



Diaspora engagement mapping PAKISTAN

Facts & figures

Terminology: While the term 'diaspora' is regularly used to define Pakistanis working, studying and/or residing abroad, 'Overseas Pakistanis' is used synonymously.

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections
for citizens residing abroad



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **7.85%**
Remittances inflow (USD billion): **26,558**

Voting from abroad⁵:

Online



Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from UNDESA (2024) and remittances from the World Bank (2023).

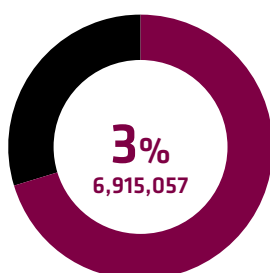
Emigration



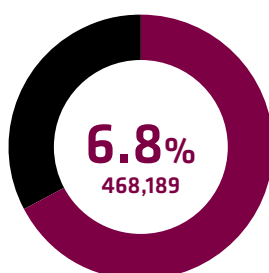
% of emigrants in
total population^{2,3}



% of which
in the EU⁴



♂ 70.3%
♀ 29.7%



♂ 67.3%
♀ 32.7%

Top countries of destination⁶



Saudi Arabia	1,937,044
United Arab Emirates	932,356
India	768,138
United Kingdom	703,309
United States	452,748

1 Pakistan Citizenship Act 1951

2 According to the BEOE: % of emigrants in total population 5.23% (total number 11,110,000). Annual Analysis of Manpower Report 2019, Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan, accessed May 12, 2020, <https://beoe.gov.pk/files/statistics/yearly-reports/2019/2019-full.pdf>. The BEOE usually track emigrants from 1971-2019 which explains the variation between their statistics and UNDESA numbers.

3 According to the "Female Labour Migration from Pakistan: A Situational Analysis", International Labour Office, accessed 12 May, 2020, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_735795.pdf, the share of women registering with the BEOE to emigrate for work purposes is very low (0.367%).

4 According to the BEOE, only 0.50% or 55,587 Pakistanis emigrate to the EU (out of which 98.54% are male and 1.46% are female), which is much lower than UNDESA's numbers. "Country-wise Emigrations", Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan, accessed 12 May, 2020, <https://beoe.gov.pk/files/statistics/2020/country.pdf>

5 "Report on I-Voting Pilot Test in 35 Constituencies held on 14th October 2018", Election Commission of Pakistan, Government of Pakistan, accessed 12 May 2020, <https://ecp.gov.pk/documents/ivotingreport.pdf>

6 According to the BEOE, the top five countries of destinations are: Saudi Arabia (5,573,948); United Arab Emirates (3,926,147), Oman (802,725), Qatar (192,988), Bahrain (177,533). "Country-wise Emigrations", Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan, accessed 12 May, 2020, <https://beoe.gov.pk/files/statistics/2020/country.pdf>

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 1973** ● **Rules of Business⁷** - Under Rule 3 (3) (iii & vi), the assigned function of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD)⁸ includes motivating Pakistani citizens abroad to strengthen their links with the mother country; as well as catering for the welfare of Overseas Pakistanis abroad and their dependents in Pakistan.
- 1979** ● **Emigration Ordinance and Emigration Rules⁹** delineate the legal framework for migration in Pakistan. The Ordinance not only controls and regulates the emigration process, but also provides safeguards for the welfare and protection of emigrants.
- 2014** ● **The Punjab Overseas Pakistanis Commission Act¹⁰**, specific to the Province of Punjab, this Act was promulgated to address the grievances of Overseas Pakistanis residing abroad who are affiliated with the province of Punjab.¹¹
- 2020** ● **National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis¹²** was developed by the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) with technical and expert support from the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). It focuses on three main priority areas covering all stages of labour emigration:
- i) Promotion of safe, orderly and fair emigration;
 - ii) Protection and welfare of overseas Pakistanis and their families;
 - iii) Engagement of Pakistani diaspora in the development process and reintegration of return migrants.



