

THE

Unheard Third 2022

New Yorkers at the Crossroads: Challenges and Opportunities

Brief

NYCHA's Working... Except When it Comes to Young Men of Color

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Context

While the worst of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are past us and residents look to find some sense of normalcy, economic impacts linger for New Yorkers. While generally U.S. labor markets have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, and the city has regained most of the jobs lost to the pandemic, serious inequities persist across racial lines. Most strikingly, the unemployment rate for Black New Yorkers was estimated to be at 12.2 percent,¹ while that for White workers was estimated to be at 1.3 percent. Part of the divergence is probably due to the fact that the industries that have traditionally been major employers of Black and Latina/o/x New Yorkers are yet to recoup all the jobs lost to the pandemic (see Table 1).

While jobs like those in finance and other white collar professions – that allow remote work options – have returned to pre-pandemic levels, many of the other job sectors on which New York relies on have not. Primarily, these are jobs that rely on international tourists, in-person business, and commuter activity in the private sector. Accommodation, hospitality, and retail industries tend to be a stable bedrock of income for young adults, immigrants, and individuals without higher education. But positions such as restaurant

Key Recommendations

- **Expand** the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)
- **Prioritize career development** for Out of School Out of Work (OSOW) and other struggling youth
 - Conduct a city-chartered study on unemployed youth and young adults in and around NYCHA developments, exploring obstacles they face to securing well-paid jobs.
 - Pass the Raise Up NY bill (S3062D/A7503C)
 - Understand and address gaps in state law related to jobs in the new tech economy by passing S938/A722.
 - Expand the Jobs-Plus program
- **Strengthen efforts to desegregate** schools and neighborhoods
 - Fully implement the Student Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG) recommendations
 - Pass pro-integration housing policy and the Fair Chance for Housing Act
- **Expand “reentry” programs** and address the jail to shelter pipeline
- **Reform and expand** the Section 3 program
- **Strengthen employment discrimination enforcement**
 - Fully fund the Commission on Human Rights
 - Direct city agencies to disregard aged convictions

staff, luggage handlers, and jobs in the entertainment sector have not rebounded from pandemic job losses.

This job loss primarily impacts low-income communities, adding instability to households in the most expensive city in the country during an inflationary period. Hundreds of thousands of New York City’s low-income families are served by the New York Housing Authority (NYCHA, pronounced ‘ny-chuh’) – the city’s largest landlord. The federal government funds NYCHA with the goal of providing safe, decent, and affordable rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, but there is a supplemental charge to also promote self-sufficiency and economic independence.² In this brief, part of the series “New Yorkers at the Crossroads: Challenges and Opportunities,” we use data from Community Service Society’s 2022 Unheard Third (UHT) Survey to focus on NYCHA resident unemployment before, during and after the pandemic. We investigate the racial and gender dynamics of employment opportunities at the largest source of public housing in the country and provide key findings and policy recommendations.

Key Findings

- 20 percent of NYCHA residents are estimated to be unemployed and either searching or have given up searching for work, compared to 26 percent of other subsidized and unsubsidized low-income NYC renters.
- 17.6 percent of Latina/o/x adults are unemployed and seeking work, higher than any other racial group.
- Black men in NYCHA are more likely to be unemployed than any other group of NYCHA residents, followed by Latino men.
- Black men in NYCHA are considerably younger than other groups of NYCHA residents and largely excluded from public sector jobs.
- More than half of NYCHA youth who apply to the Summer Youth Employment Program do not get in.
- 16 percent of Black women living in NYCHA struggling to find work cite child and elder care responsibilities as the issue.
- More than half of all “Stop and Frisks” are of Black men, almost 30 percent are Latino men, and most are in precincts with NYCHA developments.
- In 2022, the 27 precincts with at least 5 NYCHA developments make up half of all “Stop and Frisks” and averaged (122 percent) 152 more stops than precincts with no NYCHA developments.

TABLE 1: JOBS LOST AND GAINED IN SELECT INDUSTRIAL SECTORS IN NYC SINCE THE PANDEMIC

	Pre-pandemic (Feb-2020)	Pandemic Downturn (Apr-2020)	Post-COVID (Mar-2023)	Difference from pre-pandemic peak (2020)
Accommodation	52,300	18,500	42,500	(9,800)
Entertainment	93,200	52,100	79,600	(13,600)
Restaurant	311,200	86,200	298,700	(12,500)
Retail Trade	339,500	225,000	300,400	(39,100)
Construction	47,000	28,000	44,300	(2,700)
Prof'l & Business Services	774,300	685,100	787,200	12,900
Finance	484,600	464,300	491,500	6,900

Source: CSS analysis of Current Employment Statistics as made available by the NYS Department of Labor at <https://dol.ny.gov/current-employment-statistics-0>

Are NYCHA Programs Making a Difference?

NYCHA residents have workforce trainings and programs available to them that other low-income residents in New York City do not. The Office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability (REES), an entire department within NYCHA, connects residents with workforce and resident business development, adult education, vocational training, and financial empowerment programming provided by local organizations. These permanent services vary in scope and quality depending on the neighborhood the resident lives in. For instance, Bedford Stuyvesant, Williamsburg and Bushwick residents can access services provided

by landmark non-profits like BedStuy Restoration Corporation and St. Nick's Alliance, and Washington Heights, Inwood, West Harlem and Central Harlem residents can receive services from Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) and SUNY's Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC). There are also sites across 12 developments that specifically provide employment services to secure job placement for NYCHA residents. This service, known as Jobs Plus, has been extremely successful, but a lack of sites and capacity continues to keep its reach limited.

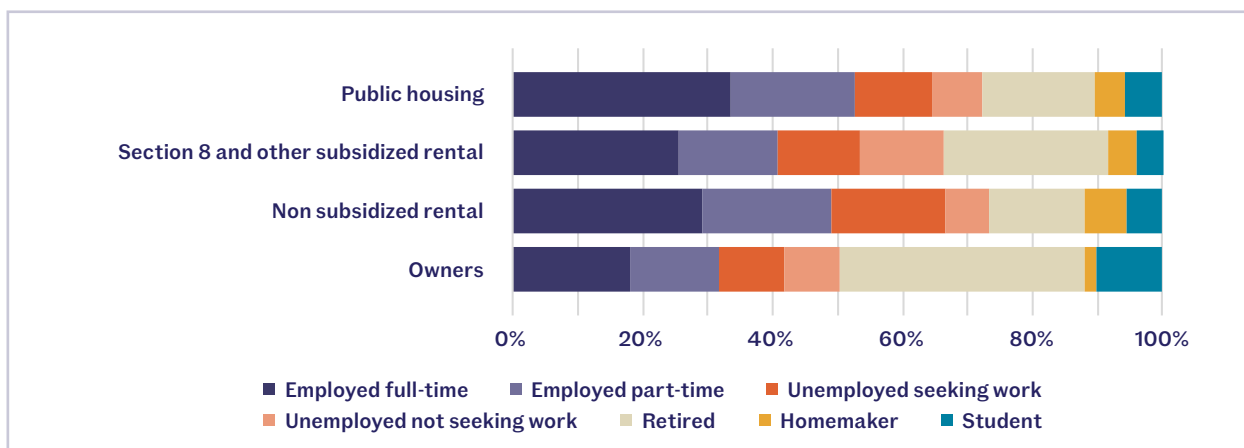
NYCHA households have a lower share of individuals who are unemployed than other low-income renting households in NYC

Public housing households in New York City are less likely to be unemployed than the low-income households in other types of housing, indicating some success in NYCHA's mission to provide not only affordable housing but opportunity and mobility.

