



# UNDERSTANDING STUDENT MIGRATION FROM SRI LANKA

Bilesha Weeraratne, Harini Weerasekera and Thilini Bandara  
February 2022

## 1. Introduction

With the advent of globalisation, there has been an increasing trend in student migration for education in recent times. Over 5.3 million international students were enrolled in 2017, up from 2 million in 2000 (Migration Data Portal, 2020). More than half of them enrolled in educational programmes in six countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, Germany, and the Russian Federation. China, India, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Nigeria, France, Saudi Arabia, and several Central Asian countries are the prominent sending countries of international students (Migration Data Portal, 2020). Student migration involves several socioeconomic costs and benefits for both origin and host countries, and the understanding of these have become more pronounced over time with rising interest in this branch of research at the global level.

Migration for education purposes has become a growing migratory outflow from Sri Lanka. Based on available secondary data, there has been an increase in student migration from Sri Lanka in the 2013-2017 period (UNESCO, 2020). The out-migration of students have a multitude of implications, including merits such as easing the pressure on the Sri Lankan higher education system and inflow of social remittances such as expertise and know-how, as well as long term implications such as brain-drain and foreign exchange outflow.

Nevertheless, there is limited systematic and empirical evidence-based socio-economic understanding about student migration from Sri Lanka. The absence of a clear understanding of this population inhibits the development of appropriate policies to harness the benefits and minimise the demerits associated with student migration for higher education. In this context, the goal of this study is to provide an initial scoping and understanding of Sri Lankan origin students migrating

for higher studies. Towards this goal, the study would address the following research questions:

1. What is the composition of Sri Lankan origin student migrants?
2. What are some of the push and pull factors of student migration from Sri Lanka?
3. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected global student migration?
4. What are the direct and indirect costs and benefits of student migration from Sri Lanka?
5. What are the trends in student migration from Sri Lanka from a host country perspective?
6. How can Sri Lanka harness the benefits and minimise the demerits of student migration?

This policy discussion brief is based on primary data from a rapid survey of student migrants and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), secondary data on available Sri Lankan student migration corridors and existing literature. The analysis adopts a descriptive approach to arrive at an initial understanding of this population as well and the associated direct and indirect costs and benefits of student migration. The findings of the study aim to inform policymakers in tailoring migration policies to optimise the merits and minimise the demerits of student migration from Sri Lanka.

## 2. Background

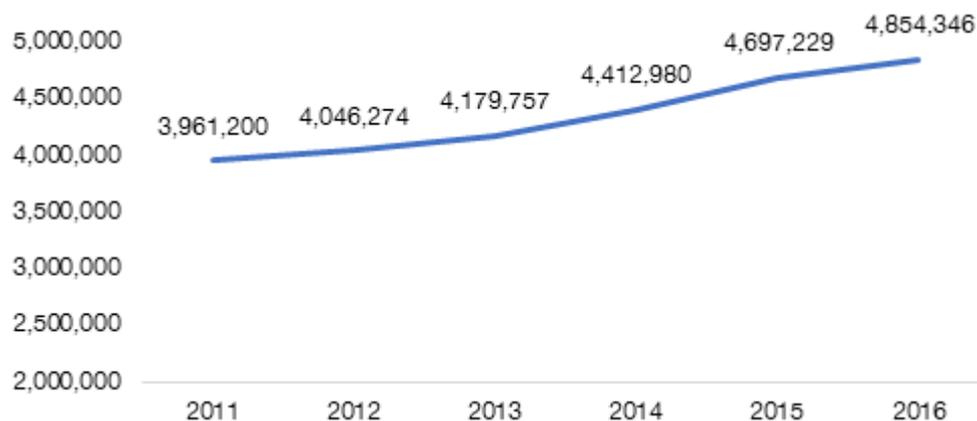
### 2.1 Global Trends in Student Migration

In terms of global trends, the number of international students enrolled in tertiary education worldwide rose significantly during the past few decades, from 2 million in 2000 to 5.3 million in 2017, with the US, UK, Australia, France, Germany and Russia being the topmost destination countries (Migration Data Portal, 2020).

#### Recommended Citation:

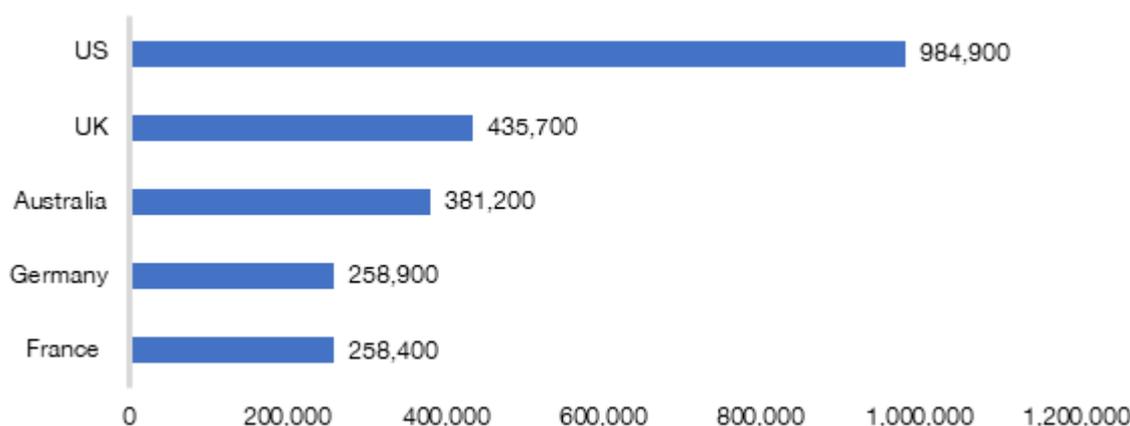
Weeraratne, B., Weerasekera, H., & Bandara, T. (February 2022). *Understanding Student Migration from Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka.

**Figure 1: Number of Internationally Mobile Students from 2011-2016**



Source: UNESCO (2018).

**Figure 2: Number of International Students in Tertiary Education by Country of Destination in 2017**



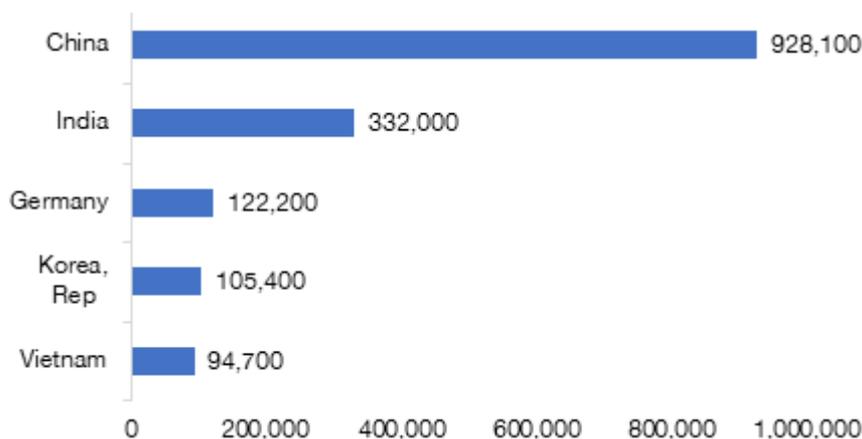
Source: UNESCO (2020).

According to the latest available statistical data from UNESCO, more than 5.3 million students at the higher education level have studied outside of their own country in the year 2017, and the number of internationally mobile students at the global level increased from 2011 to 2017 as depicted in Figure 1 below (UNESCO, 2018).

According to UNESCO (2020), more than half of the international student body is enrolled in educational

programmes mainly in six countries including USA, UK, Australia, France, Germany, and Russia, as depicted below (Figure 2). Also, prominent sending regions include China, India, Germany, Korea, Nigeria, France, Saudi Arabia and several Asian countries, as depicted in Figure 3. Further, according to UNESCO (2018), the value of official development assistance flows for scholarships in 2016 is recorded at USD 1,229 million.

**Figure 3: Number of International Students in Tertiary Education by Country of Origin in 2017**



Source: UNESCO (2020).

