

Chapter Three: Migration

Boat people from Haiti and other countries risk their lives to come to the United States and other countries. There are many draws pulling people to the US.

What is Migration?

The movement of people changes not only the people moving but the places to which they move. There are three basic types of movement.

Cyclic movement involves journeys that begin at our home base and bring us back to it. This includes daily routine, and typically occur within an area geographers call the **activity space**. The space that you cover in your daily activity is your activity space. This would include going to school, work, and to visit friends. North Americans have a larger activity space on average than a typical African or Southwest Asian, thanks largely in part to the automobile enabling people to live further from their place of work. This is commonly known as **commuting**. Some Americans travel upwards of 100 miles each way to work each day. Seasonal movement can also qualify as cyclic movement; for example, each Fall many northerners go to the Sunbelt States to spend the winter before returning home in the Spring. While the previous movement is based on prosperity, other movement, known as **nomadism**. While people think of nomads as aimless wanderers, these people in fact follow practical and familiar routes based on season and availability of pastureland that may have been used by their ancestors for centuries.

Periodic movement involves returning home as well, but unlike cyclic movement, periodic movement involves being away from home for longer periods. A common type of periodic movement would be **migrant labor**, which involves millions of workers in the US and even more worldwide. Many migrants laborers who come to the US to work agriculture in California and Florida eventually become immigrants. Also falling into the category of periodic movement is **trans-humance**, which is following herds to a different locale for months at a time. An example would be Appalachian herders of old driving their herds to the tops of mountains during the summers to graze, returning with them in the late Fall. Periodic movement can also involve going to college during the academic year and returning home in the Summer, as well as **military service** where soldiers and their families move to new locations for periods of time.

Migration involves movement resulting in permanent relocation across significant distances. This can involve an individual, household, or even large groups. **International migration**, which is movement across country borders, is also called *external migration*. When one leaves a country, he/she is called an *emigrant*. When that person enters a country, he/she is called an *immigrant*. Emigration causes population of a country to decrease; immigration causes a country's population to increase. **Internal migration** is movement that occurs within a single country's borders. An example would be the Great Migration—African Americans leaving the South for wartime factory work in the North during and after WWI. Today the US is experiencing an internal migration from the Northeast to the South and West. The US is in fact the most internally migratory nation in the world, with more than 5 million Americans leaving their state for another each year. Worldwide, the internal migration is generally from rural to urban areas.

Why Do People Migrate?

Migration can be based on an individual's or group's decision to move for personal gain; this is called **voluntary migration**. **Forced migration** involves the involuntary movement of people due to authoritarian causes. Sometimes the difference between these can be unclear; for example, the Irish potato famine in the 1840's in a sense forced people to leave Ireland to survive, but at the same time no one forced them to move; the decision to leave Ireland to seek a better life was voluntary. Considering scale, even in a household's migration one person's move may be voluntary, such as a better employment opportunity, while the rest of the family might be forced to accompany despite their objections. Bottom line, voluntary migrants have a choice in the matter, forced migrants do not.

The largest forced migration in history was the Atlantic slave trade. As many as 12 million Africans were brought to the New World, mostly to the sugar plantations in the Caribbean islands and Brazil. The Portuguese and Arab slave traders played a large role in this trade, and the trade changed the African civilizations as well as created new cultural traits in the New World. Another forced migration was the tens of thousands of convicts that were shipped from Britain to Australia in the late 1700's/early 1800's. The American 'Trail of Tears' is another example, as is the Nazi's forced migration of the Jews during WWII.

As far as voluntary migration, British demographer Ernst Ravenstein studied internal migration in England in the early 1900's and proposed several **laws of migration**:

1. Every migration flow generates a return or counter-migration.
2. The majority of migrants move a short distance.
3. Migrants who move longer distances tend to choose big-city destinations
4. Urban residents are less migratory than inhabitants of rural areas
5. Families are less likely to make international moves than young adults.

Ravenstein also suggested in his **gravity model** that the longer the distance, the fewer people willing to migrate. That of course was before air travel made distance less of an obstacle.

