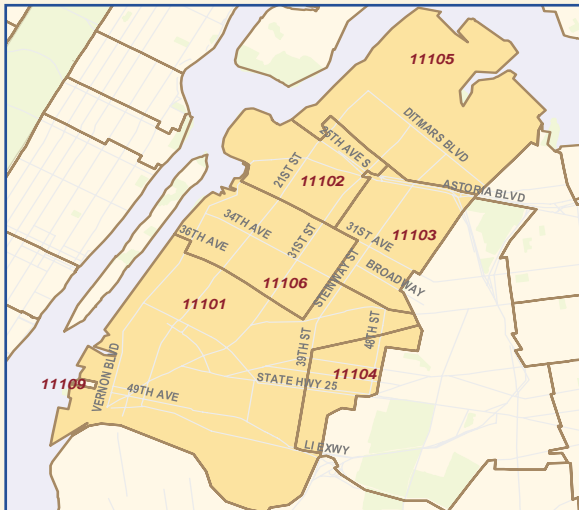


Community Health Profiles

New York City Department
of Health and Mental Hygiene



nyc.gov/health



The Health of Northwest Queens

*(Including Astoria,
Long Island City,
and Sunnyside)*

Message From the Commissioner

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

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Commissioner

Snapshots From the Census

Number of people living
in Northwest Queens
in 2000:

220,960

Age

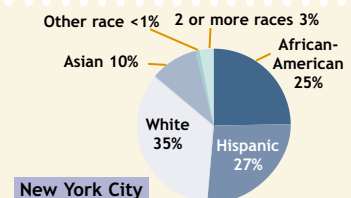
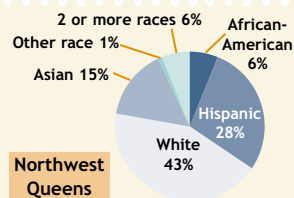
About one fifth of
Northwest Queens
residents are
children and 1
in 9 are over 65

Children (0-17 years)
Adults (18-64 years)
Adults (65 years and above)

	Northwest Queens	New York City
Children (0-17 years)	19%	24%
Adults (18-64 years)	69%	64%
Adults (65 years and above)	11%	12%

Race/Ethnicity

Compared to New
York City as a whole,
more people in
Northwest Queens
are of White and
Asian race/ethnicity



Country of Origin

1 in 2 residents of Northwest
Queens was born outside the
U.S. (Top 3 countries of
origin: Greece, Bangladesh,
Ecuador)

	Northwest Queens	New York City
Foreign-born	51%	36%

Report Card on Health

This summary shows how the health of residents of Northwest Queens compares to 41 other neighborhoods in New York City. In general, people living in Northwest Queens have a moderate 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.

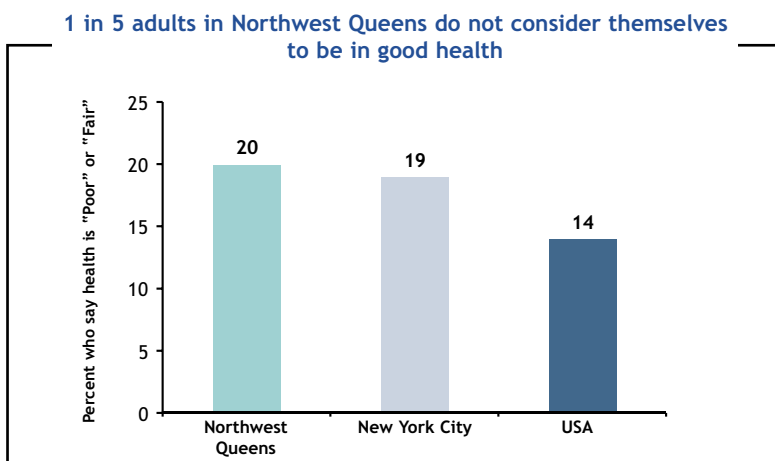
Northwest Queens compared to 41 other NYC neighborhoods

	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 Northwest Queens and across New York City were asked to rate their own health. The options were "Excellent," "Very Good," "Good," "Fair," and "Poor." In Northwest Queens, 20% said their health is "Poor" or "Fair." In Northwest Queens, 20% 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 and cancer caused the most deaths in 2001 among Northwest Queens residents. Death rates were lower in Northwest Queens than in New York City as a whole.

