



Community and Social Ties Create Safety

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Being arrested or incarcerated doesn't just physically remove a person from their home and neighborhood. It takes an enormous toll on their social and community ties, causes massive emotional and financial stress for their families, and destabilizes entire neighborhoods.

Think about it: what are some of the things that make us all feel human? Our relationships with our family, friends, and loved ones; our sense of belonging in our jobs, schools, or places of worship; the feeling we get when we walk into a space and feel truly seen, included, and worthy. When we feel connected to one another, we are more likely to contribute positively to our relationships and communities.¹ Being torn away from those people, groups, and spaces—or being constantly afraid that you might be—has a cost that goes far beyond the individual.

Social support and community connection do more than help people cope with the challenges associated with arrest, incarceration, and reentry: they are actually restorative, preventing crime and improving trust, stability, and safety.

In the name of public safety, policymakers and legal system actors can prioritize policies that foster human connection, not undermine it. By ensuring that people navigating the criminal legal system are able to maintain healthy community ties, we can help preserve their humanity and find stability; and by shrinking the criminal legal system, we can prevent the destruction of those ties.

¹ Wike, R. & Holzworth, K. (April 15, 2008). *Where Trust is High, Crime and Corruption are Low*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2008/04/15/where-trust-is-high-crime-and-corruption-are-low/>.

After a person has been arrested or incarcerated, community and social ties are crucial for healing.

- I. Strong and consistent family ties are some of the most important factors for successful reentry.^{2,3,4}
 - A. Meaningful family support has been shown to improve mental health outcomes,⁵ reduce substance use,⁶ lower recidivism,^{7,8} and increase access to employment post-release.⁹
 - B. One study found that **family ties were critical for successful reentry not necessarily because of emotional support, but because they provided assistance with accessing basic needs that are more difficult for formerly incarcerated people to secure, such as housing and financial support.**¹⁰
 - C. Formerly incarcerated people with closer family relationships, stronger family support, and fewer negative dynamics in romantic relationships are more likely to be employed and less likely to use drugs post-release.¹¹
 - D. One study found that being in a healthy romantic relationship reduced the likelihood of self-reported recidivism by 12% and self-reported substance use by 16% for formerly incarcerated people.¹²
- II. **Community organizations and institutions can be stabilizing post-release.**
 - A. Social service organizations are critical for helping formerly incarcerated people find stability and avoid future criminal legal system contact. One study found that just a one-standard-deviation increase in a person's physical proximity to social service providers decreased the likelihood of recidivating by 41%.¹³

² Visher, C. A. & Courtney, S. M. E. (2007). *One Year Out: Experiences of Prisoners Returning to Cleveland*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/43021/311445-One-Year-Out-Experiences-of-Prisoners-Returning-to-Cleveland.PDF>.

³ *Reintegration Study*. (2016). New Hampshire Department of Corrections.

https://www.nh.gov/nhdod/divisions/publicinformation/documents/reintegration_2017_04b.pdf.

⁴ Berg, M.T. & Huebner, B.M. (April 2011). Reentry and the Ties that Bind: An Examination of Social Ties, Employment, and Recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, 28(2). <https://www.pacific-gateway.org/reentry.%20employment%20and%20recidivism.pdf>.

⁵ Wallace, D., Fahmy, C., Cotton, L., Jimmons, C., McKay, R., Stoffer, S., & Syed, S. (2016). Examining the Role of Familial Support During Prison and After Release on Post-Incarceration Mental Health. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 60(1): 3-20. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25156422/>.

⁶ Mowen, T. J., Stansfield, R., & Boman, J. H. (2018). Family Matters: Moving Beyond "If" Family Support Matters to "Why" Family Support Matters during Reentry from Prison. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 56(4): 483-523. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7205225/>.

⁷ Boman, J. H. & Mowen, T. J. (2017). Building the Ties that Bind, Breaking the Ties that Don't: Family Support, Criminal Peers, and Reentry Success. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 16(3): 753-774. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1745-9133.12307>.

⁸ Cobbina, J.E., Huebner, B.M., & Berg, M.T. (October 18, 2010). Men, Women, and Postrelease Offending: An Examination of the Nature of the Link Between Relational Ties and Recidivism. *Crime & Delinquency*, 58(3). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/001128710382348>.

⁹ Berg, M.T. & Huebner, B.M. (April 2011). Reentry and the Ties that Bind: An Examination of Social Ties, Employment, and Recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, 28(2). <https://www.pacific-gateway.org/reentry.%20employment%20and%20recidivism.pdf>.

¹⁰ Mowen, T. J., Stansfield, R., & Boman, J. H. (2018). Family Matters: Moving Beyond "If" Family Support Matters to "Why" Family Support Matters during Reentry from Prison. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 56(4): 483-523. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7205225/>.

¹¹ Visher, C., Kachnowski, V., La Vigne, N., & Travis, J. (March 2004). *Baltimore Prisoners' Experiences Returning Home*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/42806/310946-Baltimore-Prisoners-Experiences-Returning-Home.PDF>.

¹² *The Impact of Marital and Relationship Status on Social Outcomes for Returning Prisoners*. (January 2009). Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Education. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/impact-marital-relationship-status-social-outcomes-returning-prisoners-0>.

¹³ Hipp, J.R., Petersilia, J., & Turner, S. (2010). Parolee Recidivism in California: The Effect of Neighborhood Context and Social Service Agency Characteristics. *Criminology*, 48(4). Doi: 10.1111/j.1745-9125.2010.00209.x.

- B. Formerly incarcerated people are more likely to achieve stability when they have access to reentry programs that promote work experience, enhance job searching skills, and connect to professional networks.¹⁴
 - 1. The Work and Gain Education and Employment Skills (WAGEES) program in Colorado saw success helping formerly incarcerated people find and maintain employment through community providers. Notably, only 2.5% of participants returned to prison for committing new crimes after two years (the rate was 15% if you include technical violations).¹⁵ Those are promising results, as many studies estimate that around 50% of formerly incarcerated people return to prison in that same timeframe.^{16,17}
- C. Research suggests that community-based programs are more effective for successful reentry than government-based programs, in part because they are better tailored to individuals' needs and can be embedded in their existing networks and resources.¹⁸
- D. Community and spiritual support—especially through religious institutions—can help minimize mental health challenges for formerly incarcerated people.¹⁹
- E. One study found that, while individual involvement in religious programming only reduced recidivism risk in the short-term, **returning to a neighborhood with higher community-level involvement in religious institutions significantly reduced risk of recidivism for the returning individual in the long-term.**²⁰
- F. School offers opportunities for stability post-release.
 - 1. When arrest or incarceration disrupts a person's educational path, they miss out on more than just the education, but also social experiences, networking opportunities, and career guidance. Upon returning to their communities post-release, formerly incarcerated people have to make up for these losses.²¹
 - 2. For young adults and children, school can be a critically important part of returning to their community post-release. These students need qualified teachers who believe that they can succeed.²² Research suggests that formerly

¹⁴ Duwe, G. & Henry-Nickie, M. (April 2021). *A better path forward for criminal justice: Training and employment for correctional populations*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-better-path-forward-for-criminal-justice-training-and-employment-for-correctional-populations/>.

