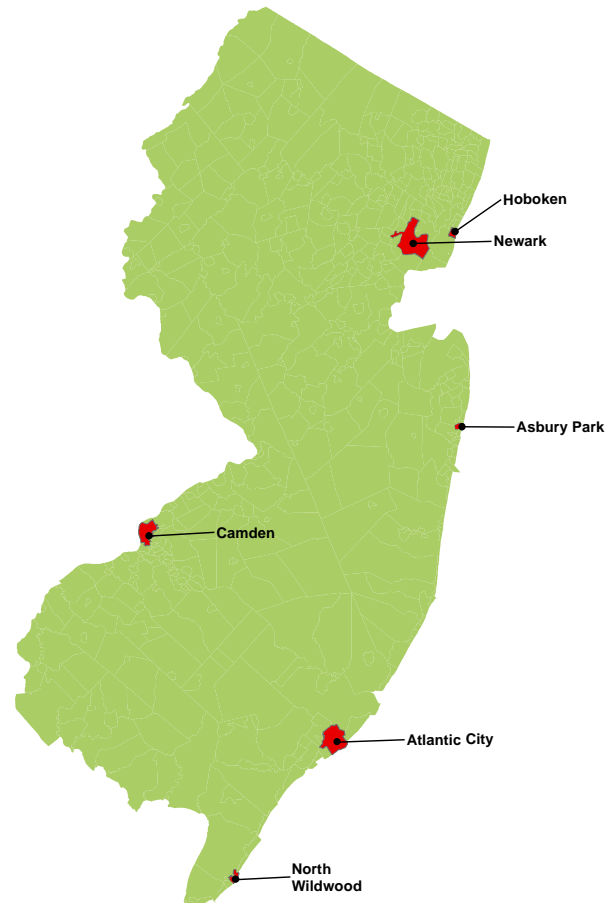


1990

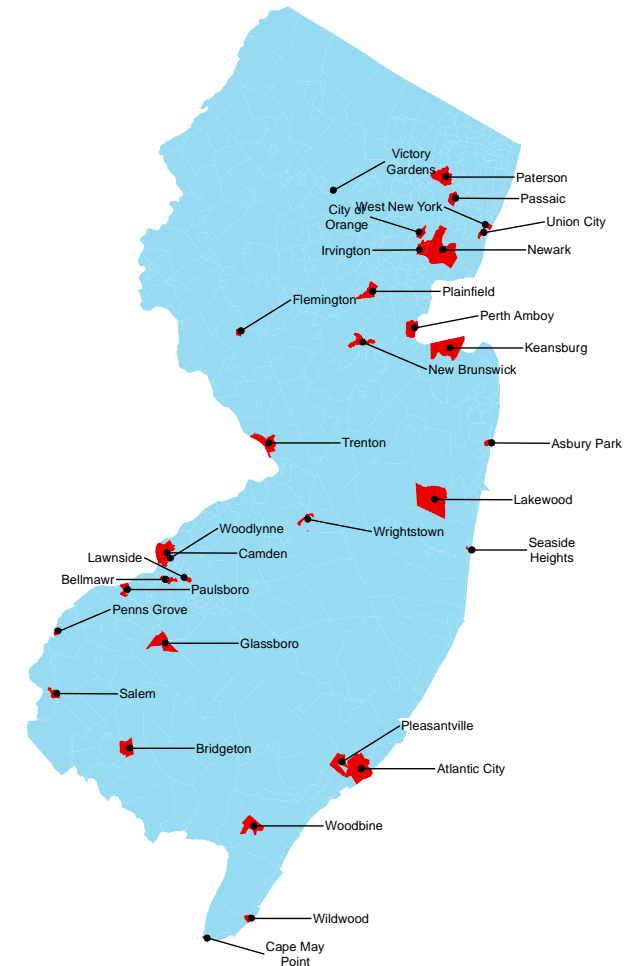
Now

New Jersey Municipalities with Concentrated Poverty

Only 6 Municipalities had at least 20% or more residents below 100% FPL in 1970



By 2013-17, Poverty in 32 Municipalities Exceeded 20% of FPL



Concentrated Poverty

- Concentrated poverty in New Jersey has been consistently worsening over the past five decades: deepening and spreading across populations and regions.
- Individuals living in concentrated poverty are disproportionately black or African-American or Hispanic or Latino.
- The magnitude of concentration is lower for impoverished non-Hispanic whites.

Historical Context

Some of the patterns of concentrated poverty can be traced to earlier policies:

- Denying African Americans access to housing subsidies that were extended to whites
- Real estate agents steering whites away from black neighborhoods, and black away from the white ones
- Redlining
- Private discrimination, etc.

Until the last quarter of the 20th century, racially explicit policies of federal, state, and local governments defined where whites and African Americans should live.

~ The Color of Law by Richard Rothstein

Thank You!

Email: sprasad@lsnj.org