



Diaspora Humanitarians

How Australia-based migrants help in crises abroad

Nepal Briefing

- During Nepal’s 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, the Nepali diaspora in Australia mobilized to provide material, economic, social and political assistance. From our survey of Nepali migrants in Australia:
 - › 81% of respondents communicated directly with those in Nepal to provide support.
 - › 70% sent financial aid.
 - › 57% engaged in advocacy in response to the crisis.
 - › 16% volunteered or were employed as part of aid efforts.
- In 2022, Nepal received US\$2.29 billion in migrant remittances, equivalent to 22.8% of Nepal’s entire economy. The Nepali Government promotes and manages overseas employment to encourage this flow of developmental and humanitarian financial aid.
- The Nepal-born population in Australia is the second largest migrant group from South Asia. In 2023, approximately 179,050 migrants born in Nepal resided in Australia. In 2001, just 2,440 Nepal-born individuals resided in Australia.

Responding to Crisis

The 2015 Gorkha earthquake was the largest experienced by South Asia in eighty years. The earthquake resulted in 9,000 deaths and at least 21,000 injured people, as well as the destruction of more than 500,000 houses and damage to 300,000 others. About 2.6 million people remained internally displaced a year after the disaster.

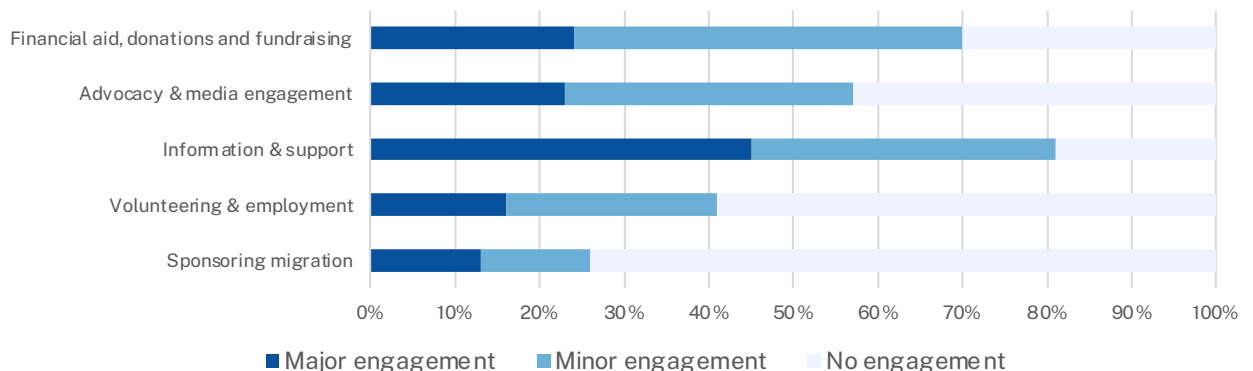
The earthquake’s immediate economic impact was estimated to be approximately US\$10 billion (UNDRR 2015), half of the country’s GDP at the time. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction identified remittances sent by the Nepali diaspora as a key resource for supporting households, rebuilding national infrastructure and contributing to economic recovery.

Diaspora Humanitarians Survey

As part of the Diaspora Humanitarians project, 36 members of the Nepali diaspora in Australia (27 women and 9 men) were surveyed about their humanitarian engagement following the earthquake. The survey asked individuals about their range of responses to the humanitarian crisis.

Responses were grouped into five categories: (1) provision of financial aid, donations or fundraising, (2) advocacy and media engagement, (3) direct communication with Nepal to provide support and information (4) volunteering and employment in the humanitarian sector and (5) sponsorship of migration to Australia. The survey relied on snowball sampling of engaged diaspora members, and provides a multi-level vision of the range of response by the Nepali diaspora to the earthquake.

Figure 1: Survey responses by the Nepali diaspora, 2022



Of respondents, 81% provided information or support to those directly impacted by the crisis over the phone. 70% of respondents provided financial aid or fundraised for aid organisations directly responding to the crisis: 24% made a major financial contribution and 46% made a minor contribution. Comparatively, 57% of respondents reported carrying out advocacy work or engaging with media following the earthquake. 23% of respondents reported a significant time contribution, and 34% reported a more time limited contribution.

Volunteer or paid work relating to the crisis was less common: 16% of respondents reported major engagement, and 25% reported minor engagement with these activities. Finally, providing information about migration pathways to Australia was the least common form of diaspora response, with 64% of respondents reporting no engagement. Only 13% of people indicated significant engagement, and an additional 13% of people indicated minor engagement.

