

Current Migration Trends from Mexico: What Are the Impacts of the Economic Crisis and U.S. Enforcement Strategy?

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The Mexican Migration Field Research and Training Program

*Center for
Comparative
Immigration Studies at
UCSD*



*UCSD student interviews a potential
migrant to the United States in
Tunkas, Yucatan*

Mexican Migration Field Research and Training Program

University of California, San Diego



Tlacuitapa, Jal.

Tunkas, Yuc.

San Miguel Tlacotepec, Oax.

Migrant-sending towns
being studied by MMFRP



4,012 survey interviews and 1,500+ hours of in-depth life history interviews conducted in Mexico, California, and Oklahoma, 2005-09

Tunkás, Yucatán

1,030 survey interviews

Population:

ca. 2,806

Culture:

Mayan indian;
74% speak Maya

Economy:

Corn farming, bee-keeping, U.S. remittances

Migration history:

In 1st or 2nd generation of migration to U.S.

25% of residents have migrated at least once to U.S.

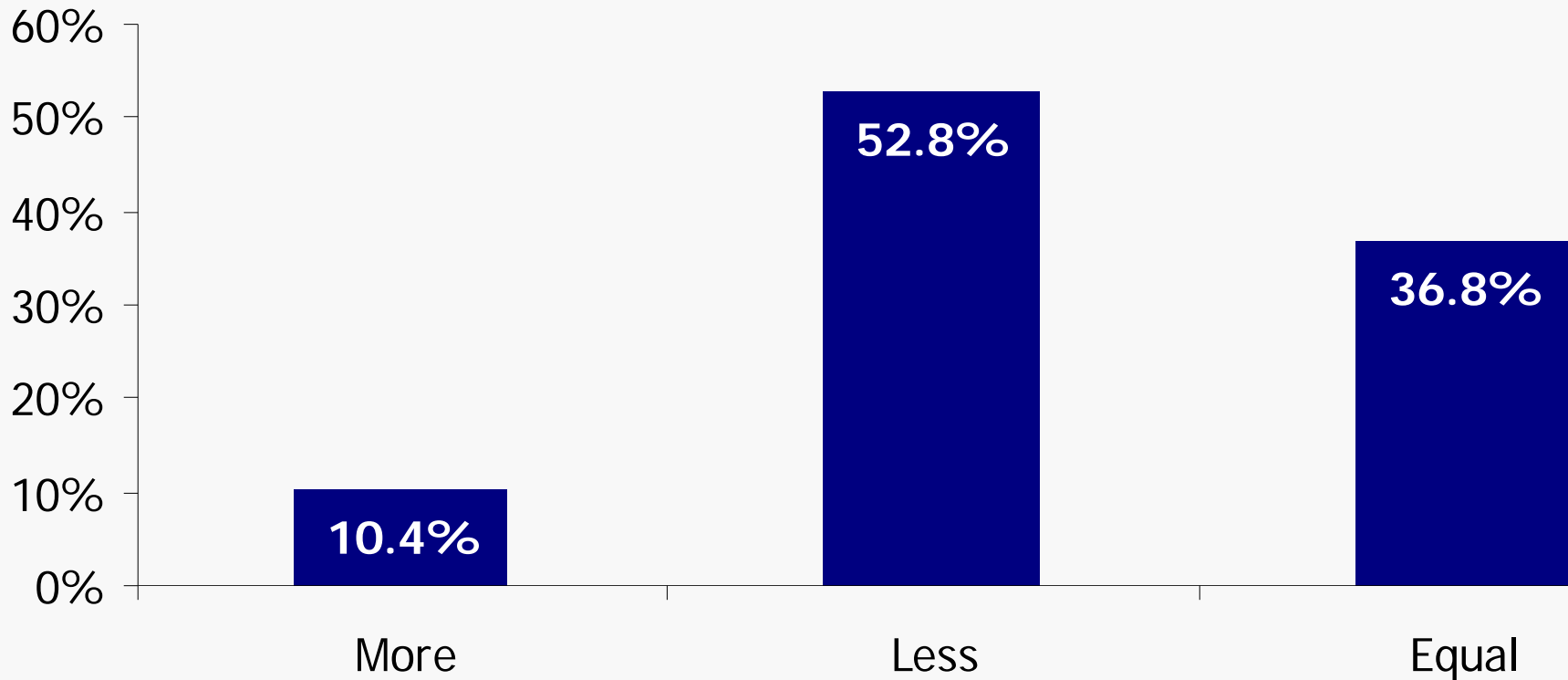


U.S. economic crisis

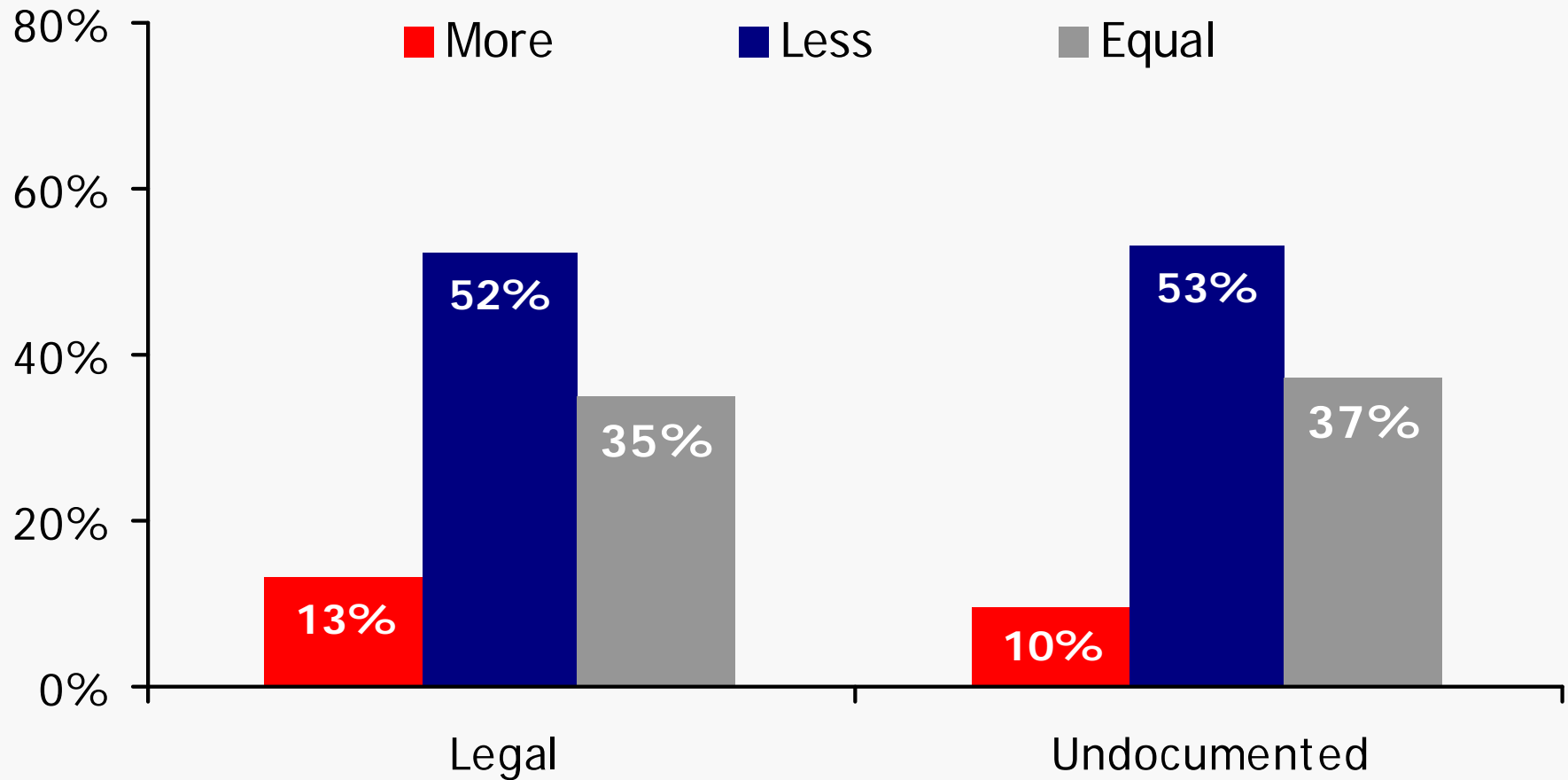
How is it affecting Mexican migrants living in the U.S.?



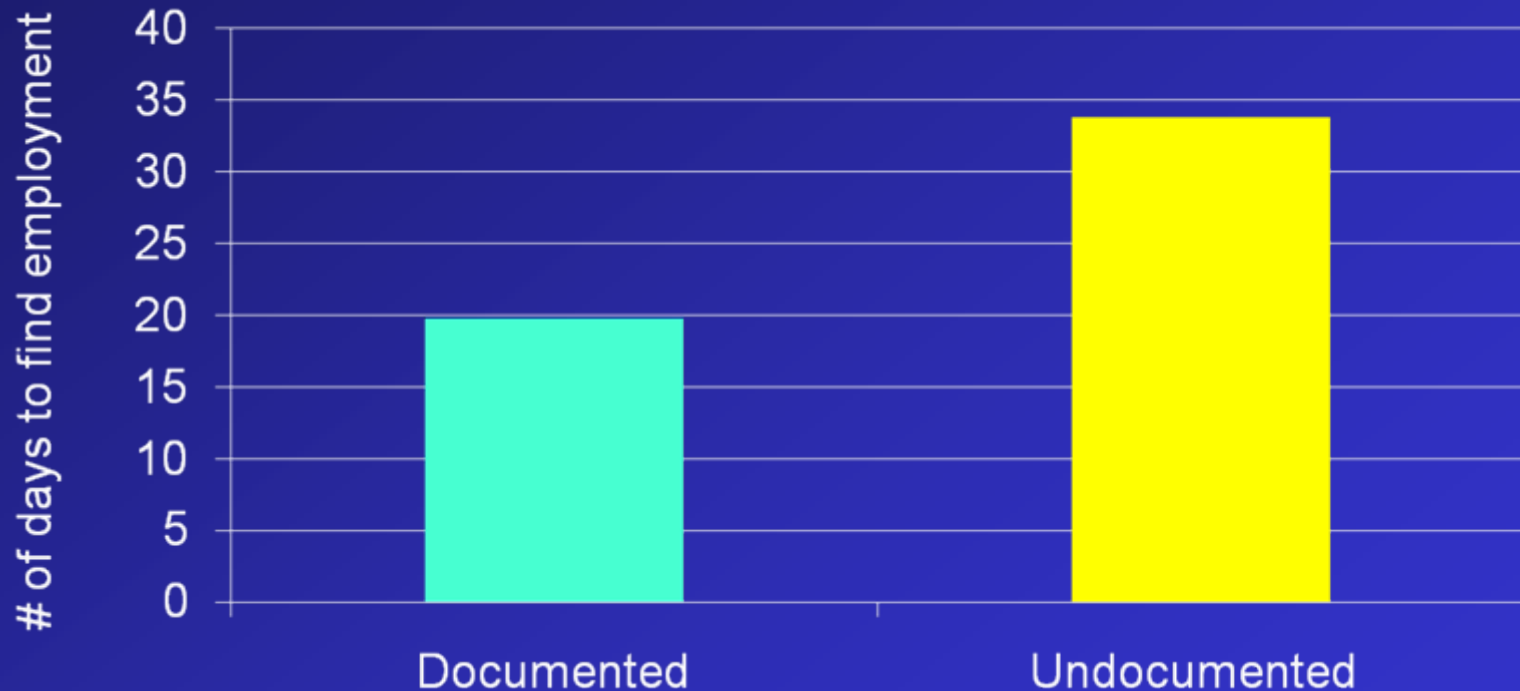
“In comparison with last year, has the number of hours that you work each week changed?”



