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### An Assessment on the Trend of Urbanization in Nepal

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#### Abstract

Nepal is considered as one of the least urbanized countries in the world. The pace of urbanization in Nepal in terms of economic development and infrastructural development is very low. In Nepal, even there is inconsistency in the definition of urban because Nepal has defined and redefined the meaning of urban time and again which makes us confused. Moreover, the definition has not strictly been followed even at present before declaring the certain areas to be urban ones and the number of human settlements is declared as urban even without adequate infrastructure, facilities and services. This study assesses the historical context of declaring urban centres in Nepal and the trend of population growth in urban centres which is useful for development practitioners. Secondary information has been used and analytical research design has been followed. The urban population as a percentage of the total population of the country was 2.9 since 1950s -1961 and after that it reached 4.1 percent by 1971, 6.3 percent by 1981, 9.2 percent by 1991, 13.9 percent by 2001, 17.07 percent by 2011, and 27.2 percent by 2014. According to the progress report (FY 2076/077) issued in 2020 by the Ministry of Urban Development of Nepal, the total number of municipalities after the census of 2068 is 293 when the urban population is 62.2%.

**Keywords:** Urban, population, metropolitan city, sub-metropolitan city

#### Introduction

There is an evidence that cities emerged in the world as early as 5,500 years ago, the first of which were in Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley, the Indus Valley and the Hoang-ho Valley. There were several organizational factors that might have precipitated the formation of these early cities, including commercial and trade, religious and political factors (Frey & Zimmer, 2001). The proportion of people

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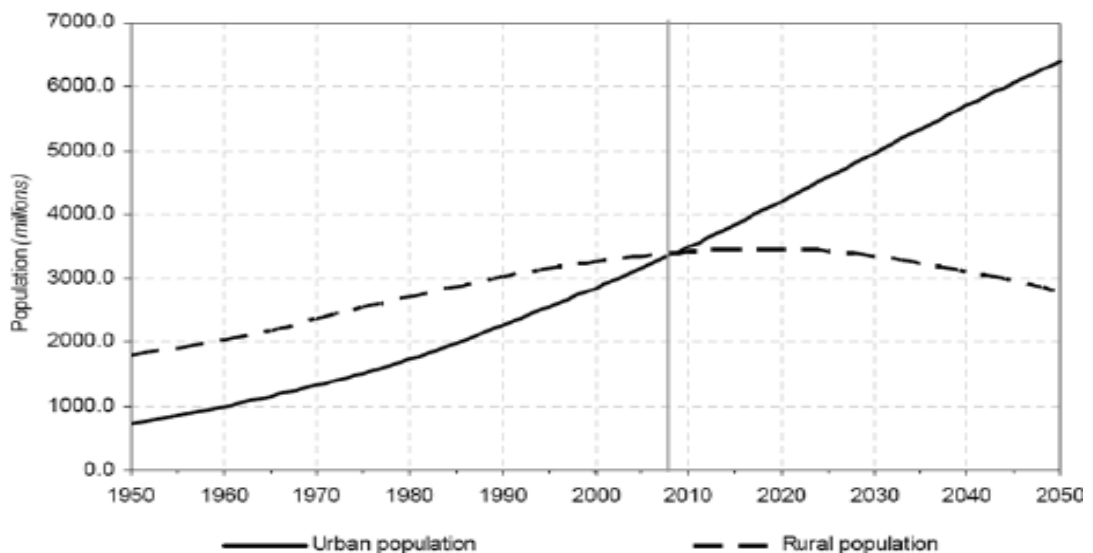
living in the urban areas fluctuated between 4 per cent and 7 per cent throughout history until about 1850 (Lowry, 1991).

The real change in population distributions and urban living patterns occurred with the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century. The period of the Industrial Revolution is supposed to be from around 1760 to around 1830 AD. Since the inception of the almost industrial revolutions most urbanized part of the world was Western Europe only and rest of the world was rural. When we look in 1900 AD, we found few transformations towards urbanizations in Asia and America with Europe. With the change in the world we observe the density of urban places, urbanizations, high percentage of the people living in urban areas.

At the beginning of the 20th century, just 16 cities in the world contained at least a million (ten lakhs) people, the vast majority of which were in industrially advanced economies. Today, at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, there are more than 400 cities around the world that contained over a million residents, and about three quarters of these are in low-and middle –income countries (Cohen, 2004).

### Figure 1

*Global Rural and Urban Population, 1950-2050*



Source: UN Population Division/DESA, World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision.

Figure 1 emphasizes the prospects of population pressure in urban areas in proportion to the expected decline of the population living in rural areas. The urban

rural population of the world trend from 1950 to 2050, a hundred years of period, will give us an insight that from the year of 2015 the rural population is dropping down and urban population is picking up.

According to the latest United Nations' projections, virtually all of the world's population growth over the next 30 years will be absorbed by urban areas. During 2007, for the first time in the history of the world, the proportion of the population living in urban areas exceeded 50 percent. The world population is expected nearly to double by 2050, increasing from 3.3 billion in 2007 to 6.4 billion in 2050 (UN, 2007).

In 1960, the global urban population was 34% of the total, by 2014 the urban population accounted for 54% of the total and continues to grow. By 2050, the proportion of living in urban area will expect to reach 66% (UNDESA, 2014).

