

## MAPPING THE DYNAMICS OF INTERSTATE MIGRATION IN INDIA: A STATE-LEVEL ANALYSIS

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### RESEARCH ARTICLE



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#### Abstract

This study analyzes interstate migration in India, focusing on trends across 16 major states using Census data from 1991 to 2011. It highlights significant rural-to-urban migration, with Maharashtra and Delhi as key destinations, though Delhi saw a recent decline. Gujarat is emerging as a growing destination, reflecting its economic growth. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are leading origin states, with substantial migration to Delhi, Maharashtra, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh. Bihar's migration also extends to Jharkhand and West Bengal. Gender-specific patterns show higher female migration in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan. These insights are vital for policymakers to manage migration and promote balanced regional development.

**Keywords:** *Interstate migration, migration trends and patterns, migration dynamics, urbanization, socio-economic factors, regional disparities*

### Introduction

Internal migration within India represents a significant demographic phenomenon with profound implications for the nation's social, economic, and political landscapes. The 2011 Census recorded approximately 453 million internal migrants, accounting for nearly 37 percent of the total population. This marked a substantial 46 percent increase from the 2001 Census figure of 309 million. These statistics underscore the critical role of inter-intrastate migration in shaping livelihoods, driving regional development, and enhancing labour mobility across the country. An examination of migration patterns from 1991 to 2011 reveals notable trends. Over the past two decades, there has been a discernible rise in intra-district migration.

Historically, internal migration in India has not received the level of scholarly attention it warrants, particularly in comparison to international migration. Despite this, internal migration is a far more prevalent phenomenon, as highlighted by a UNDP report in 2021, which emphasised that the number of internal migrants within India far exceeds that of international migrants. Research from the mid-20th century indicated that internal mobility was relatively low, with only one-third of India's population living outside their birthplace. Various factors contributed to this limited mobility, including the predominance of agriculture, strong community ties, limited educational opportunities, the rigidity of the caste system, and the diversity of language, culture, and food habits. However, over recent decades, India has undergone significant economic transformations. Advances in education, transportation, and communication, along with a shift from agriculture to industry and the tertiary sector, have accelerated internal migration. This increased mobility is not only reshaping population distribution but also influencing regional disparities, labour market dynamics, and the broader processes of modernization and development.

This paper seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of internal migration trends and patterns across India's major states. This study aims to elucidate the underlying dynamics and factors that drive interstate migration by focusing on data from sixteen key states. The analysis is structured into two main sections: the first explores overall migration trends, while the second delves into specific patterns observed in major states. Additionally, the paper outlines the data sources and methodologies employed, ensuring a robust and reliable analytical framework. The concluding section offers insights and recommendations for policymakers to effectively address the challenges and harness the opportunities associated with internal migration in India.

### Overview on Interstate Migration in India

Migration is a fundamental aspect of human evolution and a universal phenomenon (Delbosc, 2023). As the movement of people from one location to another, migration has been a constant in human history, adapting to changing contexts and motivations. Historically, migration has taken diverse forms, with individuals and groups relocating in search of better economic

opportunities, higher wages, and improved living conditions. While international migration often garners significant attention, internal migration, the movement of individuals within national borders, is a far more prevalent phenomenon (Singh, 1998; Bhagat et al., 2006; Sasikumar et al., 2003). This form of migration is intricately linked to processes of urbanization and industrialization, resulting in large-scale movements both within and across regions, driven primarily by economic development (Kumar, 2023). This trend reflects the dynamics of the agricultural economy in India (Keshri, 2012). Given the significant economic and industrial development across different regions of the country, and the accompanying intensification of population movement, a thorough understanding of migration trends and patterns becomes imperative. Accurate predictions of future population redistribution depend heavily on an understanding of temporal factors such as births, deaths, and internal migration (Kumar, 2023). Data from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and the Census of India categorize internal migration based on the origin and destination points, identifying four types of mobility: rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-rural, and urban-urban. Among these, rural-urban migration is primarily driven by disparities in economic opportunities between rural and urban areas (Rajan & Datt, 2024)<sup>i</sup>. This phenomenon, extensively theorized by development economists since the mid-20th century, arises from the perceived higher productivity and incomes available in urban and industrial sectors (Lewis, 1954; Harris & Todaro, 1969). However, historical migration from rural to urban areas has been shaped not only by individual or household decisions but also by broader structural factors (Rajan & Datt, 2024). During the colonial era, for instance, migration patterns were influenced by the demand for labour in sectors such as agriculture, mining, and infrastructure development (Srivastava & Sasikumar, 2003; Nagaraj, 2011; Kakati, 2024).

In India, the examination of internal migration is essential not only for demographic analysis but also for understanding its broader economic, political, and cultural impacts (Premi, 1990; Bhagat et al., 2006; Schmidt-Sane, 2024). Analyzing trends and patterns in internal migration is essential for grasping the dynamics of population redistribution and addressing the regional disparities that drive migration (Bhagat et al., 2006; Srivastava, 2020). Since the post-colonial period, rural-urban migration in India has been shaped by uneven development, which has been further exacerbated by patterns of capitalist growth (Srivastava, 2011). This economic disparity has only widened in the post-liberalization era, leading to significant differences in growth between rural and urban regions. The concentration of economic opportunities in growth centers, particularly in northern, western, and southern urban areas, has intensified migration from rural regions. The persistent lack of livelihood opportunities in rural areas further propels this trend, making urban centers the primary destinations for labour migrants. Inter-regional migration patterns are significantly influenced by both economic disparities and demographic trends across regions<sup>ii</sup>. Lubell (1978) emphasizes the role of social networks in helping migrants secure employment, while other studies have identified additional factors that motivate migration, such as population pressure, educational opportunities, land scarcity, and marriage (Keshri & Bhagat, 2012). The economic motivations behind rural out-migration, as discussed by Chakrapani & Kumar, (1994), highlight that migration is often a response to the lack of opportunities in rural areas. The absence of men due to migration has significant effects on women left behind, often resulting in increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and an improved status within their families<sup>iii</sup>.

