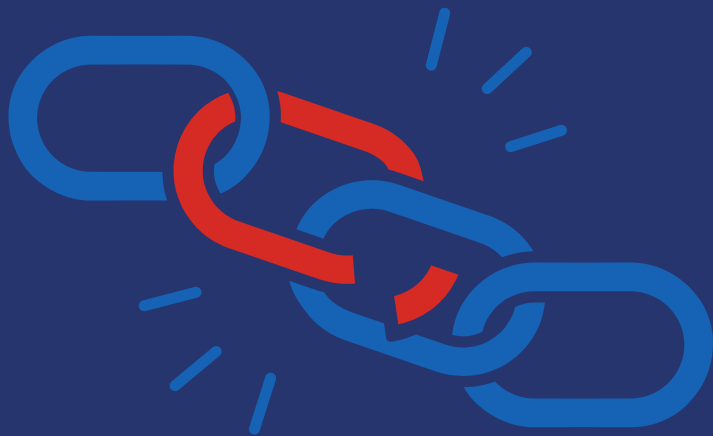


No Shelter, No Safety

How Rising Evictions in New York
Could Pose a Risk to Public Safety—
And How Eviction Prevention is
Violence Prevention

By Dr. Russell Weaver

March 2023



MARCH 2023

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ILR Buffalo Co-Lab

Advances an equitable economy
and democratic community,
collaboratively integrating scholarly
and practical understanding to
strengthen civic action.

Co-Lab's initiative to democratize
data that seeks to help New Yorkers
better understand, and organize to
transform, persistent patterns of
inequality across the state.

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No Shelter, No Safety

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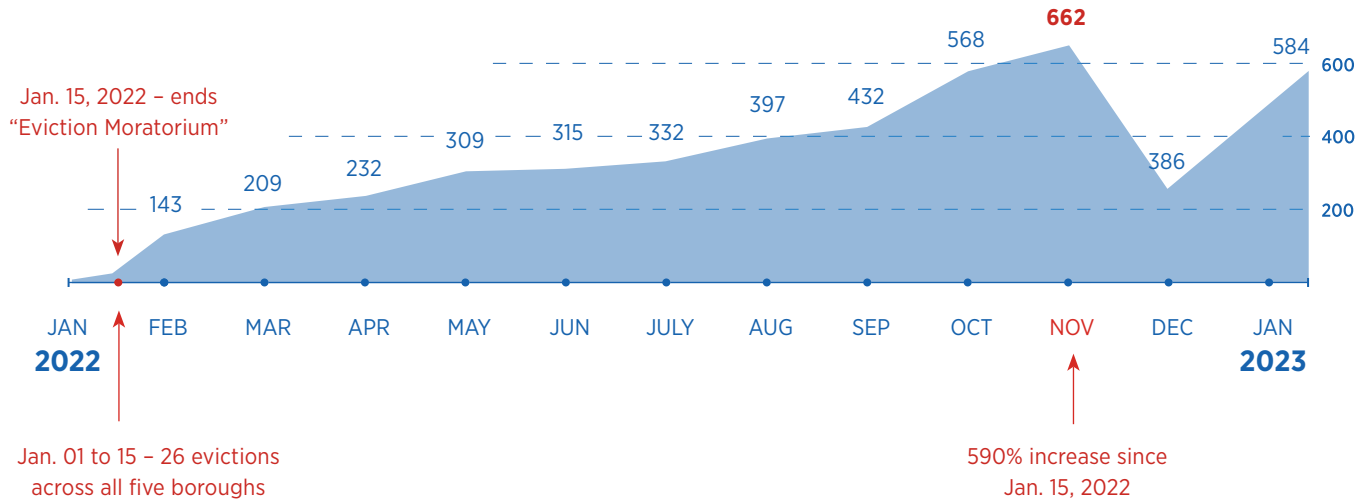
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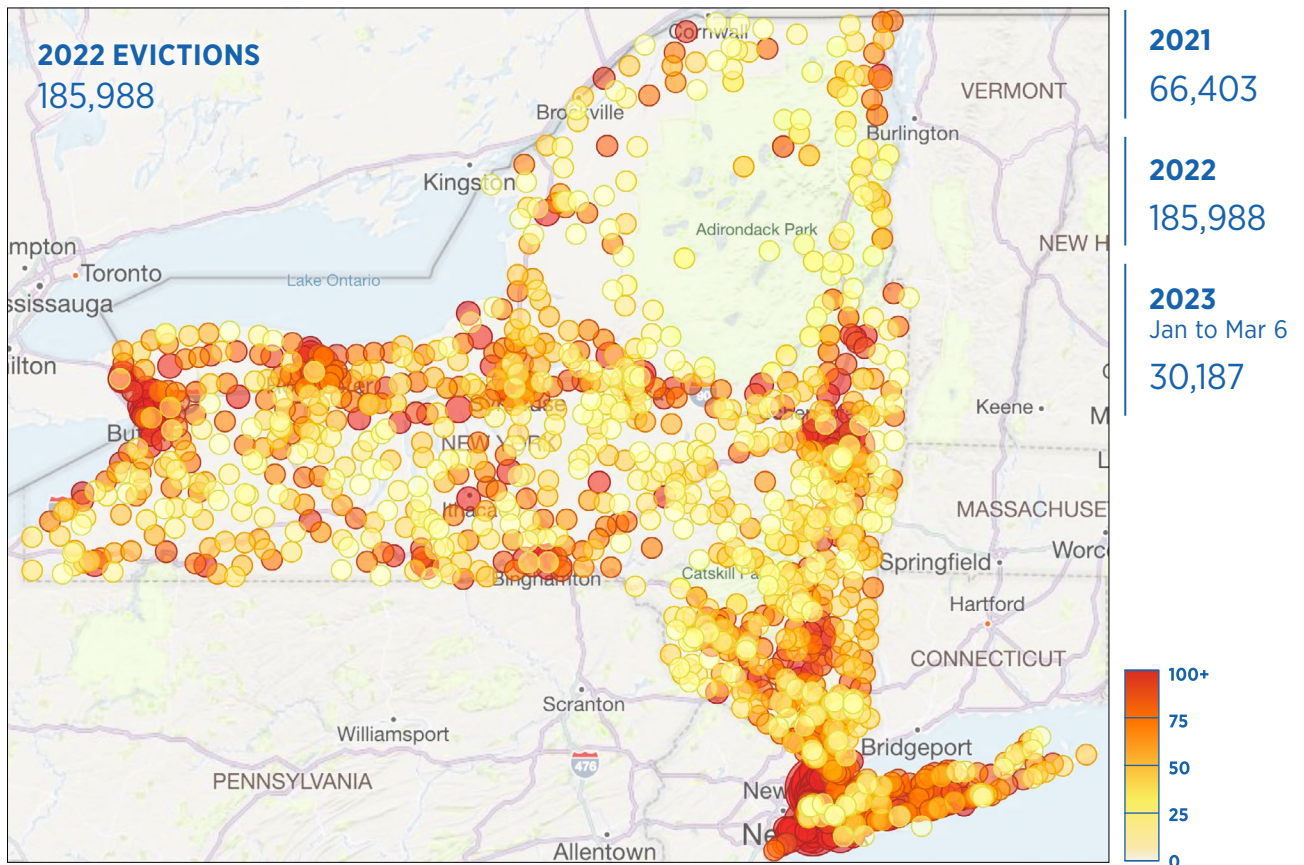
Since the end of the eviction moratorium, eviction filings have risen by nearly 600%

