



# MIGRATION TRENDS IN SOUTH AMERICA

South America is a region of origin, destination and transit of international migrants. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, population movement in South America has demonstrated variations in direction, intensity and composition. Simultaneous flows of emigrants, immigrants and refugees or refuge seekers have been observed within South America.

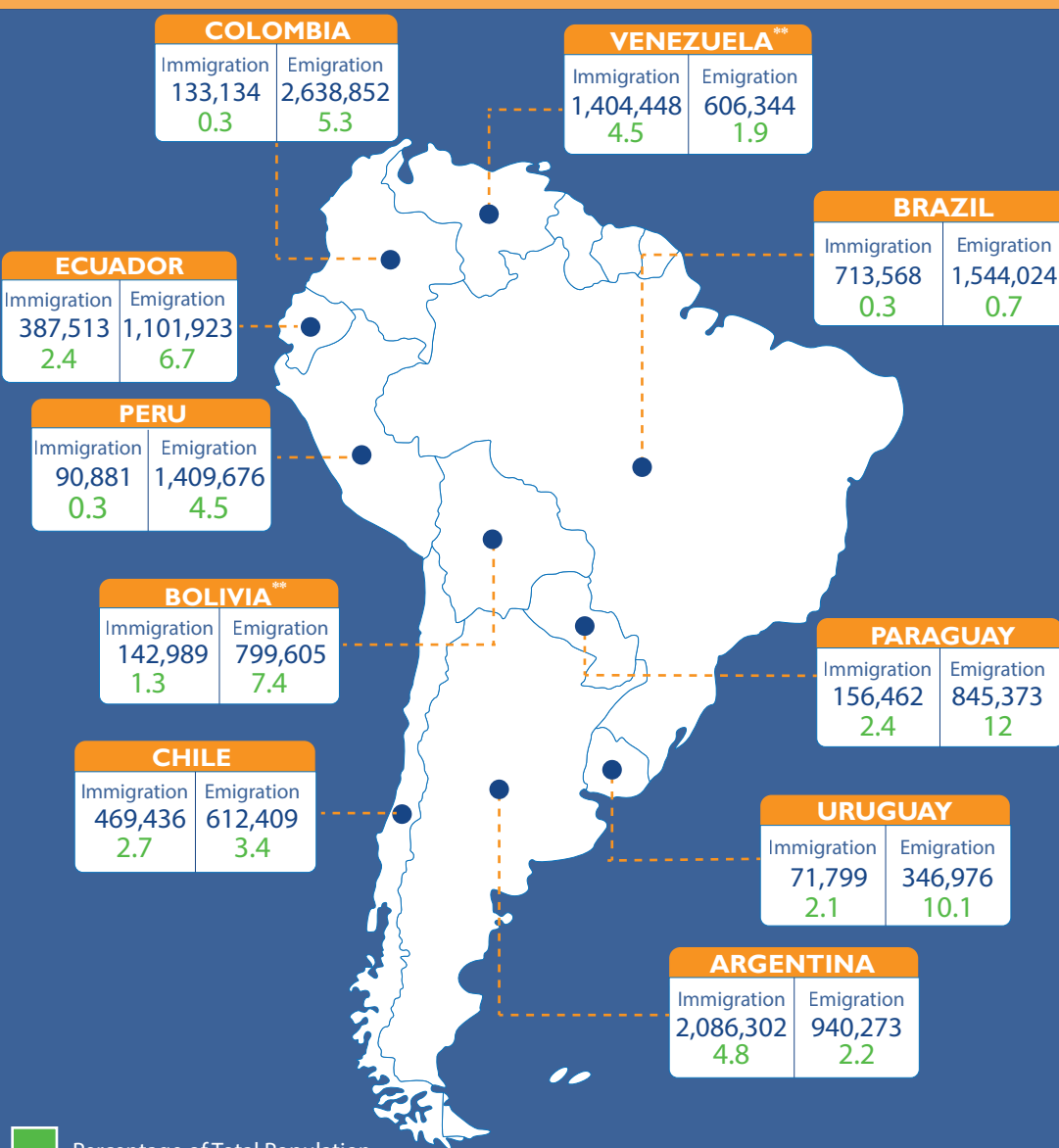
Currently, the following traits stand out for migratory patterns in the region:

**Intensification of intra-regional crossborder migration**

**Growth and diversification of countries of origin and the destination of extra-regional immigration**

**Persistency of extra-regional emigration**

## IMMIGRANTS / EMIGRANTS IN SOUTH AMERICA - 2015\*



South America has over 5 million immigrants.

