Refer back to Figure 2–3 (ecumene) for a moment. Humans have spread across Earth during the past 7,000 years. This diffusion of human settlement from a small portion of Earth’s land area to most of it resulted from migration. To accomplish the spread across Earth, humans have permanently changed their place of residence—where they sleep, store their possessions, and receive legal documents. Geographers document from where people migrate and to where they migrate. They also study reasons why people migrate.

How many times has your family moved? In the United States, the average family moves once every 6 years. Was your last move traumatic or exciting? The loss of old friends and familiar settings can hurt, but the experiences awaiting you at a new location can be stimulating. Think about the multitude of Americans—maybe including yourself—who have migrated from other countries. Imagine the feelings of people migrating from another country when they arrive in a new land without a job, friends, or—for many—the ability to speak the local language.

Why would people make a perilous journey across thousands of kilometers of ocean? Why did the pioneers cross the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, or the Mojave Desert to reach the American West? Why do people continue to migrate by the millions today? The hazards that many migrants have faced are a measure of the strong lure of new locations and the desperate conditions in their former homelands. Most people migrate in search of three objectives: economic opportunity, cultural freedom, and environmental comfort. In this chapter, the reasons why people migrate will be studied.
CASE STUDY

Migrating from Ukraine to Italy

Lesya Kolosova lived with her husband and two teenage daughters in a two-room apartment in Kovel, a city of 63,000 inhabitants in Ukraine. At age 50, she decided to migrate to Milan, Italy, 1,000 miles away, leaving behind her family in Kovel.

Kolosova migrated to Italy to take a high-paying job. She had a college degree in economics and had a good office job in Kovel. But it paid only $120 a month, an average wage in Ukraine. In Italy, she took a job that paid $900 a month—cleaning households. Most of the money she earns is being sent back to her family in Ukraine.

Kolosova's migration to Italy was illegal, because she did not have a visa or work permit. To get to Italy, she paid a broker $2,500 to sneak her across Ukraine's border with Poland, less than an hour from Kovel. Once in Poland, Kolosova could easily travel across Europe to Italy, because there are no border checks between countries belonging to the European Union.

Immigrants—both legal and illegal—have been pouring into Western Europe by the millions, primarily from Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. The United States has similarly been the destination for millions of immigrants, primarily from Latin America and Asia. Like Kolosova, most immigrants in search of better job prospects than available at home.

Western Europeans, like Americans, are ambivalent toward immigration. On the one hand, immigrants perform jobs that local residents in wealthier countries don't want, especially in unskilled services and agriculture. On the other hand, Europeans and Americans want secure borders, and they fear the loss of language, religion, and other cultural traditions when immigrants arrive from other regions of the world.

Tensions between immigrants and local residents have escalated in Europe. In Spain, local youths have burned down the homes of immigrants. In France, immigrants have done the house burning. In the Netherlands, a prominent anti-immigration politician and a prominent anti-immigration filmmaker (the great grand nephew of Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh) were murdered, in a country where murders are extremely rare. Across Europe, politicians have attracted voters by spouting harsh—in some cases, racist—anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Diffusion was defined in Chapter 1 as a process by which a characteristic spreads from one area to another, and relocation diffusion was the spread of a characteristic through the bodily movement of people from one place to another. The subject of this chapter is a specific type of relocation diffusion called migration, which is a permanent move to a new location. Geographers document where people migrate to and from across the space of Earth.

The flow of migration always involves two-way connections. Given two locations, A and B, some people migrate from A to B, while at the same time others migrate from B to A. 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. If the number of immigrants exceeds the number of emigrants, the net migration is positive, and the region has net in-migration. If the number of emigrants exceeds the number of immigrants, the net migration is negative, and the region has net out-migration.

Migration is a form of mobility, which is a more general term covering all types of movements from one place to another. People display mobility in a variety of ways, such as by journeying every weekday from their homes to places of work or education and once a week to shops, places of worship, or recreation areas. These types of short-term, repetitive, or cyclical movements that recur on a regular basis, such as daily, monthly, or annually, are called circulation. College students display another form of mobility—seasonal mobility—by moving to a dormitory each fall and returning home the following spring.

Geographers are especially interested in why people migrate, even though migration occurs much less frequently than other forms of mobility, because it produces profound changes for individuals and entire cultures. A permanent move to a new location disrupts traditional cultural ties and economic patterns in one region. At the same time, when people migrate, they take with them to their new home their language, religion, ethnicity, and other cultural traits, as well as their methods of farming and other economic practices.

The changing scale generated by modern transportation systems, especially motor vehicles and airplanes, makes relocation diffusion more feasible than in the past, when people had to rely on walking, animal power, or slow ships. However, thanks to modern communications systems, relocation diffusion is no
longer essential for the transmission of ideas from one place to another. Culture and economy can diffuse rapidly around the world through forms of expansion diffusion.

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's cultural identity and economic prospects. Within a global economy, an individual's ability to earn a living varies by location. Within a global culture, people migrate to escape from domination by other cultural groups or to be reunited with others of similar culture. Migration of people with similar cultural values creates pockets of local diversity.

Although migration is a form of relocation diffusion, reasons for migrating can be gained from expansion diffusion. Someone may migrate and send back a message that gives others the idea of migrating. For example, many Europeans migrated to the United States in the nineteenth century, because very favorable reports from early migrants led them to believe that the streets of American cities were paved with gold.

**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 geographic migration studies. To understand where and why migration occurs, Ravenstein's "laws" can be organized into three groups: the reasons why migrants move, the distance they typically move, and their characteristics. Each of these elements is addressed in this section of the chapter.

