

Irresistible Forces: Explaining Latin American Migration to the United States

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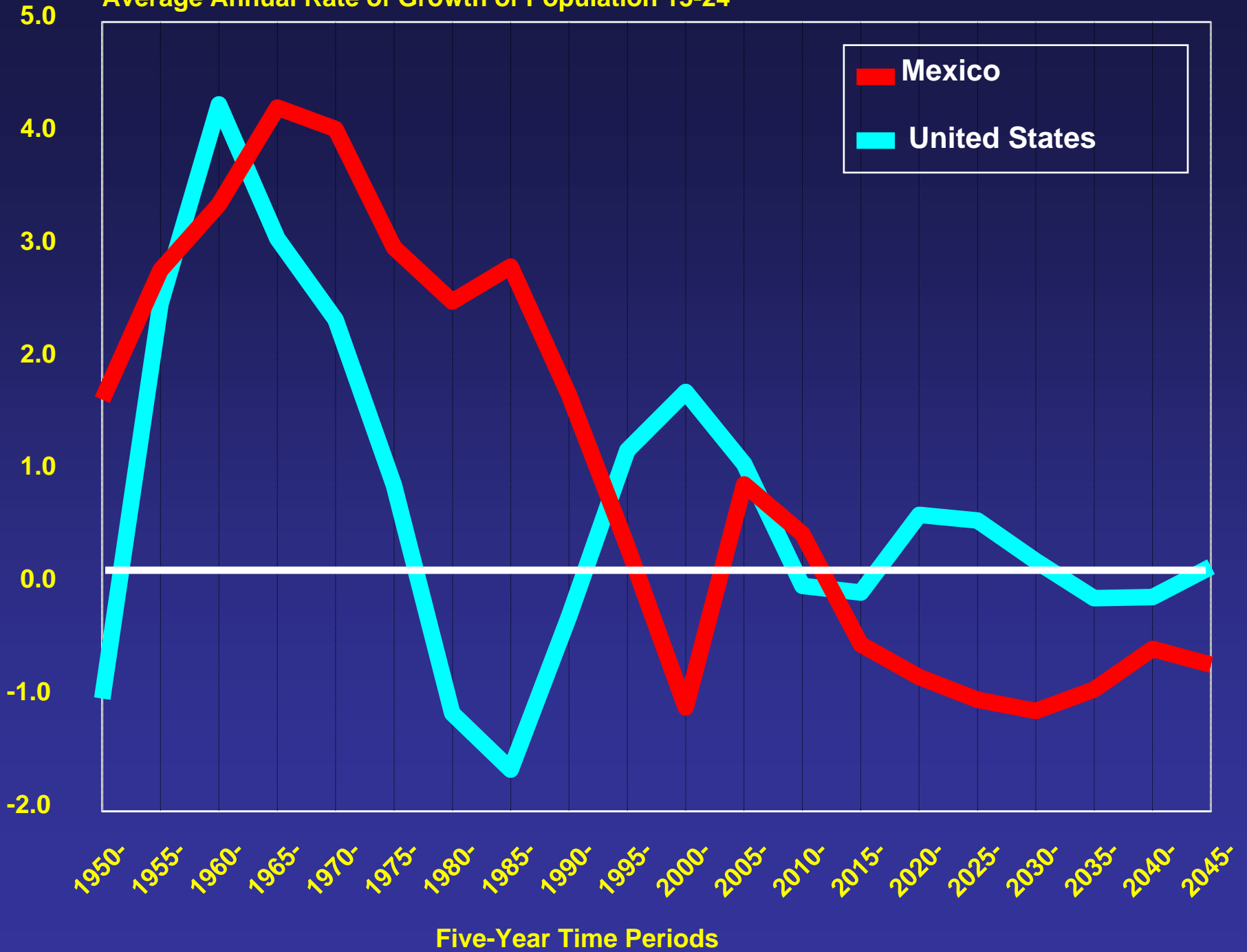
Outline of presentation

- What is a “demographic fit” and how does it help create “irresistible forces” that influence migration?
- Why do some migrants wind up coming to the US without documentation?
- From where are those migrants?
- What are some of the local impacts of undocumented migration?

