

Estimating the Size of Kentucky's Undocumented Population

KENTUCKY LONG-TERM POLICY
RESEARCH CENTER

Board Meeting
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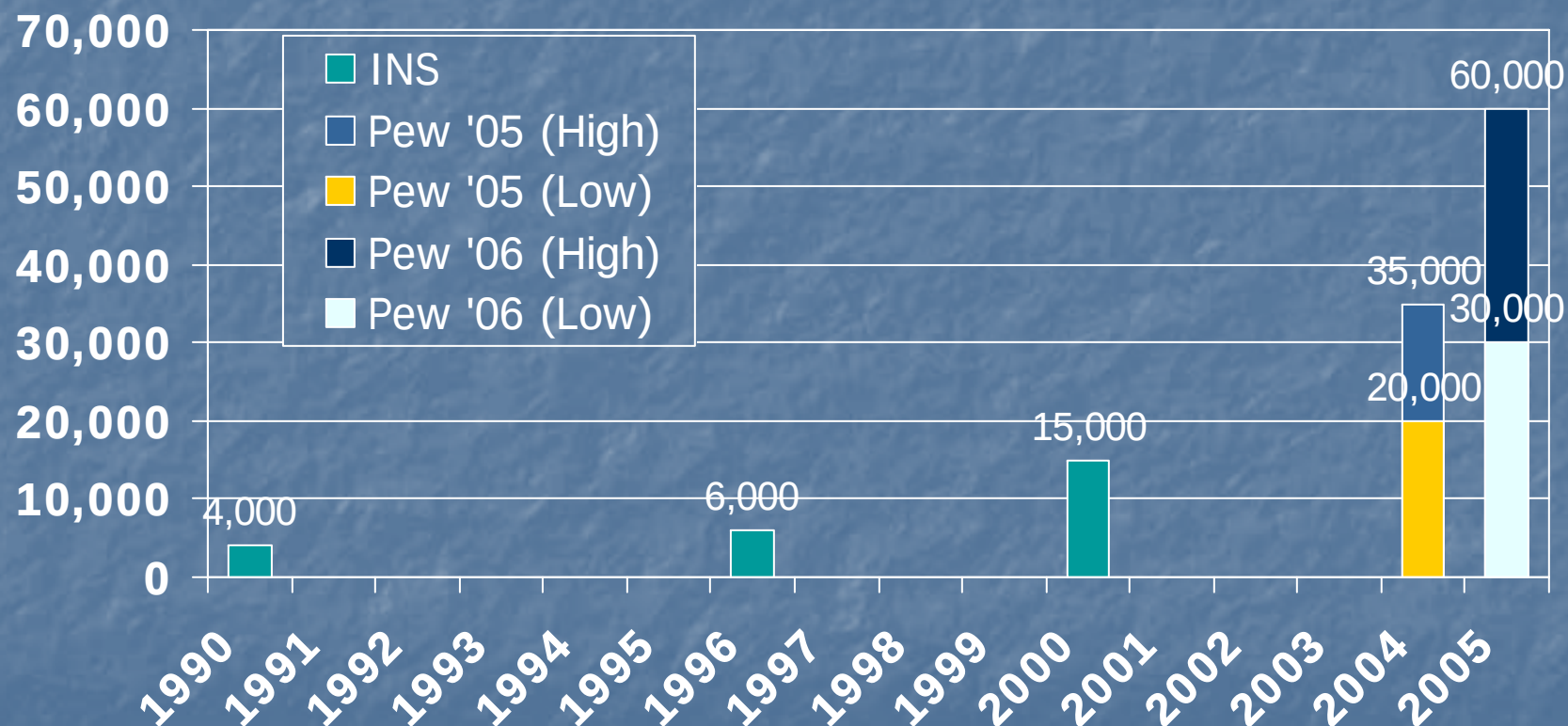
America's Undocumented Population

- An estimated 12 million illegal immigrants in US
 - Most are Hispanic (around 80%)
 - Migration beyond traditional “gateway” states
- Other estimates are nearly double
 - Bear Stearns

Immigration and the States

- 500 bills dealing with immigration were considered in 2006 (per NCSL)
- Affects many areas
 - Education
 - Health care
 - Economic development
 - Identification

