

Pain Point Analysis: Queens

July 19, 2022



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Overview

Queens Snapshot



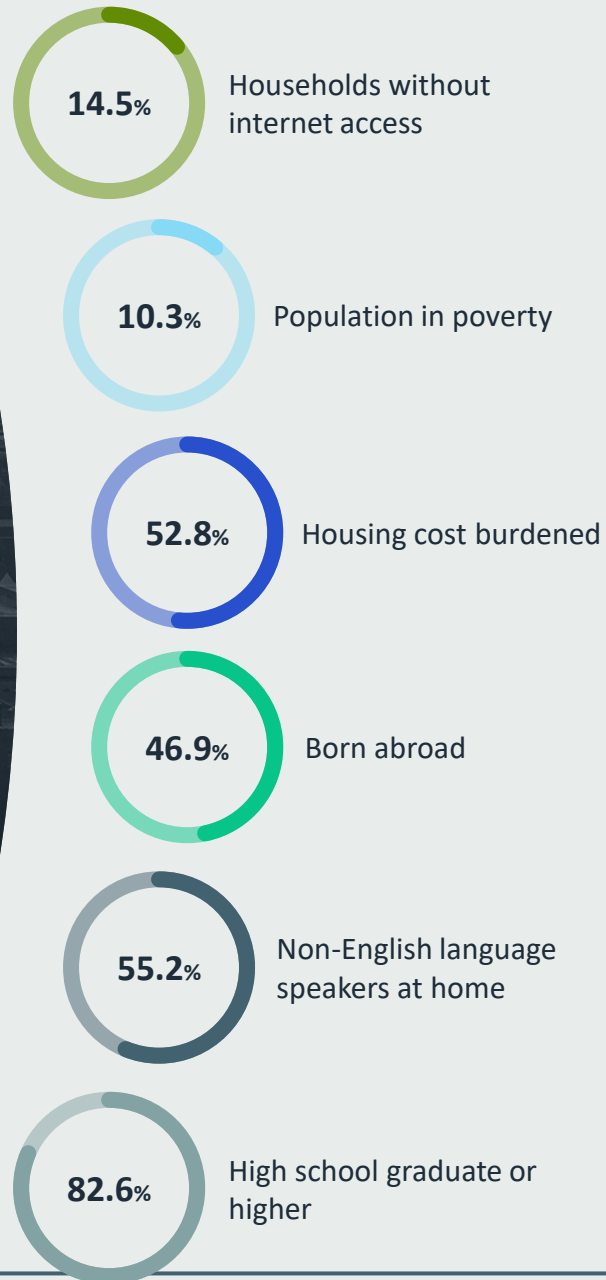
2,331,143
Total population



\$72,028
Median household
income

Zeitgeist

Queens' cultural diversity and mixed-status communities make language and culture vital to engaging the community, while also addressing its public health concerns, housing conditions, and disparities between its noncitizen and native-born populations.



28.1%	Hispanic/Latinx
27.3%	Asian
24.5%	White alone, non-Hispanic
20.7%	Black
1.4%	American Indian

Overview

- Queens is one of the most diverse places in the world, where nearly half of its residents are born abroad. According to the mayor's office, there are at least 160 languages spoken in the borough.
- Queens' largest industries include health care and social assistance, food services, retail trade, and educational services. The highest paying industry in Queen is utilities with median earnings of \$72,028. Queens is home to many colleges and universities, including several CUNY and SUNY schools.
- The borough has two of the three major New York metropolitan area airports – LaGuardia and John F. Kennedy International. More than 126,000 workers in Queens are employed in the transportation industry, the fifth-highest in the county.
- Queens became New York City's COVID-19 epicenter in 2020, while New York was the epicenter of the global pandemic. While 86 percent of Queens is fully vaccinated, just 59 percent of Black residents and 63 percent of white residents fall into this group, compared to 98 percent and 82 percent of Asian and Latinx residents, respectively. The Edgemere/Far Rockaway neighborhood, comprised of nearly 80 percent immigrants, many of whom are undocumented, has the lowest rate of vaccination.



