

# **Socio-demographic and Economic Characteristics of Migrant Heads of Households and the Consequences of their Migration in Fiji, 1992-1993**

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Internal migration is an integral part of the development process. It is influenced by development (such as the building of roads, economic activities and employment opportunities in certain areas) and it influences development (destination areas gain in skills and capital while areas of origin lose out) (Chandra and Chandra, 1998:60). There are relationships between and among migration, urbanization and socio-economic development. According to Skeldon (1992:45): "At a very simple level, there is a clear relationship between economic development and demographic variables. The most developed countries have the highest levels of urbanization . . . and they have low fertility and low rates of infant mortality. The least developed countries, however, have low levels of urbanization . . .".

Population migration reflects people's responses to many different factors such as social and economic inequalities, social and cultural conditions and constraints, and other infrastructure and accessibility aspects at places of origin

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and destination. Studies have generally indicated that migration occurs mainly for economic reasons (Parera, 1993; Thadani and Todaro, 1984; Todaro, 1989, 1994 and Young, 1994). Economic motives, such as the search for cash employment, improvements to and upgrading of jobs, resulting 'in increased wages and salaries, improvements in education for employment-related needs and relocation to gain close proximity to jobs are important determining factors for migration. Skeldon (1997:9) indicates that ". . . migration allows the circulation of goods, money and ideas, as well as people between urban and rural sectors. It concentrates a population that . . . can create a dynamic economy and society".

In 1996, Fiji's total population was 775,077. Two major ethnic groups comprise 95 per cent of the population: indigenous Fijians (51 per cent) and Indo-Fijians (44 per cent). Indo-Fijians represent fourth and fifth generation descendants of the indentured labourers brought from India to work on sugar-cane farms. Forty-seven per cent of the total population was urban in 1996, with Suva, the capital city, and its peri-urban areas comprising 52 per cent of the total urban population (Bureau of Statistics, 1999b:137).

Internal migration has been a significant factor in Fiji's urbanization and regional development. In 1996, for instance, 37 per cent of the total population aged five years and older were internal migrants representing both lifetime and recent migrants, a slight increase from 35 per cent in 1986 (Bakker, 1999:49). Among lifetime migrants aged five years and older, 38 per cent were rural-to-urban migrants, 28 per cent urban-to-urban migrants, 22 per cent rural-to-rural migrants and 13 per cent urban-to-rural migrants. Among recent migrants aged five years and older, 32 per cent were recent rural-to-urban migrants, 35 per cent urban-to-urban migrants, 19 per cent rural-to-rural migrants and 14 per cent urban-to-rural migrants (Bakker, 1999:79). Suva, the country's primate city, and its peri-urban areas are the dominant destinations for most rural-to-urban migrants.

Both ethnicity and gender are important in the internal migration process. Rural-to-urban migration is the most significant type of migration for Fijians, compared with urban-to-urban migration for Indo-Fijians; urban-to-rural migration is the least important type of migration for both ethnic groups (Bakker, 1999:79-80). Males and females are equally important in the migration process (Bakker, 1999: 109).

Internal migration, especially rural-to-urban migration, is of special concern to the Government of Fiji because of its relationship to the issues of unemployment, crime, poverty and housing, particularly in urban areas. People

will continue to be drawn into urban areas for employment and educational opportunities. The expiry of agricultural land leases, growing landlessness among Indo-Fijians, unemployment and poverty, and a general slowdown in economic activity will also push people to seek social and economic benefits in urban areas. Internal migration, especially rural-to-urban migration, is likely to intensify in the aftermath of the coup d'état<sup>1</sup> in 2000.

This paper discusses the findings of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993, conducted by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics. The survey was a complex one, consisting of three schedules: (a) a household survey, (b) demographic and economic activity, and migration survey, and (c) survey of migrant heads of households. The data analysis of this paper is based on responses to schedule 3 — migrant heads of households. The sample size for this schedule was 2,416, all of whom were migrant heads of households who had been identified from the larger demographic and economic activity and migration survey, where data were gathered from 6,000 households. Migrant heads of households comprised about 40 per cent of the total sample. The data analysis is mainly on the social, economic and demographic characteristics of the migrant heads of households. The true extent of migration in the population was not discernible because of this special category of respondents. Nevertheless, the data are extremely useful as the survey included detailed aspects of the migration process and the perceptions of the migrant heads of household about their social and economic conditions before and after migration.

It is important to note that the survey was conducted five years after the two military coups d'état that occurred in 1987. These events had important repercussions on the ethnicity of the migrants and the motivations for internal migration because, from 1987 to 1991, an average of 5,000 people (with the overwhelming majority being Indo-Fijians) left Fiji annually to settle abroad. The majority of those who left were skilled people and professionals (Chandra, 1997; Chetty and Prasad, 1993). The events of 1987 perhaps had a residual effect on the nature, characteristics and the motivations of internal migrants.