Estimates of Kentucky's Undocumented Population



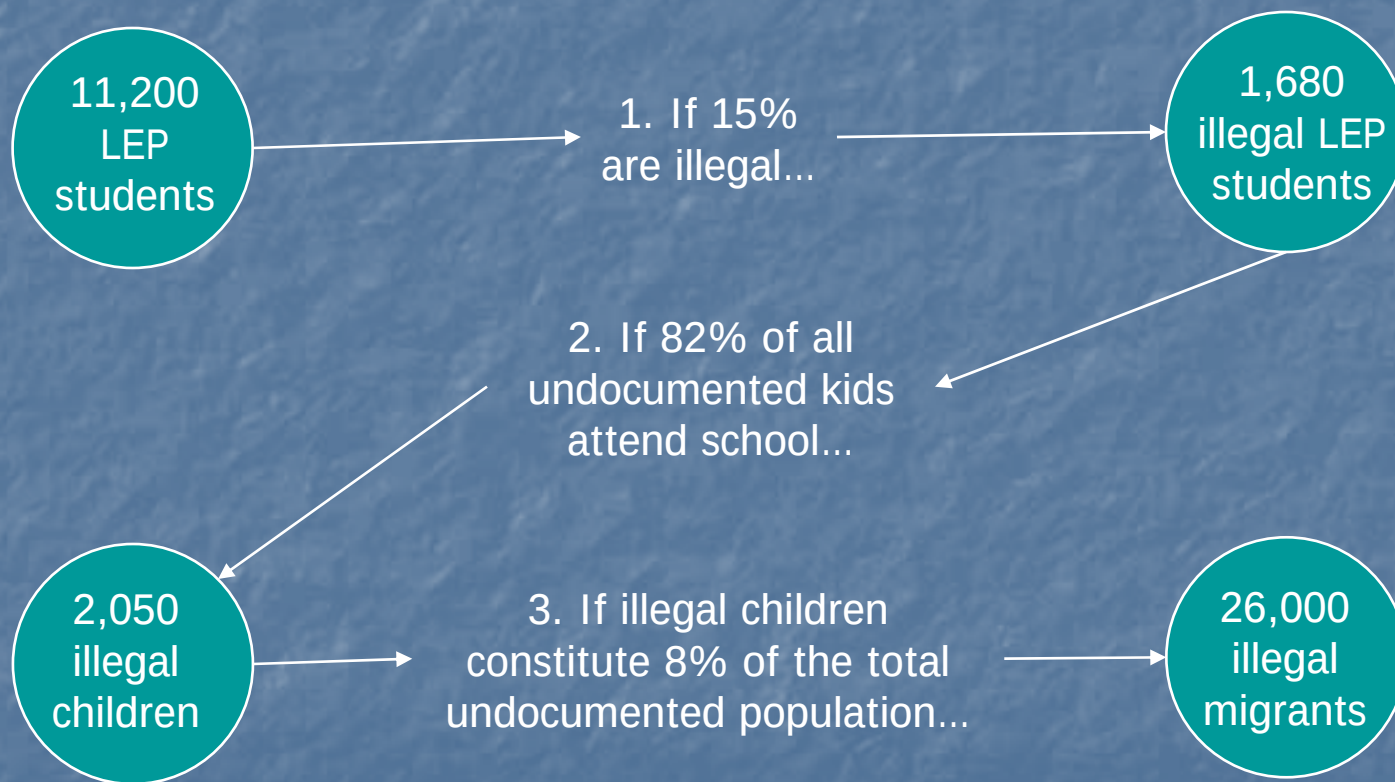
Limitations of these Estimates

- Limitations
 - Accuracy
 - Bear Stearns report asserts that the true national figure is nearly twice as high
 - State estimates are even more problematic
 - Transparency
 - Method and assumptions not always clear
 - Flexibility
 - Can't change basic assumptions to generate alternative scenarios
 - Must depend on others to generate the estimates
 - Episodic
 - Kentucky estimates are sporadic
- Forced to craft public policy for an issue with uncertain dimensions

