

A faded background image showing a metal shopping cart on a sidewalk. Inside the cart is a mattress. To the left of the cart are several cardboard boxes. The scene is outdoors, likely on a city street.

Fighting Homelessness in Flushing – 2017

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Executive Summary

Homelessness a Growing Trend in Flushing

- Homelessness is a growing trend across NY and Flushing and despite strong economic growth in Flushing, homelessness has also seen strong growth.
- The key reason for homelessness in Flushing is identified as domestic violence, followed by eviction and overcrowding.
- Flushing however has a lower than NY average student homelessness, which is a positive aspect.
- Large Asian population of Flushing has led to Asians been the largest homeless people in Flushing, which is followed by African Americans and Hispanic.

Growth in Poverty and Lack of Affordable Housing

- One of the key reason for growth in homelessness in Flushing is identified as growing poverty, which is stemming from growth in low wage income jobs in Flushing.
- Lower percentage of diploma holders in the 25+ age bracket is one of the key reason for people occupied in low wage income jobs.
- This low wage income, coupled with growing rental and housing sale price is contributing to homelessness as people simply can not afford these high priced homes.
- Another reason for increase in homelessness in Flushing is growing demand-supply gap. While demand for affordable houses grow, supply of these affordable homes is low and hence large number of applications gets rejected.

Executive Summary

What Could be Done to Alleviate Homelessness

- The three key ways to alleviate homelessness are identified as:
 - Affordable housing fund and utilizing fund to set up shelters.
 - Housing first plan, where the government, along with non-governmental organizations should focus on providing permanent housing solution to the homeless.
 - Counselling for the homeless – where the government should follow up with counselling support so that they feel safe and secure and do not come back to shelters.
- Also the key focus has to be to bridge the demand supply gap of affordable houses.
- To solve this, the only possible step is increasing the number of affordable house.
- However, since creating new affordable house could be a long-term step, the government can think of steps similar to Safe Parking Program, and slowly shift them to permanent homes as and when they are available.
- The government can also think of including residents of Flushing (voluntary inclusion), by request them to be allowed to construct small affordable houses at their unused backyards, which can be provided to homeless as shelters (a plan currently been experimented in Oregon). However, this may prove to be difficult as voluntary participation is expected to be low.
- To tackle poverty, a key step would be addressing the root cause – low wage income alleviation. Government can think of taking steps that will increase the number of 25+ aged diploma holders, thus creating the necessary talent pool and decreasing the number of labourers and low wage income earners.
- Setting up skill development and training centers would be another area that will improve the talent pool, reducing the low wage income jobs.

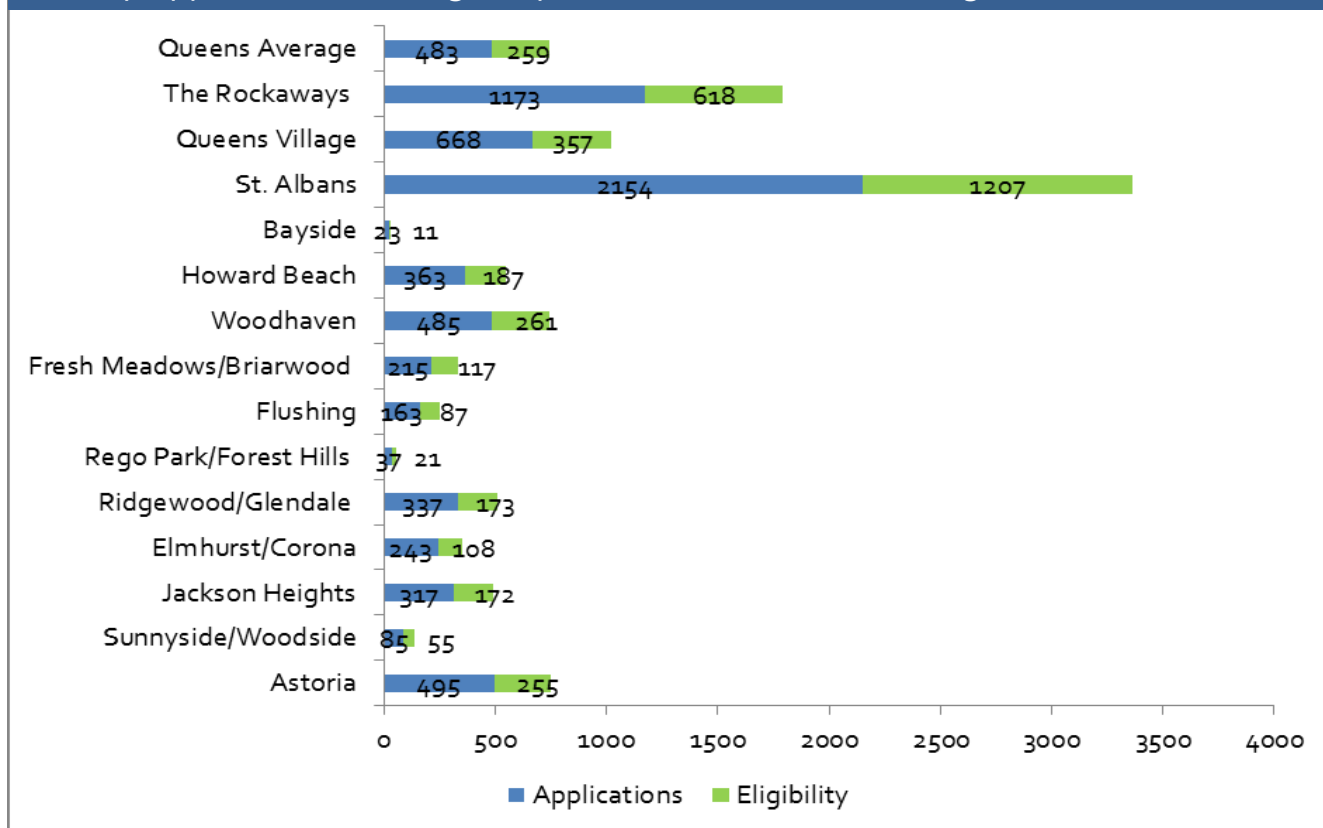
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Number of homeless applications in Flushing is less than most other neighborhoods in Queens, indicating a slight better position...