The regional average for immigration stands at 2.1 per cent of the total population.

South America has over 10 million emigrants.

The regional average for emigration stands at 5.4 per cent of the total population.

\*Source: Developed by the authors based on data from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2015 revision (United Nations database, POP/D-B/MIG/Stock/Rev.2015)

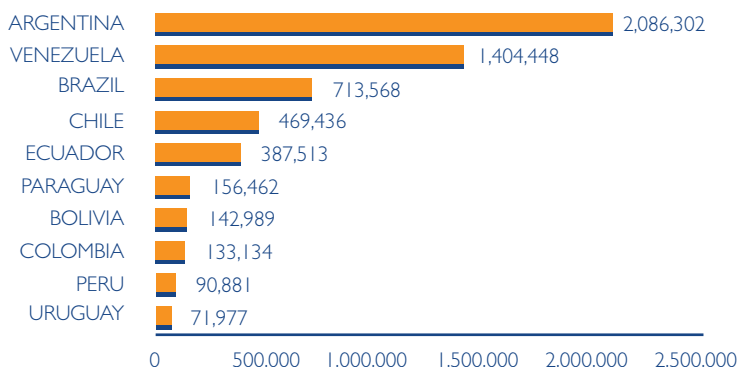
\*\* Due to space limitations, we will refer to the Plurinational State of Bolivia as 'Bolivia' and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as 'Venezuela'.

# IMMIGRATION

The intra-regional migrant population is higher than the extra-regional migrant population. This is partly due to the death of members of the massive European immigration of the twentieth century and growing regional flows. Moreover, there has been a growing dynamism in the arrival of new migrant groups from non-South American countries.

**Argentina** and **Venezuela** have the greatest number of foreign-born nationals: over 2 million and almost 1.5 million, respectively. Almost 5 per cent of the population of Argentina and Venezuela were born in another country, representing the region's highest percentages. Brazil, Colombia and Peru have the lowest percentage (0.3%).

## TOTAL NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS IN SOUTH AMERICA - 2015\*



\* Source: Developed by the authors based on data from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2015 revision (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2015)

## Recent Trends

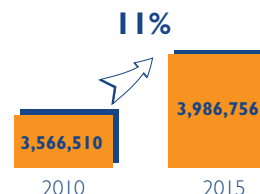
Chile reported significant growth of its foreign-born population between 2010 and 2015, rising by 27 per cent (369,436 to 469,436). The rate in Ecuador and Brazil rose by 20 per cent.

Since 2009, the migration trend in Uruguay has been reversed due to the return of nationals and the growth of non-traditional Latin American immigration (Peru, Chile, Dominican Republic and Venezuela). In 2015, the number of recently arrived immigrants (arrived in the last 5 years) was 16,664.

## A - INTRA-REGIONAL MIGRATION

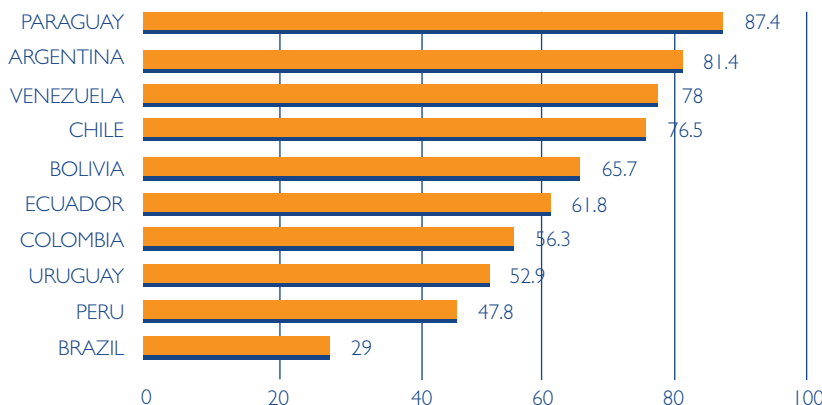
Intensification of South American migrants within the region

## EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF SOUTH AMERICAN MIGRANTS IN THE REGION



Approximately 70 per cent of immigration in South America is intra-regional

## REGIONAL MIGRANTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL IMMIGRANTS BY COUNTRY - 2015 \*

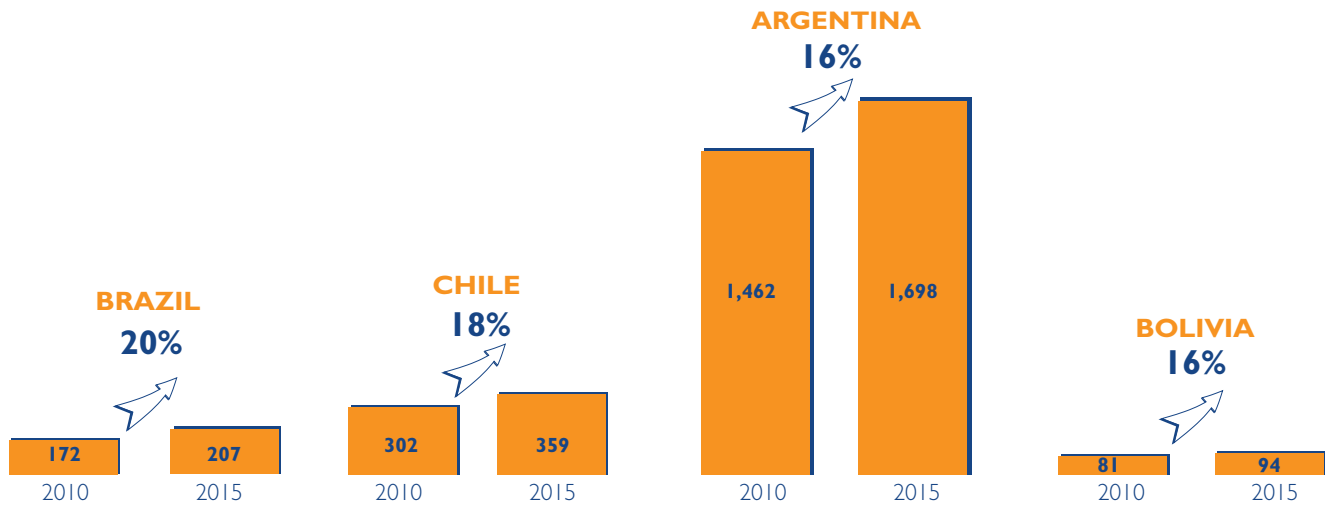


\* Source: Developed by the authors based on data from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2015 revision (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2015).

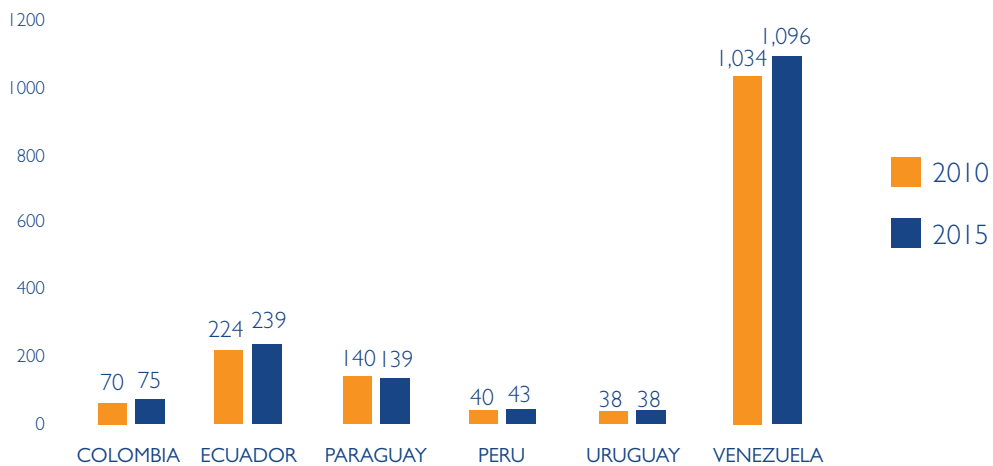
## Immigration by country

**Argentina** continues to have the largest population of intra-regional migrants, followed by **Venezuela**.

EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF SOUTH AMERICAN MIGRANTS IN SOUTH AMERICA (THOUSANDS)



EVOLUTION OF THE NUMBER OF SOUTH AMERICAN MIGRANTS IN SOUTH AMERICA (THOUSANDS)



A range of factors explain the increase in intra-regional mobility: restrictive policies on entry and access to residence in developed nations; the economic crises in the United States and Europe; greater employment opportunities and more beneficial regulatory frameworks in the region.

