



**Survey**

# **COVID-19 Impact on Internal Migration, Labor Markets and Urbanization in Mumbai, India**

**Mumbai Quantitative Results Report  
December 2023**





AIM Research & Consultancy



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## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	7
I. INTRODUCTION AND SETTING THE STAGE	7
i. Background and context	7
ii. Stepping Stone	13
iii. Objectives of the study	14
iv. Approach and methodology	17
II. WORKFORCE MIGRATION: MUMBAI	23
III. PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS COVERED IN THE STUDY	28
i. Demographic Profile	28
ii. Category of Migrants	29
iii. Economic profile	31
IV. FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY	32
i. Socio Economic Profile and practices by migrants	32
ii. Impact of COVID-19 among Migrants in Mumbai	46
iii. Response to COVID-19 Challenges	55
V. SOCIAL SECURITY –PRACTICES, CHALLENGES AND PERCEPTION POST COVID	71
i. Health Insurance	72
ii. COVID-19 Vaccination	73
iii. Access to health facility	74
iv. School Education for Kids	78
v. Other prejudices/ discrimination/ social exclusion faced by migrants	83
VI. ACCESS TO HOUSING STRUCTURE – PRE COVID AND POST COVID	84
VII. WILLINGNESS ON ADOPTING SOCIAL SECURITY COVERAGE	92
VIII. Conclusion	93

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## List of Images

Image i - Geography covered in the study and Map of India indicating Mumbai city location and highlighted Maharashtra state	16
Image ii – Bubbles in the map indicating all locations from where the respondents were interviewed	17
Image iii- Interface of the Mobile Application used in the Survey	20
Image iv – Work flow of the project	22
Image v - Migration in Mumbai	25
Image vi - Demographic profile of migrants	29
Image vii - origin state of Migrants	36
Image viii – Source region of Migrants from Uttar Pradesh	36
Image ix- Source region of migrants from Bihar	37
Image x - Source region of Migrants from Maharashtra	38
Image xi - Migrants who moved alone	41
Image xii - Figure Migrant who came with someone	43

## List of Tables

Table i – COVID Timeline in India, Year 2020 and 2021	10
Table ii - Distribution of Migrants in Mumbai, 1991-2011	23
Table iii – Income Level	51
Table iv - Time period of COVID contagion	57
Table v - Impact of COVID-19 on mental health	59
Table vi - Challenges in accessing the health facilities	77
Table vii - PRE COVID - Housing Characteristics among Migrants	86
Table viii - Willingness to accept Government Assistance	92

## List of Charts

Chart i – Distribution of migrants by category	30
Chart ii - Distribution of migrants by category and sex	31
Chart iii - Distribution of migrants by economic activity	32
Chart iv - Distribution of migrants by economic activity and sex	33
Chart v- Period of arrival of Migrants in Mumbai	34
Chart vi- Migrant Pattern of movement	39
Chart vii - Distribution of migrants by modes of remittance transfer	45
Chart viii - Frequency of Remittances transfer	46
Chart ix - Share of migrants with no livelihood during lockdown, 2020-2021	47
Chart x - Sector-wise distribution of migrants with no means of livelihood during lockdown, 2020-2021	48
Chart xi- Reason for lack of job and income generating opportunities during COVID	49
Chart xii - Change in income due to COVID	50
Chart xiii- Sector-wise change in income due to COVID	51
Chart xiv - Distribution of migrants by new income level	52
Chart xv - Change in income level in different phases of COVID lockdown	52
Chart xvi - Migrants sending remittances during lockdown	54
Chart xviii- Migrants reporting disruption in remittance transfer	56
Chart xix - Remittance transfer: issues faced	56
Chart xx - Migrants infected with COVID-19	57
Chart xxi - Period of Exodus	61
Chart xxii - Destination of category III migrants	62
Chart xxiii - Economic Activities undertaken during Lockdown	64
Chart xxiv - Mode of transportation used to leave the city during lockdown	65
Chart xxv - Expenditure on the travel	66
Chart xxvi - Problems faced at native place on return	68
Chart xxvii - Time taken to get an income generating opportunity at native place on return	69
Chart xxviii - Category 2 and 3: Motivation behind coming back to Mumbai	69
Chart xxix – Migrant pattern of return to Mumbai	70
Chart xxx - Modes of transport used to return back to the city	71
Chart xxxi - Expenditure on Return Journey	71
Chart xxxii - Health Insurance coverage of the migrants	72
Chart xxxiii - Changes made in the insurance policy	73
Chart xxxiv - Vaccination Status of the Migrants	74
Chart xxxv - Health facility seeking behaviour of Migrants	75
Chart xxxvi - Type of Health facility was accessed based on time period	75
Chart xxxvii - Reasons for going to the public or private hospital	76
Chart xxxviii - Difficulty in accessing health facility	76
Chart xxxix - Change in health facility	78
Chart xl - School education - location	79
Chart xli - School education – Migrants facing challenges	80
Chart xlii - The challenges faced by the migrants with respect to children education	80

Chart xliii - PRE COVID - Housing pattern	83
Chart xliv - Post return: Housing facility	85
Chart xlv - Post Return: Problems faced in sanitation and drinking water	87
Chart xlvi - Government Assistance at the place of Origin	90
Chart xlvii - Post Return: Government Assistance	91

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## **ABSTRACT**

The COVID-19 outbreak and the lockdown that followed led up to extreme tumultuous economic and administrative conditions in countries across the world. Needless to say, the vulnerable sections of the population suffered the most. Migrants were one such group that underwent serious constraints due to the mobility restrictions and being stuck in places far from home. This report seeks to delve into the difficulties and issues confronted by migrant workers in Mumbai during the early stages of the pandemic and the subsequent immediate lockdown. Given that Mumbai serves as a crucial migration corridor for both intra-district and inter-district migrants, this report comprehensively explores the experiences of migrants who stayed in Mumbai and those who departed the city at the pandemic's onset. The initial segments of the report elaborate on the study's context, structure, and objectives, while the subsequent sections adeptly present the findings pertaining to the lives of migrants during the pandemic.

## **I. INTRODUCTION AND SETTING THE STAGE**

### **i. Background and context**

Coronavirus disease or COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2. The outbreak of this disease was an unprecedented event that shook the human world. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic in March 2020. Despite, many efforts to control the spread, COVID-19 spread to 213 countries over the world<sup>1</sup>. The pandemic led to colossal loss of lives and created an atmosphere of fear. According to the WHO estimates as of December 2020, around 82 million people were infected, and more than 1.8 million people lost their lives due to COVID-19<sup>2</sup>. After almost three years, as of November 2023, the numbers have gone up to 772 million cases and 6 million deaths,

The Public health system collapsed all around, and nothing seemed to work. Strict lockdowns and mobility restrictions were imposed; along with all non-essential economic activities being suspended to curb the spread of the disease. However, the widespread lockdowns and strict restrictions on mobility had serious social and economic implications. The lives of people

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<sup>1</sup>The global impact of the coronavirus pandemic (nih.gov)

<sup>2</sup>The impact of COVID-19 on global health goals (who.int)

across the world were disrupted and the economies shuddered. The pandemic led to economic recessions in many countries. In addition, there was the loss of livelihood, food shortage, and an increase in poverty, inequality, economic insecurities, and even racism. The lockdown further increased the vulnerabilities of marginalized communities like women, children, migrants, the disabled, and the elderly.

According to IMF estimates the pandemic led to a massive reduction in global economic growth. The global economic growth fell to around -3.2 percent in 2020. According to baseline forecasts, there was a 5.2 percent decline in Gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020. Global trade was also estimated to have fallen by 5.3 percent in 2020.

The brunt of this economic fallout is severe for developing countries like India. According to Raghuram Rajan, (*former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India*), the COVID-19 pandemic is “probably India’s greatest challenge since independence.”<sup>3</sup>. According to the official figures issued by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the Indian economy declined by 7.3 percent in the April-June quarter of 2020-21. According to the recent CPHS (Consumer Pyramids Household Survey) statistics, rural poverty climbed by 9.3 percentage while urban poverty increased by more than 11.7 percentage points between December 2019 to December 2020. It is estimated that around 230 million people in India have fallen into poverty during the first wave of the pandemic. The epidemic resulted in an enormous increase in unemployment with millions losing their job. According to the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy, unemployment rates have increased from 7.9 percent to 12 percent in the second quarter of 2021<sup>4</sup>. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) also went through a contraction of 55.5 percent in the first half of FY 2020-21<sup>5</sup>.

All the major sectors of the economy were impacted by the nationwide lockdowns. The service sector constituting a majority of informal and migrant workers was largely affected. The poor and vulnerable lost their means of livelihood due to layoffs and cost cuts owing to the pandemic-induced economic distress. If the informal economy is included, then India’s

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<sup>3</sup>COVID-19 probably India's greatest challenge since independence, says RaghuramRajan - BusinessToday

<sup>4</sup><https://www.nabard.org/auth/writereaddata/tender/2312213756rural-pulse-covid-induced-migration-final-comments.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nabard.org/auth/writereaddata/tender/2312213756rural-pulse-covid-induced-migration-final-comments.pdf>



GDP decline will be much higher than 8 percent<sup>6</sup>. The migrants were the most hit by the pandemic and experienced a considerable reduction as well as loss of income. In the pre-pandemic era, only 1.5 percent of the migrants reported to have earned below INR 6000 per month which increased to 83 percent post-pandemic, pushing the migrants to the lowest income bracket post Covid 19<sup>7</sup>. According to a study by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), the average income of the migrants plummeted by 47 percent and the unemployment rate increased from 7 percent to 12 percent. Even when economic activities resumed following the lockdown in 2021, at least 12.5 percent of the people were unable to find employment<sup>8</sup>.

The lockdowns and the resultant shutdown of economic activities cut off the primary source of income for many of the migrants. This generated a sense of panic among them which led to an instantaneous and unexpected trend of return migration from the major urban areas back to their villages. The onward journey not only made them susceptible to the virus but they also had to face social exclusion as they were labelled as disease transmitters.

The nationwide lockdown had severe impacts on the mobility of migrants and their socio-economic condition. Recent studies have not been very successful in capturing the plight of migrant workers. To improve COVID-19 responses to support internal migrants, a better understanding of their current situation including their needs and challenges is required. In this context, this report aims to better understand the socio-economic characteristics of migrants with a special reference to migrants in Mumbai.

### [COVID-19 in India](#)

The first case of Coronavirus in India was found on January 30<sup>th</sup> in Kerala. Apart from 2-3 cases, no significant rise was observed in February 2020. However, the infection started picking up pace by mid-March with Maharashtra reporting the highest number of cases. With the number of cases continuously rising the government of India announced a complete

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.nabard.org/auth/writereaddata/tender/2312213756rural-pulse-covid-induced-migration-final-comments.pdf>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.nabard.org/auth/writereaddata/tender/2312213756rural-pulse-covid-induced-migration-final-comments.pdf>

<sup>8</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/livelihood-in-mumbai-hit-by-pandemic-66-people-say-jobs-impacted-survey-7165905/>

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/covid19-impact-mumbai-s-poor-have-got-poorer-101624127789821.html>

lockdown of the country on 25<sup>th</sup> March, suspending all economic activities except for essential services. Due to the economic shutdown, distress reverse migration began with hundreds of migrant labourers traveling to reach their native villages.

To address the economic challenges, the government of India announced a Rs 1.7 lakh crore package under a new scheme called the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana (PMGKBY). The package included free food to the “poorest of the poor”, and income support to farmers and unorganized sector workers<sup>9</sup>. Special trains were started to rescue the stranded migrant workers and help them reach their desired destination.

*Table i – COVID Timeline in India, the Year 2020 and 2021*

COVID TIMELINE		
Month, Year	Date	Major Event
<b>January, 2020</b>	30	First confirmed COVID-19 case in Kerala-Thrissur
	31	Declaration of the coronavirus as a Global Emergency of International Concern by WHO
<b>February, 2020</b>	2	Second case in Kerala-Alappuzha
	3	Third case in Kerala- Kasaragod
	27	Evacuation of 759 Indian from Wuhan
<b>March, 2020</b>	6	Screening of international arrivals in India
	11	WHO declared Covid-19 a pandemic
	12	First confirmed death in India
	22	One-day Janata curfew imposed.
		Passenger air and train travel suspended
	25	Lockdown imposed from March 25 till April 14
		All domestic flights suspended
	26	Exodus of migrants begins.
The government announced an economic relief package of ₹1.7 lakh crore		
28	PM CARES Fund set	
<b>April 2020</b>	14	Nationwide lockdown extended till May 3.
		National Directives for COVID-19 management issued
<b>May 2020</b>	1	Nationwide lockdown extended till May 17 with zone-wise restriction
		<u>Shramik Special trains</u> started for stranded migrant workers.
	7	Phase 1 of the Vande Bharat mission begins.

<sup>9</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/india/covid-19-india-timeline-looking-back-at-pandemic-induced-lockdown-7241583/>

COVID TIMELINE		
Month, Year	Date	Major Event
	12	PM announces Rs 20 lakh crore Atmanirbhar package
	17	Nationwide lockdown extended till May 31
June 2020	1	Guidelines for Unlock 1
	12	India overtook UK to become 4th worst-hit coronavirus country
July 2020	1	Guidelines for Unlock 2.0
	6	India overtakes Russia to become third worst-hit country
	15	Phase-1 clinical trials of India's first indigenous Covid-19 vaccine, Covaxin
	29	Guidelines for Unlock 3.0 announced
August 2020	29	Unlock 4.0 guidelines issued
	31	India's GDP contracts 23.9% in April-June quarter
September 2020	7	India became second worst-affected country after the US
	22	India reported over 1 lakh coronavirus recoveries in a single-day for the first time
	30	Unlock 5.0 guideline issued
October 2020	26	Government asked state to prepare 3-tier system for vaccine rollout
November 2020	10	Delhi in midst of third wave
December 2020	21	India bans flights from UK
	29	Six arrivals from UK tested positive for new strain
	30	Several cities impose night curfew
January 2021	2	First nationwide dry run for all states and Union Territories.
	8	Second nationwide dry run in all states and UTs.
	16	Coronavirus vaccination programs begins
February 2021	2	Daily case count falls below the 9,000-mark
	13	Second dose of vaccination starts
	19	India completes one crore vaccinations in 34 days,
	23	Two new strains of Covid-19 detected in India
March 2021	1	Second phase of vaccination drive begins.
	15	3.15 crore vaccinations completed
	22	46,951 cases in a single day Restriction re-imposed, night-curfews
	23	Vaccination extended for all people above age 45
April 2021	9	1 million active cases
	23	Massive rise in cases and rising death tolls
May 2021	1	Daily case count crosses the 4 lakh mark
		Vaccinations extended to all above the age of 18
June 2021		Government makes Vaccination free for all

COVID TIMELINE		
Month, Year	Date	Major Event
<b>July 2021</b>		Positivity rates continue to drop
<b>August 2021</b>		Easing of curbs continues
<b>September 2021</b>		More curbs lifted, public transport resumed, Restaurants and pubs reopen

In May 2020, Atmanirbhar package of Rs 20 lakh crore was launched to further ease out the economic distress of the people. By the end of May, phased reopening of the economy began allowing the opening of malls, hotels, restaurants and places of worship, relaxation in night curfews, and so on. The cases began to drop rapidly by the end of the year 2020. The number of cases in India came down to less than 15,000.

In January 2021 vaccination drive started with healthcare workers. In February, two new strains of COVID-19 were detected in India slowly pushing up the number of infections. By mid-March, India was hit by the second wave of Coronavirus which was much more devastating than the first, with shortages of vaccines, hospital beds, oxygen cylinders, and other medical supplies all over the country. India recorded a daily case count of 68,020, the highest in five months. In many states, restrictions were placed on public movement and activities, night curfews were re-imposed.

By the end of April 2021, India recorded the highest number of COVID cases in the world with 400,000 new cases in 24 hours. Vaccinations were extended to all above the age of 18 but shortage of doses reduced the pace of immunisation. Later in May, the number of cases started to come down but the fatality kept rising. However, by the end of June, the cases continued to drop. Restrictions on public movement and activities were relaxed with decline in cases and positivity rates. Finally, by September all restrictions were removed and schools and colleges were reopened.

Life seemed to be coming back on track. However, in the following years, the world had to constantly adapt to the new ways of life, referred to as the 'New Normal' with work from home, online schooling, lockdown, quarantine, face masks, fear of infection, and social distancing becoming part and parcel of life.

## ii. Stepping Stone

The Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) is a global hub of knowledge and policy expertise on migration and development. KNOMAD aims to generate an array of policy choices, based on analytical evidence, evaluation of policies, data collection, and quality control through peer review. It works in close coordination with the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and the U.N. agencies working on migration. KNOMAD is also supported by a multi-donor trust fund established by the World Bank.

The KNOMAD Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Internal Migration and Urbanization of the World Bank is implementing a research project titled “The impacts of COVID-19 on Internal Migration, Labour Markets, and Urbanization” in six countries, namely, Brazil, Egypt, India, Peru, South Africa, and Spain. Two cities from each country have been chosen to understand the internal migration patterns that have been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The primary objective of the research project was to understand the impact of COVID-19 on internal migration patterns and urbanization in different regions of the world and contribute to the evidence base for the local and central government actors to address migrants’ vulnerability. In India, AIM Research & Consulting has been appointed to undertake the research in the city of Mumbai.

### iii. Objectives of the study

The central objective of the study is to understand the impact of COVID-19 on internal migrants, their socio-economic characteristics, access to labour markets and social services, and their strategies to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

#### Information areas/Themes explored

The study includes a detailed understanding of the following:

- Migration scenario in the city of Mumbai
  - Source destination Geography
  - Migration Pattern and their reasons
  - Practices by Migrants
- Impact of COVID-19
  - Economic Impact at destination
  - Economic Impact at origin
  - Health Impact
- Actions triggered by Migrants due to economic impact of COVID 19 Pandemic
  - Various actions and their reasons
  - Income sources during pandemic period
  - Challenges faced
  - Time taken to adapt to the new normal
- Social Security practices by Migrants
  - Health
    - Health Insurance
    - Vaccination
    - Accessing health facility
  - School Education for Migrants' kids
    - Location of kids' schooling
    - Challenges in education faced during COVID period
    - School dropout scenario because of COVID
  - Perception on - Prejudices/ Discrimination/ Social Exclusion faced by migrants
- Housing Structure used by migrants

- Pre-COVID
  - Housing Facility
  - Sanitation facility
  - Drinking water facility
- Post-COVID
  - Housing Facility
  - Sanitation facility
  - Drinking water facility

### Geography coverage in the study

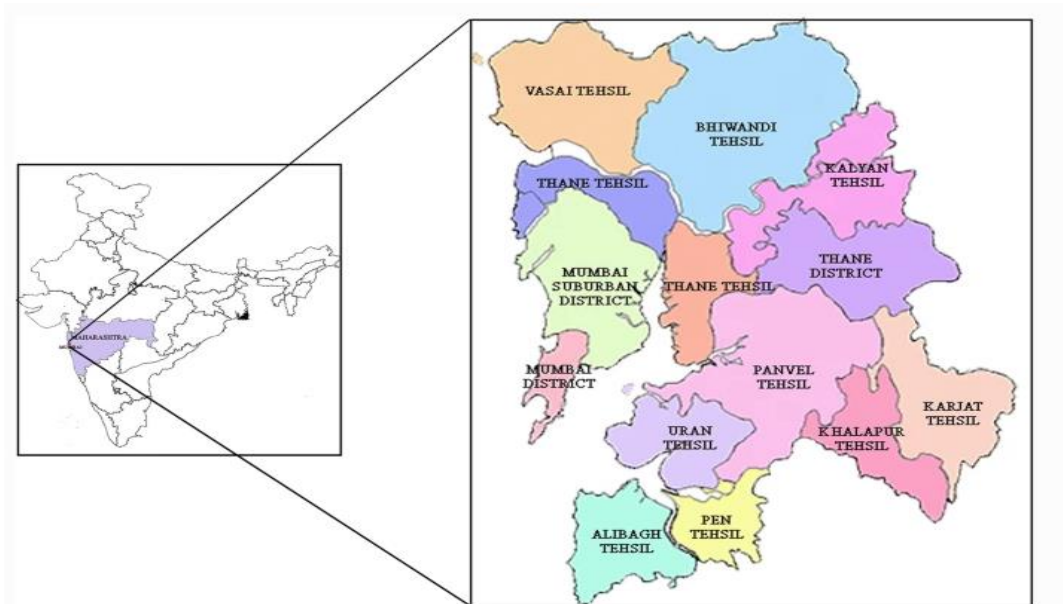
The Mumbai Metropolitan Region was selected as a unit for the present study. Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay, is the capital of the state of Maharashtra. It is situated on a narrow peninsula on the southwest of Salsette Island, which lies between the Arabian Sea to the west, Thane Creek to the east, and Vasai Creek to the north. Mumbai's suburban district occupies most of the island. Mumbai consists of two distinct regions: Mumbai City District and Mumbai Suburban District which form the two revenue districts of Maharashtra.

Mumbai is one of India's dominant urban centres. According to Mumbai Metropolitan Region estimates of UN World Urban Agglomeration Population Prospects in 2022, Mumbai with a population of 20.82 million is the second most populous city in India after Delhi and the 9<sup>th</sup> most populated city in the world<sup>10</sup>. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region has an area of 6,355 square kilo meters (2,454 sq. mi). It consists of nine municipal corporations and fifteen smaller municipal councils. The entire area is overseen by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), a state-owned organization in charge of town planning, development, transportation, and housing in the region.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.populationu.com/cities/mumbai-population>

*Image i - Geography covered in the study and Map of India indicating Mumbai city location and highlighted Maharashtra state*



Map of India showing the location of Maharashtra and Mumbai (left) and the districts of MMR (right)

This commercial capital of India is also the country's economic and industrial powerhouse. According to a Maharashtra State Report, the Mumbai metropolitan region contributes INR 368 billion (US \$5.2 billion) to the state's gross domestic product (GDP), accounting for around 87 percent of the state's economy<sup>11</sup>. In terms of money flow, the city is the 12<sup>th</sup> wealthiest city in the world (USD 950 billion). It also houses key financial institutions including the Reserve Bank of India, the Bombay Stock Exchange, and the National Stock Exchange of India, as well as the corporate offices of several Indian and global firms.

This economic powerhouse accounts for almost 66 percent of Maharashtra's GDP and about 14 percent of India's overall GDP<sup>12</sup>. Mumbai serves as India's economic driver, accounting for 10 percent of manufacturing employment, 25 percent of industrial production, 33 percent of income tax receipts, and 60 percent of customs duty collections<sup>13</sup>. It also accounts for 25

<sup>11</sup><https://www.india-briefing.com/news/economy-mumbai-india-commercial-hub-6704.html/>

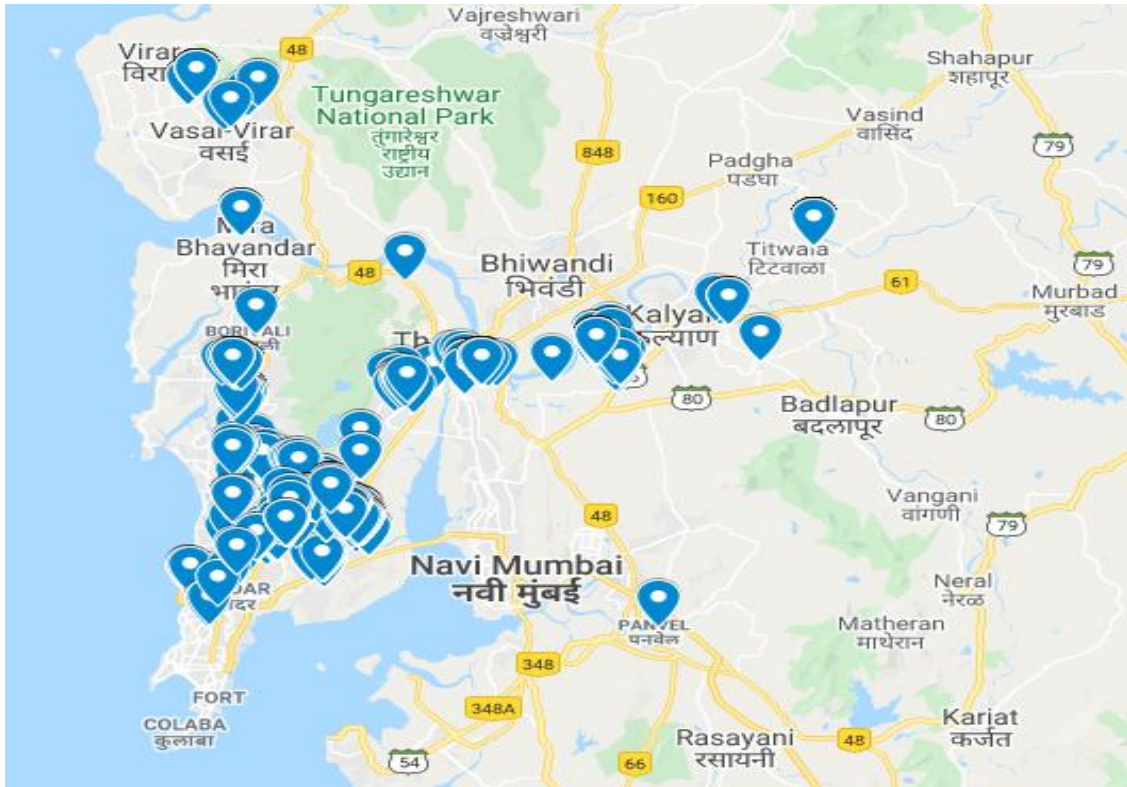
<sup>12</sup><https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/how-the-lockdown-in-maharashtra-impacts-india>  
[www.dw.com/en/indias-mumbai-covid-lockdown-threatens-more-economic-pain/a-57144253](http://www.dw.com/en/indias-mumbai-covid-lockdown-threatens-more-economic-pain/a-57144253)

<sup>13</sup><https://indiachem.in/why-mumbai.php>



percent of industrial production, 70 percent of marine commerce, and 70 percent of capital transactions.<sup>14</sup>

*Image ii – Bubbles in the map indicating all locations from where the respondents were interviewed*



#### iv. Approach and methodology

This section highlights the approach and methodology adopted in the present study. The study includes a mix of intense primary research combined with the information available from various secondary sources to understand the qualitative and quantitative aspects of migration.

