

Trends in international migration in Latin America and the Caribbean

Adela Pellegrino

Introduction

The history of Latin America has been deeply marked by international migration. Extracontinental immigration has made a significant demographic impact over the past 500 years. Colonisers were the first to arrive and settle in Latin America, followed by the forced migration of Africans and, lastly, the immigration of Europeans and Asians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Over the past 50 years, Latin America has made the transition from a region of immigration to one of emigration, with movements within regions or to the developed world, particularly the United States.

This article summarises a report drawn up under an agreement between the Population Programme of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE). The work is based on census data gathered by CELADE's IMILA project on international migration research in Latin America. This database contains information on people born in Latin America and the Caribbean and included in censuses taken elsewhere. It was started in the 1960s, and subsequent to the 1990s round of censuses, now includes data from four sets of censuses on the region. The IMILA project is pioneering the

collection and systematisation of information on international migration.

The economic and social context

Demographic transition began in most Latin American countries in the 1930s, although the chronology of the process naturally varies from region to region. Changes in mortality and fertility rates were already evident at the end of the nineteenth century in Argentina and Uruguay, while in other countries such changes only became apparent towards the mid-twentieth century. Between 1955 and 1965, the mean growth rate of the Latin American population reached its highest level (approximately 3% annually). In absolute terms, the population rose from 165 million

in 1950 to 441 million in 1990 (United Nations, ECLAC-CELADE 1993). From that point onwards, growth tapered off and some countries, including Brazil, experienced significant drops in fertility rates in a short space of time.

Starting in the 1930s, largely as a result of the crisis in the central countries, some Latin American States swapped their economic models based on agriculture and exports for an inward-led growth model, involving industrial development initially aimed at the domestic

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market. These projects, which took on fresh impetus during the Second World War, have an unequal evolution in different countries. In some countries (Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Uruguay, and Mexico), the economy diversified owing to the increasing role of industry.

Most countries experienced sustained economic growth. Mean annual accumulative growth in the subcontinent between 1950 and 1978 was 5.5%, higher than that recorded in all industrialised countries with a market economy and higher than that of other developing regions (ECLAC 1980).

Even though the region had the highest demographic growth rates in the world, per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) doubled during the period from 1950 to 1978. Per capita GDP growth was slower, however, than in most industrialised countries.¹ Latin America stands out internationally for its unfair distribution of income and, in that period, the region was also marked by inequitable access to the fruits of economic growth.

While the economic situation was favourable on balance throughout the region between 1950 and 1978, the trends in each country were dissimilar. Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, which were initially very well positioned vis-à-vis the degree of industrialisation and per capita income, were the countries showing least growth over those 30 years. Others, including Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Venezuela, where the transformation of production was a more recent process, recorded higher growth rates.

The limits of the economic model based on industrialisation by import substitution began to be felt in the 1960s, although it was in the 1970s that they became blatant. Crisis gradually took hold of the region, yet once again its impact was heterogeneous. Indeed, some countries had slower growth rates, but others posted historic highs (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Paraguay).

In the 1980s, the 'debt crisis' became widespread, leading to a drop in per capita GDP in much of Latin America, with a decline in the standard of living of the middle class and increased levels of poverty and destitution.² Income distribution, which was very unequal overall, worsened in some countries, including

Argentina and Uruguay, which had historically been noted for their levels of social homogeneity in the regional context.

Latin American states had to face several setbacks during the 'lost decade'. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the economic crisis was apparent

in the simultaneous and sustained downturn in the region's main economic and social indicators. Not only did the region witness a drop in production or a sharp decrease in its growth rate. The employment situation took a turn for the worse and real wages declined, inflation heated up and became more widespread, and the external sector's problems deepened. The deteriorating macroeconomic situation was compounded by severe crises in the countries' financial systems which had been set off by a combination of economic recession, interest rate hikes, steep currency devaluations and numerous fiscal emergencies (ECLAC 1996, 11).

The governments' response to the crisis was a new package of free market policies. Protectionist policies were abandoned in industry and there was a tendency to reduce the role of the state and privatise public companies.

Population growth began to decline in this period, but the labour force continued to grow at annual rates of 3.3%, since young people born during the demographic boom were entering the labour market and more and more women had started working. In fact, women accounted for 42% of the increase in the economically active population between 1980 and 1990 (PREALC 1992). Urban unemployment was higher in the late 1980s than in 1980, having peaked between 1983 and 1985.

