



# Economic Perspective of Migration in North-East India

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## ABSTRACT

Migration can be linked with various factors. In the context of North East of India, population dynamism is one such factor. There has been a high growth rate of population in these regions, of over 45 million. It is characterized by underdeveloped agrarian economy with a very backward industrial sector and on the other hand a very inflated service sector. Even so, agriculture remains the backbone of the economy and is dominated by shifting cultivation. Migration may take place within the same district, between rural and urban; within the same state, between rural and rural or urban and urban; another state or even another country. There are numerous reasons why people migrate from their own homes, a search for employment or better employment. In this research paper, we will take a glimpse of the migration story and relate it with employment at different education level and different status of employed workforce. We will look at only one time period using the NSS 55<sup>th</sup> round and analyze the patterns of migration in North East Region. We use binary logistic regression to find out the likelihood or probability ratio of the migration due to employment related reasons at different education level, different status of workers and different social groups.

Keywords: Education, Employment, Migration, North East India, Rural, Urban

## INTRODUCTION

This region comprises of the seven sisters (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura) and the Himalayan state of Sikkim. One of the most important resources of the region is its human resources. It is also rich in natural resources. The region is also characterized by high unemployment, with many youth resorting to self-employment. Given this background, we will try to link migration with employment using the NSS data. Many researches on family migration literature assume that the net family benefits motivate the migration of a family, rather than net personal benefits (Lee, Roseman 1986). We can come up with various theories as to why people migrate. Cooke and Bailey talks about how Mohlo<sup>1</sup> advocated that the usual starting point for empirical studies of family migration is the human capital of migration. They also mentioned that Sandell<sup>2</sup> (1977) extended the human capital model of migration to the context of nuclear family with two wage earners. Migration can be linked with various factors. In the context of North East Region, population dynamism is one such factor.

Most rural workers are self-employed, whether it is on their own farms or in small enterprises. Most rural work is poorly rewarded and the pay is low. Rural work especially farming is often arduous, sometimes monotonous and frequently hazardous. Given these problems, it is not

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<sup>1</sup>Mohlo, I, 1986, Theories of migration : a review, Scottish journal of political economy, 33:396-419.

<sup>2</sup> Sandell, S.H, 1977, Women and economics of family migration, Review of economics and statistics, 59: 406-14.

surprising that many rural workers migrate to try and find better paid jobs, often in urban areas or manufacturing industries. Improvements in communications and transport have created conditions for large scale internal movement of people at unprecedented levels.

The question of employment is one of the most important issues of development. In North Eastern States of India, where growth of the economy is not very dynamic, unemployment is a very common tale. With constant interruptions such as insurgency, political uncertainties, lack of industrial growth and economical backwardness, employment remains a sensitive issue for the region. The main objectives of this study are to take a glimpse at the migration story in North East Region and relate it with employment and education level.

## METHODOLOGY

To analyze the pattern of migration among the various types of workforce we use the tabulated NSS 55<sup>th</sup> round data. To study the effect of education and migration, logistic regression will be used to calculate the probability ratio or the likelihood of certain occurrences. Since migration is not included in the 61<sup>st</sup> EUS round, we will use the 55<sup>th</sup> round for running the logistic regression for both education and migration. The same is conducted to study employment related migration. A step wise demonstration is given along with the empirical findings.

## RESULTS

In this section we will illustrate the empirical findings for migration using the NSS 55<sup>th</sup> round. The main objective is to look at employment related migration at different education level and different status of employed workforce. We use Binary Logistic Regression to find out the likelihood or probability ratio of the migration due to employment related reasons at different education level and different status of workers. What can be asserted from the study of the data is that as one attains higher education level, there is a higher probability ratio of migration happening. There are various reasons for this. The Main push factor leading to migration of North East people is due to lack of educational infrastructure with limited choice of education, followed by unemployment opportunities in the region which are badly affected by socio-political unrest and communal conflict among heterogeneous communities of the region. It is widely understood that despite a high literacy rate, the region is characterized by a visible lack of adequate avenues for higher or technical education or vocational training. It is quite difficult to address whether individuals who migrated to another state for purpose of education return to their original place of residence due to limitation of data.

Another issue with respect to employment is the nature of work. In north-eastern states and region it is found that there has been an increase in the share of self-employment and corresponding decline in casual and regular salaried employment. Thus, there is growing trend of casual and regular salaried employment being converted into self-employment. If we look at the likelihood of migration among these different types of workers, we can see that the likelihood of migration among the casual wage earners is higher than self employed workers. What can be postulated is that it is due to the non availability of paid jobs that people are shifting towards different forms of self employment or are migrating. We have generated the following table after running the regression and the steps and result are given below.

