



Catch Basin Cleaning

# STATE OF THE SEWERS 2020

*Performance Metrics  
December 2020*

Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020)



Bill de Blasio  
Mayor

Vincent Sapienza, P.E.  
Commissioner

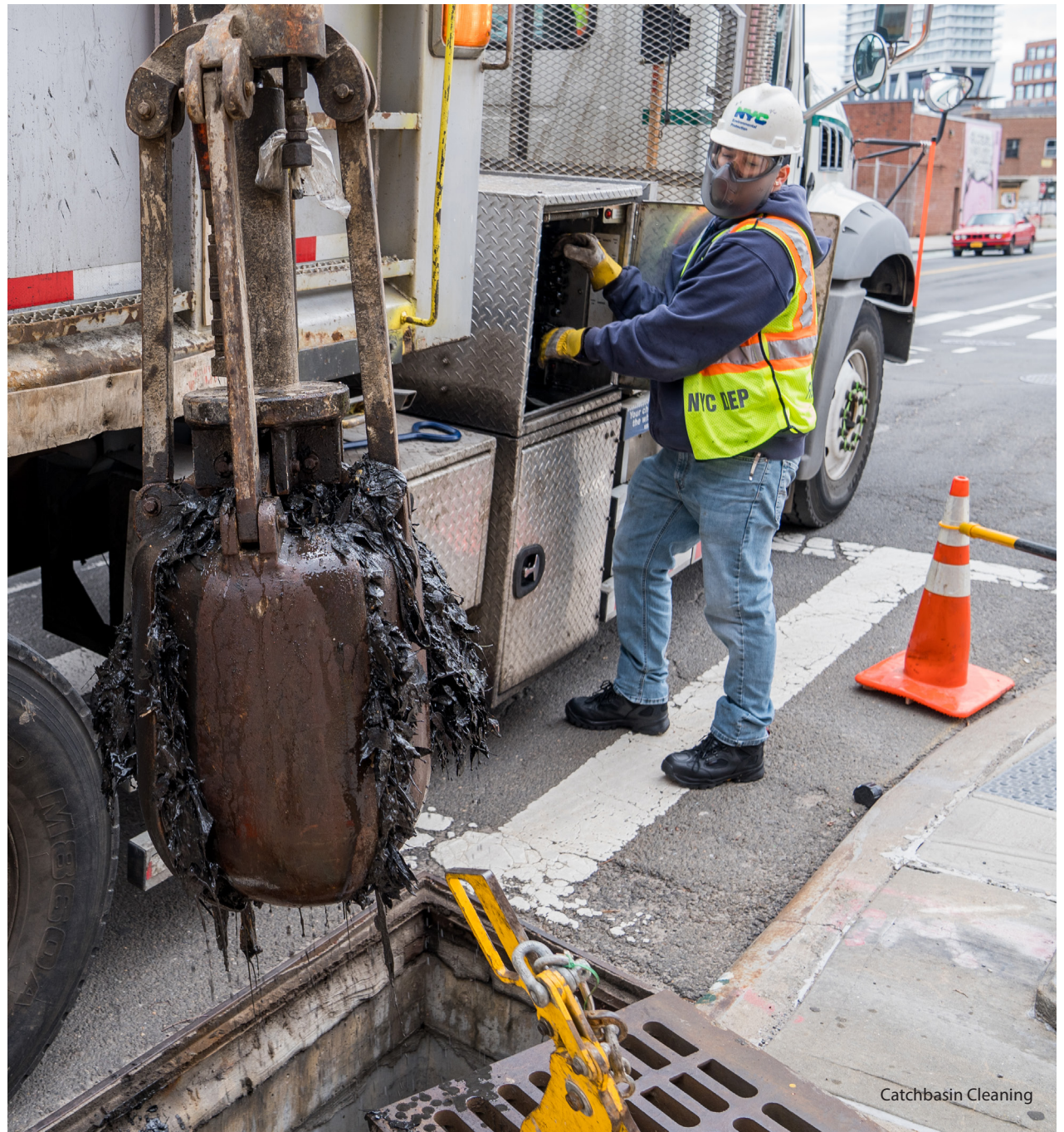
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# INTRODUCTION

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) protects public health and the environment by supplying clean drinking water, collecting and treating wastewater, and reducing air, noise, and hazardous materials pollution. To achieve this mission, DEP operates and maintains 7,500 miles of sewers that convey an average of 1.3 billion gallons of wastewater per day to 14 in-city wastewater treatment plants.

Over the last decade, DEP has embraced a data-driven, proactive approach to operating and maintaining the sewer system. By using a range of digital tools and innovative practices, DEP develops targeted programs to provide a high level of service to our customers while focusing on investments that will prioritize our resources.



