MAPPING POVERTY IN NEW YORK CITY

PINPOINTING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY, COMMUNITY BY COMMUNITY

Community Service Society | Fighting Poverty Strengthening New York

United Way of New York City

United Way of New York City

United Way of New York City creates, leads, and supports strategic initiatives that address the root causes of critical human care problems in order to achieve measurable improvement in the lives of the city's most vulnerable residents and communities. Throughout our work, we partner with neighborhood agencies, government, business, foundations, volunteers, and others so that collectively we can achieve more than any one organization working alone.

The Community Service Society of New York

The mission of the Community Service Society is to identify problems which create a permanent poverty class in New York City and to advocate the systemic changes required to eliminate such problems. CSS will focus on enabling, empowering, and promoting opportunities for poor families and individuals to develop their full potential, to contribute to society, and to realize social, economic, and political opportunities.

Contents

2 Introduction

3 A city of neighborhoods

4 Poverty and low incomes are highly concentrated

5 Unemployment is highly concentrated

6 Immigrants are concentrated in different neighborhoods from poor people

7 Renters in most low-income neighborhoods face very high rent burdens

8 Subsidized housing helps relieve rent burdens for low-income New Yorkers

9 Housing Court actions are concentrated in poor neighborhoods

10 Another look at Housing Court actions in poor neighborhoods

11 Most emergency rent assistance goes to areas with high rent stress

12 Emergency feeding sites are strategically located

13 Disconnected youth are highly concentrated

14 Low educational attainment and parenting are linked to youth disconnection

15 Many areas of high youth disconnection have large amounts of public housing

16 United Way and CSS: Putting Low Income New Yorkers on the Map

Mapping Poverty in New York City

New Yorkers are living with the effects of poverty in every part of New York City, but the experience of poverty remains closely tied to place. Half of the city's 1.4 million poor people live in neighborhoods where the poverty rate is at least 24.8 percent (compared to a citywide rate of 19.2 percent), and one-quarter live in neighborhoods where the rate is at least 34.1 percent.

These neighborhoods are all found in Upper Manhattan, the South Bronx, and Central Brooklyn. Much of the geographic aspect of poverty in the city can be summarized simply in these three place-names, which will stand out in many of the maps collected in this booklet.

But these maps also reveal that there is more to the geography of poverty in New York City than is revealed by a glance. Poverty interacts in important ways with other factors, such as immigration, which are distributed in a different way than poverty itself. And the effects of poverty can be modified or mitigated by resources, such as subsidized housing, that also have their own geographic patterns. As a result, the maps do not all look the same.

United Way of New York City commissioned the Community Service Society to compile these maps with the goal of informing United Way's work in the areas of homelessness prevention, affordable housing, hunger, education, and workforce development. United Way is pleased to share the maps and accompanying CSS analyses with others in the nonprofit, governmental, and philanthropic sectors with the hope that, together, we can apply the data in targeted and measurable responses to the causes, effects, and correlates of poverty in neighborhoods with the greatest need.

The maps are based primarily on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey, together with the internal information from both the Community Service Society and United Way of New York City.

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a major new complement to the Census conducted every ten years. It will be conducted annually, making it possible to track demographic and economic changes at a finer scale in space and time than ever before. This booklet draws on only the first year of results from the full survey. In future years, it will be possible to do even more with the survey's results.

A City of Neighborhoods

Figure 1: Public Use Microdata Areas.

The United States Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey makes it possible to examine economic and demographic patterns on a fairly fine geographic scale. Most of the maps are based on geographic areas called PUMAs (Public Use Microdata Areas), which have been defined by the Census Bureau. They are the smallest areas that can be described using data from the 2005 ACS. Each PUMA usually has a population of at least 100,000 people, and each usually contains several generally recognized neighborhoods. The PUMAs also closely resemble New York City's Community Planning Districts. This map shows the names of one or two neighborhoods for each PUMA.

Poverty and Low Incomes Are Highly Concentrated

Figures 2 and 3: Income and poverty.

All of the variables we mapped are related in some way to income and poverty. These maps present the median income and the absolute number of poor people for each PUMA using a color scale . The data come from the 2005 ACS. Not surprisingly, the poorest areas are also the ones with the lowest median incomes. They are concentrated in Upper Manhattan, the South Bronx, and Central Brooklyn.

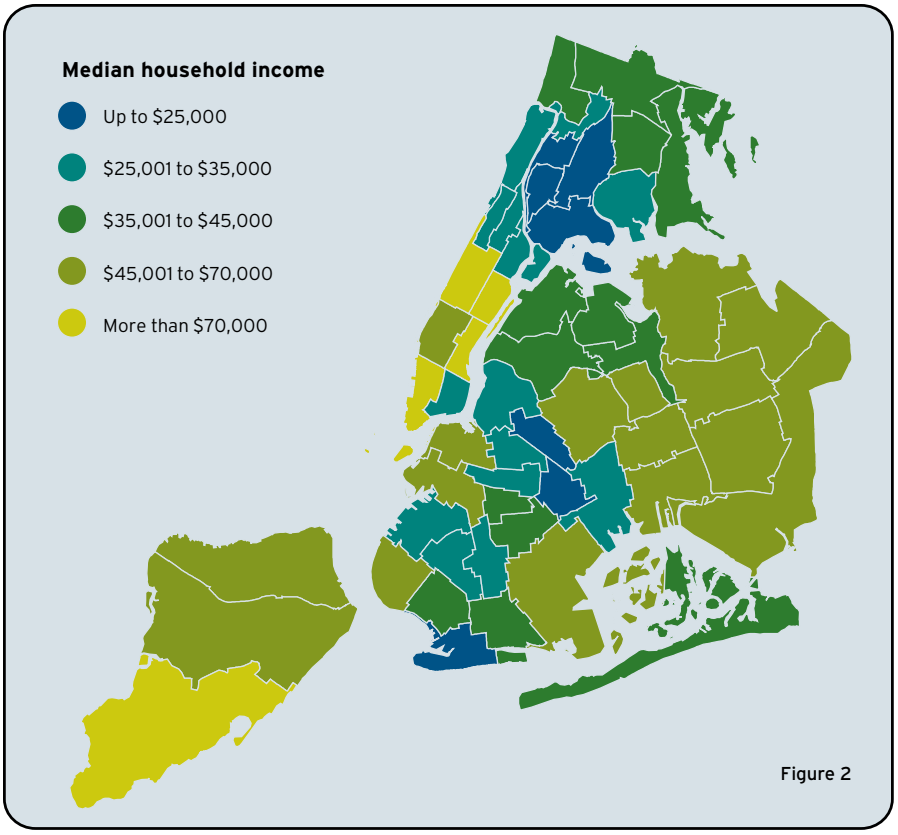
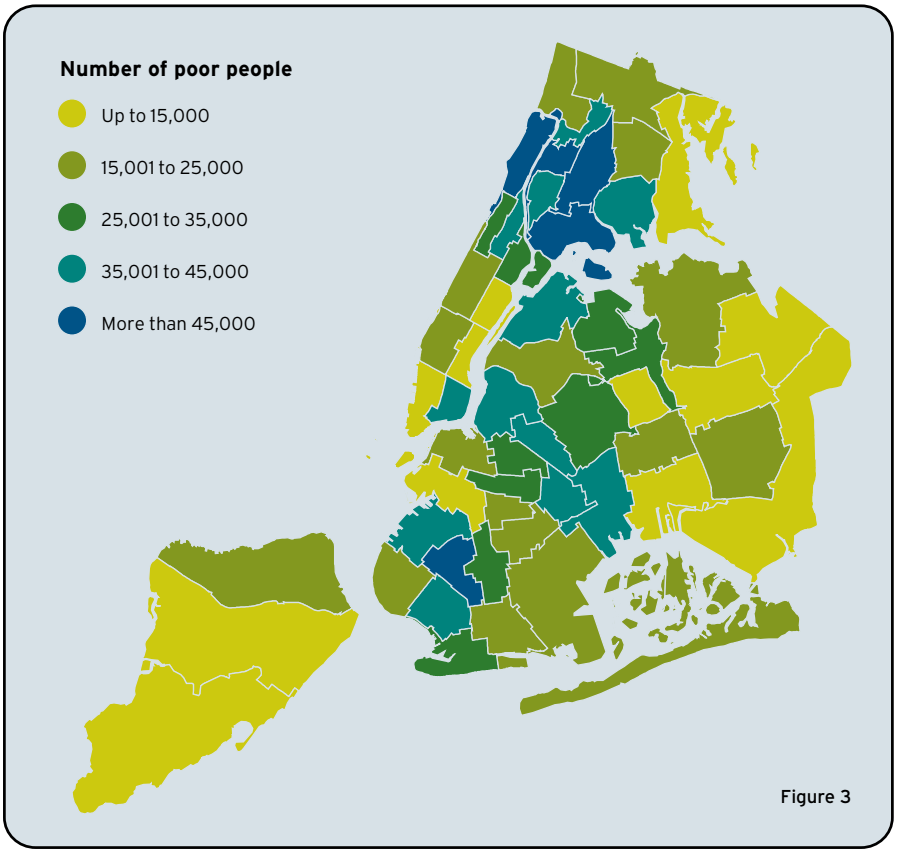