- Number of homeless in Flushing is lower than many other neighborhoods/community in Queens such as St. Albans, The Rockaways, Queens Village, Astoria, Howard Beach, Fresh Meadows/Briarwood, Jackson Heights, and Elmhurst/Corona.
- Number of family applications for shelter in Flushing was 163 in the period of 2012 through first half of 2015, which is far less than the Queens average of 483 for the same period.

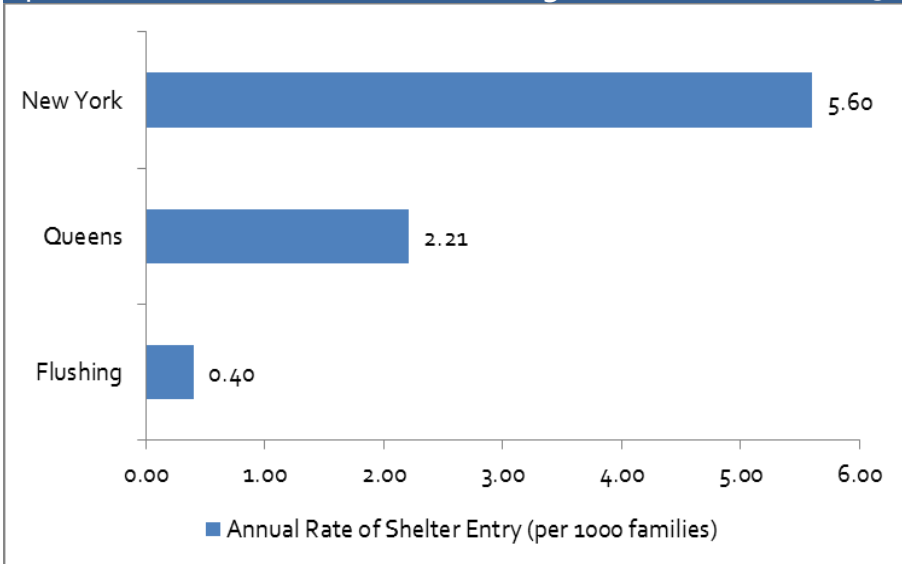
Family Applications and Eligibility for Shelter – FY2012 through First Half of FY2015



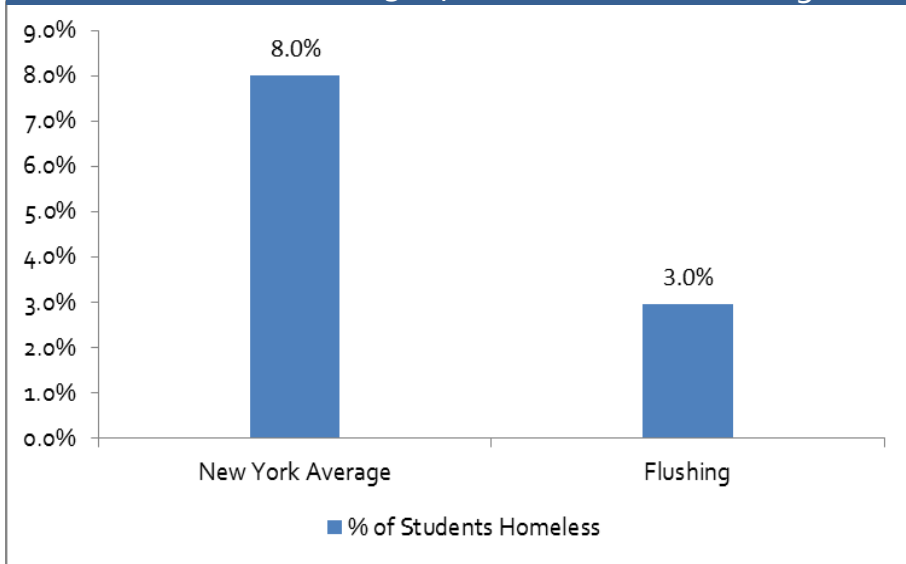
While student homelessness in Flushing is lower than Queens and New York, North Flushing witnessed very strong rise in student homelessness in the past few years – indicating a worrying trend...

- Annual rate of families (with children) entering shelter (per 1000 families) shows a much better picture for Flushing as compared to Queens and New York.
- Entrance rate in Flushing is only 0.40 for the period of FY2012 to first half of FY2015. While the entrance rate is 2.21 and 5.60 for Queens and New York respectively for the same period.
- Flushing also fares better in student homelessness with only 3% of homeless students as compared to 8% for New York (average).
- However, North Flushing witnessed an exceptional rise in homeless students – 151.6% - from SY2010-11 to SY2013-14, which was the highest among all councils / neighborhoods in New York – indicating a high student homelessness growth pattern.

Annual Rate of Families with Children Entering Shelter per 1,000 Families – FY2012 through First Half of FY2015



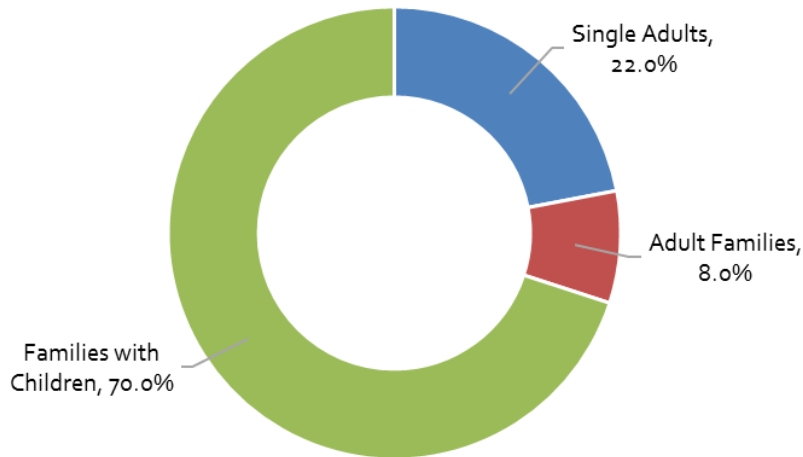
Student Homelessness (Homeless Students as a % of all Students) – SY2013-14 – New York vs. Flushing