Catchbasin Cleaning

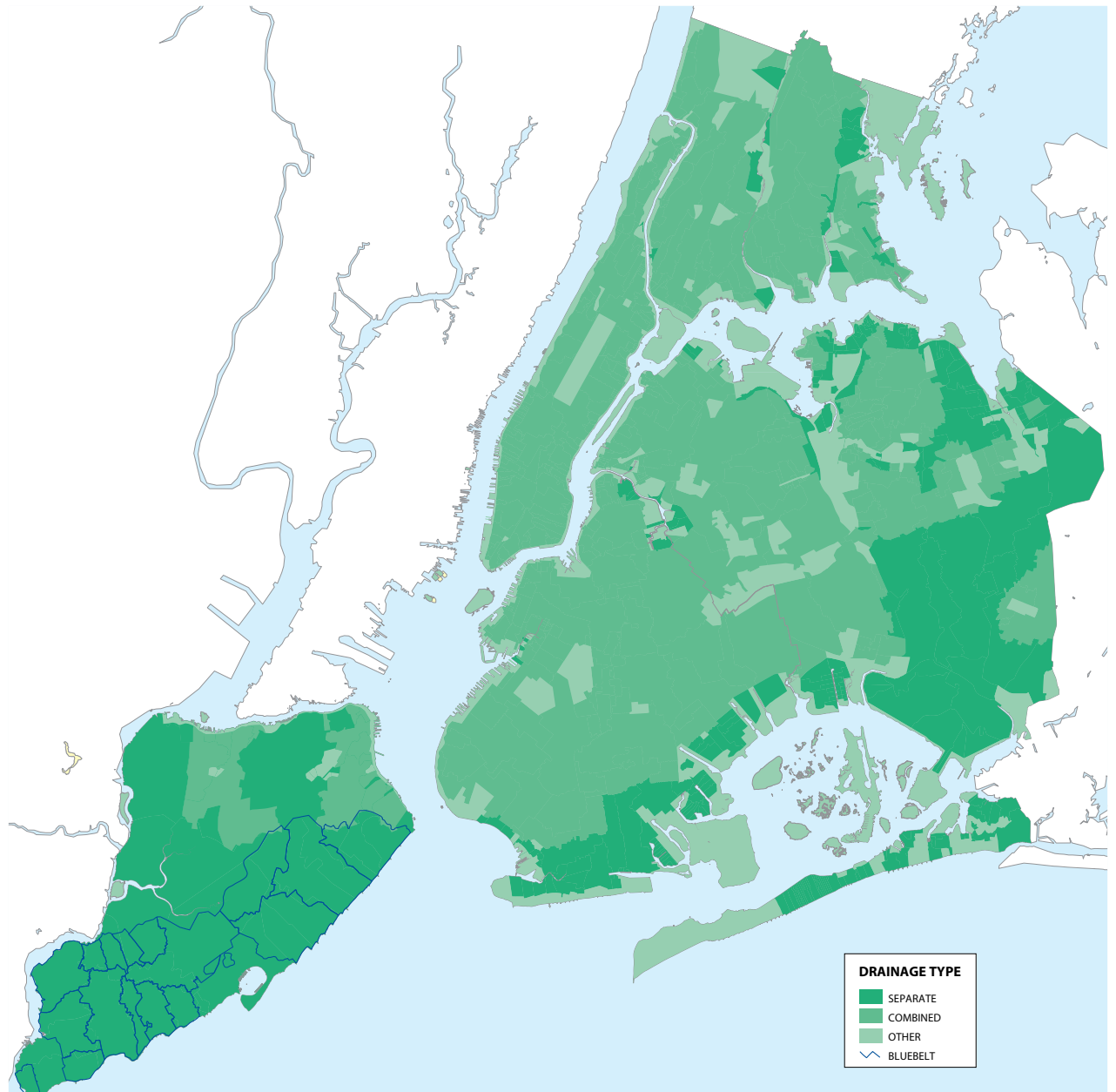
# THE SEWER SYSTEM

Approximately 60% of New York City's sewer system is combined, handling sanitary waste from both homes and businesses as well as storm water. The other 40% of the sewer system is separated – sanitary sewers carry sewage to the treatment plant, while storm sewers carry storm water runoff in a separate pipe directly to a local waterway.

In wet weather, wastewater treatment plants that receive combined flow can treat up to twice the designed dry weather flow. However, to eliminate flooding from roadways, the capacity of the city's sewer system is greater than that of the plants. When the plants reach their capacity at twice dry weather flow, regulators release the excess flow from the sewers into the harbor as combined sewer overflow to protect against sewage backing up into homes and businesses.

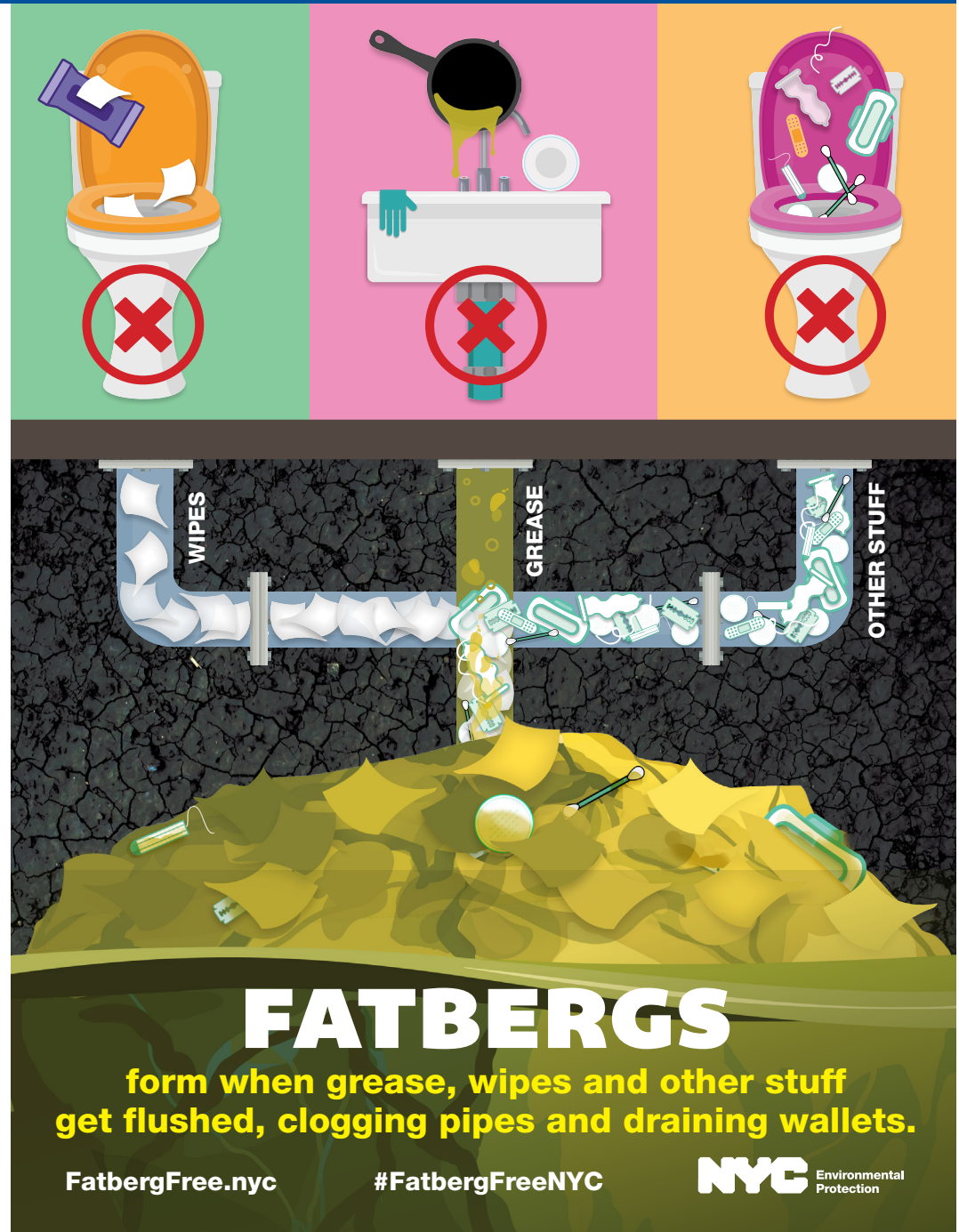
Sewers vary in size; however, all sewers are designed to convey wastewater through the system at a speed fast enough to minimize the deposition of debris and sediment in the pipes but slow enough to minimize scouring and erosion. DEP targets its programs and resources to ensure the system continues to operate as designed and to maintain the system in a state of good repair.

