# SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF RURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS IN PUNJAB: INTER-REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Rupinder Kaur, Assistant Professor
Department of Economics, Punjabi University Patiala
rupinderkaur0076@gmail.com

Anita Rani,Research Scholar
Department of Economics, Punjabi University Patiala
anitamittal23@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT**
The present paper is an attempt to analyze inter-regional variations in the socio-economic profile of labor households in rural Punjab. The study reveals that the majority of rural labour households belong to the scheduled caste category in all three regions. The non-agricultural labor households tend to have a nuclear family in the high-productivity region, while in the case of low-productivity and medium-productivity regions, they tend to be joint families. Agricultural labour households have a tendency towards joint families in all three regions. The majority of the rural labourers are living in semi-pucca houses. The living conditions of rural labour households are better in the high-productivity region as compared to the other regions. The proportion of illiterates is higher in low-productivity regions. The proportion of persons who got education up to higher secondary and graduate levels is higher in the high-productivity region. The ratio of dependents is high among rural labour households. This is due to fewer employment opportunities in rural areas.
**Keywords:** Rural labour, Family-type, Caste, Education, Housing Facilities.
**JEL Codes:** I 21, I 31, J 11, J 12.

## Introduction

India is a land of villages as around two-thirds of the total labor force in the country lives in rural areas. Wage-paid employment is the main source of their livelihood. The majority of Indian workers are agricultural laborers who constitute the major segment of the rural workforce. Rural labor is the most significant factor of production from a social and economic point of view. They possess virtually no human and physical assets and derive their livelihood from wage-paid manual labor in agricultural activities. Among different economic groups, they are the least organized, most vulnerable, economically disadvantaged and highly impoverished (Sharma, 2005). They usually get low wages, the conditions of work put an excessive burden on them, and the employment they get is extremely irregular (Raju, 2017). The higher land rents, lower wage rates and higher interest rates have further increased the dependency of labourers on the employer/landlord and, many times led to perpetual bondage (Sarap, Venkatanarayana, 2016).

The system of self-sufficiency in villages was destroyed by the British rulers. The caste system prevailing in India was also responsible for the origin of the rural labour class in India. In India, landowners belonged to the upper castes, tenants to the intermediate castes and landless labour to the lower castes. According to the prevalent caste system, the Brahmins were forbidden from doing manual labour. Therefore, they leased out their land to tenants or employed the lower class, landless labourers. This led to the emergence of a landless rural labour class in India (Tandon, 1984). After the eighties, the mechanization of farm operations and other labour-saving devices resulted in a drastic cut in labour absorption in the agricultural sector. Overcrowding and growth of agricultural labourers continued unabated, given poor labour absorption in the non-agricultural sector and also inadequacies of reforms in the agrarian structure (Rajarajeswari, 2016). Moreover, formal sectors of the economy, both industrial as well as service sectors have not held good prospects for absorbing the surplus rural labour force. Therefore, it has been realized that non-farm activities in rural areas can become the primary source of employment and earnings for the rural labour force during the slack seasons. But, most employment opportunities in the non-farm sector are temporary and casual. The increasing casualization is a cause of concern as workers in this category may not get regular work and are more likely to be low-paid resulting in a higher incidence of poverty. Vulnerability and risks, the uncertainty of work, low earnings, unfair treatment by employers and lack of social protection measures are the normal characteristics of the casual workforce (Papola, Sharma, 2005).

The state of Punjab occupies an extremely important position in Indian agriculture. The transformation of agriculture in the state through an increase in area under irrigation, high-yielding varieties, application of fertilizers along with effective price policy, particularly for wheat and rice crops, has been accompanied by an increase in employment in agriculture up to the early eighties. But, this green revolution has not made any

  

significant impact on the well-being of rural labourers. The expected hike in wages due to an increase in demand also did not take place because of the migration of labour from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar into Punjab, increasing supply and effectively suppressing levels of wages (Singh, Singh, 2016). Despite their significant contribution to the Green Revolution, Punjab's agricultural labour did not reap any benefits or see an improvement in their living conditions (Bharti, 2011).

The share of agriculture in the state's GDP and agricultural workforce in the total workforce has gone down substantially during the last three decades. There has been a moderate shift of rural workers from agriculture to non-agriculture until the late 1980s and virtual stagnation in the early 1990s (Biradar, Bagalhoti, 2001). The current scenario reveals that the agricultural sector is passing through a complex crisis of low productivity, poor competitiveness and adverse climatic conditions. Under these circumstances, this trend should have further reduced employment in the rural economy. The differences in living conditions can explain the differences in many economic and non-economic outcomes. A study of the socioeconomic characteristics of rural labourers is significant to assess the general levels of living of labour households in rural Punjab.

