

► The cost of labour migration in Nepal: Evidence from the 2023 recruitment cost survey of migrant workers



National Statistics Office
Office of the Prime Minister & Council of Ministers
Government of Nepal



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- ▶ **The cost of labour migration in Nepal: Evidence from the 2023 recruitment cost survey of migrant workers**

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► Abbreviations

EA	Enumeration Areas
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
ILO	International Labour Organization
MoLESS	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security
RCI	Recruitment Cost Indicator
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSS	Second-Stage Sample



Government of Nepal
Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers
National Statistics Office

Phone { 5345946
5345947
5345948
5345848
5341801
5328406

Ref. No.



Fax: 977-1-5327720
Post Box No.: 11031
Thapathali, Kathmandu

Foreword

It is my pleasure to present “*The Cost of Labour Migration in Nepal: Evidence from the 2023 Recruitment Cost Survey of Migrant Workers*”, an important milestone in our ongoing effort to generate reliable, evidence-based data to inform policymaking in the labour migration sector. Labour migration is a key pillar of our national economy, contributing significantly to household incomes, poverty reduction, and overall development. Yet, the costs borne by Nepali migrant workers during the recruitment process remain a critical issue to be addressed.

The National Statistics Office conducts this survey with technical support from the International Labour Organization, Nepal. This provides valuable insights into the recruitment cost incurred by Nepali Migrant Workers when seeking international labour migration. By systematically capturing recruitment costs, the survey aims to shed light on financial burdens faced by Nepali migrant workers and inform strategies to reduce costs through fair and transparent recruitment practices.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all who contributed to this survey: enumerators, data analysts, International Labour Organization (ILO), Country Office in Nepal, Decent Work Team ILO New Delhi, for the technical support, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for the financial support, and most importantly, the returnee migrant workers who shared their experiences. Their voices form the foundation of this report and will guide us toward more effective interventions.

As the nation strives toward sustainable development, the National Statistics Office remains committed to producing high-quality data that not only informs policy but also contributes to the dignity and well-being of our citizens at home and abroad.

June 2026


Dr. Sharad Kumar Sharma
Deputy Chief Statistician

► Foreword

It is a privilege to introduce the cost of labour migration in Nepal: Evidence from the 2023 recruitment cost survey of migrant workers, a significant initiative led by the National Statistics Office. The International Labour Organization in Nepal is pleased to have supported this effort through technical assistance in the survey process and the preparation of this report.

Labour migration has long been an important source of income, opportunity, and resilience for many households in Nepal. Yet the benefits of migration can be seriously diminished when workers are required to bear high recruitment fees and related costs. Excessive costs can push migrant workers into debt, deepen their vulnerability, and increase the risk of abuse and exploitation. Addressing these challenges is therefore essential to ensuring that migration remains a pathway to decent work and sustainable development.

International labour standards offer clear guidance in this regard. The ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment, together with the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997, No. 181, affirm that recruitment should be fair, transparent, and respectful of workers' rights, and that workers should not bear recruitment fees and related costs. These principles are also reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG Target 10.7 calls for safe, orderly, and responsible migration, while indicator 10.7.1 provides an important measure of the extent to which recruitment costs are borne by workers themselves.

This report makes a valuable contribution by generating nationally representative evidence on the recruitment costs faced by Nepali migrant workers. It strengthens our understanding of the financial burdens embedded in the migration process and provides an important basis for measuring progress, identifying policy gaps, and advancing reforms that promote fair recruitment. Reliable data of this kind are indispensable for shaping more effective policies and institutions, both in Nepal and across migration corridors.

I commend the National Statistics Office for its leadership in carrying out this important study, and I extend my sincere appreciation to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation for its financial support. I also wish to thank the officials of the National Statistics Office and the ILO colleagues whose commitment and technical contributions made this report possible.

Above all, I express my gratitude to the returnee migrant workers who shared their experiences. Their voices are at the heart of this report and should remain at the centre of our efforts to promote fair recruitment, decent work, and human dignity for all.

I hope that this report will serve as a useful resource for policy development, implementation, and continued action to promote fair recruitment and protect the rights of migrant workers.



Numan Özcan

Country Director

International Labour Organization, Country Office for Nepal

► कार्यकारी सारांश

पृष्ठभूमि

राष्ट्रिय तथ्याङ्क कार्यालयले अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय श्रम सङ्गठन (ILO) को प्राविधिक सहयोगमा नेपालमा पहिलो पटक श्रम आप्रवासी भर्ना लागत सर्वेक्षण २०२३ सञ्चालन गरेको छ। यस प्रतिवेदनमा नेपाली अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय आप्रवासी तथा आप्रवासी श्रमिकहरूले वहन गरेको भर्ना शुल्क (Recruitment Cost) तथा अन्य लागतहरू र मासिक आम्दानीको विश्लेषण गरिएको छ। अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय श्रम आप्रवासन नेपालको अर्थतन्त्रको एक महत्त्वपूर्ण आधार हो, तर भर्ना शुल्क तथा अन्य लागतहरूको कारणले श्रमिकहरूमा उल्लेखनीय आर्थिक भार पर्न सक्छ। यस सर्वेक्षणले भर्ना लागतको राष्ट्रिय प्रतिनिधिमूलक अनुमान तथा गन्तव्य देशमा आर्जित मासिक आम्दानीको तुलनामा भर्ना लागतको अनुपातसम्बन्धी तथ्याङ्क प्रस्तुत गरेको छ, जसले दिगो विकास लक्ष्य (SDG) सूचक १०.७.१ को अद्यावधिक अवस्था देखाएको छ।

सर्वेक्षण विधि

यो सर्वेक्षण Two Stage Stratified Sampling नमुना छनोट विधिमा आधारित घरपरिवार सर्वेक्षण हो। यस सर्वेक्षण देशभरबाट प्रतिनिधित्व हुने गरी ३,७४२ घरपरिवार समेटी राष्ट्रिय स्तरमा विश्वसनीय अनुमानहरू प्राप्त भएका छन्। सर्वेक्षणको नतिजाले नेपालको कुल २ करोड ९६ लाख जनसङ्ख्यामध्ये २४ लाख ५० हजार (८.३ प्रतिशत) जनसङ्ख्या फर्किएका अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय आप्रवासी रहेका छन् भन्ने देखाएको छ। यीमध्ये १६ लाख १० हजार (५.४ प्रतिशत) विदेशमा काम गरी नेपाल फर्किएका अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय आप्रवासी श्रमिक थिए। विदेशमा काम गरी नेपाल फर्किएका अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय आप्रवासी श्रमिकमध्ये २ लाख ५३ हजार ६८६ (१५.७ प्रतिशत) श्रमिक विगत पाँच वर्षको अवधिमा वैतनिक रोजगारीका लागि विदेश गएका थिए। यो समूह भर्ना श्रम आप्रवासी भर्ना लागत सूचक विश्लेषणका लागि मुख्य नमुना समूह रहेको छ।

मुख्य विश्लेषणात्मक निष्कर्षहरू

शून्य भर्ना लागत

सर्वेक्षणअनुसार समग्रमा ३४.७ प्रतिशत नेपाल फर्किएका अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय आप्रवासी श्रमिकहरूले वैदेशिक रोजगारी प्राप्त गर्न कुनै किसिमको शुल्क वा अन्य लागत तिर्नु नपरेको बताएका छन्। अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय आप्रवासी श्रमिक महिलाहरूमध्ये ५४.२ प्रतिशत महिला श्रमिकहरूले कुनै लागत नतिरेको बताएका छन् भने पुरुषहरूमा यो अनुपात ३३.२ प्रतिशत (शून्य भर्ना लागतको अन्तर २१ प्रतिशत) मात्र रहेको छ। क्षेत्रगत रूपमा हेर्दा सेवा क्षेत्रमा कार्यरत श्रमिकहरूमा शून्य लागतको अनुपात सबैभन्दा उच्च (३७.२ प्रतिशत) रहेको छ भने उद्योगमा ३२.८ प्रतिशत र कृषिमा २९.५ प्रतिशत रहेको छ।

मासिक आम्दानी

नेपाल फर्किएका आप्रवासी श्रमिकहरूको औसत मासिक आम्दानी ५४,४०३ रुपैयाँ तथा मध्यिका (Median) ४४,५०० रुपैयाँ रहेको छ। यसले उच्च मासिक आम्दानी भएका आप्रवासी श्रमिकको सङ्ख्या कम भएका कारण औसत अङ्क बढी भएको सङ्केत गर्दछ। नेपाल फर्किएका आप्रवासी श्रमिक पुरुषहरूको मासिक आम्दानी महिलाको भन्दा केही बढी रहेको छ (पुरुष: औसत ५४,७२१ रुपैयाँ, मध्यिका: ४४,५०५ रुपैयाँ; महिला: औसत ४८,६४७ रुपैयाँ, मध्यिका: ३०,९२० रुपैयाँ), जसले आप्रवासी श्रमिकहरूको मासिक आय असमानता बढी रहेको देखाउँछ।

गन्तव्य मुलुकका आधारमा आप्रवासी श्रमिकहरूको मासिक आम्दानी विश्लेषण गर्दा मलेसियामा सबैभन्दा उच्च औसत आम्दानी (५७,६९६ रुपैयाँ) रहेको छ, त्यसपछि कतार र संयुक्त अरब इमिरेट्स (करिब ५५,००० रुपैयाँ) रहेका छन् भने भारतमा सबैभन्दा कम (औसत: २६,०८३ रुपैयाँ; मध्यिका: २४,००० रुपैयाँ) रहेको छ। क्षेत्रगत रूपमा हेर्दा सेवा क्षेत्रमा सबैभन्दा बढी मासिक आम्दानी छ (औसत: ६५,३४५ रुपैयाँ) भने उद्योगमा औसत ४६,१८२ रुपैयाँ र कृषिमा औसत ३४,५२८ रुपैयाँ रहेको छ। आप्रवासी श्रमिकहरूको मासिक आम्दानी उच्च सीपयुक्त पेसामा सबैभन्दा बढी रहेको देखिन्छ (औसत: ६९,८९१ रुपैयाँ; मध्यिका: ५१,६०६ रुपैयाँ)। यसले सीप र आम्दानीविचको सम्बन्धलाई पुष्टि गरेको छ।

श्रम आप्रवासी भर्ना लागत खर्च

- **लिङ्गानुसार भर्ना लागत:** नेपाल फर्किएका आप्रवासी श्रमिकहरूमध्ये भर्ना लागतका रूपमा पुरुषहरूले औसत १,७६,६८६ रुपैयाँ (मध्यिका: १,७०,००० रुपैयाँ) खर्च गरेको देखिन्छ भने महिलाहरूको औसत भर्ना लागत २,१९,३६२ रुपैयाँ (मध्यिका: १,२०,००० रुपैयाँ) रहेको छ।
- **गन्तव्य मुलुक अनुसार भर्ना लागत:** खाडी देशहरू र मलेसिया उच्च भर्ना लागत भएका मार्गहरू हुन् (मध्यिका २,००,००० रुपैयाँभन्दा बढी) भने भारत सबैभन्दा कम लागत भएको गन्तव्य हो (मध्यिका: १६,००० रुपैयाँ)।
- **क्षेत्र तथा सीपअनुसार भर्ना लागत:** सेवा क्षेत्र र उच्च सीपयुक्त पेसामा भर्ना लागत उच्च रहेको छ भने कृषि क्षेत्रमा सबैभन्दा कम भर्ना लागत लाग्ने देखिएको छ।

श्रम आप्रवासी भर्ना लागत सूचक (RCI)

दिगो विकास लक्ष्यका १०.७.१ सूचक अनुसार, भर्ना लागत सूचक श्रमिकले कामका लागि विदेश जाँदा वहन गरेको भर्ना खर्चलाई उक्त गन्तव्य देशमा पहिलो कामबाट मासिक आम्दानीको अनुपातका रूपमा मापन गरिन्छ।

- **औसतमा आधारित भर्ना लागत सूचक (RCI):** नेपाल फर्किएका आप्रवासी श्रमिकहरूलाई आफ्नो भर्ना लागत बराबर गर्न औसत ३.३ महिनाको आम्दानी आवश्यक पर्ने गरेको देखिन्छ भने महिलाहरूलाई यस्तो भर्ना लागत बराबर गर्न पुरुषलाई भन्दा बढी (४.५ महिना) आम्दानी आवश्यक पर्ने देखिएको छ (पुरुषहरूमा औसत भर्ना लागत सूचक ३.२ रहेको छ)।
- **मध्यिकामा आधारित भर्ना लागत सूचक (RCI):** मध्यिकाका आधारमा श्रमिकहरूको भर्ना लागत सूचक ३.७ महिनाको रहेको छ। मध्यिकामा आधारित भर्ना लागतमा लिङ्गीय अन्तर केही घटे पनि वहन क्षमतासम्बन्धी चुनौतीहरू कायम रहेको देखिन्छ।
- **रोजगारीको माध्यमअनुसार भर्ना लागत सूचक (RCI):**
 - सबैभन्दा उच्च भर्ना लागत सूचकका रोजगारी माध्यम: दर्ता नभएका एजेन्टहरू (औसत: ४.८ महिना; मध्यिका: ४.७ महिना) तथा दर्ता भएका भर्ना एजेन्सी/कम्पनीहरू (औसत: ३.६ महिना; मध्यिका: ४.४ महिना)।
 - सबैभन्दा न्यून भर्ना लागत सूचकका रोजगारी माध्यम: परिवार तथा साथीहरू (मध्यिका: ०.६ महिना)।

यस सर्वेक्षणबाट प्राप्त नतिजाहरूले सरकारलाई भविष्यमा श्रम आप्रवासी भर्ना लागतहरूमा हुने खर्चको वैदेशिक श्रमसम्बन्धी नीति तथा योजना तर्जुमा, अनुगमन तथा मूल्याङ्कन गर्न योजनाविद् तथा नीति निर्माताहरूलाई सहयोग गर्दछ। यस सर्वेक्षणले योजनाबद्ध र व्यवस्थित आप्रवासन नीतिहरूको कार्यान्वयन मार्फत नेपालीहरूको व्यवस्थित, सुरक्षित आप्रवासन र आवतजावत सहज बनाउन मद्दत पुग्नेछ।

► Executive summary

The National Statistics Office of Nepal, with technical support from the International Labour Organization (ILO), conducted the cost of labour migration in Nepal: Evidence from the 2023 recruitment cost survey of migrant workers. A primary objective of the survey was to create a profile of international migrants and international migrant workers from Nepal, and to gather comprehensive data on recruitment fees and related costs incurred and the monthly earnings of Nepali migrant workers. International labour migration is a crucial driver of Nepal's economy, but recruitment fees and related costs can impose significant financial burdens on workers. This survey provides nationally representative estimates of recruitment costs and their proportional burden relative to monthly earnings, aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 10.7.1 on recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in the country of destination.

Survey methodology

The survey was conducted in 2023 using a stratified two-stage household sampling design. It covered 3,742 households nationwide and produced reliable national-level estimates. Based on the survey, Nepal's total population was estimated at 29.6 million, of which 2.45 million (8.3 per cent) were return international migrants. Among these, 1.61 million (5.4 per cent) were return international migrant workers – individuals who had previously worked abroad and returned to Nepal. Of this group, 253,686 (15.7 per cent) had migrated within the past five years for wage employment, forming the core analytical sample for recruitment cost indicators.

Key analytical insights

Zero recruitment cost

Based on the survey data, overall, 34.7 per cent of international return migrant worker reported paying zero recruitment fees or related costs to get a job abroad. Women return migrant workers were significantly more likely to report zero recruitment costs, with 54.2 per cent of female return migrant workers reporting paying nothing, compared with 33.2 per cent of male returnees – a gap of roughly 21 percentage points. This suggests women may have accessed more employer-paid recruitment pathways or roles with fees absorbed upstream. Across broad sectors, return migrant workers who had been employed in the services sector showed the highest zero-cost share at 37.2 per cent, compared with 32.8 per cent in industry and 29.5 per cent in agriculture. The elevated share of services workers could reflect job types (for example, domestic work, hospitality) where placement fees are more often covered by employers or regulated intermediaries, relative to the other sectors.

Earnings profile

Return migrant workers reported mean monthly earnings of 54,403 Nepalese rupees and a median of 44,500 rupees, indicating a right-skewed distribution where a minority of high earners elevate the average. Men earned slightly more (mean: 54,721 rupees; median: 44,505 rupees) than women (mean: 48,647 rupees; median: 30,920 rupees), with women showing the widest mean–median gap, reflecting greater income inequality. Earnings also varied by destination: Malaysia recorded the highest mean (57,696 rupees), followed by Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (both ~55,000 rupees),

while India ranked lowest (mean: 26,083 rupees; median: 24,000 rupees). Sectoral differences were pronounced – the services sector led with a mean of 65,345 rupees, compared to industry (46,182 rupees) and agriculture (34,528 rupees). High-skill occupations commanded the highest pay (mean: 69,891 rupees; median: 51,606 rupees), reinforcing the link between skills and earnings.

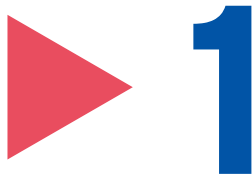
Recruitment costs

- **By sex:** Men incur a mean cost of 176,686 rupees (median: 170,000), while women show a higher mean (219,362) but a lower median (120,000), indicating extreme outlier effects.
- **By destination:** Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Malaysia dominate high-cost corridors (median recruitment costs in excess of 200,000 rupees), while India remains the least costly destination (median cost: 16,000 rupees).
- **By sector and skill:** The services sector and high-skill occupations attract the highest costs; migration to work in agriculture is the least expensive.

Recruitment Cost Indicator (RCI):

In line with SDG indicator 10.7.1, the RCI is calculated as the recruitment cost borne by an employee as a proportion of monthly income earned.

- **Mean-based RCI:** On average, migrants required 3.3 months of earnings to offset their recruitment costs; women face a heavier mean burden (4.5 months) compared to men (3.2 months).
- **Median-based RCI:** Based on the median values, migrants required 3.7 months of earnings to offset their recruitment costs. The median-based RCI shows a narrowing gender disparity compared to the mean-based measurement, but confirms persistent affordability constraints.
- **By method of job acquisition:**
 - **Highest burden:** Unregistered brokers (mean: 4.8 months; median: 4.7 months) and registered recruitment agencies/companies (mean: 3.6 months; median: 4.4 months).
 - **Lowest burden:** Family and friends (median of 0.6 months), despite an inflated mean-based RCI due to outliers.



Introduction

► 1.1. Background

In today's globalized economy, workers are increasingly seeking job opportunities beyond their home countries in pursuit of decent work and improved livelihoods. In 2022, there were an estimated 167.7 million international migrants in the labour force worldwide, 38.7 per cent of whom were women (ILO 2024). Additionally, there are 740 million internal migrants globally (ILO, n.d.). While labour movement is a significant aspect of globalization and offers alternative livelihood opportunities, it also presents new challenges for governments and policymakers in managing safe labour migration flows in both origin and destination countries.