To learn more about how DEP's sewer system functions, [click here](#).



# TRASH IT. DON'T FLUSH IT.

New York City needs the help of all its residents to keep our sewer system running properly, which is why DEP continues to promote our "Trash It. Don't Flush It." campaign to warn New Yorkers of the hazards of flushing grease, wipes, and other trash down the drain. The campaign has garnered more than 95 million impressions and more than 150,000 website visits. Door-to-door outreach efforts have reached more than 30,000 people and DEP also regularly conducts grease compliance inspections at food establishments citywide. To learn more about this campaign and how to properly dispose of grease, wipes, and other trash, visit [fatbergfree.nyc](http://fatbergfree.nyc).



# PERFORMANCE METRICS

DEP uses a variety of metrics to evaluate our operations across the agency, from frontline supervisors to senior management. This data-driven approach allows us to focus our resources, develop targeted programs, and provide the highest level of service to our customers. All annual performance metrics in this report correspond to fiscal years. For example, Fiscal Year 2019 began July 1, 2018 and ended June 30, 2019.

## Sewer Backup Complaints

When our field crews respond to a customer call about a potential sewer backup, they first open manholes around the area where the backup or blockage is reported. If the sewer segment has higher than expected wastewater levels, the crew will note this as a “confirmed sewer backup” whether or not any backups occur. If a crew does not detect higher wastewater levels than expected, it is noted as an “unconfirmed sewer backup.”

## Recurring Confirmed Backup Complaints

The sewer system is divided into 160,000 “sewer segments” that run between two adjacent manholes. In order to identify systemic issues, DEP tracks street segments with recurring confirmed sewer back-ups (multiple backups on the same segment in the same year) during both dry and wet weather.

## Sewer Cleaning

Proactive sewer cleaning includes miles of sewers cleaned as part of the inspection and analysis programs, regular sewer maintenance program, and the Department of Design and Construction inspection and cleaning. Sewer cleaning activities in response to a 311 complaint are categorized as “Reactive” cleaning

## Confirmed Sewer Backup Causes

After visually inspecting affected sewer segments, crews identify and record the potential cause of a confirmed sewer backup.

- “Grease” refers to the buildup of fats, oils, and grease in a sewer.
- “Debris” refers to sand, silt, and roadbed aggregate that accumulate along the bottom of the sewer.
- “Heavy Rain” refers to microbursts and other brief, heavy rainstorms that can temporarily overtax the sewer.
- “Other” includes backups where conditions warranted further investigation.



Clearing a sewer blockage caused by wet wipes

# CITYWIDE

DEP's extensive and robust sewer inspection, analysis and cleaning programs continue to net improvements across key performance indicators citywide. While there are some variations in year-to-year comparisons of the data, the trend over the past five years demonstrates that DEP's programs have achieved meaningful improvements.

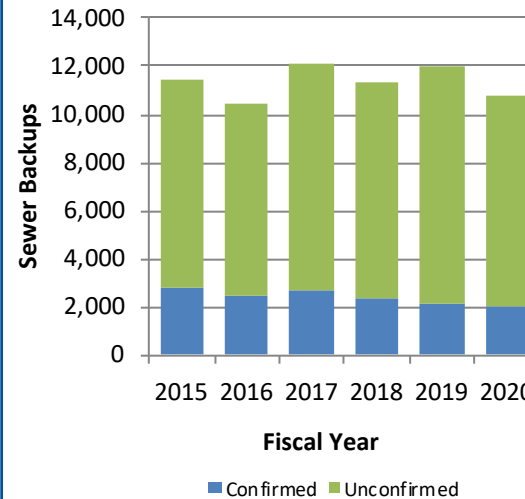
Most notably, with respect to confirmed sewer backups, average annual complaints dropped 6% when the five-year average of 2015-2019 is compared to that of 2016-2020, a decrease from 2,513 complaints to 2,354. Between 2015 and 2019, DEP received an average of 11,461 total sewer backup complaints (both confirmed and unconfirmed), compared to an average of 11,325 total sewer backup complaints between 2016 and 2020, a decrease of 1%.

Similar improvements can be seen in recurring confirmed sewer backups, which have decreased by 9% over the same time-periods (averaging 448 annually for 2015-2019, compared to 409 for 2016-2020). Dry weather recurring sewer backups netted a 1% decrease, dropping from an average of 298 in 2015-2019 to an average of 294 in 2016-2020.

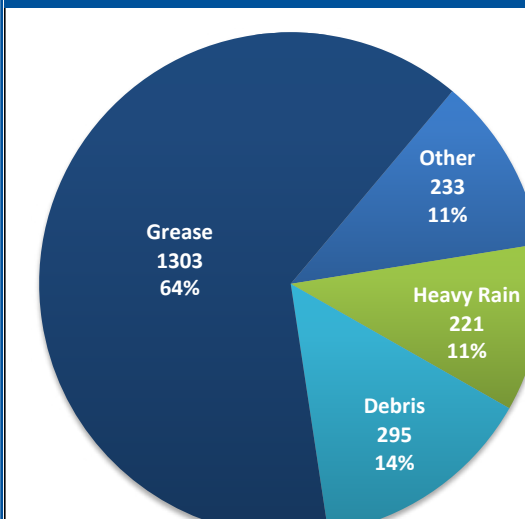
In FY2020, 64% of confirmed backups were grease-related; 14% attributable to debris; 11% attributable to heavy rains; and 11% due to other causes.

Systematic sewer cleaning continued on pace, with more proactive than reactive cleaning.

