



# COLUMBIA CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

## COTC Community Outreach and Translation Core EHJ Community Needs Assessment 2021



# CASB AGENDA 6.14.2021

**I. Welcome & Introductions (10 min) (Julie Herbstman)**

**II. COTC EHJ Community Needs Assessment Report Back (20 min)**  
(Maricela Ureño & Anabel Cole)

**III. CASB Member - Break Out Groups- South Bronx, Washington Heights and Harlem (15 min)**  
(Facilitators: Anabel, Julie, Maricela)

- **What activities can we take-on to start addressing EHJ initiatives to protect children's environmental health?**
- What are your recommendations and/or next steps should we include in the final report?

**IV. Report Back and Next Steps (15 min, 5 min per grp)**



# Our COTC Community Needs Assessment Partners

- A.I.R. Harlem
- ABC Association to Benefit Children
- Asylum Clinic, Columbia Human Rights Initiative
- BioBus
- South Bronx United
- Cardinal McCloskey Early Childhood Education Division
- CCCEH Youth Council EHJ Advocates
- Columbia University School of Nursing
- EI NIDO
- Friends of WHEELS
- Healthy Families Washington Heights, Dominican Women's Development Association
- Hispanic Federation
- Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation
- NY Public Library Inwood
- NYP ACNC Columbia University, Dept of Obstetrics/GYN
- NYP Family Planning Clinic
- NYP Youth Lang
- Parent Coordinator, NYC Public School IS 143
- Urban Health Plan
- Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning School, WHEELS Teacher
- WE ACT
- WE ACT NYCHA Representatives/Organizers
- WIC, NYP



## Objectives:

- Identify EHJ needs as defined by the community members of Washington Heights, Harlem, and the South Bronx.
- Identify and initiate opportunities for collaboration.
- Identify conditions and systems that perpetuate inequality and racism and how these affect the environmental health and well-being of all, especially children.

### Information collected from:

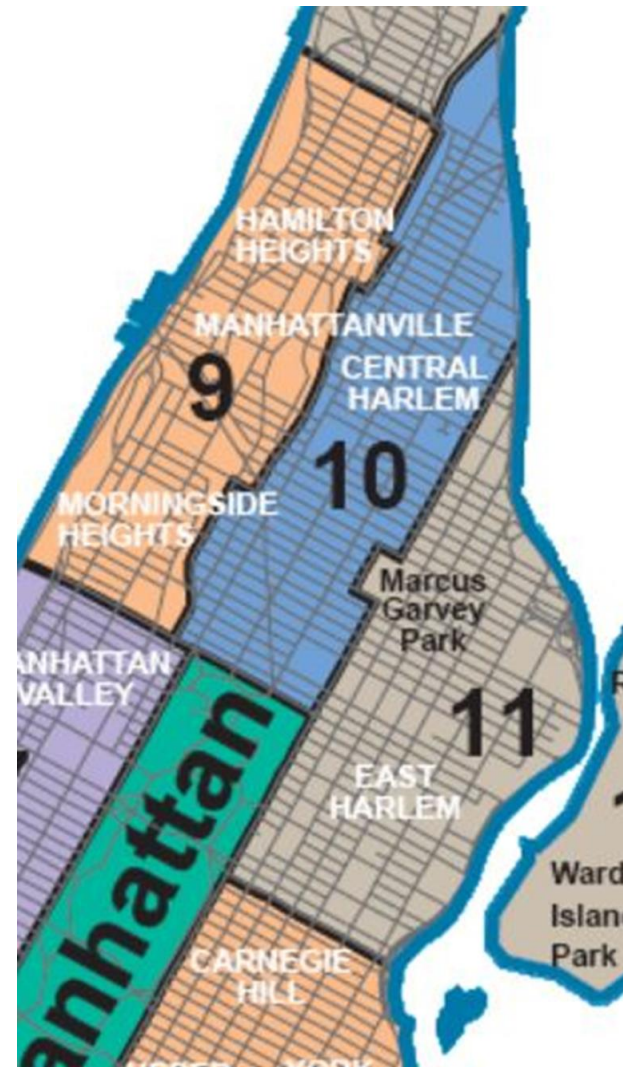
- **Secondary sources (population data):** *NYC Planning Statements of Community Districts Needs and Community Board; Keeping Track of New York City's Children, among others*
- **Survey and focus group respondents:** Community Advisory Stakeholder Board and their constituents, CCCEH Youth Council and their community contacts
  - 70 electronic surveys collected, bilingual Spanish/English
  - Three focus groups conducted, English

### Limitations:

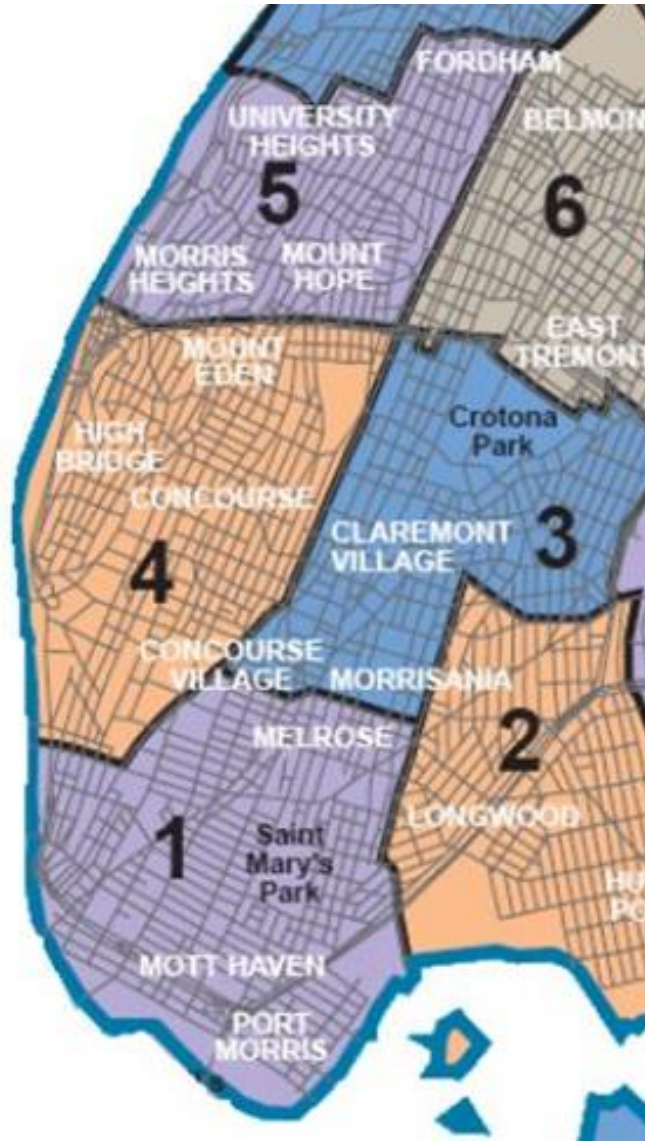
- We likely chose respondents that are more accessible and/or more involved in the community
- Constituents of Community-based agencies are more likely to be better informed about their community, and harmful health effects of various environmental conditions.



# Washington Heights CD12 & Harlem CD 10 & 11



# The South Bronx CD 1, 3, 4



## Key Findings

- Significant child health disparities among Bronx, Harlem & WH children.
- High level of community awareness/knowledge regarding harmful environmental toxins
- Community Strengths: Sense of community and strong cultural identities, friendliness, proximity to parks and public transportation
- Overarching Community Concerns: Affordable housing, mental health, gun and gender-based violence, (domestic violence and sexual harassment)
- Air pollution and lead concerning environmental issues
- Dissemination and Communication Strategies:
  - Coalition building, engaging political will, simplifying messages, engaging media and early childhood programs



