

# Aspirations of Youth in Uttarakhand



Insights from the field  
September 2019

# उत्तराखंड में छह साल में महज 21 हजार युवाओं को मिल सका रोजगार

## NAINITAL NEWS

THIS STORY IS FROM JUNE 2, 2019

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Deep Joshi | Hindustan Times

### The jobs challenge

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State	Government staff	Unemployment rate
Punjab	429,000	6.0%
Uttar Pradesh	1,800,000	7.4%
Uttarakhand	200,000	7.0%
Haryana	328,000	4.7%

Numbers have been rounded off | Source: State governments, Census, Labour Bureau

Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana and Punjab have a large number of government employees and an equally high unemployment rate. Graphic: Mint

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India Governance

### Why are Uttarakhand's young leaving the state? Govt report to shed light soon

PRAGYA KAUSHIKA  
Updated: 16 April, 2018 7:01 pm IST

### In Uttarakhand, Young Women Lead an Exodus from Mountain Villages

As modern jobs evade the state, rural millennials continue a pattern of out-migration that leaves hundreds of villages abandoned, or populated only by the elderly.



## ASPIRATIONS STUDY: UTTARAKHAND

### Acknowledgements

We were able to complete all our interviews and data collection in record time thanks to the efforts of a number of organisations and individuals who helped us identify and reach out to youth in their regions.

Thanks to Sanjay Sondhi and Arun Gour, we were able to visit Devalsari and conduct interviews at this beautiful village in Tehri Garhwal. A chance encounter at Devalsari led us to Ranu Bhogal and Tejinder Bhogal, both stalwarts in the development sector, who took out time from their holiday to share a bird's eye view of the youth livelihoods ecosystem in the country, which was invaluable for our study. The team at the Himjyoti Vocational Institute was instrumental in facilitating conversations with young women from across Uttarakhand at their campus in Dehradun. Our thanks go out to Ritika Chauhan in particular, the Vice-principal at Himjyoti Vocational Training Institute who spent countless hours giving us feedback and insights from her experiences engaging with youth from rural Uttarakhand. We would also like to thank Sunaina Kuhn, with whose help we were able to reach out to a wider circle of Dehradun's local youth.

We were able to meet a wide range of youth in Almora and Champawat, thanks to the support of a number of individuals and organisations. In Almora, Kamal, a local youth himself, facilitated both interviews and focus groups with young people from in and around Danya, while Anita Kanwal and Ishwar Joshi helped us get a lay of the land in Takula. In Champawat, we had a stellar team with Ruth D'Costa, Bhupendra Bisht and Manvendra Singh Inaniya helping us reach out to local youth. Ruth and Bhupendra assisted us with the interview process and helped us conduct a few group interactions with students as well. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Naice Foundation, especially Amit Joshi and the rest of his team in Champawat city as well.

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Finally, in the district of Pithoragarh, which we identified at the end of the study as the first district to begin IABT's programmatic interventions on a pilot basis, we are indebted to a number of individuals without whom none of this would be possible. Manoj Matwal, or Manu *Dafaali* as he is fondly known, was the inspiration for beginning our work in Pithoragarh by demonstrating the critical role timely mentorship and guidance can play in a young person's life. Pratish Patni, a



software engineer from Pithoragarh who is now based in Bangalore, played the role of a tele-mentor and guide as we were navigating this border district. Pushkar Bisht helped us reach out to young women in remote parts of Berinag, a region we would not have been able to consider were it not for his local knowledge.

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Last of all, we would like to thank our respondents - they gave us their valuable time, put up with all of our questions with patience and fortitude and helped us step into the shoes of a young person again for a little while! We wish them the very best in their future ahead.



## **About IABT and Udhyam**

IABT, which stands for India and Bharat Together, is a non-profit organization working to bridge the gap between urban India and rural Bharat by helping young people explore career paths towards meaningful employment and sustainable livelihoods. IABT does this through research-backed interventions aimed at providing the right kind of support at the right time to young people in rural and small-town India through mentorship, career guidance, livelihood support and the development of socio-emotional skills for boosting individual agency and facilitating free and informed decision-making for young people.

Supported by the Agrani India Foundation, Udhyam is a rural entrepreneurship program designed to encourage entrepreneurship among village communities in Uttarakhand's Kumaon region. With the right kind of mentorship and financial support, Udhyam entrepreneurs create jobs for their communities and contribute to the local economy. Udhyam's goal is to slow down the rate of migration from Uttarakhand's hilly areas to cities, by providing sustainable livelihood opportunities in the villages itself through locally owned and community based enterprises.

There is a massive need for employment in the region, as an increasing number of educated youth in the Kumaon region currently face a bleak future with very limited livelihood options.

Both IABT and Udhyam work in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8 of 'Decent Work and Economic Growth', which aims to tackle the growing problems of youth unemployment and access to opportunity. Through this collaborative partnership, we envision that working with young people can have a multiplier effect in the short and medium term, effectively boosting local employment, creating jobs and encouraging more and more young people to consider non-traditional and local livelihoods as a viable choice for themselves and their communities.



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## **Executive Summary**

IABT, which stands for India and Bharat Together, is a non-profit organization working to bridge the gap between urban India and rural Bharat by helping young people explore career paths towards meaningful employment and sustainable livelihoods.

In 2019, we completed this youth aspirations study across six districts of Uttarakhand along with a local partner Udhyam, an entrepreneurship organisation. We collected insights on youth career aspirations, the driving forces behind them, as well as the barriers youth face in taking action toward fulfilling these aspirations.

Our study found that there is a high demand for government jobs, especially in the army, in Uttarakhand. Youth in the region are also open to entrepreneurship, however this is in most cases a backup option and not a priority goal.

Additionally, the perceptions of stakeholders in the youth's ecosystem, such as their parents, friends and community members were found to play a role in their career aspirations and actions. Youth across the six districts also perceived a lack of awareness, guidance, as well as opportunity.

Based on what we learnt from that study, we are now piloting an intervention aimed at building awareness and agency in youth from Pithoragarh, a remote region in the state.

Our program, Margshala, is a 6-month journey of mentorship, exposure and experiential learning for 25 youth aimed at empowering them to pursue livelihoods aligned with their aspirations - whether they be in private, government or self-employment.





## Literature review

In the literature, aspirations have been conceptualized as being “future-oriented, driven by conscious and unconscious motivations and indicative of an individual or group’s commitments towards a particular trajectory or end point”<sup>1</sup>. Quaglia and Cobb define aspirations as “a student’s ability to set goals for the future while being inspired in the present to work toward those goals”<sup>2</sup>. In his framework to study aspirations, Sherwood proposes the definition of “any future goal in which an individual is willing to invest time, effort or money”<sup>3</sup>. There are therefore, two main elements of aspirations definitions-- that of setting goals for the future, and of investing in those goals in the present.

IABT’s definition of career aspirations, and that which we have used within this study, focuses on the first of these two elements, i.e. we look at career aspirations as an individual’s career interests and goals for the future. At the same time, an individual’s investment in these goals in the present is still an integral part of our work, and is viewed as a different, but deeply connected concept.

We undertook a review of existing literature to understand why having a career aspiration does not always convert into an individual’s investment in that aspiration. Below is a summary of key factors that emerged through the literature:

### Influence of Family

Contrary to earlier streams of thought that treated individuals as self-interested economic agents, literature on youth livelihoods in recent years have begun to highlight the role of the family in such decision making. These decisions are taken at a family level based on their aspirations and access to resources, and sometimes may be suboptimal compared to normal economic choices<sup>4</sup>.

### Socioeconomic status

The socioeconomic status of an individual’s household is an important factor in their ability to pursue their aspirations. A study in Uttar Pradesh indicated that entrepreneurs largely rely on informal sources such as friends and family as support systems rather than on formal institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Sarojini Hart (2016) How Do Aspirations Matter?, *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 17:3, 324-341, DOI: 10.1080/19452829.2016.1199540

<sup>2</sup> Quaglia, R. J., & Cobb, C. D. (1996). Toward a theory of student aspirations. *Journal of research in rural education*, 12(3), 127-132.

<sup>3</sup> Sherwood Jr, R. A. (1989). A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Aspirations. *Research in Rural Education*, 6(2), 61-66.

