

**2020**  
Disconnected  
Youth Task Force  
Report



# Connecting Our Future

**NYC**

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## Dear New Yorkers,



The disruptive events of 2020, centered around a once-in-a-century pandemic driving the sharpest economic downturn in generations, have exacted a particularly heavy toll on New York City’s youth and young adults. Even before the onset of COVID-19, one in every eight New Yorkers between the ages of 16 and 24 were both out of school and out of work (OSOW). Following the severe job losses of the pandemic recession, concentrated in economic sectors that traditionally employ large numbers of young adults, and the ongoing disruptions to K-12 and higher education, that figure might double or more.

The traumas of this year have only rendered more important the work of the Disconnected Youth Task Force. In this report, the Task Force presents the most comprehensive assessment to date of the city’s OSOW population, as well as the portfolio of public programs designed to serve them with meaningful employment and education opportunities. The report additionally offers a framework and action steps to address both the short-term needs of newly idle young adults, and the necessary long-term approach to prevent disconnection through engaging and effective education and a holistic service approach.

Beyond the current emergency, we must recognize that the absence of a negative outcome—disconnection from school and work—does not ensure that our young people are on track for economic self-sufficiency. Indeed, New York City saw its OSOW population decrease steadily through the decade following the Great Recession, thanks to a rising high school graduation rate and sustained job growth. But a high school diploma alone is not enough to secure career success, and most of the jobs that young people secured were low-wage and part-time, leaving them exposed when the current crisis struck.

As part of our City’s commitment to equality, we must aim higher. With this report, it is the commitment of Mayor Bill de Blasio and his administration to work with all willing parties from industry, philanthropy, and the nonprofit field to give our young people the fullest range of opportunities to realize their unlimited potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phillip Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "P".

**Deputy Mayor J. Phillip Thompson**



# Preface

**IN 2017, THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL PASSED** legislation to convene a task force that would consider the circumstances and challenges of young adult New York City residents ages 16 to 24 who were neither in school nor working, a group sometimes described as “disconnected youth.” A newly formed Disconnected Youth Task Force comprised of City officials, community leaders, service providers, advocates, and young adults convened in February 2019. The Task Force met throughout the spring and early summer of that year, conducting research, engaging key stakeholders in formal and informal settings, and deliberating critical themes, findings, and potential recommendations. Over the following fall and winter, Task Force staff members drafted a report that measured and analyzed this segment of the population and the programs that aim to meet their educational and employment needs. The Task Force developed a series of recommendations to support even more young adults as they move toward career success and economic security.

The report was nearly in final form when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020. Within weeks, the story the Task Force had prepared to tell—about an encouraging long-term decline in the number of out-of-school/out-of-work (OSOW) young adult New Yorkers and the actions that leaders in government, industry, philanthropy, and the nonprofit field could take to build upon these gains—was almost completely upended. In the aftermath of devastating pandemic-related job losses, particularly within sectors that employ large numbers of young adults, and unprecedented disruptions to the educational calendar, we

now anticipate an enormous surge in the OSOW population that will more than undo the gains of the previous decade. The work of policymakers in this area accordingly must shift toward helping as many young adults as possible to quickly reconnect to school and employment. Implicit in the response should be a commitment to ensure that young adults who were not in school or not working even prior to the pandemic do not get lost or overlooked among the large numbers of newly OSOW young New Yorkers.

The unforeseen circumstances of the pandemic and the ensuing economic crash render the work of the Task Force far more urgent than we understood when it was formed and convened. In addition to the lives the global health crisis has taken and the devastation it has unleashed on the New York City economy, it has brought urgent questions of equity and economic justice to the forefront. The burdens of COVID-19 in New York City most heavily fall on low-income communities of color. These are the same communities that saw the highest concentrations of OSOW young adults before the pandemic and have borne the burden of systemic racism in virtually every aspect of public life, from education and public services to law enforcement and labor market entry. The Task Force hopes this report deepens our collective understanding of the structural issues that afflict these communities and contribute to their higher rates of disconnection. Most importantly, we hope it spurs action on the part of leaders in the public, private, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors to ease the immediate pain of our young adults and build a sustainable system that helps them move toward long-term success.

# **The experience of disconnection often has long-term negative effects on an individual's employment prospects, earning power, and health. It also carries a high cost for their families and communities**

**AFTER A DECADE OF SUSTAINED DECLINE IN THE** number of out-of-school/out-of-work (OSOW) youth and young adults in New York City, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 threatens to push an untold amount of young New Yorkers off the path to long-term career success. The unprecedented disruptions to the K-12 and college school years and massive job losses in sectors that employ high numbers of young adults will at least temporarily idle hundreds of thousands of young adults. In this moment of great anxiety, it is vital that this population remain at the center of policy conversations on education, youth development, social services, and workforce development.

**As of 2018, more than one in eight New Yorkers between the ages of 16 and 24 were OSOW.** The journey from adolescence to adulthood challenges all individuals to define who they are and who they wish to be. For most, the period from their mid-teens to mid-20s includes a transition from the world of education to the world of work, and their first hopeful steps on a path toward career success. The transition is not always smooth or orderly, and too many young adults become sidetracked along the way. Early analysis finds that job losses since the onset of COVID-19 will equal or surpass all jobs created since the Great

Recession of 2008,<sup>1</sup> with young adults particularly hard hit. These findings suggest that at least in the short term, the OSOW rate could double in the wake of the pandemic.

**The experience of disconnection often has long-term negative effects on an individual's employment prospects, earning power, and health. It also carries a high cost for their families and communities.** Research shows that disconnection during late adolescence or young adulthood leads to significantly lower earnings and rates of home ownership well into adulthood, as well as a range of worse health outcomes.

**In the decade prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and recession, the number of OSOW young adults in New York City fell sharply—from a high of nearly 197,000 in 2010 to less than 117,000 in 2018.** Two big trends have powered that decline: (i) a rising high school completion rate, which has kept young adults in school, and (ii) strong economic growth, which has created hundreds of thousands of jobs and pulled other young New Yorkers into the workforce. Even before the pandemic, however, there were clear reasons for policymakers and other stakeholders to remain vigilant and continue to drive down OSOW numbers. Virtually all of those newly created jobs held by young adults were part-time, low-wage, or

## Executive Summary

both. So although young adults technically may be in the workforce, they are not on a career path. Moreover, even before the COVID-19 outbreak the Task Force had conservatively estimated that another 325,000 New Yorkers ages 16 to 24 were at risk of becoming OSOW.

**The smaller OSOW population of recent years in some respects resembles its larger 2010 cohort. However, key differences exist.** Today's cohort is considerably older, with more than half now 22 to 24 years of age, and better educated, with nearly three-quarters having at least a high school degree and one in nine holding a four-year college degree. What has not changed is the racial and ethnic makeup: Black and Latinx young adults comprise three-quarters of the OSOW population. Also consistent is the group's geographic concentration in low-income communities, with the Bronx accounting for the largest share of the city's OSOW residents.

**The expansive nature of the OSOW population and the lack of a uniform OSOW strategy across City agencies has yielded a patchwork of programs that can feel disjointed and unfocused.** "OSOW" is a blanket term that has been used to describe young adults who did not complete high school, and even unemployed college graduates. The group's sheer breadth, along with the absence of a strong conceptual framework to categorize the programs that serve it, is an obstacle to clarity in this area of policy.

**In the short term, reconnecting young adults displaced by COVID-19 to school and work must be our first order of business. As recovery takes hold, the Task Force strongly recommends that the City embrace prevention as the means to reducing OSOW numbers.** Between the public school system that serves students from pre-kindergarten through 12th

grade and the 25 campuses of the City University of New York (CUNY), more than 1.4 million New Yorkers benefit from publicly supported education. Research and analysis that informs this report suggest that a greater emphasis on career exploration and work readiness in school programming can help keep young adults engaged and ease their transition from classroom to workplace.

**Best practices have emerged among programs that seek to help OSOW young adults reconnect to school or work. These include longer program timelines and more robust funding; flexible and holistic approaches to service delivery; emphasis on both school- and work-based career paths; and openness to collaborating with partner organizations on complementary services.** The Task Force urges policymakers to look to replicate these program elements, while continuing to improve our understanding of the OSOW population and successful program responses through ongoing research and field supports.

**Finally, to bring cohesion and clarity to a policy area that has long lacked a center of gravity, the Task Force believes the City should centralize and specify responsibility for OSOW policy within a single City government office.** With greater focus and intention, New York City can build upon the progress of recent years and continue to drive down OSOW numbers—and, most importantly, take the needed steps to put all our young adults on a path to success.

# 1

# The Cost of Disconnection and the Impact of COVID-19

The years that bridge childhood and adulthood, roughly the ages of 16 to 24, often set the stage for everything that follows in a young adult's life. It is the period when they are expected to pass certain milestones: high school completion, college or professional training, and initial work experiences, among others. It is when young adults come to understand their strengths and interests, and make initial decisions about what they want to do and who they want to be professionally. In short, an individual's experiences and choices during this timeframe can determine whether they will be on track for a career that leads to economic security and stability for themselves and their families.



## **A young adult's experiences and choices between the ages of 16–24 can determine whether they will be on track for a career that leads to economic security and stability for themselves and their families.**

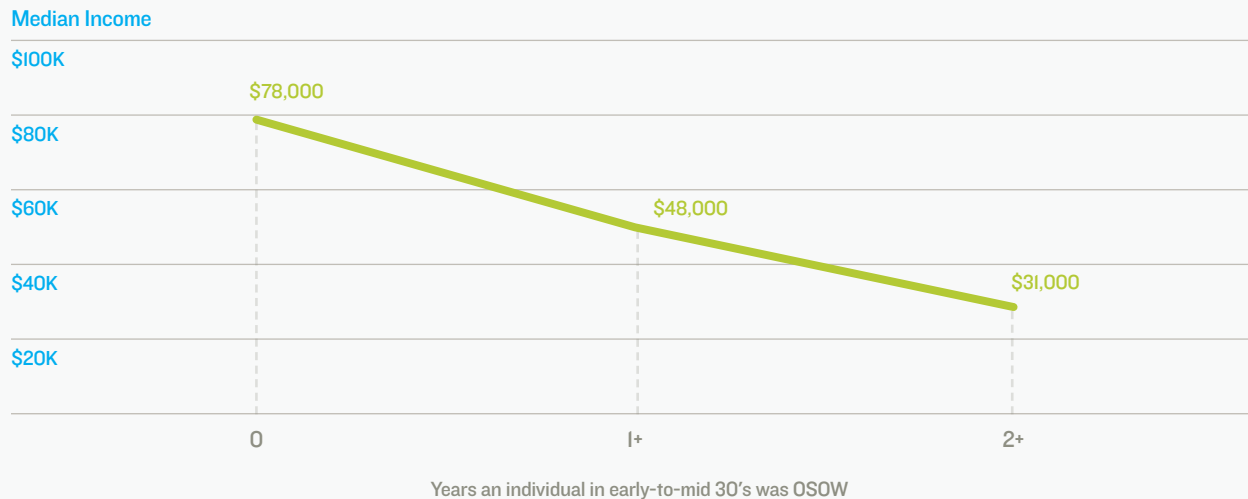
Yet too many young adults in New York City and across the nation fall short of reaching some or all of these milestones. Some become “disconnected” from education and employment, and, as a result, lose valuable time and momentum during the crucial developmental years. The reasons for disconnection are varied and often specific to each young adult. They may be tied to school experiences that did not stimulate their interests, lack of a strong support system at home, or too little information about educational options and opportunities. Obstacles may be intensified by social and economic challenges impacting the individual and/or their families, including poverty, justice system involvement, disrupted family arrangements, and housing insecurity, among others. Structural biases in the education and employment systems—such as school disciplinary norms and discriminatory hiring practices that harm young adults of color—add additional barriers and layers of complexity.

Regardless of the reasons, young adults who find themselves out of school and out of work (OSOW)

suffer a range of long-term negative life consequences. The research organization Measure of America has found that the experience of being OSOW “limits the chances and opportunities young adults will have throughout their lives.”<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, disconnection from school between the ages of 16 and 24 correlates to much lower high school completion rates, which, in turn, has negative long-term implications on employment and earnings. The study found median family income to be about \$78,000 per year for those who were never OSOW by their early- to mid-thirties, compared to approximately \$44,000 for those OSOW for a year or more. Average annual income dropped to \$31,000 for those OSOW for at least two years (see figure I.1). Similarly stark differences were found across home ownership, employment rates, and health outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

A 2012 study estimated the annual cost, calculated as the fiscal burden to taxpayers, of each OSOW young adult to be \$16,000 (adjusted for inflation from 2011 to 2020),<sup>4</sup> including lost tax payments and an increase in public expenditures in the areas

**Figure 1.1: Median Income of Individuals vs Length of Being OSOW**



of criminal justice, health, and welfare. The fiscal burden to the taxpayer compounds over a lifetime (see figure 1.2) to as much as \$273,000 for an individual who is chronically OSOW between the ages of 16 and 24 (about half of all OSOW individuals nationally at the time of the analysis). The researchers estimated the annual number of OSOW Americans at the time to be 6.7 million, which translates into an estimated present value cost of more than \$1.8 trillion.<sup>5</sup> It should be noted the costs are a conservative estimate, based on research carried out in 2011, that do not take into account lost earnings and the cost of raising taxes to pay for public services. With the cost of incarceration per person at an all-time high, an increased likelihood of negative health outcomes for young adults who are or were OSOW, a widening income gap, and the unknowns around “long” COVID-19, there is an urgent case to be made that preventing OSOW young adults from disconnecting and making early interventions for those that do disconnect will have short-term and long-term socioeconomic benefits.

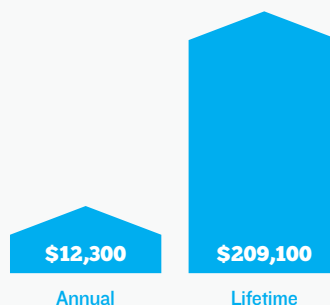
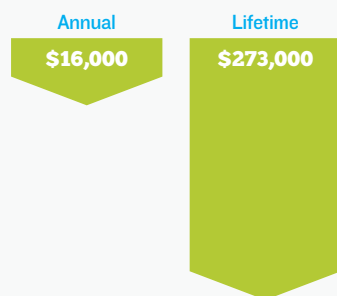
The economic rationale for strong government intervention is clear and compelling. Measure of America calculated that for every young adult prevented from becoming OSOW, the federal government would gain an average of \$12,300 per year in additional tax revenue (adjusted for inflation from 2018 to 2020).<sup>6</sup> Localities would realize significant tax revenue gains as well. Using Measure of America's methodology and an average annual wage of \$44,000, New York City's estimated gain for connecting each OSOW individual would be \$4,059 in state and City tax revenues. Using the 2018 estimate of the city's OSOW population at just under 117,000, keeping each of these young New Yorkers connected to school or work would yield an economic benefit approaching half a billion dollars per year.<sup>7</sup>

**AS NEW YORK CITY SEEKS TO BUILD BETTER SYSTEMS** of education, social services, and employment that serve all residents, the number of OSOW young adults offers both a measure of success and an indicator of persistent challenges. The City's OSOW count rose sharply during and after the Great Recession, reaching a peak of nearly 200,000 in 2010. This

**Figure 1.2: Cost of Disconnection: Taxpayers**

**TAXPAYER COST**

Lost taxes; increased public expenditures on crime, health, and welfare



**ADDITIONAL TAX REVENUE**

for each individual reconnected to employment and education

spike is not surprising, since young adults—with fewer skills and networks and less formal education—often struggle the most during an economic downturn. Fortunately, as the economy improved over the years following the Great Recession, the number of OSOW young adults in New York City steadily fell. The most recent comprehensive analysis of data from 2018 pegs the figure at 116,996. On a percentage basis, this represents a drop from about 18 percent of all 16- to 24-year-old New Yorkers in 2010 to 13 percent seven years later.

