Jawaharlal Nehru University

Presents

REPORT

on

Illegal Immigrants to Delhi: Analysing Socio-economic and Political Consequences

Illegal Immigrants to Delhi: Analysing Socio-economic and Political Consequences

Under the Guidance of

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For security reasons, the names of the team members are not disclosed.

EXECUTIVE FINDINGS

- Illegal immigration to Delhi has significantly altered the city's demographic landscape, with a large influx of migrants from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar. These migrants often settle in overcrowded neighbourhoods such as Seelampur, Jamia Nagar, Zakir Nagar, Sultanpuri, Mustafabad, Jafrabad, Dwarka, Govindpuri and many more, where they strain resources and disrupt local social cohesion.

- The historical context of illegal immigration from Bangladesh dates back to the 2017 Rohingya crisis, during which millions of refugees fled to India. Over the decades, many of these migrants settled in Delhi, creating dense pockets of undocumented populations.

- Migrants often rely on informal networks, including brokers, agents and religious preachers, to secure housing and jobs, perpetuating cycles of illegal immigration. These networks also facilitate the creation of fake identification documents, which undermine legal systems and electoral processes.

- Unauthorized settlements by illegal immigrants have led to the proliferation of slums and unplanned colonies, causing immense pressure on Delhi's already overstretched infrastructure, including housing, sanitation, and water supply.

- The healthcare system in Delhi faces significant challenges due to the influx of migrants. Overcrowded hospitals and clinics are unable to meet the demands of both legal residents and undocumented populations, resulting in reduced access to quality healthcare for all.

- The education system in migrant-heavy areas is overburdened, with schools struggling to accommodate the growing number of students. This has adversely affected the quality of education, particularly in low-income neighbourhoods.

- Migrants' participation in low-wage jobs has created economic competition with local workers, leading to resentment among Delhi's native population. Their willingness to work for lower wages has led to a decrease in overall earnings in certain sectors.

- Illegal immigrants often engage in informal economic activities, which contribute to the city's economy but limit tax revenues.

- Migrants have been linked to illegal activities such as smuggling, document forgery, and human trafficking. These activities pose significant security risks to the city and complicate law enforcement efforts.

- Cultural differences and the inability of migrants to integrate into local communities have led to social tensions and conflicts. The presence of isolated migrant communities has disrupted traditional social structures in certain areas.

- Environmental degradation is a consequence of unauthorised colonies established by illegal immigrants. These settlements often encroach on wetlands and green spaces, contributing to deforestation and pollution.
- The demographic changes caused by migration have altered the religious composition of Delhi, with a notable increase in the Muslim population due to migration from Bangladesh. This has impacted the socio-political dynamics of the city.
- Migrants' lack of documentation and legal status makes them vulnerable to exploitation by landlords, employers, and brokers. Many are forced to live in substandard conditions and work under exploitative arrangements.
- The strain on Delhi's public services, including electricity and water supply, is exacerbated by the demands of migrant populations. These shortages disproportionately affect low-income residents.
- Illegal immigration has heightened the risk of public health crises, as overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions in migrant settlements contribute to the spread of infectious diseases.
- The political patronage provided to illegal immigrants, including the facilitation of voter registration, has raised concerns about electoral manipulation and democratic integrity.
- Migrants' concentration in certain areas has led to overcrowding in public spaces such as markets, parks, and transportation hubs, diminishing the quality of urban life for residents.
- Gendered impacts of migration are evident, as female residents face greater risks of crime and limited access to healthcare and education. This perpetuates cycles of poverty and marginalisation.
- The presence of undocumented migrants complicates disaster response and crisis management, as these populations are often excluded from official relief efforts during emergencies.
- The porous India-Bangladesh border remains a major challenge for managing illegal immigration, with inadequate border control enabling the continued influx of migrants.
- Law enforcement efforts to identify and deport illegal immigrants are resource-intensive and often met with resistance from local communities and political actors.
- The lack of a comprehensive immigration policy in India has made it difficult to address the root causes of illegal migration and implement effective solutions.

- Migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar often face discrimination and hostility from local populations, further complicating their integration into Delhi's social fabric, which creates a higher level of social tension.

- Migrants' reliance on social networks for support highlights the importance of community-based interventions to address migration challenges and promote social cohesion.

- The Delhi Police has intensified efforts to identify and deport illegal immigrants, conducting door-to-door campaigns and dismantling fake documentation rackets.

- Illegal immigration has geopolitical implications, affecting India's relations with neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar. Collaborative efforts are needed to address cross-border migration issues.

- The rising population density in Delhi due to migration has strained public transportation systems, leading to overcrowding and reduced efficiency.

- The environmental impact of migrant settlements includes unregulated waste disposal, which contributes to pollution and public health hazards.

- Migrants' involvement in informal housing markets has led to the proliferation of unsafe and unauthorised housing, posing risks to both residents and the environment.

- Illegal immigration has contributed to the proliferation of criminal networks, which exploit vulnerable migrants for activities such as smuggling and trafficking.

- Efforts to deport illegal immigrants are often delayed by bureaucratic challenges the lack of cooperation from migrants' home countries, and the approach of Delhi National capital territory.

- Migrants' contributions to Delhi's economy disruptions are significant, particularly in sectors such as construction and domestic work sector.

- Social tensions between migrants and local residents have occasionally led to protests and clashes, highlighting the need for conflict resolution mechanisms.

- The lack of reliable data on migration trends and migrant populations in Delhi hampers effective policymaking and resource allocation, emphasising the need for better data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Bangladesh frequently attracts international attention due to several critical issues, such as its impressive economic growth, recent graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status, the Rohingya genocide, climate change, and migration. A young and densely populated nation, Bangladesh is inherently a country of migration, encompassing internal, emigration, and immigration flows. Emigration, both formal and informal, extends to various destinations across Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and beyond. In terms of formal emigration, the Gulf states remain the largest destination for Bangladeshi workers; on the other hand, informal migration flows are directed towards a range of locations, including Southeast Asia and Europe.

Historically, neighbouring India has been a key destination for informal emigration from Bangladesh. With its significantly larger landmass, economy, and proximity on all borders (except to the south, where Bangladesh meets the Bay of Bengal and Myanmar), India remains a key destination for Bangladeshi migrants. Migration to India, including state-to-state migration, economic immigration from abroad, and the influx of asylum seekers, has been a politically charged issue at the state, sub-regional, and national levels for decades. Currently, irregular migration from Bangladesh is a particularly contentious political topic in the eastern and northeastern states, as well as at the national level.

While the politicisation of migration is not new, it has gained renewed focus in recent years, particularly with the introduction of the NRC and CAA in 2019, alongside migration-focused electoral campaigns.

(Ref: European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Global Governance Programme-453, Migration, borders, and security discourses in the time of COVID-19: the case of migration from Bangladesh to India by Silvia Tieri, RSC Working Paper 2021/81)

Bangladeshi immigrants in the region are often seen as 'settlers,' leading to competition for essential resources such as land, water, services, and jobs. This perception leads to concerns that their presence could significantly alter the region's demographic and political landscape. Locals often claim that the influx of low-skilled workers from across the border is reducing

employment opportunities for Indian citizens, particularly in low-skill sectors. As a result, locals believe that cross-border migration is contributing to higher unemployment rates among the native population.

Moreover, illegal immigrants can strain state resources, particularly in areas like education, healthcare, and housing. Governments are under pressure to provide these services to an increasing population, which may result in inadequate support for both migrants and citizens. Additionally, growing concerns exist about illegal migrants being included in voter lists, potentially influencing domestic political dynamics. These issues highlight the social and demographic challenges that come with illegal migration and cannot be overlooked.

(Ref: IDSA Occasional Paper No. 8 November 2009 A Study on Illegal Immigration into North-East India: The Case of Nagaland, M Amarjeet Singh, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis New Delhi).

1.2 Context

The India-Bangladesh border stretches approximately 4,096 kilometres. Since the partition of British India in 1947, there have been continuous waves of migration from Bangladesh to India. Illegal immigration from Bangladesh, encompassing both refugees and economic migrants, remains a persistent issue. This refers to the movement of people across the border into India without fulfilling the legal requirements for entry, residence, or stay.

Despite ongoing attention to the issue of illegal migration, reliable data on the exact number of Bangladeshi immigrants in India is difficult to obtain. Estimates vary, with reports suggesting that the number could range from several million to as many as 15 million Bangladeshi nationals living in India.

India and Bangladesh: Migration claims fact-checked (21 February 2020)

As the debate over India's efforts to limit citizenship rights intensifies, tensions have flared between India and its eastern neighbour, Bangladesh. Indian Minister of State for Home Affairs, G Kishan Reddy, recently stated that Bangladesh would be "half empty" if India allowed everyone who entered the country illegally to claim citizenship. In response, the Bangladeshi government questioned why anyone would choose to migrate to India when Bangladesh's economy is in better shape than its neighbour's.

While the future impact of changes to India's citizenship laws on migration remains uncertain, we can examine the current trends in illegal migration from Bangladesh to India and compare the economic conditions of both countries.

How many Bangladeshis are in India illegally?

There has been significant disagreement regarding the exact number of Bangladeshis who have entered India illegally. The available data on Indian citizenship from 2015 to 2019 does not clarify the situation. During this period, just over 15,000 Bangladeshis were granted Indian citizenship, but the majority resulted from a 2015 land swap agreement between India and Bangladesh. This agreement led to the naturalisation of 14,880 Bangladeshis who had found themselves living in Indian territory due to the border adjustment.

Bangladeshis granted Indian citizenship

2015	**14,880**
2016	39
2017	49
2018	19
2019	25

Source: Indian Parliament   BBC

Despite the lack of reliable data on the actual number of illegal immigrants, politicians in India continue to argue that migrants from Bangladesh are taking away jobs from locals.

In terms of economic performance, Bangladesh has recently outpaced India in GDP, which measures the total value of goods and services produced in an economy.

GDP in India and Bangladesh

% increase
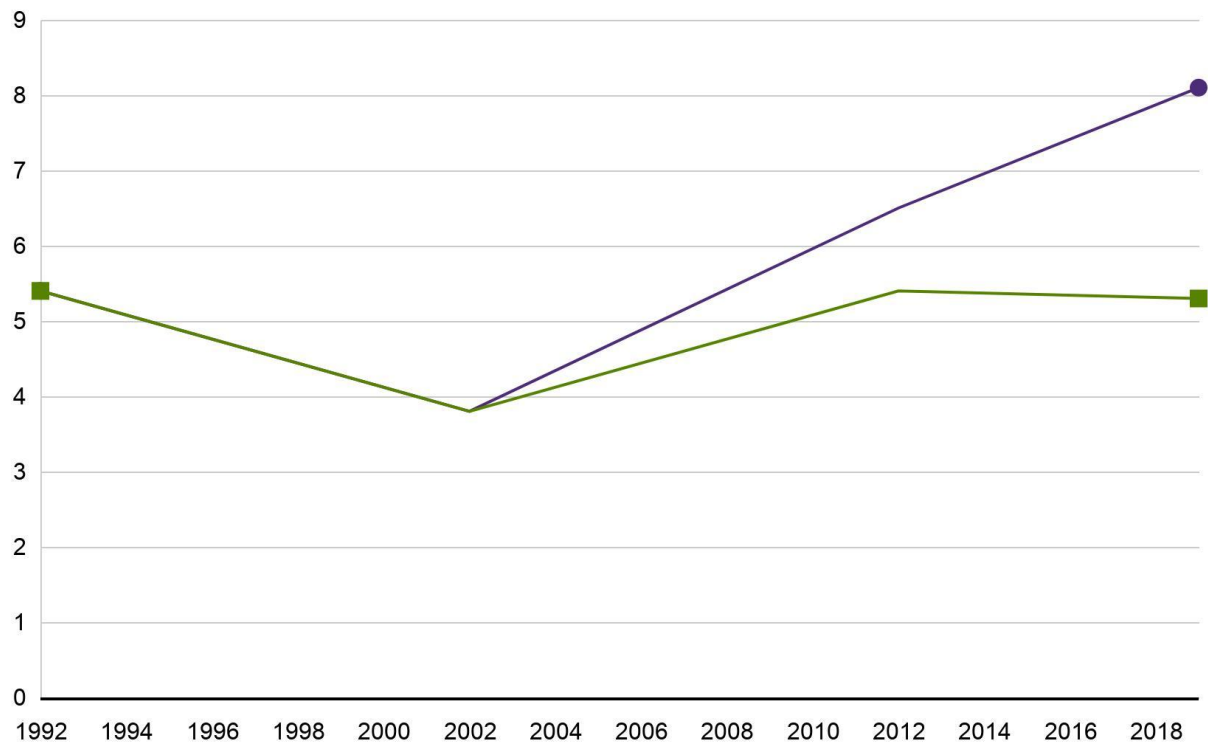
Source: World Bank, Asian Development Bank

The past decade has seen steady growth in Bangladesh's economy.

According to an Asian Development Bank report released in September last year, Bangladesh has surpassed India as the fastest-growing South Asian economy.

In 2019, Bangladesh's estimated growth rate was 8%, compared to India's 5.3%. This growth has allowed Bangladesh to shed its 'least developed country' status.

Inflation rates in South Asia
2018 figures
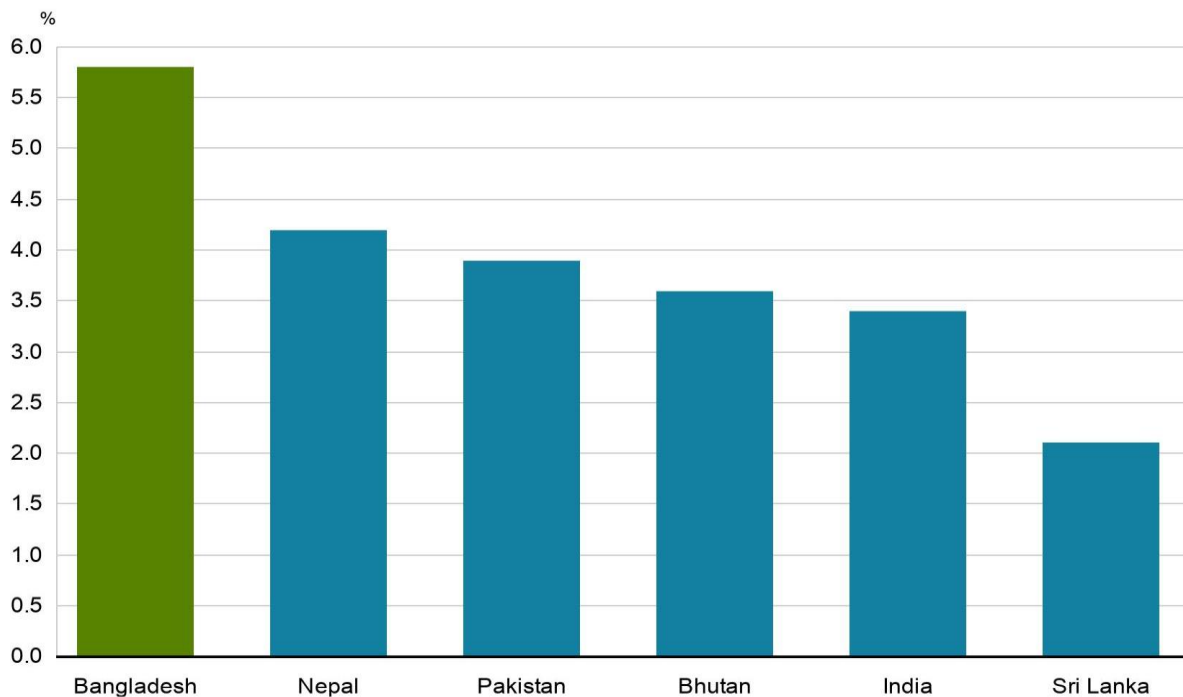
Source: Asian Development Bank   BBC

However, there are also some worrying signs for the Bangladeshi economy.

Inflation data for 2018 shows Bangladesh had the highest rate across South Asia that year at 5.8%, while India had a rate of 3.4%.

The estimated unemployment rate in Bangladesh in 2018 was higher than in India. However, a smaller proportion of workers in Bangladesh lived on less than $1.9 a day, the internationally used poverty benchmark.

Bangladesh has made a significant improvement in its social development indicators. It performs better than India in infant mortality rates and life expectancy at birth.

A newborn child in Bangladesh is more likely to see her fifth birthday than her Indian or Pakistani counterpart. She is also likely to live longer in Bangladesh (72.5 years) than in India (68.6 years) or Pakistan (66.5 years) as of 2017.

The Global Gender Gap Index 2020 released in December last year showed that India has slipped from 108th position to 112th, ranking well below Bangladesh which was 50th.

Moreover, Bangladesh fared better in terms of women's representation in parliament at 22%, compared with India at 13%.

1.3 Literature Review

1.3.1 Historical Context of Bangladeshi Migration to India

India's geographic proximity, relatively stable economy compared to its neighbours, and liberal democratic values have made it an attractive destination for migrants and refugees from the surrounding region. People escaping persecution and difficult circumstances in Tibet, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have sought refuge in India. Among these groups, illegal immigrants from Bangladesh make up the largest proportion, significantly affecting India's border states and posing broader security concerns.

The partition of British India in 1947 marked the start of multiple waves of migration from East Bengal, now Bangladesh, into India. During the 1971 Liberation War, approximately 10 million Bengalis fled East Pakistan to escape religious and political persecution, finding shelter in India. However, migration did not cease after the war ended. Ongoing economic challenges, political instability, and population pressures in Bangladesh continued to fuel illegal immigration into India in the subsequent decades.

1.3.2 Demographics and Magnitude of the Issue

Bangladesh shares a 4,096-kilometer border with the Indian states of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. Over time, various reports and statistics have underscored the extent of this issue:

- In 1997, Home Minister Inderjit Gupta informed Parliament that there were 10 million illegal Bangladeshi migrants residing in India.

- The Task Force on Border Management, in 2001, estimated the number to be 15 million.

- A 2004 statement by Sriprakash Jaiswal, then Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, indicated that about 12 million illegal Bangladeshi migrants were in India, with 5.7 million of them living in West Bengal alone.

- In a 2016 report for Carnegie, Sanjeev Tiwari suggested that the number of illegal Bangladeshi migrants in India had exceeded 15 million, primarily concentrated in border states but also spreading to other regions of the country.

1.3.3 Socio-Economic and Cultural Impact:

The demographic changes have also affected local livelihoods. Migrants often provide cheaper labour, undermining local workers' economic opportunities. Cultural friction arises as migrants sometimes fail to assimilate into local traditions, exacerbating tensions.

1.3.4 Security implications

Illegal migration poses significant threats to both India's internal and external security. Reports suggest that illegal migrants have played a role in facilitating anti-national and terrorist activities by offering local support and logistical assistance to insurgents. Two major aspects of the security threat are:

Conflict over Resources and Political Instability: Competition for resources and jobs creates resentment among local populations, a sentiment often exploited by political elites for electoral advantage. In Assam, political mobilisation around socio-economic and cultural grievances has contributed to ethnic tensions and violence.

Undermining the Rule of Law: Illegal migrants often obtain fraudulent identification documents, vote in elections, and engage in smuggling and other criminal activities. These actions weaken the integrity of India's democratic processes and legal systems.

1.3.5 Insurgency and Radicalization:

The ongoing issue of illegal migration has contributed to the emergence of insurgent movements in India's border states. Groups like the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) initially targeted illegal Bangladeshi migrants but later shifted their focus after their members sought refuge in Bangladesh.

1.3.6 Political Patronage

Political patronage has played a crucial role in enabling migration. Intelligence reports, as cited in an IDSA monograph, suggest that local political leaders in West Bengal have provided citizenship documents to migrants, thereby creating a captive vote bank.

This political support has allowed successive waves of migrants to settle more easily, exacerbating demographic changes and raising long-term security concerns. Migrants tend to settle in border regions, displacing local Hindu populations and creating potential national security vulnerabilities.

1.3.7 Vulnerability of the Chicken's Neck:

The Siliguri Corridor, also known as the Chicken's Neck, is a narrow strip of land near the city of Siliguri in West Bengal, India. At its narrowest point, the corridor spans just 20–22 kilometres (12–14 miles) in width and serves as a crucial geo-political and geo-economic link between India's seven northeastern states and the rest of the country. Flanked by Nepal and Bangladesh on either side and with Bhutan to the north, the corridor is strategically important. Historically, the Kingdom of Sikkim was located north of the corridor before it became part of India in 1975.

In recent decades, the influx of Bangladeshi migrants has caused significant demographic changes along the corridor, raising security concerns. This transformation presents a major challenge for Indian security forces, as the corridor's strategic location makes it a potential target for extremist activities. This stretch, encompassing the northern part of Uttar Dinajpur district and the southern part of Darjeeling district in Bengal, lies adjacent to Bangladesh to the east of Kishanganj and Purnea in Bihar to the west, making it especially vulnerable to security threats.

Illegal migration from Bangladesh has profound implications for India's socio-economic fabric, cultural identity, and national security. It has put significant strain on resources, altered demographics, fuelled insurgencies, and contributed to political instability in border regions. Tackling this issue requires a comprehensive approach, including enhanced border management, legal reforms, and diplomatic engagement with Bangladesh. Failure to address the problem could jeopardise India's internal stability and undermine its long-term strategic interests.

To effectively address this issue, the Indian government must take a strong and unified stance, recognising the national security stakes. It is crucial for political leaders across party lines to demonstrate maturity and prioritise national interests over narrow political considerations.

Reports suggest that certain political groups have facilitated the issuance of residency documents to illegal Bangladeshi migrants and even registered them as voters to gain electoral advantages. These actions not only undermine India's security framework but also impede efforts to resolve the issue. A united and realistic approach, focused on national security rather than political expediency, is essential to counter this growing threat effectively.

(Ref: Prof. Jagmeet Bawa, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Dharmshala. Dr Sandeep Singh, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. Cross-Border Challenges: The Impact of Illegal Bangladeshi Migration on India's Security and Society – Analysis. January 9, 2025)

With the recent change in power in Bangladesh, it is anticipated that more people will flee to India due to worsening security and economic conditions. The large influx of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh in recent decades has already led to significant economic, social, and security challenges for India. This has been especially evident in the border states, where such shifts have fuelled tensions between the local population and the growing number of outsiders.

Moving forward, India will face a considerable challenge in controlling the migration flows from Bangladesh and effectively deporting illegal migrants back to their home country. To address this issue, India must develop a multi-faceted and well-coordinated strategy that aligns with legal frameworks, ensuring a more efficient and sustainable approach to curbing illegal migration.

(Firstpost: Illegal immigration from Bangladesh: Why India should deal with the issue with a sense of urgency Aniel Pahladsingh, September 10, 2024, 13:21:32 IST)

1.4 Need for the Study

International migration to Delhi occurs for a variety of reasons, driven by both push and pull factors. Delhi is the capital of India as well as the only metropolitan city in North India with ample education and economic opportunities. There is a wide range of employment opportunities across various sectors, such as information technology, education, healthcare, business, and government, and many migrants come to Delhi in search of better career prospects, higher wages, and a better standard of living. Delhi is also a hub for entrepreneurs and business people due to its large market size, infrastructure, and connectivity, making it attractive for all types of migrants, internal or external, to set up small or big businesses.