Leading Causes of Death in Northwest Queens, 2001

	Northwest Queens		New York City	Northwest Queens 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	1,203	595	736		20%
Heart disease	565	280	304		10%
Cancer	294	147	167		10%
Stroke	38	19	24		20%
Chronic lung disease	35	17	21		20%
Pneumonia and influenza	30	15	32		55%
Diabetes	26	13	22		40%
Accidents and injuries	23	11	15		25%
Kidney disease	16	8	10		20%
AIDS	16	7	22		65%

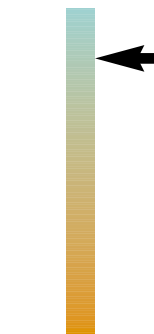
*Age-adjusted

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 half the years of potential life lost in Northwest Queens were due to 2 causes: cancer and heart disease/stroke. Smoking is, by far, the leading preventable cause of these illnesses.

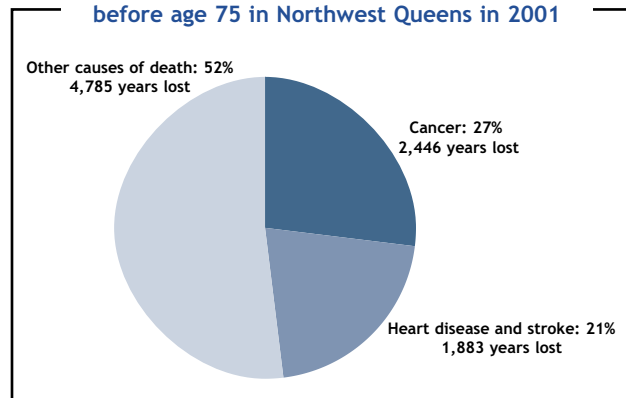
How the overall death rate in Northwest Queens ranks among 42 New York City neighborhoods

More healthy



Less healthy

More than 9,000 years of potential life were lost before age 75 in Northwest Queens in 2001



Causes of hospitalizations

Heart disease is the leading cause of adult hospitalization in Northwest Queens. The hospitalization data also reveal the burden of illness due to mental illness, alcohol abuse, and drug use, as well as accidents and injuries.

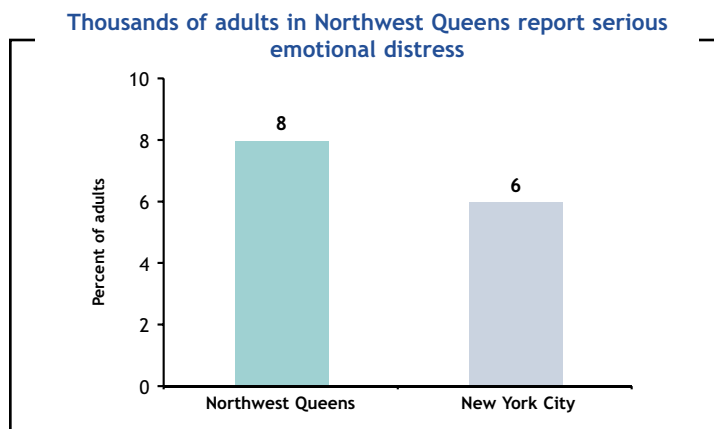
Leading Causes of Hospitalization in Adults in Northwest Queens, 2001

	Northwest Queens		New York City	Northwest Queens 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
All causes	17,474	10,623	14,140		25%
Heart disease	2,428	1,630	1,744		5%
Accidents and injuries	1,544	954	1,209		20%
Cancer	869	574	654		10%
Mental illness	655	369	671		45%
Stroke	515	345	379		10%
Pneumonia and influenza	420	274	433		35%
Alcohol-related	337	199	387		50%
Chronic lung disease	314	210	193	10%	
Diabetes	311	201	328		40%
Drug-related	283	148	492		70%

*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 Northwest Queens residents is one indication of the burden of mental illness there. In addition, in a recent telephone survey, 8% of adults in Northwest Queens – corresponding to about 14,000 people – reported experiencing serious emotional distress.



