Chapter 3. Migration

Geographers document *from where* people migrate and *to where* they migrate. They also study reasons *why* people migrate. Most people migrate in search of three objectives: economic opportunity, cultural freedom, and environmental comfort.

Key Issues

1. Why do people migrate?
2. Where are migrants distributed?
3. Why do migrants face obstacles?
4. Why do people migrate within a country?

(85)
The subject of this chapter is a specific type of relocation diffusion called **migration**, which is a permanent move to a new location. **Emigration** is migration *from* a location; **immigration** is migration *to* a location. The difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants is the **net migration**. Migration is a form of **mobility**, which is a more general term covering all types of movements from one place to another. Short-term, repetitive, or cyclical movements that recur on a regular basis, such as daily, monthly, or annually, are called **circulation**.

If people can participate in the globalization of culture and economy regardless of place of residence, why do they still migrate in large numbers? The answer is that ***place*** is still important to an individual cultural identity and economic prospects.

Key Issue 1. Why Do People Migrate?

- **Reasons for migrating**
- **Distance of migration**
- **Characteristics of migrants**

Geography has no comprehensive theory of migration, although a nineteenth-century outline of 11 migration "laws" written by E. G. Ravenstein is the basis for contemporary migration studies. Ravenstein's "laws" can be organized into three groups: (reasons, distance, and migrant characteristics).

Reasons for Migrating
Most people migrate for economic reasons. Cultural and environmental factors also induce migration, although not as frequently as economic factors. People decide to migrate because of push factors and pull factors. A **push factor** induces people to move out of their present location, whereas a **pull factor** induces people to move into a new location. Both push and pull factors typically play a role. We can identify three major kinds of push and pull factors: economic, cultural, and environmental.

Economic Push and Pull Factors
Most people migrate for economic reasons. The relative attractiveness of a region can shift with economic change.

(86)
Cultural Push and Pull Factors
Forced international migration has historically occurred for two main cultural reasons: slavery and political instability. In the twentieth century, forced international migration increased because of political instability resulting from cultural diversity. Forced migration of ethnicities is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. Refugees are people who have been forced to migrate from their home country and cannot return for fear of persecution.

Political conditions can also operate as pull factors, especially the lure of freedom. With the election of democratic governments in Eastern Europe during the 1990s, Western Europe's political pull has

disappeared as a migration factor. However, Western Europe pulls an increasing number of migrants from Eastern Europe for economic reasons.

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Environmental Push and Pull Factors

People also migrate for environmental reasons, pulled toward physically attractive regions and pushed from hazardous ones. Attractive environments for migrants include mountains, seasides, and warm climates. Migrants are also pushed from their homes by adverse physical conditions. Water—either too much or too little—poses the most common environmental threat.

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Intervening Obstacles

Where migrants go is not always their desired destination. They may be blocked by an **intervening obstacle**. In the past, intervening obstacles were primarily environmental . . . like mountains and deserts. Bodies of water long have been important intervening obstacles. However, today's migrant faces intervening obstacles created by local diversity in government and politics.

Distance of Migration

Ravenstein's theories made two main points about the distance that migrants travel to their home: Most migrants relocate a short distance and remain within the same country. Long-distance migrants to other countries head for major centers of economic activity.

Internal Migration

International migration is permanent movement from one country to another, whereas **internal migration** is permanent movement within the same country. International migrants are much less numerous than internal migrants. **Interregional migration** is movement from one region of a country to another, while **intraregional migration** is movement within one region.

International Migration

International migration is further divided into two types: forced and voluntary.

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Geographer Wilber Zelinsky has identified a **migration transition**, which consists of changes in a society comparable to those in the demographic transition. A society in stage 1, . . . unlikely to migrate permanently . . . does have high daily or seasonal mobility in search of food. According to migration transition theory, societies in stages 3 and 4 are the destinations of the international migrants leaving the stage 2 countries in search of economic opportunities. Internal migration within countries in stages 3 and 4 of the demographic transition is intraregional, from cities to surrounding suburbs.

Characteristics of Migrants

Ravenstein noted distinctive gender and family-status patterns in his migration theories: Most long-distance migrants are male; . . . (and) . . . Most long-distance migrants are adult individuals rather than families with children.

Gender of Migrants

But since the 1990s the gender pattern has reversed, and women now constitute about 55 percent of U.S. immigration.

Family Status of Migrants

Ravenstein also believed that most long-distance migrants were young adults seeking work. For the most part, this pattern continues for the United States. With the increase in women migrating . . . more children are coming with their mother.

The origin of Mexican immigrants to the United States matches the expectations of the migration transition and distance-decay theories. The destination of choice within the United States is

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overwhelmingly states that border Mexico. But most immigrants originate not from Mexico's northern states but from interior states.

