

Op Data, 2001: Red Hook, Brooklyn

Community Assessment and Perceptions of Quality of
Life, Safety and Services

Written by

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About the Author

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Acknowledgments

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Community Assessment and Perceptions of Quality of Life in Red Hook, Brooklyn

Introduction

Each year, the Red Hook Community Justice Center conducts an annual community survey known as “Operation Data.” The survey was designed as a tool for community members to voice their opinions and concerns about the neighborhood on a regular basis. In October 2001, the fifty members of the Red Hook Public Safety Corps administered the Operation Data survey for the sixth consecutive year.

The 2001 Operation Data survey was conducted by 50 Public Safety Corps members and includes 187 questions covering perceptions on a wide range of community issues as well as core background characteristics of each respondent. Assigned to teams of five to seven people, members covered all major geographic areas in Red Hook. The survey was administered door-to-door in Red Hook’s public housing, private residences and local businesses. Members also reached out to community groups and social organizations on weekends and evenings to catch those potential survey respondents who work during the day. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish. The members completed 865 surveys, representing 8 percent of Red Hook’s 10,215 residents.

The 2001 survey focused on residents’ perceptions of: neighborhood public safety and quality of life; existing community resources; and the criminal justice system. The majority of the surveys were completed in Red Hook, although 304 surveys were also completed in the surrounding neighborhoods of Carroll Gardens/Cobble Hill, Gowanus/Wyckoff, Park Slope, and Sunset Park to provide a more diverse sample and allow for neighborhood comparisons amongst all of the communities served by the Justice Center.

Wherever possible, the 2001 data was compared to 1999 data in order to demonstrate changes in perceptions of safety, neighborhood problems and quality of life before and after the opening of the Red Hook Community Justice Center (the Justice Center opened in April 2000). In this way, the 1999 data offers a baseline measurement of neighborhood conditions in Red Hook that can be compared to “post-Justice Center” neighborhood data.

Main findings from 2001 include:

- Overall perceptions of safety (day and nighttime) at public locations (streets, parks, subway stations etc.) have increased.
- Self-reports of victimization have decreased by almost half. However, Red Hook residents continue to report twice as many assaults as non-Red Hook residents.

The ranking of neighborhood problems has not changed in Red Hook; for the

fifth year in row, drug selling and drug use were cited as the biggest problems.

Criminal justice agency approval ratings Red Hook have more than doubled since 1997 (although they remain below 40 percent).

Respondents who either lived in Red Hook or public housing or self-identified as “black”, were more likely to have negative perceptions of their neighborhood. Residing in public housing and race/ethnicity identification affected perceptions of safety, neighborhood problems and criminal justice agencies.

Respondents that knew about the Justice Center were more likely to know their neighbors and less likely to report being victimized or feeling worried about being robbed, assaulted or being a victim of a home break-in. Knowledge about the Justice Center was also positively correlated with feeling safe in public locations at night.

Demographics of the Respondents

All told, 1,169 surveys were completed. For analyses concerning perceptions of quality of life, neighborhood problems and opinions of the criminal justice system, certain neighborhoods were grouped together based on shared historical influences (e.g., industry, ethnic make-up).

Red Hook Respondents

People living or working in Red Hook represented seventy-six percent of the total survey respondents. Eighty-five percent of Red Hook respondents were residents. Thirteen percent of Red Hook respondents were merchants or workers. On average, respondents have lived in Red Hook for 19 years. This year, the gender distribution of Red Hook respondents was the most even in the six years the survey has been administered. Fifty-three percent of Red Hook respondents were female, compared to 1999 when 65 percent of Red Hook respondents were female. Of the Red Hook respondents, 62 percent reside in the Red Hook Houses, a significant decrease from 1999 when 82 percent of Red Hook respondents lived in public housing. This likely reflects differences in survey administration, not in underlying community characteristics. Like the surveys from previous years, the Red Hook respondents continue to be mostly black (42 percent) and Latino (33 percent). However, the white survey respondents increased significantly from 9 percent in 1999 to 18 percent in 2001. (See Appendix A)

Other Neighborhoods

People residing or working in Sunset Park, Gowanus/Wyckoff, Park Slope, Carroll Gardens/Cobble Hill together represent 24 percent of the total survey respondents. Seventy-two percent of non-Red Hook respondents are residents while 25 percent are merchants or workers in the neighborhood. In 2001, 52 percent of the non-Red Hook respondents were male while 48 percent were female. The age breakdown for non-Red Hook respondents was similar to that of Red Hook respondents. Twenty-one percent were between 18 and 25 years, 48 percent between 26 and 40 years and 31 percent over 40 years old.