## 2.2 Local Trends in Student Migration

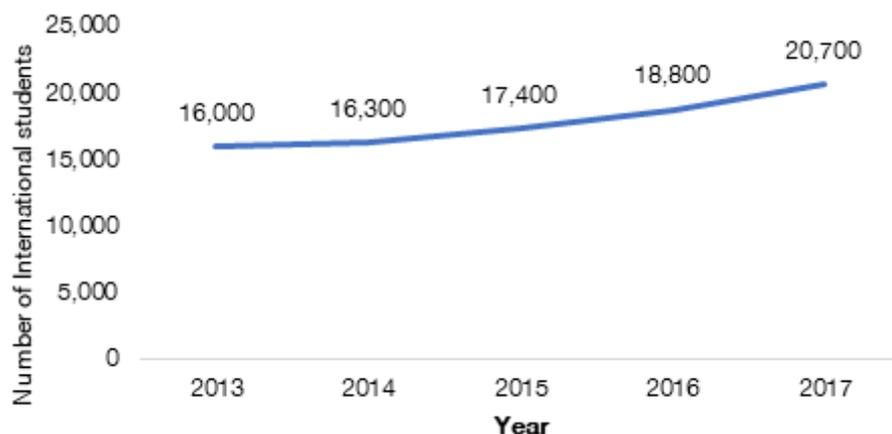
There is an increasing trend of Sri Lankans migrating to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other countries for educational purposes and thereafter obtaining employment and residency visas in these countries. Due to the competitiveness of university entrance in the Sri Lankan higher education system, a considerable number of students seek opportunities to study in foreign countries. For instance, in 2020, the number of students who sat for the GCE Advanced Level examination was 277,625, of which 62 per cent were eligible for state university entrance. However, only 23 per cent of those eligible were granted admission to one of Sri Lanka's 15 state universities due to limited places (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2020). In addition to capacity limitations, the state university system faces several issues such as frequent strikes and delays in admissions, which results in pushing the age of entry and further delaying

the graduation of students. Thus, the local graduates will be relatively older than those in other countries on average.

Also, due to the significant rate of youth unemployment (20.9 per cent) within the country, there is a growing trend of seeking greener pastures abroad by a significant share of the educated and highly skilled workforce in the country (Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, 2008). One mechanism to seek such foreign opportunities is through student migration. Further, there is a trend to continue higher education as an alternative strategy to being classified as unemployed, if there is difficulty in securing immediate employment.

According to UNESCO (2020), there is an increasing trend of student migrants from Sri Lanka to other foreign countries in the 2013-2017 period, as depicted in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Number of Sri Lankan Students in Overseas Tertiary Education Programmes - 2017**



Source: UNESCO (2020).

Furthermore, there is a relatively smaller but non-negligible inflow of student migrants to Sri Lanka. As per the most recently available data, 3,750 student/scholarship holder resident visa issuances and 4,276 extensions were granted to inward migrants to Sri Lanka in 2018. However, a huge data gap exists in student migration from Sri Lanka. Neither the inflow/outflow of foreign student movements nor the stock of foreign students is monitored in an organised manner, and there is no single authority that tracks and records this flow of migrants from Sri Lanka (Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, 2008), unlike in the case of labour migration.

Some entities facilitate documentation for student migration and thereby have sporadic administrative data related to specific aspects of student migration. These include: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (due to attesting local credentials etc.), Sri Lanka Police (in providing Police Reports), medical testing facilities, visa issuance by consulates in Sri Lanka, the Department of

Immigration and Emigration in issuing passports and collecting embarkation information at border crossing points, and student migration placement centres. Moreover, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka is involved in approving foreign exchange payments for educational purposes, while the commercial banks in Sri Lanka facilitate the outflow of remittances for foreign institutions for education and at times, directly to students for their living expenses. Additionally, many private sector entities are facilitating the placement of Sri Lankan students in foreign universities or educational institutes.

## 2.3 COVID-19 and Global Student Migration

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has posed immense challenges for those engaged in international education. The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2021) highlights that pandemic-related mobility restrictions

have forced international students and universities to reconsider academic plans. For instance, US officials sought to enforce a policy of deportation to international students enrolled in online-only courses; New Zealand closed borders to international students and; Australia initiated a pilot programme for online student enrolment (International Organization for Migration, 2021).

The IOM (2021) further notes that international students may be "disproportionately impoverished" by the immediate and policy effects of the pandemic. For instance, survey results of international students in Australia revealed that substantial housing insecurity existed even before the pandemic hit. The same study finds that in 2020, around 33 per cent of students professed to skip some meals to pay for accommodation-related expenses.

However, since many students retain the desire to commence or continue international studies, and with some of the most popular destinations inaccessible due to outbreaks or mobility restrictions, alternative academic destinations have started gaining attention. Accordingly, China, Italy and India have emerged as among the top preferences for students looking to enrol internationally in 2021, considering the pandemic restrictions imposed by most countries (International Organization for Migration, 2021). However, this is likely to be a fluid scenario due to fluctuating waves of COVID-19 being experienced the world over.

However, a recent report prepared by the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (2020), highlights the immediate impacts of the pandemic on the university higher education sector, both for the diverse actors/institutions and the economy. According to this report, travel restrictions imposed by most countries, as well as the limited capacity or even closure of consulates and other administrative bodies (such as ministries and other public bodies with competencies in migration matters) have had an impact on international student mobility.

For instance, many students were unable to enrol and study in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) abroad and many international students were unable to travel to their countries of origin due to travel restrictions, potentially leaving them in an uncertain legal situation. Since the processing of new applications or renewal of residence permits has in many cases been hindered or suspended, consequences for international students are already present in the host country (European Migration Network, 2020). In such a context, the European Migration Network, (2020) underscores the fact that many of the students have worries over inability to return to their country of origin (COO), which could result in inhibition of future flows of students; for instance, 84 per cent of prospective international students' have

concerns about restricted travel options, when applying for international education.

The COVID-19 pandemic also affects host countries at an institutional and economic level. For instance, with China being the number one sender of students (928,000) globally, it is estimated that the three major recipient countries (Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom) may experience billions of revenue losses with 80,000 fewer Chinese students entering the United States, 35,000 fewer in the United Kingdom, and approximately 30,000 fewer in Australia, respectively. However, this impact may result in a differentiated way depending on the country in question.

For instance, in Australia, education is the third largest source of income, with 1,774,852 million students enrolled in higher education; 29 per cent of them are foreign (514,707), while the contingent of Chinese students represent 20 per cent of budgetary income from Australian universities, such that the economic losses will be comparatively high. Hence, this reflects how a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced higher education institutions as well as the economy in most host countries around the globe (UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2020).

However, most of the sectors across the globe have now radically transformed to adapt to pandemic conditions, and higher education is no exception. For instance, many courses are now delivered through online/virtual modalities, allowing students to study at home. As such, from closing higher education institutions to investing in online learning and supporting isolating students and staff, universities have quickly responded and adapted to the new normal conditions (Waters, 2021).

### 3. Data, Methodology and Framework

The study adopts a descriptive analysis methodology using both primary and secondary data sources.

Primary data was collected through an online survey of Sri Lankan student migrants from 11th May 2020, to 21st June 2020. The online survey was conducted via the 'Google forms' platform, by widely circulating the survey link via social media mainly through snowballing technique. The questionnaire comprised of 27 questions, which initially screened respondents to ensure that they were enrolled in an educational programme abroad at the time of the survey. Subsequently, the survey extracted information on student demographics, course of study, country of destination (COD), course fees/living expenses, management of finances, and expectations regarding employment and return to Sri Lanka. The online survey dataset collected responses from 107 students who self-selected into responding. As such,

this study's primary data has limited representativeness of all Sri Lankan origin student migrants.

As discussed in previous sections, systematic disaggregated secondary data/administrative data on student migration from Sri Lanka is not readily available. Hence, the study relies on available aggregate data for Sri Lanka, as well as data sourced from student migrant destination countries. Specifically, data on student visas issued to Sri Lankans is extracted from available destination country datasets produced by their respective immigration/home affairs departments. The destination countries for analysis are chosen based on the top destinations for study as per the primary survey.

In addition, nine KIIs were conducted with Sri Lankan student migrants and parents of student migrants. The findings from KIIs are used to supplement the quantitative analyses on push and pull factors for studying abroad, choices and opportunities available between local and foreign education, assessing costs and benefits, payments and costs, etc.

Using both primary and secondary studies, a descriptive analysis was conducted as follows. First, the primary survey data is used to understand the composition of student migrants from Sri Lanka. Second, socio-economic costs and benefits, along with implications of covid-19 context are assessed by combining the quantitative and qualitative data collected. Third, based on data from destination countries, trends in student migration to host countries are analysed. Finally, based on the findings, recommendations are provided on how best to harness the benefits and minimise the demerits of student migration from Sri Lanka.

The analytical framework for this study on student migration starts within the larger theory of education or human capital. The seminal work of Becker (1964) is based on the idea that different level of education and training contribute to a different level of wages and salaries, where higher knowledge, skill and ability is likely to lead to a better job. Due to such potential for higher future income, benefits or utility, individuals invest in education. Student migration extends this human capital framework to consider education and work opportunities in both the COO and abroad. In such a model, the decision to study abroad is mainly based on the costs of education in both countries and the differences in the returns to skills in both countries, while other factors include the financial and non-financial costs and benefits of migration for studies (Chevalier, 2014).

Extending this further, the literature shows two approaches to student migration. In the school-constraint model, students from countries with high returns to education but a few domestic opportunities for education, seek foreign education intending to return

to their home country and benefit from high returns to education. In the migration model, education abroad is considered a passage to enter another country and its labour market, which offers a higher return to education than in their home country (Bijwaard & Wang, 2013).

## 4. Understanding the Sri Lankan Student Migrant Composition

The descriptive analysis in this section is based on the primary data collected from the online survey sample of 107 Sri Lankan students who were enrolled in an educational programme abroad during the survey period in 2020. While this is not a nationally representative sample, it provides an initial understanding of student migrants from Sri Lanka. These quantitative findings are supplemented with qualitative findings from KIIs, needs to be used with caution.

