



International Migration

Causes, patterns and consequences of international migration feature on almost all A-level Geography syllabuses. This Factsheet will summarise and illustrate the causes and consequences of such migration. Future Factsheets will cover internal migration and the approaches to the classification of migration.

Why Does Migration Begin?

Push/Pull Model

Push factors are negative aspects of the country of **origin** that cause people to move away. Lack of jobs, poverty, environmental problems such as drought, the unattractiveness of jobs in, for example, agriculture, war, persecution and political unrest are good examples of push factors.

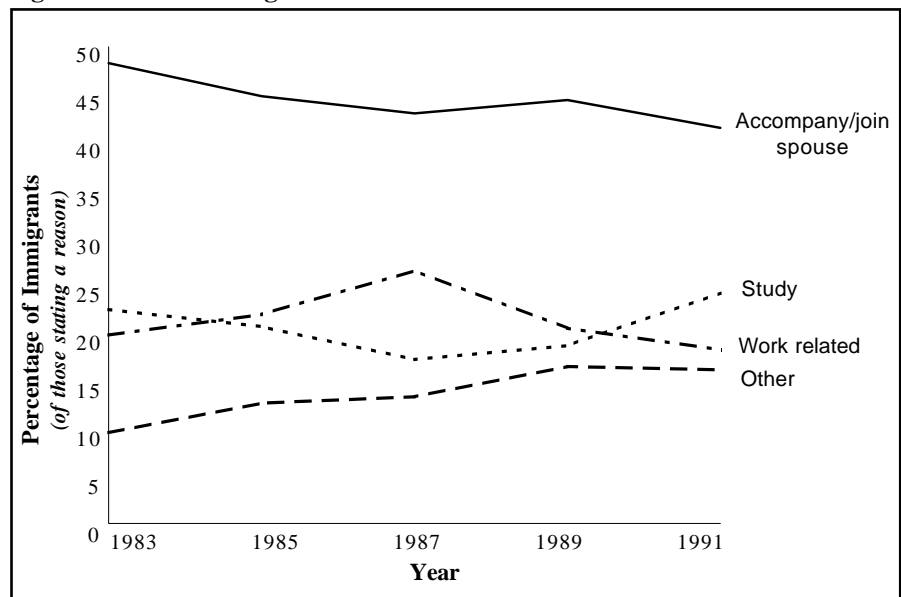
Pull factors are positive or attractive aspects of the **receiving** country. Examples include higher standards of living, the possibility of jobs in factories, higher wages etc. Combinations of push and pull factors then determine the size and direction of flows. Although the push/pull model is an oversimplification - it doesn't, for example, explain why some regions suffering many push factors actually experience little emigration or why, within a country, some people choose to stay and some do not - it serves as a useful insight into many of the most important migration patterns of this century.

Employment and Wage-Related Migration

Annually, millions of people migrate in search of work or a higher standard of living. Such migration may be temporary or permanent, may involve movement to adjacent countries (eg. Mexico to the USA - see Case Study) or to other continents. Whilst the majority of migrants are unskilled, young males, that is, migration is age and sex selective, an increasing number of young females are migrating (eg. from Southeast Asia to the Gulf States as domestic servants) and over the last two decades, huge numbers of highly qualified skilled professionals have migrated in search of higher salaries and better standards of living (see The Brain Drain).

In the twentieth century, almost all countries in **Western Europe** have experienced employment or wage-related migration. In the UK, the percentage of immigrants citing potential work as their reason for wishing to enter the country peaked in the 1980s but remains a significant motivation even in the 90s (Figure 1). Between 1941 and 1970, millions of people moved from **Spain, Italy and North Africa** to more Northern European countries in search of work. Such large-scale migrations only ended with the economic recession which spread across Western Europe in the 1970s. Many of the migrants had originally intended to return to their native country, but instead, and in many cases after long intervening

