The Health of East New York and New Lots

Brooklyn

(Including Cypress Hills)
This community health profile highlights important health issues facing the residents of East New York and New Lots, with a special focus on preventable causes of illness and death. Preventing illness requires people making healthy life choices, neighborhood resources that promote healthy living, and high-quality, accessible medical care.

New York City is the most diverse city in the U.S. This is reflected in the unique character of each neighborhood. Strategies to improve New Yorkers’ health should take local concerns into account and be based on an understanding of how decisions at the city level affect local residents. The burden of illness and death does not fall equally across New York City’s neighborhoods. One of the primary goals of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is to reduce and eliminate these disparities by improving health in communities with the greatest need.

Improving the health of all New Yorkers requires the involvement and cooperation of individual residents, community-based organizations, and the public health community. We hope that this health profile will support this effort in East New York and New Lots and across New York City.

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Commissioner

Snapshots From the Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People in East New York and New Lots are younger than the New York City average</th>
<th>East New York/New Lots</th>
<th>New York City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children (0-17 years)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults (18-64 years)</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults (65 years and above)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared to New York City as a whole, more people in East New York and New Lots are of African-American and Hispanic race/ethnicity

1 in 3 residents of East New York and New Lots was born outside the U.S. (Top 3 countries of origin: Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica)

East New York/New Lots New York City

33% foreign-born 36% foreign-born
In a recent survey, adults in East New York and New Lots and across New York City were asked to rate their own health. The options were “Excellent,” “Very Good,” “Good,” “Fair,” and “Poor.” In East New York and New Lots, 29% said their health is “Poor” or “Fair.” How people rate their own health is a good indication of the overall health of a community.

Please see the technical notes on page 11 for details on how these measures were calculated.

In a recent survey, adults in East New York and New Lots and across New York City were asked to rate their own health. The options were “Excellent,” “Very Good,” “Good,” “Fair,” and “Poor.” In East New York and New Lots, 29% said their health is “Poor” or “Fair.” How people rate their own health is a good indication of the overall health of a community.
Heart disease, cancer, and AIDS caused the most deaths in 2001 among East New York and New Lots residents. Death rates were generally higher in East New York and New Lots than in New York City as a whole, particularly for AIDS, diabetes, drug-related deaths, and homicide.

### Leading Causes of Death in East New York and New Lots, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>East New York/ New Lots</th>
<th>New York City</th>
<th>East New York/ New Lots compared to NYC as a whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of deaths</td>
<td>Death rate (per 100,000 people)*</td>
<td>Death rate (per 100,000 people)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All causes</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>918</td>
<td>736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart disease</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumonia and influenza</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug-related</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents and injuries</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic lung disease</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Age-adjusted

### Premature death

People who die before age 75 can be thought of as dying prematurely. The difference between 75 years and the age of a person who dies before that is called the “years of potential life lost.” Almost two thirds of the years of potential life lost in East New York and New Lots were due to 4 causes: heart disease/stroke, cancer, violence (including homicide and accidents), and AIDS.
Causes of hospitalization

Heart disease is the leading cause of adult hospitalization in East New York and New Lots. The hospitalization data also reveal the burden of illness due to mental illness, drug use, and alcohol abuse, as well as injuries and asthma. Hospitalization rates in East New York and New Lots are generally higher than in New York City as a whole.

