

# Rural Urban Migration and Urbanization: A Study of the Determinants of Rural to Urban Migration in Assam

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## Abstract

The present paper tries to investigate whether there is a relation between rural to urban migration and economic growth and also tries to investigate the relevant determinants of rural to urban migration with special reference to Assam. Economic conditions matter high level of rural to urban migration. The migration rate in urban areas and the urbanization level are positively associated. The paper shows that urban population growth is higher in the most developed cities both in India and in Assam also. But, rural to rural migration rate is higher than rural to urban migration. This is because most of the migration streams are intra state rather than inter-state. This paper is based on secondary sources of data collected from Census of India and NSSO data. Finally it suggests that cities need to equip themselves with better infrastructural facilities along with higher job opportunities to encourage urbanization through rural urban migration for higher and sustainable economic growth.

Keyword: Rural-urban migration, urbanization, economic growth

## 1. Introduction

Migration is the 3<sup>rd</sup> component of population change; the other two components are mortality and fertility. Migration (Human) is the movement of people from one place to another with the intentions of settling permanently or temporarily in a new location. People can either choose to move (voluntary migration) or be forced to move (involuntary migration). Migration brings people towards the interface of different environment. The movement of people from one place to another carries their own characteristics. Migratory people often find themselves to adjustment problems. There are a plenty of reason of why a person is forced to migrate or why the individual choose to migrate. Causes vary from region to region. Statistics has shown that migration in developing countries usually happens mainly for economic reasons, apart from the ethnic violence for which many people migrate. People migrate in search of better livelihood opportunity.

In general an urban area is a human settlement with high population density and infrastructure of built environment. Urban areas are created through urbanization and are categorized by urban morphology as cities,

towns, conurbations or suburbs. Urban areas are created and further developed by the process of urbanization. In general a rural area or countryside is a geographical area that is located outside towns and cities. Whatever is not urban is considered rural. Typical rural areas have a low population density and small settlements.

Rural to Urban migration is a response to diverse economic opportunities across space. Historically it has played a significant role in the urbanization process of several countries and continues to be significant in scale, even though migration rates have slowed down in some countries (Lall, Selod and Shalizi, 2006). In India, though rural-urban migration has been found to be modest (accounting for around 30 per cent of the total urban growth), in the context of urban poverty, urban slums and informal sector employment a great deal has been talked in reference to rural-urban population mobility. In other words, much of the urban ills are attributed to the rural-spills.

Rural to urban movement of population is an indispensable part of the development process. In the initial stages as urban-rural development disparities grow, rural residents migrate to urban areas for a variety of reasons, which have been identified in the literature as push-pull factors. Seeking sources of livelihood, better employment opportunities, schooling for children, remittance to rural relatives and overcoming rural indebtedness and poverty are some of the factors which have drawn a great deal of attention in the literature, explaining migration. Also, rural migrants provide an important source of labour supply to the urban areas. In the backdrop of these views and in comparison to the historical experience of the present-day developed countries, India, however, has witnessed sluggish rates of population flow from the rural to the urban areas, though large/metropolitan cities are an exception. The democratic setup in India allows free flow of population across regions, yet there are a variety of factors that tend to hinder migration, particularly that of the low-income households. With 64% of people living in rural areas, Assam is one of the least urbanized states in India. Although relatively less urbanized than the many states of India, Assam has experienced increased movement of people from rural to urban areas in recent years.

This paper basically discuss about the rural to urban migration of Assam and the factors behind that migration.

## **2. Statement of the problem:**

Migration may be considered as a symptom of basic social change. In most countries, it has been observed that industrialization and economic development have been accompanied by large scale movements of people from farm areas to towns, from towns to other towns and from one country to another. For instance, countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which are at present undergoing technological changes, are experiencing some type of migration from rural to urban areas, and these streams of migration have given rise to metropolitan cities.

