



# *Community Ties, Public Safety, and Reentry*

## *Residents' Perspectives*

JOCELYN FONTAINE AND DOUGLAS GILCHRIST-SCOTT

SAFER RETURN DEMONSTRATION EVALUATION  
INTERIM REPORT NO. 2  
MARCH 2014



Cover image from Flickr user Eric Allix Rogers (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

Copyright © March 2014. The Urban Institute. The views expressed are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

Permission is granted for reproduction of this file, with attribution to the Urban Institute.

This project was supported by Grants 07-87946-001-HCD, 09-92418-000-HCD, and 11-98490-000-USP awarded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

The authors extend their gratitude to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for generously supporting this research endeavor. The authors thank Craig Howard, Alaina Harkness, and Maurice Classen of the Foundation's Community and Economic Development Program and former Foundation program officer, Herman Brewer, for their guidance and assistance throughout the project. The authors are also thankful for the expert advice from their Urban Institute colleagues provided by Meagan Cahill, who provided excellent comments in her review of the final document and Bryce Peterson, who provided research assistance.



## **Safer Return Demonstration and Evaluation**

With funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Safer Return Demonstration was implemented in the East Garfield Park neighborhood of Chicago, IL, in spring 2008. Safer Return is a community-based, comprehensive model founded on best and promising practices in the prisoner reentry field. The model was codesigned by the Safer Foundation and the Urban Institute in consultation with other reentry experts. Safer Return recruits individuals soon-to-be or recently released from the Illinois Department of Corrections to the East Garfield Park neighborhood. The community-based services Safer Return provides are voluntary and available to any adult returning from prison to the targeted community, regardless of prison sentence, criminal history, age, or gender.

Safer Return was implemented in the East Garfield Park community based, in part, on analyses by the Urban Institute (the Institute) showing that before the demonstration, just six of Chicago's 76 communities accounted for more than one-third of all prisoners returning to Chicago in 2001 (La Vigne et al. 2003). These neighborhoods also tended to have limited institutional investment and high concentrations of crime and poverty (Lynch and Sabol 2001). East Garfield Park was one of these six high-density prisoner reentry communities and therefore demonstrated a strong need for the type of enhanced, innovative reentry services that Safer Return offers. Existing partnerships in the East Garfield Park neighborhood presented the Safer Foundation with a unique opportunity to leverage neighborhood partnerships toward better reentry outcomes for former prisoners, their families, and the larger community.

Safer Return intends to leverage community capacity, reform institutions, and address the needs of returning prisoners and their family members while maintaining public safety. Specifically, to increase public safety and the successful reintegration of people coming home from prison, Safer Return intends to (1) address the key individual needs of formerly incarcerated persons, such as gainful employment; (2) improve the local conditions that present barriers to successful reentry, such as limited access to prosocial activities and positive role models; and (3) introduce system reforms, such as comprehensive strengths-based case management and neighborhood-based parole officers. To meet these three goals, the Safer Foundation, an agency with a long history of providing employment services to those with criminal histories, has partnered with different public and private agencies to provide services to formerly incarcerated persons living in the East Garfield Park neighborhood. In general, the primary beneficiaries of the Safer Return program are formerly incarcerated persons released from state prison to the East Garfield Park community; secondary beneficiaries include family members of Safer Return participants as well as the larger East Garfield Park community.

Using a quasi-experimental design, the Institute is conducting a process, impact, and cost evaluation of the Safer Return Demonstration. Using semistructured interviews, field observations, programmatic data, official government records, and surveys of formerly incarcerated persons, their family and social support members, and community members, the evaluation will answer three main questions. First, does Safer Return lead to more-coordinated planning and integrated service provision among justice agencies, community-based service providers, and other private entities (process evaluation)? Second, do participants in Safer Return, their family and social support members, and the East Garfield Park community demonstrate better outcomes than comparison subjects (impact evaluation)? Third, do the benefits of Safer Return exceed the costs (cost evaluation)?

## **Introduction**

This research brief presents baseline data from surveys of community residents conducted in November 2009 in the East Garfield Park (treatment) and West Englewood (comparison) communities. The community surveys were implemented for two purposes: first, to contextualize the communities to which formerly incarcerated persons in the evaluation return—helping the Institute to better understand the reentry experiences of formerly incarcerated persons in these two neighborhoods; and second, to determine whether East Garfield Park residents exhibit better outcomes, over time, than West Englewood, particularly with respect to perceptions of crime and safety, the quality of neighborhood institutions and resources, and formerly incarcerated persons. The survey data of residents' perceptions of the reentry

context are critical to developing a fuller understanding of the reentry outcomes of formerly incarcerated persons included in the research sample. Additional resident surveys were completed in May 2011 and November 2012 and findings from those surveys will be the topic of forthcoming reports.

Following a general description of the two neighborhoods, the report details the community survey methodology, including the development of the survey instrument. The next section discusses the findings from the survey on perceptions of quality of life, crime, victimization, fear of crime, and formerly incarcerated persons. The final section discusses the implications of the findings for the Safer Return Demonstration and the evaluation.

## **East Garfield Park and West Englewood**

Upon implementation in 2008, Safer Return services were targeted to individuals coming from prison to the East Garfield Park community. Located on the west side of Chicago, East Garfield Park is a high-density prisoner reentry community with high levels of economic and social disadvantage. Following an analysis of data in 2008 on crime trends, sociodemographic characteristics, and reentry patterns, the Institute selected West Englewood as the comparison community for East Garfield Park for the purposes of the quasi-experimental evaluation. Located on the south side of Chicago, West Englewood is also a high-density prisoner reentry community with high levels of crime, economic, and social disadvantage that was, in fact, also considered as a demonstration site initially.

