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### Emigrants in rural Punjab, India: A socio-economic profile

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#### Abstract

Migration is an age old and universal phenomenon. Over the years, a substantial number of Punjabis have emigrated from India, primarily to Western countries. Youth in rural Punjab continue to be passionate about immigration. Keeping an eye on the bigger picture the study is planned with specific objective of knowing the socio-economic profile of emigrants in rural Punjab. Multistage random sampling technique was used for collection of data. A total sample of 120 respondents was taken up for the study. The data revealed that 56.66 percent of the respondent was in the age group of 18-28 years when they move abroad. About 73 percent of emigrants went to abroad after their secondary education to different countries. The respondents in general category had highest emigration. Emigrants sent remittances to their left behind families and 42.50 per cent were receiving Rs.1-3 lac per annum. Large number of the respondents took loans from the commission agents and other non-institutional resources for migration. The emigration of Individuals from rural Punjab has both positive and negative effects. While it provides economic opportunities and improves the standard of living for emigrants and their families, it poses challenges for the region, such as brain drain and loss of skill workforce. Additionally, the social and cultural fabric of rural Punjab undergoes changes due to the influence of host countries.

**Keywords:** Migration, emigrants, youth, remittances, socio-economic profile, universal phenomenon

#### Introduction

Migration is an age old and universal phenomenon. Historical accounts vividly indicate the migration of individuals, tribes and communities from one place to another to hunt for food, shelter, trade and economic activities. Migration occurs largely when the place of utility in a few locations becomes better than that of the present location (Singh 2008) <sup>[16]</sup>. In earlier times, a few transportation choices were available that restricted human mobility. However, globalization and transportation infrastructure help to encourage domestic and international mobility throughout the world. (Singh and Shandilya 2012) <sup>[15]</sup>.

Indian residents working in the U.S. are considered highly skilled, and Indian working in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries - are primarily semi-skilled and unskilled workers (Kuhn 2005) <sup>[14]</sup>. This Indian Diaspora includes people from Kerala, Gujarat, Punjab, and Maharashtra. Kerala is the number one state in receiving remittances accounting for 40 per cent of total receipts, followed by 12.7 per cent in Punjab, 12.4 per cent in Tamil Nadu, 7.7 per cent in Andhra Pradesh, and 4.7 per cent in Uttar Pradesh. However, Punjabis are present in every corner of the world. In addition, the Punjabi Diaspora shows its presence in religious to cultural contexts (Chanda and Ghosh 2012) <sup>[3]</sup>.

Now, Punjab has a strong Diaspora in the world and is also famous for its culture, religion and cuisine. Over the years, a substantial number of Punjabis have also emigrated from India, to Western countries. Punjabis are one of the most influential diasporic groups in the England, Canada, and the United States of America (USA). For instance, with per cent of the total population, the proportion of Sikhs in Canada is practically identical to that of India. Youth in rural Punjab continue to be passionate about immigrating to the West, especially in the *Doaba* districts (Jodhka and Shah 2010) <sup>[8]</sup>. It is well acknowledged that the *Doaba* region of Punjab has a long history of considerable overseas emigration and a strongly ingrained cultural tradition. According to Thandi 2016, over two million eastern Punjabis live abroad, most of them from *Doaba* origin. This migratory population accounts for at least 10 per cent of the Indian Diaspora. The migration from *Doaba*, mainly Sikhs, to the U.K. has a well-documented history, dynamics, and effects (Dusenbery and Tatla 2009) <sup>[5]</sup>.

The migration of Punjabis to foreign nations is caused by various reasons, and the push-pull factor always motivates migration. A rapidly growing population, poverty, and fewer employment opportunities cause migration from their native place (Todaro 1969) <sup>[18]</sup>. Similarly, better opportunities, a suitable living environment, and access to

good education attract migration. Also, the push factor of migration in Punjab is lack of development and job opportunities, big family size, natural disasters, etc. But on the other hand, the pull factors attracting migrants are better employment opportunities, high wages, a health care system, better education, and better living conditions (Kainth 2009) [10]. So, keeping all this in view the study was planned with specific objective to highlight the socio-economic profile of migrants in rural Punjab.

### Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in Punjab state. From Punjab, two regions i.e. *Doaba* and *Malwa* were selected. *Doaba* region was selected as it continuous to be a vibrant center of migration, whereas *Malwa* region was taken as recent trend of migration has been noticed in this region. Multistage random sampling technique was used for collection of data. At the first stage, two districts i.e., Sri Muktsar Sahib and Jalandhar were randomly selected to make the study representative of *Malwa* and *Doaba* region of Punjab. From each selected district one block was selected randomly. From two blocks, six villages were selected randomly at final stage of sampling. Data was collected from left behind parents of the emigrants. The entire sample comprised of 120 respondents i.e. 60 respondents from each *Doaba* and *Malwa* of Punjab.

