



# Citizen Perspectives on Economic Opportunity Summary Report 2025

Prem Darshan Sapkota, Srishti Adhikari, and Tilak Pathak

## Introduction

Youth migration fueled by lack of domestic opportunities has seen record numbers of youth leave the country for employment.<sup>1</sup> Although migration is often viewed as a concern, the fact is remittances have consistently supported the national economy. Remittances account for 26.5% of Nepal's GDP,<sup>2</sup> and income from remittances has increased almost threefold over the past decade, rising from 434.60 billion rupees in 2012-2013 to 1,220.60 billion rupees in 2022-2023.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the growing trend for migration and the knowledge that many youths feel the opportunities here are limited to those with access, little effort has been made to create jobs domestically. Even as intellectuals and ordinary people express their dissatisfaction with migration, youth continue to seek opportunities abroad. However, the current geopolitical tension in West Asia has added new risks to foreign employment and remittances, bringing

1 In 2023, a total of 916,957 Nepalis migrated for foreign destinations of which 808,415 left for employment while 108,005 left for studies. Every year 1,600,000 Nepali migrate for various reasons. Onlinekhabar. (2024, January 9). *1.6 million Nepalis left the country in 2023*. Onlinekhabar English News. <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/nepalis-left-the-country-2023.html>

2 Adhikari, H. R., & Khatri, B. B. (2024). Remittance in Nepalese economy: Trends, contributions, and policy implications. *Patan Pragya*, 13(1), 22–34. <https://doi.org/10.3126/pragya.v13i1.71179>

3 Ibid.

uncertainty to foreign exchange reserves<sup>4</sup> and raising questions about the country's internal capacity to sustain potential return of youth in large numbers.<sup>5</sup>

While the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) has promised 7% economic growth, increasing per capita income to \$3,000, and creating 1.2 million new jobs in its manifesto, economic opportunity must be viewed more broadly than just income. It is important that citizens truly get to experience equality of opportunity whereby their success depends on their individual effort and not on their political access.<sup>6</sup> According to Acemoglu and Robinson (2016), as long as opportunities remain limited to those with access, sustainable prosperity and trust in the system are impossible.<sup>7</sup>

The public has high expectations from the new government to deliver economic reforms and job opportunities. In early 2025, Purak Asia conducted Economic Opportunity Survey<sup>8</sup> in Gandaki Province to gauge public opinion. After discussing the primary findings with stakeholders, Purak Asia undertook further surveys across the Madhesh Province, Lumbini Province and Kathmandu Valley between mid-April to July 2025 to understand citizens' perspectives.

This survey report provides analysis of citizens' perspectives on investment opportunity, the employment environment, and the overall future economic direction. It identifies the factors hindering business confidence and highlights essential areas for investment. This report will help policymakers understand not just the data, but the actual sentiments and expectations of the public.

---

4 World Bank (2026, April 8). *Nepal Development Update Growth Under Pressure: Navigating Domestic and Global Shocks*. Washington D.C. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099315004072621459/pdf/IDU-5fbb7a2f-51fb-4e48-aadc-2a447660fbe1.pdf>

5 Asian Development Bank (2026 April). *Asian Development Outlook The Middle East Conflict Challenges Resilience in Asia and the Pacific*. Manila <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/1135881/ado-april-2026.pdf>

6 Ferreira, Francisco H. G.; Peragine, Vito (2015) : Equality of Opportunity: Theory and Evidence, IZA Discussion Papers, No. 8994, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), Bonn

7 Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J. A (2016). *Paths to Inclusive Political Institutions*. January 19, 2016

8 Sapkota, P.D., et al. (2025). *Economic Opportunity Survey: Gandaki 2025*. Purak Asia. [https://purakasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/1-Absar-Mapan-Survey\\_final-for-Press.pdf](https://purakasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/1-Absar-Mapan-Survey_final-for-Press.pdf)

## Methodology

Using a random sampling method, four districts each were selected from Madhesh Province (Dhanusha, Saptari, Rautahat, and Parsa) and Lumbini Province (Dang, Nawalparasi, Bardiya, and Gulmi). In the case of the Kathmandu Valley, all three districts (Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur) were included. To ensure balanced representation, the study selected one rural municipality and one municipality with the highest populations from each district in Madhesh and Lumbini. Similarly, the most populous municipalities were selected from within the districts of the Kathmandu Valley. In Madhesh Province, the survey covered Dhanusha (Janakpur Sub-Metropolitan City and Laxminiya Rural Municipality), Saptari (Rajbiraj Municipality and Tilathi Koiladi Rural Municipality), Rautahat (Chandrapur Municipality and Yamunamai Rural Municipality), and Parsa (Birgunj Metropolitan City and Sakhuwa Prasauni Rural Municipality) districts. In Lumbini Province, the selected districts were Dang (Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City and Rapti Rural Municipality), Bardiya (Barabardiya Municipality and Badhaiyatal Rural Municipality), Gulmi (Resunga Municipality and Satyawati Rural Municipality), and Nawalparasi (Bardaghat Municipality and Pratappur Rural Municipality). Additionally, from the Kathmandu Valley, Kathmandu Metropolitan City of Kathmandu district, Lalitpur Metropolitan City of Lalitpur district, and Suryabinayak Municipality of Bhaktapur district were included in the survey.

In the survey, a total of 1,425 respondents were initially planned, with 475 respondents selected from each of the three regions: Madhesh Province, Lumbini Province, and the Kathmandu Valley. However, with the addition of one respondent from Pratappur Rural Municipality in Nawalparasi (Lumbini Province), the final survey was conducted among 1,426 respondents. This adjustment was made to ensure a precise statistical distribution (33.31 percent from Madhesh, 33.31 percent from the Kathmandu Valley, and 33.38 percent from Lumbini). The sample design has a margin of error of 4.5% and a 95% confidence level.

A multi-stage sampling method was employed during the survey. After selecting the local levels (municipalities), the first stage involved selecting an equal number of wards from each municipality. In the second stage, wards were categorized based on migration patterns, and specific survey areas were identified using a simple random sampling method. In the third stage, a household listing of the survey area was conducted, and households were selected via systematic random sampling. Following this, surveyors selected households by following a clockwise direction. In rural municipalities, every third household was selected after the initial starting point, while in urban municipalities, every fifth household was selected. Finally, the Kish grid method was used to select one respondent aged 18 or older from each selected household for the interview. This rigorous methodology was adopted to ensure representative data at every stage.



**Map 1: Locations selected for the survey**

The survey participants included 50.98 percent male and 49.02 percent female participants. The largest participant group belonged to the ages 46 to 60, accounting for 26.01 percent of the total sample. Other age groups were represented as follows: 22.23 percent were aged 36 to 45, 20.2 percent were aged 26 to 35, 16.34 percent were aged 18 to 25, and 15.22 percent were aged 61 and above.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of educational attainment, the survey participants included 10.73 percent illiterate, 5.61 percent literate (no formal schooling), and 10.8 percent who had completed Grade 5. Additionally, 18.72 percent had studied up to Grade 9, while 16.55 percent had completed SLC or SEE. Those who had completed Intermediate/Higher Secondary level (+2) accounted for 20.49 percent, followed by 11.9 percent who were graduates and 5.1 percent who held a postgraduate degree or higher. Participants with vocational training accounted for 0.1 percent.

Among the survey participants, 82.19 percent were married, while 14.87 percent were unmarried. Additionally, 0.49 percent were divorced or separated, and 2.45 percent were widowed.

In terms of ethnic and caste representation, the largest group among the survey participants consisted of Hill Caste groups at 27.6 percent, followed by Hill Janajati (indigenous groups) at 25 percent, and Tarai Caste groups at 18.3 percent. Additionally, Tarai Janajati accounted for 10 percent, Tharu 7.4 percent, Tarai Dalit 5.1 percent, Hill Dalit 3.9 percent, Muslim 2.5 percent, and mountain (Himali) Janajati 0.2 percent of the total participants.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of religion, the vast majority of participants, 90.5 percent, were Hindu. Those following Buddhism constituted 4.7 percent, followed by Islam 2.5 percent, Christianity 1.5

<sup>9</sup> Since the legal adult age in Nepal is 18 years, individuals below that age group were not included in the survey. Different age-group intervals were used to understand generational perspectives.

<sup>10</sup> The classification of ethnic groups was based on Pitambar Sharma's book, *Unravelling the Mosaic*.

percent, Kirat 0.3 percent, Prakrit (nature worship) at 0.1 percent, and atheists at 0.2 percent. Additionally, 0.2 percent of respondents chose not to disclose their religious affiliation.

Among the survey participants, 47.5 percent had been living in their current location since birth. Those who had resided there for more than 10 years comprised 42.2 percent, while 8.3 percent had been living there for more than 3 years but less than 10 years. Similarly, the proportion of those who had been residing in the same place for less than 3 years was 2 percent.

Among the respondents, the largest group consisted of those involved in trade/business or self-employment, which represented 21.88 percent of the total. This was followed by farmers at 19.99 percent, while homemakers constituted 17.18 percent. Private sector employees comprised 7.85 percent, students made up 7.57 percent, and those unemployed stood at 5.4 percent. The remaining participants included retirees 5.12 percent, laborers 3.86 percent, and government employees 2.88 percent. Social workers accounted for 2.59 percent, teachers 2.52 percent, and drivers 1.61 percent. Finally, health workers made up 0.7 percent, contractors represented 0.49 percent, and others accounted for 0.36 percent.

Among the survey participants, the largest group consisted of households with a monthly income between NPR 30,000 to 50,000, which comprised 26.16 percent of the total. Furthermore, those with a monthly income exceeding NPR 50,000 represented 24.89 percent, while households earning between NPR 20,000 and 30,000 constituted 20.48 percent. Respondents with a monthly income of NPR 10,000 to 20,000 accounted for 16.79 percent, and those earning less than NPR 10,000 made up 7.36 percent. Additionally, 1.79 percent of participants chose not to disclose their family's monthly income, and 2.17 percent stated they did not know.