International migration affects nearly every family in Nepal due to the significant number of Nepalis engaging in migration abroad for work and education. Labour migration surged after the liberalization of migration policies in the 1990s and in response to labour shortages in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Sharma et al. 2014). A total of 5.7 million new labour approvals (that is, permits) were issued to Nepali migrant workers between July 2008 and July 2024 (Nepal, MoLESS 2025), and between July 2022 to July 2024 alone, a total of 954,319 new labour approvals and 558,297 renewals were issued. Most of these new and renewed labour approvals were issued to men, although the share issued to women has increased, reaching a peak of 12.9 per cent during the country's 2023–24 fiscal cycle. Findings from the 2021 Census reveal that nearly 23 per cent of households reported having former members living abroad.

Recent trends in labour approvals show increasing diversification in labour destinations. While GCC countries and Malaysia are still the top destinations for Nepali migrant workers, accounting for 81.3 per cent of all new approvals, tens of thousands of Nepali workers are now employed in Central and Eastern European countries, signalling shifts in foreign employment patterns (Nepal, MoLESS 2025). The Nepal–India migration corridor also remains a major route, with nearly a million Nepali migrant workers estimated to be in India as of 2017–18, although actual numbers are likely higher (Nepal, MoLESS 2020).

International labour migration and remittances have brought substantial social and economic benefits to Nepal. According to the World Bank (n.d.-a), Nepal received personal remittances totalling US\$10.76 billion in 2023. This amount was equivalent to 26.3 per cent of Nepal's GDP in the same year (World Bank, n.d.-b). However, the increase in migrant workers has also led to issues such as health problems, lack of access to services and indebtedness. Additionally, migrant workers face challenges with rehabilitation and reintegration upon returning to Nepal (Nepal, MoLESS 2022). The COVID-19

pandemic exacerbated these issues, causing job losses and wage reductions (Parajuli et al. 2023), highlighting the need for policies to support the reintegration of returning workers and the effective use of remittances.

The high economic and social costs borne by migrants can undermine sustainable development outcomes. Therefore, to fully harness the benefits of labour migration while minimizing its challenges, Nepal must develop a deep understanding of migration trends. As the number of migrant workers continues to grow, the availability of accurate data and thorough analysis become crucial for promoting safe, orderly and responsible migration.

Recognizing the critical role of migration, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 10.7 emphasizes the need to monitor progress towards achieving fair recruitment practices. This is measured through SDG indicator 10.7.1, which tracks “recruitment costs borne by an employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in the destination country”.

This report draws on findings from the cost of labour migration in Nepal: Evidence from the 2023 recruitment cost survey of migrant workers, conducted by the National Statistics Office with technical support and guidance from the International Labour Organization (ILO). It presents a detailed analysis of the survey results and key insights into the recruitment costs faced by Nepali migrant workers.

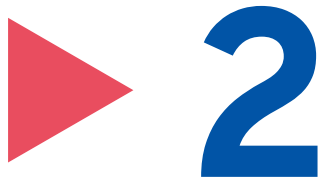
► 1.2. Implications of reducing migration costs

Reducing the costs associated with migration can substantially boost remittance flows and accelerate development in origin countries like Nepal. Lower expenses also contribute to stronger protections for migrant workers, as those who arrive in destination countries burdened by debt are more susceptible to exploitation. The highest recruitment costs often arise from complex networks of intermediaries operating in both sending and receiving countries.

The effort to reduce migration costs is firmly rooted in international migration frameworks. The ILO’s Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), recognizes the role of private recruitment agencies in facilitating labour migration. However, it underscores the responsibility of governments to regulate these agencies to prevent excessive charges. The Convention clearly states that “private employment agencies shall not charge directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, any fees or related costs for their recruitment” (Article 7(1), reinforcing the principles of fair and ethical recruitment as laid out in the ILO’s General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment (ILO 2019).

In addition, the ILO’s 2018 Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs provides a globally recognized definition of what constitute recruitment fees and related costs (ILO 2019). This definition is instrumental in the measurement of SDG indicator 10.7.1, which aims to facilitate safe, regular and cost-effective migration processes. These principles underline the critical need to eliminate excessive recruitment costs, ensuring that migration remains a viable and equitable opportunity for workers.

Securing overseas employment is often neither simple nor affordable in many countries. Yet, individuals faced with limited opportunities at home are often willing to bear substantial costs and take considerable risks to migrate. In certain migration corridors, recruitment-related expenses are particularly high. These elevated costs are not only due to the logistical challenges of crossing national borders but also reflect systemic failures at both ends of the migration corridor to create conditions that protect migrants and uphold their fundamental rights.



Survey methodology

This chapter details the methodology employed in the cost of labour migration in Nepal: Evidence from the 2023 recruitment cost survey of migrant workers. It covers the survey's scope and coverage, the development of the sampling frame and sampling design.

► 2.1. Scope and objectives of the survey

The Recruitment Cost Survey of Migrant Workers 2023 was designed to provide reliable national-level data on Nepali migrant workers, with information disaggregated by sex, education, skill level and major destination country. **A primary objective of the survey was to create a profile of international migrants and international migrant workers from Nepal, as well as to gather comprehensive data on recruitment fees and related costs incurred and the monthly earnings of Nepali migrant workers.**

Specific objectives of the survey included:

- analysing the basic socio-economic characteristics of Nepali migrant workers;
- examining their monthly earnings and recruitment-related fees and costs by sex, education, skill level and country of destination;
- assessing the current labour force status of return migrants; and
- estimating SDG indicator 10.7.1 – “recruitment cost borne as a proportion of monthly income earned in country of destination” – among Nepali migrant workers.

By understanding these factors, policymakers and stakeholders can develop strategies to reduce recruitment costs, enhance worker protections and ultimately support the development of Nepal's economy through more efficient and fair labour migration practices.

This survey was designed to cover all persons in private households, but SDG indicator 10.7.1 requires respondents to remember the costs they incurred and their earnings per month in their first job following migration. This being so, the survey placed particular focus on those who had recently travelled from and returned to Nepal. Specifically, this encompassed those who travelled abroad for work or to look for work in the **five years prior to the survey and who have since returned**. In addition, SDG indicator 10.7.1 focuses only on paid employees, and therefore those who migrated to start businesses were not considered in the survey.

► 2.2. Survey design

A household-based survey was designed to collect the information outlined above and to ensure a sufficient sample size for reliable estimates. The sampling strategy deliberately oversampled areas that are likely to have high levels of recruitment of potential migrants. **Through this methodology, a total of 3,742 households were surveyed.** The survey employed a stratified two-stage sampling design. An updated list of enumeration areas (EAs) from the Population Census 2021 was used as the first-stage sampling frame for the survey. EAs were stratified based on the share of the absentee population in each area as recorded in the Census to facilitate oversampling and to improve estimate precision. Within each stratum, EAs were further stratified into rural and urban areas. Overall, rural areas accounted for 1,260 surveyed households and the urban areas accounted for 2,482 households.

While EAs served as the first stage sampling units, households served as the second-stage sampling units. In each selected EA, all households were visited to establish whether any households had any international migrants. A list of all households in the EA that had migrant workers was compiled, which was then used as the second-stage sampling frame. This enabled targeted sampling based on household composition.

Each EA was further stratified into six second-stage stratification (SSS) groups based on information about the number of migrant workers, following the criteria outlined in the table below. It is important to note that given the free movement policy along the India–Nepal migration corridor, Nepali migrant workers recruited to India were placed in a distinct subgroup that was factored into both the sampling and analysis of data.

► **Table 1. Composition of the second-stage sample (SSS)**

SSS	composition of SSS
SS1	Households reporting at least one return migrant worker from any country of destination other than India
SS2	Among the remaining, households reporting at least one international migrant worker residing in any country of destination other than India, who had taken time off to visit their home and were present in Nepal during the survey period.
SS3	Among the remaining, households reporting at least one international migrant worker residing in any country of destination other than India, who were not present in Nepal during the survey period.
SS4	Among the remaining, households reporting either at least one return migrant worker from India or any international migrant worker residing in India who had taken time off to visit their home and were present in Nepal during the survey period.
SS5	Among the remaining, households reporting at least one international migrant worker residing in India, who were not present in Nepal during the survey period.
SS6	Remaining households

In each EA, three (3) households were selected within SSS1 and three (3) within SSS2. For SSS3, SSS4, SSS5 and SSS6, two (2) households were selected from each stratum. In total, 14 households were selected from each EA.

While forming the strata, SSS1 had priority over SSS2, SSS2 had priority over SSS3 and so on. For example, if a household satisfied the composition criteria for both SSS1 and SSS2, it was included under strata SSS1.

In cases where the number of households within a given SSS was below the required allocation, a compensation procedure was implemented to maintain the total sample size of 14 households per EA. The shortfall in any SSS was offset by reallocating households from other SSS groups. This reallocation followed a prioritization order: SSS1 was given highest priority, followed by SSS2, SSS3, SSS4, SSS5 and finally SSS6. The detailed procedures for sampling and compensation are provided in Annex 1 of this report.

► 2.3. Definitions and structure of the report

The following list offers definitions of key terms used throughout the report:

- **Migrant:** Migrants include those who have ever gone outside Nepal for at least six months or more. This survey and report are not concerned with internal migration, and therefore all references to migrants and migration are specifically referring to cross-border migration to destinations outside of Nepal.
- **Migrant worker:** Following the guidelines for collecting statistics for SDG indicator 10.7.1 on recruitment costs produced by the ILO and World Bank (2019), migrant workers are defined as persons who left their country of origin with the intention to work in another country as a wage/salary earner. The guidelines further recommend that statistics used to calculate 10.7.1 should cover all migrant workers, whether they are engaged through formal or informal recruitment processes.
- **Return migrant:** Any Nepali who moved out of Nepal for at least six months and lived in other country for any reason, be it for work, education, family reunification or something else, before returning to Nepal.
- **Return migrant worker:** The concept of return migrant workers is intended to provide a basis for measuring the work experience of people who have returned after being migrant workers abroad (ILO 2018), and it is return migrant workers who are the primary focus of the data presented in this survey report. For the purposes of this survey, the term “return migrant workers” will refer only to those who meet all of the following criteria:
 - living in Nepal at the time of the survey;
 - previously lived abroad as a migrant worker for at least six months before returning to Nepal;
 - was a paid employee while working abroad;
 - at least 15 years of age at the time of the survey; and
 - had travelled abroad for work within the five years prior to the survey.
- This final criterion was put in place to address potential issues related to recall bias (see section 2.4 below). The bulk of the survey findings – see Chapter 3 below – deal exclusively with these “recent return migrant workers” and by recent we mean Nepalis who, within the 5 years before the survey, had left Nepal for a period of more than six months in order to work or to look for work and who have since returned to live in Nepal. This is the main group of focus for the analysis of SDG 10.7.1 on migrant recruitment costs. This is distinct from “lifetime return migrant workers” (defined below).

- **Lifetime return migrants:** Nepalis who have left Nepal for a period of at least six months and have returned to live in Nepal, regardless of when they travelled abroad.
- **Lifetime return migrant workers:** Nepalis who have left Nepal for a period of at least six months in order to work or to look for work and have returned to Nepal, regardless of when they travelled abroad. Data concerning lifetime return migrant workers is considered briefly in section 3.1 below.
- **Recruitment fees and related costs** refer to any fees or costs incurred in the recruitment process in order for workers to secure employment or placement, regardless of the manner, timing or location of their imposition or collection. This definition aligns with the ILO's Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs (2018), which more specifically defines "recruitment fees" and "related costs" as:
 - **Recruitment fees include:**
 - a. payments for recruitment services offered by labour recruiters, whether public or private, in matching offers of and applications for employment;
 - b. payments made in the case of recruitment of workers with a view to employing them to perform work for a third party;
 - c. payments made in the case of direct recruitment by the employer; or
 - d. payments required to recover recruitment fees from workers.

These fees may be one-time or recurring and cover recruiting, referral and placement services which could include advertising, disseminating information, arranging interviews, submitting documents for government clearances, confirming credentials, organizing travel and transportation, and placement into employment (ILO 2019, 28).

- **Related costs** are expenses integral to recruitment and placement within or across national borders, taking into account that the widest set of related costs are incurred for international recruitment. When initiated by an employer, labour recruiter or an agent acting on behalf of those parties; required to secure access to employment or placement; or imposed during the recruitment process, the following costs should be considered related to the recruitment process:
 - medical costs;
 - insurance costs;
 - costs for skills and qualification tests;
 - costs for training and orientation;
 - equipment costs;
 - travel and lodging costs; and
 - administrative costs (ILO 2019, 29).

► 2.4. Limitation of the study

Following the sampling design of the survey, the estimates shown in this report are representative at the national level and for urban and rural areas with a good degree of statistical precision. However, producing estimates at more granular levels – such as at the province, district or municipal level – is not feasible due to insufficient sample sizes. Additionally, the analysis by migration corridor should be interpreted with caution. The number of respondents reporting migration to specific countries is limited, which may result in imprecise or potentially skewed findings. A disclosure message will be included beneath the relevant tables to advise careful interpretation of the estimates they contain.

Information was also collected from visiting family members who are international migrants and happened to be visiting home at the time of the survey. However, while this data is available for potential future analysis, this group has not been considered in this report.

- It is important to note that this period of five years prior to the survey coincides with the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, some of the estimates derived from the survey may have been influenced by the unique circumstances and challenges posed by the pandemic. These could include disruptions in global labour markets, changes in migration policies, travel restrictions and economic uncertainties that may have impacted recruitment processes, earnings and overall migration experiences during this time.

Recognizing these limitations allows readers to better contextualize the findings and identify areas where further research or complementary data collection may be needed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of migration dynamics.

 3

Survey findings

► 3.1. Demographic characteristics

This section provides a detailed profile of Nepal's international migrant population, offering a comprehensive overview of the estimated demographics characteristics. It explores key aspects such as age and sex distribution as well as the geographic spread across Nepal.

This section first provides a brief overview of lifetime return migrants and lifetime return migrant workers. As noted in section 2.3 above, "lifetime" means that no time limits have been placed on when they travelled from or returned back to Nepal. "Lifetime return migrants" refer to individuals who have come back in Nepal after living abroad for at least six months or more for any reason; while the term "return international migrant workers" denotes those who had gone abroad for at least six months specifically for work and subsequently returned in Nepal. This distinction is essential for interpreting the findings, as they reflect different migration experiences, offering a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of international migration from Nepal.

It should also be reiterated that "lifetime return migrant workers" are distinct from "recent return migrant workers", as these latter individuals are defined as having migrated from and returned to Nepal within the five years preceding the survey. The bulk of the data presented in this report is specifically dedicated to recent return migrant workers, as they are in a better position to provide accurate information concerning their recruitment costs and earnings while abroad, but there is still value in assessing the scope and scale of all Nepalis who have at some point migrated from and returned to Nepal, as it provides a view of the larger migration landscape over time.

The survey estimated the population of Nepal to be 29.6 million in 2023, with 2.45 million (or 8.3 per cent) being lifetime return migrants. Among all lifetime return migrants, 1.61 million were lifetime return international migrant workers (5.4 per cent of Nepal's total population and 65.8 per cent of all lifetime return migrants). Nepali return migrants were predominantly male.

Disaggregating between urban and rural areas, the study reveals that urban areas, with an estimated population of 19.8 million, were composed of approximately 9 per cent lifetime return migrants and 6 per cent lifetime return migrant workers. By contrast, rural areas, with a population of approximately 9.8 million, were composed of 8 per cent lifetime return migrants and 4 per cent lifetime migrant workers. A higher share of urban return migrants (at 74 per cent) had migrated specifically for employment, compared to 47 per cent of rural return migrants.

► **Table 2. Survey estimates of total population of Nepal, lifetime return migrants and lifetime return migrant workers by locality and sex**

Locality	Total population			Lifetime return migrants			Lifetime return migrant workers			% of return migrants in total population	% of return migrant workers in total population	% of return migrants who were migrant workers
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total			
Urban	9 786 683	10 047 618	19 834 301	1 399 744	288 272	1 688 016	1 153 645	103 179	1 256 824	8.5%	6.3%	74.5%
Rural	4 701 728	5 086 854	9 788 581	678 301	85 496	763 797	341 502	16 094	357 596	7.8%	3.7%	46.8%
Total	14 488 411	15 134 471	29 622 882	2 078 045	373 768	2 451 813	1 495 147	119 274	1 614 420	8.3%	5.4%	65.8%

Note: The term “lifetime” as used in this table refers to Nepalis currently residing in Nepal who had ever lived or worked abroad for at least six months at any point in their lives.

Table 3 shows that males are more likely to migrate during their lifetime compared to females, with higher percentages across both urban (14.3 per cent for males versus 2.9 per cent for females) and rural areas (14.4 per cent for males versus 1.7 per cent for females). Additionally, individuals residing in urban areas exhibit a slightly higher tendency to migrate (9 per cent) compared to those in rural areas (8 per cent), regardless of gender.

► **Table 3. Share of lifetime return migrants in the total population by locality and sex (percentage)**

Locality	Total population			No. of lifetime return migrants			Share of lifetime returned migrants		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Urban	9 786 683	10 047 618	19 834 301	1 399 744	288 272	1 688 016	14.3%	2.9%	8.5%
Rural	4 701 728	5 086 854	9 788 581	678 301	85 496	763 797	14.4%	1.7%	7.8%
Total	14 488 411	15 134 471	29 622 882	2 078 045	373 768	2 451 813	14.3%	2.5%	8.3%

Note: The term “lifetime” as used in this table refers to Nepalis currently residing in Nepal who had ever lived or worked abroad for at least six months at any point in their lives.

As shown in table 4, among the approximately 1.6 million lifetime return migrant workers, 15.7 per cent (253,686) had travelled abroad in the past five years to work for a wage or salary. Among the lifetime return migrant workers currently residing in urban areas, 14 per cent had migrated within the past five years, compared to 22 per cent in rural areas.

► **Table 4. Number of recent return migrant workers and share of recent return migrant workers among lifetime return migrant workers, by locality and sex**

Locality	Lifetime return migrant workers			Recent return migrant workers			% of recent return migrant workers among lifetime return migrant workers
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Urban	1,153,645	103,179	1,256,824	158,047	17,679	175,726	14.0%
Rural	341,502	16,094	357,596	76,801	1,159	77,960	21.8%
Total	1,495,147	119,274	1,614,420	234,848	18,838	253,686	15.7%

Important note

From here through to the end of the report, all of the data presented will refer exclusively to **recent return migrant workers**. That is, all data will refer only to workers who meet the following criteria:

- living in Nepal at the time of the survey;
- previously lived abroad as a migrant worker for at least six months before returning to Nepal;
- was a paid employee while working abroad;
- at least 15 years of age at the time of the survey; and
- had travelled abroad for work **within the five years prior to the survey**.

As noted above, it was determined to focus on these recent return migrant workers to minimize recall bias in the sample so as to more accurately calculate SDG indicator 10.7.1.

Urban areas host 69 per cent of recent return migrant workers, while rural areas account for just 31 per cent. The gender disparity in relation to locality is striking – 94 per cent of female return migrant workers reside in urban areas, compared to 67 per cent of males (table 5).

