

**2009 World Affairs Challenge**  
**6 Billion on the Move: Human Migration in a Global Society**

*The following list is an array of possible topics that teams may choose to explore during the Research Period. Teams are not limited to items on this list, however. The main goal is that teams choose a topic that is related to the theme, is global in scope and that they present a solution to their chosen issue during their Formal Presentation on Challenge Day.*

**Push Factors**

**Economy**

- **Economic opportunity:** low wages and high unemployment make it difficult to earn a living wage. Why and where do people migrate to find better wages and more job opportunity?
- **Price inflation:** The rising cost of food and energy raise the cost of living and deepen poverty. How does this drive migration?
- **Colonialism:** Arbitrary borders were established during the colonialism period. This forced people to situate themselves within the context of a state, which sometimes forced groups to move away from their home area. Borders also disrupted nomadic lifestyle. Analyze the legacy of colonialism and the ways it affects immigration patterns.
- **Natural resources:** Issues of limited resources like water and land. When there is inevitably not enough to go around, what happens to those that windup without?
- **Social insurance:** Inadequate social insurance like medical benefits or access to education may force people to migrate to areas that will provide these resources. Where do they go? Do they really obtain access to these resources?
- **Economic liberalization:** as economies are forced open, many local industries are crippled by the imposed “Washington consensus” policies. Displaced industries and workers move in search of opportunity. How exactly are industries and workers displaced? Where do they go? Is the “Washington consensus” really responsible for this?
- **Overpopulation:** various factors (sanitation, housing shortages, resource shortages, etc.) in overcrowded cities/areas force people to move. What are some other factors? How do they lead to migration? Where do people go?
- **Wealth gaps:** Growing disparities between poor countries and rich communities (as seen in the United Nations’ Human Development Index) may cause people to move. Why?
- **Seasonal migration:** certain jobs require people to move often, particularly in the informal sector (domestic work, agriculture). Work is not always guaranteed. Why does job insecurity cause migration? Where do these workers go?
- **Declining industries:** Income gaps between farming and non-farming communities causes internal migration; as agricultural production becomes less profitable, populations move towards urbanized areas in search of employment. Where are these trends found? What are the factors that contribute to the income gap?

**Natural Factors**

- **Disaster relief:** Access to aid in the aftermath of earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and hurricanes influences population movement. How? Where do people go? If governments do not adequately respond to disaster, what becomes of the effected communities?
- **Environmental destruction:** human activities (including deforestation for industry, infrastructure development, desertification and poor urban planning) force populations to relocate. Why?
- **Food shortages:** people move in response to famine and the rising food costs. Where do they go? What causes these shortages?
- **Disease:** people move in response to disease and health issues (HIV/AIDS, malaria). Where do they go? What factors contribute to the spread of disease? What role does education play?
- **Weather patterns:** changes in weather patterns disrupt social and economic dynamics. For example, droughts make nomadic life increasingly difficult or heavy rains may flood crops. What other weather changes affect migration patterns? Where do people go?

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**Politics**

- **Protection of rights:** weak political processes (the absence of a rule of law, corrupt elections, lack of voting rights) leave many politically disenfranchised. Many become asylum seekers. What other political events cause people to claim asylum? How do they leave their country? Where do they go? What are the challenges to asylum seekers?
- **Free Trade:** free trade policies often liberalize, or open up, economies by removing trade barriers and tariffs. Financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization, often play a role in negotiating new trade policies. This highly controversial topic reflects the ongoing debate about the consequences and benefits of globalization. Critics of these policies argue that opening up economies cripples domestic industry, while proponents argue that liberalized economies can provide important tools for economic development. What are the specific arguments of critics and proponents? How do these policies affect trade and industry, and thus migration? What are the migration trends in countries with newly liberalized economies? Is there a relationship between economic liberalization and migration? (*Note: academics often refer to neoliberal trade policies as “Washington consensus” policies because many of the financial institutions involved are based in Washington, D.C. While this is not an official term for free trade policies because it assigns a pejorative label, it can serve as a useful research term*)
- **Oppression:** Political discrimination, marginalization and oppression, including limited women’s and minority rights, leave many disenfranchised. How does this affect migration flows?
- **State-building:** Contemporary issues of statehood (such as groups struggling for autonomy) and the dissolution/creation of states (known as state-building) directly affects the local population, and indirectly affects the global population. Analyze the relationship between issues of statehood, state-building, and migration patterns.