This decrease is significant and commendable, and we analyze it in this report in order to surface key lessons learned. But the fact that 13 percent of young adult New Yorkers—more than one in eight—were OSOW even before the COVID-19 crisis struck indicates that the City’s education, social services, and employment systems have significant work to do. As previously noted, a period of disconnection—even for a year—can have a profoundly negative impact on an individual’s future. To minimize harm, the City must implement policies and programs deliberately designed to continue preventing young

New Yorkers from becoming OSOW as they age into early adulthood. At the same time, we must redouble efforts to reconnect young adults who have disconnected from education and work as a result of disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To that end, the administration of Mayor Bill de Blasio and the New York City Council convened a Disconnected Youth Task Force to better understand the current state of the OSOW population and develop more effective ways to support them. The Task Force is comprised of representatives from City agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve OSOW young adults, intermediaries, private sector leaders, and young adults who were at one point OSOW. The Task Force’s immediate charge was to produce a report with recommendations to improve services for current OSOW young adults and those at risk of becoming disconnected from school and/or work. Its larger goal was not only to help these individuals remain connected to school and employment, but to put them on a path toward long-term career success and economic security.



Cover photo courtesy of NYC Department of Youth and Community Development

**The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed structural weaknesses and community vulnerabilities in virtually every aspect of society, from public health to employment security. As many observers have noted throughout the period of social distancing, “We are all in the same storm but not in the same boat.”**

It is important to note that serving New York City’s OSOW population has been a priority for many City agencies and their partners in the provider and philanthropic communities. The Task Force itself includes representatives of 13 different City agencies and offices, whose primary responsibilities range from homeless services to criminal justice and workforce development. Taken together, the agencies and offices invest significant resources, knowledge, and expertise in addressing issues that can negatively impact a young adult’s educational and career goals. While more support is needed, each agency and office can point to successes in their respective programs and policies intended to support high-need young adults and their families.

Yet the City’s past response to the challenges faced by the OSOW population has equaled less than the sum of these parts. To an extent, the issue is that programs in isolation, no matter how effective, cannot solve systemic challenges of equity, access, and opportunity. Another aspect of the problem is that

by virtue of the fact that OSOW individuals are not enrolled in school or in the labor market, they are not attached to a specific City agency or public system. Perhaps for that reason, no single City agency or Mayoral office has primary responsibility for developing policy specific to the OSOW population or accountability for related outcomes. Moreover, no centralized data collection, tracking or needs analysis exists for this evolving population. As a result, New York City has never developed an aligned, coordinated, and deliberate set of strategies focused on (i) preventing disconnection and (ii) quickly and effectively re-engaging OSOW young adults. Education and employment programs that contribute to preventing disconnection are often designed and implemented without the explicit aim of keeping young adults connected and on track for sustained education and career success. The few programs that intentionally serve OSOW young adults with the goal of reconnecting them to school and/or work are not structured to incorporate all the relevant public resources to support this high-need population.

## The Cost of Disconnection and the Impact of COVID-19

**PLACING OSOW YOUNG ADULTS AT THE CENTER OF** policy discussion and prioritizing their needs is an economic and moral imperative for the City of New York. While a robust response to the current pandemic must be the immediate priority, over the longer term our emphasis should be on preventing disconnection before it happens—and thereby connecting young adults with sustainable career paths that offer good wages. Through this approach, the City can continue to sustainably and effectively address inequality. Strategic policies aligned to prudent public investments can yield enormous financial and societal returns for the young lives served and the city as a whole.

In this first stage of its work, the Task Force has attempted to grapple with these challenges and chart a path forward. This report summarizes that work, featuring a baseline analysis of the OSOW population, a review of current services and best practices locally and nationally, and finally a set of system-level recommendations. Its objective is to illuminate who these young adults are, name the changes that can enable their success, and center those at risk of disconnection and those already detached from school and work within every conversation on education and the workforce. The set of recommendations does not include a “silver bullet” to solve the OSOW problem once and for all, nor does it address all the specifics of subsystems or programs we will need to mobilize. No single policy change or new program could address the full range of needs or fix every system shortcoming that has inadvertently contributed to the problem. Rather, the Task Force calls for New York City to rethink its general approach to OSOW young adults, and to shift various systems toward making OSOW young adults a higher priority, and providing them greater support.

Being out of school and out of work is a circumstance at a specific point in time, not a fixed identity. Moreover, a young adult’s connection to school or work should not be boiled down to a simple “yes-or-no” question. Rather, their current circumstance should be considered along a spectrum of progress toward

the life goals to which many people aspire: educational achievement, career success, and economic security. For most young adults, that spectrum is sequential and timely; for others, it can be disjointed and winding. Simply connecting a previously idle 21-year-old with a low-wage, part-time job does not mean they are on track for long-term success. The relevant policy and program interventions—on both the prevention and re-engagement fronts—must be long-term, holistic, and flexible if they are to meet the changing circumstances of the diverse individuals they serve.

Recent events in New York City and around the world have added salience and urgency to this work. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed structural weaknesses and community vulnerabilities in virtually every aspect of society, from public health to employment security. As many observers have noted throughout the period of social distancing, “We are all in the same storm but not in the same boat.” Young adults without higher educational attainment, extensive work histories, or strong family/community support networks are traveling in some of the least seaworthy vessels. Vulnerable to educational disruptions and economic shocks, many thousands are likely to join, or rejoin, the previously shrinking ranks of the city’s OSOW young adult population. Meanwhile, those who were already neither in school nor working before the pandemic risk being further obscured by the surge of newly OSOW individuals.

Data are not yet available to offer a solid estimate of just how large the increase will be, nor has enough time passed. Young people typically are not categorized as OSOW until several months after their last day of enrollment or employment, and there is a lag of 12 to 18 months before changes in employment and school enrollment appear in the American Community Survey, this report’s source for OSOW data. But the figures could be staggering. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, the Task Force estimated that over and above the nearly 117,000 OSOW New Yorkers ages 16 to 24, another 325,000 in the same age range were at risk of disconnection by virtue of high school or college

## The Cost of Disconnection and the Impact of COVID-19

non-completion, or because they worked in low-wage, high-turnover industries. The groups broke down roughly evenly. If we estimate that half of those in the low-wage work category have lost their jobs, a third of the CUNY students in the high-risk category have not remotely continued their coursework, and a quarter of at-risk high school students have effectively “dropped out,” that would represent about 115,000 additional OSOW young New Yorkers. In other words, the number of OSOW young adults in New York City, and across the nation, could easily double.<sup>8</sup>

These estimates may in fact be conservative. The sectors in which many young adults work, such as food service and hospitality, are among those hardest hit by social distancing protocols; one analysis estimated that a third of previously employed 18- to 24-year-olds had lost their jobs by early April.<sup>9</sup> Further, the ongoing disruption to K-12 and higher education is likely to exacerbate learning loss and complicate or undo transitions from high school to college and from college into the workforce. Worst of all, at least in the short term, the newly disconnected group have no clear path to re-employment, and likely minimal assistance available to help them re-enroll in school and make up for lost learning. Anecdotal reports from Task Force members and other provider organizations suggest this dynamic is already starting to unfold, with a surge of newly OSOW young adults straining capacity even as public and philanthropic budgets come under growing pressure from the economic recession.

Although death rates for young adults diagnosed with COVID-19 are well under 1 percent, this does not mean they are unaffected. Given that the pandemic is disproportionately reaching and killing people from Black, Latinx, and other communities of color, many OSOW young adults—who disproportionately come from these same communities—are likely losing family members and members of their support systems. But the impact goes beyond mortality rates. As documented elsewhere in this report, drawing upon in-depth analysis from Measure of America and other

groups, becoming OSOW has drastic negative long-term consequences for individuals’ employability, earning power, and other life outcomes from health to home ownership.

**Since the pandemic struck, provider organizations are reporting a surge of newly OSOW young adults straining organizational capacity while the recession erodes public budgets and philanthropic giving.**

The prospective mass disconnection of young adult New Yorkers from school and employment as a result of the pandemic and social distancing measures has not drawn much attention in real-time coverage of the crisis. Even so, from the perspective of future decades it could be among the most harmful results. The Task Force will focus its attention over the next several years to coordinating effective policy responses to minimize this potential harm, and to ensure that our young adults are not overlooked as New York City and the nation start down the long road to recovery. The moment is here for New York City’s policymakers and community stakeholders to consider both how we can provide immediate support and relief for these young adults, and to strengthen our systems to improve their odds of enduring through the changing circumstances of an uncertain world.

# 2

# Young Adult Disconnection in New York City: Data, Research, and Analysis

This report discusses the OSOW population as a group, but it is important to keep in mind that every individual within that universe of nearly 117,000 young adults (as of 2018) has had a distinct life experience, faces a specific set of challenges, and requires a customized set of services and supports. “OSOW” as an umbrella term covers individuals as varied as a homeless 16-year-old without a high school diploma, an unemployed single mother living with family members, and a recent college graduate struggling to find employment.





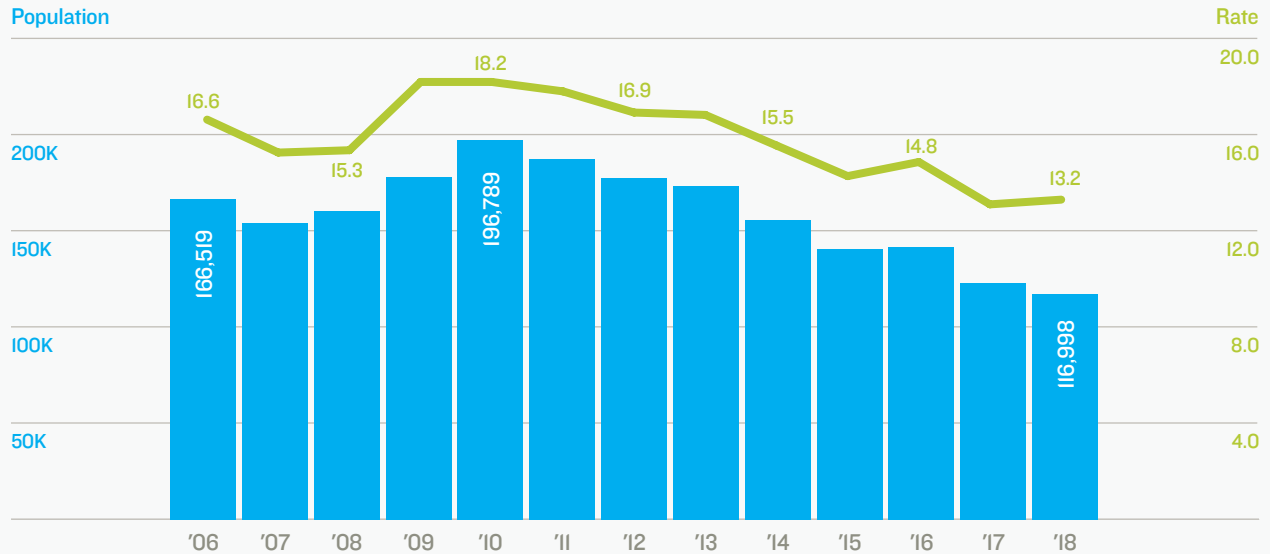
**“OSOW” as an umbrella term covers individuals as varied as a homeless 16-year-old without a high school diploma, an unemployed single mother living with family members, and a recent college graduate struggling to find employment.**

To determine how to better serve the broad spectrum of OSOW individuals—and those at risk of becoming OSOW—the Task Force sought to establish a more comprehensive understanding of their demographics and subpopulations, and their respective challenges, experiences, and aspirations. This analysis begins with a comprehensive summary of available data sources, which is then supplemented by extensive qualitative information from focus group engagements. As this section shows, the clichéd mental model of a “disconnected youth,” a high school non-completer with low skills and motivation, is wildly inaccurate. The single most representative OSOW young adult would be an unemployed 22- or 23-year-old high school graduate looking for work opportunities—someone who is interested in higher education but is stymied in these pursuits by the lack of a strong network or support system.

## **Overall Trends in OSOW Young Adults**

**FOR NEARLY A DECADE BEFORE COVID-19 STRUCK,** the number of OSOW young adults in New York City steadily fell. In 2018, 116,998 young New Yorkers between the ages of 16 and 24 were classified as OSOW—the lowest number since the City started tracking such data (see figure 2.1).<sup>10</sup> This represents a significant decrease from 2010, when the count of OSOW young adults in New York City reached a high of nearly 200,000 in the immediate aftermath of the Great Recession. On a percentage basis, the city saw a decrease in OSOW young adults from 18.2 percent in 2010 to 13.2 percent in 2018. The city’s progress is even more notable compared to national trends: The local percentage decline has outpaced the national rate, which fell from 14.7 to 11.2 percent during the same period.

**Figure 2.1: Disconnected Youth in NYC: 2006 to 2018**



Two key factors contributed to the overall decrease in the number of OSOW young adults in New York City through 2018:

**1. More students stayed in school and graduated from high school.**

- High school graduation rates have steadily risen in recent years, from a four-year graduation rate of 46.5 percent in 2005 to a high of 77.3 percent in 2019.<sup>11</sup>
- Over the same period, the dropout rate fell from 22 percent to 7.8 percent.<sup>12</sup>

**2. The growing economy created more job opportunities for young adults.**

- A sustained economic expansion beginning after the Great Recession and continuing through early 2020 accompanied the steady improvement in New York City’s high school outcomes, pushing unemployment rates among young adult workers to their lowest level in more than a decade.<sup>13</sup>

- The literal value of a job has significantly increased: The hourly minimum wage has more than doubled over the last decade (from \$7.25 in 2010 to \$15 in 2019)—drawing more young adults into the workforce.