The Secondary research involves an intensive review of the literature. The review focuses on studies done in the recent period on similar contexts; Articles and Research papers by scholars on similar contexts; Parliamentary sessions and data points and any other relevant source of information

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<sup>14</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy\\_of\\_Mumbai#:~:text=Mumbai%20is%20one%20of%20the,transactions%20to%20the%20Indian%20economy.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Mumbai#:~:text=Mumbai%20is%20one%20of%20the,transactions%20to%20the%20Indian%20economy.)

Primary Research includes both qualitative and Quantitative interviews-based interaction. For the qualitative study, in-depth interviews and group discussions were conducted with numerous stakeholders like NGO members working for Migrants, journalists, Academicians, and Researchers working in the Migration domain.

### Sampling Framework

Based on the multiple discussions with the KNOMAD working group team and the pilot study undertaken, the following sampling strategy was adopted in the study:

Total Sample Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1000 respondents</li> </ul>
Geographical Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area overseen by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority</li> </ul>
Type of Migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-state migrants</li> <li>• Intra state migrants</li> </ul>
Category of Migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Category 1: Those who did not exit the city during the COVID 19 lockdown</li> <li>• Category 2: Those who exited the city during the lockdown, went back to their native place and returned back eventually</li> <li>• Category 3: Those who exited the city during the lockdown, but did not go back to their native place and returned back eventually</li> </ul>
Respondent qualification criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be a resident beyond 200 km from destination</li> <li>• Must have income lower than INR 25,000</li> <li>• Must be unskilled/semiskilled labourer (Blue Collar Worker)</li> <li>• Must have been present in the destination before the COVID 19 pandemic first lockdown</li> <li>• Must have migrated in the city post the year 2005</li> </ul>

Sector wise quota sampling	<p>Focus was on below mentioned sectors with efforts to cover close to 200 samples from each sectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hotel/Hospitality/F&amp;B</li> <li>● Construction</li> <li>● Manufacturing Industry</li> <li>● Self Employed</li> <li>● Services</li> <li>● Household Workers</li> </ul>
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To ensure heterogeneity and holistic coverage, efforts were made to have an inclusive set of respondents' categories based on gender, socio economic class, duration of migration and so on.

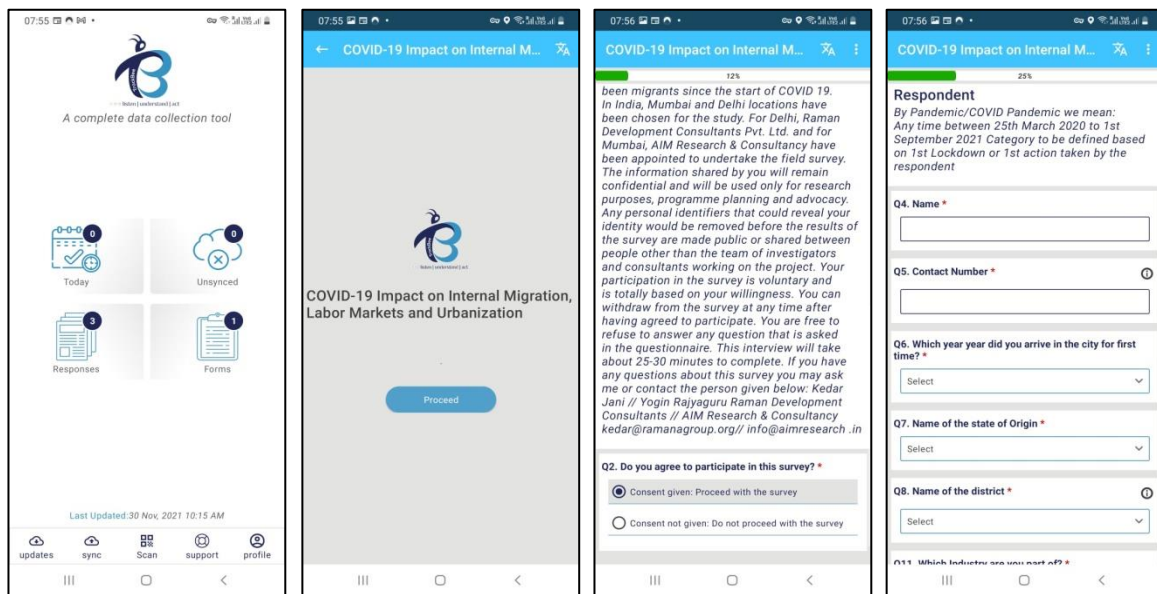
#### **Approaches Used for Data Collection**

The quantitative survey was done using Computer Assisted Interviewing with the help of smartphones and tablets. High-frequency technology enabled rugged tablets was used which were equipped with the following facilities:

- Capturing photographs
- GPS enabled
- Internet enabled
- Provision for designing the questionnaire as per the required objective and methodology
- Long power back-up
- Live Data pushing facility
- Logical checks

By adopting such approach, various mistakes by the field investigators or observers were escalated in time and required actions were taken to rectify the responses.

Image iii- The interface of the Mobile Application used in the Survey



“Trackbee” application by Frametrics Consulting Pvt. Ltd., India was used to collect and store the data. The application had the following features

- Restricted Survey Access: Choose to make a survey public or lock it with a password. Controls when respondents can track the survey by adding a start date & end date.
- Team Sharing and Collaboration: For enumerator-based mobile data collection, admin can create teams of enumerators and give survey access to a team. For back-end access, the admin can create sub-users and assign module-level access to a sub-user.
- Data Security: No compromise on data security. The application server and database server were hosted in Amazon Virtual Private Cloud (VPC hosted) in the Mumbai data center with a secure (https or SSL encrypted) link to encrypt data while it was in transit.
- Data Privacy: Survey and account data is accessible only by team members for the purpose of providing necessary service and support and it will never be shared, sold, or distributed to any third party.

### Quality Control Approach

#### **Pilot Interviews Stage**

Tools and questionnaires of all categories were tested on the field prior to the main fieldwork to ensure proper flow of questions, ease of understanding of the questions by the respondent, ease of administrating the questionnaire, comprehensibility in terms of

information coverage, and so on. The following considerations were also undertaken for better quality data.

- Pilots were conducted with each category of respondents.
- Minimum 2-3 pilot interviews were conducted from each category.
- Pilot interviews were done only by the Project In-charge, Project Coordinator, or the Project Associate

### **Field Work Stage**

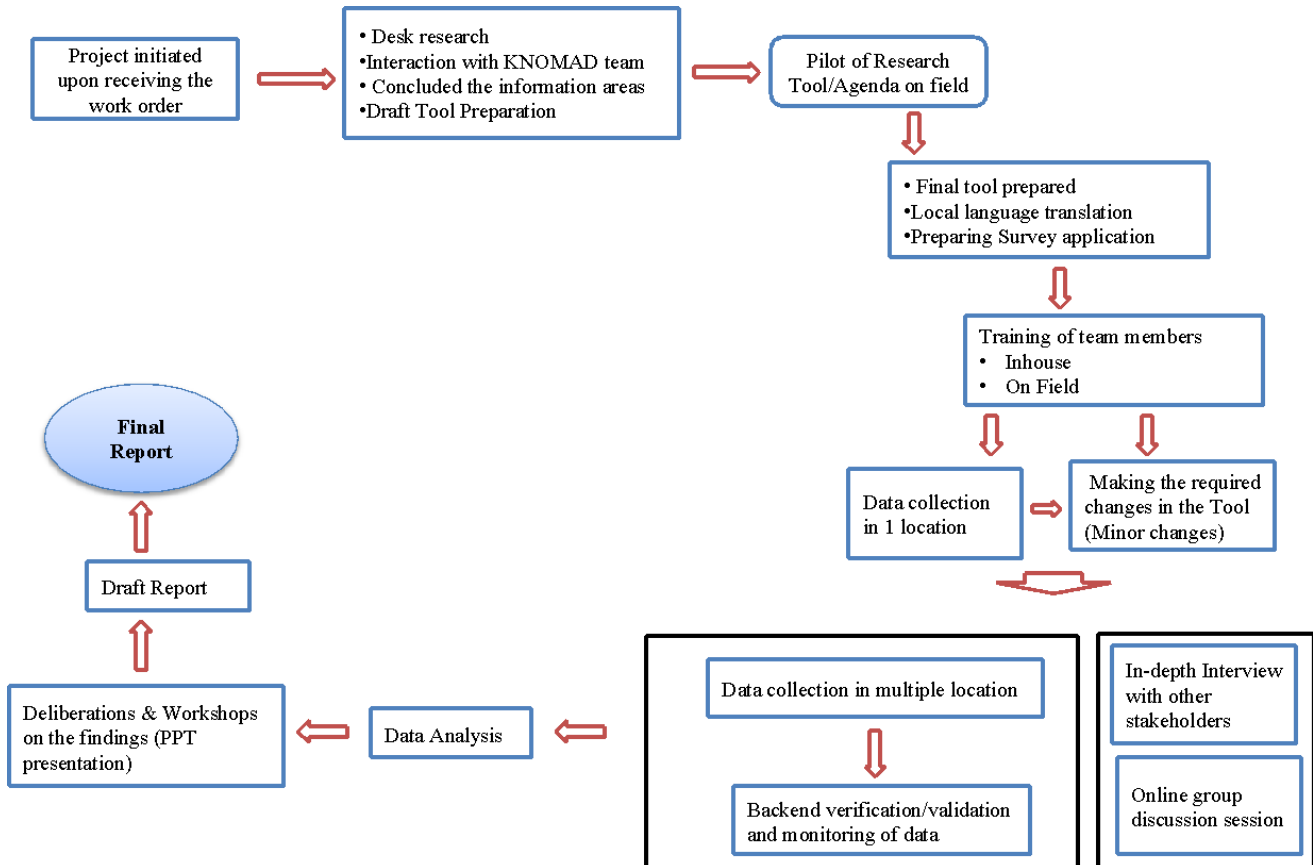
A multi-pronged robust process approach was adopted to ensure quality control during the data collection process. The following considerations were undertaken for quality control:

- The entire survey work for the study was administered under the direct supervision of AIM Research's in-house employees i.e. either Project In-charge, Consultant or Project Associate, or Research Associate. Due to the nature of the study, the supervision and monitoring of the project was not outsourced.
- A detailed checklist was prepared for validation purposes and predefined validation rules were built into the application to ensure completeness and logical flow.
- Periodic validation of the collected data was done by the team members at the back end in case clarification was required then the investigator or the respondent was contacted. In case of missing data or incorrect data, efforts were made to re-collect the data through telephone. Only when complete information was available from the respondent, the interview was considered final.
- Only individuals who had prior experience in conducting studies of a similar nature were included in the team for this study.
- Training was provided to each of the team members and a brief report of the training was shared with the KNOMAD team.

## Project workflow

The workflow that has been followed in the study is as follows:

*Image iv – Work flow of the project*



## II. WORKFORCE MIGRATION: MUMBAI

Migration has been a historical phenomenon that has shaped Mumbai's history. The city has traditionally attracted migrants from every state in India, who have played a significant part in the state's growth and development. From the advent of the Arabs of the Gujarat Sultanate in 1348, Portuguese in 1534, English in 1661, and finally the establishment of Bombay's cotton textile industry in the 1860s, Bombay acted as a magnet and attracted migrants all over the country<sup>15</sup>. Mumbai became a major trading center and a flourishing port by the mid-19th century. By the time of independence in 1947, Mumbai was established as a major commercial center and financial capital of the country with more than 50 percent migrant population.

*Table ii - Distribution of Migrants in Mumbai, 1991-2011*

Year	Migrant Population in Mumbai (in percent)
1991	21.1
2001	26.4
2011	27.66

Source: Census of India. (2011), Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner.

Studies suggest that the natural growth of Mumbai city was negative from 1901 to 1941. During this period, only migration contributed to the increase in population. Migrants accounted for almost half of Mumbai's population growth during the first decade after independence (1951-61). As per the 1971 census, the number of internal migrants was about 159 million representing 30 percent of the total population. Between 1961 and 1971, migration as well as natural growth contributed equally to the population growth. The volume of migrants subsequently increased to 200 million by 1981 which contributed to 30 percent of the total population. In 1991, the migrant population share declined to 27 percent. Migration slowed down during 1981-1991 due to sluggish growth in the Indian economy and increased unemployment. Mumbai urban agglomeration received around 2.48 million migrants during 1991-2001<sup>16</sup>. In 2001, the number of internal migrants doubled since 1971

<sup>15</sup><https://www.eximbankindia.in/Assets/Dynamic/PDF/Publication-Resources/ResearchPapers/54file.pdf>

<sup>16</sup>[https://mdl.donau-uni.ac.at/binucom/pluginfile.php/402/mod\\_page/content/22/KRVIA\\_1\\_K.pdf](https://mdl.donau-uni.ac.at/binucom/pluginfile.php/402/mod_page/content/22/KRVIA_1_K.pdf)

although the proportion remained constant at 30 percent. In 2001, Mumbai had 41.01 lakh inter-state migrants<sup>17</sup>; by 2011, that number rose to 46.44 lakh, recording a 13.22 percent increase. Intra-state migrants accounted for 28.16 lakh and 43.44 lakh, respectively, with a 52.78 percent rise.

At the time of the 2011 Census, the Mumbai Urban Agglomeration, which comprises the districts of Mumbai City, Mumbai Suburban, and Thane, had a population of 2.35 crore<sup>18</sup>. About 1.01 crore people, or 43.02 percent of the total population, were classified as migrants. According to Census 2011, the state of Uttar Pradesh accounted for the majority of migrants to Mumbai (almost 41 percent), followed by Gujarat (6.08 lakh), Karnataka (3.83 lakh), Rajasthan (3.30 lakh), and Bihar (2.84 lakh).

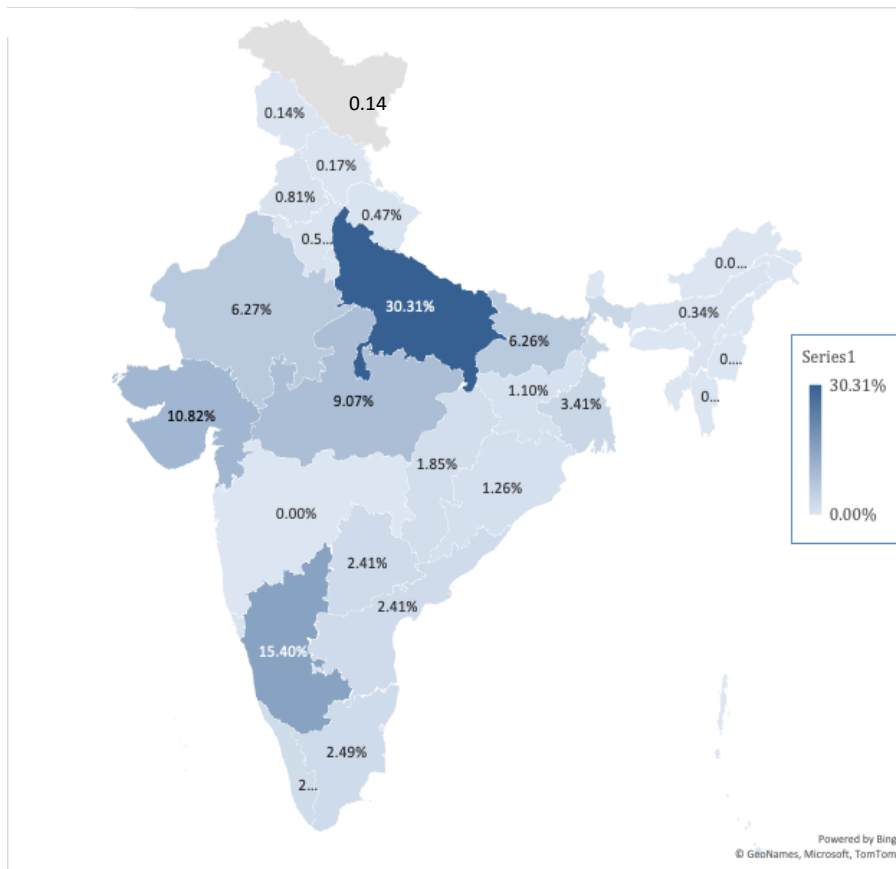
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<sup>17</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-heres-what-census-data-show-about-migrations-to-mumbai/>

<sup>18</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/migration-to-mumbai-thane-from-other-states-slows-down-5839751/>



Image v - Migration in Mumbai



Manufacturing, initially cotton, and later automobile production, were the major options for rural-urban migrants in the early years of Mumbai's development. However, since the 1980s, with globalization and foreign direct investment in the economy, migrants are increasingly being lured to work in this vibrant metropolis. The restructuring of the Indian economy also brought a surge in the service industry, with low-skilled employees offering services including taxi drivers, cleaners, street vendors, repair workers, and recycling.

There are several employment possibilities in the fields of production, sales, administration, and business in the city. Approximately half of the male migrants are employed in the production sector. Male migrants outnumber non-migrants among industrial employees in the manufacturing sector. Migrants and non-migrants are equally represented in other

sectors such as wholesale, community and social services, and construction. The community and social services industry employs a larger amount of female workers, both migrants and non-migrants. Male migration to Mumbai has been mostly motivated by economic concerns. On the other hand, almost 90 percent of female migration is for social reasons such as marriage and accompanying the family.<sup>19</sup>

Migration to Mumbai, both intra and inter-state, has long been a source of worry for scholars, planners, and policymakers. In Mumbai, there is little room for growth and expansion. The rapid influx of people is putting further strain on the city's already deteriorating infrastructure. The rapid population growth fuelled by population migration from impoverished rural regions has led to a sharp increase in population densities reducing the quality of life by making it crowded, congested, and difficult to locate cheap accommodation. While some migrants have well-paying positions in engineering, media, and IT, the majority are unskilled and jobless. Some migrants have little and cannot afford to rent, so they reside in the city's slums, where housing is extremely inexpensive. Moreover, intra-state migration has been related to poverty, regional inequalities, and imbalanced regional growth.

*Every year, migrants from drought-prone areas in Marathwada come to Ghatkopar, a Mumbai suburb. They live in temporary shacks and work in the construction business. They generally travel in November to harvest sugarcane and earn a lump amount of approximately Rs 50,000 in the four to five months following the monsoon, according to the sugarcane cycle. During the summers, they return to larger cities for another four months to work in construction projects that are both temporary and relatively high-paying. The capacity of Ghatkopar to absorb these migrants and provide them with opportunities to find work shows that Mumbai is still a place of economic opportunity.*

The hardship of migrants sheds attention on a less-discussed element of Mumbai's housing and shelter: the near-absence of inexpensive temporary housing for families, the scarcity of hostel space for a roving population, and the scarcity of bed-and-breakfast options for various budgets. These migrants have to fight for basic shelter and social security. In order to save money, the migrants move to the slums, where they rent a shared room or a small-scale apartment on a cot on a day/night basis, and use public restrooms and toilets. Many more

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<sup>19</sup><http://www.shram.org/uploadFiles/20131106035214.pdf>

live in tiny tenements or on the streets near construction projects. The majority of people never cook at home and eat at roadside stalls and tea booths. The shortage of rooms in the slums generally causes dissatisfaction among the inhabitants. Migrants who do not have a ration card are not entitled to basic necessities. It is also believed that a significant number of migrants are compelled to live on the streets since they have no other option for accommodation.

In Mumbai city, the homeless migrants are mainly informal labourers — casual/contract employees, own account workers, or a combination – who face profound suffering in everyday life with little or no care and assistance from the state and the market. There have been policy and practice shifts that have placed homeless migrants on the precipice of security/insecurity, legality/illegality, insider/outsider, and so on; and their inability to access state services revolves around the strength and limits of their citizenship as a result of identity proof or lack thereof. Dwelling on pavement or in locations such as road dividers, drainage lines, sewage pipes, public parks, or temple grounds does not safeguard or legalize their identity.

COVID-19 and the resultant lockdown have further burdened the lives of the migrants in several ways. Besides the loss of livelihood, it had myriad implications for migrant workers. The immediate challenge faced by the migrants after the lockdown was related to food scarcity, wage loss, lack of shelter, fear of getting infected, anxiety about an uncertain future, and so on. This provoked a mass exodus and the migrants started fleeing to their native homes. As per government data, there were approximately 11.4 million migrant workers who left for their homes across the country. According to the Maharashtra state administration, about 11.86 lakh migrants left Maharashtra on special trains after the lockdown was imposed. According to unofficial estimates, their number may reach as high as 25 lakh<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup><https://www.newslandry.com/2021/03/25/mumbais-migrant-workers-are-still-to-recover-from-lockdown-blow>

### III. PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS COVERED IN THE STUDY

The central objective of this study is to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on internal migrants, their socio-economic characteristics, access to labour markets and social services, and their strategies to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in the city of Mumbai. Hence, the primary respondents in this study were migrant workers from Mumbai. Using random sampling technique, a total of 1000 samples have been collected. Migrant laborers, (interstate, intrastate, skilled, unskilled laborers, and Blue Collar Workers), who have migrated to Mumbai after 2005, residing beyond 200 km from their origin, having monthly income less than INR 25000 (335.80\$) and were present in the city before the outbreak of COVID-19 have been included in this study.

In the following section, a brief socio-economic profile of the migrant workers has been discussed in the context of their selection, gender, nature of work, and their arrival.

#### i. Demographic Profile

Most of the studies on migrants are framed by men's experiences thereby ignoring women's role and impact as migrants. Heterogeneity and wide coverage of samples are important in any primary research. Hence, in the study, both male and female migrants have been included to explore the experiences of women migrants.

According to the insights of 2011 census data, women make up over 70 percent of the internal migrants in India. However, less than 3 percent of the women migrants in the age group 20-34 identify work/ employment as their reason to migrate. On the contrary, almost 40 percent of the male migrants aged 20-34 identify work/employment as the primary reason for moving. However, when looking at 'marriage' as a reason for migration, the figures are flipped, with an average of 3.1 percent males and 71.2 percent women<sup>21</sup>. According to a study by the Population Council, 51.6 percent of female migrants migrate due to marriage or with family and about 44 percent migrated due to work and job-related reasons<sup>22</sup>.

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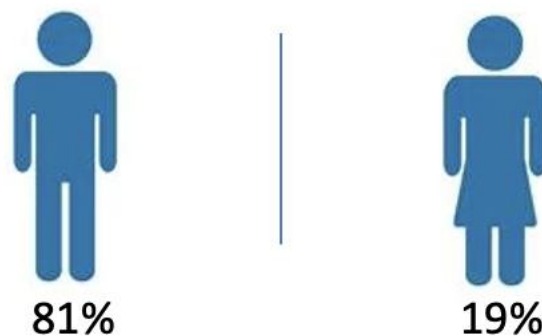
<sup>21</sup><https://feminisminindia.com/2019/03/28/womens-migration-work-india/>

<sup>22</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0897640f0b652dd00022a/61263\\_Internal-Female-Migrants.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0897640f0b652dd00022a/61263_Internal-Female-Migrants.pdf)

Even though marriage remains to be one of the predominant reasons for women's migration, lately, with the emergence of nuclear families, there has been an increase in the demand for women-centred services like domestic help, child care, elderly care, cooks, and so on. Similar findings were observed in a study by C. Annie Jane (2016). She observed that in the past few years, there has been an absolute increase in migrant women moving independently in search of work<sup>23</sup>.

Dharmendra Pratap Singh's investigation into Mumbai's sex ratio suggested that the sex ratio varies greatly between demographic groupings, ranging from 854 intra-state migrants to 615 among interstate migrants. Rural migrants have a substantially lower sex ratio than urban migrants. Similarly, migrants from rural inter-state migrants have a lower sex ratio than intra-state migrants<sup>24</sup>.

*Image vi- Demographic profile of migrants*



As observed from the figure, nearly 81 percent of the migrants included in the study were males while the rest of the 19 percent were females. More males were surveyed than females in the current study. However, no generalization can be drawn from the study findings due to random sampling.

## ii. Category of Migrants

After the declaration of the lockdown in March 2020, there was a mass exodus of migrants back to their origin. Some left the city for their hometown while some did not. Out of these

<sup>23</sup>[https://www.worldwidejournals.com/indian-journal-of-applied-research\(IJAR\)/special\\_file.php?val=April\\_2016\\_1461059249\\_24.pdf](https://www.worldwidejournals.com/indian-journal-of-applied-research(IJAR)/special_file.php?val=April_2016_1461059249_24.pdf)

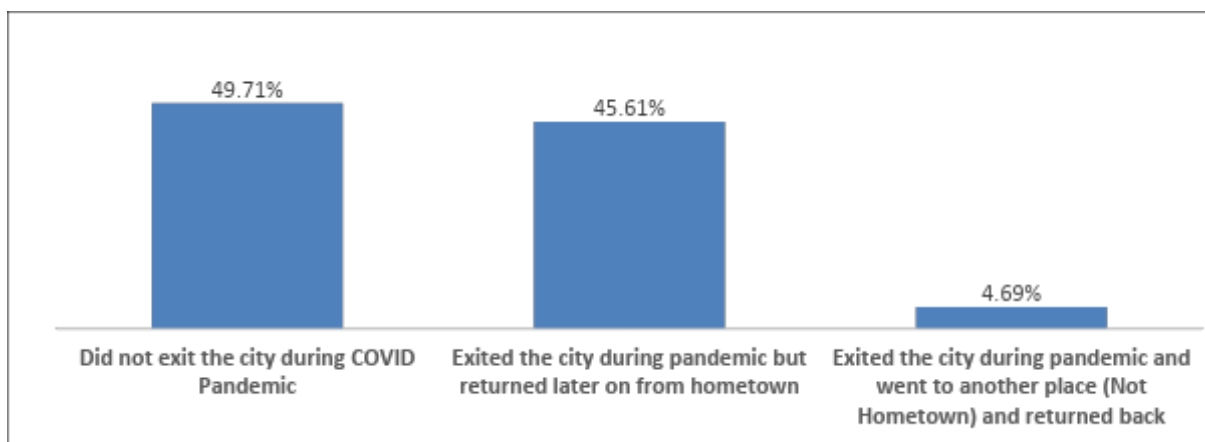
<sup>24</sup>[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346438710\\_Migration\\_in\\_Mumbai\\_Trends\\_in\\_Fifty\\_Years](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346438710_Migration_in_Mumbai_Trends_in_Fifty_Years)

migrants who went back, some returned while some did not. These migrants have been categorized into four groups for this study:

- **Category 1:** Migrants who did not exit the city during COVID-19.
- **Category 2:** Migrants who exited the city during COVID-19 to their hometown and returned.
- **Category 3:** Migrants who exited the city during COVID-19 to another location but not their hometown.
- **Category 4:** Migrants who exited the city during COVID-19 but did not return.

