Major Influences on Migration

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| Push Factors:Throughout Europe, political persecution, the heavy-handedness of reactionary regimes established after the defeat of Napoleon, agrarian unrest, and repressive legislation were all political push factors encouraging emigration across the Atlantic. General overpopulation caused by a high birth rate was also a demographic push factor. The land was overpopulated, and increasing industrialisation was causing widespread job shortages in urban centres.The late 1840s saw a renewed wave of migration from Europe to the New World. A series of revolutions and political crackdowns occurred throughout Europe, resulting in forced and voluntary exiles. The New World accepted German, Czech, and Hungarian democrats, Chartist labour reformers from Britain, and evacuees from Ireland.From the last half of the nineteenth century to the eve of World War One, migration to North America increased dramatically in volume. This was caused in part by undesirable conditions in Europe at the time. Throughout Europe labour unrest and religious persecution existed. The first of the anti-Jewish [**pogroms**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g65) occurred at this time as well. From 1845 to 1848 the Great Famine in Ireland resulted in 85,000 émigrés to North America in a single year. All of these were push factors, encouraging large numbers of people to depart the Old World in search of something better.Religion was also an important motivating factor for many Europeans who came to the New World during this period. The [**Reformation, Counter-Reformation**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g71), and other religious activity in Europe pushed many to migrate to the Americas, where they would be free from the religious turmoil and persecution that swept throughout Europe at this time. Pilgrims, [**Puritans**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g68), and Quakers came from England. They sought an environment which was more tolerant than that of England under the rule of Charles I (r. 1629-1640), who valued the Catholic ceremonial elements in the Church of England and who allowed the management of the church to rest with Archbishop Laud, a man who deliberately antagonised Protestant groups. Later, in the 1640s and 50s, England under [**Oliver Cromwell**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g21) saw a swing in the opposite direction, with restricted liberties for Anglicans and Catholics. At the same time, increasing numbers of dissenting Protestant groups created further religious tensions. At the end of Cromwells dominance, the English Parliament reinstated a king with Catholic leanings, Charles II, despite the general Protestant mood of the nation. This, of course, did nothing to diminish the religious tensions of the country. Across the Channel in France, the increasing absolutism of Louis XIV (r.1643-1715) was intolerant of such dissenting Catholic groups as [**Quietism**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g70) and [**Jansenism**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g43), to say nothing of the Protestant [**Huguenots**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g37). These groups were driven into surrender, prison, or exile by the Jesuit-favouring monarch. In Germany, the [**Thirty Years' War**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g79), fuelled largely by religious dissension, wreaked havoc in cities as well as in the countryside.Members of various pacifist sects who were fleeing war and conflict settled in Upper Canada. These sects included the [**Mennonites**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g49) and the [**Amish**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g49), as well as others. They had come from Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century or directly from Europe in the nineteenth.Pull Factors:Negative forces, or push factors, which encouraged increasing emigration from Europe in the late nineteenth century, were balanced by positive pull factors related to conditions in North America. A combination of factors enticed Europeans towards the New World. They were encouraged by a liberalisation in attitudes towards Catholics in North America. Trans-Atlantic shipping fares also became less expensive. Land was available to virtually anyone willing to work it. There were plenty of jobs for industrial labourers. Another pull factor was that many people knew friends or family who had migrated earlier. This process is known as [**chain migration**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g13), and resulted in distinct pockets of ethnic groups or nationalities in the New World. It meant that would-be immigrants were not simply sailing into the unknown; instead they had a support system already established across the Atlantic.Many migrants also came to Canada and the United States with no intention of becoming permanent residents; in fact, [**return migration**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/glossary.html#g72) to Europe was a fairly common phenomenon. North America was also somewhat mythologised in the minds of many Europeans seeking to migrate, who saw it as "the land of opportunity" or "the home of the free". Letters and diaries from the time illustrate that the immigrants perceptions of geography and distances in North America were distorted; events and places with personal significance (such as passing through the quarantine station at Grosse Isle) loomed large in their futures, while the days and weeks spent in transit seemed blurred and indistinct. Improvements in transportation that occurred played a role in this, diminishing distances and reducing the trip to a series of halts in major centres.By the 1770s chain migration was becoming highly significant, both in the New World and in Europe. One visitor to the Hebrides in 1773 described a dance, the theme of which was migration:"We performed, with much activity, a dance which, I suppose, the emigration from Skye has occasioned. They call it 'America'. Each of the couples, after the common involutions and evolutions, successively whirls around in a circle till all are in motion; and the dance seems intended to show how emigration catches, till a whole neighbourhood is set afloat. Mrs. M'Kinnon told me that last year, when a ship sailed from Portree for America, the people on shore were almost distracted when they saw their relations go off; they lay down on the ground, tumbled, and tore the grass with their teeth. This year there was not a tear shed. The people on the shore seemed to think that they would soon follow. This indifference is a mortal sign for the country." (Guillet, p.43)The discovery of gold on the West Coast in 1848 dramatically influenced the rate and make-up of European migrations to the area. The region was soon inundated by Americans, East and Central Canadians, Chileans, Chinese, Hawaiians, Africans, Mexicans, and a wide range of Europeans. From 1858 to 1862 they congregated in the mining camps of the Fraser Valley and the Cariboo region.Beginning in 1858, Chinese settlers began moving north from California into what is now British Columbia. In 1859 chartered ships began transporting Chinese settlers to Canada's West Coast directly from Hong Kong. By the early 1860s there were approximately six or seven thousand Chinese living in British Columbia, the majority of whom were men. They worked in many occupations; as gold and jade prospectors, importers, transporters, fishermen, gardeners, laundreymen, restaurateurs, labourers, and domestic servants. With the end of the gold rush in the late 1860s, the economic opportunities began to dwindle, and in the face of increasing popular discrimination, many Chinese left Vancouver, to return as railway labourers in the 1880s.Free Africans began to arrive on Vancouver Island around 1858 in response to increasingly restrictive legislation in California. They settled as farmers, ranchers, bakers, miners, merchants, outfitters, barbers, and restaurant-keepers. The pendulum swung the opposite direction a few years later when rising prejudice and economic depression followed the gold rush. At the same time, abolition was enacted in the United States, making it a much more attractive destination. |
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