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To cite this article: Bidita Dhar & R. B. Bhagat (2020): Return migration in India: internal and international dimensions, Migration and Development, DOI: [10.1080/21632324.2020.1809263](https://doi.org/10.1080/21632324.2020.1809263)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21632324.2020.1809263>



Published online: 25 Aug 2020.



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Return migration in India: internal and international dimensions

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ABSTRACT

India is a country with one of the largest emigrants with 17 million Indians living outside the country compared with 450 million internal migrants. During the 1970s and the 1980s, there was concern that India was losing its educated and skilled workforce to the Western countries, popularly known as 'brain drain'. With the recent changes in the global economy, growing unemployment rates in the developed countries and rapid growth of Indian economy there is a likelihood that the reverse brain drain has also been occurring. This is equally applicable for internal migration as well. However, there is no systematic study to know the magnitude and characteristics of return migration in India. This study examines the return migration, both internal and international, in India and also examines the socio-economic and household characteristics of return migrants. Data from the National Sample Survey (NSS) 64th round, India, 2007–08 has been used to study the magnitude and characteristics of return migrants. This study fulfils an important gap in India's migration studies.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 18 January 2020

Accepted 7 May 2020

KEYWORDS

Return migration; internal migrant; international migrant; emigrant; India

Introduction

Migration is a permanent or semi-permanent movement of people from one place to another. Migration of people from one place to another has rarely been one way, and it has often been followed by some returning back. Long back Ravenstein (1885) also conceptualised that each stream of migration also produces a return stream of migration which may not be necessarily equal. Thus return migration is defined as the movement of migrants back to their place of origin (Gmelch, 1980). Return migration has historically been thought of as the end part of the migration cycle. While migration of the highly skilled is commonly known as 'Brain Drain', the phenomena of return migration is sometimes popularly known as 'Brain Gain'. The brain drain is mitigated when those who return come with augmented skills that are more applicable in the home country. If the proportion of those who return is large enough, aggregate output and even output per capita may increase, implying a brain gain. While it is true that a substantial number of people have been migrating with a view to seek permanent settlement in the destination region, some of them have always been returning back to their place of origin under various circumstances

such as forced by the law of the destination country, to take advantage of the emerging economic opportunities in the home country, due to familial ties, due to fulfilment of emigration objectives or because of some unforeseen situations in the destination country. Three broad types of situation may be envisaged. Movement of people between countries of roughly equal standards of living and levels of economic development, but of varying demands and opportunities for labour, constitute the first type. A second type involves movements of 'developed' migrants back from underdeveloped, typically colonial or ex-colonial countries. The third situation is the return migration of workers and their families from high income to low income countries. The third type of return migration is most important in terms of the geography of development, for migrants returning from a spell in a more advanced nation are often held as important agents of change in the home country's modernization process (King, 1978). Similar reasons and situations may also hold true for return migration occurring within the country.

Objectives and data

The study focusses on the level of return migration in the country and the characteristics of return international and return internal migrants with special reference to demographic and household characteristics. It also attempts to ascertain the changes in employment status and industrial affiliation of return migrants before and after their return.

The present study utilised the Unit Level Data of the 64th round of National Sample Survey on Employment & Unemployment and Migration Particulars (Schedule 10.2) conducted during July 2007 to June 2008 led by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Government of India. There is hardly any comprehensive data made available by National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) at later dates. This survey covered the entire area of the country with the exception of: (i) Leh (Ladakh) and Kargil districts of Jammu & Kashmir, (ii) interior villages of Nagaland situated beyond five kilometres of the bus route and (iii) villages in Andaman and Nicobar Islands which remain inaccessible throughout the year. The survey covered a sample of 1,25,578 households (79,091 in rural areas and 46,487 in urban areas) and a sample 5,72,254 persons (3,74,294 in rural areas and 1,97,960 in urban areas). The 64th round (July 2007-June 2008) of National Sample Survey was earmarked for survey on 'Employment-Unemployment and Migration', 'Participation and Expenditure in Education' and 'Household Consumer Expenditure'. In Schedule 10.2 of NSS 64th round (July 2007 – June 2008) information was collected regarding the employment-unemployment characteristics and migration particulars. In NSS surveys, those movements which resulted in change of the usual place of residence (UPR) of the individuals were treated as migration and a household member whose last usual place of residence (UPR) was different from the present place of enumeration was considered a migrant. In NSS 64th round, the phenomenon of return migration was captured through a question, *whether the place of enumeration was usual place of residence (UPR) any time in the past*. Those who had answered in the affirmative, i.e. those migrants who had reported that the present place of enumeration was UPR any time in the past was considered as *return migrant*. It is worthwhile to mention that the return migration does not include seasonal and circulatory migration. They lived as permanent/semi-permanent migrants at the place of destination before returning to their place of origin. Unlike NSSO, Census of India does not give information on return migration directly.