In Assam 70% of the state's population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. But the proportion of land holding is very small for each farmer and there also prevails the presence of disguise unemployment. If we can transfer these disguised unemployed labour to the urban sector then their productive capacity should be utilized and in return they will be able to earn income. Most developed countries have more urban population in comparison to less developed countries. So rural to urban migration is one of the important indicators for future development process in India.

### 3. Review of literature:

Arzaghi and Rupasingha (2013) argued that the migration of rural to urban occurs due to diversification. The migrants get opportunities to migrate due to correlation of income between origin and destination as a measure of diversification, as in the case of United States. Iversen (2006) argues that the rural to urban migration is a dynamic migration model. The reasons of migration are social network, multipliers, spillovers, and caste affinities and the job opportunities in urban areas. According to Mc Catty (2004) who examined the need of rural to urban migration in developing countries, migration takes place in these countries due to both the push-pull migration forces these forces are of two types -- voluntary forces and involuntary forces. Voluntary forces are job opportunities; education, medical facilities, high per capita income, transport facilities, high living standard etc., and the involuntary forces are political disputes, strike, fighting with neighbors, lack of transport facility, illiteracy, natural disaster, bullying etc.

In the context of India, Mitra and Murayama (2009) found that intra state migration is much higher in magnitude than inter-state migration rate in India. Male and female migration rates are closely inter connected irrespective of whether they migrate from rural areas within the states and outside the states. The social and cultural diversity in India stands as a major hindrance to population mobility. Bhagat (2014) argued that migrants with low education and skills, given with the seasonal and temporary nature of their employment, are more vulnerable and subject to various kinds of exclusions in urban areas. Migration is treated more as an issue of governance rather than one of development in developing countries like India. Akram (2015) analyzed the push factors of rural to urban labour migration in India. His empirical analysis shows that increase in per capita Net State Domestic Product tends to decrease the number of out-migrants from the rural areas of that state whereas increase in the proportion of population living below poverty line, higher proportion of Scheduled Castes in the population and illiteracy rate in the rural area of the state, etc. tend to decrease rural to urban labour migration from that state to other states. Agasty and Patra (2013) who examined the determinants of rural to urban migration in the Indian states of Orissa states that there are two types of variables that influence the migration rural to urban: micro variables and macro variables. These are the two variables that influence people to move from one place to another. Micro variables are individual variables and macro variables refer to the factors that influence the whole population of a particular place or area to move.

Ujjal Protim Dutta (2015) works on the major causes behind rural to urban migration in Assam. This study has shown that rural-urban migration is a double edge problem affecting the rural community as well as the destination urban areas. The study revealed that problems in agriculture, unemployment, inadequate social amenities in the rural communities, negative attitude associated with agriculture and recurring floods are the major factors influencing rural-urban migration in Assam.

#### 4. Objectives:

1. To study the factors behind rural to urban migration in Assam.
2. To study how increase in rural urban migration increases economic growth.

#### 5. Research questions:

The following research questions are formed in lieu of research hypothesis-

1. Is there any relation between rural urban migration and urbanization?
2. Does rural to urban migration lead to economic growth in Assam?
3. What are the trends of urban population growth of Assam?
4. What are the factors behind rural to urban migration?

#### 6. Methodology:

This paper is based on secondary sources of data collected from various literatures, books, articles; report etc. data collected from Census of India and various rounds of NSSO services is used for analysis. Bar diagram, chart, table etc are used for the analysis.

#### 7. Discussion:

##### 7.1 Migration and urbanization:

In the wake of the rapid urbanization in recent years, Indian economy is witnessing a transformation from an agro-based rural economy to an urbanized modern economy. After independence, urbanization rate has increased continuously; in urban population in India was 28.53 percent in 2001 which increased to 31.16 per cent in 2011. The growth of urbanization has led to higher economic growth (Tripathi, 2013; Tripathi and Mahey, forthcoming) i.e., urbanization is the engine of economic growth in India. Currently 31.16% urban population is contributing about 63% of India's GDP (GOI, 2011). However, the percentage of population residing in urban areas in developed countries is far greater than in India.