Urbanization level is measured by the percentage of the population living in urban areas which is increasing in both less developed countries (LDCs) and more developed countries (MDCs). In 1950, less than 30 per cent of the world's total population was living in urban areas. There was, however, a great variation between MDCs and LDCs. In 1950, less than 20 per cent of LDC inhabitants lived in urban areas, compared to almost 55 per cent of their MDC counterparts. To give examples using some of the world's most populous countries, in 1950 about 11 per cent of the population in China, 17 per cent in India, 12 per cent in Indonesia, and 36 per cent in Brazil were living in urban areas. This compares to 64 per cent in the United States, 50 per cent in Japan, 72 per cent in Germany and 84 per cent in the United Kingdom (Frey & Zimmer, 2001, pp.16-18). In Nepal, out of its total population, urban population in 1961 was 2.9%, in 1971 was 4.1%, in 1981 was 6.3%, in 1991 was 9.2%, in 2001 was 13.9%, in 2011 was 17.07%, and in 2021 was 66.08%. But the growth in the urban population has been occurring, and will continue to occur, much faster in LDCs than in MDCs. The result is that although a higher proportion of the MDCs population will live in urban areas in comparison to the total LDCs population, the gap has been closing and will continue to close into the future. By the year 2025, it is expected that about 84 per cent of those in MDCs will be living in urban areas, as will 57 per cent of those in LDCs. There will continue to be variation between nations in LDCs as it is expected that the proportion that lives in urban areas will be, for example, about 55 per cent in China, 45 per cent in India, 61 per cent in Indonesia and 89 per cent in Brazil. There will be less variation in MDCs with, for example, 85 per cent in the USA and Japan, 86 per cent in Germany and 93 per cent in the United Kingdom living in urban areas (Frey & Zimmer, 2001, pp.16-18).

## Historical Outline and Trends in Urbanization in Nepal

Nepal is considered as one of the least urbanized countries, generally, in the world and, particularly, in South Asia. The pace of urbanization in Nepal in terms of economic development and infrastructural development is very low because a large section of population lives in remote settlements. The pace of urbanization is accelerating so rapidly in developing world. It is witnessed that the people are being pushed from the rural and pulled toward urban. Every year thousands of people tend to move to urban centers in search of a better life and secure future.

In order to make sound urbanization first of all concerning country must define the basic parameter to declare urban to the given settlements. In the context of Nepal, there is inconsistency in the definition of urban because Nepal has defined and redefined the meaning of urban time and again which makes us confused. In other hand, the definition has not strictly been followed even at present before declaring the urban and the number of human settlements are declared as urban even without adequate infrastructure, facilities and services. In the context of Nepal, the process of urbanization has been discussed with its historical background below.

### The Trends of Parameters of Declaring Cities

The first population count was undertaken in Nepal in 1911. Since then, the process has been perpetual in every ten year. The earlier censuses of Nepal were not that precise as compared to the modern censuses. The four censuses taken before the 1952/54 census are known as “head counts”. The 1952/54 census was taken in two parts of the country in two different years. It is supposed that a systematic census was taken in 1961. After 1961, a census has been taken in every ten years.

The 1952/54 census provides data on 10 “prominent” settlements with a population of over 5,000 but refrained from defining an urban area.

**Table 1**

*Distribution of Settlements Having 5000 and over Population (1952/54 Census)*

Region	Settlements with population	Total population
Hill/Mountain	-	0
Kathmandu Valley	Kathmandu (Kathmandu) – 106579	196777
	Kirtipur (Kathmandu) – 7038	
	Lalitpur ( Lalitpur) – 42,183	
	Madhyapur Thimi ( Bhaktapur) – 8657	
	Bhaktapur ( Bhaktapur) – 32320	
Inner Tarai	-	0

Tarai	Nepalgunj ( Banke) – 10813	41498
	Birgunj (Parsa) – 10037	
	Malangawa (Sarlahi)- 5551	
	Janakpur (Dhanusha) – 7037	
	Biratnagar ( Morang) – 8060	
<b>Total</b>		<b>238275</b>

(Sharma, 2003)

According to table 1, there was no settlement in Hill, Mountain and Inner Tarai region having population 5000 and more.

The 1961 census for the first time defined an urban area or a *sahar* as “an area with a population cluster of 5,000 and over and having an urban environment such as high school, college, judicial and administrative offices, bazaar, communication facilities, mills, factories etc.” but also indicated that the definition was not strictly followed (Bastola, 1995). The Nagar Panchayat Act 1962 kept the name of “Nagar panchayat” as the local level urban administrative unit which is distinct from a local level rural administrative unit in which local level rural administrative unit is called as *Gaun panchayat*. It stipulated the population size criteria of “not less than 10,000” as a generally necessary, but not a sufficient condition, for providing the municipal (*Nagar*) status.

The fact that the population size criteria was not consistently followed in the designation of *Nagar Panchayat* is revealed from the fact that at least four of the newly classified *Nagar Panchayats* in 1971 had a population of less than 10,000 while 12 other ‘localities’ in the country had a population of over 10,000 but were not classified as *Nagar Panchayats* (Sharma, 1989).

The scenario has been changed after 1990 when the democracy has been restored in Nepal. For the first time cities are classified on the basis of population and the facilities provided. Along with regime change *Nagar Panchayat* is renamed by *Nagarpalika* and *Gaunpanchayat* is renamed by *Gaun Bikash Samiti*. These two local level bodies used to govern by the Municipality Act of 1992, and the Local Self Governance Act of 1999.

According to the Local Self-Governance Act (1999) municipalities are classified into three categories: *mahanagarpalika* (metropolitan city), *upamahanagarpalika* (sub-metropolitan city), and *nagarpalika* (municipality). *Mahanagarpalika* is a municipality with a “minimum population size of 300,000, annual revenue of at least Rs. 400 million, facilities of electricity, drinking water, communication, paved main and subsidiary roads, provision of specialized health services, essential infrastructure for international sports events, adequate

opportunities for higher education in different fields, at least one established university, adequate urban facilities, and an area that has already received the status of a *upa-mahanagarpalika*”.

Similarly, a *upa-mahanagarpalika* is a municipality with a “minimum population size of 100,000, annual revenue of at least Rs. 100 million, facilities of electricity, drinking water, communication, paved main roads, education and health services of a high standard, general infrastructure for national and international sports events, provision of public parks and a city hall and similar urban facilities, and an area that has already received the status of a *nagarpalika*”. The Act lays down (a) minimum population size of 20,000 in the Tarai and 10,000 in the hill/mountains, (b) annual revenue of 5 million in the Tarai and 500,000 in the hill/mountains and “minimum urban facilities such as electricity, road, drinking water, communication and other similar urban facilities” as necessary conditions for the designation of municipal status or a *nagarpalika*. While the double standard in designating municipal area between the Tarai and the hills remains incomprehensible, Article 88 (2) C of the Act considers a *nagarpalika* as only a “semi urban area”. When the Act was promulgated there were one *Mahanagarpalika* (Kathmandu), four *Upa-mahanagarpalikas* (Biratnagar, Lalitpur, Pokhara and Birganj) and 53 *nagarpalikas*. According to the spirit of the Act the 53 *nagarpalikas* are semi-urban areas.