The aim of this paper is to provide a statistical profile of the migrant heads of households on the following topics: origin and destination, social and demographic characteristics, motivations for migration, the nature of migration, living conditions of migrants at their place of destination, and the social and economic consequences of migration. It also provides gender and ethnicity comparisons and the perceptions of the migrant heads of households about their social and economic conditions before and after migration. Finally, it identifies some policy implications related to continued urbanization and migration.

**Table 1. Migrant heads of households by their urban and rural current place of residence and ethnicity, 1992-1993**

Current place of residence	(percentage)		
	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total
Urban Suva	27	28	28
Other urban	29	32	31
Rural	44	40	41
Total	100	100	100
n	982	1,305	2,416

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

Unlike all other previous studies of migration that were based on census data, this study is unique because it is based on a special migrant survey which collected detailed information on socio-economic conditions before and after migration. The impact of migration is gauged from the perspectives of migrants, as each migrant is the focus of the migration process. This study therefore fills an important gap in migration research in Fiji.

#### **Origin and destination areas of migrant heads of households**

The origin and destinations of migrants are analysed by using three categories: current place of residence (at the time of the survey), previous place of residence (immediately before the current place of residence) and the place of birth, by city, town or settlement. These three categories make it possible to trace rural-to-urban, urban-to-rural, rural-to-rural and urban-to-urban movement. Recent migrants are defined as those who moved from their previous place of residence in the five years prior to the survey. These were enumerated at their current place of residence. Lifetime migrants are those whose previous place of residence and their current place of residence is different from their place of birth.

#### **Urban and rural distribution**

The migrant heads of households were living predominantly in urban areas (**table 1**). The Suva urban area had 28 per cent of the migrant heads of households, while the other 31 per cent of the urban-based migrants were distributed among the rest of the urban centres — Nausori, Lautoka, Nadi, Ba, Sigatoka, Labasa, Levuka, Rakiraki, Tavua and Korovou. The majority of both Fijian and Indo-Fijian migrant heads of households were living in Suva and other urban areas.

**Table 2. Recent pattern of internal migration in Fiji, 1992-1993**

	(percentage)			
	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total	1,996 census data
Urban to urban	30	37	36	35
Urban to rural	21	11	16	14
Rural to urban	25	23	22	32
Rural to rural	24	29	26	19
n	972	1,288	2,237	

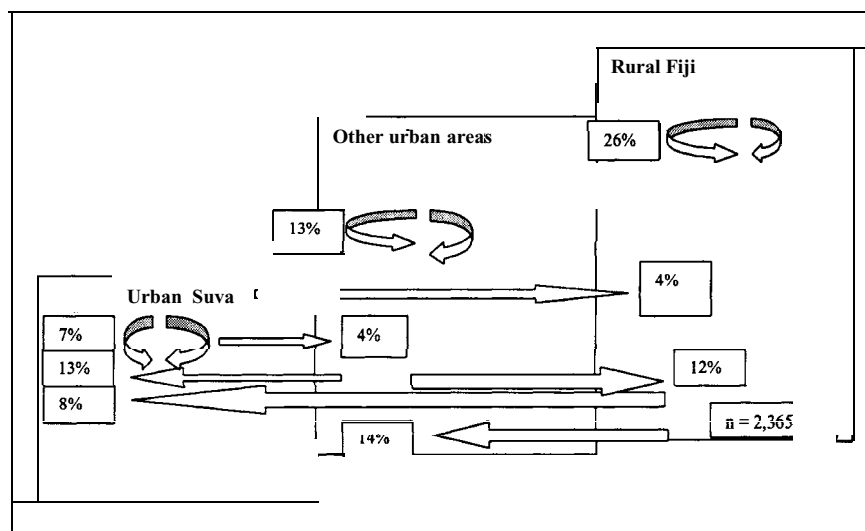
*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993, and Bureau of Statistics, 1996 Fiji Census of Population and Housing, General Tables, Parliamentary Paper No. 43 of 1998, (Suva, Government of Fiji, 1999).

**Table 2** and **figure 1** show the extent and pattern of recent<sup>2</sup> rural-to-urban and intra-urban migration, and urban-to-rural and intra-rural migration. Recent urban-to-urban migration is more pronounced than rural-to-urban migration. Slightly more Indo-Fijians than Fijians moved from urban to urban locations. Recent rural-to-urban and urban-to-rural migration was also significant. Slightly more Fijians than Indo-Fijians migrated from urban to rural areas and from rural to urban areas. The patterns shown in the survey data were very similar to those found in the 1996 census, except for rural-to-urban migration, which increased by 10 per cent. This increase was mainly due to urban boundary changes. This consistency in the findings validates the survey data (**table 2**).

Further analysis of recent movement and counter movements (**figure 1**) demonstrates the dynamic nature of the migration process: both intra-urban and intra-rural migration are important patterns in Fiji. This reflects a high degree of location and relocation of populations both in urban and rural areas.

