

#### **Reasons and Resolve to Cross the Line**

#### A Post-Apprehension Survey of Unauthorized Immigrants along the U.S.-Mexico Border

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May 2013



National Center for Border Security and Immigration



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Grimes, Mark, Elyse Golob, Alexandra Durcikova, and Jay Nunamaker. 2013. *Reasons and Resolve to Cross the Line: A Post-Apprehension Survey of Unauthorized Immigrants along the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Tucson, Arizona: National Center for Border Security and Immigration (BORDERS).

Edited by Robert Merideth.

#### National Center for Border Security and Immigration (BORDERS)

BORDERS is a consortium of 16 premier institutions that is dedicated to the development of innovative technologies, proficient processes, and effective policies that will help protect our nation's borders, foster international trade, and enhance long-term understanding of immigration determinants and dynamics.

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#### Post-Apprehension Survey of Unauthorized Immigrants

#### A BORDERS Research Project

This research was supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through the National Center for Border Security and Immigration (BORDERS). However, any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect views of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.



Border fence along the Arizona-Sonora boundary Photo courtesy U.S. Customs and Border Protection

#### **Executive Summary**

#### **OVERVIEW**

To better understand the histories and motivations of immigrants who attempt to cross the U.S.-Mexico border without authorization, researchers with the National Center for Border Security and Immigration (BORDERS) interviewed 1,000 detainees in the U.S. Border Patrol Tucson Sector during the summer of 2012.

#### Survey approach

The research team used a 38-question survey (Appendix A) administered by bilingual interviewers to learn about the detainees' characteristics, their current and previous border crossing attempts, and their reasons for crossing (Table 1).

#### **Overarching questions**

To address the primary goal of the study, all survey questions were related to two principal questions: (1) Do you think you will attempt to cross again in the next seven days? (2) Do you think you will return to the U.S. someday?

#### Interview safeguards and assurances

To encourage truthful responses, the interviewers assured the individuals that their responses would remain anonymous, that the interviewers did not work for the Border Patrol, that individual survey results would not be shared with the Border Patrol, that the individuals' answers would not influence legal or administrative outcomes, and that the individuals could skip any question or could conclude the interview at any point.

#### Cross-check of data veracity

To cross-check the veracity of the data, responses to two questions-date of birth and number of previous apprehensions-were compared with fingerprintverified data from the Border Patrol.

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### What are the motivations for crossing?

This study found that work and the existence of family in the United States are the primary motivations for individuals who attempt to enter the country without authorization.

#### Which persons will attempt to reenter?

According to this study, in general, detainees who are more likely to attempt to re-cross the border are those that:

- have relatives or friends in the United States,
- have a job in the United States,
- have relatively more education than other detainees,
- live in the United States (or consider the United States home),
- are relatively familiar with crossing options and dangers, and/or
- have made relatively more attempts at crossing.

#### What are the effects of the consequences of apprehension?

For individuals with motivations listed above, the consequences of apprehension do not seem to be a major deterrent.

Table 1. Summary of Interview Response	es (n = 1,000)
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QUESTIONS/VARIABLES	RESPONSES		RELATIONSHIP WITH INTENT TO RE-CROSS
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	Male: 04%	Female: C <sup>0</sup> /	Condex had no significant relationship with intent to re-succe
GENDER AGE (years)	Male: 94% Majority: 20-29	Female: 6% Average: 29	Gender had no significant relationship with intent to re-cross. Age had no significant relationship with intent to re-cross.
· ·	(57%) Majority: 6-12	Range: 18–57 Average: 8	Individuals with relatively more years of education were more
EDUCATION (years of school)	(75%)	Range: 0-18	likely to attempt to re-cross.
PROFESSION	Field work: 33% Food service: 6% Laborer: 5% Merchant: 3% Other: 20%	Construction: 21% Factory work: 5% Driver: 4% Unemployed: 3%	Profession had no significant relationship with intent to re-cross. However, individuals returning to work at a job they currently had in the U.S. were more likely to attempt to re-cross. Individuals seeking work were less likely to re-cross.
BIRTHPLACE AND PRIOR RESIDENCE	BIRTHPLACE So. Mexico: 61% NW Mexico: 14% Other Mex.: 25%	PRIOR RESIDENCE So. Mexico: 49% NW Mexico: 12% Other Mex.: 23% U.S.: 16%	Birthplace had no significant relationship with intent to re-cross. However, individuals living in the U.S. during the previous two years or who considered the U.S. "home" were significantly more likely to attempt to re-cross.
RELATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES			
RELATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES	Sibling: 23% Spouse: 8%	Children: 9% Parent: 5%	Individuals with any type of family member in the U.S. were 2–3 times more likely to say they would attempt to re-cross than were individuals with no family in the U.S.
REASONS FOR CROSSING			
REASONS FOR CROSSING (total > 100% due to multiple possible reasons per respondent)	Seek work: 65% Reunite fmly: 28% Study: 13%	Return to job: 51% Reunite frnds: 21% Other: 8%	Individuals seeking work or reuniting with family were the only significant indicators of intent to re-cross in seven days (but seeking work had a negative impact on intent). All reasons for crossing were significant for ever re-crossing.
APPREHENSION HISTORY			
PREVIOUS APPREHENSION HISTORY	ATTEMPTS Once: 39% 2-3: 44% 4 or more: 17%	APPREHENSIONS Once: 55% 2–3: 35% 4 or more: 10%	Individuals who had higher numbers of attempts and higher numbers of apprehensions, or who had experienced more success in crossing in the past, were more likely to indicate they would attempt to re-cross.
DESTINATIONS	California: 23% New York: 9% Illinois: 4%	Arizona: 18% Florida: 5% No. Carolina: 4%	Most destinations did not significantly affect intentions to re- cross; the exception was New York.
CROSSING LOCATIONS	Altar-Sasabe: 33% Agua Prieta- Douglas: 18% Sonoyta-Lukeville: 6%	Nogales-Nogales: 20% Naco-Naco: 9% Mexicali-Calexico: 3%	Mexicali-Calexico was the only crossing location that had a significant relationship with a detainee's intent to re-cross.
USE OF DOCUMENTS	Very few detainees (I documents during th		hey attempted to cross through a port of entry or to use any
CROSSING METHODS	More than two-thirds interviewed used a c	of detainees	Coyote use did not have a significant relationship with intent to re-cross; however, intent to use a different coyote had a significant positive relationship with intent to re-cross.
INFORMATION AND AWARENESS	Fewer than one-third accurate information		Individuals said they were more likely to cross again if they had accurate information about crossing.
CURRENT CROSSING ATTEMPT	•		·
CROSSED IN GROUPS?	Crossed in a group: 7 (one-third with family		Elements of the crossing party did not have a significant relationship with intent to re-cross.
WHO SELECTED WHERE TO CROSS?	Coyote: 50% With friend: 14% Family: 4%	Self: 18% Group: 5% Other or NR 8%	No significant relationship was found between who chose where to cross and intent to re-cross.
RETURN HOME, STAY AT BORDER?	Return home: 74% Stay near border: 14		Intending to stay near the border after release was significantly related with intent to re-cross.
PLANS TO RE-CROSS THE BORDER	· · ·		
CROSS AGAIN IN THE SAME WAY?	Yes: 24% No: 60	% Unsure: 16%	Individuals who indicated they would attempt to cross in the
USE A DIFFERENT COYOTE?	Yes: 31% No: 49	% Unsure: 20%	same way were more likely to say they would re-cross. Individuals who would use a different coyote were 2-3 times more likely to cay they would to cross than others
CONSIDER CROSSING IN CA OR TX?	Yes: 19% No: 80	% NR: 1%	more likely to say they would re-cross than others. Individuals that had considered crossing in California or Texas were more likely to say they would attempt to re-cross.
HAD ACCURATE INFORMATION?	Yes: 31% No: 66	% Unsure: 3%	Persons who had accurate information about crossing were more likely to say they would try to re-cross in seven days.
KNEW ABOUT CONSEQUENCES?	Just over half of deta they were aware of th being apprehended.		Nearly 43% of those who were aware of the consequences of apprehension planned to return in the future; only 27% of those who were not aware of the consequences planned to return.
	Fewer than half of de		Knowledge of legal means to enter the U.S. had no significant