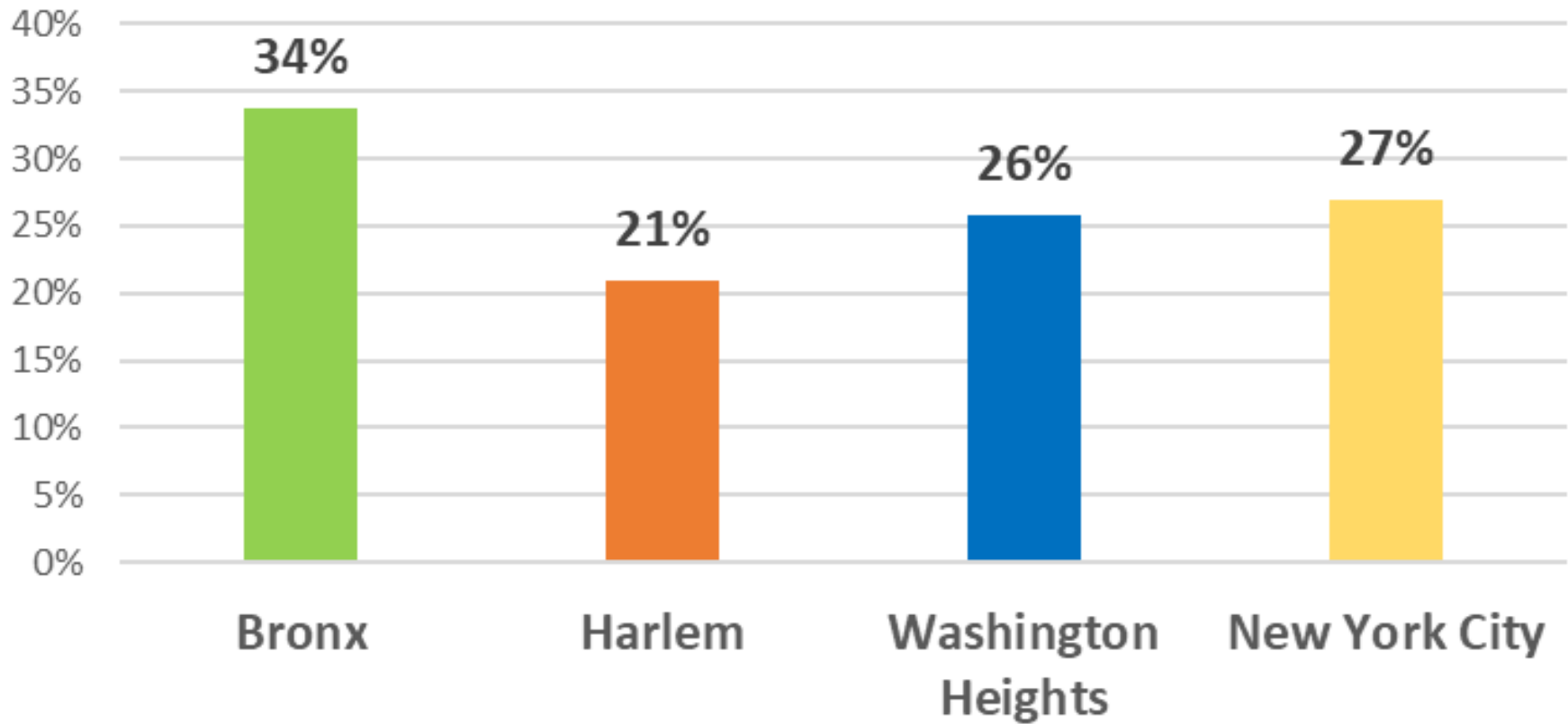


**Bronx, Washington Heights and Harlem Secondary Sources  
Child Population Data & Health Disparities**



# WH, Bronx, Harlem Child Demographics

## Households with Children 2019



<https://data.cccnewyork.org/data/table/97/total-population#83/127/40/a/a>



# Health Disparities in our Communities

- There is a larger percentage of **low birth weight and preterm births** in the Bronx and Harlem than in New York City at large.
- The Bronx has the highest number of **Asthma related ER visits** by far. (Bronx 13 times greater than UWS, Harlem is 7.6 times greater than UWS)
- Lead poisoning continues to be a concern.
- Our communities rank among the **top 11 out of 32 school districts**, in which children have an **IEP**, (*Individual Educational Plan*), **indicating a learning disability**. [1-Mott Haven, 2-Central Harlem, 6- East Harlem, 8 - (Morissania, Crotona, Melrose), 11-WH, 20-UWS, 32-Brooklyn Hts]

