



NEW YORK CITY COMPTROLLER
BRAD LANDER

Spotlight —————

The State of Job Quality in New York City

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Introduction

Job quality is a critical issue in New York City, where the cost of living is among the highest in the country and large gaps persist in income, opportunity, and access to stable employment. While New York City has experienced strong employment growth in recent years, many of the jobs that have been added to the local economy do not offer the compensation, stability, or protections that workers need to maintain a reasonable standard of living. The number of jobs, then, tells only one part of New York City's jobs story. To really understand the status of employment in the city, and how workers are faring, we must assess quality. Do jobs allow workers to cover basic expenses, support their families, and remain in the communities where they live and work?

Overall job quality is shaped by different features of the job, including wages, access to benefits, job security, physical safety, opportunities for advancement, and the ability to have a voice in the workplace. How a particular job fares on reflects individual employment arrangements as well as broader political and legal dynamics, from labor laws to union representation and patterns of public and private investment.

This report from the Office of New York City Comptroller Brad Lander offers a detailed analysis of job quality in New York City between 2017 and 2023, using data from the American Community Survey, O*NET occupational risk measures, and the MIT Living Wage Calculator. The analysis evaluates whether jobs meet a baseline standard for decent work based on four core criteria: (1) paying a living wage; (2) offering full-time and year-round employment; (3) providing employer-sponsored health insurance; and (4) avoiding physically demanding or hazardous conditions, unless those risks are offset by higher pay.

The analysis focuses on individuals who both live and work in New York City. It excludes commuters, both inbound and outbound, who may earn different wages and face different cost of living pressures. By concentrating on resident workers, the report provides a clearer picture of how local labor market conditions affect the economic stability of New Yorkers and helps inform policies aimed at raising job standards for New York City's workforce.

Defining a “Good Job”: A Baseline Standard

This analysis defines a good job as one that meets a basic set of conditions for economic security and workplace standards. These conditions reflect a minimum floor. A good job in this context is not necessarily ideal but is sufficient to support basic needs.

This definition draws on established frameworks such as the International Labour Organization’s concept of “decent work”¹ and is similar to criteria used by research organizations like the Center for Social Innovation², which emphasize full-time employment, a living wage, and access to essential benefits.

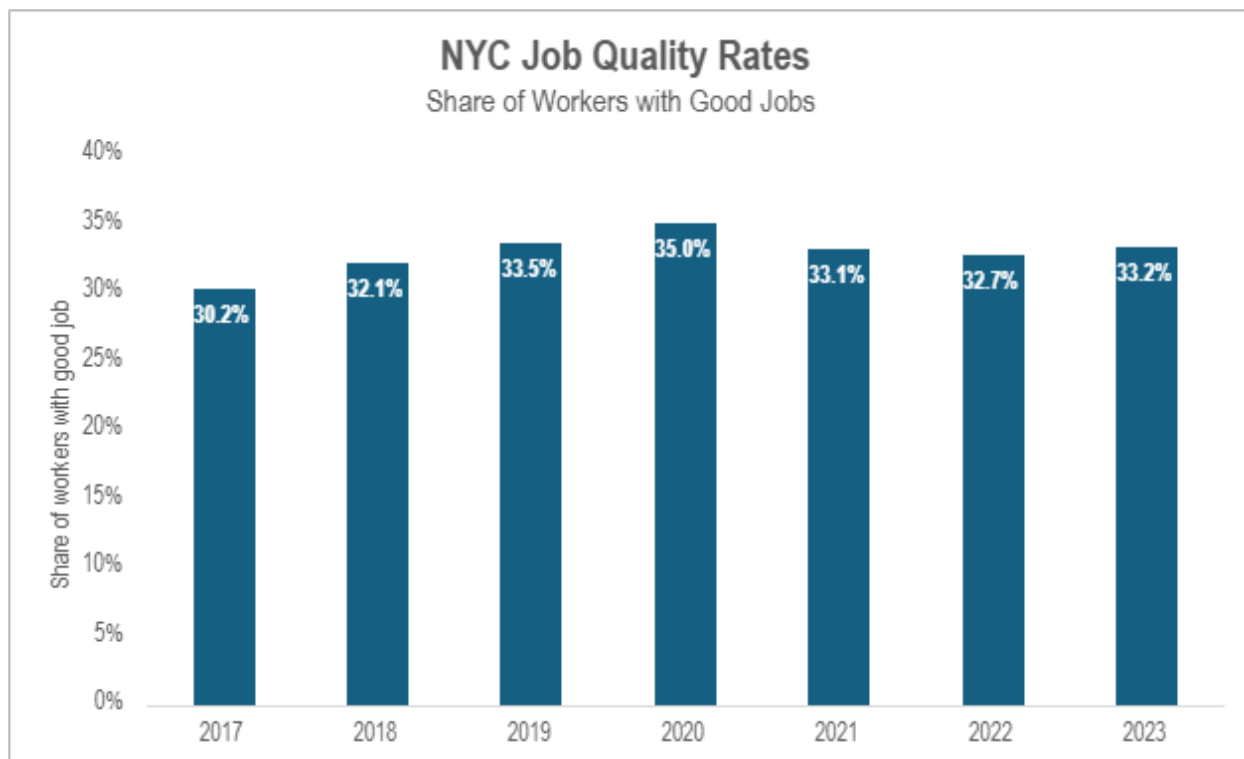
A job qualifies as good in this report if it meets all four of the following conditions:

- a) **Living wage pay:** The job must pay at least the required living wage for the worker’s household, based on local cost of living and household size (see Methodology). Jobs that fall below this threshold do not provide basic economic security. In assessing job quality, it is also important to account for job demands alongside pay. The definition of a good job used in this report includes a wage premium for physically demanding or risky work.
- b) **Full-time year-round employment:** The job provides at least 35 hours of work per week and employment for at least 50 weeks per year, ensuring reliable annual income.
- c) **Employer sponsored health insurance:** The job includes health coverage. Jobs without this benefit often leave workers reliant on public programs or unable to afford necessary care.
- d) **Safe working conditions or compensating pay:** The job does not involve excessive physical strain or exposure to hazards. Jobs that do involve significant physical strain or exposure to hazards must pay at least 25 percent above the applicable living wage to be considered good. This premium aligns with the highest levels of hazard pay available in practice, such as those used in U.S. federal employment.

These four elements define the minimum standard for job quality in this analysis. Many jobs that meet these conditions still lack retirement benefits, paid leave, advancement opportunities, or representation in the workplace.

Relaxing any criterion above will change the results. For those interested in how each condition affects the overall rate, please refer to Table A in the Appendix.

Chart 1



Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-American Community Survey 2017–2023 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample, O*NET occupational data, and the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

Note: Sample includes all NYC residents (ages 16-64) employed (in any occupation) at the survey reference week and who both live and work within the five boroughs.

As shown in **Chart 1**, the share of New York City workers in good jobs rose from 30.2 percent in 2017 to a peak of 35 percent in 2020, then declined slightly in the following years, reaching 33.2 percent in 2023. This means that roughly 3 out of every 10 workers in the city hold a job that meets basic standards for pay, benefits, and year-round stability.