In recent years, migration patterns in India have undergone significant changes, particularly in terms of gender dynamics. Women are no longer predominantly “tied” or passive migrants who relocate primarily due to family obligations or alongside male family members (Premi, 2001; Shanthi, 2006; Ghatak, S. 2020; Agarwala, 2024). With increased educational attainment, women are now actively pursuing opportunities in the public sphere, entering professions as technicians, professionals, and in related fields. This shift has led to a growing number of women engaging in formal employment and, in many cases, emerging as primary earners within their families. As a result, women’s economic opportunities are increasingly influencing family migration decisions, thereby challenging and reshaping traditional male-dominated migration trends (Gupta, 1993; Gulati, 1997; Premi, 2004; Shanthi, 2006; Gopalakrishnan, 2024). Simultaneously, the transition from traditional roles to economic activities has heightened the demand for domestic help and other gender-specific jobs within the informal sector. Migrant women often take up these roles, accepting work that is undervalued, stigmatized, and poorly paid. Despite these challenges, their readiness to work under such conditions has contributed to the rising demand for unskilled labour in these sectors (Gulati, 1997; Basu & Chatteraj, 2024). Over time, many women have become primary or equal contributors to their family incomes, with some families migrating specifically to take advantage of the economic opportunities available to women. It is crucial to consider the varying socio-economic conditions across different states in India when forecasting future migration trends<sup>iv</sup>.

Migration research in India has historically under-emphasized the study of interstate mobility, despite its significance in understanding population dynamics. This lack of focus on interstate migration can be attributed to a broader decline in interest in migration studies over the years (Bhagat, 2020). However, recent developments, including rapid urbanisation, improved education levels, and advancements in transportation and communication infrastructure, have sparked renewed interest in the spatial mobility of the Indian population (Mitra et al.; Kumar, 2024). Furthermore, the shift in economic activities from agriculture to industry and the service sector has significantly increased labour mobility across the country. As India continues to urbanise and develop its infrastructure, it becomes increasingly important to understand the patterns and trends of interstate migration to address regional disparities and support balanced economic growth.

### **Methodology and Material Sources**

This study analyzes inter-state migration trends in India using Census data from 1991 to 2011, with a specific focus on the 16 major states that serve as key economic, social, and demographic hubs. Migration is operationalized through the ‘Place of Last Residence’ (POLR) metric, which identifies individuals as migrants if their current residence differs from their previous location,

provided they have resided in the new location for a minimum of six months. Given the limitations of data granularity, the analysis is conducted at an aggregate, state-wise level. The analytical approach of this study is rooted in bivariate analysis, descriptive tabulations, and inferential statistical techniques. Bivariate analysis enables the examination of relationships between pairs of variables, allowing for a dual-dimensional exploration of migration data. Given their pivotal roles in shaping India's national migration trends, selecting those states is a deliberate and strategic choice<sup>v</sup>. These states represent the country's diverse economic, social, and demographic landscapes and serve as critical nodes in understanding the dynamics of inter-state migration. The study's emphasis on these states allows for a detailed exploration of the regional variations in migration drivers and impacts, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors influencing migration in India.

The paper emphasizes a dual focus: first, on the top eight sending states, and second, on the detailed examination of migration streams between origin and destination states. By narrowing the scope to the most significant sending states, the study enables a targeted exploration of the socio-economic conditions and policy environments that drive large-scale out-migration. This approach facilitates a more precise understanding of the factors contributing to these states' roles as major sources of interstate migration. To further enrich the analysis, the study employs an innovative approach to origin and destination analysis, structured by migration streams. This method involves identifying and analyzing the top five destination states for each origin state, ensuring a clear and concise understanding of the migration patterns. Such a detailed stream-wise analysis is crucial for uncovering the specific channels through which migrants move, providing deeper insights into the relationships between sending and receiving states. The insights would be derived from this stream-wise analysis are valuable for policymakers and researchers who aim to address the challenges and opportunities presented by interstate migration in India. By understanding the specific pathways of migration, as well as the socio-economic and policy factors driving these flows, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to manage migration, promote balanced regional development, and ensure the welfare of migrants.

To describe simple terms. A rate indicates how often an event occurs within a specific period relative to the at-risk population.

For migration, it shows the proportion of migrants compared to the total population that could have migrated.

This can be represented with an equation in algebraic form;

$$m = \frac{M}{P} \cdot k$$

Where;

m = the percentage of people who migrated

M = the number of persons migrated

P = the likelihood of migrated people during the interval

k = a constant, usually 100

This equation can be expressed as

These calculations typically result in *in-migration rates* being much lower in general compared to out-migration rates. This is because the difference in population bases between the two is usually much more significant than the difference between their respective numerators.

$$In - Migration = \frac{M_i}{P_i} \cdot k$$

$$Out - Migration = \frac{M_o}{P_o} \cdot k$$

$$Net migration = \frac{M_i - m_i}{P_i} \cdot k$$

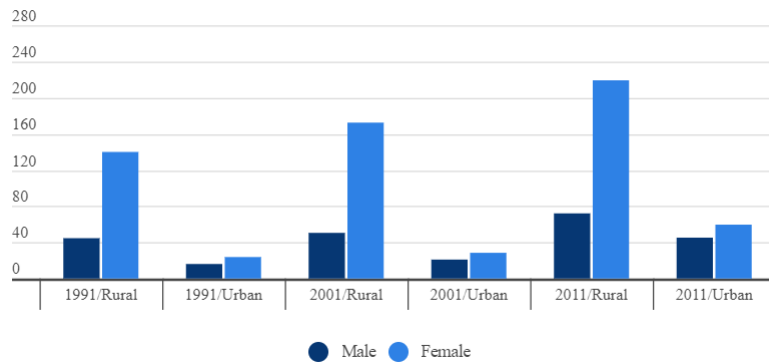
There is debate over which population measure ( $P_i$ ) to use for migration rates. One approach suggests the first rate should be based on the population at the time ( $t+n$ ), including in-migrants and excluding out-migrants. Migration rates represent the probability of moving from a specific origin to a particular destination. In-migration to an area is the sum of all incoming streams  $M_{ij}$ , out-migration is the sum of outgoing streams ( $M_{ji}$ ), and net migration ( $i$ ) The difference between them ( $M_{ji} - M_{ji}$ ). Probability rates for out-migration compare ( $M_i$ ) to the origin population ( $P_i$ ) in-migration compares ( $M_i$ ) to the population of the rest of the country ( $P - p_i$ ).