Source: Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

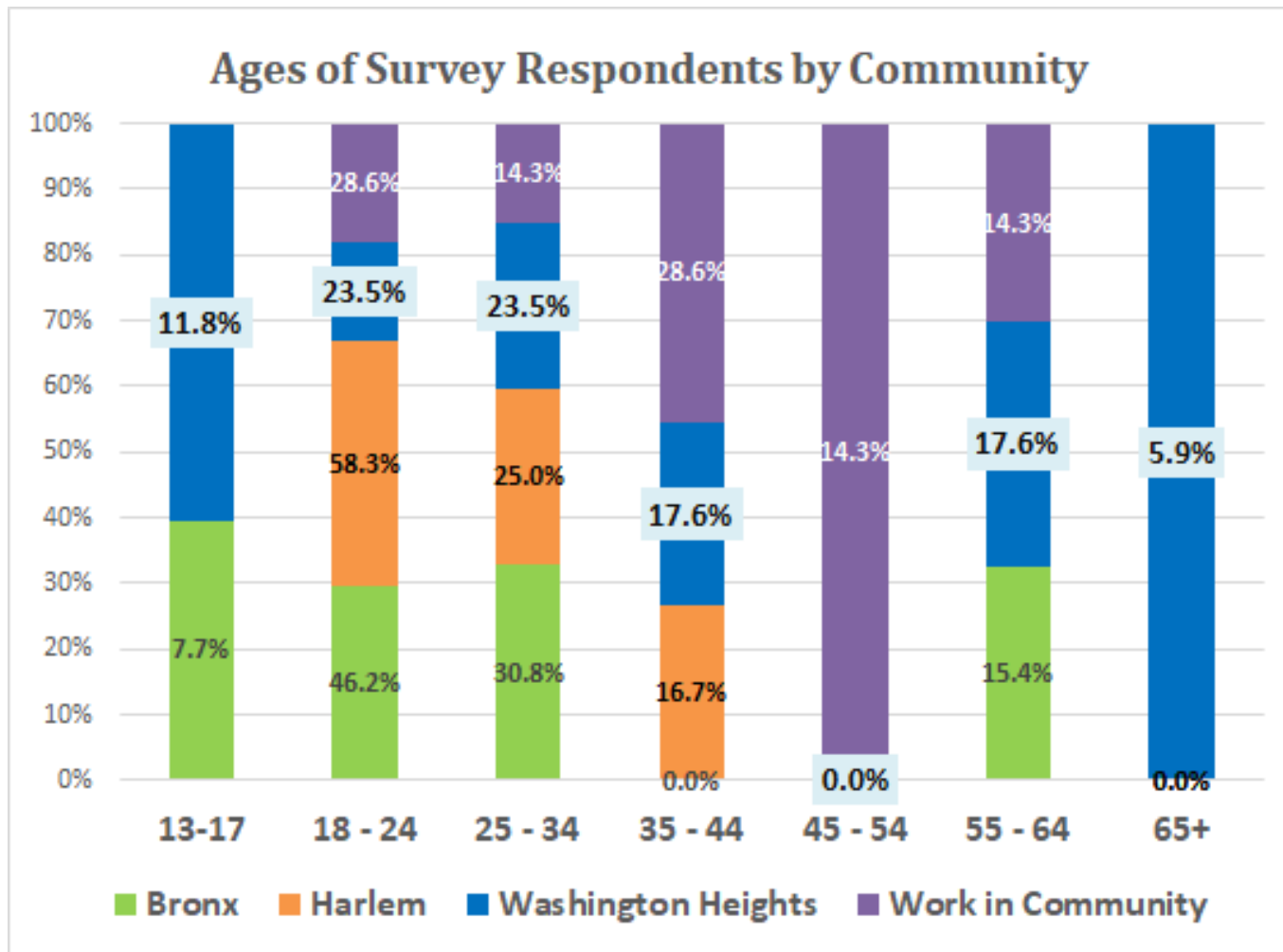


**Bronx, Washington Heights and Harlem  
CCCEH COTC Needs Assessment Survey Results  
Who took the survey?**

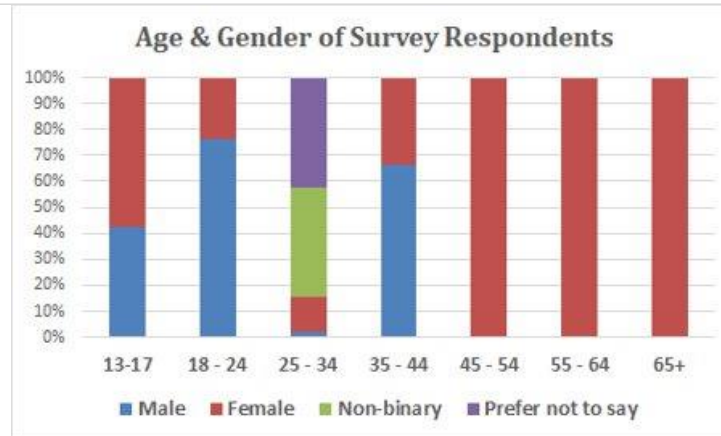
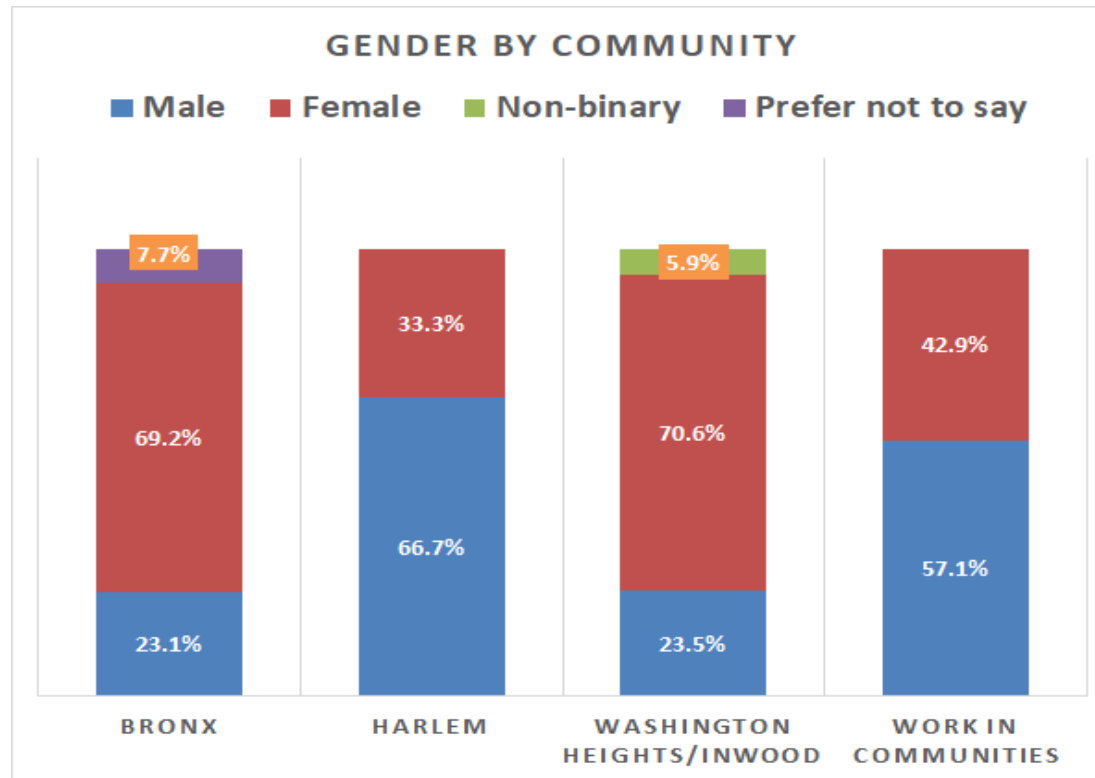


# Who took our survey?

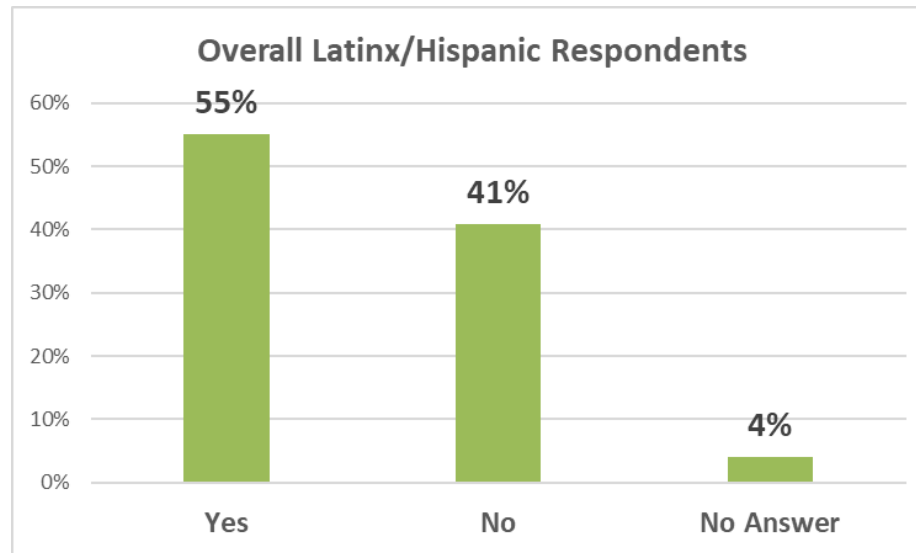
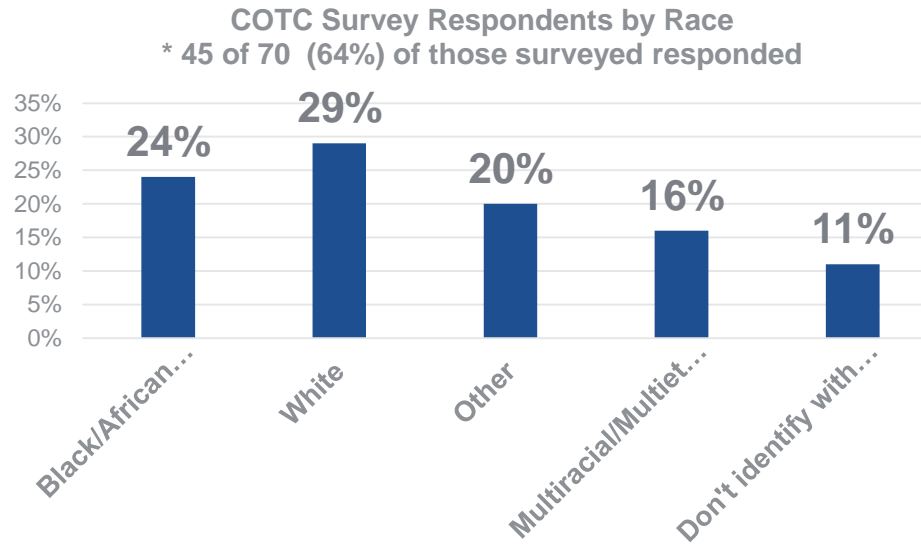
Survey respondents hailed from all 3 communities WH (34%), Bronx (28%), Harlem (23%)