Pain Points

Affordable Housing

- About 10 percent of Queens' noncitizen population lives in extremely overcrowded conditions, which are associated with poor mental health and academic performance. This is double the rate of the American-born population. Overcrowding rates increase to nearly 20 percent for Elmhurst, Corona, and Jackson Heights, which contributed to high infection and death rates early in the pandemic.
- Approximately 48 percent of housing units in Queens are rented and 52.8 percent of these are rent-burdened households. In 2019, 28.7 percent of renters were severely rent-burdened, and 52.4 percent of rental units were considered affordable at 80 percent of the area's median income, \$72,028. This leaves most of the borough without discretionary income for food and health care services. Ineligibility for state and federal stimulus aid due to immigration status kept many families food insecure.
- In May 2022, Mayor Eric Adams and Governor Kathy Hochul announced Edgemere Commons, a \$100 million affordable and supportive housing development in Queens. Upon completion, the project will offer 2,000 units of affordable housing units.



Public Health

- Queens residents have higher-than-average rates of pre-existing conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension. Many residents in Queens do not have primary care physicians, worsening health outcomes.
- The borough has a low ratio of healthcare workers to the overall population, meaning there are only 365.5 general practitioners per 100,000 residents and only ten hospitals for the borough's 2.3 million residents. In 2020, the Health Department launched the Neighborhood Health Initiative part of Take Care New York, partnering with nonprofits in Far Rockaway and Jamaica to engage community members and identify solutions for health disparities.
- Measuring the gap between air pollution across racial and ethnic groups, Queens has an Air Toxics Exposure Disparity Index score of 22.3, significantly higher than the U.S. score of 1.9. Neighborhoods such as Jamaica and Hollis that are near the Brooklyn Queens Expressway have a 32 percent higher concentration of nitrogen dioxide than non-redlined communities, which experts have linked to premature death, asthma, and heart disease.
- LaGuardia Airport was cited in a study to illustrate the health impacts airport noise has, such as an increased rate of cardiovascular disease. In March 2022, State Senator Joseph Addabbo co-sponsored four pieces of legislation to regulate helicopter flights over Queens between JFK International Airport and LaGuardia to reduce noise and carbon emissions.
- Early in the pandemic, Queens had 2,507 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents, resulting in 637 deaths between February 29 and June 1, 2020.



Immigrant and Noncitizen Disenfranchisement

- Queens has a relatively large uninsured population, with undocumented immigrants who have limited access to public health insurance programs accounting for 40 percent.
- The city offers NYC Care, a health care program that guarantees low-cost and no-cost services to those who do not qualify or cannot afford health insurance. Residents who qualify for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Temporary Protected Status programs are eligible for Medicaid; however, public charge rules have chilled participation.
- Sixty-five percent of residents in Queens have limited English proficiency, more than double the 29 percent in New York City overall. English proficiency is linked to educational attainment and health outcomes, as individuals are better able to navigate patient pathways and communicate with healthcare providers.
- Many foreign-born residents, especially undocumented immigrants, were not eligible for federal stimulus aid, exacerbating pre-pandemic economic and health disparities for many immigrant communities-and increasing reliance on resources like food banks. In 2021, New York created the \$2.1 billion Excluded Workers Fund to make direct income payments to undocumented residents, but funds ran out within weeks.
- The naturalized population has been shown to experience health outcomes at similar rates to American-born citizens. Several local nonprofits and community organizations, some partnering with the city and CUNY, are focused on providing legal and immigration services.



Priority Neighborhoods

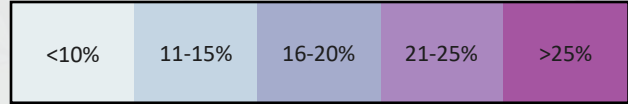
Corona, Queens

Population: 108,596*

Corona is almost entirely (96.6 percent) composed of communities of color. The largest groups are Latinx and Asian, at 76.6 and 11.6 percent, respectively. About 80 percent of residents have limited English proficiency, which has contributed to low education outcomes; 36.6 percent have not received a high school diploma. In 2020, school district 24, which includes Corona and Elmhurst, accounted for more than a quarter of 21,000 Queens school children who were homeless at some point during the year, at 5,593 students.