► **Table 5. Distribution of return migrant workers by locality and sex**

Locality	Number			Distribution within each sex		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Urban	158 047	17 679	175 726	67.3%	93.8%	69.3%
Rural	76 801	1 159	77 960	32.7%	6.2%	30.7%
Total	234 848	18 838	253 686	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Overall, 82.7 per cent of all recent return migrant workers are above the age of 25 years. When broken down by sex, 82 per cent of male return migrant workers are above 25 years, compared to 90 per cent of female return migrant workers.

► **Table 6. Distribution of return migrant workers by age group and sex**

Age group	Number			Distribution within each sex			Share of all return migrant workers		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
15–24	42 003	1 793	43 796	17.9%	9.5%	17.3%	16.6%	0.7%	17.3%
25+	192 845	17 045	209 890	82.1%	90.5%	82.7%	76.0%	6.7%	82.7%
Total	234 848	18 838	253 686	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	92.6%	7.4%	100.0%

► 3.2. Educational attainment

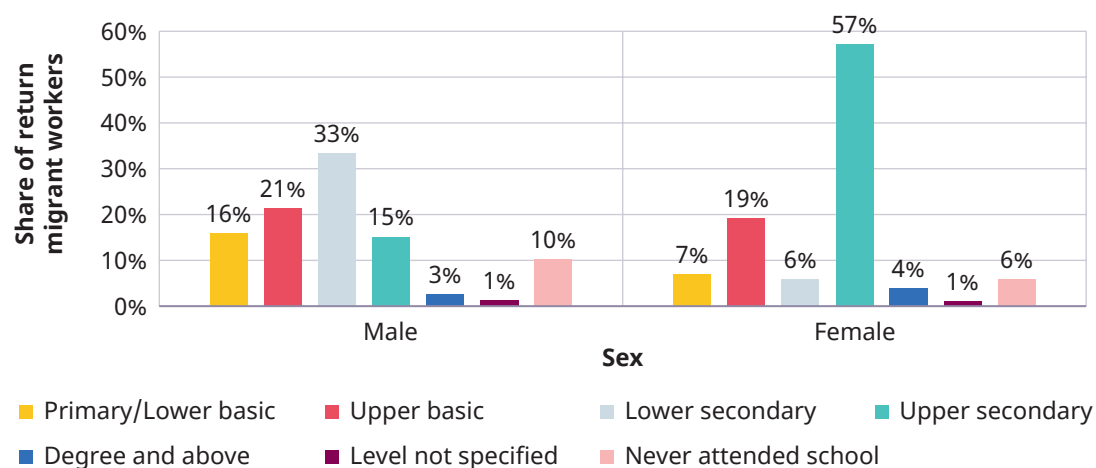
As shown in table 7, 10 per cent of recent return migrant workers never attended school, and an additional 68 per cent did not attain an upper secondary education: 15 per cent achieved a primary/ lower basic education; 21 per cent, upper basic ;and 31 per cent, lower secondary. Less than one fifth(18 per cent) completed upper secondary; while only 3 per cent attained a tertiary degree or other higher qualifications.

► **Table 7. Distribution of return migrant workers by level of educational attainment and sex**

Level of education	Number			Distribution within each sex		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Primary/Lower basic	37 303	1 309	38 612	16%	7%	15%
Upper basic	50 221	3 624	53 846	21%	19%	21%
Lower secondary	78 558	1 100	79 658	33%	6%	31%
Upper secondary	35 579	10 748	46 326	15%	57%	18%
Degree and above	6 054	741	6 795	3%	4%	3%
Level not specified	2 788	200	2 988	1%	1%	1%
Never attended school	24 345	1 116	25 460	10%	6%	10%
Total	234 848	18 838	253 686	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Among male return migrant workers, 15 per cent had attained an upper secondary education and 21 per cent had completed upper basic education, whereas only 3 per cent possessed a degree or higher qualification and 10 per cent had not attended school at all. Conversely, 57 per cent of female migrants had completed upper secondary education and 4 per cent held a degree or above, while 6 per cent reported having never attended school. These figures highlight a notable gender disparity, with female migrants demonstrating higher levels of educational attainment overall compared to their male counterparts.

► **Figure 1. Distribution of return migrant workers by level of educational attainment and sex (percentage)**



► 3.3. Occupation type, skill level and sector of employment

Figure 2 illustrates the skill distribution among return migrant workers in their first job in the destination country. Approximately 1.6 per cent were employed in high-skill roles (managers, professionals, technicians). The majority (54.4 per cent) worked in medium-skill jobs such as clerical, service, agricultural, trade, and plant operations; while 44 per cent worked in elementary occupations (low skill).

► **Figure 2. Distribution of return migrant workers by occupation type (percentage)**

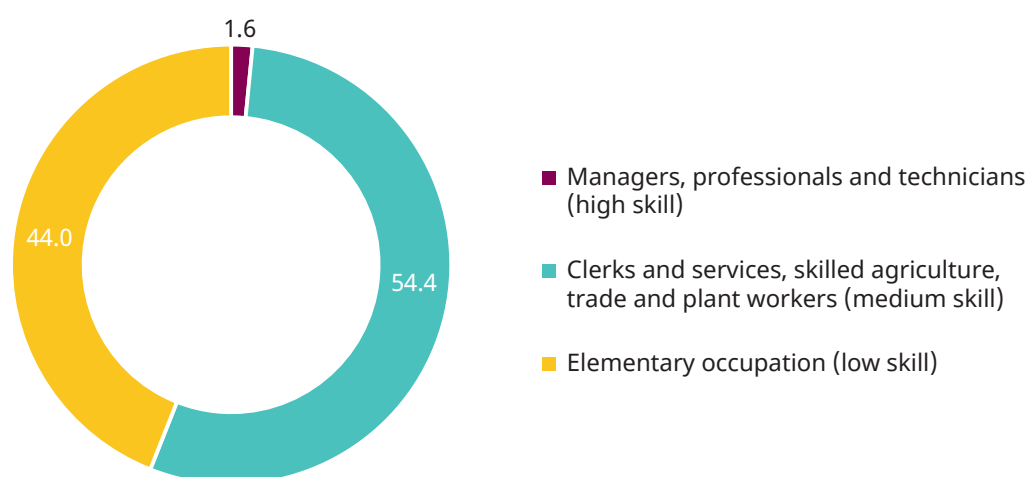
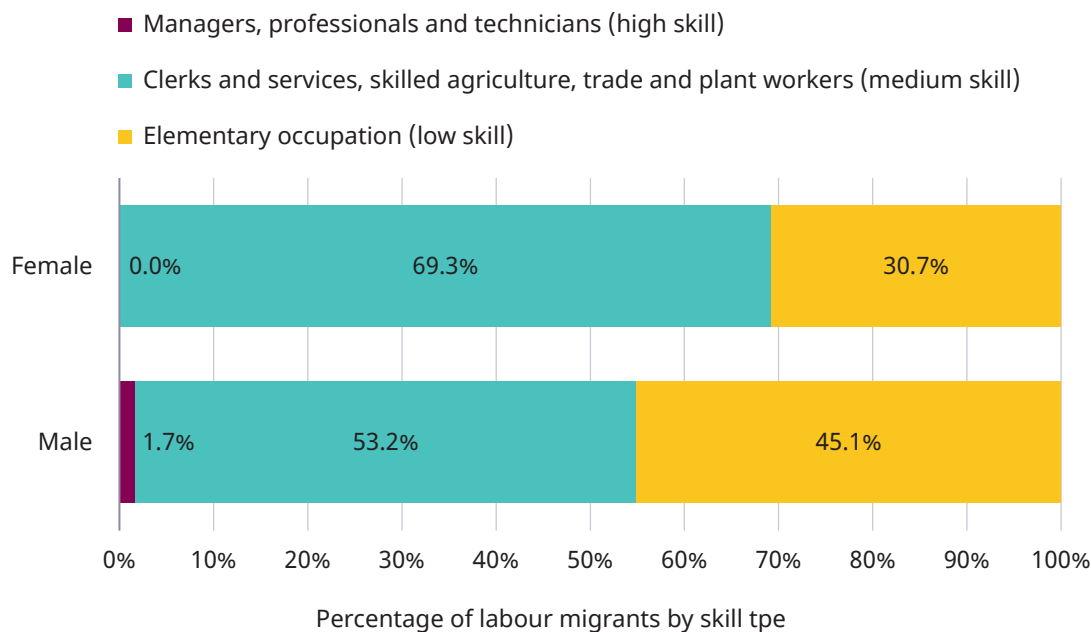
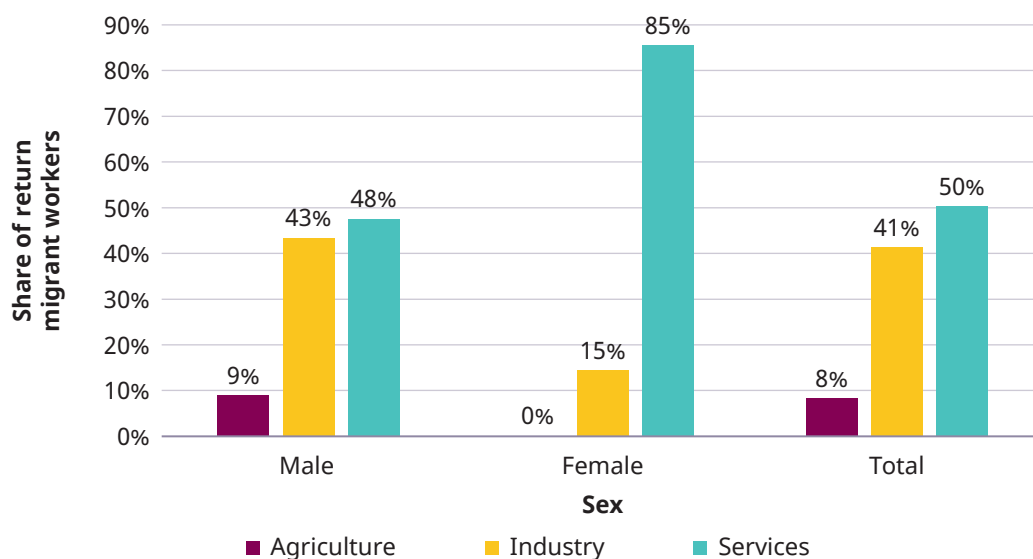


Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of return migrant workers by sex across skill categories, revealing gender differences. Among female return migrant workers, 69 per cent had been employed in medium-skill occupations such as clerical work, services, skilled agriculture and trade, while 31 per cent had worked in low-skill jobs within elementary occupations. Male return migrant workers showed a similar pattern, with 53 per cent having been in medium-skill jobs and 45 per cent in low-skill roles, indicating a more balanced distribution for males.

In high-skill occupations (managers, professionals, technicians), female return migrant workers were wholly absent, while 2 per cent of male return migrant workers had been employed in these roles – reflecting a small but notable male advantage in accessing higher-skilled positions.

► **Figure 3. Distribution of return migrant workers by sex and occupation type while abroad (percentage)**

Men were more diversified across sectors of employment, with 43 per cent having worked in the industry sector while abroad, 48 per cent having worked in the services sector and a smaller share having worked in agriculture (9 per cent). By contrast, female return migrant workers had been predominantly employed in the services sector (85 per cent), with 15 per cent having worked in industry and none in agriculture. Overall, 50 per cent of all return migrant workers had worked in the services sector, followed by 41 per cent in industry and 8 per cent in the agriculture sector.

► **Figure 4. Distribution of return migrant workers by sector of employment while abroad and sex (percentage)**

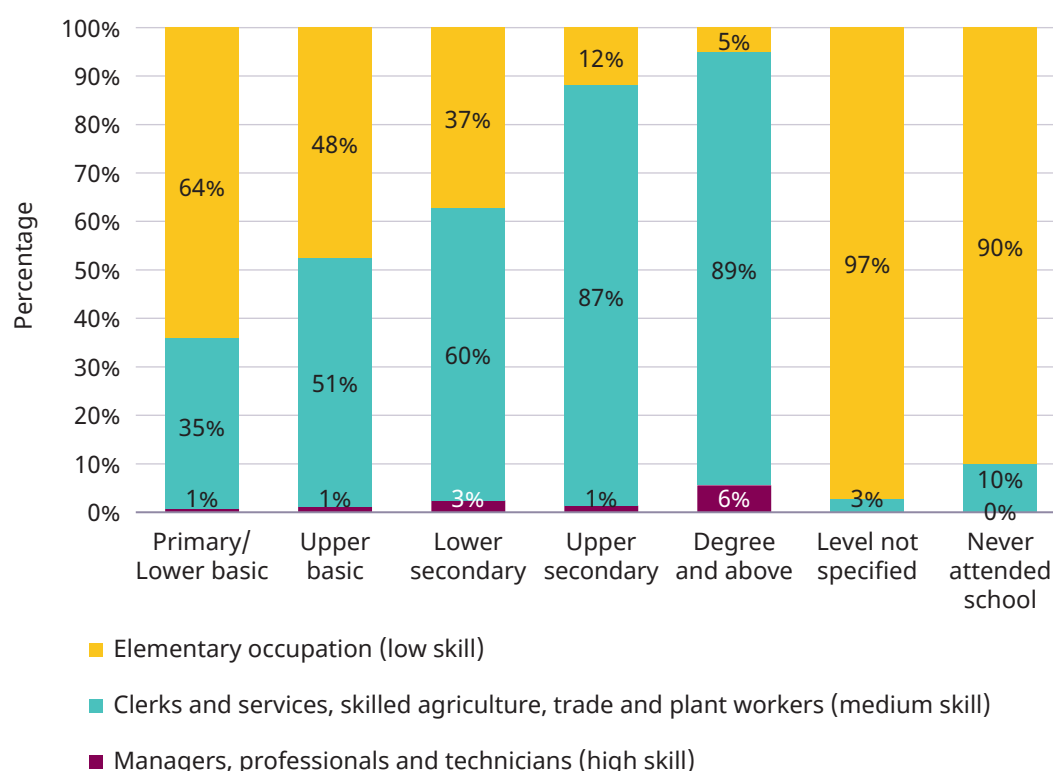
Those with a lower basic or no education were predominantly concentrated in elementary occupations while abroad. Among the return migrant workers who never attended school, 90 per cent were employed in low-skilled elementary occupations and only 10 per cent in medium-skill jobs. Similarly, those whose education level was unspecified were also highly concentrated in low-skill work (97 per cent) (figure 5).

Those with an upper basic education were evenly split, with 51 per cent having held medium-skill jobs and 48 per cent having held low-skill occupations while abroad; whereas those with only a primary/lower basic education were more disadvantaged, with 60 per cent having worked in low-skill roles and just 37 per cent in medium-skill jobs.

Migrant workers who completed an upper secondary or lower secondary education show a strong presence in medium-skill jobs during their time abroad (87 per cent), with a smaller share having been in low-skill work (12 per cent) and only a limited number managing to access high-skill roles (1 per cent).

Only 6 per cent of those with a degree or above were employed in high-skill jobs while abroad, with the majority (89 per cent) having worked in medium-skill roles. Five per cent reported that they had worked in elementary occupations in the destination country.

► **Figure 5. Distribution of return migrant workers by level of educational attainment and occupation type while abroad (percentage)**



3.3.1. Methods of getting a job

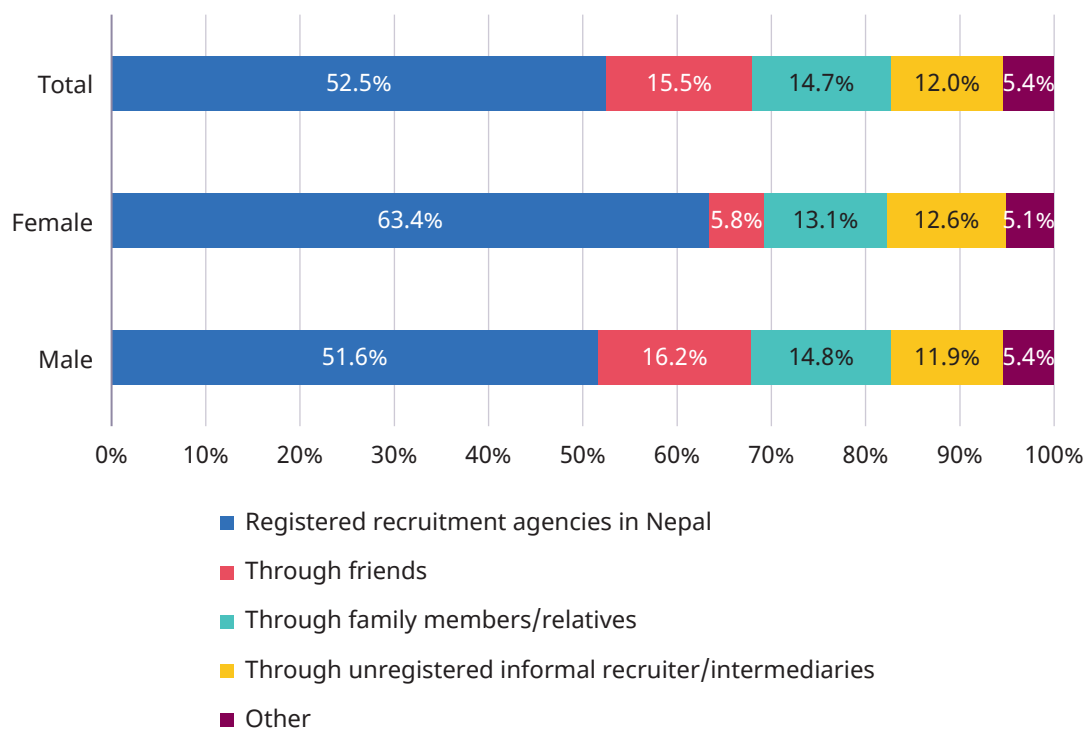
Return migrant workers were asked how they obtained their jobs abroad. The top four ways of obtaining a job reported by return migrant workers were through:

1. registered recruitment agencies (approx. 52.5 per cent);
2. friends (15.5 per cent);
3. family members or relatives (approx. 14.7 per cent); and
4. informal recruiters or intermediaries (12.0 per cent).

The data in figure 6 suggests that there are notable gender differences in how Nepali migrant workers get jobs abroad. For male return migrant workers, the primary method was through registered recruitment agencies in Nepal (51.6 per cent), followed by friends (16.2 per cent), family or relatives (14.8 per cent), and informal recruiters or intermediaries (11.9 per cent). Only a small fraction reported obtaining a job directly from an employer abroad (2 per cent), through overseas recruitment agencies (1.1 per cent), or through government agencies in Nepal (0.7 per cent).

By contrast, female return migrant workers reported relying even more heavily on registered recruitment agencies in Nepal (63.4 per cent), with informal recruiters/intermediaries and family or relatives each accounting for 13 per cent. Friends played a significantly smaller role for women (6 per cent), and other sources are mentioned by 4 per cent. Similar to men, women return migrant workers showed minimal reliance on job transfers, government agencies abroad or direct employment by foreign employers.