Recent rural-to-urban migration, however, is more pronounced than urban-to-rural migration. However, it does not show any specific pattern of step-wise migration; migrants do not necessarily move from rural areas to small towns and from there to a large city. The data show that sizable proportions of migrants move from rural areas to the largest urban centre, Suva, and likewise migrants move from urban Suva to rural Fiji, although such moves are not as pronounced. More importantly, migrants move from other urban areas into rural areas as well as into urban Suva. The dynamic nature of such migration demonstrates the balancing of the population according to people's economic and social needs. Furthermore, these patterns also indicate that population circulation is an important feature in Fiji and the Pacific (Chandra, 1981; Walsh, 1982; Bureau of Statistics, 1989).

**Figure 1. Dynamics of recent internal migration in Fiji**



*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

### Socio-demographic characteristics of migrant heads of households

#### Gender, ethnicity, age and marital status

Migrant heads of households are predominantly males (93 per cent). This pattern, which is consistent among all ethnic groups (**table 3**), is not surprising as both Fijian and Indo-Fijian societies are male dominated. The traditional role of the male is that of head and provider for the household members, irrespective of whether he earns the household's income or not. Even in households where women earn more income for the household than men, women still refer to the men as the head of the household. Indo-Fijians have slightly more male migrant heads of households compared with Fijians and "other" ethnic groups. The small proportion of women who were heads of households were most likely widowed, separated, divorced or never married, and economically independent (discussed below). There were more Fijian female migrant household heads than Indo-Fijians.

The age distribution of migrant heads of households for males and females for all ethnic groups (**table 4**) shows that the majority of them were below 40 years of age. However, when ethnicity gender and age groups for

**Table 3. Sex and ethnicity of migrant heads of households, 1992-1993**

	(percentage)			
	Males	Females	Total	Percentage of total migrant heads
Fijians	90	10	100	41
Indo-Fijians	95	5	100	54
Others	92	8	100	5
Total population	93	7	100	100
n	2,241	175	2,416	2,416

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

women are examined, a different pattern emerges. In the case of Indo-Fijian females, most migrant heads of households were over 40 years of age. A possible explanation is migration of widowed and divorced women. The reverse is true for Fijian females. There were twice as many Fijian women heads of households aged 20-29 years old as Indo-Fijian.

The majority of male migrant heads of households among all ethnic groups, were married (**table 5**). Among all ethnic groups, half the migrant women heads of households were widowed, divorced or separated. Fijians represented a slightly higher proportion than Indo-Fijians and "other" ethnic groups among the never-married migrant heads of households. This group perhaps represented a fairly large proportion of those who were never married and in the 20-29 age group. The high proportion (46 per cent) of Fijian female heads of households who were aged 20-29 years (**table 4**) indicates the

**Table 4. Age distribution of migrant heads of households by ethnicity 1992-1993**

Age groups	(percentage)					
	Fijians		Indo-Fijians		Total for all ethnic groups	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
20-29 years	26	46	28	17	27	34
30-39	41	32	39	22	40	27
40-49	23	17	22	32	23	24
50-59	7	3	7	20	7	11
60+	3	1	4	9	3	4
Total	99	99	100	100	100	100
n	884	93	1,231	69	2,233	173

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

**Table 5. Marital status and ethnicity of migrant heads of households, 1992-1993**

Ethnic groups				(percentage)	
	Never married	Married	Widowed, divorced or separated	Total	n
<b>Fijians</b>					
Males	8	92	0	100	887
Females	35	40	25	100	95
Total	10	87	3.3	100	982
<b>Indo-Fijians</b>					
Males	4	95	1	100	1,236
Females	4	13	83	100	69
Total	4	92	6	100	1,305
<b>Others</b>					
Males	3	95	2	100	118
Females	18	27	55	100	11
Total					
<b>Total for all ethnic groups</b>					
Males	5	94	1	100	2,241
Females	22	29	50	100	175

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

emergence of young, economically independent single women who are the heads of their households and are mobile. In the case of Indo-Fijian women, the overwhelming majority were widowed, divorced or separated. It is also interesting to note that about 40 per cent of the Fijian women and 13 per cent of Indo-Fijian women who were married were also recorded as being the household heads. This may indicate that their spouse was either not working and the women heads assumed all economic responsibilities, or that the spouse was not currently present in the household and living elsewhere.

**Table 6** shows that the majority of the never-married migrant heads of households were 20-29 years old. The young and single have a greater propensity to migrate. However, the married migrant heads of households were also generally young: 66 per cent were younger than 40 years of age.

