

POLICY RESEARCH BRIEF

A Profile of CUNY Students Who Live in Public Housing



Office of Policy
Research

New York City is home to both the largest stock of public housing and, in the City University of New York (CUNY), the largest urban public university in the United States. A significant number of CUNY students live in public housing—well over a thousand. Despite their large numbers, little is known about this population. In the research reported below, we compare a cohort of public housing residents who entered CUNY in fall 2011 to their peers who began at the same time. We take into account their demographic traits, academic preparation, and enrollment status at CUNY. Our work shows that students living in public housing tend to be less well prepared for college and far more likely to be under-represented minorities, female, and from poorer neighborhoods than their peers who do not live in public housing. Public housing residents are also more likely to enroll in an associate program at CUNY. It is noteworthy that this population is also slightly more likely to enroll full-time than other students, a possible benefit of the stability afforded by their housing.

Over 1,130 students (or 3%) entering CUNY in fall 2011 live in public housing

New York City's cultural and economic diversity is reflected in the students of CUNY's community and senior colleges. New York City has the largest stock of publicly-assisted housing in the nation. Over 400,000 New Yorkers live in the 334 housing developments managed by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). This brief relies on data from NYCHA and CUNY's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) to identify students living in public housing. Of the 34,000 first-time freshmen enrolling in CUNY in fall 2011, 1,130 students (about 3.3%) lived in NYCHA-administered public housing.

Students who come to CUNY from public housing are generally more disadvantaged than the fall 2011 freshman class as a whole. The median census tract household income for public housing students was approximately half that of other students in CUNY: \$22,246 compared to \$44,709 for associate students,

and \$26,124 compared to \$57,826 for baccalaureate students (see Table 1). Fall 2011 CUNY freshmen who lived in public housing were also more likely to come from under-represented minority groups. Ninety percent of public housing students were black or Hispanic compared to 61 percent of the entering cohort. Students in public housing were also more likely to be female, particularly in the bachelor's programs; almost 70 percent of public housing baccalaureate students in this cohort were female compared to 55 percent of other students.

The vast majority of public housing residents who attend CUNY received their high school education in a New York City Department of Education (DOE) high school: 92 percent of public housing students in baccalaureate programs versus 68 percent of all baccalaureate students and 85 percent of associate students living in public housing versus 74 percent of all associate degree seekers.

Table 1
Characteristics of the First-time Freshman Associate Cohort Entering CUNY in Fall 2011, by Housing Type

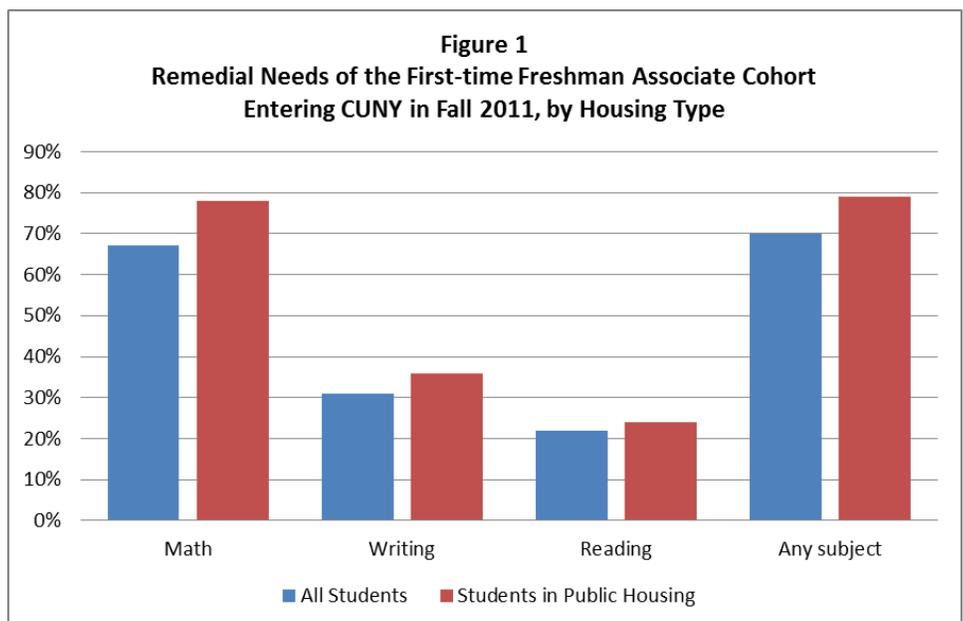
		Associate		Baccalaureate	
		All Students	Students in Public Housing	All Students	Students in Public Housing
Number of Students	N	21,968	884	11,967	236
Female	%	0.53	0.55	0.55	0.69
White Females	%	0.06	0.02	0.16	0.01
White Males	%	0.07	0.01	0.15	0.02
Black Females	%	0.17	0.21	0.09	0.19
Black Males	%	0.14	0.15	0.05	0.06
Hispanic Females	%	0.22	0.31	0.14	0.35
Hispanic Males	%	0.18	0.25	0.1	0.14
Asian Females	%	0.07	0.02	0.16	0.13
Asian Males	%	0.08	0.03	0.14	0.09
Median Home Census Tract Income (2010)	N	44,709	22,246	57,826	26,124

