

# De-Population in Nepal and Its Potential Future Implications

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Presented at

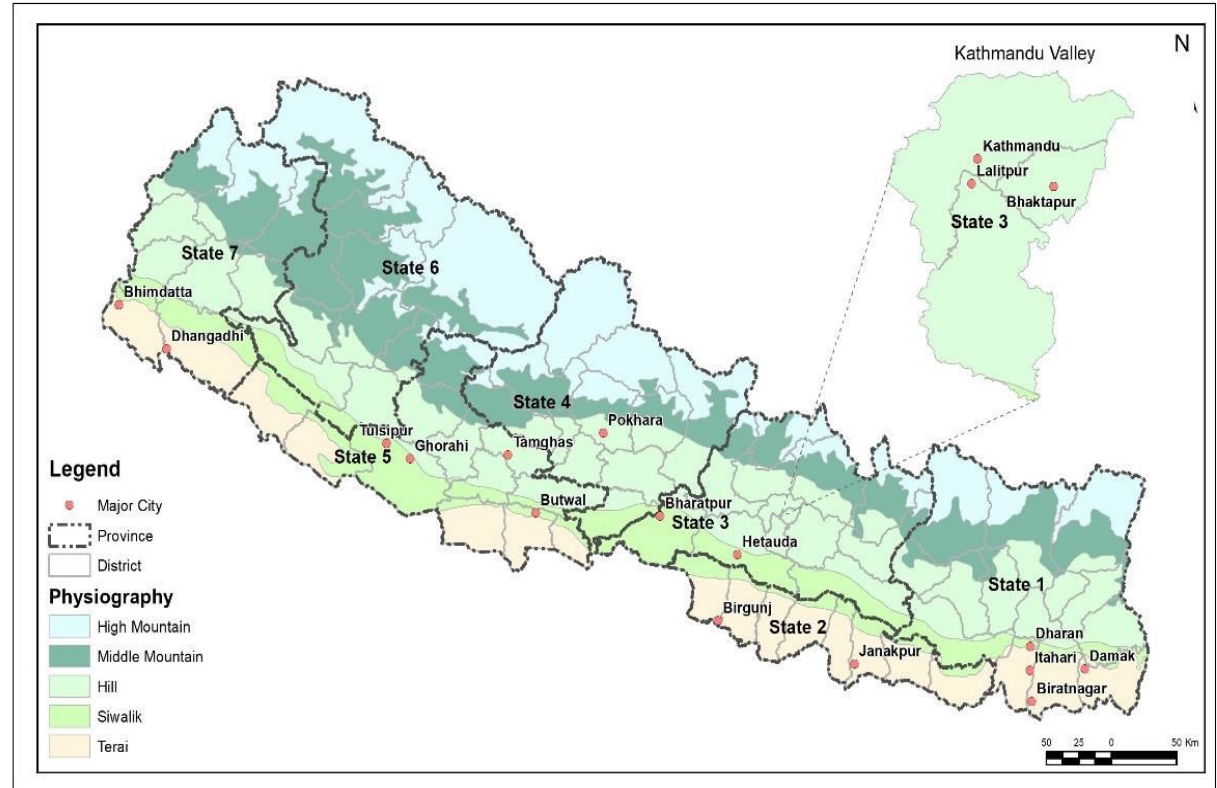
THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF DEPOPULATION

Wittgenstein Centre Conference 2021, Vienna, Austria

Mon, 29.11. – 01.12.2021 (Correspondence: [kc@iiasa.ac.at](mailto:kc@iiasa.ac.at))

# Nepal

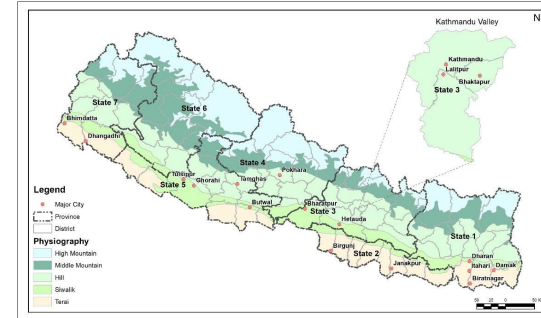
- South of the Himalaya
- Borders with India and China
- Geographically, **Mountain, Hill** and low land of **Terai** region
- Politically, 7 states, 77 districts and 753 municipalities [**Maoist Conflict**]
- Population of 11.6 million in 1971 to 26.4 million in 2011
- >28 million in 2021 (Census\*) - Migration
- TFR of 2.0 children per woman (2016-2019, MICS)
- **Depopulation?**



Map: by Hari Dhonju, Digital Data System for Development (DDSD), Nepal

# Introduction

- Depopulation started early on in some parts of Nepal
- Unique geography (political and geological): e.g. malaria eradication (Hills to Terai), people at the India-Nepal border (Hills to Terai), climate change and natural disasters
- Education and employment; marriages
- Major political changes (Monarchy - 1991- Democracy - 2007 - Republic and Federalism)
- In 2015 -Devolution of power began
- Natural Change vs Migration (Internal and International)
- How will Nepal depopulate?
- What needs or can be done? [Work in Progress]



