

Understanding Dog Bites to New York City Residents

Nationwide, after declining from 2016 to 2021, the number of nonfatal emergency department visits due to dog bites has increased to be higher than previous levels.¹ Along with tissue damage, bites can also result in bacterial and viral infections, psychological trauma, physical disfigurement, and potentially large medical expenses, including shots after the bite to protect against rabies (post-exposure prophylaxis, PEP) if it is unknown if the dog has rabies.

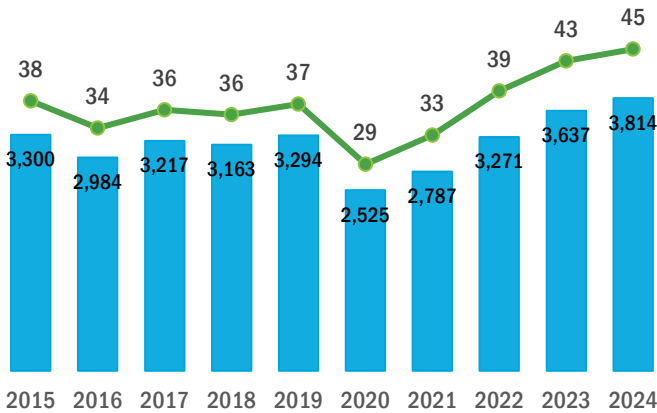
To reduce dog bites, organizations, like the [American Veterinary Medical Association](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), and public health agencies, like the New York City (NYC) [Health Department](#), have developed prevention tips. The NYC Health Code requires anyone knowledgeable of a dog bite to report the bite to the Health Department. The information helps the Health

Department provide appropriate recommendations for the victims on post-exposure care, resources for owners, and prevention programs. Additionally, legislation in NYC aims to reduce bites, including leash laws and laws that limit dogs in public places or authorize control measures.

Commonly researched topics include the risk factors for dog bites and prevention strategies, exploring characteristics of the environment and the victim, such as age, sex, activity at the time of the bite and ownership of the dog.^{2,3,4} Recently, studies have found associations between dog bite injuries and economic, educational, and environmental inequities, providing important evidence for further research to understand and address causes of elevated risk and unequal burden of injury.^{5,6} This report describes the recent rise of reported dog bites to NYC residents and the circumstances associated with them.[‡]

The rate of reported dog bites to New York City residents is at a ten-year peak

Count and rate* of reported dog bites to New York City residents, 2015 to 2024



*Reported dog bite rates per 100,000 NYC residents. Rates are not age-adjusted.
Source: NYC DOHMH Animal Case Management System (ACMS), 2015-2024

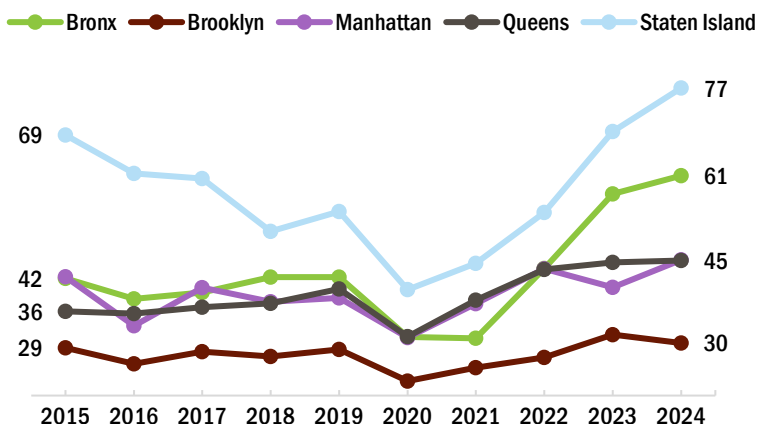
- In 2024, the number of reported bites in NYC reached 3,814, the highest during the ten-year period 2015 to 2024. This is a 51% increase from the lowest reported number of bites in 2020, when likely there were COVID-19 impacts on dog and human interactions, and a 28% increase since 2016, when bites were at their lowest pre-COVID.
- From 2015 to 2024, the average daily number of reported dog bites was higher in months with higher average daily temperatures.
- There has not been a rabid dog in NYC in over 60 years. Nevertheless, the percentage of bites where the victim reportedly received shots to prevent rabies (PEP) increased, from 7% (245) of victims in 2015 to 11% (433) in 2024.

