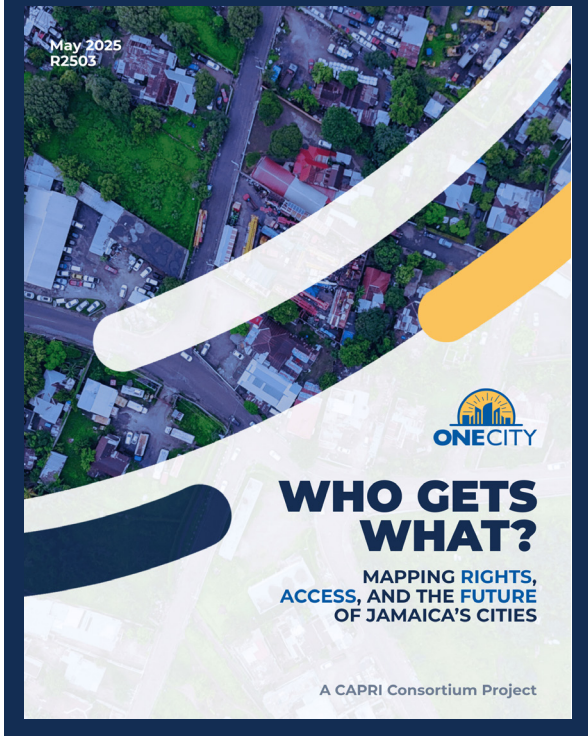


CAPSULE



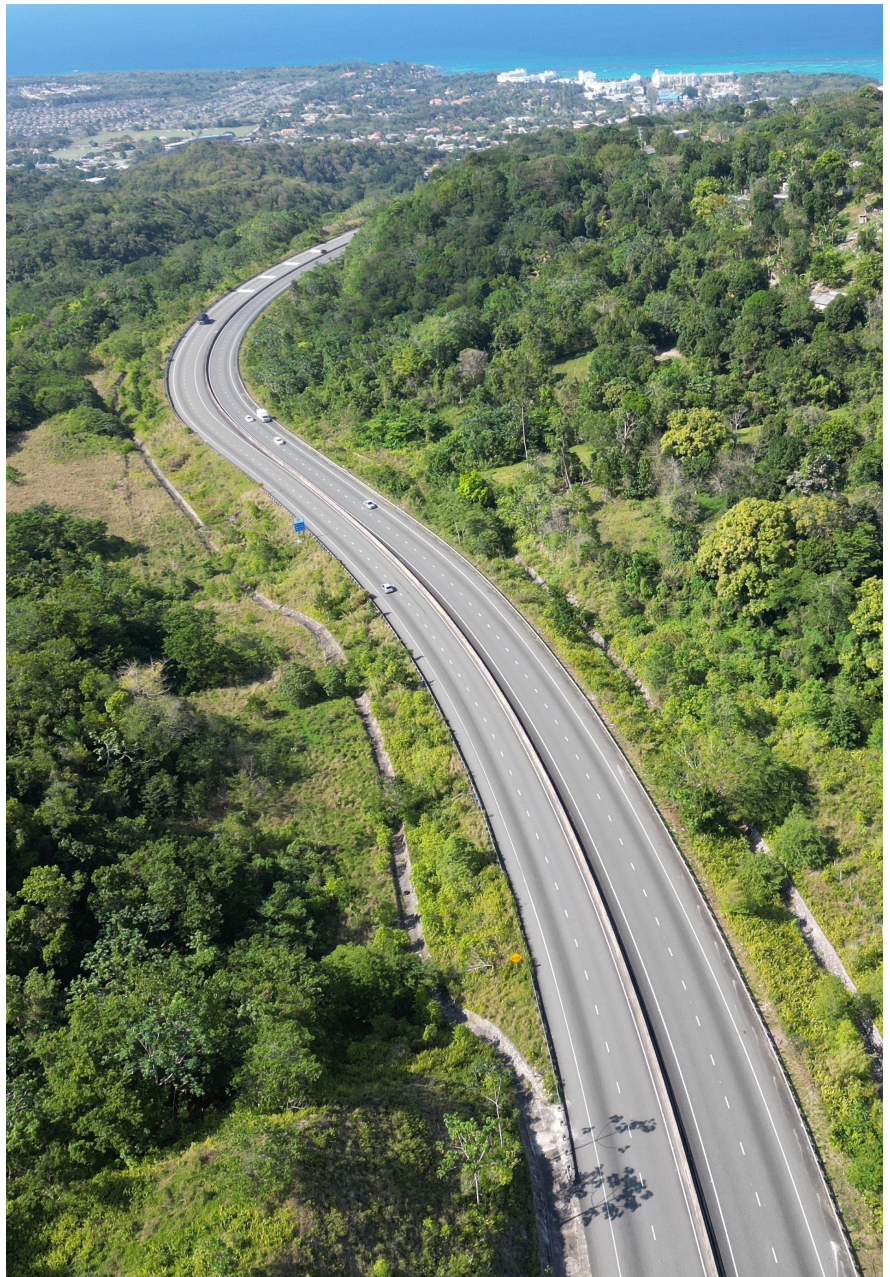
This study investigates how space, structure, and history shape urban inequality in Jamaica. Using the Urban Integration Index, it maps patterns of access and exclusion across 173 communities in the island's four major urban regions: Kingston, St. Andrew, St. Catherine, and St. James. The Index draws on 14 indicators that measure access to infrastructure, services, and opportunity. These include land tenure, water and sanitation, electricity, education, healthcare, mobility, safety, digital access, financial inclusion, and civic engagement.