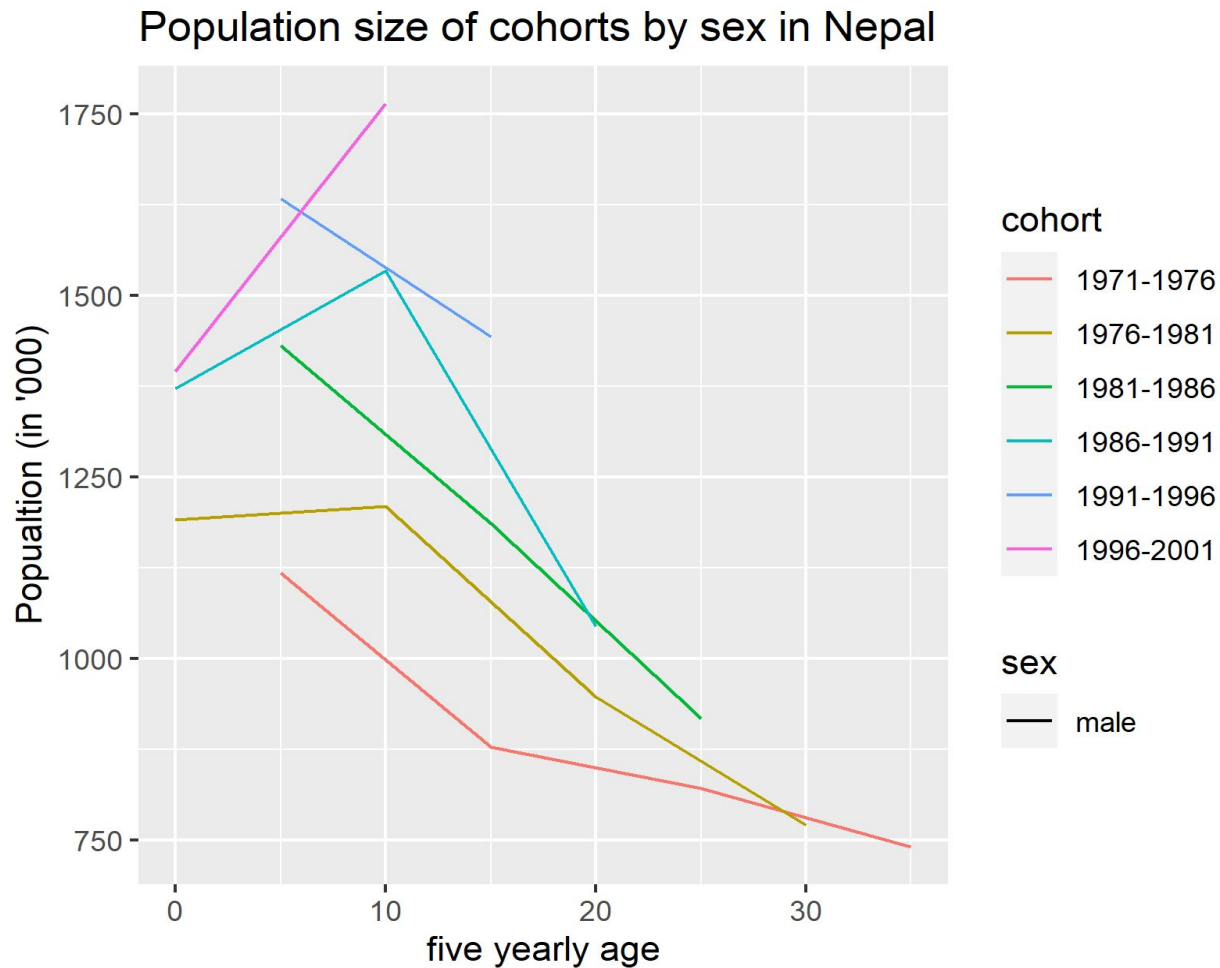
Map: by Hari Dhonju, Digital Data System for Development (DDSD), Nepal

# Research questions

- How is the trend of depopulation at the national and sub-national level (district) on the demographic structure of the population in the past (1971-2011)?
- What are the future implications?

## Cohort Change

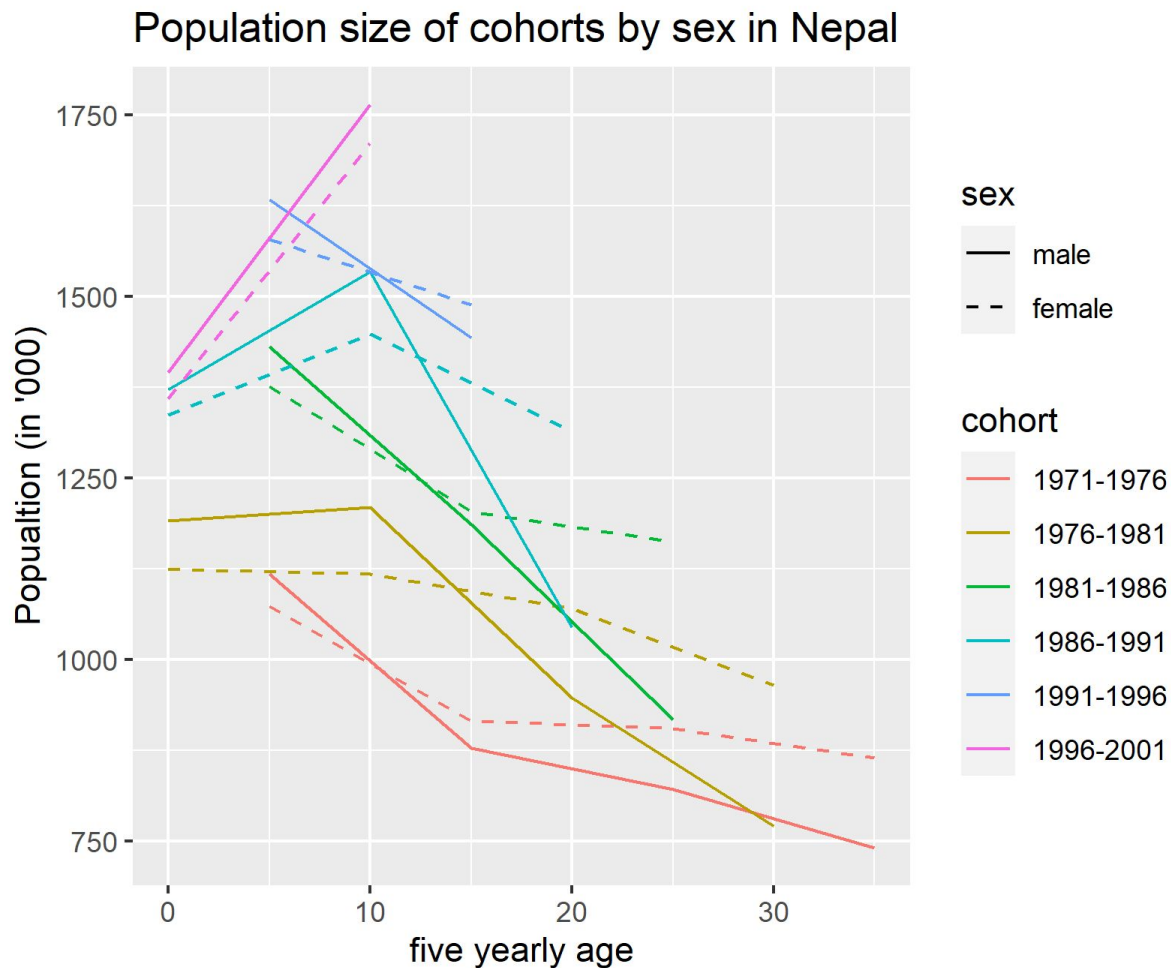
- Under-reporting of 0-4 years can be observed
- The slope is steepening, indicating that the population at higher age declining rapidly.