During the survey, questions were asked using a Likert scale with multiple-choice options such as "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neither Agree nor Disagree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree." Although "Don't Know" and "Refused to Answer" were provided as options, their numbers were not significant; therefore, they have been combined and presented together in the analysis. Furthermore, during the analysis process, "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" have been merged and presented as "Agree" in several instances. Similarly, "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" have been combined and referred to as "Disagree."

# Findings

## 1. Economic Opportunity Sentiment and Systemic Realities

### A. The Crisis of Confidence

Majority of respondents hold a highly pessimistic view of the current domestic economic environment. The data illustrates a severe lack of confidence in business environment, with 85.7% of citizens disagreeing that there are employment opportunities within the country, and 69.3% feeling the environment for becoming an entrepreneur is unfavorable. Furthermore, 62.3% report an inability to find work or establish enterprises that match their existing skills and knowledge. Despite these immediate frustrations, there is a visible sense of personal resilience, as 53.3% of respondents believe their own family’s economic situation will improve over the next five years.

Positive environment to become an entrepreneur					
	 Agree (%)	 Disagree (%)	 Neutral (%)	 Refuse / Don't Know (%)	 Not Applicable (%)
Overall	18.1	69.3	9.7	2.9	-
Madhesh	14.7	73.5	11.4	0.4	-
Lumbini	20.6	63.4	11.1	4.9	-
Kathmandu	18.9	71.0	6.5	3.6	-











Positive employment opportunities in the country					
	 Agree (%)	 Disagree (%)	 Neutral (%)	 Refuse / Don't Know (%)	 Not Applicable (%)
Overall	7.8	85.7	5.6	0.9	-
Madhesh	6.3	89.2	4.2	0.3	-
Lumbini	6.7	84.9	7.4	1.0	-
Kathmandu	10.5	83.1	5.3	1.1	-

Figure 1A-1: Comparative respondent perspectives on entrepreneurial environment and employment opportunities

Able to find work matching skills and knowledge					
	 Agree (%)	 Disagree (%)	 Neutral (%)	 Refuse / Don't Know (%)	 Not Applicable (%)
Overall	19.5	62.3	11.7	1.1	5.4
Madhesh	12.6	65.7	18.3	0.2	3.2
Lumbini	18.5	59.3	12.6	1.2	8.4
Kathmandu	27.4	62.1	4.2	1.7	4.6






Family's economic situation will be better in 5 years					
	 Agree (%)	 Disagree (%)	 Neutral (%)	 Refuse / Don't Know (%)	 Not Applicable (%)
Overall	53.3	26.7	15.5	4.5	-
Madhesh	38.8	36.0	24.2	1.0	-
Lumbini	60.5	20.6	13.4	5.5	-
Kathmandu	60.4	23.4	8.8	7.4	-

Figure 1A-2: Comparative respondent perspectives on employment opportunities and prospects

## B. The Reality of Youth Migration

Among the respondents, there is a consensus on the drivers of Nepal's youth exodus. An overwhelming 92% of them agree that youth are migrating strictly because there are no

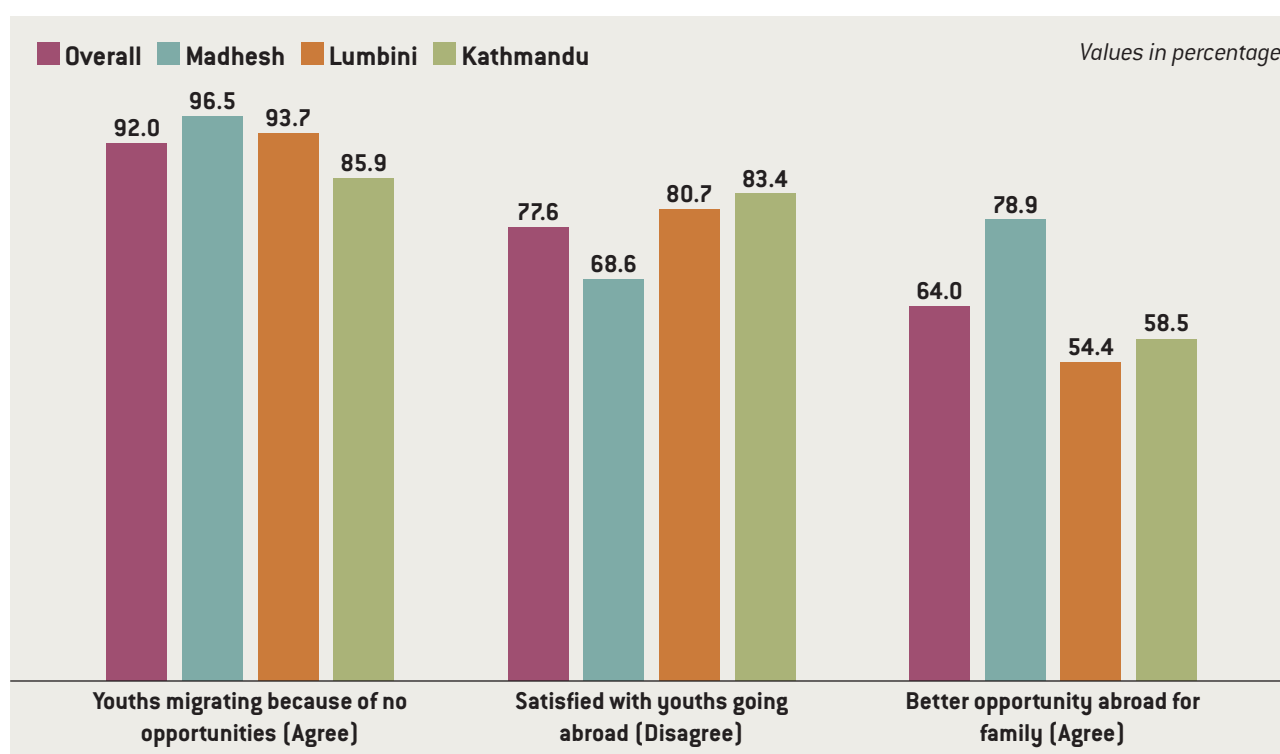


Figure 1B: Respondent views on migration

opportunities at home. While 77.6% of the respondents are dissatisfied with this trend of outmigration, pragmatism heavily outweighs ideological disapproval. When assessing the prospects for their own family and relatives, 64% of the respondents admit that they see better employment opportunities abroad for their family members than they do domestically.

### C. The Monopoly of Opportunity

The data reveals that public trust in a meritocratic economy is very low. The reality of the economic opportunity gap is that the system is heavily favorable towards the elite. When asked to rank who has the best opportunities in the country, ordinary citizens ranked last at a mere 1.1%. 58% of respondents believe political leaders have the best opportunities, followed by individuals with direct access to those leaders (14.4%) and big businessmen (13.8%).

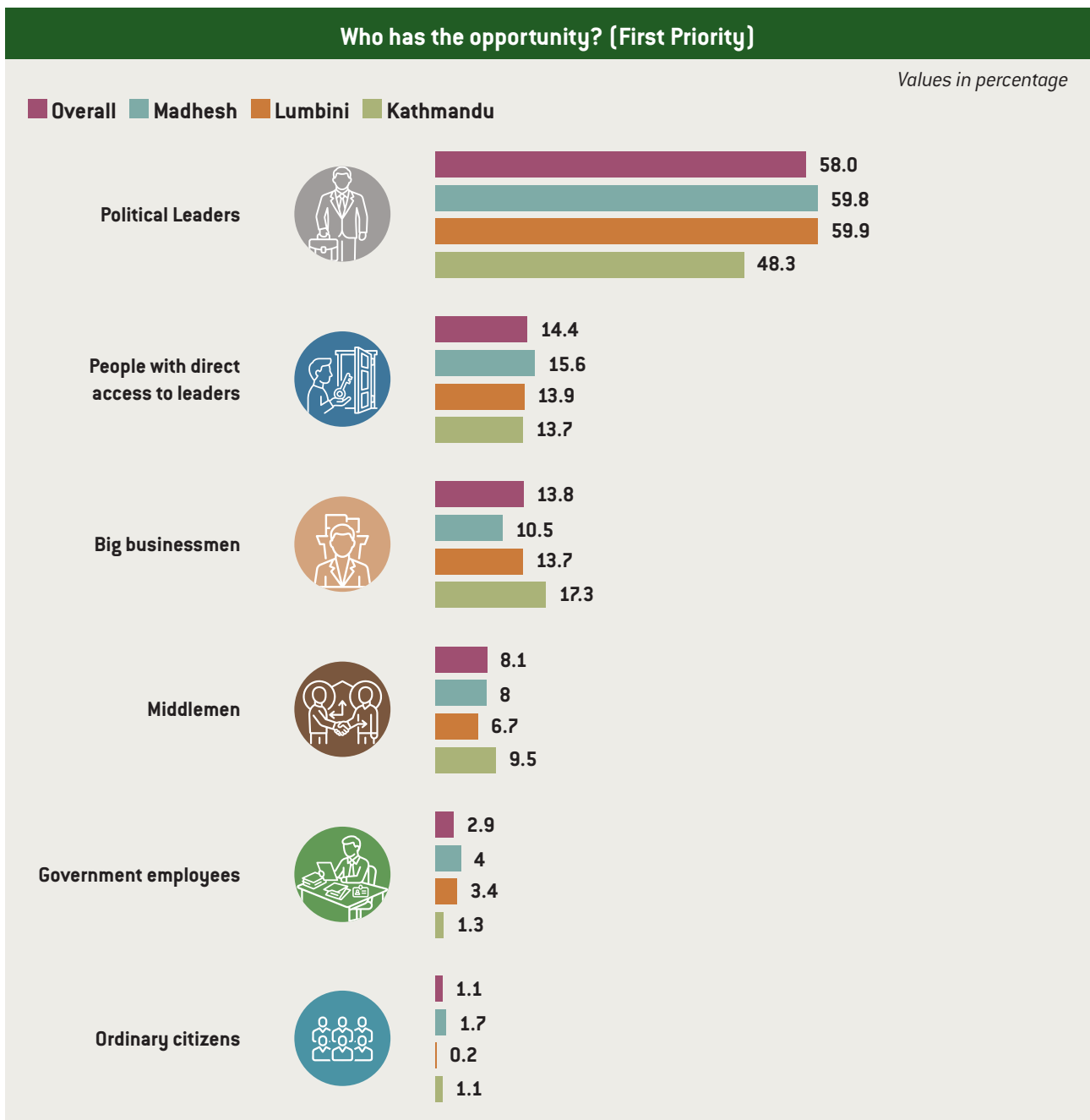


Figure 1C: Comparative respondent perspective on who has opportunity in Nepal

## D. Valued Professions

The Nepali job market has not been able to keep up with the human resources being produced by academic institutions. This is evident in the public perception that practical skilled trades have better opportunities than academic degrees. Only 28.1% of respondents believe highly educated individuals have good opportunities, and a mere 19% view farming favorably. Instead, they place the highest premium on highly practical skills with technical workers (electricians, plumbers) viewed as having the best opportunities (54.7%), followed by individuals earning from social media (43.3%) and IT/AI professionals (41.0%).

