

# Migration Trends and Analysis: Pakistan

## Migration Resource Centre in Pakistan

*This migration trends analysis includes analytical considerations from data generated by the [Migrant Resource Centres in Pakistan](#). With over 240 million people, Pakistan is world's fifth most populous country<sup>1</sup>. 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

- A total of **242,673** people reached, of which **36,716** through in-person outreach sessions, with women representing only **9%** of this figure.
- There was a notable trend of **semi-skilled and highly skilled emigrants** targeting non-common destination countries such as **Italy, Greece, UK, Germany, and New Zealand** for opportunities in sectors like **Oil and Gas** and **Construction**.
- A rising trend of **female participation** was observed across all MRCs during this reporting period, particularly in Peshawar.
- Dominance of **labour- and regular migration related queries**, particularly for Europe and the Gulf, which together accounted for over **80%** of total inquiries handled by all three MRCs, was noted.
- **Increasing use of AZAD** visa to work in Saudi Arabia and Qatar by semi-skilled and unskilled emigrants and **increasing aspiration among youth** to move to the EU for better opportunities.

### REACH

In this quarter, MRCs in Lahore, Islamabad, and Peshawar collectively reached **242,673** individuals through a combination of social media, physical sessions, and other engagement methods. Lahore MRC led the outreach, contributing **80%** (194,122) to the total reach, primarily driven by its significant social media presence (166,533). Islamabad and Peshawar MRCs contributed **11%** (26,174) and **9%** (22,377) to the overall reach, respectively. Islamabad's reach was more evenly distributed across all channels, with **46%** of its reach coming from physical sessions (11,967) and **54%** through other means (14,207).

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Population Fund: World Population Dashboard -Pakistan | United Nations Population Fund (unfpa.org)  
Funded by the European Union      Implemented by



Peshawar showed strength in physical sessions with 13,510 participants (60%) and a smaller but meaningful impact through other means, including through distribution of IEC materials, reaching 8,867 people (40%).

A combined total of **36,716 individuals** including **33,320 men** (90.7%), **3,396 women** (9.3%), and a small portion of **1,034 under-18 participants** (2.8%) were reached through various in-person outreach sessions. The key outreach methods across all three centres were **MRC-led outreach events, pre-departure briefings, and orientation sessions at vocational training centres (VTCs/TVETs)**. These activities were designed to target individuals at different stages of the migration process, from those considering migration to those preparing for departure or returning from abroad.

**Pre-departure briefings** emerged as the most significant outreach activity across all three centres, accounting for the largest share of participants. In total, **27,231 people** participated in **204 sessions**, with men making up the vast majority. These briefings, representing approximately **74%** of the total reached through in-person sessions, focused on providing emigrants with essential information before they embark on their journeys.

**MRC-led outreach events** reached **8,840 people**, or **24%** of the total participants, through direct engagement at various platforms such as universities, communities, and public events. These sessions were instrumental in raising awareness about migration-related issues among a diverse audience, including **under-18 participants**—especially in Peshawar, where outreach to younger individuals was a key focus. Peshawar alone engaged **703 under-18 individuals** through MRC-led efforts, representing **68%** of the total youth reached across all three centres.

**Orientation sessions at VTCs/TVETs** were another important component of the outreach strategy, reaching **4,658 individuals**. **Group counselling sessions** were held exclusively in Peshawar, reaching **666 individuals**, including **199 women**.