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. More than a thousand Northwest Queens residents are living with HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS in Northwest Queens, 2001	
Number of people newly diagnosed with HIV	83
Number of people living with HIV/AIDS	1,065

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

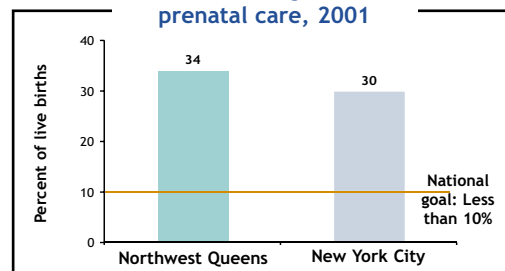
Three important measures of maternal and infant health are:

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)

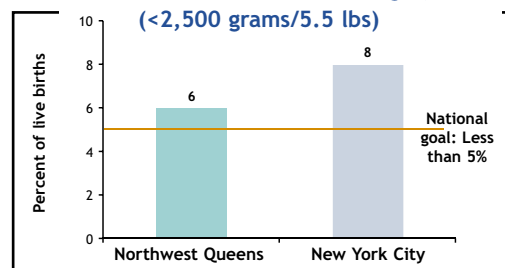
Northwest Queens is near or better than the citywide average for all these indicators, but has not yet reached national goals.

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

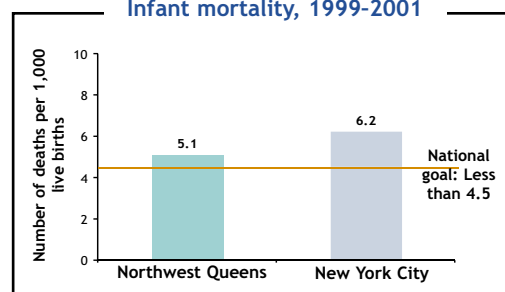
Women receiving late or no prenatal care, 2001



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



Infant mortality, 1999-2001

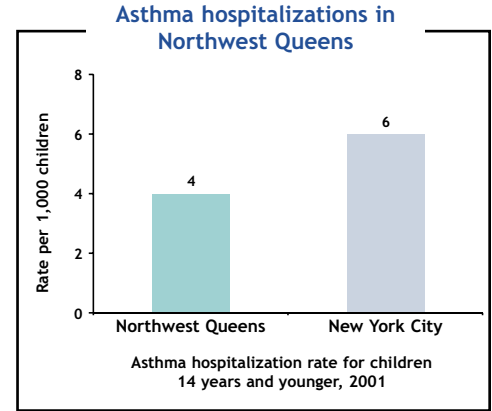


Asthma can be controlled. All children with asthma should have a written “Asthma Action Plan” to help them and their parents know which medicines to take and when to take them, how to avoid asthma triggers, and when to get medical care.

Children’s health

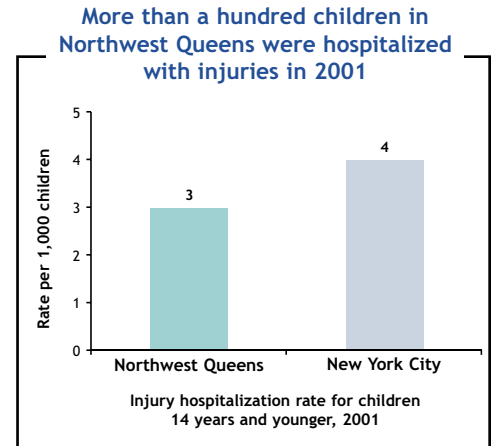
Asthma

Asthma affects a large number of New York City’s children and is a leading cause of missed school days and hospitalizations. There were 148 asthma hospitalizations among children in Northwest Queens in 2001.



