Technical Report

Turning Local Data into Meaningful Reforms

The Safety + Justice Challenge Model

January 2024

CUNY INSTITUTE FOR STATE & LOCAL GOVERNANCE

SAFETY+JUSTICE CHALLENGE

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Introduction

After four decades of explosive growth in the number of people arrested, jailed, and imprisoned in the United States, a growing consensus about the overreach of mass incarceration and unjust systems of punishment has emerged in the 21st century. National conversations on criminal justice reform often center on state or federal prison populations and excessively punitive sentences, but local jails are a key driver of mass incarceration. Seeking to raise national attention to the problem of overuse and misuse of incarceration in local jail systems and to catalyze innovation and reform at the local level, in 2015, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (MacArthur Foundation) launched the Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC). The SJC laid out two broad goals: to reduce the size of local jail populations and to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in local justice system contact, while preserving public safety. In its eighth year, the SJC now supports a diverse network of more than 57 cities, counties, and states across the country in developing and implementing decarceration strategies and represents an ambitious effort to generate transformative change in how localities conceive of and use jail incarceration.

This report focuses on the role of local data in the Safety and Justice Challenge initiative and the work of the Institute for State and Local Governance at the City University of New York (CUNY ISLG) to collect and manage the data. Data has played a vital role in the SJC initiative since its inception. In addition to directly supporting implementation of local reforms, the MacArthur Foundation invested in data collection, performance measurement, and research activities, with the aim of monitoring performance toward decarceration goals and expanding knowledge on effective programmatic and policy solutions to the overuse of jails. CUNY ISLG was funded by the MacArthur Foundation to manage the collection, measurement of performance, and dissemination of data throughout the SJC Network. This report is intended for researchers, data stakeholders, and reformers interested in understanding the data-driven model of criminal justice reform developed under the SJC, including what kinds of data were captured, how data were mobilized for change, and lessons learned when using administrative data for policy design and evaluation. While the focus of the report is on CUNY ISLG's role and activities supporting data-driven reform, we draw out key takeaways from our work that may be applicable for smaller-scale intervention efforts that seek to be data-informed.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The need for reform in jails is clear. Jail incarceration is a remarkably common experience in the United States: before the COVID-19 pandemic, over 10.3 million individuals were booked into jail custody each year, and nearly 700,000 were in jail each day (Zeng, 2021). Though immediate responses to the pandemic resulted in substantial short-term declines in the number of people in jail, evidence suggests that current jail populations are quickly returning to pre-pandemic levels (Sawyer & Wagner, 2022). Largely operated at the county and city levels, jails are short-term facilities that hold a heterogenous mix of people: those awaiting disposition of a criminal case, serving shorter sentences to incarceration, held on a violation of community supervision conditions, or awaiting transportation to state or federal prisons. Conditions of confinement vary widely across

the nation's 2,850 jails, from the size of jail systems—ranging from facilities that hold just a few detainees to expansive systems that house many thousands of people—to housing conditions; access to educational, vocational, recreational and health services; and even visitation policies (May et al., 2014).

Local jails consume a substantial proportion of state and local funds: nationally, nearly $25 billion—or 2 of every 5 dollars spent on corrections—is spent on jail incarceration, with little evidence of returns to public safety (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2021). While stays in jail are far shorter than time spent in prison, at just 28 days on average, even brief periods of incarceration can be consequential (Minton & Zeng, 2021). Jail incarceration has been linked to a range of adverse impacts: pretrial incarceration—the most common form of jail incarceration—is associated with an increased likelihood of conviction, custodial sentences, and future rearrest (Dobbie et al., 2018; Sacks & Ackerman, 2014), as well as reduced employment and income (Turney & Conner, 2019).

Experiences of jail incarceration disproportionately impact Black and Indigenous peoples, people with low incomes, and those with chronic and acute behavioral health challenges (Demuth, 2003; Reaves, 2013; Schlesinger, 2005; Yi et al., 2017). In 2020, Black people were incarcerated in jails at a rate 3.5 greater than white people, while Native American and Indigenous peoples were incarcerated at twice the rate of white people (Minton & Zeng, 2021). In both cases, these disparities reflect a substantial decline from disparity levels in previous years, likely owing to changes in crime and criminal justice operations during the pandemic. Nearly seven in ten people incarcerated in local jails are held pretrial, and many are only able to secure release via monetary bail or commercial bond, the primary mechanism for securing release pending trial. This system unfairly exposes those

with low incomes to pretrial detention: nearly 34 percent of felony defendants in 2009 were held in jail unable to afford bail (Reaves, 2013).

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report is organized as follows: in Part I, we introduce the SJC reform model and outline CUNY ISLG's role in the initiative. In Part II, we detail data collection activities, standardization of datasets, and outline research and analytic uses of data throughout the initiative. Finally, Part III describes obstacles met over the course of the initiative and outlines key takeaways for stakeholders interested in undertaking similar efforts at data-driven systems change.
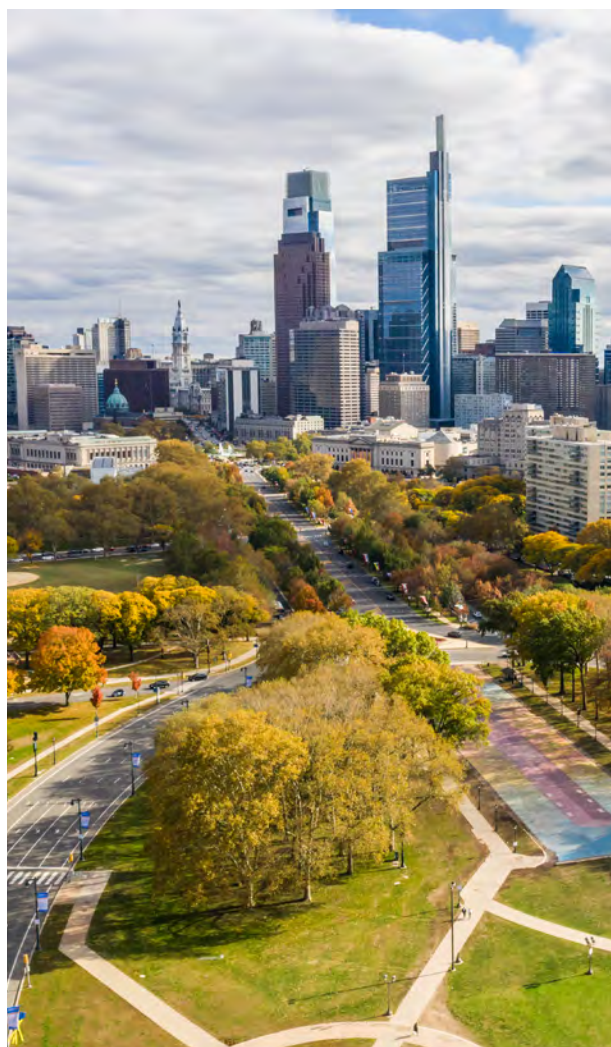
Part I. The Safety and Justice Challenge Model

In 2015, the MacArthur Foundation launched the Safety and Justice Challenge, a major initiative to support a network of local criminal justice systems in addressing issues of over-reliance on jails as a response to social problems and disparities in local jail populations. The SJC developed a network of local models for justice system reform, beginning with an initial investment of $75 million to support a cohort of 20 jurisdictions in 2015. Since then, the SJC has expanded to 57 jurisdictions and over $320 million commitment. These jurisdictions—primarily cities and counties—are geographically, demographically, and politically diverse, and vary in terms of the size of their local jails and criminal justice systems. Figure 1 shows a map of participating jurisdictions across the U.S.

Figure 1: Map of Safety + Justice Challenge Sites
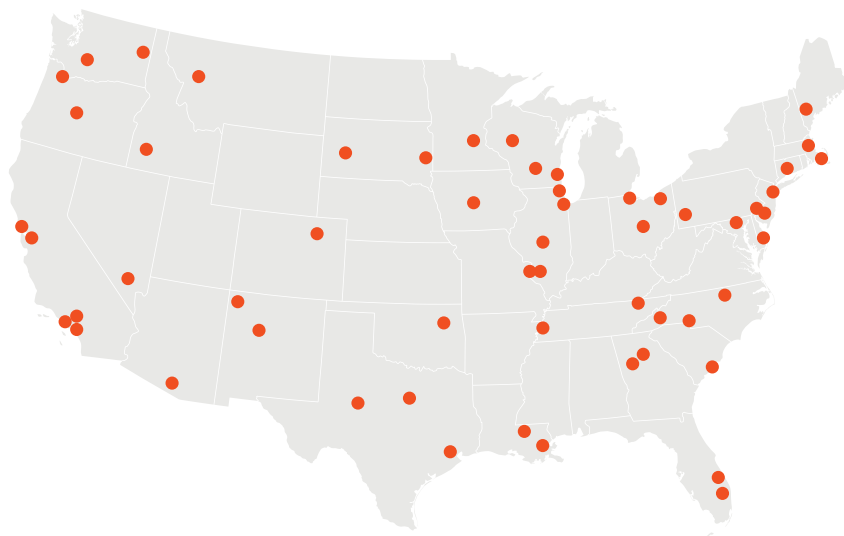
West
Ada County, ID
Adams County, CO
City & County San Francisco, CA
City of Long Beach, CA
Clark County, NV
Deschutes County, OR
Los Angeles County, CA
Missoula County, MT
Multnomah County, OR
Orange County, CA
Santa Clara County, CA
Spokane County, WA
Yakima County, WA

Southwest
Bernalillo County, NM
Harris County, TX
Pima County, AZ
San Juan County, NM
Texas Health and Human Services, TX
Tulsa County, OK
West Texas Centers, TX

Midwest
City of St. Louis, MO
Cook County, IL
Dane County, WI
Eau Claire County, WI
Franklin County, OH
Hennepin County, MN
Lake County, IL
Lucas County, OH
Milwaukee County, WI
Minnehaha County, SD
Pennington County, SD
Polk County, IA
Sangamon County, IL
St. Louis County, MO
Summit County, OH