¹⁵ Thomson, C., Sakala, L., King, R., & Harvell, S. (February 2018). *Investing Justice Resources to Address Community Needs*. Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/96341/investing_justice_resources_to_address_community_needs.pdf.

¹⁶ Hunt, K.S. & Dumville, R. (March 2016). *Recidivism Among Federal Defenders: A Comprehensive Overview*. United States Sentencing Commission. https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/research-publications/2016/recidivism_overview.pdf.

¹⁷ Antenangeli, L. & Durose, M.R. (September 2021). *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 24 States in 2008: A 10-Year Follow-Up Period (2008–2018)*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/rpr24s0810yfup0818.pdf>.

¹⁸ Price-Tucker, A., Zhou, A., Charrouz, A., Tenzin, C., Robertson, E., Abdalla, H., Gu, J., Barton, J., Keselj, M., Bernstein, O., Alexis, P., Odayappan, S., & Escalante, T. (December 2019). *Successful Reentry: A Community-Level Analysis*. The Harvard University Institute of Politics Criminal Justice Policy Group. https://iop.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/sources/program/IOP_Policy_Program_2019_Reentry_Policy.pdf.

¹⁹ Valera, P. & Boyas, J.F. (March 2, 2019). Perceived Social Ties and Mental Health Among Formerly Incarcerated Men in New York City. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 63(10). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0306624X19832239>.

²⁰ Stansfield, R. & Mowen, T.J. (September 2019). Religious Involvement, Moral Community and Social Ecology: New Considerations in the Study of Religion and Reentry. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 35(3): 493-516. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7220049/>.

²¹ Couloute, L. (October 2018). *Getting Back on Course: Educational exclusion and attainment among formerly incarcerated people*. Prison Policy Initiative. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/education.html>.

²² *Making the Right Turn: A Research Update on Evidence-Based and Promising Post-Exit Supports for Formerly Incarcerated Youth*. (May 2019). National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598451.pdf>.

incarcerated youth who are engaged in their school 6 months post-release are 2.5x more likely to be engaged in their school at 12 months post-release.²³

3. Because incarceration increases the likelihood of residential instability,²⁴ children of incarcerated parents are significantly more likely to move around or enter the foster care system,²⁵ often forcing them to switch schools, which is associated with emotional and behavioral issues and negative educational outcomes.^{26, 27}

- G. Community mentorship programs help young people re-enter their communities post-release and mitigate some of the disruption and stigma caused by arrest or incarceration. One program in Indiana found that, after 48 months, **formerly incarcerated youth who had mentors had a 55% lower recidivism rate than those who did not** (28% compared to 62%).²⁸
- H. A recent Florida study found that formerly incarcerated people had a 21% lower likelihood of recidivism when they settled into communities with high concentrations of immigrants post-release. The mechanism that explains this phenomenon, the authors believe, is that immigrant-heavy communities tend to have stronger social ties, making re-entry more supportive.²⁹
- I. Because of the relationship between poverty and criminal legal system involvement, the communities to which formerly incarcerated people return are often low-income, and high levels of incarceration can further destabilize them. Successful reentry in these communities depends on strong networks of adequately resourced, community-based organizations.³⁰

III. Finding employment and financial stability post-release depends heavily on social ties.

- A. Formerly incarcerated people are unemployed at a rate of over 27% – 5x higher than the total U.S. unemployment rate during any period in history, including the Great Depression.³¹
- B. But social capital through family ties can help formerly incarcerated people secure employment.³²
 1. Family members not only help share information about what jobs are available and how to apply, but can also vouch for their formerly incarcerated loved one,

²³ *Making the Right Turn: A Research Update on Evidence-Based and Promising Post-Exit Supports for Formerly Incarcerated Youth*. (May 2019). National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598451.pdf>.

²⁴ Warner, C. (July 2015). On the move: Incarceration, race, and residential mobility. *Social Science Research*, 52: 451-464.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0049089X15000794?casa_token=XFG-IV3eP4MAAAAA:0VoZL_OgtFjDSTZXxGntry3ij-TceZjV_QvwslzlxETjU8MsU6FntolpzpGPziOPruaOnm2Js.

²⁵ Bertram, W. & Sawyer, W. (May 5, 2021). *Prisons and jails will separate millions of mothers from their children in 2021*. Prison Policy Initiative. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/05/05/mothers-day-2021/>.

²⁶ Coley, R.L. & Kull, M. (April 24, 2014). *Is Moving During Childhood Harmful?* MacArthur Foundation.

https://www.macfound.org/media/files/hhm_brief_-_is_moving_during_childhood_harmful_2.pdf.

²⁷ Gasper, J., DeLuca, S., & Estacion, A. (June 2012). Switching Schools: Reconsidering the Relationship Between School Mobility and High School Dropout. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(3): 487-519. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4279956/>.

²⁸ *Mentoring: An Investment in Reducing Youth Violence*. (December 2015). MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, Root Cause. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED573524>.

²⁹ Jilani, Z. (February 22, 2023). *Could immigrant communities help recidivism rates of convicts?* News Nation. <https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/southeast/immigrant-communities-recidivism-convicts/>.

³⁰ Baer, D., Bhati, A., Brooks, L., Castro, J., La Vigne, N., Mallik-Kane, K., Naser, R., Osborne, J., Roman, C., Roman, J., Rossman, S., Solomon, A., Visher, C., & Winterfield, L. (January 2006). *Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry: Research Findings from the Urban Institute's Prisoner Reentry Portfolio*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/42981/411289-Understanding-the-Challenges-of-Prisoner-Reentry.PDF>.