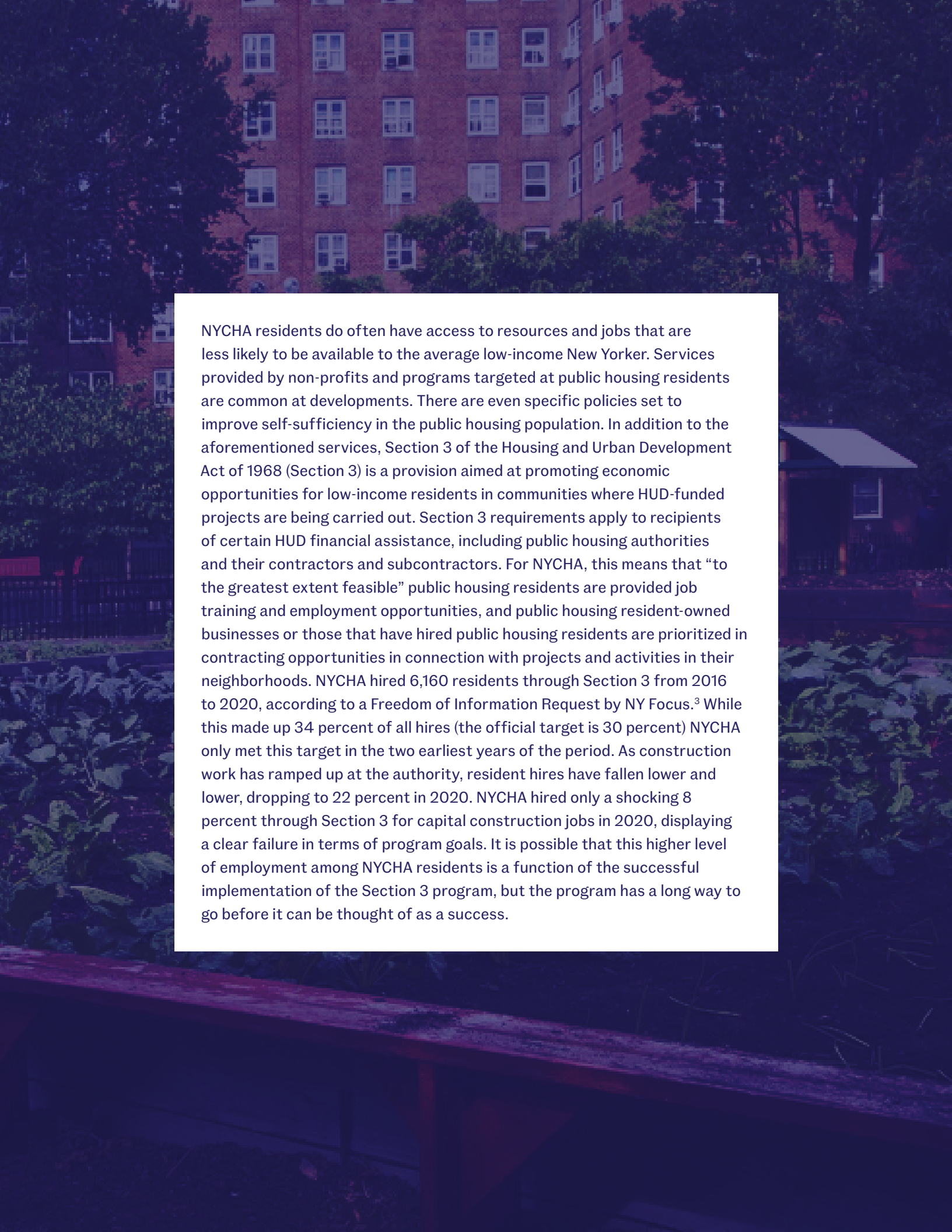
Results from the 2022 Unheard Third Survey reveal that, at 53 percent, a higher proportion

of public housing residents are employed than those in Section 8 and other subsidized housing (41 percent) and low-income owners (32 percent) who are more likely to be retired. Twenty percent of NYCHA residents responded that they were unemployed, compared to more than a quarter of all other low-income rental households.

CHART 1: EMPLOYMENT STATUS 2022 BY HOUSING TYPE (LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS)



Source: CSS analysis of Unheard Third 2022 survey data



NYCHA residents do often have access to resources and jobs that are less likely to be available to the average low-income New Yorker. Services provided by non-profits and programs targeted at public housing residents are common at developments. There are even specific policies set to improve self-sufficiency in the public housing population. In addition to the aforementioned services, Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 (Section 3) is a provision aimed at promoting economic opportunities for low-income residents in communities where HUD-funded projects are being carried out. Section 3 requirements apply to recipients of certain HUD financial assistance, including public housing authorities and their contractors and subcontractors. For NYCHA, this means that “to the greatest extent feasible” public housing residents are provided job training and employment opportunities, and public housing resident-owned businesses or those that have hired public housing residents are prioritized in contracting opportunities in connection with projects and activities in their neighborhoods. NYCHA hired 6,160 residents through Section 3 from 2016 to 2020, according to a Freedom of Information Request by NY Focus.³ While this made up 34 percent of all hires (the official target is 30 percent) NYCHA only met this target in the two earliest years of the period. As construction work has ramped up at the authority, resident hires have fallen lower and lower, dropping to 22 percent in 2020. NYCHA hired only a shocking 8 percent through Section 3 for capital construction jobs in 2020, displaying a clear failure in terms of program goals. It is possible that this higher level of employment among NYCHA residents is a function of the successful implementation of the Section 3 program, but the program has a long way to go before it can be thought of as a success.