### 4.1 Demographics

A majority of the surveyed student migrants were females (62 per cent) when compared with males (38 per cent). Female student migration seems to be following the gender shares in Sri Lanka at the secondary education level, where a higher share of females sit for the GCE A/L examination (58 per cent) and gain university admission (62 per cent) (Ministry of Education, 2020). When it comes to age, the sample has a mean age of 25 years and falls within 18 to 40 years.

In terms of prior education of students in the sample (Table 1), most students received their secondary education in a government school, and 99 of those in the sample have received their education up to year 13. This is consistent with the composition of students in the secondary education system in Sri Lanka. For instance, in 2019, 97 per cent of secondary school students were in public schools while only 3 per cent were in private schools (Ministry of Education, 2020). This indicates that in this sample, a majority of those pursuing higher studies abroad benefitted from the free education system in Sri Lanka, and if they do not return to Sri Lanka after their higher studies abroad, this public expenditure on free school education becomes a loss to the Sri Lankan economy.

Moreover, completion of 13 years of education by most of the sample, implies that it mainly comprises mainstream student migrants rather than vocational student migrants. As discussed in previous sections, at the national level, only 23 per cent of those eligible for local university entrance in Sri Lanka, received admission in 2019. Reflecting this, a majority (57 students) did not secure placement in the state university system in this sample. This group likely opted to study abroad due to the inadequacy of higher

**Table 1: Prior Local Schooling of Student Migrants in Sample**

<i>Type of school attended in Sri Lanka</i>	<b>Number</b>
Government School	64
Private School	39
Semi-government School	4
Total	107
<i>Highest level of schooling completed in Sri Lanka</i>	
Up to year 11	4
Up to year 12	4
Up to year 13	99
Total	107
<i>Accepted to one of the 15 state universities in Sri Lanka</i>	
Yes	50
No	57
Total	107

Source: Authors' calculations.

education options if they were to remain in Sri Lanka. At the same time, nearly half of the students in this sample were accepted to the state universities yet opted to pursue higher education abroad.

On the one hand, this reflects their affordability for foreign education despite being qualified for free higher education in Sri Lanka, while on the other hand, it may also be due to preference for quality in specific fields of education. The outflow of such eligible students, free up space for others in the state university system.

Furthermore, the sample data suggests that a majority of students migrated abroad for their education in the 2016-2019 period, while just over half of the sample left to study abroad in the most recent years of 2018 and 2019. Hence, the sample comprises students who left Sri Lanka more recently.

### 4.2 Countries of Destination and Study Programmes

The sample comprises students migrating to a variety of countries (Annex 1). However, three countries, namely, Australia, USA and UK are the predominant destination countries which account for just over half of the migrant sample. The sample also consisted of students who migrate to India, Latvia, Canada, China and Malaysia. While the predominant trend is to migrate to OECD countries, there is a non-negligible share who pursue education in Asian countries such as India, China and Malaysia. However, as discussed in the methodology section, the snowball sampling technique influences the sample selection. Nevertheless, the top

countries revealed in the survey, broadly follow the patterns identified in available secondary data.

When it comes to the expected qualification to be obtained from their course of study abroad (Table 2), most students are those who are pursuing undergraduate courses to obtain their bachelor's degree or MBBS. Several students are also pursuing post-graduate education and doctoral studies. A negligible share of the sample has pursued education abroad to obtain a diploma.

When considering the duration of the study programme (Annex 1), a majority of students in the sample are enrolled in 3-4 year study programmes, which is in line with the expected qualification data of most students pursuing undergraduate courses. A sizeable number of students also follow study programmes of 1-2 years, which is again in line with the data on students following master's courses in the sample.

When considering the field of education in the study programme (Table 3), the majority of the students in this sample are enrolled in the field of social sciences, followed by STEM subjects such as Engineering, Science and Medical/Health Science. A few students in this sample are enrolled in Business Management and Computer science fields respectively. However, a negligible number of students are enrolled in the field of Accountancy.

In addition, the survey extracted information about scholarships received by the student migrants in this sample. While only 10 per cent of the sample had

**Table 2: Expected Qualification**

Expected Qualification	Number
Diploma	1
Bachelors (first) degree	52
Masters (post-graduate) degree	25
PhD	18
MBBS (Bachelor of medicine and surgery)	10
Other	1
Total	107

Source: Authors' calculations.

**Table 3: Field of Education in Study Programme**

Field of Education	Number
Accountancy	2
Business Management/Administration	8
Computer Science/IT	7
Engineering	18
Science (Biology/Chemistry/Physics)	17
Medical/Health Science	17
Social Science (Economics/Arts/Political Science/Policy)	32
Other	6
Total	107

Source: Authors' calculations.

received a scholarship from the Sri Lankan government, 44 per cent had received a scholarship from another country. Overall, 44 per cent of the student sample had received some form of scholarship for their studies abroad, implying that a majority of students pursue paid study programmes abroad. Of those without scholarships, 42 per cent opt to pay course fees for study abroad, despite getting a place in the free local university system. As such, there is a high value placed for overseas education, despite having to incur a significant financial cost.

The caveats for this analysis of student migrant composition are that the data are not nationally representative due to the snowball sampling technique employed, sample size and self-selection by respondents. However, the results are internally valid

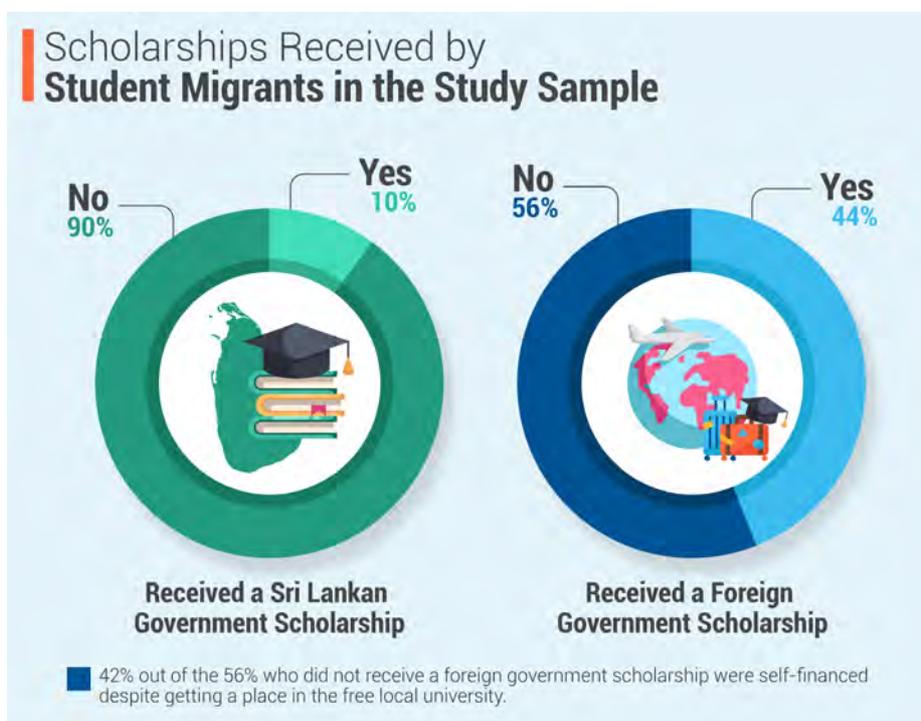
in that they provide disaggregated information and trends on student migration from Sri Lanka.

### 4.3 Push and Pull Factors

Nearly half of the sample chose to pursue higher education overseas, despite being accepted for university entrance in the public higher education system in Sri Lanka. This implies that for the sample under consideration, studying abroad is considered more desirable than pursuing tertiary education in the local university system, despite the latter being free (90 per cent of the sample are fee levying students who are not under a scholarship).

For instance, one of the KII respondents stated, "I decided to send my son to Japan to pursue higher education because the degrees are of a higher quality, and even the living standards are high."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Parent of a student migrant interviewed on 06/11/2021.



Source: Authors

KII findings further indicated that the quality of education and faculty in universities with high world rankings are not found in the local system. Hence, for students with ambitions for pursuing education in top ranking and prestigious universities, going abroad is the only option.

Furthermore, the methods of learning and assessment tend to be more multidisciplinary and flexible in some foreign education systems - for example, liberal arts education programmes in the USA offer a diverse basket of subject/skill/assessment combinations and choices, which are not available in the local university system. Similarly, faculty support systems and services for students are more diverse - for instance, the system of 'office hours' for additional student support from faculty, is not practised in the local university system.

These findings emerging from primary data align with the push and pull factors for student migration cited in the literature, such as the perception of higher quality, speed of obtaining educational qualifications and prestige associated with universities abroad (Mihi-Ramirez & Kumpikaite, 2014), the desire for an experience in another country, the desire to migrate permanently and use student migration as a bridging period to obtain residency, personality factors, etc (Boneva & Frieze, 2001).

