



## Migration Profile

### PAKISTAN

#### A. Executive Summary

Pakistan is located in South Asia and shares its borders with India, Afghanistan, Iran, and China. The country's economy is mainly based on the services sector, that in 2020 generated 61.7% of the GDP<sup>i</sup>, and is also heavily dependent on agriculture, yielding 19.2% of the annual GDP<sup>ii</sup>.

Due to its geographical location, relations with neighbouring countries and complex history, Pakistan is also a country of origin and transit for migration<sup>iii</sup>. The driving factors of emigration are instead the slow economic development and rapid population growth, contributing to an increase of unemployment in the country, low wages, natural disasters, and political instability<sup>iv</sup>. Because of this problematic situation, the Pakistani government encourages emigration to other countries through the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, which plays a vital role in promoting temporary emigration<sup>v</sup>. The main destination countries are Saudi Arabia, India, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States<sup>vi</sup>.

At the same time, Pakistan receives immigrants mostly arriving from Afghanistan and India, countries characterised by great political instability<sup>vii</sup>. After the Taliban came to power in 2021, thousands of Afghans moved to Pakistan<sup>viii</sup>, in addition to other refugees coming from Yemen and Somalia<sup>ix</sup>. However, the most significant concern for the country is climate change, which is causing monsoon floods that force millions of Internally Displaced Persons to leave their homes, destroy farms and increase food shortages, leaving the state in a very vulnerable condition<sup>x</sup>.

Pakistan is a low-middle income country<sup>xi</sup>, with a GDP in 2022 of 346,343,170,490 US\$<sup>xii</sup>. In 2022, Pakistan's economy recovered, with an estimated annual growth rate of 5.6% for its GDP<sup>xiii</sup>. Inflation also increased by 9.8%, determined by higher global commodity prices and a weaker exchange rate<sup>xiv</sup>. The fiscal deficit grew 20.6% due to higher spending related to vaccine procurement, clearance of arrears in the energy sector and development projects<sup>xv</sup>. The Foreign Direct Investment in net inflows in 2020 remained at 7% of its GDP, the same as the previous year<sup>xvi</sup>.

#### Country Profile

##### I. Basic Information

The Republic of Pakistan is the 5<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world<sup>xvii</sup>, with 230,488,099 inhabitants in 2022<sup>xviii</sup>. Its territory extends for 770,880 sq. km<sup>xix</sup>. It is divided into four provinces (Balochistan, Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), and the territories of Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir<sup>xx</sup>. The country presents different landscapes: from mountain ranges along the western border with Afghanistan to sandy deserts at the eastern border with India<sup>xxi</sup>.

Urdu and English are the official Pakistani languages<sup>xxii</sup>. However, there are other regional languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi<sup>xxiii</sup>. Pakistan is ethnically very diverse, with a Punjabi ethnic majority in the Punjab region (44.7%), followed by the Pashtun (15.4%), Sindhi (14.1%), and Saraiki (8.4%)<sup>xxiv</sup>.

Regarding religion, the state is mostly Muslim (95%), and more than 80% of them are Sunni<sup>xxv</sup>. In addition, there are Ahmadis (2.2%), Hindus (1.8%), Christians (1.5%), and other religious groups<sup>xxvi</sup>.

## II. International and Internal Migrants

According to data provided by the United Nations, in 2019 3,257,978 migrants were registered in Pakistan, representing 1.52% of the whole population<sup>xxvii</sup>. There were more male immigrants (52.62%) than females (47.37%)<sup>xxviii</sup>. Their main countries of origin were Afghanistan (48.78%), India (48.74%), and Myanmar (0.07%)<sup>xxix</sup>. In addition, their age group was between 20-64 years old<sup>xxx</sup>.

