

# New York by the Numbers

## Economic snapshots of the five boroughs

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*The Center for an Urban Future is New York City's home for independent research and innovative thinking about key issues affecting the five boroughs.*

### In this Issue:

#### **Low-Wage Jobs: Nearly a third of all adult workers in New York City are employed in low-wage jobs, but the Bronx is in a league of its own**

After approving several other mega-developments like the Willets Point redevelopment plan in Queens and Columbia University's proposed new campus in West Harlem, the New York City Council unexpectedly reversed course last week and rejected a proposal to build a shopping mall inside the Kingsbridge Armory in the Bronx. Although Mayor Bloomberg and other proponents of the plan said the mall would bring new jobs and retail opportunities, community advocates and local politicians opposed the project because it did not guarantee wages of at least \$10 an hour for the retail workers there.

It's not hard to see why the wage issue would prove to be such a sticking point in the Bronx. As we reveal in this issue of *New York by the Numbers*, the Center for an Urban Future's periodic economic snapshot of the five boroughs, a whopping 42 percent of Bronx workers over the age of 18 are employed in "low-wage" jobs. The data, compiled for us by the Population Reference Bureau using Census data from 2007, show that while the percentage of low-wage workers is high across the city, the Bronx is far and away the leader.<sup>1</sup>

In two other boroughs, more than 30 percent of residents over the age of 18 work in low-wage jobs: Queens (with 34 percent of the adult workforce in low-wage positions) and Brooklyn (32 percent). The share of low-wage workers—those making less than \$11.54 an hour or \$24,003 a year<sup>2</sup>—is slightly lower in Staten Island (23 percent) and Manhattan (22 percent). Citywide, low-wage workers make up 31 percent of the city's adult workforce. As one moves out from the city into the suburbs of New Jersey and Long Island, the percentage of low-wage workers drops off somewhat. According to our data, 28 percent of adult workers in the New York City metro area<sup>3</sup> qualify as "low-wage." The percentage bumps back up to 31 percent for the whole state of New York. In fact, only two other states have a higher percentage of adult workers in low-wage jobs (Rhode Island and Hawaii).

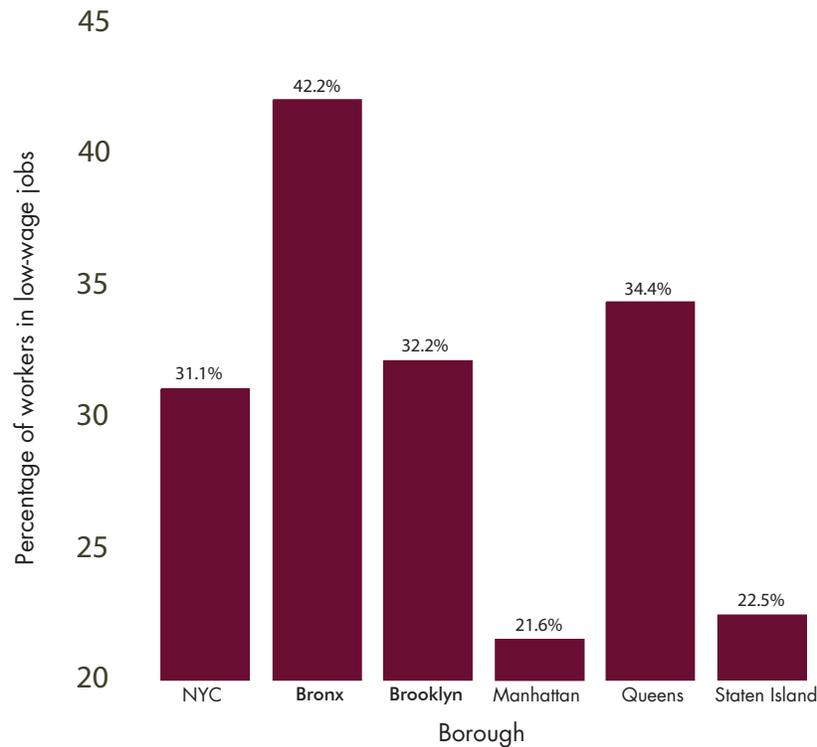
The data underscore three prevailing trends in both the local and national economy: manufacturing jobs that once provided a ticket to the middle class for people with only a high school degree or less have continued to decline; the lion's share of new middle income jobs today require applicants to have an associate's or bachelor's degree, and un-credentialed workers are increasingly forced into low-paying jobs in the service sector as a result.

<sup>1</sup> Population Reference Bureau (PRB) analysis of the Census Bureau's 2007 Basic Monthly Current Population Survey (CPS). The PRB data was collected for us by the Working Poor Families Project, a foundation-funded national initiative that works with 26 nonprofit organizations to strengthen state policies affecting working low-income families. CUF is one of two groups working on this project in New York State.

<sup>2</sup> PRB defined low-wage workers using the following formula. A low-wage worker is defined as an individual 18 and older who is either employed at work or employed absent from work who earns below a state specific "low wage" figure (i.e., the national low wage figure x state cost of living index). The national low wage figure was based upon the preliminary weighted average poverty threshold for a family of four in 2007 (\$21,386). If a person works full-time for one year (i.e., 40 hours per week for 52 weeks per year) and earns \$21,386 per year, that person would be making \$10.28 per hour. In this analysis, the New York State hourly wage (the national low-wage adjusted for state cost of living) was \$11.54 an hour.

<sup>3</sup> New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

## Percentage of workers age 18 and over employed in low-wage jobs



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Area	Number of workers ages 18 and over in low-wage jobs	Number of workers ages 18 and over	Percent of workers ages 18 and over in low-wage jobs
Bronx	168,356	405,703	42.1
Brooklyn	291,456	906,856	32.2
Manhattan	140,882	657,260	21.6
Queens	351,176	1,017,875	34.4
Staten Island	38,098	187,500	22.5
New York City	986,793	3,172,018	31.1
Metro Area	1,425,074	4,973,526	28.6
New York State	2,383,371	7,804,301	30.5

Source: Population Reference Bureau (PRB)

This report was researched and written by Jonathan Bowles and David Giles. Design by David Giles.