

# BROOKLYN, NY<sup>1</sup>

## Community Profile<sup>2</sup>

### PEOPLE AND PLACES

#### Regional orientation

Brooklyn, New York (40.65°N, 73.95°W) is a borough of New York City, located on the western end of Long Island (see Map 1). It shares its only land boundary with Queens; otherwise it is surrounded by the East River and New York Bay to the west and Jamaica Bay to the south and east (USGS 2008). Sheepshead Bay, on the southern end of Brooklyn, is where most of the fishing activity is concentrated; it opens onto Jamaica Bay.<sup>3</sup>



Map 1. Location of Brooklyn, NY (US Census Bureau 2000)

#### Historical/Background

Brooklyn, originally named Breuckelen, was authorized by the Dutch West India Company in 1646, and became the first municipality in what is now New York State (Brooklyn Online nd). Later, Brooklyn and five other towns were organized into Kings County by the British in 1683, one of twelve counties in New York State (US Census Bureau 2000). Brooklyn's waterfront has played an important role in the history of New York City since its very beginnings. The first public ferry in New York began in 1642, and ran from Brooklyn to what is now Manhattan. Ship building was for a long time an important industry here, with the opening of the Brooklyn Navy Yard in 1781. By the War of 1812 more than 100 ships had already been built here. The *Monitor*, one of the most

<sup>1</sup> These community profiles have been created to serve as port descriptions in Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for fisheries management actions. They also provide baseline information from which to begin research for Social Impact Assessments (SIAs). Further, they provide information relevant to general community impacts for National Standard 8 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and information on minorities and low income populations for Executive Order (E.O.) 12898 on Environmental Justice.

<sup>2</sup> For purposes of citation please use the following template: "Community Profile of *Town, ST*. Prepared under the auspices of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Fisheries Science Center. For further information contact [Lisa.L.Colburn@noaa.gov](mailto:Lisa.L.Colburn@noaa.gov)."

<sup>3</sup> While the community profile is for the borough of Brooklyn, where possible detailed information is provided for Sheepshead Bay because it is most closely linked with recreational and commercial fishing within Brooklyn (see Lamarque 2004).

important ships of the Civil War, was built in Greenpoint (Brooklyn Online nd). The Naval Yard was open from 1801 until the late 1960s. During the 1800s, Brooklyn absorbed many of the towns around it, including Williamsburg, Flatbush, Bushwick, and others (Columbia Encyclopedia 2008). Brooklyn was an independent city until 1898, when it became part of New York City; today it is the most populous of New York’s five boroughs. Brooklyn today is made up of a variety of multi-ethnic neighborhoods, and because of its residential character is often known as “the bedroom of New York” (Greenfield et al. 2006).

The recreational fishing fleet in Brooklyn is largely based in Sheepshead Bay, a densely populated neighborhood on Brooklyn’s south side which sits on the bay of the same name. Sheepshead Bay was named for the fish, which at one time was abundant here and has recently been making a comeback into the bay (Fioravante 2006).

### Demographics<sup>4</sup>

According to Census 2000 data, Brooklyn, New York<sup>5</sup> had a total population of 2,465,326, up 7.2% from the reported population of 2,300,664 in 1990. Of this total in 2000, 53.1% were female and 46.9% were male. The median age was 33.1 years and 68.9% of the population was 21 years or older while 13.7% were 62 or older.

The graph for Brooklyn’s population structure (Figure 1) presents a picture of a young community. The largest percentage of the population is between 30-39 years of age, followed by 20-29 and 0-9. Unlike many communities, Brooklyn does not experience a decline in population for the 20-29 age group, because of large number of jobs located here as well as several universities. Also, unlike many other communities, Brooklyn’s population of residents under the age of 20 is more or less equivalent to later ages, meaning Brooklyn is not experiencing a decline in birth rate seen elsewhere. It is also interesting to note a significant difference in the numbers of males and females after age 20, with females dominating in every category, increasingly so in each age bracket.