**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. As migration for most people is a major step not taken lightly, both push and pull factors typically play a role. To migrate, people view their current place of residence so negatively that they feel pushed away, and they view another place so attractively that they feel pulled toward it.

We can identify three major kinds of push and pull factors: economic, cultural, and environmental. Usually, one of the three factors emerges as most important, although as will be discussed later in this chapter, ranking the relative importance of the three factors can be difficult and even controversial.

**Economic Push and Pull Factors**

Most people migrate for economic reasons, as Lesya Kosolosova did when she moved from Ukraine to Italy as discussed at the beginning of the chapter. People think about emigrating from places that have few job opportunities, and they immigrate to places where the jobs seem to be available. Because of economic restructuring, job prospects often vary from one country to another and within regions of the same country.

An area that has valuable natural resources, such as petroleum or uranium, may attract miners and engineers. A new industry may lure factory workers, technicians, and scientists. Construction workers, restaurant employees, and public-service officials may move to areas where rapid population growth stimulates demand for additional services and facilities.

The United States and Canada have been especially prominent destinations for economic migrants. Many European immigrants to North America in the nineteenth century truly expected to find streets paved with gold. While not literally so gilded, the United States and Canada did offer Europeans prospects for economic advancement. This same perception of economic plenty now lures people to the United States and Canada from Latin America and Asia.

The relative attractiveness of a region can shift with economic change. Similarly, Scotland and Ireland have attracted migrants in recent years after decades of net out-migration. Following the discovery of petroleum in the North Sea off the coast of northeast Scotland, thousands of people have been lured to jobs in the drilling or refining of petroleum or in supporting businesses.

**Cultural Push and Pull Factors**

Cultural factors can be especially compelling push factors, forcing people to emigrate from a country. Forced international migration has historically occurred for two main cultural reasons: slavery and political instability. Millions of people were shipped to other countries as slaves or as prisoners, especially from Africa to the Western Hemisphere, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Large groups of people were no longer forced to migrate as slaves in the twentieth century, but forced international migration increased because of political instability resulting from cultural diversity. Boundaries of newly independent states often have been drawn to segregate two ethnic groups. Because at least some intermingling among ethnicities inevitably occurs, members of an ethnic group caught on the "wrong" side of a boundary may be forced to migrate to the other side. Wars have also forced large-scale migration of ethnic groups in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, especially in Europe and
Africa. Forced migration of ethnicities is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

According to the United Nations, refugees are people who have been forced to migrate from their homes and cannot return for fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion. Refugees have no home until another country agrees to allow them in, or improving conditions make possible a return to their former home. In the interim, they must camp out in tents, board in shelters, or lie down by the side of a road.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees, a nonprofit organization independent of the U.S. government (www.refugees.org), counted 33 million refugees in need of protection or assistance in 2005. This figure included 12 million people forced to migrate to another country and 21 million people forced to migrate to another region within the same country (Figure 3–1).

The two largest groups of international refugees, according to the U.S. Committee for Refugees, are Palestinians and Afghans. Palestinians are people who left Israel after the country was created in 1948, or those who left territories captured by Israel in 1967 (see Chapter 6). The large number of refugees from Afghanistan resulted from a quarter-century of civil war that began with the former Soviet Union’s invasion of the country in 1979 (see Chapter 8).

The two largest groups of internal refugees are in Sudan and Colombia. In Sudan, an estimated 5.3 million internal refugees plus 700,000 international refugees have been generated by a quarter-century-long civil war between rebel armies in the south and northern-based government forces. Religious and cultural disputes are intertwined in the southerners’ fight for autonomy (see Chapter 7).

In Colombia, government battles with drug lords and with guerrillas promoting land and social reform have resulted in 3 million refugees. Colombia has supplied 90 percent of the cocaine reaching the United States. More than 1 million internal refugees each are occurring in Congo, Iraq, and Uganda.

Political conditions can also operate as pull factors, especially the lure of freedom. People are attracted to democratic countries that encourage individual choice in education, career, and place of residence. This pull factor is particularly difficult to disentangle from a push factor, because the pull of democracy is normally accompanied by the push from a totalitarian country.

After Communists gained control of Eastern Europe in the late 1940s, many people in that region were pulled toward the democracies in Western Europe and North America. After permitting some emigration to the West, the Communist governments in Eastern Europe clamped down for fear of losing their most able workers. The most dramatic symbol of restricted emigration was the Berlin Wall, which the Communists built to prevent emigration from Communist-controlled East Berlin into democratic West Berlin.

With the election of democratic governments in Eastern Europe during the 1990s, Western Europe’s political pull disappeared as a migration factor. Eastern Europeans now can visit where they wish, although few have the money to pay for travel-related expenses beyond a round-trip bus ticket. However, Western Europe pulls an increasing number of migrants from Eastern Europe for economic reasons, as discussed later in this chapter.

Environmental Push and Pull Factors
People also migrate for environmental reasons, pulled toward physically attractive regions and pushed from hazardous ones. In an age of improved communications and transportation systems, people can live in environmentally attractive areas that are relatively remote and still not feel too isolated from employment, shopping, and entertainment opportunities.

