

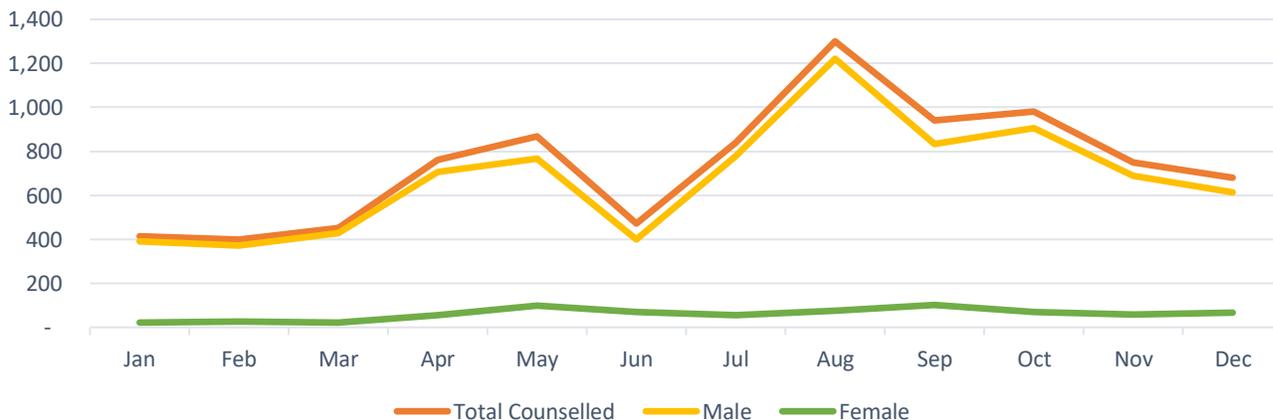
# Migration Trends and Analysis: Pakistan

## 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, incorporating references from previous quarters ensuring comparability and providing a comprehensive annual perspective.

### KEY HIGHLIGHT

- Over **10 million individuals** reached by MRCs in 2024, with 70% of engagements in the last quarter of 2024 driven by social media campaign, showcasing the effectiveness of digital platforms in disseminating information.
- A total of **8,855 individuals** received counselling services in 2024, with **27% (2,410 individuals)** counselled in the final quarter (October to December). Of these, 92% were male (2,209) and only 8% were female (196).
- A **reduction in labour migration** rates was observed during the fourth quarter of 2024, attributed to visa restrictions and delays from the UAE and Saudi Arabia, leading to a noticeable decline in the number of emigrants.
- **42% of all inquiries** in this period were related to **labour migration**, particularly to Europe and the Gulf countries, reflecting a sustained interest in work abroad opportunities.
- A **notable increase** in inquiries from Pakistanis regarding **irregular migration** pathways to MRC, with over **111 questions** recorded in 2024, a significant rise compared to minimal inquiries in previous years.



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



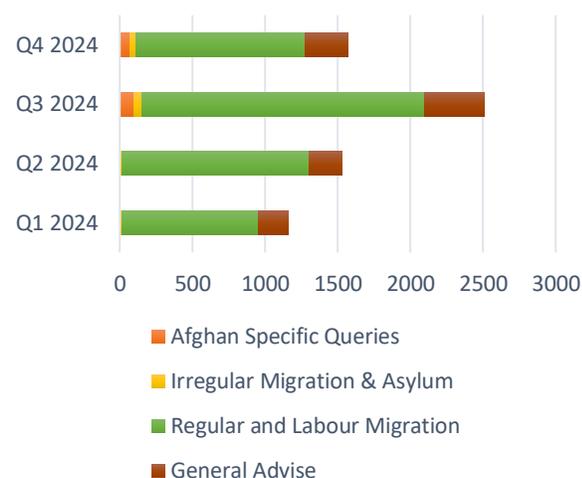
## ENQUIRIES AND EMERGING TRENDS

Key emerging trends from the outreach and counselling sessions during this period revealed that **semi-skilled and skilled workers** predominantly emigrated to countries such as Greece, Italy, the UK, Bahrain, Spain, and various Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Meanwhile, **highly skilled individuals** tended to favour destinations like China, Hong Kong, Azerbaijan, Canada, and Australia. However, delays in visa processing and restrictions imposed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE led to a **decline in the number of labour emigrants** heading to these traditional destinations for Pakistani emigrants. Additionally, a decrease in foot traffic to the Protectorate of Emigrants (PoE) office was noted, likely due to the transition to the E-Protector system.