‡ Age is increasingly not provided in reports to the NYC Health Department, with age missing in 4% of reported dog bites in 2015 and 20% in 2024. This unreported information limits comparisons by age, understanding who is at risk, and development of preventive measures.

Data sources: (A) NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Animal Case Management System (ACMS) 2015-2024: Animal bites reported to the Health Department, limited to NYC residents based on reported and geocoded addresses. Missing apartment data was determined using building class from the NYC Department of City Planning Primary Land Use Tax Lot Output (PLUTO), 24v4.1. (B) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Data Online (NOAA Climate Data), 2015-2024: Includes hourly temperature measurements at three NYC stations. Hourly measurements from LaGuardia airport were summed to daily averages. (C) NYC DOHMH population estimates, modified from US Census Bureau interpolated intercensal population estimates, 2000-2021, updated September 2022, and 2020-2024, updated September 2025, were used to calculate rates of bites per 100,000 residents. Rates may differ from previously reported rates based on previous versions of population estimates.

Reported dog bites are increasing and vary by neighborhood

Rate* of reported dog bites to New York City residents by borough, 2015 to 2024

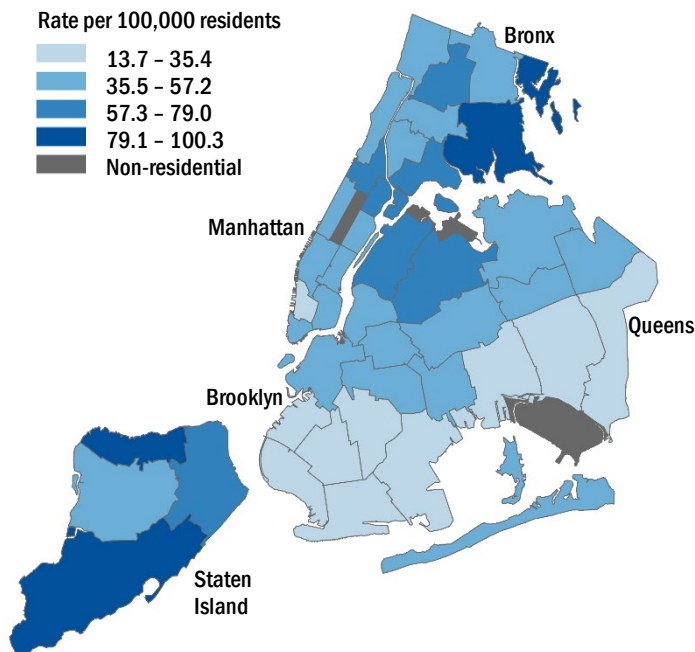


*Reported dog bite rates per 100,000 NYC residents. Rates are not age-adjusted.
Source: NYC DOHMH Animal Case Management System (ACMS), 2015-2024

- From 2015 to 2024, residents of Queens had the highest number of dog bites each year, with 1,048 bites in 2024; however, Staten Island residents had the highest rate of dog bites per 100,000 residents each year, with 77 bites per 100,000 residents in 2024.
- Bronx residents had the largest increase in the rate of dog bites, from 42 in 2015 to 61 bites per 100,000 residents in 2024, a 45% increase over 10 years; the largest increase (89%) occurred in the Pelham-Throgs Neck United Hospital Fund (UHF) neighborhood, from 44 in 2015 to 83 bites per 100,000 residents in 2024.
- In all of NYC, the Brooklyn UHF neighborhood of Greenpoint saw the largest ten-year increase in the rate of dog bites (95%), from 20 bites in 2015 to 39 bites per 100,000 residents in 2024.