Black men in NYCHA are more likely to be unemployed than any other group, followed by Latino men

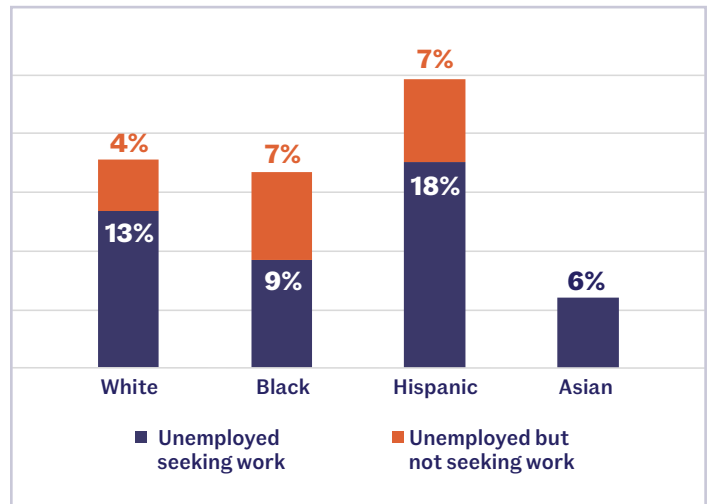
The lower unemployment at NYCHA compared with low-income residents across housing types is a positive finding, showing an added benefit of public housing investments. However, when looking at different demographic groups within NYCHA, there are wide differences across race and gender. For the overall NYCHA population, 17.6 percent of Latina/o/x are unemployed and seeking work. This is an alarming statistic much larger than any other racial group. However, when looking exclusively at men in NYCHA, Black unemployment jumps a distressing 9.2 percentage points. Whereas in all other racial groups, rates are not significantly different across genders. Overall, the data shows that amongst the unemployed, women are more likely to be no longer seeking work while men are more likely to be still seeking work. But generally, labor force participation was higher for women.

Looking at long-term trends, in more than a decade of Unheard Third Surveys, we find that the difference in workforce participation for Black men and Black women remains fairly close until 2013 when the unemployment for Black women began a sharp decline that continued for the last eight years.

This is an interesting finding that is worth further analysis to discover if there are program or policies implemented that specifically helped Black women. Though, the trend for Black women in NYCHA mirrors that of Black women in the rest of the country, with the exception of NYCHA unemployment being significantly higher.

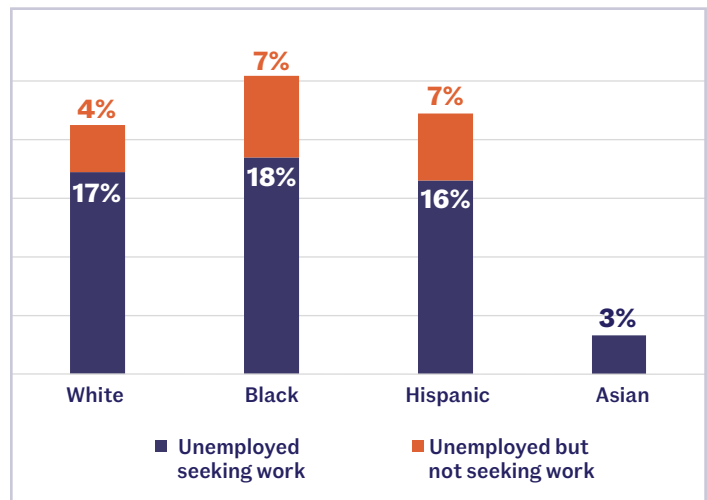
Overall, Black men in NYCHA, both looking and not looking for work, have the highest percentage of unemployed individuals of any racial and gender pairing. The differences in these statistics highlight the need to address the unique challenges faced by different racial and ethnic groups and

CHART 2: NYCHA OVERALL UNEMPLOYMENT BY RACE



Source: CSS analysis of Unheard Third 2022 survey data

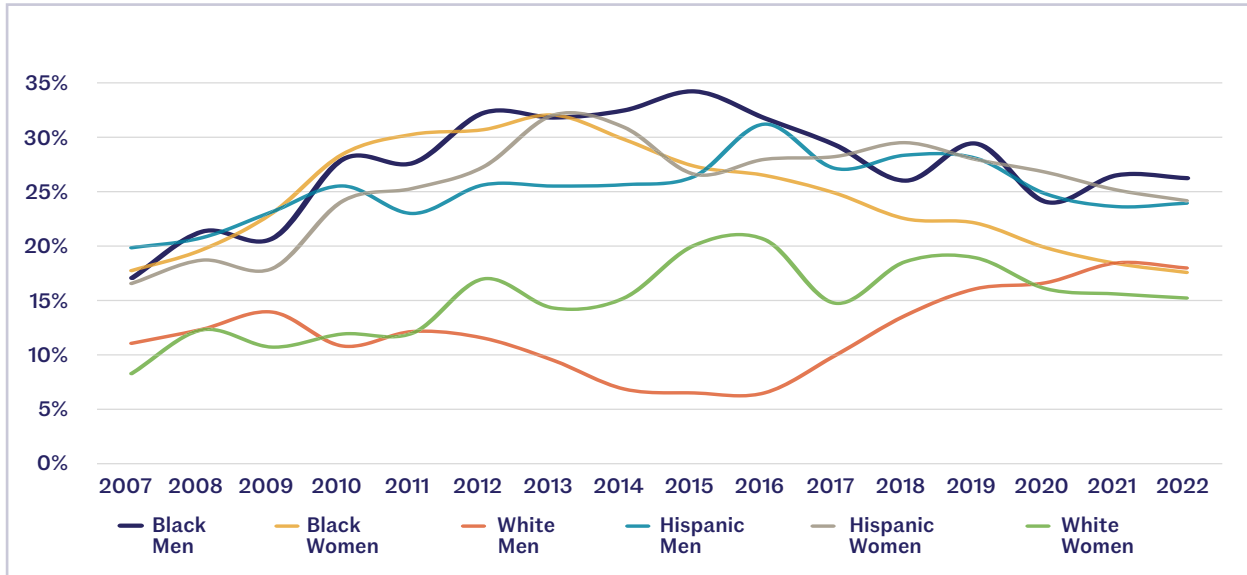
CHART 3: NYCHA MALE UNEMPLOYMENT BY RACE