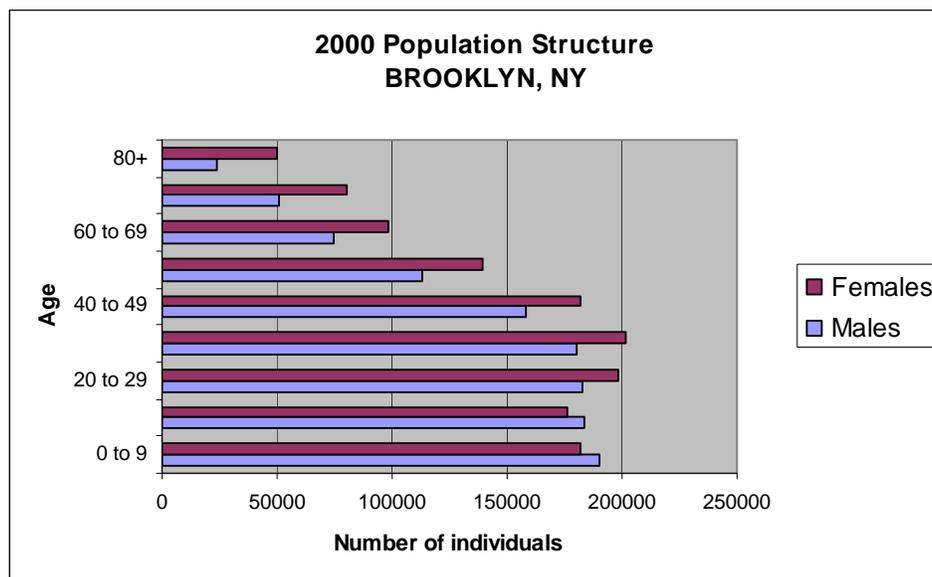


Figure 1. Brooklyn’s population structure by sex in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

<sup>4</sup> While mid-term estimates are available for some larger communities, data from the 2000 Census are the only data universally available for the communities being profiled in the Northeast. Thus for cross-comparability we have used 2000 data even though these data may have changed significantly since 2000 for at least some communities.

<sup>5</sup> While fishing activity is based in the Sheepshead Bay neighborhood, census data at this level is not available

The majority of the population was white (41.8%), with 36.5% of residents black or African American, 0.8% Native American, 8.0% Asian, and 0.2% Pacific Islander or Hawaiian (Figure 2). A total of 19.8% of the total population identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (Figure 3). Residents linked their heritage to a number of different ancestries including: West Indian (11.5%), Italian (7.5%), Russian (3.8%), and “other ancestries” (48.5%). With regard to region of birth, 49.8% were born in New York, 8.1% were born in a different state and 37.8% were born outside of the U.S. (including 19.9% who were not United States citizens).

The neighborhood of Sheepshead Bay in particular is home to numerous immigrants from the former Soviet Union, China, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Israel, the Philippines, Poland, and Guyana, among other places (US Census Bureau 2000).