Shortly after implementation of Safer Return began, service delivery in the Demonstration community was expanded to include West Garfield Park. Therefore, for the purposes of this brief and the overall evaluation we refer to the demonstration community as Garfield Park, since it includes East and West Garfield Park. The boundaries for the Safer Return catchment community was Governors Parkway (north), Talman Street (east), Taylor/Arlington Streets (south), and Cicero Avenue (west).

Table 1 summarizes the two communities along some of the key characteristics known to be related to crime and prisoner reentry. As shown in the table, the population in West Englewood is comparable to Garfield Park, and each neighborhood is majority African American/black with higher levels of poverty, female-headed households with children, and lower educational attainment than national averages. At the time of Safer Return's implementation, in 2008, the communities also had crime rates that were higher than the city average; 4,500 index crimes were reported in Garfield Park (East and West) and 4,600 index crimes were reported in West Englewood (Chicago Police Department n.d.). One difference between the two communities was the rate of individuals returning from state prison to the respective communities: Garfield Park had more than double the reentry rate of West Englewood around the start of the demonstration. West Englewood has the sixth largest annual reentry population in the city, while East Garfield Park has the second largest (La Vigne et al. 2003).

## **Methodology**

The goal of the community surveys was twofold: first, to provide descriptive information on the neighborhoods where formerly incarcerated persons return, and second, to explore whether there have been changes in the neighborhood context over time, based on the perceptions of the community residents in both neighborhoods. The results presented in this report, from the first wave of community surveys, clarify the similarities and differences between the two communities, providing relevant demographic profiles, as well as residents' perceptions of their community context. In addition, this report provides a baseline for detecting changes in residents' perceptions over time, to lay the groundwork for understanding whether and how those perceptions were associated with implementation of the Safer Return Demonstration project. A second wave of community surveys was implemented in May 2011 and a final, third wave of community surveys was implemented in November 2012.



**Table 1. Characteristics of Garfield Park and West Englewood Communities**

	Garfield Park <sup>a</sup>	West Englewood <sup>b</sup>
Reentry rate (prisoners/1,000 residents) <sup>c</sup>	31.1	18.8
Community characteristics		
Total population	42,803	41,973
Population density (population/square mile)	14,375	13,364
Owner-occupied households	27.7%	47.5%
Vacant housing units	26.6%	23.1%
Sociodemographic characteristics		
African American/black <sup>d</sup>	95.0%	95.1%
Per capita income (2011 inflation-adjusted dollars) <sup>d</sup>	\$12,690	\$11,380
Female-headed households with children <sup>e</sup>	48.0%	40.4%
Individuals living below the poverty line <sup>f</sup>	41.9%	40.6%
Families living below the poverty line <sup>e</sup>	37.9%	32.9%
Adults who have earned a high school degree or GED <sup>g</sup>	36.7%	34.8%
Adults who have had some college education <sup>g</sup>	22.9%	25.5%
Adults who have earned an associate's degree or higher <sup>g</sup>	16.1%	12.1%
Never married persons <sup>h</sup>	61.9%	57.5%
Married persons <sup>h</sup>	17.0%	18.9%
Divorced, separated, or widowed persons <sup>h</sup>	21.0%	23.6%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of data from the Illinois Department of Corrections, 2004–2006 and the American Communities Survey, 2007–2011.

<sup>a</sup> Safer Return catchment area (Governors Parkway, Talman, Taylor/Arlington, and Cicero) includes the East Garfield Park and West Garfield Park community areas, which include parts of the 60612 and 60624 zip codes.

<sup>b</sup> 60636 zip code

<sup>c</sup> Reentry rate in Garfield Park was calculated using data on releases to zip codes 60612 and 60624 and the corresponding population numbers for those zip codes.

<sup>d</sup> The total population.

<sup>e</sup> The total number of families.

<sup>f</sup> The population for whom poverty status is determined.

<sup>g</sup> Persons 25 and older.

<sup>h</sup> Persons 15 and older.

The 75-question survey was designed to take approximately 15–20 minutes to administer and contained questions about (1) the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, including neighborhood residency, quality of life, number of neighborhood friendships, and perceptions of and experiences with crime; (2) victimization, fear of crime and victimization, and neighborhood resources and organizations, such as the police department; (3) neighborhood social cohesion and control (i.e., collective efficacy); and (4) the return of prisoners to their community. The surveys were developed by the Institute to assess individuals' perceptions of their surroundings along standard domains that have long been associated with crime, victimization, neighborhood disorder, and reentry (see Kubrin and Stewart 2007; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Wehrman 2010).

To garner a sample of residents in the two neighborhoods, the research team implemented a variation on the Red Hook Survey model.<sup>1</sup> To implement the surveys, Institute researchers trained local residents recruited by the Safer Foundation who were familiar with the two neighborhoods. During a period of five days in November 2009, including weekend days, teams of two canvassed the two neighborhoods to conduct the surveys under the supervision of the Institute and community-specific field supervisors (also local residents). Field supervisors, in consultation with the Institute, attempted to target each quadrant of the two neighborhoods to gather a representative sample of residents of the entire neighborhood.

Individuals were eligible to participate in the survey if they self-identified as living in the neighborhood and were over the age of 18. Interviewers recruited respondents by knocking on their doors, visiting neighborhood businesses and churches, and speaking to them on the neighborhood streets. Participants were offered a modest, non-monetary incentive for completing the survey. In total, 382 surveys were administered and results from 354 surveys were considered valid and therefore analyzed

and included in this report. Twenty-eight surveys were dropped from the analysis because the respondent did not live within the two community areas. As shown in the table 2, survey teams in Garfield Park recruited participants primarily by speaking to residents on the street (78 percent) while survey teams in West Englewood recruited participants primarily by knocking on resident doors (60 percent). In total, 159 Garfield Park resident surveys were administered and analyzed and 195 West Englewood resident surveys were administered and analyzed.