Criminal Justice Agency Approval Ratings

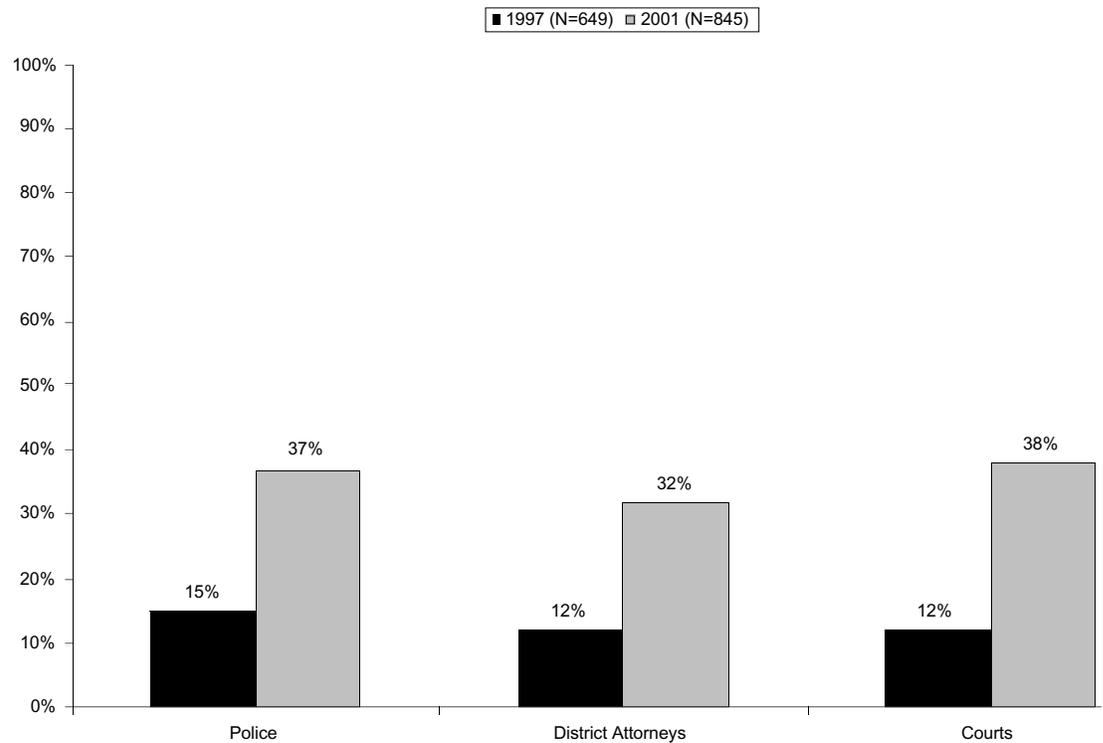
In 1997, preparing for the opening of the Justice Center, the Operation Data survey asked the community to rate their level of approval of the criminal justice system. Respondents were asked how positively they felt about the police, prosecutors and the courts. That year, positive opinions about the criminal justice system did not reach higher than 15 percent for any of these criminal justice agencies.

In 2001, just one year after the Red Hook Community Justice Center opened its doors, positive views of the criminal justice system have more than doubled (Figure 1). This does not mean the Justice Center was solely responsible for the change; other social and economic developments in the community may have contributed to this transformation. It is also important to note that the ratings remain under 40 percent for all three criminal justice agencies.

Significantly, positive views of the criminal justice system (police, prosecutors, and courts) were positively correlated to using the services offered by the Justice Center. That is, survey respondents who had used services at the Justice Center were more likely to rate criminal justice agencies favorably.

Fifty-six percent of non-Red Hook respondents thought police response was good to excellent, compared to 42 percent reported by Red Hook respondents. Both groups were evenly matched in their feelings about the court system.

