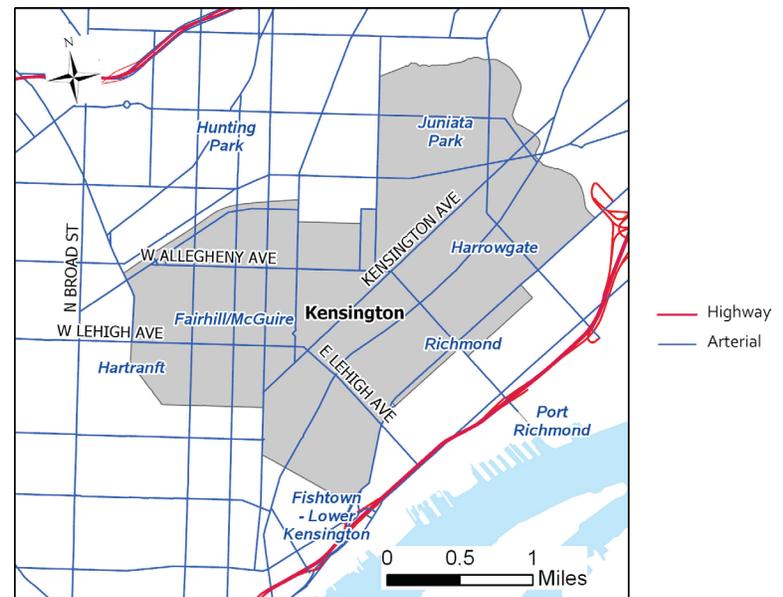


COMMUNITY BRIEF
COMMUNITY HEALTH PROFILE: KENSINGTON, PHILADELPHIA

This community profile focuses on Kensington and its surrounding neighborhoods, the area located between North Philadelphia and the Lower Northeast (see Map 1). **The goal of this profile is to describe health in the Kensington area as well as neighborhood factors that may impact health.** This profile may help residents and advocates understand opportunities for and challenges to health in the area.

The gray area, which we have defined as “Kensington,” shows the boundaries used for this profile. Different residents define neighborhoods in different ways. The boundaries used for this profile were selected with input from community organizations and are broader than other maps of this region might depict.



Map 1 (above): Map of Kensington area neighborhoods.

What Do We Know About Kensington Residents?

Table 1 shows how the Kensington neighborhood compares to the entire city of Philadelphia on a variety of factors that impact health. Compared to city averages, Kensington has a higher proportion of young people and a lower proportion of older people than Philadelphia overall. Kensington has a significantly higher percentage of residents living in poverty and a significantly lower life expectancy than the citywide average. The proportion of Kensington residents who speak a language other than English at home is more than double that proportion in Philadelphia overall.

Compared to all Philadelphia residents, Kensington residents are more likely to lack public or private health insurance, smoke, have skipped a meal, and have hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, or mental health diagnoses (though mental health is largely under-diagnosed everywhere). The percent of people who rate their own health as being fair or poor is higher in Kensington than in Philadelphia overall, and self-rated health has been shown to be predictive of actual health status.³

Table 1. Health Related Characteristics of Kensington Area and Philadelphia Overall

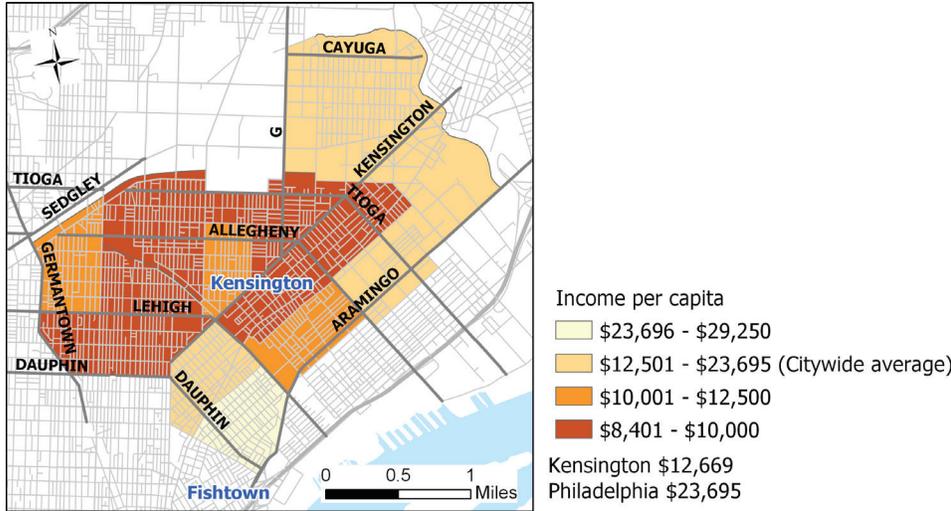
	Kensington	Philadelphia
Age less than 18 (children)* [C]	32.4%	22.2%
Age 18-34 (young adult) [C]	27.2%	29.5%
Age 35-64 (middle age) [C]	33.9%	35.8%
Age greater than or equal to 65 (older age)* [C]	6.5%	12.5%
Primary language at home is not English* [C]	47.9%	22.4%
Poverty rate* [C]	44.7%	25.9%
Percent uninsured [C]	13.9%	12.0%
Current smokers [P]	30.8%	23.6%
Cut size or skipped a meal in the last year because there was not enough money [P]	19.1%	15.9%
Adults with high blood pressure [P]	36.1%	33.7%
Adults with diabetes [P]	14.4%	12.5%
Adults with coronary heart disease [P]	6.9%	6.6%
Mental health diagnosis [P]	20.6%	20.0%
Self-rated health as poor/fair [P]	28.6%	22.7%
Life expectancy (in years)* [NCHS]	71.8 years	75.3 years