<sup>4</sup> Chambers, R., & Conway, G. (1992). *Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century*. Institute of Development Studies (UK).



78% of the entrepreneurs reported taking support from informal sources, as opposed to 22%, who went for formal support to a technology solution provider or a bank.

However, this support from informal structures is not equitable across society and places youths from lower income families at a disadvantage.

### Gender

Girls and women in both urban and rural contexts face additional unique challenges due to low mobility and access to markets. They become dependent on their parents and especially their husbands, for startup capital and market reach.

Further, 'gendering' of career paths also impacts both male and female perceptions of aspiration. Limited job opportunities for women and lack of exposure to women in nontraditional fields has been shown to contribute to the persistence of gendered career pathways<sup>5</sup>.

### Exposure to Role Models

There is evidence for the impact of role models on youth career perceptions and aspirations. This influence of local role models was also seen in a study in Uttar Pradesh, where when entrepreneurs were asked about who they think is a business leader, 91% spoke about a successful entrepreneur from their village<sup>6</sup>.

A similar trend was noted during Udhyam's initial aspirations study of Kumaon youth in 2016<sup>7</sup>, where the absence or presence of positive role models in the local community suggested an impact on an individual's own aspirations or ideas of realistic career pathways.

There is evidence for the impact of female role models on girls' aspirations. A policy experiment conducted using data from 495 villages in India revealed that the presence of female leaders had a 'role model' effect on the aspirations and educational attainment of girls in those villages. Compared to villages where leadership positions for women had not been reserved in randomly selected village councils<sup>8</sup>:

- the gender gap in adolescent educational attainment was erased

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<sup>5</sup> Chenoweth, E., & Galliher, R. V. (2004). Factors influencing college aspirations of rural West Virginia high school students. *Journal of research in rural education*, 19(2), 1-14.

<sup>6</sup> Dewan, C., Bhardway, P., Bhatnagar, A., Pant, A., Sra, L., Tewari, N. (2017) Jobs We Create- The Power of Entrepreneurship. Development Alternatives Group

<sup>7</sup> (2016). Kumaon Yatra - Understanding Aspirations of Local Youth. Udhyam (Unpublished)

<sup>8</sup> Beaman, L., Duflo, E., Pande, R., & Topalova, P. (2012). Female leadership raises aspirations and educational attainment for girls: A policy experiment in India. *science*, 335(6068), 582-586.



- girls spent less time on household chores
- the gender gap in aspirations closed by 32% in adolescents
- the gender gap in aspirations closed by 20% in parents

Strong role models, therefore, can have a positive impact on young women and their aspirations — not just in terms of increasing participation in a particular domain, but changing the way in which girls view themselves, and are viewed by their surrounding ecosystem - family, community and society at large.

### Uttarakhand Context

Uttarakhand became India's 27th state on 9th November 2000, when it was carved out of Uttar Pradesh's northernmost Himalayan districts. Primarily a mountainous state, Uttarakhand lies at the southern foothills of the Himalayas, bordering Himachal Pradesh in the north-west, China in the north, Nepal in the east and Uttar Pradesh in the south.

As per the 2011 Census, Uttarakhand is the 20th most populous state in the country with a population of 10,086,292<sup>9</sup>, spread across an area of 53,483 square kilometres. As 86% of the state is mountainous with 65% forest cover<sup>10</sup>, Uttarakhand has an abundance of natural resources and has a very conducive climate for agriculture, horticulture, floriculture and the cultivation of medicinal plants.

The state has 13 districts, divided between two divisions - Garhwal and Kumaon. Historically, the region has been divided into these two divisions for centuries - this can be traced back to as early as the 7th and 9th centuries when the hill kingdoms of Kumaon and Garhwal came into being. The 13 districts are made up of 78 tehsils and 95 community development blocks.

A multi-ethnic population is spread out across the state, with a large proportion of Rajputs - in fact, a 2007 study revealed that Uttarakhand has the highest proportion of Brahmins in the country<sup>11</sup>.



<sup>9</sup> censusindia.gov.in

<sup>10</sup> India State of Forest Report, 2011. Accessible here:

<sup>11</sup> Study by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) - accessible [here](#)



Uttarakhand is also home to a number of scheduled tribes such as the Bhotiyas, Tharus, Jaunsaris and Buksa.

Even though Uttarakhand has a higher literacy rate than the national average and more children now have access to schooling than ever before, the state has faced unique challenges of unemployment. According to a report by the World Bank, jobs created in non-farm sectors in Uttarakhand since 2005 have not been enough to off-set the loss of jobs in farming<sup>12</sup>.

Uttarakhand has over 9 lakh people registered at different employment exchanges across the state (as of 2017) and an unemployment rate of 7.6% - 1.5% higher than the national unemployment rate. For young people in urban Uttarakhand, the rate goes up even higher at 27.7%. Urban centres such as Dehradun and Haridwar have higher rates of unemployment than other areas because of in-migration from surrounding regions. In fact, in Dehradun, more women are registered as unemployed than men.

Uttarakhand's gender report card also has a lot to improve. Rural women lag far behind urban women in Uttarakhand when it comes to schooling, and while female labor force participation is higher than the national average, it has been on the decline primarily in rural areas<sup>13</sup>. Rural women, in particular, have very few opportunities for non-farm work as compared to men.

The urgent need to connect qualified youth - both young men and women - with high-quality opportunities is becoming clear through the rush for government jobs, best exemplified by a recent incident where a number of postgraduates felt the need to apply for jobs with a basic eligibility of "eighth pass". The state government has introduced incentives to build entrepreneurship, and therefore generate more jobs in the state. However, uptake of these opportunities by youth has remained low.

More and more individuals have been turning to migration. At least one member from about 88 per cent of households sampled in Pauri Garhwal and Almora districts had migrated for employment (study by NIRD - National Institute of Rural Development).

Despite migration from rural regions for employment, urban unemployment rates are even greater. Dehradun alone accounts for one-fifth of all unemployed persons (20%) registered at the State Employment Exchange in Uttarakhand.

<<Insert Table: District-wise demographic data on unemployment in Uttarakhand>>

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<sup>12</sup> World Bank (2017): Uttarakhand - Jobs

<sup>13</sup> World Bank (2017): Uttarakhand - Gender



Characteristics specific to hilly areas, such as environmental shocks, poor accessibility, fragility and marginality, as well as lack of quality health care and higher education opportunities in Uttarakhand have further added to the need to migrate.

## **Research areas**

As a primarily mountainous region which achieved independent statehood as recently as 2000, Uttarakhand has struggled to find meaningful employment for its youth. Insights from working in the region indicate that this lack of opportunities could stem both from an absence of diverse employment avenues in its villages and towns, as well as low awareness about career avenues and livelihood diversification strategies amongst youth. As a result, outmigration from villages, especially of youth, is very high.

In June 2019, IABT and Udhyam came together to think about meaningful ways to engage young people, with an understanding of two important trends:

1. In the last decade or so, the teams at both IABT and Udhyam had come across countless individuals and organisations who had demonstrated success with alternative, non-traditional livelihood options ranging across agriculture, tourism, small businesses and a number of non-farm based livelihoods. However, these livelihood avenues were yet to be considered the 'norm'.
2. Young people were moving out of villages for low-paying job opportunities primarily as a result of existing networks ('chain migration'). As a result, they were unable to see career growth or financial stability which could turn into a sustainable livelihood in the long run. In addition, the transition from village to city life also had negative psychosocial effects on some youth, who had to make socio-cultural adjustments in addition to adapting to a new work environment.

While it was clear that an awareness-oriented approach had to be taken up for young people in Uttarakhand, we still had a number of questions that remained unanswered. What were the motivations of young people when it came to selecting certain career paths? What was the level of agency that an individual had, contrasted to family pressure or expectations? Were young people making informed decisions about their livelihoods, or were they dependent on pre-existing sources of information and livelihood pathways alone?

To understand the various drivers and factors determining the future of young people from rural and small-town Uttarakhand, IABT and Udhyam decided to undertake a landscape study of youth aspirations prior to the design of any programmatic intervention aimed at awareness or livelihood support.



