

January – March 2025

Migration Trends and Analysis: Pakistan

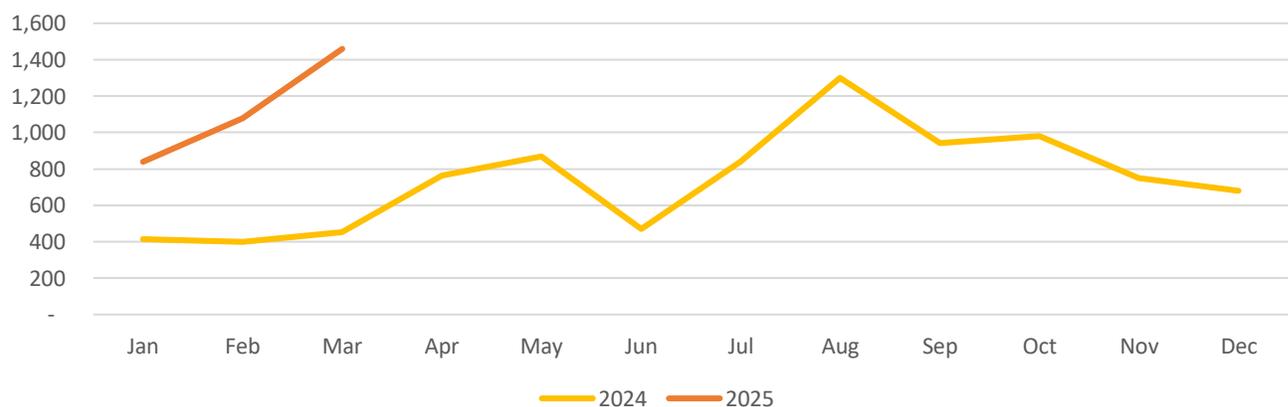
Migration Resource Centre in Pakistan

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

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- In this period, migration patterns continued to show a clear **skill-based destination trend**: low and semi-skilled workers predominantly move to GCC countries and Southern Europe, while highly skilled professionals target advanced economies like the UK, Germany, Australia, Japan, and Finland.
- The Government's **launch of the Convention for Overseas Pakistanis**, initiated by the Prime Minister's Office, marks a strategic shift toward greater diaspora engagement, recognising the important economic and developmental role of the Pakistani diaspora.
- Over **1 million individuals** were reached by MRCs in the first quarter of 2025 through social media campaigns, pre-departure orientation sessions, and on-ground outreach activities.
- During this period, **3,375 individuals** received counselling services with 9% of them being female - a 3% increase from the 6% recorded during the same period in 2024.
- A notable rise in **inquiries from Afghan nationals** was observed at MRCs, driven by intensified government deportation efforts and the suspension of Western migration programmes.

MRC Counselling Trends 2024 vs. 2025



¹ United Nations Population Fund: World Population Dashboard -Pakistan | United Nations Population Fund (unfpa.org)

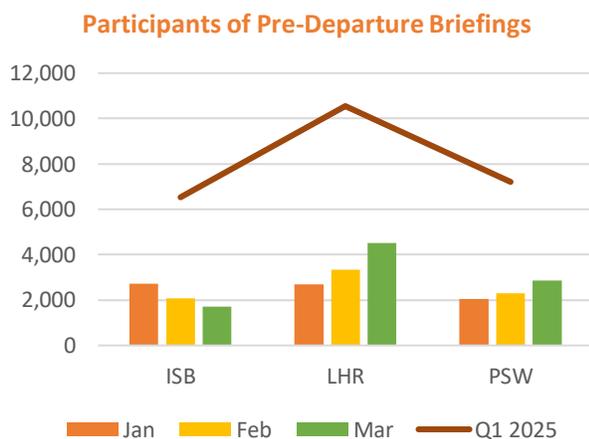
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ENQUIRIES AND EMERGING TRENDS

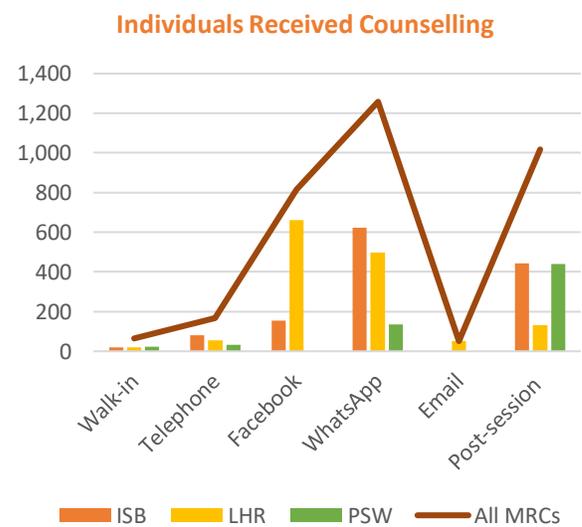
From January to March 2025, **64% of prospective emigrants** contacting MRCs inquired about **legal pathways** for labour migration and long-term stay options, including opportunities for study abroad in the GCC, Europe, and other destinations. Among these, 21% of clients specifically sought information related to travel and employment opportunities in European countries, with a marked interest in the Schengen area. Interest in mobility to the GCC region accounted for 19% of the total queries. Enquiries related to **irregular migration** were relatively low, comprising only about **1% of the total**. The remaining **35% of enquiries** focused on a variety of topics, including **general migration information and family reunification** processes.



