

# Pakistan Migration Patterns

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Gallup Pakistan Analysis of the Pakistan Migration Patterns



## [PRESS RELEASE](#)

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### **Pakistan Migration Patterns**

Islamabad, March 6th, 2025

Gallup Pakistan, as part of its Big Data Analysis initiative, is looking at Pakistan Migration Patterns, which can be found [HERE](#).

#### **What is the Big Data Analysis Series by Gallup?**

Gallup Pakistan's Big Data series was started by Bilal I Gilani, Executive Director of Gallup Pakistan. Bilal explains the rationale of the series: *"The usual complaint from academics and policy makers is that Pakistan does not have data availability. Our experience negates that. Pakistan has lots of data, but it is not available in a usable form and not widely accessible. At Gallup we plan to bridge this gap in terms of accessibility and use of data. The Gallup Big Data series has earlier worked with data sets such as [PSLM](#), [Labour Force Survey](#), and [Economic Survey reports](#) as well as [National Census Reports](#) and [Election Commission Data sets](#). The current series is using data from the [United Nations](#), the [International Organization for Migration](#), and the [Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment of the Government of Pakistan](#), which provides a variety of demographic statistics. We hope that these series are useful, and we welcome both feedback as well as possible collaborations as we create a public good in the form of useful data sets in Pakistan."*

#### **What data points this current edition covers:**

This series aims to present the important learnings about the marital status in Pakistan, for policy makers, the public, as well as for marketers in an easy and understandable way. This edition looks at Migration Patterns for Pakistan. The series' main aim is to provide data. Implications of these data points for development sector as well as wider socio-political ramifications is something we would like to trigger in relevant circles.

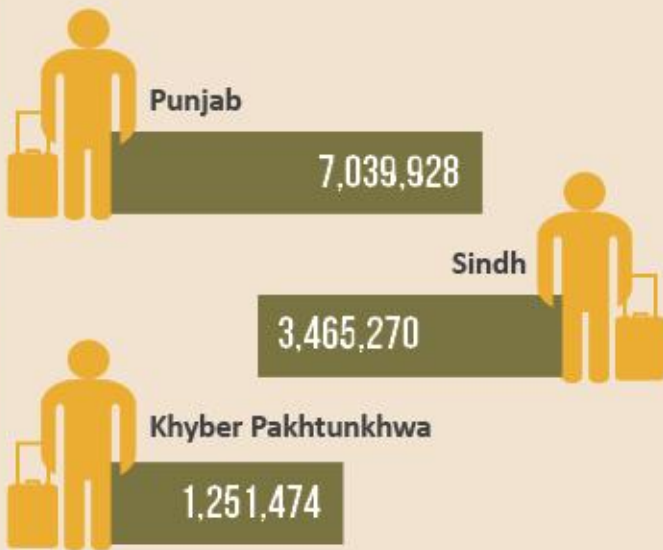
# Pakistan Migration Patterns

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According to the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, 727,381 Pakistanis registered for employment abroad in 2024.

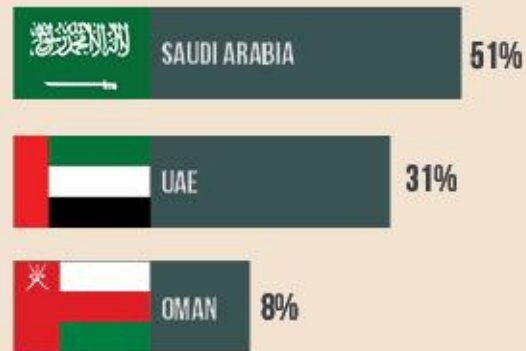


Between 1981 and January 2025, a total of 13,498,204 Pakistanis registered for employment abroad, with Punjab contributing over half (7,039,928) of this figure. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh contributed 25.7% (3,465,270) and 9.3% (1,251,474) to the total, respectively.



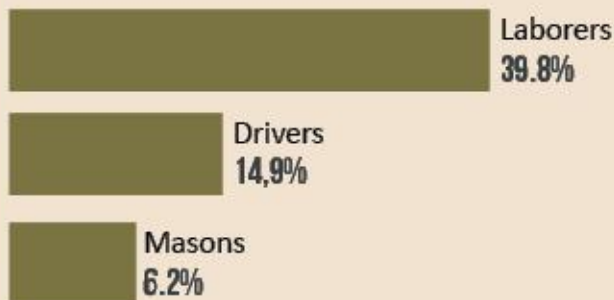
### Countries of Destination

Between 1971 and January 2025, 51% or around 7 million have registered to go to Saudi Arabia for employment, followed by the United Arab Emirates (31%) and Oman (8%).



### Occupations of Pakistani Migrants:

Out of the 14 million Pakistanis who registered for employment abroad between 1971 and 2025, laborers made up the majority (5,619,107 or 39.8% of the total). They were followed by Drivers (14.9%) and Masons (6.2%).



Between 2011 and 2024, emigration applications for salesmen saw a 62% increase, followed by doctors (151%), engineers (172%), managers (990%) and nurses (a staggering 2144%).



