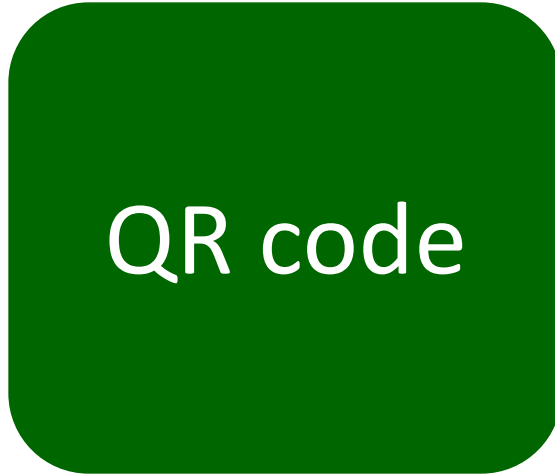




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Migration Atlas of Nepal

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Introduction

Migration is one of the most defining features of Nepal’s economy and society. For generations, Nepali people have moved within the country and abroad in search of better opportunities. Remittances from migrants have improved household well-being and become a vital source of national income. Yet, migration has also led to labor shortages, changing family structures, and growing dependency on foreign economies.

The *Migration Atlas of Nepal*, prepared by the Nepal Development Research Institute (NDRI) with support from AWO International, provides the first comprehensive visual overview of Nepal’s migration landscape. It maps where and why people move, both internally and internationally, and explores the connections between migration, livelihoods, food security, and climate change.

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Objectives

- Analyze and present national and subnational migration patterns and trends.
- Examine the drivers and consequences of work-related migration.
- Map the geographic distribution of migration and its linkages with livelihoods and food security.
- Provide evidence-based insights and policy recommendations for effective and inclusive migration governance.

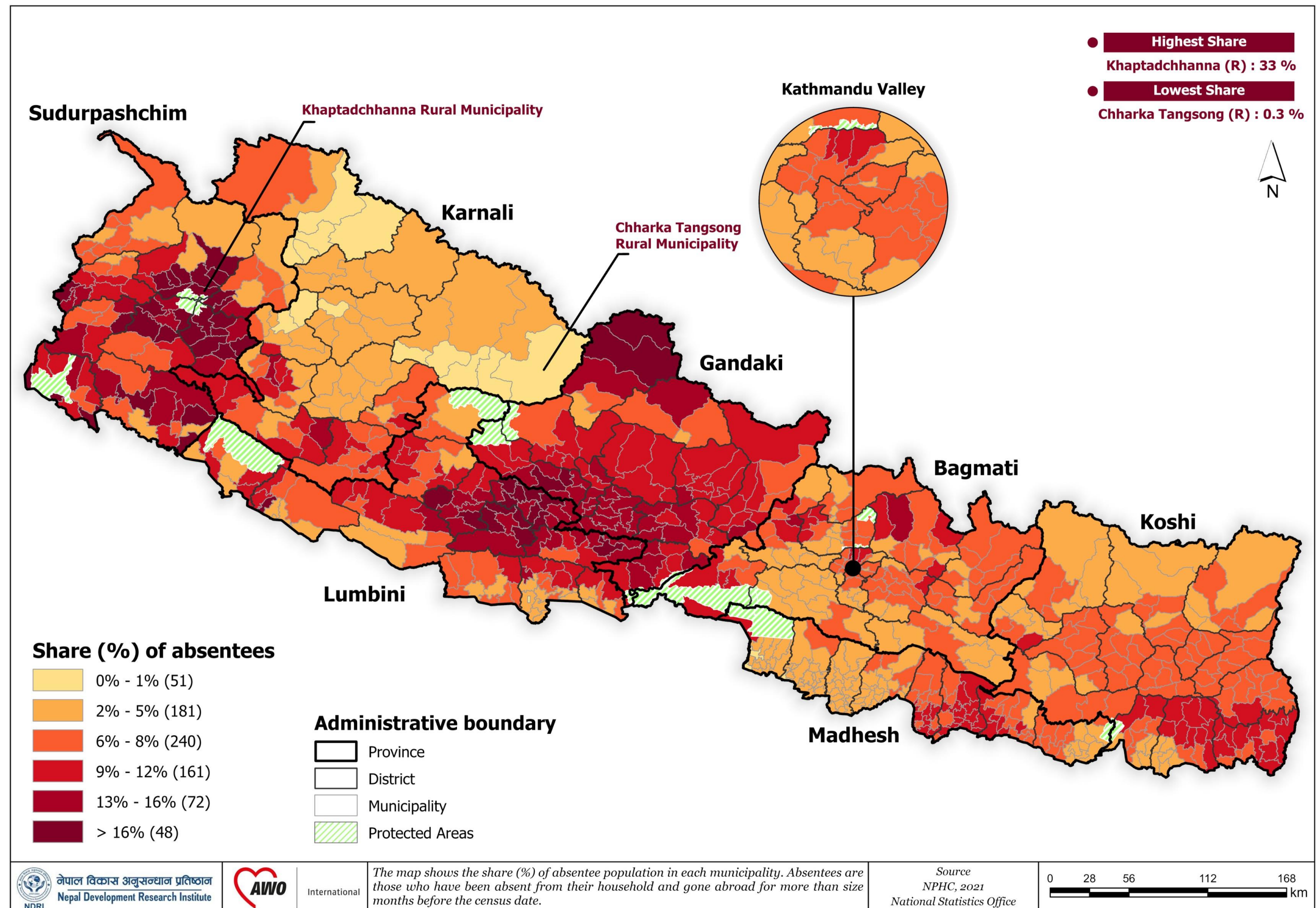
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Methodology