#### Background

The mission of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Office of Border Patrol (OBP) is to enforce immigration laws and to detect, interdict, and apprehend those who attempt to enter without authorization or to smuggle people or contraband across the borders of the United States.

To measure the effectiveness of current enforcement efforts, the Border Patrol needs accurate estimates of the level of unauthorized border crossing.

The DHS Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) began using interview surveys and other methods, such as administrative apprehension records, to measure the overall inflow of unauthorized immigrants and to determine the probability of apprehension. The reliability of such estimates depends on having accurate information on attempted re-entry among previously apprehended immigrants. In November 2011, OIS contacted BORDERS to conduct a survey of apprehended unauthorized immigrants to determine the detainees' intent to re-enter the United States and the underlying reasons for those decisions.

Between December 2011 and May 2012, researchers at BORDERS created a survey and sampling plan with input from OIS and the Border Patrol.

The Border Patrol's Tucson Coordination Center (TCC) was selected as the location for conducting the interviews based on the sector's high level of apprehensions, the facility's proximity to BORDERS headquarters, and the resources available at the TCC.

Using a 38-question survey, a BORDERS team of bilingual interviewers conducted a pilot study in May 2012 and primary data collection during the summer of 2012.



Border Patrol vehicle at the border fence line in Arizona Photo courtesy U.S. Customs and Border Protection

#### Methodology

#### BACKGROUND

In November 2011, BORDERS researchers met with representatives from the Office of International Affairs, Office of Border Patrol, Office of Field Operations, Office of Technology Innovation and Acquisition, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Office of Immigration Statistics.

Based on these meetings, the research team developed a general plan to:

- prepare survey questions to meet the needs of the OIS while minimizing the impact on Border Patrol operations,
- develop and evaluate the feasibility of a sampling plan,
- identify a location to conduct the survey,
- address logistical issues of administering the survey,
- conduct a pilot study, and
- undertake the full study.

#### SITE SELECTION

During initial meetings, the Tucson Coordination Center (TCC) was proposed as a potential location to conduct the study. BORDERS researchers visited and evaluated the site and determined that it would be a good fit.

Representatives from BORDERS and the Border Patrol discussed the logistical requirements for the study and identified two rooms at the TCC as appropriate locations in which to conduct interviews.

One room was a specially designed interview room with a glass divider to separate the interviewers from the interviewees, and with microphones on both sides of the divider. The other room was a courtroom with tables and a small brick divider wall to separate the interviewers from the detainees.

In addition to the rooms having suitable arrangements and facilities, they also provided controlled access into the main area of the detention facility and were separate from the general population of detainees and Border Patrol agents, thus enhancing the privacy of the individuals being interviewed.

#### SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

#### Objectives

With input from the OIS and the Border Patrol, BORDERS researchers developed a survey to meet the requirements of the study, namely to:

- assess the intent of a detainee to re-enter the United States and
- identify the underlying reasons for this decision.

#### Six areas of questions

The research team developed a 38-item survey (Appendix A) to obtain information in six general areas:

- demographic profile
- relatives in the United States
- reasons for crossing
- apprehension history
- current crossing attempt
- plans to re-cross the border

Two questions in the survey addressed the intent of future crossings: "Do you think you will attempt to cross again in the next seven days?" and "Do you think you will return to the U.S. someday?"

The research team deemed these questions to be sensitive and placed them near the end of the survey to allow the interviewer time to try to establish rapport and trust with the detainee.

#### Veracity of responses

To encourage honest responses, individuals were assured:

- that their results were completely anonymous,
- that the interviewers did not work for the Border Patrol,
- that their individual results would not be shared with Border Patrol,
- that the answers they gave would not influence their legal or administrative consequences, and
- that they could skip any question or could conclude the interview at any point.

To assess the veracity of responses, fingerprint-verified data for two questions a detainee's date of birth and previous apprehensions by the Border Patrol were provided to BORDERS by the Border Patrol as "ground truth," or a crosscheck, to compare against the responses from the detainee.

To avoid unduly influencing the interview process, this information was not given to the interviewer, but only used for the analysis of the interview data.