Characteristics of return migrants

India is a country with 17 million emigrants according the latest UN estimate (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2019). In addition, there are 450 million internal migrants as per 2011 Census. The rates of return migration are calculated to study the magnitude of return migration. Return migration rate, for any category of persons (internal or international, male or female), has been estimated as the number of return migrants belonging to that category per 1000 of migrants in that category. In Table 1, return migration rates have been calculated separately for internal migrants as well as international because of the distinct nature of return within the country and abroad. The return migration rate is about three times higher for international compared to internal migrants.

Figures 1 and 2 presents the age-distribution of return migrants in India. For both the return internal as well as the return international, the largest share of male returnees lies in the older age group, i.e. 60+ years (14 per cent and 21 per cent respectively). Though female return emigrants exhibit similar pattern as that of the male returnees (29 per cent), but in case of return internal migrants they are mostly concentrated in the middle age group of 30–34 years (14 per cent). As a whole, the return internal migrants mostly constitute the middle and the older age groups whereas the return emigrants are mostly from the older age-groups (60 years and above). The mean age of return emigrant in India is 45 years, and the mean age of returned internal migrant is 38 years. Thus international migrants are found to return at older ages in contrast to that of the internal migrants.

To study the mobility of persons at different ‘levels of living’, the share of the total return emigrants and return internal migrants in different MPCE quintile classes have

Table 1. Return migration rate (per 1000 migrants), NSSO (2007–2008).

Category of persons	India	Internal	International
Male	161	157	363
Female	106	105	195
Total	116	115	295

Source: Unit level data of National Sample Survey, 2007–08

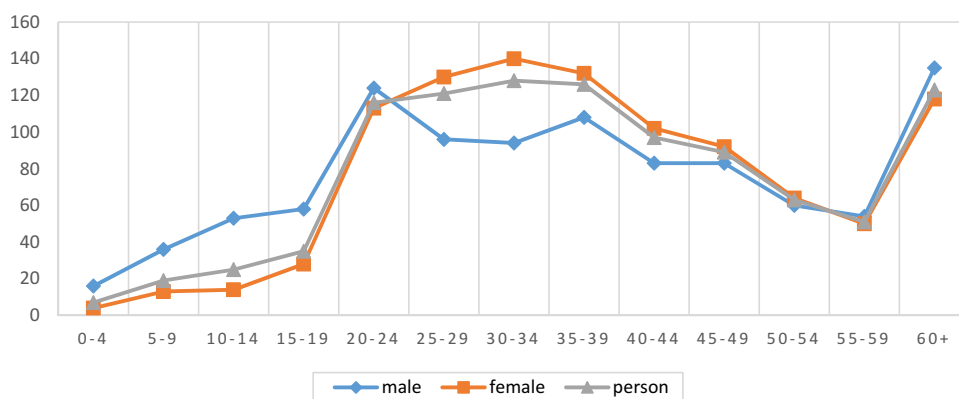


Figure 1. Distribution (per 1000) of return internal migrants by age-groups, India.

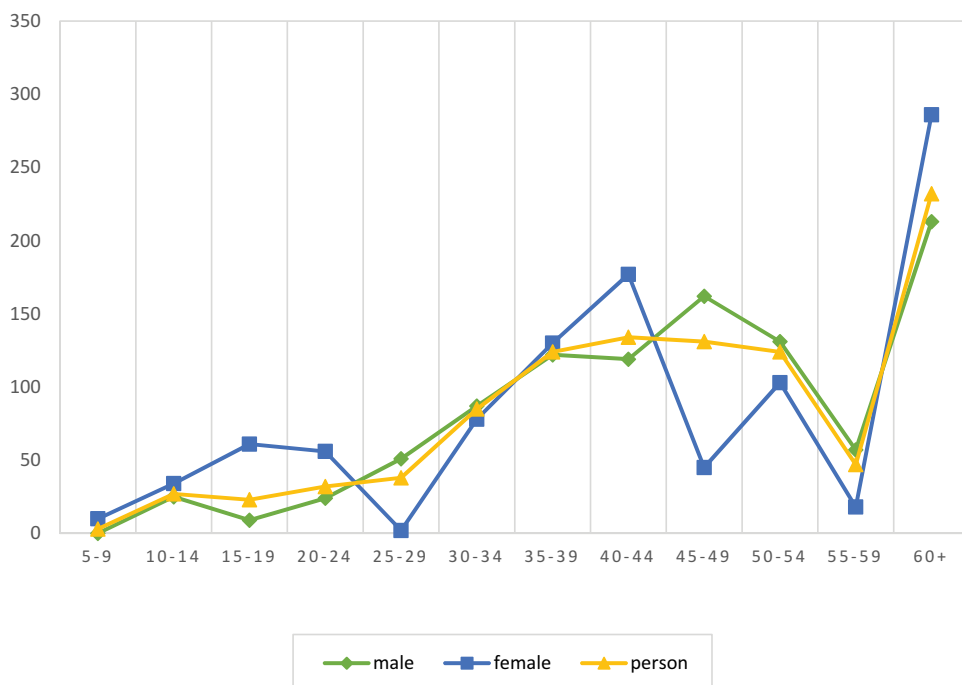


Figure 2. Distribution (per 1000) of return international migrants by age-groups, India. *Source: Unit level data of National Sample Survey, 2007–08*

been calculated. It follows from Table 2 that, bottom quintile class shared nearly 16 per cent of the return internal migrants and 6 per cent of the return emigrants, whereas the top quintile class shared nearly 30 per cent of the return internal migrants and over 53 per cent of the return emigrants in the country. Thus, there is a clear preponderance of the rich compared to the poorer sections when returning