![Figure 3-1](https://example.com/Figure3_1.png)

**FIGURE 3–1** Major sources and destinations of refugees. A refugee is a person who is forced to migrate from a country, usually because of political reasons. The U.S. Committee for Refugees estimated that in 2005 there were 12 million refugees forced to migrate to other countries and 21 million forced to migrate to another region of the same country.
Attractive environments for migrants include mountains, seascapes, and warm climates. Proximity to the Rocky Mountains lures Americans to the state of Colorado, and the Alps pull French people to eastern France. Some migrants are shocked to find polluted air and congestion in these areas. The southern coast of England, the Mediterranean coast of France, and the coasts of Florida attract migrants, especially retirees, who enjoy swimming and lying on the beach. Of all elderly people who migrate from one U.S. state to another, one third select Florida as their destination. Regions with warm winters, such as southern Spain and the southwestern United States, attract migrants from harsher climates.

Those with bronchitis, asthma, tuberculosis, and allergies have been pulled to Arizona by the dry desert climate. Ironically, the large number of migrants has modified Arizona’s environmental conditions. The pollen count in Tucson increased 3,500 percent since the 1940s, and the percentage of people with allergies there is now twice the national average.

Local experts attribute two-thirds of the pollen count in Tucson to three types of vegetation imported by migrants: the mulberry tree, the olive tree, and Bermuda grass. Some communities have banned these three species. The mulberry tree dies after 30 years, but the olive tree—an attractive species in Arizona because it is drought resistant—can live for 500 years. Bermuda grass sinks deep roots and is difficult to eradicate. Arizona’s recent experience shows that migration may no longer be the answer for people with allergies.

Migrants are also pushed from their homes by adverse physical conditions. Water—either too much or too little—poses the most common environmental threat. Many people are forced to move by water-related disasters because they live in a vulnerable area, such as a floodplain. The floodplain of a river is the area subject to flooding during a specific number of years, based on historical trends. People living in the “100-year floodplain,” for example, can expect flooding on average once every century. Many people are unaware that they live in a floodplain, and even people who do know often choose to live there anyway.

The widespread 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. Americans watching on television were shocked by the plight of residents stranded by the flooding; the squalid conditions in the evacuation centers, like the New Orleans Superdome and Convention Center; the lawlessness in the streets of New Orleans; and above all, the unsatisfactory response of emergency management officials.

A lack of water pushes others from their land. Hundreds of thousands have been forced to move from the Sahel region of northern Africa because of drought conditions. The people of the Sahel have traditionally been pastoral nomads, a form of agriculture adapted to dry lands but effective only at low population densities (see Chapter 10). The capacity of the Sahel to sustain human life—never very high—has declined recently because of population growth and several years of unusually low rainfall. Consequently, many of these nomads have been forced to move into cities and rural camps, where they survive on food donated by the government and international relief organizations.

In the United States, people were pushed from their land by severe drought as recently as the 1930s. Portions of Oklahoma and surrounding states became known as the Dust Bowl,
Many Eastern Europeans who booked passage a century ago on ships to North America never made it. An unscrupulous shipowner would sail the boat through the Baltic Sea and North Sea and land at Liverpool or some other British port. Told that they had reached America, the passengers—none of whom could speak English—paid for a transatlantic journey of 7,000 kilometers (4,400 miles) but received a voyage of 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) to an undesired destination.

Transportation improvements that have promoted globalization, such as motor vehicles and airplanes, have diminished the importance of environmental features as intervening obstacles. However, today’s migrant faces intervening obstacles created by local diversity in government and politics. A migrant needs a passport to legally emigrate from a country and a visa to legally immigrate to a new country.

**Distance of Migration**

Ravenstein’s theories made two main points about the distance that migrants travel to their new homes:

- 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. Consistent with the distance-decay principle presented in Chapter 1, the farther away a place is located, the less likely that people will migrate to it. Thus, international migrants are much less numerous than internal migrants.

Most people find migration within a country less traumatic than international migration because they find familiar language, foods, broadcasts, literature, music, and other social customs after they move. Moves within a country also generally involve much shorter distances than those in international migration. However, internal migration can involve long-distance moves in large countries, such as in the United States and Russia.

Internal migration can be divided into two types: *interregional migration* is movement from one region of a country to another, whereas *intraregional migration* is movement within one region. Historically, the main type of interregional migration has been from rural to urban areas in search of jobs. In recent years, some developed countries have seen migration from urban to environmentally attractive rural areas. The main type of intraregional migration has been within urban areas, from older cities to newer suburbs.

**International Migration**

International migration is further divided into two types: forced and voluntary. *Voluntary migration* implies that the migrant has chosen to move for economic improvement,
whereas *forced migration* means that the migrant has been *compelled* to move by cultural factors. Economic push and pull factors usually induce voluntary migration, whereas cultural factors normally compel forced migration. In one sense, migrants may also feel compelled by pressure inside themselves to migrate for economic reasons, such as to search for food or jobs, but they have not been explicitly compelled to migrate by the violent actions of other people.

Geographer Wilbur Zelinsky identified a *migration transition*, which consists of changes in a society comparable to those in the demographic transition. The migration transition is a change in the migration pattern in a society that results from the social and economic changes that also produce the demographic transition.

According to the migration transition, international migration is primarily a phenomenon of countries in stage 2 of the demographic transition, whereas internal migration is more important in stages 3 and 4. A society in stage 1 of the demographic transition—characterized by high birth and death rates and a low natural increase rate—is unlikely to migrate permanently to a new location, although it does have high daily or seasonal mobility in search of food.

In stage 2 of the demographic transition—when the natural increase rate goes up rapidly as a result of a sharp decline in the crude death rate—international migration becomes important, as does interregional migration from one country’s rural areas to its cities. Like the sudden decline in the crude death rate, migration patterns in stage 2 societies are a consequence of technological change. Improvement in agricultural practices reduces the number of people needed in rural areas, whereas jobs in factories attract migrants to the cities in another region of the same country or in another country.

