



### **The Push Factor of War**

These refugees are fleeing a war in the country of Bosnia in 1996. Recent wars have caused millions of people to leave their homelands. Sometimes the refugees return home when the conflict ends. But often they stay in their new country.

### **8.3 What Push Factors Drive Emigration?**

One night in the late 1980s, John Deng James awoke to the sound of gunfire. The terrified child ran barefoot into the nearby woods. There he found other frightened children. They were too young to know why their homeland, the African country of Sudan, was at war. But they did know that they had to escape the horror. And so they began to walk.

John Deng James is part of a group of political refugees known as the "Lost Boys of Sudan." The Lost Boys, and other children who lost their parents in the war, walked for hundreds of miles in search of a safe place. Many died along the way of hunger and thirst. Those who survived finally reached a camp set up for refugees in the country of Kenya. The survivors were among the countless people around the world who have been pushed to emigrate by war.

**Political Push Factors** War is one of many political factors that can create refugees. Political refugees may flee a country because they fear its leaders. Or they may fear persecution. Persecution is unfair treatment of people because of who they are or what they believe.

These political push factors have one thing in common. They involve the way a government treats its people. People are not likely to flee a government that treats its citizens fairly. But a government that rules through fear may create large numbers of political refugees.

Many Cuban immigrants have come to the United States as political refugees. Cuba is an island in the Caribbean Sea, south of Florida. In 1959, a leader named Fidel Castro took over Cuba's government. Castro quickly made himself a dictator. If Cubans spoke out against Castro or the way he ran Cuba, they risked being jailed. Faced with that threat, thousands of Cubans have fled to the United States.

**Environmental Push Factors** Changes in the environment, such as a long-term **drought**, can push people to emigrate. In the 1840s, a devastating plant disease struck Ireland. A fungus destroyed Ireland's most important crop, the potato. Faced with starvation, 1.5 million people left Ireland. A great many of these Irish emigrants came to the United States.

Other changes in the environment are the result of human activity. In 1986, an explosion rocked the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in what is now Ukraine. This accident left a large area of poisoned soil, air, and water around the power plant. Tens of thousands of people were forced to leave their homes and move to safer areas. You will read more about the Chernobyl accident in Chapter 16.

**Economic Push Factors** The most common push factors are economic. Most of the early immigrants to the United States were poor farmers or working people. They saw no way to improve their lives in Europe, so they chose to try their luck in a new country.

These same economic push factors are still at work today. Many people around the world want a better future than they can see in their homeland. Some of them will seek that future in another country. Often, that country is the United States.

## 8.4 What Pull Factors Draw Immigration?

In 2001, some of the "Lost Boys of Sudan" began another long journey. This one took them from a refugee camp in Africa to a new life in the United States. They arrived in the city of Boston in winter. "I was wearing very light clothes, and we'd never seen snow before," recalled John Deng James. "When we went outside, we couldn't feel our hands and our ears."

Like many refugees, the Sudanese teenagers looked forward to feeling safe, going to school, and getting jobs. These are just some of the "pull factors" that attract immigrants to the United States.



**Family Pull Factors** Another powerful pull factor is the desire to unite divided families. Often young men are the first members of a family to immigrate to another country. Once they find jobs and a place to live, they send for their wives, children, and parents. Between 1965 and 1975, more than 142,000 Greeks came to the United States. Almost all of them were joining relatives who were already living here.

**Education Pull Factors** Education is a strong pull factor in immigration. Many families migrate so that their children can attend good schools. One of every 15 students in this country's schools was born in another country. Older students come to attend colleges and universities. In the 2003–2004 school year, there were more than 572,000 foreign college students in the United States.

### The Pull of Education

Free public schools are a strong pull factor for many immigrant families. This student from Mexico is taking a computer class in her middle school in Texas. Few Mexican schools are well equipped with computers.



### A Refugee Finds Work

Peter "Nyarol" Dut, one of the "Lost Boys of Sudan," is seen here working at a new job in the United States. Like other U.S. workers, he pays taxes out of his earnings.

### Workers in the U.S., 2003



Foreign-born workers, 14%  
(20,826,000 people)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, *Immigrant Statistics*, "Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement," 2003.

### Immigrants in the Workforce

Today, about 14 percent of all U.S. workers are immigrants. Some hold low-paying jobs as farmworkers or household help. But others hold well-paid jobs as doctors, nurses, and engineers.

**Quality-of-Life Pull Factors** Most people, however, move hoping to improve the quality of their lives. In the United States, this hope is called the "American Dream." This is the belief that people here can create better lives for themselves and their children.

For many refugees, a better life begins with a sense of safety. For much of their history, Jews have been persecuted for their religious beliefs. In the United States, Jewish immigrants found freedom to worship without fear.

For other immigrants, a better life usually starts with a better job. Even low-wage jobs in the United States usually pay more than most immigrants could earn back home. With more money, immigrant families can afford better food, housing, and health care.

### 8.5 How Does Immigration Affect the U.S.?

For John Deng James and other "Lost Boys," adjusting to life in a new land was hard. At first they were terribly homesick. They were also hungry. They did not know how to shop for food in supermarkets. Not did they know how to cook. They had never seen a stove or a microwave before. They had never even used a telephone.