Source: CSS analysis of Unheard Third 2022 survey data

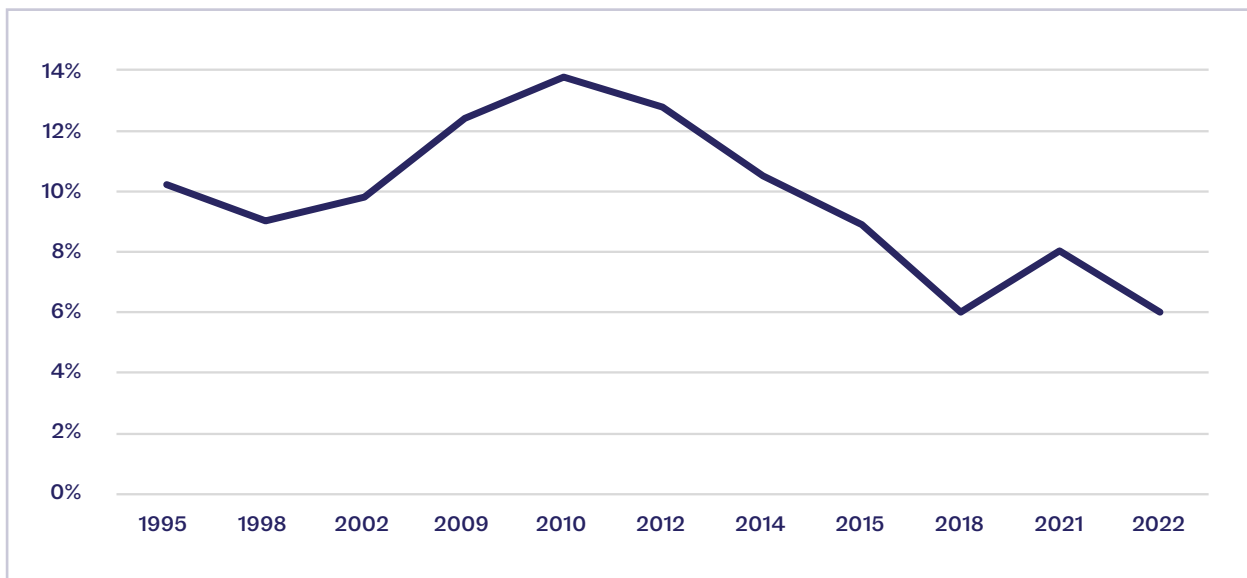
considerations of gender differences in the workforce. Superficial aspects like age and language can have an impact on this rate, but there could also be more insidious issues at play, so it is integral that we delve deeper into the gap seen here.

**CHART 4: NYCHA UNEMPLOYMENT BY RACE AND GENDER
(5-YEAR MOVING AVERAGE, 2017-2022)**



Source: CSS analysis of Unheard Third survey data, 2007-2022

CHART 5: U.S. UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FOR BLACK WOMEN, SELECT YEARS, 1995-2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, age, and race (XLS), 1995-2022



A Quick Overview: Unemployment for Black Men

The U.S. has long dealt with labor force exclusion and exploitation, with Black men consistently bearing the costs of an unequal system. In both New York City and the U.S. at large, we have seen periodic reports raise alarms about the gap between Black and White unemployment and analysis working to answer why that gap persists.^{4,5,6} But even with the gap continuing to exist – 2 to 2.5 percent historically – Black unemployment in the U.S. has lowered significantly after a spike during the pandemic.⁷ (In cities the gap tends to be even higher, 5.5 percent in mostly Black large cities.)⁸

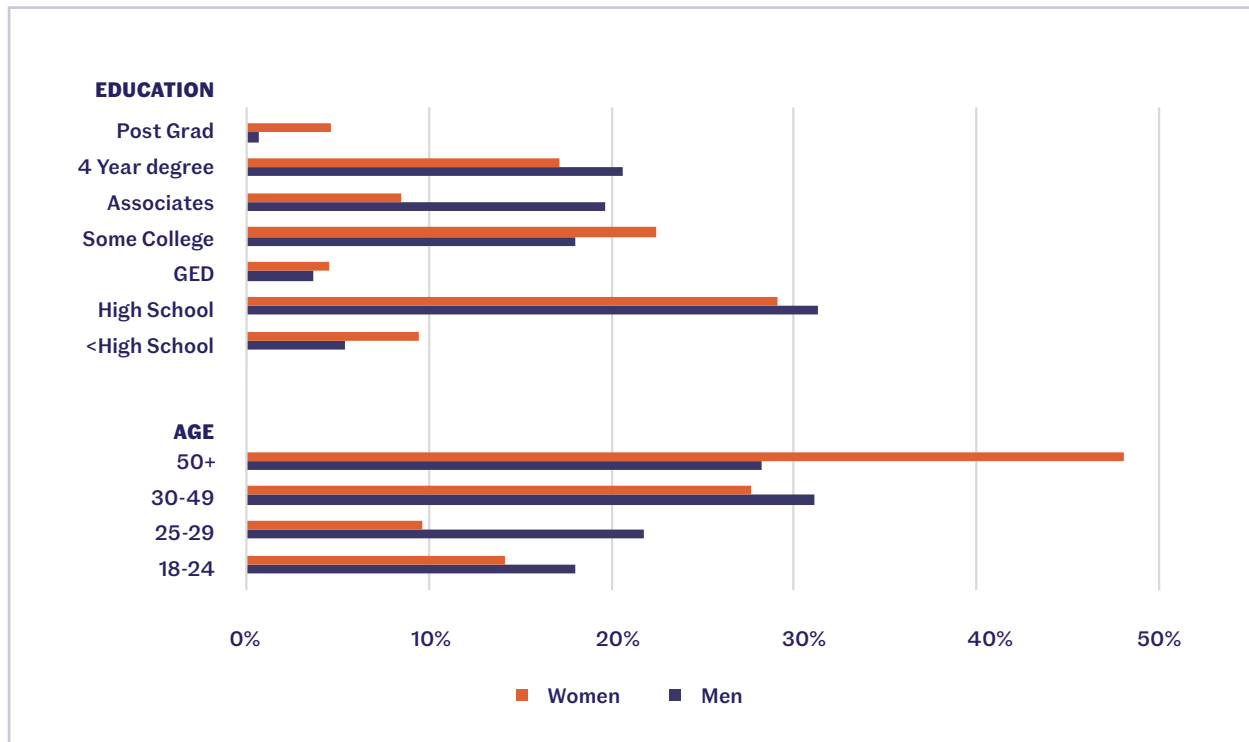
However, the post pandemic recovery in New York City has not exhibited this trend. Joblessness for all other racial groups lowered in 2021, but not for Black New Yorkers; in fact, it increased in the last quarter of the year.⁹ This joblessness spike to a population already dealing with historic barriers in the job market (specifically in New York) is likely related to the city's reliance on jobs in retail and hospitality that have yet to return to their pre-pandemic activity. But there are other considerations that likely contribute to this crisis overwhelmingly impacting Black men, including educational attainment, discrimination, professional and social networks, location, injustice in the criminal justice system, and the struggles of “out of school, out of work” youth.¹⁰ For the remainder of this report, we will consider these potential causes and solutions, with an eye on NYCHA where access and resources could make interventions more impactful and provide proof of concepts to be expanded throughout the city.

Black men in NYCHA are considerably younger and excluded from public sector jobs

The most significant causes of low employment rates for Black men in the United States are a lack of educational attainment, discrimination, locational opportunity, and criminal records.¹¹ Because rates of unemployment for women at NYCHA are lower than those of men, it is unlikely that location is the issue here. The NYC Metro Area is not lacking in terms of employment opportunities.¹² And while we cannot rule out that the distribution of the residents by gender in developments causes significant differences in access to job opportunities, this is unlikely.