Another aspect is the global reach that certain foreign universities offer to students. Unlike in Sri Lankan universities where only Sri Lankan students are enrolled, studying abroad in universities with international communities builds one's global reach and networks. This is further strengthened through alumni networks. Finally, the experience of living abroad/living independently and the exposure to different cultures

and communities were cited as further push factors during KIIs. Hence, these factors can act as incentives for student migration, even in cases where a local university admission is an option.

Moreover, the KIIs highlighted that even in cases where local university education was a student's first option, the inability to gain admission to a local university despite eligibility, have prompted students to pursue studies abroad as their second-best option. Nevertheless, this decision is subject to various factors such as availability of scholarships/personal funds, availability of courses in local private higher education institutions, etc.

## 5. Cost of Education and Movement of Money among Student Migrants

This section covers the direct and indirect costs of student migration and the movement of money between Sri Lanka and the COD. The direct cost includes sample data on student course fees and living expenses and a discussion of how these student finances are managed and channels of movement across borders. Indirect costs of student migration such as brain-drain and labour market implication are also discussed.

### 5.1 Direct Costs

The highest share of students (27 per cent) in the sample has incurred annual course fees below LKR 1,000,000, while a considerable share of students (21 per cent) has also incurred course fees of more than LKR 5,000,000. Notably, a minimum share of students (11 per cent) has incurred the course fee within a LKR 3,000,000-5,000,000 range. Disaggregation of the

annual course fees by field of study is depicted in Annex 1. In this sample, the Business Management field is the costliest study programme, followed by Social Science, Architecture, Computer Science, Science, Engineering and Medicine. Nevertheless, it is important to exercise caution about field wise costs, as they are a function of the country and the specific educational institute, which is not properly captured in primary data.

Table 4 depicts the frequency of course fees paid by the sample, which provides insights into student affordability. Accordingly, over half of the students in the sample profile have paid off their course fees by semester, whereas few students have paid their course fees by academic year. A smaller number have paid off their course fees biannually. This suggests that there is an overarching preference for incremental payment.

Table 5 depicts the annual living expenses incurred by the sample respondents. Accordingly, most of the sample incurred a living cost of less than LKR 1,000,000. A small share of students has incurred an annual living cost of more than LKR 5,000,000.

Table 6 depicts the annual total cost incurred by sample respondents including both living expenses and annual course fees. A majority of the sample respondents incur a total cost of more than LKR 5,000,000.

In this sample, the average annual cost per foreign student is LKR 5,853,257 can be identified as the annual outflow/foreign exchange per Sri Lankan migrant student.

On further disaggregation, Table 7 depicts the average annual total cost expenses for a student migrant, by country, region and qualification. Average costs are highest in the West - by country, in Australia, UK, USA,



Source: Authors

**Table 4: Frequency of Course Fees Payments**

Frequency of Fees Payments	Number
Every semester	51
Every six months	14
Every academic year	27
Total	107

Source: Authors' calculations.

**Table 5: Annual Living Expenses**

Living Expense Per Year (LKR)	Number
<1,000,000	27
1,000,000-2,000,000	23
2,000,000-3,000,000	22
3,000,000-4,000,000	12
4,000,000-5,000,000	4
>5,000,000	3
Total	91

Source: Authors' calculations

Note: Sample is less than 107 due to missing values

and more generally in the European/American regions. Asian countries, both by country and by region, display a significant cost advantage when compared with those of the West; on average, study options are relatively affordable, with the lowest average cost estimated for India at LKR 635,233 per annum.

**Table 6: Annual Total Cost**

Total Cost Per Year (LKR)	Number
<1,000,000	7
1,000,000-2,000,000	16
2,000,000-3,000,000	10
3,000,000-4,000,000	11
4,000,000-5,000,000	6
>5,000,000	41
Total	91

Source: Authors' calculations based on annual living expenses + annual course fee.

Note: Sample is less than 107 due to missing values.

Based on this sample, there is no significant cost differential between undergraduate and postgraduate study options as shown in the last panel of Table 10. Lower tier qualifications such as diplomas are relatively cheaper, which is to be expected.

Additionally, potential student migrants spend for the services of private educational agents or placement agents to secure placement in foreign universities. For instance, a KII respondent mentioned how they received support from a private education agent regarding the necessary details of degrees and universities in different countries of destination, before sending their son to Russia to pursue a medical degree.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, in most cases, students without scholarships are required to show proof of personal funds for a specific duration of the educational course, i.e. first year. In some cases, parents borrow this money at a cost to fulfil this requirement.

## 5.2 Movement of Money

The primary survey includes a component on fee payment mechanisms to understand the movement of money across borders between the host and COOs concerning student migrants. Specifically, this is money brought/sent to the host country for study and living expenses and money remitted to Sri Lanka by student migrants.

The survey revealed that over half (56 per cent) of students paid some percentage of their course fees using money brought/sent from Sri Lanka. Specifically, 42 students in the sample used such brought/sent money to pay their full course fees. Another 11 students used the same to pay 50-80 per cent of their course fees whereas the remaining 47 students did not use money brought/sent from Sri Lanka. A similar pattern is seen for payment of living expenses. Here, a marginally higher percentage (50 per cent) of students do not use

**Table 7: Average Annual Total Cost by Country, Region and Qualification**

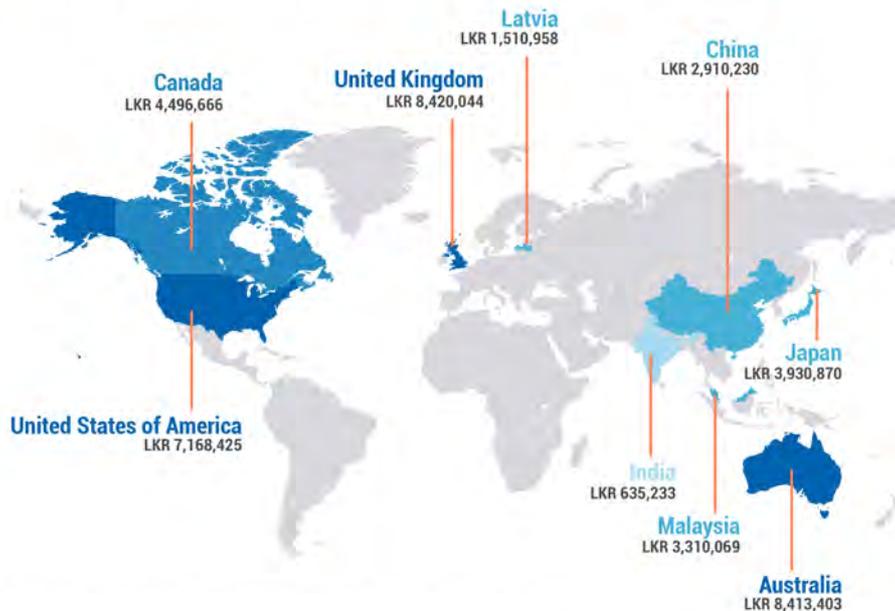
<i>Country of Education</i>	<i>Average Annual Total Cost (LKR)</i>
Australia	8,413,403
United Kingdom	8,420,044
United States of America	7,168,425
India	635,233
Canada	4,496,666
Latvia	1,510,958
China	2,910,230
Malaysia	3,310,069
Japan	3,930,870
<i>Region</i>	
Europe	5,709,214
American region (USA/Canada)	6,173,187
Asia	2,323,183
<i>Qualification</i>	
Undergraduate/Bachelor's/MBBS	5,916,800
Postgraduate (PhD/Masters)	5,819,944
Other (Diploma etc)	1,038,246

Source: Authors' calculations based on annual living expenses + annual course fee.

Note: Sample is less than 107 due to missing values.

<sup>2</sup> Parent of a student migrant interviewed on 28/06/2021.

## Average Annual Cost of Higher Education by Country



Source: Authors' calculations based on annual living expenses + annual course fee.

funds from Sri Lanka at all, while none in the sample use money brought/sent from Sri Lanka to pay their full accommodation fee.

This reveals the use of funds from Sri Lanka to finance foreign education and related expenses. In the case of remitting funds from Sri Lanka to the student's COD one key channel is Telegraphic Transfer (TT). For the TT option, before the student's departure, there is a need to register/open a file with a Sri Lankan commercial bank to facilitate the regular outward remittance of foreign currency for education and related expenses. Normally, tuition fees are directly remitted via TT to the educational institute while living expenses may be remitted directly via TT to the student's bank account in the COD.

However, TT to the student's personal bank account is capped at the published estimated costs of living expenses for the educational institute. Given these regulatory constraints, the more common method used for transferring money is the use of a local commercial bank account. Here, the parents/guardians in Sri Lanka would deposit LKR to a Sri Lankan account of which the ATM card is with the respective student overseas.<sup>3</sup> Using this ATM card, the student withdraws money in foreign currency at the COD, subject to the foreign exchange rate and the regulations on such withdrawals.

During the third quarter of 2021, it was observed that due to the pandemic-related foreign exchange concerns in Sri Lanka, such withdrawals per week were capped at various amounts depending on the respective commercial bank in Sri Lanka. For instance, the Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC had capped it at LKR

100,000 per week.

