

Executive Summary

It is no secret that inequalities in New York City (NYC), in the United States, and around the world are vast and that they are growing. We view equality as a basic human right, yet systematic and persistent forms of discrimination are deeply embedded in society's very framework. The problems of individuals living in poverty, the justice-involved, women, and ethnic or religious minorities, to name a few, are not new. They are the ones historically left out of jobs, civic participation, improvements in wellbeing, and engagement with society. But with the launch of the Equality Indicators last year, we found a new way for them to stand up and be counted.

The purpose of the Equality Indicators is to investigate whether NYC is making progress in reducing inequality on an annual basis. Last year, we established the baseline against which progress would be measured. This year, for the first time we can see whether progress is being made and where, and begin to explore why (or why not).

In envisioning our framework, we recognized that inequalities exist across numerous areas of life, and that these areas are inextricably linked to another. We choose six foundational domains in which to track progress for those most likely to experience inequalities: **Economy, Education, Health, Housing, Justice, and Services**. Data are collected from a number of sources ranging from government agencies, to Census surveys, to our own public survey of New Yorkers conducted each year.

The Equality Indicators framework consists of the six **themes** described above, each divided into four **topics** consisting of four *indicators*, 96 indicators in total. Each year, we calculate a static score for that year, and then a score measuring change. The static citywide, theme, topic, and indicator scores range from 1 to 100, with the former representing the most inequality and the latter representing the least inequality. Scores for each of the 96 individual indicators drive scores at each of the successively higher levels: scores for the four indicators under each topic are averaged to produce the score for that topic; the four topic scores under each theme are averaged to produce the score for that theme; and the six theme scores are averaged to produce a citywide score. Change scores at citywide, theme, topic, and indicator level are produced by simply subtracting the previous year's static score from the current year's static score.

Based on feedback from City agencies and other organizations, as well as taking another critical look at data and the policy context surrounding specific measures, we made several types of changes to the indicators this year. While some of these changes involved only changes to the year in which data were scored, we replaced eight indicators and made substantive changes to the definitions or data sources of 11. In all cases, if we made a change to this year's indicator, we also changed last year's indicator; for this reason, the 2015 scores do not precisely map onto what was reported last year.

We believe the insights our framework offers can be used to guide better public policy. Identifying the most persistent problem areas within the framework gives us the opportunity to work on solutions. Therefore, once we have our findings, we connect them to current policy initiatives and consider how they and new initiatives can improve outcomes for disadvantaged residents of the city.

More information is contained in the full report and online at equalityindicators.org.

2016 NYC EQUALITY SCORE

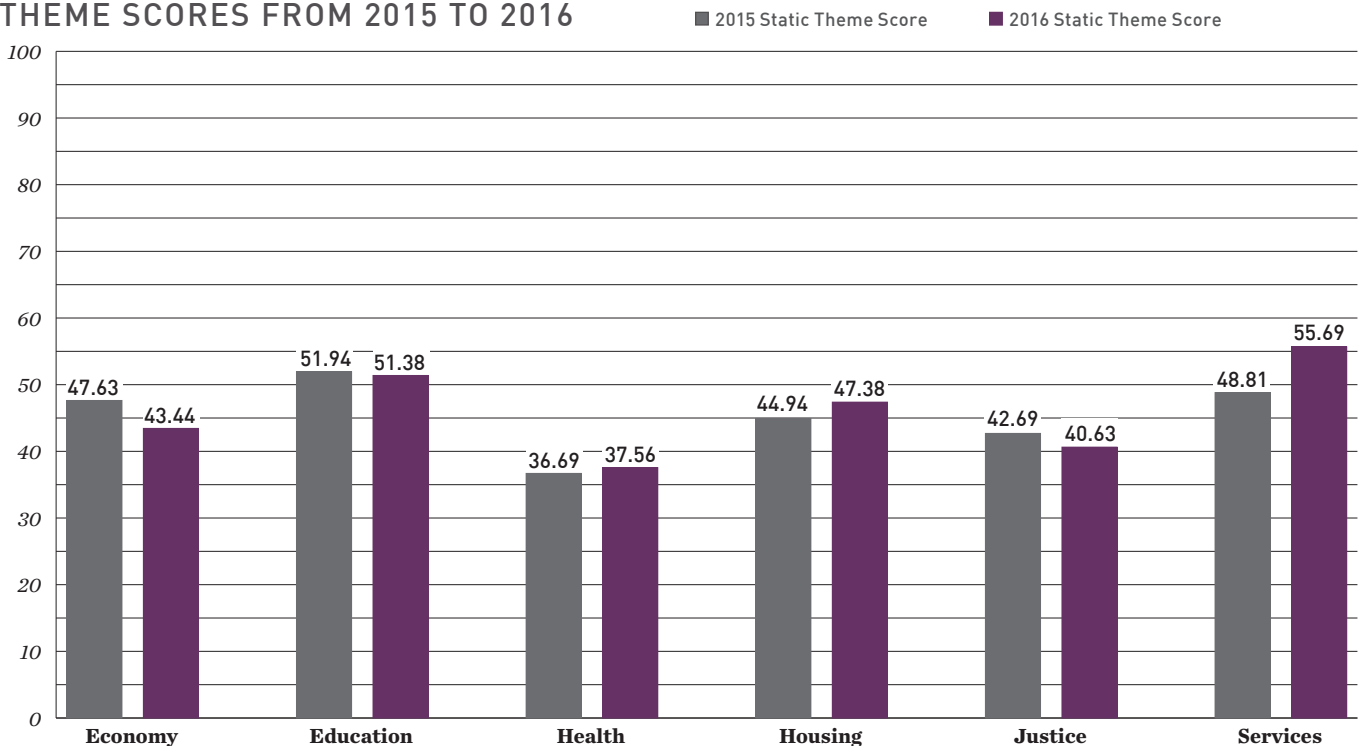
The **2016 NYC Equality Score is 46.01** out of a possible 100, an **increase of +0.56** from the 2015 score of 45.45. These scores suggest that NYC continues to be characterized by vast inequalities, and that when looking at the city as a whole, little has changed. Generally speaking this score means that overall, the disadvantaged groups represented here are almost twice as likely as those not disadvantaged to experience negative outcomes in fundamental areas of life, as measured by the Equality Indicators.

