Unravelling Labour Migration from Jharkhand
Key Findings from the Jharkhand Migration Survey 2023

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As part of evolving evidence, informed policymaking on the welfare of migrant workers under the Safe and Responsible Migration Initiative anchored by the Government of Jharkhand, a state-level migration survey (Jharkhand Migration Survey) was carried out during January–March 2023. The survey which followed the Kerala Migration Survey model canvassed a sample of 10,674 households across all districts. Findings from JMS estimate that 45 lakh persons from Jharkhand migrated to various places for livelihoods. The JMS also estimate that the state received a monthly remittance of ₹2,549 crore in 2023, which primarily contributed to the subsistence of some of the most marginalised.

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Jharkhand, one of the three Indian states formed in 2000, is located in the eastern part of the country, with a population of 32.9 million (2011 Census) and estimated at 40.6 million in 2023. According to the 2011 Census, about 26.2% of the total population in Jharkhand comprises 34 tribal communities who have inhabited the region for centuries, with their way of life closely interconnected with the land, water, forests and natural resources that they have inhabited.

Due to abundant underground mineral resources, especially coal, iron ore, bauxite, uranium, limestone, dolomite and quartz, the region during the British rule and after India's independence experienced significant demographic and socio-economic changes due to industrial development, state and private sector-led mining enterprises, building of dams and urbanisation (Rajan and Baral 2020). These activities led to massive displacement and further migration of people from rural areas in search of better economic prospects and livelihoods in cities, industrial centres and tea/coffee plantations across India. According to the India State of Forest Report (2021), nearly 30% of the state's total geographical area is marked as forests, and the state accounts for around 40% of the nation's total mineral resources.

The 2011 Census migration estimates illustrate that the majority of people from Jharkhand moved towards Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Delhi-NCR. The availability of livelihood opportunities, educational institutions, and urban amenities made cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Lucknow attractive to migrants.

The COVID-19 lockdown between March and May 2020 laid bare an unprecedented crisis, leading to the loss of jobs, livelihoods, and shelter for millions of migrant workers nationwide. Faced with dire circumstances, these workers embarked on arduous journeys back to their native states, highlighting their vulnerabilities and precarious situations. The pandemic underscored the urgent need for comprehensive institutional and policy frameworks to address internal labour migration.

Realising the urgent need for an evidence-informed data-driven policy initiative to address the issues of migrant workers, the Department of Labour, Employment, Training and Skill Development, Government of Jharkhand, anchored the Safe and Responsible Migration Initiative (SRMI) in December 2021. Jharkhand Migration Survey (JMS) 2023, the first ever such state-level exercise in Jharkhand and an integral component of SRMI, was conceptualised to arrive at estimates of labour migration, drivers and motives of labour migration, and impact on migrant households, communities, and the political economy of the state. JMS 2023 is

the first post-pandemic state-level evidence initiative on labour migration by any state government in the country. It, thus, also becomes a very significant and timely effort, especially in the context of the Lok Sabha Standing Committee on labour recommendations, and the multiple directives from the Supreme Court that have specifically stressed the need to generate credible evidence and state-level estimates on labour migration for targeted policymaking. JMS 2023 follows the Kerala Migration Survey (KMS) model started in 1998 (Rajan 2021) and replicated in several states of India—Kerala (Rajan and Zachariah 2019, 2020), Tamil Nadu (Rajan et al 2017), Gujarat, Punjab (Nanda et al 2021), Goa (Rajan and Zachariah 2013), and Odisha (Datta and Rajan 2024).

Labour Migration from Jharkhand

The 2011 Census enumerated the total number of internal migrants in India at 450 million. A decade later, the Ministry of Labour and Employment's response in Lok Sabha on 8 February 2021 indicated that a total of 11.4 million migrant workers returned to their home states during the COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdown in 2020. The *Economic Survey 2017–18* estimated outmigration for the working age population as a significant share of the working age population in large states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, etc). Cyclic or circular migration, in particular, has become a routine livelihood strategy for people living in marginal areas of the above-mentioned states, particularly from drought-prone rural regions and rapidly degenerating forested areas. In Jharkhand, circular migration (intra-state and interstate) is more significant than international migration in terms of the number of people involved and possibly even the volume of remittances (Deshingkar and Daniel 2003).

Objectives and Methodology

JMS 2023 deployed a mixed-methods approach comprising both quantitative and qualitative methods such as locality and household-level surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs), focused group discussions (FGDs), and life history interviews (LHIs).

Objectives: The primary objectives of JMS were: (i) to estimate the volume of labour migration from Jharkhand; (ii) assess the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of labour migrants; (iii) map major migration corridors from the state; (iv) identify key factors influencing decisions to migrate; and (v) estimate the volume of remittances.

For the JMS, households served as the primary sample unit, selected through a stratified multistage random sampling method. The actual sample size was 10,674 households, slightly surpassing the initial target of 10,000, aiming for more accurate labour migrant estimates (Table 1). Determining the sample size entailed considering factors like confidence level, margin of error, available resources, and logistical challenges.