Southeast
Broward County, FL
Buncombe County, NC
Campbell County, TN
Charleston County, SC
City of Atlanta, GA
Durham County, NC
East Baton Rouge Parish, LA
Gwinnett County, GA
Mecklenburg County, NC
New Orleans, LA
Palm Beach County, FL
Shelby County, TN

Northeast
Allegheny County, PA
Baltimore City, MD
Camden County, NJ
Cumberland County, ME
Middlesex County, MA
New York, NY
Norfolk County, MA
Philadelphia, PA
State of Connecticut
State of Delaware

Each jurisdiction participating in the SJC was competitively selected for participation and provided both financial and technical support to implement jail decarceration strategies. Box 1 explains the different types of participating sites, along with the phases of the SJC initiative. The scope of jail decarceration strategies is broad, and purposely tailored to specific drivers of the local jail population: arrest diversion and deflection, pretrial supervision and court notification strategies, jail population review teams, changes to prosecution and plea-bargaining policies, providing counsel at first appearances and bail hearings, strategies targeting frequent utilizers of the jail, and efforts to speed up court case processing times and reduce unnecessary continuances. SJC sites are supported by a robust infrastructure of dedicated external site coordinators, who provide intensive technical assistance to sites in planning and implementation; strategic allies, who provide specific expertise on a variety of issues, such as pretrial justice, disparity, community engagement, and behavioral health approaches; communications assistance; online and in-person conferences and resource sharing hubs; along with research institutes, providing data and analytic support.[1] Notably, the MacArthur Foundation invested heavily in data; about ten percent of SJC funding has been directed to data, research, and evaluation activities.

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1   A full list of network partner and strategic allies can be found here: https://safetyandjusticechallenge.org/about/partners-allies/

Box 1: Phases and Participating Sites in the SJC

PHASES OF THE SAFETY + JUSTICE CHALLENGE

Phase I (May-December 2015) - Planning: Out of a pool of 191 applications, twenty counties and cities were selected to receive $150,000 grants to engage in an in-depth planning effort focused on developing comprehensive, data-driven proposals to reduce local jail populations with the assistance of ISLG and other technical assistance providers.

Phase II (2016–2018) - Implementation: An initial cohort of 10 sites were awarded grants of $2 million or more over a two-year period to implement decarceration strategies developed in the planning phase of the initiative. In 2017 and 2018, the number of jurisdictions awarded implementation grants grew from 10 to more than 25. In 2017, a cohort of Innovation Fund sites were awarded targeted funding to develop small-scale, but innovative strategies to reduce jail populations (see below).

Phases III (2019–2020) and IV (2021–2022) – Continued Implementation, Knowledge Development and Sustainability: In later stages of the SJC initiative, strategy implementation has continued among SJC implementation sites, while the focus on measurement, evaluation, and knowledge development for criminal justice field has expanded with studies funded through the SJC Research Consortium, other SJC-funded research, and continued data collection and performance measurement.

TYPES OF SJC NETWORK SITES

Implementation Sites: Implementation sites were initially drawn from the twenty sites included in the Phase I planning cohort. Implementation sites are split into three groups, corresponding to the timing of their participation as implementation sites –ten sites were initially selected for implementation funding in early 2016 (Cohort 1), followed by eight additional Phase I Planning sites added in 2017 (Cohort 2). In 2018, a third cohort of implementation sites (Cohort 3) were selected to receive implementation-level funding grants from the MacArthur Foundation. These sites were drawn from a pool of Innovation Fund sites (see below).

Innovation Fund Sites: Beginning in 2017, more than twenty-five Innovation Fund sites have received small technical assistance and targeted implementation grants to test bold and innovative ideas on how to safely reduce the jail population while maintaining or enhancing public safety. In addition to targeted funding, Innovation Fund awardees receive technical assistance from the Urban Institute and participate in the SJC peer-support network.

CUNY ISLG'S ROLE

Central to all this work is the role of data and outcome tracking. CUNY ISLG plays a key role in the infrastructure of the SJC, serving as the national intermediary and primary data and analytic partner for the SJC, and supporting the MacArthur Foundation in initiative oversight, monitoring progress, and identifying and disseminating lessons learned for the broader criminal justice field. Specifically, CUNY ISLG is tasked with the following data-related activities:

- **collecting comprehensive, systemwide case-level and aggregate criminal justice data** from SJC sites on an annual basis
- **collecting monthly jail population data** for timely progress reporting
- **creating and tracking performance metrics and conducting in-depth analysis** of jail population and other criminal justice trends
- **providing analytic and data capacity-building assistance** to sites to support the development and implementation of strategies
- **managing the SJC Research Consortium** – a network of academic and applied researchers carrying out rigorous studies to understand the effectiveness of SJC work
- **providing SJC initiative partners and approved external researchers with de-identified site data** for research and technical assistance purposes
- **providing strategic guidance and project management** toward measurable outcomes

Dedicated support for centralized data collection, management and measurement is a vital component of the SJC, owing to well-known challenges with accessing and measuring local criminal justice operations.

THE LANDSCAPE OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE DATA

The most comprehensive sources of national information on local jails, courts, and law enforcement are collected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Data on crimes known to law enforcement and arrests by police are available nationally through the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting program, a voluntary agency-level annual data collection. Information on jail populations, and their characteristics, come from two surveys, the Annual Survey of Jails (ASJ) collected annually from a sample of jails by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and the Census of Jails (COJ), a more detailed census of jail populations and facility characteristics conducted every five to eight years. Another BJS data collection, the State Court Processing Statistics (SCPS), is the only national source of detailed case processing information for felony cases in state courts.

While valuable sources of data, these national collections are limited by the scope and frequency of data collection and are ill-suited for tracking local outcomes of criminal justice processes. For example, the SCPS is limited to felony cases in the 75 largest urban jurisdictions in the country, omitting both smaller and rural jurisdictions. Moreover, no information is collected in misdemeanor cases, and the most recent data available were collected in 2009, meaning knowledge of case processing, disposition, pretrial detention, and sentencing in state courts is out of date. Similarly, jurisdictions sampled in the ASJ cover only one-third of total jail facilities in between census years, limiting its utility for tracking local trends over time in sites that are not included in the annual sample. Most importantly, aggregate indicators (e.g., average daily jail population), while useful for analyzing patterns in the volume and composition

of jail populations over time, do not allow for tracking of individual cases across system points, or specific analyses of target cases.

In recent years, several large-scale efforts have been launched to fill gaps in national data and increase transparency and accountability in local criminal justice operations. These efforts capitalize on administrative records produced by criminal justice agencies and work to increase access to data for researchers, policymakers, and advocates. Housed at the University of Michigan, the Criminal Justice Administrative Records System (CJARS) is an effort to capture a nationally integrated repository of criminal justice agency records that are linkable to detailed Census Bureau information. CJARS data are accessible at a select set of academic institutions that house U.S. Census Bureau's Federal Statistical Research Data Centers and are subject to strict controls over access and use. Publicly available efforts to transform administrative records into usable metrics includes Measures for Justice (MFJ), which collects administrative data from local jurisdictions and publicly publishes a standard set of summary performance measures, calculated in five-year increments, to help jurisdictions understand how their criminal justice system is operating along a range of standardized metrics. Similarly, since 2019, the Jail Data Initiative (JDI) at the Public Safety Lab at New York University scrapes online public county jail rosters from over 1,000 jurisdictions and processes and compiles data for public use. Other projects aim to increase the usability of existing data, such as the Vera Institute of Justice's Incarceration Trends Project, which compiles multiple federal incarceration data collections and provide a searchable tool for national, state, and local prison and jail incarceration population information. Together, these efforts represent substantial steps toward increasing public transparency of local criminal justice system operations, and provide complementary data capable of answering a variety of questions about how justice systems are operating. However, for the purposes of the SJC, which sought to examine multiple pathways through participating local justice systems and evaluate the performance of specific reform strategies, existing public data collections were limited by gaps in data coverage (e.g., having data from only certain agencies, but not others), non-overlapping time periods, and levels of aggregation that preclude desired analyses (e.g., examining measures by specific charge types or more nuanced racial/ethnic groups).

GOALS OF SJC DATA COLLECTION

Given the challenges of obtaining comprehensive local criminal justice information and the focus on targeted, data-driven reform as a core component of the SJC, a central goal of this initiative has been to capture a comprehensive set of criminal justice information from participating sites. SJC sites, as a condition of their grant funding, are required to share quantitative data with CUNY ISLG for the purposes of the SJC. This collection effort is oriented around facilitating multiple uses of data, including standardized performance measurement and monitoring in each site, data-informed technical assistance, and a range of single- and multi-site research and evaluation projects.

To support these varied needs, the SJC has focused on collecting records from key points of contact with the criminal process that may impact the size, composition, and conditions of jail confinement in each participating site. To do this, CUNY ISLG built a data repository to capture full populations of cases from each key decision point in the adult criminal legal process—arrest, prosecutorial charging, assignment of counsel, jail booking and release, court case processing, disposition and sentencing, and community supervision (see Box 2)—across multiple sites and multiple years. This multi-year, system-wide, case-level data collection effort is unique both in its scope and in its focus on supporting many different data uses. To ensure that accurate and reliable data are submitted to

CUNY ISLG, each SJC site has a dedicated data liaison, whose purpose is to assist with the coordination of data submissions to CUNY ISLG and serve as a liaison between local agency staff and CUNY ISLG researchers. In total, CUNY ISLG collects criminal justice data from over 25 SJC implementation sites, including case-level criminal justice agency data in more than 19 sites, and has used that data for a variety of planning, monitoring, and evaluation purposes, discussed in Part II.[2]

Box 2: Key Decision Points in Local Criminal Justice Systems

Multiple pathways may lead individuals into jail. Because of the varied set of agencies, policies, and practices across sites, key planning, and data collection activities in the SJC were organized around key decision points. Decision points are steps along the criminal justice process, governed by major system actors in the criminal justice process, which may lead to booking into jail or lengthen stays in custody for those people who have contact with the local justice system.

Arrest: Upon contact with civilians, law enforcement often has the discretion to warn, issue a citation or notice to appear for court, or to custodially arrest and book a person into custody.

