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## International out-migration from Gujarat, India: the magnitude, process and consequences

R.B. Bhagat<sup>a\*</sup>, K.C. Das<sup>a</sup>, Rajiva Prasad<sup>a</sup> and T.K. Roy<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Migration and Urban Studies, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, India;* <sup>b</sup>*International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, India*

India is known for sending a large number of indentured labour to Africa and Caribbean to work in sugar cane and plantation agriculture during the colonial rule. However, the emigration to the West started after the Second World War, more specifically after 1965, as a result of the liberalisation of immigration policy of US and other western countries. Also, emigration to the Middle East increased rapidly since late 1970s as a result of oil boom. Of late, there has been an increase in unskilled and semi-skilled labour emigration from many states of India. Historically Gujarat has been one of the leading states in emigration from India. It is believed that Gujaratis migrated abroad to work as traders, businessmen, shopkeepers, hoteliers, professionals etc. A comprehensive study of Gujarati emigration which includes the characteristics of emigrants, the individual and household strategies, the process of migration comprising of formal (recruitment agency) and informal channels (family, kin, friends, religious groups and NGOs) of migration, costs and financing of migration, the contact, visits and remittances sent by the migrants to their native households would be helpful in understanding the causes and consequences of migration from Gujarat. This study makes an attempt to study Gujarati emigration in the recent past based on a household survey of about 10,000 households conducted in 2012. It estimates the level of emigration, the characteristics and process of emigration and decision-making, remittances sent and utilized. It also assessed the impact of emigration at the household and community levels.

**Keywords:** emigration; return migration; remittances; consequences of emigration; diaspora

### Introduction

The emigration from India to the West, although started after the Second World War, accelerated hugely after 1965 as a result of the liberalization of immigration policy of US and other western countries. On the other hand, migration to the Middle East increased rapidly since late the 1970s as a result of oil boom. The states of Kerala, Punjab and Gujarat are known for a long history of emigration, and the diaspora from these states are spread over in many countries of the world. Recently states like Goa, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh also have been sending a large number of emigrant labour and professionals (Bhagat, Keshri, & Ali, 2013). There has been also an increase in unskilled and semi-skilled labour emigration from the states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (Kumar & Irudaya Rajan, 2014). These states were also known for sending large number of indentured labour to Africa and Caribbean to work in sugar cane and plantation agriculture during the colonial rule.

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\*Corresponding author. Email: [rbbhagat@iips.net](mailto:rbbhagat@iips.net)

In the trade and entrepreneurial emigration, Gujarat stands prominent in India's history. Gujaratis migrated to eastern Africa, Central Asia and Middle East and later in the post independence period to the developed countries like UK, US and Canada. It is believed that Gujaratis migrated abroad to work as traders, businessmen, shopkeepers, hoteliers, professionals etc. The mercantile links of Gujarat with other parts of the world has been very significant buttressed by a long sea coast extending from Kachcha in the north-west to Surat in the south. On the other hand, poor farm land and dry climatic conditions pushed people to seek trade, artisanship and emigration to survive. The process of emigration started in ancient times. Under the British rule, Gujaratis, like other Indians, followed the Empire's flag to serve as traders and clerks under colonial administrators, primarily in East Africa. Socially and culturally there has developed among Gujaratis an ideology of emigration as a preferred means of obtaining family and individual goals (Helweg, 1982). There has been a sizable presence of Gujarati business community in East Africa since 1880s, but they faced adverse political situation in the early 1970s resulting into their mass emigration from East Africa to United Kingdom, US and Canada (Non-Resident Gujarati Foundation, 2004, p. 63). Further, emigration from Gujarat assumes special significance in India's political history as the name of Father of the Nation is associated with it. Mahatma Gandhi- an emigrant from Gujarat landed in South Africa in 1893 as a young barrister at the age of 24 on the invitation of Dada Abdulla—a Gujarati merchant. Gandhi Ji was the first Indian barrister, the first highly-educated Indian, to have come to South Africa who returned to India in January 1915 (Chandra et al., 1989, pp. (170–175)).