To ensure representation, sample households were distributed within districts based on rural and urban proportions from the 2011 Census data. Each district was divided into rural and urban strata, with sample households allocated accordingly. Within each stratum, localities (villages or municipal wards) were selected proportionally, and 25 households were systematically sampled from each locality. In total, 395 localities across 24 districts served as first-stage units (FSUs).

Table 1: District-level Sampling of Households, JMS 2023

Districts	Total Households (Census 2011)			Sample Households			Sample Localities		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Bokaro	3,94,918	2,06,148	1,88,770	641	357	284	22	12	10
Chatra	1,82,271	1,71,296	10,975	363	338	25	14	13	1
Deoghar	2,64,347	2,17,783	46,564	521	413	108	17	14	3
Dhanbad	5,07,064	2,11,024	2,96,040	728	220	508	27	8	19
Dumka	2,75,019	2,57,610	17,409	476	421	55	18	16	2
East Singhbhum	4,76,931	2,18,160	2,58,771	664	292	372	24	11	13
Garhwa	2,54,697	2,41,464	13,233	408	383	25	16	15	1
Giridih	3,96,521	3,60,709	35,812	640	581	59	22	20	2
Godda	2,53,648	2,41,815	11,833	440	410	30	16	15	1
Gumla	1,88,988	1,76,633	12,355	358	333	25	14	13	1
Hazaribagh	3,04,749	2,55,451	49,298	490	415	75	19	16	3
Jamtara	1,55,275	1,40,311	14,964	348	289	59	12	10	2
Kodarma	1,16,155	91,693	24,462	214	189	25	8	7	1
Latehar	1,33,381	1,23,316	10,065	249	199	50	10	8	2
Lohardaga	88,638	77,536	11,102	279	229	50	11	9	2
Pakur	1,82,317	1,68,906	13,411	377	347	30	14	13	1
Palamu	3,58,754	3,18,828	39,926	532	452	80	20	17	3
Ranchi	5,69,444	3,26,235	2,43,209	680	380	300	27	15	12
Sahibganj	2,27,023	1,96,056	30,967	434	378	56	15	13	2
Saraikela-Kharsawan	2,21,232	1,67,591	53,641	473	396	77	17	14	3
Simdega	1,18,288	1,10,036	8,252	272	222	50	10	8	2
West Singhbhum	3,02,046	2,57,294	44,752	482	408	74	19	16	3
Khunti	1,03,700	94,645	9,055	257	207	50	10	8	2
Ramgarh	1,79,375	98,829	80,546	348	187	161	13	7	6
Jharkhand	62,54,781	47,29,369	15,25,412	10,674	8,046	2,628	395	298	97

Source: Developed by the authors to conduct the Jharkhand Migration Survey (JMS) 2023.

Table 2: Raising Factor for Households and Population, JMS 2023

Districts	HH 2023 (Projected)	Sample HH	Raising Factor	Pop 2023 (Projected)	Sample Pop	Raising Factor
Bokaro	4,13,141	641	644.5	17,74,654	3,434	516.7
Chatra	2,76,861	363	762.7	14,52,190	2,183	665.2
Deoghar	1,85,118	521	355.3	11,04,111	3,087	357.6
Dhanbad	5,50,428	728	756.0	33,01,267	3,775	874.5
Dumka	3,96,766	476	833.5	20,07,117	2,523	795.5
East Singhbhum	3,54,044	664	533.1	17,22,583	3,203	537.8
Garhwa	3,15,719	408	773.8	14,89,628	2,333	638.5
Giridih	2,67,890	640	418.5	12,14,581	4,267	284.6
Godda	6,24,354	440	1,418.9	30,75,184	2,363	1,301.3
Gumla	5,16,988	358	1,444.1	24,64,728	1,938	1,271.7
Hazaribagh	1,27,108	489	259.9	6,13,354	2,830	216.7
Jamtara	6,45,564	349	1,849.7	27,32,044	1,807	1,511.9
Koderma	3,91,490	214	1,829.3	25,64,088	1,261	2,033.3
Latehar	1,88,282	249	756.1	9,92,407	1,405	706.3
Lohardaga	2,25,698	279	808.9	12,50,940	1,612	776.0
Pakur	2,23,632	377	593.1	11,01,329	1,915	575.1
Palamu	2,23,253	532	419.6	9,37,149	2,934	319.4
Ranchi	2,21,842	680	326.2	9,95,585	3,328	299.1
Sahebganj	6,64,160	434	1,530.3	37,71,749	2,304	1,637.0
Saraikela-Kharsawan	1,48,418	473	313.7	6,77,374	2,432	278.5
Simdega	1,64,677	272	605.4	13,16,325	1,544	852.5
West Singhbhum	1,62,646	482	337.4	7,20,743	2,477	290.9
Khunti	2,60,902	257	1,015.1	19,00,969	1,391	1,366.6
Ramgarh	3,61,219	348	1,037.9	13,98,370	1,811	772.1
Total	79,10,200	10,674	741.0	4,05,78,468	58,157	697.7

Source: Estimated by the authors using the primary data collected for JMS 2023.