### Leading Causes of Hospitalization in Adults in East New York and New Lots, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>East New York/ New Lots</th>
<th>New York City</th>
<th>East New York/New Lots compared to NYC as a whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of admissions</td>
<td>Admission rate (per 100,000 people)*</td>
<td>Admission rate (per 100,000 people)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All causes</td>
<td>18,975</td>
<td>18,145</td>
<td>14,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart disease</td>
<td>1,981</td>
<td>2,245</td>
<td>1,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents and injuries</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td>1,269</td>
<td>1,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Illness</td>
<td>1,088</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug-related</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumonia and influenza</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol-related</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Age-adjusted

Mental illness

Depression is a common and serious health problem that often goes undiagnosed but is treatable. Other treatable mental health problems, such as anxiety, affect many New Yorkers. The high number of hospitalizations for mental illness among East New York and New Lots residents is one indication of the burden of mental illness there. In addition, in a recent telephone survey, 8% of adults in East New York and New Lots — corresponding to about 9,000 people — reported experiencing serious emotional distress.
HIV/AIDS

While the number of AIDS deaths has dropped dramatically across New York City over the past decade, HIV/AIDS remains a very serious public health problem. More than a thousand East New York and New Lots residents are living with HIV/AIDS.

### HIV/AIDS in East New York and New Lots, 2001

| Number of people newly diagnosed with HIV | 181 |
| Number of people living with HIV/AIDS     | 1,694 |

The health of mothers and children is an important measure of the overall health of a community. Ensuring that children get a healthy start and learn healthy behaviors has many long-term benefits.

### Maternal and infant health

Three important measures of maternal and infant health are:

1. Early prenatal care (care initiated in the first trimester)
2. Low birthweight, which increases the risk for many health problems
3. Infant mortality (deaths of babies under one year of age)

East New York and New Lots are higher than the citywide average for all these indicators.
**Children’s health**

**Asthma**
Asthma affects a large number of New York City’s children and is a leading cause of missed school days and hospitalizations. The asthma hospitalization rate in East New York and New Lots is higher than in New York City as a whole. There were 462 asthma hospitalizations among children in East New York and New Lots in 2001.

**Injuries**
Injury is a preventable threat to children’s health. In 2001, 303 children in East New York and New Lots were hospitalized with injuries, including those from falls, burns, and motor-vehicle crashes.

**Lead poisoning**
Lead can cause neurologic, learning, and behavioral problems, and lowered intelligence. While the number of lead-poisoned children in New York City has decreased over the past decade, the goal is to eliminate lead poisoning by preventing children’s exposure to lead paint and other sources of lead. There were 233 children newly diagnosed with lead poisoning in East New York and New Lots in 2001 (defined as blood levels over 10 µg/dL).
Promoting healthy behaviors and reducing risks

**Smoking**

Smoking causes heart disease, stroke, emphysema, lung cancer, and many other illnesses. Currently, about one quarter of adults in East New York and New Lots smoke. Most, however, want to quit, and more than half tried last year. There are a number of highly effective strategies, including medication (such as the nicotine patch) and counseling, to help smokers quit.

![Bar graph showing smoking rates in East New York and New Lots compared to New York City.](image1)

**Exercise, obesity, and diabetes**

As New Yorkers exercise less and eat more, we are becoming more overweight. Being overweight puts people at risk for heart disease and many other health problems, especially diabetes. Diabetes is a chronic illness that can lead to heart attack, blindness, kidney failure, and amputations. Many New Yorkers are not getting enough exercise and are obese.* Even modest increases in exercise and reductions in weight can reduce the risk of diabetes by more than half.

![Bar graph showing exercise participation and obesity rates in East New York and New Lots compared to New York City.](image2)

---

* The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that adults get either moderate exercise for at least 30 minutes, 5 or more times per week, or vigorous exercise for at least 20 minutes, 3 or more times per week. Obesity is defined by someone’s “weight for height” — otherwise known as the “body mass index” or BMI — being over 30. “Overweight” is defined by a BMI over 25. Everyone should aim for a BMI less than 25. For example, a 5’10” man who weighs less than 175 lbs and a 5’4” woman who weighs less than 145 lbs have BMIs less than 25. To calculate BMI, visit [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/bmi-adult.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/bmi-adult.htm).
Alcohol
Heavy drinking is responsible for many preventable illnesses, injuries, and deaths, including those caused by motor-vehicle crashes and other accidents, liver disease, and cancer. One pattern of alcohol misuse that can lead to violence and health problems is “binge” drinking (consuming 5 or more drinks on one occasion).

