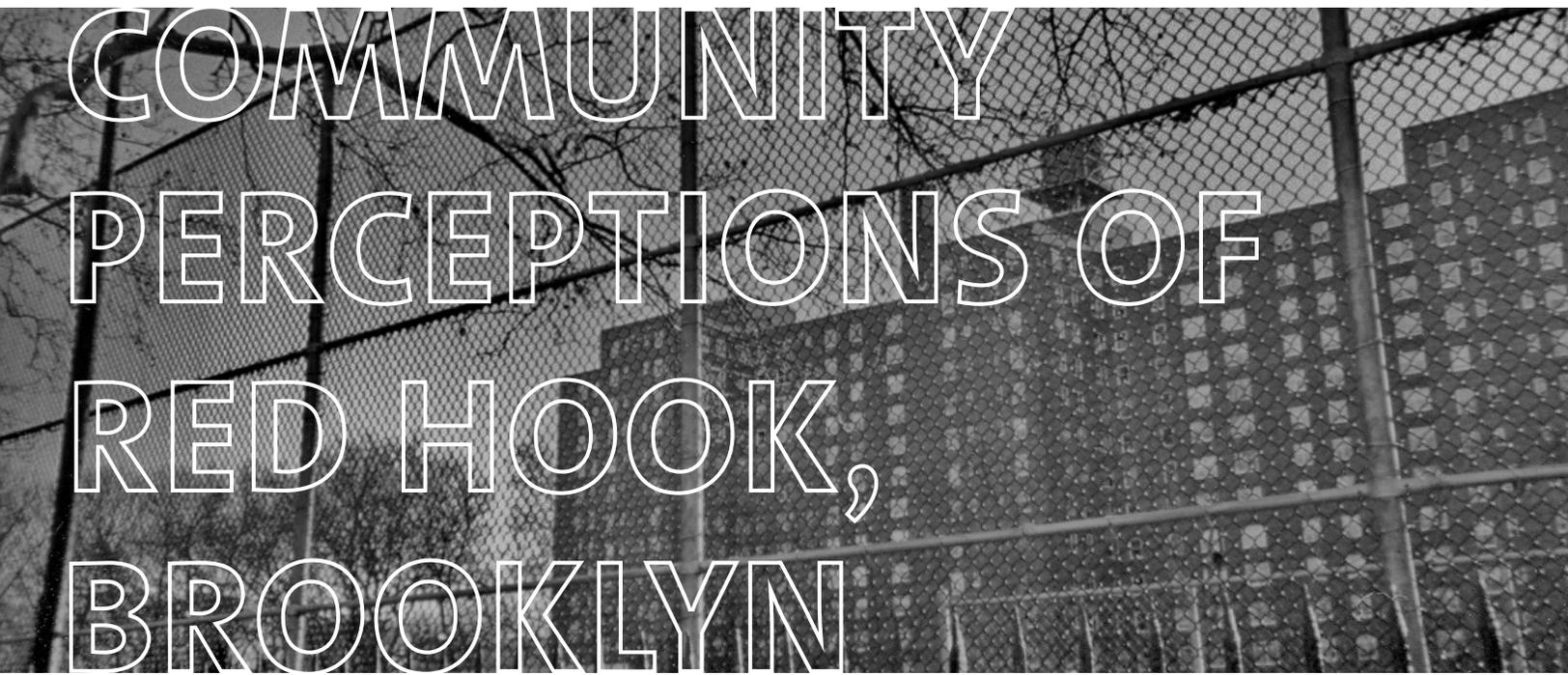


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RESEARCH



COMMUNITY  
PERCEPTIONS OF  
RED HOOK,  
BROOKLYN

Views of Quality of Life, Safety, and Services

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*date*

*acknowledgements*

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# COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF RED HOOK: VIEWS OF QUALITY OF LIFE, SAFETY AND SERVICES

Since 1997, the Red Hook Community Justice Center has regularly conducted a survey known as “Operation Data.” The survey is a tool for community members to voice their opinions and concerns about the neighborhood in which they live or work. The survey measures citizen perceptions of neighborhood quality of life, public safety, satisfaction with local criminal justice agencies, and familiarity and satisfaction with the Justice Center, an experimental, neighborhood-based court.<sup>1</sup> Survey findings are used to assess community needs and inform future initiatives. The survey was administered annually from 1997 through 2004; subsequently, less frequently. In June 2009, the survey was administered to 605 Red Hook residents, workers, and merchants. This report presents the major findings of the survey. Whenever possible, the most recent survey responses are compared to those of the Red Hook respondents from earlier years.