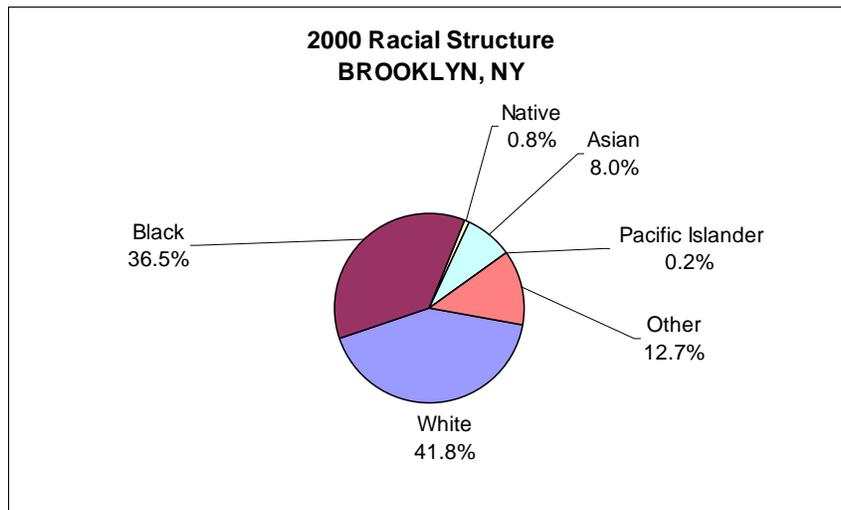


Figure 2. Racial Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

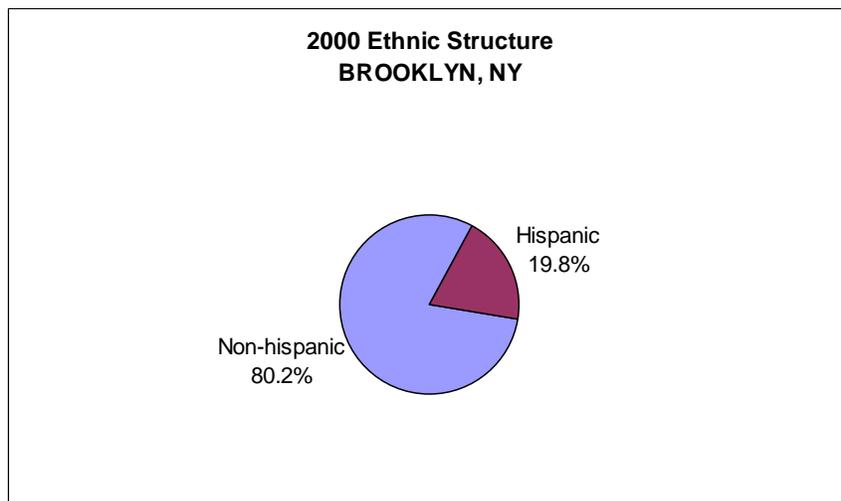


Figure 3. Ethnic Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

For 53.3% of the population 5 years old and higher, only English was spoken in the home, leaving 46.7% in homes where a language other than English was spoken, and including 23.9% of the population who spoke English less than “very well” according to the US Census Bureau.

Of the population 25 years and over, 68.8% were high school graduates or higher and 21.8%

had a bachelor's degree or higher. Again of the population 25 years and over, 13.1% did not reach ninth grade, 18.1% attended some high school but did not graduate, 26.7% completed high school, 14.5% had some college with no degree, 5.7% received an associate's degree, 13.0% earned a bachelor's degree, and 8.8% received a graduate or professional degree.

Although religious percentages are not available through the U.S. Census, according to the Association of Religion Data Archive (ARDA) in 2000 the religion with the highest number of adherents in Kings County was Catholic with 127 congregations and 912,509 adherents. Other prominent congregations in the county were Jewish (256 with 379,000 adherents), Muslim (26 with 57,897 adherents), American Baptist Churches in the USA (51 with 57,755 adherents), and Seventh-day Adventist Church (48 with 22,273 adherents). The total number of adherents to any religion was up 6.0% from 1990 (ARDA 2000).

### **Issues/Processes**

Sheepshead Bay, home to Brooklyn's recreational fishing fleet, faces a problem with a lack of parking for party boat clients; despite being accessible by public transportation, most anglers drive here (Lamarque 2004). As development in the neighborhood increases, parking continues to disappear (Fioravante 2003). Often the party boats are forced to leave customers behind while they look for parking, losing money and future business in the process. In addition to the parking problems, traffic congestion, pollution, and development are driving many boats and related business out, reducing the size of the fleet from 50 ten years ago to just 20 today (Anon 2004a). Other factors are affecting the fleet as well; the piers where the party boats dock, while municipally owned and built recently, are in disrepair. Catch limits and size limits have affected the recreational fishing industry here like in many other communities, as fishing loses out to other forms of entertainment (Lamarque 2004).

### **Cultural attributes**

The Bay Improvement Group hosts BayFest every year in Sheepshead Bay, featuring food, music, and entertainment, and promoting the neighborhood, including its fishing fleet (Cultural Research Divers 2007). It also offers diving and sailing demonstrations, as well as a parade of historic sailboats (Fioravante 2003). BayFest includes a blessing of the fleet (Year of the Ocean 1998), although reportedly this involves mostly sailboats (Lamarque 2004).

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Current Economy**

Brooklyn today still has over 500 longshoremen working at the Brooklyn Docks (Brooklyn Online nd). Few of the for-hire fishing boats fish year round these days; most crew members must have another form of employment during the winter months (Lamarque 2004). Some of the party boats, like the [\*Dorothy B VIII\*](#), also offer sunset cruises, eco-cruises, and "Science at Sea" trips to supplement their fishing trips. As part of New York City, Brooklyn has a multitude of job opportunities for its residents.