But even after these gains, data as of 2018 found that more than one in eight young New Yorkers were OSOW (116,998 of 884,886 total young adults between the ages of 16 and 24).<sup>14</sup>

Based on educational attainment data as of 2018, the OSOW population broke down into four major subpopulations:

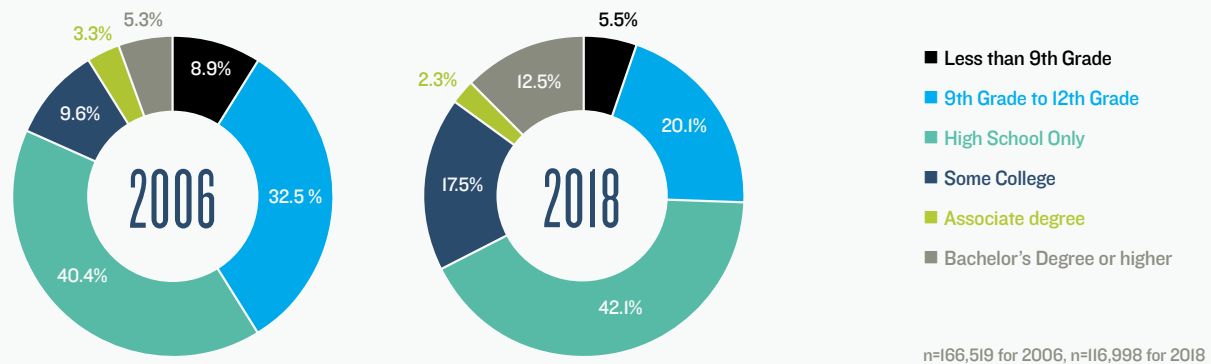
- High school non-completers (26 percent)
- High school graduates with no further education or training (42 percent)
- Some college, no degree (18 percent)
- Associate or bachelor’s degree (14 percent)

This categorization provides a valuable lens through which to begin assessing the long-term needs of the overall OSOW population. Section 3 of this report includes our analysis.

## The OSOW Population Over Time

AS THE NUMBER OF OSOW YOUNG ADULTS DECLINED over the past decade, several key characteristics of the remaining OSOW population shifted while others stubbornly remained the same.

**Figure 2.2: NYC's OSOW Population: Educational Attainment**



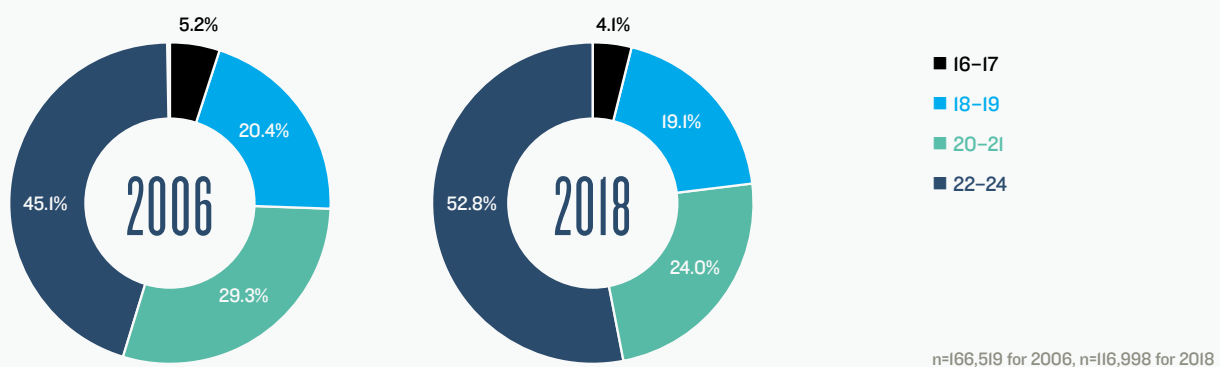
**Recent OSOW young adults have higher levels of education (see figure 2.2):**

- Nearly 75 percent of the current OSOW population in 2018 had at least a high school diploma or the equivalent, up from 60 percent in 2006.
- The share of those who had taken some college courses nearly doubled, from 9.6 percent in 2006 to 17.5 percent in 2018
- The share with a bachelor's degree more than doubled, from 5.3 percent to 12.5 percent.

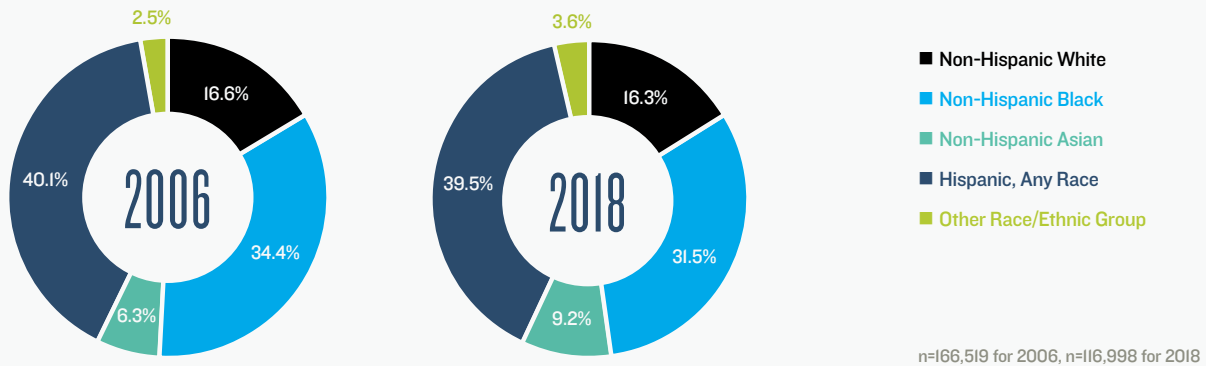
**The OSOW population is increasingly concentrated at the higher end of the 16–24 age range (see figure 2.3):**

- Over half of all OSOW young New Yorkers were 22 to 24 years old in 2018, up from 45.1 percent in 2006.
- The share of 16- to 19-year-olds in the cohort declined over this same period, from 25.6 percent to 23.2 percent.

**Figure 2.3: NYC's OSOW Population: Age**



**Figure 2.4: NYC's OSOW Population: Race/Ethnicity**



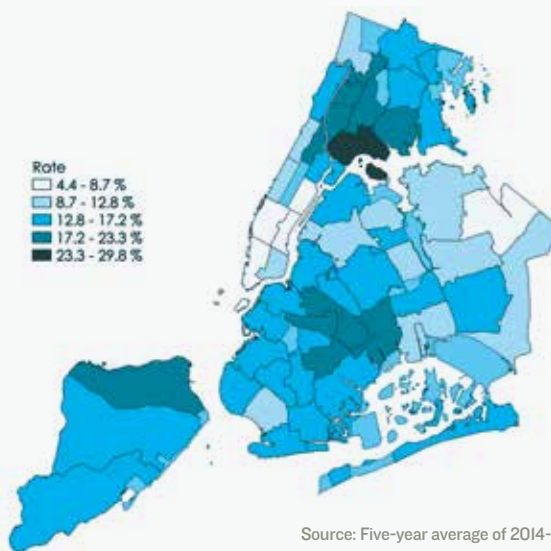
**Low-income communities and Black and Latinx populations remain over-represented (see figure 2.4):**

- Low-income communities in Brooklyn and the Bronx continued to experience high rates of disconnection. In fact, the most recent data find that 31 percent of New York City’s OSOW young adults lived in the Bronx, up from 26 percent in 2006 (see figure 2.5).<sup>15</sup>
- Latinx individuals accounted for nearly four in ten OSOW young adults (39.5 percent), followed by Black (31.5 percent), White (16.3 percent), and Asian (9.2 percent) young adults.

**OSOW young adults in New York City are largely born in the United States and live at home with their families:**

- Fewer OSOW young adults in 2018 were foreign born—just 26.5 percent in 2018 compared to 32.4 percent in 2006.
- Most OSOW young adults (73.3 percent) live with family (see figure 2.6).

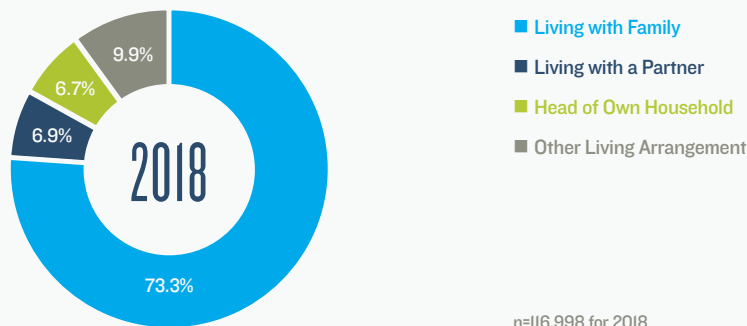
**Figure 2.5: NYC'S OSOW Population by Community District**



CD and Neighborhood Name	Rate
BX 1 & 2 Hunts Point, Longwood & Melrose	29.0%
MN 10 Central Harlem	21.6%
BX 5 Morris Heights, Fordham South & Mount Hope	21.2%
BK 16 Brownsville & Ocean Hill	21.1%
BX 9 Castle Hill, Clason Point & Parkchester	21.1%
BK 5 East New York & Starrett City	20.9%
BX 3 & 6 Belmont, Crotona Park East & East Tremont	20.8%
BK 8 Crown Heights North & Prospect Heights	19.5%
BX 7 Bedford Park, Fordham North & Norwood	18.5%
BK 3 Bedford-Stuyvesant	18.0%
BX 4 Concourse, Highbridge & Mount Eden	17.8%
SI 1 Port Richmond, Stapleton & Mariners Harbor	17.8%

Source: Five-year average of 2014-2018 American Community Survey Public Use Micro Sample as augmented by NYC Opportunity. Prepared by the Poverty Research Unit, NYC Opportunity.  
 Note: Disconnected rate is the average over the 2014-2018 period.

**Figure 2.6: NYC's OSOW Population: Living Arrangement**



While quantitative data illuminate some aspects of the OSOW population, data limitations should be taken into account. First, these data do not provide insight into the prevalence of other barriers for this population, such as justice system involvement, housing insecurity, or health challenges. Nor is there a strong understanding of how these challenges might interact and reinforce each other. The gap points to a clear need for more consistent, deeper research and analysis to inform related policy and program decisions across City agencies. Second, the data set does not explain **why** young adults may have disconnected at different points in their trajectories. This question is considered below, through analysis of findings from focus groups with young adults.

## Implications of Data Trends

**THE DATA MAKE IT CLEAR THAT AT THE END OF** the 2010s, OSOW young adults faced different—and often more complicated—challenges than their predecessors at the start of the decade. The data also hint at long-term challenges ahead, aside from the immediate crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout. For instance, OSOW young adults in recent times are more educated, which presumably improves their chances for success in a robust labor market.<sup>16</sup> Yet a high school diploma does not mean as much as it once did to employers making

**The data clearly show that more recent OSOW young adults face different—and often more complicated—challenges than in years past and hint at long-term challenges ahead.**

hiring decisions. More and more jobs require increased skills and credentials, a trend projected only to intensify in the future. Additionally, although economic growth before the pandemic pulled more young adults into the labor market, many landed part-time, low-wage jobs that did not include a career path. In that respect, the increase in overall hiring was of questionable long-term value.

In this section and the following, the Task Force assesses the implications of these shifts for programming and services. One clear theme is the need for flexible yet tailored programming that can evolve as the needs of the OSOW population changes.

## Education

The fact that so many recent OSOW young adults have higher levels of education but still find themselves disconnected highlights the importance of an appropriate response to an evolving labor market that increasingly requires different skill sets. For example, the increase in OSOW young adults who have completed high school suggests two needs:

(i) a greater emphasis on career exploration and work readiness that starts earlier in the education spectrum, and (ii) more programming that intentionally supports the transition from high school into skilled training programs which lead to stable, well-paying jobs. The increase in OSOW young adults who enrolled in, but did not complete, a college degree program also shows a clear need for a stronger focus on and approaches around college persistence, financial empowerment, and transitions into careers. Section 3 explores these ideas in greater detail.

### Employment

While the overall economic and employment data are clearly positive, they include significant flags. The surge in young adult employment was almost entirely concentrated in part-time, low-wage jobs with limited potential for advancement.<sup>17</sup> The economic downturn in the wake of the COVID-19 has eliminated many such positions, perhaps permanently, as employers cut payroll, invest in automation technologies that displace workers, or both. Sectors of the economy that employ high concentrations of less educated young adults, such as retail and food services, are particularly susceptible to automation-related layoffs. In response, relevant OSOW programs need to develop new interventions and supports for this group of marginally connected young adults.

### Race and Geography

Pre-COVID-19 data found that three-quarters of New York City's OSOW population is Black or Latinx (a broad category that stands in for ethnicity in America but includes Afro-Latinx, Indigenous, and Caribbean Spanish-speaking communities, among others),<sup>18</sup> a fact that has significant implications for efforts to better serve these groups. Throughout this discussion, it is important to acknowledge that many of the systems designed to support young people toward educational attainment and economic self-sufficiency have historically contained structural

**City agencies and their provider partners need to be clear about who their programs serve, what their needs are, and which best practices can be leveraged for success.**

biases—many of which persist today. Data show that young people of color across the United States are more likely to face harsh discipline in school<sup>19</sup> and less likely to receive serious hiring consideration from prospective employers.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, disparities in treatment at the hands of law enforcement—from harassment to fatal use of force—cast a shadow over everyday activities for countless young adults of color. In 2012, Black and Latinx students made up about two-thirds of the student body citywide but accounted for 90 percent of arrests in school.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, according to an analysis by the New York City Independent Budget Office, Black students were more likely to be suspended for longer periods of time than their non-Black counterparts for the same infraction.<sup>22</sup> Even the perception of an unfair playing field can make it psychologically easier for Latinx and Black young adults to disconnect and more difficult for them to get back on track.

These pernicious structural forces make it all the more important to tailor and prioritize OSOW prevention and re-engagement efforts. City agencies and their provider partners need to be clear about who their programs serve, what participant needs are, and which best practices can be leveraged for success. Additionally, programs and services limited by funding constraints can and should be prioritized for the groups and communities that demonstrate the highest need and risk factors.

### Personal Circumstances

The vast majority of OSOW young adults are not connected to City systems such as foster care, homeless shelters, or juvenile justice. On the one hand, this suggests they do not face the additional barriers related to those systems. On the other, it suggests

they are not formally “attached” to any City agency or partner, and therefore no straightforward mechanism exists to reach them with services. Finding, recruiting, and successfully reengaging OSOW young adults needs to be a core mission across all programming.

One strategy may lie in the data point showing that most OSOW young adults live with family members—oftentimes an older adult. This is an important factor to consider when assessing how and where to reach and support them. The Task Force found that family members are a largely untapped resource for engagement and program recruitment.

### **At Risk: Assessing Who Might Become OSOW**

A STRONG CASE CAN BE MADE THAT A LARGE proportion of young adults are at risk of disconnecting in some fashion at various points along their trajectory toward adulthood. Discussions with current and former OSOW young adults made it clear that the difference between those who stay on track and those who do not is often a matter of chance, not choice. Access to a small but timely intervention (a supportive mentor, a summer job, extra tutoring) can make all the difference.

From a policy perspective, it is more logical—and far less expensive and time-consuming—to prioritize and invest in preventing rather than remediating disconnection. With this in mind, the Task Force determined it was equally important to understand and assess the circumstances of young adults at risk of disconnecting in the near future. As Section 3 details, prevention efforts are most easily incorporated into education and other general population programming. While the process of estimating and analyzing the at-risk population is imperfect, it provides a starting point for additional research and policy development.