Figure 1: Criminal Justice Approval Ratings: 1997 vs. 2001



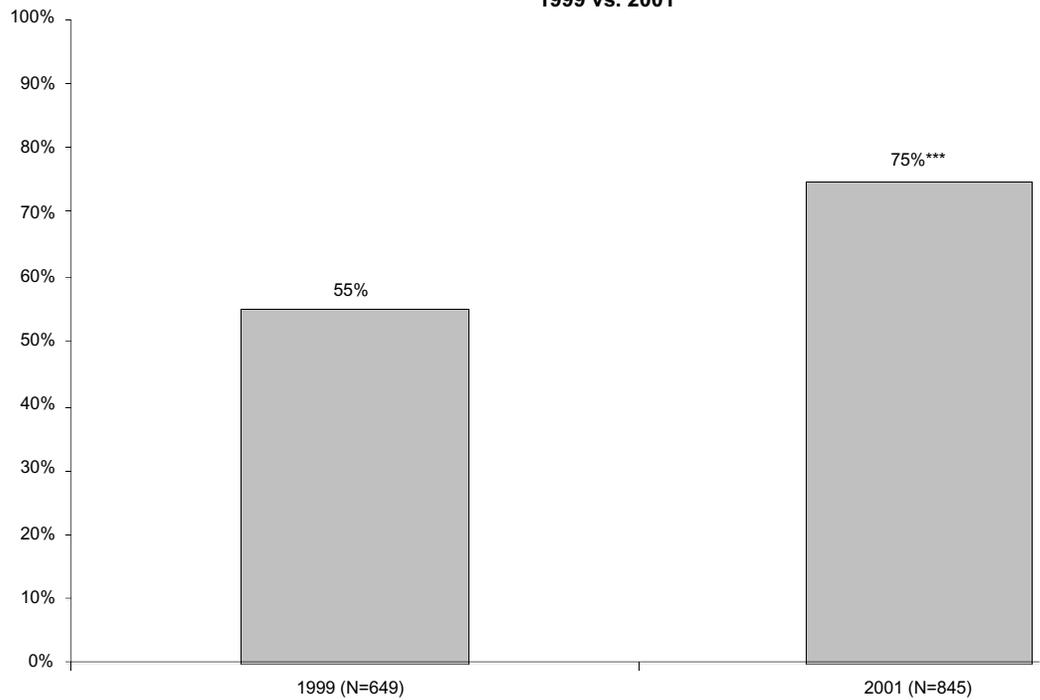
Community Resources

Red Hook Community Justice Center

In 2001, 75 percent of respondents reported that they heard of the Red Hook Community Justice Center (See Figure 2). This represents a significant increase from 1999, when only 55 percent reported hearing about the Justice Center.

People that knew about the Justice Center were more likely to know their neighbors and less likely to report being victimized or feeling worried about being robbed, assaulted or being a victim of a home break-in. Knowledge about the Justice Center was also positively correlated with feeling safe in public locations at night

Figure 2: "Respondents that have heard of the Red Hook Community Justice Center?" 1999 vs. 2001



*p< .01 **p< .05 ***p< .001 (2-tailed t-test)

Red Hook Public Safety Corps

In 2001, sixty-one percent of respondents reported that they had heard of the Red Hook Public Safety Corps the same percent as 1999. Knowledge about the services offered by the Red Hook Public Safety Corps has also remained consistent. Services and initiatives like after-school tutoring, youth baseball, mediation, park clean-ups and graffiti removal have experienced insignificant changes in the amount of people that have heard of them.

Although knowledge of the Public Safety Corps has not changed since 1999, the survey suggests that satisfaction with the Safety Corps may be on the rise. In 2001, 55 percent of respondents were satisfied with the Public Safety Corps. This is a significant increase from 2000, when 44 percent of participants were satisfied with the Safety Corps.

Red Hook Youth Court

The Red Hook Youth Court is a program that trains young people to serve as “judge,” “jury” and “attorneys” handling cases in which teens have committed a low-level offense like truancy or transit fare evasion. In 2001, 56 percent of respondents reported hearing about the Youth Court, compared to 1999 when 54 percent reported knowledge of the program. In 2001, 69 percent were satisfied with the Youth Court versus 65 percent in 1999.

