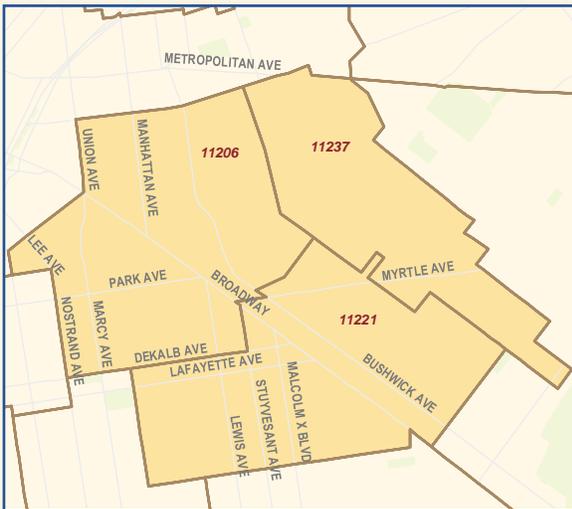


# Community Health Profiles

New York City Department  
of Health and Mental Hygiene



[nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)



## The Health of Bushwick and Williamsburg

*Brooklyn*

# Message From the Commissioner

This community health profile highlights important health issues facing the residents of Bushwick and Williamsburg, 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 Bushwick and Williamsburg and across New York City.

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH  
Commissioner

## Snapshots From the Census

Number of people living  
in Bushwick and  
Williamsburg in 2000:

**194,305**

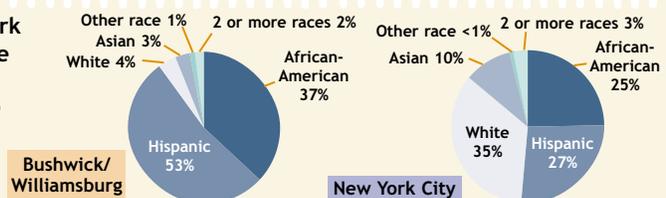
### Age

People in  
Bushwick and  
Williamsburg are  
younger than the  
New York City  
average

	Bushwick and Williamsburg	New York City
Children (0-17 years)	33%	24%
Adults (18-64 years)	60%	64%
Adults (65 years and above)	8%	12%

### Race/Ethnicity

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



### Country of Origin

Almost one third of Bushwick and Williamsburg residents were born outside the U.S. (Top 3 countries of origin: Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico)

	Bushwick and Williamsburg	New York City
foreign-born	27%	36%

# Report Card on Health

This summary shows how the health of residents of Bushwick and Williamsburg compares to 41 other neighborhoods in New York City. In general, people in Bushwick and Williamsburg have a heavy burden of illness and mortality. The challenge of improving these indicators does not fall only on neighborhood residents but is a shared responsibility between all sectors of society.

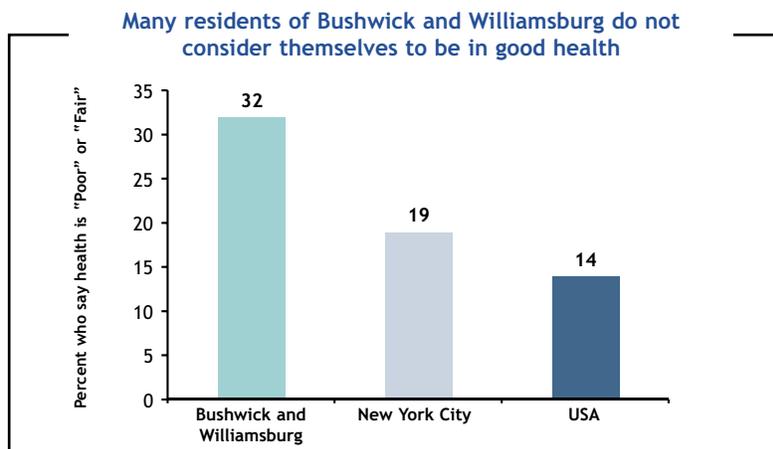
## Bushwick and Williamsburg compared to 41 other NYC neighborhoods

	Below Average (bottom 10)	Average (middle 22)	Above Average (top 10)
General health	✓		
Maternal and child health	✓		
Infectious diseases (including pneumonia, influenza, HIV/AIDS)	✓		
Chronic diseases (including heart disease, diabetes, lung diseases)	✓		
Prevention in doctors' offices (including cancer screening and immunizations)		✓	
Access to medical care	✓		

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

# How Residents Rate Their Own Health

In a recent survey, adults in Bushwick and Williamsburg and across New York City were asked to rate their own health. The options were "Excellent," "Very Good," "Good," "Fair," and "Poor." In Bushwick and Williamsburg, 32% said their health is "Poor" or "Fair." How people rate their own health is a good indication of the overall health of a community.



