Center for an Urban Future
Innovative Ideas. Independent Policy.



Report - May 2024

Closing NYC's College Attainment Gap

Most well-paying jobs in New York City today go to individuals with a postsecondary degree, and studies suggest that this will only accelerate in the decade ahead. But there are still glaring racial, ethnic, and geographic gaps in college attainment rates across New York City.

by Rachel Neches, Eric Raimondi, Jonathan Bowles, and Eli Dvorkin

The path to the middle class in New York no longer needs to start and end with a bachelor's degree. Apprenticeships, skills-based hiring, and workforce training programs in fields from tech to the green economy have become increasingly critical onramps to the well-paying jobs that are growing here. But as much as public officials will need to boost support for these and other alternative career pathways, city efforts to build a more equitable economy will fall short if they do not include bold new commitments to help ensure that a lot more New Yorkers from low-income backgrounds can earn a college credential.

Most well-paying jobs in New York City today go to individuals with a postsecondary degree, and studies suggest that this will only accelerate in the decade ahead. But there are still glaring racial, ethnic, and geographic gaps in college attainment rates across New York City. Just 24.2 percent of Hispanic New Yorkers and 30.8 percent of Black New Yorkers hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 68.7 percent of white New Yorkers. Similarly, while more than two-thirds of Manhattan residents (68 percent) have a bachelor's degree or higher, the share is just 22.8 percent in the Bronx, 37.3 percent on Staten Island, 38.8 percent in Queens, and 46 percent in Brooklyn.[1]

The disparities in college attainment are even greater at the neighborhood level. While at least 80 percent of residents have at least a bachelor's degree on the Upper East Side (88.7 percent), in East Midtown (88.3 percent), Greenwich Village (83.3 percent), and the Upper West Side (80.9 percent), the rate is just 13.1 percent in Mount Hope and 14.2 percent in Mott Haven/Hunts Point. In 40 of the city's 55 Census-defined neighborhoods, fewer than one-third of working-age Hispanic residents hold at least a bachelor's degree—and in 10 neighborhoods, the rate is under 15 percent. In 27 neighborhoods, fewer than one-third of Black residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

Overall, 2.54 million working-age adults across the city do not have a four-year degree or higher level of college attainment. This includes over 700,000 working-age New Yorkers in both Queens (768,016) and Brooklyn (763,207), and more than 550,000 in the Bronx (550,309). In every borough except Manhattan, the number of individuals without a four-year degree outnumbers those with at least a bachelor's degree.

To be sure, there has been important progress on college attainment in New York over the past decade, with rates improving across all five boroughs and among all racial groups. Citywide, the share of working-age adults with a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 37.3 percent in 2012 to 44.4 percent in 2022.

Importantly, progress on college attainment occurred throughout the city, with increases in shares over the past decade in all but 11 of the city's 55 census-defined neighborhoods. In total, 293,238 more working-age New Yorkers had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2022 than in 2012. These changes have likely been driven by multiple factors, including the increase in graduation rates at the City University of New York (CUNY), where six-year graduation rates for first-time bachelor's degree-seekers increased from 52.7 percent in 2014 to 61.9 percent in 2022.[2]

But alarming gaps remain, and the disparities in college attainment rates are a key contributor to the city's persistent income inequality.

In New York City, residents with a bachelor's degree earn twice as much as those who only have a high school diploma ($78,000 versus $40,000).[3] Most of the city's fastest-growing high- and middle-wage jobs—in fields like tech, finance, healthcare, and the creative economy—increasingly go to New Yorkers with a college credential. For example, the percentage of workers who have a four-year degree is between 75 and 90 percent in many of New York City's best paying industries—including advertising (where 90 percent of workers have at least a bachelor's degree), the securities industry (89 percent), the management, scientific and technical consulting services industry (88 percent), finance and insurance (83 percent), and the tech sector (78 percent). In numerous other industries, at least half of the workforce has at least a bachelor's degree, including performing arts companies (79 percent), film (77 percent), offices of health practitioners (59 percent), utilities (53 percent), and employment services (50 percent).

