Chapter 3: MIGRATION

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# 3.1 STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this section, the student will be able to:

1. Understand: definitions of migration and associated significant terms
2. Explain: the geographic patterns of migration within and between countries as influenced by economic, socio-cultural, political, and environmental factors in the contemporary historical period
3. Describe: the general relationship between demographic factors and migration across time
4. Connect: factors of globalization to recent trends in migration

# 3.2 CHAPTER OUTLINE

3.3 Migration and Geography: A (Very) Brief History

3.4 Definitions and Data

3.5 Global, National, Regional, and Local Patterns

3.6 Demographic Transition, Migration, and Political Policy

3.7 Culture, Globalization, and Economics of Migration in the 21st Century

3.8 The Future of Human Movement and Conclusion

3.9 Key Terms Defined

3.10 Works Consulted and Further Reading

3.11 Endnotes

# 3.3 MIGRATION AND GEOGRAPHY: A (VERY) BRIEF HISTORY

For most of human history, people did not move very far away from where they were born. **Migration** (a permanent move to a new location) over long distances was so dangerous, unpredictable, and risky that humans remained in a relatively small area of Eastern Africa until only about 65,000 years ago. At that time, some brave soul (or most likely many) set off on an adventure that would take tens of thousands of years to complete – the mass movement of humans to all corners of the **ecumene** (inhabited areas of earth). Scientists continue to disagree about the specific time periods (some studies suggest that the big move started 120,000 years ago!) and reasons that our ancestors finally decided to take flight, but significant evidence suggests that periodic climate change may have played a major role. The earliest evidence of human remains in the North America dates to approximately 13,000 years ago, when humans are hypothesized to have crossed an ice bridge from Eastern Russia into Alaska during the last Ice Age, before spending the next several thousand years spreading throughout North and South America and The Caribbean. Regardless of the time period, modern humans have been on the move for a very long time—a trend that has accelerated in recent years owing to cheap transportation and easier access to information by potential migrants.

Migration is also central to the formation of the world’s largest religions. The spread of Christianity, for example, was facilitated by the massive movement of people within the Roman Empire along well-traveled transportation routes connecting modern Israel and Palestine with Turkey, Greece, Italy, and other parts of the empire where new ideas, cultures and beliefs were shared. Many of the most significant stories from Christianity and Judaism recount the experience of “foreigners” (sojourners) who are traveling to new lands. Similarly, Islam’s prophet migrated from his city of birth, Mecca, to Medina in the seventh century, and religious ideas were spread as soldiers, merchants, and traders moved across North Africa and eventually into Europe and to Southeast Asia. Migration, in many ways, has been the most impactful of all human activities on the planet. Had humans never taken the journey, we all would still be in East Africa, just daydreaming about the rest of the earth! [Learn more about humans’ earliest journeys](https://psmag.com/why-and-when-did-early-humans-leave-africa-c1f09be7bb70#.p0wpltf4t).

# 3.4 DEFINITIONS AND DATA

Migration can be interregional (between regions), intraregional (within a region), or international (across national borders). Those moving in are **immigrants**, and those moving out are **emigrants**. **Net migration** is the difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants in any given year. The United Nations provides data and analysis on immigration and emigration annually, but such figures depend largely upon government sources that are more reliable in some cases than in others. For example, the United States (US) maintains databases on immigrants of all types including **guest workers** (those given permission to enter the country legally for a specific job and for a specific period of time), students, tourists, **asylum seekers** (those seeking sanctuary from political, religious, gender, or ethnic persecution), and **undocumented migrants** (those inside of a country without proof of residency). However, the US does *not* maintain or report data on those that have emigrated, except in those notable cases where individuals have denounced citizenship. Meanwhile, countries like Mexico and the Philippines track their overseas citizens regularly, acknowledging the realities of dual citizenship or residency. **Return migration** (a permanent return to the country of origin) also represents a significant flow of people, but is often under-reported. For example, up to one quarter of Europeans that migrated to the US in the late nineteenth century eventually returned to Europe. In recent years, more people have migrated back to Mexico from the US than from Mexico to the US. The process of migration, then, is a complicated nexus of movement rather than a simple one-way, permanent, single-directional move from place A to place B.

In spite of the complex patterns and processes of migration, some general characteristics of migration and migrants were articulated by British demographer Ernst Ravenstein (1885), characteristics known as the **laws of migration**. Many of them still hold true 135 years later. Can you decide which are still true today?

1. Most move only a short distance.
2. Each migration flow produces a counter-flow of migrants.
3. Long-distance migrants tend to move to major cities.
4. Rural residents are more migratory than those in towns.
5. Females are more migratory than males.
6. Economic factors are the main reason for migration.

In short, each of the “laws” generally hold true in 2018 with the notable exception of number five. Slightly more men moved internationally than women, but the truth is much more complicated. In fact, Ravenstein’s estimates of female migration proved incorrect as large-scale migration to North America increased in the early twentieth century, during which time most immigrants were men seeking land, wealth, and opportunity in the “New World.”