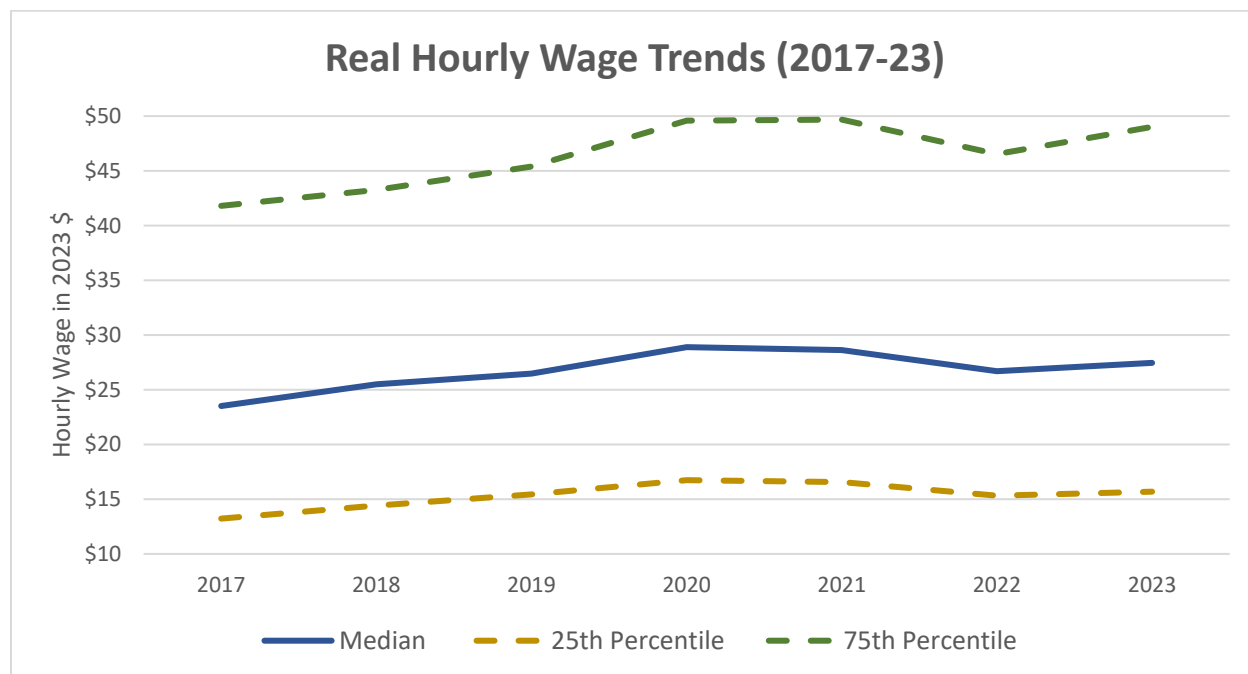
Wage Trends and Earnings

Wages are a key measure of job quality. New York City's labor market combines high average earnings with sharp differences in both how much workers are paid and how quickly those wages grow.³ For workers who live and work in the city, median wages have increased in recent years, but that growth has been uneven and disrupted by both the COVID-19 pandemic and recent inflation.

As shown in **Chart 2**, the median inflation-adjusted hourly wage for workers that reside and work in NYC rose from approximately \$24 in 2017 to about \$29 in 2020. However, real wages declined in 2022 before recovering slightly to around 27 dollars by 2023. This means that while typical inflation-adjusted earnings were moderately higher in 2023 than in 2017, they remained below their peak just before the pandemic. Several factors contributed to this pattern. Wage growth in

the late 2010s was supported in part by the citywide increase in the minimum wage to 15 dollars by 2019. During the early stages of the pandemic, median wages rose artificially as job losses were concentrated among low-wage workers, temporarily distorting the mix of existing jobs, thus pushing up the median for those still employed. However, high inflation between 2021 and 2022, together with the return of many low paid jobs, eroded much of these gains. By 2023, wages were rising again but still did not keep pace with increasing costs.

Chart 2

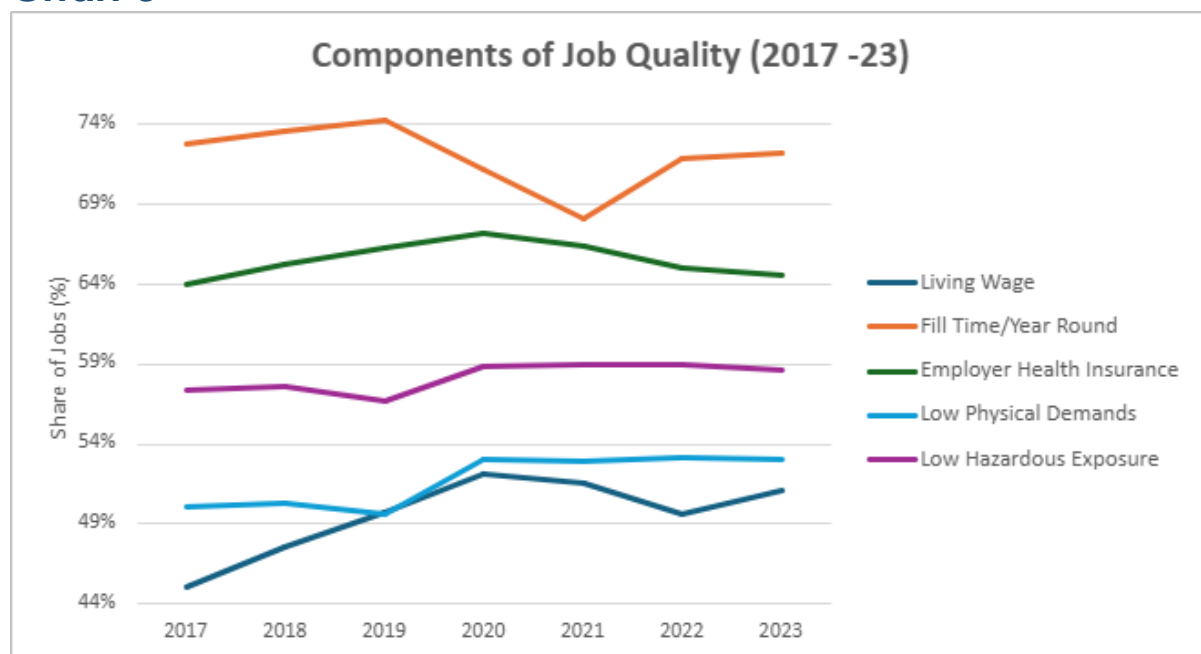


Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-American Community Survey 2017–2023 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample.

Chart 3 shows each job-quality component from 2017 to 2023: about three-quarters of jobs are full-time, year-round; roughly 64 percent offer health insurance; and around 55 percent involve low physical demands or hazards. Living-wage attainment shows a clear rise and fall: it climbs from about 45 percent in 2017 to 50 percent in 2020, decreases below 49 percent in 2022, and then recovers to around 51 percent in 2023. These living-wage shares help explain the trends in Chart 1. As living-wage attainment rose from 45 percent in 2017 to 50 percent in 2020, the overall share of good jobs also increased. Conversely, when fewer jobs cleared the wage floor in 2022 and living-wage attainment decreased, the share of positions meeting “good-job” criteria declined.