- In 2024, the Staten Island UHF neighborhoods Port Richmond and South Beach-Tottenville had the highest rates of dog bites among NYC neighborhoods (100 and 89 bites per 100,000 residents, respectively).
- In 2024, the reported dog bite rate was 1.2 times higher in neighborhoods with very high poverty than those with low poverty (54 vs. 46 per 100,000).
- Within the neighborhoods with very high poverty, Pelham-Throgs Neck in the Bronx and East Harlem in Manhattan had the highest (third and fourth citywide) reported dog bite rates.
- Dog ownership rates and their effect, if any, on dog bites and neighborhood differences are unknown. Although the law requires dogs to be licensed, the number of licensed dogs in NYC has been decreasing annually⁷ and is not likely to represent the true NYC dog population.

Rate of reported dog bites to New York City residents by United Hospital Fund neighborhoods, ^ 2024



Rates are not age-adjusted.
^The United Hospital Fund classifies New York City into 42 neighborhoods, comprised of contiguous ZIP codes.
Source: NYC DOHMH Animal Case Management System (ACMS), 2024

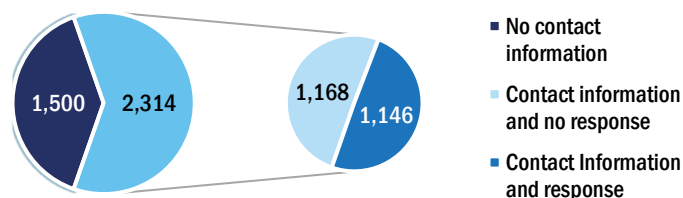
Definitions: Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) includes human rabies immune globulin (HRIG), and a four-dose vaccine series.
Neighborhood poverty (based on Zip code) is the percentage of residents with incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL) per the American Community Survey, 2019-2023, for CHS data: low poverty = < 10%, medium = 10 - <20%, high = 20 - <30%, very high = ≥30% of the population living below FPL.
UHF: The United Hospital Fund classifies New York City into 42 neighborhoods, comprised of contiguous zip codes. For more information visit: <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/ah/zipcodetable.pdf>.

Unreported bites and missing owner information prevent follow-up for the dog bite victim

- Dog bites are likely underreported in NYC.⁸ In 2024, 2,947 of 3,814 (77%) reported bites were documented as treated by a medical provider, suggesting that self-treated and less severe bites may go unreported. At least 11% (333) of bites documented as treated by a medical provider were not reported by a medical provider.
- The NYC Health Code requires a biting dog to be observed for ten days, which can be done in the owner’s home, and for the owner to report its health to the NYC Health Department. If the dog is healthy at the end of the observation, the victim can avoid unnecessary rabies PEP. However, owner information is often unknown or not reported, with 39% of reported dog bites in 2024 missing a complete address or contact phone number.

- In 2024, of the 2,314 cases where there was a complete mailing address or phone number to contact the owner, only 1,146 (50%) owners responded to the Health Department about their dog’s health after the bite. Of the owners with addresses, owners living in low-poverty neighborhoods had 2.8 times higher odds of responding to the Health Department than owners living in very high-poverty neighborhoods.

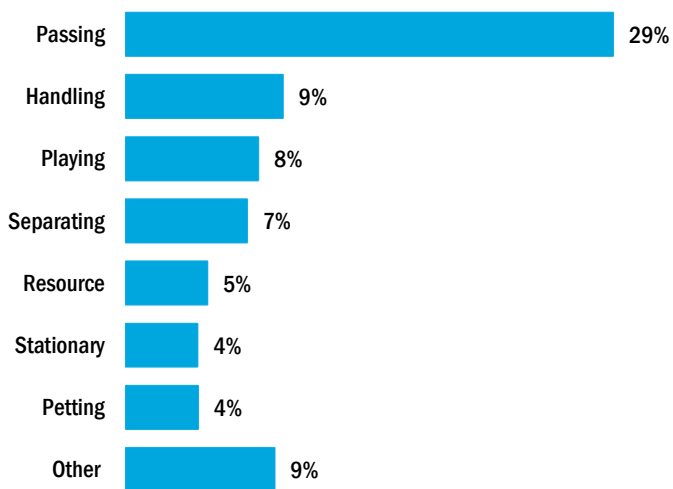
Status of contact information and response from owners of dogs involved in reported bites to New York City residents, 2024



Source: NYC DOHMH Animal Case Management System (ACMS), 2024

Bite prevention should focus on both the victim’s behaviors and responsible dog ownership