Nearly 25 percent of the population is uninsured. Of those that are insured, 51.8 percent are covered by public health insurance. The education and poor health outcomes are compounded by the neighborhood's poor internet access; just over one-fifth of residents do not have access to the internet. This has exacerbated pre-pandemic disparities, as services and information are increasingly transmitted through the internet.

Percent of households with no internet subscription



Corona	Queens
20.9%	12.8%

Corona Neighborhood Boundary

Zip Codes Represented	Approximate Enrollees within Zip Codes**
11368	84,471

*Population data for the neighborhoods is calculated using combined and averaged census tract level information. As neighborhood boundaries do not perfectly align with the census boundaries, the data for neighborhoods is only an estimated value as some additional areas from surrounding neighborhoods are included.

**Approximate enrolled population is derived from New York State of Health's publicly available data, last updated in April of 2022. The data is published at the zip code level and reflects the average number of enrollees per zip code by all data collection options. Neighborhoods were assigned the total enrollment population reflective of the zip code they fall within.

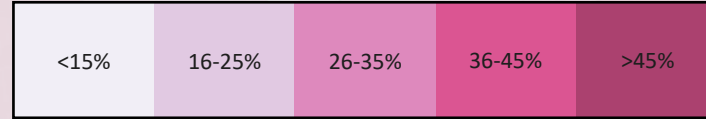
Elmhurst, Queens

Population: 96,087*

Elmhurst is 42.1 percent Latinx and 48.9 percent Asian. More than one-fifth of residents have not obtained a high school diploma, and nearly 15 percent of residents do not have access to the internet. About 78 percent of residents have limited English proficiency as well. In Queens, Elmhurst has the largest population of noncitizens living in overcrowded conditions, and over 80 percent of noncitizens in the neighborhood are considered essential workers.

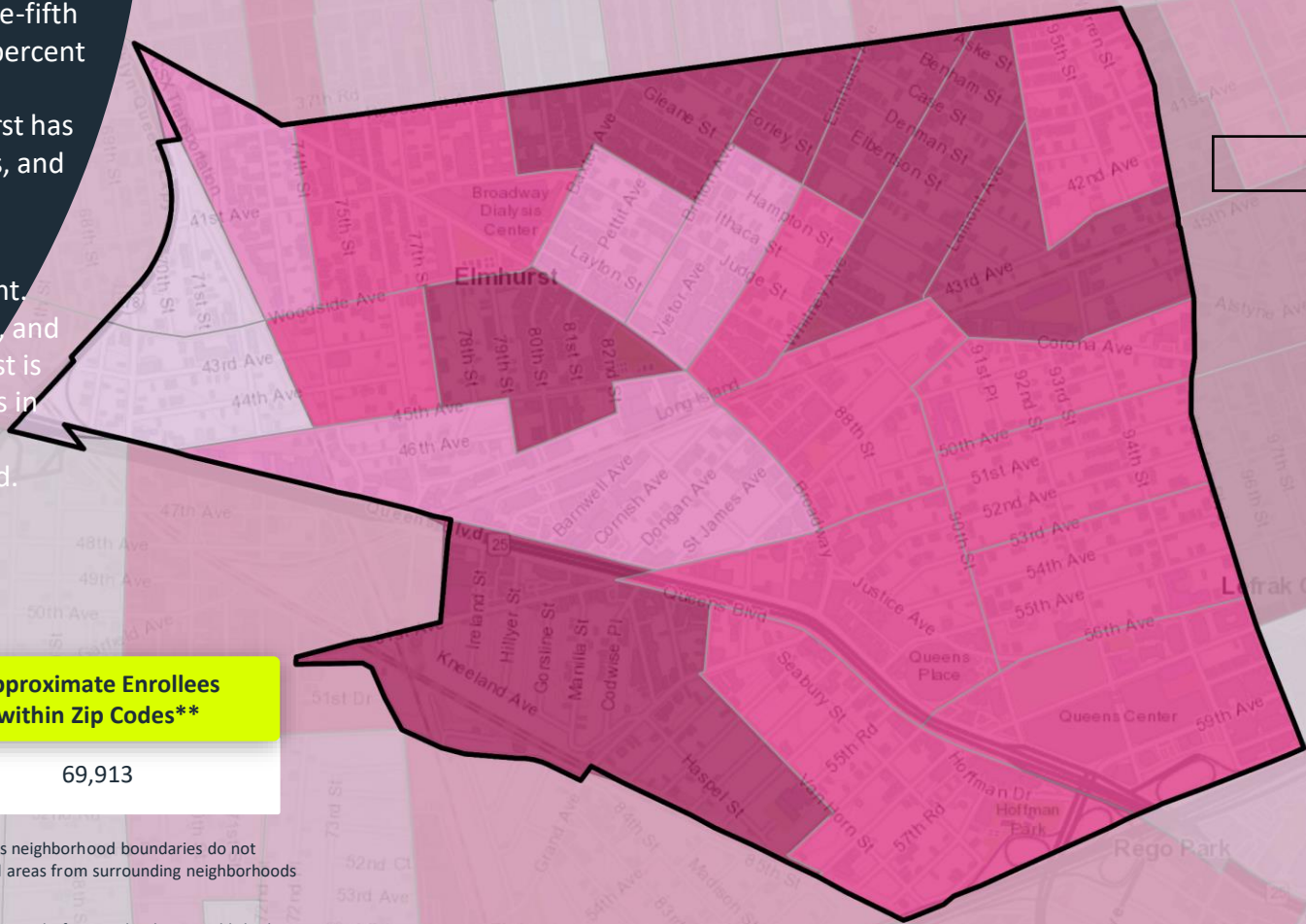
The neighborhood has a notable uninsured population, at 14.5 percent. Insurance participation is dampened by poverty, immigration status, and language barriers that make certain information inaccessible. Elmhurst is home to LaGuardia Airport, which estimated 22 million travelers in 2019. The neighborhood is also home to Elmhurst Hospital, which estimates that nearly half of its patients are undocumented.

