



# The Causes, Effects and Legacies of the Great Migration in the United States: Review and Reflection

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**Abstract.** The Great Migration, an unprecedented demographic shift that occurred roughly from the 1910s to the 1970s, involved the relocation of approximately six million African Americans from the Southern United States to the Northern, Midwestern, and Western regions of the country, making it one of the most significant internal migrations in American history. This study is a comprehensive review of scholarly research on the Great Migration. Drawing upon economic, historical, and sociological studies, this review analyzes the complex factors that triggered and sustained the migration, including racial oppression, economic hardships, and pursuit of better paying job opportunities. It also delves into multi-faceted impacts on black migrants, their descendants, and broader American society - highlighting economic gains but also challenges like residential segregation and barriers to upward mobility. Additionally, the review explores the migration's influence on racial attitudes and political realignment. By identifying gaps in the current literature and proposing areas for further research, this study underscores the enduring relevance of the Great Migration for understanding contemporary issues of racial inequality, urban poverty, and social change in America.

**Keywords:** Great Migration, African Americans, The 20th Century, United States, Racial Inequality

## 1 Introduction

The Great Migration refers to the large-scale migration of millions of African Americans from rural areas in the Southern United States to urban areas in the North and West during the early to mid-20th century, from the early 1900s to the 1970s. It was a response by African Americans to the oppressive conditions of racial segregation in the South and the strong attraction of industrial employment opportunities in Northern cities. Under the combined influence of factors such as racial discrimination, economic hardship, and social injustice in the South, and the promise of better job opportunities and greater freedom in the North, six million black men and women fled the Southern states between 1900 and 1970. The proportion of African Americans in the Southern states decreased from 93% in 1900 to 68% in 1950 and further to 53% in 1970<sup>[6]</sup>. During

the same 70 years, the proportion of black residents in some major migration destination cities increased from 3% to 26% <sup>[12]</sup>. The Great Migration not only promoted urbanization and industrialization in numerous Northern cities such as Chicago, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, and Cleveland, reshaping the demographic, economic, and cultural landscape of the United States, but also propelled social and political movements fighting for civil rights and equality, profoundly impacting African American communities, urban areas, and American society as a whole. Its legacy continues to influence contemporary issues related to race, immigration, and urbanization, holding significant importance for researching and resolving current racial and immigration issues in the United States.

The study of the Great Migration is crucial for understanding issues such as race, immigration, urbanization, and social change because it reveals how historical transformations have influenced and shaped contemporary race relations and urban landscapes in the United States. The purpose of this paper is to delve into the significance of the Great Migration and how it has molded the current economic, social, and cultural structures of the United States. By examining the Great Migration, we can better analyze and address current economic and social issues such as racial inequality, urban poverty, and community development, providing historical references for policy formulation. Moreover, this research helps the public confront history, break stereotypes, and promote inclusivity and understanding of American history.

In this literature review, I will focus on the following aspects: First, I will explore the driving factors of the Great Migration. These factors can be classified into economic and social push factors from the Southern states and pull factors from other regions of the country based on the source of the driving forces. The push factors from the South include racial discrimination and economic hardship, while the pull factors from other regions of the country include industrialization and better employment opportunities. Second, I will analyze the differing views of scholars on the economic impacts for migrants. Third, I will delve into the crucial factor of upward mobility among black migrants and their descendants. Then, I will discuss the negative repercussions of the Great Migration on migrants and how it may have hindered their progress, along with proposing solutions. Finally, I will examine its impact of race relations and political alignments in the United States. This comprehensive analysis aims to offer an in-depth perspective, elucidating the multifaceted causes underlying the current state of American society. Additionally, it aims to shed light on the pivotal role and enduring impact of the Great Migration in American history and contemporary society.

## **2 The Great Migration: Drivers and Perpetuating Factors**

### **2.1 Initiating Causes**

The motivations behind the Great Migration have always been an important part of the research on this topic, and there is a general consensus in academia about the causes of the Great Migration.

The significant increase in labor demand in the industrial cities of the North due to World War I was a crucial driving factor in the early stages of the Great Migration.