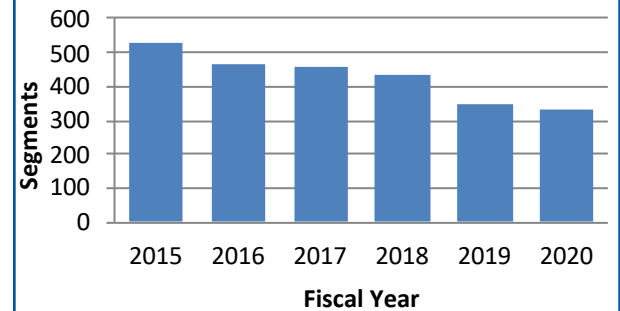
## Sewer Backup Complaints



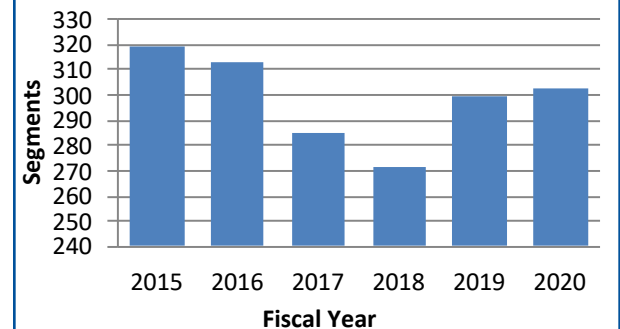
## FY20 Confirmed Sewer Backup Causes



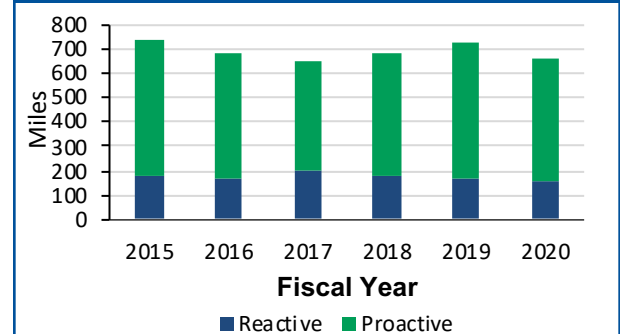
## Recurring Confirmed Backup Segments



## Recurring Confirmed Dry Weather Backup



## Sewer Cleaning Miles



# SEWER BACKUP AND CATCH BASIN RESOLUTION TIME

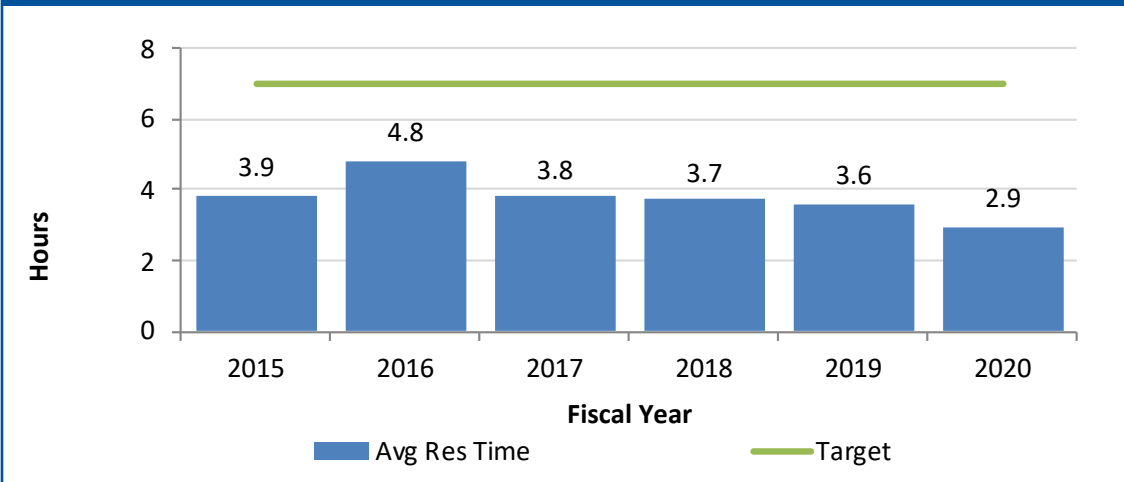
New York City has more than 153,000 catch basins to collect storm water runoff from streets and sidewalks. DEP's rigorous sewer and catch basin inspection, analysis, and cleaning programs have produced improvements in the level of sewer service citywide.

Over the past six years, the time to resolve sewer-related issues has remained below our service level targets of 7 hours to resolve a sewer backup complaint and 9 days to resolve a catch basin complaint.

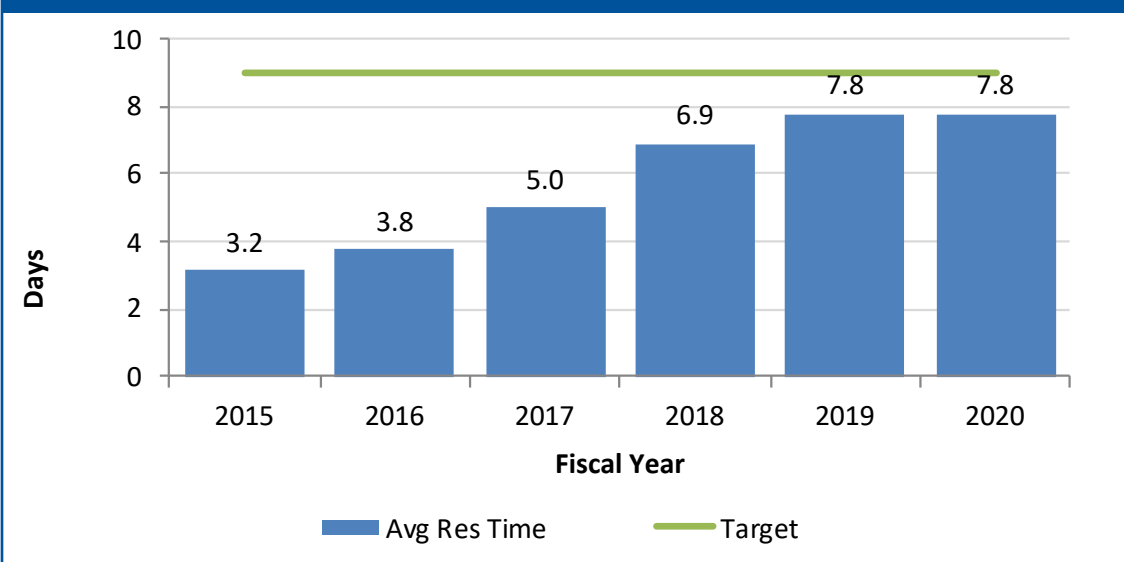
From 2015 to 2019, DEP resolved sewer backup complaints in 4 hours, on average. This metric improved to 3.8 hours for the period between 2016 and 2020, a decrease of 5%.

For catch basin-related complaints, the average resolution time from 2015 to 2019 was 5.3 days which increased to 6.3 days for 2016 to 2020. The increase was primarily attributable to Local Law 48 of 2015, which required DEP, starting in FY17, to inspect all DEP catch basins on a yearly basis, rather than on the prior 3-year cycle (i.e., inspection of 1/3 of the DEP catch basins citywide each year).

