

# **BARRIERS TO ENTRY**

## **FEWER OUT-OF-SCHOOL, OUT-OF-WORK YOUNG ADULTS, AS WARNING SIGNS EMERGE.**

By Lazar Treschan and Irene Lew

# INSIDE THIS REPORT

Executive Summary	1
Introduction, by JobsFirstNYC	5
Section I: What’s behind the large decline in out-of-school and out-of-work (OSOW) young adults in New York City over the past five years?	6
Section II: Who are today’s OSOW young adults, and how are they different from that group five years ago?	21
Recommendations and a Call to Action, by JobsFirstNYC	29
Appendix A: Additional Community-Level Data	32

## About the Authors

**Lazar Treschan** is the Director of Youth Policy at the Community Service Society, where he conducts research and advocacy to support positive outcomes for low-income young people. He has published and led successful campaigns on issues including high school and college enrollment and achievement, workforce development, and supports for foster youth and young people on public assistance. He teaches at the NYU Steinhardt School of Education, has a Masters in Public Policy from Harvard University, and is a native New Yorker. Please send any questions or comments about the research in this report to [ltreschan@cssny.org](mailto:ltreschan@cssny.org).

**Irene Lew** is a Policy Analyst at CSS, where she conducts research, analyzes economic and demographic data and writes about issues impacting low-income New York City residents. She analyzes and reports findings from CSS’s annual Unheard Third survey, as well as supports CSS’s research on young adult labor, education and employment trends. She received her Master’s degree in Urban Policy Analysis and Management from The New School.



**The Community Service Society of New York (CSS)** is an informed, independent, and unwavering voice for positive action representing low-income New Yorkers. CSS addresses the root causes of economic disparity through research, advocacy, and innovative program models that strengthen and benefit all New Yorkers. [www.cssny.org](http://www.cssny.org)

**David R. Jones, Esq.**, President & CEO

**Steven L. Krause**, Executive Vice President & COO



**JobsFirstNYC** is a nonprofit intermediary organization whose mission is to leverage all available community, corporate, human, organizational, private, and public resources to bring out-of-school and out-of-work young adults into the economic life of New York City. JobsFirstNYC was created in 2006 with an initial investment from the New York City Workforce Funders. [www.jobsfirstnyc.org](http://www.jobsfirstnyc.org)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past five years, New York City has seen a large decrease in the share and number of young people ages 18 through 24 who are out of school and out of work (OSOW): from 22 percent (187,588 young adults) in 2010, to 17 percent (136,483) in 2015. This report uses Census data to explore the variety of factors driving the decline in New York City's OSOW rate and number, call attention to the concerns that appear amidst the improvement, and examine how the composition of the new OSOW population might suggest directions for programs and policy makers moving forward. Our research is driven by two questions:

1. What's behind the large decline in out-of-school and out-of-work (OSOW) young adults in New York City over the past five years?
2. Who are today's OSOW young adults, and how are they different from that group five years ago? What are the challenges for programs and policy makers moving forward?

## Research findings, in brief

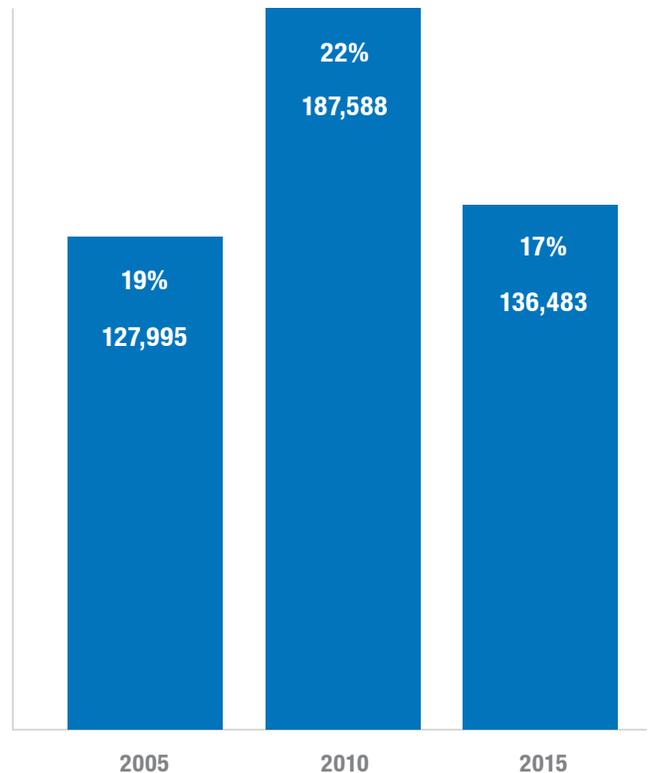
Several trends are contributing to the decline in New York City's out-of-school, out-of-work population, including:

**An improving economy** has made jobs much easier to find for young adults since the trough of the last recession, leading to fewer young people being out of work. But concerningly,

- **all job growth for young people is in part-time work**; full-time jobs, even for young people not enrolled in school, have decreased during the economic recovery.
- And despite the increased demand for labor, **wages for young people have not increased**, aside from those required by minimum wage policies.

## NEW YORK CITY OUT-OF-SCHOOL, OUT-OF-WORK POPULATION AGED 18–24

Notable declines in out-of-school, out-of-work young adults



**Progress in our schools**, along with changes in the composition of public school students overall, has led to more young people being enrolled in school, including,

- **Improving high school graduation rates** and **notably fewer numbers of “over-age” high school students**, as well as
- **increased college enrollment**, among all subgroups of young people.



These advances should be recognized. But, at the same time,

- **Persistent disparities in the types of college enrollment** and
- **growing numbers of young people leaving college without completing a degree raise** questions about next steps for education policy.

Several other dynamics affecting OSOW rates and numbers are visible alongside the employment and education increases:

- **Demographic change and gentrification** have led to fewer numbers of young adults who reside in New York City, overall, with relatively larger decreases among specific subgroups of young people who have traditionally been at greatest risk of being out of school and out of work. This dynamic can be seen directly in the rapidly changing composition of a handful of communities, whose increasing housing costs are being accompanied by declines in the share of low-income young residents of color. The gentrification of many neighborhoods is clearly contributing to some of the decline in OSOW numbers and rates.
- There are clear suggestions of the **possible positive impact of public policies**—including expanded or improved education, workforce development, and social safety net programs—on the reduction of OSOW levels in New York City. Most of the policies directly targeting the OSOW population—including new public programs, such as the Young Adult Internship Program—were enacted by the previous mayoral administration, while the current administration’s policies—such as universal pre-K—may have more indirectly led to additional decreases in OSOW rates.

In light of these data, we offer the following analyses for policy makers and programs moving forward:

- **Today’s OSOW population, though smaller, potentially faces much greater challenges to reconnection**, with those who might be considered “easiest-to-serve” having already reconnected to work and school during the past five years. The young people that remain in today’s OSOW pool may require more intensive support to help them re-engage in school or work.

- **There are a clear set of labor market issues that public policy makers and program leadership should address**, including:
  - policy makers and other funders should create new resources, or adapt existing ones, to support program providers to better serve today’s smaller, but higher-need OSOW population;
  - addressing the marked shift to part-time work for young people, and the repercussions it may have; and
  - targeting the challenges presented by high and increasing levels of college non-completion, which temper any celebration of progress in our K–12 system.

# SUMMARY OF JobsFirstNYC's Recommendations and Call to Action

JobsFirstNYC offers the following recommendations and call to action in response to the issues raised by CSS's research in the body of this document.

## 1. **Develop a deeper understanding of specific subgroups within today's OSOW young adult population to better target investments.**

Given that today's 136,000 OSOW young adults may face relatively greater structural barriers and be harder to serve, New York City would benefit from a deeper understanding of the specific challenges they face. A study to identify the specific structural barriers certain subgroups within the remaining OSOW young adult population face should be commissioned by the city. This includes youth with disabilities and mental health challenges, young adult veterans, and foster, immigrant and justice-involved youth.

## 2. **Address the Warning Signs Concerning Part-Time, Low-Wage Work.**

Steady growth in part-time, low-wage jobs creates earnings uncertainty and long-term economic insecurity. Invest in and strengthen opportunities for young adults to access good-paying, quality jobs that offer career advancement possibilities beginning in high school. In addition, build more intentional upskilling opportunities so that part-time, low-wage workers can connect to career pathways. Although much of the workforce development system has been focused on connecting jobseekers to full-time employment, more services are needed to better prepare young adults on how best to navigate a labor market in which job offerings are increasingly in part-time and precarious\* work.

## 3. **Prioritize Career Readiness and Increase Investment toward College Completion:**

Too many young adults are graduating high school inadequately prepared for college and careers, and are leaving college without an industry-recognized credential often required to enter today's labor market.

The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) must build a systemic career-readiness

framework to ensure every student has access to a relevant and universalized career-exploration and career development experience aligned with postsecondary opportunities and with their future goals. To more intentionally stem the in-flow of young adults who become a part of the OSOW young adult population, the NYCDOE should focus its attention on the more than 50,000 over-age, under-credited students in high schools—many of whom are at risk of becoming a part of the OSOW population.

City University of New York (CUNY) must expand their efforts to create strong bridge programming to increase access and provide a clearer career pathway for incoming CUNY students so they are more prepared to succeed. Additionally, to strengthen their readiness and connectedness to a career upon completion, CUNY should also ensure all students are connected to contextualized work-based learning experiences, better preparing them and increasing their likelihood of accessing a job upon completion. Finally, given the high number of students who enter but do not complete CUNY, the University must make it easier for students to re-enroll and earn their credential.

## 4. **Support neighborhood partnership development.**

Many of the same communities of the city continue to face alarmingly high rates of OSOW young adults. New York City should support and resource the development of neighborhood-based, demand-led strategies that bring together multi-sector partners in a bottom-up network that leverages collective capacities, engages in economic development and investments, and responds to local labor market and workforce capacity needs to create multiple pipelines to connect young adults to bridge programs, wraparound support services, training and occupational certification programs, post-secondary education, and careers.

\*Precarious work is non-standard employment that is poorly paid, insecure, unprotected, and cannot support a household.

# Acknowledgements

Lazar Treschan and Irene Lew of the Community Service Society of New York (CSS) conducted all the research within this report, which was conceptualized and funded by JobsFirstNYC, to whom the authors are grateful. CSS' role in this project is to present data, identify trends, and raise questions for public policy and private programs. JobsFirstNYC seeks to use this empirical analysis as a foundation to mobilize action by the range of stakeholders with whom it works on a daily basis to improve the lives of young people in New York City. At the end of this report, JobsFirstNYC offers a set of recommendations and a call to action for how public policy and private efforts should address the issues raised in this study.

Most data for this report comes from the American Community Survey (ACS) of the United States Census Bureau. The ACS provides a sample large enough to allow for a range of analyses across subgroups of young adults, and the survey itself asks a wide range of questions about educational and labor market participation. Other data, as noted, come from the Current Population Survey and the New York City Department of Education. CSS also interviewed staff from several organizations that serve OSOW young people in education and workforce development programs, whose responses are noted to offer hypotheses about ways to interpret some of these data.

This study is an update to *Barriers to Entry*, published in 2013 (and co-authored by CSS and the Fiscal Policy Institute), which examined the labor market participation of young adults at the trough of the last economic recession, and a follow-up to a brief, initial presentation of data in March 2017. CSS' work in this area began with a 2005 report that first put this population on the public policy agenda, *Out of School, Out of Work... Out of Luck?*, conducted by Mark Levitan, to whom these authors, and the field more broadly, owe a debt of gratitude. The authors are also indebted to CSS staff Nancy Rankin, Alia Winters, Jeff Jones, and Opal Lynch for their invaluable assistance in editing, designing, and producing this report.

At JobsFirstNYC, Marjorie Parker and Kevin Stump provided ongoing guidance as the analysis took shape, feedback on drafts of the report, and led the development of the introduction and call to action sections. JobsFirstNYC staff, Keri Faulhaber, Sherazade Langlade, John Falcone, and Darren Cole, also provided feedback on the report. Former JobsFirstNYC colleagues Lou Miceli and Chantella Mitchell worked with CSS to conceptualize this study.

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# Introduction

by JobsFirstNYC

High numbers of young adults in New York City continue to be excluded from fully accessing our strong and healthy economy. Despite improved high school graduation rates, increased college enrollment, and fewer numbers of out-of-school, out-of-work (OSOW) young adults overall, New York City's OSOW young adult population faces steeper structural barriers to access economic opportunities than ever before. For 18- to-24-year-olds in New York City, all of the employment gains in the recent economic recovery have been in part-time work, while full-time employment and total wages stagnated. Meanwhile, racial and income disparities have continued to influence a growing crisis of college non-completion.

As an intermediary positioned between practice, policy, and philanthropy, JobsFirstNYC is charged with understanding and articulating the barriers young adults face in accessing the economic life of New York City, while identifying opportunities for effective systemic solutions leading to successful attachment to the economy. With these goals, in 2013, JobsFirstNYC conceived of a research project to attempt to further understand who New York City's OSOW young adult population were and to understand the challenges and opportunities in the labor market. To do this, we asked two leading experts in the field, Dr. James Parrott formerly of the Fiscal Policy Institute and Lazar Treschan of the Community Service Society of New York to join us. Together, we published *Barriers to Entry: The Increasing Challenges Faced by Young Adults in the New York City Labor Market*, examining trends in the labor market as they relate to young adults' ability to participate and advance in the economy. That report also articulated key characteristics of young people, including demographics, where they live, their skills, and the barriers they face to accessing economic opportunities.

That report also included a series of recommendations for policy makers to consider. Among them were to (1) increase educational attainment of young adults, (2) raise the quality of jobs in which young adults are employed, (3) expand child care availability, and (4)

invest in more intensive workforce development efforts aimed at communities with high concentrations of OSOW youth. Fortunately, there has been much progress toward realizing those recommendations. This includes Mayor de Blasio's initiative around Universal Pre-K to alleviate child care-related burdens faced by many young parents, as well as increases in high school graduation rates and college enrollment. Additionally, there has been a significant increase in the workforce development investments targeting youth services over the last ten years, including 60 percent growth annually from New York City's private philanthropy, the city-supported Young Adult Internship Program, the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity, and the city's Young Men's Initiative, as well as the changes made to prioritize OSOW youth in the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Five years later, JobsFirstNYC launched a follow-up investigation to understand how well young adults are faring in this economy and to see if the barriers we identified in the first research project still remain. We again called upon the Community Service Society of New York to partner with us in this effort to better understand the impacts that the economy has had on young adults, and, through an informed lens, consider the next steps that we should take as a community.

Many of the barriers identified in that report remain today and new challenges have arisen, evoking a new set of questions we as a community must tackle head on. The core goal of this investigation is to raise critical questions and provide an initial insight to the challenges young adults are facing today. In the final section of this report, Recommendations and a Call to Action from JobsFirstNYC, we outline our institutional response putting forward high-level solutions, which will serve as a launchpad for the deeper work we plan to take on in the coming months and years ahead.

# SECTION 1

## What's behind the large decline in OSOW young adults? Changes in New York City's OSOW population over the past five years.

