

Convicted Women's Trajectories of Community and Financial Adversity and Race

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Reasons for Investigating High-Crime Neighborhood Exposure, Financial Need, and Race

- Neighborhood crime and financial problems are important predictors of recidivism.
- Women with criminal convictions have especially high financial need and high exposure to neighborhood crime, and these problems are most acute for racial/ethnic minority women.
- Little is known about the changes over time in convicted women's exposure to high crime neighborhoods and their financial problems.
- Understanding changes in exposure to community crime and financial problems for women in the criminal legal system can inform correctional programming and policy development by identifying those most in need of intervention to improve community conditions and to reduce financial need that persist or grows worse over time.

The Study

Data were from 402 women interviewed repeatedly over several years after a felony conviction. The interviews included questions to measure the women's level of financial need and exposure to neighborhood crime. Group based trajectory modeling identified subgroups differing in change, or lack of change, in high-crime neighborhood exposure and financial need. Multinomial logistic regression examined racial/ethnic differences in trajectory group assignment for each outcome. Dual trajectory analysis tested for overlap between assignment to the high-crime neighborhood trajectory and financial need groups.

Three groups were identified for each outcome:

Financial Adversity Groups	High-Crime Neighborhood Exposure Groups
1. Low Financial Need	1. Low Crime Neighborhood
2. Moderate Financial Need	2. Moderate Crime Neighborhood
3. High Financial Need	3. High Crime Neighborhood

Key Findings:

- **A high and chronic pattern of financial need was associated with increased risk for high and chronic exposure to high crime neighborhoods.** In other words, participants with more severe and long-term financial deprivation were also at risk of more severe and long-term exposure to high-crime neighborhoods.
 - **Racially/ethnically minoritized women tended to report higher and chronic levels of high-crime neighborhood exposure and financial need** (compared to white women).
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Recommendations for Practitioners and Policy Makers

For many justice-involved women, especially racial/ethnic minorities, high-crime neighborhood exposure and financial adversity are chronic. There is a need to reconsider justice policies that impose costs of conviction, since such policies can worsen exposure to criminogenic contexts (exposure to high-crime areas) and circumstances (poverty). For instance,

- **Bail reform:** The release of more limited-risk individuals could avoid requiring payment of a large sum of money just to continue work and family life, thereby reducing the chronic financial need.
- **Limit excessive monetary sanctions:** Excessive monetary sanctions/fines may place undue financial burden on those who are struggling the most to make ends meet. These sanctions can lock individuals into criminal justice supervision for longer than necessary. Reducing the use of such sanctions could free up income that could allow women to leave high-crime communities and avoid recidivism.

- **Community corrections as an alternative to incarceration:** Incarceration can lead to job loss and large gaps in resumes that leave women with more limited options for employment. Limited opportunities for legitimate employment may further push women with criminal histories into illegal work that results in incarceration. To prevent this, it makes sense to lean more on community corrections programs as a means of sanctioning women and non-violent offenders.

Source:

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