Sewer Backup Resolution Time



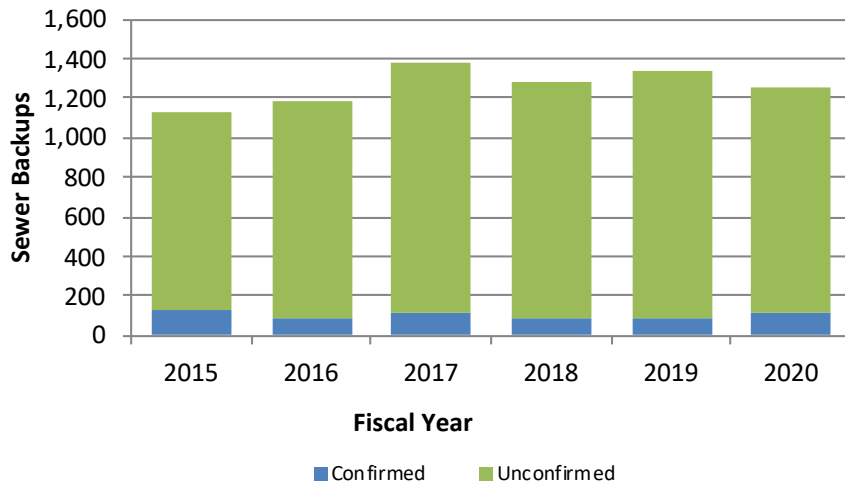
Catch Basin Complaint Resolution Time



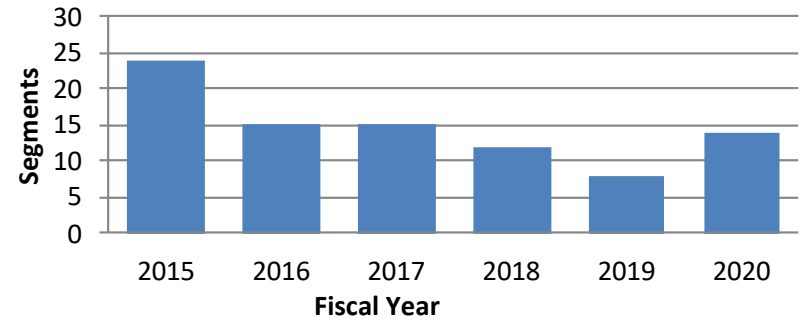


# BRONX

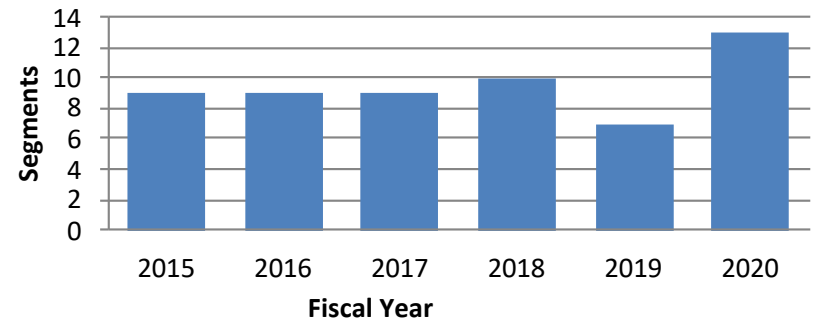
## Sewer Backup Complaints



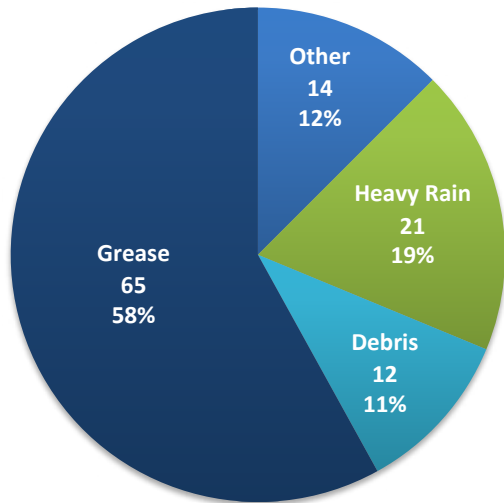
## Recurring Confirmed Backup Segments



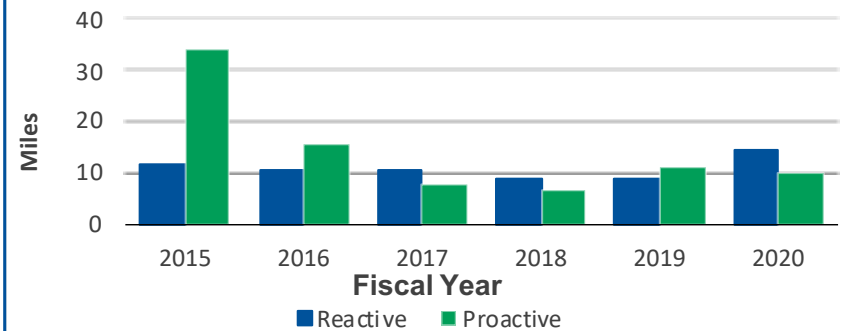
## Recurring Confirmed Dry Weather Backup Segments