Push factors are those conditions and perceptions that help the migrant decide to leave a place. **Pull factors** are those factors that attract migrants to decide to leave their home for a new location. Because people have a better understanding of their homeplace and thus the reasons for their wanting to leave, push factors are thought to have more influence in the migration of people.

As far as pull factors, the concept of **distance decay** plays a role—the further the distance to a prospective place of migration, the less the migrant knows about new place, and thus the less likely the migrant is to complete the move there. (see figure 3.6 on page 77) Indeed, **step migration**, or the gradual move to a distant place over time that includes moves to smaller, nearer towns before a move to a city, is common. The concept of **intervening opportunity** is related to these concepts. A great example of this is the Great Migration of African Americans in the early 20th century; while aiming for Chicago, many found themselves settling in St. Louis due to opportunities that presented themselves along the way.

Common types of Push/Pull factors:

-Economic conditions: Poverty driving migrants to seek new opportunity. Migration from Latin America to US is an example of this.

-Political circumstances: Oppressive regimes cause people to seek freedom, such as the Vietnamese migration to the US to escape communist persecution after the Vietnam War.

-Armed conflict and civil war: In Rwanda, the conflict between Hutus and Tutsis led to as many as 1 million deaths and the fleeing of 2 million Rwandans to neighboring countries.

-Environmental concerns: The 1840's potato famine led to a major migration of Irish to the US. Every time an earthquake rattles California, some choose to move to safer parts of the country.

-Culture and traditions: An example of this would be the Mormon migration to Utah in the early to mid 1800's, as well as the migration of Jews from the Soviet Union to Israel and other locales in the early 1990's.

-Technological advances: Thanks to advances in travel and communication, migrants have a better picture of what they are moving to. These technological advances bolster **kinship links**, which enable one group of migrants to encourage members of their family or circle of friends to move as well. For example, Algerians quickly learned where the most favorable places in France were for them.

When migrants move along kinship links, they create what geographers call **chain migration**; their kinfolk migrate and communicate a positive picture of the destination, causing more of the family to move due to the promise of help in getting established from those already there. Chains of migration built upon each other create **immigration waves**—swells in migration from one origin to the same destination.

Where Do People Migrate?

Global-scale, or long distance/intercontinental migration, was limited before 1500. But thanks to European **explorers** in the age of exploration, massive European **colonization** (a physical process where the colonizer takes over another place, putting its own government in charge and either moving its own people into the place or bringing in outsiders to work the land) sparked period of tremendous human migration. The largest was the flow of emigrants from Europe to the Americas, as well as to locations in Africa, Asia, and Australia. Between 1835 and 1935, as many as 75 million Europeans departed for colonies and opportunity in lands conquered or settled by their home countries. This movement sparked another migration; Africans to the New World to work for the colonizers. The British also moved many workers from present-day India to work in their colonies in Africa. One can still see traces of Indian culture in some former British colonies in Africa.

Regional-scale migration, where one moves to a neighboring country, is also common.

-Regional migration often moves toward **islands of development**, often coastal cities, which are places of economic opportunity due to presence of foreign investment and thus jobs. An example would be the movement to oil-rich Nigeria from poorer neighboring countries such as Togo, Benin, and Ghana.

-Regional migration can also serve to reconnect cultural groups across borders. When Jews began to repopulate Palestine after WWII to create the Jewish nation of Israel, Palestinian Arabs fled to nearby Arabic countries such as Jordan and Syria. Thousands of Jews also emigrated from the Soviet Union, where their religious practices were discouraged, to Israel in the early 1990's.

-Regional migration can also be a result of war. At the end of WWII, millions of Germans fled from Soviet-occupied East Germany to the democratic West Germany. To prevent the migration westward toward freedom, the Berlin Wall was built in the early 1960's. Another example would be the many Cubans who fled to the US after communist leader Fidel Castro took over Cuba by force in the late 1950's.