³¹ Couloute, L. & Kopf, D. (2018). *Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people*. Prison Policy Initiative. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>.

³² Berg, M.T. & Huebner, B.M. (April 2011). Reentry and the Ties that Bind: An Examination of Social Ties, Employment, and Recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, 28(2). <https://www.pacific-gateway.org/reentry.%20employment%20and%20recidivism.pdf>.

demonstrating to an employer that the person is trustworthy and has a support system.³³

- C. One study found that formerly incarcerated people with good-quality family ties—even those who were at particularly high risk for unemployment—were significantly more likely to be employed post-release and therefore less likely to recidivate.³⁴
- D. Another study found that, though respondents expected to use newspaper ads or yellow pages to find jobs, they ended up relying on personal connections: around half of the respondents who were employed post-release talked to friends (54%) or relatives (45%) to secure jobs.³⁵
- E. **Having a job gives people a sense of worth.**³⁶ In fact, exclusion from the workforce is one of the strongest predictors of depression in the U.S.³⁷ Being employed can help formerly incarcerated people develop a positive sense of identity, self-esteem, and self-sufficiency.^{38, 39}

IV. **Social connections and family ties help people secure housing post-release.**

- A. Having a place to call home gives people a sense of belonging and helps them define themselves as full citizens, but the difficulties formerly incarcerated people face in securing stable housing reinforce the stigma they already carry.⁴⁰
- B. Social ties are important for overcoming those challenges. One survey found that, on their first night out of prison, 42% of respondents slept at family or friends' houses.⁴¹
- C. The same survey found that, 1-3 months post-release, 51% of respondents were receiving financial support from family and 80% were living with family members. 89% of respondents felt that their family had been as supportive as they had hoped after their release from prison.⁴²
- D. This connection to stable housing is critical, as housing instability is directly correlated with recidivism.⁴³

- V. **Voting** is one of the many rights systematically stripped from formerly incarcerated people, robbing them of their connection to their communities and their identities as citizens.

³³ Berg, M.T. & Huebner, B.M. (April 2011). Reentry and the Ties that Bind: An Examination of Social Ties, Employment, and Recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, 28(2). <https://www.pacific-gateway.org/reentry.%20employment%20and%20recidivism.pdf>.

³⁴ Berg, M.T. & Huebner, B.M. (April 2011). Reentry and the Ties that Bind: An Examination of Social Ties, Employment, and Recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, 28(2). <https://www.pacific-gateway.org/reentry.%20employment%20and%20recidivism.pdf>.

³⁵ Visher, C., Kachnowski, V., La Vigne, N., & Travis, J. (March 2004). *Baltimore Prisoners' Experiences Returning Home*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/42806/310946-Baltimore-Prisoners-Experiences-Returning-Home.PDF>.

³⁶ Rogers, K.M., Corley, K.G., & Ashforth, B.E. (November 16, 2016). Seeing More than Orange: Organizational Respect and Positive Identity Transformation in a Prison Context. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 62(2). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0001839216678842>.

³⁷ Davis, A. & McGeeney, K. (August 23, 2013). *In U.S., Employment Most Linked to Being Depression-Free*. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/164090/employment-linked-depression-free.aspx>.

³⁸ Rogers, K.M., Corley, K.G., & Ashforth, B.E. (November 16, 2016). Seeing More than Orange: Organizational Respect and Positive Identity Transformation in a Prison Context. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 62(2). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0001839216678842>.

³⁹ Hong, P., Lewis, D., & Choi, S. (July 2014). Employment Hope as an Empowerment Pathway to Self-Sufficiency Among Exoffenders. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 53(5): 317-333. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271401254_Employment_Hope_as_an_Empowerment_Pathway_to_Self-Sufficiency_Among_Exoffenders.

⁴⁰ Keene, D.E., Smoyer, A.B., & Blankenship, K.M. (July 2018). Stigma, housing and identity after prison. *Sociological Review*, 66(4): 799-815. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7449251/>.

⁴¹ Visher, C., Kachnowski, V., La Vigne, N., & Travis, J. (March 2004). *Baltimore Prisoners' Experiences Returning Home*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/42806/310946-Baltimore-Prisoners-Experiences-Returning-Home.PDF>.

⁴² Visher, C., Kachnowski, V., La Vigne, N., & Travis, J. (March 2004). *Baltimore Prisoners' Experiences Returning Home*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/42806/310946-Baltimore-Prisoners-Experiences-Returning-Home.PDF>.

⁴³ Couloute, L. (2018). *Nowhere to Go: Homelessness among formerly incarcerated people*. Prison Policy Initiative. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>.

- A. Incarceration has stripped an estimated 4.6 million people of their right to vote, making them feel disengaged as citizens.⁴⁴
- B. **The ability to vote is central to feelings of belonging to a community, which is already difficult for people with felony convictions to establish post-incarceration.**⁴⁵
- C. Disenfranchisement compounds the stigma people already feel after being released from prison.⁴⁶
- D. Because the criminal legal system disproportionately targets and impacts Black Americans, **felon disenfranchisement also weakens Black political power.**⁴⁷
- E. Some research suggests that the ability to vote may even reduce risk of recidivism.
 1. A report by the Florida Parole Commission found that **formerly incarcerated people who kept their voting rights recidivated at a rate of only 11%, while those who were disenfranchised had a recidivism rate of 33%.**^{48, 49}
 2. Another study found that, after adjusting for other variables, people who are released in states that permanently disenfranchise people convicted of felonies are around 17% more likely to be rearrested than people released in states that restore voting rights post-release (69.42% compared to 59.51%).⁵⁰
 3. Some scholars believe the reason is that voting makes people feel more connected to their community, which makes them less likely to recidivate.⁵¹
- F. In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander expertly summarizes the impact of disenfranchisement: “If shackling former prisoners with a lifetime of debt and authorizing discrimination against them in employment, housing, education, and public benefits is not enough to send the message that they are not wanted and not even considered full citizens, then stripping voting rights from those labeled criminals surely gets the point across”.⁵²
- G. Despite some recent progress,⁵³ 48 states still ban or limit voting rights for people with felony convictions.⁵⁴ Restoring voting rights to formerly incarcerated people improves community engagement, thus contributing to well-being and public safety.

