

Sandy Surge Covered A Sixth of the City

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Jarrett Murphy/City Limits

Roofs and small houses washed into a marsh in Staten Island.

Even five months after it rolled away up the East Coast, Sandy's impact continues to inspire a dark awe. The surge from Sandy—which was not even a Category 1 hurricane by the time it struck—covered 16.6 percent, or one-sixth, of the city's land, according to a report out this week from NYU's Furman Center.

That surge damaged 62,300 properties. More properties had flooding in their living area than those who found water just in a basement (although basements were living areas for many people displaced by the storm). In all, more than 9,000 properties, 15 percent of the total damaged, had more than four feet of water in living spaces.

But we all knew there was a lot of water. What we didn't know, with any precision, is who got wet.

It turns out more than 55 percent of the people who have registered with FEMA for disaster assistance are renters, not the homeowners who have tended to dominate media coverage of

the storm's impact.

The median income of the renters who applied was \$18,000—half of the citywide figure. The aid applicants were significantly poorer and whiter than are renters citywide. And more than half the renter registrants sustained “major” or “substantial” damage to their quarters.

Furman [also reported that](#):

- The number of NYCHA buildings damaged by the storm is greater than the entire portfolio of any other public housing authority in the 50 states.
- Households in the surge area were more likely to include seniors and less likely to include children than households citywide.
- About half of affected homeowners sustained damage costing less than \$10,000 to repair. Most homeowners (64 percent) had insurance covering all the damage And only 5 percent have received the maximum FEMA payout so far.

Of course, those numbers reflect the known extent of the damage. A recovery coordinator in Brooklyn on Wednesday told *City Limits* that a proliferation after the storm of faulty advice on how to get rid of mold means that many homeowners, landlords and renters who think they have solved that problem are—once the weather warms—going to realize they haven't. And that'll mean replacing Sheetrock and doing other extensive, expensive repairs.