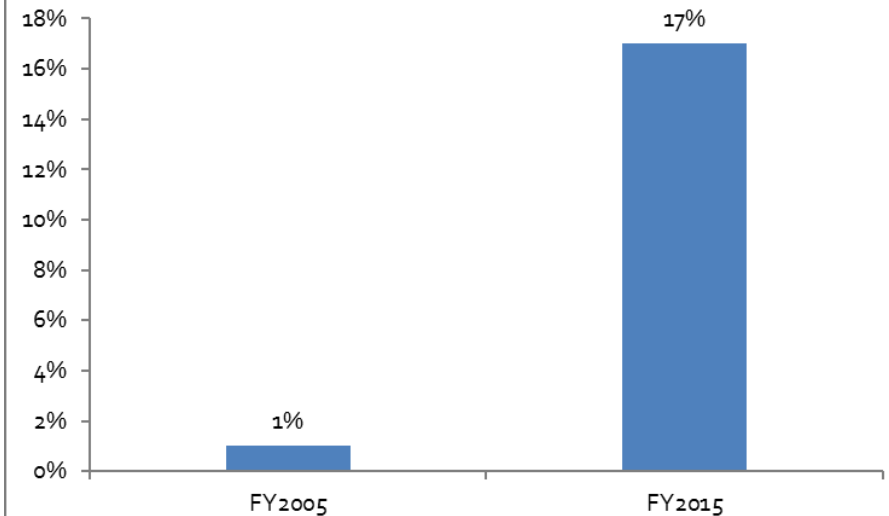
Larger families (families with children) comprise the highest portion of homeless people in Flushing and this segment has seen strong increase over the past few years...

- Families with children comprise the highest portion of homeless population in New York and its neighborhoods, while Single Adults was a distant second at 22%.
- This strongly indicates towards the difficulties larger families face in Flushing, Queens and New York in renting or staying at individual houses.
- Also number of families returning to shelter within one year of their exit to permanent housing has increased from around 1% in 2005 to 17% in 2015. This very high increase indicates an alarming trend of growing homelessness and growing rent burden (i.e., low wage with increase rent).
- Also, the number of families with children entering shelter (for homeless) has increased over the period and has seen particularly strong increase in Bloomberg's term of 2002–2013, and de Blasio's term (2014 onwards), which further points towards the increasing homelessness of larger families in Flushing, Queens and NY.

Individuals in Shelter by Family Type – Till 2014



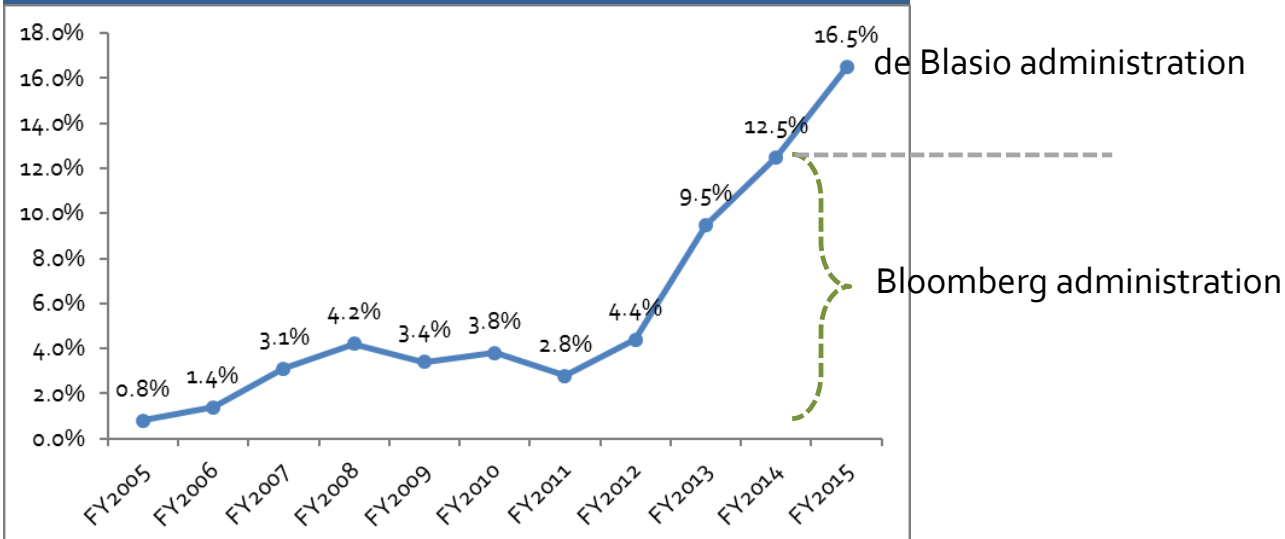
Increase in % of Families Returning to Shelter Within One Year of Their Exit to Permanent Housing – 2005-2015



Homelessness has continuously increased over the years and increased from 0.8% in FY2005 to 16.5% in FY2015...

- Homelessness in New York, Queens and Flushing has increase over the past years, and has seen a very sharp rise since 2013.
- During the Bloomberg administration, homelessness in New York (measured by return to shelter from permanent housing rate) increased from 0.8% in FY2005 to 12.5% in 2014. In Bill de Blasio administration, this increased to 16.5% in FY2015.
- This sharp and continued increase in homelessness is an alarming trend and indicates a growing need for shelters.
- This further points towards that fact that home sale and rental price are probably increasing at a higher rate than wage and hence homelessness is seeing an upward swing.