Fig 1. Reasons for Immigration to the UK

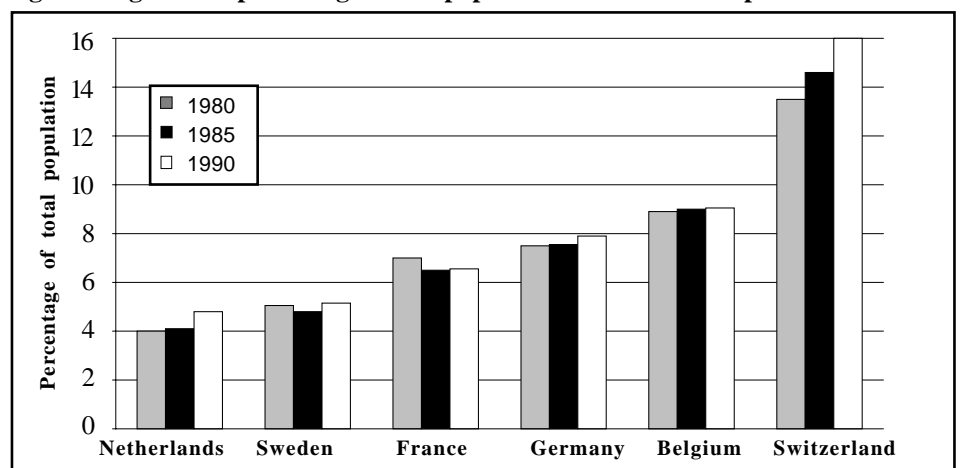


periods, their families moved to join them; temporary migration had become permanent. The size of such movements, some of which became well-established flows linking particular areas of different countries, is reflected in the large immigrant population of many European countries (Figure 2).

In the 1980s, countries such as **Spain and Italy**, which had for decades been a major **source** of migrants, began to experience net immigration. The return of migrants to Spain and, for example,

Greece, actually began in the mid seventies as large numbers of foreigners left the Federal Republic of Germany as the economy tightened following the 1973 oil crisis. The repatriation of many such migrants was accelerated by the offer of financial assistance from the government of West Germany. In the 1980s, as the economies of Southern European countries improved, large numbers of North African migrants entered Spain and Italy to take over the low-paid, unskilled jobs which became available. Thus, the long-standing South-North migrant flow was reversed.

Fig 2. Foreigners as a percentage of total population of selected European countries



Case Study: USA

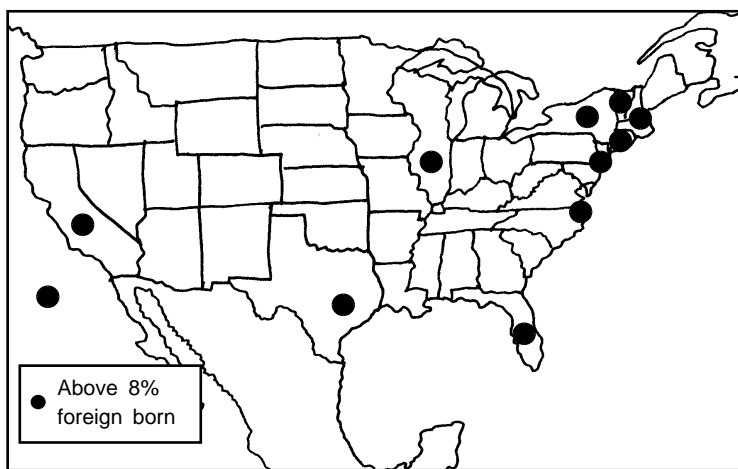
The beginning of the 1990s brought significant migration from the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe. Whilst a large percentage of such migrants initially stayed within the region, significant numbers are now moving to the USA, Canada and Israel.

The prospect of jobs and much higher standards of living is also the main motivation of the tens of thousands of **illegal immigrants** who annually attempt to enter the USA. Many illegal immigrants actually entered the country legally but then remain when their visa expires; others, having entered illegally, were able to legalise their status during the general amnesty program. Immigrants to the USA, whether legal or not, show a strong preference for particular parts of the country. Table 1 shows the percentage of the population which are foreign-born (i.e. immigrants) for selected states in the USA. The average for all states is 7.9%. The major sources of migration are the Caribbean Islands, Mexico and Central America. Almost all of the states which have an above average percentage of foreign-born citizens are on the coast or adjoin the Mexican border (Figure 3).

Table 1: American states with above-average % of foreign-born citizens

State	Population (1000s)	% Foreign born
Massachusetts	6,016	9.5
Rhode Island	1,003	9.5
Connecticut	3,287	8.5
New York	17,990	15.9
New Jersey	7,730	12.5
Florida	12,938	12.9
Texas	16,987	9.0
Nevada	1,202	8.7
California	29,760	21.7
Hawaii	1,108	14.7
All States Average	4876	7.9

Fig 3. The foreign-born population of the USA



The "Brain Drain"