Injuries

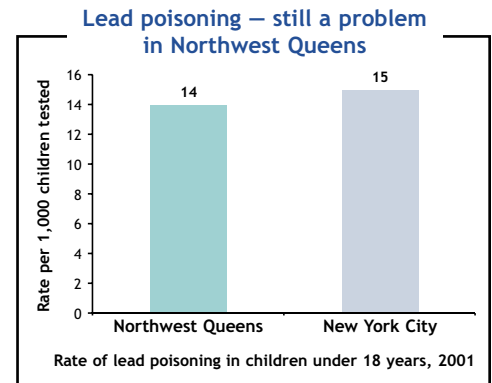
Injury is a preventable threat to children’s health. In 2001, 123 children in Northwest Queens were hospitalized with injuries, including those from falls, burns, and motor-vehicle crashes.



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 111 children newly diagnosed with lead poisoning in Northwest Queens in 2001 (defined as blood levels over 10 µg/dL).



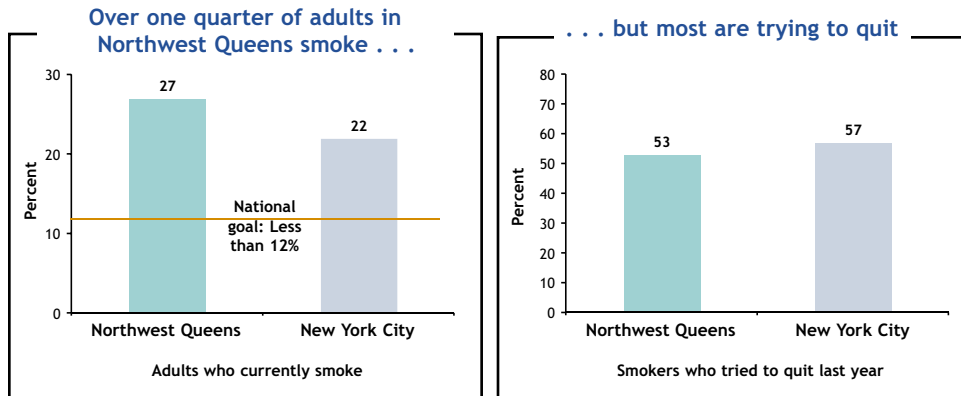
Targets for Prevention

Promoting healthy behaviors and reducing risks

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

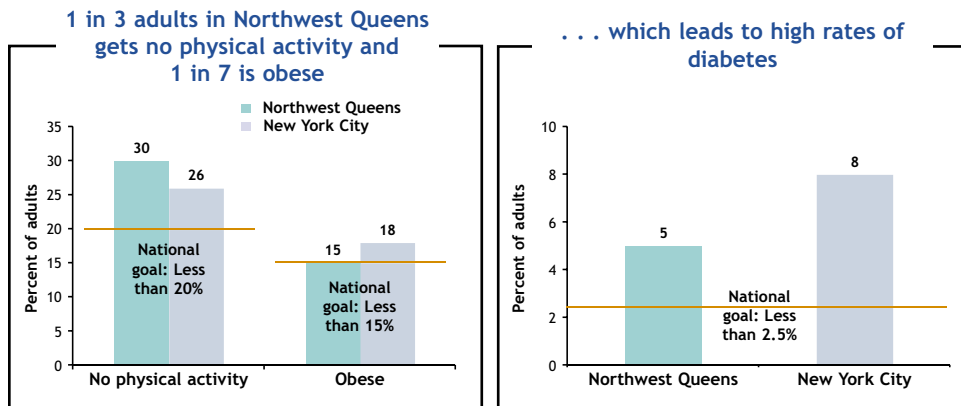
Smoking

Smoking causes heart disease, stroke, emphysema, lung cancer, and many other illnesses. Currently, over one quarter of adults in Northwest Queens 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.