According to the U.S. Census 2000<sup>6</sup>, 55.4% (1,039,512 individuals) of the total population 16 years of age and over are in the labor force (Figure 4), of which 5.9% were unemployed, 0.1% were in the Armed Forces, and 49.4% were employed.

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<sup>6</sup> Again, Census data from 2000 are used because they are universally available and offer cross-comparability among communities. Some statistics, particularly median home price, are likely to have changed significantly since 2000.

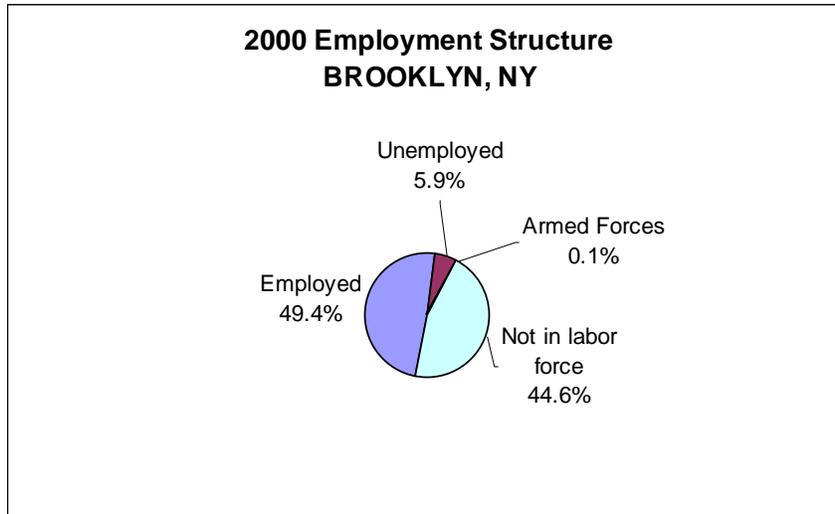


Figure 4. Employment Structure in 2000 (US Census Bureau 2000)

According to Census 2000 data, jobs in the census grouping which includes agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining accounted for 571 positions or 0.1% of all jobs. Self employed workers, a category where fishermen might be found, accounted for 45,971 positions or 5.0% of jobs. Educational, health and social services (25.8%), professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services (10.4%), finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing (10.2%), and retail trade (9.1%) were the primary industries.

Median household income in Brooklyn was \$32,135 (up 25.1% from \$25,684 in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and per capita income was \$16,775. For full-time year round workers, males made approximately 12.5% more per year than females.

The average family in Brooklyn consisted of 3.41 persons. With respect to poverty, 22.0% of families (up from 19.5% in 1990 [US Census Bureau 1990]) and 25.1% of individuals were below the US Census poverty threshold (US Census Bureau 2000b). This threshold is \$8,794 for individuals and ranges from \$11,239 through \$35,060 for families, depending on number of persons (2-9). In 2000, 48.6% of all families (of any size) earned less than \$35,000 per year.

In 2000, Brooklyn had a total of 930,866 housing units of which 94.6% were occupied and 5.0% were detached one-unit homes. More than forty percent (42.7%) of these homes were built before 1940. Boats, RVs, vans, etc. accounted for 0.1% of the total housing units; 89.9% of detached units had between 2 and 9 rooms. In 2000, the median cost for a home in this area was \$244,100. Of vacant housing units, 5.2% were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Of occupied units 72.9% were renter occupied.

## Governmental

Brooklyn is governed by the Brooklyn borough president, currently Marty Markowitz, who works with the mayor and city council of New York City and represents the borough's interests at the city level. Brooklyn is further organized into 18 community boards, divided up by neighborhood (Brooklyn Online nd).

### *Fishery involvement in the government*

The New York City Department of Planning established the Sheepshead Bay Special Zoning District in 1973 for 20 blocks along Sheepshead Bay's waterfront to strengthen this area's unique

waterfront character and to promote water-related commercial and residential development (NYCDCP nd). The Brooklyn borough president recently recommended that the Department of Planning undertake a study of how zoning can protect the fishing fleet and associated tourism in Sheepshead Bay (NYCDCP nd).

