Investigating The Socio-Economic Dynamics Of Northeast Indian Out-Migrants In Delhi

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Abstract

The people of Northeast India (NEI) have been migrating out to different parts of the country primarily for work and employment opportunities. Recent census data of 2011 highlights that Delhi is increasingly becoming a favored destination for NEI out-migrants. Numerous studies have revealed that the socio-economic attributes of migrants significantly influence the type of 'labour' they engage in at their destinations. Therefore, a comprehensive academic investigation is essential to comprehend the socio-economic characteristics of NEI out-migrants and to identify the predominant work sectors they are employed in within Delhi. The analysis draws on data from NSSO 64th round, complemented by primary data collected through a field survey conducted in Delhi. This combination of data sources enables a thorough examination of the socio-economic dynamics of NEI out-migrants and their occupational patterns in the capital city.

Keywords: Northeast India, Out-Migrants, Delhi, NSSO, Socio-Economic.

1. Introduction

The inter-relationship between poverty and migration has been a topic of academic discussion in the field of migration studies. Migration has long been perceived as a strategy adopted by the impoverished to escape poverty and secure livelihoods in developing countries. Migrants, by providing their labour, not only benefit the destination but also break the cycle of poverty at the origin (de Haan, 1999). Migration often occurs from poor rural areas to urban centres, where regional disparities and unequal development at the macrolevel are prevalent (Brauw, 2007; Deshingkar & Akter, 2009; Deshingkar & Grimm, 2005; Ha et al., 2009; Lam et al., 2007). It is said that temporary migration is commonly chosen by the economically deprived sections of the population, including the poorest, landless individuals, illiterates, and marginalized groups like the SC/STs and Muslims (Bird & Deshingkar, 2009; Dayal & Karan, 2003; Mosse et al., 2005). These distressed migrants are often associated with factors contributing to urban poverty (Breman, 1994; Deshingkar & Farrington, 2009; Haberfeld et al., 1999; Vijay, 2005).

However, there is an opposing view suggesting that the poor are less mobile, especially in the case of permanent or semipermanent migration (Bhagat, 2010; Singh, 2009). In the contemporary context, it is the better-off sections of society that are migrating out. They possess better socio-economic advantages compared to the poor (Bhagat, 2010; Kundu, 2007). Other studies have also found that voluntary migration, driven by reasons like employment and education, is not primarily driven by poverty, but rather by non-poor or well-off families (Lolaksha Nagaveni & Anand, 2017). Therefore, it is better-skilled and educated individuals are more likely to migrate compared to those with lower skills and education levels (de Haan, 1999; Massey and Parr, 2012). Bhagat and Mohanty (2009) have also observed that push factors play a limited role in influencing internal migration. They found less correlation, suggesting that the poor and disadvantaged are not migrating more than the better-off people. Similarly, some studies have indicated that the educational qualifications of migrants are higher than those of non-migrants (Bhagat, 2010). As socio-economically better-off migrants are better skilled and educated, they are predominantly absorbed in formal sectors in urban areas with better working conditions. This analysis shows that both the poor and better-off sections of society engage in migration, but they are absorbed into different work sectors in urban areas based on their socio-economic status. Therefore, whether the migrants belong to the poor or the

'better-off' sections of society is contextual and depends on research objectives. This paper is built upon this inherent contradiction that serves as its core premise. By elucidating the intricate interplay between migration, socio-economic factors, and livelihood strategies among NEI out-migrants in Delhi, this research aims to contribute scholarly insights to the ongoing discourse on migration and its multifaceted implications in the context of contemporary socio-economic dynamics.

2. Methods

This paper employs both secondary and primary data sources. Preliminary insights on NEI out-migrants in general, are derived from the 64th round of NSSO data. Again, a field survey was conducted in Delhi, involving 380 NEI respondents in Delhi. The participants were identified through secondary sources, and thereafter, the snowball sampling technique was used for random selection. Data was collected through structured and semi-structured surveys, personal interviews, and informal conversations. Statistical techniques like 'binary logistic regression', 'multiple linear regression', and simple methods such as 'mean' and 'median' were utilized to analyse various socio-economic aspects of the NEI out-migrants. The study includes all eight Northeast states³.