Moreover, during the first three months of 2025, a **total of 24,271 outgoing migrants received pre-departure information** through 220 orientation sessions held across Islamabad, Lahore, and Peshawar. This marks a slight increase compared to the previous quarter, during which 22,749 individuals participated in similar sessions. Lahore accounted for the largest share with 10,547 participants, making up 43.45% of the total. Peshawar followed with 7,194 participants,

representing 29.64%, while Islamabad saw 6,530 participants, amounting to 26.91% of the overall emigrant turnout.

These sessions revealed key trends in outbound labour migration. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries - including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar - remained the **primary destination for low and semi-skilled workers**, particularly from Peshawar and Lahore.



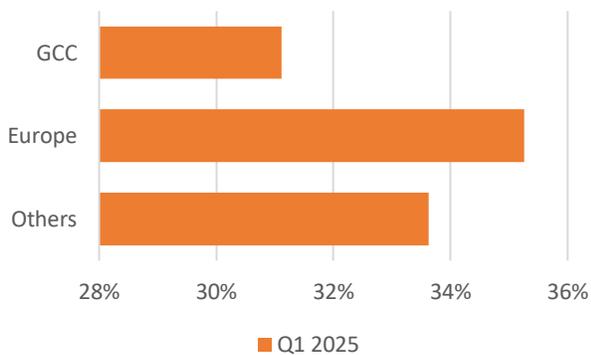
Amid continued challenges related to the UAE's visa policies, Saudi Arabia emerged as the leading destination for Pakistani workers in the first quarter of this year. Meanwhile, European countries like Greece, Portugal, and Italy continued attracting **seasonal and semi-skilled labour**, especially through direct employment routes, with notable participation from Lahore-based emigrants. Islamabad reported a rise in female migration, although female participation at the pre-orientation sessions remained minimal overall - less than 2% of all outgoing migrants - and was virtually absent in Lahore and Peshawar. MRC Islamabad specifically noted an increasing number of semi-



skilled labour migrants to Albania, Lithuania, Croatia, Hong Kong, and Portugal, particularly during January 2025.

Highly skilled emigrants primarily targeted destinations such as the UK, Germany, Australia, Japan, and Finland, driven by opportunities in sectors like IT, engineering, and finance. A notable increase was observed in migration to emerging labour corridors such as Kyrgyzstan, Albania, and Lithuania, especially for roles linked to Chinese infrastructure projects and administrative work. One prominent recruitment agency in Lahore, planned to facilitate emigration of nearly 1,000 individuals to Kyrgyzstan. These **reflect a sharp rise in demand to non-traditional destinations** across Pakistan.

Emigrants Asked About

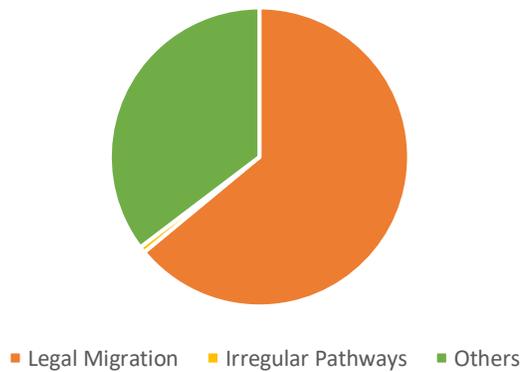


Across all MRCs, outgoing emigrants frequently asked questions about legal documentation, visa regulations, protectorate renewal procedures, and safety measures against fraud and exploitation. Concerns also surfaced around remittances, legal rights abroad, and family reunification options. Requirement for a police character certificate as a new prerequisite for obtaining protectorate stamps at all Protectorate Offices (PoEs) across Pakistan was noted.