Intra-regional migration has been favored by the approval of new regulatory and institutional frameworks at the national level, and regional integration agreements (mainly the Southern Common Market [MERCOSUR] and the Andean Community of Nations), which have facilitated intra-regional mobility. The Agreement on Residence for Nationals of the States Parties of MERCOSUR and Associated States represents a fundamental tool for access to legal residence in South America.

Since 2010, the number of permits has highlighted the persistence of border migration as well as the increase of non-border movements:

- ▶ The countries whose nationals received the highest numbers of permanent residency permits in **Argentina** between 2011 and 2015 were Paraguay and Bolivia with 280,030 and 161,262, respectively.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ In **Chile**, a total of 46,352 Peruvians were granted permanent residency between 2010 and 2014, which made them the largest group to be granted such status.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Most permits issued by **Colombia** between 2011 and 2016 were to Venezuelans (nearly 50,000).<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ Recent increased flows of Colombians and Venezuelans to the most southern countries of the region (**Argentina, Chile and Uruguay**).

## B – NON-SOUTH AMERICAN IMMIGRATION

### Multiple countries of origin of recent migrations in South America

Growth in the number of non-South American migrants.

Higher level of vulnerability with respect to regional migrants due, for instance, to difficulty of migration regularization.

South America is both a transit region (mostly for those heading to the United States) and final destination.

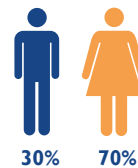
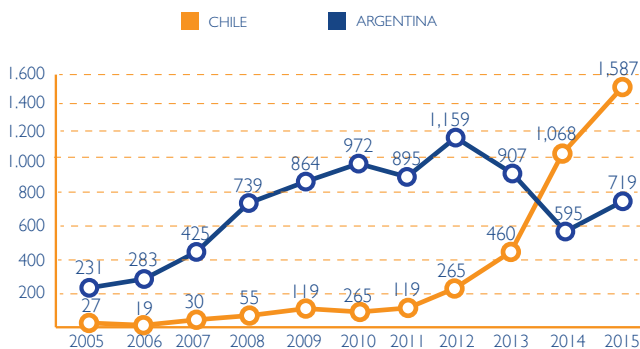
## Caribbean Migration to the South

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Dominican emigrants have historically moved to Venezuela. Over the past few years, the destination country list has grown to include other South American nations, particularly the southernmost countries of the continent.

The number of Dominicans who have moved to Chile and Argentina over the last decade has increased. This dates back to the 1990s in Argentina and mid-2000s in Chile. Between 2005 and 2015, almost 35,000 residency permits were issued, a third of which were for permanent residency. The year-on-year variation for 2014-2015 for such residency rose by 120 per cent in Argentina and 150 per cent in Chile.<sup>4</sup>

#### PERMANENT RESIDENCY



30% 70%

**70%** of permanent residency permits issued in Chile between 2005 and 2015 were granted to women.

### HAITI

Natural disasters have added to Haiti's already precarious economic situation, which has encouraged emigration to various destinations in South America.

**Brazil** is the main destination for Haitians in South America.

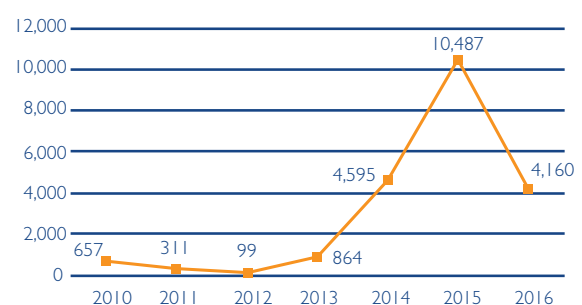
Between 2010 and 2016, almost 70,000 residency permits were granted. There has been a marked increase in the number of residency permits granted since 2012, when Brazil set up a system of humanitarian visas. More than 40,000 were issued in Port-au-Prince.

In **Argentina** and **Chile**, almost 3,000 permanent residency permits were granted between 2010 and 2015. This represents an increase of 600 per cent in Argentina and 2,500 per cent in Chile.<sup>5</sup>

### CUBA

There has been a growing presence of Cubans in South America in recent years. Cuban nationals both pass through countries in the region and reside in them. Over 50,000 residency permits were granted to Cuban nationals in South America.