### *1. Migration-Education level*

Migration for employment purpose is more common among those with higher education level. As education level keeps increasing, the likelihood of migration for employment keeps going up as compared to those without education as can be seen from below.

Dependent Variable: Migration

Independent: Education level\*-

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1(a) edu_rec			66528.328	4	.000	
Group 2	.281	.005	2809.632	1	.000	1.325
Group 3	.534	.005	10001.461	1	.000	1.706
Group 4	1.010	.008	14823.407	1	.000	2.746
Group 5	1.848	.008	58422.389	1	.000	6.344
Constant						
	-1.609	.002	449823.906	1	.000	.200

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: edu\_rec.

Step1: We have created dummy variables for migration as 1 and 0.

1-migrated due to employment

0- migrated due to other reasons

Other reasons include studies, marriage, political reasons, health etc.

Step 2: We then reclassify education into 5 groups, all the way from illiterates to education up to graduate and above as follows:

Group 1: Illiterates

Group 2: Primary

Group 3: Secondary

Group 4: Higher Secondary

Group 5: Graduate and above

We will keep Group 1 or illiterates as the reference with which probability ratio is looked at.

Step 3: We run a binary logistic regression, keeping migration as dependent variable and education as the independent variable. This is done in order to see the education category-wise relation keeping illiterate as the contrast variable or reference variable.

Step 4: Interpretation of the result:

- The likelihood or the probability ratio of people who have migrated for employment purpose among Group 2 i.e. education up to primary is 1.3 times as that of illiterates.
- The likelihood or the probability ratio of people who have migrated for employment purpose among Group 3 i.e. secondary is 1.7 times as that of illiterates.
- The likelihood or the probability ratio of people who have migrated for employment purpose among Group 4 or higher secondary is 2.7 times as that of illiterates.
- The likelihood or the probability ratio of people who have migrated for employment purpose among Group 5 or graduates or above category is 6.3 times as that of illiterates.

2 Migration-Workforce participation rates

Dependent Variable: Migration

Independent: Status of Employment

## RESULT 2

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1(a)	upss_rec2			56873.352	3	.000	
	Group 2(RWE)	.156	.021	56.186	1	.000	1.169
	Group 3(CWL)	1.494	.021	5219.791	1	.000	4.457
	Group 4(Unem)	.604	.021	843.623	1	.000	1.830
	Constant	-1.500	.020	5449.109	1	.000	.223

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: upss\_rec22.

Dummy variables: migration

1-migrated due to employment

0- migrated due to other reasons

Reclassification of independent variable:

Group 1: Self-employed workers

Group 2: Regular wage employees

Group 3: Casual Wage Labours

Group 4: Unemployed labours

Contrast Variable/Reference variable: Group 1(Self-employed workers)

Objective: To see the labour force classification wise relation with migration due to employment reasons.

Interpretation of the result:

- The likelihood or the probability ratio of people who have migrated for employment purpose among Group 2 i.e. regular wage employees is 1.1 times as that of self-employed workers.
- The likelihood of people who have migrated for employment purpose among Group 3 i.e. casual wage labours is 4.4 times as that of self-employed workers.
- The likelihood of people who have migrated for employment purpose among Group 4 or unemployed labours is 1.8 times as that of self-employed workers.

Therefore, what we can conclude from this empirical study is that as the education level goes up, the likelihood of employment related migration increases. It is highest in the case of graduates and above compared to illiterates. Looking at the classification of workers, compared to self-employed, casual labours are most likely to migrate due to employment reasons.

### DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRATION

In order to understand the structural composition of migrating people, we will look at the percentage distribution of people with different status at the time of migration. The percentage distribution of migration according to the status of the migrating people is reported in Table 1. Here, we have classified the status into five groups, self-employed workers, regular wage employees, casual wage earners, unemployed and others, consisting of the rest of the people who are not in the labour force. If we look at the data for rural males, for most of the states in the NE, the highest proportion of workers migrating are the self-employed workers, the share of Meghalaya being the highest at 69.76%. Even among the rural females, the highest proportion of migration (among the labour force) is seen in the case of self-employed workers.

In the urban sector, this is not the same. For most of the states, migration is highest among the regular wage employees for both males and females. Among the urban males, the proportion of casual wage labour migration is also seemingly high but quite nominal for females in both the sectors.