3. A Brief Understanding of Labour Migration in India

Labour is a crucial factor of production, encompassing both mental and physical work (Morgan, 1974). Theories often focus on the intrinsic value of labour, as Karl Marx defined it as 'labour-power in use.' In a capitalist economy, capitalists buy labour-power, while sellers sell it, putting it to work to produce useful goods and services (Marx, 1992). Having defined the term 'labour', furthermore, the concept of migrant and migration remains contested and dubious mainly on two major grounds: distance of migration and duration of stay at destination (International Organization for Migration (2003), World Migration Report (Vol. 2)). Despite many differences, a migrant is defined as a person who has changed his or her residence from one geographical welldefined area with the intention of permanently or semipermanently settling in the new place (ibid). Again, the Census of India defined migrants based on two major

³ The eight states of NEI comprises: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.

aspects: migration based on place of birth and migration based on place of last residence. On the other hand, NSSO has defined a migrant as a household member whose last usual place of residence (UPR), at any time in the past, was different from the present place of enumeration, wherein a person had stayed continuously for six months or more (NSSO Report No 533). From the above discussion on labour and migration, the majority of the study reveals that 'labour migration' has been defined on the major criteria of 'reason of migration' and labour migrants are those who migrate for employment-related reasons' (Agnihotri, Mazumdar, and Neetha 2011).

Labour migration is not an entirely new phenomenon. It is a process that has been going on since the beginning of time. People have relocated from one region to another for better chances and a strategy of livelihood since time immemorial. In the context of India, migration has significantly changed since its independence, with internal migration playing a significant role. As per the 2011 census, between 2001-2011, while the population of the country grew by 18 per cent, the number of migrants increased by 45 per cent. In 2011, 99 per cent of the total migration was internal while international migration comprised only 1 per cent. It is pertinent to mention, during the early decades of India's independence, the migration rate was believed to be low due to factors like the caste system, joint families, traditional values, language diversity, and agriculture (Davis 1951). However, postreform, the internal migration rate rose from 30 per cent in 2001 to 37 per cent in 2011, highlighting the increasing movement of people.

4. Preliminary Understanding of Socio-Economic Characteristics of NEI Out-Migrants in General: NSSO 64th Round

NSSO 64th round of employment unemployment and migration survey has observed that 14 per cent of the households in NEI have at least one family member have migrated out during a recall period of the last 365 days prior to the survey. The majority of the households (87 per cent) were located in rural areas while the rest were in the urban locations. The mean size of the out- migrated household was 5 (minimum size was 1 and maximum 17). NSSO assigned the out-migrated household types on the basis of the sources of the household's income during the last 365 days before the date of survey. It takes into consideration only the households income generated from the economic activities. NSSO classified economic activities under the major groups of self-employed, casual labour, regular wage/salary earning and 'others'. Therefore, if a single source of income contributed 50 per cent or more of the household's income from economic activities during the last 365 days, the particular household corresponding to that particular income source has been assigned. On this basis, it has been observed that 61 per cent of the out-migrated households were selfemployed⁴ followed by casual labour⁵ (19 per cent), regular wage/salary (6 per cent) and others⁶ (14 per cent). If we delineate the households based on its rural/urban locations, it was observed that in case of rural households, 65 per cent were self-employed followed by casual labour (21 per cent) and others (14 per cent). However in case of urban households, 42 per cent were engaged in regular wage/salary earning activities followed by self-employed (39 per cent), casual labour (6 per cent) and others (13 per cent).

NSSO 64th round defined land possessed as the land that is 'owned'⁷, 'leased in'⁸ and 'land neither owned nor leased in'⁹ by households but it excludes land that has been 'leased out'¹⁰. The result from the analysis reveals that majority of the out-migrants households possessed land less than 1 hectare (51 per cent) followed by up to 1 hectare (27 per cent), 1-3 hectare (20 per cent) and only 2 per cent possessed land greater than 3 hectares. It shows that the majority of the out-migrated households possessed smaller land size. Again

⁴ 'Self-employed' includes employment in agricultural and non-agricultural activities

⁵ 'Casual labour' includes agricultural labour and other forms of labour work

⁶ 'Others' includes those households which did not have any income from economic activities.

