

# Examining the Demographic and Socio-Economic Differentials in Commuting: A Review of Literature

Nazish Naz

Research Scholar, Department of Geography, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India

## ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of commuting is largely selective in nature and there is more or less paucity of commuting by a certain segment of population with particular demographic, economic or social traits (i.e. age, sex, education, marriage, occupation, income, caste/race and religion, etc.). As a general assumption, the males, adults, and the married people are likely more to commute and those with low level of education, medium level of income and with skilled professions, though, the demographic and socio-economic differentials in commuting may vary in developed and developing societies depending on their distinct socio-economic structure. Commuting selectivity process poses the impacts on both sending and receiving areas. The commuting of workforce with particular qualifications to a region increases the number of that trait in particular area and decreases the number of that segments in dispatching area. Likewise, commuters with high skill of technology and education also diffuse them in their place of work, which later become the base for the development of that particular region.

**KEYWORDS:** *Commuting, Differential, Age, Sex, Education, Marriage, Occupation, Income, Caste/race and Religion*

## INTRODUCTION

Human mobility has been getting the transformations in terms of motives, period and distance since its earlier stages to the present modern era with the transformations in demographic, social and economic structure, fast urbanization with its concomitant industrialization, and ahead in the process of civilization, development of communication and transportation. The movement of human being which previously used to happening for longer duration of period or permanent in nature, has turned into various forms of movement such as temporal or periodic, circular or reversible, and most recently on daily basis. With the emergence of these new mobility patterns, the traditional form of mobility such as seasonal migration and permanent migration are on decline in almost everywhere even in developing countries. Contrary to it, the shortest and reversible or daily movement is on increase both in number and distance as an expression of technical progress in human life. In the literature pertaining to development and regional economics, labour mobility is considered one of the most effective mechanisms through which rural and urban interaction can lead to a reduction in the urban-rural divide (Lewis, 1954). One of the most significant emerging forms of mobility is commuting characterized with shortest duration, basically for the purpose of employment. With its immense implications on socio-economic structure, commuting has extended over periods of time and has increasingly become a substitute for migration.

In studying the phenomenon of commuting from the socio-economic perspective of population, the certain queries arise

in mind such as which groups of society is likely more to commute? What circumstances prompted them for commuting across their domicile boundaries? What characterize the commuters? Nonetheless, commuting is a social, economic and geographical phenomenon which occurs in specific condition of a region or a country and this is reinforced by the group of individuals of different social, economic and demographic characteristics in accordance with the commuting selectivity process. In fact, the pattern of commuting is getting the emergence because of transformations in demographic and socio-economic structure of the society with its concomitant of socio-economic regional disparities particularly between rural and urban communities.

Commuting brings modifications or alteration in great a part of population moving towards the cities for work. It also causes the changes on place of origin as well as on the place of destination through the diffusions of knowledge and expansions of norms, civilization and culture by a particular group of individuals with specific characteristics. Moreover, the overall pattern of commuting is reinforced by the demographic and socio-economic structure of the population residing in a particular region. It, thereby, for a comprehensive analysis of the commute patterns existing in a specific region, the knowledge of characteristics of commuters becomes essential.

Besides, gaining a better understanding of commuting characteristics in rural and urban areas is also significant for

**How to cite this paper:** Nazish Naz "Examining the Demographic and Socio-Economic Differentials in Commuting: A Review of Literature"

Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-4 | Issue-6, October 2020, pp.1378-1382, URL: [www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd33540.pdf](http://www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd33540.pdf)



Copyright © 2020 by author(s) and International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development Journal. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



regional planners and policy makers which provide them a new insight into development and better planning. Moreover, the consideration of the demographic and socio-economic differential of the commuters in terms of their sex, age, marital status, educational attainment, and nature of their employment and their mutual relationships would be helpful for measuring the level of socio-economic development.

Therefore, having considered the significance of the analysis of commuters' socio-economic characteristics in light of above said questions, the present study has been constructed to examine commuters' caste, religion, literacy and educational status, household size, occupations, monthly income, working hours etc.

