



## Immigration of Foreign Nationals in Nepal: A Study on International Migration from India to Nepal (1961-2021)

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### Abstract

Cross-border migration is a widespread phenomenon around the world. Around 281 million international migrants are residing outside their country as of the year 2020. Most of the beneficiaries of migration are moving towards developed nations; nonetheless, when discussing international migration, neighbouring country migration issues are frequently overlooked, particularly when migration occurs from a more developing to a less developed country. This study explores the reason for the migration and integration of Indian immigrants in Nepal. The current study uses secondary data from the Nepal population and housing census (NPHC). Descriptive statistics on the pattern and composition of Indian immigrants present in Nepal have been employed in this study based on secondary data. Seasonal short-term immigration increased by 0.9 percent in the 2011-2021 decade. In contrast, from the 2011 to the 2021 census, long-term or permanent immigration of foreign citizens (including Indians) has drastically declined (8.9%). The rate of Indian immigration has dramatically increased in the census decades of 1991 (7.9%), 2001 (2.5%), and 2021 (7.3%). The majority of Indian immigrants, both men and women, inhabit Kathmandu. Most of the districts in Nepal's southern Terai area that border India have a higher prevalence of female Indian immigrants, suggesting collaboration between India and Nepal on policy campaigns.

**Keywords:** India; International migration; Nepal; Integration; Census data; South Asia

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## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of transnational mobility has emerged as a pivotal aspect of contemporary global society, influencing socio-cultural, economic, and political dynamics across borders. Among the diverse range of transnational migrations, the movement of Indian immigrants into Nepal has garnered significant attention. As per the recent (NPHC) Nepal Population and Housing Census report, Indian immigrants constitute over 90 percent of total foreign-born people in Nepal (NPHC, 2021).

The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu's report sheds light on the significant presence of Indian-born individuals in Nepal, indicating a complex demographic and socio-economic relationship between the two nations. With 4.4 million Indian-born residents in Nepal, of which 2 million have acquired Nepalese citizenship, there's a substantial integration of Indian immigrants into Nepalese society. This integration is underscored by the fact that Indian immigrants who have taken Nepalese citizenship represent approximately 35 percent of Nepal's total population. Furthermore, the

percentage of Indian labour force to total labour force in Nepal is notable, standing at 41.9 percent. This figure, although slightly less than half of the total workforce participation rate in Nepal, indicates a significant contribution to the country's economy by Indian immigrants. The data suggests a dynamic labour market where Indian immigrants play a vital role, potentially filling gaps in specific sectors or industries of Nepal (Lucas, 2015).

A compilation of World Bank data shows that around 74 million individuals (47 percent) migrate between developing countries in search of employment globally (Solimano, 2012). The developmental anomalies between adjacent nations are the primary source of motivation in pursuit of better employment prospects and better wages (McKenzie et al., 2014a). Rising fertility rates and declining mortality combined with high population growth and density lead to a spillover of working-class emigration between developing nations (Afolayan, 2001).

Recent scholarly articles have also indicated that about fifty-three percent of migrants leaving Nepal for Gulf nations are between the ages of 26 to 35 years (Mak et al., 2021). Economic factors also cause emigration; prior research suggests that an impoverished nation's citizens are forced to leave their home country due to a combination of financial debt and a fragile economy of the home country (Afolayan, 2001; Joshi et al., 2011; Zimmermann, 2004).

Prior research on migration overseas has shown that the expansion of industries and globalization of labour promotes the movement of semi-skilled workers from developing Asia-Pacific countries to Australia (Hugo, 2005). That opens a window for people to migrate to developed nations to work in high- and low-skilled jobs. Additionally, the costs associated with international migration are anticipated to rise with distance (Mak et al., 2021). Migration from neighbouring countries presents a distinct set of possibilities and challenges, and it plays a vital role in shaping the pattern of international migration (Hugo, 2006).

However, international migration to neighbouring countries also raises challenges with resource distribution, cultural integration, and border management (Richmond, 1988). Historical ties and shared geographical closeness encourage voluntary and involuntary migration. Citizens frequently migrate across borders between neighbouring countries due to the intricate interactions of social, political, and economic forces (Chakraborty et al., 2022).

After Janga Bahadur Rana issued Nepal's first civil code (1854), it was said that "foreigners living in Nepal could purchase and sell lands." The Indian farmers were encouraged by this civil code to immigrate to Nepal as agricultural labourers and establish themselves permanently in the Terai districts of Nepal. People of Indian descent used to move to Nepal's plains as agricultural labourers. The demographic and socioeconomic composition of the Terai regions was significantly shaped by this inflow of Indian immigrants. These immigrants have developed a distinctive fusion of cultural exchange and coexistence over the years, in addition to making contributions to the agricultural sector and assimilating into Nepalese society (Ojha D P, 1983).

Indian railway lines (narrow gauge) extend from Indian town Jaynagar near the Indo-Nepal border to Nepali town Bhangaha (1937). These railway line extensions played a crucial role in fostering economic ties between India and Nepal. They facilitated the transportation of goods, promoted trade, and contributed to the growth of commercial activities in Nepal. Additionally, the improved connectivity between

the two countries also facilitated the movement of people, leading to increased Indian immigration and integration in Nepal over the years (Dormeus, 2006).

