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Internal Migration in Sikkim: Patterns, Trends and Causal Factors

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Abstract

This study examines the patterns, trends, and causal factors of internal migration in Sikkim using Census of India data for 2001 and 2011 (D3 Migration Tables) together with the Multiple Indicator Survey (MIS) 2020–21. The results show that migration in Sikkim increased from 1,86,987 persons in 2001 to 2,47,049 in 2011, with the migration rate rising from 34.57% to 40.46%, above the national average of 38%. Intra-district migration is the dominant stream, growing from 48.37% to 51.00% of all migrants, while inter-district migration's share declined slightly despite an absolute increase. Interstate in-migration is concentrated from West Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, while out-migration flows toward more economically developed states such as Delhi, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. Marriage is the principal reason for female migration across all districts, while work and employment dominate male migration, with East District and its capital, Gangtok, emerging as the state's primary migration hub owing to its administrative, educational, and economic importance. A district-wise composite index of selected urban-development indicators confirms East District's pre-eminence, followed by South, North, and West Districts. The findings highlight the need for balanced regional development to reduce migration-driving disparities across Sikkim's districts.

Keywords: internal migration; Sikkim; Census of India; intra-district migration; inter-district migration; migration streams; Himalaya; Gangtok

1. Introduction

Migration is one of the three fundamental elements of population change, alongside birth and death, and reshapes the social and demographic fabric of regions (Gupta & Miglani, 2021). The phenomenon affects the populations of receiving areas, sending areas, and the migrants themselves.

In India, internal migration plays a major role in shaping population of an area. Internal migration is defined as migration that occurs within a region that is within a nation's jurisdiction (Chandna, 2023). There are three types of internal migration: intra-district, inter-district, and inter-state, affected by factors such as poor housing, better earnings, employment opportunities, wage differences between rural to urban areas. In India, there were approximately 455 million migrants according to the 2011 Census, indicating that internal migration occurs at a large scale

Economic and historical changes have influenced migration in India. India saw two significant migration streams after gaining its independence. The first one, was forced and involuntary as people had little say in the decisions taken during the 1947 division of the country, which resulted in the displacement of about 14 million people. The second one was voluntarily as a result of the port cities growing industry and commerce. These newly constructed port cities, together with Delhi, changed regional economies and led to interregional migration in India (Gupta and Miglani, 2021).

Migration patterns in India are not the same across all regions. Areas that offer greater transportation, education, and employment opportunities pull more migrants, while places with difficult terrain and limited job opportunities retain fewer (Debnath & Ray, 2016).

According to the 2011 Census, the total number of migrants in Sikkim was 247,049. Short-distance migration is one of the state's defining characteristics; intra-district migrants (125,999) outnumber inter-district migrants (41,126). Since the East District is the state's main economic center with the opportunities to attract migrants, the largest percentage of intra-district migration (26.16%) was reported from this district (Census, 2011). Gangtok's pull as the administrative, educational and economic hub is primarily the reason for this.

In Sikkim, the reasons for migration varies regionally and show major differences in gender. Marriage continues to be the main reason of migration in rural areas of all districts, with rates as high as 55.75% in the West District and 45.61% in the South District. On the other hand, economic wants are increasing the migration to urban areas. The main reasons of interdistrict and interstate migration to Gangtok are work and employment (Census, 2011). In addition, education has become an important driver for youths; the concentration of higher education institutions and vocational centres in the capital is reflected in the inter-district rural migration to Gangtok for education (11.18%). The East District has a more balanced and urban-centric migration pattern, as compared to the West and South districts, where rural-to-rural streams dominate (Census, 2011).

2. Study Area

The present study focuses on Sikkim, a Himalayan state in northeastern India, bordered by Nepal, the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, Bhutan, and the Indian state of West Bengal. The state's severe climate, rugged terrain, and limited infrastructure shape a distinctive pattern of population movement compared with other Himalayan states such as Uttarakhand, where large-scale village abandonment through permanent out-migration is common (Kumar, 2025). Sikkim is administratively divided into four districts — North, West, South, and East — of which East District, containing the state capital Gangtok, serves as the primary administrative, educational, and economic centre and, as this study shows, the principal hub of in-migration.

3. Materials and Methods

This study is based entirely on secondary data. Migration counts for 2001 and 2011 (total, intra-district, inter-district, and interstate migrants; migration streams; and reasons for migration, disaggregated by sex and by rural/urban origin-destination) were compiled from the D2 and D3 Migration Tables of the Census of India. To reflect trends beyond 2011, given that no Census has been conducted since, migration indicators for 2020–21 were additionally drawn from the Multiple Indicator Survey (MIS) of India, which reports migration on a sample rather than a complete-count basis.