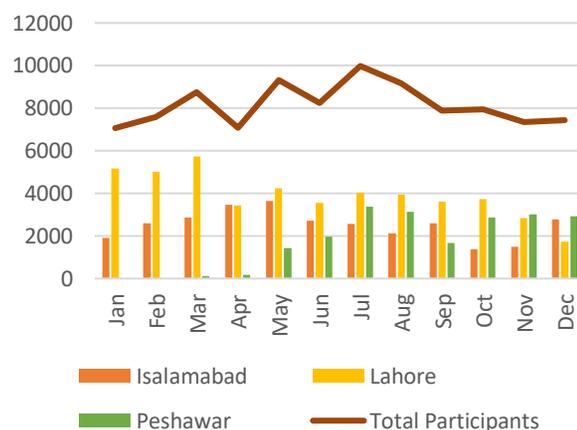
Analysis of the FAQs during this period reveals that the most frequent queries received by MRCs were related to **work abroad opportunities**, with Europe (360 queries), and the GCC region (302 queries) being the top destinations, accounting for 42% of all queries. Queries on irregular migration and asylum were minimal (2% of the total), however, a notable number of individuals sought information on asylum processes in Europe due to perceived life threats in Pakistan, reflecting both the political and economic drivers of migration during this period. On the other hand, post-session counselling revealed a **rising trend in irregular migration**, particularly through Libya to the EU, and clients sought solutions to address challenges in accessing legitimate migration channels.

Afghan nationals, predominantly residing in Pakistan, sought guidance on resettlement programs, scholarships, and alternative migration pathways. Simultaneously, Pakistani students displayed significant interest in studying abroad, specifically targeting EU countries, GCC, USA, and Australia, with frequent queries about scholarships, visa processes, and technical education opportunities. Additionally, overseas employment dominated discussions, with clients inquiring about job opportunities in Europe, Canada, USA, and the Gulf, while concerns about fake job offers and visa exploitation underscored the importance of counselling on authentic processes.

### Queries Recorded In 2024



### Participants of Pre-Departure Briefings

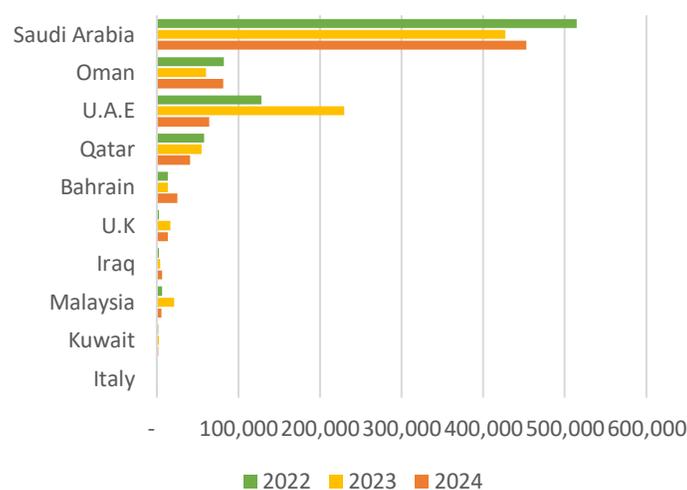


In the last quarter of 2024, key trends in emigration destinations for Pakistani workers highlighted shifting demands and emerging opportunities. The GCC countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, remained dominant, with sustained demand for low- and semi-skilled labour in construction and services, despite ongoing nationalization efforts like Saudization. Europe also showed increasing interest in skilled workers, with Germany easing pathways for healthcare and IT professionals, while irregular migration to Southern Europe, particularly Greece and Italy, continued to be a concern.