As we know the provisions for declaring urbans vary from nation to nation and in the same nation it may have set different benchmarks for its urban in different periods of time with respect to its level of development and the size of population. At present some basic criteria has been set in “Local Government Operation Act 2017” by the Nepal government in order to identify as urban and its different categories. Nepal government could declare municipality, sub-metropolitan city, or metropolitan city to the given area in coordination to the respective local government with respect to the facilities available and terms and conditions set for it which are mentioned below:

**Table 2**

*Criteria for Municipalities*

Requirements	Municipality	Sub-metropolitan city	Metropolitan city
Permanent residents	Himali area from himali districts – 10000	200000 (two lakh)	500000 (five lakh)
	Hilly area from himali districts and hilly districts – 40000		
	Inner tarai – 50000		
	Tarai – 75000		
	Kathmandu valley – 100000		

Average annual gross income for the last five years	Himali area – 10 million (one crore)	250 million (25 crore)	1 billion (1 arab)	
	Rest of area – 30 million (three crore)			
Facilities	Roads, pavements	Paved main roads across the city	75% of the total road length of city is paved	
	Electricity	Electricity		
	Drinking water	Drinking water		
	Communication	Communication		
	Waste management and landfill side	Waste recycle and management system		
	Specified open area and park, garden	Public parks and city hall	Having children garden and senior citizens' recreational centers	
	Busk park with passenger rest area and public toilet.		Bus park with terminal, parking facilities, subway, and footpath	
	Hospital with 25 beds	Hospital with at least 100 beds, Hospital facilities with 200 beds	Hospitals with specialized services, general hospital with 100 beds	
	Facility of drinking water and sanitation			
	Banking and financial services			
	Meeting hall	Meeting hall	International level meeting hall and trade exhibition venue	
	Market area			
	Animal slaughterhouse	Modern animal slaughterhouse		
	Cremation site	Cremation ground		
	Play ground	National level stadium, gymnasium, and covered hall	Stadium suitable for conducting international level sport competition	
	City master plan	Facilities for higher education and technical education	Teaching institutions up to masters level, having technical education institutions	
	To have fulfilled other criteria set by the government.	Disable friendly and common accessible public building and places		Urban transport facilities and disable friendly public vehicle services
		Hotels, motels, and resorts with tourist standard.		Hotel service with international standard
		To have fulfilled other criteria set by the government.		Managed vegetable and fruits sales center, shopping Malls
				Ease of transportation to international airport
Having museum				
Conservation of valuable heritage within its premises				
Having adequate recreational facilities				
Having dance hall and art gallery				
Having urban greenery and beauty				
To have fulfilled other criteria set by the government.				

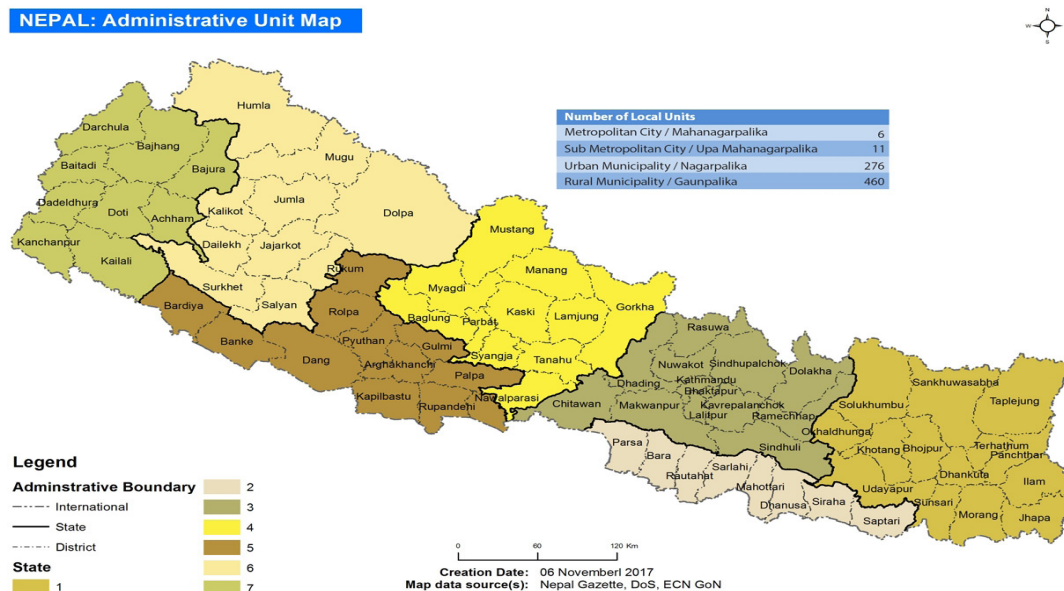


(Source: LGOA, 2017)

As the Nepal restructured in 2015, it has in total 753 local level units which is categorized as the 6 Metropolitan Cities, 11 Sub-Metropolitan Cities, 276 Municipalities and 460 *Gaunpalika* also known as Rural Municipalities.

**Figure 2**

*Administrative Division in the Map of Nepal*



### Statistical Features of Metropolitan Cities and Sub-Metropolitan Cities of Nepal

As the Nepal restructured in 2015, it has in total 753 local level units which is categorized as the 6 Metropolitan Cities, 11 Sub-Metropolitan Cities, 276 Municipalities and 460 *Gaunpalika* also known as Rural Municipality. Basic features of following local level body is as follows.

**Table 3**

*Metropolitan Cities*

S.N.	Name	District	Province	Population (2021 census)	Area(km <sup>2</sup> )	Density(/km <sup>2</sup> )
1	Kathmandu	Kathmandu	Bagmati	862400	49.45	17440
2	Pokhara	Pokhara	Gandaki	513504	464.28	1106
3	Bharatpur	Chitawan	Bagmati	369268	432.95	853
4	Lalitpur	Lalitpur	Bagmati	294098	36.12	8142



5	Birung	Parsa	Madesh	272382	132.07	2062
6	Biratnagar	Morang	Koshi	243927	77.00	3168

Source: NSO, 2022.