Migration between Afghanistan and Pakistan has a centuries-long history due to their physical proximity, and their linguistic and cultural similarities<sup>xxxi</sup>. For a long time, the border between these two countries has been crossed daily, due to cross-border trade, family ties, education, work, medical treatment, or when fleeing violence and political instability<sup>xxxii</sup>. Migration flow between these two countries has also had a circular and seasonal pattern<sup>xxxiii</sup>. In fact, besides economic reasons, also healthcare has played an important role in these flows, with a good number of Afghans seeking medical treatment in Pakistan<sup>xxxiv</sup>. Labour migrants are employed in the railway, construction, copper mining, and energy sectors to meet the labour demand of China's large-scale development projects in Pakistan<sup>xxxv</sup>.

Likewise, immigration from India has also had a long history, dating back to the partition of the British Indian Empire in 1947, which resulted in the creation of two territories, Pakistan and India<sup>xxxvi</sup>. This process caused a movement of thousands of Muslim families, who had previously lived in India for decades, to move to Pakistan<sup>xxxvii xxxviii</sup>. India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) currently aims to grant citizenship to non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2020)<sup>xxxix xl</sup>.

The main challenges faced by immigrants in Pakistan are related to lack of housing security, because houses are precarious and rents very high<sup>xli</sup>. Furthermore, according to official statements made by the National Security Advisor, Pakistan cannot accept more refugees.

Finally, internal migration in Pakistan is higher than international flows<sup>xlii</sup>. People who migrate internally tend to have little education and move from the mountains into urban

areas<sup>xliii</sup>. This phenomenon is often driven by factors like rural-urban wage differences, economic opportunities, marriages, and natural disasters<sup>xliv</sup>. Men are more likely to migrate to other areas of the country than women<sup>xlv</sup>. The main problems faced by internal migrants are linked to their difficulty of accessing basic services and job opportunities, lack of adequate housing and loss of social networks<sup>xlvi</sup>.

### **III. Emigration and Skilled Migration**

According to data provided by the UN, in 2019 Pakistan had 6,303,286 emigrants<sup>xlvii</sup>, and the male percentage (65.51%) was higher than the female one (34.48%)<sup>xlviii</sup>. Their main destination countries were Saudi Arabia (22.96%), India (17.18%), the United Arab Emirates (15.57%), the United Kingdom (9.39%), and the United States (6.31%)<sup>xlix</sup>.

Pakistani emigrants can be defined according to their destination countries<sup>l</sup>. As far as migrants moving to North America and Europe, they plan to stay there for a longer period of time and intend to reunite with their families<sup>li</sup>. Instead, migrants who do not have the opportunity to migrate to developed countries usually move only temporarily to countries belonging to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)<sup>lii</sup>, and they are mostly low-skilled or semi-skilled workers<sup>liii</sup>.

The main push factors causing emigration flows are the slow economic development and a rapid population growth, which greatly contribute to the country's unemployment rate, low wages, unequal employment opportunities between rural and urban areas, and over-dependence on the textile industry<sup>liv</sup>. In addition, the state is often facing insecurity, natural disasters and political instability<sup>lv</sup>. Because of this difficult situation, the Pakistani government has encouraged people to seek employment abroad<sup>lvi</sup>. The Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment handles temporary labour emigration<sup>lvii</sup>, providing assistance and protection to Pakistani citizens abroad; however, this rarely meets the requirements of the legislation of destination countries<sup>lviii</sup>.

Labour smuggling is also very common in Pakistan, and the leading destinations for irregular migrants are Europe and the Middle East<sup>lix</sup>. In order to reach the Middle East, they follow sea routes; instead to get to Europe, they follow land routes through Turkey to Greece, from Central Asia to Eastern Europe<sup>lx</sup>, and from the Middle East and North Africa to Italy and Spain<sup>lxi</sup>. Once migrants enter the European Union, they move on to other countries<sup>lxii</sup>.

### **IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced, asylum seekers and refugees, climate displaced people)**

Pakistan has been sheltering Afghan refugees for over 40 years, becoming throughout this time one of the top host countries in the world<sup>lxiii</sup>. According to the United Nations, as of June 30, 2022 in Pakistan there were approximately 1.3 million refugees and asylum seekers<sup>lxiv</sup>. Of those, nearly 1.28 million are recognised Afghan refugees<sup>lxv</sup>. The remaining ones mainly come from Somalia and Yemen<sup>lxvi</sup>.