Source: International Organization for Migration  
Data analyzed by Gallup Pakistan



## ***EDITOR'S NOTE***

Migration has played a crucial role in shaping Pakistan's social and economic fabric, influencing labor markets, population demographics, and international relations. As globalization and geopolitical shifts continue to reshape migration patterns, it is essential to analyze the trends, drivers, and implications of both emigration and immigration. This report provides a comprehensive examination of Pakistan's migration landscape, using data from the **United Nations**, the **International Organization for Migration**, and the **Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment of the Government of Pakistan**.

The analysis delves into historical migration patterns, particularly the long-term impact of the Partition of 1947 and regional conflicts that have led to large-scale population movements between Pakistan and its neighboring countries. It also highlights the significant role of **labor migration**, which remains a key component of Pakistan's economy, with millions of workers seeking employment opportunities abroad, particularly in the Gulf region. The evolving composition of Pakistan's migrant workforce, with a growing number of skilled professionals seeking opportunities overseas, is also explored in depth.

While Pakistan has traditionally been a country of high emigration, it has also experienced fluctuating inflows of migrants. This report examines the **push and pull factors** influencing these migration trends, including economic conditions, conflict, government policies, and global labor demands. Furthermore, it discusses the **broader implications** of migration on Pakistan's economy, workforce, and social structures, providing critical insights into how these trends may evolve in the coming decades.

Looking ahead, migration patterns are expected to shift due to changing economic realities, technological advancements, and international policy developments. The United Nations' projections indicate a gradual reduction in Pakistan's **net migration rate**, suggesting that while more people will continue to leave the country than enter it, the gap may narrow over time. Understanding these dynamics is essential for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders as they navigate the challenges and opportunities posed by migration.

This report aims to serve as a valuable resource for those seeking a deeper understanding of Pakistan's migration trends. By providing data-driven insights and contextual analysis, it contributes to a more informed discussion on how migration shapes Pakistan's future in an increasingly interconnected world.

***Zainab Khan***

*Senior Research Consultant*

## Key Findings

1. According to the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, 727,381 Pakistanis registered for employment abroad in 2024.
2. Between 1981 and January 2025, a total of 13,498,204 Pakistanis registered for employment abroad, with Punjab contributing over half (7,039,928) of this figure. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh contributed 25.7% (3,465,270) and 9.3% (1,251,474) to the total, respectively.
3. Between 1971 and January 2025, 51% or around 7 million have registered to go to Saudi Arabia for employment, followed by the United Arab Emirates (31%) and Oman (8%).
4. Out of the 14 million Pakistanis who registered for employment abroad between 1971 and 2025, laborers made up the majority (5,619,107 or 39.8%) of the total. They were followed by Drivers (14.9%) and Masons (6.2%).
5. Between 2011 and 2024, emigration applications for salesmen saw a 62% increase, followed by doctors (151%), engineers (172%), managers (990%) and nurses (a staggering 2144%).
6. According to UNDESA, migrants entering Pakistan constituted 1.4% of the global migrant stock in 2024, marking a 2.6% decline from 4% in 1990.
7. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs forecasts that Pakistan's net migration rate will improve from -5.6 in 2024 to -0.9 in 2100.

Migration is a fundamental aspect of global demographics, shaping economic, social, and political landscapes. According to the United Nations, a person qualifies as an international migrant if they cross an international border and change their usual place of residence for at least 12 months. This report delves into the inflows and outflows of international migrants in Pakistan, analyzing historical trends, key statistics, and projections for the future.

## Pakistan's Migration Landscape

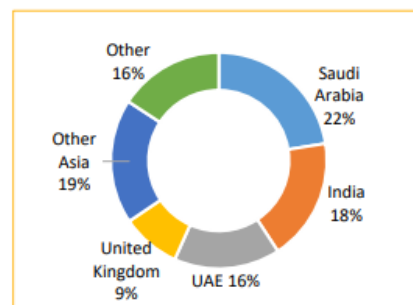
This report aims to explore inflows and outflows of international migrants in depth in subsequent sections, comparing data over time and across different cross-sections. **An International Organization for Migration (IOM) study from 2017 reported that between 2012 and 2017, the country experienced a net international migration of -1,071,771, with migrants constituting 4.8% of Pakistan's total population.**

Historical factors have played a crucial role in shaping these patterns. Approximately 18% of Pakistan's out-migrant and 55% of its in-migrant populations can be traced back to the 1947 Partition, as Pakistani-origin individuals living in India accounted for a large share of Pakistani emigrants. Meanwhile, 45% of Pakistan's in-migrants are Afghan nationals, whose influx has been driven by Afghanistan's socio-political instability, particularly in the 1990s and early 2000s.

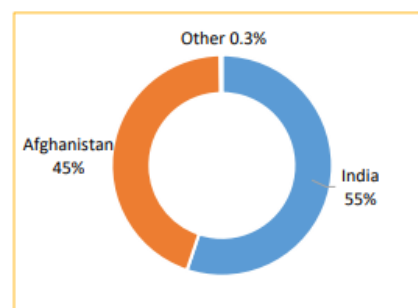
Fig. 1

<b>Population</b>	197,015,955 (48.6% women)
<b>Immigrant population</b>	3,398,154 (48.7% women)
<b>Emigrant population</b>	5,978,635 (35.0% women)
<b>Migrant population<sup>54</sup></b>	9,376,789 (40.0% women)
<b>Migrant population % of total population</b>	4.8%
<b>Net international migration (2012 – 2017)</b>	-1,071,771
<b>GDP per capita</b>	USD 1,548 (current)
<b>Remittances received as share of GDP</b>	6.46%