**Table 2. Recruitment Method, by Community**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Knocking on doors	12 7.5%	118 60.5%
On the street	124 78.0%	33 16.9%
Community- or faith-based organizations	23 14.5%	44 22.6%
Total	159	195

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

## Findings

### Sociodemographics

The sociodemographic profile of survey respondents is presented in table 3. The majority of survey respondents self-identified as African American/black, middle-aged, and never married, with limited annual incomes, low educational attainment, and daily attendance at religious services. Survey respondents also reported long tenure in the neighborhoods and in their current home. With a few exceptions, notably educational attainment, the demographic breakdown of respondents recruited for the survey generally mirrors the data summarized in table 1. It appears that the local surveyors recruited participants who, on average, were fairly representative of the overall neighborhood.

In both neighborhoods, responses were gathered from residents ranging in age from 21 years old to 82 years old in Garfield Park, and 19 to 90 years old in West Englewood. The gender of the respondents was not available. The average respondent was approximately 46 years old in both Garfield Park and West Englewood and had lived in the community for more than one decade. While respondents in West Englewood reported living in the community and their current home for significantly longer than Garfield Park respondents, in general, the survey was administered to adults with substantial tenure in their neighborhood. The overwhelming majority of respondents in each neighborhood identified as African American or black. Similar percentages of respondents in Garfield Park and West Englewood said they achieved a high school degree or GED and attended some college courses, but the educational breakdown of West Englewood respondents was significantly different than Garfield Park respondents.

More Garfield Park respondents reported annual incomes of less than \$10,000 than West Englewood respondents, but the breakdown of annual reported incomes was not significantly different in the two communities. The modal annual income category reported among respondents in each neighborhood was \$10,000 or less, with annual incomes of \$10,000 to \$19,999 as the second-most reported category in each neighborhood. The relationship status of respondents in the two neighborhoods were also comparable, with nearly half of the respondents in Garfield Park and West Englewood reporting having never been married (48 and 45 percent, respectively). Finally, church attendance was also comparable across the respondents in the two neighborhoods, as nearly the half of the respondents in Garfield Park and West Englewood reported at least weekly attendance (46 and 48 percent, respectively).

**Table 3. Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents, by Community**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Mean age (years)	45.5	46.0
Race <sup>a</sup> (percent)		
African American/black	97.4	97.3
White	1.3	1.1
Education* (percent)		
Less than high school degree	14.6	8.3
High school degree or GED	46.9	49.0
Some college	22.8	21.4
Two year college or vocational degree	8.9	9.9
Four year college degree	3.8	10.9
Attended graduate school	3.2	0.5
Annual Income (percent)		
Less than \$10,000	50.3	39.5
\$10,000 to \$29,999	29.9	35.1
\$30,000 to \$49,999	11.1	14.6
\$50,000 or more	8.8	9.9
Relationship status (percent)		
Never married	47.9	44.8
Divorced, separated, or widowed	26.0	24.1
Married or domestic partnership	26.0	31.0
Residential stability		
Mean years living in the community***	13.7	18.3
Mean years living in current home**	12.2	15.1
Religious service attendance (percent)		
Daily	10.3	12.0
Weekly	46.2	47.9
Monthly	14.7	12.0
A few times a year	23.7	19.8
Never	5.1	8.3

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests and chi-square tests, as appropriate.

<sup>a</sup> Respondents were permitted to report as many races and ethnicities as applied.

\*\* p < 0.05 \*\*\* p < 0.01. No estimates differ significantly at the p < 0.10 level.

## Quality of Life and Community Friendships

Residents were asked to rate their quality of life in the community on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 was very bad and 5 was very good), and to identify the number of friendships they had in the neighborhood, excluding friends in the same household. The quality of life question was used to gain a general perspective on residents' quality of life, outside of their ratings of specific neighborhood resources and deficits. The question on neighborhood friendship was used to understand how well respondents felt connected to other residents in the community. Each of these questions may be related to individuals' perceptions of neighborhood cohesion or collective efficacy.

The majority of respondents' impressions of their quality of life in the community were negative in both neighborhoods (table 4). At the same time, approximately one in three respondents in each neighborhood rated their quality of life in the middle of the scale (3 out of 5). On average, Garfield Park respondents reported a higher quality of life (average rating of 2.5 out of 5) than West Englewood respondents (2.2 out of 5) (not shown). The quality of life reported by West Englewood respondents was significantly different than the quality of life of Garfield Park respondents. As shown in table 4, more than half of the respondents in West Englewood (57 percent) had negative opinions (1 or 2 ratings) of the

quality of life in their neighborhood, while less than half of Garfield Park respondents had negative opinions of the quality of life in their neighborhood (47 percent). Notably, less than 10 percent of respondents in each neighborhood rated their quality of life as “excellent”.

With respect to neighborhood friendships, we found no significant differences between the neighborhood respondents. Responses were quite similar for West Englewood and Garfield Park respondents and almost equally distributed across the response categories. In general, the respondents appeared to vary considerably in the number of friendships they had in the neighborhood.

**Table 4. Quality of Life and Neighborhood Friendships Ratings, by Community (percent)**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Quality of life*		
1 (very bad)	35.4	40.5
2	11.4	16.9
3	34.2	32.8
4	10.1	6.2
5 (excellent)	8.9	3.6
Neighborhood friendships <sup>a</sup>		
None	25.8	28.9
1 to 2	22.2	11.9
3 to 9	22.8	26.8
10 or more	29.1	32.5

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests and chi-square tests, as appropriate.