Neighborhood Public Safety and Quality of Life

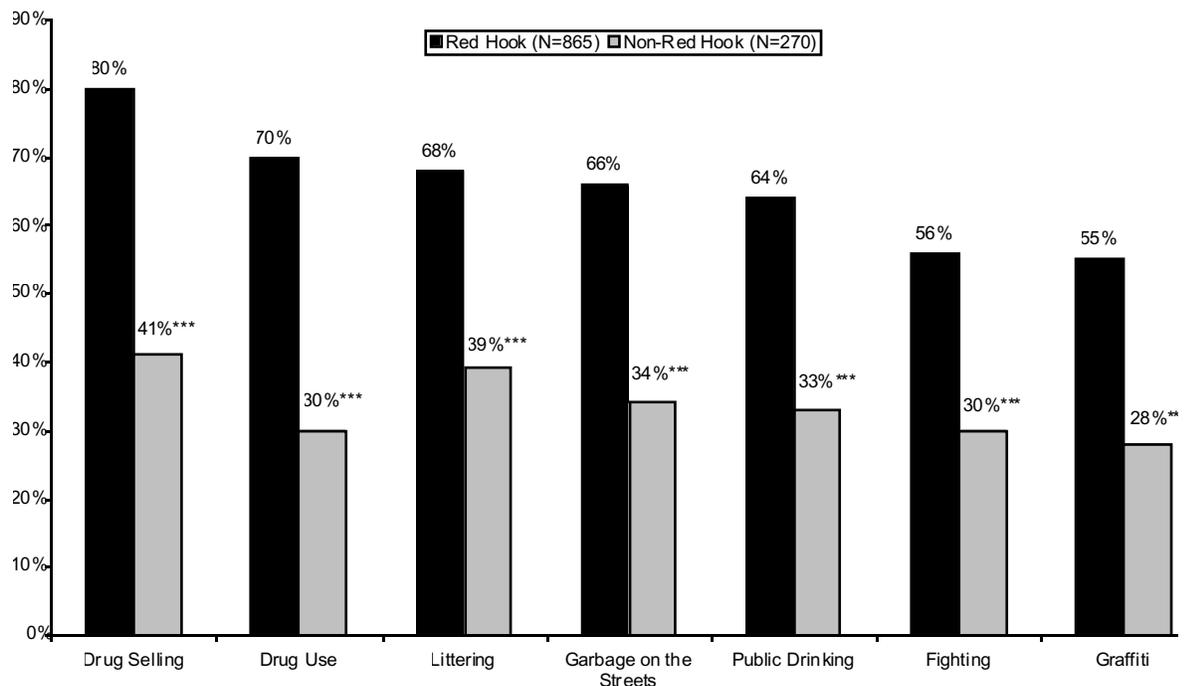
Quality of Life

Fifty-eight percent of respondents feel somewhat to very satisfied with Red Hook as a place to live and work. This is statistically identical to 1999, when 57 percent felt somewhat to very satisfied with the neighborhood. In contrast, seventy percent from the surrounding neighborhoods reported feeling somewhat to very satisfied with their neighborhood as a place to live and work.

Neighborhood Problems

For the fifth year in a row, respondents cited drug selling and drug use as the “biggest problems”— 80 percent and 70 percent respectively, in Red Hook (results shown in Figure 3). As Figure 3 makes clear, across the board Red Hook respondents felt their neighborhood had many more serious problems than non-Red Hook residents.