Main countries of destination (2017)



Main countries of origin (2017)

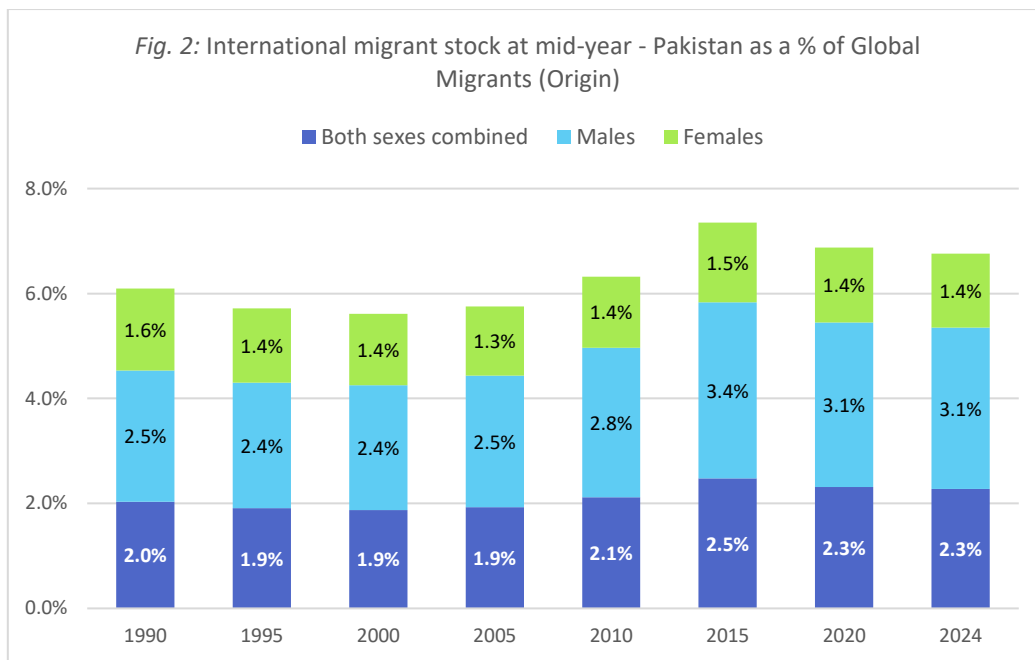


Source: International Organization for Migration<sup>1</sup>

## Migrant Outflows from Pakistan

The international migrant stock, as defined by the United Nations, represents the total number of international migrants in a country at a given time, categorized by either birth country or citizenship.

<sup>1</sup> <https://pakistan.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1121/files/documents/pakistan.pdf>



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). International Migrant Stock 2024. Visualization by Gallup Pakistan.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Pakistani-origin migrants constituted 2.3% of the global migrant stock in 2024, reflecting a 0.3% increase from 1990 (Figure 2). A gender breakdown shows that Pakistani men made up 3.1% of the total male migrant stock, while women contributed to 1.4% to the international female migrant figures. These numbers have remained relatively constant across the last three decades, peaking in 2015 where the total migrants from Pakistan made up 2.5% of the global stock, with the female contributions being 3.4% and 1.5%, respectively.

Fig. 3

Region, development group, country or area	World	Pakistan
<b>Number of international migrants (thousands)</b>		
1990	153,916	6,208
2010	221,020	3,944
2024	304,022	4,176
<b>International migrants as a share of total population (%)</b>		
1990	2.9	5.3
2010	3.1	2
2024	3.7	1.7
<b>Percentage female among international migrants</b>		
2024	48	48.1

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). International Migrant Stock 2024<sup>2</sup>.

Key figures from the United Nation’s migrant stock statistics paint a dynamic picture of migration across the globe. While mere numbers, without qualitative insight into the socio-

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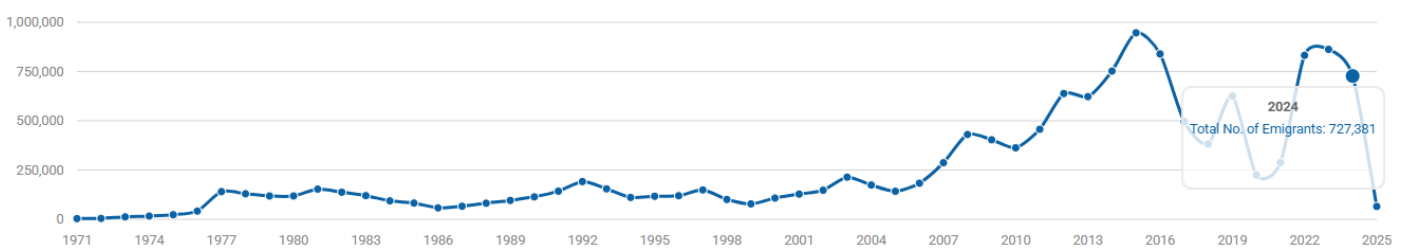
[https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesa\\_pd\\_2025\\_intlmigstock\\_2024\\_key\\_facts\\_and\\_figures\\_advance-unedited.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesa_pd_2025_intlmigstock_2024_key_facts_and_figures_advance-unedited.pdf)

political and economic landscapes of different regions, do not reveal a holistic view, they provide a reasonable enough starting point for deeper analyses. Between 1990 and 2024, the total number of international migrants nearly doubled from 153 million to 300 million. **However, during the same period, the migrant population from Pakistan saw a sharp decline, falling from 6 million to 4 million, marking a 32.7% decrease.** This also reflects when looking at international migrants as a share of total population. At the global level, there has been an increase of 0.8%, while migrants making up 3.7% of the total global population in 2024. On the other hand, this proportion fell for Pakistan, from 5.3% in 1990, to 1.7% in 2024.