Homeland Connections

The humanitarian activities of the Nepali diaspora after the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake were heavily shaped by their existing global connections to their homeland.

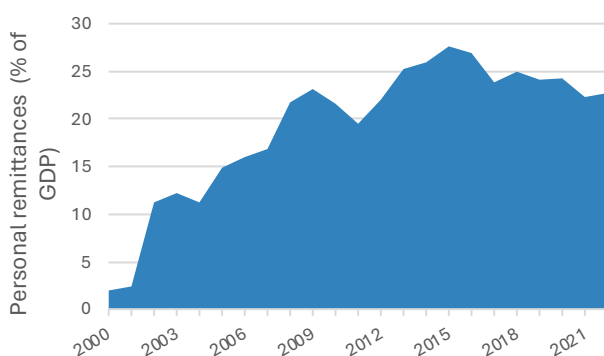
The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction highlighted the importance of remittances for developing seismic-resist buildings and for promoting business recovery (UNDRR 2016).

Remittances

Since 2000, the value of personal remittances received in Nepal has increased by more than 8000%. In 2022, Nepal received US\$2.29 billion in personal remittances, accounting for 22.8% of the country's GDP. Remittances were most important to Nepal's economy in 2015. Following the impact of the Gorkha earthquake, personal remittances represented 27.6% of GDP.

In 2021, Australia sent US\$467 million to Nepal. Australia was Nepal's sixth largest remittance sending country, behind Saudi Arabia (US\$1.69 bn), Malaysia (US\$1.68 bn), India (US\$1.58 bn), Qatar (US\$1.10 bn) and the United States (US\$884 m).

Figure 2: Personal remittances as a percentage of Nepal's total GDP, 2000-2022



Diaspora Institutions

The Nepali Government actively maintains a relationship with its diaspora. However, this mainly takes place through government management of circular labour migration, rather than through the promotion of business, philanthropic or humanitarian contributions.

Since 2007, the Government of Nepal has managed overseas employment through the Department of Foreign Employment, under the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The Department develops policies, guidelines, and labour contracts with host countries, ensuring the regulation of employment agencies, and overseeing training for migrant workers. The Department emphasizes safe migration, public awareness, and the identification of labour market opportunities. It also engages in welfare operations for citizens abroad.

Additionally, the Department coordinates with various national and international entities to regulate foreign employment, promote labour rights, and advocate for the dignified treatment of Nepali workers internationally. The Department seeks to safeguard the diaspora's interests and facilitates legal actions and policy reforms where necessary.

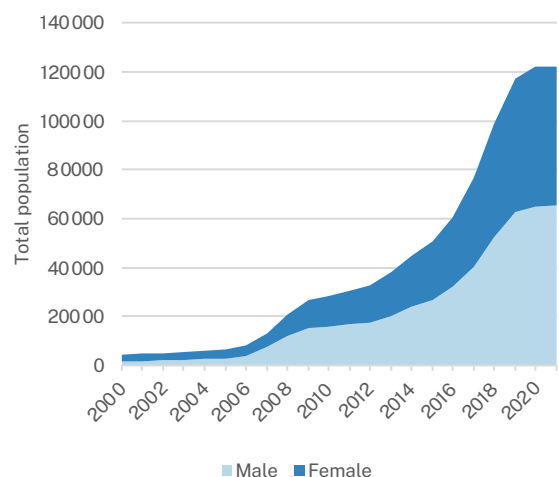
The Australia-Based Diaspora

The Nepali diaspora's humanitarian responses to the 2015 earthquake were shaped by their continuing connections with their homeland, by dynamics of migration and due to their experiences of settlement in Australia. This briefing primarily uses data from Australia's 2021 census to analyse the experiences of Australia's Nepali diaspora.

Dynamics of Migration

Australia's population in 2022 included an estimated 151,140 individuals born in Nepal. This was a significant increase from the 2021 census, which was taken while Covid-19 and border closures disrupted migration flows. The census recorded 122,506 Nepal-born migrants as

Figure 3: Total Nepal-born population in Australia, 2000-2021

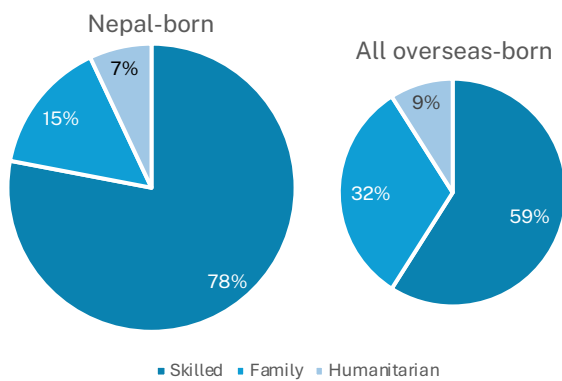


living in Australia, of whom 54.2% were male and 45.8% were female.