(90)
Because farm work is seasonal . . . the greatest number of Mexicans head north to the United States in the autumn and return home in the spring.

Key Issue 2. Where Are Migrants Distributed?

- **Global migration patterns**
- **U.S. immigration patterns**
- **Impact of immigration on the United States**

About 3 percent of the world's people are international migrants. The country with by far the largest number . . . is the United States.

Global Migration Patterns
At a global scale, Asia, Latin America, and Africa have net out-migration, whereas North America, Europe, and Oceania have net in-migration.

The population of the United States includes about 30 million individuals born in other countries. Although it contains the largest number of immigrants, the United States has a smaller percentage of immigrants than many other countries. The highest percentage of immigrants can be found in the Middle East, about one-half of the region's total population.

(91)
U.S. Immigration Patterns
About 70 million people have migrated to the United States since 1820, including the 30 million currently alive.

The United States has had three main eras in immigration. The three eras have drawn migrants from different regions.

Colonial Immigration from England and Africa
Immigration to the American colonies and the newly independent United States came from two sources: Europe and Africa. Most of the Africans were forced to migrate to the United States as slaves, whereas most Europeans were voluntary migrants—although harsh economic conditions and persecution in Europe blurred the distinction between forced and voluntary migration for many Europeans.

(92)
Ninteenth-century Immigration from Europe
In the 500 years since Christopher Columbus sailed from Spain to the Western Hemisphere, about 65 million Europeans have migrated to other continents. For 40 million of them the destination was the United States.

First Peak of European Immigration. From 1607 . . . until 1840, a steady stream of Europeans (totaling 2 million) migrated to the American colonies and after 1776 . . . the United States. Ninety percent of European immigrants . . . prior to 1840 came from Great Britain. During the 1840s and 1850s, the level of immigration . . . surged. More than 4 million people migrated, . . . more than twice as many as in the previous 250 years combined.

(94)
More than 90 percent of all U.S. immigrants during the 1840s and 1850s came from Northern and Western Europe, including two fifths from Ireland and another one third from Germany.

Second Peak of European Immigration. U.S. immigration declined somewhat during the 1860s as a result of the Civil War (1861–1865). A second peak was reached during the 1880s, more than a half-million people annually. More than three-fourths of the immigrants during the late 1880s came from Northern and Western Europe.

Third Peak of European Immigration. Economic problems in the United States discouraged immigration during the early 1890s, but by the end of the decade the level reached a third peak. The record year was 1907, with 1.3 million. During the third peak, most came from countries that previously had sent few people. One-fourth each came from Italy, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. The shift coincided with the diffusion of the Industrial Revolution . . . to Southern and Eastern Europe.

Recent Immigration from Less Developed Regions
Immigration to the United States dropped sharply in the 1930s and 1940s, during the Great Depression and World War II, . . . steadily increased during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, then surged during the 1980s and 1990s to historically high levels.

Immigration from Asia. Asia was the leading source of immigrants between the late 1970s and the late 1980s until overtaken by Latin America. Asians also comprise more than 40 percent of Canadian immigrants, but compared to the U. S., Canada receives a much higher percentage of Europeans and a lower percentage of Latin Americans.

Immigration from Latin America. About 2 million Latin Americans migrated to the United States between 1820 and 1960, about 11 million between 1960 and 2000.

(95)
The unusually large number of immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries in 1990 and 1991 resulted from the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which issued visas to several hundred thousand who had entered the United States in previous years without legal documents.

Impact of Immigration on the United States
The U.S. population has been built up through a combination of emigration from Africa and England primarily during the eighteenth century, from Europe primarily during the nineteenth century, and from Latin America and Asia primarily during the twentieth century. In the twenty-first century, the impact of immigration varies around the country.

Legacy of European Migration
Massive European migration ended with the start of World War I.

(96)
Europe's Demographic Transition. Rapid population growth in Europe fueled emigration, especially after 1800. Application of new technologies . . . pushed much of Europe into stage 2 of the demographic transition. To promote more efficient agriculture, some European governments forced the consolidation of several small farms into larger units. Displaced farmers could choose between working in factories in the large cities or migrating to the United States or another country where farmland was plentiful.

Diffusion of European Culture. Europeans frequently imposed political domination on existing populations and injected their cultural values with little regard for local traditions. Economies in Africa and Asia became based on extracting resources for export to Europe, rather than on using those resources to build local industry. Many of today's conflicts in former European colonies result from past practices by European immigrants.

Undocumented Immigration to the United States
Many people who cannot legally enter the United States are now immigrating illegally, . . . called **undocumented immigrants**. The U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS)

estimate 7 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S., although other estimates are as high as 20 million.

