

Tackling Health at the Intersections of Disability, Mobility & Precarity: The Everyday Experiences of Returnee Migrants in Nepal



12th National Summit of Health and Population Scientists in Nepal 10th -12th April 2026

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GEMMS
Gendered violence
& poor mental health
among migrants in
precarious situations

An outline

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intersecting
inequities mainly
on socio-economic,
mental health and
accessibility
challenges

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Disability,
migration &
Health-Missing
link



Introduction & Context

- This is part of PhD, explores the health burden and lived experiences of returnee migrants with disabilities and diseases in Nepal.
- Migrant workforce from Nepal: predominantly **male, low-skilled, able-bodied**.
- Limited data and visibility of migrants with disabilities.
- **3Ds work** (difficult, dirty, dangerous): **high risks, low protections and incomes**.
- Migrants face **injuries, disabilities, psychosocial distress, and financial burdens/economic precarity**.

NEPAL UR MIGRATION REPORT 2024



Fieldwork & Data Collection



MIXED METHODS



JUNE-AUGUST 2025
(KOSHI & BAGMATI)

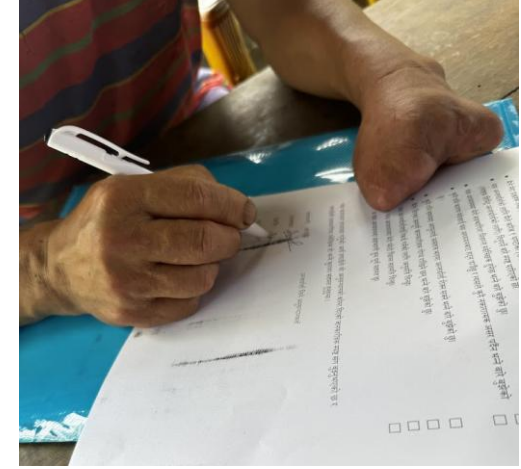
Table-1: Survey data collection

Province	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Koshi	98	51.1	7	3.6	105	55
Bagmati	83	43.2	4	2.1	87	45
Total	181	94.3	11	5.7	192	100