The urban growth occurs due to the natural growth of population, expansion of city boundaries, net rural to urban migration, and reclassification of rural areas into urban. Net migration from rural to urban areas contributed to about 21 per cent to the increase in urban population in the 1990s, a little smaller than its

contribution of 22.6 per cent in the 1980s. Natural increase has been by far the largest source of increase in urban population (62.7 per cent in the 1980s and 59.2 per cent in the 1990s). Though different countries follow different definitions to measure urbanization still we can say India's urbanization rate is much lower than other developed countries.

According to the 2011 Census, as Bhagat (2011) points out, the increase in urbanization has been faster than expected. In fact, since independence this is the first time that the absolute increase in the urban population is seen to be higher than the absolute increase in the rural population. The contribution made by net rural–urban classification and rural–urban migration increased from a little above 40 per cent during the nineties to 56 per cent during 2001-2011.

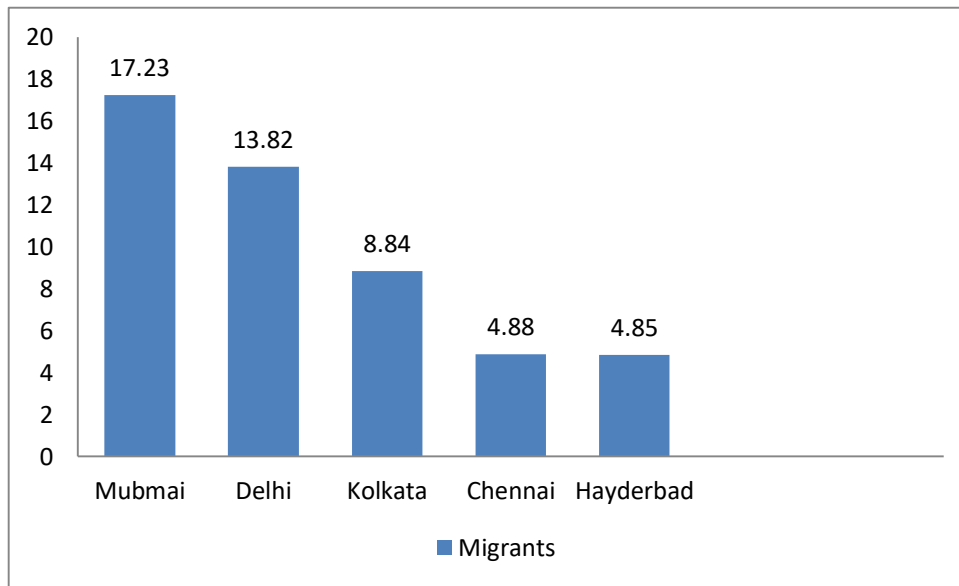
Migration leads to higher growth in urban population, but the migration rate has been very low in India. To increase the growth rate of urbanization, it is essential to promote rural to urban migration. Migration depends upon many factors like job opportunities in urban areas, urban poverty, and higher urban wage rate. Thus, migration positively impacts, the growth of economy, albeit indirectly. Rural to urban migration leads to the growth of economy through the growth of urbanization. Migration could be voluntary or coercive. Voluntary migration occurs due to the promise of job opportunities, education, better medical care, securing family links, industrial job, higher income etc. in the host city. On the other hand, forced migration occurs due to drought, political war, poor medical care, loss of wealth, forced labour, etc.

In India rural to urban migration is less than rural to rural migration. Economically advanced Indian states have a higher level of rural to urban migration rate than the less developed states. The diagram below shows the percentage of rural to urban migration in top five (as per population size) million plus cities.