Figure 2



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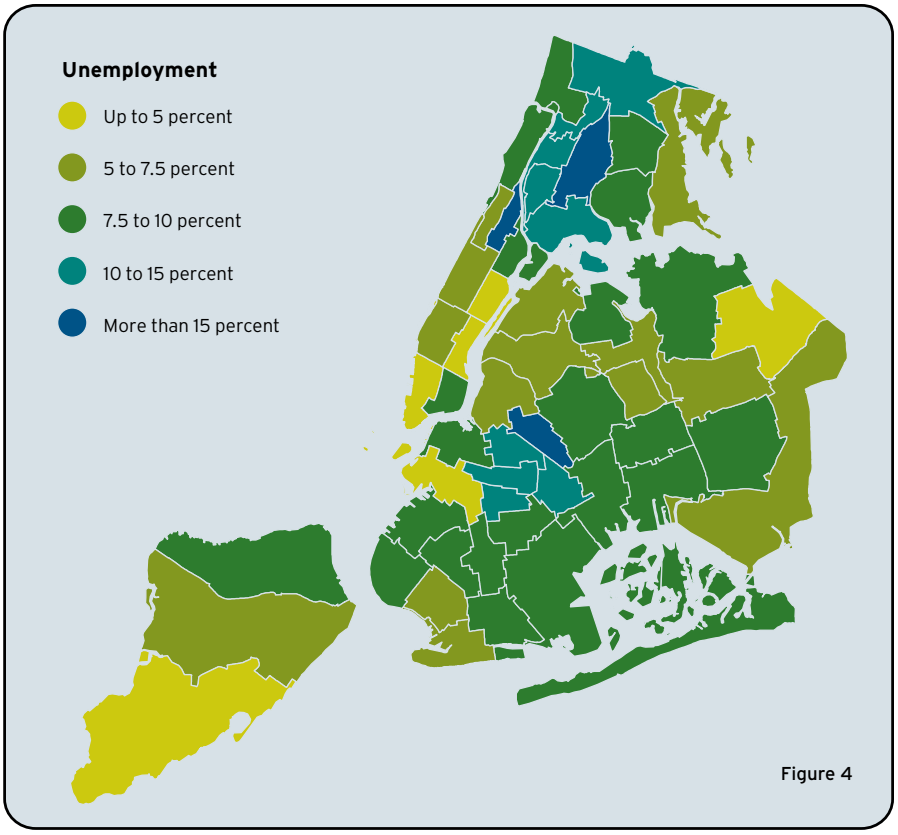

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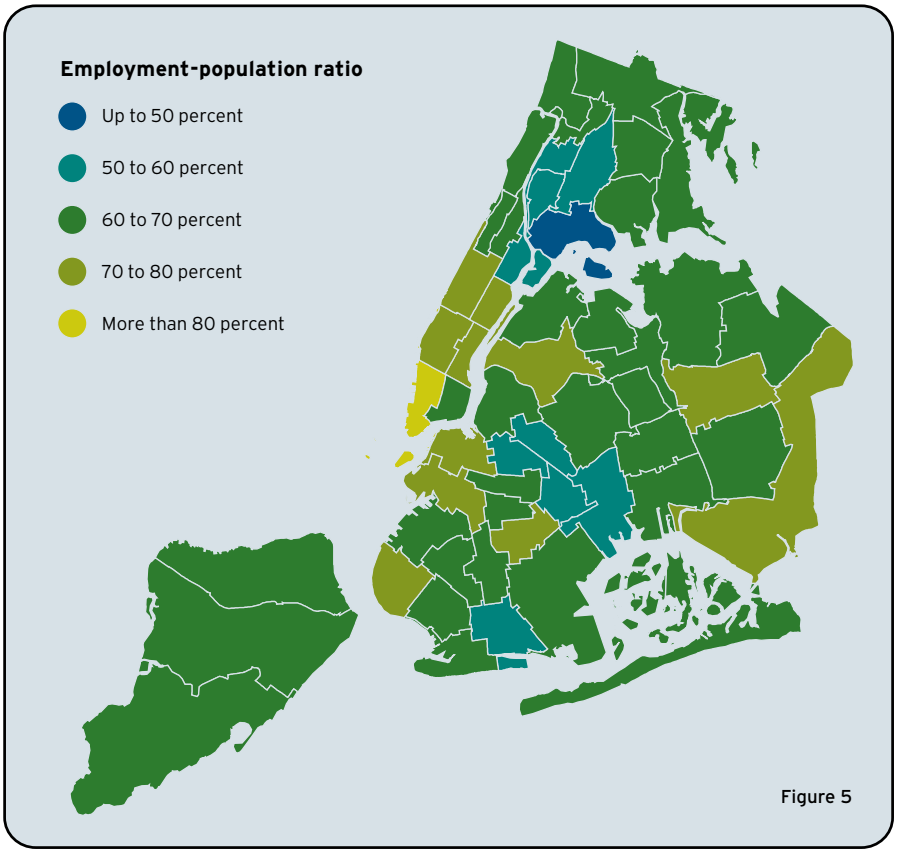


Figure 5

Unemployment is Highly Concentrated

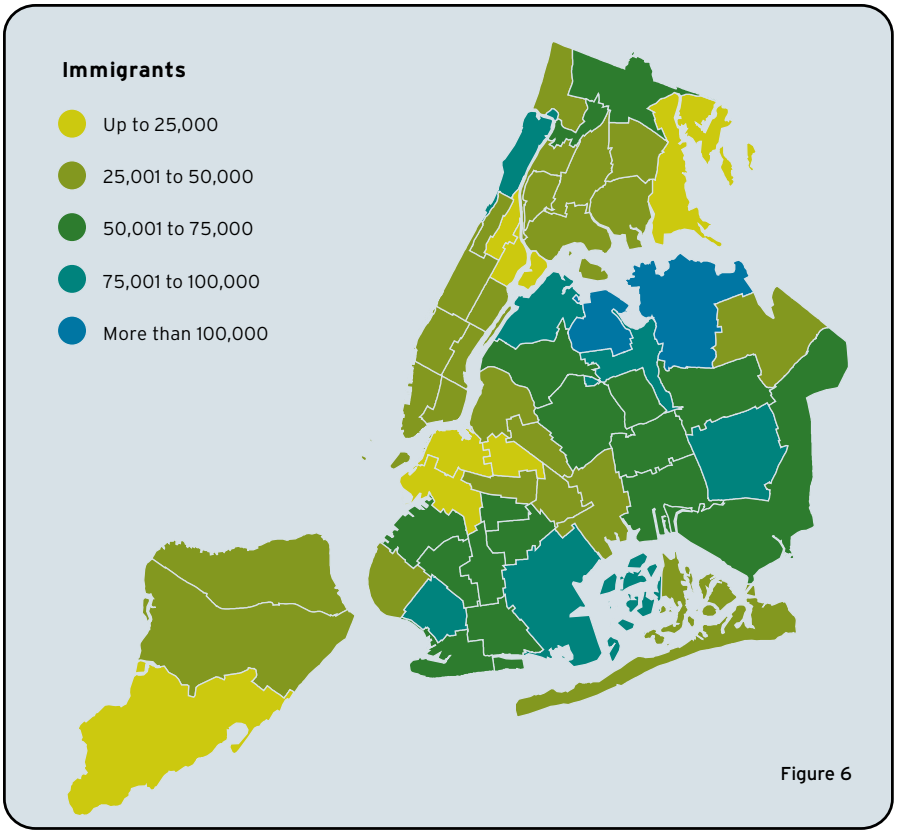
Figures 4 and 5: Unemployment and employment-population ratio.