<b>Percentage distribution of migration according to status (55th round)</b>							
<b>Sector</b>	<b>States</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>RWE</b>	<b>CW</b>	<b>UNEM</b>	<b>Others</b>	
<b>Rural Male</b>	<b>Arunachal Pradesh</b>	9.23	13.63	3.75	0	73.39	
	<b>Assam</b>	15.84	11.05	12.95	14.21	45.95	
	<b>Manipur</b>	54.54	0.7	3.14	0	41.62	
	<b>Meghalaya</b>	69.76	2.99	5.99	5.72	15.54	
	<b>Mizoram</b>	21.07	3.13	0	10.62	65.18	
	<b>Nagaland</b>	23.01	16.51	0.91	11.29	48.28	
	<b>Sikkim</b>	13.47	13.13	7.89	2.74	62.77	
	<b>Tripura</b>	29.28	7.27	22.82	0.77	39.86	
	<b>NER</b>	19.76	10.69	12.7	10.5	46.35	
	<b>Rural Female</b>	<b>Arunachal Pradesh</b>	6.08	0	0	0	93.92
<b>Assam</b>		0.71	1.89	6.45	2.5	88.45	
<b>Manipur</b>		0	18.81	0	0	81.19	
<b>Mizoram</b>		39.03	0	0	0	60.97	
<b>Nagaland</b>		14.1	3.6	0	0.86	81.44	
<b>Sikkim</b>		7.94	2.25	0.83	0.86	88.12	
<b>Tripura</b>		3.1	0.38	0.36	0.46	95.7	
<b>NER</b>		1.66	1.8	5.34	2.15	89.05	
<b>Urban Male</b>		<b>Arunachal Pradesh</b>	0	10.7	0	52.07	37.23
		<b>Assam</b>	8.76	17.87	7.88	13.4	52.09
	<b>Manipur</b>	36.4	15.06	1.23	5.29	42.02	
	<b>Meghalaya</b>	12.13	22.2	13.63	8.03	44.01	
	<b>Mizoram</b>	0	17.45	15.51	6.78	60.26	
	<b>Nagaland</b>	14.58	24.34	1.84	7.1	52.14	
	<b>Sikkim</b>	21.55	20.72	0.51	6.91	50.31	
	<b>Tripura</b>	16.9	31.55	4.31	10.32	36.92	
	<b>NER</b>	11.88	20.9	5.67	11.04	50.51	
	<b>Urban Female</b>	<b>Arunachal Pradesh</b>	0	13.44	0	0	86.56
<b>Assam</b>		1.3	2.41	0.23	9.69	86.37	
<b>Manipur</b>		7.08	9.17	9.6	0	74.15	
<b>Meghalaya</b>		2.15	6.36	0	0	91.49	
<b>Mizoram</b>		8.06	8.75	27.08	0	56.11	
<b>Nagaland</b>		8.18	11.91	0	3.17	76.74	
<b>Sikkim</b>		1.6	6.59	0	2.72	89.09	
<b>Tripura</b>		1.03	5.18	0.52	1.63	91.64	
<b>NER</b>		2.49	4.49	0.35	7.46	85.21	

source: tabulations made from NSS 55th unit level- EUS

Migration in the case of unemployed is quite lofty among the males of both the sectors. In Assam, this proportion is highest of all the other states at 14.21% of rural males and in the case of urban males, it is highest for Arunachal Pradesh at 52.07%. For the females, migration among the unemployed is ostensibly low.

Percentage distribution of migration according to status (NSS 55th round)

- Status is classified into 5 groups: Self Employed Workers, regular wage employees, casual wage earners, unemployed and others
- It is calculated for both rural and urban for both male and female

Findings

- Among rural males, the highest proportion of workers migrating are the self-employed, the share being highest in Meghalaya at 69.7%
- In the urban sector, migration is highest among the regular wage employees
- In the case of unemployed, migration is quite high among the males in both the sectors. For females, migration among the unemployed is ostensibly low.
- Another important finding from the data analysis is that migration among female workers is low in NER compared to all India level.

*Reasons for migration according to NSS*

Of late labour migration is getting feminized especially in developing countries (U.N, 2004). K.Shanthi has illustrated how Trade liberalization had far reaching consequences on the labour market. While liberalization has brought about various changes which has had favorable impact on the highly skilled and educated manpower, unskilled uneducated casual labour-force faces an increasingly competitive labour market for a comparatively low wage with less desirable working conditions<sup>3</sup>. It is mentioned how in this regard, women face a much more challenging situation in the labour market with the changing scenario. However, in India, women are very much treated as secondary earners with a very low rate of employment related migration among them. K.Shanta has pointed out that in India when surveys are conducted the respondents are required to give only one reason for migration and in the case of women invariably the reason for migration is identified with marriage.