### Results and Discussion

The Socio-economic profile of emigrants was enquired from respondents which included the age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, caste and income of family. It is important to know the age of emigrants as it shows the age trend of population moving abroad. Table 1 shows that more than half (56.66%) of the respondent were in the age group of 18-28 years whom they move abroad whereas only 2.50 per cent were above of 49 years. Further, the table reveals that 43.30 percent of emigrants in *Doaba* region and 70.00 percent of the emigrants in *Malwa* region were very young in the age group of 18-28 years when they move abroad. Only 5.00 percent of the emigrants in *Doaba* region and none of the emigrant in *Malwa* region were in age group of 49 and above. One fourth of emigrants in *Malwa* region were in age group of 29-38 years when they migrated. Overall, more than half (56.66%) of emigrants were in age group of 18-28 years when they emigrated. The data in table 1 explains the male and female emigration trends in two regions of Punjab. It was seen that male migration was more than female migration. The data shows that 85 per cent males and 15per cent females in *Doaba* have migrated and 78.34 per cent males and 21.66 per cent females in *Malwa*. It clearly shows that in both area female emigration was very low as compared to male migration. Kaur (2022) [12] also revealed that in Asia, international migration is male dominant. The pattern of migration is highly gendered. In the past it was often assumed that men usually migrated for employment and education, meanwhile women moved for marriage or family reunification (Ghosh 2009) [6]. It was important to know the age of emigrants as it will show the age trend of population moving abroad. Table 1 shows that more than half (56.66%) of the respondent were in the age group of 18-28 years whom they move abroad whereas only 2.50 per cent were above of 49 years. Further, the table

reveals that 43.30 per cent of emigrants in *Doaba* region and 70.00 per cent of the emigrants in *Malwa* region were very young in the age group of 18-28 years when they move abroad. Only 5.00 per cent of the emigrants in *Doaba* were in age group of 49 and above. One fourth of emigrants in *Malwa* region were in age group of 29-38 years when they migrated. Overall, more than half (56.66%) of emigrants were in age group of 18-28 years when they emigrated.

**Table 1:** Socio-economic profile of emigrants

Particulars	<i>Doaba</i>	<i>Malwa</i>	Total
<b>Age of emigrant (years)</b>			
18-28	26(43.34)	42(70.00)	68(56.66)
29-38	21(35.00)	15(25.00)	36(30.00)
39-48	10(16.66)	3(5.00)	13(10.84)
49 and above	3(5.00)	-	3(2.50)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	51(85.00)	47(78.34)	98(81.66)
Female	9(15.00)	13(21.66)	22(18.34)
<b>Education</b>			
Primary	10(16.67)	13(21.67)	23(19.16)
Up to secondary	46(76.67)	41(68.33)	87(72.50)
Graduate	4(6.66)	6(10.00)	10(8.34)
<b>Caste of emigrant</b>			
General*	43(71.66)	52(86.66)	95(79.12)
OBCs**	4(6.67)	8(13.34)	12(10.00)
SCs***	13(21.67)	-	13(10.88)
<b>Occupation of father</b>			
Agriculture	34(56.67)	39(65.00)	73(60.83)
Job	7(11.66)	3(5.00)	10(8.34)
Others****	19(31.37)	18(30.00)	37(30.83)

General\*- Jattsikhs, Arora, OBC's\*\*- Ramghariye, Mistri, Chimbe and Ghumiyar, SC's\*\*\*- Ravidasiye

Others\*\*\*\*-Carpenters, Tailor, shopkeepers

Note- Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

Further in table 1, the educational level of emigrant they have attained in their home country was seen. In overall sample, 72.50 per cent of emigrants attained their senior secondary level education. The data shows that none of the emigrants were illiterate on both regions. In *Doaba*, 6.66 percent and 10.00 per cent of emigrants were graduates. Overall, it was seen that people migrated on student visas after completion of their up to secondary education. A study by (Ali 2007) [1] showed that education plays an important role at many stages of an individual's migration. The young Indians have high aspirations to go abroad, either for work or study.