Change in hours worked per week in past year, by legal status



***“How long did it take to find your
most recent job in the U.S.?”
(by legal status)***



*Open unemployment is still rare
among Tunkaseño migrants in the U.S.*

- Among Tunkaseño migrants interviewed in U.S., only **2%** were currently unemployed (but most work in services).
- Among returned migrants interviewed in Yucatán in 2009, only **3%** had come back because they had lost their job in the U.S., or couldn't find work there.

Return Migration to Mexico?

“Anecdotal evidence suggests that U.S. demand for Mexican labor has plummeted with the economic downturn.”

-- *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/18/09

- Widespread media reports of return migration
- But is this really happening? People are aware that the situation in Mexico is no better:
- *Q. Why don't you go back to Mexico?*
“Because the work in Mexico is deficient as well. When I think about it, I want to go back, but I don't because of the situation that Mexico is in right now.”
- *Ramón, Tunkaseño migrant living in Anaheim, Calif.*

Predicting return migration to Mexico in 2009

(Probit regression model)

Dependent variable	(1) Returner	(3) Returner	(2) Returner	(4) Returner	(5) Returner	(6) Returner ever
Independent variables						
Age	0.0112 (0.0202)	0.0015 (0.0184)	0.0085 (0.0172)	0.0121 (0.0198)	-0.0007 (0.0177)	-0.0303 (0.0253)
Age ²	-0.0002 (0.0003)	-0.0000 (0.0002)	-0.0001 (0.0002)	-0.0002 (0.0003)	0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0005* (0.0003)
Education	-0.0001 (0.0002)	-0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0001 (0.0002)	-0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0001)
Married	0.1304** (0.0567)	0.1395*** (0.0541)	0.1022* (0.0544)	0.0631 (0.0730)	0.0775 (0.0728)	0.0373 (0.1327)
Spouse_in_US	-0.3203*** (0.0537)	-0.3060*** (0.0534)	-0.2699*** (0.0744)	-0.2125*** (0.0800)	-0.1536*** (0.0490)	-0.5157*** (0.0423)
US experience			-0.0052** (0.0024)		-0.0049** (0.0019)	0.0001 (0.0001)
Children				0.1551** (0.0738)	0.0612 (0.0468)	0.3474*** (0.0957)
Children_in_US				-0.2339** (0.0943)	-0.1950*** (0.0473)	-0.3728*** (0.0201)
Controlling for undocumented	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Clustered SE by occupation	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Num of observations	186	186	166	186	150	220

Robust standard errors in parentheses

Coefficients represent the marginal changes in probability for a change in the independent variables

Clustered SEs by occupation

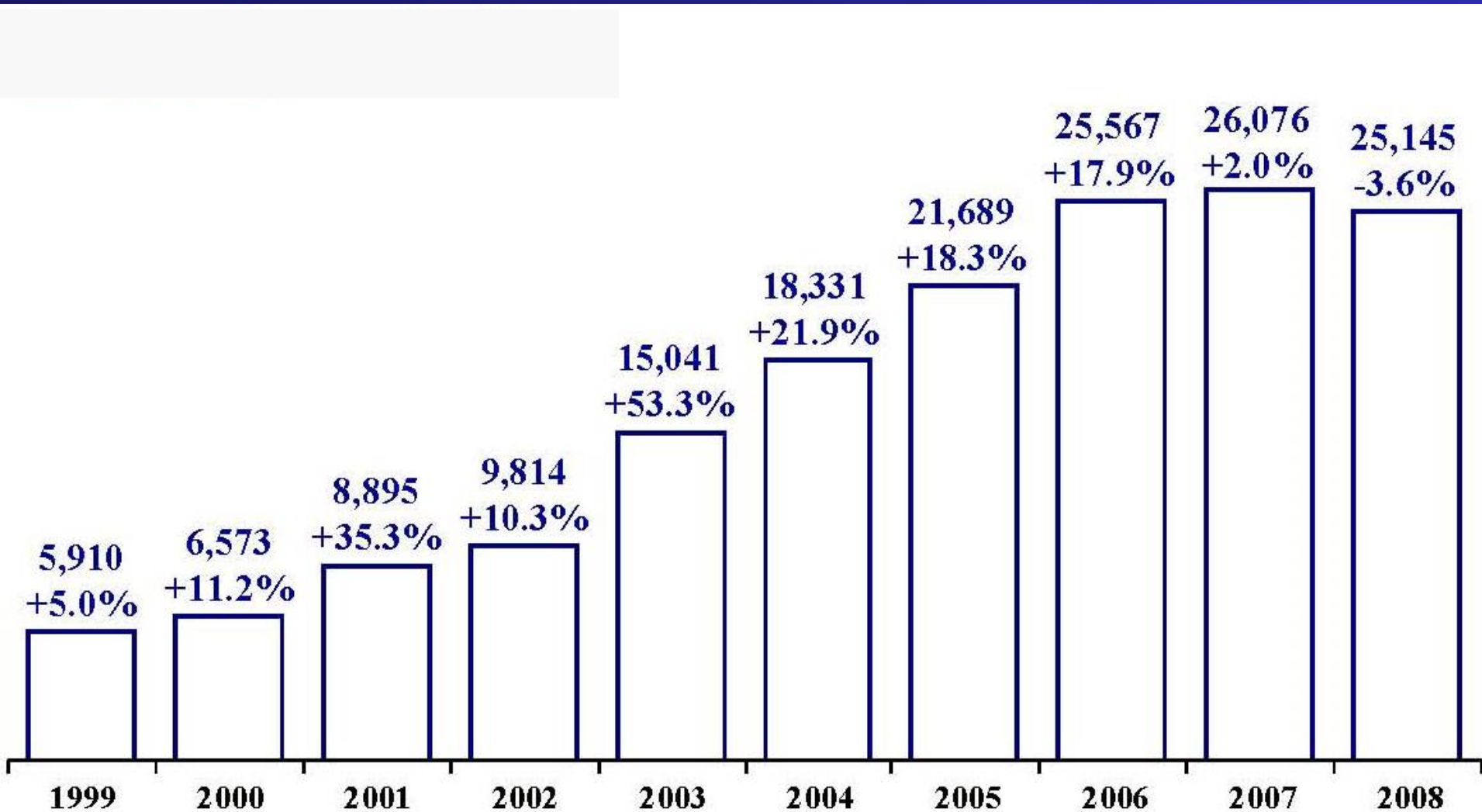
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The U.S. economic crisis

How is it affecting
remittances and
the economies of
migrant-sending
communities?



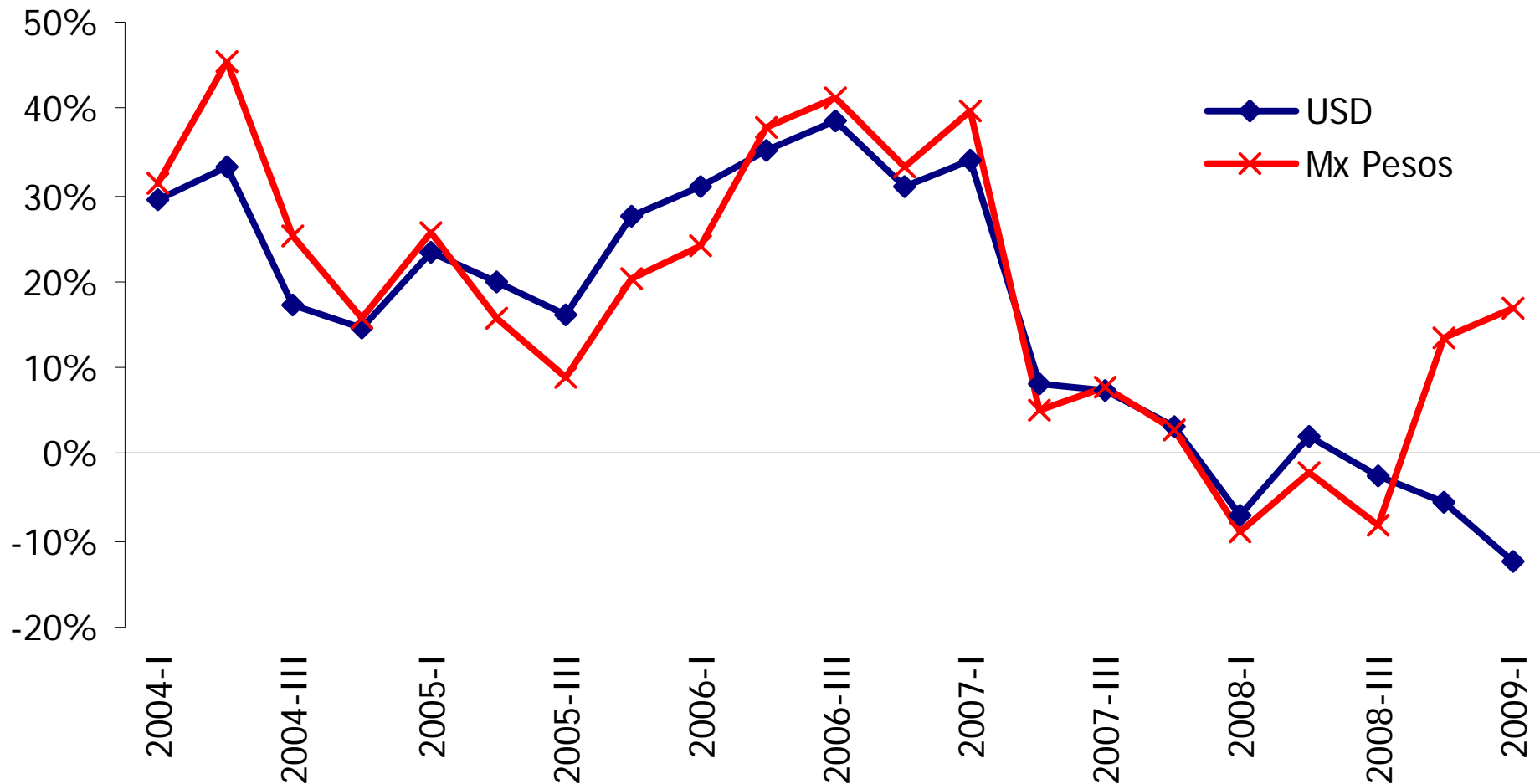
Family remittances sent to Mexico (in millions of dollars)



Source: Banco de Mexico.