According to UHT 2022 respondents, Black men in NYCHA are generally much younger than Black women; 40 percent of Black men are younger than age 30, compared to 24 percent of women. (Almost half of Black women in NYCHA are 50 and older, compared to 28 percent of Black men.) Of those Black residents who are not currently students, a much higher percentage of men stopped at their associate's degree and a much higher percentage of women received post-graduate education. There are slight differences between 4-year degree attainment and high school completion, but on its face, the

CHART 6: BLACK NON-STUDENT NYCHA RESIDENTS' EDUCATION AND AGE BY GENDER (2022)



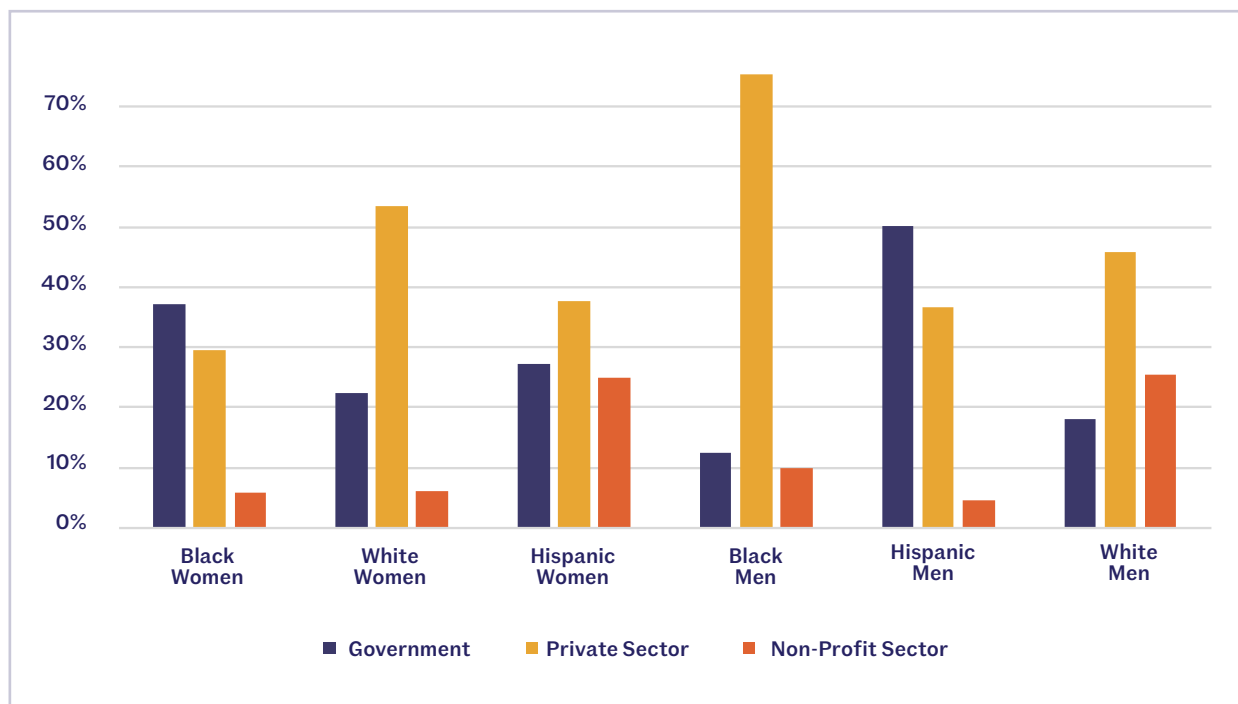
Source: CSS analysis of 2022 Unheard Third Survey data

survey results do not point to a vast difference in education. There are not enough students in the survey to see if educational attainment amongst the student population is significantly different than the non-student population. However, the larger youth population among Black males could have a lot to do with the difference in joblessness. It is concerning that there is such a vast difference in age but not a similar difference in student status.

Apart from age and education, it is possible that the sectors residents pursue or find available to them can impact joblessness rates. UHT 2022 results show a stark difference in where Black men

are employed compared to other groups. Almost 80 percent of Black men work in the private sector, whereas every other racial group is employed much more evenly across the private, non-profit and government sectors. This signals a lack of accessibility of job markets outside the private market by Black men, which could also be related to the vast age difference noted earlier, as private market jobs may both be more accessible to and fit the qualifications of older residents. State and local government jobs, for example, are more likely to require post-secondary education, and the private sector has many more opportunities for those without formal educational credentials.¹³

CHART 7: NYCHA RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT SECTOR BY RACE (2022)



Source: CSS analysis of 2022 Unheard Third survey data

More than half of NYCHA youth that apply to the Summer Youth Employment Program do not get in

According to JobsFirstNYC, 18–24-year-old New Yorkers were 35 percent more likely to have lost work during the pandemic than other age groups and most of those jobs were in the very industries most impacted by the pandemic. The group also points to another issue being young people of color leaving school prematurely and becoming unemployed and despondent about the already difficult labor market. It is not a good sign that community college enrollment plunged¹⁴ since the pandemic and continues¹⁵ to do so three years after the height of the health crisis.

While there isn't great data on NYCHA youth, the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) – which is the largest youth employment program in the country, connecting New Yorkers in their teens and early twenties with career exploration opportunities and paid work experience each

summer – receives thousands of applications every year from young people seeking opportunities and a leg up in the job market.

Fifty-five percent of the 18,300 NYCHA youth that apply to the SYEP did not get into the program. This meant missing out on referrals to crucial social services, the receipt of financial counseling, and enrollment in college readiness courses and activities. All NYCHA youth that enrolled in the program took advantage of each of these aspects of the program along with a minimum wage (\$15 per hour) for the summer. This exposes a segment of young New Yorkers hungry for opportunities to grow, learn, and work. Young residents are in need of opportunities, and even this limited data set shows that not all can access them in our city.