District-wise migration was analysed by migration type (intra-district, inter-district), by stream (rural-to-rural, rural-to-urban, urban-to-rural, and urban-to-urban), and by reason for migration (work/employment, business, education, marriage, moved after birth, moved with

household, and other reasons), disaggregated by sex throughout. A district-wise composite index of urban development was additionally constructed from six indicators — urban population share, female literacy, and the share of workers in manufacturing, accommodation and food-service activities, administrative/public-administration and defence activities, and education/human-health/social-work activities — each normalised to a 0–1 range and summed across indicators, and districts were ranked on the resulting composite score.

4. Results

In Sikkim, migration mostly occurs within the same district, which suggests that people likely travel short distances. Migration patterns vary from district to district or between states. The reason for migration also varies from male to female.

This section examines these patterns using Census data for 2001 and 2011, focusing on trends, reasons for migration, and migration streams across the state.

4.1 Migration Trends and Growth (2001–2011)

Migration in Sikkim has increased from 2001 and 2011. As shown in Table 1, the total number of migrants increased from 1,86,987 in 2001 to 2,47,049 in 2011, showing an increase of 60,062 persons. The migration rate also increased from 34.57 percent in 2001 to 40.46 percent in 2011, showing a rise in migrants in the total population of Sikkim. The migration rate of Sikkim in 2011 was higher than the national average of 38 percent, reflecting the greater importance of migration in shaping Sikkim's demographic profile.

Table 1. Distribution of Total Migrants in Sikkim

Category	2001	2011
Total Migrants	1,86,987	2,47,049
Migration Rate	34.57	40.46

Source: D3 Migration Table; Census of India 2001 & 2011

4.2 Intra-District and Inter-District Migration

Sikkim witnessed an increase in both intra-district and inter-district migration, during 2001 and 2011. Intra-district migration was the most dominant type of migration in both years (Table 2). The number of intra-district migrants rose from 90,451 to 125,999, showing an absolute increase of about 35,548. Its share in total migration also rose from 48.37 percent in 2001 to 51.00 percent in 2011.

On the other hand, inter-district migration also increased from 32,267 in 2001 to 41,126 in 2011, showing an increase of 8,859 migrants. Even though there is an absolute increase of migrants, its percentage share slightly declined from 17.26 percent in 2001 to 16.65 percent in 2011.

Overall intra-district migration is the most predominant type of migration in Sikkim, indicating that localized movement is the primary driver of internal migration in Sikkim (Table 2). Internal migration in India is largely dominated by short-distance migration, with intra-district and intra-state migration forming the dominant share of total migration (Srivastava, 2011).

Table 2. Migration in Sikkim, 2001–2011

Category	2001	Percentage	2011	Percentage	Absolute Change (2011–2001)
Intra-District	90,451	48.37	1,25,999	51.00	35,548
Inter-District	32,267	17.26	41,126	16.65	8,859

Source: D3 Migration Table; Census of India 2001 & 2011

4.3 Interstate Migration

Sikkim experienced a rise in interstate migration from 2001 to 2011. The majority of migrants come to Sikkim from West Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh. This indicates that Sikkim attracts migrants mainly from nearby and less developed states, primarily for employment opportunities. Migration for economic reasons, particularly among males, has been identified as a major driver of internal migration (Srivastava, 2011).

At the same time, some states such as Delhi, Maharashtra, and Karnataka show negative net migration, indicating that people from Sikkim move towards more developed regions. This shows the trend where in-migration rates are higher in economically advanced states (Srivastava, 2011).

These patterns suggest that interstate migration is shaped by differences in development, which play a significant role in shaping migration patterns. Economic opportunities and better living conditions further attract migrants towards such developed regions (Gupta and Miglani, 2021).

Table 3. Interstate Migration in Sikkim by State/Union Territory

State	In Migrants	In Migrants	Out Migrants	Out Migrants	Net Migrants	Net Migrants
State	**2001**	**2011**	**2001**	**2011**	**2001**	**2011**
Jammu & Kashmir	526	974	98	109	428	865
Himachal Pradesh	438	431	273	844	165	-413
Punjab	199	319	315	330	-116	-11
Chandigarh	38	36	74	70	-36	-34
Uttarakhand	436	359	316	612	120	-253
Haryana	730	661	267	325	463	336
NCT of Delhi	289	481	1649	995	-1360	-514
Rajasthan	751	675	251	327	500	348
Uttar Pradesh	2109	2280	290	476	1819	1804
Bihar	10556	13282	686	368	9870	12914
Arunachal Pradesh	196	515	361	234	-165	281
Nagaland	146	225	117	145	29	80
Manipur	810	732	125	288	685	444
Mizoram	42	53	38	43	4	10
Tripura	73	92	64	18	9	74
Meghalaya	244	356	210	145	34	211
Assam	1360	2621	847	1077	513	1544
West Bengal	25326	33158	5108	11537	20218	21621
Jharkhand	342	1267	77	125	265	1142
Odisha	270	602	92	143	178	459
Chhattisgarh	92	53	47	68	45	-15
Madhya Pradesh	140	459	269	210	-129	249
Gujarat	78	110	166	122	-88	-12