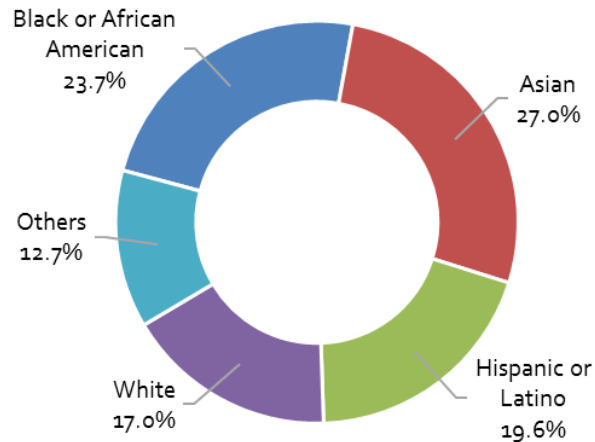
Return to Shelter Rate – 2005-2015



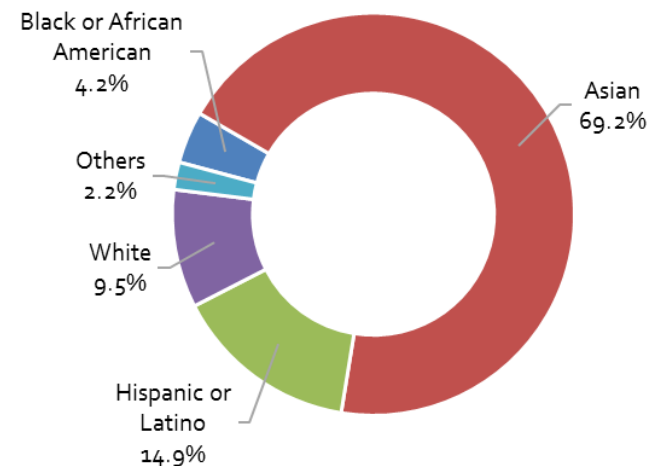
In Flushing, Asian Americans represents the highest percentage of homeless people, which is in contrast with overall New York, where African Americans represents highest homeless population...

- Asian or Asian American represents largest proportion of homeless in Flushing, followed by Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino and White.
- It is estimated that Asians represents 27% of all homeless in Flushing. Also, this percentage represents a very large number of people as Flushing has majority of Asiatic people – at 69.2% of the overall population.
- 23.7% of the African American population is homeless, while 19.6% of all Hispanic in Flushing are homeless.
- The main reason for homelessness in Flushing is linked with association with low wage income, which is complicated by the growing gap between wage increase and rental/sale price increase (home sale/rental price is increasing at a much higher rate than wage increase).
- A large number of Asians in Flushing are immigrants and hence Flushing is estimated to have a large immigrant homeless population.

Homelessness in Flushing – by Ethnicity – 2015-2016

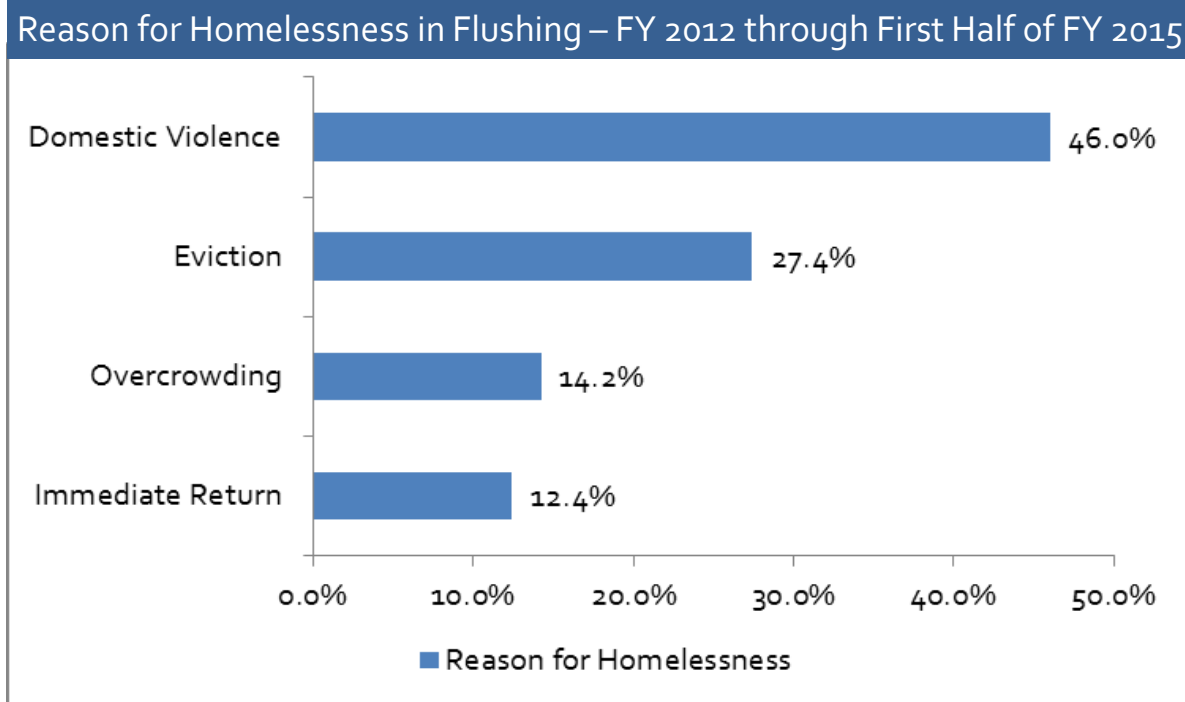


Flushing – Ethnicity – 2015-2016



Domestic violence is identified as a key reason for homelessness in Flushing, as well as in most other regions in Queens...