Trends

The Pakistani diaspora is hailed as being one of Pakistan's greatest assets. However, in the absence of a legal framework governing diaspora engagement, the government has struggled to fully capture the trust of the diaspora – and thus far missed the opportunity to fully capitalise on their positive experiences. In this context, the government initiated the development of National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis in 2020. The policy shows that all relevant stakeholders relating to Overseas Pakistanis will coordinate to develop a Diaspora Engagement Strategy to impact on national development. The MOPHRD will develop programs for brain gain by engaging Overseas Pakistanis in knowledge transfer with the cooperation of other institutions such as the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC). A Talent Hunt Programme, which targets young overseas Pakistanis, will also be initiated. Opportunities will be increased for the diaspora to engage with local institutions of Pakistan to transfer skills and technology. The policy also guides the MOPHRD to coordinate with Pakistani associations abroad for their effective role in boosting the tourism industry in Pakistan.

Targeted sectors: In 2021, the Federal Minister for Science and Technology spoke at the first direct outreach event for diaspora experts in science and technology to support Pakistan in developing an export economy. He emphasised the potential for them to contribute expertise in modern technology, research and product development, a sentiment that has been echoed in other government outreach events such as a visit to Pakistani diaspora in the US. These examples demonstrate a keen awareness of skills transfer potential and a targeted approach to leverage it.

Humanitarian crisis coordination: During the extreme flooding in 2022, the government of Pakistan actively sought support from the diaspora, briefing its ambassadors on mobilising

7 The Rules of Business allocate and outline the functions and responsibilities of each Division of the Federal Government.

8 The Federal Ministry responsible for the welfare and protection of all Overseas Pakistanis.

9 <https://beoe.gov.pk/files/legal-framework/rules.pdf>

10 <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/99330/118491/F88939753/PAK99330.pdf>

11 For an overview of the types of issues that can be addressed by the Commission see: https://opc.punjab.gov.pk/why_need

12 It is imperative to note that the final draft of the Policy lies with the MOPHRD and is pending approval of the Prime Minister's Cabinet.

resources and humanitarian assistance from the diaspora.¹³ In response and independently, Pakistani diaspora networks accelerated relief efforts, launching emergency appeals to raise funds for medical aid, food, shelter and much more.¹⁴

Digitalisation: Pakistani expatriates are increasingly embracing digitalisation, particularly through platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, to engage in political discussions, organise transnational campaigns, and maintain emotional connections with their homeland. Despite challenges such as censorship, misinformation, and limited access, digital activism has become a powerful way for the Pakistani diaspora to influence and participate in homeland politics.



Achievements

Crisis: During times of national crisis, support from Pakistan's diaspora has proven to be both critical and timely. A notable example is the financial assistance provided during the COVID-19 pandemic, with overseas Pakistanis ranking among the highest contributors to the Prime Minister's COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Fund. In recognition of their contributions, the Pakistani government has launched a special portal to assist overseas Pakistanis who lost their jobs due to the pandemic.¹⁵

Remittances: Given the large Pakistani diaspora, remittances are Pakistan's second-largest source of foreign exchange after exports. In the fiscal year 2023-2024, remittances surged to approximately USD 340.1 bln, marking a 32% year-on-year increase from 2023. These flows play a vital role in stabilising Pakistan's economy, bolstering foreign exchange reserves, supporting household income, and reducing trade deficits.¹⁶



Obstacles

- **Diaspora policy:** Challenges stem from the fact that no formal policy or strategy exists to engage the Pakistani diaspora in socio-economic development efforts.
- **Female emigration:** Based on publically available figures, emigration of women from Pakistan is alarmingly low. This is perhaps related to the tendency for Pakistani women not to be perceived or recognised by public and private sector institutions as substantial - let alone equal - contributors to the country's overall economic and social wellbeing.
- **Remittances:** While remittances continue to grow, there is an on-going concern regarding the dominance of informal channels for sending remittances i.e. through the Hawala and Hundi systems.¹⁷ Furthermore, the limited financial literacy of Overseas Pakistanis and their families has continued to result in a lack of awareness on investment opportunities for their earnings.
- **Investment:** There is a lack of trust which deters the diaspora from investing in their motherland. This can be attributed to the underdeveloped business/investment landscape.

