

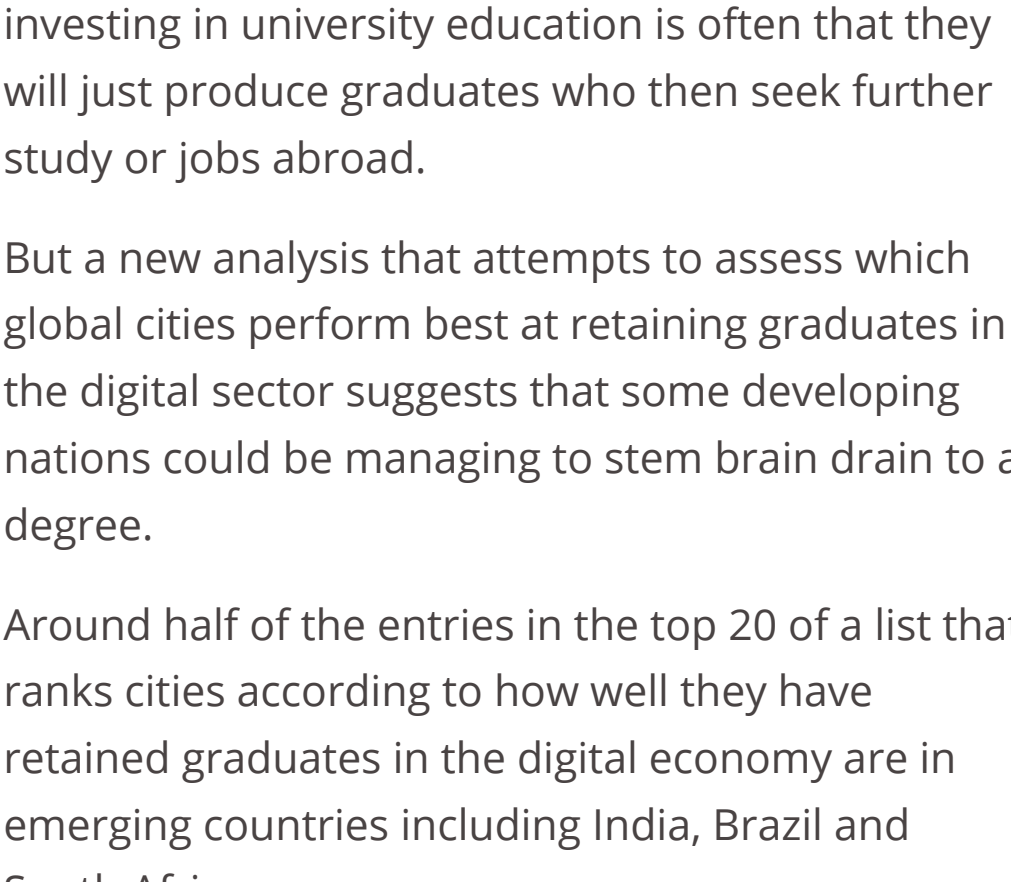
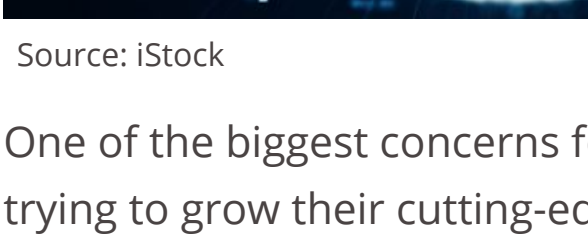
Cities in emerging nations 'stemming digital brain drain'

Technology hubs in countries such as India and Brazil appear to be improving retention of graduate talent

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Simon Baker

Twitter: [@HigherBaker](#)



Source: iStock

One of the biggest concerns for emerging countries trying to grow their cutting-edge industries by investing in university education is often that they will just produce graduates who then seek further study or jobs abroad.

But a new analysis that attempts to assess which global cities perform best at retaining graduates in the digital sector suggests that some developing nations could be managing to stem brain drain to a degree.

Around half of the entries in the top 20 of a list that ranks cities according to how well they have retained graduates in the digital economy are in emerging countries including India, Brazil and South Africa.

The list, part of a suite of new rankings from Paris-based human resources consultancy Emerging, which produces the annual [Global University Employability Ranking published by Times Higher Education](#), looks at how many senior executives in technology companies are working in the city where they went to university.

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Top of the pile are London and New York, but São Paulo comes in third, Buenos Aires is fourth and Mumbai is fifth, according to the data from business information platform Crunchbase.

Top cities for retention of digital graduates – [see here](#) for full list

Rank	City/metro area
1	London, UK
2	Greater New York Area, US
3	São Paulo, Brazil
4	Buenos Aires, Argentina
5	Mumbai, India
6	Paris, France
7	Sydney, Australia
8	Cape Town, South Africa
8	Los Angeles, US
10	Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

Source: Emerging/Crunchbase

India also comes third, behind the US and the UK, for country performance in the results of a [global survey](#), commissioned by Emerging, of employers and which universities they think are best at producing digital graduates.

Antara Sengupta, a research assistant on an international project on dual apprenticeships involving the Indian Institute of Management in Kolkata and the [University of Glasgow](#), said India's higher education system was known "to have some of the best technology institutes", so its performance was not a surprise.

However, she added that graduates of such institutes generally would go abroad for further study or work.

Therefore, the placing of a city such as Mumbai high up for graduate retention pointed to the possibility of global changes in recent years – such as visa conditions in countries like the US and the UK coupled with India's rapidly expanding home-grown tech industry – as factors.

"This points to the fact that tech jobs grew in India while conditions for global migration became more stringent in the past few years, restricting graduates from moving abroad," she said.

India also has a couple of entries in a list of the top cities for educating female executives in tech companies, including New Delhi at fifth.

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However, Ms Sengupta said a recent United Nations study had highlighted that while the country was a global leader for the number of female graduates in science, technology, engineering and maths, it was struggling to convert this into employment for all these women.

Emerging's [overall ranking of the best universities for digital education](#) is dominated by the US, with [Harvard University](#) and the [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) taking the top two spots.

The UK has 22 entries in this overall university ranking, but most of the top positions are taken by institutions in London in addition to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

John Higgins, president of the British Computer Society (BCS), the professional body for IT in the UK, said he thought London would remain an important technology hub despite challenges like Brexit and the pandemic.

However, he thought that in the future, other cities in the UK, and elsewhere, could rise in stature if they became hubs specialising in certain technology areas, with their local universities focused on expertise in these sub-fields.

Mr Higgins, who has advised the European Commission's [Intelligent Cities Challenge](#), said his work for the programme had highlighted how the interaction between universities and businesses – alongside the input of civic bodies and community groups – was increasingly important for the digital transformation of local economies.

This is something that would continue despite the move to remote working during the pandemic, he added.

"I think people will want that blend of...being able to network locally and recruit locally while at the same time have a web of business opportunities where your...hub can deal with other hubs in other parts of the world," Mr Higgins said.