<sup>a</sup> Excludes individuals living in the same household.

\*  $p < 0.10$ . No estimates differ significantly at the  $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.01$  levels.

## Collective Efficacy

To assess respondents’ connectedness and cohesion with other residents further, the survey included validated questions about social cohesion and informal social control developed by Morenoff and Sampson (1997). Research has consistently shown that social cohesion and social control, otherwise known as collective efficacy, are inversely correlated with crime, victimization, and delinquency (see Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush 2001; Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). Neighborhoods with greater levels of collective efficacy have been found to have lower rates of crime, victimization, and delinquency than neighborhoods with lower levels of collective efficacy (Sampson et al. 1997). Consistent with Sampson and colleagues’ measure of collective efficacy, respondents were asked several questions about the likelihood of their neighbors intervening in certain scenarios and another set of questions asked respondents about the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with certain statements. While the empirical relationship between collective efficacy and reentry has only been recently advanced in the social science literature (see Rose and Clear 2002), theory would suggest that high rates of returning prisoners may have a negative effect on collective efficacy and residents’ quality of life and perceptions of informal social control and cohesion.

Overall, Garfield Park and West Englewood respondents provided similar responses to the five validated questions assessing neighborhood social control:

1. If a group of children were skipping school and hanging out on a street corner, how likely is it that your neighbors would do something about it?
2. If some children were spray-painting graffiti on a local building, how likely is it that your neighbors would do something about it?
3. If a child was showing disrespect to an adult, how likely is it that people in your neighborhood would scold that child?
4. If there was a fight in front of your house and someone was beaten up or threatened, how likely is it that your neighbors would break it up?



5. Suppose that because of budget cuts the fire station closest to your home was going to be closed down by the city, how likely is it that neighborhood residents would organize to try to do something to keep the fire station open? (See table 5.)

On all five questions, with one exception, responses were skewed toward the lower end of the five-point distribution, indicating that they felt it was unlikely that residents would intervene in the five different scenarios assessing neighborhood social control. The only exception, which was a significant difference between the two neighborhoods, was Garfield Park respondents had higher mean ratings on whether they would intervene if the local fire station was to be closed than the mean rating among West Englewood respondents. A scale of social control ( $\alpha=0.83$ ) was not significantly different across the two communities' respondents ( $p < 0.10$ ), indicating statistically comparable ratings of social control among Garfield Park and West Englewood respondents.

**Table 5. Average Ratings of Neighborhood Social Control and Social Cohesion, by Community**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Social control <sup>a</sup> (very unlikely/very likely)		
Neighborhood children were skipping school	2.1	2.3
Children were spray-painting graffiti	2.6	2.7
Child was showing disrespect	2.5	2.5
Fight in front of your house and someone was beaten/threatened	2.5	2.7
Because of budget cuts, fire station was to be closed**	3.0	2.6
Social cohesion <sup>b</sup> (strongly disagree/strongly agree)		
This is a close-knit neighborhood*	2.8	2.5
People around here are willing to help their neighbors	2.7	2.5
People in this neighborhood generally don't get along***	2.9	2.4
People in this neighborhood do not share the same values**	3.0	2.6
People in this neighborhood can't be trusted	2.2	2.2

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

Notes: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests. Social control alpha reliability coefficient = 0.83; no statistically significant difference between communities in the "social control" scale,  $p < 0.10$ . Social cohesion alpha reliability coefficient = 0.62; statistically significant difference between communities in the "social cohesion" scale,  $p < 0.10$ .

<sup>a</sup> Social control rating on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = very unlikely and 5 = very likely on the five social control questions.

<sup>b</sup> Social cohesion rating on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree on the five social cohesion questions.

\*  $p < 0.10$  \*\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

We further explored residents' perceptions of social control in table 6. As shown in this table, with only one exception, a small percentage of respondents in both neighborhoods reported high levels of social control in their neighborhood. The exception is Garfield Park respondents' relatively high feelings about the likelihood of organizing to keep the local fire station open. Indeed, less than one-third of respondents in both neighborhoods agreed that residents would intervene if they observed children skipping school, agreed that residents would intervene if a child was disrespecting an adult, or agreed that residents would intervene if there was a fight in front of their house that resulted in someone being threatened or beaten. Nearly one-third of respondents in both neighborhoods agreed that residents would intervene if children were spray-painting graffiti on a local building.

Remarkably different from the questions assessing neighborhood social control, Garfield Park and West Englewood respondents provided different overall responses to the five questions assessing neighborhood social cohesion:

1. This is a close-knit neighborhood (agree/disagree).
2. People around here are willing to help their neighbors (agree/disagree).
3. People in this neighborhood generally don't get along with each other (agree/disagree).
4. People in this neighborhood do not share the same values (agree/disagree).
5. People in this neighborhood can be trusted (agree/disagree) (Table 5).

A scale of social cohesion ( $\alpha=0.62$ ) was significantly different across the two community respondents ( $p < 0.10$ ); although the scale appears only marginally reliable. On all five questions, with one exception, respondents in both communities skewed toward the lower end of the five-point distribution (indicating disagreement with the statements). Significantly more Garfield Park than West Englewood respondents disagreed that the neighborhood was close-knit, that people in the neighborhood generally do not get along, and that people in the neighborhood do not share the same values. While perhaps valid, these responses seem inconsistent, which may have contributed to the relative unreliability of the scale. For example, Garfield Park respondents expressed general disagreement that the neighborhood is close-knit while also expressing general disagreement that people in the neighborhood do not get along. There could have been some confusion over the wording of the questions, or perhaps respondents genuinely feel different about the degree to which the neighborhood is close-knit and gets along. Nevertheless, with the exception of the question assessing neighborhood trust, a greater percentage of Garfield Park respondents, as compared with West Englewood respondents, agreed with the questions assessing higher levels of social cohesion (table 6).