As a first step in that process, the Task Force set out to answer a basic question: **Who is at risk of disconnecting?** To avoid disconnection, a young adult must continuously be in school or working through the age of 24. They must complete high school; transition into higher education, training, or employment; and stay in school or at work for several years. As the demographic breakdown above suggests, the categories of at-risk 16- to 24-year-olds would include young people who are:

- Enrolled in high school but at risk of not graduating
- High school graduates who do not have a clear next step after graduation
- Enrolled in college but at risk of not graduating
- Employed, but in low-wage and high-turnover jobs

**The difference between those who stay on track and those who do not is often a matter of chance, not choice. A small but timely intervention (a supportive mentor, a summer job, extra tutoring) can make all the difference.**

Based on these categories, the Task Force sought to develop general estimates of the total pool of at-risk young New Yorkers, within the universe of nearly 885,000 16 to 24 year olds, by considering the following analyses:<sup>23</sup>

**HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION:** The total high school population of New York City is approximately 327,000 students. The most recent four-year graduation rate (reported for 2019) was 77.3 percent, with the six-year rate slightly higher at 80.5 percent. Based on these figures, a conservative assumption would find approximately 30 percent of the high school population at any given time at risk of not graduating (about 100,000 students).



Cover photo courtesy of NYC Department of Youth and Community Development



**COLLEGE COMPLETION:** On the other side of high school completion, considering CUNY’s total undergraduate enrollment of about 250,000 and its system-wide graduation rate of about 55 percent would suggest that about 112,000 students currently enrolled will leave without a degree.

**EMPLOYMENT:** Data suggest that a near majority of young adults who are working but not enrolled in school are employed in part-time roles within low-wage, high-turnover industries—about another 113,000 young adults.

Combining these three categories yields a conservative estimate of 325,000 marginally connected New Yorkers, ages 16 to 24, who were at risk of becoming OSOW before the spring of 2020, when COVID-19 upended the school year and triggered massive job losses (see figure 2.7).

To be clear, leaving school (with or without a degree) or losing a single job does not automatically mean that an individual will be relegated to OSOW status over a long period of time. Some young adults who do not finish high school or college will enter the workforce and some who separate from jobs will likely return to education. Yet the larger point remains that New York City—like many communities across the country—has a large population of young

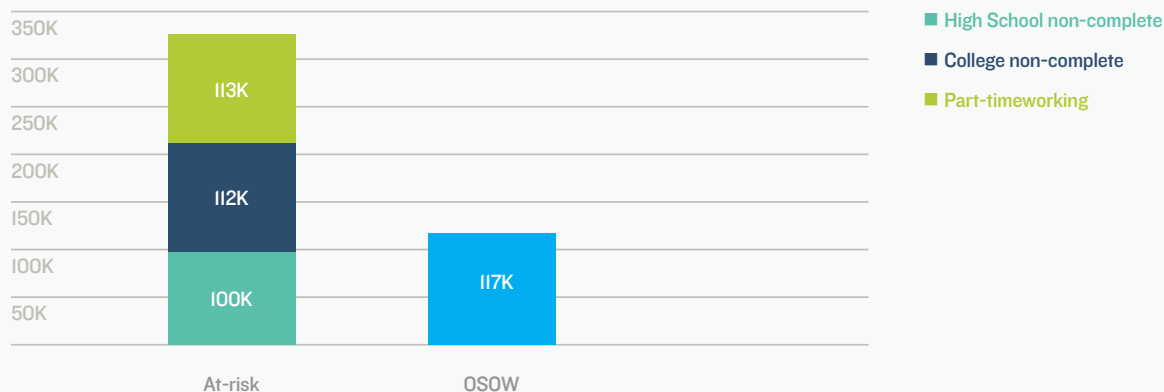
adults who were precariously close to becoming OSOW even before COVID-19. In order to continue to drive down OSOW numbers in the longer term, a sharper focus on prevention must be at the core of the City’s OSOW strategy.

## Why Young People Disconnect

**THE LIMITS OF THE QUANTITATIVE DATA MADE IT** all the more important that the Task Force invest time in capturing and analyzing the real-life experiences of OSOW New Yorkers and those who work with and support them. As previously indicated, the reasons young adults become disconnected are as varied and complicated as the young adults themselves. In an effort to better understand those different reasons and begin to inform new strategies, the Task Force convened focus groups with both young OSOW New Yorkers and staff from provider organizations.

One overarching theme that emerged is the lack of supportive adults at home, in school, and/or at work. Simply put, young adults felt they did not have a caring adult who could provide support, advice, and resources to help them overcome their various educational, financial, and personal challenges.

**Figure 2.7: NYC's OSOW vs At-risk Population**



## **Many OSOW young adults felt they did not have a caring adult who could provide support, advice, and resources to help them overcome educational, financial, and personal challenges.**

They drew a direct connection between their current OSOW circumstances and the absence of a strong support system over the years.

These conversations produced several other common themes for the Task Force to consider:

### **Poor Experiences in High School**

For many OSOW young adults with a high school degree or less, school experiences did not provide adequate attention or support. They either left school without a degree or graduated without a clear plan for employment or postsecondary studies. One recent report notes that New York City high school students with higher average household incomes perceived that their school focused on personal growth, and preparation for the future in addition to graduation. By contrast, students at schools that mostly enrolled youth from lower-income families had “a singular emphasis on graduation.”<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, conversations with current and former OSOW young adults<sup>27</sup> that informed this report suggest that as students, they did not feel seen or heard by the adults in their schools. Moreover, they saw no connection between the content of

their classes and the larger world that awaited them. They bemoaned an excessive focus on testing, which contributed to their disengagement, and a lack of attention to career opportunities or postsecondary planning. Their earlier high school experiences contrasted sharply with what they subsequently found in programs designed to reconnect them to school and/or work, which provided a more supportive environment and a focus on work readiness.<sup>28</sup> These academic challenges were more pronounced among students with additional barriers, such as limited English proficiency and mental health challenges like depression or anxiety.

The abrupt shift to remote learning as a result of COVID-19 presents significant additional challenges for students who were already at risk of not completing high school. The elimination of in-person classes has drastically reduced connections to teachers and peers, and access to other supports. Worse, students might not have a home environment where they can concentrate on schoolwork, or the needed technology and reliable connectivity to do so. As New York City contemplates the uncertainties of public education during a pandemic, educators and administrators must account for these concerns.

### Barriers to Completing College

Among OSOW young adults who enrolled in college but did not complete degrees, many were not academically, organizationally, or financially prepared.

As indicated above, as of 2018 the majority of New York City's OSOW young adults (74 percent) had graduated high school. Within that group, a growing number (18 percent) enrolled in college but did not complete degree programs (see figure 2.2). The fact that these young adults started college but did not secure a degree often puts them at a long-term disadvantage. While some find work after leaving school, most jobs available to them without additional training offer low pay, little security, and dim prospects for advancement. Many are also burdened by debt after taking out loans to pay for college.

The focus groups and additional research suggest a number of reasons these students are encountering barriers and dropping out:

- Their academic skills were inadequate for college-level work. While the Department of Education's (DOE) "college readiness" rate has risen steadily over recent years, it is still notably lower than the share of high school graduates who enroll at CUNY. The rate measures the percentage of graduates who meet minimum requirements for proficiency in English and Mathematics that are able to take credit-bearing courses without remediation.<sup>29</sup> The measure of readiness is therefore limited; it does not capture whether a young adult is well prepared for the challenges of a much less structured learning environment. For example, among community college students who required remedial coursework, only about 28 percent ended up earning a degree within eight years.<sup>30</sup> (Beyond academics, many students in this situation exhaust their limited financial resources while enrolling in the required non-credit classes they need in order to catch up.)
- Economic need is another major driver of the college non-completion crisis. Most CUNY

students come from low-income families and struggle to meet everyday expenses while in school.<sup>31</sup> A majority of them also hold jobs, and many find it difficult to sustain both roles.<sup>32</sup> In 2018, nearly a third of CUNY undergraduates attended school part-time,<sup>33</sup> putting them at a particular disadvantage since part-time students do not qualify for the New York State Tuition Assistance Program. Immediate economic needs like food and rent take priority over long-term educational investment. When circumstances force students to choose between school and work, most conclude their only option is to keep their job and discontinue their education. Young people who subsequently

**Part-time college students are particularly at risk of dropping out for economic reasons since they do not qualify for the New York State Tuition Assistance Program. In 2018, nearly a third of CUNY undergrads attended school part-time.**

lose their jobs or must take on additional family responsibilities are at higher risk of becoming OSOW for an extended period.

- A final factor preventing degree completion is difficulty in navigating systems of higher education. Students who are ill informed on how to choose courses that lead toward graduation—or where to go for academic and financial guidance—are at greater risk of dropping out. As personal, financial, and academic challenges pile up, they may feel isolated and think their only option is to remove themselves from school.

These factors contribute to an all-too-common scenario: Students enter college unprepared, spend their limited resources on classes that do not lead toward a degree, and are forced to leave when the funds run out. They have nothing to show for their

experience except student debt. As COVID-19 forced colleges in New York and elsewhere to utilize a purely online educational model, polling conducted in the spring of 2020 found that the crisis exacerbated many challenges. Large shares of students reported significant concerns around finances; academically keeping up; and connection to professors, classmates, and other needed supports.<sup>34</sup>

### Challenges with job retention

Many found the line between employment and joblessness uncomfortably thin even before the COVID-19 pandemic wiped out tens of millions of jobs nationwide—a disproportionate share of which were in sectors that employ large numbers of young adults. Although clear data are lacking on this point, conversations with OSOW young adults indicate that many, if not most, held jobs in the past but faced challenges that contributed to a loss of employment. Some challenges were outside the workplace, including a lack of transportation, childcare, housing, and/or good health.

Other challenges manifested themselves in the workplace. Young people pointed to issues of race, class, and gender as barriers to keeping a job, and expressed a sense that many employers did not provide an opportunity to prove they could succeed.<sup>35</sup> Other individuals asserted that employers had mistreated them, citing their being asked to work long hours, not receiving adequate sick time, or even having tips or wages stolen. For their part, employers the Task Force spoke with for this report acknowledged that young adults bring dynamism, a fresh perspective, and technical skills, and can help companies meet goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Employers suggested that CBO providers often struggle to understand their priorities and culture. They further noted that managers typically are not able to spend large amounts of time coaching workers who have limited skills and/or those who might have issues stemming from trauma.<sup>36</sup>

CBOs, employers, and young adults themselves all stressed that young adults need help building the skills that contribute to job retention and advancement. These “soft skills,” “executive skills,” or “durable skills” include problem-solving, teamwork and communication, and self-advocacy. While many employment and educational programs include some elements, there clearly is a need to expand and intensify trainings that build skills of this type.

### Lack of strong support systems and guidance

Finally, the absence of a strong social network can exacerbate the challenges faced by young adults at risk of becoming OSOW and increase the likelihood of disconnection.

First-generation college students, for example, are less likely to have someone in their lives that can provide guidance throughout the college application process. Once enrolled, many young adults lack an engaged adult—at home or at school—who can advise them on how to advocate for changes to class schedules or how to balance work and school. They are less likely to get the informal reinforcement that otherwise may come from a parent or older sibling, reminding them to apply for financial aid or a paid internship. In short, they are likely missing the necessary encouragement to keep going in school with an eye toward the long-term payoff.

Similarly, a young jobseeker from a low-income “community may not have the benefit of connections to employers. They are less likely to have regular “exposure to careers they may want to pursue. As one young adult put it, “I never had anyone who could help me figure out how to get there. How are you going to be successful when there’s nobody around who hasn’t been struggling?”<sup>37</sup>

### The Strengths of OSOW Young People

Discussions about OSOW young adults tend to focus on the challenges that contributed to their

**The absence of a strong social network exacerbates every other challenge, from financial issues to mental health. As one young adult put it, “How are you going to be successful when there’s nobody around who hasn’t been struggling?”**

disconnection, whether poor educational experiences, weak support networks, or specific barriers such as justice system involvement. Policymakers naturally zero in on the barriers that need to be removed or mitigated. It is equally instructive, however, to identify and analyze the real talents and positive attributes of these young New Yorkers.

In discussions with service providers, employers, and current and former OSOW individuals, a number of clear themes emerged:<sup>38</sup>

- By virtue of their circumstances, many OSOW young adults have become resilient by necessity as they navigate formal and informal support systems. Their instinctive resilience can be successfully applied in many work and/or school contexts.
- Many expressed a strong interest in entrepreneurship, exhibiting creativity, independence, and a willingness to work hard.
- These young adults are eager to learn the skills and attributes needed for success. They are also looking for a sense of community and belonging. In the words of one provider, OSOW young adults are “thirsty for hope.”

With appropriate and sustained support, OSOW young adults can leverage their strengths to achieve their aspirations: opportunities to learn and grow,

connections with caring and supportive adults, getting on track for early work experiences that build toward a career, identifying and pursuing personal and career interests, and advancing to self-sufficiency. Providing them with greater voice and agency in the public discourse about their peers is part of that support. If we wish to go beyond numbers and theory to build systems that promote success, it is vital to provide OSOW young adults, those at risk of becoming OSOW, and members of their families and support systems real opportunities to speak and be heard.

Discussions with young adults made it clear that they consider being “out of school and out of work” a temporary circumstance rather than a permanent identity. Policymakers and others should consider that current circumstance along a spectrum of progress toward educational achievement, career success and economic security. Although that spectrum is sequential and timely for most, others might experience it as disjointed and winding. Relevant policy and program interventions—on both the prevention and re-engagement fronts—need to be long-term, holistic, and flexible. They must meet the changing circumstances of the diverse young adults they serve. The next section explores these issues in greater detail.

# 3

## The OSOW Service Ecosystem

To establish a shared understanding of the OSOW population, the Task Force focused on distilling the OSOW universe as of 2018—the most recent data available—and outlining the categories of young adults that fall under this umbrella term. The previous section of this report painted a picture of the OSOW population, including its diversity and wide variety of education and workforce needs, as well as how the population changed over the decade-plus before the coronavirus. It also spotlighted young people who are “at risk” of becoming OSOW in the near future, emphasizing the need to prioritize prevention strategies. The report now turns to the City’s programmatic efforts to serve both groups.

# **The OSOW system currently lacks a shared framework for identifying, organizing, analyzing, and connecting the large set of relevant programs and services.**

New York City's portfolio of OSOW programs and services is as varied and nuanced as the population it serves, and it presents a range of strengths and challenges. On the positive side, New York City has a wide range of education and workforce training programs designed to serve young adults across a broad spectrum of needs. Some programs are directly operated by nearly a dozen City agencies, while others are administered in collaboration with a large portfolio of contracted community-based provider organizations. The field collectively brings deep capacity, expertise, and commitment to serving this high-priority population. There is a shared recognition across stakeholders that constant innovation and improvement is needed to continue addressing OSOW young adults. A number of highly promising interagency collaborations, along with more intentional and robust program models, have emerged in recent years. Several are detailed below.

