

## OUT MIGRATION FROM UTTARAKHAND HILLS: MAGNITUDE AND CAUSES

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### ABSTRACT

Formed on November 9, 2000, Uttarakhand is India's 27<sup>th</sup> state. Located at the foothills of Himalayas, it shares its borders with China and Nepal and is a neighbour of Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana (Uttarakhand Year Book, 2012). The new state is the culmination of a long standing struggle for separate statehood and represents the aspirations of its people to usher in all round socio-economic development. Incidentally, after the formation of this state, out migration has become a widespread phenomenon in hill districts, resulting in absolute decrease in population in few districts such as Almora and Pauri Garhwal and very slow growth in other hilly districts during the recent decade. The magnitude of this serious problem can be understood by the fact that in 2001 the rural population of Uttarakhand was 74.80% of the total population which was 69.70% in 2011, with an aggregate decrease of 7%, while in the same period the urban population increased by nearly 35% which is twice the average state growth rate of 19.20%. Severe out-migration has led to many serious concerns not only economically and socially but also politically. This problems needs to be effectively and urgently addressed by the government in order to stop this process and the consequences it has on economic development. The present study based on secondary data taken from government and authentic private publications has two main objectives. First, to study the extent and magnitude of human migration from the hilly regions in Uttarakhand. Second, to examine the causes of human out-migration from the hilly regions of Uttarakhand.

### INTRODUCTION

The per capita income of Uttarakhand in 2015-16 was Rs.151219 which is well ahead of national averages. The literacy rate of Uttarakhand is 78.80% : 87.40% in men and 70% in women. The state has 116 colleges, 16 universities, 4 deemed universities and 1 IIT which makes the state rich in terms of providing skilled human resources. Despite the availability of various resources and labour, the state

has not achieved the expected growth, due to poor infrastructure and problems like unemployment and migration are on the rise. Human migration is the movement of people from one place to another with the intention of settling permanently in the new location. It is the movement of people from one geographical region to another in search of better employment opportunities and a higher standard of living.

Migration in Uttarakhand has been a historical process. The demography and ethnography of the hill regions in Uttarakhand has been influenced by immigration from other parts of the country during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12th centuries and later years. Natives as well as migrants cleared the jungles and developed farm land for cultivation through their hard labour over centuries. With the creation of Garhwal and Kumaon army Regiments during the British rule, local youth got regular employment in large numbers for the first time in the region. This necessitated out-migration of local youth for a few years who generally returned to their villages after the end of their service tenure. There had been a seasonal migration of males from the upper hills to clear the jungles in the lower Shivalik hills. This initial exposure to the outside world had a major influence on building acceptance of livelihood based on migration. The situation has changed substantially with a large number of natives migrating permanently along with families from the hill regions mainly to earn their livelihoods and better future of their children. This has become a widespread phenomenon in hill districts, resulting in absolute decrease in population in few districts such as Almora and Pauri Garhwal and very slow growth in other hilly districts during the recent decade. Severe out-migration has led to many serious concerns not only economically and socially but also politically.

This study based on secondary data taken from government and authentic private publications has the following main objectives:

1. To study the extent and magnitude of human migration from the hilly regions of Uttarakhand.
2. To examine the causes of human out-migration from the hilly regions of Uttarakhand.

