

Research report for ECOSOC

# Reduction of Brain Drain

Vindi Cooray

Deputy President of ECOSOC

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## Introduction

Brain drain is the colloquial term indicating substantial emigration or migration of individuals. A brain drain can result from turmoil within a nation, or from a desire to seek a higher standard of living.

The issue of “Brain Drain” occurs due to multiple factors such as unstable political conditions, low standards of living, the existence of favourable professional opportunities in other countries and more. The migration of a country’s human capital, which may have otherwise benefited their motherland and contributed to its economy and improvement, results in major problems such as loss of talent and quality. This prevents the economy from reaping all the benefits that were made from their major investments such as education and training. In addition, it increases the disparity in the economic and social prospects of the countries around the world: the already rich and developed nations grow richer while the underdeveloped ones stay poorer.

## Key terms

- **Brain drain:** also indicated by human capital flight, the term is commonly used to describe the emigration of highly trained, qualified or skilled people from a particular country to another; either for better pay, equipment, political stability or living conditions.
- **Brain gain:** increase in the number of foreign professionals moving to a country where they are given better opportunities.
- **Reverse brain drain:** form of brain drain where professionals move from a more developed country to a less developed country. These migrants may accumulate remittances and improve skills abroad that can be useful in their motherland.
- **Human capital:** knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies and experience possessed by an individual or a population affecting their productive capacity, economic potential or cost to a certain organisation or country.
- **LEDC:** Less Economically Developed Countries; this term indicates a country showing either a poverty level of income, a high rate of population increase, a substantial portion of workers employed in agriculture or unemployed, and/or a low portion of adult literacy.

- **MEDC:** More Economically Developed Country; whose economy is characterised by large industrial, service sectors and advanced technological infrastructures.

## General Overview

### History of the issue

Human capital flight first emerged as a major public concern in the 1940s when high numbers of European experts emigrated to the USA and UK.

In 1972, about 6% of the world's physicians (140 000) were located outside their home country, mainly in the USA, UK and Canada. The majority of migrants were fleeing countries reflecting colonial and linguistic ties, with a prevalence of Asian countries such as India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.


In 1979, the World Health Organisation (WHO) carried out a detailed 40-country report on the magnitude and flow of international migration by health professionals. According to this report, nearly 90% of all emigrants were moving to five countries: Australia, Canada, Germany, UK and USA. In 2000, about 175 million people had been living abroad for more than a year: about 65 million of them were economically active.

### Currently

At present, countries such as India, Pakistan and Nigeria are suffering from this problem and losing their human capital extremely rapidly. As a matter of fact, India is currently deprived of around 3 percent of its skilled professionals (including teachers, doctors, engineers, scientists etc.) to developed nations like the USA.

Globalisation has significantly increased migration and the free movement of human capital in the recent decades. This has caused workers in more developed countries (especially the US) to lose jobs or earn below average earnings due to increased competition in native labour markets and large numbers of immigrants from LEDC's willing to work for lower wages. This has been most significant and evident in the traditional manufacturing industries.

High youth unemployment rates in countries such as Spain, Italy and Poland have incentivised young people to seek jobs in other countries. Low income levels in many Eastern European countries has also provided an incentive for some people to leave these countries. Often it is only the relatively skilled or those with some income or savings who can afford to migrate. The increase in income inequality in the UK and US



has also created more incentives for higher skilled immigrants to migrate there, since the monetary gains will be higher.

Young, educated, healthy individuals are most likely to pursue higher education and economic improvements abroad. The majority of doctors obtain specialised and postgraduate professional qualifications during their stay in the host country. In 1995, in fact, 79% of the doctoral graduates in science and engineering in the USA from India and 88% of those from China, decided to remain in the USA. Poorer continents such as Africa and conservative nations such as LEDCs suffer the most from this issue and, as a consequence, their development is hindered.

In the majority of cases, the "donor" country is not only renouncing its investment in education in the medical field, but also the contribution of its professionals to health care. In fact, as a country loses its talents, its progress slows down due to the lack of the highly skilled workforce, which has left the nation. For example, the ratio of physicians to patients in India is 1:2083 compared to the USA where the ratio is 1:500.