The phased increase in the minimum wage was a key driver of improvements in the share of workers earning a living wage. Moreover, the Comptroller’s office previously found that rising minimum wages were associated with declining poverty among low-wage workers and did not slow job growth in sectors with a high concentration of minimum wage employment.⁴

Chart 3



Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-American Community Survey 2017–2023 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample, O*NET occupational data, and the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

Benefits and Employer-Provided Insurance

Access to workplace benefits, especially health insurance, is another critical dimension of job quality that often intersects with wages. Jobs that pay well often also provide benefits, whereas low-wage jobs frequently lack employer-provided health coverage, retirement plans, or paid leave. As of 2023, only around 65 percent of NYC workers have employer-sponsored health insurance through their job. This represents a slight improvement from 2017, but a decline from a peak of about 68 percent in 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic labor market shake-up likely affected this trend: many of the jobs added during the recovery (in sectors like restaurants and home health care) historically offer fewer benefits, which brought down the overall share of workers receiving employer sponsored health insurance. At the same time, enrollment in public programs like Medicaid and increasingly New York's Essential Plan rose, as workers without employer-sponsored insurance turned to public health insurance. By 2023, roughly 20 percent of employed New Yorkers relied on Medicaid, and among those in jobs that do not meet our "good-job" standard, Medicaid participation climbed from 27 percent in 2017 to 33 percent in 2023. By contrast, sectors that shrank or recovered more slowly (finance, tech, office jobs) typically provide more robust benefits; as these high-quality jobs made up a smaller share of employment, New York city's average rate of employer coverage declined.

Beyond health insurance, the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey does not provide data on other workplace benefits such as retirement plans. However, existing research suggests that many workers in New York City lack access to these supports. For example, in 2021

just 41 percent of New York City’s roughly 3.5 million private-sector workers had access to an employer-sponsored retirement plan, well below the 53 percent national average⁵.

Union representation plays a key role in shaping access to benefits. New York City has a unionization rate of 19.8 percent, nearly double the national average of 10 percent.⁶ Union presence is especially strong in the public sector, building services, and transit, where collective bargaining has historically secured health and pension benefits for many working-class New Yorkers. In contrast, many of the city’s fastest-growing sectors, health care support and food services, are largely non-union and offer few protections. Home health aides, for example, often earn near the minimum wage with minimal benefits; in 2023, fewer than 37 percent of NYC home health aides had employer-sponsored health insurance, even as demand has surged. Much of this growth is driven by New York’s Consumer-Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP), which lets clients hire family or friends as caregivers. Between 2018 and mid-2023, CDPAP service hours more than doubled (from 106 million to 240 million), while traditional agency hours fell by 19 percent.⁷

Although many CDPAP workers rely on Medicaid or the Essential Plan, they now face a new threat to their coverage under the state’s consolidation of payroll services with Public Partnerships Limited (PPL).⁸

Lack of paid sick leave or predictable schedules (topics that overlap with job stability) can also degrade job quality and force workers into impossible choices between health, family, and income. The City has enacted policies like a paid sick leave⁹ mandate and Fair Workweek¹⁰ laws in fast food to partially address these issues, but benefits gaps remain wide.

Job Stability and Work Hours

Stable year-round employment with predictable hours is a key aspect of job quality. About three quarters of New York City workers hold full-time, year-round jobs, while the remaining quarter face reduced hours or seasonal gaps that limit income stability and weaken overall job quality.

As shown in **Chart 3**, approximately 73 percent of jobs in the city have been full-time and year-round in recent years. This share briefly increased to 75 percent in 2019. However, by 2021 it dropped back to about 68 percent as temporary and part time jobs returned to the labor market after the initial employment impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic. Over time, the share of stable, full-time year-round jobs has remained relatively flat.

Part-time work is not necessarily a problem if workers choose it voluntarily or if it pays very well. But many NYC part time workers are classified as involuntary, meaning they want full time hours but cannot find them¹¹. Before the pandemic, involuntary part time employment was a persistent issue in service industries. National studies have shown that service sector jobs often come with “temporal precarity,” including variable hours and unpredictable shifts¹². In New York City, many workers in retail and hospitality report last minute schedule changes and inconsistent hours, which undermine financial stability and make it difficult to plan for family or other obligations. These unstable scheduling practices disproportionately affect women and workers of color in the service sector¹³.

To address these challenges, New York City enacted Fair Workweek legislation in 2017 and 2018 to curb harmful practices by fast food employers such as on call scheduling and “clopening” shifts—when a worker closes their workplace one night and then returns to open it again the next morning. While evidence from other contexts suggests these policies may improve schedule predictability¹⁴, underemployment remains widespread. In 2023, part-time workers in New York City had a poverty rate of 19.4 percent, up from 17 percent in 2019¹⁵.

Although full-time year-round status does not capture all aspects of job stability, such as schedule predictability or job security, it serves as a useful proxy. Research shows that control over work hours is critical to worker well-being. Unstable schedules are linked to stress, income volatility, and barriers to arranging child care¹⁶.

Patterns in Job Quality Across New York City

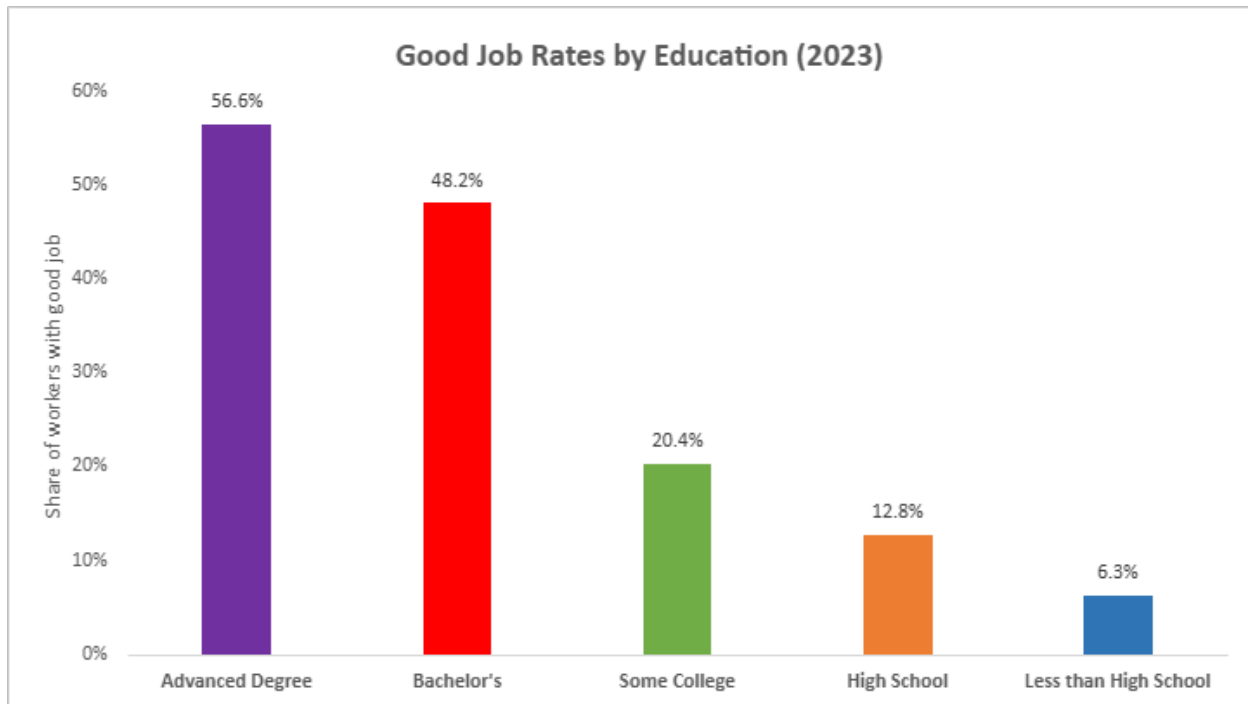
Access to “good jobs” in New York City is highly uneven, with disparities across demographic, socioeconomic, and geographic lines. Workers with a bachelor’s degree are nearly four times more likely to hold a good job than those with a high school degree. Racial and ethnic gaps are also stark: about half of White workers hold quality jobs, while only about one-quarter of Black workers and under one-fifth of Latinx workers do. Citizenship status matters too, with New Yorkers with U.S. citizenship nearly twice as likely to have a good job as non-citizen New Yorkers. Geography mirrors these divides: Manhattan residents enjoy good-job rates near 46 percent, whereas in the Bronx fewer than one in five workers meet the standards. Together, these patterns highlight how education, race and ethnicity, immigration status, occupation, and neighborhood jointly shape access to decent work in the city.