Delhi has also been a destination for refugees and asylum seekers fleeing political instability, conflicts, and persecution in their home countries, with many migrants from Afghanistan, Myanmar, and some African nations seeking refuge in Delhi due to its established refugee communities and access to international aid organisations. Delhi is home to large displaced communities, particularly from neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan, who act as a support system for newcomers, encouraging international migration,

both legal and illegal. International migration occurs alongside internal migration, with migrants from foreign countries seeking the same urban benefits that draw domestic migrants.

Figure 1.41 Map of Delhi
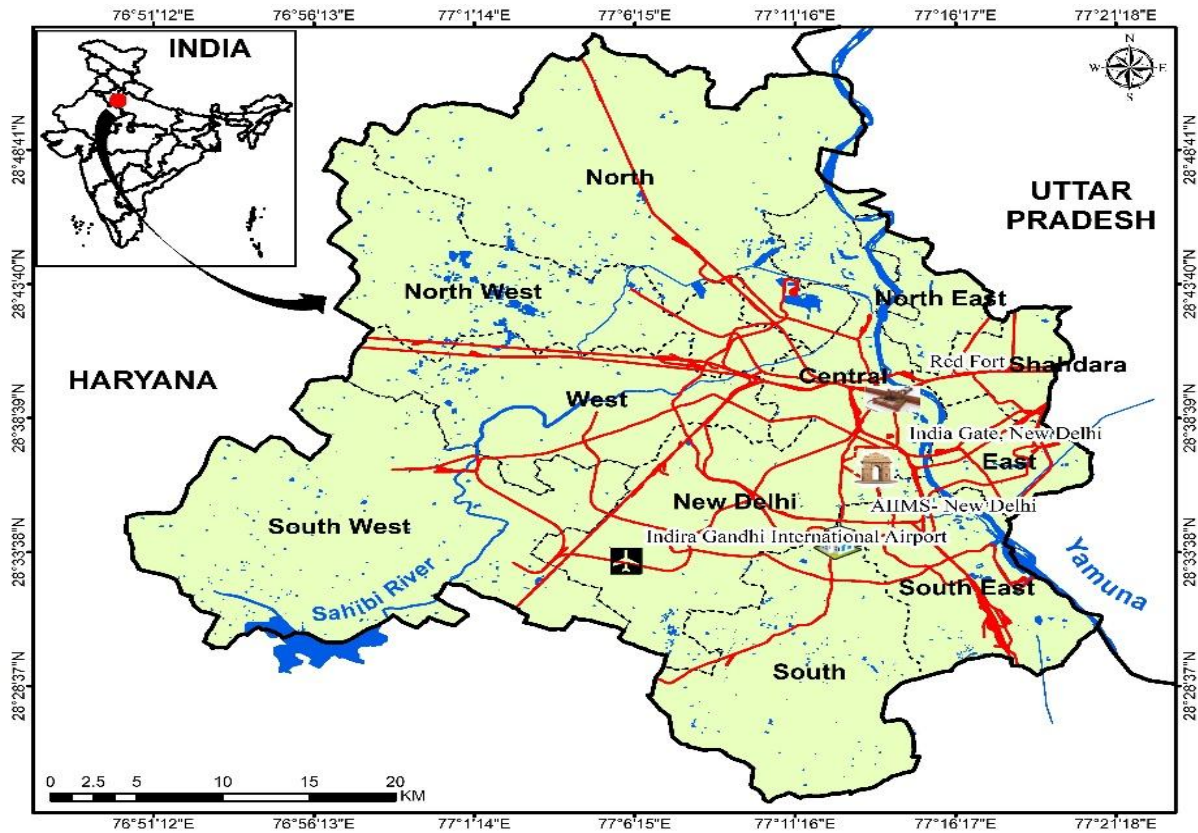
Source: GIS map created by Author

The population growth rate in Delhi has been high due to factors such as rural-to-urban migration, better economic opportunities, and improved healthcare facilities, among others. Overall, Delhi's position as an economic, educational, cultural, and political hub plays a central role in attracting international migrants from various parts of the world.

Delegation of Muslim clerics meets LG, demands action against 'illegal' Bangladeshis in Delhi.

PTI Last Updated: Dec 07, 2024, 04:45:00 PM IST

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/delegation-of-muslim-clerics-meets-lg-demands-action-against-illegal-bangladeshis-in-delhi/articleshow/116075857.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

A delegation of clerics and residents from the Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah area met with Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena on Saturday, urging for a special drive to identify and deport illegal Bangladeshi nationals residing in the city, according to a statement from the Raj Niwas.

The delegation called for strict action against Bangladeshi nationals residing illegally in Delhi, urging that they should be denied rented accommodation and employment in any establishment. The delegation also called for the Delhi Police and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to be directed to remove any encroachments on government land, footpaths, parks, and other public spaces by such individuals. They further requested that any official documents, such as Aadhaar cards or voter ID cards, issued to them be immediately cancelled, according to the letter.

Delhi Police launches drive against immigrants from Bangladesh living illegally in the city.

Published - December 12, 2024, 12:40 am IST - New Delhi

[The Hindu Bureau](#)

On Wednesday, the Delhi Police initiated a door-to-door campaign aimed at identifying Bangladeshi nationals residing illegally in the city. The operation took place in several areas of southeast Delhi, including Shaheen Bagh and Jamia Nagar. Residents were asked to provide their Aadhaar and voter ID cards, according to an officer. "Some residents were flagged as suspects, and they may be sent to detention centres once the legal process is complete," the officer said.

This police action followed a request from Raj Niwas to Chief Secretary Dharmendra and Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora, urging them to carry out a "special" two-month drive to identify and take "strict action" against illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

Delhi Police deport 11 more Bangladeshi immigrants staying in hotels (By [Arvind Ojha.](#)

New Delhi, UPDATED: Jan 1, 2025 21:48 IST; Edited By: [Sahil Sinha](#))

In another salient news in search of illegal Bangladeshi migrants was that the Delhi Police had arrested and deported a group of 11 Bangladeshi immigrants living illegally in various hotels in southwest Delhi, continuing a series of crackdowns on unlawful foreign residents as directed by the Lieutenant Governor. The age of these illegal migrants varies between 21-48 years. The drive by Delhi Police was followed by Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena's directive against foreign nationals staying illegally in the national capital.

In another incident, on December 27, 2024, authorities detained and deported seven illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, including five women, from south Delhi. The arrests followed raids in slums, labour camps and unauthorised colonies. During questioning, the detainees admitted

to illegally crossing the border and had been residing in Rajeev Nagar in Gurugram. The verification of their mobile phones and documents confirmed their Bangladeshi citizenship, a senior official told *news agency PTI*.

On December 29, **another group of eight Bangladeshi nationals was detained** and deported from the Rangpuri area of Delhi. The group, consisting of a person, his wife, and their six children, came from Kekerhat village in Bangladesh's Madaripur district. The man had confessed to entering India via unofficial routes and later bringing his family, with the group having destroyed their Bangladeshi identification documents. They had been living in Delhi under false identities, according to police.

In ongoing efforts, police teams from various stations are visiting slum areas and locations such as Kalindi Kunj, Shaheen Bagh, Hazrat Nizamuddin, and Jamia Nagar, conducting checks on voter IDs and Aadhaar cards to identify suspected Bangladeshi immigrants.

Delhi police crackdown on illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and issuing fake Aadhar card racket

Story by TOI City Desk • 1st January 2025 •

The Delhi Police have identified over 25 "illegal" immigrants from Bangladesh and have initiated the process of deporting them to their home country, according to an official. Additionally, the police successfully dismantled a racket involved in the issuance of fake Aadhaar cards.

Special Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Madhup Tiwari confirmed that the operation to identify "illegal" immigrants was carried out under the instructions of Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena. "Following the LG's directive, we launched a campaign to identify and deport illegal immigrants. In Zone 2, the Southern zone, more than 25 illegal immigrants have been identified so far, and the deportation process has already begun," Tiwari stated.

At the same time, we achieved a significant breakthrough in the South district, where we dismantled a racket. Not only did we uncover their route into India, but we also apprehended those involved, who were illegally creating Aadhaar cards for them," said Tiwari.

The Special Commissioner of Police explained that the operation to target "illegal" immigrants was carried out with the help of both human intelligence and technical surveillance. Many of

the suspects were found to possess Bangladesh ID cards and had illegally obtained voter ID cards in India, he added.

"We utilized both human intelligence and technical surveillance, and we are pleased with the success so far. We discovered that many of them had Bangladesh ID cards and had also obtained voter ID cards here. As a result, we arrested individuals involved in this illegal activity. We are ensuring that we are deporting the right individuals while making sure that no Indian citizens are mistakenly caught in the process," Tiwari said.

Discussing the racket, Tiwari further explained that the immigrants typically infiltrate India through the borders surrounding Meghalaya and then travel to Delhi, often using the Rajdhani Express.

"In the racket that we caught, these people used to come from Bangladesh, enter Meghalaya because it is a porous border and after that, they used to come mostly in Rajdhani Express and in second AC. Then they were given a fake Aadhar card, whose data when we checked, the entire Aadhar card was fake... So we faced a lot of challenges in this, but till now, we have ensured that legitimate citizens are not harassed... When we conduct such drives, they flee from the area.

This definitely helps in reducing crime in that area," Tiwari said. "We will continue this drive; there is no doubt about it. Now, elections are coming in Delhi. At that time, since most of our forces get busy in election-related activities, it is possible that the pressure on this drive may reduce a bit, but still, this drive will not stop, I assure you that," he added.

Earlier, Delhi Police detained 12 Bangladesh nationals who were living in different areas of south Delhi without any identification, an official said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) South East Ravi Kumar Singh said "So far, we caught 12 Bangladeshis from different areas like Nizamuddin, Kalindi Kunj, Shaheen Bagh, and Sarita Vihar. We detained them, and they have been sent to the detention camp. All the Bangladeshis that we met were without identities and some people were living for a long time. We are investigating further. We have a Bangladeshi cell, a specialised unit, which works on this. We verified close to 1,200 people and will do so in the future as well as information will come," said Singh.

Meanwhile, in another case, Delhi Police arrested six people while taking action against complaints over fake identification cards, an official said. The Electoral registration officer submitted two complaints against eight people in connection with this matter. DCP (South East)

Singh said that upon receiving complaints, they filed two FIRs against those involved. The cyber cafe owner, along with five others, including two middlemen, was arrested.

In recent weeks, there have been frequent reports of Indian authorities deporting illegal Bangladeshi migrants, with news of such actions appearing almost daily. Notably, between December 31, 2024, and January 2, 2025, 30 individuals were deported. Additionally, India has established several detention centres to house individuals identified as illegal immigrants, including those from Bangladesh.

Delhi houses three detention centres, two of which are operated by the Department of Social Welfare. These include a women's centre at Nirmal Chhaya in West Delhi and a men's facility at the Lampur Complex in North Delhi. These centres house trafficked individuals, irregular economic migrants, and refugees.

(Ref for last 2 paragraphs-Prof. Jagmeet Bawa, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Dharmshala. Dr. Sandeep Singh, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. Cross-Border Challenges: The Impact of Illegal Bangladeshi Migration on India's Security and Society – Analysis. January 9, 2025)

1.5 Research Questions

What are the social consequences and community-level impacts of illegal migration in Delhi, particularly in terms of community cohesion, identity formation, and cultural integration?

1. What is the impact of illegal immigrants on the demographic landscape of Delhi?

2. Where are the concentration of illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya immigrants in Delhi?

3. What causes ideology-induced immigration of Bangladeshi and Rohingya to Delhi?

4. What are the channels and pathways through which illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar come to Delhi?

5. What are the economic and social challenges to local residents of Delhi due to illegal immigrants?

6. What are the political consequences of illegal Bangladesh and Rohingya immigrants?

1.6 Research Objectives

To examine the socio-economic, demographic and political consequences and the process of illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya immigrants to Delhi.

1. To examine the demographic trends and pattern of migration to Delhi.

2. To examine the economic activities of illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya immigrants in Delhi.

3. To examine the spatial concentration of illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya immigrants in Delhi and its effect on urban amenities.

4. To explore the channels and pathways through which illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar come to Delhi.

5. To understand the support system for illegal immigrants in the host country.

6. To understand the illegal activities associated with illegal immigrants.

CHAPTER 2

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we discuss the foundational elements of the study, including the collection, organisation, and analysis of both primary and secondary data, along with the methodological framework employed to achieve our research objectives. A systematic approach is crucial for ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. This chapter offers a detailed research design and methods that form the foundation of the study.

The present study utilises both primary and secondary data, and the chapter explains the justification for such selection. It then details the sampling methods, study population, and data collection tools. Additionally, this chapter describes the analytical techniques and statistical methods used to interpret the data and draw meaningful conclusions. Ethical considerations and the challenges faced during the research process are also addressed to ensure transparency and context for the study.

By outlining these critical elements, this chapter seeks to establish the empirical base for the research, thereby providing a solid basis for the subsequent analysis and interpretation of findings. As Creswell (2014) emphasised, "A well-defined methodology not only enhances the credibility of the research but also ensures that the study's outcomes are aligned with its objectives." This chapter adheres to such principles, ensuring a structured and comprehensive approach to the research process.

2.2 Research design

The study employs a mixed-methods design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to address the research objectives thoroughly. This design facilitates the collection of a variety of data types, allowing for a comprehensive, multi-dimensional understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The following sections outline the key components of the research design:

2.3 Data Sources

The research is grounded in robust data collection methods, encompassing both **primary** and **secondary** data sources. This mixed-methods approach integrates qualitative and quantitative

data to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. However, this interim report is based on a sub-sample and does not cover all primary data.

2.3.1 Primary Data

Primary data forms the cornerstone of this research, providing first-hand insights into the lived experiences of immigrants and the contextual factors influencing their immigration patterns. The primary data collection process was meticulously crafted to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The following methods were employed to gather primary quantitative and qualitative data:

A. Quantitative Survey Method

Quantitative data were collected through structured survey interviews, which were designed to capture a comprehensive array of demographic, socio-economic, and immigration-related information. A target sample of 400 individuals was successfully surveyed from various clusters within Delhi for the report. The survey instrument included both closed and open-ended questions, specifically formulated to address the following key areas:

- **Demographics**: Age, gender, educational background, family structure, and occupation.

- **Housing Conditions**: Type of accommodation, tenure status (e.g., rented or owned), living space conditions, and access to basic amenities.

- **Access to Public Services**: Utilization of healthcare, education, and other social services available to migrants, particularly in the context of legal or illegal status.

- **Immigration Background**: Reasons for immigration, pathways to come to Delhi, length of stay, immigration routes, and socio-economic conditions in the place of origin.

- **Financial Remittances**: Patterns of remittance sending, the sources of income, and economic engagement in the destination region.

The survey was administered by Bengali-speaking field investigators, enabling them to effectively communicate with migrants and residents from the targeted Bengali-speaking communities or their dialects.

B. Qualitative Survey Method

- **Observations**

In qualitative research, observation is an essential data collection method that involves systematically watching and documenting behaviours, actions, events, or phenomena as they occur in their natural settings. This technique offers valuable, in-depth insights into the context, environment, and behaviours, providing information that other methods like interviews or surveys might need to capture fully.

In the present study, we used observation techniques to understand living areas, food preferences, dressing patterns and willingness to participate in the survey among the suspected Bangladeshi immigrants. They usually reside in segregated areas. Their housing is predominantly hut-like structures. Their food habits closely resemble those in West Bengal, with a strong preference for rice over roti. Their dressing patterns align with those from other regions, but their language is distinctly different from the Bengali dialect spoken in West Bengal. Many immigrants appeared hesitant to engage in the survey, especially when discussing documentation or their migration destinations. Additionally, they seem socially segregated, maintaining minimal interaction with neighbours or forming few friendships outside their group or community.

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**

To gain insights and understand the broader context of illegal immigration, ten Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) from domain experts were conducted who had specialised knowledge about the migrant population and immigration trends. The key informants included:

- ❖ **Government Officials**: Representatives from local administration and law enforcement agencies who could provide perspectives on immigration policies, border control, and enforcement practices.
- ❖ **Community Leaders**: Local influencers and leaders who have direct engagement with migrant populations, providing insights into community dynamics and challenges.
- ❖ **Brokers and Contractors**: Individuals involved in facilitating immigration, housing, and employment for migrants, offering unique views on the migrant networks and their operations.

The KIIs were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in responses while focusing on specific themes such as immigration motivations, socio-economic challenges, and perceptions of legal status and border enforcement.

- **In-depth Interviews (IDIs)**

Qualitative data was gathered through ten in-depth interviews with migrants to gain deeper, personal insights into the lived experiences of migrants, focusing on their individual immigration stories, challenges, and coping strategies. The interviews explored areas such as:

- ❖ **Personal Narratives**: Detailed accounts of the migrants' journeys, reasons for leaving their home country, and experiences in the destination region.

- ❖ **Social Networks**: Insights into the role of family, friends, and community connections in the immigration process, including the support systems that facilitate integration into new environments.

- ❖ **Legal and Social Marginalization**: Experiences with being undocumented, encounters with law enforcement, and the social stigma faced by illegal migrants in their host communities.

- ❖ **Economic and Social Opportunities**: Access to work, education, healthcare, and other services, and the ways in which undocumented migrants navigate barriers related to their legal status.

These interviews were conducted with confidentiality and respect, ensuring that participants felt safe and comfortable sharing their experiences.

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were held to capture collective perspectives on immigration issues within specific communities. The FGDs facilitated group discussions on themes such as immigration experiences, community integration, and health and social challenges faced by migrants. The FGDs were conducted with the following groups:

- ❖ **Commercial sex workers**: This FGD aimed to explore the livelihood strategies of female illegal/undocumented migrants involved in sex work, shedding light on the socio-economic realities of this marginalised group and how they navigate both their immigration status and occupation.

❖ **ASHA and Anganwadi Workers**: This FGD focused on the health and social issues faced by migrant populations, especially in relation to healthcare access, child welfare, and community support systems.

The FGDs were facilitated by trained moderators, who encouraged open discussions while ensuring that participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences. The group dynamics provided rich, qualitative data, revealing shared community concerns, coping strategies, and common immigration challenges.

2.3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data from the Census of India (1872 to 2011), since its inception, is used to gain an in-depth understanding of the fluctuating religion-wise data over the years in the growth of the population. This included reports, research publications, government documents, and datasets relevant to the study domain. The integration of secondary data enabled triangulation, ensuring greater reliability and robustness in the research outcomes.

2.4 Identifying the Target Population, Strategies and Indicators:

Identifying illegal immigrants involves a combination of systematic approaches and localised knowledge. A literature review provides valuable insights into the locations and patterns of illegal Bangladeshi migrants, enabling researchers and authorities to identify areas of concern and effectively reach migrant groups. Local bodies, including agents, brokers, contractors and community leaders, serve as crucial sources of information due to their direct interactions and deep familiarity with local communities. Key informants from different places further enhance understanding by offering specific details on migrant presence and behaviours. Snowball sampling is effective for tracing networks, starting with an individual Bangladeshi migrant and expanding to larger groups.

Figure 2.1 Identification of Respondents
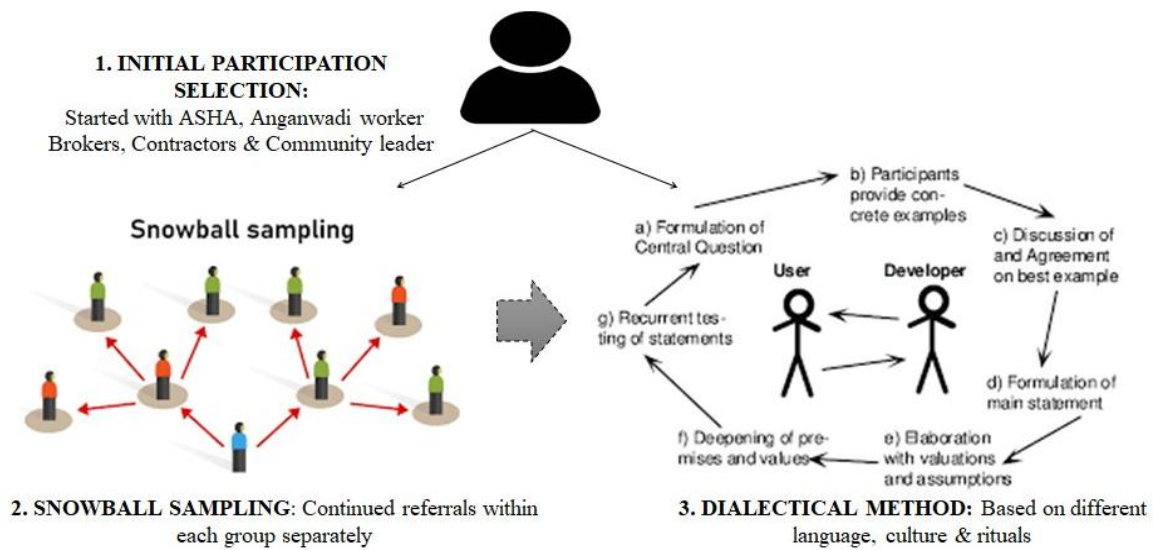
2.5 Dialect Method

Linguistic differences are one of the most noticeable markers. Our field staff from West Bengal often report that they cannot fully understand the language spoken by suspected migrants, as it differs significantly from the language of West Bengal. Specific examples include the use of "Teha" instead of "Taka" (money), "Halar po" instead of "Salar beta" (insulting terms), "Bodda" instead of "Boro Dada" (elder brother), "Aiyachi" instead of "Khayechi" (eaten), and "Saar" instead of "Dekhechi" (seen). Additionally, proverbs such as the Chattogram saying "Chatgaiya pola matit porle loha" (a Chattogram baby turns into iron upon touching the earth) reveal distinct cultural roots. Hesitation or inconsistencies during documentation checks, including with visas, passports, and border-crossing processes, further raise suspicion. By integrating these methods with insights from systematic literature, targeted identification and outreach to these migrant communities become more efficient and effective.

2.6 Sample Size

The study seeks to establish a vigorous sample size and a target of 400 participants in the quantitative surveys. Qualitative insights were collected through 10 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders, including government officials, Agents, community leaders, brokers, contractors, and locals. 2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in the Rohini region. The other one was conducted in Zakir Nagar with ASHA and Anganwadi workers. Ten in-depth interviews of immigrants were done to get deep insights.

2.7 Study Area

The study area encompasses the urban expanse of Delhi, a complex and diverse metropolis. In order to ensure comprehensive coverage of the city's multifaceted immigrant populations, Delhi is first divided into five distinct geographical zones: South Delhi, Central Delhi, Western Delhi, Eastern Delhi, and Northern Delhi. These zones represent the spatial heterogeneity of the city, each with its unique demographic, economic, and social characteristics. From each of these zones, we selected key areas that have a significant presence of illegal immigrants, with particular attention given to the large Bangladeshi migrant populations in specific neighbourhoods.