National migration flows can also be thought of as internal migration flows. Once again, the Great Migration of African Americans in the early 20th century would be an example of a large migration within a nation's borders. The migration of 'Okies', or poor farmers from the dust bowl Midwest to California in the early 1930's would be another example. Interestingly, the African American migration has since reversed, and since the 1970's that group has begun to move back South. Another example is Mexico; due to the migration of northern Mexicans to the US, southern Mexicans are moving to northern Mexico to fill the labor void. Ironically, those southern Mexicans face the same kinds of discrimination in northern Mexico that the northern Mexicans face in the US.

Guest workers, or labor migrants allowed into a country to fill a labor shortage, are a major cause of migration.

Due to the need for labor following WWII rebuilding efforts in Germany, many Turks were allowed into the country. While guest worker programs are meant to be temporary, invariably some guest workers will opt to stay. In Germany's case, only recently have Turks been allowed to become German citizens. Often times, guest workers are taken advantage of. Further, sometimes when the labor shortage subsides, the host country chooses to expel the guest workers, sometimes by force as in the case of Nigeria. Invariably, these guest workers have an impact on the host country, as evidenced by mosques in predominately Christian Germany.

Refugees are another source of migration. The United Nations defines a refugee as "a person who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion." However, refugees can also be the result of a national disaster. Because of conflicting definitions of what constitutes a refugee, an accurate count of how many there are can be difficult to find. As of 2000, the UN estimates 24 million refugees in the world. **Internal refugees** are those that stay within their country of origin. Victims of Hurricane Katrina moving to Nashville would be an example of this. **International refugees** are people who have crossed an international border; the Lost Boys of Sudan would be an example of this. Generally, to be considered to be a refugee *and not just a voluntary (if desperate) migrant*:

1. Refugees generally are fleeing with only the shirts on their backs and little if any tangible property.
2. Refugees generally are fleeing on foot, bicycle, or wagon; due to haste, they have few resources.
3. Refugees move without visas or other identifying papers that usually accompany a planned migration.

Current refugee hotspots include:

1. Sub-Saharan Africa: Civil wars and ethnic cleansing in countries such as Rwanda, which was an ethnically motivated conflict, and the Sudan, which was a conflict between the Muslim north and the animist and Christian south, have caused millions of refugees. Interestingly, the conflict in Sudan also includes a racial component, with Arabic Muslims attacking darker skinned African Muslims in the area of Darfur. Much of this conflict can be traced to the drawing of the borders of Sudan by European colonizers in the early 20th century with no regard to the ethnic and religious differences that they were forcing together when they drew the map.
2. North Africa and Southwest Asia: Due to persecution in Iraq after the Gulf War of 1991, many Kurdish people in Northern Iraq had to flee to Turkey. Due to the Taliban in Afghanistan, many Afghans fled to neighboring Iran.
3. SouthEast Asia: Repressive rule of generals in Myanmar (formerly Burma) have led to people fleeing to Thailand.
4. Europe: The collapse of Yugoslavia has led to over a million refugees.

How Do Governments Affect Migration?

Governments both aid migrants and hinder them. **Immigration laws** such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act in the US show how immigration can be limited by a government. Indeed, in American history favoritism towards certain groups is evident. For example, in the early 1800's immigrants from Northern (Scandinavia) and Western (Britain, France) Europe were encouraged. However, by the early 1920's immigration from Southern (Italy, Greece) and Western (Poland) Europe were discouraged by **quotas** which placed a numeric limit on the number of immigrants from these countries that were seen as supplying poorer, 'less desirable' immigrants. By 1965, Congress reversed the earlier, discriminatory immigration policy by allowing more immigrants from previously undesirable areas such as Central America and Asia. Many countries practice **selective immigration** in which individuals with certain backgrounds (criminal backgrounds, poor health) are prohibited from entering the country while at the same other groups, particularly wealthier and more educated people, are encouraged. Post 9/11 America has shown a stricter immigration scrutiny of anyone wishing to immigrate from certain countries known to have active Al-Qaeda presences.