

An Economic and Demographic Snapshot of The Rockaways

Highlights

- The Rockaways population grew by 8 percent from 2010 to 2020, the fourth-largest increase among 14 Queens neighborhoods. Growth rates were highest for the Hispanic and Asian populations.
- From 2000 to 2021, Rockaways businesses grew by 55.8 percent. In 2021, 81.5 percent had fewer than 10 employees.
- Health care jobs (44 percent of private sector jobs in 2019) declined by just 5 percent at the onset of the pandemic, muting job losses when compared to citywide.
- Job losses in 2020 were reversed with a 3.9 percent increase in 2021, with employment created in almost all sectors.
- The number of Rockaways residents employed in 2016-2020 was 21.2 percent higher than in 2006-2010, and 89 percent worked outside of the Peninsula.
- The median household income of \$59,600 was 32 percent higher than in 2006-2010.
- Edgemere, Far Rockaway and Hammels households had the lowest median incomes and highest shares living with poverty, food insecurity and no broadband access.
- During the analysis period, the average commute time (49.7 minutes) for residents was the longest of all City neighborhoods.
- Of all area renters, 51 percent spent 30 percent or more of income to pay rent, and 25 percent spent 50 percent or more.
- Major crimes in the Rockaways declined in both years since the start of the pandemic in 2020, with the trend continuing for violent crimes as of July 2022.

The Rockaway Peninsula, located in the southwestern portion of Queens, is an 11-mile long barrier beach that separates the Atlantic Ocean from Jamaica Bay and parts of South Queens and Southeast Brooklyn. The area lies mostly within Queens Community District 14. More than three-quarters of the area's residents are located in Arverne, Edgemere, Far Rockaway and Rockaway Park.

After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Arverne, Edgemere, Far Rockaway and Hammels were among 33 areas citywide that were deemed most impacted. By March of 2022, cumulative COVID-19 death and hospitalization rates in these communities were among the highest across the City, despite relatively low case rates, reflecting underlying socioeconomic and health factors that make it more difficult to respond to disasters.¹

Despite these challenges, local economic indicators have slowly improved as the pandemic has worn on, with the number of Rockaways businesses growing in 2020 and 2021. Local businesses were relatively successful at accessing federal COVID-19 relief programs. Notably, women-owned restaurants accessed the highest share of area federal restaurant grants among all Queens neighborhoods.

Since the City's reopening following the height of the pandemic, local stakeholders on the Peninsula have made concerted efforts to promote economic recovery and improved environmental conditions, with a focus on mitigating the impact of extreme climate events. The economic recovery of the Rockaways remains a critical barometer for the equitable recovery of Queens and the City.

Introduction

Located from east to west, the communities along the Rockaway Peninsula are Far Rockaway, Bayswater, Edgemere, Arverne, Hammels, Seaside, Rockaway Park, Belle Harbor, Neponsit, Rockaway Beach and Breezy Point. These communities, along with Broad Channel which lies north in Jamaica Bay, make up the Census-defined area of Far Rockaway, Breezy Point and Broad Channel, referred to in this report as the Rockaways (see Figure 1).²

The Rockaways was historically a summer vacation destination and still has many parks and beachfronts, including the 260-acre Jacob Riis Park and the former military site Tilden Fort (decommissioned in 1978), both located in Breezy Point. Jacob Riis Park is part of the Gateway National Recreation Area under the National Park Service.

Vehicular traffic, subway and rail connections between the Peninsula and the rest of the City rely on two railroad bridges and two vehicular bridges. The first of these, the Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Memorial Bridge, connects the Rockaways to Brooklyn and was opened in 1937. The second, the Cross Bay Bridge (and Cross Bay Parkway), connects the Peninsula to Queens and was completed in 1939, then replaced in 1970 with the current Cross Bay Veterans Memorial Bridge.

FIGURE 1
The Rockaways



Subway service to the Rockaways started in 1956 with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's A Train. Connections to the rest of the City were further strengthened with the 2017 revitalization of ferry service (the main transportation mode connecting the Rockaways to the rest of the City before 1937), when a route between Manhattan (Wall Street/Pier 11) and the Peninsula was established. In July 2022, a first-time weekend express service was launched for this route, to run through the summer. The area is also served by buses operated by New York City Transit and by Nassau Inter-County Express, which operates in both Nassau and Queens counties.

Rockaways residents often experience more intense storm impacts than those in the areas of Brooklyn and Queens that are protected by the Peninsula, as evidenced by the disparate impacts of Superstorm Sandy in 2012 and Ida in 2021. In fact, capital projects designed to restore infrastructure damaged by Superstorm Sandy and to improve the area's resilience to storms and other climate events are still ongoing.