In terms of the quality of jobs created, the decade was marked by increasing 'informalisation' and a growing service industry. Employment rose most notably in informal activities, such as self-employment and unpaid family work, domestic help and employment in micro-enterprises. Taken together, these activities accounted for 53% of all non-agricultural employment, up from 40%, doubling their total volume over the decade (PREALC 1992). Employment in the service industry jumped to 65% of urban employment at the end of the decade, while employment in manufacturing dropped from 38% to 35% and employment in agriculture continued to decline (PREALC 1992).

Starting in the 1980s, new regional integration strategies were defined to meet the challenges of the increasing globalisation of the world economy. To the treaties signed by the countries of the Andean Pact and the Central American Common Market were added the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), bringing together Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, which entered into force in 1991, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed in 1994 between the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

International migration trends

The volume and profile of migration flows

By 1990, 2.5% of the total population of Latin America were migrants in other countries of the Americas and Latin American emigrants accounted for 9.2% of all emigrants worldwide, according to United Nations estimates.³ The demographic impact of emigration has varied according to region and the geographical concentration of the phenomenon has impacted on a number of specific populations.

It should be noted that international emigration is not a phenomenon that significantly affects populations of origin and that, while it is not easy to compare data, the demographic effect of international emigration is not on the same scale as that experienced by European countries in the nineteenth century.⁴ But it is also true that emigration from Mexico to the United States is currently the largest migratory movement on the planet and the phenomenal growth of 'Hispanics' in the United States has become a far-reaching political issue.

The signs that Latin America was once a migrant-receiving region are gradually disappearing. The reversal of traditional extracontinental migratory movements is to be seen in a decline in the total accumulated number of European and Asian immigrants in the main receiving countries: Argentina, Venezuela, and Brazil. Increases in immigration from other Latin American countries do not make up for the reduction in number through the death or return of European or Asian immigrants of previous decades.

Over the past 50 years, where migration is concerned, the biggest quantitative phenomenon, with the greatest economic and social impact, has been the urbanisation of the population. Movement from rural to urban areas and various types of displacement, given the high rates of demographic growth and changes in production patterns, brought about an unprecedented increase in urban populations, particularly in major cities.

This process, which did not attain the same intensity or take place simultaneously in all countries, has become a region-wide phenomenon and made several Latin American cities into some of the largest in the world.

Until the 1960s, international migration was restricted to rural-rural or rural-urban movements between bordering countries, notably seasonal migration. Movements of this type were recorded throughout the continent and a significant portion of international migration should actually be regarded as an extension of internal migration beyond national borders.

Such migratory movements are caused by a variety of factors. In many cases, political borders were determined during the wars of independence and cut across communities with shared identities. In other cases, regions had different levels of population density and availability of land and labour for production. In all cases, borders could be crossed without great difficulty.

In South America, Argentina was a major receiving country for European immigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, besides a magnet for migration from bordering countries. These movements, which originally targeted border regions, started to turn to urban areas in the 1950s, particularly Buenos Aires, which was the centre of industrial development and services.

Venezuela, Costa Rica and Mexico are also traditional cross-border migrant-receiving countries (Colombians in the case of Venezuela, Nicaraguans in Costa Rica, and Guatemalans in Mexico). Lastly, although migration between Mexico and the United States has always accounted for the greatest numbers of migrants, it has remained comparable to cross-border movements between Latin American countries.

There are other traditional flows of cross-border migration which have stabilised or varied

slightly over the years. Barely significant in absolute terms, these movements have generally remained constant (when censuses have been frequent enough to record such movements). By way of example, we can cite the presence of Haitians in the Dominican Republic and Colombians in Panama and Ecuador.

Migration destinations started to change in the 1960s. Latin Americans increasingly emigrated to the United States and Caribbeans to Canada. Furthermore, the oil crisis of the 1970s produced additional imbalances between Latin American countries in terms of economic growth. While oil-producing countries enjoyed a boom which enabled them to increase investment and boost their economies, the oil crisis was a mere prelude to the crisis of the 1980s for other countries.

Venezuela was the oil-producing country that experienced the deepest changes and implemented policies designed to attract professionals and technicians. There was virtually full employment during most of the 1970s, pay on qualifications equalled or often exceeded that offered in developed countries and the exchange rate was high against the United States dollar. All these factors meant that migrants' remittances and savings increased in real terms in their countries of origin. The population of migrants from other Latin American countries tripled in Venezuela's censuses between 1970 and 1980. Furthermore, Venezuela attracted immigrants from all regions of the subcontinent—an unprecedented phenomenon.