In **Colombia**, **21,173** residency permits issued between 2010 and 2016.

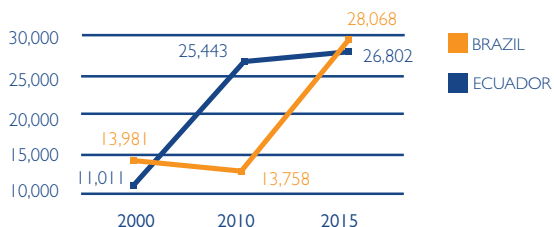


**Ecuador** and **Brazil** issued over **14,608** and **7,218** residency permits, respectively, between 2011 and 2014.

## North-South Migration

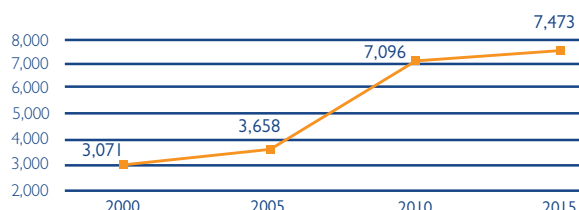
Processes with low but increasing population impact in which the component of nationals of the region with dual citizenship among new arrivals (return migration) stands out.

**United States of America:** In 2015, there were 118,598 Americans living in South America. Between 2000 and 2015, a positive variation of 68 per cent was recorded. Brazil and Ecuador have the largest number of Americans in the region.



## EUROPE

Increase in Spanish migration to Latin America after the 2008 crisis. For example, Ecuador doubled its migrant stock between 2005 and 2015.



## South-South Migration

While South-South migration is not a new phenomenon in the region, during the first decade of the twenty-first century there was a significant increase in migration from Africa and Asia, within a context of increasingly restrictive policies in Europe and North America, along with visa liberalization in some South American countries.<sup>6</sup>

New nationalities within African immigration to the region.

South America as a region of transit and destination.

Mixed flows composed of refugee seekers, economic migrants and irregular migrants, etc.

## AFRICA

Although not important in quantitative terms, in some countries African immigrants are highly visible and vulnerable (difficult access to regularization of immigration status, language barriers, cultural barriers, etc.).

## ASIA

There has been a long tradition of migration from **Asia** (particularly **China, Japan** and the **Republic of Korea**). At present, Chinese and Korean migration continues to be dynamic, with variable growth in some countries. This can be observed in the rise in the number of residency permits granted.

Over the course of one decade (2004-2014), **Argentina, Brazil** and **Chile** granted nearly 50,000 permanent residency permits to Chinese citizens.<sup>7</sup>

In Chile, **58 per cent** of permanent residency permits were granted to men and **42 per cent** to women.<sup>8</sup>



The granting of residency permits to Chinese citizens in **Colombia** and **Peru** has grown in recent years.<sup>9</sup>

Noticeable male profile as **72 per cent** of residency permits granted in Colombia correspond to men and **28 per cent** to women.<sup>10</sup>



**Syrian Arab Republic:** Historic flows to South America were identified in the mid-twentieth century, heading to Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Paraguay, among others. However, in recent years the number of Syrians in the region has increased due to the special circumstances caused by the conflict, thus deserving of international protection. In fact, some countries have granted humanitarian visas and set up resettlement programs. For example: **Argentina, Brazil** and **Uruguay**.

A growing diversification of origin has been noted: **Bangladesh, India, Pakistan** and **Nepal** among others, although of very low population impact in quantitative terms.

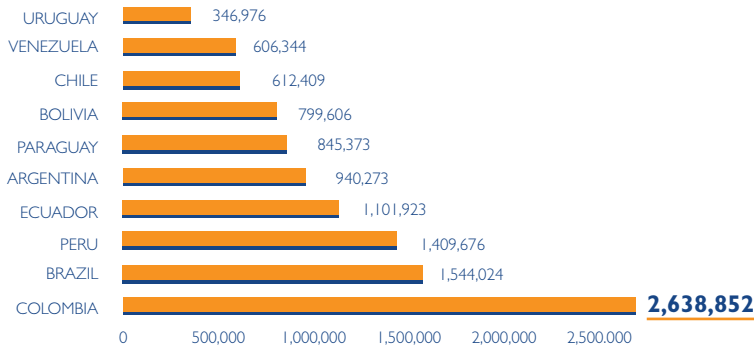
# EMIGRATION

Currently, emigration takes in all countries to a greater or lesser extent. In recent years, the reasons for emigration of South Americans are, almost exclusively, related to work, fueled by political and economic crises. Between 2010 and 2015, the absolute number of emigrants rose by 10 per cent (9,331,357 to 10,845,455), although this represented a fall in relation to the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty first.