Even as a growing number of employers embrace skills-first hiring and other alternative pathways, research suggests that companies in nearly every industry will increasingly hire people with a college credential. A recent study by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce projects that between 2021 and 2031, net new jobs in New York State requiring postsecondary education and training will grow by 772,000 while net new jobs for workers with a high school

education or less will grow by 268,000.[4]

Already, there are significant disparities in the unemployment rate for New Yorkers based on levels of college attainment. In 2023, the unemployment rate in New York State for workers with at most a high school degree or GED was 5 percent, compared to 2.9 percent of workers in New York State with at most a bachelor's degree and 1.7 percent for workers with a master's degree or higher.[5]

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the troubling opportunity gaps that still exist in so many industries, and to ensure many more New Yorkers of color are able to access the well-paying jobs growing in New York, city and state leaders will need to prioritize closing gaps in college attainment and help far more New Yorkers who do enroll at CUNY to succeed in earning a credential.

Specifically, we are recommending the following actions:

1. **The Adams administration and the City Council should work together to fully fund CUNY in the FY 2025 budget.** The mayor's executive budget cuts nearly $84.9 million in city funds for CUNY, compared to last year's adopted budget.[6] As CUNY faces additional fiscal challenges from an ongoing enrollment decline and the loss of significant federal funding tied to COVID-19 economic relief, a reduction in city funding will almost certainly lead to staffing and programmatic cuts that will hamper CUNY's ability to serve students effectively and limit the institution's economic mobility-generating potential. Policymakers should reverse these cuts in the final budget and instead enhance funding for specific evidence-backed CUNY programs that are working to boost college and career success.
2. **Set a 10-year goal to achieve a 50 percent increase in the number of Black, Latino, and Asian New Yorkers with a college credential—with a focus on closing gaps in the city's lowest-income communities.** A bold goal can help drive this issue forward, but only if it is backed up with a multifaceted set of policies and investments to get there. To create a more inclusive economy, Mayor Adams should make boosting college success a top priority and back up that commitment with a multiyear plan that includes scaling up CUNY's most effective and inclusive college and career success initiatives and investing in the capacity of community-based organizations to support college access and success.
3. **Expand CUNY ACE to help more senior college students succeed.** Mayor Adams and the City Council should look to scale up the CUNY Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE) program. Today, only 36.2 percent of full-time students at CUNY's senior colleges graduate in four years. For Black and Latino students, the graduation rate falls to 27.5 percent. Fortunately, the ACE program has begun to change this, providing students attending CUNY's senior colleges with a mix of academic advisement, career development, tuition scholarships, textbooks, and transportation assistance that has proven to be critical in boosting graduation rates—by as much as 40 percent. However, limited funding has restricted that program to serving just 3 percent of all eligible students. The mayor and City Council should baseline funding for CUNY ACE in the FY 2025 budget and invest in growing CUNY ACE over the next two years, which will help students save money by completing their degrees more quickly, maximize the city's other investments in student success by boosting completion rates, and strengthening New York's economy by raising earnings and growing the tax base.
4. **Continue to expand the highly successful CUNY Reconnect initiative.** Approximately 600,000 working-age New Yorkers have obtained some college credits but no degree. In just two years, the CUNY Reconnect initiative has helped more than 32,000 students return to college and re-enroll, of which over 2,000 have earned degrees. The majority of these students are Black and Hispanic, and women, and most are over the age of 24. At a relatively modest cost of just $5.4 million last year, CUNY Reconnect has succeeded in helping working-age New Yorkers complete credentials while boosting enrollment, and this

program deserves to continue and grow.