In the 1970s, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay suffered a political and economic crisis that led to the formation of military dictatorships and increased emigration markedly to a variety of destinations, including Europe, Australia, the United States and Canada, but also other Latin American countries, primarily Mexico, Venezuela, and Costa Rica.

A number of Central American countries witnessed rural-rural cross-border movements, although Costa Rica was the main immigrant-receiving country since it enjoyed the greatest relative development: social well-being indicators were significantly higher in Costa Rica than elsewhere in the region and it boasted political stability and a solid democratic system.

Instability and violence in Central America since the mid-1970s turned the region into one

marked by population movements. We only have approximate data on internally displaced people, international migrants and refugees seeking to settle in the region or migrate to the United States.

According to information collected by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, based on data supplied by refugee-receiving countries, the displaced population in the region stood at over 1,163,000 in early 1990. The refugees were located, in descending order of numbers, in Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras. In 1993 the volume of refugees had reportedly fallen in most countries, particularly in Costa Rica, yet remained stable in Mexico and Guatemala (Staton Russel 1995).

The 1980s, referred to by ECLAC as the 'lost decade' for development, had an impact on international migration. Traditional receiving countries of migrant workers (Argentina and Venezuela) saw a levelling off in immigration from neighbouring countries, and the most significant phenomenon was the increased migration of Latin Americans to the United States, and to a lesser extent, Canada.

Table 1 contains information on Latin American migration trends over these decades. Regional migration accounted for approximately 67% of all migration in 1960, compared with 31% in the early 1990s (excluding Mexican emigration to the United States).

The Latin American population in United States censuses jumped from roughly 1 million in 1960 to nearly 8.5 million in 1990. The growth rates were higher in the period between censuses from 1970 to 1980, although a number of significant differences can be identified in the pace of growth of Latino communities included in United States censuses from 1960 to 1990.

In terms of growth rates, total Latin American migration peaked between 1970 and 1980, then dropped in the following period between censuses. Migration to the United States showed, on average, a similar trend in growth. Averages, however, conceal a number of distinct situations. Emigration from Caribbean countries culminated between 1960 and 1970, with waves of emigrants leaving Cuba, the Dominican Republic and the English-speaking Caribbean for the United States. Emigration from Mexico hit highs from 1970 to 1980 and

TABLE 1. Summary of accumulated volume of emigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean included in censuses taken in other countries of the region and in the United States and Canada

	Accumulative number of emigrants				Growth rates		
	1960	1970	1980	1990	1960–1970	1970–1980	1980–1990
Total emigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean	1,582,489	3,091,632	6,538,914	11,030,846	69.3	77.8	53.7
Emigrants to the United States	908,309	1,803,970	4,372,487	8,407,837	71.0	92.6	67.6
Mexican emigrants to the United States	575,902	759,711	2,199,221	4,298,014	28.1	112.1	69.3
Emigrants to the United States (excl. Mexicans)	332,407	1,044,259	2,173,266	4,109,823	121.3	76.0	65.8
Emigrants to Canada ^a		82,685	323,415	523,880		146.1	49.4
Emigrants to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean ^b	674,180	1,204,977	1,843,012	2,099,129	59.8	43.4	13.1
Percentage of emigrants to the United States (incl. Mexicans)	57.4	58.4	66.9	76.2			
Percentage of emigrants to the United States (excl. Mexicans)	33.0	44.8	50.1	61.0			
Percentage of emigrants to Canada		2.7	4.9	4.7			
Percentage of emigrants to Latin America and the Caribbean (incl. Mexicans)	42.6	39.0	28.2	19.0			
Percentage of emigrants to Latin America and the Caribbean (excl. Mexicans)	67.0	51.7	42.5	31.2			

^aData from the 1986 and 1996 censuses were used for Canada. Data are not available for 1960.

^bData from seven countries were used for the 1960 figures, including the total number of Latin Americans in Venezuela, not counted as international migration. For 1970: 20 countries; 1980: 19 countries; 1990: 18 countries.

only a few Central American countries, such as Guatemala and Nicaragua, had higher emigration growth rates between 1980 and 1990. Rates were equally high in El Salvador in both decades.