The findings expose a deeply fragmented urban landscape. In some communities, residents enjoy formal land tenure, reliable public utilities, and proximity to schools and clinics. In others, basic services are unreliable or absent. Roads are narrow, irregularly laid out, and unsafe. Residents face high exposure to crime, environmental hazards, and chronic underinvestment. The quality of life in urban Jamaica depends significantly on where one lives.

These disparities are not random. They reflect the legacies of informal urbanisation, political clientelism, weak regulatory enforcement, and uneven development. Informal settlements, which house a large share of the urban population, often remain off-grid and out of sight. These communities tend to be omitted from planning frameworks, underrepresented in official statistics, and deprioritised in state investment. Residents lack not only reliable public services but also visibility and voice.

The Urban Integration Index addresses this gap by making the spatial distribution of exclusion measurable. It combines fragmented datasets into a single tool that can be used to diagnose need, monitor progress, and support more equitable urban policy. The Index gives policymakers and planners a baseline for identifying where the Right to the City is realized and where it is denied.

The Right to the City is a framework that recognises urban



Spatial inequality refers to the uneven distribution of resources, services, infrastructure, and opportunities across different geographic areas



inclusion as a matter of justice. It affirms that all urban residents, regardless of tenure status, income, or geography, have the right to inhabit, use, and shape their cities. This study applies that framework to Jamaica's urban landscape, highlighting how spatial inequalities in infrastructure, services, and governance continue to shape life chances.

What emerges is a portrait of urban development marked by disconnection. Government agencies operate in silos. Data is often incomplete or incompatible across institutions. Public consultations are limited and rarely shape policy decisions. Infrastructure upgrades are sporadic and tend to follow political incentives rather than objective needs. The result is a patchwork of provisions, where opportunity clusters in some places and is absent in others.

Addressing this fragmentation requires a shift in how Jamaican cities are planned, governed, and resourced. The Index points the way by identifying not only where deficits exist, but also how they intersect. For example, communities with insecure tenure often lack regular electricity and water services. Places with poor road connectivity also report low school attendance and limited financial access. These overlaps show that spatial inequality is systemic, and issues are interconnected, not incidental.

The OneCity Explorer, an interactive digital dashboard, makes these findings accessible to the public. Users can view indicator scores by community, compare areas, and explore maps that visualize disparities. This tool supports transparency, public engagement, and evidence-based planning. It is part of a broader effort to democratize data and empower residents to advocate for their rights. While this study focuses on measurement, it is not neutral. It makes a case for action. By establishing a baseline and identifying the communities most in need, the Index can help shift urban planning from reactive to proactive, and from piecemeal to integrated.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Use the Urban Integration Index to guide spatial targeting of public investment. Resources should be directed toward communities with the most acute deficits, using the Index as a baseline to inform where interventions will have the greatest impact.**
2. **Invest in comprehensive infrastructure upgrading, improving access to basic services identified as inadequate by the urban integration index, to reduce the physical isolation of marginalised communities and foster social inclusion.**
3. **Formalize land tenure in informal settlements. Regularizing tenure strengthens legal protection, encourages household investment, and allows for infrastructure upgrades. Secure tenure also supports integration into formal governance systems and service networks.**
4. **Establish an independent Urban Equity Commission. This body would oversee resource allocation, monitor disparities, and promote accountability in urban development. It should include representatives from civil society, planning authorities, and academia.**
5. **Break down institutional silos through data-sharing and coordination. Government agencies must collaborate across sectors and use common data frameworks to improve efficiency and reduce duplication. Open data platforms such as the OneCity Explorer can support this.**
6. **Engage communities in planning processes. Public consultations should be meaningful, early, and continuous. Feedback from residents must inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of urban projects.**