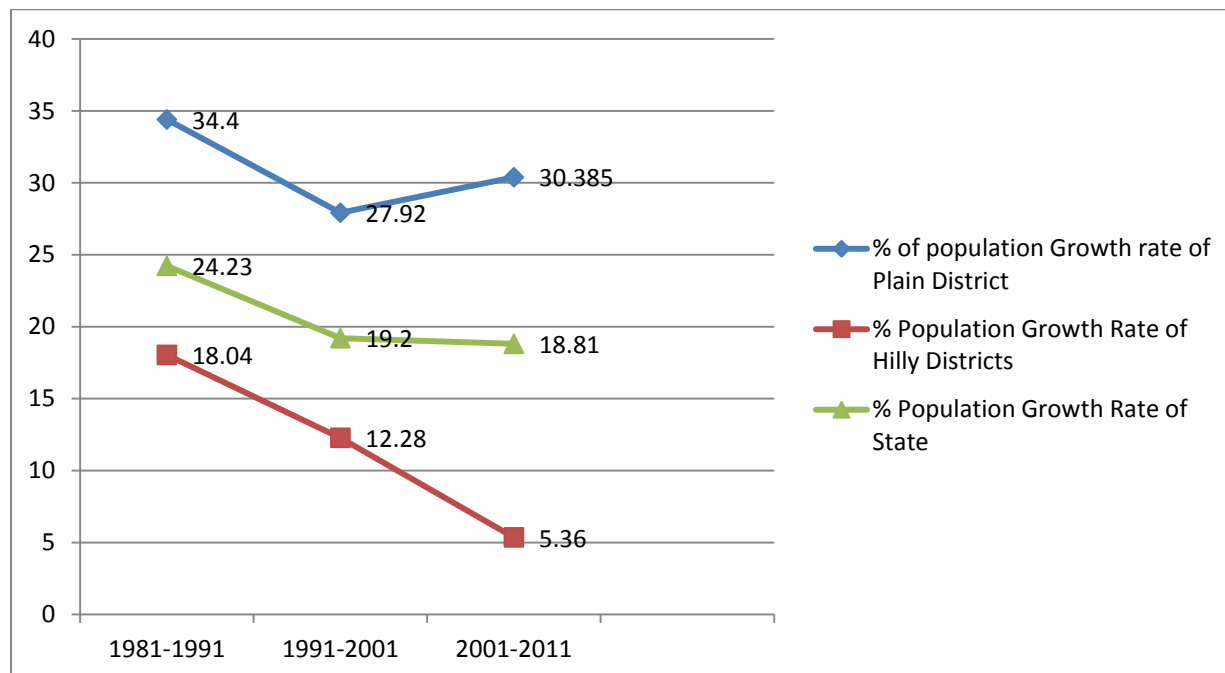
## THE MAGNITUDE OF MIGRATION

The magnitude of this serious problem can be understood by the fact that in 2001 the rural population of Uttarakhand was 74.80% of the total population which was 69.70% in 2011, with an aggregate decrease of 7%, while in the same period the urban population increased by nearly 35% which is twice the average state growth rate of 19.20%. Almora and Pauri districts have seen a negative population growth rate of -1.73% and -1.51% respectively.

Out of 13 districts in the state, 4 districts (Dehradun, Udham Singh Nagar, Haridwar and Nainital) are regarded as plain areas while rest of the districts are hilly areas. The decadal growth of population between 1981-1991 in hilly areas was 18.04% which reduced to 12.28% between 1991 to 2001 and again reduced to 5.36% in period between 2001 to 2011. In the same period from 1881-1991 the population growth of urban-plain region was 34.40% which reduced to 27.92% soon after the formation of the new state due to migration to UP, but it again increased significantly to 30.38% between 2001-2011. The growth rate of the state is 18.8% over 2001-2011. This increased growth rate of the population of plain regions and continuous decrease in the population of hilly areas clearly shows the extent of heavy outmigration from hilly districts of Uttarakhand. There are villages which are on the verge of complete migration like Patas village of Almora with a total population of 121(27 families) and Chandauli village of Pauri (*Climate Himalaya, July 2012*). Take the case of Saniyar, a set of twin villages nestled in the hills, 20 km from Pauri district Headquarters. The villages are completely deserted. Same is the story of Bitgaon, located half-a-kilometer from Saniyar, which is not half as lively as it was a decade ago when it had 150 homes and a population of 500. Just like Saniyar the exodus in Bitgaon too started in 2000. The population has now come down to 175. (*Report down to Earth*).

Figure1-

## Population Growth Rate of hilly and plain Uttarakhand



The **change in sex ratio** is also the most telling change in demographic information. During the last decade (2001-2011) the Sex Ratio of hilly districts increased sharply while there was a significant decrease in Child Sex Ratio of these districts which clearly shows the heavy migration of males from the

hilly districts. In hilly districts like Almora, Chamoli, Champawat, Rudraprayag, Uttarkashi there has been a sharp reduction in Child Sex Ratio while there is also increase in their Sex Ratio. Six (6) districts of Hilly region have more females per 1000 males while the state ratio is 963 Females per 1000 Males(2011).

Table:1

## District-wise Child Sex Ratio and sex ratio of Uttarakhand

S.No	District	Child Sex Ratio		Sex Ratio	
		2001	2011	2001	2011
1	Almora	932	922	1146	1139
2	Bagesgwar	929	904	1105	1090
3	Chamoli	934	889	1016	1019
4	Champawat	934	873	1021	980
5	Dehradun	894	889	887	902

6	Pauri Garhwal	929	904	1106	1103
7	Haridwar	862	877	865	880
8	Nainital	910	902	906	934
9	Pithoragarh	902	816	1031	1020
10	Rudraprayag	953	905	1115	1114
11	Tehri Garhwal	927	897	1049	1078
12	Udham Singh Nagar	913	887	902	
13	Uttarkashi	942	916	941	958