The broad nature of the OSOW population combined with the lack of a uniform OSOW strategy across City agencies has yielded a patchwork of programs

that can feel disjointed and unfocused. For every program intentionally designed to reconnect OSOW young adults with school or the workforce, another offers a valuable resource, such as high school equivalency (HSE) classes or job training, but does not specifically target OSOW individuals and has not been designed or implemented with them in mind. In fact, most of the programs and services that reach OSOW young adults—and those at risk of becoming OSOW—fall into the latter category. They offer needed services but lack intentionality, focus, and connection to other resources, inherently limiting the benefit for participants.

The absence of focus on the needs of OSOW young New Yorkers in the programs that many in this population turn to reflects a figurative hole at the center of the ecosystem. With most defined groups that New York City has identified as having distinct needs and challenges, such as immigrants, people with disabilities, or homeless individuals, it is clear which entity within city government is primarily responsible for supporting them. But OSOW status

is defined by the negative characteristic of not being attached to school or work: by definition, these individuals are not connected to a public system. Thus, there is no parallel entity to the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Mayor’s Office of People with Disabilities, or the Department of Homeless Services responsible for OSOW issues. This explains why so few programs that serve OSOW individuals incorporate the full breadth of services necessary to address the obstacles they face.

The Task Force found that the OSOW system currently lacks a shared framework for identifying, organizing, analyzing, and connecting the large set of relevant programs and services. In an effort to begin filling this gap, this section presents a summary, analysis, and organization of key City-funded programs. The Task Force has identified specific programs as the most valuable interventions for OSOW young adults and those at risk of becoming OSOW. To identify where gaps remain, the analysis is largely focused on organizing programs according to the specific OSOW populations they serve. It also includes a summary of necessary program improvements, informed by research and engagement with providers, employers, philanthropic funders, and young adults themselves.<sup>39</sup>

## A Framework for Organizing OSOW Programs

**THIS ANALYSIS CONSIDERS TWO PRIMARY PROGRAMMING CATEGORIES:**

**PREVENTION PROGRAMS** serving young adults currently in school and/or employed, but at risk of disconnecting from school or work without a strong support system

**RE-ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS** assisting current OSOW young adults with education or employment-related services to help them reconnect to school or work

While the distinction between prevention and re-engagement is useful in considering programs and resources, there is often substantial overlap and nuance. For example, many larger workforce and job development programs are equipped to serve clients in both categories. Depending on participant circumstances, a program may help one client remain connected to school or work (prevention), and help another “disconnected” client get back on track with school or employment (re-engagement).

Within the two categories, programs align to various subpopulations:

**Figure 3.1**

Prevention	Re-engagement
High school students at risk of not earning a degree or equivalency	High school, non-completers
High school graduates who are marginally employed	High school graduates who are not in the workforce
College students at risk of not completing a program	College, non-completers
College graduates who are marginally employed	College graduates, who are not in the workforce



# Prevention

**THE TASK FORCE HAS PLACED PROGRAMS IN** the prevention category if they serve participants currently enrolled in high school or college, or currently employed, but at risk of disconnecting from these systems. There is strong evidence of specific risk factors at three distinct junctures:

**HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION/TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION OR EMPLOYMENT.** Risk factors include falling behind grade level, poverty, limited English proficiency, disability, chronic absenteeism, justice system involvement, and homelessness.<sup>40</sup>

**COLLEGE COMPLETION.** Barriers include financial burdens and inability to access sufficient financial aid, inadequate academic preparation, and too little advisement support to navigate through the many academic choices and complicated college systems.<sup>41</sup>

**JOB RETENTION.** Challenges include limited work history, absence of a strong support system, and non-work barriers such as a long commute, family responsibilities, or health challenges.

Prevention programs typically have an explicit focus on addressing these factors to support one or more of the following objectives:

- High school completion
- Transition to postsecondary education or training
- College persistence and completion
- Job retention

The most effective prevention models contain common elements. First, they offer a supportive environment in which participants feel seen and heard. Program staff often includes peers and near-peers with life experiences similar to program participants’—a boost to credibility. Second, they offer support services that may not seem connected to the primary program goal but must be in place for participants to succeed—such as transportation or childcare, without which a participant may not be able to complete their HSE. Finally, they emphasize the big picture—

not only achievement of a program milestone such as a certification or job placement, but how the accomplishment supports the participant toward their true goals of career-track work and economic security. In so doing, strong prevention programs help participants build durable skills, such as teamwork, self-regulation, and critical thinking. Social and emotional learning is another hallmark of effective programming. It represents the ways in which young adults become aware and in control of their emotions; set and work toward achieving goals; demonstrate and act with empathy; build and keep healthy relationships; and make good decisions.

**The heart of a comprehensive OSOW prevention strategy is education—specifically, New York City’s “public talent pipeline” of K-12 schools run by the DOE and the 25 CUNY campuses.**

The heart of a comprehensive OSOW prevention strategy is education—specifically, New York City’s “public talent pipeline” of K-12 schools run by the DOE and the 25 CUNY campuses. Over the last 15 years the DOE has achieved steadily rising high school graduation rates and declining dropout rates, in part through prevention efforts that identify students at highest risk of leaving without a degree. Successful initiatives like ACCESS schools, Pathways to Graduation, Young Adult Borough Centers, and the School of Cooperative Technical Education offer flexible, personalized, and supportive educational experiences for those facing barriers to high school completion. Transfer schools hold particular promise for career-focused educational models. They owe their clear, real-world relevance to small class sizes, greater program flexibility, and partnerships with CBOs that provide support services.

In the postsecondary world, CUNY has similarly emphasized improving student retention and com-

**CareerReady NYC is well positioned to serve as the City's OSOW prevention strategy. By emphasizing the connections between school and work experiences, CareerReady NYC will help young New Yorkers reach adulthood with the education, credentials, work experience, and skills needed to pursue their career goals.**

pletion, with CUNY ASAP (Accelerated Success in Associate Programs) perhaps the most visible and successful among multiple initiatives. With its focus on providing academic, social, and financial supports, ASAP spotlights how to better bolster college program retention and degree completion. The program has gained national recognition for its excellent results. The related ACE (Accelerate, Complete, and Engage) initiative utilizes a similar model to improve four-year baccalaureate completion rates at CUNY senior colleges. The College Now program, a collaboration of DOE and CUNY, also provides high school students with the opportunity to earn college credit. These efforts offer an advantage toward degree completion and provide a taste of what it takes to succeed in higher education. College Now participants complete both associate and bachelor's degrees at significantly higher rates than nonparticipants.<sup>42</sup>

To build upon these gains will require a more intentional and coordinated approach that leverages other relevant City programs to support prevention efforts. Fortunately, a plan is in place for this effort: in July 2019, the Center for Youth Employment (CYE)

released CareerReady NYC, the City's first youth employment strategic plan. CareerReady NYC aligns traditional academics with career exploration, work readiness, and personal development toward the goal of preparing young adults for careers with sustainable wages.<sup>43</sup> The strategy cuts across prevention subcategories, reinforcing persistence and completion in high school and postsecondary programs, and improving employment prospects by emphasizing career exploration and work readiness.

The Task Force finds that CareerReady NYC is well positioned to serve as the City's OSOW prevention strategy. By emphasizing the connections between school and work experiences, the program helps young New Yorkers reach adulthood with the education, credentials, work experience, and skills needed to pursue their career goals. The approach recognizes that students are more likely to persist in and complete school experiences they find engaging and relevant to their future. To that end, the initiative includes new efforts to build career awareness at an early age and connect awareness to school experiences—from middle school to postsecondary education settings.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL:** Exploring Futures, a pilot program launched in 2019 at six New York City middle schools, allows City-funded afterschool programs to expose students to career options and pathways through online career exploration activities, college and workplace site visits, and project-based learning. CYE and DOE are internally evaluating the program and will use findings to consider expanded options over the next several years.

**HIGH SCHOOL:** Administered by the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) created a specialized CareerReady SYEP track that links summer work experience with the school year. The model focuses on career exploration and work readiness, and targets schools across the five boroughs with the most significant economic need. The program served over 6,300 high school students in 2019. That number is projected to grow over the next several years.

**POSTSECONDARY:** Through CUNY Career Success, CUNY has launched a series of campus- and system-level projects and partnerships focused on providing students with valuable work experience in an effort to boost post-graduation employment prospects. One overall goal is to double the rate of CUNY students with paid internships while in school. The current rate is 10.4 percent.<sup>44</sup>

In each effort, CareerReady NYC looks to leverage and reorient existing resources and programming to better serve a prevention purpose. Strategies to achieve this goal include prioritizing high-need populations with high risk factors; customizing the general program model to better meet a population's needs and interests; and linking previously disparate initiatives so clients receive a series of interventions. The leveraging tactic highlights how the City can utilize existing resources to best serve the population of young adults at risk of becoming disconnected.

While high school and college completion is the most important aspect of a prevention strategy, and good work is well underway, a fully effective approach

must also focus on keeping non-college young people employed. Unfortunately, these components of a prevention strategy are considerably less developed than in the education sphere. More must be done to identify and scale effective services for high school graduates who are not attending college, and have yet to find stable work. Another key question is how best to help young working adults in high-turnover, low-paying roles to stay on the job and advance over time. Here, too, some promising models have emerged, including several new apprenticeship initiatives in key economic sectors such as transportation and technology;<sup>45</sup> multi-provider collaborations to support first-generation college-goers with academic advisement and social services; and efforts to support low-wage workers. Two of these initiatives, the Bronx Opportunity Network and Youth Advancing in the Workplace, are described below.

### Program Coverage: Prevention

As previously noted, even before the onset of COVID-19 the Task Force estimated the “at-risk universe” to be approximately 325,000 OSOW young New Yorkers. This number divides into three roughly equal categories: high school students not on track to graduate, CUNY students in danger of not completing their degree programs, and low-wage workers in high turnover jobs. In terms of programming, the challenge with high school and college persistence and completion is quality, not capacity. Stark disparities remain in graduation rates, driven by the resources students can access beyond the classroom environment. CareerReady NYC attempts to render opportunities more equal by raising system-wide standards and directing resources where they are most needed. Capacity is a much greater concern in other prevention subcategories. Few programs exist to support non-college high school graduates as they enter the workforce or to help low-wage workers remain on the job and move ahead over time.

**Figure 3.2: Prevention Programs FY19 Snapshot**

AGENCY	PROGRAM NAME	POPULATION SERVED	PROGRAM TYPE	PROGRAM LENGTH	CLIENTS SERVED
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (CUNY)	ACE (NYC Opportunity)	Pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree at John Jay or Lehman College	Education Support	Multi-Year	282
	ASAP	Pursuing an Associate Degree at a CUNY community college	Education Support	Multi-Year	25,507
	College Discovery	College-bound high school graduate or High School Equivalency diploma recipient	Education Support	Multi-Year	2,223
	College Now	High school juniors and seniors in NYC public schools, home-school students, or students with disabilities with private school tuition supported by the DOE	Education	3 – 6 Months	23,000
	CUNY Start	CUNY-bound students who have not passed CUNY Assessment Tests	Education	3 – 6 Months	2,648
	SEEK	College-bound high school graduate or High School Equivalency diploma recipient	Education Support	Multi-Year	8,477
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DISTRICT 79 (D79)	Co-op Tech	17 to 21 years old High school juniors and seniors in NYC public schools, or post-grads Must have a minimum of 21 credits	Workforce Education	6 Months – 1 Year	1,422
	Learning to Work	16 to 21 years old Overage, undercredited high school students in a DOE Transfer School Minimum of 1 year of high school, 10 academic credits, and one Regents	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	12,599
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DYCD)	COMPASS High	High school freshmen and sophomores	Workforce Education Support	6 Months – 1 Year	1,491
	Learn and Earn	16 to 21 years old High school juniors and seniors in NYC schools Low-income Foster care Runaway and homeless	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	1,583
	SYEP: D75	14 to 21 years old Enrolled in a District 75 school	Workforce	1 – 3 Months	1,346
	SYEP: Emerging Leaders	14 to 24 years old Runaway and homeless Foster care ACS prevention Justice-involved	Workforce	1 – 3 Months	3,176
	SYEP: MAP to Success	14 to 24 years old NYCHA resident	Workforce	1 – 3 Months	3,033

## Best Practice Program Models: Prevention

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### High School/Equivalency Completion



**Who's Served:** DOE Students in Transfer Schools



**Best Practices:** Sequenced services, contextualized education, strong data management



**Funding Type:** Private (leveraging public investments through DOE schools)

The **TRANSFER 2 CAREER COLLABORATIVE**, a partnership of New Visions for Public Schools and JobsFirstNYC working with 12 transfer high schools within the NYC DOE, has embraced the idea that real-world relevance fuels scholastic achievement.<sup>46</sup> Targeting over-age and under-credited students at greatest risk of becoming OSOW, the partnership is developing a three-stage sequence of early career awareness and exploration, advanced career development through skills embedded in school, and sector-specific bridges to postsecondary education and training. New Visions and JobsFirstNYC are working with participating schools to support shared learning and to build data tools that track progress and capture student outcomes.

### College Persistence and Completion



**Who's Served:** CUNY students at three community colleges






**Best Practices:** Multi-provider partnership, dual focus on academic and life skills



**Funding Type:** Private (leveraging public investments in CUNY)




Since 2011, a group of seven Bronx CBOs has operated as the **BRONX OPPORTUNITY NETWORK (BON)** to support student enrollment, persistence, and completion at three CUNY campuses: Bronx Community College, Hostos Community College, and Borough of Manhattan Community College. An initiative of the intermediary JobsFirstNYC,<sup>47</sup> BON serves low-income students who have earned their HSE or other alternative credentials. The network helps them build basic academic skills, adjust to the less structured educational experience of college, navigate institutions, and access needed supports.<sup>48</sup> BON participants—most of whom are Latinx or African-American and the first in their family to pursue higher education—have shown stronger rates of graduation and ongoing enrollment compared to overall CUNY figures and to a demographically and academically similar comparison group of enrollees at the same three colleges.

## High School Completion/ Postsecondary Transition

-  **Who's Served:** High school juniors and seniors
-  **Best Practices:** Collaboration with school staff, extended service period, customized activity mix
-  **Funding Type:** Public (federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act [WIOA])

DYCD's **LEARN & EARN** program supports low-income high school juniors and seniors with services that help them graduate high school, develop career awareness, improve work readiness, and explore postsecondary education options. Staff from provider organizations closely works with school-based educators, counselors, and administrators to offer academic support, tie activities to academic learning, and provide appropriate and engaging summer work experiences. Programs engage and retain participants for up to three years, providing stipends and incentives for participation and completion of program activities, along with a range of supports to meet personal and academic needs. Services include targeted academic assistance and tutoring, as well as SAT and Regents exam preparation. Learn & Earn offers opportunities for participants to socialize, learn life skills such as financial literacy, engage in small group workshops, and interact with program alumni acting as mentors. The program has delivered strong results: Available data for the three most recent cohorts found that over 85 percent of program "exiters" enrolled in college, and almost 10 percent have entered the workforce.