Percent of 18+ population who speak English "less than very well"



Elmhurst	Queens
41.0%	20.3%

Zip Codes Represented	Approximate Enrollees within Zip Codes**
11373	69,913



Elmhurst Neighborhood Boundary

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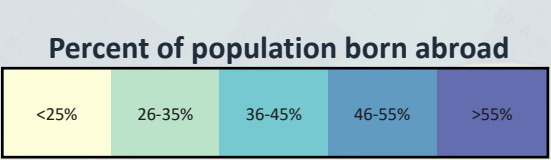
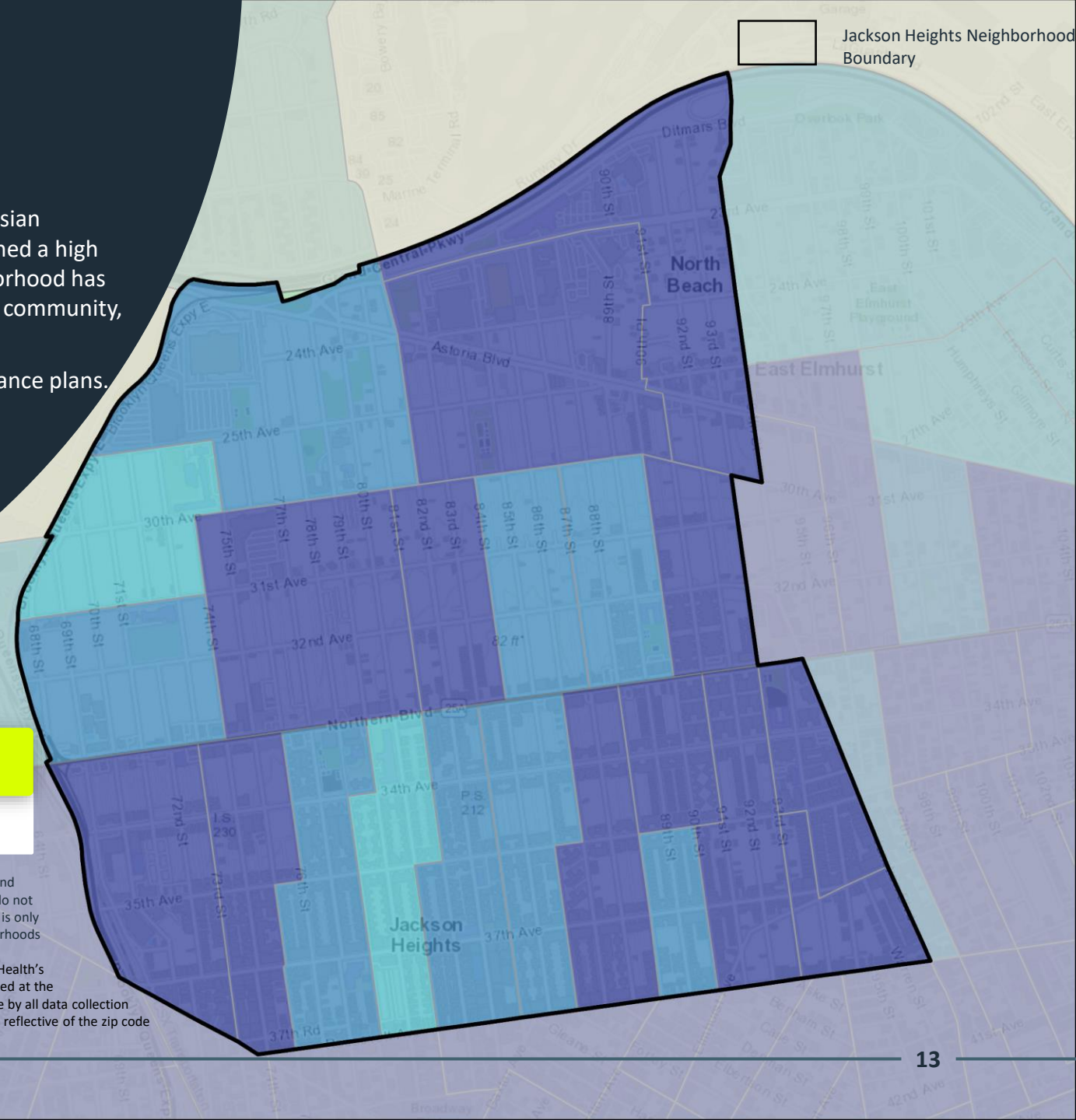
Jackson Heights, Queens