**Table 6. High Ratings<sup>a</sup> of Neighborhood Social Control and Social Cohesion, by Community (Percent)**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
<b>Social Control</b>		
Neighborhood children were skipping school	21.0	24.0
Children were spray-painting graffiti	34.4	35.6
Child was showing disrespect	30.3	28.3
Fight in front of your house and someone was beaten/threatened	27.7	32.8
Because of budget cuts, fire station was to be closed	43.9	28.9
<b>Social Cohesion</b>		
This is a close-knit neighborhood	34.8	23.7
People around here are willing to help their neighbors	30.1	23.0
People in this neighborhood generally don't get along	33.1	18.4
People in this neighborhood don't share the same values	38.9	25.9
People in this neighborhood can't be trusted	16.5	17.7

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

<sup>a</sup> Social control rating "4" or "5" on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = very unlikely and 5 = very likely on the five social control questions; social cohesion rating "4" or "5" on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree on the five social cohesion questions.

## Community Resources

To get a sense of the residents' feelings about the resources in their communities, some of which are critical to successful prisoner reentry, respondents were asked to rate the quality of community resources on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was very bad and 5 was excellent (tables 7 and 8). Across both neighborhoods, respondents had higher ratings for churches, soup kitchens, health clinics, and schools, and lower ratings of recreational centers. For example, more than two-thirds of the respondents in Garfield Park and West Englewood had high ratings of churches, far higher than ratings of other neighborhood resources. But the majority of Garfield Park residents also had high ratings of schools (58 percent) and health clinics (54 percent). Mean ratings of community resources were significantly different for Garfield Park respondents than West Englewood respondents for community churches, health clinics, schools, social services, and substance abuse treatment agencies. Indeed, of the eight community resources residents were asked to assess, Garfield Park respondents had higher average ratings than West Englewood respondents. A scale of community resources ( $\alpha=0.82$ ) was significantly different across the two communities ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 7. Average Ratings<sup>a</sup> of Community Resources, by Community**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Churches*	4.2	3.9
Soup kitchens	3.3	3.2
Health clinics*	3.3	3.1
Recreational centers	2.3	2.1
Schools***	3.6	3.1
Parks and public spaces	2.9	2.7
Social service agencies*	2.9	2.6
Substance abuse treatment agencies*	2.9	2.5

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests and chi-square tests, as appropriate. Alpha reliability coefficient = 0.82; statistically significant difference between communities in the "resources" scale,  $p < 0.01$ .

<sup>a</sup> Rating on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = very bad and 5 = excellent.

\*  $p < 0.10$  \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . No estimates differ significantly at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

**Table 8. High Ratings<sup>a</sup> of Community Resources, by Community (percent)**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Churches	72.5	67.6
Soup kitchens	49.2	48.3
Health clinics	53.5	39.1
Recreational centers	25.4	19.0
Schools	57.3	39.3
Parks and public spaces	35.9	28.9
Social service agencies	39.5	27.7
Substance abuse treatment agencies	40.1	31.7

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

<sup>a</sup> Rating "4" or "5" on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = very bad and 5 = excellent.

## Crime, Fear of Crime, and Victimization

As previously mentioned, Garfield Park and West Englewood are two high-crime, high-reentry neighborhoods. Safer Return intended to increase the successful reentry of returning citizens, while increasing public safety in Garfield Park relative to the comparison community. To understand residents' perspectives on the level of and their experiences with violence, crime, and disorder, respondents were asked about their perceptions of neighborhood safety, the frequency with which they engage in precautionary behavior out of concern for their safety, and their victimization history. Given that this survey was conducted at one point in time and did not ask about the timing of victimization relative to the timing of precautionary behavior, we do not know whether levels of community crime and personal victimization lead to precautionary behavior or perhaps, whether precautionary behavior leads to (presumably less) crime and victimization. Therefore, the tables 9–15 and findings that discuss crime, victimization, and precautionary behavior do so independently, but with an understanding that they are likely interrelated.

As shown in table 9, respondents in each community felt key neighborhood landmarks were relatively dangerous, as compared to safe. On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 was dangerous and 5 was very safe), all six of the community landmarks received average ratings below 3 among respondents in each community. Significant differences between the community respondents were observed along several measures assessing safety and a scale of neighborhood safety ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ) was significantly different in the two communities ( $p < 0.01$ ). On each community landmark, Garfield Park respondents had higher ratings (i.e., they thought they were safer) than West Englewood respondents. For example, while one-third of respondents in Garfield Park felt that the nearest public transportation stop and neighborhood stores were safe, fewer than two in five respondents in West Englewood felt similarly about these two landmarks (table 10).

**Table 9. Average Ratings<sup>a</sup> of the Safety of Community Landmarks, by Community**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Respondent's block	2.7	2.5
Respondent's neighborhood***	2.6	2.2
Way to and from public transportation**	2.8	2.4
The nearest public transportation stop***	2.8	2.4
Neighborhood stores***	2.9	2.3
Neighborhood parks*	2.4	2.2

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests.

<sup>a</sup> Rating on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = dangerous and 5 = very safe. Alpha reliability coefficient = 0.87; statistically significant difference between communities in the "neighborhood safety" scale,  $p < 0.01$ .