**Conflict/War and Forced Migration**

- **Conflict:** How is migration a cause and effect of conflict?
- **Types of conflicts:** There are many types of conflicts (civil war, foreign invasion, political oppression, genocide) that force populations to move. Compare different types of conflict and the ways they force people to migrate.
- **Refugees:** What is a refugee? Where do refugees go?
- **Territorial disputes:** Disputes over land ownership can result in migration, and may lead to violence. Explore this relationship.
- **Discrimination and oppression:** what are the different types of discrimination and oppression? What are the sources of discrimination and oppression? How does this affect migratory flows?
- **Class conflict:** how does class conflict contribute to migration? How does the marginalization of poor communities within cities affect internal migration? What is “white-flight”?
- **Corruption:** do illegitimate elections and political corruption cause migration?
- **Terrorism:** how do terrorism and fear influence migration?
- **Forced migration:** human trafficking is a form of economic exploitation. Where does this occur? What issues do trafficked individuals face?
- **Drug trade:** how does the drug trade affect population movement?

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**Pull Factors**

**Economy**

- **City-regions:** What are city-regions? Where are they found? What are technopoles? Where are they found? How do city-regions and technopoles attract immigration?
- **Economic incentives:** what types of incentives attract immigrants?
- **Labor demands:** what industries have a high demand for labor? How does this affect immigration?
- **North/South:** what is the north/south divide? How does it influence immigration patterns?
- **Capital:** explore how access to natural resources like land, water and energy affects immigration.
- **Technological globalization:** the globalization of technology spreads ideas and images, which makes people aware of opportunities abroad. What constitutes the globalization of technology? How do people access these ideas and images?
- **Transportation globalization:** advances in technology (the development of the shipment container, faster planes and trains, growing car industry) makes it cheaper and easier to move between locations. How does this affect immigration?
- **Migration industry:** there is an industry surrounding migration. Some examples of this include immigration lawyers, labor recruiters and traffickers. What are some other examples? Who else is involved? How does this contribute to immigration?

**Social**

- **Cityscapes:** a cityscape is the skyline/horizon of a city, or the “landscape” of a city. How does migration affect cityscapes? What recent trends can you discover?
- **Family reunification:** sometimes families will send one member ahead of everyone else. This family member will find housing in the new country or area, and will earn money to bring the rest of the family. How does this affect family dynamics? How do families go about reunifying in new countries?
- **Network migration:** what is network migration? Explain how this determines immigration patterns.
- **Aging populations:** analyze countries with aging populations. Does it discourage or encourage immigration? How?

**Political**

- **Freedom:** What types of freedom make a country attractive to immigrants? What freedoms do immigrants find upon arrival?
- **Government programs:** How do government programs (such as job centers and worker visas) facilitate immigration and direct immigration patterns?
- **Globalization:** globalization can diminish the significance of borders. In the absence of borders, everything converges because the world becomes more economically, politically and socially interconnected. How does convergence in places like Europe affect immigration policy? Does convergence make it easier or more difficult to migrate?
- **Education:** how do education policies influence immigration patterns? Is immigrant access to education growing or diminishing? How does this relate to the “brain drain?”
- **Decolonization:** Analyze immigration during the period of decolonization. How does decolonization continue to influence immigration today?
- **Standardization:** immigration norms have been standardized through the Geneva Conventions and institutions like the WTO. How does this facilitate immigration? Why does standardization make migration more attractive?
- **Legal convergence:** how have high courts converged over issues of immigration? What are some recent examples? How does this influence immigration policy and immigration flow?

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**Effects**

**Environment**

- **Weather patterns:** how do immigration and migration affect weather patterns?
- **Natural resources:** how does population growth put pressure on natural resources like water, land and energy?
- **Urbanization:** how does immigration affect city landscapes? What are the various urbanization and deurbanization patterns in different regions?
- **Environmental destruction:** Deforestation and urbanization of rural areas to accommodate growing populations and industry.