# Major Causes of Death and Hospital Admissions

Many deaths from heart disease, the biggest killer in New York City and nationwide, are caused by preventable or controllable factors, such as smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and obesity.

Heart disease, cancer, and AIDS caused the most deaths in 2001 among Bushwick and Williamsburg residents. The death rates for all causes were higher in Bushwick and Williamsburg than in New York City as a whole, particularly for AIDS, diabetes, drug-related deaths, and homicide.

Leading Causes of Death in Bushwick and Williamsburg, 2001

	Bushwick and Williamsburg		New York City	Bushwick/Williamsburg compared to NYC as a whole	
	No. of deaths	Death rate (per 100,000 people)*	Death rate (per 100,000 people)*	Higher by	Lower by
All causes	1,276	995	736	35%	
Heart disease	386	336	304	10%	
Cancer	261	202	167	20%	
AIDS	83	50	22	2 times	
Diabetes	57	47	22	2 times	
Stroke	47	38	24	60%	
Drug-related	40	23	10	2 times	
Pneumonia and influenza	39	37	32	15%	
Chronic lung disease	37	31	21	45%	
Accidents and injuries	36	26	15	70%	
Homicide	34	17	7	2 times	

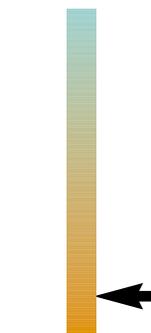
\*Age-adjusted

## 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.” More than two thirds of the years of potential life lost in Bushwick and Williamsburg were due to 4 causes: heart disease/stroke, cancer, AIDS, and violence (including homicide and accidents).

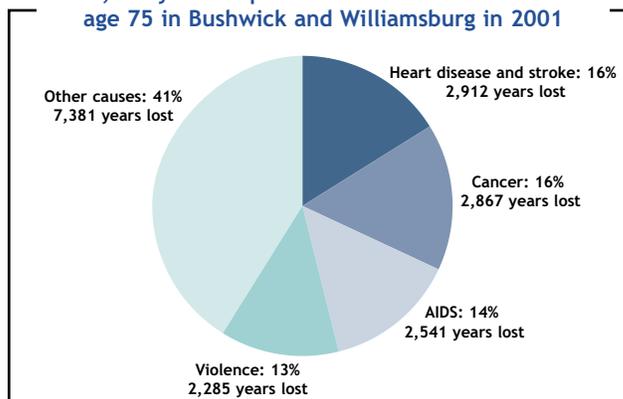
How the overall death rate in Bushwick and Williamsburg ranks among 42 New York City neighborhoods

More healthy



Less healthy

18,000 years of potential life were lost before age 75 in Bushwick and Williamsburg in 2001



## Causes of hospitalization

Heart disease is the leading cause of adult hospitalization in Bushwick and Williamsburg. The hospitalization data also reveal the burden of illness due to mental illness, alcoholism, and drug use, as well as asthma. Hospitalization rates in Bushwick and Williamsburg are generally higher than in New York City as a whole, particularly for drug use, asthma, and diabetes.