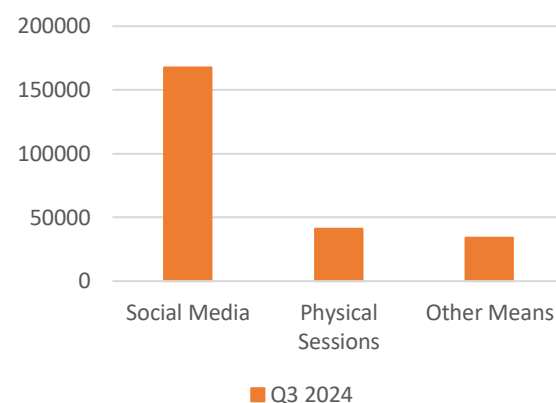


Figure 1. Reach-out to clients

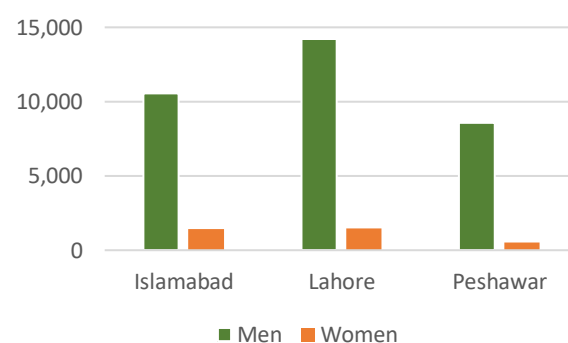


Figure 2. Reach – In-person sessions per MRC by gender

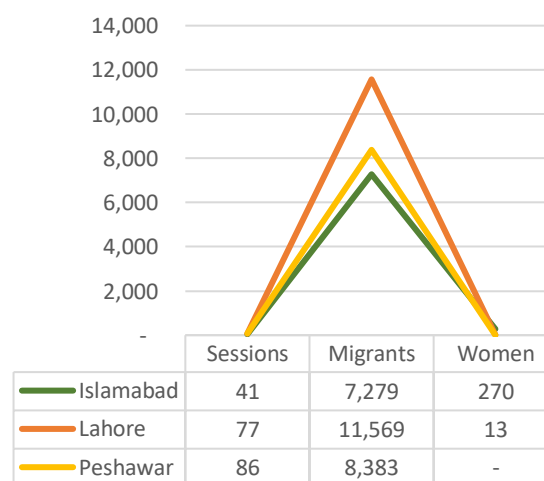


Figure 3. Pre-departure briefing reach per MRC



This personalized approach helped address specific concerns of potential migrants and returnees, offering a tailored support system.

## ENQUIRIES AND EMERGING TRENDS

This quarter marked **80%** of the total inquiries focusing on **labour migration and long-term stay options**, including study opportunities in the Gulf, Europe, and other countries. Notably, **32%** of clients sought information regarding travel and work in European nations, particularly in the Schengen area. Additionally, **29%** of clients expressed interest in mobility and travel to GCC countries. These trends underscore a continued demand for labour migration and educational opportunities abroad, especially in Europe and the Gulf region.

All three MRCs engaged with outgoing and prospect emigrants through different engagement methods. The centres collectively facilitated pre-departure orientations sessions to **27,231 individuals** during this period, with notable month-to-month variations. Lahore reported the highest number of outgoing emigrants, peaking at **4,037** in August and descending to **3,598** in September. Islamabad had **2,606** in July but saw a small drop in August to **2,110** before rebounding to **2,606** in September. Peshawar consistently supported a significant number of emigrants, recording **3,192** in July and gradually decreasing to **2,056** in September. Women comprised a small fraction of these figures, with only **283** women among the total outgoing migrants, indicating persistent gender difference in emigration trends across the country.

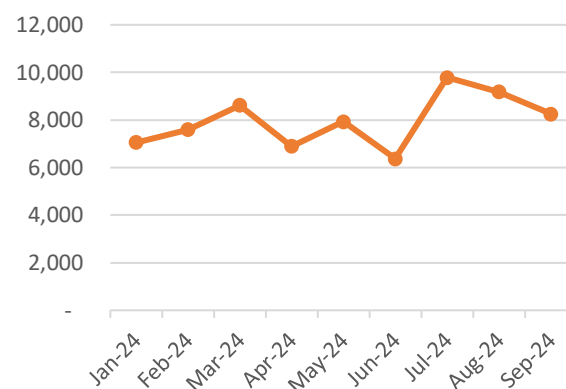


Figure 4. Pre-departure outreach participants

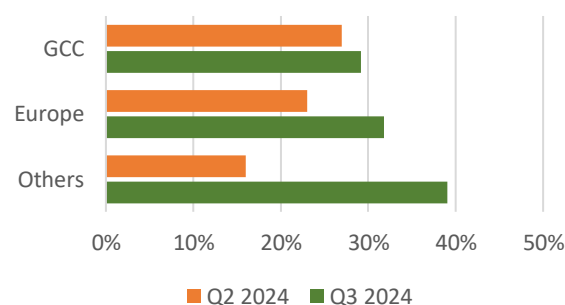


Figure 5. Countries that clients enquired about during the two consecutive quarters of 2024

### Top three questions during the period July - September 2024:

- **80% on labour migration** and long-term stay including study options in the Gulf, Europe, and other countries (**1,735 queries**). This was 82% of the total queries received during the second quarter of 2024.
- **32%** of the clients were having questions regarding travel and work in **European countries**, primarily Schengen areas (**503 queries**). This was 23% of the total questions received during the second quarter of 2024.
- **29%** of the clients were having questions regarding mobility and travels to **the GCC countries (461 queries)**. This was 27% of the total questions received during the previous quarter.



