

The Community Well-Being & Public Safety Framework

Part 3: From Findings to Action

Data Stories seeks to illuminate how data and analytics can advance criminal justice reform

Key Takeaways

→ **Incarceration concentrates where community strain concentrates.**

Across nearly 200 New York City neighborhoods, higher incarceration rates track closely with lower community well-being, and the composite Community Well-Being Score is more strongly associated with incarceration than any single indicator.

→ **Similar incarceration rates can hide very different needs.**

Two neighborhoods with nearly identical incarceration rates are strained by different conditions, so they call for different responses despite similarities on the surface.

→ **Agencies can act on these patterns now.**

The findings point to where coordinated action is most needed, across government agencies, service providers, and community-based organizations (CBOs). Existing programs can begin that work.

Building on their established data partnership, the New York City Criminal Justice Agency (CJA) and Luminosity set out across this series to understand how community conditions and public safety are connected, and what that connection means for the people who move through New York City's justice system. This third paper in the Data Stories series turns from analysis to action: it reports what the neighborhood conditions associated with incarceration look like on the ground, how they concentrate and differ from place to place, and how agencies can act on those patterns, drawing on CJA's Queens Supervised Release program as a working example. While this analysis focuses on New York City, the approach is not specific to it.

From Indicators to Understanding

The [first publication in this series](#) introduced the Community Well-Being & Public Safety Framework, a way of understanding safety and well-being as interdependent conditions shaped across ecological levels. The [second publication](#) showed how CJA and Luminosity operationalized the Framework, building a working data foundation from publicly available indicators to examine the neighborhood conditions associated with incarceration across New York City. This third publication reports what the analysis revealed and shows how agencies like CJA can act on it.

The goal of the analysis was not to predict individual behavior or suggest that neighborhood conditions alone explain who enters jail. Instead, the study used neighborhood-level data to examine where incarceration is concentrated, which community conditions are associated with those concentrations, and where coordinated, prevention-oriented action could address these conditions before people enter New York City's already overburdened jail system.

Incarceration rates were calculated for each Neighborhood Tabulation Area (NTA) in New York City. Community well-being in each NTA was then measured across five domains: health, education, economic security, housing, and civic infrastructure. These domains were examined individually and combined into a composite Community Well-Being (CWB) Score, so the analysis could see both specific, domain-level relationships and the broader cumulative pattern of neighborhood well-being.

The findings describe whether incarceration rates are associated with measurable community conditions across places, not whether any single condition causes a specific person's incarceration. Used carefully, these patterns can point to the neighborhood conditions most relevant to prevention, investment, and cross-agency action.

What the Data Show

Incarceration is unevenly distributed across New York City neighborhoods.

Across residential NTAs, incarceration rates over the three-year study period (2023–2025) ranged from about 12 to 266 per 10,000 residents, a wide spread that shows how differently incarceration is experienced from one neighborhood to the next. The highest-rate NTAs in most boroughs tended to sit near other high-rate neighborhoods, so incarceration is not scattered randomly across the city but found in clusters. Queens, the largest borough by land mass, was the exception, where the highest-rate neighborhoods were more dispersed. That said, this pattern of concentration is consistent with research showing that incarceration is not only an individual event but also a geographically concentrated, community-level phenomenon.¹ Figure 1 maps the incarceration rate for every residential neighborhood across the five boroughs, alongside citywide and borough averages for the Community Well-Being Score and each indicator. Use the [interactive map](#) to explore the relationship between incarceration rates and community well-being data in any NYC neighborhood.