**Leading Causes of Hospitalization in Adults in Bushwick and Williamsburg, 2001**

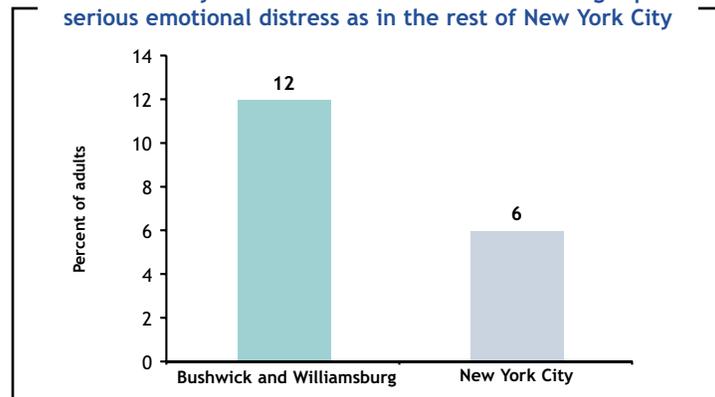
	Bushwick and Williamsburg		New York City	Bushwick/Williamsburg compared to NYC as a whole	
	No. of admissions	Admission rate (per 100,000 people)*	Admission rate (per 100,000 people)*	Higher by	Lower by
<b>All causes</b>	<b>26,948</b>	<b>22,727</b>	<b>14,140</b>	<b>60%</b>	
Heart disease	2,703	2,694	1,744	55%	
Drug-related	1,881	1,300	492	2.5 times	
Accidents and injuries	1,816	1,507	1,209	25%	
Mental Illness	1,413	1,042	671	55%	
Asthma	1,176	991	262	4 times	
Diabetes	999	919	328	3 times	
Alcohol-related	947	720	387	85%	
Pneumonia and influenza	691	662	433	55%	
Cancer	646	625	654		5%
Stroke	576	606	379	60%	

\*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 Bushwick and Williamsburg residents is one indication of the burden of mental illness there. In addition, in a recent telephone survey, 12% of adults in Bushwick and Williamsburg – corresponding to about 15,000 people – reported experiencing serious emotional distress.

**Twice as many adults in Bushwick and Williamsburg report serious emotional distress as in the rest of New York City**



Reducing risky sexual behavior, getting tested for HIV, and ensuring high-quality treatment of all HIV-infected people are effective ways of preventing new HIV infections and AIDS.

## 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. Hundreds of people are diagnosed with HIV each year in Bushwick and Williamsburg, and over two thousand people are living with HIV/AIDS.

### HIV/AIDS in Bushwick and Williamsburg, 2001

Number of people newly diagnosed with HIV	252
Number of people living with HIV/AIDS	2,356

## The Health of Mothers and Children

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

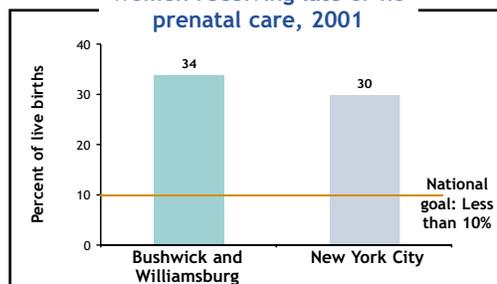
Three important measures of maternal and infant health are:

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)

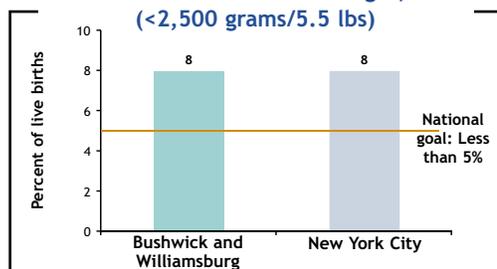
Bushwick and Williamsburg are near the citywide average for all these indicators, but they have not yet reached national goals.

Healthy babies start with healthy mothers who get early, regular, and high-quality prenatal care.

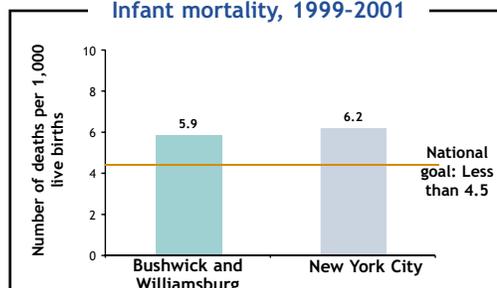
Women receiving late or no prenatal care, 2001



Babies born with low birthweight, 2001 (<2,500 grams/5.5 lbs)



Infant mortality, 1999-2001

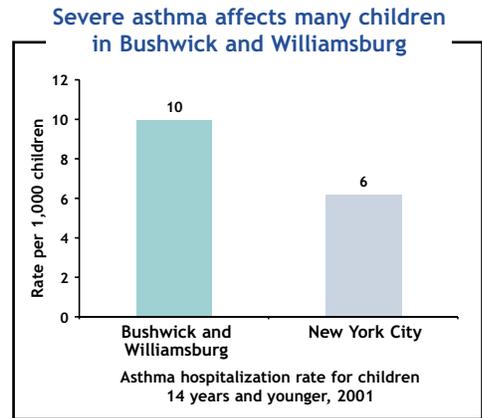


Asthma can be controlled. All children with asthma should have a written “Asthma Action Plan” to help them and their parents know which medicines to take and when to take them, how to avoid asthma triggers, and when to get medical care.