## 7.2 Percentage of rural to urban migration in top five (as per population size) million plus cities

**Table: 1**

	Migrants
Mumbai	17.23
Delhi	13.82
Kolkata	8.84
Chennai	4.88
Hyderabad	4.85

**Figure:1**

Source: Census of India, 2001

The diagram (Figure 1) shows the trends of migration in top five million plus cities on the basis of census of India in 2001 on a time-scale of ten years and more than 10 years. Mumbai reported 17.32% its population as migrants, which is quite higher than in other million plus cities. The second-ranking city, Delhi, reported 13.82% as its migration of population. From this table we can conclude that economically advanced Indian states have a higher level of rural to urban migration rate than the less developed states. So in order to have higher development, rural urban migration needs to be promoted.

### 7.3 Pattern of migration in Assam:

In Assam, rural to rural migration stream dominates all streams of migration at the three levels, i.e. intra-district, inter-district and inter-state. The rural to rural migration is most prominent at the intra-district level with an overwhelming 82.4 percent of the total migrants moving from rural to rural areas. The corresponding percentages are 59.7 percent and 35.7percent at the inter-district and inter-state respectively. However, over the decade of 1991 and 2001, there has been a reduction in the share of rural to rural migrants Thus, the share of rural to rural migration at the intra-district level declined by 7.8 percentage points, over the decade of 1991 and 2001(although rural to rural migration in absolute numbers has gone up during this period). The decline in the share of rural to rural migration is an indication of the falling incentive to move within rural areas.

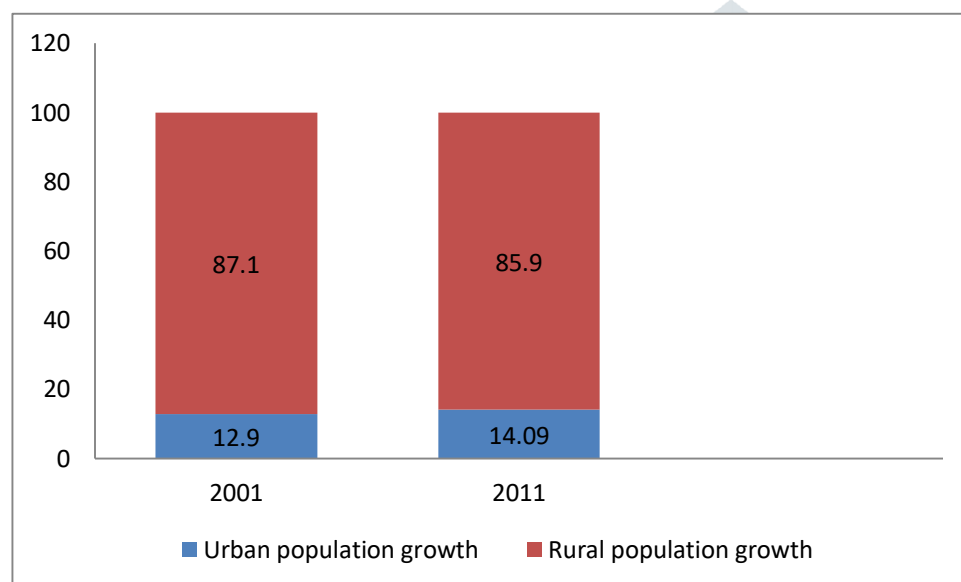
## Rural urban population scenario of Assam in 2001 and 2011

**Table: 2**

Year	Urban population growth	Rural population growth
2001	12.90	87.10
2011	14.09	85.90

Source: Census of India

**Figur:2**



Source: census of India

From the above figure it is cleared that urban population growth in Assam gradually increases from 12.90% in 2001 to 14.09% and rural population growth falls from 87.10% to 85.90%. But the proportion of rural population growth is much higher than the urban population growth as like India.