NYC residential eviction data from Jan. 15, 2022 to Jan. 31, 2023; [Data published and updated](#) by the New York City Department of Investigation.



No part of New York State untouched by rising evictions

Statewide eviction data (excluding commercial properties) from Jan. 1, 2022 to Mar. 6, 2023; [Data published](#) by NYS Unified Court System, Statewide Evictions Filings Report.



Introduction

What are Community-Level Processes?

Community-level processes are the interactions that collectively create stable neighborhoods. Stable neighborhoods allow longtime residents to form social ties and invest in shared goals, often leveraging the political system to do so. Conversely, unstable neighborhoods are characterized by high levels of residential turnover, which compromises the emergence of collective will — neighborhood-based social cohesion and a synergistic investment in the common good.

- **Community-Level Processes and Outcomes**, especially as they relate to public safety.

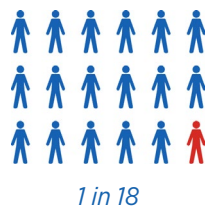
This brief summarizes three interconnected findings from this growing body of research and considers their implications for New York State, where evictions have been climbing since the expiration of the COVID-19 moratorium on evictions in January 2022.¹ The number of legal residential removals in New York City has increased every month from January to November 2022, rising to a high of 662. Compared to the 239 total removals from March 2020 through the end of the moratorium in January 2022, this figure represents a 590% increase.

Contrary to popular narratives that evictions are “downstate” or “urban” issues, our data shows that the resurgence in eviction filings has been concentrated upstate, especially in rural areas. 40 out of 62 counties — nearly all upstate counties — had higher eviction filing rates (per 100 renter households) in 2022 compared to pre-pandemic, 2019 levels.

The growing incidence of evictions in New York State, if left unchecked, pose a significant risk to public safety, neighborhood stability, and weakened participatory democracy.

EVICTION RATES

In 2022, there was roughly 1 eviction filing for every 18 renter households in NYS, representing 590% increase.



EVICTION BY REGION

Eviction filing rates in the counties with some of the highest eviction rates are alarming: in the capital region, **Rensselaer County**, has a **10.7% eviction rate**, and in New York City, the **Bronx borough** alone has an **eviction rate of 9.5%** per 100 renter households — respectively, about a *one in ten chance of eviction*.



Summary of Findings

- **Evictions destabilize neighborhoods and weaken social ties, making communities more prone to crime:** New research prompted by the heightened risk of eviction during the pandemic found that evictions disrupt social networks in both the communities where individuals are evicted from and the neighborhoods to which they move.
- **Evictions harm the ability of communities to work together to solve collective problems:** Given that social ties are the basis of positive interactions in communities, the damage that eviction does to these ties diminishes a community's willingness and capacity to work together. And, evictions can impact civic participation as a whole, leading to lower voter turnout.
- **Eviction puts significant upward pressure on crime rates:** By Destabilizing social ties and breaking down civic infrastructure, evictions can lead to rising crime and declining public safety.
- **Increasing evictions in New York could pose a risk to public safety:** Zip codes with the highest eviction filing rates tend to have the lowest levels of economic and social cohesiveness and civic participation. The resurgence of evictions in New York State following the end of the eviction moratorium in January of 2022 is likely to put upward pressure on crime rates.

Finding:

Evictions destabilize neighborhoods and weaken social ties, making those with high rates of evictions more prone to crime

About a decade ago, when Matthew Desmond began publishing his seminal works,² eviction had been “perhaps the most understudied process affecting the urban poor” in all social sciences.³ Since that time, researchers have produced compelling findings on the impacts of eviction on households and individuals, including heightened levels of depression;⁴ lower school performance for children;⁵ and poorer health and mental health outcomes.⁶

However, the research on *neighborhood-level* outcomes from eviction has been “notably limited”⁷ until recently, when the COVID-19 pandemic put upwards of 40 million households across the U.S. at risk of eviction.⁸

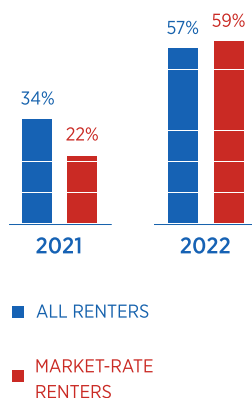
Critical finding drawn from a 2022 study of households in Philadelphia asserts that “eviction results in ‘hypermobility’ for those forcibly displaced from their homes, making it more difficult for neighborhoods to establish community crime prevention strategies.”⁹ Eviction forces households to relocate frequently, disrupting social networks in both the communities residents are evicted from and the neighborhoods to which they move.¹⁰ The relocation process for evicted households is never smooth, typically involving multiple moves in the months that follow eviction.¹¹ As the Philadelphia study argues, “Forced hypermobility makes it especially difficult for low-income [evicted] families to settle into a community and achieve the necessary financial, social, or educational stability crucial for well-being and active community engagement.”

