

Study finds previously deported immigrants more likely to be rearrested after leaving jail

September 8 2008

Deportable immigrants who previously have been expelled from the United States are more likely to be rearrested on suspicion of committing a crime after they are released from jail than other deportable immigrants without the prior history of expulsion, according to a new RAND Corporation study.

Studying deportable immigrants released from the Los Angeles County Jail, researchers found that men who previously had been deported from the country were about twice as likely to be rearrested within a year than other deportable immigrants. Previously deported immigrants also were rearrested sooner and arrested more frequently than other deportable immigrants.

The findings provide support for law enforcement programs that target deportable immigrants who have a record of being previously deported from the United States.

"Having been deported once before appears to be a good indicator of who may be at risk of committing more crimes in the future," said study author Laura Hickman, an assistant professor with the Criminal Justice Policy Research Institute at Portland State University and a researcher at RAND, a nonprofit research organization. "Our findings support efforts taken in many jurisdictions to focus scarce law enforcement resources on this group."

The study, forthcoming in the journal *Crime & Delinquency*, is the first

to objectively test the notion that those immigrants with a record of being previously deported pose a disproportionate burden on local criminal justice systems.

The RAND study tracked 517 deportable immigrant men who were released back to the community between Aug. 4, 2002, and Sept. 2, 2002, from the Los Angeles County Jail operated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. About one-third of the men previously had been deported from the United States.

All the men in the study were "deportable" because they entered the country illegally, overstayed their visas or committed other violations. Present deportable status and previous deportation was determined based on checks of federal immigration records.

Hickman and co-author Marika Suttorp of RAND found that 73 percent of the previously deported immigrants were rearrested within a year of jail release, compared to 32 percent of the other deportable immigrants. Previously deported immigrants also were arrested more frequently, with 28 percent rearrested three or more times within a year of release, compared to 7 percent among deportable immigrants who had not previously been expelled from the United States.

A previous RAND Corporation study of the Los Angeles County Jail population found that 50 percent of all men released were rearrested within one year of release. In comparison, the new study shows that deportable immigrants with no record of prior deportation have lower rates of rearrest than male inmates overall (32 percent compared to 50 percent). For those with a record of prior deportation, however, the one-year rearrest rate is substantially higher (73 percent vs. 50 percent). The researchers say the findings suggest that previous deportation, not present deportable status, is a clear risk marker for recidivism.

"Our findings are consistent with the widely held notion that previously deported immigrants repeatedly cycle through local criminal justice systems," Hickman said.

Researchers examined whether their observations might be better explained by other differences between the two groups of deportable immigrants, such as differences in age or ethnicity. But they found those factors did not account for the differences observed between the two groups.

A growing number of local and federal law enforcement programs have begun targeting previously deported immigrants based on the assumption that they pose a high risk for repeat criminal activity.

One of the first such programs was the High Intensity Criminal Alien Apprehension and Prosecution (HI-CAAP) partnership in Los Angeles County. Supported initially by a federal grant, the partnership is intended to increase the identification of previously deported immigrants upon jail booking and to refer them to federal authorities.

While the study focused on 139 previously deported immigrants who were not identified before release into the community, the researchers are careful to point out that their study should not be interpreted as indicating failure of the HI-CAAP partnership. "Based on our previous work, we can say that HI-CAAP has increased identification quite a bit." Hickman said. "If we were to repeat the study, we would probably find fewer previously deported immigrants released back into the community today."

The RAND study excluded immigrants who were sent from Los Angeles jails to state prisons or were transferred to the custody of immigration officials.

Researchers say a limitation of the study is that it relies upon the self-reporting of birthplace by arrestees. The sample size was large enough to produce statistically meaningful results and there is no reason to believe the mix of arrestees was unusual during the study period, according to researchers.

The study was done by examining data collected as a part of a previous study of deportable immigrants the Los Angeles County Jail. The latest work was not supported by funding from any outside agency or group. The researchers undertook the study because the data were unique and could be used to test an assumption of previously deported aliens that had never been statistically analyzed before.

Source: RAND Corporation

Citation: Study finds previously deported immigrants more likely to be rearrested after leaving jail (2008, September 8) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-09-previously-deported-immigrants-rearrested.html>

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