⁴⁴ Uggen, C., Larson, R., Shannon, S., & Stewart, R. (October 25, 2022). *Locked Out 2022: Estimates of People Denied Voting Rights*. The Sentencing Project. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/locked-out-2022-estimates-of-people-denied-voting-rights/>.

⁴⁵ Bennett, C. (May 24, 2014). Penal Disenfranchisement. *Criminal Law and Philosophy*, 10: 411-425. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11572-014-9316-3>.

⁴⁶ Vogel, M. & Hamilton-Smith, G. (January 2012). The Violence of Voicelessness: The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement on Recidivism. *Berkeley La Raza Law Journal*, 22(3). <https://lawcat.berkeley.edu/record/1125056?ln=en>.

⁴⁷ *Amici Curiae Brief by NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc., The Sentencing Project, & Southern Poverty Law Center in Support of Plaintiffs-Appellants*. (2017). Voice of the Ex-Offender, et al. vs. State of Louisiana, et al. <https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/Ex-A-Vote-Amicus-Br-11.6-FINAL.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Call, J. (July 29, 2011). *Study shows ex-cons benefit from rights restoration*. WSFU. <https://news.wfsu.org/show/capital-report/2011-07-29/study-shows-ex-cons-benefit-from-rights-restoration>.

⁴⁹ It should be noted that these findings are limited because, in this case, the ability to vote was automatically restored for people convicted of certain crimes, while people convicted of other crimes had to actively apply to regain their voting rights (see https://repository.uchastings.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2571&context=faculty_scholarship).

⁵⁰ Vogel, M. & Hamilton-Smith, G. (January 2012). The Violence of Voicelessness: The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement on Recidivism. *Berkeley La Raza Law Journal*, 22(3). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335401893_The_Violence_of_Voicelessness_The_Impact_of_Felony_Disfranchisement_on_Recidivism.

⁵¹ Aviram, H., Bragg, A., & Lewis, C. (2017). Felon Disenfranchisement. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 13: 295-311. https://repository.uchastings.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2571&context=faculty_scholarship.

⁵² Alexander, Michelle. (2012). *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New Press. pg. 158.

⁵³ Wilder, W. (February 25, 2021). *Progress on Restoring Voting Rights*. Brennan Center for Justice. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/progress-restoring-voting-rights>.

⁵⁴ Uggen, C., Larson, R., Shannon, S., & Stewart, R. (October 25, 2022). *Locked Out 2022: Estimates of People Denied Voting Rights*. The Sentencing Project. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/locked-out-2022-estimates-of-people-denied-voting-rights/>.

- VI. **The stigma associated with incarceration complicates a person's relationships to their family and community, and social ties are critical for overcoming it.**
- A. Research has shown that stigma—even just the perception of stigma—makes it difficult for formerly incarcerated people to achieve stability, especially when it comes to finding and maintaining employment.⁵⁵
 - B. Even interactions with the criminal legal system that do not lead to incarceration, such as arrest, can result in overwhelming stigma.⁵⁶
 - C. **One way people cope with stigma from arrest or incarceration is to pull back from community life and isolate themselves, which harms not only the individual, but the community at large.**⁵⁷
 - D. Strong family ties can mitigate some of the negative impact of stigma associated with criminal legal system contact. Family members are more likely to see past the stereotypes associated with criminal legal involvement and recognize the person's strengths, as opposed to letting their loved one's criminal record define them.⁵⁸
 - E. Positive connections between formerly incarcerated people and the neighborhoods they return to are critical not only in helping the individual improve their self-esteem and self-perception, but also for neighborhood-wide stability.⁵⁹ In other words, reducing stigma and helping formerly incarcerated people reenter their communities is a community-wide public safety measure.

Community ties and relationships help people survive incarceration.

- I. Maintaining contact with family members while in prison provides emotional support and lowers the likelihood of recidivism post-release.⁶⁰
- II. One such form of contact, **visitation from family and friends while in prison improves social relationships, helps people cope with the trauma of incarceration,⁶¹ and reduces risk of recidivism post-release.**⁶²
 - A. One study by the Minnesota Department of Corrections found a strong connection between visits in prison and recidivism: **visits by friends and family were correlated**

⁵⁵ Moore, K.E., Stuewig, J.B., & Tangney, J.P. (February 1, 2016). The Effect of Stigma on Criminal Offenders' Functioning: A Longitudinal Mediation Model. *Deviant Behavior*, 37(2): 196-218. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4788463/>.

⁵⁶ *The Cascading Consequences of an Arrest*. (Last visited January 19, 2023). ACLU. <https://www.aclufl.org/en/cascading-consequences-arrest>.

⁵⁷ Rose, D.R. & Clear, T.R. (2003). Incarceration, Reentry, and Social Capital. In J. Travis & M. Waul (Eds), *Prisoners Once Removed: The Impact of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families, and Communities*. Urban Institute.

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=822DzrF0uhwC&oi=fnd&pg=PA313&dq=how+incarceration+stigma+impacts+self+esteem&ots=Fiz4PGFzI7&sig=qQArZ3zIlfi5ttszDMKRGIFbxQA#v=onepage&q=how%20incarceration%20stigma%20impacts%20self%20esteem&f=false>.

⁵⁸ Berg, M.T. & Huebner, B.M. (April 2011). Reentry and the Ties that Bind: An Examination of Social Ties, Employment, and Recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, 28(2). <https://www.pacific-gateway.org/reentry.%20employment%20and%20recidivism.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Rose, D.R. & Clear, T.R. (2003). Incarceration, Reentry, and Social Capital. In J. Travis & M. Waul (Eds), *Prisoners Once Removed: The Impact of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families, and Communities*. Urban Institute.

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=822DzrF0uhwC&oi=fnd&pg=PA313&dq=how+incarceration+stigma+impacts+self+esteem&ots=Fiz4PGFzI7&sig=qQArZ3zIlfi5ttszDMKRGIFbxQA#v=onepage&q=how%20incarceration%20stigma%20impacts%20self%20esteem&f=false>.

⁶⁰ Barrick, K., Lattimore, P.K., & Visher, C.A. (June 11, 2014). Reentering Women: The Impact of Social Ties on Long-Term Recidivism. *The Prison Journal*, 94(3). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0032885514537596>.

⁶¹ Duncan, H.E. & Balbar, S. (June 1, 2008). Evaluation of a Visitation Program at a Canadian Penitentiary. *The Prison Journal*, 88(2). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0032885508319210>.