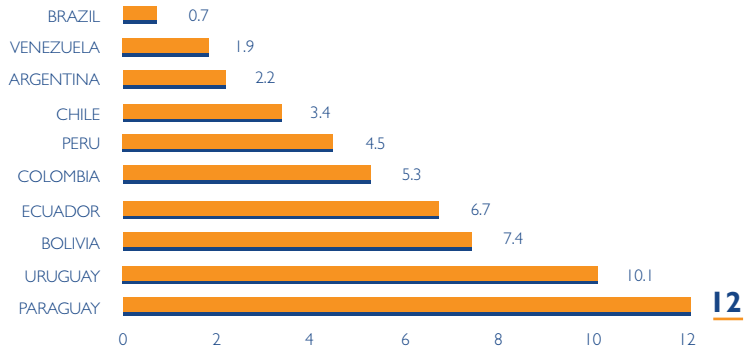
In absolute terms, **Colombia** is the South American country with the largest population living abroad, standing at more than 2.5 million people.

In relative terms, **Paraguay** is the country with the greatest proportional number of emigrants (12 %).

**TOTAL NUMBER OF SOUTH AMERICAN EMIGRANTS 2015**



**PERCENTAGE OF EMIGRATION AGAINST TOTAL POPULATION 2015**

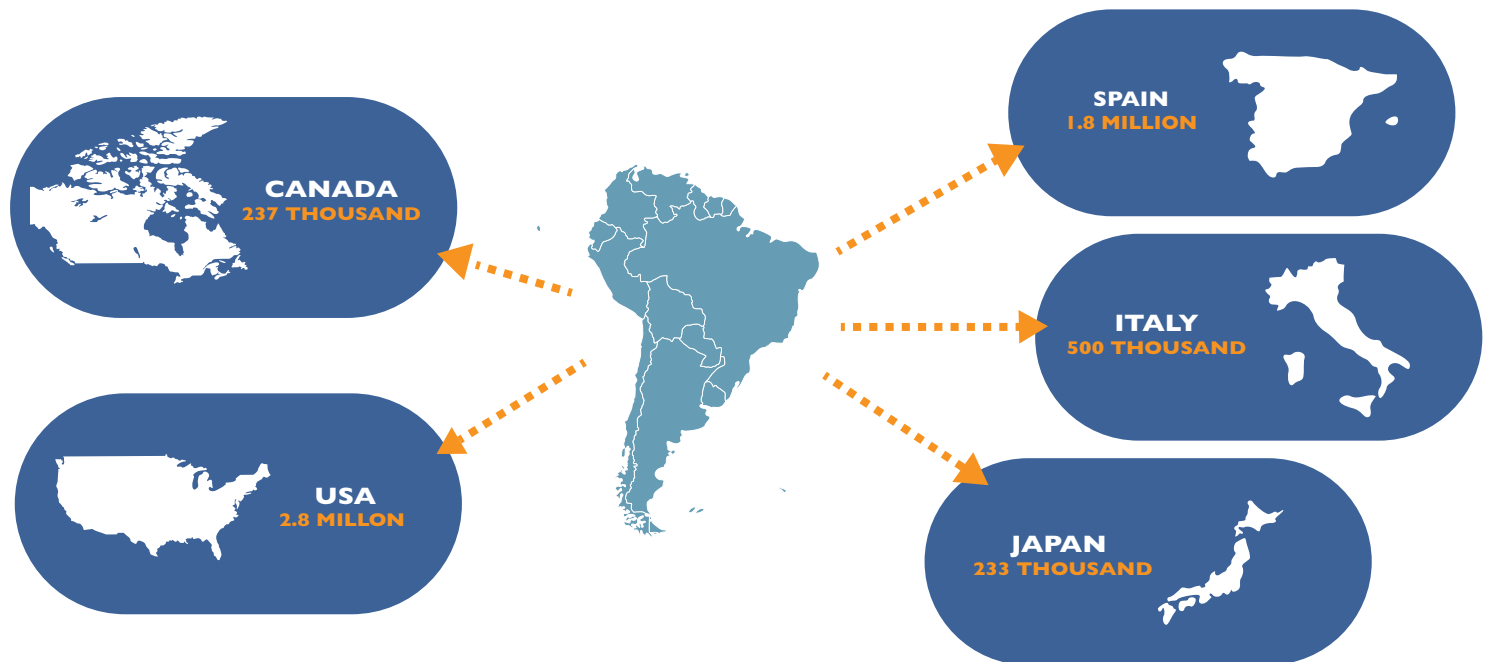


\*Source: Developed by the authors based on data from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2015 revision (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2015).