### Commuting Differential

The phenomenon of commuting is not common process rather it is a complex category of mobility which is almost selective. The daily movement of the persons to work having some particular demographic, economic or social traits or qualifications, brought about by selectivity process and considered separately, is termed commuting selectivity or differential commuting. It is performed higher and longer by a particular group of society in terms of age, sex, marriage, occupation, income, race, caste and religion. All of these traits in context of commuting have been discussed as follows:

#### Age

Age-selectivity is the major characteristic of commuting. It is a universal fact that most of commuters belong to young-adult working age-groups. This is an evidence from a vast studies which exhibits the fact that young and adults are likely more to commute than that juveniles (below 15 years of age) or older/senile (above 60) (Simonsahn, 2006; Sandow, 2008; 2010, Champion et al., 2009; Partridge et al., 2010; Erikson, 2011; Chandrasekhar, 2011; Dargoy and Clark, 2012). Rosen bloom, (2006) assessed that women in the United states still commuted shorter distances and times than men, although the gender gap was diminishing. Age is a significant parameter of commuting. It is almost universal that most of commuters belong to young and adult working age-group. It is because aged people stay at home. They look after families and non-farm activities and therefore, they prefer commuting rather than to migrate (Mehbub, 1997). It may also be due to the fact that many young people continue to live in their parental home during their 20s because of free residence and the domestic service provided by parents, or the inability to find their own dwelling at an affordable price, and then choose longer commuting distances because of the difficulty in finding a first job nearby.

#### Sex

The process of commuting is also sex-selective. Generally, the males are higher to commute more and longer, and more frequent than the females (Madden, 1981; Fox, 1983; Hanson, 1985; Gordon et al., 1989; Schwanen et al., 2002; Susilo and Maat, 2007; Vem acker and Witlox, 2011; Groot et al., 2012; Osth and Lindgren, 2012). The gender differential in commuting is wider among the developing countries than that of existing in developed countries because of their weaker socio-economic position and on account of their societal conventional trends and also due to the prevalence of social and cultural norms (Mantra, 1981). In developing

countries, problems of connectivity, high cost of transportation, paucity of work opportunities and lack of security in cities discourage women to commute from rural to urban areas. The commuting on shorter distance is predominated by women but on longer distance commuting the condition gets reversed when the males have distinct dominance, but in traditional society both short and long distance commuting are male dominated. The gender differential in commuting is greatly influenced by the presence of children in families. The women tend to commute shorter when children are present in a household because of the still traditional larger role in child care by women (Deding et al., 2009; Ancker and Witlox, 2011). Among women commuters the probability of long distance commuting of single women with a dependent child is lowered by 20 percent than the women without children or with earning spouses (Champion et al., 2009). The National Travel Survey 2005 found that in Great Britain men commute an average of 17 km compared with 10 kms. Men commute longer than that of women. Among women commuters, the probability of long-distance commuting of single woman with dependent child is lowered by 20% than other women with no dependent child (Champion et al., 2009).

#### Marriage

The commuting is also selective largely by marital status of commuters. The decisions to commute longer or shorter distance depends on household responsibilities which are outcome of the marital status of an individual. The married persons have generally higher responsibilities than those of unmarried. Thereby, the role in performance of domestic duties restricts them to commute longer or higher only if the place of residence is not shifted closer to their work place. The probability of commuting is higher among the married workers than the unmarried workers as the unmarried being not strongly tied with the families often prefer to migrate rather than to commute. If in some circumstances the migration is not possible, they shift their residence closer to their place of work and thus they tend to commute shorter. It has been substantiated by the study of commuting done by Davanzo(1981), wherein it has been stated that the unmarried are often more likely to move closer than they commute long distances because of lower levels of place-specific investments, both in terms of the direct costs of moving and psychological costs, compared to married persons. Another study of one-worker households in the US showed that married workers had longer work trips than the unmarried (Gordon et al., 1989). This suggests that unmarried workers are more likely than married workers to change their place of residence to be closer to their workplace, the result being reduced commuting distances. The commuting of married women is more selective than the men because of their greater probability of household responsibilities along with child care, therefore, they cannot afford to spend as much time commuting as males or single women (Guest, 1976; Gera and Kuhn, 1981 ; Gordon, 1980) .