Exercise, obesity, and diabetes

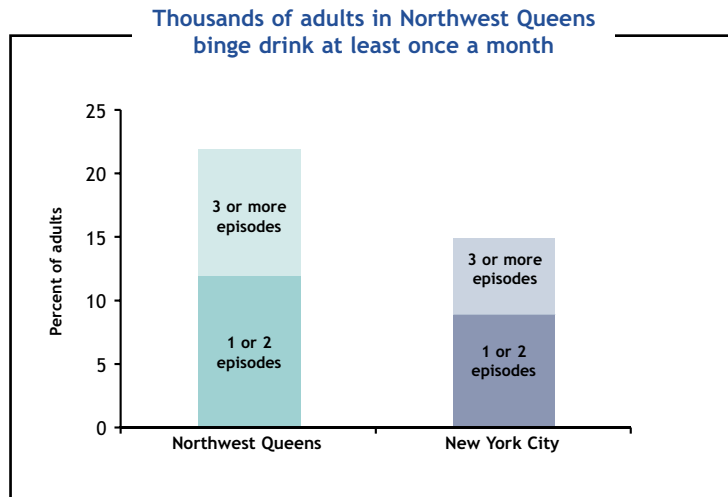
As New Yorkers exercise less and eat more, we are becoming more overweight. Being overweight puts people at risk for heart disease and many other health problems, especially diabetes. Diabetes is a chronic illness that can lead to heart attack, blindness, kidney failure, and amputations. Many New Yorkers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

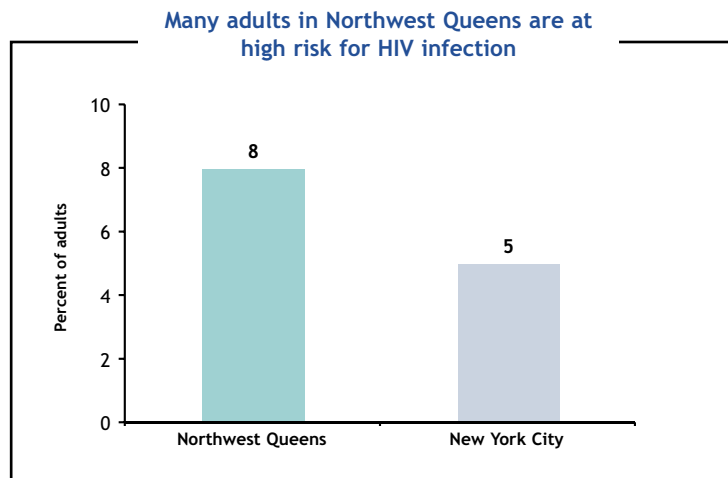
Alcohol

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 Northwest Queens – 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.



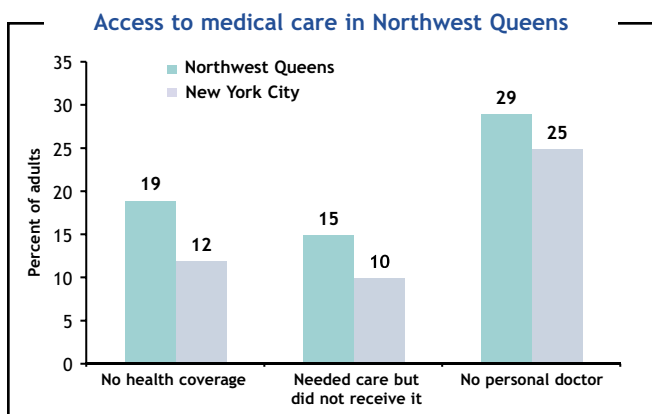
Medical Care

Opportunities for prevention

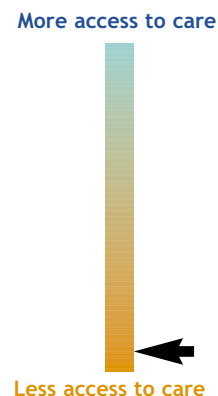
The medical community – doctors, nurses, counselors, and others – can help prevent illness. Screening and treatment for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and cancer can prolong life. Flu and pneumonia vaccinations prevent many hospitalizations and deaths. Counseling to quit smoking or control drinking 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 Northwest Queens residents have poor access to medical care: about 33,000 people report no current health care coverage; 27,000 people did not get needed medical care in the past year; and 52,000 people do not have a personal doctor.