Table 2. All-India distribution (per 1000) of return migrants by quintile classes.

MPCE quintile class	per 1000 distribution of return migrants		
	Male	Female	Person
Internal			
Poorest	79	195	164
Poorer	93	198	170
Middle	117	187	169
Richer	188	204	200
Richest	523	216	297
All groups	1000	1000	1000
International			
Poorest	56	67	59
Poorer	100	142	111
Middle	61	177	91
Richer	223	154	205
Richest	560	460	534
All groups	1000	1000	1000

Source: Unit level data of National Sample Survey, 2007–08

internationally compared to internal migrants. Coming to the male-female differentials we can observe that while the female return internal migrants are distributed more or less equally across all the quintile classes, there is an increasing concentration of male return internal migrants by quintile classes with maximum numbers belonging to the richest quintile class. For return emigrants, the male and female exhibit similar characteristics wherein the richest quintile group shows the highest share (56 per cent for males and 46 per cent for females), although other classes appear much more uniformly distributed in case of women as compared to the men.

Considerable differences exist among return migrants by the educational levels and sex (Table 3). It can be seen that among the return internal migrants a large proportion was 'not literate' (42 per cent) compared to international return migrants (21 per cent). Compared with males, majority of female returnees in both among internal and international migrants are illiterates.

Table 4 provides details on the location of the last Usual Place of Residence (UPR) collected from each of the return migrants in seven categories, specifying, whether, he/she had migrated from the rural/urban areas, same district/other district, same state/other state or from other countries. Return migrants in any area may be (i) from within the State, (ii) from other States, or (iii) from another country. Total return migrants considering the migration locations (i) and (ii) together constitute the volume of return internal migrants. Considering both the rural and urban areas, nearly 98 per cent of the return migrants were return internal migrants. Vast majority of the female returnees have reported intra-state return migration (90 per cent) as compared to the males (64 per cent). About 32 per cent

Table 3. All-India distribution (per 1000) of return migrants by educational level.

Category of persons	General education level						All
	Not literate	Literate below primary	Primary/ middle	Secondary & higher secondary	Diploma/ certificate	Graduate and above	
Internal							
Male	143	113	294	265	33	152	1000
Female	520	96	230	106	8	40	1000
Total	421	101	246	148	14	70	1000
International							
Male	82	109	373	253	85	98	1000
Female	579	4	155	162	30	70	1000
Total	213	81	316	229	70	91	1000

Source: Unit level data of National Sample Survey, 2007–08

Table 4. All-India distribution (per 1000) of return migrants by location of last usual place of residence.

Last usual place of residence in								
Category of return migrants	Rural areas of			Urban areas of			Other countries	All
	Same state		Other states	Same state		Other states		
	Same district	Other district		Same district	Other district			
Male	225	121	146	79	208	177	44	1000
Female	590	171	54	72	69	38	6	1000
Person	491	158	79	74	106	76	16	1000

Source: Unit level data of National Sample Survey, 2007–08

of the males and 9 per cent of females account for inter-state return migration. The figures are even lower for the international returnees (4 per cent for males and less than 1 per cent for females).

Though the proportion of return migrants from abroad is very low but have significance in terms of experience and knowledge gained in the countries abroad. Among all the return emigrants, 60 per cent of the returnees are from the Gulf countries namely Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Bahrain and other countries of the region (see [Figure 3](#)). There are 10 per cent return emigrants from Bangladesh and 7 per cent from Pakistan. It seems that around 96 per cent return from developing economies while the percentage of returnees from advanced countries such as USA and UK stands very low at 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively.

Now if we observe the state-wise distribution of these return emigrants (see [Figure 4](#)), Kerala has nearly 50 per cent of these return emigrants. It is due to the fact that emigrants from Kerala are also higher, which has been persistent since the 1970s. It is also due to the fact that in Gulf countries citizenship is hardly granted to the emigrants. Kerala is followed by Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu, wherein each state constitutes on an average 7 to 8 per cent share of return emigrants. So, in respect with return emigrants, there is no disparity observed between the rich and the poor states of the country.