#### **Education, ethnicity and sex**

Among all ethnic groups, a higher proportion of migrants had secondary or post-secondary education than solely primary education (**table 7**). However, there were gender and ethnic differences in the level of education and



**Table 6. Age distribution of migrant heads of households by marital status, 1992-1993**

Age groups	(percentage)				n
	Never married	Married	Widowed, divorced or separated	Total	
20-29 years	81	25	5	28	663
30-39	15	41	30	39	938
40-49	4	23	37	23	545
50-59	0	7	17	7	174
60+	0	3	11	4	86
Total	100	100	100	100	
n	142	2,152	112	2,406	2,406

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

migration. Fijian and “other” male migrant heads of households had a higher proportion of those who had upper secondary and post-secondary education compared with Indo-Fijian males. A high degree of emigration of educated Indo-Fijian males in the five years prior to the survey (following the 1987 military coups d’etat) perhaps explains their low proportion among internal migrants. Another important finding is that Fijian females represented the largest percentage of those with secondary and post-secondary levels of

**Table 7. Educational level of migrant heads of households by ethnic group and sex, 1992-1993**

Ethnic groups	(percentage)				Total	n
	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Post-secondary		
<b>Fijians</b>						
Males	10	40	38	11	100	886
Females	7	32	44	17	100	95
Total	10	40	39	12	100	981
<b>Indo-Fijians</b>						
Males	27	35	29	9	100	1,235
Females	64	23	9	4	100	69
Total	29	35	28	9	100	1,304
<b>Others</b>						
Males	10	36	36	18	100	118
Females	18	18	36	27	100	11
Total	11	35	36	19	100	129
<b>Total for all ethnic groups</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,414</b>

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

**Table 8. Reasons for migration by sex of migrant heads of households, Fiji, 1992-1993**

Reasons for migration	(percentage)		
	Males	Females	Total
Employment/seeking better employment	14	11	14
Job transfer	34	27	33
Education and medical reasons	5	6	5
Family reasons	8	13	8
Being near job	9	13	10
Other	31	30	31
Total	100	100	100
n	2,236	174	2,410

*Source* : Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

education relative to Indo-Fijian women: 44 per cent and 17 per cent had upper secondary and post-secondary education compared with 9 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. This supports our earlier finding that the Fijian female head of household is more likely to be young, well educated, never-married and presumably economically independent, while the Indo-Fijian female head of household is more likely to be less educated and perhaps widowed, divorced or separated.

### **Motivation for migration**

#### **Sex, marital status and ethnicity**

Most migration occurred as a result of job transfer (33 per cent) and for “other”<sup>3</sup> reasons (31 per cent), followed by employment or seeking better employment (**table 8**). The transfer of jobs to some extent explains the motivation for migration — heads of households utilized the opportunity to fill positions vacated by skilled and professional people, especially Indo-Fijians who departed to take employment or live abroad.

Gender differences in migration for employment-related reasons, such as seeking employment, job transfer and being near jobs, generally were not significant (**table 8**).

The never-married migrant heads of households moved predominantly for job-related reasons (84 per cent) that included job transfers (54 per cent) followed by seeking employment or seeking better employment (18 per cent)

**Table 9. Reasons for migration, and marital status of migrant heads of households in Fiji, 1992-1993**

Reasons for migration	(percentage)		
	Never married	Married	Widowed, divorced or separated
Employment/seeking better employment	18	14	10
Job transfer	54	33	14
Education and medical reasons	3	5	7
Family reasons	3	8	15
Being near job	12	10	6
Other	11	31	48
Total	100	100	100
n	152	2,147	111

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992- 1993.

and being near their job sites (12 per cent). A high proportion among those who were married had also moved for job-related reasons, but this was not as marked as for never-married people. Those migrant heads of households who were widowed, divorced or separated moved mainly for “other” reasons as well as for family-related reasons (**table 9**). Nearly twice as many Fijians and “other” heads of households than Indo-Fijians migrated for job transfer, which could possibly stem from the much higher representation of Fijians and “others” in the civil service<sup>4</sup> (**table 10**).

**Table 10. Reasons for migration and ethnicity of migrant heads of households, Fiji, 1992-1993**

Reasons for migration	(percentage)			
	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Others	Total
Employment/seeking better employment	13	15	10	14
Job transfer	46	24	30	33
Education and medical reasons	6	4	6	5
Family reasons	7	9	8	8
Being near job	9	10	17	10
Other	20	39	29	31
Total	100	100	100	100
n	981	1,300	129	2,410

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992- 1993.

**Table 11. Nature of migration within ethnic groups, 1992-1993**

Nature of migration	(percentage)								
	Fijians		Indo-Fijians			Total (all ethnic groups)			
	Males	Females	Males and females	Males	Females	Males and females	Males	Females	Males and females
Alone	12	37	15	6	12	6	9	25	9
Migrated with some dependants <sup>a</sup>	9	22	11	6	4	6	7	14	8
Migrated with all dependants	78	41	75	88	84	88	84	60	82
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
n	886	95	981	1,234	68	1,302	2,238	174	2,412

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992- 1993.

**a** Includes couples with no dependants.

### Nature of migration

Family migration, that is, migrant heads of households moving with all their dependants, has been an important feature of internal migration in the earlier migration studies in Fiji, and it continues to be an important factor. The majority of the migrant heads of households among all ethnic groups and gender groups migrated with some or all of their dependants (**table 11**). However, a slightly higher proportion of Indo-Fijians and “other” ethnic groups than Fijians migrated with all their dependants. Fijians were twice as likely to migrate alone when compared with Indo-Fijians. There is a significant gender difference in the nature of migration. Women migrant heads of households were three times more likely to migrate alone than men heads of households.