**Literature Review**

The green revolution and new economic policy had not brought a significant socioeconomic and political change in the life of the rural labourers. All the indicators related to the well-being of rural labourers indicated that the new economic policy has worsened the lives of rural labour instead of improving them (Jha, 1997). The percentage of landless labourers as a proportion of the rural labour force increased from 1991 to 2001. About 61 per cent of the rural households either had no land or own an uneconomic holding of less than one hectare. They had low social status with no bargaining power. They were often facing the problem of seasonal unemployment and under-employment due to the seasonal nature of agriculture and the absence of alternative working occupations. These agricultural labourers were under the slavery system and unorganized (Khan, 2013). The non-viability of farming forced a large number of marginal farmers to join the rank of labourers or industrial workers in Punjab. Due to this, agricultural labour had become the largest rural worker category in Punjab after cultivators. The rural labour households in Punjab showed the existence of indebtedness, low level of literacy rate and uncertainty and causality in employment (Singh, 2009).

The proportion of rural workers with primary education was 32 per cent and with secondary-level educated workers was 39 per cent. The marital status, the number of dependents and social overhead capital positively affect the labour force participation rate. The number of livestock, spouse participation in economic activity and size of land holding harmed rural labour force participation (Faridi, Basit, 2011). About 59 per cent of agricultural labourers were illiterates in the Nellore district. All the caste categories were concentrated in the family size groups of 3 and 4, 5 and 6 persons in a household. About 67 per cent of males and 60.60 per cent of females were in the working age group. The majority of workers were engaged as agricultural labourers (Naidu, Mohan and Pratap, 2015). The agricultural labourers were the victims of social, political and economic exploitation and discrimination. Almost 43 per cent population of the agricultural labour households were illiterate and 82.52 per cent belonged to the scheduled castes category (Singh, Singh, 2016). The agricultural labour households were characterized by low and irregular earnings, a decline in the level of employment and income, low consumption and a high level of indebtedness. The majority of these agricultural labourers belonged to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (Raju, 2017). The majority of the households belonged to the scheduled castes which were already socially and economically backward. 97 per cent of the sampled labour households were living in their own houses but the average number of rooms was just 2.35. Only basic amenities were available to the households. About 33 per cent of the persons were earning and the remaining 67 per cent were non-earners (Chaudhary, Singh, 2021).

The agricultural labourers were placed at the bottom of the economic ladder. During the current situation of agrarian crisis in the state of Punjab, these labourers are living in deplorable conditions. Their income level was too low to cover their domestic needs. The incidence of poverty and indebtedness among them was higher (Uppal, Kaur and Singh, (2018). The rural labour households were characterized by low earnings, a decline in income, low consumption and high debt, and remedies will have to be found to generate more employment and income (Anand 2022).

**Objectives of the study**

The present paper is an attempt to analyse the region-wise socio-economic profile of the rural labour households in Punjab. More specifically, the objectives are:

1) To analyse the caste and family structure of the rural labour households in Punjab.
2) To examine the housing conditions of rural labour households in Punjab.
3) To examine the educational and economic status of the sampled population.

  

**Research Methodology**

The study is based on primary data. For the purpose of data collection, a multi-stage stratified random sampling method has been used. The sample design is a three-stage stratified sample given as under:

(i) Selection of districts;
(ii) Selection of villages; and
(iii) Selection of households

For data collection, the whole state has been divided into three regions based on agricultural productivity namely low, medium and high productivity regions. One district has been selected from each region. The Mansa district from low productivity region, S.B.S. Nagar from medium productivity region and Ludhiana from high productivity region has been selected. One village has been chosen from each development block of the three selected districts. There are five development blocks in the Mansa district, five in the S.B.S. Nagar district and twelve in the Ludhiana district. Thus, in all, twenty-two villages have been selected from the three districts under study. One-tenth of the households from the total number of rural labour households in the villages have been selected randomly for the survey. Thus, in all, 530 rural labour households have been selected from 22 villages. Out of 530 rural labour households, 163 from Mansa district, 175 from S.B.S. Nagar and 192 from Ludhiana district have been selected. Out of 530 rural labour households, 229 households are agricultural labour households and 301 are non-agricultural labour households in all three districts. Out of 229 selected agricultural labour households, 99 households are from the Mansa district, 49 households are from the S.B.S. Nagar district and 81 households are from the Ludhiana district. Out of 301 selected non-agricultural labour households, 64 households are from the Mansa district, 126 households are from the S.B.S. Nagar district and 111 households are from the Ludhiana district.