### Emerging Migration Trends in India

In recent decades, migration patterns in India have shown significant regional variations, largely influenced by economic and demographic changes. Northern states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan have consistently experienced high levels of out-migration, driven by factors such as rural-to-urban migration in search of better opportunities. Conversely, southern states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh exhibit lower levels of both in-migration and out-migration. Since the late 1990s, enhanced transportation and communication networks have facilitated migration from less developed to more developed states. Simultaneously, the growth of small towns and informal economic activities has further shaped migration dynamics (Deshingkar, 2008; Sharma, 2013; Chandrasekhar, 2014). Despite some fluctuations, the overall migration distribution across these regions

has remained relatively stable over time. In this section, the analysis of Census data is undertaken to examine the macro-level characteristics of migration, with particular emphasis on how the composition of internal movement has evolved over time across India's major states. This analysis delves into the individual characteristics of migrants, including gender, place of residence, and personal preferences. While existing narratives on migration trends have often been contradictory and inconsistent in explaining structural shifts, this section seeks to provide a reliable account of the evolving trends and patterns of migration in India.

**Figure 1: Number of Migrated People by Location and Gender: 1991, 2001, 2011  
(Interstate migrant labourers)**



Note: Figures are reported in actuals in millions.

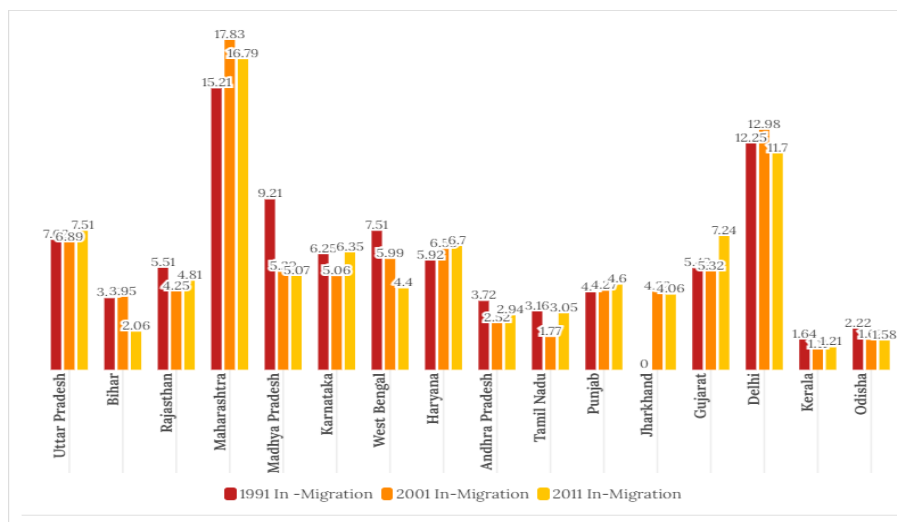
Source: The author's calculation is based on Census 1991, 2001, 2011.

Figure 1 illustrates the migration patterns in India across three decades, from 1991 to 2011, with data categorized by the place of last residence, gender, and the total number of migrants. The data reveals a significant rise in migration during this period, encompassing both male and female migrants. In 1991, the total number of migrants was 225.9 million, comprising 61.1 million males and 164.8 million females. By 2001, this figure increased to 309.4 million, with 90.7 million male migrants and 218.7 million female migrants. The upward trend continued. The data also underscores the prevalence of rural-to-urban migration, a substantial proportion of migrants originate from rural areas. This overall increase in migration highlights the changing dynamics of population movement within India over the three decades. Notably, in 1991, women were, on average, 2.9 times more likely to migrate than men. This gender ratio gradually decreased to 2.6 times in 2001 and further to 2.3 times in 2011. It is important to note that migration patterns in India vary significantly from state to state, as each state has unique factors influencing migration. However, census data consistently indicates a rising trend in the aggregate number of migrants over the examined period.

### **The Scale of Migration Dynamics Inflow and Outflow Principal Indian States**

Understanding the trends and factors driving migration is a critical component in advancing economic development. To analyze inter-state migration trends, we begin by independently calculating the inflows and outflows of migrants for each of India's sixteen major origin and destination states over the period from 1991 to 2011.

**Figure 2: Percentage Distribution of In-Migration Flow across Major States in India**

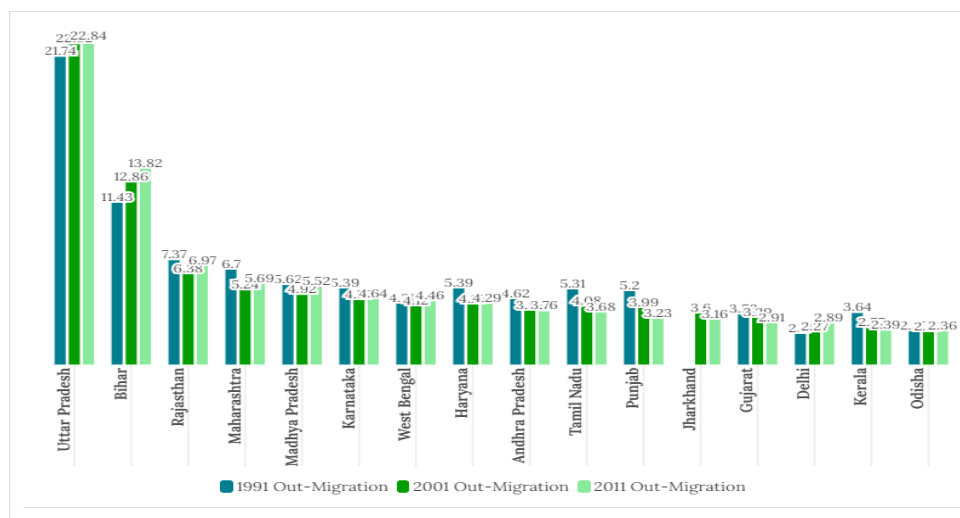


Source: The author's calculation is based on the Census 1991, 2001, 2011.