## FY20 Confirmed Sewer Backup Causes

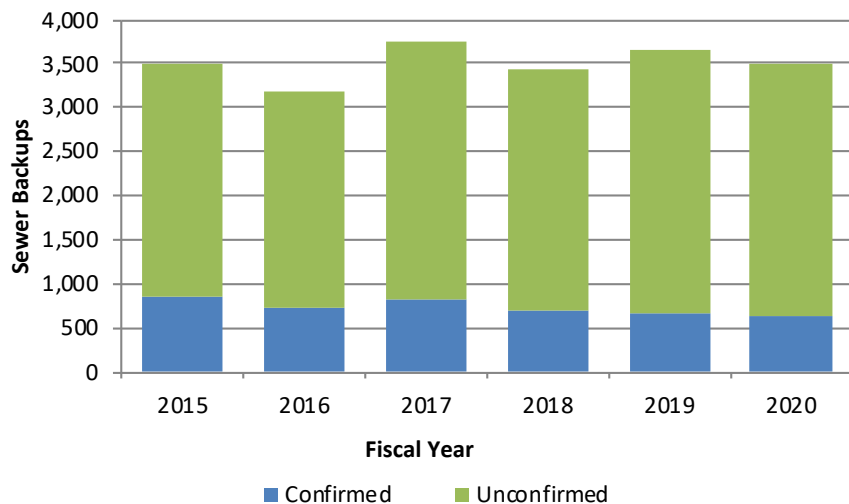


## Sewer Cleaning Miles

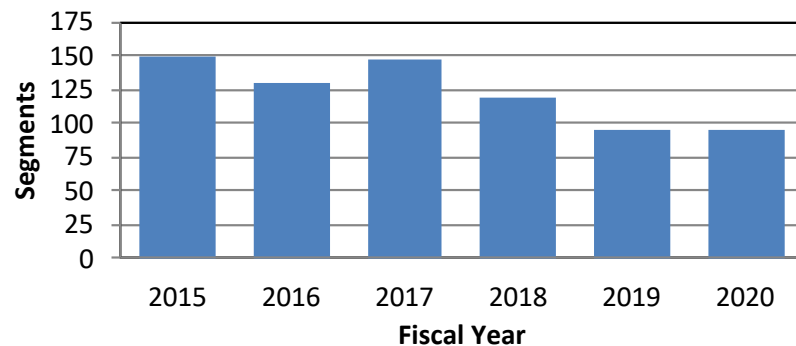


# BROOKLYN

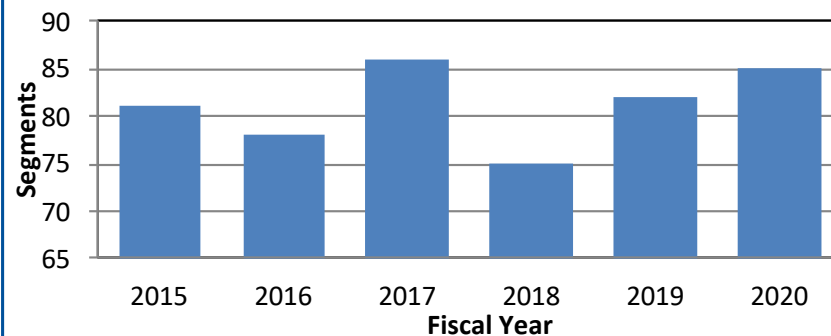
## Sewer Backup Complaints



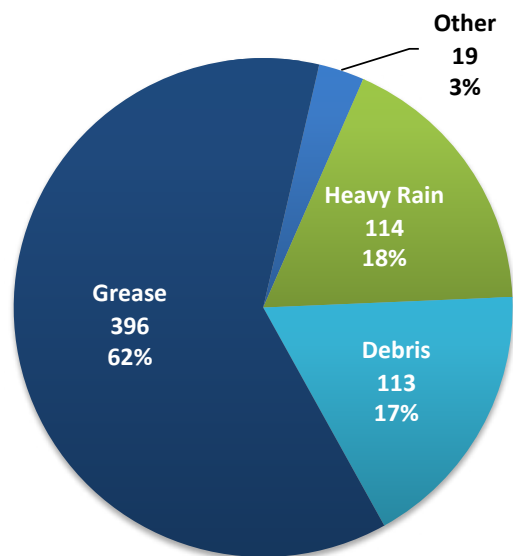
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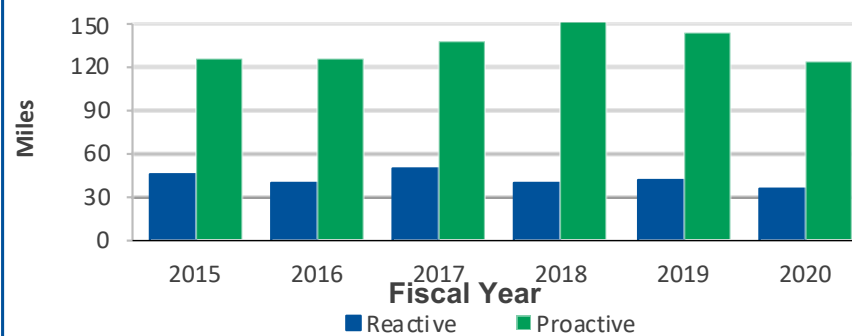
## Recurring Confirmed Dry Weather Backup Segments



