

## Chapter 3: Migration

The chapter focuses on migration which is a specific type of relocation diffusion. It examines why people move permanently or migrate, both internally and internationally. Migration patterns are analyzed as well as the obstacles faced by migrants.

### **Key Issue 1 – Why do people migrate?**

## **II. Population**

### **A. Geographical analysis of population**

#### **4. Population and natural hazards: past, present, and future**

### **C. Population movement**

#### **1. Migration selectivity**

#### **3. Theories of migration**

#### **4. International migration and refugees**

#### **5. Socioeconomic consequences of migration**

E.G. Ravenstein, a nineteenth century geographer, identified eleven laws of migration which can be roughly organized into three main elements: the reasons migrants move, the distance they move, and the major characteristics of migration. Migration is a specific type of relocation diffusion and is a form of **mobility**, a more general term dealing with all types of movement. **Migration** is the movement of a person from one place to another. It can include movement at many different scales, such as short-term, repetitive, or cyclical movements called **circulation**, or **intercontinental migration**, which is from one continent to another. **Emigration** is movement *from* a location whereas **immigration** is movement *to* a location. The difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants is the **net migration**.

People generally migrate because of push and pull factors. **Push factors** include anything that would want to cause someone to leave their present location, such as the violation of a person's **activity space**. **Pull factors** induce people to move to a new location. Four major kinds of push and pull factors can be identified. These are economic, political, cultural, and environmental.

Economic factors that can lead to migration include job opportunities, cycles of economic growth and recession, and cost of living. The United States and Canada have been important destinations for economic migrants lured by economic pull factors. An example of this is **place utility**, where a place may offer economic incentives in an effort to attract people to their town or city.

Armed conflict and the policies of oppressive regimes have been important political push factors in forcing out those who become refugees. **Refugees**, according to the United Nations are people who, "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political

opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." Of the more than thirty-three million refugees in the world, more than two-thirds of them are from Asia and Africa. There are also political pull factors such as the promise of political freedom. It has been this factor that has lured so many people from the Communist countries of Eastern Europe to Western Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.

Cultural factors can encourage people to move to places where they will be more at home culturally. A good example of a cultural pull factor is the relocation of Jews to the newly formed state of Israel after the Second World War. Israel is the ancestral hearth of Jewish culture and it serves as a place where Jewish people can reestablish social ties and create a sense of political unity.

Environmental pull and push factors are largely related to physical geography. People will be pulled towards physically attractive regions such as the Rocky Mountains and the Mediterranean coast of southern Europe. People might also be pushed from places by floods and droughts. The flooding in New Orleans and other Gulf coast communities in 2005 following Hurricane Katrina caused around 1,400 deaths and forced several hundred thousand people from their homes. Indeed many people are forced to move by water-related disasters because they live in vulnerable areas, such as a **floodplain**.

Migrants do not always go to their intended destination because of an **intervening obstacle**, which is an environmental or cultural feature that hinders migration. Sometimes a migrant will stop and stay at a place en route to their intended destination because of an **intervening opportunity**, which is an environmental or cultural feature that favors migration.

## II. Population

### 2. Major voluntary and involuntary migrations at different scales

According to Ravenstein, most migrants move only a short distance and within a country. **Internal migration** is permanent movement within a country. This is the most common type of movement and is consistent with the principles of distance decay. **Interregional migration** is one type of internal migration, and is movement from one region of a country to another. Historically this has usually been from rural to urban, but developed countries are now experiencing more urban to rural migration. The other type of internal migration is **intraregional migration**, movement within a region. In the developed world this has largely been urban to suburban but these patterns are now beginning to change.

One of Ravenstein's laws states that long-distance migrants to other countries usually relocate to major economic and urban centers. The permanent migration from one country to another is **international migration**, and it can be voluntary or forced. **Voluntary migration** is when someone chooses to leave a place as a result of push or pull factors. **Forced migration** is when someone is moved from their home without any choice.