5. **Boost CUNY's career success programs.** Although programs like CUNY ACE and ASAP have made meaningful progress in boosting graduation rates, CUNY still has work to do to ensure that CUNY degrees lead to lasting economic opportunity. Today, too many students end up unemployed or underemployed even after earning a credential. Fortunately, several CUNY programs are succeeding in launching students into well-paying careers in the tech sector, health care, finance, and other industries. But these programs are generally operating at a very small scale, and budget cuts threaten their continuation. To ensure that CUNY is as effective as possible in generating economic mobility, the mayor and City Council should support the growth of these initiatives—such as the Tech in Residence Corps and the Tech Talent Pipeline Residency Internship program, Futures in Finance, and CUNY Career Launch—and help expand access to career services by adding dedicated career advising and industry engagement staff at each campus.
6. **Expand innovative alternative pathways to earn a college credential.** While a four-year degree is clearly linked to much higher lifetime earnings, these high-stakes, high-cost degrees should not be the sole focus of higher education. Policymakers and education officials should work with industry leaders to develop and expand short-term academic certificate and industry-recognized credential programs that can stack up to a two- or four-year degree. A major expansion of short-term microcredentials embedded in degree-granting programs—including credentials obtained in partnership with nonprofit workforce development organizations—could provide quicker access to job opportunities and income gains, help CUNY students succeed in accessing competitive paid internships, enable more graduates of workforce training programs to go on to pursue two- and four-year degrees at CUNY, and help far more New Yorkers earn college degrees while working. Crucially, these programs could also be eligible for the state's recently launched non-degree part-time Tuition Assistance Program, making them free for eligible students. Likewise, the city should greatly expand efforts to enroll high school students in early college programs—including through career-focused programs like youth apprenticeships that also confer college credits.
7. **Include investments in skills-building programs that go beyond college degrees.** A comprehensive plan to expand access to good jobs should also include non-degree investments in skills training for adults who do not have a college credential, such as apprenticeships, workforce training, and skills-based hiring programs. These programs should be developed in partnership with industry leaders and small businesses, result in marketable credentials, focus on the neighborhoods and communities with the greatest need, and include wraparound supports for the same non-tuition barriers—from childcare to technology—that derail aspiring low-income college students.

KEY FINDINGS

New York is lagging among the nation's other large cities in college attainment.

- Out of the 25 largest cities in the United States, New York City ranks 15th in terms of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher, with 44.4 percent of working-age adults holding this credential. New York trails cities such as Seattle (70.6 percent), Washington, DC (69.2 percent), San Francisco (68.2 percent), and Denver (59 percent).

Although large gains were made in college attainment in the last decade, disparities by race, ethnicity, and geography remain.

- All five boroughs saw rises in the shares of residents with bachelor's degrees or higher, thereby also experiencing declines in the shares of residents with no four-year degrees. Over the past decade, the share of working-age residents with a bachelor's degree or higher has increased by 7.1 percent, rising from 37.3 percent to 44.4 percent. At

the same time, the share of working-age residents with no four-year degree has decreased by 7.1 percent, falling from 62.7 percent to 55.6 percent.

- While 68 percent of working-age Manhattan residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, the share is lower in each of the other four boroughs: 46 percent in Brooklyn, 38.8 percent in Queens, 37.3 percent on Staten Island, and 22.8 percent in the Bronx.
- White New Yorkers have the highest share of individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher of any racial group (68.7 percent), following by Asian residents (50.4 percent), Black residents (30.8 percent), and Hispanic residents (24.2 percent).
- Over the past decade, Brooklyn saw the largest rise in the share of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher, increasing by 11.3 percentage points (from 34.7 percent to 46 percent). While incredibly positive, it is possible that much of this jump was due to affluent, highly educated residents moving into the borough.

College attainment rates are not evenly distributed throughout the city's neighborhoods.

- The bachelor's degree attainment rate is over 50 percent in just 30 percent of the city's Census-defined neighborhoods (16 out of 55).
- In 39 of the city's 55 neighborhoods, over 50 percent of working-age residents have no four-year degree.
- In four neighborhoods across the city—three in the Bronx and one in Brooklyn—fewer than 20 percent of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher: Morris Heights/Mount Hope (13.1 percent), Melrose/Mott Haven/Longwood/Hunts Point (14.2 percent), Morrisania/Tremont/Belmont/West Farms (16.6 percent), and East New York/Cypress Hills (19.7 percent).