Figure 2.2 Study Areas in Delhi
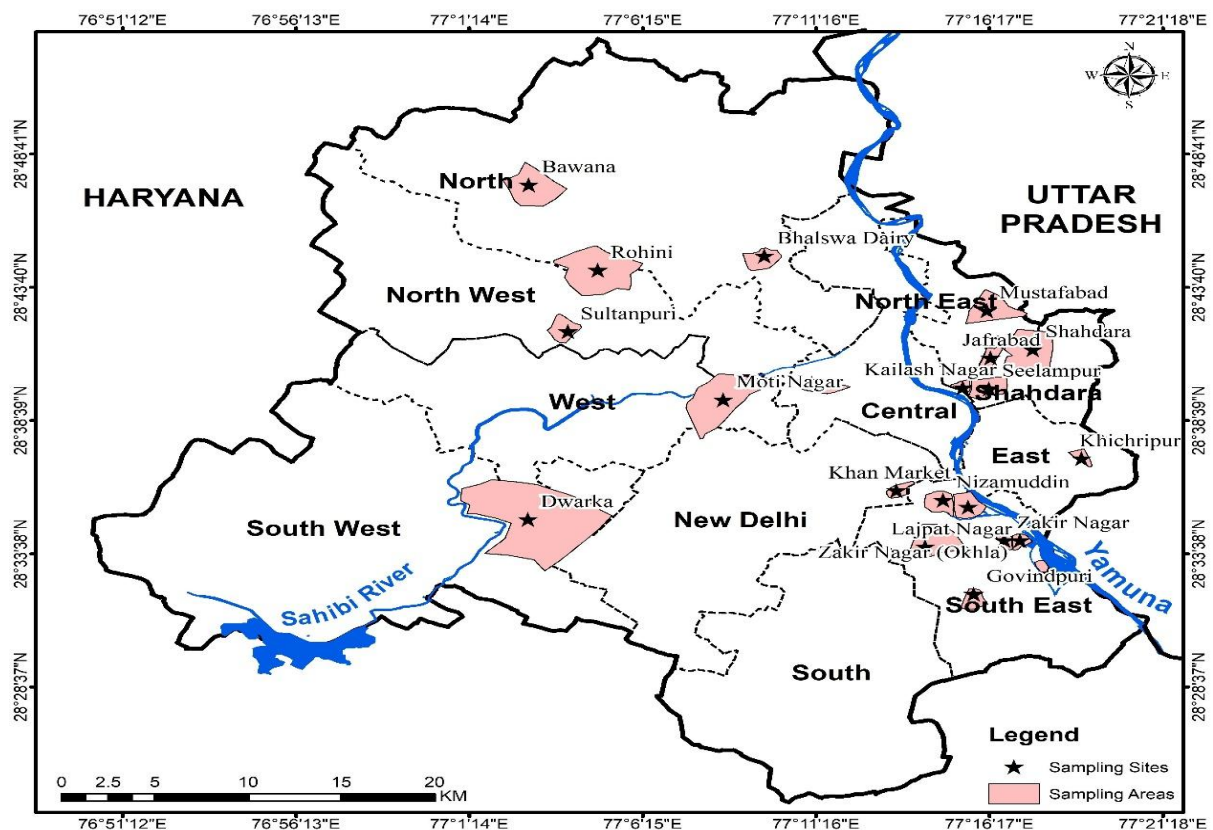
Source: GIS map created by Author

To capture a representative sample of the immigrant community, a total of 20 hotspots were strategically identified, chosen for their high concentrations of immigrants and the diversity of their migrant populations. These hotspots include **Seelampur, Jamia Nagar, Zakir Nagar, Lajpat Nagar, Kailash Nagar, Khichripur, Sarai Kale Khan, Sultanpuri, Mustafabad, Nizamuddin, Sarai Rohilla, Jafrabad, Shahdara, Bhalswa Dairy, Bawana, Dwarka,**

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Rohini, Moti Nagar, and Govindpuri. These locations are known for their dense immigrant populations, often characterised by a significant proportion of individuals who have migrated illegally from neighbouring countries, particularly Bangladesh.

From each of these 20 selected hotspots, approximately 20 individual samples will be collected from immigrants residing within the area. This approach allows for a detailed and localised understanding of the migrant experience, capturing both the macro-level patterns of migration as well as the micro-level experiences of individual immigrants. The study specifically aims to explore various aspects of immigration, including the socio-economic conditions of the migrant communities, their integration (or lack thereof) into the urban fabric of Delhi, the challenges they face in terms of access to resources, housing, employment, and education, as well as the broader social and political dynamics surrounding illegal migration in the Indian context.

The emphasis on areas with substantial Bangladeshi migrant populations is crucial for understanding the specific challenges faced by these communities, such as issues of documentation, legal status, and the discrimination they may encounter in both the formal and informal sectors. By gathering data from such a varied and representative set of locations, the study will provide a nuanced understanding of the immigrant experience in Delhi, offering insights into the broader phenomena of illegal migration and urban integration. Through this detailed analysis, we aim to illuminate key trends and challenges that shape the lives of illegal immigrants, contributing to policy discussions and strategies for better supporting these vulnerable populations within the city.

2.8 Quantitative Data Collection

Surveys were conducted by the Bengali-speaking field investigators with both migrants and residents, collecting information on demographics, immigration backgrounds, housing conditions, access to public services, and financial remittances.

2.9 Qualitative Data Collection

A range of stakeholders participated in in-depth interviews and FGDs. ASHA and Anganwadi workers, with direct exposure to the migrant population, shared their observations on the health and social issues impacting illegal migrants. The FGD conducted in the Rohini region with commercial sex workers also provided qualitative data on how female immigrants earn their livelihood. Their understanding of the community allows them to identify migrants' legal status

by referencing specific neighbourhoods or individuals linked to migrant groups. Language is also a valuable indicator, as certain dialects can hint at a migrant's origin, while very few might openly acknowledge being from Bangladesh. Additionally, surveys included questions on visa status to help distinguish illegal migrants directly.

2.10 Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics that provide a summary of the population under study, percentage calculations for bar graphs, and a projection model that projects the population for the next forty years were calculated as part of quantitative data analysis.

2.11 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data was examined using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and content analysis of government policies to assess effectiveness in addressing immigration-related issues. The grounded theory approach and core theory, hypothesis and theory development were also done.

2.12 Spatial Analysis

Using GIS mapping, the illustration of immigration patterns and pathways, as well as areas with higher concentration illegal immigration levels in Delhi shall highlight the strains put on the urban infrastructure and support targeted policy interventions.

2.13 Triangulation

The outcomes from both quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated to strengthen the validity of the conclusions from this study, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic impacts of immigration.

2.14 Summary

This research provides a comprehensive examination of undocumented immigration patterns in Delhi, focusing on Bengali-speaking migrants through a mixed-methods approach. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, the study has captured the diverse experiences and challenges faced by migrants in terms of socio-economic conditions, legal status, and integration into the urban environment.

The use of surveys, observation techniques, in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions has provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of the migrant population. Key themes such as housing conditions, access to public services, financial remittances, social networks, and legal marginalisation have been explored in depth.

By triangulating data from multiple sources and methods, this research ensures a robust understanding of the socio-economic impacts of immigration. The findings emphasise the need for targeted policies that address the challenges faced by illegal migrants while also considering the broader implications of population growth and urban stress in Delhi.

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of ethical considerations and methodological rigour in conducting research involving marginalised communities. The use of local languages and dialects, as well as the involvement of community leaders, ensured the accuracy and depth of the data collected.

CHAPTER 3

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND PATTERNS IN DELHI

3.1 Introduction

India is the seventh largest country in the world, with a land area of 3,287,263 square kilometres. It is the second most populated country, next only to China, with a current population of approximately 1.36 billion. The National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD) is the political and administrative centre of India. The NCT of Delhi Act 1991 governs the territorial jurisdiction of the Government of Delhi. The NCTD covers a geographical area of 1,484 square kilometres and has a population of about 19.8 million. According to the 2011 census, Delhi is the second most populous city in India. The city of Delhi has witnessed rapid population growth. From 2001 to 2011, Delhi recorded an increase of about 4.1 million people, the highest increase among all megacities in India. Delhi is an attractive destination for migrants in search of better employment opportunities and living conditions.

Bangladesh shares a 4,096-kilometre international border with India, which is the fifth-longest border in the world. The border states of India bordering Bangladesh are Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and West Bengal. The geographical proximity creates socio-economic links between the populations living across the border. The erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) witnessed widespread political turmoil, social unrest, cultural oppression, and persecution of the Bengali speakers during the 1950s and 1960s under the regime of the then-Pakistani President Ayub Khan. The situation escalated further upon the imposition of martial law in 1970 by President Yahya Khan. The 1971 Liberation War that ensued between East Pakistan and West Pakistan, leading to the formation of Bangladesh, caused widespread genocide. According to a US Congressional report, between 1.5 to 3 million people were killed, and approximately 10 million people fled to India to escape the atrocities. Most of the refugees returned to Bangladesh post-liberation in December 1971 (Sengupta & De, 2018). The refugees who fled persecution in erstwhile East Pakistan prior to the birth of Bangladesh in 1971 and came to India were forced to do so. Some came because of natural calamities like floods. Still, the refugees from East Bengal came in large numbers due to persecution at the hands of the Muslim League and later during the riots post-partition. The need to escape grinding poverty back home was the main 'push' factor behind such a movement.

Delhi, being the capital city of India, draws a significant number of migrants from every corner of the nation. According to the 2011 Census data, there was a net in-migration rate of approximately 34.4%, marking an increase from 29.8% from 2001 to 2011. Over recent decades, Delhi has also become a refuge for a significant portion of illegal migrants, specifically hailing from Bangladesh. The history of migration from Bangladesh into Indian territory dates back to the very inception of Bangladesh as an independent nation. The issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh into India presents a considerable challenge, especially in the eastern states of West Bengal and Assam. Within the larger context of Delhi, illegal immigration has notably transformed the demographic landscape of the city. Like many other urban centres, the flow of people moving towards Delhi has significantly altered its demographic patterns. Given that Delhi is classified as a Union Territory, the local government's autonomy and powers regarding law enforcement are limited and are largely governed by the central authorities. In a broader sense, more than 90% of the national capital territory (NCT) of Delhi falls within the administrative boundaries set by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), which oversees municipal services and governance. Recently, political discussions surrounding the National Register of Citizens (NRC) have intensified, generating substantial debate that could influence the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections set for the year 2019. In its unique position as a national capital, Delhi maintains a different approach concerning the Register of Citizenship (ROC) in comparison to other states such as Assam, West Bengal, and Kerala. It is noteworthy that in Assam, Chapter VI of the North East Region in the Policy Notes explicitly addresses the issue of illegal migration, reflecting the seriousness of the situation.

In India, illegal immigration from Bangladesh primarily arises from the challenges posed by a porous border, but this situation is further complicated by the socio-economic and political factors that are prevalent within Bangladesh itself. During periods of political instability in Bangladesh, a significant number of individuals have sought refuge within Indian territory. While some have been formally granted asylum, a larger proportion remains undocumented and continues to face challenges as illegal immigrants. The events surrounding the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War resulted in an exodus of over 10 million refugees fleeing to India, of which a notable percentage returned following the conflict, yet many chose to remain in the country. Particularly in regions like Assam, a large number of these individuals settled, thereby influencing local demographics. Over time, a substantial portion of these migrants has crossed from Assam into West Bengal, eventually establishing their homes in urban centres like Kolkata. The late 1970s and the early 1980s marked a period of intensified illegal immigration

into Assam, primarily triggered by the influx of Bengali-speaking Muslims from the then East Pakistan, which is now recognised as Bangladesh. (Sengupta & De, 2018) (Chanderdeep Singh, 2018)

3.2 Findings

Table 3.1 Demographic Changes in Delhi, 1951 – 2011

Year	Total population growth (in '000)	Population Growth Rate	Natural Increase	Net – Migration
1951-1961	1158	3.87	558	600
1961-1971	1819	4.38	947	872
1971-1981	2273	3.81	1203	1070
1981-1991	1682	2.04	1400	282
1991-2001	2053	2.07	1254	799
2001-2011	464	0.39	1050	-586

Source: *https://censusindia.gov.in/nada/index.php/catalog*

Figure 3.1 Components of Population Growth in Delhi

Source: *https://censusindia.gov.in/nada/index.php/catalog*
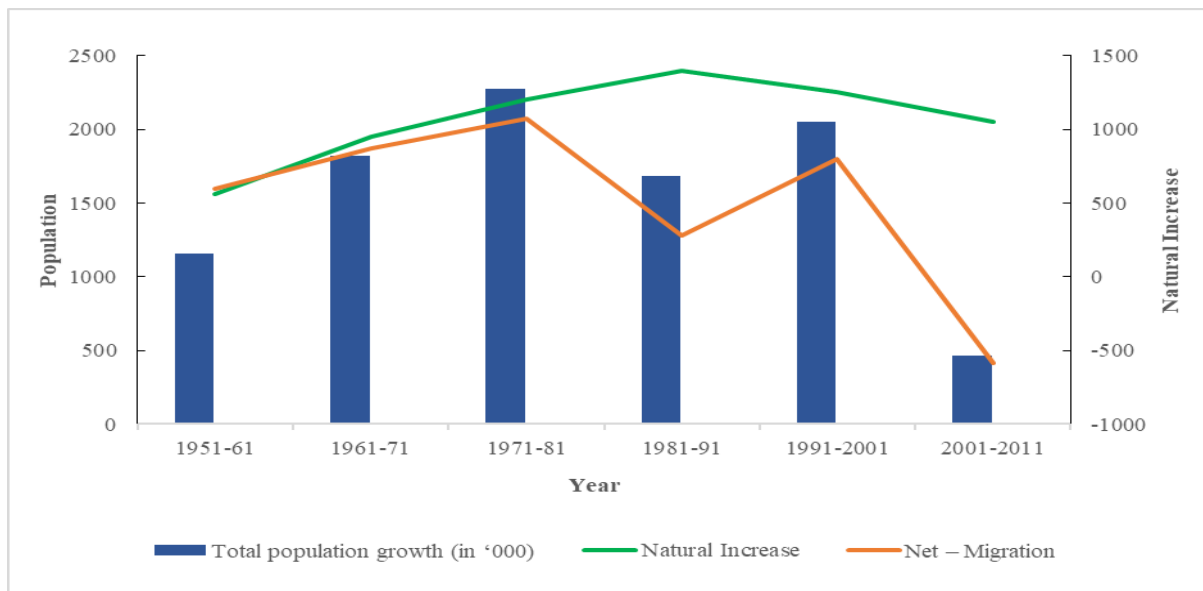
The provided table and chart depict the demographic trends of Delhi over six decades (1951-2011), analysing the interplay between total population growth, natural increase, and net migration. The total population growth, represented by blue bars, shows a steady rise from 1951-61 to 1971-81, reflecting the combined effects of high birth rates and significant

migration inflows. During the period 1951-61, the total population growth was relatively moderate at 1,158,000, with a population growth rate of 3.87%. This was primarily driven by natural increase (558,000) and substantial net migration (600,000), as Delhi attracted large numbers of migrants seeking better economic opportunities post-independence.

The 1961-71 decade marked the highest population growth rate of 4.38%, with a significant increase in natural growth (947,000) and continued strong migration (872,000), indicating that Delhi was becoming a prime destination for job seekers due to rapid industrialisation and urban development. This trend peaked in 1971-81, when total population growth reached its highest at 2,273,000, with natural increase surpassing 1.2 million and migration at 1.07 million. This period corresponds with Delhi's rapid expansion in infrastructure, transportation, and employment opportunities, attracting people from rural areas.

However, a noticeable shift occurred in the 1981-91 decade, where total population growth dropped to 1,682,000, accompanied by a decline in migration (282,000). Despite a relatively high natural increase (1.4 million), the decline in net migration suggests emerging challenges such as rising living costs, saturation in employment opportunities, and increasing urban congestion. This trend of slowing population growth continued into the 1991-2001 period, where total growth stabilised at 2,053,000, with net migration recovering slightly to 799,000. The 1990s saw the economic liberalisation of India, which created new employment opportunities and attracted migrants; however, rising costs and infrastructural constraints began to deter large-scale migration.

The most significant shift in demographic patterns occurred in the 2001-2011 period, with total population growth dropping drastically to 464,000, marking a substantial decline in the growth rate to just 0.39%. Notably, for the first time in six decades, net migration turned negative (-586,000), indicating that more people left Delhi than entered it. Despite a natural increase of 1,050,000, the negative migration suggests that factors such as overcrowding, pollution, high living costs, and improved opportunities in suburban areas and the National Capital Region (NCR) led to an outflow of residents to satellite cities like Noida, Gurgaon, and Ghaziabad.

The chart visually represents these demographic trends, showing how total population growth peaked in the 1971-81 period before steadily declining. The green line, representing natural increase, shows a peak in 1981-91, followed by a gradual decline, reflecting the impact of slowing birth rates and improved family planning policies. Meanwhile, the orange line, representing net migration, exhibits fluctuations with a significant decline after 1981,

ultimately becoming negative in the last decade, indicating a shift in migration patterns towards peri-urban areas.

Figure 3.2 Represents the Population Growth Rate Recorded in Delhi Between 1951 and 2011
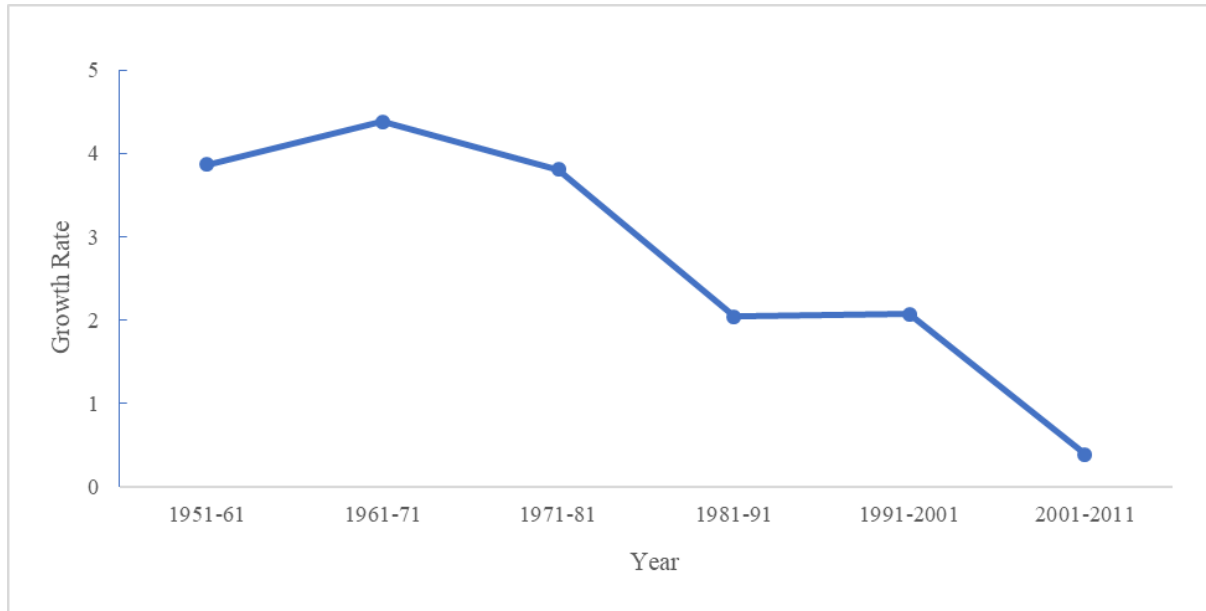
Overall, the data underscores the evolving demographic landscape of Delhi, characterised by early periods of rapid population growth driven by both natural increase and migration, followed by a slowdown caused by urban saturation, rising costs, and improved living conditions in peripheral areas. These trends highlight the need for urban planners and policymakers to focus on sustainable urban development, improved infrastructure, and better governance to accommodate the growing population and manage the shifting migration trends effectively.

Table 3.2 Gender-Wise Urban Population Distribution in Delhi, 1951-2011

Year	Male	Female	Sex ratio
1961	1489378	1169234	785
1971	2257515	1808183	801
1981	3440081	2780325	808
1991	5155512	4265132	827
2001	7607234	6243273	821
2011	8987326	7800615	868

The gender-wise population data of Delhi from 1961 to 2011 highlights significant demographic trends, showing a steady increase in both males and females over the decades. In 1961, the male population was approximately 1.49 million, while the female population stood at 1.17 million, with a sex ratio of 785 females per 1,000 males. Over the next five decades, the population of both genders grew substantially, reaching 8.99 million males and 7.80 million females by 2011. The sex ratio has shown a gradual improvement, increasing from 785 in 1961 to 868 in 2011, reflecting progress in gender balance due to factors such as improved healthcare, education, and economic opportunities for women. While earlier decades saw male-dominated migration driven by employment in industrial and construction sectors, the narrowing gender gap in recent years suggests a shift, with more women migrating to the city for work and education. The slight decline in the sex ratio from 827 in 1991 to 821 in 2001 may indicate gender-selective migration patterns or socio-cultural factors influencing population dynamics. However, the subsequent increase to 868 in 2011 points to a growing acceptance of women's roles in urban employment and social life. Despite these positive trends, the persistent gender gap underscores the need for targeted policies to ensure equal opportunities, safety, and welfare for women in the city. The data highlights Delhi's evolving social structure and the necessity for continued efforts to promote gender equality and inclusive urban development.

Table 3.3 Duration of Residence in Place of Enumeration of Migrant Population

Duration in year	1991			2001			2011		
	Male	Female	N	Male	Female	N	Male	Female	N
Less than 1 year	57.44	42.56	141373	54.06	45.94	154169	52.85	47.15	284164
1-4 years	54.75	45.25	803591	56.05	43.95	1106203	49.74	50.26	1120655
5-9 years	53.46	46.54	736609	56.25	43.75	1093564	50.95	49.05	1196093
10-19 years	53.61	46.39	985697	55.68	44.32	1655023	51.95	48.05	1865906
20+ years	52.71	47.29	997352	55	45	1610229	53.31	46.69	2313074

Source: *https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/data/census-tables*

The "Duration of Residence in Place of Enumeration" data provides valuable insights into the settlement patterns and mobility trends within Delhi, reflecting both long-term stability and recent migratory movements. A high percentage of residents with longer durations of stay, such as those living in the city for over 20 years, indicates a well-established population that has integrated into the socio-economic fabric of the town. On the other hand, a significant proportion of residents with shorter durations, such as less than one year or 1-4 years, suggests

continuous inflows of new migrants seeking employment and better living conditions. This trend highlights Delhi's enduring appeal as an economic hub, attracting people from various regions within India and beyond. However, it also raises concerns about the sustainability of rapid urban growth, as the increasing influx of migrants can put significant pressure on the city's infrastructure, public services, and housing resources. While migration is crucial to the city's development, addressing challenges related to urban planning, social integration, and law enforcement is essential for ensuring balanced growth. In some cases, concerns about undocumented migration arise, particularly in informal settlements where verifying residency and legal status can be challenging. Policymakers must focus on improving data collection, expanding legal documentation initiatives, and enhancing access to social services to ensure that all residents, regardless of their background, contribute positively to the city's growth and development.