The unemployment rate is defined as the number of unemployed people seeking work divided by the sum of workers and unemployed people seeking work. Those who are not seeking work are not included. The employment-population ratio, however, does take into account the number of people not looking for work. It is the number of workers divided by the total population. Because there are many reasons why a person might not be working or looking for work, the pattern of labor participation is somewhat different from that of unemployment. Nevertheless, unemployment and lack of labor participation are both concentrated in the city's low-income areas. In order to avoid the effects of childhood and retirement, these maps present figures for people age 18 to 64 only.

In General, Immigrants are Concentrated in Different Neighborhoods from Poor People

Figures 6 and 7: Immigrants and immigrant poverty.

New York City's immigrants are concentrated in Queens, South Brooklyn, and Washington Heights. Only the last of these is also a high-poverty area. But significant numbers of poor immigrants live in areas away from important resources for poor people, such as the city's stock of public and subsidized housing.



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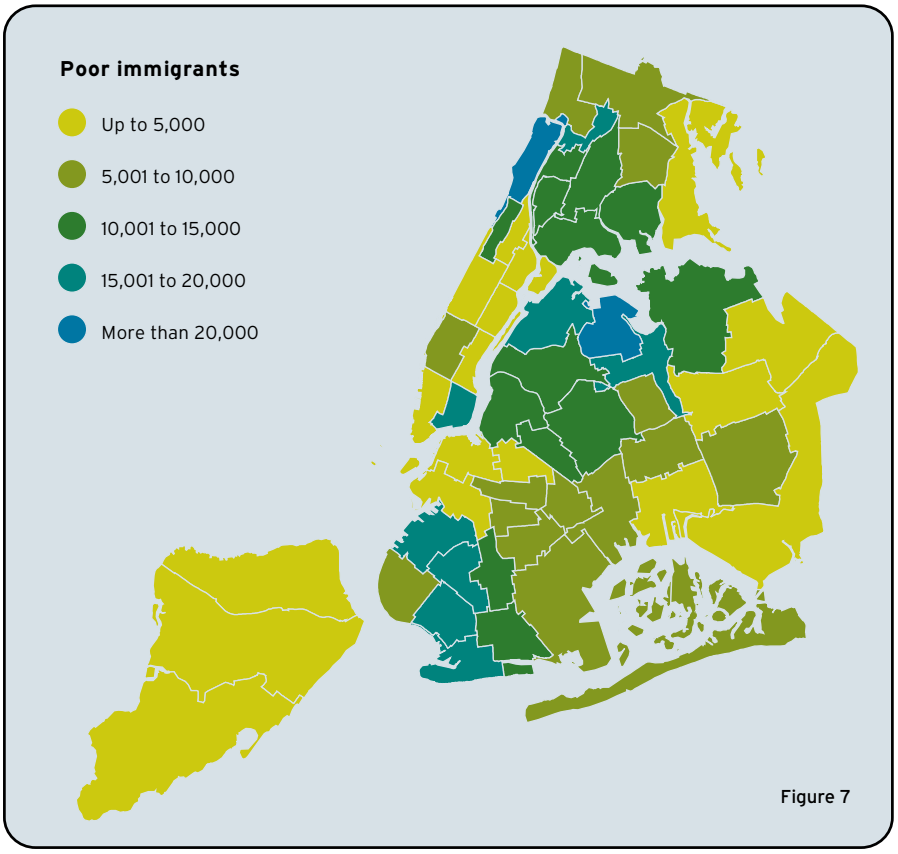


Figure 7

Renters in Most Low-Income Neighborhoods Face Very High Rent Burdens

Figure 8: Income and rent burdens.

Housing affordability is a central issue for poor New Yorkers. One measure of affordability for renters is the ratio of rent to income. Housing is generally defined as affordable when rent is less than 30 percent of income. This map shows the locations of households (of all income levels) with very high rent burdens—50 percent of income or more. They are concentrated in areas with low median incomes. The data come from the 2005 ACS.