Another similar method is the use of a credit card from a Sri Lankan bank, where the expenses are incurred in the COD in foreign currency, while the credit card payments are done in Sri Lanka in LKR. Like the ATM card option, regulatory caps, as well as charges for foreign transactions, are applicable for this option too.

When it comes to inward remittance dynamics in the student migrant sample, only 14 students in the sample remitted money to Sri Lanka. This is despite 45 in the sample being employed while studying. As such, in this sample, remittance income to Sri Lanka from the student migrant body is not significant. KII findings support this where students claimed that they do not remit money back to Sri Lanka while studying abroad for several reasons such as - high transfer costs and needing an additional income source to fund living their expenses abroad.

Nevertheless, accumulated savings from stipends might be transferred back to Sri Lanka at the end of the course or on return to Sri Lanka, which indicates that there is some potential for inward foreign exchange from such students. As such, when in and outflow of remittances related to student migration are considered at a macroeconomic policy level, student migrants mostly seem to contribute towards an outflow of foreign exchange with no comparable inflow. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that student visas are used as a bridge mechanism to upgrade to more permanent visas types. Such students might engage in part-time employment and support the family in Sri Lanka by remitting money, though not reflected in this sample.

<sup>3</sup> Normally, the bank is given prior notice of the use of the ATM card in the COD.

### 5.3 Indirect Costs of Student Migration

The survey extracted information on students' desires and reasons for returning to Sri Lanka after completion of studies abroad. While most of the sample stated that they do not plan to return to Sri Lanka, the reasons for not returning were finding employment outside of Sri Lanka (45 per cent), continuing higher studies outside of Sri Lanka (38 per cent) and other personal reasons (17 per cent). A large share indicates that they wish to remain in the COD to find employment, which in turn indicates a trend of brain-drain taking place in this sample cohort.

This phenomenon is supported by KII findings, where most parents of student migrants stated that their children are reluctant to return to Sri Lanka, due to several factors pertaining to both countries of origin and destination. The home country factors include lack of job opportunities, economic and political instability which contributed to challenges in reintegrating, while the host country factors include higher living standards, higher job opportunities and higher incomes etc. For example, a KII respondent stated that "he (son) does not have any intention to return to Sri Lanka upon his graduation, due to high living standards and high job opportunities there in Japan, which suit with his degree."<sup>4</sup>

This finding is consistent with De Silva (2013, p. 4) where "high salaries, better working hours, a better quality of life, better education for their children, better social security and a better working environment" are identified as factors that contribute to a medical professional's decision to not return to Sri Lanka after training overseas.<sup>5</sup> As such, many KII respondents revealed the fact that most of the migrant students decided to stay permanently in destination countries, which creates labour gaps (specially for skilled/professional workers) in Sri Lanka. This situation is prominent in other developing countries as well. A recent study conducted by Chirangivi (2015) stated that Nepal is experiencing a significant loss of human resources and fiscal capital due to an increasing trend of student migration.

In addition to the above direct implications, there are several indirect costs and benefits of student migration. For example, students' exposure to foreign cultures, social networks with other foreign students, proficiency over 2-3 languages and efficient assessment/ grading systems in the degree programmes were cited during KIIs as indirect benefits that are associated with student migration. Confirming these findings, literature points to cultural interchange and social networks as external

benefits of student migration (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). On the flip side, several KII respondents underscored mental stress conditions resulting due to isolation (compounded by COVID-19 restrictions in particular), culture shock and challenges in destination countries, as well as social protection issues that could affect migrant students in study destinations.

## 6. Trends in Student Migration from Sri Lanka by Destination Country

This section employs secondary data from host/ destination countries on student visas issued to Sri Lankans. As such, this analysis will provide an overall understanding of student migration trends by destination. The destinations are chosen based on the top host countries as per regional trends. Furthermore, data is sourced from immigration/home affairs departments of various countries and not from a single collated source; as such, the type of data used in the analysis and periods for which data are available vary. Further, visa issuance data is a proxy for the number of student migrants as some with visas may not depart. However, available data is collated to provide an overall understanding of destination country trends.

The primary data sample found that Australia, the US and the UK were the predominant destination countries for Sri Lankan student migrants in 2020, and together they accounted for over half of the sample. A significant share of students also migrated to India, Latvia and Canada while a smaller share pursued an education in China and Malaysia. Thus, a predominant trend is to migrate to OECD countries in the Global North, while there is a non-negligible share who pursue education in the Global South, in countries such as India, China and Malaysia. However, visa or immigration data is not available for the latter countries.

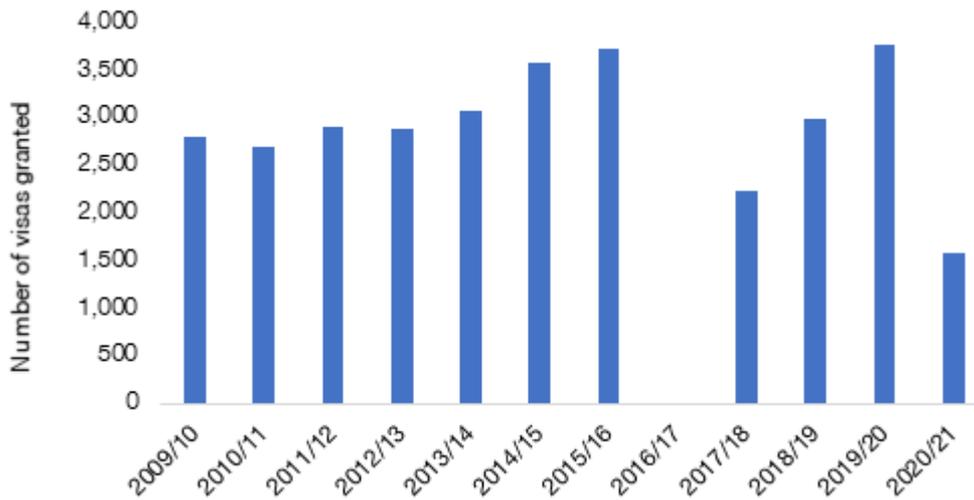
Australia is one of the top destinations of choice for Sri Lankan student migrants. There has been a strong desire, particularly among high skilled Sri Lankans, to pursue employment opportunities in Australia. Hugo & Dissanayake, (2017) have underscored a pattern of Sri Lankans migrating to Australia as students or skilled temporary workers and upon completion of their studies or work contract, taking up permanent residence, since the Australian government gives high priority for such highly skilled workers.

Therefore, their study finds that Australia is a destination

<sup>4</sup> Parent of a student migrant interviewed on 06/07/2021.

<sup>5</sup> A Pubudu De Silva<sup>1\*</sup>, Isurujith Kongala Liyanage<sup>2</sup>, S Terrance GR De Silva<sup>1</sup>, Mahesha B Jayawardana, Chiranthi K Liyanage<sup>4</sup> and Indika M Karunathilake<sup>4</sup>.

De Silva et al. Human Resources for Health 2013, 11:21 Page 4 of 6.  
<http://www.human-resources-health.com/content/11/1/21>

**Figure 5: Number of Student Visas Granted to Sri Lankans Applying from Outside/Inside Australia**

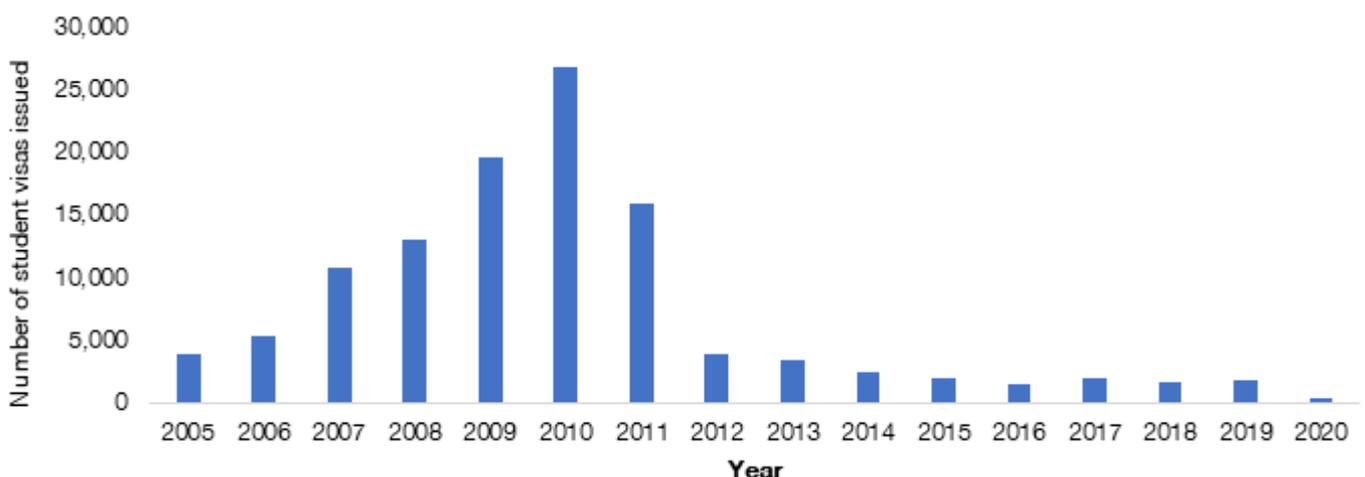
Source: Authors' calculations based on data sourced from Australian Department of Home Affairs, 2021.