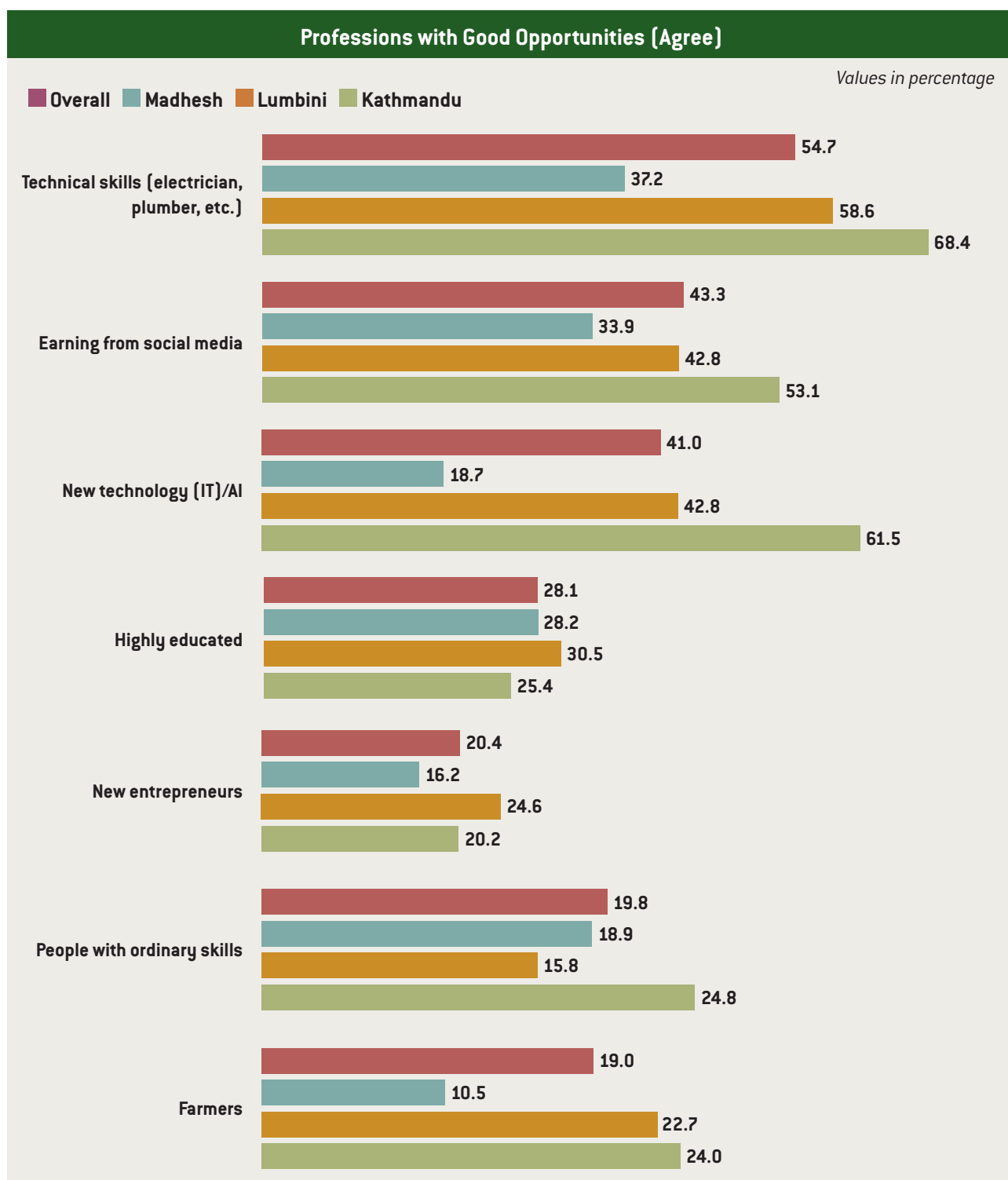


Figure 1D: Respondent views on which professions offer the best opportunities

## E. Investment Needs & Employment Drivers

To generate domestic employment and fix the economy, respondents point to foundational and systemic industrialization. Agriculture is identified as the top sector desperately requiring investment (68.4%), followed by education and educational consultancy (49.3%) and healthcare (40.1%). When evaluating the mechanisms to create these jobs, 68.0% of respondents identified the establishment of large industries and factories as the most important factor, followed by the commercialization of agriculture (53.9%) and political stability (45.8%).

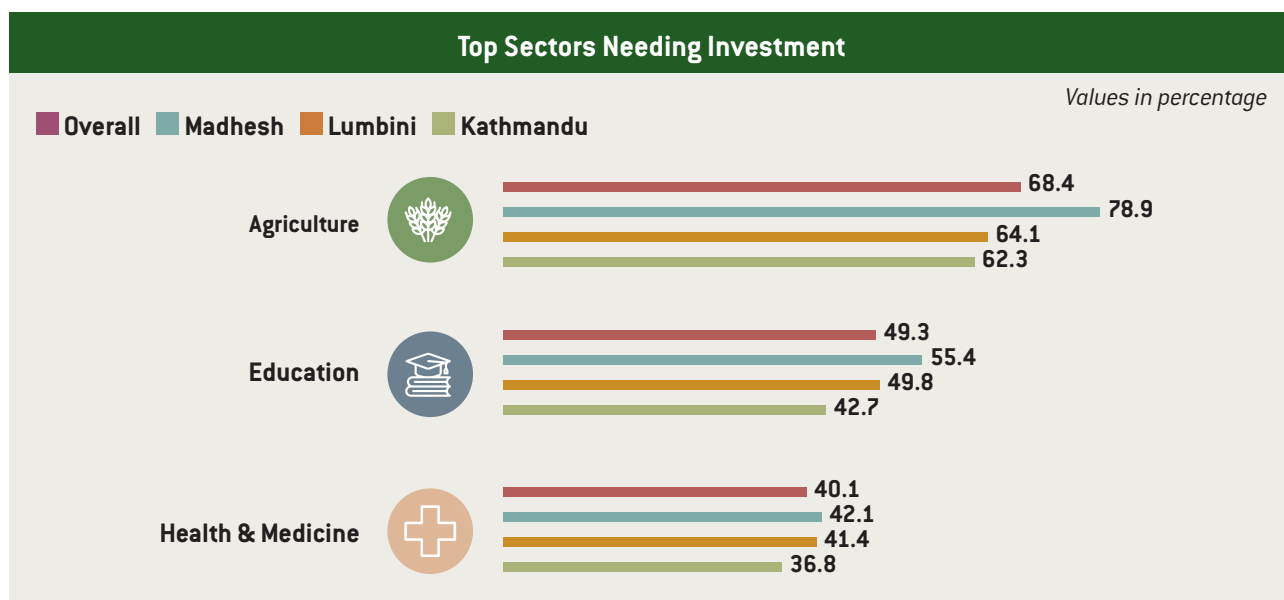


Figure 1E-1: Respondents' views on which sector requires the most immediate investment

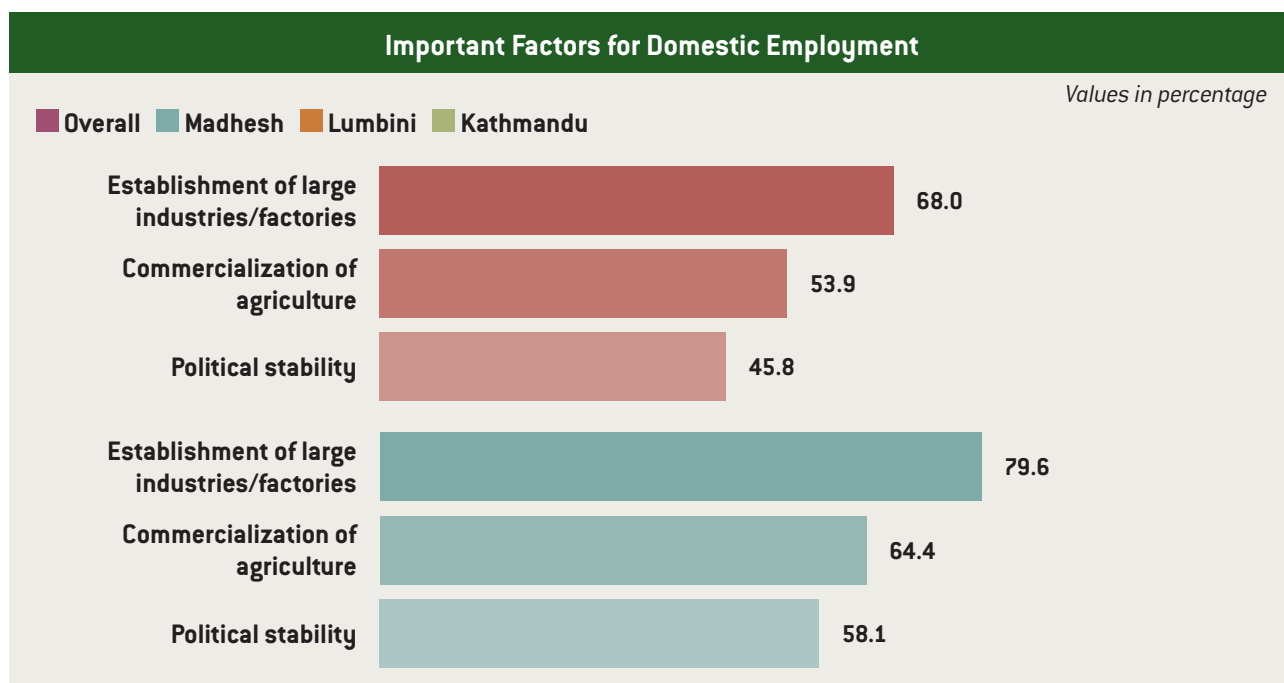


Figure 1E-2: Respondents' perception on factors for generating domestic employment