Figure 3: “Big to very big” neighborhood problems: Red Hook vs. Non-Red Hook



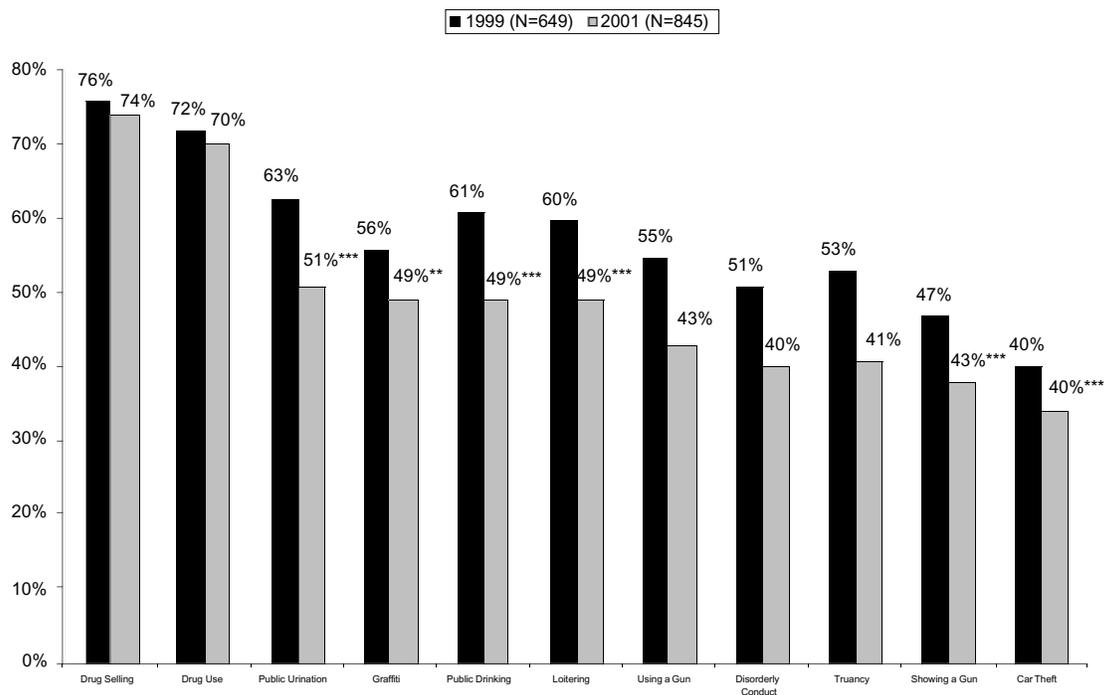
*p < .01 **p < .05 ***p < .001 (2-tailed t-test)

Participating in tenant patrol was associated with higher ratings of neighborhood problems. Interestingly, these same people were also likely to give higher ratings of neighborhood satisfaction. This may suggest that when residents have serious concerns about their neighborhood and join an initiative that addresses those concerns it can positively affect their opinion of the community.

Youth Problems

In 2001, respondents felt that problems with youth crime were less serious than in previous years. There are statistically significant reductions in many of the quality-of-life problems, such as public urination, graffiti, public drinking and loitering. Youth drug selling and drug use, however, remain high at 74 percent and 70 percent respectively. As indicated by Figure 4, these top two youth problems have not changed significantly from 1999, when 76 percent thought youth drug selling was a big problem and 72 percent thought youth drug use was a big problem.

Figure 4: Perceived Youth Problems in the Community: 1999 vs 2001



*p < .01 **p < .05 ***p < .001 (2-tailed t-test)

Victimization

Significant decreases occurred in self-reports of victimization in 2001, dropping by almost a half from 1999. However, Red Hook respondents reported almost twice as many rapes, stabbings and shootings as their non-Red Hook counterparts.