The primary areas of inquiry for this study were:

1. Demographic, socio-economic and cultural factors
2. Family and community influences on aspirations
3. Self-reporting of career interests, goals and aspirations
4. Self-perception of information or skill gaps amongst youth
5. Baseline levels of awareness and knowledge about diverse livelihood pathways

Through this landscape assessment, we also aimed to develop an understanding of the factors influencing what an individual's aspirations are, as well as the actions that they take toward them. Our study aimed to look at both intrinsic and extrinsic factors:

- a. Intrinsic factors (Such as intrinsic motivations and abilities)
- b. External factors (influencing youth aspirations and actions in rural Uttarakhand, such as access to information and the role of community or family influences, role models and local networks)

### **Research methodology**

A total sample of 61 youths were surveyed from across 6 districts of Uttarakhand. The districts selected for the study were Dehradun, Tehri Garhwal, Almora, Champawat, Bageshwar and Pithoragarh.

These 6 districts were selected so as to have a representative sample of the state of Uttarakhand, by including districts that are more developed (such as Dehradun and Almora), somewhat developed (such as Pithoragarh and Bageshwar) as well as those that are more remote and rural (such as Tehri and Champawat). Initially, the attempt was to study both divisions of Uttarakhand equally, and have 30 respondents each from Garhwal and Kumaon. However, because of logistical reasons, the district of Pauri Garhwal, which lies in Garhwal was replaced with Bageshwar district in the Kumaon division.

#### Sampling strategy:

Respondents in each district were identified through a network of NGOs as well as individuals living in the community. The identifying individuals were asked to recommend a mixture of motivated and less motivated youth (based on their perception of the youth) for the surveys.

For each district sample, to the extent possible, sampling took into account age (18 to 30 years), gender (50% women and 50% men) and motivation level (a combination of more and less motivated).

#### Research Instrument:



The research instrument was designed based on a review of existing literature as well as a contextual understanding of youth in Uttarakhand. The instrument includes both multiple choice and open-ended items, with a view to capturing quantitative as well as qualitative insights. Surveys were administered with respondents as one-on-one interviews while focus groups were held in a few locations. 13 of the 61 interviews were conducted telephonically for logistical reasons. During the interview, privacy was ensured to the extent possible so as to minimize the possibility of respondent bias.

The data sources utilized for quantitative and qualitative data analysis were the respondent surveys, transcripts from interviews and field notes.



## Sample Description

### I. Youth Characteristics

#### a. *Gender and Age*

61 respondents were surveyed from across 6 districts of Uttarakhand. Of these, 35, i.e. 57.4% are males, and 26, i.e. 42.6% are female.

<i>District</i>	Female	Male	Grand Total	Average age
Almora	3	7	10	19.5
Bageshwar	5	5	10	20.3
Champawat	4	6	10	21.3
Dehradun	10	2	12	21.8
Pithoragarh	4	9	13	23.5
Tehri / Pauri		6	6	23.8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>61</b>	
	<i>42.6%</i>	<i>57.4%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>21.7</i>

The average age for this group of respondents was 21.7 years. The youngest respondent was 17 years old, and the oldest was 31.

Caste data was also collected from the respondents. The majority of respondents (31, or 67% of respondents for whom caste data was available) reported belonged to the General category. This was followed by 10 belonging to SC category, and 4 to OBC.

<i>District</i>	No response	Do not know	General	OBC	SC	Grand Total
Almora	1	1	5		3	10
Bageshwar	1		9			10
Champawat			8	1	1	10
Dehradun	3		7		2	12
Pithoragarh	9		2		2	13
Tehri / Pauri	1			3	2	6
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>61</b>
		<i>2%</i>	<i>67%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>22%</i>	





*b. Education and Work Experience*

Information on the highest education level completed upto the time of the survey was collected. For the majority of respondents (33, i.e. 57.9%), class 12 was the highest level of education completed at the time. 6 (10.5%) and 10 (17.5%) respectively had completed up till their Diploma and Bachelor's. 3 respondents (5.3%) had completed their Master's degrees. 3 respondents (5.3%) had only studied up to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and another 2 (3.5%) to the 10<sup>th</sup>.

<i>District</i>	Diploma	Graduate degree	Post-graduate	Upto Class 10th	Upto Class 12th	Upto Class 8th	Grand Total
Almora		1		1	7	1	10
Bageshwar		3			7		10
Champawat	2	1	1		6		10
Dehradun		1	1	1	8	1	12
Pithoragarh	4	1	1		3		9
Tehri / Pauri		3			2	1	6
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>57</b>
	<i>10.5%</i>	<i>17.5%</i>	<i>5.3%</i>	<i>3.5%</i>	<i>57.9%</i>	<i>5.3%</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

Additionally, some respondents were still pursuing education. 25 (43.9%) respondents reported being enrolled in school/college at the time of the interviews. Of these, 21 (36.8%) were pursuing their Bachelor's degrees. 1 respondent had dropped out of college during the second year of his B.Sc program, and was now pursuing employment for financial reasons.

<i>District</i>	Graduate degree	Post-graduate degree	Upto Class 10th	Upto Class 12th	Grand Total
Almora	2			1	4
Bageshwar	4	1			5
Champawat	7				7
Dehradun	5				5
Pithoragarh	2				2
Tehri / Pauri	1		1		2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>25</b>
	<i>36.8%</i>	<i>1.8%</i>	<i>3.5%</i>	<i>1.8%</i>	<i>43.9%</i>



16 (66.7%) of the 24 students enrolled for graduation are doing a B.A. Degrees such as B.Sc. and B.Com are less common, being pursued by 6 and 1 participants respectively.

Degree	B.A	B.Sc	B.Com	Did not specify	Total
Number	16	6	1	1	24
	66.7%	25%	4.2%	4.2%	100%

36 (66.7%) of respondents reported having some work experience, which they often carried out alongside their studies. 31 (86.1%) of those with work experience reported that it was paid work.

Education (completed)	No work experience	Any work experience	Paid work experience	Grand Total
Diploma		6	6	6
Graduate degree (Bachelors)	2	8	7	10
Post-graduate (Masters)		3	2	3
Upto Class 10th	1	1	1	2
Upto Class 12th	14	17	14	31
Upto Class 8th	1	1	1	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>54</b>
	33.3%	66.7%		100%

## 2. Family Background

### a. *Parental levels of education*

6 out of 51 (11.8%) of respondents are first-generation school goers - none of their parents have attended school before them. The average age of these respondents is 22.5 years, and none of them are attending college at the moment. 2 out of the 6 first generation school goers are engaged in domestic jobs.

In contrast, 43 (84.3 %) out of 51 respondents are first-generation college goers. This was the case, for example, with a young woman from Dehradun who was pursuing college despite the fact that her elder brother had dropped out of school in Class 10. There had been financial difficulties at home as their father had taken ill, due to which her brother was compelled to discontinue his studies. Other



respondents stated that college degrees were now a prerequisite for jobs, which is why their parents stressed on college even though they themselves had not attended college.

There are 4 respondents who are both first-generation school goers and first-generation college goers. In certain districts, almost all respondents were first-generation college goers - in Tehri/Pauri (100%), Bageshwar (90%) and Champawat (90%).

	Almora	Bageshwar	Champawat	Dehradun	Pithoragarh	Tehri / Pauri	Grand Total
<i>First gen to college</i>	7	9	9	6	6	6	43
<i>First gen to school</i>	2			3	1	3	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>31</b>
District total	10	10	10	12	13	6	61

<i>Parents' education level</i>	Father's education level		Mother's education level	
Don't know	1		-	
Post-graduate (Masters)	2	4.4%	-	0%
Graduate degree (Bachelors)	2	4.4%	2	4.3%
Upto Class 12th	14	31.1%	7	14.9%
Upto Class 10th	7	15.6%	6	12.8%
Upto Class 8th	10	22.2%	9	19.1%
Upto Class 5th	4	8.9%	10	21.3%
No education	6	13.3%	13	27.7%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>46</b>		<b>47</b>	

Overall, it was observed that youth levels of education are higher than their parents'. A difference was also observed between father's education and mother's. More fathers (77.840%) had completed Class 12th than mothers (68.117.4%), and more mothers (27.78.3%) had not studied at all compared to fathers (13.3%). Higher education levels were low, with only 4 (8.9%) of fathers and 2 (4.3%) of mothers having studied after class 12, as compared to 283% of respondents who had graduated already or had diplomas.



