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Linking Residents to Opportunity: Gentrification and Public Housing

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May 25, 2016



Acknowledgements



- Research by Abt team under contract to NYC CEO
 - Collaboration with community partners and NYCHA resident community ethnographers
- New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) provided access and insight into administrative data and helpful guide to policies and procedures
- Independent research represents views and findings of authors only, not CEO or NYCHA

Gentrification and NYC public housing



- Most NYC public housing built between 1950 and 1970 in what were then low-income areas
- About 2/3 of developments now surrounded by neighborhoods with average incomes that fall in upper half of NYC income distribution
- “Gentrification experiment”: Otherwise similar low-income populations, some surrounded by high-income, others by low-income neighborhoods

Gentrification and NYC public housing



- Do public housing residents benefit from living in gentrified neighborhoods?

Overview

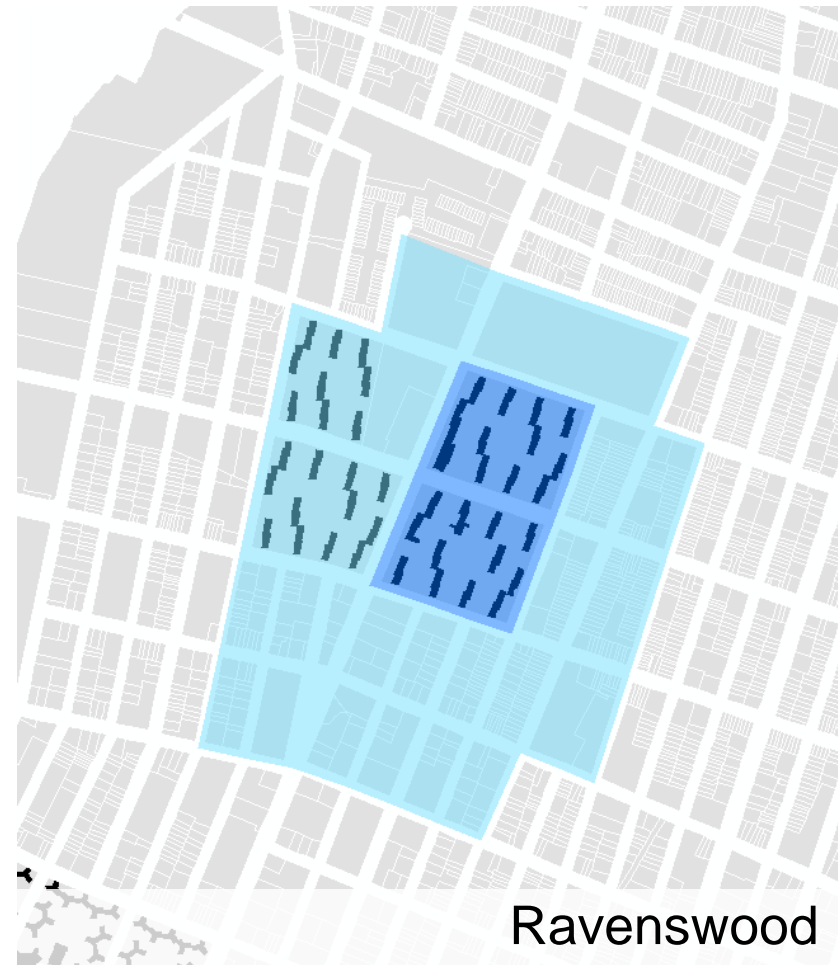


- 2/3 of NYCHA units in relatively high-income neighborhoods
- Neighborhood characteristics and indicators vary with surrounding neighborhood income
- NYCHA residents surrounded by increasing and high-income neighborhoods
 - Can access higher-performing schools and are exposed to less crime
 - Have higher educational attainment, employment, and earnings
- Some qualitative findings
- Discussion and policy implications