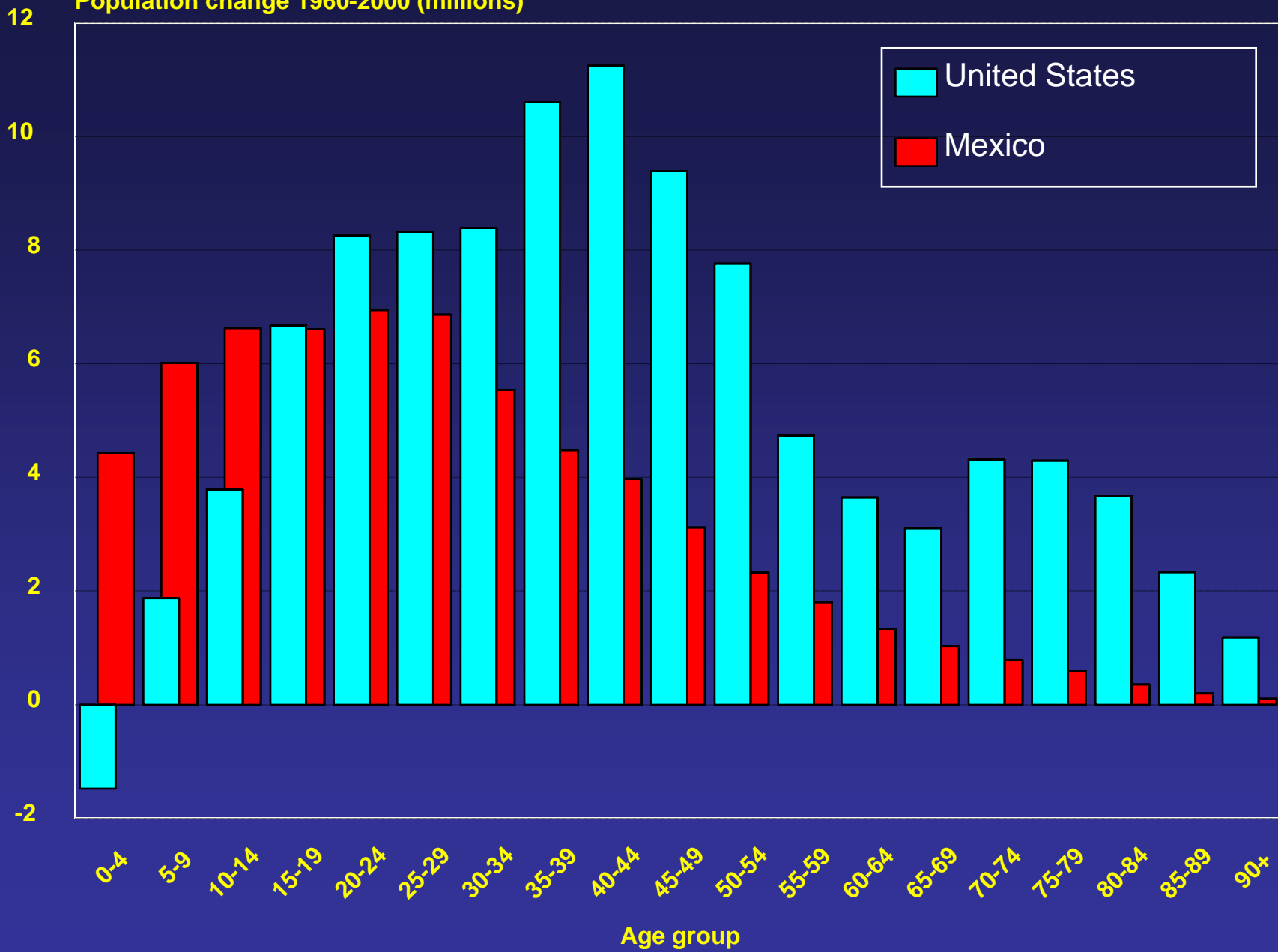
What is “demographic fit”?