## METHODOLOGY

Though Operation Data was conducted in previous years, in 2009 the survey was shortened due to concerns that arose from prior administrations over survey fatigue and respondents stopping midway through the survey due to the length of time it took to complete.<sup>2</sup> The final version, which is attached in the Appendix, contained 46 questions. In June 2009, AmeriCorps members (volunteers who provide service work in exchange for a stipend and educational award) and summer interns approached individuals in high-traffic public spaces and community locations (e.g., local park, public housing walkways, outside of the grocery store and Laundromat) and asked if they agreed to be surveyed. Though 605 surveys were completed, throughout this report, the number for certain data elements of the 2009 study may be smaller due to missing data, but is never lower than 505.

Descriptive statistics are reported for most questions, and, where appropriate, t-tests were used to indicate any significant changes from previous years. Additionally, some tests were conducted to examine whether the results varied based on background characteristics such as gender, age, or living in public or private housing.

## PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Table 1 presents demographic information for 2009 survey respondents. The sample was evenly split along gender lines. The majority (63 percent) of survey respondents were Hispanic, less than one-quarter (23 percent) were Black, 11 percent were White, and 3 percent were other race/ethnicity. Forty-two percent of respondents lived in New York City Housing Authority public housing (compared to 48 percent in 2004). Most (84 percent) were Red Hook residents, though 13 percent did not live in Red Hook but worked in the neighborhood. The average number of years lived or worked in Red Hook was 21.

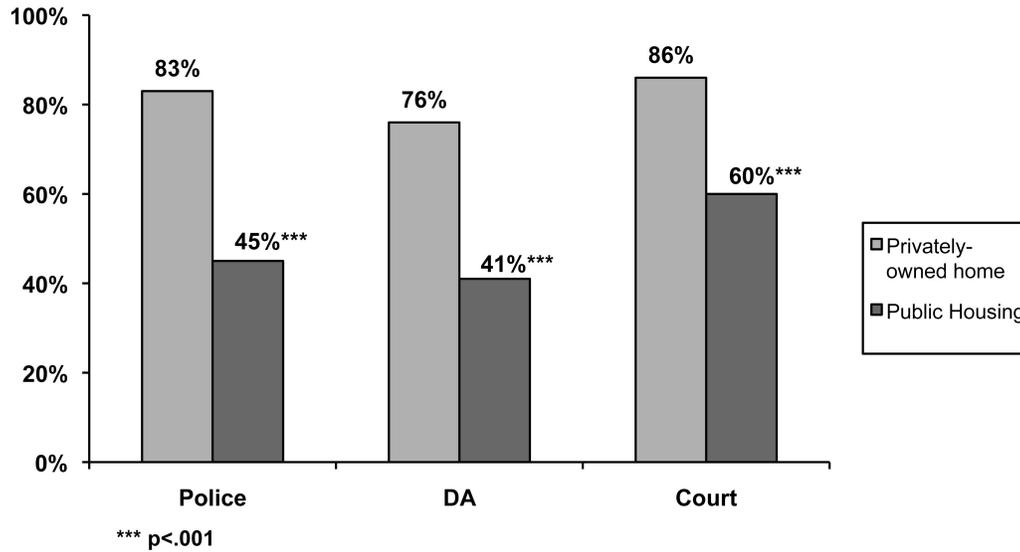
<b>Demographics</b>	<b>2009</b>
Mean Age	42 years
Female	49.8%
Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic	63.4%
Black	22.6%
White	10.5%
Other	3.5%
Living in Public Housing	42.2%
Red Hook Residents	84.1%
Work in Red Hook	12.9%
Red Hook Merchant	2.5%
Student in Red Hook	0.5%
Means Years Lived/Worked in Red Hook	21 years

Note: n=605 but can be as low as 590 for some data elements due to missing data.

## THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE COMMUNITY

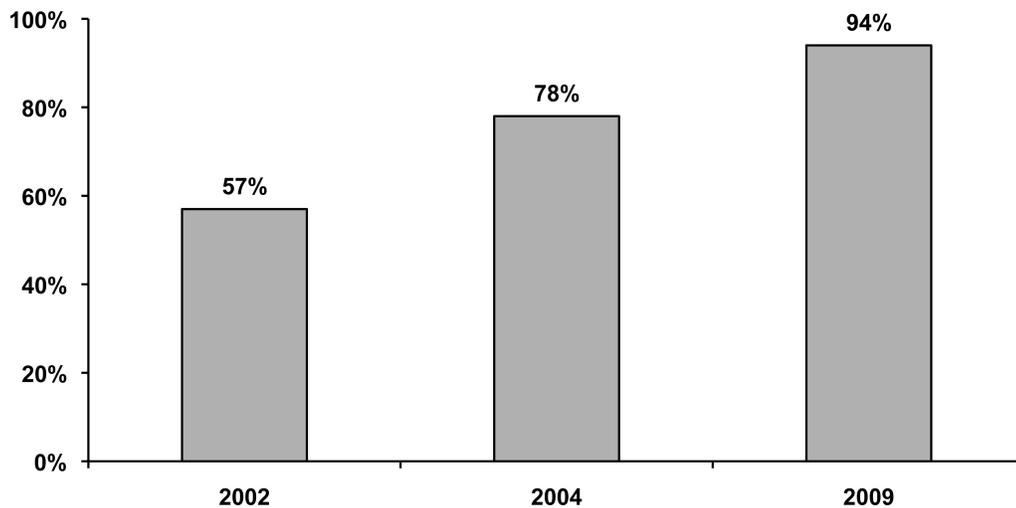
Over the course of the last three Operation Data survey administrations, feelings towards criminal justice agencies in the community have become increasingly positive. Two-thirds (66 percent) of respondents characterized the relationship between the police and the community in the past year as positive, compared to 24 percent in 2004 and 14 percent in 1997. Additionally, only 16 percent stated that the police's response to community issues had been unsatisfactory, down from 21 percent in 2004 and 38 percent in 1997. Sixty-one percent characterized the District Attorney's Office's response to complaints and issues raised by the community over the past year as positive, compared with 15 percent in 2004, and 9 percent in 1997. Seventy-five percent characterized the effectiveness of the court system in responding to community problems as positive, compared with 31 percent in 2004 and 28 percent in 1999.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1: Criminal Justice Approval Ratings, 2009



As shown in Figure 1, there were significant differences in these approval ratings by housing status, with those in private housing thinking significantly more positively of criminal justice agencies than those in public housing.

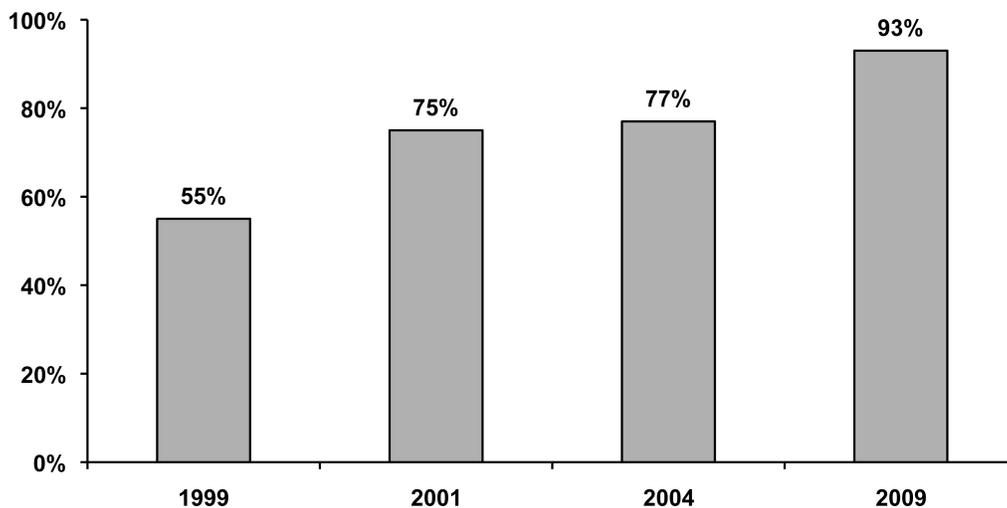
Figure 2: Respondents Who Had Positive Feelings Towards a Community Court in Their Neighborhood



Overall, there was a strong positive change in feelings about having a community-based court in Red Hook. As Figure 2 shows, of the 93 percent who had heard of the Red Hook Community Justice Center, 94 percent reported positive feelings towards having a community court in their neighborhood. This is a significant increase from the 78 percent reported in 2004 ( $p < .001$ ), and the 57 percent reported in 2002 ( $p < .001$ ).