Daman & Diu	0	27	5	0	-5	27
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0	4	1	0	-1	4
Maharashtra	150	277	636	551	-486	-274
Andhra Pradesh	161	423	154	189	7	234
Karnataka	103	191	1947	1615	-1844	-1424
Goa	4	29	15	31	-11	-2
Lakshadweep	0	2	1	0	-1	2
Kerala	300	227	126	196	174	31
Tamil Nadu	117	156	159	231	-42	-75
Puducherry	4	2	10	22	-6	-20
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	3	84	25	13	-22	71

Source: Computed by author using D3 Migration Table, 2001 & 2011

4.4 Migration Patterns: Comparative Analysis of Census 2011 and Multiple Indicator Survey 2020–21

The analysis of migration patterns can be studied more in detail when we compare the patterns on an extensive scale. For this study the data has been taken from Census 2011 and the Multiple Indicator Survey (MIS) India 2020–21. The Census provides migration data based on total count, whereas the MIS provides migration data based on samples. Since a Census has not taken place after 2011, the MIS is used to reflect the latest trends in migration.

4.5 Trends in Migration Streams: Intra-State vs. Inter-State

Table 4 shows that intra-state migration is the most dominant stream of migration. Inter-state migration is higher in Sikkim as compared to India. The data also shows that intra-state and inter-state migration are both higher in urban areas.

Table 4. Distribution of Migrants by Streams, Census 2011

Region	Area	Intra-state	Inter-state
India	Total	87.94	12.06
	Rural	89.16	10.84
	Urban	81.25	18.75
Sikkim	Total	73.21	26.79
	Rural	75.11	24.89
	Urban	60.17	39.83

Source: Computed by author using D3 Migration Table; Census of India, 2011

Table 5 also shows that intra-state migration is the dominant migration stream. However, inter-state migration is higher in Sikkim as compared to India. This shows that the same pattern is being followed in both India and Sikkim even after ten years. The data also shows that intra-state and inter-state migration are higher in urban areas. Urban centres attract migrants because economic activities, educational facilities, healthcare services, communication, and other opportunities are concentrated in urban areas (Bhagat, 2014). In the case of Sikkim, Gangtok acts as a major urban centre that attracts migrants to Sikkim.

Table 5. Distribution of Migrants by Streams, Multiple Indicator Survey 2020–2021

Region	Area	Intra-state	Inter-state
India	Total	87.2	12
	Rural	91.7	7.6
	Urban	78.7	20.2
Sikkim	Total	82.8	16.9
	Rural	91.2	8.4
	Urban	50.8	48.7

Source: Multiple Indicator Survey 2020–2021

4.6 Comparative Analysis of Migration Drivers

Table 6 shows that marriage is the most predominant reason for migration, followed by ‘others’, in both India and Sikkim. Moved with household also accounts for 14.23% in India and 18.95% in Sikkim. Migration is also occurring due to work/employment: in India it accounts for 9.07%, whereas for Sikkim it is much higher at 18.15%.

Table 6. Distribution of Migrants by Reason, Census 2011

Reason for Migration	India			Sikkim		
Reason for Migration	**Total**	**Males**	**Females**	**Total**	**Males**	**Females**
Work/Employment	9.07	24.06	2.06	18.15	34.57	5.38
Business	0.78	1.83	0.29	2.11	4.13	0.54
Education	1.20	2.27	0.7	3.15	3.76	2.67
Marriage	46.64	3.7	66.74	29.85	1.62	51.82
Moved after Birth	7.49	13.92	4.47	2.85	3.47	2.37
Moved with Household	14.23	20.02	11.52	18.95	21.35	17.08
Others	20.58	34.19	14.2	24.93	31.09	20.14

Source: Computed by author using D3 Migration Table; Census of India, 2011

Table 7 shows that the Multiple Indicator Survey 2020–2021 identifies 18 reasons for migration. Marriage is the most dominant reason for migration among females for both Sikkim and India even in recent trends. Factors such as in search of employment, in search of better employment, business, and transfer of services account for a significant share of male migration in both India and Sikkim. People also migrate to pursue studies, with male migrants outnumbering females for this reason, especially in Sikkim.

Factors such as health care, housing problems, natural disasters, and migration due to family members are also included, and although they account for a smaller share, this shows that migration is also influenced by real-life conditions and circumstances faced by individuals.

