

Poverty and Migration in Latin America

Many people from Latin America and the Caribbean live and work abroad. Migrants have been motivated to leave their home country in search of better job opportunities and, in some cases, a more secure environment. Their families at home often benefit from the **remittances** (the sending of money, checks, etc., to a recipient at a distance) **migrants** (people who move to another country) send home, which help improve their standard of living, health care, and education. Remittances also provide financial resources for trade and investment, which helps boost the country's growth.

However, in some cases, the impact on the others in home countries may be negative, because migrants are often young and may be high-skilled (such as doctors, nurses, or engineers), and their departure reduces the country's economic potential.

Questions:

1. What are two reasons people leave Latin America and the Caribbean?
2. What are remittances?
3. How do remittances help families back in their home country?
4. How can the people who leave have a negative effect on their home country?

Emigrants from Mexico and Central America tend to be younger (on average, about 20 years old) and have lower levels of education compared with those from South America and the Caribbean. Of the latter groups, about 40 percent have attended college (or beyond). With a high share of skilled workers leaving their home countries, the Caribbean in particular has been suffering from "brain drain." With lower levels of education, emigrants from Mexico and Central America tend to work in lower-skilled occupations and have lower wages, but they also send a higher share of their income back to their families.

The United States is by far the most important destination for Latin American and Caribbean migrants, with about two thirds of them living and working in the United States. This high dependence on a single destination country makes the economic fortunes of the region's migrants—and the remittances they send back home—susceptible to the economic ups and downs and immigration policy changes in the United States.

5. Write a one-sentence summary of the paragraphs above.