

GEOGRAPHY

SPOTLIGHT

The Movement of Migrant Workers

The nation's 3 million farm workers are responsible for harvesting much of the fruit and vegetables that families eat each day. Most field workers on United States farms remain in one place most of the year. Others are migrant workers, who move with their entire family from one region to the next as the growing seasons change. Nationally, migrant workers make up around 10 percent of hired farm workers, depending on the season and other factors.

As the map shows, there were three major streams of migrant worker movements in the 1960s: the Pacific Coast, the Midwest, and the Atlantic Coast. While these paths may have changed slightly since then, the movement of migrant workers into nearly every region of the nation continues today.

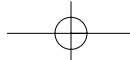
▼ THE PACIFIC COAST

The Pacific Coast region's moderate climate allows for year-round harvesting. Most of California's migrant farm workers work on large fruit farms for much of the year. More than 62,000 workers make their way up to Washington each year to pick cherries, apples, and other crops.



▲ THE MIDWEST

Workers along the Midwest and East Coast streams, where crops are smaller, must keep moving in order to find work. These workers picking strawberries in Michigan will soon move on. For example, one family may travel to Ohio for the tomato harvest and then return to Michigan to pick apples before heading back to Texas for the winter months.



▲ THE ATLANTIC COAST

While some workers along the Atlantic Coast stream remain in Florida, like the workers shown here picking beans, others travel as far north as New Hampshire and New York. There, they work from March through September. Due to the winters, migrant workers in most of the Midwest and Atlantic regions can find work for only six months out of the year.

▲ The map above shows the three major streams of migrant worker movements in the 1960s.


THINKING CRITICALLY

CONNECT TO HISTORY

1. Analyzing Patterns Retrace the movement of migrant workers in the three regions. Why do you think migrant workers have to keep moving?

CONNECT TO TODAY

2. Creating a Database Pose a historical question about the relationship between crops and planting seasons. For example, what types of crops are harvested in Michigan during the fall? Then research and create a database that answers this and other such questions.

 **SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R33**

 **RESEARCH LINKS** CLASSZONE.COM