#### Education

The selectivity of commuting is also much selective in term of educational status of commuters. In developed countries, the commuters are better educated than the non-commuters; the similar condition too prevails in developing societies but only in context of urban-rural commuting where the commuting selectivity based on education is much

clearer than the rural-urban commuting. In such condition, the commuters are found to be highly educated at their place of work than those of having their residence at the same place. The empirical literature conducted on commuting finds that a higher level of education is associated with longer trips in terms of distance (Lee and McDonald, 2003; Papnikolaou, Vance and Hedel, 2008). So is with commuting time, the commuters with high status of education spend the more time in commuting as compared to the commuters with low level of education who often invest less time in commuting (Lee and McDonald, 2003; Shen, 2005). More especially, Shen (2000) finds that highly educated people travel longer while low educated people tend to work closure to home. In addition it has been urged that highly educated people have a higher probability to be long distance commuters (Ohman and Lindgren, 2003).

### Occupation

As far as the occupations are concerned, the commuting seems highly selective as the workers associated to particular occupational activities commute more than others. In agrarian society, when the majority of population is involved in farms activities, the commuting differential in term of occupation is much clear as the commuting by skilled, semi-skilled, landless agricultural labourers, seasonal labors and those with small size of landholding exceeds that of cultivators or unskilled workers. Congdon (1983) found that, in London, white-collar workers were likely to move from their workplace areas and then commute long distances. It appears that the more educated and those persons with high occupational status are more likely than others to use commuting as a complement to residential mobility.

### Income

Income is widely accepted as a general measure of development. It is customary to identify whether a region has been backward or advanced in the levels of development using the estimates of per capita income. The income of commuters is also considerable to know it is feasible or not if a commuter spends more on his regular-journey to work than his income then he would tend to migrate rather than commuting. So a question about commuters' average monthly income as well total amount spent on commuting out of total income has been asked.

With regard of income, the commuting is too selective by the particular income-groups. The workers with very low and very high level of income are less to commute than those having the medium level of income. Likewise, the labourers commute more for higher wages than those comparatively gaining the lower wages. It may be attributed to fact that the commuting is itself expensive process which stress the pressure on commuters' income; therefore, the cost spent on commuting requires to be compensated by the earnings of commuters. This is why the commuters earning very low income/wages avoid commuting rather preferred to work at place of their residence. Commuters extend their work trips to obtain high wages and reduce travel times when the wages fall.

### Caste/Race

The commuting by people of certain caste/race on account of their differences in their socio-economic status is more selective than the people belonging to a particular

caste/race. It can be supported by the evidences from both the developed and developing countries. In developing countries, the strong caste systems prevails where the certain caste on the basis of their occupation and on the basis of the ownership of small size of landholding suffer from the poor economic condition. They also discriminated in social terms because of their occupations they engaged in. Therefore, the dissatisfaction of so called backward castes population arising from caste prejudices existing at place of domicile compel them to move to another area and thus, the commuters of lower caste groups are more to commute outside of their place of origin for livelihood sources than upper caste groups. Similarly, in developed countries, there are clear differences in commuting volume of the people of different races. For example, in USA, the commuting patterns of whites completely differ from those of the blacks.

### Household size

Individuals' decisions about commuting patterns can also be related to family structure. Generally, in developing countries, the members of joint families are motivated to be more and migrate over longer distance being less burdened by household responsibilities because of the presence of more responsible older/elder members in families to take off the duties more sincerely. It, thus, commuting prevails more among the people belonging to medium or small sized households. Harbison, (1981); assessed that extended family networks, especially in developing societies, may encourage long distance commuting because of the strength of emotional ties to other members in the networks. It can be expected that members of nuclear families, compared to those of extended families, would be more likely to commute shorter distances because of the importance of parental roles; thus they cannot spend much time in commuting.