As per the latest estimates based on 64th Round of National Sample Survey (NSS), Kerala leads in emigration among the states of India followed by Punjab, Goa, Tamil Nadu, AP, Gujarat and Rajasthan in 2007–08 (Bhagat et al., 2013; NSSO, 2010). For Kerala there are several rounds of large surveys conducted by Centre for Development Studies (CDS) available since 1998, but for other states the only estimate available is from 64th Round NSS 2007–08. Both NSS survey and CDS studies confirm that about 2 million Keralites are working outside Kerala predominantly in the Gulf countries (Bhagat et al., 2013; Zachariah & Irudaya Rajan, 2012). Perhaps no such confirmed figures are available for other states in India. For example from Punjab, it is the roughly estimated that 2.5 to 8 million Punjabis live outside Punjab (quoted in Nanda & Veron, 2011). Similarly various estimates are claimed for Gujarat. Some study shows the number of Gujaratis living outside comprises about 1.5 million, out of which half a million resides in US (Sahoo, 2006, p. 92). According to sources in NRG Centre, Ahmadabad, there are about 6 million Gujaratis living abroad spread over in 120 countries. However, it may be noted that these figures mix emigrants with diaspora. Diaspora essentially includes all people living outside India who have India origin unlike emigrants who are former member of the Indian households (includes all those born in India) but currently living outside India. Thus, study on diaspora must be distinguished from the study on emigration. On the other hand based on NSS 64th Round the estimated number of emigrants from Gujarat in 2007–08 was only 0.18 million. There is not only a need to validate this estimate but also to understand the process of emigration from Gujarat.

A comprehensive study of Gujarati emigration which includes the magnitude and characteristics of emigrants, the individual and household strategies, the process of migration comprising of formal (recruitment agency) and informal channels (family, kin, friends, religious groups and NGOs), costs and financing of migration, the contact, visits and remittances sent by the emigrants to their native households would be helpful in understanding the causes and consequences of migration from Gujarat. This study

makes an attempt to study Gujarati emigration in the recent past. It estimates the level of emigration, the characteristics and process of emigration, decision-making, remittances sent and utilized. It also assessed the impact of emigration at the household and community levels. The main objectives of the study are as follows:

### **Objectives**

- (1) To estimate the level of emigration from and return migration to Gujarat.
- (2) To study the characteristics of emigrant and non-emigrant households in Gujarat.
- (3) To study the role of the individual and household factors in the decision-making and process of migration.
- (4) To study the magnitude of remittances, its utilization and impact on the individual, household and community levels.

### **Data and methods**

Primary data were collected covering whole of Gujarat through interview schedules pertaining to a sample of 10,000 households selected through stratified random sampling. A total of 200 Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) i.e. 120 rural and 80 urban were selected covering the entire state of Gujarat. First Gujarat was divided into four regions namely-South-Eastern Gujarat, Northern Plains, Dry Areas & Kuchchh and Saurashtra (see Figure 1). The villages and towns falling in each region were selected based on PPS method according to the share of each region and rural-urban proportions. From each PSU 50 households were selected randomly after mapping and listing of the households in the selected PSUs. Villages were the PSUs for rural areas and National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) blocks for urban areas. The survey results were suitably weighted as sampling units differed in size and were selected with varying probabilities. The survey, conducted in 2012, interviewed 9714 households out of 10,000 selected households.

This study covered not only emigration but also return migrants. Wherever head of households reported to have return migrants from abroad, he/she was interviewed along with the head of households. Thus the study was able to capture information about the place of destination as well. Apart from emigration, as the state of Gujarat is known for in-migration, data on internal migrants were also collected, but not reported in this paper.

### **Household characteristics**

Nine out of ten households in the study area are headed by males and the pattern is almost identical both in urban and rural areas. Of the total surveyed households, about 2% were single member households and about 10% have a large household size of 8 and more. However, the maximum number of households (45.8%) has the household size of four or less. The urban-rural differential in distribution of family composition reflects that urban localities have slightly higher proportion (55.9%) of nuclear families than the rural localities (50.2%).