The share of young people between the ages of 18 through 24 who are neither in school, nor working, has declined notably, from 22 percent at the peak of the last recession, to 17 percent. New York City's OSOW rate decline since 2010 has occurred in parallel to declines at the national level, although New York City has seen slightly larger drops over the period (5 percentage points, compared to 3 percentage points).<sup>1</sup>

Something unique is happening with New York City's young adult population, and the first section of this report explores this dynamic, presenting the four main drivers of the drop in local OSOW rates and numbers:

### A. More jobs for young people:

a tighter labor market, leading to increased employment of young adults, although nearly all of it in part-time jobs;

### B. Progress in our schools:

increases in high school graduation and college enrollment, but clear racial disparities in the quality of college enrollment and completion;

### C. Demographic change and gentrification:

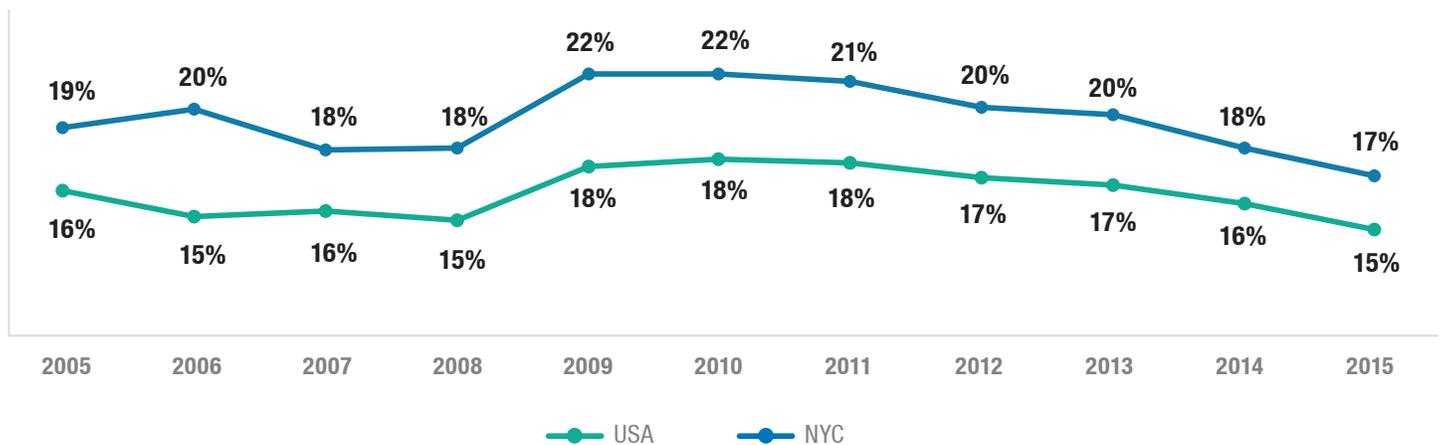
the increasing cost of living in many neighborhoods and the city, more broadly, appears to have contributed to the decline in subpopulations with traditionally high OSOW rates, including young people of Puerto Rican backgrounds, young adult parents, and young adult immigrants. And at the neighborhood level, the composition of several communities once home to high numbers of OSOW young people have notably changed; and

### D. Possible impact of new public policy and programs targeting young adults:

more education and workforce development initiatives directly targeting OSOW young adults and their unique needs, as well as other initiatives that may have indirectly supported greater workforce attachment of young adults.

Taken together, these four areas cover much of the decrease in OSOW young adult rates and numbers, and represent significant progress, including some evidence of the positive role that public policy and private programs have played in improving the lives of young people. However, an in-depth examination of each area also points to issues of concern moving forward.

**CHART 1: SHARE OF POPULATION AGED 18–24 THAT IS OUT OF SCHOOL, OUT OF WORK<sup>2</sup>**  
NYC OSOW Rate Decline is Parallel to Drop in National Rate

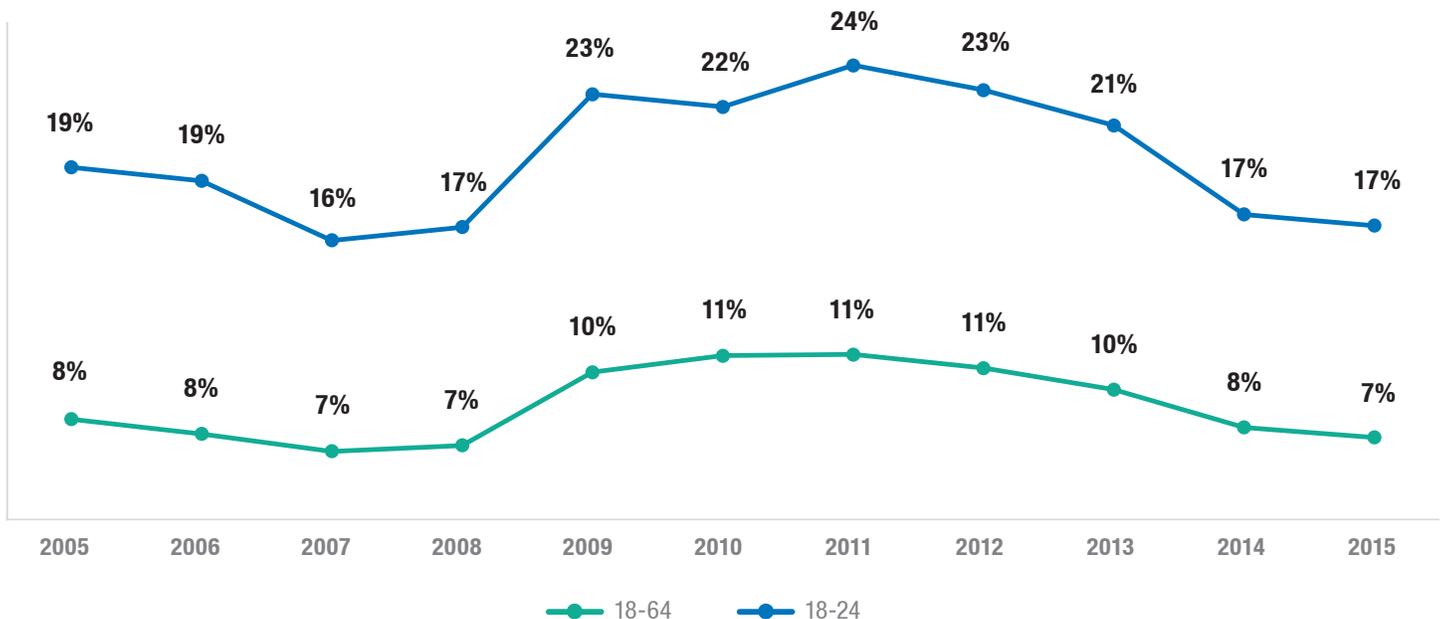


**TABLE 1: 2010–15: CHANGES ACROSS VARIOUS MEASURES OF NEW YORK CITY'S YOUNG ADULT POPULATION**

	2010	2015		2010	2015
POPULATION AGED 18–24	870,725	794,558	SHARE OF 18–24 POPULATION	%	%
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION	474,238	451,885	LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE	54%	57%
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT	446,204	424,350	SCHOOL ENROLLMENT	51%	53%
EMPLOYED	370,005	376,047	EMPLOYMENT-TO-POPULATION RATE	42%	47%
EMPLOYED AND IN SCHOOL	133,072	142,322	WORKING AND IN SCHOOL RATE	15%	18%
UNEMPLOYED	104,233	75,838	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	22%	17%
UNEMPLOYED AND IN SCHOOL	44,206	26,752	NOT WORKING BUT IN SCHOOL RATE	5%	3%
NOT IN THE LABOR FORCE (NILF)	396,487	342,673	NILF TO POPULATION RATE	46%	43%
NOT IN THE LABOR FORCE, IN SCHOOL	268,926	255,276	NILF, IN SCHOOL RATE	31%	32%
NOT IN THE LABOR FORCE, NOR SCHOOL*	127,561	87,397	NILF, NOT IN SCHOOL* RATE	15%	11%
OUT OF SCHOOL, OUT OF WORK*	187,588	136,483	OUT OF SCHOOL, OUT OF WORK* RATE	22%	17%

\*The not in school, not in the labor force population differs from the out of school, out of work population, because the OSOW group also includes the unemployed, who are not working, but actively seeking work.

**CHART 2: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AMONG NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS BY AGE GROUP**  
Declines Overall and for Young Adults



## A. Economic Change: An improving economy has created more jobs for young people, but nearly all of them part time

The leading driver of the drop in OSOW rates for young adults over the past five years is the fact that jobs have been easier to find. New York City’s economy has grown notably since 2010, when it was mired in recession.<sup>3</sup> As the economy has expanded, the demand for labor has increased, leading to higher job-holding and lower unemployment for all individuals, including all subgroups of young adults (see Chart 2).

But, amidst this, several troubling trends have arisen. First, nearly all new jobs created for young adults since the recession have been in part-time work. Second, despite high rates of employment, earnings have not risen proportionately. Finally, major disparities persist in terms of employment and pay, with the greatest gains during the recovery having gone to higher-educated whites, the traditionally most advantaged subgroup of young people.

### More jobs available for young people...

Unemployment for young adults in New York City decreased in line with that of the general population after the recession, although it remains at relatively higher levels. Far more young adults are working overall than five years ago: the employment-population ratio of 18- to 24-year-olds increased from 42 to 47 percent of the population, meaning that jobs were easier to find despite a higher share of young adults actively seeking work.

Along with the greater availability of jobs, which increases the numbers of those employed among those already looking for work, more young people entered the active workforce to seek work at the highest rates since the recession. Specifically, there was a decline in three major reasons that young adult workers cite for not seeking employment. There were 19 percent fewer “discouraged workers,” who stopped seeking work because they were unable to find it—this is clearly a result of the greater availability of jobs during the recovery. Twenty-two percent fewer young adults cited an illness or disability keeping them from being able to work. This is likely attributable to two factors: first, many more people cite illness/disability preventing them from working during recessions when hiring is low, and second, it is possible that the notably expanded health coverage associated with rollout of the Affordable Care Act may have both allowed individuals to get care and/or removed disincentives to their working that might be associated with losing health care benefits.

Twenty-seven percent fewer young adults claimed they were not seeking work because they had to take care of their home/a family member than in 2009–11. Some of this is clearly due to the lower rates of young adult parenting, which we noted earlier. But it may also be possible that New York City’s new universal pre-K, which began rolling out in 2014, might have played a role, by freeing up more young adult parents to be able to work. Children of young adults are more likely than those of older parents to be in the age group of 3- to 4-year-olds that would qualify for pre-K, and these data also show that higher rates of parents of 3- to

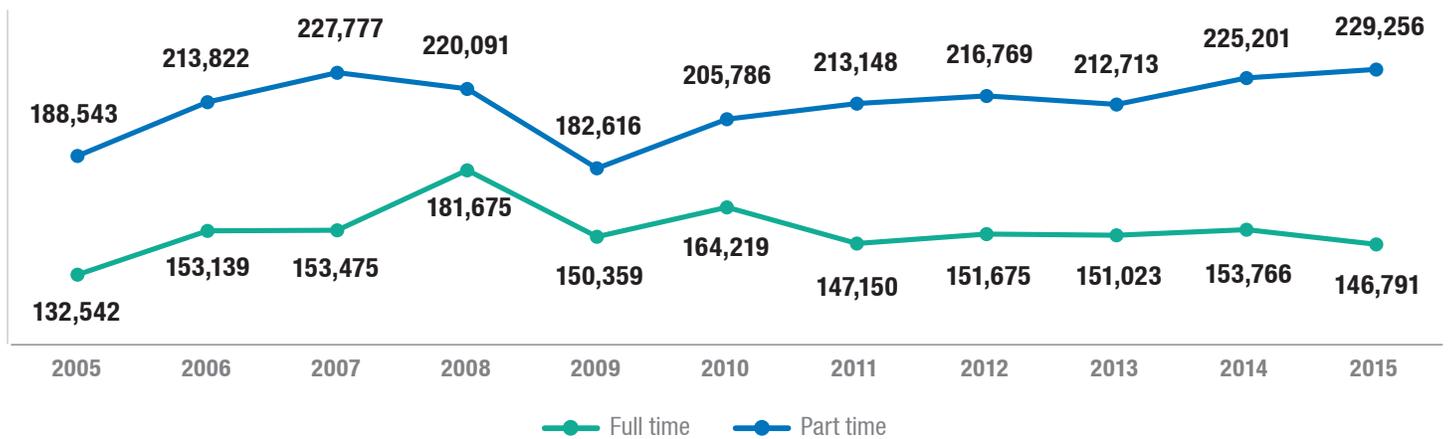
**TABLE 2: REASONS FOR NOT BEING IN THE LABOR FORCE, 18- TO 24-YEAR-OLDS**

	2009–11		2014–16		% CHANGE
COULD NOT FIND WORK	13,585	3.2%	10,985	2.6%	-19%
ILL OR DISABLED	18,095	4.3%	14,072	3.3%	-22%
TAKING CARE OF HOME/FAMILY	40,420	9.6%	29,604	6.9%	-27%
GOING TO SCHOOL	333,992	79.6%	352,992	82.8%	6%
OTHER	13,636	3.2%	18,760	4.4%	38%
TOTAL	419,727		426,413		2%

Source: US Census Bureau, pooled 2009–11 and 2014–16 Current Population Survey data (from ASEC). The ACS, used for most of the other analysis in this study, does not ask respondents their reasons for not actively seeking work. It is important to note that the sample of respondents in the CPS and ACS are not the same, but the fact that the broad labor market trends mirror one another give us the confidence to complement our ACS analyses with these figures from the CPS.

**CHART 3: EMPLOYED NYC POPULATION AGED 18–24 BY PART-TIME AND FULL-TIME STATUS (INCLUDING THOSE ENROLLED IN SCHOOL)**

All Job Growth in Part-Time Work



4-year-old children are now in the workforce than prior to the universal pre-K rollout. In fact, the subgroup with the highest employment increases over the past five years is Latinx<sup>4</sup> young women, also the group most likely to have previously not sought work for child care reasons.

**...but all job growth in part-time employment, leading to lower pay**

While the number of jobs has increased, nearly all the increase in employment has been in part-time work. Despite overall job growth, there has been no net increase whatsoever in full-time jobs for 18- to 24-year-olds.<sup>5</sup> In 2010, 56 percent of jobs among 18- to 24-year-olds were part time, a figure that has increased to 61 percent in 2015. This might be less concerning if it was in line with the interests of young workers, who might be seeking part-time employment while attending school. However, the share of full-time jobs has dropped even among non-students between the ages of 18 and 24, from 57 percent to 52 percent, despite the period being considered an economic recovery.

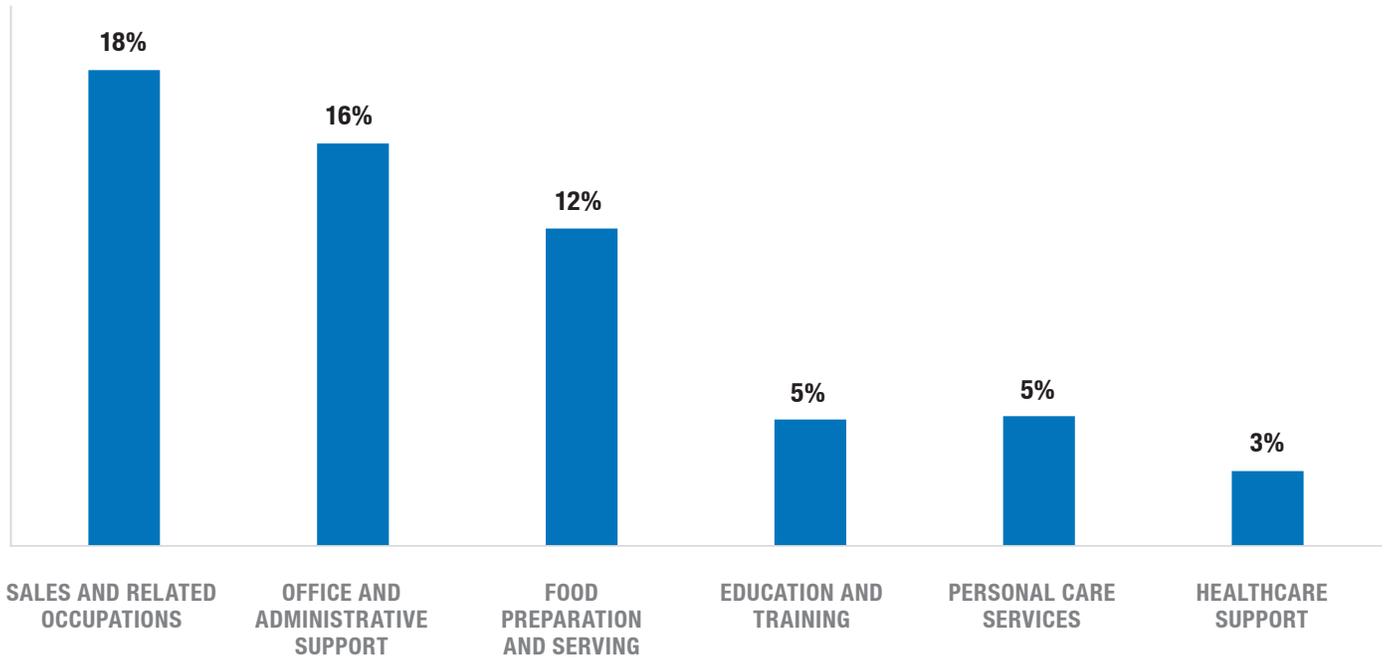
Among working young adults aged 18 through 24, those employed full time are most likely to be in high-paying industries while those employed on a part-time basis are most likely to be in low-paying service areas of the economy. As of 2015, 28 percent of young adults working full time were in high-paying sectors, compared to just 17 percent of those employed part time. Jobs in low-paying industries comprise the highest share of jobs held by young adults working part time (26 percent). Yet, the share of young adults working full time in low-paying industries has edged up since the Recession, rising from 20 percent in 2010 to 23 percent in 2015.