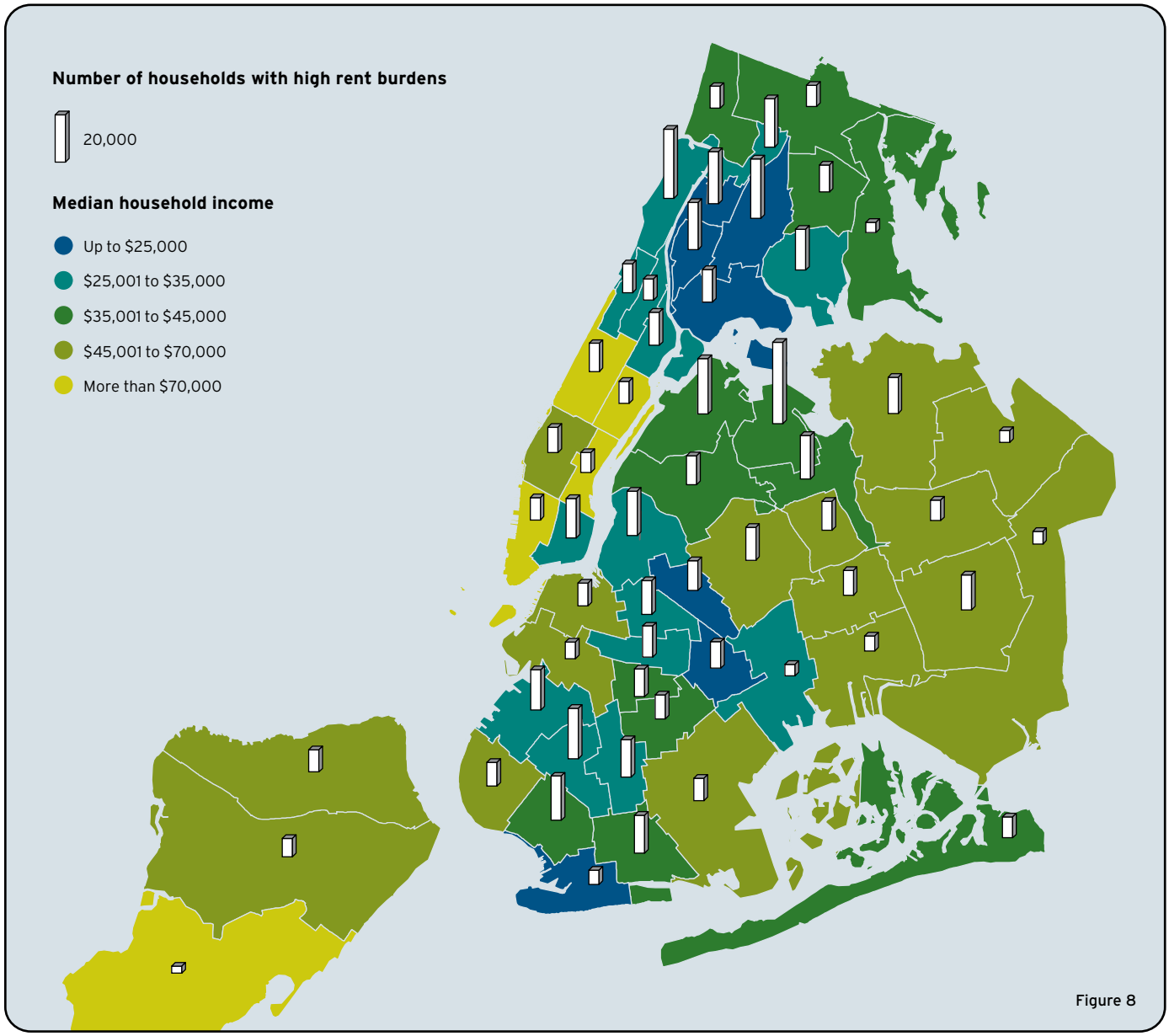
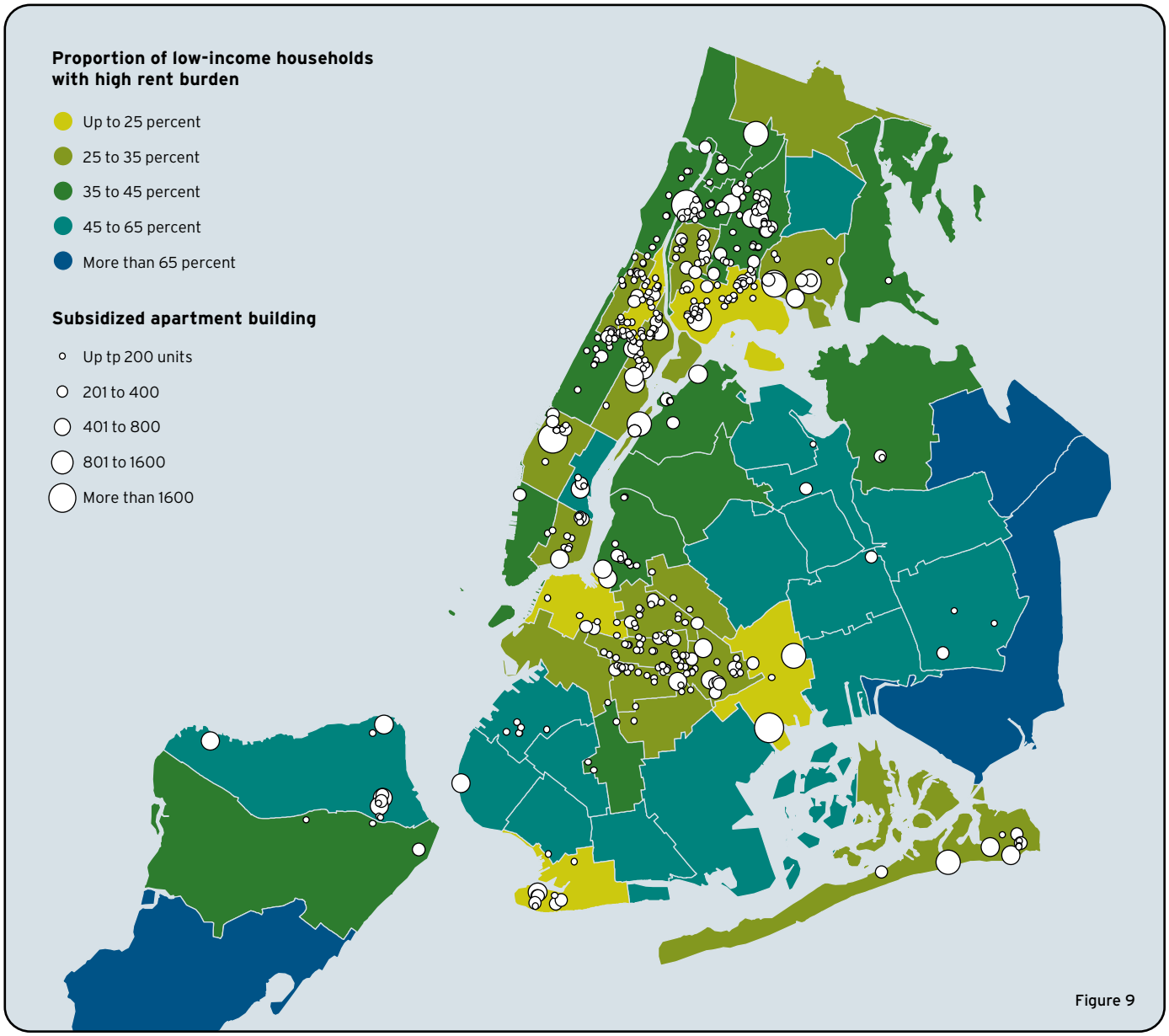


Figure 8

Subsidized Housing Helps Relieve Rent Burdens for Low-Income New Yorkers

Although the greatest absolute numbers of renters with very high rent burdens live in low-income areas, the likelihood that a low-income household will have a very high burden is greatest in areas with somewhat higher median incomes, especially on the fringes of the city. These areas have relatively few low-income households, but affordable housing is even scarcer. One reason for this is the scarcity of government-subsidized affordable housing developments. The income data come from the 2005 ACS and the housing supply data come from Community Service Society research.



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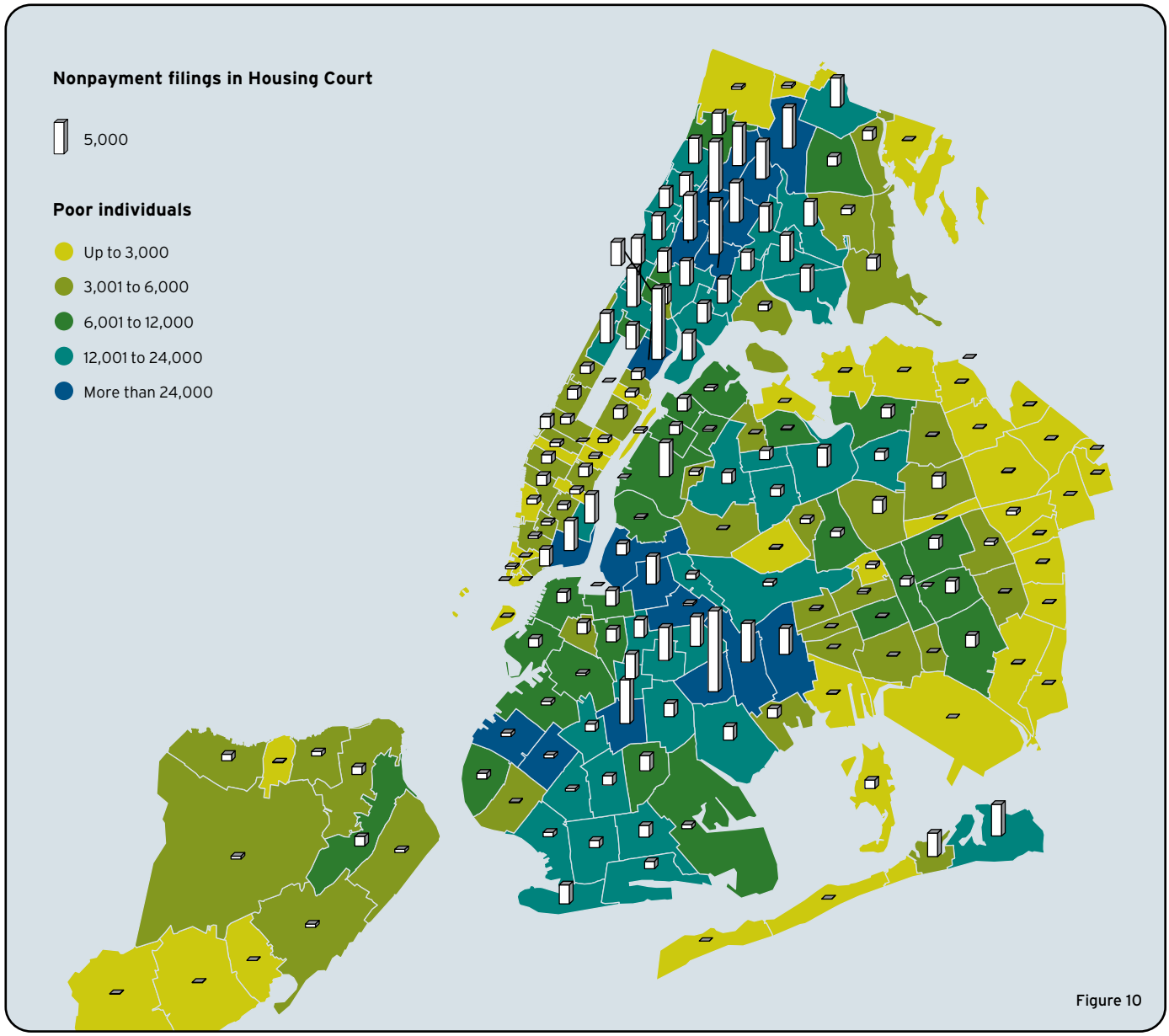