Table 3.4 Migration Trends of Delhi since 1961-2011

Year	Male	Female	Total migrant population	Total population	Migrants Population Share to population share
1961	909784	728303	1638087	2658612	61.61
1971	1130062	917178	2047240	4065698	50.35
1981	1634532	1354589	2989121	6220406	48.05
1991	2002615	1720847	3723462	9420644	39.52
2001	3338550	2675908	6014458	13850507	43.42
2011	3751348	3473166	7224514	16787941	43.03

Source: *https://censusindia.gov.in/*census.*website/data/census-tables*

The table illustrates migration trends in Delhi from 1961 to 2011, highlighting the number of male and female migrants, the total migrant population, the total population of the city, and the share of migrants in the overall population. Over the six decades, both male and female migrant populations have increased significantly, indicating the city's growing appeal as an economic hub. In 1961, the total migrant population was approximately 1.64 million, accounting for **61.61%** of Delhi's total population. This high share reflects the substantial role migration played in the city's growth during the early post-independence period, driven by job opportunities and infrastructural development. However, by 1971, the migrant population's share dropped to **50.35%,** even though the absolute number of migrants increased to about 2.05 million. This trend of a declining migration share continued over the next few decades, reaching

39.52% in 1991, suggesting that natural population growth started playing a more dominant role in the city's demographic expansion. The absolute number of migrants, however, continued to rise, reaching 6.01 million in 2001 and 7.22 million in 2011, as Delhi's economy expanded and opportunities in various sectors such as services, construction, and manufacturing attracted people from across the country. The slight fluctuations in the migrant population share, increasing from 39.52% in 1991 to 43.42% in 2001, reflect improved economic conditions and better living standards in the city. The migrant population share remained relatively stable at 43.03% in 2011, indicating that while migration remains a critical component of Delhi's growth, other factors such as birth rates and internal population dynamics have also contributed significantly. The data underscores the evolving migration patterns in Delhi, with a growing female migrant population, which rose from 0.72 million in 1961 to 3.47 million in 2011, reflecting improved opportunities for women in employment, education, and urban living. Overall, the table illustrates how Delhi has transformed into a major migrant destination, although the proportion of migrants in the total population has stabilised in recent decades, indicating an evolving urban demographic landscape.

Table 3.5 Religion-Wise Distribution of the Population of Delhi, 1872-2011

Religion	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Others	Total
1921	66.64954	29.02189	2.706714	1.621858	100
1931	62.82946	32.5191	2.669438	1.982006	100
1941	61.79332	33.22345	1.143213	3.840016	100
1951	84.15918	5.704875	1.074914	9.061027	100
1961	84.05126	5.847149	1.100913	9.000674	100
1971	83.81919	6.469221	1.075338	8.636254	100
1981	83.60277	7.745507	0.990434	7.661284	100
1991	83.66906	9.443526	0.882657	6.004759	100
2001	82.00457	11.72174	0.940897	5.332794	100
2011	81.67827	12.85854	0.870226	4.592963	100

Source: *https://censusindia.gov.in/nada/index.php/catalog*

The table illustrates the trends in migration to Delhi from 1961 to 2011, highlighting the growth in both male and female migrant populations and their share in the overall population of the city. Over the six decades, the total migrant population increased steadily from 1.64 million in 1961 to 7.22 million in 2011, reflecting Delhi's continued attraction as an economic and employment hub. However, despite this growth in absolute numbers, the migrant population's

share in the total population declined from 61.61% in 1961 to 39.52% in 1991, indicating a relative slowdown in migration compared to the natural increase of Delhi's resident population. The early decades, particularly the 1960s and 1970s, saw high migration rates as people moved to the city for better economic opportunities and urban amenities. In 1981, the total migrant population increased to 2.99 million, but its share in the total population declined to 48.05%, reflecting a shift where natural growth began to outpace in-migration. The 1990s marked a period of rapid urbanisation and economic reforms, with the migrant population reaching 3.72 million, though its share continued to decrease. However, from 2001 onwards, the migrant share showed a slight resurgence, rising to 43.42% and then stabilising at 43.03% in 2011. This suggests that while Delhi remains a prime destination for migrants, urban saturation, rising living costs, and improved infrastructure in surrounding areas have influenced migration patterns. The data also highlights an increasing trend in female migration, rising from 0.72 million in 1961 to 3.47 million in 2011, indicating greater participation of women in the workforce and better access to education and social opportunities. The relatively stable migrant share in recent years reflects the evolving urban demographic dynamics, where internal city-born populations are growing alongside incoming migrants. Overall, the table underscores Delhi's transformation as a magnet for people seeking better livelihoods while showcasing a shift in the relative importance of migration in shaping the city's demographic profile.

Figure 3.3 Religion-Wise Distribution Based on Years 1951 & 2011

Source: *https://censusindia.gov.in/nada/index.php/catalog*
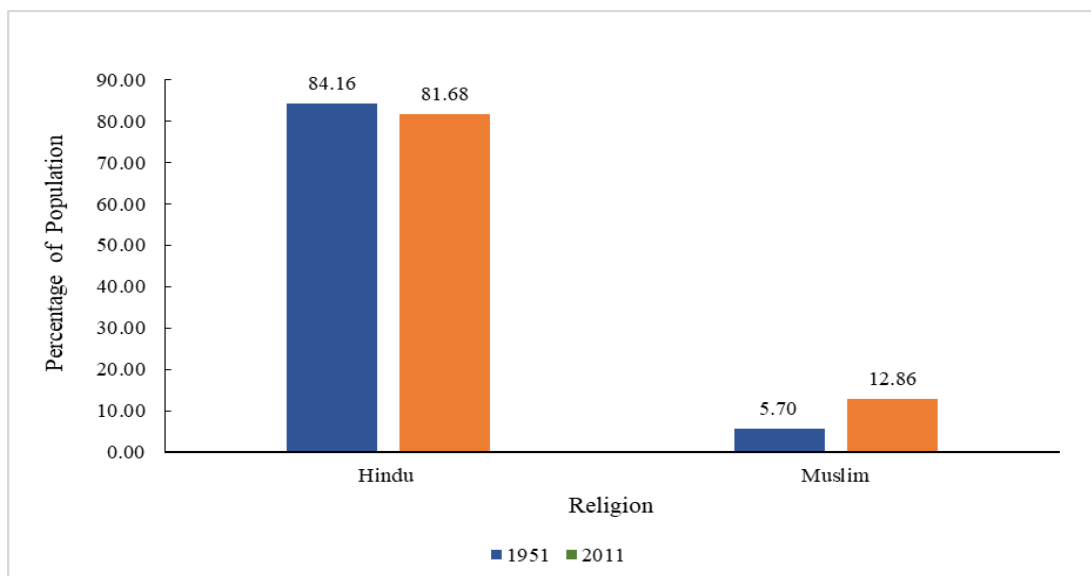
The bar chart compares the religious composition of Delhi's population in 1951 and 2011, focusing on the Hindu and Muslim communities. In 1951, Hindus comprised 84.16% of the population, which declined slightly to 81.68% by 2011, indicating a gradual decrease in their proportional share. Conversely, the Muslim population increased significantly from 5.70% in 1951 to 12.86% in 2011, reflecting a substantial rise in their demographic presence over the six decades. This shift suggests changes in migration patterns, birth rates, and socio-economic factors influencing religious demographics in Delhi. Despite the decline, Hindus remained the majority, while the Muslim community experienced notable growth, likely due to higher fertility rates and migration trends.

Table 3.6 Percentage of Migrants in Greater Delhi District Based on Place of Last Residence Data

Total Population (in '000)	2011	2001	1991
Share of Migrants to Delhi	7224	6014	3723
Share of Intra-state migrants to Delhi	9.56	6.84	3.99
Share of Interstate migrants to Delhi	87.82	88.52	87.79
Share of International Migrants to Delhi	2.62	4.64	8.23

Source: *https://censusindia.gov.in/nada/index.php/catalog*

The data highlights migration trends to Delhi over three census decades (1991, 2001, and 2011), revealing significant shifts in population dynamics. The total population of migrants to Delhi increased substantially from 3.72 million in 1991 to 6.01 million in 2001 and further to 7.22 million in 2011, indicating the city's growing attractiveness as a migration hub. Interstate migrants consistently formed the largest share, accounting for over 87% of migrants across all three decades, reflecting Delhi's role as a central economic and employment destination within India. Intra-state migration, though relatively small, has shown a steady increase from 3.99% in 1991 to 9.56% in 2011, suggesting an increasing tendency for rural-to-urban migration within the state. Conversely, the share of international migrants has declined sharply from 8.23% in 1991 to 2.62% in 2011, indicating a reduced role of international migration in Delhi's demographic changes. These patterns underscore the dominance of domestic migration flows in shaping Delhi's population.

3.3 Discussion

The demographic trends and patterns in Delhi reflect a complex interplay of factors, including migration, economic opportunities, and urbanisation. Over the decades, Delhi has emerged as a magnet for migrants from across India and beyond, leading to significant changes in its population structure. The rapid population growth observed between 1951 and 2011 has been driven by both natural increase and migration, with the latter playing a crucial role in shaping the city's demographic landscape. However, this influx has brought with it several challenges related to infrastructure, public services, and socio-political dynamics.

3.3.1 Migration Trends and Their Impacts

Migration has been a defining feature of Delhi's demographic evolution. The data reveals a consistent increase in the total migrant population, with the highest influx recorded during the 1971-81 period, when the city's economic expansion attracted people seeking better employment opportunities. However, in recent decades, the net migration rate has shown signs of decline, with the 2001-2011 period witnessing negative net migration. This shift suggests a growing saturation of the city, with many migrants opting for nearby regions such as Noida, Gurgaon, and Ghaziabad, which offer better affordability and infrastructure. The shift in migration patterns highlights the evolving economic and social dynamics of Delhi, where rising living costs, congestion, and environmental concerns have influenced people's movements.

Despite the positive contributions of migration to the economy, the pressure on public services and infrastructure cannot be overlooked. The increasing population has strained resources such as housing, healthcare, education, and transportation. Informal settlements and unauthorised colonies have proliferated, leading to concerns about sanitation, public health, and environmental degradation. The challenge for policymakers lies in balancing the need for inclusive urban development while addressing the strain on resources.

3.3.2 Gender Dynamics in Population Growth

The gender composition of Delhi's population has seen gradual improvements in the sex ratio over the decades. The rising female-to-male ratio from 785 in 1961 to 868 in 2011 indicates positive strides in gender equality, influenced by improved healthcare, education, and employment opportunities for women. However, the persistent gap between male and female populations suggests that male-dominated migration continues to impact the city's

demographic makeup. More efforts are needed to create inclusive policies that support women's participation in the workforce and provide gender-sensitive urban planning solutions.

3.3.3 Duration of Residence and Socioeconomic Challenges

The duration of residence data provides crucial insights into population stability and mobility trends within the city. A significant portion of the population has resided in Delhi for over 20 years, reflecting deep-rooted social and economic integration. However, the substantial number of residents with shorter durations, particularly those staying for less than a year or 1-4 years, points to ongoing inflows of new migrants. This transient population poses challenges for local governance, as ensuring access to essential services and social integration for short-term residents remains a persistent issue.

Additionally, concerns about illegal immigration, particularly from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar, have added complexity to Delhi's demographic scenario. The presence of undocumented immigrants has raised questions about security, resource allocation, and social cohesion. While migration remains a critical driver of growth, addressing issues related to documentation, legal recognition, and equitable access to services is essential for sustainable development.

3.3.4 Religious Demographics and Cultural Diversity

The religious composition of Delhi has also undergone significant changes, with the Hindu population witnessing a gradual decline from 84.16% in 1951 to 81.68% in 2011. In contrast, the Muslim population has grown from 5.70% to 12.86% during the same period. These shifts indicate changing socio-cultural dynamics influenced by migration patterns, birth rates, and socio-economic factors. The rise in the Muslim population, in particular, underscores the need for policies that promote social harmony, inclusive urban development, and equitable resource distribution to prevent potential communal tensions.

3.3.5 Policy Implications and Recommendations

The demographic trends in Delhi call for a comprehensive urban development strategy that focuses on sustainable growth, infrastructure expansion, and social inclusivity. Policymakers must prioritise:

- **Urban Planning:** Developing satellite towns and improving connectivity to reduce congestion in central areas.

- **Infrastructure Development:** Expanding healthcare, education, and housing facilities to accommodate the growing population.
- **Employment Opportunities:** Encouraging investments in peripheral regions to create job opportunities outside the city core.
- **Social Integration Programs:** Addressing the needs of migrants, especially women and marginalised communities, through targeted welfare initiatives.
- **Regulatory Frameworks:** Strengthening border controls and documentation processes to manage illegal immigration while ensuring humanitarian considerations.

3.4 Summary

Delhi's demographic patterns present both opportunities and challenges for policymakers and urban planners. The city's growth has been driven by economic opportunities, but managing its consequences requires a forward-looking approach that balances development with social and environmental sustainability. The evolving population structure, gender dynamics, and religious composition necessitate inclusive policies that address the needs of all residents while ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities. By adopting a holistic and data-driven approach, Delhi can navigate its demographic complexities and emerge as a model of sustainable urban development.

CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION TO DELHI

4.1 Introduction

Illegal migration to Delhi is a multifaceted issue influenced by factors such as historical context, economic disparity, and environmental challenges. Unlike regular migrants who follow formal procedures, including obtaining passports, visas, and necessary permits, illegal migrants typically enter the country without the required documentation or overstay their visas. Many of these migrants are driven by urgent economic needs, political instability, or environmental crises, pushing them to cross borders through unauthorised routes. This phenomenon is particularly common among migrants from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar, who arrive in cities like Delhi seeking safety and better prospects ("Das, P. (2016). Illegal migration from Bangladesh: Deportation, border fences, and work permits (IDSA Monograph Series No. 56). Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses").

Illegal migration from countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar to India, including Delhi, typically involves individuals seeking better economic opportunities, escaping political or ethnic persecution, or fleeing natural disasters. Here's an outline of how this process generally unfolds:

4.2 Entry into India

Land Border Crossings: Bangladesh shares a long border with India, particularly West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura. Many migrants cross into India through these porous borders, often without proper documentation or authorisation. Similarly, Myanmar borders India through states like Mizoram and Nagaland, and some people from Myanmar enter India illegally through these remote areas (Tripathi, S. (2016, June 29). Illegal immigration from Bangladesh to India: Toward a comprehensive solution. Carnegie India).

Lack of Border Control: The border areas are difficult to police entirely, which allows for easier unauthorised entry.

4.3 Movement Within India

After entering India, migrants often head to cities like Delhi in search of better employment opportunities. Urban areas are attractive because they offer jobs in sectors like construction, domestic work, street vending, or other low-paying labour.

These migrants are engaged in criminal networks operating in the area. The lack of proper travel documentation makes tracking them challenging.

4.4 Establishing Residency

Many of these migrants find it challenging to obtain legal work or residence status in India, especially without proper documentation. They may live in crowded areas with limited access to healthcare, education, and other essential services.

4.5 Challenges of Detection

4.5.1 Lack of Documentation

Migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar typically do not have official visas or any documentation proving their right to be in India. This makes it difficult for authorities to track their presence unless they are caught in the act of breaking the law.

4.5.2 Difficulties in Identification

There's a lack of effective identification methods, especially for those who have been living in India for an extended period.

4.6 Legal Framework

- Under Indian law, both Bangladeshis and Myanmar nationals who enter without proper visas are considered illegal migrants.
- India's **Foreigners Act of 1946** and **Passport (Entry into India) Act of 1920** govern the rules around migration and entry. However, enforcement can be inconsistent, and often, political, social, and diplomatic factors complicate deportation efforts.
- In some cases, individuals are caught and detained by Indian authorities and face possible deportation back to their home countries, but this process is often slow and complicated due to diplomatic challenges.

4.7 Refugee Status and Political Factors

- Some Bangladeshis, particularly from minority communities such as Hindus and Myanmar nationals, including Rohingya Muslims, claim refugee status in India.

- In certain cases, such as the Rohingya from Myanmar, they seek asylum or refuge in India due to violence in their home countries, but legal protections are minimal.

4.8 Social Impact

- The arrival of illegal migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar in urban centres like Delhi can sometimes fuel political and social tensions. Issues of citizenship, national security, and access to resources (jobs, housing, etc.) often become contentious.

- They may incite hostility among the local population, potentially leading to a rise in criminal activities.

Illegal migration from Bangladesh and Myanmar to Delhi typically involves crossing borders without the necessary documentation, entering the informal economy, and creating a range of social, legal, and security challenges. Driven by economic struggles or persecution, these migrants find themselves trapped in a cycle of crime.

4.9 Overview of Illegal Immigration to Delhi: Patterns and Networks

The analysis of illegal immigration to Delhi reveals a significant and diverse influx of migrants, predominantly from neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh and Myanmar. These migrants are concentrated in various neighbourhoods across the city, such as Seelampur, Jamia Nagar (Shaheen Bagh), Zakir Nagar (Okhla), Lajpat Nagar, Kailash Nagar, Khichripur, Sarai Kale Khan, Sultanpuri, Mustafabad, Nizamuddin, Sarai Rohilla, Jafrabad, Khan Market, Shahdara, Bhalswa Dairy, Bawana, Dwarka, Rohini, Moti Nagar, and Govindpuri. Many of these migrants arrive with family members or close friends, although some initially migrate alone and later facilitate the migration of others. Established networks of relatives, friends, and acquaintances within Delhi play a crucial role in promoting migration by providing essential support such as securing employment and housing and navigating bureaucratic processes. These networks, often backed by brokers and agents, help migrants settle by offering temporary shelter, job opportunities, and guidance through informal channels. Many migrants maintain strong, persistent ties to their communities of origin, forming cohesive social networks that provide mutual aid and support in times of need.

Migration to Delhi has developed over time, with the average duration of residence before migration from areas like West Bengal, Assam, and Bangladesh being around 15-20 years. This reflects long-standing socio-economic patterns of cross-border movement, where migrants have established enduring relationships with relatives or communities in Delhi. Social networks, brokers, and political actors have played a significant role in shaping this migration process, with political patronage sometimes binding migrants to specific political groups. This often perpetuates their vulnerable status within the city, as migrants rely heavily on these connections to reduce the risks and uncertainties associated with migration. The role of political affiliations and support systems not only influences the migration process but also impacts the legal and socio-political positioning of these migrants in the city.

4.9.1 Migration Patterns

The migration patterns of illegal migrants to Delhi, particularly those from Bangladesh and neighbouring Indian states, display both traditional and emerging trends that reflect broader socio-political changes, as well as shifting economic opportunities. One of the most prevalent patterns is the **family-first strategy**, where one family member, typically male, migrates first to secure employment and housing, effectively laying the groundwork for other family members to join later. This approach minimises risks, spreads the financial and logistical burden of migration, and allows for smoother integration into urban life. By relying on established family connections in Delhi, migrants can more effectively navigate the challenges of relocation, as family members who have already settled in the city provide crucial resources such as housing, job opportunities, and emotional support.

In addition to this traditional migration strategy, more recent trends indicate a growing number of **women migrants** from rural areas, especially from Bangladesh and certain regions of India, migrating to Delhi in search of better economic prospects. These women often come from impoverished backgrounds and are drawn to the city in the hope of improved living standards and greater financial independence. However, many become involved in illegal activities. Some are drawn into marginalised sectors of the labour market, including domestic work, low-wage manufacturing, and even black market industries such as prostitution or drug trafficking. Many of these women go to great lengths to conceal their actual job profiles from their families back home, as they wish to maintain the illusion of success and economic improvement.

While the migration pathways of male and female migrants may differ in some respects, both groups significantly contribute to **informal and black economy** of Delhi. Many of these migrants take up low-wage labor, in sectors such as construction, retail, domestic work, and

small-scale manufacturing, often taking jobs from local workers and contributing to economic instability in local areas. Additionally, some become involved in criminal activities, which negatively impacts the local population by contributing to increased crime rates, insecurity, and social unrest. While they send remittances back to their families, this financial support often perpetuates the cycle of migration, leading to further strain on local resources and creating dependency on external income rather than fostering long-term economic development within their communities.

Table 4.9.1 below provides an in-depth look at the distribution of illegal migrants to Delhi according to their region or country of origin, as well as the stopover destinations they pass through before arriving in the capital. This table sheds light on the diverse migration patterns and the flow of migrants to Delhi.

Table 4.1 Country and State of Residence Before Arrival in Delhi: Distribution of Population

Residence Before Arriving in Delhi	Population (%)
West Bengal	43.2
Assam	16.3
Tripura	8.7
Jharkhand	11.0
Direct from Bangladesh and Myanmar	8.0
Bihar	6.7
Uttar Pradesh	3.3
Nepal	2.8

Source: Compiled by the Author based on primary data.

The table illustrates the stopover destinations of illegal migrants before arriving in Delhi. The largest group of migrants comes from West Bengal (43.2%), many of whom have crossed the porous border between India and Bangladesh before eventually reaching Delhi. Jharkhand (11%) and Assam (16.3%) follow as significant sources of migration to the city. Smaller percentages come from Tripura (8.7%), Bihar (6.7%), and Uttar Pradesh (3.3%), while Nepal contributes to around 2.8% of the migration flow. An important observation is that around 8% of migrants arrive directly in Delhi from Bangladesh and Myanmar, bypassing previous states or settlements.

Tripathi (2016) further explores the socio-economic impact of illegal immigration, particularly the involvement of female migrants in illegal activities. Many of these women often come alone or with family members, work in domestic service, manufacturing, and other sectors that offer low wages and minimal job security. In an effort to earn more money, they sometimes turn to illegal activities. The remittances sent back serve as an essential financial lifeline, not only for the migrants but also for their families back home. However, this perpetuates the cycle of illegal migration, ultimately leading to further strain on local resources.

Through these interconnected migration patterns, it becomes clear that both male and female migrants are actively shaping the evolving landscape of migration to Delhi. The role of family networks, brokers, and remittance flows all contribute to these evolving migration trends, presenting a nuanced understanding of migration to Delhi, which continues to grow in response to regional and global shifts. The migration process is not static but rather constantly influenced by changing political and socio-economic factors that require targeted policy responses to address the growing complexities of urban migration.

4.9.2 Duration of Stay of Illegal Migrants

The data concerning the duration of stay of illegal Bangladeshi migrants in Delhi provides critical insights into the patterns of socio-economic integration, adaptation, and settlement over time. The length of stay often determines the nature of economic participation, housing arrangements, and access to services, all of which influence the degree to which these migrants become integrated into the urban fabric of the city. By analysing the duration of stay, we can understand the processes through which these migrants find ways to sustain themselves in the capital of India.