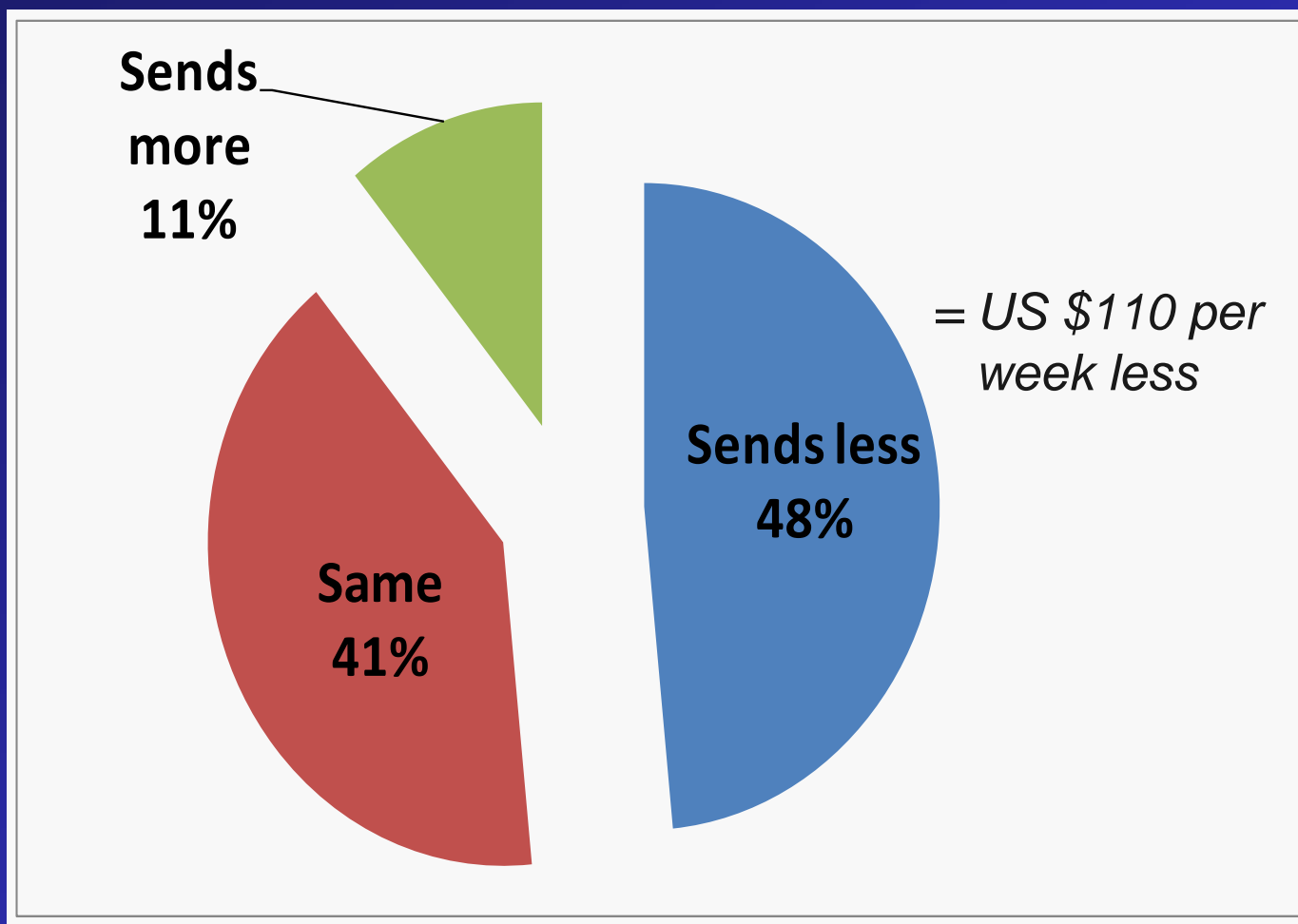
Remittances sent to state of Yucatan

Year to year variation



Source: Banco de Mexico.

Remittances: “Compared with the previous year, how has the average amount that you send [from the U.S. to Tunkás] changed”?



U.S. economic crisis

How is it affecting migration flows?

Arrests drop as border traffic slows

With the economy in tatters and security beefed up, immigrants have fewer incentives to risk dangerous trek.

RICHARD MAROSI
REPORTING FROM SAN LUIS RIO
COLORADO, MEXICO

Arrests of illegal immigrants on the U.S.-Mexico border have fallen to levels unseen since the 1970s as the ailing U.S. economy and enhanced enforcement appear to be deterring people from trekking north.

From October 2008 through February of this year, the Border Patrol arrested 195,399 illegal immigrants, a 24% decrease from the same period last year. The apprehension level is on track to dip to about 550,000 for this federal fiscal year, the lowest level since 1975, when 596,796 immigrants were caught, according to Border Patrol statistics.

The downward trend in arrests — considered one of the best indicators of illegal immigrant migration — began a few [See **Border**, Page A24]

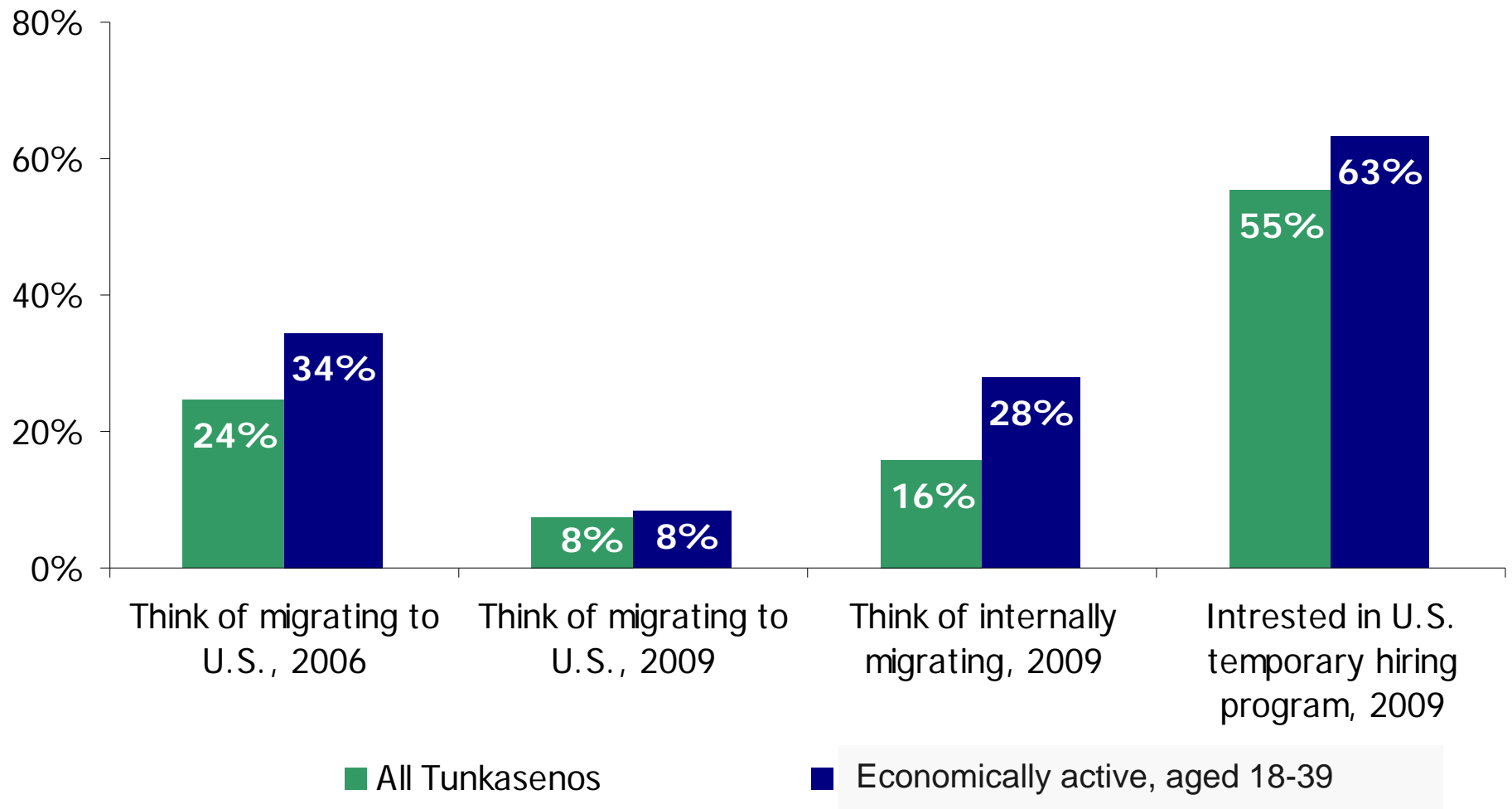
The Associated Press, June 3, 2009

Mexican emigration drops 13 percent in 1st quarter

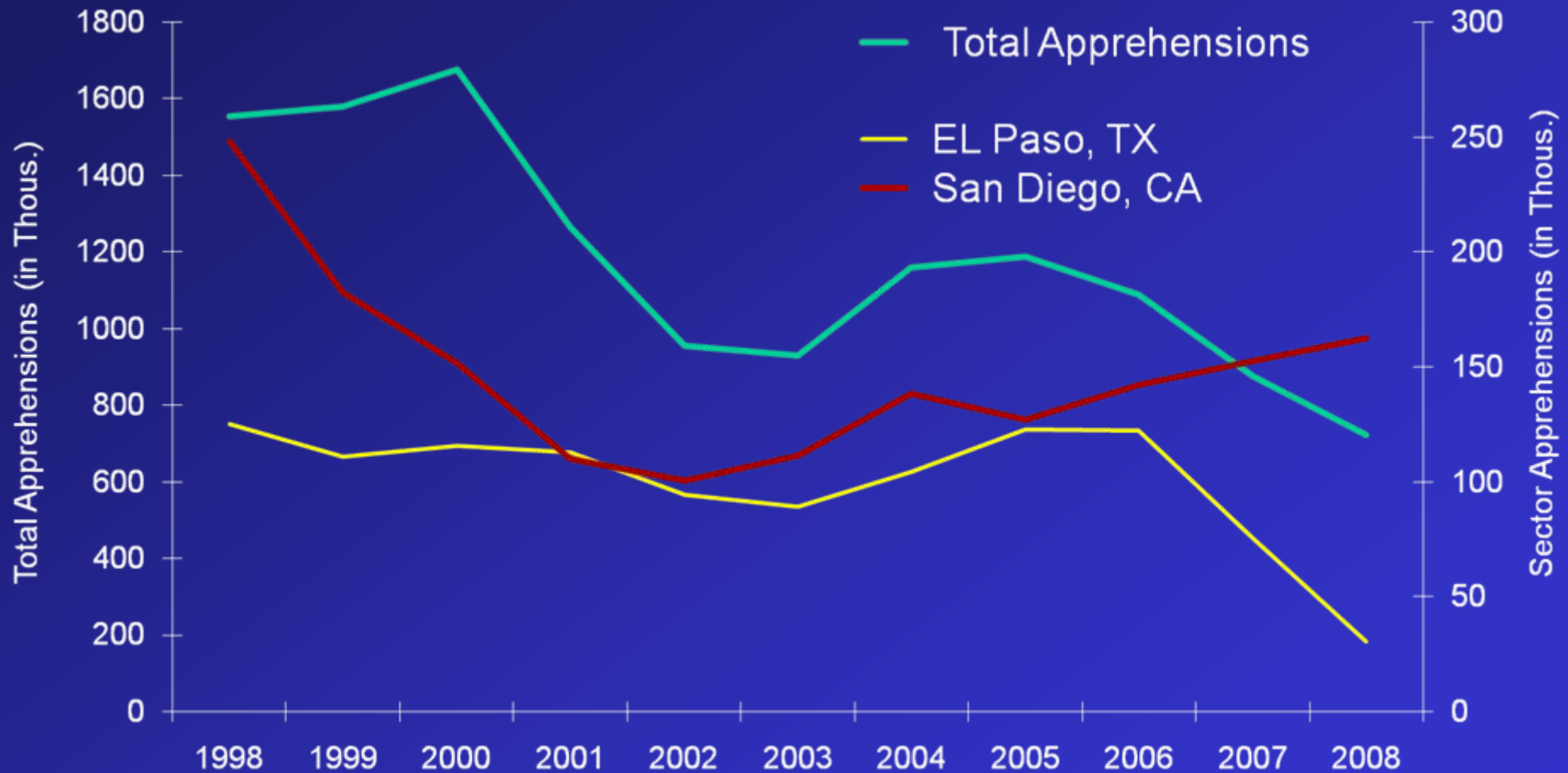
Mexico City (AP) -- A government survey finds Mexican emigration dropped **13 percent** in the first quarter of 2009 — an ongoing trend as the U.S. economic recession discourages Mexicans from crossing the border in search of work.