- The economy of the United States is very large and attractive to outsiders.
- The population of the US has been aging for several decades, leading to a need for younger labor not met by the native population.
- There has been a youth bulge in Latin American populations (contributing to economic struggles) that has nicely fit the dearth of workers in the US.
- But that fit is coming to an end...

Average Annual Rate of Growth of Population 15-24



Population change 1960-2000 (millions)

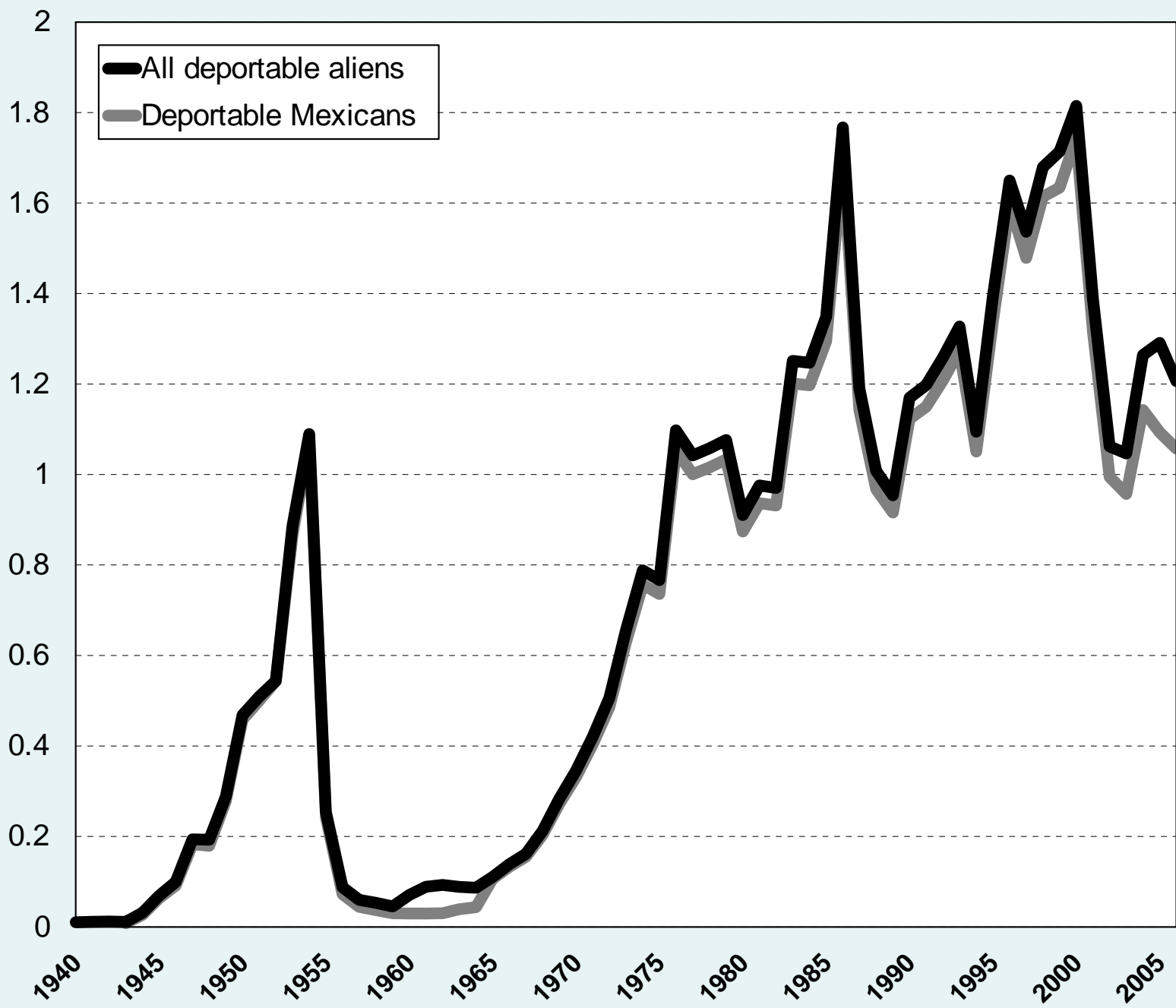


Selected Latin American and Caribbean Countries	%under 25 in 2005	Country Population 2005
Guatemala	63	12,293,545
Haiti	61	8,308,504
Nicaragua	61	5,570,129
Honduras	60	7,326,496
Bolivia	57	8,989,046
Dominican Republic	53	9,183,984
El Salvador	52	6,822,378
Ecuador	52	13,547,510
Peru	51	28,302,603
Venezuela	51	25,730,435
Mexico	50	107,449,525
Jamaica	50	2,713,130
Colombia	49	43,593,035
Brazil	47	188,078,227
Argentina	44	39,921,833
Chile	42	16,134,219
Uruguay	39	3,431,932
<i>United States</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>301,621,157</i>