13 MFA Press release (26 August 2022). Briefing Session of the Foreign Secretary with Pakistan's Ambassadors in various capitals regarding flood relief efforts. <https://mofa.gov.pk/briefing-session-of-the-foreign-secretary-with-pakistans-ambassadors-in-various-capitals-regarding-flood-relief-efforts/>

14 <https://www.demac.org/community-news/2022/09/pakistan-s-diaspora-steps-into-action>

15 <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/674844-govt-launches-portal-to-help-unemployed-overseas-pakistanis>

16 "Govt expects remittances to exceed \$22bln in FY2020", Pakistan Remittance Initiative, State Bank of Pakistan, accessed May 13, 2020, <https://www.pri.gov.pk/govt-expects-remittances-to-exceed-22bln-in-fy2020/>

17 "The Hawala Alternative Remittance System and its Role in Money Laundering", United States Department of Treasury, Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, accessed 13 May 2020, <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/terrorist-illicit-finance/Documents/Fin-CEN-Hawala-rpt.pdf>

- **Reintegration:** There are no concrete reintegration programmes for return migrants returning after long periods abroad. As a result, they remain unguided upon their return in terms of investment, integration and social norms, as well as employment/job placement according to their acquired skills. Perhaps the lack of data on return migration (forced or voluntary) prevents undertaking a comprehensive reintegration programme in Pakistan.

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

Explore 400+ practices by country, SDG or sector of engagement in the [interactive database!](#)



National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP) and Pakistan Origin Card (POC) 2002

IDENTITY

In 2002, Pakistan's National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) developed two types of cards linking Overseas Pakistanis to their motherland. The NICOP serves as a registration document for Overseas Pakistanis and provides visa-free entry into Pakistan for dual nationals. The POC gives eligible foreigners an opportunity to connect with their roots in the motherland, while offering many incentives such as multiple visa-free entry into Pakistan, indefinite stay in Pakistan, the right to open bank accounts, the right to manage property and real estate, and the right to obtain employment under certain circumstances.

Pakistan Citizens Portal (PCP)

DIGITAL

The PCP is a government-owned mobile application that was launched in 2019 and acts as a corridor between government institutions and Pakistani citizens, including Overseas Pakistanis. The PCP was established to ensure timely redressal of grievances, complaints or queries raised by any Pakistani with the commitment that all issues are addressed at the highest level.

National Remittance Loyalty Program

REMITTANCES

The Economic Coordination Committee of the Prime Minister's Cabinet approved the incentives for banks and facilitations to the Overseas Pakistanis to boost remittances through official banking channels. The National Remittance Loyalty Program will be launched in September 2020 and will aim to simplify the transfer of remittances for Overseas Pakistanis. The program will offer several incentives to senders (yet to be announced) and will be accessible through mobile apps and cards.

Yaran-e-Watan (Pakistani Diaspora Health Initiative)

HEALTHCARE

This new initiative for 2020 has been introduced for overseas Pakistani health professionals to enable them to become part of the national fight against Covi-19. The initiative has been launched in collaboration with the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development with support from Pakistani diaspora health organisations.

Annex: List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

Budapest Process 1993

The Budapest Process is an interregional dialogue on migration stretching from Europe to the Silk Routes region - also covering Europe's Eastern neighbours, the Western Balkans and Central Asia. It provides a platform for dialogue and operational cooperation for over 50 governments and 10 international organisations. Pakistan is an actively participating state in the dialogue.

Colombo Process 2003

The Colombo Process is a Regional Consultative Process on the management of overseas employment and contractual labour for countries of origins in Asia. It is a member state-driven, non-binding and informal forum to facilitate dialogue and cooperation on issues of common interest and concern relating to labour mobility. The current membership of the Colombo Process consists of 12 Member States, including Pakistan, and 8 Observer Countries.

Abu Dhabi Dialogue 2008

The Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) was established in 2008 as a forum for dialogue and cooperation between Asian countries of labour origin and destination. The ADD consists of the 12 Member States of the Colombo Process plus six Gulf countries of destination: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as Malaysia.