Note: Disaggregation by country is available only for the top countries in any given year. The data point for 2016/17 is unavailable as Sri Lanka is lumped in the 'all other countries' category and data is not reported separately for Sri Lanka.

for over a third of Sri Lankan students going overseas and that it has been an important destination for students since the Colombo Plan in the 1960s (Hugo & Dissanayake, 2017). According to the same study, there has been a significant increase in the number of student visa holders from Sri Lanka in Australia, from 1,201 in 2002 to 7,555 in 2009.

More recent data sourced for the current study from the Australian Department of Home Affairs (Figure 5) suggests that an increase in student visas granted to Sri Lankans is seen from 2010-2015 within a range of 2,500-3,500 students. A decline is observed in 2017, but this drop gradually recovers again until 2019; before the pandemic hits in 2020 thus resulting in a drop in numbers to an all-time low of 1,500. Australia has implemented one of the strictest COVID-19 related international border closure policies (unlike the UK/Europe) which is barring international student entry into the country, potentially until mid-2022.

When it comes to the UK (Figure 6), student visas ranging from 476-26,928 visas per year, have been issued to Sri Lankans over the past 15 years. While a steady increase in visas issued is seen between 2005-2009, a further jump is seen in 2010, recording the highest number of student visas issued in the 2005-2020 period. However, this is soon followed by a sharp drop from 2011 onwards, whereby visas issued have declined to under 4,000 per year. This reflects the tighter immigration rules/restrictive immigration policies imposed by the UK Government, resulting in falling of overseas entrants in both 2011/2012 and 2012/2013; specifically, reforms to the student visa system with new measures to tackle abuse and reduce the numbers of students overstaying their visas (ICEF Monitor, 2015). Furthermore, the lowest number of visas issued is recorded in 2020, when the pandemic struck, where a mere 476 student visas were issued.

**Figure 6: Student Visas Issued to Sri Lankans for Study in the UK**

Source: Authors' calculations based on data sourced from Immigration Department-UK, 2019.

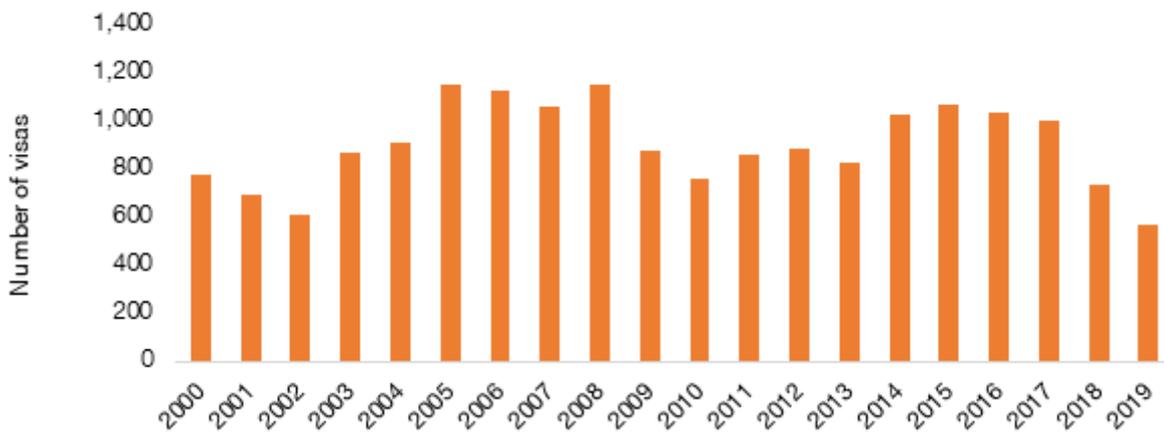
Student visas to the US, another popular destination for Sri Lankan students (Figure 7), have ranged between 600-1,200 visas per year, over the past two decades. In 2019, the US recorded the lowest number of visas issued for Sri Lanka between 2000-2019. Israel & Batalova, (2021) revealed that around 1.1 million international students were enrolled in US institutions in 2019-20, recording a decrease of almost 20,000 international students from the year before. As highlighted by Israel & Batalova (2021) key factors for this decline were: the rising cost of US higher education, the high number of student visa delays and denials, a challenging political environment for immigrants under President Trump's administration and expanded opportunities to study in other countries (Israel & Batalova, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated these dynamics due to closures and limited access to US embassies and consulates, travel restrictions, and personal safety considerations which are resulting in complicated visa issuance and travel plans of international students (Israel & Batalova, 2021).

When it comes to Canada, the country has increased in popularity as a student migration destination for Sri Lankans, where permit holders have increased from 290 in 2015 to nearly 1,000 by 2019 (Figure 8). This can largely be attributed to Canada's demand for skilled labour whereby immigration pathways were opened to essential workers and international students living in the country (Government of Canada, 2018). The drop in 2020 is likely to be the impact of COVID-19.

A similar trend can be observed for New Zealand as a host country for student migration (Figure 9). Here too, an increasing trend in student visa permits granted can be observed, where under 300 was approved in 2009/2010 and this has increased to nearly 800 by 2019/2020.

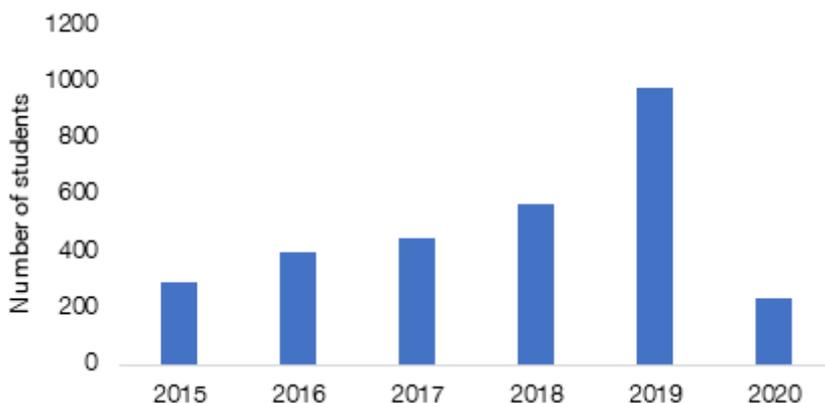
The number of international students from Sri Lanka to Japan has increased exponentially in recent years, as opposed to the declining trend observed for the countries in the Global North discussed thus far. While

**Figure 7: Student Visas Issued to Sri Lankans for Study in the US**

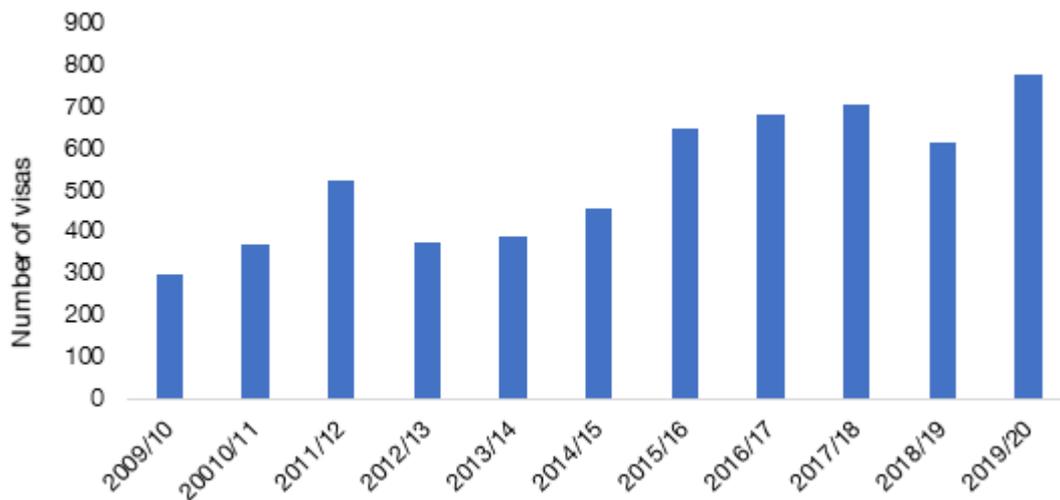


Source: Authors' calculation based on Visa Statistics sourced from the US. Department of State-Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2019.