It is often pointed out that the return migrants have potential to make a substantial contribution to the economic development of the sending country not only by investing the money they have accumulated in the destination country but also by transferring the accumulated knowledge to boost technology and managerial know-how in their source country. There is evidence that, for migrants who returned to their home country, work experience acquired abroad enhances earnings compared to the work experience acquired in the home country. In other words, we can say that temporary overseas migration leads to a wage premium upon return (Wahba, 2015).

Several studies on developing countries have indicated that a significant portion of returnees will opt to start businesses or arrange for independent work after they return (Dumont & Spielvogel, 2008). Studies also suggest that return migrants are significantly

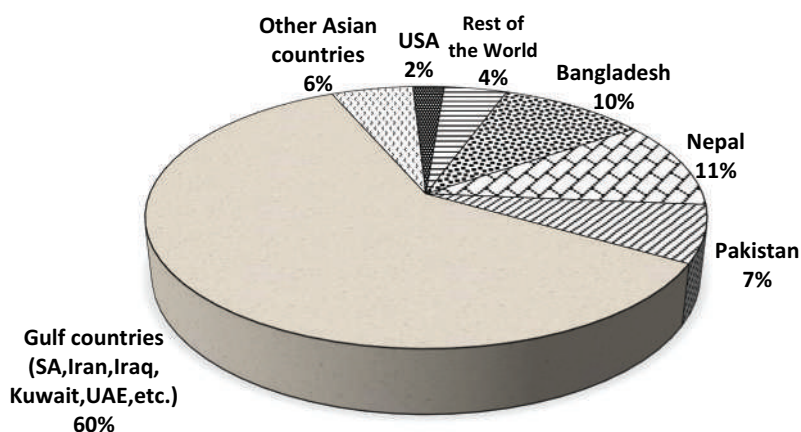


Figure 3. Percentage of return migrants from abroad. Source: Unit level data of National Sample Survey, 2007–08

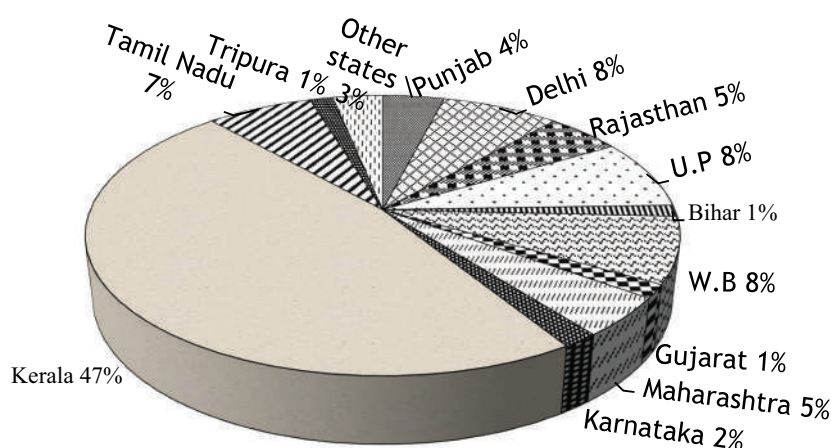


Figure 4. Return migrants from abroad among states in India. *Source: Unit level data of National Sample Survey, 2007–08*

more likely than nonmigrants to employ others, work as managers and be self-employed. Return migrants did not rely heavily on jobs created by others but ventured in sectors where self-employment and entrepreneurship were more common (Hausmann & Nedelkoska, 2018).

Table 5 provides changes in the principal activity status of return international migrants before and after migration for both the sexes. The activity status is broadly defined as the activity in which a person was found during the reference period with regard to the person's participation in economic and noneconomic activities. It is very evident that the self-employed category has increased many folds after return from abroad, from 3.2 per cent to 26.8 per cent. Females abroad were less involved in economic activities in contrast to the males. There has been a 9 per cent increase in the regular wage/salaried employment among females after returning back to the home country. Also, 3 per cent of female return international migrants joined as employers after return, which was previously zero in the host country. The male return international migrants in the self-employment category show a drastic increase from 4 to 36 per cent after return from abroad. It seems as if male return international migrants generally make use of the knowledge and money earned abroad to

Table 5. All- India employment status of return international migrants – before and after.

Principal Activity status	Males		Females		Total		Difference (after-before)
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	
Own account worker	3.9	35.5	0.6	1.9	3.1	26.6	23.5
Employer	0.0	9.8	0.0	3.2	0.0	8.1	8.1
Unpaid family worker	0.3	1.5	2.1	0.2	0.8	1.1	0.3
Regular salaried	67.9	11.3	2.5	11.6	50.7	11.3	–39.4
Casual wage labour	7.5	12.3	0.0	4.6	5.6	10.3	4.7
Seeking and/or available for work	8.5	9.1	3.1	0.7	7.0	6.9	–0.1
Attended educational institution	5.6	3.5	5.7	8.8	5.6	4.9	–0.7
Attended domestic duties	0.8	0.5	79.6	55.2	21.6	14.9	–6.7
Rentiers, pensioners, remittance recipients	1.2	10.1	0.0	4.8	0.9	8.7	7.8
Others	4.2	6.5	6.4	8.9	4.8	7.2	2.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	

Source: Unit level data of National Sample Survey, 2007–08

open production units for their survival at the place of origin. Like female return international migrants, the male return international migrants show a straight 10 per cent increase in the employer's category after their return which was almost nil before their migration.