A variety of non-government organizations, research groups, and humanitarian entities also track the movement of people across borders and within countries in order to provide a deeper understanding of the causes and effects of migration *locally*, *regionally*, *nationally*, and *globally*. For example, the [Migration Information Source](https://www.migrationpolicy.org) offers a wealth of reports, analysis, and data visualization that dramatically enhance our geographic understanding of migration. [The Pew Research Center](http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/migration) conducts regular polls often focused on Latino populations in the US. Other non-profit organizations track the effects of immigration in the US and publish regular reports, but often they lack objectivity or editorial oversight, as the intent of such efforts is to achieve policy change to reduce immigration levels. For example, the [Federation for American Immigration-FAIR](https://fairus.org) is an organization motivated by the explicit desire to reduce the number of immigrants and to secure the traditional cultural heritage of European Americans. [Likewise, the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) presents data to support its stated vision “of an America that admits fewer immigrants” and to reduce immigration of all kinds in the twentieth century](https://cis.org/About-Center-%20Immigration-Studies).

Geographers have identified general trends in global migration, also known as North-South migration, in which most emigrants originate in poorer, developing countries and most destinations have traditionally been wealthier, developed countries. For most Americans and Canadians, this pattern is very familiar, as recent decades have seen unprecedented numbers of Latinos immigrate to the US for the purpose of finding higher-paying jobs and better opportunities and escaping structural poverty in the developing world. Similarly, the recent patterns in Europe have seen record numbers of Eastern Europeans move west and north to earn higher wages than those available in the home country. However, such wage differentials do not tell the whole story. For example, wages in Chicago tend to be much higher than those in other parts of Illinois, but not everybody leaves rural Illinois just because they can earn a higher wage. Wages, though significant, only tell part of the story. Unless you are reading this text in Manhattan or Paris or Hong Kong, you could most likely move tomorrow and find a job elsewhere that pays more than what you earn now (if you are working). Geographers recognize that attachment to place, cultural factors, desire to stay close to family/friends, and other factors play a powerful role in the decision to move or stay.

Another pattern that has remained consistent over time is that of **highly skilled migrants**, who tend to enjoy a much greater freedom of movement than those with lower levels of education and fewer skills. For example, computer software engineers, database managers, and a host of other highly-demanded skills lead to efforts by countries and corporations to attract the best and the brightest minds to immigrate in order to bring those skillsets into a country where they are in short supply. Countries often offer travel **visas** (temporary permission to enter a country) to those with highly demanded skillsets. Countries like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand utilize a **points system** to determine which of the highly-skilled applicants will be granted permission to enter. The **brain drain** refers to the conceptual idea that when a wealthy country recruits the ‘best brains’ from a poorer country, it can be damaging to the sending country, as many of the most qualified and talented groups of people are poached away by higher-paying opportunities. As such, the term **brain gain** refers to the benefits received by a country that receives all those “brains” without having to produce them from scratch! Recently, countries have also acknowledged the concept of **brain waste**, in which receiving countries fall short in utilizing the full range of **human capital** inherent in many immigrant populations. For example, nearly half of all immigrants into the US from 2011-2015 held at least a bachelor’s degree, but more than 2 million immigrants with college degrees continue to work low-skilled jobs because employers or governments do not recognize foreign-held degrees. Similarly, a brain-drain/brain-gain phenomenon occurs *within* some countries, such as the US. California and New York, for example, continue to draw the most highly-trained and qualified people away from other states. Governments that wish to keep the highly skilled at home take such transfers of educated and highly-skilled people very seriously.

Framing migration as a loss or gain, however, also does not tell the whole story. Most countries that send migrants also receive them. The US receives large numbers of immigrants, but it also is a country of emigration, whereby retirees choose to live outside of the US, or long-term migrants (who usually are US citizens) choose to return to their home country in retirement. Migration is neither inherently good nor bad; rather, it is complicated. This chapter seeks to tease out some (but not all) of the important characteristics of migration in the twenty-first century to help you gain a better understanding of a topic that too often is used by politicians to gain votes or credibility. Let us put those simplistic debates aside for a few minutes to consider the basic elements of migration around the world.

# 3.5 GLOBAL, NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL PATTERNS

## 3.5.1 Global Patterns

Though geopolitical and global economic forces change over time, it is useful to understand contemporary global, national, and regional patterns of migration as processes that vary by geography. The vast majority of people do not migrate internationally, yet migration makes a powerful impact globally. Just imagine what our world would look like if nobody ever moved! Latin America would have no coconut trees, the American Midwest would still be dominated by buffalos, and most humans would look very much alike—how boring! Instead, migrants across the globe diffuse new ideas, new genetic footprints, new diseases, new cooking styles, and new sports. While a small number of countries receive large numbers of newcomers each year, only 3.4 percent of the world’s population live outside of their birth country, so most places in the world are *not* significantly impacted directly by international migration. However, the dynamics of migration are undergoing a significant transformation, and the future is very difficult to predict. Humans have been on the move for over 60,000 years, so it is unlikely to come to a halt anytime soon.