Data: Nepal Population and Housing Census, 1971-2011

# Cohort Change

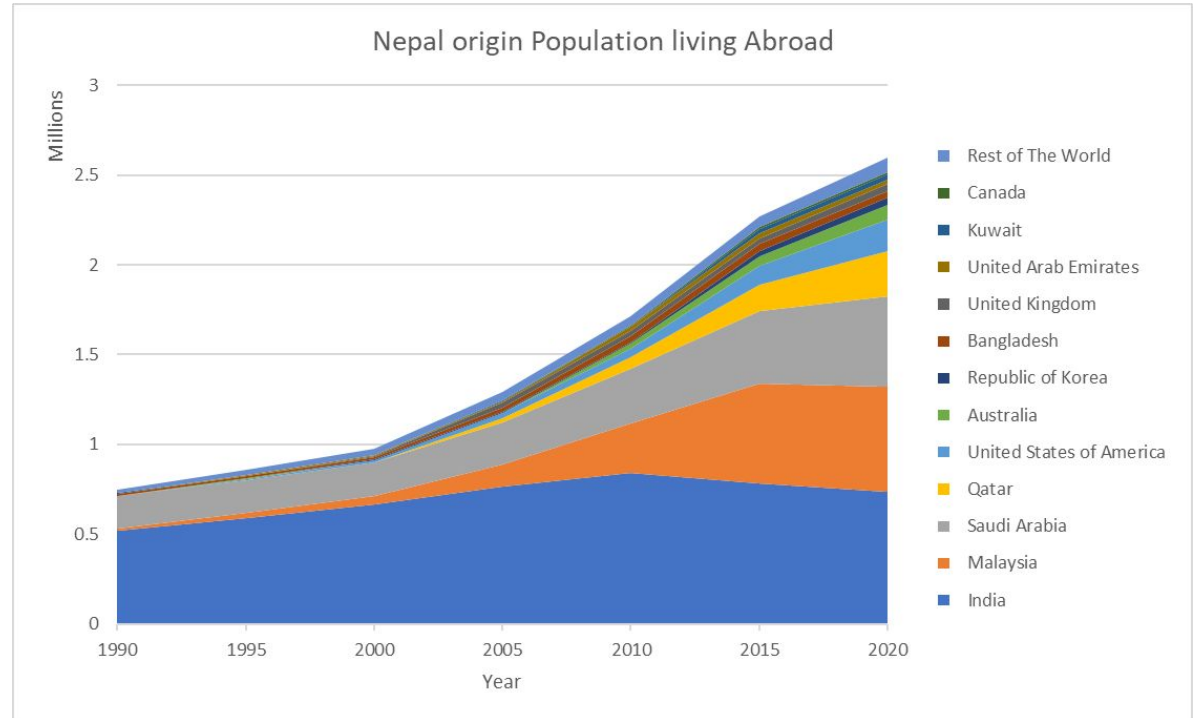
- Under-reporting of 0-4 years
- Slope is getting steeper for males
- Less decline among females



Data: Nepal population and Housing Census, 1971-2011

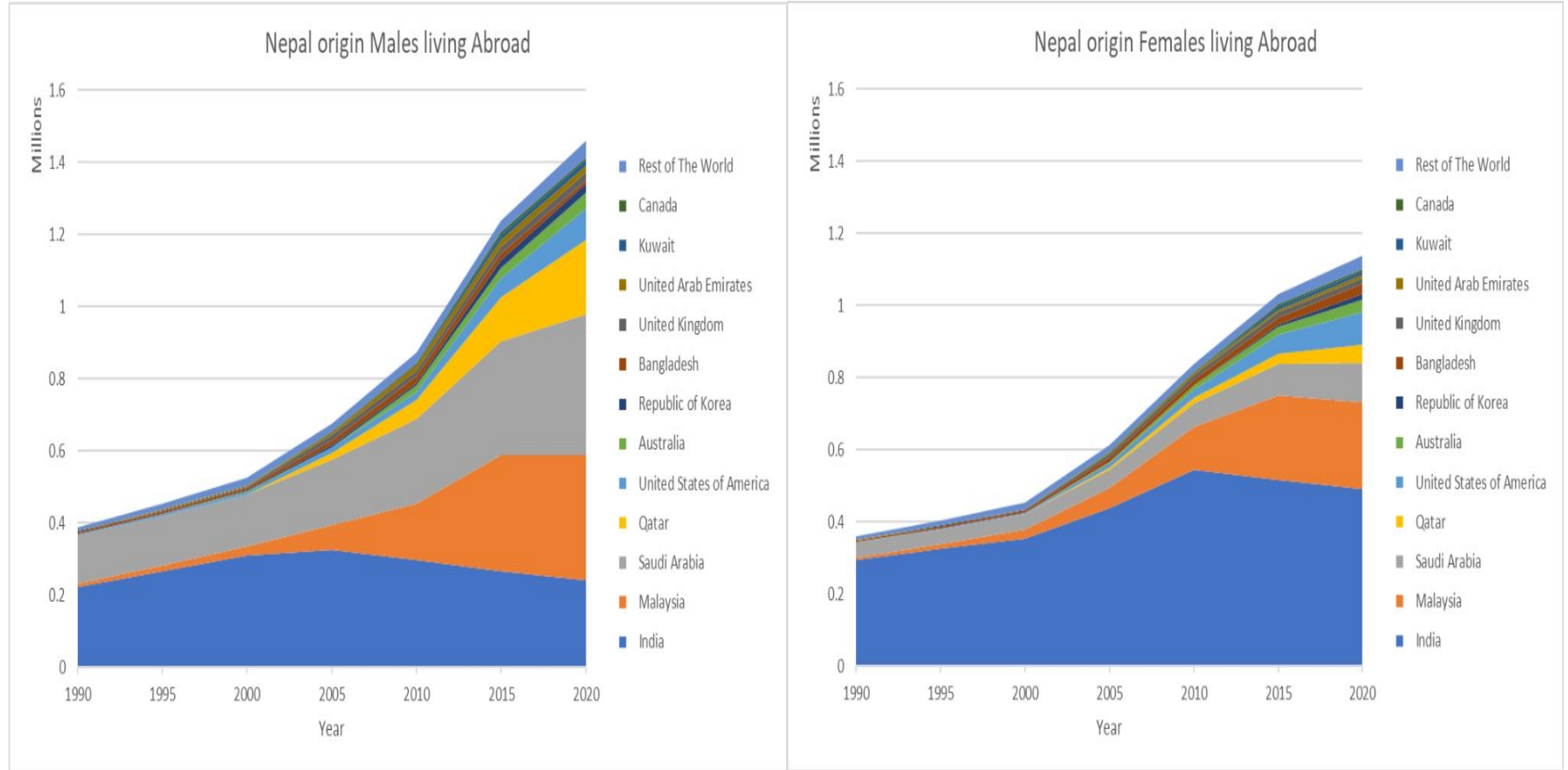
# International Migration

- ❖ Rapid increase
- ❖ New destinations
- ❖ Labor migration
  - Absentees
  - Will return
- ❖ Re-population!