In respect with return internal migrants Table 6 shows similar pattern to that of the return emigrants. The changes in the principal activity status before and after return shows lesser magnitude of difference in case of return internal migrants. For both males and males, after return, the share of persons unemployed, i.e. seeking and/or available for work has declined. Males shows much higher unemployment compared to females after return. While regular salaried job has declined drastically among males after return, it is found to have increased among females.

As shown in Figures 5 and 6, the activity status of return migrants are classified into seven broad industrial categories related to before and after their return. It also shows the sectors of employment in which return migrants from abroad as well as that of within the country are engaged. It also captures the transition in economic activity status of return migrants engaged in various sectors at the place of origin as well as at the place of destination.

For male return emigrants the engagement in the activities related to the construction sector has decreased from 32 per cent before to 14 per cent after return whereas it has increased for females to 26 per cent after return compared to almost naught in the host country. More male emigrants are engaged in trade after their return (26 per cent) compared to their status before return (17 per cent). This is also true for transport and other service sectors. For female emigrants the manufacturing and construction sectors register hugely increased participation after return whereas sectors like trade and other services show significant decline in participation.

For male return internal migrants we observe increase in the activity related to agriculture (20 per cent to 54 per cent) after their return the place of origin (see Figure 7). All other sectors register a decline in respect with male return internal migrants. For females all other sectors except agriculture show an increase after return, unlike males. Substantial increases in economic activities can be seen for females particularly for manufacturing, trade and other services (see Figure 8).

Thus, the conclusions derived from the above results are in line with the fact that considerable differences were found between the industrial affiliation of the return migrants before and after their return (Zachariah et al., 2001).

Table 6. All- India employment status of return internal migrants – before and after.

Principal Activity status	Males		Females		Total		Difference (after-before)
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	
Own account worker	9.8	21.2	0.8	3.7	3.2	8.3	5.1
Employer	0.5	2.3	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.7	0.6
Unpaid family worker	1.7	2.6	5.7	10.6	4.6	8.5	3.9
Regular salaried	27.8	28.1	1.4	3.5	8.3	10.0	1.7
Casual wage labour	18.0	13.7	11.2	14.1	13.0	14.0	1.0
Seeking and/or available for work	6.2	1.7	0.6	0.6	2.0	0.9	-1.1
Attended educational institution	22.5	17.4	5.7	3.8	10.1	7.4	-2.7
Attended domestic duties	2.8	1.1	71.5	57.5	53.5	42.7	-10.8
Rentiers, pensioners, remittance recipients	0.9	6.3	0.1	1.4	0.3	2.7	2.4
Others	9.8	5.6	3.1	4.5	4.9	4.8	-0.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	

Source: Unit level data of National Sample Survey, 2007–08

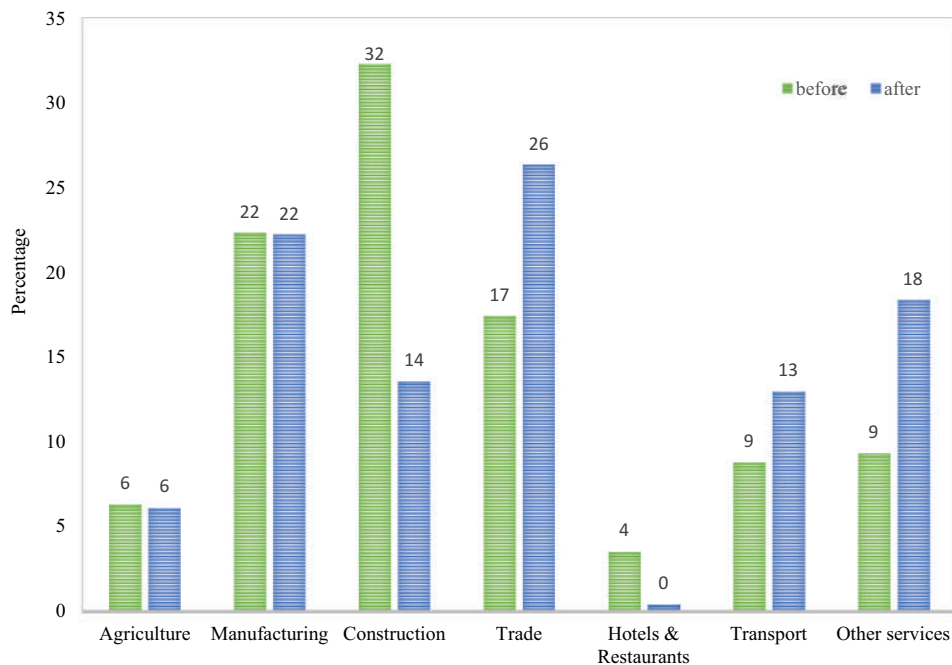


Figure 5. Industrial category of male return international migrants – before and after.