Crude birth rates begin to decline in stages 3 and 4 of the demographic transition as a result of social changes—people deciding to have fewer children. 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. The principal form of 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.
- Most long-distance migrants are adult individuals rather than families with children.

**Gender of Migrants**

A century ago, Ravenstein theorized that males were more likely than females to migrate long distances to other countries, because searching for work was the main reason for international migration, and males were much more likely than females to be employed. This held true for U.S. immigrants: during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, about 55 percent were male. But the gender pattern reversed in the 1990s, and women now constitute about 55 percent of U.S. immigrants.

Mexicans who come to the United States without proper immigration documents—currently the largest group of U.S. immigrants—show similar gender changes. As recently as the late 1980s, males constituted 85 percent of the Mexican migrants arriving in the United States without proper documents, according to U.S. census and immigration service estimates. But since the 1990s, women have accounted for about half of the undocumented immigrants from Mexico.

The increased female migration to the United States partly reflects the changing role of women in Mexican society: in the past, rural Mexican women were obliged to marry at a young age and to remain in the village to care for children. Now some Mexican women are migrating to the United States to join husbands or brothers already in the United States, but most are seeking jobs. At the same time, women also feel increased pressure to get a job in the United States because of poor economic conditions in Mexico.

**Family Status of Migrants**

Ravenstein also believed that most long-distance migrants were young adults seeking work, rather than children or elderly people. For the most part, this pattern continues for the United States. About 40 percent of immigrants are between the ages of 25 and 39, compared to about 23 percent of the entire U.S. population. Immigrants are less likely to be elderly people; only 5 percent of immigrants are over age 65, compared to 12 percent of the entire U.S. population.

An increasing percentage of U.S. immigrants are children—16 percent of immigrants are under age 15, compared to 21 percent for the total U.S. population. With the increase in women migrating to the United States, more children are coming with their mothers.

Recent immigrants to the United States have attended school for fewer years and are less likely to have high school diplomas than are U.S. citizens. The typical undocumented Mexican immigrant has attended school for 4 years, less than the average American but a year more than the average Mexican.

For the most part, the origin of Mexican immigrants to the United States matches the expectations of the migration transition and distance-decay theories. With Mexico in stage 2 of the demographic transition, more than three-fourths of migrants are from rural areas. The destinations of choice within the United States are overwhelmingly states that border Mexico, with California receiving more than half, Texas another fifth, and other southwestern states most of the remainder.

But most immigrants originate not from Mexico’s northern states but from interior states far from the U.S. border, as the distance-decay theory would suggest. The four leading sources of Mexican migrants are the states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, Chihuahua, and Zacatecas, and only Chihuahua is on the U.S. border. Residents of Mexico’s border states are less likely to migrate to the United States, because jobs are relatively plentiful.
there (as discussed in Chapter 11) as a result of increased economic integration with the United States.

Most illegal Mexican immigrants have jobs in their home villages but migrate to the United States to earn more money. The largest number work in agriculture, picking fruits and vegetables, although some work in clothing factories. Even those who work long hours for a few dollars a day as farm laborers or factory workers prefer to earn relatively low wages by American standards than to live in poverty at home.

Most undocumented residents have no difficulty finding jobs in the United States. Some employers like to hire immigrants who do not have visas that permit them to work in the United States, because they can pay lower wages and do not have to provide health care, retirement plans, and other benefits. Unsatisfactory or troublesome workers can be fired and threatened with deportation.

Because farm work is seasonal, the flow of immigrants varies throughout the year. The greatest number of Mexicans head north to the United States in the autumn and return home in the spring. The money brought back by seasonal migrants is the primary source of income for many Mexican villages (and, of course, that money is removed from the U.S. economy). Shops give credit to the villagers through the winter until the men return in the spring with dollars. During the winter, these villages may be inhabited almost entirely by women and children.

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—that is, they currently live in countries other than the ones in which they were born. The country with by far the largest number of international migrants 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 three largest flows of migrants are to Europe from Asia and to North America from Asia and from Latin America (Figure 3–2). Substantial in-migration also occurs from Europe to North America and from Asia to Oceania. Lower levels of net migration occur from Latin America to Oceania and from Africa to Europe, North America, and Oceania.

The global pattern reflects the importance of migration from less developed countries to more developed countries. Migrants from countries with relatively low incomes and high natural increase rates head for relatively wealthy countries, where job prospects are brighter.

![Annual Net Migration](image)

**Figure 3–2** Global migration patterns. The major flows of international migrants are from less developed countries to more developed countries, especially from Asia and Latin America to North America and from Asia to Europe.

The population of the United States includes about 35 million individuals born in other countries. More than one-half of these immigrants were born in Latin America and one-fourth in Asia. More than one-half of the Latin American immigrants came from Mexico. Other countries with a large number of immigrants include Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom (Figure 3–3).

Immigrants comprise 12 percent of the population in the United States. Although it contains the largest number of immigrants, the United States has a smaller percentage of immigrants than several less populous countries. One-fourth of the Australian population and one-sixth of the Canadian population are immigrants. The overall percentage of immigrants in Europe is around 5 percent, lower than in the United States, though it is much higher in smaller European countries, such as Luxembourg and Switzerland.

The highest percentage of immigrants can be found in the Middle East, at about one-half of the region’s total population. The population of the United Arab Emirates is made up of approximately 74 percent immigrants, and Kuwait 68 percent. These countries and other petroleum-exporting countries of the Middle East attract immigrants primarily from poorer Middle Eastern countries and from Asia to perform many of the dirty and dangerous functions in the oil fields.