Figure 2 presents the in-migration trends across Indian states from 1991 to 2011, revealing notable regional shifts. Maharashtra consistently emerged as the leading destination for migrants, with its in-migration rate peaking at 17.83 percent in 2001 before experiencing a slight decline to 16.79 percent in 2011. Similarly, Delhi maintained high in-migration rates, reaching 12.98 percent in 2001, though it decreased marginally to 11.70 percent by 2011. Gujarat demonstrated a positive trend, with its in-migration rate rising from 5.49 percent in 1991 to 7.24 percent in 2011. In contrast, states such as Bihar and West Bengal exhibited significant declines in in-migration, with Bihar's rate dropping from 3.87 percent in 1991 to 2.06 percent in 2011, and West Bengal's rate decreasing from 7.51 percent to 4.40 percent over the same period. Haryana experienced a steady increase from 5.92 percent in 1991 to 6.70 percent in 2011, while Tamil Nadu showed signs of recovery, with its rate rebounding from a low of 1.77 percent in 2001 to 3.05 percent in 2011. Conversely, states such as Kerala and Odisha continued to exhibit low and declining in-migration rates, with Kerala at 1.21 percent and Odisha at 1.58 percent in 2011. This analysis of in-migration trends underscores Maharashtra and Delhi's consistent ability to attract a substantial number of migrants, despite a slight decline in Delhi over the last decade. Gujarat's emergence as a growing destination reflects its economic development and increasing appeal. In contrast, the significant declines in in-migration in Bihar and West Bengal may indicate economic challenges or increased out-migration. The trends in Haryana and Tamil Nadu suggest improved economic opportunities in these states, as evidenced by their rising in-migration rates.

**Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of Out Migration Flow across Major States in India**



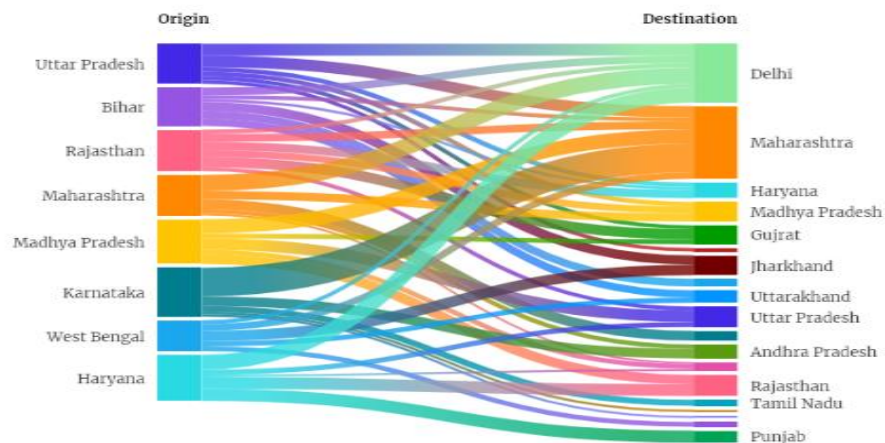
Source: The author's calculation is based on the Census 1991, 2001, 2011.

Figure 3 illustrates the out-migration trends across Indian states from 1991 to 2011, revealing significant patterns over the two decades. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar consistently exhibited the highest out-migration rates, with Uttar Pradesh's rate increasing slightly from 21.74 percent in 1991 to 22.84 percent in 2011, and Bihar's rate rising from 11.43 percent to 13.82 percent during the same period. Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh experienced fluctuations in out-migration, with periods of decline followed by modest increases by 2011. In contrast, states like Tamil Nadu and Punjab saw significant reductions in out-migration, decreasing from 5.31 percent to 3.68 percent and from 5.2 percent to 3.23 percent, respectively. These declines suggest improving conditions and better opportunities within these states. Gujarat and Kerala also demonstrated steady declines in out-migration, indicating their growing attractiveness as destinations rather than places from which people leave. Delhi, while maintaining relatively low out-migration rates, experienced a slight upward trend, increasing from 2.17 percent in 1991 to 2.89 percent in 2011. These trends underscore the shifting socio-economic dynamics within India. The fluctuations in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh suggest mixed economic conditions that have influenced out-migration rates over time.

### Emerging Patterns of Migrants in Major States in India

Stouffer's migration theory (1940) argues that migration is driven more by opportunities along the way than by distance. He suggests that the number of migrants to a destination is proportional to the opportunities there and the obstacles encountered en route, challenging the traditional focus on distance. Stoeckel and Beegle (1966) supported this, noting that high travel costs, difficulties in maintaining connections, and limited information contribute to the inverse relationship between distance and migration. In diverse societies like India, cultural and linguistic differences further complicate long-distance migration, reinforcing established migration streams. Understanding these patterns is essential for researchers and policymakers addressing modern migration challenges.

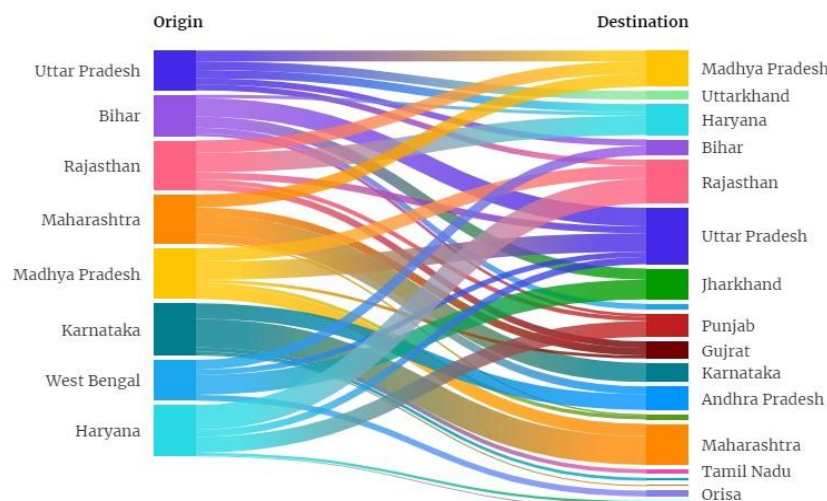
**Figure 4: Total Migration Channels - Key Principles of State Origins and Destinations**



Source: The author's calculation is based on the Census 2011.