According to the Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment (BEOE), approximately 727,381 individuals left Pakistan for employment purposes in 2024, marking a 15% decline from the 862,625 who emigrated in 2023. The majority of emigrants in 2024 chose the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (452,562 workers), followed by Oman (81,587) – replacing United Arab Emirates as the second place, the UAE (64,130), Qatar (40,818), and Bahrain (25,198) – [PROPAKISTANI](#).

The notable increase in inquiries from Pakistanis about **irregular migration pathways** to MRC, with over 111 questions recorded in 2024, aligns with broader trends highlighting a growing desire to leave the country. This rise reflects the escalating challenges faced by Pakistanis, as detailed in a report by the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), which identified economic hardship, political instability, limited educational opportunities, high inflation, and terrorism as key drivers behind the growing number of people seeking to migrate. As per NCHR's report, Pakistan's surge to the fifth position (2023) in a list of countries with the most irregular immigrants in Europe is particularly alarming<sup>2</sup>, considering that just a year earlier, it was not among the top-10 nations for irregular migration. The report cites that nearly 40% of the Pakistani survey respondents want to leave<sup>3</sup>, with many turning to perilous routes through Dubai, Egypt, and Libya to reach Europe.

Number of Emigrants from Pakistan 2022 - 2024



The deadly risks associated with these irregular migration pathways are evident, as seen in the tragic deaths of 44 Pakistanis among the 50 who perished trying to reach Spain's Canary Islands in early days of 2025. Additionally, a series of tragic incidents further underscores the increasing risks: on October 13, 2024, four young Pakistani men suffocated to death while attempting to migrate via boat from Mauritania, and on December 15, 2024 37 Pakistani nationals returned from the UK. That same day, a boat carrying migrants from Libya capsized

<sup>2</sup> <https://nchr.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Perilous-Journeys.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2509712/nearly-40-pakistanis-want-to-leave-country>

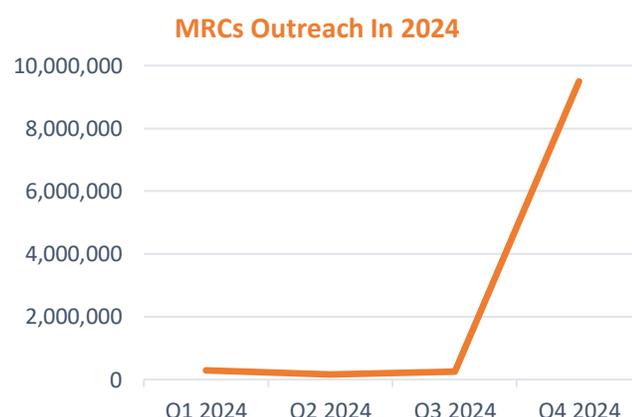


off the Greek coast, resulting in one confirmed Pakistani death and the rescue of 47 others. In response, the government of Pakistan intensified legal action against human trafficking and smuggling networks, launched an awareness campaign promoting legal migration channels, and activated the Crisis Management Unit in Islamabad to support affected families. These tragic trends underscore the desperation and increasing willingness of Pakistanis to take extreme risks in search of better prospects abroad, which has undoubtedly contributed to the increased inquiries to MRC regarding irregular migration.

## REACH

In 2024, MRCs in Pakistan reached a remarkable **10.2 million** people, with over **9 million engagements** recorded in the final quarter alone. This achievement was primarily driven by a robust social media campaign, organised towards the last quarters of the year and which played a crucial role in engaging over **7 million individuals** during this period alone. In addition, other channels such as physical events, pre-departure information sessions, and partner collaborations contributed to a combined total of **1.2 million engagements** for the year. The distribution of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials also played a significant role, reaching over **39,500 individuals** in the last quarter, bringing the **annual total to 153,037**.