Note: *Comparisons with an asterisk indicate statistically significant differences
 C = data from the American Community Survey, 2012-2016 (i.e. the “Census”)
 P = data from the PHMC Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey, 2015
 NCHS = from the National Center for Health Statistics

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

The following maps show averages of factors of neighborhood life throughout Kensington, as measured at the Census tract level. Thus the borders between different colors cannot be interpreted as stark transitions. It is not the case, for example, that as soon as you cross from one color to another on the crime maps, the neighborhood suddenly becomes more dangerous.

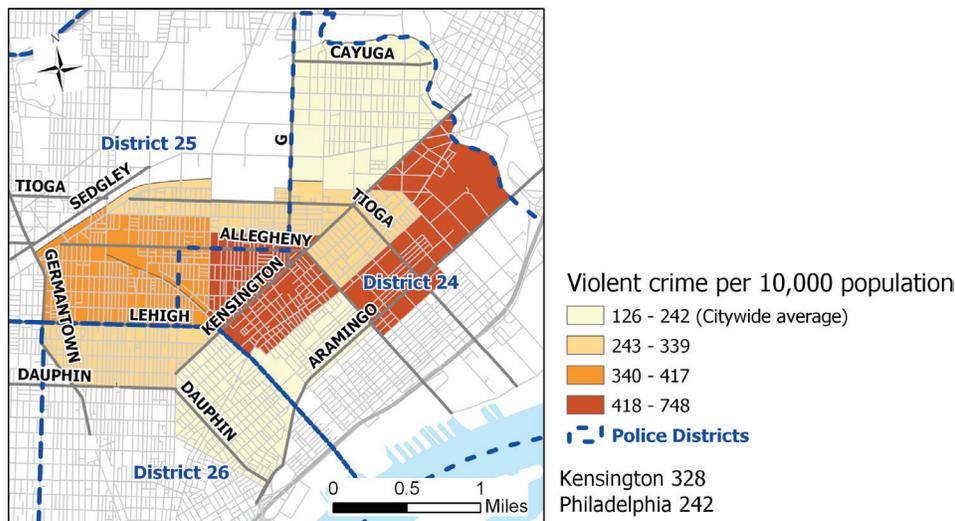
Map 2: Income per capita



In Kensington, the average income per capita was \$12,669 per year in 2012-2016, which is about half of the average income in Philadelphia. This matters because lower income is associated with higher rates of disease and higher rates of unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and lack of physical activity.⁴ In addition, income directly impacts access to quality housing, health care, and healthy foods.⁵ Map 2 shows that most of Kensington (dark red and dark orange) has an average income lower than the citywide average. Only a small section of Kensington (pale yellow), which is adjacent to a rapidly shifting area (Fishtown), has a higher average income than Philadelphia overall. Philadelphia is the poorest of America's large cities,⁶ which means Kensington is one of the poorest areas in one of the poorest cities.

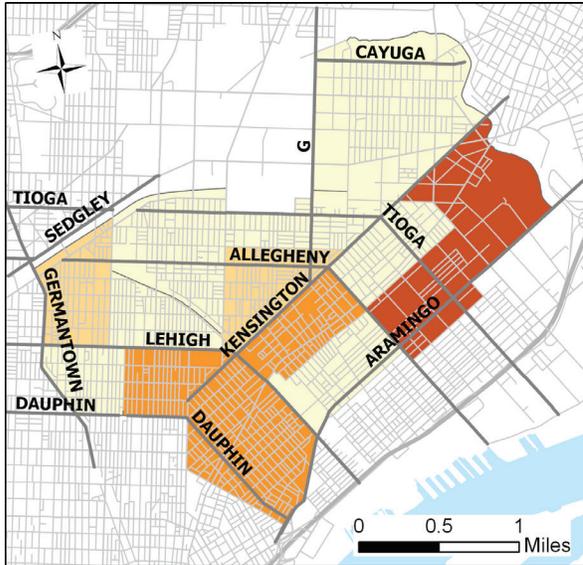
These maps show the rate of crime incidents reported to the police that occur in each area, expressed as the number per 10,000 residents. However, residents are not always the perpetrators or victims of the reported crimes. This neighborhood is served by the 24th, 25th, and 26th police districts. It is also important to note that this represents an underestimate of violence, as many crimes and violent acts are not reported to the police.