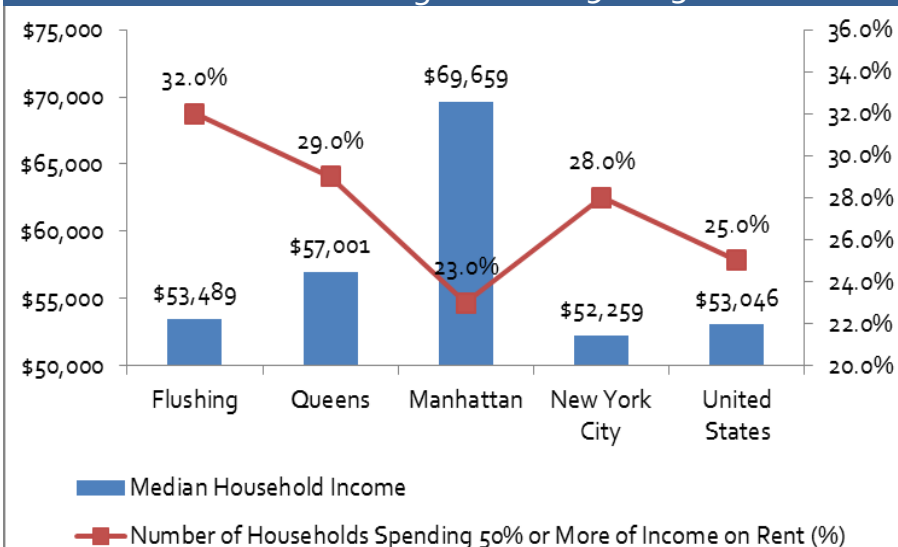
- Domestic violence is the major reason for homeless in Flushing with 46% of homeless families indicating domestic violence to be the key reason.
- Domestic violence is followed by eviction (27.4%), overcrowding (14.2%) and immediate return (12.4%).
- Nearby neighborhoods / community districts such as Bayside, Fresh Meadows, Corona, Elmhurst, Woodside, Sunnyside and Rego Park also cited domestic violence as the major reason for homelessness.
- While some other regions / community districts in New York such as St. Albans, Queens Village, Washington Heights, Ridgewood, Rockaways, Howard Beach, etc. indicated eviction as the key reason for homelessness.
- Eviction was the key reason for homelessness in 30 community districts, while domestic violence was the reason in 27 community districts.



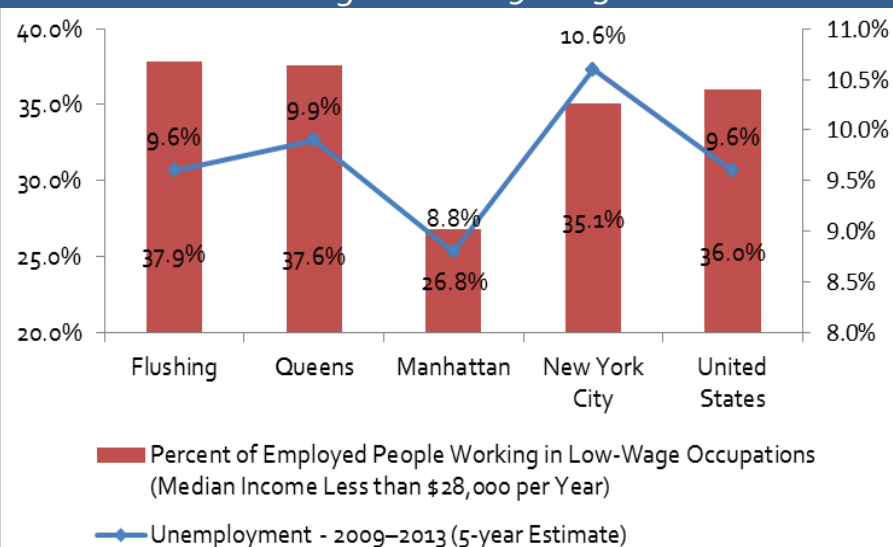
High rent burden, coupled with comparatively lower median household income and high low-wage employment is a key reason for homelessness in Flushing...

- On the cost front, one of the key reason for homelessness in Flushing is high rental price. In Flushing, the median household income for the 2009-2013 period was \$53,489, which was lower than overall Queens, New York city, Manhattan and average of United States.
- However, higher rent resulted in 32% of households in Flushing spending more than 50% of their income on rent alone.
- Additionally Flushing also had high number of people employed in low-wage occupation in the 2009 to 2013 period. Flushing had 37.9% of people employed in low wage occupation, which was higher than all other compared regions – Queens, New York city, Manhattan and United States.
- This slightly lower median household income, couple with high rental requirement and high percentage of low-wage employment is a key reason for homelessness in Flushing.

Median Household Income and Rent Burden – Flushing vs. Other Regions – 2009-2013



Low-wage and Unemployment – Flushing vs. Other Regions – 2009-2013



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Flushing's homeless student population is lower than most other neighborhoods, however, Queens has witnessed a very high increase in homeless student population in the fast few years, indicating a worrying trend...