The National Statistics and Geography Institute found that **137,497** people left Mexico in the first three months of 2009, compared to **159,024** during the same period of 2008.

Propensity to migrate in 2006 and 2009, among residents of Tunkás, Yucatán



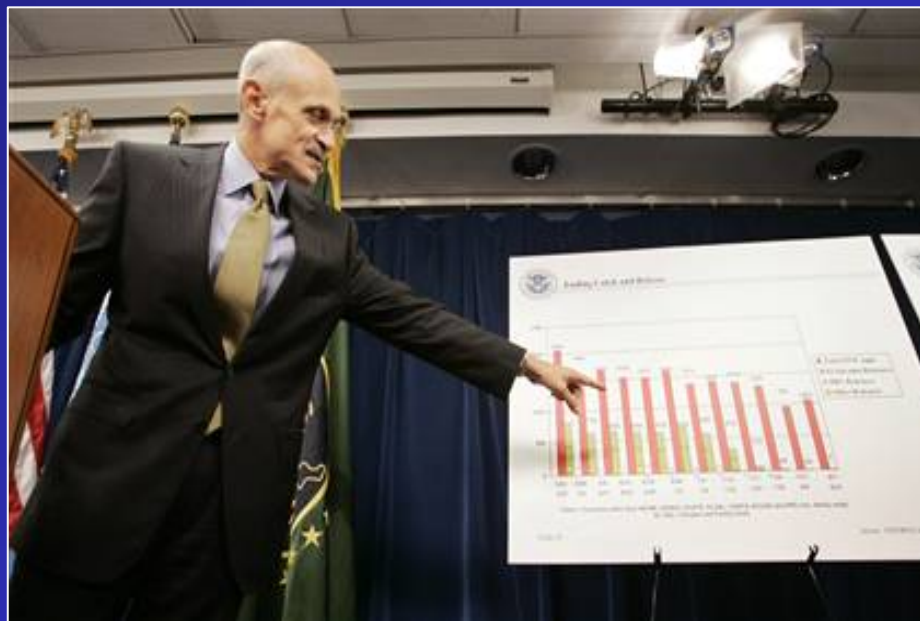
Southwest border apprehensions



Apprehensions declined by **27%** from October 2008-May 2009.

Why are border apprehensions declining?

“This is an indication that there are fewer attempts to cross the border illegally....
The efforts we’ve undertaken at the border have begun to turn the tide of illegal immigration.”
-- Michael Chertoff, DHS Secretary, October 23, 2008



Evading Border Patrol is perceived as difficult

“At present, how easy or difficult is it to evade the Border Patrol when crossing the border?”

Very difficult:	64%
Somewhat difficult:	21%
Somewhat easy:	5%
Very easy:	10%

Source: MMFRP survey of
Yucatecos, January-March 2009



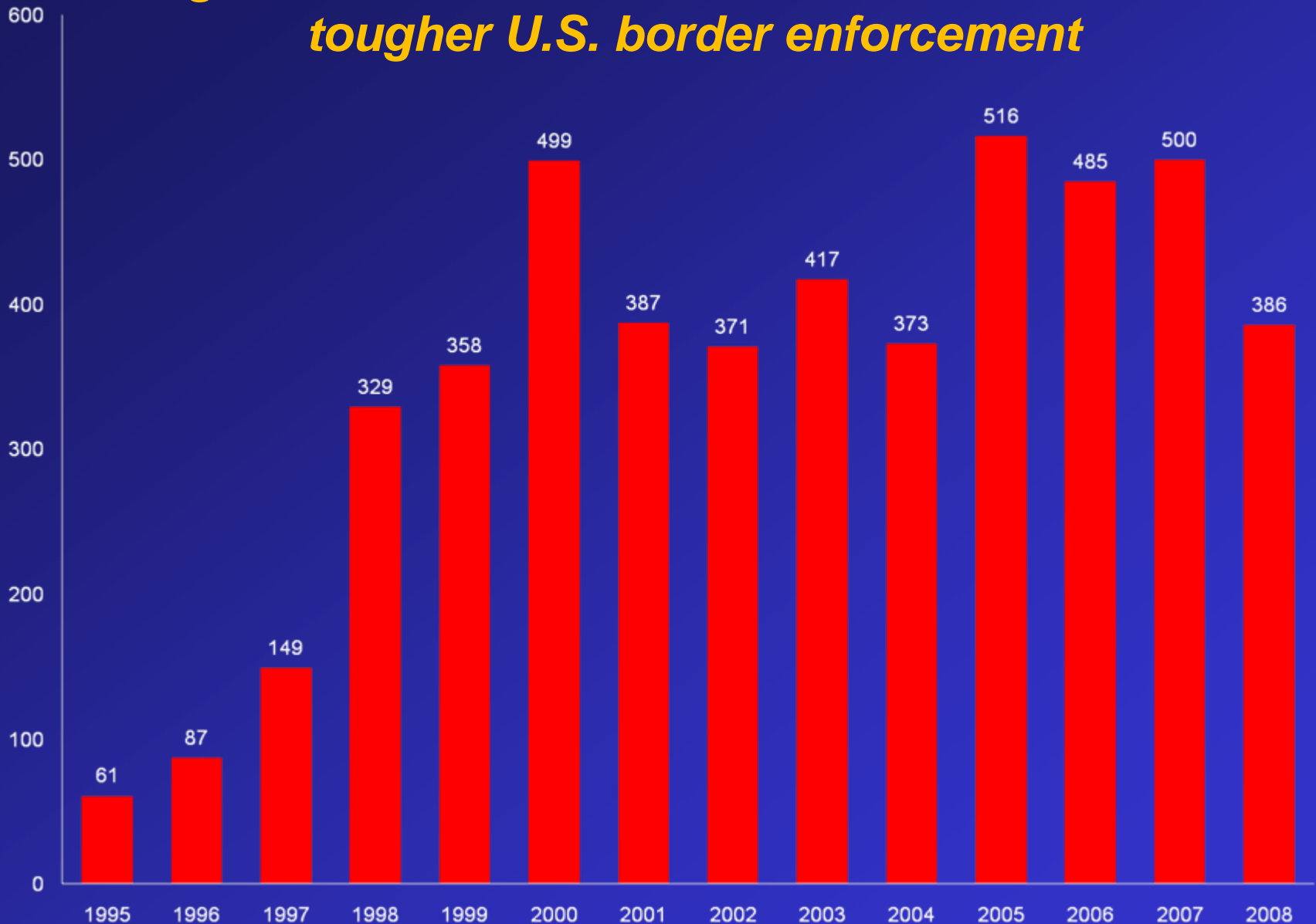
Clandestine border crossings are seen as very dangerous

- 87% of Yucateco migrants believe it is “very dangerous” to cross the border without papers
- 44% know someone who died trying to cross

Gravesite of 46-year-old Tunkas woman who died of hypothermia in East San Diego County



***Migrant fatalities have increased in tandem with
tougher U.S. border enforcement***



Total detected deaths, 1/1/95 – 3/31/09: 5,046

Alternative explanations for declining border apprehensions:

- Reduced circularity in migration (less return migration):

Border enforcement doesn't keep migrants *out*, but keeps them *in* the U.S. once they gain entry, due to high \$ cost (coyote fees) + physical risks of reentry.

*Fewer return trips =
fewer apprehensions:*

If migrants aren't going home, they aren't getting caught when they return to their jobs in U.S.



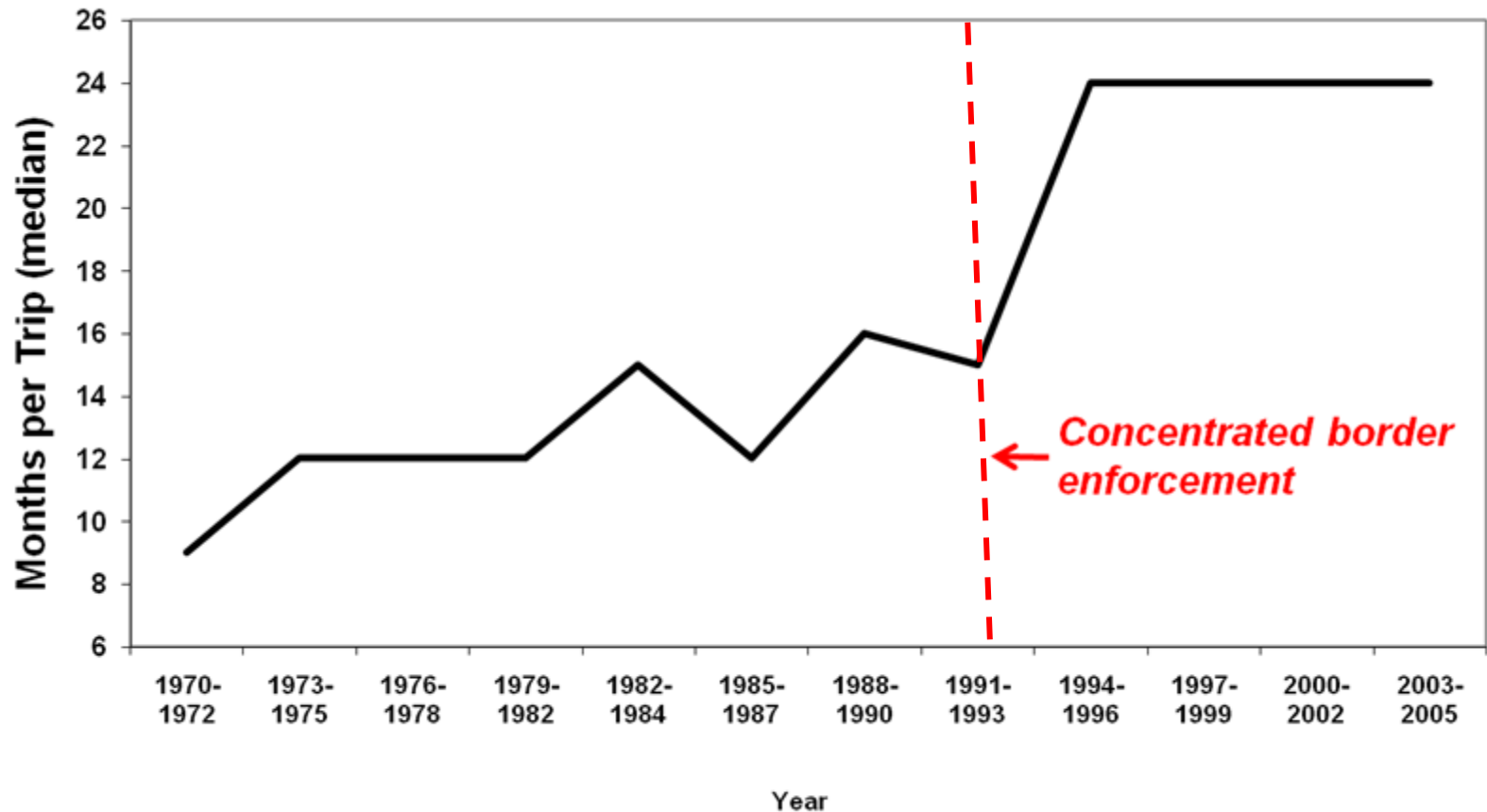
Key indicators of reduced circularity:

- Migrants are staying longer in U.S. on each trip.
- In the last 5 years, the average Tunkás migrant living in the U.S. has returned to his/her hometown only *once*.
- **37%** of people interviewed in Tunkás report that they have relatives who have stayed in the U.S. for fear of not being able to get back in if they return to Mexico.
- More abandoned houses in hometown = whole-family migration
- Lower attendance at annual fiesta

*Abandoned house in
Tunkás, Yucatán*



Average length of stay, most recent trip to the U.S.