Map 3: Police-reported violent crime incidents



In Kensington, the violent crime rate is roughly 30% higher (328 violent crimes per 10,000 residents) than in Philadelphia overall (242 violent crimes per 10,000 people). Surviving or witnessing crime can negatively impact individual lives, and neighborhoods exposed to high rates of violence may experience community-level stress and trauma.⁷ Map 3 shows rates of violent crime incidents throughout Kensington in 2017. Any color besides yellow is an area with a crime rate estimated to be higher than Philadelphia overall. Dark red areas have very high violent crime rates, in some cases up to 3 times higher than Philadelphia.

Map 4: Police-reported property crime incidents



Property crime per 10,000 population

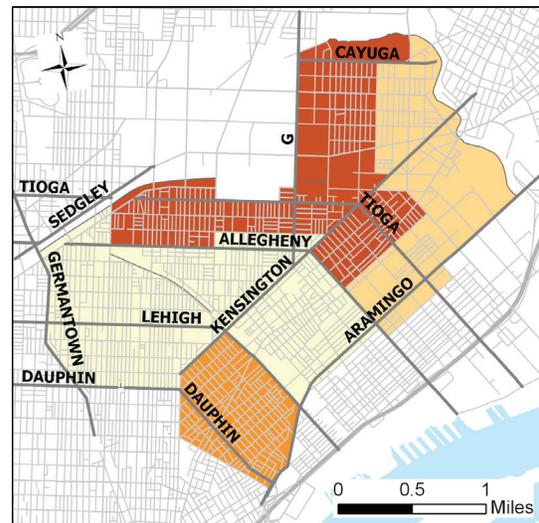
- 151 - 287 (Citywide average)
- 288 - 358
- 359 - 515
- 516 - 1601

Kensington 306
Philadelphia 287

Although Kensington has a higher average rate of property crime incidents (306 per 10,000 residents) than Philadelphia as a whole (287 per 10,000 residents), there are large areas of Kensington that have property crime rates that are lower than or equal to Philadelphia. Property crimes, such as theft and vandalism, are a good indicator of resident quality of life. High rates of property crime can impact stress and feelings of connection to the neighborhood.⁸ Map 4 depicts police reports of property crime incidents in Kensington. When comparing Maps 3 and 4, the sections of Kensington with the highest rates of violent crime tend to have the highest rates of property crime as well.

Kensington residents reported feeling as safe during the day as other Philadelphians (87.5% vs. 88%). Perceived safety influences people's stress levels and their ability to go about their daily lives,⁹ including activities that are needed to stay healthy such as walking and exercising. Map 5 depicts the percent of people who feel safe going places in their neighborhood during the day. Some areas with the highest perceived safety (pale yellow) overlap the areas with higher rates of violent (Map 3) and property (Map 4) crime. This may indicate there are other assets within Kensington that make residents feel safe, such as close social connections to neighbors.

Map 5: Perceived safety

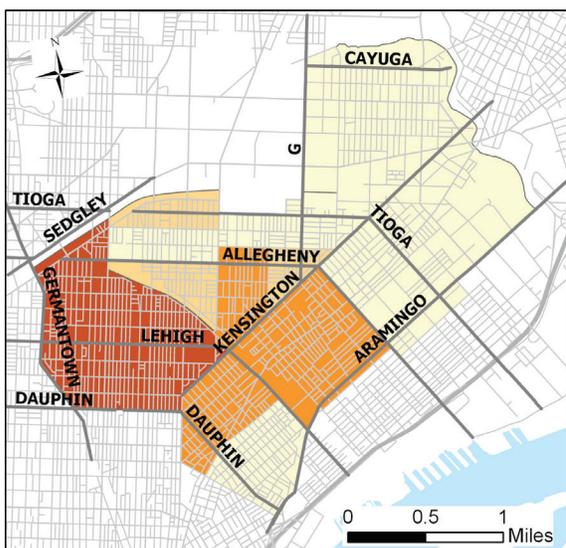


Feel safe going places during day

- 88.1% - 90.1%
- 86.1% - 88.0% (Citywide average)
- 85.2% - 86.0%
- 84.2% - 85.1%