Charging: Following an arrest or referral from law enforcement, a prosecuting agency evaluates the legal merits of a case and determines whether to formally file criminal charges with the court, offer diversion, or decline to pursue a criminal charge.

Pretrial release: If booked into jail custody pretrial, arrestees may be able to secure release back into the community pending adjudication of their charges through a variety of mechanisms, including cash bail or bond, release on own recognizance, or release onto pretrial supervision. In some jurisdictions, judges may also order individuals to be remanded to custody, or held without bail, until the disposition of a case.

Assignment of counsel: For individuals who cannot afford private legal representation, indigent defense may be assigned or appointed by the court.

Case processing: Case processing encompasses multiple stages within the legal court process and procedure that affect the time to case disposition, such as arraignment, pretrial conferencing, continuances, and case management.

Disposition and sentencing: Criminal charges may result in a conviction and imposition of a sentence to jail or prison incarceration, probation, fine or some other court order sanction; be diverted to collaborative or problem-solving courts or programs (e.g., drug courts, veterans' courts, etc.); or be acquitted or dismissed at the direction of the prosecution or court. participate in the SJC peer-support network.

Part II. Data Collection, Management & Use in the SJC

In this section, we first describe the process for collecting administrative data and provide an overview of data elements obtained for each site and system point. Next, we discuss how CUNY ISLG manages administrative data and produces research datasets; and finally, we briefly outline how these data have been used throughout the initiative—from the early planning stages through to external evaluation and research activities. Although we discuss the data collection process first, the SJC and CUNY ISLG expressly oriented its data collection activities – in particular, the scope of data collected from each agency, the types of data elements, and the time period of collection – to fit multiple purposes. Foremost has been the goal of facilitating standardized performance measurement and ongoing jail population monitoring to assist participating sites, the MacArthur Foundation, and the public in understanding whether sites are achieving their intended de-carceration goals. Additionally, data collected under the SJC is intended to facilitate technical assistance to sites from site coordinators and other experts, as well as support broader research and knowledge development for the field.

PLANNING FOR DATA COLLECTION

The administration of criminal justice at the local level often involves a system of intersecting municipal, county, and state-level agencies. Across the SJC jurisdictions, substantial variation in the structure of the criminal justice system exists. For example, in many sites, a single prosecuting attorney handles most, if not all, criminal prosecutions, while in other jurisdictions, responsibility for the prosecution of criminal cases may be split across multiple agencies, by jurisdiction or by severity of the alleged crimes (e.g., in Spokane County, WA, prosecutorial authority is split between city and

county agencies). Similarly, a single, consolidated court system may handle all criminal cases, separate courts may handle misdemeanor and felony cases, or cases may originate in one court system, but terminate in another, as in Charleston County, SC. This complexity in the governance and operations of criminal justice systems affects how data are recorded, retained, accessed, and shared across systems. While several SJC jurisdictions have developed sophisticated centralized criminal justice data repositories (e.g., Allegheny County, PA and Charleston County, SC), more commonly, individual agencies in each jurisdiction handle the collection, maintenance, and retention of their own administrative records stored in distinct record management systems, making access to records across the entire system a difficult and fragmented endeavor. Because of the nature of the criminal justice process, policy decisions made by one agency can affect outcomes of a different agency, and in particular, the jailing agency. For example, decisions made by a judge on pretrial release (e.g., setting bail amount, or offering a non-financial release option) and the speed at which cases are processed through the courts can shape the ability of the jail to regulate the size of its pretrial population. Analyses focused solely on jail data cannot offer insight into how other substantive and procedural decisions made by other agencies impact levels of incarceration – this poses an issue not only for researchers and reforms, but for local agencies themselves, who often are unable to access to other agencies' data.

Understanding the structure, case flow, and governance of data in each of the SJC sites was a critical first step in developing subsequent requests for data. During the planning phase of the initiative (see Box 1), the first group of participating sites

worked closely with their assigned site coordinator to complete a system mapping exercise to document the initiation, flow, and termination of cases from the point of arrest through case disposition and post-disposition community supervision, in addition to gathering historical aggregate information on jail populations and key criminal justice decision points. In parallel, CUNY ISLG undertook a systematic data assessment process to map out how information about cases flow through each local justice system. For each site, CUNY ISLG researchers documented how cases are initiated in each agency's data system, what types of information are collected on each case, how data are accessed by practitioners and system end-users, and how data is shared across agencies and data systems. Diagnostic reports were developed through interviews with key data stakeholders at each of the major partner agencies, including police, sheriff, courts, probation, pretrial services agencies, prosecution, and public defense, and supplemented with a review of available database diagrams, codebooks, and other data documentation. This diagnostic work served as the foundation for documenting gaps in local data collection, understanding data-sharing requirements of agencies operating within each jurisdiction, and setting expectations for the execution of a data use agreement (DUA) that governed required data sharing with the SJC. Further, each site received a set of tailored recommendations aimed at expanding the capacity, validity, and scope of data collected in their administrative data systems.

TYPES OF DATA COLLECTED FOR THE SJC: CASE- AND AGGREGATE-LEVEL DATA

Once sites were selected by the MacArthur Foundation for the implementation phase of the SJC, they were required to provide case-level administrative data (i.e., data that represented individual persons or cases) for key decision points in the criminal justice process to CUNY ISLG (Box 2). This usually encompassed the largest law

enforcement agency in each jurisdiction, the jail, the prosecuting attorney's office, the criminal courts, the public defender's office or defense bar, and the agency responsible for community supervision. To facilitate this process, CUNY ISLG negotiated and executed multi-party DUAs with each jurisdiction that determined rules for the transfer, use, dissemination, and protection of personally identifiable data submitted from agencies to CUNY ISLG.

With the DUAs in place, CUNY ISLG developed a standardized set of data requests for each decision point and agency. CUNY ISLG researchers worked closely with data stakeholders at each agency to further tailor the final requests to the availability of data from each agency's data system and strategy-specific measurement needs. For each system point, the full population of adult cases active during each year of implementation was collected on an annual basis, in addition to cases active during a period prior to the beginning of each site's participation in the SJC. Cases are defined differently across each system point: for example, at the point of law enforcement contact, a case may be defined as an arrest, summons, or ticket issued; at the point of prosecution, a case may be a referred charge from law enforcement; at jail, a case is defined as a booking into jail custody; while for courts, a case refers to a criminal case filed with the court. Specific case data requested varied by agency, but generally information from cases includes dates of key events and decisions, such as a date of arrest, date of jail booking and release, charging date, disposition date, probation violation date; charge information at various stages, including statutory code, severity, and offense type; disposition information, such as charging decision or a court case disposition, and key interim events in case processing.

Data requested also included demographic information on each person associated with each case, such as date of birth, gender, race, ethnicity, and

zip code of home residence. Obtaining race and ethnicity data on each person who comes into contact with the local criminal justice system agencies was a critical focus of data collection activities; these data were used to identify dispro-portionalities and disparities across racial and ethnic identity groups in arrests, jail stays, and other outcomes in the criminal justice system. For all people and cases, CUNY ISLG requested that agencies provide unique person and case identifi-ers, such as state or county ID numbers, booking numbers, and court case numbers to facilitate tracking of people and cases across system points and over time. The extent to which sites include

common person and/or case identifiers across system points varies greatly site to site. Detailed information on the specific data elements request-ed from each system point at each site is displayed in Appendix A. Table 1 below displays the case-lev-el data holdings, by site and system point. In total, nearly 1,900 data files and 162 million records are included in the repository.

In addition to case-level data collection, CUNY ISLG also collects a variety of aggregate, or sum-mary level, information across participating sites[3] (e.g., the total number of bookings into custody in each month). Each site submits monthly aggregate

Table 1. Case-level data holdings, last updated August 2023

Site Name	System Point						
	Law Enforcement	Prosecution	Public Defender	Jail	Pretrial	Court	Community Supervision
Ada County, ID	-	-	-	●	-	-	-
Allegheny County, PA	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Buncombe County, NC	●	-	●	●	●	●	-
Charleston County, SC	●	●	●	●	-	●	-
Cook County, IL	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Harris County, TX	●	●	●	●	●	-	●
Lucas County, OH	●	●	-	●	●	●	●
Mecklenburg County, NC	●	-	-	●	●	●	-
Milwaukee County, WI	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Multnomah County, OR	-	●	-	●	-	●	●
New Orleans Parish, LA	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Palm Beach County, FL	-	●	●	●	-	●	-
Pennington County, SD	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Philadelphia, PA	●	●	-	●	-	●	●
Pima County, AZ	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
City & County San Francisco, CA	-	●	-	●	-	●	-
Spokane County, WA	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
St. Louis County, MO	●	●	●	●	-	●	●

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3   Of the 26 implementation sites that CUNY ISLG collects data from, eight sites received more targeted grant funding to implement one or two specific strategies and were not required to provide system-wide, case-level information. For these sites, CUNY ISLG researchers developed a set of core performance measures tailored to the target population, strategy, and key outcomes, which are compiled by sites and sent to CUNY ISLG in aggregate form.

measures of their jail populations, including counts of bookings, releases, a one-day count of prisoners by legal status (e.g., pretrial, sentenced, contract, etc.), average daily population, and average length of stay. These data provide more timely tracking of trends in jail populations and racial/ethnic disparities in between performance measurement reports.

MANAGING SJC DATA: INFRASTRUCTURE AND STANDARDIZATION

The scale and scope of the SJC initiative and data collection activities poses several challenges for measuring the activities and outcomes of site strategies, and particularly for comparing performance across sites. Little consistency exists across sites' administrative data, owing to variation both in state and local law and policy, highly localized data entry practices, and changes in data systems and policies over time. To generate research datasets that are consistent over time and comparable across jurisdictions, CUNY ISLG researchers conduct extensive review and processing of raw administrative datasets.

Upon receiving agency data, CUNY ISLG researchers examine each dataset for quality, completeness, and variability of the data provided, using a standardized assessment process. Staff examine each file for elements requested, coverage of appropriate time periods, missing or incomplete values, and any data irregularities such as duplicate records or missing identifiers. When necessary, additional data extracts are requested from sites to resolve technical issues found in initial data submissions.