There have been prominent examples of changes in population in two districts of Almora and Pauri Garhwal (districts having absolute decline of 8061 and 9807 persons in their population, respectively between 2001 and 2011). Two major observations emerge from this study. Firstly, the maximum absolute decline in population has been in smaller villages in all the districts. Secondly, in bigger villages (having over 125 households) population growth has been rather positive and well above one per cent during the decade 2001-2011. These bigger villages are mainly the rural market places which have grown over the years. The above demographic features clearly show out-migration becoming a widespread phenomenon in the Hill Region of the State, more so over the recent decade, 2001-2011. The magnitude is

so huge and widespread that about 1000 villages in the hill region ( 2.8 lac households ) have been completely abandoned in the wake of out-migration. Since the creation of the State , 32 lac people have been reported to have migrated from the hill regions . ( Hindustan Newspaper, 26<sup>th</sup> June , 2017). These villages are almost turned into “ghost villages”. In Pauri Garhwal district, 160 villages (representing about 5 per cent of total villages of the district) were left with single digit populations in 2011 while Almora, Tehri and Pithoragarh have 49, 34 and 50 such villages respectively. Though there has been a history of high incidence of migration from hill regions, a large number of migrants tended to return to their villages. **This process of return migration seems to have stopped.**

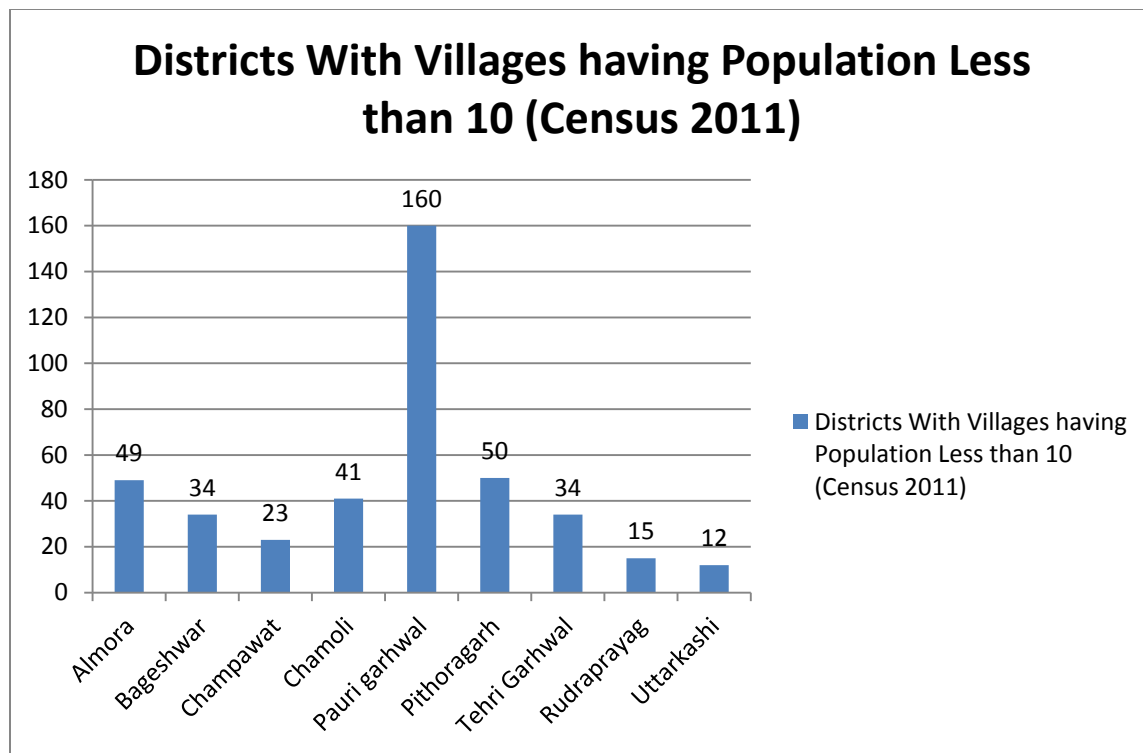


Figure-2

## CAUSES OF OUT-MIGRATION IN UTTARAKHAND

There are several causes of migration, the nature of which predominantly depend upon the conditions prevailing in a household or a region. The causative factors are generally categorized into two groups in Lee's (1966) framework of 'push' and 'pull' factors. Both these factors concentrate only on labour market related migration. In case of migration in

developing countries like India such a framework is inadequate to capture the complex interplay of variations in the labour market, social and political reasons, the living environment (housing, sanitation and access to basic infrastructure such as education and health) (Jayaraj, 2013). In the context of the hill region in Uttarakhand, 'push factors' predominate the decision to migrate. As per 2001 census around 13% moved for better employment opportunities while most of the migration of females is on account of marriage.