Moreover, as shown in Figure 2, the percent of people living or working in the neighborhood that have heard of the Red Hook Community Justice Center has been consistently increasing over the last decade, with significant changes between 1999 and 2001 ( $p < .001$ ), and 2001 and 2009 ( $p < .001$ ).

**Figure 3: Respondents That Have Heard of the Red Hook Community Justice Center**



## COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Respondents were asked about problems in the neighborhood. Overall, they were most concerned with drugs, guns, gangs, HIV/AIDS, and public drinking, and were least likely to say that panhandlers, abandoned buildings, run down parks, and shoplifting were big problems facing the community. T-tests showed that drugs were a concern to more people than in the past. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) stated that drug use was a “big problem” for Red Hook, significantly higher than in 2004 (63 percent,  $p < .001$ ). Additionally, two-thirds (66 percent) indicated that drug selling in public was a big problem, compared to 62 percent in 2004 ( $p < .05$ ). Private housing residents were significantly more likely than those in public housing to report drugs (77 percent compared to 67 percent) and drug selling in public (74 percent compared to 57 percent) as big problems in Red Hook ( $p < .001$ ).

Guns and gangs were also considered to be bigger problems (68 percent and 63 percent, respectively) in 2009 than in 2004, when the percentages were 48 percent for guns and 38 percent for gangs. Finally, the percent identifying HIV and AIDS as a big problem in the community increased significantly from 46 percent in 2004 to 60 percent in 2009 ( $p < .001$ ).

There were some notable improvements as well, particularly related to neighborhood cleanliness. The percent indicating littering as a big problem significantly decreased from 50 percent to 22 percent between 2004 and 2009 ( $p < .001$ ); graffiti went from 36 percent to 20 percent ( $p < .001$ ); and garbage removal from 49 percent to 17 percent ( $p < .001$ ).

Table 2 presents the full 2009 results for the community problems questions.

<b>Community Problems</b>	<b>Big Problem</b>	<b>Minor Problem</b>	<b>Not a Problem</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Drug use	72.5%	15.4%	8.1%	4.0%
Guns	67.9%	12.1%	12.5%	7.5%
Drug selling in public	66.2%	13.9%	15.1%	4.8%
Gangs	62.7%	13.6%	16.1%	7.6%
HIV and AIDS	60.2%	7.4%	17.5%	15.0%
Public drinking	57.7%	20.7%	18.2%	3.3%
Assault (fighting, etc.)	22.3%	55.8%	17.6%	4.3%
Littering	22.0%	14.5%	62.5%	1.0%
Graffiti	19.8%	17.4%	59.1%	3.7%
Street needs repairs/poor street lighting	18.9%	14.4%	64.1%	2.7%
Vandalism	17.1%	19.9%	55.8%	7.2%
Garbage removal	16.9%	12.9%	68.2%	2.0%
Mugging	13.7%	49.5%	28.3%	8.5%
Prostitution	12.9%	14.9%	60.4%	11.9%
Theft	11.0%	54.0%	28.1%	7.0%
Sexual assault	8.6%	45.2%	34.6%	11.6%
Panhandlers	6.3%	11.4%	60.9%	21.4%
Abandoned buildings	5.7%	15.4%	74.5%	4.5%
Run down parks/green areas	4.3%	12.7%	80.7%	2.3%
Shoplifting	4.2%	9.3%	58.8%	27.7%

Note: n=605 but can be as low as 595 for some data elements due to missing data.

## QUALITY OF LIFE AND RESIDENTS' FEELINGS OF SAFETY

When asked to rate the quality of life in the neighborhood, 65 percent responded with good or very good, 25 percent said okay, and 10 percent said poor or very poor. Ratings of quality of life in Red Hook were more positive than in 2004, when only 26 percent said good or very good, 51 percent said okay, and 23 percent said poor or very poor.

