METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

A PORTRAIT OF NEW YORK CITY 2018

WELL-BEING IN THE FIVE BOROUGHS AND THE GREATER METRO AREA
Human Development

Human development is about what people can do and be. It is formally defined as the process of improving people’s well-being and expanding their freedoms and opportunities. The human development approach emphasizes the everyday experiences of ordinary people, encompassing the range of factors that shape their opportunities and enable them to live lives of value and choice. People with high levels of human development can invest in themselves and their families and live to their full potential; those without find many doors shut and many choices and opportunities out of reach.

The human development concept was developed by the late economist Mahbub ul Haq. In his work at the World Bank in the 1970s, and later as minister of finance in his own country of Pakistan, Dr. Haq argued that existing measures of human progress failed to account for the true purpose of development—to improve people’s lives. In particular, he believed that the commonly used measure of gross domestic product failed to adequately measure well-being. Working with Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and other gifted economists, Dr. Haq published the first Human Development Report, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme in 1990.

The American Human Development Index

The human development approach is extremely broad, encompassing the wide range of economic, social, political, psychological, environmental, and cultural factors that expand or restrict people’s opportunities and freedoms. But the American Human Development (HD) Index is comparatively narrow, a composite measure that combines a limited number of indicators into a single score. The HD Index is an easily understood numerical measure that reflects what most people believe are the basic ingredients of human well-being: health, education, and income. The value of the HD Index varies between 0 and 10, with a score of 10 being the maximum possible that can be achieved on the aggregate factors that make up the index.

Data Sources

The analysis in this report includes well-being estimates for the entire New York metropolitan area and the 170 census-defined public use microdata areas (PUMAs) contained within it, as well as for New York City, the five boroughs, and the 188 New York City neighborhood tabulation areas (NTAs). PUMAs are substate geographic units designated by the US Census Bureau. They have populations of at least 100,000 and generally less than 200,000. The New York metro area comprises New York City and the surrounding counties in New Jersey, Connecticut, and New York State as defined by the Regional Plan Association. A total of thirty-one counties are included in the metro area, ranging in population size from under 75,000 residents in Sullivan County to over 2.5 million in Kings County (Brooklyn).

The American Human Development Index for A Portrait of New York City 2018 was calculated using several datasets. Mortality data used to calculate life expectancy are from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the New York State Department of Health, the New Jersey Department
of Health, and the Connecticut Department of Public Health. The education, earnings, and population data all come from the American Community Survey (ACS), a product of the US Census Bureau. The ACS is an ongoing survey that collects data from a representative percentage of the population every year using standard sampling methods.

For places with large populations, such as New York City, the Census Bureau publishes one-year estimates. All data for the metropolitan area, New York City, and PUMAs in this report are calculated using one-year data from 2015, the most recent survey available at the time of writing. For less-populous places such as NTAs, one-year estimates are often either unreliable due to small population sizes or simply not available. Therefore, multiyear 2011–2015 ACS estimates are used for these smaller geographical areas. Source notes below all tables in A Portrait of New York City 2018 show the exact year or years of data presented.

The New York metro area boasts one of the country’s largest immigrant populations. The ACS contains responses from both documented and undocumented individuals but, for ACS 2015, did not require respondents to indicate their immigration status. Nevertheless, undocumented immigrants are harder to accurately count than documented immigrants. They are less likely to speak English, may be reluctant to disclose information to strangers, and are more likely to live in temporary housing. Estimating the size of the undocumented population is challenging, and there are many different approaches to this calculation. Using one methodology developed by the Pew Research Center, we estimate that in the metro area, the undocumented population comprises about 25 percent\(^1\) of the total foreign-born population, or approximately 1,565,700 people. This is not to say that over one million people are missing from the analysis contained in this report, but rather that an estimated 5 to 7 percent of this population may be undercounted.

### HEALTH: A long and healthy life is measured using life expectancy at birth.

Life expectancy at birth was calculated by Measure of America using data from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the New York State Department of Health, the New Jersey Department of Health, and the Connecticut Department of Public Health from 2010–2014 and population data from the US Census Bureau and the CDC WONDER Bridged-Race Population Estimates from 2010–2014. Life expectancy calculations for foreign-born and US-born NYC residents were conducted by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Life expectancy estimates for New York City overall and NYC racial and ethnic groups include death records of NYC residents who died outside of the city but within New York State. Life expectancy was calculated using abridged life tables using the Chiang II methodology. These abridged life tables aggregate death numerators and population denominators into age groups, rather than using single years of age as in complete life tables. The aggregated groups are ages under 1, 1–4, 5–9, 10–14...80–84, and 85 and older. The upper age band is capped at 85 and over. Age-specific mortality rates are used within the life table to calculate the probability of a death event at each age interval. These probabilities are then applied to a hypothetical population cohort of newborns \(e_0\). Life expectancy at birth in a geographic area can be defined as an estimate of the average number of years a newborn baby would live if they experienced the particular area’s age-specific mortality rates for that time period throughout their life. Population sizes were too small at the NTA level for reliable life expectancy estimates; therefore, the NTA estimates are imputed from the corresponding PUMA.