Analysis geographies



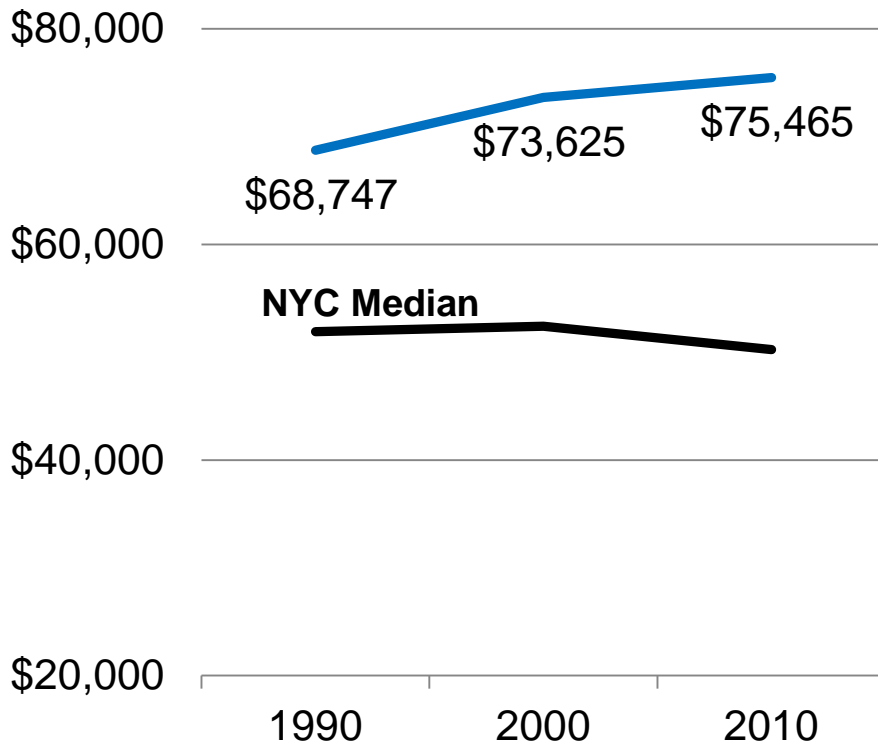
- NYCHA core areas
 - Block group(s) of at least 70% NYCHA units (dark blue)
- Surrounding neighborhood
 - All block groups adjacent to NYCHA core (light blue)
 - Divided into three groups