CUNY ISLG staff also contact each criminal justice agency to request any codebooks or translational tables for interpreting specific values in the data provided; to seek clarification for fields and values that are difficult to interpret without localized knowledge of policy and practice; and to understand reporting practices for key elements and

develop uniform fields for comparison across sites. For example, standardized categories were developed to capture the legal status of individuals held in jail custody in order to measure who is held in custody pretrial, on a violation of conditions of community supervision, sentenced to jail, and held for other reasons. In certain sites, existing legal status categories aligned closely with standardized values, while in others custom code and logic was developed to generate consistent categories. Standardized code sets for each site are designed to be a repeatable process that ensures reliable recoding across datasets and time periods.

Once initial quality control measures are complete, data are processed into a data repository through a standardized process to strip personally identifiable data and assign consistent, unique deidentified person and case identifiers to all records in the repository. This process is done to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of individuals in the data, and to facilitate matching cases across agency data. The raw data, which are submitted in a variety of file formats and types, are stored in a centralized data repository in consistent file types to

Figure 2. SJC Data Flow Chart

facilitate easy transfer to a variety of statistical programs. Figure 2 illustrates the flow of data through the initiative.

HOW DATA ARE USED IN THE SJC

From the outset of the SJC initiative, the MacArthur Foundation put a heavy focus on data collection for monitoring and evaluating the performance of site strategies, jail decarceration, and the initiative as a whole. In this section, we briefly outline the many uses of data collected above throughout the initiative, which fall broadly into four categories: (i) data analysis for implementation planning and impact estimates; (ii) monthly jail population tracking and standardized performance measure development and reporting; (iii) special analyses and research briefs, and (iv) policy-oriented academic and evaluation research.

Assessing Drivers of Jail Populations and Planning for Impact

In the first phase of the initiative, data from a variety of sources played a significant role in the assessment of jail population drivers, development of reform strategies, and estimates for decarceration impacts. CUNY ISLG developed a standard data template of aggregate annual measures intended to be used as a tool to help sites identify drivers of local jail populations and disparities. The template tool was meant to ensure that each system point (see Box 2) was tied to concrete data on the types of cases that are moving through the system and the outcomes that result. Further, the

template provided consistency and fairness in the planning process, ensuring that site plans are informed by the same core set of indicators, and establishing an empirical understanding of where each site was starting from as a marker for future changes. Each of the twenty initial sites populated the template and used the trends to help formulate proposals for decarceration strategies. CUNY ISLG also supplied aggregate data to site coordinators and other technical assistance providers for the purpose of site jail population projections, technical assistance activities to help guide the identification of population drivers, identify disparities, estimate impacts of reforms, and revise strategies to achieve greater impact on key populations.

Data also played a key role in setting site expectations for jail reduction performance for grantees. To position sites for meaningful impact, CUNY ISLG analyzed publicly available BJS data from the Annual Survey of Jails to examine median rates of change in national jail populations over a three-year period, accounting for differences in the size of jail systems (as different sets of institutional challenges are faced by jail systems of varied sizes). Results from these analyses were used to set three-year benchmark goals for jail population reductions, which were adjusted for arrest and population trends in each jurisdiction. Three-year benchmarks targets ranged between 15-19 percent to 30 percent or greater reduction goal, measured from a pre-reform baseline (see Table 2). This initial benchmarking exercise was meant to establish a level of

impact expected by the MacArthur Foundation and encourage sites to be ambitious in their proposed strategies for jail population reduction.

In addition to setting overall targets for jail decarceration, as a part of their grant applications to the MacArthur Foundation for full implementation funding, each site was required to estimate the potential impacts of each individual strategy on their jail populations. For each intervention strategy proposed for implementation funding, sites were asked to identify the size of their target populations (i.e., the population of people or cases that would be affected by the intervention) and apply reasonable estimates of how many fewer jail admissions and/or how much shorter jail stays would be for targeted individuals. Using these data, an estimated reduction to the average daily population of the jail was calculated and subtracted from a pre-implementation average daily population figure. This process, supported by technical assistance from CUNY ISLG, ensured that decarceration strategies proposed were likely to impact meaningful drivers of the local jail population, rather than having only small or marginal impacts on the overall jail population.

Monitoring Performance

The primary role of CUNY ISLG in the SJC is to monitor the performance of participating jurisdictions. To support this work, CUNY ISLG developed a comprehensive performance measurement framework to assess progress toward the two broad aims of the SJC initiative—reducing jail populations and reducing racial and ethnic disparities—and to measure site-level outcomes for specific strategies pursued across jurisdictions. Each metric was defined and measured in a uniform manner across multiple jurisdictions and compared against a pre-implementation baseline period to assess progress over time. Standardized measurement allows for comparisons between sites, and for assessment of overall progress across all sites in achieving jail decarceration aims. Box 3 below displays examples of standard measures at key system points, including arrest, jail, and court.

Using case-level administrative data processed into the SJC Data Repository, CUNY ISLG has produced a series of reports tracking standard cross-site jail performance measures to assess progress toward jail decarceration and racial equity goals.[4] Standardized measures of jail populations include measures of the standing jail population, such as

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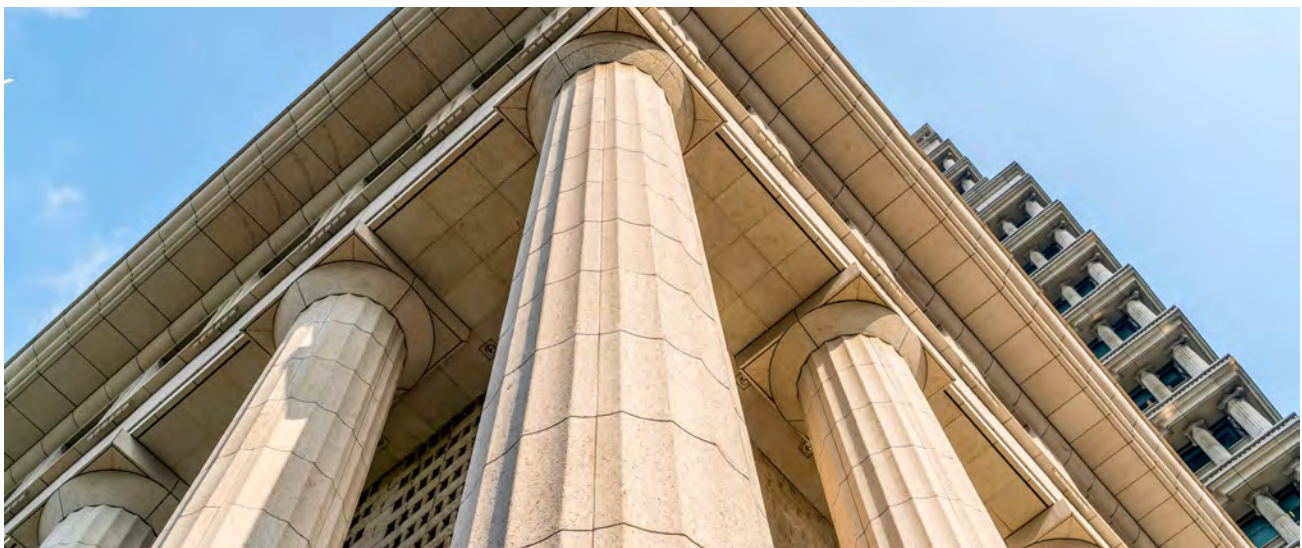
4   CUNY ISLG's SJC cross-site jail performance measurement report through April 2019 is available here: https://islg.cuny.edu/resources/reducing-the-misuse-and-overuse-of-jails

Box 3: Sample Standardized Performance Measures Measured Across Sites

SAMPLE JAIL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Goal/objective 1: Reduce the jail population

- Average daily population
- Average daily pretrial/awaiting action population
- Average daily sentenced population

Goal/objective 2: Reduce unnecessary jail bookings

- Number of individuals booked into jail
- Number of pretrial/awaiting individuals booked into jail
- Number of sentenced individuals booked into jail

Goal/objective 3: Reduce unnecessary length of stay

- Average and median length of stay (in days) among individuals released from jail
- Average and median length of stay (in days) among pretrial/awaiting action individuals released from jail
- Average and median length of stay (in days) among sentenced individuals released from jail

Goal/objective 4: Reduce racial/ethnic disproportionalities and disparities in the jail population

- Ratio of the proportion of the jail population that are People of Color to the proportion of the general adult population that are People of Color (by misdemeanor and felony populations)
- Ratio of the jail booking rate for People of Color per 100,000 People of Color in the general adult population to the jail booking rate for White People per 100,000 White People in the general adult population (by misdemeanor and felony populations)
- Ratio of the average length of stay for People of Color released from jail to the average length of stay for White People released from jail (by misdemeanor and felony populations, and by pretrial/awaiting action and sentenced legal statuses)

Sample Arrest Performance Measures

- Number and percentage of all arrests that are custodial (overall and comparing salient racial/ethnic groups)
- Number and percentage of felony (and/or misdemeanor) arrests that are custodial (overall and comparing salient racial/ethnic groups)
- Number and percentage of eligible/target population with a custodial arrest (overall and comparing salient racial/ethnic groups)

Sample Court Performance Measures

- Average and median number of days from criminal case filing to disposition for all cases (overall; comparing salient racial/ethnic groups; and by custody status, as applicable)
- Number and percentage of non-custodial sentences OR other alternative sentence as specified by site out of all cases to reach disposition (overall and comparing salient racial/ethnic groups)
- Number and percentage of dispositions that are convictions (overall and comparing salient racial/ethnic groups)
- Number and percentage of dispositions that are dismissals (overall and comparing salient racial/ethnic groups)

the average daily population, as well as measures of the rate of admissions into jail and the length of stay while in custody. Measures are reported by legal status while in custody (i.e., whether a person is held pretrial, or awaiting action on a pending criminal matter, sentenced, or on a violation of probation or parole), by most severe offense level, and by salient racial and ethnic groups. To assess progress on reducing racial and ethnic disparities, CUNY ISLG reports standard sets of both disproportionality and disparity ratios, to compare

composition of jail populations against representation in the larger community and to compare the rates of booking and lengths of stay between racial/ethnic groups. Prior to release of the performance measurement reports, CUNY ISLG works with site project leadership and key data stakeholders to ensure the accuracy of the data reporting, and to address any concerns about quality or validity of the measures. Table 2 below displays key cross-site measures, and progress achieved toward jail decarceration goals.