There have been historical variations in migration routes between Pakistan and Afghanistan, with disagreement over the border<sup>lxvii</sup>. Since August 2021, with the withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan, there have been thousands of new refugee arrivals in Pakistan<sup>lxviii</sup>.

Currently, Afghan refugees are mostly concentrated in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (58%), Balochistan (23%), and Punjab (12%)<sup>lxxix</sup>. They live in rural camps (called the Afghan refugee villages), and in urban or peri-urban areas, depending on their legal status (Proof of Registration - PoR - Cardholders, Afghan Citizens Cards Holders or undocumented). The first group includes recognised refugees, the only ones allowed to be accommodated in refugee camps. The Afghan Citizens Cards, instead, represented an attempt to indefinitely legalise the stay of all the non-recognized refugees. Still, there are many Afghans without documents residing in the state<sup>lxxx</sup>.

Demographic data is only available for PoR Cardholders and for those who newly arrived in 2021. As of June 30, 2022 53% were male, and 47% were female<sup>lxxxi</sup>. Also, 51.2% of them were under 18. There is no recent data regarding ethnic affiliations, but it is known that they mainly arrived from Nangarhar, Kunduz, and Kabul<sup>lxxxi</sup>.

One of the main issues encountered by Afghans in Pakistan is the problem of non-recognized refugees, who do not have access to education, housing, or banking services. Furthermore, Afghans are often exposed to discrimination. They find themselves in the situation of immobilisation (mainly women) since even holders of PoR cards face discriminatory acts in cross-provincial travels<sup>lxxxiii</sup>. Moreover, Afghans have minimal access to the formal labour market, thus engaging in hazardous occupations in the informal economy<sup>lxxxiv</sup>. As a Pakistani national identity card is needed to purchase land, this limits their property rights. However, Pakistan does provide them with education and health assistance<sup>lxxxv</sup>.

Climate change is also one of Pakistan's main concerns, affecting nearly 17 million people who have been internally displaced since 2008. The number of Internally Displaced Persons in 2021 was estimated to be 69,700, mainly due to floods (67,700 people) and earthquakes (2,000)<sup>lxxxvi</sup>. Furthermore, in 2020 there were 388 recognised internal displacements due to conflict and violence<sup>lxxxvii</sup>. In 2022, the country has experienced the most destructive monsoon season in its history, making most of Pakistan's farmland go underwater, increasing food shortages, leaving people homeless and causing thousands of deaths<sup>lxxxviii</sup>.

## **V. Victims of Human Trafficking**

Pakistan is a tier 2 country in the US Human Trafficking 2021 Report, since it does not fully meet the minimum standards for eliminating trafficking, but it is making significant efforts. The main problem attested is bonded labour, in which traffickers exploit workers in exchange for paying an initial debt and then later on entrapping family members, sometimes for generations (manipulating records and continuing with the cycle). Traffickers force them mainly in the regions of Sindh and Punjab to labour in agriculture and brick kilns. 70% of the bonded labourers in the state are estimated to be children<sup>lxxxix</sup>.

Traffickers also buy, sell, rent and kidnap children using them to beg, for domestic work, small shops, and sex trafficking. They are exposed to severe physical abuse, torture, and sexual abuse. Traffickers have forced Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani children into drug trafficking at border areas, and especially in Karachi. Boys are also vulnerable to sex traffickers in Greece. Likewise, women and girls fall into trafficking with fraudulent marriage promises and then are exploited in sex trafficking in Iran, Afghanistan, Kenya and even China. Girls are also used

as chattel to settle debts or disputes, and are forced to take drugs in order to exploit their drug addiction and keep them involved in sex trafficking<sup>lxxx</sup>.

Pakistani traffickers also exploit Chinese workers in the local construction, as well as women and girls from Afghanistan, Iran and other Asian countries in sex trafficking. Moreover, refugees and stateless persons from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Burma, religious and ethnic minorities such as Christians and Hazaras, and Rohingya refugees are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking in Pakistan<sup>lxxxii</sup>.