\*  $p < 0.10$  \*\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 10. High Ratings<sup>a</sup> of Community Landmarks' Safety, by Community (percent)**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Respondent's block	28.5	21.8
Respondent's neighborhood	22.9	13.4
Way to and from public transportation	26.3	18.3
The nearest public transportation stop	32.5	18.4
Neighborhood stores	33.5	18.7
Neighborhood parks	20.1	14.0

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

<sup>a</sup> Rating "4" or "5" on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = dangerous and 5 = very safe.

To understand how individuals' perceptions of crime are associated with certain precautionary behaviors, respondents were asked how often they ever avoided certain streets, stayed in at night, did not travel alone, avoided certain buildings, and carried a weapon (table 11) out of concern for their own safety. With the exception of carrying a weapon—a response that may have been underreported given the sensitivity of the question—respondents in both neighborhoods skewed toward the lower end of the five-point scale. This indicated that they engaged in these behaviors often. Few survey respondents in each community reported never engaging in certain precautionary behaviors—with the exception of carrying a weapon. It appeared that the frequency of precautionary behaviors varied across the community respondents in interesting ways. As shown in table 12, while Garfield Park respondents reported to engage in some precautionary behaviors less often than West Englewood respondents (e.g., avoiding certain streets), among other behaviors, West Englewood respondents reported less engagement in some precautionary behaviors (e.g., staying in at night). Significant differences in precautionary behavior between the communities were observed on avoiding certain streets, avoiding certain buildings, and carrying a weapon.

**Table 11. Average Ratings<sup>a</sup> of Precautionary Behaviors Out of Concern for Own Safety, by Community**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Avoid certain streets*	2.4	2.2
Stay in at night	2.2	2.3
Not travel alone	2.2	2.3
Avoid certain buildings*	2.3	2.1
Carry a weapon**	3.3	3.1

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

Notes: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests. Alpha reliability coefficient = 0.62, without carry a weapon, alpha reliability coefficient = 0.71.

<sup>a</sup> Rating on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 = all of the time, 2 = most of the time, 3 = some of the time, and 4 = never.

\*  $p < 0.10$  \*\*  $p < 0.05$ . No estimates were statistically significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level.

**Table 12. Reports of Never Engaging<sup>a</sup> in Precautionary Behaviors Out of Concern for Own Safety, by Community (percent)**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Avoid certain streets	24.8	17.4
Stay in at night	15.2	20.6
Not travel alone	16.0	20.5
Avoid certain buildings	22.2	19.1
Carry a weapon	70.3	59.3

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

<sup>a</sup> Rating “4”, never on a scale of 1 to 4; where 1 = all of the time and 4 = never.

Providing context for cautionary behavior, the respondents were asked how often crimes had occurred in their neighborhood over the past year and whether they had been victimized by any crime in the past year. As shown in table 13, ratings on the frequency of certain crimes skewed toward the higher end, indicating that respondents perceived the crimes as occurring often. There were a few significant differences in the perceived frequency of crimes across community respondents. Overall, it appears that the perceived frequency of crime varies by crime across the community respondents. In general, respondents’ perceptions are that rapes or sexual assaults occur less frequently than do shootings or attempted shootings. Indeed, more than half of the respondents in Garfield Park and West Englewood felt that a shooting or shooting attempt occurred at least weekly during the past year, compared with fewer than one-third reporting that a rape or sexual assault occurred at least weekly in that same period (table 14). The difference in the perceived frequency of certain criminal events is probably related to the likelihood a crime would come to the attention of the larger community and persons not involved in the criminal activity. That is, it is likely that shootings and shooting attempts more often come to the attention of the larger community than such crimes as sexual assaults or home burglaries. The difference in perceived frequency is also likely since sexual assaults and home burglaries do not usually receive the same local media attention as shootings and are reported less frequently.

**Table 13. Average Ratings<sup>a</sup> of the Frequency of Crimes over the Past Year, by Community**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Violent fight between neighbors	3.1	3.3
Mugging or robbery	3.2	3.0
Home burglary*	3.5	3.2
Car theft**	3.5	3.1
Assault	2.8	3.0
Rape or sexual assault*	3.8	3.5
Stabbing or shooting event	3.1	3.1
Shooting or shooting attempt	2.5	2.4

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests. Alpha reliability coefficient = 0.94.

<sup>a</sup> Rating on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = daily, 2 = weekly, 3 = monthly, 4 = a few times, and 5 = never.

\* p < 0.10 \*\* p < 0.05. No estimates were statistically significant at the p < 0.01 level.

To understand whether community residents experienced crime personally, they were asked whether they knew a victim of certain crimes in their neighborhood and whether they had been victimized by any crime in the past year. As shown in table 15, more than half of the respondents in each community knew someone who had been a victim of a shooting or shooting attempt in the past 12 months and nearly half knew the victim of an assault in that same time frame. West Englewood respondents indicated knowing significantly more victims of home burglaries in the past 12 months than Garfield Park respondents (38 and 28 percent, respectively). Moreover, 22 percent of West Englewood respondents and 12 percent of Garfield Park respondents reported that they themselves had been a victim of one of the crimes listed in tables 14 and 15 in the past year. The percentage of West Englewood respondents that reported to have experienced at least one victimization in the past year was significantly different (higher) than the percentage of victims in Garfield Park.

**Table 14. Crimes Reported as Occurring at Least Weekly<sup>a</sup> during the Past Year, by Community (percent)**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Violent fight between neighbors	37.4	30.2
Mugging or robbery	33.3	40.8
Home burglary	29.5	36.7
Car theft	30.9	39.7
Assault	49.2	39.7
Rape or sexual assault	18.6	26.4
Stabbing or shooting event	38.4	35.3
Shooting or shooting attempt	52.6	55.1

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

<sup>a</sup> Rating “1” or “2” on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = daily, 2 = weekly, 3 = monthly, 4 = a few times, and 5 = never.