Factories located in northern states had previously preferred to hire European immigrants. However, with the outbreak of World War I and the subsequent decrease in European immigration, these factories began to employ more African Americans, which created new employment opportunities for African American workers. As information spread, many Southern migrants yearned to seek better economic opportunities through migration, and better job prospects held a strong appeal for Southern blacks, stimulating the initial wave of migration. Active advertising by companies from outside the South played a significant role in the dissemination of employment information. During World War I, many factories and railroad companies in Northern cities sent recruiters to the South to recruit black laborers, offering higher wages<sup>[3]</sup>. This encouraged many African Americans to relocate in pursuit of higher wages, better working conditions, and a higher standard of living.

Not only did the "pull factors" in the North promote the Great Migration, but the "push factors" such as economic hardship in the South also drove labor migration. According to Lee (1966) migrants are motivated by the balance of push factors in their place of origin and pull factors in potential destinations<sup>[24]</sup>. Both economic and social conditions are important in migrants' decision-making process. The impact of the boll weevil on cotton crops and the mechanization of cotton harvesting led to a decline in the demand for agricultural labor in the South, which were potential factors encouraging Southern migration<sup>[21]</sup>. However, Higgs (1976), an American economic historian and economist, argues that although the boll weevil may have had an impact on certain states in the 1920s, it was neither necessary nor sufficient to drive the Great Migration<sup>[22]</sup>. William J. Collins and Marianne H. Wanamaker's [economists] (2015) research indirectly supports this view<sup>[14]</sup>. They also found that "residing on a farm" was the most robust inhibiting factor for migration among both white and black groups. This weakens the persuasiveness of the view that natural disasters negatively impacting agriculture led to Southern migration. However, it remains a fact that plantation agriculture and the sharecropping system in the South left most blacks without land and living in poverty (Mandle 1978; Ransom and Sutch 1977)<sup>[26][29]</sup>. The South not only had poor agricultural economic conditions but also had problems of low industrialization and few non-agricultural employment opportunities. This created a gap in economic potential and stability between the South and the North.

In addition to economic factors, social factors also played a crucial role in promoting the Great Migration. Although discrimination, violence, and racism also existed in the North, the legalized racial segregation of the Jim Crow system and the threat of racial violence were particularly oppressive in the South (Collins 2020)<sup>[12]</sup>. Compared to the South, the North and West were more tolerant of blacks and had lower levels of racial discrimination. This differential treatment is reflected in the number of lynchings. Gabriel et al. [soc., econ., soc., econ.] (2023) research found that from 1910-1930, the number of blacks lynched in the South was positively correlated with the number of blacks migrating out of the South<sup>[18]</sup>. By 1920, over a thousand blacks were lynched every decade, with 90% occurring in Southern states (Anderson 2016)<sup>[3]</sup>. Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, Alabama, and Louisiana accounted for more than half of the national total. Many black sharecroppers became debt slaves due to their debts and suffered

exploitation and abuse. Moreover, education for blacks in the South was very backward, and black children in the South could not receive normal education, with many places having black schools in session for only a few weeks a year. In addition, the media also played a role in promoting the Great Migration. Some black newspapers, such as the *Chicago Defender*, advertised opportunities in the North and encouraged black migration, promoting the Great Migration (Grossman 1989, 66-98)<sup>[20]</sup>.

However, some studies have indirectly questioned the factor of racial oppression driving Southern blacks to migrate, arguing that racial oppression was not the primary or decisive factor in driving black migrants to leave the South. Collins, William J., and Marianne H. Wanamaker's (2015) research found that after controlling for other destination characteristics (migration costs, employment opportunities and wage levels, urbanization level and population size of the destination), although race influences the destination choice of migrants, race itself does not drive migration<sup>[14]</sup>. It can be inferred from this that even though African Americans were discriminated against and oppressed based on their racial characteristics, this did not directly become their motivation for migration.

Within racial categories, the differences between migrants and non-migrants were relatively small, indicating that participation in migration from 1910 to 1930 was widespread across races, rather than the result of strong positive or negative selection (Collins and Wanamaker 2015)<sup>[14]</sup>. The evidence suggests that migrants who left the South tended to be positively selected compared with those who remained behind (Marks 1989)<sup>[27]</sup>.