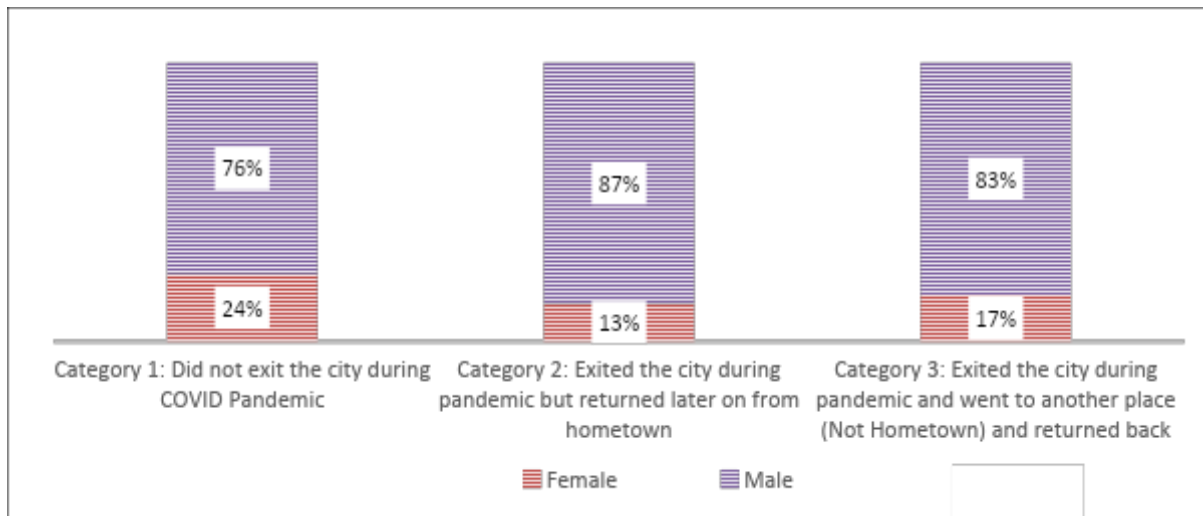
In the current study, migrants belonging to only Category I, II, and III have been included. The Category IV migrants have not been included as they were difficult to trace back and were beyond the scope of the study.

*Chart i – Distribution of migrants by category*



Various news articles suggest that there was a massive exodus of migrants from Mumbai city after the declaration of lockdown. However, the present study findings suggest otherwise. As observed from the bar graph, almost 50 percent of the migrants did not leave the city during the pandemic (Category 1). About 5 percent of the migrants who exited the city went to someplace other than their hometown (Category 3), whereas the rest went to their respective hometowns (Category 2). The migrants who faced challenges in reaching their hometowns chose to move to their nearest relative's home instead of their hometown.

Chart ii - Distribution of migrants by category and sex

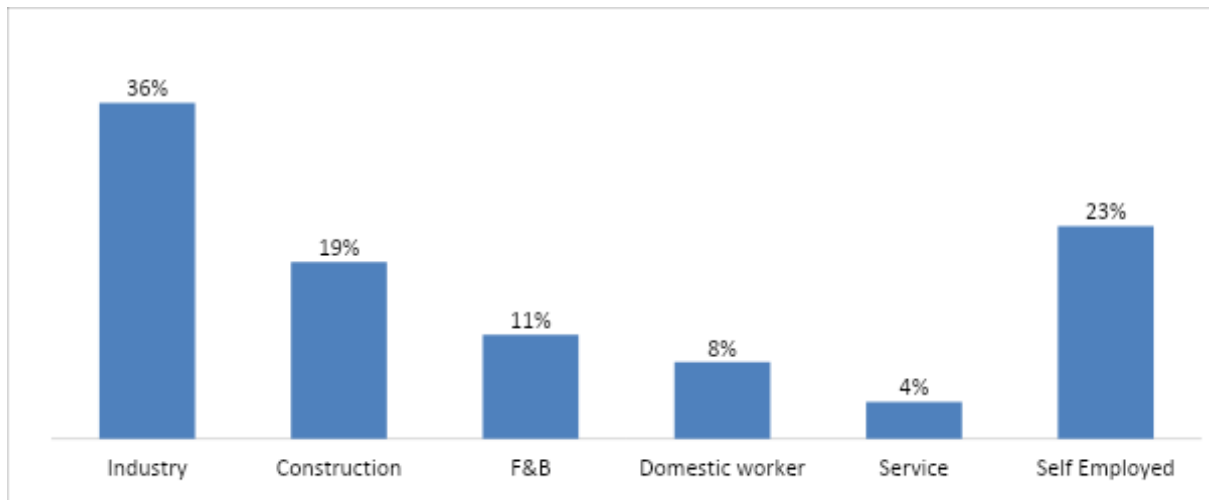


### iii. Economic profile

There are numerous sub-sectors like construction, textiles, rickshaw pulling, domestic work, security services, street vending, small hotels, roadside hotels, tea stalls, and so on where migrant workers are employed in Mumbai as part of their livelihood. However, in the current study, greater focus has been given mainly to profiles like Food and Beverage (F&B), Manufacturing, Construction, Household workers, and the ones who are self-employed. About 200 samples from each of the five profiles were intended to be taken. However, due to random sampling, varying proportions of migrants were represented from each sector.

The industrial sector included the migrants working in manufacturing, fabrication, casting, moulding units, and so on. They constituted around 35 percent of the total sample size. Construction workers constituted 19 percent of the total sample. The migrants employed as security guards, in financial institutes, and IT software companies and were getting a fixed and regular pay were included in the service sector. Only 4 percent of migrants apprehended belonged to the service sector.

*Chart iii - Distribution of migrants by economic activity*

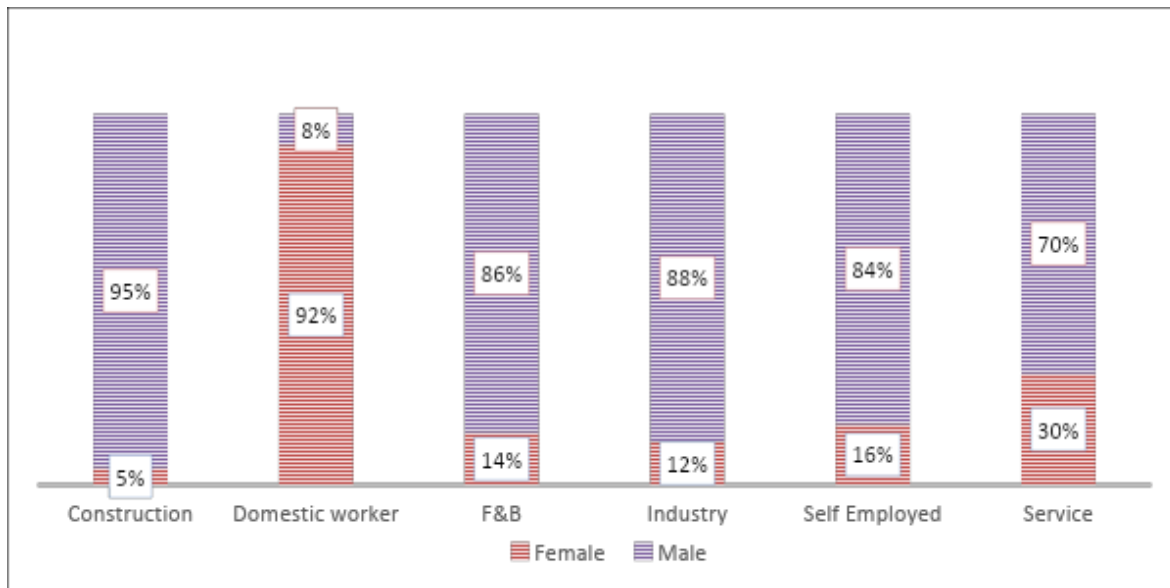


The F&B sector included the migrants working in restaurants, bars, pubs, hotels, alcohol sales, and so on. They constituted 11 percent of the total sample size. The migrants who were working as street vendors, rickshaw pullers, auto-rickshaw drivers, and taxi drivers, had roadside stalls of clothes, accessories, and so on were considered under the self-employed category. About 23 percent of the total sample size was self-employed. In general, more than 70 percent of the total respondents were pursuing a job.

The following graph shows the distribution of migrant economic activity by sex. The majority of the migrants surveyed were males. Most of the domestic workers that were surveyed were women. This, in general, can imply that women are preferred over males in this occupation. Women also constitute 30 percent of the workers in the service sector. However, very few samples of female migrant workers were apprehended in the construction sector.



Chart iv - Distribution of migrants by economic activity and sex



Findings in various literatures also show the predominance of female workers as domestic helpers which falls in line with the present study findings. In the study by Banerjee and Raju, they find that around 92 percent of the 20 million domestic workers in the country are women<sup>25</sup>. Furthermore, an article published in *Indian Express* suggested that nearly half of women migrants in Mumbai work as domestic help<sup>26</sup>. In another study by Saraswati et.al, found that nearly 55 percent of the female migrants in Mumbai were working as domestic helps<sup>27</sup>.

#### IV. FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

##### i. Socio Economic Profile and practices by migrants

In the following section some of the major characteristics of the respondents have been discussed namely the period of their arrival, their origin state, pattern of remittances transfer and their movement and staying pattern. A discussion around these will help to better understand the context of the migrant's arrival and their adjustment in the destination, i.e. Mumbai.

<sup>25</sup><http://www.shram.org/uploadFiles/20140702042222.pdf>

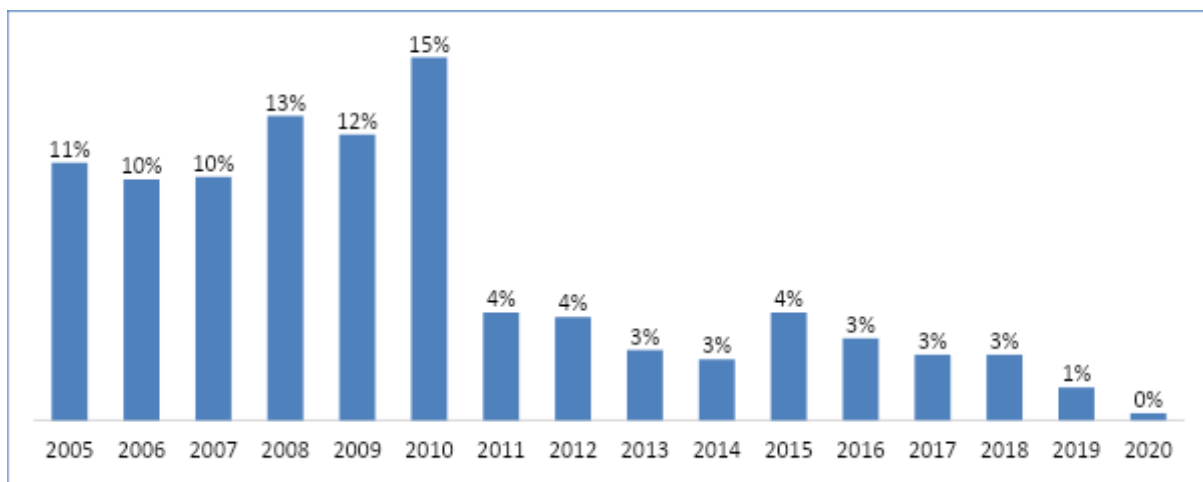
<sup>26</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/mumbai-paper-clip-nearly-half-of-women-migrants-in-mumbai-work-as-domestic-helps-2935565/>

<sup>27</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0897640f0b652dd00022a/61263\\_Internal-Female-Migrants.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0897640f0b652dd00022a/61263_Internal-Female-Migrants.pdf)

### Period of arrival of Migrants in Mumbai

In the present study, migrants who moved to Mumbai after 2005 have been considered. This benchmark has been selected based on subjectivity and significant ground realities. The following graph depicts the trend of the arrival of migrants in Mumbai, which indicates a decline in the number of migrants approaching Mumbai after 2010. In the period of 2005-2010, there is a consistent rise in the number of migrants coming to the city whereas post 2010, there has been a substantial fall. Almost 71 percent of the migrants in the current study came in the period of 2005-2010. While 22 percent came in the period of 2011-2016. Only 7 percent of the total sample population came after 2017.

Chart v- Period of arrival of Migrants in Mumbai



The findings mirror the observation of an article published in *Indian Express*, which concluded a declining rate of migration over the last two decades<sup>28</sup>. The prominent reasons behind this declining trend could be combination of below mentioned factors-

- Evolution from an industrial to a service sector powerhouse, altering the inter-state migration trend, which formerly favoured labourers.
- Shifting of textile industries to Surat, Bhiwandi, Ichalkaranji and other close by textile industrial hubs

<sup>28</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/fewer-people-migrating-to-mumbai-from-outside-state-than-10-years-ago-census-2011-6705944/>

- Higher cost of living: The exorbitant expense of living in Mumbai is another key reason why people are retreating from the city.
- Limited opportunity of housing, health, and education services for migrants.
- Promotion of regional nativism. The migrant workforce in Mumbai is also a component of the city's political narrative. Certain parties have backed anti-migrant policies and attempted to reserve employment for locals, resulting in a struggle between migrants and local identity politics.

### Origin state of Migrants

According to Census of India, the largest share of migrants to Mumbai has been reported to be from Uttar Pradesh (nearly 41 percent) followed by Gujarat (6.08 lakh), Karnataka (3.83 lakh), Rajasthan (3.30 lakh), and Bihar (2.84 lakh). Moreover, there has been an increase in the share of migrants coming from every state into Mumbai except for Southern states of Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu<sup>29</sup>.

The current study findings suggest that only a small share of migrants amounting to 11 percent is intra-state migrants, migrating from other parts of Maharashtra to Mumbai. Most of the intra-regional migrants are from western and central Maharashtra. Only 9 percent of the total intra-regional migrants are from Eastern Maharashtra.

Almost 89 percent of the total sample population are inter-state migrants, migrating from other states of the country, namely Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and so on. Around 77 percent of the sample population is from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar as depicted in the map. These two states are of the most densely populated states of India with low level of urbanisation. Most of the migrants from Uttar Pradesh are from western and central parts. Only a meagre share of migrants hails from Eastern Uttar Pradesh. The close proximity with Delhi NCR can be a probable reason for small share of migrants from this region. No distinct pattern of migrant arrival can be seen in case of Bihar. Almost an equal share of migrants in Mumbai hail from Eastern and western Bihar.

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<sup>29</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-heres-what-census-data-show-about-migrations-to-mumbai/>

Image vii - Origin state of Migrants

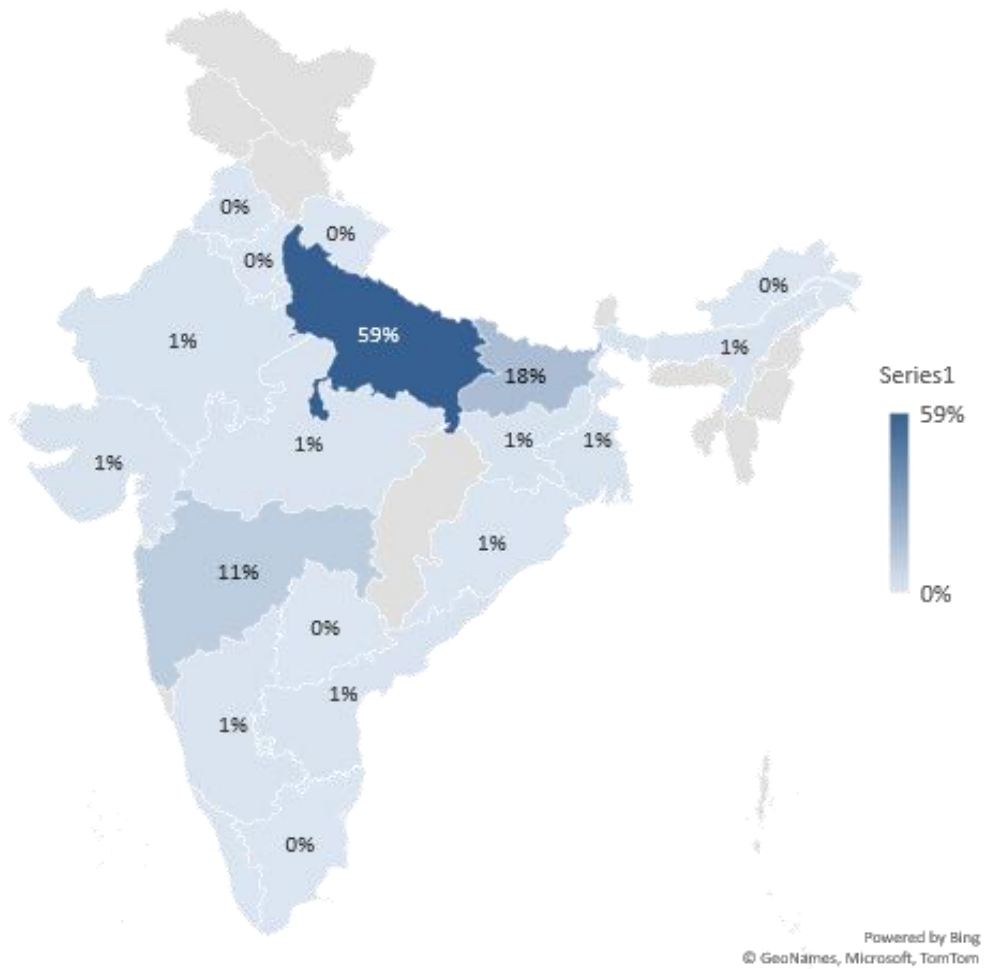
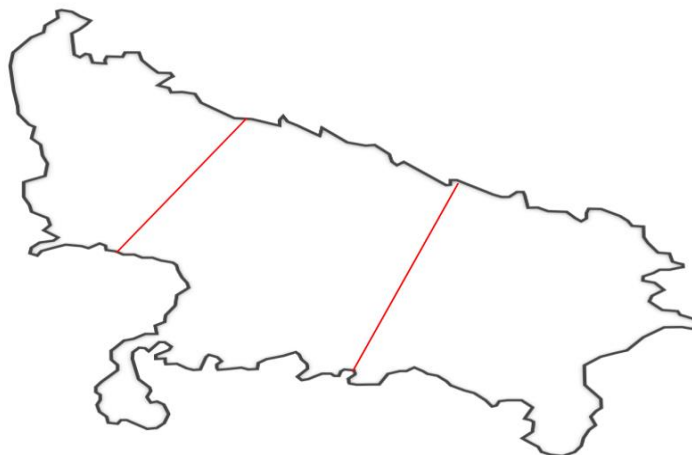


Image viii – Source region of Migrants from Uttar Pradesh

East UP – 3%  
Central UP – 39%  
West UP – 58%



*Image ix- Source region of migrants from Bihar*



West Bihar – 58%  
East Bihar – 42%

Most of the migrants mentioned that they need to earn more and the city of Mumbai being more economically propulsive with a myriad of employment opportunities and better pay is the ideal location for them. The migrants conveyed that the rural areas are mostly dependent on agriculture for employment and that alone cannot satiate their needs. Moreover, the greater extent of employment in rural areas is seasonal in nature. Hence, they resort to migration to large urban centres offering more and better employment opportunities with greater wages. The same story was narrated by one of the respondents from Chhattisgarh who said, *“There are very limited opportunities and scope in village and one cannot earn much through agriculture. Hence we decided to migrate to Mumbai in search of better opportunities.”*

Image x - Source region of Migrants from Maharashtra



East Maharashtra – 9%  
Central Maharashtra – 45%  
West Maharashtra – 46%

The migrants included in the study credited the city of Mumbai with availability of multiple work opportunities and greater wages compared to their native place. *Santosh Ram, a migrant labourer from Bihar said he does brick loading in Mumbai. He used to earn INR 200- INR 300 a day in Bihar whereas he is earning around INR 700 a day in Mumbai for the same amount of work.*

*A garment vendor in Mumbai remarked that in big cities like Mumbai, one can sell anything on the roadside and make money which is not possible in his hometown. The garments that he sell here fetches good margin which would not have been much profitable in his village.*

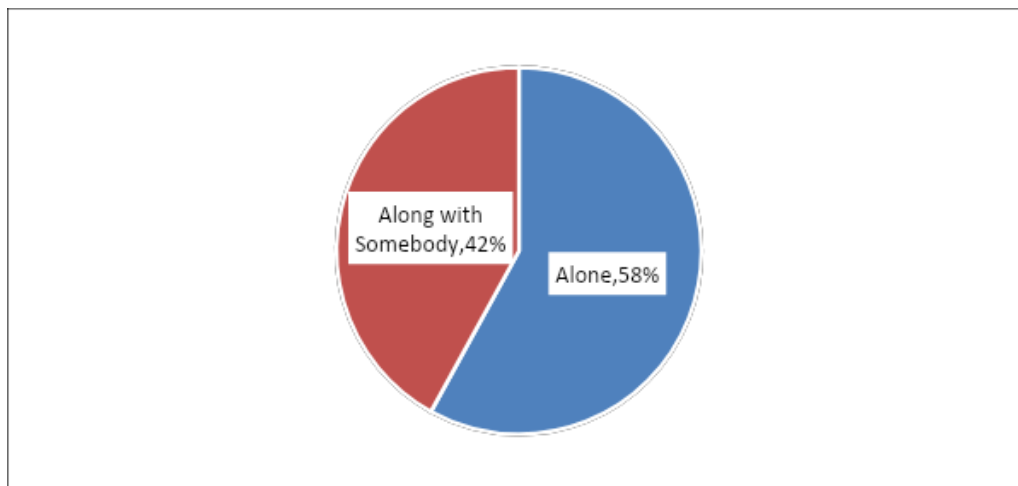
Field evidence also suggests that certain sectors are associated with migration from specific states. For example, inter-state female migrants from West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand mainly worked as house maids or cooks. The construction workers are mainly from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are mostly employed in industrial sector. The cart pushers, head loaders, rickshaw pullers and drivers are mainly from Bihar. Hotel industry is dominated by a mix of the intrastate as well as migrants from different states.

### **Migrants' pattern of movement and staying**

Migration can involve movement of individuals alone or the entire family. Most of the migrants in India do not always move with their entire family. More often, they leave their family like spouse, children, and parents behind. Uncertain living conditions in the destination region, and the high cost of migration are some of the reasons why many people migrate alone.

In the current study, about 58 percent of the migrants moved alone while rest 42 percent moved with someone like spouse, kin, siblings' friends, children, village acquaintances and so on.

*Chart vi- Migrant Pattern of movement*



### **Migrants responded - Moved alone in the city:**

As ascertained from the pie chart more than half of the migrants that came to Mumbai in the pre COVID period, came alone. About 72 percent of this group were still living alone when COVID first started in 2020. About 14 percent had their families with them. Though they initially came alone, in the subsequent years their family also joined them. The rest 13 percent of the migrants were living as bachelors.

About 45 percent of the migrants that continued living alone did not exit the city during the COVID lock down. About 55 percent migrants living alone left the city. Majority of these people (98 percent) when they returned to Mumbai came back alone. During the survey,

majority of these people were still living alone. Only 22 percent of them brought their family with them. However, during the time of the survey, 60 percent of them were living alone.

About 65 percent of the migrants who were joined by their family in the subsequent years did not exit the city during COVID. Only 35 percent of this group left for their native place. Only 30 percent of these people brought back their family with them while rest came alone. Among the people who came back alone after the lockdown was lifted half of them have been again joined by their family while the other half continued living alone.



Image xi - Migrants who moved alone

1		2 and 3		4		5		6 and 7				
How they came first time?		How they live during march 2020?										
1. How Migrated		2. Pre COVID		3. React		4. Return to the city alone or with family		Immediate family members reside with you in the destination				
Level 1		Level 2		Cat 1		Cat 2/3		For only Cat 2/3				
								Alone	Family			
Alone (594,58.01%)	Family (88,14.81%)	57,64.77%	31,35.23%		Alone (22,70.97%)	Family (10,45.45%)						
										Family (9,29.03%)	Family (1,11.11%)	Alone (8,88.89%)
	Alone (430,72.39%)	192,44.65%	238,55.35%		Alone (233,97.90%)	Family (52,22.32%)	239	7	Alone (181,77.68%)			
										Family (5,2.10%)	Family (2,40%)	Alone (3,60%)
Family (2,5.13%)	Family (1,50%)	Alone (1,50%)										

The majority (51 percent) of migrants who were living in bach left for their native place during the lockdown. When they returned they mostly came back alone and are still living alone. Only 5 percent of the migrants came back with family.

Since the lockdown led to cessation of all economic activities, majority of Category 2 and 3 migrants who returned came back alone to assess the economic situation and availability of opportunities. Only when they were assured of things returning back to normal with ease of

finding jobs, they were joined by their family members. In many cases, the migrants left their family in the place of origin in fear of subsequent lockdowns in the wake of new strains of COVID.

### *Migrants who came with someone*

As stated earlier 42 percent of the migrant in the current study came to Mumbai with someone like spouse, kin, siblings friends, children, village acquaintances and so on. Almost 95 percent of the migrants came with family members and only a handful came with someone other than family.

Majority of the migrants (97%) were living with their family during the COVID outbreak. About 56 percent of the migrants did not exit the city. They stayed in Mumbai during the lockdown and the subsequent time. About 44 percent of them belonged to Category 2 and 3. Majority of these migrants returned back with their family. Only 11 percent of the migrants came alone but their family joined them later on.

About 10 percent of the migrants who came with family were found to be living alone before the outbreak of COVID. Majority of these people did not leave the city. The 46 percent of the emigrants who left, mostly came alone while 78 percent brought their family with them.