Risk behaviors for HIV
Many adults in East New York and New Lots — nearly 1 in 12 — report at least one of the following behaviors that put them at risk for HIV: using injection drugs, having unprotected anal intercourse, exchanging sex or drugs for money, or having a sexually transmitted disease.
Medical Care

Opportunities for prevention
The medical community — doctors, nurses, counselors, and others — can help prevent illness. Screening and treatment for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and cancer can prolong life. Flu and pneumonia vaccinations prevent many hospitalizations and deaths. Counseling to quit smoking or control drinking is highly effective and helps people who want to improve their health.

Access to care
Preventing and treating illness depends on people’s ability to access high-quality medical care. This means having health insurance and a “medical home” — a personal doctor or nurse practitioner. Many East New York and New Lots residents have poor access to medical care: about 16,000 people report no current health care coverage; 16,000 people did not get needed medical care in the past year; and 36,000 people do not have a personal doctor.

Cancer screening and other preventive services
Cancer screening and other clinical services can prevent or reduce the severity of many illnesses. This graph shows how rates in East New York and New Lots compare to New York City as a whole and to some national goals.
Vulnerable Populations

People’s ability to increase healthy behaviors and improve their health is influenced by the conditions in which they live. A healthy environment that includes adequate housing, neighborhood resources such as supermarkets and parks, community services such as daycare, and safety, is essential in preventing disease and promoting health. The graph below gives an indication of the vulnerability of East New York and New Lots residents, reflected in high rates of not graduating from high school, living in poverty, and feeling unsafe in their neighborhood.

![Vulnerability graph](image)

### Technical notes

#### Data sources

- Mortality, years of potential life lost, infant mortality, low birthweight, late prenatal care: NYCDOHMH/Office of Vital Statistics
- Self-reported health status, depression/anxiety symptoms, smoking, exercise, obesity, diabetes, alcohol, drugs/risky sexual practices, access to medical care, clinical preventive services, neighborhood safety: NYCDOHMH/Division of Epidemiology/NYC Community Health Survey 2002
- Lead poisoning: NYCDOHMH Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
- Hospitalizations: New York State Department of Health/Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System
- Population (total, race/ethnicity, foreign-born, percent in poverty, education): New York City Department of City Planning/Census 2000 data
- National goals: US Department of Health and Human Services/Healthy People 2010

#### How the report card was calculated

Ranks in each category were computed by combining several standardized (z-scores) measures within the following categories:

- **General health**: Self-reported health status and all-cause mortality rate
- **Maternal and child health**: All “Health of Mothers and Children” indices
- **Infectious disease**: People living with HIV, pneumonia and influenza mortality, tuberculosis incidence, and gonorrhea incidence
- **Chronic diseases**: Mortality and hospital admissions for heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and lung disease
- **Prevention in doctors’ offices**: All listed indices
- **Access to medical care**: All listed indices

All rates are age-standardized to the NCHS Year 2000 standard. Mortality rates do not include residents of NYC who died outside the city. Infant mortality rates are 3-year averages, 1999-2001. Death rates are rounded to the nearest whole number; however, percentage differences between neighborhood and NYC rates are calculated based on more precise values.

Geographic definitions of neighborhoods are based on zip code aggregations (from the United Hospital Fund, New York, NY).

For more information on data collection and analysis, including detailed tables, please visit [www.nyc.gov/health](http://www.nyc.gov/health).

**Cover Photograph**: Highland Park, Brooklyn. Photo by Adam Karpati.
Reports on 41 other New York City neighborhoods are available from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene by visiting: nyc.gov/health

by e-mailing: profiles@health.nyc.gov

or by writing to:
Community Health Profiles
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Division of Epidemiology
125 Worth Street, Room 315, CN-6
New York, NY 10013

For more information about the health issues covered in this report, please call 311.