In 2020, law enforcement and judiciaries investigated 800 sex trafficking cases, initiated prosecutions in 756 cases, and convicted 91 sex traffickers, mostly related to prostitution. However, the government did not report any sentences for these convictions. In the region of Punjab, government authorities investigated 192 cases of bonded labour, prosecuted 174 cases, and convicted 20 traffickers. The Ministry of Interior and the Federal Investigative Agency published the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling for 2021-2025. In 2020, FIA transitioned from a paper-based system to a computerised case management system, allowing efficiencies in data collection and information sharing for law enforcement<sup>lxxxii</sup>.

Furthermore, Pakistan faces many difficulties such as lack of resources and ineffective law enforcement. The state did not report in 2020 any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of officials allegedly involved in human trafficking offences.

Victims usually face retaliation from their abusing employers after not receiving a judicial response for their claims. There is a lack of protection services in many regions, and shelters do not have even basic resources, such as showers. Bonded labourers sometimes return to their previous exploitative condition, since they cannot find any other employment or housing opportunity<sup>lxxxiii</sup>.

## **VI. National Legal Framework**

The main law on migration in Pakistan is the 1979 Emigration Ordinance<sup>lxxxiv</sup>, which oversees labour recruitment, costs, and administrative boundaries for Pakistani abroad<sup>lxxxv</sup>. Furthermore, the 1946 Foreigners Act<sup>lxxxvi</sup>, the 1951 Pakistan Citizenship Act<sup>lxxxvii</sup> and the 1974 Passport Rules<sup>lxxxviii</sup> are the legal instruments that regulate the entrance, stay and departure of foreigners in the country, as well as nationality and document requirements<sup>lxxxix</sup>.

Pakistan has not enacted any legislation regarding the recognition or protection of refugees<sup>xc</sup>. They just fall under the provisions of the 1946 Foreigners Act<sup>xcii</sup>. In relation to human trafficking, the country has prescribed sex and human trafficking penalties in the 2018 PTPA. Likewise, the Penal Code, under sections 366A, 370, 371, 372, and 374, criminalises activities related to exploitation and slavery<sup>xciii</sup>.

At the international level, Pakistan ratified on September 21, 1966 the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination<sup>xciii</sup>. However, it is neither a member of the 1949 ILO Migration for Employment Convention<sup>xciv</sup>, nor the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families<sup>xcv</sup>.

In 2010 Pakistan ratified the Convention against Torture and other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment<sup>xcvi</sup>, as well as the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime<sup>xcvii</sup>. However, it is neither a party to its protocol nor to the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance<sup>xcviii</sup>. Moreover, despite the high number of refugees in the state, Pakistan is not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, nor the 1967 Protocol<sup>xcix</sup>.

## VII. Main Actors

### *The State*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the main actor responsible for migration, issuing visas, legalising documents, repatriating Pakistanis, giving Emergency Travel Documents, and providing other services to Foreigners living in the country<sup>c</sup>.

The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development was established in 2013, and its aim is to seek employment opportunities abroad, coordinate with provincial governments to align the national labour laws, and ensure the welfare of workers and their families. It also supervises the work of the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation, and the Overseas Employment Corporation.

Regarding refugees, no specific agency manages their recognition and protection. Therefore, UNHCR is the organisation providing these services in the state<sup>ci</sup>. In addition, the Federal Investigative Agency handles issues pertaining human trafficking<sup>cii</sup>.

### *International Organisations*

The international agencies dealing with migration and refugees in Pakistan are the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and United Nations (UN). IOM started its activities in Pakistan in 1981 to support the influx of Afghan migrants into the country. This organisation carries out a wide range of projects in the state, related to migration management, health, resettlement and reintegration, disaster risk reduction, recovery after disasters, capacity development, and community stabilisation<sup>ciii</sup>. It has offices in Islamabad, as well as in Karachi, Lahore, Mirpur, and Peshawar<sup>civ</sup>.