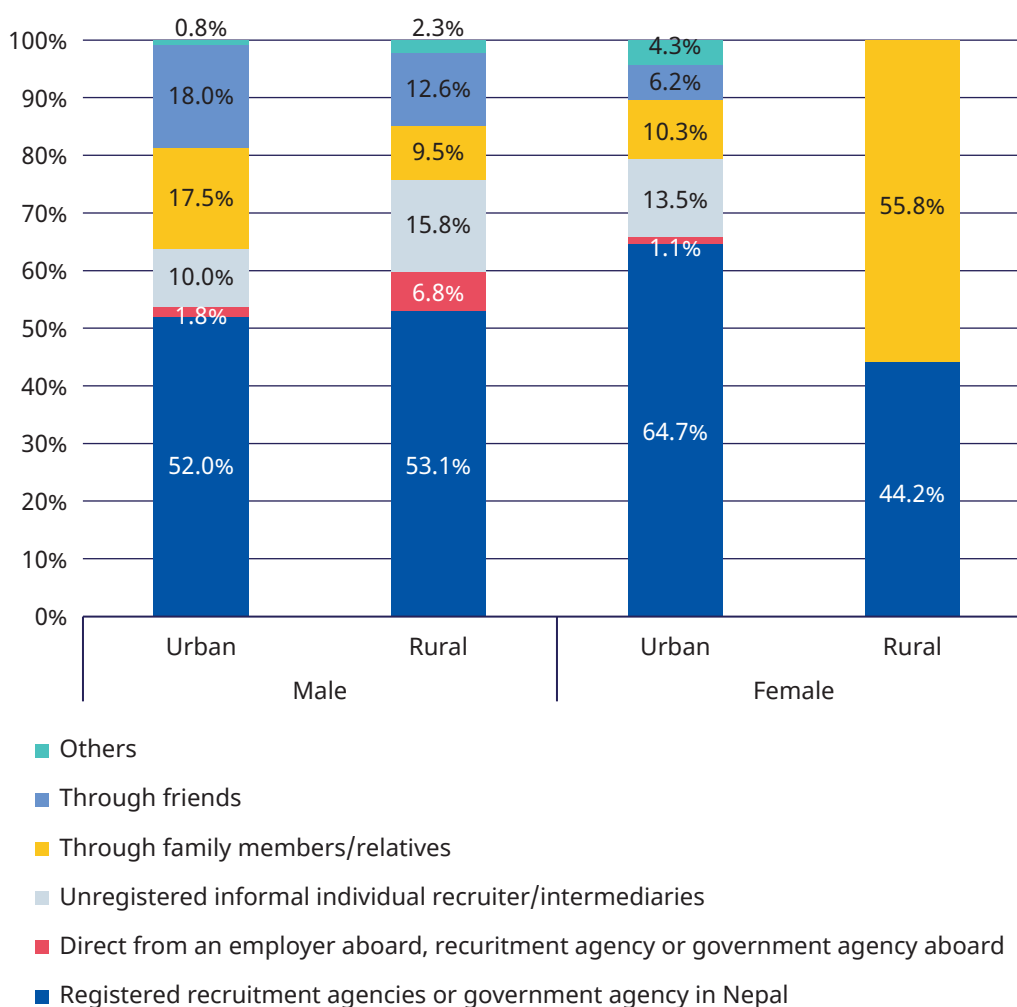
► **Figure 6. Method used by return migrant workers to obtain their first job abroad, by sex (percentage)**



Note: The "Other" category includes the following potential survey responses: direct hire by an employer abroad; registered recruitment agencies abroad; government agency in Nepal; registered recruitment agencies abroad; job transfer, government agency abroad; and other.

Figure 7 reveals a different pattern for rural women, in that they depended mainly on family members and relatives (55.8 per cent) to obtain employment abroad, and the remaining 44.2 per cent obtained jobs through registered recruitment agencies or government agencies in Nepal.

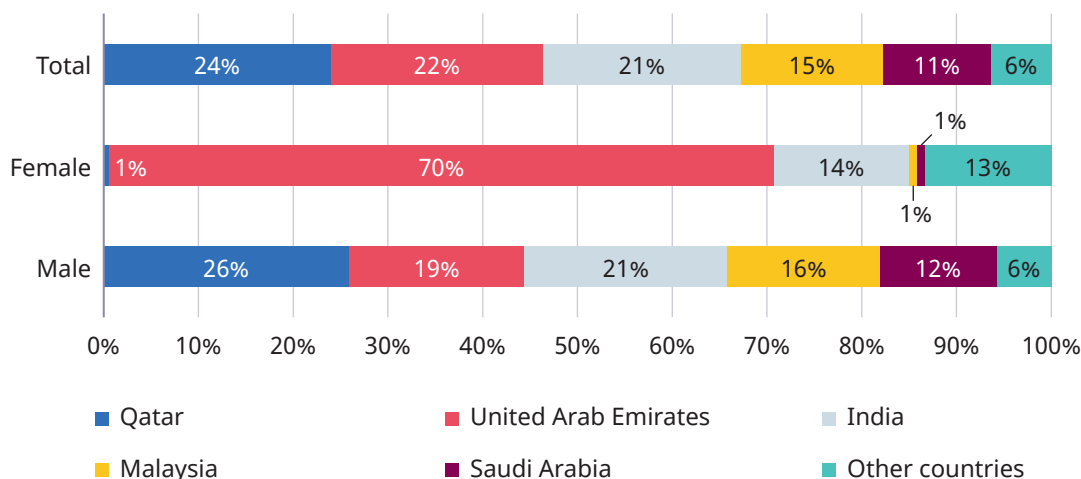
► **Figure 7. How return migrant workers obtained their first job abroad by sex and locality (percentage)**



► 3.4. Migration corridors

Qatar attracted the highest share of the male return migrant workers (26 per cent), while the United Arab Emirates was the top destination among female return migrant workers (70 per cent) and the second destination for males (19 per cent). India was common to both genders (21 per cent of males, 14 per cent of females). Malaysia drew 16 per cent of male return migrant workers but only 1 per cent of females. Overall, “other countries” account for 6 per cent of all return migrant workers, including 6 per cent among males and 13 per cent among females.

► **Figure 8. Distribution of return migrant workers by sex and country of destination (percentage)**

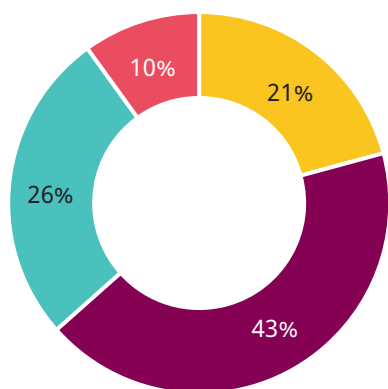
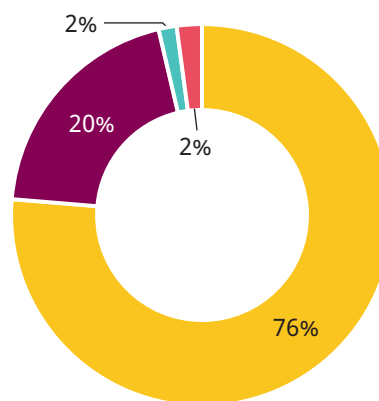


► 3.5. Salary/wages, other benefits and earnings

This section presents an overview of earnings from employment abroad. The survey specifically gathered data on return migrant workers' first-month earnings in their initial jobs in their most recent destination country. Beyond base pay, the survey also captured all supplementary income and benefits.

3.5.1. Wages and benefits from employment abroad

As seen in figure 9 below, 43 per cent earned between 20,001 and 40,000 rupees in the first month of their initial job abroad, while 26 per cent received between 40,001 and 60,000 rupees. A little more than one in five (21 per cent) reported earning less than 20,000 rupees per month. The data in figure 9 further suggests that other benefits distinct from wages/salary contributed a smaller portion of the total income, with roughly three quarters of returned migrant workers (76 per cent) having earned less than 20 000 per month in other benefits.

► **Figure 9. Distribution of return migrant workers' by monthly salary/wage and by other benefits in rupees (percentage)****Panel A. Salary/wage from the first job****Panel B. Other benefit**

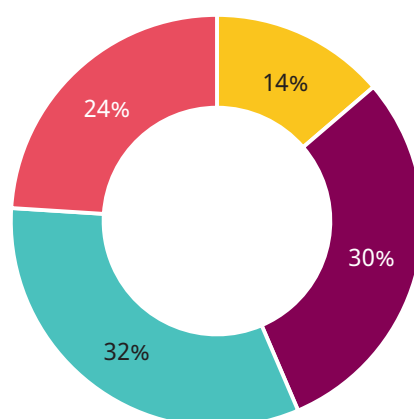
■ Less than 20,000

■ 20,001-40,000

■ 40,001-60,000

■ 60,001 and above

Nearly one in three returned migrant workers (32 per cent) received total monthly earnings (wages/salary plus any benefits) between 40,001 and 60,000 rupees, while 24 per cent earned above 60,000 rupees. By contrast, 30 per cent of return migrant workers fell within the 20,001–40,000 rupee range, and only 14 per cent earned less than 20,000 rupees per month in total.

► **Figure 10. Distribution of return migrant workers by total monthly earnings (salary/wage + other benefits) in rupees (percentage)**

■ Less than 20,000

■ 20,001-40,000

■ 40,001-60,000

■ 60,001 and above

3.5.2. Mean and median monthly earnings

Across all return migrant workers, their mean monthly earnings from their first job abroad were 54,403 rupees, while the median was 44,500, indicating a right-skewed distribution in which a minority of higher earners lift the average above the typical worker's pay. Men return migrant workers reported a mean of 54,721 rupees against a median of 44,505, whereas women showed a mean of 48,647 rupees and a markedly lower median of 30,920 – the widest mean–median spread among the subgroups. The mean–median earnings gaps were roughly 10,216 for men return migrant workers, 17,727 for women and 9,903 overall, underscoring the stronger right skew and dispersion in women return migrant workers' earnings while abroad compared to men.

The female median trails the male median by about 13,585 rupees, highlighting a substantial disparity in typical monthly earnings while abroad, even though the female mean is only about 6,075 rupees lower than the male mean. This pattern suggests that a relatively small set of higher-paid women elevates the average while most women earn considerably less.

► Table 8. Mean and median monthly earnings from first job abroad by sex (rupees)

Sex	Mean monthly earnings	Median monthly earnings
Male	54 721	44 505
Female	48 647	30 920
Total	54 403	44 500

Return migrant workers aged 25 and above earned more per month while abroad than younger workers, with an average of 57,254 rupees and a median of 45,164 rupees, compared to a 46,011-rupee mean and 40,000-rupee median for those aged 15–24. This difference could be due to the impact of experience and tenure, as older workers typically secure higher-paying roles.

► Table 9. Mean and median monthly earnings from first job abroad by age group (rupees)

Age group	Mean monthly earnings	Median monthly earnings
15–24	46 011	40 000
25+	57 254	45 164

Table 10 shows that among the top destination countries, return migrant workers who had migrated to Malaysia recorded the highest average monthly earnings at 57,696 rupees, with a median of 50,000 rupees; followed closely by Qatar (mean: 55,978 rupees; median: 50,006 rupees) and the United Arab Emirates (mean: 55,684 rupees; median: 51,560 rupees). Kuwait stands out for having the highest median pay at 53,592 rupees, indicating a relatively strong middle-income range. By contrast, India ranks lowest, with mean earnings of 26,083 rupees and a median of 24,000 rupees. Meanwhile, the “other countries” category shows exceptionally high figures (mean: 189,626 rupees; median: 115,000 rupees), likely due to a small sample influenced by high-paying outliers.

Dispersion varies meaningfully by destination: Kuwait exhibits the smallest mean–median gap (1,760 rupees), suggesting a relatively compressed earnings distribution; whereas Oman (gap of 13,978 rupees) and Malaysia (gap of 7,696 rupees) show wider spreads indicative of greater inequality or heterogeneity across jobs and sectors. The “other countries” group's gap (74,626 rupees) confirms the influence of high-earning outliers within that composite, implying more volatile outcomes for individual workers despite high aggregate potential.

► Table 10. Mean and median monthly earnings from first job abroad by country of destination (rupees)

Country of destination	Mean monthly earnings	Median monthly earnings
Qatar	55 978	50 006
United Arab Emirates	55 684	51 560
India	26 083	24 000
Malaysia	57 696	50 000
Saudi Arabia	52 519	49 475
Kuwait	55 352	53 592
Oman	54 563	40 585
Other countries	189 626	115 000

Return migrant workers who had worked in the services sector abroad reported the highest monthly earnings, averaging 65,345 rupees and a median of 48,200 rupees. The industry sector followed at mid-range levels (mean: 46,182 rupees; median: 44,385 rupees); while agriculture ranked lowest (mean: 34,528 rupees; median: 24,000 rupees). This pattern highlights a clear sectoral hierarchy, with services commanding a premium over industry, and both significantly outperforming agriculture.

► Table 11. Mean and median monthly earnings from first job abroad by sector of employment (rupees)

Sector	Mean monthly earnings	Median monthly earnings
Agriculture	34 528	24 000
Industry	46 182	44 385
Services	65 345	48 200

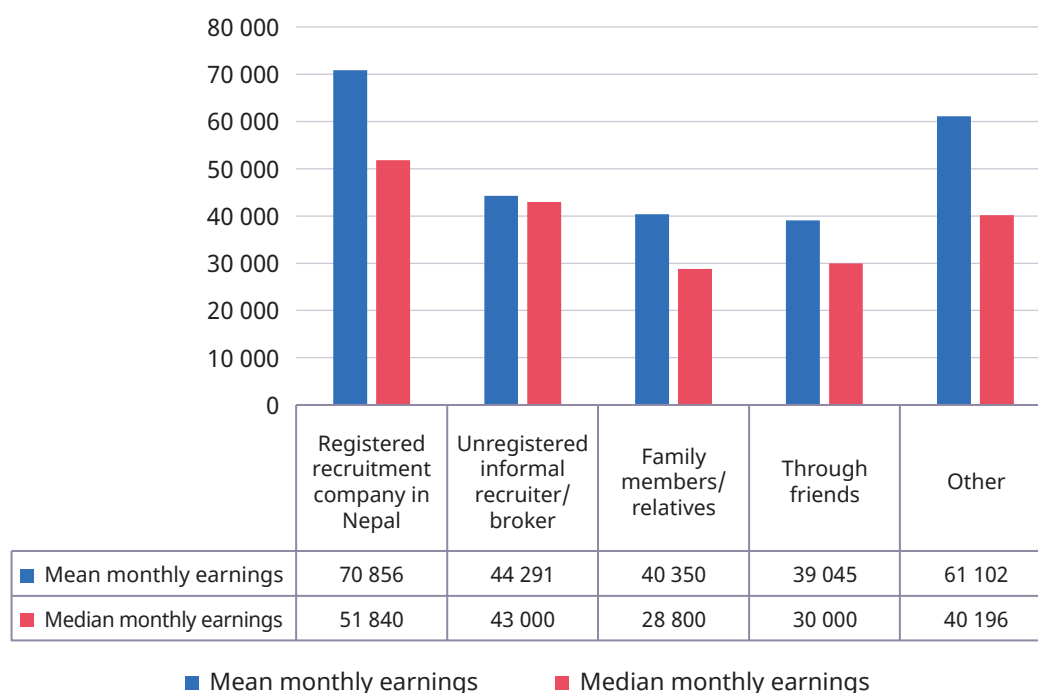
Monthly earnings rise with the skill level of the occupation held: high skill roles (managers, professionals, technicians) had the highest mean (69,891 rupees) and median (51,606 rupees) earnings, followed by medium skill roles (mean: 64,477 rupees; median: 49,000 rupees). Return migrant workers who had held low skill jobs trailed (mean: 42,708 rupees; median: 39,432 rupees), consistent with returns to skills and qualifications.

► Table 12. Mean and median monthly earnings from first job abroad by occupation type (rupees)

Occupation type	Mean monthly earnings	Median monthly earnings
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	69 891	51 606
Skilled agriculture, trade and plant workers (medium skill)	64 477	49 000
Elementary occupations (low skill)	42 708	39 432

Earnings varied significantly by recruitment channel. Jobs secured through registered recruitment agencies yielded the highest pay, with an average of 70,856 rupees and a median of 51,840 rupees. By contrast, informal routes to securing employment, such as family or friends, resulted in much lower earnings among returned migrant workers, with medians ranging from 28,800 to 30,000 rupees. Notably, jobs obtained through unregistered informal individual recruiters showed a median of 43,000 rupees, which is higher than family or friend referrals but still far below jobs secured via formal channels.

► **Figure 11. Mean and median monthly earnings from first job abroad by method used to acquire the job (rupees)**



► 3.6. Recruitment fees and related costs incurred

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of recruitment fees and related costs borne by migrant workers, focusing on expenses incurred in securing employment abroad. It examines cost categories, total expenditures, and average costs.

3.6.1. Return migrant workers with zero recruitment costs

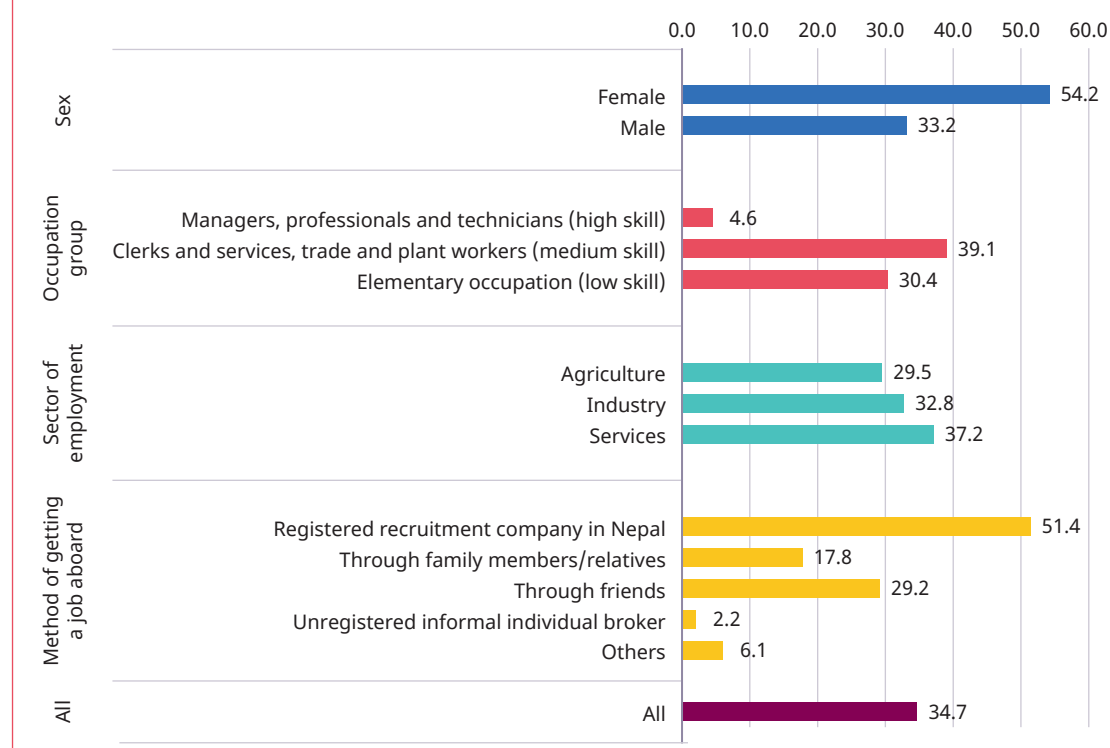
The ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment state, “No recruitment fees or related costs should be charged to, or otherwise borne by, workers or jobseekers” (ILO 2019, 13), and as noted above, this admonition is also found in the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), which prohibits private recruitment agencies from charging recruitment fees or costs to jobseekers.