Pre-departure briefings revealed that a significant number of migrant workers heading to countries like Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Qatar are predominantly **semi-skilled and unskilled**. In Malaysia, stringent visa restrictions for semi-skilled workers have notably curtailed migration since August. In Peshawar, there's a growing trend among migrants to Saudi Arabia opting for the AZAD visa, which, despite its lack of legal status, is perceived to provide greater work flexibility in the host country. Many of these individuals secure work visas through company sponsorship but ultimately seek employment independently, either directly or through employment promoters. The AZAD visa's popularity is also on the rise in Qatar, as evidenced by recent reports of deported individuals engaging in informal labour.

The most common destinations for emigrants remained consistent across all centres, including Qatar, Iraq, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. Notably, the trend of semi-skilled and skilled emigrants has been observed towards non-common destinations such as Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, a rising interest in highly skilled individuals migrating to countries like the USA, UK, China, and Japan was also noted.

Queries handled by the MRCs (**2,162**) reflect diverse interests across various emigration categories. The majority of inquiries (1,581) were related to **working abroad**, with **Europe** and the **Gulf** being the top destinations. **Work-related queries for Europe** accounted for **32% (503)** of these inquiries, with **Islamabad** receiving the highest share at **245 inquiries**, which was **48.7%** of all Europe-related work queries. In comparison, **Gulf-related queries** constituted **29% (461)** of the total, with Islamabad again receiving majority with **207 inquiries (45%)**, followed by Lahore with **163** and Peshawar with **91**. Queries related to working abroad in other regions, including US, Canada, Japan, etc., made up **39% (617)** of the total, with Lahore accounting for the largest portion (283).

A significant **aspiration among young migrants** in the community is to relocate to EU countries for work and study, driven by the perception of easier pathways to permanent residency. Many believed that irregular migration incurs lower costs compared to regular migration, leading some to travel to the UAE on visit visas for labour migration purposes. In tandem with these aspirations, students enrolled in TVET programs exhibit a strong

In 2024, Pakistan recorded over \$30.3 billion in remittances, an 11% increase from the previous year. This was partially due to economic improvements and currency stability, supported by new international financial programmes. The Gulf region remains a key destination for Pakistani labour, though the remittance growth slowed in 2023 due to global factors like falling oil prices and economic challenges in host countries. However, forecasts indicate growth for 2024 with expectations of stable inflows, subject to the overall developments in the region (<https://propakistani.pk>).

In the past two years, more than 2 million people have left Pakistan, contributing to the growing remittance inflows. This exodus has been fuelled by domestic economic challenges, such as inflation and limited employment opportunities, which have pushed more individuals to seek work abroad. The remittances play a crucial role in Pakistan's economy, often surpassing exports in their contribution (<https://www.pakistangulfeconomist.com>).



inclination towards regular migration. Those pursuing vocational courses are especially interested in employment opportunities within GCC countries and South Korea, while students engaged in three-year diploma programs are exploring study and work options abroad in countries such as the UK, Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, and China.

Furthermore, MRCs continued to observe a notable interest in **studying abroad** during this period, making up **12% (264)** of the total inquiries, led by **Lahore** with **100 queries**. Family reunification and settlement accounted for **4% (95)**, with Lahore again leading with **54 inquiries**. Additionally, **Islamabad** showed a distinct focus on **irregular migration and asylum**, handling **91%** of the related queries (51 out of 56), reflecting emerging topics in that area. The **Peshawar** MRC, on the other hand, processed the highest number of **general inquiries** (40) and requests for MRC information (56). This highlights a trend in Peshawar's broader engagement, particularly with younger individuals and more diverse migration topics. Overall, data generated by MRCs indicates that **employment opportunities abroad**, particularly in Europe and the Gulf, dominated inquiries across all MRCs. **Afghan nationals in Pakistan** were also seeking information about student opportunities and resettlement programs offered by various countries. Additionally, several Afghans have reached out to the MRC regarding difficulties faced by Afghan workers returning to Pakistan from the EU on visit visas. These individuals are encountering challenges in extending their visas and securing exit permits from Pakistan's Ministry of Interior.