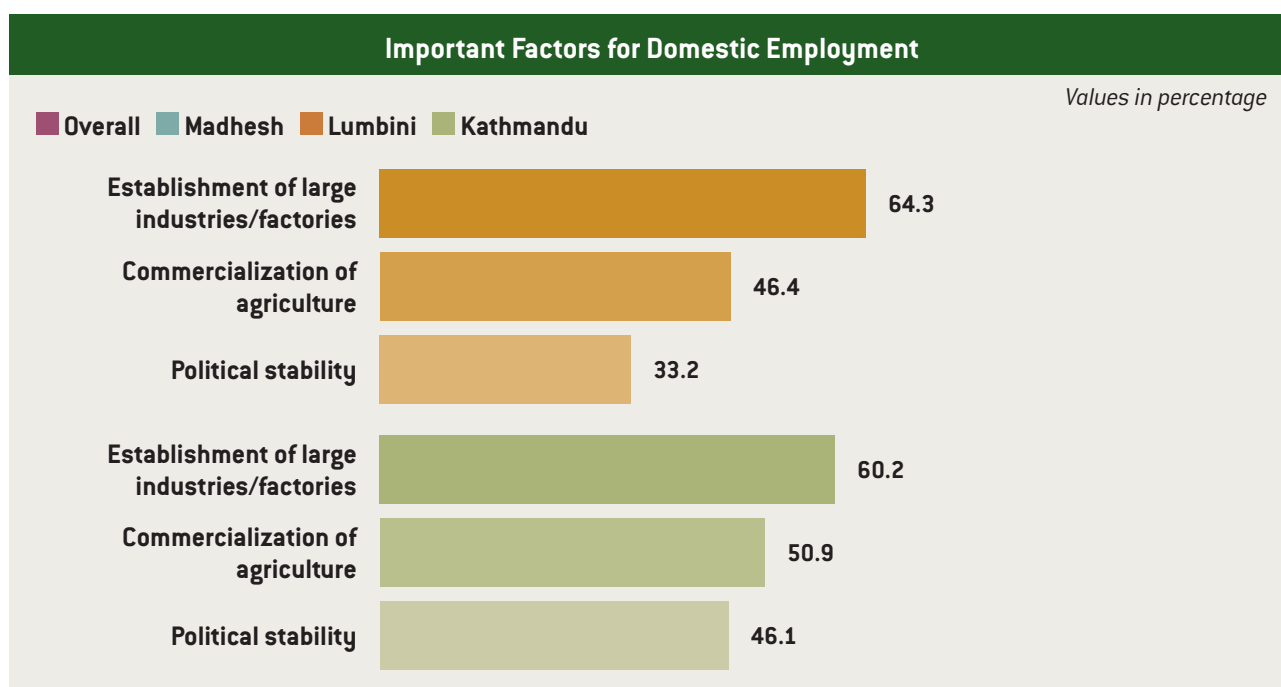


Figure 1E-3: Respondents' perception on factors for generating domestic employment

### F. Major Barriers to Employment

Validating the perceptions of an economy favorable to those with access, respondents do not view a lack of personal merit as their main hurdle. 68% of them view lack of access/connections as the primary barrier to finding employment. This systemic roadblock overshadows personal qualifiers such as educational qualifications (39.4%) or a lack of work experience (34.9%). Furthermore, 33.2% of the respondents cite the dominance of middlemen as a critical barrier, reinforcing the reality that navigating political gatekeepers is a prerequisite for economic participation.

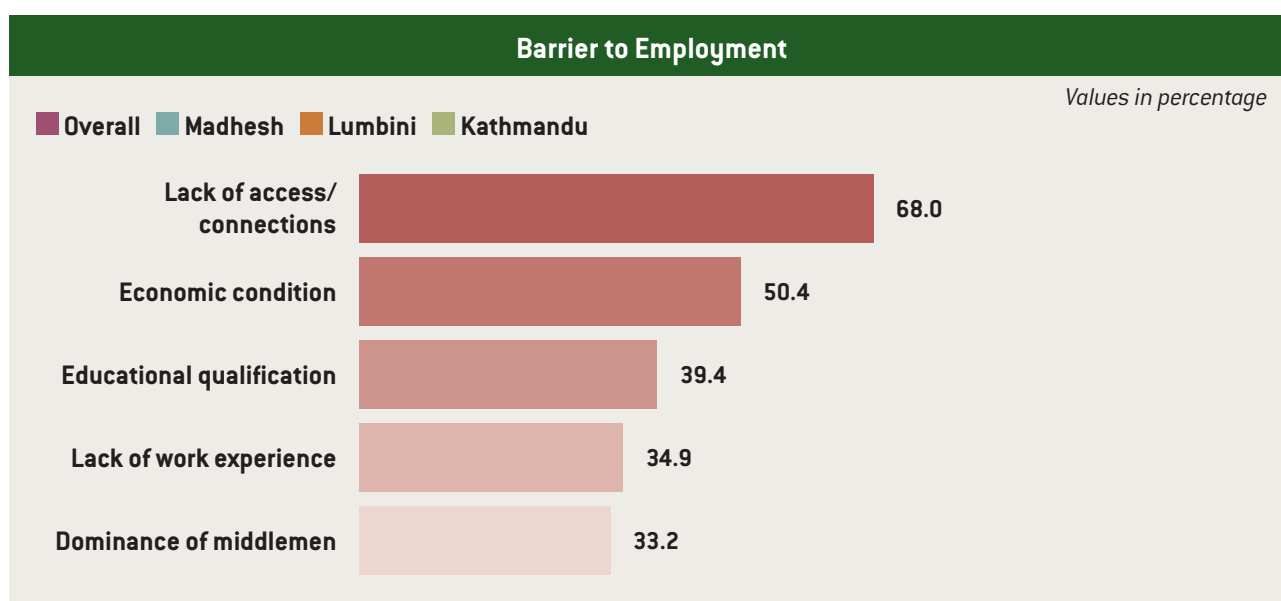


Figure 1F-1: Respondent views on major barriers to employment

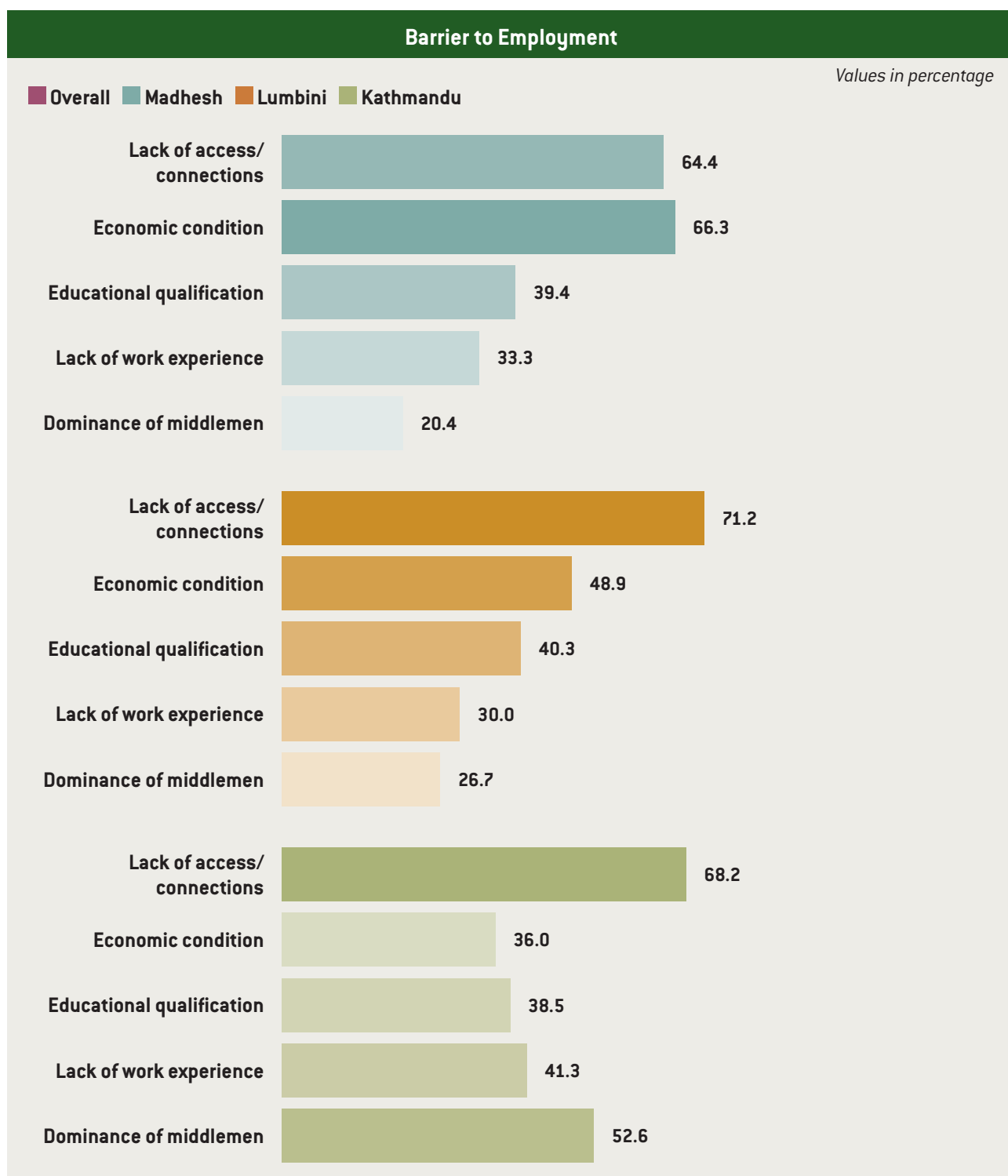


Figure 1F-2: Respondent views on major barriers to employment

## 2. Major Contradictions: The Paradoxes of Economic Sentiment

The survey reveals multiple paradoxes about how Nepali respondents view the economic prospects for the country versus how they see the same prospects for themselves. These paradoxes highlight how individuals while critical about the possibility of national job opportunities and unhappy about youth migration are open to adapting their personal lives to pursue their own interests within the country or abroad.