Challenges: Personal motivations of individuals to participate in the survey prompted enumerators to conduct more interviews than initially planned. However, logistical challenges hindered access to certain areas in Koderma and Jamshedpur districts. To mitigate this, enumerators were instructed to conduct additional interviews in accessible areas. The goal was to accommodate the increased interest and ensure comprehensive population representation within constraints. These adjustments aimed to minimise potential biases and improve study accuracy. The survey took place from January to March 2023.

Raising factor: The raising factors for the survey (number of households in a district in 2023 estimated from census data divided by the number of households from the district in the sample) were calculated using the number of households from Census 2011 and JMS 2023, and they were vital for estimation (Table 2, p 53).

Estimated Labour Migrants from Jharkhand

Methodology for estimation: In JMS, the interview schedule enquired about the labour migration status of the members of the sample households over three temporal periods, that is, the entire life course of the individuals (ever-migrated) in the last five years and in the last 12 months. Three broad categories of respondents were identified through the course of the survey analysis. (i) Non-migrant (individuals who have never migrated from their birthplace); (ii) current migrant workers (migrant workers whose current residence differs from their place of birth); and (iii) return migrant workers (migrant workers whose last residence differs from their place of birth).

Within the current migrant category, further classifications were made based on the purpose of migration: current migrants temporarily at home for festival, current migrants temporarily at home for other reasons, current migrants at the destination, migrants for education, and migrants for reasons other than work or education. Return migrants were classified based on the duration of their stay at the destination: three months (stayed at destination for three months), return migrant, four to six months (stayed at destination for four to six months), return migrant, six to nine months (stayed at destination for six to nine months), return migrant, 9–12 months (stayed at destination for 9–12 months), return migrant, 12 months (stayed at destination for 12 months), and migrant but staying home due to unavailability of work (return migrant). The migration status question thus covers the duration of residence and place of last residence.

Further, in order to estimate internal labour migration, the data is divided into two categories: (i) Current labour migration (CLM), which would refer to migration for work within Jharkhand and migration from Jharkhand to other states or regions of India or international migration. (ii) Return labour migration (RLM), that is, individuals who have returned from work to their place of birth from within Jharkhand and those who have returned from other states or regions of India or abroad at the time of the survey.

The ratio method of estimation by household and population has been used for estimating the number of current and return labour migrants from Jharkhand, at the district level, where estimates are calculated for each individual district and then aggregated to obtain a state-level estimate.

State-level estimate of labour migration: The total CLM workers from Jharkhand are estimated as the highest number, 45,28,124 and the total RLM workers to Jharkhand (estimated) are 9,43,798 (Table 3). According to JMS 2023, the total current migrants in proportion to the total households are 54.8%.

Among the total migrant workers, it is estimated that over 32 lakh people are interstate migrant workers, accounting for 70.5% of all labour migration. The next largest group of migrant workers are those who move within their districts (17.2%). Only 12% of the total migrant population are intrastate migrant workers. International labour migration constitutes only 0.3% of total migrants (Table 4).

Major source and destination of labour migrants: Among the districts of Jharkhand, Sahibganj, Gumla, Garhwa, Godda, and Koderma emerge as the major source of labour migration and they also happen to share their borders with neighbouring states. Sahibganj shares its border with West Bengal and Bihar, Garhwa shares its border with Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and

Table 3: District-level Estimates of Current and Return Migrants from Jharkhand, 2023

	Estimation Based on Household		Estimation Based on Population	
	Current Migrants	Return Migrants	Current Migrants	Return Migrants
Bokaro	147,596	78,632	1,18,345	63,048
Chatra	2,41,014	28,220	2,10,212	24,613
Deoghar	1,12,990	22,029	1,13,737	22,175
Dhanbad	1,14,168	43,853	1,32,051	50,721
Dumka	2,85,905	40,844	2,72,866	38,981
East Singhbhum	58,652	26,127	59,158	26,352
Garhwa	3,42,803	36,370	2,82,857	30,010
Giridih	1,99,662	68,647	1,35,776	46,682
Godda	3,29,205	87,977	3,01,922	80,686
Gumla	4,65,000	62,096	4,09,516	54,687
Hazaribagh	77,720	16,896	64,803	14,088
Jamtara	2,10,872	1,12,835	1,72,359	92,227
Kodarma	3,01,850	10,976	3,35,507	12,200
Latehar	1,51,231	14,367	14,1268	13,420
Lohardaga	2,08,710	32,358	2,00,212	31,041
Pakur	1,42,958	32,625	1,38,601	31,631
Palamu	2,20,315	18,884	1,67,690	14,373
Ranchi	37,844	11,745	347,02	10,770
Sahibganj	4,72,870	85,698	5,05,847	91,674
Saraikela-Kharsawan	28,554	9,100	25,346	8,077
Simdega	92,025	19,979	1,29,586	28,134
West Singhbhum	78,286	9,786	67,506	8,438
Khunti	79,184	43,653	1,06,596	58,765
Ramgarh	1,28,710	30,102	95,747	22,392
Jharkhand	45,28,124	9,43,798	42,22,211	8,75,187

Source: Estimated by the authors using JMS 2023.