## BACKGROUND

The first ever international agreement to Indo-Nepal migration is “Sagauli treaty (1816)”, between the East India Company and Guru Gajraj Mishra following the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814–1816 (Dhahai D R, 1983). The “Indo-Nepal friendship treaty of 1955” is another boost for cross-border migration in huge numbers. According to the friendship treaty, both governments should accord equal rights and privileges to their citizens regarding residence, immigration, property ownership, and participation in trade and commerce (Chamie, 2015).

Migration from India again sparked after the introduction of the first “Industrial Policy of Nepal (1957)” It was stated that ‘no discrimination would be made based on nationality, to set up industries in Nepal’ and the government of Nepal urged Indian businessmen like Birla to establish industries in Nepal. As a result, businessmen and entrepreneurs from India set up manufacturing industries. Skilled and semiskilled workers were hired by owners to operate the machinery and contribute to the growth of these industries. This influx of Indian workers not only boosted the economy of Nepal but also led to the development of technical skills among the local workforce, as they learned from their Indian counterparts. Additionally, this collaboration between Indian businessmen and Nepali workers paved the way for further industrialization and modernization in Nepal (Kirti, 2021; Singh, 2011).

Nepal's geographical position, coupled with its reliance on Indian ports for trade, fosters a friendly relationship between the two nations in South Asia. This relationship is further bolstered by shared sociocultural characteristics, evident in physical appearance, language, culture, religion, and social structures (Dahal, 1983a). The economic growth of Nepal is intertwined with immigration, with small-scale industries such as plywood and brick-making factories contributing significantly.

However, there is an inverse correlation between immigrant workers and native-born employment, particularly notable at the sub-national level due to significant emigration to Gulf countries (Laxman, 2015). While Nepal acknowledges India's hospitality towards Nepalese seeking employment, concerns about its small size, low population, and fragile economy temper enthusiasm for open immigration (Thapliyal S, 1999). This reluctance mirrors broader sentiments in South Asia, where receiving nations are cautious about embracing foreign immigrants from neighbouring countries. Despite these challenges, India and Nepal remain deeply interconnected due to historical, geopolitical, and sociocultural ties, prompting policymakers to persist in their efforts to maintain an open border (Das, 2008a; Nayak, 2020a; S. Pattanaik, 1998).

## RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

However, there have been emerging challenges like thirty-seven closure of land entrance crossings between Nepal and India during COVID-19, leaving thousands of labourers stranded in Nepal (Shakya, 2020), mostly from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal (Paudel, 2021). These labourers were left without any means of income or support, leading to a severe economic crisis for them and their families (Mishra, 2021). The closure of these crossings also disrupted the flow of essential goods and

supplies between Nepal and India, further exacerbating the situation (Nayak, 2020; Parmanad, 1986).

On the other hand, the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), introduced in 2018, has encouraged the implementation of policies that would promote safe, orderly, and regular migration. It aimed to address the challenges and opportunities associated with migration, emphasizing the importance of international cooperation and shared responsibility among countries. Furthermore, in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), target number 10.7, aims to facilitate human movement and migration in an orderly, safe, regular, and responsible manner through implementing well-managed migration policies. Therefore, the current study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of Indian immigration in Nepal from 1961 to 2021, utilising census of Nepal data. By examining the patterns, trends, and reason for migration to Nepal, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of transnational mobility and its impact on the sending country India.

The concentration of Indian immigrants in ecological belts of Nepal, districts of Nepal, and duration of stay were analysed separately between r Indian and non-Indian foreign immigrants. By examining the concentration of Indian immigrants in ecological belts and districts of Nepal, as well as comparing their duration of stay with that of foreign immigrants, a comprehensive understanding of immigration patterns in Nepal was obtained. The findings will shed light on the factors influencing settlement choices and the varying lengths of stay for different immigrant groups in Nepal.

## DATA

The current investigation drew upon longitudinal data spanning seven consecutive rounds of the Nepal census conducted between 1961 and 2021. The Nepal Census, administered by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) every ten years, serves as a primary source of demographic information for the nation. In this study, migration patterns were analysed using two key variables derived from the census data. Firstly, current immigration was assessed based on country of birth data. Secondly, migration was evaluated by examining the residency status five years prior to the census date. Specifically, people aged 5 years and older were classified as "immigrants" if their current district of enumeration differed from their previous district (or country) of residence.

The identification of immigrants was contingent upon a comparison between the respondent's current and past places of residence. In this study, particular attention was given to respondents whose place of birth or previous residence was identified as India. By focusing on people with Indian origins or previous residency in India, the study aimed to investigate the migration dynamics between India and Nepal over the specified period. This approach allowed for an exploration of the migratory patterns and trends, shedding light on the extent and nature of Indian immigration to Nepal and its implications for both countries. Through the systematic analysis of census data and the utilization of these key variables, the study contributed to a deeper understanding of migration dynamics within the South Asian region.

## METHODOLOGY

The Nepal Population and Housing Census Report, compiled using Microsoft Excel, serves as a comprehensive source for understanding the dynamics of Indian

immigration in Nepal. This study conducts a thorough analysis of descriptive statistics to elucidate trends, patterns, and the composition of Indian immigrants within Nepal's borders. Key to this analysis is immigration rates, calculated by dividing the number of immigrants reported in Nepal in a given year by the total population of Nepal for the same year, and then multiplying by 1000. Immigration rate is a vital tool for assessing the impact of immigration on Nepal's population. By quantifying the influx of immigrants relative to the total population, these rates will offer valuable insights into the scale and magnitude of migration within the country.