Table 7. Distribution of Migrants by Reason, Multiple Indicator Survey 2020–2021

Reason for Migration	India			Sikkim		
Reason for Migration	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
In search of employment	11.4	0.3	2.5	15.0	2.1	6.3
In search of better employment	20.8	0.3	4.4	17.7	1.5	6.7
Business	1.8	0	0.4	3.7	0.2	1.4
To take up employment/better employment	8.5	0.2	1.9	9.8	0.6	3.6

Transfer of service/contract	4.7	0.1	1.0	4.4	0.1	1.5
Proximity to place of work	1.6	0.1	0.4	1.6	D.N.A	0.5
Studies	8.0	0.9	2.3	31.8	11.1	17.9
Marriage	5.8	87.0	70.8	3.7	76.6	52.9
Social/political problems	1.0	0.3	0.4	D.N.A	0.5	0.3
Displacement by development project	0.2	0	0.1	D.N.A	D.N.A	D.N.A
Scarcity of water	0	0	0	D.N.A	D.N.A	D.N.A
Acquisition of own house/flat	3.3	0.4	1.0	0.2	D.N.A	0.1
Housing problem/ insufficient landholding	2.8	0.5	0.9	D.N.A	D.N.A	D.N.A
Health care	1.9	0.2	0.5	1.2	0.4	0.7
Post retirement	1.5	0	0.3	1.7	D.N.A	0.6
Natural disaster	0.5	0	0.1	D.N.A	D.N.A	D.N.A
Migration of parent/earning member	17.1	8.0	9.9	3.1	1.0	1.7
Others	9.1	1.6	3.1	5.9	6.0	6.0

Source: Multiple Indicator Survey 2020–2021

4.7 Migration Streams

Migration streams show the direction of movement between rural and urban areas. These streams help in understanding how migration has been flowing within and between districts.

4.8 Intra-District Migration Streams

Migration streams in Sikkim show clear changes across districts between 2001 and 2011. As shown in Table 8, rural-to-rural migration remains the dominant stream in all districts, but its share has decreased over time, while rural-to-urban and urban-to-urban streams have

increased. This indicates a gradual shift of population towards urban areas, along with growing movement between urban centres. The findings suggest that, although rural-to-rural migration remains the most common stream overall, urban-oriented streams are steadily gaining importance across all districts and most prominently in East District.

In North district, rural-to-rural migration decreased from 91.05 percent in 2001 to 77.35 percent in 2011. Rural-to-urban migration increased from 0.53 percent to 14.57 percent. This shows that people are moving towards urban areas.

A similar trend is seen in West district, where rural-to-rural migration declined slightly from 95.27 percent to 92.12 percent, while rural-to-urban and urban-to-urban migration increased.

In South district, rural-to-rural migration dropped from 87.82 percent to 77.25 percent, while rural-to-urban migration increased from 1.47 percent to 10.9 percent. Urban-to-rural migration decreased from 8.98 percent to 4.59 percent. Urban-to-urban migration also increased from 1.73 percent to 7.26 percent, showing growing movement between urban areas.

The most significant change is seen in East district. Rural-to-rural migration declined from 67.82 percent in 2001 to 46.87 percent in 2011.

The findings suggest that while rural-to-rural migration is still the most common stream overall, urban-oriented migration streams are steadily gaining importance across all districts, and most prominently in East district.

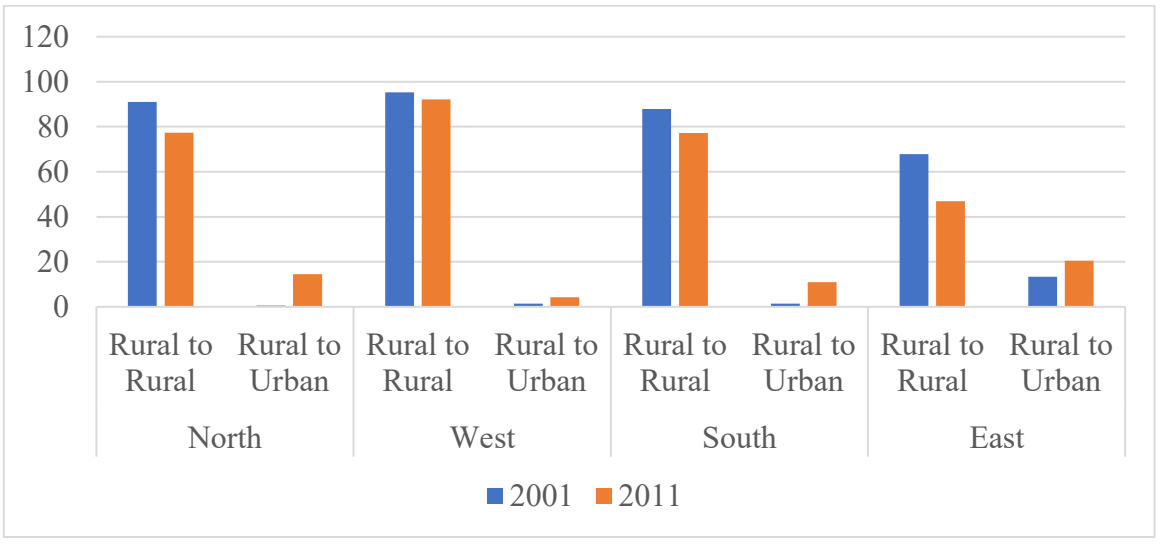
Table 8. Percentage of Intra-District Migration by Streams in Sikkim