The period also saw a surge in client concerns regarding the legitimacy of job offers and visa-related issues, particularly for countries like Italy, Romania, and Saudi Arabia. In the first quarter of 2025, MRCs conducted **223 job verifications**, accounting for 68% of the total verifications in 2024 (327 cases). These included 87 job advertisements, and 52 job contract offers, in addition to verifications of passports, visas, and Overseas Employment Promoter (OEP) licenses (Pakistan only). **These efforts help identify fraudulent offers and protect migrants from potential exploitation, scams, and trafficking, reinforcing MRCs’ role in safeguarding safe migration.**

Additionally, inquiries around **family reunification and immigration procedures** saw an uptick, along with a notable increase in Afghan nationals - particularly in Islamabad and Peshawar - seeking guidance on resettlement and legal stay options due to the ongoing refugee crisis. Visa issues, including application rejections and scheduling delays, also remained prominent, highlighting the continued need for MRCs to support individuals navigating increasingly complex migration systems.

Topics Asked of MRC



At the outset of this year, a notable trend was the **increasing emphasis on diaspora engagement²**,

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1904437>



exemplified by the launch of the Convention for Overseas Pakistanis by the Government. Initiated by the Prime Minister's Office, the convention reflects a strategic shift in recognising the economic and developmental significance of the Pakistani diaspora. With a focus on boosting remittances, encouraging foreign investment, and mobilising support for upcoming national projects, the event signals a broader policy trend toward integrating overseas communities into the country's long-term growth agenda.

REACH

During this quarter, MRCs in Pakistan collectively reached over 2 million individuals through social media campaigns, pre-departure orientation sessions, and on-ground outreach activities. Of this, over **2,032,941 people** were reached through digital outreach, with **TikTok (53%) Instagram (25%) and Facebook (20%)** serving as the primary platforms for engagement. This marks a significant digital footprint, reflecting MRCs' growing online presence and relevance among potential migrants, particularly youth. Moreover, MRCs have created a TikTok channel for maximum outreach.

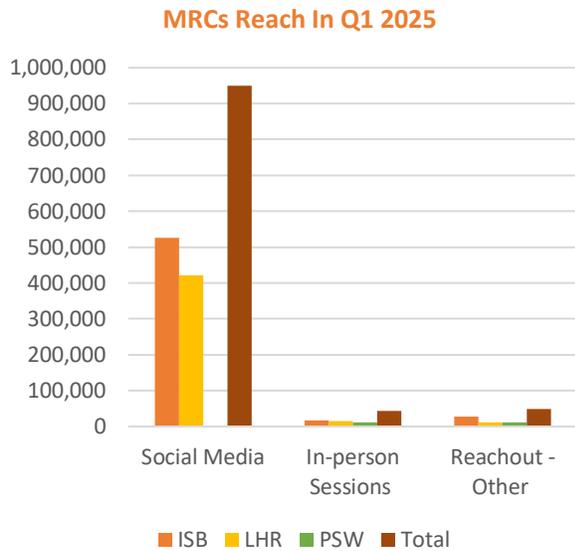
In addition to online efforts, physical outreach activities continued to play an important role in community engagement. A total of **43,679 individuals** were reached through various in-person initiatives this quarter, an 18% increase from the 37,033 individuals reached in the previous quarter. Islamabad accounted for 38% of the total participants, followed by Lahore with 36%, and Peshawar MRC with 26%. This accounts for 27% of the total physical outreach recorded in 2024, indicating a strong start to the year. Of this outreach, 56% was achieved through pre-departure orientation sessions.

Meanwhile, the Government of Pakistan ramped up efforts to deport undocumented Afghans residing in the country, setting a March 31 deadline for all foreigners living illegally. Afghan nationals reaching out to the MRCs also expressed concern over potential persecutions if returned. Human Rights Watch reported growing pressure on Afghans to return to Afghanistan, where they risk persecution and face severe economic hardship.

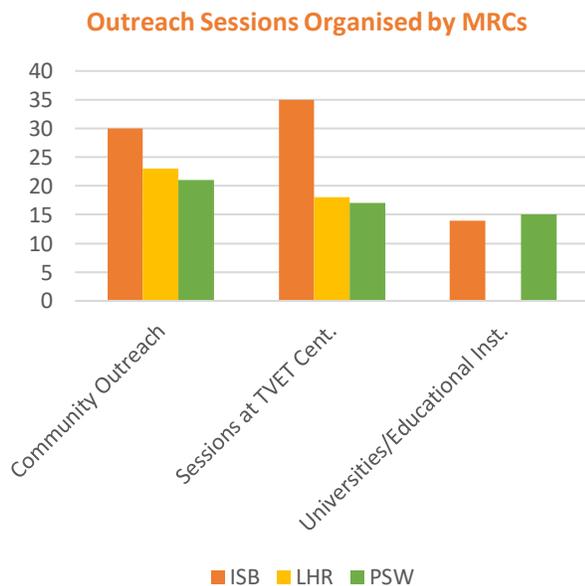
Further outreach included **10,622 individuals** (24%) reached through orientation sessions conducted by partner universities and vocational training institutes (VTCs/TVETs), while **6,778 individuals** (16%) were engaged via direct MRC-led outreach activities.