## Children’s health

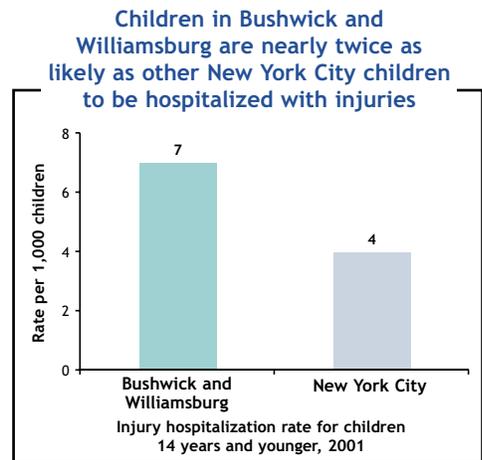
### Asthma

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 Bushwick and Williamsburg is higher than in New York City as a whole. There were 567 asthma hospitalizations among children in Bushwick and Williamsburg in 2001.



### Injuries

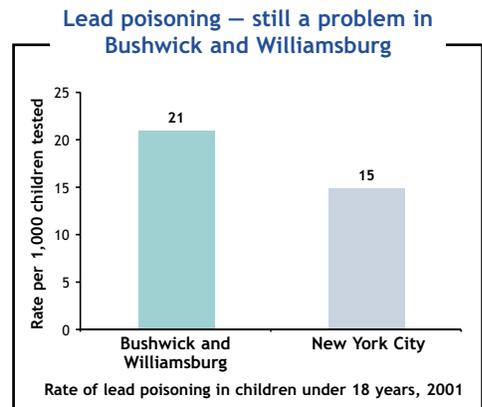
Injury is a preventable threat to children’s health. In 2001, 398 children in Bushwick and Williamsburg were hospitalized with injuries, including those from falls, burns, and motor-vehicle crashes.



All children in New York City must have a blood lead test at 1 and 2 years of age.

### 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 319 children newly diagnosed with lead poisoning in Bushwick and Williamsburg in 2001 (defined as blood levels over 10 µg/dL).



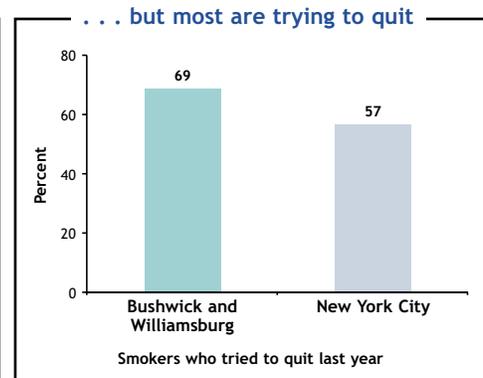
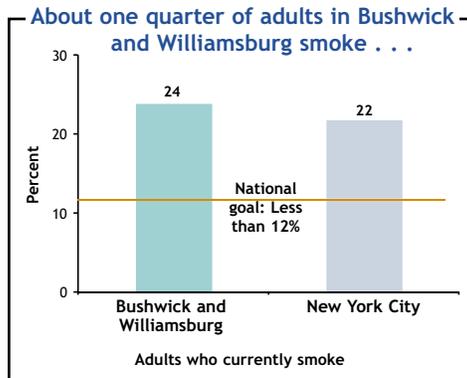
# Targets for Prevention