As a result, communities with higher eviction rates tend to be less cohesive and more prone to social disorganization and crime.¹²

NYS RENT INCREASES IN 2021 VS 2022⁴²

The majority of tenants saw rent increases last year. However, **market rate tenants** were the most impacted, as compared to 2021.

59% saw their rents rise, and none saw their rents fall. The numbers were consistent across incomes:



Finding:

Eviction Hurts a Community's Ability to Work Together to Fix Collective Problems

Forced hypermobility places a strain on social ties, reduces civic activity, and leads to disengaged communities.¹³ Because social ties “serve as a means for positive interactions with individuals [in] a community,”¹⁴ the damage that eviction does to these ties diminishes a community’s willingness and capacity to work together “to fix collective problems.”¹⁵ For evictees, the added material hardship of eviction can deprioritize civic participation as individuals must instead focus on survival and securing shelter. These dynamics tend to “breed government cynicism,” where evictees *and residents* of a neighborhoods with high eviction rates grow increasingly skeptical of formal political institutions and processes.¹⁶

In a large-scale study involving tens of millions of voting and eviction records from across the U.S., scholars found that eviction *causes* lower voter turnout, even after accounting for factors that are known to influence voting behavior.¹⁷ The study estimated that **decreasing the residential eviction rate by one percentage point could boost voter turnout by nearly three percentage points.**¹⁸ Given that recent (2022) U.S. general elections were historically close¹⁹ the dampening effect that evictions have on voter turnout is especially troubling. Greater voter participation among those affected by eviction could have altered electoral outcomes nationwide.

◀ Data reveals that 2022 was a historically close election in a historically divided era, **with one major party edging out the other in gubernatorial and Senate races by just 0.3 and 0.1 percentage points, respectively.**

A concerning implication of these findings is that because evictions are heavily concentrated in low-resourced communities of color,²⁰ eviction may actively be “suppressing the political voice of the poor and blunting the full power of the Black and Hispanic vote.”²¹

Renter Households

- 0
- 10,000
- 20,000
- 32,000

Higher Rates of Eviction Filings are Associated with Significantly Weaker Social Ties and Economic Connectedness

[Eviction Filings by County tool](#), report filings as a function of renter-occupied households, data from the current, [2017-21 U.S. Census Bureau Five-Year American Community Survey](#).