The number of international migrants worldwide reached 244 million in 2015, representing a 44 percent increase since the year 2000 (**Figure 3.1**). During the same period, global population grew by just 20 percent, so cross-border migration seems to be accelerating in many parts of the world as more people have access to information, infrastructure, and communication—all elements that facilitate the large-scale movement of people. In 2015, nearly 70 percent of all migrants originated in either Europe or Asia, with the largest numbers coming from India, Mexico, Russia, and China. Meanwhile, those countries hosting the most immigrants were the US (47 million),

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| --- | --- |
| Region | Immigration Population |
| Europe | 76 million |
| Asia | 75 million |
| North America | 54 million |
| Africa | 21 million |
| Latin America/Caribbean | 9 million |
| Oceana | 8 million |

Figure 3.1 | Immigrant populations around the world by region

**Authors |** Dilip Ratha, Christian Eigen-Zucchi, and Sonia Plaza

**Source |** World Bank eLibrary

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followed by Germany (12 million), Russia (12 million), and Saudi Arabia (10 million) (**Figure 3.2**). Generally speaking, migrants tend to move away from low/middle income countries into high income countries because the most common driving force is economic opportunity. Most migrants move for better jobs, higher incomes, and better opportunities overall. It is worth noting, however, that about one third of international migration takes place between lower income countries (e.g. from Bangladesh to India or from Afghanistan to Iran).

Graphical user interface, application, PowerPoint

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Figure 3.2 | Top countries of immigration by number and percent

**Authors |** Dilip Ratha et al.

**Source |** World Bank eLibrary

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It is also important to note that patterns can change very quickly, depending upon economic or political conditions. Spain, for example, was a major recipient of immigrants from 2000-2008, but when its economy dipped and job opportunities decreased, people began to leave *en masse*. In every year since 2011, more people have left Spain than have arrived. Ireland, on the other hand, experienced mostly net emigration from the mid 1800’s until the late 1990’s, when large numbers of Irish and descendants returned “home” and new immigrants began to choose Ireland as a popular destination due to its improved economic opportunities under the European Union.

## 3.5.2 Regional Migration Flows: Europe

Map

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Figure 3.3 | Total European immigrant and emigrant populations by country, 2015

Figure 3.3a (left)

**Authors |** OpenStreetMaps and Migration Policy Institute

**Source |** Migration Policy Institute

**License |** ODbL

Figure 3.3b (right)

**Author |** User “Ssolbergj”

**Source |** Wikimedia Commons

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Consistent with Ravenstein’s “Laws of Migration,” most international moves continue to take place across relatively short distances. In no place is this more evident than in Europe, where it also quite common to find Spaniards in France, Germans in Switzerland, Romanians in Germany, etc. As portrayed in the map above, movement within Europe tends to be from East (blue dots) to West (red/orange dots) (**Figure 3.3**). Given the ease of travel within, the small size of, and short distances between many European countries, it is not surprising that many people move across borders for a variety of reasons. Of the 508 million residents of the European Union (EU), about 10 percent (54 million) are foreign born, of which 35 million originate outside of the EU and 19 million moved from one EU country to another. Movement within and to the EU has accelerated in recent decades for two reasons. First, Europe has intentionally worked towards greater economic integration and cooperation since WWII by removing barriers to movement (See more about the EU in Chapter 8). Citizens and legal residents of participating EU member states may travel, live, study, and work seamlessly across national borders under the *Schengen Agreement* **(Figure 3.4)**. While the EU facilitates the free movement of capital, products, and services in the region, the agreement permits the free flow of people across international borders without significant delay, hassle, or regular security checks. Millions of working-aged residents of Poland, Romania, and Bosnia, for example, have moved to countries like Germany, France, and Spain for higher wages. In some ways, the European region has become similar to the US in that Spaniards may travel to France just as easily as Californians may travel to Oregon.

The second reason for increased movement and mobility in Europe, however, is that more people from nearby Africa and the Middle East have attempted to enter Europe to seek work, escape conflict, or find better educational opportunities. Although economic and political life has been relatively more attractive in Europe than in neighboring regions for some time, the forces of globalization have accelerated such flows. Human smuggling organizations transport hopeful migrants in exchange for large amounts of money. As such, the EU has increased maritime military patrols in the region, which has forced human smugglers and would-be immigrants into riskier and more perilous routes. Thousands die each year trying to gain entry to another country (**Figure 3.5**). In 2016, approximately 7,400 died during a migration route, and nowhere is the trek riskier than in the Mediterranean, where 4,800 migrants perished in 2016, most of whom were from African countries. Additionally, conflicts in the Middle East, most notably Syria, have driven hundreds of thousands to seek refuge in Europe.

Map

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Figure 3.4 | Schengen Countries (2017)

**Author |** User “Ssolbergj”

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A picture containing map

Description automatically generated

Figure 3.5 | Migrant Fatalities in 2017

**Author |** International Organization for Migration Data Analysis Center

**Source |** International Organization for Migration Data Analysis Center

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The free flow of people across the European region has come into question in recent years as northern member states mistrust the vetting process put into place by southern and eastern European states. An individual that manages to enter any of the Schengen states can travel quite easily to any of the other European states. Denmark and Sweden, for example, have increased border security and border checks in spite of being signatories to the agreement (**Figure 3.6)**. The bold experiment in Europe to integrate so many cultural, linguistic, and political systems faces constant challenges and has no guarantee for long-term success. Twice in the last century, the region was war-torn. As the twentieth century unfolds, Europe remains a focal point for migration policy and practice into the twenty-second century.