### A. Macro-Pessimism vs. Micro-Optimism (The “Country vs. Family” Reality)

The most striking contradiction in the survey is the disconnect between how citizens view the macroeconomic future of Nepal and how they view their own microeconomic household reality.

On a national level, the outlook is overwhelmingly gloomy. A staggering 85.7% disagree that there are positive domestic employment opportunities, and 56.3% actively doubt that the national job market will improve over the next five years. Furthermore, 62.3% feel the country does not offer work that matches their skills.

In contrast, when the questioning shifts from the nation to the individual, the data appears a lot more positive. Despite their pessimism about domestic employment opportunities, 63.4% of respondents report being satisfied with their current profession, and 64.2% state their family’s current income is sufficient to cover living expenses. Most crucially, while they do not trust the national job market to grow, 53.3% remain optimistic that their own family’s financial situation will improve in the next five years.

This contradiction suggests that although citizens are skeptical about the state’s ability to provide opportunities, they maintain hopeful confidence in their own personal resilience, adaptability, and alternative income streams (such as the informal economy or remittances).

**Table 1: The Macro-Pessimism vs. Micro-Optimism Reality**

Economic Metric	National Outlook (Macro)	Personal/Family Reality (Micro)
Current Employment Satisfaction	7.8% (Believe national opportunities are positive)	63.4% (Satisfied with own current profession)
Current Financial Sufficiency	18.1% (Believe entrepreneurial environment is positive)	64.2% (State family income is sufficient to cover expenses)
5-Year Future Outlook	20.1% (Believe national job opportunities will increase)	53.3% (Believe own family’s economic situation will improve)

### B. Ideological Disapproval vs. Pragmatic Acceptance of Migration

The survey exposes a deep moral and pragmatic conflict regarding the ongoing youth exodus. Ideologically, people are unhappy about the loss of young workforce. When asked about the general trend of youth outmigration, a significant 77.6% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, indicating a collective national discontent over the loss of human capital and the forced separation of families.

However, when the abstract concept of “national youth migration” becomes a personal question about their own children or siblings, ideological disapproval is replaced by the need

for pragmatism. 64% of respondents openly admit they see better employment opportunities abroad for their own family members than they do in Nepal.

Respondents disapprove of the system that forces youth to leave, but as individuals, they actively encourage and facilitate the migration of their own kin because they recognize it as the most viable path to financial security.

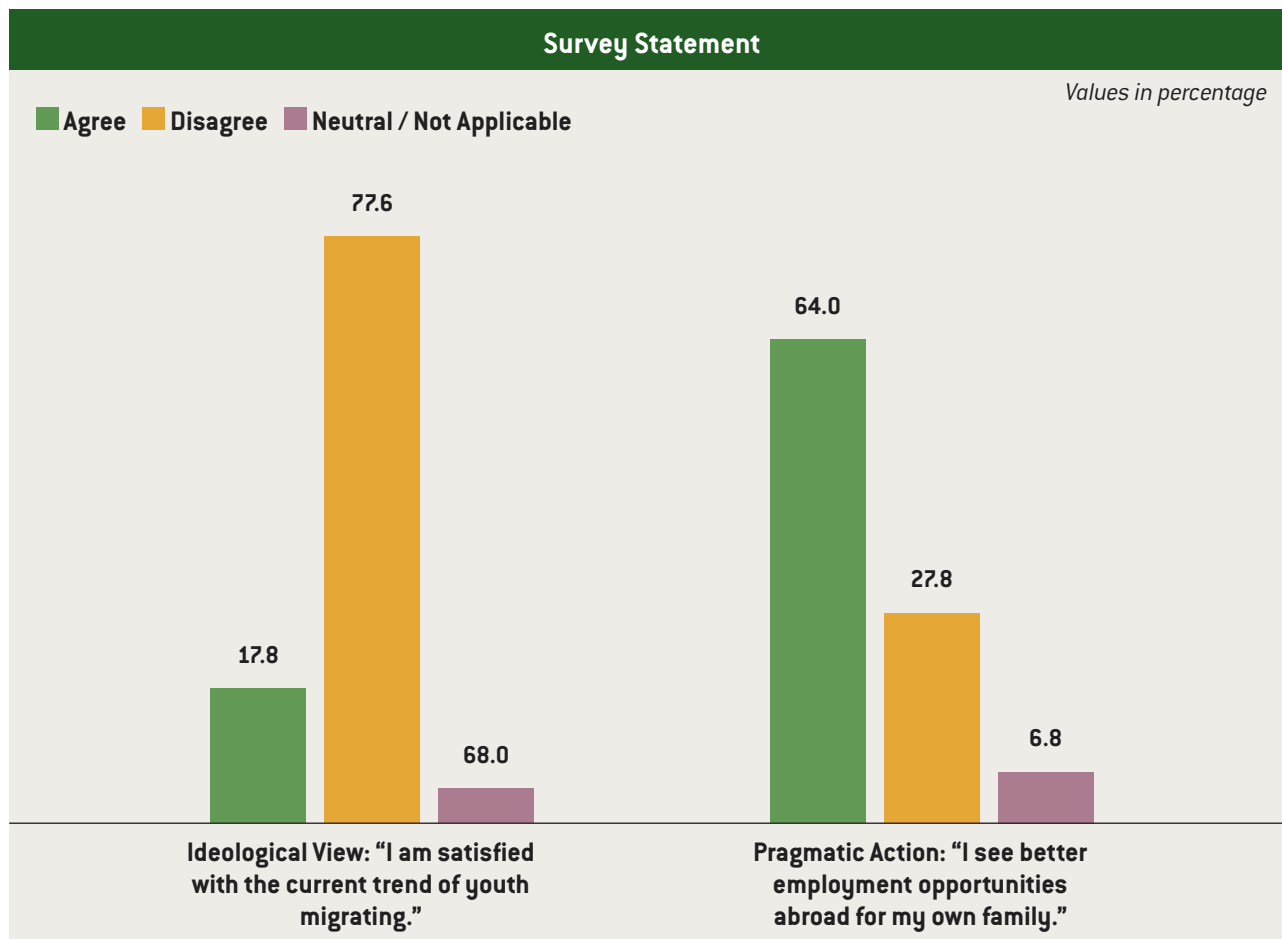


Figure 2: The Ideological vs. Pragmatic Acceptance of Migration

### C. The Agriculture Reality

Agriculture is viewed through a highly complex lens: it is viewed as both the country’s ultimate economic lifeline and the least rewarding sector for workers to survive on.

When the survey participants were asked to identify the sectors that require investment to fix the national economy, agriculture ranked first at 68.4%. Furthermore, 53.9% identified commercialization of agriculture as one of the most vital factors for generating domestic employment. The public clearly sees the land as the engine for Nepal’s sustainable prosperity.

Yet, the current reality of working that land is viewed as an economically unsustainable. When asked which professions currently offer good opportunities, farmers ranked at the bottom (19%), trailing far behind technical workers, IT professionals, and social media earners.

These responses encapsulate nuanced economic understanding. The respondents know that a modernized, commercialized agricultural sector could save the national economy, but they also acknowledge that traditional, unsupported farming in its current state is a failing livelihood.

**Table 2 : The Agriculture Reality (Potential vs. Current Viability)**

Perception Angle	Metric / Sector Assessment	Public Agreement (%)
The Macro-Economic Hope	Agriculture identified as the #1 top sector requiring urgent national investment	68.4%
The Structural Solution	Commercialization of agriculture seen as a primary driver for domestic employment	53.9%
The Micro-Economic Reality	Belief that current farmers have “good opportunities” in the country	19.0% (Ranked Lowest)

### 3. Provincial Comparisons: Divergent Realities

The survey results highlight that citizens across Madhesh Province, Lumbini Province, and the Kathmandu Valley are experiencing different economies.

#### A. Financial Satisfaction and Future Optimism

There is a stark contrast in how citizens feel about their current financial survival and their future prospects.

Kathmandu Valley (High Current Satisfaction): Kathmandu boasts the highest satisfaction rates, with 77.3% stating their income covers their expenses and 71.2% expressing satisfaction with their current profession. Furthermore, 27.4% feel they are effectively utilizing their skills, more than double the rate seen in Madhesh.