Additionally, the research analysts compared answers to "sensitive" questions to baselines previously developed by the Border Patrol. For example, the Border Patrol estimates that approximately 80% of individuals who cross the border use a coyote or guide. However, Border Patrol agents reported that only 5–10% of respondents typically admit to using a coyote.

In our study, 69% of the detainees interviewed admitted to using a coyote or guide. This similarity to Border Patrol estimates offers, by extension, a high level of confidence in the overall truthfulness of the individuals' responses to the other survey questions.

#### **Bilingual interviewers**

Two bilingual interviewers who spoke Spanish as a first language translated the survey from English into plain, or "street," Spanish.

Prior to translating the survey, Border Patrol agents interviewed the translators to assess their fluency and level of Spanish and ability to communicate and interact with the detainees. The survey was translated independently by each interviewer. Then the two translated surveys were compared to one another and any inconsistencies were resolved. This helped ensure that the translated survey was as clear and accurate as possible.

#### **RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION**

#### Pilot study

In May 2012, BORDERS conducted a pilot study, interviewing 50 detainees at the TCC. The pilot study helped address or refine such components as:

- what data about the detainees the Border Patrol could provide,
- how to anonymize the data and provide it to the research team,
- how to coordinate the physical movement of the detainees in and out of the interview areas,
- survey questions that were unclear, and
- processes to document interview logistics such as who conducted each interview and where the interview took place.

In addition, the preliminary findings of the pilot study were reviewed by OIS to ensure that the questions being asked were addressing the targeted areas of interest.

Upon completing the pilot study, the research team made minor modifications to the questionnaire and filed appropriate paperwork with, and received final approval from, the University of Arizona's Office for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Institutional Review Board.

After the pilot study, BORDERS recruited, vetted, and hired five additional interviewers for a total of seven bilingual interviewers who would participate in the main study. All interviewers completed the UA's human-subjects protection training and passed background checks conducted by the Border Patrol.

#### Main study

The main study occurred over a sevenweek period during the summer of 2012. The seven interviewers worked multiple shifts at the TCC, generally 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., five days a week.

This timetable was chosen to accommodate existing activities scheduled at the TCC—such as the arrival and departure of detainees and visits by staff of the Mexican consulate with detainees. Interview schedules were adjusted as necessary to accommodate varying inflow of detainees and other Border Patrol resource requirements.

The arrangement and setting of the courtroom was somewhat preferable to the interview room, so when possible interviews were conducted there. In total 748 interviews were conducted in the courtroom and 252 in the interview room. Each interviewer rotated between the courtroom and interview room to minimize any systematic difference in interviewer or interview location.

After introducing themselves to the detainees and prior to asking the survey questions, the interviewer would read a statement explaining the nature of the interview and the process to be followed, and then would ask the detainee to sign a consent form (Appendix B).

On average, each interview lasted 12 minutes with a few minutes of transition time between interviews. The briefest interview was 5 minutes and the longest was 50 minutes.

In all, the interview process required about 400 person-hours to complete, with an additional 150 person-hours of data entry after the interviews were completed.

Lengthier interviews (those lasting 20 to 50 minutes) were generally those in which detainees were apprehensive or were particularly talkative in their responses.

Likewise, briefer interviews (5 to 8 minutes in length) were those in which detainees either had few apprehensions or were unwilling to provide many details about their crossing history.

Over the course of the study, 1,018 detainees were interviewed. Six individuals did not meet the eligibility requirements and their responses were removed from the study data pool. An additional 12 persons were removed for providing inconsistent answers during the survey (which indicated they either did not understand the questions or were intentionally providing misleading information).

After the removal of the responses of these individuals from the data pool, the data for the 1,000 detainees meeting the eligibility requirements were included in the analysis.

The research team completed data collection in mid-August 2012.

#### Findings

#### **OVERVIEW**

This section presents the key findings from the detainees' responses to the 38item survey.

The findings cover six general areas: (1) demographic profile, (2) relatives in the United States, (3) reasons for crossing, (4) apprehension history, (5) current crossing attempt, and (6) plans to recross the border.

The findings within each section are presented in the context of the two overarching questions:

- Do you think you will attempt to cross again in the next seven days? and
- Do you think you will return to the U.S. someday?

#### **DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

The demographic analysis of the subjects of this study-1,000 apprehended unauthorized immigrants in the Tucson Sector of the U.S. Border Patrolindicated that the subject pool was highly representative of the typical unauthorized border crosser apprehended in the Tucson Sector.

#### Gender and age

Ninety-four percent of the individuals in this study were male.

According to historical Border Patrol apprehensions data, approximately 84% of detainees are male. The slight skew in gender balance of our subject pool was likely because: (a) the survey was conducted during the summer when the extreme heat in the Sonoran desert presents more dangerous conditions, likely resulting in fewer women attempting to cross and thus fewer women apprehended; and (b) many women declined to participate in the interviews.

The majority of detainees (57%) were 20 to 29 years old. The average age was 29 years with a minimum of 18 years and a maximum of 57 years. The age distribution of the study detainees is closely in line with historical distributions observed by the Border Patrol.

#### Relationship of gender and age with intent to re-cross

Based on our analysis, gender and age had no significant relationship with intention to cross again within the next seven days, or with intention to ever return to the United States.

#### Education

The average education level of the detainees was eight years of schooling with a minimum of zero years and a maximum of eighteen years. More specifically, some 20% of the detainees had 0–5 years of education, 29% had 6–8 years, 45% had 9–12 years, and 5% had 13 or more years of school.

#### Relationship of education with intent to re-cross

Our analysis found that individuals with more education are relatively more likely to say they would attempt crossing again at some point in the future, but were not more likely to attempt again in the next seven days than other detainees.

#### Profession

The majority (59%) of detainees reported having as their profession—or were seeking a job in—low-skilled, manual labor, such as field work (33%) or construction (21%).

A small number of detainees reported skilled labor or white collar jobs, such

as business professional (2%), sales (1%), or government work (1%) as their profession. Five persons indicated their profession as "student."

#### Relationship of profession with intent to re-cross

Based on our analysis, profession did not have a significant relationship with intent to re-cross the border.

However, individuals returning to work at a job they already had in the United States were more likely to state their intent to attempt crossing again in the short term.

Individuals who reported their jobs as food service, merchant, or unemployed were more likely to indicate intent to attempt to re-cross in the next seven days.

