



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Out – Migration In Uttarakhand

Diksha Sah

Research Scholar

Government Post Graduate College

Ranikhet

Dr. Bushra Mateen

Assistant Professor

Government Degree College

Haldwani

ABSTRACT

Like several other regions in the world, out-migration has become a worrying trend for rural and hilly areas of the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand in India; this has resulted in village out-migration, agricultural decline, and increased pressure on urban centers. The research indicates different infrastructural challenges coupled with the environment to be the main factors influencing the resident's decision to migrate. From a policy perspective, enhancing educational and healthcare services, along with other local economy spending aimed at reducing out-migration, will help in curbing the problem. Additionally, this research also indicates out-migration to be influenced mainly by employment, educational, and healthcare opportunities, requiring an integrated regional perspective toward managing migration.

Keywords: Uttarakhand, Out-Migration, Hilly Regions

Introduction

Uttarakhand, established in 2000, is characterized by its rugged terrain, with a large share of its population living in remote, rural, and mountainous regions. Although the state boasts an immense cultural heritage and scenic landscapes, it faces severe out-migration, particularly from hilly districts such as Pithoragarh, Chamoli, Uttarkashi, Almora, and Rudrapur. This exodus has led to the emergence of 'ghost villages'—abandoned settlements where only elderly residents remain due to the lack of essential resources and opportunities. More than 80% of Uttarakhand's rural population resides in its hilly districts, where development is hindered by challenging geography and scattered settlements. Since the state's formation, out-migration has become a major demographic shift in certain districts, while others experience sluggish growth. Census data reveals stark contrasts: between 2001 and 2011, the rural population declined by 7%, whereas urban areas saw a 35% increase, far exceeding the state's average growth rate of 17%. Such migration trends have profound economic, social, and political implications, demanding urgent policy intervention. A key issue plaguing Uttarakhand is internal migration from rural to urban areas. Most mountainous regions exhibit stagnant or declining population growth, as evidenced by 2001-2011 census figures. This demographic shift underscores the need for targeted strategies to reverse migration and revitalize rural economies.

Causes of Out-Migration

Economic Factors

- **Limited Job Openings:** Agriculture is the major economic activity in the rural areas, however, decreasing farmland productivity caused by land fragmentation and climate change, employment outlets have been eliminated.
- **Industrialization:** Unlikely on plains (Dehradun, Haridwar) and hilly areas are devoid of industries requiring people to shift to metros like Delhi, Mumbai, Chandigarh etc.
- **Low Wages and Seasonal Employment:** Many jobs available (tourism, small-scale agriculture, etc) are seasonal and low-wage.

Social and Infrastructure Features

- **Lack of Good Health and Education:** Remote villages do not have good schools or hospitals, and families are forced to move to towns.
- **Poor Connectivity and Transport:** Poor roads and pitiful public transport make everyday life so difficult.
- **Missing Facilities:** Electricity, water and internet connections are not available at many villages.

Environmental Factors

- **Delicate Ecosystem and Natural Calamities:** Periodic landslides, floods, and earthquakes make life insecure there.
- **Reduction in the Viability of Agriculture:** Productivity of farming has declined because of soil erosion and water scarcity.

Impacts of Out-Migration

Changes in Demographics

- **Ageing Population:** As residents in the 15-35 age cohort depart, the number of dependent older people is increasing.
- **Gender Issues:** For most, gendered migration means leaving behind women to perform heavier work.

Economic Impacts

- **Loss of Agricultural Labor:** Less labor results in lands being abandoned and producing increasingly less.
- **Increase in Remittance Dependency:** Many households have become reliant on remittances for food and transportation.

Social and Cultural Impact

Destruction of Traditional Communities: Depopulation due to migration erodes traditional cultural practices, fostering more isolation and individualism, and leading to a loss of field-based traditional leadership and governance.

- **Mental Well-Being Crisis:** Isolation experienced by older individuals and abandoned family members results in greater psychological malaise than usual, as people become disconnected from family and friends.

Environmental Impacts

- **Abandoned Land:** As land is left uncultivated and human activity decreases, there will be an increase in a variety of problems in soils and a greater potential for wildfires.
- **Density Changes in Wildlife:** A reduced human population means more wildlife in abandoned areas and villages.

Objectives

1. To examine the shifts and patterns of out-migration in Uttarakhand.
2. To assess the socio-economic and environmental consequences of migration.
3. To give suggestions and recommendations.