Table 2. Jail Population and Length of Stay Change From Pre-Implementation Baseline

Site	Benchmark Jail Population Reduction	Average Daily Jail Population			Average Length of Stay (Days)		Jail Incarceration Rate	
		Baseline	Feb-Apr 2021	Percent Change	Baseline	Feb-Apr 2021	Baseline	Feb-Apr 2021
Allegheny*	20-24%	2,773	1,931	-30.3%	68.7	73.9	280	192
Buncombe*	15-19%	457	375	-17.8%	13.8	19.7	217	169
Charleston	20-24%	1,195	871	-27.1%	20.9	23.2	378	258
Cook	15-19%	8,551	6,059	-29.1%	61.6	59.5	211	149
Harris	20-24%	8,943	9,013	+0.8%	31.5	34.5	268	258
Lucas	15-19%	829	508	-38.7%	14.6	10.4	249	154
Mecklenburg	15-19%	1,023	875	-14.4%	16.1	25.5	129	101
Milwaukee	15-19%	2,512	1,573	-37.4%	27.6	32.3	348	223
Multnomah	15-19%	1,328	898	-32.4%	14.4	26.4	207	136
New Orleans	25-29%	1,801	896	-50.3%	36.9	53.9	579	296
Palm Beach	15-19%	2,324	1,896	-18.4%	28.7	34.2	201	156
Pennington	15-19%	342	373	+9.0%	12.5	13.6	409	432
Philadelphia	>30%	7,563	4,724	-37.5%	95.1	100.9	619	382
San Francisco*	15-19%	1,266	769	-39.3%	25.1	33.4	165	110
Spokane	15-19%	878	708	-19.4%	16.9	20.1	228	166
St. Louis	15-19%	1,239	972	-21.5%	18.7	21.1	159	125

Note: Baseline is measured as November 2015-April 2016 for Cohort 1 & 2 sites, while Baseline is measured as November 2017-April 2018 for Cohort 3 sites (as indicated with an *). Pima's data is not presented here due to data issues being addressed with the site. All measures in this table were calculated using case-level data submissions by the sites.

Special Analyses and Research Briefs

In addition to detailed performance measurement reports on progress toward key SJC initiative outcomes, CUNY ISLG publishes quarterly jail trend reports drawn from monthly aggregate jail data submissions from each site. These quarterly monitoring data reports focus on only a subset of jail metrics to provide more real-time monitoring of jail population trends between performance reports and flag when issues arise that may require course adjustment[5]. Special projects and topical research briefs make use of SJC Data Repository files, covering topics like public safety impacts of SJC participation,[6] briefs on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on jail populations and disparities in SJC sites,[7] and court case processing. Additionally, CUNY ISLG conducts internal technical analyses and briefs for sites and the MacArthur Foundation, as requested, including in-depth analyses of specific strategy outcomes for a sample of sites. Other SJC partners, including the JFA Institute, the W. Haywood Burns Institute, four site coordinator organizations, and other partners, have conducted additional analyses aimed at providing technical assistance to the sites, such as long-term jail population projections, data-driven discussions of major drivers of jail populations, racial and ethnic disparities, and other topics.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

An additional aim of the SJC is to advance rigorous scholarship on the effectiveness of innovative SJC reform strategies and to contribute to broader change in the criminal justice field. Since 2019, the MacArthur Foundation has committed $5.9 million towards an CUNY ISLG-managed SJC Research Consortium (Consortium), a group of pre-qualified research organizations eligible to bid on various research projects that address key gaps in knowledge in priority areas that include effective pretrial strategies, case processing, racial and ethnic disparities, implications of COVID-19 for decarceration, public safety, and front-end decision-making. These priority areas have evolved over time in response to emerging questions, interests, and debates both within the SJC and in the broader criminal justice field.

To direct this work, CUNY ISLG convened a diverse advisory committee of academics, policymakers, practitioners, and individuals with lived experience to shape solicitations for new research projects, and evaluate proposals submitted by research partners. Since its launch in 2019, over a dozen external research projects have been supported through the Consortium, examining diverse topics including the effectiveness of bond court reform, impact of jail population review teams for reducing racial/ethnic disparities, impacts of arrest diversion/deflection strategies,

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5   The quarterly monitoring data, "Measuring Progress: Jail Trends in SJC Sites", are available here: https://safetyandjusticechallenge.org/measuring-progress-jail-trends-in-sjc-sites
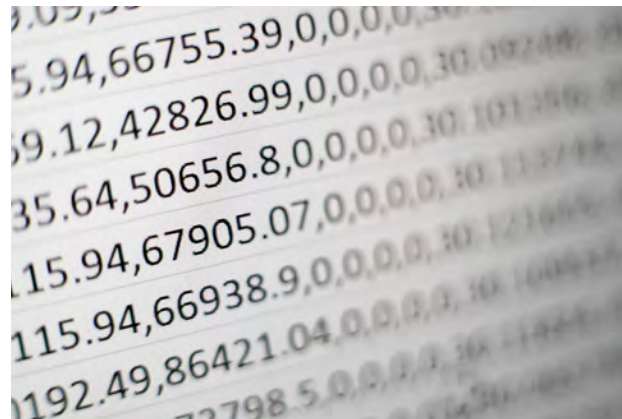
6   CUNY ISLG's most recent report on the public safety implications of the SJC is available here: https://islg.cuny.edu/resources/jail-populations-violent-crime-covid19

7   In addition to the Measuring Progress data, the special topic briefs are available here: https://islg.cuny.edu/resources/measuring-progress-briefs

prosecutorial discretion and plea bargaining, frequent jail utilization, effectiveness of strategies to reduce probation violations, and public safety impacts of SJC strategies (see Appendix B for a list of published research studies to date). Research activities funded under the SJC are not limited to quantitative methods—qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches have been used to assess a variety of projects funded through this stream. Over the long-term, the research emerging from the Consortium will establish an evidence base around SJC efforts, synthesizing knowledge gathered across the wide range of approaches that sites have implemented to determine what works to safely and effectively reduce jail populations and eliminate disparities in the pre-trial process.

Finally, the MacArthur Foundation has funded several external research partners, including the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) and NORC at the University of Chicago, to conduct an independent third-party evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the SJC initiative along a range of outcomes. Evaluation activities by RTI and NORC differ from site-focused performance measurement and strategy evaluation conducted by CUNY ISLG and Consortium research partners. RTI's and NORC's evaluations are aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the broader SJC initiative and reform model, rather than assessing the effectiveness of local interventions or policies.

Part III. Challenges and Possibilities for Future Data Driven Reform Efforts

The effort to collect, process, and analyze multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency data is not without its challenges. In this section, we discuss common issues that CUNY ISLG encountered in its work assisting partner cities and counties to pursue data-driven reform. A variety of challenges were encountered throughout the data lifecycle—from data collection, to cleaning and analyzing administrative records, to reporting trends and outcomes for multiple audiences. We first discuss technical and operational challenges, including fragmented local data systems; lack of consistent person or case identifiers shared across agency data systems; missing or overwritten information; and variation across jurisdictions in how key processes are defined and recorded. We also address challenges that are more resource- and process-oriented, including a lack of trust in existing data capacity and its use for analysis; turnover in agency leadership and key staff positions; and varied data needs across different stakeholder audiences.

Finally, we draw out several lessons that CUNY ISLG learned about how to effectively build data into systemwide reform efforts from navigating these challenges—lessons that can help both policy and programmatic stakeholders, along with analysts and researchers, who are working to advance reforms locally. Some challenges and lessons learned are unique to the nature of multi-jurisdictional efforts; however, even those challenges may be relevant to reform efforts within individual cities and counties, particularly those that involve collaborative work across local criminal legal agencies and/or other partners.

TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Using administrative data for performance measurement and research purposes is often challenging within the context of a single agency or program; doing this across multiple agencies and multiple sites brings added technical complexities that analysts and researchers should anticipate:

Fragmented Systems Data

To fully understand how people and cases flow through the criminal justice system from a systems perspective, information from each key stakeholder and agency is needed. With few exceptions, each agency in the criminal justice process is responsible for entering, maintaining, and extracting their own data, often relying on agency-specific case management systems. Agency data generally encompass the parts of the criminal process that their own agency is responsible for: law enforcement maintains information about arrests and tickets; jailing agencies maintain information about booking and jail custody; courts maintain information about filings, case processing and disposition; and so on. Though individuals may proceed through the criminal justice process in a standard fashion, administrative information about each person, event, and case is not always recorded in a manner that allows analysts and researchers to follow them through the system. For example, a county sheriff's office may maintain information on individuals arrested and booked into jail. While the sheriff often also requires information from the court system in order to manage its own cases – such as bail or sentencing information – CUNY ISLG staff found that the jailing agency's data systems are not always the most reliable source of this information, owing to manual data entry practices, and lack of automated

sharing or regular updating of information between agencies. Understanding how a jail booking is linked to a particular arrest or a court case can be a difficult and laborious task using administrative data alone, and CUNY ISLG researchers often worked in close consultation with data and operations experts in local sites to examine these issues. Moreover, because the criminal process often involves agencies with different, and overlapping, jurisdictions—e.g., multiple local and county law enforcement agencies, a county-level jail or, municipal and county prosecutors, local and state courts—generating a comprehensive understanding of how a system operates requires interacting with multiple agencies governed by multiple sets of laws and policies governing data access, sharing, and use.