Indian society is stratified on the basis of caste. It is one of the important factors in pattern of migration. It was observed in Table 1 that general category had highest emigration in both districts with 71.6 percent and 86.6 percent in *Doaba* and *Malwa* respectively. It was seen that 6.77 per cent in *Doaba* and 13.34 per cent in *Malwa* belonged to backward castes. None of emigrants belonged to scheduled castes from *Malwa* region who migrated abroad. It was seen that the general castes had more land holdings so they afford to send their children abroad. Similar to these results (Jodhka and Shah 2010) [8] revealed that Jatt Sikhs stands the most economically powerful, politically/socially influential and occupationally privileged group within Punjab and the "dominant castes" who moves

abroad. The information of occupation of parents was also taken into an account. Data also reveals that 60.83 per cent of the respondents were doing agriculture in the total sample. About 31 percent of the respondents were involved in other occupations such as tailor, carpenters, shopkeepers etc. Further, 8.34 per cent of respondents were engaged in jobs. These jobs included government as well as non-government sector jobs. In *Doaba* region, it was seen that majority of respondents were engaged in agriculture and same trend was also seen in *Malwa* region.

**Destination of country**

People want to settle abroad and explore the new avenues. They go abroad on various basis likework visas, study visas or spouse visas. Emigrants generally choose countries such as America, Canada, Australia, England etc. for higher education and permanent settlement. Table 2 shows that in *Doaba* region, 28.33 per cent of the emigrants moved to European countries followed by 26.67 percent went Canada for their better livelihood.

**Table 2:** Destination country of emigrants

Country	Doaba	Malwa	Total
Canada	16(26.67)	32(53.33)	48(40.00)
Europe*	17(28.33)	3(5.00)	20(1.67)
America	10(16.67)	8(13.33)	18(15.00)
Gulf countries**	10(16.66)	4(6.67)	14(11.67)
Australia	5(8.33)	7(11.67)	12(10.00)
New Zealand	1(1.67)	4(6.67)	5(4.16)
Others***	1(1.67)	2(3.33)	3(2.50)

\*European Countries: England, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain

\*\*Gulf Countries: Dubai, Qatar, Lebanon

\*\*\*Others: Malaysia, Mandela

Note- Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

Also 16.67 per cent of the emigrants went America and gulf countries in search of settlement and work respectively. According to the world migration report 2020, number of international migrations was estimated to be almost 272 million globally, 51 million more than in 2010 (Kaur G, *et al.* 2021) [13]. Some other studies also depict that, *Doaba* region was the origin of most of the Punjabi migrants to England, Canada, USA, and New Zealand. Migration from Punjab has mostly been from *Doaba* region, consisting of districts of Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur and Nawanshahr (S.B.S Nagar now) (Kapuria and Birwal, 2017) [11]. In *Malwa* region the trend was little bit different as more than half of respondents migrated Canada for better quality of life. Only 5 per cent moved European countries followed by other countries. Similar findings were reported by (Singh, 2021) [17] that presently, western countries have been top destinations for Indians when they seek migration

**Year of migration**

The timeline of years, when emigrants migrated was also recorded. The table 3 highlights that 65 percent of the emigrants went abroad during the year 2011-2018. Punjab shares a long migration history that started during the British period after Punjab’s annexation in 1839 (Judge 2002) [9]. Table 3 shows that a very negligible number 1.67 per cent migrated from year 1970-1980 and 1981-1990. In *Doaba* region, 63.30 per cent of emigrant migrated in the

year 2011-2018. In *Malwa* region none of the respondent migrated from year 1970-1990. So, most (65 per cent) of people migrated to different countries from both region in the year 2011-2018.

**Table 3:** Year of migration of emigrants

Year of migration	Doaba	Malwa	Total
1970-1980	2(3.30)	-	2(1.67)
1981-1990	2(3.30)	-	2(1.67)
1991-2000	3(5.00)	3(5.00)	6(5.00)
2001-2010	15(25.00)	17(28.33)	32(26.66)
2011-2018	38(63.30)	40(66.67)	78(65.00)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

**Basis of migration**

People migrate for various reasons including economic opportunities, education, family reunification or to escape conflict or persecution. Depending on the purpose and duration of the migration, individuals often obtain different types of visas or permits to legally enter and reside in their destination country. One common type of visa is permanent visa or permanent residency permit. This visa allows individuals to permanently settle in a country and enjoy many of the same rights and benefits as its citizens, such as access to employment, healthcare and education. Another frequent sought-after visa is a study visa or student permit. This type of visa is obtained by individuals who wish to peruse education or training in a foreign country. Study visas allow students to enrol in educational institutions such as universities or colleges, and may come with certain restrictions on working or staying in the country after completing their studies. In addition to these, there are spouse visas, tourist visas for the emigrants. Table 4 depicts the basis on which emigrants went abroad. It was seen that 36.76 per cent of the emigrants went on permanent resident visas (PR), followed by 28.34 per cent went on study visas. It was interesting to know 18.34 per cent of the emigrant also went on spouse visas for their settlement. Further, in *Doaba* region 38.33 per cent went on PR and 25 per cent had work permit when they went abroad. It was interesting to note that in *Malwa* region 40 per cent of emigrants went on study visa which shows that emigrants found it an easy way for migration nowadays.