⁶² Duwe, G. & Clark, V. (December 6, 2011). Blessed Be the Social Tie That Binds: The Effects of Prison Visitation on Offender Recidivism. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 24(3). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0887403411429724>.

with a 13% lower risk of recidivism for felony reconviction and a 25% lower risk for technical violation revocation (breaking the rules of parole).⁶³

1. The more visits people had, the less likely they were to recidivate.⁶⁴
- B. Having consistent visits in prison is associated with better behavior, which can increase the likelihood of early release and reduce risk of violence while in prison.⁶⁵
 1. In fact, one study found that incarcerated people who were never visited were 8x more likely to have high rates of misconduct than those who were visited late in their sentence. While people who were never visited had a 5.6% chance of having “high” levels of misconduct, people who were visited consistently had a 0% chance.⁶⁶
- C. One study found that visitation from an incarcerated person’s parents improved relationships, prevented recidivism, increased the likelihood of employment post-release, and reduced the risk of drug use post-release.⁶⁷
 1. This was particularly important for the most marginalized groups, including racial minorities, older people, and people who lived in foster care as children.⁶⁸
- D. Research suggests that visits from one’s children while incarcerated is beneficial for both the child and the incarcerated parent.
 1. Visits help children feel more attached to their parents and improve their well-being, emotional adjustment, self-esteem, and school behavior.^{69, 70} Parent-child bonds play a major role in helping the child overcome the challenges associated with having an incarcerated parent.⁷¹

⁶³ *The Effects of Prison Visitation on Offender Recidivism*. (November 2011). Minnesota Department of Corrections. https://mn.gov/doc/assets/11-11PrisonVisitationResearchinBrief-Final_tcm1089-272782.pdf.

⁶⁴ *The Effects of Prison Visitation on Offender Recidivism*. (November 2011). Minnesota Department of Corrections. https://mn.gov/doc/assets/11-11PrisonVisitationResearchinBrief-Final_tcm1089-272782.pdf.

⁶⁵ Cramer, L., Goff, M., Peterson, B., & Sandstrom, H., (2017). *Parent-Child Visiting Practices in Prisons and Jails: A Synthesis of Research and Practice*. Urban Institute.

https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/89601/parent-child_visiting_practices_in_prisons_and_jails_0.pdf.

⁶⁶ Cochran, J.C. (September 2012). The ties that bind or the ties that break: Examining the relationship between visitation and prisoner misconduct. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 40(5): 433-440.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256919807_The_ties_that_bind_or_the_ties_that_break_Examining_the_relationship_between_visitation_and_prisoner_misconduct.

⁶⁷ Brunton-Smith, I. & McCarthy, D.J. (March 1, 2017). The Effects of Prisoner Attachment to Family on Re-entry Outcomes: A Longitudinal Assessment. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 57(2): 463-482. <https://academic.oup.com/bjc/article/57/2/463/2623932>.

⁶⁸ Brunton-Smith, I. & McCarthy, D.J. (March 1, 2017). The Effects of Prisoner Attachment to Family on Re-entry Outcomes: A Longitudinal Assessment. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 57(2): 463-482. <https://academic.oup.com/bjc/article/57/2/463/2623932>.

⁶⁹ Cramer, L., Goff, M., Peterson, B., & Sandstrom, H., (2017). *Parent-Child Visiting Practices in Prisons and Jails: A Synthesis of Research and Practice*. Urban Institute.

https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/89601/parent-child_visiting_practices_in_prisons_and_jails_0.pdf.

⁷⁰ Cramer, L., Goff, M., Peterson, B., & Sandstrom, H., (2017). *Parent-Child Visiting Practices in Prisons and Jails: A Synthesis of Research and Practice*. Urban Institute.

https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/89601/parent-child_visiting_practices_in_prisons_and_jails_0.pdf.

⁷¹ Martin, E. (2017). Hidden Consequence: The Impact of Incarceration on Dependent Children. *National Institute of Justice*, 278. <https://www.santacruzcounty.us/Portals/0/County/Commissions/jag%20commission/Resources/Hidden%20Consequences%20Impact%20of%20Inc%20on%20Dependent%20Children%20NIJ%202017.pdf>.

2. For the incarcerated parent, visits with children contribute to lower recidivism rates.^{72, 73, 74} They can motivate parents to comply with rules, leading to less disciplinary action and more participation in beneficial programming.⁷⁵
3. Mothers interviewed for one study said that not having contact with their kids was a massive source of distress, and that contact with their kids gave them a reason to live.⁷⁶
4. Unfortunately, current practices can make visits from loved ones unfeasible, stressful, unpleasant, or traumatic.⁷⁷
 - a) Often, kids live far away from the prison or jail or don't have someone who can take them to visit: **two thirds of mothers in one study reported that their kids live over 2 hours away from the prison.**⁷⁸
 - b) The prison environment is often unpleasant: visiting rooms lack toys, books, and places for kids to play. Sometimes, conditions are poor or dangerous enough (lead paint, mold, broken toilets, pests, overcrowding) that incarcerated parents do not want to expose their children to it.⁷⁹
 - c) Programs that provide free transportation to families who wish to visit incarcerated loved ones have seen success,⁸⁰ and some legislation has called for smaller distances between incarcerated people and their families,⁸¹ but **we need to re-envision the way we prioritize visits in prison. They are not just a perk, but a public safety measure.**

III. Phone calls in prison help people stay connected to loved ones and the outside world and reduce risk of future system involvement.

⁷² Martin, E. (2017). Hidden Consequence: The Impact of Incarceration on Dependent Children. *National Institute of Justice*, 278. <https://www.santacruzcounty.us/Portals/0/County/Commissions/jag%20commission/Resources/Hidden%20Consequences%20Impact%20of%20Inc%20on%20Dependent%20Children%20NIJ%202017.pdf>.

⁷³ Cramer, L., Goff, M., Peterson, B., & Sandstrom, H., (2017). *Parent-Child Visiting Practices in Prisons and Jails: A Synthesis of Research and Practice*. Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/89601/parent-child_visiting_practices_in_prisons_and_jails_0.pdf.

⁷⁴ Bales, W.D. & Mears, D.P. (June 4, 2008). Inmate Social Ties and the Transition to Society: Does Visitation Reduce Recidivism? *Journal in Research of Crime and Delinquency*, 45(3). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022427808317574>.