Demographic Disparities in Job Quality

The Comptroller’s analysis reveals large gaps in the incidence of “good jobs” by different demographic groups. These disparities reflect underlying inequalities in education, labor market opportunities, and discrimination, which result in certain groups being concentrated in lower-quality jobs.

Education is one of the strongest predictors of job quality. Workers with a college degree, especially those with advanced degrees, are significantly more likely to hold good jobs compared to those with only a high school diploma or less. As shown in **Chart 4**, in 2023, nearly half (48.2 percent) of New York City workers with a bachelor’s degree held a good job, while well over half (56.6 percent) of workers with advanced degrees did. Among those who completed only some college, the share was much lower at 20.4 percent. Access to good jobs was even more limited for workers with only a high school diploma at 12.8 percent. For workers without a high school diploma, it was just 6.3 percent. This means an advanced degree holder in New York City is more than four times as likely as a high school graduate to have a job that meets the basic standards for pay, benefits, and stability.

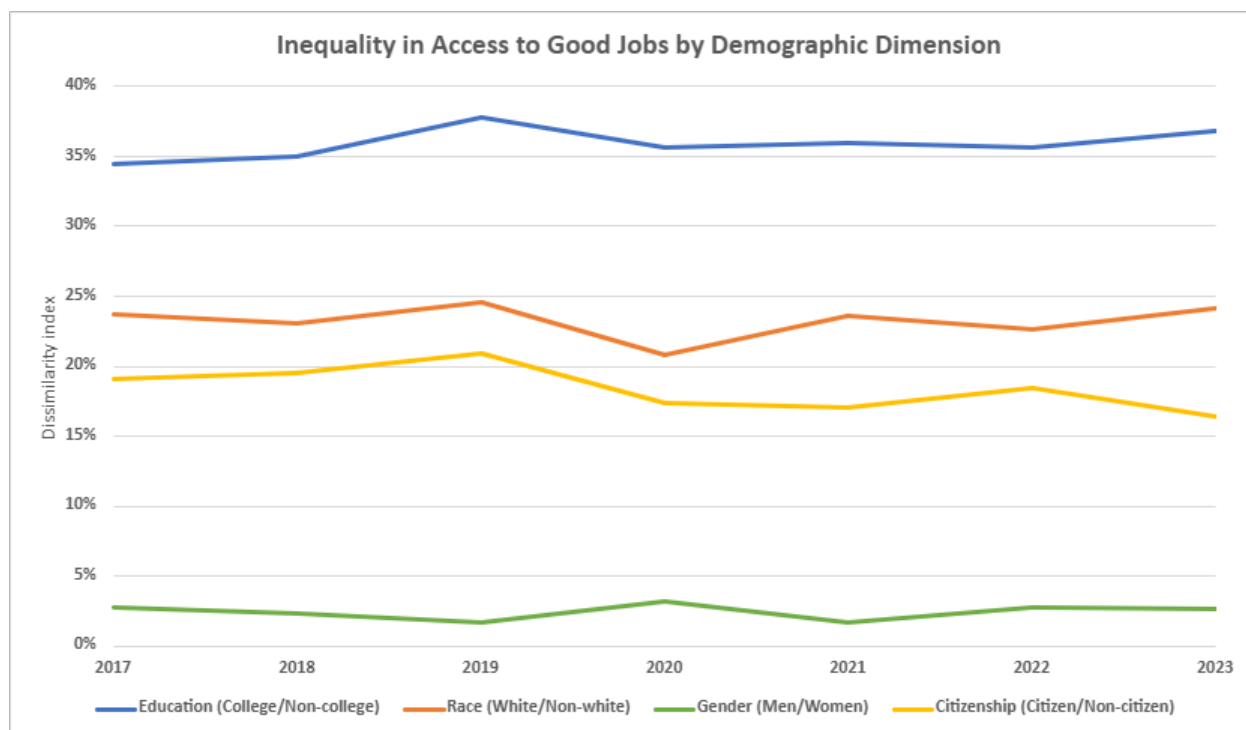
Chart 4



Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-American Community Survey 2017–2023 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample, O*NET occupational data, and the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

Another way to capture this gap is the education dissimilarity index, shown in **Chart 5**, which is approximately 37. This index, defined as the absolute difference between the good job rates of two groups, means that about 37 percent of noncollege workers would need to switch jobs to equalize the share of good jobs held by college-educated and non-college educated groups. This suggests that having a college degree has become a near requirement for securing decent employment, while those without a degree face significantly fewer opportunities. This pattern reflects broader national trends in labor market polarization¹⁷. The well-paying blue-collar jobs that once offered stability and upward mobility to workers without college credentials have sharply declined, while job growth has split between high-skill occupations requiring advanced education and low-wage jobs with limited prospects.