Classifying the surrounding neighborhoods by income level



Average income in neighborhoods surrounding NYCHA developments



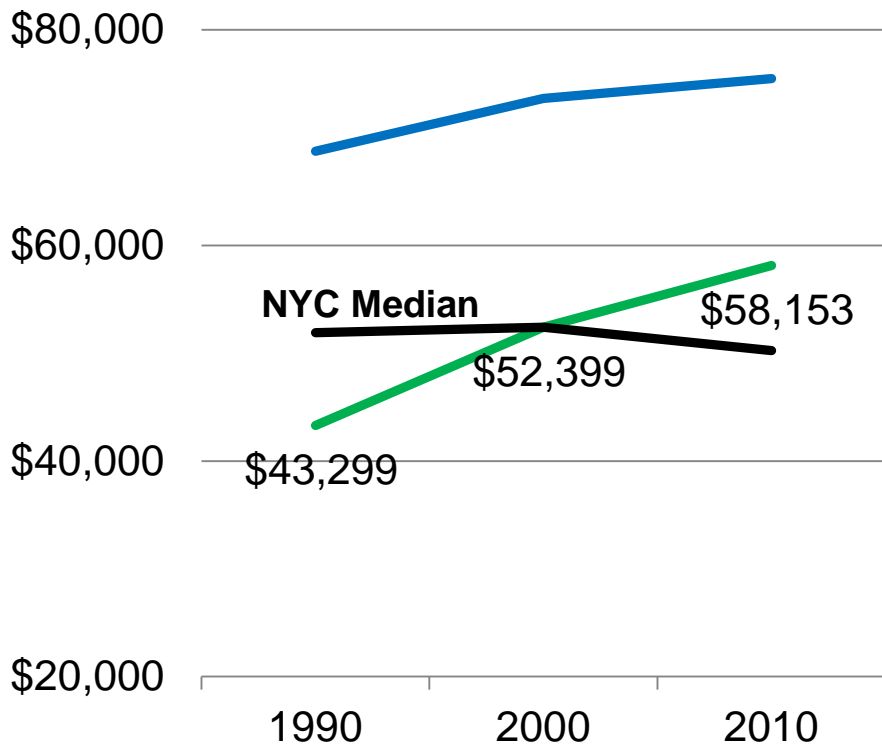
High

- 52,000 HHs in 54 core areas

Classifying the surrounding neighborhoods by income level



Average income in neighborhoods surrounding NYCHA developments



High

- 52,000 HHs in 54 core areas

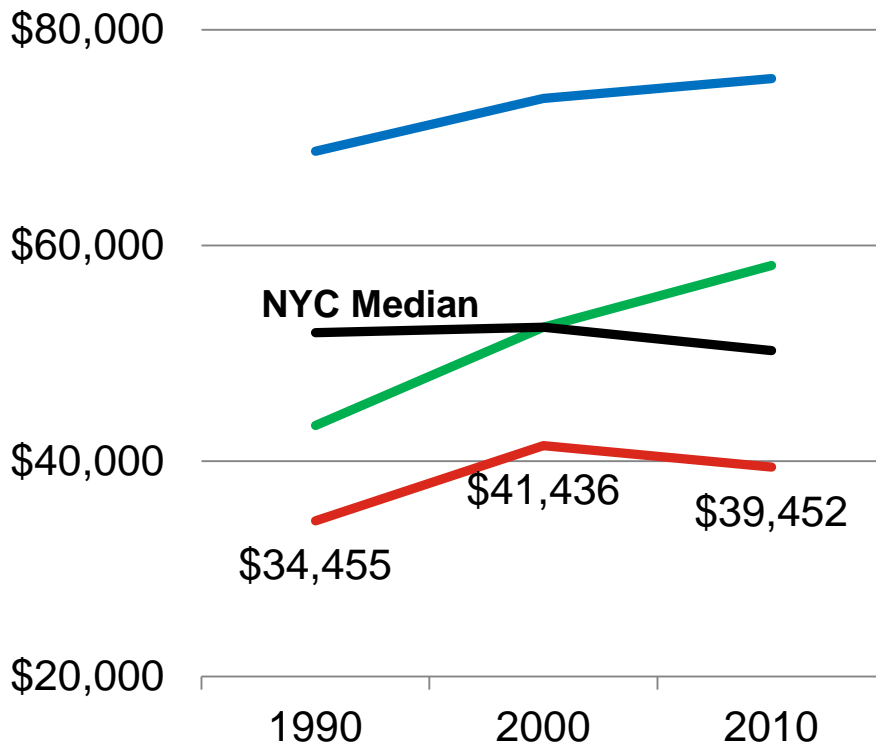
Increasing

- 33,000 HHs in 34 core areas

Classifying the surrounding neighborhoods by income level



Average income in neighborhoods surrounding NYCHA developments



High

- 52,000 HHs in 54 core areas

Increasing

- 33,000 HHs in 34 core areas