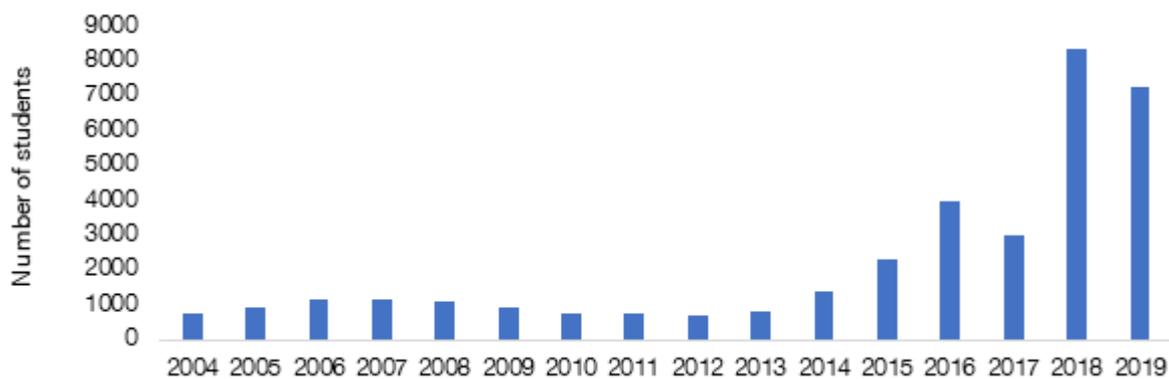
**Figure 8: Sri Lankan Study Permit Holders in Canada 2015-2020**



Source: Authors' calculation based on Immigration Statistics, (2020).

**Figure 9: Visa Permit Decisions Approved for First-time Sri Lankan Students to New Zealand**

Source: Authors' calculation based on Immigration Department - New Zealand, 2020.

**Figure 10: Number of Student Migrants to Japan (2004-2019)**

Source: Authors' calculation based on Immigration Statistics (2020).

an average of 1,000 student migrants pursued an education in Japan between 2004-2014, this jumped to 4,000 in 2016 further and doubled to 8,000 students by 2018 (Figure 10).

In a similar vein, a recent report by ICEF Monitor (2018) has underscored the fact that there is a notable growth stemming from Sri Lanka; roughly 6,610 Sri Lankan students studied in Japan representing a 67 per cent increase over 2016. As highlighted in the said report, reasons behind such an increasing rate of student enrolment in Japan are due to several factors including Japanese government support in providing subsidised company internships, assistance with finding jobs after graduation, offering additional Japanese language courses, and more streamlined processes for work visas to international students (ICEF Monitor, 2018). While these increased opportunities for Sri Lankans in Japan are to be applauded, the recent incident of a death of a Sri Lankan migrant in a Japanese immigration detention centre, exposed the flipside and the dire consequences

faced by student migrants within foreign detention systems. Having overstayed her student visa intending to transit to an employment visa, the student in question faced life-threatening consequences within a Japanese detention centre due to a serious health condition (Wasantha, 2021).

Other countries in the Global South such as China, India, and Malaysia are also popular destination countries for Sri Lankan student migrants. However, administrative immigration/visa data is not available for most of these countries. As such, the analysis will largely rely on available literature.

A recent study by Wei, Lin, Jingdong, & Yanxiong, (2020) revealed that Mainland China has become an emerging international education hub for foreign students, attracting students from across Asia, Europe, Africa and America. China stands as the third-ranked country for international college students, following the USA (22 per cent) and the UK (11 per cent). Accordingly,

the Ministry of Education in China in 2018 found that the international students studying in Mainland China from 196 countries are a total of 492,185 presenting an increase of 3,013 students (0.62 per cent) as compared to the previous year 2017. China is, therefore, one of the lead destination countries for Sri Lankan student migrants as well, due to high affordability, generous scholarships provided by the Chinese government, loosening visa policies (e.g. relaxing rules on obtaining permanent residency in some major cities, annual work permit renewals with a five-year permit, allowing foreign students to participate in short term internships, part-time jobs or create high tech start-ups) and regional ties (One Belt, One Road initiative has made significant implications on international education agendas among 64 countries spanned by the road, including Sri Lanka) (Wei, Lin, Jingdong, & Yanxiong, 2020).

India is also emerging as a preferred destination for foreign students, particularly from the South Asian region, including Sri Lanka. According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2011-12 as cited in UNESCO Institute for Statistics, (2014), Nepal contributed the highest percentage (19 per cent) of foreign students in India, followed by, in the descending order, Bhutan, Iran, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Sudan, Iraq and Sri Lanka (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014). When considering the Sri Lankan student enrolment in India, the study highlights that around 7 per cent of Sri Lankan students have enrolled in India for higher education during 2011-12. Among them, it was recorded that 56 per cent of students are female, and the rest are male (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014).

Malaysia is one of the top five countries in Asia attracting foreign students, owing to substantial investments from the Government of Malaysia. Malaysia has become well-known as one of the pioneers in the development of transnational education programmes and for being actively investing in the educational sector, promoting overseas education and attracting foreign students (Akiba, 2008; cited in Chu, Foong, Lai, & Pang, 2015). As such, most foreign students in Malaysia are from the nearby Asian countries of Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Maldives, Singapore and China.

Apart from those prominent sending countries, Malaysia is a lead destination country for Sri Lankan student migrants as well. According to the recent study by Chu, Foong, Lai, & Pang (2015), a total of 104 Sri Lankan students (including 67 male students and 37 female students) have enrolled in Malaysian Universities representing 0.39 per cent of total foreign students enrolled in 2012. However, this amount has been slightly increased in 2013, recording a total of 116 Sri Lankan students (including 77 male students and 39 female students) representing 0.4 per cent of total foreign students enrolled in 2013 (Chu, Foong, Lai, & Pang, 2015).

## 7. Way Forward

Based on the descriptive analysis of primary data from Sri Lanka and secondary data from host countries, this concluding section recommends options for maximising the benefits and minimising the demerits of student migration from Sri Lanka.

### 1. Tracking Student Migration Flow Data

There is no policy or regulatory framework in Sri Lanka to govern student migration flows to and from Sri Lanka. Further, no unified source or authority monitors the inflow and outflow of student migrants from Sri Lanka. When compiling this study, the authors relied on secondary data from multiple sources to construct an overall picture of current student migration trends.

However, to harness the benefits of student migration and mitigate demerits of the same, and to implement policy measures to this end, the GOSL must appoint a single authority to track this non-negligible migrant stock and flow in the same way that it tracks labour migrant outflows. Moreover, it is important to regulate the student migration placement agencies.

In this regard, it is recommended to track student outmigration from Sri Lanka by integrating student migration into the mandates of relevant ministries/ departments with an institutional structure connecting these institutions as well as the financial sector to track student migration and related outflow of foreign exchange.

### 2. Reintegration Support to Mitigate Brain-drain

Brain-drain emerges as one of the main features of student migration that negatively impacts origin countries. Although concrete data to quantify levels of brain-drain are not available for Sri Lanka, the evidence compiled and analysed in this study suggests that it is an issue that deserves urgent policy attention in Sri Lanka. While Sri Lankan students can reap the benefits of pursuing higher education abroad at an individual level, Sri Lanka can do much more as a sending country to leverage this migrant groups' benefits to the country's labour market and economy at large.

Currently, the loss of the younger generation, especially the high skilled, impacts negatively on the country's labour market. This further compound the macroeconomic need to urgently attract more foreign direct investments (FDI). Attracting FDI becomes challenging in a context where there is a lack of skilled labour pool available.

As seen in the foregone analysis reasons among student migrants' reluctance to return upon completion of studies included difficulty in economic reintegration such as finding employment. As such, some specific

measures should be taken are to strengthen the country's overarching migrant 'reintegration' programmes. The current reintegration programmes in Sri Lanka mainly focus on returning migrant workers lack aspects to support returning student migrants.

The existing reintegration programmes can be strengthened to cater to returning high skilled migrant workers and thereby the returning qualified student migrants as well. Here, a mechanism can be introduced to evaluate the credential of returning qualified students and match them with employers/ employment opportunities. In terms of evaluating credentials, for instance, students with foreign medical degrees are subject to local examinations and have lower points for their internship placements.

Similar issues with the portability of foreign qualifications are present in the legal professions. As such, provisions to streamline foreign qualifications into professional requirements in Sri Lanka will encourage the return of student migrants to establish themselves professionally in Sri Lanka, particularly among those who may be keen to return but are deterred by additional qualification requirements to be fulfilled in joining the local system.

### 3. Harness the Potential of Student Migrants Overseas

At the same time, it is important to maintain productive links with qualified student migrants who chose to remain in CODs. The National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP) 2008, underscores the importance of keeping the diaspora population engaged with Sri Lanka to encourage "transnational communities and circular migration".

Currently, there are no programmes or concrete efforts in Sri Lanka to maintain productive relationships between diaspora populations, including student migrants and other types of migrants who have become permanent migrants overseas. These can include both efforts to re-attract them to Sri Lanka on a more permanent basis or to encourage their engagement with the country's development efforts while residing in their countries of destination.

This can be done through encouraging investments in Sri Lanka to facilitate knowledge transfers, encouraging student research findings and training to contribute back to Sri Lanka, and leveraging on alumni networks developed in international universities to advance the local education system, among many other efforts targetting student migrants.