**Primary Data Analysis**

**Caste-wise distribution of rural labour households**

In India, caste plays an important role as far as the socio-economic condition of any community is put under consideration because most of the decisions of a family or person belonging to any community are determined by the caste factor. The caste-wise distribution is given in Table 1. The table indicates that the majority of the sampled rural labour households belong to the scheduled caste category in all three regions. This proportion is 88.96 per cent in the low-productivity region, 88.57 in the medium-productivity region and 85.94 per cent in the high-productivity.

| Caste | Agricultural Labour | Non-Agricultural Labour | All Labour Households |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Low-Productivity Region | | |
| GC | 5 (5.05) | 3 (4.69) | 8 (4.91) |
| BC | 7 (7.07) | 3 (4.69) | 10 (6.13) |
| SC | 87 (87.88) | 58 (90.62) | 145 (88.96) |
| Total | 99 (100.00) | 64 (100.00) | 163 (100.00) |
| | Medium-Productivity Region | | |
| GC | 2 (4.08) | 3 (2.38) | 5 (2.86) |
| BC | 3 (6.12) | 12 (9.52) | 15 (8.57) |
| SC | 44 (89.80) | 111 (88.10) | 155 (88.57) |
| Total | 49 (100.00) | 126 (100.00) | 175 (100.00) |
| | High-Productivity Region | | |
| GC | 5 (6.17) | 4 (3.60) | 9 (4.69) |
| BC | 8 (9.88) | 10 (9.01) | 18 (9.38) |

  

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| SC | 68<br>(83.95) | 97<br>(87.39) | 165<br>(85.94) |
| Total | 81<br>(100.00) | 111<br>(100.00) | 192<br>(100.00) |

Source**:** Field Survey, 2015-16
Note 1**:** GC-General Caste, BC-Backward Class and SC-Scheduled Caste
2**:** Figures in brackets are column-wise percentages
Table 1: Caste-wise Distribution of Rural Labour Households in Different Regions

For the agricultural labour households, 87.88 per cent of households belong to the scheduled castes in the low-productivity region. The corresponding figures are 89.80 and 83.95 per cent respectively in medium and high-productivity regions. In the case of non-agricultural labour households, the scheduled caste category represents 90.62, 88.10 and 87.39 per cent of sampled households in low, medium and high-productivity regions respectively. The proportion of backward caste rural labour households is 9.38, 8.57 and 6.13 per cent respectively in high, medium and low productivity regions. This proportion is slightly higher for the agricultural labour households in high and low-productivity regions than non-agricultural labour households. About five per cent of households in high and low-productivity regions and about three per cent in medium-productivity regions belong to the general caste. This proportion is slightly higher for the agricultural labour households in all three regions than for non-agricultural labour households.

**Family type and family size of rural labour households**

Table 2 manifests the average family size of the sampled rural labour households across the regions. The average family size of the rural labour households is 5.17, 5.38 and 4.97 in the low-productivity, medium-productivity and high-productivity regions, respectively. Moreover, it is pertinent to mention that the family size for the agricultural labourers in the low-productivity, medium-productivity and high-productivity regions is 5.12, 5.20 and 5.07, respectively. The table puts forth a clear contrast of the prevalent family type in each region of the state. For the low-productivity region, it has been found that 44.79 per cent of the total rural labour households have nuclear families, while the remaining 55.21 per cent have joint families. In the medium-productivity region, 44.57 per cent of the total rural labour households have nuclear families, while the remaining 55.43 per cent have joint families. In high-productivity regions, 49.48 per cent of the total rural labour households have nuclear families, while the remaining 50.52 per cent have joint families.

| Description | | Agricultural Labour | Non-Agricultural Labour | All Labour Households |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Low-Productivity Region | | | | |
| Family Type | Nuclear | 44<br>(44.44) | 29<br>(45.31) | 73<br>(44.79) |
| | Joint | 55<br>(55.56) | 35<br>(54.69) | 90<br>(55.21) |
| | Total | 99<br>(100.00) | 64<br>(100.00) | 163<br>(100.00) |
| Family Size | | **5.12** | **5.22** | **5.17** |
| Medium-Productivity Region | | | | |
| Family Type | Nuclear | 22<br>(44.90) | 56<br>(44.44) | 78<br>(44.57) |
| | Joint | 27<br>(55.10) | 70<br>(55.56) | 97<br>(55.43) |
| | Total | 49<br>(100.00) | 126<br>(100.00) | 175<br>(100.00) |
| Family Size | | 5.20 | 5.56 | 5. 38 |
| High-Productivity Region | | | | |
| Family Type | Nuclear | 36<br>(44.44) | 59<br>(53.15) | 95<br>(49.48) |
| | Joint | 45<br>(55.56) | 52<br>(46.85) | 97<br>(50.52) |
| | Total | 81<br>(100.00) | 111<br>(100.00) | 192<br>(100.00) |
| Family Size | | 5.07 | 4.86 | 4.97 |

  

Source**:** Field Survey, 2015-16
Note**:** Figures in brackets are column-wise percentages.
Table 2: Family Type and Family Size of Rural Labour Households in Different Regions

We can see that among the non-agricultural labour households, it is the high-productivity region that tends to have a nuclear family, while in the case of low-productivity and medium-productivity regions, the non-agricultural labour households tend to have joint families. Agricultural labour households have a tendency towards joint families in all three regions.