Figure 4 illustrates the 2011 Census data on migration patterns in India, shaped by economic opportunities, regional proximity, and cultural ties. Uttar Pradesh is a major origin state, with significant migration to Delhi, Maharashtra, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh for better job prospects. Bihar shows strong migration to Jharkhand, Delhi, and West Bengal, driven by historical and economic connections, with additional flows to Uttarakhand and Maharashtra. Rajasthan's migration is tied to Gujarat, Haryana, and Maharashtra, with flows to Madhya Pradesh and Delhi due to proximity. Maharashtra is both an origin and destination state, with outflows to Delhi and significant migration to Karnataka, reflecting strong economic ties. Madhya Pradesh has substantial out-migration to Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, driven by economic factors, with notable migration to Chhattisgarh and Gujarat, underscoring its regional role. Karnataka primarily sends migrants to Maharashtra, while also migrating to Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu due to cultural ties and proximity. West Bengal's migration to Jharkhand and Maharashtra highlights economic links, while movement to Delhi and Uttarakhand reflects diverse patterns. Haryana's flows to Delhi, Punjab, and Rajasthan reveal interconnected labour markets, with smaller flows to Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh indicating regional economic interactions. These trends show the complex interplay of economic opportunities, regional ties, and historical connections in shaping India's migration landscape. High per capita income in states like Maharashtra and Delhi attracts migrants from poorer states and neighboring regions. However, West Bengal and Karnataka present more nuanced cases. West Bengal shifted from a net in-migrating state in 1991 to a net out-migrating state by 2001, driven by slow income growth, high population density, industrial decline, and low agricultural productivity. In Karnataka, despite rapid per capita income growth, out-migration remains high due to the limited reach of the IT sector and income disparities with neighboring Maharashtra. These factors collectively explain observed migration patterns in these states.

**Figure 5: Distribution of Rural-to-Rural Migration Channel – Origins and Destinations of Key Principles of States in India**

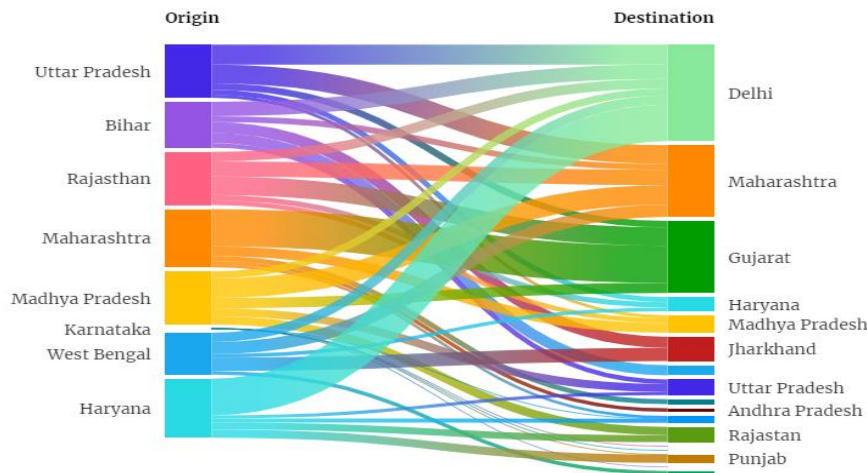


Source: The author's calculation is based on the Census 2011.

Figure 5 from the 2011 Census data provides an overview of rural-to-rural migration in India, highlighting interstate movement patterns driven by proximity, economic opportunities, and cultural ties. Uttar Pradesh shows significant migration to neighboring states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Haryana, indicating that geographical proximity plays a crucial role in migration

decisions due to easier access and similar socio-economic environments. Bihar's rural migrants predominantly move to Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, reflecting cultural and linguistic similarities and shared economic zones. In Rajasthan, a substantial portion of rural migrants head to Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, known for their agricultural sectors, indicating that employment opportunities are a significant pull factor. Haryana's rural migrants primarily move to Rajasthan and Punjab, agriculturally prosperous states, underscoring the influence of economic conditions on migration patterns. Karnataka shows strong migration links with Maharashtra, driven by diverse economic opportunities in India's western and southern regions. West Bengal's migration to Jharkhand and Bihar highlights the importance of cultural and regional ties, with migrants often seeking destinations where social networks are familiar. While focusing on each origin state's top five destination states offers a clear overview of significant migration flows, it may overlook smaller but important patterns to less prominent destinations. This view of rural-to-rural migration in India highlights the interplay of geography, economics, and culture in shaping these movements.

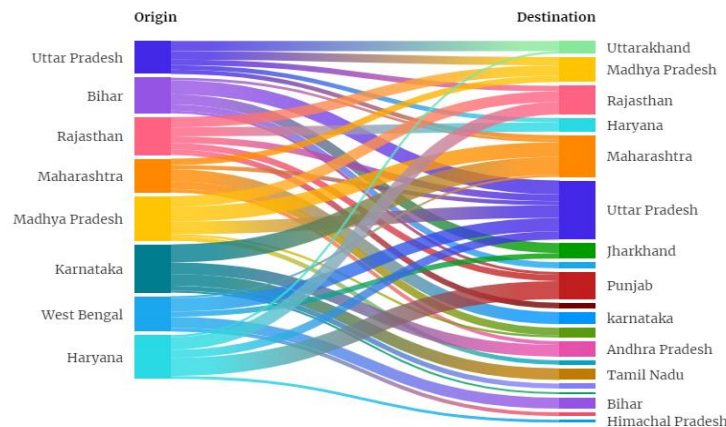
**Figure 6: Distribution of Rural-to-Urban Migration Channel – Origins and Destinations of Key Principles of States in India**



Source: The author's calculation is based on the Census 2011.

Figure 6 highlights rural-to-urban migration patterns in India, primarily driven by poverty, unemployment, and inadequate access to education and services in rural areas. Major urban centers like Delhi and Maharashtra attract significant numbers of migrants, particularly from socio-economically underdeveloped states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, due to the economic opportunities these hubs offer. Rajasthan's migrants primarily move to Gujarat and Maharashtra for industrial jobs, while migrants from Madhya Pradesh largely relocate to Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Rajasthan, indicating strong regional migration trends within Central India. West Bengal's rural migrants move to Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Delhi, driven by regional ties and economic prospects. Haryana's migration flows are closely linked to Delhi and nearby states, influenced by regional connections and economic development in the National Capital Region. Overall, the data underscores the pull of major urban centers for rural populations across India, with regional migration patterns shaped by economic opportunities, historical ties, and the broader socio-economic context. Additionally, southern states experience migration influenced by both local and international factors, with higher wage rates attracting rural migrants to diverse employment sectors.