Table-2

Reason for Migrating	Male	Female	Total
Work/employment	382986	38437	421423
Business	11284	2099	13383
Education	36670	14012	50682
Marriage	7987	1361711	1369698
Moved After Birth	13725	9464	23189
Moved With Household	271356	387152	658508

Other	286175	248116	534291
Total	1010183	2060991	3071174

Source- Census of India, 2001

## LOW AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

The geographical location of Uttarakhand is such that out of total land only 12% is used for cultivation and only 47.81% is irrigated land. Moreover agriculture is traditional and crops are grown for self consumption (*Statically diary, Uttarakhand 2013-14*). In fact, farmers are willing to diversify their farm production to improve their income, but the required support of agricultural extension services, development of irrigation channels, and use of better seeds, improved inputs, technology and marketing remain a major concern. As a result, almost all cultivators are willing to leave their highly non-remunerative agriculture provided they get other alternative livelihoods. Apart from very low agricultural productivity, destruction of crops by wild animals has become more frequent and widespread, resulting in huge losses to famers. As a result, farmers have left their cultivable land barren in the outer circle of their village boundaries. Also, rapid spread of wild grass and wild bushes have destroyed the farm land and other barren land in the hill districts, making farm activity more difficult. Irrigation channels are in bad shape and are hardly being maintained for irrigation purposes. Many of these channels have been washed away during recent years due to frequent heavy rains.

The utter failures of systems for irrigation reflect the absence of infrastructure development for agriculture. Due to limited land, the shortage of fodder for livestock poses a serious problem for most of the households as they have to travel longer distances to collect fodder from reserve forests. This also discourages households from maintaining a large number of milch animals. There is hardly any visible programme aimed at providing cheaper fodder through PDS, effecting improvement in the breed of milch animals and development of infrastructure for procurement of milk. Employment

opportunities outside agriculture are extremely limited. Agriculture is the predominant economic activity engaging over 60 per cent of workers in the hill region as cultivators and another 5 per cent as agricultural labour. Gender-wise, nearly 40 per cent of male workers and 80 per cent of female workers are working as cultivators in the hill region of the State. Contrary to this, the dependence on agriculture is far less in the plain areas of the State.

## LACK OF EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH FACILITIES

The most common reason cited by respondents for migration is lack of educational and health facilities in rural Uttarakhand. People travel far for basic health amenities. There are 1689 schools in Uttarakhand which have a single teacher teaching over 70 students. Rural districts like Bageshwar (235), Almora(231), Pithoragarh (222) and Rudraprayag (165) top the list (Table-3). Also there are only 5% public schools in the rural areas of Uttarakhand. The poor condition of healthcare can be measured by the fact that there are an inadequate number of hospitals in Uttarakhand (*Public Health and Family Welfare, U.K, 2016*). Take the case of village Semalt and Dhasor of Tehri where people have to travel 20 km in case of any emergency. Government doctors are not ready to work in hilly areas of Uttarakhand. It has been cited in a report by the Planning Commission that from 2002-03 to 2007-08, 912 doctors were appointed by the Uttarakhand government following the recommendations of the Public Service Commission. Only 573 doctors joined the Department of Health. More than 60 percent of the sanctioned posts of doctors are vacant in the hill districts. This is despite a law that makes it obligatory for doctors and other professionals to serve in hill districts. The poor state of Uttarakhand hills is evident from the fact that due

to non-availability of doctors at the block level community health centres, nearly 132 women delivered babies in ambulances in the last one and a half years in Pithoragarh District, while going to district hospitals. As per government data only 59

doctors are available against the sanctioned strength of 173 while only 445 paramedical staff are available against the sanctioned strength of 752 in district Pithoragarh.

**Table : 3**

**District wise list of schools having single teacher**

S.No	District	No. of School having Single Teachers	% of Total
1	Bageshwar	235	13.91
2	Almora	231	13.68
3	Pithoragarh	222	13.14
4	Rudraprayag	165	9.76
5	Pauri	158	9.35
6	Uttarkashi	151	8.94
7	Tehri	150	8.88
8	Chamoli	122	7.22
9	Udham Singh Nagar	61	3.61
10	Haridwar	60	3.55
11	Dehradun	53	3.13
12	Champawat	49	2.90
13	Nainital	32	1.89

**Source- Education Department, Uttarakhand**

## LOW AVAILABILITY OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In hilly Uttarakhand nearly 70% population depends on agriculture and allied activities. Other job prospects are not available in hilly areas as tourism and government services are the only available alternative sectors to provide employment. A person after attaining higher education finds it difficult to find any white collar job of his level in hilly areas

which further increases the tendency to migrate among males. Employment generation in small scale shops is also not at the required rate as between the second and third economic census the increase in small scale shops in hilly areas was only 5% while in plain regions it was 53%. According to the available data, the number of people migrating between the age group 20-39 is 601724 or 56.78% which indicates that a majority of people are migrating in the age of employment.