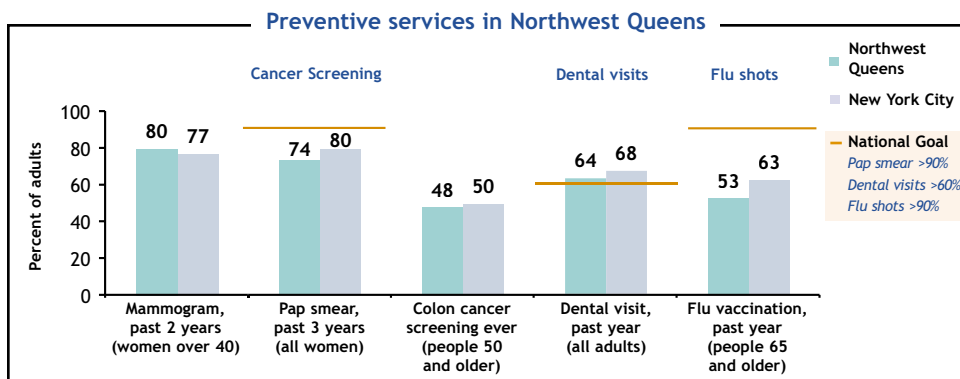


How access to medical care in Northwest Queens ranks among 42 New York City neighborhoods



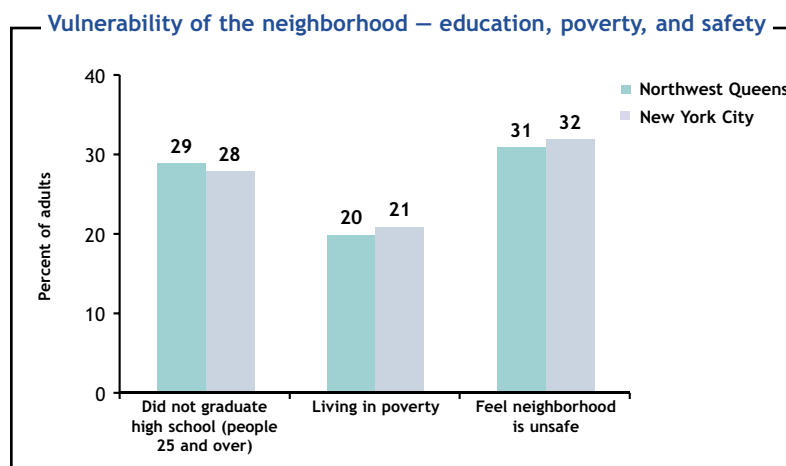
Cancer screening and other preventive services

Cancer screening and other clinical services can prevent or reduce the severity of many illnesses. This graph shows how rates in Northwest Queens 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 many Northwest Queens 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.

Cover Photograph: PS1, Long Island City, Queens. Photo by Mark Foggin.

Community Health Profile for Northwest Queens

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.

Inside

Community-specific information on . . .

Overall health and census data	2
Leading causes of death and hospitalization	4
The health of mothers and children	6
Behaviors affecting health: smoking, exercise, alcohol use, and others	8
Opportunities for disease prevention in clinical settings: cancer screening, dental care, vaccinations	10
Social and demographic issues affecting health	11



NYC Community Health Profiles

nyc.gov/health

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Division of Epidemiology, Bureau of Epidemiology Services, 125 Worth Street, CN-6, New York, NY 10013

Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

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

Copyright©2003
The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
NYC Community Health Profiles feature information
about 42 neighborhoods in New York City.

To contact NYC Community Health Profiles,
e-mail profiles@health.nyc.gov

Suggested citation: Karpati A, Lu X, Mostashari F, Thorpe L,
Frieden TR. The Health of Northwest Queens.
NYC Community Health Profiles 2003;1(14):1–12.