

KEY ISSUE 1

Where Are Migrants Distributed?

- Distance of Migration
- U.S. Immigration Patterns

Refer to Figure 2-4 (ecumene) for a moment. These maps show how the ecumene have changed as permanent human settlements 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 the reasons people migrate.

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 coast? Why do people continue to migrate by the millions today (Figure 3-2)? 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 (Figure 3-3). Most people migrate in search of three objectives: economic opportunity, cultural freedom, and environmental comfort. This chapter will study the reasons people migrate.

Geography has no comprehensive theory of migration, although an outline of migration “laws” written by nineteenth-century geographer 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:

▼ **FIGURE 3-2 IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY** These immigrants are being administered the oath to become citizens of the United States.



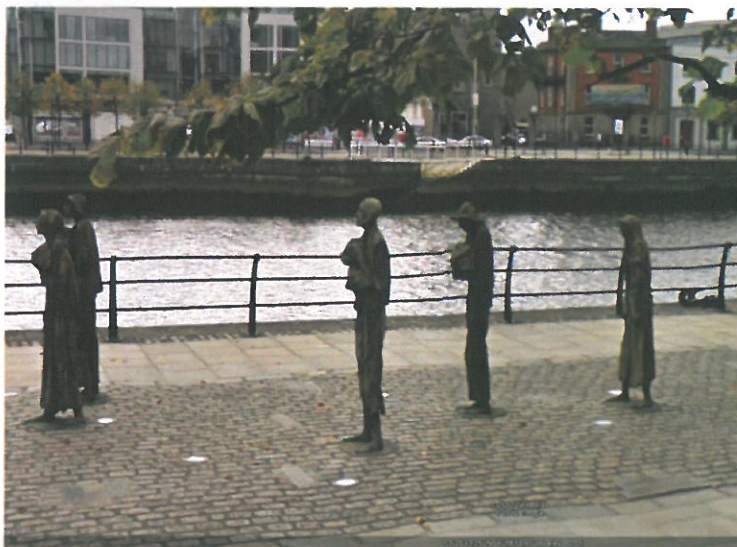
- The distance that migrants typically move (discussed in Key Issues 1 and 2)
- The reasons migrants move (discussed in the first part of Key Issue 3)
- The characteristics of migrants (discussed in the second part of Key Issue 3)

Geographer Wilbur Zelinsky identified a **migration transition**, which consists of changes in a society comparable to those in the demographic transition (Table 3-1). 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.

TABLE 3-1 COMPARISON OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION AND MIGRATION TRANSITION

Stage	Demographic Transition	Migration Transition
1	Low NIR, high CBR, high CDR	High daily or seasonal mobility in search of food
2	High NIR, high CBR, rapidly declining CDR	High international emigration and interregional migration from rural to urban areas
3	Declining NIR, rapidly declining CBR, declining CDR	High international immigration and intraregional migration from cities to suburbs
4	Low NIR, low CBR, low CDR	Same as stage 3

▼ **FIGURE 3-3 IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES FROM IRELAND** The Famine Memorial in Dublin depicts painfully thin people emigrating from Ireland during the potato famine of the 1840s.



Distance of Migration

Learning Outcome 3.1.1:

Describe the difference between international and internal migration.

Ravenstein's laws for 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.

INTERNATIONAL AND INTERNAL MIGRATION

Migration can be divided into international migration and internal migration (Figure 3-4):

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION. A permanent move from one country to another is **international migration**. International migration is further divided into two types:

- **Voluntary migration** implies that the migrant has chosen to move, especially for economic improvement (Figure 3-5).

- **Forced migration** means that the migrant has been compelled to move, especially by political or environmental factors.

The distinction between forced and voluntary migration is not clear-cut. Those who are migrating for economic reasons may feel forced by pressure inside themselves to migrate, such as to search for food or jobs, but they have not been explicitly compelled to migrate by the violent actions of other people.

INTERNAL MIGRATION. A permanent move within the same country is **internal migration**. 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, internal migrants are much more numerous than international migrants.

Internal migration can be divided into two types:

- **Interregional migration** is movement from one region of a country to another. 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.
- **Intraregional migration** is movement within one region. The main type of intraregional migration has been within urban areas, from older cities to newer suburbs.

Most people find migration within a country less traumatic than international migration because they find

▼ **FIGURE 3.4 INTERNATIONAL AND INTERNAL MIGRATION** Mexico has international migration into the country from Central America and out of the country to the United States. Mexico also has internal migration, especially interregional migration to states near the U.S. border and intraregional migration into Mexico City.