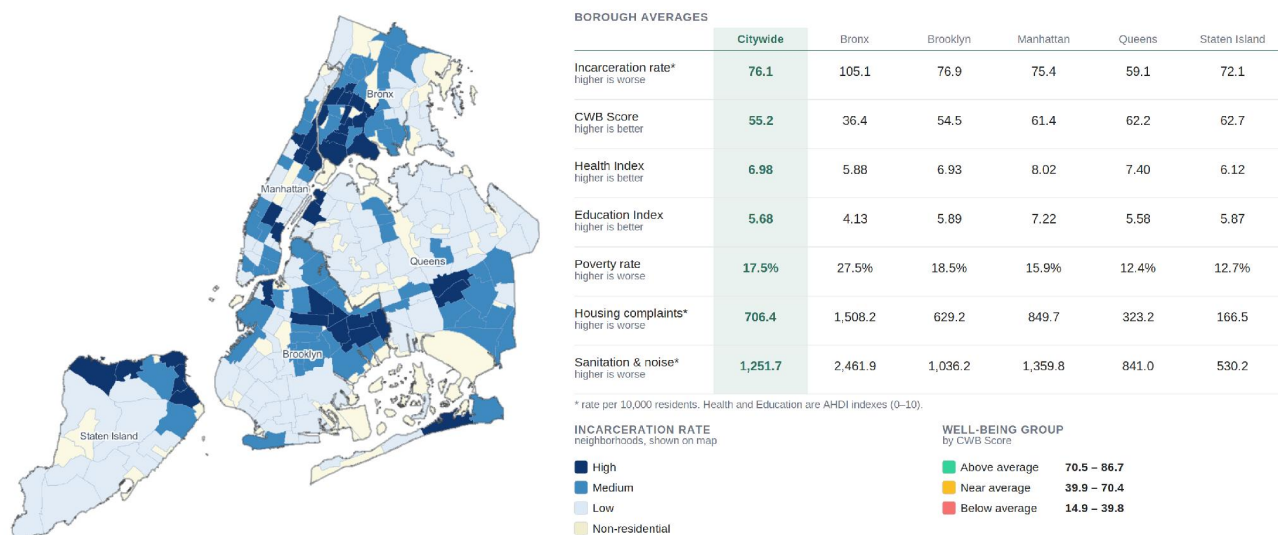


Figure 1: Incarceration rate by neighborhood, with well-being and indicator averages by borough

Community conditions and incarceration move together across every domain.

Neighborhoods with higher incarceration rates consistently showed weaker conditions across all five domains: higher poverty, more housing and building complaints, more sanitation and noise complaints, shorter life expectancy, and lower educational attainment.² When the five indicators were combined into the composite CWB Score, the relationship was stronger than for any individual indicator: put simply, neighborhoods with lower CWB Scores had higher incarceration rates.³

This matters because it makes visible what residents often live day to day. Economic insecurity, housing instability, health-related strain, educational inequity, and infrastructure problems do not operate separately. They compound. The composite score identifies areas where residents are managing multiple overlapping forms of strain simultaneously.

High-incarceration neighborhoods do not all tell the same story.

A high incarceration rate does not imply uniformly poor conditions across all domains. Some neighborhoods show deep, multi-domain strain, with below-average conditions on several indicators at once. Others show more selective strain, with one or two domains standing

out while the rest are closer to citywide averages. A few have high incarceration rates alongside near-average or above-average CWB Scores.

This variation is the point. It cautions against treating the incarceration rate alone as a measure of what a neighborhood needs, or assuming every high-incarceration neighborhood needs the same response. The value of the Framework is that it flags which neighborhoods have higher incarceration rates and distinguishes the underlying patterns behind those rates. A comparison of two neighborhoods makes the point concrete.

A Matched-Pair Comparison: Rockaway Beach–Arverne–Edgemere and South Jamaica

To show how similar incarceration rates can reflect different neighborhood conditions, the analysis paired two Queens NTAs: Rockaway Beach–Arverne–Edgemere and South Jamaica. They were chosen because they are close in population and in incarceration counts and rates but differ in their domain-level well-being profiles. Holding population and incarceration roughly constant lets the comparison focus on how the underlying conditions differ.

Community Well-Being Domains

As Figure 2 shows, the two neighborhoods share a similar population, incarceration rate, and incarceration count. Both are high-incarceration NTAs, and both fall below the citywide and Queens average on the CWB Score. Yet their well-being profiles differ in ways that would point to different responses.

Rockaway Beach–Arverne–Edgemere’s most pronounced condition is economic insecurity: its poverty rate, at 26.3 percent, is more than twice the Queens average. It also shows shorter life expectancy and elevated housing and building complaints. South Jamaica’s poverty rate, by contrast, is close to the Queens average, and its most pronounced condition is civic infrastructure: its sanitation and noise complaint rate is roughly double the borough average. South Jamaica also has the lower education index score of the two.

