



What is Human Migration?

Migration (human) is the movement of people from one place in the world to another for the purpose of taking up permanent or semipermanent residence, usually across a political boundary. An example of "semipermanent residence" would be the seasonal movements of migrant farm laborers. People can either choose to move ("voluntary migration") or be forced to move ("involuntary migration").

Migrations have occurred throughout human history, beginning with the movements of the first human groups from their origins in East Africa to their current location in the world.

Migration occurs at a variety of **scales**: **intercontinental** (between continents), **intracontinental** (between countries on a given continent), and **interregional** (within countries). One of the most significant migration patterns has been **rural to urban migration**—the movement of people from the countryside to cities in search of opportunities.

Types of Migration

Internal Migration: Moving to a new home within a state, country, or continent.

External Migration: Moving to a new home in a different state, country, or continent.

Emigration: Leaving one country to move to another (e.g., the Pilgrims emigrated *from* England).

Immigration: Moving into a new country (e.g., the Pilgrims immigrated *to* America).

Population Transfer: When a government forces a large group of people out of a region, usually based on ethnicity or religion. This is also known as an **involuntary** or **forced migration**.

Impelled Migration (also called "reluctant" or "imposed" migration): Individuals are not forced out of their country, but leave because of unfavorable situations such as warfare, political problems, or religious persecution.

Step Migration: A series of shorter, less extreme migrations from a person's place of origin to final destination—such as moving from a farm, to a village, to a town, and finally to a city.

Chain Migration: A series of migrations within a family or defined group of people. A chain migration often begins with one family member who sends money to bring other family members to the new location. Chain migration results in **migration fields**—the clustering of people from a specific region into certain neighborhoods or small towns.

Return Migration: The voluntary movements of immigrants back to their place of origin. This is also known as **circular migration**.

Seasonal Migration: The process of moving for a period of time in response to labor or climate conditions (e.g., farm workers following crop harvests or working in cities off-season; "snowbirds" moving to the southern and southwestern United States during winter).

People Who Migrate

Emigrant: A person who is leaving a country to reside in another.

Immigrant: A person who is entering a country from another to take up new residence.

Refugee: A person who is residing outside the country of his or her origin due to fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Internally Displaced Person (IDP): A person who is forced to leave his or her home region because of unfavorable conditions (political, social, environmental, etc.) but does not cross any boundaries.

Migration Stream: A group migration from a particular country, region, or city to a certain destination.

Why Do People Migrate?

People move for a variety of reasons. They consider the advantages and disadvantages of staying versus moving, as well as factors such as distance, travel costs, travel time, modes of transportation, terrain, and cultural barriers.

Push Factors: Reasons for emigrating (leaving a place) because of a difficulty (such as a food shortage, war, flood, etc.).

Pull Factors: Reasons for immigrating (moving into a place) because of something desirable (such as a nicer climate, better food supply, freedom, etc.).

Several types of push and pull factors may influence people in their movements (sometimes at the same time), including:

1. **Environmental** (e.g., climate, natural disasters)
2. **Political** (e.g., war)
3. **Economic** (e.g., work)
4. **Cultural** (e.g., religious freedom, education)

Place Utility: The desirability of a place based on its social, economic, or environmental situation, often used to compare the value of living in different locations. An individual's idea of place utility may or may not reflect the actual conditions of that location.

Intervening Opportunities: Opportunities nearby are usually considered more attractive than equal or slightly better opportunities farther away, so migrants tend to settle in a location closer to their point of origin if other factors are equal.

Distance Decay: As distance from a given location increases, understanding of that location decreases. People are more likely to settle in a (closer) place about which they have more knowledge than in a (farther) place about which they know and understand little.

Laws of Migration

Geographer E.G. Ravenstein developed a series of migration 'laws' in the 1880s that form the basis for modern migration theory. In simple language, these principles state:

- Most migrants travel only a short distance.
- Migrants traveling long distances usually settle in urban areas.
- Most migration occurs in steps.
- Most migration is rural to urban.
- Each migration flow produces a movement in the opposite direction ("counterflow").
- Most migrants are adults.
- Most international migrants are young males, while more internal migrants are female.

Impacts of Migration

Human migration affects population patterns and characteristics, social and cultural patterns and processes, economies, and physical environments. As people move, their cultural traits and ideas **diffuse** along with them, creating and modifying **cultural landscapes**.

Diffusion: The process through which certain characteristics (e.g., cultural traits, ideas, disease) spread over space and through time.

Relocation Diffusion: Ideas, cultural traits, etc. that move with people from one place to another and do not remain in the point of origin.

Expansion Diffusion: Ideas, cultural traits, etc., that move with people from one place to another but are not lost at the point of origin, such as language.

Cultural markers: Structures or artifacts (e.g., buildings, spiritual places, architectural styles, signs, etc.) that reflect the cultures and histories of those who constructed or occupy them.

Measuring Migration

In-migration: people moving into one place from another place within a nation (internal migration).

Out-migration: people moving out of one place to another place within a nation (internal migration).

Gross migration: total number of in-migrants and out-migrants (internal migration).

Net internal migration: the difference between in-migration and out-migration.

Movers from abroad: people coming into a nation from another country or part of the world.

Net migration: the difference between net internal migration and movers from abroad.

Migrations Resources

U.S. Census Bureau

<http://www.census.gov/>

Population Reference Bureau

http://www.prb.org/Content/NavigationMenu/PRB/Educators/Human_Population/Migration2/Migration1.htm

CSISS Classics: Ernest George Ravenstein—The Laws of Migration, 1885

<http://www.csiss.org/classics/content/90>

Ancestry.com: Thirteen Reasons Our Ancestors Migrated

<http://www.ancestry.com/learn/library/article.aspx?article=1436>

AngliaCampus: Migration

<http://www.angliacampus.com/public/sec/geog/migrate/index.htm>

RevisionNotes.Co.UK: Migration

<http://www.revision-notes.co.uk/revision/171.html>

Smithsonian Institution: Migrations in History

<http://smithsonianeducation.org/migrations/start.html>

Migration Information Source

<http://www.migrationinformation.org/>

UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency

<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>

International Organization for Migration
<http://www.iom.int/>

Migration Dialogue
<http://migration.ucdavis.edu/index.php>

Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI)/EuroStat: Push and Pull Factors of International Migration
<http://www.nidi.knaw.nl/web/html/pushpull/index.html>

National Geographic Magazine: Changing America
http://www7.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/data/2001/09/01/html/ft_20010901.3.html

National Geographic: Xpeditions—Geography Standard 9 - The Characteristics, Distribution, and Migration of Human Population on Earth's Surface
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/standards/09/index.html>

National Geographic: Xpeditions—Migration Station
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/hall/index.html?node=36>

National Geographic: Geography Action!—Migration: The Human Journey
http://ngsednet.org/community/index.cfm?community_id=7

National Geographic: The Genographic Project
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/genographic/index.html>

National Geographic: Xpeditions—Human Migration Within and Into the United States
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/09/g912/migration.html>

National Geographic: Xpeditions— Migration Station: Should We Stay or Should We Go?
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/09/g912/migrationstation.html>