Chart 5

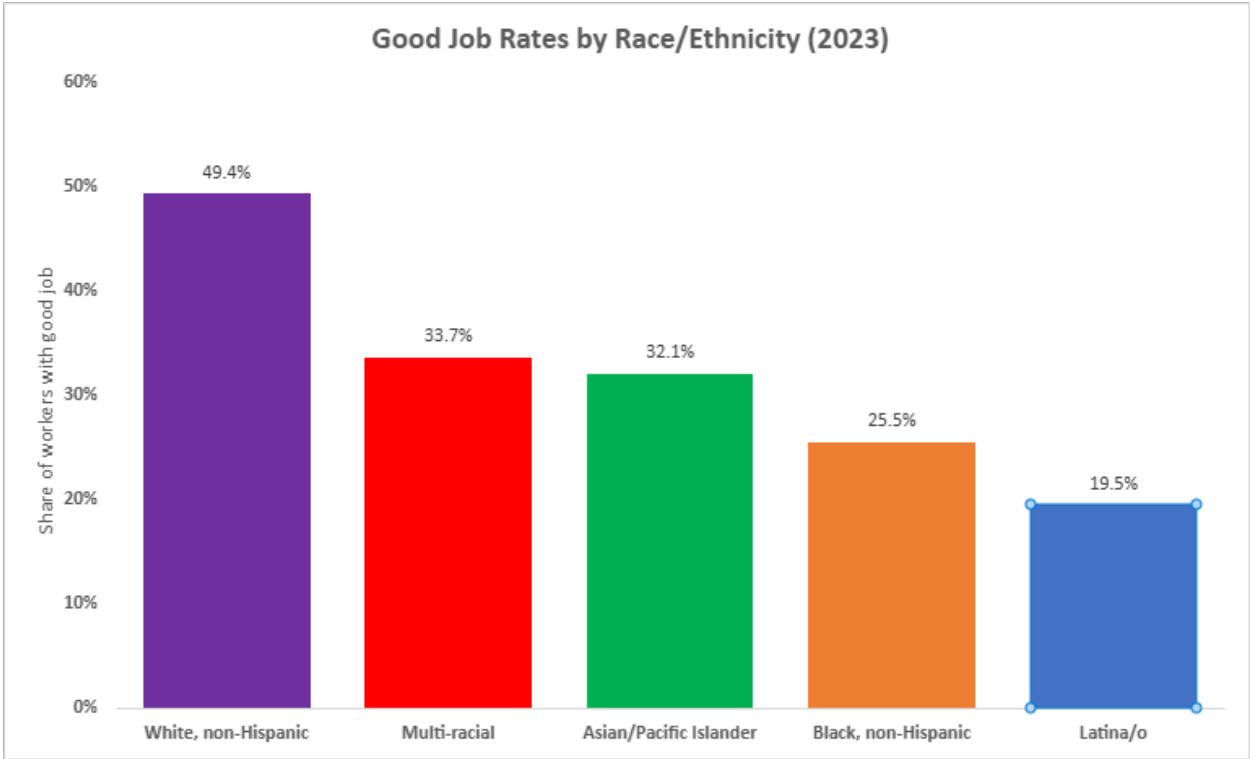


Source: Author’s analysis of IPUMS-American Community Survey 2017–2023 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample, O*NET occupational data, and the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

Racial and ethnic disparities in job quality are also pronounced. White workers are far more likely to hold good jobs than Black and Hispanic/Latinx workers. As of 2023, approximately half of White workers in New York City had a good job, compared to only about 25 percent of Black workers and 19 percent of Hispanic/Latinx workers. Asian/Pacific Islander workers fell in between, with roughly 32 percent in good jobs in 2023, and workers classified as “Other” (including multiracial workers) were around 34 percent. These gaps have been persistent. From 2017 to 2023, all groups saw some improvement in their good-job rates (for instance, Black workers rose from roughly ~22 percent to roughly ~24 percent, Hispanic from about ~15 percent to about ~19 percent), but the relative gaps did not close meaningfully. The racial dissimilarity index for job quality is about 24 percent indicating that roughly a quarter of workers of color would need a different job allocation to match the distribution of good jobs among white workers.

As shown in **Table 1**, even when controlling for education, workers of color often end up in lower-quality jobs. Structural factors like network effects and discrimination play a role. For example, one study found White workers have advantages in avoiding precarious scheduling and securing full-time hours in service jobs¹⁸. Moreover, occupational segregation means that workers of color are overrepresented in low-wage service roles and underrepresented in higher-paying professional roles, a legacy of unequal access and opportunities.

Chart 6



Source: Author’s analysis of IPUMS-American Community Survey 2017–2023 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample, O*NET occupational data, and the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

Table 1: Share of Workers with Good Jobs by Race and Education (2023)

Education level	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Multi-racial
Less than HS	9.1%	8.2%	6.8%	5.6%	7.7%
High school	23.8%	13.6%	12.2%	7.9%	16.3%
Some college	30.4%	19.9%	19.4%	17.5%	24.2%
Bachelor's	53.0%	39.6%	37.3%	46.1%	47.5%
Advanced degree	57.4%	50.1%	47.7%	56.3%	56.5%

Source: Author’s analysis of IPUMS-American Community Survey 2017–2023 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample, O*NET occupational data, and the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

Gender disparities in job quality exist but are much smaller than racial/ethnic or educational divides. In 2023, about 34 percent of male workers held a good job compared to 31 percent of female workers, a gap that has slightly narrowed since 2017. The gender dissimilarity index is very low, around 3 percent, implying near parity in the overall distribution of good jobs between men and women. This does **not** mean there is no gender inequality. Women still face a pay gap

and are overrepresented in certain lower-paying occupations, with women of color especially disadvantaged. However, women's high rates on average of college education and participation in professional fields have helped many attain good jobs at nearly the same rate as men. For instance, women in New York City are heavily represented in the education and healthcare sector. The relatively small gender gap also reflects the fact that both men and women are represented among vulnerable low-wage populations (though the specific jobs differ by gender).

Citizenship status is a significant factor in access to good jobs in New York City. Across all years from 2017 to 2023, U.S. citizens working and living in New York City had consistently higher rates of good job attainment than non-citizens. In 2023, about 36 percent of U.S. citizens held a good job, compared to just under 20 percent of non-citizens. This gap has remained persistent over time, with non-citizens having good jobs at roughly half the rate of citizens in most years.

In 2023, shown in Figure 5, the index was approximately 16 percent. This means that 16 percent of either group would need to change jobs to equalize the distribution of good jobs between citizens and non-citizens. Although the index has declined from a peak of 21 percent in 2019, the overall gap remains significant. These patterns point to structural barriers that non-citizens face in the labor market, including language barriers and immigration-related discrimination

Overall, education is the most decisive factor in job quality, followed by race/ethnicity and citizenship status, while gender plays a smaller role. These findings suggest that improving job quality in NYC is not just an economic challenge but also an equity imperative. Policies that invest in education and training for residents of color, enforce anti-discrimination and pay equity laws, and create pipelines for underrepresented groups into higher-paying careers can help reduce these gaps. Otherwise, the benefits of New York City's economic growth will continue to accrue unevenly, leaving significant portions of the population in persistently lower-quality jobs. As the data show, the inequalities in who has a good job remain stark, echoing broader patterns of racial and educational inequality in the United States.