Reported dog bites to New York City residents by victim activity, 2024



Note: Victim activity was not reported or unclear for 24% of reported bites in 2024.
Passing includes entering or leaving dog’s area.
Handling includes moving, manipulating, restraining, antagonizing, and separating dog from person.
Playing includes playing with or near the dog.
Separating includes separating the dog from another animal or protecting another animal.
Resource includes activities around food and taking a toy or anything else from the dog.
Stationary includes waiting, sitting, lying down or standing.
Petting includes positive interactions (cuddling, reaching out, etc.).
Other includes accidental interactions with dog like falling or stepping on dog, activities that do not involve dog, such as fights between people, or other activities that do involve dog but do not fit in previous categories.

Source: NYC DOHMH Animal Case Management System (ACMS), 2024

- In 2024, 31% (1,176) of reported bites to NYC residents were reported as being from a dog owned either in the same building or household as the victim’s own residence. Of those, 783 bites were known to be from a dog owned within the same household.[#]
- In 2024, more than one third of reported dog bites in NYC (40%) were known to have occurred at a location other than the victim’s residential building.
- In 2024, of the 1,858 bites known to have occurred outside of the victim’s own residence, 187 (10%) were reported to be from an unleashed dog. An additional 137 (7%) bites were reportedly from a leashed but uncontrolled dog.
- At least 29% (1,107) of bites occurred when the victim was passing by or entering the dog’s space. Of those, at least 57% (628) of bites were known to occur at a location other than the victim’s residential building.
- In 2024, 54% (99) of bites that involved food or resource guarding and 39% (141) of bites when the victim was handling the dog were reported as from a dog owned within the victim’s household.

[#] Of reported bites in 2024, addresses were not reported for <1% (9) of victims and 31% (1,175) of incidents.

Recommendations



All New Yorkers

- Learn more about [dog bite prevention](#), including behaviors to avoid around both unfamiliar and familiar dogs.
- Most bite victims report being bitten when passing a dog or entering its space. Always maintain a safe distance when passing a dog and avoid entering its space even when the dog is on a leash and the owner is present. Everyone, especially owners, should pay attention to a dog's body language to recognize [warning signs](#) which can indicate a dog may bite.
- Report to 311 any [stray](#), [abandoned](#), or [unleashed dog](#). Call 911 if the dog poses an immediate danger. If you are threatened by a dog, stand still and do not stare at the dog.



If a Dog Bites

- **Anyone knowledgeable of the bite must** report the bite (as required by law) by calling 311 or [reporting online](#). Provide complete information to help the victim and aid in the development of prevention strategies.
- **Victims should** always get the owner's name, address, and phone number, to potentially avoid rabies post-exposure prophylaxis.
- **Owners must** observe the dog for ten days and report the dog's health to the NYC Health Department.



All Dog Owners

- Learn more about [responsible dog ownership](#), including [rabies vaccination](#), [licensing](#), [spay or neuter](#), and keeping your dog on a leash that is no longer than six feet when in public.
- Socialize and train your dog to respond to basic commands from a young age. Seek professional advice if your dog behaves aggressively. Visit [Animal Care Centers of NYC](#), [Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists](#), or [American College of Veterinary Behaviorists](#) for resources.
- To prevent bites in the home, supervise all child-dog interactions, and ensure household members know how to recognize when your dog becomes stressed. Provide a quiet retreat space for your dog especially when you have visitors, and make sure no one bothers your dog while it's eating or sleeping.



Schools, Community-based Organizations, and Animal Care Facilities

- Provide education on [safe interactions with dogs](#), ideally in early spring, ahead of peak periods of dog bites.
- Provide dog bite prevention, responsible ownership, and training guidance during routine visits and purchase or adoption of a new dog.
- Ensure equitable access to educational materials, including translation into multiple languages, and target resources to neighborhoods with higher poverty.

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Health equity is attainment of the highest level of health and well-being for all people. Not all New Yorkers have the same opportunities to live a healthy life. Achieving health equity requires focused and ongoing societal efforts to address historical and contemporary injustices such as discrimination based on race/ethnicity, and other identities. For more information, visit the World Health Organization's [Health Equity](#) webpage.

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