**Table 4**

*Sub-metropolitan Cities*

S.N.	Name	District	Province	Population	Declare Date	A r e a (km <sup>2</sup> )	Density
				(2021Census)			
1	Dhangadhi	Kailali	Sudurpaschim	198792	6/1/2072	261.75	759
2	Ghorahi	Dang	Lumbini	200530	11/22/2073	522.21	384
3	Itahari	Sunsari	Koshi	197241	8/16/2071	93.78	2103
4	Hetauda	Makawanpur	Gandaki	193576	8/16/2071	261.6	740
5	Janakpurdham	Dhanusha	Madhesh	194556	2071	91.97	2115
6	Butawal	Rupandehi	Lumbini	194335	8/16/2071	101.6	1913
7	Tulsipur	Dang	Lumbini	179755	11/27/2073	384.63	467
8	Dharan	Sunsari	Province 1	166531	-	192.32	866
9	Nepalgunj	Banke	Lumbini	164444	8/16/2071	85.94	1913
10	Kalैया	Bara	Madhesh	136222	-	108.94	1250
11	Jitpur-Simara	Bara	Madhesh	127307	-	312.18	408
<b>Total</b>				<b>1953289</b>			

Source: NSO, 2022; Profiles of respective local bodies.

### Methods and Procedures

This paper is based on the analytical research design in which data were collected and analyzed. The issues which drew the attention to this area of study are: high population growth rate is experiencing but no satisfactory livelihood is found even in urban area; the trend of designating urban centers regardless of basic infrastructural development is high.

In order to find the context behind the trend of urbanization in Nepal, this study revolves around following objectives:

1. To explore the trend of urbanization in Nepal
2. To make comparative analysis of the urban centers with reference to the ecological zones of Nepal
3. To examine the policy of Nepal government for designating urban centers and its implementation

Being the vast area to be discussed within this topic following limitation has been set for the sake to make the study specific.

1. Data since 1950 to till the date are observed, so the urban centers that might have existed before 1950 are not discussed here.
2. The paper has focused only on the trends of developing urban centers and remained silence regarding the urban life in Nepal.

Secondary data were observed and analyzed in which prominent sources of the data are Nepal government census report, academic articles and statistical data bases.

## Results and Discussion

According to the administrative division of Nepal, there are 7 provinces and 753 local level governing bodies. Out of 753, local level bodies are comprised by 6 metropolitan cities, 11 sub-metropolitan cities, 276 municipalities, and 460 village municipalities. The urban centers and their categories are analyzed with respect to provinces and ecological zones of Nepal below.

**Table 5**

*Distribution of Metropolitan Cities and Sub-Metropolitan Cities by the Provinces*

Cities	Provinces and numbers of cities							
	Koshi	Madhesh	Bagmati	Lumbini	Gandaki	Karnali	Sudurpaschim	Total
Metropolitan	1	1	3	-	1	-	-	6
Sub-Metropolitan	2	3	1	4	-	-	1	11
Municipality	46	73	42	32	25	25	33	276
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>293</b>

Three provinces – Lumbini, Karnali, and Sudurpaschim have no metropolitan cities and two provinces – Gandaki and Karnali have no sub- metropolitan cities. In addition to this, Karnali is that province which has neither metropolitan city nor sub-metropolitan city.

In Koshi province, there is one metropolitan city named Biratnagar metropolitan city and are two sub-metropolitan cities called Itahari sub-metropolitan city and Dharan sub-metropolitan city.

In Madhesh province, there in one metropolitan city named Birgunj metropolitan city and are three sub-metropolitan cities named Janakpur sub-metropolitan city, Kalaiya sub-metropolitan city, and Jitpur-Simara sub-metropolitan city.

In Bagmati province, there are three metropolitan cities named Kathmandu metropolitan city, Lalitpur metropolitan city, and Bharatpur metropolitan city; and one sub-metropolitan city named Hetauda sub-metropolitan city.

In Lumbini province, there is no metropolitan city and are four sub-metropolitan cities named Butwal sub-metropolitan city, Ghorahi sub-metropolitan city, Tulsipur sub-metropolitan city, and Nepalgunj sub-metropolitan city.

In Gandaki province, there is one metropolitan city named pokhara metropolitan city and no sub-metropolitan city.

Likewise, in Sudrupaschim province, there is no metropolitan city and one sub-metropolitan city named Dhangadhi sub-metropolitan city.

**Table 6**

*Distribution of Metropolitan Cities and Sub-metropolitan Cities by Ecological Zone*

Cities	Ecological Zone				Total
	Mountain	Hill	Inner Tarai	Tarai	
Metopolitan	-	3	1	2	6
Sub-Metropolitan	-	-	3	8	11
Municipality	33	93	25	125	276
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>293</b>

While distributing Nepal into four ecological zones, we found the metropolitan cities and sub-metropolitan cities as follows: There is no metropolitan and sub-metropolitan city in mountain zone, three metropolitan cities ( Kathmandu metropolitan city, Lalitpur metropolitan city, and Pokhara metropolitan city) are in Hill zone, one metropolitan city (Bharatpur Metropolitan City) and three sub-metropolitan cities (Hetauda sub-metropolitan city, Tulsipur sub-metropolitan city, and Gorahi sub-metropolitan city) are in inner tarai and finally two metropolitan cities (Biratnagar metropolitan city and Birjung metropolitan city) and eight sub-metropolitan cities (Dharan sub-metropolitan city, Itahari sub-metropolitan city, Jitpur-Simara sub-metropolitan city, Kalaiya sub-metropolitan city, Janakpur sub-metropolitan city, Butwal sub-metropolitan city, Nepalgunj sub-metropolitan city, and Dhangadhi sub-metropolitan city) are in tarai zone.