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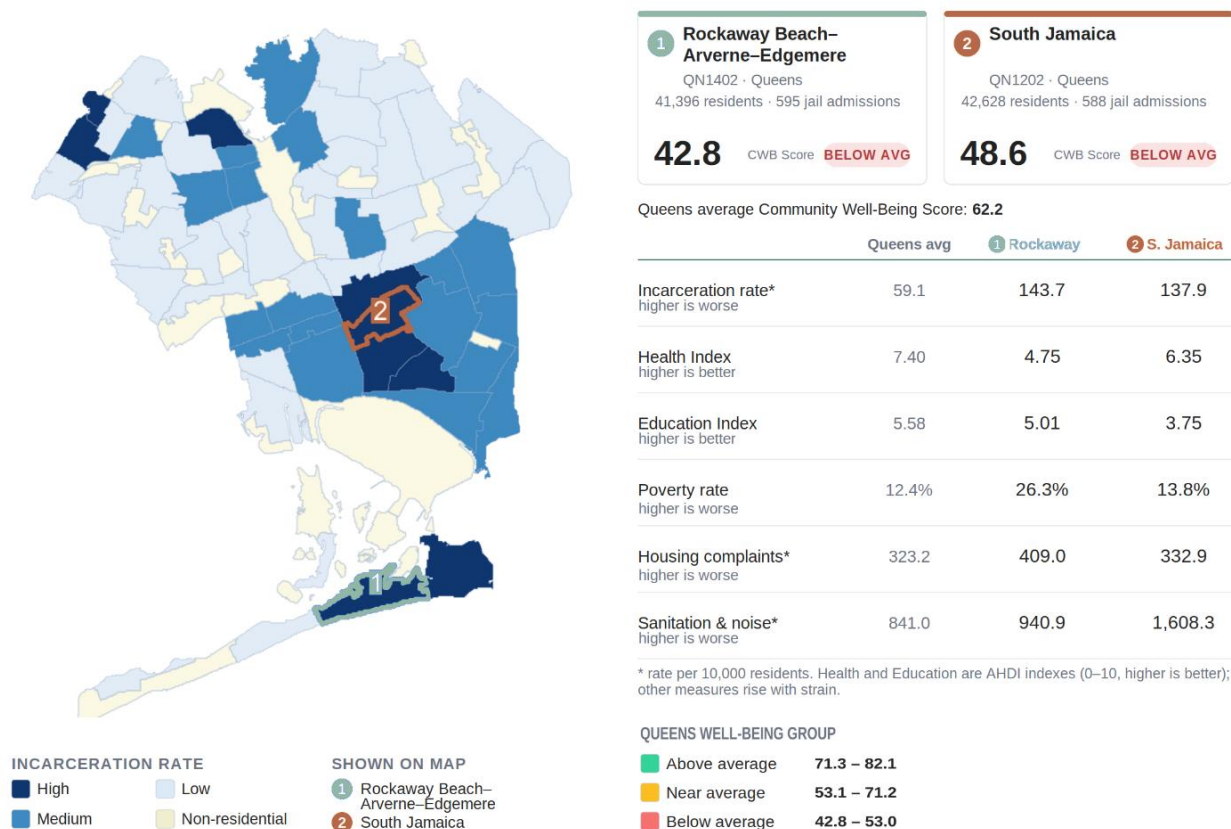


Figure 2: Comparing two high-incarceration Queens neighborhoods

The example of these two neighborhoods shows why the Framework should not be used simply to rank neighborhoods by incarceration rate, by the composite CWB Score, or by any single indicator. Looking at either the rate or the score alone could suggest the two NTAs need the same upstream response. Their profiles suggest otherwise. Rockaway Beach-Arverne-Edgemere's pattern points toward economic security, housing stability, and health. South Jamaica's points toward sanitation, noise, public-space conditions, infrastructure responsiveness, and educational support.

Structural and Historical Context

These different profiles are not only present-day data points. They reflect place-specific histories of land use, investment, infrastructure, and housing that help explain why different domains stand out in each neighborhood today. These histories do not determine current conditions, but they help explain them.