Source: Data from three most recent MMFRP surveys, in Jalisco, Oaxaca, and Yucatan.



Attendance at annual town fiesta (February 2009) was down sharply

Alternative explanations for declining border apprehensions

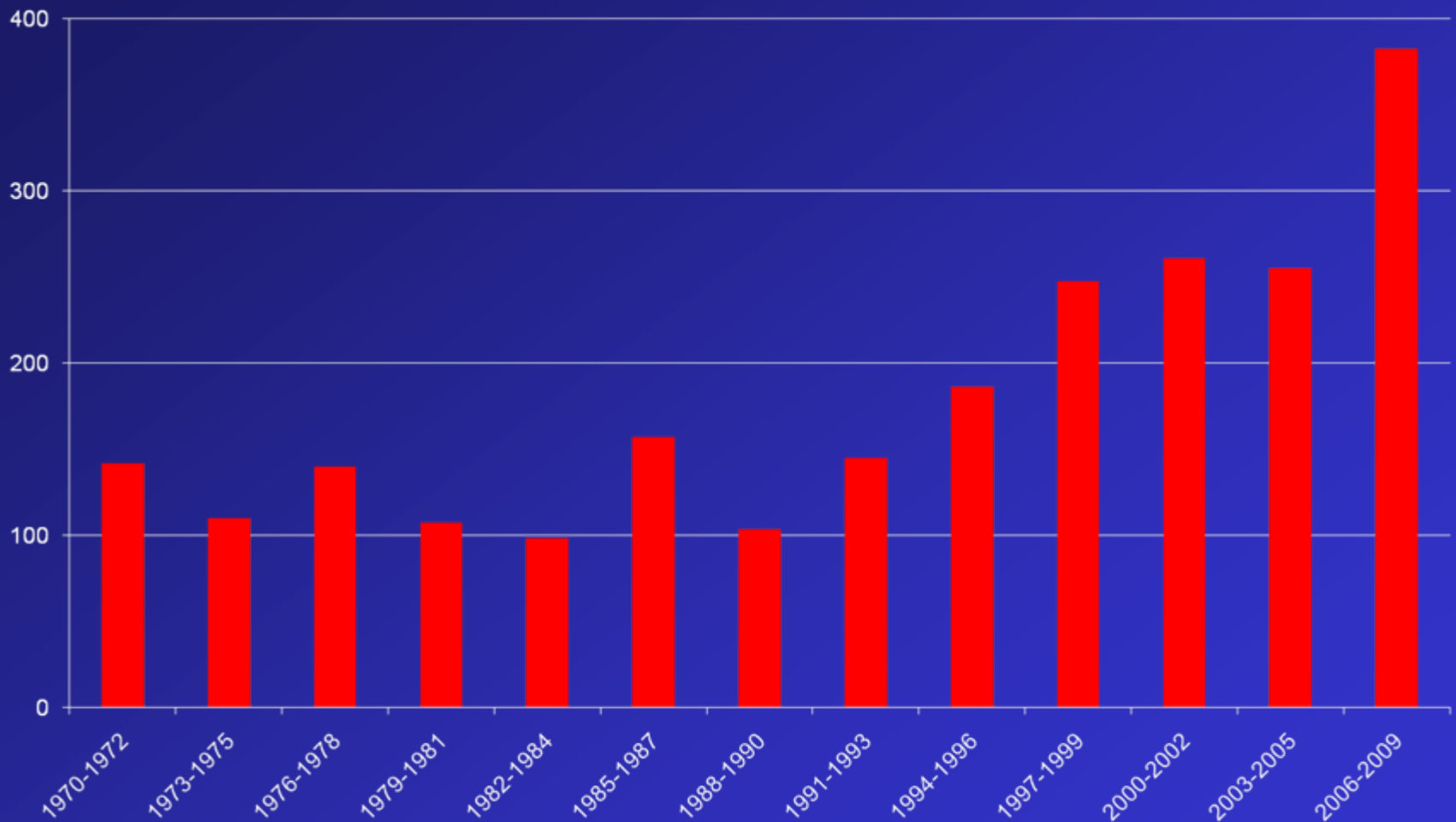
- Reduced circularity in migration
- More use of people-smugglers:
 - Tighter border enforcement has increased use of “coyotes.”
 - **91%** of Yucateco migrants interviewed in 2009 had hired a coyote to assist their post recent crossing into the U.S.
 - Using a coyote = high probability of successful entry



Average amount paid to people-smuggler by Yucateco migrants on their most recent trip to the U.S.



Hours of U.S. work needed to repay coyote fee (most recent trip to the U.S.)



Source: MMFRP of Tunkas migrants in U.S. and Yucatan.

U.S. economic crisis has also reduced the capacity of potential migrants to go to U.S.

70% of Yucateco migrants obtained the money to hire a “coyote” for their most recent trip to the U.S.
from *U.S.-based relatives or friends*



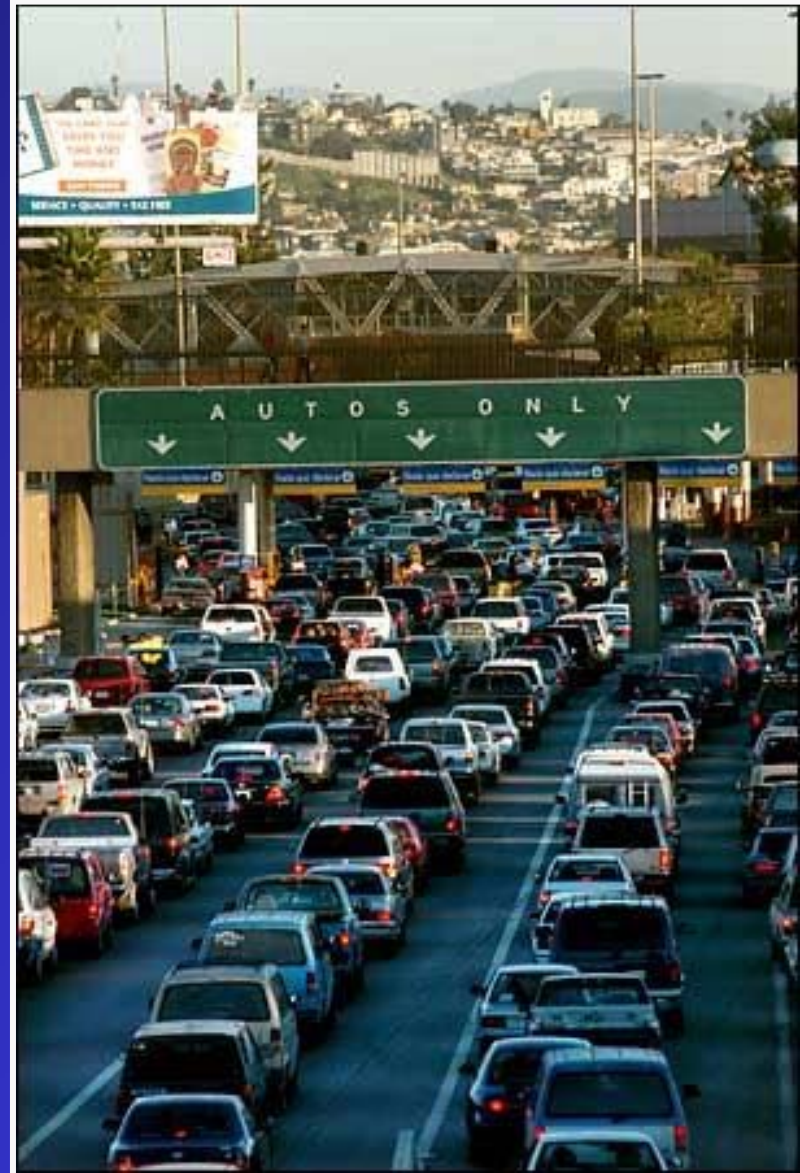
Alternative explanations for declining border apprehensions

- Reduced circularity in migration
- Greater use of people-smugglers
- Migrants and coyotes are developing new modes of entry:

More crossings being made through legal ports of entry (POEs)

**Entry through a POE =
lower probability of apprehension**

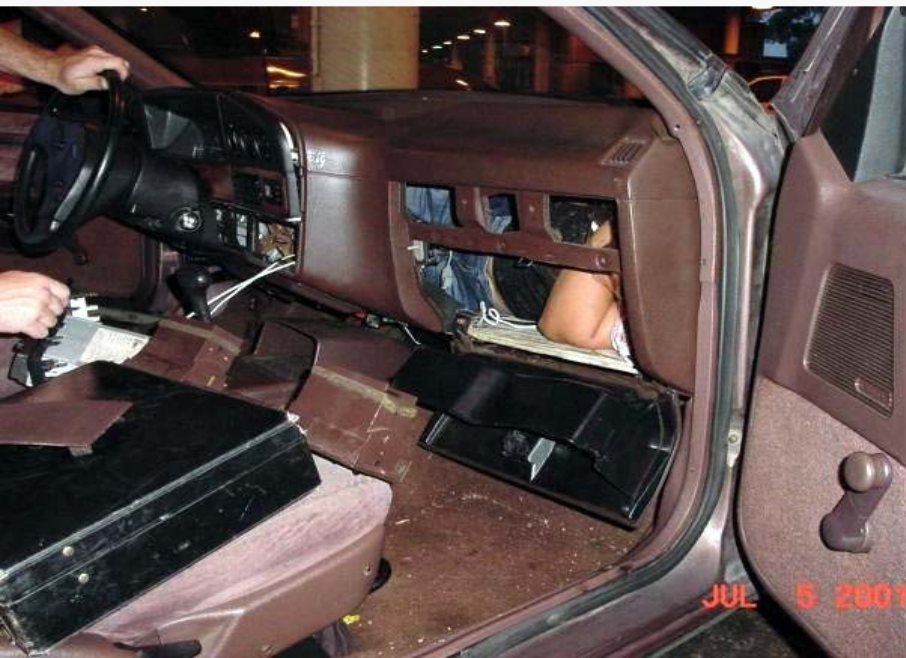
Over 224 million crossings/year are made through POEs on US-Mexico border; close scrutiny is impossible



More unauthorized entries are being made through legal ports of entry

28% of undocumented Yucatecos interviewed in 2009 came through a POE on most recent trip to U.S.: **52%** hidden in a vehicle, **39%** using false or borrowed documents.

- Probability of apprehension on most recent entry attempt, *if made through a POE:* **0.36**
- Probability of apprehension on most recent entry attempt, *if made away from POEs:* **0.73**



San Diego Union-Tribune

May 26, 2009

Illegal immigrants detained near north San Diego beach

ENCINITAS – Nearly two dozen illegal immigrants were detained early Tuesday near Swami's Beach, and two people believed to have smuggled them into the country were arrested shortly afterward on a boat, officials said.

Sheriff's deputies and Border Patrol agents went to the beach about 5:20 a.m. after receiving a tip that several people were getting off a boat that had just come ashore.

Officials found 16 men and six women hiding in nearby brush.

