

Migration Trends Analysis

Pakistan

Migration Resource Centre in Pakistan

This migration trends analysis includes analytical considerations as well as data generated by the [Migration Resource Centres in Pakistan](#). With over 240 million people, Pakistan is world's fifth most populous country¹. In terms of migration trends, it is an important country of origin, transit and destination for migrants. This report focuses on highlights and important information on trends/patterns and insights regarding the migration and mobility of potential, current or returning migrants within the covered period.

HIGHLIGHTS

- There has been a **decline in Pakistanis immigrating to the GCC countries**, both through direct employment and other means, primarily due to persisting visa restrictions.
- In this reporting period, MRC noticed a continued **rising trend of female emigrants** towards UAE, UK and Qatar.
- An **increase in Pakistanis immigrating for work to non-common destinations** such as Libya, Kyrgyzstan, Iraq, Romania, Spain and New Zealand was observed.
- There have **been consistent enquiries about labour migration options** during this period. Around 82% of enquiries received by the MRCs during this period were about legal migratory pathways, a 6% increase as compared to the first quarter of 2024.
- **GCC (27%) followed by European countries (23%)** were among the most interested countries of destination by prospective emigrants.

REACH

During this period, a total of **308,681 people** were reached by the MRCs through different means of engagement, which is **1.11% higher** than the previous quarter (305,286). Out of this, 75% (232,766) of the clients were reached through social media platforms – Facebook 95%; 14% (40,565) through in-person outreach sessions; and 11% (30,350) through other channels of communication, including via distribution of IEC materials.

¹ United Nations Population Fund: World Population Dashboard -Pakistan | United Nations Population Fund (unfpa.org)
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All three MRCs continued their in-person outreach sessions during this quarter. A total of **40,565 (13% women)** were reached through various sessions at education centres, universities, stall events as well as pre-departure orientation, an 8% increase compared to the previous quarter (37,593).

Pre-departure briefings have been at the core of MRCs to reach the outgoing migrants and disseminate relevant information before their departure. Topics included migrants’ rights; the destination country’s culture, laws and policies; accessing support services and complaint mechanisms; issues of remittances as well as return and re-integration.

Through the organization of **148 pre-departure orientation sessions**, 24,627 outgoing migrants (310 women) were reached – with 94% of women departing from Islamabad. MRCs noted an increasing trend of labour migration to non-common destinations such as Iraq and Kyrgyzstan, besides the traditional ones such as Qatar, UAE, KSA, Oman, UK, and Bahrain. Other destinations observed by MRCs during these briefing sessions were Spain, Cyprus, Italy, Greece, New Zealand, Japan, Libya, the USA and Australia.