Lack of Consistent Unique Identifiers Shared Across Agencies

Identification numbers, such as a warrant number, court case number, or jail booking number, are frequently assigned to cases or events to facilitate the administrative processing of cases. Agencies often assign identifiers to people, whose names and other attributes may change over time (e.g., fingerprint-linked identification number). However, in many cases, unique identifiers assigned to cases or people by one agency are not shared with or used by another agency in the same site. For example, a prosecuting attorney may generate a unique defendant identifier for its own administrative records but not share this identifier with the court or jailing agency (who may have their own data system-specific identifiers). Certain identifiers, often biometric identifiers, are only captured for more severe offenses (such as felonies or serious misdemeanors), but not generated for low-level, non-criminal offenses that may be adjudicated in the same system (e.g., traffic or ordinance violations). These issues are not new in criminal justice data infrastructure but continue to create substantial challenges for system-wide research and analysis.

Missing and Overwritten Information

Missing or overwritten information is another common challenge when working with administrative data sets developed for the purpose of supporting day-to-day operations. Missing data can arise for a variety of reasons: no fields exist to input pieces of information in a database, inconsistent data entry practices (including free text fields), data conversion issues from one system to another, or systems that are not set up to keep a record of dynamic changes in a field (i.e., overwriting historical information). For example, some data systems—often court data systems—do not regularly collect race and ethnicity information for defendants, or inconsistently transfer these data from earlier points of data collection (often at the point of law enforcement contact). Likewise, dynamic information, such as charges, pleas, and court appearance information, change often as a case proceeds through the criminal justice process; in some data systems, only the most recent record is retained, making it difficult to understand how a case evolves over time. These issues may not pose challenges to practitioners in the system, who operate largely on a case-by-case basis and who may track down individual case information from other agencies when necessary. For analysts and those interested in understanding trends in groups or populations of cases, however, inconsistent availability of information can limit the ability to quantify key outcomes and measure disparities in case processing and decision-making. This is particularly problematic when missing information is not the product of chance or error, but is systematic in nature, such as when race information is not captured for low-level misdemeanor or violation cases but is widely available for felony cases.

Jurisdictional Variation in Legal Practice and Definitions

For analysts working in a single jurisdiction, legal rules and practices generally have shared meaning across practitioners and are used in a similar

manner across agencies. However, for the SJC—operating in over 50 jurisdictions—differences in state and local law, policy, and practice posed unique challenges for comparative analysis across sites. For example, one early goal of analysts at CUNY ISLG was to define and operationalize a consistent "study population" across all SJC sites for the purpose of measuring jail decarceration. Local jails often detain individuals who are under the legal authority of other agencies (e.g., the Federal U.S. Marshal Service, tribal authorities, state prisons, or other counties), either as a short-term courtesy hold or via a contractual arrangement for per diem amount or set number of beds in the jail facility. Jurisdictions vary in the proportion of their local jail populations made up of these types of detainees, and local authorities often have little, if any, leeway to modify the course of legal processes or jail incarceration for these populations. However, how such populations are defined and identified within the context of local jurisdictions varied widely, variously referred to as "detainees", "holds", or "contract inmates." This variability required CUNY ISLG researchers to consult closely with subject matter experts in each local jurisdiction to understand how such populations are identified in their administrative data systems, and to exclude these groups from official performance reporting.

PROCESS AND RESOURCE CHALLENGES

Sustaining long-term data partnerships with multiple jurisdictions generated non-technical challenges, as well. Below we discuss three process and resources challenges that CUNY ISLG staff encountered over the course of its eight-year partnership with the SJC.

Scope and Complexity of Multi-Jurisdictional Data

Each SJC site, and often each agency within a site, has its own set of unique legal procedures, terminology, and data entry practices. The process

described in Part II above—developing relationships with data experts in each site; obtaining, processing, and analyzing data; and summarizing trends across jurisdictions at the scale of the SJC initiative—required substantial investment in staffing resources, data management and data analytic expertise, and the development of jurisdiction-specific institutional knowledge about how policies, procedures and practices are translated into administrative data systems. As the number of jurisdictions participating in the SJC grew, so, too, did the need for dedicated CUNY ISLG staff—including criminologists, applied researchers, analysts, and data scientists—to manage the scale and complexity of data tasks and site relationships. Further, documenting the nuanced institutional information and developing custom code to process information from each source, is a continuous and labor-intensive process.

Building Trusting Relationships and Contextual Knowledge

Critical to data-driven reform approaches is building trust and legitimacy with local partners in the data being collected, the analyses being run, and the results and interpretation of the findings. Quantitative data often tell only part of a story, and in order to properly understand and make use of those data for criminal justice reform, in-depth and repeated interactions with data stakeholders and practitioners was an integral component of CUNY ISLG and other technical assistance providers' work. Initially, many sites participating in the SJC were apprehensive about having an external, out-of-state data partner collect and analyze their data. Concerns generally fell into two main types: (i) sites were worried that data would be analyzed without consultation with local data experts, and (ii) sites feared that results would be presented without the appropriate local knowledge of policy or practice and might misrepresent their performance. To combat this initial apprehension and build trust in the approach, CUNY ISLG purposely conducted the in-depth diagnostic assessment

work in-person, in order to establish working relationships and to gather detailed contextual knowledge of local policy, practice, and data systems. Further, with each new round of data collection and each research or data product, results and methods are vetted by local stakeholders to ensure accuracy and legitimacy of the findings.

Data Needs for Multiple Audiences

Data collected for the SJC was intended for multiple purposes and audiences, including performance measurement, technical assistance, and rigorous applied research. Each of these data uses had a variety of audiences, including decisionmakers and practitioners at each site, the MacArthur Foundation, academic and applied researchers, and the public. Audiences vary in the type, level, and frequency of data communication needs; practitioners and site-level decisionmakers often had need for more frequent, real-time monitoring of trends, sub-populations, and short-term outcomes in order make strategy adjustments or change course, while the MacArthur Foundation and broader audiences often needed higher-level, summative assessments of how sites, individually and overall, were progressing toward their decarceration and racial equity goals. Further, tension between the time needed to produce accurate and reliable analyses and policymakers' and practitioners' need for "real-time" findings is ever-present. Balancing technical accuracy and transparency in data communications, conveying a clear data-based "story", and meeting multiple timelines for data reporting were challenges that required CUNY ISLG to be nimble and responsive, and to adjust the scope, focus, and deadlines for its reporting.

Challenges of Multi-Year Collaboration

The long-term nature of the SJC initiative brought a number of unanticipated challenges, including issues related to turnover at key positions within agency leadership, line and data stakeholders, changes in decarceration strategies, goals and operations; transitions from legacy data systems;

and issues related to negotiating and renewing data use agreements. First, the multi-year nature of the SJC initiative meant that many jurisdictions' participation saw multiple changes in staffing of key positions, including in elected officials, site project directors, agency leaderships, and key data liaisons and stakeholders. This turnover posed a variety of challenges across sites, but related to the data partnerships with CUNY ISLG, turnover often had implications for data use agreement renewals, data collection, and questions or vetting of findings from various analyses. To ensure that new stakeholders were informed of the SJC work and the process for data collection, submission, and vetting, CUNY ISLG staff maintained regular contact with stakeholders across each site and provided repeated opportunities for assistance, collaboration, and guidance via webinars, in-person conferences, site visits, and ad-hoc assistance with site stakeholders. Second, long-term collaborations meant that data use agreements needed to be renewed and renegotiated as the SJC initiative evolved over time. This, in conjunction with staffing turnover at the sites, sometimes resulted in protracted multi-year contract negotiations and delayed data submission and delivery to CUNY ISLG.

Takeaways for Effective Data Practices in Data-Driven Reform

Effective, sustainable reform in criminal justice benefits from careful and collaborative reliance on data for planning, implementation tracking, and impact evaluation. Drawing from the SJC model described above and lessons learned by CUNY ISLG in addressing the common challenges to data collection and use, we outline five takeaways for jurisdictions interested in engaging with the "data" in data-driven reform. Of course, while some of the challenges and lessons learned stemmed from CUNY ISLG's work across multiple jurisdictions, even those challenges are relevant to reform efforts within individual cities and counties, especially those that involve collaborative work across local criminal legal agencies and/or other partners.

1. Collect Data with Purpose.

Early efforts at conducting detailed diagnostic assessments of the data needs, capacity, and collection were instrumental to positioning sites for successful data-informed reforms. Drawing from these activities, before collecting and analyzing data, stakeholders should first clearly identify and prioritize the types of questions that need to be answered (e.g., assess drivers of a jail population, track outputs and outcomes of a new intervention, examine flow of cases through a system); identify and engage with the primary users of information and analysis, including those who will make programmatic, policy, or resource decisions based on the data; and facilitate consensus on how data will be used. Once clear understandings of the questions, users, and uses of data are established, analysts can devise a set of data needs and sources, key measure and concept definitions, and develop a data collection and analysis plan.

2. Use Data to Diagnose Problems and Plan Impactful Solutions.

Where possible, data should be used to identify the scope, scale, and drivers of the issue(s) that stakeholders want to address, as well as to identify key populations or processes for intervention. Additionally, stakeholders should use data to estimate potential impacts of policy and practice reforms, estimating how many cases or people may be realistically impacted by a proposed intervention and what types of relevant outcomes (including the magnitude of those outcomes) an agency or jurisdiction might expect. This exercise should be incorporated as part of the planning process to maximize positioning for meaningful impacts and to test stakeholder assumptions about the impact of various reforms.

3. Create a Data Infrastructure Plan.

Robust data infrastructure plans include clear processes for the transmission, storage, and use of collected data. Stakeholders should define clear policies covering data governance; data submission; data collection frequency; file layout and formatting; and data security. Strong data infrastructure plans consider both how data are collected (which agencies/entities submit the data and how are the data submitted) as well as how the data are accessed (which agencies/entities have access to the data and how are the data extracted). Documentation of data infrastructure and data use helps to build trust in and reproducibility of data products among internal and external stakeholders.