**Table 15. Respondents Who Knew a Victim of Crime in Their Neighborhood, by Community (percent)**

During the past year, respondents who knew a victim of	Garfield Park	West Englewood
Violent fight between neighbors	43.2	45.1
Mugging or robbery	37.8	40.5
Home burglary**	27.7	39.7
Car theft	32.5	40.4
Assault	46.8	49.0
Rape or sexual assault	21.6	19.1
Stabbing or stabbing event	37.0	32.5
Shooting or shooting attempt	53.5	57.2
Respondent victim of any of the above**	11.7	21.5

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests.

\*\* p < 0.05. No estimates were statistically significant at the p < 0.10 or p < 0.01 levels.

The survey also included two questions assessing respondents’ view of local law enforcement, given that the relationship between law enforcement and high-crime neighborhoods tends to be fractured. These questions were also included because some of the Safer Return efforts include reaching out to local law enforcement in their institutional reform efforts. Respondents were asked first to characterize the relationship between the police and the community during the past 12 months from 1 (very bad) to 5 (excellent) and second to rate the response of police to community issues during the past few months, using the same scale of 1 to 5. On both of these questions, Garfield Park and West Englewood respondents skewed toward the lower end of the scale (2.1 out of 5 on the police-community relationship question and 2.3 out of 5 on the police response question) (results not shown). For police-community relations, Garfield Park respondents had significantly different (higher) ratings than West Englewood respondents (p < 0.05). There were no significant differences between the two communities on ratings of police response to community issues.

## Opinions of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Finally, the survey asked a series of questions about formerly incarcerated individuals to explore some commonly held perceptions about the reentry population. These questions were used to assess the relative community climate for returning prisoners, based on the perceptions of residents. As shown in tables 16 and 17, respondents in both communities expressed general support for returning individuals. For example, fewer than one-quarter of respondents in both communities believe returning individuals are a danger to themselves and their families, are a bad influence on children, or make the neighborhood more dangerous. Further, the majority of respondents in both communities believe that neighborhood resources should be increased for returning individuals. Overall, as shown most clearly in table 17, Garfield Park respondents held generally more favorable opinions of formerly incarcerated persons than



did West Englewood respondents. There were significant differences between the neighborhood respondents along several measures of attitudes concerning returning individuals. The average rating of West Englewood respondents was significantly different than the average rating of Garfield Park respondents on whether targeted resources to returning individuals should be increased, whether returning individuals are a danger to respondents and their families, whether community members are too supportive of returning individuals, whether community members socialize with returning individuals, whether returning individuals are a bad influence on children, and whether returning individuals don't want to change their ways. A scale of perception of returning individuals ( $\alpha=0.74$ ) was significantly different in the two communities ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 16. Average Ratings<sup>a</sup> of Returning Individuals, by Community**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
This community welcomes RIs	2.9	2.8
Community resources targeted to RIs should be increased*	3.9	3.6
RIs are a danger to me and my family**	1.9	2.3
Community members are too supportive of RIs*	2.1	2.4
Community members socialize with RIs**	3.2	2.8
I would prefer if RIs returned to a different neighborhood	2.4	2.5
RIs are a bad influence on children**	2.1	2.4
In this community, RIs are treated the same as everyone else	2.6	2.8
RIs strain neighborhood resources	2.2	2.3
RIs don't want to change their ways*	2.8	2.5
I would prefer to live in an apartment/block without any RIs	2.2	2.4
RIs have made this neighborhood dangerous	2.0	2.1

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

Note: RI = returning individual. Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests. Alpha reliability coefficient = 0.74; statistically significant difference between communities in the "perceptions of returning individuals" scale,  $p < 0.05$ .

<sup>a</sup> Rating on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

\*  $p < 0.10$  \*\*  $p < 0.05$ . No estimates are statistically significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level.

**Table 17. Respondents Agreeing<sup>a</sup> with the Following Perceptions of Returning Individuals, by Community (percent)**

	Garfield Park	West Englewood
This community welcomes RIs	35.9	29.1
Community resources targeted to RIs should be increased	65.6	52.7
RIs are a danger to me and my family	14.6	17.0
Community members are too supportive of RIs	17.0	18.6
Community members socialize with RIs	40.0	28.8
I would prefer if RIs returned to a different neighborhood	23.6	27.5
RIs are a bad influence on children	17.9	24.3
In this community, RIs are treated the same as everyone else	26.8	30.8
RIs strain neighborhood resources	25.5	19.4
RIs don't want to change their ways	25.3	25.0
I would prefer to live in an apartment/block without any RIs	21.0	23.9
RIs have made this neighborhood dangerous	17.9	16.5

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data from community resident surveys in Garfield Park and West Englewood.

Note: RI = returning individual.

<sup>a</sup> Rating of "4" or "5" on a scale of 1 to 5; where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

As previously mentioned, Garfield Park and West Englewood each have a high concentration of returning prisoners. This is notable here, given that this may account for the reasons why community members appear to be rather receptive to returning individuals in their community and advocate for the belief that more resources should be targeted to them. Furthermore, it is likely that many of the respondents were either formerly incarcerated themselves or know someone who has been. While it is

difficult to make national comparisons, particularly because these same questions have not been implemented nationwide and among a low-density prisoner reentry community, recent social surveys of the larger US population have shown increasing support for returning individuals and associated services.

