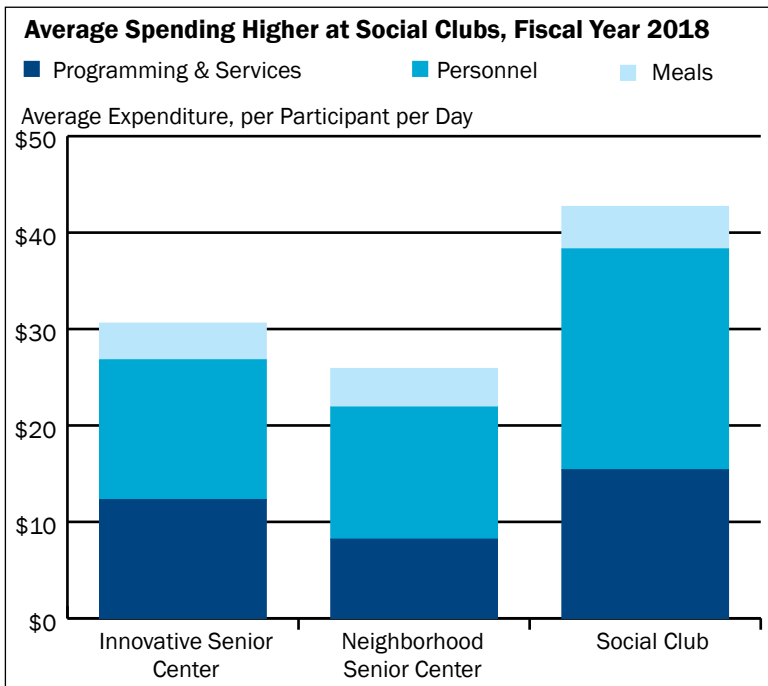


Neighborhood Senior Centers, Innovative Senior Centers, and Social Clubs: What Is the Difference?

New York City has a diversity of seniors, and a diversity of program models to serve them. Under the aegis of the city’s Department for the Aging, there are 233 “traditional” neighborhood senior centers, 16 “innovative” senior centers launched by the Bloomberg Administration, and 29 social clubs located in public housing developments. What are the similarities and differences among these three types of senior programs and do average program and personnel costs differ? We compared using data from the Department for the Aging, which contracts with providers to operate the senior programs. Although funding for running the social clubs is included in contracts for some senior centers, information about the clubs’ costs, services, and participation is reported separately.

Neighborhood Senior Centers	Innovative Senior Centers	Social Clubs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer a variety of programs ranging from recreational activities like art or yoga to nutrition workshops. Centers also offer information and referral services for access to Medicaid and other public benefits. Not every center provides every program. All centers provide lunch and some centers also provide breakfast. Daily participation at neighborhood centers averaged about 110 seniors in fiscal year 2018. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer a wider variety of programs than at neighborhood centers including more focus on wellness classes and access to health care. Some innovative centers have programs specifically designed for communities such as the visually impaired and LGBTQ participants. Meals are offered at flexible times. Daily participation at innovative centers averaged about 200 seniors in fiscal year 2018. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer a limited set of programs, generally just one or two at each club. Meals are not available at some of the clubs. Until this fiscal year, the city’s housing authority managed about half of the clubs; all clubs are now managed by the Department for the Aging. Daily participation at the clubs averaged about 20 seniors in fiscal year 2018.



- Largely because social clubs served relatively few seniors, their average daily spending per participant (\$42.68) exceeded the average for neighborhood senior centers (\$25.80) and innovative senior centers (\$30.52) in fiscal year 2018. These average costs do not include rent and other overhead expenses.
- Notably, the senior social clubs had higher average expenditures per client for programming and services, even though they provided fewer services than neighborhood and innovative senior centers. Average daily programming costs per participant ranged from \$15.42 at social clubs to \$8.15 at neighborhood senior centers and \$12.26 at the innovative centers.
- Personnel costs were also considerably higher at the social clubs, averaging \$22.90 daily per participant compared with \$13.65 at the neighborhood centers and \$14.50 at the innovative centers.

Share on



Prepared by Amanda Gallear
New York City Independent Budget Office

SOURCES: IBO analysis of the Department for the Aging’s “Report on Senior Center Metrics 2018,” accessed May 2019

NOTES: Includes information only on social clubs operated by the Department for the Aging in fiscal year 2018 and excludes five clubs that did not serve meals. Assumes 250 days of operation and excludes one social club and one neighborhood center for which information was unavailable.