Province	LHI	KII
Koshi	7	3
Bagmati	9	11
Total	16	14

Table-2: Ethnographic data collection

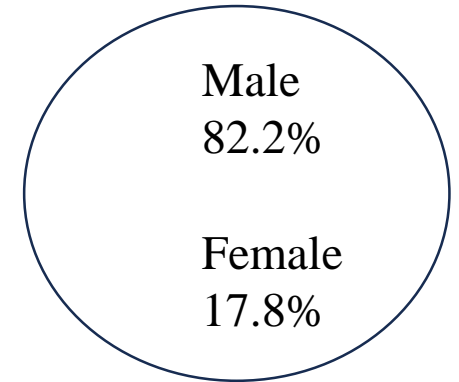
Pictures from Fieldwork



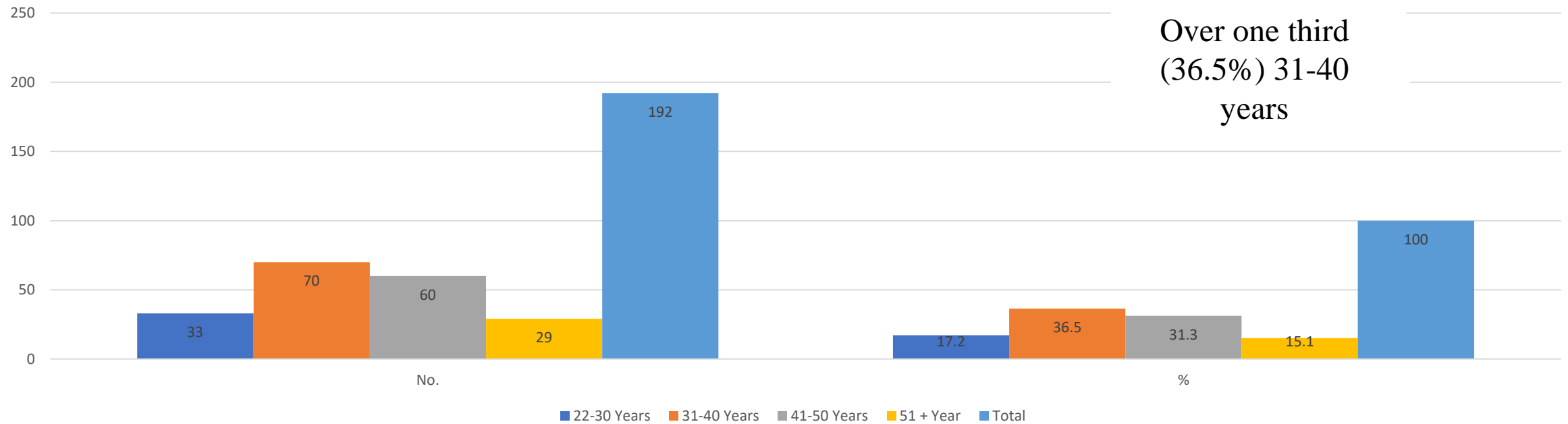
Age & Gender

Gender

- Male 94.3%
- Female 5.7%

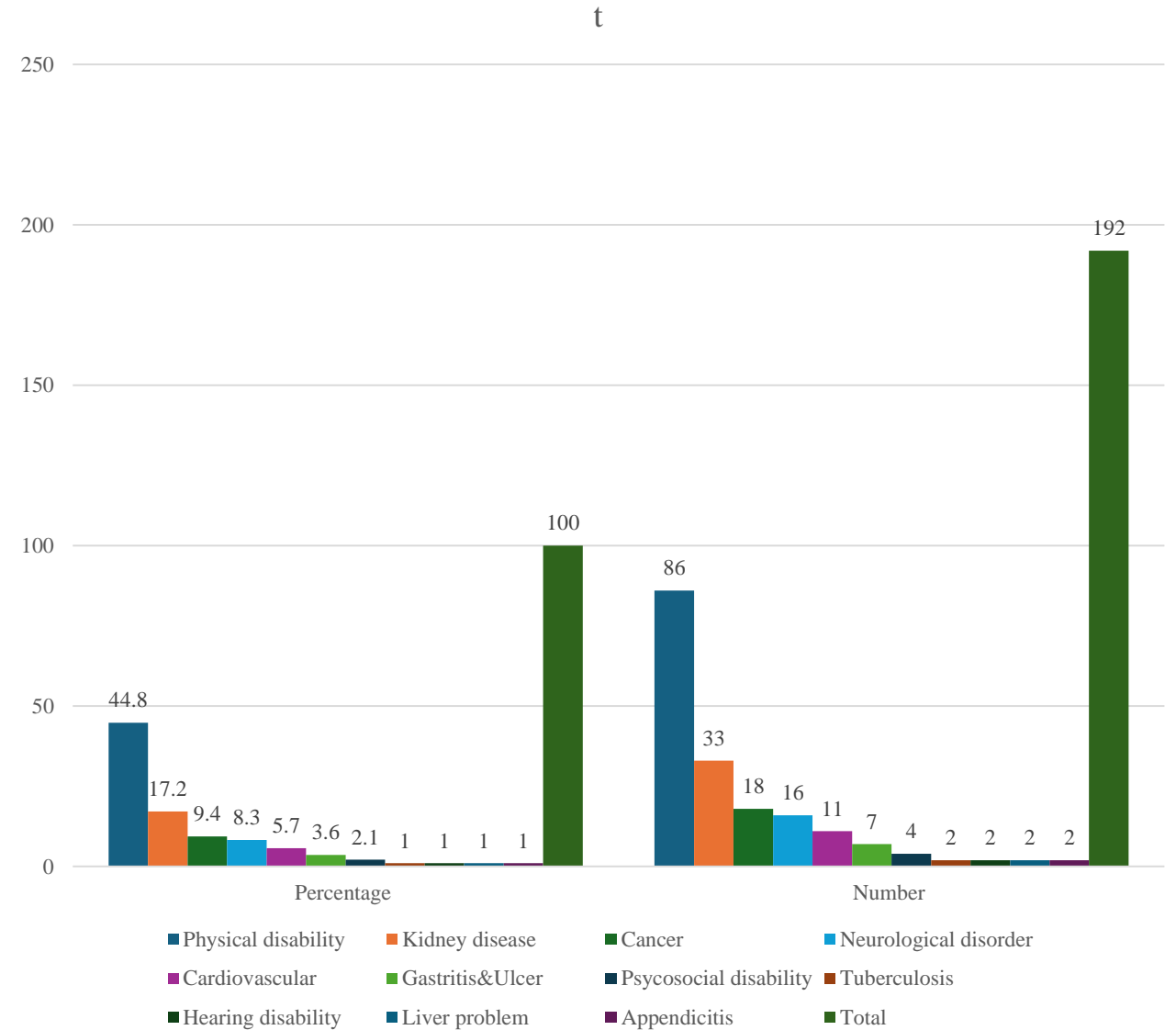


Age of participants



Disability & Disease Profiles

- **Top 10 categories**
- According to Government of Nepal 2008/9 to 2024/25 (April) over 4000 and 3310 received one-time financial assistance from FEB.
- Over 44% physical disabilities
- Over 17% Kidney Disease
- Liver and Appendicitis 1%



Intersecting Burden Of Economic Precarity, Disability & Mental Health

A 47-year-old male returnee migrant from Bagmati province mentioned that:

What my experience as a migrant worker tells is that migrant workers face double burdens. First, they have stress caused by workload at a low salary. Second, mostly those who went to Malaysia and Gulf countries from Nepal took loans (with high interest rates) for going aboard, and so family members from Nepal frequently ask to send money back home as they need to repay loans and run household expenses. (Life History Interview, 04 Bagmati Province July 2025)

A 45-year old male returnee migrant with severe physical disability recalled his attempt as