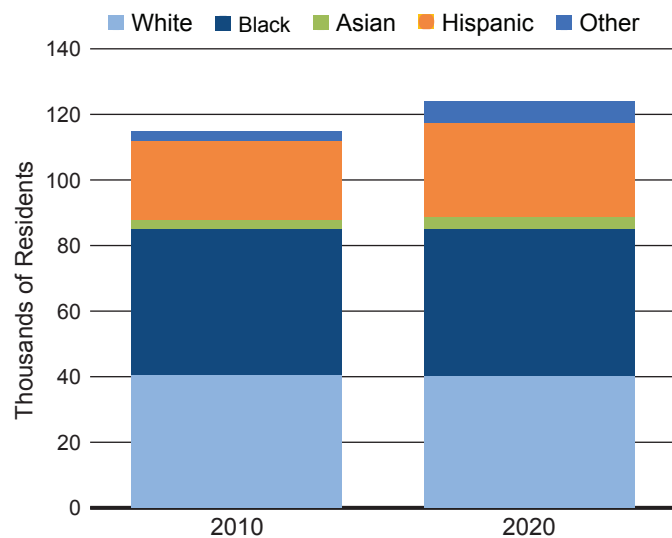
Demographic Trends

The Rockaways population increased by 8 percent from 2010 to 2020, to reach 124,185.³ This was the fourth-largest increase among Queens' 14 Census-defined neighborhoods, and higher than the borough of Queens itself (7.8 percent) and citywide (7.7 percent).

As of 2020, more than two-thirds of Rockaways residents lived in Arverne, Edgemere, Far Rockaway and Rockaway Park. Nearly one-half of the population increase in the Rockaways since 2010 (46.3 percent) occurred in Far Rockaway, by far the most populated area. Arverne accounted for the second-largest increase, while the population of Rockaway Park declined.

There was also a shift in the composition of the Rockaways population over the 10-year period, as the shares of residents who identified as either Hispanic or Asian increased (see Figure 2). The White population was the only group to experience a decline since 2010.

FIGURE 2
Population by Race and Ethnicity
in the Rockaways



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates; OSC analysis

The increase in the Asian population was nearly 40 percent (by 1,004 residents), while the Hispanic population increased 18.6 percent (by 4,483 residents). These rates were greater than the increase in the Black population (0.5 percent; by 233 residents). The Hispanic population accounted for the largest portion of the total increase in the Peninsula population. The combined share of the Hispanic and Asian populations accounted for more than a quarter of the total population in 2020.

The racial composition varied significantly across the Peninsula’s communities. At least 71 percent of residents in Belle Harbor, Breezy Point, Broad Channel, Neponsit and Rockaway Park identified as White, while more than 53 percent of those in Arverne, Edgemere, Far Rockaway, Hammels and Seaside identified as either Black or Hispanic.

Immigrants made up 28 percent of the population in the Rockaways, with individuals from Latin America accounting for almost two-thirds of the total. The immigrant share was the lowest among the 14 Queens neighborhoods, and much lower than the share in the borough overall (47 percent) and in the City (36 percent).⁴

Among residents aged 25 and over during the 2016-2020 period, 31 percent had earned at least a bachelor’s degree, slightly lower than the rate in all of Queens (33 percent) and lower than the City as a whole (39 percent). Shares of residents with this attainment level ranged from over 45 percent in Belle Harbor, Breezy Point and Neponsit to less than 30 percent in Edgemere, Far Rockaway and Seaside.