Some of the highest levels of bachelor's degree attainment are in the city's whitest and wealthiest neighborhoods.

- In the Upper East Side, which has the second highest share (68.4 percent) of working-age white residents of all the city's 55 census-defined neighborhoods and where only 3.5 percent of the population is Black, 88.7 percent of working-age residents have a BA or higher – the highest rate of any neighborhood in the city.
- In Park Slope/Carroll Gardens, where 63.9 percent of the working-age population is white, 11.3 percent is Hispanic and 6.1 percent is Black, the share of those with a bachelor's degree or higher is 79 percent.
- In Midtown/East Midtown/Flatiron, where 60.4 percent of the working-age population is white and only 3.9 percent is Black, the share of working-age residents with a bachelor's degree or higher sits at 88.3 percent.

While all major racial groups experienced advancements in college achievement over the past decade, minority racial groups saw slower rates of growth.

- Although all major racial groups saw increases in their shares of individuals with at least a bachelor's degree over the past decade, white New Yorkers saw the largest spike (9.4 percent), compared to Asian New Yorkers (8.8 percent), Hispanic New Yorkers (6.9 percent), and Black New Yorkers (6.1 percent).
- In 30 of the city's 55 neighborhoods, less than one-quarter of Hispanic residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher level of educational attainment. In 10 neighborhoods, fewer than 25 percent of Black residents have a bachelor's degree. The same is true in four neighborhoods for Asian residents and three neighborhoods for white residents.
- While white New Yorkers saw the largest rise in its share of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher (9.4 percent) over the past decade, white New Yorkers with a bachelor's degree or higher were the only racial group to decline in total (down 1 precent).

While there are racial disparities in college attainment across the entire city, some of the city's fastest-gentrifying neighborhoods have exceptionally wide gaps.

- In Jackson Heights/North Corona, 68.6 percent of white residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 35.8 percent of Asian residents, 28.4 percent of Black residents, and 16.1 percent of Hispanic residents.
- In Sunset Park where 46 percent of all residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, 82 percent of white residents have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 57.5 percent of Black residents, 31.8 precent of Asian residents, and 21.7 percent of Hispanic residents.
- In East Harlem, the bachelor's attainment rate is 80.3 percent for white residents and 59.8 percent for Asian residents, more than double the rate for Black residents (28.7 percent) and Hispanic residents (20.5 percent). The overall rate of bachelor's attainment in East Harlem is 35.6 percent.
- In Williamsburg/Greenpoint, 64.5 percent of all residents have a bachelor's degree or higher. However, 74 percent of white residents and 78.6 percent of Asian residents have at least a bachelor's degree, which is nearly double the share of Black residents (40.9 percent) and Hispanic residents (37 percent) with bachelor's degrees.
- The same is the case for Downtown Brooklyn/Fort Greene, where 90.6 percent of white residents and 84.5 percent of Asian residents have at least a bachelor's degree. Meanwhile, 44.2 percent of Black residents and 57.6 percent of Hispanic residents have at least a bachelor's degree.
- In Crown Heights North, where 57.4 percent of all residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, 89.2 percent of white residents have at least a bachelor's, compared to 48.4 percent of Hispanic residents and 28.7 percent of Black residents.
- In the Lower East Side/Chinatown, 80.3 percent of white residents and 48.8 percent of Asian residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 20 percent of Hispanic residents and 11.6 percent of Black residents. Overall, 51.7 percent of residents have at least a bachelor's degree.

Some of the largest gains in college attainment in the past decade have occurred in the city's gentrifying neighborhoods, at times widening achievement gaps along racial and ethnic lines.