⁷ A piece of land is considered to be owned by the household if permanent heritable possession with or without the right to transfer the title vests in a member or members of the households. It also includes the land held in owner-like possession say under perpetual lease for 30 years or more etc. ⁸ If a piece of land is taken by a household on rent or free of rent without any right of permanent or heritable possession is termed as land 'leased-in'.

⁹ It includes the land possessed by households but lacks title of ownership and also does not have lease agreement for the use of the land transacted either verbally or in writing

¹⁰ It is the land given out to others on rent or free of rent by the owner of the land without surrendering the right of permanent heritable title is termed as land 'leased-out'.

NSSO identified nine types¹¹ of household religion. However, in cases where the religion of all the member of the household is different, the survey considered the religion of the head of the household as the 'household religion'. Based on this, it is observed from the analysis that majority of the out-migrated households were Hindu (64 per cent) followed by Islam (19 per cent), Christian (14 per cent) and 3 per cent belong to the 'others'12 category. However, if we delineate the religion of the households of state specific the scenario exhibit different picture of each states. It is observed that for Sikkim, majority of the households were reported to be Hindu (52 per cent) followed by 'others' (37 per cent) and Christianity (10 per cent). Likewise for Arunachal Pradesh, majority of the households belong from 'others' category (66 per cent) followed by Christianity and Hindu. In case of states like Tripura and Assam, majority of the out-migrated households were 'Hindus' by religion. However, for the rest of the states like Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Meghalaya, majority of the out-migrated households were Christians. Similarly, NSSO 64th round identified four social groups: ST, SC, OBC, and General. It has been observed that 38 per cent of the out-migrants households in the region mostly belonged from the 'General' (39 per cent) category followed by OBC (33 per cent), ST (24 per cent) and SC (4 per cent).

Social	NEI states										
groups											
Group	Sikkim	Arunachal	Nagaland	Manipur	Mizoram	Tripura	Meghalaya	Assam			
		Pradesh									
ST	43.08	75.2	99	58.79	97.1	21.87	80.24	9.29			
SC	9.58	2.74	0.03	4.07	1.15	15.38	0.91	3.4			
OBC	38.66	1.34	0.17	30.17	1.61	23.63	0.92	40.35			
General	8.68	20.72	0.8	6.97	0.14	39.12	17.93	46.96			

Table 1: Percentage distribution of social groups of out-migrated households for State Specifics

Source: 64th NSSO Round

If we delineate the social groups of the out-migrated households for state specifics, it is observed from Table 1 that majority of the out-migrated households from all the states of

¹¹ The religion includes: i) Hinduism ii) Islam iii) Christianity iv) Sikhism v) Jainism vi) Buddhism vii) Zoroastrianism viii) Jewish and ix) Others

¹² 'Others' includes all the religion excluding Hinduism, Islam and Christianity the region except for Tripura and Assam belonged from the STs Category. For instance for Sikkim, majority of the out-migrated households belong from ST category followed by OBCs, SCs and General Category. For Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, majority of the out-migrated households belong from the STs followed by the General Category. In case of Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya, a considerable larger percentage of the out-migrated households belong from the STs. But in case of Manipur, majority of the out-migrated households were STs followed by OBCS and General Category. Again, if we look at the scenario of Assam, majority of the out-migrated households belongs from the 'General' Category follows by OBCs, STs and SCs. So, briefly from the above analysis it can be observed that, except Assam and Tripura; the majority of the out-migrated households in the region belonged to the ST categories.

NSSO 64th round also provided information related to the monthly household consumption expenditures and the size of the households from where MPCE has been calculated. When we divide the monthly household's consumer expenditures by the size of the household, we arrive at MPCE. This was done for understanding the economic characteristics of outmigrants households of the region. The Monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) is the expenditure incurred by each member of households during the last 30 dates. It is the monetary values of all the goods and services procured by an individual for consumption. The population of any region can be divided into five quintile classes of MPCE where the 1st MPCE quintile group signifies the level of the MPCE below which 20 per cent of the out-migrant population falls, the 2nd MPCE quintile group signifies the level of MPCE below which 40 per cent of the out-migrants population falls, and so and so forth.