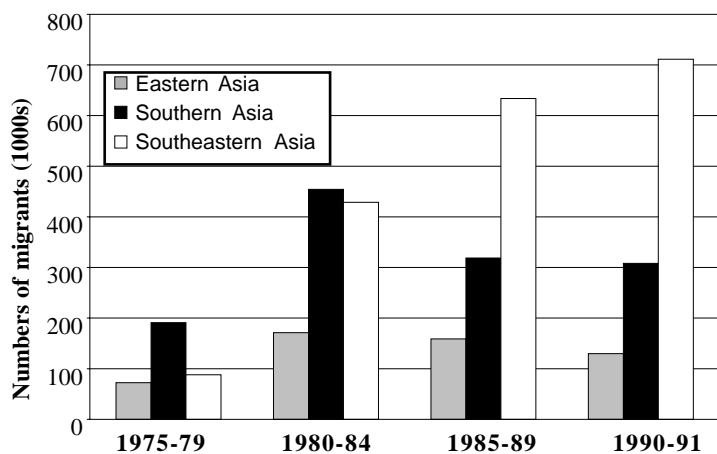
USA immigrants include highly-skilled workers such as doctors, engineers and entrepreneurs who have emigrated from Africa in the hope of securing higher incomes and improved standards of living. Although the number of such individuals is relatively small, they are highly economically significant, since their loss impoverishes their country of origin. In countries such as Ghana, Sudan and Uganda, it has been estimated that as many as two thirds of their professionals are employed abroad.

Case Study: Gulf States

In the 1970s the **oil rich Gulf states** attracted hundreds of thousands of young, mainly unskilled workers from Southern Asia to develop their infrastructure - roads, airports, hospitals etc. During the 1980s the number of migrants from South East Asian countries - especially Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand increased dramatically (Figure 4). **NB: In this diagram, the last period considered is only one year, whereas the earlier pictures are all five years;** this shows that the numbers of migrants has increased dramatically in the nineties.

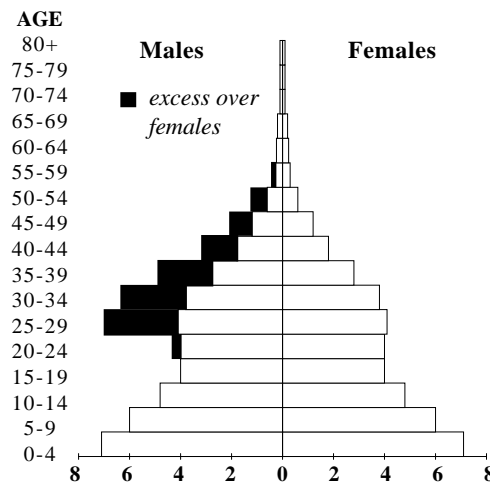
By 1991, the region was the source of 60% of all migrant workers registering to work abroad. The huge influx of young males produced a distorted population pyramid in countries such as Kuwait (Figure 5).

Fig4. Out-migration from Asia by region



Eastern Asia comprises China and Korea
 Southern Asia comprises Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka
 Southeastern Asia comprises Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam

Fig5. Population pyramid for Kuwait (1990)

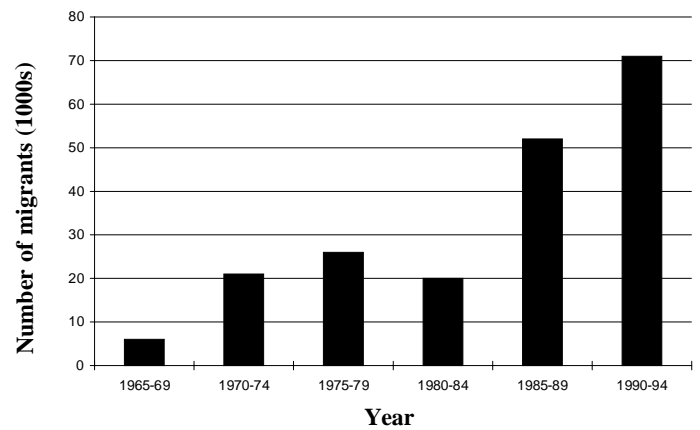


Case Study: Sub-Saharan Africa

A combination of economic, demographic, political and environmental push factors over the last twenty years have resulted in dramatic migration from almost all countries in **Sub Saharan Africa (SSA)**. Stagnant economies, rapid population growth, sporadic unrest and, in some cases, plummeting agricultural productivity because of drought and desertification, has resulted in both intra-regional and inter-continental migration. The region has experienced a very rapid population growth (3% per annum) which has exceeded the growth in jobs (2.4% per annum). 50% of the population are under 15 years of age.