In 1971, there were 16 municipalities in Nepal, and 7 more municipalities were added in 1981 and reached 23 municipalities. In 1991, the number of cities reached to 33 which is increased by 10 than 1981 census report. Municipalities in 2001 were 58. The same number of municipalities (58) has remained up to 2011. Similarly, in 2014, additional 72 municipalities were declared and the total number

of urban places reached to 130 (58+72). Likewise, the government of Nepal, again declared 163 additional municipalities by 2017 onwards and now the total number of municipalities reached from 130 to 293 including 6 metropolitan city, 11 sub-metropolitan cities and 276 municipalities.

### **Trend of Urban Population**

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) 2012, the urban population (population residing in 58 municipalities) constitutes 17% (45,23,820) of the total population. Based on the recorded urban population, Kathmandu metropolitan city is the most crowded city with the population of 24.3% (10,03,285) of the total population. Dhulikhel municipality has the least proportion (0.31%) of the total urban population.

**Table 7**

*Urban Population by Census*

<b>Census Year</b>	<b>Number of Urban Areas</b>	<b>Urban Population in millions</b>	<b>Urban Population (%)</b>
1952/54	10	0.238	2.9
1961	16	0.336	2.9
1971	16	0.462	4.1
1981	23	0.957	6.3
1991	33	1.696	9.2
2001	58	3.28	13.9
2011	58	4.23	17.07
2021	293	19.29	66.17

Source: Source: CBS 2011, CBS 2019, NSO 2022

The urban population as a percentage of the total population of the country was 2.9 in since 1950s to 1961 and then after reached 4.1% by 1971, 6.3% by 1981, 9.2% by 1991, 13.9% by 2001, 17.07% by 2011, 27.2% by 2014 and 66.17% by 2021. From 2011 to 2017 the number of municipalities are declared so rapidly by the political decision and due to this, the population residing in the rural area is decreasing remarkably.

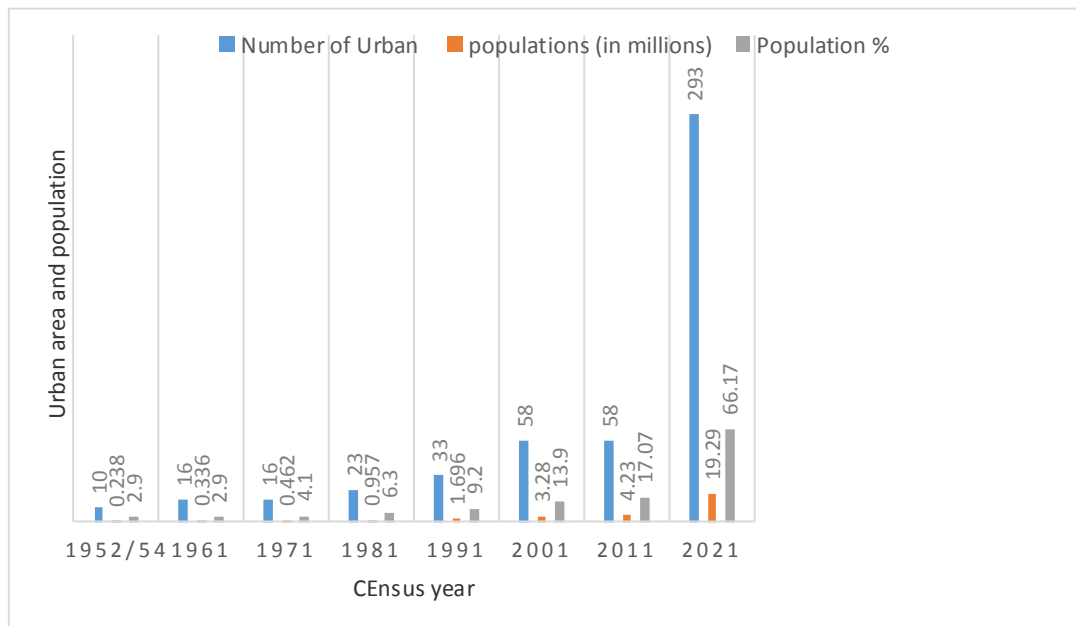
A progress report (FY 2076/077) of the Ministry of Urban Development, Nepal government says after the census of 2068 when the total number of municipalities has reached 293 the urban population is 62.2%.

Above table reveals that Nepal's urbanization tendency has increased dramatically, especially after 2015. Data until, 2011 only 58 urban areas were

designated but after the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal in 2015, the size of municipalities voluminously increased and reached 293.

**Figure 3**

*Urban Centres and Population by Census*



**Table 8**

*Urban Areas with Population since 1952/054 to 2021*

Region/ Municipality	1952/54	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021
<b>Hill/ Mountains</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16237</b>	<b>34344</b>	<b>83376</b>	<b>192558</b>	<b>576024</b>	<b>772446</b>	<b>4051231</b>
Darchula	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45888
Mahakali								24081
Shailyashikhar								21807
Baitadi	0	0	0	0	0	18345	16791	119736
Dashrathchand						18345	16791	31567
Melauli								20658
Patan								29230
Purchaudi								38281
Dadeldhura	0	0	0	0	0	18390	21245	59739
Amargadhi						18390	21245	24149

Parsuram								35590
Doti	0	0	0	0	12360	22061	23416	64367
Dipayal Silgadhi					12360	22061	23416	33968
Shikhar								30399
Acham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	99568
Kamalbazaar								21032
Mangalsen								26557
Panchadewol Binayek								26088
Sanfebagar								25891
Bajhang	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55745
Bungal								33812
Jayaprithivi								21933
Bajura	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	76469
Badimalika								18414
Budhiganga								20185
Budhinanda								20072
Tribeni								17798
Mugu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24527
Chayanathrara								24527
Kalikot	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55896
Khandachakra								22274
Raskot								17425
Tilagufa								16197
Jumla	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21036
Chandannath								21036
Dolpa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22094
Thuli Bheri								9861
Tripurasundari								12233
Jajarkot	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	104691
Bheri								37892
Chedagaadh								37877
Nalgaadh								28922
Dailekh	0	0	0	0	0	19446	21110	122905
Narayan						19446	21110	26111
Aathbisa								31092
Chamunda Bindrasaini								26559
Dullu								39143
Salyan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	101624