Among the never-married, 70 per cent of men and 58 per cent of the women heads of households migrated alone (**table 12**). The migration of never-married women household heads is significant as it indicates a growing pressure on them to seek employment in order to realize social and economic benefits; it also may show that they desire to free themselves from socio-cultural constraints and for older women to seek familial support during their old age. Both Fijian and Indo-Fijian women experienced this pressure to migrate for survival.

The majority of the migrant heads of households migrated with some or all of their dependants. However, in some cases, other people, relatives as well as non-relatives, migrated with the heads of households as well. Of the 2,403

**Table 12. Sex, marital status and the nature of migration of the heads of households, 1992-1993**

(percentage)

Nature of migration	Males				Females			
	Never married	Married	Divorced, separated or widowed	Total males	Never married	Married	Divorced, separated or widowed	Total females
Alone	70	5	13	9	58	22	13	25
Migrated with some dependants	14	7	4	7	21	20	8	14
Migrated with a dependant	16	88	84	84	21	58	79	60
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
n	114	2,099	25	2,238	38	50	86	174

*Source:* Computed from the data analysis of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

migrant heads of households, about 13 per cent (320 cases) indicated that persons other than their dependants migrated with them (table not shown). Of these, 56 per cent of the migrant heads indicated that one non-dependent person migrated with them, 28 per cent indicated that two people migrated with them and 17 per cent said that three to seven non-dependent persons migrated with them. Fijians represented the largest group having persons other than their dependants with them (69 per cent). Such persons included relatives and non-relatives. This migration of non-dependents with the migrant heads of households indicates the wider socio-cultural and economic aspects of living arrangements and living styles for kinship members who also migrated with the heads of households. It is well known that Fijians tend to have extended families and are more likely than Indo-Fijians to have relatives and non-relatives staying in the household<sup>5</sup>

### **Migrants at their destinations**

#### **Employment and training**

The majority of the migrant heads of households secured jobs within one to six months of their arrival at the place of destination (**table 13**). Indo-Fijians found jobs slightly more quickly than Fijians. The rapidity with which the migrant heads of households were absorbed into the labour market is indicative of job availability at their destinations. However, it is also quite likely that arrangements for employment were made prior to movement.

**Table 13. Ethnicity and time taken to acquire employment by migrant heads of households, 1992-1993**

Ethnic groups	(percentage)				n
	Less than 1 month	Within 1 to 6 months	6 to more than 12 months	%	
Fijians	59.4	32.8	7.8	100	128
Indo-Fijians	62.6	29.0	8.4	100	214
Others	61.5	38.5	0.0	100	13
All ethnic groups	61.4	30.7	7.9	100	355

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992- 1993.

These findings fully endorse the view that migration is a powerful mechanism for social and economic improvement, and that job opportunities do exist in migrant destinations, acting as a powerful magnet for rural populations.

#### Living conditions of migrants

Migrants need housing when they relocate to other areas. Generally, arrangements for housing are done prior to the actual departure of migrants. This is to be expected as most migrant heads of households moved as a consequence of job transfer and it is likely that arrangements for housing were also made before migration. Those who migrated for job transfer in the civil service or in the private sector are more likely to have government, institutional and subsidized housing from employers. The data (not shown) indicate the slight increase in tenure of government, institutional or subsidized housing. **Table 14** shows that 62 per cent of the migrant heads of households acquired independent dwellings, while approximately one third rented rooms.

**Table 14. Living arrangements of migrants by ethnicity, 1992-1993**

Type of dwelling and living arrangements	(percentage)			
	Fijian	Indo-Fijians	Others	Total (all ethnic groups)
Independent dwelling	63.3	60.5	64.3	61.9
Rented rooms	24.3	30.1	23.3	27.4
Paying guest/living with relatives and friends	3.7	3.7	3.9	3.7
Other	8.7	5.7	8.5	7.1
Total	100	100	100	100
n	979	1,299	129	2,407

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

**Table 15. Employment status of migrant heads of households before and after migration by ethnicity, 1992-1993**

Employment status	(percentage)						Percentage point change for total
	Before migration			After migration			
	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total	
Wage earner	29	51	41	33	51	43	2
Salary earner	50	26	37	53	26	38	1
Employer	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Self employed	13	15	14	10	15	13	-1
Unpaid family community worker	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Unemployed	2	2	2	1	2	2	0
Not economically active	5	4	5	2	2	3	-2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	
n	975	1,302	642	980	1,302	2,410	

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

### Consequences of migration

This section examines the impact that migration had on the social and economic conditions as reported by migrant heads of households and their dependants at their destinations. The micro-level perspective on the impact of migration is wholly explained from the migrants' view, irrespective of objective economic forces such as inflation, salary and wage conditions.