Regarding the United Nations, it must be underscored its work with refugees through the UNHCR agency. Lacking a national refugee legal framework, UNHCR is the organisation in charge of determining refugee status under its mandate. It further provides health and education services, assists voluntary returnees and works to strengthen the relations between refugees and host communities. In 2018 it helped 54,000 children to enrol in primary schools<sup>cv</sup>. Other UN organisations are also active in Pakistan, like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes located in Islamabad<sup>cvi</sup>.

Furthermore, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) cooperates with the Pakistani government to promote safe and fair labour migration and good conditions for Pakistani workers abroad<sup>cvii</sup>, within the framework of the EU-funded ILO Global Action to Improve the Recruitment Framework of Labour Migration project<sup>cviii</sup>.

### *NGOs and Other Organisations*

Among the leading NGOs in Pakistan, there is the CARE agency, working in remote and urban areas to address poverty by creating opportunities for self-reliance, focusing on women, children and marginalised communities<sup>cxix</sup>. It also focuses on emergency preparedness and response, access to quality education, women's economic empowerment, lowering barriers to health care and increasing food security<sup>cx</sup>.

Furthermore, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) offers services to respond to all significant humanitarian situations resulting from earthquakes, catastrophic floods and displacement<sup>cxii</sup>. Therefore, they get involved, if the government requires it, to accelerate their response through local partners to provide cash assistance, support primary health care and reproductive health, ensure clean water and sanitation, provide job training and work on the social and educational integration of children<sup>cxiii</sup>.

Another organisation in Pakistan is the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), whose projects include humanitarian assistance with a long-term view on disaster response, sudden or slow onset<sup>cxiiii</sup>. They provide medical aid and aim to help people in need to reduce their dependence on humanitarian aid, while facilitating their transition to sustainable, self-sufficient and long-term development<sup>cxv</sup>.

NGOs' activities in Pakistan are, however, limited while dealing with migration and refugee issues, due to the statutes that NGOs must comply with within the country. Otherwise, if they fail to do so, the local government may terminate their activity<sup>cxvi</sup>.

### *The Catholic Church*

ACN (*Ayuda a la Iglesia Necesitada*) works to enhance Christians' life in Pakistan, financing and promoting education and pastoral projects and training programmes for Christian girls and women<sup>cxvii</sup>. Moreover, ACN carries out investigations and awareness campaigns regarding the situation of Christians in Pakistan<sup>cxviii</sup>.

Another Catholic organisation present in Pakistan is Caritas, which operates under the mandate of the Pakistan Bishops Conference<sup>cxix</sup>. It cooperates with the Pakistani Task Force and provides support to people of all faiths, as well as national and local community organisations<sup>cx</sup>. One of the main objectives of Caritas programmes, in both emergency and non-emergency situations, is to promote tolerance and understanding in society. Caritas fights poverty, exclusion, intolerance, and discrimination<sup>cxxi</sup>. Priority areas are disaster management, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods, health and water, sanitation, and hygiene. Caritas Pakistan operates throughout the country serving the poor, children, women and men of all races and religions<sup>cxii</sup>.

The Salesians of Don Bosco is another organisation present in Pakistan<sup>cxiii</sup>. Its mission has focused on responding to natural disasters, providing emergency relief and supporting the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase on humanitarian grounds<sup>cxiiii</sup>. This organisation has also supported the Pakistani population during the 2005 and 2008 earthquakes, and the 2012 floods<sup>cxv</sup>. It is present in Quetta and Lahore, where they offer quality education and an

innovative teaching style. More than 1,000 students from underprivileged families attend Salesian schools<sup>cxv</sup>.

In Quetta, Salesians also provide shelter and necessities to Afghan refugees. More than 100 refugees, mostly children, received tents, blankets, food and medicine<sup>cxvi</sup>. Lahore has also distributed humanitarian aid to Afghan refugee families in collaboration and coordination with local authorities, police, and city administration<sup>cxvii</sup>. The Salesians are also providing ongoing support, especially in the education for children, and medical and psychological assistance<sup>cxviii</sup>.

**September 2022**



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