Rockaway Beach-Arverne-Edgemere sits within the longer history of the Rockaway Peninsula: decades of urban renewal and land clearance, large public

housing campuses, city-owned vacant land, and acute coastal vulnerability, including Hurricane Sandy damage and ongoing climate-resilience challenges.⁴ A neighborhood shaped by stalled redevelopment, storm recovery, and coastal risk is one where strain can surface as economic insecurity, housing quality, and health vulnerability, which is the pattern the data show.

Rockaway's history also carries a distinct set of safety concerns. Community-based research on the peninsula points to violence, safety that varies sharply from one stretch to another, strained police relations, limited youth programming, and a shortage of safe, supportive spaces and resources.⁵ These are conditions residents navigate directly, and they sit alongside the economic and housing strain the data show.

South Jamaica sits within a different history. Local planning records document longstanding stormwater and sewer problems, including flooding and sewage backups, and public housing maintenance needs at South Jamaica Houses tied to decades of unequal investment.⁶ These conditions map onto the neighborhood's elevated sanitation and noise complaints.

The efforts of CJA, along with other agencies and CBOs, can offer practical support to individual clients while building a more durable connection between residents and the systems meant to serve them.

The area also carries a difficult history with the justice system itself. That history may be unfamiliar or overlooked by those who do not live there, but it remains present within the community: the fatal police shootings of Black residents in two separate incidents and the subsequent acquittals of the police officers who shot them, followed by sustained protest.⁷ The mistrust those events produced continues to shape how residents experience the justice system and the public institutions meant to serve them. Together, this context helps explain why infrastructure, public housing, education, and justice system contact are best read as interconnected features of place rather than separate issues.

A broader pattern of disinvestment is relevant to both neighborhoods, though it applies differently in each. Research on redlining and neighborhood disinvestment describes the long-term withholding of public and private resources, including housing, schools, and jobs, and in many accounts a greater reliance on enforcement than on other supports.⁸ The point is not that one historical force explains both places the same way. It is that current indicators should be read as products of accumulated policy choices, public and private investment patterns, and neighborhood development decisions.

This comparison shows why place-specific interpretation is necessary. Similar incarceration rates can coexist with different well-being profiles, different histories, and different upstream needs. The Framework's value is in making those differences visible, so that responses can be tailored to each place rather than applied uniformly.

Acting on the Findings

Analysis like this earns its value only when it informs action. Once a jurisdiction can see where conditions concentrate and how they differ across neighborhoods, the response the Framework points to is a coordinated one: the agencies that shape daily living conditions align their efforts, direct investment where strain is greatest, and act before conditions escalate. No single actor owns that work: government agencies, service providers, and community-based organizations (CBOs) each have a role, and analysis like this can show where each can contribute most.

The domains in which the community indicators fall are interconnected, and so are the responses. Being below the poverty line is associated with shorter life expectancy and lower educational attainment; educational attainment shapes future earnings; earnings, in turn, feed back into health outcomes. These conditions reinforce one another, which is why single-program fixes tend to fall short and why staff who can address several barriers at once are well suited to the work.

Through its direct service work, CJA offers one example of an agency that has evolved its programming to support individuals on Supervised Release in Queens, and by extension support public safety for the borough as a whole. Established in 2009, CJA's Queens Supervised Release program has supported Queens residents in tens of thousands of cases, offering an alternative to bail or detention. Part 2 of this series identified unnecessary pretrial incarceration as the single largest lever for responsibly reducing the jail population, and Supervised Release plays an important part in supporting this effort. Through Supervised Release, clients meet regularly with trained case managers who support them in returning to court and connect them with stabilizing services that can help reduce their further criminal justice system-involvement. These services include employment, housing needs, physical and mental health care services, and more.

Over the past 17 years, CJA has innovated to better serve the wide range of participants who are mandated to the program. One innovation was starting a peer specialist program where certified practitioners who have overcome obstacles such as mental health challenges, addiction, and justice system involvement

serve as a person's case manager or as part of their care team. Another related innovation was the launch of the Intensive Case Management pilot in which participants with higher needs and repeated contact with the criminal justice system are enrolled in an enhanced version of Supervised Release that includes mobile intake, community-based visits, and a client care team model. While the majority of participants continue to be enrolled in traditional Supervised Release, where clients come to CJA's Supervised Release headquarters for their appointments, both clients and staff report an interest in increasing CJA's work in the community to better meet clients where they are and decrease the barriers to success in the program.