A century ago Ravenstein stated that most long-distance migrants were male adults rather than families with children. Today there are much larger numbers of females

migrating internationally together with their children, especially from Mexico to the United States. This is a reflection of the changing role of women. Much of the migration from Mexico to the United States is illegal and seasonal.

## **II. Population**

### **B. Population growth and decline over time and space**

#### **2. Theories of population**

### **C. Population Movement**

#### **3. Theories of migration**

The demographer Wilbur Zelinsky has identified a **migration transition** which outlines changes in the migration pattern in a society during different stages of the demographic transition. According to the migration transition, international migration usually occurs when countries are in stage two of the demographic transition. For example, international migrants moved from Western Europe to the United States as a result of the technological changes related to the Industrial Revolution. Internal migration becomes more important when countries are in stages three and four of the demographic transition. According to migration transition theory, people generally move from cities to suburbs during these stages. Zelinsky theorizes that countries in stages three and four of the demographic transition are the destinations of international migrants leaving stage two countries because of economic push and pull factors.

### **Key Issue 2 – Where are migrants distributed?**

## **II. Population**

### **C. Population movement**

#### **2. Major voluntary and involuntary migrations at different scales**

#### **5. Socioeconomic consequences of migration**

At a global scale people generally migrate from the developing to the developed world. The three largest flows are from Asia to Europe and North America, and from Latin America.

More than most other countries, the United States is a land of immigrants. About 75 million people migrated to the United States between 1820 and 2010. There have been three major eras of immigration to the United States. The first era was the original settlement of colonies in the 1600's. The second was from the mid nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, and the third was from the 1970's until the present. All three eras have involved people coming to the United States from countries that were at stage two of the demographic transition.

Immigration to the American colonies consisted of mostly forced migration from Africa and a mixture of forced and voluntary migration from Europe. There were three

peaks of the second era of immigration. The first peak of immigration was during the 1840's and 1850's and consisted of people largely from Western Europe. The second peak was during the late 1800's and again most migrants were from Western Europe, especially Germany and Ireland, although there were increasing numbers of people from Scandinavia. The third peak was from the late 1800's until the early 1900's and consisted of people largely from Southern and Eastern Europe who came to work in the factories of the Industrial Revolution.

Recent immigration to the United States has been from less developed regions, especially Asia and Latin America. The three leading sources of U.S. immigrants from Asia are China, India, and the Philippines. In the 1980's Mexico became the leading source of immigrants to the U.S. Although the pattern of immigration to the U.S. has changed, the reason for immigration remains essentially the same. People are pushed from their homeland by economic and political conditions, and are attracted to the economic and social potential of life in the U.S.

Today's immigrants to the U.S. are clustered in California, New York, Florida, and Texas. New immigrants often move to places where family members and friends from their home country have already migrated. This is called **chain migration**.

There have been increasing numbers of illegal, **unauthorized**, or **undocumented immigrants** to the United States. In 2005 the Urban Institute estimated that there may have been as many as 9.3 million undocumented immigrants, including 5.3 million from Mexico. It is a controversial topic because although undocumented immigrants take jobs that few others want, most Americans would also like more effective border patrols. Thus some favor **amnesty** for illegal immigrants whereas others believe that they should be deported.

### **Key Issue 3 – Why do migrants face obstacles?**

## **II. Population**

### **B. Population growth and decline over time and space**

#### **5. Effects of population policies**

### **C. Population movement**

#### **5. Socioeconomic consequences of migration**

The United States uses a quota system to limit the number of foreign citizens who can migrate permanently to the country. **Quotas** are maximum limits on the number of people who can immigrate to the U.S. from one country during a one-year period. Initial quota laws were designed to allow more Europeans to come to the U.S., rather than Asians. Quotas for individual countries were eliminated in 1968 and replaced with hemisphere quotas. In 1978 the hemisphere quotas were replaced by a global quota. The majority of legal immigration today is chain migration. Some preference is also given to skilled workers, which leads to **brain drain**, the emigration of talented people. According to the World Bank in 2005 85% of Haitians with a college degree lived abroad.