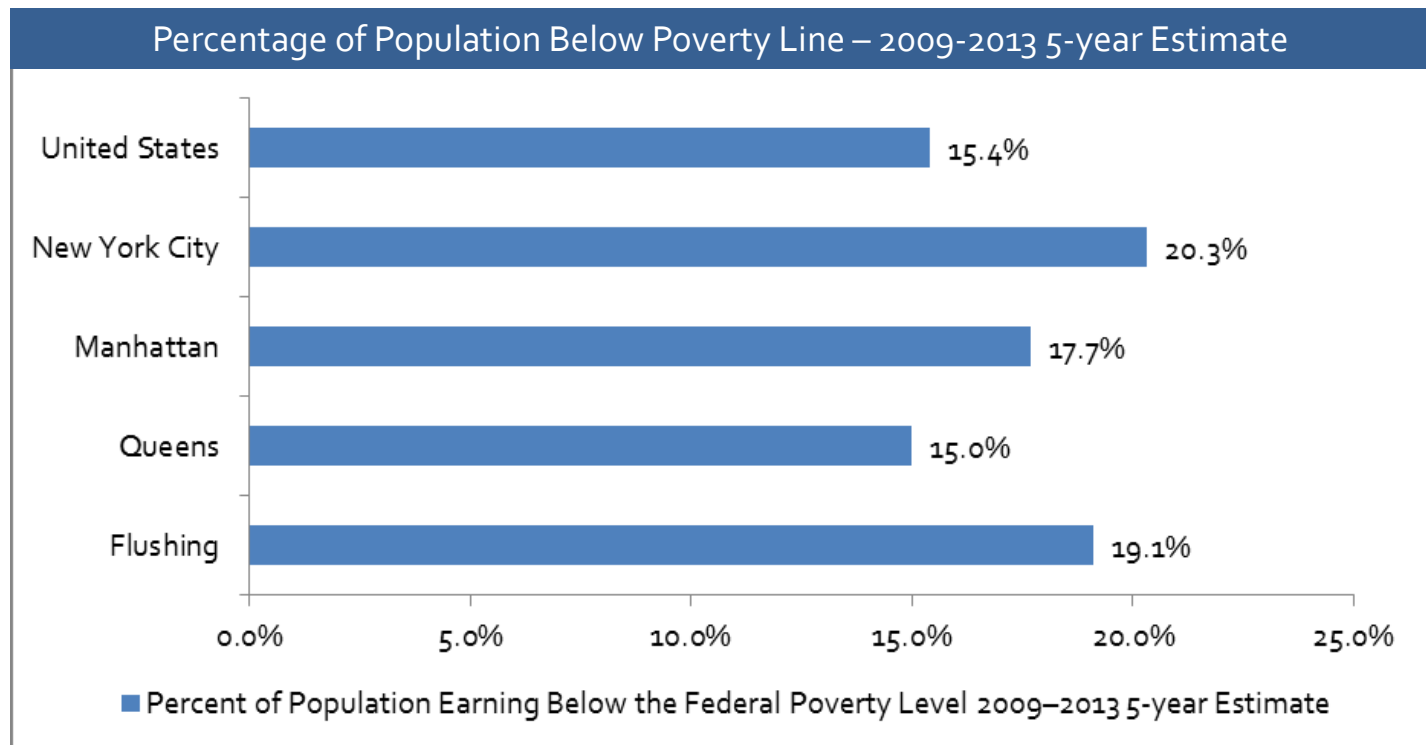
- Flushing suffers lesser than many other neighborhoods (in both NY and Queens) in terms of student homelessness. Research shows that the districts of Flushing, Whitestone, Bayside, Little Neck, Fresh Meadows and Floral Park, had the lowest student homeless rates of any school districts in the city.
- In Flushing, Hispanic and black constitute the highest percentage of homeless students, followed by Asian, which is understandable since Flushing has a considerably higher Asian population than many other neighborhoods.
- Although Flushing has comparatively low number of homeless students, Queens has seen steady increase in number of homeless students over the years.
- However, North Flushing witnessed an exceptional rise in homeless students – 151.6% - from SY2010-11 to SY2013-14, which was the highest among all councils / neighborhoods in New York – indicating a high student homelessness growth pattern.
- Queens had the second largest percent increase — 50% — of the number of homeless students attending public school in the borough between the 2011-2012 school year and the 2015-2016 year.
- In 2011-2012, Queens saw 2,651 public school students living part or all of the year in the shelter system; in 2012-2013, Queens had 2,932; in 2013-2014 the borough had 2,962; in 2014-2015 that number jumped to 3,225 students; and in the 2015-2016 school year, Queens had a total of 3,971 public school students living in shelters.
- One of the key reason for increase in student homelessness is the challenges faced by the homeless students. Some of the challenges include issues with changing schools, attending high school, and difficulty getting to their schools that leads to chronic lateness and absences – further increasing the dropout rate.
- Most of the homeless student are clustered in few schools only and hence these schools often run out of funds to provide the students with the additional funding they need – which results in dropouts.

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Flushing has a higher poverty level than overall Queens, Manhattan and overall U.S., indicating poverty to be a strong contributor to homelessness...

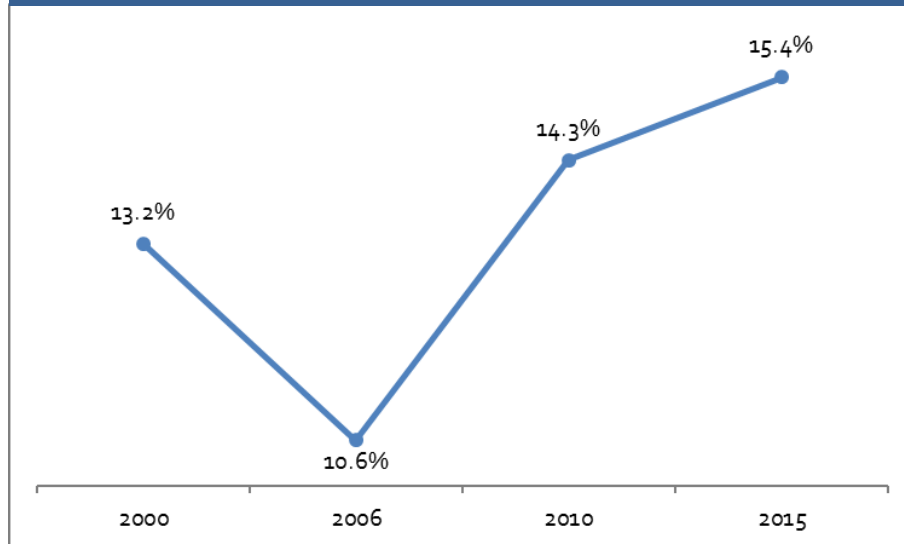
- Federal Poverty Level data shows Flushing has a much higher poverty rate with 19.1% of residents living under the poverty level.
- This percentage is higher than overall Queens (at 15%), Manhattan (at 17.7%) and overall U.S (at 15.4%) and is slightly less than overall New York city (20.3%).
- Several factors such as large number of low-wage workers, high rental, and unemployment contributes to high poverty in Flushing.
- This high number of laborers and high poverty level are other contributors to homelessness in Flushing.