***Maritime smuggling
of migrants is up
300% since
October 2007***



Alternative explanations for declining border apprehensions

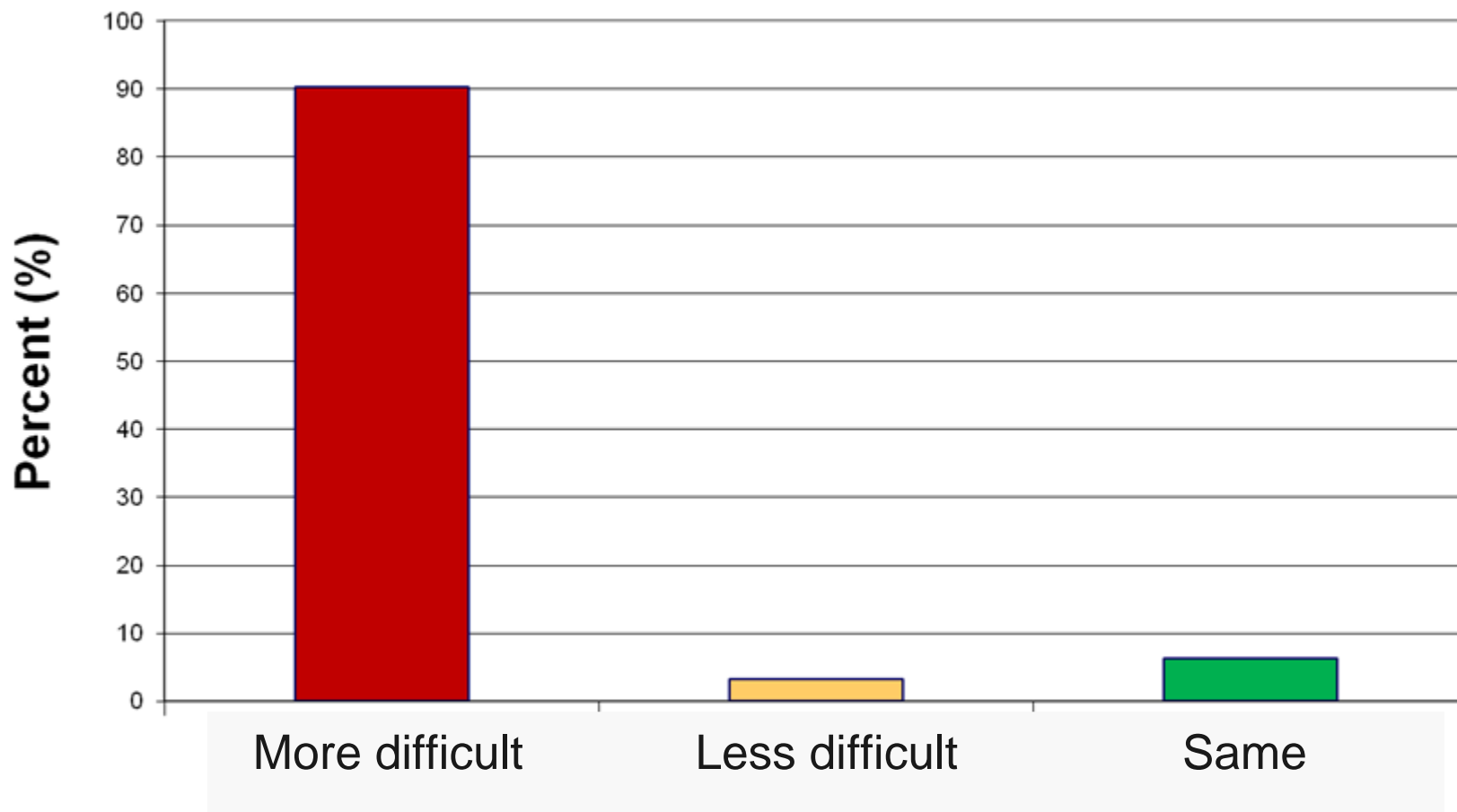
- Reduced circularity in migration
- Greater use of people-smugglers
- Migrants and coyotes are developing new modes of entry
- Less U.S. demand for labor:

U.S. economy (especially construction) is depressed, so jobs magnet is diminished.

“It’s the economy, stupid!”



“Would you say that it is more difficult, less difficult, or the same to find a job in the U.S. now than a year ago?”

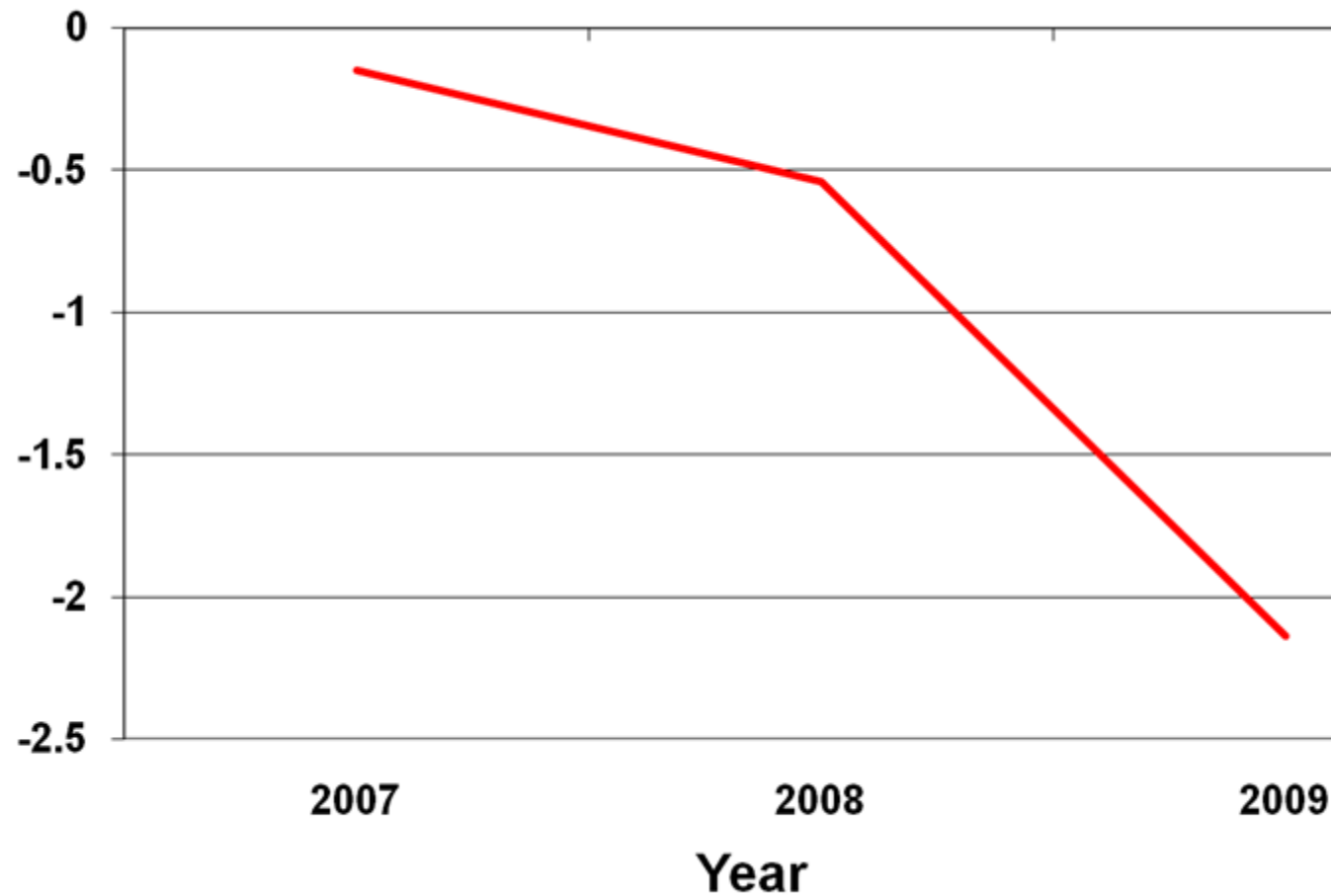


Source: MMFRP survey of Tunkás residents, Jan-Feb. 2009

Less unauthorized migration:
Which is more important -- border enforcement
or the economic crisis?



Intention to migrate to the United States, relative to reference year 2006



- **No** statistical difference in propensity to migrate between *2006* and *2007*
- By *2008*, potential migrants were **54%** less likely to be planning migration to the U.S.
- In *2009*, potential migrants were **2 times** less likely plan migration, relative to reference year of *2006*



Predicting the intention to migrate to the U.S. in 2009

(logistic regression model)

	β	
Year 2009	-1.230*** (.196)	<i>Economy</i>
Year 2008	-0.445** (.189)	
Year 2007	-0.384 (.219)	
Difficult	-0.156 (.149)	<i>Border</i>
Dangerous	0.062 (.231)	
Death	0.419** (.153)	
Male	0.258 (.137)	
Age	-0.024*** (.006)	
Married	-0.293** (.146)	
Education	-0.012 (.017)	
Legal	1.186*** (.202)	
Network	0.068*** (.020)	
Migrant	1.022*** (.149)	
Constant	-0.771** (.351)	
N	2264	
Pseudo R ²	.140	

** 95 percent, *** 99 percent confidence levels; robust standard errors in paren.

Economy vs. border enforcement

Predicting the intention to migrate to the U.S. in 2009

(logistic regression model, controlling for legal status)

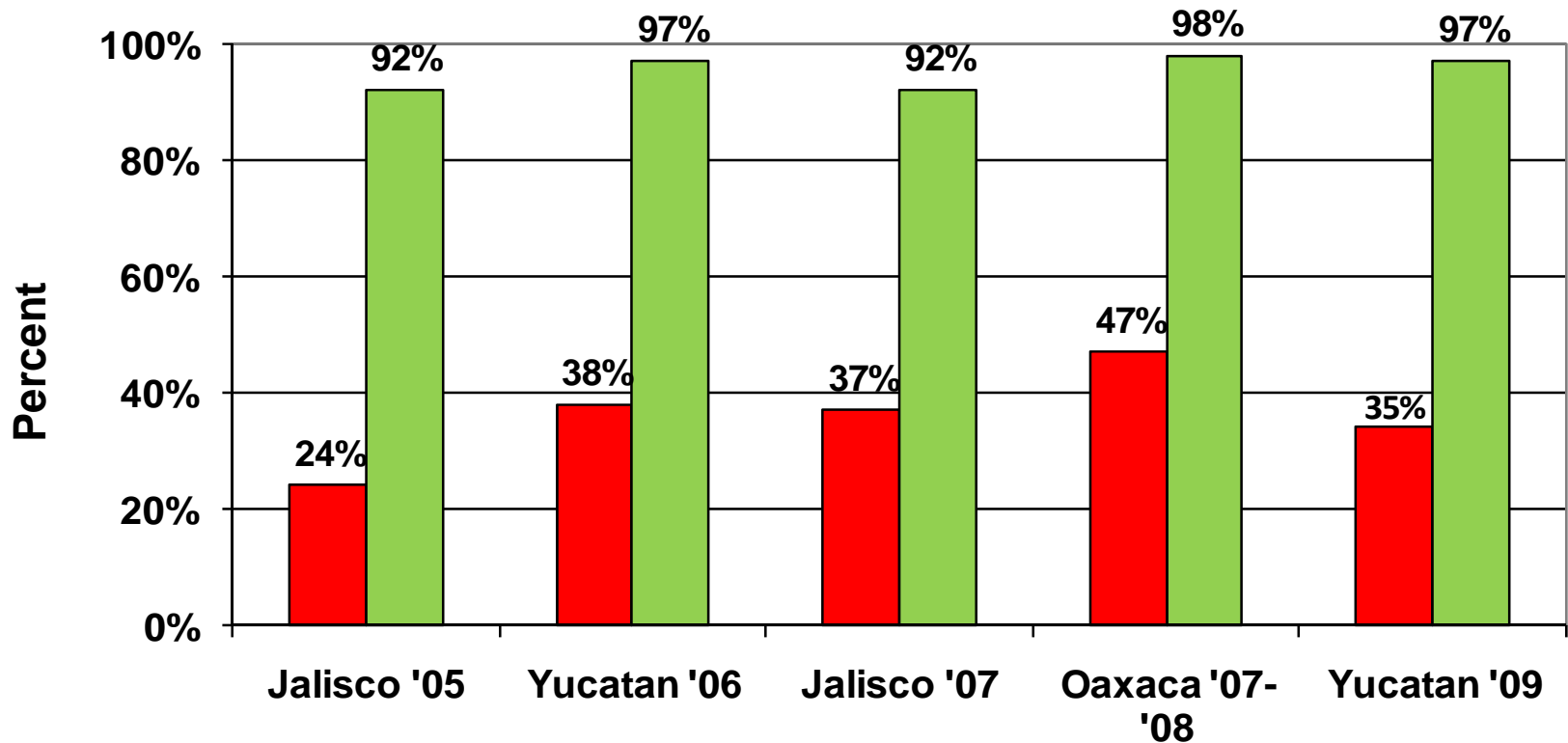
** 95 percent, *** 99 percent confidence levels; robust standard errors in paren.