Data from the New York State Department of Health contained a higher rate of missing addresses than expected, especially in Westchester County. There was not enough mortality data to calculate Native American life expectancy.
EDUCATION: Access to education is measured using two indicators: net school enrollment for the population ages 3 through 24 and degree attainment for the population ages 25 and older (based on the proportions of the adult population that has earned at least a high school diploma, at least a bachelor’s degree, and a graduate or professional degree). All educational attainment and enrollment figures come from Measure of America analysis of data from the US Census Bureau ACS. Single-year 2015 ACS estimates were used for New York metro area and New York City HD Index calculations except those for NTAs, which utilize multiyear 2011–2015 estimates.

INCOME: A decent standard of living is measured using the median personal earnings of all workers ages 16 and older. Median personal earnings data come from the US Census Bureau ACS. Single-year 2015 ACS estimates were used for the metro area and New York City HD Index calculations except those for NTAs, which utilize multiyear 2011–2015 estimates. The NYC Department of City Planning’s Population Division provided median earnings for the NTAs.

Calculating the American Human Development Index

The first step in calculating the HD Index is to calculate a subindex for each of the three dimensions separately. This is done in order to transform indicators on different scales—years, dollars, etc.—into a common scale from 0 to 10. In order to calculate these indices—the health, education, and income indices—minimum and maximum values (goalposts) must be chosen for each underlying indicator.

Performance in each dimension is expressed as a value between 0 and 10 by applying the following general formula:

\[
\text{Dimension Index} = \frac{\text{actual value} - \text{minimum value}}{\text{maximum value} - \text{minimum value}} \times 10
\]

Since all three components range from 0 to 10, the HD Index, in which all three indices are weighted equally, also varies from 0 to 10, with 10 representing the highest level of human development.

The goalposts were determined based on the range of the indicator observed in all possible groupings in the United States, taking into account possible increases and decreases for years to come. The goalposts for the four principal indicators that make up the American Human Development Index are shown in the table below. To ensure that the HD Index is comparable over time, the health and education indicator goalposts do not change from year to year while the income goalposts are only adjusted for inflation using the CPI-U-RS from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Because earnings data and the earnings goalposts are presented in dollars of the same year, these goalposts reflect a constant amount of purchasing power regardless of the year, making Income Index results comparable over time. In cases where an estimate for a population group or geographic area falls above or below the set goalpost for that indicator, a maximum value of 10 or a minimum value of 0 is imputed for the purposes of calculating the HD Index.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>Maximum Value</th>
<th>Minimum Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy at birth</td>
<td>90 years</td>
<td>66 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational attainment score</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined net enrollment ratio</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median personal earnings*</td>
<td>$15,777</td>
<td>$66,751</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Earnings goalposts were originally set at $13,000 and $55,000 in 2005 dollars.
degree of sampling and nonsampling error inherent in data from the Census Bureau’s annual ACS. Not all differences between estimates for two places or groups may reflect a true difference between those places or groups. Comparisons between similar values on any indicator should be made with caution since these differences may not be statistically significant. Direct comparisons between estimates that are not statistically significant at a 90 percent confidence level have been noted in the text.

Geographic and Population Groups Used in This Report

WITHIN THE NEW YORK METRO AREA

The “Five New Yorks” framing is a way to compare different areas within the region that share similar HD Index scores. For A Portrait of New York City 2018, Measure of America sorted the public use microdata areas into one of the Five New Yorks using the following thresholds:

**Gilded New York**
HD Index scores equal to or greater than 8.50

**Opportunity-Rich New York**
HD Index scores equal to or greater than 7.00 and less than 8.50

**Main Street New York**
HD Index scores equal to or greater than 5.50 and less than 7.00

**Struggling New York**
HD Index scores equal to or greater than 4.00 and less than 5.50

**Precarious New York**
HD Index scores less than 4.00

The Five New Yorks are also presented as five separate units of analysis in order to permit some exploration of the broad demographic and socioeconomic disparities between people living in communities with different human development outcomes. For this analysis, Measure of America...