International Centre for Migration Policy Development: Silk Routes (ICMPD) 2011

Funded by the European Union and others, ICMPD started implementing various migration-related projects in the Silk Routes countries, including Pakistan, since 2011. Activities specific to Pakistan concern ongoing support to MOPHRD in the development of a National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis; ongoing support to Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency and its sister Academy; establishment of two Migrant Resource Centres (Islamabad and Lahore)¹⁸; and a regional cooperation initiative called Regional Law Enforcement Cooperation (RELEC).¹⁹

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH 1990

Within the priority area on sustainable economic development, GIZ is supporting the Government of Pakistan in apprentices and vocational education institutions²⁰ to enable them to meet the demands of the labour market.²¹ Support is provided on the proviso that Pakistan uphold labour and environmental standards.²²

¹⁸ mrc.org.pk/en/

¹⁹ It is an initiative among Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Turkey; its main objective is to enhance regional cooperation on preventing irregular migration, migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

²⁰ "Global Project Build4Skills", GIZ, accessed May 13, 2020, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/75066.html>

²¹ "Support to the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector in Pakistan (phase 2)", GIZ, accessed May 13, 2020, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/74535.html>

²² "Promoting sustainability in the textile and garment industry in Asia (FABRIC)", GIZ, accessed May 13, 2020, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/34136.html>

International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2000

Within the sphere of migration management, IOM is presently supporting the Government of Pakistan to implement two projects: Strengthening Reception Capacities of Immigration Authorities in Pakistan; and Electronic Readmission Case Management System (RCMS). The former project focuses on strengthening the reception capacities for the increased number of Pakistani returnees from various countries, focusing on humane and orderly return. The latter project, funded by the EU through EURCAP, focuses on improving the readmission process through RCMS with greater transparency and accountability.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

All foreign missions of Pakistan are headed by senior officials of Pakistan's Foreign Service. Any grievances, complaints or related issues faced by the Overseas Pakistanis (including settled diaspora) are addressed to Pakistan Missions abroad. To this end, the MFA plays an integral role in ensuring timely communication and coordination on pending issues with relevant ministries in Pakistan.

Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) 2013²³

The objective of MOPHRD is to deal with all the matters and affairs of the overseas Pakistanis; attending to their needs and problems, initiating schemes and projects for their welfare and working for the resolution of their problems and issues. Moreover, to promote Pakistani manpower abroad, and to elevate the living conditions of overseas workers through better protection and decent working conditions. The area of its activities encompasses the management of human capital, social protection, socio-economic up lift of working class. MOPHRD is responsible for the functioning of three core departments (BEOE, OEC and OPF). More importantly, it has nominated 14 Community Welfare Attaches (CWA) serving at Pakistan missions abroad.²⁴ CWAs are based in the Pakistan Missions and are responsible for negotiating Memorandums of Understanding and Agreements with labour importing countries. In addition, they also play an important role in engaging with the Pakistani diaspora and extending support as necessary.

- At sub-ministerial level

Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) 1971

BEOE is a centralised agency of the Federal Government for processing recruitment demands for Pakistani manpower through Licensed Overseas Employment Promoters, etc. for the different manpower-importing countries in the world, especially in the Middle East. A notable function of the Bureau is to control and regulate emigration under the Emigration Ordinance of 1979.

Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) 1976

OEC is a company limited by shares incorporated under the Companies Act 1913 as a private limited concern. Administrative and financial control is exercised by the MOPHRD. Primary objectives include the promotion of emigration of Pakistani labour for employment abroad through close coordination and liaison with international recruiters.

²³ After the merger of the Ministry of Human Resource Development with the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis. This was done as a result of re-organisation of the Federal Secretariat pursuant to Rule 3 of the Rules of Business, 1973.

²⁴ Bahrain, Greece, Iraq, Italy, Kuwait, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, UK, UAE and USA.

Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) 1979

OPF's core mandate includes the establishment and management of welfare programmes, educational institutions and housing schemes for overseas Pakistanis. OPF looks after the social welfare of emigrants and their families in Pakistan and abroad.