Moreover, immigration rate offers a nuanced perspective on the changing dynamics of Nepalese society. It highlights the periods of significant migration inflows, reflecting shifts in political, economic, and social conditions both within Nepal and in neighboring countries like India. Additionally, immigration rate enables the identification of regions or districts within Nepal that experience higher concentrations of immigrants, which will facilitate in targeted interventions and policy responses. Furthermore, immigration rate serves as a benchmark for comparing Nepal's migration trends with those of other countries. By contextualizing Nepal's immigration patterns within a global framework, policymakers can draw upon best practices and lessons learned from international experiences to inform their decision-making processes.

## RESULTS

### Characteristics of foreign immigrants in Nepal over last two decades

In Nepal, there are a sizable number of foreign immigrants (see Table 1). In both 2021 and 2022 censuses, the majority of immigrants – nearly 65% and 56%, respectively – were residing in Nepal for a period of more than 10 years. Furthermore, key findings also show that there is a general trend of an increase in the percentage of people staying for longer durations across all categories. The most significant increase is seen in the category of "Duration of 1-4 years," which had a substantial jump from 17.7% in 2011 to 22.3% in 2021. The category of "Duration above 10 years" saw a noticeable decrease from 64.8% in 2011 to 55.9% in 2021, indicating a shift towards shorter duration stays or possibly an influx of newer residents. Overall, this data suggests that there has been a shift in the distribution of stay durations in Nepal over the decade from 2011 to 2021, with more people staying for intermediate durations (1-4 years) and fewer people staying for extremely long durations (above 10 years).

**Table 1.** Duration of Stay for Foreign Immigrants in Nepal, 2011-2021

Stay duration in Nepal	In 2011 (Percentage)	In 2021 (Percentage)
Duration of <1 year	2.6	3.5
Duration of 1-4 years	17.7	22.3
Duration of 5-9 years	15.0	18.4
Duration above 10 years	64.8	55.9

*Source: Census of Nepal, 2011-2021*

There is a great variation in the length of stay of the immigrants in the ecological belts of Nepal (see Table 2). It provides a detailed breakdown of the distribution of the population in Nepal across three different types of terrains: Mountain, Hill, and Terai, for the years 2011 and 2021. There has been a significant increase (0.8% in 2011 to 2.8% in 2021) in the percentage of people residing in mountainous and a huge jump (20.6%

in 2011 to 43% in 2021) has been noticed for hilly terrains. It has been found that the percentage of people living in mountain terrain more than tripled from 2011 to 2021. Similarly, the percentage of people in hill terrain has almost doubled. The Terai region, although still the most densely populated, experienced a notable decrease (78.6% in 2011 to 54.2% in 2021) in population percentage. This suggests a potential shift in population distribution towards the mountain and hill areas, possibly due to various factors like urbanization, economic opportunities, or environmental considerations.

**Table 2.** Foreign Immigrants in Terrains of Nepal, 2011-2021

Stay in the terrains of Nepal	In 2011 (Percentage)	In 2021 (Percentage)
Mountain terrain	0.8	2.8
Hill terrain	20.6	43.0
Terai terrain	78.6	54.2

Source: *Census of Nepal, 2011-2021*

Foreign immigrants depict a huge variation of reasons for migration in Nepal. Table 3 illustrates the changing dynamics of immigration reasons in Nepal between 2011 and 2021, expressed as percentages. In 2011, the primary motivations for immigration were marriage (45.8%), followed by dependents (17.0%), business (7.3%), and service-related opportunities (6.3%). Notably, a substantial portion of immigrants did not state their reasons (10.2%). However, by 2021, there were significant shifts in immigration patterns. While marriage remained a prevalent reason (38.2%), there was a decrease in this category, possibly indicating changing societal norms or demographic trends. The percentage of immigrants seeking employment in the service sector surged from 6.3% to 15.2%, reflecting a growing demand in this industry. Additionally, there was a notable increase in the number of individuals returning to Nepal (4.1%), which was not recorded in 2011. Interestingly, the 'Not Stated' category decreased substantially to 1.2%, suggesting improved reporting or more transparency in immigration records. Business-related immigration saw a significant drop from 7.3% to 2.8%, indicating potential shifts in economic activities or regulations affecting foreign entrepreneurs. Overall, the data highlights a dynamic landscape of immigration reasons in Nepal over the decade, reflecting evolving social, economic, and policy factors influencing migration patterns.

**Table 3.** Reasons of Immigration of Foreign Immigrants in Nepal, 2011-2021

Reasons of immigration	In 2011 (Percentage)	In 2021 (Percentage)
Agriculture	5.6	3.9
Business	7.3	2.8
Service/Work	6.3	15.2
Study	4.4	7.8
Marriage	45.8	38.2
Dependent	17.0	19.5
Conflict/Disaster	0.4	0.7
Return	-	4.1
Others	3.0	6.6
Not stated	10.2	1.2