Respondents attributed this shift in education levels to two factors: parental aspirations for their children to lead better lives than they had, as well as a higher eligibility criteria for jobs than in their parents’ generation.

*“My father told me if I couldn't pass class 12.....I mean...in today's time....without asking for a degree for '12th pass' or 10th pass'...no one will give you a job even at a hotel...the person will be considered uneducated. And if a person gets some sort of education...he can gain some understanding of how things work....with the help of books. In order to gain that understanding, my father asked me to complete my schooling.”*

- A 17 year old male respondent from Almora

**b. Parental Employment and Income Levels**

Data on the primary livelihood pathway of the family was collected. This could indicate the father’s, mother’s or a sibling’s livelihood pathway. The breakdown of primary livelihoods by caste as well as by district are given below. It was seen that more than half of the families whose primary livelihood is agriculture and animal husbandry are from Bageshwar. 1 out of 8 families from the General caste are engaged in Construction or Daily wage labour compared to 2 out of 5 families among the SC caste.

Primary Livelihood (Family)	No response	Do not know	General	OBC	SC	Grand Total	
No response	4		1			5	8.2%
Agriculture and animal husbandry	2		11		2	15	24.6%
Construction/Daily wage/Domestic	1		4		4	9	14.8%
Defense (army)	1		1			2	3.3%
Government job	2		3			5	8.2%
Private job in hospitality / tourism			1		2	3	4.9%
Private job in other	4	1	6	2	2	15	24.6%
Self employed in own business				2		2	3.3%
Social work			1			1	1.6%
Other			4			4	6.6%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100%</b>



<i>Primary Livelihood (Family)</i>	Almora	Bageshwar	Champawat	Dehradun	Pithoragarh	Tehri / Pauri	Grand Total
No response				1		4	5
Agriculture and animal husbandry	1	8	1	2		3	15
Construction/Daily wage labour/Domestic	3	1	1	3		1	9
Defense (army)				1		1	2
Government job				2		3	5
Private job in hospitality / tourism	1		1			1	3
Private job in other	4	1	3	3		3	13
Self employed in own business						2	2
Social work				1			1
Other	1		3				4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>61</b>

1820 (41.9%) of mothers work as housewives. This is followed by 143 (32.6%) who are employed in agriculture.

<i>Mother's Occupation (category)</i>	No education data	No education	Upto Class 8th	Class 8th - 12th	Graduate	Grand total	
Agriculture		2	9	3		14	30.4%
ASHA worker			1	2		3	6.5%
Bhojan mata			2			2	4.3%
Business				2		2	4.3%
Clerk				1		1	2.2%
Daily wage labour	1					1	2.2%
Domestic worker				1		1	2.2%
Factory worker		1				1	2.2%
Housewife	2	9	5	3	1	20	43.5%
Social worker					1	1	2.2%
	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100%</b>



In contrast, 16.28% of fathers (7 of 43 responses) were involved in agriculture. Other prominent occupations included government jobs, private jobs and construction work.

<i>Father's Occupation (category)</i>	No education data	No education	Upto Class 8th	Class 8th - 12th	Graduate	Post-graduate and above	Grand total	
Agriculture	1		1	5			7	16.3%
Business			1	2			3	7.0%
Construction worker	1	1	1	2			5	11.6%
Contractor				1		1	2	4.7%
Daily wage labour		1					1	2.3%
Deceased		1	1		1		3	7.0%
Domestic worker				1			1	2.3%
Driver	1	1		1			3	7.0%
Electrician				2			2	4.7%
Government job	2			2		2	6	14.0%
Gram Pradhan			1				1	2.3%
Hospitality		1					1	2.3%
Multiple				1			1	2.3%
Police				1			1	2.3%
Private job			1	4			5	11.6%
Unemployed				1			1	2.3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Information on mother and father's monthly income was collected. Of 21 earning mothers, 16 (i.e. 76.2%) earned less than INR. 5000 per month while 18 (85.7%) earned less than INR. 10,000 per month. In contrast, only in 5 cases (21.7%) was the father's income less than INR. 10,000 per month.

<b>Income range</b>	<b>Father's Income</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Mother's Income</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
0-10,000	5	21.7%	18	85.7%
10-15,000	7	30.4%	1	4.8%
>15,000	11	47.6%	2	9.5%



<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>
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The average income combined for both parents was Rs 18,666.70 for a total of 33 respondents.

<b>Parents Income (combined)</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
0-5,000	5	15.2%
5-10,000	11	33.3%
10-15,000	5	15.2%
15-20,000	3	9.1%
20-25,000	0	0.0%
25-30,000	2	6.1%
30-35,000	1	3.0%
35-40,000	1	3.0%
40-45,000	2	6.1%
>45,000	3	9.1%
<b>Blank Cells</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Overview of Youth Aspirations

### I. Career Aspirations: Primary career aspirations (5 year goals)

Youth were asked what they would like to be doing after five years. Government jobs were the highest reported aspiration, with 22 of 55 youth (40%) citing this as their five year goal. Of these 22, 10 specifically mentioned wanting to join the defense forces.

Career aim	Number
Accounting	1
Any other job	7
Business / Entrepreneurship	9
Engineer	1
Entertainment / Arts	1
Fashion / Beauty	2
Government job (Defense)	10
Government job (Other)	12
Hospitality / Hotel management / Retail	3
NA	4
Research	2
Social work	1
Teaching	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>55</b>

19 (51.4%) respondents reported that their career aspirations had been different as a child. Lack of guidance and access to training during childhood were reasons cited for the change in aspirations.

Career interest different as a child	Responses
No	18
Yes	19
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>37</b>

*“Since childhood, I wanted to become a lawyer, but I never got the proper guidance for it, there was no career counsellor or Internet to check these things. I talked to the people around me and according to my interest I did engineering.”*

*A young woman, aged 22, from Champawat*





*“Since childhood I have always wanted to fly an airplane, but I didn’t get the right guidance and I did not have maths in my 11th class. I took medical stream so I would like to join medical field related jobs in the Airforce.”*

*A 21 year old male respondent from Champawat*

## 2. Career Aspirations: Interest in Various Careers

Respondents were provided with a list of career options and asked to rate their level of interest in pursuing them. The highest number of respondents reported being very interested in starting one’s own business and government jobs (other) respectively. Government jobs (other) include medicine, teaching and defense jobs in the government. 34 (74%) respondents reported not being interested in pursuing government bank jobs.

Career Interest	Maybe	Very Interested	Not Interested
Private Job in IT	24	10	18%
Private Job in Nursing	15	15	27%
Entertainment	9	19	38%
Private Job in Customer Facing	16	9	20%
Government Job in Bank	7	9	16%
Government Job in SSC	8	16	29%
Government Job (other)	4	31	56%
Start Own Business	6	29	58%
Family Business	3	1	2%
Others		10	29%

A breakdown of this information by gender is presented below. Starting one’s own business and government jobs (other) were most often reported as high interest options by both boys and girls.

Career Interest (girls)	Maybe	Very Interested	Not Interested
Private Job in IT	15	5	20%
Private Job in Nursing	5	8	32%
Entertainment	4	11	44%
Private Job in Customer Facing	9	2	8%
Government Job in Bank	2	5	20%



Government Job in SSC	5	7	28%	13	52%
Government Job (other)	4	13	52%	8	32%
Start Own Business	3	12	50%	9	38%
Family Business	0	1	20%	4	80%
Others		3	25%	9	75%

Career Interest (boys)	Maybe	Very Interested	Not Interested
Private Job in IT	11	5	17%
Private Job in Nursing	12	7	23%
Entertainment	5	10	33%
Private Job in Customer Facing	7	9	30%
Government Job in Bank	5	4	13%
Government Job in SSC	5	9	30%
Government Job (other)	2	18	60%
Start Own Business	3	19	66%
Family Business	3	0	0%
Others	0	7	30%

On being asked to rate their interest in various careers ranging from private sector and government jobs to businesses, private sector jobs were the most coveted, with 57.5% of all responses related to private sector jobs such as those in IT, retail, hospitality, entertainment, medicine and law.