Data: UN Migration Stock, 2020

# Sex Difference in International Migration

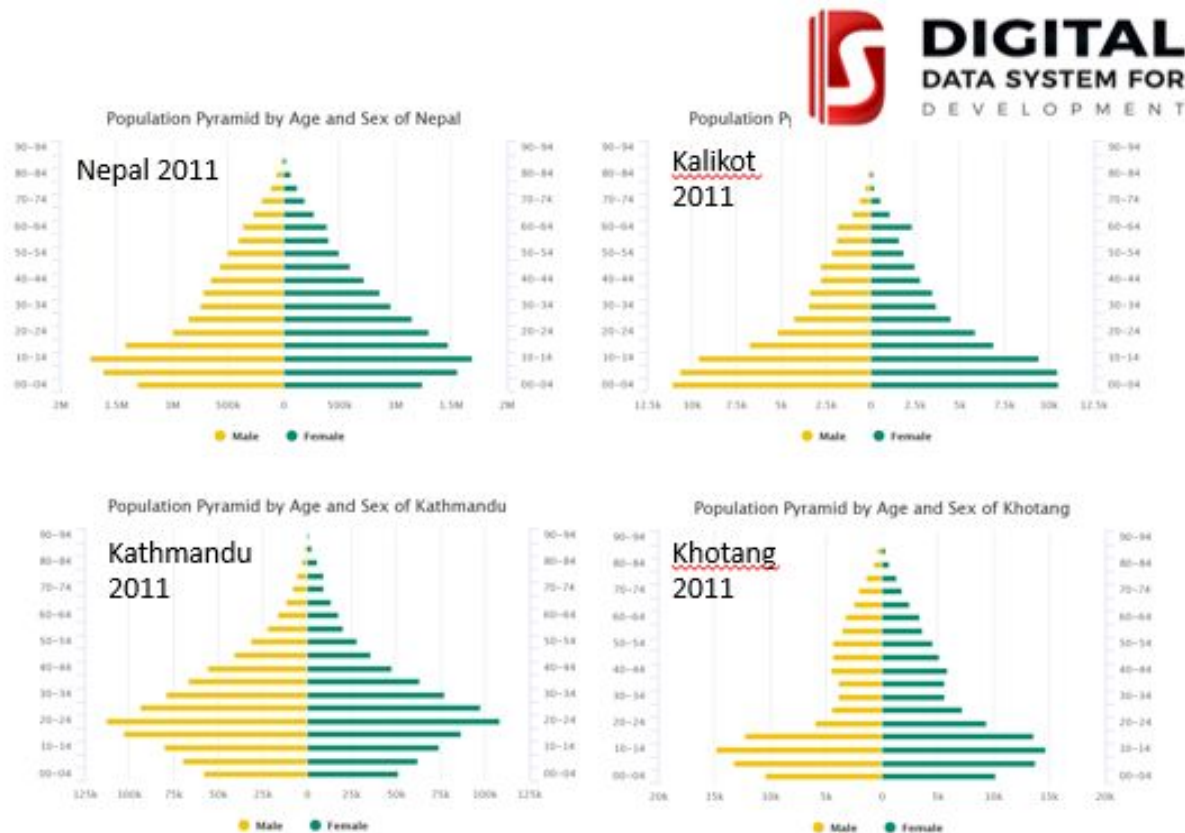


Data: UN Migration Stock, 2020



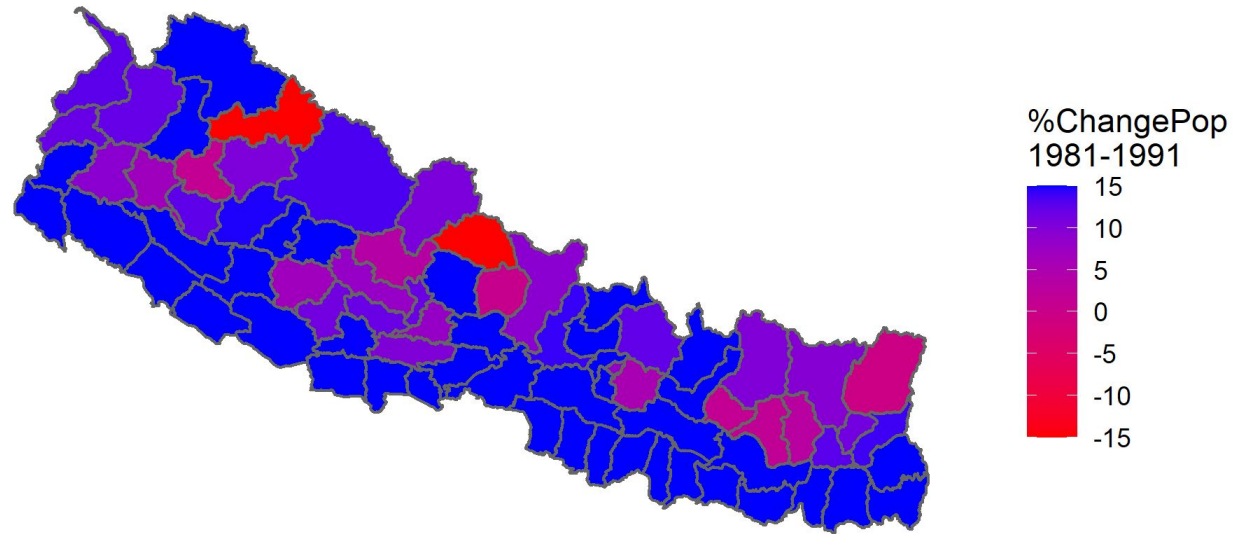
# Population Heterogeneity in Nepal

- Data: Census, 2011
- District level  
(75/77)
- Decadal population change



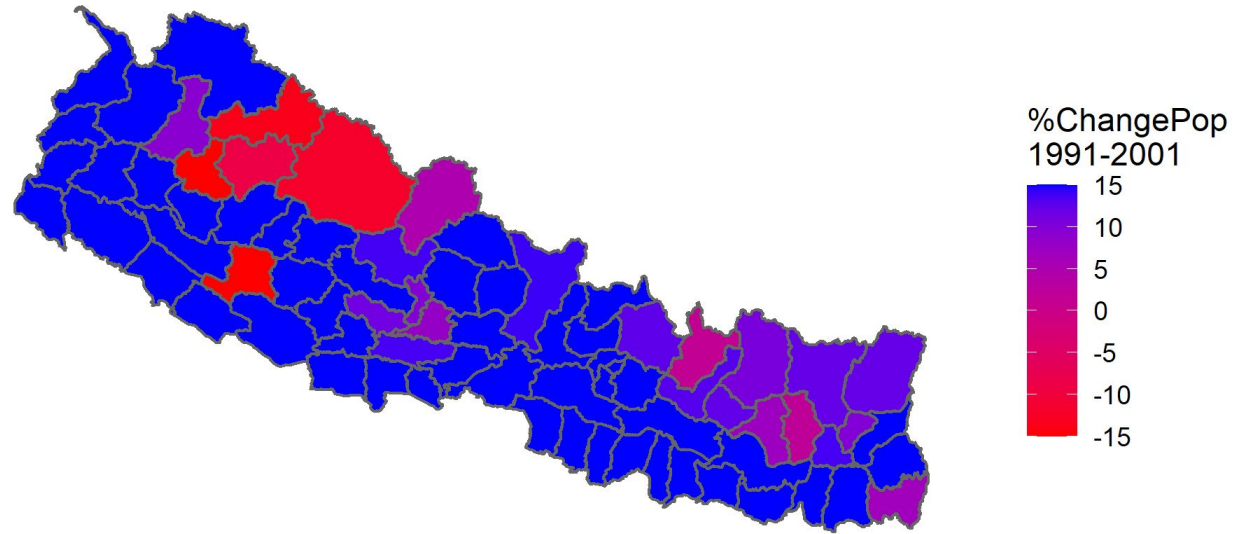


- ❖ Hills were continued to be depopulated



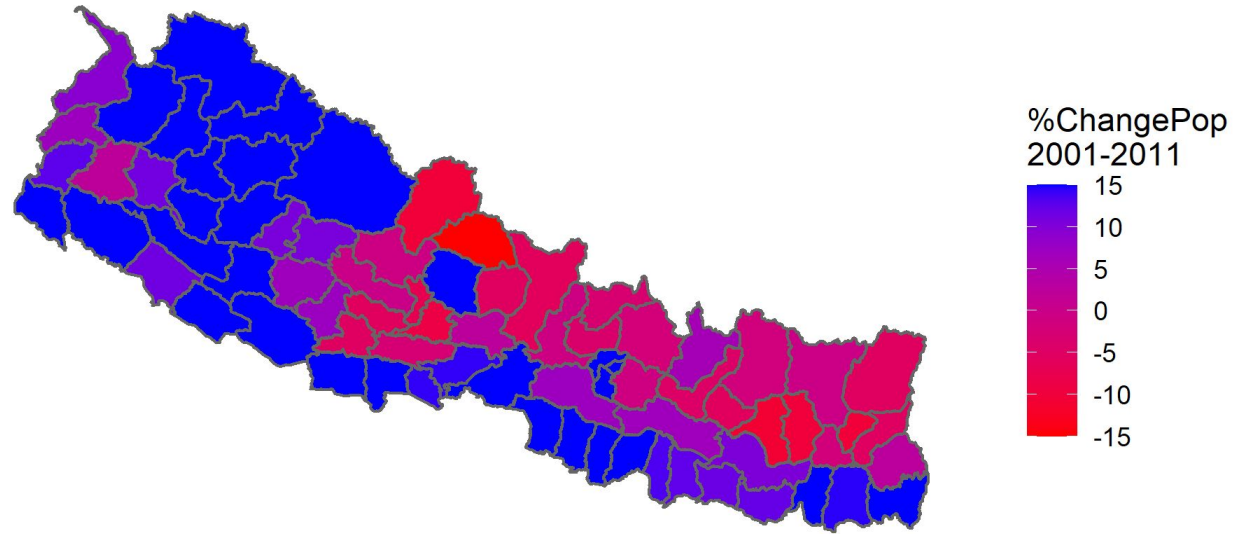