Sixteen percent of Black women living in NYCHA struggling to find work cite child and elder care responsibilities as the issue

Responses in the UHT 2022 survey about why residents' job searches had been so difficult, found divergent issues depending on race and gender. In the wake of the pandemic, most who were struggling conveyed that there were not enough jobs on the market; this was largely the case for NYCHA (11 percent) and Section 8 residents (13 percent) and not an issue for Owners (3 percent) and other renters (6 percent). In NYCHA, 7 percent of those having trouble finding a job said that family responsibilities

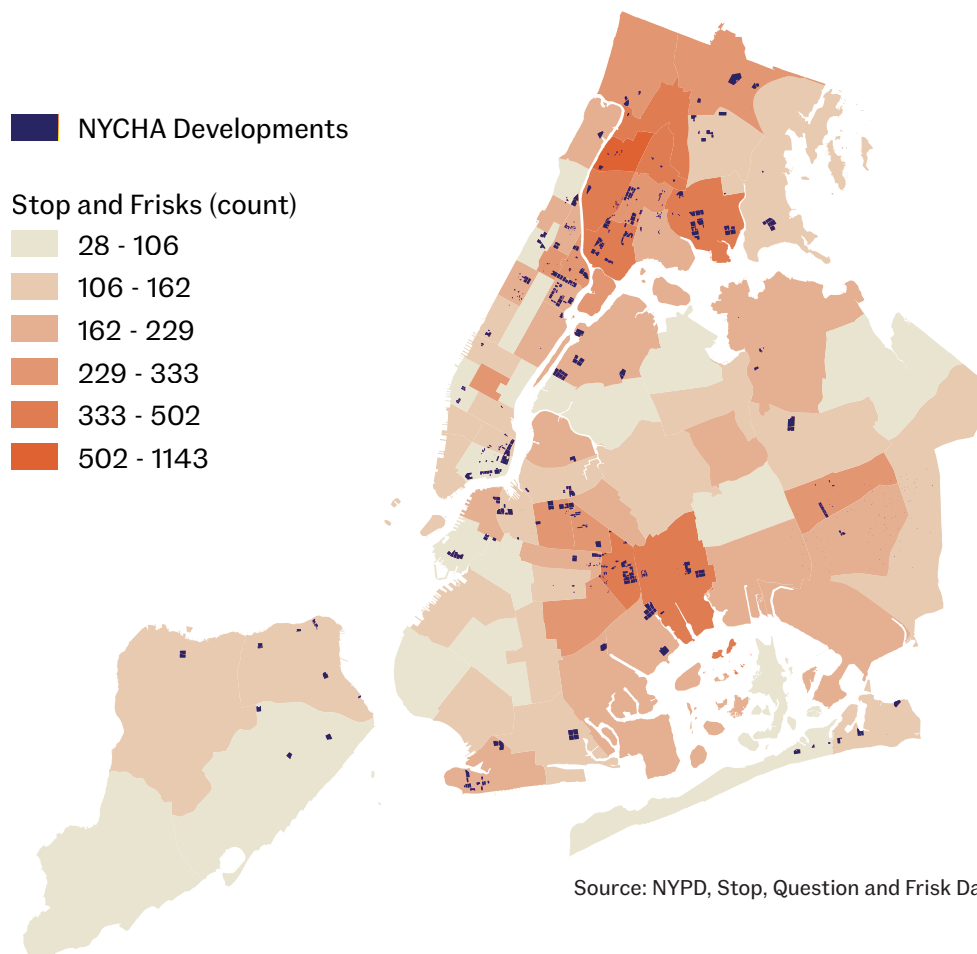
like childcare and elderly care, compared to 3 and 5 percent for Section 8 and other renters, respectively. This finding was almost completely a result of difficulties Black women faced – 16 percent of which answered this way. Despite lower overall unemployment, this finding shows one avenue where more relief can be provided to low-income households, who despite having rents regulated, may not have jobs that pay enough to cover absorbent costs of child and/or elder care.

More than half of all “Stop and Frisks” are of Black men, almost 30 percent are Latino men, and most are in precincts with NYCHA developments

Lastly, any conversation about joblessness and race cannot be complete without considering the role discrimination and mass incarceration play. New York has made many strides to limit the extent of over-incarceration, including the Criminal Justice Reform Act of 2016, bail reform in 2019, marijuana legalization in 2021, and other actions, culminating in a 68 percent decrease in the number of people in custody from April 2018 to April 2023.¹⁶ While this has given NYC one of the lowest incarceration rates in the nation, the impact of the system on Black and Latina/o/x individuals remains. At the same time that the incarceration rate was lowering, the percentage of Black people in custody rose from 55 percent to 60 percent. A 2021 study by

researchers at Columbia University concluded that Black and Latina/o/x people made up 90 percent of jail admissions despite being only 52 percent of the population.¹⁷ Further, the study found that one in four Black men were incarcerated before the age of 38, compared to 16 percent for Latino men and 3 percent for White men at the same age.¹⁸ The Fair Chance Act of 2015 and 2021 amendments altered NYC Human Rights Law to ban employers from accessing a job applicant’s criminal record until after an employer makes a job offer. However, the law does not prevent the use of background checks after an offer is made, and it is common for employers to use other characteristics – including race – as a proxy.¹⁹

MAP 1: NYPD STOP & FRISKS BY PRECINCT AND NYCHA DEVELOPMENTS (2022)



While there isn't data in the UHT to ascertain whether criminal histories are contributing to the employment gap found in this report, we can look at geographic disparities in police activity as well as the demographics of those interacting with the police.

NYPD Stop & Frisk encounters are also called "Terry Stops," named after the 1968 U.S. Supreme Court case *Terry v. Ohio*, which established the constitutionality of brief detentions and investigations by law enforcement officers based on reasonable suspicion that a person is engaged in criminal activity. During a Terry Stop, an officer may conduct a limited search for weapons (a "frisk") if they have a reasonable belief that the person may be armed and dangerous. This search is limited to a pat-down of the outer clothing for weapons, and any further search requires additional justification, such as probable cause or consent from the individual. These stops have long been controversial in New York City and across the nation as they have been overused in minority communities.

NYPD's data on Stop and Frisks reveal startling bias. In 2022, there were more than 15,000 Terry Stops; 60 percent of them were of Black individuals and 30 percent were of Latino/a/x individuals. Of that 90 percent, men of color made up 92 percent of the stops. Sixty-three percent of all stops were of people younger than 31 years old. Furthermore, stops were concentrated in precincts where NYCHA developments were located. Thirty-five percent (27 precincts) of the

77 NYPD precincts have at least five NYCHA developments within them. These 27 precincts accounted for half of all stops in 2022. These precincts had an average of 275 stops, whereas precincts with no developments had 152 less stops on average.

Overrepresentation of young men of color, primarily Black men, in the criminal justice system and evidence of NYCHA residents' disproportionate encounters with officers offers a potential explanation for at least some of the employment gap. NYCHA itself takes criminal history and activity into account when it comes to who is allowed to live in the developments. Ultimate determinations on tenancy are made by administrative hearing officers who function outside of the housing court system. NYCHA has taken steps to lessen the impact of criminal behavior in cases where a person has been shown to no longer engage in them and support reentry after incarceration. But more needs to be done to integrate those with criminal records into society and the labor market. Further research in the topics addressed here are warranted, including the impact NYCHA has had on employment, deeper understanding of the interplay between job type and race and gender, and a deeper analysis of the plight young men of color in public housing face. However, this report built off of the Unheard Third 2022 responses and other available data provide some avenues for ameliorating a serious issue as we work to truly recover from the pandemic.