Table 4.2 Duration of Stay for Illegal Bangladeshi Immigrants in India

Duration of Stay (years)	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
< 1 year	83	20.7%
1 > - < 5 years	168	42.0%
5 > - < 10 years	119	29.7%
10 > years	30	7.2%
Total	**400**	**100%**

Source: *Compiled by the Author based on primary data.*

The data from the survey reveals a notable distribution of illegal Bangladeshi migrants in Delhi based on their length of stay. Among the respondents, 42.0% have resided in the city for 1 to 5 years, indicating that the largest group of migrants is in an intermediate phase of their settlement process. These individuals are generally navigating the initial stages of urban integration, heavily relying on informal labour markets and local community networks, while also becoming entangled in criminal activities. They often find employment in sectors such as construction, domestic work, small-scale retail, and unskilled labour, where workers are frequently employed without formal contracts. Additionally, their heavy dependence on public resources further exacerbates the strain on these services, leading to increased challenges for the local population.

Migrants who have been in Delhi for 5 to 10 years, comprising 29.7% of the respondents, represent a group that has moved beyond the initial phase of settlement. These individuals are likely to have secured more stable and long-term employment within the informal economy. Over the years, they have established informal housing in underdeveloped areas or slums, where housing is unregulated, and services are often provided through informal or unofficial means. They have also managed to integrate into the local socio-economic fabric in a manner that allows them to sustain their livelihoods and gradually secure access to essential services. This process of integration, though often incomplete and informal, represents a significant aspect of urban adaptation. As a result, local government and the population face several challenges, including increased pressure on resources, competition for jobs, overcrowding, and housing shortages, social tensions, and decreased public health standards.

The group that has lived in Delhi for 10 years or more—comprising 7.2% of the respondents—plays a critical role in facilitating further migration and providing support systems for new arrivals. These long-term migrants are not only involved in the labour market but also act as intermediaries who bridge the gap between newly arrived migrants and available resources. Their experience and established presence in the city make them pivotal in facilitating the survival of more recent arrivals, as they provide assistance through informal networks that help newcomers. This group's role in sustaining the cycle of migration aligns with the theory of cumulative causation in migration studies (Massey et al., 1993), where the presence of established migrants lowers barriers to migration for others, reinforcing the process of migration.

The remaining 20.7% of respondents, who have been in Delhi for less than a year, represent the most transient group. These migrants heavily depend on brokers, community leaders, and illegal networks to facilitate their rapid economic integration. Despite their lack of legal status, they are able to enter informal labour markets quickly, often relying on their immediate social networks for economic opportunities. The rapidity with which they integrate into the informal labour market underscores the resilience and adaptability of undocumented migrants, even in the absence of legal rights or access to formal support systems. In contrast, this often makes it more challenging for the local population to access formal support systems, intensifying their economic and social challenges.

The duration of stay is a key factor in determining the depth of socio-economic integration among Bangladeshi migrants in Delhi. While short-term migrants rely heavily on informal labour markets and community networks for their initial survival, medium- to long-term migrants tend to solidify their positions within the informal economy, contributing to the perpetuation of the migration cycle. This ultimately increases the pressure on local resources, housing, and public services, straining the local infrastructure. This leads to greater competition for low-wage jobs, overcrowding, and social tensions between migrants and the local population. Additionally, the local government faces challenges in managing informal settlements and regulating services, exacerbating the difficulties for both migrants and residents.

4.9.3 Problems Faced by Immigrants During Border Crossing

The challenges faced by Bangladeshi migrants during their border crossing are multifaceted and extend beyond mere legal barriers. The complexities of illegal immigration are reflected in the difficulties encountered during the journey, which range from logistical issues and lack of documentation to physical violence and the emotional toll of separation from family members. These challenges not only impact the well-being of migrants but also affect their ability to successfully navigate the border crossing process and begin their lives in Delhi.

Table 4.3 Common Problems Faced by Illegal Bangladeshi Immigrants During Border Crossing

Problems Faced During Border Crossing (N = 188 Participants)	Percentage (%)
Lack of Documents	21.96%
Bribery/Corruption	13.59%
Language Barriers	11.98%
Detention by Border Authorities	10.22%
Physical Violence or Harassment	11.60%
Separation from Family Members	5.91%
Lack of Food/Water/Shelter	4.84%
Long Waiting Times	6.38%
Health Issues	4.76%
Transportation Problems	3.23%
Other (specify)	5.53%
Total	**100%**

Source: *Compiled by the Author based on primary data.*

The survey data reveals that the most significant barrier for illegal migrants crossing the border is the lack of documentation, with 21.96% of respondents citing it as their primary challenge. This issue exacerbates the vulnerability of migrants, as they are unable to present the necessary identification or travel documents, which complicates their interactions with authorities and significantly increases their risk of detention or deportation.

In addition to documentation issues, bribery and corruption (13.59%) are prevalent in the migration process. Many migrants report that they are often compelled to pay bribes to border officials or intermediaries to facilitate their journey. This illegal transaction exposes migrants to exploitation and underscores the weakness in governance systems that fail to address corruption along migration routes.

Another significant issue faced by migrants is the language barrier (11.98%), which complicates communication with border authorities and local communities. Without a common language, migrants find it difficult to explain their situation, increasing their risk of detention, exploitation, or mistreatment.

A notable proportion of respondents (11.60%) also reported experiencing physical violence or harassment during the border crossing. This statistic highlights the extreme risks that migrants face, as they are often subjected to abuse by authorities or smugglers who exploit their vulnerable status.

Detention by border authorities (10.22%) is another prevalent challenge, illustrating the legal consequences of crossing borders without proper documentation. In addition to these physical and legal challenges, migrants also face emotional difficulties, such as separation from family members (5.91%). The emotional toll of being separated from loved ones during such a perilous journey is often compounded by the psychological stress of being undocumented and constantly at risk of deportation.

Basic survival needs, such as lack of food, water, or shelter (4.84%), are also a significant concern, particularly for migrants who undertake long and arduous journeys. Furthermore, the long waiting times (6.38%) encountered during border crossings exacerbate the physical and mental strain on migrants, particularly those in transit for extended periods.

Other logistical issues, such as health problems (4.76%) and transportation difficulties (3.23%), also complicate the migration process, adding to the already precarious situation that migrants face. Additionally, 5.53% of respondents mentioned other unspecified challenges, which could include unique or context-specific difficulties encountered during the border crossing.

One of the most striking findings is that 38% of the respondents did not participate in the survey or chose not to disclose information. This non-participation rate may reflect fear or distrust of authorities, as migrants may be hesitant to reveal sensitive information about their journey due to concerns about legal repercussions or the risk of deportation.

4.9.4 Assistance and Social Support Received by Illegal Migrants

The migration of Bangladeshi migrants to Delhi, much like other major urban centres, relies heavily on informal and community-based support systems. As observed through field investigations, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs), these migrants navigate a complex socio-economic landscape that requires not only financial and material support but also strong social networks to help them settle and survive in a new city.

At the onset of their migration journey, many Bangladeshi migrants depend on politically connected networks or intermediaries to help them cross the border. These intermediaries play a significant role in facilitating the movement of migrants by arranging transportation,

providing forged documents, and guiding them through less-travelled routes to avoid detection by border authorities.

Upon arriving in Delhi, illegal migrants typically turn to informal community networks that consist of relatives, co-nationals, or earlier migrant settlers. These networks offer critical short-term support in the form of temporary housing, food, and access to basic sanitation, often within overcrowded slums or informal settlements.

Among the most crucial forms of assistance is employment, where informal networks become indispensable in helping migrants secure jobs. Many migrants, especially women, find work through connections established by earlier arrivals. These networks enable them to access employment in low-skilled sectors such as domestic labour, small-scale manufacturing, and other informal industries.

The research reveals that these support systems are indispensable for the survival and initial settlement of migrants, offering essential resources and employment opportunities that allow them to begin their lives in Delhi. Migrants remain dependent on these networks to fully integrate into the city's socio-economic structure.

4.9.5 Community Networks and Integration

After settling in Delhi, illegal Bangladeshi migrants increasingly rely on community networks to support both their economic and social integration into the city. These networks are built around shared ethnic, regional, or religious identities, which allow migrants to maintain connections with their home regions while simultaneously adjusting to life in an urban setting that may seem foreign and unfamiliar. Religious events and family gatherings play a significant role in reinforcing these connections. Celebrations such as Eid, Muharram, and other family occasions serve as important opportunities for migrants to interact with people from similar backgrounds, strengthening the sense of community and belonging in the city. These social gatherings are not only an occasion for cultural and religious expression but also serve as critical points for migrants to connect with other members of the community, including brokers, political figures, and local community leaders who have played a role in supporting their migration journey.

Brokers and agents, in particular, are integral to these networks. Having established relationships within the community, they help facilitate the connection between newcomers and local residents. By inviting brokers and agents to community gatherings, migrants show

their gratitude and strengthen these vital connections, further embedding themselves in the web of social networks that can be pivotal in times of need.

Table 4.4 Support Networks for Illegal Bangladeshi Immigrants: Number of Population by Type of Supporter

Migration Supporters	Percentage (%)
Family	37.0%
Relatives	15.0%
Neighbors	11.7%
Friends	11.3%
Group/NGO	15.7%
No Help	9.3%
Total	**100%**

Source: *Compiled by the Author based on primary data.*

The data highlights the vital role that community networks play in supporting illegal Bangladeshi migrants in Delhi. Of the 400 respondents surveyed, the largest proportion (37%) received support from family members, which underscores the essential role of family connections in facilitating migration and ensuring initial settlement in the city. Family members often provide financial aid, housing, and other necessary resources to help migrants start their new lives. Relatives also contribute significantly, providing assistance to 15% of the respondents, suggesting that family-based networks extend beyond the nuclear family to include broader kinship ties.

Neighbors (11.7%) and friends (11.3%) also offer considerable support, demonstrating the importance of local community ties in helping migrants navigate the challenges of urban life. Neighbours often provide immediate assistance, such as access to housing, food, or basic necessities, while friends offer social support and help with emotional well-being during difficult times. Additionally, 15.7% of respondents reported receiving help from groups or NGOs, indicating the involvement of organised community or non-governmental support systems that assist migrants in overcoming obstacles such as legal documentation, employment, or healthcare access. However, it is important to note that 9.3% of respondents reported receiving no help at all, indicating that a small but significant portion of migrants may be isolated or disconnected from supportive networks.

While close-knit support systems help undocumented Bangladeshi immigrants navigate migration challenges, their presence also has significant negative societal impacts. The influx of undocumented migrants can strain public resources, including healthcare, education, and housing, leading to increased competition for limited services. This may create resentment among local populations, fueling social tensions and conflicts. Additionally, undocumented immigration can contribute to the informal labor market, where migrants often work for lower wages. This can drive down wages and job opportunities for low-income native workers. Moreover, cultural and linguistic differences can hinder integration, leading to social fragmentation and the marginalization of migrant communities. Overall, while support networks aid migrants in coping with hardships, the broader socio-economic and political consequences of undocumented migration present serious challenges for host societies.

4.9.6 External Contact Status

The external contact status among Bangladeshi migrants in Delhi reveals an interesting distribution regarding their connections outside India. According to the data, a significant portion of the migrant population maintains external contacts, which may serve various purposes such as facilitating migration, providing resources, or offering advice. These external connections can also influence the migrants' decision-making and their potential mobility.

Table 4.5 Bangladeshi Immigrant Population in Delhi: External Contact Status

Outside Indian Contacts	Percentages of Population (%)
Yes	37.0%
No	63.0%
Total	**100%**

Source: *Compiled by the Author based on primary data.*

Out of the 400 respondents surveyed, 37% of individuals reported having contacts outside of India, while 63% did not maintain such connections. For those who do have external contacts, these may serve several functions. They could be involved in assisting with migration processes, sharing vital information, or offering social and financial support. The 63% of respondents without external contacts are likely relying more heavily on local networks within Delhi for their survival and integration. These findings suggest that a substantial number of migrants, despite being geographically distant from their home country, maintain ties abroad that may influence their socio-economic strategies or future plans.

4.9.7 Planned International Destinations

A portion of the Bangladeshi immigrant population in Delhi appears to have intentions of migrating beyond India, indicating that for some, migration is not necessarily a final destination. The data reveals that a significant minority of migrants are contemplating further international relocation. This could be driven by factors such as perceived economic opportunities, better living conditions, or family reunification possibilities.

Table 4.6 Distribution of Bangladeshi Immigrants in Delhi by Planned International Destinations

Planned Destination Outside India	Number of Population (%)
Yes	49.0%
No	51.0%
Total	**100%**

Source: *Compiled by the Author based on primary data.*

Among the 400 respondents, 49% reported that they are planning to move to destinations outside India, while the remaining 51% do not have such plans. This suggests that while the majority of migrants are likely to remain in India for the time being, a notable portion are looking to move to other international destinations. This could be motivated by factors such as improved employment prospects, better living conditions, or the desire to reunite with family members abroad. The planned international movements highlight the temporary nature of migration for many individuals and point to the broader socio-economic strategies migrants adopt when seeking to improve their living circumstances. Such temporary migration can disrupt the local labor market by increasing job competition and suppressing wages for native workers. It also puts pressure on public services like healthcare, education, and housing, potentially straining resources for local residents. Additionally, frequent migrant turnover can hinder community cohesion and contribute to social tensions.

4.9.8 Undocumented NGOs and Religious Groups

In Delhi, as in other major urban centres, undocumented NGOs and religious community groups play an essential role in supporting illegal migrants and providing services such as shelter, food, healthcare, education, legal assistance and access to informal banking. These groups, operating in a legal grey area, help illegal migrants access employment and integrate into local communities, sometimes bypassing government regulations. However, many

migrants hesitate to disclose their associations with these groups due to fears of legal repercussions. Nonetheless, these organisations are vital in helping migrants integrate into their new communities. By fostering social connections through shared religious practices, festivals, and community events, undocumented NGOs create a sense of belonging and mutual support among migrants. Religious events such as Eid and Muharram serve as key points for these migrants to interact, share resources, and strengthen social ties.

In addition to the assistance provided by NGOs, there is also significant involvement from local political figures, who often support illegal migrants in exchange for political loyalty. These political figures may help secure housing or provide false documentation, leveraging the vulnerable position of the migrants during elections. This relationship between migrants and political actors creates a complex web of mutual dependency. Migrants rely on these figures for resources, while politicians benefit from the votes of this population, further complicating their integration into formal legal frameworks.

Despite the challenges posed by their undocumented status, many migrants in Delhi manage to integrate into the city's social and economic systems through these informal networks. These migrants often form community groups based on shared regional, religious, or experiential ties, offering each other emotional, social, and financial support. Cultural and religious events play a central role in maintaining these connections, allowing migrants to share resources and reinforce social cohesion.

The unregulated support illegal migrants received may encourage further illegal immigration, straining public resources and social services. Local workers may face increased job competition, especially in low-wage sectors, leading to wage suppression. Additionally, these groups can operate outside government oversight, making it difficult to track migration patterns and enforce policies. In some cases, their involvement can contribute to social tensions, as local populations may perceive them as prioritizing migrants over native residents. Moreover, the unchecked activities of these organizations can create parallel systems that weaken state authority and legal governance over immigration.

4.10 Summary

The study on Bangladeshi migration to Delhi emphasises the complexity and multi-faceted nature of migration patterns, particularly the role of informal networks and external connections. The concentration of migrants in specific urban areas highlights the establishment

of localised support systems, which play an important role in facilitating migration and helping migrants adjust to their new environment. These networks not only provide immediate assistance but also foster social cohesion and help migrants secure housing and employment.

However, the limited involvement of governmental and non-governmental services in supporting undocumented migrants suggests a potential area for policy intervention. Enhancing access to formal support systems could improve the socio-economic conditions of illegal migrants and help integrate them more effectively into Delhi's urban fabric.

Furthermore, the ongoing external connections and the plans for international destinations reflect the broader socio-economic strategies of many migrants. Their migration is not merely a one-time event but part of an ongoing process that involves constantly seeking better opportunities.

In conclusion, further research is needed to explore the socio-political implications of illegal migration in Delhi, particularly in relation to integration policies and community development initiatives that can better support both migrants and the broader urban population.

CHAPTER 5

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF ILLEGAL BANGLADESHI AND ROHINGYA IMMIGRANTS IN DELHI

5.1 Introduction

Migration has significantly shaped the urban landscape of Delhi, with the immigration of Bangladeshi and Rohingya populations adversely impacting the informal expansion of crime, black markets and social unrest. Among the many migrant groups that have found their way to the city, the influx of Bangladeshi and Rohingya populations stands out for its scale and impact. Driven by economic desperation, political instability, and ethnic persecution, these migrants seek refuge and opportunities in Delhi's bustling landscape. Examining the migration patterns of these communities provides insight into the broader narrative of Delhi as a city of hope, resilience, and inherent contradictions.

Bangladeshi migration to Delhi is largely shaped by socio-economic factors. Economic disparity, unemployment, and poverty in Bangladesh have driven many to seek opportunities across the border. Delhi's vibrant informal economy, which includes construction, domestic labour, and street vending, serves as a magnet for these migrants (Roy, 2020). Predominantly young men, Bangladeshi migrants often arrive through established networks and settle in informal settlements through particular religious affiliation.

The migration of Rohingyas to Delhi is primarily driven by political and ethnic persecution. As a minority group in Myanmar, the Rohingyas endure systemic oppression, including being denied citizenship and facing severe limitations on their freedom of movement, access to education, and healthcare services (UNHCR, 2023). In response to escalating violence and insecurity, numerous Rohingya families have sought safety in India, with many settling in Delhi. Unlike Bangladeshi migrants, Rohingyas encounter greater challenges in integrating culturally, as linguistic and religious disparities further exacerbate their socio-economic exclusion and marginalisation (Jamil & Hossain, 2021).

The demographic profiles of these migrant groups reflect their differing migration experiences. Bangladeshi migrants are predominantly single male workers aiming to improve their economic circumstances, while Rohingya refugees typically migrate as family units to escape persecution. Both groups face similar socio-economic vulnerabilities, such as low literacy levels and limited access to formal employment, confining them to low-wage, informal sectors (Hasan, 2019). This perpetuates cycles of poverty and limits their upward mobility. Because of all this the natives/locals face many problems.

Despite these adversities, both Bangladeshi and Rohingya migrants contribute significantly to Delhi's black markets and societal unrest. Bangladeshi migrants form an unwanted competition in the city's informal labour market, taking up physically demanding, low-paying jobs that sustain various sectors and impacts the lives of locals. Rohingya refugees, though larger in number, also contribute to crime and smuggling while striving to rebuild their lives in an unfamiliar and often unwelcoming environment. However, the lack of institutional recognition and support prevents these communities from achieving their full potential or integrating effectively into society.

Living conditions for these migrants are often dire. Many reside in overcrowded, poorly serviced informal settlements with limited access to clean water, sanitation, and healthcare. Such conditions not only undermine their quality of life but also pose public health risks for the broader population.

The immigration of Bangladeshi and Rohingya migrants also highlights broader issues surrounding India's immigration policies. While border controls and deportation measures are often emphasised, a balanced approach is needed to address the socio-economic realities of locals/natives. Policies that prioritise security must be complemented by initiatives promoting social security and economic participation to address the needs of vulnerable native populations effectively.

The present study seeks to explore the socio-economic and demographic dimensions of Bangladeshi and Rohingya migration to Delhi. By analysing their experiences, challenges, and contributions, the study aims to provide insights into the complexities of migration and its impact on urban development. As Delhi continues to grapple with migration issues, strict and sustainable policy frameworks will be essential for enhancing equitable growth and social harmony in the city.

5.2 Results

The table provides a comprehensive socio-economic profile of illegal immigrants in Delhi, highlighting characteristics such as religion, social category, education, marital status, and employment. These characteristics reveal significant patterns of diversity and disparity across genders. The study shows that the majority of respondents identified as Muslim, accounting for 96.3% of the total population, with males representing 47% and females 53%. Hindu respondents comprised a smaller proportion, collectively 4.7% of the population (1.4% males and 3.3% females).

Table 5.1 Socio-economic Characteristics of Immigrants in Delhi

Socio-Economic Characteristics	Male	Female	Total
N	189	211	400
Religion-Wise Distribution (%)			
Hindu	1.4	3.3	4.7
Muslim	46	49	95
Social Category (%)			
Unreserved	30	27	57
OBC	16	17	33
SC	1.3	8.5	10
Educational Attainment (%)			
Illiterate	18	15	33
Primary	10	7.0	17
Secondary	9.4	21	30
Higher	6.6	3.6	10
Madarsa	3.0	6.6	10
Marital Status			
Unmarried	25	16	41
Currently Married	14	30	44
Divorced	5.3	2.7	8.0
Widow	3.0	4.4	7.4
Employment Status			
Employed	39	44	83
Unemployed/ Unreported	8.0	9.0	17

Source: Compiled by the Author based on primary data

The distribution across social categories shows that 57% of the population belongs to the unreserved category, with a fairly even split between males (30%) and females (27%). The OBC category constitutes 33%, while SCs account for the smallest proportion of 10%. This suggests that a significant portion of the population falls under historically advantaged or socially intermediate groups, with limited representation from marginalised categories. The education levels indicate a high proportion of illiteracy, with 33% of the population unable to read or write (18% males and 15% females). Educational attainment improves at the primary (17%), secondary (30%), and higher levels (10%), with men generally having better representation at all levels compared to women. Notably, 10% of respondents reported attending Madarsa education, with females slightly outnumbering males (6.6% vs. 3.0%).

Marital status shows that 41% of the population is unmarried (25% males and 16% females), while 44% are currently married. Divorce rates are relatively low at 8%, with slightly higher representation among males (5.3%) than females (2.7%). Widowhood affects 7.4% of the population, with a higher prevalence among females (4.4%) compared to males (3.0%). Employment status demonstrates a high level of economic participation, with 83% of the population employed. However, a gender gap persists: 39% of males are employed compared to 44% of females. Unemployment or unreported employment is observed in 17% of the population, with slightly higher rates for females (9.0%) than males (8.0%).

The data on basic amenities accessible to the assessed population reveals important information about their living circumstances and access to key services.

Table 5.2 Basic Facilities Accessed by Immigrants (%)

Basic Facilities where?	Yes	No	Total
Private Toilet Facility	54.7	45.3	100
Water Facility	92.0	8.0	100
Medical Insurance	22.7	77.3	100
Bank Account	47.0	53.0	100

Source: Compiled by the Author based on primary data

Access to private toilet facilities is available to 54.7% of the population, while 45.3% lack this basic necessity. This indicates a considerable proportion of individuals living without adequate sanitation, which can have significant implications for public health and hygiene. An overwhelming 92% of the population has access to a water facility, leaving only 8% without access. This high level of water availability reflects a relatively better situation compared to

sanitation but still leaves room for improvement, especially for the minority without reliable water sources.

Furthermore, only 22.7% of individuals have access to medical insurance, while a staggering 77.3% lack this safety net. This highlights the vulnerability of a majority of the population to health-related financial shocks, underlining the urgent need for increased health insurance coverage and healthcare accessibility. In addition, bank account ownership is observed among 47% of the population, whereas 53% remain without access to formal financial services. This lack of financial inclusion may hinder their ability to save, access credit, or benefit from government financial programs, emphasising the need for initiatives to promote banking literacy and access.