Table 4: Migration Estimates Based on JMS 2023 by Stream of Migration

Destination Type	Estimates	Percent
Within district	7,80,942	17.2
Outside district but within Jharkhand	5,42,973	12.0
Outside state but within India	31,90,803	70.5
Outside country	13,407	0.3
Total	45,28,124	100.0

Source: Same as Table 3.

Table 5: Destination of Outmigrants from Jharkhand, 2023

Destination States	Male	Female	Others	Total
Maharashtra	18.0	10.9	0.0	17.5
Gujarat	9.6	2.8	0.0	9.2
West Bengal	8.0	15.7	100.0	8.6
Karnataka	8.5	7.3	0.0	8.5
Others	55.6	63.1	0.0	56.4
Grand total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	40,32,316	4,94,259	1,549	45,28,124

Source: Same as Table 3.

Chhattisgarh, Gumla shares its border with Chhattisgarh, while Godda and Koderma share their borders with Bihar (Table 5).

Based on the data from JMS, Maharashtra (18), Gujarat (9.2), and West Bengal (8.6) emerge as the top three destinations for labour migrants from Jharkhand. The majority of female labour migrants went to Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal, and Karnataka. West Bengal was the destination for 15.7% of females compared to 8% of males and 7.3% of females migrated to Karnataka compared to 8.5% of males. The most popular destinations are not neighbouring states, except for West Bengal, indicating that migration is driven in large part by the economic opportunity available for migrants in various states.

Demographic and social profile of labour migrants: Labour migration from Jharkhand is male-dominated and as per the data, males comprise 89.6% of the total labour migrants while females only constitute 10.3% of the labour migrants. Further, this should be contextualised within the prevalent low rate of female labour force participation in Jharkhand (47.2%) in comparison to 83.2% for men (PLFS 2021–22). Further, it would be pertinent to point out that labour migration from the state is primarily interstate where typically men move long distances while women and children of the household stay behind.

The outflow of labour migrants is the highest (23.1%) in the 20–24 years age group, followed by the 25–29 years age group at 19.6%. Labour migrants above the age group of 40 years constitute only 20.4% while 79.6% of labour migrants are below 40 years of age. One in every five female labour migrants is in the 15–19 years age group and 27.4% in the 20–24 years age group, compared to 11.1% of males in the 15–19 years age group and 22.6% in the 20–24 years age group; indicating that there are more young females as a share of total female labour migrants than males for the same category. This data substantiates that a significant number of young women from Jharkhand, some still below the age of 18, are taken to cities like Delhi, mainly because of the lack of work opportunities locally and for mere survival.[1]

One in every five labour migrants from Jharkhand is aged 40 years or above, indicating significant distress migration from the state. Long-distance migration typically happens in the prime of youth and declines as physical capacities begin to decline post 40 years of age. Given that migrant labourers from Jharkhand usually take up semi-skilled and unskilled job roles, physical strength becomes a critical factor in securing jobs. As physical capacities of the labourers begin to decline with age, the labour markets eject them out of these job roles. Thus, age and physical capacities are rendered as critical factors for determining the vulnerabilities of migrant workers.

In terms of religion, Hindus form the majority of the migrants from Jharkhand, constituting 64.8% of the total migrants (Table 6). This is in line with the proportion of Hindus in Jharkhand (67.8%) as per Census 2011. A significant section of labour migrants mentioned that they followed traditional belief systems or were nature worshippers (17%), followed by Muslims (11%), and Christians (7%).

In terms of caste-wise distribution of labour migrants, 40.2% are Other Backward Classes (OBCs), which is reflective of their relative strength in Jharkhand. Moreover, 32.4% of labour migrants belong to the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and 18.4% are Scheduled Castes (SCs) (Table 7).

Table 6: Distribution of Migrants by Religion, 2023

Religion	Estimates	%
Hindu	29,33,791	64.8
Muslim	47,4891	10.5
Christian	3,04,457	6.7
Sikh	3,099	0.1
Jain	0	0.0
Buddhism	5,423	0.1
Do not follow any religion	27,889	0.6
Other religion	7,78,574	17.2
Total	45,28,124	100.0

Source: Same as Table 3.

Table 7: Distribution of Migrants by Caste, 2023

Caste	Estimates	%
OBC	18,20,306	40.2
ST	14,67,112	32.4
SC	8,33,175	18.4
General	3,35,081	7.4
PVTG	72,450	1.6
Total	45,28,124	100.0

Source: Same as Table 3.

A majority of the migrants were found to have completed middle school (19.5%). The proportion of males who have completed middle school (20.2%) is significantly higher than females who have completed middle school (13.9%). A significant proportion of migrants in Jharkhand do not have a formal education (17.8%); this proportion is higher among females (29.4%) than among males (16.4%). Additionally, 29.4% of females are not educated, and the majority of them are likely to be forced into domestic work or as manual labourers in brick kilns or migrate with their spouses for work (Table 8). Interestingly, the proportion of female migrants who have completed graduation and above is 11.2%, while it is only 6.3% for males, suggesting that females who receive a formal education go on to achieve higher educational qualifications than males. About 74.7% of migrants have a formal education ranging from Class 1 to Class 12.