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

Figure 3.6 | Google News headlines on Danish border control

Search Results Screen Capture for terms “Danish border control.” 6 September 2017.

**Author |** Google News

**Source |** Google News

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## 3.5.3 Regional Migration Flows: North America

North America represents a special case in that the US routinely receives significantly more immigrants than any other country in the world. Roughly 14.5 percent (46 million) of all residents in the US were foreign born in 2015, representing seventeen percent of the labor force. In Canada, the numbers were roughly twenty-one percent for both categories. The [**International Organization for Migration (IOM)**](https://www.iom.int/world-migration)**,** sponsored by the United Nations, offers a great tool for visualizing migration around the world. Click on the tool to find out how many in the US came from China or how many from the US lived in Mexico last year (hint: toggle the In/Out button). Do you notice any patterns? Click on a few other Caribbean countries to view the flows of migration into North America. You will notice that the largest source areas to the US were Latin America and Asia, but sending countries and volumes, in fact, vary significantly over history. The figure below shows changes over time in the US immigrant population, and you can see that immigration from Latin America and Asia has only occurred in the most recent period. Do you know or think you know when your ancestors arrived? Can you visualize the time period during which they first came to North America? Which population groups are not included in the chart? Why do you think this might be?

There four distinct phases of immigration, but let’s examine each one briefly. First, during the era of frontier expansion (1820-1880), a rapid westward movement occurred. Settlers were given the rare opportunity to acquire large amounts of good farmland in the “New World,” which pushed people out of the large cities like New York and Boston and towards the American Midwest into the future states of Ohio, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, etc. Many immigrants came to the US specifically in search of land, because population pressure in Europe made land acquisition very difficult. The *Homestead Act* of 1862 offered up to 160 acres of farmland to citizens or those planning to become citizens as long as they continuously lived on and farmed the land for five years. More than 1.5 million claims for land were made in subsequent years, resulting in a massive movement of people. It was also during this era that the transcontinental railroad was completed, linking the East Coast and West Coast for the first time in a meaningful way. Most immigrants during this time came from England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia. More than 1.5 million also came from Ireland in just a ten-year period (1845-1855) when the potato crop failed due to blight (disease), a period known as the Great Hunger. The only significant non-European immigrants arrived as a result of the *Burlingame-Seward Treaty* of 1868, which welcomed Chinese workers, as China also opened its borders to American businesses, students, and missionaries. Migration from China was short-lived, however, during the subsequent era.

Phase 2 (1880-1910) ushered in a dramatic shift as the number of new arrivals soared to unprecedented levels. Moreover, the source countries also changed as immigrants began to arrive from southern and eastern European countries such as Italy, Greece, Russia, and Poland. American imagery, stories, legends, books, and films tend to focus heavily on this period, because it was the most intense era of movement from Europe, and most were arriving via Ellis Island by ship before settling into distinctly ethnic neighborhoods in cities across the US It was also an era of massive industrialization that demanded a large source of low-cost workers, which immigration provided. Coal mines, steel mills, and factories were growing at unprecedented levels as the US raced to “catch up” with the great cities of the world, building bridges, skyscrapers, museums, sports stadiums, and other large structures at unprecedented levels. The period also produced a new era of exclusion as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited immigration, naturalization, and citizenship for anyone of Chinese descent, including those that had immigrated previously under legal means.

During Phase 3 (1910-1965), the US dramatically curtailed the number of immigrants permitted to enter the country legally. The great western settlement had ended, and high birth rates in the US created enough new workers to meet the demand of the continued industrialization of the country. A series of new exclusionary laws prevented all “Asiatic People” from entering the country, as American nationalism fanned by white power and eugenic movements sought to exclude and divide the people of the world into categories of “civilized,” “savage,” and “semi-civilized.” Also banned were “polygamists, anarchists, beggars, and importers of prostitutes.” (For an excellent graphical overview of US immigration legislation, visit the [Pew Research Center website](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/selected-u-s-immigration-legislation-and-executive-actions-1790-2014). During this period, immigration levels declined precipitously as the country grappled with questions of heritage, identity, and cohesion. National legislation was crafted to maintain the racial and ethnic balance of the country as mistrust between nations erupted in two world wars. Quotas were established to allow immigration of only a limited number of people from specific European countries, while all others were kept out. Ellis Island closed its doors in 1954 after having processed more than 12 million immigrants. However, a dramatic social shift was on the horizon, as the 1960’s would dramatically alter US immigration in the coming decades.