Availability of drinking water in the household is considered one of the key aspects of health and wellbeing of the family. About three-fifth of households in rural areas have piped water facility into dwelling followed by 17.6% using public taps and hand pumps and 8.9% using tube well and bore well. About one tenth (10.1%) of rural

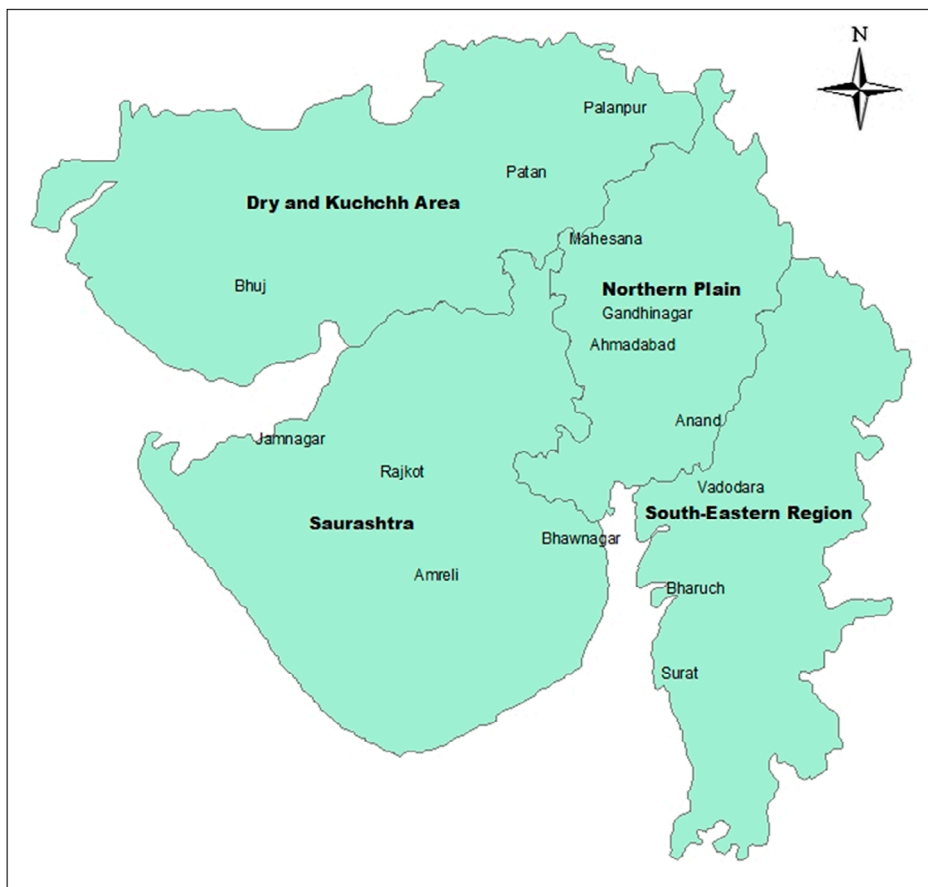


Figure 1. Map of Gujarat and its regions.

dwelling still use unprotected dug well for drinking water which is a matter of health concern.

This study collected information on various aspects of household and household amenities. More than half (53.3%) of the rural households in rural areas have no toilet facility while the figure for the urban areas is 13.1%. Wood (71.7%) is the major source of cooking fuel in rural areas followed by LPG (25.1%). On the other hand, LPG (73.8%) is the major source of cooking fuel in urban areas followed by kerosene (19.8%). About half the households have reported kitchen facility in rural areas compared to three-fourth in urban areas (76.0%). A little less than two third (65.5%) of the rural households have a bank/post office account while the corresponding figure for urban areas is 82.5%. Only 8.2% of the rural and 5.6% of the urban households are covered under micro finance; on the other hand, 16.3% of the rural households and 7.3% of the urban households have availed any government sponsored health insurance. More than one third (37.1%) of the rural households and 13.9% urban households have a Below Poverty Line card. Emigrant and return emigrant households were better off than non-emigrant households in most of the indicators of housing conditions and amenities such as pucca house, flush toilet, piped drinking water etc. There is also a

higher proportion of households with large land holdings (six acres and more) and in higher monthly per capita consumer expenditure class among emigrant and return emigrant households.