Kensington 87.5%
Philadelphia 88.0%

Map 6: Vacant lots

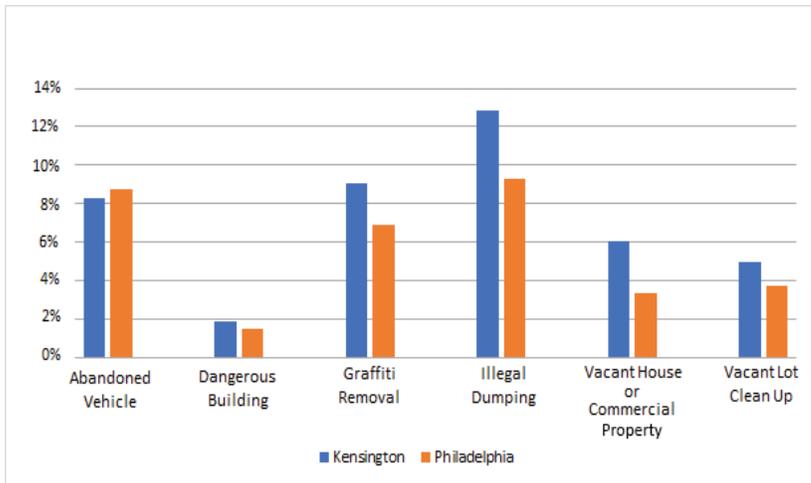


Residential lots likely vacant

- 0.07% - 5.3% (Citywide average)
- 5.4% - 8.8%
- 8.9% - 13.4%
- 13.5% - 28.7%

Kensington 9.3%
Philadelphia 5.3%

Kensington has nearly twice the proportion of vacant lots compared to Philadelphia overall (9.3% vs. 5.3%), and a higher proportion of vacant buildings compared to the City (3.5% vs. 2.4%). Vacant buildings and lots are a sign of housing and economic distress in a neighborhood.⁶ They have been linked with increased violence and higher rates of chronic disease, environmental contamination, mental distress, and a breakdown of social capital.^{10,11} Vacant buildings and lots are also of concern for residents because they can be sites for development that can increase property values and taxes, and thus displace current residents.¹² However, vacant buildings can also provide shelter for vulnerable residents. Map 6 shows the percent of residential lots that are likely vacant.

Figure 1: Percent of 311 Requests by Type

Philly311 is a system provided by the City of Philadelphia that records service requests regarding quality of life issues or neighborhood disorder. Compared to the city average, there were proportionately more requests from Kensington residents about dangerous buildings, graffiti removal, illegal dumping, and vacant houses, commercial properties or lots.

The blue bar is the percent of 311 requests from Kensington (n=49,577) about each type of complaint, during the years 2014-2016. For example, slightly more than 8% of 311 calls from Kensington are about abandoned vehicles. The orange bar is the percent of 311 requests from Philadelphia (n=625,944) about each type of complaint.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This community profile provides an overall snapshot of Kensington using the most currently available data. The profile focuses on indicators that are commonly used to describe residents, the overall health of a neighborhood, and factors that affect people's health and daily lives. Kensington is a neighborhood with challenges, but also many community assets and opportunities. The area is receiving much attention and investments from the City of Philadelphia. In October 2018, the City of Philadelphia launched the Philadelphia Resilience Project, which included a central focus on Kensington, to combat the opioid crisis through targeting trash, crime, homelessness, overdoses and infectious diseases while mobilizing community resources. More health data and qualitative data that depict residents' experiences with health could be useful in prioritizing investments, and would allow tracking of changes over time. Continuing to support and engage community residents as partners and experts on their neighborhood could improve the impact of investments in this neighborhood.

The Drexel Urban Health Collaborative and Dornsife School of Public Health are committed to assessing the health of urban neighborhoods. We value partnerships with community residents, leaders and organizations, as well as policymakers, government leaders, and other decision makers to improve population health, reduce health inequities, and promote neighborhoods where all residents have the opportunity to be healthy. We create community profiles like this one as a resource to catalyze action, and hope that the information is helpful to neighborhood residents, advocates, and decision makers in their efforts to improve community health.

REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

For more information on our sources of data and for a complete list of references, and information on the Drexel Urban Health Collaborative, please visit us online at: drexel.edu/uhc/resources/briefs

CITATION

Confair A, Carroll-Scott A, Castro K, Zhao Y, Melly S, Kolker J, Lankenau S, Roth A. *Community Health Profile: Kensington, Philadelphia, PA: Drexel University Urban Health Collaborative; October 2019*



The mission of the Drexel Urban Health Collaborative is to improve health in cities by increasing scientific knowledge and public awareness of urban health challenges and opportunities, and by identifying and promoting actions and policies that improve population health and reduce health inequities.

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