

Why Is There Poverty In Brownsville?

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### **Why Is There Poverty In Brownsville?**

Brownsville, Brooklyn is a residential area in New York City in the eastern part of Brooklyn. The 11212 zip code region stretches from Atlantic Avenue to Avenue D, and is home to more than 70,000 people. In the mid 1800s, Brownsville was home to Jewish factory workers that needed a place to settle. Brownsville was much larger than it is now and the community was much more stable. There were many buildings that people lived in, and Pitkin Avenue was the busiest part of Brownsville. Pitkin Avenue was like the 42nd st. of Brownsville, there were plenty of food places and shopping stores for residents to run their daily errands. There were small markets and street vendors were everywhere, and around the holidays it was really festive. Today Pitkin Avenue still has the same arrangement, there are shopping areas, unlimited places to eat, and everyone is outside. It was not until the 1940s that more than 50% of Russians were residing in Brownsville, and initially the language was not English. In the 1950s, more Black and Latinos started to settle into Brownsville. Generally when groups that have a similar experience in being marginalized move into a community, there is a huge chance that they will be ignored. The community needs were ignored, racism and economic change created obstacles that Brownsville could not overcome. This all comes down to the “generational wealth” that does not come with oppressed groups. When I was growing up, there was so much rival violence between the different neighborhoods in Brownsville. There were murders, stabbing, and rapings, and many other crimes transpiring across the neighborhood. My parents wanted to move away because they did not want their children to be on the news for being hurt in any sort of way. Currently my side of the neighborhood has quiet down, and it is rare that I hear any

confrontation at all. I believe that the people in my community have been there so long that they found a foundation in their community. My family does want to relocate and not because of the violence, we just feel as if we deserve a fresh start in a new home.

### **Brownsville, Brooklyn**

#### **Poverty in Brownsville**

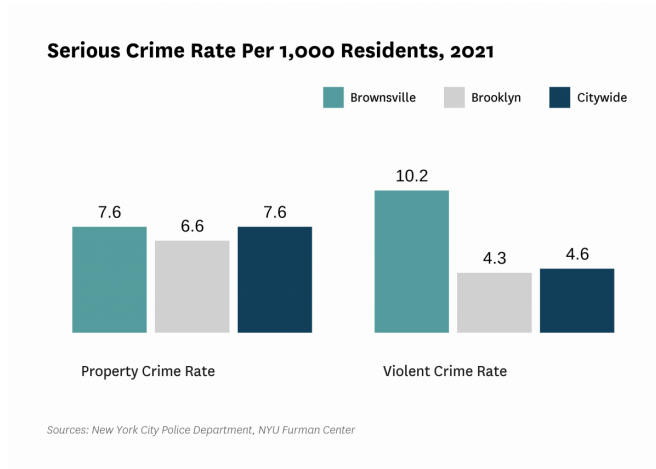
In Brownsville less than 2 percent of families had a household income of \$250,000 from the year 2000 to 2019. Compared to the rest of the city, Brownsville's poverty rate was 34.5% while citywide, the poverty rate was 16%. There was a rent increase in Brownsville in 2019 which forced residents to spend more than 50% of their income on rent. Apparently residents in Brownsville have a life expectancy of 74 years of age compared to the rest of New York City which is 84 years of age (Khan 2017).

#### **The Youth in Brownsville**

The high school graduation rate in Brownsville is about 40% while citywide the high school graduation rate is 67% in 2015. In 2008 young people from the age of 8-18 made up 1,600 arrests in Brownsville. There is a Juvenile Center in Brownsville located on Bristol St. that houses young males that have been detained. I myself have seen children in my neighborhood that were doing things that they should not have been doing, stealing, and running around. The youth in Brownsville keep themselves occupied with playing basketball in the local courts, participating in community days that involve cookouts and block parties.

#### **Crime Rates in Brownsville**

In Brownsville the violent crime rate is 6 times higher than Brooklyn, and the city as a whole. Brownsville also has a higher property crime rate than the whole borough of Brooklyn (Figure 1). In 2009 there were 50% more crime in Brownsville than any other neighboring



community in Brooklyn. Brownsville also

has the second highest incarceration rate in the city of New York.

### What To Expect To See in Brownsville

Brownsville has a shopping strip on Pitkin Avenue with many shopping places and food places to eat. There are furniture stores, clothing stores, sneaker stores, 99cent stores, Hispanic, African, and American food restaurants. When the holiday times come around in colorful lights across the street lights for many blocks read, “Pitkin Avenue Welcomes You.” Brownsville, Brooklyn also has community gardens that provide the community with free vegetables every Thursday morning. This garden is also connected to a program that gives NYCHA residents an opportunity for employment, with guaranteed job offerings at the end of the program. In my area specifically you will see colorful parks and a big pool that reads, “Howard Pool,” you will also see elderly women sitting outside of the buildings enjoying the weather and catching up with one

another. Not only are the old women out, but the young men hang out together as well while they listen to music and enjoy one another's company. When the weather is warm the sound of children's laughter scurry across the neighborhood. When members of our community pass away, other members place pictures with viewing information about the person so that anyone in the community can pay their respects and give their condolences.

Recently there have been many changes in my neighborhood that seem like satisfactory changes to the neighborhood. On Pitkin Avenue and Mother Gaston Avenue there used to be this huge abandoned building. I do not know what it was previously, but I do know that for as long as I have lived there, it was vacant. However, about a year ago, the building was developed into a clinic. Dora Health and Wellness has many aspects to it that satisfy many different medical needs. They do Covid tests, have Primary doctors, as well as family doctors, they have STD testing, and many more. This was a quick change I believe the neighborhood needed. Brownsville has murals all over the place dedicated to the history and love of the neighborhood.







### **The Brownsville Plan**

The Brownsville plan recognized the goals of the neighborhood and their need for economic development, and their need for affordable housing and resources. There are multiple ways that this plan for Brownsville, Brooklyn can go, and I want to talk about two. Although the project to give Brownsville a new image seems like a selfless idea, it could go wrong.

#### **Outcome 1**

The outcome to this Brownsville Plan could go different ways. One way it could go is that gentrification can continue to be a stain on minorities. All of the “affordable” housing being forged will not be as affordable as it is advertised. Market value will go up and rent will increase and people will be forced to move out of their homes to another area that is just as dilapidated as the other. Many small businesses will not only continue to feel the aftermath of COVID-19, but the economic change that will occur during this gentrification process. There is a possibility that the native Brownsville residents will start to become disconnected from the community that they built.

**Outcome 2**

The other outcome is the government actually creating a plan that assists the people in Brownsville instead of kicking them out for other people. If the affordable housing is really affordable then people can move into better apartments with better space and amenities that work well. The children will have more programs dedicated to their needs as young individuals such as homework help, tutoring, basketball, video games, and many more. Trees and grass will multiply so that the community can receive the perfect amount of oxygen and decrease the heat when the weather is hot. Economically the neighborhood will do better without the extraction of African Americans and Latinos, who are the sole union of the community.

**Discussion**

I myself have no true feelings about the Brownsville Plan and what will come because we just have to wait and see what will happen. I do believe that more opportunities for the youth need to be taken into consideration. Keeping after school programs live, and exposing children to chances that will contribute to their career readiness. So far the community is going through a huge transition, and many programs are surfacing. I see flyers in my building everyday about career fairs, youth programs and many more. Hopefully in the end racial biases of the system do not have a negative effect on the natives of the neighborhood. Hopefully the friendly love that I have experienced in my community does not dissolve as if it was never there.



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