In this next section, we have tabulated the various reasons for migration (that is reasons for leaving the last place of residence) into three broad spectrums, of ‘work related’, ‘studies’ and ‘others’ which is shown in the following Charts. The reasons for migration are shown in the Charts below. Work related migration is highest among urban males with half of migration taking place due to work related reasons. Even in the case of rural area, work related migration among male is 30.52% which is quite high. This however is not the case among female migration especially rural sector where it is only 1.33%.

- Work related: 1. in search of job 2. in search of better job 3. to take up job/better job 4. transfer of service 5. proximity to place of work
- Studies
- Others

Chart 1

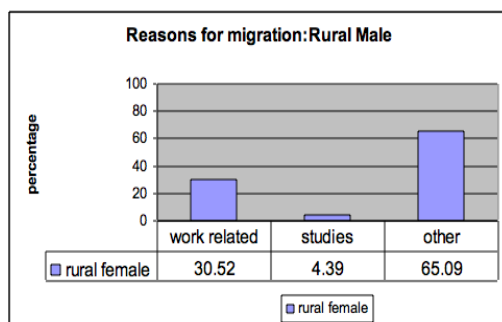


Chart 3

Chart 2

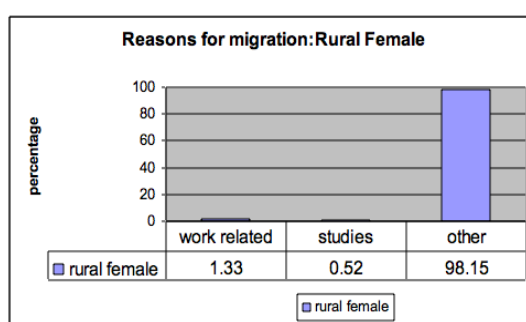
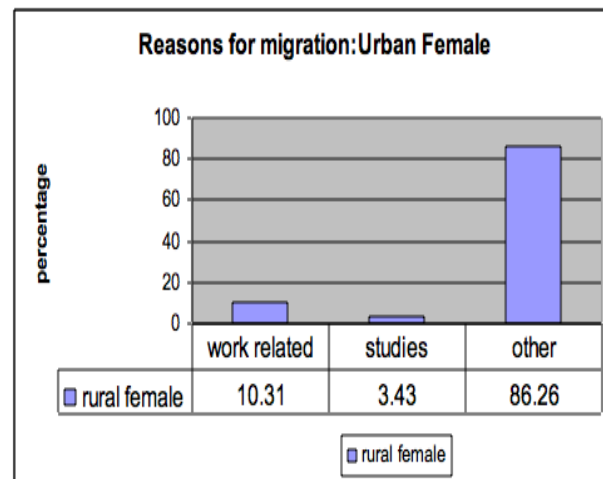
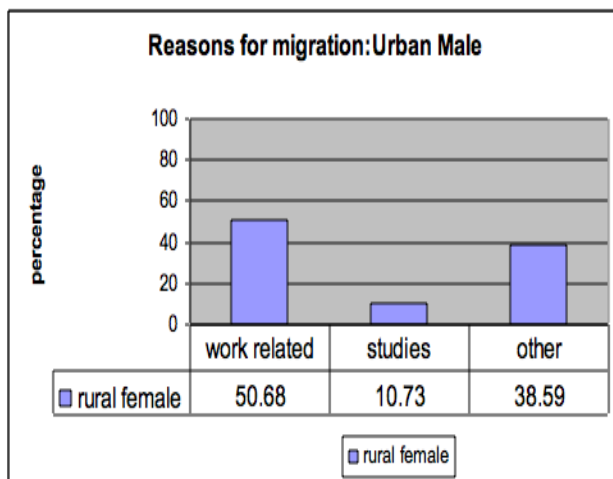


Chart 4

<sup>3</sup>Shanthi,K, Female labour migration in India: Insights from NSSO data, Working paper 4/2006, Madras school of economics.



Migration which is employment related is quite high among males for both the sectors. However, among the females, this rate is not very notable in the rural sector, except Manipur with 16.42% of female migration being work related. This can be seen from table....The highest work related migration is seen among the urban males in most of the states. Arunachal Pradesh consists of the highest at 68.19% and Tripura having the lowest at 29.1%.

The reason for migration which is work related is elaborated further into more detailed reasons: 1-in search of job, 2- in search of better job, 3- to take up job/better job, 4- transfer of service, 5- Proximity to place of work. The percentage distribution of the work related migration in different North East States can be seen from the table below.