The Nepali population in Australia has grown rapidly since 2016. In the 2021 census, 60% of individuals born in Nepal had arrived in Australia in the past five years. In contrast, just 2,355 Nepali individuals had arrived in Australia before 2001. Australia's Nepali diaspora has followed a diverse range of migration pathways.

In 2021, 49,149 Nepal-born migrants were in Australia's permanent migration program, with 78% in the skilled visa stream, 15% in the family stream and 7% in the humanitarian stream. Comparatively, 59% of all permanent migrants to Australia were in the skilled stream, 32% were in the family stream and 9% were in the humanitarian scheme.

Figure 4: Nepal and all overseas-born permanent residents in Australia, 2021



At the end of 2023, 112,273 Nepali citizens held temporary Australian visas. The majority of these individuals (54%) held student visas. In the 2021 census, over a fifth (21.1%) of Nepal-born residents were Australian citizens.

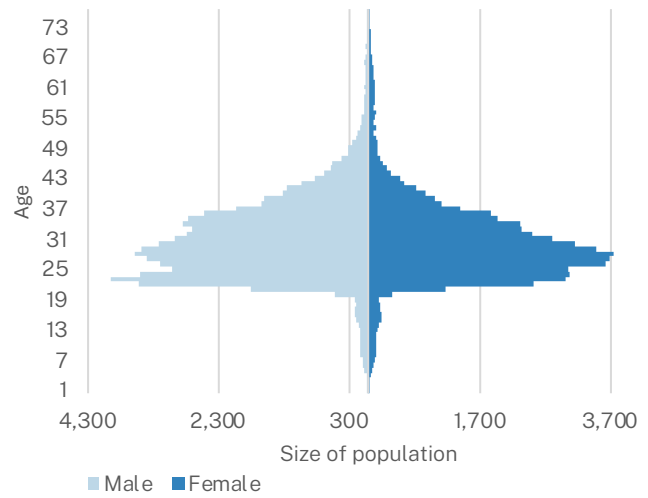
Population Dynamics

The population dynamics of the Nepali diaspora in Australia reflect the emerging migration flow from the country. Compared to the total Australian and Nepali populations, the diaspora in Australia is young, majority male, highly educated and overwhelmingly works in service industries.

Demography

The diaspora's population is primarily comprised of young adults. In 2021, 87% of Nepal-born migrants in Australia were between the ages of 15 and 39. This compares to 43% of the total population in Nepal and 33% of Australia's total population being in this age range. Additionally, 51% of the Nepal-born population in Australia were between the ages of 20 and 29 in 2021.

Figure 5: Population pyramid for the Nepal-born population in Australia, 2021



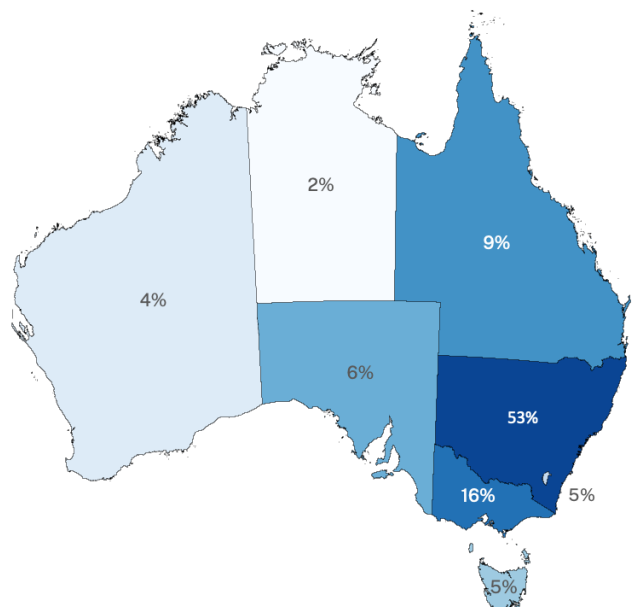
As the diaspora in Australia has consolidated, the number of Australians with Nepali ancestry has increased. As of 2021, the diaspora included 21,494 second-generation Australians. Of this group, 85% had two Nepal-born parents. In contrast, 5% were born to one Nepali and one Australian-born parent, and 10% were born to one Nepali and one other overseas born parent.

