

Parolee releases spike violent crime, study suggests

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John Hipp, UC Irvine criminology professor, found that releasing parolees leads to an increase in violent neighborhood crime unless there are social programs in place to provide support. Photo by Daniel A. Anderson/University Communications

(PhysOrg.com) -- California lawmakers may want to rethink a cost-cutting proposal to release at least 27,000 inmates from state prison in light of a new study linking parolees to increases in violent crime.

Led by UC Irvine criminologist John Hipp, the study found that, in most cases, reports of aggravated assault, robbery and burglary go up when parolees return to their [neighborhoods](#) - and that if they have violent backgrounds, murder rates increase.

However, crime rates decrease when parolees move back to neighborhoods with longtime residents, and they increase at a slower rate

in areas with nonprofit groups offering economic resources and youth intervention programs. These findings suggest that social factors play a role in how communities handle an influx of parolees.

"It appears that services provided by volunteer organizations help returning parolees integrate back into society," said Hipp, criminology, law & society associate professor. "And stable neighborhoods often have the cohesiveness that discourages criminal behavior."

Researchers monitored parolees going back to Sacramento neighborhoods and month-to-month changes in crime rates from 2003 to 2006. The state capital was chosen for its nationally representative economic and ethnic demographics.

In an average month, increases in the parolee population correlated to a more than 8 percent rise in aggravated assault reports, a 20 percent jump in robbery reports and a nearly 10 percent upswing in burglary reports. Murder rates surged by about 20 percent when violent parolees returned to neighborhoods. Every year, U.S. jails and prisons release about 700,000 parolees.

"It would be wise for lawmakers to consider discretionary parole for violent offenders as an alternative to mandatory release," Hipp said.

UCI graduate student Daniel K. Yates co-authored the study, published this week in the journal [Criminology](#). UCI's Center for Evidence-Based Corrections funded the study.

Provided by UC Irvine

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