**Housing condition of rural labour households**

Table 3 focuses on the housing characteristics of labour households across the different regions in rural Punjab. About 67 per cent of the sampled rural labour households are living in semi-pucca houses in the low-productivity region. This proportion is 53.14 and 45.32 per cent, respectively in medium and high-productivity regions. About 27 of the sampled rural labour households are living in pucca houses in the low-productivity region. In medium and high-productivity regions, about 39 and 53 per cent of sampled rural labour households are living in pucca houses. When we compare agricultural and non-agricultural labour, the proportion of labourers living in semi-pucca houses is higher for non-agricultural labourers in all the regions. The proportion of labourers living in pucca houses is higher for agricultural labourers in all the regions.

| Description | | Agricultural Labour | Non-Agricultural Labour | All Sampled Rural Labour |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Low-Productivity Region | | | | |
| House Type | Katcha | 06 (6.06) | 04 (6.25) | 10 (6.13) |
| | Semi-pucca | 64 (64.65) | 45 (70.31) | 109 (66.88) |
| | Pucca | 29 (29.29) | 15 (23.44) | 44 (26.99) |
| | Total | 99 (100.00) | 64 (100.00) | 163 (100.00) |
| Housing Condition | Good | 33 (33.33) | 25 (39.06) | 58 (35.58) |
| | Average | 59 (59.60) | 34 (53.13) | 93 (57.06) |
| | Dilapidated | 07 (7.07) | 05 (7.81) | 12 (7.36) |
| | Total | 99 (100.00) | 64 (100.00) | 163 (100.00) |
| Toilet | Yes | 92 (92.93) | 62 (96.88) | 154 (94.48) |
| | No | 07 (7.07) | 02 (3.12) | 09 (5.52) |
| | Total | 99 (100.00) | 64 (100.00) | 163 (100.00) |
| Source of Drinking Water | Hand pump | 18 (18.18) | 08 (12.50) | 26 (15.95) |
| | Tap | 71 (71.72) | 51 (79.69) | 122 (74.85) |
| | Others | 10 (10.10) | 05 (7.81) | 15 (9.20) |

  

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | 99 (100.00) | 64 (100.00) | 163 (100.00) |
| Medium-Productivity Region | | | | |
| House Type | Katcha | 7 (14.28) | 7 (5.56) | 14 (8.00) |
| | Semi-pucca | 20 (40.82) | 73 (57.94) | 93 (53.14) |
| | Pucca | 22 (44.90) | 46 (36.50) | 68 (38.86) |
| | Total | 49 (100.00) | 126 (100.00) | 175 (100.00) |
| Housing Condition | Good | 14 (28.57) | 40 (31.75) | 54 (30.86) |
| | Average | 31 (63.27) | 79 (62.70) | 110 (62.86) |
| | Dilapidated | 04 (8.16) | 07 (5.55) | 11 (6.28) |
| | Total | 49 (100.00) | 126 (100.00) | 175 (100.00) |
| Toilet | Yes | 47 (95.92) | 123 (97.62) | 170 (97.14) |
| | No | 02 (4.08) | 03 (2.38) | 05 (2.86) |
| | Total | 49 (100.00) | 126 (100.00) | 175 (100.00) |
| Source of Drinking Water | Hand pump | 12 (24.49) | 20 (15.87) | 32 (18.29) |
| | Tap | 36 (73.47) | 98 (77.78) | 134 (76.57) |
| | Others | 01 (2.04) | 08 (6.35) | 09 (5.14) |
| | Total | 49 (100.00) | 126 (100.00) | 175 (100.00) |
| High-Productivity Region | | | | |
| House Type | Katcha | 01 (1.23) | 03 (2.70) | 04 (2.08) |
| | Semi-pucca | 36 (44.45) | 51 (45.95) | 87 (45.32) |
| | Pucca | 44 (54.32) | 57 (51.35) | 101 (52.60) |
| | Total | 81 (100.00) | 111 (100.00) | 192 (100.00) |
| Housing Condition | Good | 37 (45.68) | 64 (57.66) | 101 (52.60) |
| | Average | 42 (51.85) | 45 (40.54) | 87 (45.31) |
| | Dilapidated | 02 (2.47) | 02 (1.80) | 04 (2.09) |
| | Total | 81 (100.00) | 111 (100.00) | 192 (100.00) |
| Toilet | Yes | 80 (98.77) | 109 (98.20) | 189 (98.44) |
| | No | 01 (1.23) | 02 (1.80) | 03 (1.56) |
| | Total | 81 (100.00) | 111 (100.00) | 192 (100.00) |

