

Pandemic Worse than Great Recession for S.J. Economy; Recovery Hinges on Casinos

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Galloway, N.J. –The greater Atlantic City metropolitan area had the third largest employment decline in the nation in 2020, at almost 16%. The leisure and hospitality sector saw an almost 35% decline in employment.

But early signs of post-pandemic recovery should mean good news for the Atlantic City and greater South Jersey economy according to the Summer 2021 issue of the [South Jersey Economic Review](#) (SJER) released today by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

“Should the national recovery continue to gather steam over the remainder of 2021, it would be especially welcome news for the southern New Jersey regional economy,” said Stockton University Associate Professor of Economics Oliver Cooke, editor of the SJER.

Topics covered in this issue of the SJER include:

- The COVID Recession of 2020 was far more damaging to the leisure and hospitality sector than the Great Recession of 2009.
- Casino brick and mortar win declined by almost 44% in 2020 as compared with 13% in 2009, though casinos were able to recoup revenue through online and internet gaming.
- EZ Pass toll transactions at the Pleasantville toll plaza (leading to Atlantic City) declined from 20 million in 2019 to 14 million in 2020.
- SNAP reciprocity in Atlantic County increased almost 31%, compared with 26% statewide. About 20% of all households in Atlantic County were receiving SNAP benefits in February 2021.
- Single-family housing sales have benefitted from the pandemic. Prices rose an average 18% in Atlantic and Cape May counties between February 2020 and February 2021.
- The regional economy’s near-term trajectory will hinge on the casino industry’s rebound for the rest of 2021.

“A key question that will loom over the regional economy as the national and regional recoveries play out over the remainder of 2021 and into 2022 is whether Atlantic City casino industry managers elect to return their physical properties’ personnel levels to

pre-pandemic benchmarks or redirect resources to higher profit margin revenue streams which require far fewer brick and mortar workers,” Cooke said.

The complete issue of the South Jersey Economic Review is on the Hughes Center website at <https://stockton.edu/hughes-center/sjer/sjer.html>

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