Those reporting their jobs as food service, laborer, or unemployed were more likely to report that they would attempt to enter the United States again at some point in the future.

Individuals crossing to look for work were less likely to attempt crossing again in the short term or the long term.

#### Birthplace and place of prior residence

Approximately 75% of detainees were born in one of nine Mexican states: Chiapas (10%), Oaxaca (10%), México (9%), Veracruz (9%), Guerrero (8%), Puebla (8%), Sinaloa (8%), Michoacán (7%), and Sonora (6%).

The remaining 25% of detainees were born in other Mexican states. The pattern shows that the majority of detainees (61%) were born in southern states in Mexico (Figure 1).

When asked where they had been living during the past two years, the pattern of distribution for Mexican states was similar to that for birth places, with 61% of detainees reporting living in the nine Mexican states mentioned above.



**Figure 1.Birth states in Mexico of detainees** 

Twenty-three percent of detainees reported living in another state in Mexico and 16% indicated they have been living in the United States (with 13% considering the United States home).

Of those individuals who reported having lived for the past two years in the United States, one-third resided in California, about one-fifth lived in Arizona, and nearly one-third lived in one of six other states (Florida, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, and Texas).

#### Relationship of birthplace and prior residence with intent to re-cross

Birthplace does not have a significant relationship with intention to re-cross.

However, individuals who had been living in the United States for the past two years or who considered the United States "home" were significantly more likely to say they would attempt to recross.

Individuals living in the United States for the past two years were much more likely to respond affirmatively (16%) about attempting to cross again in the next seven days than their counterparts who had lived in Mexico for the past two years (6%).

When asked if they believed they would ever return to the United States, respondents living in the United States for the past two years were more than twice as likely (64%) to respond affirmatively than those who had lived in Mexico for the past two years (31%).

#### RELATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES

Family is commonly believed to be a strong motivator for unauthorized attempts to cross the border.

Overall, our findings support this assumption and indicate that individuals with any relative (spouse, sibling, parent, or child) in the United States are more likely to attempt crossing again.

Of the individuals interviewed for this study:

- 8% had a spouse in the United States,
- 23% had siblings in the United States,
- 5% had at least one parent in the United States, and
- 9% had at least one child in the United States.

#### Relationship of relatives in the United States with intent to re-cross

When examining the relationship between having relatives in the United States and intentions to attempt to reenter the country, we found that:

- for those with a spouse in the U.S., 17% intended to attempt crossing in the next seven days, and 61% intended to attempt crossing again in the future;
- for those with a *sibling* in the U.S., 14% intended to attempt crossing in the next seven days,

and 56% intended to attempt crossing again in the future;

- for those with a parent in the U.S., 14% intended to attempt crossing in the next seven days, and 62% intended to attempt crossing again in the future;
- for those with a child in the U.S., 16% intended to attempt crossing in the next seven days, and 58% intended to attempt crossing again in the future.

Thus, individuals with any type of family in the United States were 2-3 times more likely to indicate they intended to attempt crossing again than were individuals with no family members in the United States.

Many detainees indicated that being with their family was more important than any consequences they might experience if apprehended while crossing.

#### **REASONS FOR CROSSING**

From a multiple-choice list, the detainees indicated the following reasons why they attempted to cross the border:

- seek work (65%)
- work, already have a job (51%)
- reunite with family (24%)
- reunite with friends (21%)
- study (13%)
- other (9%)

Detainees who responded with "other" cited a variety of reasons: "to gain a better quality of life," "seek medical care," "escape violence," and "see the United States."

#### Relationship of reasons for crossing with intent to re-cross

Individuals seeking work or reuniting with family were the only significant indicators of intent to cross again in seven days. It is worth noting that seeking work had a negative impact on intent. When asked if they believed they would ever return to the United States, all reasons for crossing were significant.

#### **APREHENSION HISTORY**

The interviewers asked detainees about their current border-crossing experience, and about two other possible trips: their first trip (if the current trip was not the first) and another trip (if applicable).

For each trip, individuals were asked about:

- the year and month of the trip,
- the intended destination,
- where they crossed,
- what documents they used (if any),
- whether the documents they used were legitimate,
- the number of times they were apprehended,
- whether or not they used a coyote (and if so, whether the coyote crossed the border with them, how much the coyote cost, and when was the coyote paid), and
- whether or not the trip was successful.

For the purposes of this study, a "trip" was defined as a seven-day period in which an individual might attempt to cross the border one or more times. For example, if an individual crossed on Day 1, was apprehended and subsequently released on Day 3, then attempted crossing again on Day 5, that series of events would be recorded as two attempts during one trip.

#### Previous apprehension history

About 39% of detainees reported attempting to cross the border once; 44% said they had attempted to cross two or three times; and nearly 18% reported crossing four or more times.

Nearly 44% of the detainees interviewed had been apprehended for the first time

on the current crossing, while about 34% had been apprehended two or three times (including the current attempt), and almost 20% had been apprehended four or more times.

In all, the individuals interviewed for this study attempted about 2,500 crossings, for which nearly 1,900 apprehensions were documented, resulting in an overall apprehension rate of 76%.

#### Relationship of previous apprehension with intent to re-cross

When examining apprehension history, we found that individuals with higher numbers of attempts and higher numbers of apprehensions were more likely to indicate they would attempt to cross again.

Additionally, individuals that had experienced more success in the past were more likely to indicate they would attempt to re-cross the border.

#### Destinations

When asked about their planned destination, detainees' responses included 40 U.S. states and Washington D.C. The only states not reported as destinations were: Alaska, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maine, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming.

The most popular destination states were California (23%), Arizona (18%), New York (9%), Florida (5%), Illinois (4%), and North Carolina (4%).

Nearly 3% of detainees indicated they were willing to go anywhere in the United States and fewer than 1% responded with destinations outside the United States such as "Sonora" or "Canada."

#### Relationship of destination with intent to re-cross

While most destinations did not significantly affect future intentions, the study found individuals traveling to New York were significantly more likely to indicate they intended to attempt crossing again within the next seven days.

Despite this apparent connection between New York and intent to attempt entry again in the near future, there is no significant relationship between intended destination and the belief that one will ever return to the United States.