- At local level

Provincial Labour Departments 2010

Pursuant to Pakistan's 18th Constitutional Amendment, several ministries including the Ministry of Labour and Manpower (at the time), were devolved to the Provinces. As a result, each Province now has its own Labour Department headed by Provincial Secretaries and core team members. In this regard, decisions relating to overseas employment and engagement are managed by Provincial Labour Departments directly. In parallel, the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development continues to operate at a Federal level and acts as the focal ministry in terms of decision making.

Punjab; Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa; Sindh; Balochistan

Diaspora organisations in Europe

All Pakistan Women's Association UK (APWA UK)

2010 United Kingdom

Read more about diaspora organisations
in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora
organisation](#)"



Integration activities

APWA UK gives British Pakistani women a platform and a voice in the United Kingdom so that they can contribute to the UK and also integrate and benefit from what it has to offer. The aim is to inspire women to develop their potential and support them by putting them in touch with government departments within APWA UK's network.

Austria-Pakistan Association Austria

Development activities

The association works to promote culture, trade and social service projects, human rights and individual interactions between Austria and Pakistan.

Austria-Pakistan Society 1976 Austria

Development activities

Integration activities

The Austria Pakistan Society with a view to cultivating the cultural and scientific contacts between Austria and Pakistan and to further the knowledge of the wider public about the politics, economy and social system of Pakistan. Several members are successfully engaged in cooperation projects in the educational and humanitarian sector and in the promotion of sport activities in Pakistan.

British Pakistan Foundation (BFP) 2010 United Kingdom

Development activities

BFP engages, unites and empowers the UK's more than one million British Pakistanis, by bringing them together through a single platform, creating networks and making a real difference to their work and their lives across the UK. While boosting community building, the BPF also acts as a liaison between the diaspora and governmental and non-governmental organisations in both the UK and Pakistan.

G.A.T.E to Pakistan e.V. Germany

Integration activities

G.A.T.E. to Pakistan e.V. may be seen as communication platform for Germans and Pakistanis to enable access to the respective regions in the areas of sciences, culture and development cooperation and projects (for instance, in the areas of health and infrastructure).

Italian-Pakistan National Association Italy

Development activities

The non-profit organisation aims to supporting and develop social, economic, commercial, spiritual, cultural and tourism from and to Pakistan.

Pak-France Alumni Network (PFAN) France

Integration activities

The vision of the club is to tighten the bonds between the alumni of French universities in Pakistan and to create an active and dynamic community for strengthening research and cultural ties between Pakistan and France. More importantly, the PFAN endeavours to promote educational and academic links between Pakistan and France through exchange programmes, workshops, seminars, conferences and visits in order to achieve, inter alia, a network of solidarity between doctoral students, Masters, Bachelors and Diploma programmes graduates, or long-term trainees.

SOAS Pakistan Society 1968 United Kingdom

Integration activities

The society aims to continue to provide a forum for people of Pakistani descent to get to know each other, as well as to promote Pakistani culture to non-Pakistanis and raise awareness of both issues faced by Pakistan and the Pakistani diaspora.

The Pakistan Society 1951 United Kingdom

Integration activities

The society is an international organisation with some five hundred members, almost equally divided between those of British and Pakistani origin. It aims to increase public knowledge in Britain of the arts, history, geography, economic life and institutions of Pakistan. It does this through a series of lectures, meetings and social events, usually held at the Pakistan High Commission. Its patrons are HRH Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh and HE the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Midland Doctors UK 2006

Development projects

Established by a group of doctors who had travelled to Azad Kashmir in response to the 2005 earthquake in Northern Pakistan, Midland Doctors®, a UK based nonprofit organisation, was created with a vision to provide free healthcare to the poor and destitute with dignity and care. Midland Doctors has created a state-of-the-art medical facility which is ever evolving to serve the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The organisation has a network of sub-committees which help to raise funds for the charity and to ensure that resources continue to flow into its projects. The sub-committees are in the UK (Birmingham, Bradford, London, Midlands), Canada, UAE and the US (Houston).

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