How academically prepared for college work are students who live in public housing?

Public housing students in both associate and baccalaureate programs entered CUNY less well academically prepared for college than the population of freshmen as a whole. Students who

lived in public housing scored relatively low on high school exit exams in mathematics mandated by the New York Board of Regents compared to the class as a whole. Public housing students in associate degree programs earned an average Regent’s math score of 66.7 compared to 69.0 for all CUNY associate degree students. Public housing students in baccalaureate pro-

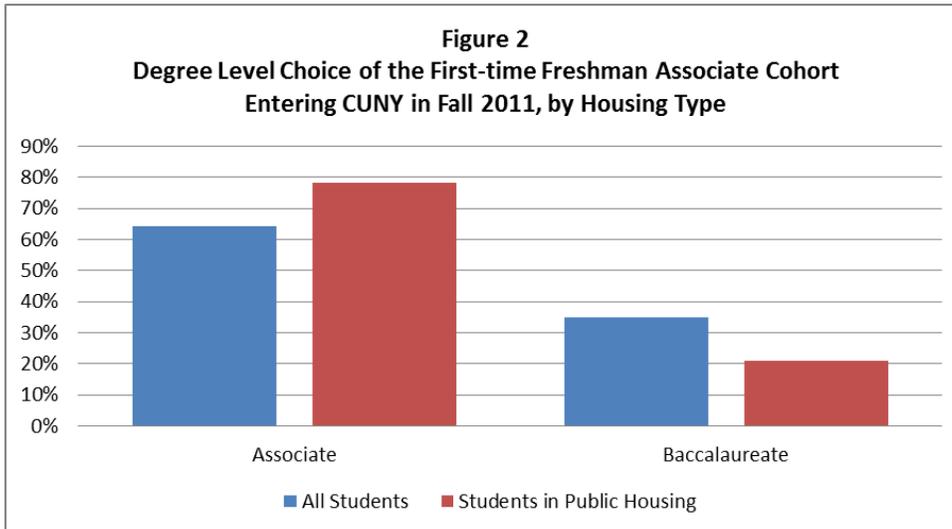
grams earned an average Regent’s math score of 81.1 compared to 85.9 for CUNY baccalaureate students overall.



Public housing students in associate programs are also more likely to require remediation in at least one subject: reading, writing, or math (79 percent compared to 70 percent of

flecting their level of academic preparation. Finally, public housing students enrolled disproportionately at certain CUNY colleges. BMCC, Bronx, and Hostos saw higher than

average enrollment from this population: 27 percent of public housing students enrolled at BMCC in fall 2011 compared to 18 percent of the total cohort. Students in public housing also enrolled at Bronx and Hostos Community Colleges at approximately twice the rate of the freshman class as a whole.



associate degree seeking students overall). By subject, the greatest disparity is in math: 78 percent of students in public housing required math remediation versus 67 percent of all of associate students (Figure 1).

What CUNY colleges do students who live in public housing attend?

Fall 2011 entering freshmen who live in public housing also make different enrollment choices than other students at CUNY. First, they attended full-time at slightly higher rates than the entering cohort as a whole: 90 percent of public housing students in associate programs attended full time compared to 87 percent of all CUNY associate students. Second, they were more likely to enter at the associate level. As shown in Figure 2, 78 percent of public housing students entered associate programs in the fall of 2011 compared to 64 percent of all students, perhaps re-

Conclusion

CUNY students living in public housing are more likely to be black, Hispanic and female, and to be living in poorer than average neighborhoods. They are less academically prepared for college and more likely to enter associate programs than the overall population of CUNY freshmen, perhaps due to their relatively lower levels of academic preparation. Students living in public housing disproportionately choose BMCC, Bronx and Hostos Community Colleges. This analysis is the first step in better understanding a student population that is particularly vulnerable and, as such, should aid administrators and policymakers in the education and housing sphere better target services and coordinate actions.