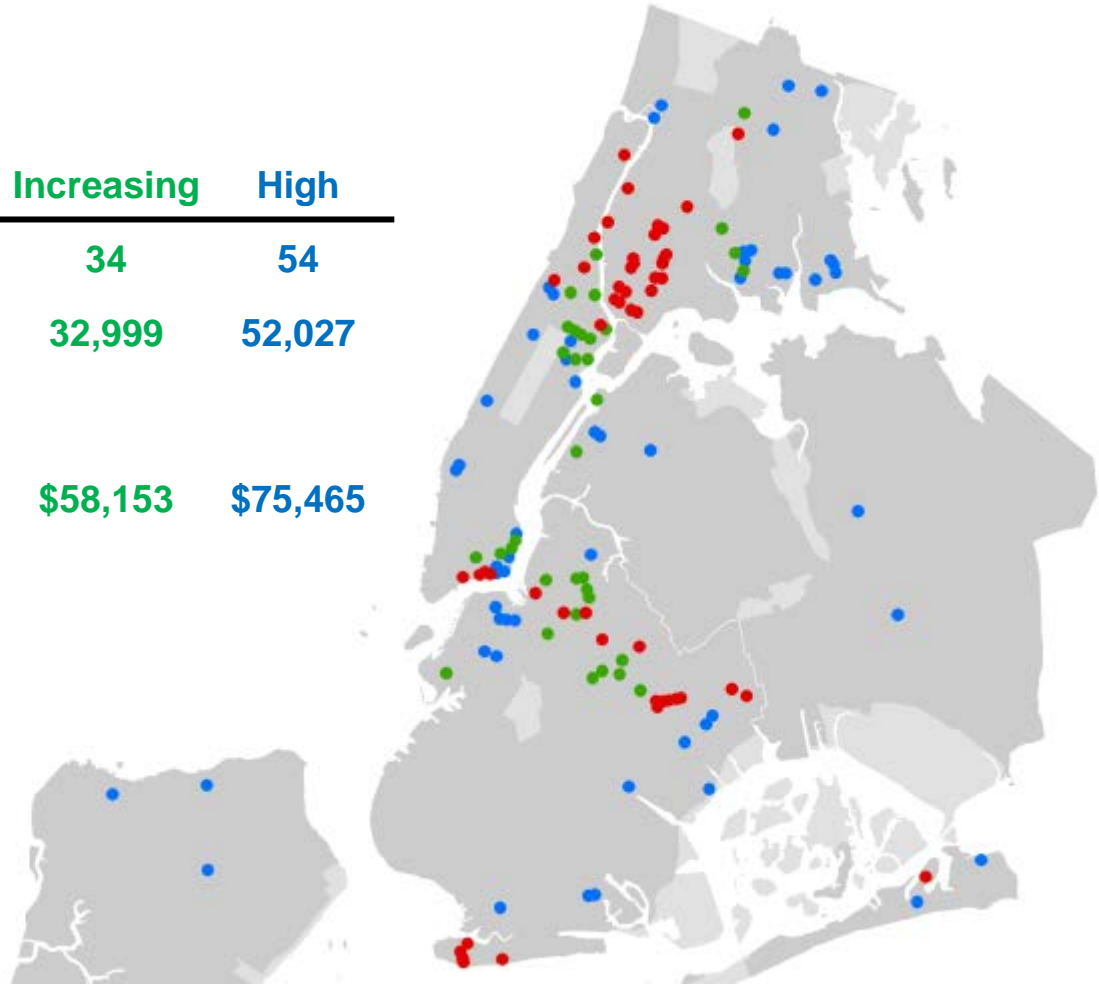
Low

- 41,000 HHs in 49 core areas

Neighborhood classifications



	Low	Increasing	High
Developments	49	34	54
NYCHA units	40,879	32,999	52,027
Surrounding neighborhood average income (2010)	\$39,452	\$58,153	\$75,465



Surrounding neighborhood characteristics are correlated with income



Indicator (surrounding neighborhood)	Low	Increasing	High	NYC
Average income	\$39,452	\$58,153	\$75,465	\$81,374
% Bachelor's degree +	12%	28%	36%	34%
Homeownership rate	10%	12%	30%	33%
Housing code violation (annual per 1000 units)	95	76	32	54
Minority share	92%	84%	74%	67%

Income, bachelor's degree, and homeowner rate: American Community Survey (2008-2012)