#### **Crossing locations and documents**

For each trip, detainees were asked if they attempted crossing at a port of entry or between ports, and if they crossed at a port, did they use any documents. Very few detainees (4%) indicated they attempted to cross through a port of entry or to use any documents during their crossing. The vast majority of crossings (90%) occurred in one of six general areas (Figure 2): Altar-Sasabe (33%); Nogales-Nogales (20%); Agua Prieta-Douglas (18%); Naco-Naco (9%); Sonoyta-Lukeville (6%); and Mexicali-Calexico (3%).

When asked why they crossed where they did, detainees provided a variety of responses: guidance of the coyote and perceived ease of crossing were frequently cited as reasons for choosing a location at which to cross (Table 2).

#### Relationship of crossing location with intent to re-cross

Mexicali-Calexico was the only crossing location that had a significant relationship with a detainee's intent to recross.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Crossing methods**

Individuals crossing the border illegally are frequently assisted by coyotes or guides. Many detainees were quick to make distinctions between coyotes and guides.

Coyotes make all the arrangements (which may include a guide) and provide advice, but typically do not accompany the crosser across the border.

Guides are less costly and may accompany the crosser across the border, but make fewer arrangements on behalf of the crosser. In general, more expensive coyotes were less likely to cross the border with the detainee.

Regardless of use of a coyote or guide, detainees indicated that the drug cartels, commonly referred to by the detainees as "mafia," must be paid in order to cross the border. The fee paid was usually around \$150 USD.

About two-thirds of subjects admitted to using a coyote or guide to cross at an average cost of about \$2,350 USD. This is similar to previous estimates by the Border Patrol.

Of the detainees that responded to the question "When did you pay the coyote?" About 73% indicated that they were to pay the coyote after they crossed the border, almost 17% paid in advance, and nearly 11% paid part in advance and were to pay the rest after successfully crossing (hybrid payment).

#### Relationship of use of coyote or guide with intent to re-cross

Coyote use does not have a significant relationship with future intent to cross.

However, 30% of subjects indicated they would use a different coyote on a future attempt. Intent to use a different coyote had a significant positive relationship with intent to cross again within the next seven days.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Mexicali-Calexico crossing is not within the Tucson Sector. Many of the detainees that reported crossing there were not apprehended while crossing the border, but rather were apprehended as a result of other interactions with law enforcement while residing in the United States. A larger proportion of individuals that reported crossing through the Mexicali-Calexico area also reported having lived in the United States for at least the past two years (50% vs. 16% for all other crossing locations), thereby leading to the significantly higher number of positive responses to this question.



Figure 2. Locations of detainees' border crossings (Mexican-U.S. community pairs): (1) Altar-Sasabe, (2) Nogales-Nogales, (3) Agua Prieta–Douglas, (4) Naco-Naco, (5) Sonoyta-Lukeville, and (6) Mexicali-Calexico

Altar-Sasabe (n=331)	Nogales-Nogales (n=199)	Agua Prieta-Douglas (n=184)
<ul> <li>coyote determined (35%)</li> <li>easier (15%)</li> <li>recommended by others (10%)</li> <li>closer/shorter (8%)</li> <li>safer (5%)</li> <li>previous success (4%)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>easier (28%)</li> <li>coyote determined (21%)</li> <li>closer/shorter (9%)</li> <li>recommended by others (9%)</li> <li>previous success (4%)</li> <li>safer (3%)</li> <li>cheaper (3%)</li> <li>success of others (3%)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>coyote determined (13%)</li> <li>easier (13%)</li> <li>closer/shorter (6%)</li> <li>recommended by others (6%)</li> </ul>
<b>Naco-Naco</b> (n=90)	Sonoyta-Lukeville (n=62)	Mexicali-Calexico (n=32)
<ul> <li>easier (34%)</li> <li>coyote determined (20%)</li> <li>recommended by others (17%)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>coyote determined (24%)</li> <li>easier (19%)</li> <li>closer/shorter (11%)</li> <li>recommended by others (10%)</li> <li>knowledge of area (5%)</li> <li>group decision (5%)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>easier (53%)</li> <li>closer/shorter (19%)</li> <li>previous success (13%)</li> </ul>

Table 2. Terms used by detainees to describe crossing locations

Overall we found that most subjects (60%) were not satisfied with the method they used for crossing. Individuals were more likely to re-cross if they were satisfied with their crossing method.

#### Information and awareness

Only about one-third of detainees said they had accurate information about crossing.

Fewer than half of detainees knew of a legal option for entering the United States. Slightly more than half of detainees indicated that knowledge of the consequences of being captured influenced their future decisions.

#### Relationship of information and awareness with intent to re-cross

Individuals who were more educated on the options for crossing (i.e. had considered multiple crossing locations) and who were more aware of the dangers and consequences of crossing were also more likely to indicate they would attempt crossing again.

Individuals said they were more likely to cross again if they had accurate information about crossing.

#### **CURRENT CROSSING ATTEMPT**

Detainees were asked a number of questions about their experiences during their current crossing attempt, including:

- the number of travel companions they had,
- how many of these were family members,
- who chose where to cross the border, and
- if they intended to return home or stay at the border once they were released by the Border Patrol.

#### Group crossings

We found that the majority (78%) of detainees interviewed said they cross in groups. Of the 783 individuals that crossed with a group, nearly one-third crossed with one or more family members.

#### Relationship of group crossings with intent to re-cross

Elements of the crossing party did not have a significant relationship with intent to re-cross.

#### Who selected where to cross

When asked who chose where to cross the border, half of the detainees responded that the coyote or guide chose where to cross, 18% reported they chose the location themselves, 14% said they chose with a friend, 5% indicated it was a group choice, 4% said their family chose, 7% said "other" and 1% declined to respond.

#### Relationship of who selected where to cross with intent to re-cross

No significant relationship was found between who chose where to cross and intent to cross again within the next seven days or with intent to ever return to the United States.

#### Return home or stay at border

Detainees were asked where they intended to go once they were released by the Border Patrol: specifically, did they intend to stay at the border, go home, or do something else.

Some 73% of detainees indicated they intended to go home, 14% indicated they would stay near the border, and 12% indicated they would do something else or declined to respond.