**Notable wage stagnation despite increased labor market demand**

Another area of concern is depressed earnings among young adults. Conventional wisdom has it that as the economy grows and employers need more labor, wages and salaries also rise as workers are able to obtain a higher price for their work. But median earnings have declined for young adult workers during the recovery, despite the increased demand for labor. Some of this is due to the increase in part-time employment, which keeps young workers from earning full-time salaries. But even among full-time young adult workers not enrolled in school, median earnings in 2015 (\$27,000) were still lower than they were in 2010 (\$28,000).

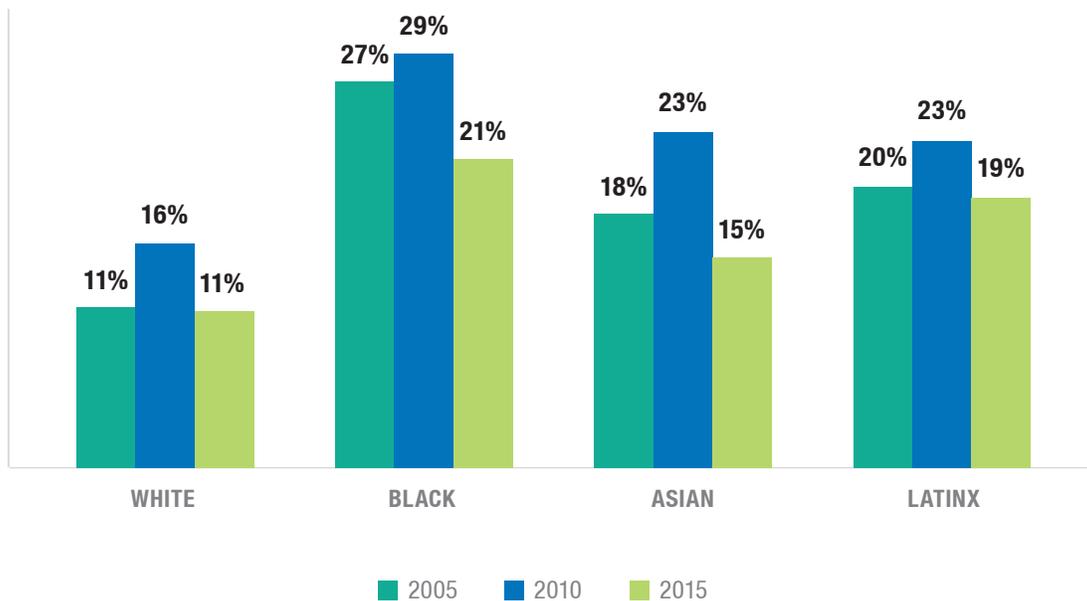
The shift to part-time work and income stagnation are directly related to the growing concentration of jobs in low-paying sectors such as retail, food service, personal services, and health care support. These four sectors comprised 39 percent of all young adult jobs in 2013–15, up from 34 percent in 2008–10, and are more likely to utilize part-time workers and offer low pay. As discussed at the end of this report, the ongoing legislative increases to the minimum wage will support high numbers of young adults whose earnings have not risen even as the economy has improved.

**CHART 4: JOB TYPE OF WORKING 18–24 POPULATION IN NEW YORK CITY NOT ENROLLED IN SCHOOL**  
**Many Jobs in Low-Wage Sectors**



Source: US Census Bureau, pooled 2013–15 American Community Survey.

**CHART 5: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES OF NEW YORK CITY POPULATION AGED 18–24 BY RACE/ETHNICITY**  
**Steady Increases in School Enrollment**



Also of concern is the persistent level of disparity in the labor market for young people across subgroups. Black and Latinx young people saw the greatest total decline in their unemployment rates after the recession, but these levels remain much higher than those of whites. And unemployment rates among Latinxs are obscured by the differences by nationality, with young people of Mexican origin having rates closer to those of whites, while Puerto Ricans have the highest unemployment rates, and Dominicans show rates similar to young people who identify as black, non-Latinx.

At first glance, rising levels of employment may seem very positive, particularly given that far fewer young adults are out of the workforce entirely. But the sharp shift to part-time employment, even for those not enrolled in school, stagnating wages in a time of “recovery”, and the persistence of employment disparities across racial groups, may be causes for concern moving forward.

## B. Education Change: Increases in high school graduation and college enrollment

While employment levels have risen, young adults are also increasingly getting more education, thanks to increases in high school graduation and college enrollment. Traditionally, this is not always the case, as employment and school enrollment often run “counter-cyclically” with school enrollment increasing when young people are unable to find work, a trend visible from 2005 to 2010.

But since 2010, even though more 18- to 24-year-olds entered the labor market to seek work and found jobs, there was also a rise in the share of young people who were attending school from 2010 (51 percent) through the end of 2015 (53 percent). This raises the question of how much this simultaneous increase in employment and school enrollment is because there is more flexibility within the labor market to do both at the same time—related to the rise in part-time work—and the extent to which there is more of an economic imperative to earn money while attending school, related to higher costs of living.

Looking more deeply at school enrollment rates, we find two trends of note. First, there are far fewer “over-age” high school students, young adults aged 18 or over who are still enrolled in high school. This is a clearly positive story, supported by higher on-time graduation rates among young people traditionally less likely to graduate. Second, there has been continued growth in the enrollment of low-income young people in college.

### Far fewer “over-age” high school students along with increasing graduation rates

According to Census data, the number of young people aged 18 or over enrolled in high school has dropped notably and continuously over the past ten years, with the greatest drops concentrated among young people from households with the lowest incomes. In 2010, nearly 70,000 young people aged 18 or over—16 percent of the age group—were still enrolled in high school. By 2015, this had dropped to 53,000 and 12 percent of the age group.

CHART 6: SHARE OF NEW YORK CITY POPULATION AGED 18–24 IN SCHOOL  
Steady Increases in School Enrollment

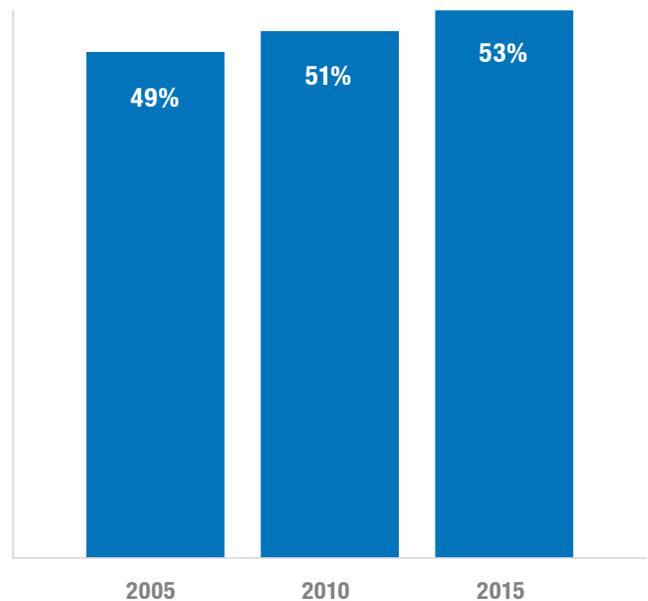


CHART 7:

### SHARE OF NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS AGED 18–24 ATTENDING HIGH SCHOOL (AMONG THOSE IN SCHOOL)

Decline in Over-age High School Student Share

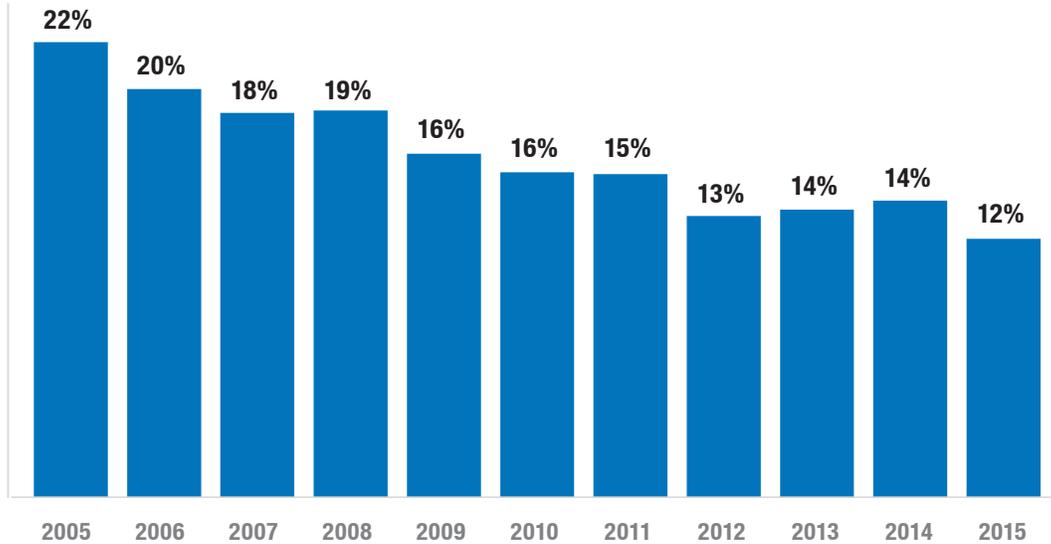
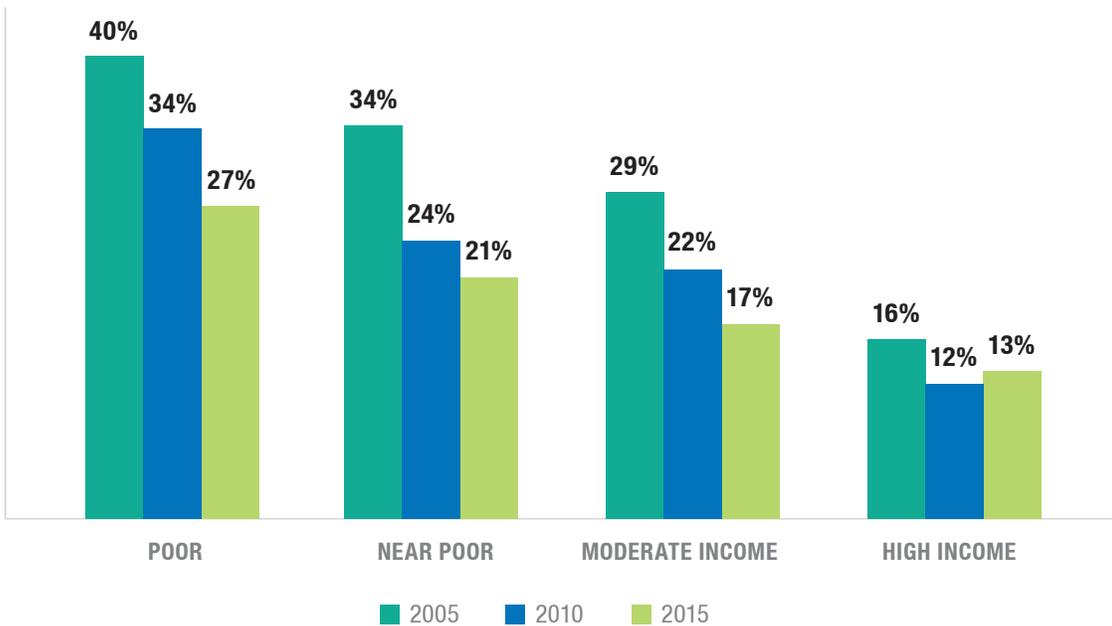


CHART 8:

### SHARE OF 18–21 POPULATION IN SCHOOL WHO ARE ATTENDING HIGH SCHOOL, BY INCOME CATEGORY

Lower-Income Students Benefitting From Gains in On-Time Graduation



Note: Income categories are based on the ratio of family or unrelated individual income to federal poverty thresholds used by the US Census Bureau that vary by size and composition. Families with household incomes below the federal poverty threshold are considered poor, between 100% and 200% are considered near poor, between 200% and 400% moderate income, and above 400% high income.

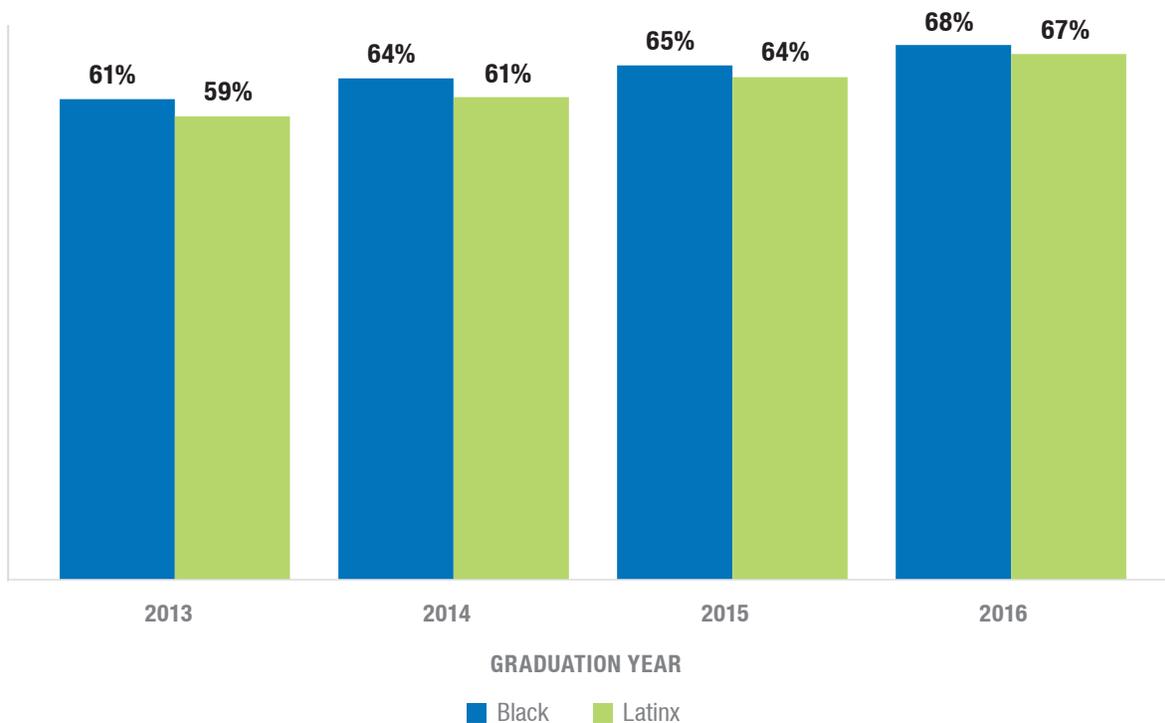
## Possible unintended positive consequence of HSE reform

Another factor that may be influencing this trend is the notable decrease in students seeking and achieving a high school equivalency (HSE) diploma. Formerly known as the GED, the exam to assess equivalency was replaced with the Test Assessing Secondary Completion in 2012, (TASC, but now referred to more broadly as HSE), the HSE has become more difficult to obtain, with both the final exam itself becoming more difficult, and the NYCDOE’s process for achieving the diploma becoming more rigorous (which began prior to 2012).<sup>10</sup> This increasing difficulty of the alternative to graduation may have led to an increased likelihood for students to stay enrolled in and finish high school on time. In the words of one community-based organization that partners with the NYCDOE for HSE programs: “it used to be possible to drop out of high school in February or March, get your GED, and enroll in CUNY in the Fall. Not anymore. So now you try to stay in school, pass your Regents, and graduate.”