⁷⁵ Cramer, L., Goff, M., Peterson, B., & Sandstrom, H., (2017). *Parent-Child Visiting Practices in Prisons and Jails: A Synthesis of Research and Practice*. Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/89601/parent-child_visiting_practices_in_prisons_and_jails_0.pdf.

⁷⁶ Dworsky, A., Fedock, G., Schlecht, C., Malcolme, M., Murray, C., & Hazel, C. (2020). Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children in Illinois. *Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration*. <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Incarcerated-Mothers-FINAL-2020.pdf>.

⁷⁷ Murray, J., Farrington, D. P., & Sekol, I. (2012). Children's Antisocial Behavior, Mental Health, Drug Use, and Educational Performance After Parental Incarceration: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 138(2): 178. <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2012-00399-001.html>.

⁷⁸ Dworsky, A., Fedock, G., Schlecht, C., Malcolme, M., Murray, C., & Hazel, C. (2020). Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children in Illinois. *Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration*. <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Incarcerated-Mothers-FINAL-2020.pdf>.

⁷⁹ Dworsky, A., Fedock, G., Schlecht, C., Malcolme, M., Murray, C., & Hazel, C. (2020). Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children in Illinois. *Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration*. <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Incarcerated-Mothers-FINAL-2020.pdf>.

⁸⁰ Joyce, Jaime. (May 10, 2019). *Let's Make It Easier for Kids to Visit Incarcerated Parents*. The Marshall Project. <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2019/05/10/let-s-make-it-easier-for-kids-to-visit-incarcerated-parents>.

⁸¹ Joyce, Jaime. (May 10, 2019). *Let's Make It Easier for Kids to Visit Incarcerated Parents*. The Marshall Project. <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2019/05/10/let-s-make-it-easier-for-kids-to-visit-incarcerated-parents>.

- A. Studies have shown that phone calls with family members reduce risk of recidivism post-release.⁸² In fact, one study found that phone calls to family members were even more closely associated with reductions in recidivism than in-person visitation.⁸³
- B. Access to family phone calls improves relationship quality between incarcerated parents and their children, which mitigates some of the traumatic consequences of parental incarceration on children.⁸⁴
- C. Unfortunately, communicating by phone in prison can be difficult. People wait in line to use the limited phones which are often broken, phone access is limited to certain times that may not line up with when their families are available to talk, and phone calls from prison can be expensive.⁸⁵
 1. Though progress has been made in capping the cost of phone calls in state-run prisons, phone calls in county- and city-run jails can still cost \$1 per minute or more, and the private companies that manage the system often impose other hidden fees, further compounding the financial strain of incarceration on families.⁸⁶

IV. **Receiving physical mail while in prison is critical and humanizing.**

- A. Mail services are crucial for legal correspondence, educational opportunities, and emotional well-being: receiving and sending physical letters helps strengthen relationships with loved ones and feelings of connectedness.⁸⁷
- B. Physical mail can be relatively cheap to send and receive, and can be written and read (and re-read) at one's own pace.⁸⁸
- C. **"There's something about that mail coming through the slot and hearing your name get called that reminds you how valued you are"** - Marcus Bullock, who was incarcerated for 8 years from the age of 15 and who founded Flikshop, an app that helps people stay in contact with their incarcerated loved ones.⁸⁹
- D. **Despite its clear benefits, access to mail correspondence is under attack.**
 1. In one study, incarcerated mothers expressed the difficulties of communicating with their children by mail: many were not allowed to receive mail with crayon or other markings, supplies like envelopes and stamps cost money, and it is difficult to locate a child's address if they are staying with relatives or foster families.⁹⁰

⁸² Wang, L. (2021). *Research roundup: The positive impacts of family contact for incarcerated people and their families*. Prison Policy Initiative.

https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/12/21/family_contact/#:~:text=Consistent%20phone%20calls%20to%20family%20improve%20relationships&text=As%20with%20visitation%2C%20family%20phone,odds%20of%20returning%20to%20prison.

⁸³ Barrick, K., Lattimore, P.K., & Visher, C.A. (June 11, 2014). Reentering Women: The Impact of Social Ties on Long-Term Recidivism. *The Prison Journal*, 94(3). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0032885514537596>.

⁸⁴ Haverkate, D. L. & Wright, K. A. (2020). The differential effects of prison contact on parent-child relationship quality and child behavioral changes. *Corrections: Policy, Practice, & Research*, 5: 222-244. https://static.prisonpolicy.org/scans/Haverkate_Wright_2020.pdf.

⁸⁵ Dworsky, A., Fedock, G., Schlecht, C., Malcolme, M., Murray, C., & Hazel, C. (2020). Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children in Illinois. *Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration*. <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Incarcerated-Mothers-FINAL-2020.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Wagner, P. & Jones, A. (2019). *State of Phone Justice: Local jails, state prisons and private phone providers*. Prison Policy Initiative. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/phones/state_of_phone_justice.html.

⁸⁷ Nahra, A. & Arzy, L. (September 29, 2020). Why Mail Service Is So Important to People in Prison. Brennan Center for Justice. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/why-mail-service-so-important-people-prison>.

⁸⁸ Wang, L. (December 21, 2021). *Research roundup: The positive impacts of family contact for incarcerated people and their families*. Prison Policy Initiative. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/12/21/family_contact/.

⁸⁹ Dholakia, N. (March 1, 2022). *More and More Prisons are Banning Mail*. Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/news/more-and-more-prisons-are-banning-mail>.

⁹⁰ Dworsky, A., Fedock, G., Schlecht, C., Malcolme, M., Murray, C., & Hazel, C. (2020). Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children in Illinois. *Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration*. <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Incarcerated-Mothers-FINAL-2020.pdf>.

2. To add insult to injury, lawmakers have recently enacted even stricter regulations on physical mail—sometimes banning it completely—making it more and more difficult for incarcerated people to communicate with their loved ones.⁹¹
 - a) A number of states have enacted “postcard-only” policies, limiting incarcerated people to postcards, which are smaller and therefore more expensive.⁹²
 - b) Many jurisdictions have banned physical mail and instead use for-profit digitization services to scan mail and transform it into a digital copy that people can only view on a personal tablet or communal kiosk.⁹³ This not only removes the physical connection of a letter, but is also often a low-quality or blurry scan, violates privacy, and relies on slow and sometimes spotty technology.⁹⁴ If a person wants a physical copy of their mail (not the original), they have to pay a fee to have it printed.⁹⁵
 - c) These policies strip the humanity out of mail correspondence: “Having a physical picture or having a physical card cannot compare to a scanned version that is printed from the kiosk” - Tatiana Sparks, whose husband is incarcerated in Florida.⁹⁶
 - d) The stated purpose of these bans and limitations is to prevent contraband from entering prisons, despite repeatedly proven evidence that contraband rarely enters prison through mail. The only party who benefits here is the for-profit digitization companies.⁹⁷

V. Programs that promote educational and job opportunities help connect incarcerated people to the community to which they will return.

