Population Thoughts:

What determines a population's natural increase rate? Several factors have been identiﬁed as affecting this rate, most of which are related to economic development, culture, or public policy.

* ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT has profound implications on the quality of available healthcare, employment opportunities, nutrition, and many other factors that affect population growth. Generally, increases in economic development lead to decreases in fertility and growth rate.
* EDUCATION affects every aspect of population growth, from fertility rates to prenatal care to the use of contraception. Populations with better education tend to have lower fertility rates and lower rates of natural increase.
* GENDER EMPOWERMENT refers to the relative status and opportunities available to women in a given population. When women have more economic and political access, power, and education, fertility rates inevitably drop.
* HEALTHCARE can have contradictory effects on the rate of natural increase. Improved healthcare in the less-developed countries has decreased the infant mortality rate and increased the life expectancy, thus contributing to population growth. Conversely, the same healthcare services are often effective at providing desperately needed contraception and family planning education.
* CULTURAL TRADITIONS in many parts of the world encourage high fertility rates by limiting women's employment opportunities outside of the home, by elevating motherhood to a high post and deterring women from doing anything else, or by discouraging the use of contraception.

PUBLIC POLICY can have important implications for population growth in places like China, where the "one couple, one child" program, initiated in 1979, provides economic incentives favoring families who have fewer children and legal penalties for those who have too many.

**Human Migration**

Migration is defined as a long-term move of a person from one political jurisdiction to another, and  can include a move to a neighboring city or a move to another country on a different continent, though each of these has very different implications in terms of local governance, social systems, and planning. People who leave their homelands to live in another country are said to emigrate, while people who move into a country immigrate.

Several factors cause people to migrate, including:

* **POLITICAL ISSUES**, such as armed conflict and the policies of oppressive regimes, have been important historical forces leading to migration.
* **ECONOMIC FACTORS** that may lead to migration include job opportunities, economic cycles of growth and recession, and cost of living.
* **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES** can be an important cause of migration in both the less-developed and the more-developed world.
* **CULTURAL ISSUES** can also cause people to move to places where they feel more at home or where they are able to take advantage of certain institutions.
* **TRANSPORTATION ROUTES** can enable and entice people to migrate to new areas. Throughout history, improved transportation technology and improved routes between places have allowed many people to move within countries and across borders.

Another way that geographers have sought to understand the nature of these motivating factors behind migration is by dividing them up into push factors and pull factors.

* **Push factors** include anything that would cause someone to want to move from somewhere, such as an economic recession or a lack of religious freedom.
* **Pull factors** induce people to move to someplace because that place has something enticing to offer them, such as a pleasant climate or an abundance of jobs in their chosen field.

Geographers also think of migration as being either voluntary or forced.

* **Voluntary migration** occurs when someone chooses to leave a place, either as a result of push factors or pull factors.
* In f**orced or involuntary migration**, someone is removed from his or her home and must leave the area without any choice.

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| Recent global flows of voluntary migration. |

People who leave their homes because they are forced out, but not because they are being officially relocated or enslaved, are said to be **refugees**. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defined a refugee as someone who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the global refugee population, as of 2002, was over 21 million people.

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| All the countries that are significant sources of refugees are located in Africa and southern Asia. |

In the 1960s and 1970s, another pattern emerged, as large numbers of white, middle-class Americans moved from older northeastern and midwestern cities to the South and to the West Coast. For would-be migrants, the South offered job opportunities in new high-tech industries, such as software development and aerospace engineering, a pleasant climate, and a relatively affordable cost of living. As a result, during the mid-20th century, the South ceased to be known as the Cotton Belt, with its connotations of agrarian poverty and backwardness, and instead became the new land of opportunity-the Sun Belt.

Internal migration patterns have also radically altered the balance of political and economic power. California, Texas, and Florida are now three of the four most populous states in the country (New York is the other).

On a smaller geographic scale, suburbanization is one of the most important geographic phenomena affecting the cultural landscape of the United States in the last century. Suburbanization involves migration from the inner city to outlying neighborhoods near the perimeters of urban areas.