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**EXAMPLE**

**Calculating the HD Index for New York City**

**HEALTH Index**
Life expectancy at birth for New York City is 82.26 years. The Health Index is then:

\[
\text{Health Index} = \frac{82.26 - 66}{90 - 66} \times 10 = 6.77
\]

**EDUCATION Index**
In 2015, 80.9 percent of New York City’s residents 25 years and older had at least a high school diploma, 36.8 percent had at least a bachelor’s degree, and 15.1 percent had a graduate or professional degree. Therefore, the Educational Attainment Score is 0.809 + 0.368 + 0.151 = 1.33. The Educational Attainment Index is then:

\[
\text{Educational Attainment Index} = \frac{1.33 - 0.5}{2.0 - 0.5} \times 10 = 5.52
\]

School enrollment (net enrollment ratio) was 78.5 percent, so the Enrollment Index is:

\[
\text{Enrollment Index} = \frac{78.5 - 60}{95 - 60} \times 10 = 5.30
\]

The Educational Attainment Index and the Enrollment Index are then combined to obtain the Education Index. The Education Index gives a 2/3 weight to the Educational Attainment Index and a 1/3 weight to the Enrollment Index to reflect the relative ease of enrolling students in school as compared with the relative difficulty of completing a meaningful course of education (signified by the attainment of degrees):

\[
\text{Education Index} = \frac{2}{3} \times 5.52 + \frac{1}{3} \times 5.30 = 5.44
\]

**INCOME Index**
Median personal earnings for the typical worker in New York City in 2015 were $35,934. The Income Index is then:

\[
\text{Income Index} = \log(35,934) - \log(15,777.62) \times 10 = 5.71
\]

**HUMAN DEVELOPMENT Index**
Once these indices have been calculated, the HD Index is obtained by taking the average of the three indices:

\[
\text{HD Index} = \frac{6.77 + 5.44 + 5.71}{3} = 5.98
\]
aggregated PUMAs based on their average HD Index scores to identify Gilded, Opportunity-Rich, Main Street, Struggling, and Precarious New York. The Five New Yorks represent the average score for that group of PUMAs; there will always be individuals who are doing better or worse than the HD Index score for that geography—no place is homogeneous.

Public use microdata areas or PUMAs are substate geographic units designated by the US Census Bureau. PUMAs have populations of at least 100,000 and generally less than 200,000. The New York metro area has a total of 170 PUMAs. PUMAs used in this report were delineated for the 2010 census and were named by the local State Census Data Center.

Racial and ethnic groups in this report are based on definitions established by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and used by the US Census Bureau and other government entities. Since 1997 the OMB has recognized five racial groups and two ethnic categories. The racial groups include Native Americans, blacks, Asians, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, and whites. The ethnic categories are Latino and not Latino. People of Latino ethnicity may be of any race. In this report, these racial groups include only non-Latino members of these groups who self-identify with that race group alone and no other. Census data also include some detail on the specific ancestries of the resident population. Detailed race and ancestry data were used to identify members of the largest Asian subgroups and all Latino/Hispanic subgroups in the New York metro area for the purposes of this report.

Accounting for Cost-of-Living Differences

As the report details, the New York metro area is an expensive place to live with particularly high housing costs. Any comparisons with other cities or national data in terms of food, shelter, and clothing, therefore, must take this into account. There is currently no suitable nationwide measure, official or not, of the cost of living that could be used as a basis for adjusting for differences across regions. The Consumer Price Index (CPI), calculated by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, helps in understanding changes in the purchasing power of the dollar over time. The CPI is sometimes mistaken for a cost-of-living index, but in fact it is best used as a measure of the change in the cost of a set of goods and services over time in a given place. The Council for Community and Economic Research’s 2016 Cost of Living Index ranked Manhattan as the most expensive urban area for the cost of consumer goods and services for professional households in the top income quintile. Brooklyn ranked fourth and Stamford, Connecticut, ranked ninth.² Like any summary of a large area, however, these rankings should be interpreted with caution. This is in part because cost-of-living variations within compact regions, such as states or cities or between neighborhoods in the same urban area, are often more pronounced than variations between states and regions. Further, while costs vary across the nation, they are often higher in areas with more community assets that are conducive to higher levels of well-being. For example, neighborhoods with higher housing costs are often places with higher-quality public services such as schools, recreation facilities, and transport systems and safer and cleaner neighborhoods. Thus, to adjust for cost of living would be to explain away some of the factors that the HD Index is measuring.
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Who Are We?

New York City Population
8,551,938

AGE

0-17 21%
18-64 66%
65+ 13%

BIRTHPLACE

62% NATIVE-BORN
38% FOREIGN-BORN

HOUSING

32% OWN
68% RENT

RACE/ETHNICITY

White 33%
Latino 29%
Black 22%
Asian & Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander 13%
Other 3%
Native American 0.2%

EMPLOYMENT

Management, Business, Science, & Arts Occupations 41%
Sales & Office Occupations 22%
Services Occupations 23%
Production, Transportation/ Moving Occupations 8%
Natural Resources, Construction, Maintenance Occupations 6%

Note: Numbers do not always sum to 100 due to rounding.