District	Streams	Total		Male		Female	
		2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
North	Rural to Rural	91.05	77.35	88.86	70.41	92.59	81.5
	Rural to Urban	0.53	14.57	0.39	19.01	0.63	11.93
	Urban to Rural	8.35	7.14	10.58	9.11	6.78	5.96
	Urban to Urban	0.07	0.93	0.17	1.47	0	0.61
West	Rural to Rural	95.27	92.12	91.82	87.04	96.62	94.07

	Rural to Urban	1.37	4.31	2.35	7.01	0.98	3.27
	Urban to Rural	3.14	2.55	5.4	4.16	2.25	1.93
	Urban to Urban	0.23	1.02	0.43	1.79	0.15	0.73
South	Rural to Rural	87.82	77.25	83.2	69.72	90.4	81.33
	Rural to Urban	1.47	10.9	1.87	14.58	1.25	8.9
	Urban to Rural	8.98	4.59	12.2	5.71	7.19	3.99
	Urban to Urban	1.73	7.26	2.73	10	1.16	5.78
East	Rural to Rural	67.82	46.87	64.61	40.59	70.74	51.9
	Rural to Urban	13.34	20.52	14.44	22.71	12.34	18.77
	Urban to Rural	9.71	10.89	10.59	12.02	8.92	9.99
	Urban to Urban	9.13	21.72	10.37	24.69	8	19.34

Source: Computed by author using D2 Migration Table, 2001 & 2011

Figure 1. Intra-District Migration in Sikkim, 2001–2011



Source: Computed by author using D2 Migration Table, 2001 & 2011

4.9 Inter-District Migration Streams

Inter-district migration streams in Sikkim show clear changes across districts between 2001 and 2011. In the North District, rural-to-rural migration decreased from 68.14 percent in 2001. In the West District, rural-to-rural migration declined from 75.05 percent. In the South District, rural-to-rural migration dropped from 74.31 percent. The most significant change is seen in the East District, where rural-to-rural migration declined from 68.61 percent to 39.45 percent and rural-to-urban and urban-to-urban streams grew substantially. Across all districts, urban-to-urban migration also rose over the decade, indicating greater circulation between urban centres.

Table 9 highlights that rural-to-rural migration is an important stream, but its share is declining across districts as urban-oriented streams grow.

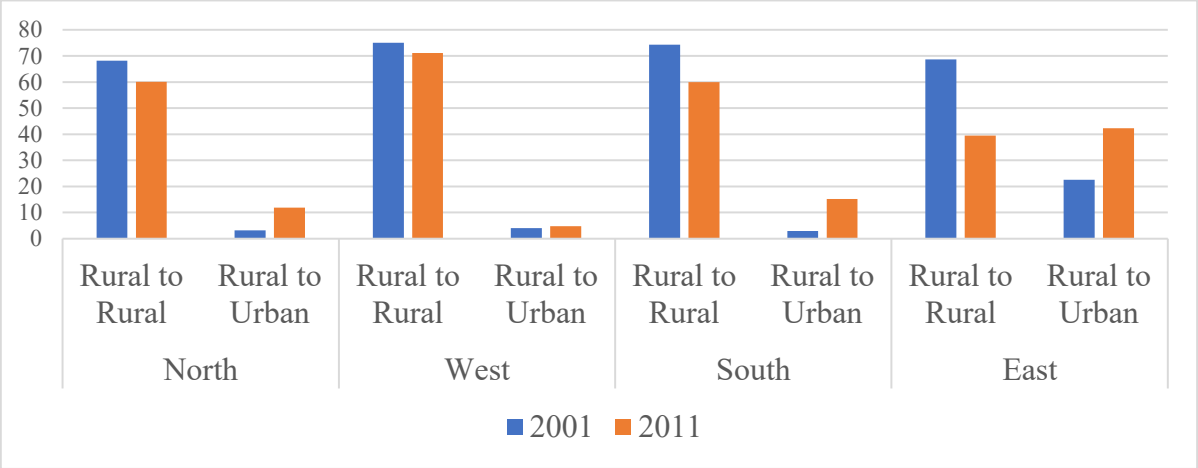
Table 9. Streams of Inter-District Migration in Sikkim

District	Streams	Total		Male		Female	
		2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
North	Rural to Rural	68.14	60.1	62.43	53.24	73.65	65.46
	Rural to Urban	3.18	11.95	3.68	15.49	2.7	9.19
	Urban to Rural	25.62	18.1	30.3	19.78	21.11	16.79
	Urban to Urban	3.06	9.85	3.6	11.49	2.54	8.56
West	Rural to Rural	75.05	71.13	67.49	59.77	80.45	76.66
	Rural to Urban	4.05	4.82	5.09	6.51	3.31	4
	Urban to Rural	17.35	19.62	22.44	26.71	13.71	16.18
	Urban to Urban	3.55	4.42	4.98	7.01	2.53	3.16
South	Rural to Rural	74.31	59.97	68.19	48.7	78.76	66.53
	Rural to Urban	3	15.27	3.53	19.38	2.62	12.87