5.3 Discussion

The socio-economic and demographic characteristics of Bangladeshi immigrants in Delhi reveal complex dynamics that impact both the migrant communities and their host society. A key characteristic of the immigrant population is their religious composition, with Muslims forming the overwhelming majority (96.3%). This dominance reflects the socio-political push factors driving migration, such as systemic discrimination and limited economic opportunities in Bangladesh (González, 2020). However, in Delhi, this overrepresentation amplifies their inclusion as Bengali Indian compounding challenges to accessing resources and opportunities for the locals. The marginalisation of Muslim migrants also hinders their integration into the social fabric of the city, leading to a cycle of inclusion that reinforces poverty and inequality in Delhi.

The gender composition of the migrant population presents another layer of complexity. While men dominate the workforce, women remain underrepresented due to cultural norms and societal constraints that limit their mobility and participation in the labour market (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). This gender disparity not only skews the demographic profile but also has broader implications for family structures and economic stability within migrant households. The limited formal economic participation of women reduces household income and opportunities for upward mobility, perpetuating economic vulnerabilities.

Economic insecurity is a persistent issue among Bangladeshi migrants in Delhi. Only 22.7% of the population has medical insurance and 53% lack access to formal banking services. The

absence of financial inclusion forces migrants to rely on informal financial systems, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and increasing their economic instability (Kumar & Mirdha, 2021). This lack of stability also affects their ability to secure better housing, education, and healthcare, creating a ripple effect on their overall quality of life. Additionally, economic marginalisation often becomes a tool for political manipulation, as unemployed and underemployed migrants are susceptible to exploitation by political groups as vote bank seeking to leverage their grievances.

The study highlights the significant access in basic facilities such as private toilets, with only 45.3% of unwanted migrants lacking access to these services. This efficacy increases health risks and contributes to the overburdening of urban sanitation systems, fostering mistrust between migrant communities and native residents. Such disparities not only undermine the well-being of migrants but also escalate tensions over resource allocation, thereby impacting urban social harmony for the Natives and locals.

Education is another critical area of concern, with 32.6% of migrants being illiterate and only 10.3% attaining higher education. These educational deficits limit employment opportunities and confine migrants to low-paying jobs in the informal sector, perpetuating their socio-economic vulnerabilities (Singh & Gupta, 2018). Furthermore, low literacy levels hinder their ability to access resources and navigate urban systems effectively, creating barriers to integration and social mobility.

5.4 Summary

The socio-economic characteristics of Bangladeshi immigrants in Delhi underscore the multifaceted challenges faced by the local populaitons. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive policy interventions that target both the structural and socio-cultural dimensions of migration and native communities. Promoting access to education and skill development programs, improving sanitation infrastructure, and ensuring equitable access to financial services are essential steps toward fostering social inclusion. Additionally, efforts to counter discrimination and support the socio-economic integration of native groups can create a more cohesive urban environment. By addressing these interconnected issues, policymakers can promote sustainable and strict urban development and enhance the quality of life for both migrant populations and host communities.

CHAPTER 6

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF ILLEGAL BANGLADESHI AND ROHINGYA
IMMIGRANTS IN DELHI

6.1 Introduction

The economic impact of illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya immigrants in Delhi is multifaceted, affecting not only the migrants themselves but also the broader urban economy. These immigrant communities often face precarious living and working conditions, relying heavily on low-wage, labour-intensive jobs within the informal sector, which disrupt the local job market. Despite their marginalised status, their contributions to the local economy are significant, particularly in industries requiring cheap, manual labour. However, their presence also generates several challenges that influence competition in the labour market, strain public resources, and expand the informal economy.

A primary area of concern is the informal labour market, where many Bangladeshi and Rohingya immigrants are employed. These migrants typically take on low-wage, physically demanding jobs, many of which local workers are either unwilling or unable to perform. The nature of these jobs—often in sectors such as construction, domestic work, cleaning, and street vending, is primarily due to long working hours, difficult working conditions, and low pay. Consequently, these migrants disrupt the workforce, performing jobs that would otherwise go unfilled or be taken on by fewer people. The work performed by immigrants thus supports various industries in Delhi, influencing the city's overall economic activity, particularly in sectors where cheap labour is critical for local employment.

The economic implications of the illegal migration of Bangladeshis to India have been noted for their dual effect on the labour market, with both positive and negative consequences. On the negative side, many local workers perceive illegal migrants as competitors for jobs, particularly in the informal economy. This perception stems from the migrants' willingness to accept lower wages and work under difficult conditions, which can displace local workers or contribute to stagnant wages in low-wage sectors. In industries like construction, where both local and migrant workers are engaged, competition is often fierce. Locals usually view the influx of undocumented migrants as detrimental to their economic prospects, believing that

these migrants are taking jobs at lower costs and diminishing the bargaining power of native workers.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in unskilled or semi-skilled sectors, where migrant labour has intensified competition for positions. Local workers in these areas often face greater difficulty finding stable, well-paying jobs, as migrants are more likely to accept substandard wages and working conditions. In the long term, this competition for jobs can lead to unemployment or underemployment among local workers, further exacerbating social tensions. The resulting economic strain can also lead to a sense of frustration and resentment, as many local workers perceive migrants as direct competitors for scarce job opportunities, thus making it more difficult for both groups to secure job stability and economic mobility.

In spite of these challenges also, the illegal migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar (Rohingya) continue to contribute significantly black economy and illegal work. Even though they are employed in informal sectors, many of these migrants spend the majority of their earnings within the local economy.

However, the economic vulnerability of Bangladeshi and Rohingya migrants is significant, with many facing exploitation in the workforce. Without legal documentation, these migrants are more vulnerable to exploitation by employers, landlords, and authorities which leads to their involvement in the Black economy. They are often subjected to wage theft, unsafe working environments, and a lack of access to fundamental worker protections such as social security, paid leave, and healthcare. This exploitation is particularly pronounced in industries like domestic work and construction, where employers may take advantage of the migrants' undocumented status to offer substandard pay and deny them basic legal rights. As a result, these workers are trapped in a cycle of economic instability and social marginalisation, with little recourse for improving their conditions.

Moreover, the influx of low-wage migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar has led to a phenomenon of wage suppression in certain sectors of the labour market. Many employers, recognising that migrants are willing to accept lower wages than local workers, tend to favour hiring them for labour-intensive jobs. While this offers employers a cost-effective way to meet labour demands, it suppresses wages in industries such as construction, domestic work, and street vending, where migrant labour is predominantly employed. Local workers in these sectors, particularly those in semi-skilled or unskilled positions, are often forced to accept

lower wages as a result, further exacerbating economic inequality and creating a greater divide between the wages of migrants and locals.

The economic integration of illegal migrants also highlights the broader structural challenges within Delhi's economy, where the demand for cheap labour continues to outpace the supply of willing local workers. In sectors that rely heavily on low-wage labour, the presence of undocumented migrants, while filling labour shortages, also reinforces the precarious nature of the informal economy. The reliance on migrant labour in these areas, although vital for the functioning of Delhi's economy, underscores the broader issue of labour exploitation and the inadequacies of legal and social protections for marginalised workers.

In conclusion, while illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya immigrants contribute significantly to Delhi's black economy, their presence generates a range of economic challenges. From intense competition for jobs and wage suppression to exploitation and economic vulnerability, the impact of these migrants on the labour market is profound. At the same time, their consumption habits sustain local businesses and stimulate economic activity in various sectors. Addressing the economic implications of illegal migration requires a comprehensive approach that not only provides adequate identification for migrants but also balances the needs of the local workforce, ensuring fair wages, access to social services, and integration into the formal economy.

6.2 Results

6.2.1 Work Participation Rate of Migrants

The table highlights the trends in the work participation rate in Delhi from 1961 to 2011, disaggregated by sex. This data provides critical insights into the evolving economic roles and labour market integration of migrants over five decades in the context of Delhi's rapid urbanisation and demographic changes.

In 1961, the work participation rate among migrants stood at 36.1%, marking the highest rate recorded in the six-decade period. This reflects the substantial contribution of migrants to the labour force in the post-independence era when Delhi was undergoing significant industrial and infrastructural development. However, the participation rate declined sharply to 30.21% by 1971, potentially due to a combination of economic restructuring, limited job opportunities, and changing migration patterns.

Table 6.1 Work Participation Rate of Migrants in Delhi, 1961-2011

Year	Work Participation Rate
1961	36.1
1971	30.21
1981	32.19
1991	31.63
2001	32.82
2011	33.28

Source: (Bhagat, R. B.,2020) Demographics dynamics of mega-urban regions.
The case of Delhi

The 1980s saw a modest recovery in the work participation rate, which rose to 32.19% in 1981, followed by a slight decline to 31.63% in 1991. This fluctuation may be attributed to the increasing pressure on Delhi's labour market from rural-to-urban migration, coupled with economic transitions and the proliferation of the informal sector, which often absorbs a large proportion of migrant workers.

From 2001 onward, the work participation rate demonstrated a steady upward trend, reaching 32.82% in 2001 and 33.28% in 2011. This gradual increase could reflect enhanced economic opportunities in Delhi, driven by the expansion of service industries, construction, and informal employment sectors. It also underscores the growing reliance of the city's economy on migrant labour to meet its workforce demands.

Overall, the trends reveal a persistent yet fluctuating integration of migrants into Delhi's labour market. While economic opportunities have expanded over time, the relatively low work participation rate suggests continued barriers to employment for many migrants, such as lack of formal education, skills mismatch, and labour market segmentation.

The table provides an overview of the occupational distribution of Bangladeshi immigrants by sex. Male immigrants are predominantly employed in hospitality and food service roles (15%), followed by labour-intensive occupations such as general labour (10%) and industrial work (8.3%). Males also have a notable presence in roles like hawkers, retail and sales (7%) and delivery/driver positions (6.3%).

In contrast, female immigrants are primarily engaged as domestic workers, accounting for 12.3 per cent of the total, and in occupations categorised as "prostitute and others," which comprise 9.3 per cent. Women also have significant representation in labour roles (6.3%) and industrial work (5.3%).

Table 6.2 Occupation of the Immigrants by Sex

Occupation Type	Male	Female	Total
Trader	4.7	1.3	6
Industrial Worker	8.3	5.3	13.6
Delivery /Driver	6.3	0.1	6.4
Hawkers/Retail and Sales	7	3.7	10.7
Labour	10	6.3	16.3
Hospitality and Food Service (Cooks, waiters)	15	4	19
Construction Worker	3.7	1.7	5.4
Domestic Worker	1	12.3	13.3
Prostitute & Others	0	9.3	9.3
Total	**56**	**44**	**100**

Source: Compiled by the Author based on primary data

Overall, the data reveals a clear gender-based division of labour, with men dominating fields like hospitality, construction, and industrial work, while women are more concentrated in domestic and informal sector jobs. This highlights the economic opportunities these immigrants mainly dwell in for financial purposes.

6.3 Discussion

6.3.1 The Drain on Public Resources

The presence of illegal migrants often exerts a considerable strain on public resources, as their limited financial integration and lack of asset ownership create dependencies on already stretched public systems. Many illegal migrants face barriers to accessing formal banking services, leaving them excluded from opportunities like bank accounts or loans. This exclusion not only limits their ability to build financial security but also reduces their contribution to the local economy through formal economic activities.

Figure 6.1 Economic Characteristics of Migrants: Assets Owned
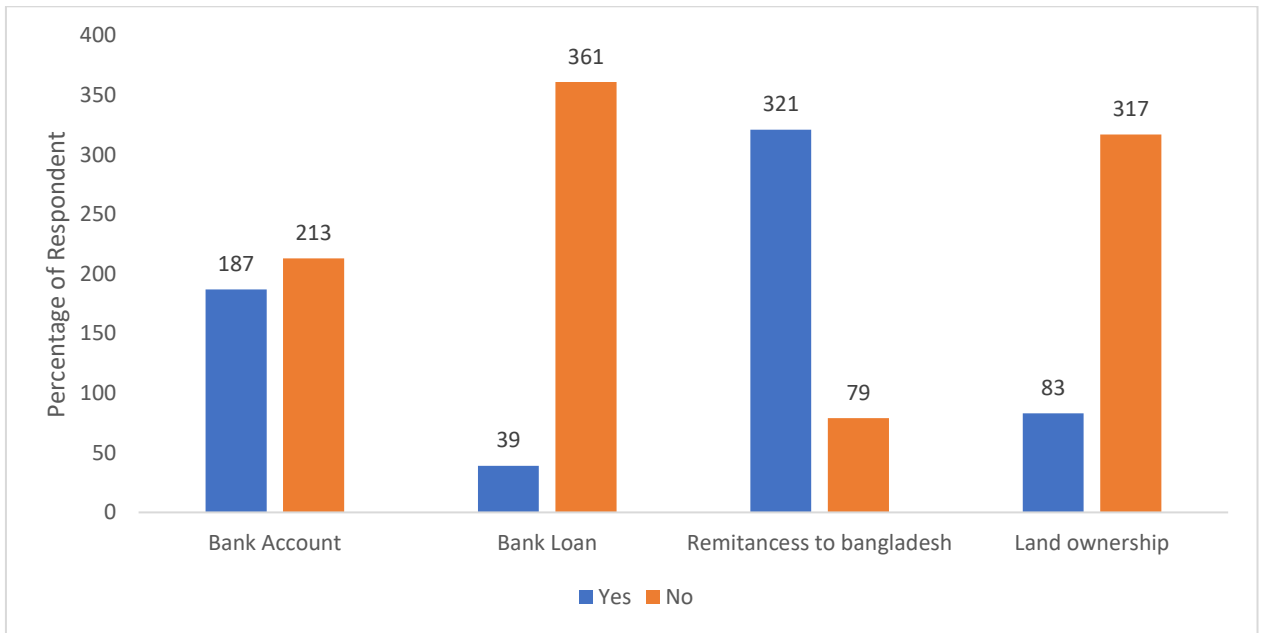
Source: Compiled by the Author based on primary data

The graph presents a compelling narrative about the mechanisms through which Bangladeshi immigrants, including those who may have entered Delhi without proper legal documentation, navigate structural and institutional barriers to gain access to financial and economic resources. The data reveals that a significant number of respondents (187 individuals) successfully opened bank accounts, despite their undocumented status. This phenomenon suggests the exploitation of loopholes in the document verification processes of financial institutions, where fraudulent documents are often used to bypass regulatory requirements. The ability to open a bank account not only provides these individuals with a sense of financial inclusion but also serves as a gateway to other socio-economic benefits, further embedding them within the local economy.

Interestingly, the graph highlights that while only a small minority (39 individuals) have availed themselves of formal bank loans, a substantial majority (361 individuals) reported no access to such credit facilities. This trend could indicate a lack of eligibility for formal borrowing due to their status or reliance on informal lending networks within immigrant communities. Despite this, a remarkable 321 individuals reported sending remittances back to Bangladesh, illustrating their ability to achieve a level of financial stability and generate surplus income, even in the face of significant challenges. This remittance behaviour underscores the vital role these immigrants play in transnational economic flows, with their earnings in Delhi supporting families and communities in their home country.

In addition, the graph sheds light on land ownership patterns, revealing that 83 individuals reported owning land in Delhi, while the majority (317 individuals) did not. Land ownership, even in small numbers, is a noteworthy finding, as it implies that some immigrants have managed to overcome structural barriers to secure property in the host city. This achievement could be attributed to informal land markets, where regulatory oversight is weak, or strategic partnerships with intermediaries who facilitate such transactions. The acquisition of land further reinforces their settlement and integration into the socio-economic fabric of Delhi.

Taken together, these findings point to the adaptive strategies employed by Bangladeshi immigrants to establish themselves in the host country, often leveraging informal networks and systemic gaps. Their ability to access bank accounts, remit funds, and, in some cases, acquire property raises critical questions about governance, the efficacy of documentation verification processes, and the broader implications for urban resource allocation. This dynamic interaction between undocumented immigrants and institutional frameworks highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of migration, economic integration, and the challenges of regulating informal processes in a rapidly urbanising context like Delhi.

6.3.2 The Impact on Employment

Illegal migration exerts significant pressure on the Indian labour market, particularly in the informal sector. Migrants are often willing to accept lower wages and work under challenging conditions, which leads to wage suppression and increased job competition for local workers. This is especially pronounced in sectors like construction and agriculture, where migrants dominate the workforce. Local labourers frequently perceive this as job displacement, further intensifying tensions between native populations and migrant communities. While migrants contribute to economic activities, especially in labour-intensive industries, their presence creates challenges for local workers who struggle to secure fair employment opportunities.

The arrest of three illegal Bangladeshi migrants working in Pune's Talegaon MIDC highlights the growing concern over unauthorised migration and its implications on national security, economic stability, and resource management. According to reports, the Pimpri Chinchwad police confiscated Aadhaar cards, Indian PAN cards, and a Bangladeshi passport from the detained individuals, indicating a misuse of India's identification systems. Such incidents raise serious questions about the loopholes in the system that allow migrants to obtain fraudulent documentation, thereby blending into society and accessing resources meant for Indian citizens.

News / Cities / Pune / 3 illegal Bangladeshi migrants working in Pune's Talegaon MIDC held

3 illegal Bangladeshi migrants working in Pune's Talegaon MIDC held

Pimpri Chinchwad police sezied Aadhaar cards, Indian PAN cards, and a Bangladeshi passport.

This particular case underscores the broader issue of illegal employment. Migrants often find work in sectors like construction, manufacturing, or informal labour markets due to their willingness to accept lower wages. While this might seem beneficial to employers seeking cheap labour, it displaces local workers and exacerbates unemployment. Furthermore, the use of fake identification creates challenges for law enforcement and undermines the integrity of official databases, making it difficult to monitor and regulate such activities.

The presence of illegal migrants also puts additional pressure on public infrastructure and resources in cities like Pune, which are already struggling to manage urbanisation and population growth. Housing, healthcare, and social welfare systems are stretched thin, often leaving local residents to bear the brunt of resource scarcity. Additionally, such instances highlight the need for stricter border control, enhanced surveillance, and policy measures to address the root causes of illegal migration while safeguarding the rights and resources of Indian citizens.

6.3.3 Problems in Accomplishing SDG Goals

The influx of illegal migrants presents hurdles in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India, particularly those related to poverty eradication, education, health, and urban infrastructure. The sudden increase in population strains public resources, making it difficult to provide equitable access to basic services. Overburdened healthcare systems, inadequate educational facilities, and insufficient housing impact the government's ability to meet the SDG targets. Additionally, the informal settlements created by migrants often lack basic

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infrastructure, further complicating the implementation of development initiatives. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure sustainable growth and inclusivity.

6.3.4 Pressure on Resources

Illegal migration leads to a significant drain on public resources, including housing, water, healthcare, and education. Urban areas, particularly border states like West Bengal and Assam, face acute challenges as resources become overstretched to accommodate the migrant population. In cities like Kolkata, the rising demand for basic services has resulted in the growth of slums and unplanned settlements, which are characterised by poor sanitation, lack of clean water, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure. The pressure on agricultural land from unauthorised construction further exacerbates poverty among farmers, displacing local populations and reducing agricultural productivity.

The report sheds light on the impact of illegal Bangladeshi migrants in Delhi, where a well-organized network ensures their entry and prolonged stay by leveraging legal loopholes. This influx puts immense pressure on Delhi's already overstretched resources. Public services such as healthcare, education, and sanitation are burdened as these migrants access them without contributing to the city's tax revenue. Additionally, the availability of informal employment creates competition for low-wage jobs, adversely affecting local workers and increasing unemployment rates. Housing shortages and the growth of unauthorised settlements further strain urban infrastructure, contributing to overcrowding and inadequate living conditions in the city.

6.3.5 Unrecorded Remittances and Loss of Revenue

Illegal migration contributes to the issue of unrecorded remittances, which are often sent through informal channels, bypassing formal banking systems. This deprives the host country of foreign exchange inflows and disrupts financial monitoring mechanisms. Migrants' inability to access formal banking services leads to an informal flow of funds, causing a significant loss of revenue for the Indian economy. The absence of proper documentation of these transactions hinders financial planning and national economic stability. Additionally, the lack of financial inclusion among migrants limits their contribution to the formal economy, further intensifying the fiscal burden.

6.3.6 Social and Political Implications

The presence of illegal migrants has far-reaching social and political ramifications. Tensions between local populations and migrants often lead to social unrest, while the politicisation of migration issues influences electoral outcomes and governance strategies. Border states like Assam and West Bengal have experienced demographic shifts that alter the social fabric, giving rise to xenophobia and communal tensions. Politically, illegal migration is a contentious issue, with different parties exploiting it for their own agendas, often at the cost of fostering inclusive and constructive policies. Addressing these implications requires a balanced approach that considers both security concerns and humanitarian obligations.

6.4 Critical Review

Illegal migration from Bangladesh to India poses a significant strain on the nation's resources without contributing meaningful economic benefits. Migrants are often employed in low-paying informal sector jobs, displacing local workers and depressing wages, particularly in agriculture and construction. This leads to heightened unemployment and worsens socio-economic inequalities, with no tangible long-term economic contributions from the migrant population.

Additionally, the influx of illegal migrants creates immense pressure on public resources, including housing, healthcare, and education, particularly in states such as West Bengal and Assam. These states are struggling to provide basic amenities to their own citizens, and the additional burden imposed by migrants exacerbates these challenges. Unplanned urban settlements, often in slums or unauthorised constructions, further deplete land and

environmental resources, rendering many areas uninhabitable or unsuitable for agricultural activities.

Another critical concern is the issue of unrecorded remittances, where migrants use informal channels to transfer money back to Bangladesh. This practice not only leads to substantial revenue losses for India but also undermines the formal financial systems that could regulate and contribute to the economy. Instead of fostering economic growth, these financial outflows drain the country of its monetary resources.

Politically, illegal migration destabilises local governance and creates divisions within society. The demographic changes in border states fuel cultural and communal tensions, which political actors often exploit for electoral gains. The law-and-order situation also deteriorates as illegal activities increase, further undermining the stability and security of the affected regions.

The overall impact of illegal migration is overwhelmingly negative. It destroys the country's limited resources, disrupts the livelihoods of local populations, and undermines efforts toward sustainable development. Far from contributing to economic progress, illegal migrants exacerbate poverty, resource scarcity, and social unrest, necessitating urgent policy interventions to secure the nation's interests.

6.5 Summary

The dynamics of Bangladeshi migration to India, as analysed through historical context, socio-economic impacts, and political ramifications, reveal a complex and multifaceted issue with profound consequences for Indian society, particularly in border states like West Bengal and Assam.

From a socio-economic perspective, Bangladeshi migrants have significantly impacted the labour market, particularly in the informal sector. They have become indispensable to industries such as construction and agriculture, providing a vital workforce often willing to work for lower wages and under harsh conditions. While their contributions to the economy cannot be overlooked, their presence has heightened competition for jobs and suppressed wages, fostering resentment among local workers. Additionally, their influx has strained India's limited resources, exacerbating challenges in urban areas like Kolkata, where population density, slum growth, and inadequate infrastructure have reached critical levels. The conversion of agricultural land into unauthorised settlements further underscores the environmental and economic pressures induced by migration.