## Migration Stream in Assam for the period of 1991 to 2001

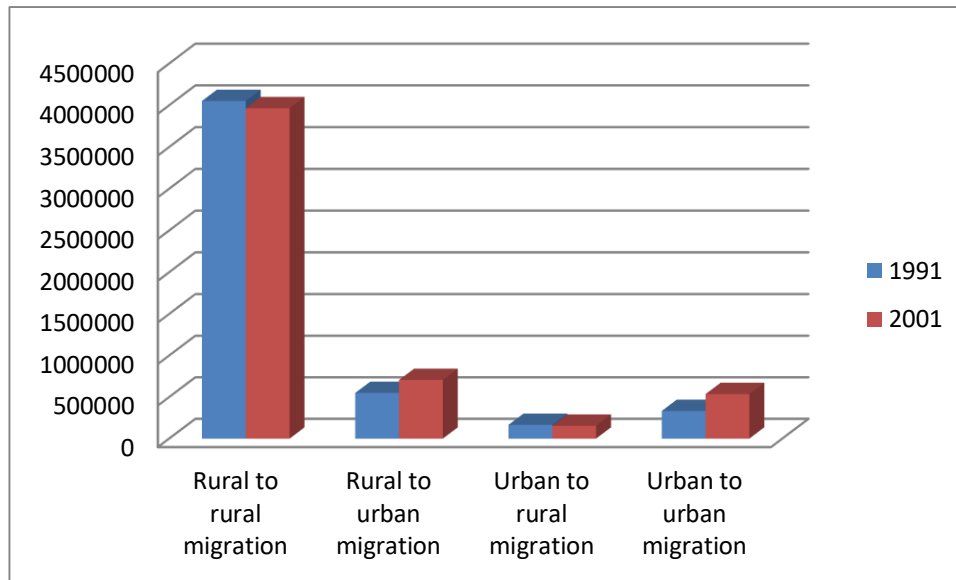
**Table: 3**

	Rural to rural migration	Rural to urban migration	Urban to rural migration	Urban to urban migration
1991	4051342	549433	165783	332749
2001	3964312	705556	154512	535998

Source: Census of India, Assam, Migration Table, 1991, Vol-1(Table D-2)

Census of India, Assam, Migration Table, 2001, D-Series (Table D-2)

Figure: 3



Source: Census of India, Assam, Migration Table, 1991, Vol-1(Table D-2)

Census of India, Assam, Migration Table, 2001, D-Series (Table D-2)

From this figure also we can conclude that rural urban migration gradually increases in Assam although its proportion is less than rural to rural migration. This rising trend of rural-urban migration at all the levels of internal migration is the result of growing urbanization process, increasing demand for labour in urban areas and increasing income differentials between rural and urban sectors.

With growing economic activities in the secondary and tertiary sectors, the volume of urban to urban migration is exhibiting rapid increases, especially in the case of large distance migration. In the figure it is cleared that urban to urban migration gradually increases in Assam.

Urban to rural migration shows a declining trend indication that the reverse migration is not significant.



**Urban population and its proportion to total population in selected districts of Assam****Table: 4**

Districts	Urban population				Urban population as a % of total population			
	1951	1991	2001	2011	1951	1991	2001	2011
Kamrup	48,321	655215	–	103701 1	7.65	32.76	–	68
Jorhat	16,164	133,03 2	–	220534	3.6	15.27	–	20.20
Dibrugarh	37,991	183,85 0	–	243730	8.06	17.61	–	18.35
Cachar	34,059	119,22 4	–	315464	6.29	9.81	–	18.16
Assam	344,831	2,487,7 95	–	439854 2	4.29	11.10	12.90	14.09

Source: Census of India

From the table we have seen that Assam experienced a process of rapid urbanization. This was evidence in the census figures where the urban population went up from 344,831(4.29%) in 1951 to 439854(14.09) in 2011. Then this paper shows the urban population of the top 4 districts of Assam. Within these four districts urbanization process is higher in Kamrup district, where the percentage of urban population to the total population went up from 7.64% in 1951 to 68% in 2011. The extra ordinary growth of urbanization in Kamrup city was fuelled by the explosive growth of its principal city Guwahati which accounted for 89.18% of the district urban population ( Barua, 2012). The others cities also has an increasing trend of urban population growth.