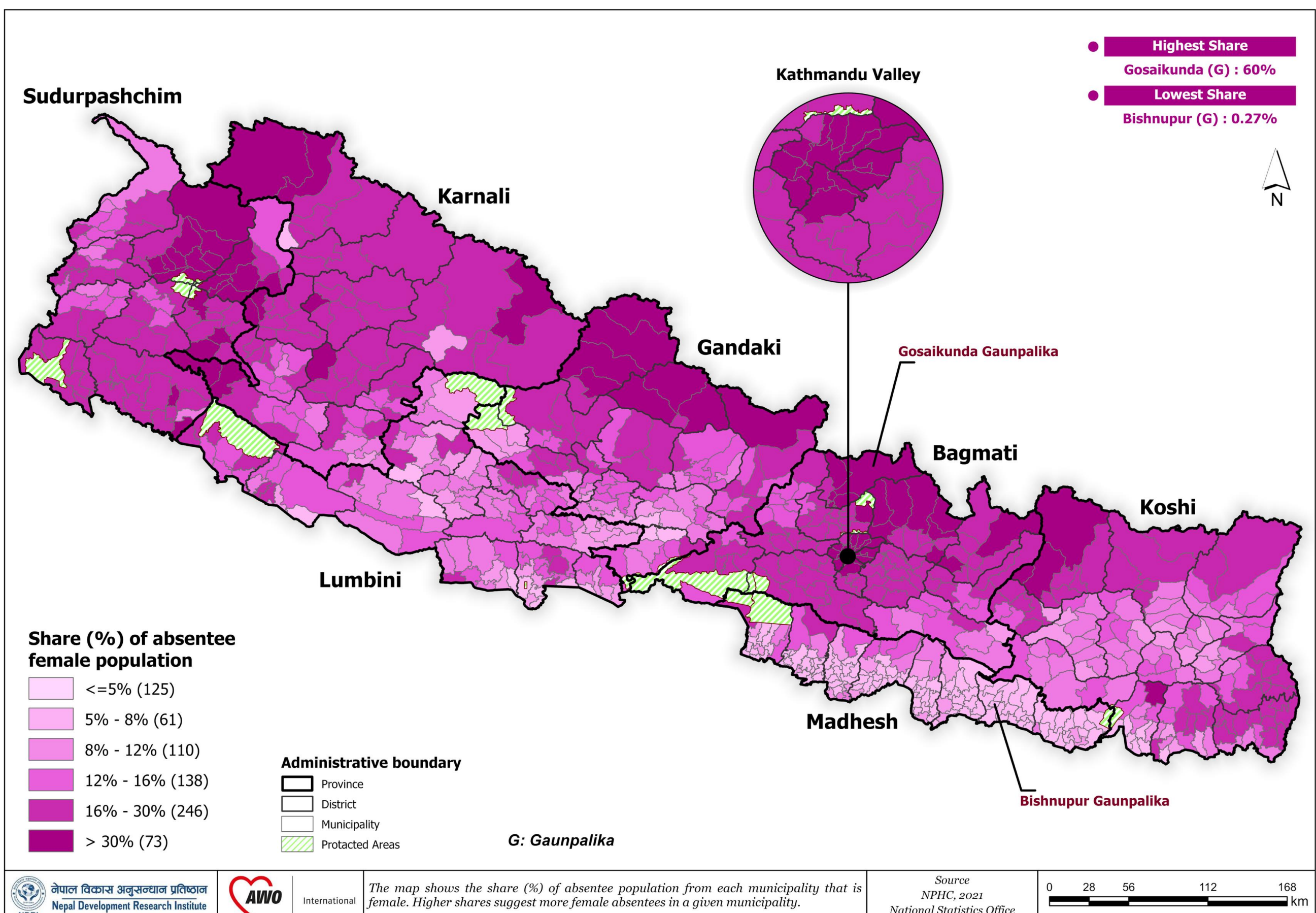
- The Atlas combines spatial analysis, descriptive statistics, and literature review to illustrate Nepal’s migration dynamics.
- Data were sourced from the National Statistics Office (NSO) and the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE).
- GIS-based maps visualize migration flows, demographic trends, and regional disparities.
- Findings were validated through consultations with migration experts and stakeholders to ensure accuracy and relevance.