  

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source of Drinking Water | Hand pump | 12 (14.81) | 15 (13.51) | 27 (14.06) |
| | Tap | 65 (80.25) | 87 (78.38) | 152 (79.17) |
| | Others | 04 (4.94) | 09 (8.11) | 13 (6.77) |
| | Total | 81 (100.00) | 111 (100.00) | 192 (100.00) |

Source**:** Field Survey, 2015-16
Note**:** Figures in brackets are column-wise percentages
Table 3: Type of House, Housing Condition, Toilet Facility and Source of Drinking Water of Rural Labour Households in Different Regions

If we notice the housing conditions in this region, 35.58 per cent of the sampled rural labour households have houses of good condition. Moreover, 57.06 and 7.36 per cent of the rural labour households have average and dilapidated houses in the low-productivity region. 33.33, 59.60 and 7.07 per cent of the agricultural labourers have houses of good, average and dilapidated condition. The proportion of the sampled non-agricultural labourers living in good, average and dilapidated houses is 39.06, 53.13 and 7.81 per cent, respectively. 94.48 per cent of rural labour households have toilet facilities. About 75 per cent of rural labour households use public taps for drinking water. It is pertinent to note that 71.72 and 79.69 per cent of sampled agricultural labour and non-agricultural labour households respectively use public taps as the main source of drinking water in this region. In the medium-productivity region, we find that 62.86 per cent of the sampled rural labour households have houses of average condition, respectively. The proportion of the sampled rural labour households having toilet facilities is 97.14 per cent. Similarly, this proportion is 95.92 and 97.62 per cent for the agricultural labourers and non-agricultural labourers, respectively. A large proportion of the sampled rural labour households (76.57 per cent) have public taps as a source of drinking water. In the high-productivity region, we find that 52.60, 45.31 and 2.09 per cent of the sampled rural labour households have houses of good, average and dilapidated condition, respectively. This proportion for the agricultural labourers is 45.68, 51.85 and 2.47 per cent, respectively. The proportion of the sampled non-agricultural labourers living in good, average and dilapidated houses is 57.66, 40.54 and 1.80 per cent, respectively. The proportion of sampled rural labour households having toilet facilities is 98.44 per cent. Similarly, this proportion is 98.77 and 98.20 per cent for the agricultural labourers and non-agricultural labourers. A large proportion of the sampled rural labour households have public taps as a source of drinking water.

Thus, the living conditions of rural labour households are better in the high-productivity region as compared to the other regions as large strata of rural labourers have the facilities such as pucca and good-condition houses.

**Sex ratio and education level**

The information regarding the sex ratio and education level of the sampled rural labour households is given in Table 4. Sex ratio and education are important predictors and the most widely and frequently used indicators that capture distinctive aspects of socio-economic status.

| Description | Agricultural Labour | Non-Agricultural Labour | All Labour Households |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Low-Productivity Region | | |
| Male | 267 | 186 | 453 |
| Female | 240 | 148 | 388 |
| Sex ratio | 899 | 796 | 857 |
| | Medium-Productivity Region | | |
| Male | 132 | 372 | 504 |
| Female | 123 | 329 | 452 |
| Sex ratio | 932 | 884 | 897 |

  

| | High-Productivity Region | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 220 | 276 | 496 |
| Female | 191 | 264 | 455 |
| Sex ratio | 868 | 957 | 917 |

Source**:** Field Survey, 2015-16
Table 4: Sex Ratio of Sampled Population in Different Regions

The table depicts that the sex ratio in the low-productivity region for the rural labour, agricultural labour and non-agricultural labour households is 857, 899 and 796, respectively. Alternatively, the sex ratio in the medium-productivity region is 897, 932 and 844, respectively for the rural labour, agricultural labour and non-agricultural labour households, respectively. The corresponding figures for the high-productivity region are 917, 868 and 957, respectively. Hence, these figures reveal that rural Punjab has a higher proportion of males than females across the regions.