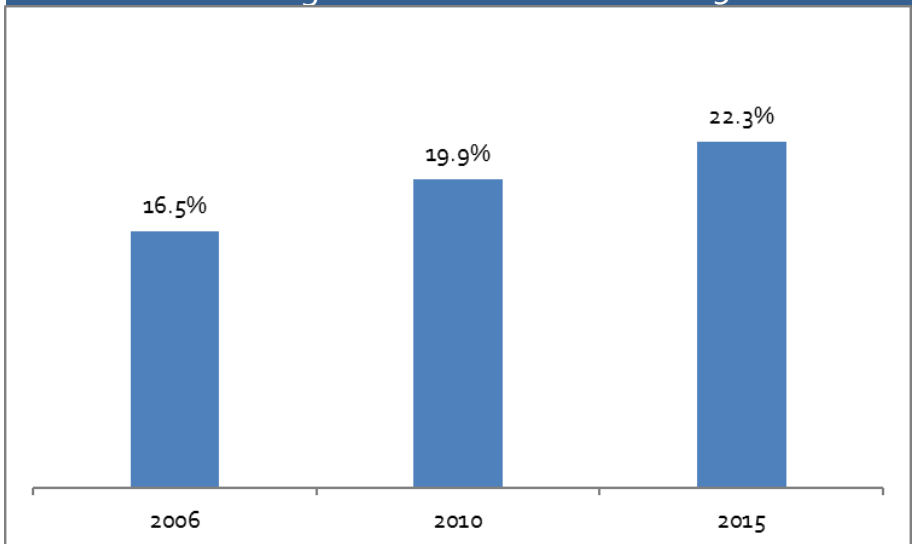
Flushing is witnessing an increase in poverty, which is mainly due to growing occupation in low wage income, coupled with increase in rent and sale price of homes...

- Along with other factors, poverty is also a key factor for homelessness and growing poverty rate in Flushing has also led to this increase in homelessness over the past years.
- Poverty rate has increased from 10.6% in 2006 to 15.4% in 2015 – a contrast considering the fact that the housing market in Flushing, as well as the economy has seen improvement in their performance.
- This growth in poverty can be linked to occupation in low wage income, which has increased over the years.
- This is further complicated by the fact that number of people without high school diploma in Flushing has increased – population aged 25 and above without a high school diploma in Flushing has increased from 16.5% in 2006 to 22.3% in 2015.
- This increase in number of people with lower degree level is another reason for low employment in high-level income jobs and hence a growing trend of low wage income jobs is witnessed in Flushing.

Poverty Rate in Flushing – Year on Year – 2000-2015



Population Aged 25+ Without a High School Diploma in Flushing – Year on Year – 2006-2015



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Although Flushing has a flourishing real estate and housing market, it has very less number of affordable housing projects, which is another reason for growing homelessness...

- Although Flushing has witnessed strong housing market development in the past years, the development on the affordable / low-income housing space has been limited.
- The affordable housing plan further received a blow in mid-2016, when the de Blasio administration scrapped plans to rezone a portion of Flushing, Queens – which was supposed to be rezoned as part of the administration's affordable-housing plan.
- The rezoned Flushing West would have potentially resulted in 1,600 apartments at affordable and market-rate. However, the scrapping of the plans pushed Flushing back to been a high-end real estate market.
- However, other developments are expected to take place with the help of financing under Mayor Bill de Blasio's Housing New York: A Five-Borough, 10-Year Housing Plan. The plan aims to create and preserve 200,000 units of affordable housing.

One Flushing Affordable Housing Project:

- In April 2015, The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) Commissioner announced the selection of a development team for the Flushing Municipal Lot 3 in the Flushing neighborhood of Queens.
- The joint venture between Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), HANAC Inc., and Monadnock Development was selected.
- The plan, called One Flushing, includes the creation of 208 units (which is later increased to 232 units in 2016) of housing affordable to households earning between \$24,200 - \$72,600 annually for an individual and \$34,520 - \$103,560 for a family of four.
- One Flushing will also feature a community facility program that will provide supportive care services to seniors, a rooftop farm, and weatherization services for low-income Queens residents.
- The 43,200 square-foot development site is located at 133-45 41st Avenue, bordered by College Point Boulevard, Main Street, and the Long Island Rail Road.
- According to the plan, there will be a combined total of 60 apartments reserved for senior citizens. The remaining 147 units will be mixed-income multi-family units.

However, financing under HDC has seen recent developments in the affordable housing space, which is a strong positive indication towards solving the homelessness issue...

Selfhelp KVII Apartments

- Selfhelp KVII Apartments is located on 137-39 45th Ave, Flushing, NY 11355, and is an HDC-financed affordable housing development.
- The apartment consist of 91 studio and one-bedroom apartments available for rent from \$474 to \$808 per month.
- Permitted Income: maximum of \$23,240 - \$39,840 depending on apartment/household size.

Macedonia Plaza

- Macedonia Plaza is an HDC-financed affordable housing development completed in 2014 and opened in 2015.
- Macedonia Plaza, located at 37-08 Union St., includes 143 affordable apartments. The 14-story \$50 million building developed by BRP Companies has 143 units that are broken up into studios, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments.
- There's a community room and on-site laundry, an outdoor sun deck and, a number of green building items, including low-flow figures and toilets, energy-efficient lighting, and, according to BRP, Flushing's first co-generation system.
- There are 27 studio apartments, 58 one-bedroom units, 55 two-bedroom units and two three-bedroom apartments.
- Twenty-nine of the units are affordable for individuals earning \$19,063 to \$24,080, or \$24,515 to \$30,960 for households of three. The remaining units are affordable for individuals earning from \$29,383 to \$36,120 and from \$37,783 to \$46,440 for three-person households.



Council Towers VI is another affordable housing development, targeted specifically towards the elderly...

Council Towers VI

- Council Towers VI is an affordable senior housing project development under financing from HDC.
- Located at 155-71st Avenue, Flushing, the development contains 77 units for seniors.
- The property was built using funding through HUD's Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program, and hence residency is restricted to persons who earn 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) or less.
- Resident's rents are based on their income and the tenant contribution is set at 30% of the tenants income.
- Council Towers VI is an eight-story building with 77 one-bedroom rental units and one unit reserved for an on-site superintendent. Twenty-five percent of the units have a preference for existing NYCHA tenants. All units have a senior preference for tenants age 62 and older. The units will be available to tenants earning no more than 50 percent Area Median Income (AMI) or \$28,650 for an individual.