## FY20 Confirmed Sewer Backup Causes

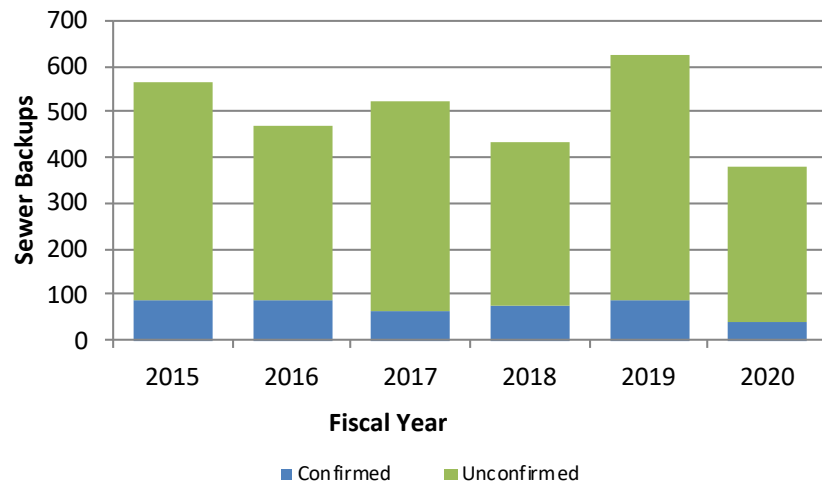


## Sewer Cleaning Miles

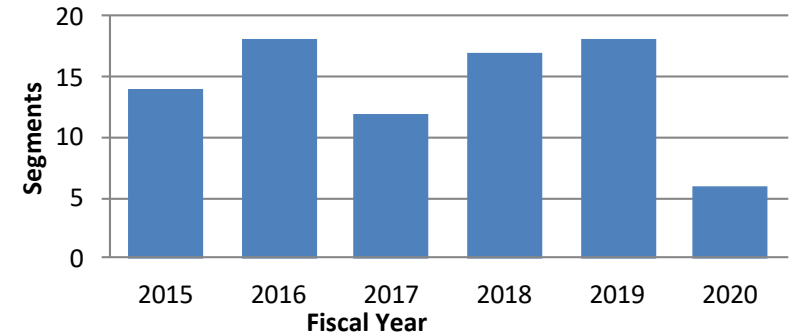


# MANHATTAN

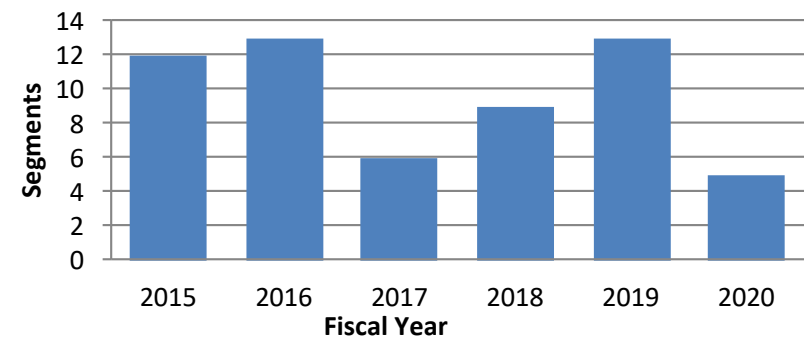
## Sewer Backup Complaints



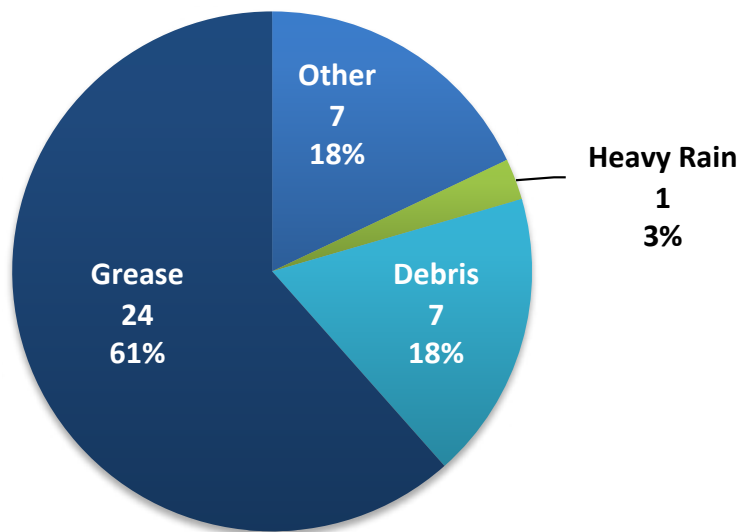
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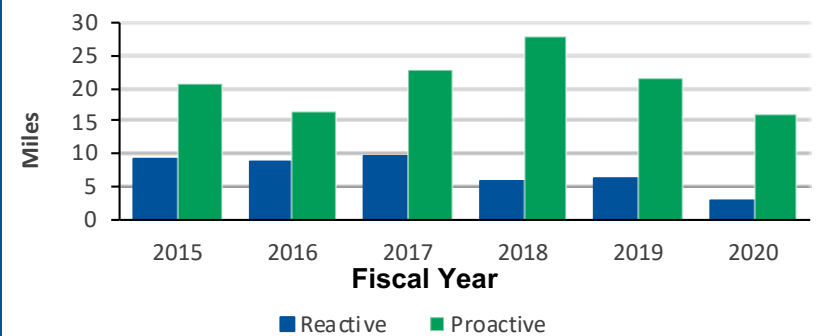
## Recurring Confirmed Dry Weather Backup Segments



## FY20 Confirmed Sewer Backup Causes

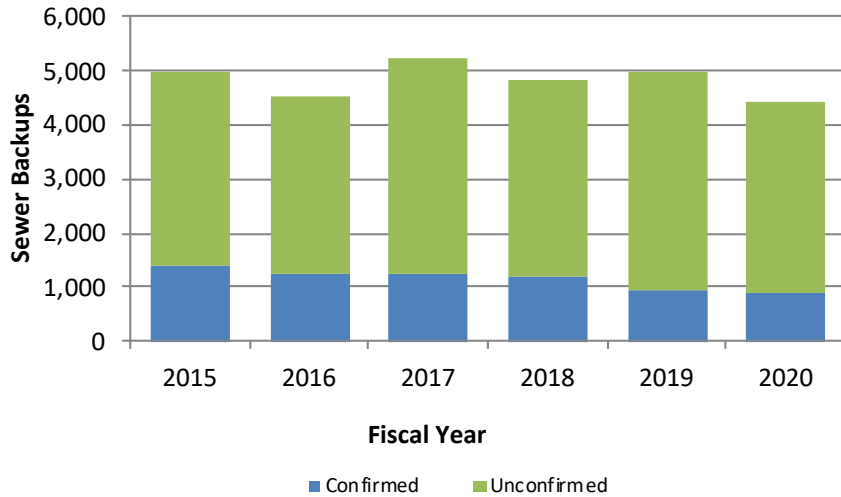


## Sewer Cleaning Miles

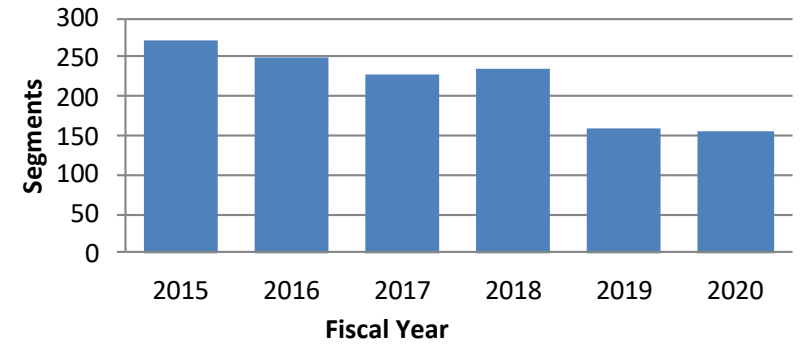


# QUEENS

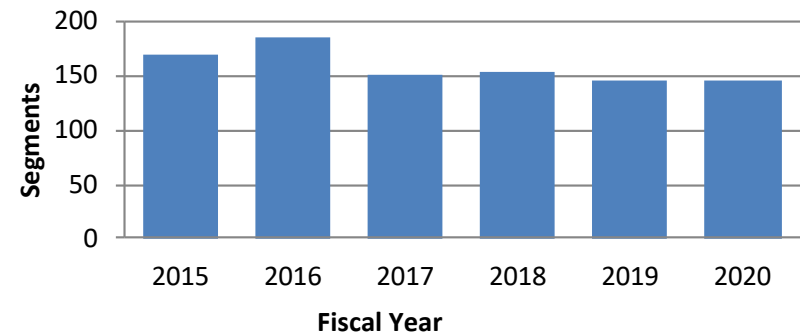
## Sewer Backup Complaints



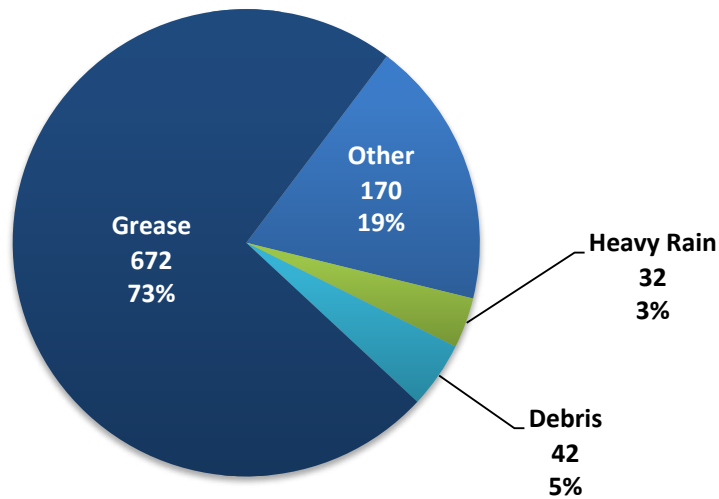
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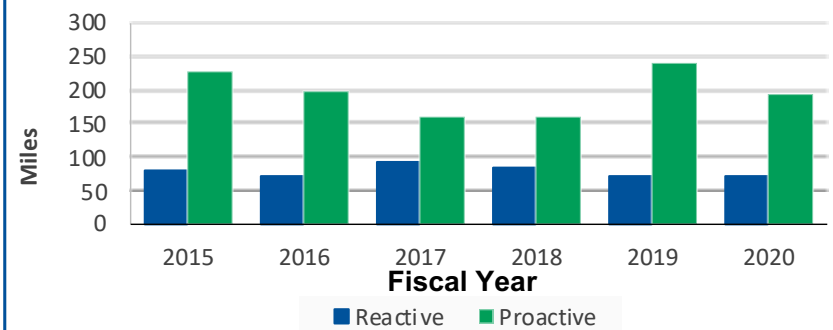
## Recurring Confirmed Dry Weather Backup Segments