I attempted to commit suicide two times. I could not do it [his eyes were full of tears] My youngest daughter saw it and immediately cut off the rope. Then I told my daughter I would not do it again. I convinced my daughter. I attempted it due to our poverty; otherwise, I would not have done it [his eyes were full of tears and his throat was not clear]. (Life History Interview, 06 Koshi Province June 2025)

- Mental health and psychosocial services for the general population are not readily available in the communities. Limited projects focused on returnee migrants were provided such services, but they are limited to a specific location.
- Limited availability of services, stigma against mental health issues, and high burdens among returnee migrants with disabilities and diseases have made the situation more complex and complicated.

Emerging Intersecting Inequities

1. Socio-economic challenges/Economic precarity : Most of the returnee migrants with disabilities and diseases explained that they have been undergoing economic leading to difficulty in managing household expenses, cost of regular medicines and causing everyday stress

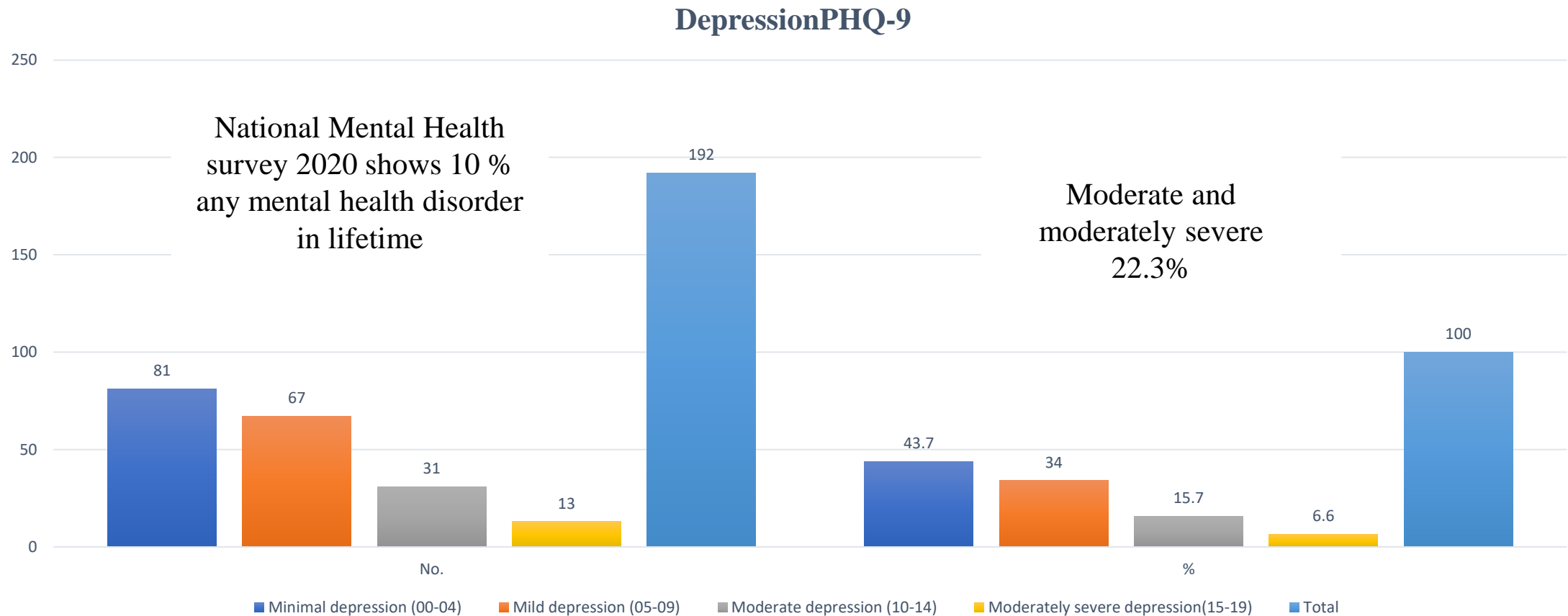
A 53- year Dalit male migrant with physical disability recalled his socio-economic situation as:

I took a loan from a villager. I paid a high interest rate (36%). It took 2 years to repay my loan. As I mentioned, I did not receive a regular salary from the company. I paid about double the amount (Rs. 135000) (\$1036). I cannot earn. My wife manages household expenses by doing daily wage labour, and when that is not sufficient, we ask our son, and he sends us the money to cover my regular medicines and house old expenses. (Life History Interview, 02 Bagmati Province July 2025)

A 32-year-old female migrant with disability recalled her socio-economic conditions and key reasons to migrate abroad as:

'I grew up in a challenging situation early on. I worked in a hotel in Pokhara for a year. By then, I was 11 or 12 years old. My monthly salary at that time was Rs. 1600 (\$11.85). The situation of my home was not financially strong. We were struggling to manage our everyday meals. I was thinking from early on that I would make a better house and give a better life to my parents as long as they live, that was a dream while I was migrating abroad. I made this house from my earring. While remigrating, I asked an uncle (with whom I bought the chicken) to lend me money to go abroad. I told him that I would send it back once I received my salary (within a month). I could not pay back the loan in a month, but it took me three months to clear the loan I got from an uncle to go abroad.'
(Life History Interview, 02 Koshi Province June 2025)

2. Returnee Migrants With Disabilities are Facing Higher Burdens of Mental Health and Psychosocial Issues



3. Experience of Accessibility Challenges in Public Transportation and Service Centres

A 32-year-old female migrant with disability recounted her experience as:

'It is a challenge for me to travel by public transport. Unlike in the past, it is difficult to get on and get off. My feet do not work properly, and I cannot catch with both hands either. On some buses, support staff treat us with consideration, but not all staff are kind to us, and a few do not even allow us to get on their buses. Ye, birami raichha, hudai na bhanchhan (Oh, this is an ill/sick person, should not let her in the bus). I wait for the next bus, which lets me get on easily. I got married 15 years ago, but we separated in a few months after our marriage. I have been living separately from my husband, and I do not have a family member to accompany me while I am travelling.' (Life History Interview, 02 Koshi Province June 2025)

A-30-year female returnee migrant with kidney disease explained her experiences of accessing health care as:

Garo ta garhai chha ni haina? Every day life is challenging, isn't it? It is challenging in every aspect of my life. I need monthly expenses, even weekly expenses. I need to visit twice a week for my dialysis. I need to pay rent for a room; I do not have a house in Kathmandu. If I go to my village, there are no dialysis facilities, and there is no good hospital near my home. I need to travel 2-3 hours to get to health care facilities. Additionally, there is no regular transportation access in the village.(Life History Interview, 01 Bagmati Province July 2025)

Disability, migration & Health- Missing link

- These issues have not received adequate attention from interdisciplinary scholarship (i.e. migration scholarship, disability studies, medical anthropology, global health), policy landscape.
- This situation has not only created challenges to understand the issues in depth and breadth considering the context but also created hurdles for evidence informed policies, programmes and interventions to address the concerns of vulnerable population but also meeting national and global goals: Health as fundamental rights and ‘Leaving No One Behind’ and ‘Universal Health Coverage’



References

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- Ministry of Labour, Employment & Social Security. (2025). Nepal Labour Migration Report 2024. <https://ceslam.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Nepal-Labour-Migration-Report-2024.pdf>
- Not all pictures that are used in this PPT are mine. I have downloaded some of them using relevant thematic words or sentences from the google image.



Comments and
Questions are Welcome!!