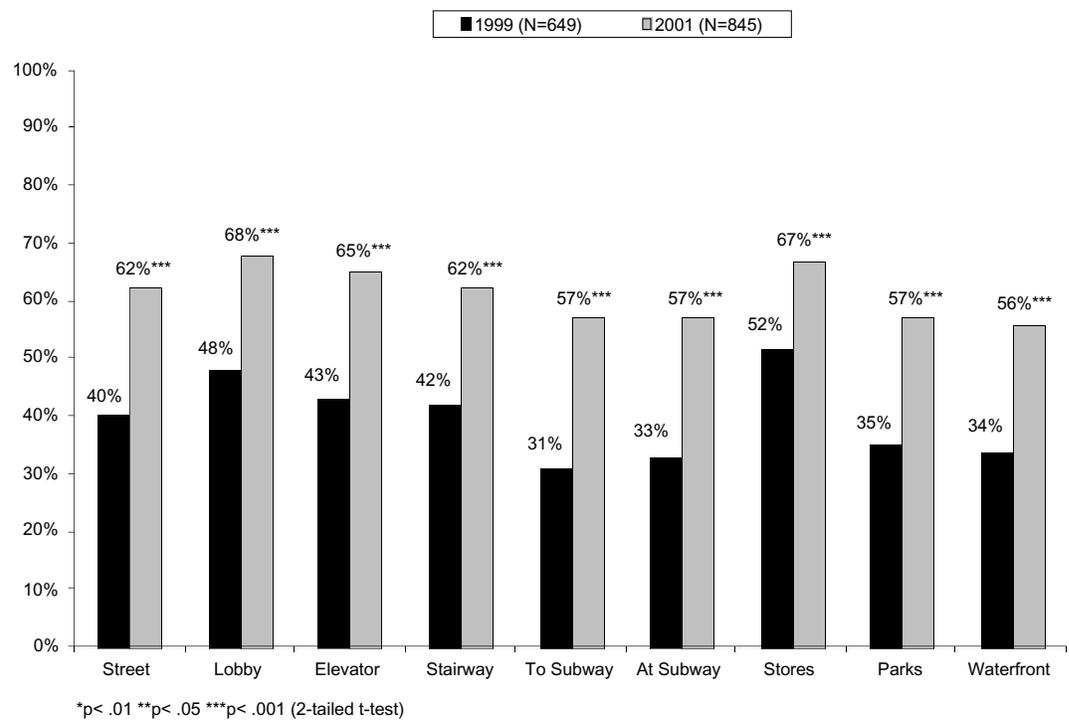
Personal Safety

In 2001, respondents reported a significant overall increase in the level of safety they felt at various locations in the community. More people responded that they felt “very safe” in or on the streets, home, lobbies, stairways, elevators and subways as opposed

to merely “safe.” As shown in Figure 5, each of these locations saw a 6 percent to 21 percent increase in the number of people that reported them as “safe” to “very safe” during the evening. These locations remain safer during the day and less safe during the evening. Like the nighttime levels of safety, on average, the daytime levels almost doubled in 2001 compared to 1999.

Safety precautions, like avoiding certain buildings, not traveling alone, staying in at night and carrying a weapon, decreased significantly. Respondents that live in the Red Hook Houses reported slightly higher levels of precautions taken for safety yet worried about home break-ins, robberies and assault no more than other Red Hook respondents.

Figure 5: "Safe to very safe" perceptions of safety at nighttime public locations: 1999 vs 2001



Perceptions of Criminal Justice Agencies and Quality of Life Issues

Six major variables emerged as predictors of neighborhood satisfaction, levels of perceived safety, reports of neighborhood problems, and views of criminal justice agencies. These variables were:

- Residing in public housing;
- Residing in a low-income neighborhood (Red Hook, Gowanus/Wyckoff and Sunset Park);
- Participation in tenant patrol;
- Racial/ethnic identification;
- Heard of the Red Hook Community Justice Center; and
- Previous case processed at the Red Hook Community Justice Center.

Respondents identifying as black and/or Latino were likely to hold more negative views about criminal justice agencies. Respondents who previously had a case processed at the Red Hook Community Justice Center were also more likely to hold negative views of criminal justice agencies. Public housing residents and residents of low-income neighborhoods gave lower ratings of neighborhood satisfaction, more serious reports of neighborhood problems and fewer reports of perceived neighborhood safety. Conversely, respondents familiar with the Justice Center gave higher ratings of neighborhood satisfaction than those not familiar with the work and services offered at the Justice Center. (See Appendices C and D)

Appendices

Appendix A: Operation Data 2001: Respondent Demographics						
GENDER						
	Year of Survey					
<i>Red Hook Respondents Only</i>	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Men	34%	36%	38%	35%	35%	47%
Women	66%	64%	62%	65%	65%	53%
2001 only-Breakdown by Neighborhood						
	Red Hook	Sunset Park	Gowanus/Wyckoff	Park Slope	Carroll Gardens/Cobble Hill	Other
<i>All Neighborhoods</i>	N=865	N=47	N=34	N=69	N=101	N=19
Men	47%	40%	58%	59%	49%	61%
Women	53%	60%	42%	41%	51%	39%
RELATION TO NEIGHBORHOOD						
	Year of Survey					
<i>Red Hook Respondents Only</i>	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Resident	95%	82%	89%	89%	94%	89%
Merchant/Worker	4%	14%	11%	9%	6%	9%
Other	1%	4%	1%	2%	0%	2%
2001 only-Breakdown by Neighborhood						
	Red Hook	Sunset Park	Gowanus/Wyckoff	Park Slope	Carroll Gardens/Cobble Hill	Other
<i>All Neighborhoods</i>	N=865	N=47	N=34	N=69	N=101	N=19
Resident	89%	75%	85%	77%	71%	28%
Merchant/Worker	9%	25%	15%	23%	26%	50%
Other	2%	0%	0%	0%	3%	22%
LIVE IN RED HOOK HOUSES						
	Year of Survey					
<i>Red Hook Respondents Only</i>	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Yes	n/a	60%	84%	82%	84%	62%
No	n/a	40%	16%	18%	16%	38%