On the basis of the above discussion, it can be ascertained that migrants who came to Mumbai alone for a livelihood were majorly found to be living alone, though, with time, family members joined them in the city. Post COVID, instances of individual migration was more widespread. Even though the lockdown was relaxed and economic activities resumed, a sense of fear was instilled among the migrants.

Image xii - Migrant who came with someone

1		2 and 3		4		5		6 and 7					
How they came first time?		How they live during march 2020?											
1. How Migrated		2. Pre COVID		3. React		4. Return to the city alone or with family		Immediate family members reside with you in the destination					
Level 1		Level 2		Cat 1	Cat 2/3	Alone	Family	For only C at 2/3					
								Alone	Family				
Somebody (430,41.99%)	Family (407,94.65%)	Family (283,70.76%)	162,56.25%	126,43.75%	Alone (14,11.12%)	Family (14,100%)	102	167					
						Alone (0)							
					Family (112,38.83%)	Family (111,99.10%)							
						Alone (1,0.90%)							
					Alone (39,9.59%)	21, 53.85%			18,46.15%	Alone (13,72.22%)	Family (9,69.23%)		
										Family (5,27.78%)	Family (5,100%)		
					Alone (0)								
	Someone else (23,5.35%)	Bach (30,19.65%)	38,47.5%	42,52.5%	Alone (2,4.76%)	Family (2,100%)							
						Alone (0)							
					Family (40,95.23%)	Family (40,100%)							
						Alone (0)							
					Family (3,13.04%)	0	3,100%	Alone (3,100%)	Family (2,66.67%)				
								Alone (1,33.33%)					
				Family (0)	Family (0)								
					Alone (0)								
	Alone (9,39.13%)	0	9,100%	Alone (3,33.33%)	Family (0)								
				Alone (3,100%)									
Family (1,11.11%)				Family (0)									
				Alone (1,100%)									
						Alone (9,100%)	Family (1,11.11%)						
							Alone (3,33.33%)						
				Family (0)	Family (0)								
					Alone (0)								
	Bach (11,47.83%)	2,18.18%	9,81.82%	Alone (9,100%)	Family (1,11.11%)								
				Alone (0)									
				Family (0)									
				Alone (0)									
						Alone (9,100%)	Family (1,11.11%)						
							Alone (3,33.33%)						
				Family (0)	Family (0)								
					Alone (0)								

### Practices related to Remittances

Remittances are usually understood as financial transfers made by migrants to their relatives and families at the origin. Domestic migration is highly significant in the context of internal remittances. According to a report by World Bank, India tops among the remittance receiving countries of the world in 2018 at US\$78.6 billion, thereby gaining 2.9 percent of its GDP from remittances<sup>30</sup>.

It is very difficult to estimate the magnitude of domestic remittances when compared to international remittances. This is mainly because the internal remittances are mostly sent through informal modes. Majority of migrants do not have bank account and hence send remittances through another trusted person's bank account. Another means of sending remittance is through a sub-agent from the same locality of the native place. The agent takes the responsibility of sending the remittances to specific migrant's households.

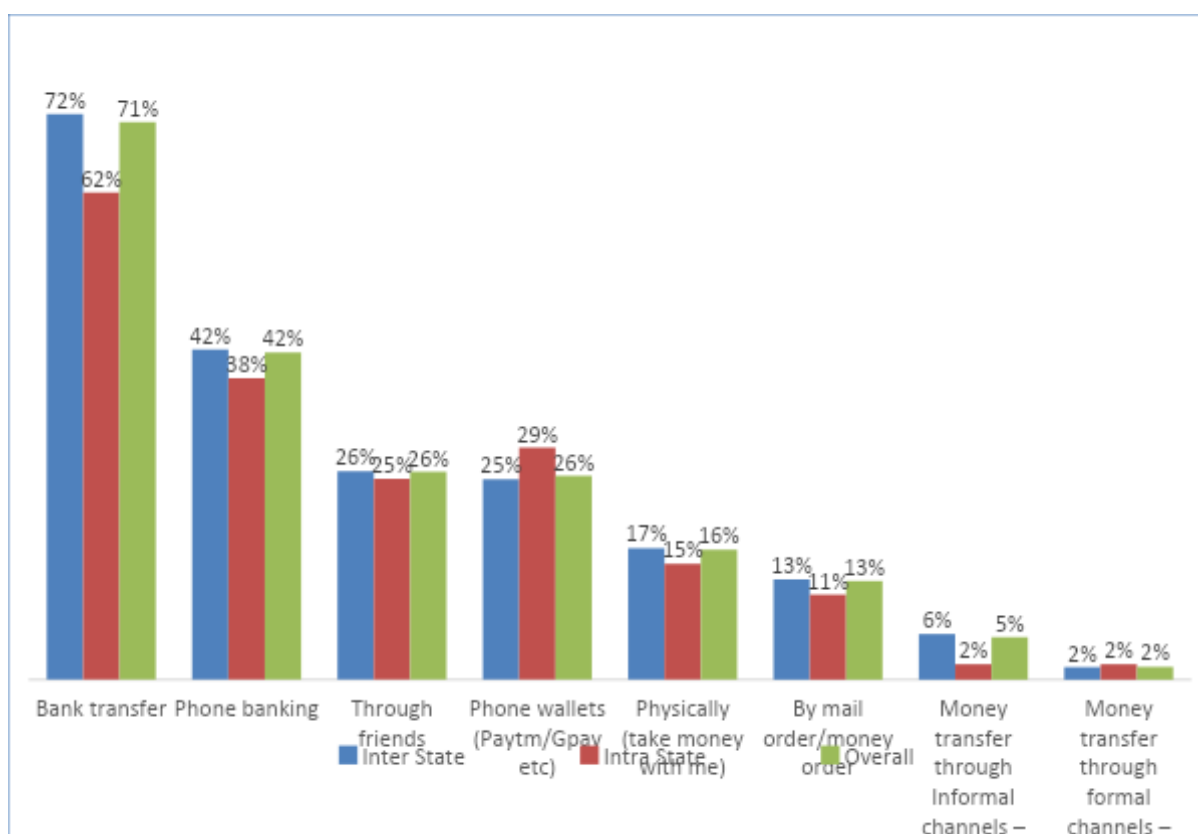
The study by Reja and Das (2019), has highlighted another transfer process popularly known as TT channels. The migrants involved in this TT process approach a fellow migrant in the evening after the day's work and enquire about migrants who want to send money home. They collected the cash from the fellow migrants and deposit it to their own bank account which is subsequently disbursed to the fellow migrant's family through some agents or family members.

Lately, the mechanism of sending remittances has subsequently switched from informal to formal mode. This is perhaps in line with technology advancement and increased awareness amongst migrants. The most probable reason for this major shift could be due to the distance between the migrant's native home and city of residence which hinders frequent and regular transfer of remittance. Hence, formal channels are being preferred because of its fast, easy and safer transfer of money. Moreover, with the introduction of Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) in 2014 by the Government of India, almost every household holds a bank account. This too has immensely helped in reducing the informal arrangements.

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<sup>30</sup><https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33634>

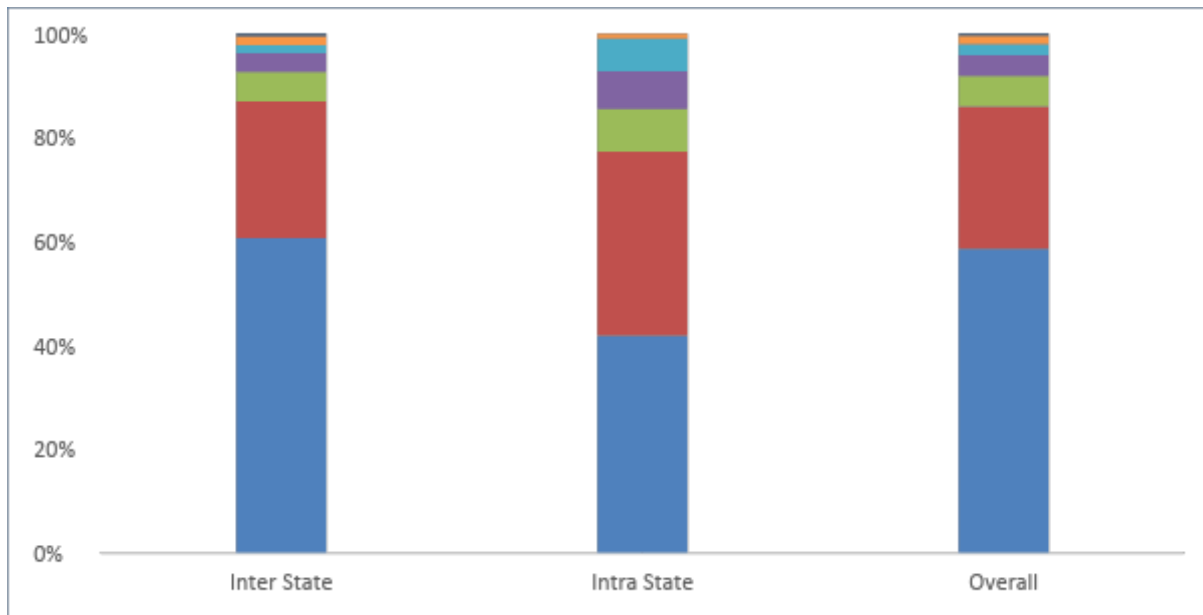
Chart vii - Distribution of migrants by modes of remittance transfer



In the present study it was observed that bank transfer is the most preferred mode of remittance transfer followed by phone banking among the migrants. About 25 percent of migrants send remittances through friends. Phone wallets are another modern age technology that is being used by the migrants for remittance transfer. Only 5 percent of migrants are using informal means of remittance transfer. The modes and patterns of remittance transfer among the inter-state and intra state is very consistent with the overall pattern with bank transfer being the most preferred mode of transfer.

Majority of migrants, both inter and intra state migrants send remittances monthly. Large share of intra-state migrants (35 percent) does not send remittances regularly. The probable reason might lie in the difference in distance. As they are located much closer to their home in comparison to the interstate migrants, they have the feasibility of time as even in urgent requirement they can send the money fast and easily to their family members.

Chart viii - Frequency of Remittances transfer



The respondents also mentioned that there is no fixed amount that they send as remittances. It all depends on the circumstantial needs of the family. Mostly remittances are used to meet household expenditures, repay debts, children's education, and medical expenses, cover losses in agriculture and for meeting large expenditures of marriages, festivals and ceremonies. After the basic subsistence needs are fulfilled, some of the migrants use it for land purchase also.

## ii. Impact of COVID-19 among Migrants in Mumbai

In the following section the impact of COVID-19 on the migrant population has been discussed in detail.

The sudden lockdown and shutdown of economic activities placed the migrant population in a disadvantageous position. Millions of migrants were left without means of livelihood and income with shutting down of the markets. They not only had to deal with loss of income but also food shortages and an uncertain future. Though the scale of this issue varied from region to region, it resulted in extensive economic and social disruptions.

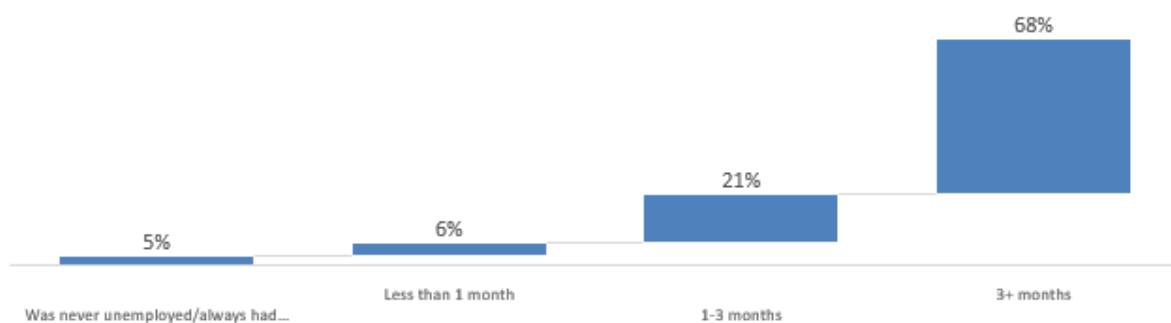
According to a study on economic impact of COVID on migrants by The Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the average income of the migrant has plummeted by almost 47 percent and unemployment increased from 7 percent to 12 percent. At the same time, self-employed

people such as vendors, drivers, shop owners, and daily wage earners, bore the brunt of the burden. Even once economic activity restarted following the lockdown last year, at least 12.5 percent were unable to find employment<sup>31</sup>.

### Economic Impact

As illustrated in the graph, around 95 percent of the migrants were without income generating activities during major duration of lockdown in 2020-21.

*Chart ix-Share of migrants with no livelihood during lockdown, 2020-2021*



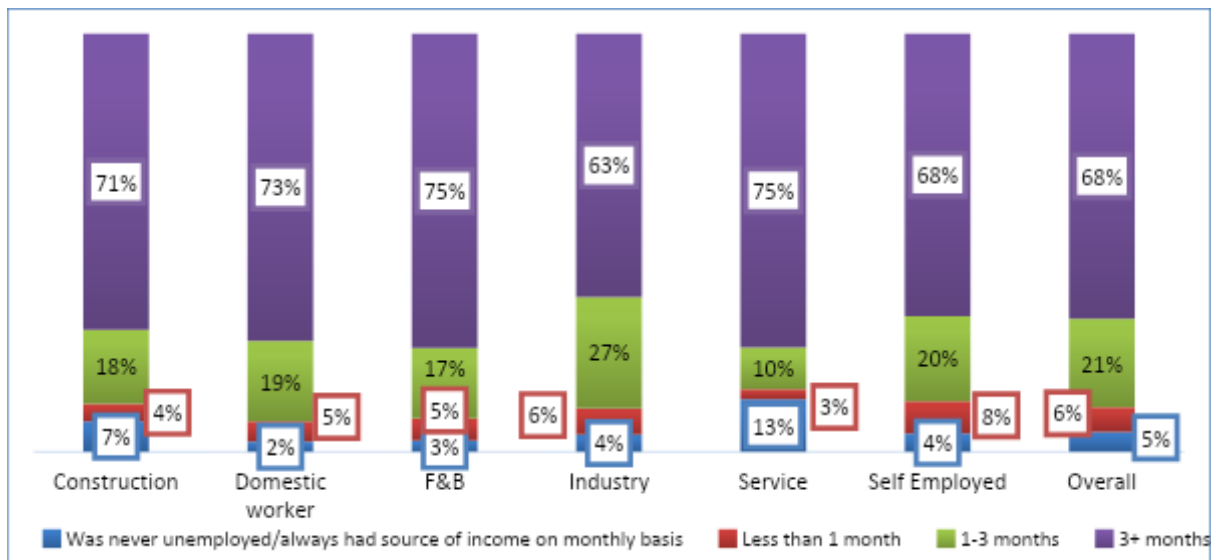
The pandemic shook the lives of the already poor and vulnerable migrant workers working in all the major sectors. About 68 percent of the migrants did not have any means of livelihood for more than 3 months during the lockdown. Only 5 percent of the migrants had employment or source of income during the period of lockdown. These were the people mostly employed in service sector like watchmen.

The migrants reported that the abrupt announcement of lockdown and the consequent shut down of all economic activities like factories, industries, construction sites, offices, hotels and other businesses left them in a perilous situation. Majority of the domestic workers and house-maids were asked to discontinue the work during the initial phase of lockdown to prevent the disease transmission. Most of these workers had no source of income during this time. But at the same time, some domestic workers reported that few of the generous employers gave them either full or half of their monthly salary through-out the lockdown

<sup>31</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/livelihood-in-mumbai-hit-by-pandemic-66-people-say-jobs-impacted-survey-7165905/>  
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/covid19-impact-mumbai-s-poor-have-got-poorer-101624127789821.html>

period. Migrants working in big hotels had some-what better experience as compared to others as they stayed and had food in the hotels itself. The ones working in small hotels (dhabas), roadside eateries, tea stalls and so on were not that fortunate. Most of these establishments were shut down and the workers were asked to vacate the workplace.

*Chart x - Sector-wise distribution of migrants with no means of livelihood during lockdown, 2020-2021*



The migrants remarked, that the lockdown added to their adversities and debts. In response to the crisis and to meet their needs they made adjustments and compromised on the quality and quantity of the food, took loans, sold their belongings, etc. A worker from Bihar said, *“We were in pathetic condition. We had neither food nor any money left. We were forced to sell our belongings and even mortgage my wife’s jewellery”*

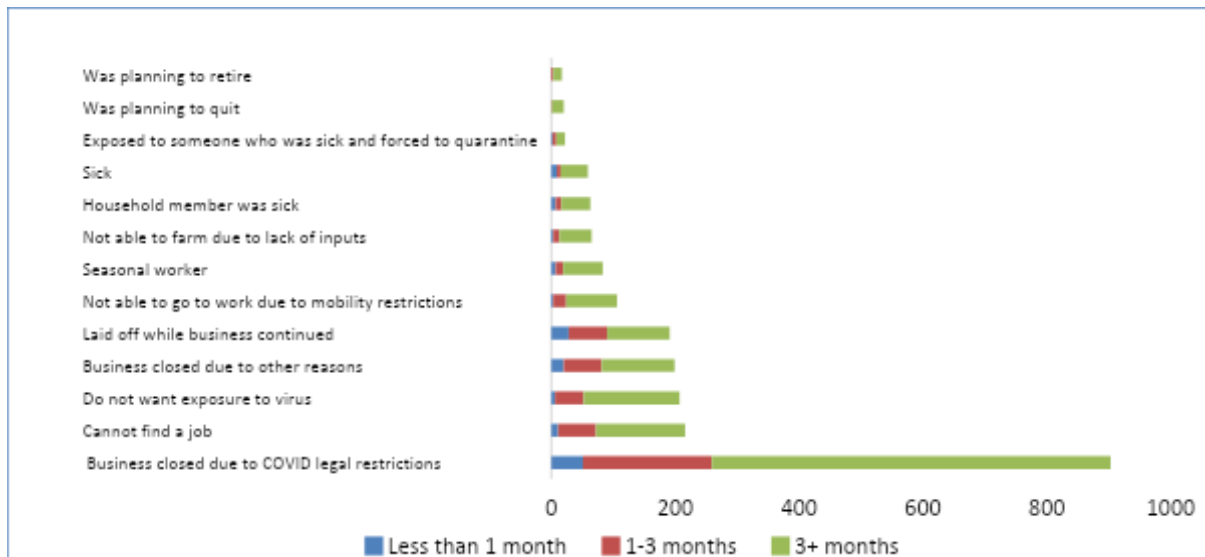
A construction worker from Uttar Pradesh while revealing his miseries said that, *“I work as a labourer in construction sites. I became unemployed with the announcement of the lockdown. I had no idea how I will survive in the city for more than 20 days since I had only INR 6000 as my savings.”*

One of the female migrant also shared her woes. *She said that she had to leave their rented room because the owner asked them to vacate it immediately. They faced a lot of hurdles in searching for another room amidst pandemic and when they got one, they could not afford*



the rent for more than two months. They again had to relocate themselves. Their children's studies were also disturbed during this crisis.

Chart xi- Reason for lack of job and income generating opportunities during COVID



The findings of the present study suggest that almost 63 percent of the total migrants were unemployed for more than three months due to COVID based legal restrictions. The other significant reasons for unemployment were inability to find jobs; business was shut, while some migrant workers were laid off. Many migrants reported that they did not go out to search for jobs as they feared getting exposed to virus considering the population density of Mumbai and the rising cases. Some mentioned that they did not go out due to imposed mobility restrictions.

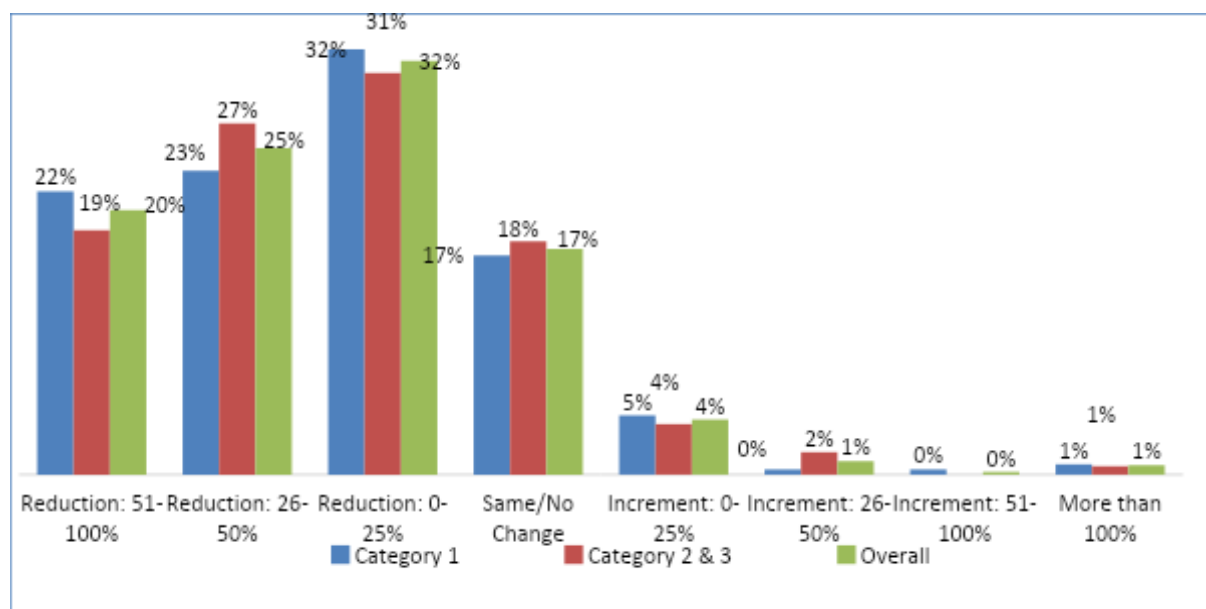
Kamlesh, a respondent who was living with his family at the time of lockdown explained that during those times they lived in fear. *“Neither his children nor his wife stepped out of the house. We all remained inside. We were just passing our days on the little savings we had.”*

Mukesh, a migrant from Bihar, working in a hotel stated, *“I have been living in Mumbai for the last 10 years. I received full salary for the month of March, a little less in April but was not given any in May. I knew I cannot survive without money for too long in Mumbai. Hence, I decided to go back to my hometown, Gaya.”*

### Impact on income

In the current study as illustrated in the graph, overall 77 percent of the respondents reported to have reduced income post pandemic as compared to the pre pandemic situation. About 20 percent of the migrants reported that their income reduced by more than 50 percent. Around 17 percent of the migrants reported that their income is constant. A very small section of the migrants (6 percent) reported increment in their income by 1-4 percent. The pattern of income reduction is consistent across all the three categories of the migrants that were included in the study.

Chart xii - Change in income due to COVID



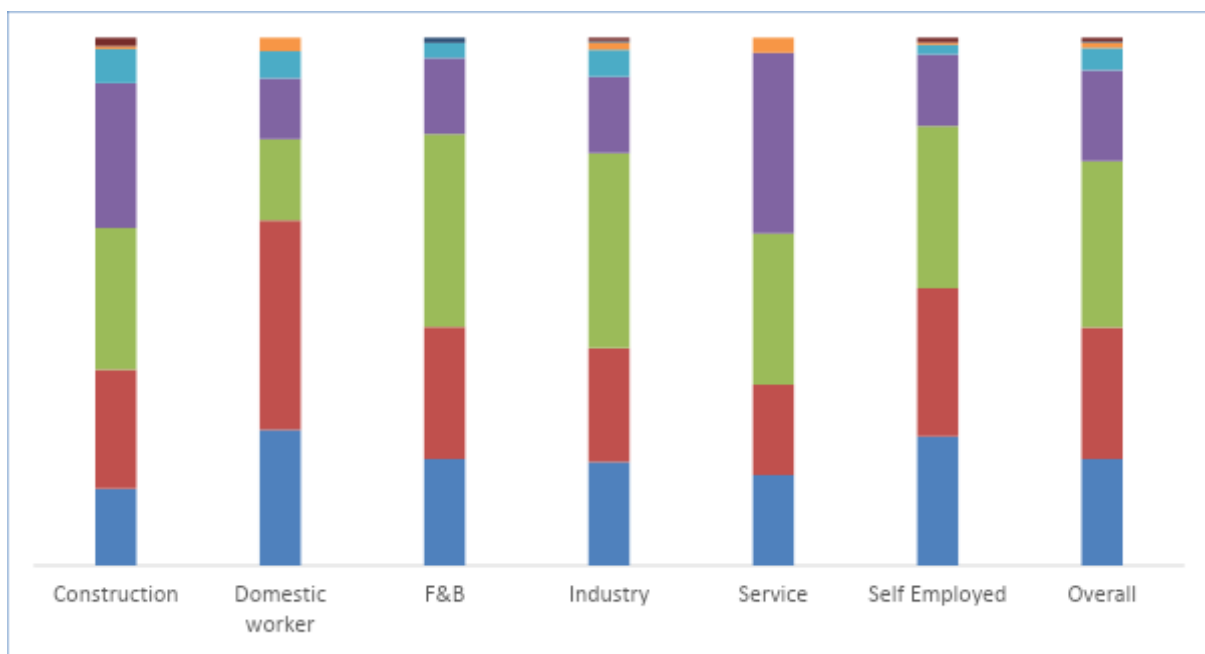
A report by Habitat for Humanity, which aimed to understand the impact of pandemic on migrants of Maharashtra, is in line with the findings of the current study. The report illustrated around 71 percent of the migrants did not get their wages after the announcement of lockdown, 5 percent received half the money and around 16 percent received the same wages as before<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>32</sup>[https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind\\_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf](https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf)

Sanoj, one of the construction workers, mentioned, “Our contractor informed us that the government has imposed lockdown and we will not be allowed to come out of our house. So, till the time this lockdown persists, we will not be getting any work.”

When looking at the change in income, a very interesting picture comes into scene. About 59 percent of the migrants who were self-employed and the ones working in hotel industry faced reduction in their income. The domestic workers did not experience much change in the income level. At the same time about 34 percent of the migrants who were involved in service sector also had no major reduction in their income.