Figure 1 shows that the majority of the out-migrants households in the region fall under the 4th Quintile groups which were then followed by 3rd, 2nd and 5th Quintile groups. The out-migrants households that falls under the 1st Quintile groups were found to be the lowest. This indicates that out-migration from the region generally takes place from the households that belong to the higher quintile groups.

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of MPCE Quintile groups of out-migrants households at the region



Source: 64th NSSO Round

A further delineation of MPCE Quintile groups can be done based on state specifics of the region to see if all the states fall under the higher quintile groups or otherwise. It is observed that in Sikkim, the households of the out-migrants belong to the 4th quintile group followed by the 3rd quintile group. Similarly, for states like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Assam fall under the 4th quintile group. The majority of the out-migrants household in Manipur are from the 3rd quintile group. However, for states like Mizoram and Tripura, highest number of households belonged to the 5th quintile group, indicating the out-migrants from these states to be more economically better-off compared to other states in the region.

In case of remittances received by the households of outmigrants during the last 365 days, it is observed the mean amount of remittances received during the last 365 days was Rs.25, 848 (minimum was '0' and maximum Rs.300000). The minimum value of '0' signifies to those households that have not received any remittances and the maximum value of Rs.300000 represents the amount of remittances received by some of the households of out-migrants in the region during the last 365 days. In terms of utilization of the remittances by the households of the out-migrants in the region, it is observed that majority of the remittances received are used in the household consumer expenditure mainly on food items (29 per cent) and expenditure on other households items e.g. for improving housing condition (18 per cent). It is observed that a minor percentage of remittances are utilised for aspects like debt repayment, saving/investment, marriage/ceremony and for improving housing conditions of the out-migrated households.

Therefore, the current section analysed the socio-economic characteristics of the out-migrated households using parameters like household size, religion, social groups, land possessed, MPCE and remittances used. The analysis shows that the out-migrated households of NEI were economically better-off as the majority falls under the 4th MPCE Quintile groups.

4.1. Results of the Binary Logistic Model

The result of the binary logistic model has been presented in Appendix 1. It is found from the analysis that the rural/urban origin of out-migrants is not significant, indicating it migration can take place from both urban and rural locations. Conversely, the variable 'household size' is highly significant at a 1 per cent level, suggesting that larger out-migrant households are more likely to experience migration. Regarding household types (occupation types), casual labour and workers under the 'other' category are significant at a 1 per cent level, while regular wage workers are significant at a 10 per cent level. This implies that all types of economic activities have similar likelihoods of migration, but casual labourers and 'other' category workers are more prone to migration compared to other occupations. The variable 'religion' indicates that Muslims are more likely to migrate compared to other religious groups. In terms of 'social groups', SC is significant at a 10 per cent level, OBC at 1 per cent level, and the general category at 5 per cent level. All social groups are likely to migrate, with OBCs being more likely to migrate compared to General and SCs. The variable 'size of land possessed' is significant at a 1 per cent level, showing that larger landholdings in out-migrant households increase the likelihood of migration. Moreover, MPCE quintile groups 4 and 5 are significant at the 1 per cent level, and the 3rd quintile group is significant at the 5 per cent level, indicating that out-migrant households with higher MPCE quintiles lead to increased migration likelihood.

From the analysis, it is evident that Muslims and OBCs are more likely to migrate out compared to other religious and social groups. Household size and occupation types also influence the migration process. Additionally, economic factors like larger landholdings and higher MPCE have a significant positive impact on out-migration likelihood. The findings support previous research indicating that the contemporary migration process in India is largely driven by economically better-off sections of society, which is also applicable to NEI outmigration. Understanding the factors influencing migration is crucial for policymakers to address the challenges and opportunities arising from migration patterns in the North-Eastern region.