Figure 10

Housing Court Actions Are Concentrated in Poor Neighborhoods

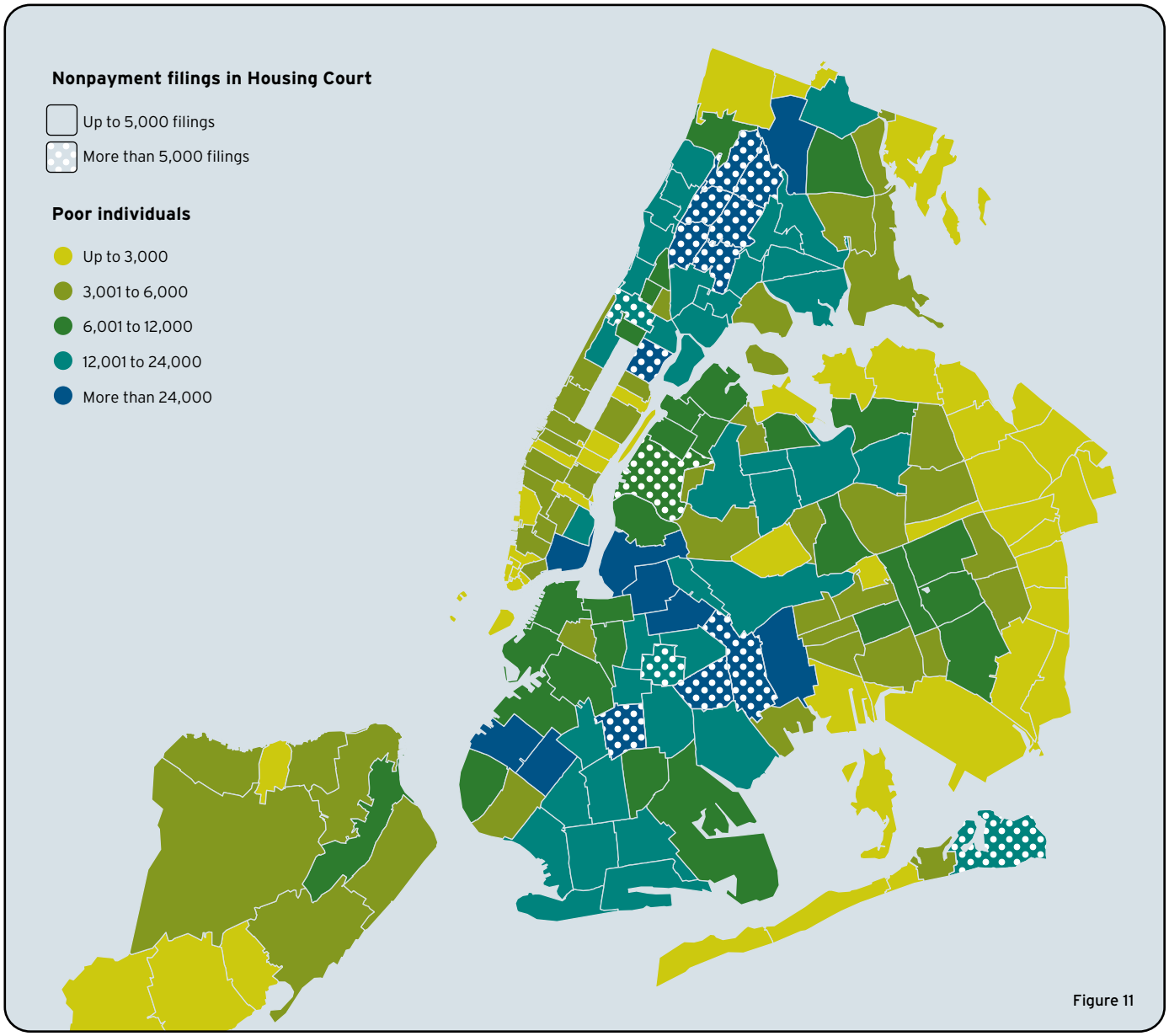
Figure 10: Poverty and housing court filings.

Households with high rent burdens run an increased risk of falling behind in rent, which can lead to eviction. Nonpayment proceedings are by far the most common type of housing court action, and they are filed overwhelmingly in low-income areas. Half of the geographic variation in nonpayment filings is explained by the distribution of poor people. This map presents information obtained by the Citywide Task Force on Housing Court, using zip codes instead of PUMAs as the basic geographic unit. The poverty information is from the 2000 Decennial Census instead of the 2005 ACS.

Another Look at Housing Court Actions in Poor Neighborhoods

Figure 11: Poverty and housing court filings.

Almost one-third of all nonpayment filings in Housing Court come from the 15 zip codes with the highest numbers of them, shown here crosshatched. These zip codes include nine of the 15 zip codes with the highest numbers of poor people, and all but one of them are among the top third of zip codes in number of poor people.



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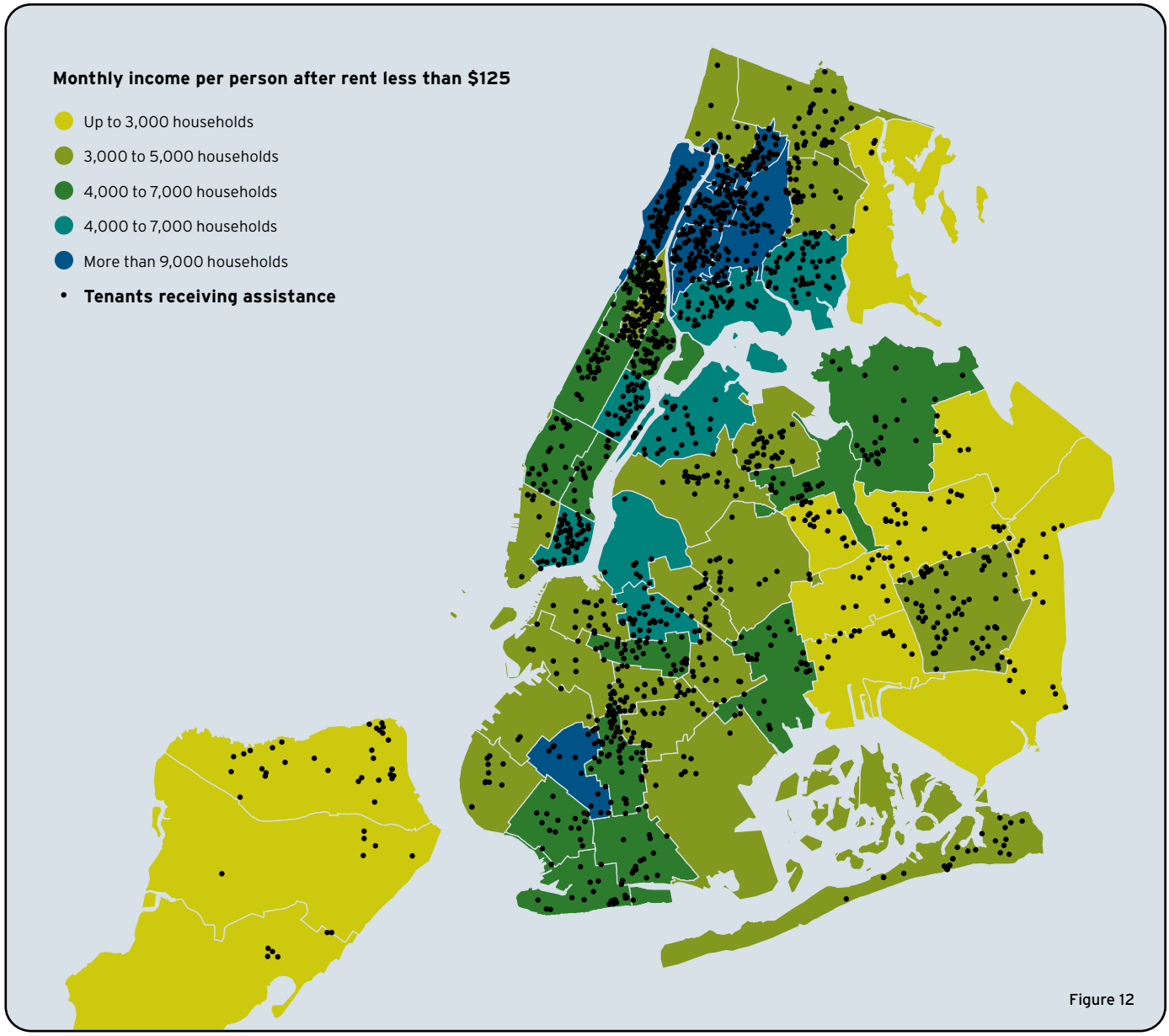