- In Bedford-Stuyvesant, a neighborhood in which Black residents make up the largest share (38.3 percent) of the working-age population, the rise in the share of white residents with a bachelor's degree or higher over the past decade (48.3 percent to 74.9 percent) far outpaced that of Black residents (24.3 percent to 29.5 percent) over the past decade. The share of Hispanic residents with at least a bachelor's degree rose by 25.2 percentage points (15.7 percent to 40.9 percent) in the same period. Out of all neighborhoods in the city, Bedford-Stuyvesant has seen the largest increase in the share of individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher over the past 10 years, rising by 28.5 percent (20.6 percent to 49.1 percent).
- In Bushwick, the bachelor's degree attainment rates for Black, Hispanic, and Asian residents saw some of the largest increases in Brooklyn. The share of Black residents with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by 20 percentage points (from 22.6 percent to 42.3 percent), and the share of Hispanic residents with a bachelor's degree or higher rose by 15.6 points (from 12.3 percent to 27.9 percent). Overall, the share of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher in Bushwick rose by 19.2 points in the past decade.
- Sunset Park saw its share of working-age adults with at least a bachelor's degree rise by 15.1 percent over the past decade. The share of white residents with at least a bachelor's increased by 19.4 percent, the share of Asian residents with a bachelor's degree increased by 15.4 percent, and the share of Black residents with a bachelor's degree increased by 16.4 percent. Hispanic residents saw a slightly smaller increase of 9.8 percent.
- The share of Long Island City/Sunnyside/Woodside residents with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by 12.3 percent over the past decade. The biggest gains were spread among Asian residents (+19.1 percent, from 41.9 percent to 61 percent), and Hispanic residents (+17.6 percent, from 15.3 percent to 33.3 percent). White and Black

residents also saw increases, rising by 9.4 and 7.5 percentage points, respectively.

- In Harlem (Central), the share of Asian residents with a bachelor's degree or higher more than doubled, from 32.2 percent to 79.6 percent. The increases were far smaller for Black residents, who saw a slight rise from 29.1 percent to 32.4 percent, and even declined for Hispanic residents (27.5 percent to 24.7 percent) residents. Overall, the total share of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by 8.2 percent.

Methodology

This analysis used data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 and 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. More specifically, we looked at educational attainment for working-age (25-64) residents of the five boroughs of New York City.

Appendix – Borough Breakdowns

Bronx

- 22.8 percent of working-age Bronx residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, the lowest college attainment rate of any borough.
- Just 16.9 percent of Hispanic residents in the Bronx have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 26.1 percent for Black residents, 39.2 percent for Asian residents, and 42.8 percent for white residents.
- The share of Bronx residents with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by 3.8 percent over the past decade, rising from 19 to 22.8 percent. In total, 25,287 more working-age Bronx residents have a bachelor's degree or higher in 2022 than 2012.
- 31.1 percent of Bronx residents have an associate degree or higher.
- 17 percent of working-age residents have completed some college credits but have no degree, the highest rate of any borough in the city.
- Morris Heights/Mount Hope has the lowest bachelor's degree attainment rate of any Bronx neighborhood (13.1 percent), followed by Melrose/Mott Haven/Longwood/Hunts Point (14.2 percent) and Morrisania/Tremont/Belmont/West Farms (16.6 percent).
- Riverdale/Kingsbridge/Marble Hill has the highest bachelor's attainment rate of any Bronx neighborhood (43.8 percent), followed by Co-op City/Throgs Neck (30.9 percent) and Wakefield/Williamsbridge/Eastchester (28.2 percent).
- The bachelor's degree attainment rate for working-age adults in the Bronx is under 30 percent in eight of the borough's 10 neighborhoods.
- Riverdale/Kingsbridge/Marble Hill has the highest bachelor's attainment rate for all major racial groups; 74.2 percent of Asian residents, 69.2 percent of white residents, 44.3 percent of Black residents, and 28 percent of Hispanic residents have at least a bachelor's degree.
- Black residents have the lowest bachelor's attainment rate in Morris Heights/Mount Hope (12.2 percent), white residents have the lowest bachelor's attainment rate in Soundview/Parkchester (7 percent), Hispanic residents have the lowest bachelor's attainment rate in Morrisania/Tremont/Belmont/West Farms (9.9 percent), and Asian residents have the lowest bachelor's attainment rate in Soundview/Parkchester (17.6 percent).