#### Economic conditions

This section provides economic data on factors such as employment and occupational status, income of household heads, total income of households before and after migration. Ethnic and gender comparisons are also made in relation to income and employment status. The employment status of migrant heads of households indicates a positive marginal change relating to salary and wage earners. While there were no changes in the wage and salary component of the Indo-Fijians after migration, there was a small positive change for the Fijian component (**table 15**). However, there was no change in the state of unemployed heads of households after migration.

After migration, professional, technical and related occupational groups, and sales personnel showed a slight growth in employment, with Fijians improving their share of professional and related work after migration (**table 16**). In agriculture-related work, the proportion of migrant heads of households who were employed in agriculture decreased, with Indo-Fijians experiencing

**Table 16. The main occupations of migrant heads of households before and after migration, 1992-1993**

Occupations	(percentage)						Percentage point change for total
	Before migration			After migration			
	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total <sup>a</sup>	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total <sup>a</sup>	
Professional/technical/related	26	15	20	30	15	22	2
Administrative/managerial	8	2	5	7	3	5	0
Clerical/related	7	7	7	6	7	7	0
Sales	2		5	3	9	7	2
services	19		12	19	8	13	1
Agricultural/related	18	8	23	13	20	17	4
Production	17	7	25	4	4	4	-21
Not classified	3	4	4	5	8	7	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	
n	900	1220	2120	952	1,232	2,301	

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

<sup>a</sup> Total population includes all ethnic groups.

much of this decrease. Rural-based farming activities suffered a loss of people owing to land-lease problems, the stagnant market for agricultural products and general unemployment in the rural areas. Migrant heads of households' choice of production-related occupations (such as work as labourers, and in transport and production) decreased substantially across all ethnic groups.

The gross income of the household heads and the gross income of the households, pooled by all participating members, increased as well. There were gender and ethnic dimensions to the changes in the gross income of the migrant heads of households (**table 17**). Women migrant heads of households in the F\$7,000-9,999 (US\$1= F\$2.28) income bracket realized a slight increase in their income while those in the F\$0-2,999 bracket suffered a decrease after migration. This reflects the positive impact of migration. Increases in the income of the household heads occurred mainly among those who were earning over F\$5,000 and males were more advantaged than females after migration, as a slightly higher proportion of them earned over F\$5,000 than did females.

Both Fijian and Indo-Fijian household heads increased their gross income slightly after migration (**table 18**). Even though the increase was small (3-4 per cent), it was considered significant enough to attract the migrants to move from one place to another. Further, the gross income from all activities contributing



**Table 17. Gross annual income of migrant heads of households by sex, before and after migration, 1992-1993**

Income level(F\$)	(percentage)						
	Before migration			After migration			Percentage point change for total
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	
0-2999	28	49	29	21	44	22.1	-6.7
3,000-4,999	25	15	24	24	16	23.5	-0.9
5,000-6,999	19	11	18	21	11	20.3	2.1
7,000-9,999	15	14	15	18	18	17.6	2.4
10,000-14,999	8	8	8	11	8	10.5	2.2
15,000-19,999	3	2	3	4	3	3.8	0.6
20,000+	2	1	2	2	0	2.2	0.3
Total	100	100	99	101	100	100	
n	2,188	136	2,324	2208	154	2,362	

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

to the household also increased, particularly for households earning more than F\$5,000. Both Indo-Fijians and Fijians experienced similar levels of positive changes in their gross income for the household (**table 19**).

The economic consequences of migration provide unambiguous support for the notion that migration in Fiji is economically beneficial for migrants. The number of household members earning income increased (those with three earners more than doubling after migration). The number of people in higher income brackets increased consistently for those earning F\$5000 or more gross income from all economic activities.

### **Social conditions**

The housing conditions of the migrant heads of households changed marginally as a result of migration. There were slight decreases in the proportion of migrant heads of households who lived as squatters and in other housing arrangements. There was an increase in free or subsidized housing from employers, government and institutional housing, and rental and individual homes (**table 20**). Ethnicity and the type of housing tenure show an important change. The proportion of Indo-Fijians living in their own house increased slightly after migration. In contrast, the Fijian component experienced significant changes as a higher proportion of them had government quarters, subsidized/free housing from their employer or from the Housing Authority (a statutory organization providing housing for low-income earners) when compared with the tenure type before migration.

**Table 18. Gross annual income of migrant heads of households by ethnicity before and after migration, 1992-1993**

Income level (F\$)	(percentage)						Percentage point change total
	Before migration			After migration			
	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total population <sup>a</sup>	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total population <sup>a</sup>	
0-2999	24	34	29	16	28	22	-7
3,000-4,999	22	26	24	21	26	24	0
5,000-6,000	21	16	18	24	17	20	2
7,000-9,999	19	13	15	21	15	18	3
10,000-14,999	9	7	8	12	9	11	3
15,000-19,999	4	3	3	4	4	4	1
20,000+	2	2	2	2	1	2	0
Total	101	101	100	100	100	101	
n	936	1,265	2,324	969	1269	2,362	

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992- 1993.