<i>US Non-Hispanic Whites</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>192,372,560</i>
<i>US Hispanics</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>42,603,116</i>
<i>Canada</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>32,271,000</i>

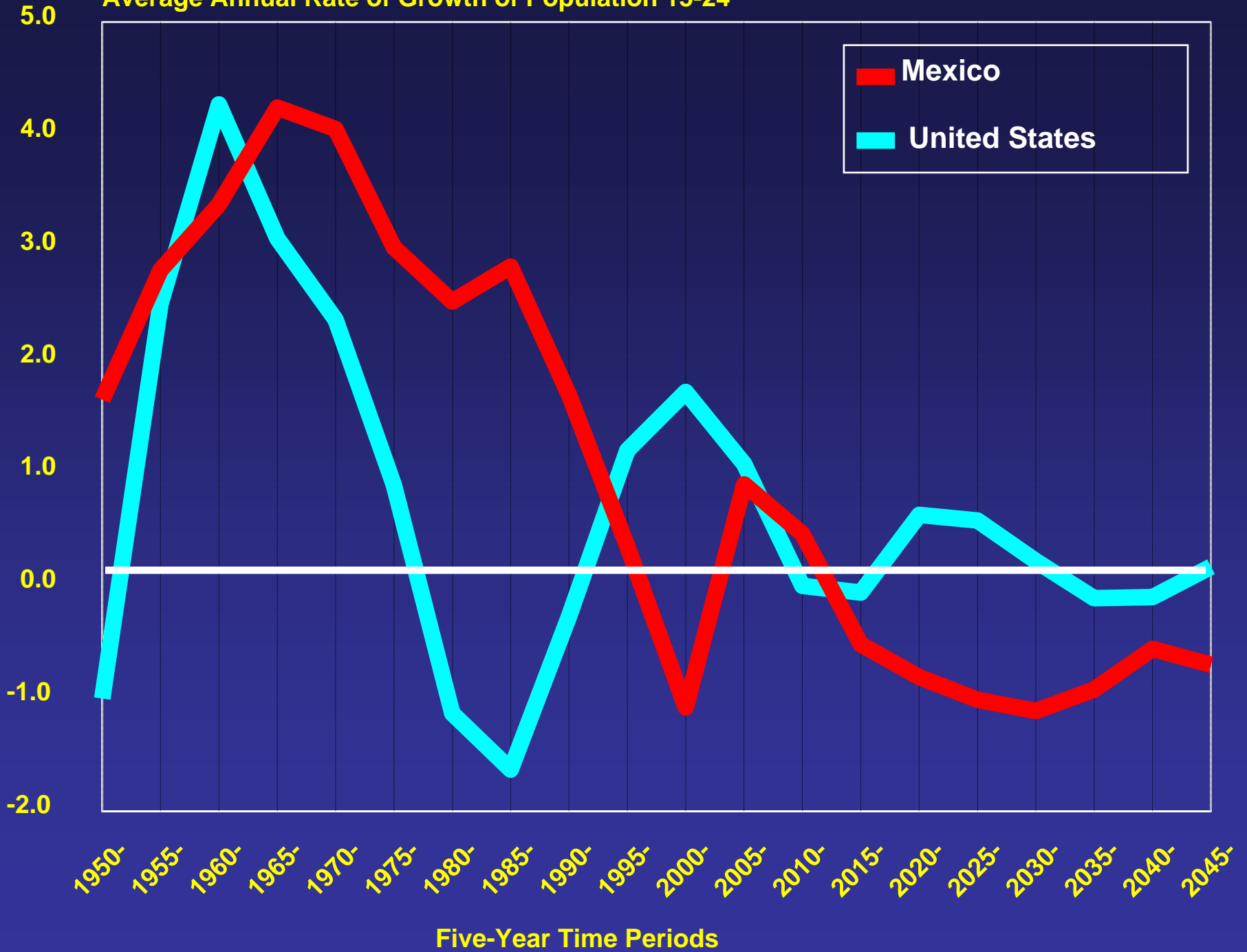
Years	All Immigrants to US	From Latin America	% from Latin America
1820 to 1829	128,502	7,358	5.7
1830 to 1839	538,381	20,030	3.7
1840 to 1849	1,427,337	16,231	1.1
1850 to 1859	2,814,554	19,974	0.7
1860 to 1869	2,081,261	12,314	0.6
1870 to 1879	2,742,137	20,700	0.8
1880 to 1889	5,248,568	31,961	0.6
1890 to 1899	3,694,294	34,252	0.9
1900 to 1909	8,202,388	154,742	1.9
1910 to 1919	6,347,380	361,824	5.7
1920 to 1929	4,295,510	641,963	14.9
1930 to 1939	699,375	67,591	9.7
1940 to 1949	856,608	142,149	16.6
1950 to 1959	2,499,268	508,127	20.3
1960 to 1969	3,213,749	1,218,373	37.9
1970 to 1979	4,248,203	1,724,050	40.6
1980 to 1989	6,244,379	2,538,933	40.7
1990 to 1999	9,775,398	4,942,918	50.6
2000 to 2008	12,678,612	7,078,522	55.8