Based on the survey data, overall, approximately 34.7 per cent of international return migrant worker reported paying zero recruitment fees or related costs to get a job abroad (figure 12).

Women return migrant workers were significantly more likely to report zero recruitment costs, with 54.2 per cent of female return migrant workers reporting paying nothing, compared with 33.2 per cent of male returnees – a gap of roughly 21 percentage points. This suggests women may have accessed more employer-paid recruitment pathways or roles with fees absorbed upstream.

Zero-cost recruitment was least common among high-skill roles (however, this could be due to the small number of observations in the sample). Only 4.6 per cent of managers, professionals and technicians reported no costs, versus 39.1 per cent among clerks, services, trade and plant workers (medium-skill roles) and 30.4 per cent among elementary (low skill) occupations. This gradient implies that higher-skilled migrants are far more likely to bear some recruitment-related expenses, while mid-skill roles, in particular, see the highest incidence of employer- or third party-covered costs

► **Figure 12. Share of international labour migrants who did not pay any costs by sex, occupation group, sector of employment and method of acquiring a job abroad (percentage)**



Across broad sectors, return migrant workers who had been employed in the services sector showed the highest zero-cost share at 37.2 per cent, compared with 32.8 per cent in industry and 29.5 per cent in agriculture. The elevated share of services workers could reflect job types (for example, domestic work, hospitality) where placement fees are more often covered by employers or regulated intermediaries, relative to the other sectors.

The data in figure 12 show that those who secured employment through a registered recruitment agency experienced the highest share of zero-cost migration at 51.4 per cent. By comparison, obtaining jobs through friends (29.2 per cent) or family/relatives (17.8 per cent) were associated with considerably lower chances of paying no fees. The likelihood drops even further for those relying on unregistered or informal individual brokers, where only 2.2 per cent reported zero costs, while the “others” category stands at 6.1 per cent. Collectively, these results highlight the protective role of formal, regulated recruitment systems and the increased financial risks linked with informal brokers and personal networks.

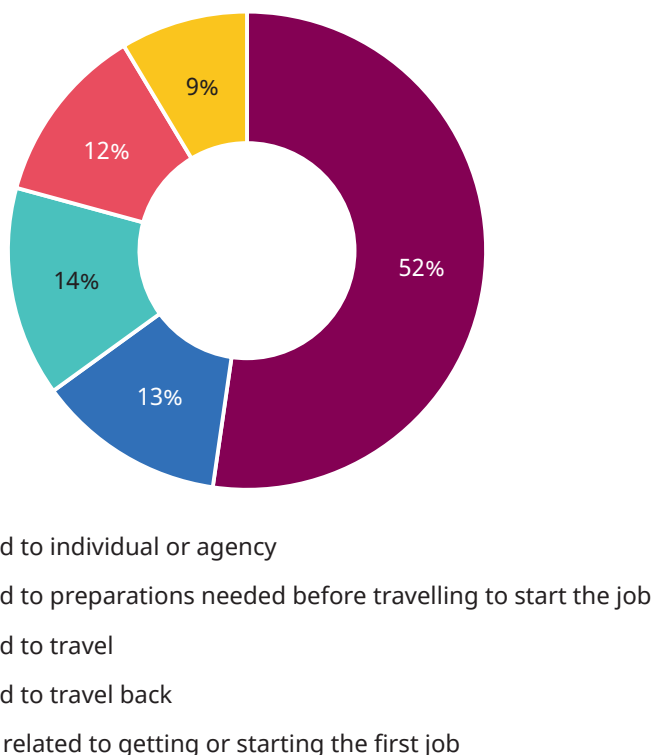
3.6.2. Recruitment fees and related costs borne by return migrant workers

As the data in section 3.6.1 shows, roughly one third of return migrant workers did not pay any recruitment-related fees or costs to migrate abroad for work, but this, of course, means that nearly two in three return migrant workers (65.3 per cent) did pay such costs. Recruitment fee and related costs reported by return migrant workers included the following:

- **Costs related to recruitment brokers**, these included both formal recruitment agencies and individual informal recruiters.
- **Costs related to preparations needed before travelling to start the job**: for example, costs related to obtaining visas, passport and other documents like police clearance; training or assessment fees required by the job; medical check-ups/vaccines; travel or health insurance; contract preparation (if any) and so on.
- **Costs related to travel**, for example, transport, including international and local travel in the country or in transit countries; travel clearances; border crossing; and accommodation during travel.
- **Costs related to travel back to Nepal**, for example, transport, including international and local travel in the country or in transit countries; border crossing; and accommodation during travel.
- **Other costs**, for example, any gifts or payments to people who facilitated getting the job, debt repayment fees, any interest on borrowed money, and any previous costs for failed attempts to migrate.

The analysis of the recruitment fees and related expenses incurred by return migrant workers revealed a complex and layered cost structure that significantly affected their overall earnings. The largest share of these expenses – 52 per cent (figure 13) – was associated with payments made to registered and unregistered recruiters and brokers, underscoring the extent to which migrants depended on recruitment intermediaries to secure employment opportunities. Following this, 13 per cent of the total expenditure was linked to pre-departure preparation costs, which included essential documentation such as visas and passports, medical examinations, and required training fees. This pattern highlighted the substantial financial burden migrants bore even before beginning their journey abroad.

Additionally, travel costs to reach the destination accounted for 14 per cent of the total expenses, encompassing both international and local transportation, border crossing fees, and accommodation during transit. Similarly, costs related to the return journey comprise 12 per cent. Lastly, 9 per cent of the costs fall under other miscellaneous expenses, which included payments to facilitators, debt repayments, and losses incurred from previous unsuccessful job searches.

► **Figure 13. Distribution of recruitment costs borne by return migrant workers (percentage)**

When analysed by sex, the categories of recruitment costs show a consistent pattern across male and female return migrant workers. The data indicates that the types of expenses incurred in the recruitment process are similar for both groups, reflecting parallel trends in how costs are structured and distributed regardless of gender.

3.6.3. Mean and median recruitment fees and related cost by sex, destination, and skill levels

The cost of migration show pronounced differences by sex. Men return migrant workers showed a mean cost of 176,686 rupees and a median of 170,000 rupees (a gap of 6,686), while women faced a much higher mean cost of 219,362 rupees but a lower median of 120,000 rupees (a gap of 99,362), with the overall mean standing at 178,922 rupees and the median at 166,000 rupees.

► **Table 13. Mean and median recruitment fees and related costs by sex (rupees)**

Sex	Mean recruitment fees and related costs	Median recruitment fees and related costs
Male	176 686	170 000
Female	219 362	120 000
Total	178 922	166 000

The contrast between the female mean (219,362 rupees) and female median (120,000 rupees) – versus male mean (176,686 rupees) and male median (170,000 rupees) – suggests that women’s recruitment experiences are more heterogeneous, with a subset incurring very high fees. In addition, the female–male mean difference is roughly 42,677 rupees, but the female median is 50,000 rupees lower than the male median, highlighting the presence of outliers rather than uniformly higher costs for women migrant workers.

Costs rise with age: return migrant workers aged 25+ faced higher fees (mean: 192,634 rupees; median: 174,500 rupees) than those aged 15–24 (mean: 138,560 rupees; median: 130,000 rupees).

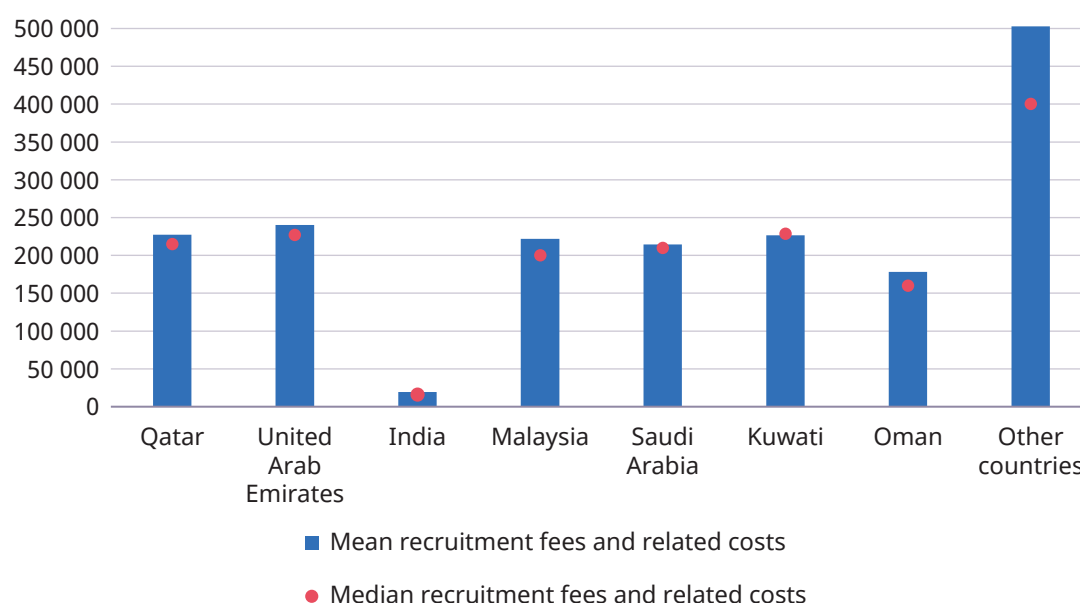
► **Table 14. Mean and median recruitment fees and related costs by age group (rupees)**

Age group	Mean recruitment fees and related costs	Median recruitment fees and related costs
15–24	138 560	130 000
25+	192 634	174 500

“Other countries” show exceptionally high recruitment costs (mean: 502,569 rupees; median: 400,000 rupees), but this figure should be interpreted with caution as it likely reflects a very small sample influenced by high-cost outliers. Gulf destinations such as the United Arab Emirates (mean: 240,208 rupees; median: 226,934 rupees) and Kuwait (mean: 226,678 rupees; median: 228,700 rupees) also rank among the most expensive, followed closely by Qatar (mean: 227,282 rupees; median: 215,000 rupees), Malaysia (mean: 222,057 rupees; median: 200,000 rupees) and Saudi Arabia (mean: 214,564 rupees; median: 210,000 rupees). Oman sits slightly lower (mean: 178,169 rupees; median: 160,000 rupees), while India remains the least costly destination (mean: 19,535 rupees; median: 16,000 rupees). This pattern underscores significant cross-country variation, with GCC and “other countries” channels demanding far higher upfront payments than India.

► **Table 15. Mean and median recruitment fees and related costs by destination country (rupees)**

Country of destination	Mean recruitment fees and related costs	Median recruitment fees and related costs
Qatar	227 282	215 000
United Arab Emirates	240 208	226 934
India	19 535	16 000
Malaysia	222 057	200 000
Saudi Arabia	214 564	210 000
Kuwait	226 678	228 700
Oman	178 169	160 000
Other countries	502 569	400 000

► **Figure 14. Mean and median recruitment fees and related costs by country of destination (rupees)**

Recruitment costs were highest among return migrant workers who had worked in the services sector while abroad, averaging 204,486 rupees, with a median of 181,000 rupees. Industry followed at mid-range levels (mean: 171,536 rupees; median: 162,400 rupees), while agriculture recorded the lowest costs (mean: 76,366 rupees; median: 16,000 rupees).

► **Table 16. Mean and median recruitment fees and related costs by sector of employment (rupees)**

Sector	Mean recruitment fees and related costs	Median recruitment fees and related costs
Agriculture	76 366	16 000
Industry	171 536	162 400
Services	204 486	181 000

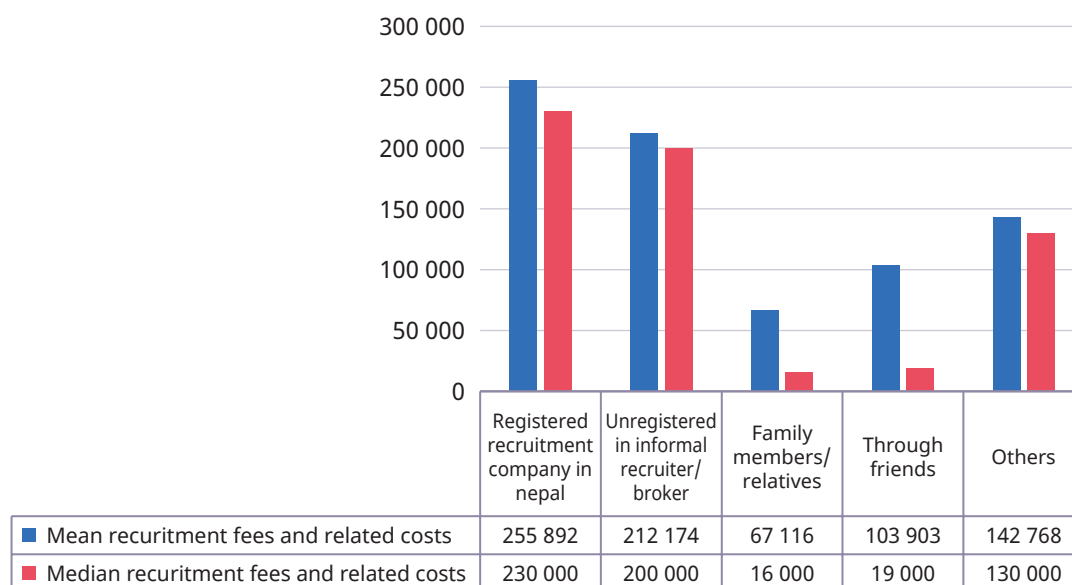
Return migrant workers who had been in high-skill roles – such as managers, professionals and technicians – incurred the highest recruitment costs, with an average of 237,069 rupees and a median of 262,550 rupees, indicating a substantial typical outlay where the median exceeds the mean. Medium-skill occupations fall in the mid-range (mean: 184,085 rupees; median: 164,000 rupees), while low-skill roles are slightly lower on average (mean: 170,469 rupees) but have a similar median of 165,000 rupees, suggesting comparable typical payments across non-high-skill jobs.

► **Table 17. Mean and median recruitment fees and related costs by occupation type (rupees)**

Occupation type	Mean recruitment fees and related costs	Median recruitment fees and related costs
Managers, professionals and technicians (high skill)	237 069	262 550
Skilled agriculture, trade and plant workers (medium skill)	184 085	164 000
Elementary occupations (low skill)	170 469	165 000

Return migrant workers who secured their employment abroad through a registered recruitment agencies in Nepal showed the highest typical (median) cost at 230,000 rupees, with a mean of 255,892 rupees – a gap of 25,892 rupees (+11.26 per cent) that signals relatively high but predictable fees for this formal channel. Return migrant workers who used unregistered informal recruiters/brokers also exhibited high typical costs – median: 200,000 rupees; mean: 212,174 rupees; gap: 12,174 rupees (+6.09 per cent) – suggesting consistently expensive arrangements with some variation but fewer extreme outliers than is seen among those who relied on personal networks. By contrast, family members/relatives and friends look cheap on medians (16,000 rupees and 19,000 rupees, respectively), yet their means are much higher (67,116 rupees and 103,903 rupees), producing very large mean–median gaps (+51,116 rupees for family and +84,903 rupees for friends). This pattern reveals volatile personal routes: most migrants pay little, but a minority faces very high fees that inflate the average.

► **Figure 15. Mean and median recruitment fees and related costs by method of getting first job abroad (rupees)**



► 3.7. Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7.1

3.7.1. Recruitment Cost Indicator

Recruitment fees and related costs are a critical component of the migration process, shaping both the affordability and sustainability of overseas employment. While absolute cost figures provide useful information, they do not fully capture the financial burden on workers. For example, a fee of 200,000 rupees may appear significant, but its true impact depends on the worker's earnings. For someone earning 50,000 rupees per month, this represents four months of income – a substantial strain. For another earning 250,000 rupees, the same fee is far less burdensome.

To address this gap, this report introduces the Recruitment Cost Indicator (RCI), which expresses recruitment fees and related costs as a proportion of monthly income. This ratio-based approach transforms raw cost data into a meaningful measure of affordability, fairness and financial stress. By calculating the RCI using both mean values and median values, we capture two perspectives:

- **Mean-based RCI** highlights the overall burden, including the influence of extreme cases.
- **Median-based RCI** reflects the typical experience of workers, minimizing distortion from outliers.

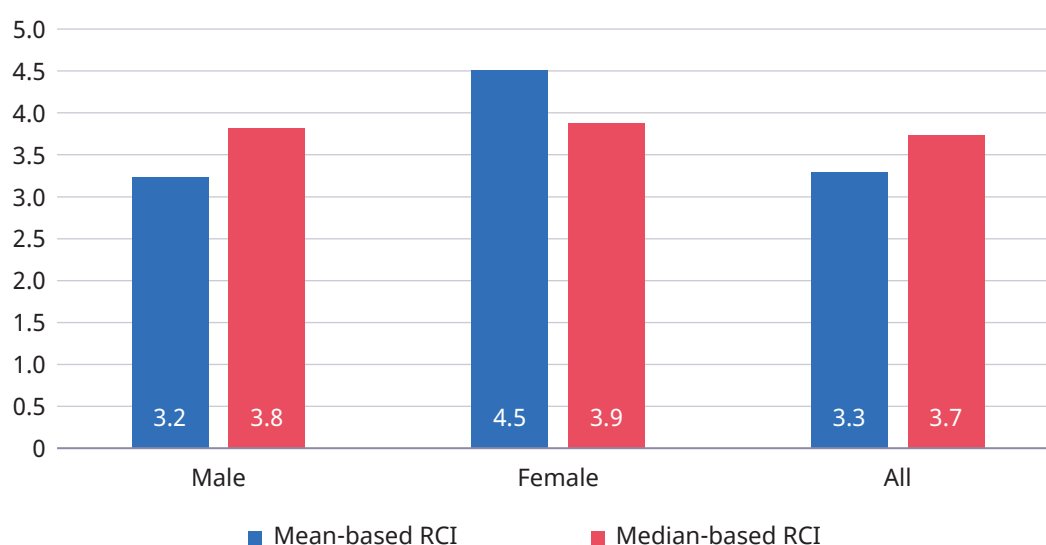
This analysis directly supports **SDG indicator 10.7.1**, which measures recruitment costs borne by the worker as a proportion of monthly earnings in the country of destination. High RCI values indicate excessive recruitment costs relative to income, which can lead to debt bondage, exploitation and reduced remittance capacity – issues SDG target 10.7 seeks to address under its mandate to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration.

By benchmarking RCI across destinations, sectors and recruitment channels, this report provides actionable insights for monitoring progress toward SDG target 10.7 and for designing policies that promote fair recruitment and reduce inequality among migrant workers.