It can be asserted from Table 5 that the proportion of illiterates among rural labour households is higher in the medium-productivity region followed by the low and high-productivity regions. Among the literates, in the low-productivity region, 27.92, 23.37, 18.94, 8.36 and 0.86 per cent of the sampled rural labour persons are educated up to the primary, middle, matric, higher secondary and graduate levels, respectively. In the medium-productivity region, 30.71, 23.83, 16.07, 5.68 and 0.55 per cent of the population of rural labourers have got education up to the level of primary, middle, matric, higher secondary and graduate levels, respectively. Also, for the high-productivity region, 32.82, 21.19, 18.66, 8.45 and 1.54 per cent of the population of rural labourers have been educated up to primary, middle, matric, higher secondary and graduate levels, respectively. The proportion of illiterates is also higher in the medium-productivity region followed by the low and high-productivity regions for the agricultural labourers. Among the literates, in the low productivity region, 29.47, 23.78, 16.67, 7.52 and 1.22 per cent of the sampled agricultural labour persons are educated up to the primary, middle, matric, higher secondary and graduate levels, respectively. In the medium-productivity region, 29.44, 25.80, 18.15 and 4.03 per cent of the population of agricultural labourers have got education up to the level of primary, middle, matric and higher secondary levels, respectively. For the high-productivity region, 35.95, 18.23, 16.20, 8.60 and 1.02 per cent of the population of agricultural labourers have been educated up to primary, middle, matric, higher secondary and graduate levels, respectively.

| Description | Agricultural Labour | Non-Agricultural Labour | All Labour Households |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Low-Productivity Region | | |
| Illiterate | 105 (21.34) | 62 (19.31) | 167 (20.55) |
| Primary | 145 (29.47) | 82 (25.55) | 227 (27.92) |
| Middle | 117 (23.78) | 73 (22.74) | 190 (23.37) |
| Matric | 82 (16.67) | 72 (22.43) | 154 (18.94) |
| Higher Secondary | 37 (7.52) | 31 (9.66) | 68 (8.36) |
| Graduation | 06 (1.22) | 01 (0.31) | 07 (0.86) |
| Total | 492 (100.00) | 321 (100.00) | 813 (100.00) |
| | Medium-Productivity Region | | |

  

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Illiterate | 56 (22.58) | 156 (23.39) | 212 (23.16) |
| Primary | 73 (29.44) | 208 (31.18) | 281 (30.71) |
| Middle | 64 (25.80) | 154 (23.09) | 218 (23.83) |
| Matric | 45 (18.15) | 102 (15.29) | 147 (16.07) |
| Higher Secondary | 10 (4.03) | 42 (6.30) | 52 (5.68) |
| Graduation | 0 (0.00) | 05 (0.75) | 05 (0.55) |
| Total | 248 (100.00) | 667 (100.00) | 915 (100.00) |
| | High-Productivity Region | | |
| Illiterate | 79 (20.00) | 79 (15.31) | 158 (17.34) |
| Primary | 142 (35.95) | 157 (30.43) | 299 (32.82) |
| Middle | 72 (18.23) | 121 (23.45) | 193 (21.19) |
| Matric | 64 (16.20) | 106 (20.54) | 170 (18.66) |
| Higher Secondary | 34 (8.60) | 43 (8.33) | 77 (8.45) |
| Graduation | 04 (1.02) | 10 (1.94) | 14 (1.54) |
| Total | 395 (100.00) | 516 (100.00) | 911 (100.00) |

Source**:** Field Survey, 2015-16
Note 1**:** Minors below 4 Years are excluded. Their total number is 109.
2**:** Figures in brackets are column-wise percentages
Table 5: Education Level of Sampled Population in Different Regions

In the case of sampled non-agricultural labourers, the proportion of illiterates is again higher in the medium-productivity region followed by the low and high-productivity regions. Among the literates, in the low productivity region, 25.55, 22.74, 22.43 and 9.66 per cent of the sampled non-agricultural labour persons are educated up to the primary, middle, matric and higher secondary, respectively. In the medium-productivity region, 31.18, 23.09, 15.29 and 6.30 per cent of the population of non-agricultural labourers have got education up to the level of primary, middle, matric and higher secondary, respectively. Also, for the high-productivity region, 30.43, 23.45, 20.54 and 8.33 per cent of the population of non-agricultural labourers have been educated up to primary, middle, matric and higher secondary, respectively.

The above analysis shows that there is a positive relationship between education and the productivity of the region. The proportion of illiterates is higher in the low-productivity region. On the other hand, the proportion of persons who got education up to higher secondary and graduate levels is higher in the high-productivity region.

**Age-wise distribution**
It can be observed from Table 6 that 62.99 per cent of the rural labour population appears in the working age groups of 15-60 years, in the low-productivity region, 65.16 in the medium-productivity region and about 66 per cent in the high-productivity region. On the other hand, the proportion of dependents is 36.98, 34.94 and 34.06 per cent in low, medium and high-productivity regions, respectively. The proportion of the population that

  

appears in the working age groups of 15-60 years for agricultural labour is 59.76, 62.75 and 62.29 per cent in the low, medium and high-productivity regions, respectively. The corresponding figure for non-agricultural labourers is 67.97, 66.05 and 68.70 per cent in the low, medium and high-productivity regions, respectively. The percentage of dependent people in the age group of 0- 15 and above 60 years is higher for agricultural labour households than non-agricultural labour households in all three regions.