Brain drain can also have benefits for home countries. Alongside positive feedback effects from remittances, circular migration, and the participation of high-skilled migrants in business networks, innovation, and transfers of technology, consider the effect of migration prospects on the formation of human capital in home countries. New research suggests that limited high-skilled emigration can be beneficial for growth and development, especially for a limited number of large, middle-income developing countries. But for the vast majority of poor and small developing countries, skilled emigration rates significantly exceed the optimal rate.

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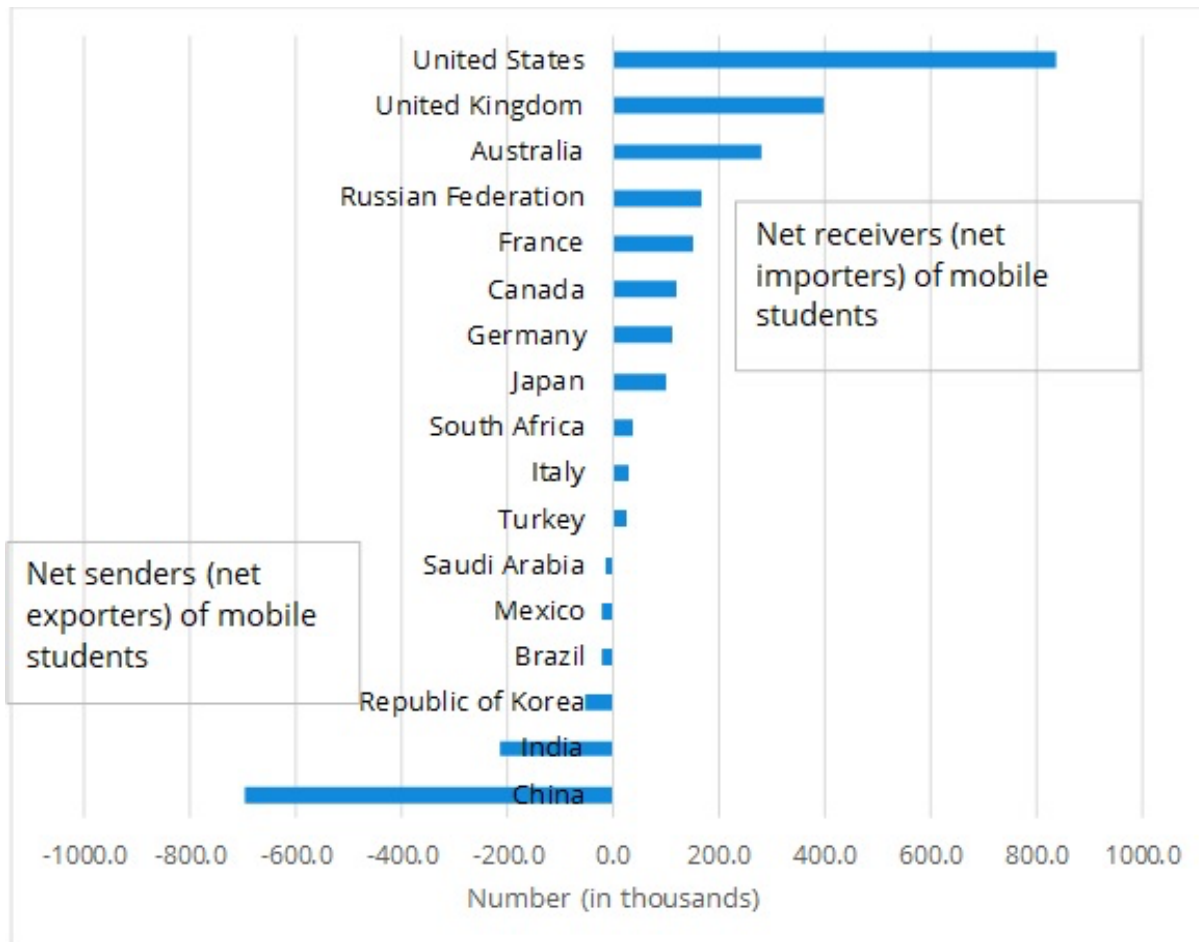
## Countries involved