Chart xiii- Sector-wise change in income due to COVID



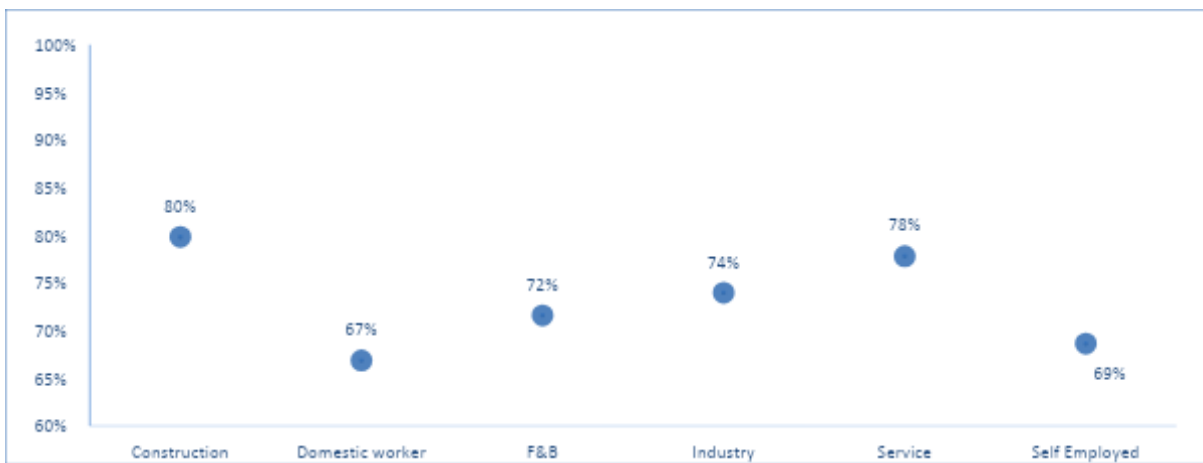
Shamit, a native of Jharkhand working in hotel expressed pain of losing his income as his salary was slashed by 50 percent during lockdown. He said, “I have a two year old son. I don’t know how I will manage to pay the rent and send back money to my wife with this reduced salary.”

Table iii – Income Level

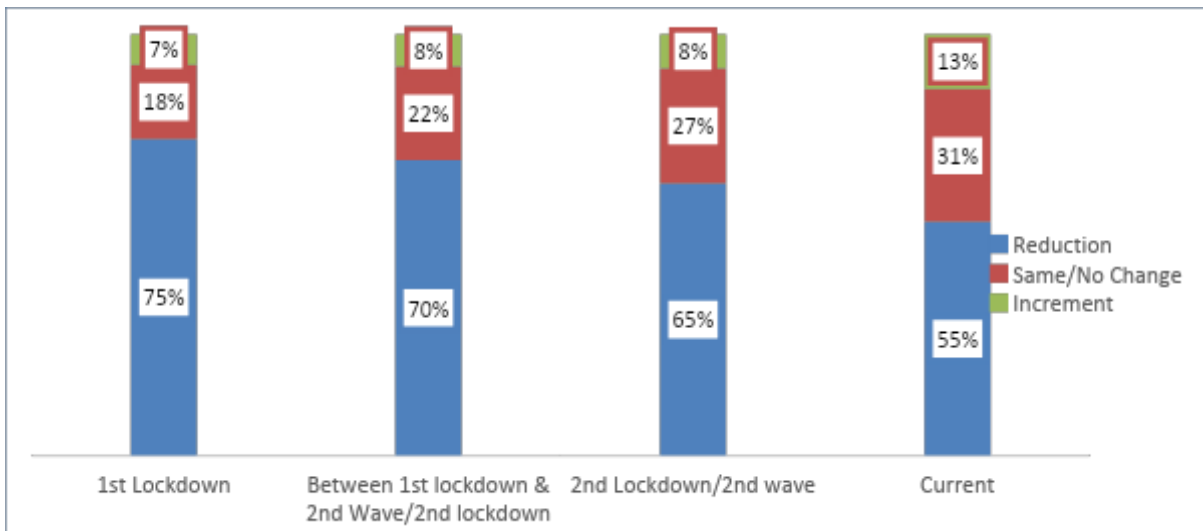
Definition	Income post Covid ( )
Reduction: 51-100%	25
Reduction: 26-50%	68

<b>Reduction: 0-25%</b>	83
<b>Same/No Change</b>	100
<b>Increment: 0-25%</b>	113
<b>Increment: 26-50%</b>	139
<b>Increment: 51-100%</b>	176
<b>More than 100%</b>	200

*Chart xiv - Distribution of migrants by new income level*



*Chart xv - Change in income level in different phases of COVID lockdown*



It is quite evident from the graph that the income of the migrants reduced by almost 75 percent in the first lockdown. However, the percent reduction in income post-COVID stands

at 55 percent. So although the migrants faced great losses during lockdown, their situation is improving. The migrants also remarked that their earnings post-COVID is much lesser than pre-COVID earning, but on the contrary their monthly expenses have increased. This is pushing them into debt cycles.

Most of the migrants faced reduction in their income. They had to completely rely on their savings to meet their needs. Many of the migrants mentioned that they explored other prospects to earn and make a living for themselves. Some of the migrants ended up doing odd jobs which was out of their regular domain. For example, some migrants started selling vegetables and fruits while some started fast food stalls. On the other hand, the migrants who left the city for their home town engaged themselves in agriculture and other associated commercial activities. The migrants who went back to their native place narrated that agriculture and MGNREGA were their two saviours.

A study by Kaur and Shubham (NABARD Insight Report, 2021) suggested that around 41 percent of the migrants relied on farming as livelihood during lockdown. According to the data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, there has been an increase in the sowing of Kharif crop in 2020 by almost 21 percent across India, suggesting more labour supply for agriculture<sup>33</sup>. On the other hand, MGNREGA<sup>34</sup> scheme provided daily wages and daily subsistence to millions of migrants and thus proved to be a lifeline for them. Some of the migrants said that they used their savings to start small businesses like selling tea or set up food stalls.

Kamala, a house maid in Kharghar said that in the initial phase, her income was reduced considerably because there were many who did not take the risk of calling maids and managed the household chores by themselves. Gradually, as the lockdown got lifted and people started moving to offices, the maids were called again. She is now earning a stable amount to feed her family.

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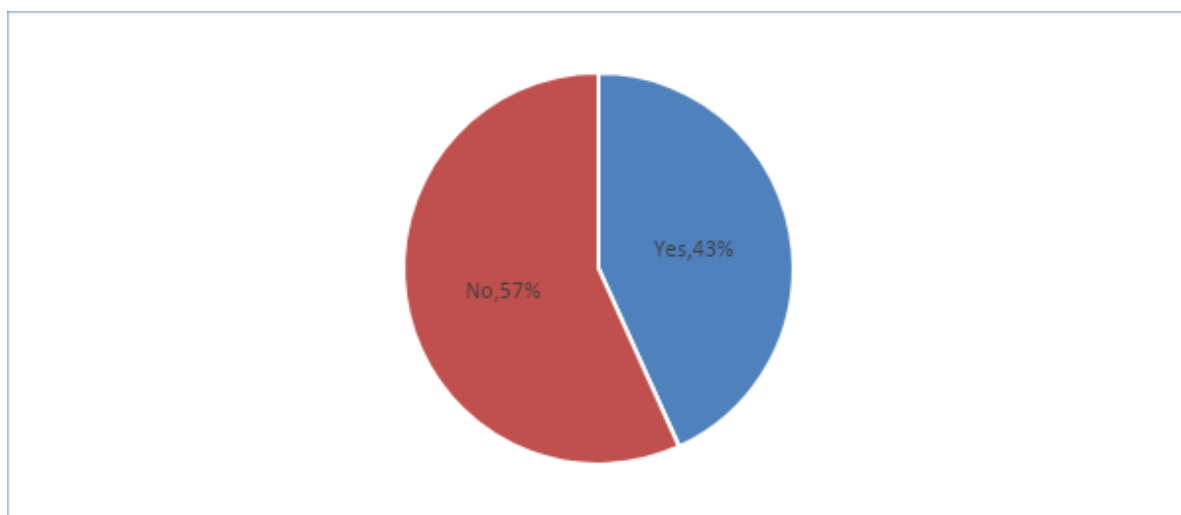
<sup>33</sup><https://www.nabard.org/auth/writereaddata/tender/2312213756rural-pulse-covid-induced-migration-final-comments.pdf>

### Impact on Remittances

According to the annual report of Reserve Bank of India (2020-21), there was an exodus of migrant worker from host nations, resulting in worldwide drop in remittance flows in 2020. India, the largest beneficiary of incoming remittances, had about 5.4 percent decrease in remittance flows from April to December 2020-21. Although remittances subsequently recovered from this initial setback, the flows remained below pre-crisis levels<sup>35</sup>.

As per an article published in *The Economic Times*, localised lockdowns in Maharashtra's industrial centres as well as fears of similar limitations in Delhi-NCR, continued to impact the informal workers. The remittances to the less-affluent hinterland from these metropolitan enclaves plummeted by up to 10 percent between March to April 2021.

*Chart xvi - Migrants sending remittances during lockdown*



The pie diagram indicates that around 57 percent of the migrants in the present study revealed that they were not able to send any remittance to their family during lockdown as they did not have enough money. The migrants mentioned that during that time it was hard for them to sustain their life in Mumbai so sending money to their family was beyond imagination. Some of the migrants (43 percent) who somehow managed to send little

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<sup>35</sup><https://rbi.org.in/scripts/AnnualReportPublications.aspx?Id=1315>

remittances said that they would be left with so little that they could not even afford proper meal two times a day.

The migrants were burdened with a series of responsibilities. Their entire savings got exhausted in meeting their basic needs. Although they did not have any income, they had to bear the expenses for food and lodging. The workers narrated how their hard earned savings got drained in a couple of months. Ultimately, when all the savings were exhausted, they resorted to taking loans from the local moneylenders or from the owner of the firms and factories they worked in and were deep in debts. Some even pledged their gold ornaments and survived with those money. A construction worker from Uttar Pradesh said, *“What do we send back home? There is hardly anything left after arranging for food and other basic necessities!”*

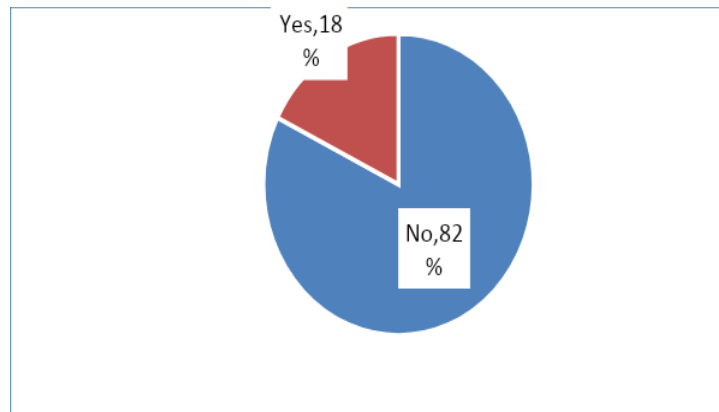
When the amount of remittances sent is compared between the first lockdown and the phase between June 2021 and September 2021, it can be inferred that the quantum of sending remittance to the place of origin is shifting and has improved from 77 percent to 62 percent. This improvement can be understood with the fact that now the markets are open and the disruptions which existed before is resolved and hence the percentage has improved. The migrants stated that as the lockdown was withdrawn, and as they started getting work, they resumed sending the remittances. However, the amount and the frequency of sending remittances have considerably decreased over the two lockdown phases. The migrants are also not left with enough cash post their expenditures in the city to send back as remittance as their earnings has reduced and the expenditure has increased.

A small share of migrants (only 18 percent) reported disruptions in the channel through which they sent their remittances as perceived from the graph. This is primarily because they mostly relied on formal channels like bank transfer or phone banking and not informal channels like friends/ neighbours.

Of the migrants who complained about the disruptions, about 81 percent mentioned that the bank services were not operational, other 68 percent stated that the disruption was because of their personal shortcomings like they could not go to bank or they had no digital literacy of phone banking and the rest of the migrants (24 percent) were those who depended on

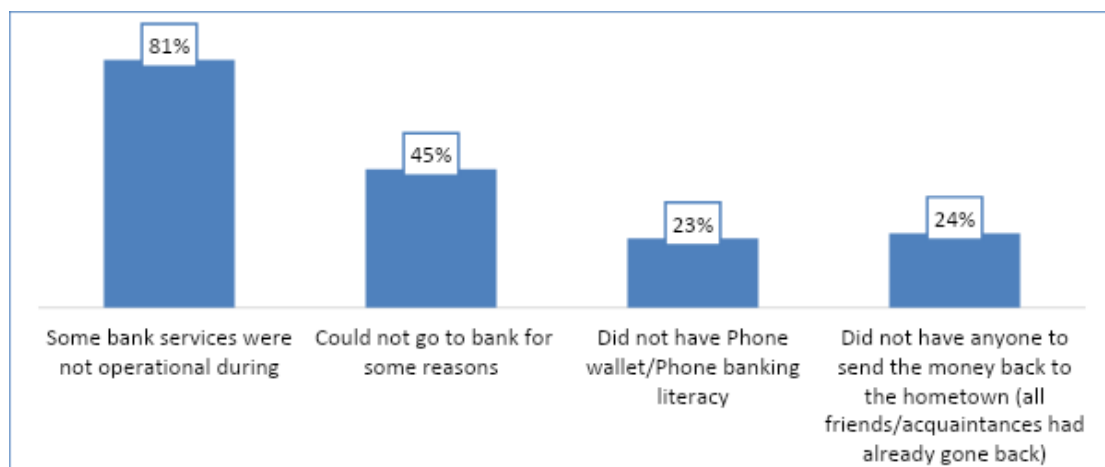
informal modes of transfer. These people did not have any friend or acquaintances through which they can transfer the money.

*Chart xviii- Migrants reporting disruption in remittances transfer*



There were some migrants who mentioned that they learnt online modes of money transfer through mobile applications during the lockdown so that they could send money to their family in case of emergency. The family members of the migrants who did not receive money during that period were left with no other options than taking loans from moneylenders. Some of them continued in agriculture while some sold their assets.

*Chart xix - Remittance transfer: issues faced*



### Impact on health

According to WHO, the number of weekly COVID-19 cases and fatalities worldwide continued to fall in September, with over 3.6 million cases and slightly under 60,000 deaths reported between 13-19 September, 2020. India had 33,504,534 confirmed cases as of September 22<sup>nd</sup>



2020, with 7 percent decrease in the overall number of cases recorded compared to the previous week. During the reporting period, the top five states, namely Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, contributed 56 percent of all cases<sup>36</sup>.

According to an article published in *Times of India* and another in *Hindustan Times (2020)*, Mumbai reported a total of 7,42,528 Covid-19 infections. However, the fatality rate remained low with daily deaths of less than 10 in September. Around 4,943 new cases were reported in August while 7,407 Covid-19 occurrences were registered in the city between September 1 and 17, recording a 50 percent increase. During that time Mumbai saw 7,19,218 discharges, with a recovery rate of 97 percent. From September 22 to September 28, the total increase rate of Covid-19 cases was only 0.06 percent<sup>37</sup>.

Chart xx - Migrants infected with COVID-19

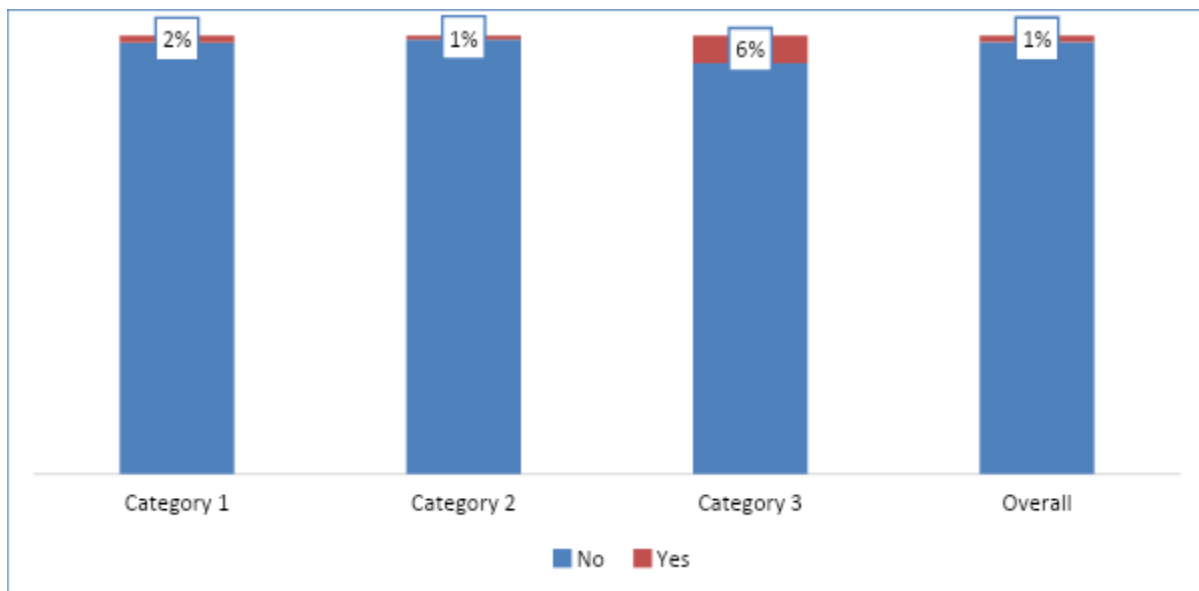


Table iv - Time period of COVID contagion

<b>March 20 to May 20</b>	20%
<b>June 20 to April 21</b>	67%
<b>May 21 to Sept 21</b>	14%

<sup>36</sup>[https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/wrindia/situation-report/india-situation-report-86.pdf?sfvrsn=cedc203e\\_4](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/wrindia/situation-report/india-situation-report-86.pdf?sfvrsn=cedc203e_4)

<sup>37</sup><https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/covid-19-mumbai-records-over-500-cases-for-third-time-in-september/articleshow/86618052.cms>  
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/mumbai-sees-50-spike-in-covid-cases-in-september-but-fatalities-down-by-38-101631995356735.html>

The findings from the present study suggest that approximately 1 percent of the surveyed migrants across all categories were infected by COVID-19. Around 6 percent of the migrants in Category 3 got infected.

When asked about the challenges faced because of COVID infection, about 60 percent of the migrants said that they had to go for paid quarantine and about 33 percent said that they lost their job and 40 percent mentioned about their out of pocket expenses due to quarantine. Around 53 percent of the migrants had to spend approximately INR 5000 on COVID-19 related treatment.

The COVID-19 had a great bearing on mental health. Articles from *Hindustan Times* and *India Today* presented migrants were emotionally and mentally disturbed as they remain far from their families<sup>38</sup>. A cross-sectional study on the psychological impact of the pandemic and lockdown on migrants observed that about 73.5 percent of the migrants were in depression, about 50 percent developed anxiety issues and about 51 percent were suffering from both (K. Kumar, 2020). Around 63.3 percent reported to have faced an increase in loneliness, 51 percent stated to have irritability and 44.9 percent were suffering from disturbed sleep<sup>39</sup>.

The findings of the present study suggest that there is significant psychological impact on the migrants. Almost all the migrants under study reported that they had suffered from depression (34 percent), anxiety (59 percent), worry (75 percent), anger (44 percent), irritability (41 percent), loneliness (39 percent), hopelessness (35 percent), sleep disturbance (18 percent), while some resorted to drug and alcohol abuse (5 percent). Only 1 percent of the surveyed migrants reported of not suffering from any emotional or mental disturbance.

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<sup>38</sup><https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/covid-19-india-is-staring-at-a-mental-health-crisis/story-hmBOzUYsbo3SmtlWilmBzL.html>.  
<https://www.indiatoday.in/mail-today/story/domestic-violence-spikes-in-lockdown-govt-told-to-step-in-1671460-2020-04-27>.

<sup>39</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7305726/>

Table v - Impact of COVID-19 on mental health

Respondent Category	Depression	Worry	Anxiety	Loneliness	Anger	Irritable	Hopelessness	Sleep problems/disturbances	Drugs	Alcohol	No any such concern
<b>Overall</b>	34%	75%	59%	39%	44%	41%	35%	18%	1%	4%	1%
<b>Category 1</b>	34%	75%	62%	44%	47%	41%	35%	18%	1%	3%	1%
<b>Category 2</b>	35%	76%	59%	35%	40%	41%	33%	18%	2%	4%	1%
<b>Category 3</b>	27%	75%	40%	25%	46%	33%	48%	23%	2%	10%	0%

The primary reason for migrants suffering from such mental troubles was the loss of source of livelihood which led to financial insecurity and uncertainty regarding the future. Uncertainties about food security also paved way to more mental distress. Secondly, the migrants who were staying away from home were in constant stress for the health of self and that of family members who were away. Thirdly, the possible loneliness paved path for all other psychiatric morbidity. The reduced social contact was also one of the reasons of their depression. They felt alone and secluded. Some of the workers said that they feared to approach hospitals even in case of emergencies as they were apprehensive that the doctors and the hospital staffs would declare them as COVID positive even if they are not.

The migrants also reported that they were overwhelmed and bewildered due to lack of information. Most of the migrants narrated that they repeatedly asked their relatives and friends to explain the news updates in simple language. Some even mentioned they never understood the significance of social distancing.

*Ratul, a resident of a slum of Chembur mentioned that his pregnant sister visited them during the first phase of lockdown and got stuck there. He said that throughout the crisis, he could*

not take her for regular check-up primarily because of lack of transport facility. He was also afraid that she might catch the infection in hospital.

### iii. Response to COVID-19 Challenges

With the COVID-19 and the resultant lockdown, the migrants were left in a precarious position. The uncertainties caused due to COVID-19 with cessation of source of livelihood, income, depletion of savings, loneliness and concerns about the well-being of the members back at home forced the migrants to take some harsh decisions to withstand the crisis. A large section of the migrants decided to return back to their native place to their friends and family with a hope of finding some mean of sustenance and the solace of their near and dear ones.

There have been various studies and new paper articles which discuss the reasons behind the mass exodus of migrants in lockdown. One of the article comments that the abrupt shutdown of commercial activities cut off migrants from their primary source of income, leaving them with almost no resources to endure even the first phase (of 21 days) of the lockdown<sup>40</sup>.

In another study conducted by *Jan Sahas*, they have highlighted that migrant's illiteracy and lack of knowledge impeded their awareness towards COVID -19 virus and made them more susceptible to misinformation. This further resulted in intensifying their fears of death and hence created panic among the migrants triggering mass exodus<sup>41</sup>.

Similar study conducted by *Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB)* specified three reasons which forced migrants to leave. Firstly, there was non-availability of work (48 percent), then some were forcefully evacuated (23 percent) while others lacked access to basic amenities (15 percent)<sup>42</sup>.

#### **The Exodus: Timeframe**

Most of the migrants (51 percent) under the present study reported that they left for their hometown during the Phase 3 and Phase 4 of the lockdown as lockdown relaxations were

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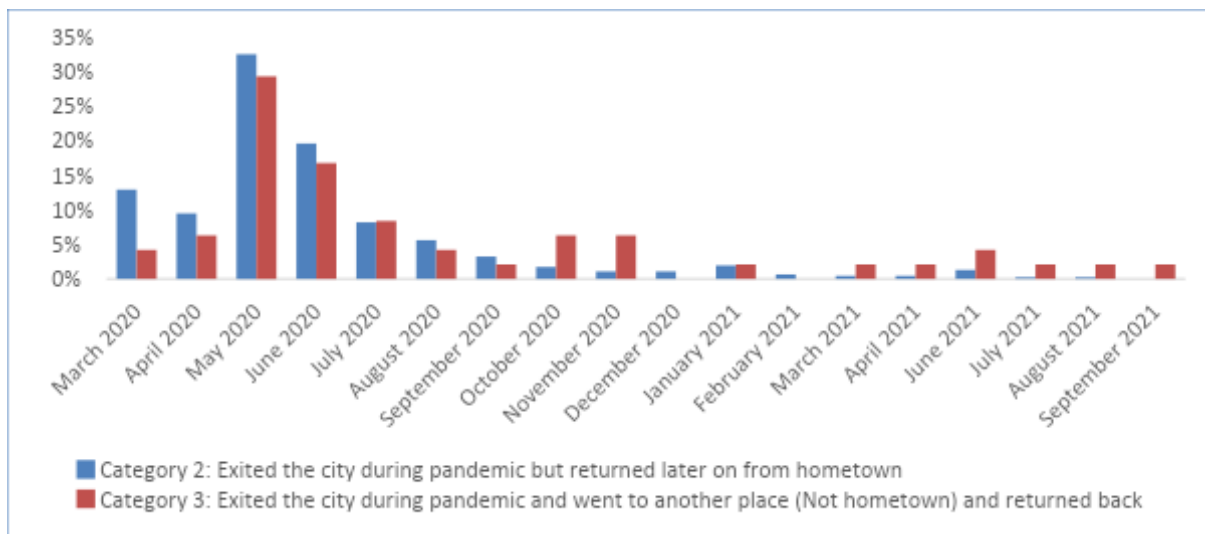
<sup>40</sup><https://doi.org/10.1007/s41027-020-00293-8>  
[https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind\\_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf](https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf)

<sup>41</sup>[https://freedomfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Voices-of-Invisible-Citizens.pdf?mc\\_cid=5335a3b0e8&mc\\_eid=fe4e6490b8](https://freedomfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Voices-of-Invisible-Citizens.pdf?mc_cid=5335a3b0e8&mc_eid=fe4e6490b8)

<sup>42</sup><https://www.ihrb.org/focus-areas/migrant-workers/india-internal-migrant-workers-covid-19>

given except for the areas considered as red containment zones. Only about 21 percent of the migrants said that they left for their hometown in the month of March and April, i.e. during the Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the lockdown. Hence, the maximum reverse migration (about 72 percent) took place in between March-June. It is evident from the graph that the reverse migration gradually declined from 13.6 percent during July-August to almost 3 percent from April 2021 to September 2021.