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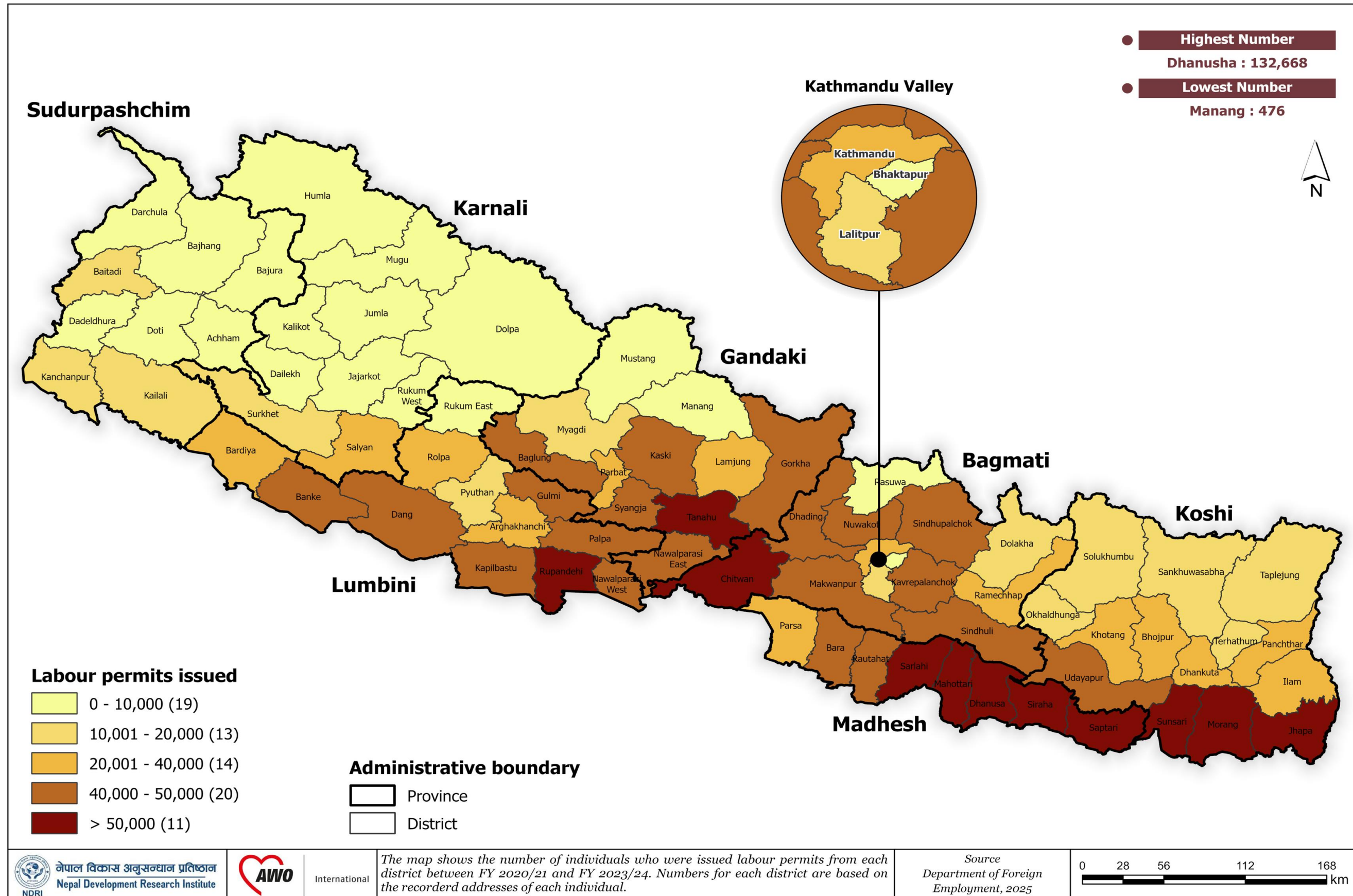
Key Findings