### Emigration: magnitude and process

*An emigrant is defined as a former member of a household, who left the household any time in the past for staying outside India provided he/she, was alive on the date of survey.* This is a NSS definition and we have followed the same definition in this study. In 2007–08, the emigration rate from Gujarat was 3 per 1000 population compared to 4 per 1000 at all India level. The present survey gives an emigration rate of 8 per 1000 population. Similarly in terms of proportion of households, it was observed that there were 11 households with emigrants per 1000 households in 2007–2008 which increased to 27 households per 1000 households in this survey. Therefore, some increase in emigration has taken place during 2007–2012 from Gujarat. This study further shows that emigration in recent years has increased more from areas of Saurashtra and Kutchch compared to Central Plain (also called Northern Plains in NSS Survey)- known for emigration and diaspora in the past. This is consistent in the shift in the geographical pattern of development in the state of Gujarat. According to Joshi (2000) the corridor of development from Mehsana to Vapi which mostly falls in the northern plains is being exhausted. The shift has been now clearly occurring to Saurashtra and elsewhere. The South-eastern Gujarat which comprises districts with sizeable presence of tribals is having the least emigration.

Sample surveys conducted at the place of origin have some limitations. For example, if entire households have moved it will not be captured. Further definition of emigrant with a rider of former member of households may be perceived by head of the households differently if the link between the emigrant and the household is weak. Further, the definition of emigrant will be more suitable to capture more recent emigrants who will be identified as former member of the household. With these limitations in mind, we estimated about 0.5 million people from Gujarat being classified as emigrants in 2012 as compared to 0.18 million estimated based on NSSO data pertaining to year 2007–08 (see Table 1).

Further emigration is predominantly a male selective phenomenon. The SCs, STs and OBCs are much less emigrating compared to higher castes (others). About one-tenth of the emigrants were students and similar magnitude were also reported having the status of housewives. It is also important to note that majority of the emigrants were from rural areas showing the rising aspiration to migrate due to lack of better opportunities locally.

About 3/4th of the emigrants were Hindus and Muslims constituted one-fifth. There were very few emigrants from Jain and other communities. Among Hindus about 2/5th were from Patel communities alone. So, Patel and Muslims comprised of the majority

Table 1. Emigration rate from Gujarat: present study and NSSO compared.

Rates	NSS 2007–08	Present study 2012
Emigration rate per 1000 population	3.7	8.0
Number of emigrant households per 1000 households	11.2	26.7
Estimated number of emigrants (million)	0.18	0.50
Sample size (Households)	4257	9714

of the emigrants. Educational level and economic status of the households are important determinants of emigration. However, these two factors also vary significantly across regions of Gujarat. The Northern Plain is relatively better off both in terms of economic status and educational status. Accordingly, emigrants from Northern Plains were more educated and belong to higher standard of living and wealth index. About 75% of emigrants from Northern Plains were graduate and above compared to 40% in rest of the regions of Gujarat. This indicates that labour migration of unskilled and semi-skilled nature has been an emerging feature coincidental with the regional shift towards Saurashtra and Kutch in the emigration pattern from the core of Northern Plains dominated by the emigration of upper castes (Brahmins, Bania and Patels) in the professional, executive and technical jobs and also in shops, hotel and motels in post 1965 in USA and other western countries. At first the professionals like doctors, pharmacists, engineers and scientists migrated followed by the business classes. Over time, they sponsored family members, as a result a large proportion of two million Indians in US comprises Gujaratis (Yagnik & Seth, 2005, p. 238).

About two-thirds of emigrating households reported only one emigrant and one third reported two and more emigrants. However, majority of the emigrants were from rural areas shows that aspiration to migrate has been higher in rural areas due to lack of better opportunities. Table 2 shows that emigration is predominantly a male selective phenomenon, and lower castes such as SCs, STs and OBCs are much less emigrating compared to higher castes (see Others in Table 2). About one-tenth of the emigrants were students and similar magnitude were also reported having the status of housewives. It may be also noted from Table 2 that Majority are currently married (72%) and very few people emigrated with poor background (SLWI).

The recent emigration from Gujarat is neither business related nor entrepreneurial as we expected, but very similar to unskilled and skilled (including professional) labour migration taking place from other states like Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. The current occupational status of emigrant shows that about one-fifth were employed as unskilled workers such as domestic or wage workers and another one-tenth were employed in factories and firms doing works like mechanics, drivers, plumbers, electricians etc. Emigrants employed in business, shops, malls and working as sales workers constituted another one-tenth of the emigrants. About one-fourth were employed in higher categories of professional, technical and managerial jobs. However, it may be noted from Table 2 that about one-third were non-workers which include students and housewives along with children, unemployed, and old people. A comparison between before and after activity status of emigrants is also presented in Table 3. It shows that the most important change in the activity status is visible in respect with financial and managerial jobs as well as in the category of student.