*Chart xxi - Period of Exodus*



**The Exodus: Reasons**

Around 50 percent of the migrants in this study did not leave the city (Category I). Some of the migrants of Category I working as domestic help narrated that they did not have any work during the initial 1-3 months but afterwards they resumed their work. The migrant workers, working as security guards stated that they were never out of work even during the pandemic. Some of the migrants working in the hotel industry were allowed to live and eat in the hotel for free. Few of the migrants even expressed that they tried leaving for their hometown but due to strict restrictions on movement, they were stopped in the midway by the police. So, in a way these migrants were actually waiting for the relaxations in the lockdown so that they could visit their hometown.

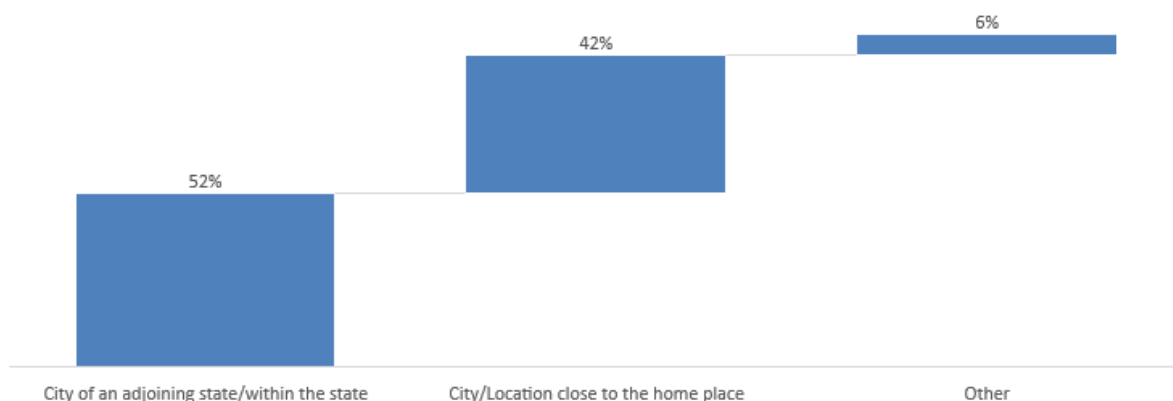
Manoj Sinha, from Uttar Pradesh narrates his story- *“I work as contract labour in the canteen of IDBI bank. During the lockdown, since the banks were not closed I still had some work to*

*do. Even though I was getting lower wage but I thought something is better than nothing. Hence I opted to stay here throughout the pandemic.”*

About 50 percent of the migrants interviewed in the present study left the city during the pandemic. The unprecedented crisis led to loss of livelihood and with no other source of income and continuous depletion of savings forced them to leave the city. Some of them complained that they were forced to leave their residence as they were unable to pay the rent. Some were forced out of their workplace after the sudden declaration of the lockdown. The migrants described that they were left with little support and even workers with some level of skills were incapable of finding opportunities.

Many migrants expressed that they were not concerned about getting infected from COVID-19 but were afraid of dying alone. Many of the migrants mentioned of having their own land in their village and can rely on it for their sustenance. In their village they at least had an assurance of shelter, food and some source of livelihood. Sunil Yadav, a mechanic in Vashi said, *“It is better to cultivate and work on our own farms and have food rather than staying here and dying in hunger.”* One of the female migrants expressed her fear saying, *“Who will take care of us here. We have no one here. At least we have our family back at our villages. It is better to die in village amongst the family members than to stay here and die alone”*

*Chart xxii - Destination of category III migrants*



The 50 percent migrants who left the city, a small proportion of them left for places other than their hometown. As indicated from the graph, about 52 percent of them said that they moved to another city within the state or an adjoining state and 42 percent went to another

city which was close to hometown. During the first two phase of the lockdown, there were stringent rules regarding movement. Since there was disruption in the transport service, so the migrants went to places which were easily accessible. Some of them were intra-state migrants who felt convenient to move to an adjoining city like their children's place. Few of them moved in groups. Most of these belonged to same place so they asked other migrants to move along and stay with them till this period of uncertainty ends.

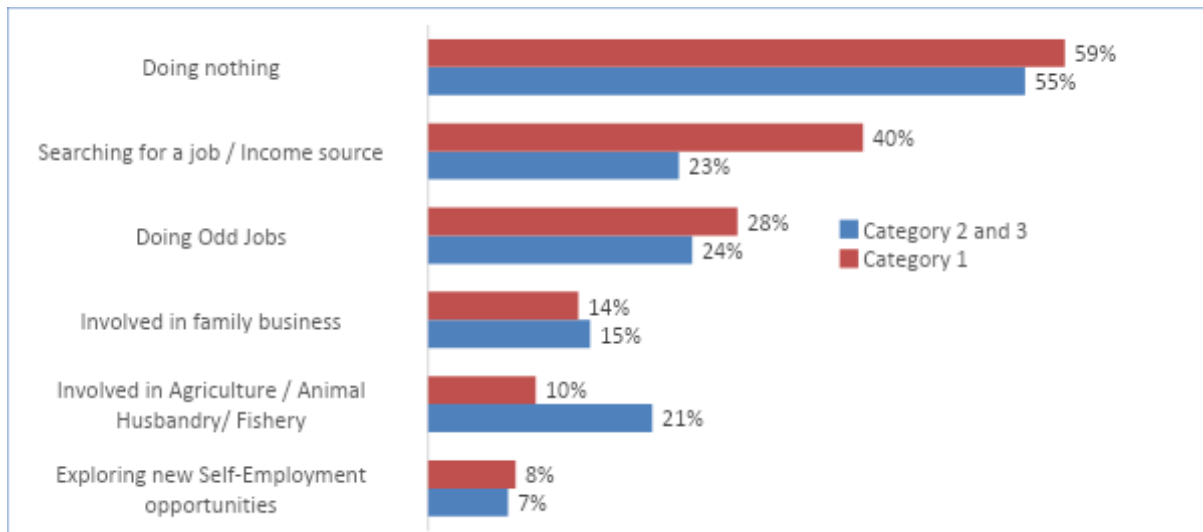
A migrant from Uttar Pradesh said *"My friends and co-workers were leaving for their hometown in Chapra. So I too went with them else I would have been all alone in the city."*

Ram Kumar Sahu, a labourer from Bihar lost his livelihood and hence wanted to return home. He said *"I had no food or money and I didn't know how long I could survive like this."*

#### **Economic activities during lockdown**

As indicated from the graph, among migrants who went back to their native place or another place (category 2 and 3), about 21 percent got engaged in agriculture while a large section of them did not participate in any commercial activity but were exploring new job opportunities (55 percent). The migrants remarked that when they were unable to find work they survived by borrowing money from various sources. Some of the migrants who were not engaged in permanent job tried doing odd jobs in between and even explored new opportunities of self-employment. Some migrants also worked for few days wherever or where they got chance like sowing in farms, carrying baggage, and so on. The migrants who did not exit the city also stated that majority of them were not engaged in any jobs (60 percent). While the rest explored new job opportunities or did odd jobs for sustenance.

Chart xxiii - Economic Activities undertaken during Lockdown



Similar findings have been observed in another qualitative study which suggested that the migrants opted for overtime work or they did more than two jobs at a time to deal with the financial crisis<sup>43</sup>.

#### **Modes of Transport used for the journey**

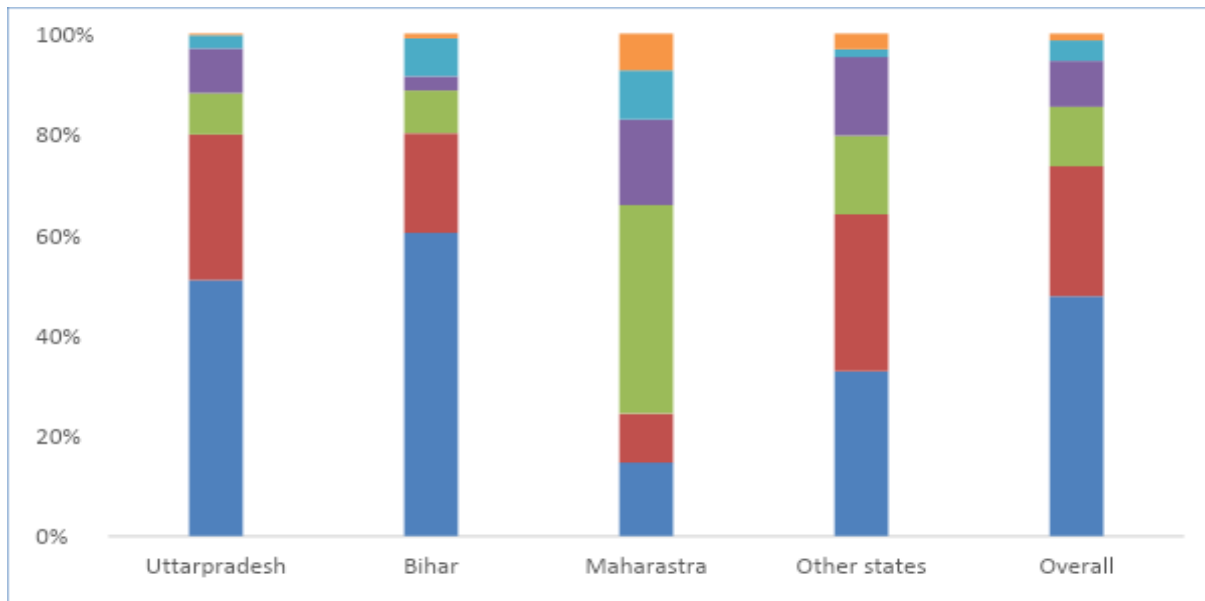
With the drying up of piecemeal savings, no work opportunities and uncertainty set in about the duration and nature of the lockdown, migrants started demanding to travel back to their hometowns and villages. In response to this crisis, the Indian government introduced 'Shramik Special' trains on May 1, 2020 for migrants. According to an article published in *Hindustan Times*, Indian Railways had run about 4450 Shramik trains ferrying nearly 6 million migrants to their hometown<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>43</sup><https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.648334/full>

<sup>44</sup><https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/nearly-6-million-migrants-ferried-in-shramik-spls-rly-board-chairman/story-rKmwNquYDTGsFtwCFRDhPI.html>



Chart xxiv - Mode of transportation used to leave the city during lockdown



It can be ascertained from the graph that 52 percent of the migrants used Government supported transport facility, mainly bus or train, to leave for their native place during lockdown. Most of the migrants under our study who took Shramik trains were from Bihar (60 percent) and Uttar Pradesh (51 percent). A larger share of migrants (48 percent) also arranged their own medium of transport. Many migrants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh used trucks and lorries for their journey home.

During the initial phase of lockdown, road and rail transport were suspended and hence walking back was the only option available. Hence, migrants were compelled to take the road. The findings of our study suggest that there were only 1 percent of the migrants who travelled on foot. Majority of the people who walked home were intra-state migrants.

The state government arranged fare free buses to ease the woes of migrant workers. However, the number of migrants outnumbered the number of buses. The buses were overcrowded with migrants climbing on rooftops and hanging on footboards to find a place.

*Ashutosh Sharma, a rickshaw puller while returning home with his family via a truck had the most uncomfortable experience. He said that he did not feel right as the truck was packed with all sorts of people and he did not feel comfortable in travelling with his family however, he had no other choice as the cars, jeeps and buses were charging a lot.*

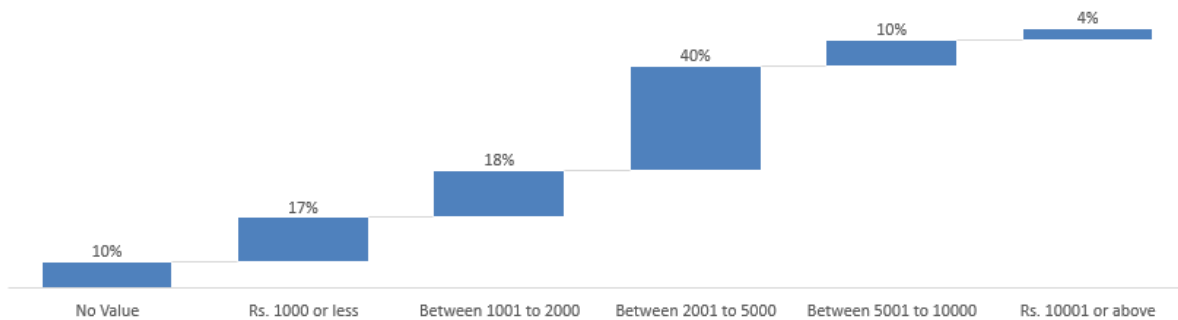
Going back to their villages was an ordeal for most of the respondents, especially the struggle to find affordable transportation. The migrants who took Shramik trains complained that there was lack of food or water on the trains. Since they had no money to buy food, they were mostly empty stomach throughout the journey. They used to get off at every station to get drinking water from the station and sustained the entire journey on drinking water alone.

### Expenditure on the travel

A survey by *Caritas India* states that 23 percent of the respondents spent more than INR 5,000 for their return journey, 16 percent spent between INR 3,000 and INR 5,000, and 14.4 percent migrants spent between INR 2,000-3,000<sup>45</sup>.

As indicated from the graph, only 10 percent of the migrants reported that nothing came as out of pocket expenditure while travelling back to their hometown while 75 percent reported that they had to spend in between INR 1000-5000 as travel expenditure. Rest of the migrants (15 percent) stated that they had to spend more than INR 5000 in transport.

*Chart xxv - Expenditure on the travel*



The migrant workers in our study who arranged for their private buses and trucks incurred huge expenses. These people travelled in groups of 25-30 by hiring bus/truck for a lump sum amount of 2-3 lakh. However, some those buses and trucks were not allowed to move further Bhiwandi but they did not get their fares back. So, their hard earned money went in vain. Some of the workers hired jeeps, but failed to reach their destination as they were stopped

<sup>45</sup>[https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind\\_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf](https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf)

in midway by the police. One of the migrant who was travelling with family mentioned that it cost them around INR 300-400 per head from Maharashtra to Bihar.

*Chotelal from Samastipur, Bihar said that he had his family and three children at home in Bihar. Since he was left with no cash and so mortgaged his wife's gold ornaments to arrange for tickets. The bus charged Rs 4000 per person but it did not drop them to their village. They reached Patna and from there they had to walk. They walked for around 4-5 hours and then took bus from midway for their village. Even after reaching their village, they were kept in quarantine centres.*

Many of the migrants also had to borrow money to travel. *Kamal, a 34-year-old tailor spoke of his experience and said, "Our savings were depleted. We rented a bus and for the fare, we have to deposit our valuables as security in return for money."*

*Rizwan Manjhi, who travelled to Paschim Medinipur in West Bengal, expressed, "We ran out of money, and there was no way to survive. My father was bed-ridden. My brother said he might die any time, and hence we wanted to reach before it was too late. My brother in the village took a loan of nearly INR 25,000 from a moneylender so that we could buy the bus tickets. He travelled with his wife and two children. They paid INR 3,250 each for three seats.*

*Another migrant hailing from Palamu district of Jharkhand explained that the private agencies were charging more than INR 2,000 for a seat in a bus to West Bengal, Jharkhand, or Bihar. He also narrated that the family of one of his co-workers, had to mortgage a plot in his village to arrange the travel money.*

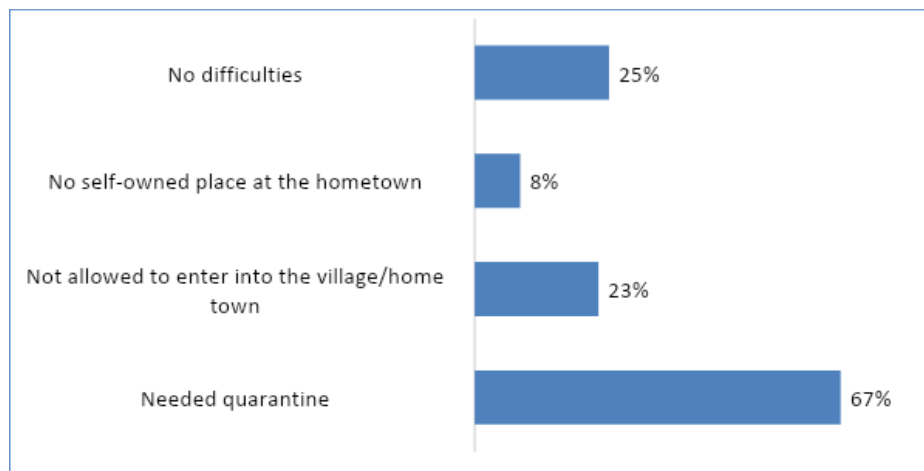
*Nafizul, who was also travelling to Palamu district, with his wife and three children said, "My parents are very disturbed and worried, because they had nobody to take care of them. This is harvest time, and I was supposed to be at home."*

### **The experience on arrival to native place**

For many migrants homecoming was bittersweet. They elaborated about the treatment they received after reaching their native place. They stated that there was no social support from the villagers. They were treated as carriers of virus from the urban 'hotspots', to the rural villages. The lack of empathy from the villagers and the labelling of 'virus carrier' stigma was one of the causes of resulting anxiety which acted as a stressor for the migrants.

The findings of our study suggests that around 67 percent of the migrants had to go for quarantine after reaching their native place while 23 percent were not even allowed to enter the village. A mere 25 percent of the migrants expressed that they did not face any trouble after they reached their native place.

*Chart xxvi - Problems faced at native place on return*

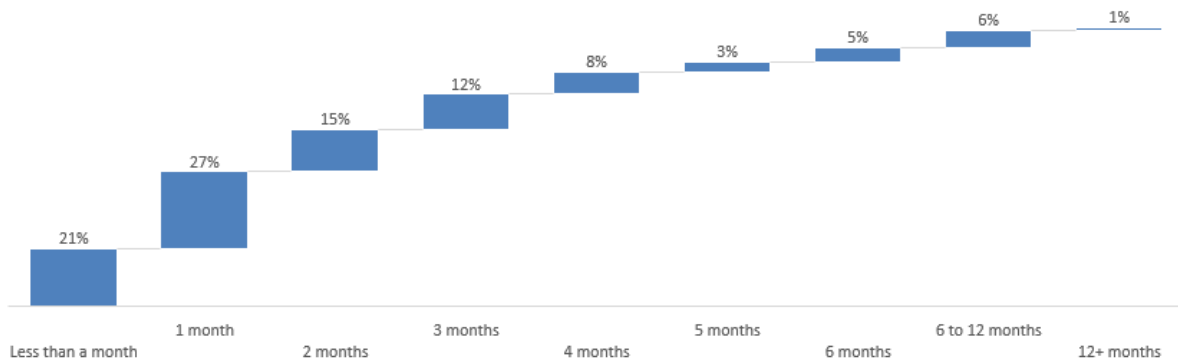


Similar findings have been depicted in an article published in *Frontiers* which conveyed that the problems of the migrants did not stop after reaching their hometown. The migrants expected warmth, care and concern from the villagers but the scenario was quite incongruent from their expectations. Even the family members maintained distance from them and were made to stay outside home and eat on banana leaves instead of plates. Migrants reported feeling detachment, agony and remorse towards people<sup>46</sup>.

The migrants returned to their native places with an assumption that they will find some means of livelihood to sustain themselves. However, as the graph indicates that around 54 percent of the migrants had to wait for nearly 1-3 months to find an income generating opportunity while 21 percent of the migrants reported that they could find an income generating opportunity within a month in their hometown.

<sup>46</sup><https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.648334/full>

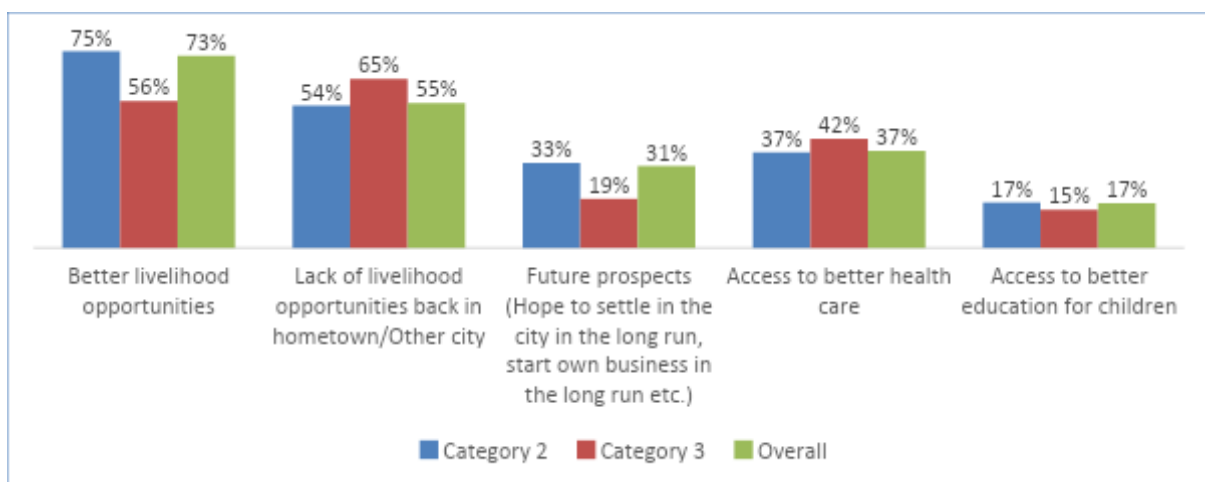
Chart xxvii - Time taken to get an income generating opportunity at native place on return



### Return journey to Mumbai

As the graph indicates, a better livelihood opportunity is the major reason for migrants to return to city. Most of the migrants expressed their concern over lack of livelihood opportunities in hometown/other cities. For the migrants who exited the city to go back to their hometown (Category 2), education of children and health services are lesser of a concern over the livelihood security. They displayed a willingness to settle down for future prospects and start their own business in the city. For the migrants who exited the city but went to some other place other than their hometown (Category 3), access to better healthcare is yet another main reason to return along with livelihood options.

Chart xxviii - Category 2 and 3: Motivation behind coming back to Mumbai



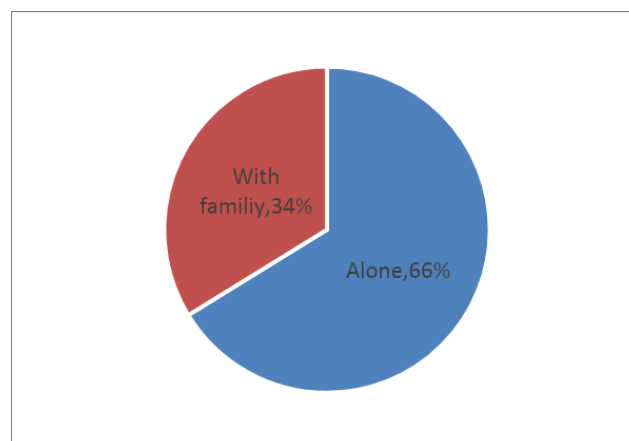
Similar findings were observed from a study conducted by NABARD (Insight Report, 2021) where around 55 percent of the migrants wanted to return back to the city. Better income

possibility, availability of jobs, and the presence of better infrastructure were the reasons which influenced their decision to move back to the city<sup>47</sup>. Another study on migrant workers of Maharashtra stated that around 59 percent of the migrants under their study expressed their willingness to return to their hometown once the lockdown is lifted and restrictions are removed by the Government<sup>48</sup>.

Sonu from Allahabad, working in the construction sector describes his situation as, “I did not get any work during lockdown which forced me to leave for my village. I joined poultry business with my brother in the village. However, I could barely save money enough. All the earnings were spent on meeting the essential needs. So, I had no option but to wait for relaxations in the lockdown restrictions so I could come back to Mumbai and search for new work. I was successful in getting a new job through his contacts.”

Madhu from Jharkhand, working in a small IT firm mentioned that she used to earn Rs 22000 per month which was sufficient for her to survive after managing all her expenses. After the lockdown was declared, after a month only she lost her job. She had no option other than to return to her home. She joined in a private firm in Ranchi where she earned only rupees 12000 per month. After working there for 3-4 months, she decided to come to the city again and search for better opportunities.

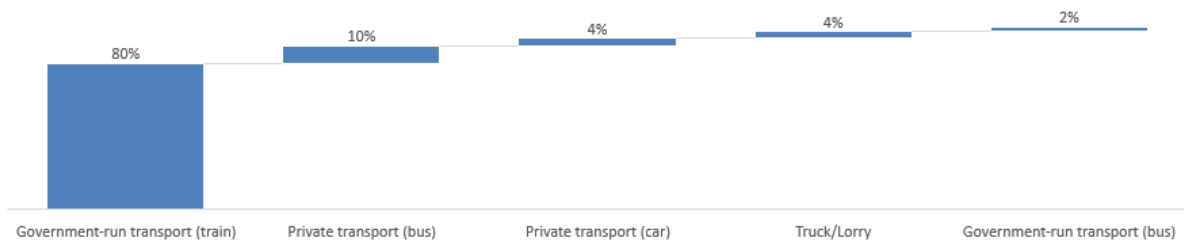
Chart xxix – Migrant pattern of return to Mumbai



<sup>47</sup><https://www.nabard.org/auth/writereaddata/tender/2312213756rural-pulse-covid-induced-migration-final-comments.pdf>

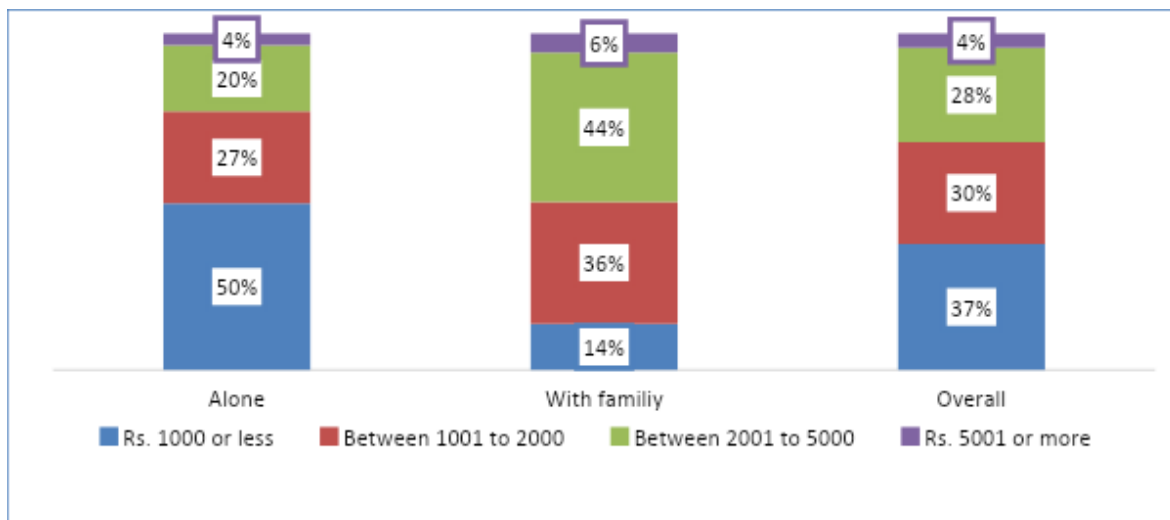
<sup>48</sup>[https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind\\_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf](https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf)

Chart xxx - Modes of transport used to return back to the city



Majority of the migrants, constituting 66 percent came alone and only 34 percent of the migrants came back with family. Most of the migrants (80 percent) came back to the city in trains which resumed with the relaxation of the lockdowns. Nearly 50 percent of them said that they had to spend Rupees 1000 or less on transport while coming back whereas 44 percent of the migrants who came back with their families had to spend in between INR 2001 to 5000 on the transport.