U.S. Immigration Patterns

The United States plays a special role in the study of international migration. The world’s third most populous country is inhabited overwhelmingly by direct descendants of immigrants. 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 of immigration. The first era was the initial settlement of colonies. The second
era began in the mid-nineteenth century and culminated in the early twentieth century. The third era began in the 1970s and continues today. The three eras have drawn migrants from different regions. Most immigrants were English or African slaves during the first era, nearly all were European during the second era, and more than three-fourths were from Latin America and Asia during the third era.

Although the origins vary, the reason for migrating has remained essentially the same: Rapid population growth limited prospects for economic advancement at home. Europeans left when their countries entered stage 2 of the demographic transition in the nineteenth century, and Latin Americans and Asians began to leave in large numbers in recent years after their countries entered stage 2. But Europeans arriving in the United States in the nineteenth century found a very different country than Latin Americans and Asians who have recently arrived.

**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.

About 1 million Europeans migrated to the American colonies prior to independence, and another million from the late 1700s until 1840. From the first permanent English settlers to arrive at the Virginia colony's Jamestown, in 1607, until 1840, a steady stream of Europeans migrated to the American colonies (and after 1776 to the newly independent United States of America). Although early migrants included some Dutch, Swedes, French, Germans, German-Swiss, Spanish, and Portuguese, 90 percent of European immigrants to the United States prior to 1840 came from Great Britain.

Most African Americans are descended from Africans forced to migrate to the Western Hemisphere as slaves. About 400,000 Africans were shipped as slaves to the 13 colonies that later formed the United States during the eighteenth century, primarily by the British. The importation of Africans as slaves was made illegal in 1808, but another 250,000 Africans were brought to the United States during the next half-century (see Chapter 7).

**Nineteenth-Century Immigration from Europe**

In the 500-plus 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. The remainder went primarily to the temperate climates of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, southern Africa, and southern South America, where farming methods used in Europe could be most easily transplanted.

For European migrants, the United States offered the greatest opportunity for economic success. Early migrants extolled the virtues of the United States to friends and relatives back in Europe, which encouraged still others to come.
The total flow of European migrants to the United States and the number from individual countries has varied from year to year. Among European countries, Germany has sent the largest number of immigrants to the United States, 7.2 million. Other major European sources include Italy, 5.4 million; United Kingdom, 5.3 million; Ireland, 4.8 million; and Russia and the former Soviet Union, 4.1 million. About one-fourth of Americans trace their ancestry to German immigrants, and one-eighth each to Irish and English immigrants.

Note that frequent boundary changes in Europe make precise national counts impossible. For example, most Poles migrated to the United States at a time when Poland did not exist as an independent country. Therefore, most were counted as immigrants from Germany, Russia, or Austria.

**FIRST PEAK OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION.** The level of immigration to the United States surged during the 1840s and 1850s (Figure 3-4). Around 4.3 million people migrated to the United States during those two decades, more than twice as many as in the previous 250 years combined. Immigration jumped from approximately 20,000 per year during the first 50 years of independence to over 250,000 in the peak immigration years of the 1840s and 1850s.

During the 1840s and 1850s, more than 95 percent of all U.S. immigrants came from Northern and Western Europe, including two-fifths from Ireland and another one-third from Germany. At first, desperate economic push factors compelled the Irish and Germans to cross the Atlantic. Germans migrated to escape from political unrest, as well as from poor economic conditions.

**SECOND PEAK OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION.** U.S. immigration declined somewhat during the 1860s as a result of the Civil War (1861–65), but it began to climb again in the 1870s. Immigration reached a second peak during the 1880s, when more than a half-million people annually immigrated to the United States.

Again, during the late 1800s, most immigrants came from Northern and Western Europe. Germans accounted for one-third, and the Irish still constituted a large percentage. However, other countries in Northern and Western Europe sent increasing numbers of migrants, especially the Scandinavian countries of Norway and Sweden. The industrial revolution had diffused to these countries, and the population was growing rapidly as a result of entering stage 2 of the demographic transition (rapidly declining crude death rates). Most who could not find land to farm at home—such as those whose older siblings had inherited their parents' farm—migrated to the cities. But some decided to migrate to other countries in search of farmland or jobs in foreign cities.

**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. Nearly a million people each year immigrated during the first 15 years of the twentieth century. The record year was 1907, with 1.3 million immigrants.

![Migration to the United States by region of origin.](image-url)

**Figure 3-4** Migration to the United States by region of origin. Europeans comprised more than 90 percent of the immigrants to the United States during the nineteenth century, and even as recently as the early 1960s, still accounted for more than 50 percent. Latin America and Asia are now the dominant sources of immigrants to the United States.
CONTEMPORARY GEOGRAPHIC TOOLS

Claiming Ellis Island

Twelve million immigrants to the United States between 1892 and 1954 were processed at Ellis Island, situated in New York Harbor. Incorporated as part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument in 1965, Ellis Island was restored and reopened in 1990 as a museum of immigration. Before building the immigration center, the U.S. government used Ellis Island as a fort and powder magazine beginning in 1808.

An 1834 agreement approved by the U.S. Congress gave Ellis Island to New York State and the submerged lands surrounding the island to New Jersey. When the agreement was signed, Ellis Island was only 1.1 hectares (2.75 acres), but beginning in the 1890s, the U.S. government enlarged the island, eventually to 10.6 hectares (27.5 acres).