Immigration into the US in the current era, Phase 4 (1965-Present), is characterized by (1) enormous growth and (2) a new diversity of source countries, dominated by the regions of Asia and Latin America. While the percent of foreign-born residents is similar to that of the early 1900’s, the 47 million (in 2016) living in the US represents an unprecedented historical high with one out of every four children having at least one parent who is an immigrant. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 dramatically shifted the nature of immigration into the US from one with low numbers from a handful of pre-determined countries to a system that favors those with particular skills (e.g. scientists, engineers, and doctors) and for family reunification. As more Americans entered college, demand for manual labor also grew. Jobs that were once done by children and teenagers, such as harvesting crops, cutting grass, or washing dishes in restaurants were increasingly being filled by immigrants willing to work long hours for little pay. Asian exclusion laws and quotas were abolished, as progressive civil rights era provisions took a “colorblind” approach to welcome those from all regions of the world as long as they had the skills and education that would benefit the American economy. Laws also made it much easier for existing citizens to legally bring immediate relatives from abroad, so that families would not be divided by restrictive immigration policies. Speaking to a sparse crowd in 1965 about the new immigration bill, President Lyndon B. Johnson said, this “is not a revolutionary bill. It does not affect the lives of millions . . . It will not reshape the structure of our daily lives or add importantly to either our wealth or our power.”[[1]](#endnote-1) Yet in the three decades after its passage, more than 18 million people arrived legally, tripling the number of immigrants from the previous three decades. The “face” of immigration changed dramatically. In 2016, the largest number of foreign born were those from Mexico, China, India, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Moreover, immigrants are responsible for 25 percent of all new businesses and more than half of all start-up companies valued at more than $1 billion. Sometimes, Presidents are wrong.

## 3.5.4 Regional Migration Flows: Asia

Migration within Asia is difficult to summarize given the massive size and scope of a region with 4.4 billion people! However, if you revisit the [world migration map](https://www.iom.int/world-migration), you will notice that even the largest countries in the world (China and India) contain relatively-few foreign born people compared to those in Europe and North America. Can you think of reasons why this might be the case? The first explanation is simple. Large-scale human settlement and political development occurred much earlier than in Europe or in North America. Early Chinese civilizations had already emerged more than 5,000 years ago, and many in Asia can trace ancestral lineages back thousands of years as well. As such, Asia (for the most part) wasn’t “discovered,” conquered, or colonized during the time of European imperialism. Apart from a small number of missionaries, entrepreneurs, and adventurers, Asia did not become a major destination for those from foreign lands (there are several notable exceptions, particularly in the case of the British Empire). Second, most Asian countries simply do not allow for permanent immigration, except in the case of marriage (which also can be a very slow and tedious process). Nonetheless, in the age of globalization and migration, more people are on the move in Asia in the twenty-first century than ever before.

With a population of 1.3 billion and a fast-growing economy, China tends to dominate the East Asia region. The Chinese **Diaspora** is a term that refers to the 46 million people that identify themselves as Chinese but live outside of China, with the largest number making their homes in Southeast Asia and others in Australia, North America, or Europe. Many fled China during times of political instability before and after WWII and under early communist rule, but today, many of those who leave China are wealthy and educated and do so because their skills are in demand in other parts of the world.

The most significant movement of people anywhere in the history of the world has been taking place recently inside both China and India as rural farmers have been leaving the countryside and moving into cities. Nearly 200 million people have left the interior of China to re-settle and seek work in China’s dynamic cities, mostly located along the eastern part of the country. While they do not cross international borders, the distance and socioeconomic differences between rural and urban areas in China are very similar to an international move for many. The motivation is largely economic in that farmers can barely earn a few dollars a day in rural areas; new manufacturing jobs in coastal cities pay several times that.

# 3.6 DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION, MIGRATION, AND POLITICAL POLICY

## 3.6.1 What is the relationship between population structure and migration?

Even though people generally migrate to find/make a better life for themselves and for their families, the benefits and pitfalls of migration affect different countries and regions in very different ways. [Demography (age structure) has a lot to do with understanding how such a differentiation occurs](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/geography/population/population_change_structure_rev4.shtml). (Hint: You may need to go back to Chapter 2 to review your understanding of the demographic transition model.)

The demographic transition model explains how countries experience different stages of population growth and family sizes, but the model also works well to understand sources and destinations for migrants. Before the explanation continues, take a look at the model to see if you can predict the stages during which you would expect large-scale emigration versus immigration. Do you feel confident in your guesses? Why or why not?

Geographers note that countries of emigration tend to be late in stage 2 or early stage 3, while countries of immigration tend to be late stage 4 or stage 5 countries. Let’s think about this for just a moment. At what age are people most likely to take the risk to move to a completely different country to seek their fortune? Would you move to Slovenia next year, if you could earn triple your current salary? Most international migrants tend to be relatively young (18-35) during the prime of their working years. Countries that tend to have an abundance of working-age people also tend to be early in stage 3 of the model. Countries like Mexico, Guatemala, the Philippines, and India had large families a generation ago. As those children enter their working years, there are not enough jobs created due to an “oversupply” of laborers. Meanwhile, countries in late stage 4 find that because of low fertility rates a generation earlier, the economy now faces a shortage of working-age residents to do all kinds of jobs. Birth rates were high during the 1950’s in the US, but as women had fewer children in subsequent generations, fewer workers were entering the workforce every year. Unsurprisingly, young workers from Mexico, El Salvador, Jamaica, etc., began to immigrate as the demand for their labor increased. In Europe, the same pattern occurred as those from higher fertility countries like Turkey migrated to lower fertility countries like Germany.