4. **Facilitate Ongoing Communication Between Practitioners and Data Experts.**
Successful data-driven reform requires careful attention to the validity and accuracy of data collected, as well as to how key stakeholders in a reform process will understand and respond to research and analysis. CUNY ISLG developed a successful process of early and ongoing engagement with strategy and data stakeholders across agencies in each site, to generate valid and reliable measurement and encourage trust in the data process. Building regular, early, and continuous stakeholder engagement with data improves data literacy and builds trust in data and analytic findings. Incorporating in-person collaboration with practitioners, decisionmakers, and data stakeholders early in the process is crucial to building trust in the data, analyses, and to being able to effectively address issues when they arise.

5. **Regularly Query and Evaluate Data.**
Data-driven reform requires ongoing monitoring of key processes, outputs, and outcomes; simple before-and-after analysis is often insufficient to understand and sustain meaningful change over time. Standard sets of measures related to key processes and outcomes, clear definitions, and transparent calculations should be established and reviewed at repeated intervals over the course of any planning, implementation, and evaluation of a reform. This helps to both establish and protect the credibility of the data analytic process and can help to foster a culture of data literacy over time. Measures should be adapted as needed over time, as project needs, questions, and aspects of the larger context change.

6. **Tailor Data Communications and Develop Compelling Data "Stories".**
Critical to every communication is an assessment of the audience and their primary interests—data stories should be adapted and presented in ways that speak most directly to those interests. Develop data communications tailored to the specific audience and their data needs. Clear, specific, and jargon-free presentation of findings will help facilitate understanding and use of data for decision-making. Use of data visualizations and customizable charts also supports better understanding of data, rather than presentations of long tables of numbers and metrics. Importantly, data presentations should aim to distill empirical findings into a narrative, or "story," which go beyond mere presentation of data and figures to provide synthesis and interpretations for the audience. This may involve going beyond top-level findings, disaggregating measures by subgroups and conducting follow-up analyses to better understand patterns of results.

Together, these recommendations provide an important framework from which to develop large scale data-driven reform efforts. However, these challenges and lessons learned are not exhaustive and each initiative will run into additional and unique barriers along the way. Any data-driven reform effort should build in a generous amount of time for each of the above components, including collaborative planning with initiative partners and sites and, receiving, organizing, preparing, and analyzing complex multi-agency, cross-site datasets.

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Appendix A.
Data Elements by System Point

The list below contains data elements that were requested from Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC) core sites. The list is organized by system point and is a general template that covers the broad range of reforms being pursued across all SJC sites and system points. Data elements highlighted in orange were requested of all sites, while the remaining data elements varied based on their necessity in measuring strategies unique to each SJC site. CUNY ISLG worked with each site to refine the list based on the scope of its implementation plan, further define and tailor data elements to the local operational context; and identify time frames, samples, formatting, and other parameters for requested data. Therefore, some data elements may not be provided by all sites.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
For cases/people at each of the system points below (as applicable):

- Unique Person ID
- Unique Case ID (e.g. arrest ID, summons ID docket number, probation case number, etc.)
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Zip code (of home residence)
- Any other information necessary to identify eligible/target populations for selected strategies

LAW ENFORCEMENT
For each arrest (custodial and non-custodial):

- Date of arrest
- Zip code of arrest location
- Type of arrest—custodial or non-custodial (i.e. arrested and released with a citation)

- All charges associated with the arrest—including charge code and level (felony, misdemeanor, etc.), flag for top charge
- Offense type (for each charge) (e.g., person, property, drug, public order, sex, violation of probation/parole, other, etc.)

For each summons:

- Date of summons
- Zip code where summons was issued
- Type of summons (e.g. civil, criminal)
- All charges associated with the summons—including charge code and level (misdemeanor, violation, etc.)

For each police diversion:

- Date of diversion
- All charges associated with the diversion
- Name and type of diversion program/service (if applicable)
- Date diversion terminated (if applicable)
- Type of termination (successful/unsuccessful) (if applicable)
- Dates and charges of any subsequent arrests that occur during diversion programming (if applicable)

FOR EACH CALL FOR SERVICE:

- Date of call
- Type/nature of incident (including information about offense, as relevant)
- Flag for incidents involving behavioral health crisis/disturbance
- Responding unit
- Outcome (e.g. arrest, transport to emergency room, referral to service)
- If referral to service, name/type of program/service

PROSECUTOR (OR OTHER CHARGING ENTITY):

For each case received by the prosecutor (or other charging entity):

- Date of review and/or receipt of arrest charges
- Information on any risk assessment completed by the prosecutor
- Charging outcome (e.g., case accepted, declined, deferred/diversion pre-filing, referred back to law enforcement, grand jury outcome, etc.)
- Date of charging outcome
- If not declined:
  - All charges associated with the case—including charge code and level (felony, misdemeanor, etc.)
  - Offense type (for each charge) (e.g., person, property, drug, public order, sex, violation of probation/parole, other), etc.

For each prosecutorial diversion:

- Conditions of diversion/deferral (e.g. restitution payments)
- Date diversion terminated (if applicable)
- Type of termination (successful/unsuccessful)
- Any relevant additional detail on conditions met
- Dates and charges of any subsequent arrests that occur during diversion/deferral period (charge codes and levels)

PUBLIC DEFENDER:

For each case screened for assigned counsel:

- Date of arrest
- Date of filing (by prosecutor or other charging entity)
- Date of eligibility screening (for public defender/assigned counsel)
- Outcome of eligibility screening
- If assigned counsel, type assigned (e.g., public defender, assigned counsel, private attorney)—in cases where there is a change in counsel, include all assignments
- If assigned counsel, all assignment dates

PRETRIAL SERVICES:

For each case screened/assessed:

- All charges associated with the case (charge code and level—using charges at the point of assessment)
- Date of risk assessment/screening
- Outcome/recommendation of risk assessment/screening (risk level and score)
- Pretrial release recommendation (release, release to supervision, etc.)
- Date of pretrial release recommendation
- Pretrial release decision (by the court)
- Date of pretrial release decision
- For each case released to pretrial supervision:
- Enrollment and Termination dates
- Any conditions applied
- Termination type (successful/unsuccessful) and specific conditions met (e.g. restitution paid) as applicable
- Date and charges of any subsequent arrests that occur during supervision (charge codes and levels)
- Dates of any failures to appear that occur during supervision (and associated bench warrants)

COURT:

For each court case:

- Date of filing (by prosecutor or other charging entity)
- All filing charges (charge codes and levels)
- If bail/bond set:
  - Type (secure, unsecured, full cash, etc.)
  - Amount
  - Date set
  - If paid/posted: date, amount, and type paid/posted; date of release from custody
  - If bail/bond review: date, outcome (bail/bond lowered, eliminated, etc.), and release status following review
- Release decision at bail/bond hearing/first appearance (e.g., remand, held on money bail, released on money bail, released on bond, RoR, supervised release, ATI, etc.)

- Any further release decisions made
- All arraignment charges (if different from filing)
- Arraignment plea
- Arraignment outcome (e.g. continued, disposed, dismissed)
- Dates of all failures to appear and bench warrants issued
- Dates, types, and outcomes of selected court appearances (including bail/bond hearing/ initial appearance, arraignment, disposition, sentencing)
- Dates of all adjournments/continuances
- Custody status at selected court appearances (in custody, out of custody)
- Type of counsel present at selected court appearances (e.g. public defender, court-appointed counsel, private attorney)
- If screened for diversion/deferral at any point during court processing: screening date/ outcome
- If diverted/deferred at any point during court processing (including problem-solving court):
  - Referral date
  - Name and type of diversion/deferral program
  - Any conditions applied
  - Termination date and type (successful/ unsuccessful) and specific conditions met (e.g. restitution paid) as applicable
  - Date and charges of any subsequent arrests that occur during diversion/deferral (charge codes and levels)
- Disposition (e.g. dismissal, guilty plea, conviction)
- Disposition charges (if different from filing or arraignment)
- If sentenced, sentence type and length

PROBATION AND/OR PAROLE:
For population snapshot:
- Original charges (code, level, flag for top charge)/sentence (date, type, length)
- Intake date

- Supervision level (if applicable)
- Risk level
- Information on any special supervision conditions (restitution, sex offender registration, etc.)
- Anticipated discharge date

For each violation issued:
- Original charges/sentence (date and type)
- Information on any special supervision conditions (restitution, sex offender registration, etc.)
- Date violation filed
- Type of violation (technical, new arrest, etc.)
- Information on conditions violated
- If booked into jail custody: date of booking and release
- If diverted to program/service: date of diversion, name and type of program, termination type (successful/unsuccessful); dates and charges of any subsequent arrests that occurred during programming (charge codes and levels)
- Date of final violation disposition
- Final disposition (revoked, restored, etc.)