Data: Nepal Population and Housing Census, 1971-2011  
Map Source: Open Data Nepal

- Depopulation spread to other parts of the country
- Eastern districts
- Some lower hilly districts

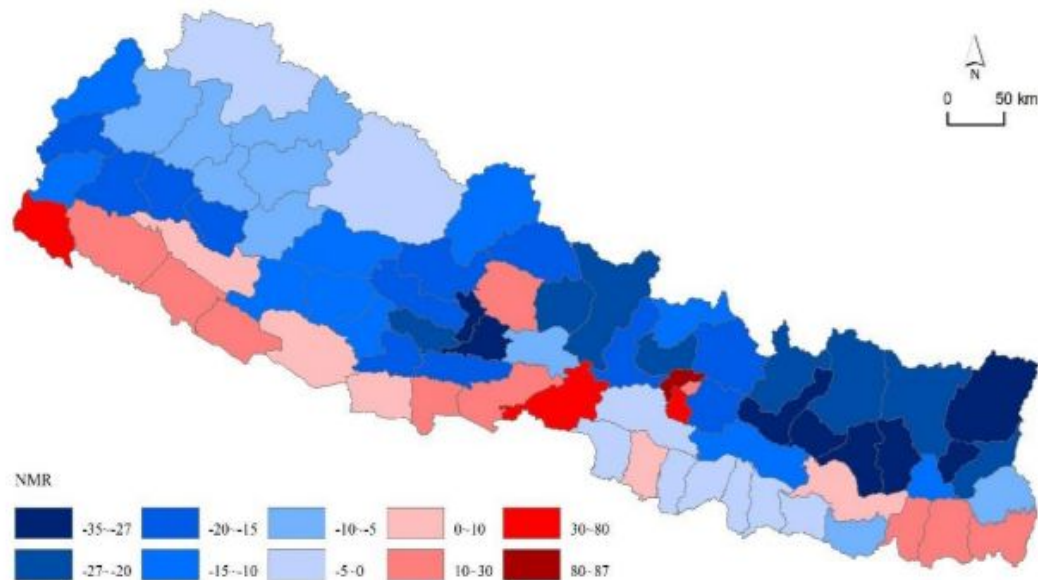


Data: Nepal Population and Housing Census, 1971-2011  
Map Source: Open Data Nepal

- Further spread to other districts
- Internal as well as International migration



Data: Nepal population and Housing Census, 1971-2011  
Map Source: Open Data Nepal