# Age & Gender by Community

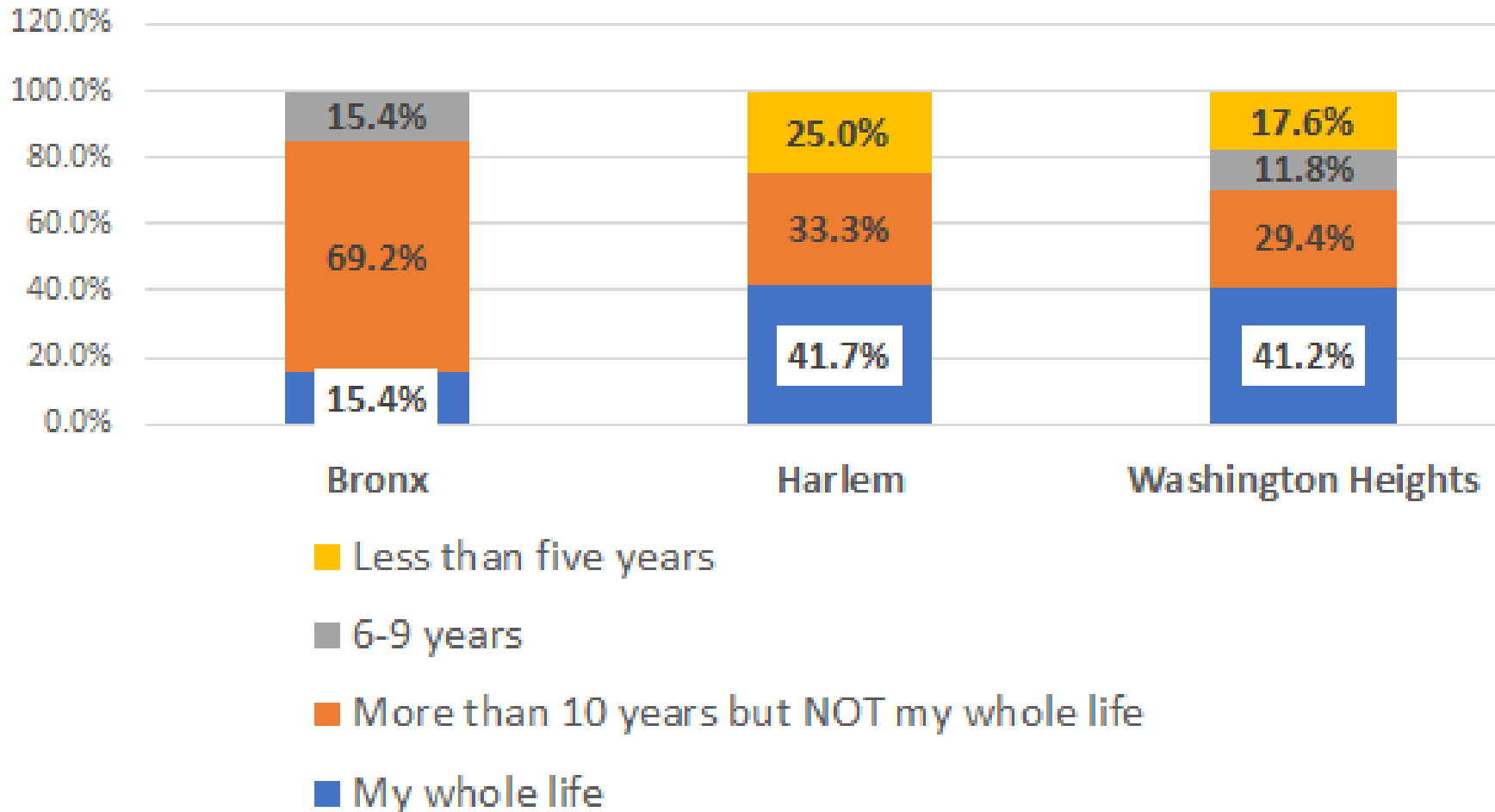


# Race/Ethnicity of Respondents



# How long have respondents lived in their community?

## Years Lived in Bronx, Harlem & Washington Heights





**Bronx, Washington Heights and Harlem  
CCCEH COTC Needs Assessment EHJ & CEH  
Survey & Focus Group Results**



*...to me it kind of means like there's- equity- like **environmental equity** if that makes sense like it- it means that **you're not taking advantage of a particular neighborhood** and dumping.... You know you're not building factories in a particular neighborhood because you know it's populated by predominantly poor people... it's about making sure that you're not taking advantage of a certain group of people or you know that you're **destroying their environment but preserving your own. This is about preserving all environments regardless of who lives there and what their socioeconomic status is.***



# What do you like most about your community?

## *The Power of Culture and Connection*

*A lot of the families are **first-generation immigrants**, that **realness and rawness of their culture ... provide perspectives that are different.***

***Unity**-my community comes together we celebrate. When someone passes, we come together and can address issues.*

*Love that there is so much **love, joy, culture, and flavor.***

*... there is a **generational connection... things and wisdom.***



# What do you like most about your community?

## *Sense of Community, (Pride) and Friendliness*

*... I have a second family, in my in my neighborhood in my community, and the people you know, the stores, people in stores know me, they always call me the “Good Morning Lady”, because I say good morning to everybody.*

*I am a South Bronx native from the outside it's seen as the borough that burned and has the worst statistics when it comes to health and environmental indicators. But I love that the people are resilient, creative, communal. We take care of each other, advocate for each other, go toe-to-toe, heart-to-heart with the big giants to fight for what's right for the community.*



# What do you like most about your community?

*Transportation access was also mentioned :*

*Love that you can be **10 min from urban grind, suburbia, and green spaces**; you can get a little bit of everything.*

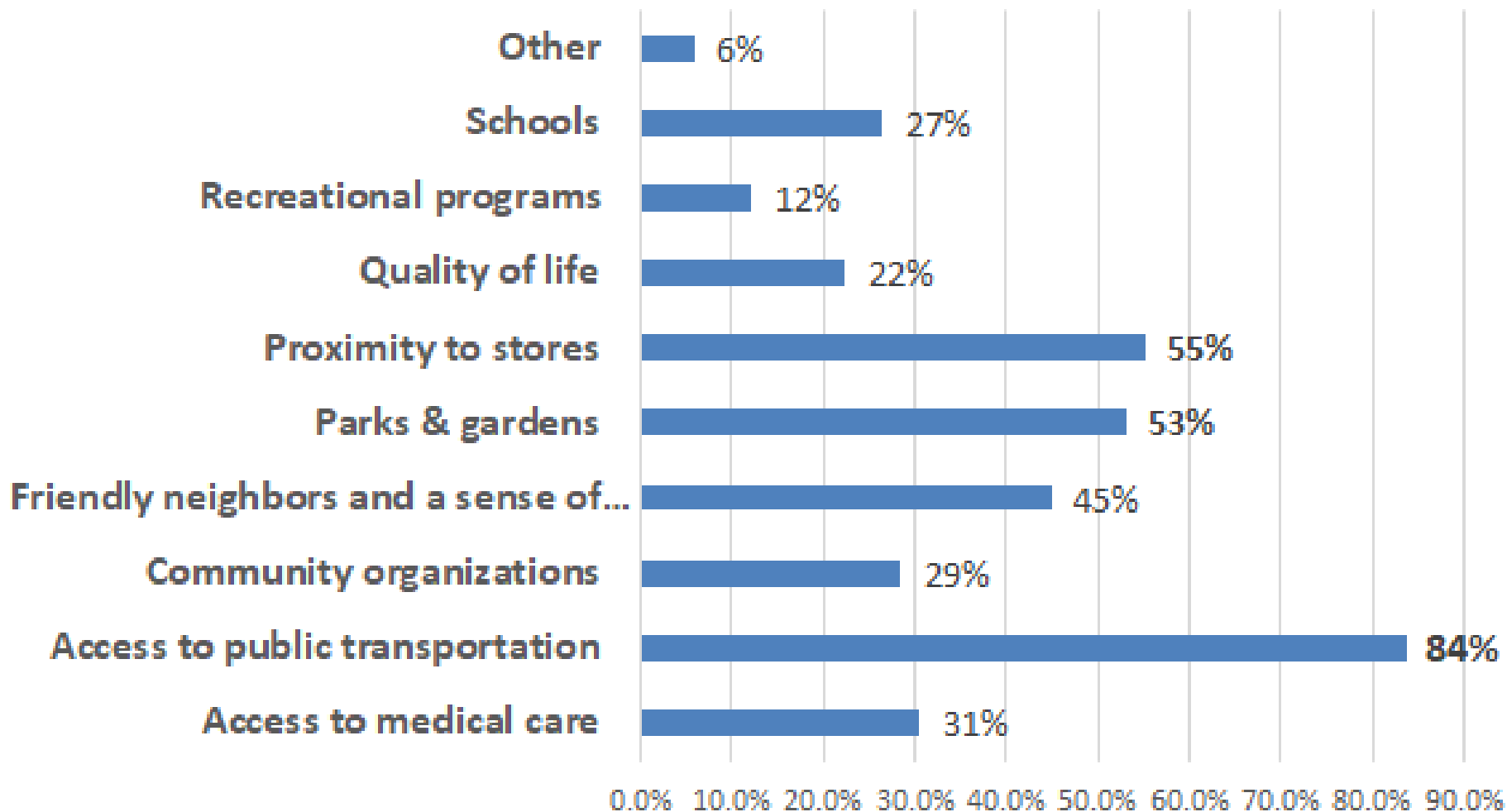
*I like my geographical location, the **transit, transit accessibility,***

*Actually, **transit access** for me, even though it's far. It is pretty **easy for me to get to Harlem on the train.***



# What do you like most about your neighborhood?

## What do you like most about your neighborhood?



# Air Quality a Concerning EHJ Issue

*...smog, air quality from building*

*A lot of truck-intensive businesses create **emissions and fumes** that heat up our environment. Urban communities and **communities of colors** are pointed as spaces where a **lot of heavy industry and EH Injustice** takes place.*

***Cardiovascular and respiratory conditions from air pollution. PM2.5, for example, increases mortality and morbidity rate of overall health conditions. Because we are heavily saturated with the highways, that has led to an increase in all of the health conditions.***