Baagchaur								34021
Bangadh Kupende								32940
Sharada								34663
Rukum Pashchim	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	99143
Aathbiskot								35917
Chaurjahari								28956
Musikot								34270
Rolpa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35376
Rolpa								35376
Pyuthan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74167
Pyuthan								42130
Sworgadwary								32037
Arghakhachi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	108375
Bhumikasthan								28192
Sandhikharka								42492
Shitaganga								37691
Palpa	0	5136	6434	13125	13599	20431	29095	91675
Rampur								40883
Tansen		5136	6434	13125	13599	20431	29095	50792
Gulmi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	60005
Musikot								28454
Resunga								31551
Syangja	0	0	0	0	0	50081	54710	168879
Waling						20414	24006	50488
Putalibazar						29667	30704	41743
Bhirkot								22645
Chapakot								22969
Galyang								31034
Baglung	0	0	0	0	0	20852	29360	141386
Baglung						20852	29360	56102
Dhorpatan								30068
Galkot								30588
Jaimini								24628
Parbat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58569
Kushma								38101
Falebaas								20468
Myagdi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32697
Beni								32697
Kaski	0	5413	20611	46642	95286	197681	314281	513504



Pokhara		5413	20611	46642	95286	156312	255465	513504
Lekhnath						41369	58816	
Tanahu	0	0	0	0	0	28245	42899	206601
Byas						28245	42899	78939
Bhanu								42794
Bhimad								29248
Shuklagandaki								55620
Lamjung	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	104648
Beshishahar								38232
Madhyanepal								21971
Rainas								17402
Sundar bazaar								27043
Gorkha	0	0	0	0	0	25783	32473	89877
Gorkha						25783	32473	52468
Palungtaar								37409
Dhading	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	87977
Dhunibeshi								29149
Nilakantha								58828
Nuwakot	0	0	0	0	18694	21193	26750	94451
Bidur					18694	21193	26750	59227
Belkotgadhi								35224
Kavrepalanchok	0	5688	0	0	22349	52906	66405	244982
Banepa		5688			12537	15822	24764	67690
Dhulikhel					9812	11521	14283	33726
Panauti						25563	27358	51504
Mandandeupur								30381
Namobuddha								26160
Panchkhal								35521
Sindhupalchok	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	107840
Barabise								24109
Chautara Sangachokgadhi								42668
Melamchi								41063
Dolakha	0	0	0	0	0	21916	22537	50821
Bhimeswar						21916	22537	34712
Jiri								16109
Ramechaap	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	64666
Manthali								39695
Ramechaap								24971

Khotang	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70086
Halesi Tuwachung								27078
Diktel Rupakot Majhuwagadhi								43008
Okhaldhunga	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27351
Shiddhicharan								27351
Solukhumbu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25678
Solududhakunda								25678
Bhojpur	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55349
Bhojpur								26007
Khadananda								29342
Sankhuasabha	0	0	0	0	0	21789	26301	108038
Khandbari						21789	26301	35565
Chainpur								26799
Dharmadevi								16053
Madi								13273
Panchkhapan								16348
Terahthum	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	34079
Laligurans								15329
Myanglung								18750
Dhankuta	0	0	0	13836	17073	20668	26440	77269
Dhankuta				13836	17073	20668	26440	35983
Mahalaxmi								22182
Pakhribas								19104
Ilam	0	0	7299	9773	13197	16237	18633	166513
Deumai								30969
Mai								30732
Suryodaya								54727
Ilam			7299	9773	13197	16237	18633	50085
Panchthar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48495
Fidim								48495
Taplejung	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28449
Fungling								28449
<b>Kathmandu Valley</b>	<b>196777</b>	<b>218092</b>	<b>249563</b>	<b>363507</b>	<b>598528</b>	<b>995966</b>	<b>1426641</b>	<b>2936462</b>
Kathmandu	113617	126783	150402	235160	421258	712681	1041055	1994555
Kathmandu	106579	121019	150402	235160	421258	671846	975453	862400
Kirtipur	7038	5764				40835	65602	81578
Budhanilkantha								177557
Chandragiri								136860

Dakshinkali								26372
Gokarneshowr								149366
Kageshwori Manahara								130433
Nagarjun								115437
Shankharapur								29318
Tarakeshwor								151479
Tokha								133755
Lalitpur	42183	47713	59049	79875	115865	162991	220802	514847
Lalitpur	42183	47713	59049	79875	115865	162991	220802	294098
Godawori								97633
Mahalaxmi								123116
Bhaktapur	40977	43596	40112	48472	61405	120294	164784	427060
Madhyapur Themi	8657	9719				47751	83036	119756
Bhaktapur	32320	33877	40112	48472	61405	72543	81748	79136
Changunarayan								88083
Suryavinayak								140085
<b>Inner Terai</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16194</b>	<b>96861</b>	<b>160529</b>	<b>392108</b>	<b>546666</b>	<b>2366639</b>
Surkhet	0	0	0	13859	22973	31381	47914	317831
Birendranagar				13859	22973	31381	47914	153863
Bheriganga								48203
Gurvakot								48216
Lekbesi								31710
Panchapuri								35839
Dang	0	0	0	20608	29050	77002	114465	439335
Ghorahi				20608	29050	43126	62928	200530
Tulsipur						33876	51537	179755
Lamahi								59050
Nawalparasi, Bardghat Susta East	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	285264
Debachuli								58003
Gaidakot								79349
Kawasoti								86821
Madhyabindu								61091
Chitwan	0	0	0	27602	54670	127114	190203	683634
Bharatpur				27602	54670	89323	143836	369268
Ratnanagar						37791	46367	89905
Kalika								52164
Khairahani								67385