<b>Feel safe in these locations (residents only)</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>1998</b>
On the way to and from the subway	53.5%	40.8%***	42.0%***
On the street	54.5%	40.0%***	51.8%*
At the waterfront	74.9%	44.3%***	47.1%***
In the local parks	73.5%	45.6%***	48.9%***
In your home	90.7%	76.1%***	83.5%***

Notes: n=505 for 2009, n ranged from 325 to 339 for 2004, n ranged from 340 to 369 for 1998  
\* p<.05, \*\*\* p<.001 (comparisons made between 2009 and 2004, and 2009 and 1998)

Some additional questions were asked only of Red Hook residents, not of those who lived or attended school in Red Hook. These were related to feelings of safety in locations in the neighborhood. Table 3, below, shows the data for 2009, 2004 and 1998. The data indicate that residents feel significantly safer in the community today than they did five and over ten years ago.

Further analyses were done on the 2009 data to determine if there were any significant differences in responses to the quality of life and safety questions between public housing residents and those who lived in a privately-owned co-op, house, or apartment. Independent samples t-tests revealed that public housing residents were significantly less likely to rate quality of life as good (49 percent compared to 77 percent,  $p<.001$ ), and were also significantly less likely to report feeling safe in their home (88 percent compared to 94 percent,  $p<.05$ ) and at the waterfront (70 percent compared to 79 percent,  $p<.05$ ). There was no relationship between gender or age and feelings of safety.

## CONCLUSION

The results showed many positive changes since previous survey administrations. Notably, people feel Red Hook is physically cleaner, with significantly fewer people reporting that litter, graffiti, and garbage removal are big problems in the neighborhood. Additionally, 65 percent of respondents reported a good or very good quality of

life, much higher than the 26 percent in 2004. Red Hook residents also felt much safer in areas around the neighborhood. However, public housing residents tended to feel less safe in certain areas and reported a lower quality of life than those not in public housing. Finally, people felt significantly more positive about the district attorney, the police, and the court system than in earlier years, though in 2009 those in public housing had significantly less positive feelings towards these agencies than those in private housing. There were some negative changes as well. Specifically, a significantly greater number of respondents felt that drugs, drug dealing, and HIV/AIDS were big problems facing the neighborhood. Moreover, a higher percentage of people reported that guns and gangs were big problems than in 2004.

Positive feelings towards a community court in the neighborhood increased from 57 percent in 2002 to 78 percent in 2004 to 94 percent in 2009. The percentage of people living or working in the neighborhood that has heard of the Red Hook Community Justice Center has significantly increased over the last ten years.

## NOTES

1. For more information on the Red Hook Community Justice Center, please see: Berman, G. and Feinblatt, J. 2005. *Good Courts*. New York: The New Press, and Berman, G. and Fox, A. 2005. "Justice in Red Hook." *The Justice System Journal*, 26(1):77-90.
2. See Custer et al. 2008. *Public Perceptions of Neighborhood Quality of Life and Safety in Five New York City Communities: Results from Operation Data, 2004-2005*.
3. This question was not asked in 1997 or 1998; thus, 1999 is the earliest year data are available for this question.

## APPENDIX: COMMUNITY SURVEY SPRING 2009

<b>Red Hook Operation Data</b>				
COMMUNITY SURVEY SPRING 2009				
Opening Remarks				
Hello my name is _____. I'm a volunteer with the Red Hook Public Safety Corps. We're conducting a survey to learn about the strengths and problems of your neighborhood. Participation in this survey is voluntary. Your responses will be kept confidential. This information is for research purposes only. The survey will be about 5 minutes, and is only for residents, merchants, and those who work in the Red Hook neighborhood. Does that describe you? If so, do you agree to participate? <i>(If they say yes, then start the survey, if not, thank them and move on.)</i>				
#	Answers		Question	
<b>THE COMMUNITY</b>				
1				First, I have a few basic questions. What is your relationship to this neighborhood? Choose all that apply. Resident Merchant Work in the neighborhood Other _____
		1 2 3 4		
2				How many years have you lived/worked in this neighborhood? (if less than 1, put 0)
3				How would you rate the quality of life in the neighborhood? the quality of life: <span style="float: right;">Is</span>
		1 2 3 4 5 6		Very poor Poor OK Good Very Good Don't Know
<b>COMMUNITY PROBLEMS/SAFETY</b>				
				Now, I am going to ask you some questions about some issues in the neighborhood. Let's first talk about the problems that may exist here. After each issue that I state, tell me whether it is a ...:  1 - big problem 2 - minor problem 3 - not a problem
4				Public drinking
5				Drug use
6				Gangs
7				Drug selling in public
8				Theft
9				Assault (fighting, etc.)
10				Sexual assault
11				Mugging
12				Guns
				<i>If the respondent is a resident,</i> Please tell me whether you feel very safe, unsafe or neutral in the following locations:  1 safe 2 neutral/no opinion 3 unsafe
13				In your home
14				On the street
15				On the way to and from the subway
16				In the local parks
17				At the waterfront