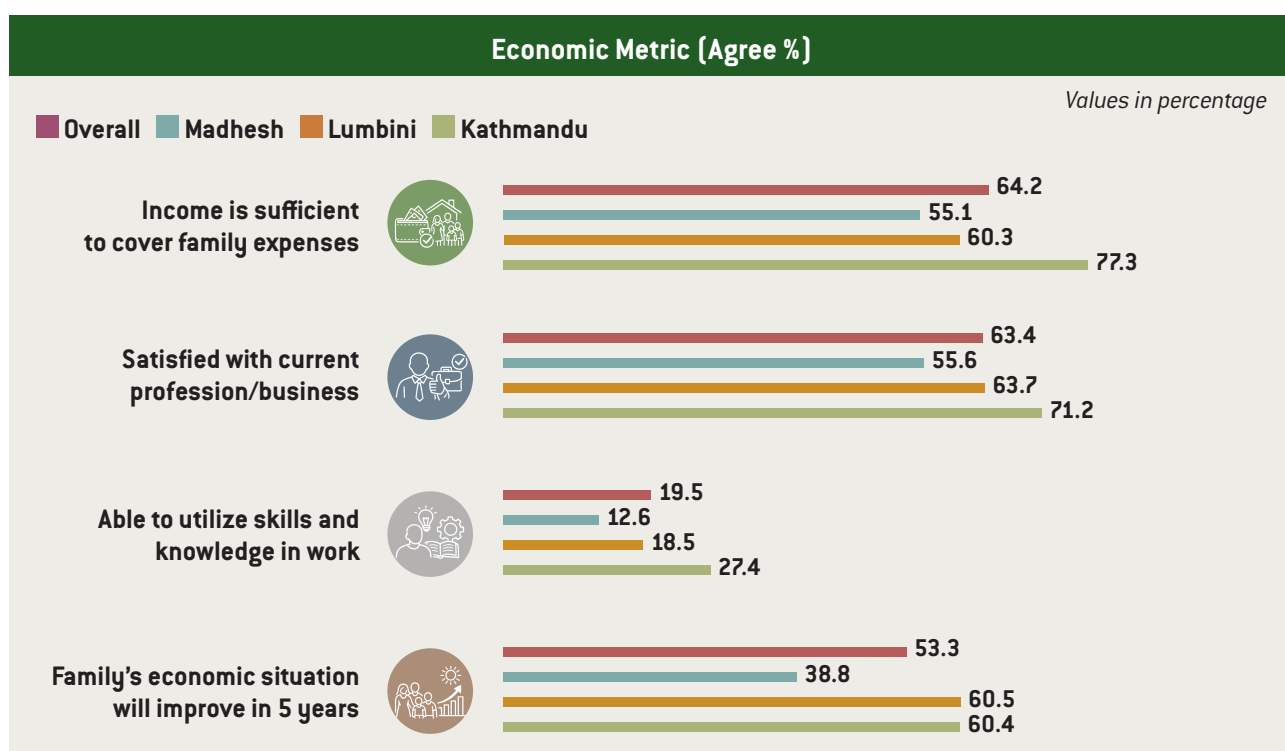


Figure 3A: Financial Satisfaction and Future Optimism by Province

Madhesh Province (Deep Disillusionment): Citizens in Madhesh report the lowest levels of current satisfaction. Only 55.1% feel their income covers their family expenses, and merely 55.6% are satisfied with their current profession.

Lumbini Province (The Optimistic Middle): Lumbini serves as an optimistic bridge. While its current satisfaction sits in the middle, it shares Kathmandu’s strong sense of personal optimism, with 60.5% believing their family’s economic situation will improve over the next five years.

## B. The Push for Migration vs. Local Opportunity

Geographic location has a significant bearing on whether citizens look inward or outward for their family’s survival.

Madhesh (The Ultimate Push for Migration): Majority of the Madheshi respondents looked beyond their country for opportunities. A staggering 78.9% state they see better employment opportunities abroad for their own families, and 53% identify foreign countries as the best location for opportunities.

Kathmandu (Localized Hope): A significant portion of Kathmandu respondents (23.8%) actually believe the best opportunities are right in Kathmandu, relying far less on foreign countries compared to Madhesh.

Lumbini (Resistance to Migration): Lumbini respondents are the least likely to favor going abroad: 80.7% are dissatisfied with the trend of youth migration, and only 54.4% look to foreign countries for family opportunities (the lowest among the three regions).

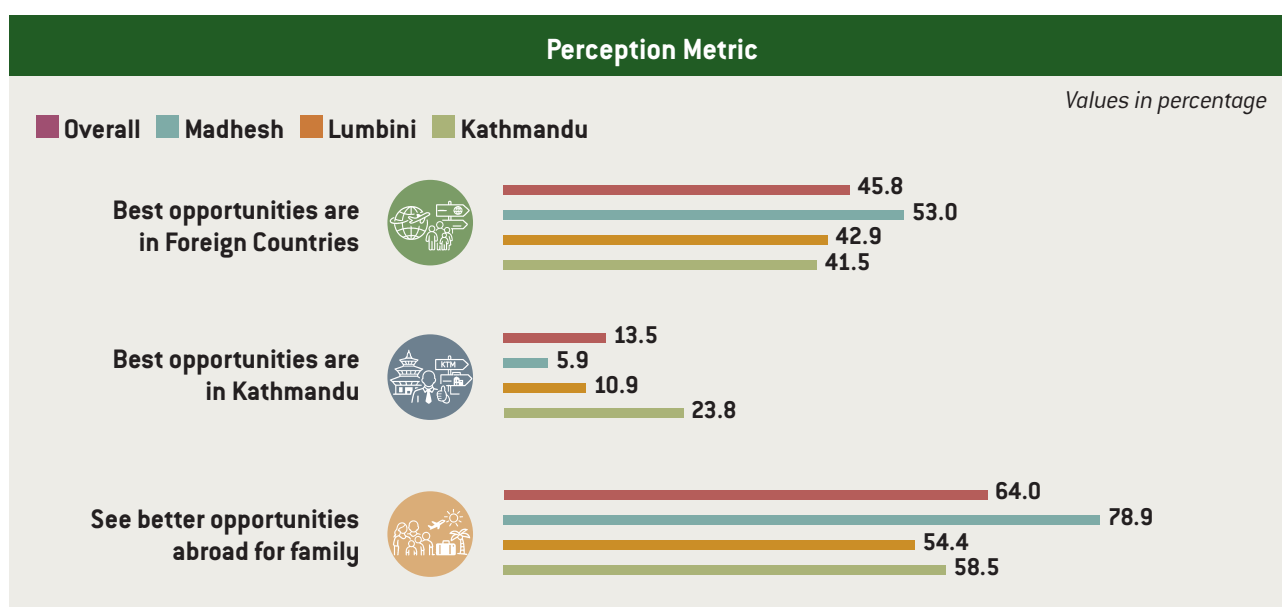


Figure 3B: Location of Opportunity & The Migration Push

### C. The Geographic Divide in Investment Priorities

The data also highlights that the provinces envision completely different economic futures based on their current infrastructural realities.

**Madhesh (Agrarian & Trade Reliance):** The investment priorities in Madhesh reflect a fight for basic economic stability. A substantial 78.9% demand investment in agriculture, and 52% prioritize business. Very few focused on digital economy with only 2.3% picking tech investments as a priority.

**Kathmandu (The Modern Economy Pivot):** The capital is highly focused on a post-agrarian future. Kathmandu respondents see huge potential in IT/AI (61.5%) and social media income. Consequently, they push for investment in tourism (39.6%) and technology (18.7%).

**Lumbini (The Rise of SMEs):** Lumbini shows a highly balanced economic desire. While the Lumbini respondents emphasize agriculture (64.1%), they also show the highest regional demand for investment in Small, Medium, and Domestic Enterprises (SMEs) at 32.1%.



Figure 3C: The Geographic Divide in Investment Priorities

## D. Structural Barriers to Employment (Foundational vs. Systemic)

While the respondents from all three regions stated lack of political access (*Pahunch*) as a primary hurdle, the secondary hurdles they face are entirely different.

**Madhesh (Foundational Constraints):** Job barriers in Madhesh are fundamentally rooted in poverty and social standing. 66.3% of respondents cite their poor economic condition as a primary barrier to employment (the highest in the survey), while 15.4% specifically point to their personal identity as a systemic hurdle.

**Kathmandu (The “Bichouliya” Bottleneck):** While Kathmandu respondents face fewer foundational constraints like extreme poverty, they are trapped in a highly corrupt, networking-driven job market. A massive 52.6% of them specifically cite the dominance of middlemen (*Bichouliya*) as a primary barrier to employment, which is more than double the rate reported in Madhesh (20.4%).

**Lumbini (Personal Conditions):** For the respondents from Lumbini, personal economic condition and lack of work experience featured as secondary hurdles at 48.9% and 40.3% respectively.



Figure 3D: Structural Barriers to Employment by Province

## 4. The Intersections of Opportunity

### The Intersections of Opportunity

The concept of “Equality of Opportunity” is premised upon the belief that an individual’s demographic background such as their age, education, or gender should not prevent them from achieving success if they apply personal effort.

A cross tabulation of respondent sentiment against independent demographic variables unveils complex structural barriers. The following analysis breaks down how age, educational attainment, income, and gender independently affect respondent sentiment, and how all these variables ultimately intersect with the systemic barrier of the Nepali economy: “Pahunch” (Lack of Political Access).

#### A. Age: Gen-Z Ambition vs. Generational Reality

The survey reveals a sharp generational divide regarding economic optimism, current job satisfaction, and the necessity of migration.

There is an inverse relationship between age and optimism regarding the domestic entrepreneurial environment. The youngest demographic (Gen-Z, 18–25 years) is the most optimistic, with 22.3% agreeing that the environment is positive for starting a business. In contrast, the oldest demographic (61+ years) is the least optimistic, at just 12.9%.

However, this youthful optimism does not translate into current stability. Older generations are significantly more satisfied with their current professions (73.5% for the 61+ group) compared to younger cohorts entering the workforce. The youth who have had more exposure and hence, are ambitious have a greater likelihood of seeking options abroad. A significant 70% of the 18–25 age group sees better opportunities abroad for their families, a sentiment that slowly decreases with age.

