Ravenstein made two main points about the distance that migrants travel to their new homes:

- Most migrants relocate a short distance and remain within the same country (see Sections 3.8. and 3.9).
- Long-distance migrants to other countries head for major centers of economic activity.

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 international migrants are much less numerous than internal migrants.

At a global scale, Asia, Latin America, and Africa have net out-migration, whereas North America, Europe, and Oceania have net in-migration. The three largest flows of migrants are to Europe from Asia and to North America from Asia and from Latin America.

Substantial in-migration also occurs from Europe to North America and from Asia to Oceania. Lower levels of net migration occur from Latin America to Oceania and from Africa to Europe, North America, and Oceania.

The global pattern reflects the importance of migration from less developed countries to more developed countries. Migrants from countries with relatively low incomes and high natural increase rates head for relatively wealthy countries, where job prospects are brighter.
Geographer Wilbur Zelinsky identified a migration transition, which consists of changes in a society comparable to those in the demographic transition. A society in stage 1 of the demographic transition has high daily or seasonal mobility in search of food. 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.

3.3.3 MIGRANTS FROM ASIA
Chinese migrant workers board a train in Shanghai to return for a week-long holiday.