



## **A Jobs Crisis for Low-Income New Yorkers**

By David R. Jones  
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In the Community Service Society's annual survey of New York residents, *The Unheard Third 2010*, 31 percent of Latino respondents report losing their jobs or having their wages, hours, or tips reduced in the past year. Amongst all unemployed, low-income New Yorkers, two-thirds have been out of work for more than a year; 31 percent have been jobless for three years or more.

*The Unheard Third 2010* reveals that for low-income New Yorkers, there has been no recovery, and there is none in sight. Low-income families continue to experience high levels of job loss, rising under-employment, and acute worries related to jobs and financial security. The survey is the 9<sup>th</sup> annual edition of the only poll in the nation to regularly gauge the opinions and experiences of low-income urban residents. It was conducted in July and August 2010.

The lack of jobs has eclipsed the economy as New York's biggest problem, and most New Yorkers do not see signs of improvement in either the economy or the job market. Thirty percent of all respondents across income groups, including 36 percent of low-income respondents and 33 percent of low-income Latinos, name the lack of jobs or unemployment as the top problem facing the city.

*The Unheard Third 2010* also highlights sobering effects of the jobs crisis. Sixty percent of low-income respondents are worried that their household won't be working enough hours to make ends meet in the next year, with a similar number worried about losing their jobs. Thirty-one percent of all respondents, and 40 percent of low-income respondents, feel they have little or no control over their personal economic situations. In addition, one-third of low-income respondents reported that they have no savings in case of an emergency.

The jobs crisis and its effects have particularly impacted low-income working mothers. Half of low-income, working, custodial mothers report losing a job or having their hours, wages, or tips reduced in the last year, one-third fell behind in rent or mortgage payments, and 3 in 10 report having unpaid medical bills.

The alarming results of *The Unheard Third 2010* call for immediate action on behalf of New York's workers and families. Policy makers at all levels of government must directly address the jobs crisis, creating jobs programs for the unemployed to put people back to work, and strengthening essential safety net supports such as Unemployment Insurance.

The federal government should be providing more aid to the states and large cities, which must balance their budgets. Greater aid would stem layoffs by government agencies. A public/private effort – along the lines of President Obama's jobs bank policy – is necessary to create jobs across the country. This

would have the added benefit of upgrading the nation's infrastructure, which would be a long-term investment in the economy. It could also provide jobs for young people who have dropped out of school and have no job skills.

Labor unions should be recruiting high school students who will not be going on to college in order to provide them with a pipeline to apprenticeships and, ultimately, to jobs in various industries. A national effort to focus on early education is necessary in order to cut back on the numbers of young people dropping out of high schools.

Further findings from *The Unheard Third 2010* to be released later this fall will detail more impacts of the lingering recession, including high levels of hardships related to food, health care, and housing, and worries about meeting daily financial needs and commitments among low-income New Yorkers. The initial results of *The Unheard Third 2010* are available online at [www.cssny.org](http://www.cssny.org).

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