<sup>a</sup> Total population includes all ethnic groups.

Migrant household heads were also able to acquire larger living areas after migration; more households lived in three- and four-room houses than previously (data not shown). This situation also reflects the larger household sizes, particularly among Fijians, where both relatives and non-relatives stayed with the migrant heads of households (as discussed previously).

Also after migration, slightly more people attended schools and colleges, perhaps reflecting factors such as the age structure of the migrant families and the improved conditions of migrant heads of households. Furthermore, the slight gains in salaries and wages may have made attendance at these institutions more affordable.

### General perceptions of social and economic conditions after migration

In the previous section, the changes in the socio-economic conditions of the migrants were examined objectively through a number of variables; in this section, the perceptions of migrant heads of households — a very important variable in the migration process — are discussed.

**Table 21** indicates that the vast majority of the migrant heads of households perceived that they had improved their employment and working conditions, income, and the social and cultural aspects of their lives. These perceptions reflect the interplay of various socio-economic factors, especially

**Table 19. Gross annual household income from all economic activities, by ethnic group, before and after migration, 1992-1993**

Gross annual income level from all sources (F\$) <sup>a</sup>	(Percentage)						Percentage Point change total <sup>b</sup>
	Before migration			After migration			
	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total population <sup>b</sup>	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total population	
0-2999	19	30	25	12	22	17	-8
3,000-4,999	20	25	23	17	24	21	-2
5,000-6,999	19	16	18	21	17	19	1
7,000-9,999	17	12	14	20	14	17	3
10,000-14,999	13	8	10	14	11	12	2
15,000-19,999	7	5	6	8	6	7	1
20,000+	4	4	4	7	5	6	2
Total	99	100	100	99	99	99	
n	943	1,287	2,355	977	1,293	2,398	

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992- 1993.

**a** Gross income includes income from all economic activities by the members of the household.

**b** Total population includes all ethnic groups.

those of their previous place of residence, which the migrant heads of households used to judge their current place of residence and their associated benefits once migration had occurred. There were no differences in gender and ethnic perceptions of social and economic improvements after migration (data not shown). The majority of male and female migrant heads of households indicated that they enjoyed better social and economic conditions after migration. The majority of respondents from all ethnic groups indicated that they felt their social and economic conditions had improved after migration.

Overall, the overwhelming majority of migrant heads of households, irrespective of sex and ethnicity, felt very positive about migration, even though the data indicate that the benefits were marginal, especially in relation to income, employment, education and housing conditions. These very positive perceptions perhaps indicate that higher wages and salary are not necessarily the major criteria for their perception of socio-economic improvements. More significant may be other factors such as having access to electricity and water, being in closer proximity to hospitals and schools, being closer to relatives and family members for social and physical security (especially after the coups d'etat) and other social and cultural benefits.

**Table 20. Ethnicity and type of house tenure migrants had before and after migration, 1992-1993**

Type of tenure	(Percentage)						Percentage Point change total
	Before migration			After migration			
	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total population	Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Total population	
Own house	35	45	41	31	49	41	0.4
Rent from private landlord	18	23	21	18	25	22	1.0
Rent from Housing Authority	3	2	2	7	2	4	1.6
Government/Institutional house	24	9	15	27	9	17	1.4
Free/subsidized housing from employer	11	9	10	14	11	12	2.1
Squatter	0	4	3	0	0	0	-2.3
Other	9	8	8	3	4	4	-4.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	
n	978	1,303	2,410	980	1,302	2,411	

*Source:* Computed from data of the Migration Module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1992-1993.

Because human behaviour involves the interplay of people's perceptions, among many other influences, these perceptions are important, as migrants behave according to them. Quite clearly, the results show that migrants felt that they had improved their social and economic position after migration. This positive perception is likely to fuel further migration.

### Conclusions and policy implications

Internal migration in Fiji during the five years prior to the 1992-1993 survey was a dynamic process. Rural-to-urban migration and more importantly inter-urban migration have been most pronounced, indicating the dominance of urban Suva. However, rural-to-rural and urban-to-rural migrants cannot be overlooked, because they showed that location of jobs and other attractions did not deter people from moving into these areas. Generally, marital status and education level were significant factors influencing the decision to migrate. Educated and trained people migrated more than others for job transfers and related needs. Among the varied reasons for migration, the most important were job transfer and "other" reasons. For Fijian heads of households, job transfer was more important than "other" reasons, while the opposite held true for Indo-Fijians. This outcome reflected the labourmarket situation during the five years prior to the survey. The rapid and continued emigration of skilled

**Table 21. General perceptions of social and economic conditions of migrant heads of households before and after migration, 1992-1993**

Social and economic conditions	Percentage
Employment and working conditions better after migration	85.3
Social and cultural life better after migration	85.0
Income better after migration	81.4
n	2,416

*Source:* Computed from data of migration module of the Fiji Employment and Unemployment Survey 1992-1993.

and professional Indo-Fijians created a skilled labour vacuum in key areas of the professional, trade, production and other sectors. The vacuum was filled by the transfer of skilled people, most notably Fijian and “other” migrants.