Like millions of other immigrants, the Sudanese refugees found their way. Within six months, James had two jobs and was studying for college. These changes affected how James thought about life. "In the United States, you determine who you are," he told a reporter. "Now I have a vision of my future. I can go to school, I can work, and I can do what I want." At the same time, he and the other "Lost Boys" were starting to have an impact on their adopted country.

**Economic Impacts: Jobs** The United States has long depended on immigrants for labor. Early immigrants cleared large tracts of forests for farms. Later immigrants built roads and railroads across the continent. They filled jobs in mines and factories. And they helped fight this country's wars.

Some of the immigrants entering the United States today arrive with few skills. As a result, they are often limited to low-paying jobs. Some work as farm laborers. They plant and harvest crops on large farms. Others find jobs as cab drivers, house cleaners, restaurant workers, or nannies.

Not all immigrants take low-paying jobs. Some newcomers are highly educated and skilled. They contribute to the economy in many ways. They work as doctors, professors, and computer programmers. Some become famous athletes, musicians, or artists. Still others start new businesses. Those who succeed create jobs for immigrants and native-born workers alike.

Some native-born Americans resent having to compete with immigrants for work. They complain that the immigrants are "taking our jobs." Often, however, the jobs immigrants find are ones that native-born workers are not eager to fill.

**Economic Impacts: Taxes** Like native-born workers, immigrants who work pay taxes. Their taxes help support public schools, libraries, and health clinics. These public services are important to immigrants and native-born Americans alike.

At the same time, many immigrants also need services that are paid for out of tax money. For example, immigrants who don't speak English may need language classes. Those who can't work may need public assistance or free health care.

In states with many immigrants, such as California and Texas, the cost of providing such welfare services is high. Some taxpayers resent these costs. Others believe the benefits immigrants bring to their state outweigh the cost to taxpayers.

### **Cultural Impacts: Neighborhoods, Foods, and Holidays**

Immigrants create cultural as well as economic change. They introduce Americans to different ways of life from all over the world. This mixing of cultures sometimes leads to conflict. But it also makes life more interesting.

Newcomers to the United States often live close to other people from their homeland. These immigrant neighborhoods sometimes have names like Chinatown or Little Italy. Here immigrants can speak their native language. They can find familiar foods and eat in restaurants that cook dishes they grew up eating. And they can hear news from their homeland. Such immigrant neighborhoods have made American cities more exciting places.

Immigrants bring new foods to the United States. Some of these foods, such as potstickers, bagels, and tacos, have become very popular. They now seem almost as American as apple pie.

Immigrants have introduced new holidays to American life. Today people from many backgrounds enjoy celebrating St. Patrick's Day, Chinese New Year, and Cinco de Mayo. Newcomers bring their music, art, and stories with them as well. The result is a rich mix of ideas, sights, and sounds.

Finally, immigrants help their new neighbors to learn about the world. Many Americans knew very little about Sudan before seeing news stories about John Deng James and his fellow Sudanese refugees. But once people read about the "Lost Boys," they could no longer ignore Sudan and its problems.

### **Chinese New Year Celebration**

The dragon dance is a colorful part of Chinese New Year celebrations. Once such events were limited to immigrant communities. Today they are enjoyed by Americans from many backgrounds.





## Top Countries with Brain Drain to the U.S., 2002

Country	Number of Immigrants
India	64,980
China	18,841
Canada	11,760
Philippines	9,295
United Kingdom	7,171
Korea	5,941
Japan	4,937
Taiwan	4,025
Pakistan	3,810
Columbia	3,320

Source: 2002 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, 2003.

### Skilled Immigrants

A brain drain occurs when a country loses its most talented people to emigration. The table shows the number of highly skilled people coming to the United States from 10 countries in 2002. These people came to work for American companies that wanted their skills.

## 8.6 How Does Emigration Affect the Homelands People Leave Behind?

When the "Lost Boys of Sudan" left their homeland, Sudan lost their talents and energy. Still, it may not have lost them forever. "I have a vision that I may be going back to Sudan," John Deng James told a reporter. "I want to make the economy stronger."

**Economic Impacts: Brain Drain and Gain** When people emigrate, they take with them whatever they might have contributed to life in their homeland. When doctors or engineers leave, the homeland loses their skills and training as well. Experts call the loss of such well-educated people a **brain drain**. A country suffers from brain drain when its most talented people leave for better jobs in other countries.

As painful as these losses are, they may benefit the home country in some ways. The first is by bringing in needed money. Many immigrants send money back to their families. These payments are called **remittances**. In many countries, money sent by emigrants to their families is a very important source of income. Mexico, for example, receives more money from remittances than from anything else except tourism and the sale of its oil.

Brain drain can also turn into "brain gain." Not all emigrants stay forever in their new countries. Sometimes, people leave to go to school or to work and then return. The result is a gain in skills and experience for the home country.

### A Money Office in Mexico

The sign in this money office says "We send and receive money orders to and from the USA." Payments sent home by immigrants help support families left behind. By 2004, one of every 10 people in the world was either sending or receiving such payments.