## Workforce Retention

-  **Who's Served:** All workers in low-wage positions, with a focus on 18-24 year olds
-  **Best Practices:** Holistic approach to service; delivers value to employers through strong ROI
-  **Funding Type:** Private

In 2020, the nonprofit organization Seedco began to transition its highly regarded Youth Advancing in the Workplace (YAW) program<sup>49</sup> to a broader initiative called **CAREER ADVANCEMENT, RETENTION, AND EMPOWERMENT (CARE)**. Where YAW had provided job retention and advancement services exclusively to newly employed young adults aged 18 to 24, including many who had been OSOW, working in the food service field, CARE is serving workers of all ages. Like YAW, CARE aims to address the related challenges of low-wage workers looking to stay on the job and advance over time, and small businesses wishing to reduce the costs associated with high worker turnover. Program case managers help participants overcome challenges both within and outside of the workplace, providing individualized services including career coaching and planning, additional skills training, financial advisement, benefits counseling, and referrals for further education. At the same time, Seedco works closely with partnering employers, advising them on business practices that support worker retention and advancement. Employer motivation is high: a recent project Seedco conducted with YAW employer partners and the nonprofit Social Finance to quantify the cost of worker turnover found an average turnover cost to employers of about \$3,300 per instance.<sup>50</sup> As Seedco continues to recruit new employer partners for CARE, it is giving priority to women- and minority-owned businesses in New York City.

## Re-engagement

The Task Force placed into the “re-engagement” category those programs that serve current OSOW young adults with the purpose of reconnecting them with school and/or employment. To recap, subcategories of OSOW young adults include:

- High school non-completers
- High school graduates who are neither working nor in postsecondary education
- College non-completers
- College graduates who are not employed or actively looking for work

While a lag in reliable data means policymakers may not know the exact dimensions of a COVID-19-driven surge in the number of OSOW New Yorkers until well after the pandemic ends, we can be sure

**Successful re-engagement programs offer a robust mix of services, including opportunities for paid work; an emphasis on youth development; a mix of education, training, and employment-facing services; comprehensive support services; and strong follow-up beyond the end of a program.**

that between academic disruptions and devastating spikes in joblessness, the number will sharply rise. At least for the short- to medium-term, re-engagement efforts are much more important than may have been the case when New York was in the midst of a decade-long decline in disconnection.

A Task Force review of national research found that successful re-engagement programs offer a rich and robust mix of services. They often feature opportunities for paid work; a strong emphasis on youth development; a mix of education, training, and

employment-facing services; comprehensive support services; and ongoing engagement beyond a program's formal end.<sup>51</sup> Re-engagement programs in New York City typically offer HSE education, connections to higher education or training, and/or job training and placement. Like prevention programs, some re-engagement programs have been designed for the OSOW population while other more general programs lack specific outreach and tailored services for OSOW young adults.

Programs with a specific focus on OSOW young adults often provide a sequential set of education and job training services. Under these models—many of which take place over six months or more—an unemployed young adult without a high school diploma can enroll in a program and begin taking HSE classes. Once they build basic education skills and secure their HSE, depending on their interests and abilities they move on to higher education or a specific job training program. Finally, to secure an internship or permanent position they receive job placement services, including resume and interview preparation, credentials attainment, and connection to employers. DYCD's new Advance & Earn program features tiered services, comprehensive supports, and a higher price point. It is a prime example of the “full service” program model. (More details on Advance & Earn can be found on page 40.)

In addition to integrated education and training components, successful re-engagement programs place strong emphasis on creating a supportive and culturally relevant environment. Through close and sustained engagement with each participant, program staff members—often young adults once themselves OSOW—gradually build trust, assess needs, and create a comprehensive plan of action. Independent analysis backs up the importance of cultural relevance. The Department of Probation's Arches Transformative Mentoring Program and its “credible messenger” model, for example, has shown powerful impact in reducing recidivism, a key step in getting individuals on a path to steady employment.<sup>52</sup>

Lastly, conversations between young adults and the Task Force highlighted the importance of a holistic approach that emphasizes building durable skills and social capital. When asked what allowed them to succeed in an OSOW program, young adults mentioned guidance around college enrollment, benefits eligibility, and connections to employment. They stressed how program staff taught them to network and build relationships in the workplace.<sup>53</sup> Successful re-engagement programs not only get clients into schools or jobs, they cultivate the self-sufficiency and advocacy skills young adults need to persist and succeed on their own.

In other conversations with young adults, providers, and employers, the Task Force surfaced several clear areas for operational and/or strategy adjustment that would improve the quality of re-engagement programs. For the most part, the following recommendations apply to contracted CBO providers.

**MORE TIME.** Given the nature of the challenges many OSOW young adults face, providers need more time to plan and implement the necessary interventions and supports to successfully invest in clients. Most City contracts limit programs to six months or less—rarely enough time to address the challenges that have built up over years, let alone the time to provide ongoing support through key transition junctures such as from HSE completion into higher education or from job training into employment.

**MORE FLEXIBILITY.** Providers similarly advocated for flexibility in contracts so they could offer more comprehensive support services to clients whose needs may shift in a matter of months. Most contracts do not permit funds to be used to address barriers such as transportation or childcare.

**RECRUITMENT SUPPORT.** Even with significant numbers of OSOW young adults, programs often run into challenges recruiting participants who meet specific criteria. Some stakeholders have proposed that the City play a lead role in creating and implementing a citywide recruitment strategy, along with a mechanism that “sorts” applicants into the most relevant program.

**INCENTIVES FOR PARTNERSHIPS.** In most cases, OSOW provider organizations work independently and their contracts with City agencies do not incentivize partnerships. Given the diverse needs of participants (and provider areas of specialization), it may be useful to reward partnerships that leverage and combine multiple provider assets and skills.

### Program Coverage: Re-engagement

The biggest challenge with the City’s current portfolio of re-engagement programs, particularly those that explicitly serve OSOW young adults, is a lack of adequate capacity compared to need even prior to COVID-19 and the subsequent wave of job losses. For more than a decade the City has engaged in this area of policy by developing a series of program models. The most recent, Advance & Earn, was informed by a number of evaluations and a rigorous, multi-stakeholder redesign process. The program offers great promise for strong results but is considerably more expensive than the programs it replaces. Significant scaling is therefore a challenge. (See page 40 for further details.)

A pragmatic and cost-effective approach would be to tweak the many programs configured to serve the wider public that OSOW young adults also use to reconnect to school or work. These include adult education programs that help participants complete an HSE or get back on track for a college degree, and workforce programs that offer job training or employment placement. All OSOW outcomes could improve by building in greater flexibility to extend the time of service, bolstering follow-up and creating stronger incentives for referrals and partnerships. Accounting for the needs of OSOW young adults should be the program model’s premise rather than an afterthought. Additional analysis and research is required to identify which programs are best suited for reconsideration and which changes would yield the strongest results.






**Figure 3.3: Re-engagement Programs FY19 Snapshot**

AGENCY	PROGRAM NAME	POPULATION SERVED	PROGRAM TYPE	PROGRAM LENGTH	CLIENTS SERVED
<b>CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (CUNY)</b>	<b>CUNY Fatherhood Academy</b> (Young Men's Initiative)	18 to 30 years old Young parents	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	173
<b>DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DISTRICT 79 (D79)</b>	<b>Office of Adult and Continuing Education</b>	21 or older English language learners Low literacy CTE Students	Education	3 – 6 Months	2,956
	<b>Pathways to Graduation</b>	English language learners Low literacy Dropout	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	7,975
<b>DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION (DOP)</b>	<b>Justice Plus (Works Plus)</b>	16 to 30 years old Referred through Cure Violence	Workforce Support	6 Months – 1 Year	284
	<b>YouthWrap</b>	14 to 26 years old On probation	Workforce	3 – 6 Months	370
<b>DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH &amp; COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DYCD)</b>	<b>Adult Literacy</b>	16 or Older English language learners Low literacy Out-of-school, out-of-work	Education	3 – 6 Months	2,583
	<b>Advance &amp; Earn (NYC Opportunity, Young Men's Initiative)</b>	16 to 24 years old Out-of-school, out-of-work	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	N/A
	<b>SYEP: Cure Violence</b>	16 to 24 years old Justice-Involved	Workforce	1 – 3 Months	282
	<b>Train &amp; Earn</b>	16 to 24 years old Out-of-school, out-of-work	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	1,562
	<b>YAIP Plus</b>	16 to 24 years old Out-of-school, out-of-work Does not have an Associate or Bachelor's degree Justice-involved Foster care	Workforce Education Support	6 Months – 1 Year	110
<b>HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION (HRA)</b>	<b>Jobs-Plus (Young Men's Initiative)</b>	16 or older NYCHA resident	Workforce	6 Months – 1 Year	3,774
	<b>Work Progress Program (NYC Opportunity)</b>	16 to 24 years old Low-income	Workforce	6 Months – 1 Year	1,821
	<b>Youth Pathways</b>	18 to 24 years old Low-income	Workforce Education Support	6 Months – 1 Year	9,382
<b>MAYOR'S OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE (MOCJ)</b>	<b>Jails to Jobs</b>	16 or older Justice-involved	Workforce Support	6 Months – 1 Year	371




## Best Practice Program Models: Re-engagement

### Low education/limited work experience

-  **Who's Served:** Young adults not in school or in the workforce
-  **Best Practices:** Braided services, provider flexibility, robust funding
-  **Funding Type:** Public

**ADVANCE & EARN**, a new DYCD program that began offering services to New York City's OSOW population in 2019, incorporates more than a decade of experience and lessons learned from the provider community and participants. Similar to settlement houses, the model aligns traditionally separate services like basic skills development, HSE, and placement with higher education, advanced training, and employment. It emphasizes the foundational skills valued across multiple sectors, embeds career readiness concepts and skills throughout sequential services, and offers a wider range of work and internship opportunities. It also delivers stronger support and services for participants making key transitions, such as from secondary to postsecondary education or into employment. Importantly, Advance & Earn gives providers more flexibility in setting program schedules, subcontracting services that contracted providers cannot directly deliver, and offering stronger case management.<sup>54</sup> It offers three primary levels of services, from basic skills through advanced training. Each level incorporates work readiness, college and career exploration, and wraparound services, as well as financial compensation for young adults through participation stipends and paid internships.

### Low education/limited work experience

-  **Who's Served:** Young parents ages 16–24
-  **Best Practices:** Braided services, childcare navigator
-  **Funding Type:** Public

Funded through a federal grant awarded in 2017, DYCD's **PARENT EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM (PEP)** connects OSOW young parents to work and/or education. Managed across two sites in Brooklyn by Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, PEP features an extended service period of up to two years. The longer time frame enables clients to participate in more work experiences while taking the time they need to work toward an HSE and occupational credentials, and to access supportive services. One key service is access to a childcare navigator—an individual who supports participants in finding subsidized or no-cost slots close to where they live or work. Program evaluation is underway and early results have been positive: A significant number of PEP participants earned their HSE diploma in less than six months, and nearly all have received an industry-recognized occupational credential.



Photo courtesy of NYC Department of Youth and Community Development

## Workforce training, placement, and retention



**Who's Served:** Jobseekers, including many young adults



**Best Practices:** Multi-provider partnership, employer feedback mechanisms



**Funding Type:** Private

A collaboration of eight CBOs on Manhattan's Lower East Side, the **LOWER EAST SIDE EMPLOYMENT NETWORK (LESEN)** has emerged as a citywide model for partnership among organizations that offer workforce services. LESEN works closely with Community Board 3 and JobsFirstNYC, an intermediary organization that provides technical assistance and partnership coordination, to help connect community

residents with nearby work opportunities. Consolidated efforts allow member organizations to source from a bigger pool of candidates and fill larger job orders than could be independently achieved, and each has seen significant improvements in annual outcomes. The benefits for employers include a single point of contact through LESEN rather than a set of job developers across multiple organizations, as well as access to local candidates who reflect the community and have a shorter commute to work, making them more reliable.<sup>55</sup> Employers also offer feedback on needed hard skills and workplace attributes, which the provider network can quickly and effectively incorporate into their training offerings. LESEN's success has inspired similar collaborations in Staten Island, the Bronx, and other neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

# 4

## Recommendations

As this report details, New York City has a strong interest in improving how well it supports its young adults toward career success and economic security. Although this motivation holds for young New Yorkers in every circumstance, it perhaps is most compelling for OSOW or at risk individuals—and is most urgent at a moment when COVID-19 has knocked hundreds of thousands of additional young adults off track for successful career transitions. While the substantial decline in the number of OSOW young adults over recent years is encouraging, much important work remains to be done.

## Recommendations

The bulk of the work falls into two categories: (i) keeping young adults who currently are in school or at work on track for educational attainment and career advancement, and (ii) ensuring that resources are sufficient and well deployed in response to the inevitable surge of OSOW individuals as New York City absorbs the impact of a post-COVID-19 recession. In terms of broad goals, policymakers should prioritize the following:

- Emphasizing career exploration and work readiness, from middle school through postsecondary education
- Continuing to improve the high school completion rate
- Creating and supporting pathways for high school graduates not immediately going on to college that directly place them in training and employment opportunities
- Improving college retention and completion rates
- Supporting the tens of thousands of young adults working in low-wage positions with job retention and career development services. Even those who are not OSOW may have a precarious attachment to the world of work.

Based on the progress made in the decade before the pandemic, we can do all of these things. The New York City DOE achieved historic improvements in the high school graduation rate over the last two decades, raising its four-year graduation rate to 77 percent in 2019. CUNY has put in place highly promising initiatives to help students persist and succeed in higher education, and is newly focused on employment and career outcomes for students and graduates. The NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) has made hundreds of thousands of job placements during the past 15 years, building and leveraging strong credibility with employers of all sizes across the five boroughs. The same level of focus and sustained commitment toward reducing OSOW incidence among young adults can yield similarly strong results.

In this final section, the Task Force offers nine recommendations for how the City can stem the tide of newly OSOW young New Yorkers by reattaching them to education or the workforce, and how it can resume recent progress once the COVID-19 crisis subsides. The recommendations are premised upon three underlying ideas. First, beyond New York's response to an economic crisis unfolding in the wake of the pandemic, the most impactful long-term strategies to drive down the number of OSOW young adults and bolster their prospects for achieving economic security fall under the category of "prevention." This means sustaining recent dramatic improvements in high school graduation rates and extending those gains into the postsecondary realm, as well as providing our young adults the tools and supports they need to successfully navigate higher education and the labor market. Second, knowing that the OSOW number will never be zero, incorporating proven best practices into reconnection programs that help OSOW young adults get back on track toward educational or employment goals, and balancing long-term supports with immediate assistance. Third and finally, the systems and programs that serve OSOW young adults must be accountable and holistic.