### Employment-Driven Emigration

Economic factors are among the most significant drivers of emigration from Pakistan.

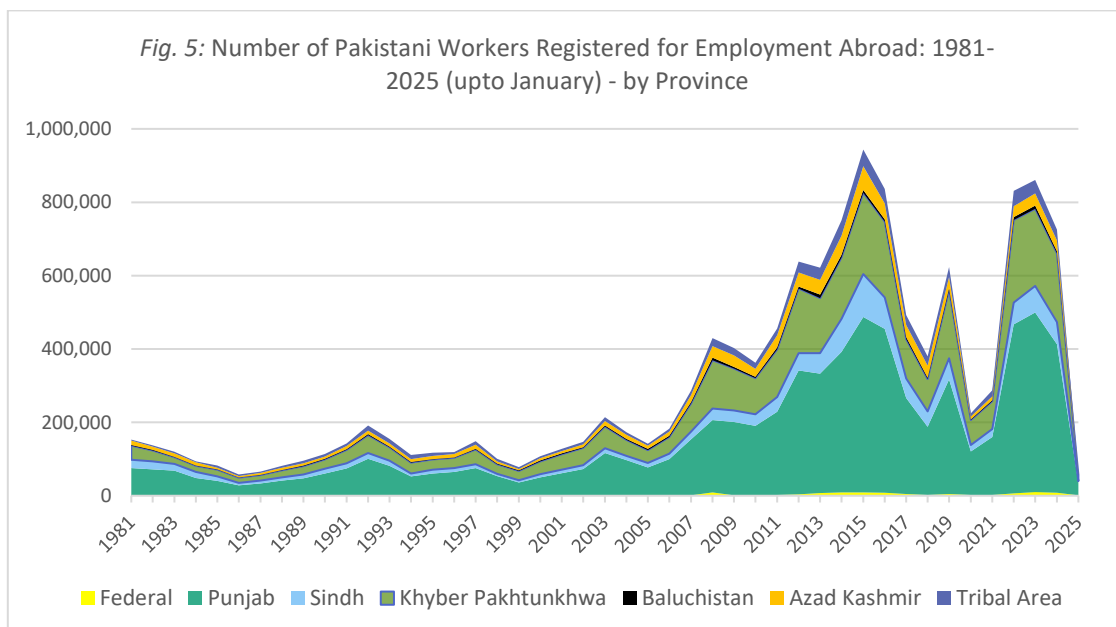
Fig. 4



Source: Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan<sup>3</sup>

<https://galluppakistandigitalanalytics.com/overseas-pakistanis-dashboard/>

**According to the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, 727,381 Pakistanis registered for employment abroad in 2024** (Figure 4). The trend since 1971 shows a slowly rising number of emigrants annually, with occasional highs and lows and a steep incline post-2006. For instance, 2020 saw a record low of 225,213 emigrants – the lowest since 2006, owing to travel restrictions imposed because of Covid-19, while the highest number recorded in the past five decades came in 2015 (946,571).