An Alternative Estimating Approach

- An alternative approach with three basic variables
 - What percent of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students are undocumented or illegal?
 - What percent of the undocumented school-age children attend school?
 - What percent of the total undocumented population are undocumented children?
- Does the 30,000 to 60,000 estimate for Kentucky make sense?
 - Approach enables one to assess the internal consistency of factors

An Example



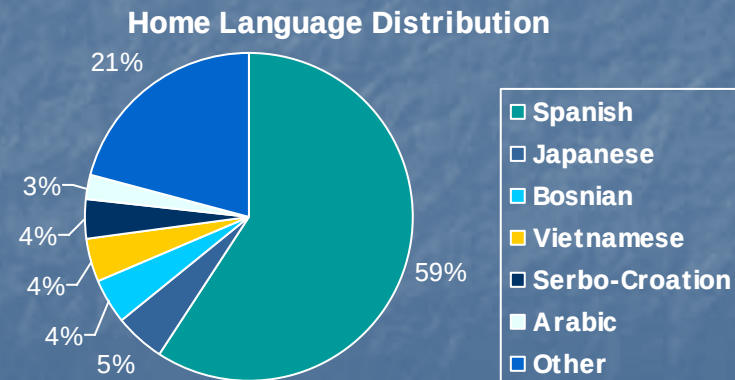
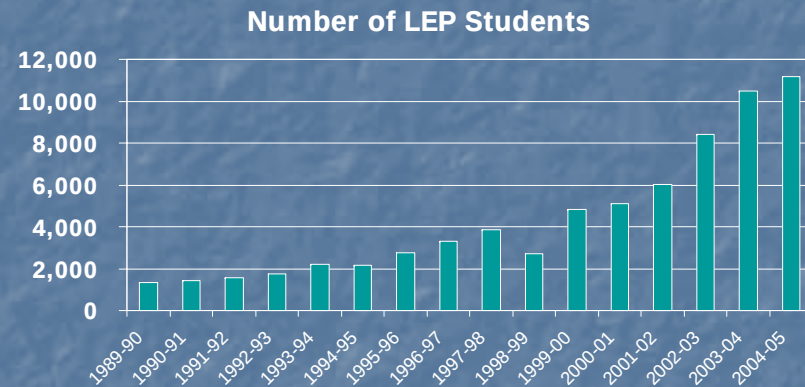
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

■ LEP Students

- Not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English
- Come from environments where a language other than English is dominant
- American Indian/Alaska Native and who come from environments where a language other than English has had a significant impact on their level of English language proficiency
- Have sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language

Kentucky's Limited English Proficient Students

- Nearly 11,200 LEP students in 2005
 - LEP increased 732% from 1990 to 2005
 - Total enrollment essentially flat for the same period
- Nearly 100 different languages, Akan to Urdu
 - Majority language is Spanish



Undocumented LEP Students

- What percent of the 11,200 (LEP) students are undocumented or illegal?
 - How many are foreign-born?
 - 40% of LEP students 5–19 are foreign-born (Urban Institute, 2003)
 - 59% of LEP students are Spanish speaking (KDE, 2005) and about 43% of Hispanics are foreign-born (U.S. Census, 2000)
 - Of the foreign-born, how many are undocumented?
 - Kentucky's unauthorized population constitutes between 30-39% of the foreign-born (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005)
- Likely value: 15% ($0.42 \times 0.35 = 0.15$)