## Re-engagement Recommendations

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### **I. Prioritize programs and services that reconnect young New Yorkers to education, employment, and training as part of the City's COVID-19 response.**

Repairing the damage done by the pandemic to public health and the economy will be the primary mission of New York City's government for the next several years. As noted throughout this report, although young adults have been less likely to

## Recommendations

contract COVID-19 and are far less likely to lose their lives to the disease, the pandemic nonetheless has caused almost incalculable harm to this group. In addition to job losses that have pushed an unknown yet enormous number of young adults into the OSOW ranks, disruptions to daily life have eroded educational engagement through the shift to remote learning in K–12 and college. Devastated public budgets and philanthropic endowments have badly harmed the nonprofit sector’s capacity to support young adults. While these problems have gotten relatively little attention throughout the immediate public health crisis, they must be front and center as City leaders plot a course back to health and prosperity.

### Action steps:

- Prioritize employment opportunities for young adults, including newly dislocated workers and new high school and college graduates, in programs related to pandemic recovery, including “contact tracers” and other public works supported by federal stimulus.
- Engage the private sector in creating new employment options related to apprenticeships where young adults can learn skills, earn some income, build professional networks, and remain engaged in the labor market—even in a part-time role.
- Address educational disruptions by helping young adults participate in paid near-peer group mentoring, hiring displaced young adults to help provide academic and postsecondary planning guidance to younger children in their communities.

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## 2. Improve and enhance program quality and outcomes by establishing clear standards and goals across City agencies for serving this population.

As Section 3 detailed, the Task Force identified a number of guiding premises for re-engagement programs that serve OSOW young adults:

- Longer duration programs that offer enough time and funding for participants to access needed services
- Flexible and holistic approaches to service delivery
- An emphasis on career planning, including both educational attainment and work opportunities
- A thoughtful approach to partnership that makes sense for all parties and expands total capacity to meet participants’ diverse needs

Public and private funders should keep in mind these premises as they create concept papers, issue requests for proposals (RFPs), and consider funding decisions around programs that serve OSOW young adults. For their part, the provider community and intermediary groups should highlight the importance of these program elements, including the value of longer service horizons as the labor market begins its long recovery from the pandemic.

City policy should incorporate stronger incentives for cross-provider collaboration, particularly for programs that serve OSOW young adults but are not specifically designed to do so, such as DYCD’s adult literacy programs and the Workforce Career Center network. These collaborations might be “horizontal,” as evidenced by the Lower East Side Employment Network (described on page 41), where partnering organizations provide the same or closely related services to build collective capacity. Others may be “vertical,” with different organizations providing complementary activities and a more complete menu of services, such as recruitment and training, placement and retention, or wraparound supports.

### Action steps:

- Ensure that concept papers and grant parameters for OSOW initiatives incorporate key elements common to successful programs.
- Create incentives for partnership and collaboration, in both program proposals (such as credit awarded for proposals that show strong complementary partnerships) and in operations (through supplemental funding for programs that deliver on this promise).

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### 3. Ensure that young adults' input and leadership are centered across the portfolio of programs to meet the needs of a diverse, evolving OSOW population.

During the course of its deliberations, the Task Force embraced a mantra frequently expressed over the years by historically underrepresented populations: “Nothing about us, without us.” All the data and expertise we collectively can bring to bear on the particulars of OSOW policy are of limited value if we exclude the voices and perspectives of young adults. The experience of the provider community clearly shows that the most effective organizations are those that consistently incorporate participant input. The City should embrace a similar approach, enlisting young New Yorkers as thought partners and advocates around outreach, programming, and continuous improvement in service efforts. This is of particular importance given the substantial differences between the current OSOW population and the cohort from a decade ago.

Many current structures exist to convene and activate young adults, including those who are OSOW. Rather than creating new structures, the City should build upon those already most highly regarded and utilized by young adults. The clear intention is to actively engage hard-to-reach young adults and a full cross-section of the OSOW population.

A related priority is strengthening support systems for these young adults. This can make all the difference when they face challenges that threaten to disconnect them from school or work. This goal will feel particularly relevant as the city comes through a period of forced social isolation followed by severe economic dislocation. As Section 2 noted, the majority of OSOW young adults live with family (see figure 2.6); many who do not reside with friends or in other group settings. With the right structure, these networks can bolster OSOW young adults with every kind of tool available—from emotional support to employment search assistance.

### Action steps:

- Launch a public engagement campaign to mobilize OSOW young adults and communicate the supports available to serve them, including educational enrollment and supports; work-based learning and employment opportunities; and assistance addressing other barriers.
- Recruit and support OSOW young adults in an effort to communicate their aspirations, challenges, needs, and successes to policymakers and the wider public on an ongoing basis.
- Support program providers to engage not only OSOW individuals but the people in their lives who can help them move forward.

## Prevention Recommendations

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### 4. Integrate career awareness and readiness into middle school and high school to ensure young New Yorkers are prepared for long-term careers.

An educational experience that shows the full spectrum of possibilities for a rewarding career is New York City's most powerful tool to prevent young

## Recommendations

adults from becoming OSOW. Educational experience guides individuals toward goal setting that aligns with their values and ambitions, and provides the tools, resources, and supports to achieve those goals. With CareerReady NYC, the City has developed an approach that more effectively integrates traditional education, career exploration, and work experience, and develops the skills and attributes that help young adults flourish in the world of work.

The objective of CareerReady NYC is to help young adults and their families make better-informed, intentional choices regarding education and work—from where to attend high school to what to do for summer enrichment; which postsecondary education and training to pursue; and what type of employment to seek. The program’s explicit focus on career readiness represents a sharp departure from the traditional approach of waiting until college to even consider those choices. It offers promise for stronger high school engagement and improved college persistence and completion. These outcomes are more important than ever given the dismal hiring environment we are likely to see over the next several years.

Beyond the educational aspect, the approach has two crucial elements: (i) “executive skills” development, such as problem-solving, communication, time management, and sound decision-making, and (ii) the ability to successfully navigate the world of work, including honing the technical skills employers demand and understanding how to pursue, secure, and keep a job. These skill sets can and should reinforce each other. From a project-based learning experience or an internship to a full-time position, each opportunity helps young adults better understand their strengths, interests, and areas for improvement, and continuously helps them build and replenish social capital.

### Action steps:

- Prioritize implementation of CareerReady NYC at middle school, high school, and postsecondary levels.

- Offer training and technical support for providers to more effectively deliver “executive skills” and work readiness skill sets in different program contexts.

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## 5. Support programs to improve college retention and completion, along with the transition into the workforce after graduation.

As Section 2 discussed, an important and somewhat surprising Task Force finding was the large share of OSOW young adults as of 2018 with “some college” (education beyond high school but short of a degree) or an associate or bachelor’s degree (see figure 2.2). This data point provides grounds for concern and hope. The concern is that although more New Yorkers enroll in college than ever before, far too many leave without earning a degree and often are burdened by debt. On the positive side, higher educational attainment generally correlates with better labor market outcomes; even a fairly modest improvement in degree completion rates could have a significant positive impact on the city’s economy over the long term. Facing the prospect of a difficult labor market for years to come and a pending wave of automation that will eliminate many of the low-wage jobs young adults previously filled, now is the time to communicate that college remains the best path to long-term career success and to put in place supports to ease students along that path.

In recent years, the City University of New York increasingly has focused on addressing this challenge. Its campuses have partnered with CBOs and other stakeholders to launch the Network for College Success (N4CS), a coalition working to support student persistence and completion. N4CS helps CBOs support students by facilitating access to student-level data as well as CUNY information and policies, important assets for groups such as the Bronx Opportunity Network (see page 35) that have proven effective in helping students navigate the academic and cultural aspects of higher education.



## Recommendations

A related consideration is the need of many CUNY students to hold jobs while enrolled, whether to support themselves or to contribute to household expenses. As Section 2 noted, the majority of CUNY students work, and many face tension between their educational and employment obligations. Most campus-level career services offices do not have the resources or contacts to help undergraduates find jobs that are remunerative, related to their fields of study, or both. The City should consider ways to help fill this gap and support students in balancing school and work.

### Action steps:

- Work with CUNY and private sector partners to launch a high-profile public campaign that encourages college enrollment, including re-engagement of former students looking to complete degree programs.
- Partner with CUNY and the Network for College Success to better understand why students leave before degree completion, and develop initiatives to support educational persistence and completion.
- Support campuses and CBOs working to help students balance the obligations of school and work, including through more robust campus-based career services.

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## 6. Prioritize services for job retention and advancement for young New Yorkers in low-wage, part-time, and/or gig employment.

Even before COVID-19, economic sectors that employ young adults who had not completed college, including those at highest risk of becoming OSOW, typically saw high rates of job turnover. One recent analysis found the annual rate of turnover across the accommodation, food, and retail sectors to be 64 percent. Challenges outside of work, such as unreliable transportation or childcare obligations, have been a big

driver of high turnover. With few expectations that workers will stick around, many employers worsen the situation with unfriendly staff scheduling policies and inadequate supervisor training. The consequences of high turnover are severe, not only for newly unemployed young adults but for their employers. A 2019 study found that costs for each incidence of turnover among small- to medium-sized employers in New York City and Memphis averaged \$3,300.

The City should support programming between employers, individually or working in collaboration, and providers to deliver services that improve retention outcomes for both young adult workers and employers. Career Advancement, Retention, and Empowerment (previously known as Youth Advancing in the Workplace), further detailed on page 36 of Section 3, is one model that has shown strong early results in New York City over the past five years. Nationally, similar efforts to bolster retention among workers of all ages have shown great promise.<sup>59</sup> Cost savings to employers could create a strong incentive for cross-sector partnerships.

### Action steps:

- Proactively engage employers and intermediaries in sectors that hire young adults who have not completed college to raise their awareness of, and suggest changes to reduce, high turnover costs.
- Explore partnerships with CBOs and provider collaborations—and employers—to offer retention services for newly hired young adult workers.

### System Recommendations

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#### **7. Invest in research and evaluation to establish best practices for serving OSOW young adults and to foster seamless connectivity between programs that serve this population.**

As previously discussed, programs and providers that serve OSOW and at-risk young adults rarely have access to the full range of resources and supports to meet all their potential needs. Nor do policymakers and service providers have the full range of information required to assess program performance and make adjustments to program models. The City can take action by developing and following through on a research agenda to better understand the population served and how well different interventions are meeting their needs. Similarly, information resources should be compiled and made accessible to providers and the community at large. This may include inventories of programs available to serve OSOW young adults in different circumstances, including location and contact information, service eligibility criteria, and program specifics.

The City should develop stronger program infrastructure to complement these resources. Building a common application protocol for programs and a comprehensive referral system would represent important advances in supporting better service delivery. To strengthen both case management and our understanding of what is working and what is not, the City additionally should determine how best to connect relevant data systems of the many entities that serve OSOW young adults. An initiative such as this would keep track of young New Yorkers as they move across programs, helping policymakers and funders to more fully assess program impact.

#### **Action steps:**

- Conduct and publicly share research on key issues pertaining to OSOW young adults and

how best to serve them, including:

- Labor market information pertaining to current job openings and general employer needs
- Ongoing research to fill current knowledge gaps about the population of OSOW young New Yorkers, such as health status and past incidence of justice system involvement
- An annual estimate of the OSOW population made publicly available through the Mayor's Management Report or other sources
- Develop a consistent program application protocol and comprehensive referral system across publicly supported education and workforce programs that serve OSOW young adults.

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#### **8. Create a robust and centralized system for employer engagement to facilitate relationships between employers, providers, and young New Yorkers.**

In the abstract, employers looking to diversify their workforce, implement succession plans, and recruit creative, tech-savvy younger workers into their organizations should be highly motivated to support and ultimately hire young New Yorkers. But employers often find the landscape of nonprofit providers, government programs, and agencies confusing and frustrating, and are generally inclined to seek easier ways to fill hiring needs. For their part, most providers understand that the best way to support a young adult is to connect them to a job that matches their interests. Yet providers and schools do not always perceive employers as central to their mission. They may not have the time, the in-house expertise, or the organizational capacity to fully grasp the objectives and frustrations of potential employer partners.

The City can do more to bring providers and employers together. Such efforts would support stronger mutual understanding and, most importantly, comprehensive

## Recommendations

and sustained exposure to and engagement with the world of work for young adults in New York City. The long-term objective should be to create stronger and better-supported paths to steady employment for those not on the postsecondary educational path following high school graduation.

### Action steps:

- Develop tools and resources that help providers and employers interact beyond job placements—from site visits to resume development to mock interviews.
- Support schools and service delivery organizations to better understand employer needs and more effectively engage them on the full spectrum of work-based learning activities and job placements.
- Facilitate work-based learning opportunities at every point along the educational pathway from middle school through college, including information sessions, site visits, project-based learning, and internships—giving young adults a better understanding of workplace culture and their own interests, while helping employers see the full value of young talent.

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### 9. Centralize and specify responsibility for coordinating OSOW services within the Mayor’s Office.

New York City has long mirrored the problem of “disconnected youth” by itself operating a disconnected system of services to assist them. Notwithstanding pockets of excellence within the program portfolio, the dramatic decline in the number of OSOW young adults from 2010 through the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was more the product of education system gains and overall economic growth than the fruit of intentional strategy. Now that the OSOW population is poised to sharply increase, the City must address the longstanding issues that have beset this area of policy: an absence of clear accountability, connective

infrastructure, and a guiding mission and vision. Only then can we meaningfully help the young New Yorkers who lack the support networks, social capital, and other resources to access the necessary education and employment-related experiences that build resiliency in the face of adversity.

Designating a primary point of contact may be the single most important step the City can take to develop more coherent and effective programs and policies around OSOW young adults. Creating a “center of gravity” within the public sector around OSOW will help the City build subsystems, coordinate services, share resources, define best practices, and otherwise improve the performance of publicly supported programs. It would concurrently give stakeholders outside government—employers, service providers, private philanthropy, young adults, and their families—a clear point of contact for assistance, information, and engagement. The result would increase our collective capacity to more deeply engage with questions related to the challenges facing OSOW young adults. With a new mayor due to take office in January 2022, it would also be a way to preserve continuity and focus through the pending change of administration.

### Action step:

- Designate one office or individual within City government the primary responsibility for OSOW policy, including public reporting, programs and services coordination, internal advocacy for resources, and systems infrastructure development.



Photo courtesy of NYC Department of Youth and Community Development

**The number of OSOW individuals tells us little about what should be our real goal: to support an ever-growing share of young New Yorkers toward career success and economic security.**

PUBLICATION OF THIS REPORT CONCLUDES THE first stage of the work of the Disconnected Youth Task Force. Through its meetings, engagements with stakeholder groups, research, and deliberation, the Task Force has sought a deeper understanding both of the causes and circumstances that impel young people to detach from education and the labor market, and the factors that can help them get back on track. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic transformed the education and employment landscape and put countless additional young New Yorkers at risk of disconnecting from school and work, the decrease in the number of OSOW individuals was a somewhat misleading measure of the City's collective performance. In fact, the number itself tells us less than it may seem about the real goal in this area of policy: to support an ever-growing share of our young adults toward career success and economic security.

By statute, the Task Force will remain in effect through early 2022, issuing updates on its progress during that period. Over the next year, the Task Force will work with stakeholders in City government and beyond to determine resource needs, milestones, and key indicators to implement our nine recommendations, including how collectively to best respond to the societal impact of COVID-19. By building systems that are smarter and more compassionate, more capacious and better connected, we can continue New York City's progress toward a more equitable and durable prosperity.