**Economy**

- **Local industries:** What are the effects of immigration (legal and illegal) on local industries (both in the sending and receiving country) including agriculture and manufacturing?
- **Efficiency:** Does immigration make receiving economies more efficient?
- **Wages:** Does immigration affect wage rates? How does illegal immigration and legal immigration (including guest workers) influence wage rates?
- **Labor availability:** What is the job availability in different countries? Are there always jobs for immigrants (legal and illegal)?
- **Types of immigrant labor:** Concentration of migrants in 3D sectors (dirty, dangerous, difficult)
- **Brain drain:** Examine the “brain drain” and its effects on industry. In certain situations, might it be considered a “brain gain”?
- **Exploitation:** Analyze the economic exploitation of migrant workers, including domestic workers, fieldworkers and sex workers. In what ways are these workers exploited?
- **Core and periphery:** What are the general migration trends between the core and periphery? What causes these trends?
- **Heavy migration:** What are the major challenges to countries experiences large population outflows?
- **Discouraging emigration:** How can sending countries discourage emigration? Is it beneficial to do this?
- **Trade and immigration:** How does trade affect immigration and migration patterns?
- **Economic costs of immigration:** Does immigration lower wages in the receiving country? Take away jobs? Burden the social welfare system?
- **Economic development:** What is the relationship between emigration and economic development? Does emigration help or inhibit economic development?
- **Free trade:** Does free trade increase migration and immigration?
- **Worker programs:** What are the economic and political costs and benefits of foreign worker programs?
- **Return migrants:** In what situations do immigrants return home?
- **Poverty and migration:** How might migration exacerbate poverty? What are the challenges migrants face in their new home?
- **Comparative policies:** Examine the relationship between the type of economy and the immigration policies found within that country.
- **Remittances:** what are remittances? Where do they go? How does this affect economies?

**Social**

- **Youth and the immigration legacy:** what is the experience of the second generation? The third generation? How does it vary from country to country?
- **Identity:** Examine the relationship between identity and immigration. How does immigration affect identity?
- **Racism:** what forms of racism do immigrants face? What causes this? How does it affect immigrants?
- **Discrimination:** In what ways are immigrants and migrants discriminated against?
- **Assimilation and integration:** What is the process of assimilation and integration? How are they different? How do governments frame assimilation? How is it problematic?
- **Propaganda:** Analyze contemporary propaganda and the way it frames immigration debates within different countries.

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- **Critiquing the debate:** immigration is often depicted in a negative light, which can fuel discrimination and misconception. In what ways is this problematic? Who is responsible for this: the media, government, population, or another agent? How can we re-frame the debate in a positive way?
- **Feminization:** Analyze the feminization of immigration. What larger global trends have led to the feminization of immigration? Feminization of labor?
- **Friendly nations:** What steps can societies take in order to be more receptive of immigrants, particularly in the education and business sectors?
- **Families:** What implications does immigration have on the family structure?
- **Community:** Explore the nature of Migrant Hometown Associations (HTAs) and the impact they have on immigrant communities.
- **Art:** Immigrant populations influence art, music and even television. How do they contribute? What are some examples? How is this contribution received?
- **Education:** Do immigrants have access to education? Analyze how immigrant children are matriculated into schools. What are the barriers to education? What educational obstacles do immigrant children face?

**Health**

- **Fertility:** Explore the relationship between immigration and fertility rates. Immigrant women tend to have lower fertility rates. What are the implications to this?
- **Health issues:** Examines the various health issues that face immigrant populations, including malnutrition, communicable disease, and maternal mortality. What causes these health risks?
- **Refugees:** what health issues face refugee populations?
- **Trafficking:** What health risks do trafficked individuals face?
- **Insurance:** do immigrants have access to insurance? How do they pay for medical costs?
- **HIV/AIDS:** What is the relationship between HIV/AIDS and population mobility?
- **Cities:** How does internal migration affect the health of cities (sanitation, overcrowding, “white flight”)?
- **Healthcare policy:** do countries provide healthcare to immigrants?

**Political**

- **Human Rights:** what is the relationship between human rights and immigration?
- **Civil rights:** How does labor migration affect the rights of individuals?
- **Political controls:** Examine different migration controls (walls, militia, strict entry requirements) employed in different areas of the world by both sending and receiving countries.
- **Immigration policy:** What factors should policymakers consider when designing immigration policies? What are the challenges to creating immigration policy? What advice would you give them?
- **Security versus civil liberties:** Security legislation can lead to the discrimination and unfair treatment of immigrants. What are the tradeoffs between security concerns and civil liberties when it comes to immigration policy?
- **Trafficking:** What steps are governments taking to prevent human trafficking? Why is it difficult to study or control trafficking?
- **Refugees:** what challenges do refugees face in finding a new place to live? Why don't countries always accept refugees?
- **Asylum seekers:** what is asylum? How do different countries accommodate asylum seekers?
- **Stateless people:** what constitutes a state? What happens to stateless people?

**Miscellaneous**

- **Preventing migration:** why might countries prevent or discourage migration? In what ways do they do this? Do people migrate anyway?
- **Population:** analyze the relationship between population trends and immigration policy. If a country has a diminishing population size, will it encourage immigration?