

Immigration

The Language of Migration: Key Concepts

Demographers, historians, and sociologists have developed a technical vocabulary that is useful in understanding the nature, varieties, and results of migration.

Career Migration:	The movement of people or households in response to occupational opportunities in business enterprises, government bureaucracies, or the military.
Chain Migration:	The movement of clusters of individuals from a common place of origin to another place. The earlier migrants provide later migrants with aid and information.
Circular Migration:	A well-defined pattern of migration, such as seasonal work or grazing of livestock or sending children temporarily into domestic service in another family's home, in which migrants return to their place of origin.
Diaspora:	The dispersion abroad of a group of people.
Emigration:	The departure of people from their homeland to take up residence in a new place of residence.
Forced Migration:	Migration that takes place when the migrant has no choice about whether or not to move.
Global Migration:	Human movement across continents.
Immigration:	The movement into a country of which one is not a native.
Impelled Migration:	Migration that takes place under great economic, political, or social pressures.
Internal Migration:	The movement of people from one part of a country or region to another.
Local Migration:	Migration within a narrow geographical area, often within a single labor market or agricultural market.
Long-Distance Movements:	The movement of people from one country or region to another.
Repatriation:	The return of migrants or displaced persons to their place of origin or citizenship.

Repeat Migration: Individuals who repeatedly migrate from and return to their place of origin.

Seasonal Migration: Migration at a particular time of the year.

Who Migrates?

Even in societies with high rates of emigration, not everyone migrates. Who chooses to stay and who goes?

Migrants are rarely a random cross-section of the population. Rather, migrants usually share certain social characteristics, including age, sex, marital status, occupation, and ethnic background. Thus, for example, many early twentieth century Italian migrants were unmarried men in their teens or twenties; most early-twentieth century Russian migrants were Jews.

Migration often takes place during a particular stage of the life cycle. It is particularly common for individuals to migrate during adolescence or early adulthood or at the time of marriage.

Many studies of migration have emphasized the idea that migrants have a different psychology than those who decide to remain behind. Some speculate that migrants are less tradition-bound, more restless, or more aspiring than non-migrants. Many scholars distinguish between the true "innovators," the first individuals in a particular society to migrate to a new area, and those who follow in their footsteps.

In some instances, it seems clear that migrants are traditionalists who seek to preserve an older way of life. During the mid-nineteenth century, many German emigrants to the United States were motivated by a desire to maintain pre-industrial crafts in the face of disruptive social and economic changes linked to the rise of industry. Many migrated to rural areas in the U.S. Midwest, where they set up farms or engaged in crafts.

What, then, are the effects of migration on their community of origin? Migration often entails the loss of people with certain characteristics--age, sex, social attitudes, education, religion, ethnicity, and income. Because migrants often consist of a disproportionate number of young men, migration tends to reduce a community's population growth rate. Recently, many economically underdeveloped societies have expressed a fear that migration has resulted in a "brain drain"--a loss of the society's most educated and highly skilled members--to wealthier countries.

- Innovators: The first individuals in a society to migrate to a new area.
- Traditionalists: Immigrants who seek to preserve an earlier way of life.

Why do people migrate?

In trying to understand why people migrate, some scholars emphasize individual decision making, while others stress broader structural forces. Many early scholars of migration emphasized the importance of "push" and "pull" factors. According to this viewpoint, people decide to leave their homeland when conditions there are no longer satisfactory and when conditions in another area are more attractive.

In recent years, many scholars have argued that a thorough understanding of the decision to migrate involves looking at various levels of explanation: the individual, the familial and the structural-institutional. The first level of explanation--the individual or the psychological--focuses on individual perception and asks what advantages individuals hope to obtain by migrating. These often include the prospects of increased economic opportunity or a higher standard of living or escape from social turmoil.

A second level of explanation focuses on family needs. Often, the decision to migrate is not simply a personal but a family decision, reflecting the desire of a larger family unit to enhance its security or improve its well-being. Many family or kin groups receive "remittances"--cash payments that help to support family members--from relatives who have migrated to another area.