## 3.6.2 Why do some countries benefit from migration while others do not?

Demographic realities can be **push factors** or **pull** factors that serve to push people away from a place or pull them towards a place as explained in the previous paragraph. Push and pull factors can be cultural, economic, or ecological. Baptists might be “pulled” towards the American South, and Mormons might be “pulled” to Utah for cultural reasons. Meanwhile, the devastation of Hurricane Maria (2017) “pushed” hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans off the island. The most common destination for Puerto Ricans was Florida for economic (jobs), ecological (warm weather), and cultural (existing Spanish speakers) reasons. When the push factors and pull factors fit together nicely, migration can benefit both the sending and receiving regions.

Very often in the case of **forced migration**, however, migration does not benefit both parties. Those migrants who flee their country based upon claims of danger based upon race, religion, nationality, or other pertinent identifiers are known as **asylum seekers.** They seek a country willing to take them in permanently for fear of imprisonment, retribution, or death in their country of origin. When asylum seekers have satisfactorily demonstrated a claim in court, their status changes to **refugee.** Under international agreement, refugees cannot be forced to return to any country where they are deemed to be in danger, so refugee status provides displaced people with a legal protection against deportation. The number of refugees worldwide at the end of 2016 was 22.5 million, the highest total of refugees since the end of WWII. There were also 40.3 million people uprooted within their own country, known as **internally displaced people (IDP),** bringing the total number of displaced people to an all-time high of nearly 63 million. In recent years, large numbers of asylum seekers have left Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Cuba, Venezuela, and Myanmar (formerly Burma) as wars and political conflict have endangered millions. During previous wars, wealthier countries in Europe, North America, and Australia accepted large numbers of asylum seekers, but anti-immigrant sentiments have risen in many parts of the world, leaving the majority of would-be refugees without refuge. Opponents of resettlement argue that the cost is just too great, and they fear that accepting refugees would encourage more unwelcome immigration in the future, so this has significantly reduced the number of migrants that countries are willing to accept.

Though twenty-first century anti-immigrant sentiment remains high in countries like the US, Australia, and the U.K., the benefits for receiving countries are well documented. Apart from the demographic advantages already described, employers and consumers tend to benefit markedly from the low-cost, readily-available supply of labor provided by immigrants. Everything from the cost of fruit, construction, fast food, and lawn care tends to be cheaper owing to an immigrant labor force. Evidence also indicates that wages in low-skilled jobs may be suppressed by immigrants, but the overall economic benefit is widely reported by economists to be favorable when unemployment rates are low. Immigrants have higher rates of employment, are more likely to start businesses and are less likely to commit crimes than the native-born population in the US Sending countries also tend to benefit from emigration in two ways. First, emigration provides an opportunity for young workers who cannot find employment at home. Second, emigrants tend to send home the majority of their overseas earnings. Money sent home by overseas workers is called **remittances.** Countries that send large numbers of workers overseas benefit from the large infusion of foreign capital into the local economy, which tends to spur new investment opportunities. When migration is working smoothly, both sending and receiving countries can benefit.

Besides low-skilled workers and refugees, a third category of immigrant has increased dramatically under globalization. Highly-skilled immigrants represent a unique contradiction. On the one hand, countries seek to increase border security, limit asylum seekers, and build walls. On the other, those same countries actively recruit and seek to attract immigrants with specific skills, training, and educational levels. Most commonly, wealthy countries like the U.K. regularly recruit nurses, scientists, and engineers from poorer countries to meet the needs of an aging population. As British residents have fewer children and society gets older, there is more demand specifically for healthcare workers of all kinds. As such, the best and brightest minds from poorer countries become attracted to the much higher wages outside of their countries and they leave—resulting in a **brain drain.** Nearly sixty percent of all doctors born in Ghana and eighty-five percent of nurses born in the Philippines have left the country to work elsewhere! Wealthy countries reap the benefits of this **brain gain.** Although highly-skilled and educated individuals and families that emigrate for higher pay undoubtedly benefit from emigration, the countries that experience brain drain persistently lose a very valuable resource. Besides losing most of its doctors, Ghana also now faces a major shortage of those qualified to teach the next generation of medical professionals, so the negative effect crosses multiple generations.

# 3.7 CULTURE, GLOBALIZATION, AND ECONOMICS OF MIGRATION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

## 3.7.1 What is the connection between globalization and increased international migration?

**Globalization** is defined as the set of forces and processes that involve the entire planet, making something worldwide in scope. Although 246 million people live outside of their birth country, more than 96 percent of the world’s people do not ever move outside of their birth country, so in the case of migration, globalization might not be as powerful as once believed. While geographers try to understand where people move and why, a more significant question might be why so many people *do not* move. If you live in one of the places on Earth where you interact with people from all over the globe on a regular basis, then it might seem to you that globalization is operating at full speed. Yet, the vast majority of humans don’t leave their home country and have limited interactions with people from other places, even if the products they consume and produce might be worldwide in scope.