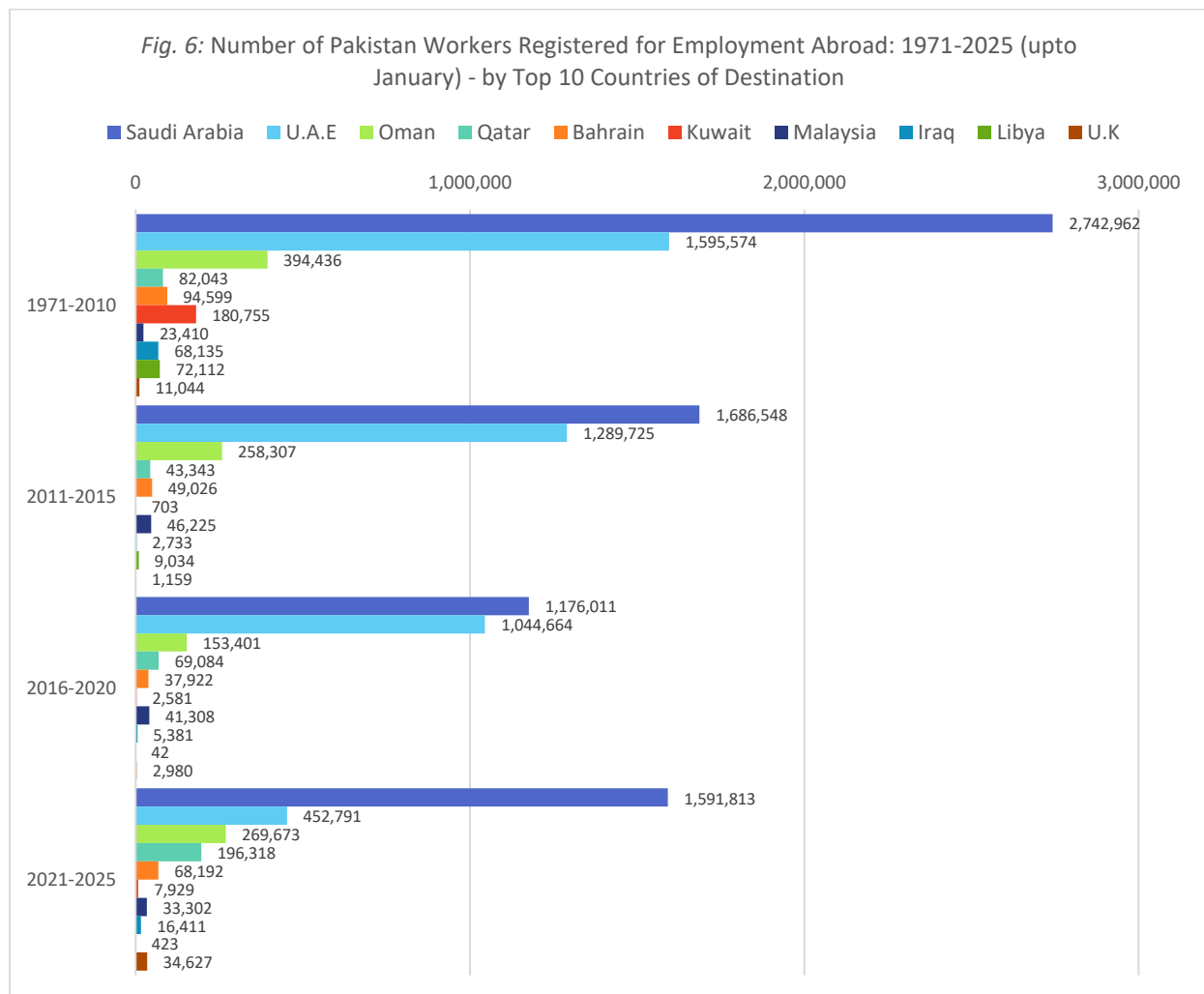


Source: Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan. Visualization by Gallup Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup> <https://beoe.gov.pk/reports-and-statistics>

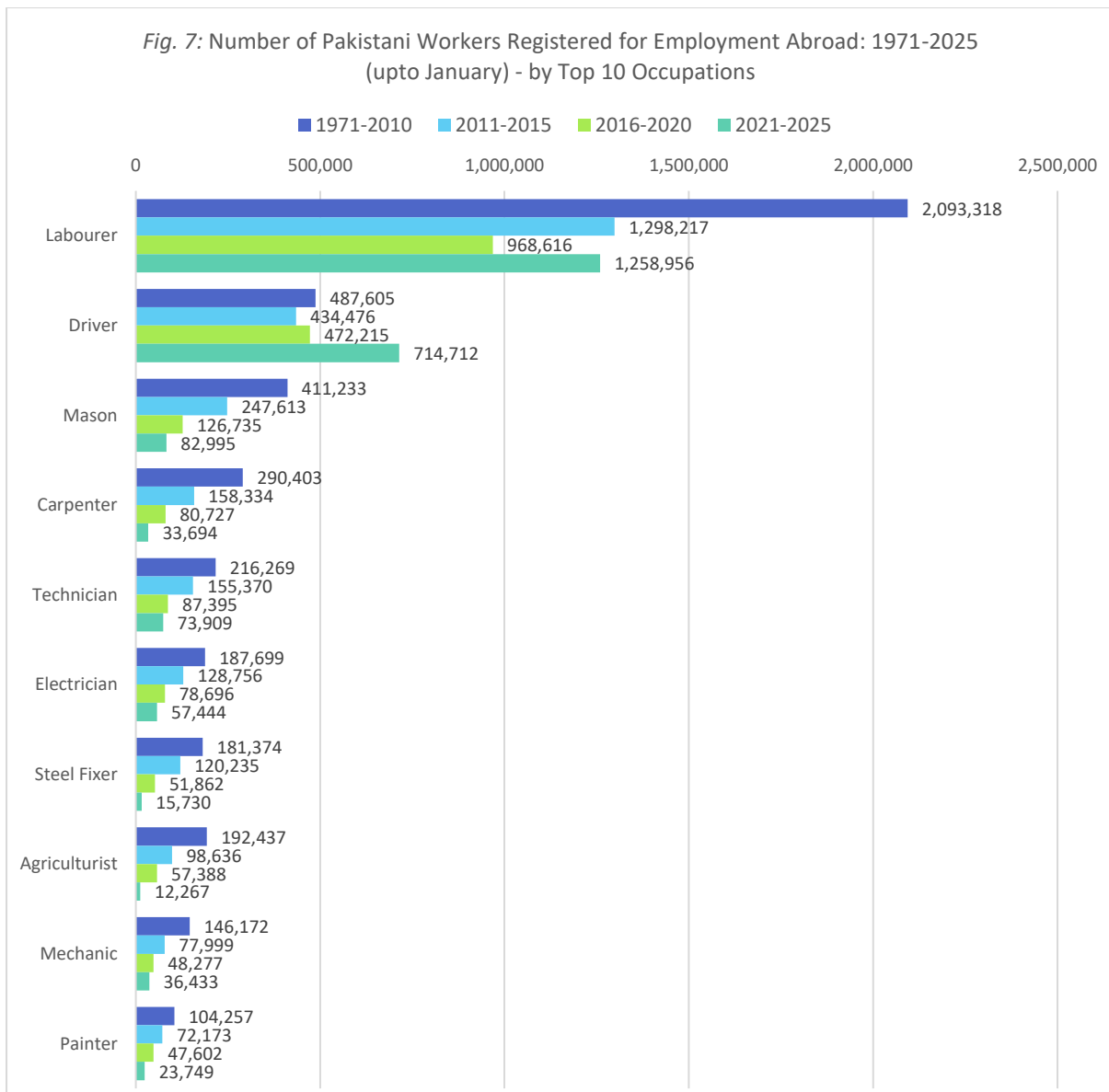
Between 1981 and January 2025, a total of 13,498,204 Pakistanis registered for employment abroad, with Punjab contributing over half (7,039,928) of this figure. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh have contributed 25.7% (3,465,270) and 9.3% (1,251,474) to the total, respectively (Figure 5). The trend across provinces follows the national overall trendline, 2015 and 2023, and steep declines in 2020-21.