Source: *Census of Nepal, 2011-2021*

### Characteristics of Indian immigration in Nepal over last seven decades

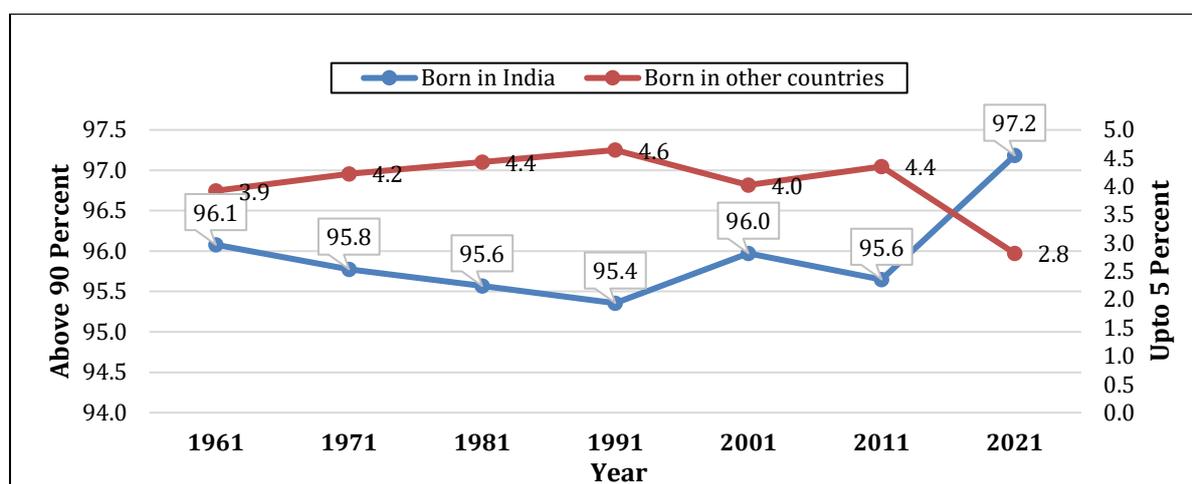
Indian immigrants displayed diverse characteristics in Nepal. Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of Nepal's population dynamics and immigration trends over six census decades from 1961 to 2021. In 1961, Nepal had a population of approximately 9.4 million, with 324,159 Indian citizens residing in the country, accounting for a relatively high immigration rate of 34.4%. Over the subsequent decades, there was a consistent increase in both the total population and the number of Indian citizens in Nepal. By 1971, the population had grown to over 11.5 million, with 322,718 Indian citizens, resulting in a slightly reduced percentage of immigrants at 27.9%. In 1981, Nepal's population surged to 15 million, with 222,278 Indian citizens, resulting in a lower percentage of immigrants rate at 14.8%. The 1991 census recorded a population of nearly 18.5 million, and the number of Indian citizens residing in Nepal increased to 418,982, pushing the percentage of immigrants up to 22.7%. The 2001 census showed a further population increase to approximately 23.2 million, with 583,599 Indian citizens and a rising percentage of immigrants to 25.2%. In the 2011 census, Nepal's population had risen to over 26.2 million, with 449,149 Indian citizens, resulting in a decreasing immigrants to 17.1%. By 2021, the population had grown to nearly 29.2 million, with 713,973 Indian citizens, yielding another increase percentage of immigrations to 24.4%. Overall, the data highlights a consistent trend of population growth in Nepal, along with a fluctuating trend of immigration, with the highest percentage of immigrants rate observed in 1961 and the lowest in 1981. This information provides valuable insights into the demographic changes and immigration patterns in Nepal over the past six decades.

**Table 4.** Volume and Rate of Indian Immigrants in Nepal, 1961 to 2021

Census decades	Population of Nepal	Indian citizens	Immigration rate
1961	9412996	324159	34.4
1971	11555983	322718	27.9
1981	15022839	222278	14.8
1991	18491097	418982	22.7
2001	23151423	583599	25.2
2011	26253828	449149	17.1
2021	29164578	713973	24.4

Source: *Census of Nepal, 1961-2021*

Trends of immigrants in Nepal from India and other countries show very contrasting scenarios. Figure 1 depicts the percentage distribution of foreign-born individuals residing in Nepal over a span of six decades, from 1961 to 2021. Notably, the overwhelming number of foreign-born individuals in Nepal were consistently born in India, indicating a strong historical and demographic connection between the two countries. In 1961, 96.1% of foreign-born individuals were of Indian origin, a trend that remained relatively stable over the decades, with percentages ranging from 95.4% in 1991 to a peak of 97.2% in 2021. This suggests a persistent presence of Indian-born individuals in Nepal throughout this period.



**Figure 1.** Trends of Immigration from India and Other Countries in Nepal 1961 – 2021 (Source: Census of Nepal, 1961-2021)

Conversely, the percentage of foreign-born individuals originating from countries other than India remained comparatively small. This group accounted for only 3.9% in 1961, with a slight increase over the decades, peaking at 4.6% in 1991, but subsequently declining to 2.8% in 2021. This indicates a relatively low influx of individuals from non-Indian origins into Nepal.

The data suggests that the majority of foreign-born individuals in Nepal are from India, highlighting the strong historical and cultural ties between the two countries. The decline in the percentage of individuals of non-Indian origins over the years may be attributed to shared language and cultural similarities. Overall, the figure underscores the enduring influence of Indian migration in Nepal's demographic landscape, while also highlighting a minor, but discernible, presence of foreign-born individuals from other countries.