There were far fewer emigrants to Canada, although the number has increased considerably over the past three decades. Emigrants were primarily from the English-speaking Caribbean, notably Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana. Canada had signed special agreements with these countries to hire temporary workers. Haiti is the next biggest supplier of emigrants to Canada. Haitian exiles traditionally went to Quebec, and that initial nucleus gave rise to a community that has been growing over time.

We would like to point out some of the phenomena that emerged during the period:

1. The immigrant population increased in Paraguay, particularly with greater numbers of peasants and farm workers on the Alto Paraná border. The movement of 'Braziguayans', which began in the 1970s, was a major phenomenon with significant social and geopolitical consequences for the region. There were over 100,000 Brazilians included in Paraguay's census in 1990.⁵
2. There was an increase in the number of Peruvians in all countries still open to immigration to some extent. During the previous period between censuses, Peruvians were the fastest-growing national group in Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. They also increased in number in the United States.
3. In the 1980s, Brazil perceptibly started becoming a country of emigration. In addition to the cross-border migration to Paraguay just mentioned, emigration increased to the United States and other countries. Portugal and Japan, originally suppliers of emigrants to Brazil, started to receive large numbers of their descendants returning to the country of their ancestors.
4. In addition, the theme of the 'return' of descendants of former immigrants gained ground in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile. The same applied to people of Japanese origin in Peru.

While this study solely concerns migration between Latin American countries and to the United States and Canada, emigration also rose

to immigrant-receiving regions of the developed world. Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay recorded significant emigration flows to Europe,⁶ as more recently did other Latin American countries, chiefly Colombia, Peru, and the Dominican Republic. Australia received emigrants from Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, and more recently, from Central America, particularly El Salvador. As already observed, descendants of Japanese immigrants emigrated to Japan from Brazil and Peru.

The educational level and employment prospects of Latin American immigrants

The educational background and employment prospects of Latin American immigrants vary according to the conditions and circumstances under which they emigrated, but generally hinge on demand in the labour markets of receiving countries. Distance imposes greater selectivity by increasing the costs and risks of migration, while what prompts the decision to migrate also influences the profile of trends. Refugees and displaced peoples fleeing from political repression come from a much wider range of backgrounds than migrant workers.

In Argentina, cross-border immigrants included in the 1980 and 1990 censuses had a somewhat lower educational profile than that of the total population of the receiving country, except in the case of Uruguayans, whose educational standards approximate very closely to Argentine averages. A similar trend was observed in the past decade, but there were also fewer professionals and technicians among Latin American immigrants. An exception to the rule is the case of Peruvians, who have increased in number in recent years and whose educational standards are high on average, according to censuses. A large proportion of Peruvian immigrants are also professionals and technicians.

In Venezuela, which implemented policies aimed at attracting skilled human resources, there was a marked difference regarding Latin American immigration between cross-border immigrants from Colombia and the Dominican Republic, both with below-average standards of education, and immigrants from southern Latin American countries and Peru with qualifications



At the airport of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, January 1987, an orchestra entertains waiting travellers. Billard / UNHCR

way above average. Thanks to policies attracting skilled migrants and offering high pay, Venezuela was the Latin American country taking in the highest number of professionals and technicians from other countries in the region in the 1970s. The occupational background of immigrants did not change substantially in the last decade, but the number of immigrants levelled off with the onset of the crisis.

Some groups of Latin American migrants in the United States are more educated than the locals. This also tends to mean that such migrants have higher educational standards than the average at home. Nevertheless, there is a notable difference between countries and regions. Central American and Mexican migrants, moving between close or bordering countries, have much lower standards of education than the average in the receiving country and, in many cases, than in their country of origin. Immigrants from other countries, however, have much higher levels of education than

those of their country of origin and the receiving country. This applies to Venezuela, Panama, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, and Argentina.

Overall, we can state that, on average, immigrants from southern Latin American countries and the English-speaking Caribbean offer higher educational standards.

Massive migration to the United States has meant that migrants' backgrounds are increasingly diverse, with a significant number of highly skilled migrants. A large proportion of migrants have postgraduate degrees (Master's, PhD, etc.). Although we lack comparative data, it is highly likely that in many cases there is a similar number of Latin Americans with doctorates living in the United States and in their respective countries of origin.

From the point of view of employment prospects, migrant backgrounds show that changes in labour markets also affect the proportion of different types of migrants.