Figure 12

Most Emergency Rent Assistance Goes to Areas With High Rent Stress

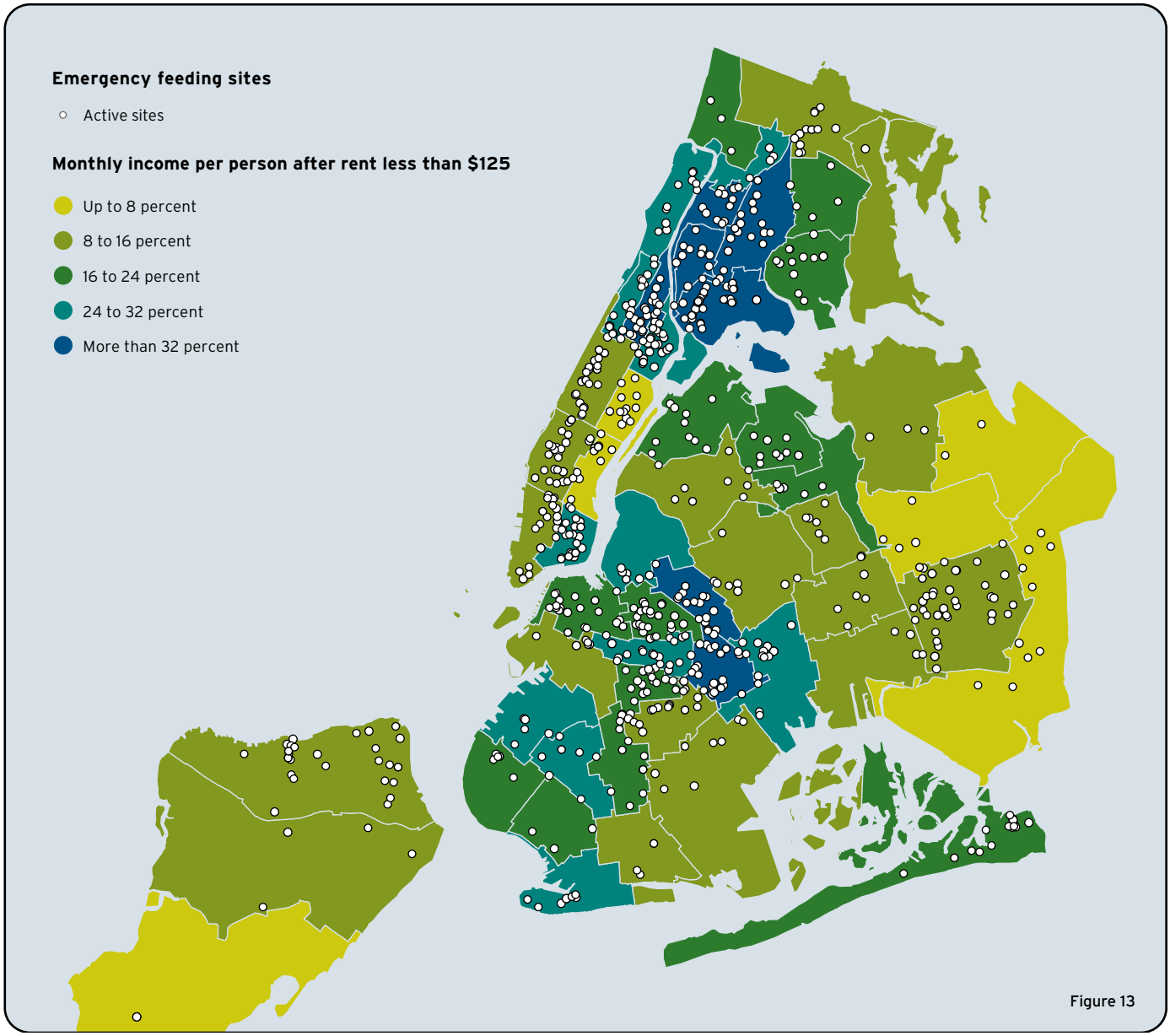
Figure 12: Emergency rent assistance and after-rent income.

Emergency payments to tenants are an important strategy to prevent evictions. This map presents the addresses of the clients who received emergency rent, mortgage, and utility assistance through the United Way's Emergency Food and Shelter Program in 2006. It also presents an indicator of budget stress, not rent-to-income ratio, but residual rent per person. This is the amount of income remaining after rent is paid, divided by the number of people in the household. This is a less well-established measure, but it gives a very clear indication of the amount of strain on a household budget.

Emergency Feeding Sites Are Strategically Located

Figure 13: Emergency feeding sites and poverty rate.

New York City's emergency feeding sites are widely distributed. They are concentrated in areas with high poverty rates, and also in Manhattan.



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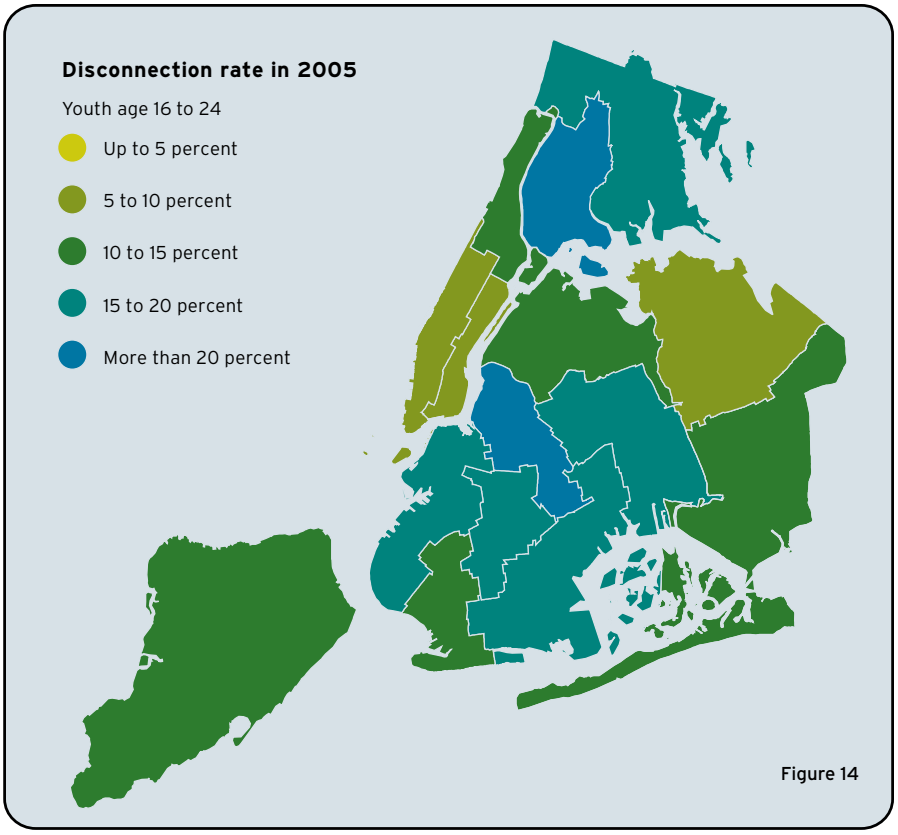