## Promoting healthy behaviors and reducing risks

### Smoking

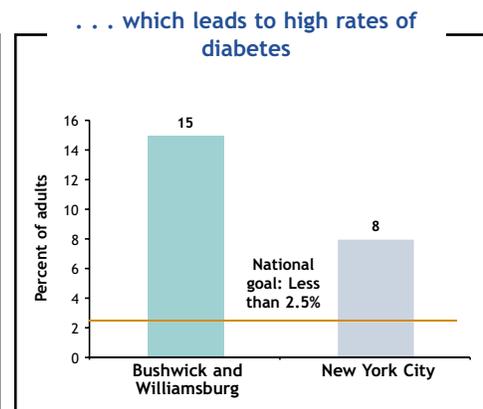
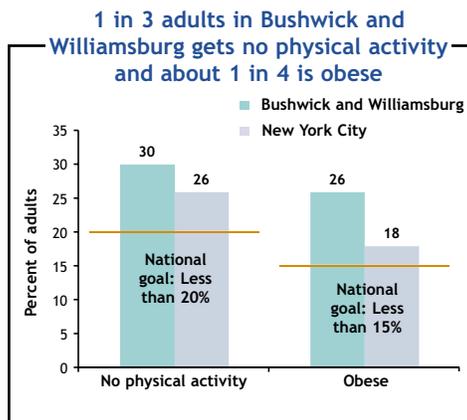
Smoking causes heart disease, stroke, emphysema, lung cancer, and many other illnesses. Currently, about one quarter of adults in Bushwick and Williamsburg smoke. Most, however, want to quit, and more than half tried last year. There are a number of highly effective strategies, including medication (such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

Stopping smoking is the most important thing smokers can do to improve their health.



### Exercise, obesity, and diabetes

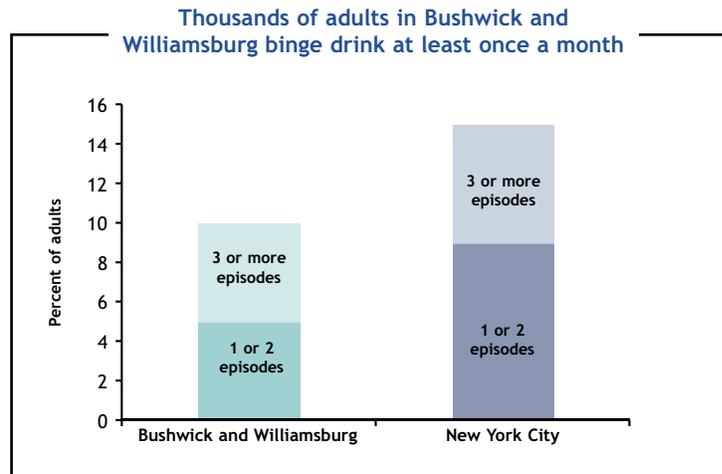
As New Yorkers exercise less and eat more, we are becoming more overweight. Being overweight puts people at risk for heart disease and many other health problems, especially diabetes. Diabetes is a chronic illness that can lead to heart attack, blindness, kidney failure, and amputations. Many New Yorkers 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.



\* 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).

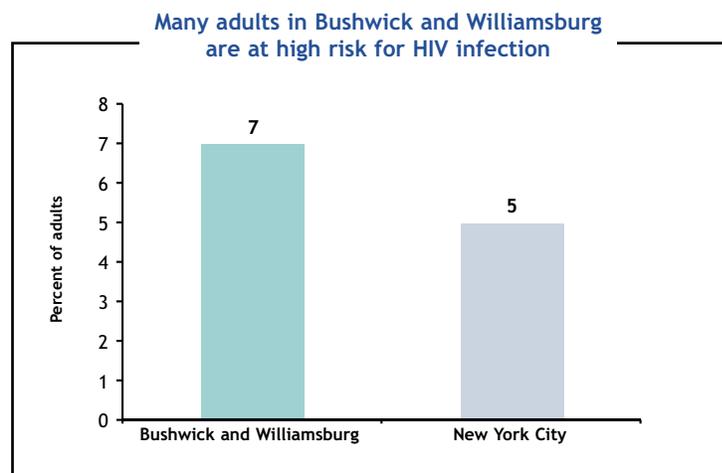
## Alcohol

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 Bushwick and Williamsburg – nearly 1 in 14 – 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

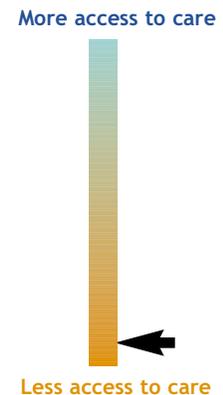
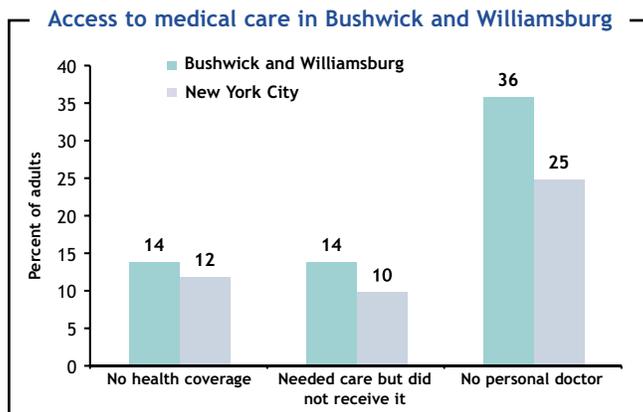
## Opportunities for prevention