1. **Ethiopia:** Ethiopia produces a large number of qualified professionals, especially in the medical field, but is experiencing one of the worst brain drains of any country in the world. Attracted by better prospects overseas and in other African nations and pushed out by political persecution, Ethiopia's best and brightest haven't been sticking around after graduation. A recent study presented at the National Symposium on Ethiopian Diasporas revealed the country losing about 75% of its skilled professionals over the past ten years. This exodus of highly qualified professionals has had a huge impact on the country, leaving it with too few physicians, engineers and scientists to fill positions the country desperately needs to thrive economically.
2. **Nigeria:** Nigeria is another African nation that has suffered due to a massive brain drain. With much of Nigeria still essentially a developing nation with unreliable power and few resources, higher level science, engineering and medical professionals often find little to motivate them into staying, especially with job offers from the U.S. and European nations exerting a powerful pull. Since Nigeria's brutal civil war in the late 60s, the country has bounced between military governments and dictatorships, pushing out between 11 and 17 million people. Today, over 2 million Nigerians live in the U.S. alone, and of these about 20,000 are doctors and over 10,000 are academics. That's a heavy loss for a nation that so desperately needs qualified professionals to rebuild and improve its own resources.
3. **South Africa:** Years of unrest, high crime rates, AIDS and lack of jobs have combined to make South Africa's brain drain a serious problem. Losing so many skilled workers has a ripple effect, with the loss of each skilled professional costing about 10 unskilled jobs. Currently, the country is working to not only keep residents from leaving once they've completed their training, but to also attract professionals from other nations to South African businesses. Though there is still a long way to go to make this a reality.
4. **China:** China has become a major player in global economics, but despite a rapidly growing job force, it is having trouble hanging on to qualified professionals. Many believe the reason lies in censorship and lack of freedoms, but whatever the true cause, 70% of Chinese students who study overseas never return to their homeland. Many foreign schools actually work to attract Chinese students, only exacerbating the problem for a nation in need of top scientists and researchers. The Chinese government has worked hard to reverse the trend,

providing top-tier students in science and engineering with a large number of incentives, yet the numbers are only growing larger.

5. **Mexico:** Mexican immigration is a big issue in the U.S., with tens of thousands of illegal immigrants crossing U.S. borders each year. Yet a large portion of Mexican immigrants don't fit this stereotype and are wealthy, well-educated and enter the country quite legally. Mexico is seeing a huge brain drain as more middle- and upper-class citizens move abroad, many who hold higher degrees and work in professional fields like medicine and law. The biggest cause for this is unemployment, with hundreds of thousands of skilled workers unable to find work, though security issues also play a big role. The higher the level of education, the less likely workers are to stay in Mexico, with about 70% of Mexicans with a PhD coming to work in America. The brain drain is worst in the sciences, where 79% of students who come to study in America never return home.
6. **Jamaica:** In a trend common for Caribbean nations, Jamaica faces one of the biggest brain drains in the region. Over 80% of Jamaica's citizens who've obtained higher education live abroad. Most of this migration is due to lack of jobs, as there simply aren't enough to go around for young graduates from university programs. What makes this loss so striking isn't just the high percentage, but that Jamaican citizens who choose to work abroad must pay a remittance to the Jamaican government. Even with these additional fees, students aren't enticed into staying to work in Jamaica. While much attention has been paid to the issue in recent years, little has changed and Jamaica. Along with Haiti, Suriname, Guyana and Grenada are losing between 70-90% of their college-educated force each year.
7. **England:** While it isn't seeing staggering losses like many countries on this list, it is valuable to see how brain drain is a problem even in developed and relatively wealthy nations like Britain. Over the past few years, England has seen a large number of its skilled professionals leaving for work abroad, with over 1.1 million university graduates living and working outside of the country. This accounts for almost 1 in 10 skilled citizens choosing to emigrate. This mass emigration of skilled professionals may have serious ramifications for the British economy, as professionals add to the workforce of nations like Australia, Canada, America, France and Spain rather than at home. When compared to other developed nations, these numbers are especially high, with only Germany coming close in terms of losses (with 860,000 workers lost), making it clear that even top nations

with good schools, public health and lots of resources can be subject to brain drain.



## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

**UNOMOZ**, which stands for United Nations Operations in Mozambique, is an example of the UN involvement. UNOMOZ was a UN peace mission in Mozambique in 1992. On 9 October 1992, Boutros-Boutros Ghali, UN Secretary General, submitted to the SC (Security Council) a report aiming at guaranteeing security. As a consequence of the

achieved security, many experts and highly-qualified professionals renounced to flee overseas.

**The International Convention on Migrant Workers and its Committee**, held its first session in March 2004. It is formed by a body of independent professionals that monitors implementation aiming at safeguarding workers rights from potential violation.

**The World Health Report 2006 - Working Together for Health**, published by WHO, contains precise estimations of the current crisis in the global medical workforce. The study reveals an amount of 4.3 million doctors, nurses and support workers, with peaks of intensity in sub-Saharan Africa's countries, where medical field employment needs to be filled.

## Possible solutions

- **Improve governance and create better business climates.**
- **Forge agreements with OECD host countries:** this could be to force scholarship students to return home for a specific period, prior to being allowed to emigrate again.
- **Placements in the country:** More companies should employ the recent graduate with lucrative packages, allowances, and decent working conditions.
- **Work Culture:** In developing countries, some organisations do not work on strong principles and work culture. This leads to politics within an organisation, communication gaps, absence of grievance redressal, etc leading to stress and anxiety in the employees. Many employees migrate to countries abroad with the expectation of a decent work atmosphere in lieu of staying with improper work culture.
- **Rural Development:** There can be various employment opportunities developed in the sectors of education, women empowerment, agriculture, handicrafts, etc where highly skilled youth can contribute to the development and also earn a decent income through their contribution.
- **Tackling under-employment:** The companies recruiting employees should take utmost care to resolve any form of underemployment in their organisation. A person should be given a job based on his interest, calibre and academic merit. The designation and post assigned to a person plays a very important role in the performance and efficiency of work.



- **Proper payment policy:** The salary paid to an employee is one of the determining factors for job satisfaction. The payment needs to be structured and proper monetary incentives should be paid whenever necessary. The salaries are one of the most important economic factors that lead to brain-drain as the employee finds the payment attractive in the other countries.
- **Taxation:** Taxation policies can leave much less scope for savings. Also, the allied issues remain in the dissatisfaction of taxes not being utilised to solve various issues in the country. Taxes thus hamper the mindset of a person in two ways by pinching their pockets and with issues like corruption, red tape, etc.

## Useful links

- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303984720\\_Brain\\_drain\\_in\\_less\\_developed\\_countries\\_Africa\\_in\\_focus](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303984720_Brain_drain_in_less_developed_countries_Africa_in_focus)
- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/10-countries-facing-biggest-brain-drain-sachin-dubey>
- <https://wol.iza.org/articles/brain-drain-from-developing-countries/long>
- <https://blogs.iadb.org/caribbean-dev-trends/en/brain-drain-a-curse-of-small-states/>
- <https://eciks.com/stopping-the-brain-drain-is-it-possible/>
- <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/10/345094/80-of-moroccans-believe-legalizing-cannabis-will-have-positive-impact>
- <https://www.nordicalcohol.org/iceland-cannabis>
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/emilyearlenbaugh/2020/10/06/more-people-were-arrested-for-cannabis-last-year-than-for-all-violent-crimes-put-together-according-to-fbi-data/?sh=3f8633fa122f>
- <https://www.karger.com/Article/FullText/510824>
- <https://www.webmd.com/pain-management/cbd-thc-difference>
- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1079132>