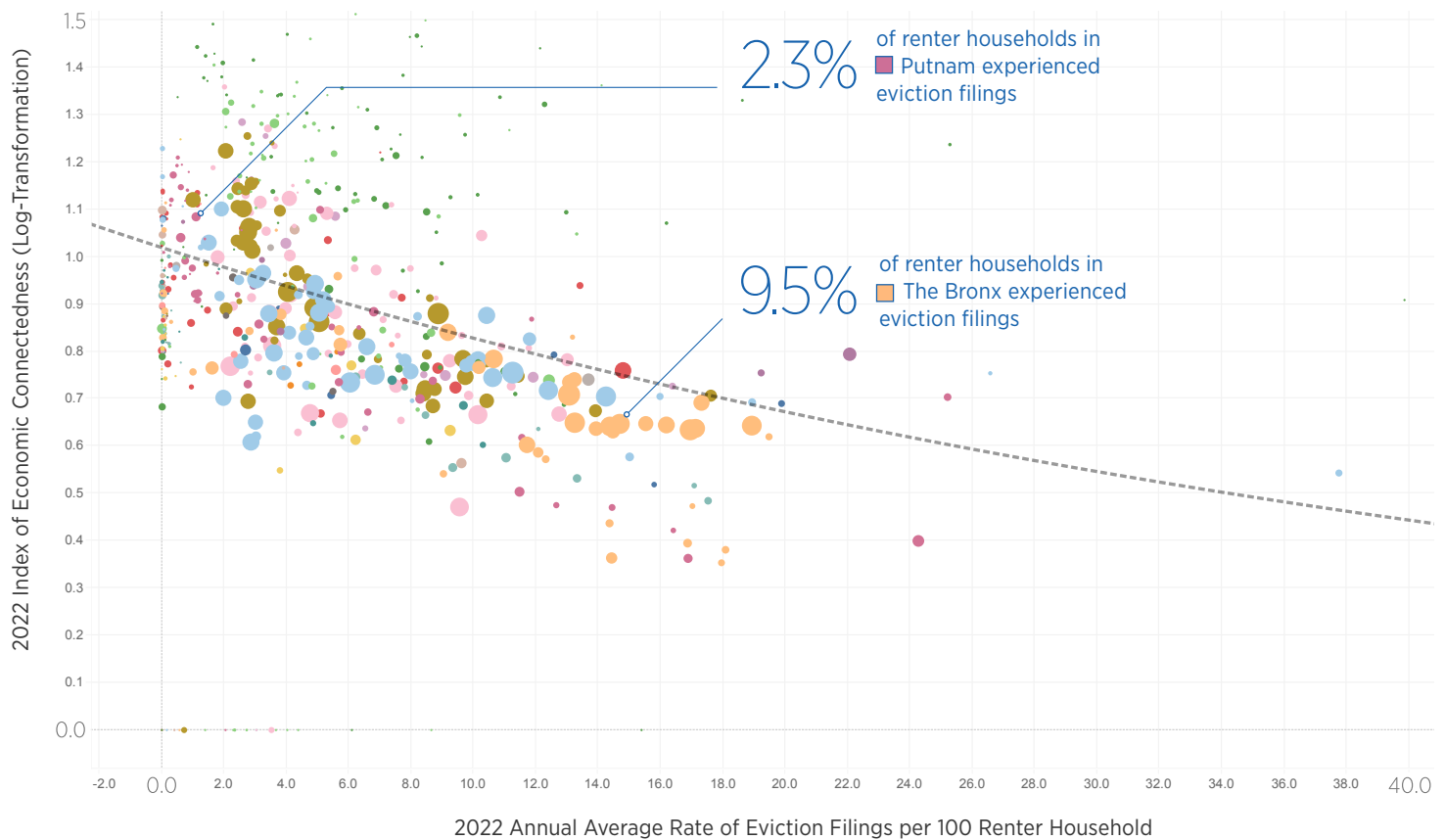


Chart Correlation



County

Albany	Erie	Niagara	Schenectady
Allegany	Fulton	Oneida	Schoharie
Bronx	Genesee	Onondaga	St Lawrence
Broome	Greene	Ontario	Steuben
Cattaraugus	Hamilton	Orange	Suffolk
Cayuga	Herkimer	Oswego	Tioga
Chautauqua	Jefferson	Otsego	Tompkins
Chemung	Kings	Putnam	Ulster
Chenango	Madison	Queens	Warren
Clinton	Monroe	Rensselaer	Washington
Columbia	Montgomery	Richmond	Westchester
Delaware	Nassau	Rockland	Wyoming
Dutchess	New York	Saratoga	Yates

Finding:

Eviction Puts Significant Upward Pressure on Crime Rates



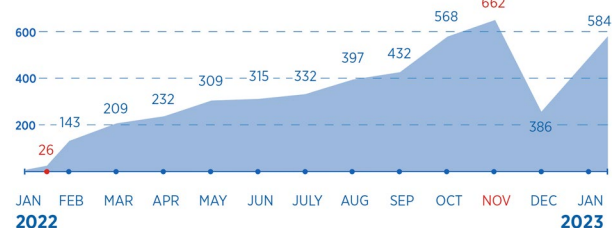
The first two findings in this brief shed light on how the harms of eviction spill beyond the boundaries of landlord-tenant relationships to weaken community social ties and break down civic infrastructure. The third finding from recent evictions research concerns what happens as a result of these patterns — namely, rising crime and declining public safety.

Social science research has long held that neighborhood social ties, social cohesion, and norms of civic engagement are among the most important and consistent factors in crime prevention.²² Connected, stable, engaged communities are capable of developing mechanisms to keep their community safe.²³ As one criminologist recently put it, CHIME—Connectedness, Hope, Identity, Meaning, and Empowerment in communities—prevents crime.²⁴

By unraveling social ties, eviction actively undermines a community's ability to keep itself safe. Evidence of the direct link between eviction and crime continues to grow. A 2022 study of Ohio, for instance, **found emerging causal evidence that evictions lead to increased instances of burglary and vehicle theft.**²⁵ **The upticks in these offenses appeared to be a direct result of acts of desperation, with evictees seeking shelter and necessities through the only means available to them.**²⁶ Importantly, the presence of supporting infrastructure, such as temporary housing shelters, mitigated these effects and resulted in lower increases in eviction-related crimes.

Since the end of the Eviction Moratorium (01/15/22) NYC Landlords filed roughly 114,768 Eviction Notices:

590% INCREASE
from Jan. 2022



Each **10% INCREASE** in⁴³ evictions leads to...

- 5.5% higher burglary into structures
- 8.5% higher vehicle theft

The author of the study reached this conclusion by finding that thefts were largely targeted toward clothes and consumables, rather than items like money and jewelry; and the **effect of evictions on illegal entry into structures or vehicles was 40% higher in winter months**, suggesting that such actions were motivated by unhoused and evicted persons searching out shelter and warmth.

In Boston, Eileen Kirk found that eviction “harms collective efficacy” and is positively related to neighborhood-level violent crime, even after controlling for variables that typically explain spatial patterns of criminal offenses.²⁷ Similarly, in Philadelphia, Daniel Semenza and colleagues found “a direct association between neighborhood eviction rates and crime rates, including homicide, robbery, and burglary, even after controlling for related traditional measures of economic disadvantage and residential mobility.”²⁸ More specifically, they found that a one standard deviation increase in eviction rates led to a 3% increase in homicides, a 2% increase in robbery, and a 2% increase in burglary over time. The latter relationship, however, only existed in high-poverty areas,²⁹ adding further support to the notion that evictees in low-resourced communities are left with few options for making ends meet.

The major takeaway from these studies is that eviction “is a destabilizing force” that puts significant upward pressure on crime in communities by disrupting the “ability of residents to form social connections and come together to solve collective issues” and advance public safety.³⁰