Many emigrants have managed to improve their job profile and have entered in the category of financial and managerial jobs. It also seems that many students after finishing their education have taken up jobs at the destination as proportion of students declines from 19% before to 13% after emigration.

The average cost of legal emigration was about 2.5 lakh (5000 US\$). Money was mobilised through parental, personal and family sources and the contribution of formal channels like banks or sponsorship by Government/other sources was not significant. This further supports the proposition that emigration is an informal process primarily driven by individual and supported by the network of family and friends. Emigration from Gujarat has been taking place mainly to developed countries like US (36%) followed by Australia (11%) and UK (8%). However one-fourth of emigrants also

Table 2. Percentage distribution of emigrants by background characteristics.

Background characteristic	Percentage	Number
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	74.6	288
Female	25.4	98
<i>Marital status (age 10+)<sup>a</sup></i>		
Never married	27.4	101
Currently married	72.1	266
Divorced	0.3	1
Separated / deserted	0.3	1
<i>Residence<sup>a</sup></i>		
Rural	69.4	268
Urban	30.6	118
<i>Education (age 6+)<sup>a</sup></i>		
Illiterate	0.3	1
Literate but below middle	14.0	53
Middle but below higher secondary	23.0	87
Higher secondary but below graduate	16.9	64
Graduate and higher	45.9	174
<i>Religion</i>		
Hindu	75.9	293
Muslim	21.8	84
Jain	2.1	8
Others	0.3	1
<i>Caste</i>		
Scheduled castes (SCs)	6.7	26
Scheduled tribes (STs)	2.6	10
Other Backward Classes (OBCs)	20.2	78
Others (General)	70.5	272
<i>Activity status<sup>a</sup></i>		
Working	70.2	271
Housewife	14.5	56
Student	13.2	51
Too young children/Pensioners/retired/old can't work	1.8	7
Job seekers (unemployed)	0.3	1
<i>Standard living &amp; wealth index (SLWI)</i>		
Lowest	1.8	7
Second	4.9	19
Middle	12.2	47
Fourth	22.5	87
Highest	58.5	226
Number of emigrants	100.0	386

<sup>a</sup>Only current status has been considered for emigrant's marital, education and activity status.

moved to Middle-East. There were also some irregular emigration reported from few villages which have experienced large emigration in the recent past particularly to the US and Canada. The cost of irregular emigration was as high as 70,000 to 80,000 US\$ which was funded by the prospective employers in the destination countries.

The informal agents/brokers provided information to the majority of the emigrants (61%) followed by friends and relatives (55%). The registered recruitment and travel agencies played a little role. The sources of information have been multiple and not mutually exclusive. The print media played some role as about one-fifth of the emigrant reported newspaper as source of information. The private firms, NGOs and trust also played some role. The internet as source of information was reported by only one-tenth



Table 3. Occupational status of emigrants before and after emigration.

Actual occupation of emigrants	Before emigration		After emigration	
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Administrative & educational services <sup>a</sup>	9.6	37	11.4	44
Financial & managerial services	3.9	15	10.4	40
Engineering, IT professionals	2.1	8	3.1	12
Business, shops, malls, etc.	11.4	44	8.8	34
Sales workers	2.3	9	3.6	14
Unskilled workers/domestic workers (wage worker)	18.1	70	18.6	72
Skilled workers/mechanics/factory workers/drivers/plumbers, etc.	8.8	34	13.7	53
Student	19.2	74	13.0	50
Housewives	15.0	58	14.8	57
Non-workers (old, children, disabled, job seeker, etc.)	9.6	37	2.6	10
Number of emigrants	100.0	386	100.0	386

<sup>a</sup>Persons who were employed in government and semi-government institutions were considered as working in administrative & educational services. Also, persons employed in private institutions (company, firm, factory, etc.) as clerks, supervisors, etc. were also considered under the administrative & educational services.

of the emigrants. In nutshell, emigrants derive information mainly from informal sources and channels. There are elements of lack of transparency in most of the sources which make emigration process opaque and unsafe. Also, emigration mostly takes place through channels organised through agents and brokers not officially registered. As such, this involves lot of risk and also at times illegal acts, and high cost of emigration. Although irregular emigration is difficult to be captured in a sample survey based at the place of origin, such instances have been reported to have occurred in several villages in the study area.