Censuses conducted in the 1970s and 1980s revealed that the emigration of industrial

workers was a widespread phenomenon at the time. In terms both of regional movement, particularly to urban areas in Argentina and Venezuela, and of migration to the United States, industrial workers accounted for a considerable portion of the total working population. Similarly, the emigration of professionals and technicians constituted a major phenomenon in Latin American migration and, because of its strategic character, attracted more attention among politicians and academics.

Given the widespread crisis in the 1980s, regional migration lost momentum and changed its profile. There were more self-employed migrants and more migrants working in services and commerce. However, migrants tended to be polarised at both extremes of the labour market. On the one hand, highly skilled migrants occupied professional, technical, and managerial positions. On the other, unskilled migrants accounted for the bulk of personal services and manual employment in the least specialised sectors.

The last round of censuses indicated the presence of professional Latin American migrants in other countries of the region. This information possibly points to a degree of regionalisation of the professional and technical labour market in the continent, what with the growing number of multinational corporations, which tend to transfer their staff between countries, together with international organisations, administrative entities of regional integration treaties, and so on.

While this may reveal increasing mobility among professionals in the region, it is also true that the United States receives the highest number of emigrants and that Mexicans represent the largest contingent of professionals emigrating to the United States. Of the 14 top destinations for skilled emigrants, 13 are located in the United States, in terms of total numbers.

Within Latin America, Colombians in Venezuela form the bulk of skilled immigrants, according to both 1980s and 1990s census figures. Uruguayans in Argentina occupy second place.

Among the major sending countries of skilled migrants, there are some, such as Bolivia, which have a low proportion of professionals and technicians in the working population resident in the country, while others have

a high proportion, as in the case of Argentina. This suggests that surplus supply does not necessarily force professionals and technicians to emigrate, but that an explanation should be sought both in factors peculiar to each country and, basically, in the opportunities offered by receiving countries.

Figure 1 gives the percentage of professionals in the working population of a number of Latin American countries and the same indicator for emigrants from those countries included in United States censuses.⁷ As the figure shows, emigration from Central America, Mexico and the Dominican Republic reveals 'negative selectivity' vis-à-vis skilled emigration. 'Negative selectivity' means that the proportion of professionals and technicians in the working population is lower among immigrants in the United States than in the total working population in the country of origin. On the other hand, Venezuela, Chile, Panama, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Bolivia, Guyana, and Paraguay show 'positive selectivity' in terms of skilled emigration to the United States. The list of countries in Figure 1 (which only includes those for which comparable data are available) does not enable us to draw any conclusion as to what factors influence such emigration. Any attempt to go beyond very general explanations (such as pay differentials) requires analysis to focus on actual case studies.

What general conclusions can be drawn from the Latin American experience?

Some authors (Hatton and Williamson 1994, Massey 1998, Thomas 1941, 1961) have sought to extrapolate from transatlantic emigration movements of the nineteenth century in order to identify those trends that would explain the phenomenon and so to predict the future of international migration. The fact that Latin America has, in the past 50 years, become a continent of emigration instead of immigration, has fostered attempts to understand the phenomenon and draw a number of general conclusions.

Population growth and the resulting pressure on national resources and the availability of land, services and employment have been identified as decisive factors in international