	Urban to Rural	18.66	12.07	22.5	14.48	15.87	10.67
	Urban to Urban	4.02	12.69	5.77	17.44	2.75	9.93
East	Rural to Rural	68.61	39.45	66.25	32.95	70.97	44.48
	Rural to Urban	22.55	42.36	24.64	47.23	20.46	38.6
	Urban to Rural	4.05	3.89	4.04	4.08	4.05	3.75
	Urban to Urban	4.8	14.29	5.07	15.74	4.52	13.17

Source: Computed by author using D2 Migration Table, 2001 & 2011

Figure 2. Inter-District Migration in Sikkim, 2001–2011



Source: Computed by author using D2 Migration Table, 2001 & 2011

The analysis of migration streams shows that rural-to-rural migration remains the dominant pattern overall. There is an increase in rural-to-urban and urban-to-urban migration streams across districts. These changes show a shift from rural migration towards more urban migration destinations over the decade.

4.10 Reasons for Migration

The reasons for migration vary between rural and urban areas and also differ between intra-district and inter-district movement, as examined below.

4.11 Reasons for Intra-District Migration

Reasons for intra-district migration in Sikkim show clear differences between districts. In North district, marriage is the main reason in rural areas (35.09%). In West district, marriage

is the most dominant reason in rural areas (55.75%). In South district, marriage plays a major role in rural migration (45.61%). In East district, rural migration is caused by marriage (33.53%) and movement with household.

Overall, the table shows that marriage is the most important reason for rural intra-district migration across all districts, while economic reasons play a comparatively larger role in urban intra-district migration.

Table 10. Percentage Distribution of Intra-District Migrants by Reason for Migration

District	Category	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration
		Work/employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved after birth	Moved with household	Others
North	Rural	11.05	0.38	11.33	35.09	1.21	14.58	26.35
	Urban	13.83	0.00	9.75	13.61	26.08	15.42	21.32
West	Rural	5.99	0.89	2.12	55.75	1.95	15.13	18.17
	Urban	11.13	3.03	2.02	24.53	17.70	18.33	23.26
South	Rural	10.25	1.06	2.43	45.61	0.89	21.17	18.59
	Urban	15.08	3.61	5.11	19.83	10.15	26.56	19.65
East	Rural	16.82	1.27	3.17	33.53	2.21	25.48	17.52
	Urban	13.49	1.92	2.67	11.80	10.50	26.97	32.66

Source: Computed by author using D3 Migration Table, 2001 & 2011

4.12 Reasons for Inter-District Migration

Reasons for inter-district migration in Sikkim vary across districts and between sexes. In North district, rural migration is mainly due to marriage (35.6%). In West district, marriage is the dominant reason in rural areas (56.34%). In South district, rural migration is largely influenced by marriage (46.06%). In East district, rural migration shows a mix of reasons, with marriage and work/employment both prominent.

The data shows that for total migrants, rural migration is mostly driven by marriage, while work/employment and education gain relatively greater importance in urban inter-district migration, particularly to Gangtok.

Table 11. Percentage Distribution of Inter-District Migrants by Reason for Migration

District	Category	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration
		Work/employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved after birth	Moved with household	Others
North	Rural	28.84	0.49	5.17	35.6	1.02	10	18.89
	Urban	31.81	1.82	4.68	15.62	15.28	16.76	14.03
West	Rural	11.65	1.1	2.44	56.34	2.25	14.62	11.6
	Urban	15.67	1.21	1.89	22.1	23.69	18.47	16.96
South	Rural	14.13	1.16	3.55	46.06	1.46	20.36	13.28
	Urban	20.03	2.78	2.15	18.15	11.69	29.9	15.3
East	Rural	25.43	1.41	7.24	31.16	0.86	18.76	15.14
	Urban	29.93	2.26	7.18	19.49	2.47	21.9	16.77

Source: Computed by author using D3 Migration Table, 2001 & 2011

4.13 Differentials by Gender

A comparison of Table 10 (intra-district) and Table 11 (inter-district) shows clear gender differences in migration reasons. Work/employment is a major driver for inter-district migration among males as compared to intra-district migration.

For females, marriage is the main reason in both intra- and inter-district migration.

Migration among males for 'other reasons' and 'moved with household' is higher for inter-district movement.

For females, there is a small increase in work/employment migration for inter-district as compared to intra-district movement.