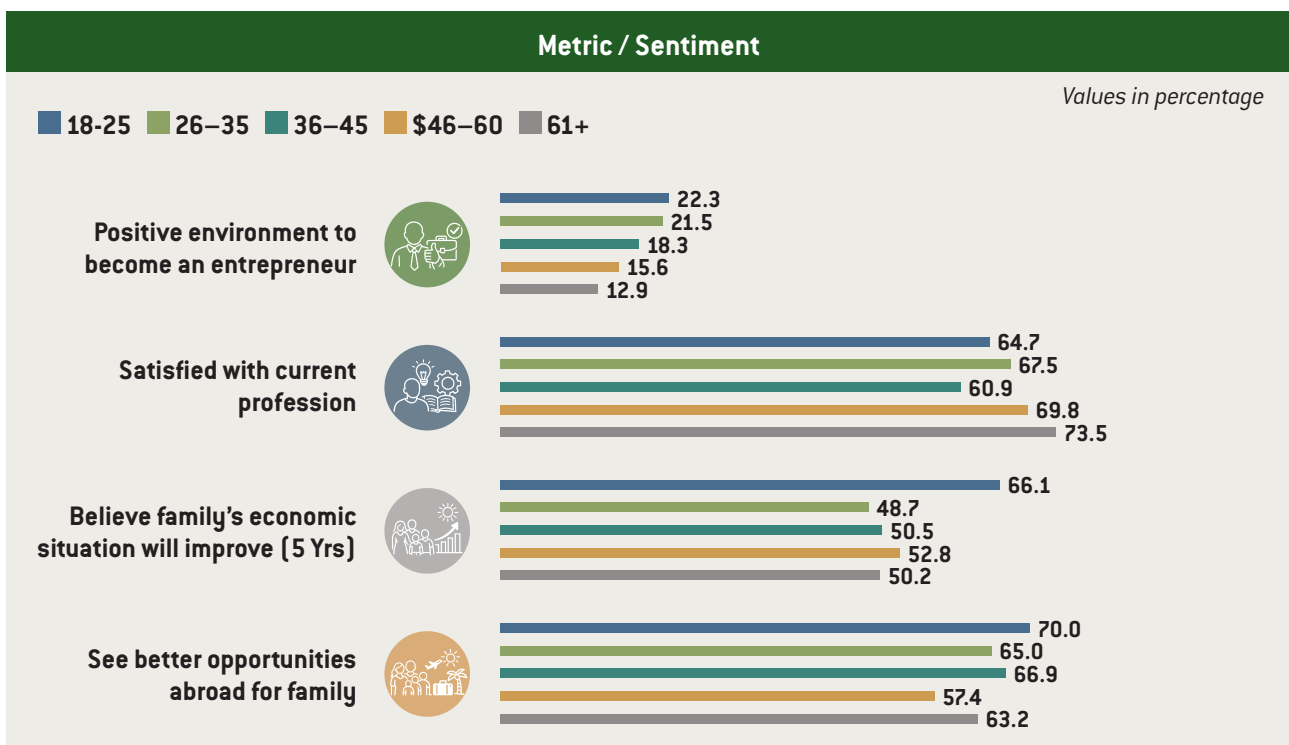


Figure 4A: Generational Divides in Economic Sentiment

## B. Educational Attainment: The Disillusionment of the Educated

The data exposes the biggest paradox regarding formal education: as educational qualifications increase, optimism about the domestic entrepreneurial environment actively decreases.

While 22.2% of illiterate respondents view the domestic business environment positively, only 14% of those with a bachelor’s degree or higher share this view. Highly educated citizens, who have invested the most time and capital on personal qualifications, find the Nepali business environment particularly discouraging because they recognize that academic credentials are often not enough without socio-political clout and connection.

However, higher education does yield significant dividends in immediate financial stability. Only 43.2% of illiterate respondents feel their income covers their family expenses, whereas 79.1% of those with a bachelor’s degree or above feel financially sufficient. The educated recognize the limits of traditional areas of work and see digital sectors as a more promising alternative: 61% of respondents with a bachelor’s degree or higher view IT/AI as having excellent opportunities.

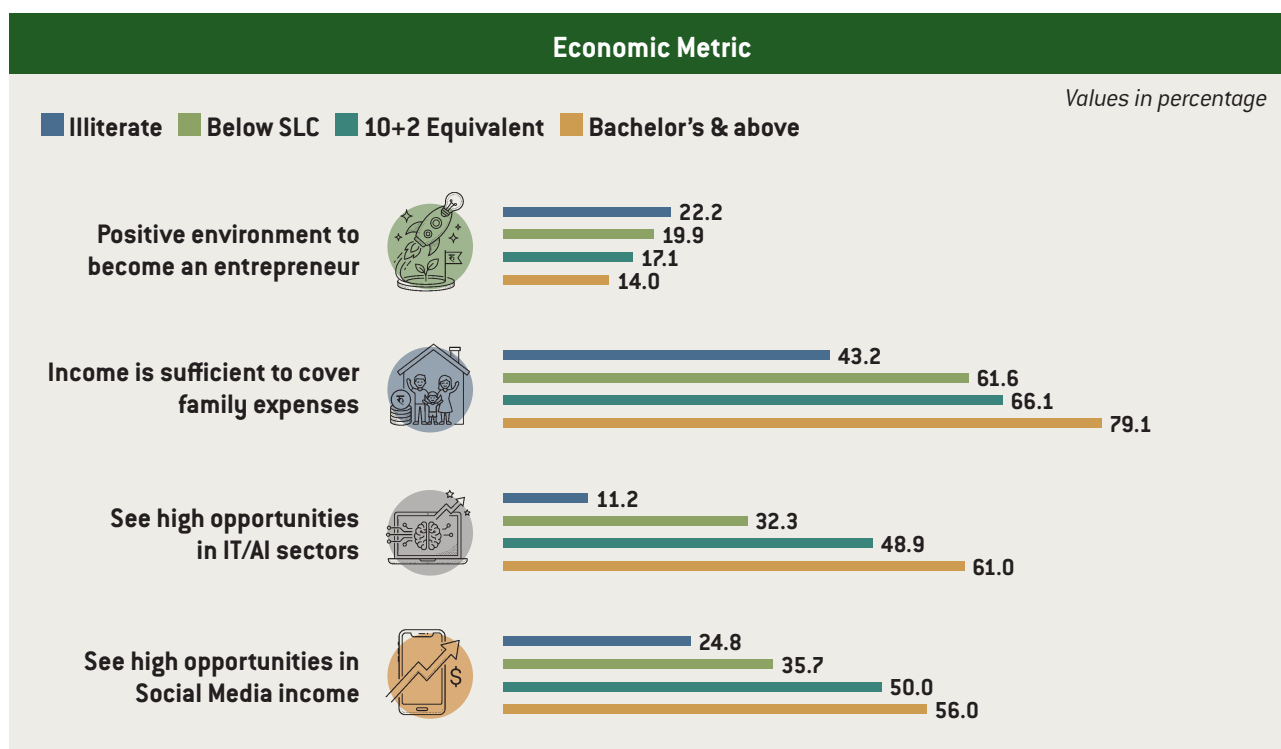


Figure 4B: The Impact of Educational Attainment

## C. Income: The Baseline for Future Optimism

The survey findings reveal a strong, direct positive correlation between current monthly income and future economic optimism. Economic hardships foster deep systemic pessimism, while financial security provides the foundation for future hope.

Among respondents earning the lowest bracket (less than Rs. 10,000 monthly), only 21% agree that their income covers their family’s expenses, and only 22.9% feel confident that their financial future will improve over the next five years. In contrast, satisfaction is high among the highest earners: 86.8% of individuals earning more than Rs. 50,000 agree their income is sufficient, and 66.2% of this demographic are optimistic about their future.

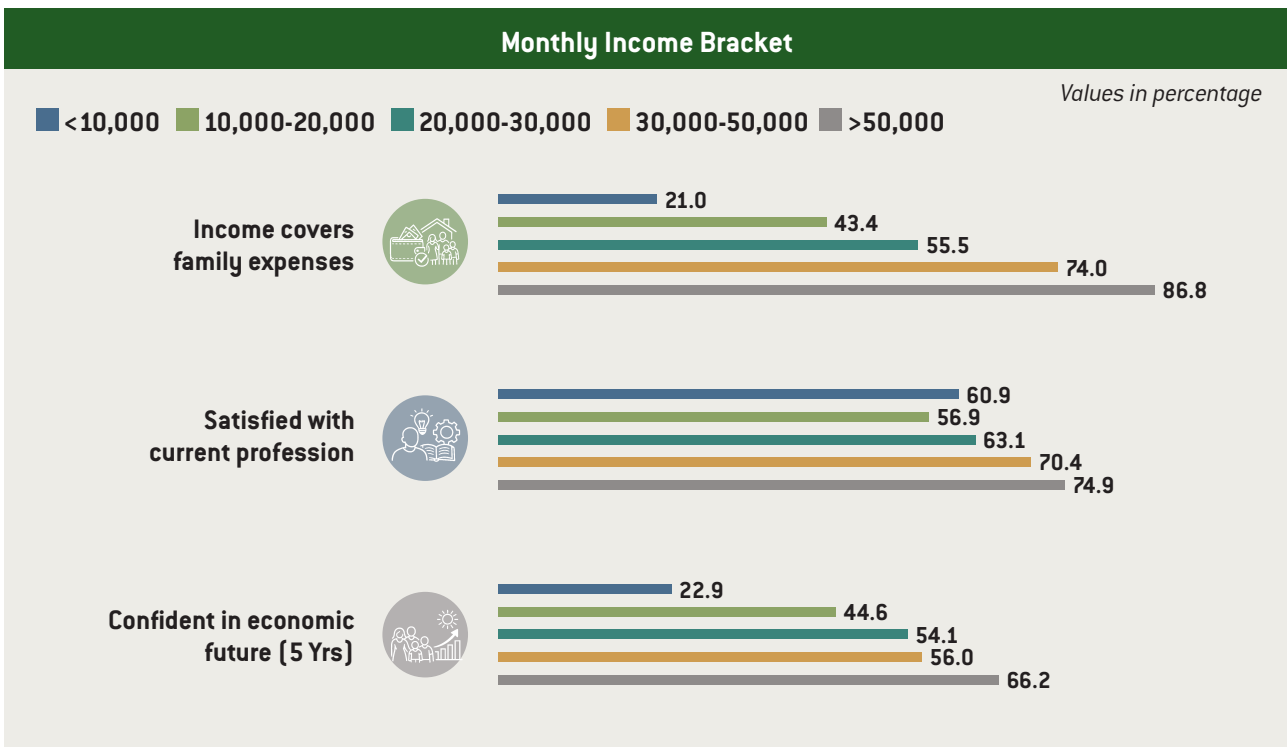


Figure 4C: Income as a Predictor of Economic Sentiment

### D. Gender Aspect: Differing Perspectives and Various Obstacles

In the survey, women appear to be slightly more positive about the country's entrepreneurial environment than men. 24% of women agree that the environment for becoming an entrepreneur within the country is positive, whereas only 12.4% of men share this view.