Government jobs, including positions in the Defense forces, Police as well as posts such as IAS, IFS and Bank PO were also common responses, with 25.3% related responses. Fewer people chose options related to starting their own business or continuing a family business.

Career Interest	Not Interested	Maybe	Very Interested
Private Sector jobs	98	68.5%	68
Government jobs	19	13.3%	23
Business	26	18.2%	9
	36.9%	25.8%	37.4%



Of all the career options presented during the survey, 37.4% of options elicited ‘Very Interested’ responses while 36.9% elicited ‘Not Interested’ responses.

Considering ‘Very Interested’ responses alone, there seemed to be similar preferences between the private and government sector, while the majority of ‘Not Interested’ responses (68.5%) and ‘Maybe’ responses (47.6%) were for private sector jobs.

### 3. Location Aspirations

18 of 55 respondents (32.73%) reported that they see themselves living anywhere.

25 respondents (80.65%) reported that they only want to live in Uttarakhand (within their village/hometown and/or elsewhere in Uttarakhand), and 6 (19.35%) reported that they only want to live outside of Uttarakhand. Here, outside Uttarakhand means that they reported wanting to live in a major city outside Uttarakhand and/or abroad. Only 1 respondent reported aspiring to live abroad in five years time.

	Number	%
<b>Only in Uttarakhand</b>	25	80.7%
<b>Only outside Uttarakhand</b>	6	19.4%
<b>Total</b>	31	100%

## **Factors Influencing Aspirations of Youth**

### 1. Factors Influencing Career Aspirations

Through the interviews, various factors were observed as playing a defining role in the aspirations of the youth, i.e. that influence what careers the youth aspire to. These factors are summarized below:

#### a. *Family*

Youth’s family members, particularly parents, emerged as being influential in their choice of career. 15 respondents (40.54%) reported that parents were very influential in their choice of career, 9 (24.32%) reported that they were somewhat influential, and 13 (35.14%) that they were not influential at all.



<i>Career influence - parents</i>	Number of responses	
Not at all	13	35.1%
Somewhat	9	24.3%
Very	15	40.5%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100%</b>

Furthermore, 13 respondents (40.63%) reported that other family members, apart from their parents, were very influential in their choice of career, followed by 11 (34.38%) who reported that they were somewhat influential, and 8 (25%) that they were not influential at all.

<i>Career influence - family</i>	Number of responses	
Not at all	8	25.00
Somewhat	11	34.38
Very	13	40.63
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Support to family was seen as a common driving factor with regards to employability among the youth. For multiple respondents, securing a job that allows them to earn sufficiently for themselves and their families is a priority goal for the next five years.

This prioritization of supporting one’s family appeared to be stemming from a variety of factors. Some expressed feeling a desire to now give back to their parents, who they feel have supported them all these years. Others, particularly first-born children or those from single parent households, spoke about it being their responsibility to provide for the rest of the family.

Additionally, parents’ career advice or aspirations for their child were noted as playing a large role in determining youths’ career aspirations. For example, a young woman in Champawat who was preparing for the army entrance exams told researchers she was doing so because it had always been her parents’ dream to see her in the army. Another spoke about how her father encouraged her to start her own business as he believed it would be preferable to working for someone else.

Youth are also influenced by their siblings, especially if the siblings are already working, and even more so when they are working outside the village. Youth reported being influenced by their elder siblings even if the final decision is taken by parents (usually the father). Of 21 respondents who



reported their career aspirations being influenced by a family member other than their parents, 10 reported being influenced by a sibling, followed by 7 who reported being influenced by an uncle. Of the 10, 5 reported being influenced by a brother, 4 by a sister, and 1 by both.

Through the discussions, it was also noted that exposure to a certain career path such as by having a family member who is in the same field could encourage an individual's decision to pursue it.

*Respondent: "I have a lot of interest in that (starting a business)."*

*Interviewer: "You are thinking of starting a beauty business?"*

*Respondent: "Yes"*

*Interviewer: "Do you know anyone who has opened their own salon?"*

*Respondent: "My sister had learned, and she used to order supplies and do it from home itself" – A 22-year old female from Mussoorie.*

*"I haven't really given this a thought. Because this level...since the beginning, I haven't seen or thought at this level. Had there been something from my home and family..like if anyone back home had a business or something...so maybe I would have thought at this level. I would have thought maybe I would also have my own business, I can also do this, have a business of my own."—A young woman from Bageshwar speaking about her attitude towards running a business*

*Interviewer: "But you said you weren't interested in it (entrepreneurship) ?"*

*Respondent: "Yes, but I'll go for it if I don't get any government job. My younger brother-in-law is an entrepreneur in Delhi and he is well settled."*

*Interviewer: "Okay. What does he do?"*

*Respondent: "e-commerce business"*

*Interviewer: "If you will start a business, what will be it?"*

*Respondent: "I don't have much knowledge, but I'll go for ecommerce business after taking advice from him."*

*- A 21 year old male respondent from Champawat*



#### *b. Friends and Peers*

Friends and the peer group also play a big role in improving levels of awareness and influencing career aspirations. Their opinions and attitudes were important to respondents as peers are often actively pursuing career decisions at the same time and can offer useful and relevant information about careers and current opportunities. Of 13 respondents who reported that their career aspirations are influenced by community members other than family, 8 cited their friends.

*“I wanted to be a singer as it is my hobby. I can make covers and if I succeed then I can pursue it. My friend won a reality show, his name is Pawan. He used to sing on Youtube and in fairs.”*

*A 21 year old male respondent from Champawat*

#### *c. Community Norms*

The interviews provided a glimpse into community norms regarding certain career pathways. These norms were seen to play a role in what careers local youth aspire to. Almost 26% of respondents indicated that what other people think is an important factor they consider while deciding upon a career.

These norms vary based on community or region. For example, societal reservations about girls joining the hotel industry was frequently mentioned in Almora, while an entrepreneur running a goat rearing business in Tehri spoke about the stigma surrounding entrepreneurship in his community.

*“People look down upon being self- employed or starting your own business. They think if they do so, their social reputation may suffer and they may become excluded from the community.”*

*“I stayed at home back then and people talked about how I didn’t have a job despite being educated...So I was forced to take up that job at the hotel.” (Tehri-based entrepreneur)*

Respondents reported being interested in pursuing a career in the civil service/IAS. During follow-up questioning with some of the respondents, the respect associated with the IAS was cited as a reason for this.

#### *d. Age and Past Experiences*

Older respondents appeared to have different aspirations, which were shaped by their past experiences. This is in line with Pomery et. Al’s (2009) assertion that experience is one of the



factors that shapes career choice. A 27 year old NGO worker in Champawat spoke emphatically about her distaste for private companies and her need for a private job. When questioned about this further, she recounted her experience where she had been working for an ambulance service in Dehradun for over 3 years. The service changed hands, and the new private company who had been put into place imposed a reduction in salary from 19,000 per month to 9,000 per month. This, she told us, would not be the case at a government department, such as the ones where her friends worked. A government job would have ensured more security.

A sense of having responsibilities related to marriage and providing for one's children and in-laws was highlighted by older youth. An older respondent also mentioned that she grew up at a time where child marriage was commonly practiced and girls did not work, suggesting that there may be a difference in the community norms that affect older and younger youth.

On the other hand, younger respondents, having had less work experience, appeared more receptive to and on-the-lookout for new information about different career pathways. In a few cases, younger respondents asked for information during the interview on what would be possible career options related to their stream of study at school, or their passion area.

*e. Choice of stream in school*

When respondents were asked about why they were not interested in certain careers (particularly in medicine, pharmacy and law), a common response was that they had not elected that stream of study in school, and so they would not be able to pursue it anymore. During school, they said, they did not have sufficient information about what could be pursued with which stream of study. Additionally, the role of parents in deciding which stream to select was mentioned.