The comparison between intra-district and inter-district migration, among both males and females, confirms that marriage-related migration is predominantly a short-distance, intra-district phenomenon for women, while economically motivated migration among men extends over longer, inter-district distances.

Table 12. Percentage Distribution of Male and Female Intra-District Migrants by Reason for Migration

District	Category	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration
		Work/employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved after birth	Moved with househol	Others

							d	
North	Male	21.94	0.56	13.86	2.72	3.95	18.98	38
	Female	4.24	0.2	9.09	50.38	2.62	11.45	22.02
West	Male	17.17	2.57	3.83	3.73	4.98	31.44	36.28
	Female	1.69	0.31	1.39	73.48	1.48	8.54	13.12
South	Male	24.08	2.81	3.91	2.65	3.02	31.51	32.02
	Female	3.08	0.51	2.03	63.14	1.34	15.84	14.05
East	Male	20.8	1.92	2.62	1.22	4.37	24.75	44.32
	Female	4.38	0.42	2.19	37.58	3.43	19.4	32.6

Source: Computed by author using D3 Migration Table; Census of India, 2011

Table 13. Percentage Distribution of Male and Female Inter-District Migrants by Reason for Migration

District	Category	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration	Reasons for migration
		Work/employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved after birth	Moved with household	Others
North	Male	54.59	1.79	5.67	2.73	5.74	10.83	18.65
	Female	9.6	0.11	4.44	50.93	4.32	12.69	17.91
West	Male	29.66	2.41	3.94	3.18	10.76	24.23	25.82
	Female	3.05	0.42	1.3	67.52	5.24	10.13	12.35
South	Male	34.1	3.03	5.33	2.28	5.83	30.01	19.43
	Female	4.7	0.69	1.97	60.44	2.88	18.34	10.98
East	Male	45.57	2.59	7.65	1.63	1.26	20.07	21.23
	Female	9	0.58	6.47	48.6	0.96	9.87	16.9

Source: Computed by author using D3 Migration Table; Census of India, 2011

4.14 District-wise Pattern of Migration

Migration patterns in Sikkim vary across districts, migration type, and gender. In North district, intra-district migration (12.9%) is higher than inter-district migration. In West district, intra-district migration is quite high (16.57%) compared to inter-district migration. In South district, intra-district migration (16.04%) is higher than inter-district migration. In East district, intra-district migration is the highest among all districts.

The table also highlights that rural intra-district migration is higher than urban intra-district migration across all districts, reflecting the continued rural character of short-distance movement in Sikkim.

Table 14. Percentage of Intra-District and Inter-District Migrants by District

District	Migration Type	Category	Total (in percent)	Males (in percent)	Females (in percent)
North District	Intra - District	Total	12.9	8.61	18.5
		Rural	12.85	8.19	19.03
		Urban	9.5	8.79	10.28
	Inter - District	Total	7.26	5.64	9.38
		Rural	5.79	4.24	7.84
		Urban	18.88	17.51	20.43
West District	Intra - Distict	Total	16.57	9.1	24.51
		Rural	16.28	8.57	24.46
		Urban	15.07	13.51	16.75
	Inter - District	Total	4.24	2.78	5.8
		Rural	3.18	1.76	4.68
		Urban	25.17	22.36	28.17
South District	Intra - District	Total	16.04	10.96	21.59
		Rural	16.08	10.32	22.43
		Urban	12.82	11.7	13.99
	Inter - District	Total	8.38	5.9	11.09
		Rural	7.3	4.63	10.24
		Urban	14.25	13.22	15.31
East District	Intra - District	Total	26.16	22.86	29.94
		Rural	22.71	17.53	28.8
		Urban	14.45	13.78	15.19
	Inter - District	Total	7	5.71	8.48
		Rural	9.14	7.22	11.41
		Urban	2.67	2.42	2.95