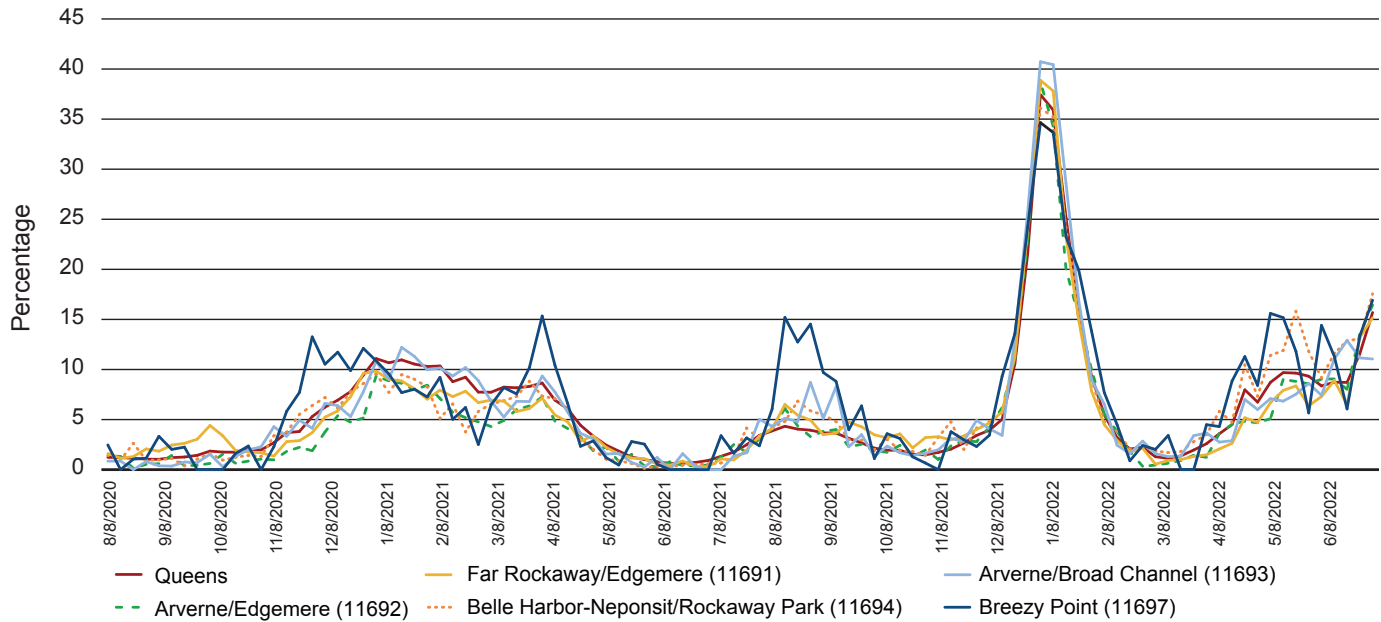
Pandemic Health Impacts

Cases, Hospitalizations and Deaths

As of July 11, 2022, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) reported a total of more than 2.6 million COVID-19 cases since the first one was identified in the City in February 2020. As of that date, there had been nearly 41,000 COVID-19-related deaths citywide, including 991 in the Rockaways.⁵

There have been multiple waves of COVID-19 infection levels since the start of the pandemic, driven by several dominant variants. In the latter half of 2021, the Omicron variant brought sharp increases in the citywide 7-day positivity rate (the percentage of people tested who had positive results) that peaked at 34.7 percent in early January 2022. (The rate in Queens peaked at 37.4 percent.) There were sharp increases in positivity rates in all five ZIP code areas of the Rockaways as well, with rates in three areas (11691, 11692 and 11693) exceeding that in all of Queens (see Figure 3).⁶ Most recently, Omicron subvariants have resulted in yet another wave of new cases.

FIGURE 3
COVID-19 Positivity Rates for the Rockaways Communities and Queens



Sources: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; OSC analysis

As of July 11, 2022, the cumulative COVID-19 case rate for the Rockaways was lower than that for the borough, and for the City (see Figure 4). Far Rockaway/Edgemere (ZIP code 11691), which boast a significantly larger population than the other four ZIP code areas on the Peninsula, subsequently had the highest number of cases and third-highest case rate. Notably, Breezy Point (ZIP code 11697), which had the smallest population, had the highest case rate (the second-highest case rate in the City).

Far Rockaway/Edgemere (ZIP code 11691) also had the highest number of COVID-19 deaths and cumulative death rates across the Peninsula, as well as the second-highest death rate in Queens and the fifth-highest death rate of all 177 ZIP codes in the City. All ZIP codes within the Rockaways had death rates that exceeded the citywide rate.

FIGURE 4
Cumulative COVID-19 Cases and Deaths in the Rockaways, Queens and New York City

ZIP Code Area	Cases	Deaths	Case Rates	Death Rates
Far Rockaway/Edgemere (11691)	20,730	620	31,007	927
Arverne/Edgemere (11692)	5,733	153	27,262	728
Arverne/Broad Channel (11693)	3,625	63	28,606	497
Belle Harbor-Neponsit/Rockaway Park (11694)	6,529	134	31,421	645
Breezy Point (11697)	1,623	21	47,839	619
The Rockaways	38,240	991	30,658	795
Queens	728,527	12,028	32,324	534
New York City	2,638,430	40,843	31,648	490

Note: Case rates and death rates are the cumulative number of confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases and deaths per 100,000 residents through July 11, 2022.

Sources: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; OSC analysis

Early in the pandemic, the City launched a Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity (TRIE) as a response to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. The TRIE included four of the five ZIP code areas in the Rockaways (11691, 11692, 11693 and 11694). Together, these areas comprised one of 33 communities across the City that the taskforce identified as hardest hit by the pandemic, and as having high percentages of other health and socioeconomic disparities.⁷

In a recent letter to the Mayor’s office, several elected officials outlined the pandemic’s toll on Rockaways residents, and the overall health disparities there such as high rates of diabetes, obesity and hypertension.⁸ The letter included a request for construction of an additional health care facility on the Peninsula. Currently, there is just one hospital and no trauma center in the Rockaways.