In order to further analyze the motivators behind international emigration, destination countries provide valuable information. Between 1971 and January 2025, 14,114,918 Pakistanis have registered for employment abroad (Figure 6). Among them, 51% or around 7 million have gone to Saudi Arabia – the most common destination for workers looking to leave the country. This is followed by the United Arab Emirates (31%) and Oman (8%). Kuwait, which received 180,755 applicants between 1971-2010, only had 7,292 people apply for employment in the 2021-2025 time period. On the other hand, there has been a rise in applicants to the United Kingdom, from 11,044 (1971-2010) to 34,627 (2021-2025). Applicants to Qatar have also more than doubled over the years, from 82,043 to 196,318. These variations in destinations could be attributed to changes in international law, emigration policies, and nature of employment in the destination country. While a large number of those who travel to Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE are unskilled labor or manual workers, this composition differs among migrants to Western or European regions of the world.



Source: Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan. Visualization by Gallup Pakistan.

**Out of the 14 million Pakistanis who registered for employment abroad between 1971 and 2025, laborers made up the majority (5,619,107 or 39.8% of the total). They were followed by Drivers (14.9%) and Masons (6.2%).** Other common professions include carpenters, technicians, electricians and steel fixers. While majority of the top ten most common professions to find employment abroad are manual or unskilled labor, an interesting trend emerges where over the years, the numbers of individuals going abroad in each category are decreasing. For example, while carpenters make up the fourth-largest category, their emigration numbers have fallen from 158,334 between 2011-2015 to 33,694 between 2021-2025 – a 78.7% decrease. A similar downward trend can be observed among technicians (-52.4%), electricians (-55.4%) and mechanics (53.3%).



Source: Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan. Visualization by Gallup Pakistan.

Figure 8 shows the other side of the emigration picture, where less common occupations like salesmen, managers and medical professionals are seeing very considerable increases in emigration applications. This could be indicative of more opportunities, higher awareness or greater means of going abroad. It also indicates that while laborers and similar workers make

up the majority of Pakistani emigrants, skilled professionals are also trying to leave the country at an ever-greater pace. **Between 2011 and 2024, emigration registrations for salesmen saw a 62% increase, followed by doctors (151%), engineers (172%), managers (990%) and nurses (a staggering 2144%).**

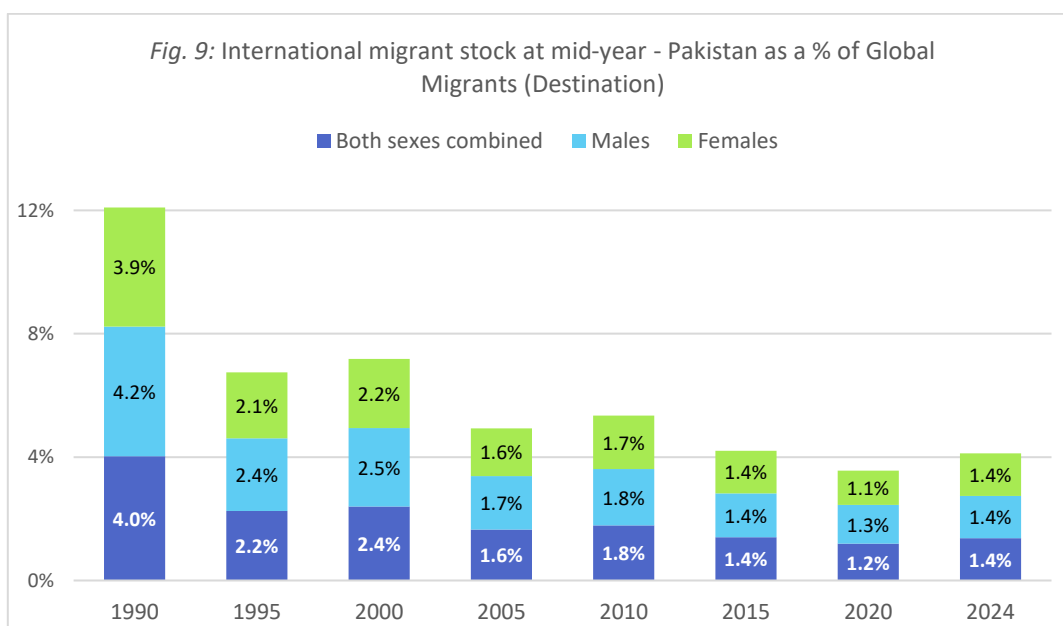
*Fig. 8 Number of Pakistani Workers Registered for Employment Abroad*