FINDINGS

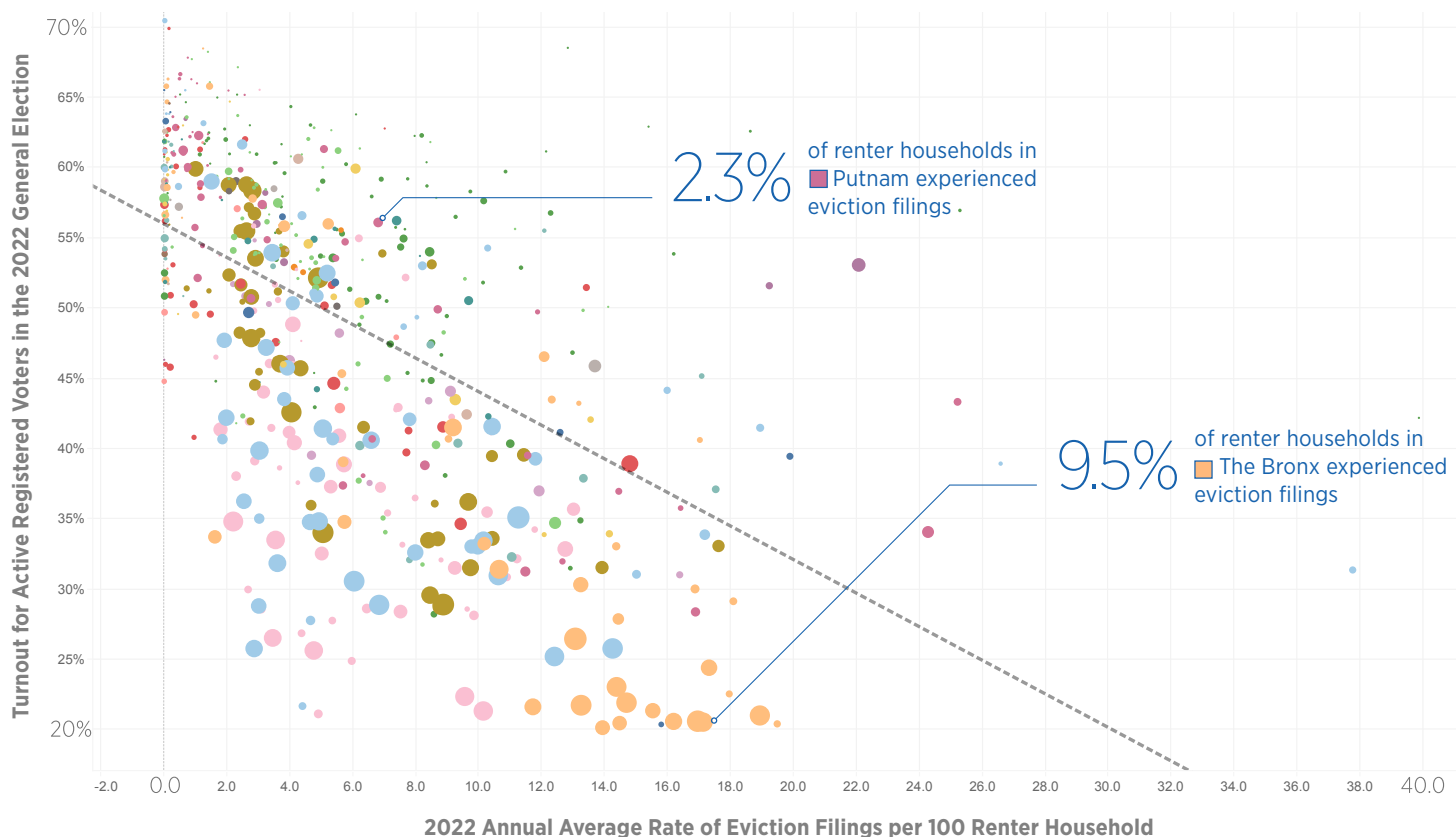
- Evictions push communities into fragmentation and individuals/ households into isolation — limiting a neighborhood’s ability to address rising crime rates as it causes them.
- Evictions, which are concentrated in low-resourced communities of color, actively suppress the political voice of the poor and blunt the full power of the Black and Hispanic vote.

IMPACTS

- A one standard deviation increase in eviction rates leads to a 3% increase in homicides, a 2% increase in robbery, and a 2% increase in burglary.
- Decreasing a residential eviction rate by a single percentage point can boost voter turnout by three percentage points.

Higher Rates of Eviction Filings are Associated with Significantly Lower Voter Turnout

High social cohesion and economic connectedness are both indicators of low eviction, but there are broader implications and impacts for the inverse; the relationship between eviction filings and voter turnout.



Higher Rates of Eviction Filings are Associated with Significantly Weaker Social Cohesiveness

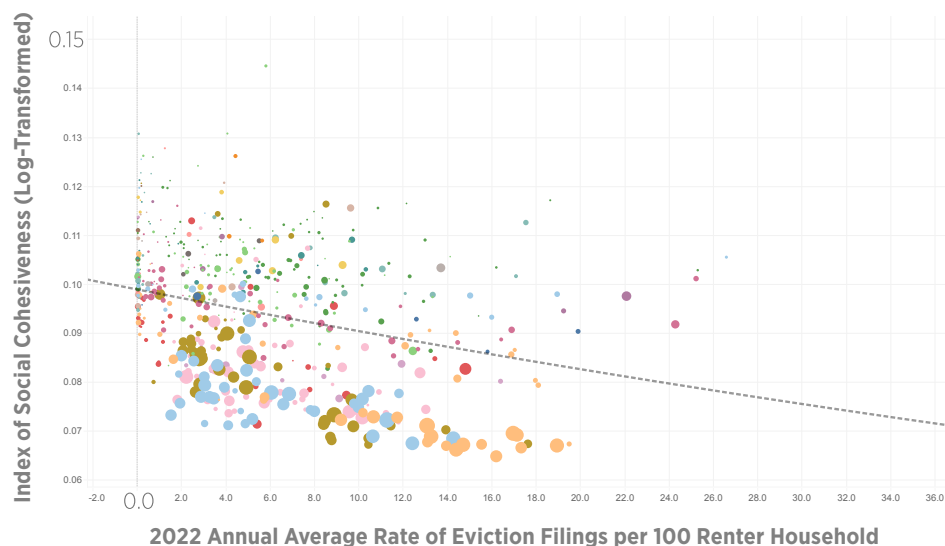


Social Cohesiveness

describes the extent of how well we know each other — our neighbors, neighborhood communities, and how embedded our personal networks are in the place that we live.