**Table-4**  
**Age-wise Number of Migrants From Uttarakhand**

Age At Migration	No. Of Migrants	Percentage
0-9	123986	11.70
10-19	192887	18.20
20-29	447440	42.22
30-39	154284	14.56
40-49	73264	6.91
50-59	34779	3.28
60-69	19656	1.85
70-79	8653	.82
80+	3666	.35
Others	1176	.11

Source- Census Of India, 2011

## FREQUENT NATURAL DISASTERS

Frequent occurrence of natural calamities is also one of the main reasons of out migration from hilly Uttarakhand. The hills are prone to cloud-bursts, landslides and earthquakes and there have been heavy casualties in the past due to this. According to a report around 52000 people have lost their lives in last 16 years due to landslides. There are around 239 sensitive spots marked by Uttarakhand Disaster Mitigation and Management Department for landslides. In last 15-20 years State has witnessed three most destructive disasters. In 1991 the earthquake of Uttarkashi saw the loss of around 2000 people and property of 60 million US dollars and it affected nearly 300000 people residing in 1294 villages. Again on 29, March 1999, the earthquake of Chamoli shook the whole Uttarakhand causing death of 103 people and affecting 50000 people and 2000 villages. The Varunavrat hill landslides in 2003 in Uttarkashi district and the June 2013 flood which cost a loss of billions of rupees took more than 5000 lives and affected 4200 villages. Interaction with a social activists working in hills revealed that around 12% people migrated due to frequent natural calamities.

## DEMONSTRATION EFFECT

The influence of migrants and returning migrants proved to be one of the most compelling pull factors. Migrants often act as the medium through which information about job opportunities in the cities reaches the youth. In this sense, migrants are active networkers for other youths. Migrants tell them fairy tales of cities where everything is available at the doorstep compared to the difficult life of hills. This further increased the pace of migration amongst youth. Migrants heavily depend on social networks and informal channels to seek information about jobs and to obtain recommendations. These largely include friends and relatives who have already migrated to cities. In many cases village youth travel to the cities where their relatives are living to seek their support in job searches. Support is mostly given by family, friends and relatives and it acts like a spiral with more and more people being helped in their migration by fellow migrants from the village. The form of support includes financial help, search for jobs, food, accommodation, etc., at the initial stages of migration.



## LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT OF ARTISANS AND TRADITIONAL MUSICIANS

Earlier when people used to live in hilly villages in large numbers all wood and construction work was done by specialist artisans. Among the prominent local crafts was wood carving, which appears most frequently in the ornately decorated temples of Uttarakhand. Intricately carved designs of floral patterns, deities, and geometrical motifs also decorate the doors, windows, ceilings, and walls of village houses. Beautifully worked paintings and murals were used to decorate both homes and temples. Artisans, once the torchbearers of this rich art and culture are now unable to find any job in hills due to heavy migration of people, and this factor forces them to migrate to cities in search of similar work. Dhol and Damau which were generally played in marriages and other auspicious occasions and once also used as a tool of communication between villages using various codes are now a thing of the past due to heavy migration of people from the hills. "Auji" a local tribe who used to play traditional folk instruments like Dhol-Damau and Musakbaaj and were once known as the people who call Gods, are now all unemployed and have been forced to migrate to cities for work. This kind of migration further encourages migration of other people associated with particular arts.

## SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS EVILS

Society in hilly Uttarakhand is traditional and full of many social and religious evils like untouchability, superstitions and the caste system with the influence of the upper classes on the economy and the resources of villages. Low caste people have less agricultural land compared to upper class Brahmins and they either work on their farms or do some chores. Most of these people moved to cities and became industrial labour, or work in the hotel industry where they get equal social status and more remunerative opportunities round the year.

It is evident from the above that migration from the hills is predominantly on account of poor employment opportunities, inadequate healthcare and education facilities, unsafe living conditions and the underdeveloped state of the socio-economic infrastructure. These problems need to be effectively and urgently addressed by the government in order to stop this process of migration and consequences it has on economic development. The proposal for the creation of a Commission by the Uttarakhand government in June 2017 to deal with this problem is a welcome step in this direction, and represents an implicit acknowledgement of its seriousness and magnitude.

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