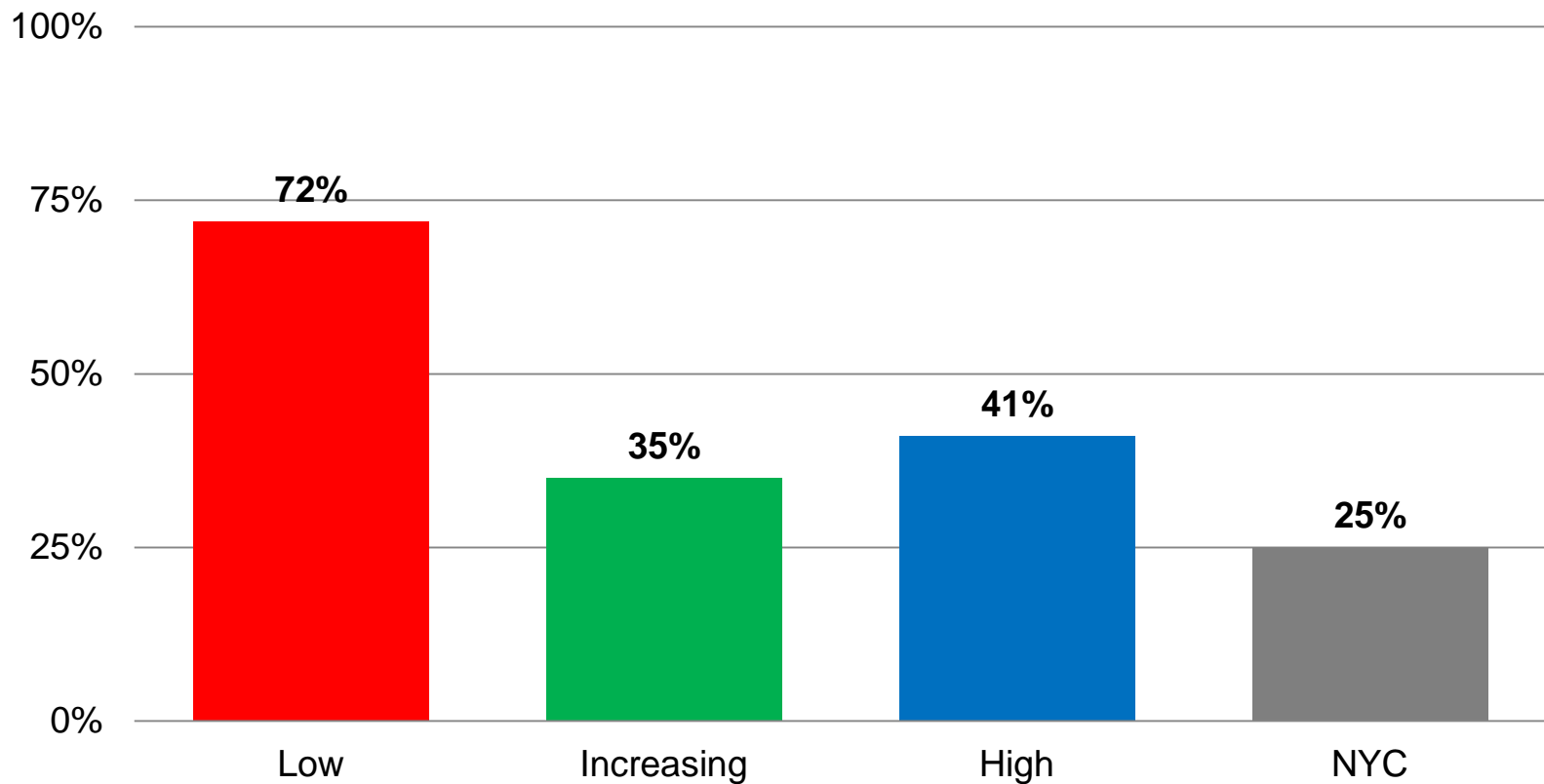
Housing code violations per 1000 units: NYC HPD, ACS, Furman Center