	β
Year 2009	-1.181*** (.202)
Legal	1.491*** (.473)
Year09*Legal	-0.330 (.766)
Male	0.302 (.215)
Age	-0.030*** (.009)
Married	-0.297 (.217)
Education	0.017 (.023)
Network	0.189*** (.072)
Migrant	1.096*** (.238)
Constant	-0.862** (.389)
N	1289
Pseudo R ²	.174

*Does current U.S. border enforcement
prevent illegal entry?*



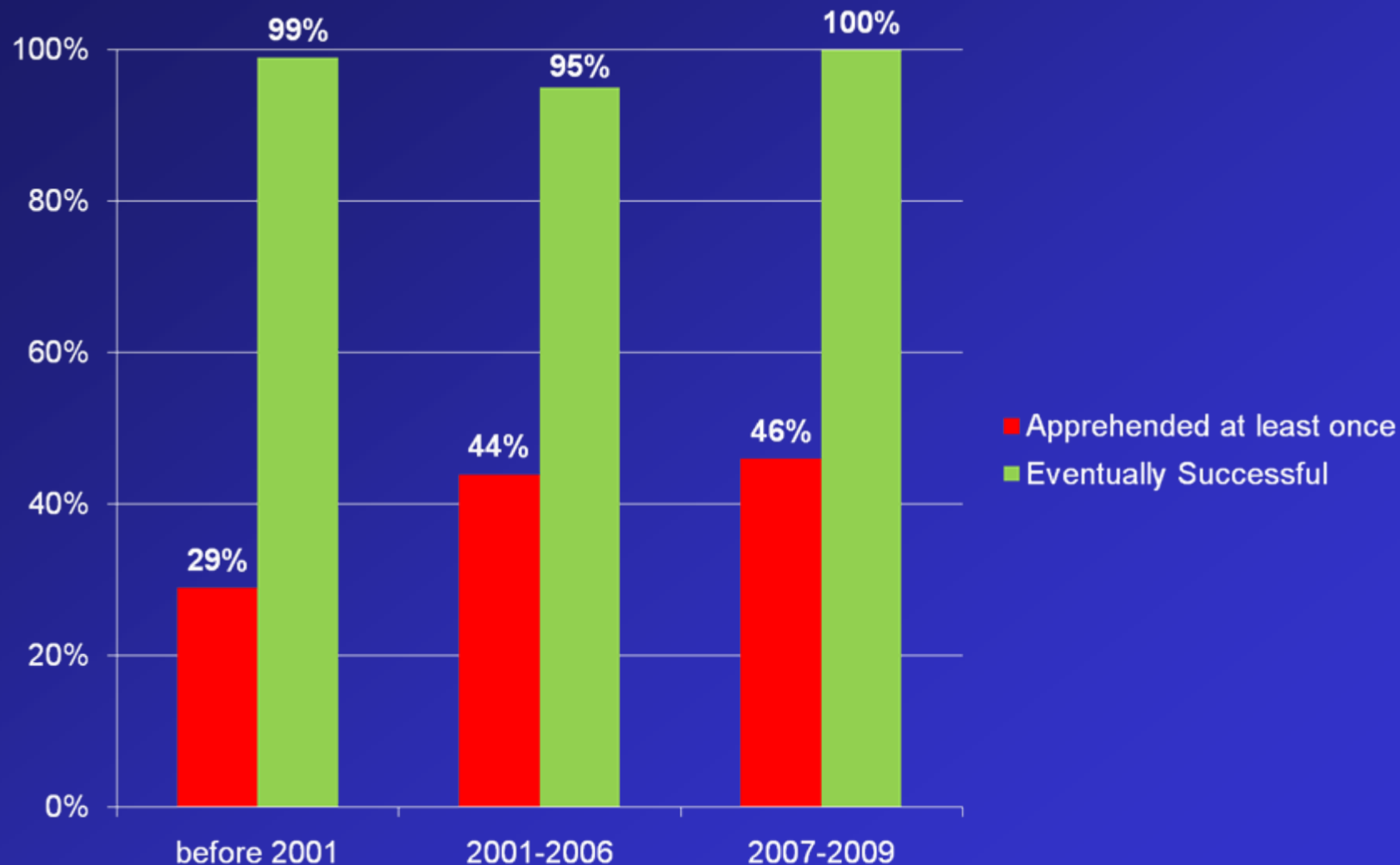
Apprehension rates and eventual success rates among undocumented migrants from Jalisco, Zacatecas, Oaxaca, and Yucatán



- Apprehended on most recent trip to border
- Able to enter eventually, on same trip

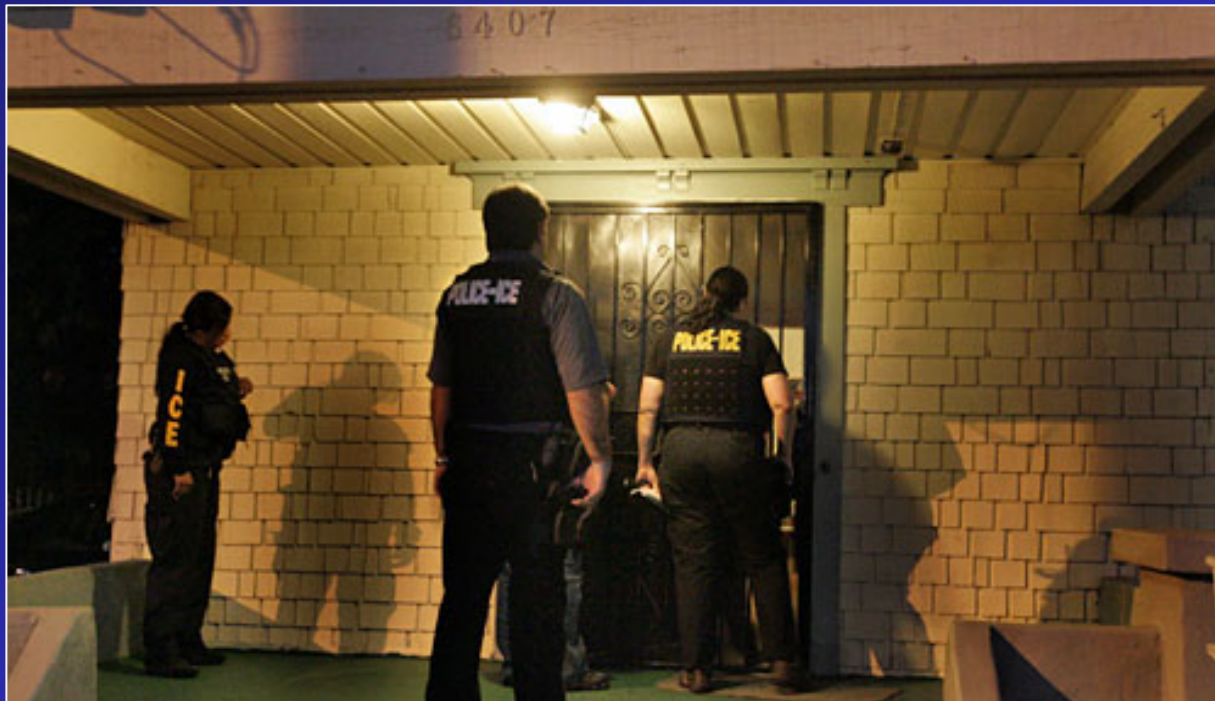
Apprehension rates and eventual success rates among undocumented Yucateco migrants

(by year of most recent entry)



The “attrition through (interior) enforcement” approach to immigration control

Inducing undocumented immigrants to leave the U.S. by making it more difficult for them to find employment and housing, instilling fear, confiscating vehicles, etc.



***Interior
enforcement
creates a
climate of fear
in immigrant
communities***

***¿Cuáles cosas
más le
preocupan a una
persona que vive
en los Estados
Unidos sin
documentos?***

ir al hospital



ir de compras



ir a la escuela



ir al trabajo



manejar un coche



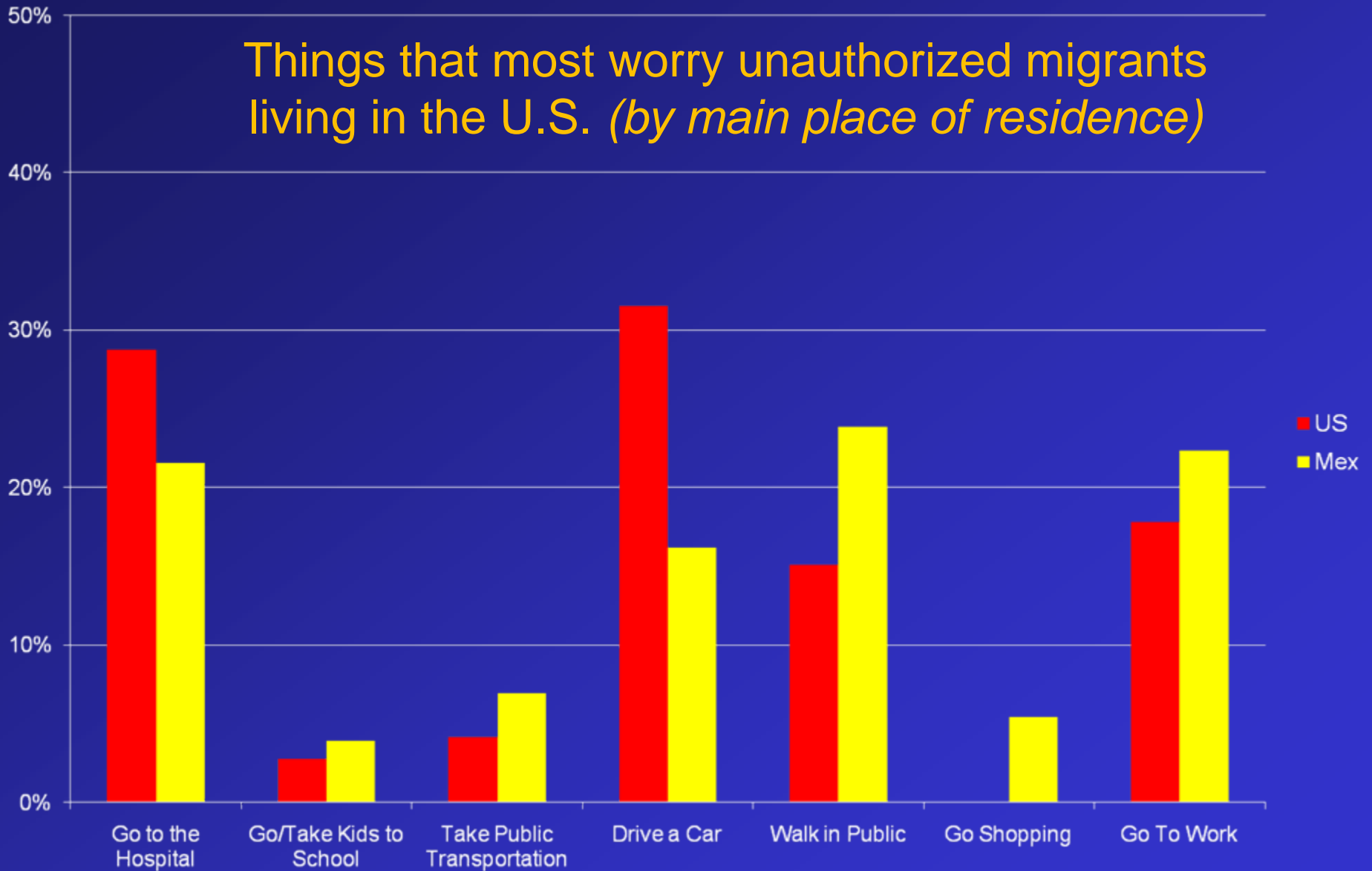
**usar transporte
público**



andar en la calle



Things that most worry unauthorized migrants living in the U.S. *(by main place of residence)*