Europe allows temporary **guest workers** to legally work for at least minimum wages in their countries. They serve the same purpose as the vast majority of illegal immigrants in the U.S. Luxembourg and Switzerland have especially high percentages of foreign born workers in their labor force. Between 1999 and 2008, the foreign-born population in Spain rose from around ¾ million to 5¼ million.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century **time-contract** workers migrated to work in mines and on plantations for a set period of time, although many of them stayed. More than 33 million ethnic Chinese currently live in other countries. Thus it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between economic migrants and refugees.

The U.S. has generally regarded emigrants from Cuba as political refugees since Castro's 1959 revolution. Economic and political refugees from Haiti have not been quite as welcome in the U.S. Vietnamese boat people were regarded as political refugees after the Vietnam War when thousands fled the war ravaged country. Vietnam remains an important source of immigrants to the United States today, but largely because of the pull of economic opportunity rather than the push of political persecution.

Immigrants often face opposition from some citizens of host countries because they are often culturally, ethnically and religiously different. For example there have been open ethnic and racial conflicts between citizens and migrants in Western Europe and Australia in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### Key Issue 4 – Why do people migrate within a country?

## II. Population

### C. Population movement

1. Migration selectivity
2. Major voluntary and involuntary migrations
3. Theories of migration
5. Socioeconomic consequences of migration

Historically the most significant migration trend has been **interregional migration** westward in United States to obtain cheap land and potential wealth. The population center of the U.S. has moved westward and, more recently southward. In the 1960's and 1970's large numbers of white, middle-class Americans moved from the older northeastern and midwestern to the south and the west coast. At this time northern industrial states were known as the **Rust Belt** because their economy was declining as factories closed and people moved. At the same time the south, which had been known as the **Cotton Belt** because of its agricultural poverty, became known as the **Sun Belt**, a land of opportunity. The migration of African-Americans followed a different pattern, from the rural south to large cities in the north. Interregional migration in the U.S. has not been as significant in the first decade of the twenty-first century, largely because of a narrowing of regional differences in employment opportunities.

Interregional migration has also been important in other countries. Soviet policy encouraged people to move to Russia's Far North to develop industry. It didn't work very well and ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Brazil has encouraged people to

move into the interior, especially since the building of Brasilia in 1960. Since 1969 the Indonesian government has paid for the migration of more than five million people from the island of Java to less populated islands.

**Intraregional migration** has also been important in many countries. In the United States as well as most MDCs, the most important trend since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been the move to suburbs from central cities. A new trend in North America and Western Europe has been **counterurbanization**, from urban to rural areas for lifestyle preferences especially now that modern technology allows people to work more easily from their homes.

Migration from rural to urban areas has been very important in LDCs. Worldwide more than 20 million people are estimated to migrate each year from rural to urban areas. People seek economic opportunities with this type of migration and, especially in LDCs, are pushed because of failed agricultural systems.

## **KEY TERMS**

**Activity space**

**Amnesty**

**Brain drain**

**Chain migration**

**Circulation**

**Cotton Belt**

**Counterurbanization**

**Emigration**

**Floodplain**

**Forced migration**

**Guest workers**

**Immigration**

**Intercontinental migration**

**Internal migration**

**International migration**

**Interregional migration**

**Intervening obstacle**

**Intervening opportunity**

**Intraregional migration**

**Migration**

**Migration transition**

**Mobility**

**Net migration**

**Place utility**

**Pull factors**

**Push factors**

**Quotas**

**Refugees**

**Rust Belt**

**Sun Belt**

**Time-contract workers**

**Unauthorized immigrants**

**Undocumented immigration**

**Voluntary migration**