The Mayor’s Office has since published a blueprint for the City’s post-COVID economic recovery which includes a commitment to “improving long-term health outcomes in Downtown Far Rockaway,” in part through a new public health facility.⁹ New York City Health + Hospitals is in the early stages of planning a primary care facility on the Peninsula.



Vaccinations

To date, everyone aged 6 months and older is eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. A booster shot is recommended for everyone 5 years and older and a second booster has been recommended for individuals 50 years and older or with higher risk of infection.¹⁰

The share of Queens residents who were fully vaccinated as of July 11, 2022, is highest among the five boroughs, as well as citywide (see Figure 5). Even so, the four Rockaways ZIP code areas (11691, 11692, 11693 and 11694) that are included in the 33 hardest-hit areas citywide, and therefore prioritized for vaccines, still had some of the lowest vaccination rates across the City’s 177 areas. ZIP code area 11691 (Far Rockaway/Edgemere) had the lowest vaccination rate on the Peninsula, as well as the second-lowest vaccination rate, and the lowest rate for an additional vaccine dose, citywide.¹¹

FIGURE 5
COVID-19 Vaccinations in the Rockaways, as of July 11, 2022

ZIP Code Areas	At Least One Dose	Fully Vaccinated	Additional Dose
Far Rockaway/Edgemere (11691)	64.0%	56.5%	20.3%
Arverne/Edgemere (11692)	71.9%	64.5%	26.1%
Arverne/Broad Channel (11693)	70.9%	65.1%	29.0%
Belle Harbor-Neponsit/Rockaway Park (11694)	72.2%	67.6%	34.9%
Breezy Point (11697)	107.4%	101.8%	54.4%
The Rockaways	68.6%	61.8%	25.5%
Queens	94.2%	86.0%	43.2%
New York City	87.9%	79.0%	39.2%

Note: Percentages reflect the share of the entire population, all ages, and if greater than 100 percent, reflect more vaccinations than the 2019 population estimate for the area.

Sources: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; OSC analysis

Businesses

The number of businesses in the Rockaways grew by 55.8 percent (459 firms) from 2000, to reach a total of 1,281 in 2021. This was greater than the borough (43.8 percent) and citywide (28.5 percent) rates. More than three-quarters of the increase (77 percent) was in businesses with fewer than five employees.

Most businesses on the Peninsula (81.5 percent in 2021) were microbusinesses (defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration as those with fewer than 10 employees), and more than two-thirds had fewer than five employees. Fewer than 1 percent of firms on the Peninsula had more than 250 employees. Health care accounted for most of these larger firms and included home health care and residential care facilities.

As of 2021, Rockaways businesses are concentrated in several different sectors, with retail trade accounting for the largest number at 190 firms. Health care and leisure and hospitality were next, each with 156 firms. Professional and business services had 124 firms.

As in [other areas of the City](#), businesses in the Rockaways sought relief from various sources of federal aid for COVID-19-related revenue losses. Except for the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF), Rockaways businesses received shares of federal loans and grants to Queens that were the same or more than the proportion of borough businesses located on the Peninsula in 2019 (2.6 percent). (See Figure 6.)

Although restaurants in the Rockaways accounted for 2.5 percent of all eateries in Queens in 2019, the sector received 1.9 percent of RRF funds approved for the borough. Notably, women-owned restaurants received 82.7 percent of the total RRF grants approved for the Peninsula, the highest share among all 14 Queens neighborhoods.

FIGURE 6
COVID-19 Relief Loans and Grants to Small Businesses in the Rockaways

Loan or Grant Program	Dollars Approved	
	Thousands	As a Share of Queens Total
Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)	\$183,059	3.6%
Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL)	\$56,693	2.6%
EIDL Advances	\$5,902	3.4%
Restaurant Revitalization Fund	\$6,353	1.9%

Note: A total of \$123.1 million in PPP loans were forgiven, representing 3.3 percent of the total forgiven for all of Queens.

Sources: U.S. Small Business Administration; OSC analysis

Employment Growth

Private sector employment within the Rockaways declined significantly between 2010 and 2013 in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, while the numbers in the rest of Queens and the City grew. From 2013 to 2019, the number of workers employed on the Peninsula grew by 38.7 percent, higher than in the borough and in the City (see Figure 7).

The health care sector accounts for the largest number of jobs in the Rockaways (44.4 percent in 2019). Nearly one-half (47 percent) of the 2,549 health care jobs added between 2013 and 2019 were in home health care services, and just under one quarter (24 percent) were in nursing and residential care facilities.

With the onset of the pandemic in 2020, employment declined, although by a smaller percentage than in Queens or the City.¹² The highest numbers of job losses experienced were in health care (395 jobs; 5 percent), construction (230 jobs; 28.2 percent), and leisure and hospitality (215 jobs; 18.8 percent).