▲ **FIGURE 3-5 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION INTO MEXICO** These immigrants from Honduras are traveling across Mexico on top of the train because they don't have enough money to pay for their travel.

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.

Pause and Reflect 3.1.1

How many times have you moved? How many of these moves were international?

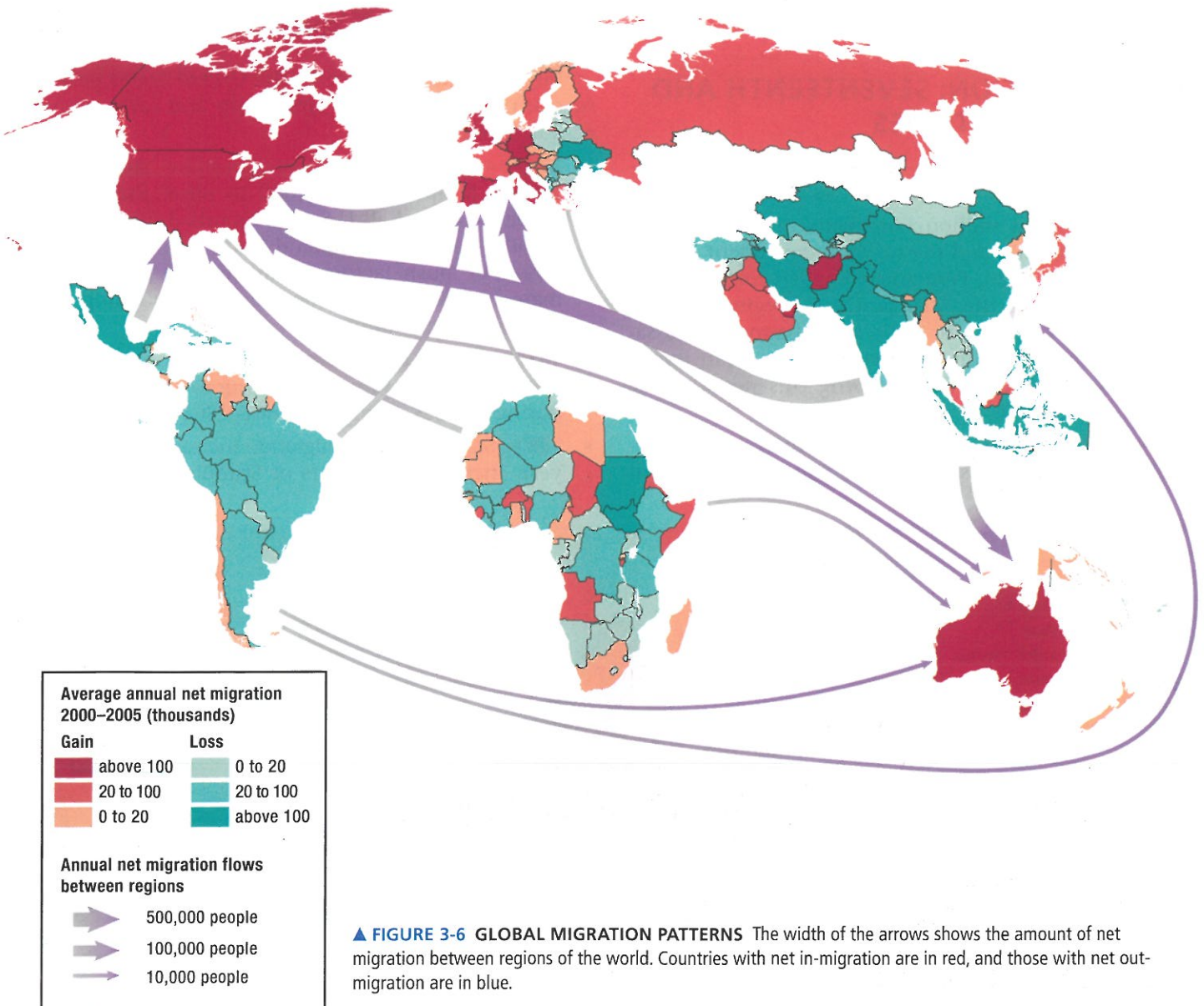
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION PATTERNS

About 9 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. On a global scale, the three largest flows of migrants are:

- From Asia to Europe
- From Asia to North America
- From Latin America to North America

The global pattern reflects the importance of migration from developing countries to developed countries. Asia, Latin America, and Africa have net out-migration, and North America, Europe, and Oceania have net in-migration. Migrants from countries with relatively low incomes and high natural increase rates head for relatively wealthy countries, where job prospects are brighter.