Literature Review

Pokhariya and Jindal (2022), in their study *"Effect of Migration on the Migrated People of Uttarakhand,"* examine migration trends in the Garhwal and Kumaon regions. Their findings indicate that scarcity of basic necessities and limited employment opportunities are the primary drivers of migration. The study reveals that Garhwal experiences higher migration rates than Kumaon, with a significant trend of male-dominated migration, particularly among married individuals aged 21–30 years. Despite the challenges, the research highlights positive outcomes for migrants, including improved living standards, better financial access, increased savings, and enhanced entrepreneurial opportunities, contributing to their socio-economic upliftment.

Sati (2020), in *"Out-migration in Uttarakhand Himalaya: Its Types, Reasons, and Consequences,"* analyzes migration patterns in Pauri, Almora, and Tehri districts, where over 10% of the population migrated post-2011. The study identifies unemployment as the leading cause, accounting for 50% of migration cases. The research also categorizes migration destinations: 35.69% moved to other districts within Uttarakhand, 28.72% migrated outside the state, 19.46% relocated to nearby towns, 15.18% shifted to district headquarters, and 0.96% migrated abroad. Sati emphasizes that improving rural infrastructure, education, and agricultural technology could help reduce out-migration.

Lehar Rana and Neha Barodia (2024), in *"The Issue of Out-Migration in Uttarakhand,"** analyze census data (2001–2011) showing a 7% decline in rural population alongside a 35% urban growth, underscoring the severity of out-migration. Their research identifies lack of livelihood options as the primary driver and

suggests strengthening the local economy through primary sectors, education, and healthcare to curb migration.

Sharma and Mishra (2020), in *"Determinants of Rural-Urban Migration in India: A Review of Empirical Evidence,"* highlight the gendered challenges faced by migrant women, including poor housing, social exclusion, and weak support systems. They advocate for gender-sensitive policies to address structural barriers and improve socio-economic security for female migrants.

Tulika Uniyal Verma (2024), in *"Case Study on Migrated Women Employment from Rural to Urban Areas in Uttarakhand,"* explores the socio-economic factors influencing female migration. Using qualitative (interviews, focus groups) and quantitative (secondary data) methods, the study finds that lack of jobs, low agricultural productivity, and aspirations for better livelihoods drive rural women to urban areas. It also identifies gender role shifts, social networks, and education policies as key influencers. However, migrant women face challenges such as limited education access and inadequate support networks.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and analytical research design based entirely on secondary data to investigate migration patterns, underlying causes, and socio-economic impacts in Uttarakhand. The research utilizes three primary data sources: (1) Government reports, including the Census of India (2001 and 2011), the Uttarakhand Economic Survey (2022–23), and policy documents from NITI Aayog; (2) Academic research, comprising peer-reviewed journal articles and working papers focused on migration in the region; and (3) Institutional reports, such as those published by the Uttarakhand Migration Commission (2017), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

Table 1: District-wise Migration Trends and Socio-Economic Indicators in Uttarakhand (Based on 2011 Census & Government Reports)

District	Population (lakh 2011)	Decadal Growth Rate (2001-2011, %)	Urban Population (%)	Migration Rate (Outflow %)	Key Migration Drivers
Almora	6.22	-1.51 (Decline)	10.02	12.5%	Unemployment Poor Education
Bageshwar	2.59	-2.30 (Decline)	3.50	10.8%	Low Agriculture Yield
Chamoli	3.91	1.98 (Slow Growth)	15.11	9.2%	Natural Disasters
Pithoragarh	4.86	-0.75 (Decline)	14.31	11.3%	Lack of Industries
Pauri	6.86	-3.20 (Sharp Decline)	16.41	15.6%	Poor and Connectivity
Tehri	6.16	0.45 (Stagnant)	11.37	13.1%	Seasonal Employment

Uttarkashi	3.29	1.25 (Slow Growth)	7.35	8.9%	Healthcare Shortage
Dehradun	16.99	32.48 (High Growth)	55.90	In-Migration Hub	Job Opportunities
Haridwar	19.20	30.63 (High Growth)	33.77	In-Migration Hub	Industrialization
Udhamsingh Nagar	16.48	28.45 (High Growth)	35.58		

Source: (Based on 2011 Census & Government Reports)

The table highlights in contrasts of migration trends and socio-economic indicators across Uttarakhand's districts. Hilly districts like Almora, Bageshwar, and Pauri show population decline (-1.51% to -3.20%) and high out-migration (10.8%-15.6%) due to unemployment, poor infrastructure, and low agricultural yields. In contrast, plains districts like Dehradun and Haridwar exhibit high growth (30%+) and in-migration, driven by urbanization, industries, and job opportunities. Natural disasters (Chamoli) and healthcare shortages (Uttarkashi) further exacerbate out-migration in remote areas. The data reflects a regional divide, with underdeveloped hills losing population to economically dynamic plains.