These trends are supported by data from the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), which show increasing shares of students, particularly those that identify as black or Latinx, graduating high school within the conventional four-year timeframe. Citywide, the share of high school students graduating in four years has increased steadily since the Recession, from 63 percent in 2009 to 73 percent in 2016.<sup>6</sup> This may speak to the contribution of the range of reforms to public education at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, as well as the increasing gentrification of New York City—the public schools serve more white, Asian, middle- and upper-income students than in previous years, groups that have traditionally higher graduation rates than black and Latinx students.<sup>7</sup>

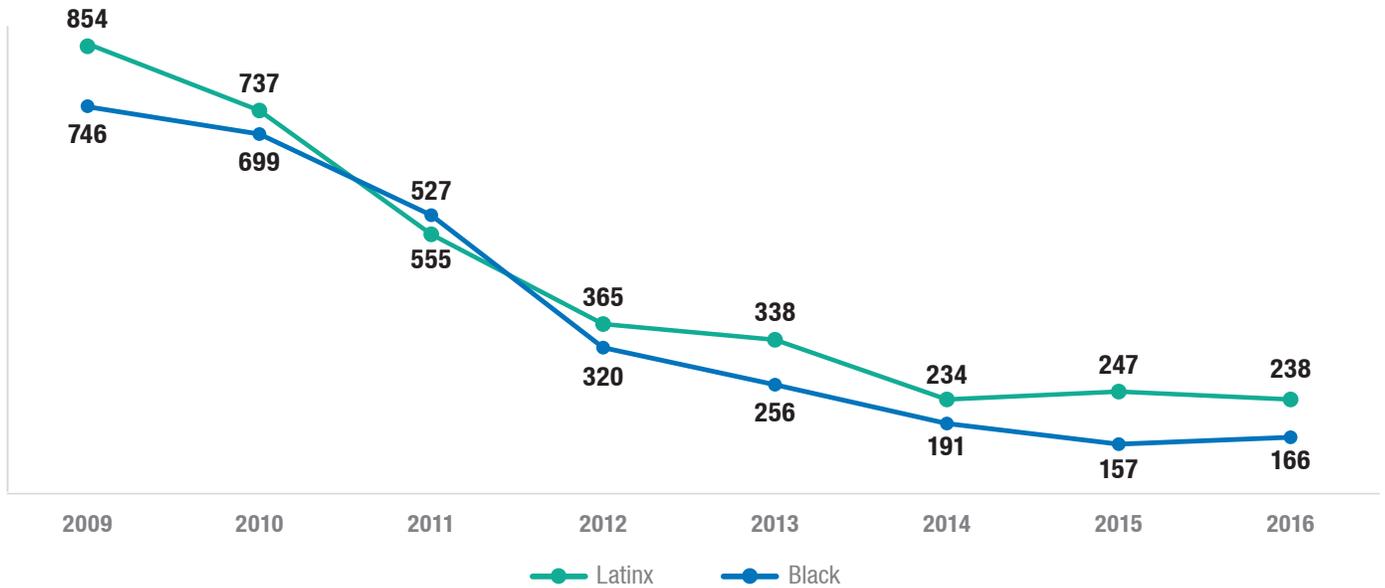
Within high schools, specifically, recent efforts have included the closing down of large public high schools in favor of newer, small schools, which have shown strong impacts on graduation rates.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, increased programs to identify students falling off track and get them back on track toward graduation may also have contributed to these gains.<sup>9</sup>

**CHART 9: FOUR-YEAR NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES, BY RACE/ETHNICITY**  
Steady Annual Increases



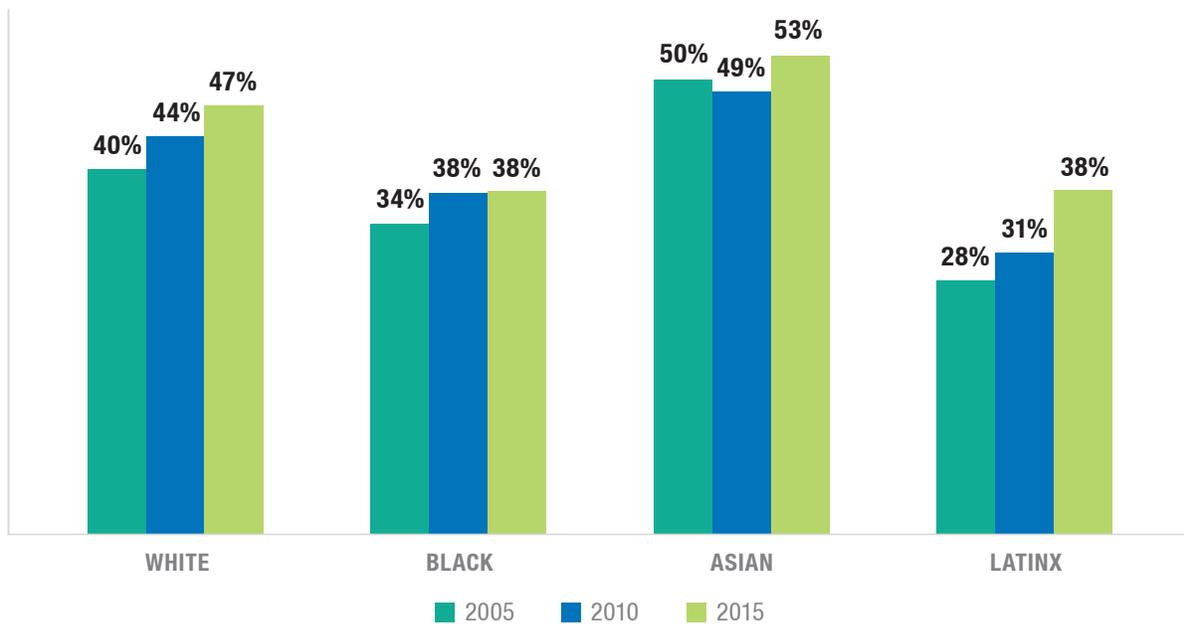
Source: NYC Department of Education

**CHART 10: 9TH GRADE GRADUATES GRADUATING WITH A HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY DIPLOMA**  
Declines in Students Attaining Equivalency Diplomas



Source: NYC Department of Education

**CHART 11: SHARE OF NEW YORK CITY POPULATION AGED 18–24 IN COLLEGE**  
Largest Gains Among Latinxs



Whether or not it was an intentional goal of New York City and State’s HSE policies, the increased rigor of the HSE may have made it a less appealing alternative to simply staying in high school until graduation.

**Notable increases in college enrollment, driven by low income young people**

Where the largest gains in school enrollment can be seen are that the college level, which has been driven largely by young people of Latinx backgrounds and from low-income households, whose college enrollment has now matched that of students from moderate- and high-income households.

These trends are again supported by NYCDOE data, which show marked increases in the number of high school students taking the SAT exam. In 2011, 30,482 juniors took the exam—by 2016, 40,462 did so, an increase of 33 percent.

**Increased imperative to attend school and work at the same time**

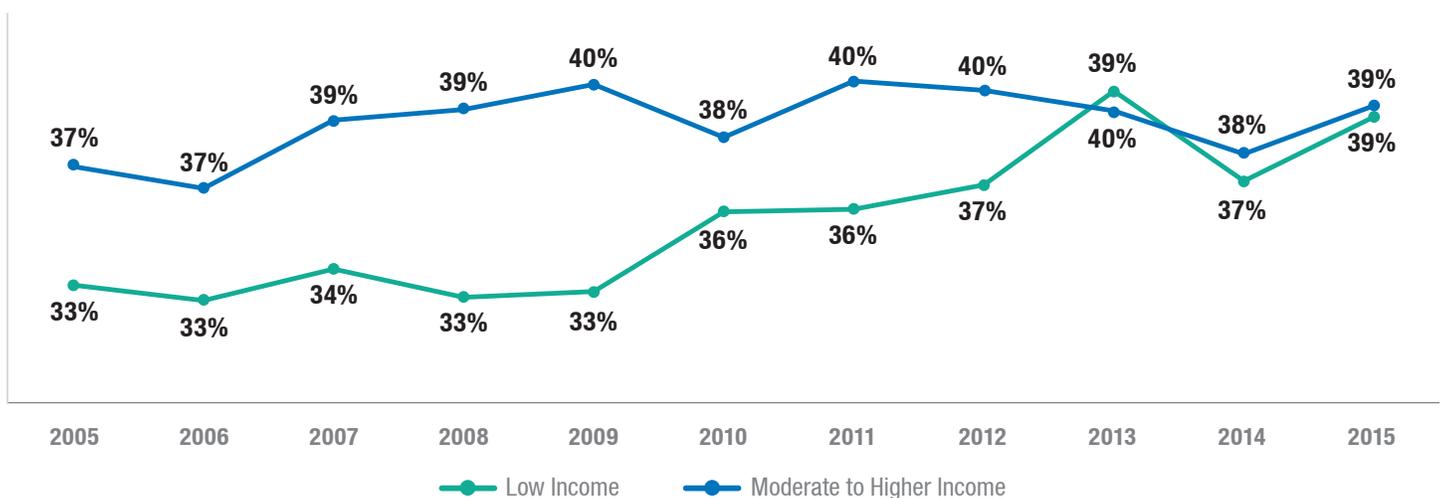
The rise in college-going among low-income young people may be one of the reasons why employment among the population of young people enrolled in school has risen. But the increase in the share of the population both in school and working has risen even faster than that of the college-going population alone. Thirty-five percent of local college students also work, up from 31 percent in 2010, emphasizing that now more than ever, attending school and working are not mutually exclusive, further evidence of the increasing costliness and difficulty.

**But clear differences in the types of college enrollment by race, driving disparities in degree attainment**

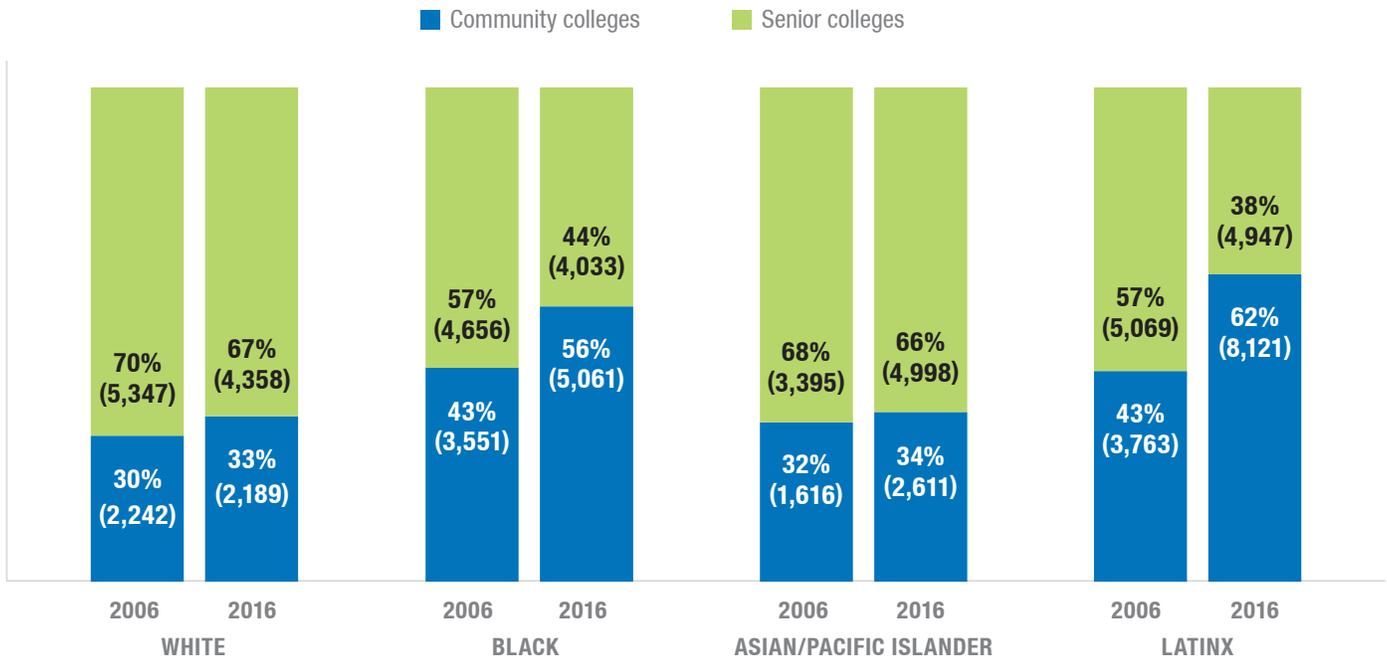
Amidst the promise suggested by increased college-going are possible concerns about the types of college enrollment among different subgroups. Black and Latinxs are far more likely (75%) to attend public colleges than white students (39%). And within CUNY, the city’s public university system, there are notable disparities in enrollment in four- and two-year colleges along racial and ethnic lines. Whites and Asians are more likely to attend senior colleges, while blacks and Latinxs are far more likely to attend community colleges. This is occurring even though increasing numbers of black and Latinx students are not only graduating high school, but as we have discussed, taking the SAT exam, which is only required to attend senior colleges.

Similarly, even though measures of college readiness among high school graduates remain lower than graduation rates, the number and share of students meeting those measures have risen steadily, from 42 percent of graduates in 2011 to 51 percent of graduates in 2016, with most of those gains concentrated among black and Latinx students. CUNY does not make its application data available, but given that its enrollment number in the four year colleges are so much lower than the numbers of college-ready black and Latinx high school graduates, most of whom report attending public colleges, it can be assumed that many of these qualified candidates are not able to get into senior colleges.

**CHART 12: SHARE OF NEW YORK CITY POPULATION AGED 18–24 ATTENDING COLLEGE, BY INCOME**  
Increases Among Low-Income College-Goers

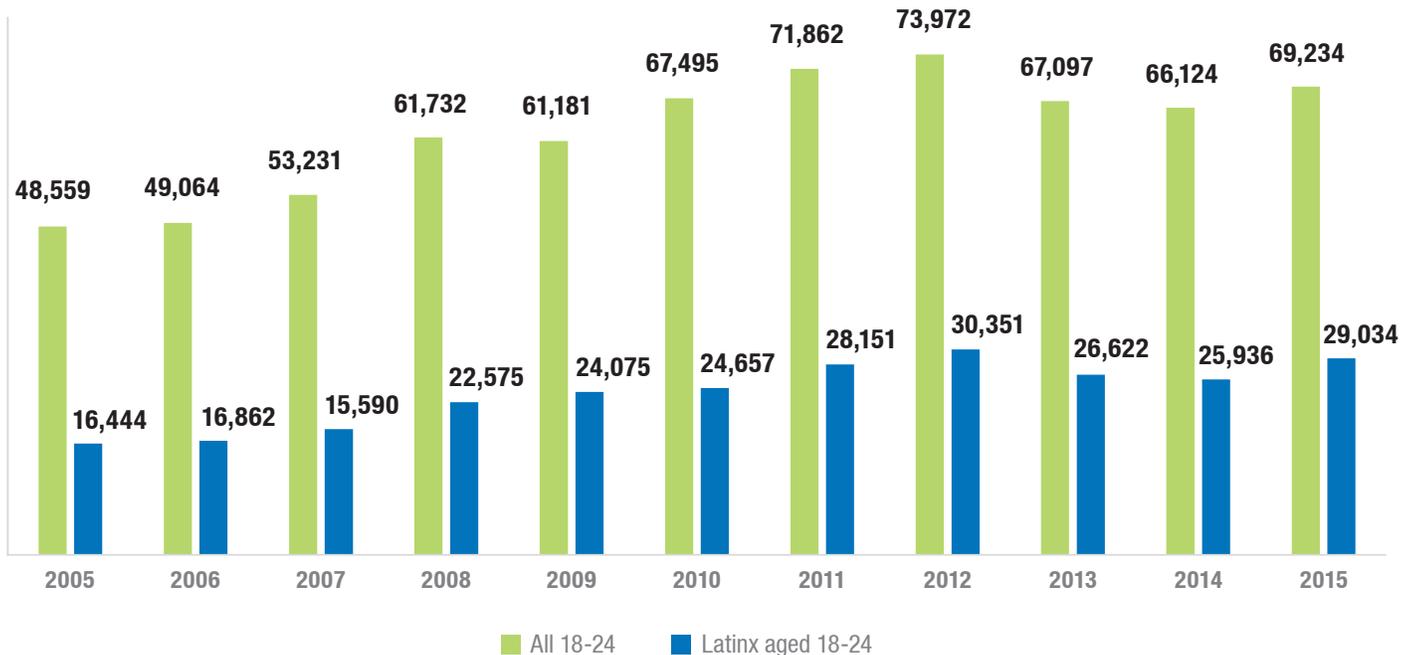


**CHART 13: SCHOOL TYPE OF FIRST-TIME FALL FRESHMEN ENROLLED AT CUNY COLLEGES, BY RACE/ETHNICITY**  
**Black and Latinx Decline in Share at 4-Year Colleges**



Note: Excludes students enrolled at Guttman.  
 Source: CUNY, Office of Institutional Research.