Population: 95,858*

Jackson Heights is predominantly Latinx at 53.5 percent, with a large, 24.5 percent Asian population. Education outcomes are low, as 18.9 percent of residents have not attained a high school diploma. This is compounded by the fact that about 80 percent of the neighborhood has limited English proficiency. This is in part due to the neighborhood's large immigrant community, particularly undocumented immigrants.

Of those in Jackson Heights that are insured, 46.7 percent are on public health insurance plans. Nearly a quarter of residents are impoverished, and 15.6 percent do not have access to the internet. The neighborhood's population also skews older than its surrounding areas and the city overall, at a median age of 40.5. The neighborhood also has high rates of housing overcrowding. In 2017, Target announced plans to open a 20,000- square-foot store in the neighborhood, which residents protested, citing concerns about the affordable housing market.

Jackson Heights Neighborhood Boundary



Zip Codes Represented	Approximate Enrollees within Zip Codes**
11372	38,265

Jackson Heights	Queens
56.9%	43.9%

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Key Findings

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Cultural and linguistic dynamics present some of the biggest barriers to re-enrollment in Queens, compounded by the variability of education outcomes and literacy rates in target communities. These populations are most at risk for poor health outcomes, particularly given that economic and housing conditions make communities more vulnerable to communicable diseases such as COVID-19.

- Given the lack of internet access in many low-income communities of color, engagement strategies must offer alternative forms of enrollment and re-enrollment. Leveraging partnerships with local computer centers or libraries to access online resources and the online health insurance marketplace will help mitigate this obstacle.
- Culturally sensitive and relevant messaging will be paramount. For example, Asian residents – particularly those of Chinese descent – fared better than other people of color early in the pandemic due to warnings from family and friends in China. This prompted the demographic to wear masks in public, socially distance, and enhance cleaning practices. Faith-based organizations can similarly help reach New Yorkers with varied cultural backgrounds via trusted messengers.
- Given issues and concerns around safety in immigrant populations, which comprise a significant portion of the borough, NY State of Health should continue to leverage trusted community spaces such as food banks where residents have built-in language services as locations for educational events and enrollment pop-ups.