There is a significant gender difference observed for Indian immigrants in Nepal. Table 5 provides a comprehensive overview of immigration trends in Nepal over seven decades from 1961 to 2021, showcasing both absolute numbers and the corresponding percentages of male and female immigrants. In 1961, specific gender data was unavailable, but the total number of immigrants from India was 324,159. In 1971, a total of 322,718 Indian immigrants were recorded, with a relatively balanced distribution between males (115,606) and females (207,112). This constituted 35.8% males and 64.2% females of the total immigrant population. In 1981, the trend continued with 222,278 Indian immigrants, with 65.4% being females and 29.4% males. The female immigrant population consistently maintained a higher percentage throughout. In 1991, there were 418,982 Indian immigrants, with 72.9% being females and 27.1% males. This trend of higher female immigration continued in 2001 (70.7% females, 29.3% males) and 2011 (71.3% females, 28.7% males). The 2021 data indicates a total of 713,973 Indian immigrants, with females accounting for a substantial 75.4%, while males constituted 24.6% of the total.

Overall, the table highlights a consistent pattern of higher female immigration from India to Nepal over the decades, indicating potentially gender-specific factors influencing migration trends. Additionally, it illustrates a steady increase in the absolute number of immigrants, reaching its highest recorded figure in 2021. This data provides valuable insights into the changing demographic composition of immigrants in Nepal.

**Table 5.** Gender Wise Distribution of Indian Immigrants in Nepal 1961 - 2021

Year	In absolute numbers		In Percentage		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1961	-	-	-	-	324159
1971	115606	207112	35.8	64.2	322718
1981	65285	156993	29.4	70.6	222278
1991	113405	305577	27.1	72.9	418982
2001	171224	412375	29.3	70.7	583599
2011	129057	320092	28.7	71.3	449149
2021	175930	538043	24.6	75.4	713973

Source: Census of Nepal, 1961-2021

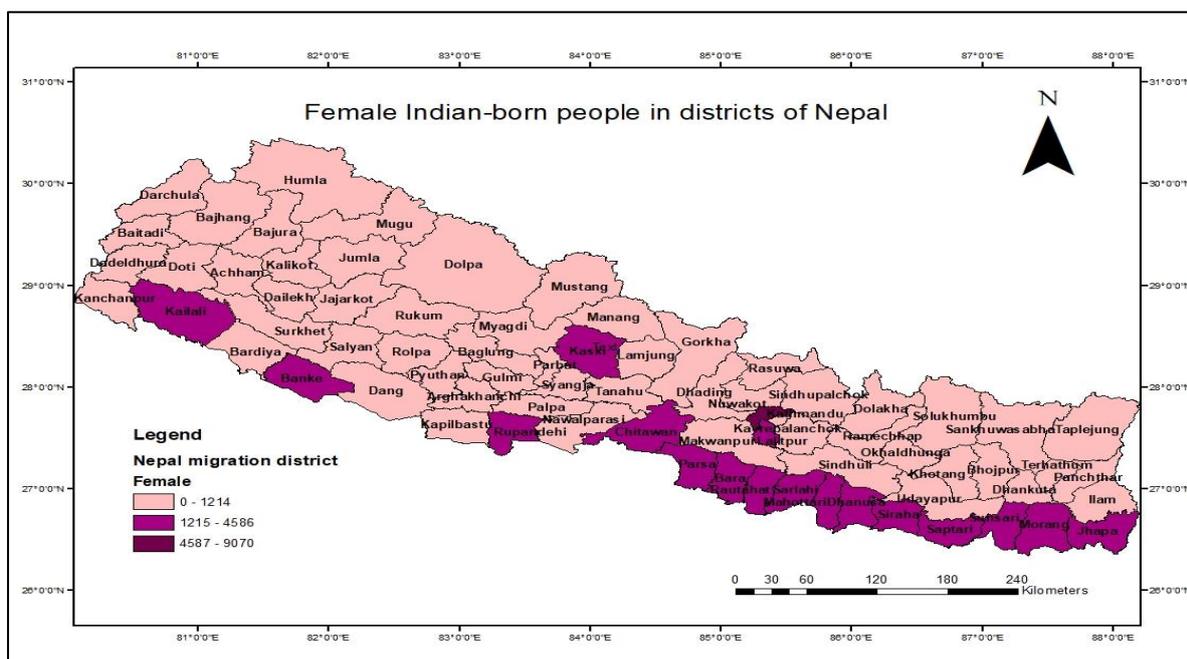
**District-wise concentration of Indian immigrants and their sex-ratios**

Indian immigrants are mainly concentrated in the Red (4774-21136), and Yellow (1507-4773) highlighted districts. Figure 2 presents the male population in districts of Nepal, with Kathmandu having the highest male population of 21,136, followed by Chitawan with 4,773 and Kaski with 4,071. This data provides insights into the demographic distribution across these specific districts. Notably, Kathmandu, being the capital and most populous city of Nepal, exhibits a significantly higher male population compared to the other districts listed. This is likely due to urbanization, economic opportunities, and various amenities that draw a larger population to the capital. Chitawan, a district in central Nepal, follows with a considerably smaller population, reflecting a more balanced urban-rural distribution. Kaski, home to the popular tourist destination of Pokhara, shows a substantial male population, indicating the appeal of this region for both tourism and settlement. The other districts listed exhibit progressively male populations are Kailali, Rupandehi, Parsa, Sunsari, Morang, and Jhapa. Each of the aforementioned districts is located in the Terai region, close to the Nepal-India border.