Madi								38295
Rapti								66617
Makwanpur	0	0	16194	34792	53836	68482	84671	232446
Hetauda			16194	34792	53836	68482	84671	193576
Thaha								38870
Sindhuli	0	0	0	0	0	32838	39413	141223
Kamalamai						32838	39413	71016
Dudhauri								70207
Udayapur	0	0	0	0	0	55291	70000	266906
Trijuga						55291	70000	102725
Katari								59507
Chaudandigadhi								53631
Belaka								51043
<b>Terai</b>	<b>41498</b>	<b>101893</b>	<b>161837</b>	<b>412977</b>	<b>744104</b>	<b>1263781</b>	<b>1660292</b>	<b>9743534</b>
Kanchanpur	0	0	0	43834	62050	80839	104599	464101
Mahendranagar				43834	62050	80839	104599	122320
Bedkot								57680
Belauri								53910
Krishnapur								71500
Dodhara Chandani								42974
Punarwas								61748
Shuklafata								53969
Kailali	0	0	0	27274	44753	106169	158097	682430
Dhangadhi				27274	44753	67447	101970	198792
Tikapur						38722	56127	89835
Bhajani								53494
Gauriganga								64558
Ghodaghodi								86034
Godawori								98746
Lamkichuha								90971
Bardia	0	0	0	0	0	46011	55747	371280
Gulariya						46011	55747	74505
Bansgadhi								63252
Barbardiya								72533
Madhuwon								50739
Rajapur								60831
Thakurbaba								49420
Banke	10813	15817	23523	34015	47819	57535	72503	266111
Nepalganj	10813	15817	23523	34015	47819	57535	72503	164444

Kohalpur								101667
Kapilbastu	0	0	0	0	17126	27170	30428	481661
Kapilbastu					17126	27170	30428	88874
Banaganga								96714
Buddhabhumi								76507
Krishnanagar								70111
Maharajgunj								64645
Shivaraj								84810
Rupandehi	0	0	30087	53702	83745	127953	181945	656483
Butwal			12815	22583	44272	75384	118462	194335
Siddharthanagar			17272	31119	39473	52569	63483	74436
Debdaha								72457
Lumbini Sanskritik								87383
Sainamaina								78393
Tilottama								149479
Parsa	10037	10769	12999	43642	69005	112484	135904	395104
Birganj	10037	10769	12999	43642	69005	112484	135904	272382
Bahudarmai								43478
Parsagadhi								41569
Pokhariya								37675
Nawolparasi, Bardghat Susta West	0	0	0	0	0	22630	25990	212805
Bardghat								76703
Ramgram						22630	25990	64017
Sunawol								72085
Bara	0	0	0	0	18498	32260	42826	507224
Kalaiya					18498	32260	42826	136222
Jitpur Simara								127307
Kolhabi								51182
Mahagadhimai								59424
Nijgadha								37687
Pacharauta								40524
Simraungadh								54878
Rautahat	0	0	0	0	0	25383	34937	761991
Gaur						25383	34937	39846
Baudhimai								39325
Brindaban								49742
Chandrapur								81807
Dewahi Gonahi								38690

Gadhimai								49135
Garuda								60857
Gujara								54033
Ishanath								51855
Katahariya								45821
Madhav Narayan								40894
Moulapur								32325
Paroha								45702
Fatuwa Bijayapur								42218
Rajdevi								35658
Rajpur								54083
Sarlahi	5551	6721	0	0	14142	18484	25102	595893
Malangwa	5551	6721			14142	18484	25102	54550
Bagmati								47106
Balara								47912
Barhathawa								81120
Godaita								54270
Haripur								43233
Haripurwa								38714
Hariwon								49988
Ishworpur								68377
Kabilashi								44204
Lalbandi								66419
Mahottari	0	5073	0	0	18088	22046	23533	523133
Jaleswar					18088	22046	23533	63802
Matihani		5073						36136
Aurahi								37361
Balawa								49473
Bardibas								74361
Bhangaha								55354
Gaushala								72481
Loharpatti								45773
Manara Shisawa								52191
Ramgopalpur								36201
Dhanusha	7037	8928	14294	34840	54710	74192	97776	710060
Janakpurdham	7037	8928	14294	34840	54710	74192	97776	194556
Bideha								37697
Kshireswornath								51075
Dhanushadham								52024

Ganeshman Charnath								44082
Hansapur								44949
Kamala								44597
Mithila Bihari								38273
Mithila								48676
Nagarain								38037
Sabaila								62282
Shahidnagar								53812
Siraha	0	0	0	13775	19018	51642	62095	513568
Siraha						23988	28442	95410
Lahan				13775	19018	27654	33653	102031
Dhangadhimai								53355
Goalbazaar								63885
Kalyanpur								58872
Karjanhaa								38557
Mirchaiyaa								59425
Sukhipur								42033
Saptari	0	5232	7832	16444	24227	30353	37738	441203
Rajbiraj		5232	7832	16444	24227	30353	37738	70803
Bodebarsain								46017
Dakneshwori								47739
Hanumannagar Kankalini								52796
Kanchanrup								58466
Khadak								52778
Shaptakoshi								23510
Shambhunath								39634
Surunga								49460
Sunsari	0	13998	20503	42146	85004	159742	219136	659299
Dharan		13998	20503	42146	66457	95332	116181	166531
Inaruwa					18547	23200	28454	74914
Itahari						41210	74501	197241
Baraahakshtra								91087
Duhabi								66074
Ramdhuni								63452
Morang	8060	35355	45100	93544	129388	166674	201125	802089
Biratnagar	8060	35355	45100	93544	129388	166674	201125	243927
Belbaari								81771
Letang								38152



Pathari Shanishchare								72451
Rangeli								57494
Ratuwamai								61139
Sundarharaincha								120213
Sunaworshi								56034
Urlabari								70908
Jhapa	0	0	7499	9761	56531	102214	150811	699099
Damak					41321	35009	75102	107227
Bhadrapur			7499	9761	15210	18145	18164	70913
Mechinagar						49060	57545	133073
Arjundhara								84018
Birtamoda								116192
Gauradaha								60451
Kankai								53148
Shivasataakshi								74077
<b>Total</b>	<b>238275</b>	<b>336222</b>	<b>461938</b>	<b>956721</b>	<b>1695719</b>	<b>3227879</b>	<b>4406045</b>	<b>19097866</b>

Source: (Sharma, 2003), (CBS, 2012), (NSO, 2022)

**Note:** Gorkha municipality (Gorkha), Baglung municipality (Baglung), Ghorahi municipality (Dang), and Bhimdutta municipality (Kanchanpur) were previously known as Prithivinarayan municipality, Kalika municipality, Tribhuvannagar municipality, and Mahendranagar municipality respectively.