## Conclusions and Implications

With the goal of informing the evaluation, the resident surveys were implemented for two purposes: to provide descriptive information on the reentry context from the perspective of community residents and to explore whether there are changes in residents' perspectives of the neighborhood context, which might be attributable over time to the Safer Return Demonstration. As the first of three waves of community surveys, the findings from the 2009 surveys of residents provide three lessons to the evaluation and the Safer Return Demonstration:

1. The neighborhoods are fairly comparable along several sociodemographic characteristics, and similar to official administrative statistics from the US census.
2. The reentry context in both neighborhoods appears depressed, but worse in the West Englewood neighborhood than in Garfield Park.
3. Community residents should be part of reentry projects like Safer Return, given their support for returning individuals.

First, the surveys were implemented among a random sample of adults who were largely representative of the community (see tables 1 and 3). The individuals who completed the survey were generally low-income, overwhelmingly black/African American, with limited educations, and many have never been married. This provides some indication that the sampling strategy was useful in generating a sample of individuals that represented the larger community. While the results presented herein are not intended to be generalized to the larger Garfield Park and West Englewood communities, the comparability of the survey respondents' demographic profiles to those of the wider community provides confidence that the findings are not an aberration due to the sampling strategy. Further, that the two communities appear comparable in sociodemographic characteristics instills confidence in the quasi-experimental design that is the foundation of the larger impact evaluation.

Second, given the sociodemographic characteristics of the residents and the communities that were under scrutiny, the survey findings with respect to crime, victimization, community resources, and precautionary behavior were largely expected. Simply, the residents' perceptions of community life are relatively poor. But there were a handful of residents who had more positive feelings of the neighborhoods. Though a small, but notable, group of people in both neighborhoods do not view their neighborhoods as violent and do not frequently engage in precautionary behaviors, the majority of residents in Garfield Park and West Englewood do view the neighborhoods as dangerous places, believe that criminal activity occurs frequently, and alter both when and where they frequent certain communal spaces. Quite simply, the survey illustrates through many questions that which is revealed in the quality of life question. That is, less than two in ten in Garfield Park and less than one in ten in West Englewood have a positive rating of their quality of life in the neighborhood.

However, from the perspective of the community residents, it appears that the reentry context is far more difficult for those returning to West Englewood than it is for those returning to Garfield Park. Overall perspectives of the community on nearly every domain in the survey, each of which were included given their theoretical and empirical importance to reentry and crime, appear to be worse in West Englewood than Garfield Park. If community context matters for reentry outcomes (which research suggests is accurate and which is an assumption on which the Safer Return project is based), it is appropriate to conclude from the survey findings that reentry outcomes might be worse in West Englewood than Garfield Park (if all else is constant). The impact evaluation of Safer Return will include surveys of former prisoners in both communities, official administrative data on reentry outcomes, and maps of institutional investments in both neighborhoods. As much as possible, the research will try to ensure that the sample of former prisoners included in the evaluation is comparable, but there is no way to ensure the neighborhood context is comparable. In fact, it is reasonable to conclude that Garfield Park and West Englewood have quite different reentry contexts. This underscores the importance of assessing

the community context somehow. Using the survey data of residents' perceptions of the reentry context will be critical to understanding the reentry outcomes of formerly incarcerated persons included in the research sample.

Finally, the survey findings on the support of returning individuals from community members present a tremendous opportunity for Safer Return and other reentry programs. Residents in both communities were generally supportive of returning individuals and eschewed such common stereotypes of former prisoners, as "returning individuals don't want to change their ways." While it is likely that some of the perceptions of returning individuals are because many residents in low-income, high-crime neighborhoods have direct or indirect personal experience with incarceration, the support for returning individuals shown in the survey are further indications that community residents should be viewed as resources for reentry programs. As a community-based program, Safer Return leverages the strengths of the community toward the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated persons. Future research on the Safer Return program will explore how effectively the program is meeting this one stated objective.

## Notes

1. See Bureau of Justice Assistance. "Red Hook Survey," US Department of Justice, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/bja/197109/pg4.html>.

## References

- Chicago Police Department. n.d. *2008 Annual Report: A Year in Review*. <https://portal.chicagopolice.org/portal/page/portal/ClearPath/News/Statistical%20Reports/Annual%20Reports/08AR%5B1%5D.pdf>.
- La Vigne, Nancy G., Cynthia A. Mamalian, Jeremy Travis, and Christy Visser. 2003. *A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Illinois*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/publications/410662.html>.
- Lynch, James P., and William J. Sabol. 2001. *Prisoner Reentry in Perspective*. Crime Policy Report Vol. 3. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/publications/410213.html>.
- Kubrin, Charis E., and Eric A. Stewart. 2007. "Predicting Who Offends: The Neglected Role of Neighborhood Context in Recidivism Studies." *Criminology* 44 (1): 165–97.
- Morenoff, Jeffrey D., Robert J. Sampson, and Stephen W. Raudenbush. 2001. "Neighborhood Inequality, Collective Efficacy and the Spatial Dynamics of Urban Violence." *Criminology* 39 (3): 517–60.
- Morenoff, Jeffrey, and Robert J. Sampson. 1997. "Violent Crime and the Spatial Dynamics of Neighborhood Transition: Chicago, 1970–1990." *Social Forces* 76 (1): 31–64.
- Rose, Dina, and Todd Clear. 2002. *Incarceration, Reentry and Social Capital: Social Networks in the Balance*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/publications/410623.html>.
- Sampson, Robert J., Jeffrey D. Morenoff, and Thomas Gannon-Rowley. 2002. "Assessing 'Neighborhood Effects': Social Processes and New Directions in Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 443–78.
- Sampson, Robert J., Stephen Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy." *Science* 277 (5328): 918–24.
- Wehrman, Michael M. 2010. "Race, Concentrated Disadvantage, and Recidivism: A Test of Interaction Effects." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 38 (4): 538–44.