Source: Computed by author using D3 Migration Table; Census of India, 2011

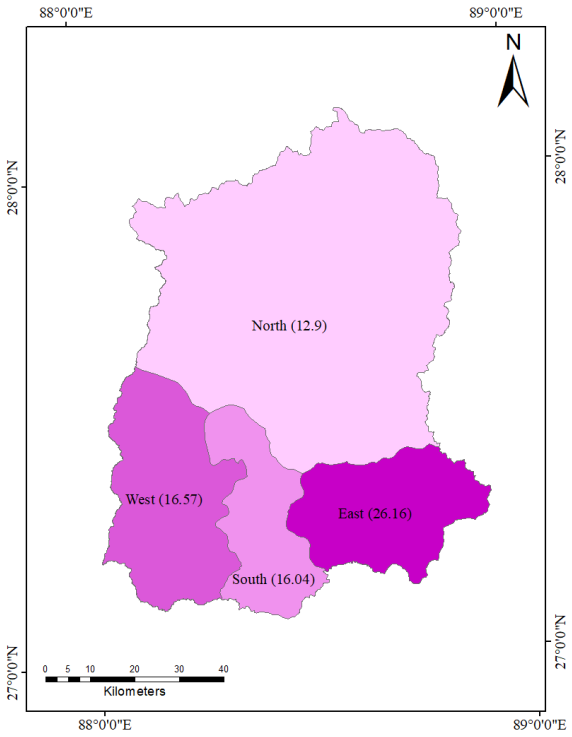


Figure 3. Percentage of Intra-District Migration in Sikkim

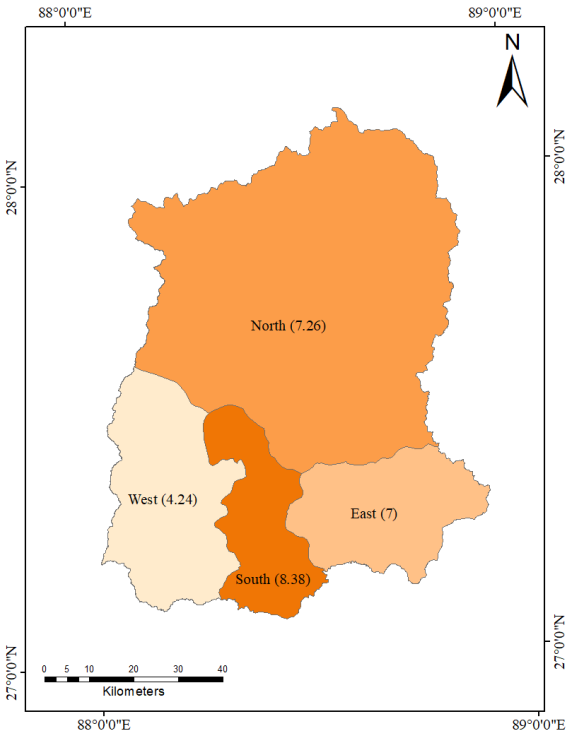


Figure 4. Percentage of Inter-District Migration in Sikkim

Source: D3 Migration Table; Census of India, 2011

4.15 District-wise Composite Index and Ranking Based on Selected Indicators in Sikkim

East District ranks first with the highest Composite Index value of 5.86, indicating a high level of urban development characterized by greater urban population concentration, higher female literacy, and a strong presence of manufacturing and service-sector activities.

South District ranks second with a Composite Index of 2.46. The district shows a moderate level of urban development, supported by relatively high female literacy and significant participation in manufacturing, education, health, and accommodation-related activities.

North District ranks third with a Composite Index of 1.81. Although the district records a high score in administrative and public service activities, its lower values in urban population, literacy, and manufacturing indicate a comparatively lower level of urban development.

West District ranks fourth with a Composite Index of 0.02, reflecting the lowest level of urban development among the districts. The district records very low values across most indicators, suggesting limited urban and economic activities.

Table 15. District-wise Composite Index and Ranking Based on Percentage Values of Selected Indicators in Sikkim, 2011

Districts	Urban population	Female Literacy	Manufacturing	Accomodation and food service activities	Administrative and Support Service Activities & Public Administration and Defence	Education & Human Health and Social Work Activities	Composite Index	Rank
North	0.17	0.01	0.00	0.28	1.00	0.35	1.81	3
West	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	4
South	0.27	0.65	0.38	0.36	0.09	0.71	2.46	2
East	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.86	1.00	5.86	1

Source: Census of India, 2011

5. Discussion

The study shows that migration in Sikkim is mainly dominated by short-distance movement. Intra-district migration forms the largest share of total migration. This pattern is similar to the national trend, where most migration takes place within the same district or state (Hussain, 2017).

Rural-to-rural migration remains the most dominant type of migration stream, although its share is decreasing. There is an increasing trend of rural-to-urban and urban-to-urban migration, indicating the growing importance of urban centres. This pattern is similar to the national trend, where urbanization and better employment opportunities in urban areas attract people (Gupta and Miglani, 2021).

Migration patterns vary significantly among the districts because of differences in development, infrastructure, and opportunities. East Sikkim, especially Gangtok, has become the main centre that attracts migrants due to its economic, administrative, and educational significance. This finding supports the study of Debnath and Ray (2016), which identified East Sikkim as the district with the highest in-migration and net migration in the state.

The study also shows that migration in Sikkim is shaped by both social and economic factors. Marriage remains the most common reason for female migration, whereas employment is the major driver of male migration. This pattern is similar to the overall migration pattern in

India, where female migration is largely marriage-related and male migration is mainly employment-driven (Hussain, 2017; Gupta and Miglani, 2021).

6. Conclusions

The increasing number of migrants in Gangtok shows the need for balanced development across the districts. Similar studies have shown that migration is often driven by regional disparities in employment opportunities, infrastructure, and access to services (Hussain, 2017; Gupta and Miglani, 2021). There should be better opportunities in other districts to reduce the differences among the districts.

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