| Age ( In Years) | Agricultural Labour | Non-Agricultural Labour | All Labour Households |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Low-Productivity Region | | |
| 0-15 | 161 (31.76) | 83 (24.85) | 244 (29.01) |
| 15-30 | 87 (17.16) | 90 (26.95) | 177 (21.05) |
| 30-45 | 144 (28.40) | 81 (24.25) | 225 (26.75) |
| 45-60 | 72 (14.20) | 56 (16.77) | 128 (15.22) |
| Above 60 | 43 (8.48) | 24 (7.18) | 67 (7.97) |
| Total | 507 (100.00) | 334 (100.00) | 841 (100.00) |
| | Medium-Productivity Region | | |
| 0-15 | 75 (29.41) | 191 (27.25) | 266 (27.83) |
| 15-30 | 50 (19.61) | 176 (25.11) | 226 (23.64) |
| 30-45 | 75 (29.41) | 178 (25.39) | 253 (26.46) |
| 45-60 | 35 (13.73) | 109 (15.55) | 144 (15.06) |
| Above | 20 (7.84) | 47 (6.70) | 67 (7.01) |
| Total | 255 (100.00) | 701 (100.00) | 956 (100.00) |
| | High-Productivity Region | | |
| 0-15 | 116 (28.22) | 139 (25.74) | 255 (26.81) |
| 15-30 | 92 (22.38) | 146 (27.04) | 238 (25.03) |
| 30-45 | 110 (26.76) | 134 (24.81) | 244 (25.66) |
| 45-60 | 54 (13.15) | 91 (16.85) | 145 (15.25) |
| Above | 39 (9.49) | 30 (5.56) | 69 (7.25) |
| Total | 411 (100.00) | 540 (100.00) | 951 (100.00) |

Source**:** Field Survey, 2015-16
Note**:** Figures in brackets are column-wise percentages
Table 6: Age-wise Distribution of Sampled Population in Different Regions

  

The above analysis shows that the proportion of the working population is slightly higher in medium and high-productivity regions than in the low-productivity region. The proportion of the working population is higher for non-agricultural labour households than agricultural labour households in all three regions.

**Economic status**

The data showing the economic status of the sampled rural labour population is provided in Table 7. In the low-productivity region, the proportion of earners, earning dependents and dependents is 30.56, 21.88 and 47.56 per cent, respectively.

| Economic Status | Agricultural Labour | Non-Agricultural Labour | All Labour Households |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Low-Productivity Region | | |
| E | 145 (28.60) | 112 (33.53) | 257 (30.56) |
| ED | 124 (24.46) | 60 (17.97) | 184 (21.88) |
| D | 238 (46.94) | 162 (48.50) | 400 (47.56) |
| Total | 507 (100.00) | 334 (100.00) | 841 (100.00) |
| | Medium-Productivity Region | | |
| E | 87 (34.12) | 257 (36.66) | 344 (35.98) |
| ED | 61 (23.92) | 111 (15.84) | 172 (17.99) |
| D | 107 (41.96) | 333 (47.50) | 440 (46.03) |
| Total | 255 (100.00) | 701 (100.00) | 956 (100.00) |
| | High-Productivity Region | | |
| E | 120 (29.20) | 179 (33.15) | 299 (31.44) |
| ED | 141 (34.30) | 85 (15.74) | 226 (23.76) |
| D | 150 (36.50) | 276 (51.11) | 426 (44.80) |
| Total | 411 (100.00) | 540 (100.00) | 951 (100.00) |

Source**:** Field Survey, 2015-16

Note 1**:** E-Earning, ED-Earning Dependent and D-Dependent 2**:** Figures in brackets are column-wise percentages

Table 7: Economic Status of Sampled Population in Different Regions

In the medium-productivity region, the proportion of earners, earning dependents and dependents amongst the sampled rural labour households is 35.98, 17.99 and 46.03 per cent, respectively. For agricultural labourers, this proportion is 34.12, 23.92 and 41.96 per cent, respectively. The table further exhibits that among non-agricultural labourers, the number of earners, earning dependents and dependents is 36.66, 15.84 and 47.50 per cent, respectively. In the high-productivity region, the proportion of earners, earning dependents and dependents amongst the sampled rural labour households is 31.44, 23.76 and 44.80 per cent, respectively. For agricultural labourers, this proportion is 29.20, 34.30 and 36.50 per cent, respectively. The table further exhibits that among non-agricultural labourers, the number of earners, earning dependents and dependents is 33.15, 15.74 and 51.11 per cent, respectively. The above analysis shows the proportion of dependents is negatively related to the productivity of regions. This is due to fewer employment opportunities in rural areas. This is the depth of the situation that persons who are earning have to bear the burden of the dependents.