Geography

The Nepali diaspora is concentrated in Australia's capital cities. Just 12% of the Nepal-born population in Australia reside outside of these cities.

In 2021, 48% of Nepal-born residents in Australia lived in Greater Sydney. 15% resided in Greater Melbourne and 5% resided in both Greater Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Comparatively, 21% of Australia's total population resided in Greater Sydney, 19% resided in Greater Melbourne and 10% resided in Greater Brisbane.

Figure 6: Geographies of residence of the Nepal-born population in Australia, 2021





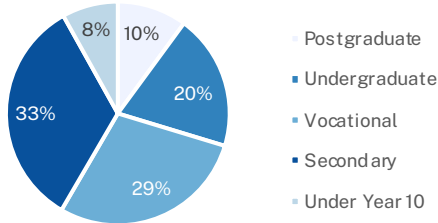
Education

The Nepali diaspora in Australia is highly educated. As of 2021, 62,396 individuals (52% of the population) had attained a bachelor's degree or above, and 26,330 individuals had other post-secondary qualifications (certificate level III or IV, advanced diplomas). An additional 28% of the diaspora were attending a tertiary education institution at the time and less than 1% of the population had not completed secondary school.

The Nepali diaspora is more educated than both Australian and Nepali averages. Approximately 30% of adults in Australia have obtained tertiary qualifications and 8% have not completed high school.

While Nepal collects education statistics differently to Australia, only 6.7% of individuals no longer studying had completed an undergraduate degree or above and 36% of individuals had not completed secondary school.

Figure 7: Highest level of educational achievement of the Nepal-born population in Australia, 2021



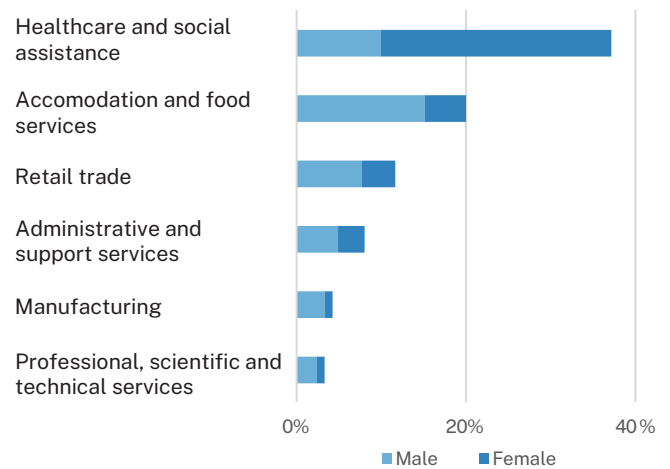
Economic Activity

In Australia, the most popular sector of employment for Nepal-born migrants is overwhelmingly healthcare, with 37% of those in the labour market working in the sector in 2021. Other significant sectors of employment include accommodation and food services (20%) and retail trade (13%).

The Nepali diaspora's employment dynamics vary by gender. Of the working female Nepali population, 60% were employed in healthcare in 2021, 11% were employed in accommodation and food services and 9% were employed in the retail sector.

The leading sector of employment for the male diaspora was accommodation and food services, which employed 28% of the male population. Additionally, 18% of employed Nepal-born men were worked in healthcare and 14% worked in retail.

Figure 8: Leading sectors of employment for the Nepal-born population in Australia, 2021



Sources:

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021; Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022b), Permanent Migrants in Australia; Australian Department of Home Affairs (2024a), Permanent Migration Program (Skilled & Family) Outcomes Snapshot – Annual Statistics; Australian Department of Home Affairs (2024b), Temporary visa holders in Australia; The World Bank (2022a), Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) Remittances Data; The World Bank (2022b), Personal remittances, received (% of GDP). United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015), 25 April 2015 Gorkha Earthquake Disaster Risk Reduction Situation Report. Bikram Manandhar (2016), “Remittance and Earthquake Preparedness”.

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This research is partially supported by the Australian Government through the ARC's Linkage Projects funding scheme (project LP200200817). The views expressed herein are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Australian Government or the ARC.



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The Diaspora Humanitarians project aims to map the extensive humanitarian activities and contributions of Australia-based migrants to crises abroad. For more information see www.diasporahumanitarians.com