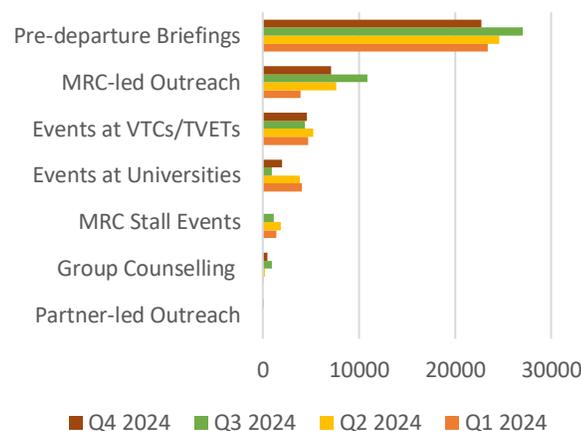
In 2024, a total of 1,657 asylum applications were submitted by the Pakistanis nationals, with the top three EU+ destinations being Italy, Germany, and France. First-time applications accounted for 1,488 cases, while 1,613 decisions were issued. The recognition rate is low, with a predominant proportion of decisions being negative. Pending cases remain high at 33,208, suggesting long awaiting processes. Additionally, 196 applications were withdrawn, and there are no reported resettlement arrivals. This reflects a challenging scenario for applicants from Pakistan, with limited success in achieving positive outcomes and significant delays in processing ([EUAA](#)).



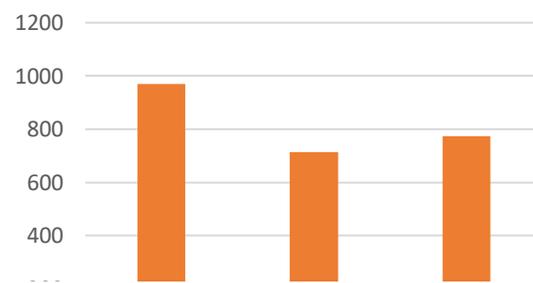
Moreover, in-person physical outreach activities engaged a total of **159,034 individuals** across various initiatives throughout 2024. Specially in the last quarter, a total of 37,033 individuals were reached through physical outreach measures, contributing to 23% of the yearly total. Among these, **7,110 people (19%)** were engaged through MRC-led outreach. Orientation sessions in VTCs/TVETs accounted for **4,573 individuals (12%)**, while orientation sessions at universities reached **2,033 individuals (5%)**. Pre-departure briefings remained the largest contributor, engaging **22,749 people (61%)**. Furthermore, a total of **8,855 individuals** received direct counselling, with **2,410 seeking** guidance in the final quarter. The majority of those counselled were male, with 8,111 men receiving support over the course of the year and 2,209 in the last quarter. Female participation was comparatively lower, with 725 women counselled annually and 196 in the last quarter, reflecting the small number of female emigrants from Pakistan rather than limited outreach to women.

In terms of counselling channels during the last quarter of 2024, digital platforms such as WhatsApp and hotlines dominated, with WhatsApp being the most utilized channel, particularly in Islamabad (49%), reflecting a strong preference for accessible, remote communication methods. MRC Lahore used email (16%) and Facebook (10%) for consultation purposes as well. In-person interactions, such as post-session counselling, were highest in Peshawar (69%), indicating a greater reliance on face-to-face support in that region. Walk-in sessions remained low across all locations, with a slight preference in Islamabad. Overall, Islamabad had the highest total consultations (969) – 7% Afghan nationals, driven by its strong adoption of digital channels, while Peshawar followed (774) - 17% of them being Afghan nationals, with significant reliance on in-person methods. MRC in Lahore also provided counselling services to prospect emigrants (693). This underscored the importance of tailoring services to regional preferences, with a balance of digital and in-person approaches adopted by MRCs in Pakistan throughout the year.