**CHART 14: NEW YORK CITY POPULATION AGED 18–24 WITH SOME COLLEGE, BUT NO DEGREE**  
**Increases in College Non-Completion**

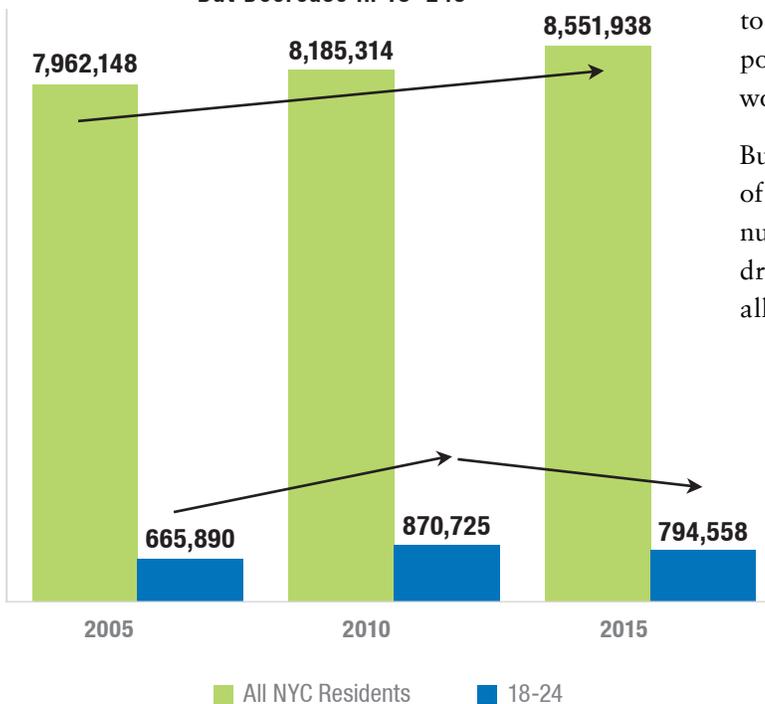


## Increasing numbers of college non-completers

This is a trend that CSS has documented previously, but which has persisted despite improving college readiness among black and Latinx high school graduates. Students who enroll in two-year community colleges are far less likely to graduate. Perhaps uncoincidentally, we find high numbers of young people reporting to have previously attended college without obtaining a degree, numbers largely driven by Latinx young adults.

It is important to note the progress of the New York City public schools in steadily increasing rates of high school graduation, college readiness and enrollment. But the population of college non-completers represents a potentially worrisome concern for policy makers. Unlike high school graduates who have not begun college, these young adults may be marked by debt incurred while they attended college, as well as the experience of failure in a formal setting.

**CHART 15: NEW YORK CITY POPULATION**  
Overall Population Growth,  
But Decrease in 18–24s



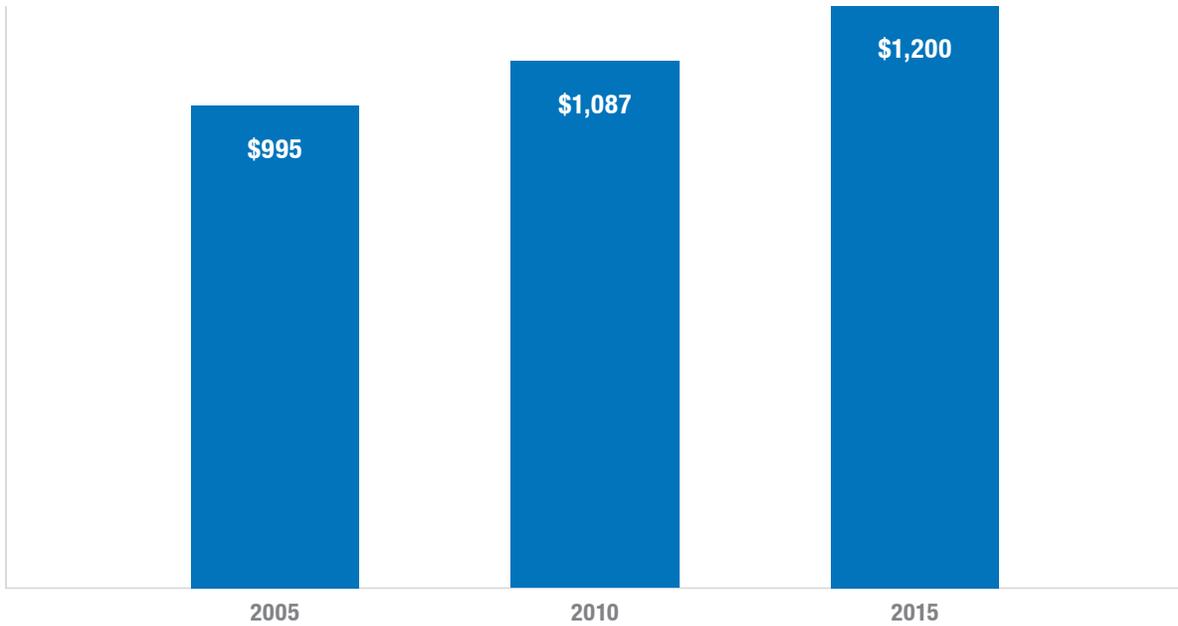
## C. Gentrification and Demographic Change

One clear reason behind the drop in OSOW numbers and rates is that New York City is today home to fewer young adults in general, and notably fewer of some low-income subgroups that are traditionally neither in school, nor working.

As Chart 15 presents, there has been a notable drop in the overall number of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 living in New York City.<sup>11</sup> This alone likely contributes to some extent to the lower numbers of young adults in that age group who are out of school and out of work. Overall, there are nine percent fewer people in this age group. Applying this drop in the overall 18–24 population to the OSOW population proportionally would have led to a drop from 187,588 to 171,268—16,409 fewer OSOW young adults. On its own, that would account for nearly a third (32%) of the total decrease in OSOW numbers since 2010. But since the 18- to 24-year-old populations in 2010 and 2015 are largely independent—only those who were age 18 and 19 in 2010 would still be within the 18-24 age group in 2015—and thus not directly attributable to an outflow of the population, it is difficult to fully understand the extent to which the decrease in the population is more likely to be related to individuals who would have been out of school and out of work.

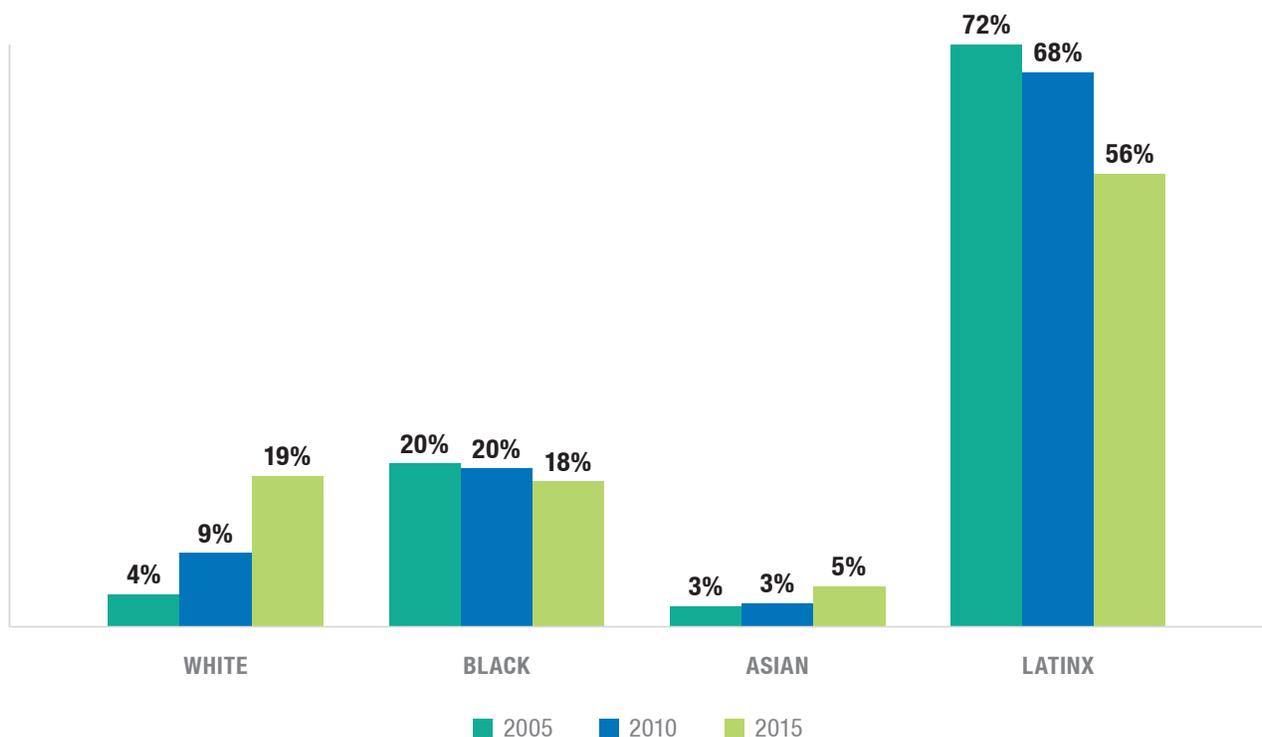
But it is important to note that this decrease in the number of all young adults, while to some extent affecting the number of OSOW young people, does not explain the drop in the share of OSOW, which fell from 22 percent of all 18- to 24-year-olds in 2010, to 17 percent in 2015.

**CHART 16: MEDIAN CONTRACT RENT PAID BY RENTER HOUSEHOLDS IN NEW YORK CITY (2015 DOLLARS)**  
**Notable Rise in Rents**



Note: Median contract rent has been adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers.

**CHART 17: RACIAL/ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF BUSHWICK RESIDENTS AGED 18–34**  
**Clear Signs of Gentrification**



## Signs of gentrification changing New York City’s youth population: decline in low-income subgroups, changes in specific neighborhoods

The drop in the share of young people who are out of school and out of work appears directly related to gentrification, whereby increased housing costs lead to the displacement of lower-income communities.<sup>12</sup> New York City rents have risen, as shown in Chart 16, which controls for inflation, leading to changes in those able to live in the neighborhoods with the highest-increasing costs. For example, Chart 17 shows how Bushwick, Brooklyn, the neighborhood with the largest decline in OSOW rates, has also seen the greatest replacement of black and Latinx residents by whites.

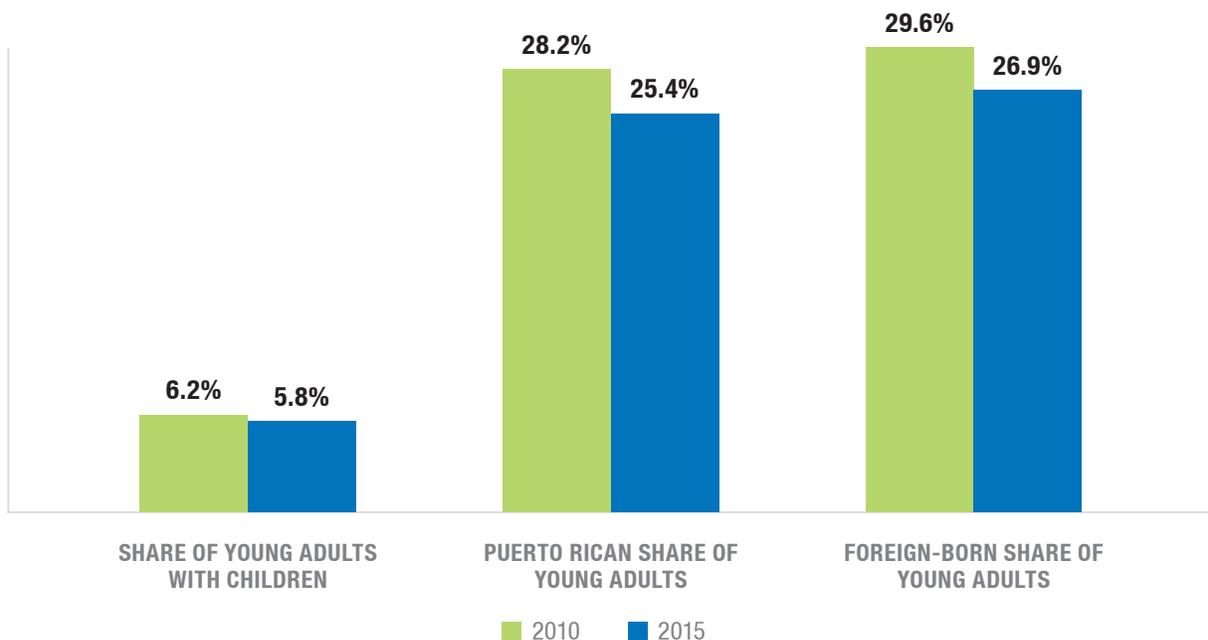
We find specific declines in subgroups of young people who have traditionally had the highest rates of OSOW status. Between 2010 and 2015, there was a decrease in several subpopulations that have traditionally been more likely to be out of school and out of work, including young people of Puerto Rican backgrounds, young adult parents, and a slight decrease in the share of foreign-born young adults.<sup>13</sup>

Table 3 presents the neighborhoods that have changed the most over the past five years, in terms of their share of OSOW young adults compared to other New York City communities. Bushwick and Sunset Park, both in Brooklyn, saw notable drops in their OSOW rates, which took them

out of the 20 communities with the highest OSOW rates. This likely has as much to do with the gentrification of those neighborhoods as it does with increases in jobholding and school enrollment of the young people in those communities. From 2010 to 2015, those areas became home to higher shares of white and higher-income individuals.

Areas that have not fared as well nor gentrified as quickly during the post-Recession period, such as the North Shore of Staten Island, and the Rockaways, in Queens, saw the highest increases in OSOW rates, and entered the group of neighborhoods with the highest shares of young people neither in school, nor working. The economic recovery that has taken place over the past five years continues to fit a “tale of two cities” narrative, with some communities, marked by gentrification, seeing notable improvements in young adult connection, and other neighborhoods, which have not gentrified, seeing higher rates of disconnection.

**CHART 18: SHARE OF NEW YORK CITY POPULATION AGED 18–24 Declines Among Subgroups With Highest OSOW Rates**



**TABLE 3: CHANGE IN TOP 20 NEIGHBORHOODS WITH HIGHEST OSOW RATES AMONG RESIDENTS AGED 18–24**

STATUS	NEIGHBORHOOD	OSOW RATE (2013–15)	OSOW RATE (2008–10)
LEFT TOP 20 NEIGHBORHOODS WITH HIGHEST OSOW RATES	BUSHWICK (BK)	17%	26%
	SUNSET PARK (BK)	17%	24%
	KEW GARDENS / WOODHAVEN (Q)	15%	22%
	PELHAM PARKWAY (BX)	18%	27%
	EAST HARLEM (M)	15%	32%
ENTERED TOP 20 NEIGHBORHOODS WITH HIGHEST OSOW RATES	NORTH SHORE (SI)	24%	19%
	FLATBUSH (BK)	22%	21%
	WASHINGTON HEIGHTS / INWOOD (M)	21%	20%
	ROCKAWAYS (Q)	19%	17%
	ELMHURST / CORONA (Q)	19%	18%

Additional neighborhood data is presented in Appendix A. Source: Pooled 2008–10 and 2013–15 American Community Survey data.

### D. Possible Impact of New Public Policy and Programs Targeting Young Adults

Along with the changes in the economy and progress within the public schools, a range of new initiatives have targeted young adults, both those who are out of school and out of work, as well as those at risk of falling into that category. And other new policies, less aimed at OSOW young people directly, may have also supported their reconnection to work and school. While it is difficult to attribute the decline in OSOW rates to public policy, particularly given the changes in the economy, it is interesting to note that local declines have been slightly more dramatic than those seen at the national level, where the broader economy has experienced similar dynamics. This may suggest some role of local policy, which is independent of national trends.