Appendix A continued

RACE/ETHNICITY						
	Year of Survey					
<i>Red Hook Only</i>	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Black	61%	57%	55%	53%	57%	44%
Latino	32%	28%	25%	32%	32%	32%
White	2%	2%	5%	10%	6%	13%
Multiracial	n/a	6%	4%	3%	3%	4%
Other	0%	2%	4%	2%	3%	3%
Asian	n/a	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%
Native American	n/a	0%	3%	3%	1%	2%

RACE/ETHNICITY						
2001 only-Breakdown by Neighborhood						
	Red Hook	Sunset Park	Gowanus/Wyckoff	Park Slope	Carroll Gardens/Cobble Hill	Other
<i>All Neighborhoods</i>	N=865	N=47	N=34	N=69	N=101	N=19
Black	44%	10%	31%	25%	27%	61%
Latino	32%	68%	50%	28%	17%	17%
White	13%	15%	13%	37%	47%	22%
Multiracial	4%	5%	0%	7%	2%	0%
Other	3%	0%	3%	2%	2%	0%
Asian	2%	3%	3%	1%	4%	0%
Native American	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%

AGE						
	Year of Survey					
<i>Red Hook Respondents Only</i>	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
18 to 25	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	27%
26 to 40	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	42%
Over 40	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	31%

2001 only-Breakdown by Neighborhood						
	Red Hook	Sunset Park	Gowanus/Wyckoff	Park Slope	Carroll Gardens/Cobble Hill	Other
<i>All Neighborhoods</i>	N=865	N=47	N=34	N=69	N=101	N=19
18 to 25	27%	24%	13%	19%	19%	28%
26 to 40	42%	47%	50%	53%	47%	55%
Over 40	31%	29%	38%	28%	34%	17%

Appendix B: Results from Simple Linear Regression Predicting Attitudes about the Criminal Justice System

Regression Model	Attitude about the		Attitude about Police
	Court System ¹	Police Approval ²	Character ³
Total Sample Size	2,149	2,149	2,149
R-square for model	0.038	0.01	0.34
F	4.537	2.161	4.602
Independent Variables	T-Values	T-Values	T-Values
Year		-1.197	
Black American	-1.221	-2.502*	-1.334
Latino American	2.106*	-2.104*	2.075*
Public housing resident	-0.496	-1.026	-0.623
Red Hook resident	0.455	-0.249	2.470*
Gowanus/Wyckoff resident	-1.394	0.668	-0.679
Had a case processed at the Justice Center	-2.301*		
Heard of the Justice Center		1.295	-0.315

+ p<.10 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

1: The dependent variable is the positive attitude about of court system residents reported in 2001.

2: The dependent variable is the positive attitude about the police residents reported in 2001.

3: The dependent variable is the positive attitude about police character residents reported in 2001.

Appendix C: Results from Simple Linear Regression Predicting Neighborhood Attitudes and Tenant Patrol

Regression Model	Neighborhood	Neighborhood	Tenant Patrol
	Problems ¹	Satisfaction ²	Participation ³
Total Sample Size	2,149	2,149	2,149
R-square for model	0.051	0.5	0.059
F	9.656	9.094	8.524
Independent Variables	T-Values	T-Values	T-Values
Year	0.85	-0.66	-1.835+
Black American	0.682	-1.395	-0.429
Latino American	0.935	-0.006	-0.648
Public housing resident	3.271***	-3.747***	2.320*
Tenant patrol participant		2.833***	
Red Hook resident	4.493***	-4.644***	0.236
Gowanus/Wyckoff resident	5.156***	-4.021***	2.688**
Heard of the Justice Center	1.673	3.156***	-0.074
Neighborhood Problems			7.304***
Police (more specific)			1.312

+ p<.10 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

1: The dependent variable is the severity of neighborhood problems residents reported in 1999 and 2001. Nineteen different neighborhood problems were indexed to form a larger neighborhood problems variable.

2: The dependent variable is the level of neighborhood satisfaction in 1999 and 2001.

3: The dependent variable is tenant patrol participation reported by respondents in 1999 and 2001.

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