Table 8: Education Status of Migrants by Sex, 2023

Educational Status	Male	Female	Total
Did not study	16.4	29.4	17.8
Classes 1–5 (primary school)	14.3	8.7	13.7
Classes 6–8 (middle school)	20.2	13.9	19.5
Classes 9–10	13.9	9.4	13.4
10th pass (matric pass)	15.1	11.1	14.7
12th pass (senior secondary pass)	13.2	15.5	13.4
Diploma/certificate course/ITI	0.6	0.8	0.6
Graduate	5.6	8.7	5.9
Postgraduate	0.7	2.5	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Same as Table 3.

Economic activity and occupation of labour migrants: During JMS, labour migrants were enquired about their economic activity both before and after they undertook migration (Table 9, p 56). It is seen that the percentage of labour migrants working in private jobs goes up by almost 7% post migration (28.3%), while it increases from 55.8% to 59.6% for non-agriculture-based sectors (Table 9). The increase in engagement in private jobs after migration is fuelled mostly by those who had been earlier either self-employed, or were homemakers, engaged as agricultural labourers or had migrated in search of

work. If seen from a destination perspective, this data-point indicates that major employers at the destination are private sector companies. Interestingly, a significant drop is seen among one-third of the females (33.8%) who were homemakers before migration but only 1% of these homemakers continued in their role after migration and took up either a private job or are engaged as non-agricultural labourers at the destination.

Table 9: Economic Activity Before and After Migration

Economic Activity	Before Migration			After Migration			% Difference
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Government job	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.4	-0.2
Non-government/private job	21.9	7.3	20.9	28.9	20.5	28.3	7.3
Self-employed	3.5	1.4	3.4	0.6	0.0	0.6	-2.8
Housewife	1.1	33.8	3.4	0.3	1.4	0.4	-3.0
Agri labourer	3.2	4.4	3.3	3.1	2.9	3.1	-0.2
Non-agri labourer	57.0	39.7	55.8	60.2	51.4	59.6	3.8
Looking for work	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.5
Student	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.1	-0.2
Domestic help/maid	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1
Other	1.4	0.0	1.3	2.3	1.4	2.2	0.9
Grand total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Source: Same as Table 3.

The majority of the migrants (80%) are engaged in sectors that present low-skilled jobs like construction, manufacturing, agriculture, automobile, brick kiln and domestic work. Of these, the construction and manufacturing sectors account for a little more than half (56.5%) of the labour migrants from Jharkhand.

Among male labour migrants, curiously, a 3% decline is observed within the construction sector post migration, while manufacturing sees a 3% increase. This is most likely because of a lack of opportunities at the source that males are forced to engage within the construction sector but migration provides them with better work opportunities and offers them a chance to utilise their skills. Brick kiln and domestic work also see a slight increase of 1% among male labour migrants post migration.

Apparel industry, domestic work and brick kilns see a 3%, 3%, and 5% increase respectively in the engagement of women labour migrants post migration. Various studies have observed that a majority of female labour migrants have been migrating to work in brick kilns[2] or as domestic help[3] over the past several years, while a push to skill development from the government has opened up avenues for young women in Jharkhand to migrate and work in the apparel industries in South India.[4]

Reasons for labour migration from Jharkhand: Close to five million of Jharkhand's working age population migrated between 2001 and 2011 (*Economic Survey of India* 2017). Lack of employment opportunity, deprivation and loss of traditional livelihood resulted in migration of more than 5% of the population annually. Similarly, findings from JMS showcase that the

Table 10: Reasons for Migration by Sex, 2023

Reasons for Migration	Male	Female	Total
No work available within district	54.5	38.2	53.3
Seek better work	29.2	28.2	29.1
Declining yields in agriculture	4.5	6.6	4.6
To repay debt	2.9	4.2	3.0
For education of family member	2.1	4.3	2.2
To accompany spouse/family	1.7	11.2	2.5
Other	5.0	7.3	5.2
Grand total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Same as Table 3.

major reason for migration as reported by the respondents is the lack of employment opportunities (53.3%) within source districts, followed by a search for better work opportunities (29.1%). Declining productivity in agriculture (4.6%) and repayment of debts (3%) were the other major reasons cited by the respondents as the major reasons for migration (Table 10).

About 9% of female respondents mentioned that they migrated with family/spouse and 3.5% for the education of a family member, while the corresponding percentage for men is only 0.6% and 1.2%. Interestingly, a greater percentage of women (7%) mentioned that they had to migrate due to declining productivity in agriculture and 4% of women mentioned that they migrated because they had a debt to repay.