Occupational Disparities in Job Quality

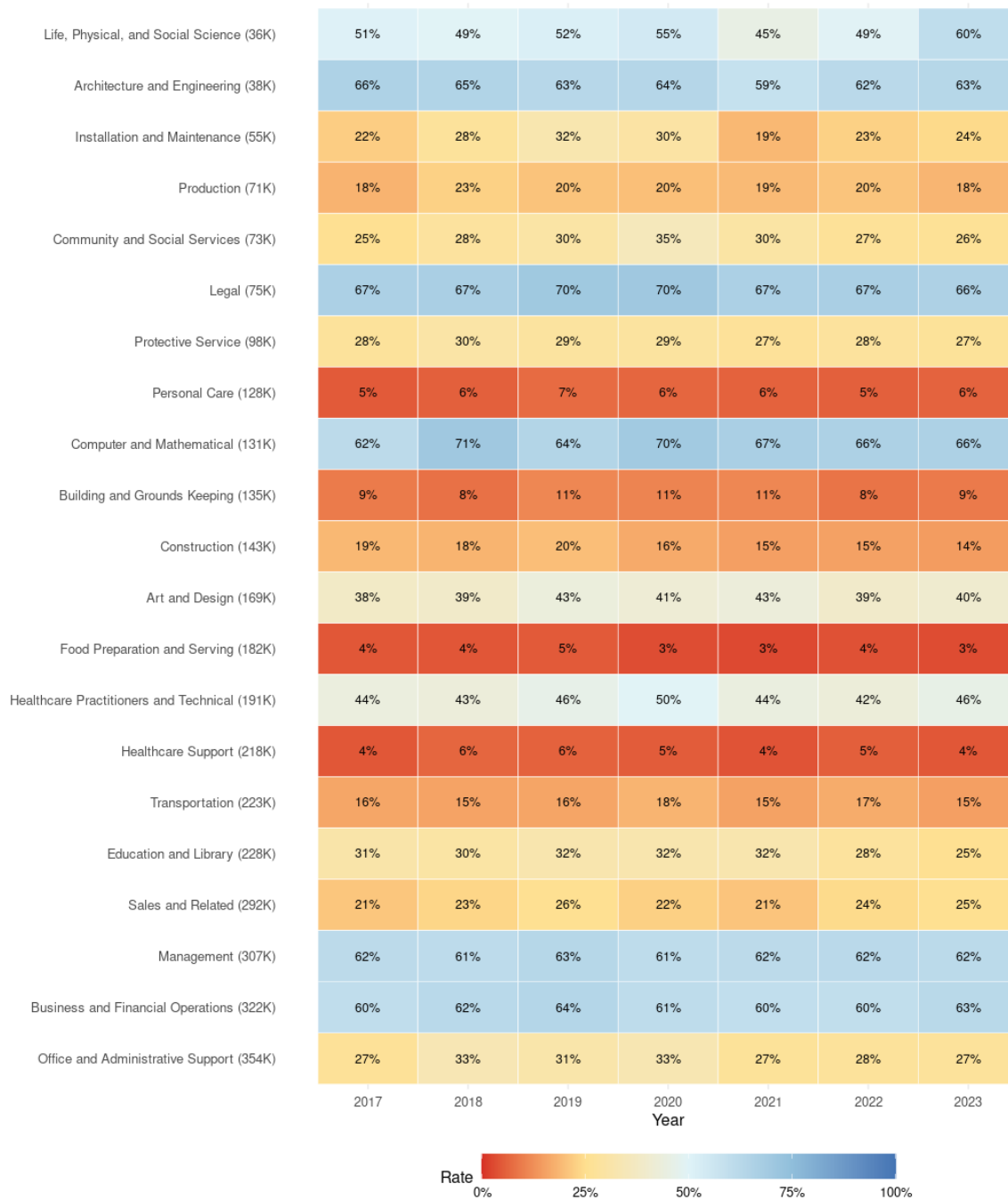
Job quality in New York City varies widely depending on industry and occupation. The city's economy spans high-paying sectors like finance and technology as well as low-wage sectors such as retail, food service, and personal care. This mix drives much of the inequality in job quality across the workforce. In general, jobs in finance, insurance, tech, and professional services are among the highest quality, offering salaries well above the city median and often exceeding the living wage. These positions are also far more likely to come with employer-sponsored health insurance, retirement plans, and other key benefits. Recent job growth, however, has been concentrated in lower-paying sectors, particularly in health services and care work. These roles often lack essential benefits and offer limited wage progression. As job gains in these sectors offset losses in higher-paying industries, there is growing concern that the overall quality of employment in the city may stagnate or decline¹⁹.

Meanwhile, the expansion of the gig economy and informal work adds another layer of complexity. Although not tied to any single sector, these jobs cut across multiple industries and include many rideshare drivers, food delivery couriers, and other platform-based workers. Many of these workers are classified as independent contractors and do not receive employer-sponsored benefits.

Chart 7

Adjusted Good Job Rates by Occupation Group (2017-2023)

Occupations ordered by employment size (largest at bottom)



Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-American Community Survey 2017–2023 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample, O*NET occupational data, and the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

Occupational differences in job quality are equally stark, as shown in **Chart 7**. The chart illustrates the share of workers in each major occupation group who held a good job between 2017 and 2023, ranked by employment size. The results highlight a structural problem: many of the largest occupation groups in New York City have some of the lowest shares of good jobs.

Legal occupations, computer and mathematical roles, architecture and engineering, and management consistently have the highest shares of good jobs. In 2023, approximately 66 percent of workers in legal and tech occupations held good jobs, and more than 60 percent of workers in management and business-related roles did as well. However, these occupations are relatively smaller in size.

In contrast, many of the city's largest occupations, including office and administrative support (391,000 workers), business and financial operations (348,000), sales (325,000), and transportation (255,000) have lower rates of good jobs.

Most concerning are the lowest-quality jobs concentrated in large occupations. Healthcare support (240,000 workers), food preparation and serving (203,000), and personal care (143,000) consistently show rates below 7 percent. Despite employing hundreds of thousands of workers, these occupations offer minimal access to living wages, benefits, or year-round stability. Their persistently low performance underscores how many of the city's essential workers remain trapped in low-quality employment.

Physically demanding blue-collar jobs such as construction (158,000 workers), production, and building and groundskeeping also show poor job quality outcomes, with good job rates rarely exceeding 20 percent. Although some roles in installation and maintenance perform moderately better, gains over time have been limited and uneven. Unionization helps in some cases, but it has not been sufficient to raise job quality consistently across these categories.

Geographic Disparities in Job Quality

While job quality is a citywide challenge, access to good jobs varies sharply by where workers live. Some of the city's neighborhoods are home to more residents with stable, well-paid employment, while New Yorkers engaged in low-wage or precarious work are overrepresented in others. In 2023, about 46 percent of Manhattan residents held a good job, compared to only 20 percent of Bronx residents. Brooklyn and Queens fell in the middle, at approximately 33 percent and 28 percent respectively, while Staten Island was relatively high at around 37 percent. These boroughwide trends reflect variations in residents' access to high-quality employment opportunities, which are shaped by education, occupation, commuting options, and broader labor market inequalities. As shown in **Figure 8**, such differences exist within boroughs as well, with analysis of data at even smaller geographic levels (Public Use Microdata Areas, each representing roughly 100,000 residents) revealing disparities in residents' job quality by neighborhood.

Manhattan residents have the highest rates of good jobs, largely due to their higher levels of education and concentration in professional occupations tied to finance, law, technology, and corporate management. Even residents in lower-wage occupations may benefit from union

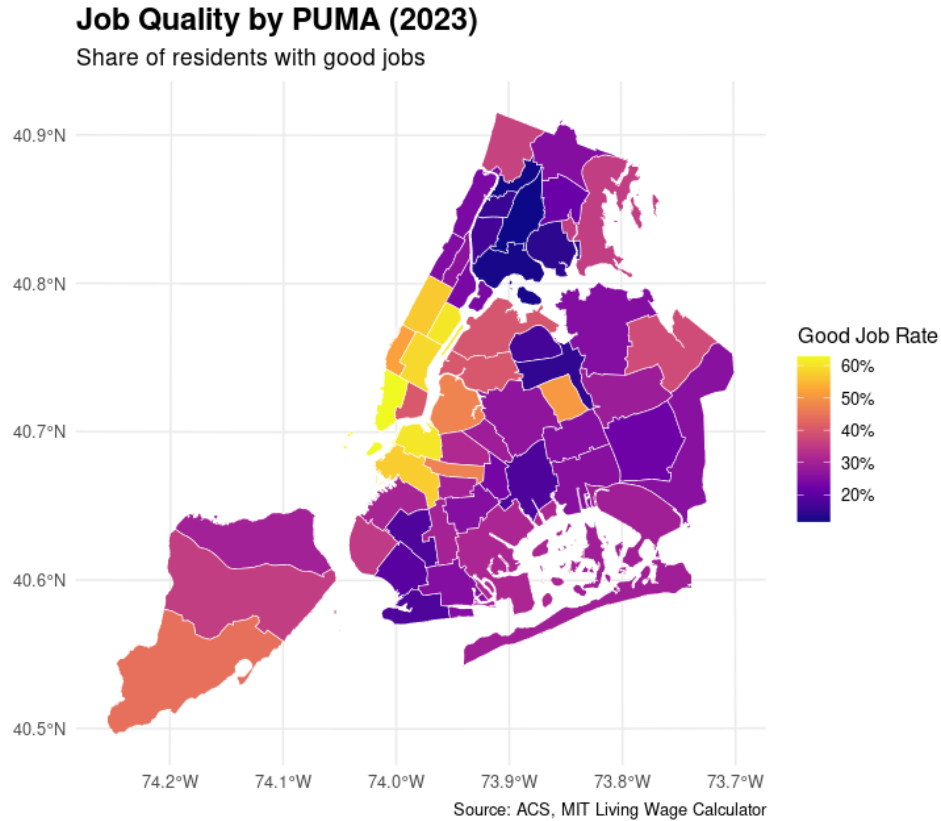
contracts or prevailing wage protections, especially if employed in large residential or commercial buildings.

