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City's hard hats call Queens home

By Rich Bockmann

The largest share of the five boroughs' resident hard hats lived in Queens in 2012, and while the construction workforce grew from the previous year, it was still significantly lower than its pre-recession levels.

More than 70,000 construction workers — or 38.2 percent of the industry's resident workforce — lived in Queens in 2012, according to an analysis of the Census' American Community Survey data by the New York Building Congress.

That put the borough ahead of Brooklyn (31.9 percent), the Bronx (14.4) percent, Staten Island (8 percent) and Manhattan (7.5 percent).

Overall, the number of city residents employed by the industry climbed 3 percent to about 185,000 workers between 2011 and 2012, but the ranks were still around 28,000 smaller than in 2007.

“We are encouraged to see a 3 percent increase in the number of New York City residents actively employed in the construction industry,” New York Building Congress President Richard Anderson said. “However, it is worth noting that, even after this 2012 increase, the industry in 2012 employed nearly 28,000 less workers than it did in 2007. Our hope and expectation is that most, if not all, of these lost jobs will be recaptured as part of a rising construction market between 2013 and 2015.”

Results for the Census' survey, which were released in mid-December, are self-reported by individuals, so the snapshot captures the “off-the-books” workers employed in the industry.



Photo by Christina Santucci

More of the city's construction workers live in Queens than any other borough, according to a recent analysis of census data.

About 82 percent of the industry's workforce was directly involved in construction activities, with the remainder made up of white-collar jobs such as managers and sales professionals as well as service jobs like security officers and maintenance workers, the congress said.

Construction workers living in Queens had the third-highest median earnings in 2012 at \$31,731 — just slightly below the \$32,155 average across the five boroughs.

Staten Island (\$47,236) and Manhattan (\$37,920) had the highest median earnings, though both boroughs saw a decrease from 2011.

And although Queens served as the heart of the industry's workforce, construction jobs accounted for only about 6.5 percent of the borough's 1.1 million workers.

Educational services and healthcare and social assistance jobs accounted for 23.5 percent of the borough's workforce and jobs classified as arts, entertainment, recreation and food services made up about 12 percent. Other top industries include professional services, retail, finance and real estate, transportation and warehousing and "other services."