Average annual employment increased in all sectors from 2020 to 2021 except transportation and warehousing. Growth was led by leisure and hospitality, which accounted for 260 of the 635 jobs created during this period.

FIGURE 7
Employment in the Rockaways, Queens and New York City

Sector and Area	2013	2019	2020	2021	Change		
					2013 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021
Construction and Manufacturing	740	1,080	775	875	45.9%	-28.2%	12.9%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	1,150	1,335	1,270	1,305	16.1%	-4.9%	2.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	270	610	495	475	125.9%	-18.9%	-4.0%
Financial Activities	1,100	995	905	915	-9.5%	-9.0%	1.1%
Professional and Business Services	410	595	560	570	45.1%	-5.9%	1.8%
Educational Services	865	940	845	910	8.7%	-10.1%	7.7%
Health Care	5,420	7,965	7,570	7,640	47.0%	-5.0%	0.9%
Social Assistance	1,010	1,535	1,610	1,670	52.0%	4.9%	3.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	655	1,145	930	1,190	74.8%	-18.8%	28.0%
All Other Services	1,305	1,725	1,230	1,270	32.2%	-28.7%	3.3%
The Rockaways	12,925	17,925	16,190	16,825	38.7%	-9.7%	3.9%
Queens	498,130	595,330	514,860	540,085	19.5%	-13.5%	4.9%
New York City	3,307,670	3,916,345	3,421,540	3,502,740	18.4%	-12.6%	2.4%

Notes: Data is annual. Figures may not add up to due to rounding.
Sources: NYS Department of Labor; OSC analysis

Rockaways Residents in the Workforce

In 2016-2020, 54.5 percent of Peninsula residents aged 16 and over were employed (see Figure 8). While this was the lowest share among the 14 Queens neighborhoods (and much lower than the borough and citywide shares), it was higher than the area's share during the 2006-2010 period, reflecting 21.2 percent growth in the number of employed residents. This growth was the largest among all Queens neighborhoods and much greater than the 5.1 percent and 7.9 percent increases for the borough and the City, respectively.

Across the Peninsula, increases in the number of employed residents over the decade varied from 73.6 percent and 30.8 percent in Arverne and Far Rockaway, respectively, to less than 2 percent in Edgemere and Rockaway Park. The shares of residents employed declined by 0.8 percent and 22.7 percent, respectively, in Breezy Point and Broad Channel.

One-quarter of Rockaways residents worked in the health care and social assistance sector, while the next highest shares worked in educational services and business services (12.2 percent and 9.9 percent, respectively). Across all industries, employed Rockaways residents were most likely to work in office and administrative support occupations (10.2 percent), health care support occupations (8.9 percent), and educational instruction and library occupations (8.9 percent).

In 2016-2020, Rockaways residents' average commute time of 49.7 minutes was the longest among the City's 55 neighborhoods. Almost 86 percent of employed residents worked in industries that predominantly require employees to work in-person.¹³ In 2019, over 89 percent of employed residents worked outside the area.

Over one-half (53 percent) of commuting workers drove to work while 36 percent took public transportation. In contrast, 39 percent of all Queens workers drove to work and almost one-half (48 percent) took public transportation.

FIGURE 8**Residents in the Workforce in Thousands and with Working Age Population Shares**

Category	The Rockaways		Queens		New York City	
	2006-2010	2016-2020	2006-2010	2016-2020	2006-2010	2016-2020
Working Age Population	84.5	96.6	1,792.6	1,861.6	6,506.5	6,819.1
Employed Population	43.5	52.7	1,066.0	1,120.4	3,745.1	4,040.0
Share of Working Age Residents Employed	51.4%	54.5%	59.5%	60.2%	57.6%	59.2%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year files; OSC Analysis

Rockaways residents that were less likely to take public transportation also faced shorter commute times. Over 70 percent of workers in Belle Harbor, Breezy Point, Broad Channel and Neponsit drove to work, and average commute times in each of these areas were shorter than for the Peninsula overall. In Arverne, Edgemere and Hammels over 40 percent of workers commuted by public transportation and the average travel time for residents of each area was over 50 minutes.

Households

Household Income and Poverty

The 2016-2020 median household income of \$59,600 in the Rockaways was 31.9 percent higher than the median in 2006-2010. This was a larger increase than in Queens, yet smaller than the City. The median income increased the most in Belle Harbor and least in Broad Channel, and in fact declined in Hammels (see Figure 9).

While the Rockaways had the highest share of households living below the federal poverty threshold (18.3 percent) in 2016-2020, the Peninsula had the greatest decline (3.4 percentage points) from the share of households living below the federal poverty level in 2006-2010 among the 14 neighborhoods in Queens. Household poverty rates were lowest at 1.3 percent in Belle Harbor and highest at 22 percent in Far Rockaway and 28.6 percent in Edgemere (which also had the highest child poverty rate of 38 percent).