New Jersey state officials claimed that the 10.6-hectare Ellis Island was part of their state, not New York. The claim was partly a matter of pride on the part of New Jersey officials to stand up to their more glamorous neighbor. After all, Ellis Island was only 1,300 feet from the New Jersey shoreline, yet tourists—like immigrants a century ago—are transported by ferry to Lower Manhattan more than a mile away. More practically, the sales tax collected by the Ellis Island museum gift shop was going to New York rather than to New Jersey.

After decades of dispute, New Jersey asked the U.S. Supreme Court in 1993 to rule on its claim to Ellis Island. The Supreme Court in May 1998 ruled 6–3 that New York owned the original island but that New Jersey owned the rest. New York’s jurisdiction was set as the low waterline of the original island.

Critical evidence in the decision consisted of a series of maps prepared by New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) officials using geographic information systems (GIS). And after ruling in favor of New Jersey’s claim, the Supreme Court directed the NJDEP to delineate the precise boundary between the two states, again using GIS.

New Jersey officials scanned into an image file an 1857 U.S. coast map that was considered to be the most reliable from that era. The image file of the old map was brought into Arc-View, and then the low waterline shown on the 1857 map was edited and depicted by a series of dots. The perimeter of the current island was mapped, using global positioning system (GPS) surveying. Also mapped was the surviving portion of the walls of the original fort built on the island in the early nineteenth century. Overlaying the 1857 low waterline onto the current map identified New York’s territory, and the rest of the current island belonged to New Jersey.

New Jersey officials celebrated the legal victory by raising the state flag over Ellis Island at a July 4 ceremony. The island’s zip code was changed from a New York to a New Jersey number. A footbridge was built from Jersey City so that visitors could bypass the ferry from Manhattan (Figure 3-1.1). Joked former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, “They’re still not going to convince me that my grandfather, when he was sitting in Italy thinking of coming to the United States, getting on that ship in Genoa, was saying to himself, ‘I’m coming to New Jersey.’”

FIGURE 3-1.1 New York Harbor. Ellis Island is connected to New Jersey by bridge. Liberty Island, containing the Statue of Liberty, is south of Ellis Island.

During the third peak, more than 90 percent of immigrants were European. But instead of coming from Great Britain, Ireland, and Germany, most came from countries that previously had sent few people. Nearly one-fourth each came from Italy, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. (Austria-Hungary encompassed portions of present-day Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine.) Immigrants came from Southern and Eastern Europe in the early twentieth century for the same reason that Northern and Western Europeans had migrated in the previous century. The shift in the primary source of immigrants coincided with the diffusion of the industrial revolution from Northern and Western Europe to Southern and Eastern Europe. The populations of these countries grew rapidly as a result of improved technology and health care.
For many, the option of migrating to the United States proved irresistible.

At the peak of immigration around 1910, 13 million U.S. residents were either born in a foreign country or had at least one foreign-born parent. This amounted to 14 percent of the country’s total population of 92 million. These recent immigrants comprised more than 20 percent of the population in northeastern states, across a northern tier between Michigan and Montana, and along the Pacific Coast.

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. During the 1930s, only 50,000 immigrants a year arrived in the United States, and the number of emigrants leaving the United States actually exceeded the number of immigrants by one-fourth. The number of immigrants to the United States steadily increased during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and then surged during the past quarter-century to historically high levels. Latin America and Asia have provided most of the recent U.S. immigrants.

Immigration from Asia. During the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, only 1 million Asians migrated to the United States, nearly all from China, Turkey, and Japan. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, about 7 million Asians arrived in the United States, and annual immigration from Asia increased from 40,000 in the 1960s to 150,000 in the 1970s to 280,000 in the 1980s and 1990s.

Asia was the leading source of immigrants between the late 1970s and late 1980s until overtaken by Latin America. The four leading sources of U.S. immigrants from Asia during the 1990s and 2000s have been China (including Hong Kong), Philippines, India, and Vietnam, which together have accounted for nearly two-thirds of all Asian immigrants in recent years (Figure 3–5).

Asians also comprise more than 40 percent of Canadian immigrants, but, compared to the United States, Canada receives a much higher percentage of Europeans and a lower percentage of Latin Americans. Canada, however, takes in 50 percent more immigrants per capita than does the United States.
IMMIGRATION FROM LATIN AMERICA. About 2 million Latin Americans migrated to the United States between 1820 and 1960, and about 13 million between 1960 and 2005. Annual immigration from Latin America increased from 60,000 in the 1950s to 130,000 in the 1960s, 180,000 in the 1970s, 350,000 in the 1980s, 430,000 in the 1990s, and 400,000 since 2000.

Officially, Mexico passed Germany in 2006 as the country that has sent to the United States the most immigrants ever. Because of the large number of undocumented immigrants, Mexico probably became the leading source during the 1980s. The Dominican Republic has been the second leading source of immigrants from Latin America during the past quarter-century, followed by El Salvador (Figure 3-6).

An unusually large number of immigrants came from Mexico and other Latin American countries in the early 1990s as a result of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which issued visas to several hundred thousand people who had entered the United States in previous years without legal documents. Counting those legalized under the 1986 act, the United States in 1991 admitted more immigrants—1.8 million—than any other year in history, with 1990 the second highest ever, at 1.5 million.

The pattern of immigration to the United States has changed from predominantly European to Asian and Latin American, although the reason for immigration remains the same. People are pushed by poor conditions at home and lured by economic opportunity and social advancement in the United States. Europeans came in the nineteenth century because they saw the United States as a place to escape from the pressures of land shortage and rapid population increase. Similar motives exist today for people in Asia and Latin America. Several Caribbean countries in stage 2 of the demographic transition are transferring the equivalent of most of their annual natural increase in population to the United States.