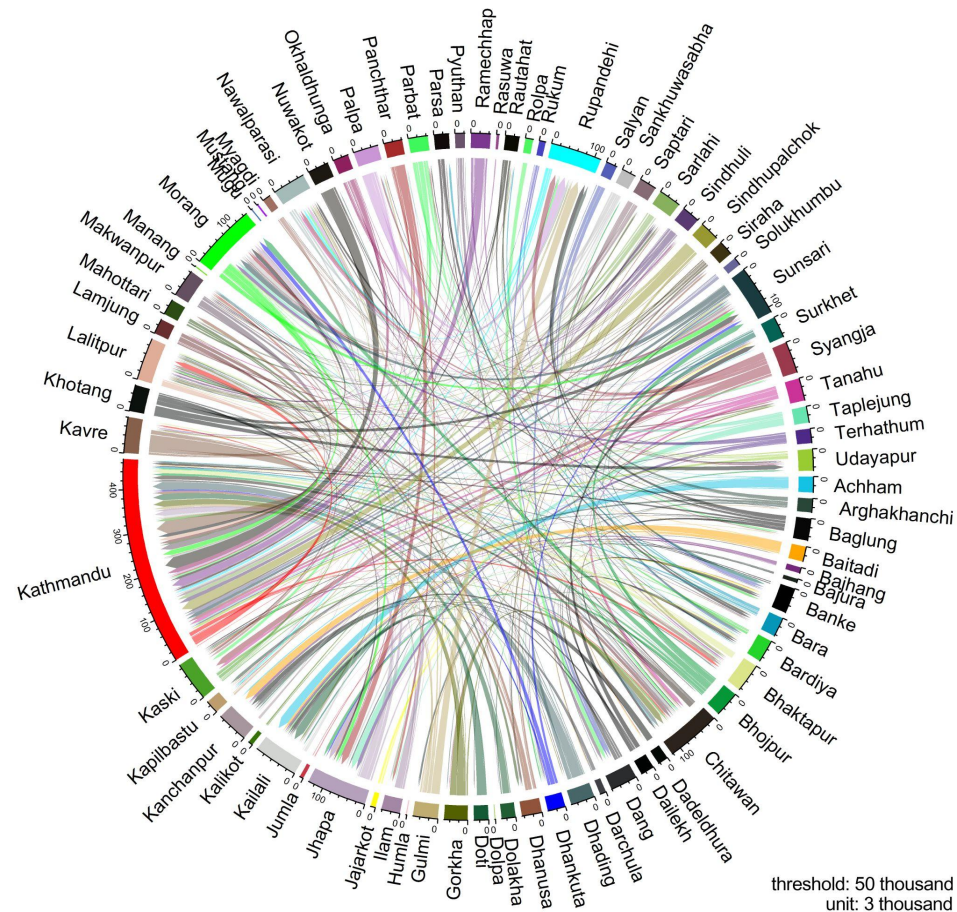
**Fig. 13.7** Net lifetime migration rates, districts of Nepal, 2011

*Source: calculated from the 2011 census (IMAGE-Asia Project), data from the Central Bureau of Statistics*

Source: KC, Samir. 2020. "Internal Migration in Nepal." In *Internal Migration in the Countries of Asia: A Cross-National Comparison*, edited by Martin Bell, Aude Bernard, Elin Charles-Edwards, and Yu Zhu, 249–67

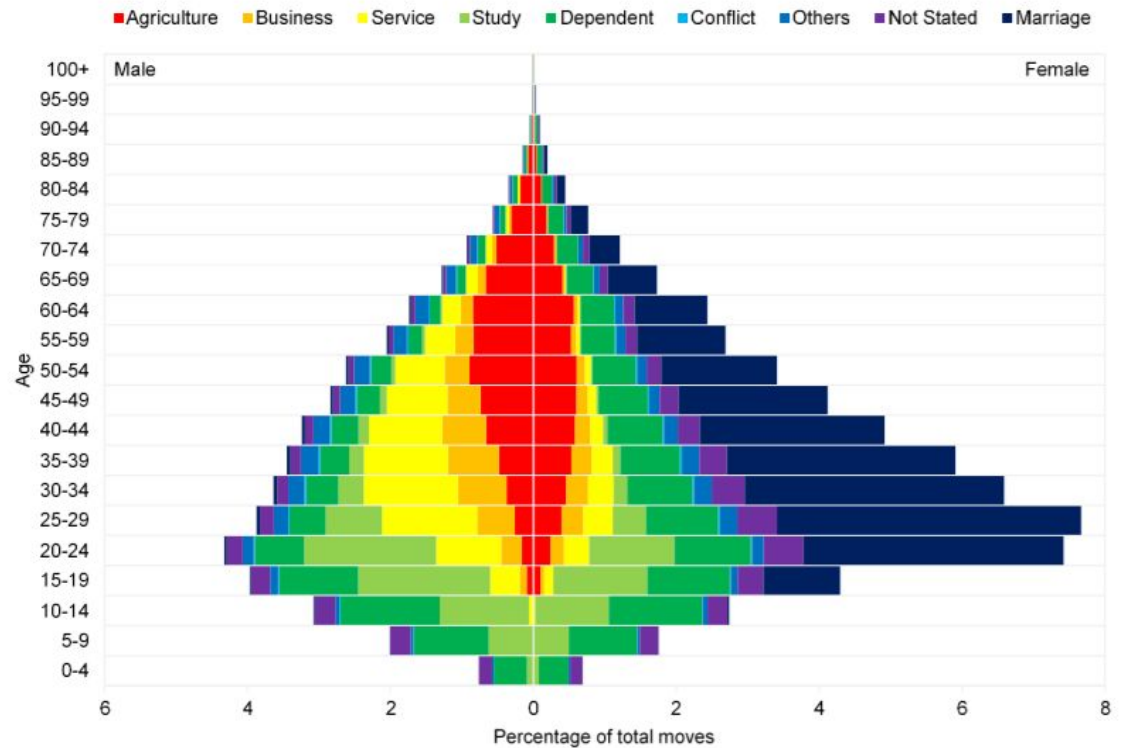


# Bilateral lifetime migration flows between districts of Nepal, 2011



Source: KC, Samir. 2020. "Internal Migration in Nepal." In Internal Migration in the Countries of Asia: A Cross-National Comparison, edited by Martin Bell, Aude Bernard, Elin Charles-Edwards, and Yu Zhu, 249–67