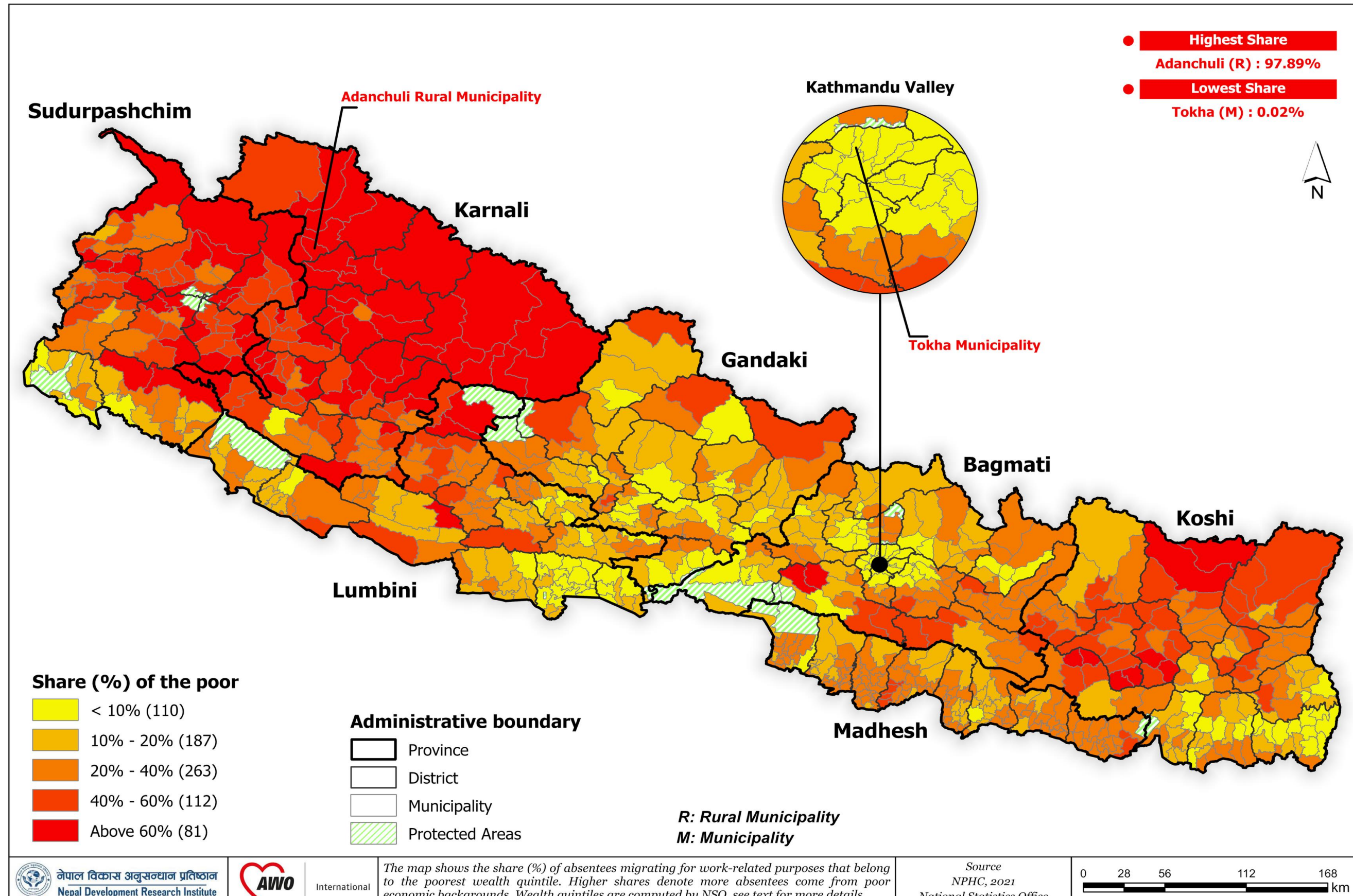
The 2021 national census recorded over 10 million migrant individuals, of which over 2 million were absent abroad. The highest proportion of absentees are concentrated around the middle mountains of Gandaki and Sudhuraschim provinces, with the least in Karnali province.