What has created the pool of undocumented immigrants?

- **Disconnect between legal preferences and what the economy is demanding;**
- **Higher border security encourages undocumented migrants to stay permanently, rather than circulate.**



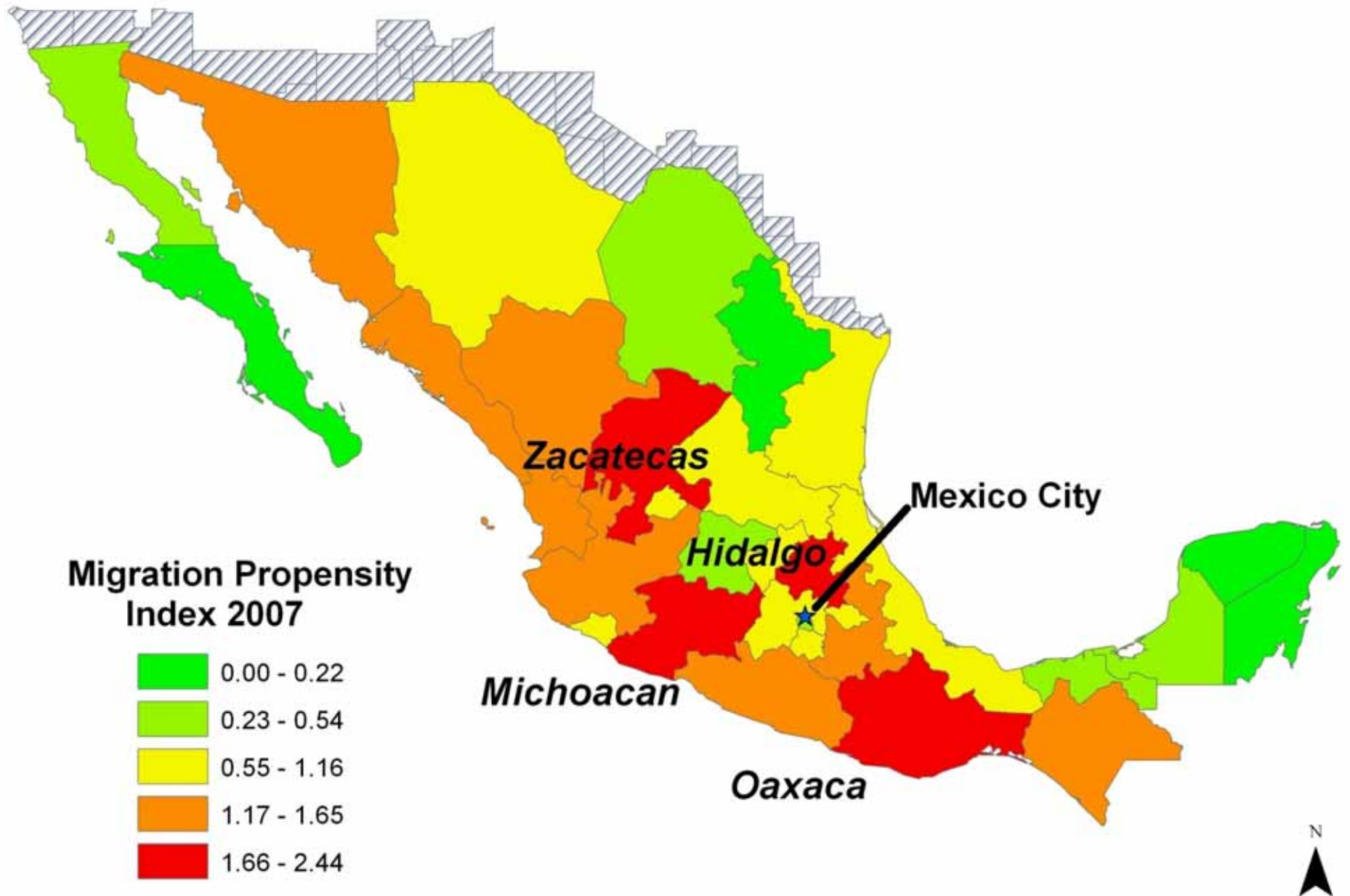
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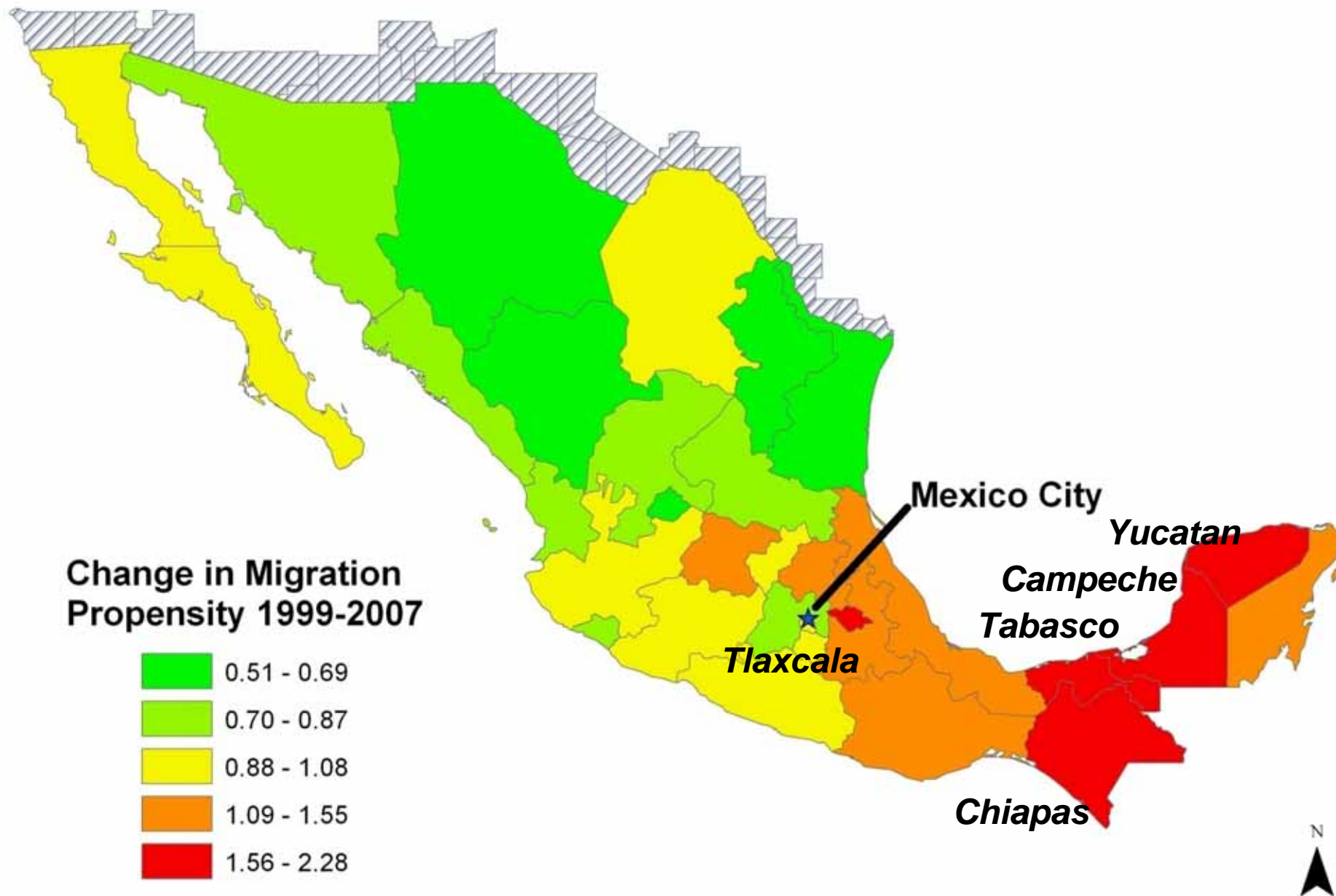