# Appendix A: Program Inventory

AGENCY	PROGRAM NAME	POPULATION SERVED	PROGRAM STRATEGY	PROGRAM TYPE	PROGRAM LENGTH	CLIENTS SERVED FY19
ACS	Driver's Education	18 to 21 years old Foster care	Prevention	Workforce	6 Months – 1 Year	200
	Fair Futures	6th Grade through 26 years old Foster care ACS prevention Justice-involved	Prevention	Workforce Education Support	6 Months – 1 Year	N/A
	FirstStar	14 to 26 years old Foster care	Prevention	Education Support	6 Months – 1 Year	25
	Fostering College Success Initiative	17 to 24 years old Foster care	Prevention	Education Support	6 Months – 1 Year	119
	Mentored Internships	16 to 21 years old Foster care	Prevention	Workforce	6 Months – 1 Year	260
	NYC Summer College Internship Program	17 to 24 years old Foster care	Prevention	Workforce	1 – 3 Months	35
	YA WORC	13 to 24 years old Foster care ACS pPrevention Justice-involved	Prevention	Workforce	6 Months – 1 Year	60
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (CUNY)	ACE (NYC Opportunity)	Pursuing a Bachelor's Degree at John Jay or Lehman College	Prevention	Education Support	Multi-Year	282
	ASAP	Pursuing an Associate Degree at a CUNY Community College	Prevention	Education Support	Multi-Year	25,507
	College Discovery	College-bound high school graduate or High School Equivalency diploma recipient	Prevention	Education Support	Multi-Year	2,223
	College Now	High school juniors and seniors in nyc public schools, home-school students, or students with disabilities with private school tuition supported by the DOE	Prevention	Education	3 – 6 Months	23,000
	CUNY Fatherhood Academy (Young Men's Initiative)	18 to 30 years old Young parents	Re-engagement	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	173
	CUNY Start	CUNY-bound students who have not passed CUNY Assessment Tests	Prevention	Education	3 – 6 Months	2,648†
	SEEK	College-bound high school graduate or High School Equivalency diploma recipient	Prevention	Education Support	Multi-Year	8,477

## Appendix A: Program Inventory

AGENCY	PROGRAM NAME	POPULATION SERVED	PROGRAM STRATEGY	PROGRAM TYPE	PROGRAM LENGTH	CLIENTS SERVED FY19
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DISTRICT 79 (D79)	Alternate Learning Center	Students with suspension	Prevention	Education Support	Multi-Year	6,556
	Co-op Tech	17 to 21 years old High school juniors and seniors in NYC public schools, or post-grads; must have a minimum of 21 credits	Prevention	Workforce Education	6 Months – 1 Year	1,422
	East River Academy	16 to 21 years old Mandated detention or placement, justice-involved	Prevention	Education	6 Months – 1 Year	847
	Judith S. Kaye High School	English language learners Over-age, undercredited Dropout	Prevention	Education	Multi-Year	179
	Learning to Work	16 to 21 years old Overage, undercredited high school students in a DOE Transfer School; Minimum of 1 year of high school, 10 academic credits, and one Regents	Prevention	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	12,599‡
	LYFE	Young parents enrolled in a DOE high school or HSE program	Prevention	Support	Multi-Year	701
	Office of Adult and Continuing Education	21 or Older English language learners Low literacy CTE students	Re-engagement	Education	3 – 6 Months	2,956
	Passages Academy	Mandated detention or placement, justice-involved	Prevention	Education Support	3 – 6 Months	787
	Pathways to Graduation	English language learners Low literacy Dropout	Re-engagement	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	7,975
	ReStart Academy	13 to 21 years old Justice-involved Substance Abuse	Prevention	Education Support	Multi-Year	1,342
Transfer School	16 to 21 years old English language learners Overage, undercredited Dropout	Prevention	Education	Multi-Year	10,767	
Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs)	17.5 to 21 years old Overage, undercredited Adult responsibilities Minimum of 17 credits	Prevention	Education	Multi-Year	6,442	

† Data is not age-specific.

‡ Data reflects only those served in Transfers Schools.

## Appendix A: Program Inventory

AGENCY	PROGRAM NAME	POPULATION SERVED	PROGRAM STRATEGY	PROGRAM TYPE	PROGRAM LENGTH	CLIENTS SERVED FY19
<b>DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION (DOP)</b>	<b>AIM</b> (Young Men's Initiative)	13 to 18 years old On probation	Re-engagement	Support	6 Months – 1 Year	68
	<b>Arches</b>	16 to 24 years old On probation	Re-engagement	Support	6 Months – 1 Year	252
	<b>ECHOES</b>	14 to 18 years old On probation	Re-engagement	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	16
	<b>Justice Plus (Works Plus)</b>	16 to 30 years old Referred through Cure Violence	Re-engagement	Workforce Support	6 Months – 1 Year	284
	<b>Next STEPS</b>	16 to 24 years old NYCHA resident High school diploma or equivalency but no college	Re-engagement	Support	6 Months – 1 Year	247
	<b>Youth WRAP</b>	14 to 26 years old On probation	Re-engagement	Workforce	3 – 6 Months	370
<b>DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH &amp; COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DYCD)</b>	<b>Adult Literacy</b>	16 or older English language learners low literacy Out-of-school, out-of-work	Re-engagement	Education	3 – 6 Months	2,583†
	<b>Advance &amp; Earn</b> (NYC Opportunity) (Young Men's Initiative)	16 to 24 years old Out-of-school, out-of-work	Re-engagement	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	N/A‡
	<b>COMPASS High</b>	High school freshmen and sophomores	Prevention	Workforce Education Support	6 Months – 1 Year	1,491

† Data includes clients older than 24.

‡ New program for FY20



## Appendix A: Program Inventory

AGENCY	PROGRAM NAME	POPULATION SERVED	PROGRAM STRATEGY	PROGRAM TYPE	PROGRAM LENGTH	CLIENTS SERVED FY19
<b>DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH &amp; COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DYCD)</b>	<b>Learn and Earn</b>	16 to 21 years old High school juniors and seniors in NYC schools Low-income Foster care Runaway and homeless	Prevention	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	1,583
	<b>Parent Empowerment Program</b>	16 to 24 years old Young parents Out-of-school, out-of-work	Re-engagement	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	50
	<b>Summer Youth Employment Program</b>	14 to 24 years old	General	Workforce	1 – 3 Months	74,354
	<b>SYEP: Cure Violence</b>	16 to 24 years old Justice-involved	Re-engagement	Workforce	1 – 3 Months	282
	<b>SYEP: D75</b>	14 to 21 years old Enrolled in a District 75 school	Prevention	Workforce	1 – 3 Months	1,346
	<b>SYEP: Emerging Leaders</b>	14 to 24 years old Runaway and homeless Foster care ACS prevention Justice-involved	Prevention	Workforce	1 – 3 Months	3,176
	<b>SYEP: MAP to Success</b>	14 to 24 years old NYCHA resident	Prevention	Workforce	1 – 3 Months	3,033
	<b>Train &amp; Earn</b>	16 to 24 years old Out-of-school, out-of-work	Re-engagement	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	1,562
	<b>Unity Works</b>	17 to 24 years old LGBTQI+ Runaway and homeless Out-of-school, out-of-work	Re-engagement	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	N/A
	<b>Work, Learn, &amp; Grow</b>	16 to 21 years old High school students in NYC schools, previously in SYEP	General	Workforce	6 Months – 1 Year	4,350
<b>YAIP Plus</b>	16 to 24 years old Out-of-school, out-of-work Does not have an Associate or Bachelor's degree Justice-involved Foster care	Re-engagement	Workforce Education Support	6 Months – 1 Year	110	

## Appendix A: Program Inventory

AGENCY	PROGRAM NAME	POPULATION SERVED	PROGRAM STRATEGY	PROGRAM TYPE	PROGRAM LENGTH	CLIENTS SERVED FY19
<b>HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION (HRA)</b>	<b>CUNY EDGE</b>	16 to 24 years old Low-income	Prevention	Workforce Education Support	Multi-Year	4,722
	<b>Jobs-Plus (Young Men's Initiative)</b>	16 or older NYCHA resident	Re-engagement	Workforce	6 Months – 1 Year	3,774
	<b>Work Progress Program (NYC Opportunity)</b>	16 to 24 years old Low-income	Re-engagement	Workforce	6 Months – 1 Year	1,821
	<b>Youth Pathways</b>	18 to 24 years old Low-income	Re-engagement	Workforce Education Support	6 Months – 1 Year	9,382
<b>MAYOR'S OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE (MOCJ)</b>	<b>Jails to Jobs</b>	16 or older Justice-involved	Re-engagement	Workforce Support	6 Months – 1 Year	371
<b>MAYOR'S OFFICE OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (MOPD)</b>	<b>ATWORK</b>	16 or older People with disabilities	Re-engagement	Workforce Support	6 Months – 1 Year	95
<b>NYC PARKS</b>	<b>Green Applied Projects for Parks (GAPP) (NYC Opportunity)</b>	18 to 24 years old Justice-involved	Re-engagement	Workforce	6 Months – 1 Year	88
<b>SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES (SBS)</b>	<b>Bridge to Tech</b>	18 or older Out-of-school, out-of-work	Re-engagement	Education Workforce	1 – 3 Months	23
	<b>Employment Works</b>	18 or older Justice-involved	Re-engagement	Workforce Support	N/A	38
	<b>Medical Assistant Training</b>	18 or older Out-of-school, out-of-work	Re-engagement	Education Workforce	6 Months – 1 Year	29
	<b>NYACH Ready for Healthcare Initiative</b>	CTE students	Prevention	Workforce Education	Multi-Year	300
	<b>Occupational Workshops</b>	18 to 24 years old	Re-engagement	Workforce Education	1 – 3 Months	N/A†
	<b>Workforce1</b>	18 or older	General	Workforce	N/A	30,096

† Data includes clients older than 24.

‡ New program for FY20

# Appendix B: About the Disconnected Youth Task Force (DYTF)

## Member List

**ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ACS)**  
Raymond Singleton

**BROTHERHOOD-SISTER SOL**  
Cidra Sebastien

**MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY(NYC OPPORTUNITY)**  
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**CENTER FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT (CYE)**  
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**CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK (CUNY)**  
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**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DOE)**  
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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & MENTAL HYGIENE (DOHMH)**  
Jane Bedell (2019)  
Deborah O'Uhuru (2020)

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES (DHS)**  
Jerry Bruno

**DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION (DOP)**  
Lily Shapiro

**DEPARTMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES (SBS)**  
Lucinda Glover

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Daphne Montanez (2020)

**DEPUTY MAYOR FOR STRATEGIC POLICY INITIATIVES**  
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**FORTUNE SOCIETY**  
Stanley Richards

**GRAHAM WINDHAM**  
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**HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION (HRA)**  
Sarah Haas (2019)  
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Jordan Stockdale (2020)

**YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE**  
Natalie Camacho

**YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE**  
Djibril Kaba

## Working Group Members Prevention

**ACS**  
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**CUNY**  
Cass Conrad

**CYE**  
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**CYE**  
Zain Khan

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**JOBSFIRSTNYC**  
Kevin Stump

**NYC OPPORTUNITY**  
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**YMI**  
Natalia Diaz

**YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE**  
Natalie Camacho

## Working Group Members Re-Engagement

**BROTHERHOOD-SISTER SOL**  
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Beth Spektor

**CYE**  
Leah Hebert

**DHS**  
Jerry Bruno

**DOE**  
Chelsea Henderson

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Mike McCrae

**DOP**  
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**DYCD**  
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Tesandra Cohen

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Gregory Brender

**WKDEV**  
Amy Peterson

**YMI**  
Charissa Townsend

## Appendix B: About the Disconnected Youth Task Force (DYTF)

### Meeting List

<b>FEBRUARY 1, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF KICKOFF MEETING</b> DYTF Members
<b>MARCH 4, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF FULL MEETING</b> DYTF Members
<b>MARCH 5, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF FOCUS GROUP</b> Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow Youth Participants
<b>MARCH 25, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF WORKING GROUP MEETING</b> Prevention Working Group
<b>MARCH 26, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF WORKING GROUP MEETING</b> Re-Engagement Working Group
<b>APRIL 16, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF FOCUS GROUP</b> Youth Service Providers
<b>APRIL 29, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF FULL MEETING</b> DYTF Members and Working Group Members
<b>MAY 7, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF WORKING GROUP MEETING</b> Prevention Working Group
<b>MAY 9, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF WORKING GROUP MEETING</b> Re-Engagement Working Group
<b>MAY 28, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF FULL MEETING</b> DYTF Members and Working Group Members
<b>JUNE 19, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF FOCUS GROUP</b> Youth Development Funders
<b>JULY 16, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF FULL MEETING</b> DYTF Members
<b>AUGUST 22, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF FOCUS GROUP</b> Youth Employers
<b>AUGUST 27, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF FOCUS GROUP</b> Youth Service Providers at United Neighborhood Houses
<b>OCTOBER 11, 2019</b>	<b>DYTF FOCUS GROUP</b> Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow Youth Participants

# Endnotes

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2. Kristin Lewis and Rebecca Gluskin, "Two Futures: The Economic Case for Keeping Youth on Track." Measure of America, 2018. Online at <https://measureofamerica.org/psid/>
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4. Clive R. Belfield, Henry M. Levin, and Rachel Rosen, "The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth." 2012. Online at: [https://aspencommunitysolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Economic\\_Value\\_of\\_Opportunity\\_Youth\\_Report.pdf](https://aspencommunitysolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Economic_Value_of_Opportunity_Youth_Report.pdf)
5. Ibid.
6. Lewis and Gluskin.
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8. Kristin Lewis, "A Decade Undone: Youth Disconnection in the Age of Coronavirus," p. 7. Measure of America, June 10, 2020. Online at: <http://measureofamerica.org/youth-disconnection-2020/>
9. James A. Parrott and Lina Moe, "The New Strain of Inequality: The Economic Impact of COVID-19 in New York City." April 15, 2020. Online at: <http://www.centernyc.org/reports-briefs/2020/4/15/the-new-strain-of-inequality-the-economic-impact-of-covid-19-in-new-york-city>
10. Unless otherwise noted, data discussed in this section come from the American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, as analyzed by the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity Poverty Research Unit.
11. Note that the 46.5 percent figure counts June graduation rates while the 77.3 percent figure includes graduates who completed requirements by August; the June 2019 figure is 73.9 percent. Also of note, the six-year rate has risen to 80.5 percent. NYC Department of Education, Information and Data Overview. Online at: <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2019-graduation-rates---website---1-16-20.pdf>
12. Ibid.
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14. The overall count of young adults ages 16–24 is also at its lowest level since 2006. In that year there were a total of 1,001,691 young adults in this age bracket.
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60. Data from the American Community Survey provide reliable information on OSOW young adults in New York City but could be enhanced by incorporating with City administrative data, including data on system-involved young adults.



Photo courtesy of NYC Department of Youth and Community Development



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