CJA is also exploring ways to bring Supervised Release services and support closer to clients in impacted neighborhoods. An example of this is the [mobile transport van](#) that CJA uses to serve clients in the Intensive Case Management program. Inspiration also comes from other Supervised Release providers such as the Center for Justice Innovation, which serves clients in the East New York neighborhood of Brooklyn, through a newly launched [Supervised Release Program \(SRP\) Neighborhood Hub](#). The idea is to

move away from relying on downtown office locations toward a neighborhood-based alternative closer to home. Its value is removing barriers to access: the hub sits within the community, many staff live locally, and that proximity builds the local partnerships needed to connect clients to longer-term voluntary support.

Two things that Queens Supervised Release is positioned to strengthen run through every domain: warm connections that link clients to the specific services they need, and a disciplined practice of recording — without identifying information — the barriers clients hit when they try to use those services. The first offers immediate help. This second practice of recording has the potential to turn an individual experience into a signal that can reach the agencies that own the systemic fix, which varies by domain. What follows is a walk-through of the five domains, the agencies whose levers matter most in each, and where an existing program like Queens Supervised Release could provide the data-driven connective tissue between individual needs and community conditions. That connective tissue points to where upstream intervention is needed, at one or more of the Framework's ecological levels: daily settings, neighborhood conditions, or structural and historical forces.

Indicators and Actions



Health.

Raising life expectancy means addressing the specific causes of years lost before age 65, which in New York City are concentrated in chronic and diet-related disease, screenable cancers, overdose, suicide, maternal mortality, violence, and COVID-19.⁹



CJA's case managers and peer specialists can support warm connections to health information and care and can record where clients run into barriers — such as coverage gaps, appointment access, or language — so recurring breakdowns become visible to the health agencies able to act on them.



Education.

Enrollment and attainment are shaped by conditions beyond the classroom, including household income, housing stability, health, transportation, caregiving responsibilities, and the difficulty of navigating enrollment and credentialing systems.



CJA's case managers can connect clients to adult education, English-language learning, high school equivalency programs, workforce credentials, libraries, youth programs, transportation support, and childcare. They can also log recurring barriers, such as documentation requirements, scheduling conflicts, technology access, or program availability, so those patterns can be raised with the relevant systems.



Economic security.

Poverty is a borough-wide condition shaped by education, available jobs, and wage levels, including wage theft. There is often a gap between the services the city offers and residents' awareness of, trust in, or access to them.



CJA's case managers can help clients access available resources, address clients' concerns about using services (such as privacy or eligibility), and track where uptake breaks down. This eases immediate effects, and it should be paired with prevention: coordinating with partners whose work addresses the upstream drivers of economic insecurity.



Housing.

Unstable housing undermines progress in every other domain. The work is to identify where clients face unstable addresses, shelter stays, overcrowding, eviction risk, disrepair, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) maintenance problems, or difficulty receiving mail and court notices.



CJA's case managers can connect clients to housing and homelessness services, including outreach, transitional and permanent housing, and benefits assistance offered by community-based partners, and can record where these problems recur — without identifying information — so the patterns reach the agencies responsible for them.



Civic infrastructure.

The condition and responsiveness of the shared neighborhood environment, from sanitation to noise to the state of public space, shape daily life and show up sharply in 311 data.



Beyond helping individual clients navigate these conditions, CJA can build working relationships with the agencies that own them and share the patterns that point to where responses are breaking down, turning scattered complaints into a signal that those agencies can act on.

CJA, along with other agencies and CBOs, can further operationalize the Framework by using clients' experiences of their neighborhoods as data to identify signs of community strain and potential public safety breakdowns sooner than existing city data systems typically do. These efforts can offer practical support to individual clients while building a more durable connection between residents and the systems meant to serve them.

Looking Ahead

In this publication series, Part 1 introduced the idea that community well-being and public safety are

interdependent and that well-being indicators can serve as early signals of strain. Part 2 showed that the Framework could be operationalized with public data, connecting neighborhood conditions to incarceration across the city. Part 3 has traced what those conditions look like on the ground: they concentrate, compound, and differ from place to place. It has also shown that agencies can begin acting on that knowledge, as CJA's Queens Supervised Release program demonstrates.