*“Interviewer: When you were in school, what did you want to be? Did you think differently back then?”*

*Respondent: Very much so. Back then I used to think being a doctor, police officer or engineer were the only options. So, I thought I would be a doctor. But then I took commerce.*

*Interviewer: Then why did you take commerce?*

*Respondent: Science is more difficult. And mummy said no to taking arts.” – A young woman from Dehradun*

Factors Influencing Career Aspirations (Job-Specific)



*a. Motivators for Government Jobs*

Interviews and discussions in the field indicated an overwhelming inclination among the youth towards pursuing government jobs, particularly in defense, the police or as Bank PO. Multiple respondents also suggested that this is a widely coveted career pathway, explaining that securing a government job is an aspiration held by many. However, fewer respondents are interested in pursuing the IAS or Civil Services. This can possibly be attributed to the recognition that selection processes for these positions are very difficult.

Various reasons were cited for the widespread inclination toward joining the army. Reasons varied from wanting to protect national interests, fulfilling parental ambitions for the child, and having the option of early retirement.

A young woman from Champawat spoke about the phenomenon of joining the army in her community. Most people, she told us, tend to join the army at about 18-19 years of age, and then retire by the time they are 37-38 years. They then proceed to take coaching classes for about a year after which they apply for jobs in other departments, such as the police.

*b. Motivators for Entrepreneurial Jobs*

High motivation to develop society and the surroundings was noted in multiple respondents who reported starting their own business as a priority aspiration. Furthering ecological conservation, promoting local foods and job creation were a few of the motivations mentioned.

*c. Motivators for Hotel Jobs*

Hotels are generally viewed as an attractive employment option as they require little to no skills, training is on the job and free food and accommodation are often provided, i.e. there are very low barriers to entry. The preference for joining the hotel industry was however observed more prominently in Tehri, where right after Intercollege, boys were “expected” to join hotels almost immediately.

*d. Motivators for Creative Jobs*

A few respondents did recognize the scope for employment in creative fields through avenues such as Youtube channels, talent shows, and activity classes at the local Club Mahindra resort. A lot of people mentioned dancing as either a current career aspiration or their aspiration as a child which





changed while growing up. Some attributed this change to not being able to explore their interest further due to costly training, or sometimes the complete unavailability of it.

*“Earlier, I used to think I could become a dancer. But I never used to dance. Even now, it is such that I do not dance in front of anybody. But I watch a lot of dance videos; it is very expensive to take dance lessons.”*

*- Student based in Dehradun*

### Factors Influencing Location Aspirations

Respondents spoke about feeling a connection, in some cases to rural life, and in others, to the mountains. A number of examples of reverse migration were mentioned where respondents or those known to them had moved out of their hometown for employment purposes. However, it was reported that those who move away, particularly to cities have difficulty adapting, and face health issues as a result of pollution. Respondents said they had already visited or lived in other parts of India, seen what it has to offer and realized that they preferred their home. This reverse migration was seen to be more prevalent among people in their late twenties.

Respondents also spoke about wanting to stay close to home so as to be able to support their family or reach them in case of an emergency. However, how they defined ‘close’ varied from a few kilometers from their town/village to cities such as Delhi. Some respondents mentioned that they would have to move out of their village due to lack of employment opportunities but would prefer to continue living in Uttarakhand.

### **Factors Influencing Career Actions of Youth**

Career-oriented actions commonly taken by the youth included pursuing higher studies, preparing for entrance exams through self study and coaching, and gaining awareness on the field through YouTube, social media, and speaking with people in the same domain. Youth who aspired to defense jobs reported running regularly to practice for the fitness test.

It was found that even in cases where youth had clearly defined aspirations, they were not always taking action in pursuit of these aspirations. Various factors were identified as playing a role in whether or not youth take actions in line with their aspirations.

Youth were asked which factors they consider most essential while making decisions related to pursuing different career opportunities. ‘Income’ was the most commonly reported factor, with 56.7% respondents selecting this option. 45% of respondents stated that the distance of a work



opportunity from their home was a factor, and they would prefer a location nearby. 1 out of 4 respondents consider the perceptions of other people as critical factors to consider before taking up a work opportunity. Other factors mentioned include what the nature of the work is, how much scope it offers, how much time they have available, and what the environment of the workplace is.

Things	Frequency	Not Selected	Total	Percentage
Income	17	13	30	56.7%
Location	7	23	30	23.3%
Distance from home (Near)	14	17	31	45.2%
Risk	6	25	31	19.4%
Other People	8	23	31	25.8%
Other	14	16	30	46.7%

Through the interviews, various additional factors emerged as impacting whether or not youth take actions that are in line with their aspirations. These are described below.

#### I. Household Financial Situation

Individuals expressed an inability to pursue their true aspirations due to the financial situation of their household. Youth from financially vulnerable families, such as those employed in daily wage labor, are particularly at a disadvantage. An urgent need to take up a job is felt, due to which youth forego pursuing careers which require more time for studying or have higher barriers to entry. Careers that can be joined right after school include working in hotels, which seem to be easier to access than many others and come with perks.

Additionally, training in skills such as computers, english and creative arts require a monetary investment, and so may not be accessible to all households. Similarly, a respondent from Bageshwar reported not being in a position to pursue an employment training program even though it is provided free of cost. She currently takes care of her own expenses, and would have to leave her present job to attend the training program. She also mentioned that even if she did manage her expenses, and secure a placement at the end of the program, there was no certainty that she would be the right fit for the job. In such a case she would be out of both her old job as well as the newer one.



## 2. Encouragement from Family

Family was seen to play a motivating role in youth’s pursuit of their aspirations. A number of respondents highlighted the role of at least one family member, ranging from their mother to an elder brother or uncle, who had been a notably motivating presence in their life and encouraged them to pursue their aspirations. A student at the PMKVY skilling center in Champawat cited having both financial savings and familial support as an essential requirement for him to start a business.

## 3. Lack of Awareness

Lack of awareness regarding the requirements to pursue their aspirations emerged as a challenge encountered by youth in the region. Not having all the required paperwork (such as Aadhar cards) on time was cited multiple times as a reason for not being able to participate in competitive exams. It was however noted that individuals aspiring to the army seem to be well informed regarding selection criteria and procedures.

Modes of learning about job opportunities were limited to personal connections. This was also how most students enrolled in skilling centers reported having learned about the centers.

### **Additional Insights**

#### 1. Sources of Guidance

Youth in the region expressed a lack of guidance related to their careers aspirations. Respondents were asked about whether they know of people working in their field of choice. In a number of cases, they did not know anyone working in their field. Very few who did know someone had actually spoken with them regarding their careers.

*“There is no one like this in the village that has enough knowledge to answer my queries. Someone who can answer all my questions... I don’t think there is anyone like that around here.”*

*– A 17-year old boy from the village of Danya in Almora*

People	Frequency	Not Selected	Total	Percentage
Parents	34	18	52	65.4%
Other Family Members	33	19	52	63.5%
College Teachers, School Teachers, Placement Cell	8	44	52	15.4%



Coaching Centre, Training Institute	4	48	52	7.7%
Classmates, Seniors	6	46	52	11.5%
Newspapers, books	6	46	52	11.5%
Internet	12	40	52	23.1%
Myself	15	37	52	28.8%
Other	27	25	52	51.9%
Friends (chosen under 'Other')	20	7	27	74.1%

34 respondents (65.4%) reported trusting their parents for advice related to their careers. However, in families where parents had low levels of education (below class 8th or no education), respondents did not cite parents as strong influences on career aspirations. They would depend on other family members or external members of the community for guidance. Only 8 respondents (15.4%) reported seeking guidance from teachers or college placement cells.

*“Who do you go to for career advice? “*

*“To those who have gone out to study. Some are for instance, in the IT sector, others in banking.”*

*“Mummy papa?”*

*“They are not educated.”*

*- A respondent in BA final year. He wants a government job, maybe in the IFS, police or army. He is also interested in acting and comedy.*

In addition to parents, a sizable number of respondents (62.7%) reported relying on other family members for career guidance, often older siblings, uncles and aunts.

Some individuals (21%) also spoke about using the internet to expand their general knowledge as well as learn more about the world and their career interests. Teachers at colleges, schools or training centres were not a popular source of guidance nor were newspapers and books.

28.8% respondents stated they relied on themselves for career guidance, while 3 out of 4 respondents who chose ‘Other sources of career guidance’ stated that their friends were an important source of career guidance.