Kirtipur and Madhyapur Thimi in the Kathmandu valley and Malangawa in the tarai were declassified from the urban category in 1971 but were reclassified again in 1991. Banepa in the hills was classified as urban in 1961, declassified in 1971 and again reclassified in 1991. Matihani in the Tarai was classified as urban in 1961 but was declassified in 1971 (Sharma, 2003).

### **Locations of the People's Preference to Reside**

We may see the direct relation between the population distribution and urbanization trends in Nepal. The number of population is decreasing in some hilly and the himalayan districts even though the government of Nepal designated few areas to the urban centers over there after the promulgation of the new constitution in 2015. It may indicate to urban deficiencies. The people are migrating toward other parts of hill urban centers and tarai rather than own district's urban center.

**Table 9***Population Decreasing Districts*

S.N.	Region/District	Population		Growth rate (%)	Number of urban centers
		2011	2021		
<b>Hill</b>					
1	Ramechhap	202646	170302	-1.67	2
2	Khotang	206312	175298	-1.56	2
3	Bhojpur	182459	157923	-1.39	2
4	Terahthum	101577	88731	-1.3	2
5	Syanga	289148	253024	-1.28	5
6	Gulmi	280160	246494	-1.23	2
7	Achham	257477	228852	-1.13	4
8	Parbat	146590	130887	-1.09	2
9	Arghakhanchi	197632	177086	-1.05	3
10	Panchthar	191817	172400	-1.02	1
11	Dhankuta	163412	150599	-0.78	3
12	Gorkha	271061	251027	-0.74	2
13	Baglung	268613	249211	-0.72	4
14	Lamjung	167724	155852	-0.7	4
15	Palpa	261180	245027	-0.61	2
16	Myagdi	113641	107033	-0.57	1
17	Okhaldhunga	147984	139552	-0.56	1
18	Nuwakot	277471	263391	-0.5	2
19	Kavrepalanchok	381937	364039	-0.46	6
20	Ilam	290254	279534	-0.36	4
21	Dailekh	261770	252313	-0.35	5
22	Baitadi	250898	242157	-0.34	4
23	Doti	211746	204831	-0.32	2
24	Dhading	336067	325710	-0.3	2
25	Dadeldhura	142094	139602	-0.17	2
26	Salyan	242444	238515	-0.15	3

27	Tanahu	323288	321153	-0.06	4
Mountain					
1	Manag	6538	5658	-1.39	0
2	Sindhupalchok	287798	262624	-0.88	3
3	Dolakha	186557	172767	-0.74	2
4	Taplejung	127461	120590	-0.55	1
5	Bajhang	195159	189085	-0.3	2
6	Solukhumbu	105886	104851	-0.09	1
7	Sankhuwashabha	158742	158041	-0.04	5

Source: (CBS, 2012), (NSO, 2022).

**Table 10**

*Cities by Ecological Regions (1952/54 – 2021)*

Region	Census Year							
	1952/54	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021
Hill/Mountain	0	3	3	4	8	20	20	111
Kathmandu Valley	5	5	3	3	3	5	5	18
Inner Tarai	0	0	1	4	4	9	9	29
Tarai	5	8	9	12	18	24	24	135
Total	10	16	16	23	33	58	58	293

Source: (CBS, 2012), (CBS, 2022)

### Conclusion

According to the Nepal's administrative restructuring that took place after the promulgation of the constitution on Nepal in 2015, there are 293 municipalities among the 753 local level governments. Here, the municipalities are considered as an urban area. According to the census held since 1952/54 to 2021 and the cities/ municipalities designated by the government the number of urban centers are calculated below.

Tarai region has occupied 17% of land of Nepal in which 45.74% of the total number of urban centers has emerged whereas the hilly and Mountainous regions have occupied 68% and 15% of land of Nepal respectively in both of which 54.26% of the urban centers emerged. It vividly shows that the high population pressure in Tarai regions and the need of urban centric development infrastructure in the different regions of Nepal.

Urbanization is a dominant phenomenon in virtually all developing countries. It has been observed in Nepal from the 1970s onward, showing one of the highest rates in Asia and the Pacific (ADB/ICIMOD, 2006). The number of urban centers in Nepal grew from 16 to 293 between the years 1961 and 2021 and the urban population increased from 0.4 million to 19.29 million, and forty-eight times increase in this 60-year period.

Urbanization and urban developments are, substantially, influenced and guided by the key policies of the government in sectors such as education, transport, communication, agriculture, tourism, industry, energy, environment etc. in addition to the policy followed in the urban sector. Currently, municipalities are de facto urban areas in Nepal. In terms of existing physical, natural, socio-economic and cultural environment, the interpretation of urban environmental condition is critical. Available social overhead capital such as water supply, sewage, drainage, health and sanitation, housing, road and transportation shows the urban deficiency (NUDS, 2017). In Nepal, according to the national census report 2011 and 2021, 34 districts have negative population growth rate. It shows that people are preferring to migrate to large urban centers. Unless the Nepal government pays its attention to this fact timely urban deficiency will grow significantly.

The population growth rate of 34 districts is in negative direction while comparing the number of population of 2011 census and 2021 census report of Nepal. Out of 34 districts, 27 districts represent the hill ecological region whereas 7 districts represent the Mountain ecological region of Nepal. Even though there are some emerging urban centers.

In Nepal, even there is inconsistency in the definition of urban because Nepal has defined and redefined the meaning of urban time and again which makes us confused. On the other hand, the definition has not, strictly, been followed even at present before declaring the certain areas to be urban ones and the number of human settlements is declared as urban even without adequate infrastructure, facilities and services. Hence, scientific parameters in terms of urban facilities must be introduced while designating the urban centers and it should be followed strictly.

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