Of those who indicated they intended to stay at the border, 35% indicated they would attempt to cross again within the next seven days. Relationship of intent to remain near border, or not, with intent to re-cross Intending to stay near the border after release is significantly related with intent to cross again within the next seven days.

Similarly, when asked if they ever intended to return to the United States, individuals that indicated they intended to go home or who declined to respond were statistically more likely to say they would not return to the United States in the future, vs. the group that indicated they would stay near the border.

#### PLANS TO RE-CROSS THE BORDER

In the final section of the interview, interviewers asked detainees a series of questions about their intentions and their overall crossing experience, including:

- Would you cross the same way you did this time?
- Would you try a different coyote?
- Where did you cross, and why?
- Did you consider crossing in California or Texas?
- Were you given accurate information about crossing?
- Did you know of the potential consequences that could be applied if caught?

During the course of the main survey, preliminary analysis led the research team to believe that many detainees were not aware of how to enter the United States legally.

This led to an additional question to the survey:

• Do you know of a way you could have entered the United States legally?

Since this question was added after the survey was already underway, only 629 detainees answered this item.

#### Would you cross again in the same way?

When asked if they would cross the same way next time, fewer than a quarter of detainees (24%) answered affirmatively; some 60% indicated they would not cross in the same way; and about 17% were unsure of how they would cross in the future, if at all.

Relationship of intent to cross again in the same way with intent to re-cross Individuals who indicated they would attempt to cross in the same way were more likely to say they would cross again in the next seven days and that they would return to the United States in the future.

Similarly, most detainees who would not cross again in the same way responded that they would not attempt to cross again within the next seven days or attempt to return to the United States in the future.

#### Would you use a different coyote?

When asked if they would use a different coyote, 31% of detainees answered affirmatively and fewer than half (49%) said they would not use a different coyote. Due to the wording of the question, it is unclear if the detainees meant they would not use the same coyote or that they would not use a coyote at all.

The cost of the coyote used by the detainee had a significant relationship with whether or not the detainee would choose a different coyote going forward.

#### Relationship of intent to use a different coyote with intent to re-cross

When asked if they intended to attempt crossing again within the next seven days, those that would use a different coyote were almost three times as likely to respond affirmatively as those who would not use a different coyote. When asked if they intended to ever return to the United States, those that said they would use a different coyote were almost twice as likely to respond affirmatively as those that said they would not use a different coyote.

#### Did you consider crossing in California or Texas?

We asked detainees if they considered crossing in locations other than Arizona, such as California or Texas. About 19% responded that they did consider crossing in one of these locations, 80% responded no, and a bit more than 1% declined to respond.

#### Relationship of considering crossing in California or Texas with intent to recross

Of those that did consider crossing in California or Texas, there was a significant relationship with intent to attempt crossing again within the next seven days and to attempt to return to the United States in the future.

#### Were you given accurate information about crossing?

When asked about the accuracy of the information they were given about crossing, 31% said they had accurate information regarding the process, while 66% did not. Qualitative data gathered during the interviews suggests detainees frequently had poor information regarding how long it would take to cross and the dangers of crossing. Many detainees also reported being left in the desert with insufficient food and water.

#### Relationship of having accurate information with intent to re-cross

Detainees that were given accurate information about crossing were more than twice as likely to indicate they would attempt crossing again within the next seven days. However, having accurate information was not found to be a statistically significant indicator of intent to ever return to the United States.

#### Did you know about the consequences that can be applied if you were caught?

The interviewers asked the detainees if they were aware of the consequences that could be applied if they were caught.

Just over half of detainees indicated that they were aware of the consequences of being captured while attempting to enter the United States illegally. However, many detainees expressed confusion about the next steps in the detention process.

Detainees that were apprehended for the first time were found to be less likely to know about the consequences of being caught, while more experienced border crossers were more likely to know about the consequences.

When asked if the consequences of being caught influenced their future decisions, just over half of detainees responded positively, while just under a quarter responded negatively.

#### Relationship of knowledge of consequences of apprehension with intent to re-cross

Knowledge of consequences was not significantly related with intent to attempt again within seven days. However, it was significantly related with intent to return to the United States in the future. Nearly 43% of those aware of the consequences planned to return in the future, and only 27% of those that were not aware of the consequences planned to return.

When asked about their intentions, detainees who indicated that consequences would not affect their future decisions were more likely to indicate intent to attempt crossing again within the next seven days. Likewise, detainees who indicated the consequences would not affect their future decisions were more likely to indicate they would return to the United States in the future.

#### Do you know of a way you could have entered legally?

As interviews were conducted, the research team constantly monitored the interview responses to identify any potential problems with the process or improvements that could be made.

The research team observed that many detainees made comments that indicated they had little understanding of U.S. immigration processes and legal options for entering the United States

To address this gap in the data, a new question, "Do you know of a way you could have entered the United States legally?" was added to the interview at about a third of the way into the study and was administered to 629 detainees.

Of the detainees that answered the question, fewer than half reported that they knew of any legal option for entering the United States

#### Relationship of knowing about legal means of entering the United States with intent to re-cross

There is no statistically significant relationship between knowledge of legal means of entering the United States and intent to attempt crossing again within the next seven days or with intent to ever return to the United States.

#### ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

While conducting the interviews, the interviewers made many observations that did not fit neatly into the provided categories. While these observations do not necessarily align with the requested analysis, they do help to describe more fully the ethos of the project and of the detainees.

#### Interview experience

Many detainees were skeptical and standoffish at first; but after the first few questions they became more comfortable with the interviewers. Making it clear that the interviewers were not Border Patrol agents seemed to be significant when trying to elicit truthful responses from the detainees. Additionally, showing detainees that their name was not being recorded, only a subject ID number, seemed to greatly increase the trust the detainee had with the interviewer. When sensitive questions were asked, such as those regarding coyotes, detainees were often visibly nervous.

To assuage their fears, the interviewers would reassure detainees that the study was anonymous, that the Border Patrol would not get their individual responses, and that if they still felt uncomfortable, they could skip the question. After this reassurance, only slightly more than 1% of detainees declined to answer these sensitive questions.

Overall, the detainees were respectful of the interviewers, and by the end of the session most were very open. Many shared stories about their families, why they attempted to enter the United States, and the hardships encountered while crossing.