This study also tried to probe if internal migration is related to international migration. This could be possible if people move by step. However, we did not find much support to this conjecture. At household level less than 10% emigrant households reported that their members moved internally before venturing abroad. Internal migrants come from lower socio-economic background compared to emigrants originating from economically better off households. It seems that both types of migration are influenced by different emigration influencing factors.

### **Return migration**

One of the consequences of emigration on the place of origin could be assessed through the role of return emigrants. The total number of return emigrants in the surveyed households was 111 of which 37.0% belonged to Kutch followed by Saurashtra (23.4%), Northern Plains (20.7%) and South Eastern Gujarat (18.9%). Among the four regions, Dry and Kutch region recorded highest return migration rate i.e. 19 households with return emigrants per 1000 households or 4 returned emigrants per 1000 population. The average return migration was 11 per thousand household or 2 per 1000 population for the whole Gujarat. Majority of them returned from Gulf countries (66.7%) followed by US and Canada (15.3%). At the destination countries, majority of them lived in accommodation provided by employers (67%) followed by living arrangement with friends and relatives (17%). Overwhelming return emigrants have worked as production, sales and service workers at the destination countries.

The majority of the return emigrants were males (92%) and currently married (75%) at the time of emigration. Most of the currently married return emigrants did not take their spouse along with them. The main reason for not taking spouse was too much responsibility back home and inadequate income at the place of destination. On return maximum of them were self employed (33.3%) followed by wage labour (23%). About one-tenth also have been working as regular worker in private sector compared to 1% employed in government jobs after returning to Gujarat. About one-tenth have been searching jobs after their return. The educational attainment of return emigrants shows that the highest proportion (29.8%) have less than higher secondary education followed by below middle (29.7%) and graduate and higher level of education (22.5%). The most important reasons for return to home were the expiry of the employment contract (30.2%) followed by conditions at home required them to return (19%), insufficient income (7%), health and injury (6%) and illegal stay and repatriation (4%).

The return emigrants reported three main sources of information for their emigration namely agents and brokers (27.4%) followed by relatives (26.4%) and friends (21.7%). The most important skills acquired by the return emigrants abroad were accounting (42.5%), technical skills (40.6%), marketing/trading skills (27.4%), managerial/supervisory (25.5%), leadership/organisational skills (24.5%) and navigation skills (23.6%). About one-fourth of return emigrant also said that they would like to re-emigrate again.

### **Consequences of emigration**

Emigration brings about lots of changes at the individual, household and community levels. There are social, economic as well as demographic changes due to emigration both at the place of origin and destination. The most important outcome of emigration is the remittances which influence the consumption pattern and life style of the individual and households especially at the place of origin. Majority of the emigrant households reported (64.0%) to have received remittances. The frequency of receiving remittances was not regular as only one-fifth of the emigrant households received on monthly basis. The mean annual amount of remittances received by the emigrant households was rupees 1.35 lakh (2500 US\$) and about a quarter of them reported to have received remittances above rupees 1lakh (2000 US\$) during the past one year (see Table 4).

About four-fifth of households reported that the mode of transfer of remittances to their family members was through bank while less than one tenth reported transferring remittances through relatives and friends. In majority of cases, remittances were received by parents (60%) followed by spouse (33%). A majority (88.6%) of the households use remittances for household consumption followed by payment towards utility bills (77.7%), medical and health expenses (60.8%), education of children (48.2%) and repayment of debts (42.8%). Of the total households who use remittances on household consumption, about three-fourth belong to rural locality. Similar is the pattern in case of use of remittances in the education of children, health care expenses, payment of utility bills and repayment of debts as the majority of such households belong to rural locality.

Apart from remittances, about 16% emigrant households reported to have donated money for any social cause. Among those who donated, about 70% donated for building religious places like temple/mosque/church (see Figure 2).

One-fourth also donated for building educational institutions like schools and colleges. More than half of them sent donation through the channel of family members, and about two-fifth sent money directly to the organizations.

Table 4. Percentage of emigrant households received remittances, mode of transfer and the person receiving remittances at home.