- A. Workforce development programs that help incarcerated people develop skills and secure jobs before release promote economic stability, connect people with community institutions, and reduce recidivism, ensuring that people have the resources to escape the cycle of criminal legal system involvement and poverty.⁹⁸
 1. One study found that people who participate in job training in prison were 51% more likely to be employed 8 months post-release.⁹⁹

⁹¹ Dholakia, N. (March 1, 2022). *More and More Prisons are Banning Mail*. Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/news/more-and-more-prisons-are-banning-mail>.

⁹² Wang, L. (December 21, 2021). *Research roundup: The positive impacts of family contact for incarcerated people and their families*. Prison Policy Initiative. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/12/21/family_contact/.

⁹³ Dholakia, N. (March 1, 2022). *More and More Prisons are Banning Mail*. Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/news/more-and-more-prisons-are-banning-mail>.

⁹⁴ Wang, L. (December 21, 2021). *Research roundup: The positive impacts of family contact for incarcerated people and their families*. Prison Policy Initiative. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/12/21/family_contact/.

⁹⁵ Dholakia, N. (March 1, 2022). *More and More Prisons are Banning Mail*. Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/news/more-and-more-prisons-are-banning-mail>.

⁹⁶ Dholakia, N. (March 1, 2022). *More and More Prisons are Banning Mail*. Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/news/more-and-more-prisons-are-banning-mail>.

⁹⁷ Dholakia, N. (March 1, 2022). *More and More Prisons are Banning Mail*. Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/news/more-and-more-prisons-are-banning-mail>.

⁹⁸ Duwe, G. & Henry-Nickie, M. (April 2021). *A better path forward for criminal justice: Training and employment for correctional populations*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-better-path-forward-for-criminal-justice-training-and-employment-for-correctional-populations/>.

⁹⁹ Visser, C., Debus, S., & Yahner, J. (October 2008). *Employment after Prison: A Longitudinal Study of Releasees in Three States*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/32106/411778-Employment-after-Prison-A-Longitudinal-Study-of-Releasees-in-Three-States.PDF>.

2. A 2008 Delaware Workforce Development Program increased the likelihood that formerly incarcerated people would be employed post-release by 50%. Participants who received vocational training were 36% more likely to be employed full-time (76% compared to 56%) and had higher monthly incomes..¹⁰⁰
 3. The Department of Labor pilot program, Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP), improved workplace readiness by 85% and participants had a recidivism rate of 20% after one year post-release (significantly lower than national trends)..^{101, 102}
- B. Educational opportunities while in prison are correlated to stability post-release and lower recidivism rates..^{103, 104}
1. One study found that **incarcerated people who participated in correctional education programs were 13% more likely to be employed post-release and 43% less likely to recidivate**..¹⁰⁵
 2. The Last Mile, a California-based program that provides educational and coding opportunities to incarcerated people, boasts a 0% recidivism rate among its participants..¹⁰⁶
 3. Research shows that prisons with college programs have fewer violent incidents, which improves safety for both staff and incarcerated people..¹⁰⁷
 4. Access to education helps people feel confident and gain social skills..¹⁰⁸ and makes them eager to succeed, to make their children proud, and to avoid future interactions with the criminal legal system..¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰ Visher, C., Smolter, N., & O'Connell, D. (2010). Workforce development program: A pilot study of its impact in the U.S. Probation Office, District of Delaware. *Federal Probation*, 74(3). https://www.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/74_3_4_0.pdf.

¹⁰¹ Duwe, G. & Henry-Nickie, M. (April 2021). *A better path forward for criminal justice: Training and employment for correctional populations*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-better-path-forward-for-criminal-justice-training-and-employment-for-correctional-populations/>.

¹⁰² Antenangeli, L. & Durose, M.R. (September 2021). *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 24 States in 2008: A 10-Year Follow-Up Period (2008-2018)*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/rpr24s0810yfup0818.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Duwe, G. & Henry-Nickie, M. (April 2021). *A better path forward for criminal justice: Training and employment for correctional populations*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-better-path-forward-for-criminal-justice-training-and-employment-for-correctional-populations/>.

¹⁰⁴ Ellison, M., Szifris, K., Horan, R. & Fox, C. (March 22, 2017). A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the effectiveness of prison education in reducing recidivism and increasing employment. *Probation Journal*, 64(2). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0264550517699290>.

¹⁰⁵ Davis, L.M., Bozick, R., Steele, J.L., Saunders, J., & Miles, J.N.V. (2013). *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html.

¹⁰⁶ The Last Mile. (Last visited January 17, 2023). <https://thelastmile.org/about/#story>.

¹⁰⁷ *Expanding Access to Postsecondary Education in Prison*. (January 2017). Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/publications/postsecondary-education-in-prison-fact-sheet-for-correction-leaders>.

¹⁰⁸ Bender, K. (March 2, 2018). *Education Opportunities in Prison Are Key to Reducing Crime*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/education-opportunities-prison-key-reducing-crime/>.

¹⁰⁹ *Why Invest in College Prisons?* (Last visited January 17, 2023). Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/research/why-invest-in-college-in-prisons>.

Community ties, social networks, and social support PREVENT violence and crime in the first place.

- I. **Social cohesion, collective efficacy, and trust make neighborhoods safer.**^{110, 111}
 - A. Studies have shown that social cohesion—feeling connected to one another—decreases disorder in neighborhoods, which decreases crime.¹¹² In other words, when neighbors report stronger social ties, crime and violence go down.
 - B. One study found that homicide rates were significantly lower in neighborhoods with higher social trust.¹¹³
- II. **Healthy, stable relationships can prevent criminal legal system involvement.**¹¹⁴
 - A. Researchers have repeatedly found strong correlations between poor familial relationships and crime, particularly for relationships with children and parents.¹¹⁵
 - B. A study in Oregon found that having a stable romantic relationship reduced the likelihood of arrest for men who were at higher risk of criminal legal involvement.¹¹⁶
 - C. Having support from romantic partners has been shown to mitigate risk of criminal legal involvement for young adults, and supportive relationships with parents are similarly effective for single young adults.¹¹⁷
 - D. Parental support helps people develop empathy, which is a preventative factor against criminal involvement.¹¹⁸
 - E. One study found that having a positive relationship with one's sibling—especially when combined with positive relationships with one's parents—reduces the likelihood of engaging in criminal activities toward others, theft, vandalism, and substance use.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁰ Sackett, C. (2016). *Neighborhoods and Violent Crime*. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer16/highlight2.html>.