**Figure 2.** Concentration of Male Indian Immigrants in Districts of Nepal 2021

Female Indian immigrants are concentrated in the Purple (1216-9070) highlighted districts. Figure 3 provides a detailed overview of the female population in various districts of Nepal. Kathmandu, being the capital and a major urban centre, exhibits the highest female population at 9,070. Parsa, a district located in the southern plains of Nepal, has a female population of 4,586. Further, districts like- Chitawan, Bara, Siraha, Dhanusa, Rupandehi, Sarlahi, Rautahat, and Mahottari are situated on the Southern border Terai region, show substantial female populations likely influenced by marriage and agricultural labour. Moreover, Sunsari, Morang, and Jhapa districts in the eastern part of Nepal, have slightly smaller but still significant female populations, indicating the prevalence of marriage relations among Indian females across the districts of Nepal.



**Figure 3.** Concentration of Female Indian Immigrants in Districts of Nepal 2021

Table 6 outlines Indian citizens in various districts, emphasizing their sex ratios, which represent the number of Indian females per 1000 Indian males within each district. Analyzing the sex ratios reveals notable variations in gender distribution across the districts studied. For instance, Parsa exhibits a considerably higher sex ratio of 1844, indicating a notable surplus of females, followed by Jhapa and Kalaili, Sunsari 800-900. Whereas Chitawan and Lalitpur demonstrate remarkably low sex ratios of 460 and 451, respectively, suggesting significant gender imbalances with a prevalence of males. Additionally, Kathmandu and Kaski depict particularly low sex ratios of 429 and 388, respectively, further accentuating the preponderance of males in these areas. Findings underscore the importance of understanding regional demographic dynamics, particularly in terms of gender distribution, for effective policy formulation and resource allocation in various sectors such as healthcare, education, and social welfare.

**Table 6.** Sex Ratios of Indian Immigrants in Nepal 2021

Districts	Total	Male	Female	Sex Ratio
Parsa	7173	2487	4586	1844
Rupandehi	4795	2475	2320	937

Districts	Total	Male	Female	Sex Ratio
Morang	5375	2797	2578	922
Sunsari	5752	3065	2687	877
Kailali	4071	2201	1870	850
Jhapa	4946	2740	2206	805
Chitawan	6969	4773	2196	460
Lalitpur	4209	2900	1309	451
Kathmandu	30206	21136	9070	429
Kaski	5652	4071	1581	388

Source: *Census of Nepal, 1961-2021*

## DISCUSSION

Nepal, a landlocked country in South Asia, shares its maximum border with India. Historically, Indo-Nepal relations are quite peaceful and citizens of both nations can migrate to each country without passports or visas. It is similar to the European Union which has provisions for visa-free entry for the citizens of its member states (Bansh Jha, 2013; Zimmermann, 2004). Because South Asian countries are mostly developing their economies, international migration is unexpectedly growing among the people of India and Nepal to migrate to a developed country to earn more money. But, the majority of people in South Asia are poor, deprived, and socially backward people, and therefore they are unable to migrate to developed countries (Kumar Nanda, n.d.). Although, globalisation of world economy has invited immigrants from countries in South Asian nations. On the other hand, Nepal government has also invited businessmen from India (i.e., Tata, and Birla) to set up manufacturing industries in Nepal. Such industrial transformation cannot be possible without labourers, and Indian citizens were taken as skilled and semi-skilled workers (Albrecht, 1998).

In the recent two decades the Census data immigration of foreign nationals (immigrants from countries all over the World) in Nepal has increased for short-duration during the 2011-2021 decade. On the other hand, long-term or permanent immigration has drastically declined by (8.9%) in the same time period.

Furthermore, as Nepal is a Himalayan mountainous country, its largest cities were built in the valley regions of Himalayas. Last two decades also reported that foreign nationals are rising in hilly (22.4%) and mountains (2.0%) regions of Nepal. But, in the Terai region a significant decline of 24.4% has been noticed. Earlier literature also suggests that immigrants in hilly regions have set up a service sector economy. Additionally, there are opportunities for immigrants to work in the diplomatic and consultancy services (Adamson, 2006; Naujoks, 2020; Nowotny & Pennerstorfer, 2019; Pal, 2016). While, immigrants in mountain regions engaged with tourism industry (Gill, 2003). Notably, tourism-related jobs such as training camps, trekking, tourist guides, and jobs in hotels and restaurants attracted foreign nationals in Nepali mountainous region (Bhattarai & Kathiawar, 1993; Connor, 2017).

Findings also indicate that during the last two decades, migration of foreign nationals has increased significantly for reasons related to work purpose (8.9%), migration as dependent population (2.5%), typically older people, women, and children. However, reasons that are not mentioned in the census are also contributing significantly (3.6%). The set up of manufacturing hubs work and employment became the backbone of employment. But Nepali people are not appropriately skilled, and therefore skilled workers were hired from foreign countries.

Nonetheless, globalisation has made it easy to trade and navigate in and around the World (Hugo, 2006). Up to the second half of the nineteenth century manufacturing labourers were transported by ships to a distant land where the factory was established. However, globalisation has converted the World into a global village, and people are working and returning to their home countries (Bhagat, 2009; Hutzschenreuter et al., 2016a; McKenzie et al., 2014b). Globalisation has already put forward the right to carry and bring workers across nations (Warner, 2010).