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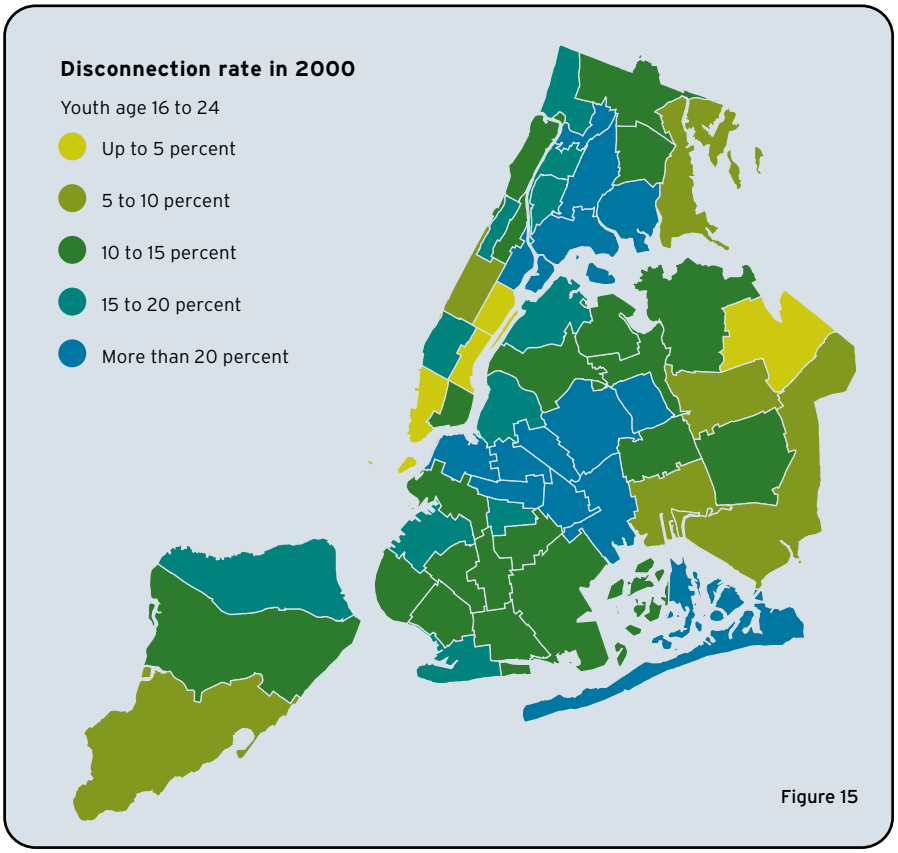


Figure 15

Disconnected Youth Are Highly Concentrated

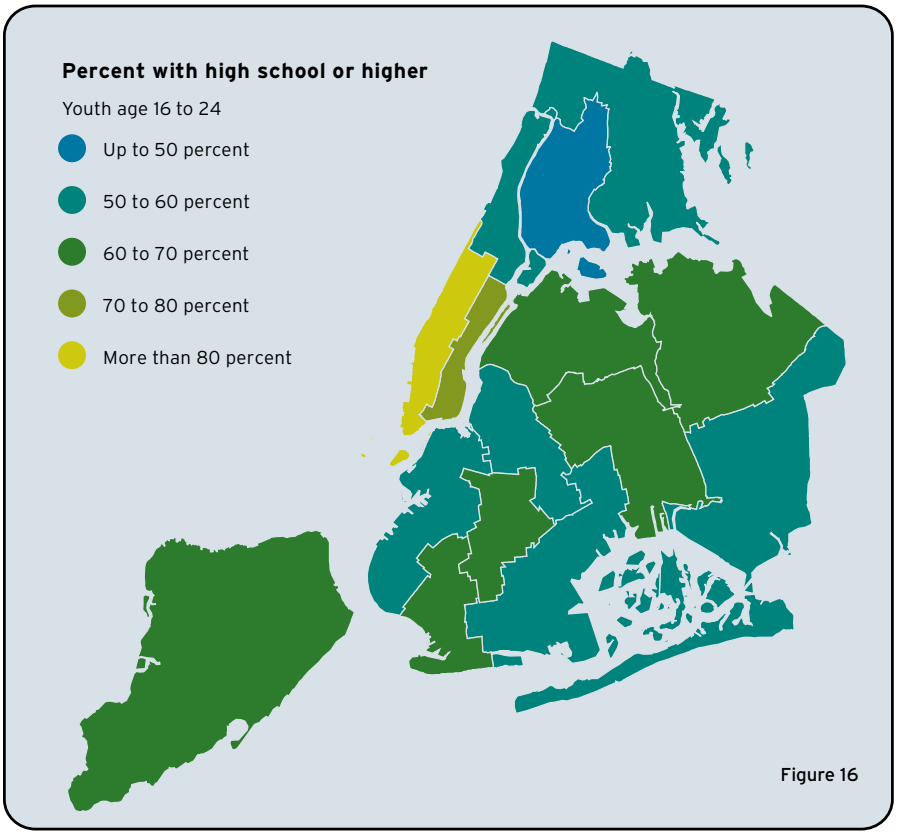
Figures 14 and 15: Disconnected youth.

Young people who are neither working nor going to school have become a focus for policy concern. In some neighborhoods, they make up more than 20 percent of all people age 16 to 24. The 2005 ACS does not provide enough cases to reliably calculate the disconnection rate for each PUMA, so instead CSS calculated it for larger geographic areas called SuperPUMAs. One can, however, calculate the rate for PUMAs using the 2000 Decennial Census. In both 2000 and 2005, disconnected youth were concentrated in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn.

Low Educational Attainment and Parenting Are Linked to Youth Disconnection

Figures 16 and 17: Education, parenting, and disconnected youth.

Educational attainment and parental responsibilities strongly affect the employment prospects of young people. Data from the 2005 ACS, mapped using the SuperPUMAs, show that the number of young people with less than a high school education and the number of young people caring for children are both high in the same areas with high disconnection rates.



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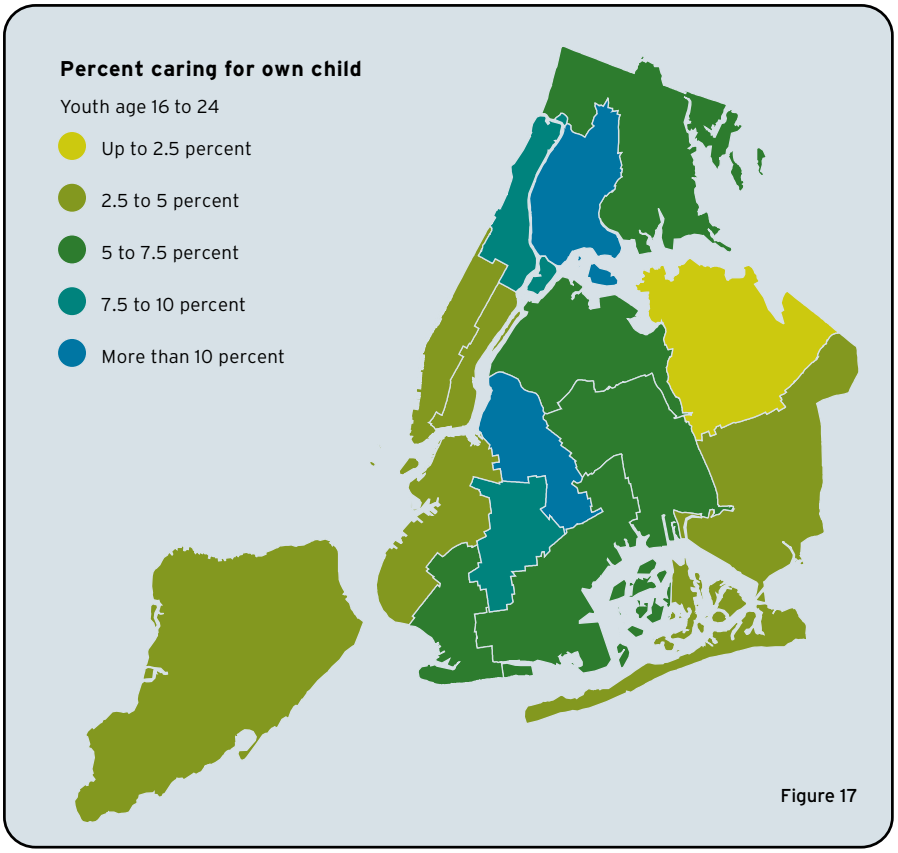