In the early 1990s, several SSA governments agreed to strict controls dictated by the International Monetary Fund; consequently wages were frozen, currencies were devalued and thousands of previously "safe" workers such as scientists, teachers and doctors became unemployed. The main migration flows have been from West Africa to France, Zaire to Belgium and Sudan, Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda to the Gulf states.

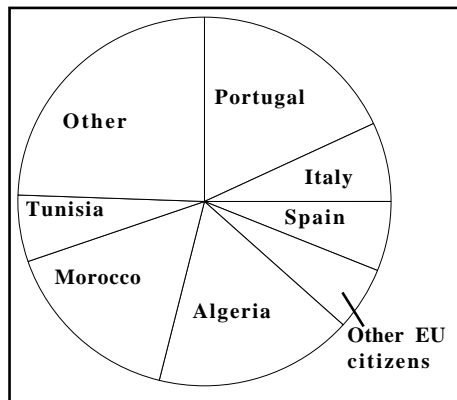
Fig 6. Net migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to developed countries



Colonial Rule

International migration has often been a legacy of colonial rule. Upon independence, citizens often had the chance of remaining in their mother country or of moving to the colonial state. This explains the well-established migrant links between the UK and India and France and North and West Africa. Figure 7 shows the composition of the French immigrant population by original country of birth.

Fig 7. France's immigrant population



Political changes

Legislation which affects the ease with which migrants can enter a country can have rapid and dramatic effects. Since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, immigration has been a major cause of population growth. However, a relaxation of emigration restrictions by the former USSR, coupled with the decision in the 1980s by the USA to stop granting automatic refugee status to Soviet nationals, resulted in a flow of Soviet Jews into Israel (see Table 2). The problem of finding sufficient housing, school places and employment for these people has merely added to the tensions within the country.

In 1990 **Japan** made a very significant amendment to the **Immigration Controls and Refugee Recognition Act** by entitling second and third generation descendants of Japanese emigrants to long-term residency permits in Japan, free of any

employment restrictions. Japan thus joined a small group of European countries such as Germany, Greece and Italy that allow the immigration of foreign-born descendants of former emigrants. The effect was immediate; the number of Brazilians in Japan rocketed from 14,000 in 1989 to 120,000 in 1991. However the vast majority of legal immigrants in Japan originate from Korea - people brought into Japan as forced labour before and during the two World Wars along with their descendants.

Why Does Migration Continue?

Once migration to a particular country has begun, a **migration flow** is usually established. The presence of friends, relations and people with the same language and customs will be an incentive for other would-be migrants to choose that country too (Fig 1). The demographic profile of such "second-wave" migration is of course very different to that of the original migration.

The process of migration itself causes changes in both the origin and destination countries. This phenomenon, called **cumulative causation** increases the chance of future migration. For example, before migration occurs they may be relatively small income inequalities in an area. Migrants however may be able to send back large remittances - which may increase the inequalities in the country of origin. Feelings of relative deprivation will grow and this will stimulate future migration. If families receiving high remittances use them to buy land or mechanise

previously labour-intensive operations, the consequences may be even more significant. There will also be an effect on the destination country; the jobs which are frequently taken by immigrants may come to be seen as low status and unattractive to natural citizens, creating a **structural demand** for migrant labour.

Consequences of Migration

(A) On Country of Origin

The major benefits are often economic; large scale emigration may reduce unemployment, the cost of welfare benefits and urbanisation. Money sent home by migrants may represent a significant proportion of gross national product (GNP) and if such monies are used to establish new businesses such investment may have a valuable **multiplier effect**. Since most migrants are young males, outflux may lead to a decline in the Crude Birth Rate (CBR) which may lead to a drastic reduction in the cost of establishing new schools etc. Finally, returning migrants may bring new skills - in practice, however, this is rare.

The harmful effect of migration on the country of origin can be serious; the loss of young males could lead to labour shortages, an unbalanced sex ratio, disruption to family life and marriage patterns and, if the CBR falls, to an ageing population.

(B) On Country of Destination

The major benefit to the receiving country is that migrants usually provide a source of cheap labour which requires little investment in training. Low wages may help to dampen wage inflation.

However, immigrants must be provided with housing, education and health facilities etc. which represent an economic cost and this may multiply if migrants' families follow. The development of large immigrants areas within inner cities may fuel xenophobia and racial tension.

Table 2: Immigration to Israel 1948-89

Period	Total Immigration	Soviet Jews as % of total
1948-49	342 000	-
1950-59	618 000	-
1960-69	374 000	2
1970-79	346 000	19
1980-89	154 000	43

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