### 4. Recognising Foreign Exchange Outflows

In Sri Lanka's present-day policy space, there is no understanding of the magnitude of foreign exchange outflows accompanying student migration. For the

sample of students considered in this study the estimated annual average expenditure per student migrant is LKR 5.8 million. This amounts to an average annual outflow of LKR 121.8 billion for a student migrant stock of 21,000 (based on UNESCO's latest 2017 data). This is a significant foreign exchange outflow for a country facing low foreign reserves. It is critical to introduce necessary measures to understand and track the full magnitude of foreign exchange spent on foreign education of Sri Lankan students and identify ways to minimise this outflow.

One area to focus on in terms of minimising the outflow of foreign exchange for foreign education is by providing high-quality educational opportunities within Sri Lanka, as discussed under the next point. Another is to attract more scholarships for Sri Lankan students. One possible mechanism is to tie skilled inward migration with scholarships to develop the lacking skills in Sri Lanka.

For instance, if an FDI project requires to bring in a mechanical engineering expert to Sri Lanka, a corresponding opportunity should be created to train/ educate a Sri Lankan student to be qualified in the same field in a reputed foreign university with a foreign education scholarship. Such a mechanism would be in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.B which calls for expanding the number of cross-border scholarships, as the promotion of student mobility increases the number of education migrants, thus increasing higher education opportunities for people from least developed countries and other underserved areas.

### 5. Improving the Sri Lankan Higher Education System

The study shows that a key driving factor of student migration from Sri Lanka is the relatively lower quality of higher education and other issues within the local higher education systems. In the addition, the study found that many of those sampled were from public schools (primary and secondary) in Sri Lanka, which implies that there is a cost incurred by the country to freely educate students up to this point and then possibly lose their contribution back into the economy.

Steps must be taken to improve local higher education provision to allow for a portion of students to remain in Sri Lanka rather than migrate for education, especially if their desired course is already available in the local system. When it comes to the public higher education system, limited seats for eligible students are a key hurdle as discussed in the study. Due to the fiscal constraints of further expanding free education services in the country, consideration should also be given to offering mixed fee levying course options - as there is a segment of students who can afford to pay local fees,

rather than foreign fees. This option is already available for post-graduate courses within state universities and should be extended to undergraduate courses.

Similarly, private HEIs in Sri Lanka affiliated with foreign universities - albeit granting a relatively higher quality of education - do not provide all-round opportunities that are available in state universities such as a campus environment, accommodation facilities, clubs and societies, sports activities, extended research opportunities, alumni networks, etc. If these aspects are addressed, Sri Lanka can aspire to have a more balanced higher education system that affords better services and to a broader group of students.

## 6. Protection of Student Migrant Rights

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed that in some countries of destination, international students although high-skilled are not treated as belonging to the COD. The crisis reveals that they may be treated as 'guest

workers', disposed of in times of crisis. Furthermore, the pandemic is exacerbating issues for student migrants such as unfair fee payments for reduced services (e.g. online teaching replacing physical classes and living abroad), delays in visa processing, among other things.

Furthermore, incidents such as that of the Sri Lankan student migrant who faced untimely death in a Japanese detention centre, highlight the harsh treatment and conditions that migrant students may find themselves in. All these factors together point towards the need for a stronger international commitment towards the protection of student migrant rights. While these commitments are well established for labour migrants, their implementation is still poor across the board. Similarly, specialised provisions must be instituted for student migrants, particularly in times like the current pandemic where mobility is facing additional restrictions.

## Works Cited

- Altbach, P. G., & Bassett, R. (2004). The Brain Trade. *Foreign Policy*, (144), 30-31.
- Bijwaard, G. E., & Wang, Q. (2013). Return Migration of Foreign Students. *IZA Discussion Paper No. 7185*.
- Boneva, B. S., & Frieze, I. (2001). Toward a Concept of a Migrant Personality. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(3), 477-491.
- Central Bank of Sri Lanka. (2020). *Annual Report 2020*. Colombo: Central Bank of Sri Lanka.
- Chu, M. Y., Foong, B., Lai, C., & Pang, A. (2015). *Foreign Students' Enrolment in Malaysian Higher Education Institution (Doctoral dissertation)*. UTAR.
- European Migration Network. (2020). *Second EMN OECD Inform: Impact of COVID-19 on international students in EU and OECD Member States*. EU Commission. Retrieved August 15, 2021, from [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/second-emn-oecd-inform-impact-covid-19-international-students-eu-and-oecd-member-states\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/second-emn-oecd-inform-impact-covid-19-international-students-eu-and-oecd-member-states_en)
- Government of Canada. (2018, 12 20). *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Departmental Plan 2018–2019*. Retrieved August 15, 2021, from Canada.ca: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/departmental-plan-2018-2019/departmental-plan.html>
- Hugo, G., & Dissanayake, L. (2017). *The Process of Sri Lankan Migration to Australia Focusing on Irregular Migrants Seeking Asylum*. Canberra, Australia: ANU Press, The Australian National University.
- ICEF Monitor. (2015, May 13). *UK Educators Rally Following Conservative Election win*. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from Market Intelligence For International Student Recruitment: <https://monitor.icef.com/2015/05/uk-educators-rally-following-conservative-election-win/>
- ICEF Monitor. (2018, January 11). *Japan Well on its Way to 300,000 International Students*. Retrieved July 12, 2021, from Market intelligence for international student recruitment: <https://monitor.icef.com/2018/01/japan-300000-international-students/>
- Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka. (2008). *International Migration Outlook-Sri Lanka*. Colombo: IOM.
- International Organization for Migration. (2021). *COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot #52: International students UPDATE*. IOM. Retrieved August 10, 2021, from [https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19\\_analytical\\_snapshot\\_52\\_-\\_international\\_students\\_update.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19_analytical_snapshot_52_-_international_students_update.pdf)
- International Organization for Migration. (2018). *Global Migration Indicators 2018*. Berlin: Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC), IOM.
- Israel, E., & Batalova, J. (2021, January 14). *International Students in the United States*. Retrieved August 11, 2021, from MPI: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/international-students-united-states-2020>
- Migration Data Portal. (2020). *International Students*. Retrieved July 12, 2021, from Migration Data Portal: <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-students#key-trends>
- Mihi-Ramirez, A., & Kumpikaite, V. (2014). Economics Reason of Migration From Point of View of Students. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* (109), 522-526.
- Ministry of Education. (2020). *Annual School Census of Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Ministry of Education. Retrieved September 16, 2021, from <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Education/StaticallInformation/SchoolCensus/2020>
- Trading Economics. (2021). *Sri Lanka - Percentage Of Enrolment In Tertiary Education In Private Institutions*. Retrieved July 15, 2021, from Trading Economics: <https://tradingeconomics.com/sri-lanka/percentage-of-enrolment-in-tertiary-education-in-private-institutions-percent-wb-data.html>
- UNESCO. (2015). *Global Education Monitoring Report*. Paris. Retrieved July 12, 2021, from <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/taxonomy/term/199>
- UNESCO. (2018). *Global Education Monitoring Report*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2020). *Global Education Monitoring Report*. Paris. Retrieved July 16, 2021, from <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/>
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2014). *Status of International Students in India for Higher Education*. New Delhi: UNESCO.
- UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. (2020). *Covid 19 & Higher Education: Today & Tomorrow: Impact Analysis, Policy Responses & Recommendations*. Caracas. Retrieved August 15, 2021, from <http://www.iesalc.unesco.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-EN-090420-2.pdf>
- Wasantha, D. (2021, June 6). *Tragic Death of Young Sri Lankan Woman Exposes Horrific conditions in Japanese Detention Centres*. Retrieved July 20, 2021, from World Socialist Website: <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/06/07/immi-j07.html>
- Waters, J. (2021, January 05). *Covid-19 and International Student Mobility: Some Reflections*. Retrieved July 12, 2021, from LSE South East Asia Blog: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/seac/2021/01/05/covid-19-and-international-student-mobility-some-reflections/>
- Wei, G., Lin, W., Jingdong, Y., & Yanxiong, W. (2020). China as a Global Destination for International Students. *Journal of Politics & Law* (13), 135-142.

## Annex

### Annex 1: Table 2 Country of Destination

Host country	Number
Australia	21
United States of America	17
United Kingdom	14
India	10
Latvia	7
Canada	6
China	4
Malaysia	4
Japan	3
Philippines	3
United Arab Emirates	3
Belarus	3
Sweden	2
Bangladesh	2
France	1
Germany	1
Italy	1
Netherlands	1
Singapore	1
Thailand	1
Vietnam	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>

Source: Authors' calculations.

### Annex 2: Duration of Study Programme

Duration (years)	Number
1	7
2	18
3	31
4	30
5	10
6	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>

Source: Authors' calculations.

### Annex 3: Course Fees by Field of Study

Annual Course Fees by Field of Study	Average Course Fee (LKR)
Business Management	5,763,526
Social Science	5,208,233
Architecture	4,998,471
Computer Science/IT	3,584,235
Science (Biology/physics/Chemistry)	3,426,077
Engineering	3,080,114
Medicine	1,830,424
Aviation	807,564

Source: Authors' calculations.