#### 7.4 Reasons for migration in Assam

One of the most important aspects of research in migration pertains to ascertaining the reasons behind the decision to migrate. There are two factors- push factors and pull factors. Push factors force the migrants out of the rural areas as well as pull factors attracts migrants to urban areas. The question on reasons for migration was introduced for the first time in 1981 in Indian Census and was confined to the migrants by last residence. The same list of reasons continued in 1991 and 2001 census, except for the fact that the reason „business“ was added in 1991 and the reason „natural calamities“ was dropped from the list in 2001. Besides, an additional reason „moved after birth“ was added in the 2001 census list (as it was felt that a large number of mothers moved to either their natal residence or to a place with better medical facility for delivery). In Assam, the migrants had

cited various socio-economic factors such as employment, business, education, marriage, family movement, natural calamities, moved after birth etc. as the reasons behind their migration within and into the state. In the following table we have shown the reasons of the people to migrate from rural to rural and rural to urban areas according to the report of 2011 census.

### Reasons for migration in Assam, 2011 census

Table: 5

Reasons	Streams	Migration
employment	Rural to rural	259380
	Rural to urban	22405
Business	Rural to rural	73234
	Rural to urban	9270
Education	Rural to rural	43099
	Rural to urban	4458
Moved after birth	Rural to rural	6478
	Rural to urban	2103
Moved with household	Rural to rural	1155930
	Rural to urban	62213
others	Rural to rural	1254490
	Rural to urban	33058