- May combine to influence outcome differences for NYCHA residents

Public school access



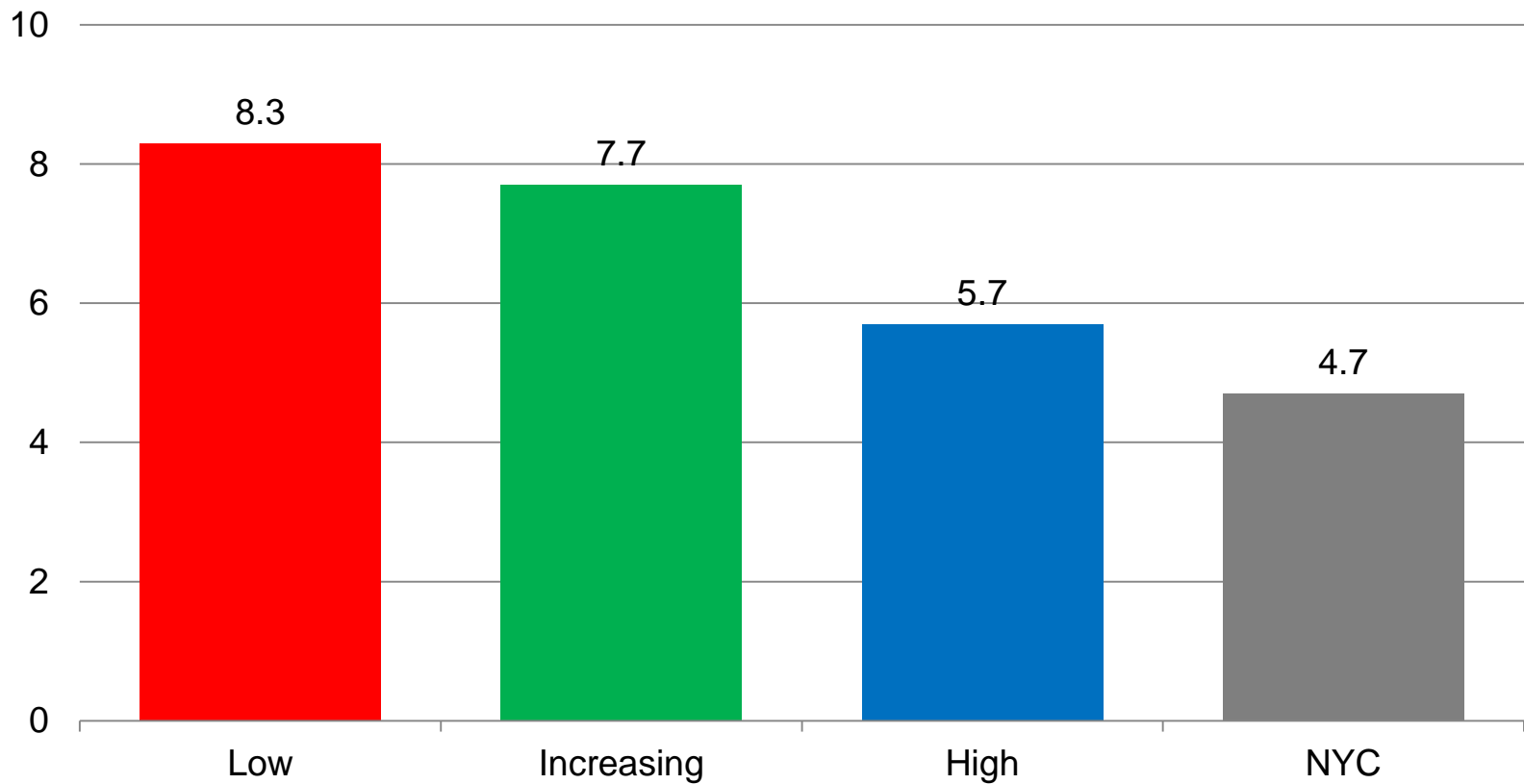
Share of NYCHA units zoned for attendance at a public school with low math proficiency



Exposure to crime



Violent crime rate per 1,000 residents, NYCHA campus and surrounding neighborhood