### Conclusions:

Commuting as an outcome of regional differences is in itself a phenomenon characterized with the differentials in certain aspects of the people by those it is performed. The differentials in commuting may be associated with two types of characteristics of population; the assigned and the acquired. The act of commuting is obviously dominated by certain assigned characteristics such as age, and sex such as it is reinforced majorly by the young and adult and by the males being more capable to commute more and further but among those it is further distinctly selected by particular group of acquired characteristics such as education, income, occupations, skill and technical know-how, etc. In fact, the varying reasons operating at place of origin bring the differentials ultimately in commuting workers because some of workers being unable to earn the higher income start moving the areas having the more chances of more income, likewise, the people being dissatisfied with present occupational status due to its arduous nature or lack of dignity are forced to commute to another place in search of work in their interested fields. Moreover, the persons with high level of education go ahead from their domicile to find the work as per their educational status. Similarly, the skilled and the persons with special technological know-how also start to commute towards the areas having the opportunities in particular field. Therefore, differential in commuting is much obvious phenomenon which will keep on increasing with the increase in socio-economic disparities in socio-economic structure of population.



## References:

- [1] Champion, T., Coombes, M., and Brown, D.L., (2009). *Migration and Longer-Distance Commuting in Rural England*, *Regional Studies*, 43(10), 1245-1259, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- [2] Chandrasekhar, S. (2011). *Worker commuting Between the Rural and Urban: Estimates from NSSO Data*. EPW, Nov.12, Vol. XLVI, No.46, pp. 22-25
- [3] Clark, A. E. (2003). *Unemployment as a social norm: psychological evidence from panel data*. *Journal of Labor Economics*. 21, pp. 323-352.
- [4] Clark, William A. V.; van Lierop, W. F. J. (1986). *Residential Mobility and Household Location Modelling*. *Handbook of Regional and Urban Economics*, vol. I. Ed.: Nijkamp, Peter. P. – Amsterdam 1986, pp. 97–132.
- [5] Clark, William A.V., Youqin Huang and Suzanne Withers (2003). *Does Commuting Distance Matter? Commuting Tolerance and Residential Change*. *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 33, pp. 199–221, Elsevier.
- [6] Congdon, P. (1983). *A model for the interaction of migration and commuting*. *Urban Studies*, 20, pp. 185-195.
- [7] Dargay, J., & Hanly, M. (2003). *Travel to Work: an investigation based on the British Household Panel Survey*. In NECTAR conference (No. 7).
- [8] Davanzo, J. (1981). *Microeconomic approaches to studying migration decisions*, in: G. F. De Jong and R. W. Gardner (Eds) *Migration Decision Making: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Micro level Studies in Developed and Developing Countries*, pp. 90-129. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- [9] Erikson, U., Misimi, E., & Gallart-Jornet, L. (2011). *Super chilling of rested Atlantic salmon: Different chilling strategies and effects on fish and fillet quality*. *Food Chemistry*, 127(4), pp. 1427-1437.
- [10] Fox M. B., (1983). *Working women and travel: the access of women to work and community facilities*. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 49: pp. 156-170.
- [11] Gera, Surendra and P. Kuhn (1980). *An Empirical Model of Residential Location and the Journey-to-Work in A Metropolitan Area*, *Socio-Econ. Plan. Sci.* vol. 14, pp. 67-77.
- [12] Gordon, I. and Lamont, D. (1980). *A model of labour market interdependencies in the London region*. *Environment and Planning*, 14: pp.237-264.
- [13] Gordon, P, Richardson, HW & Jun, M-J (1991). *The Commuting Paradox Evidence from the Top Twenty*. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 57, No. 4, pp. 416-420.