## 2.2 Forces Sustaining the Migration

After the migration began, migrant networks and the persistent economic opportunity gap between the North and the South became key factors in sustaining the migration, forming chain migration. This meant that even after the initial driving factors such as the labor demand shock of World War I disappeared, the Great Migration formed a self-sustaining process driven by migrant networks and the persistent differences in economic opportunities and living conditions between the North and the South. These factors enabled the Great Migration to continue for several decades even after the initial impetus had passed (Collins 2020)<sup>[12]</sup>. The networks established by early migrants facilitated the migration and reunification of more family members and acquaintances. These connections provided information and support, reducing the migration costs and uncertainty for later migrants (Marks 1989; Carrington et al. 1996; Stuart and Taylor 2021)<sup>[27][9][32]</sup>. Many blacks who migrated north often followed family members and friends who had migrated earlier (Ballard 1984, 182-194)<sup>[5]</sup>. Research on the persistent causes of the Great Migration does not conflict with either perspective on the origins of the Great Migration discussed above.

## 2.3 Destiny Selection

Tolnay et al. (2005) observe a trend where white southerners exhibited a higher propensity for relocation to the West Coast, particularly noted in the initial phases of the

Great Migration. Conversely, black migrants demonstrated a greater inclination to settle in the Northeast compared to their white counterparts.

Collins and Wanamaker (2014) research point out that in 1910, the differences in migrant background characteristics other than race accounted for a minuscule proportion of the factors influencing the choice of migrant destination, meaning that the differences between blacks and whites in these socioeconomic background characteristics, such as education level, occupation, income, etc., cannot explain the differences in their choice of migration destination<sup>[13]</sup>.

This research suggests that the economic factors causing differences in white and black immigrant destinations may include: black migrants are less willing to go to distant places, more easily attracted to cities with high labor demand, and more attracted to manufacturing centers. This indicates that the geographical distribution of economic opportunities, especially economic opportunities from the manufacturing sector, played a role in shaping the differences in migration. Moreover, white migrants may be more sensitive to wage changes at their destinations due to easier access to education and information, and thus exhibit greater sensitivity to wage changes at their destinations when making destination choices.

Since blacks were more likely to migrate to the Northeast and Midwest, while whites were more likely to migrate to the West, even after controlling for economic factors. This suggests that non-economic factors such as social and political conditions also influenced migrants' choice of destination. Differences in labor market discrimination, civil liberties, or social norms in different regions may have led to differences in the destinations of black and white migrants.

### **3 Economics Impacts on Black Migrants**

Whether the Great Migration truly led to improved conditions for the descendants of migrants is a complex topic, with academia reaching consensus in many aspects while also having controversies in certain areas. Regarding the economic gains of the Great Migration, most studies support the notion that migration generated positive economic benefits for black migrants, but there are also studies suggesting that the actual economic gains for black migrants did not increase.

#### **3.1 Potential Benefits Perspective**

By linking individuals between the 1910 and 1930 censuses, Collins and Wanamaker's (2014) study provides strong evidence that African American males who migrated from the South to the North and West during the Great Migration experienced significant economic gains, with higher income growth than those who stayed in the South, even after accounting for pre-migration differences in individual such as age, literacy, occupation, migrants' income increased substantially, and local characteristics<sup>[13]</sup>.

### **3.2 Evidence of Improved Outcomes for Second Generation**

Alexander et al. [sociologies] (2017), using linked census records from 1940 to 2000, traced outcomes for the descendants of both Great Migration participants and non-migrants<sup>[2]</sup>. They found that the children of Black families who left the South ended up living in neighborhoods with higher median income, lower poverty rates, higher rates of high school completion, and lower rates of single motherhood compared to the children of southern Black families who did not migrate. These neighborhood advantages for the children of migrants persisted into adulthood and were transmitted to the next generation as well. The authors also noted that some of the differences in outcomes between the children of migrants and non-migrants could be explained by positive selection into migration, suggesting that migrant families may have had characteristics that predisposed them to better outcomes. Overall, this study demonstrates the long-lasting, intergenerational benefits of the Great Migration for the families of Black Americans who left the South, although the magnitude of these benefits was somewhat smaller than expected.

Furthermore, W. Collins (2020) included white migrants in the research scope, forming a contrast with black migrants<sup>[12]</sup>. Second-generation white migrants gained little benefit from migration compared to white settlers in the South or North. After controlling for parental and individual characteristics, white migrants were not much better off than those who stayed in the South. This reflects that black migrants' descendants gained more from the Great Migration compared to white migrants' descendants.