**Figure 7: Distribution of Urban-to-Rural Migration Channel – Origins and Destinations of Key Principles of States in India**

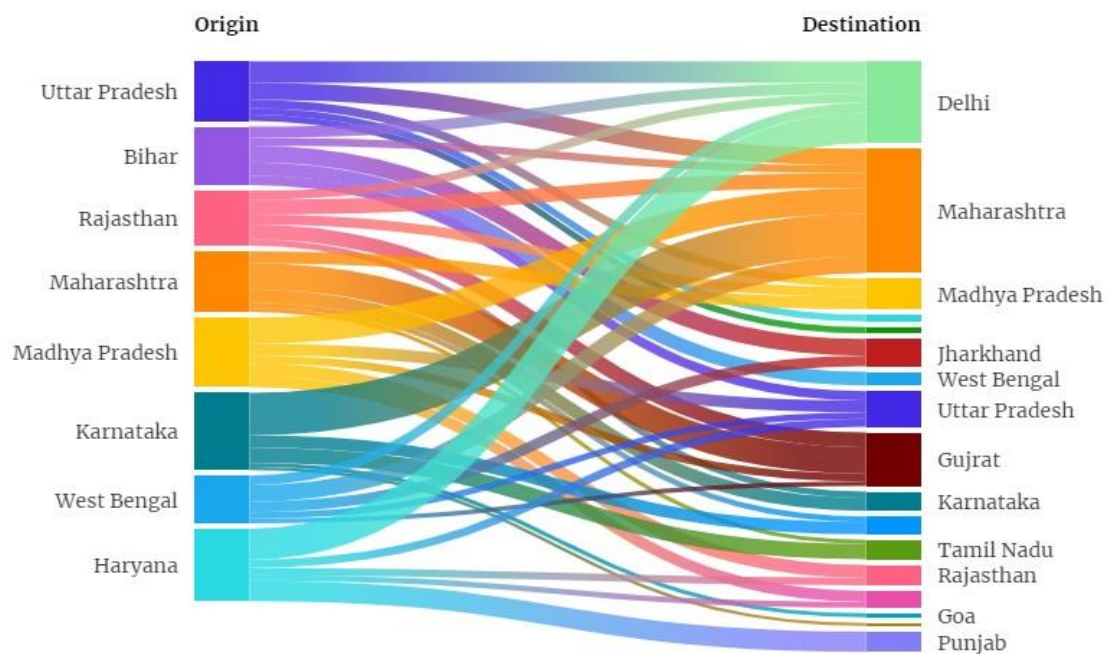


Source: The author's calculation is based on the Census 2011.



Figure 7 reveals the urban-to-rural migration patterns in India, highlighting varying trends across different states. Urban areas, typically known for offering better employment, higher wages, and improved living conditions, sometimes experience outflows as individuals seek alternative benefits in rural settings. In Uttar Pradesh, significant out-migration was directed towards Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, indicating a preference for neighboring regions with favorable rural conditions. Bihar's migrants primarily moved to Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, suggesting regional migration driven by agricultural opportunities or familial ties. Rajasthan saw notable migration to Madhya Pradesh and Haryana, reflecting a preference for areas with similar economic or agricultural environments. Maharashtra experienced substantial rural migration towards Karnataka and Gujarat, indicating a search for opportunities in neighboring states. Madhya Pradesh's outflows were directed mainly towards Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, highlighting economic motivations and regional ties. Karnataka's migrants predominantly moved to Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, influenced by the economic conditions of these neighboring states. West Bengal's migration trends showed movement to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, suggesting strong regional ties. Haryana's migrants primarily relocated to Punjab and Rajasthan, reinforcing strong regional connections within Northern India. The data highlights that rural migration is primarily influenced by geographic proximity, economic opportunities, and social networks. Economic pressures in urban areas, such as high living costs and job instability, drive some individuals to seek more affordable and stable conditions in rural regions. The appeal of a simpler lifestyle, stronger family ties, and opportunities for entrepreneurship or government incentives also draws people to rural areas. Additionally, urban challenges like crime and social isolation motivate individuals to move to rural settings, where they find a more secure and supportive environment. This migration reflects a quest for better living conditions, economic stability, and a reconnection with cultural roots.

**Figure 8: Distribution of Urban-to-Urban Migration Channel - Origins and Destinations of Key Principles of States in India**



Source: The author's calculation is based on the Census 2011.