Public efforts, through those at the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity, the Young Men’s Initiative, adult literacy community, and others, have created new funding streams and program models aimed at OSOW young adults. One of the largest of these, the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP), is a 14-week transitional job program solely for 16-24 year olds neither in school, nor working, created in 2008, expanded through 2012, and which served 1,744 young people in Fiscal Year 2017.<sup>14</sup> Recent reforms at the New York City Human Resources Administration have allowed thousands of young people on public assistance to enroll in programs aimed directly at OSOW young adults. Expansion in funding for local adult literacy programs, most of which are open to individuals ages 18 and over, have also added thousands of new seats for participants.

Policy makers might point to New York City’s combined efforts of OSOW prevention, largely within the public high schools, as discussed earlier, with the increased investment in the range of recuperative programs for young adults already disconnected from school and work. Working alongside the public sector and private philanthropic funders in New York City are the broad range of community-based and similar direct service organizations, offering young people multiple ways to reconnect to education or employment. New York City’s size has allowed it to target the OSOW population specifically, which may not have been possible in other localities where funding streams for young people need to be more concentrated.

Several other new public policy initiatives may have also supported young adult reconnection to work and school. As we have noted, it is possible that a positive side effect of the universal pre-K program, implemented broadly in 2015, has been increased employment of young people, particularly Latinx women.<sup>15</sup> It is also possible that the continued expansion of public health insurance among young adults, which we note in the following section, as a result of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), may have addressed health-related barriers to work, or made young people less averse to losing healthcare benefits they would have received from not working.

# SECTION II

## Who are today's OSOW young adults in New York City, and how are they different from that group five years ago? What do these changes suggest for programs and policy moving forward?

The second section of this report examines how the current population of OSOW young adults is different from that of five years ago, and what these differences suggest for how program and policy might need to adjust in response.

**A. Traditional structural barriers** remain the greatest predictors of OSOW status, including low levels of education, race/ethnicity, and neighborhood and household poverty.

**B. Service providers** cite heightened challenges in serving the current OSOW pool.

**C. Issues for public policy to address** directly now include part-time work and wage stagnation among young adult workers; heightened barriers of remaining OSOW pool; increasing rates of college non-completion.

**D. Issues for public policy to consider** in the future include the potential impact of the increasing minimum wage; possible economic slowdown or contraction; and continued rise in public college competitiveness.

### A. Traditional structural barriers remain the greatest predictors of OSOW status

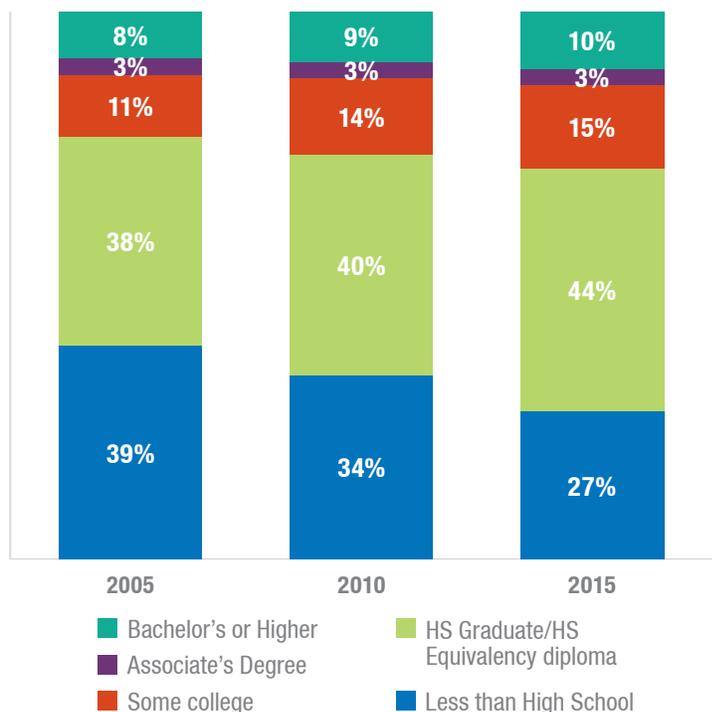
#### Educational attainment drives OSOW status

The factors that have traditionally driven youth disconnection remain firmly in place, and in some cases heightened to reflect new realities. Educational attainment has long had a strong relationship with a young person's likelihood of being neither in school, nor working. Young people without high school diplomas are only 16 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds not current enrolled in school, but they make up 61 percent of the OSOW population. But due to the changing economy and increased demand for skills in today's labor market, we find some changes in today's OSOW pool, with increases in the likelihood of OSOW status among those with high school degrees and some college experience.

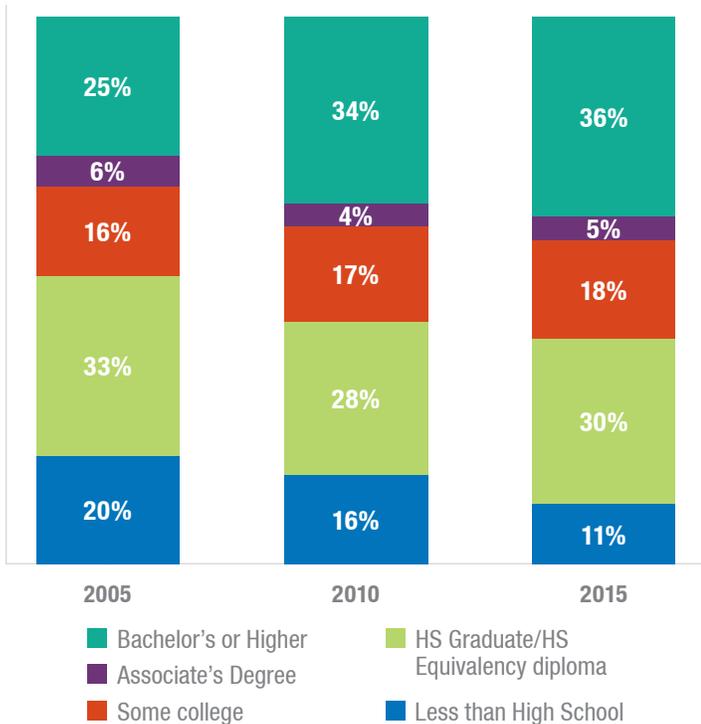
Employment and earnings remain directly correlated with educational attainment, with young people increasingly likely to hold higher-paying jobs as their levels of education increase. The median income of employed young adults aged 18 to 24 with a four-year college degree is more than double the salary of those with less than a high school education. Young people with any level of college education—even those who have left college without achieving any type of degree—are far less likely than their share of the overall population to be OSOW.

But due to the changing needs of a labor market that increasingly demands more skills than ever, today's OSOW young adults have higher levels of education than they did five and ten years ago (Chart 19). Whereas 61 percent of the OSOW population had a high school degree or higher in 2005, that has increased steadily to 73 percent in 2015, with a high school degree providing less insulation today against joblessness as it once did. Those without a high school degree remain the least likely to find work, but comprise a smaller share of today's OSOW pool due to the combination of higher graduation rates and the increasing skills demanded in the labor market.

**CHART 19: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS AGED 18–24 THAT ARE OUT OF SCHOOL, OUT OF WORK**  
More education among OSOWs



**CHART 20: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF EMPLOYED 18–24 POPULATION IN NEW YORK CITY (NOT ENROLLED IN SCHOOL)**  
Jobs Requiring More Education



This is a direct reflection of the education levels of employed young adults (Chart 20). Whereas 20 percent of employed 18- to 24-year-olds in 2005 and 16 percent in 2010 did not have a high school diploma, that rate has fallen to just 11 percent in 2015. Similarly, those with at least some college experience now make up 59 percent of working young adults, compared to 47 percent in 2005 and 54 percent in 2010. Despite the heightened demand for labor since 2010, the chances of obtaining work for those with lower levels of education has not increased.

Our economy requires more skills from young adults than ever before, even during periods when jobs are more plentiful. Improvements in our public schools and resulting graduation rates are part of the solution, but a high school diploma alone is not as useful as it once was in securing employment. Policy makers may need to turn their attention to college retention and finding ways to get young people early work experience.

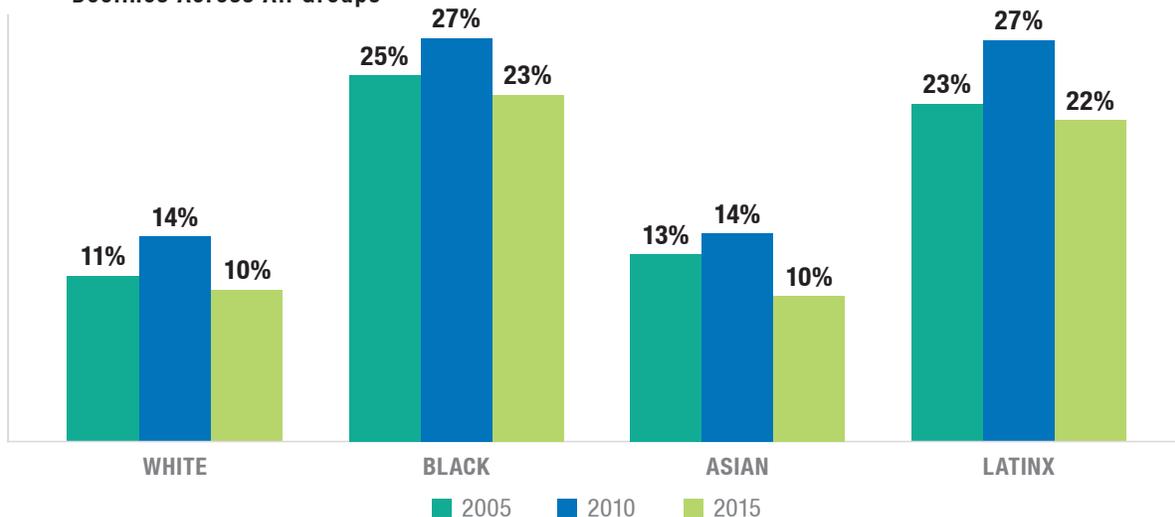
**Race and ethnicity still strongly tied to OSOW likelihood**

Race and ethnicity remain another strong driver of OSOW status. Despite declines across racial and ethnic subgroups since 2010, black and Latinx young adults remain more than twice as likely as whites and Asians to be neither in school, nor working.

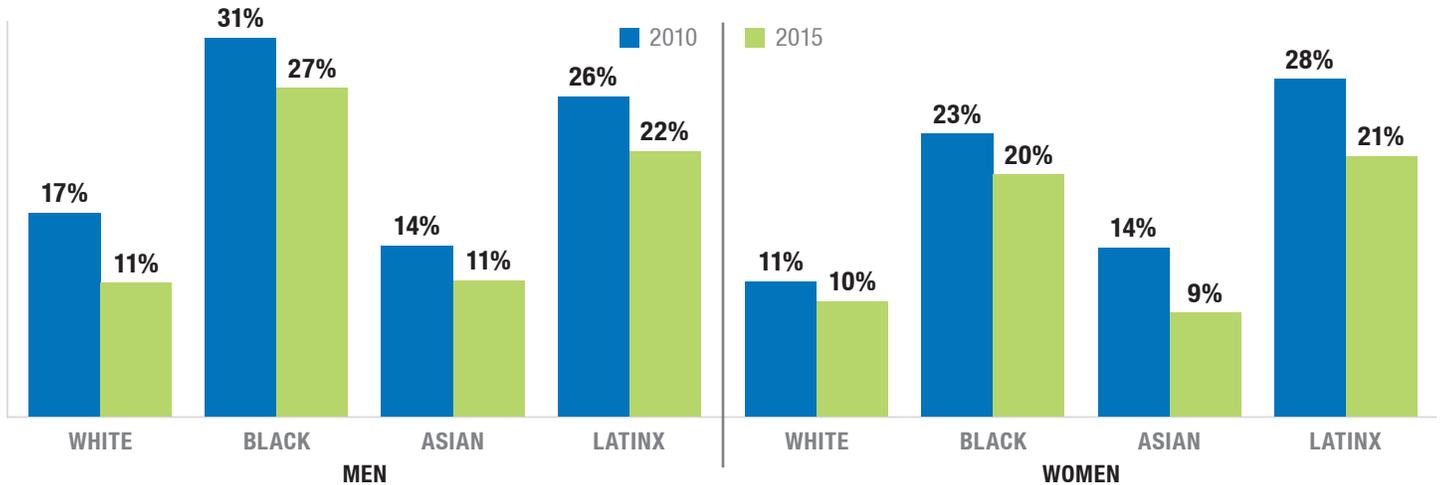
Looking deeper, the declines among subgroups were relatively largest for white and Asian young adults (14% to 10% for both groups), than they were for black (27% to 23%) and Latinx (27% to 22%) young people, suggesting that those with the fewest barriers benefited most during the recovery.

Across race and gender, white males and Latinx females both showed the largest drops in disconnection, for different reasons, with white males increasing their college-going and Latinx females working at higher rates. Overall, white male disconnection dropped from 17 to 11 percent, and the rate for Latinx females from 28 to 21 percent.

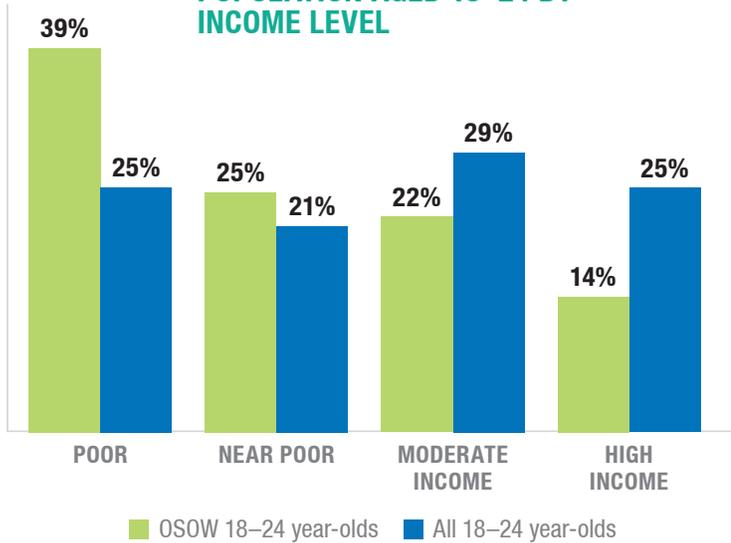
**CHART 21: SHARE OF NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS AGED 18–24 THAT ARE OUT OF SCHOOL, OUT OF WORK**  
Declines Across All Groups



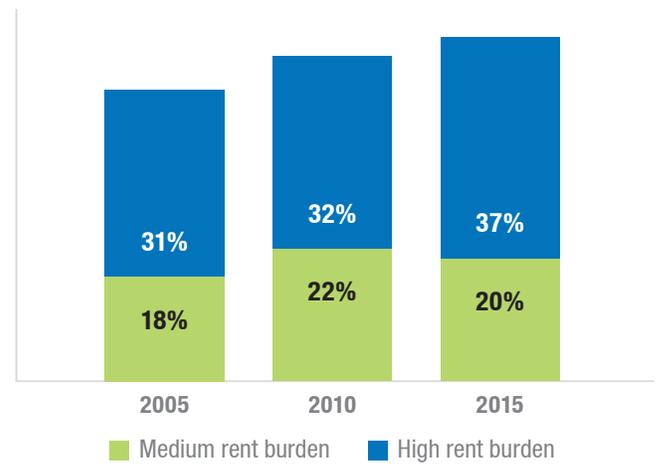
**CHART 22: SHARE OF NEW YORKERS AGED 18–24 THAT ARE OUT OF SCHOOL, OUT OF WORK, BY GENDER AND RACE**



**CHART 23: DISTRIBUTION OF NEW YORK CITY POPULATION AGED 18–24 BY INCOME LEVEL**

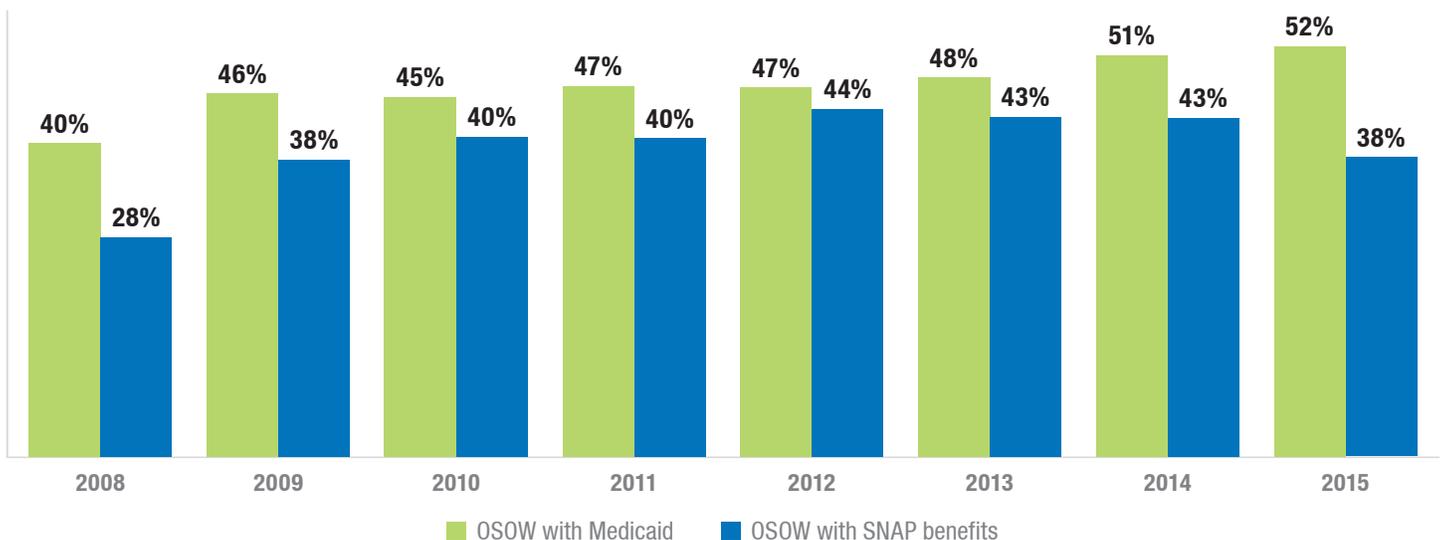


**CHART 24: RENT BURDEN RATES AMONG OSOW 18–24 YOUNG ADULTS LIVING IN RENTER HOUSEHOLDS**



Note: Rent burden calculations are based on contract rents and assume that renter households paying zero rent are unburdened. Moderate burdens are defined as comprising 30–50 percent of income; high burdens as over 50 percent of income.