					<p>Now, I am going to ask you some questions about additional issues in the neighborhood. Let's first talk about the problems that may exist here. After each issue that I state, tell me whether it is a ...:</p> <p>1 - big problem</p> <p>2 - minor problem</p> <p>3 - not a problem</p>
	<u>Big</u>	<u>Minor</u>	<u>Not</u>	<u>D/K</u>	
18	1	2	3	4	Garbage removal
19	1	2	3	4	Run down parks/green areas
20	1	2	3	4	Littering
21	1	2	3	4	Street needing repairs/poor street lighting
22	1	2	3	4	Abandoned buildings
23	1	2	3	4	Graffiti
24	1	2	3	4	Panhandlers
25	1	2	3	4	Shoplifting
26	1	2	3	4	Prostitution
27	1	2	3	4	Vandalism
28	1	2	3	4	HIV and AIDS
29					<p>What would you identify as the greatest strengths of your neighborhood? _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES/INVOLVEMENT</b>					
30					<p>Would you characterize the relationship between the police and your community <i>over the past year</i> as...</p> <p>1 Positive</p> <p>2 Neutral</p> <p>3 Negative</p> <p>4 Don't Know</p>
31					<p>In the past year, how well have police responded to community issues?</p> <p>1 Excellent</p> <p>2 Good</p> <p>3 Satisfactory</p> <p>4 Unsatisfactory</p> <p>5 No opinion</p>
32					<p>Would you characterize the District Attorney's Office's response to complaints and issues raised by your community <i>over the past year</i> as...</p> <p>1 Positive</p> <p>2 Neutral</p> <p>3 Negative</p> <p>4 Don't know</p>
33					<p>Would you characterize the effectiveness of the court system in responding to community problems as...</p> <p>1 Effective</p> <p>2 Neutral</p> <p>3 Not effective</p> <p>4 Don't know</p>
<b>THE RED HOOK COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTER</b>					
34	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>			<p>Have you heard of the Red Hook Community Justice Center? (If no, skip to #40)</p> <p>1 2</p>

35	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p>	<p>In general, how do you feel about having a community court in your neighborhood or nearby?</p> <p>Very good Good Neutral Bad Very bad</p>
36		<p>Which programs have you heard of at the Red Hook Community Justice Center?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
37	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Yes</u>    <u>No</u> 1            2</p>	<p>Have you used any of the services available at the Red Hook Community Justice Center in the past year?</p>
38	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Yes</u>    <u>No</u> 1            2</p>	<p>Have you had a case processed through/used the Red Hook Community Justice Center?</p>
39	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Would you characterize the effectiveness of the Red Hook Community Justice Center as...?</p> <p>Effective Neutral Not effective Don't know</p>
<b>THE RED HOOK PUBLIC SAFETY CORPS</b>		
40	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Yes</u>    <u>No</u> 1            2</p>	<p>Have you heard of the Red Hook Public Safety Corps (Americorps)? (If no, skip to #42)</p>
41	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4</p>	<p>In general, how do you feel about the Red Hook Public Safety Corps?</p> <p>Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied Don't know</p>
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>		
42	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2</p>	<p>Male Female</p>
43	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5 7</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Yes</u>    <u>No</u> 1            2</p>	<p>What racial group do you consider yourself a part of? [optional]</p> <p>Black or African American White American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</p> <p>Other: _____</p> <p>Are you Hispanic/Latino?</p>
45	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4</p>	<p>Where do you currently live?</p> <p>Privately owned home, Co-Op or apartment NYCHA (public) housing complex Shelter/temporary housing Homeless</p>
46		<p>How old were you on your last birthday?</p>

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