From where are the migrants coming?

- **Mostly from Mexico, but not exclusively;**
- **Those from Mexico come from a selected group of states.**

Latin American and Caribbean Countries	Major language	Number of people born in country who were residing in US in 2007	Foreign-born from this country as a percent of all Latin American immigrants
Mexico	Spanish	11,738,537	58
El Salvador	Spanish	1,104,390	5
Cuba	Spanish	983,454	5
Dominican Republic	Spanish	755,539	4
Guatemala	Spanish	700,567	3
Colombia	Spanish	604,527	3
Jamaica	English	597,940	3
Haiti	French	530,897	3
Honduras	Spanish	430,504	2
Ecuador	Spanish	406,907	2
Peru	Spanish	401,129	2
Brazil	Portug	338,853	2
Guyana	English	242,667	1
Nicaragua	Spanish	230,902	1





What are some of the local impacts of undocumented migration?

- For purposes of the discussion today, we will assume that local means the county level (similar to municipio in Mexico), but this is arbitrary.

The Impact of Migrants at the Local Level Depends on Which Migrants We're Discussing:

- **Legal permanent residents**
 - Workers or family members
 - Level of education
 - English-language ability
 - US-born children of undocumented immigrants

The Impact of Migrants at the Local Levels Depends on Which Migrants We're Discussing, continued:

- **Undocumented immigrants**
 - **Workers or family members**
 - **Level of education**
 - **English-language ability**
 - **Visa-overstayers or border crossers**

The Impact of Migrants Depends on Which Impact We're Examining:

- **Impact on consumers of goods and/or services to which immigrants contribute:**
 - Largely beneficial because immigrants take jobs that are otherwise available and, especially if undocumented, are paid less than others, thus effectively raising the consumer's standard of living.

The Impact of Migrants Depends on Which Impact We're Examining (continued):

- **Impact on businesses that employ immigrants:**
 - Largely beneficial because immigrants take jobs that others won't take and, especially if undocumented, are paid less than others, thus potentially contributing to a higher profit margin for the employer—or maybe even just the ability to stay in business.

The Impact of Migrants Depends on Which Impact We're Examining (continued):

- **Impact on local government:**
 - Very difficult to measure, but...
 - Legal immigrants probably have no net effect on local government—higher income workers may pay more in taxes than they receive in services from local government; lower income workers may pay the same or less in taxes than they receive in services from local gov't.