**CHART 25: SHARE OF 18–24 OUT-OF-SCHOOL, OUT-OF-WORK POPULATION WITH PUBLIC BENEFIT**



**TABLE 4: NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS WITH HIGHEST OSOW RATES THROUGH 2015**

NEIGHBORHOOD	OSOW RATE AMONG 18- TO 24-YEAR-OLDS		NUMBER OF OSOW 18- TO 24-YEAR-OLDS		NEIGHBORHOOD POVERTY RATE (2013–15)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE IN OSOW RATE	CHANGE IN RANKING FROM 2008–10 TO 2013–15
	2013–15	2008–10	2013–15	2008–10			
1. MOTT HAVEN / HUNTS POINT (BX)	37%	43%	7,687	8,238	41%	-5%	NO CHANGE
2. BEDFORD STUYVESANT (BK)	29%	29%	4,588	4,250	33%	0%	7 TO 2
3. BROWNSVILLE / OCEAN HILL (BK)	29%	37%	3,912	4,834	36%	-8%	2 TO 3
4. EAST FLATBUSH (BK)	29%	22%	3,853	3,304	18%	8%	20 TO 4
5. SOUNDVIEW / PARKCHESTER (BX)	29%	31%	6,037	5,860	30%	-2%	NO CHANGE
6. CENTRAL HARLEM (M)	27%	27%	4,051	3,484	29%	0%	12 TO 6
7. MORRISANIA / EAST TREMONT (BX)	26%	29%	6,188	6,418	41%	-2%	8 TO 7
8. KINGSBRIDGE HEIGHTS / MOSHOLU (BX)	26%	27%	3,679	3,753	33%	-1%	10 TO 8
9. HIGHBRIDGE / S. CONCOURSE (BX)	26%	23%	4,557	3,419	39%	2%	16 TO 9
10. EAST NEW YORK / STARRETT CITY (BK)	25%	31%	4,654	5,643	29%	-5%	6 TO 10
11. NORTH CROWN HEIGHTS / PROSPECT HEIGHTS (BK)	25%	27%	3,411	3,821	25%	-2%	9 TO 11
12. NORTH SHORE (SI)	24%	19%	4,495	3,834	21%	5%	ENTERED TOP 20
13. UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS / FORDHAM (BX)	23%	33%	4,141	6,314	41%	-9%	3 TO 13
14. FLATBUSH (BK)	22%	21%	3,636	4,048	22%	1%	ENTERED TOP 20
15. JAMAICA (Q)	21%	23%	5,425	5,410	15%	-2%	17 TO 15
16. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS / INWOOD (M)	21%	20%	4,913	4,439	25%	0%	ENTERED TOP 20
17. SOUTH CROWN HEIGHTS (BK)	20%	22%	2,243	2,915	21%	-2%	18 TO 17
18. ROCKAWAYS (Q)	19%	17%	1,841	1,997	20%	2%	ENTERED TOP 20
19. ELMHURST / CORONA (Q)	19%	18%	2,593	2,688	20%	1%	ENTERED TOP 20
20. WILLIAMSBRIDGE / BAYCHESTER (BX)	19%	27%	2,799	3,501	21%	-8%	11 TO 20

Note: Rankings are based on pooled 2013–15 American Community Survey data.



OSOW young adults remain more likely to live in households with low incomes. But the cost of housing has become an increasing barrier for young adults—who both pay more for rent than ever before, and are also increasingly less likely to be able to afford living on their own. The share of OSOW young adults in renter households that pay over 50 percent of their household income on rent increased from 32 percent in 2010 to 37 percent in 2015, after only a slight increase from 31 percent in 2005. And just 10 percent of low-income OSOW young adults headed their own household in 2015, down from 19 percent a decade prior.

On the positive side, OSOW young adults have been increasingly likely to receive health insurance under Medicaid since the enactment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2009. This increase in health care coverage also comes at the same time as the decline in health concerns as a reason for labor market non-participation among young people, offering another possible benefit of the ACA. Food assistance also grew steadily from 2009 (but a sharp dip in 2015 will need to be investigated with 2016 data to see if it is a blip or a trend).

Neighborhood poverty also remains a strong predictor of OSOW status, with the poorest communities having the highest rates and number of out-of-school, out-of-work young adults. Table 4 presents the 20 community districts in New York City with the highest OSOW rates, along with how those rates have changed since the Recession.

OSOW rates have dropped in citywide measures, but at the community level, declines across neighborhoods vary. Mott Haven/Hunts Point; Bedford-Stuyvesant; Brownsville/Ocean Hill; East Flatbush; and Soundview/Parkchester, in that order, are the five New York City community districts with the highest rates of 18- to 24-year-olds who are neither in school, nor working. Mott Haven/Hunts Points remains the community with the highest OSOW rate, despite its rate having dropped from 43 percent to 37 percent since 2010; while Bedford Stuyvesant, previously ranked seventh, is now second highest. There has been no change in Bedford Stuyvesant's OSOW rate of 29 percent since 2010—young people in that community seem to have enjoyed none of the economic recovery. But the biggest mover among high OSOW communities is East Flatbush, which was 20th in 2010 (at 22%), and now has the fourth-highest rate of OSOW young adults (29%), running counter to the broader decreases in OSOW rates citywide. On the positive side, the community making the largest drop in the ranking is University Heights/Fordham: after being 3rd in 2010 (33%), it is now ranked 13th (23%).

## **B. Service providers cite heightened challenges in serving the current OSOW pool**

CSS conducted interviews with several organizations that offer education and workforce development programming to OSOW young adults.<sup>16</sup> Respondents were invited to reflect on and offer their own analysis of topline data showing general decreases in OSOW levels, and corresponding increases in employment and school enrollment. In addition to confirming many of the trends visible in the data, respondents provided an additional level of detail about the OSOW young adult population.

Service providers cited a range of challenges that were consistent with the idea that those who remain in the OSOW pool despite improving schools and greater availability of work are those with the greatest barriers, making them the hardest to serve. Major themes presented by providers included:

- **Recruitment challenges**
- **Heightened barriers of participants in today's OSOW programs**
- **Mismatches between policy and funding environment with some realities of new OSOW population**

### **Service providers cite new recruitment challenges**

According to providers, the lower numbers of OSOW, and the characteristics of this newer group, has made recruitment into programs more challenging. This may be because those currently in the OSOW pool are less motivated and have higher barriers, and providers cite the need for more intensive outreach and marketing efforts to attract young people into their programs.

### **Service providers cite heightened barriers among participants in today's OSOW programs**

The dual improvements in both high schools and the labor market, while reducing the overall numbers of OSOW young adults, may mean that those who are in today's OSOW pool face much greater challenges to success. Young people with relatively high academic skills who might have considered leaving high school before 2011 are much less likely to do so today. And the most job-ready young adults who were OSOW because they could not find work five years ago are much more likely to be employed today. The providers we spoke to cite a higher concentration of young people with low levels of literacy, mental health concerns, histories of trauma, criminal justice involvement, and severe housing instability in their programs today than five years ago.

This may be particularly true of recent high school non-completers in today's OSOW pool. Increased HSE requirements have lowered the numbers of program walk-ins who are near high school graduation and seeking a quicker alternative to a diploma without taking Regents exams and finishing required coursework. These claims are supported by data—presented earlier in this report—showing reduced numbers of young people leaving high school seeking an equivalency diploma. Young people that might have comprised the higher-skill portion of the OSOW without a high school degree are now likely staying in high school. Those who enter OSOW programs without even a high school degree likely face the deepest set of challenges to their longer-term success than any OSOW subgroup in recent years.

## **Service providers cite the need for more comprehensive funding streams and program guidelines to meet new OSOW population challenges**

Related to the above, program providers cite a mismatch between the program and funding streams that currently exist and the realities of the new OSOW pool. Whereas a high share of OSOW young adults five years ago might have been well served by a transitional job program—such as YAIP—today’s OSOW may need much more comprehensive supports. Consistently, service providers cited the need for longer service timelines, more support for overcoming barriers related to skills deficiencies, mental health challenges and histories of trauma, housing instability, and poverty.

## **C. OSOW young adult issues for policy and programs to address directly now**

The changes that have occurred in New York City over the past five years suggest a range of issues that should be addressed now by public policy and private philanthropy and programs. Below CSS presents the three main problems that we believe are raised by our analysis of recent data.

- **heightened barriers of remaining OSOW pool;**
- **the surge in part-time work and wage stagnation among young adult workers;**
- **increasing rates of college non-completion**

### **Heightened barriers in the current OSOW program participant pool**

Improved retention and graduation rates in our high schools and increases in employment suggest that those with the fewest barriers—the “low-hanging fruit” among the OSOW population—have been able to stay connected to school or work. This is supported by service providers, who agree that today’s HSE population has, on average, lower literacy levels and higher social/emotional challenges. More work should be done to understand how to best serve young people with these higher barriers to success. These dynamics suggest a need for greater resources to serve today’s smaller, but potentially needier, OSOW population, to support the possible increased prevalence of mental health issues, housing instability, and a greater concentration of low literacy in OSOW.

## **Addressing the surge in part-time work and wage stagnation**

All gains in jobs since the Recession for young adults have been in part-time work, including what is likely involuntary part-time work for young people not enrolled in school. This may be partially related to growth in certain sectors—such as retail and food service—that are traditionally more likely to hire part-time workers, but is also likely due to the fact that employers have a range of incentives to keep their full-time staff total down. These include the ability to adjust staffing from week-to-week and even day-to-day, fewer requirements to provide benefits to part-time staff, and likely cost savings from offering fewer hours to employees. For young workers, the downsides of this shift to part-time work include unpredictable scheduling that makes balancing child care and school—not to mention life, in general—more complicated, a reduced likelihood of receiving benefits, and lower levels of pay than they would receive in full-time jobs. There may be an opportunity for public policy and programs to target part-time and underemployed workers to develop their skills for full-time and higher-level positions.

## **Increasing rates of college non-completion**

As discussed earlier, the number of individuals between the ages of 18 through 24 in New York City who have started college but left before completing any type of degree has grown from under 50,000 in 2005 to nearly 70,000 today. While the city’s progress in increasing high school graduation and college enrollment rates should be recognized, any praise should be mitigated by a concern about the extent to which the higher numbers of graduates are unsuccessful at the next level of their education. College may not be for everyone, but those who do enroll should be supported to achieve a degree. And unlike those young people whose highest level of educational attainment is also a high school diploma, but who have not begun college, college non-completers may face debt, and be marked by experiences of failure, creating new barriers to their success moving forward.

At the end of this report, JobsFirstNYC offer its recommendations for how public policy makers and private actors should respond to the above challenges.

## D. OSOW young adult issues to address over the next five years

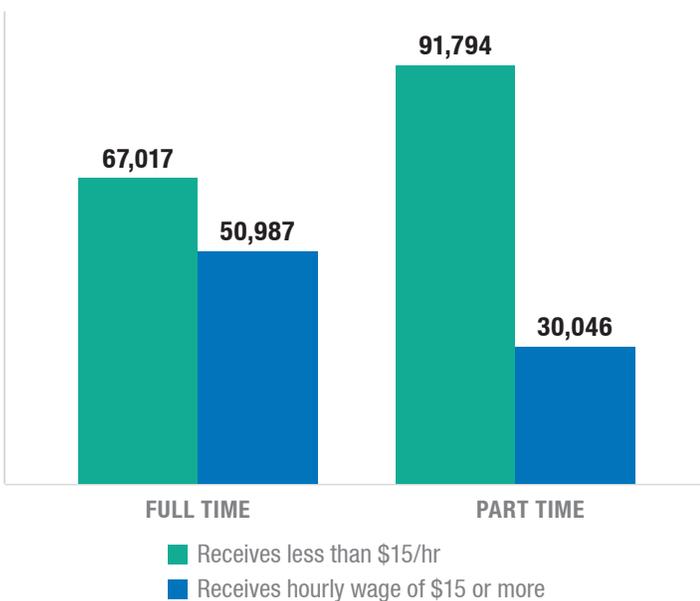
Looking further ahead, beyond the data considered for this report, two issues stand out for additional consideration:

- **Increases in the minimum wage**
- **Potential economic slowdown/contraction**

### Increases in the minimum wage will greatly impact young adults

New York City's general minimum wage will continue to increase to \$15/hour by 2020. Large numbers of young adults stand to benefit from these increases, assuming they do not lead to any reductions in employment levels. Fifty-seven percent of full-time and 75 percent of part-time non-tipped workers between the ages of 18 and 24—nearly 160,000 workers in total—currently earn less than \$15/hour, and these increases may ameliorate some of the negative effects of recent wage stagnation discussed earlier in this section. The rise in hourly pay may also help offset some of the move to part-time work, and the associated fewer hours worked, by young adults since 2010.

**CHART 26: NUMBER OF NEW YORK CITY WORKERS AGED 18–24**  
**Most Young Workers Will Gain from Minimum Wage Increases**



Source: US Census Bureau, monthly Current Population Survey data pooled for 2016, Outgoing Earner rotation module. Notes: Based on annual average of monthly data for 2016. Excludes tipped workers, including those in the hospitality and restaurant industries who receive a lower minimum wage and are excluded from increases in state minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

### Potential economic slowdown/contraction

It is important to note that the economic context for the five years that this report covers has been one of economic recovery, marked by rising levels of employment, even if they are mitigated by other dynamics such as increasing part-time work and wage stagnation (which, as we have noted, will be itself mitigated by the increasing minimum wage). Many of the jobs that have been gained over the past five years are in sectors, such as retail and food services, that are among the most affected by an economic slowdown, and which disproportionately employ young adults.

Another economic contraction will likely hit young adult employment hard, as in 2009-10, and public policy makers may want to be prepared for how to deal with the inevitably higher numbers of young people who will then become part of the OSOW pool.

Smart policy in this regard might include public sector employment, in the form of a public service corps that works to keep young people engaged in productive activities that not only keep them from being idle, but build their skills and work to enhance or support public infrastructure. Developing the plans—and perhaps even the funding sources that might be triggered—for such an initiative in relatively good economic times such as now, even if they are (hopefully) not needed later, might prove prescient in the case of a future crisis.