3.7.2. RCI by country of destination, origin, sex, skill level, industry age group, and source of migration information

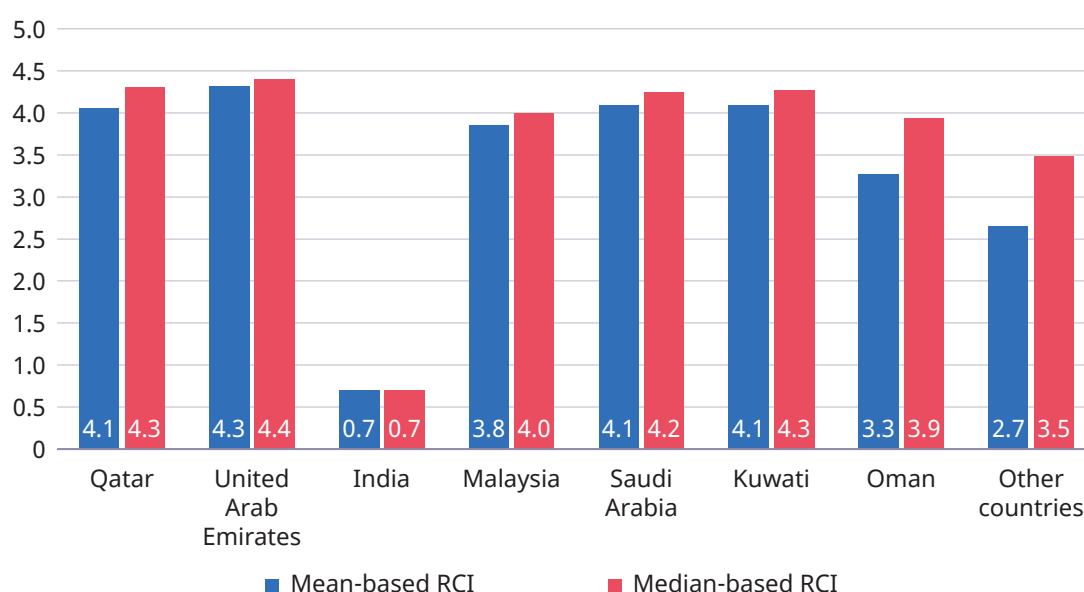
Women return migrant workers faced a heavier recruitment cost burden than men when measured against monthly income. Using averages, women's RCI was about 4.5 months, compared to 3.2 months for men. At the median, the gap narrows slightly – 3.9 months for women versus 3.8 months for men – while the overall typical burden is 3.7 months. This suggests women encounter more high-cost cases, raising their mean, even though the typical cost burden is similar across both sexes.

► **Figure 16. Recruitment fees and related costs as a share of monthly income by sex (mean- and median-based RCI)**



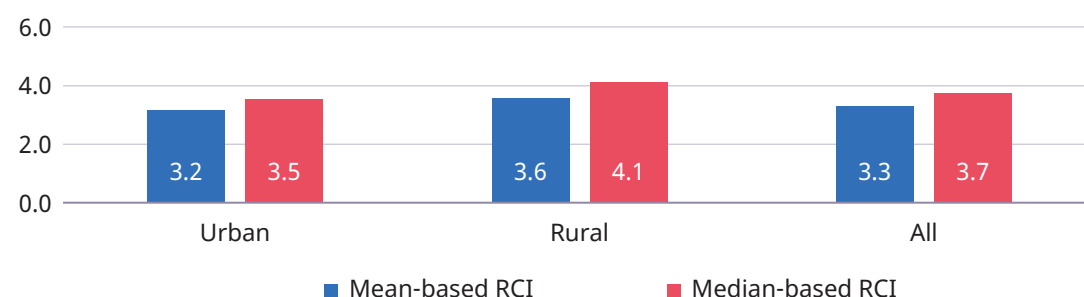
Across destinations, GCC countries required the longest recovery period for recruitment costs, averaging about four months of earnings: United Arab Emirates (4.3 months), Kuwait (4.1), Saudi Arabia (4.1), and Qatar (4.1). Malaysia followed closely at 3.8 months, while Oman was slightly lower at 3.3 months. India stands out as the most affordable destination, with a recovery time of less than one month (0.7 months on average), indicating minimal financial strain compared to all other destinations. Median values confirm this pattern, with the United Arab Emirates (4.4 months) and Kuwait (4.3 months) at the top. Figures for “other countries” (mean: 2.7 months; median: 3.5 months) should be interpreted cautiously, as they likely reflect a small sample influenced by high-cost outliers.

► **Figure 17. Recruitment fees and related cost as a share of monthly income by country of destination (mean- and median-based RCI)**



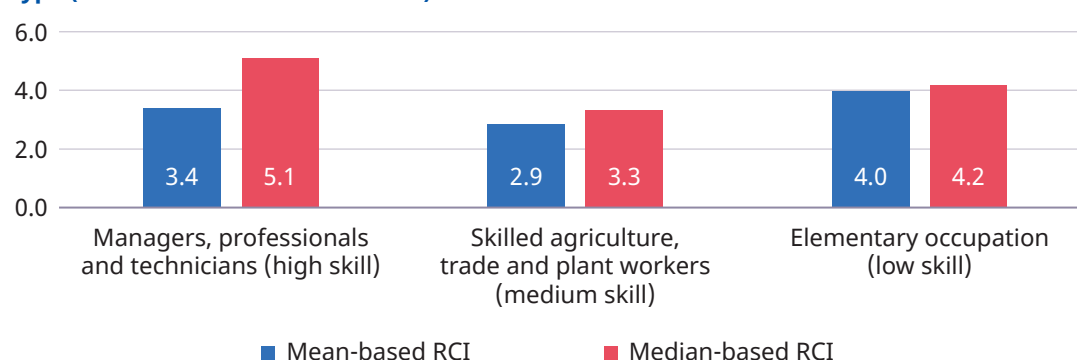
Return migrant workers from rural areas of Nepal faced a heavier burden than their urban counterparts. On average, the rural RCI was 3.6 months versus 3.2 months in urban areas. Median values widen the gap further – 4.1 months for rural compared to 3.5 months for urban – indicating consistently higher costs relative to income for the placement of a rural dweller.

► **Figure 18. Recruitment fees and related cost as a share of monthly income by current locality (mean- and median-based RCI)**



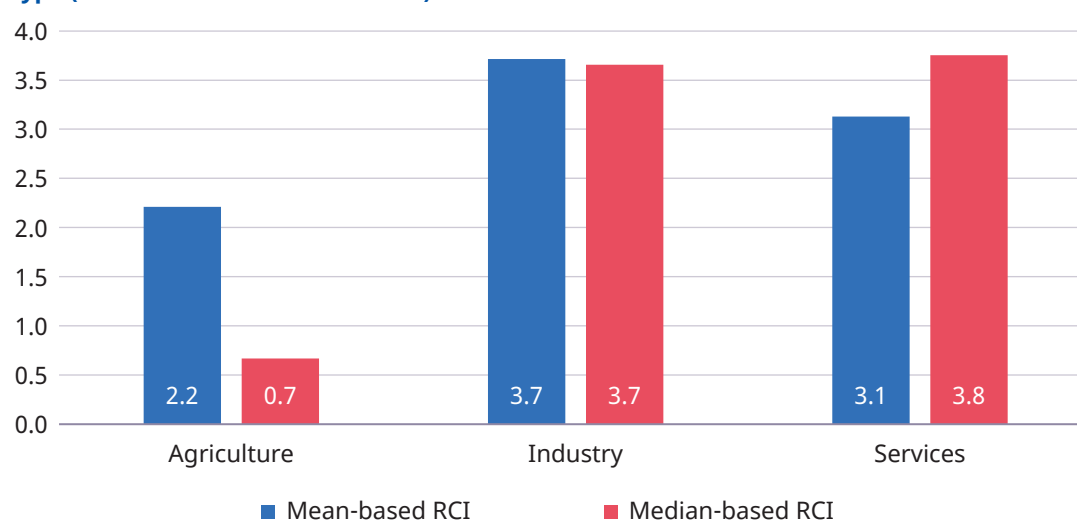
Return migrant workers who had been employed in low-skill roles in the destination country had the highest average burden (4.0 months), compared to those in high-skill (3.4) and medium-skill (2.9) roles. However, median values reverse this trend: high-skill jobs showed the largest typical burden (5.1 months), followed by low-skill (4.2) and medium-skill (3.3). This may suggest high-skill placements consistently require more months of income, while low-skill roles have a few extreme cases that raise the mean. However, data on high-skilled occupations should be interpreted cautiously, as they likely reflect a small sample influenced by outliers (skilled occupations accounted for only 2 per cent of all recent return migrant workers).

► **Figure 19. Recruitment fees and related cost as a share of monthly income by occupation type (mean- and median-based RCI)**



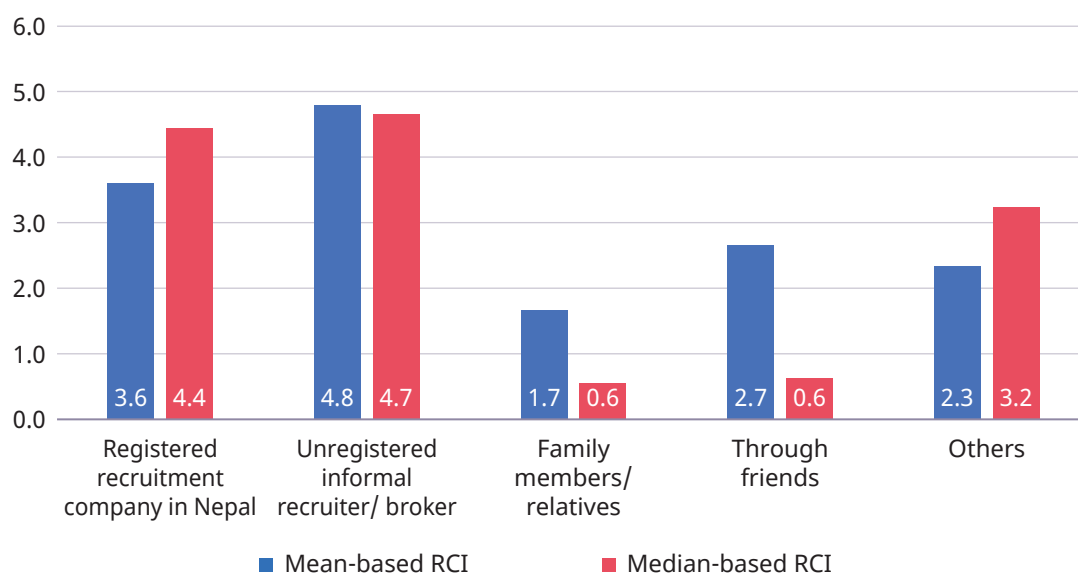
The proportion of recruitment costs relative to monthly earnings varies across different industries. Those who had worked in the industry sector reported the highest average burden (3.7 months), followed by services (3.1) and agriculture (2.2). At the median, services led at (3.8 months), slightly ahead of industry (3.7), while agriculture drops sharply to 0.7 months, indicating that most agricultural placements involve very low costs relative to income. Please note that agriculture accounted for only 8 per cent of all recent return migrant workers, suggesting a small sample, and therefore agriculture figures should be interpreted with caution.

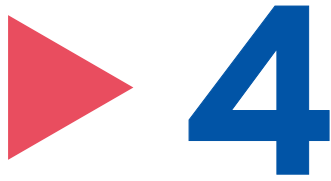
► **Figure 20. Recruitment fees and related cost as a share of monthly income by occupation type (mean- and median-based RCI)**



Return migrant workers who utilized unregistered informal recruiters/brokers faced the heaviest burden, with a mean-based RCI of 4.8 months and median-based RCI of 4.7 months. Registered recruitment agencies in Nepal followed, at 3.6 months (mean) and 4.4 months (median), showing that the typical payback is longer than the average suggests. The “other” category sits mid range at 2.3 months (mean); 3.2 months (median), while securing a job abroad through family members/relatives or friends was the least burdensome, with a median of 0.6 for both despite higher means (1.7 for family members/relatives and 2.7 for friends), indicating that most migrants repay quickly, but a few outliers inflate the averages. Overall, the method of job acquisition strongly influences cost burden: informal brokers and registered recruitment agencies dominate the high end, while family and friends remain the lowest-burden options for typical cases.

► **Figure 21. Recruitment fees and related costs as a share of monthly income by method of getting their first job abroad (mean- and median-based RCI)**





Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The survey provides important evidence on the financial cost borne by Nepali migrant workers for foreign employment. Despite existing legal and policy measures aimed at regulating recruitment practices, the survey findings reveal that recruitment fees and related costs remain substantially high for many workers. Total recruitment costs for men migrant workers remained at 176,686 rupees (as mean value) and at 170,000 rupees (as median value), while women worker found paying much higher cost (219,362 rupees at mean value but a lower median of 120,000 rupees). The average recruitment cost is found between 178,922 to 166,000 rupees (as mean and median value). In addition, women migrant workers faced a heavier recruitment cost burden than men when measured against monthly income. Using averages, women's RCI is about 4.5 months, compared to 3.2 months for men. At the median, the gap narrows slightly with 3.9 months for women versus 3.8 months for men while the overall typical burden is 3.7 months.

The survey reveals considerable variations in recruitment costs across destination countries, educational attainment, skill levels and sectors. Findings also indicate that recruitment pathways continue to influence both recruitment costs and earnings outcomes.

Financial burdens increase workers' vulnerability to exploitation and reduce the developmental benefits of labour migration. Addressing recruitment related challenges will require more coordinated action by government institutions, employers, recruitment agencies, workers' organizations, destination country authorities and development partners. Continued efforts to promote fair recruitment practices, strengthen governance and regulatory mechanisms, improve transparency in recruitment processes, and enhance bilateral cooperation with destination countries will contribute to safer, more orderly and rights based labour migration maximizing the benefits of migration, and advancing progress towards sustainable development goal (SDG) Indicator 10.7.1.

Key Policy Recommendations

a. Strengthen enforcement of recruitment related regulations

Enhance monitoring and compliance mechanisms and strengthen enforcement of existing laws and regulations governing recruitment agencies and other labour intermediaries. Particular attention should be given to preventing the charging of unauthorized recruitment fees and related costs, improving oversight of recruitment practices, and ensuring timely and effective sanctions for non-compliance. Enhance coordination among and capacity building of relevant government agencies to further support compliance and accountability throughout the recruitment process.

b. Accelerate progress towards the application of fair recruitment practices and the elimination of worker-paid recruitment fees and related costs.

Promote and incentivize recruitment practices consistent with the relevant ILO conventions and General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment, including the principle

that workers should not bear recruitment fees and related costs. Enhance engagement with recruitment actors and support replication of business models and good practices in accordance with fair recruitment principles.

c. Increase transparency and accountability in recruitment processes and across migration corridors.

Expand the use of transparent and accessible digital systems for recruitment and related services for migrant workers, while strengthening digital literacy among migrant workers and their families. Improve cross border transparency and accessibility of service delivery mechanisms to reduce informal payments, improve access to reliable information, support informed decision making, and facilitate safe migration pathways.

d. Strengthen bilateral labour migration agreements with destination countries including its effective implementation and monitoring

Strongly negotiate bilateral labour migration agreements or memoranda of understanding (BLMAs/MOUs) with the destination countries based on international labour standards and fair recruitment principles. Strengthen the implementation and monitoring of such agreements to ensure recruitment fees and related costs are not shouldered by the workers. Bilateral cooperation should support greater transparency of recruitment processes, stronger protection of migrant workers' rights and access to services, and joint efforts to reduce recruitment fees and related costs and promote fair recruitment standards throughout the migration cycle.

e. Enhance access to accurate information among migrant workers and their families

Improve pre-departure orientation programmes and awareness-raising initiatives to ensure that migrant workers and their families have access to accurate and timely information on recruitment procedures, employment conditions, recruitment costs, labour rights, and available support and grievance mechanisms. Special attention should be given to reaching vulnerable workers, those in rural areas and those who may be at greater risk of relying on informal recruitment channels. The findings indicate that recruitment through unregistered informal recruiters or brokers is associated with the highest recruitment cost index (with a mean value at 4.8 months and a median value at 4.7 months). This pattern highlights the significant financial burden associated with informal recruitment practices and underscores the need for strengthened regulation of informal recruitment intermediaries

f. Strengthen grievance handling and redress mechanisms

Improve accessibility, responsiveness, and effectiveness of grievance and redress mechanisms for migrant workers and their families. This should include measures to facilitate the reporting of excessive recruitment fees, fraudulent recruitment practices, and related abuses. Ensure proper investigations and redressal of such grievances in a timely manner.

g. Institutionalize the regular measurement and monitoring of recruitment fees and related costs

Strengthen evidence-based policy making by institutionalizing the regular collection and publication of recruitment cost data, including SDG indicator 10.7.1, through the national statistical system. Future surveys should enable trend analysis and disaggregation by sex, destination country, occupation, sector, recruitment channel and geographic location. Such evidence can support the identification of high-cost migration corridors and vulnerable groups, inform policy reforms, strengthen monitoring of recruitment practices, and assess progress towards reducing recruitment fees and related costs borne by migrant workers.

Advancing fair recruitment is essential in achieving Nepal's national development aspirations and international commitments to safe, orderly, and regular migration. Reducing recruitment costs and promoting fair recruitment require coordinated action by government institutions, recruitment agencies, employers, workers' organizations, destination countries, and development partners. Strengthened governance, greater transparency, and effective international cooperation will be critical to ensuring that labour migration remains safe, orderly, and beneficial for Nepali migrant workers and their families.

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► Annex 1. Detailed sample design

Objective of the survey

The objective of the cost of labour migration in Nepal: Evidence from the 2023 recruitment cost survey of migrant workers was to estimate various migration worker-related characteristics, which in turn assisted in producing the statistics needed to calculate the SDG 10.7.1 indicator. The survey was designed to provide reliable estimates of labour migrants at the national level, with disaggregation by sex, education, skill type, type of job and major countries of destination. The term “migrant workers” here refers to all international migrant workers who had changed their country of usual residence in order to work in another country, whether they were engaged through formal or informal recruitment processes.

Scope and coverage of the survey:

The entire geographical area of Nepal was under the coverage of the survey. The fieldwork of the survey was conducted within Nepal only. No attempt was made to collect information from Nepali migrant workers in destination countries.

The target population for recruitment costs consisted of migrant workers and return migrant workers who were or had been employed in a country of which they were not nationals. Only those persons having Nepal as their country of origin were considered for the survey. To avoid recall issues, some questions were limited to individuals who had migrated to work in a destination country with the five years prior to taking the survey.

By definition, the return migrants were available in the country and were considered as normal members of their households. However, in the case of international migrant workers who were not return migrants, some of them had taken time off to visit their home in Nepal and therefore were present in the country at the time of the survey. These two categories of migrant workers were considered for collecting data on recruitment cost. However, the second category were analysed separately for later methodological development.

For migrant workers who were not present in the country at the time of the survey, data on recruitment costs was not collected through proxy responses from their family. However, some socio-demographic characteristics were collected about these migrant workers from their reporting household for comparison of various target populations.

Short-term migrant workers who were employed in a foreign country for such short periods that they did not change their usual residence were excluded from this survey. Here, short periods meant staying (or intending to stay) in the destination country for less than six months. However, those migrant workers who left the country for a period of less than six months but were likely to stay in the destination country for six months or more were included in this survey.