FIGURE 9**Median Household Income in the Rockaways for Five-Year Periods Ending 2010 and 2020**

Area	Median Household Income		
	2010	2020	Change
Belle Harbor	105,000	152,500	45.3%
Neponsit	105,800	135,600	28.1%
Breezy Point	83,000	116,200	40.0%
Broad Channel	79,600	89,300	12.1%
Arverne	57,000	78,200	37.1%
Rockaway Park	62,100	76,900	23.9%
Seaside	51,200	68,200	33.3%
Far Rockaway	37,300	53,000	42.1%
Hammels	47,100	45,400	-3.6%
Edgemere	28,500	34,500	20.8%
The Rockaways	45,200	59,600	31.9%
Queens	55,300	72,000	30.3%

Note: Median income figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year files; OSC analysis

Food Insecurity

More than one-half of Edgemere households and more than one-quarter of Far Rockaway and Hammels households relied on the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) in 2016-2020. These communities have the lowest median household incomes on the Peninsula. The Edgemere and Hammels shares of households participating in SNAP were higher than in 2006-2010 by 10 percentage points or more.

A Hunter College 2022 report shows that 16 of 21 food pantries in the Rockaways were located in ZIP code area 11691, the most populated area in the neighborhood.¹⁴ The report also shows a much smaller number of retail food stores in this area than in other communities on the Peninsula (10 of 50). The high number of pantries and low number of retail food stores suggest that there may be significant levels of food insecurity in these communities.

Housing

Renters accounted for 63 percent (27,100) of the 43,100 occupied housing units in the Rockaways in 2016-2020, a higher share than boroughwide (55 percent). The Peninsula's median monthly rent of \$1,260 (including utilities) was the lowest among all Queens neighborhoods, despite being 42 percent higher than in 2006-2010 and outpacing median rent increases in the borough (38 percent) and the City (39 percent). As of 2017, rent-stabilized (38 percent), public housing (11.4 percent) and Mitchell-Lama (11.3 percent), made up more than half of total rental units.¹⁵

A total of 51 percent of the Peninsula's rental households spent 30 percent or more of their incomes towards rent (the level considered a burden) and 25 percent spent 50 percent or more of their incomes on rent (considered a severe burden). Both the rent burden and severe rent burden shares were slightly lower than those for all of Queens (53 percent; 28 percent) and the City (52 percent; 28 percent). Of the senior citizen householders in the Rockaways, 51 percent were rent burdened, compared to borough and citywide shares of 65 percent and 62 percent, respectively.

While the median home value on the Peninsula (\$538,600) was 11 percent higher in 2016-2020 than in 2006-2010 (\$486,800), it was the fourth-lowest among all Queens neighborhoods. In addition, the increase in median homeowner costs (such as insurance, mortgage, real estate taxes, and utilities) during the two periods (18 percent) was the highest among the borough's neighborhoods.

Renters and homeowners across the City were eligible for pandemic relief through State and federally funded programs. As of June 2022, a total of \$403.4 million was paid from the largest source of rental assistance, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, for 25,639 arrears assistance applications from renters in Queens. An additional \$10.4 million was paid for 9,244 applications for utility payment support within the borough. ZIP code level data shows that the Rockaways accounted for 9.6 percent (4,819) of Queens rent arrears applications, significantly higher than the 6.3 percent share of all borough renters that are located on the Peninsula.

There are six New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments with more than 4,000 apartments occupied by nearly 10,000 people located in the Rockaways (ZIP code areas 11691 and 11692). Repair work on five of these campuses damaged by Superstorm Sandy is set to be completed in 2022. Work on the remaining development, Hammel Houses, is 37 percent complete, and estimated to reach full completion by the third quarter of 2023.

One NYCHA campus, the Ocean Bay Apartments in the Rockaways community of Bayside, was among the first public housing developments in the country to participate in the federal Rental Assistance Demonstration program, which transfers management of public housing properties to private companies contracted to oversee daily operations and capital repair work at the developments.¹⁶

Broadband Internet

Among the 14 Queens neighborhoods, the Rockaways had the fifth-highest share of households and individuals with no broadband internet access in 2016-2020, placing the area among the bottom half in terms of access.¹⁷ Moreover, the shares of households and residents with no broadband internet access were higher than comparable shares for all of Queens.

Across the Peninsula, the proportions of both households and individuals with no broadband were highest in Edgemere, Far Rockaway and Hammels and lowest in Belle Harbor (see Figure 10).