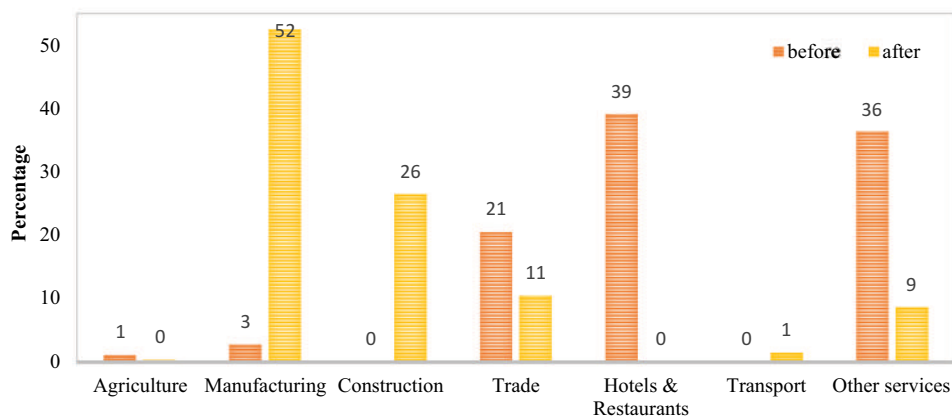


Figure 6. Industrial category of female return international migrants – before and after. *Source: Unit level data of National Sample Survey, 2007–08*

Results from the Logistic regression analysis presented in [Table 7](#) reveals some interesting findings. The odds for the people returning is observed to be rising with age, where the odds of the old age group (66 years and above) returning are found to be the highest. For the independent variable like 'sex', the females have lesser chances of being a return migrant as compared to males with a very high level of significance.

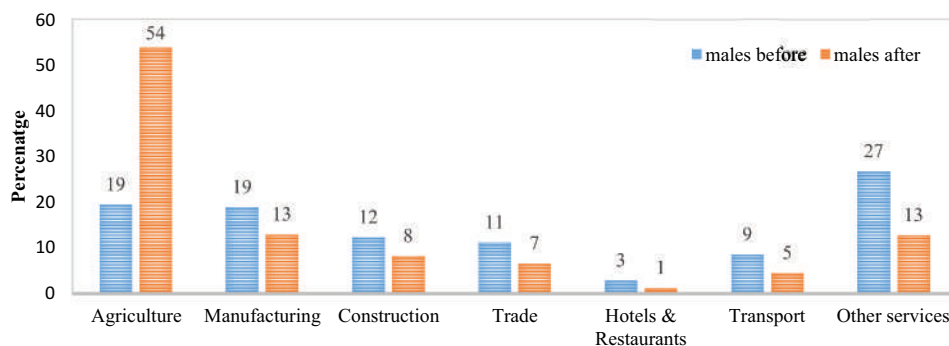


Figure 7. Industrial category of male return internal migrants – before and after.

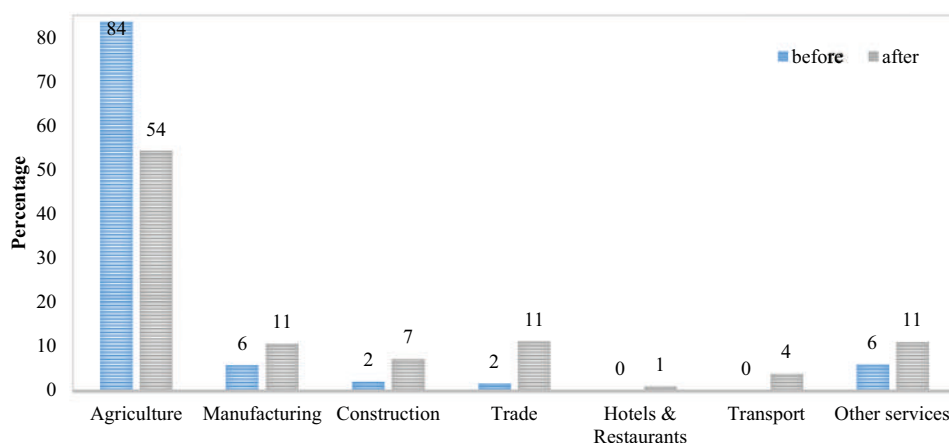


Figure 8. Industrial category of female return internal migrants – before and after. *Source: Unit level data of National Sample Survey, 2007–08*

Similarly, urban areas have lesser chance of return compared to rural areas. Divorced/Separated people are thirteen times more likely to return back to their place of origin. Studies show that the change in marital status of women motivates their return to the places of origin where their relatives are living, who can provide the much needed support (Medrano, 1987). Migrants belonging to the scheduled castes have higher probability to return as compared to the general category households. In case of educational attainment, results show that the odds for return increases with rising level of education. People migrated to abroad have higher probability to return followed by inter-state and within state migration. Logistic regression analysis also shows that the odds of those who said that their return is temporary is higher than those who are permanently returned. It means that temporary return migrants intend to re-migrate again. When other variables are controlled, the monthly per capita expenditure of households denotes that the odds of being a return migrant for all MPCE classes are lesser in comparison to the poorest of MPCE class.