Gender is important in migration. Independent migration of women emerged during this period, especially among those who are educated and more motivated to achieve economic independence and gain freedom from socio-cultural constraints. Young never-married Fijian women were much more mobile than Indo-Fijian women. Older Indo-Fijian women who were widowed, divorced and separated were found to be more mobile than younger Indo-Fijian women. Also, it is significant to note that Fijian females who had a higher education had greater representation among the heads of households than Indo-Fijian and “other” ethnic groups. These young, highly educated, single Fijian women comprised the bulk of the single woman heads of households migrating. Nonetheless, family migration still remains the dominant type of migration. The patriarchal nature of the society and the importance of family values and family life are reflected in the migration of families, although the evidence of the migration of independent, educated women is a positive feature indicating a greater degree of freedom of movement, especially among Fijian women.

The social and economic conditions indicate that there were only marginal changes in various social and economic indicators after migration. However, migrant heads of households felt that employment, income and the social and cultural lifestyles were significantly better after migration, and there were no ethnic and gender differences in this perception. One of the most important findings of this study is that there is a wide gulf between any objective measure of change in the well-being of people before and after migration and the perception of the migrants themselves. This leads one to question variables often included in these measurements, as migrants probably

place high pressure on improvements for future rather than purely current indicators. In any case, since the perceptions of people guide their behaviour, this study points to the importance of studying migrant perceptions more in the future in order to understand migration dynamics.

Internal migration and more specifically rural-to-urban migration and urban-to-urban migration will continue to remain a strong and dynamic force in Fiji because, from the migrant's perspective, there are gains to be made from migration. Migration is perceived to improve one's income and lifestyle. In view of the fact that most survey respondents were located in urban areas, especially in Suva and its peri-urban areas, and that in 1996, 47 per cent of the total population of Fiji lived in urban areas, there are growing concerns about the potential for an increasingly large urban population in the future. Rural-to-urban migration by Indo-Fijians will also be fueled by the expiry of agricultural land leases and the consequent increase in landlessness among farmers. There is growing fear among Indo-Fijians living in rural areas that are predominantly Fijian. These fears have been heightened as a result of the May 2000 coup d'état in Fiji and the resulting racial tension and violence suffered by isolated Indo-Fijian settlements in rural provinces. Efforts to minimize this problem in rural settlements and villages and to seek better race relations could minimize the tendency of Indo-Fijian farmers to vacate farmland in order to reside in urban areas. Rural development programmes and plans must be approached with human development and human rights issues in mind in order to instill a sense of security of living in rural places and consequently to curb the flow of rural people to urban areas in the future. In addition, agricultural land-lease problems deserve urgent and non-political attention, within the spirit of goodwill and commitment by all those concerned — the State, farmers, millers and landowners. Indo-Fijian farmers who lease native land have no access to any other land; unless solutions to this problem are found, urban places will face an influx of people from rural areas in the future. The rural population will continue to remain in rural areas only if the income disparities between rural and urban centres decrease, and the rural population can look forward to a better infrastructure (such as electricity, roads and water supply) and better health and education services.

While high population concentrations may be valuable for business and industry in situations where there is high economic growth, such concentrations may prove to be a setback in a stagnant economy that faces high unemployment. Fiji has low economic growth, limited investor confidence and problems of political instability, especially after three coups d'état in the past 15 years. Job losses have been significant as a result of these crises. In

addition, urban places are already experiencing pressure on their urban resources and facilities. Poor housing, erratic water supply, disruptions to electricity supply, poor road conditions, limited job opportunities and rising unemployment are some of the problems already experienced by the urban population, especially in Suva. These are and will remain important considerations for the urban population and they need to be factored explicitly into development planning in general and urban planning in particular.

### Endnotes

1. The expiry of agricultural leases and landlessness among Indo-Fijians in rural areas are likely to precipitate rural-to-urban migration as families and relatives move to urban areas either to squat or seek shelter with relatives. By 2001, 2,932 agricultural leases had expired (Reddy and others, 2001) and no provision was made to accommodate the expiry of leases and the resettlement of Indo-Fijian farmers.
2. The data analysis indicated that almost all migrants were living at their current place of residence for the last five years after migrating from their previous place of residence. This aspect shows the recent nature of migration in Fiji.
3. Other reasons were not coded in the migration schedule data. This category includes a diverse set of reasons otherwise not included in the categories of the variables.
4. Fijians represented nearly two thirds of the civil service in 1996. Following the military coups of 1987, the share of Indo-Fijians in the civil service shrank by nearly 50 per cent owing to resignation and emigration (Kumar, 1997:87).
5. Among the Fijian population in 1996, 57 per cent of the households were the extended type in rural areas and 65 per cent of the households were the extended type in urban areas (Bureau of Statistics, 1999a).

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