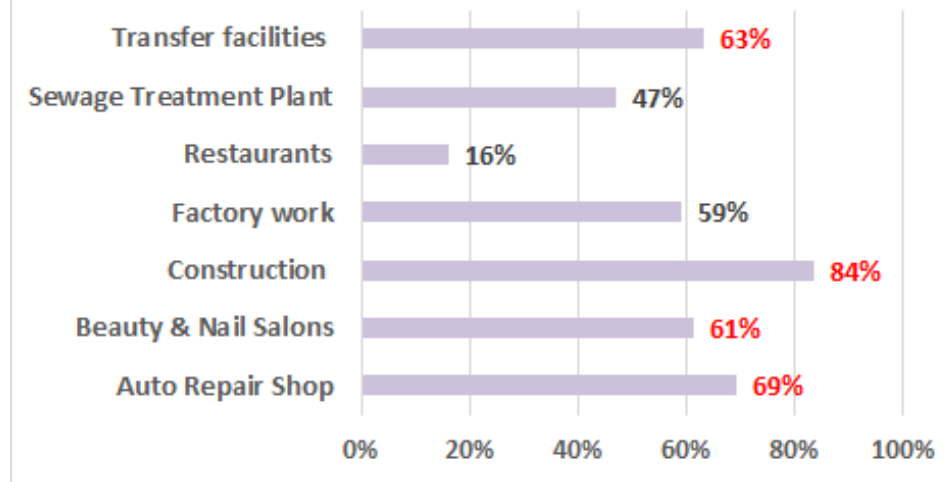
# Air Pollution and Construction-Concerning EH Issue

*cleaner construction and better waste disposal because one of my biggest fear is like air pollution.*

*like I think construction is a really big problem especially like where I live...like this new building ... like this luxury building with terrible smell because of oil -even when you close your windows you could still smell like a toxic smell.. and I think **definitely construction** is a big problem because if the construction is right outside of your house you can't really avoid inhaling...*



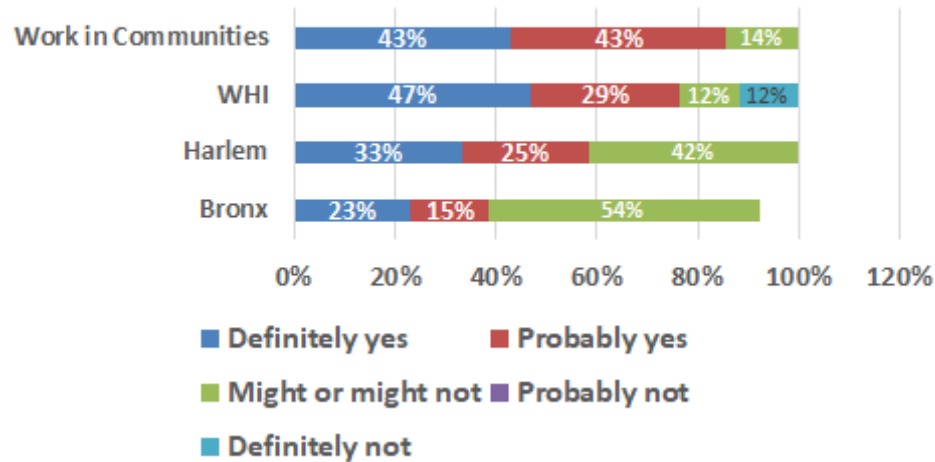
**Construction Main Industry Exposing Community to Toxins**



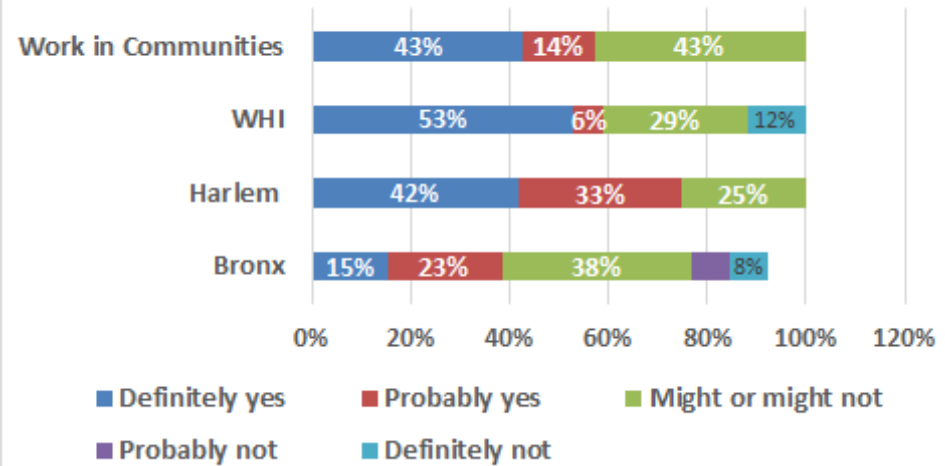


# Air Pollution - Low Birth Weight & Learning Disabilities

## Low Birth Weight Linked to Air Pollution

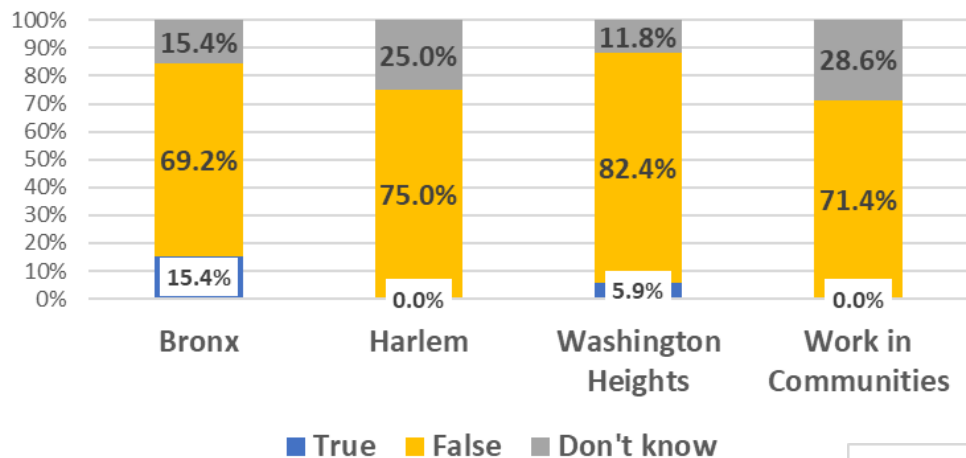


## Learning Disabilities Linked to Air Pollution

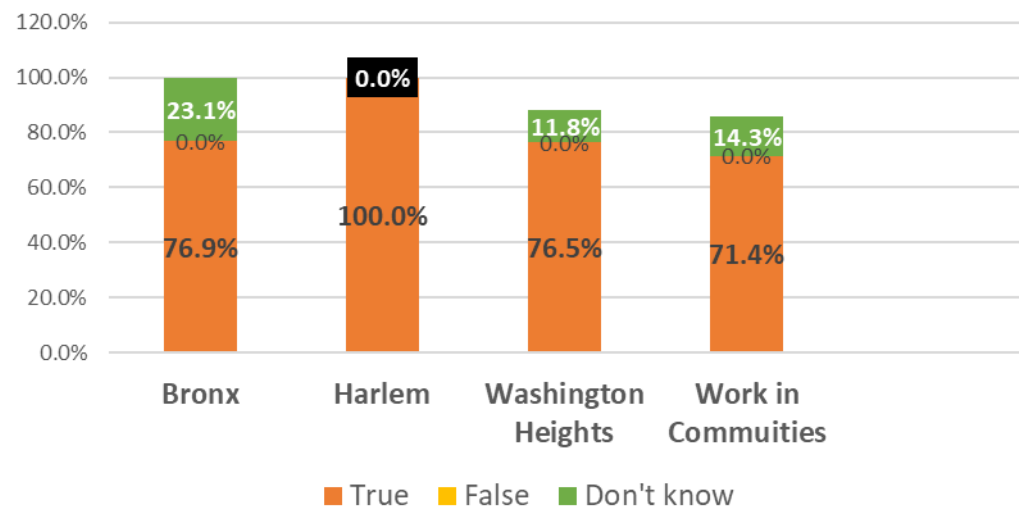


# Clearly knowledgeable of health effects due Lead, BPA, Pesticides, Flame Retardants

## Microwaving Food in Plastic (BPA) Containers is Ok by Community



## Lead Causes Developmental Delays



# Despite knowledge of harmful health effect lead poisoning is still a concern in NYC homes and schools

*We can throw in **lead-based poisoning**. Buildings are very old, slumlords that **don't take care of the property the way it should be taken care of**. Physical health like **toxicity from heavy metals**, a **3-fold rate of autism** because of the living environment.*

***Lead in water** in most elementary schools. The **DOE** have tried to **hush it up**, when exposed, we found that many of our kids have been drinking **lead-based water** and feeling the effects, seeing the cognitive*