The United States has more foreign-born residents than any other country: approximately 43 million as of 2010, and growing by around 1 million annually. Other developed countries have higher rates of net in-migration, including Australia and Canada, which are much less populous than the United States (Figure 3-6). The highest rates can be found in petroleum-exporting countries of Southwest Asia, which attract immigrants primarily from poorer countries in Asia to perform many of the dirty and dangerous functions in the oil fields.



U.S. Immigration Patterns

Learning Outcome 3.1.2

Identify the principal sources of immigrants during the three main eras of U.S. immigration.

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 75 million people migrated to the United States between 1820 and 2010, including 43 million who were alive in 2010.

The United States has had three main eras of immigration:

- Colonial settlement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries
- Mass European immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- Asian and Latin American immigration in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries

U.S. IMMIGRATION: SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

Immigration to the American colonies and the newly independent United States came from two principal regions:

- **Europe.** About 2 million Europeans migrated to the American colonies and the newly independent United States prior to 1820. Permanent English colonies were established along the Atlantic Coast, beginning with Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, and Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620. Ninety percent of European immigrants to the United States during this period came from Great Britain.
- **Sub-Saharan Africa.** Most African Americans are descended from Africans forced to migrate to the Western

Hemisphere as slaves. During the eighteenth century, about 400,000 Africans were shipped as slaves to the 13 colonies that later formed the United States, 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).

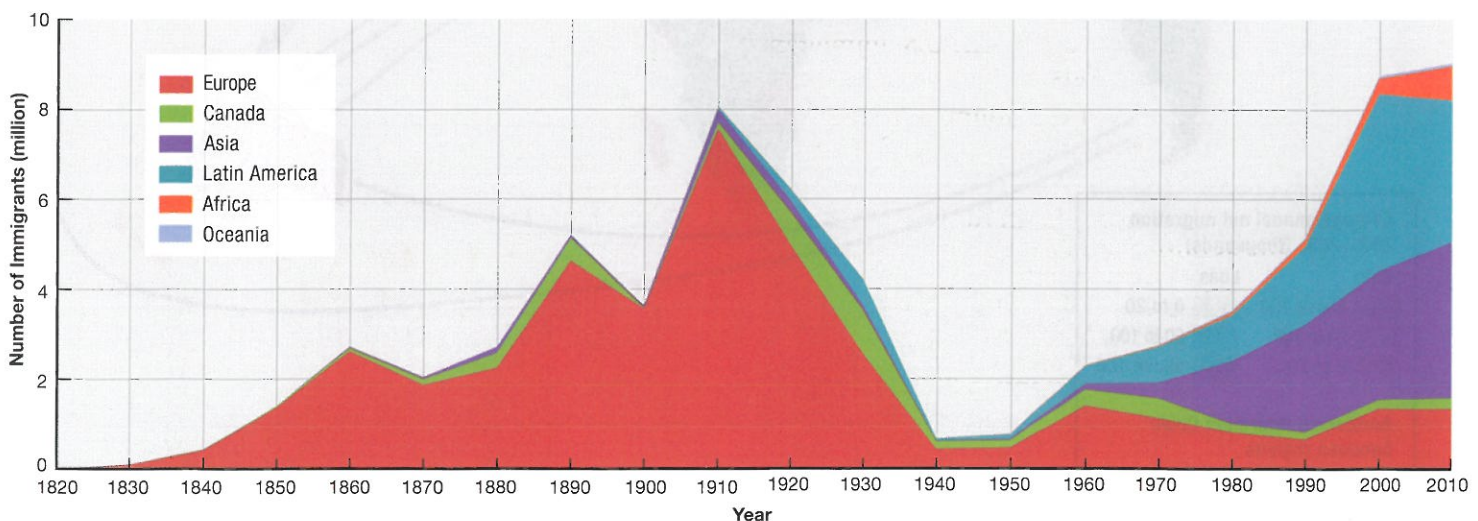
Most of the Africans were forced to migrate to the United States as slaves, whereas most Europeans were voluntary migrants—although harsh economic conditions and persecution in Europe blurred the distinction between forced and voluntary migration for many Europeans.