Chart xxxi - Expenditure on Return Journey



## V. SOCIAL SECURITY –PRACTICES, CHALLENGES AND PERCEPTION POST COVID

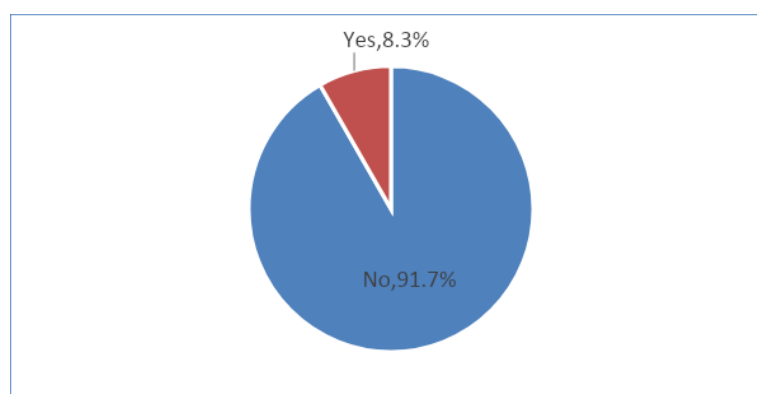
Social security is a human right to which everyone in any society should have access to. Social security is significantly important for migrant workers who are confronted with a myriad of problems. The major chunk of migrant workers in India are unskilled and employed in unorganised sector. Social protection and healthcare of migrant workers are often neglected. In the following section the practises related to social security are discussed in detail.

## i. Health Insurance

According to Statista Research Department, nearly 500 million people were covered under health insurance in the fiscal year of 2020 across India. Of these, maximum people were insured under government-sponsored health insurance schemes, while individual insurance plans were availed by less number of people. However, the penetration of health insurance stood at just around 35 percent in financial year 2018<sup>49</sup>. As per a report by NITI Aayog published in October 2021, at least 30 percent of the population, or 40 crore individuals are not having any financial protection for health. They are referred to as the missing middle<sup>50</sup>.

According to an article in the *Financial Express*, a steep upward trend was observed in the sale of health insurance plans during the course of COVID -19. In the pre COVID time approximately 32 percent of the people purchased insurance plans. But after the pandemic, this has shot up to 55 percent. COVID-19 has increased consciousness regarding the significance of preventive health insurance in the country. As many witnessed their friends and close relatives succumbing to the deadly virus, they understood the need to secure their own families financially from any future adversity<sup>51</sup>.

*Chart xxxii - Health Insurance coverage of the migrants*



<sup>49</sup><https://www.statista.com/statistics/657244/number-of-people-with-health-insurance-india/>

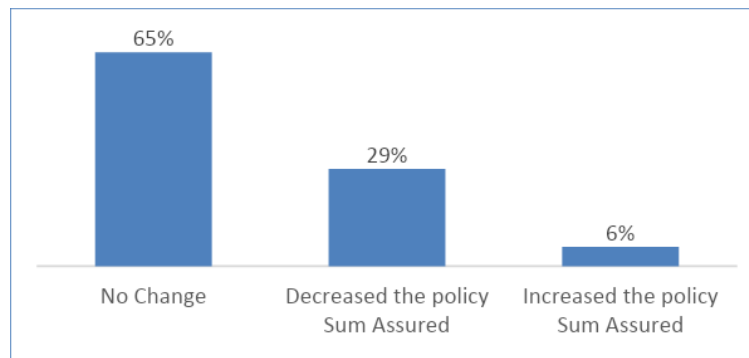
<sup>50</sup>[https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-10/HealthInsurance-forIndiasMissingMiddle\\_28-10-2021.pdf](https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-10/HealthInsurance-forIndiasMissingMiddle_28-10-2021.pdf)

<sup>51</sup><https://www.financialexpress.com/money/the-ever-growing-need-for-health-insurance-post-pandemic/2266727/>



The present study findings suggest that majority of the migrants (91 percent) were not covered by any health insurance. Few of them (4 percent) mentioned that post COVID they opted for health insurance on some friend's or relative's advice. The rest of the migrants (8.3 percent) had health insurance. During the COVID period, only 4 percent of the migrants who did not have insurance obtained health insurance.

Chart xxxiii - Changes made in the insurance policy



Majority of the migrants did not do any change to their insurance amount. But about 6 percent migrants who had insurance have increased their policy sum assured. On the other hand 29 percent of the migrants have reduced the assured policy sum to cut down the premium amount to save money.

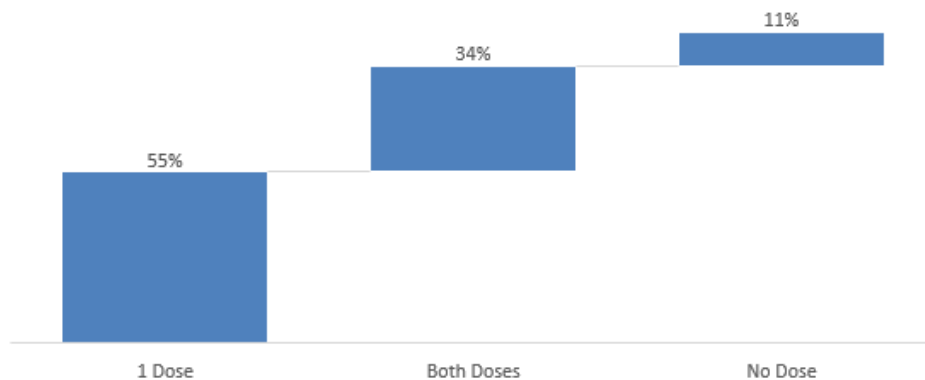
## ii. COVID-19 Vaccination

The data from Ministry of Health and Welfare India as of 29th January 2022, India's cumulative COVID-19 vaccination coverage exceeds 165.04 crore while that of Maharashtra was 14.7 crore<sup>52</sup>. According to an article by *Hindustan Times*, Mumbai achieved 100 percent first dose vaccination coverage while the second dose coverage stood at 65 percent<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>52</sup><https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/CummulativeCovidVaccinationReport28January2022.pdf>

<sup>53</sup><https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/mumbai-achieves-100-first-dose-covid-vaccine-coverage-101636791408475.html>

Chart xxxiv - Vaccination Status of the Migrants

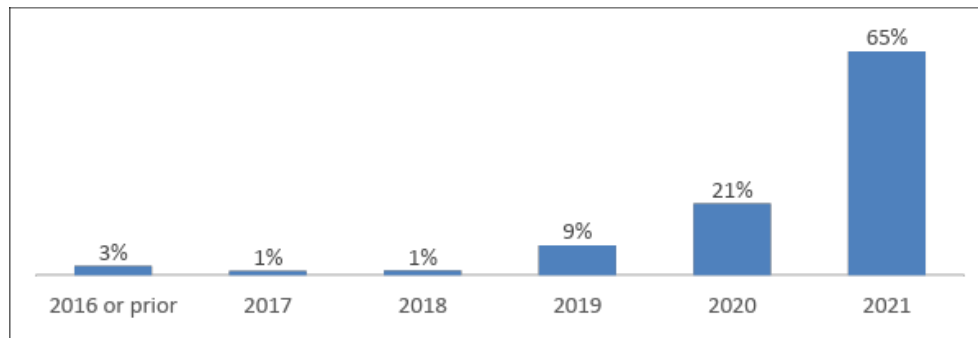


Findings from the present study indicates that most of the migrants (89 percent) have taken their vaccination dose for COVID (either 1<sup>st</sup> dose or both the doses) while the rest (11 percent) did not take their vaccination dose. A lot of migrants did not take the vaccination as they did not have time to go for vaccination. Some feared that they would fall sick after being vaccinated while others did not want to go in crowd or stand in long queues. Few of the migrants also mentioned absence of Aadhar Card as one of the reason that prevented them from taking vaccination.

### iii. Access to health facility

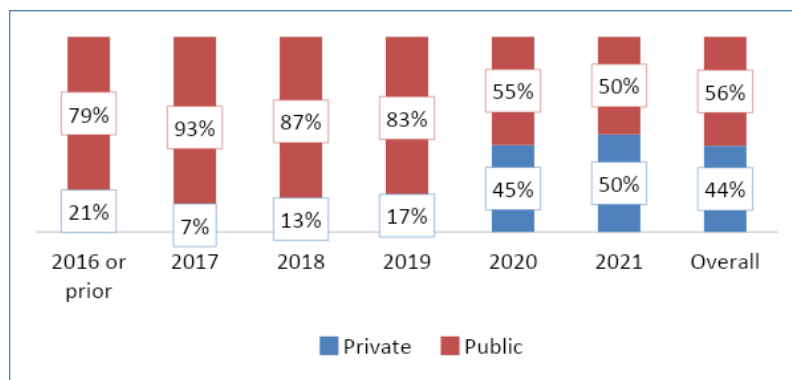
The following graph depicts the health service seeking behaviour among the migrants in the pre and post COVID times. There has been a drastic change in the health service seeking behaviour during and post COVID era. As evident, very small share of migrants resorted to health facility in case of illness in the pre COVID era. In the year 2019, only 9 percent of the migrants visited a health facility. However in 2020, more than 20 percent visited health facility recording an increase of almost 10 percent. The percentage share has further increased to 65 in 2021. Out of the total surveyed migrants only 35 percent did not visit health facility in case of illness.

Chart xxxv - Health facility seeking behaviour of Migrants



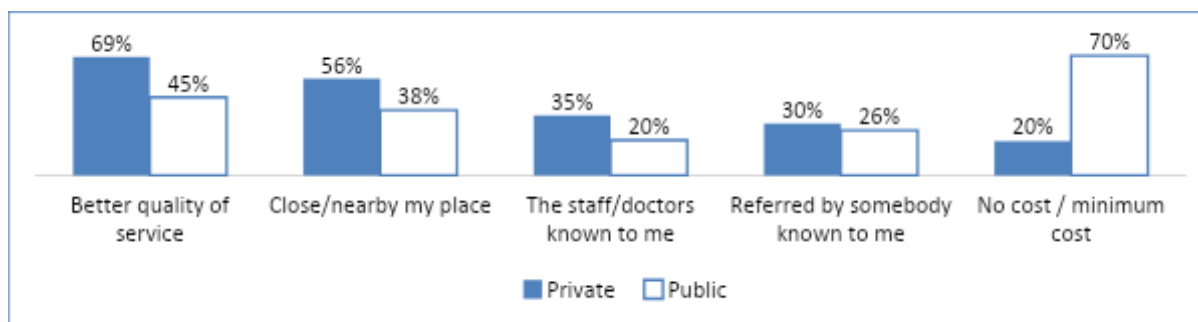
Most of the migrants that sought health facility visited public health facility. Approximately 56 percent of the migrant population under the present study had access to public health facility. It is evident from the graph that prior to 2020 public health facility was largely preferred perhaps because of no or minimum cost of the services. However, over time migrants are placing more trust in private facility over public facility. The massive increase in percentage share of people opting private medical facility bears testimony to it.

Chart xxxvi - Type of Health facility was accessed based on time period



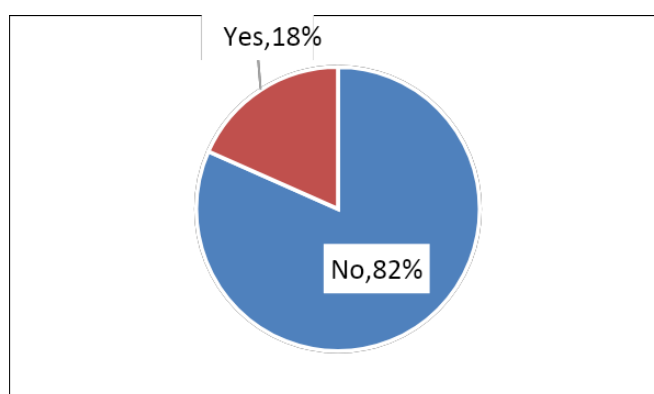
This shift is mainly because the migrants in Mumbai believe that private hospitals have better quality of service, more responsiveness and follows better hygiene & safety protocols as compared to public facilities.

Chart xxxvii - Reasons for going to the public or private hospital



Migrants often experience certain barriers in accessing health care services. Understanding these barriers is a key to developing interventions aimed at improving their accessibility. One study stated that lack of confidence and fear of the system as the major barrier. It noted that migrants in Maharashtra reported lack of confidence (41 percent), language barrier (37 percent), and financial problem (52 percent) while 42 percent had lack of awareness<sup>54</sup>. Another study reported that the migrants are hesitant to visit public health facility because they fear that they would be infected with COVID, while some of the migrants stated that they could not get planned treatment due to COVID-19<sup>55</sup>.

Chart xxxviii - Difficulty in accessing health facility



In the present study initiatives were also taken to explore the barriers in accessing the health facility by the migrants. The pie chart suggests that 18 percent of the migrants faced some challenges in accessing the health facilities. The major challenges faced are indirect costs or charges even for common illness, inconvenient working hours, administrative difficulties,

<sup>54</sup>[https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/Approved\\_Health%20and%20social%20security%20ISMW\\_KDS-NHRC.pdf](https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/Approved_Health%20and%20social%20security%20ISMW_KDS-NHRC.pdf)

<sup>55</sup><https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18062863>

language and cultural barriers' time restraint, lack of awareness, fear of contracting COVID-19 and so on.

*Table vi - Challenges in accessing the health facilities*

Consultation/Treatment is too expensive	55%
Health services opening hours are not suitable	47%
Administrative difficulties	37%
Lack of knowledge of rights	34%
Did not know where to go	25%
Language & Cultural barriers	23%
Care refused by health professionals	21%
Fear of discrimination	17%
Too time consuming	14%
Fear of contracting Covid-19	14%
Too crowded	10%
Don't Know/Can't Say/No Experience	2%

On detailed discussion with the migrants, we concluded that language was the main barrier when it comes to accessing any service. Most of the information, directions or any IEC material are written in Marathi and the staff too sometimes converse in Marathi. This creates confusion for the migrants. They ultimately avoid visiting such places.

*Gayatri Devi, working in a bakery shop said that she has stopped visiting government hospitals for treatment. She said that she gets confused because all the directions and messages are displayed in Marathi and the hospital staff too speaks in Marathi. She said it is very time consuming and have to take half day leave for that. Hence, I prefer consulting private doctors.*

Lack of awareness among the migrant workers is also one of the primary reasons that prevented them from accessing the public health services. There was sheer lack of awareness

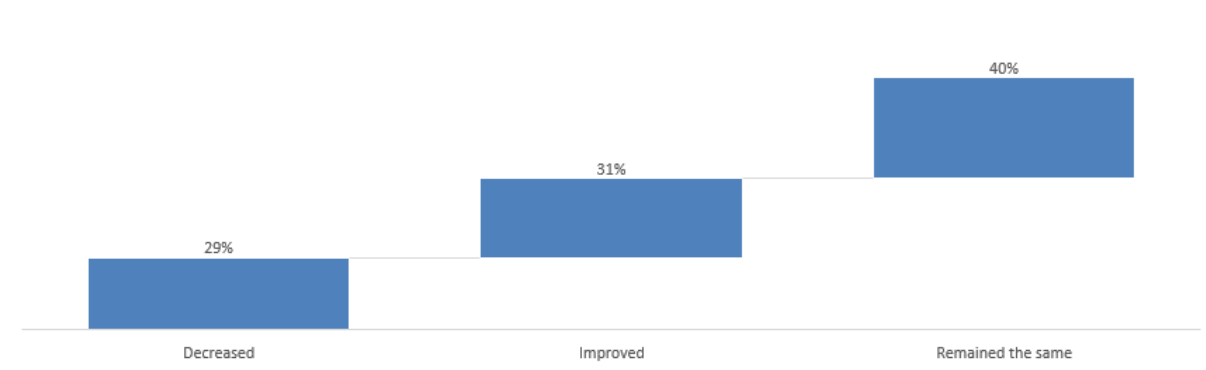
in the context of healthcare services. Even the children of migrants and pregnant women did not take benefits of government programmes under ICDS.

Similar study which focussed on the migrants of Delhi reported that even if people were aware of government health facilities, they often did not consider it for treatment for common illnesses, because of health system related factors and indirect costs. The migrants had negative perception and lack of trust for government health services<sup>56</sup>.

#### **Change in health facilities:**

On return to this city the migrants were inquired about any change they experience in the quality of health services. Among the category 2 and 3, 31 percent believed the health services in the city has improved while the rest believe it to be same or even deteriorated. As the reference period between the departure and arrival of the migrants is comparatively very small, no significant change could be observed in the quality of health services.

*Chart xxxix - Change in health facility*



#### **iv. School Education for Kids**

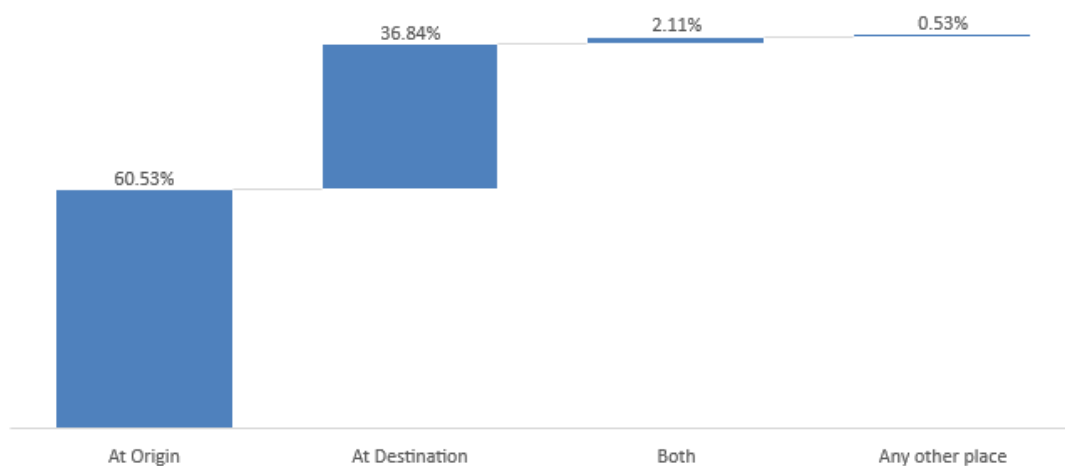
Education plays a significant role in achieving a quality human life. Education always had constant issues such as learning gaps, continuity, affordability, accessibility, and other issues which exacerbate dropouts. The pandemic has amplified the challenges and has impacted the education of children in numerous ways.

<sup>56</sup><https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/tmi.12166>

A recent report by *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO]*, *United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF]* and *World Bank (2021)* has estimated that nearly 1.5 billion children have been affected by school closures globally, which is likely to lead to a learning loss especially for children belonging to low-income countries<sup>57</sup>.

About 37 percent of the migrants under study indicated of having school or college-going children when the pandemic started (1st Jan 2020 to 31st March 2020). Children of almost 60 percent migrants who had school and college going children studied at the place of origin. Only 37 percent of the migrants with school going children had their children staying with them in Mumbai.

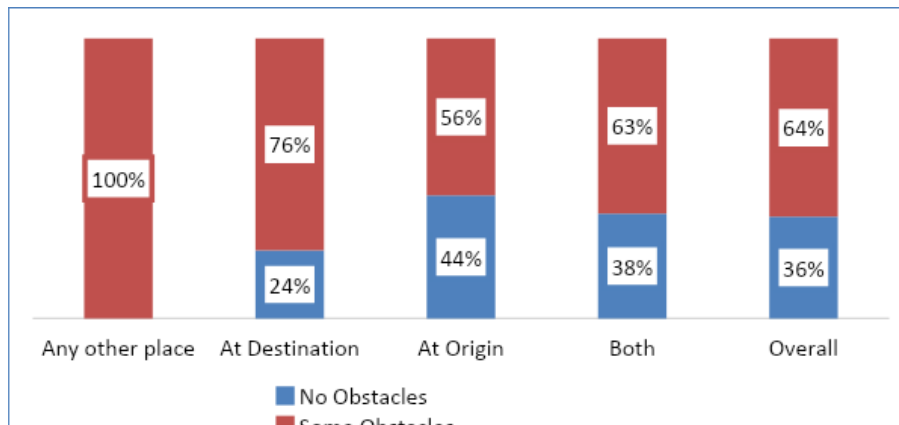
*Chart xl - School education - location*



The migrants were enquired about challenges faced in accessing the school education by their children. Around 64 percent of the migrants, (with school going children) faced obstacles in education of their children during the pandemic. It is clear from the graph that the children pursuing their education at destination (Mumbai) faced more obstacles than those at origin. Around 76 percent of the migrant’s children studying at destination faced obstacles while 56 percent faced obstacles at origin

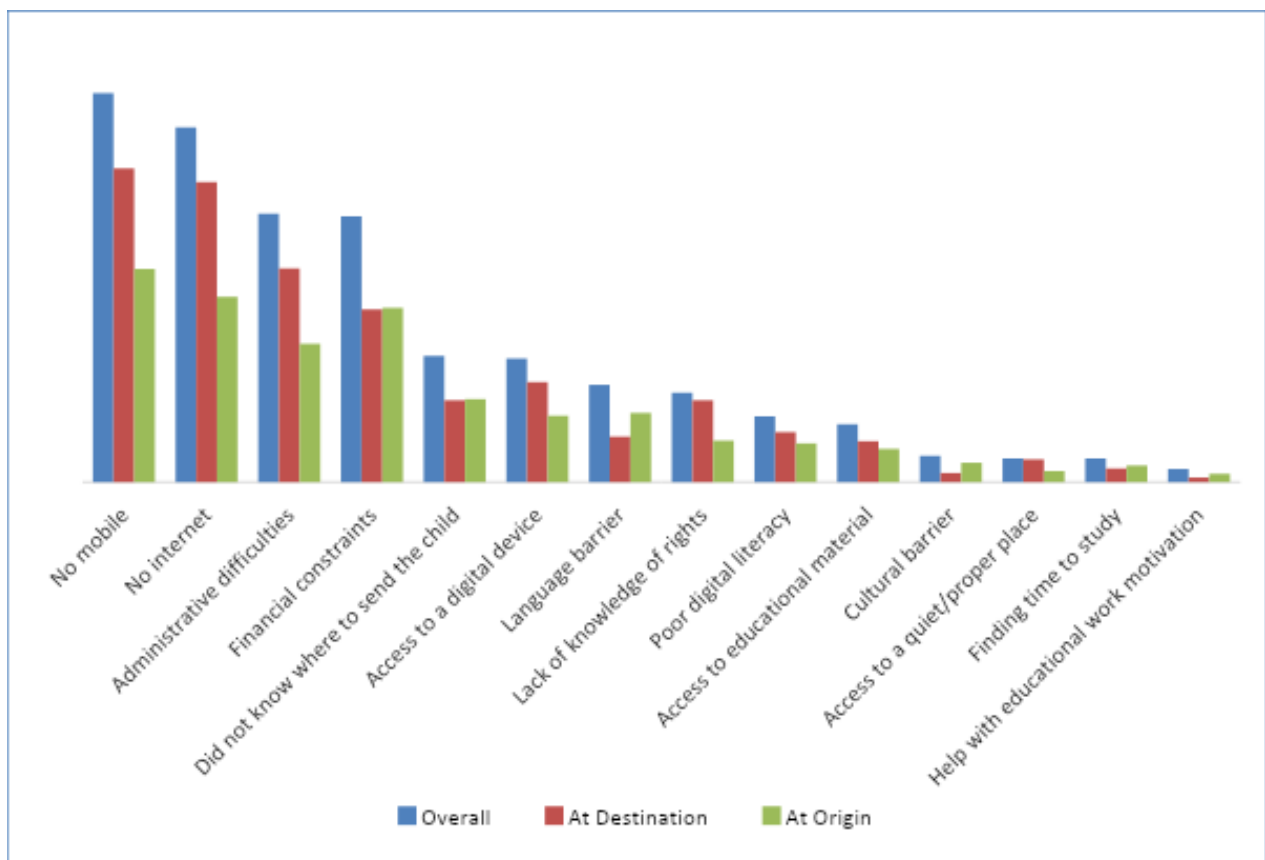
<sup>57</sup><https://data.unicef.org/resources/national-education-responses-tocovid19>

Chart xli - School education – Migrants facing challenges



As indicated from the following graph, the primary challenges that the migrants faced were lack of mobile (61 percent), lack of internet facility (56 percent), financial and administrative difficulties (42 percent). Challenges like digital illiteracy, language and cultural barrier were also listed by some of the migrants.

