

Why People Migrate

BEFORE YOU READ

Reach Into Your Background

There may have been a time in your life when you or your family moved to a new home. Or perhaps a close friend

moved away from your neighborhood. You probably felt a little sad and uncertain then. Imagine how you would feel if you moved to another country!

Questions to Explore

1. Why do people migrate?
2. What are some important population issues?

Key Terms

migration
immigrant
“push-pull” theory
urbanization
rural area
urban area

Key Places

Cuba
Vietnam
Jakarta

Roberto Goizueta was the former head of Coca-Cola, one of the largest companies in the world. Yet when he came to the United States from Cuba in 1960, he had nothing. This is how he described his escape from Cuba:

▼ On July 4, 1996—Independence Day—hundreds of people celebrate receiving their citizenship in El Paso, Texas.



“When my family and I came to this country [the United States], we had to leave everything behind . . . our photographs hung on the wall, our wedding gifts sat on the shelves.”

Like millions of others who came to the United States, Roberto Goizueta helped the nation become a land of prosperity.

Migration: The Movement of People

For centuries people have moved from one place to another. This is called **migration**. **Immigrants** are people who leave one country and move to another. From 1881 to 1920, almost 23.5 million Europeans moved to the United States. Since 1971, nearly 700,000 people migrated here from the country of Vietnam.

Over 995,000 came from Central America, and over 4.2 million came from Mexico. More than 2.4 million immigrants came from the Caribbean islands.

Demographers use the “**push-pull**” theory to explain immigration. It says people migrate because certain things in their lives “push” them to leave. Often, the reasons are economic. Perhaps people cannot buy land or find work. Or changes in a government may force people to leave.

For instance, in 1959 there was a revolution in Cuba. Some Cubans lost land and businesses. Many fled to America to find safety and a better life. In the 1800s, many Scandinavians moved to Minnesota and Wisconsin. They wanted their own land, which was scarce in Scandinavia. Some also left to escape religious persecution.

What about the “pull” part of the theory? The hope for better living conditions “pulls” people to a country. Cubans settled in Florida because it was near their former home. It already had a Spanish-speaking population. Also, Florida’s climate and vegetation are similar to Cuba’s. Scandinavians were “pulled” by the United States government’s offer of free land for immigrants willing to set up farms. They also moved to a familiar place. The long, cold winters in Minnesota and Wisconsin were similar to those in northwestern Europe.

READ ACTIVELY



Connect Did you or any members of your family or your ancestors immigrate to the United States? Why?

Cuba and Florida: Climate Regions

Map Study Since 1959, about one million Cubans have fled their communist-ruled country to find a new life in the United States. Many have settled in Florida. **Movement** Use the map scale to determine about how far Cuba lies from the mainland of Florida. **Place** How are southern Florida and Cuba similar?



LINKS ACROSS TIME

Settlement of Polynesia

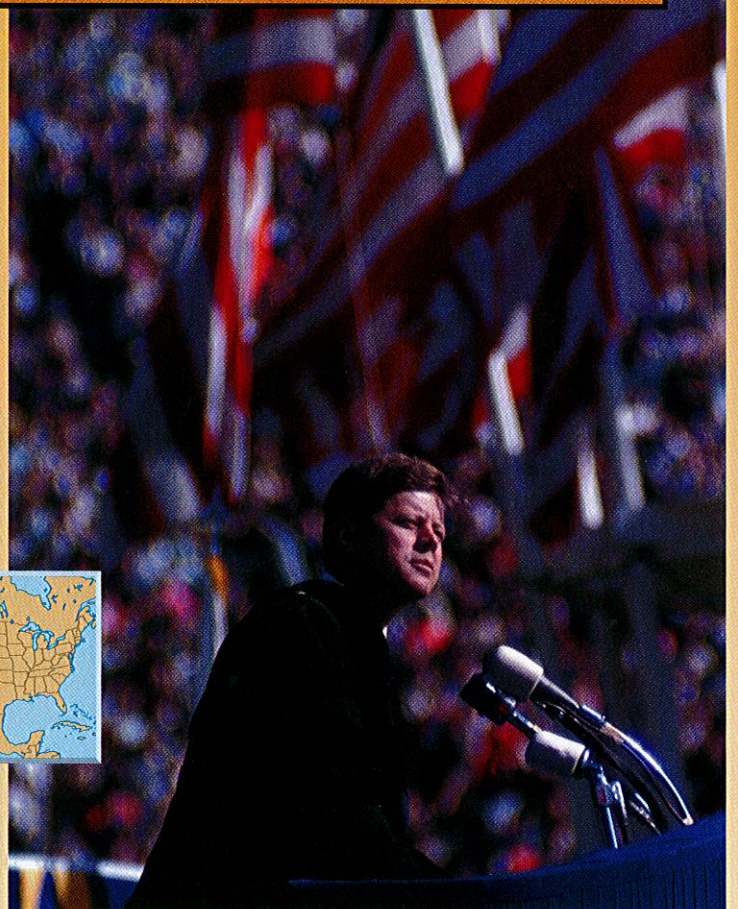
Not all people end up in a location by choice. Thousands of years ago people settled in Polynesia, a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean. Scholars theorize that these people left eastern Asia in search of new land. Then violent storms blew them off course. Ocean currents carried these people to the islands they now call home.