As we entered the new millennium in 2000, scholars were convinced that a new age was upon us. Some went so far as to say that geography was “dead” and that place didn’t matter. A best-selling book written by Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat* (2005), decreed that humanity was becoming more connected all the time to the point that it didn’t matter if you were in the streets of Bombay or in a classroom at Harvard. The best minds and the best ideas would always rise to the top, regardless of their origin. Inherent in this argument was the assumption that more people would be on the move, and international migration would accelerate as people and products would just zoom across the “flat earth” at lightning speed.

In 2017, however, geography has re-emerged to re-stake its claim. While more people than ever are, in fact, living outside of their birth countries, there is a growing resistance across the planet to “outsiders.” In response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush firmly asserted that “every nation in every region now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.” Perhaps that is the moment in which the earlier hope of a fully-integrated world with open borders and full mobility was deemed too optimistic. In the years since that speech, western nations have taken a collective stance against immigration often based upon religious or ideological grounds. In 2017, for example, Donald Trump called for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” in response to a shooting in San Bernadino, California. Meanwhile, Britain moved to cut immigration levels dramatically as it exited the European Union and took a more isolationist position, and Australia moved to prevent refugees from arriving on its shores.

## 3.7.2 How is migration in the twenty-first century different from that of the twentieth century?

While the percent of those who migrate has not increased significantly in the twenty-first century, the destinations and origins of immigrants have shifted dramatically, so that more people are migrating to and from more places than ever before. Such a statement may sound confusing at first, but one need look no further than college campuses throughout the world to understand this dynamic. Georgia Gwinnett College in suburban Atlanta, for example, is the most ethnically-diverse college in the American South. In a typical geography class at that school, thirty-three percent speak a language other than English at home. A recent survey of the author’s students (n=115) from just one semester found that students (or their families) came from Mexico, El Salvador, Peru, the Philippines, Laos, China, Colombia, Korea, Haiti, Jamaica, Vietnam, Ukraine, Dominican Republic, Liberia, Latvia, Romania, India, Pakistan, Scotland, and Paraguay. While past waves of migration were dominated by a small number of sending countries and a small number of receiving countries, migration in the twenty-first century is much less predictable.

Australia offers another example, as thousands of prospective immigrants have been traveling thousands of miles by land and sea to seek refuge in the small continent. The government eventually made the difficult decision to intercept would-be immigrants at sea, but it still faces a complex dilemma of where to redirect those who have risked their lives to make the perilous journey. For now, they are being taken to remote islands of Papua New Guinea, Christmas Island, and Nauru for resettlement, resulting in an odd mix of refugees and South Pacific Islanders living side by side. Unpredictability is now the rule rather than the exception as twenty-first century technology allows for a rapid flow of information. Those wishing to move can now find out much more quickly about opportunities, transportation options, and routes to take than has ever been the case before. Geography does not represent nearly as formidable of a barrier to travel than it did in the twentieth century. Other than asylum seekers, most immigrants are far more likely to travel by plane than by boat in the twenty-firs century, and they may or may not seek permanent residence.

The final way in which migration is different today relates to the concept of **transnationalism** (exchanges and interactions across borders that are a regular and sustained part of migrants’ realities and activities that transcend a purely “national” space). Those traveling to the US in 1900 were leaving everything behind to seek a new homeland, learn a new culture, and often to speak a new language. Migrants of today, however, are not forced to fully disconnect from “home.” Even after a long-distance migration, people can stay connected to friends, family, news stories, and relationships across the world. A journey that took several months in 1900 today takes less than half a day. Meanwhile, apps like Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Skype allow newcomers to stay intimately involved in the lives of those left behind—for *free*! **Transnational** families contain members that are living in multiple countries simultaneously, speak multiple languages, and are ready to move in a moment’s notice, based upon market conditions in any given place at a particular time. Critics argue that immigrants of today do not assimilate as readily as those from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but in that era, people simply had no other choice. **Transnationalism** is a feature of twenty-first century immigrants that is here to stay as immigrants to new places have the option to live their lives in more than one world, carry more than one passport, and move more seamlessly from place to place than at any time in human history. Take note that the term appears again in this textbook (section 11.4, Political Geography) in that corporations also operate within and between multiple countries, depending upon various factors. An important distinction exists, however, from the concept of *supranationalism* (Section 8.3, Political Geography) in that supranationalist organizations do not officially reside under the direction of any single state (country), while transnationalism involves moving between countries – not operating outside of them.

# 3.8 THE FUTURE OF HUMAN MOVEMENT AND CONCLUSION

The future dynamics of migration are very difficult to predict, but certain geographic realities provide clues for where patterns are likely to change. In those parts of the world where societies are quickly aging and fertility rates continue to decline, we can expect rates of immigration to increase. Certain countries have experienced and will continue to experience dramatic population decline (most notably Germany, Italy, Russia, and Japan), and the demand for young, working-aged immigrants will certainly continue to draw more people to those places. Japan and China represent unique cases because both are aging and yet have been resistant to allowing outsiders to become citizens or permanent residents. In spite of cultural preferences for ethnic homogeneity, it would seem likely that the culture will shift and become more accepting of outsiders, as the country needs them to take care of the elderly, pay taxes, and provide an infusion of energy into the respective countries.