At the same time, migration factors relating to agriculture (1.7%) have declined to a record low. Probably modern types of machinery have taken away the jobs of foreign nationals in Nepal (Machado et al., 2022). Moreover, previously marriages were the dominant reason for Indo-Nepal female migrants (International Labour Organization, 2017), as migration for marriage is an age-old phenomenon. Nevertheless, data from the last two census decades that cross-region marriages are still a significant factor (7.6%) behind migration of foreign nationals into Nepal. Furthermore, some of the reasons are not stated by foreign nationals (9.0%) for immigration. Previous studies suggest that male foreigners were encouraged to join the industrial, commercial, and tourism sectors (Adamson, 2006; Behera, 2011; Bhattarai & Kathiawar, 1993; Connor, 2017; Paudel, 2021; U.N., 2017; Weiner, 1992). While female foreign nationals in Nepal usually work in service sectors and entertainment industries. Additionally, a significant number of dependent female foreign nationals migrated to Nepal with their husbands (Dahal, 1983a; Kirti, 2021; NPHC, 2021; Subedi, 1991).

The situation for Indian immigration across the seven census decades 1961–2021, is quite interesting. In the current study, the rate of Indian immigration has declined over time, falling by 6.5%, 13.1%, and 8.1% in the census decades of 1971, 1981, and 2011, respectively. The rate of immigrants from India has also dramatically increased in the census decades of 1991 (7.9%), 2001 (2.5%), and 2021 (7.3%). Various acts/treaties are responsible for such ups and downs in the Indo-Nepal migration. Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship which was established in (1950) has facilitated the international migration.

By this treaty, a provision was provided that allows citizens of both countries to move freely across the international border without the need for passports or visas (Das, 2008b). There is another significant Treaty of Trade and Transit (1996) and subsequent protocols: agreements between India and Nepal government bilateral trade and transit arrangements, which indirectly influence migration patterns by facilitating economic activities between the two countries. Apart from that, bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) between India and Nepal have been signed at different and difficult times. Such bilateral agreements and MoUs are arranged to facilitate movement of people and goods. As Nepal being a landlocked nation, the government immediately takes steps on issues such as labour, migration, and border management, which influence the trade and movement of food and other industrial goods with foreign countries (Hutzschenreuter et al., 2016b).

Foreigners Act (1946) and successive amendment of Foreigners act in India have been taken to measure and regulate the entry, stay, and departure of foreigners, including Nepali citizens, in India. While the treaty provides for free movement in case of administrative matters, it affected Indian migration to Nepal, as host Nepal was not happy with India's Foreigner act (S. S. Pattanaik, 1998). Consequently, Nepal took its first Immigration Act in (1992), that was promulgated by the Government of

Nepal. Regulations were made the first time to regulate immigration of foreigners including Indian citizens into Nepal. The act further outlined procedures for the entry, stay, and departure of Indian citizens, including traders, businessman, and Indian diplomats (Nayak, 2020b).

Labour laws and regulations implemented at various times have impacted migration negatively as the laws and regulations in both India and Nepal include provisions related to work permits, minimum wages, working conditions, and social security benefits. To implement the laws and offer provisions citizens of both countries will need documentation (Kapur, 2014). Many people got fear of deportation and imprisonment, and they became reluctant to migrate to Nepal. The factory owners were also opposing the documentation process, as it will impact the job market and wage rates. Various recruitment agencies also opposed the law as they deal with employers and Indian migrants to offer employment to migrant workers, including those from Nepal working in India and vice versa (International Labour Organization, 2017).

Extensive research on citizenship acts in Nepal suggests that the process of obtaining citizenship has undergone multiple amendments over time. Both the monarchy and the Nepali government have grappled with issues surrounding Indian immigration. Janga Bahadur Rana, for instance, implemented measures to welcome Indian citizens into the Terai region of Nepal, facilitating the clearing of dense forests for settlement (Das, 2008c; Kharel et al., 2022; Prabhass, 2023; Shukla, 2006). This led to vast forest lands being transformed into agricultural fields, with revenue collected from Indian citizens in exchange for permanent residency in Nepal. However, as a result of amendments to the Indian government's Foreigners Act and the "Jana Andolan" uprising in the late twentieth century, the Nepali government experienced a surge in patriotism among its citizens. Consequently, all Nepalese political parties adopted an anti-immigration stance towards Indian citizens (Dahal, 1983b; Nayak, 2020b).

Despite these sentiments, the government system in Nepal remains unstable, with factions aligning either in favour of India or its neighbour, China. The transition from monarchy to democracy has further strained the stability of Nepal's government. Moreover, the government has prioritised providing job opportunities to its own nationals (Dahal, 1983c). Consequently, immigration laws in recent decades have been more strictly regulated and enforced, making it increasingly difficult for Indian citizens to secure employment in government sectors and discouraging Indian officials from immigrating to Nepal during the late twentieth century census decades (Bhattraai, 2007b; Subedi, 1991). Despite these measures, the number of Indian immigrants, mostly short-term or seasonal migrants, in Nepal saw a 1.6% rise during 2021.

Gender distribution of migrants shows female immigrants from India have dominated the international migration to Nepal. The reason explored by previous literatures shows that in the recent past, Indian women primarily migrated to Nepal for marriage purposes. However, recent census reports indicate a shift in female migration patterns. Women now migrate not only for marriage but also as independent domestic workers in urban areas, accompanying family members as dependents, and, unfortunately, through illegal means such as trafficking facilitated by the entertainment industry (Bhattraai, 2007a; Butler, 2018; International Labour Organization, 2017; Sharma & Thapa, 2013; Tanaka & Ng, 2012).