One question from Part 1 remains open: can fluctuations over time in community well-being indicators predict future public safety conditions? Like Part 2, this analysis is cross-sectional: it shows that community conditions and incarceration are

associated in an aggregated snapshot over the study period, but not yet that well-being indicators shift before harm escalates. Confirming that they function as true early warning signals will require tracking them over time, which is the clear next step for this work.

As Part 1 emphasized, the measure of progress is not the sophistication of the analysis. It is whether everyday conditions improve: fewer families facing housing instability, more responsive services, safer and more usable public spaces, and fewer people drawn into the justice system by conditions that could have been addressed upstream. None of this is unique to New York City; any jurisdiction with comparable data could build the same picture and act on it.

Taken together, the Framework advances public safety in several ways: it explains how community well-being and public safety are interrelated, shows the value of an ecological or place-based, approach to public safety and harm reduction, and makes a case for the analytical importance of structural and historical forces to inform preventive strategies. Perhaps most critically, the Framework points toward a much broader set of preventive responses and solutions. Operationalized, it makes cross-agency data a meaningful resource for practitioners and the communities they serve. The work ahead is to act, in coordination with the residents and agencies closest to the conditions themselves.

Acknowledgments

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Endnotes

- 1 Robert J. Sampson and Charles Loeffler, "Punishment's Place: The Local Concentration of Mass Incarceration," *Daedalus* 139, no. 3 (2010): 20–31.
- 2 Spearman rank correlations with the neighborhood incarceration rate: poverty rate +0.65; sanitation and noise complaint rate +0.69; housing and building complaint rate +0.54; American Human Development Index (AHDl) Health Index -0.64; AHDl Education Index -0.58. Index and complaint indicators are aligned in opposite directions (higher index values indicate stronger conditions; higher complaint rates indicate greater strain).
- 3 The composite CWB Score was more strongly associated with the incarceration rate than any single underlying indicator (citywide Spearman $\rho = -0.75$; mean within-borough $\rho = -0.80$), consistent with the validation reported in Part 2 of this series.
- 4 New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Resilient Edgemere Community Plan (2017), which documents the peninsula's history of urban renewal, city-owned vacant land, large public housing developments, and post-Hurricane Sandy coastal vulnerability; see also the earlier Edgemere Urban Renewal Plan (1997).
- 5 Rachel Swaner et al., "Keep Showing Us That You're Here for Us": Rockaway Youth Talk About Safety, Justice, and Programming (New York: Center for Court Innovation, now the Center for Justice Innovation, 2022), a community-based study of safety, policing, and youth programming on the peninsula.
- 6 On chronic flooding, stormwater and sewer backups, and drainage investment in South Jamaica and southeast Queens, see New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Southeast Queens stormwater and drainage program materials, including the cloudburst project at NYCHA's South Jamaica Houses. On the racialized history of public housing and public investment, see Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright, 2017).
- 7 This history includes two landmark cases in South Jamaica: the 1973 fatal police shooting of ten-year-old Clifford Glover and the subsequent acquittal of the officer who shot him, and the 2006 fatal police shooting of Sean Bell and the 2008 acquittal of the officers involved. Both were followed by sustained protest. On the community response, see John Eligon, "For Crowds at Courthouse, Just Being There Is the Point," *New York Times*, February 26, 2008; and Errol Louis, "Patience Is No Virtue: NYPD's Long List of Victims Proves Communities Must Rally," *New York Daily News*, December 5, 2006.
- 8 Bruce Mitchell and Juan Franco, *HOLC "Redlining" Maps: The Persistent Structure of Segregation and Economic Inequality* (Washington, DC: National Community Reinvestment Coalition, 2018); see also New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene reporting on neighborhood health inequities (2021).
- 9 New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, *HealthyNYC and Summary of Vital Statistics*, which identify the leading drivers of premature death (years of life lost before age 65) in New York City, including chronic and diet-related disease, screenable cancers, drug overdose, suicide, maternal mortality, violence, and COVID-19.