Entrepreneurship at NYCHA

The number of self-employed NYCHA residents increased by 472 percent, from 286 to 1,636 residents between 2012 and 2021, according to The Center for Urban Future (CUF).²⁰ Despite this significant spike, less than 1 percent of NYCHA residents are business owners compared to 9.8 percent of city residents who are self-employed. NYC has taken notice. The city is expanding its support for NYCHA entrepreneurs, partnering with local organizations and nonprofits to create a network of support, offering resources such as training, mentorship, and funding to help NYCHA residents start and grow their businesses. The program also seeks to connect these entrepreneurs with potential customers, suppliers, and investors, boosting their chances of success and contributing to the overall economic development of New York City. Several plans to increase entrepreneurship at NYCHA have been proposed from Speaker Adrienne Adams' State of the City ideas including requiring the creation of a business directory of NYCHA tenant-owned businesses and a marketing campaign to highlight them, expansion of the Business Pathways programs beyond catering and childcare to include creative fields, retail, cosmetology, and others periodically identified as of interest to NYCHA residents, ask NYCHA and EDC to identify vacant spaces appropriate for commercial pop-ups and business incubators along with other initiatives. The recently launched "NYC Boss Up" program will help eight NYCHA and Section 8 resident owned businesses get off the ground with training and a \$20,000 grant. These types of programs and initiatives should be seen as part of the solution to economic empowerment in NYCHA.²¹



Recommendations: Increase Opportunity, Access, and Fairness for NYCHA Residents

Expand the Summer Youth Employment

Program (SYEP): The SYEP has shown great promise as a vehicle to improve youth engagement with the labor market. It should be expanded to allow a higher number of enrollees; it should be a year-around and universal program to create a steadier rhythm of training and workforce engagement with youth—effectively serving as a preventive tool to decrease the OSOW population. SYEP should also be more closely connected to relevant skills development in the workforce and broader economy and designed to better serve the needs of a rapidly changing labor market. This is even more crucial in the wake of the pandemic, where students lost precious enrichment and learning time due to the impact of remote education. Studies estimate that students lost about a third of their school year during the pandemic.²² Investments in student enrichment are needed now more than ever. For NYCHA residents specifically, this means advancing community-based contracts especially with NYCHA partners with a focus on training and placement in specific job sectors. Increasing specificity early on can provide a real opportunity to overcome some of the current obstacles in the current Section 3 program. Furthermore, the city should explore why the acceptance rate for NYCHA students is so low and make a concerted effort to increase the enrollment rate for NYCHA applicants.

Prioritize career development for Out of School Out of Work (OSOW) and other struggling youth:

Reconnecting today's and preventing tomorrow's OSOW young adults is crucial for ensuring the economic security of New York City and mobility for an entire generation. NYC and NYCHA have a patchwork of programs and policies that have culminated in serving this population, but both still have a long way to go to ensure opportunities for advancement are accessible for all. For example, Los Angeles has built a systematic approach to connecting its population to economic opportunities, leveraging mental health services, housing, foster care needs, job training for in-demand fields, employer partnerships, and buy-in from the mayor's office to community leaders. NYC should explore similar efforts, expanding upon existing programs and policies. Priorities should include:

1. **Better understanding the issues faced by this population:** There is no comprehensive understanding of the structural barriers that face subgroups within the OSOW population in NYC and NYCHA specifically. Data displaying the characteristics of the population can only tell us so much. And while Mayor Adams' efforts to focus on expanding dyslexia screenings²³ is a great preventative measure, there are thousands of young people potentially dealing with mental health challenges, disabilities, immigration status issues, or experiences with the justice system that are preventing them from advancing. The city should issue a study particularly on those unemployed youth and young adults in and around NYCHA developments, exploring obstacles they face to securing well-paid jobs.

2. **Addressing the growth of low-pay and part-time work:** Those struggling to find footing in the job market are being steered into minimum wage, part-time jobs with little opportunity for advancement. An increase in the minimum wage is proposed in the Raise Up NY bill (S3062D/A7503C) sponsored by State Senator Jessica Ramos. The bill would require the minimum wage to progressively increase to \$17.25 by 2024, up to \$21.25 in 2026, subsequently indexed to inflation (if positive) and labor productivity growth (if positive).²⁴ Furthermore, the state could gain a stronger understanding of what gaps on protections for jobs in the new tech economy exist in state law (especially around portable benefits and collective bargaining) by passing (S938/A722). The bill would create a task force on jobs and the new economy to investigate necessary changes to state law to account for on-demand electronic application sector jobs.
3. **Expanding Jobs-Plus sites:** Jobs-Plus was a demonstration that ran from 1998 to 2013 in public housing developments in six communities throughout the country to provide increased employment and earnings in struggling public housing communities. New York City was the first city to create its own version (in Jefferson Houses in 2009) and eventually expanded it to eight new sites between 2011 and 2014. The program was found to increase the likelihood of employment for applicants by 72 percent and increase earnings by 32 percent for public housing residents. However, it did not impact the development-wide employment and earnings because providers do not have the needed funding space and capacity to serve developments with thousands of residents who would benefit from the program. Jobs-Plus is funded via a number of city agency budgets totaling \$24 million as of 2019 (along with an initial \$2 million grant from HUD in 2016). The city and state should commit to a shared \$50 million in Jobs-Plus funding over the next five years.

Strengthen efforts to desegregate schools and neighborhoods: Expanding educational opportunity and social connections is an integral way to address depressed employment. Seven decades after the Brown vs. Board decision, only a small segment of NYC schools reflect the economic and racial diversity of the city. In schools where students of color are underrepresented feelings of alienation abound. Worse yet, hyper segregated-majority low-income, Black and Latina/o/x schools disadvantage attendees due to underfunding and structural issues. Eight in 10 Black and more than seven in 10 Latina/o/x students attend a school where more than 90 percent of their classmates are students of color.²⁵ Meanwhile, 34 percent of White students are enrolled in a school that is over half-White.²⁶

1. **Fully implement the Student Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG) recommendations:** The 38-member Student Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG) convened by Mayor De Blasio in 2017 produced two reports with recommendations for DOE and school districts. These included the dissolution of the highly segregated Gifted and Talented (G&T) program and “unscreening” of middle schools and some high schools.²⁷ Screenings were halted at some middle schools for two years, but since these reports were released, state legislators rejected any legal changes to screening and Mayor Eric Adams expanded the G&T program.²⁸ The mayor has also allowed middle schools to continue screening again. New York City must not ignore segregation in schools and should confront the difficult conversations that come with prevailing over a fight that many thought to be a vestige of a bygone era.