Several detainees became emotional during the interview. Some thanked the interviewers at the conclusion, and said it felt good to tell their side of the story. Overall, the process seemed to be cathartic for many detainees.

One common observation by the interview team was that there seemed to be a great deal of confusion and uncertainty for many detainees about what was to happen next in the detention process. The interviewers were frequently asked questions regarding how much longer they would be at the detention center, how to reach out to their relatives, and so on.

Since the interviewers could not speak authoritatively to these points, detainees were advised to ask these questions to one of the Border Patrol agents or the Mexican Consulate after the interview.

#### **Crossing experience**

Nearly two-thirds of detainees reported not having accurate information about the crossing experience.

There were many commonalities in these stories, for example, about:

- walking for many days in the desert
- running out of food and water
- being abandoned by their coyote or guide
- being robbed of their money
- witnessing acts of violence

When asked whether their decision to cross was affected by the consequences of being apprehended, many detainees remarked that since they now knew how dangerous crossing the desert is, they were influenced more by this knowledge than by the legal consequences of being captured.

Some detainees indicated they called 911 or flagged down Border Patrol agents to turn themselves in as they feared dying of dehydration.

While a few detainees did have negative comments about the Border Patrol, many more detainees spoke kindly of agents and said they had been treated well.

#### Future intentions

For detainees who have crossed in the past, many indicated that it is harder to cross now that it was several years ago. They perceived the laws as being more stringent and that there were more Border Patrol agents than in the past.

Regardless of the consequences and dangers of crossing, however, many detainees remarked that the need to come to the United States is greater than any deterrent.

Many individuals interviewed said they would like to try to return to the United States legally and in a safer way in the future, but did not know how to do so, could not afford it, or did not believe they would be approved for a visa.

When asked if they knew of a way they could have entered legally, fewer than half responded affirmatively. A common response was "What other way is there?" or "There is no other way."

Many individuals had lived and worked in the United States for some time and had returned to Mexico to attend to some family issues. For those that consider the United States home, there seems to be little that can be done to dissuade them from crossing.

Many detainees stated that they were afraid of the violence in Mexico and wanted to come to the United States to start a better life.

Many mentioned that there seemed to be no jobs in Mexico, so they felt they had to come to the United States to provide for their family.

Others have family in the United States and were determined to return. For many detainees falling into these categories, they were fully aware of the dangers and repercussions of crossing illegally, and intend to cross again regardless of the consequences.

Based on the responses we received, we see that individuals making an informed decision and having a plan in place for life in the United States were more likely to attempt crossing again in the future. Having a job, family, friends, or a home in the United States—as well as planning and thoughtful consideration of the crossing process—all have a strong positive relationship with intent to cross the border were also significant indicators of intent.

#### **FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study provides valuable insight into the motivation and plans of individuals who cross the border without authorization. Based on the success of this project, we recommend that DHS expand the survey scope to include additional Border Patrol Sectors. We also suggest that longitudinal analyses be conducted at these locations.

Based on our analysis, we believe that by monitoring both long-term trends and geographically specific perspectives, the Border Patrol would be better able to track changes over time and identify emerging trends.



Border Patrol agent Photo courtesy U.S. Customs and Border Protection

### 1 Introduction

Subject ID:

My name is: What is your first name? Do not record here

Gender: Male / Female

Appendix A

**SURVEY** 

Interviewer ID:

# 2 Provide and read consent form

## 3 Demographic

What is your date of birth?	Where were you born?	What has been your	What city/state do	How many years	How many years What job did you do in
(Record as MM-DD-YY)		primary location for the you consider your	you consider your	of school have	Mexico?
		last 2 years?	home?	you completed?	
	City:	City:	City:		
	State:	State:	State:		

# 4 Relatives (Numbers only in these fields)

19

formal and the strength and the strength is				
	Yes/No Total	How many live How many live in your other parts of hometown? Mexico?	How many live in other parts of Mexico?	How many live in the US?
Spouse				
Brother/Sister				
Living Parents				
Children				

# 5 What is the primary reason for coming to the United States? (check all that apply and record comments below)

	Other:	
in a second seco	To be reunited with friends	
	To be reunited with family	
	To study	
	To seek work	
	o work (already has job) ' What type of work?)	
	Fζ	

/ End time:

Start time:

Date:

Interviewer ID:

6 Apprehension - Now let me ask you about your previous experience trying to get into the US

(IR = Interview Room, CR = Court Room)

Location:

Subject ID:

order?	
ss the bor	hended?
w many times have you tried to cross the b	een appre
ave you t	ny times have you been app
r times ha	r times ha
low many	low many

Trip can consist of several attempts over	attempts over 1 week. (Us	1 week. (Use fields in this order: Current, First, Previous)	ent, First, Previous)			
Trip or Attempt	Year of trip	Month of trip	Intended or actual	Attempted entry at	Attempted entry at Documents used (BCC,	If documents
			p	port or between		used, were they
			State)	ports? Where?	Visa <u>, H-2A, etc.</u> )	valid or counterfait
First						
Trip prior to most recent attempt						
Current						
Trip or Attempt	Number of times Use Coy apprehended when crossing Yes/No	Use Coyote Yes/No	Did the coyote cross the Cost of coyote? border with you? even if not paid		Did you pre pay the coyote Successful? or pay on arrival?	Successful? Yes/No
First						
Trip prior to most recent attempt						
Current						

2/3

/ End time:

Start time:

Subject ID:

Location: (IR = Interview Room, CR = Court Room)

Interviewer ID:

## 7 Current Attempt

On your current attempt, How many of these		Who chose where to	Do you think you will Do you think you Do you think you will	Do you think you	Do you think you will
did you travel alone or with people were family	people were family	cross on the border?	attempt to cross	will return home return to the US	return to the US
others?	members?		again in the next 7	or will you stay at someday?	someday?
			days?	the border?	
Alone		Coyote	Yes	Stay at border	Yes
With others		Family Member	No	Go home	No
		Me	Maybe	Other	Maybe
		Other	Not Sure		Not Sure

#### ő 8 Fut

21

8 Future Plans						
Would you cross the same Would you t	Would you try a different	try a different Where did you cross?	Did you consider	Were you given	Were you given Where you aware of the Do you know	Do you know
way you did this time?	coyote?		crossing in California accurate	accurate	consequences that can of a way you	of a way you
		Why did you cross there? or Texas?	or Texas?	information	be applied when you are could have	could have
				about crossing	caught? Does this	entered the
				here?	influence your decision United States	United States
					about the future?	legally?
	14 m. 1	to the second				T
Yes	Yes	Where:				
No	No					
Maybe	Maybe	Why:				
Not Sure	Not Sure					

Date:

#### Appendix B

#### **CONSENT DOCUMENTATION**

I am working with the University of Arizona conducting a study to collect information about your background and your border crossing, migration, and capture experiences. I am not affiliated with Border Patrol – the answers you give me today will be kept confidential.