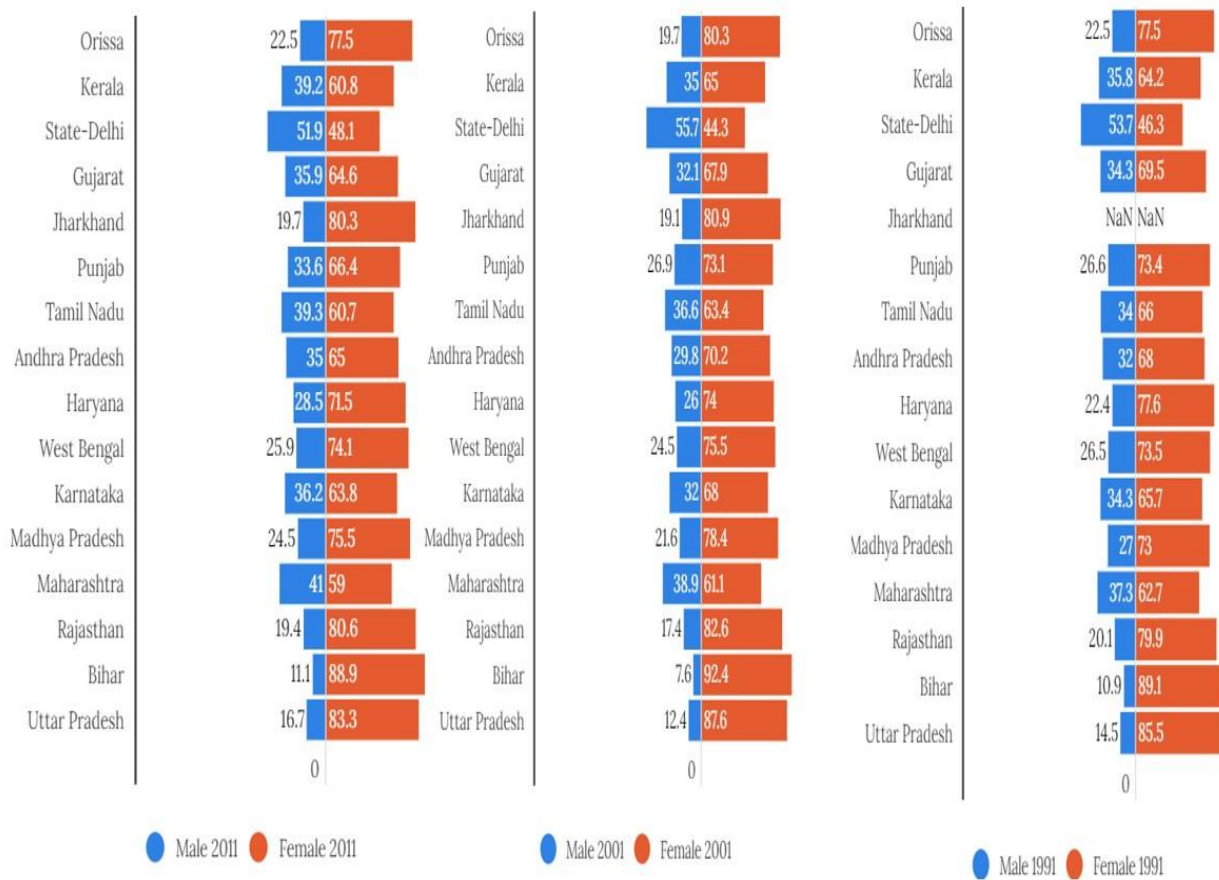
Figure 8 highlights the growing trend of urban-to-urban migration in India, driven by better job prospects and advanced infrastructure in major economic hubs like Delhi and Maharashtra. These states attract significant numbers of migrants from regions such as Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh, underscoring their roles as key economic centers. Migration patterns also reflect strong regional trends, with people often moving between geographically proximate or culturally similar states, such as Bihar to Jharkhand and West Bengal, or Rajasthan to Maharashtra and Gujarat. This suggests that regional proximity and cultural ties significantly influence migration decisions. Additionally, states with strong economic connections, like Maharashtra and Karnataka, experience reciprocal migration flows, reflecting their interdependence. Urban areas in economically vibrant states serve as primary destinations due to superior employment opportunities and higher living standards. State-specific trends show that urban migrants from Haryana predominantly move to Delhi and Punjab, while those from West Bengal prefer Maharashtra and Delhi. Urban-to-urban migration has been increasing significantly and is projected to become the dominant migration stream, driven by job creation in the informal sector within large cities. The rapid expansion of urban areas has triggered increased urbanization, leading to a surge in urban-to-urban migration. For instance, Uttar Pradesh has seen a significant outflow of migrants to Delhi and Maharashtra, marking these states as major urban destinations. As traditional urban centers like Mumbai, Kolkata, and Delhi reach saturation, newer urban areas with more job opportunities in the informal sector are increasingly attracting migrants. This shift from rural-to-urban to urban-to-urban migration reflects changing economic dynamics in India, with workers moving away from agriculture and continuing to drive urban migration trends.



### Gender Migration by State in India

Historically, the economic contributions of women in migration have been significantly underestimated, largely due to the prevailing perception that most women migrate primarily for marriage-related reasons. Traditionally, male migration has been associated with economic pursuits, while female migration has been viewed as secondary, with women seen as accompanying their parents or spouses. This perception is deeply rooted in gender roles that confine women to domestic responsibilities, often limiting their participation in the labour market to home-based work, whether paid or unpaid (Ho, 2006). Additionally, women's economic contributions have been further marginalized due to their lower levels of education and skill development, leading them to be employed in roles traditionally deemed 'feminine' (Banerjee, 2018). However, recent decades have witnessed a transformation in labour market demands and increased educational opportunities for women, enabling greater participation in economic activities beyond domestic confines. This shift is reflected in the evolving roles, patterns, and motivations for female migration, particularly in developing countries. A growing number of women are now migrating for reasons that extend beyond traditional social factors such as marriage, signaling a significant change in the patterns of internal migration and resettlement in these regions.

**Figure 9: Percentage Distribution of Male and Female Migrants across States from 1991 to 2011 in India**



Source: The author's calculation based on Census D series 1991, 2001, 2011.

Figure 9 elucidates gender-specific migration patterns across key states in India, revealing significant insights into the dynamics of female migration. States such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan consistently exhibit a higher percentage of female migrants compared to their male counterparts across all three census years. The proportion of female migration in these states ranges from 80.6 percent to 87.6 percent, underscoring a persistent and marked trend of predominant female migration. Similarly, states including Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Gujarat, Delhi, Kerala, and Odisha also reflect a higher proportion of female migrants, though the magnitude of this disparity varies across different states and census years. The percentage of female migration in these regions generally fluctuates between approximately 59 percent and 80.9 percent, indicating regional variations in gender-specific migration trends. In the state of Jharkhand, there is a notable consistency in the higher percentage of female migration, with percentages ranging from 80.3 percent to 80.9 percent, signifying a sustained trend of greater female mobility within the state. The aggregated data for India reveals that the percentage of female migration has consistently surpassed that of males across all three census years. This trend corresponds with existing literature, which suggests that enhanced educational attainment among women has catalyzed migration driven by aspirations for greater autonomy and improved living standards, thereby challenging traditional societal norms.

**Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Male and Female Migrants by Different Reasons and Motivations in India.**