## **Institutional**

### *Fishing associations*

There is a Sheepshead Bay Fishing Fleet Association (Lamarque 2004); more information on this association could not be found at present. The New York Seafood Council is the largest association representing fishing interests in the state. “The New York Seafood Council (NYSC) is an industry membership organization comprised of individuals, businesses, or organizations involved in the harvesting, processing, wholesale, distribution or sale of seafood products or services to the seafood industry in New York” (NYSC 2008).

### *Fishery assistance centers*

Through its Maritime Technology Program, [Kingsborough Community College](#) in Sheepshead Bay offers an associate’s degree which trains students to operate a vessel, among other skills. Originally created to train crews for commercial fishing vessels, now many of the graduates go on to work on Sheepshead Bay’s fishing fleet or in maritime transportation, fulfilling a need for trained crew members (CUNY nd).

### *Other fishing related organizations*

The [Bay Improvement Group](#) in Sheepshead Bay is a community coalition founded in 1993 focused on educating the public about the preservation of waterfront and bay areas here, promoting cultural, recreational, and tourist activities along the waterfront and in the bay, and mobilizing community groups toward a vision of the future of Sheepshead Bay. They have more than 400 members dedicated to the future preservation and planning of Sheepshead Bay. The Working Waterfront Association works to promote intelligent waterfront planning around the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary, and to maintain waterfront access (SmallTownBrooklyn 2005). The [Sheepshead Bay Yacht Club](#), established in 1908, organizes regular fishing tournaments.

## **Physical**

Brooklyn is connected to Manhattan by the Williamsburg Bridge, Manhattan Bridge, Brooklyn Bridge and the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel. It is connected to Staten Island via the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. There is a peninsula on the south of the borough that encompasses Coney Island, Brighton Beach and Manhattan Beach (USGS 2008). Sheepshead Bay is accessible by subway by taking the Q line, which runs from Midtown Manhattan through much of Brooklyn, to the Sheepshead Bay stop, and there is an express bus running between here and Midtown Manhattan (MTA nd). JFK International Airport is about 13 miles away and LaGuardia Airport is about 21 miles away. The Belt Parkway East runs right by Sheepshead Bay traveling out along Long Island. Other marinas and recreational fishing locations throughout Brooklyn are also easily accessible by public transportation.

Brooklyn’s recreational fishing fleet is largely centered around Sheepshead Bay, in the south of Brooklyn, which sits on the bay of the same name (Lamarque 2004). Sheepshead Bay sits inside of the easily navigable Rockaway Inlet, nearby Coney Island, Manhattan Beach, and Brighton Beach (NYFisherman nd). The bay is more like a canal, bordered on one side by Emmons Avenue, where

most fishing-related businesses are located. Sheepshead Bay has a number of municipal piers where most of the party boats tie up. There are a number of restaurants located in the same area as the party boats, which derive some of their business from party boat clients and also use the fishing fleet as a backdrop to provide a working waterfront atmosphere (Lamarque 2004). The [Stella Maris Fishing Station](#) sells bait and tackle, as well as ice, to supply party and charter boat passengers as well as shoreside anglers.

However, not all recreational fishing in Brooklyn is based in Sheepshead Bay. Brooklyn has a large number of marinas throughout the borough (HelloBrooklyn.com nd). At least one party boat and some private boats dock at [Tamaqua Marina](#), across the canal from Sheepshead Bay in Gerritsen Beach. Gravesend Bay, also near Sheepshead Bay, has at least two charter fishing companies located at Marine Basin Marina: [Fish New York Charters](#) and [Lady L Charters](#). There are a few other piers throughout Brooklyn where anglers will sometimes fish in addition to Sheepshead Bay. A popular spot for fly fishing in Brooklyn can also be found in Floyd Bennett's Field, a park in Gerritsen Beach (Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation nd).

## **INVOLVEMENT IN NORTHEAST FISHERIES<sup>7</sup>**

### **Commercial**

Historically, commercial fishing in Brooklyn has been limited. Commercial fishing here, and through out the New York City area, mostly ended during the 1970s. A small amount of commercial fishing exists today in Sheepshead Bay. In 2003, there was one 70-foot trawler and a couple of small bay boats used for gillnetting or lobstering. Some party boat crew members will sell fish along the docks, leading many to believe it is locally caught, when in fact most often it has been purchased from Fulton Fish Market (Lamarque 2004). Jordan's Lobster Dock in Sheepshead Bay is a classic lobster pound which is also New York State's largest distributor of Maine and Canadian lobsters, and the subject of a recent film, "Brooklyn Lobster" (Curtis 2005).