FIGURE 10
Broadband Access in the Rockaways

Area	Shares with No Broadband Connection	
	Households	Individuals
Belle Harbor	11%	1%
Broad Channel	16%	11%
Neponsit	17%	4%
Seaside	25%	10%
Breezy Point	26%	9%
Arverne	28%	9%
Rockaway Park	29%	11%
Far Rockaway	32%	13%
Edgemere	32%	13%
Hammels	34%	16%
The Rockaways	30%	12%
Queens	29%	11%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year files; OSC Analysis

Education

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated citywide trends of falling student enrollment that began in 2017-18, with total enrollment declining by more than 3.3 percent in the 2020-21 school year and a further 3.2 percent in the 2021-22 school year, according to the most recent City data. In the Rockaways, however, enrollment increased slowly but steadily in the years prior to the pandemic, then fell by 2.8 percent in 2020-21 and 3.5 percent the following year. The neighborhood had 23 public elementary and middle schools (including three charter schools) and served approximately 12,000 students in 2021-22.

Following citywide trends, enrollment in charter schools on the Peninsula continued to increase despite the pandemic, with 15.7 percent of the neighborhood’s students enrolled in charter schools in 2021-22 compared to 9.2 percent in 2016-17.

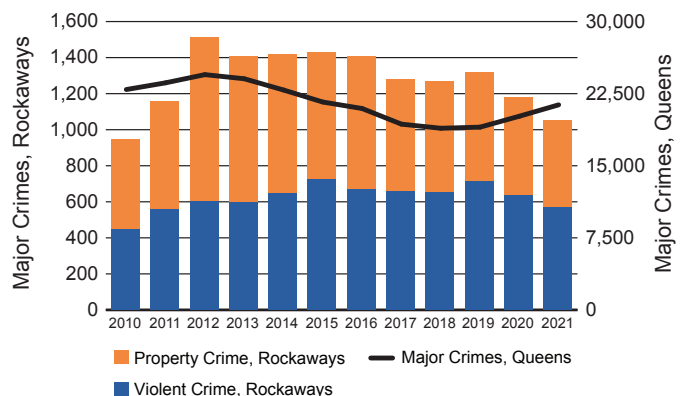
Under the City’s definitions, the Rockaways has roughly the same shares of students with disabilities (20.2 percent) and students living in poverty (75.6 percent) as citywide. The concentration of English Language Learners (8.9 percent) is significantly lower than citywide (13.9 percent).

Throughout the pandemic, student attendance in the Rockaways regularly hovered just below citywide rates, though average daily in-person attendance was slightly higher than average daily remote attendance (86.4 percent compared to 85.6 percent in the spring of 2021). Overall total attendance (excluding attendance at charter schools) was 87 percent in the 2020-21 school year, below the rate for all of Queens (91.3 percent) and the City (89.5 percent).

Crime

Overall, major crimes (consisting of the seven major violent and property crimes) in the Rockaways reported by the 100th and 101st precinct has declined since 2012, the peak year in the 2010 through 2021 period (see Figure 11). Between 2012 and 2021, property crimes on the Peninsula declined in almost every year, while violent crimes increased in three of the 10 years. Overall, the rate of decline in major crimes was considerably higher (30.4 percent) for the area than it was for the borough as a whole (12.8 percent).

FIGURE 11
Major Crimes in the Rockaways



Sources: NYPD CompStat; OSC analysis

While Queens and the City as a whole both had higher numbers of major crimes in 2021 than in 2019, the Rockaways saw declines in both violent crimes and property crimes in each of the two years since the onset of the pandemic in 2020. By July 17, 2022, however, the trend had reversed for property crimes in the Rockaways, which was 27 percent higher than for the comparable January to July period of 2021. Violent crime continued to decline and was 10 percent lower than for the comparable period in 2021.



Resiliency and Revitalization

Community Resilience

The U.S. Census Bureau released a new tool, the Community Resilience Estimates (CRE), to categorize a community's population under three levels of risk (low, medium and high) of experiencing disaster.¹⁸ The tool is intended to facilitate efforts at understanding and improving the resilience of communities.

The 2021 CRE dataset included census tract level data drawn from the 2019 American Community Survey. The data showed that more than one-half of Arverne and Far Rockaway residents were at medium risk of experiencing disaster in an emergency event. Furthermore, more than two-fifths of Edgemere residents, as well as some residents in parts of Rockaway Park and Hammels, were categorized as high risk. Notably, together, these communities are among the 33 areas across the City that experienced disproportionate health impacts from the pandemic and that have the lowest COVID-19 vaccination rates.

Infrastructure Resilience

Superstorm Sandy caused extensive damage to homes, businesses, roads, sidewalks, dunes, parks and beaches. Much of the boardwalk was swept away, the water supply was disrupted, power outages lasted for weeks and subway service was

not restored for seven months. Communities such as Edgemere were completely flooded as water from the sea and Jamaica Bay met.

In addition to restoring homes and relocating residents, federal, State and City agencies focused on recovery and reconstruction efforts (as described in part in the [Comptroller's 2018 report on the Rockaways](#)) that included reconstruction of the Rockaway boardwalk, enhancement of Rockaway Beach, infrastructure enhancements in Far Rockaway, and preparation of the Resilient Edgemere Community Plan (from 2015 to 2017).