Source: Census of India, 2011

Figure: 4

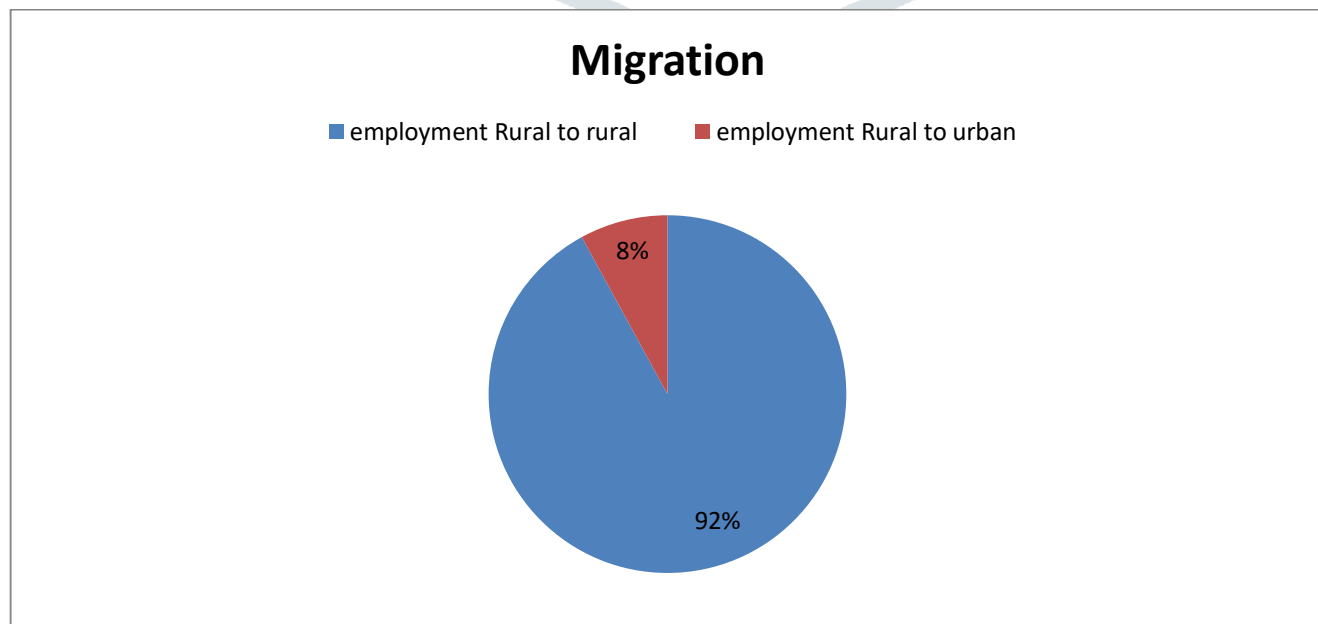


Figure: 5

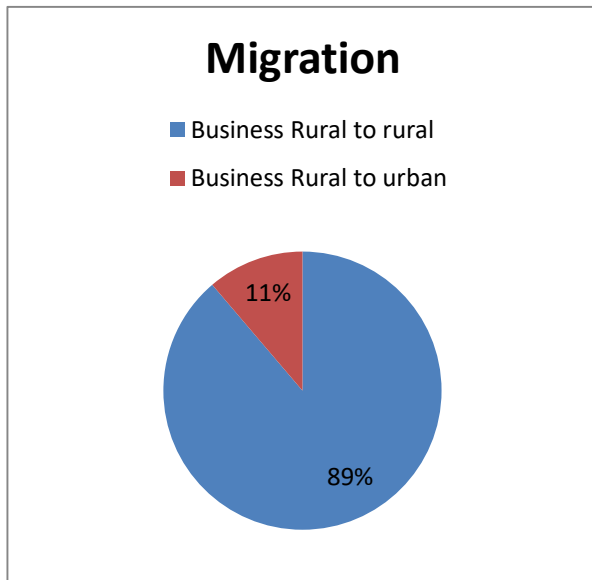


figure: 6

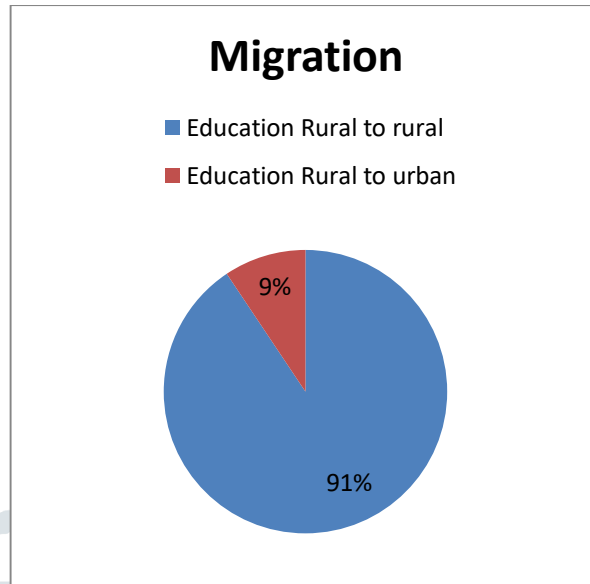
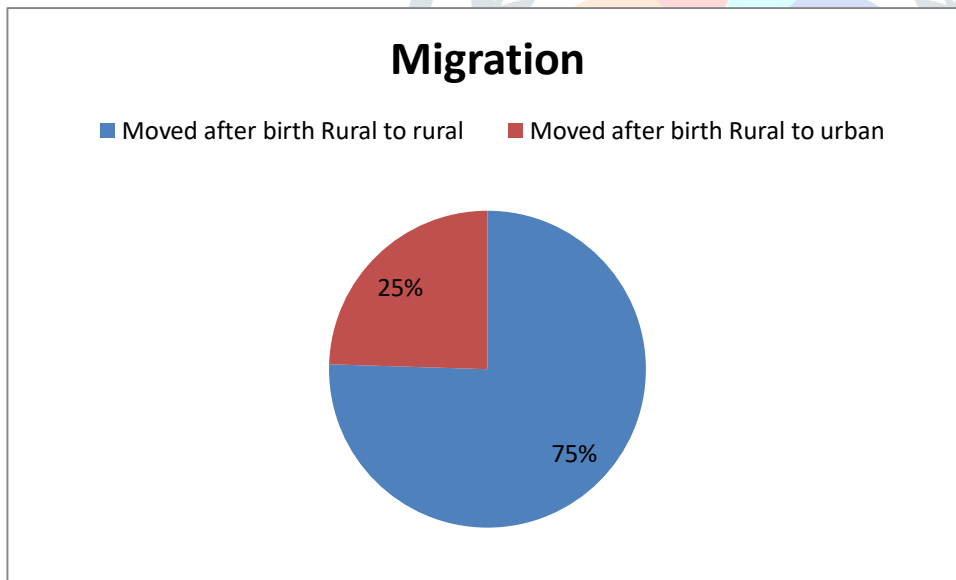