Commercial fishing data shows a moderate amount of activity in Brooklyn/Sheepshead Bay; some data is specified for Sheepshead Bay, while the rest is for Brooklyn in general. All federal landings are listed for Brooklyn, with none for Sheepshead Bay. Landings are from a number of different species complexes, with the most valuable being summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. In 2006, however, the highest landings in Brooklyn were for lobster (Table 1). There are a number of vessels listed as home ported throughout Brooklyn, but there is no discernable trend in the data (Table 2). However, while these vessels brought in over \$100,000 in landings in 2004, the value of landings to vessels home ported in Brooklyn in 2005 was only \$6, and experienced a high degree of variability in other years. The highest level of landings listed was in 1997, when Brooklyn saw just over \$79,000 in landings.

There were no landings of federally managed species recorded in Sheepshead Bay specifically. It does have some vessels listing it as their home port; seven in 1997, declining to just

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<sup>7</sup> In reviewing the commercial landings data several factors need to be kept in mind. 1) While both federal and state landings are included, some states provide more detailed data to NMFS than others. For example, shellfish may not be included or data may be reported only by county and not by port. 2) Some communities did not have individual port codes until more recently. Before individual port codes were assigned, landings from those ports were coded at the county level or as an aggregate of two geographically close small ports. Where landings were coded at the county level they cannot be sorted to individual ports for those earlier years, e.g., prior to 2000. 3) Where aggregated codes were used, those aggregate codes may still exist and be in use alongside the new individual codes. Here the landings which are still assigned to the aggregate port code cannot be sorted into the individual ports, so port level data are only those which used the individual port code. 4) Even when individual port codes exist, especially for small ports, landings may be coded at the county level. Here again it is impossible to disaggregate these to a port level, making the port level landings incomplete. 5) In all these cases, the per port data in this profile may under report the total level of landings to the port, though all landings are accounted for in the overall NMFS database.

two in 2006 (Table 3). Only in 2000 and 2003 did any of these vessels report any landings of federal species, and these landings were very small. There are no vessel owners listed for Sheepshead Bay; it is likely that any vessel owners here would have Brooklyn instead of Sheepshead Bay as an address. New York is profiled separately; some of the data listed as New York may also be fishing that occurs in Brooklyn rather than in the other boroughs.

### Landings by Species

Table 1. Dollar value of Federally Managed Groups of landings in Brooklyn

	Average from 1997-2006	2006 only
<b>Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass</b>	15,182	5,828
<b>Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish</b>	11,571	0
<b>Other<sup>8</sup></b>	8,960	448
<b>Largemouth Groundfish<sup>9</sup></b>	8,946	2,439
<b>Bluefish</b>	1,624	301
<b>Smallmouth Groundfish<sup>10</sup></b>	1,390	0
<b>Lobster</b>	1,054	9,057
<b>Skate</b>	545	668
<b>Monkfish</b>	361	0
<b>Scallop</b>	323	0
<b>Tilefish</b>	102	0
<b>Dogfish</b>	21	0

### Vessels by Year<sup>11</sup>

Table 2. All columns represent vessel permits or landings value combined between 1997-2006 (Brooklyn)

Year	# Vessels (home ported)	# Vessels (owner's city)	Level of fishing home port (\$)	Level of fishing landed port (\$)
1997	18	36	31,255	79,261
1998	12	27	56,645	22,809
1999	11	21	48,970	71,334
2000	14	30	13,371	33,759
2001	14	23	13,017	74,702
2002	16	24	94,360	59,531
2003	18	20	7,049	65,912
2004	19	20	101,055	58,353
2005	19	20	6	16,380
2006	15	19	9,477	18,741

<sup>8</sup> "Other" species includes any species not accounted for in a federally managed group

<sup>9</sup> Largemouth Groundfish: cod, winter flounder, yellowtail flounder, American plaice, sand-dab flounder, haddock, white hake, redfish, and pollock

<sup>10</sup> Smallmouth Multi-species : red hake, ocean pout, mixed hake, black whiting, silver hake (whiting)

<sup>11</sup> Numbers of vessels by owner's city and homeport are as reported by the permit holder on permit application forms. These may not correspond to the port where a vessel lands or even spends the majority of its time when docked.