Occupation	2011	2024	Percentage change
Salesman	7,461	12,075	62%
Manager	2,272	24,760	990%
Engineer	2,951	8,018	172%
Doctor	1,453	3,642	151%
Nurse	131	2,940	2144%

*Source: Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan*

## Migrant Inflows into Pakistan

Despite the significant outflow of migrants, Pakistan also experiences considerable in-migration. **According to UNDESA, migrants entering Pakistan constituted 1.4% of the global migrant stock in 2024, marking a 2.6% decline from 4% in 1990.** The male migrant proportion fell from 4.2% in 1990 to 1.4% in 2024, while female migrants declined from 3.9% to 1.4% over the same period. The sharp increase in migrant inflows in the late 20th century was largely driven by Afghan refugees seeking asylum during Afghanistan’s ongoing conflicts.

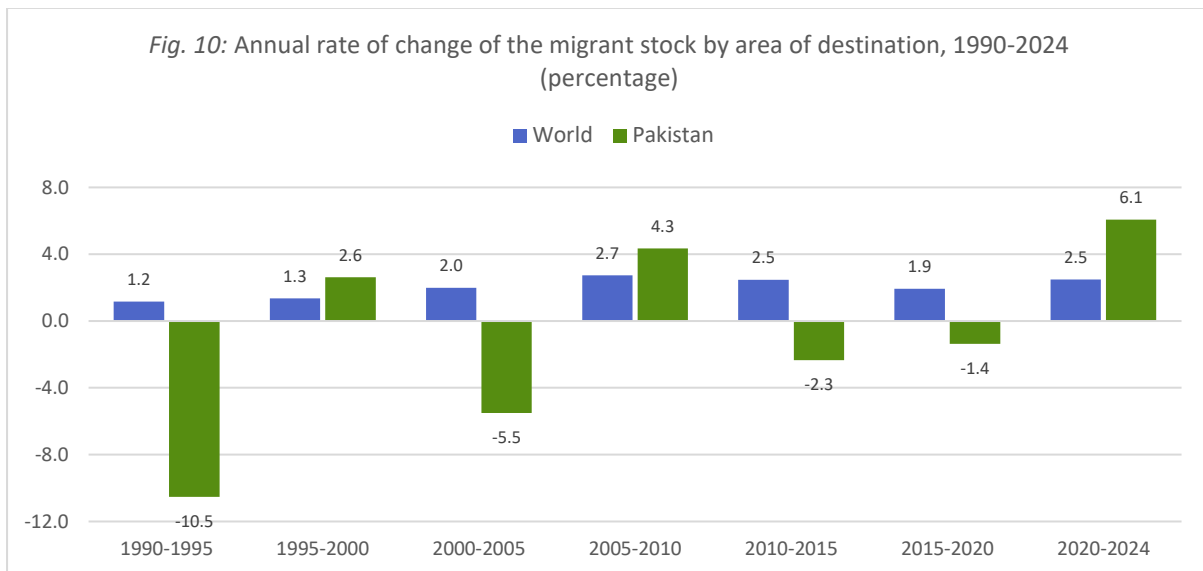


*Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). International Migrant Stock 2024. Visualization by Gallup Pakistan.*

Globally, the annual rate of change in migrant stock has remained positive and relatively stable, ranging between 1.2% and 2.5% throughout the observed periods. The world saw a slight increase in migration growth from 1990-1995 (1.2%) to 2005-2010 (2.7%), followed by a small dip in 2015-2020 (1.9%) before recovering to 2.5% in 2020-2024. This indicates a consistent but moderate rise in global migration over time.

Pakistan’s migration trend, however, has been much more volatile, showing significant fluctuations between periods of decline and growth. The country experienced a sharp negative migration trend between 1990-1995 (-10.5%) and 2000-2005 (-5.5%), indicating a substantial decrease in migrant stock during these years. **A notable recovery occurred in 2005-2010, where migration stock increased by 4.3% annually, the highest positive change before 2020.** However, the trend reversed again with negative growth in 2010-2015 (-2.3%) and 2015-2020 (-1.4%), suggesting migration outflows or a reduction in incoming migrants. The most significant increase happened in 2020-2024, where Pakistan's migrant stock grew by 6.1% annually, marking the highest rate of increase in the entire dataset.

This pattern suggests that migration trends in Pakistan are highly responsive to political, economic, and social factors, experiencing dramatic shifts over time. The recent sharp increase (6.1%) in 2020-2024 may be attributed to policy changes, conflict-driven migration, or increased labor mobility. In contrast, the global migration trend appears more stable, indicating a steady flow of migrants worldwide.