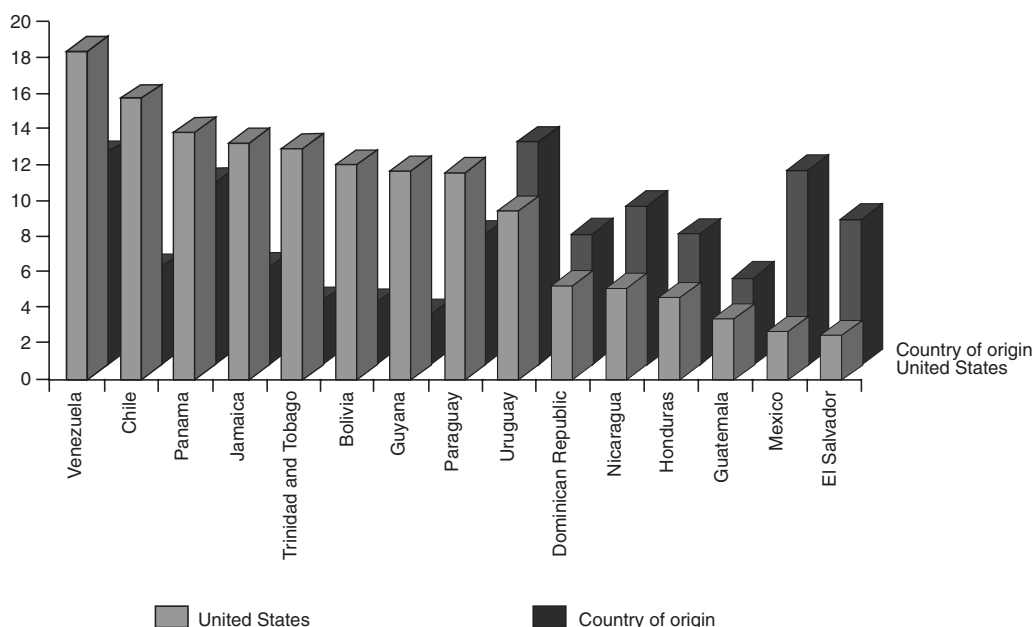


FIGURE 1. Professionals born in Latin America and the Caribbean living in the United States and their country of origin. Percentage of total economically active population, circa 1990.

migration. A glance at the phenomenon over time suggests that high population growth has triggered movements which in many cases went beyond national borders. The fact, however, that some countries are subject to major movements of international migrants in particular circumstances, while others are not, calls into question the validity of general hypotheses.

Population growth

In general and simplified terms, we can say that in Latin America and the Caribbean the major period of population growth was followed by an increase in emigration.

While the population grew fastest on average between 1955 and 1965, emigration increased significantly over the ensuing decades, when the corresponding cohorts were old enough to enter the labour market. However, there are big differences between individual countries in this respect. Venezuela was a major receiving country at a time when its total population was growing rapidly, as was its working-age population. Uruguay has been a major send-

ing country despite having the lowest population growth in the region.

If we use the relative impact of emigration on the total population of the country of origin as a migration indicator, the resultant ranking prompts reflection on other aspects. It is basically the small countries (demographically and geographically speaking) that lose large proportions of their populations. This does not apply to Mexico, which is one of the largest countries in terms of population and territory and has lost over 5% of its total population (Figure 2). This would confirm the conclusions of the study conducted by Zlotnik (1997) on global trends in international migration.

Economic growth

Economic performance has differed in Latin America. In the 1950s and 1960s (and in many cases the 1970s as well), the region posted economic growth rates that were substantially higher than those of the developed world in the same period. Protectionism in industry and incentives for import substitution fostered indus-

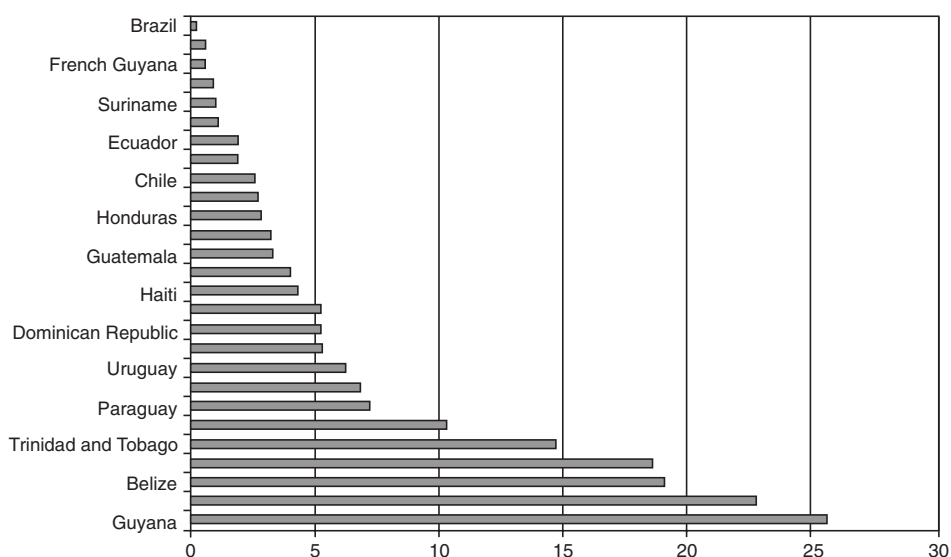


FIGURE 2. Emigrants as percentage of total population of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1990.

trial development and boosted the labour force in the sector. Countries experiencing the highest rates of industrial growth were countries of immigration in some cases and of emigration in others, with no obvious link between the two factors.

