

Growing Crisis: Brain Drain Crisis in Latin America

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Investment in innovation has long-term benefits. This is one of the reasons governments fund scientific research. These investments have an undeniable impact on research projects. However, the cuts in government research funding are fueling a growing crisis in science in Latin America. Scientists in the region face low salaries, underfunding, and a plague of bureaucracy, all of which is leading to a brain drain of scholars and the [effects are being felt](#). Although the number of Argentinian PhD scholars has increased significantly, only half have been employed in Argentina's scientific system. About 20% of PhD scholars have left the country and the remaining are choosing other careers.

The data from [a recent publication](#) shows that researchers in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay earn significantly less than the cost of a two-bedroom apartment in their nation's capital. The researchers could afford a new medium sized car if they were willing to spend very little money on essentials such as food or utilities. World Bank data for these countries also show that they spend less than one percent of their GDP (except Brazil, which spends 1.24%) on research and development. In contrast, a developed country spends about 2.4% of its GDP on research and development activities.

The [situation in Brazil](#) is getting worse as its innovation funds have been cut due to the economic slump. Earlier this year, the Brazilian federal budget for science was cut by 44%. This is a decrease of \$898 million. Rio de Janeiro's state science funding agency,

[FAPERJ, is bankrupt](#). The agency owes \$150 million in grant payments and has stopped funding 3,670 research projects over the past two years. Salaries for employees at state universities have also been delayed.

Scientific research in Latin America is obviously suffering under these conditions. Part of the reason for the problem in Brazil is the fact that FAPERJ is entitled to 2% of state taxes but the Rio de Janeiro governor recently decreased that to 1.36%. In reality, FAPERJ has only received 40% of even that reduced allotment. FAPESP, the state science funding agency for São Paulo is facing a similar issue. Originally entitled to 1% of state taxes, FAPESP will now receive only 0.89%. To fuel the interest of researchers and advance innovation, this situation needs to be tackled at academic and governmental levels.

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