Local police stops of immigrants have increased sharply in recent years



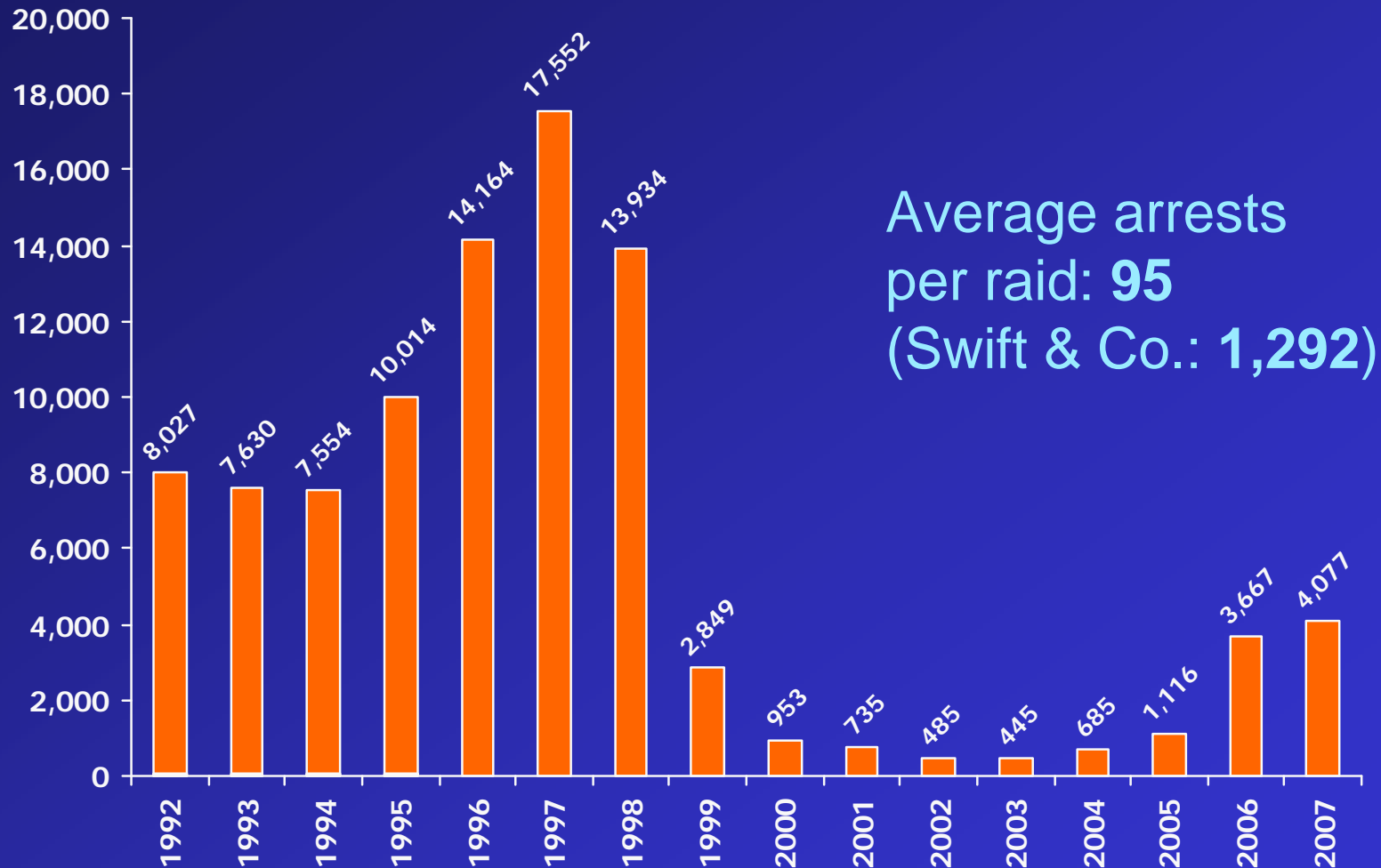
- **23%** of Yucateco migrants interviewed in 2009 had been stopped by police and questioned in last 12 months

(MMFRP survey, 2009)

- **17%** of Latino immigrants had been stopped and questioned by local police

(Pew Hispanic Center, national survey of Latino adults, April 2009)

Arrests of unauthorized migrants resulting from employer investigations



Source: Data from Department of Homeland Security.

ICE raids on workplaces instill fear but don't affect decisions to migrate to the U.S.

8.1% of Yucateco migrants had witnessed a workplace raid;
17.6% had a relative or friend arrested in a workplace raid

Intends to migrate in 2009:

14.5% of those who experienced raid
9.5% of those with no raid experience

Believes it is more difficult to get a job in U.S. now than a year ago:

93.5% of those with raid experience
92.8% of those with no raid experience

(among percentages are for economically active persons aged 18-40)



Employers of unauthorized workers have not changed their hiring practices

Current employer asked for some sort of document:

Yes: 67.5%

No: 32.5%

In current U.S. workplace:

Employer knew *for sure* that worker
was authorized to work in U.S.: 30.7%

Employer *probably* knew that worker
was authorized: 8.8%

Employer *probably* knew that worker
was not authorized: 11.0%

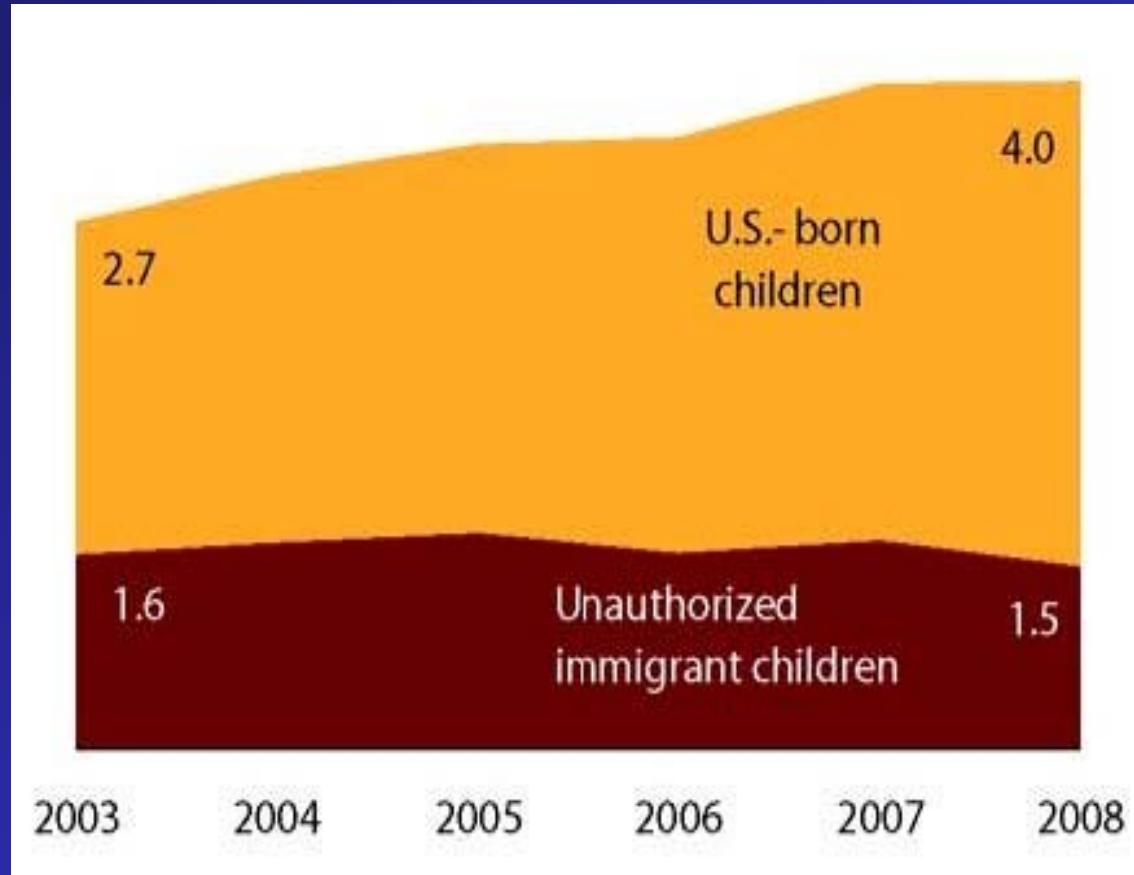
Employer knew *for sure* that worker
was not authorized: 49.6%

Worksite raids (ca. 2006-08) have mostly had the effect of breaking up immigrant families



Mixed-status families are increasing rapidly

**Children with at least one undocumented parent
(in millions)**



Source: Pew Hispanic Center.

Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants

“Generation 1.5”

- Born in Mexico
- Average child migrant is 13 years old on arrival in U.S.
- The overwhelming majority enroll in school upon arrival

“Generation 2.0”

- Born in U.S.
- The vast majority are still very young and enrolled in public schools
- The average U.S.-born adult is a high school graduate

Education in “mixed status” families

A father on his daughter's education in the U.S. :

“You don't want to go wash dishes, you don't want people screaming at you...You want to be something in life, you don't want to earn \$200 a week. So, I always tell her different things to motivate her.”

Q: What makes it difficult for your daughter as a student?

“Well first of all she doesn't have papers. That's the main thing. It makes us have to go around, knock on more doors. But that's not going to happen with Matthew [born in the U.S.]. If you're born here you have a lot of chances, if you want to be something.”

- First-generation and 1.5-generation immigrant students face difficult challenges, particularly regarding legal status

- Parents place a high value on learning English and on general educational attainment

Conclusions

- New migration from Mexico to the U.S. has diminished mainly because potential migrants no longer have assurances of finding employment in the U.S.
- Migrants are more worried about not finding a job in the U.S. than about evading the Border Patrol. Tighter border enforcement deters new migration mainly through its impact on people-smugglers' fees.
- Migration is being postponed, not discarded as an option, pending improvement in the U.S. economy. Economic recovery is likely to bring a quick rebound in unauthorized migration.
- No large-scale return of Mexican migrants due to the U.S. economic crisis, nor because of interior enforcement. Unauthorized migrants are staying put in the U.S. because of border enforcement (higher coyote fees, physical risk), fear of losing their U.S. job, and lack of jobs in place of origin.
- Migrants living in the U.S. are earning less because of reduced working hours and overtime. Their Mexico-based relatives have less capacity to migrate illegally because U.S.-based relatives can't finance *coyotes*.
- Many residents of migrant-sending communities are suffering due to reduced remittances and a deepening recession in Mexico, intensifying push factors.

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