Although the motives for moving to the United States are similar, the country has changed over time. Unfortunately for people in less developed countries, the United States is no longer a sparsely settled, economically booming country with a large supply of unclaimed land. In 1912, New Mexico and Arizona were admitted as the forty-seventh and forty-eighth states. Thus, for the first time in its history, all the contiguous territory of this country was a "united" state (other than the District of Columbia). This symbolic closing of the frontier meant to many Americans that the country no longer had the space to accommodate an unlimited number of immigrants.

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

The era of massive European migration to the United States ended with the start of World War I in 1914, because the war involved the most important source countries, such as Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia, as well as the United States. The level of European emigration has steadily declined since that time. Europeans accounted for one-fourth of all U.S. immigrants in the 1970s and one-seventh since 1980.

### EUROPE’S DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION.

Rapid population growth in Europe fueled emigration, especially after 1800. Application of new technologies spawned by the industrial revolution—such as public health, medicine, and food—produced a rapid decline in the death rate and pushed much of Europe into stage 2 of the demographic transition (high growth rate). As the population increased, many Europeans found limited opportunities for economic advancement.

To promote more efficient agriculture, some European governments forced the consolidation of several small farms into larger units. Historically, family farms often had to be divided among a great number of relatives, and the average farm was becoming too small to be profitable. In England, this consolidation policy was known as the “enclosure movement.” The enclosure movement forced millions of people to emigrate from rural areas. Displaced farmers could choose to work in factories in the large cities or migrate to the United States or another country where farmland was plentiful.

For several hundred years, the United States was Europe’s safety valve. When Europe’s population began to increase rapidly because of the industrial revolution, migration to the United States drained off some of the growth. As a result, people remaining in Europe enjoyed more of the economic and social benefits from the industrial revolution.

Most European countries now have very low natural increase rates (stage 4 of the demographic transition) and economies capable of meeting the needs of their people. Countries such as Germany, Italy, and Ireland, which once sent several hundred thousand people annually to the United States, now send only a few thousand. The safety valve is no longer needed.

### DIFFUSION OF EUROPEAN CULTURE.

The emigration of 65 million Europeans has profoundly changed world culture. As do all migrants, Europeans brought their cultural heritage to their new homes. Because of migration, Indo-European languages now are spoken by half of the world’s people (as discussed in Chapter 5), and Europe’s most prevalent religion, Christianity, has the world’s largest numbers of adherents (see Chapter 6). European art, music, literature, philosophy, and ethics have also diffused throughout the world.

Regions that were sparsely inhabited prior to European immigration, such as North America and Australia, have become closely integrated into Europe’s cultural traditions. Distinctive European political structures and economic systems have diffused to these regions.

However, Europeans also planted the seeds of conflict by migrating to regions that have large indigenous populations, especially in Africa and Asia. 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.

In more tropical climates, especially in Latin America and Asia, European migrants established plantations that grew cotton, rice, sugar, and tobacco for sale back in Europe. Europeans owned most of the plantations, but relatively few worked on them. Instead, most of the workers were native Asians or Latin Americans or were slaves from Africa. Many of today’s conflicts in former European colonies result from past practices by European immigrants, such as drawing arbitrary boundary lines and discriminating among different local ethnic groups.

### Undocumented Immigration to the United States

Legal immigration to the United States has reached the highest level since the early twentieth century, yet the number of people who wish to migrate to the United States is much higher than the quotas permit. Many people who cannot legally enter the United States are now immigrating illegally. Those who do so are entering without proper documents and thus are called **undocumented immigrants** or unauthorized immigrants.

No one knows how many people immigrate to the United States without proper documents. The Urban Institute placed the figure in 2005 at around 9.3 million, including 5.3 million from Mexico, 2.2 million from other Latin American countries, 1 million from Asia, one-half million from Europe and Canada, and one-half million from the rest of the world. The Pew Hispanic Center estimated a higher level of 11.1 million in 2005 and between 11.5 and 12 million in 2006.

The Pew Hispanic Center’s 2005 estimate of undocumented immigrants included 5.4 million adult males, 3.9 million adult females, and 1.8 million children. In addition, 3.1 million children who were U.S. citizens were living in families with an adult who was an unauthorized immigrant. The Pew Hispanic Center researchers also found that 40 percent of the unauthorized immigrants had been in the United States for 5 years or less, 26 percent between 5 and 10 years, and 34 percent more than 10 years.

People enter or remain in the United States without authorization primarily because they wish to work but do not have permission to do so from the government. About 7.2 million of the 11.1 unauthorized immigrants in 2005 were employed, according to the Pew Hispanic Center’s estimate, accounting for 5 percent of the total U.S. civilian labor force. They constituted 24 percent of workers in farming, 17 percent in cleaning, 14 percent in construction, and 12 percent in food preparation. Foreigners who fail to receive work visas have two choices if they still wish to work in the United States:

- Approximately half of the undocumented residents legally enter the country as students or tourists and then remain after they are supposed to leave.
The other half simply slip across the border without showing a passport and visa to a border guard.

Crossing the U.S.-Mexican border illegally has not been difficult. Guards heavily patrol the official border crossings, most of which are located in urban areas such as El Paso, Texas, and San Diego, California, or along highways. However, the border is 3,600 kilometers (2,000 miles) long. It runs through sparsely inhabited regions and is guarded by only a handful of agents. A fence runs along the border but is broken in many places.