What services do county governments provide to residents?

- **In the US this varies by state, so I will use California as the example:**
- **Public safety—police, fire, emergency medical services;**
- **Public health, environmental health and social services;**
- **Recreation services;**
- **NOT: Medical care (paid by state)**
- **NOT: Education (paid by state)**

What income do county governments in California derive from residents?

- A portion of property tax
- A portion of sales tax
- NOT income tax (that goes only to state and to federal government)
- NOT Social Security or Medicare (that goes only to federal government)

The Impact of Migrants Depends on Which Impact We're Examining (continued):

- **Impact on local government of undocumented immigrants (especially border crossers):**
 - probably have a less positive effect on local government than other groups:
 - Their earned income is low, and so they will spend disproportionately small amounts of income that will be taxed for sales tax (food is exempt from sales tax);

- They are more likely than established immigrants to be sending money back home—money that is therefore not being spent locally and thus is not making a contribution to local sales tax;
- They tend to live in low rent places that, by definition, will have low property tax payments, so their contribution will be limited.

– The fact that they live in a legal limbo can be a strain on government workers who deal with them—wanting to help them, in most cases, but required not to ask about their status, and feeling as though they are engaged in clandestine activity at taxpayer's expense.

The Impact of Undocumented Migrants on County Government in San Diego, California

Year	Estimated number of undocumented immigrants	Population	% Undocumented
1990	64,000	1,987,235	3.2
1995	86,888	2,369,064	3.7
2000	117,962	2,824,259	4.2
2005	176,800	3,024,993	5.8
2006	192,654	3,066,820	6.3
2007	209,930	3,109,226	6.8

The Cost of Undocumented Migrants to County Government in San Diego, California

Category	Program	% effort spent on Undocumented Immigrants	Cost of Undocumented Immigrants
Public Safety Group	<i>TOTAL</i>	7.5%	\$75,010,931
Health and Human Services	<i>TOTAL</i>	4.6%	\$22,868,539
Parks and Recreation	<i>TOTAL</i>	10.0%	\$3,614,931
<i>TOTAL</i>		6.7%	\$101,494,401

Rough Estimate of Revenue from Undocumented Migrants to County Government in San Diego, California

N	210,000
wage rate	10
hours	8
days	5
weeks	50
average gross income	20,000
total income	4,200,000,000
local taxable expenditure = .20	840,000,000
sales tax	10,500,000
persons/house = 3	70,000
rent a house/apt with an assessed valuation of 150,000	78,750,000
County Government Revenue	89,250,000

Conclusion from these estimates:

- There may be a financial impact;
- But the greater impact is almost certainly psychological—it is difficult for immigrants and for those dealing with them.
- I believe that the situation is “un-American” and untenable.

Where Do I Think We Should Go From Here?

- **Legalize all currently undocumented immigrants (eliminate the underclass)—this would increase their income and regularize their tax contributions;**
- **Create a sufficiently large guest-worker program that will absorb the supply relative to demand—but it too must have a road to eventual citizenship;**

- Reduce the number of people allowed to enter via the family preferences;
- Continue to closely monitor the borders—legalization will increase demand for new wave of cheap immigrants, at least in short run;
- Increase legal visas for visitors from South America;
- Wait for the demographic fit to play its role—lower demand in US; smaller supply in Mexico/ Central America.

Sources

- Gregory B. Weeks and John R. Weeks, ***Irresistible Forces: Explaining Latin American Migration to the United States***, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press), in press.
- John R. Weeks, Justin Stoler, and Piotr Jankowski, "Who's Crossing the Border: New Data on Undocumented Immigrants to the United States," ***Population, Space and Place***, 2009 (currently online; not yet in print).
- John R. Weeks and David M. Eisenberg, ***Estimating the Cost to the County of San Diego, California, of Services Delivered to Undocumented Immigrants During FY 2006-07***, Final Report to the County of San Diego, 2007.

**Muchísimas
Gracias!**