The Plan has the stated intent of creating resilient housing and improving streets and transportation over a 10-year implementation period. The plan aligns with previously completed [Resilient Neighborhoods](#) planning initiatives for Broad Channel, Rockaway Park and Rockaway Beach.¹⁹ Plan implementation requires periodic public consultations on proposed land use actions, such as the most recent ones on up-zoning in targeted areas to accommodate construction of new five- to six-story mixed-use buildings.

On July 14, 2022, following a series of public consultations, the New York City Council approved the Plan, including a package of land use projects and related measures, such as provisions for participation of community land trusts in land ownership and stewardship, and for limiting development in areas that are more prone to flooding.

Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Census Bureau, Community Resilience Estimates Datasets, 2019 Estimates, at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/data/datasets.html>.
- 2 Neighborhood in this report refers to public use micro-data areas (PUMA) defined by the Census Bureau. These are non-overlapping and each containing no less than 100,000 people. New York City has 55 such Census Bureau-defined areas, which encompass the 59 community districts. PUMA borders are not contiguous with community district borders.
- 3 U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2010 and 2020.
- 4 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2010 and 2016-2020 5-year estimates. Some trend analysis in this report draws on comparison of ACS data for these five-year periods, ending in 2010 and 2020, due to pandemic-related data issues in 2020. Because there is no single reference date, the terms “2006-2010” and “2016-2020” are used to refer to the data.
- 5 All health-related data is from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, unless otherwise specified. Case and death counts include confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases.
- 6 Data for this series is not available before August 8, 2020. For all COVID-19 health data, the Rockaways in this report is defined as the following five ZIP codes, whose collective boundaries are not identical to the U.S. Census Bureau-defined neighborhood: 11691 (Far Rockaway/Edgemere/Bayswater/Hammels), 11692 (Arverne), 11693 (Rockaway Beach/Broad Channel), 11694 (Rockaway Beach/Belle Harbor/Neponsit/Seaside) and 11697 (Breezy Point/Jacob Riis Park).
- 7 City of New York, Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity (TRIE), at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/trie/about/neighborhoods.page>.
- 8 Donovan Richards, et al., letter to the Mayor, March 4, 2022, at <https://queensbp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Rockaway-Health-Letter-to-the-Mayor.pdf>.
- 9 City of New York, “Rebuild, Renew, Reinvent: A Blueprint for New York City’s Economic Recovery,” at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/office-of-the-mayor/2022/Mayor-Adams-Economic-Recovery-Blueprint.pdf>.
- 10 On March 29, 2022, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized a second booster dose of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for people 50 years of age and older, people ages 12 to 49 who are moderately or severely immunocompromised, and people ages 18 to 49 who received a primary and booster Johnson & Johnson vaccine.
- 11 Additional dose is administered after the primary series, including booster doses and third doses available for fully vaccinated people who have a weakened immune system.
- 12 Jobs in the Rockaways are taken up by persons living within and outside of the area. This is different from residents in the workforce, which refers to persons living in the Rockaways who are working, regardless of the location of their workplace.
- 13 In-person industries include all except information, financial activities and professional and business services.
- 14 Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center, Foodscape Rockaway/Broad Channel, March 22, 2022, at <https://www.nycfoodpolicy.org/foodscape-broad-channel-rockaway/>.
- 15 U.S. Census Bureau, New York City Housing Vacancy Survey (NYCHVS), 2017 Housing and Vacancy Survey Microdata, at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/nychvs/data/datasets.html>. Mitchell-Lama shares represent Mitchell Lama rentals, Mitchell Lama Cooperatives and Mitchell Lama-type cooperatives.
- 16 Under this program, federal funding is directed away from designated housing authority to the private entities, who then leverage this stable source of funding to raise money for repairs of the developments. Although the City regards the Rental Assistance Demonstration as one of the key programs for raising much needed funding for NYCHA, it is a relatively young program (created in 2011 under the Obama Administration) so long-term impacts have not yet been fully assessed. Studies conducted by some advocacy organizations, including a recent one by the Human Rights Watch, suggest that properties may face higher rates of evictions after conversion.
- 17 Access is measured as households or individuals with cable, fiber optic or DSL (direct subscriber line) internet subscriptions.
- 18 Development of the CRE coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The tool sets thresholds for indicators (such as income-to-poverty ratios, unit-level crowding in housing, health insurance coverage, and no broadband internet access) to determine whether households are at low, medium or high risk of not being able to absorb, endure and recover from an emergency event.
- 19 New York City Department of City Planning, Resilient Neighborhoods – Old Howard Beach, Hamilton Beach and Broad Channel, at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/plans/queens.page>.

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