Politically, the migration of Bangladeshis has emerged as a divisive and sensitive issue, particularly in Assam, where it has reshaped the region's demographic and electoral landscape. The unchecked influx has not only influenced governance but also fueled communal tensions and xenophobia, often exploited by political parties to advance their agendas. Despite agreements like the 1985 Assam Accord, the lack of consistent enforcement and the politicisation of the issue have impeded the resolution of the problem, leaving border states vulnerable to demographic and socio-political shifts.

In conclusion, Bangladeshi migration to India represents a nuanced challenge that intertwines historical legacies, economic imperatives, resource management, and political strategy. While the migrants contribute to India's financial framework, their presence also raises significant concerns regarding resource allocation, job competition, and national security. Addressing this issue requires a balanced approach that recognises migrants' contributions while protecting the rights and livelihoods of the local population. Sustainable policies must prioritise equitable resource management, effective border security, and inclusive socio-economic strategies to mitigate tensions and ensure stability in affected regions. Only through a nuanced understanding and cooperative policy measures can India navigate the complexities of Bangladeshi migration and its far-reaching implications.

CHAPTER 7

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION IN DELHI

7.1 Introduction

The presence of illegal Bangladeshi migrants in Delhi is a major social and political issue. As one of India's largest and most populous cities, Delhi draws migrants from across the country, including from neighbouring Bangladesh. Illegal migration from Bangladesh to India became a serious issue after the partition of India in 1947. Events such as the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 and recurring environmental crises in the region have exacerbated the push for migration. These factors, combined with a desire for better economic opportunities, escape from political instability, and the search for refuge from poverty, have led to significant numbers of Bangladeshi migrants crossing the border into India. Many of these individuals arrive without proper documentation, seeking a better life in Delhi's urban landscape. However, their presence has introduced a variety of challenges to the city, affecting its economy, society, and political environment.

A primary driving factor behind the illegal migration from Bangladesh to Delhi is the search for improved economic opportunities. In Bangladesh, poverty, economic inequality, and limited access to employment drive many individuals to seek livelihoods in larger cities. Delhi, with its thriving informal economy and high demand for low-wage labour, becomes a natural destination for these migrants. They often take on physically demanding and low-paying jobs in sectors such as construction, domestic work, cleaning, and agriculture—areas where local workers are either unavailable or unwilling to work due to harsh conditions. These migrants are typically employed in the unregulated labour market, contributing significantly to the city's economy. However, their influx can also create tensions, particularly as locals perceive these migrants as competitors for jobs, driving down wages and limiting employment opportunities for Delhi's native population.

The presence of illegal Bangladeshi migrants also brings with it a set of significant challenges related to living conditions. Many of these migrants settle in overcrowded, informal settlements, often referred to as slums, where access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, and healthcare is severely limited. Due to their undocumented status, these migrants are unable to access formal housing or government support, leading to further marginalization. The squalid conditions in which many of these individuals live exacerbate social problems such

as poor sanitation, overcrowding, and an increased strain on local resources. This situation contributes to the growth of informal settlements, which in turn generates additional social friction with local residents who are already facing challenges related to infrastructure and service delivery.

Social tensions between illegal Bangladeshi migrants and local residents are another important issue stemming from the migration phenomenon. Cultural differences, including variations in language, religion, and social practices, often create misunderstandings between these groups. Additionally, local populations may perceive migrants as a threat to their cultural identity, economic opportunities, or access to public resources. These concerns can foster discrimination and, in extreme cases, even violence against the migrant population. The influx of migrants, particularly when large numbers settle in close proximity to established communities, can create a sense of competition for both tangible resources and social space, heightening tensions and fostering an environment of resentment.

One of the most significant challenges faced by Bangladeshi illegal migrants in Delhi is their limited access to vital public services, particularly in the realms of education and healthcare. Due to their lack of proper documentation, these migrants are excluded from government-run programs, meaning that their children are often unable to attend formal schools, and their healthcare needs are unmet. This exclusion from essential services leads to poorer health outcomes and limited opportunities for education, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and disadvantage that is difficult to escape. As these migrant populations grow, the pressure on public systems, which are already stretched thin, intensifies, and local governments must grapple with how to address the needs of both residents and undocumented migrants.

The political implications of illegal Bangladeshi migration in Delhi are far-reaching, touching upon national security concerns, sovereignty, and immigration policy. The presence of undocumented migrants in the city has prompted debates about national security, particularly during election periods when political parties may use the issue to mobilize support among local voters. Some political groups argue that the influx of illegal migrants poses a demographic threat and undermines national security, while others view the migrants as victims of broader geopolitical issues and local economic hardship. These political disagreements, while rooted in concerns about border control and national integrity, often fail to consider the human side of natives, leaving the natives themselves vulnerable to crime and social threats.

The vulnerability of illegal Bangladeshi migrants in Delhi is exacerbated by their lack of legal status. Without documentation, they are often subject to exploitation by employers, landlords, and other individuals in positions of power. Employers may take advantage of these migrants' precarious position by offering them low wages, imposing poor working conditions, and denying them basic labor rights. Furthermore, their undocumented status leaves them particularly susceptible to human trafficking, as traffickers exploit their desperation for better living conditions. This exploitation can lead to a perpetuation of poverty and social isolation, making it difficult for these migrants to improve their circumstances or integrate into the broader society.

The Indian government has taken various steps to address illegal migration, including measures to strengthen border security and enforce deportation policies. However, the sheer scale of migration and the complex socio-political dynamics involved make it challenging to fully enforce these policies. While the central government has implemented several measures to curb illegal migration, the practical realities of managing large migrant populations in an urban environment like Delhi remain difficult to navigate. The lack of adequate enforcement mechanisms and the political challenges surrounding migration policy further complicate efforts to address the issue in a comprehensive manner.

The social consequences of illegal migration in Delhi are vast and multifaceted, affecting the city's infrastructure, local communities, and public services. As a metropolitan centre with significant pressures on its infrastructure, Delhi faces considerable challenges in managing the influx of undocumented migrants. The demand for housing, transportation, and sanitation services has grown in tandem with the city's population, and the arrival of migrants only exacerbates these issues. Many migrants settle in informal settlements, where essential services are limited or non-existent, further straining the city's already overburdened infrastructure.

Social tensions also arise from the cultural and economic differences between residents and migrant populations. The influx of migrants from Bangladesh introduces new artistic practices and social norms, which can lead to friction with Delhi's established communities. In some cases, local residents may feel that their cultural identity or economic well-being is threatened by the presence of large numbers of migrants. This sense of competition for resources, such as jobs and public services, can fuel prejudice, discrimination, and even violence against the migrant population. The perception that migrants are taking jobs or pushing down wages can create resentment and exacerbate social divides.

The arrival of illegal migrants also contributes to competition in the labor market, particularly in low-wage sectors like construction, domestic work, and manual labor. Migrants are often willing to accept lower wages and work in harsh conditions, which can drive down local wages and reduce job opportunities for Delhi's native workers. This phenomenon contributes to unemployment and underemployment, particularly for unskilled or semi-skilled workers who are already struggling to find stable employment. As competition for jobs increases, tensions between migrants and local workers can escalate, further deepening social divisions.

Furthermore, the presence of illegal migrants places additional strain on Delhi's social welfare systems. Migrants, who are excluded from formal welfare programs, often rely on emergency services or informal support networks. However, these resources are finite, and as the migrant population grows, the strain on social services intensifies. This can lead to debates about the allocation of public resources, with some advocating for the prioritization of local citizens over migrant populations. As the pressure on these systems grows, the city must find ways to balance the needs of its residents with the growing demands of undocumented migrants.

In summary, the social consequences of illegal migration in Delhi are wide-ranging and multifaceted. The presence of illegal Bangladeshi migrants creates significant challenges in terms of labor market competition, living conditions, social tensions, and public services. While the Indian government has attempted to address these issues through various policies, the complexity of managing illegal migration in an urban setting like Delhi presents ongoing difficulties. The interaction between migration, local communities, and public services highlights the need for comprehensive solutions that balance security concerns with the humanitarian needs of migrants. Addressing these challenges will require coordinated efforts at both the local and national levels to create policies that protect the rights of migrants while also ensuring the well-being of Delhi's residents.

7.2 Social Consequences of Illegal Migration in Delhi

Illegal migration affects different aspects of life in Delhi, including the economy, social harmony, and public resources.

7.2.1 Continuous Migration and Integration

Figure 7.1 Perpetual Cycle of Migration and Integration

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        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        │      First wave Migration     │
        │                               │
        │  Illegal Entry-Porous Borders,│
        │  social networks, cross-border│
        │  trade and vested political   │
        └──────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────┐
│   Continued Migration     │        │    Integration into the   │
│                           │        │       host country        │
│  Bring more illegal       │        │                           │
│  migrants, demographic    │        │  Cheap labor, Shadow      │
│  influx; influence the    │        │       economy             │
│  policies and politics    │        │                           │
└──────────────────────────┘        └──────────────────────────┘

        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        │      Establishment of         │
        │         Networks              │
        │                               │
        │  Nexus between illegal migrants-│
        │  authorities-Organized crime  │
        └──────────────────────────────┘
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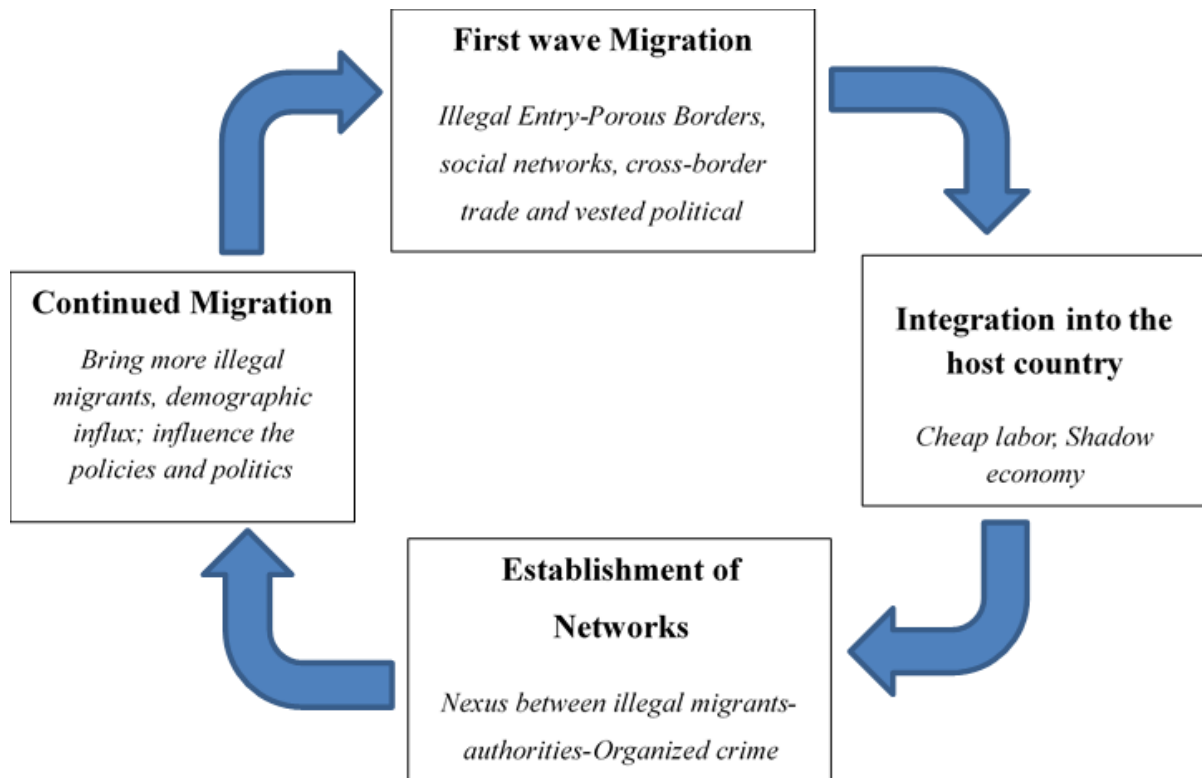
7.2.2 First Wave of Migration

Many illegal migrants enter India through unauthorized routes because it is easier and cheaper than going through legal channels. The long, porous border between India and Bangladesh makes it easy for people to cross without documents. They often enter through border states like West Bengal and Assam before making their way to Delhi. The migrants often travel in groups, relying on smugglers and agents to facilitate their journey. Many of them settle in areas with existing Bangladeshi communities, which provide them with initial support and employment opportunities.

### 7.2.3 Building Networks

Once they arrive in Delhi, illegal migrants form networks with people who are already living in the city. They often find work in construction, domestic help, and street vending. Some also get involved in illegal activities due to a lack of other options. These networks help new migrants settle in, find housing, and access informal jobs. Migrants also rely on religious and

cultural organizations to support their social and economic needs. These networks provide essential emotional support and information on how to navigate life in the city.

7.2.4 Ongoing Migration

After settling in Delhi, many migrants help their friends and family to come to India through the same illegal routes. This continuous arrival of people increases the demand for resources and creates tensions with local residents. The expanding migrant population contributes to the growth of informal settlements in areas such as Seelampur, Okhla, and parts of East Delhi. The constant inflow of migrants leads to overcrowding and further strain on limited public services. The inability of the government to regulate these movements effectively results in the unchecked expansion of slums.

Figure 7.2 Supporters of Illegal Migrants for Continued Migration
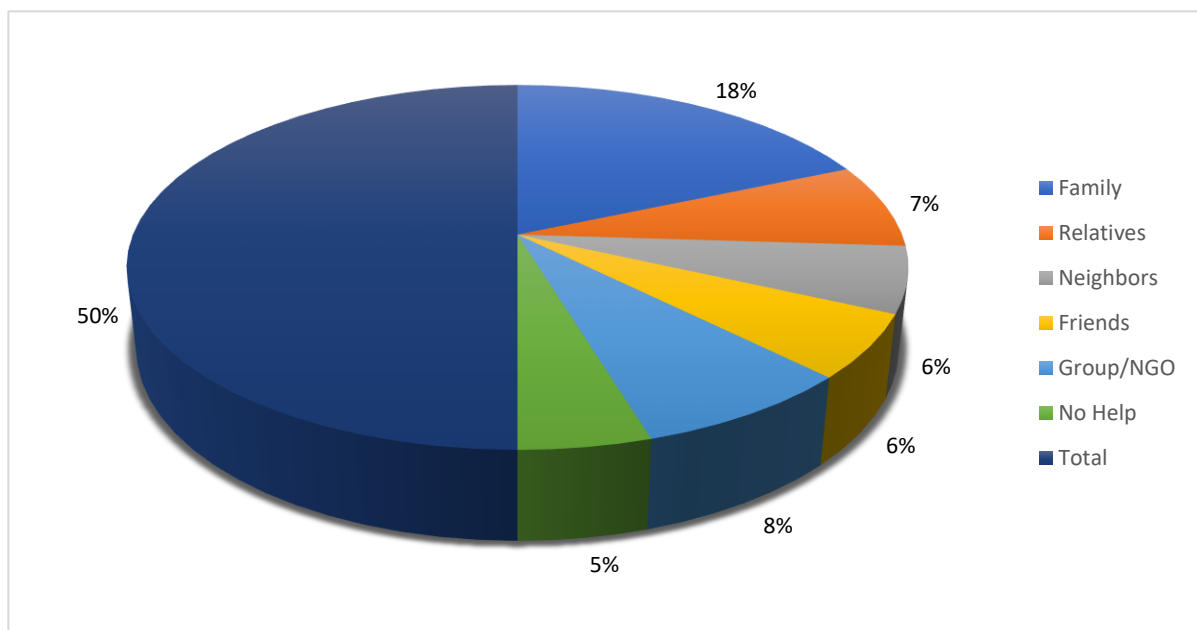
Source: Compiled by the Author based on primary data

7.3 Changes in Population

Illegal migration has led to a rise in Delhi's population, especially in slum areas. This rapid increase puts pressure on basic facilities like water, electricity, and public transport. Overcrowding in urban areas often results in unhygienic living conditions, leading to health problems among both migrants and local residents. The competition for basic amenities creates conflict between locals and migrants. The increasing population density also impacts traffic

congestion and environmental pollution. With more people migrating, public transport services become overwhelmed, making daily commuting a challenge.

7.4 Effect on Religious and Cultural Composition

The increase in the migrant population has changed the religious and cultural composition of some parts of Delhi. This has sometimes led to social tensions and conflicts, as cultural differences can create misunderstandings between local communities and migrants. In some areas, migrants have established their own cultural enclaves, which can lead to a lack of integration with the larger society. Religious and cultural festivals celebrated by migrants may sometimes cause friction with local communities. The rise of cultural pockets creates both opportunities for cultural exchange and challenges in maintaining social cohesion. Over time, some migrant communities have introduced new cultural practices to Delhi, enriching the city's diversity.

7.5 Crime and Safety Concerns

Some illegal migrants, due to poverty and lack of jobs, may get involved in crimes such as theft, drug trafficking, and illegal businesses. Women migrants often face exploitation and work in low-paying jobs. Law enforcement agencies often face challenges in identifying and managing crimes committed by undocumented individuals, further complicating the security situation. The lack of proper identification makes it difficult to monitor the migrant population effectively. Additionally, some criminal elements exploit migrant communities, making them vulnerable to illegal activities. This has led to a rise in petty crimes, and in some cases, more organized criminal activities have been reported.

Figure 7.3 Schematic Diagram of Vicious Cycle of Crime

Illegal Entry

Help of friends and families, nexus between illegal migrants and corrupt officials

Engagement in Criminal Activity

Mob Mentality, Capture connecting and economic points of the city

Link between organized crime and terrorism

Terrorism funding through the money generated

Rise of Organized Crime

Organized crime; make profits, launder the illegal money

7.6 Impact on Jobs and Wages

Illegal migrants take up low-wage jobs, which affects local workers who demand higher wages. This leads to job competition and wage suppression in sectors like construction and domestic work. Many local residents believe that migrants take away opportunities that should belong to them, leading to frustration and resentment. Small businesses may prefer hiring migrants due to lower wage expectations. This dynamic can create economic disparities and feelings of marginalization among local populations. The job competition also leads to increased hostility and a sense of insecurity among local job seekers.

7.7 Pressure on Public Healthcare

Illegal migrants mostly depend on government hospitals for healthcare services because private hospitals are expensive. This increases the burden on public healthcare facilities, making it difficult for locals to get proper medical attention. Overcrowded hospitals and clinics struggle to provide adequate services to both migrants and locals. Communicable diseases spread quickly due to the poor living conditions of migrants. Limited access to proper nutrition and

sanitation further exacerbates health problems. The influx of patients has led to longer waiting times and a shortage of essential medicines and equipment.

Figure 7.4 Access to Health Care Facility Among Immigrants
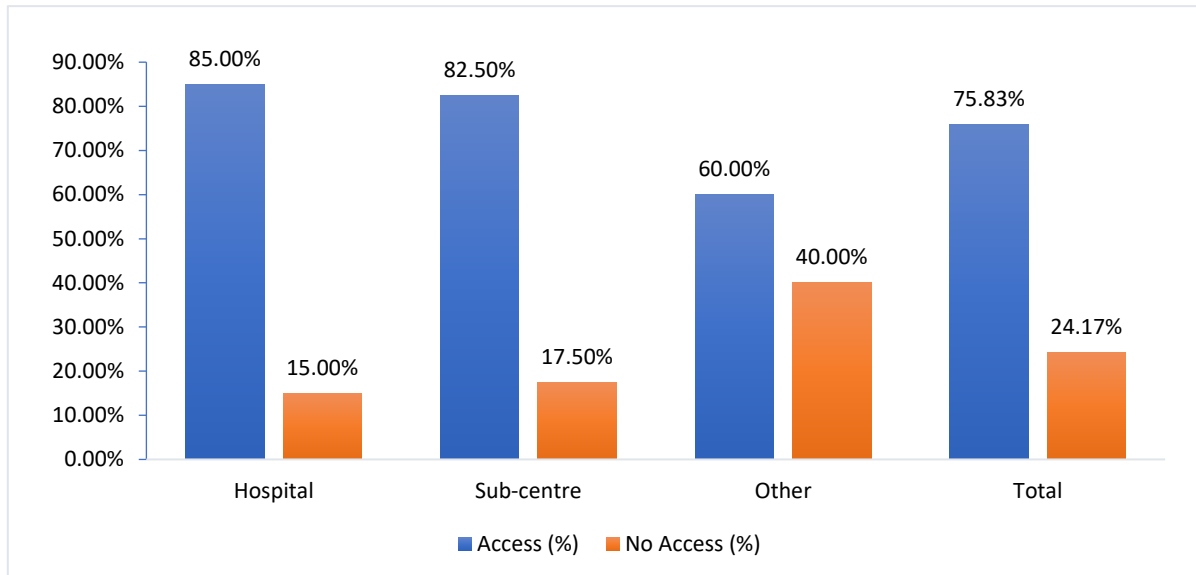
Source: Compiled by the Author based on primary data

7.8 Impact on Education

Many migrant children struggle to get admission to schools due to a lack of proper documentation. Even when they are admitted, language barriers and cultural differences make it hard for them to adjust and succeed. Overcrowding in schools due to the influx of migrant children puts pressure on educational infrastructure, affecting the quality of education for all students. Some children end up dropping out to work and support their families. This lack of education limits their future opportunities and perpetuates poverty. Teachers also face challenges in addressing the diverse needs of students from different cultural backgrounds.

7.9 Housing and Infrastructure

Strain Illegal migrants often settle in unauthorized colonies and slums, leading to illegal construction and encroachments on public land. These settlements lack proper sanitation, clean drinking water, and electricity, contributing to urban decay and environmental degradation. Unplanned expansion of these areas leads to fire hazards and health risks. The local administration faces difficulties in providing necessary services, further marginalizing these communities. These settlements often expand rapidly, creating challenges for urban planners and civic authorities.

7.10 Social Integration Challenges

Due to cultural and language differences, integration into local communities is often difficult. Migrants tend to live in close-knit groups and may not interact much with locals. This can lead to misunderstandings, social exclusion, and occasional conflicts between different communities. Social cohesion is impacted as migrants face discrimination and exclusion from mainstream society. Efforts to promote social integration through community programs and initiatives are essential for building harmony. Addressing social prejudices and encouraging dialogue can help bridge gaps between communities.

7.11 Summary

In summary, illegal migration presents considerable challenges for Delhi. The influx of undocumented migrants strains essential public resources, including healthcare, housing, and transportation, creating competition that often leads to conflicts between newcomers and established residents. Increased population density contributes to overcrowding and deteriorating living conditions, which can result in public health issues affecting both migrants and locals. Cultural tensions may arise as the demographic landscape shifts. While diversity can enrich the city, misunderstandings and clashes between different communities can lead to social discord. Migrant enclaves, while providing support networks, can also isolate individuals from broader society, hindering integration and exacerbating feelings of division. Furthermore, the relationship between illegal migration and crime complicates the situation. Poverty and limited job opportunities may drive some migrants into illegal activities, posing additional challenges for law enforcement and public safety. This dynamic fosters an environment of insecurity and mistrust, impacting the overall safety of communities. Overall, these negative consequences highlight the need for targeted policies and solutions to manage the complex issues arising from illegal migration in Delhi.