Irish Immigrants in the United States Demographers use the push-pull theory to explain the great Irish immigration in the 1840s and 1850s. In those years, 1.5 million people left Ireland for the United States. Why did so many Irish people come to America? Ireland was a farming nation. In the 1840s, disease destroyed its main crop—potatoes. Hunger and starvation pushed people to migrate. Also, England ruled Ireland very harshly. There were very few ways for Irish people to improve their lives. These things also pushed people to move. Job opportunities pulled Irish families to the United States.

Vietnamese Come to the United States The push-pull theory also explains Vietnamese immigration. These people came from southeastern Asia to the United States. After many years of war between North and South Vietnam, peace came in 1975. North Vietnam had won. Soon, it extended its communist form of government to South Vietnam. This was a serious change for many South Vietnamese. Thousands left the country. They were not welcome in nearby Asian countries. But the United States and the South Vietnamese had been allies during the war. The United States accepted the immigrants. That pulled the Vietnamese here.

An Irish-American President

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960. His great-grandfather migrated to the United States from Ireland. Like many other immigrants to this country, Irish Americans have made many important contributions. President Kennedy is shown here delivering a speech at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1962.





Other Kinds of Immigration Sometimes, people are forced to migrate. Australia was colonized by the English. Some were convicts serving their sentences in Australia. When their sentences were done, they stayed. War also forces people to migrate. In the mid-1990s, war broke out among three ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, in Eastern Europe. Many refugees fled to escape the warfare. Also, victorious soldiers of one group often forced entire communities of other groups to leave. Millions of immigrants flooded into countries in Eastern and Western Europe.

Other people leave their countries for a few years to help their families. Young men from Morocco and Turkey often go to Europe to find work. They leave their families behind. For a few years they work hard and save their money. Then they return home.

The World Becomes More Urban

Migration also occurs within a country. This happens in the United States. Americans migrate more than citizens of any other country, but most move from one state to another. Recently, the population has shifted from the northeastern states to the southern and southwestern states. People may be searching for better job opportunities or a better climate. This growth in urban areas of southern states has put great stress on services. Southwestern cities, for example, are developing new ways to ensure an adequate supply of fresh water.

▲ Sometimes war forces people to migrate. In 1995, thousands of refugees fled a brutal civil war in the Central African country of Rwanda.



Ask Questions What questions would you like to ask someone who plans to migrate to a city from a rural area?

One of the biggest challenges to today's nations is people migrating to cities from farms and small villages. In recent years, the population of major cities has grown tremendously. The movement of people to cities and the growth of cities is called **urbanization**. What pushes people from rural areas? What pulls people to cities?

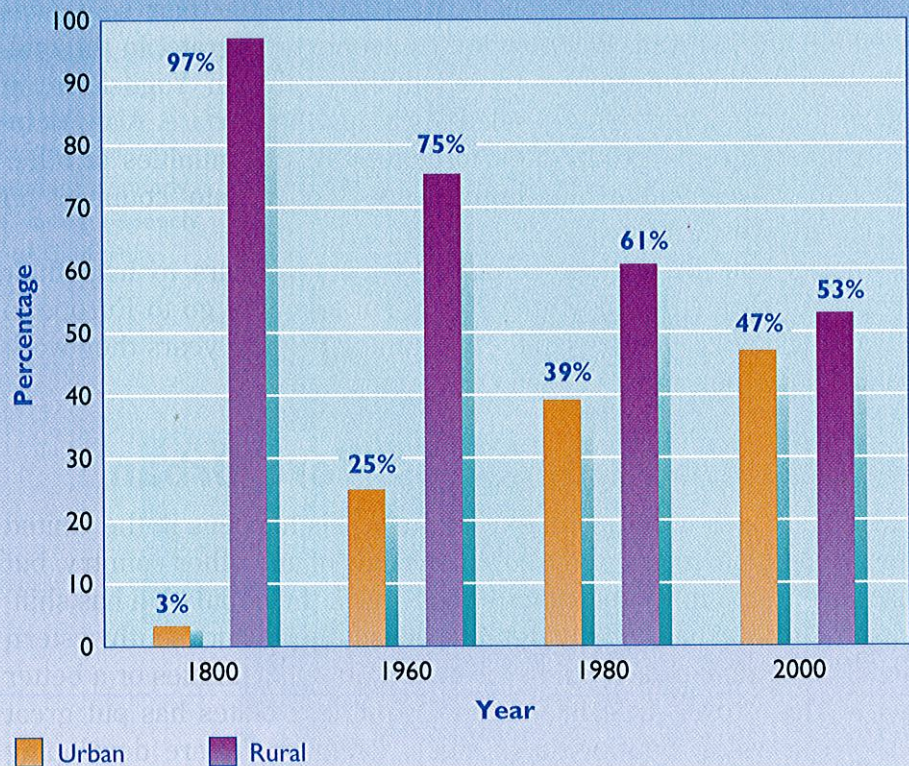
Growing Cities, Growing Challenges Cities in Indonesia are an example. In the past, most Indonesians were farmers, fishers, and hunters. They lived in **rural areas**, or villages in the countryside. Recently, more and more Indonesians have moved to **urban areas**, or cities and nearby towns. Its urban population is increasing rapidly. For example, in 1978, about 4.5 million people lived in the capital of Jakarta. By 2000, its population was about 11 million. And demographers estimate that by 2015 the population will have risen to about 21 million.