U.S. IMMIGRATION: MID-NINETEENTH TO EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Between 1820 and 1920 approximately 32 million people immigrated to the United States. Nearly 90 percent emigrated from Europe. For European migrants, the United States offered a great opportunity for economic success. Early migrants extolled the virtues of the country to friends and relatives back in Europe, which encouraged still others to come.

Migration from Europe to the United States peaked at several points during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Figure 3-7):

- **1840s and 1850s: Ireland and Germany.** Annual immigration jumped from 20,000 to more than 200,000. Three-fourths of all U.S. immigrants during those two decades came from Ireland and Germany. Desperate economic push factors compelled the Irish and Germans to cross the Atlantic. Germans also emigrated to escape political unrest.
- **1870s: Ireland and Germany.** Emigration from Ireland and Germany resumed following a temporary decline during the U.S. Civil War (1861–1865).
- **1880s: Scandinavia.** Immigration increased to 500,000 per year. Increasing numbers of Scandinavians, especially



▲ FIGURE 3-7 IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Europeans comprised more than 90 percent of immigrants to the United States during the nineteenth century. Since the 1980s, Latin American and Asia have been the dominant sources of immigrants.

Swedes and Norwegians, joined Germans and Irish in migrating to the United States. The Industrial Revolution had diffused to Scandinavia, triggering a rapid population increase.

- **1905–1914: Southern and Eastern Europe.** Immigration to the United States reached 1 million. Two-thirds of all immigrants during this period came from Southern and Eastern Europe, especially Italy, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. The shift in the primary source of immigrants coincided with the diffusion of the Industrial Revolution to Southern and Eastern Europe, along with rapid population growth.

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; the 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.

Pause and Reflect 3.1.2

In what stage of the demographic transition were European countries when they sent the most immigrants to the United States?

U.S. IMMIGRATION: LATE TWENTIETH TO EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Immigration to the United States dropped sharply in the 1930s and 1940s, during the Great Depression and World War II. The number of immigrants steadily increased beginning in the 1950s and then surged to historically high levels during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

More than three-fourths of the recent U.S. immigrants have emigrated from two regions:

- **Asia.** The leading sources of U.S. immigrants from Asia are China, the Philippines, India, and Vietnam.
- **Latin America.** Nearly one-half million emigrate to the United States annually from Latin America, more than twice as many as during the entire nineteenth century.

Recent immigrants are not distributed uniformly throughout the United States. More than one-half head for California, Florida, New York, or Texas (Figure 3-8).

Officially, Mexico passed Germany in 2006 as the country that has sent to the United States the most immigrants ever. Unofficially, because of the large number of unauthorized immigrants, Mexico probably became the leading source during the 1980s. In the early 1990s, an unusually large number of immigrants came from Mexico and other Latin American countries 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.

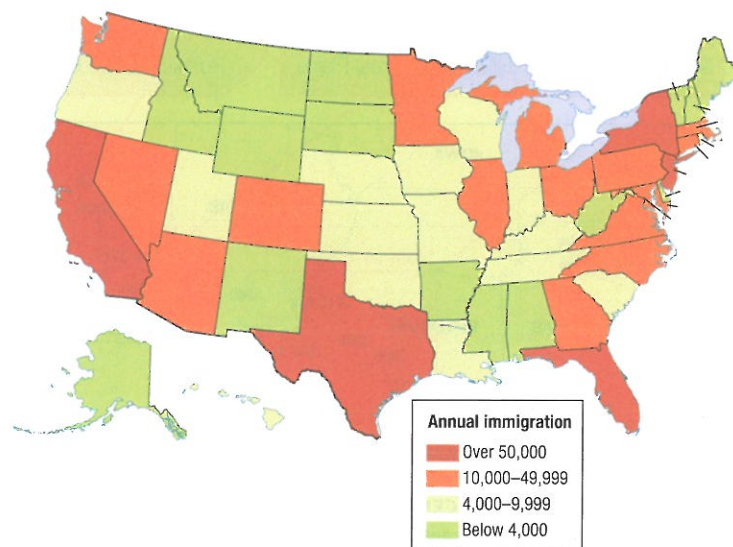
Although the pattern of immigration to the United States has changed from predominantly European to Asian and Latin American, the reason for immigration remains the same. Rapid population growth has limited prospects for economic advancement at home. Europeans left when their countries entered stage 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. With poor conditions at home, immigrants were lured by economic opportunity and social advancement in the United States.

The motives for immigrating to the country may be similar, but the United States has changed over time. 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 the country was a “united” state (other than the District of Columbia). This symbolic closing of the frontier coincided with the end of the peak period of emigration from Europe.

CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 1

Where Are Migrants Distributed?

- ✓ Migration can be international (voluntary or forced) or internal (interregional or intraregional).
- ✓ Migration to the United States has occurred in three principal eras, with emigrants from different combinations of countries and regions predominating during each era.



▲ **FIGURE 3-8 DESTINATION OF IMMIGRANTS BY U.S. STATE** California, New York, Florida, and Texas are the leading destinations for immigrants.

KEY ISSUE 2

Where Do People Migrate within a Country?

- Interregional Migration
- Intraregional Migration

Learning Outcome 3.2.1

Describe the history of interregional migration in the United States.

Internal migration for most people is less disruptive than international migration. Two main types of internal migration are interregional (between regions of a country) and intraregional (within a region).

Interregional Migration

In the past, people migrated from one region of a country to another in search of better farmland. Lack of farmland pushed many people from the more densely settled regions of the country and lured them to the frontier, where land was abundant. Today, the principal type of interregional migration is from rural areas to urban areas. Most jobs, especially in services, are clustered in urban areas (see Chapter 12).

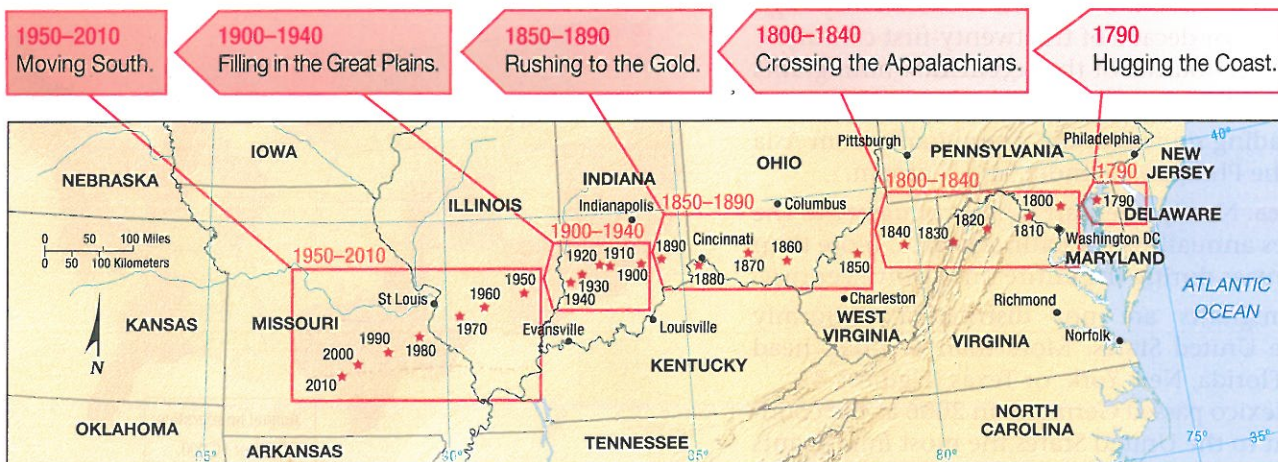
MIGRATION BETWEEN REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

An especially prominent example of large-scale internal migration is the opening of the American West. At the time of independence, the United States consisted of long-established settlements concentrated on the Atlantic Coast and a scattering of newer settlements in the territories west of the Appalachian Mountains. Through mass interregional migration, the interior of the continent was settled and developed.

CHANGING CENTER OF POPULATION. The U.S. Census Bureau computes the country's population center at the time of each census. The population center is the average location of everyone in the country, the "center of population gravity." If the United States were a flat plane placed on top of a pin, and each individual weighed the same, the population center would be the point where the population distribution causes the flat plane to balance on the pin.

The changing location of the population center graphically demonstrates the march of the American people across the North American continent over the past 200 years (Figure 3-9). The center has consistently shifted westward, although the rate of movement has varied in different eras:

- **1790: Hugging the coast.** This location reflects the fact that virtually all colonial-era settlements were near the Atlantic Coast. Few colonists ventured far from coastal locations because they depended on shipping links with Europe to receive products and to export raw materials. The Appalachian Mountains also blocked western development because of their steep slopes, thick



▲ **FIGURE 3-9 CHANGING CENTER OF U.S. POPULATION** The population center is the average location of everyone in the country, the "center of population gravity." If the United States were a flat plane placed on top of a pin, and each individual weighed the same, the population center would be the point where the population distribution causes the flat plane to balance on the head of a pin.