Experiences of RLM

Internal migration from Jharkhand has been ongoing since the pre-independence era. However, the COVID-19-induced lockdown temporarily reversed the migration patterns in the state, causing its socio-economic system to be suddenly overwhelmed by almost a million RLMs.[5] As per JMS estimates, there are 9.4 lakh RLMs in Jharkhand at the time of the survey. In terms of spatial movements, rural–urban migration dominates migration for economic reasons. In Jharkhand, seasonal migration is high and it is very high among the socio-economically deprived and marginal groups.[6]

District-wise RLMs per 100 households: Jamtara has the highest number of RLMs (1,12,835) followed by Godda (87,977), and Sahibganj (85,698). Among all districts, Girdidh recorded about 25 RLMs per 100 households (Table 11). Bokaro and Jamtara follow the lead with 19 and 17 RLMs per 100 households, respectively, while Kodarma has the least number RM per 100 households (2.8%). While 86% of return outmigrations (ROMs) were from rural

Table 11: RLM Estimates and RLM per 100 Households by District, 2023

District	RLM	RLM per 100 Households
Jamtara	1,12,835	17.5
Godda	87,977	14.1
Sahibganj	85,698	12.9
Bokaro	78,632	19.0
Giridih	68,647	25.6
Gumla	62,096	12.0
Dhanbad	43,853	8.0
Khunti	43,653	16.7
Dumka	40,844	10.3
Garhwa	36,370	11.5
Pakur	32,625	14.6
Lohardaga	32,358	14.3
Ramgarh	30,102	8.3
Chatra	28,220	10.2
East Singhbhum	26,127	7.4
Deoghar	22,029	11.9
Simdega	19,979	12.1
Palamu	18,884	8.5
Hazaribagh	16,896	13.3
Latehar	14,367	7.6
Ranchi	11,745	5.3
Kodarma	10,976	2.8
West Singhbhum	9,786	6.0
Saraikela-Kharsawan	9,100	6.1
Jharkhand	9,43,798	11.5

Source: Same as Table 3.

areas, only 13% belonged to urban areas. Rural outmigration has become an integral part of the livelihood of people in Jharkhand.

Demographic and social profile of RLMs: The religious composition of RLMs shows that around 65% were Hindus followed by nature-worshipping communities, Muslims, and Christians (Table 16, p 58).

Hindus constituted the majority of the RLMs in Giridih, Bokaro, Hazaribagh, Dhanbad, Dumka, Palamu, and Chatra districts (Table 12). Islam was the most followed belief system among RLMs in Deoghar, Garhwa, and Ramgarh. The RLMs from the nature-worshipping community were most concentrated mainly in Jamtara, East Singhbhum, Gumla, Lohardaga, Saraikela-Kharsawan, and West Singhbhum. Christianity took the lead in Sahibganj, Pakur, Khunti, and Simdega districts. Another notable feature is that about 66% of RLMs in Sahibganj district and 33% in Latehar district reported that they do not follow any religion.

The caste-wise composition of RLMs indicates that the majority belonged to OBCs while STs were the second major group (Table 13). Particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) account for the least number of RLMs. Socio-economically deprived and marginal groups such as ST, SC, Muslim, households from the lower monthly per capita expenditure quintile and households having smaller landholding have a greater propensity to migrate seasonally (Sucharita 2020).

Table 12: Estimated RLM Population by Religion, 2023

Religion	Sample	Estimates	%
Hindu	804	6,12,440	64.9
Muslim	152	1,15,785	12.3
Christian	85	64,748	6.9
Other religion	195	1,48,540	15.7
Do not follow any religion	3	2,285	0.2
Total	1,239	9,43,798	100.0

Source: Same as Table 3.

Table 13: Estimated RM Population by Caste

Caste	RLMs (from Sample)	Estimates	%
ST	378	2,87,938	30.5
SC	185	1,40,922	14.9
OBC	567	4,31,907	45.8
General	93	70,842	7.5
PVTG	16	12,188	1.3
Grand total	1,239	9,43,798	100.0

Source: Same as Table 3.

Major Sectors and Occupation of RLMs

Around 70% of RLMs were engaged in non-agricultural labour work at their destinations (Table 14). Here, males were in a higher proportion than females. While 73% of men were employed for non-agricultural work, only 42% of women got hired for the same. Nevertheless, the majority of the migrant population took up non-agricultural work followed by private jobs and domestic labour. Females constituted more among the domestic workers. Agricultural labourers and the self-employed were sectors that employed very few RLMs at their destination. Outmigration is not solely economic, as many young people leave rural areas to pursue higher education (Kumar et al 2023).

RLM women who were unemployed accounted for about 8% whereas men almost always found employment. After moving

Table 14: Economic Activity of RLM at Last Migration Destination and at Present

Economic Activity	At Destination			In Jharkhand		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Non-agri labourer	72.9	41.7	70.7	62.2	14.3	58.9
Non-government/private job	17.4	8.3	16.8	19.9	21.4	20.0
Unemployed	0.0	8.3	0.6	4.1	5.4	4.2
Self-employed	1.3	0.0	1.2	2.8	0.0	2.6
Agri labourer	1.3	8.3	1.8	1.8	12.5	2.6
Other	0.6	16.7	1.8	2.5	3.6	2.6
Housewife	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	32.1	2.5
Agriculture	1.3	8.3	1.8	2.5	0.0	2.3
Looking for job	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	1.8	1.6
Student	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.9	3.6	1.1
Domestic worker	3.9	8.3	4.2	0.5	5.4	0.9
State/central government job	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.7	0.0	0.6
Unable to work due to health issues	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Same as Table 3.

back to Jharkhand, a majority of RLMs were again employed in non-agricultural activities. Among those employed again had a higher proportion of men than women. The majority of female RLMs turned out to become housewives followed by private jobs and agricultural work.