Table 2: Migration Status: Individual

Area N		Resident		Daily Commuters		Short-term migration		Long-term migration		Total	
		%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
RURAL	Hill	24618	89.1	57	0.2	262	0.9	2695	9.8	27632	100
	Plain	5796	98.8	4	0.1	30	0.5	37	0.6	5867	100
	Total	30414	90.8	61	0.2	292	0.9	2732	8.2	33499	100
URBAN	Hill	5365	95.9	60	0.1	37	0.7	189	3.4	5597	100
	Plain	3916	98.4	1	0.0	9	0.2	52	1.3	3978	100
	Total	9281	96.9	7	0.1	46	0.5	241	2.5	9575	100
TOTAL	Hill	29983	90.2	63	0.2	299	0.9	2884	8.7	33229	100
	Plain	9712	98.6	5	0.1	39	0.4	89	0.9	9845	100
	Total	39695	92.2	68	0.2	338	0.8	2973	6.9	43074	100

Source: HDR Survey, 2017

This table shows that inter-district variations in the proportion of short-term and long-term migrants in Uttarakhand are more important for long-term migration. For most of the districts of the state, long-term rural out-migration is higher than urban out-migration. In Rudraprayag district, there is the highest proportion of out-migration population in both areas, that is rural (13.9%) and urban (6.6%). And districts like Almora, Chamoli, Pithoragarh, and Champawat are the other hill districts that are migrating out to urban areas.

Conclusion

Out-migration has become a common problem in Uttarakhand. A vast numbers of people, including the youth, are migrating from the state to gain economic stability, which causes major changes in socio-economic factors. In various areas, only women and old age people are left with a minimum amount of necessities. Unemployment is the major reason for out-migration which leads to depopulation in rural areas due to which the farming structure of rural areas is affected. Using a mix of policy interference, infrastructure development, and livelihood diversification is important to counter migration trends and protect sustainable growth. The government and people of Uttarakhand should take various steps to minimize out-migration. The government should provide a good education system and employment opportunities that can be a strong tool that limits

the youth from out-migration for job and education. Modern technological advancements can also generate employment opportunities by enhancing the yield of crops in the agricultural sector. But recently in migration was also observed in many villages. Most of the people are returning from urban areas to rural areas and are adapting entrepreneurial skills by running their own business. But the number of people returning is very less.

Recommendations

1. Encouraging the growth of Agriculture-Based Industries: By promoting food processing, organic farming, and horticulture, many employment opportunities could be generated, and out-migration can be reduced.
2. Enhancing Tourism Infrastructure: Developing eco-tourism, homestays, and adventure tourism boosts employment.
3. Improve Education Systems and Healthcare: By establishing better schools and hospitals in rural areas, out-migration could be minimized.
4. Strengthening Digital Connectivity: By expanding internet access to enable remote work opportunities.
5. Adapting Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure: Build climate-adaptive housing and roads to reduce environmental risks so that people of Uttarakhand do not face any problem, and out migration can be controlled.

References

01. https://www.uttarakhandpalayanayog.com/pdf/Palayan%20Ayog%20Report_English.pdf
02. NITI Aayog studies, academic papers, and government documents as per standard research formatting
03. Rana Lehar and Barodia Neha (2024), THE ISSUE OF OUT-MIGRATION IN UTTARAKHAND Shodh Samarth- Research Journal of Commerce, Management & Economics 1(1),150-159
04. En.wikipedia.com
05. Census of India (2011), New Delhi
06. Uttarakhandtourism.gov.in/
07. Migration Commission Report (2018) by Migration Commission.
08. Sharma, A., & Mishra, N. (2020). Determinants of Rural-Urban Migration in India: A Review of Empirical Evidence. Indian Journal of Regional Science, 52(1), 75-95.
09. Verma Uniyal Tulika (2024), Case Study on Migrated Women Employment from Rural to Urban Areas in Uttarakhand, Gyan Management Journal, 18(2).
10. Sati Prasad Vishwambhar (2020), Out-migration in Uttarakhand Himalaya: its types, reasons, and consequences, Transnational Press London, 18(3), 281-295
11. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/thesundaystandard/2024/Sep/08/24-years-on-uttarakhand-struggles-to-hold-its-people-together>
12. A Comprehensive Study of Uttarakhand by Himanshu Kafaltia and Gunjan Sharma Kafaltia