## 2. Role Models:

Respondents were asked whether they had a role model, which was explained to them as someone who inspires them, who they feel like they would like to be like. A number of the youth reported not having or being able to think of such a person.

Amongst those who mentioned having role models, these varied from celebrities and renowned personalities to friends and family. It was noted that while the role models mentioned did often belong to the respondent's field of interest, this was not always the case. However, in either case, respondents with role models were usually able to identify certain qualities in their role model that they looked up to. A few such qualities mentioned were perseverance, humility and critical thinking. A young man from Almora, aspiring to join the army spoke about a friend who unsuccessfully attempted the entrance exams multiple times before finally making it to the air force. Another respondent currently working with the ambulance services in Delhi spoke of a friend who moved to Mumbai and began earning very well. He told us that despite being so successful, his friend has continued to be humble, a trait he admires.

*“The best thing about her... Firstly, the coaching/training she pursued. This way, you get to learn things and get to know about so many things. When you stay with such people, and everybody works in a group...they gain knowledge about this field...get to know about things.”*

*– A young woman from Bageshwar*

*I: Do you have any role models? Any one from nearby or from T.V?*

*D: One can learn from everyone. I don't have any role model as such.*

*I: Do you have anyone from airforce?*

*D: I have elder cousins who are well settled. Some have been to abroad too.*

*I: Do you think you can learn anything from them?*

*D: Yes, a lot.*

*I: What all can you learn from them?*

*D: Yes, I have an elder cousin. He failed many times, qualified once but got a fracture but in his last chance, he worked hard and again qualified the exam.”*

*- A 21 year old male respondent from Champawat*



### 3. Perceived Skill Gaps

Many of the respondents expressed a need to receive training in computers. Even those who had basic knowledge of computers felt the need to learn more advanced concepts. The need for building English communication skills was also highlighted, especially in situations where one is working in another region.

*“They cannot understand English too well. They have little knowledge of the language. They cannot understand what the other person is saying. They appear for interviews. The interview is conducted in English...And these kids don’t make it.”– A 17-year old from the village of Danya in Almora, speaking about the importance of English in the job market.*

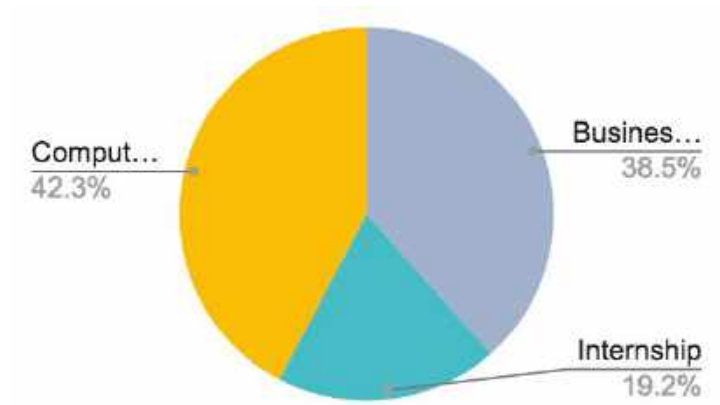
Respondents reported that they or their peers often take up coaching classes for English, computers and government job preparation. In some locations, school teachers in villages are providing classes, while most people have to travel out for coaching to the closest urban centre (Dehradun, Haldwani, Almora, Champawat) or Delhi.

These coaching classes cost anywhere between Rs 500 to Rs 15,000 a month, however the fees are prohibitive. Quality of existing computers and english training centers was raised. A young man from Basoli who had enrolled in a three-month English coaching program in Almora left the program after the first two months due to its low quality. He also mentioned that everyone else he knew had done the same thing.

#### *Intervention-related preferences:*

Youth were asked which types of interventions they would be interested in participating in. 47 respondents (85.5%) reported being interested in a training program that teaches skills such as computers, english and financial management. 40 respondents (72.7%) each reported being interested in an entrepreneurial training program and internships. Of those who were not interested in engaging in internships, the unpaid nature of work was a common reason cited for this.

Program	Interested	Not Interested	Total	Percentage
Business Training	40	15	55	72.7%
Internship	40	15	55	72.7%
Computers, English, Finances	47	8	55	85.5%



22 respondents (40%) reported being 'Most interested' in the English & Computers program, followed by 20 respondents (36.4%) who were most interested in Entrepreneurial training, and 10 respondents (18.2%) in internships.

Respondents were also given a list of different kinds of career support, and asked which they felt they needed. 'Practical exposure' was the most commonly cited form of support, with 50 respondents (92.6%) selecting this option. This was followed by 'Life Skills education' and 'English skills', with 45 respondents (83.3%) each. Computer skills were also considered important, with 41 respondents (75.9%) choosing this option.

A majority of respondents stated a preference for job search support, however a higher number of respondents (72.2%) preferred support for finding a job close to their homes as compared to the rest of Uttarakhand (68.5%) or out of the state (56.6%). The least selected option was 'Entrance exam preparation (higher education)' with 20 respondents (37%) selecting this option.

Type of program	No	Maybe	Yes	Total	%age
Practical exposure	4	0	50	54	92.6%
Job search - home	15	0	39	54	72.2%
Job search - state	17	0	37	54	68.5%
Job search - out of state	23	0	30	53	56.6%
Guidance - starting an enterprise	17	0	37	54	68.5%
Training - government jobs	17	0	37	54	68.5%
Life skills - confidence, etc	9	0	45	54	83.3%
Computer skills	12	1	41	54	75.9%
Entrance exam preparation (college)	33	1	20	54	37.0%



English speaking	8	1	45	54	83.3%
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60% (15 out of 25) of respondents said that they did not have access to any of the services listed above at a location close to them.

#### 4. Limited Access to Opportunity

Limited job opportunities were mentioned as a barrier in multiple districts. In Tehri, for instance, the hotel industry was seen to be the only career option available to youth, with the expectation being that young men would go to work in hotels immediately after intercollege. A similar trend was reported by a student in Dehradun who spoke about the IT park as being the only option for boys to find employment.

#### 5. Role of Gender

A clear demarcation emerged between careers considered more appropriate for women, and those for men. Even though a number of male respondents showed an interest in working in hotels, few women expressed the same interest. The ones who did, were aware that this wasn't considered a 'good' option for girls.

*Respondent: Yes. This will be okay. I have some interest here (hotel industry).*

*Interviewer: Like the big hotels and resorts nearby*

*Respondent: Yes, there are a few here.*

*Interviewer: Have you ever thought of working there?*

*Respondent: Yes, I have given it thought. But this option is not available for ladies and girls...*

*Interviewer: Why?*

*Respondent: Why...I don't know that. Because ladies rarely take up these jobs up here...If there had been some ladies (female candidates willing to do this work) here then there might be an option. But, here mostly men work.*

*- A 23 year old female respondent from Bageshwar*

Mobility was seen to play a large role in a girl's agency - how far she can go to study, work or take coaching. A number of girls spoke of wanting to leave their current village/hometown, because they felt they would be able to tap into opportunities more if they are outside. However, restrictions on leaving home were pronounced amongst females, who face the





additional challenges of safety, parental permission and commonly held perceptions that women should not be away from home.

Low age of marriage for girls was an added factor in some areas, and was particularly highlighted in Berinag, Pithoragarh. Young women respondents spoke about there being no options for girls in the village as they get married off soon after the 8<sup>th</sup> or the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Their schooling is then discontinued, and the only employment options accessible to them, if at all, are in jobs such as tailoring.



## **Researcher Observations:**

During the time we spent in the field, apart from the data collected through the interviews, we also documented our observations and conversations we had with locals in the area. Below is a summary of our observations.

### Observations on youth response to the interviews:

The respondents, men and women alike, came across as being open to participating in the interviews. Some even connected us with more youth we could interview for the study. This was the case with both in-person and telephone conversations.

Some youth took the interview as an opportunity to ask questions related to different career pathways, and what the requirements for entering those careers are. Others reached out after we had left the field with follow-up questions and even connected us to other youth who they felt could benefit from engaging with our team - either for guidance or mentoring support for employment or entrepreneurship. This signaled an interesting opportunity to further leverage these visits by delivering career awareness/guidance once an interview is concluded.