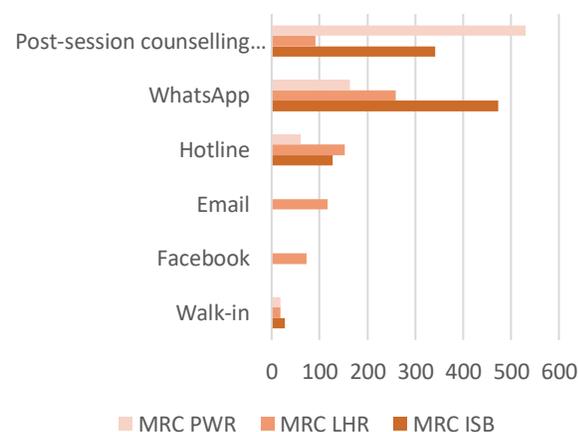
MRC Outreach - Physical Events in 2024



Total Counsellled, Q4 2024



Means of Counselling in Q4 2024



## Engagement with Emigrants

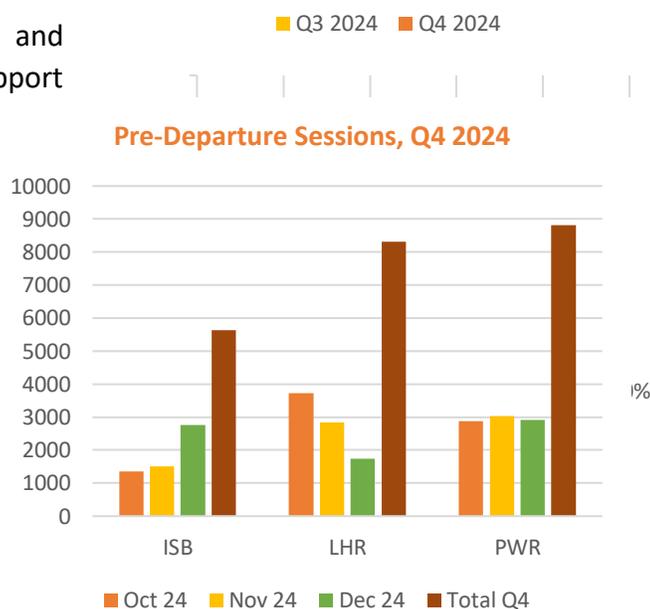
During this quarter, **71%** of total inquiries were centred on **labour migration and long-term stay** options, including study opportunities in the GCC, Europe, and other countries. Notably, **23%** of clients sought information about traveling to and working in European nations, with a particular focus on the Schengen area. Additionally, **19%** of clients showed interest in mobility and travel to GCC countries.

All three MRCs actively engaged with outgoing and prospective emigrants through various outreach and support methods. Collectively, the centres facilitated pre-departure orientation sessions for **22,749** Individuals during this period contributed to a total annual engagement with nearly 98,000 outgoing emigrants throughout 2024 – nearly **13%** of all outgoing Pakistani emigrants. Lahore and Peshawar recorded the highest engagement levels during this period, with Peshawar consistently maintaining a high volume of interactions throughout the quarter. Islamabad saw a substantial increase in December, with 2,766 emigrants engaged, accounting for 49.2% of its final quarter total.

Annually, MRCs provided pre-departure orientation to a total of 97,837 emigrants, with Lahore leading the effort (47,025 or 48.1%), followed by Islamabad (30,071 or 30.7%) and Peshawar (20,741 or 21.2%). These sessions provided emigrants with critical information about their rights, procedures such as the E-Protector registration, and the significance of the Foreign Service Agreement (FSA). Addressing common queries about financial limits, benefits, and insurance procedures ensured emigrants were better prepared for their destinations, demonstrating the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Fighting counterfeit messaging and misinformation was central to the MRCs' efforts to empower outgoing migrants and their communities. Utilizing a multi-faceted approach, MRCs conducted awareness campaigns, community outreach programs, and distributed IEC materials through innovative methods, such as Rickshaw campaigns. These campaigns reached wider audiences in both urban and rural areas. Additionally, orientation sessions for youth at VTCs and universities were integral to the MRCs' strategy, targeting younger demographics who are often key participants in migratory journeys. By combining creative grassroots initiatives with formal education efforts, the three MRCs continued to contribute

### Emigrants Asked About, Q4 2024



significantly to raising awareness, dispelling myths, and ensuring that migrants and their families had access to accurate and reliable information. Furthermore, this quarter, the **MRCs verified 130 cases** involving job advertisements, contract offers, passport authenticity, and Overseas Employment Promoter (OEP) licenses, bringing the total number of cases verified in 2024 to **327**. This proactive initiative is designed to protect potential migrants from fraudulent schemes and ensure the credibility of job opportunities, reinforcing trust and safety in the migration process.

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