



# Colombian and South American Immigrants in the United States of America: Education Levels, Job Qualifications and the Decision to Go Back Home

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This document provides evidence to show that Colombia is a net exporter of 5% of its population with a university or post-graduate degree, while Argentina, Brazil and Chile are net importers of people with a similar level of education. We find that those Colombians who returned home to Colombia from the United States between the years 1990 and 2005 were, on average, less well educated than those who decided to stay in the States, a fact which has contributed to emphasising the positive selection made by Colombians when choosing the US as their destination, and as a result has increased the net flight of human capital (the so-called 'brain drain?'). The same exercise carried out on the South American countries as a whole leads to an analogous result. Although data does not allow us to include the quality of jobs immigrants are performing in the US as a determinant of the decision to return, it allow us to show that immigrants to the US from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay and Venezuela are generally employed in activities that require better qualifications than those in which Colombian migrants are working, although the Colombians are usually engaged in work which requires better qualifications than the jobs where migrants from Ecuador and Peru are employed. In the case of Colombians, and for the rest of South Americans taken as a whole, their level of education is closely linked to the level of qualification required for the work they do in the United States.

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