***Lead paint, heavy metal toxicities...** We've had studies over and over again in our environment*





Photo: Stephen Wang



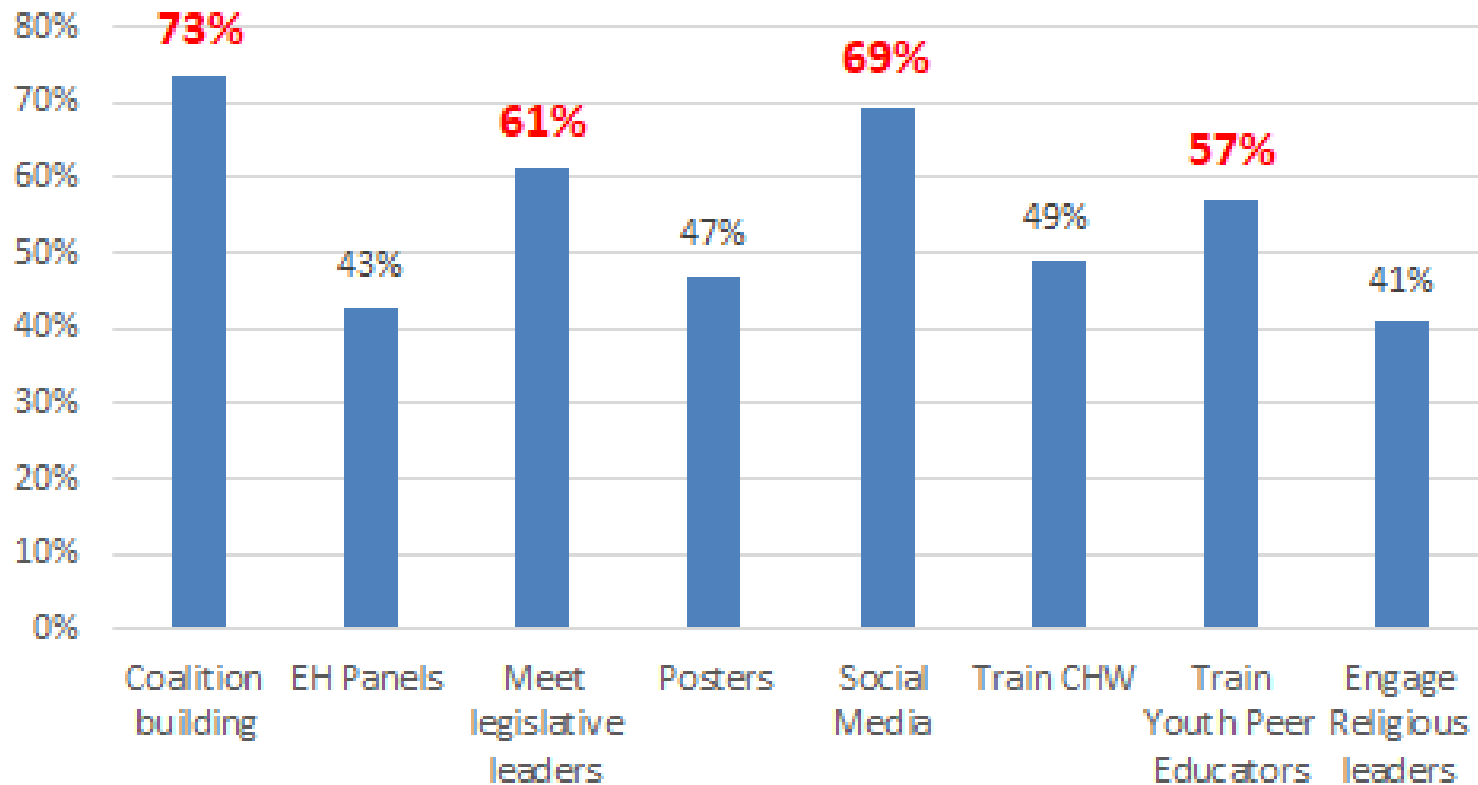
Photo: Richard Harbus

**Bronx, Washington Heights and Harlem  
CCCEH COTC Needs Assessment Survey & Focus Group:  
Strategies to increase information & action to protect children's  
environmental health**



# Best Strategies to increase CEH Information & Communication Dissemination

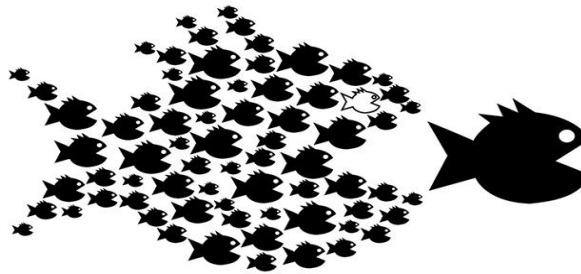
## Summary-Best Strategies to increase EHJ Communication & Information Access



# Best Strategies to increase CEH Information & Communication Dissemination

## Engaging political will to bring about the needed change - organizing

- *visiting elected officials*



- *sometimes neighbors blame each other for issues instead of looking at things in a more systemic way. That's why community organizers want to reshape that thinking*
- *I don't know that our people don't know (the EHJ issues) that. We are a heavily-researched area. **It's a matter of making the political will, having the accountability and necessary advocacy to implement policies that will make sure that all the information we have will be implemented to make an impact.** Knock on any of my neighbor's door and **they can tell you how their environment is affected.** What is the government doing? What is the city/federal doing so that our politicians will advocate?*

# Best Strategies to Increase CEH Information & Communication Dissemination

## Simplifying Messages and Participation

- *Not have it be confusing make it clear - easy to understand*
- *Simplifying things... families have bigger priorities than this. “here’s an easy to way to recycle”... show them the location, this is something you can do with your kids. Simplify it in a way that they can digest it. (it becomes doable)*

## Youth involvement- School-based programs and Participation in EHJ groups

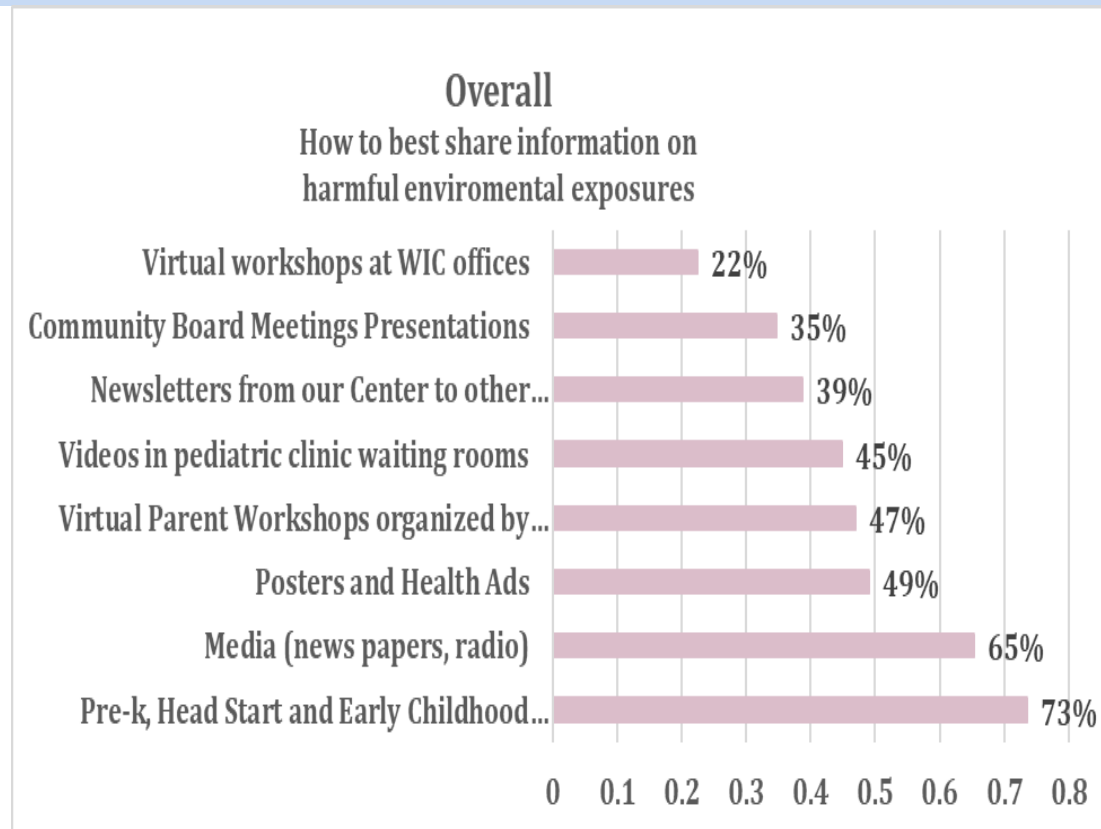
- *Why not have EHJ implemented in the school curriculum? A project that a certain grade has to do? That has to go through the DOE and they have to buy in that this is a significant issue in the communities... we can pitch it to them, this is something Columbia has the influence to do.*
- *Action and join a youth groups to bring more awareness.*
- *Talk to schools and students what EHJ means... A lot of the situations are normalized as “it is the way it is.” Families and children are normalizing their situations and feel powerless.*