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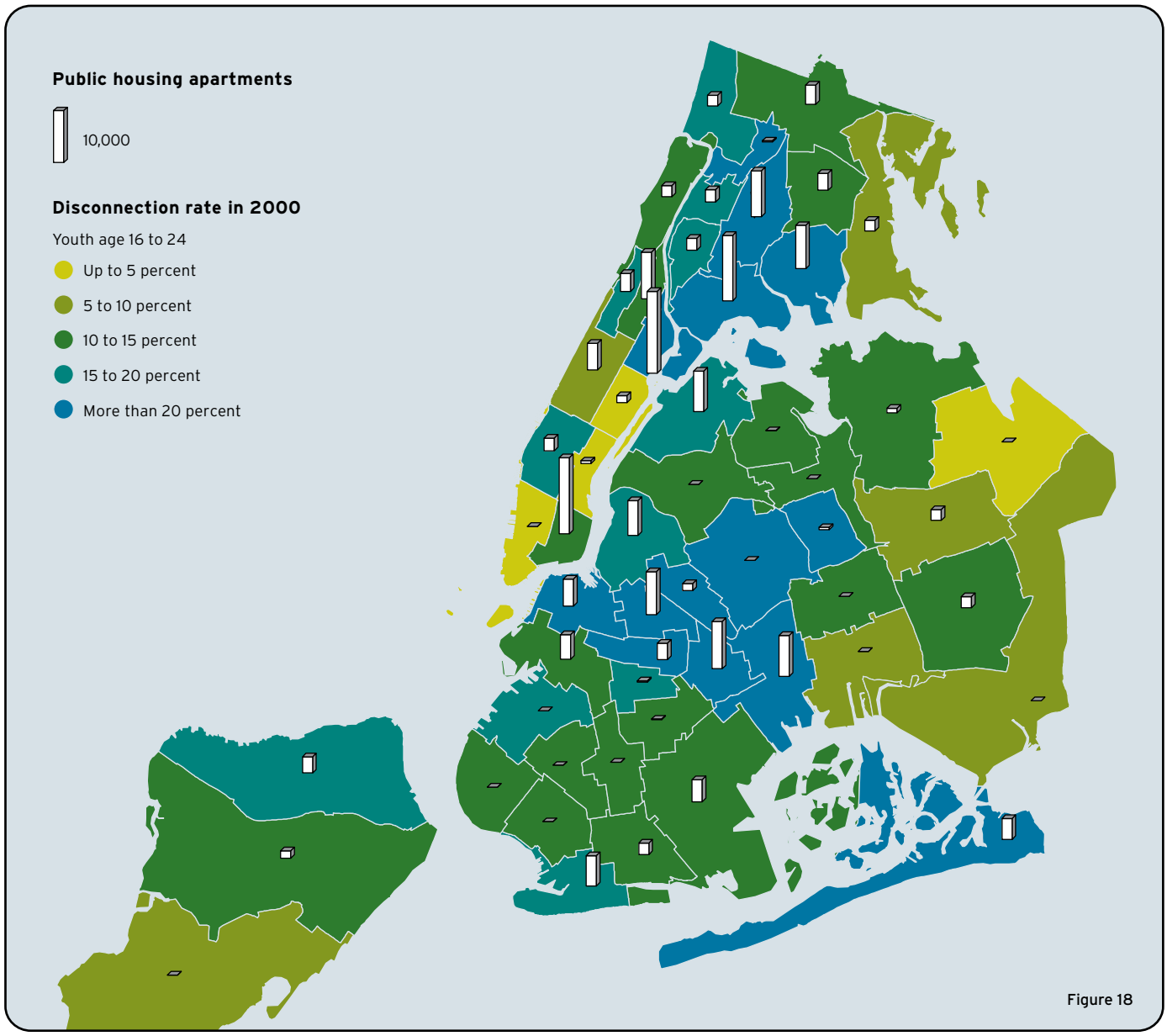


Many Areas of High Youth Disconnection Have Large Amounts of Public Housing

Figure 18: Disconnected youth and public housing.

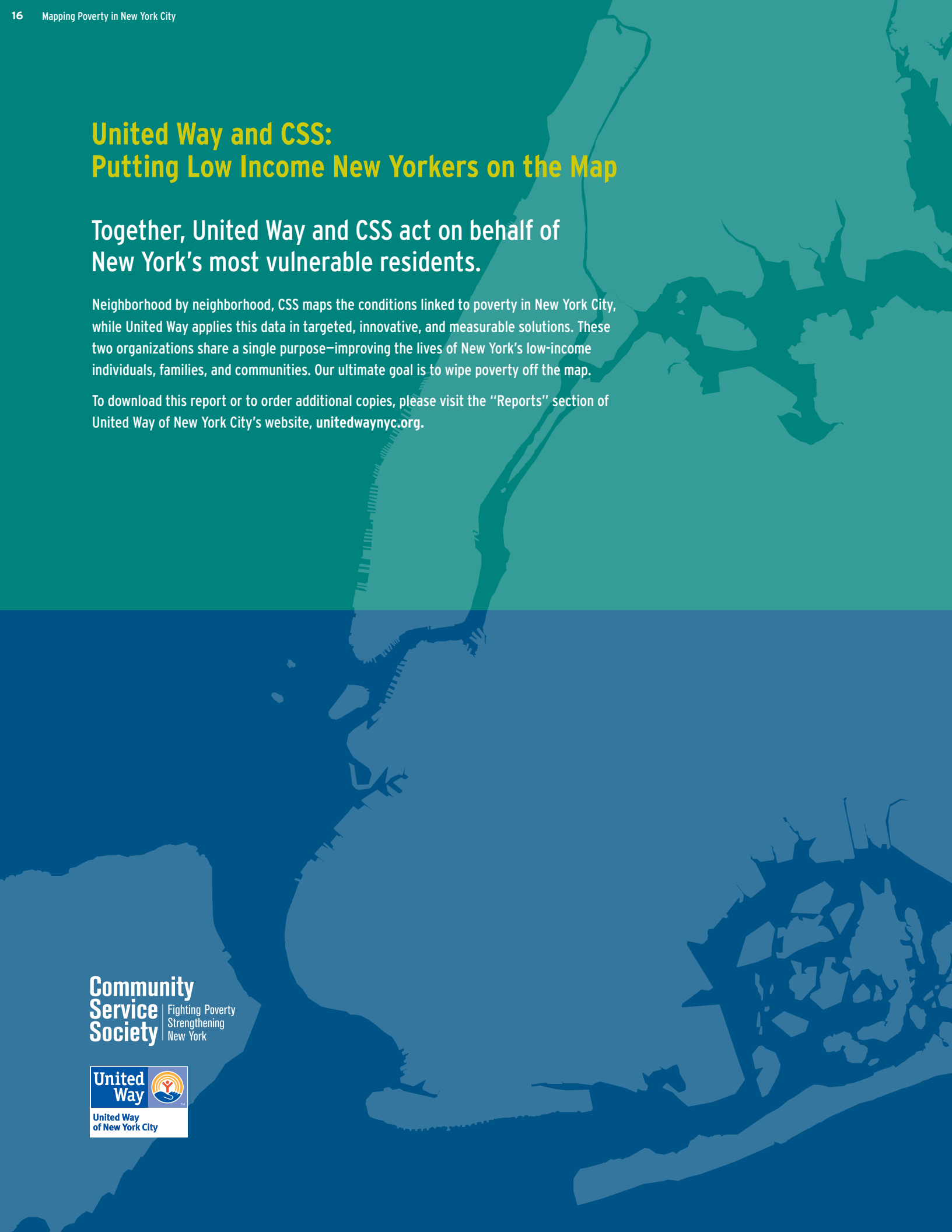
About half of the PUMAs with high rates of disconnected youth also have large amounts of public housing. This suggests that programs sited in public housing to combat disconnection would be able to reach many, but not all, of the people who could benefit from the program.

United Way and CSS: Putting Low Income New Yorkers on the Map

Together, United Way and CSS act on behalf of New York's most vulnerable residents.

Neighborhood by neighborhood, CSS maps the conditions linked to poverty in New York City, while United Way applies this data in targeted, innovative, and measurable solutions. These two organizations share a single purpose—improving the lives of New York's low-income individuals, families, and communities. Our ultimate goal is to wipe poverty off the map.

To download this report or to order additional copies, please visit the "Reports" section of United Way of New York City's website, **unitedwaynyc.org**.



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