# Reason of Migration



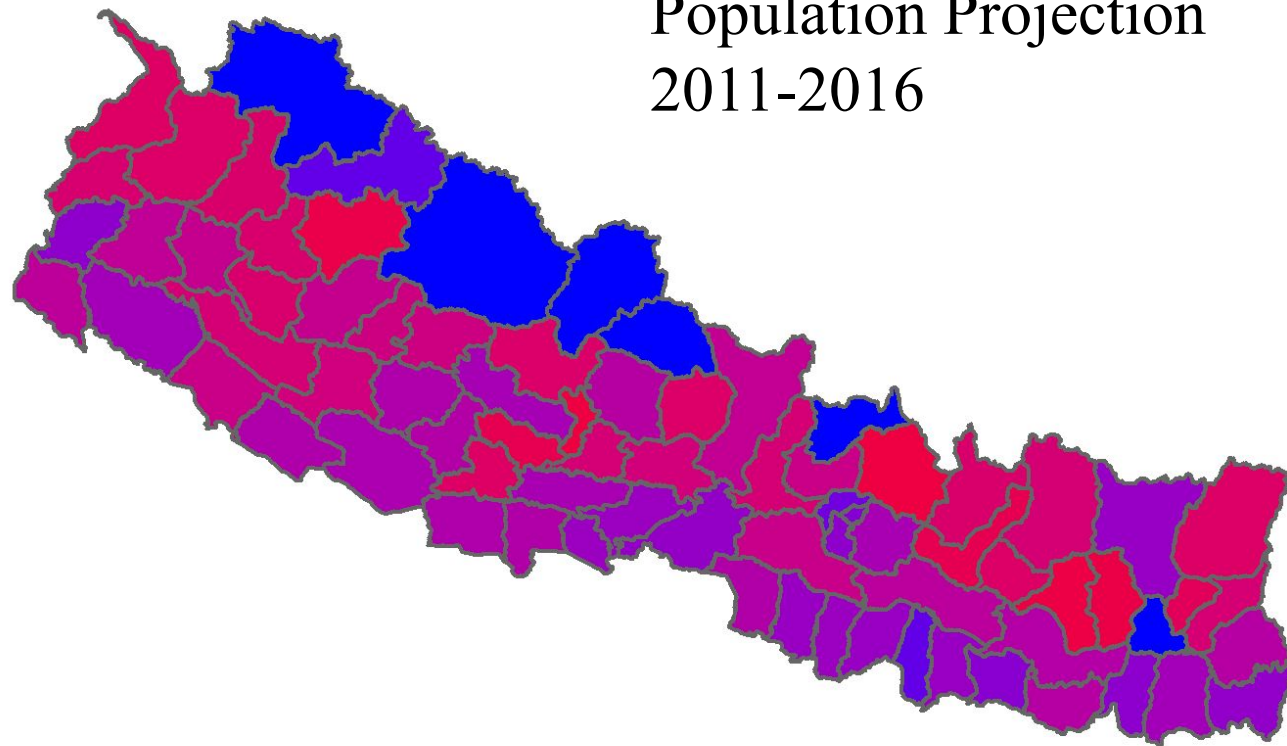
**Fig. 13.4** Lifetime migration by age, sex and cause, Nepal, 2011

*Source: calculated from the 2011 census, data from the Central Bureau of Statistics*

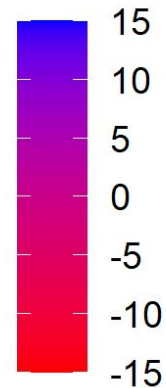
Source: KC, Samir. 2020. "Internal Migration in Nepal." In *Internal Migration in the Countries of Asia: A Cross-National Comparison*, edited by Martin Bell, Aude Bernard, Elin Charles-Edwards, and Yu Zhu, 249–67



