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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, MAY 28, 2019**

Report: Uneven Progress in School Diversity as New York City's Neighborhoods Experience Demographic Change

Troubling Racial Disparities Persist While Extreme Segregation Slowly Declines

New York, NY -- A new report from the NYU Furman Center, *The Diversity of New York City's Neighborhoods and Schools*, examines the racial and ethnic diversity of the city's public elementary schools and the neighborhoods where they are located. The analysis finds that a majority of elementary students attend schools with a significant presence from at least one other racial/ethnic group, and segregation has grown less extreme over the past 12 years for Black, Hispanic, and white students. Yet Black and Hispanic students remain significantly more racially isolated in schools where students experienced far higher economic needs than their white and Asian peers. [Read *The Diversity of New York City's Neighborhoods and Schools*.](#)

The report was released as part of the NYU Furman Center's annual publication of [The State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2018](#). The State of the City provides a rich compendium of data and analysis about the New York City's population, housing stock, rental market, and neighborhood conditions. The report contextualizes key findings by reporting citywide trends over time, and also includes detailed neighborhood data profiles for each of New York City's 59 Community Districts. Read [The State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2018](#).

As New York City wrestles with how to address the persistent challenge of school segregation, the Furman Center's timely analysis offers critical data about elementary school enrollment patterns and how they change in relationship to neighborhood demographics. Despite the common perception that diversifying neighborhoods leads to equally diverse schools, the Furman Center analysis found that when the population of school zones diversified, elementary schools diversified much more modestly. More encouragingly, existing school diversity appeared durable. The vast majority of diverse schools in 2005—2006 remained so through the 2017—2018 school year.

The report also examines how the racial/ethnic makeup of public elementary schools differs from citywide demographic composition, and how economic need varies based on the demographics of the students. Black and Hispanic children are far more likely to attend public elementary schools than white children. Predominantly Hispanic schools and Black-Hispanic schools scored highest on an economic need index that measures the likelihood that students are in poverty. More than 1 in 5 students in Black-Hispanic schools lived in temporary housing at some point during the academic year. (Read more in the Key Findings Section below.)

“This new analysis allows policy makers and community members to answer foundational questions about the connection between neighborhood and school diversity. Our report suggests that policies to diversify neighborhoods are essential but not sufficient for creating diverse schools,” said **Ingrid Gould Ellen**, Paulette Goddard Professor of Urban Policy and Planning at NYU’s Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and Faculty Director at the NYU Furman Center.

To accompany the report, the NYU Furman Center published a set of interactive District Diversity profiles that contain statistics and demographic data on each of New York City’s school districts. Explore the district level diversity at furmancenter.org/school-district-diversity.

“The State of New York City’s Housing and Neighborhoods report is required reading for reporters and policy makers seeking to understand our past, present, and future,” said **Matt Murphy**, Executive Director of the NYU Furman Center. “Our focus on education contextualizes the debate around diversity in schools within the larger demographic changes, market forces, and neighborhood conditions shaping New York City.”

“For housing to provide opportunity to families, it must offer access to quality education,” said **Katherine O’Regan**, a Professor of Public Policy and Planning at NYU’s Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and Faculty Director at the NYU Furman Center. “This report shows that far too many students remain isolated by race and ethnicity, which research shows undermines their chances to succeed.”

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Read the report: [The Diversity of New York City’s Neighborhoods and Schools](#) (PDF)

Read [The State of New York City’s Housing and Neighborhoods in 2018](#) or view the indicators on [CoreData.nyc](#).

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The Diversity of New York City’s Neighborhoods and Schools: Key Findings

- New York City’s public elementary school classrooms do not look like the city as a whole—while 3 in 10 New Yorkers overall and 1 in 4 children ages 5-9 are white, the white share of students enrolled in public school is less than 15 percent. Correspondingly, Black and Hispanic students are over-represented in public schools.
- Overall, 6 in 10 public school students attend schools classified as diverse, defined as schools with at least 20 percent enrollment from two separate racial/ethnic groups.

- Black and Hispanic students are much more likely to share schools with each other than with any other racial/ethnic group. Roughly 9 in 10 Black students and 7 in 10 Hispanic students attend schools classified as Black-Hispanic, predominantly Black, or predominantly Hispanic.
- In contrast, roughly 7 in 10 white students and 8 in 10 Asian students attend schools with a significant share of students (20% or more) from a different racial/ethnic group.
- Overall, 39 percent of NYC public elementary school students attend predominantly one-group schools, 28 percent attend Black-Hispanic schools, and 33 percent attend other types of diverse schools.
- Segregation is not creating separate but equal schools. For example, predominantly white schools have an average economic need index (an index that goes from 0 to 1 and captures the likelihood that students at the school are in poverty) of 0.24 while predominantly Hispanic and Black-Hispanic schools have an average economic need index of 0.87.
- Public elementary school students generally attended schools with fewer same-group peers in the 2017–2018 school year than they did in the 2005–2006 school year. The one exception was Asian students who attended schools with more same-group peers in 2017–2018.
- The vast majority of diverse schools remained diverse over this 12-year period.
- When the population of school zones diversified, their elementary schools diversified as well, but school changes were far more muted. For example, when a school zone with minimal white presence saw a gain in its white residential population share of more than 10 percentage points, the white student share rose on average by just 1.6 percent. Schools in these neighborhoods became less Black, and more Asian and Hispanic.

State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2018: Key Findings

- For the third year in a row, citywide real median renter household income rose faster than real median rent.
- Median rent across all housing types (subsidized, rent-stabilized, market rate) increased only \$1 between 2016 and 2017, the smallest increase since 2005–2006.
- The median gross rent for recent movers jumped by \$118 between 2016 and 2017, the largest increase since the American Community Survey began tracking in 2005.
- All five boroughs saw the college-educated share of their populations rise between 2007 and 2017, though the most dramatic increase occurred in North Brooklyn.
- Although the Bronx continued to lag behind the other boroughs in student math proficiency, student performance continued to rise in every borough.
- High school graduation rates continued to improve in all five boroughs, with over 72 percent of the high school class of 2018 graduating within four years.
- In 2017, a greater share of the population was in the labor force and a smaller share of the population was unemployed as compared to pre-recession levels.
- The overall poverty rate declined between 2010 and 2017 with a decrease in the childhood poverty rate and a slight increase in the poverty rate among seniors.
- Between 2000 and 2017, the distribution of household income became more skewed toward higher and lower incomes as the share of moderate- to middle-income households decreased.

- Homeownership in New York City remained stable in 2017, with less than a third of New York City households owning their homes.
- The number of foreclosure filings on one- to four-unit buildings and condominiums decreased in every borough except Manhattan between 2017 and 2018.
- While the share of renters in New York City remains far above the national average, the gap closed marginally between 2010 and 2017, with a slight fall at the city level and a somewhat larger rise at the national level.

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About the NYU Furman Center: The NYU Furman Center advances research and debate on housing, neighborhoods, and urban policy. Established in 1995, the Furman Center is run jointly by the New York University School of Law and the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. For more information, visit furmancenter.org, and find the Furman Center on Twitter at [@FurmanCenterNYU](https://twitter.com/FurmanCenterNYU).

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