Figure: 7



From the figure 4 employment based migration are shown. It is cleared from the diagram that migration from rural to rural area is higher than rural to urban area. Again from figure 6 migrations that occur because of business motive is shown. Here also rural to rural migration level is higher than rural to urban migration. But there is a slight increase in rural to urban migration for business purpose than employment based migration from rural to urban areas.

For education purpose also rural to rural migration is higher than rural to urban migration. If we consider the migration after birth than rural urban migration is higher than all the other reasons.

In Assam rural to rural migration is more than rural to urban migration. This is a normal condition when we look for intra state migration. But when we go for interstate migration then rural to urban migration is more than rural to rural migration. This can be understood from table 7 also.

### Migrants by place of last residence indicating migration streams (duration 0-9 years) INDIA 2001

**Table: 6**

Migration streams	Persons
Intra state migrants	
Rural to rural	48,880,074
Rural to urban	14,222,276
Inter-state migrants	
Rural to rural	4,474,302
Rural to urban	6,372,955

Source: Table D-2, Census of India 2001

### 8. Findings and policy measures:

The major findings of this study are:

1. Indian economy is witnessing a transformation from an agro-based rural economy to an urbanized modern economy. To increase the growth rate of urbanization, it is essential to promote rural to urban migration.
2. Economically advanced Indian states for example Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata have a higher level of rural to urban migration rate than the less developed states.
3. In Assam, rural to rural migration stream dominates all streams of migration at the three levels, i.e. intra-district, inter-district and inter-state.
4. Urban population growth in Assam gradually increases from 12.90% in 2001 to 14.09% in 2011. Like India in Assam also the urban population growth is higher in the main cities for example Kamrup, Jorhat etc in comparison to the other districts.
5. Among the reasons of migration from rural to urban areas it is cleared that business and moved after birth has a significant impact than the other factors like employment. Education etc.

6. In case of interstate migration rural to rural migration is more than rural to urban migration. But in interstate migration we have to see the complete opposite face.

Recently Government of India has launched several policies and programmes to promote urbanization-led-development in India as urban areas have traditionally contributed higher level of GDP than rural areas. City level employment situations, city level inequality level, city level poverty and infrastructure facilities play an important role in rural to urban migration.

In this perspective we suggest the following policies -

1. We need to increase the job opportunities in the urban area for higher rural to urban migration.
2. Level of urban poverty and urban inequality has to control for this purpose.
3. Basic urban infrastructure facilities such as road, electricity, education etc has to increase not only to make investment friendly but also to promote rural to urban migration.
4. Living cost such as urban housing prices has to control for making the cities migrant friendly for higher and sustainable growth.

### **Conclusion:**

Rural urban migration gradually increases in Assam although its proportion is less than rural to rural migration. This rising trend of rural-urban migration at all the levels of internal migration is the result of growing urbanization process, increasing demand for labour in urban areas and increasing income differentials between rural and urban sectors.

It is quite obvious that Assam needs more rural to urban migration for economic development. In rural areas, more population depends upon agriculture and the higher dependence on agriculture leads to disguised unemployment in rural area. If the disguised unemployed laborers can be shifted to the urban areas then the supply of labour and demand of consumer goods in urban areas will increase. This will in turn lead to more production, higher level of economic activity and also higher per capita income. The level of job opportunities in the cities will also increase in this process and this increase will promote investment which in turn will lead to further economic growth. So economic growth can be catalyzed through the growth of urbanization, resulting from rural to urban migration

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