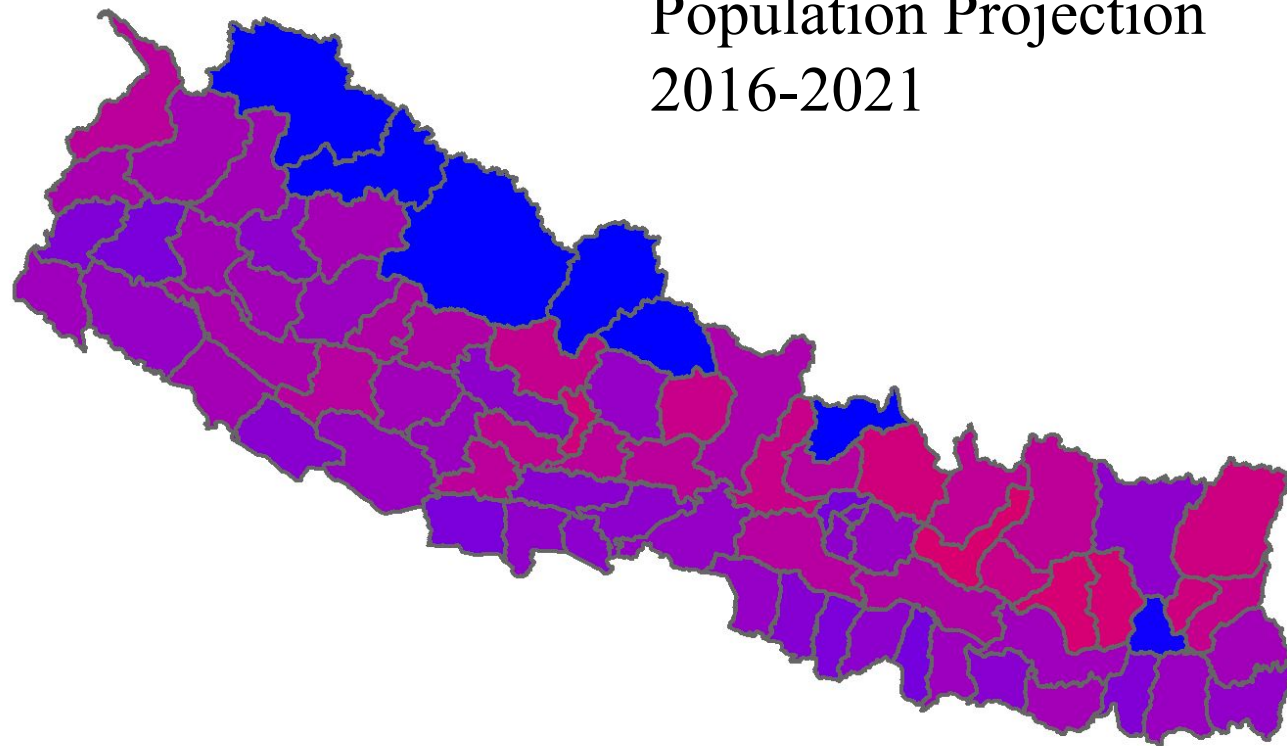
# Population Projection 2011-2016



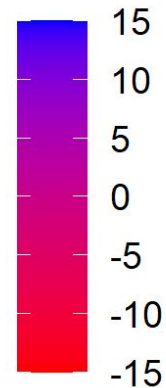
%ChangePop  
2011-2016



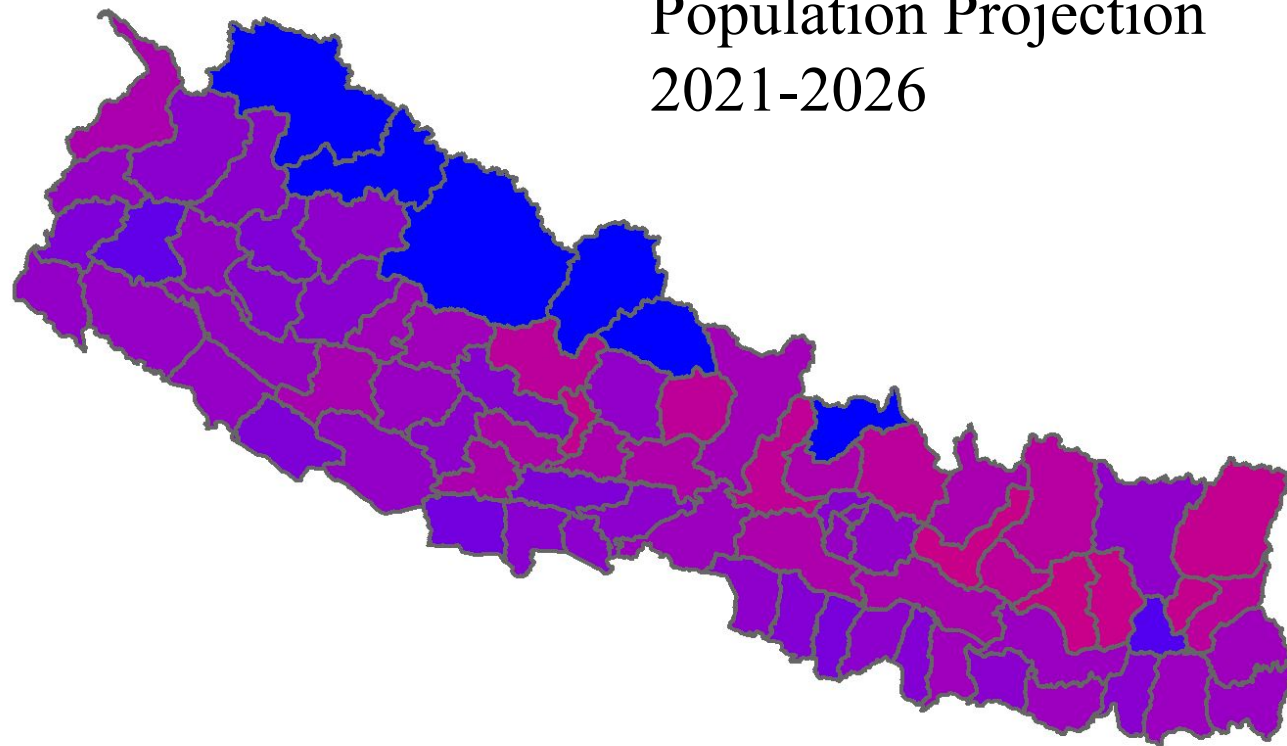
# Population Projection 2016-2021



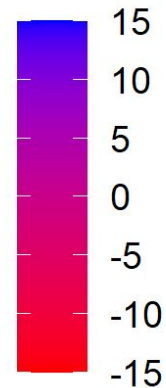
%ChangePop  
2016-2021



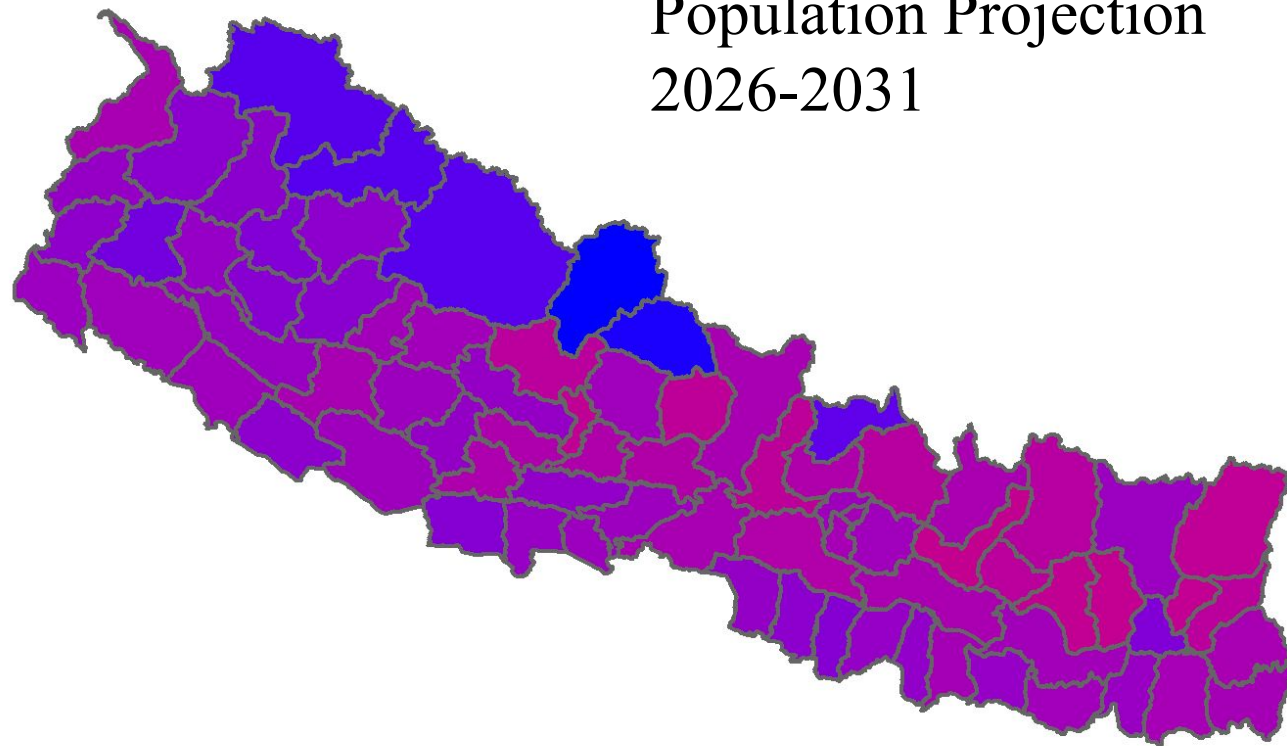
# Population Projection 2021-2026



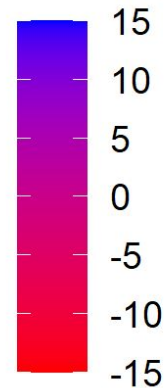
%ChangePop  
2021-2026



# Population Projection 2026-2031



%ChangePop  
2026-2031



# Implications of depopulation

## Cons

- Land abandonment and under utilization of farming
- Lack of able bodied people in the community
- Loss of culture/identity
- Unplanned urbanization at destinations
- Absentee - No vote
- Family separation

## Pros

- Return of forest and biodiversity
- Female empowerment
- Remittance

# Conclusion

- National level depopulation could occur in the near future due to international labor migration and low fertility
- However, the absentee population will return to ‘re-populate’ Nepal
- At the sub-national level, internal migration has caused depopulation in the past and will continue in the future
- Significant demographic, ecological, socioeconomic, and cultural implications highly likely - important knowledge generation [Work in Progress]
- What can be done? Policy makers and stakeholders - devolution of power
- urban/rural municipality - educational attainment