

## Stockton study: South Jersey lags in economy, life quality

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GALLOWAY – Six of the eight southern New Jersey counties rate lowest of the 21 in the state on several key economic and quality of life indicators, according to a report from Stockton University's William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy.

According to the report, the southern counties “experience some of the highest rates of poverty and unemployment, have the lowest

Hunterdon County has the lowest unemployment rate at 5.3 percent, with Cumberland, 10.7 percent, and Atlantic, 10.9 percent, more than double Hunterdon's level.

This geographic pattern of inequality continues in educational attainment measures, with the six southern counties at the bottom of the rankings. Hunterdon County has the highest percentage of high school graduates, 94.5 percent, while Cumberland anchors the low end of the scale with 77.7 percent.

When looking at the percentage of those with a bachelor's degree, Somerset County is the leader with 51.4 percent, more than double the counties of Passaic, 25.9 percent, Atlantic, 25.4 percent, and Salem, 20.5 percent, and more than triple that of Cumberland, 14.7 percent.

"The poverty in cities like Newark, Trenton, Camden and Atlantic City is highly visible. Poverty in southern New Jersey is sometimes tucked into rural areas, small towns and older suburban communities, making it less obvious but just as critical to those who find themselves at the wrong end of the disparity," Sloane said.

The report can be downloaded at [stockton.edu/hughescenter](http://stockton.edu/hughescenter) and contains links to interactive maps and data. Unemployment data is from January 2014. The other economic data is from the U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2011-2013.