OTHER KEY FINDINGS: THEME, TOPIC, AND INDICATOR SCORES

2016 THEME SCORES

Among the six themes, the largest positive change—accompanied by the highest static score—was found in **Services** (+6.88), and the largest negative change in **Economy** (-4.19). **Housing** (+2.44) and **Justice** (-2.06) demonstrated similar amounts of change to one another, yet that change was positive for the former and negative for the latter. Both **Education** (-0.56) and **Health** (+0.88) remained largely unchanged at the theme level, although their scores were moving in different directions.

THEME SCORES FROM 2015 TO 2016

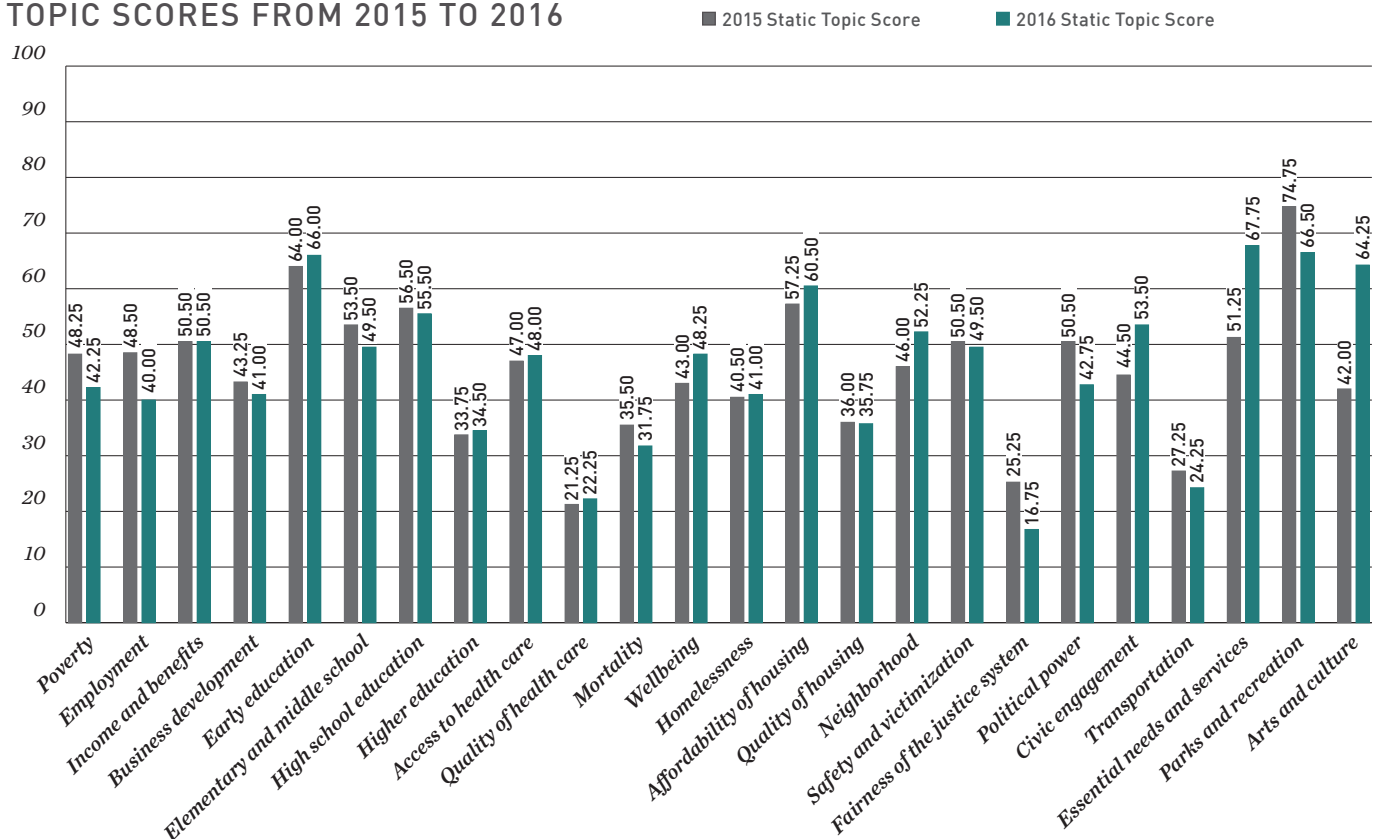


2016 TOPIC SCORES

Within the 24 topics, change scores range from an increase of +22.25 for **Arts and Culture** to a decrease of -8.50 for **Employment** and **Fairness of the Justice System**. Of the five biggest positive topic changes, two were from the theme of **Services** (**Arts and Culture**: +22.25; **Essential Needs and Services**: +16.50), one from **Justice** (**Civic Engagement**: +9.00), one from **Housing** (**Neighborhood**: +6.25), and one from **Health** (**Wellbeing**: +5.25). Of the five biggest negative changes, two were from the theme of **Economy** (**Employment**: -8.50; **Poverty**, -6.00), two from **Justice** (**Fairness of the Justice System**: -8.50; **Political Power**: -7.75), and one from **Services** (**Parks and Recreation**: -8.25). Interestingly, **Education** was the only theme without extreme changes in topic scores; scores for this theme ranged from -4.00 (**Early and Middle School Education**) to +2.00 (**Early Education**).

Three of the topics had extremely low static scores, below 25. **Fairness of the Justice System** had the lowest static score (16.75) followed by **Quality of Health Care** (22.25), and **Transportation** (24.25). At the other end of the spectrum, while there were no scores above 70, **Essential Needs and Services** had the highest static score (67.75), followed by **Parks and Recreation** (66.50), and **Early Education** (66.00).

TOPIC SCORES FROM 2015 TO 2016



2016 INDICATOR SCORES