During the interviews, it was noticed that sometimes respondents would report their mother's occupation as being a housewife, but upon further probing it would emerge that their mothers are in fact also involved in other occupations outside of housework. This happened for example, with a boy we interviewed in Champawat. It did not emerge until much later in the discussion that his mother is an ASHA worker. Other examples of this include youth whose mothers work in their fields, do domestic work at someone else's home or sell milk.

Another observation was that when asking youth who their role model is, in a few cases the respondents explained that they feel a great deal of confidence in themselves and are their own role model. This could indicate either the lack of access to impressive role models or a degree of self-confidence in these particular youth which set them apart from others.

### Observations related to Career Aspirations and Action:

Of the districts surveyed, the aspiration to join the Army seems to exist more prominently in the Kumaon region of the state. It is possible that being a region close to the national border as well as one where traditionally a number of families have had members enlisted in the army could have a role to play in this.

In border areas, it was observed that mobility was higher as local livelihoods were considered more vulnerable and unstable. Respondents from such areas were more open to leaving the state, because of a cited lack of security and facilities - for instance, one young man from the Tambli-Manch border



region of Champawat, who had come to the city for a skill development program could not foresee going back there to work because of security issues.

Overall, there was a sense of lack of initiative taking amongst the youth we spoke with. While access to knowledge and opportunities is indeed limited, particularly in more remote areas, many of the youth we spoke with had not acted on opportunities that were available to them, for example not speaking with people within their networks who were knowledgeable about their field of interest.

Program-related Inputs:

Three of the Pithoragarh-based respondents we interacted with expressed an inclination for community development, and had in fact volunteered with a local NGO. We asked these respondents what type of intervention they believed youth in their community required. All three respondents highlighted the need for a career awareness and guidance intervention, suggesting college workshops as a way of implementing this. Other recommendations made were providing access to high-quality coaching institutes for government exams, awareness on self learning techniques, and more exposure to digital technology. A few youth also brought up the need to engage with other youth among their peer groups, who were facing drug addictions because of limited guidance and a lack of productive work opportunities, and were keen that such youth could also be supported through such a program.



## **Conclusion**

### Summary of Findings

There is a high demand for government jobs among young people across rural and small town Uttarakhand, particularly in the defense forces. Several respondents were preparing for government entrance exams, and knew of others in their community who were doing so as well. Youth in the region are also open to entrepreneurship, however this is in most cases a backup option and not a priority goal. The willingness to engage in entrepreneurship was observed in all districts, with the exception of Tehri Garhwal, where engaging in entrepreneurship is not well perceived by the community.

Overall, across the six districts, the perceptions of stakeholders in the youth's ecosystem, such as their parents, friends and community members were found to play a role in their career aspirations and actions. There was also a widely reported lack of awareness and guidance, as well as opportunity. This was even more pronounced for youth where parental levels of education were low. Further, households which had only a single-parent, or where there was a high dependence on the oldest sibling for financial support also seemed more vulnerable and in need of immediate assistance.

Through the interviews a number of factors influencing an individual's aspirations emerged. These were: a need to financially support one's family, the career perceptions of family members and friends, community norms, age and past experiences, and selection of subject stream in school.

Certain factors were also identified as playing a role in an individual's career actions, whether they take actions that are in line with their aspirations. These were: financial situation of the household, encouragement from parents and a lack of awareness about career opportunities.

### *The role of self efficacy in career aspirations and action:*

Self efficacy, a person's belief in their capabilities to produce effects, plays a role in the career aspirations and behaviours of individuals. According to Bandura<sup>14</sup>, who coined the term, individuals choose to engage in or avoid a specific task based on their self-judgment of their competency in accomplishing the task. Lent's Social Cognitive Career Theory explains how an individual's self efficacy along with their outcome expectations, i.e. their personal beliefs about performing certain behaviors, affects one's goals as well as the effort expended in their pursuit. The attainment (or not)

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<sup>14</sup> Bandura, A. (1994). Self-efficacy. In V. S. Ramachandran (Ed.), Encyclopedia of human behavior (Vol. 4, pp. 71-81). New York: Academic Press. (Reprinted in H. Friedman [Ed.], Encyclopedia of mental health. San Diego: Academic Press, 1998)



of these goals, in turn influences an individual's self efficacy and outcome expectations. Achieving goals has been seen to positively impact one's self efficacy and outcome expectations.<sup>15 16</sup>

In this way, an individual's career actions and aspirations continue to play into each other. Building self efficacy can therefore positively impact youth and how they approach their livelihoods.

#### Limitations and Challenges of the Study:

- Youth respondents were to be sampled based on the following criteria: 1. Respondents between the age of 18-30 years, 2. Equal numbers of male and female youth, and 3. Equal numbers of youth the recruiters perceived as being more motivated and less motivated. However this was not possible in certain districts, because of limited youth in the area or in the recruiter's network.
- Sample variation between districts was high with regards to certain parameters. In two districts, Champawat and Dehradun, respondents were predominantly recruited through skilling centers, unlike in other districts where the respondents were recruited from the community, and most were not enrolled in such centers. Similarly, a number of respondents from Pithoragarh district worked as volunteers with local NGOs, which was not the case in other districts.
- As a result of logistical and time considerations, primarily because of weather conditions in the survey area, 13 interviews were conducted over the phone. Due to reasons such as poor network connectivity in the respondent's location and absence of face-to-face communication, retrieving rich qualitative insights from these conversations was challenging.

#### Recommendations for Future Studies:

- The sample for this study is limited to youth. Conducting a study with other important stakeholders such as parents, local employers etc. would lend more insight into the findings from this study, as well as other important contextual factors such as caste and local networks.
- Through the course of this study, we identified a number of areas for further research. These include:

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<sup>15</sup> Tang, M., Pan, W., & Newmeyer, M. D. (2008). Factors influencing high school students' career aspirations. *Professional School Counseling, 11*(5), 2156759X0801100502.,

<sup>16</sup> Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (2002). Social cognitive career theory. *Career choice and development, 4*, 255-311.



- The influence of birth order on household responsibility and aspirations of individuals.
- Role of age in career aspirations and motivations of youth.
- Capacity of parents in Uttarakhand to advise their children on careers

Further research studies (quantitative and qualitative) should be undertaken to better understand these areas.

### **Output of study**

As this study was undertaken with the objective of identifying potential areas for intervention, we were able to use these insights to design a programmatic intervention - Margshala - for youth in the age range of 18 to 25 years. Some examples of this are outlined below:

- Building career awareness and self awareness through exposure to different career pathways, interactions with professionals from various fields and self reflection exercises.
- Providing individualized guidance on navigating career decisions through one-on-one mentorship.
- Developing essential skills such as initiative taking, goal setting and decision making through a combination of experiential learning and mentorship.

One key tenet of the program design for Margshala has been providing the right kind of intervention at the right time, in recognition of the diversity of needs of individual youth. Hence the program has a multi-focus with equal emphasis on mentoring, skilling and career exploration through awareness and exposure.

As a program with a modular nature, we hope to be able to learn from our upcoming pilots to understand how this can be taken across different districts of Uttarakhand in the future. Finally, Margshala also takes into account local considerations by engaging locally-based professionals as mentors and guides for career exposure, with an emphasis on locally relevant and sustainable livelihoods that are more suited for the region.

In addition to Margshala, we were also able to begin the development of a research tool which we hope to employ in the future for evaluations, assessments and predictive matching of individual-to-intervention.

### **Motivations-aspirations rubric**

While interviewing youth across 6 districts of Uttarakhand, an interesting but unintentional observation we were able to make was that individual youth displayed varying degrees of motivation and aspiration. In fact, we were able to identify four distinct personas of youth based on the nature



of revealed aspiration as well as the level of motivation they displayed to take action towards that aspiration.

This has led us to work backwards to identify defining characteristics, values and behavioural traits that can predict persona types and perhaps lead to a better matching of an individual youth to a particular programmatic intervention.

We are still in the process of developing this framework further and hope to be able to use this to create an evaluation rubric for our programs, and also develop a predictive algorithm in the future for matching the right person to the right kind of programmatic intervention. This would enable us to follow a more modular approach that is more personalised and customised to an individual's specific need, and provide the right kind of support at the right time to the right youth.