However, it is fairly clear that where there was industrial development the regions that concentrated industry and services underwent spectacular population growth (e.g., São Paulo and Buenos Aires). In addition, most of the internal migration in Mexico resulting from the rural exodus was concentrated in Mexico City and Colombia's urban population expanded at the same time as Colombians emigrated to Venezuela.

In short, population growth coupled with urbanisation and industrial development, brought about population mobility. In Latin America, migration took a number of different forms and directions. The proximity of inviting borders diversified migratory movements, encompassing both internal and international migration.

Free market policies, which replaced policies of industrial development and import substitution, were successively introduced in all countries as of the 1970s and 1980s. These

policies put paid to traditional industry in many regions, which, coupled with policies designed to reduce the role of the state, led to a rise in unemployment and cuts in welfare spending. The natural consequence has been worsened living standards for major sectors of the population.

One response to the employment crisis has been the emergence of myriad self-employment activities, ranging from highly specialised to unskilled functions. This helped to generate mobility since survival strategies tend to evolve in extended geographical areas, depending on the opportunities offered by the development of communications and access to information.

Developed countries, particularly the United States, pursued investment strategies involving the relocation of production (especially assembly lines) to countries of emigration. This mobilised capital to areas with plentiful cheap labour to avoid meeting the social costs of immigration. The first initiatives of this kind date back to the mid-1960s, when it was decided to cut the *Bracero* Programme and stop hiring temporary workers from Mexico and the Caribbean.

There is no indication that this strategy actually encouraged many workers to remain in

their countries of origin. It is rather the case that the countries where such industries were most developed (Mexico, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic) saw a marked increase in emigration to the United States.

Saskia Sassen (1988) and Lim Lean Lim (1993) have maintained that this type of growing economic integration tends to pile on, rather than ease, pressure to migrate. Such forms of socio-economic development are also essentially disruptive for local communities, generating internal population displacement from rural to urban areas, and subsequently international migration. Interdependence further creates a system of inter-country relations that are economic but also political, social and cultural and that prompt international migratory movements for reasons not fully explicable in terms of differences in pay or levels of economic growth.

The increase in the employment of women in assembly lines resulted in imbalances between men's and women's situations, leading to a rise in male emigration. Furthermore, according to Sassen, the practice of hiring young women for short periods and then making them redundant created large numbers of unemployed women with experience in factory work, as potential migrants.

In addition to the general validity of these observations, we must stress that migration to developed countries takes place in contexts of a demand for workers. Even though industrialised countries have high unemployment rates, the ageing working population and technological change cause bottlenecks in particular types of jobs. The segmentation of the labour market has consolidated the virtually hegemonic position of migrants in specific sectors, both in services and in industries using 'tertiarised' or 'degraded' production systems, whose very survival depends on the availability of workers.

Violence as a cause of expulsion

Violence is no doubt a major phenomenon driving international migration in Latin America. Social violence and violence resulting from political changes and the advent of authoritarian regimes are perhaps some of the main causes of migratory movements. Mexico and the English-speaking Caribbean have not experienced such violence (at least in the second half of the

twentieth century) and provide illustrative cases of different types of labour migration.

In most cases, an initial event took place that triggered a violent population expulsion. Exiles then formed networks and links, leading to an increase in emigration. In the 1960s, Haitians, Cubans and Dominicans emigrated to the United States and Paraguayans and Bolivians to Argentina. In the 1970s, dictatorships in southern Latin American countries (Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay), coupled with economic crisis, sparked emigration within the region and to Europe, Australia, the United States, and Canada. The late 1970s and early 1980s was the critical period in Central America, with a million displaced persons. Clearly economic crisis cannot be entirely separated from the emergence of political violence. This also makes it difficult to categorise migrants as victims of violence or of economic hardship, since both phenomena are often interrelated.

The hegemony of the United States

In recent decades many authors have highlighted the systemic nature of migration. Over and above factors of expulsion and attraction, there is a tendency to stress the need to view the problem in the light of relations among nation-states and the hegemonic relations that prevail in the international arena (Kritz et al. 1992).

The foreign policy of the United States with regard to Latin America has relevance to the flows of migration between the two regions. In Latin America, the hegemony of the United States has to be seen as a powerful influence on migration, as well as on all echelons of economic, social, and political life.