¹¹¹ Wike, R. & Holzwart, K. (April 15, 2008). *Where Trust is High, Crime and Corruption are Low*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2008/04/15/where-trust-is-high-crime-and-corruption-are-low/>.

¹¹² Markowitz, F.E. & Bellair, P.E. (May 2001). Extending social disorganization theory: Modeling the relationships between cohesion, disorder, and fear. *Criminology*, 39(2): 293.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229642048_Extending_social_disorganization_theory_Modeling_the_relationships_between_cohesion_disorder_and_fear.

¹¹³ Messner, S.F., Rosenfeld, R., & Baumer, E.P. (December 2004). Dimensions of Social Capital and Rates of Criminal Homicide. *American Sociological Review*, 69(6): 882-903.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254078767_Dimensions_of_Social_Capital_and_Rates_of_Criminal_Homicide.

¹¹⁴ Petrosino, A., Derzon, J.H., & Lavenberg, J.A. (January 2009). the role of the family in Crime and Delinquency: evidence from Prior Quantitative reviews. *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice*, 6(2): 108-132.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/224049275_the_role_of_the_family_in_Crime_and_Delinquency_evidence_from_Prior_Quantitative_reviews.

¹¹⁵ Petrosino, A., Derzon, J.H., & Lavenberg, J.A. (January 2009). the role of the family in Crime and Delinquency: evidence from Prior Quantitative reviews. *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice*, 6(2): 108-132.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/224049275_the_role_of_the_family_in_Crime_and_Delinquency_evidence_from_Prior_Quantitative_reviews.

¹¹⁶ Capaldi, D.M., Kim, H.K., & Owen, L.D. (May 2008). Romantic Partners' Influence on Men's Likelihood of Arrest in Early Adulthood. *Criminology*, 46(2): 267-299. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2600871/>.

¹¹⁷ Meeus, W.H.J., Branje, S., & Overbeek G. (November 2004). Parents and partners in crime: A six-year longitudinal study on changes in supportive relationships and delinquency in adolescence and young adulthood. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45(7): 1288-98. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8377759_Parents_and_partners_in_crime_A_six-year_longitudinal_study_on_changes_in_supportive_relationships_and_delinquency_in_adolescence_and_young_adulthood.

¹¹⁸ Walters, G.D. (February 22, 2021). In search of a mechanism: Mediating the perceived parental support–delinquency relationship with child empathy. *Journal of Moral Education*, 5(3):336-352. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03057240.2021.1872511>.

¹¹⁹ Jihyun, A. (2019). *The Impact of Family Contexts and Sibling Relationships on Youth Behavior Outcomes*. Columbia University. <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/d8-wf4r-rg83>.

- III. **Ties to community institutions such as churches,¹²⁰ local nonprofit organizations,¹²¹ mentorship programs,¹²² and sports teams¹²³ have been shown to prevent criminal legal involvement, especially for youth.**
- IV. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) lists mentorship programs as one of the top four strategies for preventing youth violence, which is considered an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE).¹²⁴
- V. Community-based approaches to crime prevention, like community-based violence intervention (CVI) programs that leverage community ties to reduce crime and violence, have been successful in lowering crime rates.¹²⁵
 - A. **CVI programs across the country have lowered violent crime by up to 60%.¹²⁶**
 - B. One reason these programs work is that they are rooted *within* communities, ensuring that people who are at risk of criminal legal system involvement have support from people and institutions they already trust.¹²⁷
- VI. The very existence of community centers and other spaces that connect people to one another is associated with less crime.¹²⁸
 - A. **A 20-year study spanning 264 American cities found that *every 10 additional community organizations led to a 9% reduction in the murder rate, a 6% reduction in the violent crime rate, and a 4% reduction in the property crime rate.*¹²⁹**
- VII. One study found that a neighborhood-level program designed to increase community ties—which they measured based on “association density”, or the number of social associations per capita—led to a 28% reduction in “intimate” crimes (crimes where the perpetrator and victim were socially close) in the short term, a reduction in drug crimes in the long term, and an overall reduction in young people accused of crimes.¹³⁰
 - A. Importantly, this study controls for factors like improved health and employment, and determines that **it is indeed a “more robust social fabric” that reduces crime.**

¹²⁰ Johnson, B.R. (2008). *The Role of African-American Churches in Reducing Crime Among Black Youth*. Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion. <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/24230.pdf>.

¹²¹ Sharkey, P., Torrats-Espinosa, G., & Takyar, D. (October 25, 2017). Community and the Crime Decline: The Causal Effect of Local Nonprofits on Violent Crime. *American Sociological Review*, 82(6). <https://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/VThwp5JSFz7eNKF5GkxW/full>.

¹²² DuBois, D.L. (May 26, 2021). Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Promising Intervention for Delinquency Prevention. *National Institute of Justice*. <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/mentoring-programs-youth-promising-intervention-delinquency-prevention>.

¹²³ Spruit, A., van der Put, C., van Vugt, E., & Stams, G.J. (May 2018). Predictors of Intervention Success in a Sports-Based Program for Adolescents at Risk of Juvenile Delinquency. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 62(6). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5904749/>.

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Conclusion

The carceral system undermines well-being and public safety by destroying human connection, removing people from their homes, severing their community ties, and isolating them from the people and places that make them feel whole. The impact is twofold: there is the negative psychological and emotional impact of stigma and isolation, as well as the logistical impact of losing the kind of connections that can open doors to housing, employment, education, and other crucial resources. The combined effect is one which continually undermines the success of individuals who have experienced criminalization.

In order to prevent violence, preserve humanity, stabilize neighborhoods, and improve public safety, policymakers should prioritize practices that foster community connections. **The surest way to improve community connection is to reduce the number of people whose ties are severed by the criminal punishment system, shrinking its scope and reducing both arrests and incarceration.**