Particulars	Emigrant households ( <i>n</i> = 259)
Remittances received	63.7
Frequency of receiving remittances	
Monthly	19.4
Once in two months	18.2
Once in three months	13.3
Once in six months	14.5
Once in a year	15.8
Whenever need arose	18.8
Amount of remittances received during last 12 months (in Rs.)	
Up to 15,000	6.1
15,001–25,000	6.7
25,001–50,000	23.6
50,001–100,000	38.8
100,001 & above	24.8
Mean annual amount (in Rs.)	135,979
Remittances received by	
Parents	60.1
Son/daughter	1.8
Brother/sister	3.6
Spouse	33.3
Others	1.2
Mode of transfer of remittances	
Through bank	78.9
Through cheques/drafts	2.4
Through other financial institution (Western Union, Money Gram, etc.)	1.2
Electronic money order	4.2
Through relatives/friends coming on leave	9.1
Hawala	2.4
Others	1.8
Total	100

Emigration has huge impact on both the places of origin and destination. Information about the impact of emigration on individual life style, family and society is collected from the head of household with atleast an emigrant. More than four-fifth of the respondents reported that due to emigration, there was an increase in the economic and social status of the family. An assessment of the emigrant households by Standard of Living and Wealth Index (SLWI) shows that majority of those reported improvement in their social and economic status belonged to higher SLWI.

Emigration also increases the expenditure on consumption (36%) and increases the savings and investment (26%). The answer to the question whether emigration brings changes in the life style, 39.0% of emigrant households reported that emigration has an impact on dressing and socialising of the family members followed by impact on communication and languages (38%). Emigration also brought changes in the food habits of the household members. More than one-fourth (29%) of the respondents reported that emigration brought changes in the eating habits of the household members followed by one-fifth (20%) of the respondents reporting people are eating more fast food due to emigration. Information was also gathered on impact of emigration on values and attitudes of the individuals. Three-fifth (60%) of the emigrant households reported that

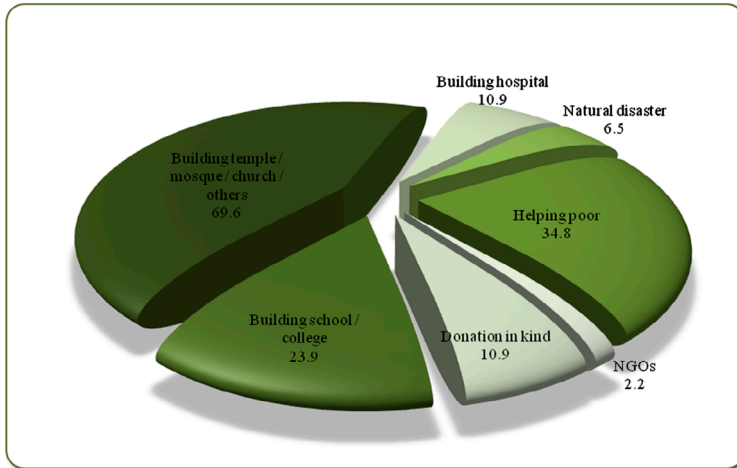


Figure 2. Percentage of emigrants who donated money by purpose of donation.

Note: Multiple response. The addition likely to be more than 100%

due to emigration, there was an increased attachment to family and home followed by 33% reporting greater sense of national and community pride, while 24% reported increased preference for gender equality. Thus, emigration not only brought changes at the individual and family levels, but also for the community at large increasing further the aspiration of emigration among larger sections of Gujarati society.

### Limitations and suggestions

This study is based on place of origin. If all the members of a household have emigrated, we do not have information about that household. Also, in this type of study based on place of origin, we generally define an emigrant as a former member of the household. However, if the emigrant is not in contact with the household at the place of origin or the household does not consider them as a member, in such cases emigrants might be missed. A similar study based on place of destination may be needed in future.

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### Disclosure statement

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### Notes on contributors

**R.B. Bhagat** is a professor and the head of Department of Migration and Urban Studies, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai. His areas of interest are migration, urbanization, urban policies, and right to the city.

**K.C. Das** is a professor of Department of Migration and Urban Studies, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai. His areas of interest are migration, urbanization, and regional development.

**Rajiva Prasad** is a former professor of Department of Migration and Urban Studies, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai. His areas of interest are migration, survey research, and indirect estimation of migration.

**T.K. Roy** is the former director and senior professor of International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai. His areas of interest are sampling, survey research, and programme evaluation.

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