By contrast, Bronx residents consistently have the lowest access to good jobs. The borough's workforce is heavily concentrated in sectors such as retail, food service, home health care, and custodial work, jobs that are often part time, lack benefits, and fall below the living wage threshold. In some Bronx communities, fewer than one in nine residents has a job that meets the criteria for decent work.

Brooklyn and Queens are highly diverse and reflect a mix of job quality outcomes. Some neighborhoods, especially those near hospitals, universities, or downtown commercial areas have many residents employed in public sector or union jobs that provide stability and benefits. Other neighborhoods, such as East New York, Sunset Park, or parts of eastern Queens, are home to more residents working in informal sectors, small businesses, or gig jobs with little economic security. Immigrant communities are particularly affected by these patterns, often concentrated in low-wage service work such as food service, cleaning, and care occupations.

Staten Island stands out with a relatively high share of good jobs among residents, likely due in part to the borough's large number of unionized public sector workers, including police officers, firefighters and teachers. These workers benefit from stable employment and strong benefit packages despite not necessarily working in Staten Island itself.

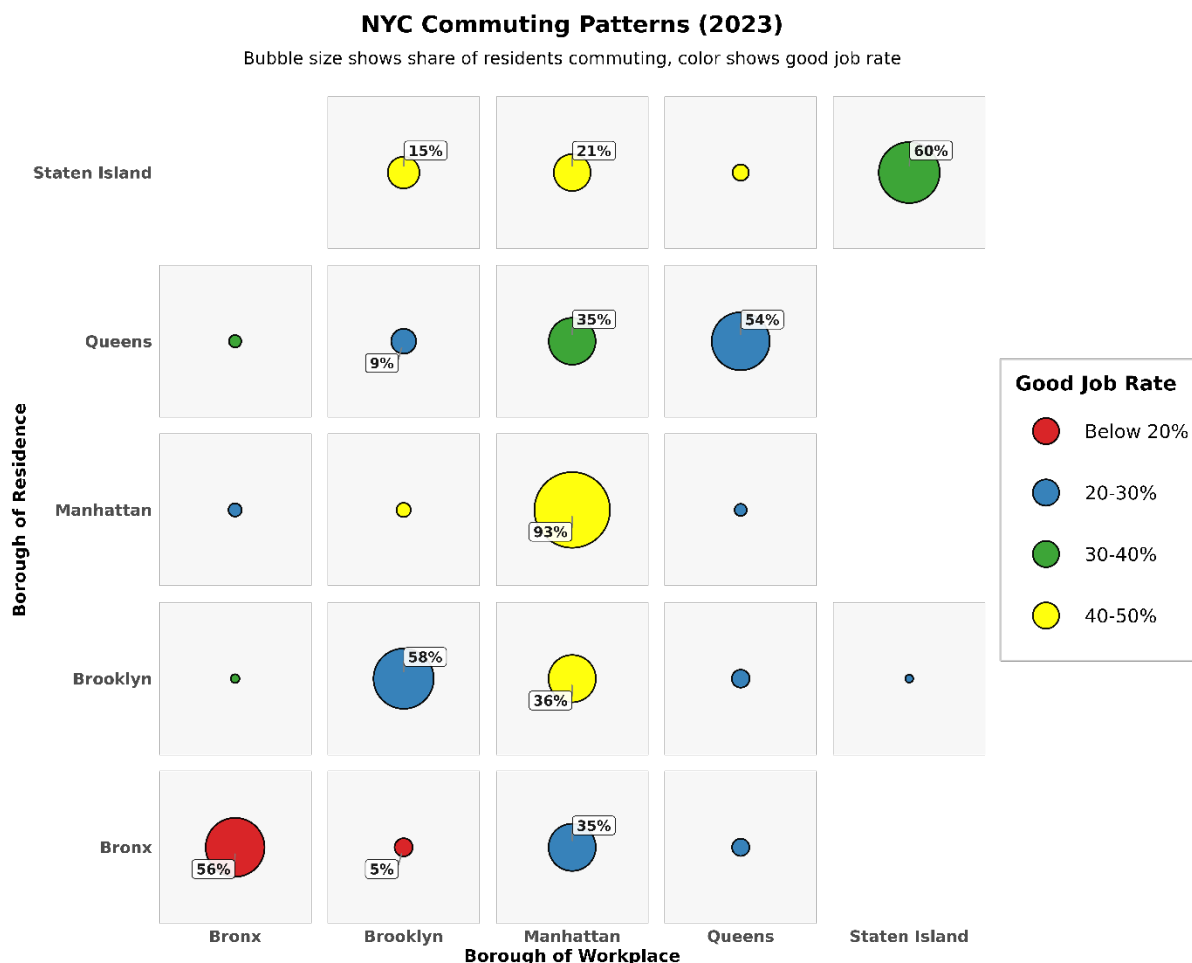
Chart 8



Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-American Community Survey 2017–2023 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample, O*NET occupational data, and the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

As depicted in **Chart 9**, complex relationships exist between where New Yorkers live and work, and how this affects their access to good jobs. Most residents work within their home borough, as indicated by the largest bubbles showing where residents both live and work. Manhattan stands out as both a destination and source of high-quality employment, with nearly all Manhattan residents (93%) working within the borough and accessing jobs with good pay and benefits. The stark contrast between Bronx residents working locally (56% of residents but with poor job quality below 20%) and Manhattan workplaces illustrates the geographic inequality in job opportunity. Residents of all boroughs who commute to Manhattan workplaces tend to access better quality jobs than those who remain in their home borough.

Chart 9



Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-American Community Survey 2017–2023 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample, O*NET occupational data, and the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

Note: This chart illustrates the share of workers who commute within and between each NYC borough. Because it counts remote workers as “commuting” within their borough, it may overstate actual travel patterns.

Wage Growth by Job Quality

Chart 10 shows indexed wage growth from 2017 to 2023 for workers in good jobs and in jobs that do not meet that standard. Wages are indexed to 100 in 2017, allowing for direct comparison of growth over time. The chart reveals a divergence in wage growth by job quality.