Persons who had migrated to a destination country with intentions other than employment – such as for leisure, tourism, family reunion, education and the like – were excluded from the definition of “migrant workers”. The rationale for their exclusion was that such individuals were not likely to incur recruitment costs, since their primary motive for the move was not work-related.

Nepal and India shared an “open” border as per the agreements of a bilateral treaty signed in 1950. According to the treaty, Nepalese and Indians could travel and work across the border and

were treated on par with native citizens. Recruitment costs for such migrant workers was likely to be negligible due to the open border, the shorter distances involved and long-established social networks. However, the guidelines for SDG indicator 10.7.1 recommended that the indicator should be supplemented by the percentage of migrant workers who did not have to pay any fees for their recruitment. Therefore, although the recruitment costs in the Nepal–India migration corridor were negligible, migrant workers and return migrant workers who had worked or were working in India were considered within the coverage of the survey.

Sample design

A household-based survey was conducted to collect information on recruitment costs from the migrant workers covered by this survey. To obtain a large enough sample to produce reliable estimates, the sampling strategy took care to oversample in areas where migrant workers are most frequently recruited.

A stratified two-stage design was adopted for this survey. A list of enumeration areas (EAs) from the Population Census 2021 was used as the first-stage sampling frame for the study. The list of EAs was stratified using the absentee population for oversampling to obtain a large enough number of target group respondents to make sufficiently precise estimates possible. Within each stratum, EAs were further stratified into rural and urban areas. The first-stage units were the enumeration areas (EAs).

The second-stage sampling units were households. In each sample EA, all households were visited to prepare a list of households. This list was treated as the sampling frame for second-stage units. Second-stage stratification (SSS) in each EA was determined based on the information received regarding the number of return migrant workers and migrant workers.

► Annex table 1. Second stage stratification (SSS): Composition and sample allocation

SSS	Composition of SSS	No. of households to be surveyed
SS1	Households reporting at least one return migrant worker from any country of destination other than India	3
SS2	Among the remaining, households reporting at least one international migrant worker in any country of destination other than India, who have taken time off to visit their home and are present in Nepal during the survey period.	3
SS3	Among the remaining, households reporting at least one international migrant worker in any country of destination other than India, who is not present in Nepal during the survey period.	2
SS4	Among the remaining, households reporting either at least one return migrant worker from India or any international migrant worker from India who has taken time off to visit their home and is present in Nepal during the survey period.	2
SS5	Among the remaining, households reporting at least one international migrant worker in India, who is not present in Nepal during the survey period.	2
SS6	Remaining households	2
Total		14

SSS1, SSS2 and SSS4 together took care of the target population from whom data on recruitment cost was collected. The remaining three strata – SSS3, SSS5 and SSS6 – were used to allow for comparisons in the population characteristics with the target population.

In each EA, three (3) households each were selected for the survey from SSS1 and SSS2, and two (2) households each were selected from SSS3, SSS4, SSS5 and SSS6. Data with respect to recruitment cost from the target population were collected from eight (8) households. Altogether, a maximum of 14 households were surveyed in each EA.

Sample size

Since Nepal is a small country, recruitment costs were not expected to vary much among provinces or even among districts. Therefore, it was decided that a reliable estimate at the national level could be made from a sample of 275 EAs (first-stage units) covering approximately 4,000 households.

Stratification and sample allocation

As discussed earlier, an appropriate strategy for stratification was adopted to oversample those areas having large absentee populations in order to capture migrant workers and return migrant workers. From the Population Census 2021, population data as well as absentee data were available for 31,456 EAs. The list of EAs constituted the sampling frame.

The proportion of the absentee population to total population (that is, absentee population divided by the sum of the total population and absentee population) in the EAs were found to vary widely. In EAs where this proportion was high, the target population for this survey was more likely to be found. Therefore, it was appropriate to consider the proportion of the absentee population in the EA as the stratification variable.

From the sampling frame, it was observed that about 67 per cent of the absentee population were from urban areas and only 33 per cent were from rural areas. To keep provision for generating sector-wise estimates, the sampling frame was first stratified into two sectors – namely the rural sector and the urban sector. The total sample size of 275 EAs was proportionately allocated between the two sectors, with 90 sample EAs in the rural sector and the remaining 185 sample EAs in the urban sector.

The Mahalanobis (1952) method of stratification and sample allocation, using the equalization of strata totals with equal allocation, was used to stratify and allocate the sample separately to the rural and urban sectors of the sampling frame.

Within both the rural and the urban sectors, the EAs were arranged in ascending order of their proportions of absentee population to total population. EAs were then stratified into ten strata in the rural and in the urban sectors so that each stratum contained about 10 per cent of the total absentee population within each sector. For the rural sector, each stratum was allocated 9 sample EAs (out of the total 90 rural sample EAs), and for the urban sector, the first five strata were allocated 27 sample EAs each, while the last five strata were allocated 28 sample EAs each (out of the total 185 urban sample EAs). Details of stratification and sample allocation are provided in annex table 2.

► Annex table 2. Second stage stratification (SSS): Composition and sample allocation

Stratum	Total no. of EAs in frame – Urban	Total no. of EAs in frame – Rural	Total no. of EAs in frame – Total	Total no. of sample EAs – Urban	Total no. of sample EAs – Rural	Total no. of sample EAs – Total
01	5 931	3 485	9 416	18	9	27
02	2 741	1 619	4 360	18	9	27
03	2 233	1 251	3 484	18	9	27
04	1 856	1 039	2 895	18	9	27
05	1 669	856	2 525	18	9	27
06	1 520	786	2 306	19	9	28
07	1 340	697	2 037	19	9	28
08	1 219	609	1 828	19	9	28
09	1 073	502	1 575	19	9	28
10	688	342	1 030	19	9	28
Total	20 270	11 186	31 456	185	90	275

Selection procedure

Selection of the first-stage units

From each of the strata as stated above, EAs were selected by “probability proportional to size without replacement” (PPSWOR), where the size measure was taken as the absentee population within the EA. In the selected EA, complete listing and selection of the households were carried out. In case a selected EAs had large population sizes, to reduce the listing workload, these large EAs were further segmented.

Since household size varied widely, the segmentation was done by equalizing the population instead of the number of households. In cases where the selected EA had a population greater than 1,200, the EA was divided into a suitable number of segments by more or less equalizing the population, as per annex table 3.

► Annex table 3. Guideline: Segment formation by EA population size

Approximate present population of the sample EA	No. of segments to be formed
Less than 1 200 (no segment formed)	1
1 200 to 1 599	2
1 600 to 2 399	3
2 400 to 3 199	4
3 200 to 3 999	5
... and so on	

After forming the segment as per the procedure described above, one among these segments was selected by simple random sampling, and the listing of households was carried out in the selected segment only.

Selection procedure of the second-stage units

All the households were listed in the selected EA (or in the segment, if segmentation had been carried out) to form the second-stage sampling frame. Second-stage strata (SSS) in each selected EA were formed based on the information collected on migrant workers during listing.

► Annex table 4. Second stage stratification (SSS): Composition and sample allocation

SSS	Composition of SSS	No. of households to be surveyed
SS1	Households reporting at least one return migrant worker from any country of destination other than India	3
SS2	Among the remaining, households reporting at least one international migrant worker (non-India) who has taken time-off to visit home and is present in Nepal during the survey period.	3
SS3	Among the remaining, households reporting at least one international migrant worker (non-India) who is not present in Nepal during the survey period.	2
SS4	Among the remaining, households reporting either at least one return migrant worker from India or an international migrant worker from India who has taken time-off to visit home and is present in Nepal during the survey period.	2
SS5	Among the remaining, households reporting at least one international migrant worker in India who is not present in Nepal during the survey period.	2
SS6	Remaining households	2
Total		14

While forming the strata, SSS1 had priority over SSS2, SSS2 had priority over SSS3, and so on. For example, if a household satisfied the composition criteria for both SSS1 and SSS2, it was stratified into SSS1. Fourteen (14) households could be selected for the survey – three (3) households each from SSS1 and SSS2 and two (2) households each from SSS3, SSS4, SSS5 and SSS6, subject to their availability. From each SSS, the sample households were selected by “simple random sampling without replacement” (SRSWOR). An instruction manual describing the sample selection in detail was provided to the field staff so that field enumerators could select the sample households in the field.

Shortfall and compensation

There could have been situations where the number of households in the frame of an SSS was less than the required allocation, leading to a shortfall. To maintain the total allocation of sample households at the specified level of 14, any shortfall in the required number of households in the frame of a second-stage stratum (SSS) was compensated from other SSSs. While making such compensation, the general principle was to give priority first to SSS1, then to SSS2, then to SSS3, then to SSS4, then to SSS5, and finally to SSS6. The procedure of compensation could be implemented by following the steps described below:

Step 1: The required number of households was allocated to each SSS wherever possible, and the SSSs having shortfalls were identified.

Step 2: The SSSs where additional households were available, were identified, following the priority order of SSS1, SSS2, SSS3, SSS4, SSS5 and SSS6, and compensation was made accordingly. This step was repeated sequentially for all SSSs that had shortfalls (see annex table 5).

► Annex table 5. Shortfall and compensation: Priority order by SSS

SSS having shortfall	Priority order of SSS for compensation
1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2	1, 3, 4, 5, 6
3	1, 2, 4, 5, 6
4	1, 2, 3, 5, 6
5	1, 2, 3, 4, 6
6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Substitution of EAs

If an EA could not be surveyed due to unavoidable circumstances after making all efforts to survey it, the EA was substituted by another EA with similar characteristics within the sampling frame of the stratum. If the sample EA happened to be the last in the frame of the stratum, a substitution was made from the nearest EA in the frame of that stratum. If the substituted EA also could not be surveyed, no further attempt was made for substitution, and the original EA was declared a non-response.

Any decision regarding substitution and/or declaring an EA as a non-response was made by a central supervisor after assessing the ground reality. For casualty EAs, appropriate adjustments were made at the time of calculating the weight.

Substitution of sample households

It was possible that a selected household could not be surveyed during the first visit due to non-availability of the informant at the time of the visit. In such cases, the household was re-visited after fixing an appointment based on information obtained from other household members about the informant's availability. In such situations, there was no upper limit on the number of visits an enumerator could make. This was left to the enumerator's assessment of the household's willingness to provide information.

There could also have been other unavoidable circumstances that forced the enumerator to visit a selected household repeatedly. If a household could not be surveyed for any reason, in spite of best efforts, it was substituted by the next household having the next highest sampling serial number in the SSS frame (provided it had not already been selected). If the household was the last in the frame of that SSS, then it was substituted by the unselected household with the smallest sampling serial number within the same SSS.

If that substitute household also could not be surveyed, it was treated as a non-response. The decision to substitute a household was taken by the enumerator in consultation with the central supervisor after taking full account of the ground reality.

► Annex 2. Additional tables: Relative standard deviation

► Annex table 6. Relative standard deviation and margin of error for recruitment cost index by sex

Sex	Mean RCI	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Relative standard deviation	Margin of error
Male	3.2	0.2	3.2	3.9	6.0	0.4
Female	4.5	0.7	2.2	5.1	16.4	1.4

► Annex table 7. Relative standard deviation and margin of error for recruitment cost index by destination country

Destination country	Mean RCI	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Relative standard deviation	Margin of error
Qatar	4.1	0.3	4.0	5.2	8.0	0.6
United Arab Emirates	4.3	0.3	4.4	5.5	6.3	0.5
India	0.7	0.1	0.7	1.2	16.4	0.2
Malaysia	3.8	0.6	3.5	6.1	16.7	1.3
Saudi Arabia	4.1	0.2	4.2	5.0	5.1	0.4
Kuwait	4.1	0.4	3.5	5.0	9.6	0.8
Oman	3.3	0.7	2.4	5.2	21.9	1.4
Other countries	2.6	0.8	3.3	6.6	31.9	1.6
Total	3.3	0.2	3.2	3.9	5.7	0.4

Annex 3: Survey questionnaire

Government of Nepal
Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers
National Statistics Office
Nepal Recruitment Cost Survey of Migrant Workers 2023

Household Questionnaire

Household ID				
PSU Number			HH Number	

Time of interview		
Start Time:...	:	Hour : Minute
End Time:...	:	Hour :Minute

Introductory items

1. Province	8. Caste/Ethnicity
2. District	9. Sex of household's head (Male ..1/female..2):
3. VDC/Municipality	10.1. Number of usual household member
4. Ward No	10.2. Number of Member staying abroad and currently visiting household for short time
5. Settlement Name	10.3. Number of member staying abroad
6. Selected Household No	11. Name of respondent
7. Name of Household Head	12. Contact telephone No. of respondent
	No. of questionnaires, if additional questionnaires are used

Section 1. Household information (HH)		
HH1: What is the type of the house occupied by the household?	1. Own 2. Rented 3. Institutional 4. Others.....	<input style="width: 30px; height: 30px;" type="checkbox"/>
HH2: What is the main source of drinking water in your household?	1. Tap/pipe 2. Tube well/Hand pump 3. Covered Well/Kuwa 4. Uncovered Well/Kuwa 5. Spout water 6. River/Stream 7. Jar/Bottle 8. WaterTanker 9. Other.....	<input style="width: 30px; height: 30px;" type="checkbox"/>

Section 1. Household information (HH)		
HH3: What is the usual type of fuel used for cooking in your household?	1. Wood 2. LP Gas 3. Kerosene 4. Electricity 5. Biogas 6. Cow Dung 7. Other	☐
HH4: What is the usual source of lighting in your household?	1. Electricity 2. Kerosene 3. Biogas 4. Solar 5. Other	☐
HH5: What type of toilet facility are you using in your household?	Flush (Public Sewerage) Flush (Septic Tank) Ordinary Toilet Public Toilet No Toilet	☐
HH6: Do you have following facilities in your household? (Multiple response is possible)	1. Radioyes..1 /No..2 2. TVyes..1 /No..2 3. Cable TVyes..1 /No..2 4. Computer /laptop/tablet.....yes..1 /No..2 5. Internetyes..1 /No..2 6. Landline Telephone.....yes..1 /No..2 7. Mobile Phone.....yes..1/No..2 8. Car/Jeep/Van.....yes..1/No..2 9. Motorcycleyes..1/No..2 10. Bicycleyes..1/No..2 11. Other type of vehicle.....yes..1/No..2 12. Washing machine.....yes..1/No..2 13. Refrigeratoryes..1/No..2 14. Air Conditioner (AC)yes..1/No..2 15. Heater/geysers.....yes..1/No..2 16. Induction stove.....yes..1/No..2 17. Solar water Heater.....yes..1/No..2 18. Microwave Oven.....yes..1/No..2	☐
HH7: What is the main source of income in your household?	1. Agriculture 2. Manufacturing 3. Trade/Business 4. Job 5. Pension 6. Rent 7. Interest/Bonus 8. Remittance(International) 9. Remittance(Domestic) 10. Daily Wages 11. Other	☐

[illegible]

Section 3: International Labour Migration Ask only to Household reference person						
Now I am going to ask you about persons who were previously members of this household but left in the last 5 years, that is since [date], to live in another country, and are still staying abroad (include those who are currently visiting)						
Person No	Please state the year and month when he/she left for abroad		What was the main reason why (/name) moved to live in abroad? 01-To take up a job 02-Job transfer 03-To look for wage or salaried work 04-To look for any Other type of work 05-To study 06-Because of family or marriage 07-For health reasons 08-Because of conflict, insecurity, persecution 9-Because of a natural disaster, climate 10-Other non-work related reason	Name the country where he/she is presently resident? Write Country name and country code... If person's age is under 15 (A9<15)...go to next person M.11		Ask if A9 ≥15 Was he/she employed before leaving for abroad? 1-Yes 2-No
A.1	Month (m3a)	Year (m3b)	M.10	Country code (m11a)	Country Name (m11b)	M.13
1						
2						

[illegible]

CAPI Instruction				
If ((A.9≥15 and A.14=1 and (A.16=1 or a.17=1 or 3)) or A17=3 or A11c=2) ask this section otherwise end)				
For				
- Household members of working age (A.9=15+), who are nepali nationals (A.14=1), with experience abroad (A16=1 or A17=1 or 3) - Former household members currently visiting from abroad (A11c=2)				
Interviewer Read:				
The next questions are about (you/name)...				
Note: Proceed in chronological order through the PPNO's as relevant				
T_0a	Is (A.2) available?	Yes	01 ☐	
		No	02 ☐	
T_0b	Interviewer to answer: Is the person (him/herself) responding to the questions?	Yes	01 ☐	→ T_0f
		No	02 ☐	
After interview scheduled, continue to T_0a with next eligible member, if any.				
After 3 direct interview attempts, continue with T_0d				
T_0d	Interviewer, enter the A1 code of the person responding to the questions	_____		
		A1		
T_0e	Can you let me know what is your relationship to (A.2)?	1-Reference person/head		
		2-Spouse/partner		
		3-Son/daughter-in-law		
		4.Daughter/ son in-law		
		5-Mother/father		
		6- Mother in-law/father in-law		
		7.Brother/sister		
		8.Grandson/grand daughter		
		9-Other relative		
		10-Domestic worker		
		11- Other unrelated person		

Section T: Lifetime Return Migrant /Migrant Worker				
<i>For eligible respondents with experience abroad</i>				
Interviewer Read: The next questions are about (your/A.2) Experience abroad...				
<i>Ask (T.1 to T.4) if (A.16=1 or A17=1 or 3)</i>				
T.1	I was informed that you have lived in another country for more than 6 months. Is this correct?	Yes	01 ☐	
		No	02 ☐	→ T.5a
		Don't know	97 ☐	→ T.5a
T.1a	When did (you/A.2) first leave [survey_country] to go abroad?	t1a. _____		
Month (MM)				
97 Don't know				
T.1b		t1b. _____		
		Year (YYYY)		
T.2	In which country did (you/A.2) first live ?	#__ Variable name (t2_1) _____ first_destination_country code #__ Variable name (t2_2) _____ first_destination_country name		
T.2a	Is this the only country where (you/A.2) lived for more than 6 months	Yes	01 ☐	→ T.3
		No	02 ☐	
T.2b	In which country did (you/A.2) last live?	#__ Variable name (t2b1) _____ last_destination_country code #__ Variable name (t2b2) _____ last_destination_country name		
T.2C	When did (you/A.2) last move to [last_destination_country] to live?	#__ Variable name (t2c1) _____		
		Month (MM)		
		97 Don't know		
		#__ Variable name (t2c2) _____		
		Year (YYYY)		

CAPI Instruction				
If (T2a=1 then last_destination_country = first_destination_country)				
T.3	What was the main reason why (you/A.2/) (last) moved to [last_destination_country]?	To take up a pre-arranged job	01 ☐	→ T.8
		Job transfer	02 ☐	→ T.8
		To look for work	03 ☐	→ T.8
		Studies or training	04 ☐	
		Family or marriage	05 ☐	
		Health reasons	06 ☐	
		Conflict, insecurity, persecution	07 ☐	
		Natural disaster, climate	08 ☐	
		Others	09 ☐	
T.4	While living in [last_destination_country], did (you/A.2) work or look for work?	Yes	01 ☐	→ T.8
		No	02 ☐	→ T.5b
		Don't know	97 ☐	→ T.5b
T.5a	I was informed that in the past (you/A.2) travelled outside [survey_country] to work or to look for work, is this correct?	Yes	01 ☐	→ T.6
		No	02 ☐	→ End
		Don't know	97 ☐	→ End
T.5b	Did (you/A.2) ever travel outside [survey_country] to work or look for work, even if only for a short period?	Yes	01 ☐	
		No	02 ☐	→ End
		Don't know	97 ☐	→ End
T.6	To which country did (you/A.2) last travel to work or look for work?	#_ Variable name (t6a)_____ other_destination_country code #_ Variable name (t6b)_____ other_destination_country name		
T.7	When did (you/A.2) last travel to [other_destination_country] to work or look for work?	#_ Variable name (t7a)_____		
		Month (MM)		
		97 Don't know		
		#_ Variable name (t7b)_____		
		Year (YYYY)		