Table 7. Effect of background variables on return migrants: results from logistic regression analysis.

BINARY LOGISTIC REGRESSION		95% Confidence Interval (CI)	
Dependant variable – Return Migrants	Odds Ratio	Lower boundary	Upper boundary
Age			
0–15 years *	1.00		
16–35 years	1.17	0.99	1.38
36–65 years	1.33	1.12	1.59
66 years and above	1.45	1.18	1.79
Sex			
Male *	1.00		
Female	0.64	0.60	0.68
Sector			
Rural *	1.00		
Urban	0.66	0.62	0.72
Marital status			
Never married *	1.00		
Currently married	0.99	0.88	1.13
Widowed	1.33	1.13	1.57
Divorced/separated	13.23	10.17	17.23
Household size			
1*	1.00		
2–3	1.51	1.25	1.84
4–6	1.33	1.10	1.61
7 and above	1.23	1.01	1.49
Religion			
Hindu *	1.00		
Muslim	1.24	1.15	1.34
Christian	0.97	0.83	1.14
Others	0.63	0.54	0.74
Social group			
Scheduled tribes *	1.00		
Scheduled castes	1.12	1.01	1.25
Other backward classes	1.09	0.99	1.21
General	0.86	0.78	0.96
Education			
Not literate *	1.00		
Literate but below primary	1.15	1.06	1.26
Primary or middle	1.17	1.10	1.25
Secondary or higher secondary	1.43	1.31	1.57
Diploma or certificate	1.61	1.30	2.00
Graduate and above	1.53	1.36	1.71
Last usual place of residence			
Same district *	1.00		
Different districts	0.95	0.89	1.01
Between states	1.49	1.38	1.61
Another country	2.79	2.29	3.41
Nature of movement			
Temporary – less than 12 months *	1.00		
Temporary – 12 months or more	0.48	0.37	0.64
Permanent	0.32	0.24	0.42
MPCE (Monthly per capita consumer expenditure)			
Poorest *	1.00		
Poorer	0.91	0.83	0.99
Middle	0.82	0.75	0.89
Richer	0.84	0.77	0.91
Richest	0.88	0.80	0.96
Constant	0.34	0.25	0.47

Conclusion and policy perspectives

Return migration is an integral and significant element in the cycle of migration that connects between the places of origin and places of destination. This study shows that about one-third of international and one-tenth of internal migrants return to their respective places of origin. It also shows that there are two types of return migrants—one that belongs to poor, marginal social groups. They are probably not very successful or due to certain mishaps returned to their families living at the place of origin. The returnees among women are less compared to men, but among those who are widowed, divorced and separated it is high. Another category belongs to those who are educated probably students who return after completing education. The findings of this study show that return migration increases with increasing level of education. It shows some magnitude of brain gain compared to brain drain of professionals and technical manpower. However, our findings show that many are waiting to remigrate as they considered their nature of return is temporary.

As return migration is a significant part of migration, policies and programmes need to focus them. A study by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2013) that internal migrants are a neglected segment of India's population. There is a need to mainstream internal migration into our development process. While doing this, area of destination and areas of origin pose different problems. In the areas of destination mostly located in big and small urban areas, internal migrants face various types of exclusions. Most of them largely work in informal sector and lack economic and social security. Some of them are also not able access social security programmes like public distribution of food grain (PDS), housing and health insurance due to lack identity and residential proofs – a precondition for getting registered under various social security programmes. A large number of them are also not able to vote being away from their electoral constituency – i.e. their place of origin. On the whole, urban policies and programmes largely ignore the factor of migration and migrants in urban development programmes (Bhagat, 2011). Back to their place of origin, return migrants are left to their own means, and hardly any policy and programme exists to support their integration into the development process in areas of their origin. Many return migrants have considerable experience of having lived and worked in other states and countries. They are comparatively experienced, skilled and older. There exists a huge opportunity to utilise their entrepreneurial forte through financial inclusion and integration into development in the areas of origin.