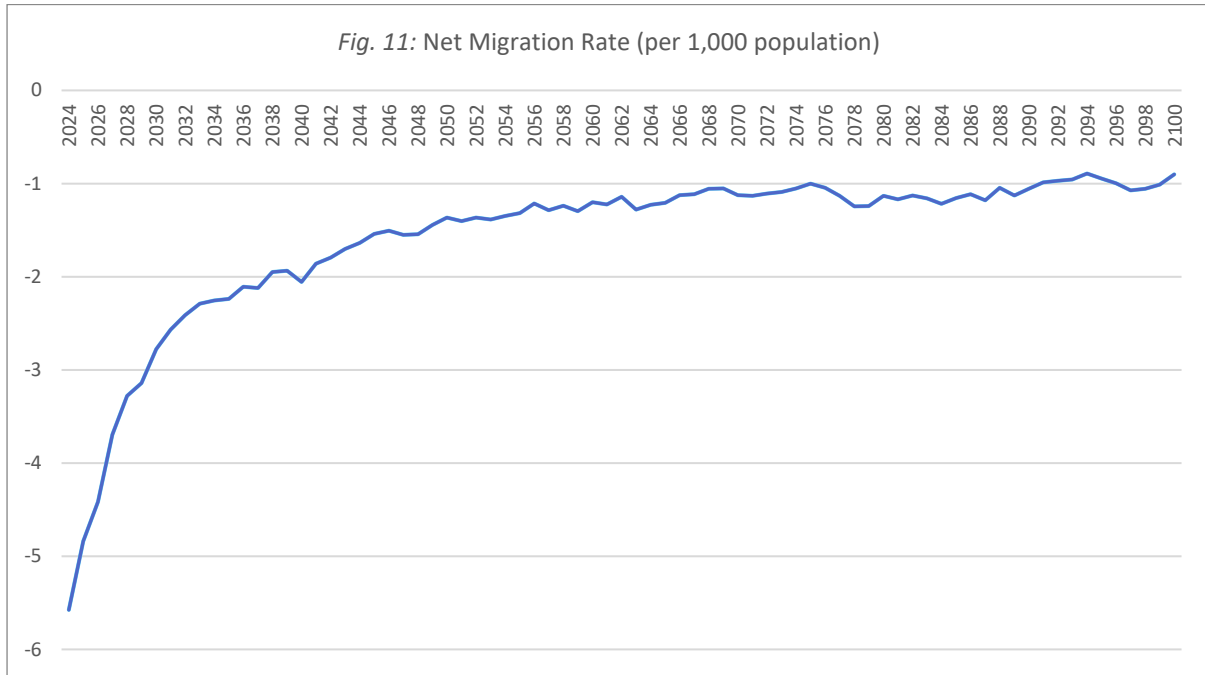
*Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). International Migrant Stock 2024. Visualization by Gallup Pakistan.*

## Future Projections

**Using historical trends and current migration dynamics, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs forecasts that Pakistan’s net migration rate will improve from -5.6 in 2024 to -0.9 in 2100.** While this still indicates a net outflow of migrants, the significant reduction suggests that either emigration rates will slow down, or in-migration will increase over the coming decades. Factors such as economic development, international labor demands, political stability, and government policies will play crucial roles in shaping this trajectory.

Pakistan’s migration landscape is shaped by a complex interplay of historical, economic, and political factors. While the country has witnessed a significant outflow of emigrants—largely driven by economic opportunities—there has been a noticeable shift in the composition of migrants, with a growing number of skilled professionals seeking work abroad. At the same time, migration inflows have fluctuated due to regional conflicts and changing government policies.

The overall decline in net migration suggests a broader global trend where migration patterns are becoming more dynamic and responsive to socio-political factors. Looking ahead, Pakistan’s migration trends will likely stabilize, with a reduction in net outflows as economic opportunities expand and global labor demands shift. Policymakers must consider these trends in planning for workforce development, labor market policies, and international migration agreements to ensure that migration serves as a tool for economic growth rather than a challenge.



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2024). International Migrant Stock 2024. Visualization by Gallup Pakistan.<sup>4</sup>

By continuously analyzing and adapting to these trends, Pakistan can better harness the potential of migration, ensuring it contributes to national development while addressing the challenges that arise from large-scale mobility.

<sup>4</sup> <https://population.un.org/wpp/downloads?folder=Standard%20Projections&group=Most%20used>

### **Wish to Contribute to Gallup Big Data Analysis?**

Gallup Pakistan is looking for collaboration with researchers to expand the Big Data Analysis project. If you have any ideas, please write to Bilal I Gilani, Project Director, Big Data Analysis at Gallup Pakistan.

### **Wish to know more about Pakistan's Migration Patterns?**

The United Nations Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs provides the international community with timely and accessible population data and analysis of population trends and development outcomes for all countries and areas of the world. To this end, the Division undertakes regular studies of population size and characteristics and of all three components of population change (fertility, mortality and migration). Founded in 1946, the Population Division provides substantive support on population and development issues to the United Nations General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Population and Development. It also leads or participates in various interagency coordination mechanisms of the United Nations system. The work of the Division also contributes to strengthening the capacity of Member States to monitor population trends and to address current and emerging population issues.

You can find more information on Migration Patterns at:

<https://beoe.gov.pk/reports-and-statistics>, and

[https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesa\\_pd\\_2025\\_intlmigstock\\_2024\\_key\\_facts\\_and\\_figures\\_advance-unedited.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/undesa_pd_2025_intlmigstock_2024_key_facts_and_figures_advance-unedited.pdf)

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