Economic Connectedness

describes the extent of social ties across class lines — the breadth and depth of economic diversity in a physical proximity that neighborhoods physically occupy and identify through.



Implications for New York State:

Rising Evictions Pose a Growing Risk for Public Safety

With the expiration of the COVID-19 moratorium on evictions in early 2022, New York State has seen “a resurgence of evictions being filed”³¹ in recent months. According to the findings summarized here, this change threatens to bring devastating consequences to our neighborhoods, including a loss of social ties and higher levels of crime and disadvantage.

Although studies comparable to those featured in this briefing have not yet been carried out for New York State (NYS), new data from researchers at Cornell University strongly suggest that trends observed in Ohio, Boston, and Philadelphia have bearing on and implications for the Empire State.

Linking data from a national “Social Capital Atlas” that publishes measures of economic connectedness (cross-class social ties) and social cohesion³² to eviction filings data from the NYS Unified Court System, the Cornell team found a strong association between these two phenomena that cannot be explained by chance alone. As shown in the figure on page nine, ZIP Codes in New York with high eviction rates tend to have the weakest levels of economic connectedness.³³

Relatedly, the Cornell team found that, as eviction rates increase, the level of social cohesiveness in a ZIP Code tends to decrease. This relationship cannot be explained by chance alone.³⁴ Comporting with the latest literature, the higher the eviction rate, the weaker a community’s social ties and social cohesiveness.

Finally, the Cornell researchers computed ZIP Code-level turnout among active registered voters in the most recent (2022) statewide General Election using a January 2023 voter file from the NYS Board of Elections. Consistent with the latest evictions literature, they estimated a highly statistically significant,³⁵ negative relationship between evictions and electoral participation across the state.

Whereas the figures show correlations, and not causal relationships like several of the studies cited in this briefing, they are highly consistent with the growing state of knowledge on eviction’s community-level impacts.

Conclusion

Through the combination of forced hypermobility and imposed material hardship, eviction contributes to the perpetuation of poverty and inequality by:

- (1) Isolating evictees from social networks,
- (2) Disrupting residential stability and straining social relationships in communities, all of which works to
- (3) Reduce civic engagement and keep communities from developing the types of norms and internal capacities that are critical for crime prevention and public safety.

Without intervention, it seems highly probable that the growing number of eviction filings in New York will make the state more unequal, less democratic, and less safe over time.

To prevent these outcomes,
it is necessary to take substantive
action to prevent evictions and
keep New Yorkers in their homes.

Recommendations

In the long term, strategies that limit housing as a commodity and build towards housing as a public good are essential for safe and stable communities.

New York State should explore the large-scale expansion of public housing and social/collective housing alternatives.³⁶

In the nearer term, there are multiple opportunities to bring more balance to landlord-tenant relations and prevent evictions. Three policy opportunities currently being considered by the State legislature, are key first steps towards stronger communities and reduced inequality in New York State.



Good Cause Eviction

Good Cause Eviction legislation, which is currently under debate in the New York State Legislature, allows tenants to defend themselves in court against unjust evictions and severe rent hikes. It prevents arbitrary or retaliatory evictions by requiring landlords to have “good cause” (nuisance, breaking the lease, non-payment of rent) to successfully pursue eviction. Yearly rent increases over a certain threshold — 3% or 150% of the consumer price index (CPI, essentially the rate of inflation), whichever is larger — could be challenged by the tenant, requiring the landlord to justify the increase.

This bill can help tenants fight arbitrary evictions and steep rent hikes that all but amount to an eviction, which could help curb the rate of evictions in New York State³⁷

Housing Access Voucher Program

The Housing Access Voucher Program would set up a statewide rental subsidy program for New Yorkers who are homeless or at risk of eviction. With \$250 million in funding the first year, the legislation would create 20,000 vouchers, which would cap tenants' rent burden at 30%. By helping New Yorkers gain access to safe and permanent housing, the program would make it likelier that more residents could maintain a roof over their heads.³⁸

Right to Counsel

Across New York State, between 2018 and 2022, 95% of property owners/landlords were represented by legal counsel in proceedings associated with eviction filings, compared to just 14% of tenants.³⁹

Recognizing this vast gulf in legal representation, New York City adopted a Right to Counsel (RTC) law in 2017. That law, which “provides tenants who are under 200 percent of the federal poverty line with [free] access to counsel in housing court,” has proven to be highly effective. For three consecutive years, 84% of NYC tenants “who received legal representation in housing court by RTC lawyers were able to remain in their homes.”⁴⁰