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

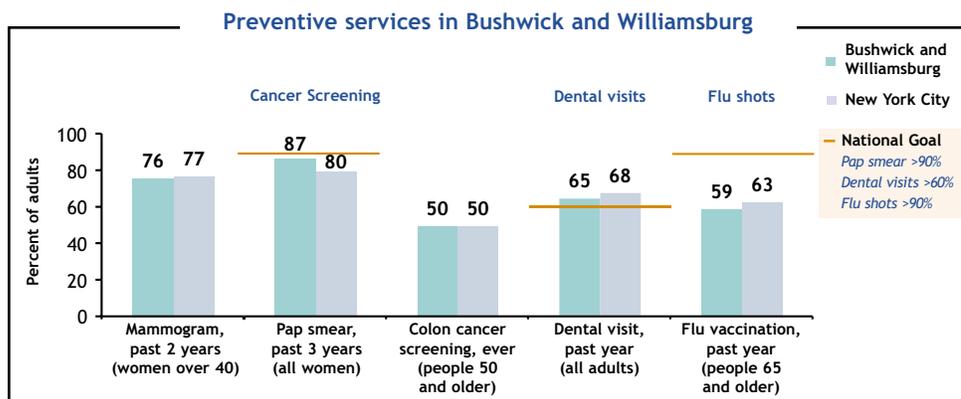
Preventing and treating illness depends on people’s ability to access high-quality medical care. This means having health insurance and a “medical home” – a personal doctor or nurse practitioner. Many residents of Bushwick and Williamsburg have poor access to medical care: about 18,000 people report no current health care coverage; 18,500 people did not get needed medical care in the past year; and 47,500 people do not have a personal doctor.

How access to medical care in Bushwick and Williamsburg ranks among 42 New York City neighborhoods



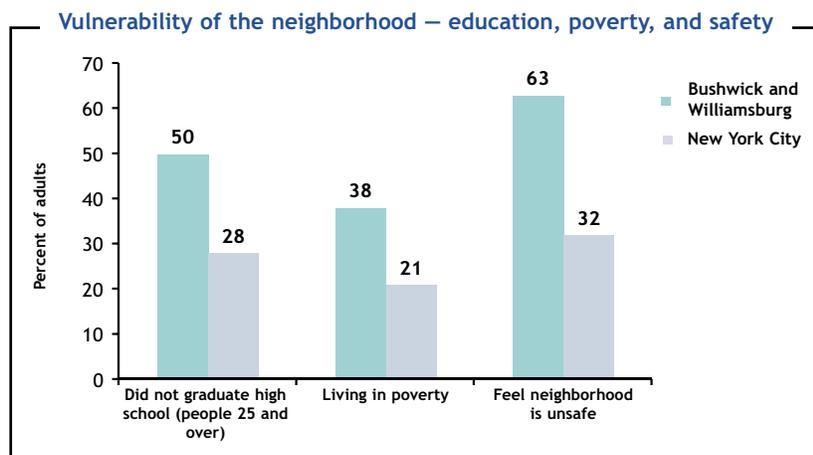
### Cancer screening and other preventive services

Cancer screening and other clinical services can prevent or reduce the severity of many illnesses. This graph shows how rates in Bushwick and Williamsburg 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 Bushwick and Williamsburg residents, reflected in high rates of not graduating from high school, living in poverty, and feeling unsafe in their neighborhood.



## 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; National self-reported health status: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2001, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

### 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: Knickerbocker Avenue, Bushwick, Brooklyn. Photo by Yumary Ruiz.

# Community Health Profile for Bushwick and Williamsburg

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](http://nyc.gov/health)

by e-mailing: [profiles@health.nyc.gov](mailto: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.**

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## NYC Community Health Profiles

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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**Michael R. Bloomberg**  
Mayor

**Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH**  
Commissioner of Health and Mental Hygiene

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To contact NYC Community Health Profiles,  
e-mail [profiles@health.nyc.gov](mailto:profiles@health.nyc.gov).

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