The MRC is actively addressing counterfeit messaging and misinformation through awareness campaigns. During sessions with the Christian community in Punjab, counselors identified heightened vulnerabilities, with participants sharing distressing experiences of exploitation. One woman recounted paying PKR 400,000 (approximately EUR 1,400) to an agent, lured by false promises of immigration and work for her family. The local pastors expressed gratitude to the MRC for their efforts in raising awareness. Additionally, the MRC has conducted **verification on 91 cases** concerning job advertisements and Overseas Employment Promoter (OEP) licenses. This initiative aims to safeguard potential migrants from fraudulent schemes and ensure the legitimacy of job offers.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has intensified operations against human trafficking and smuggling networks, apprehending 574 smugglers, including seven most-wanted individuals and 123 proclaimed offenders. Additionally, 380 individuals were convicted during this reporting period. Consider highlighting the joint activities of FIA and MRC that have enhanced efforts to combat human trafficking and smuggling (<https://www.fia.gov.pk/files/tickers/71055219.pdf>).

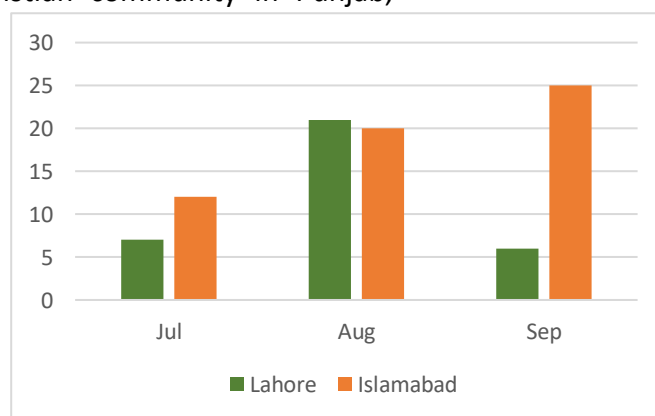


Figure 6. Verification of job advertisement and OEP cases, Q3 2024



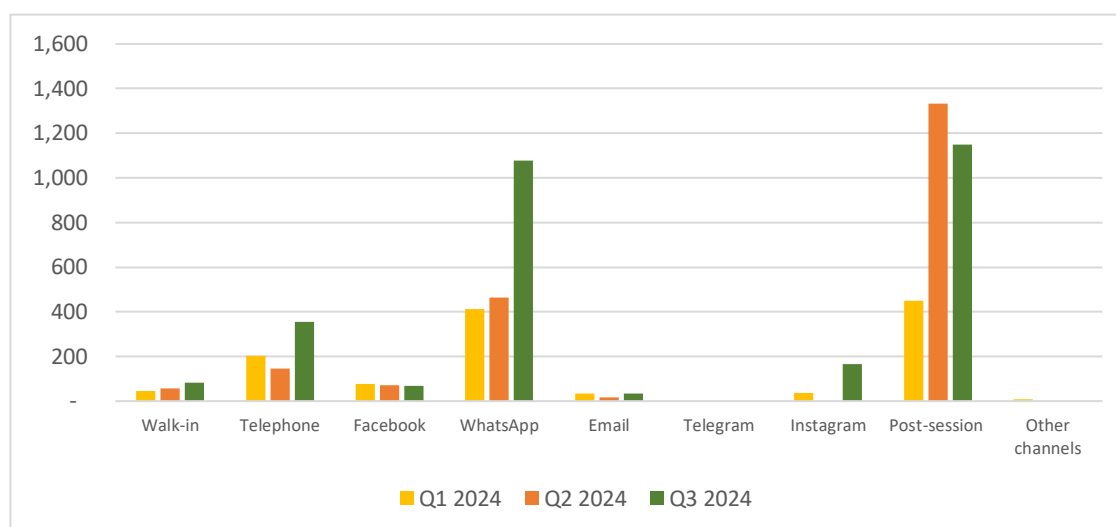


Figure 7. In-person counselling channels

Moreover, MRCs in Islamabad, Lahore, and Peshawar provided counselling services to **2,931** individuals - 6% women (181). In this period, MRCs saw significant shifts in the usage of different channels for in-person counselling. Walk-in sessions increased by 89%, rising from 44 in Q1 to 83 in Q3 of 2024, indicating a growing preference for face-to-face support. Meanwhile, telephone counselling surged by 74%, jumping from 204 in Q1 to 355 in Q3, highlighting an increasing reliance on immediate, real-time assistance. WhatsApp emerged as the most popular communication channel, with queries increasing by 162%, from 411 in Q1 to 1,077 in Q3.

The number of **male clients** receiving individual counselling rose substantially, with an **increase of 177%**, from 1,193 in Q1 to 3,308 in Q3. In contrast, the number of **female clients** fluctuated, reaching a peak of **221 in Q2** before dropping to 181 in Q3.

#### Contact information:

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