This study is being funded by the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS). The results of this study will be provided to the OIS and will only be used to help understand how border policy can be improved. The results may also be used to help other studies better understand the reasons economic migrants cross the border.

If you choose to take part in this study, I will ask you questions about your background and your border crossing, migration, and capture experiences. I will write down the answers you give, but I will not write down your name, so what you tell me cannot be linked back to you. The interview will take about 20 minutes. We will be interviewing approximately 1,000 people.

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate at any time during the interview by telling me you don't want to answer any more questions. No matter what decision you make, there will be no penalty to you. Your answers will not be given to Border Patrol or any other agency. How you answer will not influence Border Patrol's decision regarding the consequence of your illegal crossing of the border.

There are no physical, psychological, social, legal, or economic risks involved in this study. Although there is no direct benefit to you for participating, by understanding more clearly how and why illegal immigrants attempt to enter the U.S., this study aims to enhance safety and options for immigrants who want to enter the U.S. by helping those that make immigration laws better understand how and why individuals cross the border illegally.

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact the Principal Investigator of the study, Jay Nunamaker, at (520) 626-1319. For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at (520) 626-6721.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The University of Arizona reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Do you have any questions? <Wait for response and address any questions the subject has>

Would you like to participate? <Wait for response and address any questions the subject has>

If Yes: I will start with the questions now.

If No: Thank you for your time. A border patrol agent will escort you.

#### Appendix C

#### STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

Several factors had a significant relationship with intent to attempt crossing again within the next seven days and intent to ever return to the United States (Table C.1). Factors that were not found to be part of statistically significant relationships are not shown in this table.

Statistically significant findings are in **bold.** Relationships with negative impact are highlighted.

	Affirmative response to	Affirmative response to
	intent to attempt again	intent to ever return to
	within 7 days	the United States
Base Rate	7.4%	36.1%
Education level (p-values=.261 and .011)		
0 – 5 years	7.9% (+0.5%)	<mark>27.6% (-8.5%)</mark>
6 - 8 years	<mark>4.8% (-2.6%)</mark>	35.8% (-0.3%)
9 – 12 years	8.6% (+1.2%)	38.3% (+2.2%)
13+ years	10.0% (+2.6%)	52.0% (+15.9%)
Have Family in the United States		
Spouse (p-values=.000 and .000)	17.1% (+9.7%)	60.5% (+24.4%)
Siblings (p-values=.000 and .000)	14.2% (+6.8%)	55.6% (+19.5%)
Parents (p-values=.088 and .000)	13.5% (+6.1%)	61.5% (+25.4%)
Children (p-values=.000 and .000)	16.3% (+8.9%)	58.1% (+22.0%)
Reason for crossing		
Work (p-values=.064 and .000)	9.1% (+1.7%)	42.3% (+6.2%)
Seek Work (p-values=.004 and .000)	6.0% (-1.4%)	28.7% (-7.4%)
Study (p-values=.855 and .005)	7.0% (-0.4%)	48.4% (+12.3%)
Unite with family (p-values=.004 and .000)	9.5% (+2.1%)	53.0% (+16.9%)
Unite with friends (p-values=.937 and .005)	7.2% (-0.2%)	45.9% (+9.8%)
Other (p-values=.132 and .002)	12.4% (+5.0%)	51.7% (+15.6%)
Location		· · · ·
Lived in the United States for the last two years (p-values=.000 and .000)	16.2% (+8.8%)	63.7% (+27.6%)
Consider the United States home (p-values=.000 and .000)	18.0% (+10.6%)	71.4% (+35.3%)
Previous attempts (p-values=.001 and .000)		· · · · ·
1	<mark>4.4% (-3.0%)</mark>	26.0% (-10.1%)
2-3	7.8% (+0.4%)	40.1% (+4.0%)
4+	13.1% (+5.7%)	48.3% (+12.2%)
Previous apprehensions (p-values=.009 and .003)		· · ·
1	5.3% (-2.1%)	31.1% (-5.0%)
2-3	8.9% (+1.5%)	40.1% (+4.0%)
4+	14.1% (+6.7%)	50.0% (+13.9%)
Percentage of time apprehended while crossing (p-values=.013 and .000)		,
0 - 25%	20.0% (+12.6%)	60.0% (+23.9%)
26 - 50%	7.4% (–)	43.2% (+7.1%)
51 - 75%	13.4% (+6.0%)	55.7% (+19.6%)
76 - 100%	6.2% (-1.2%)	30.7% (-5.4%)
Satisfaction with crossing method		
(p-values=.000 and .000)		
Yes - would cross the same way again	21.9% (+14.5%)	67.1% (+31.0%)
No - would not cross the same way again	1.8% (-5.6%)	25.3% (-10.8%)
Considered other crossing locations (p-values=.000 and .000)		1
Yes – considered crossing in CA or TX	13.9% (+6.5%)	50.8% (+14.7%)
No – did not consider CA or TX	<b>5.9% (-1.5%)</b>	33.1% (-3.0%)
Were you given accurate information about crossing? (p-values=.010 and .064)		1
Yes – accurate information	11.4% (+4.0%)	42.8% (+6.7%)
No – inaccurate information	5.5% (-1.9%)	33.1% (-3.0%)
Do the consequences of being caught affect your future decisions? (p-values=.001 and .044)		
Yes – influenced by consequences	5.1% (-2.3%)	33.3% (-2.8%)
No – not influenced by consequences	13.3% (+5.9%)	42.6% (+6.5%)
No – not influenced by consequences	13.3% (+5.9%)	42.6% (+6.5%)

#### Table C.1. Overview of Findings