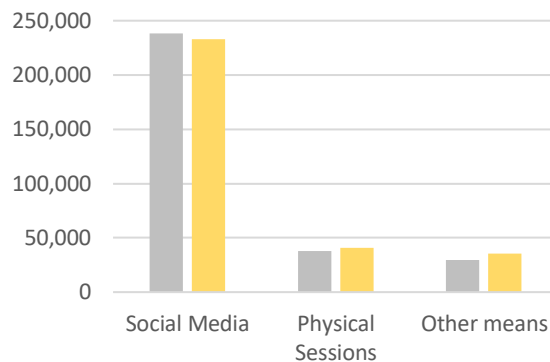


Figure 1. Reach-out to clients

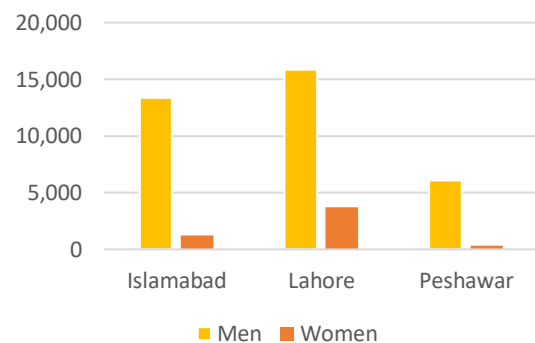


Figure 2. Reach – In-person sessions

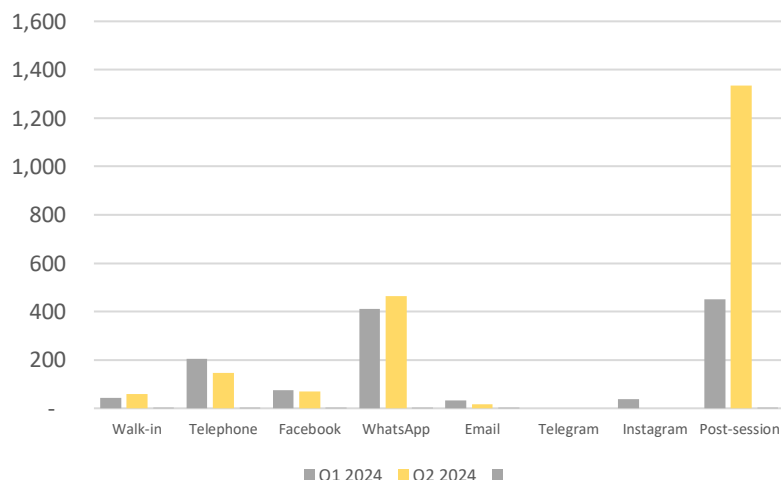


Figure 4. Counselling services by MRCs

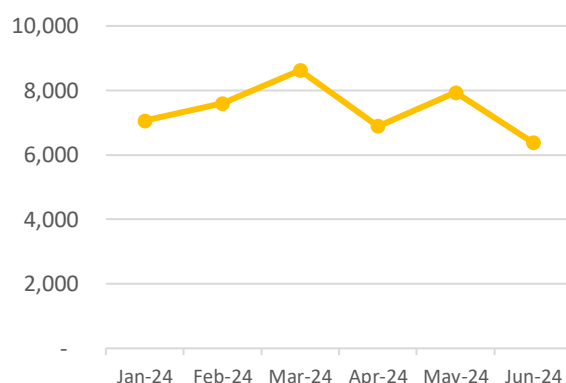


Figure 3. Pre-departure briefing reach



Furthermore, MRCs in Islamabad, Lahore, and Peshawar provided counselling services to **2,090 clients** - 11% women (221) - 65% higher than the 1,264 people counselled during the previous quarter. Clients sought assistance through various communication channels, including participation in the in-person post-session counselling (64%), MRC hotline (7%), telephone and WhatsApp (22%), Facebook (3%) and others (4%).

ENQUIRIES AND EMERGING TRENDS

Around 82% of enquiries received by the MRCs during this period were about legal migratory pathways, highlighting a 6% increase as compared to the first quarter of 2024. Enquiries included topics such as labour migration to the Gulf Cooperation Council - GCC (27%) as compared to 11% during the previous period; European countries (23%) as compared to 11% in the first quarter; and others (16%), with 11% of clients seeking information about study and scholarships opportunities abroad, which was 9% during the previous period. Around 18% of the enquiries were scattered across different topics, including humanitarian visas, irregular migration and asylum opportunities (though non-substantial), general advice and contacts.

The GCC region remains the leading destination for Pakistani migrants, with 862,625 Pakistanis moving abroad for work in 2023, while Saudi Arabia was the top. As of May 2024, this figure has reduced to 281,367 emigrants². Consistent with the previous quarter, there was a declining trend of Pakistanis migrating to the UAE due to alterations in visa policies. In 2023, over 230,000 Pakistanis migrated to this country in search of greener pastures making the country the second top destination for Pakistanis —who accounted for 26.77 per cent of the total number of people migrated from South Asian countries in 2023. BEOE and Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) statistics indicate just a little over 35,000 Pakistanis migrated to this country so far this year.