Jakarta is not unique. In South America, too, large numbers of people are moving from rural to urban areas. São Paulo, Brazil, is now the largest city in South America. The city has hundreds of tall office buildings, stores, banks, businesses, and small factories. In 1995, its population was nearly 16 million. By 2015, it is expected to be 21 million.

The problem in cities like São Paulo is that too many people are coming too fast. Cities cannot keep up. They cannot provide housing,

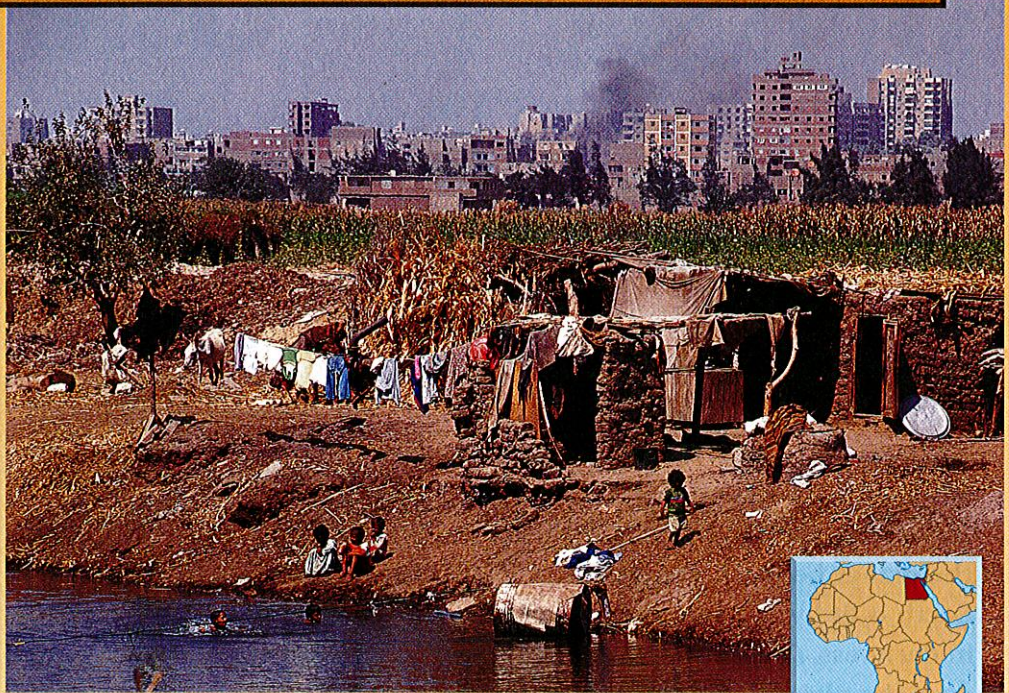
World Urban and Rural Populations, 1800–2000

Graph Study In countries all over the world, city populations have soared, while rural populations have fallen. What percentage of the world's population lived in cities in 1800? What percentage of the world's population lived in cities in 2000? **Critical Thinking** Based on the graph, what do you predict will happen to the world's rural and urban populations by the year 2050?



Crowded Conditions in Cairo, Egypt

Across the world, growing cities face special challenges. Sometimes, there is not enough housing for newcomers to the cities. Sometimes, newcomers cannot afford the housing that is available. Until they find better housing, many newcomers build whatever shelters they can. These shelters are in Cairo, Egypt's capital.



jobs, schools, hospitals, and other services that people need. The country as a whole also suffers. With fewer farms, there is less food.

If you visited São Paulo, you would see why some migrants have a hard life. Schoolrooms are crowded. The city's four million cars and buses pollute the air. Traffic noise echoes day and night. Traffic jams and crowds often make it a struggle to get around.

With so many daily problems, why do immigrants flock to São Paulo and other big cities? Most are seeking a better life for their families. They are looking for jobs, decent houses, and good schools. Above all, most want more opportunities for their children.



Visualize Visualize what it would be like to move to a city like São Paulo, Brazil.

SECTION 3 REVIEW

1. Define (a) migration, (b) immigrant, (c) "push-pull" theory, (d) urbanization, (e) rural area, (f) urban area.

2. Identify (a) Cuba, (b) Vietnam, (c) Jakarta.

3. What are some of the reasons why people migrate from place to place?

4. Why have some immigrants left their homelands to live in the United States?

Critical Thinking

5. Making Comparisons

What is the difference between migration within a country and migration from one country to another?

Activity

6. Writing to Learn When too many people migrate from rural to urban areas, it can mean hardships. List suggestions and ideas to help people decide whether to migrate to the city.