Chart xlii - The challenges faced by the migrants with respect to children education





On elaborate discussion with the migrants, they expressed that they are worried about their children's future. Since the schools are closed indefinitely, children's studies were greatly impacted and they are getting completely detached from their studies. Lack of continuity in education among the children was the major challenges as stated by migrants. Moreover, the introduction of online classes made it more complicated for them to continue their studies. Many of the migrants did not have access to smartphones or internet facility at home essential for online classes. Hence, they were almost not exposed to any education material for approximately a year. Almost consistent pattern can be identified both at place of origin and destination with respect to problems faced in the context of education

*Mukesh Mittal and his wife who runs a panipuri stall in Navi Mumbai said that their children faced a lot of issues in attending class. They said that when the online classes started, they missed a lot of classes because they did not have any smart phones and they even were not aware of how to use a smart phone. Thus, the children lagged behind in their studies.*

*Suresh said, "My children's studies completely stopped. I am quite concerned about my children's schooling. It has almost been more than a year. So, the government has to do something to deal with this loss, else the children of all the poor people like us will be left without schooling."*

An article published in *The Times of India* reported that closure of the schools has negatively impacted the nutrition of the students as they did not get enough food for their growth. With the physical closure of the school the children were unable to get midday meals offered in the school. It also raised concern over the education of female children and transgender children. Action India in one of its article estimated disruption in the education of 32.1 crore children in India due to school closures.

### **School Dropout/School Absenteeism**

Around 15 crore children are currently out of education system. Girls are more at risk of dropping out. The National Right to Education forum's policy brief estimated nearly 10 million girls at risk of dropping out<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup><https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilia/story/how-covid-19-has-forced-the-dropout-rate-to-shoot-up-in-india-1879271-2021-11-21>

An article published *The Times of India* highlighted the number of drop out children from Maharashtra. Nearly 17,397 students aged 6-14 were counted as drop out because of irregular attendance in 2020-21. Out of these there were around 10,403 dropped out students from Mumbai. Among the dropped out students, around 288 were engaged as child labour at present and nearly 1,212 had special needs which prevented them from attending school. Almost 8,801 students were said to have migrated from Mumbai.

School dropout in our study is considered as no school or home education for more than a year. The findings of our study suggest that around 21 percent of the migrants have reported their children dropping out of school/college during the pandemic. About 27 percent of the migrant, whose children were enrolled in Mumbai reported their children dropping out of school whereas 17 percent reported dropping out who were enrolled in their origin.

Sambhu whose daughter was enrolled in Mumbai said, *“My daughter was promoted to 4th grade. Due to school closure, classes have not yet started. Her teachers are sending lessons through mobile. For few days, she managed to receive them through my friend’s baba’s (dad’s) mobile. But it is not possible all the time. Hence the continuity in her studies is disrupted.”*

This is the reality in most of the cases where affordability and accessibility is the major challenge. The students who faced barriers due to affordability and accessibility issues are pushed out of education and are plunged early into child labour and child marriage<sup>59</sup>. There is also a high probability that the lockdown have pushed the parents to prioritize survival over the children education<sup>60</sup>.

*Sundara Devi said her children had to quit school because they could no longer educate three children in this pandemic-affected income. Their father, Suresh, worked as a security guard at a mall but lost his job and then took to selling vegetables. Owing to the circumstances at home, their children had to drop out of school. In fact their children too started working alongside their parents and started even taking up odd jobs to financially support the family.*

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<sup>59</sup><https://www.actionaidindia.org/blog/invisible-corona-visible-impact-children/>

<sup>60</sup><https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/theenchantedpen/impact-of-covid-19-on-school-education-in-india-32475/>

#### v. Other prejudices/ discrimination/ social exclusion faced by migrants

The migrants under the present study were asked about other forms of prejudices or discrimination they had to witness while living in Mumbai. Many migrants reported that sometimes they feel like an outsider as they have limited access to services because of the lack of valid documents. They do not get ration and their children's admission often gets denied in government school.

The migrants lacked the warmth, love and affection from the local people both at the workplace and neighbourhood. Sunil from Bihar in spite of spending more than a decade in Mumbai says, "*Mumbai is our workplace. It has never felt like home*". The migrants also faced lack of integration with the local community. They did not understand the regional language, i.e. Marathi. Hence, they never indulged in direct communication with the native people. There is always a communication gap. Some of the migrant workers could not even speak proper Hindi because they only knew their regional language. So their interactions with the local people were very restricted.

Some of the migrants complained of high risks at work sites. They are largely employed in unorganized sectors and most of them are illiterate and hence are not much aware of the health hazards due to their work conditions. Some of the industrial and construction workers face ergonomic hazards resulting in musculoskeletal injuries. Most of the workers working in construction sectors works without adequate protection and safeguards.

The migrants have long working hours for almost 10-14 hours in a day and almost six- seven days a week. The worst part of their work as reported by some of the worker was that they were not given scheduled breaks. This exhausted them both physically and mentally and had adverse effects on their health.

*Mohan Singh from Uttar Pradesh worked in an apparel manufacturing unit where he used to do embroidery with machines. He narrated that he has to do all his machine work while standing the entire day. He was not allowed to sit. He further added that the manager kept an eye on the workers through cameras and if someone was found sitting or taking rest, they were thrashed by the manager. He mentioned that this work is purely exhaustive and drains all his energy.*

The workers working in the construction sector, in industries and factories complained of low wage. They said that they earn too less than the amount of strenuous work that they do. Sometimes, they do not receive the full payment and these results in financial distress. Moreover, their payment gets cut if they take sick leave even for a day.

## **VI. ACCESS TO HOUSING STRUCTURE – PRE COVID AND POST COVID**

As our country lacks a legal and institutional framework which addresses migrants' housing needs, they are compelled to dwell in slums and other informal settlements, where they often live in cramped spaces without access to basic services. A large proportion of the migrants dwell in marginalized localities or slums in the city.

In an assessment study on the migrant workers of Maharashtra, it was observed that a mere 15 percent of the migrants had access to all facilities like access to safe drinking water, toilet, adequate space to practice social distancing and water for washing hands. The study pointed out that the migrants had access to one or more facilities but not all of the facilities. Around 75 percent of the migrants had access to drinking water, water for washing hands while 79 percent of them reported to have access to a clean toilet. A mere 26 percent of the migrants stated that they had adequate space in their place of stay for practicing social distancing.

Another study pointed that owing to the low income the living condition of the migrants are miserable. Majority of migrants live in rented, substandard housing. Mumbai's Dharavi, Asia's largest slum, has the highest concentration of interstate migrants. Around 62 percent of interstate migrants dwelling in Mumbai slums are residing in 10x10 or 10x12 rooms'.<sup>61</sup>

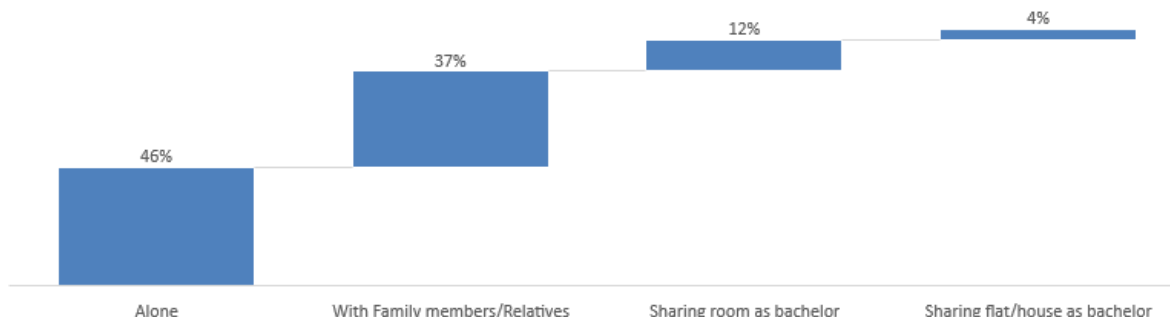
Another report by IHRB talked about the cramped living space of the migrants. It stated that majority of the migrants were either living in slums or in shared rooms close to their worksites. They had limited access to toilet or clean water. The report also highlighted that the two most important precautionary measures for COVID-19 i.e. washing hands with soap and clean water and maintaining social distancing was not possible for them<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup>[https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/Approved\\_Health%20and%20social%20security%20ISMW\\_KDS-NHRC.pdf](https://nhrc.nic.in/sites/default/files/Approved_Health%20and%20social%20security%20ISMW_KDS-NHRC.pdf)

<sup>62</sup><https://www.ihrb.org/focus-areas/migrant-workers/india-internal-migrant-workers-covid-19>

Chart xliii - PRE COVID - Housing pattern



In the current study the migrants were enquired about their housing condition and the changes observed between pre COVID and post COVID time. As depicted from the graph, the findings suggest that pre-COVID only 37 percent of the migrants lived with their family and the rest stayed either alone or in shared rooms. A large proportion of the migrants (78 percent) residing in shared rooms lived with 3 or more person in one room. The migrants rent up and share space in a room to save costs.

Due to high property cost in Mumbai, migrants are forced to stay in low budget housing structure, mostly slums. They reside in unhygienic, poorly ventilated, and cramped rooms in the slums lacking basic amenities and facilities. As evident from the table, overall 38 percent of the migrants did not have access to Integrated household toilet or Community Toilet. Only common toilet was available and that posed threat to their health. Moreover, most of the dwelling sites (66 percent) did not have a running water facility while 83 percent did not have a filter water facility

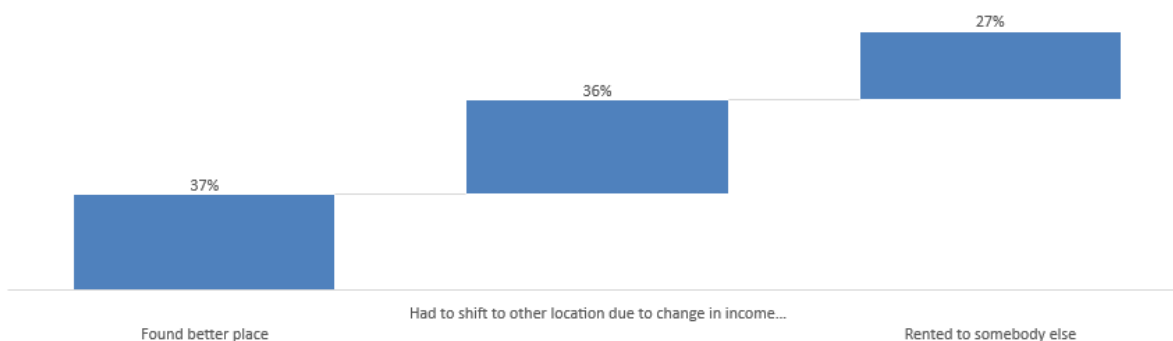
*Mamta Verma, a maid residing in Dharavi, Mumbai, said that the toilet is the breeding ground for many infections. She said that she avoids using that toilet as much as possible because she has suffered from recurrent infection due to poor sanitation and hygiene. She now tries to use either pay and use toilets or she uses the toilet where she works.*

Table vii - PRE COVID - Housing Characteristics among Migrants

Type of Stay	Integrated household toilet/Community Toilet	Solid waste Pickup facility	Sewage system	Running water	Drinking water (RO system/filter water etc.)	Drinking water (direct tap water)	Sample Size
<b>Overall</b>	62%	64%	24%	24%	17%	67%	<b>1024</b>
<b>Alone</b>	59%	66%	23%	34%	19%	51%	<b>472</b>
<b>With Family members/Relatives</b>	61%	70%	28%	17%	15%	83%	<b>383</b>
<b>Sharing room as bachelor</b>	83%	40%	13%	11%	17%	83%	<b>126</b>
<b>Sharing flat/house as bachelor</b>	42%	53%	21%	16%	9%	60%	<b>43</b>

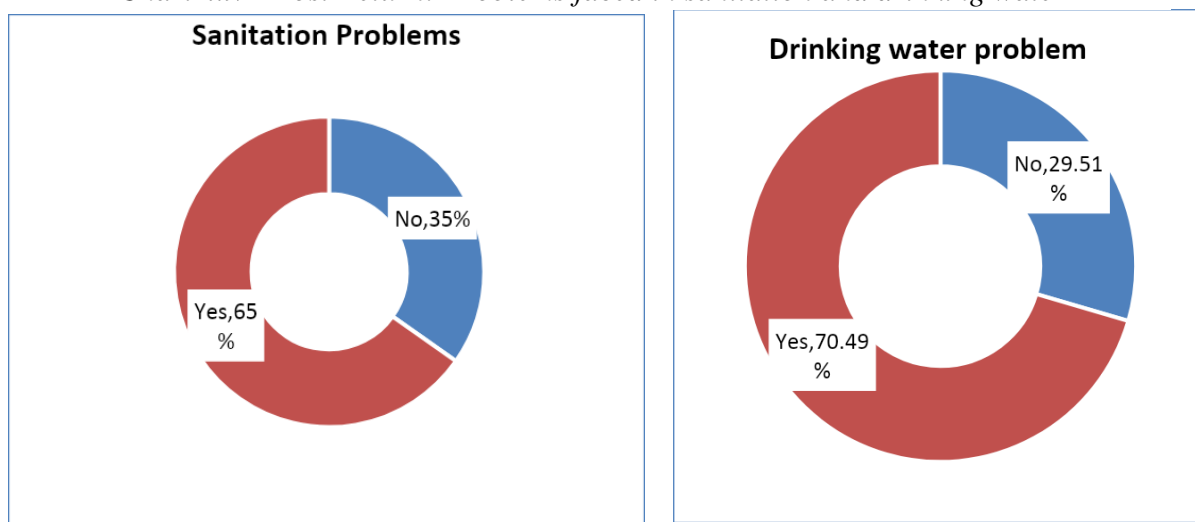
Post COVID Scenario: As per the study findings, majority of the migrants did not have to look around for new accommodation upon returning to Mumbai except for around 34 percent of the migrants who expressed that they did not/ could not return to their previous accommodation. Out of the migrants who had to change their accommodation, only 37 percent said that they switched to another accommodation because they found a better place while the rest were either evicted or their accommodation were rented to someone else or due to other financial issues.

Chart xlv - Post return: Housing facility



The migrants were also enquired about the problems they were facing with respect to the water and sanitation. The pie chart indicates that 70.5 percent of the Category 2 and 3 migrants believed they have been able to access clean drinking water facilities since they returned to the city. About 35 percent of them believes the access to clean water has improved while the rest responded it has either decreased or has been constant. About 65 percent of the migrant who returned back reported to have access to sanitation facilities after their return.

Chart xlv - Post Return: Problems faced in sanitation and drinking water



The Government of India took various initiatives to safeguard the interest of migrant workers during COVID Lockdown and to ameliorate the troubles of migrants. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, issued an advisory as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 regarding

the quarantine of migrants. It was declared that ‘special care shall be taken with regard to vulnerable groups including children, pregnant women, the elderly and those with co-morbidities<sup>63</sup>.’

The Ministry of Labour and Employment have taken various initiatives as part of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) and Atmanirbhar Bharat which includes

- (i) Payment of 12 percent employers’ share and 12 percent employees’ share under Employees’ Provident Fund (EPF), i.e. 24 percent by the Government of India for six wage months from March to August, 2020 for all the establishments having up to 100 employees with 90 percent of such employees earning less than Rs.15,000 monthly wage;
- (ii) Reduction in PF contribution from 12 percent to 10 percent of wages for the wage months of May, June and July, 2020;
- (iii) Non-refundable COVID advance from the PF by amending the EPF Scheme, 1952;
- (iv) Extension in the date of filing of returns;
- (v) Issuing advisory to promptly attend to distress calls of workers/employees and also guide them in temporary shelters; and
- (vi) Taking preventive measures to contain the spread of COVID – 19.

Government of India has also launched SVANidhi Scheme for the benefit of 50 lakh street vendors. Through this scheme, they can enjoy the benefits of collateral free working capital loan up to INR.10,000. This would help them to resume their lost livelihood due to COVID and lockdown.

In rural areas, wages under MGNREGA were increased from Rs.182 to Rs.202 per day for the rural workers including returning migrant workers. Moreover, The Ministry of Food Processing Industries sanctioned 700 food processing/preservation and infrastructure projects to employ migrant workers<sup>64</sup>.

The government provided Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana as the first cushion against the impact of the pandemic. Under this scheme, direct cash transfers were made

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<sup>63</sup><https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/Advisoryforquarantineofmigrantworkers.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup><http://164.100.24.220/loksabhaquestions/annex/175/AU1056.pdf>



to female holders of Jan Dhan accounts. The benefits also included a transfer of INR 1,000 to senior citizens. This was supplemented by the provision of LPG /cooking gas free of cost to enrolled beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana for three months, i.e. from 1 April to 30 June 2020<sup>65</sup>.

Government announced 'One Nation One Ration Card' to enable access of PDS across the country. The government also took steps to supply food grains to around 80 million migrants who were not covered under the PDS system. Affordable rental housing under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana schemes were provided. The government also released INR 1100 billion to States for setting up shelter homes for migrants in their State Disaster Response Fund<sup>66</sup>.

According to an assessment study conducted on the migrants of Maharashtra, about 28 percent of the migrants said that they did not receive any help from the government. Nearly 49 percent of them mentioned that they got ration or food on some days, while 15 percent mentioned that they got cash deposits and 12 percent said that government helped them to get health check-ups done. However, among those who got help, over 75 percent of the migrants reported it to be inadequate while only 17 percent reported it as sufficient<sup>67</sup>.

According to another article published in *The Mint*, only 31 percent of the migrants said to have benefits from the government's free food scheme. As per the statement by the senior officials of the consumer affairs and food and public distribution ministry, about 800,000 tonnes of food grains were allocated under the scheme. Of these, around 638,000 tonnes of food grains were lifted by various state governments and was not distributed to the targeted beneficiary. Out of 8 crores migrants, only 2.51 crore benefitted from this scheme<sup>68</sup>.

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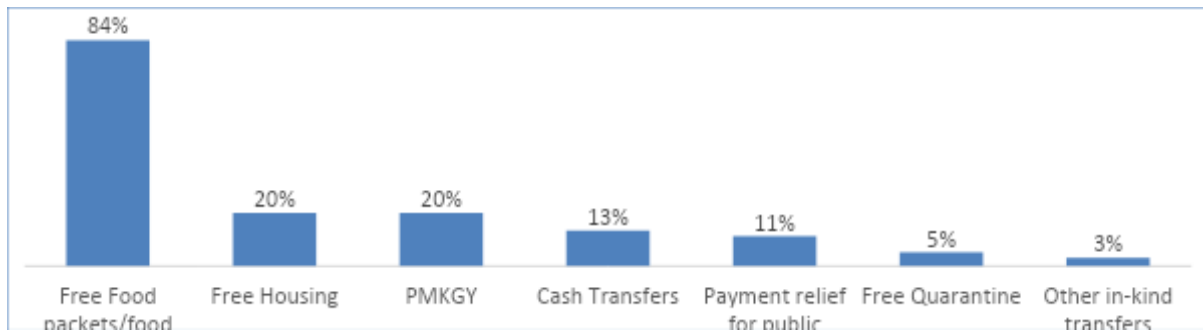
<sup>65</sup>[https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind\\_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf](https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf)

<sup>66</sup><https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1607911>.

<sup>67</sup>[https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind\\_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf](https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Leaving-the-City-Behind_Rapid-assessment-with-migrant-workers-Maharashtra.pdf)

<sup>68</sup><https://www.livemint.com/news/india/less-than-a-third-of-migrants-benefited-from-govt-s-free-food-scheme-11597717705605.html>

Chart xlvii - Government Assistance at the place of Origin

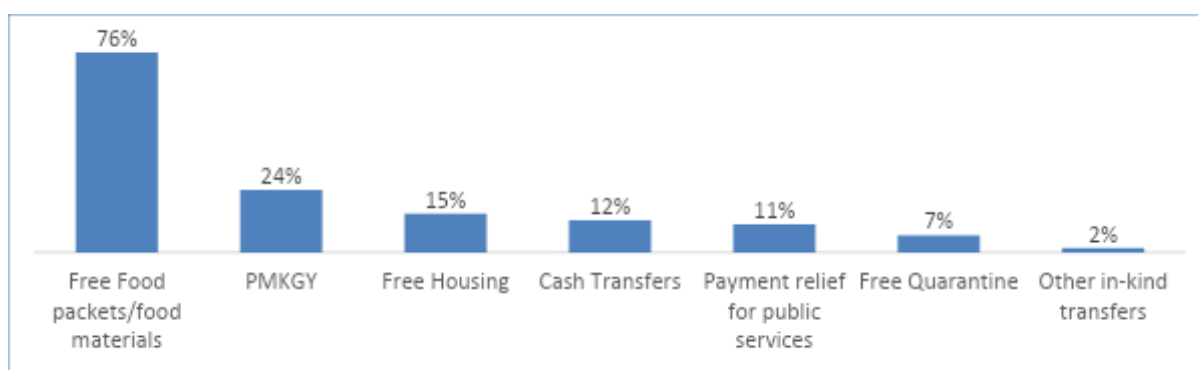


The migrants under the present study stated that during these difficult times, they expected that the government would be proactive but they felt that they received minimal support from the government's end. As per the graph only 33 percent of the migrants or their families staying back at origin reported to have received government assistance. Majority of the migrants (84 percent) said that they received assistance in the form of food packets. Around 24 percent of the migrants who returned with their families accepted of receiving assistance from government at origin. The feeling of lack of support can be understood from the following narratives.

Jyoti, a domestic helper recounted that: *"We became jobless when the lockdown was declared. But people believed we will get support from the government. But the government did nothing for us. We did have a ration card. I filled an online form for the ration with the help of a neighbour's son. Still, I did not receive any ration. If not anything else, the government should have least help us in getting work."*

The migrants who did not exit the city (Category 1) mentioned that some of the NGOs rolled up their sleeves and distributed food packets (both lunch and dinner). Some of the migrants even complained that they did not get food because they do not cast their vote and hence do not belong to any political party. They were ignored when food were distributed by a particular political party.

Chart xlvii - Post Return: Government Assistance



*Sanoj and his family said that they did not get food packets which were distributed by a certain political party. When asked they never denied in clear terms but said, “Don’t worry, everyone will get food by their turn.”*

*Santosh who worked in a construction site in Panvel said that their family was entirely dependent on the food packets distributed by the government and the different NGOs. He also said that there used to be a big queue and it usually ran out of food before everybody gets their turn. Sometimes, they had to sleep empty stomach.*

Some of the migrants who had bank account and proper documents stated that they got INR 500 under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) scheme. When the migrants were in their hometown they also availed benefits of free food grains under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) and this came as a huge relief to them. Some of the workers who were into agriculture also received monetary benefits under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PMKSN).

There were a number of loopholes when it came to implementation of these schemes and initiatives too. When it came to access the welfare funds, the workers must have a valid identity proof like Aadhar Card or ration card or should be enrolled in any government scheme. In the absence of these, they were left in the blind spot. The government although gave orders not to cut their wages but there was no system to verify the same. So these migrants did not receive any monetary help. Hence, the benefits of these schemes could not reach every migrant.

## VII. WILLINGNESS ON ADOPTING SOCIAL SECURITY COVERAGE

There has been a plethora of health policy introduced which covers all the expenses incurred in the treatment of COVID-19 like Corona Kavach, COVID Indemnity Health Policy and Corona Rakshak. These benefit-based COVID health policy exclusively aimed to cover all the expenses for COVID-19 positive patients and provided that the positive diagnosis should be from a government-authorized diagnostic centre<sup>69</sup>.

Majority of the migrants under study reported that they were willing to spend approximately INR 6000 per year for availing any insurance or social security option which makes them eligible to get some benefits during any challenging or pandemic period.

*Table viii - Willingness to accept Government Assistance*

Amount Range	Health insurance in case I fall sick	Money for housing and food during the lockdown	Transport money and two months' salary to return to my family	Wage insurance (60% - 70% of your monthly wage during the lockdown)
<b>Rs. 500 or less</b>	66%	63%	64%	65%
<b>Between Rs. 501 to 1000</b>	6%	7%	4%	4%
<b>Between Rs. 1001 to 2000</b>	3%	4%	3%	2%
<b>Between Rs. 2001 to 5000</b>	4%	2%	6%	5%
<b>Above INR 5000</b>	7%	9%	7%	9%
<b>Don't know/Can't Say</b>	14%	15%	16%	16%

Maximum of the migrants were completely unaware or had no idea about insurance. Most of the workers were of the opinion that why should they pay. They were not willing to pay a single penny. They said that it should come entirely from the Government's end. They

<sup>69</sup><https://www.livemint.com/money/personal-finance/10-types-of-standard-insurance-policies-spawned-by-pandemic-11617638898018.html>

mentioned that they have faced a lot during this pandemic and the political parties and the government should consider this and provide them with food and medical support during these unprecedented times. The workers also want that they should have a health card with which they can avail every facility in hospitals without delay especially during these times.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

The lives of migrants in Mumbai during the COVID-19 pandemic reflect the complex interplay of historical migration patterns, urbanization challenges, and the economic impact of the crisis. Mumbai, a city built on the contributions of migrants from across India, continues to grapple with the consequences of rapid population growth and strained infrastructure. The influx of people, particularly from impoverished rural regions, has exacerbated issues of congestion, overcrowding, and a scarcity of affordable housing.

The socio-economic landscape of migrants in Mumbai is diverse, with a notable proportion engaged in unskilled and precarious employment, particularly in the industrial sector. While some migrants secure well-paying positions in fields like engineering, media, and IT, most face challenges in finding stable employment. The lack of inexpensive temporary housing options has forced many migrants to seek shelter in the city's slums, where living conditions are often substandard.

The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified the vulnerabilities of migrant populations in Mumbai. The fear instilled by the pandemic led to instances of individual migration, with a sense of uncertainty lingering even as economic activities resumed post-lockdown. This report also puts forward the near absence of affordable temporary housing, hostel spaces, and bed-and-breakfast options and how it underscores the difficulties faced by migrants in securing basic shelter and social security. The report highlights shifts in the behavior of migrants, indicating their newfound willingness to allocate funds for social security and health coverage, which prove beneficial during challenging periods such as the pandemic. In addition to addressing housing concerns in Mumbai, the conditions faced by migrants amid Covid-19 underscored the existing structural limitations in their access to various government initiatives and established schemes.

In addressing the multifaceted challenges migrants face in Mumbai, policymakers and urban planners must consider comprehensive solutions. Efforts should be directed toward improving infrastructure, creating more affordable housing options, and implementing policies that promote inclusive urban development. Furthermore, recognizing the diverse skill sets of migrants and fostering opportunities for sustainable employment can enhance their overall quality of life. By addressing these issues, Mumbai can continue to harness the positive aspects of migration while mitigating the challenges faced by its migrant population.