# Recommendations and a Call to Action

by JobsFirstNYC

Today's out-of-school, out-of-work young adults—fewer in overall share of the population and in number but facing perhaps greater barriers to reconnection—require a deeper understanding of their challenges and will need more comprehensive strategies to connect them to sustainable economic opportunities. Not doing so not only threatens the economic security of New York City but of an entire generation as well. This is especially critical given the growth in part-time, low-wage jobs as a share of young adults foundational work experiences. As the economy continues to evolve and the nature of work becomes more precarious for millennials, the nature of how we as a community work to expand economic opportunity must also evolve and change.

This research continues to reinforce that fundamental barriers—such as household income and poverty, race, neighborhood, and lower educational attainment—continue to plague too many young adults from entering the economy. These continued obstacles reflect, in part, the city's lack of a comprehensive approach to addressing the unique needs of the OSOW young adult population. By comparison, Los Angeles, for example, has built a cross-system approach designed to fully address the needs of this population to better connect them to economic opportunities. Their approach, led by the Mayor and key stakeholders, integrates mental health services, housing, foster care needs, training for in-demand jobs, employer partnerships, and other critical strategies that are responsive to the interconnectedness of the structural challenges faced by OSOW young people.

Despite a noticeably absent city strategy to tackle the challenges of OSOW young adults, New York City has made broader policy changes that—along with a stronger economy and overall higher employment—may have consequently had a positive impact on this population. Among them include the potential impact that Universal Pre-K has had on helping to reduce the share of young adults citing care-taking responsibilities as a reason for not being in the labor force. Another example of how

broader NYCDOE and CUNY policy changes may have had a positive impact on lowering the rates of OSOW young adults has been the focus on increasing high school graduation and college enrollment rates. On the workforce development side, the city has shifted toward more intentional investing sector-based strategies for OSOW young adults to ensure job training aligns with market demand, supported by the federal Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act (WIOA).

However, as highlighted throughout this report, alongside the reduction in the share and number of OSOW young adults, new questions have also surfaced. The significant increase in part-time work in low-wage jobs is disproportionately increasing the already too large number of young workers who are not wholly disconnected from the labor market, but instead are working in jobs with limited opportunities for advancement. The almost 35 percent of young adults in low-wage retail, food service, and personal care jobs makes clear the need to target initiatives to not only include those young people who are OSOW...but also those who are underemployed and further from accessing career pathway opportunities.

Given the number of young adults who end up in low-wage jobs and the increasing labor market demand for postsecondary credentials and skills training, there is a heightened need for the two largest systems providing education and career training, NYCDOE and CUNY, to establish a framework that better prepares students for the current realities of the employment market. This is particularly true for New York City's over-age, under-credited high school student population as well as the students who entered CUNY but left without a degree—many of whom are at great risk of falling into the OSOW population. For most OSOW young adults, school was their most promising opportunity for economic mobility—a connection that ultimately failed them.

The findings included in this report as well as the below next steps are timely as Mayor de Blasio has committed to establishing New York City's Disconnected Youth

Taskforce, set to launch in 2018. While taskforces are only impactful if city leadership is invested, policy makers, private philanthropy, the workforce development field, employers, and more need to deepen support for existing strategies we know work, nimbly adjust or modify those that aren't working, and invest in additional effective models and policy frameworks.

The questions raised by the research conducted to produce this report make clear the following priority areas:

- **Develop a deeper understanding of specific subgroups within today's OSOW young adult population to better target investments.**

Given that today's 136,000 OSOW young adults who may face relatively greater structural barriers and be harder to serve, New York City would benefit from a deeper understanding of the specific challenges they face so we can better serve them. The city should commission a study to better identify the structural barriers that certain subgroups of the OSOW young adult population face. This includes youth with disabilities and mental health challenges, foster youth, young adult veterans, immigrants, and young adults with justice-system experience. This effort must be equally focused on helping employers better understand and work with these populations. A targeted investigation for each subgroup must help to inform the next iteration of services and industry partnerships that would allow New York City's youth workforce development system to innovate or adapt where needed, and to invest more deeply in existing effective strategies.

- **Address the warning signs concerning part-time, low-wage work.**

Steady growth in part-time, low-wage jobs creates long-term economic insecurity and uncertainty. The City needs to invest in and strengthen opportunities for young adults to access good paying quality jobs—like JobsFirstNYC's Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project (YASEP)—that offer career advancement possibilities, while also building more intentional

opportunities for part-time, low wage workers to connect to training that will put them on a path to economic mobility. Although much of the workforce development system has been focused on connecting people to full-time employment, more services are needed to better prepare young adults on how best to navigate a part-time job economy. This includes longer post-placement services, more opportunities for part-time workers to continue developing their skills. For example, CareerLift, a recent partnership developed between the New York City Center for Youth Employment, JobsFirstNYC, and Social Finance, aims to grow targeted opportunities for formerly OSOW young adults to help them stay employed and advance in their careers.

Furthermore, New York State should begin the policy process to build a portable benefits framework that will lead the country in providing the growing number of part-time workers with greater protections and financial security. To start, the state should pass New York State Senate bill S.6355 proposed by Senator Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan) to establish the Task Force on Jobs and the New Economy that will further investigate the matter.

- **Prioritize career readiness and deepen investment in college completion programs.**

Despite the increase in high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates, too many young adults are leaving school not career-ready and without a credential required to enter today's labor market.

The NYCDOE must build a systemic career development and career readiness framework—similar to the fundamental principles that, if implemented well, can make Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools effective—to ensure all students have a universalized career exploration and career development experience that will better prepare them for postsecondary opportunities. To more intentionally stem the in-flow of young adults falling into the OSOW population, NYCDOE should focus its attention on the

more than 50,000 over-age, under-credited students in high school—many of whom are at risk of becoming OSOW. This work includes further integrating sector-specific workforce development agencies to create clear on-ramps and bridge programs for students to enter into postsecondary training and education opportunities.

Enrollment at CUNY has increased in recent years but too many low-income students of color are not completing with a credential, limiting their career opportunities and threatening their economic security. Despite the expansion of evidence-based models like the Accelerated Study of Associate Programs (ASAP) and other similar investments, CUNY must expand their efforts to create effective contextualized bridges for incoming CUNY students so they are more prepared to succeed. To strengthen their readiness and connectedness to a career upon completion, CUNY must also better connect all students to contextualized work-based learning experiences that better prepare them to access a job upon completion. Finally, given the high number of students who enter but do not complete CUNY, the university must make it easier for students to re-enroll and earn their credential.

infrastructure, engage anchor institutions for talent sourcing, and ultimately makes sure that local residents benefit from incoming economic growth.

The next phase of work to connect OSOW young adults to the economy will require an unprecedented level of alignment and collaboration to collectively tackle the myriad of structural barriers as the economy continues to evolve. This means the city, private philanthropy, and employers need to create more nimble mechanisms to create programs with wider on-ramps and longer bridges for these young adults.

- **Support neighborhood partnership development.**

Some communities continue to face alarmingly high rates of OSOW young adults. New York City should support and resource the development of partnerships among community-based organizations and stakeholders to create a community-driven, bottom-up network that leverages their collective capacities, engages in economic development and investments, and tackles community challenges together. For example, similar to the impact that the Lower East Side Employment Network (LESEN)—a JobsFirstNYC partnership—has had in helping reduce the number of OSOW young adults in the lower east side of Manhattan, communities with incoming economic development should develop a partnership model supported by the city to create a talent development

# APPENDIX A

Neighborhood	2013–15		2008–10		Percentage point change in OSOW rate
	OSOW rate	Number of OSOW 18-24s	OSOW rate	Number of OSOW 18-24s	
Mott Haven / Hunts Point (Bx)	37%	7,687	43%	8,238	-5%
Bedford Stuyvesant (Bk)	29%	4,588	29%	4,250	0%
Brownsville / Ocean Hill (Bk)	29%	3,912	37%	4,834	-8%
East Flatbush (Bk)	29%	3,853	22%	3,304	8%
Soundview / Parkchester (Bx)	29%	6,037	31%	5,860	-2%
Central Harlem (M)	27%	4,051	27%	3,484	0%
Morrisania / East Tremont (Bx)	26%	6,188	29%	6,418	-2%
Kingsbridge Heights / Mosholu (Bx)	26%	3,679	27%	3,753	-1%
Highbridge / S. Concourse (Bx)	26%	4,557	23%	3,419	2%
East New York / Starrett City (Bx)	25%	4,654	31%	5,643	-5%
North Crown Heights / Prospect Heights (Bk)	25%	3,411	27%	3,821	-2%
North Shore (SI)	24%	4,495	19%	3,834	5%
University Heights / Fordham (Bx)	23%	4,141	33%	6,314	-9%
Flatbush (Bk)	22%	3,636	21%	4,048	1%
Jamaica (Q)	21%	5,425	23%	5,410	-2%
Washington Heights / Inwood (M)	21%	4,913	20%	4,439	0%
South Crown Heights (Bk)	20%	2,243	22%	2,915	-2%
Rockaways (Q)	19%	1,841	17%	1,997	2%
Elmhurst / Corona (Q)	19%	2,593	18%	2,688	1%
Williamsbridge / Baychester (Bx)	19%	2,799	27%	3,501	-8%
Flatlands / Canarsie (Bk)	18%	3,865	15%	3,312	3%
Pelham Parkway (Bx)	18%	2,157	27%	3,271	-8%
Middle Village / Ridgewood (Q)	18%	2,770	20%	3,213	-2%
Sheepshead Bay / Gravesend (Bk)	18%	2,129	18%	1,992	0%
Howard Beach / S. Ozone Park (Q)	18%	2,198	19%	2,706	-2%
Brooklyn Heights / Fort Greene (Bk)	17%	2,125	19%	2,515	-2%
Sunset Park (Bk)	17%	2,340	24%	3,419	-7%
Bushwick (Bk)	17%	2,999	26%	4,658	-9%
Jackson Heights (Q)	16%	3,087	19%	3,712	-3%
Borough Park (Bk)	16%	2,491	20%	3,223	-4%
Park Slope / Carroll Gardens (Bk)	16%	973	16%	1,261	0%
South Shore (SI)	16%	2,201	17%	2,284	-1%
Astoria (Q)	15%	2,404	13%	2,087	2%

Neighborhood	2013–15		2008–10		Percentage point change in OSOW rate
	OSOW rate	Number of OSOW 18-24s	OSOW rate	Number of OSOW 18-24s	
Bellerose / Rosedale (Q)	15%	2,881	15%	2,920	0%
East Harlem (M)	15%	1,939	32%	4,631	-17%
Sunnyside / Woodside (Q)	15%	1,433	11%	1,063	4%
Kew Gardens / Woodhaven (Q)	15%	2,500	22%	3,126	-7%
Bay Ridge (Bk)	15%	1,334	18%	1,744	-3%
Forest Hills / Rego Park (Q)	15%	880	10%	720	4%
Williamsburg / Greenpoint (Bk)	14%	2,004	17%	2,790	-3%
Throgs Neck / Co-op City (Bx)	14%	1,579	19%	1,731	-5%
Riverdale / Kingsbridge (Bk)	13%	1,453	11%	1,568	2%
Coney Island (Bk)	13%	1,167	18%	1,515	-5%
Flushing / Whitestone (Q)	13%	2,566	14%	3,058	-1%
Bensonhurst (Bk)	12%	1,719	17%	2,013	-5%
Hillcrest / Fresh Meadows (Q)	12%	1,964	11%	1,459	0%
Lower East Side / Chinatown (M)	11%	1,905	17%	2,965	-6%
Morningside Heights / Hamilton Heights (M)	11%	2,480	16%	3,499	-5%
Upper West Side (M)	11%	1,046	10%	1,119	0%
Mid-Island (SI)	10%	1,170	17%	1,985	-7%
Chelsea / Clinton / Midtown (M)	7%	1,053	7%	1,049	1%
Bayside / Little Neck (Q)	7%	554	11%	887	-4%
Stuyvesant Town / Turtle Bay (M)	7%	1,154	3%	443	4%
Greenwich Village / Financial District (M)	7%	969	4%	567	3%
Upper East Side (M)	6%	572	15%	1,592	-9%



## NOTES

1. An earlier version of this report included incorrect data for national OSOW rates. CSS mistakenly reported that those rates had risen since 2010. We apologize for the error.
  2. Unless otherwise noted, data for this analysis is from the American Community Survey (ACS) of the United States Census Bureau.
  3. Between 2010 and 2015, private-sector employment in New York City increased by 17 percent, from 3.17 million in 2010 to 3.70 million in 2015, according to Current Employment Statistics data from the New York State Department of Labor.
  4. The authors choose to use the term “Latinx” throughout this report, even when referring to data tabulated in response to the question of whether respondents consider themselves “Hispanic”.
  5. Note that year-to-year fluctuations keep us from feeling comfortable citing the large drop from 2010 to 2015, but even if we use 2011 as a baseline, there has been no increase in full-time jobs.
  6. Based on four-year August graduation rates from NYC Department of Education, Graduation Outcomes, <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/GraduationDropoutReports/default.htm>
  7. NYC Department of Education, Demographic Snapshot - School Years 2011-12 to 2015-16 (All Grades) [http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/20056B95-8351-4E45-B8A1-9901B4B6A93B/0/DemographicSnapshot201112to201516Public\\_FINAL.xlsx](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/20056B95-8351-4E45-B8A1-9901B4B6A93B/0/DemographicSnapshot201112to201516Public_FINAL.xlsx)
  8. Press release from MDRC. “New Findings Show New York City’s Small High Schools Boost College Enrollment Rates Among Disadvantaged Students.” October 2014, <https://www.mdrc.org/news/press-release/new-findings-show-new-york-city-s-small-high-schools-boost-college-enrollment>
  9. Manuel Gutiérrez, Donna Tapper, Michael Scuello et al. *Evaluation of New York City’s Learning to Work Initiative for Over-Age and Under-Credited High School Youth: Student Outcomes (2005-2008)*. Prepared by Metis Associates for Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation, NYC Department of Education, June 2010, [http://www.metisassociates.com/images/pdf/reports/Metis\\_06-10\\_LearningtoWorkEvaluationReport.pdf](http://www.metisassociates.com/images/pdf/reports/Metis_06-10_LearningtoWorkEvaluationReport.pdf)
  10. NYC Department of Education, Overview of High School Equivalency Diploma program, including changes to the GED, <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/SpecialPrograms/AlternativesHS/FullPtGED/default.htm>
  11. CSS was unable to find statistically significant or notable citywide trends related to the decrease in the 18 through 24 population other than those presented here about specific subpopulations.
- We did find changes within specific communities related to race, ethnicity, and income, which are discussed, but these were not present in our analysis of citywide data. Individuals we spoke to about some of these trends raised hypotheses about native New Yorkers leaving the city for other--perhaps more affordable--areas, but those trends were not supported by our analysis of Census data.
12. The term gentrification has a range of usages, connotations, and impacts, but is defined here specifically as the process by which increased housing costs can lead to the displacement of lower-income community residents of color and influx of white residents who typically have higher incomes.
  13. See James Parrot and Lazar Treschan. *Barriers to Entry: the Increasing Challenges Faced by Young Adults in the New York City Labor Market*. Prepared for JobsFirstNYC by Fiscal Policy Institute and Community Service Society, May 2013, [http://lghhttp.58547.nexcesscdn.net/803F44A/images/nycss/images/uploads/pubs/JFNYC\\_Barriers\\_to\\_Entry\\_5-2-13\\_SPL%20%282%29.pdf](http://lghhttp.58547.nexcesscdn.net/803F44A/images/nycss/images/uploads/pubs/JFNYC_Barriers_to_Entry_5-2-13_SPL%20%282%29.pdf); and Lazar Treschan, Latino Youth in New York City: School, Work and Income Trends for New York’s Largest Group of Young People, Community Service Society, October 2010, <http://lghhttp.58547.nexcesscdn.net/803F44A/images/nycss/images/uploads/pubs/LatinoYouthinNYCOct2010.pdf>
  14. City of New York, Mayor’s Management Report Fiscal 2017, [http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2017/2017\\_mmr.pdf](http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2017/2017_mmr.pdf)
  15. It is difficult to estimate the total increase in numbers of OSOW young people that now participate in programs, but between the range of new or more accessible programs at DYCD and HRA alone, we estimate the figure as approximately 30,000.
  16. CSS met with staff from four organizations that serve young adults who are neither in school, nor working. In order to encourage the greatest level of candor in their responses about public policy, CSS assured respondents that their organizations would not be named.



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