The main reason for this disparity is that men and women face different sets of challenges:

**Men's Challenges:** Men are primarily frustrated by systemic political patronage and gatekeeping networks. Among those who cited a lack of access/connections as a barrier to employment, 71.3% were men. Additionally, 42.3% of men considered the dominance of middlemen to be a major obstacle.

**Women's Challenges:** On the other hand, women are more troubled by domestic responsibilities and a lack of education rather than the country's systemic issues. 20.4% of women view domestic circumstances (household chores and family care) as a barrier to employment, which is nearly double the percentage of men who feel the same. Similarly, 42% of women consider educational qualification to be a major obstacle, while the number of men who say so is lower.

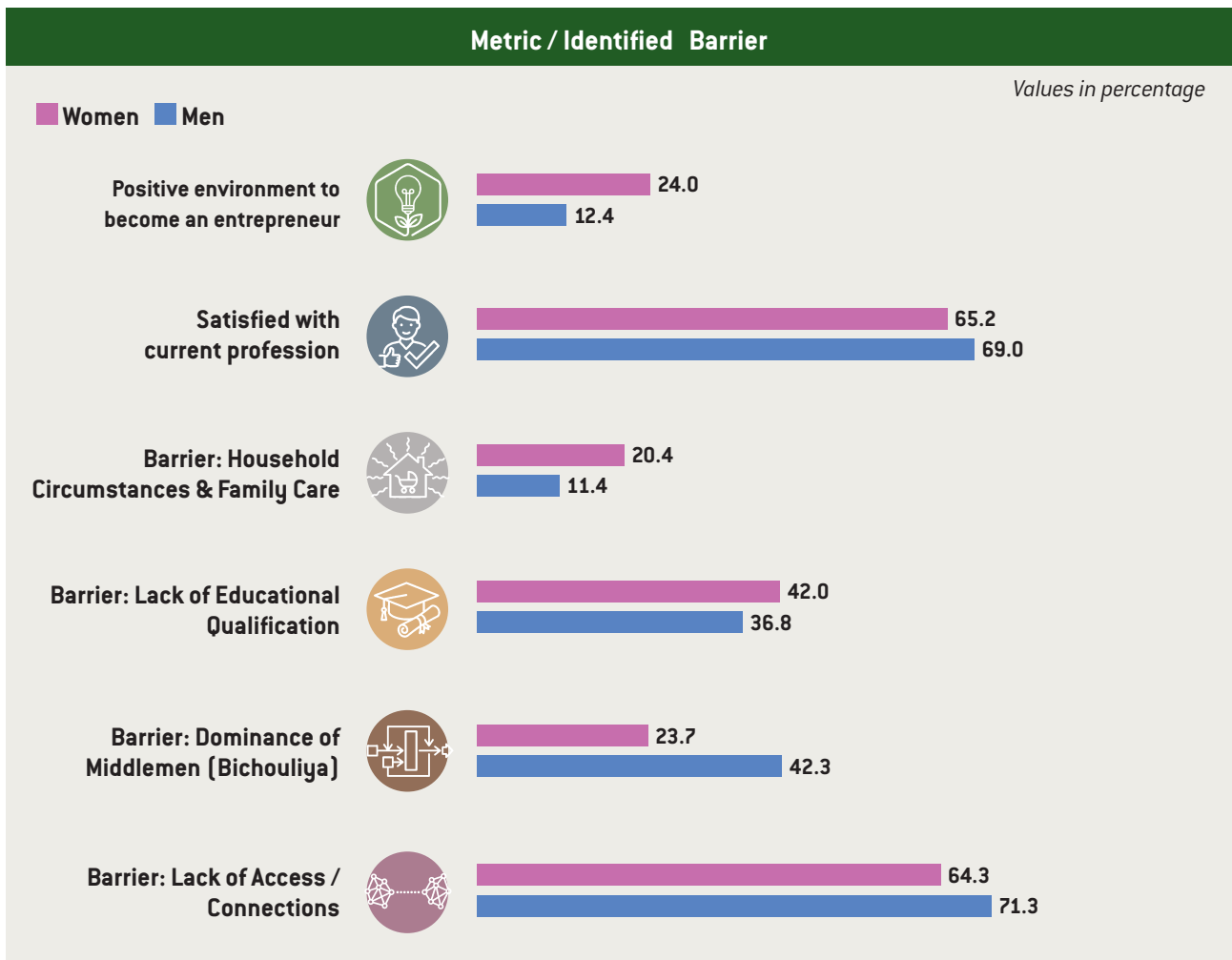


Figure 4D: Gender Sentiments and Structural Barriers

## 5. The Intersection of “Pahunch” (Access)

While the analysis looks at opinions across different groups separately, the overall findings show a deeper problem in Nepal’s economy: political connections matter more than merit.

In a functioning economy, the intersection of certain demographics such as being young, highly educated, and living in an urban center would ideally guarantee high economic mobility. However, the survey shows that in Nepal, these demographic advantages are nullified by systemic gatekeeping.

Regardless of whether a respondent is a highly educated youth in Kathmandu or an illiterate farmer in Madhesh, they ultimately face the same macro-barrier. Across the provinces, 68% of respondents cite “lack of access” as the primary barrier to employment, superseding education, experience, and geography.

**Table 3: Intersecting Demographics with Pahunch**

Demographic Intersection	Unique Micro-Barrier (Personal Hurdle)	The Dominant Systemic Barrier Faced	The Ultimate Economic Reality
Young + Highly Educated + Kathmandu	Navigating a highly competitive, tech-driven job market.	Bureaucratic Gatekeeping: 68.2% face a lack of political access; 52.6% are blocked by middlemen.	81.2% of this group believe political leaders hoard opportunities, neutralizing their educational advantage.
Older + Madhesh	Foundational Poverty: 66.3% blocked by extreme economic constraints.	Foundational Gatekeeping: 64.4% face a lack of political access.	86.1% believe political leaders hoard opportunities, leaving them dependent on traditional survival.
Gen-Z + Low Education + Lumbini	The Network Deficit: Lacking the capital to act on their high entrepreneurial optimism [20.6%].	The Access Deficit: 71.2% face a lack of access/connections as their primary hurdle.	77.7% believe political leaders control the economy, forcing them to look abroad.

The multivariate data definitively proves that “Equality of Opportunity” is currently just a theoretical concept in Nepal. Until the variables of individual effort and education hold more statistical weight in determining economic success than the variables of political access and nepotism, sustainable domestic prosperity will remain unattainable.

## Conclusion

This survey highlights the complex reality surrounding the availability of economic opportunities in the country. While Nepal faces significant economic hurdles, the core problem is not merely a lack of jobs, but a profound lack of equitable access to the opportunities that do exist. A staggering 92% of citizens strongly believe that youth are migrating abroad simply because there are no opportunities left for them at home. This mass exodus is driven by a deep-seated public perception that existing resources are monopolized by a privileged few, leaving the public with minimal pathways to success.

There is a huge gap between the ideal of “equality of opportunity”, where success is based on personal effort, and the practical reality in Nepal. Modern economics advocates that hard work should dictate success, yet the survey reveals severe systemic discrimination: only 2% of citizens believe an ordinary person can secure economic opportunities. In comparison, 81.7% of citizens believe political leaders are the most well placed to access opportunities and 68% believe only those with direct connections have similar access. When political nepotism determines who receives economic benefits, skilled ordinary citizens are pushed outside the economic mainstream. This reality reduces equality of opportunity to a mere theoretical debate and severely weakens the social contract between the public and the state.

Furthermore, the survey illustrates how centralized development has created drastically different economic realities across the country. The geographic disparities are striking, portraying two distinct environments: high economic frustration and an agrarian focus in Madhesh, compared to a strong attraction toward modern technology and services in the Kathmandu Valley. These divergent realities prove that development policies must be tailored to regional needs rather than relying on a centralized approach.

Despite the widespread crisis in business confidence and low satisfaction levels, the data reveals cautious optimism toward the future. Interestingly, the number of people expecting their economic situation to improve over the next five years is almost three times higher than the number of people who view current employment opportunities positively. This reflects a silent trust and optimism among the citizens in potential new policy reforms and their own resilience. The respondents believe that Nepal can move towards managing potential reverse migration if it takes targeted actions in addressing the urgent need for investment in agriculture and large-scale industries and offers required support to the growing IT and technology sectors.

Ultimately, achieving sustainable prosperity in Nepal requires a fundamental shift in governance. Policymakers must move away from political nepotism and prioritize true equality of opportunity. They should also focus on building inclusive institutions that do more than just solely rely on statistics-based economic growth. By keeping citizens' perceptions and the principle of equal access at the center of future reforms, Nepal can build a fairer economy that rewards hard work and offers opportunities to youth that choose to build their own futures at home.



77 Kunwar Marga,  
Kathmandu-31, Nepal  
☎ 977-1-4564599  
✉ info@purakasia.org  
🌐 www.purakasia.org

Publication Date: 2026

DOI: 10.62657/Purak2606a

#### Acknowledgments

**Social Science Baha** team, led by **Dr. Jeevan Baniya** and **Sakar Sapkota**, for survey data collection. **Shehnaz Banu** for suggestions on the publication layout and **Bikram Chandra Majumdar** for the design.



Scan to read the  
full report

The views, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this report may not necessarily represent the institutional stance of Purak Asia.