NYCHA resident employment and earnings

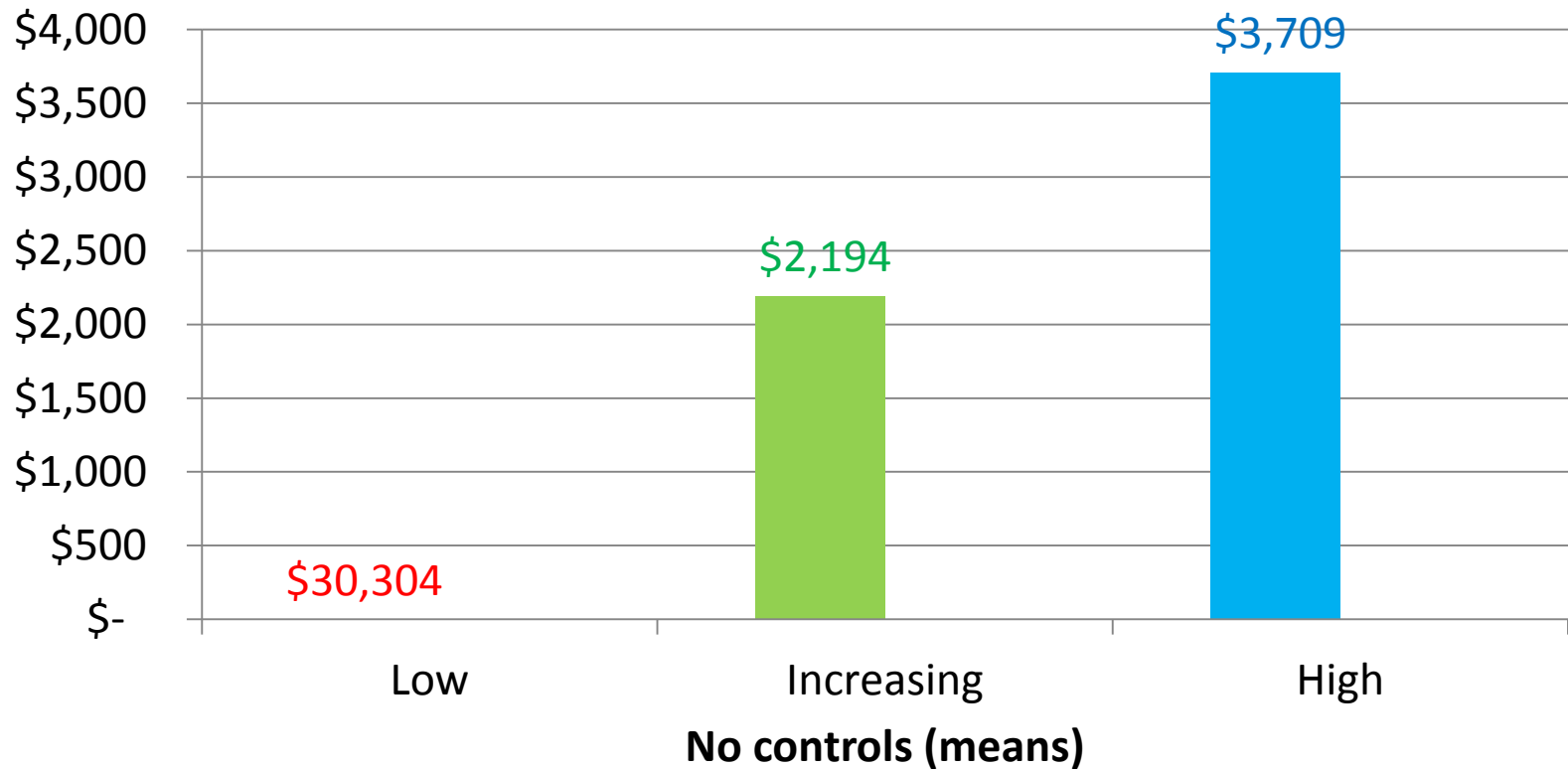


NYCHA resident outcome	Classification based on surrounding neighborhood income		
	Low	Increasing	High
Median household annual income	\$19,500	\$20,698	\$21,648
Median household annual earnings (when > \$0)	\$25,199	\$28,167	\$29,702
Residents with any earned income	54.6%	55.2%	56.5%