Reason/States	Female							Male						
	Work/Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved after birth	Moved with household	Others	Work/Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved after birth	Moved with household	Others
Uttar Pradesh	1.46	0.38	0.51	81.66	1.44	7.35	7.21	25.24	1.67	3.26	6.10	8.59	25.06	30.07
Bihar	0.89	0.22	0.38	87.48	1.11	3.32	6.59	16.69	1.29	3.21	10.	9.64	17.84	40.89
Rajasthan	1.62	0.18	0.46	81.63	3.13	8.96	4.01	34.00	1.20	2.98	3.23	17.94	26.54	14.12
Maharashtra	3.72	0.53	1.33	57.14	12.49	16.44	8.35	31.88	1.34	3.38	2.51	28.90	18.61	13.38
Madhya Pradesh	2.29	0.30	0.93	76.57	3.94	10.98	4.99	33.66	1.25	4.06	5.20	16.35	24.66	14.82
Karnataka	3.76	0.44	1.75	61.37	9.93	13.63	9.11	28.80	2.38	4.82	3.68	24.79	18.02	17.51
West Bengal	1.18	0.30	0.40	72.87	5.38	9.30	10.58	17.15	3.85	1.92	3.97	19.32	23.53	30.27
Haryana	2.68	0.25	0.60	71.20	3.31	16.79	5.18	37.27	1.19	1.94	2.89	11.55	30.28	14.88
Andhra Pradesh	3.53	0.47	2.46	61.00	8.31	14.50	9.44	28.33	3.07	5.87	4.80	21.47	19.36	17.09
Tamil Nadu	4.53	0.34	1.81	50.56	12.51	18.12	12.13	25.95	1.24	3.49	4.79	24.23	22.58	17.72
Punjab	2.46	0.33	0.49	65.83	7.28	12.71	10.90	24.80	1.06	1.12	2.83	21.65	20.26	28.28
Jharkhand	1.48	0.21	0.91	81.57	1.65	9.19	4.99	35.94	1.68	4.27	6.87	8.56	25.06	17.63
Gujarat	2.40	0.69	0.83	62.50	8.18	16.59	8.81	29.40	5.75	2.17	2.25	22.06	20.65	17.72
Delhi	0.95	0.10	0.25	30.00	11.92	9.78	6.44	11.04	4.43	2.10	2.25	27.37	29.38	18.97
Kerala	1.67	0.13	0.54	50.88	24.30	16.04	7.97	9.15	0.61	0.87	7.37	47.38	24.24	10.38
Orissa	1.43	0.28	1.79	76.71	2.27	9.55	7.43	22.35	6.10	6.18	6.24	9.73	25.48	23.91
Grand Total	1.49	0.20	0.47	50.00	3.26	8.40	7.10	8.33	0.60	0.73	1.25	4.78	6.73	7.16

Source: The author's calculation is based on the Census 2011.

Table 1 from the 2011 Census provides insights into gender-specific migration patterns across various states in India, highlighting distinct reasons for migration among men and women. In states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan, a significant majority of female migrants 81.66 to 87.48 percent relocate primarily due to marriage, reflecting the strong influence of traditional societal norms. However, in states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, while marriage remains a key driver, a considerable proportion of women 50.56 to 57.14 percent also migrate for work, employment, and education, indicating expanding socio-economic opportunities for women. In states like Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha, migration reasons are more balanced, with a notable percentage of women migrating for both marriage 76.57 to 81.57 percent and employment 2.29 to 3.94 percent. Delhi stands out as an outlier, with lower rates of marriage-related female migration 30.43 to 65.83 percent and higher rates of migration for work and other reasons 0.07 to 11.92 percent, reflecting the city's cosmopolitan nature and diverse economic opportunities. Male migration patterns reveal that in states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana, a significant proportion of men 33.66 to 37.27 percent migrate for work and employment, underscoring the dominance of economic factors. Gujarat is notable for attracting male migrants for business purposes 5.75 percent. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have higher proportions of male migrants 3.49 to 5.83 percent moving for education, while Kerala shows a significant percentage 47.38 percent of male migrants relocating due to marriage. Additionally, across all states, a considerable number of male migrants move for other reasons, such as relocation after birth or with their household, indicating the complex nature of migration motivations. Overall, these findings highlight the intricate interplay of economic, social, and personal factors shaping migration patterns across India, with significant variations between male and female migration drivers.

### Conclusion

This study significantly advances the understanding of interstate migration in India by offering a detailed analysis of migration patterns among the top sixteen states. The findings provide essential insights for the formulation of targeted policies and interventions aimed at addressing the complexities of migration flows and promoting sustainable development across the country. The analysis reveals key trends in migration dynamics, particularly the predominance of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar as major origin states, accounting for over 50 percent of total labour migrants, while Delhi and Maharashtra emerge as primary destinations. The study highlights the role of economic disparities, with migration flows generally directed towards more prosperous regions, and economically disadvantaged states primarily serving as sources of labour outflow. Especially, the period post-1991 witnessed shifts in migration patterns, with states like West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh transitioning from net recipient to net sender

states. A significant driver of migration, particularly after 2001, has been per capita income differentials, with southern states increasingly attracting labour migrants. The study also underscores the importance of short-distance migration among females, driven by traditional village exogamy, and highlights the rise in rural-to-rural migration for both genders. Over the past three decades, there has been a gradual increase in women migrating for employment, business, and educational opportunities, reflecting a shift towards greater economic participation by women. The data also indicates that migration for job-related reasons remains the predominant factor for male interstate migrants, while household relocation emerges as a significant factor for both genders. The correlation between male and female migration rates suggests that women often migrate in association with men, but economic factors continue to be a critical driver of migration trends. The insights from this study are invaluable for policymakers, offering a foundation for developing region-specific policy interventions that manage migration effectively, promote balanced regional development, and optimize labour market dynamics. There is a critical need for policies that safeguard the welfare and rights of migrants while leveraging migration as a catalyst for sustainable development. Ensuring conducive work environments across all regions and implementing comprehensive policies to foster rural employment are essential steps towards mitigating rural-to-urban migration, reducing displacement, and addressing job insecurity.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> The present study uses census data to examine the trends and patterns of internal migration, with a particular focus on the rural-to-urban migration stream. Remarkably, rural-to-rural migration emerges as the dominant migration pattern across all states, with females exhibiting higher mobility than males (Farhana, 2018).

<sup>ii</sup> Srivastava et al. (2020) observes that states receiving migrants typically exhibit low growth rates in the working-age population, contrasting with the higher growth rates seen in states from which migrants originate. Migration is often driven by a combination of “push” and “pull” factors. Economic pressures are a major driver, with individuals, families, and couples migrating from rural to urban areas in search of better employment opportunities (Rao, 2014).

<sup>iii</sup> This shift has led to transformative changes in traditional rural societies, particularly by empowering women. Moreover, studies by Franke (2011) and Sen (2024) have documented that forced migration in response to climate-related stresses can exacerbate the spread of epidemic diseases, illustrating the broader public health implications of migration.

<sup>iv</sup> Earlier migration data indicated a significant female majority among migrants, a trend that may have been influenced by the underreporting of employment-related migration among women (Srivastava & Sasikumar, 2003; Shanthi, 2006; Ghatak, S. 2020).

<sup>v</sup> Please see the states such as labour sending states (origin) 8 names and receiving states (destination) 5 names

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