### **3.3 Counterarguments of Limited Economic Advantages**

Due to significant differences in economic development levels and living costs across U.S. states, comparisons of absolute income may obscure migrants' true economic status, thus incorrectly reflecting migrants' actual economic gains. Some studies have questioned the view that black migrants' economic benefits increased and argued that the Great Migration did not actually improve black migrants' economic gains but may have even reduced them. Some other studies show that migrants leaving the South were not significantly better off than Southern groups in terms of employment status, income, or occupational status. Migrants had a slight advantage in terms of income, but after controlling for interstate income differences, migrants had no relative income advantage and even fared worse than Southern internal migrants in 1980. These findings suggest a contradiction with the traditional view that leaving the South brings economic benefits, arguing that black interstate migrants did not economically benefit from migration.

## **4 Upward Mobility of Black Migrants**

### **4.1 Relationship Between Migration Size and Upward Mobility**

The ability to move upward is an important reflection of the socioeconomic vitality of migrants. Even if the economic conditions of black migrants were better than those of

non-migrating blacks who remained in the South, it does not mean that black migrants achieved the expected or equal status with Northerners in terms of obtaining better opportunities. On the contrary, research shows that the Great Migration had long-term negative impacts on the upward mobility and racial inequality of black migrants in cities that received a large number of black migrants. The Great Migration widened the gap in upward mobility between black and white descendants in Northern cities.

The number of black migrants received in each region greatly affected the upward mobility of black descendants, especially black boys. In cities that received a large number of blacks during the Great Migration, such as Detroit and Chicago, the rate of upward mobility for children born in low-income families in the 1980s was much lower compared to Northern cities with fewer migrants. Without the migrants and the changes they brought, the upward mobility gap between blacks and whites would have been reduced by 27% (Derenoncourt 2022)<sup>[16]</sup>.

## 4.2 Factors Hindering Descendants' Upward Mobility

Derenoncourt (2022) compared the upward mobility rates of low-income black children in northern cities with high and low levels of Black population inflows during the Great Migration, from 1940 to 1970<sup>[16]</sup>. She found that cities receiving larger inflows of Black migrants experienced significant reductions in upward mobility for Black children, particularly Black men. This suggests that the lower upward mobility was not solely due to the impact of Black identity itself, but rather that cities receiving more Black migrants were dramatically affected in ways that altered the urban environment and impacted economic opportunity. These changes included increased crime rates, greater racial segregation, higher investments in policing and incarceration, and "White flight" from urban neighborhoods. The study concludes that these changes created long-term economic barriers for Black families in these cities. Notably, the effects were much larger for Black men than Black women, suggesting the importance of changing family structure and the particular vulnerability of Black boys to adverse environmental influences.

## 4.3 Proposed Solutions to Mobility Challenges

Certain forms of policing actions or strategies can promote intergenerational upward mobility, especially by reducing crime rates. However, more police presence has had a negative impact on outcomes for black students.

Sharkey and Torrats-Espinosa's (2017) research, which argues that strengthening law enforcement actions is conducive to upward mobility<sup>[30]</sup>, suggests that reduced crime rates promote intergenerational upward mobility. They used increases in community policing funding (a community-based, prevention-focused policing strategy) as an instrumental variable and found that this form of policing indirectly promoted mobility by reducing crime. Norris, Pecenco, Weaver's (2021) research shows that the imprisonment of siblings has a deterrent effect on other siblings, reducing their crime<sup>[28]</sup>. This suggests that certain policing actions may promote mobility by disrupting the intergenerational transmission of crime.

Other studies point out the negative impacts of policing actions. Police shooting incidents involving civilians have had a negative impact on educational outcomes for black and Hispanic students in the same communities (Ang 2021)<sup>[4]</sup>. While police presence reduced violent crime, it also increased arrests for nonviolent crimes, disproportionately affecting blacks (Chalfin, Hansen, Weisburst, and Williams Jr. 2020)<sup>[11]</sup>. Moreover, mass incarceration has damaged black family structures and children's educational outcomes (Liu 2020)<sup>[25]</sup>.

It is evident that different studies have divergent findings on how policing behaviors affect black communities. However, in summary, overall, some preventive community policing measures may help reduce crime and thus indirectly improve the environment. However, if law enforcement actions are too harsh, although they superficially control crime, they traumatize and damage black communities, affecting children's growth.