Meanwhile, people living in places without sufficient opportunities will continue to move away in search of jobs and better circumstances, regardless of the attempts made by wealthy nations to keep them out. Source countries and destinations will continue to shift, as they always have. More Mexicans have returned than have left the US in recent years, and it is no longer the leading sending source country of migration to the US. Rather, more people are now coming from Central America. The demographic pressures in many African countries will absolutely drive more working-aged people out of the continent in search of better opportunities even as the journey becomes increasingly dangerous. As the Internet becomes more pervasive on that continent, more people will find the information that they need in order to plan their emigration. Finally, the highly-skilled people of the world will continue to be increasingly mobile and largely unaffected by borders or increased security. Computer programmers, nurses, doctors, engineers, and high-tech workers of all sorts will use the globe to their advantage and seek out places that best fit their desires. Television shows like “House Hunters International” demonstrate how the vast numbers of people who work online or in highly-skilled careers can virtually live anywhere. Wealthy people from across the globe are leaving their passport countries by the millions, as Wi-Fi networks are now available across the world. The poor and wealthy alike will continue to move about the planet, reconstituting the human geography of our world well into the twenty-first century but for very different reasons and with very different experiences.

# 3.9 KEY TERMS DEFINED

**Asylum seeker** – those who leave the sovereign territory of one country in order to achieve refugee status in another, based upon claims of danger because of race, religion, nationality, or other pertinent identifiers.

**Brain drain** – the collective loss of skills, education, training, and wealth that occurs when highly-skilled and educated people move away from a country (usually away from a relatively poor country).

**Brain gain** – the collective gain of skills, education, training, and wealth that occurs when highly-skilled and educated people move into another country (usually to a relatively wealthier country).

**Brain waste** – a phenomenon in which international migrants with high levels of education and/or training often are not eligible to work in their area of training due to regulations or certification requirements, resulting in a “wasted” potential in certain groups.

**Diaspora** – a group of people sharing a common historical and ethnic connection to a territory, but who no longer live in that territory or country. Some members of a diaspora may have been removed from the traditional homeland for multiple generations but still identify with it as a “homeland.”

**Ecumene** – human inhabited areas of Earth

**Emigrant** – an individual who moves *away* from one country into another for a prolonged period. The definition of “prolonged” varies by country and is defined by the World Bank as minimum of one year.

**Forced migration** – a type of movement in which individuals or groups are coerced into moving by an external set of forces, most notably environmental, economic, social, or political factors.

**Globalization** – all those processes, technologies, and systems that result in greater connections, communication, and movement among increasingly distant people and places on Earth.

**Guest worker** – someone without legal permanent status who has been granted permission to reside in a country’s territory in order to work for a specific set of time on a particular kind of work.

**Highly skilled migration** – patterns movement by those with skills that are in high demand on the global market. Examples include nurses, doctors, IT specialists, actors/artists, and athletes who tend to enjoy greater levels of movement across borders than others.

**Highly skilled migration** – patterns movement by those with skills that are in high demand on the global market. Examples include nurses, doctors, IT specialists, actors/artists, and athletes who tend to enjoy greater levels of movement across borders than others.

**Immigrant** – an individual who moves for a prolonged period *to* another country. The definition of “prolonged” varies by country. In 2016 there were 246 million immigrants in the world.

**Internally Displaced People (IDP)** – those who have moved or been forced to move from a homeland for the same reasons as refugees but have not crossed an international boundary and do not have refugee status.

**Laws of migration** – generalizations about international migration as detailed by nineteenth-century demographers

**Migration** – a permanent move to a new location

**Net migration** – the difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants in any given year

**Points system** – a national immigration policy that seeks to attract people with a specific set of skills, experience, and job training to satisfy unmet demand among those currently in the country. Regardless of origin country, anyone with the prescribed set of skills, linguistic ability, and education may apply to migrate to that country if they have acquired enough points to do so. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and England all have a points system.

**Pull Factor** – those forces that encourage people to move *into* a particular place

**Push Factor** – those forces that encourage people to move *away* from a particular place

**Refugee** – an individual who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable, or unwilling, to avail themselves of the protection of that country. An individual who has been granted “refugee” status is afforded a certain set of rights and privileges, most notably, the right not to be forcibly returned to the country of origin.

**Remittances –** money sent “home” by international migrants. Remittances represent the largest single source of external funding in many developing countries. The global figure for 2016 was US$600 billion.

**Return migration** – a return of a migrant to the country or place of origin

**Transnationalism** – exchanges and interactions across borders that are a regular and sustained part of migrants’ realities and activities that transcend a purely “national” space.

**Undocumented migrants** – those inside of a country without proper authorization or proof of residence.

**Visa** – the legal permission granted by a receiving country to those seeking to enter. Examples include tourist, temporary work, and student visas. A visa is different from a passport.

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