Compared to internal migration, policies and programmes for international return migration is better. In recent years, it has received increased focus from both host and origin countries in leveraging return migration to their economic advantage. There has been considerable interest in return migration of skilled professionals as a major positive or beneficial factor for the development of source countries (Olesen, 2002). Despite this growing attention, limited research has been conducted to understand the decision-making dynamics behind migrants' returning to their home countries. There is a chronic lack of information about emigrants who have returned home—their motives for returning, their precise geographical destinations, their income and employment characteristics, their new social status, their mobility, or their aspirations, levels of satisfaction and reintegration. (King, 1978). There is also a reason for looking at the literal aspect of return

migration because these migrants do not simply go ahead to another, a new place in their migration trajectory, but go back to where they came from. As such, return migration is a very specific episode in a circular migration career (Nadler et al., 2016). The return migrants' emotional attachment to destinations in the frame of return is comparably high, and this emotional attachment itself is one of the constituents for return. Even though feelings of homesickness or belonging are individual and subjective, and thus difficult to catch or foresee, they have considerable power on the decision making process and on actual movements in space as well as on the directions of such movements. As such, the link between return migrants and their home regions and home countries is a very tight bond, which has implications for the link between return migration and regional development.

Lack of information on various aspects of return and reintegration within the home country makes it difficult to draw any conclusions about the phenomena in totality. The literature on the benefits of return migration is still fragmentary and is composed mostly of the country and regional case studies. A 2014 empirical study on Indian skilled diaspora and returnees examined the impact of skilled return migration on development in India (Siddiqui & Tejada, 2014). The ability of returnees to foster positive social change is linked to their own social acceptability upon return. This study classified the return migrants' identity in terms of a participant being a woman, a member of a religious minority group, belonging to rural background, etc. Returnees with these disadvantaged identities were more interested in working towards home country development changes. Siddiqui and Tejada (2014) attributed this pattern to the huge gap between the rights and facilities that these groups accessed in their host countries and the lack of such rights and facilities that they experienced in India at an early stage of their lives.

Several studies have revealed that returnees contribute to their countries of origin in a number of ways including bringing their human capital and skillset acquired in host countries, investing in local economies with their remittances and wealth accumulated while abroad, utilizing their transnational linkages to facilitate innovative business partnerships and ventures between the host and origin countries and acting as social change makers in their home countries (Cassarino, 2004; Lubambu, 2014; Debnath, 2016). Return migration of the highly skilled is generally considered to create a 'triple-win' situation, coming to the benefit of sending country, receiving country as well as individual migrants (Weisbrock, 2008). Migrants send remittances to their places of origin, providing financial resources that can reduce poverty and be used for productive purposes (Human Mobility and Migration, 2017). It also stresses on the fact that if sending and receiving countries set up partnerships to encourage repatriation of knowledge and skills – known as brain circulation – then developing countries can benefit from the knowledge their citizens gain while away.

The Ministry of External Affairs deals with all matters pertaining to overseas Indians, comprising Persons of Indian Origin (PIO), Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) to recognize the fact that the overseas Indian community constitutes a significant economic, social and cultural force and needs mainstream attention. India's constitution does not allow dual citizenship. The Government of India introduced Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Scheme in 2005 to cover all Persons of Indian Origin in response to the long and persistent demand for dual citizenship particularly from the diaspora in North America and developed countries. Accordingly, the Citizenship Act,

1955 was amended extending the facility of Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) to Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) of all countries except Pakistan and Bangladesh. Registered OCIs were authorised the following benefits: (i) Multiple entry, multi-purpose lifelong visa to visit India; (ii) Exemption from reporting to the police for any length of stay in India; and (iii) Parity with NRIs in financial, economic and educational fields except in the acquisition of agricultural or plantation properties. As per the recommendation of High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, the Government of India has also decided to celebrate 'Pravasi Bharatiya Divas' (PBD) in recognition and appreciation of the constructive, economic and philanthropic role played by the Indian Diaspora, in January every year. In addition to this, a comprehensive insurance scheme named *Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana* was launched in the year 2006. It is a new and upgraded version of the compulsory insurance scheme for the migrant workers introduced in 2003. The insurance is compulsory for all those who migrate for employment purposes after obtaining emigration clearance from Protector of Emigrants (POE). The cumulative effect of these policy changes has connected the Indian diaspora more closely with India, but there still exists a dearth of policies concerning the issues of reintegration of return migrants in the society and linkages with development. Besides policies on the encouragement of return, some others also exist which are basically ageing-related. There are other different facets related to this phenomenon of return migration which requires attention. Kerala has done considerable work in integrating return migration to its development (Zachariah et al., 2006). In general, compared to senior emigrants, young generations of emigrants seem to be confronted more often with temporariness, and with risk of unemployment back home (Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2014). Often who return home having failed in an attempt of employment and residence abroad made them feel that they have not fulfilled the expectations of family and friends, or a sense of alienation and problems of adjustments may be common among people who have spent considerable time away from their home. In such cases, efforts should be made to address their mental health through counselling awareness and education in the respective areas of origin. Also since different parts of the country record varying volumes of return migrant flows, certain area-specific programmes may prove to be more fruitful than a nation-wide programme. Concentrating on states with high return migration rates can be a better choice. When designing return migration policies, it is important that area-specific factors need to be taken into consideration. A one-size-fits-all approach will not likely to work.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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