# Best Strategies to Increase CEH Information & Communication Dissemination

## EHJ Capacity building by Initiating community-based interventions and programs.

*If Columbia has a thing where we can do programming or have people come in to plant things, connect with the tenant associations, and how schools can create programming or plant trees, etc.*

*Pipeline programs--what is the community benefit.  
Scholarships for people in urban environments to learn botany, EHJ, etc*



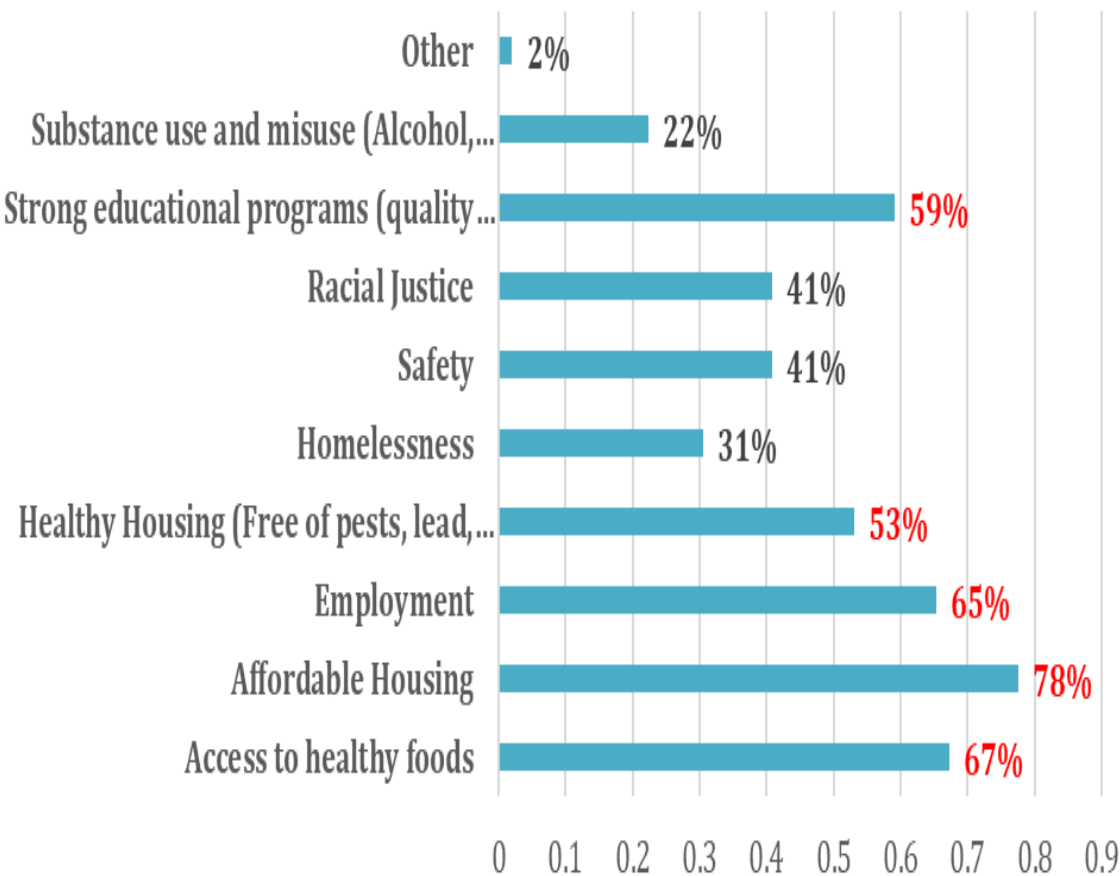


**Bronx, Washington Heights and Harlem  
Most Pressing Community Needs  
Survey & Focus Group Results**



# Housing Most Pressing Issue in all Communities

## Most Pressing Needs



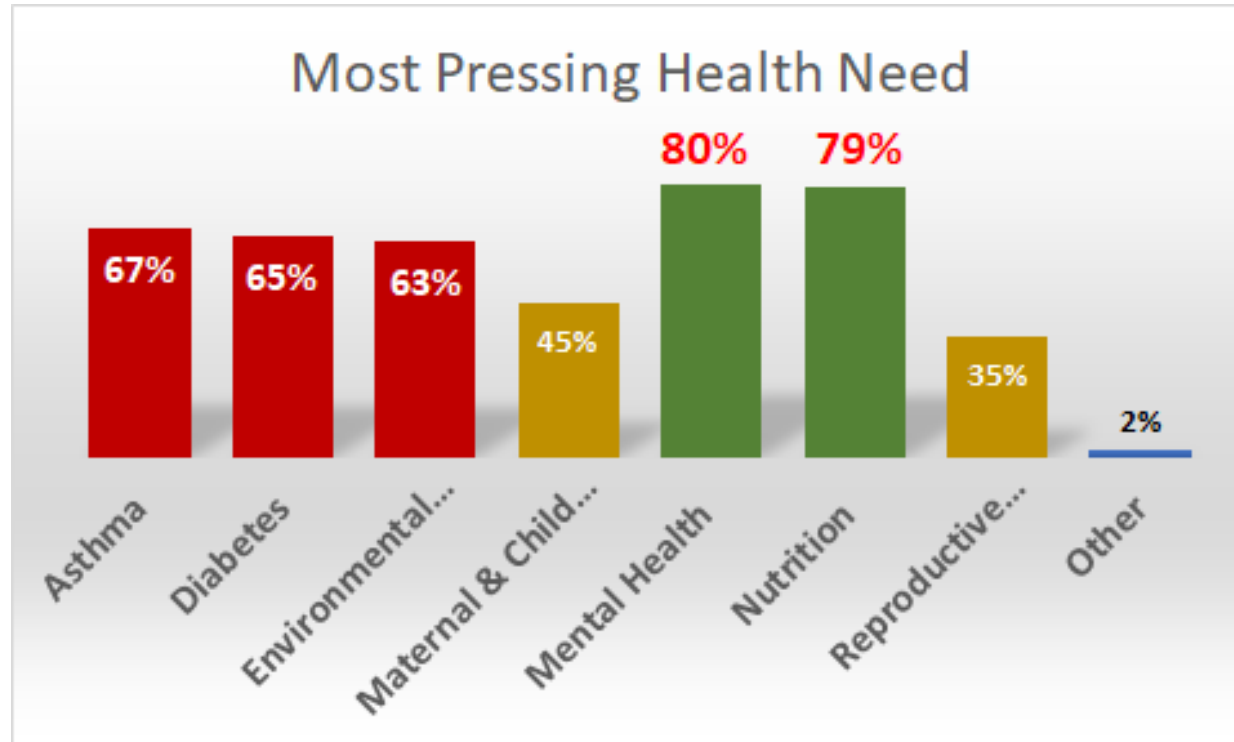
*Affordable Housing is defined as financially attainable, safe and in good repair.*

*"The development of unaffordable, low-income units makes housing financially inaccessible preventing "in-community mobility..." (Source-NYC Planning Statements, CB Reports)*

*...discouraging tenants to complain about need for repairs, poor quality and lack of basic needs like functioning heating...*

*(In NYCHA housing)... because of the (broken) elevators, people are dying, trying to make their dialysis appointment...,*

# Mental Health Most Pressing Health Need



- *We haven't even talked about the mental health effects on residents. As a therapist, I have a growing concern that communities retain so much heat during the summer...and its effects on mental health.*
- *As climate change continues, we will see more extreme heat in our community were being treated from depression/anxiety that stemmed from an environment and things they couldn't change*
- *Covid is taking a huge toll. There are more mental health issues...*