The data from the reporting period reflects a strong and diverse outreach effort undertaken to raise awareness about safe and informed migration. A total of **173 outreach sessions** were conducted, encompassing community-level engagement, institutional partnerships, and large-scale events. These included 74 community outreach activities aimed at reaching populations at the grassroots level, 70 sessions delivered at TVET institutions to engage youth preparing for the labour market, and 29 sessions at universities and other educational institutes targeting students and young professionals. This multipronged approach ensured that key messages on the risks of irregular migration and the importance of pursuing regular migration pathways reached a broad demographic, particularly young people at transitional stages in their lives.





In terms of information dissemination, the outreach activities were supplemented by the distribution of 49,410 informational flyers and IEC materials. These materials played a crucial role in reinforcing the messages delivered during the sessions, enabling participants to take home reliable resources that further guide their decisions.



Beyond formal outreach sessions, the MRC Islamabad team extended its presence through participation in two major expo-style events. These public events, including the Euro Village 2025 and the HeadStart School Job Fair, provided platforms to engage with a wider audience in more interactive settings. At these events, more than 1,660 individuals visited the MRC stalls, receiving tailored information on safe migration pathways, legal requirements, and support mechanisms. An additional 2,000 flyers and educational materials were distributed during these engagements, indicating a robust demand for information and the value placed on such initiatives by the public.

The Euro Village event was particularly significant in positioning MRC Islamabad within a global context, emphasising international collaboration and opportunities for legal migration through work and study programs in Europe. Similarly, the HeadStart School Job Fair allowed the team to engage directly with over 80 students and institutional representatives, many of whom showed interest in MRC’s mission and expressed willingness to contribute as interns or volunteers. This signals not only an increase in awareness but also a growing community interest in being part of migration management efforts.

Overall, the trends point toward a steadily expanding reach, both in terms of volume and diversity of audience. The strategic combination of community outreach, institutional sessions, and participation in high-traffic public events has created a multifaceted awareness framework. This approach not only increases visibility and engagement but also fosters deeper connections with target groups, particularly youth, who are most vulnerable to misinformation around migration. The growing interest in volunteering and collaboration further underscores the impact and credibility of the MRC’s outreach strategy.



Engagement with Emigrants

All three MRCs solidified their role as a trusted point of contact for individuals seeking reliable guidance on migration. During this period, the MRCs maintained direct engagement with emigrants and provided individual counselling to **3,375 prospective emigrants, with women comprising 9% of those served**. The majority of inquiries were made through digital platforms, with WhatsApp emerging as a particularly active channel. This shift toward digital engagement underscores MRC's adaptability in reaching migrants where they are most comfortable and accessible. Through these engagements, clients were able to receive tailored information on a range of migration topics, including study abroad opportunities, scholarships, and employment options in popular destinations such as the European Union, GCC countries, Canada, the United States, and Australia.

During this period, MRCs significantly strengthened their engagement with clients as concerns around the legitimacy of job offers and visa-related challenges surged. The timely support aimed at enabling clients to better protect themselves against exploitation and make informed migration decisions.

MRCs also responded to a sharp rise in inquiries related to family reunification and immigration procedures, offering critical guidance amidst increasingly complex migration landscapes. Notably, Afghan nationals in Islamabad and Peshawar sought MRC assistance in greater numbers, seeking advice on resettlement and legal stay options amid the ongoing refugee crisis.

The growing demand for verification of Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs) and their job offers further highlighted the risks faced by migrants and

reaffirmed the pivotal role of MRCs in promoting transparency, accountability, and trust throughout the migration journey.

MRCs have also intensified their awareness-raising efforts by organising joint sessions in collaboration with key government stakeholders. These sessions were conducted with active participation from representatives of BEOE and the Labour and Human Resource Department (LHRD). Through these engagements, authentic and verified information on safe and legal migration pathways was disseminated directly to the public. The involvement of government representatives not only enhanced the credibility of the sessions but also reinforced public trust in institutional messaging, helping to counter misinformation and reduce the allure of irregular migration channels.

According to [Bureau of Immigration](#) data, Pakistan witnessed significant labour migration in the first quarter of 2025, with 172,144 citizens moving abroad for better job opportunities, compared to a total of 727,381 migrants in all of 2024. Saudi Arabia remained the top destination, attracting 121,190 Pakistani workers, followed by Qatar (12,989), Oman (8,331), and the UAE (6,891).

Western countries also drew Pakistani talent, with the United Kingdom welcoming 1,454 workers, Germany 264, and the United States 257. Most migrants to the UK took up roles as general labourers (99,139), drivers (38,274), and skilled technicians (3,474). Additionally, 849 doctors, 1,479 engineers, 390 nurses, and 436 teachers from Pakistan pursued careers abroad during this period.



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