Women make up 18% of the total share of absentees, showing that work-related out-migration remains male-dominated. The absentee population is largely at the early stages of their working years, with most looking to secure labor permits once they turn 16 and receive their citizenship.



With respect to foreign migration, the Eastern Terai belt of Madhesh and Koshi provinces recorded the highest aggregate number of labor permits issued over the past four fiscal years. Karnali and Sudhuraschim provinces had the least, where India is the most common labor destination.



Almost 16% of all absentees abroad during the 2021 census were part of the poorest wealth quintile, a pattern that is most marked in municipalities of Karnali and Sudhuraschim provinces. One out of every four absentees of working age reported little to no education.

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Key Recommendations and Policy Implications

- **Different migrants, different needs:** Migrants have diverse needs, from distress migration for survival and basic well-being to income generation and human capital enhancement, requiring differentiated policy responses for both internal and international migrant flows.
- **Destination matters:** Migration destinations vary in opportunities and risks, so policies must be tailored to the specific characteristics of destination countries.
- **Invest in skills development:** Expanding access to skills training that meets domestic and international labor market demands is crucial for improving migrant outcomes and increasing remittance potential, especially for migrants from less educated regions.
- **Acknowledge internal migration:** Recognize the role of internal migration in sustaining cities and reshaping rural livelihoods and address related food security challenges.
- **Strengthen and promote bilateral labor agreements:** Securing new bilateral labor agreements that ensure safe recruitment practices and protect the rights and welfare of migrant workers with popular destination countries is paramount.
- **Vulnerabilities of women migrants:** Gender-responsive policies are needed to address women’s unique vulnerabilities, including GBV, domestic work risks, stigma and reintegration challenges. Non-discriminatory policies and provisions without any restrictions or preconditions for women and domestic migrant workers for destinations such as the GCC and Malaysia are also important.
- **Reintegration:** Returnees need structured support like psychosocial counselling, vocational training, and recognition of their contributions.
- **Migration data and monitoring:** A dynamic and publicly available migration data dashboard is crucial for timely policy responses.



Acknowledgement:

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