# Most Pressing Safety Issues

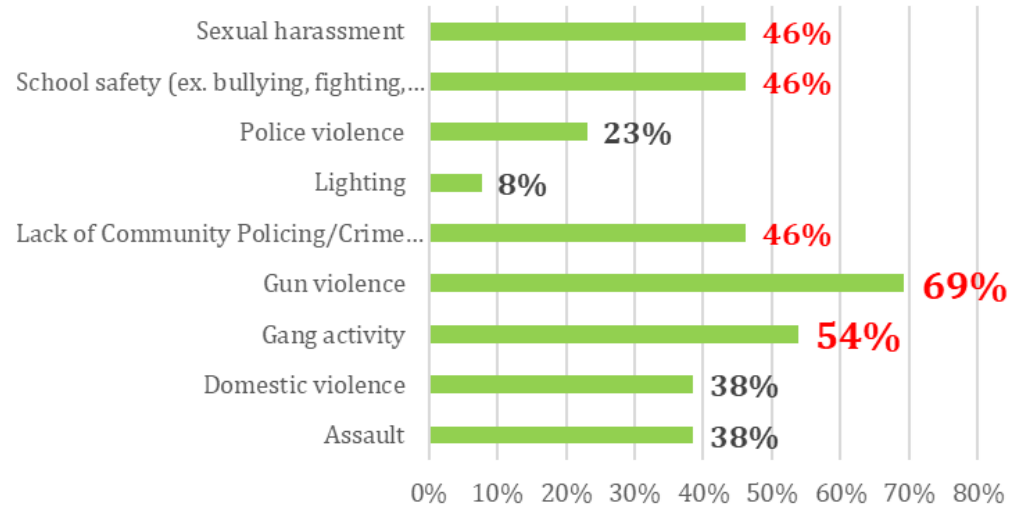
## Assault as a safety issue

*Gun violence- someone next to my building got shot.*

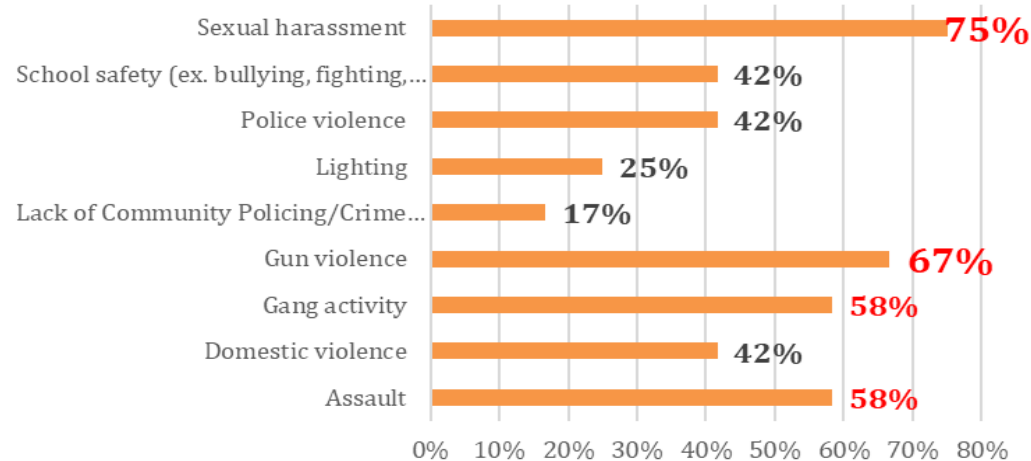
*Security and elevators, building security and elevators.*

*Making others, especially women feel safer, walking in their community. There are abductions- women are just taken on the spot.*

## Bronx Pressing Safety Issues

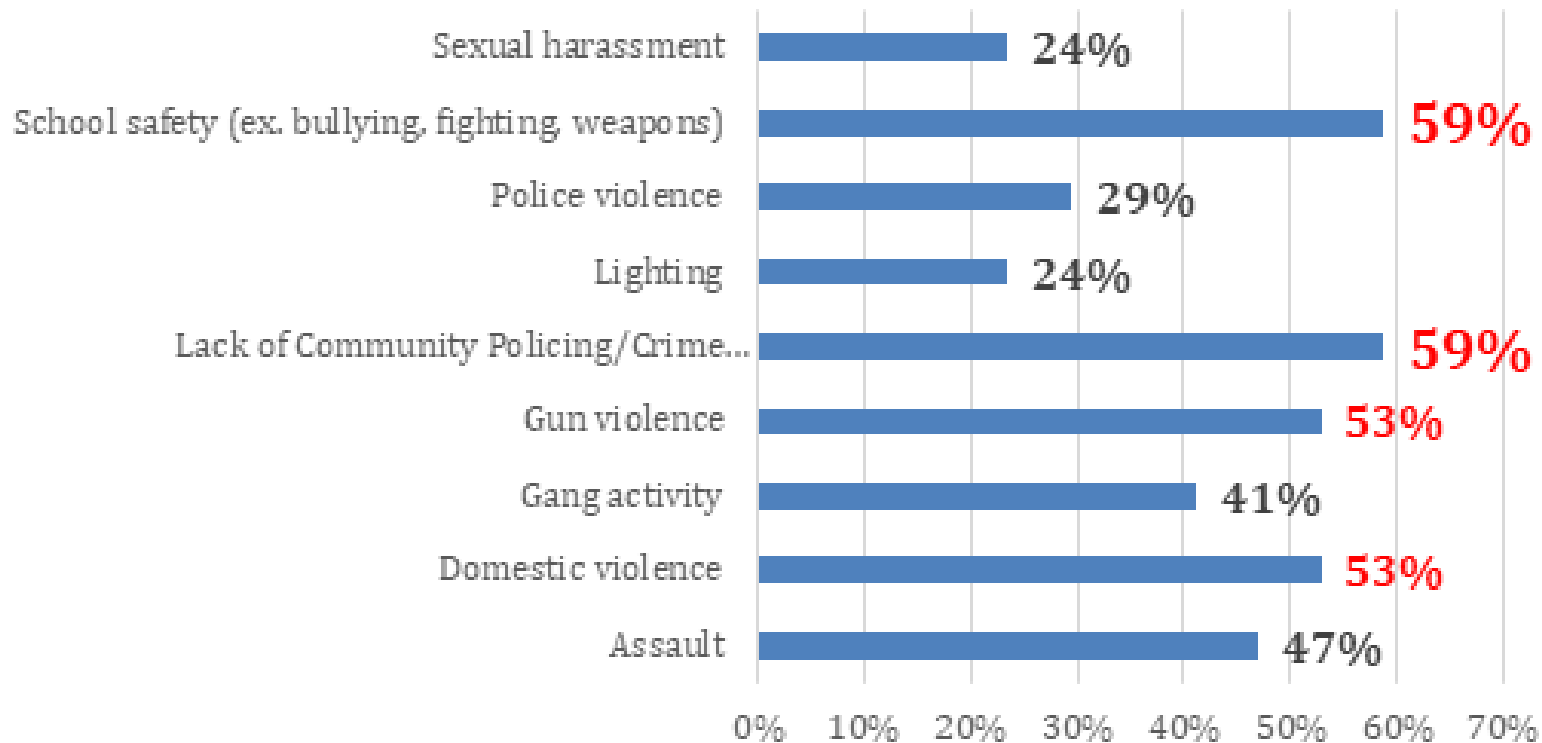


## Harlem - Pressing Safety Issues



# Most Pressing Safety Issues

## WHI-Pressing Safety Issues



# Magic Wand – Two things you could change/make happen

## Community Initiatives Underway

*Our coalition has been fighting for the **waterfront in the Bronx**. We have been fighting for access so that community can develop economically and businesses along the waterfront. Introduce people to green space and water activity.*

***Green corridor.** Presented to the community board and they were excited. First phase is open a plaza right in front of the school hopefully that puts everything in motion and hopefully close the whole street.*

*The need to access digital media with **NYCHA residents** on a resident council level, so that we can become more aware of environmental climate and public housing issues, and learning the legislative process, as well as advocating for ourselves.*

# Magic Wand – Two things you could change/make happen

## End Covid-19 pandemic and the digital divide (accessible internet and electronic devices for education)

- *...just going back to the internet point, a lot of folks do not have internet access. And so I think my wanda, I would love to waive it and give free Wi Fi to everyone.*
- *well with this wand I would do away with COVID... I wish I could make it better*
- *it took you know COVID for children to get access to Chromebooks and computers and stuff. But I would wave my wand for them to be able to keep it ...Right now our kids have access to the internet*

# THANK YOU!



# Resources

<https://data.cccnewyork.org/>

<https://nypost.com/2020/09/13/de-blasio-downplayed-dire-extent-of-nycha-lead-poisoning-issue/>

<https://gothamist.com/news/city-quietly-triples-estimate-nycha-apartments-lead-risk-children>

<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/joan-leary-matthews/still-high-levels-lead-drinking-water-nyc-schools>