5. Socio-Economic Characteristics of NEI Out-Migrants in Delhi: Primary Findings

The survey results revealed that the majority of NEI outmigrants in Delhi were unmarried (88per cent), while 10 per cent were currently married, and 2 per cent were either separated or divorced. Regarding their duration of stay in Delhi, 44 per cent had resided in the city for 2-5 years, followed by 5-9 years (34 per cent), more than 9 years (12 per cent), and up to 2 years (10 per cent). In terms of religion, Christians comprised the largest group (51per cent), followed by Hindus (29 per cent), and others (20 per cent). In terms of social groups of the NEI out-migrants in Delhi, it can be observed that 48 per cent were STs followed by General (34 per cent), OBC (13 per cent) and SCs (5 per cent). The study focused on out-migrants aged between 20-35 years, where 52 per cent fell in the age group of 25-30 years, 31per cent were between 20-25 years, and 17 per cent were aged 30-35 years. They were mostly employed in various service-oriented occupations such as retail, BPO, aviation, care sector, food & drink services, self-employed, professional/freelancer, parlour/spa, information and technology and others. In terms of education, 39 per cent were graduates, 34 per cent completed their higher secondary level, 9 per cent attained a diploma after higher secondary, 8 per cent were postgraduates, 6 per cent had completed matriculation, and 3 per cent had education below matriculation.

The results presented in Appendix 2 demonstrate notable income disparities among NEI out-migrants across diverse occupational sectors. Our analysis shows that those employed in the IT sector, 'others,' and self-employment exhibited higher earning capacities compared to their counterparts in different professions. Conversely, individuals working in the food and drink services and parlour/spa sectors displayed lower income levels and expressed a preference for more economical lodging options. The majority of out-migrants chose to share their accommodations with two or more individuals, while those working in the food and drink services or parlour/spa sectors tended to avoid living alone, likely motivated by cost-saving considerations related to rent. Additionally, out-migrants engaged in 'others,' aviation, IT, professional/freelancers, and self-employment sectors reported higher monthly expenditures, contributing to an overall higher total monthly expenditure compared to other occupational groups.

5.1. Income and Social Attributes of NEI Out-Migrants in Delhi: Multiple Regression Results

Multiple regressions were run to see the relationship between the income of out-migrants with certain attributes like their age, sector of work, educational qualification of out-migrants, duration of stay of out-migrants in Delhi and type of accommodation in Delhi. Multiple linear regressions can be empirically represented as follows:

 $\hat{Y} = b_0 + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + \dots + b_n X_n$

Where

 \hat{Y} = Dependent variable

 $X_1, X_2, ..., X_n = n$ distinct independent variables

 b_0 =value of 'y' when all the independent variables are '0'

 $b_1, b_{2,\ldots} b_n \text{=} \text{estimated regression coefficient}$ For our current analysis, the Dependent variable=Income of the out-migrants

Independent variables=age of the out-migrants, sector of work, educational qualification of out-migrants, duration of stay of out-migrants in Delhi and type of accommodation in Delhi

The study conducted multiple regression analysis to explore the relationship between various independent variables and the income of NEI out-migrants in Delhi. The result shows that 73 per cent of the variance in income can be explained by the regression model. Our findings show that the 'age' of outmigrants was found to have a positive linear relationship with income. As the age of the out-migrants increased, their income also increased. This suggests that older out-migrants with more work experience tend to earn higher incomes compared to younger out-migrants. Regarding the sector of work, outmigrants employed in the food & drink services and parlour/spa sectors had a negative linear relationship with income. This means that out-migrants working in these sectors earned less income compared to those in other sectors. On the other hand, out-migrants working in the IT sector and those falling under the 'others' category experienced a positive linear relationship with income, indicating that they earned a higher income. The duration of stay in Delhi also had a positive linear relationship with income. Out-migrants who had been in Delhi for a longer duration earned higher incomes compared to recent migrants. This could be attributed to the fact that those with longer stays had better work experience, acquired necessary skills, and had more bargaining power in the labour market. Out-migrants residing in accommodations owned by them also showed a positive linear relationship with income. Lastly, those with higher incomes were more likely to afford their accommodation in Delhi compared to those with lower incomes.

6. Conclusion

This paper examines the socio-economic characteristics of outmigrant households from North-Eastern India (NEI) using secondary data from NSSO 64th round and primary data from a field survey conducted in Delhi. The NSSO analysis reveals that Muslims and OBCs are more likely to migrate out compared to other religious and social groups. Household size and occupation types also influence the migration process. Additionally, economic factors like larger landholdings and higher MPCE have a significant positive impact on outmigration likelihood. Furthermore, our primary field results show that the majority of the out-migrants were graduates and worked in various sectors like BPO, retail, care, aviation, food and drinks services, parlour/spa, self-employed, professionals/freelancers, others, and IT. Out-migrants in IT, 'others,' and self-employed sectors earned higher incomes and lived in higher-rent accommodations with fewer roommates. Their monthly expenditure was also higher, and they had higher educational qualifications, mostly graduates and postgraduates.