  

**Findings**

The above analysis shows that a large proportion of the scheduled castes people work as low-paid agricultural labourers and non-agricultural labourers for their livelihood and occupy the lowest position in rural Punjab across the regions. But the proportion of the scheduled castes households is slightly lower in the high-productivity region. The proportion of illiterates is higher in the low-productivity region. On the other hand, the proportion of persons who got education up to higher secondary and graduate levels is higher in the high-productivity region. In all the regions, the rural labourers have minimum access to various facilities like good housing, education, and safe drinking water which require urgent attention. The proportion of the working population is slightly higher in the medium and high-productivity regions than in the low-productivity region. The living conditions of rural labour households are slightly better in the high-productivity region as compared to the other regions as large strata of rural labourers have pucca and good-condition houses in this region.

**Conclusion**

To improve the socio-economic conditions of rural labourers in Punjab, the government have to come up with effective policies. The programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abihan should be implemented on a priority basis. Though the government must provide some kinds of scholarships to increase the attainment of education of the wards of labourers. The lack of professional knowledge and financial constraints become hindrances in acquiring higher and professional education. So government must provide skill-based professional education to the wards of these poor labourers. Apart from this easy and cheap institutional finance for education should be given top priority. Since most of the labour households live in dilapidated housing conditions across the regions, the state government must come forward to provide housing facilities to rural labourers. There must be adequate accommodation of at least two rooms with kitchen and toilet facilities to provide them with a dignified living. A large proportion of the sampled rural labour households use the tap for drinking water. Gram panchayats should provide fresh drinking water by setting up general taps and water filters in rural areas for these rural labourers.

**References**

Anand. M. (2022), "Socio-economic condition of agriculture labour in India", International Journal of Applied Research, 8(6), 108-112. https://www.allresearchjournal.com/archives/2022/vol8issue6/PartB/8-6-3-529.pdf

Biradar, R.R. , Bagalhoti, S.T. (2001), "Changing facets of employment in rural India: Emerging issues and challenges", Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics, 56 (3),538-552.

Bharti, V. (2011), "Indebtedness and suicides: Field notes on agricultural labourers of Punjab", Economic and Political Weekly, 46(14), 35–40.

Chaudhary, A. , Singh, S. (2021), "Socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers in Punjab", Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics,76 (3) .443-452.

Faridi, M.Z. , Basit, A.B. (2011), "Factors determining rural labour supply: A Micro Analysis", Pakistan Economic and Social Review, 49(1), 91-108.

Jha, P. (1997), "Economic reforms and agricultural labourers", Economic and Political Weekly, 32(20),1066-1068.

Khan, M. H. (2013), "An article on agricultural labour problems in Barpeta of Assam", Journal of Pharmacy, 3(2),11-13.

Naidu. M. C., Mohan, M, R. and Pratap, G. (2015), "Agricultural labour and livelihoods - a study in Nellore district", Paripex - Indian Journal of Research, 4(1), 42-44.

Papola, T. S., Sharma, A.N. (2005), "Towards a policy agenda for the rural non-farm sector", In Nayyar, Rohini and Sharma, A. N.(ed.) Rural Transformation in India: The role of non-farm sector. Institute of Human Development, New Delhi.

Rajarajeswari, V. (2016), "The socioeconomic status of agricultural labourers in Srivaikuntam taluk, Tuticorin district", Asia Pacific Journal of Research, 1(35),143-48. Available at https://www.apjor.com/downloads/0602201623.pdf

Raju, B.V. (2017), "Agriculture labour's socio-economic conditions (A study in Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh)", Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM), 19(11), 34-39. DOI: 10.9790/487X-1911023439

Sarap, K. , Venkatanarayana, M. (2016), "Some aspects of dynamics in the rural labour market: Interface between credit and labour markets", Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ 28a7/ 1bc1ea8acc2d1108c92ac4ce16a44193fb19.pdf.

Sharma, H.R. (2005), "Economic conditions of agricultural labour households in the 1990s: a state-level analysis of wage earnings and indebtedness", The Indian Journal of Labour Economics, 48(2), 425-436.

Singh, G , Singh, K. (2016), "Employment patterns among agricultural labourers in rural Punjab", Social Change, 46(3), 409–427.

  

Singh, S. (2009), "Survival of agricultural labour in Punjab: A burning question", Economic and Political Weekly, 44(29), 24-25.

Tandon, B.B. (1984), "Wage differentials between scheduled caste and non-scheduled caste agricultural labour", Indian Journal of Labour Economics, 27 (3),119-137.

Uppal, A., Kaur, R. and Singh, G. (2018), "Globalisation and exclusion of landless rural labour in India with special reference to Punjab", Paper presented at the 35th IARIW General Conference Copenhagen, Denmark, August 20-25, 2018. http://old.iariw.org/copenhagen/uppal.pdf

  