Brooklyn

- 46 percent of working-age Brooklyn residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- In Brooklyn, 67.4 percent of white residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 45.9 percent of Asian residents, 30.8 percent of Black residents, and 26.5 percent of Hispanic residents.

- 12 percent of Brooklyn residents have some college but no degree.
- The share of Brooklyn residents with a bachelor's degree or higher rose by 11.3 percent in the past 10 years (34.7 percent to 46 percent), the largest increase of any borough. In total, there are 162,850 more working-age residents in Brooklyn with a bachelor's degree or higher in 2022 than in 2012.
- Of all neighborhoods in the borough, Downtown Brooklyn/Fort Greene has the highest share of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher (79.6 percent), followed by Park Slope/Carroll Gardens (79 percent), and Williamsburg/Greenpoint (64.5 percent).
- The three Brooklyn neighborhoods with the lowest bachelor's degree attainment rates are East New York/Cypress Hills (19.7 percent), Ocean Hill/Brownsville (25.4 percent), and East Flatbush (32.9 percent).
- Black residents have the highest bachelor's degree attainment rate in Sunset Park (57.5 percent) and the lowest bachelor's attainment rate in Coney Island/Brighton Beach (15 percent).
- Hispanic residents have the highest bachelor's degree attainment rate in Downtown Brooklyn/Fort Greene (57.6 percent) and the lowest bachelor's degree attainment rate in Ocean Hill/Brownsville (10.9 percent).
- Asian residents have the highest bachelor's degree attainment rate in Downtown Brooklyn/Fort Greene (84.5 percent), and the lowest bachelor's degree attainment rate in East New York/Cypress Hills (14.9 percent).
- White residents have the highest bachelor's degree attainment rate in Downtown Brooklyn/Fort Greene (90.6 percent), and the lowest bachelor's attainment rate in in East New York/Cypress Hills (24.1 percent).

Manhattan

- 68 percent of working-age adults in Manhattan have a bachelor's degree or higher, by far the highest college attainment rate of any borough.
- 8.6 percent of working-age adults (80,599) in Manhattan have some college credits but no degree.
- The share of Manhattan residents with a bachelor's degree or higher has risen by 5.6 percentage points over the past decade, increasing from 62.4 percent to 68 percent. In total, there are 19,704 more residents with a bachelor's degree or higher in Manhattan in 2022 than in 2012.
- White residents have the highest rate of bachelor's degree attainment in Manhattan (88.6 percent), followed by Asian residents (79.3 percent), Hispanic residents (37.8 percent), and Black residents (38 percent).
- The three Manhattan neighborhoods with the highest rates of bachelor's degree attainment are the Upper East Side/Roosevelt Island (88.7 percent), Midtown/East Midtown/Flatiron (88.3 percent), and the Financial District/Greenwich Village (83.3 percent).
- The three neighborhoods with the lowest rates of bachelor's attainment include East Harlem (35.6 percent), Harlem (41.5 percent), and Washington Heights/Inwood (46.9 percent).
- For Black residents, Washington Heights/Inwood has the highest bachelor's degree attainment rate (77.7 percent), while Lower East Side/Chinatown (11.6 percent) has the lowest rate.
- For Hispanic residents, the Financial District/Greenwich Village (78.9 percent) has the highest bachelor's degree attainment rate, while the Lower East Side/Chinatown (20 percent) has the lowest rate.
- For Asian residents, the Upper West Side (92 percent) has the highest bachelor's degree attainment rate, and the Lower East Side/Chinatown (48.8 percent) has the lowest rate.
- For white residents, Midtown/East Midtown/Flatiron (94.3 percent) has the highest bachelor's degree attainment rate, and Washington Heights/Inwood (78.1 percent) has the lowest rate.