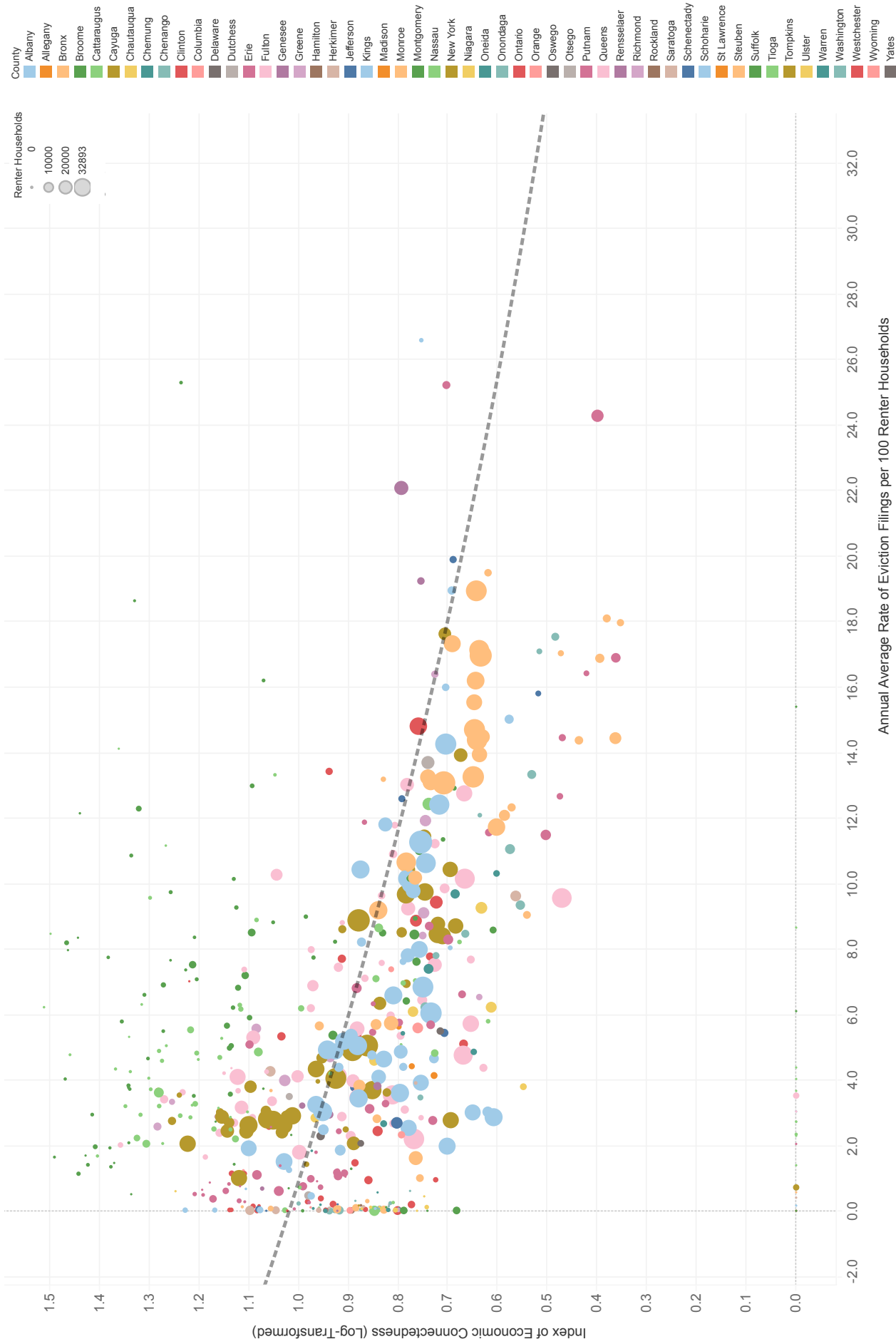
To build on that success, the NYC RTC Coalition is championing a statewide **RTC bill that would: “apply to all tenants facing eviction; cover any case that could result in a tenant losing their housing;** and require the courts, judges, and landlords to ensure that tenants know about and can use their Right to Counsel.”⁴¹

About the Author

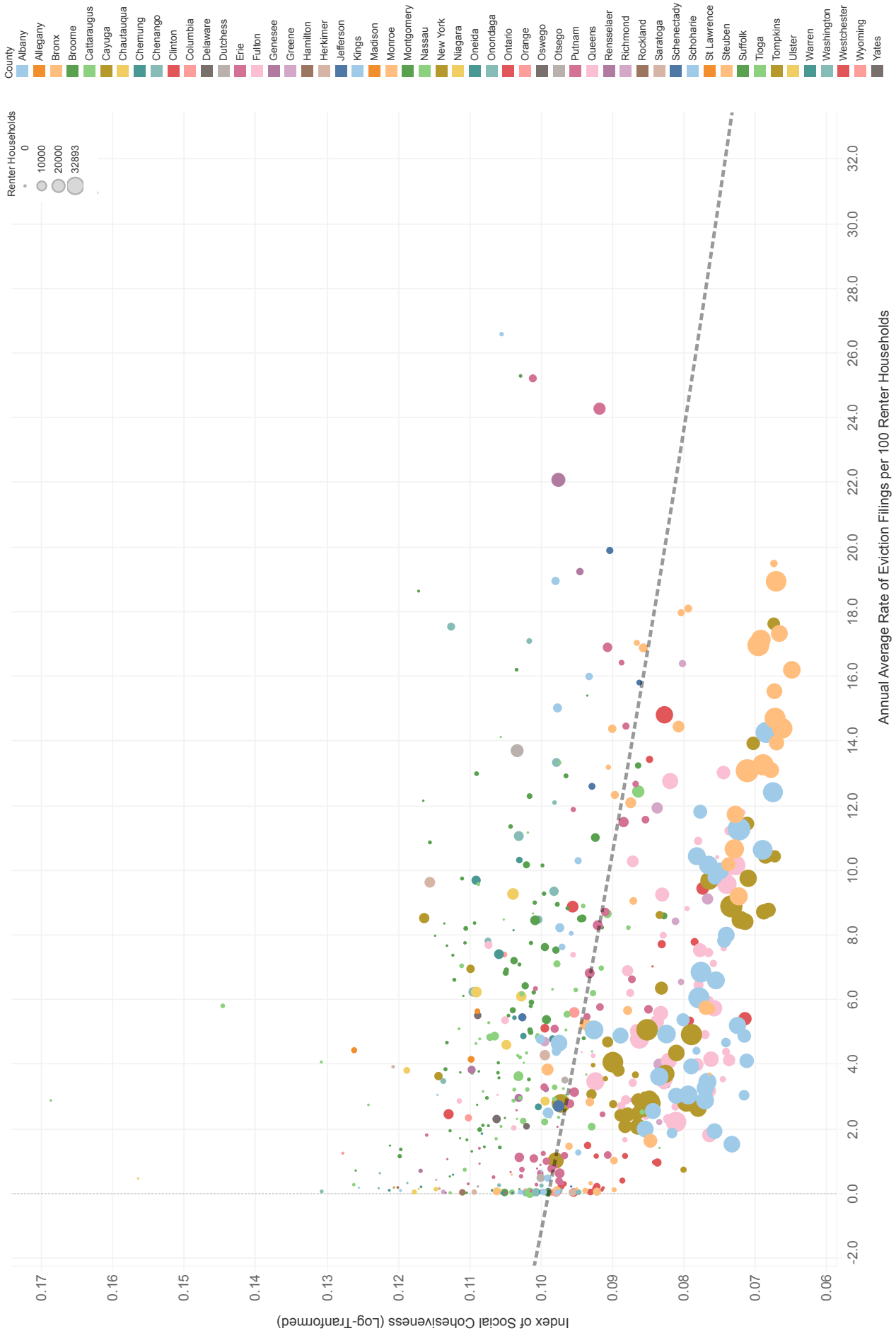
Russell Weaver, PhD, is a quantitative geographer and Director of Research at the Cornell ILR Buffalo Co-Lab. He was previously an Associate Professor (with tenure) in the Texas State University Department of Geography, where he taught courses in community geography, community development, urban planning, geographic thought, and quantitative data analysis. His research programs are aimed at understanding pathways for context-sensitive, sustainable, and equitable community economic development. He is the lead author of *Shrinking Cities: Understanding Urban Decline in the United States*, and his work appears in such journals as *The Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *Ecological Economics*, *Applied Geography*, and *Community Development*. Weaver holds a master's degree in Economics and a PhD in Geography from SUNY Buffalo.