2. **Pass pro-integration housing policy and the Fair Chance for Housing Act:** In addition to reengaging with the recommendations of the SDAG, New York City should embrace desegregation in its neighborhoods; that means focusing on zoning changes presented as a part of the Mayor’s City of Yes²⁹ that address exclusionary zoning and the embrace of government as a producer of housing again by exploiting unused Faircloth cap to build economically integrated public housing units. It is important to note that, at this point in New York City, public housing is better integrated than Section 8 tenant-based voucher housing in terms of the neighborhoods where residents live. There are NYCHA developments resting on some of the most high-worth land in the city, providing the only chance that low-income residents would have to live in these communities. More broadly, passage of the Fair Chance for Housing Act³⁰ would help integrate communities and provide more economic opportunity. This could impact over 700,000 NYC residents³¹ being restricted by background checks which do little to show the safety of a prospective or current tenant. Furthermore, they are often subject to errors and inaccuracies, with one recent lawsuit claiming that a single background check company produced 11,000 inaccurate renter background reports between 2014 and 2019. Stopping housing discrimination against individuals with criminal backgrounds can create a more inclusive and supportive environment, which can lead to better employment opportunities and outcomes for low-income residents. Housing stability is a critical foundation for finding and maintaining employment and a reduced recidivism rate. For both low-income people in and outside of NYCHA, discrimination in housing closes off where they

can live and therefore effectively bars their access to areas with more job opportunities. Reducing housing discrimination can help in the social reintegration of people with criminal backgrounds, allowing them to establish social connections and networks that could lead to job opportunities.

Expand “reentry” programs and address the jail to shelter pipeline: New York City must expand its current Family Reentry Pilot Program³² to its entire public housing portfolio. The program is designed to reunite individuals leaving prison or jail with their families who live in NYCHA. By agreeing to take part in certain programming and receipt of reentry services, the participant is allowed to remain in the home on a conditional basis until the program requirements are met. This allows them to be added to the household composition. While such a program does not necessarily ensure increased employment, it does allow for residents impacted by our criminal justice system to receive services that provide opportunity and bring families together.

Reform and expand the Section 3 program: Over the last two decades, NYCHA has been successful at meeting the Section 3 targets for non-capital project work but has failed when it comes to capital projects.³³ As NYCHA looks to preserve, rehabilitate, and potentially build on its public housing stock, there is an opportunity to implement one of the largest public works programs in the history of the country. Addressing the \$40 billion capital backlog will create thousands of near-term construction jobs and spur additional employment at local manufacturing firms in places like the local Brooklyn Navy Yard and Brooklyn Army Terminal. It will also create 2,000 long-term jobs just for the maintenance of new building heating systems, doors, electrical systems, and other building improvements. The need for new, efficient building technology at NYCHA is similar to that of private homes as the city works to reach the lower carbon emissions targets set for buildings under Local Law 97.³⁴ The size of NYCHA’s stock allows for the agency to take advantage of economies of scale, with the massive output of energy efficient appliances and building material (most of which is currently made overseas). This will create opportunities that NYCHA residents should be first in line for. Section 3 struggles have largely been a result of a mismatch between the NYCHA workforce and the needed jobs. But there have been successful examples to pull from.



Case Study: Workforce and Education in Williamsburg Houses

Williamsburg Houses in Brooklyn went through the PACT conversion process in 2021. Repairs are underway on the 20-building complex. RDC, a partnership between Wavecrest Management and MDG Design + Construction pulled \$482.2 million in financing to remove lead, update the heating system, and carry out other renovations. RDC proposed an innovative idea to impact educational opportunity as well in addition to the capital improvements. For Section 3, HUD requires 25 percent of all labor hours for the project to be worked by Section 3 qualified individuals and/or businesses. RDC is currently on pace to achieve that at Williamsburg Houses; as of April 24, 2023, they have hired 55 Section 3 qualified individuals. Furthermore, through a partnership with St. Nicks, they have provided the OSHA 30-Hour Construction Training, OSHA 10-hour site safety training, and the EPA Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting Certification (RRP) for free to all residents interested. In addition to the Section 8 compliance, RDC is creating a scholarship fund,³⁵ based on a similar approach at the nearby Marcy Houses – rapper Jay-Z’s Shawn Carter Scholarship Fund.³⁶ The program includes \$75,000 in awards slated for 25 disbursements either to 25 different students or some mix of reapplicants. Residents of Williamsburg Houses are eligible to apply for any year that they are enrolled in a vocational or higher education institution. Overall, this project shows the extent to which NYCHA development rehabs can provide opportunity. Such wide-reaching and comprehensive efforts to create jobs and educational opportunity for residents should be taken as a standard for all modernization proposals. Any conversions into the Preservation Trust, for example, should require similar plans.



Strengthen employment discrimination enforcement:

The NYC Council has taken steps to give job applicants more protections from discrimination than almost any other place in the world. Since 2015, New York City has added 39 new protections to the city’s Human Rights Law (NYCHRL), creating a wide range of protected groups. Organizations must have four or more employees to be covered by the law. The Fair Chance Act is an important law, preventing employers from asking about criminal history prior to making a conditional offer of employment, but more can be done to match the implementation with the spirit of NYC’s impressive protections.

1. **Fully fund the Commission on Human Rights:**

Laws are only as strong as their enforcement. The NYC Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) is the agency tasked with investigating employment discrimination cases, but it is underfunded and understaffed. Despite the new enforcement mandates, in recent years, CCHR’s budget has never been more than \$13.7 million, which is less than 1 percent of the city’s budget. It has also been declining since 2019, along with a headcount that has dropped to below 100 employees since its height of 142 employees in 2018. It is the second-worst funded and staffed organization of all the agencies included in the Mayor’s Management Report’s “Public Safety and Access to Justice” area of city service.

2. **Direct city agencies to disregard aged**

convictions: While it is illegal for old and irrelevant convictions to be preventing residents from working in city agency jobs, there is evidence that city agencies continue to violate the law by failing to hire those with any criminal history. Mayor Eric Adams must issue an executive order, aligning city agencies with the law, by directing agencies to disregard convictions that more than seven years old or are unrelated to the job offered.

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ABOUT THE UNHEARD THIRD SURVEY

The 2022 Unheard Third is a scientific telephone survey of 1,968 New York City adult residents reached by cell phones and landlines from July 12th through August 18th, 2022. It was designed by Community Service Society in collaboration with Lake Research Partners, who administered it using Random Digit Dialing and professional interviewers. The sample included 1,234 low-income residents (up to 200% of federal poverty standards, or FPL), and 734 moderate and higher-income residents (above 200% FPL). Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, and Chinese. The margin of error for the entire survey is +/- 2.2 percent, for the low-income component is +/- 2.8 percent, and for the higher-income component is +/- 3.6 percent, all at the 95% confidence interval. For further information on the survey please reach out to Emerita Torres at etorres@cssny.org.

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