## Extra-Regional Emigration

The **United States of America, Europe** (mainly Spain and Italy) and, to a lesser extent, **Canada** and **Japan** are the main destinations for South American migrants.

The **United States and Spain** account for nearly half of the region's total migrants (around 5 million)



\*Source: Developed by the authors based on data from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2015 revision (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2015).

## Emigration by country

Today, the **United States** is the main host of South American migrants with almost 3 million (2,820,681).

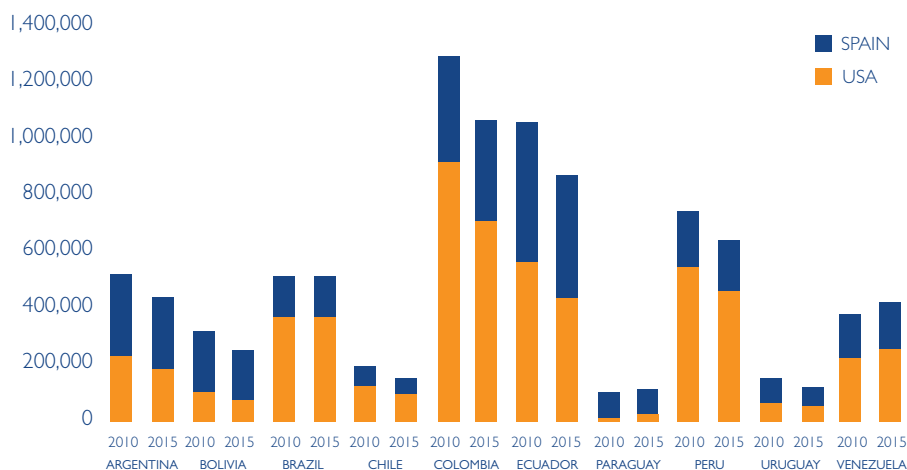
▶ **Colombia, Peru** and **Ecuador** are the most numerous population groups totaling more than 1.5 million.

▶ Nearly a quarter of that number corresponds to those born in **Colombia** (690,750).

**Spain** is the second most popular destination in terms of the quantitative importance of South American emigration. Currently, there are almost 2 million (1,879,728) who were born in South America living there.

### EVOLUTION OF THE SOUTH AMERICAN POPULATION IN SPAIN AND THE UNITED STATES (2010-2015)

The dynamics of the five-year period between 2010-2015 show a fall in the total stock of South American migrants in the **United States** (-15 %) and **Spain** (-12 %).



Source: Developed by the authors based on data from the US Census Bureau and Spanish Municipal Register (Spanish Statistical Office-INE).

In the United States, **Paraguayan, Venezuelan** and **Brazilian** populations grew. Paraguayans almost tripled their number (from 10,023 to 28,642); Venezuelans grew by 18 per cent (215,023 to 255,520) and Brazilians by 2,000 emigrants to stand at 361,374.

In the case of Spain, only **Venezuelans** increased in number among the population born in South America. In 2016, there were 180,289 Venezuelans registered in Spain, of which 65 per cent (117,300) had Spanish nationality, a situation linked with previous Spanish emigration to Venezuela.

## OTHER DESTINATIONS<sup>11</sup>

### EUROPE

Between 2010 and 2015, the total stock of South Americans grew by 8 per cent (2,968,373 to 3,231,326), driven by the growth of the Venezuelan population in **Spain, Italy** and **Portugal**; Brazilians going to **Portugal** and the **UK**; and Peruvians heading to **Italy, France, the Netherlands** and **Germany**.

### ASIA

**Japan** and **China** host the largest number of South American emigrants (321,514), predominantly from Brazil and Peru. In **Israel** there are more than 60,000 South Americans (63,614), led by Argentinians with almost two-thirds of the total (39,343).