At the indicator level, we saw a much wider variation in scores, some with dramatic changes. Change scores range from a high of +60 (*location and public library availability*) to a low of -46 (*disability and unemployment*). Overall, 12 indicators had change scores of +10 or above, showing the greatest amount of positive change. On the other hand, there were nine indicators that had change scores below -10, showing the greatest amount of negative change.

This year, two indicators had static scores of 100, indicating equality across the groups measured, in both cases, based on location: *location and public library availability* and *location and senior access to the arts*. Both of these were based on specific policy changes made by the City, in the first case setting targets to increase the number of days libraries in all boroughs were open, and in the second case greatly expanding a program which places artists in senior centers throughout the city. Two additional indicators had scores above 90: *location and hospital quality* (94), and *sexual orientation and housing stability* (93).

Five indicators had static scores of 10 or below. With a score of 1, the highest amount of inequality as measured by the Equality Indicators, *probation status and employment* received the lowest score, followed by *religion and trust in police* (6), *race and jail admissions* (8), *race and homelessness* (10), and *income and funding for the arts* (10).

CONCLUSION

The scope of inequality in NYC can only be lessened by gradual shifts in attitudes and awareness. As a society we prize individual achievement, but inequality is a problem requiring a different focus. More informed public policy decisions and more just allocation of critical resources is a good place to start. Combatting inequality will require candid assessment of where we are failing the most vulnerable. These data are designed to serve that purpose. Our measures are not weighted; society's should not be either. Too often the scales tip in favor of the more advantaged members. It is our hope that this framework can help in the efforts to restore some balance. If it prompts people to think differently about inequality and how they contribute to mitigating or exacerbating it, then we have done our job.