Reasons for Migration among RLMs

About 41% of males migrated due to difficulty in finding work within their home districts. On the other hand, 40% of females migrated in order to find better work. Another primary reason for migration is the declining productivity in agriculture. For females, a significant reason for migration is owing to the fact that they move out with their spouse or family while this is not at all a reason for male migration due to the patrilineal social structure. Marriage is one of the most important reasons for female migration (Kumar and Kumar 2020). Nearly 5% of women cited family disputes as the reason for migrating for work whereas less than 1% of men cited this as a reason for their migration.

Another trigger for migration of males is the pressure to repay loans or debt. Poverty, lack of sufficient means of subsistence, unequal distribution of landholding to meet household expenditure, availability of employment opportunities, and loans are the main causes of temporary migration (Sucharita 2020).

Personal factors, such as health concerns, ageing parents, or a change in life circumstances, can lead to return migration. Individuals may decide to return to Jharkhand to take care of their family members or address personal needs.

About 14% of the RLMs said that their reason for returning was because they missed their family, but a majority of them cited other reasons. On the other hand, most female returnees stated illness or accident as the primary reason and seasonality as the second major reason. Least-reported reason for returning was retirement, indicating the informal nature of work most of the internal migrants are involved in.

Remittances

The average monthly remittance per household has been calculated as the average of the remittances received by all the households. The average was calculated using only 95% of the observations and the remaining 5% of observations were omitted

to exclude the outliers (only observations ranging from ₹500 to ₹45,000 were included in the calculation). Thereby, accounting for the outliers, we have removed the need to take the median value for the remittances. We believe the average value delivers a more accurate picture of remittances.

The average monthly remittances received by a household from JMS = ₹8,918.96.

Estimation of remittances: To estimate the monthly remittances under the JMS, it has been estimated at the district-level and then the state-level figures have been estimated at ₹2,549.06 crore.

The districts of Giridih, Palamu, Garhwa, Hazaribagh, Deoghar, Chatra, and Gumla hold 50% of the migrant population in the state. The notable distinction is that out of the top four districts in Table 15, two districts, namely Giridh and Hazaribagh, have heavy mining sectors and the other two, that is, Palamu and Garhwa, are both part of one of the most backward districts across the country according to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and receive funds from the Backward Regions Grant Fund programme. Despite government aid and heavy industrial growth, these regions report both the highest internal labour migrants and remittances for the state.

Table 15: Monthly Remittances in Crore by District, 2023

District	Average Monthly Remittances per District	Remittances (in crore)
Giridih	9,521.8	266.3
Palamu	8,052.7	245.8
Garhwa	8,192.6	215.8
Hazaribagh	10,655.4	170.1
Deoghar	8,945.9	158.7
Chatra	9,902.7	155.0
Gumla	9,606.4	138.4
Sahibganj	8,292.3	122.1
West Singhbhum	10,227.4	118.9
Bokaro	9,598.5	112.3
Godda	8,673.3	110.2
Dumka	6,912.1	87.3
Pakur	7,690.7	85.2
Koderma	7,105.5	77.6
Simdega	9,701.7	72.9
Lohardaga	10,222.2	68.9
Jamtara	10,013.5	61.3
Dhanbad	8,202.8	48.9
Ranchi	11,845.2	48.6
Latehar	6,764.7	47.7
Ramgarh	8,911.1	42.8
East Singhbhum	7,525.0	34.4
Khunti	7,707.3	30.5
Saraikela-Kharsawan	9,783.3	29.6
Jharkhand	8,918.9	2,549.0

Source: Estimated by the authors using JMS 2023 and other secondary data.

Table 16: Remittance in Crores by Administrative Division, 2023

Administrative Division	Average Remittances	Remittances (₹ crore)
North Chotanagpur	9,128.3	872.9
South Chotanagpur	9,816.6	359.3
Kolhan	9,178.6	182.8
Palamu	7,670.1	509.2
Santhal Pargana	8,421.3	624.7
Jharkhand	8,918.96	2,549.0

Source: Estimated by the authors using JMS 2023 and other secondary data.

The northern administrative divisions of Jharkhand, namely North Chotanagpur, Palamu, and Santhal Pargana form the major part of the migrant count and remittances in comparison to the southern administrative divisions of Kolhan and South Chotanagpur (Table 16).

Migrants from the Hindu community constitute the highest number of migrants and send close to ₹1,725 crore of estimated remittances back home, the Muslims and Sarna communities follow closely behind with remittances worth ₹310 crore and ₹309 crore, respectively.

OBCs with 44% is the highest remittance-sending community. The STs with 27% and SCs with 20% form the second- and third-highest remittance sending community in Jharkhand (Table 17). The caste migration pattern within the sample indicates that the SC/ST community tend to migrate largely in search of better employment opportunities. Social discrimination and lack of economic growth historically can be cited as a reason for this phenomenon.