## FY20 Confirmed Sewer Backup Causes

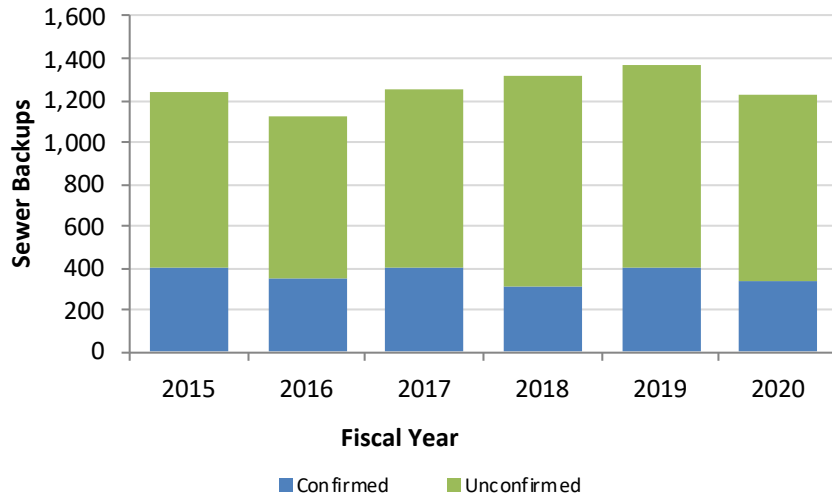


## Sewer Cleaning Miles

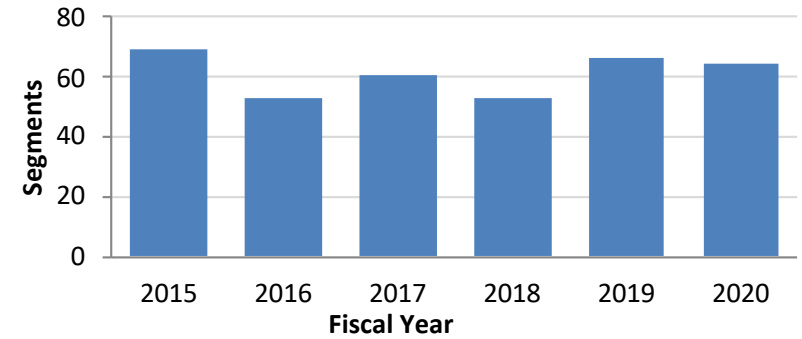


# STATEN ISLAND

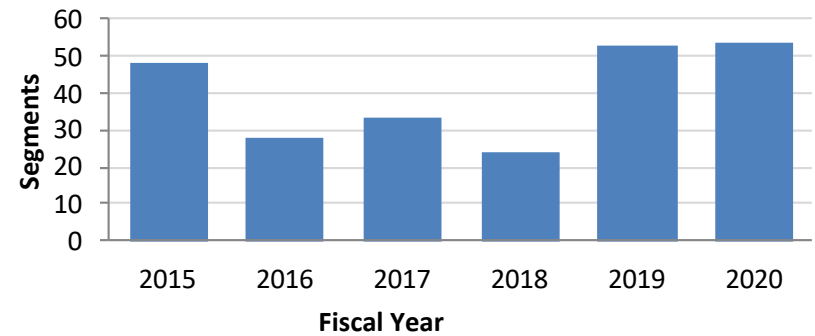
## Sewer Backup Complaints



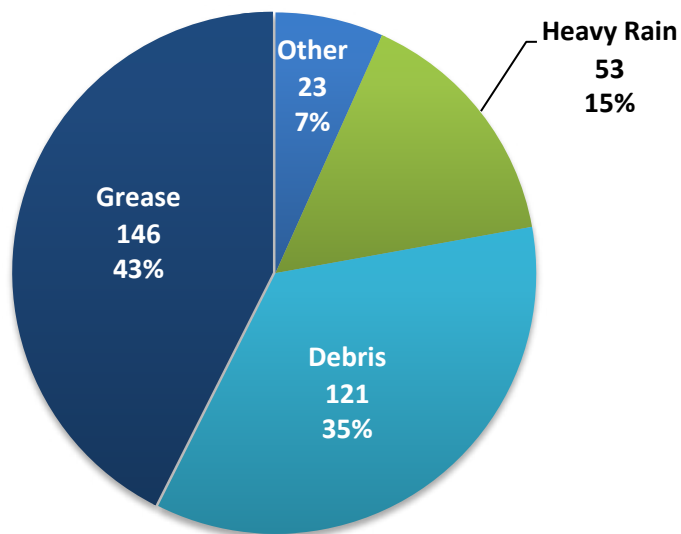
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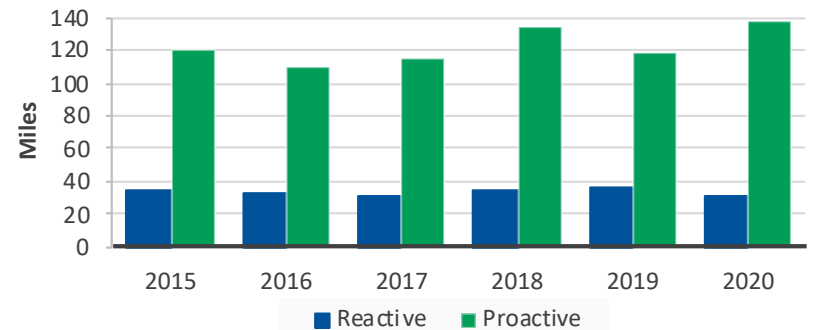
## Recurring Confirmed Dry Weather Backup Segments



## FY20 Confirmed Sewer Backup Cause



## Sewer Cleaning Miles





**Environmental  
Protection**