<https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/people/russell-weaver>

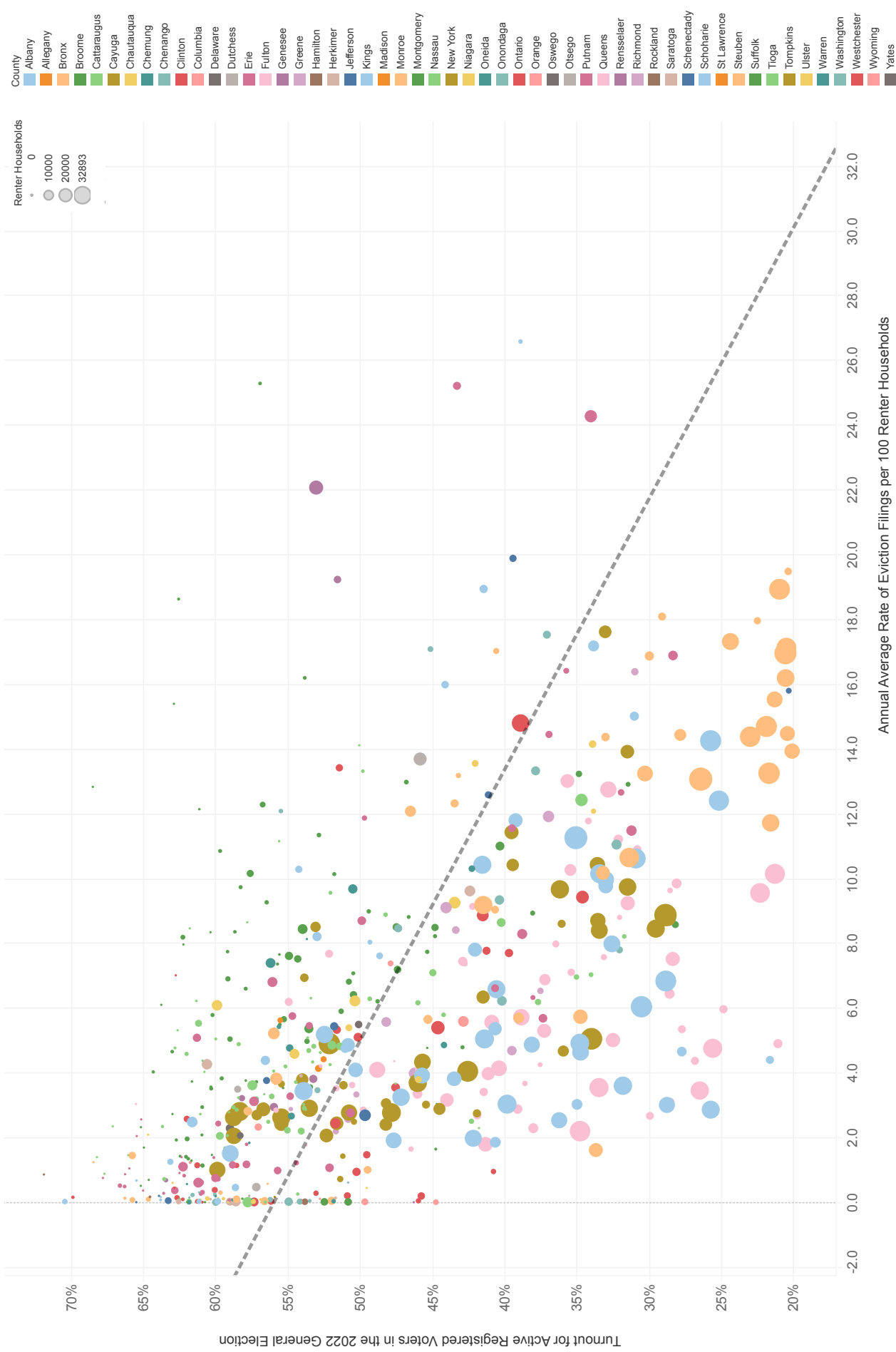
Higher Rates of Eviction Filings are Associated with Significantly Weaker Social Ties/Economic Connectedness



Higher Rates of Eviction Filings are Associated with Significantly Weaker Social Cohesiveness



Higher Rates of Eviction Filings are Associated with Significantly Lower Voter Turnout



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