Table 3. All columns represent vessel permits or landings value combined between 1997-2006 (Sheepshead Bay)

Year	# Vessels (home ported)	# Vessels (owner's city)	Level of fishing home port (\$)	Level of fishing landed port (\$)
1997	7	0	0	0
1998	6	0	0	0
1999	5	0	0	0
2000	7	0	3,132	0
2001	6	0	0	0
2002	5	0	0	0
2003	4	0	276	0
2004	3	0	0	0
2005	3	0	0	0
2006	2	0	0	0

# Vessels home ported = No. of permitted vessels with location as homeport

# Vessels (owner's city) = No. of permitted vessels with location as owner residence<sup>12</sup>

Level of fishing home port (\$) = Landed value of fisheries associated with home ported vessels

Level of fishing landed port (\$) = Landed value of fisheries landed in location

## Recreational

For-hire fishing boats with federal permits are usually list Brooklyn, Staten Island, or New York as their home port, but Sheepshead Bay is where these vessels are located. Sheepshead Bay has a number of charter and party boats, bait shops, and seafood restaurants (Lamarque 2004). While the Sheepshead Bay fishing fleet numbered around 50 ten years ago, today there are just 20 boats here (Anonymous 2004). Most are party boats which offer both half- and full-day trips; some of the party boats will also do charters. Generally the party boats will fish from March through November. The fishing fleet from Sheepshead Bay targets fluke, bluefish, stripers, weakfish, blackfish, sea bass, porgies, and others. Some boats do offshore bottom fishing for cod and pollock. Another boat takes passengers canyon fishing for tuna as well as offshore wreck fishing (FishBox.tv nd) Between 2001-2005 there were a total of 18 charter and party boats which logged trips in Brooklyn, carrying a total of 59,978 anglers on 2,910 different trips (NMFS VTR data).

About 40 years ago, there were four times as many party boats found here. Businesses that would rent row boats for fishing have closed down, mainly because of the cost of insurance for a business like this. Some crew members of the party boats will sell fish along the docks from their boats; most of this is bought from Fulton Fish Market but some is caught by them or their clients. There is one local bait fisherman in Sheepshead Bay who supplies the party boats (Lamarque 2004). There at least three bait and tackle shops located in Sheepshead Bay (Google nd). People of all ages and ethnicities can be observed fishing from the road along the bay (Lamarque 2004).

[Tamaqua Marina](#) in Gerritsen Beach, across the canal from Sheepshead Bay, which hosts a number of fishing tournaments throughout the year. There is at least one party/charter fishing business ([Big M Express Fleet](#)) located at Tamaqua Marina. Marine Basin Marina in nearby Gravesend also has a few charter fishing boats (HelloBrooklyn.com nd).

<sup>12</sup> The Owner-City from the permit files is technically the address at which the owner receives mail concerning their permitted vessels, which could reflect the actual location of residence, the mailing address as distinct from residence, owner business location, or the address at which a subsidiary receives mail about the permits.

## **Subsistence**

The Sheepshead Bay party boats get a lot of business from subsistence fishers paying to come out for the day to take home several meals. Often these clients are from a variety of ethnic groups who want to target particular species. The newly-arrived immigrant populations of Brooklyn often benefit from this opportunity while they are waiting to become more financially stable (Lamarque 2004).

## **FUTURE**

Brooklyn is trying to increase tourism to the borough and to Sheepshead Bay in particular; the fishing fleet is an important backdrop to tourism here. At the same time, a number of condominiums, elderly assisted living residences, and a department store have recently been built here (Lamarque 2004). Sheepshead Bay was considered one of the hottest development areas in New York City in 2006 (Johnson 2006). However, part of Sheepshead Bay was recently rezoned to permit only one- and two-family housing to be built to preserve its character as a low-density residential community (NYCDCP nd.). The city is working on a project to bring green space and public parking to a currently empty lot in Sheepshead Bay (Anon 2006). Community activists are fighting another plan to develop more large-scale retail space along the waterfront here (Anon 2004b).

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