The BCIS apprehends more than a million persons annually trying to cross the southern U.S. border. Half of the undocumented residents legally enter the country as students or tourists and then remain after they are supposed to leave.

(97)
The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act tried to reduce the flow of illegal immigrants. Aliens who could prove that they had lived in the United States continuously between 1982 and 1987 could become permanent resident aliens and apply for U.S. citizenship after 5 years. At the same time, the law discouraged further illegal immigration by making it harder for recent immigrants to get jobs without proper documentation.

Destinations of Immigrants within the United States
Recent immigrants are not distributed uniformly through the United States. **Chain migration** is the migration of people to a specific location because relatives or members of the same nationality previously migrated there.

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Key Issue 3. Why Do Migrants Face Obstacles?

- **Immigration policies of host countries**
- **Cultural problems living in other countries**

The major obstacles faced by most immigrants now begin only after they arrive . . . gaining permission to enter . . . and hostile attitudes of citizens.

(99)
Immigration Policies of Host Countries
The United States uses a quota system to limit the number . . . who can migrate. Other major recipients of immigrants . . . permit guest workers . . . but not to stay permanently.

U.S. Quota Laws
The era of unrestricted immigration to the United States, ended when Congress passed the Quota Act in 1921 and the National Origins Act in 1924. Quota laws were designed to assure that most immigrants to the United States continued to be Europeans. Quotas for individual countries were eliminated in 1968 and replaced with hemispheric quotas. In 1978 the hemisphere quotas were replaced by a global quota of 290,000, including a maximum of 20,000 per country. The current law has a global quota of 620,000, with no more than 7 percent from one country, but numerous qualifications and exceptions can alter the limit considerably.

Brain Drain. Other countries charge that by giving preference to skilled workers, U.S. immigration policy now contributes to a **brain drain**, which is a large-scale emigration by talented people. The average immigrant has received more education than the typical American: nearly one-fourth of all legal immigrants to the United States have attended graduate school, compared to less than one-tenth of native-born Americans.

Temporary Migration for Work
Prominent forms of temporary work migrants include **guest workers** in Europe and the Middle East and historically time-contract workers in Asia.

(100)
Foreign-born workers comprise more than one-half of the labor force in Luxembourg, one-sixth in Switzerland, and one-tenth in Austria, Belgium, and Germany.

Guest workers serve a useful role in Western Europe because they take low-status and low-skilled jobs that local residents won't accept. The United Kingdom severely restricts the ability of foreigners to obtain work permits. However, British policy is complicated by the legacy of the country's former worldwide empire. Most guest workers in Europe come from North Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Asia.

Time-contract Workers
Millions of Asians migrated in the nineteenth century as time-contract laborers, recruited for a fixed period to work in mines or on plantations. More than 29 million ethnic Chinese currently live permanently in other countries, for the most part in Asia.

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In recent years people have immigrated illegally in Asia to find work in other countries. Estimates of illegal foreign workers in Taiwan range from 20,000 to 70,000. Most are Filipinos, Thais, and Malaysians.

Distinguishing between Economic Migrants and Refugees
It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between migrants seeking economic opportunities and refugees fleeing from the persecution of an undemocratic government. The distinction between economic migrants and refugees is important, because the United States, Canada, and Western European countries treat the two groups differently.

Emigrants from Cuba. Since the 1959 revolution that brought the Communist government of Fidel Castro to power, the U.S. government has regarded emigrants from Cuba as political refugees. In the years immediately following the revolution, more than 600,000 Cubans were admitted to the United States. A second flood of Cuban emigrants reached the United States in 1980, when Fidel Castro suddenly decided to permit political prisoners, criminals, and mental patients to leave the country.

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Emigrants from Haiti. Shortly after the 1980 Mariel boatlift from Cuba, several thousand Haitians also sailed in small vessels for the United States. Claiming that they had migrated for economic advancement, . . . U.S. immigration officials would not let the Haitian boat people stay. The Haitians brought a lawsuit. The government settled the case by agreeing to admit the Haitians. After a 1991 coup that replaced Haiti's elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, thousands of Haitians fled their country . . . but the U.S. State Department decided that most left Haiti for economic rather than political reasons. The United States invaded Haiti in 1994 to reinstate Aristide as president. Many Haitians still try to migrate to the United States.

Emigrants from Vietnam. The long Vietnam War ended in 1975. The United States . . . evacuated from Saigon several thousand people. Thousands of other pro-U.S. South Vietnamese who were not politically prominent enough to get space on an American evacuation helicopter tried to leave by boat. A second surge of Vietnamese boat people began in the late 1980s. According to an international agreement, most of the Vietnamese boat people who were judged refugees were transferred to other places, especially the United States, Canada, Australia, and France. However, the majority of the boat people, who were considered economic migrants, were placed in detention camps . . . until 1996, when the camps were closed and the remaining boat people were sent back to Vietnam.

