

Migrant Laborers

The labor force which builds the city itself remains invisible to us even in broad daylight. Most of the laborers are migrants, looked upon as outsiders and as a burden on systems and resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic has strongly brought the stories of these workers into the limelight and serves as an important reminder for all of us to address their exclusion and discrimination and urges us to work towards removing their cloak of invisibility.

Thus, resulting in exacerbated vulnerabilities to the irregularities of the labor market, poverty traps, and risks of discrimination and violence. Women migrants especially face discrimination, coupled with vulnerability as victims of gender-based violence. Out of these laborers, many are migrant workers.

According to the 2011 census, the number of internal migrants (inter and intra-state migrants) in India amounts to a **total of 45 crore people, almost 37% of the nation's population**. Out of this statistic, around 29% are daily wage workers according to a 2019 report by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Azim Premji University.

The 2011 census data further reveals that 70% of intra-state migration was due to reasons of marriage and family. 83% of females migrated due to marriage whereas 50% of men migrated between states for work. India's rural population migrate seasonally to cities and farms in search of work. They engage in casual labor such as construction, manufacturing, and agriculture. **They make up India's unorganized, informal workforce, who are denied basic rights and services as citizens of the country.**

Migrant laborers, who make up 47% of the urban population, are identified as the largest category in need of housing in urban areas by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in 2015. Other key challenges faced by migrant laborers include:

- i. Lack of social security and health benefits
- ii. Inability to access PDS schemes due to non-portability of ration cards from one state to another
- iii. Lack of access to affordable housing and basic amenities in urban areas.

Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are states with the highest level of out-migration in India. The largest recipients of these migrant labourers are large cities like Delhi, Mumbai and industrial hubs, along with states like Kerala, which have become popular for long-distance migration.

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