Queens

- In Queens, 38.8 percent of working-age residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- At the same time, 178,052 working-age residents (14.2 percent) have some college credits but no degree.
- The share of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher in Queens has risen by 6.5 percent in the past decade, from 32.3 percent to 38.8 percent. In total, 68,538 more working-age Queens had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2022 than in 2012.
- 57.7 percent of white working-age residents in Queens have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 45.2 percent of Asian residents, 31.6 percent of Black residents, and 22.3 percent of Hispanic residents.
- The three Queens neighborhoods with the highest bachelor's degree attainment rates are Forest Hills/Rego Park (58.9 percent), Astoria/Queensbridge (55 percent), and Long Island City/Sunnyside/Woodside (54.7 percent).
- The three neighborhoods with the lowest bachelor's degree attainment rates are Jackson Heights/East Elmhurst (25.8 percent), Jamaica/St. Albans/Hollis (26 percent), and Elmhurst/Corona (27.3 percent).
- For working-age white residents, Long Island City/Sunnyside/Woodside (72.6 percent) has the highest bachelor's degree attainment rate, and Queens Village/Bellerose/Rosedale (31 percent) has the lowest rate.
- For working-age Black residents, Forest Hills/Rego Park (66.2 percent) has the highest bachelor's degree attainment rate, and the Rockaways (15.2 percent) has the lowest.
- For working-age Hispanic residents, Forest Hills/Rego Park (40.8 percent) has the highest rate of bachelor's degree attainment, and Elmhurst/Corona (13.5 percent) has the lowest.
- For working-age Asian residents, Forest Hills/Rego Park (67.5 percent) has the highest bachelor's degree attainment rate, and South Ozone/Howard Beach (25.9 percent) has the lowest.

Staten Island

- 37.3 percent of working-age adults on Staten Island have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- The share of adults with at least a bachelor's degree has increased by 5.6 percentage points over the past decade (16,859 more individuals).
- 16.6 percent of working adults have some college credits but no degree, the second highest rate behind the Bronx.
- 44.8 percent of working-age white Staten Islanders have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 33.3 percent of Asian Staten Islanders, 29.3 percent of Black Staten Islanders, and 21.1 percent of Hispanic Staten Islanders.
- Of the borough's three community districts, the South Shore has the highest rate of bachelor's attainment (40 percent), followed by Mid-Island (39.7 percent), and the North Shore (33.3 percent).

Endnotes

1. Center for an Urban Future analysis of data from the American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

2. Center for an Urban Future analysis of system-wide graduation rates from CUNY's Student Data Book, https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/oira.cuny/viz/StudentDataBook/Enrollment.

3. Center for an Urban Future analysis of data from the American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

4. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, After Everything Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements Through 2031, 2021.

5. New York State Department of Labor, Why Go to School?.

6. Mayor Adams's FY 2025 executive budget proposes $937,145,025 in city expense funding for CUNY, a reduction of $84,885,272 from last year's adopted budget of $1,022,030,297. CUNY also faces the loss of $112,445,646 in federal funding, for a combined decrease of $197,330,918 compared to last year's adopted budget.

Closing NYC's College Attainment Gap in New York City is a publication of the Center for an Urban Future. Researched and written by Rachel Neches, Eric Raimondi, Jonathan Bowles, and Eli Dvorkin. Edited by Dorian Block.

Center for an Urban Future (CUF) is a leading New York City-based think tank that generates smart and sustainable public policies to reduce inequality, increase economic mobility, and grow the economy.

General operating support for the Center for an Urban Future has been provided by **The Clark Foundation** and the **Altman Foundation**.

We are grateful for support from **Fisher Brothers Foundation** for the Center for an Urban Future's Middle Class Jobs Project, and ongoing support from a number of other philanthropic funders.

RELATED PRESS

How to Lose a Man in 365 Days

Puck, by Peter Hamby, November 11, 2025

New report shows racial, ethnic and geographic college attainment gaps on Staten Island

Staten Island Advance, by Erik Bascome, May 10, 2024

NYC Public Advocate Pushes For Citywide Access To College Counseling

Office of the New York Public Advocate, October 30, 2024



CENTER FOR AN URBAN FUTURE
120 Wall Street, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10005

cuf@nycfuture.org © All Rights Reserved.