Overall, the analysis suggests that NEI out-migrants in Delhi were socio-economically better off, capable of financing their migration process and sustaining themselves during job searches. The NSSO analysis further confirms that inter-state out-migrants belonged to higher MPCE quintile groups, indicating their relative economic advantage.

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Appendix 1: Binary Logistic Regression Model								
Households of the out-	odds ratio	[95per cent Conf.	Interval]					
migrants								
Rural/Urban locations								
Rural (Ref. Category):1								
Urban	1.004943	0.91686	1.101488					
Household Size	1.063079***	1.043958	1.082551					
Household type								
Self Employed (Ref. Category)	:1							
casual labour	0.601481***	0.532455	0.679455					
regular wage	0.860675*	0.763596	0.970097					
others	2.126116***	1.953741	2.313698					
Religion								
Hindu (Ref. Category):1								
Islam	0.853728*	0.742715	0.981333					
Christian	0.921148	0.820085	1.034665					
Others	1.061675	0.930589	1.211228					
Social group								
ST (Ref. Category):1								
SC	1.148369**	0.97564	1.351679					
OBC	1.355968***	1.202603	1.528891					
General	1.215483***	1.070287	1.380376					

Size of land possessed	1.14244***	1.117194	1.168257				
MPCE							
1 st Quintile group (Ref. Cate	egory):1						
2 nd Quintile group	1.105282	0.955616	1.278389				
3 rd Quintile group	1.228245***	1.066996	1.413862				
4 th Quintile group	1.478717***	1.281576	1.706185				
5 th Quintile group	1.749244***	1.493433	2.048873				
constant	0.183112	0.150231	0.223188				
Source: Author's computation from 64 th NSSO Round							

*10 per cent level of significance, **5 per cent level of significance & ***1 per cent level of significance

Appendix 2: Summary of 'Median values' of various Economic parameters of out-migrants in Delhi across different sectors of work

Economic variables	Retail	BPO	Aviation	Care	Food and	Parlour/Sp	Self	Professional	IT	Others
				Sector	drinks	а	Employed	S		
					services			/freelancers		
Income of out-migrants										
	33000	32000	36000	25000	16000	15000	40000	28500	44000	37000
Rent per month										
	8000	8000	11000	9000	6500	6400	8500	11000	12000	12000
Number of People										
sharing the										
accommodation	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
Monthly expenditure on										
non-rental items	7000	7500	8000	7500	5000	5000	7500	7250	8000	8000
Total approx.										
expenditure per month	10500	11250	14000	11167	6625	6875	11625	12500	14000	15500

Source: Author's computation from field survey

Appendix 3: Multiple Regression Results

Source	SS	df	MS	Numl	per of	380	
				obser	observation		
				F(23,	356)	43.19	
Model	45.36699	23	1.972478	Prob	> F	0.000	
Residual	16.2595	356	0.045673	R-squ	ared	0.7362	
				Adj R	-squared	0.7191	
Total	61.6265	379	0.162603	Root	MSE	0.21371	
Logincome			Coeff.	95per cent conf.	Interv	al	
Age			0.016***	0.007	0.024		
Sector of work							
BPO			0.046	-0.024	0.116		
Aviation			0.073	-0.036	0.181		
Care sector			-0.055	-0.143	3 0.033		
Food and drink services			-0.668***	-0.776	6 -0.559		
Parlour/spa			-0.672***	-0.771	-0.572		
Self employed			0.176	0.054	0.298		
Proff/freelancer			-0.105	-0.237	0.026		
IT			0.185***	0.067	0.303		
others			0.123**	0.013	0.234		
Education of out-migrants			0.003	-0.019	0.024		
Duration of stay in Delhi			0.026***	0.012	0.039		
Type of Residence	e in Delhi						
Rent			0.056	-0.144	0.255		
Own flat			0.244*	-0.033	.033 0.522		
Workplace accom	modation		0.037	-0.170	0.243		

*10 per cent level significant **5 per cent level

significant ***1 per cent level significant