Promoting upward mobility not only requires moving families to better communities but also addressing structural barriers and inequalities within cities that limit opportunities for disadvantaged residents. The Great Migration itself was an attempt to pursue opportunities, but the behavior and attitude changes of receiving cities toward black migrants limited the gains of black migrants. The ongoing impact of the Great Migration on some cities suggests that targeted, place-based policies may be needed to address deep-rooted inequalities. As each place faces different historical backgrounds and challenges, promoting mobility requires context-specific thinking. The government may need to work more coherently to reduce disparities within regions, rather than relocating disadvantaged families through "urban renewal". Relevant units need to take comprehensive measures to improve the environment of communities where disadvantaged groups live and enhance their opportunities, rather than simply implementing a strategy of "migrating elsewhere" (Derenoncourt 2022)<sup>[16]</sup>.

## **5 Acknowledged Negative Repercussions of the Great Migration**

### **5.1 White Flight and Residential Segregation**

The arrival of large numbers of African American migrants in Northern and Western cities triggered significant demographic changes. The Great Migration led to "white flight" from central cities to suburbs, with white residents moving away due to the influx of African American residents. Residential segregation was associated with the deterioration of socioeconomic conditions for black youth in the late 20th century. Around the mid-20th century, at the peak of the Great Migration, white families collectively acted, from threats of violence to legal barriers (such as restrictive covenants), to enforce high levels of residential segregation. White families tended to enter white areas of highly segregated metropolitan areas and paid a premium to do so (Cutler and Glaeser 1997)<sup>[15]</sup>. This process exacerbated residential segregation between races and the concentration of African American populations in urban communities. In the long run, the intensification of residential segregation and white flight led to concentrated poverty, urban decay, and reduced upward mobility for African Americans in some



urban areas. Collins (2020) points out that after 1880, levels of residential segregation rose across the United States, including in rural and urban areas, in the South and the North. Therefore, although the Great Migration literature tends to focus on residential segregation in Northern and Western cities, residential segregation was widespread and increasing throughout the United States during this period<sup>[12]</sup>.

As urban population expansion, suburbanization, urban poverty, and crime became increasingly serious problems after World War II, the federal government launched a series of urban renewal programs in the late 1940s. Because of the concentration of African American populations in urban communities, black migrants were much more affected by urban renewal than whites. Although urban renewal was ostensibly intended to improve cities by clearing slums and promoting redevelopment, in practice it often led to the displacement of predominantly black poor communities and disrupted vibrant neighborhoods (Shi et al. 2022)<sup>[31]</sup>. Critics argued that urban renewal was not only ineffective but also had negative impacts on African American communities, harming the communities they wanted to help. Moreover, urban renewal reinforced patterns of racial segregation and inequality through the relocation of residents (Hirsch 2000)<sup>[23]</sup>.

Urban renewal was more common in cities that received more black migrants during the Great Migration. Urban renewal programs relocated more families, especially nonwhite families. Shi et al. (2022) study shows that between 1955 and 1974, a 10 percentage point increase in the number of black migrants led to a 10 percentage point increase in the likelihood that a city undertook at least one urban renewal project<sup>[31]</sup>. The Great Migration largely led to urban renewal, which led to increased residential segregation, white migration to the suburbs, and the loss of jobs and resources, further leading to the decline of downtown communities.

Within cities, blacks had mobility in terms of housing, but they faced more disadvantages than whites in moving to the suburbs and better neighborhoods. Racial discrimination limited their housing choices (Tolnay 2003)<sup>[33]</sup>. Carol Anderson's research mentions an incident where a black family moving into a white neighborhood faced violent treatment from whites in the community due to racial discrimination, confirming that black migrants were disadvantaged in moving to better neighborhoods, and this disadvantage could lead to threats to their lives and safety.

Therefore, although the Great Migration itself may have benefited those blacks who left the South, the response of Northern and Western cities with urban renewal programs often harmed the interests of black migrants in those cities. Thus, in many cases, urban renewal actually made things worse (Shi et al. 2022)<sup>[31]</sup>.