Earnings gap robust to controls



Regression coefficients: Household Earned Income > 0

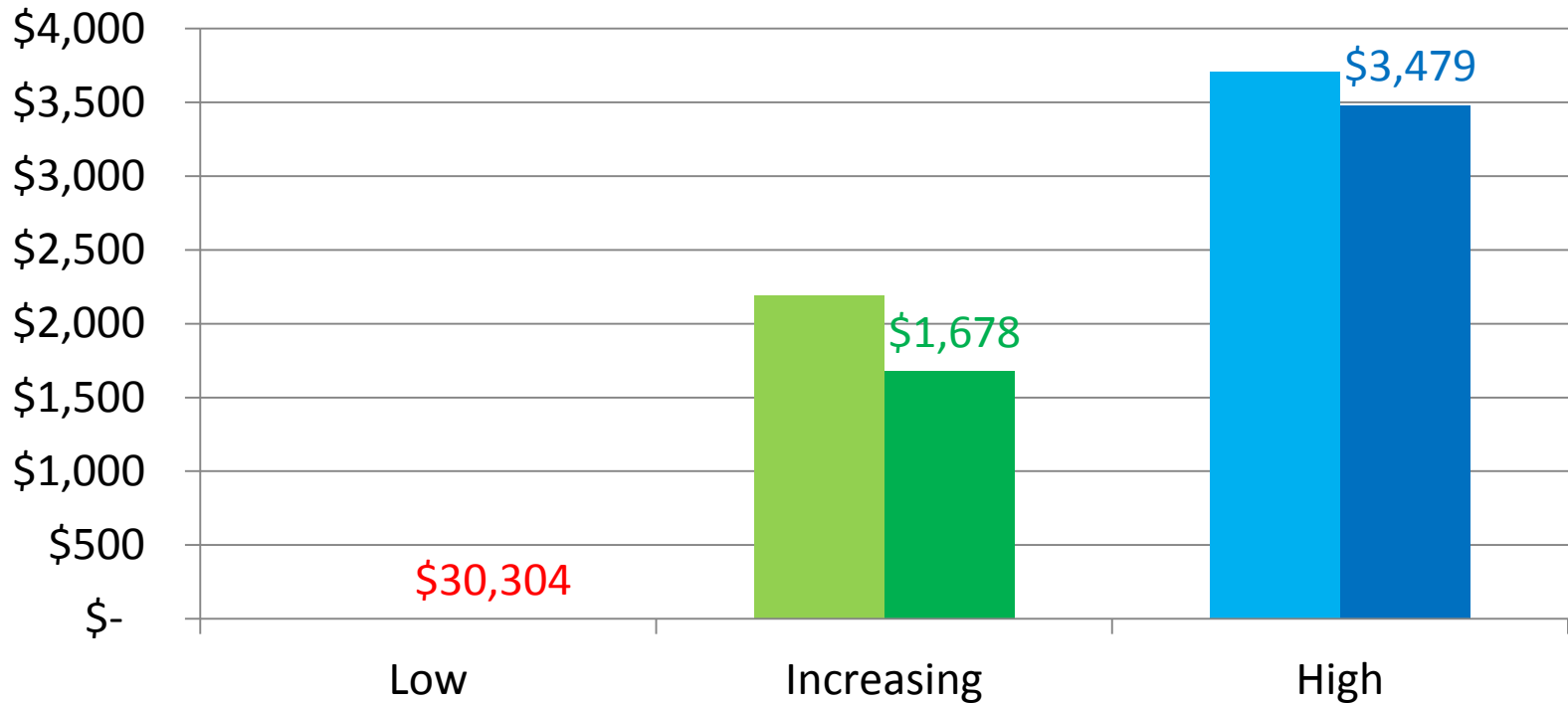


N (HH yrs): 264,474

Earnings gap robust to controls



Regression coefficients: Household Earned Income > 0



Full controls: Age, age², yrs in nycha, yrs², HH composition, race/ethnicity, outer borough, and year dummies

N (HH yrs): 264,474

There is no clear evidence of NYCHA residents sorting across developments



NYCHA Resident Characteristics, 2008 - 2013

Resident characteristic	Low	Increasing	High
Hispanic	46.2%	44.9%	40.7%
Black	44.1%	45.7%	47.8%
HH composition categories	similar		
Over 25yrs old	50.6%	52.1%	52.7%
Males (age 25-39)	29.3%	29.3%	29.4%

NYCHA admin records

- Limited choice and transfers → less opportunity for sorting
- Borough preference for high-needs households (e.g. homeless), development preferences for working families → some sorting

Rapid ethnographic assessments



- Low: Morris Heights (Sedgwick Houses)
- Increasing: Long Island City (Queensbridge Houses)
- High: Chelsea (Elliott-Chelsea and Fulton Houses)
- Partnered with CBOs and hired residents as Community Ethnographers
- Public observations, street interviews, household interviews, focus groups, personal experience

Rapid ethnographic assessments



- Dramatic changes noted in Chelsea and Long Island City
 - Generally appreciated new amenities and improvements
 - Some sense of alienation: “not for us”, divide between NYCHA campus and surrounding neighborhood
- Challenges remain in employment, enrichment for young people, and making ends meet
 - Increase in cost of living

Policy implications



- Gentrification can lead to improved neighborhood environments and access to amenities for assisted households that remain in place
- Suggests place-based policies that preserve affordable housing can have positive neighborhood effects for low-income households
- Public housing maintains some income mix in NYC
- Some sense of alienation along with recognition of positive aspects of change by residents