**Table 4:** Basis of migration in *Malwa* and *Doaba* region of Punjab

Basis	Doaba	Malwa	Total
Work permit	15(25.00)	5(8.33)	20(16.66)
Study visa	10(16.67)	24(40.00)	34(28.34)
Permanent residence	23(38.33)	21(35.00)	44(36.76)
Spouse visa	12(20.00)	10(16.67)	22(18.34)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

When individuals decide to migrate, especially to a different country or region, they often require financial resources to support their journey and initial settlement. In many cases, emigrants may not have access to traditional financial institutions or may face challenges in securing loans through formal channels. Table 5 reveals that in *Doaba* (73.33%) and in *Malwa* (86.67%) emigrants took money from non-Institutional sources such as commission agents, private money lenders and some relative or kin. Only 26.67 per cent from *Doaba* and 13.43 percent from *Malwa* took loans from

banks. According to respondents, getting money from “*Artiye- the Middleman*” is easy when money is needed immediately. Commission agents are individuals or agencies that assist emigrants with various aspects of the migration process, including arranging travel, documentation and sometimes providing financial support. These agents typically charge a commission or fee for their services. Bruyn and Kuddus (2005) [4] also mentioned that in the process of migration the debt is taken by the family to pay for cost of migration and it is the prevalent practice worldwide.

**Table 5:** Source of finance for migration

Source of finance	Doaba	Malwa	Total
Institutional*	16(26.67)	8(13.43)	24(20.00)
Non- Institutional*	44(73.33)	52(86.67)	96(80.00)

Institutional\*- Bank loans/ Study loans, Non-institutional\*\*- Relatives/ commission agents

Note- Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

The most cited sources of getting money are from family and friends, from banks or private money lenders. As a consequence, many families accumulate debts in order to send a family member abroad.

Remittances play an important role in people who are left behind by the emigrants. So, in this regard it was tried to probe how much money emigrants sent to their left behind parents.

**Table 6:** Remittances send to left behind members

Remittances (Lacs/annum)	Doaba	Malwa	Total
Rs.25,000 to 50,000	9(15.00)	1(1.67)	10(8.33)
Rs.50,000 -1 Lac	19(31.67)	21(35.00)	40(33.33)
Rs.1-3 Lac	23(38.43)	28(46.76)	51(42.50)
Above 3 Lac	9(15.00)	10(16.77)	19(15.84)

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicates percentage

Table 6 depicts that more than 42 per cent of respondents were receiving Rs.1-3 lakh followed by 33.33 per cent received Rs.50.000-1 lac/annum. It was also seen 15.84 per cent of the respondents were receiving more than 3 lakh by their children. In *Malwa* region, 46.76 per cent of the respondents were receiving Rs.1-3 lakh per annum followed by 35per cent received between Rs.50.000-1 lac. Overall, most of the respondent were receive 1-3 lakh per annual from the emigrants. Many studies support the finding as migration and remittances can affect various socio-economic outcomes among those left behind, such as poverty and income, education and health (Gibson and McKenzie 2011, Antman 2010) [7, 2].

**Conclusion and Policy Implications**

Migration has a profound impact on the socio-economic profile of immigrants. Immigrants often leave their home countries in search of better economic opportunities, improved living conditions, and a chance for social mobility. The socio-economic profile of immigrants is influenced by a range factors, including their educational background, skills, language proficiency and social networks. However, the socio-economic profile of immigrants is not homogeneous. There are variations among different immigrant groups, depending on factors such as

their country of origin, immigration status, reception policies and integration programs in the host country. Successful integration of immigrants into the host society is crucial for maximizing their potential contributions and ensuring their well-being. Policies and programs that focus on language acquisition, skill training, recognition of foreign qualifications and social support can help immigrants overcome barriers and enhance their socio-economic outcomes. Access to education, healthcare and social services also play a vital role in fostering immigrant integration and promoting upward mobility.

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