### CENTER AND NORTH OF THE AMERICAN CONTINENT

**Canada** reported a significant rise of 20 per cent (196,977 to 237,203) between 2010 and 2015, driven by emigration from Colombia (70,000).

**Mexico** (70,281) and **Panama** (69,916), with around 70,000 South Americans in each of their territories, particularly Colombians and Venezuelans.

### AFRICA

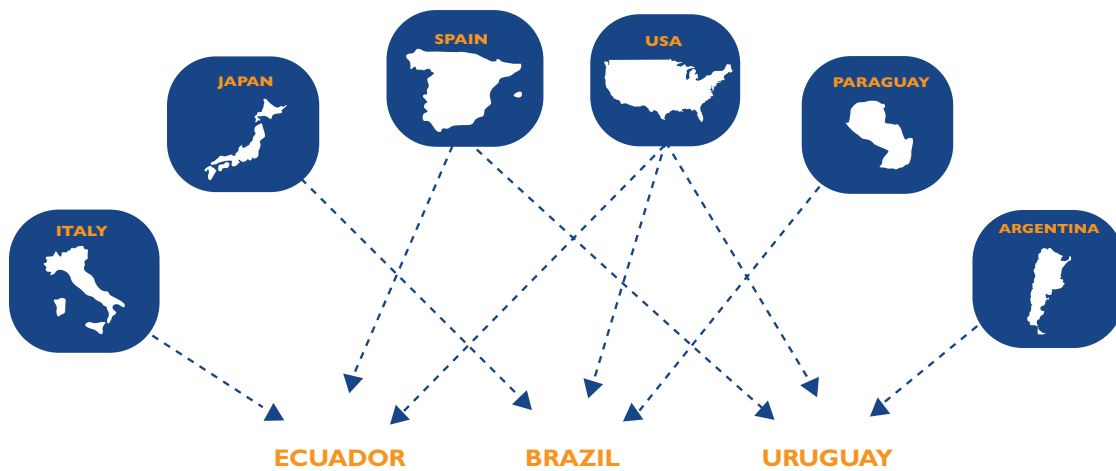
**South Africa** stands out as having the largest group of South Americans (7,633), led by Brazilians (3,151) and Argentinians (2,419).

## Return Migration

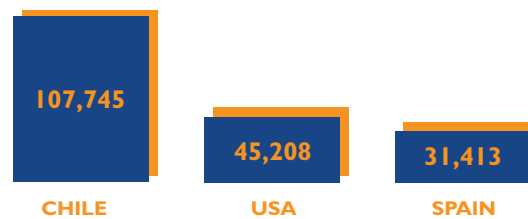
With varying degrees of intensity, the return of South Americans to their places of origin is structured in relation to the destination countries of emigration. Thus, among the main countries of return is the United States in the cases of Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay; and Spain in the cases of Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay.

According to the 2010 Census Round, the percentage of return of migrant stocks living abroad was 7 per cent in **Ecuador**, 5.5 per cent in **Uruguay** and 4.5 per cent in **Brazil**.

MAIN COUNTRIES OF RETURN (CENSUS ROUND 2010)<sup>12</sup>



In **Peru**, three countries account for **59.8** per cent of the total number of migrants who returned from abroad between 2000 and 2016. A total of **8.1** per cent of all returnees left the country in **2007**.<sup>13</sup>



### References:

- 1- National Directorate for Migration Argentina.
- 2- Foreigners and Migration Department Chile.
- 3- Migration Colombia.
- 4- Developed by the authors based on data from National Directorate for Migration Argentina and Foreigners and Migration Department Chile.
- 5- National Directorate for Migration Argentina and Foreigners and Migration Department Chile.
- 6- IOM (2013) Migration Notebook No. 5: Extra-continental Migrants in South America: Case studies.
- 7- Developed by the authors based on data from National Directorate for Migration Argentina, Foreigners and Migration Department Chile, and SINCRE Brazil.
- 8- Developed by the authors based on data from Foreigners and Migration Department Chile.
- 9- Developed by the authors based on data from Migration Colombia and National Superintendence of Migration of Peru.
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- 13- National Institute of Statistics and Informatics-National Superintendence of Migrations of Peru – IOM Peru (2016); Statistics for International Emigration of Peruvians and Immigration of Foreigners, 1990 - 2015. Lima: INEI-IOM.

This publication is part of a systematic series of reports on migration produced by the Migration Analysis Unit of the IOM Regional Office for South America.

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