Actually finding the border is difficult in some remote areas. A joint U.S.-Mexican International Boundary and Water Commission is responsible for keeping official maps, on the basis of a series of nineteenth-century treaties. The commission is also responsible for marking the border by maintaining 276 6-foot-tall iron monuments erected in the late nineteenth century, as well as 440 15-inch-tall markers added in the 1970s.

Once in the United States, undocumented immigrants can become “documented” by purchasing forged documents for as little as $25, including a birth certificate, alien registration card, and social security number. What happens to the minority of illegal immigrants who are caught? The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and its predecessors have apprehended an average of 1.3 million undocumented immigrants per year since the 1980s. More than 90 percent of those apprehended have been Mexicans. To save time and money, the border patrol escorts them out of the country. However, the overwhelming majority simply retrace their steps and re-cross the border.

Americans are divided concerning whether undocumented migration helps or hurts the country. Most Americans recognize that undocumented immigrants take jobs that no one else wants, and a majority would support some type of work-related program to make them legal. At the same time, Americans would like more effective border patrols so that fewer undocumented immigrants can get into the country.

The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act tried to reduce the flow of illegal immigrants to the United States. Under the law, 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. Seasonal agricultural workers could also qualify for permanent residence and citizenship. However, only 1.3 million agricultural workers and 1.8 million others applied for permanent residence, far fewer than government officials estimated would take advantage of the program. Other undocumented residents apparently feared that if their applications were rejected, they would be deported. Many of those who received permanent residence were later found to have purchased fraudulent papers on the black market.

At the same time, the law discouraged further illegal immigration by making it harder for recent immigrants to get jobs without proper documentation. An employer must verify that a newly hired worker can legally work in the United States and may be fined or imprisoned for hiring an undocumented worker.

Destination of Immigrants Within the United States

Recent immigrants are not distributed uniformly throughout the United States. More than one-half are clustered in four states, including more than one-fourth in California and more than one-fourth in New York, Florida, and Texas. Coastal states were once the main entry points for immigrants, because most arrived by ship. Today, nearly all arrive by motor vehicle or airplane, but coastal states continue to attract migrants. California and Texas are the two most popular states for entry of motor vehicles from Mexico, and these states have the country’s busiest airports for international arrivals.

Undocumented immigrants show a similar pattern. More than one-fourth are in California; nearly one-fourth are in Texas or Florida; another one-fourth can be found in New York, Arizona, Illinois, Georgia, or New Jersey; and the remaining one-fourth can be found in the other 42 states (Figure 3–7). Undocumented immigration is relatively high in states that are relatively accessible to Mexico, where more than 90 percent originate.

Individual states attract immigrants from different countries. Immigrants from Mexico head for California, Texas, or Illinois, whereas immigrants from Caribbean island countries head for New York or Florida. Chinese and Indians immigrate primarily to New York or California, and other Asians immigrate to California (Figure 3–8).

Proximity clearly influences some decisions, such as Mexicans preferring California or Texas, and Cubans preferring Florida. But proximity is not a factor in Poles heading for Illinois or Irani-
GLOBAL FORCES, LOCAL IMPACTS
Undocumented Immigration Viewed from the Mexican Side

From the United States, the view to the south may seem straightforward. Millions of Mexicans are trying to cross the border by whatever means, legal or otherwise, in search of employment, family reunification, and a better way of life in the United States.

The view from Mexico is more complex. Along its northern border with the United States, Mexico is the source of the undocumented immigrants. At the same time, along its southern border with Guatemala, Mexico is the destination for undocumented immigrants. When talking with its neighbor to the north, Mexicans urge understanding and sympathy for the plight of the immigrants. When talking with its neighbor to the south, Mexicans urge stronger security along the border.

Along the U.S.-Mexican border, the contrast in wealth between the two countries is apparent, even in satellite imagery. Small houses packed close together on the Mexican side face large houses with wooded lots and swimming pools on the American side. Contrasts also exist along Mexico's southern border. Some cross into Mexico from Guatemala because they can get higher-paying jobs in tropical fruit plantations. The Suchiate River, which marks the border between Hidalgo, Mexico, and Tecum Uman, Guatemala, is sometimes only ankle deep. Immigrants from other Latin American countries, especially El Salvador and Honduras, travel through Guatemala without need of a passport in order to cross into Mexico. Although a passport is needed to cross the border from Guatemala into Mexico, hundreds of thousands do so illegally.

The ultimate destination for most undocumented immigrants into Mexico is the U.S. border. Ironically, it is easier for undocumented immigrants in the United States if they are not Mexican. Undocumented Mexicans apprehended in the United States are usually bused back across the border into Mexico and released, but those from other countries who are apprehended in the United States are usually arrested and released with orders to appear at a court hearing. Once released, they are free to travel within the United States, blending in with other immigrants, and few show up at scheduled court hearings several months later.

Meanwhile, the millions of Mexicans living legally and illegally in the United States have constituted a powerful political and economic force back in Mexico. The Inter-American Development Bank estimated that immigrants in the United States sent $17 billion back to Mexico in 2005, and $28 million to other Latin American countries. Most of these remittances were used by relatives for food, clothing, and shelter, but government officials have tried to channel some of the money into development projects. The Mexican government has also faced pressure to make it easier for the millions of its citizens living in the United States to vote in elections back home.

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**KEY ISSUE 3**

**Why Do Migrants Face Obstacles?**

- Immigration policies of host countries
- Cultural problems faced while living in other countries

The principal obstacle traditionally faced by migrants to other countries was the long, arduous, and expensive passage over land or by sea. Think of the cramped and unsanitary conditions endured by nineteenth-century immi-