- [14] Gordon, Peter, Kumar, A. and Richardson (1989). *Gender Differences in Metropolitan Travel Behaviour*. *Regional Studies*, 23. (6) Pp. 499-510.
- [15] Gordon, Peter, Kumar, A. and Richardson (1989). *Gender Differences in Metropolitan Travel Behaviour*. *Regional Studies*, 23. (6) Pp. 499-510.
- [16] Groot S. P. T., Groot H. L. F. and Veneri P. (2012). *The Educational Bias in Commuting Patterns: Micro-Evidence for the Netherlands*. Discussion Papers Number 12-080/3. Tinbergen Institute, Amsterdam.
- [17] Guest, A. M. (1979). *Patterns of suburban population growth.1970–75*. *Demography*, 16(3), pp. 401-415.
- [18] Hanson, S. and Johnston, I. (1985). *Gender Differences in Work-trip Lengths: Explanations and Implications*. *Urban Geography*, 6: pp.193-219.
- [19] Hanson, S., & Pratt, G. (1991). *Job search and the occupational segregation of women*. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 81 (2), pp. 229-253.
- [20] Harbison, S. F. (1981). *Family structure and family strategy in migration decision making*. In G. F. De Jong and R. W. Gardner (Eds.), *Migration decision making* (pp. 225-251). New York: Pergamon Press.
- [21] Lee, B., & McDonald, J. (2003). *Determinants of commuting time and distance for Seoul residents: The impact of family status on the commuting of women*. *Urban Studies*, 40 (7), pp. 1283–1302.
- [22] Madden, J., & White, M. (1978). *Women's work trips: An empirical and theoretical overview*. In S. Rosenbloom (Ed.), *Women's travel issues: Research needs and priorities* (pp. 201–204). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation.
- [23] Madden, J. F. (1981). *Why women work closer to home*. *Urban Studies*, 18, pp. 181-194.
- [24] Madden, J. F. and L. Chen Chiu (1990). *The Wage Effects of Residential Location and Commuting constraints on Employed married Women*, *Urban Studies*, vol. 27(3), pp.353-369.
- [25] Madden, Janice F. and White, M., (1980). *Spatial Implications of Increases in the Female Labor Force: A Theoretical and Empirical Synthesis*, *Land Economics*, vol. 56, no. 4, pp. 432-446.
- [26] Mahbub (1986). *Population mobility in rural Bangladesh: The circulation of working people*.
- [27] Mahbub A.Q.M. (1997). *Mobility Behaviour of Working People in Bangladesh-Rural-Rural and Rural-Urban Circulation*, University of Dhaka: Urban Studies programme (ISBN: 984-510-012- 0).
- [28] Mantra, I.B. (1981). *Population Movement in Wet Rice Communities*. GadjahMada University Press, GadjahMada University, Yogyakarta.
- [29] Öhman, M., & Lindgren, U. (2003). *Who are the long-distance commuters? Patterns and driving forces in Sweden*. *Cybergeo: European Journal of Geography*.
- [30] Partridge, M., Ali, K. and Olfert, R., (2010). *Rural-to-Urban Commuting: Three Degrees of Integration*, *Growth and Change*, 41 (2), pp. 303–335.
- [31] Rosen bloom (2006). *Understanding women and men's travel patterns: The research challenge*. In *Research on*

- Women's Issues in Transportation*, Vol. 1: Conference Overview and Plenary Papers, Transportation Research Board Conference Proceedings 35, pp. 7-28. Washington DC: National Research Council.
- [32] Sandow, E., & Westin, K. (2010). *Preferences for commuting in sparsely populated areas: The case of Sweden*. Journal of Transport and Land Use, 2(3/4), pp. 87-107.
- [33] Schwanen, T. & Dijst, M. (2002): *Travel-time ratios for visits to the workplace: the relationship between commuting time and work duration*. Transportation Research A, 36, pp. 573-592. DOI: 10.1016/S0965-8564(01)00023-4.
- [34] Shen, Q. (1998). *Location characteristics of inner-city neighborhoods and employment accessibility of low-wage workers*. Environment and Planning B-Planning & Design 25(3): pp. 345-365.
- [35] Shen, Q., and T. W. Sanchez. (2005). *Residential location, transportation, and welfare-to-work in the United States: A case study of Milwaukee*. Housing Policy Debate 16(3-4): pp. 393-431.
- [36] Simonsohn, U., (2006): *New-Yorkers Commute More Everywhere: Contrast Effects in the Field*. Review of Economics and Statistics, 88, pp. 1-9.