## 5.2 Health and Life Expectancy

Historically, it was not uncommon for migrants moving to large cities to have poorer health than migrants who remained in rural areas (Haines 2001). Health factors of migrants should be considered within the scope of the benefits of the Great Migration. D. Black et al. (2015) study shows that despite the economic benefits, the Great Migration actually had a negative impact on the life expectancy of migrants<sup>[7]</sup>. The study found that the Great Migration increased the mortality rate of migrant blacks born in the South in the early 20th century. For those born between 1916 and 1932, migrating to the North

reduced life expectancy after age 65 by an average of about 1.5 years, and this effect appears to exist for both men and women. Black et al. (2015) studied populations aged 65 and older from 1976-2001 and found that migrants had lower life expectancy. They estimate that after controlling for other factors, if a migrant lived to age 65, their probability of living to age 75 was on average 10 percentage points lower than those who did not migrate. D. Black et al. (2015) study provides suggestive evidence that migrants had higher rates of smoking and drinking compared to non-migrants who stayed in the South, and this increase may be the reason for their higher mortality rates<sup>[7]</sup>. Moreover, the displacement caused by migration itself may have had a huge health cost. Therefore, although the Great Migration improved economic opportunities for African Americans, these gains may have been offset by adverse effects on health and life expectancy.

## **6 Other Impacts and Unresolved Issues**

### **6.1 The Great Migration Promoted White Solidarity**

The Great Migration not only affected the main subjects of migration - African Americans from the South - but also influenced the relationships among white groups. Fouka et al. (2022) study shows that the Great Migration played a role in promoting white solidarity<sup>[17]</sup>. The arrival of a new outsider group (African Americans) that was more distant from the white mainstream reduced the perceived distance of the white mainstream from existing outsider groups (European immigrants). The arrival of Southern blacks redefined the boundaries of "whiteness" and reshaped the racial landscape of the United States.

The arrival of Southern black migrants led to increased assimilation of European immigrants, specifically in terms of higher naturalization rates, intermarriage with native-born whites, and leaving immigrant-dominated industries such as manufacturing. This occurred because the emergence of a new minority group, African American migrants, changed native-born whites' views on race relations, making them perceive European immigrants as more similar to them. Historical newspapers show that anti-international immigrant sentiment and negative stereotypes of international immigrant groups declined after the Great Migration.

This impact was greatest for immigrant groups seen as "intermediary groups". They had faced discrimination but were similar to native-born whites, so they benefited when more distant groups arrived. However, non-white immigrants who were culturally very distant, such as Mexicans and Chinese, did not benefit from the Great Migration. This study provides new evidence that the arrival of a new, culturally distant minority group can promote the assimilation of previously immigrant minority groups by changing the majority's perception of who belongs to their "in-group".

### **6.2 The Great Migration Improved White Racial Attitudes**

By analyzing data from the American National Election Studies (ANES), Calderon et al. (2022) discovered that white respondents born in states that welcomed more Black migrants between 1940 and 1960 held more favorable views of African Americans and

were more likely to consider civil rights as a paramount issue for the nation in 1964 when the Civil Rights Act was passed<sup>[8]</sup>.

Furthermore, Calderon et al. (2022) examined county-level data on racially motivated hate crimes from the FBI, as well as whites' racial attitudes from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) for the period between 2000 and 2015<sup>[8]</sup>. Their findings revealed that counties which received a higher influx of Black migrants during the Great Migration experienced a lower incidence of racially motivated hate crimes against Black victims.

Leveraging county-level data on non-violent, pro-civil rights protests organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Calderon et al. (2022) uncovered that the Great Migration elevated whites' propensity to participate in CORE demonstrations, further underscoring the positive impact of the migration on racial attitudes (Alberto and Tabellini 2024)<sup>[8][1]</sup>.

### **6.3 The Impact of the Great Migration on Political Alignment**

The Great Migration between 1915 and 1960 reshaped Black political power and Democratic party politics. Millions of Black individuals, who had been disenfranchised in the South, gained voting rights through their relocation to the North. This shift not only altered the composition of Northern electorates (Grant 2019), but also transformed the partisan political landscape of the United States<sup>[19]</sup>.