## DISCUSSION

As we can see from the above data, one of the reasons for migration apart from employment is education. There is a lack of education infrastructure and very limited choice of education which calls for huge investments in these areas. The reason for increase in migration as the education level goes up hence, can be due to the desire to pursue higher education elsewhere or expectation of getting a better job that suits their education level. We also have seen from some literature review that labour migration is getting feminized especially in developing countries. But this is not so in North East Region. This brings forth an important area for discussion. It could be asserted that there is bias in the questionnaires for female respondents which leads to the belief that their reasons for migration is not related to employment.

## CONCLUSION

In many Backward Hill areas, not just the north east, the adult male members out migrate in large numbers and the members of the family left behind, mostly women and children and the old and the infirm, have very little time or energy to spare for subsidiary gainful occupations, being almost wholly engaged in the day-to-day fight for survival.

The majority of the people in the hill areas are living at the subsistence level and, therefore, there is an urgent need to raise the productive capacity of the economy by encouraging income generating activities like horticulture, animal husbandry, social forestry, tourism, etc. Then there is the problem of out migration of adult males in search of employment outside imposing a heavy burden on women. In order to slow the progress of out-migration, generation of gainful employment locally has to receive a high priority.

<b>Percentage distribution of migration : Employment related reasons</b>							
<b>Sector</b>	<b>States</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>Rural Male</b>	<b>Arunachal Pradesh</b>	0	20.29	0	79.71	0	
	<b>Assam</b>	25.94	33.73	21.81	13.72	4.8	
	<b>Manipur</b>	82.02	17.98	0	0	0	
	<b>Meghalaya</b>	45.27	54.73	0	0	0	
	<b>Mizoram</b>	41.04	0	58.96	0	0	
	<b>Nagaland</b>	37.8	34.14	13.76	10.75	3.55	
	<b>Sikkim</b>	33.08	24.41	16.17	24.71	1.63	
	<b>Tripura</b>	1.18	31.53	12.23	34.99	20.07	
	<b>NER</b>	26.79	32.58	19.69	15.93	5.01	
	<b>Rural Female</b>	<b>Arunachal Pradesh</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Assam</b>		4.08	2.15	28.16	51.37	14.24	
<b>Manipur</b>		33.52	0	66.48	0	0	
<b>Mizoram</b>		0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Nagaland</b>		0	17.9	34.87	19.29	27.94	
<b>Sikkim</b>		19.88	18.35	28.04	33.73	0	
<b>Tripura</b>		0	27.58	28.85	43.57	0	
<b>NER</b>		5.6	8.76	29.83	44.49	11.32	
<b>Urban Male</b>		<b>Arunachal Pradesh</b>	28.66	0	55.02	16.32	0
		<b>Assam</b>	35.88	15.32	25.04	20.26	3.5
	<b>Manipur</b>	13.66	42.72	7.86	30.38	5.38	
	<b>Meghalaya</b>	50.64	15.68	12.16	21.52	0	
	<b>Mizoram</b>	0	47.03	0	52.97	0	
	<b>Nagaland</b>	36.22	19.7	11.79	30.39	1.9	
	<b>Sikkim</b>	34.43	26.77	16.1	15.8	6.9	
	<b>Tripura</b>	20.93	7.09	17.66	52.66	1.66	
	<b>NER</b>	35.26	16.7	21.15	23.72	3.17	
	<b>Urban Female</b>	<b>Arunachal Pradesh</b>	45.23	0	14.52	40.25	0
<b>Assam</b>		73.53	2	16.42	5.4	2.65	
<b>Manipur</b>		100	0	0	0	0	
<b>Meghalaya</b>		0	0	0	100	0	
<b>Mizoram</b>		0	0	0	100	0	
<b>Nagaland</b>		26.41	11.26	18.06	41.28	2.99	
<b>Sikkim</b>		62.74	0	35.48	1.78	0	
<b>Tripura</b>		38.64	0	11.67	49.69	0	
<b>NER</b>		58.48	3.96	16.67	18.55	2.34	

source: tabulations made from NSS 55th unit level- EUS

Migration among female workers is lowest compared to the All India level where migration of female workers is higher. Work related migration is hence very low among the females in the NER. What is quite clear from the study of migration is that the likelihood of work related migration increases as the education level of the worker gets higher, that is, compared to illiterates, and the probability ratio of migration for a graduate is higher. One impression that we get from this secondary data on migration rates is that it may not adequately reveal the actual status of increasing trend of migration from North Eastern states as compared to rest of the regions of the country. However, an analysis of the reasons behind migration suggest that migration for studies and employment assume much more significance in the case of north eastern states than rest of India.

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