While demand for affordable units is large and growing, the low presence of affordable units has created a huge demand-supply gap in Flushing...

Demand vs. Supply

- Demand supply analysis clearly shows a huge gap in the affordable housing market in Flushing.
- While Flushing has significantly large homeless and low-income population, it has seen very limited development in the affordable housing space.
- When it comes to personal income and economic development, Flushing has certain negatives such as –
 - Flushing has a median annual income of \$53,489, which is lower than Queens average
 - In Flushing, percentage of population spending more than 50% on rent is 32% which is a very high number and indicates very less disposable income in hand
 - Percentage of Population Below Poverty Line (2009-2013 5-year Estimate) in Flushing was 19.1%, which was much higher than Queens average.
 - In Flushing, the percentage of people employed in low-wage occupation (where median income is less than \$28,000) is 37.9%, which is higher than Queens, Manhattan, New York City average, and the U.S. average.
- The above shortcomings in terms of personal income and economic developments has increased the need for affordable housing in Flushing. This is further complicated by the high rental and sales price of real estate in Flushing.
- Both Queens and Flushing has lower presence of affordable housing units. Michael R. Bloomberg's New Housing Marketplace Plan (NHMP) initiative was to finance the development of 165,000 units of affordable housing for half a million New Yorkers by the close of the 2014 fiscal year. By 2014, the plan funded the creation or preservation of over 129,200 units of affordable housing across the five boroughs. Of these, only 12,500 of those units are in Queens and 2,598 units located in Community District 8, which includes Flushing as well as other neighborhoods.
- The gap is further highlighted by the fact that Macedonia Plaza, which has 143 affordable units, during its planning process received 30,000 applications, and hence 29,857 still remained to be served.

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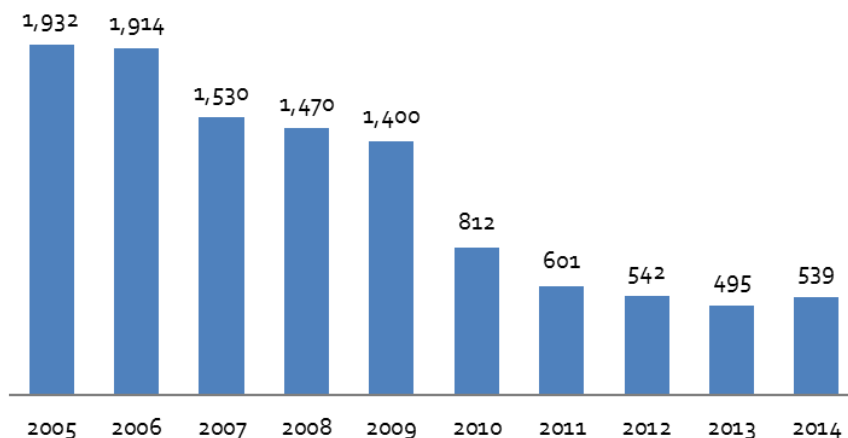
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Permanent supportive housing policy of Utah has helped it reduce chronic homelessness by a large amount and the state is continuing with this successful program...

Permanent Supportive Housing Program – Utah

- Utah has significant homeless people, of which large number were in the chronic homeless category.
- In 2005, Utah had nearly 1,932 chronically homeless. To reduce this number, the government came out with its unique permanent supportive housing program, which was a success and led to a 72% drop in chronic homeless by 2014. By 2014, the chronic homeless number had dropped to 539.
- The program focused simply on the chronic homeless into permanent homes, followed with counselling to help them develop a sense of security so that they can continue in their new homes.
- The program started with defining and identifying the chronic homeless, followed setting up each chronically homeless person with his or her own house. Then the state got them counselling to help them allay any fears.
- The program suggested that such counselling services would afford them with safety and security that studies suggest is necessary to re-acclimate to modern life.
- The government has remained steady with its permanent supportive housing approach, which has helped reduced chronic homelessness.
- Gordon Walker, who was the director of the state Housing and Community Development Division, mentioned that Utah is approaching a functional zero chronic homelessness.

Number of Chronic Homeless Person in Utah – 2005-2014



Safe Parking Program, originally implemented by Santa Barbara takes a unique approach at reducing homelessness and is a success especially in the state of California...

New Beginnings' Safe Parking Program – Santa Barbara

- The New Beginnings Safe Parking Program is a homelessness alleviation program in Santa Barbara, with the ultimate goal is to help people find permanent housing.
- New Beginnings has operated the Safe Parking Program since 2004 in cooperation with numerous local churches, governmental and non-profit agencies and businesses.
- Under the program confidential, daily-monitored parking places are provided for those who are living in their vehicles because they do not have sufficient income to provide for their basic need of affordable housing.
- In addition to operating 115 safe overnight parking spaces, the Safe Parking program aims to connects the chronically homeless to shelters and services that will get them off the streets and into safer environments.
- Additionally, the program staff distribute more than 450 pounds of food each month and offer a rapid re-housing component that provides case management to transition program participants into permanent housing and employment.
- Further, through the program, New Beginnings offers job tutoring, resume preparation and facilitates outside agency connections as needed to help participants gain employment or obtain government benefits.
- On a case-by-case basis, New Beginnings will write grants on behalf of clients to help them obtain cash assistance to pay for medical and dental expenses, and other costly, but life-changing assistance.
- High success of this program has led to some other cities and states replicating this program – for example, Los Angeles is studying this program further to see if it can be implemented to reduced growing homelessness. In the 2016 census, 4,643 people were counted living in cars, vans and campers in the City of L.A. Hence, the program has a lot of potential to reduce homelessness.
- Monterey County in California also has a very similar program, which is modelled after New Beginnings Safe Parking Program in Santa Barbara. Of the 2,308 people counted in the 2015 Monterey County Homeless Census, 24% were sleeping in cars, vans and RVs – and hence the program is expected to be a success.

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