JAIL:
For jail population snapshot:
- Law enforcement agency admitting person
- Legal status ("current" status—at time of snapshot)
- If held on money bail/bond, amount
- Date/time of admission
- Date/time of booking (if different from admission)
- Risk assessment/classification/custody level (current status)
- Housing unit and cell location (including facility of confinement) (current status)
- Flag for mental health
- Information on any program participation within jail (name/type of program, date of enrollment, date of termination, type of termination (successful/unsuccessful))
- All charges associated with jail admission (charge codes, levels, flag for top charge)
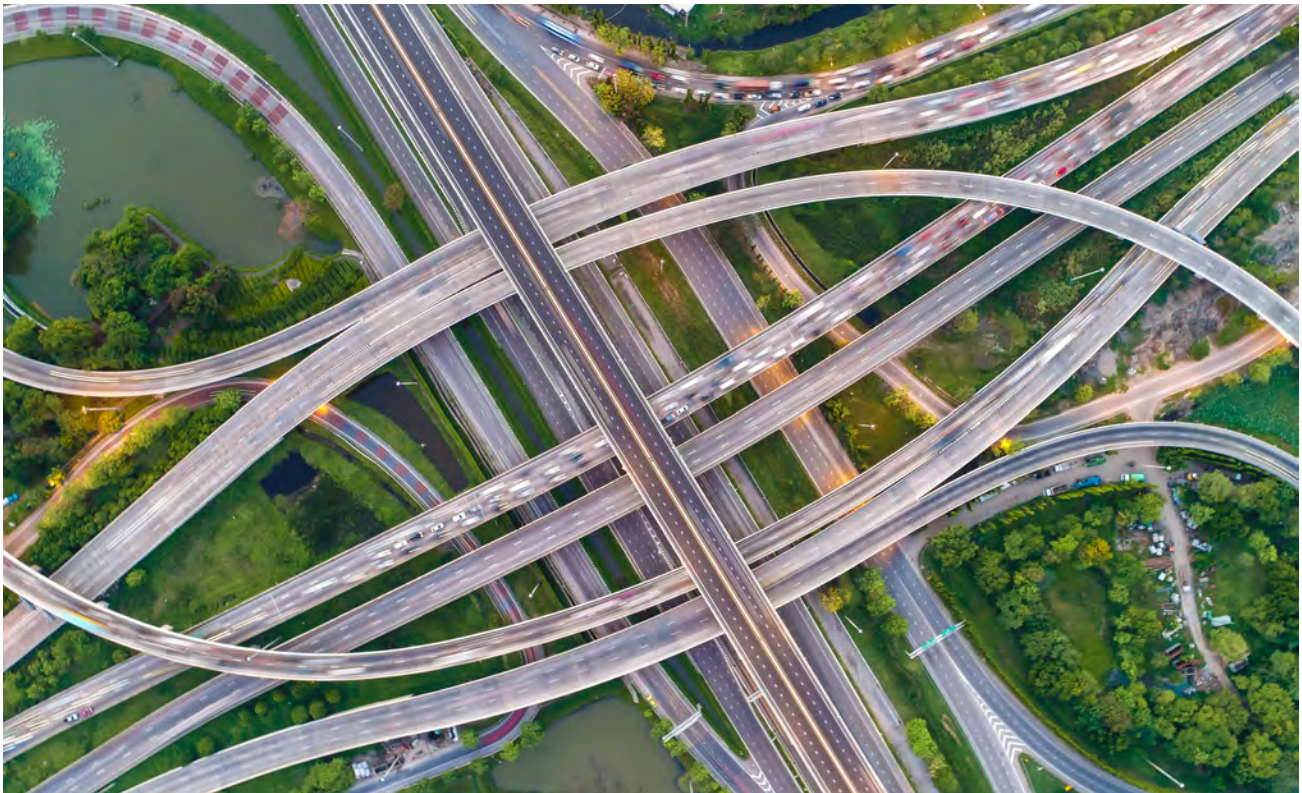- Top/Most Serious Booking/Admission Charge

Type (e.g., person, property, drug, public order, sex, violation of probation/parole, other, etc.)

- If sentenced, date, length, type (time served, jail, split) of sentence; sentencing court/jurisdiction
- If probation/parole violator, type of violation (probation/parole; technical/new arrest)
- Flag for individuals who are under the jail's jurisdiction but not confined (some elements in this list will not apply to them)

For jail admissions:

- Law enforcement agency admitting person
- Legal status at admission
- If held on money bail/bond, amount
- Date/time of admission
- Date/time of booking (if different from admission)
- Risk assessment/classification status/custody level at admission
- Assigned housing unit and cell location at admission (including facility of confinement)

- All charges associated with jail admission (charge codes, offense levels, flag for top charge)
- Offense Type for each charge associated with booking/admission (e.g., person, property, drug, public order, sex, violation of probation/parole, other, etc.)
- Flag for mental health
- If released:
  - Date/time of release
  - Type of release (e.g., RoR, release on money bail, release to pretrial supervision, ATI, sentence served, transferred, etc.)
  - If sentenced: date, length, type (time served, jail, split) of sentence; and sentencing court/jurisdiction
  - Risk assessment/classification status/custody level at release
  - All charges associated with release (charge codes, levels, flag for top charge)
  - Referrals/connections to services/programming upon release (name/type of service/program, date of referral)

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Appendix B. Published Research Projects Supported by the SJC

Project	Project Description
Exploring Latino/a Representation in Local Criminal Justice Systems: A Review of Data Collection Practices and Systems-Involvement (University of California, Irvine, 2023)	This project builds on a 2019 study focusing on the representation and experiences of the Latinx population in the criminal justice system in SJC sites. The initial stages of this work conducted an analysis of data from SJC sites to understand 1) how the Latinx population is captured in criminal justice information systems; 2) the nature and scope of language access programming across sites; and 3) state and local immigration policies and how they may contribute to arrests, detainers, and deportations. An extension to the 2019 study expands this inquiry by examining a cohort of justice-involved individuals across three SJC sites to explore cumulative disadvantage across decision points for Latinos/as and other racial and ethnic groups.
Dollars and Sense in Cook County: Examining the Impact of General Order 18.8A on Felony Bond Court Decisions, Pretrial Release, and Crime (Loyola University, 2020)	This project, conducted by academic partners at Loyola University, analyzed data to assess the public safety implications of bond court reform in Cook County, Illinois and was the first Consortium project to complete a public report providing timely evidence that bail reform was not associated with an increase in new violent crime.
Population Review Teams: Evaluating Jail Reduction and Racial Disparities Across Three Jurisdictions (Center for Justice Innovation, 2022)	The Center for Justice Innovation (CJI) conducted a multi-site project focusing on Population Review Team (PRT) strategies and impacts on racial and ethnic disparities across three SJC sites— Lucas County, Pima County, and St. Louis County. CJI explored how jail population and disparity trends are related in each site and closely investigated the impacts of PRT strategies on disparities and other outcomes.
Expanding Supervised Release in New York City (Center for Justice Innovation, 2022)	The Center for Court Innovation conducted a series of analyses to examine the impact of the major Supervised Release Program (SRP) expansion in June 2019. This study answers four questions about the 2019 expansion: 1) Did SRP enrollment rates increase after the June 2019 expansion? 2) Did any observed changes in SRP enrollment rates disproportionately impact specific racial/ethnic groups? 3) Did detention rates at arraignment decrease after the June 2019 SRP expansion? 4) Did any observed changes in detention rates at arraignment disproportionately impact specific racial/ethnic groups?

Project	Project Description
The Perils of Probation: How Supervision Contributes to Jail Populations (Vera, 2021)	Researchers from the Vera Institute examine the extent to which people being held on probation detainers have impacted jail populations.
Examining the Impacts of Arrest Deflection Strategies on Jail Reduction Efforts (Justice System Partners, 2022)	In an effort to learn more about how police-led deflection strategies operate, Justice System Partners conducted a mixed-methods studies of deflection strategies in two SJC sites. Using administrative data from local crisis centers and interviews with police officers in Pima County, AZ and Charleston County, SC, this mixed methods study aimed to understand how deflection of individuals with SMHD/SUD operates in both sites.
Evaluations of the Misdemeanor Diversion Program in Durham County, North Carolina (Urban Institute, 2021)	The Urban Institute conducted a process and impact evaluation of SJC Innovation Fund Site Durham County's Misdemeanor Diversion Program (MDP) to learn more about these deflection strategies and their effectiveness on both individual and systemic levels.
Exploring Plea Negotiation Processes and Outcomes in Milwaukee and St. Louis County (Loyola University, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2022)	Loyola University and the University of Missouri, St. Louis employed multiple methods to understand the cumulative effects of prosecutorial decision-making on plea bargaining, while also engaging prior defendants who have pled guilty to gain a deeper understanding of plea negotiations through the experience of directly impacted individuals. The goal of the study was to expand existing research to consider how prosecutors, and other court actors, approach and make decisions surrounding the plea negotiation process and to consider factors that affect guilty plea outcomes in Milwaukee and St. Louis Counties. The project analyzed data and reviewed policy documents to describe trends in plea outcomes and assess the procedural factors that influence prosecutorial decision-making.
An Exploration of Prosecutorial Discretion in Plea Bargaining in Philadelphia (Urban Institute, 2022)	Researchers at the Urban Institute conducted a mixed-methods study to analyze prosecutorial discretion in the plea-bargaining process and associated outcomes in Philadelphia, using administrative data as well as collecting primary data through interviews and surveys with multiple stakeholder groups. In a first phase of work, Urban examined the primary characteristics of cases disposed of by plea and documented the policies and practices that shape plea bargaining decision-making. The second phase of work consisted of a deep-dive analysis to assess the procedural factors influencing prosecutorial decisions around plea bargaining.

Project	Project Description
Probation Violations as Drivers of Jail Incarceration in St. Louis County, Missouri (University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2023)	The University of Missouri, St Louis conducted a mixed-methods study, including a process and outcome evaluation of the St. Louis County Expedited Probation Program, which was designed to accelerate case processing and provide services for individuals detained on a probation technical violation. Specifically, in the first phase of work, the project documented the legal and procedural processes related to probation violations and assessed the trends in jail incarceration for this population. The second phase of work included (i) a process evaluation that aims to document the program model design and implementation, and (ii) an outcome evaluation. This study also explored the impacts of COVID-19 on the probation violation process.
At the Intersection of Probation and Jail Reduction Efforts (Urban Institute, 2023)	The Urban Institute carried out a comprehensive research study to describe probation pathways to jail incarceration and examine the effectiveness of the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program to reduce the jail population and racial and ethnic disparities within the population in Pima County, AZ. Specifically, Urban will engage in a two-phased project. Phase I included an assessment of both the probation to jail pathways and trends and PSH implementation. Phase II included an evaluation of the short-term and long-term outcomes of PSH among the probation population at both the aggregate and individual levels with particular attention to how outcomes may vary across race/ethnicity and other salient characteristics (e.g., age, gender).
Understanding the Population of People with Frequent Jail Contact (Policy Research Associates, 2023)	In an effort to understand the population of people with frequent jail contact, Policy Research Associates (PRA) conducted a mixed-methods research study in three SJC sites—Harris County, Texas, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, and Pennington County, South Dakota. This study sought to track the flow of people with frequent jail contact, assess the various strategies used by sites to reduce jail contact, and investigate outcomes, especially for people of color and people with behavioral health conditions.

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The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation launched the Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC) in response to the misuse and overuse of American jails. The SJC Network includes cities, counties, and states committed to rethinking local criminal legal systems with innovative solutions that are data-driven, equity-focused, and community-informed.