A third level of explanation--the structural and institutional--focuses on the broad social, political and economic contexts encourage or discourage population movement. Factors that stimulate migration include improvements in transportation and communication or income differentials between more economically advanced and less advanced areas. War, too, often induces migration. Factors that inhibit migration include immigration laws restricting exit or entry or laws or social practices that tie farmers to the land (such as sharecropping or debt peonage which prevented many African Americans from leaving the post-Civil War American South).

- **Push Factors:** Factors that repel migrants from their country of origin--include economic dislocation, population pressures, religious persecution, or denial of political rights.
- **Pull Factors:** Factors that attract migrants to move, including the attraction of higher wages, job opportunities, and political or religious liberty.
- **Uneven Development:** Disparities in income, standards of living, and the availability of jobs within and across societies.

The Language of Culture Persistence and Adaptation

The study of migration encourages us to think about the process of cultural adjustment and adaptation that takes place after migrants move from one environment to another. In the early twentieth century, Americans commonly thought of migration in terms of a

"melting pot," in which immigrants shed their identities and assimilated into the dominant culture. Today, we are more likely to speak of the persistence and blending of cultural values and practices.

- Assimilation: Absorption into the cultural tradition of another group.
- Creolization: Cultural patterns and practices that reflect a mixture of cultural influences. In terms of language, creolization refers to the way that a subordinate group incorporates elements of a dominant group's language, simplifying grammar and mixing each group's vocabulary.
- Fusion: The melding together of various cultural practices.
- Hybridization: A fusion of diverse cultures or traditions.
- Redefinition: To alter the meaning of an existing cultural practice, tradition, or concept.
- Survival: The persistence of an earlier cultural practice in a new setting.
- Syncretization: The way that a group of people adapts to a changing social environment by selectively incorporating the beliefs or practices of a dominant group.

The Stages of Migration

Migration usually involves a series of distinct steps or stages. These include:

- The stimuli that lead individuals to migrate
- Preparations to move
- Departure
- The transit to a new environment
- Arrival
- Acclimation to a new location
- Reception of immigrants into the new environment
- Establishment of a new identity

Questions to think about:

1. Do all migrants pass through each of these stages?
2. Does this model only apply to "voluntary" emigrants? Or is it also useful in understanding the experience of involuntary migrants?
3. Are there any other stages that you would add to this list?

Kinds of Migrants

When we think of migrants, one image quickly comes to mind: people who permanently depart their place of birth and travel hundreds and even thousands of miles to make a new home. But this kind of migration represents only one of many forms of migration.

Migration may be voluntary or involuntary. Involuntary migrants are those people who are forced to move--by organized persecution or government pressure. Migration may be temporary or permanent. Approximately a third of the European immigrants who arrived in the United States between 1820 and World War I eventually returned to live in their country of origin. These "birds of passage," as they are known, often returned to the United States several times before permanently settling in their homeland.

Migration may also be short distance or long distance. Short-distance migrants might move from a rural community to a nearby urban area or from a smaller city to a larger one. Migration may be cyclical and repetitive, like the rhythmic migrations of nomadic livestock herders or present day farm laborers. Or it may be tied to a particular stage in the life cycle, like the decision of an adolescent to leave home to go to college.

The motives behind immigration may also vary widely. Migration may occur in reaction to poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, persecution, or dislocation. It may also arise in response to employment opportunities or the prospects of religious or political freedom. In distinguishing between different kinds of migration, it is important to look at:

- The distance travelled;
- The causes of migration;
- Whether migration is temporary, semi-permanent, or permanent;
- Whether the migration is voluntary, involuntary, or the result of pressure.

- "Coolie" Laborer: A pejorative term referring to a contract manual laborer, usually from South or East Asia.
- Displaced Person: A person displaced from a place of residence by war, political strife, or natural catastrophe.
- Nomad: A member of a people who have no fixed place of residence, usually a migratory pastoral people.
- Pioneer: An individual who helps to open up a frontier region to settlement.
- Refugee: A person who flees to a foreign country to escape danger or persecution.
- Slave: A person who is held in servitude as another person's chattel property.
- Sojourner: A temporary resident.

Questions to think about

1. Do you think that temporary migrants are less likely to learn the language of their new place of residence or to marry individuals outside their ethnic group?

2. Do you think they are more or less likely to establish community, cultural, labor, or religious organizations in their land of residence?
3. Do you think that temporary migrants are more likely to select jobs that allow them to be mobile?