Census data reveals that, except for the decade following the 2001 census, during which male immigration increased by 2.2%, females have consistently outnumbered males in migration. There was a notable 4.1% increase in female immigrants during the most recent decade (2021). The district-level analysis further highlights variations in immigrant distribution by gender across Nepalese districts. Kathmandu hosts the majority of Indian immigrants regardless the sex (National Statistics Office, 2023; NDTV, 2020). Male Indian immigrants are more concentrated in Kaski and Lalitpur districts, whereas the southern Terai districts bordering India have a higher prevalence of female Indian immigrants. Women migrants with marital ties constitute a significant portion and often have longer stays (Butler, 2018; Deane, 2010; Thapa, 2015).

Additionally, the majority of the migrant workforce in the Terai region consists of Indian immigrants engaged in both farm and non-farm activities. However, Jhapa, Morang, and Sunsari districts in Nepal's eastern region also exhibit a considerable proportion of both male and female Indian immigrants.

The phenomenon of seasonal migration plays a significant role in shaping migration patterns between India and Nepal. Seasonal migrants, such as traders, merchants, and workers are undocumented to engage in temporary stays lasting only a few months, as noted by Burton et al. (2020), Hidayati (2020), and Kapur (2014). These migrants often traverse the border for specific economic opportunities, such as trading legal as well as illegal goods or participating in seasonal markets. Their movements are driven by the pursuit of short-term economic gains, with the intention of returning to their places of origin after a brief period and handsome profit.

Conversely, the weather phenomenon also impacts Indo-Nepal migration. In the monsoon season, Nepal sees a surge in the influx of unskilled circular migrants particularly engaged in labour-intensive activities like- agriculture. This phenomenon is observed by Gautam (2017) and Gill (2003) and reflects the cyclical nature of migration patterns influenced by seasonal demands and economic imperatives. The Indian migrants, often from rural areas of India, seek employment opportunities in Nepal's manufacturing sector as unskilled labourers, but during the monsoon season they had to return back to India either to cultivate their own lands or sometimes work such brick-making remain closed during monsoon in Nepal. The contrasting nature of these migration patterns underscores the complexity of Indo-Nepal migration dynamics. Seasonal migrants, driven by economic considerations, contribute to cross-border trade and commerce, while circular migrants fulfill labour requirements in Nepal's agricultural, manufacturing, and trading sectors during specific seasons.

## CONCLUSION

This study finds a notable increase of 7% in international migration from India to Nepal for employment purposes between 2011 and 2021. Surprisingly, however, there is a declining trend among male migrants, particularly concentrated in the Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts of the hilly regions. The study also highlights a 9% increase in work-related migration and a 2% rise in dependent migration from other countries, including India. This raises concerns regarding job availability for migrants at their income level, as well as the necessity for enhancing social and health support for older immigrants.

Moreover, there has been a decrease in marriage-related migration, with females increasingly engaging in domestic and industrial work, alongside instances of

trafficking. Understanding these shifting migration patterns between India and Nepal is crucial for policymakers and stakeholders to develop effective interventions that address the diverse needs and challenges faced by migrants.

By comprehending the specific motivations driving different categories of migrants, policymakers can tailor interventions to provide appropriate support and resources. For example, acknowledging the temporary nature of seasonal migrants, such as traders and merchants, policymakers can focus on facilitating smooth border crossings, streamlining administrative processes, and offering access to temporary housing and services during their brief stays. This targeted approach ensures that seasonal migrants can engage in economic activities efficiently while minimizing obstacles to their mobility and livelihood pursuits.

Furthermore, acknowledging the seasonal influx of unskilled circular migrants, primarily engaged in agricultural labour during the monsoon season, provides a foundation for policymakers to craft interventions tailored to the specific challenges faced by this migrant demographic. Initiatives aimed at enhancing working conditions, ensuring equitable wages, and facilitating access to healthcare and social services can significantly improve the well-being and livelihood opportunities of circular migrants involved in subsistence agriculture.

Moreover, investing in skill development and vocational training programmes designed to meet the unique needs of circular migrants can equip them with sustainable livelihood options beyond seasonal agricultural employment. Additionally, recognising the transient nature of migration flows underscores the necessity of implementing flexible policies capable of adapting to the evolving dynamics of migration between India and Nepal throughout the year.

This entails adopting a responsive approach that can accommodate seasonal variations in migration patterns, economic circumstances, and labour requirements. Policymakers may consider implementing mechanisms for real-time monitoring of migration trends, conducting regular assessments of migrant needs and vulnerabilities, and collaborating with relevant stakeholders to devise timely and targeted policy responses. Such measures are essential for effectively addressing the multifaceted challenges associated with seasonal circular migration.

Both countries, as stakeholders, can collaborate to establish agreements aimed at facilitating joint policies that promote healthy behaviour and awareness campaigns across borders. Additionally, India and Nepal, being neighbouring nations, can collaborate to ensure the compatibility and interoperability of their health information systems. This would enable the exchange of research findings and best practices, facilitating better coordination of healthcare services across borders.

In conclusion, comprehending the diverse patterns of migration between India and Nepal is crucial for policymakers and stakeholders to develop interventions that effectively address the multifaceted needs and challenges encountered by migrants. By acknowledging the transient nature of migration flows and designing adaptable policies, policymakers can ensure that migration governance mechanisms remain responsive to the evolving dynamics of migration. This, in turn, promotes the well-being and rights of migrants while fostering inclusive and sustainable development in both countries.

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