Throughout the twentieth century, the United States has been the primary market for exports from Latin America and the major source of its imports. (...) While the market share represented by the United States tends to vary inversely with distance (high in the Caribbean and low in the Southern Cone), its dominance in the region is unquestionable (Bulmer Thomas 1998, 243).

There is clearly more to it than foreign trade. The region is a highly important geopolitical area for the United States and this has led to direct military intervention and constant interference in the decisions of governments.

While any analysis of migratory flows from Latin American countries must give prime attention to the specific determinants of each country and each period (which do indeed vary considerably), it has to take into account the prevailing overall context. For large sectors of the Latin American population, the United States has become the centre of gravity and a powerful magnet in terms of personal advancement prospects, including culture and the complex system of values and of mechanisms whereby they are conveyed. It is also true that this general impression is difficult to turn into a set of tangible explanations as to why individuals act as they do. This makes it no less important for an understanding of the issue.

Recent globalisation processes have rapidly universalised expectations and disseminated lifestyles and consumption patterns specific to the developed countries. While these phenomena are being offset by a revitalising of cultural and ethnic identities, large sectors of the population increasingly expect to live in the same manner as in the developed world. Indeed, the 'American' way of life has permeated Latin American societies. Discrepancies between expectations generated and actual opportunities for social mobility produce a propensity to migrate that has become a realistic alternative for much of the population.

The uncertainty of the future

The task of imagining future scenarios is complex since uncertainty reigns over the dawn of the new millennium and how far globalisation will reduce inequality is doubtful, to say the least.

From a demographic standpoint all countries are heading for a downturn in growth, albeit not uniformly. Demographic potential, however, will continue to put additional pressure on labour markets for some decades yet, hampering the entry of new generations each year.

Economic indicators tended to improve in the early 1990s. Even so, economic growth has failed to bring about greater equality and reduce the rift between developed countries and countries unable to develop. From a regional perspective, the widespread crisis has caused stagnation in migration between countries and it is hard to tell whether the integration projects under way will encourage spectacular changes in the geographical distribution of the population.

While developed countries are increasingly putting up barriers to immigration, many factors suggest that their demand for workers will continue to be an important theme. The effects of population ageing on the availability of skilled resources, coupled with the consolidation of service sectors using more and more immigrant labour, make it likely that international migration will still be a major issue in the coming decades.

Furthermore, there is clearly a trend towards mobility involving different forms of displacement and transfer that are increasingly internationalising the history of individuals, but also keeping alive links with places of origin and encouraging people to return, maintain ties and share their projects.

Translated from Spanish

Notes

1. According to ECLAC (1980), per capita GDP doubled over this period (1950–1978), while in EEC countries it increased two-and-a-half-fold over the same period.

2. The percentage of poor people rose from 41% in 1980 to 44% in 1989. At the end of the decade, there were 183 million poor people in the region, primarily located in

urban areas. This estimate is based on the criteria used by ECLAC to measure poverty. It should be noted that the criteria are the same for the entire continent and that if specific

procedures were used in each country to measure poverty, higher levels of poverty would no doubt be recorded.

3. The total number of emigrants around 1990 was 119,761,000, according to United Nations estimates given by Zlotnik (1997).

4. In the second half of the twentieth century, the proportion of emigrants in the total population reached 10 and 12% in countries such as El Salvador and Paraguay. These levels may be underestimated, but in no case are they thought to exceed 15%. The situation is different in some Caribbean islands, where there is a higher proportion of emigrants in the population—up to 20% in

Barbados and Guyana. Massey (1988) put the impact of emigration on the total population of the British Isles at 41%, the corresponding proportions being 35, 30, and 29%, respectively, for Norway, Portugal, and Italy. Different bases of estimation are used since in Massey's case the impact of emigration is measured over eight decades from the mid-nineteenth century, as against the populations of the respective countries in 1900.

5. As in all cases, censuses can underestimate the migrant population. Other sources put the number of migrants at between 250,000 and 300,000 between 1972 and 1978 (Amorim Salim, 1995).

6. Some European countries received political refugees and exiles fleeing dictatorships in southern Latin American countries in the 1970s. It should also be noted that a number of emigrants retrieved the nationality of their parents or grandparents who originally immigrated to these countries. The information made available by SOPEMI for OECD countries has been published by nationality, which is a hindrance to obtaining information on emigrants of this kind.

7. Migratory movements for which comparable data are available are presented. The previous note also applies here.

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