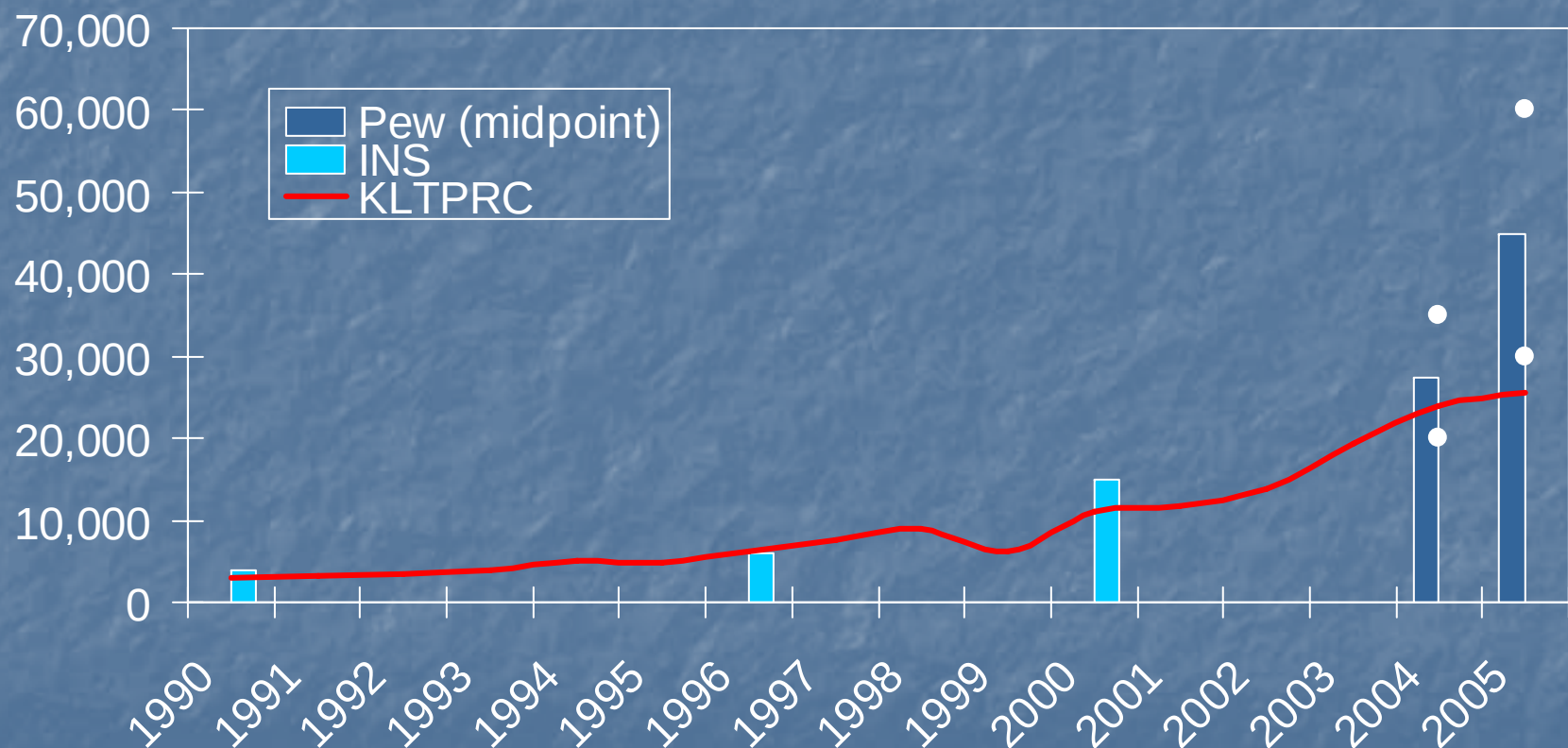
School Attendance

- What percent of the undocumented school-age children attend school?
 - 97% of Kentucky kids 6 to 17 are enrolled (derived from American Community Survey, 2004)
 - “Language minorities enroll ... in elementary/ secondary school at rates that are not measurably different from those ... who speak only English at home” (US Dept of Education, 2004)
 - Hispanic enrollment rate for those 16 and older is believed to be significantly lower (less than 10% by one KDE account)
- Likely value: 82% $[(0.1 \times 0.17) + (0.97 \times 0.83) = 0.82]$

Proportion of Kids to the Whole

- What percent of the total undocumented population are undocumented school-age children?
 - 14-16% of the total unauthorized are unauthorized children (Passel, 2005, 2006)
 - We adjust it down to 9% to exclude children not in school ($0.6 \times 0.15 = 0.09$)
 - Could be lower for Kentucky given the more recent migration here (dominated initially by single males)
- Likely value: 8% ($0.9 \times 0.9 = 0.81$)

Estimates of KY's Undocumented Immigrant Population



Conclusions

- Kentucky's undocumented population grew steadily from 1990 to 2005
 - On an upward trajectory
- Current estimate: about 26,000
 - This analysis does not support anecdotal estimates that are very large

Want More Information?

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