

Introduction

Senior Citizens are often left behind and taken for granted when it comes to policies and research. The amount of low-income senior citizens living in horrible circumstances and paying over 30% of their wage and social security benefits is immense in NYC. Low-income senior citizens are completely dependent on welfare programs, if they qualify for them. Housing should not be a concern for them. The practical research question of this study is how are senior citizens in The Bronx, New York, being affected by the housing crisis and how can they better access resources to aid them through affordable housing options?

Background and Review of Literature

Known as the Housing Stability Act of 2019, this act “extends and makes certain provisions of law relating to rent control and rent stabilization” (New York State Senate, 2019) that expands protections to tenants statewide. This is supposed to be a major resource for low-income senior citizens and this study analyses that. Programs such as Section 8, Section 202 and the low-income housing tax credit exist at a federal level but depend on criteria’s defined by the Public Housing Authority which then enlists you and your household members on a waitlist that can take years to provide you aid.. At a federal level there is no specialized program targeting only the elderly and at a local level, there only exists one program, SCRIE, that also has extended waitlists. Overall authors conclude that current programs aren’t being enough and that there is no opportunity to make the best out of resources. The COVID-19 pandemic has generated a bigger need for affordable housing as “medical professionals have sounded the alarm about how eviction crisis will exacerbate our public health emergency” (Desmond, M. 2020). Policies utilized as a band aid solution are expected to bring awful repercussions to the housing situation in NYC.

**Housing Crisis in The Bronx:
How it Affects Low Income Senior Citizens**
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Study Objective/Aim/Contribution

Throughout interviews with participants, the study will identify the types of challenges faced by senior citizens, the way the court can help seniors resolve these issues and will use the collected data to make practical recommendations for ways in which seniors can use governmental resources in a more effective way.

Methods:

Participants:

3 senior citizens who live in landlord owned housing in the borough of The Bronx, who are receiving some type of governmental assistance, and are at risk of eviction, 3 housing court judges, 3 landlord tenant lawyers, 3 Guardian At Litem program members, 3 legal services lawyers.

Data Collection:

Qualitative data taken from interviews with participants that were performed through Zoom and phone after consent forms were signed.

Data Analysis:

Data obtained from interviews was grouped based on topics such as the Housing Stability Act of 2019 via content analysis.

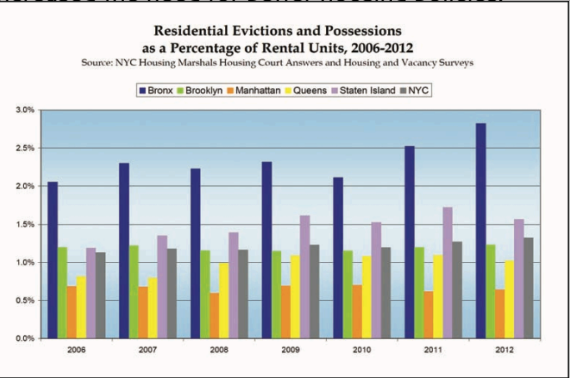
Results

Existing Resources:

There is a constant thought of the current resources not being enough. An increase in demand for affordable housing from low-income seniors, as well as an increase in demand from other demographics, has increased wait times significantly. This means that low-income seniors are not obtaining the help they need in a timely manner.

COVID-19 Pandemic:

Overall, there are a lot of variable views on the rent relief policies put in place when the pandemic started. For instance, this policies implement a moratorium in evictions and suspend housing court functions in a variety of situations. This means that when the economic situation brought up by the pandemic is relieved, tenants will either have to pay up all the rent they did not pay throughout the time policies were in place or be evicted. These policies are acting more like a band aid than a permanent solution. The pandemic exponentially increased the need for better housing policies.



Discussion

Results show that there is a need for better strategies in the way in which existing resources are utilized by low-income citizens. They also show that there needs to be a wider focus from public policies on the needs that senior citizens have such as handrails in bathrooms and elevators in the buildings. Senior citizens are being highly affected by the Housing Crisis and with support of the court and the practical suggestions that are generated after this study concludes, can lead to a more effective implementation of the existing resources. Data collection efforts are still ongoing due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in communication with senior citizens and in availability of court members due to a delay in case processing.

Selected References

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Acknowledgments/About the Author

Special gratitude to the Ozanam Scholars Program, Dr. DeKay, The Bronx Housing Court and to the tenants who offered their perspective on this important topic. The author was born and raised in Colombia, majors in Economics and is passionate about topics related to development.