Despite its segregationist stance in the US South, the Democratic Party began to champion the interests of Black people and advocate for civil rights in the North and West starting in the early 1930s (Caughey et al. 2020; Wasow 2020)<sup>[10][35]</sup>. Calderon et al. (2022), using a version of the shift-share instrument to predict Black in-migration, find that the Great Migration had a substantial and positive effect on the Democratic vote share. The magnitude of their estimates indicates that the increased support for the Democratic Party cannot be attributed solely to the behavior of Black voters. Instead, the findings suggest that at least some white voters shifted their preferences in a more liberal direction due to Black in-migration (Alberto and Tabellini 2024)<sup>[1]</sup>.

### **6.4 Remaining Unresolved Issues**

Many questions and areas remain unresolved regarding the full impact and legacy of the Great Migration, including the impact of the Great Migration on the South, the role of women, and changes in the intergenerational trajectories of migrants (Collins 2020)<sup>[12]</sup>. The impact of the Great Migration on the industrial transformation and upgrading of the South is a topic for further research. Besides, regions may take different approaches to maintain economic and social stability when facing active population outflows, which may have implications for a range of consequences brought about by urbanization.

Further analysis is needed on migrants' choice of destination. Not all factors leading to differences in black and white immigrant destinations can be fully determined in migrants' choice of destination (Collins, William, and Wanamaker 2015)<sup>[14]</sup>. Research

in this direction will help analyze and predict future labor migration choices and guide policy interventions.

The interaction between the Great Migration and U.S. international migration needs further exploration. The Great Migration began at the end of the first U.S. immigration peak and ended in the early stages of the second U.S. immigration peak. Domestic migration may have been a passive supplement to insufficient international migration, or the Great Migration may have indirectly influenced U.S. international immigration policies.

The deeper social and cultural impacts of the Great Migration need to be explored. In 1910, blacks accounted for as much as 29.8% of the population in the South and only 1.9%, 1.8%, and 0.7% in the Northeast, Midwest, and West, respectively. The migration of African Americans played a pivotal role in shaping American society in the 20th century, particularly in mitigating potential cultural disparities between the South and other regions. If this migration had not occurred, it could have exacerbated cultural differences, potentially leading to a markedly distinct social landscape today. This could have manifested in heightened racial inequality, urban poverty, and significant variations in social dynamics across the nation.

## 7 Conclusion

The "Great Migration" of the early 20th century was an important event in American history, with millions of African Americans leaving the Southern states and migrating to Northern and Western cities in search of better socioeconomic environments. This unprecedented population migration movement profoundly impacted America's demographic structure, economic development, social change, and race relations, with its influence continuing to this day.

Through a review of extensive literature, this paper provides an in-depth exploration of the driving and sustaining factors of the Great Migration, its economic impacts and upward mobility, urban renewal and racial segregation, among other aspects. Economic hardship in the South and the demand for cheap labor in the North were the initial driving factors of the Great Migration. Although the Great Migration provided more economic opportunities for African Americans, it also produced significant negative impacts, such as residential segregation and white flight, leading to the deterioration of conditions for black migrants. Some recent studies indicate that the Great Migration exacerbated the degree of racial segregation in some Northern cities, constraining the upward mobility of black descendants. Additionally, research has found that the Great Migration promoted the integration of European immigrants into American society. In areas with higher inflows of African Americans, white residents developed more favorable attitudes towards other races, and the Democratic Party significantly benefited from the Great Migration.

This review also points out some issues that require further research, including industrial transformation in the Southern states, factors influencing destination choice, the relationship between the Great Migration and international immigration policies, and deeper social and cultural impacts. Overall, the Great Migration was a complex

historical process that produced both positive impacts and some problems. Through studying this event, we can better understand the roots of some challenges in contemporary American society, such as racial inequality and the emergence of black homelessness in Northern cities. This is important for promoting American social progress, eliminating inequality, and achieving racial harmony, and it has implications for avoiding the negative impacts of population migration internationally.

Future research on the Great Migration and related issues should enhance its comprehensiveness and forward-thinking mindset based on empirical studies, culminating in the formulation of an analytical model for the Great Migration. Currently, large-scale population movements persist worldwide, including but not limited to brain drain and refugee migration. Future research could strengthen comparative studies between the Great Migration and other migrations, identifying differences in their causes, processes, and impacts, and synthesizing economic regularities of population migration into models. Integrating historical models with contemporary issues could provide insightful perspectives on current race relations and immigrant assimilation processes in the United States and beyond. Deepening research on population migration and its derivative themes would contribute to the development of a more inclusive, equitable, and economically efficient society.

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