CAPI Instruction				
If (T3=01-03 or T4=01) then work_destination_country = last_destination_country				
Else if (T.5a=01 or T.5b=01) then work_destination_country = other_destination_country				
T.8	In total, for how long (did/have/has) (you/A.2) work/worked in [work_destination_country]?	Did not find work	01 ☐	
		Less than one month	02 ☐	
		One month to less than 3 months	03 ☐	
		Three months to less than 6 months	04 ☐	
		Six months to less than 12 months	05 ☐	→ T.11
		One year to less than 3 years	06 ☐	→ T.11
		Three years to less than 5 years	07 ☐	→ T.11
		Five years to less than 10 years	08 ☐	→ T.11
		10 Years or more	09 ☐	→ T.11
T.9	Have (you/A.2) travelled to any other country to work or look for work?	Yes	01 ☐	
		No	02 ☐	→ End
		Don't know	97 ☐	→ End
T.10	Considering all the time you spent abroad, in total, did (you/A.2) work abroad for...?	Less than 6 months	01 ☐	→ End
		Six months or more	02 ☐	
		Did not find work abroad	03 ☐	→ End
T.10a	To which country did (you/A.2) last travel to work or look for work?	#_ Variable name (t10a1)_____ short_destination_country code		
		#_ Variable name (t10a2)_____ short_destination_country name		
T.10b	When did (you/name) last travel to [short_destination_country] to work or look for work?	#_ Variable name (t10b)_____		
		Month (MM)		
		97 Don't know		
T.10c		#_ Variable name (t10c)_____		
		Year (YYYY)		

T.11	When did (you/A.2) last return back to [survey_country]?	#. Variable name (t11a) _____	
		Month (MM)	
		97 Don't know	
T.11b		#. Variable name (t11b) _____	
		Year (YYYY)	→ T.12
		9997 Don't know	

T.12	What was the main reason why (you/A.2) (last) returned to [survey_country]?	To take up a job	01 ☐	→ U.1
		Job transfer	02 ☐	→ U.1
		Start or move my business back home	03 ☐	→ U.1
		Lost a job/ retrenched	04 ☐	→ U.1
		Ended job/ retired	05 ☐	→ U.1
		Holiday	06 ☐	
		For health reasons	07 ☐	
		Because of family or marriage	08 ☐	
		Because of conflict, insecurity, persecution	09 ☐	
		Government lockdown due to covid or fear of covid infection	10 ☐	
		Others	11 ☐	

CAPI Instruction

IF (work_destination_country) = missing & (T.10=2) THEN (work_destination_country) = short_destination_country

T.13	(Are/is) (you/A.2) currently still working in [work_destination_country]?	Yes	01 ☐	
		No	02 ☐	
		Not sure i will be able to go back	03 ☐	
		Don't know	97 ☐	
ALL → Go to Module U				

Section U: Recruitment Costs of Return Migrants (CoO)			
<i>Characteristics of first job during last move</i>			
The next questions are about (your/A.2) work experience the last time that (you/he/she) moved to [work_destination_country]...			
U.1	Last time (you/A.2) lived in [work_destination_country] did you have one or more than one job or business?	One job 01 ☐	More than one job 02 ☐
If more than 1 job, interviewer read:			
Please, think about the first job (you/name) had when you last moved to [work_destination_country]			
U.2a	What kind of work did (you/A.2) do in [destination_country]?	#(u2a)..... <i>Job title or description</i>	
U.2b	(e.g. Cattle farmer –breed, raise and sell cattle; Policeman –patrol the streets; Cook –plan and prepare meals; Primary school teacher –teach children how to read and write)	#(u2b)..... <i>Main tasks and duties</i>	
U.2c_final		# (u2c_final)..... NSCO Code: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
U.3a	What was the main activity at the place where (you/A.2) worked?	#(u3a)..... <i>Main activity</i>	
U.3b	(e.g.: Police Department - public safety; Restaurant - preparing and serving meals; Transport Company - long distance transport of goods)	#(u3b)..... <i>Goods or services</i>	
U.3c_final		# (u3c_final).....ISIC code: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
U.4	Did (you/name) work ...	<i>Read</i>	
		As an [employee] 01 ☐	
		In (your/his/her) own business activity 02 ☐	
		Helping in a family or household business 03 ☐	
		As an apprentice, intern 04 ☐	
		Helping a family member who works for someone else 05 ☐	
U.5a	How long ago was it that [you /A.2] started working in that job [work_destination_country]	<i>Read</i>	
		Less than 1 year ago 01 ☐	
		1 to 3 years ago 02 ☐	
		3 years to 5 years ago 03 ☐	
		5 years ago and more 04 ☐	

U.5b	What year and month was it	#_ Variable name (u5b)_____	
		Month (MM)	
U.5c		97 Don't know	
		#_ Variable name (u5c)_____	
		Year (YYYY)	

U.6a	How did (you/A.2) obtain that job?		
	Job transfer	01 ☐	
	Government agency, here in my country	02 ☐	
	Government agency in abroad	03 ☐	
	Registered manpower company here, in my country	04 ☐	
	Registered manpower company in abroad	05 ☐	
	Direct from an employer abroad	06 ☐	
	Through individual recruiter/broker	07 ☐	
	Through family members/ relatives	08 ☐	
	Through friends	09 ☐	
	Others	10 ☐	
U.6b	How did (you/A.2) learn about the job?		
	Through a registered manpower company here	01 ☐	
	Through employer in origin country	02 ☐	
	Through friends: who have not worked abroad	03 ☐	
	Through friends: previously worked or currently working abroad	04 ☐	
	Through family members/relatives: who have not worked abroad	05 ☐	
	Through family members/relatives: previously worked/currently working abroad	06 ☐	
	Through non-relative individual intermediary	07 ☐	
	Through newspapers	08 ☐	
	Through websites	09 ☐	
	Through social media (facebook, etc.)	10 ☐	
	Others	11 ☐	

U.7	Before starting that job, did (you/A.2) enter [work_destination_country] with a...?		
	<i>Read each and mark first yes</i>		
	A work visa	01 ☐	
	Tourist/ Visit Visa	02 ☐	
	student visa	03 ☐	
	Visa not required	04 ☐	
	Without visa (through non-regular channels/entry ports)	05 ☐	
	Another type of visa	06 ☐	
	Don't know	97 ☐	

U.8	Did/does you get the same job according to your agreement? Yes....1 No.....2 Don't know...97
U.9	Did/does you get the same salary/wages and other facilities according to your agreement? Yes...1 No...2 Don't know...3 Note: if U5=1 to 3 → Go to Module C [section 8]

CAPI Instruction

Ask this section if U4 = (1 or 4) and (U5a= 01-03)

Interviewer read:

Now I am going to ask you a few questions about the total costs (you/A.2/M.2) incurred to get that first job in [work_destination_country], whether paid by (name/ A.2/M.2) or by someone else on (your/his/her) behalf.

F.31a	To find that first job in [work_destination_country], How much amount [you/ A.2] paid for costs related to individual or agency brokers that helped to obtain the job. For example, fees from public or private recruitment agencies, placement fees. Please indicate the amount Write '0' if no broker costs Write 97 for don't know	Amount		
F.31b	Currency code			
f31a_NRs	Amount in Nepali Rupees			

F.32a	How much amount [you/ A.2] paid for costs related to preparations needed before travelling to start the job in [work_destination_country]. For example, costs related to obtaining visas, passport and other documents like police clearance, training or assessment fees required by the job, medical check-up/ vaccines, travel or health insurance, contract preparation if any, etc.? Please indicate the amount <i>Write '0' if no preparations costs</i> <i>Write 97 for don't know</i>			
		Amount		
F.32b	Currency code			
f32a_NRs	Amount in Nepali Rupees			
F.33a	How much amount [you/ A.2] paid for costs related to travel to start the job in [work_destination_country]. For example, transport, including international and local travel in the country or in transit countries, travel clearances, border crossing, and accommodation during travel? Please indicate the amount <i>Write '0' if no travel costs</i> <i>Write 97 for don't know</i>			
		Amount		
F.33b	Currency Code			
f33a_NRs	Amount in Nepali Rupees			
F.33c	How much amount [you/ A.2] paid for costs related to travel back to [survey_country]. For example, transport, including international and local travel in the country or in transit countries, border crossing, and accommodation during travel? Please indicate the amount <i>Write '0' if no travel costs</i> <i>Write 97 for don't know</i>			
		Amount		
F.33d	Currency code			
f33c_NRs	Amount in Nepali Rupees			

F.34a	How much amount [you/ A.2] paid for other costs related to getting or starting that first job in [work_destination_country] ? For example, any gifts or payments to other people who facilitated getting the job, debt repayment fees, any interests on borrowed money, any previous costs for failed attempts.		
	Please indicate the amount <i>Write '0' if no additional costs</i> <i>Write 97 for don't know</i>	Amount	
F.34b	Currency code		
f34a_NRs	Amount in Nepali Rupees		

Now I am going to ask you a few questions about the money/wage/salary (you/ A.2) earned in the first month in (your/his/her) first job in the last [work_destination_country].

I.10a	When (you/ A.2) started that first job in [work_destination_country], how much did (you/he/she) earn in the first month? Enumerator, read: Please include do not discount any part of (your/ A.2) wages taken as payment for getting the job.	_____ Amount -97 Don't know	
I.10b	Currency code (Enumerator: use currency code list provided)		
i10a_NRs	Amount in Nepali Rupees		
I.11a	That first month, did (you/ A.2) also receive any free or subsidized support, for example accommodation, meals, transport, as part of (your/ A.2) job? If yes At the time, how much would that have cost per month if (you/he/she) had to pay for them?	_____ Amount -97 Don't know	
I.11b	Currency code (Enumerator: use currency code list provided)		
i11a_NRs	Amount in Nepali Rupees		

I.12	In which year and month were you (was A.2) paid this wage or salary?	# (I12a) _____ Month (MM)	
		97 Don't know	
		# (I12b) _____ Year (YYYY)	
I.13	Thinking about (your/ A.2/M.2) initial monthly earnings when (you/he/she) started working in [<i>work_destination_country</i>], about how many months would (you/name) have to work to recover the amount that (you/name) paid to get this first job?	 Months	
		997 Don't know	

X.10a	For this first job in [<i>work_destination_country</i>], did your [A.2's] employer deduct any costs from your [his/her] salary to pay back for obtaining the job?	Yes	01	
		No	02	→ G.10a
		Don't know	97	→ G.10a
X.10b	How much did your [A.2's] employer deduct in total			
		Don't know		→ G.10a
X.10c	Currency code			
x10b_NRs	Amount in Nepali Rupees			
G.10a	Did you [did A.2] or someone in your family borrow any money to pay for getting this first job in [<i>work_destination_country</i>]?	Yes	01	
		No	02	→ C.11
		Don't know	97	→ C.11
G.10b	How much did you [name] borrow?			
		Don't know		→ C.11
G.10c	Currency code			

Labour force status of return migrants of working age >15, usually resident in [survey_country]			
Ask if (A.11C=1) and (A.9→15) and (A.13=1) and (A.14=1) and (A.16=1 Or (A.17=1 or 3)			
This last section is about your current work situation (in Nepal)...			
C.11	Last week, from (day) to (day), did (you/A.2)...?		
	<i>Read each & mark first yes</i>		
	Work for someone for pay	01 ☐	→ E.11
	Work in (your/his/her) own or the family farming, animal rearing, or fishing activities	02 ☐	
	Work in own or Family's Non-Agriculture Work	03 ☐	→ E.11
	None of the above	04 ☐	→ C.14
C.12	Are the farming, animal [or fishing] products that (you/A.2) worked on, are they intended ... ?		
	<i>Read all & mark one</i>		
	Only for sale	01 ☐	→ E.11
	Mainly for sale	02 ☐	→ E.11
	Mainly for family use	03 ☐	
	Only for family use	04 ☐	
C.13	A2b. What are the main (products/animals) that (...) (are/is) working on? <i>(Write main goods –e.g. [Fruits, rice, vegetables, oranges, cattle, sheep, rearing of chickens, producing eggs, producing milk, freshwater fish, etc.]) & CPC code</i>	_ [c13_name] _____ [C13CPC].... code:	
C.13a	How many hours per week do (you/name) usually spend working in (farming, rearing animals, [and/or fishing])?	_____ <i>Hours per week</i>	→ E.11
C.14	Last week, did (...) at least one hour in any work ...?		
	<i>Read each & mark first yes</i>		
	1. Do any (other) activity to generate an income, even for 1 hour (e.g. [casual work, odd jobs, make things to sell, provide services for pay,...])	01 ☐	→ E.11
	2. Have a paid job or business activity, but (were/was) temporarily absent	02 ☐	
	3. Help without pay in a family business	03 ☐	→ E.11
	4. Did not do any income generating activity, not even for one hour.	04 ☐	→ D.11

C.15	In total, will (you/name) return to that same job/business			
	<i>Read</i>			
	1. Within [3 months or less]	01 ☐	→ E.11	
	2. After [3 months]	02 ☐		
	3. Once restrictions are lifted	03 ☐	→ E.11	
	Will not return	04 ☐		
	4. Unsure to return	05 ☐		

D.11a	During the last 30 days, that is from [date] up to [date] did you [did name] do anything to find a paid job, or to start a business?	Yes	01 ☐	→ D.11c
		No	02 ☐	
D.11b	What is the main reason why (you/name) did not try to find a paid job or start a business in the last four weeks?			
	Waiting for results of a previous search	01 ☐	→ D.12	
	Awaiting recall from a previous job	02 ☐	→ D.12	
	Waiting for the season to start	03 ☐	→ D.12	
	Waiting to start new job or business	04 ☐	→ D.12	
	Tired of looking for jobs, no jobs in area	05 ☐	→ D.12	
	No jobs matching skills, lacks experience	06 ☐	→ D.12	
	Considered too young/old by employers	07 ☐	→ D.12	
	In studies, training	08 ☐	→ D.12	
	Family / household responsibilities	09 ☐	→ D.12	
	In agriculture / fishing for family use	10 ☐	→ D.12	
	Own disability, injury, illness	11 ☐	→ D.12	
	Retired, pensioner, other sources of income	12 ☐	→ D.12	
	Others	13 ☐	→ D.12	
All → D.12				
D.11c	Are you/is name) looking for work in...? (Mark all that apply)	Nepal	01 ☐	
		Abroad	02 ☐	
d11c1	Country code			
d11c2	Country name			
D.12	If a job or business opportunity became available, could (...) start working within the next 15 days?	Yes	01 ☐	
		No	02 ☐	

D.13	Which of the following best describes what (you/name) (are/is) mainly doing at present?		
	<i>Read and mark one</i>		
	Housework or caring for family	01 ☐	
	Studying	02 ☐	
	Doing an unpaid apprenticeship, internship	03 ☐	
	Farming or fishing to produce food for the family	04 ☐	
	Doing unpaid voluntary, community, charity work	05 ☐	
	Retired, pensioner	06 ☐	
	Long term illness, injury, disability	07 ☐	
	Waiting to go back to previous work	08 ☐	
	Waiting to go back to studying	09 ☐	
	Others	10 ☐	
If last person end otherwise move to next person			

	<i>Interviewer to read:</i> I am now going to ask you some questions about the income generating activity in which (you/A.2) are currently working the most hours.		
E.11	What kind of work (do/does) (...) do in (his/her) main job/business? (s)?	_ Variable name (e11a)_ <i>Occupational title, if any</i>	
	<i>([e.g. Cattle farmer –breed, raise and sell cattle; Policeman –patrol the streets; Cook –plan and prepare meals; Primary school teacher –teach children how to read and write])</i>	__ Variable name (e11b)_ Main tasks and duties	
		Variable name (e11c_final) NSCO code:	
E.12	What is the main activity of the place where (...) work(s)? <i>([e.g.: Police Department - public safety; Restaurant - preparing and serving meals; Transport Company - long distance transport of goods], for person working in private household record them as "domestic worker in private household")</i>	_____ Variable name (e12_1)_____ <i>{Name of place or company}</i> _____ Variable name (e12_2)_____ <i>{Name of product}</i> _____ Variable name (e12_3_final)_____ NSIC code:	
E.12b	In which [district/ abroad] is (...) place of work located?	# Variable name: (e12b_1) District Within Country1 Abroad.....2 # Variable name: (e12b_1a_code)----- Code of the [District] # Variable name: (e12b_1b_code)----- Code of the [Country] # Variable name: (e12b_2) Name of District/Abroad	

E.13	(Do/does) (you/name) work...?	<i>Read</i>		
		As an [employee] 01	☐	
		As an apprentice, intern 02	☐	
		Employer(with hired employees) 03	☐	→ E.16
		Own-account worker (without hired employees) 04	☐	→ E.16
		Helping without pay in a family or household business 05	☐	
		Helping a family member who works for someone else 06	☐	
The following set of questions is for those identified as employees, apprentices or assisting family members.				
E.14	(Do/does)(you/name) have a written contract or oral agreement for the work (you/he/she) (do/does)?	Yes, written contract 01	☐	
		Yes, oral agreement 02	☐	
		No, any contract 03	☐	
		Don't know 97	☐	
E.15a	Does (your/name's) employer pay contributions to the [Pension Fund/ Health/ Unemployment Insurance] for (you/name)?	Yes 01	☐	
		No 02	☐	
		Don't know 97	☐	
E.15b	(Do/Does) (you/name) get paid annual leave?	Yes 01	☐	
		No 02	☐	
		Don't know 97	☐	
E.15c	Would (you/name) get paid sick leave in case of illness or injury?	Yes 01	☐	
		No 02	☐	
		Don't know 97	☐	
E.15d	(Do you/Does name) work in?			
	<i>Read</i>			
	The government or a state owned enterprise	01	☐	→ E.17
	An Agriculture Farm	02	☐	
	A private business (non-farm)	03	☐	
	A household(s) as a domestic worker	04	☐	→ E.17
	A NGO/Non Profit Institution, Religious organization	05	☐	→ E.17
	An international organization or a foreign embassy	06	☐	→ E.17

For all employed persons			
E.16	Is the business/farm (you/name) work(s) for registered in the [National Business Register or Institution(s) responsible for business/farm registration]?	Yes	01 ☐
		No	02 ☐
		Don't know	97 ☐
E.17	How many persons including (you/name) work at (your/name) place of work?	1	01 ☐
		2-4	02 ☐
		5-9	03 ☐
		10-19	04 ☐
		20-49	05 ☐
		50+	06 ☐
		Don't know	97 ☐