Table 17: Remittance Sending Migrants by Caste

Caste	%	Remittances (₹ crore)
ST	27.0	687.5
SC	20.3	518.7
OBC	44.3	1,130.0
General	7.1	179.7
PVTG	1.3	32.9
Jharkhand	100.0	2,549.0

Source: Estimated by the authors using JMS 2023 and other secondary data.

Usage of Remittances

Outmigration and the resulting remittances and investment usually translate to faster development and improved human development indicators, as seen from the case of Kerala. However, data from the JMS does not show a significant difference between migrants and non-migrants when it comes to assets owned, cooking gas used, land owned, type of houses, and other developmental indicators. This suggests that the majority of outmigrants from Jharkhand are low-skilled, low-income groups, compared to the non-migrant population that is comparatively better off. Unlike in the case of Kerala, where majority are international migrants, the majority of migrants from Jharkhand are internal migrants. Migration is a great leveller, and it is reassuring that the migrant and non-migrant population have similar developmental indicators, considering that migrants are likely to have belonged to the lowest strata of society. As Jharkhand continue to reap the benefits of

Table 18: Assets Owned by Households; Internal Migrant, RLM, and Non-migrant Households

Assets Owned	Internal Migrants	RLMs	Non-migrants
Bed	64.4	73.4	72.1
Ceiling fan	35.4	38.5	44.4
Table fan	20.9	22.8	27.9
TV	15.2	17.6	29.7
Mobile phone	72.3	70.7	68.5
Smartphone	60.1	61.5	63.7
Cycle	54.1	57.1	60.2
Scooter/motorcycle	29.0	27.0	39.4
Autorickshaw	1.8	1.7	1.5
Car	0.4	1.2	1.5
Tractor	0.2	0.7	0.9

Source: Estimated by the authors using JMS 2023 and other secondary data.

migration, the social-developmental indicators of migrants and the general population are expected to improve.

The JMS collected information on various basic amenities among migrant and non-migrant households; consumer durable product ownership among both non-migrant and migrant households is to a certain extent comparable (Table 18, p 58). This is a favourable indicator when we consider the composition of migration in Jharkhand, as mentioned earlier, that is, a majority of the migrants originate from rural localities. Ownership of consumer durables and assets is a sign of increasing purchasing power and consumer expenditure of households beyond basic necessities, indicating that income has translated into affordability for consumer durables. Hence, migration has a considerable effect on their consumer expenditure pattern.

Conclusions and Policy Issues

Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon that shapes the social and economic landscape of every region and state in India. From Kerala's ties with the Gulf to Tamil Nadu's south-east migration, each state has its own migration story with significant implications for its development trajectory. Even recent trends like the influx of low-skilled labour into Kerala underscore the complex interplay between migration, social dynamics, and economic development.

In the context of Jharkhand, migration plays a pivotal role in addressing issues of seasonal unemployment in agriculture and the lack of adequate employment opportunities within the state. The JMS 2023 sheds light on the patterns, characteristics, and impacts of migration in the state. With an estimated 45 lakh migrants, a substantial portion of Jharkhand's population seeks better economic prospects outside the state, with Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal emerging as top destinations.

Examining the demographic and social profile of migrants reveals intriguing trends. The majority of migrants are male, comprising 89.6% of the total migrant population, reflecting underlying gender dynamics and traditional roles. Younger age groups, particularly those aged 20–24 years, dominate migration patterns, indicative of a quest for personal and professional advancement. Interestingly, a higher proportion of female migrants is found in the 15–19 years and 20–24 years age group, suggesting unique migration patterns among young women.

Religion-wise, Hindus form the majority of migrants, aligning with their representation in Jharkhand's overall population. However, significant proportions of nature worshippers, Muslims, and Christians also contribute to the migrant population, reflecting the diverse religious fabric of the state.

The primary drivers of migration are the pursuit of better work opportunities and the lack thereof in migrants' home districts. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a significant temporary reversal in migration patterns, leading to the return of a large number of migrants to Jharkhand. Return migrants, numbering approximately 9.4 lakh cite various reasons, including familial responsibilities, health concerns, and shifts in life circumstances. Some of them will remigrate in the immediate future.

Remittances, a crucial aspect of migration, are estimated at ₹2,549 crore, although likely underreported due to methodological limitations. Despite the infusion of remittances, the JMS reveals no significant disparities between migrant and non-migrant households in terms of asset ownership, access to basic amenities, and developmental indicators. This suggests that while migration may provide some economic relief, it has yet to substantially improve the socio-economic conditions of low-skilled migrant populations in Jharkhand.

Moving forward, leveraging remittances for development and creating a supportive environment for migrants and their families are imperative for fostering inclusive growth. Policies aimed at enhancing skill development, facilitating financial inclusion, and strengthening social safety nets can empower migrants to contribute more meaningfully to the state's development agenda. Additionally, addressing underlying structural issues such as rural distress and limited job opportunities and tackling the impact of the unfolding climate change on nature-based livelihoods can mitigate the need for distress migration, fostering sustainable growth and prosperity within Jharkhand.

NOTES

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2 https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/710/1/ANTH_SHAH_2006a.pdf.
3 http://www.jstor.org/stable/23528839.
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