CHAPTER 8

POLITICAL RESPONSE TO ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IN DELHI

8.1 Introduction

Illegal immigration from Bangladesh to India, particularly to urban centers like Delhi, has become an increasingly divisive political issue over the years. As economic, social, and political dynamics evolve, the influx of undocumented immigrants has given rise to a complex web of concerns ranging from national security to the distribution of resources. The political discourse surrounding illegal immigration often finds itself polarized, with some advocating for stringent security measures to protect India's jobs, resources, and cultural integrity. In contrast, others argue for a more humanitarian approach that emphasizes the moral responsibility to provide refuge to people fleeing persecution. The political landscape is further complicated by the interaction between the central government's border security measures and local governance issues, where municipal and state authorities must take strict decisions and the provision of essential services with the national imperative of protecting borders. This chapter delves into the political responses to illegal immigration, examining their impact on governance, social cohesion, and the democratic fabric of Delhi (Joseph, 2006; Nayak, 2024). Recent reports suggest that media coverage of these issues, including those on *The Hindu* and *The Times of India*, have further polarised public opinion, as various stakeholders present conflicting narratives about the impact of illegal immigration on the region (The Hindu, 2025; The Times of India, 2025).

8.2 Different Political Views

8.2.1 The Role of State and Central Governments:

One of the primary challenges in addressing illegal immigration in Delhi is the administrative complexity stemming from its unique status as both a union territory and the capital of India. The Delhi government operates under the purview of the federal government, which means that while local governance can handle matters of social welfare, education, and housing, issues like border security, citizenship, and deportation policies fall under the jurisdiction of the central government (Chiranjeevi, 2023). This bifurcation of responsibilities has led to ongoing tensions, particularly when local authorities accuse central agencies of inadequately preventing

unlawful border entries, while central officials blame the Delhi government for failing to effectively identify and expel illegal immigrants.

These political squabbles frequently play out in the public domain, with political parties accusing each other of either failing to protect national security or neglecting the rights of marginalized communities. For instance, local politicians in some constituencies have been accused of actively courting illegal immigrants, particularly in areas where there is a high concentration of poor and displaced populations. They are often seen as attempting to gain electoral advantage by fostering loyalty among these communities, even though their status is largely undocumented (Sinha, 2000). Recent media coverage in *The Indian Express* has discussed the ongoing political tension over these accusations, particularly in relation to recent elections (Indian Express, 2025).

8.2.2 Delhi Government Subsidies and Facilities

The controversy surrounding subsidies for refugees, particularly the Rohingyas, has been one of the most contentious points in recent years. Critics of the Delhi government's policies argue that offering special benefits such as healthcare, housing, and education to refugees might incentivise further migration and strain the city's already overburdened infrastructure (Mayilvaganan, 2019). These political adversaries claim that by providing such resources, Delhi risks attracting more undocumented migrants, further exacerbating the problem of illegal immigration.

In response, government representatives defend their policies by pointing to India's long-standing tradition of offering humanitarian aid to those fleeing war, ethnic cleansing, or political persecution (Sinha, 2000). India's support for refugees dates back to its struggles with partition and its subsequent commitment to providing refuge to those in need. However, the debate remains deeply polarised, with critics arguing that humanitarian measures may inadvertently worsen the situation, making it more difficult to control the influx of illegal immigrants. For example, *The Hindu* reported on public concern about the Rohingya refugees receiving government subsidies, which fueled discussions about the allocation of public resources to non-citizens (The Hindu, 2025).

8.2.3 Strict Protocols: Border Control and Deportation

Nationalist political parties, especially those with a more nationalist stance on national security, have been vocal in advocating for stricter border controls and deportation measures for illegal immigrants. According to these parties, undocumented migrants, particularly from Bangladesh, are a significant burden on India's economy and security. They argue that illegal immigrants take up employment meant for Indian citizens, driving down wages and contributing to the unemployment crisis. Moreover, they assert that these immigrants place an undue strain on public services such as healthcare, education, and welfare programs, which are already stretched thin due to the growing population (Joseph, 2006).

Furthermore, nationalist parties raise the concern of linking illegal immigration to criminal activities, such as document forgery, human trafficking, and smuggling, arguing that these immigrants contribute to a variety of illicit activities that undermine India's security (Nayak, 2024). These parties, therefore, pledge during elections to enact more robust measures to identify, deport, and prevent the entry of illegal immigrants. Such policies have been framed as a way to safeguard India's cultural identity and economic stability, ensuring that national resources are reserved for Indian citizens. The issue of deportation has been widely reported, particularly in the context of rising concern about illegal migrants in Delhi (The Hindu, 2025; Indian Express, 2025).

8.2.4 Humanitarian Approach: Integration and Support

On the other hand, alternative political groups, particularly those with more liberal or left-leaning ideologies, contend that immigrants, even if undocumented, should be treated with dignity and respect. They argue that many of these immigrants are fleeing violence, political instability, and extreme poverty, conditions that push them to seek refuge in neighbouring India (Chiranjeevi, 2023). These political groups propose providing these immigrants with access to essential services, such as healthcare, education, and even work permits, to help them integrate into society and contribute positively to India's economy.

These political groups are often criticised by their opponents for engaging in "vote bank politics," where they seek to gain electoral support by advocating for the rights of immigrants, particularly those in marginalised communities. Reports suggest that certain politicians have gone so far as to assist immigrants in acquiring official documents, such as voter IDs and ration cards, in order to solidify their political base (Mayilvaganan, 2019). These practices raise

concerns about the potential for voter manipulation and whether such actions undermine the integrity of electoral processes. *The Times of India* has reported on such political dynamics, particularly highlighting the tension surrounding immigrant voting rights (The Times of India, 2025).

8.3 Government Policies and Actions

8.3.1 Judicial Structure

India has a number of legal frameworks in place to address the issue of illegal immigration, such as the Foreigners Act of 1946 and the Citizenship Act of 1955. These laws stipulate the conditions under which non-nationals can reside in India and outline the processes for their deportation if they are found to be living in the country illegally (Nandy, 2005). However, enforcing these laws, particularly in large urban centres like Delhi, is an ongoing challenge. The city's diverse population and the vast number of immigrants make it difficult for authorities to accurately identify and track undocumented individuals.

A key problem is the widespread use of counterfeit documents by immigrants, which enables them to blend into local communities and evade detection. These forged documents, which include fake identity cards, voter registration, and even ration cards, make it difficult for law enforcement to distinguish between lawful residents and illegal immigrants (Joseph, 2006). The challenge of differentiating between these two groups is particularly pronounced in Delhi, where millions of people from different parts of the country and the world reside.

8.3.2 Law Enforcement Operations and Suppression

To address the growing issue of illegal immigration, law enforcement agencies in Delhi periodically conduct raids in areas known to have high populations of undocumented immigrants. These operations are typically aimed at verifying the documentation of individuals and apprehending those who are residing in the city without legal authorisation (Nayak, 2024). However, the effectiveness of these operations has been questioned. Many immigrants, after being detained and deported, return to India through unofficial border routes, or they manage to elude detection by using fake documentation.

5 Bangladeshis arrested in Delhi in fresh crackdown on illegal immigrants

The five Bangladeshi illegal immigrants, who were arrested in west Delhi's Uttam Nagar, told the police that they had entered India from Bangladesh illegally with fake documents.

The five Bangladeshi nationals who were arrested in Delhi for living illegally in India. (Photo: Screengrab)

Himanshu Mishra
New Delhi, UPDATED: Jan 4, 2025 11:59 IST
Edited By: Prateek Chakraborty

Hindustan Times @100

Delhi: 3 Bangladeshis held in raid on illegal immigrants

By Karn Pratap Singh

Dec 31, 2024 10:34 PM IST

The drive is part of a two-month-long crackdown ordered by lieutenant governor VK Saxena on December 10

Moreover, these law enforcement operations are often criticised for being capricious and ineffectual. They are usually limited in scope and target specific neighbourhoods rather than addressing the systemic issues that allow illegal immigration to flourish. This inconsistent enforcement has led to frustrations both among local communities and the immigrant population, who may feel that they are being unfairly targeted or that the enforcement efforts lack a clear strategy (Nayak, 2024). Despite these challenges, finding a sustainable solution to

THE HINDU

Delhi Police identifies 175 people in verification drive against illegal Bangladeshi immigrants

"The 12-hour verification drive began at 6 p.m. on December 21, 2024 in outer Delhi area," officials said

Updated – December 23, 2024 04:20 am IST – New Delhi

THE HINDU BUREAU

The Delhi police have identified 175 more illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in the Capital, a police officer said on Sunday (December 22, 2024).

illegal immigration remains a difficult balancing act between ensuring national security and maintaining humanitarian principles. *The Indian Express* recently discussed the challenges faced by Delhi authorities in conducting such operations effectively, particularly due to the large migrant population (Indian Express, 2025).

8.4 Socioeconomic Consequences

Illegal immigration from Bangladesh significantly shapes the economic and social fabric of Delhi. Immigrants, predominantly from Bangladesh, often enter the labour force in sectors characterised by low wages, including domestic service, construction, and informal, unregistered enterprises. While their contributions to the city's economy cannot be dismissed, the influx of unauthorised migrants triggers intense competition for low-skilled employment, often resulting in heightened friction between local labourers and immigrant workers. This competition intensifies social tensions, as the indigenous workforce perceives these migrants as economic threats, accused of undercutting wages and taking jobs that should ideally be allocated to Indian nationals ("Illegal Bangladeshi migrants: Delhi tale," *Indian Express*, 2025). Moreover, the proliferation of undocumented immigrants exacerbates the strain on public services, particularly in the domains of healthcare, education, and housing. Educational institutions in Delhi have become overcrowded, with classrooms brimming with students from immigrant backgrounds, placing substantial pressure on the already overstretched educational infrastructure. Similarly, the healthcare system grapples with increased patient numbers, making access to essential services more difficult for both immigrants and residents. Informal settlements, also referred to as "slum clusters," have proliferated to accommodate the surging migrant population, encroaching on underdeveloped areas and straining urban resources. The cumulative effects of these pressures are detailed in recent reports, which underscore the challenges facing Delhi's infrastructure ("Delhi's housing crunch worsened by illegal migrants," *The Hindu*, 2025).

8.5 Fraudulent Documents and Identity Theft

A critical challenge in addressing illegal immigration in Delhi is the widespread use of fraudulent identity documents. Unauthorised immigrants often rely on counterfeit Aadhar cards, voter IDs, and ration cards, which allow them to assimilate into the city's social and economic systems. These falsified documents facilitate the acquisition of rental housing, the opening of bank accounts, and even the ability to vote in local elections, thus allowing illegal

immigrants to further integrate into Indian society under the guise of legality. The availability of these counterfeit documents raises significant concerns about the integrity of India's democratic processes, particularly during elections. The potential for non-citizens, even in minimal numbers, to influence electoral outcomes is a recurring issue within the political discourse, contributing to the proliferation of anti-immigrant rhetoric and calls for more stringent document verification processes ("Bangladeshis using fake IDs for elections," *Times of India*, 2025).

This issue has gained considerable attention in political debates, with accusations of political parties potentially exploiting undocumented immigrants for electoral gains. By providing these individuals with legal documents and welfare benefits, certain politicians may seek to secure loyalty from immigrant populations, further complicating the debate surrounding illegal immigration ("Undocumented migrants influencing Delhi elections," *The Hindu*, 2025).

8.6 Influence on Elections

The political discourse surrounding illegal immigration is particularly intense during election cycles in Delhi, with political parties attempting to use the issue to secure votes. In areas where significant populations of immigrants reside, parties often promise enhanced services and greater protection for these communities, aiming to win favour among immigrant voters. Conversely, other political factions advocate for stricter immigration controls, framing the issue as one of national security and economic protectionism. The notion that illegal immigrants may serve as a key voting bloc has spurred considerable debate, with allegations that certain political figures may disregard their illegal status in exchange for electoral support. This phenomenon, though often difficult to substantiate with concrete evidence, is reflected in various anecdotal accounts and investigative reports that suggest complicity between local officials and undocumented migrant groups ("Bangladeshi immigrants as electoral pawns," *Indian Express*, 2025).

While actual data regarding the scope of this practice is elusive, reports of illegal immigrants acquiring voter IDs and participating in elections have contributed to growing discontent among the broader electorate. Many citizens perceive this as a violation of their democratic rights, particularly in light of the vulnerability of election systems to manipulation. As such, the issue of undocumented migration remains central to political debates and electoral strategy in Delhi ("Undocumented migrants influencing Delhi elections," *The Hindu*, 2025).

8.7 Concerns Regarding Terrorism and Extremism

The infiltration of illegal immigrants is not only seen as a socio-economic challenge but also as a national security concern. India's security establishment has repeatedly expressed alarm over the possibility that extremist groups may exploit porous borders to infiltrate the country. While instances of terrorists entering India through these illegal routes remain rare in comparison to the broader influx of economic migrants, the potential for such events to destabilise national security is not taken lightly. High-profile terrorist attacks in India have occasionally involved infiltrators from neighbouring regions, underscoring the vulnerabilities posed by illegal immigration ("Security risks tied to illegal immigration," *The Hindu*, 2025).

Additionally, security think tanks have raised concerns about the potential for radicalisation within marginalised immigrant populations. If these groups continue to face socio-economic exclusion and live in conditions of relative deprivation, they may become more susceptible to extremist ideologies. Marginalisation, combined with economic hardships, creates fertile ground for violent extremism, whether it manifests in Islamist militancy or other forms of political violence. This concern is often cited by proponents of stringent surveillance and policing measures in immigrant-dominated communities, who argue that the lack of integration and opportunity heightens the risk of radicalisation ("Radicalization risks among marginalised immigrants," *Nayak, 2024*).

8.8 Challenges in Addressing Illegal Immigration

The complex issue of illegal immigration is compounded by several challenges that hinder effective policy development:

- **Ambiguous Data:** The absence of accurate data on the number of illegal immigrants residing in Delhi complicates the creation of targeted interventions. Without reliable estimates, policymakers are left to speculate about the scale of the problem, making it difficult to allocate resources effectively.
- **Fraudulent Documents:** The widespread availability of counterfeit identity documents further complicates efforts to identify and apprehend unauthorised immigrants. The sophisticated nature of these forgeries makes detection difficult, especially in the absence of robust verification processes ("Illegal immigration and fake documents," *Nayak, 2024*).

- **Political Disputes:** Ongoing disagreements between the central and state governments hinder the formulation and implementation of coherent immigration policies. These political disputes exacerbate the fragmentation of immigration control efforts, making it difficult to enact consistent strategies for addressing illegal immigration ("Delhi's divided response to illegal immigration," *Sinha, 2000*).

- **Human Rights Concerns:** Advocacy organisations argue that immigrants deserve equitable treatment and protection under international law, which makes mass deportation programs highly controversial. Efforts to strike a balance between national security and the protection of immigrant rights remain a central challenge ("Deportation debate: Human rights versus security," *Joseph, 2006*).

8.9 Prospective Developments and Policy Suggestions

Addressing illegal immigration in Delhi will require a multifaceted approach that brings together the central and state governments, civil society, and international organisations. Some potential policy recommendations include:

- **Strengthening Border Control:** Increasing the deployment of advanced surveillance technologies, such as drones and biometric systems, alongside the augmentation of border security personnel, to deter unauthorised border crossings and improve monitoring of high-risk areas ("Improving border security against illegal immigration" *Nandy, 2005*).

- **Regulating Immigrants:** Introducing mechanisms to regularise the status of immigrants who contribute to the local economy, such as the creation of temporary work permits and residency programs. These measures would allow immigrant workers to remain in the country legally, filling essential labour gaps while minimising the economic disruption caused by their unauthorised status ("Policy solutions for economic migrants," *Mayilvaganan, 2019*).

- **Community Engagement:** Promoting dialogue between local communities and immigrant populations to foster greater social cohesion and reduce tensions. These initiatives would seek to integrate immigrants into the broader social and cultural fabric of Delhi, promoting mutual understanding and cooperation.

- **Legal Reforms:** Reforming India's immigration laws to reflect the contemporary challenges of unauthorised immigration while ensuring that enforcement practices are fair, transparent, and humane. This may include updates to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the introduction of more efficient mechanisms for documenting and processing immigrants.

8.10 Summary

Illegal immigration from Bangladesh remains a deeply contentious and complex issue in Delhi's political and social landscape. While some view it as a threat to national security and economic stability, others advocate for a more inclusive and compassionate approach to using them as a vote bank. Despite the government's efforts, including legal actions and police raids, the problem continues to persist. The issue is further complicated by political divides, with certain parties emphasising national security concerns and others pushing for using them as a vote bank.

A well-rounded, balanced approach is essential—one that addresses the root causes of illegal immigration strengthens border security, improves identification mechanisms, and ensures fair treatment for immigrants. Moving forward, future policies should focus on enhancing intergovernmental collaboration and creating sustainable solutions that maintain national security and democracy.

CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Summary

The Delhi Migration Report explores the complex patterns, causes, and consequences of migration to Delhi, focusing on both internal and international migration. Delhi's status as India's capital and an economic hub has made it a prime destination for migrants seeking better opportunities. Internal migrants primarily arrive from Indian states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal, while international migrants, including a significant number of Bangladeshi and Rohingya immigrants, often enter illegally. The report highlights the push factors driving migration, such as poverty, unemployment, and religious-induced and environmental crises in origin regions, alongside pull factors like Delhi's robust job market, educational institutions, and access to public services. However, the influx of migrants has led to social, economic, and political challenges, particularly concerning illegal immigration.

Illegal migration from Bangladesh, facilitated by the porous 4,096-kilometer India-Bangladesh border, is a major concern. Historical waves of migration date back to the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, with subsequent decades witnessing continued movement due to political instability and economic disparity. Migrants often settle in densely populated neighbourhoods like Seelampur, Jamia Nagar, and Zakir Nagar, relying on informal networks for housing and employment. This concentration creates significant pressure on Delhi's urban infrastructure, including housing, healthcare, education, and sanitation. The report also examines the role of brokers, contractors, and political patronage in facilitating illegal immigration, with allegations of political actors providing fraudulent documentation to migrants for electoral gains.

The socio-economic integration of migrants remains a significant challenge. While many internal migrants contribute to Delhi's economy through construction, domestic work, and street vending, their living conditions are often precarious.

Migration has a profound demographic impact, as evidenced by census data. Between 1951 and 2011, Delhi's population grew rapidly, driven by high rates of migration and natural increase. However, the report notes a shift in recent decades, with net migration declining and more people moving to suburban areas like Noida and Gurgaon due to rising living costs and urban congestion. The gender ratio has also improved over time, reflecting better healthcare and increased participation of women in the workforce. Despite these trends, the report highlights concerns about illegal migrants altering the city's demographic composition, particularly with the growing share of the Muslim population.

From a security perspective, illegal migration poses significant risks. The report documents instances of illegal immigrants obtaining fake Aadhaar and voter ID cards, raising concerns about national security and electoral integrity. The Delhi Police has intensified efforts to identify and deport illegal immigrants, conducting door-to-door campaigns and dismantling fake documentation rackets. However, the lack of a comprehensive refugee policy complicates the situation for vulnerable groups like Rohingya refugees, who face statelessness and inadequate legal protections.

The report concludes with policy recommendations to address migration challenges. These include enhancing border security, improving urban planning, and developing satellite towns to reduce pressure on Delhi's infrastructure. It also emphasises the need for targeted welfare programs to support marginalised migrants and promote social integration. Legal reforms, such as streamlining documentation processes and ensuring the humane treatment of religiously prosecuted refugees like Hindu refugees, are essential for balancing security concerns with humanitarian considerations. The report calls for a multi-faceted approach combining robust governance, community engagement, and regional cooperation for effective and sustainable migration management.

9.2 Policy Implications

Delhi, being the national capital and an economic hub, has long attracted both legal and illegal migrants, especially from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh. Over the years, the Ministry of Home Affairs has implemented several policies to address the issue of illegal immigration, focusing primarily on the identification, documentation, and deportation of unauthorised immigrants. One of the key measures has been the verification drives conducted by the Delhi Police, particularly in slum clusters and unauthorised colonies, where illegal immigrants are often suspected to reside. These drives involve door-to-door checks to identify individuals

without valid documentation or those who have overstayed their visas. In recent years, the use of technology and data analytics has enhanced these efforts, enabling the authorities to track patterns and identify suspected illegal immigrants more efficiently.

In addition to police verification, the Delhi Police has intensified scrutiny of guest houses, hotels, and other accommodations to prevent such facilities from being used as temporary shelters by illegal immigrants. This step aims to curb the ability of illegal immigrants to acquire official identification, which could allow them to integrate into the local population more easily. The Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) has also been working in collaboration with local authorities to monitor and detain illegal immigrants, especially those involved in criminal activities. Deportation processes have been initiated in several cases, although these efforts are often delayed by bureaucratic and diplomatic hurdles.

Despite these measures, the challenges of tackling illegal immigration in Delhi persist due to several gaps in the existing policy framework. One of the most significant issues is the absence of a centralised database for tracking immigrants across the country. This lack of a unified system often allows illegal immigrants to move to other states to evade detection, thereby complicating the task of law enforcement agencies. Another challenge is the limited coordination between various governmental bodies, including the Delhi Police, FRRO, and immigration authorities, which undermines the effectiveness of existing policies. Moreover, political sensitivities and human rights concerns frequently delay the deportation of illegal immigrants, further complicating the situation.

To address these gaps, there is an urgent need for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach. Establishing a centralised database for tracking immigrants nationwide would greatly enhance the ability of law enforcement agencies to monitor and manage migration flows. Strengthening the coordination between various government bodies through an integrated task force could streamline efforts and improve efficiency. At the local level, community awareness campaigns should be initiated to involve residents in reporting suspicious activities while also addressing the security and legal concerns associated with immigration. Additionally, stricter enforcement of border controls and improved collaboration with neighbouring countries, particularly Bangladesh, are essential to curbing the influx of illegal immigrants.

Moreover, new policies should focus on strengthening documentation systems to prevent the misuse of identity-related services. Implementing biometric identification for all residents, for instance, could help differentiate between legal and illegal immigrants. Similarly, expanding the role of the FRRO and providing it with adequate resources to handle cases efficiently would ensure quicker identification and deportation processes. Regular audits of public and private institutions, such as schools and employers, should also be conducted to ensure compliance with verification requirements. To address the socio-economic factors driving illegal immigration, the government must also engage in diplomatic efforts to support development initiatives in source countries, thereby reducing the push factors that compel individuals to migrate illegally.

In conclusion, while the Ministry of Home Affairs has taken several measures to address the issue of illegal immigration, significant gaps remain that need to be filled through more coordinated, comprehensive, and technology-driven policies. Enhancing inter-agency cooperation, creating a centralised tracking system, and addressing the socio-economic drivers of migration are critical steps toward effectively tackling this challenge. At the same time, a balance must be struck between enforcing immigration laws and addressing the humanitarian concerns associated with religiously prosecuted migration like the Bangladeshi Hindu, ensuring that policy responses are both effective and equitable.

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