Real wages for workers in non-good jobs grew modestly through 2021 but then fell, ending at 114 in 2023. In contrast, **real wages for workers in good jobs** were nearly flat over the period, reaching just 105 in 2023 representing a 5 percent real gain over six years. This pattern reflects both inflation dynamics and labor market segmentation. The rapid rise in wages for lower-quality

jobs likely stems from increases in minimum wages from 2017 to 2020 and the subsequent pandemic-related labor shortages²⁰.

Chart 10



Source: Author's analysis of IPUMS-American Community Survey 2017–2023 1-year Public Use Microdata Sample, O*NET occupational data, and the MIT Living Wage Calculator.

Conclusion

Ensuring that every job in New York is a good job is a worthy but ambitious goal, and one that will not be achieved overnight. However, setting a baseline standard for job quality is a critical first step. Doing so establishes a clear target for what we should expect from employers and the economy at a minimum: that anyone working full time should earn enough to live on, have health care coverage, and not be subjected to dangerous conditions or constant job insecurity. Meeting this standard citywide will require reversing decades of wage stagnation and declining worker power. The stakes are high: the quality of jobs in New York City directly affects rates of poverty, health outcomes, crime, and the overall vitality of communities, and as this report shows, ensuring greater equity in access to good jobs will have outsized impacts on some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. As New York continues to recover and rebuild in the coming years, a focus on job quality alongside job quantity will be essential to ensure that prosperity and opportunity is broadly shared.

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by Aida Farmand, Senior Tax Policy Analyst. Archer Hutchinson, Creative Director, and Addison Magrath, Graphic Designer led the design, with assistance from Angela Chen, Senior Website Developer and Martina Carrington, Web Developer.

Appendix: Methodology and Data Sources

Data Source and Scope

This analysis uses microdata from the American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year samples for 2017-2023, accessed through IPUMS USA²¹. The sample includes employed civilians aged 16-65 who both live and work in New York City. To ensure statistical reliability, all estimates are based on samples with at least 30 observations. All analysis uses the ACS person weights to produce estimates representative of the population of workers in NYC.

“Good Job” Criteria and Measurement

We defined a “good job” as a job meeting four specific criteria: (1) full-time, year-round employment; (2) pays at least a living wage (adjusted for household needs and local costs); (3) provides health insurance through the employer; and (4) has safe and sustainable working conditions. These criteria correspond to the definition described in the Introduction, and here we detail how each was measured:

- a) **Hours and work schedule:** A job was considered *full-time, year-round (FTYR)* if the worker usually worked 35 or more hours per week and worked at least 50 weeks. Workers not meeting this threshold were classified as not having a good job on this criterion.
- b) **Living wage:** We determined a living wage²² threshold for each worker based on their household composition and geographic cost of living. Using the MIT Living Wage Calculator for NYC, we obtained an annual “living wage” income for various household types (e.g. single adult, two working adults with children, sole provider with children, etc.) and for each NYC county. Each worker was assigned a required income level depending on how many adults were in their household, how many were working, and how many dependents (children) were present. For example, a single adult living alone has a lower wage threshold than a single parent with two children, and a sole breadwinner supporting a non-working spouse has a higher threshold than a dual-earner couple.

To account for economies of scale in larger households, we applied adjustment factors derived from the MIT calculator's implicit scaling ratios. These adjustments recognize that while costs increase with additional household members, they do not increase proportionally due to shared housing, food, and other resources. For households with more than two adults or complex compositions not directly addressed by the MIT calculator, we developed custom scaling factors by analyzing the proportional cost increases in MIT's standard household types. This allowed us to generate more accurate living wage thresholds for non-standard household arrangements while preserving the underlying economic relationships in the MIT methodology.

We then compared the worker's own annual employment income (wages and salary from the ACS) to this threshold (scaled to an individual level). If their earnings met or exceeded the needed living wage for their household, they satisfied this criterion. If not, the job was classified as not providing a living wage.

- c) **Employer-provided benefits:** The key benefits indicator available in the ACS is whether the worker's employer (or union) offers **health insurance** that covers the worker. We used this as a proxy for basic benefits.
- d) **Safe working conditions:** ACS does not directly measure workplace hazards or demands. To approximate this criterion, we utilized each worker's occupation code to infer the typical physical demands and risk associated with that job. We cross-referenced occupations with data from the U.S. Department of Labor's **Occupational Information Network (O*NET)**. Occupations were classified as **physically demanding or hazardous** if their average scores on O*NET scales for physical requirements or work hazards exceeded the median score across all occupations (indicating high levels of physical strain, exposure to dangerous conditions). Moreover, we allow a compensating differential: if a worker in a high-hazard occupation **earns a wage at least 25 percent above the applicable living wage threshold**, we count that job as meeting the good job definition (the higher pay is considered to offset the greater risk). If it does not, then that job is classified as *not* a good job due to the physical hazard component.

e) **Geographic Cost-of-Living Adjustments**

New York City's cost of living varies within the city, especially in terms of housing costs. To account for this, we introduced geographic adjustments to the living wage thresholds by borough of residence. The MIT Living Wage Calculator provides county-level living wage estimates, which differ for, say, New York County (Manhattan) versus Bronx or Kings County.

Inflation adjustment: All monetary values were adjusted to 2023 dollars using the Consumer Price Index for the New York-Newark-Jersey City region.

Trend analysis: Although not elaborated in the main text, we note that the share of "good jobs" in NYC has been slowly rising in recent years from roughly 30 percent in 2017 to about 33 percent in 2023 largely due to increases in the minimum wage and a tight labor market that pushed up wages at the bottom. However, the pandemic in 2020 caused a temporary distortion in this metric: many low-wage workers lost jobs, which paradoxically *raised* the share of remaining jobs that were "good" (statistically speaking), and the subsequent recovery re-balanced the workforce.

Robustness checks for "Good Job" Definition

To assess how individual criteria affect our overall "good job" rate, we re-calculated the 2017–2023 share of jobs meeting all but one of the four components (living wage, full-time year-round status, employer-sponsored health insurance, and compensating hazard pay). Table A below

summarizes these results for each year. For example, omitting the living-wage requirement raises the 2023 estimate from 33.2 percent to 43.2 percent, showing that pay is the most restrictive test. Eliminating the health-insurance criterion yields a 2023 rate of 38.7 percent, and dropping the physical/hazard-pay threshold produces 36.2 percent, when we relax the full-time, year-round condition, the 2023 share increases to 39.0 percent. Across all years, the living-wage filter consistently produces the largest increase when removed.

Table A. Share of NYC Jobs Meeting All “Good Job” Criteria Except One, 2017–2023

Year	Full Definition	No Living Wage	No Full Time-Year Round	No Health Insurance	No Physical/Hazard Pay
2017	30.2%	41.5%	35.5%	34.7%	32.9%
2018	32.1%	43.0%	37.4%	37.0%	35.0%
2019	33.5%	43.8%	38.9%	38.7%	36.4%
2020	35.0%	45.5%	41.3%	39.8%	37.9%
2021	33.1%	43.6%	40.3%	37.6%	35.8%
2022	32.7%	43.4%	38.6%	37.8%	35.5%
2023	33.2%	43.2%	39.0%	38.7%	36.2%

Methodological Limitations

- **Living Wage Assumptions:** While we adjusted for household composition, the MIT Living Wage Calculator makes assumptions about typical expenses that may not reflect the full diversity of household needs and circumstances.
- **Sample Restriction:** By focusing only on NYC residents who also work in NYC, the analysis excludes both NYC residents who commute outside the city for work and non-residents who commute into NYC for work.

Endnotes

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