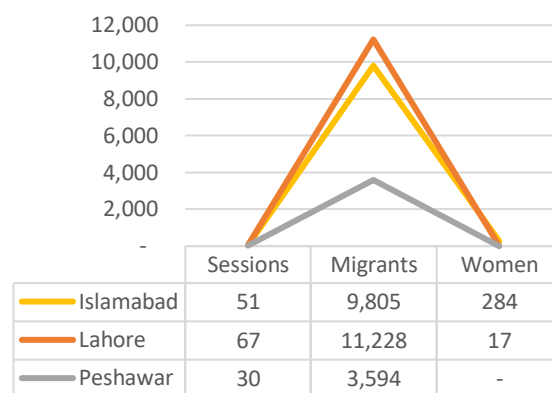


Figure 5. Pre-departure sessions by MRCs

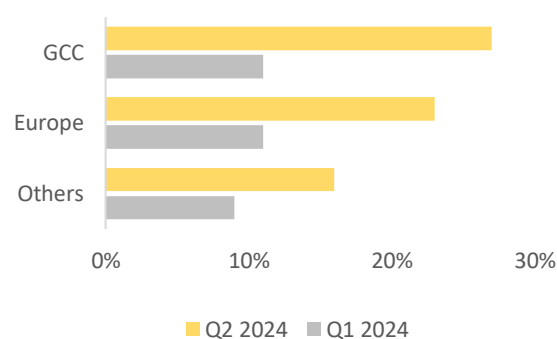


Figure 6. Countries clients enquired about

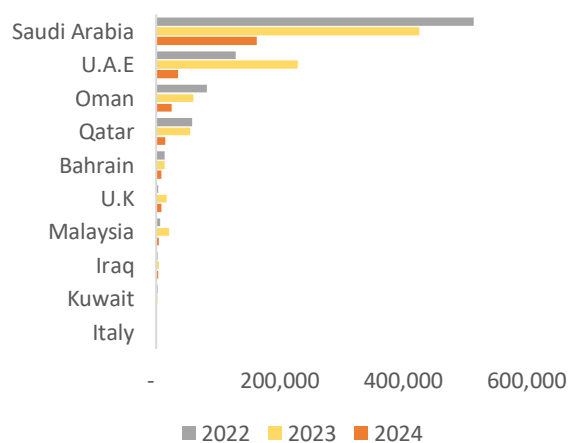


Figure 7. Top 10 countries Pakistani migrants registered in the past 3 years – as of May 2024
Source: BEOE

² [Reports & Statistics - Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment \(beoe.gov.pk\)](https://beoe.gov.pk)

Further, the MRC noted an increasing number of people travelling to Iraq and other non-common destinations, including Libya, Cyprus, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan and New Zealand, primarily mid- and low-skilled emigrants. On the other hand, high-skilled and highly qualified individuals tended to emigrate to Australia, USA, UK and Japan.

Women immigrants have consistently been on the rise. While comprising only 1.26% of the total of 24,627 outgoing migrants, this figure was 310 women participants during the MRCs pre-departure orientation sessions (420 during the first quarter of 2024).

In this period, MRC Lahore noted increasing enquiries about Kyrgyzstan work visas to Pakistani nationals. Given MRCs' role in providing information on counterfeit recruitment or employment, including online and through agents, MRC counsellors' investigations revealed that travel agents were asking large sums of money (ca. EUR 3,000) from prospective migrants with the promises of granting work visas to them, including possibilities of using Kyrgyzstan as a transit country towards Europe. In June, the Pakistani Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) and its Protectorate of Emigrant Offices (PoEs) halted the "protection" of any visas to Kyrgyzstan.

Clients contacting MRCs continue to raise questions about cases of fraudulent practices including fake visa and protector stamps by individuals and networks. Such cases have been taken up by relevant authorities, including BEOE and PoEs.

Additionally, MRCs in Pakistan continuously follow the situation of Afghan refugees in the country and target the community through their outreach and engagement activities. Given the significant reduction in the rate of arrest, detention and deportation of Afghans since its peak in October and November 2023, MRC noted a declining trend in the number of Afghans reaching out to MRCs in the country for counselling services or raising specific questions.

Top questions during the period April – June 2024:

- **82% on labour migration** and long-term stay including study options in the Gulf, Europe, and other countries (**1,620 queries**). This was 75% of the total queries received during the first quarter of 2024.
- 27% of the clients were having questions regarding mobility and travels to **the GCC countries (529 queries)**. This was 11% of the total questions received during the first quarter of 2024.
- 23% of the clients were having questions regarding travel and work in **European countries**, primarily Schengen areas (**460 queries**). This was 11% of the total questions received during the first quarter of 2024.



Furthermore, on 10 July 2024, the Government of Pakistan announced a further extension of the validity of the PoR cards for Afghan nationals, until 30 June 2025.

With regards to the Pakistani nationals en route towards Europe, while Pakistan nationality was not among Europe's top ten countries where migrants were arriving from up until 2022, it became the fifth most prominent by mid-2023, with arrivals reaching 8,778 in December. Currently, a significant portion of Pakistan's population, particularly in urban areas, expresses a desire to leave the country, as disclosed by a recent report by the National Commission of Human Rights, Pakistan³. According to Frontex, the European border agency, so far this year there were 1,295 detection cases of Pakistani nationals, the majority of which (848 cases) used the Central Mediterranean Route for their journey towards Europe, followed by the Western Balkans Route (223 cases) and Eastern Mediterranean Route (202 cases). Although these figures are not significant as compared to the overall number of detections, the increased use of the Central Mediterranean Route partly explains Pakistani nationals' intent in taking an outward journey towards Libya, among others. So far in 2024, about 4% of the represented country of origin among arrivals in Italy through this route was Pakistan⁴. The decided shift towards the Central Mediterranean Route was prompted by a number of developments elsewhere, including strengthened sea patrols and the building of a border fence along the Evros by Greece as well as systematic and strong pushbacks against refugees and migrants in some of the transit countries.

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³ [Perilous Journeys: Unravelling Irregular Migration from Pakistan - Pakistan | ReliefWeb](#)

⁴ [QMMU_Q2_2024_EU.pdf \(mixedmigration.org\)](#)

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