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Q8(a)

What are the issues relating to male migration and its impact on birth rate? Does it necessarily result in skewed sex ratio?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Population Dynamics

Population Dynamics: Population size, growth, composition and distribution; Components of population growth: birth, death, migration; Population policy and family planning; Emerging issues: ageing, sex ratios, child and infant mortality, reproductive health.

Core demand of the question

- What are the issues relating to male migration and its impact on birth rate? Does it necessarily result in a skewed sex ratio?
- Treat as a 20-mark answer

Revision summary

Male migration splits village households and urban work lives.

Births may be delayed, spaced, or clustered on return.

Fertility decline has wider causes than migration.

Adult sex ratios in work cities can skew without missing girl children.

Child sex-ratio skew needs son preference and selection, not male migration as such.

Introduction

- **Male migration splits households:** men in cities and Gulf, women and children in villages. Birth rates can fall or be delayed because of absence, contraception, and urban costs. A skewed sex ratio does not necessarily follow. Sex ratio depends more on son preference and sex selection than on who travels.

Body**Male migration as a social fact**

- Circular and long-distance labour from Bihar, east UP, Odisha, and similar tracts feeds metros and farms.
- The village household becomes woman-headed in daily work, still male-headed in property, a Seed-and-Earth twist.
- **Social life:** loneliness, extra-marital urban ties, and left-behind care burdens.

Impact on birth rate

- Spousal separation can space births and lower completed fertility for a time.
- Remittance and urban exposure can raise contraception use.
- Return visits can produce clustered births, so the effect is not a simple drop.
- Development and education lower fertility more steadily than migration alone, a national TFR story.

Sex ratio: not a necessary result

- Skewed child sex ratios in DEMARU states came from prosperous settled peasantry plus ultrasound, not from male-out-migration belts as such.
- Male-surplus work towns can skew adult sex ratios without meaning missing girls at birth.
- If migrants adopt urban son preference and clinics, selection could travel; that is contingent, not necessary.

Other issues

- Women's unpaid farm work rises; reproductive health access may fall.
- Children of migrants face schooling gaps, linking to child-labour risk.
- COVID reverse migration showed fertility and care snap back when men return.

Flow diagram

Male migration -> Spousal separation
Spousal separation -> Delayed clustered fertility
Male migration -> Adult sex ratio in work towns
Son preference clinics -> Child sex ratio skew
Male migration -> Child sex ratio skew

Conclusion

Male migration issues are split households, delayed or clustered fertility, and a heavier female work load. Birth rate effects are real but mixed. A skewed sex ratio is not a necessary result; it follows son-preference regimes and adult job geographies, which only sometimes coincide with migration.

Facts & figures

Circular labour

Men move; women keep the village field and children.

DEMARU contrast

Low child sex ratio in prosperous settled states, not a simple migrant-export story.

Work-town adult ratio

Male-heavy job sites that skew counts without sex-selective births.

Remittance contraception

One path by which migration can lower fertility.