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Vietnam remains a major source of immigrants to the United States, but the pull of economic opportunity in the United States is a greater incentive than the push of political persecution.

Cultural Problems Living in Other Countries
For many immigrants, admission to another country does not end their problems. Politicians exploit immigrants as scapegoats for local economic problems.

U.S. Attitudes toward Immigrants
Americans have always regarded new arrivals with suspicion but tempered their dislike during the nineteenth century because immigrants helped to settle the frontier and extend U.S. control across the continent. Opposition to immigration intensified when the majority of immigrants ceased to come from Northern and Western Europe. More recently, hostile citizens in California and other states have voted to deny undocumented immigrants access to most public services, such as schools, day-care centers, and health clinics.

Attitudes toward Guest Workers
In Europe, many guest workers suffer from poor social conditions. Both guest workers and their host countries regard the arrangement as temporary. In reality, however, many guest workers remain indefinitely, especially if they are joined by other family members. As a result of lower economic growth rates, Middle Eastern and Western European countries have reduced the number of guest workers in recent years. Political parties that support restrictions on immigration have gained support in France, Germany, and other European countries, and attacks by local citizens on immigrants have increased.

In the Middle East, petroleum-exporting countries fear that the increasing numbers of guest workers will spark political unrest and abandonment of traditional Islamic customs.

Migration by Asians nearly a century ago is producing contemporary problems in several countries.

(104)
The argument of anti-immigrant politicians is seductive to many voters in Western Europe, as well as the United States. Such arguments have little scientific basis, and in a culturally diverse world these arguments have racist overtones.

Key Issue 4. Why Do People Migrate within a Country?
- **Migration between regions of a country**
- **Migration within one region**

Internal migration for most people is less disruptive than international migration. Two main types of internal migration are interregional and intraregional. The principal type of interregional migration is between rural and urban areas, while the main type of intraregional migration is from older cities to suburbs.

Migration between Regions of a Country
In the United States, interregional migration was more prevalent in the past, when most people were farmers.

Migration between Regions Within the United States
The most famous example of large-scale internal migration is the opening of the American West.

Changing Center of Population. The population center is the average location of everyone in the country, the "center of population gravity."

The changing location of the population center graphically demonstrates the march of the American people across the North American continent over the past 200 years. In 1790, the population center was located in Chesapeake Bay, east of Baltimore, Maryland.

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Early Settlement in the Interior. By 1830 the center of population moved west of Moorefield, West Virginia. After 1830 the U.S. population center moved west more rapidly, to just west of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1880. The population center shifted west rapidly because most western pioneers during the mid-nineteenth century passed through the interior of the country on their way to California. For

While interregional migration attracts considerable attention, far more people move within the same region, which is *intraregional* migration. Less than 5 percent of the world's people lived in urban areas in 1800, compared to nearly half today.

Migration from Rural to Urban Areas
Urbanization began in the 1800s in the countries of Europe and North America that were undergoing rapid industrial development.

Migration from rural to urban areas has skyrocketed in recent years in the less developed countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Migration from Urban to Suburban Areas
In more developed countries, most intraregional migration is from central cities out to the suburbs. As a result of suburbanization, the territory occupied by urban areas has rapidly expanded (see Chapter 13).

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Migration from Metropolitan to Nonmetropolitan Areas
During the late twentieth century, the more developed countries of North America and Western Europe witnessed a new trend. More people in these regions immigrated into rural areas than emigrated out of them. Net migration from urban to rural areas is called **counterurbanization**.

Most counterurbanization represents genuine migration from cities and suburbs to small towns and rural communities. Like suburbanization, people move from urban to rural areas for lifestyle reasons. Many migrants from urban to rural areas are retired people.

Counterurbanization has stopped in the United States because of poor economic conditions in some rural areas. Future migration trends are unpredictable in more developed countries, because future economic conditions are difficult to forecast.

Key Terms
Brain drain (p.99)
Chain migration (p.98)
Circulation (p.85)
Counterurbanization (p.109)
Emigration (p.85)
Floodplain (p.87)
Forced migration (p.88)
Guest workers (p.99)
Immigration (p.85)
Internal migration (p.88)
International migration (p.88)
Interregional migration (p.88)
Intervening obstacle (p.88)
Intraregional migration (p.88)
Migration (p.85)
Migration transition (p.89)
Mobility (p.85)
Net migration (p.85)
Pull factor (p.85)
Push factor (p.85)
Quotas (p.99)
Refugees (p.86)
Undocumented immigrants (p.96)
Voluntary migration (p.88)