

Outflows Of Pakistani Workers to the Gulf States Declined by One-Third After the US-Israel-Iran War

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Over the past fifty years, Pakistan has been a significant source of migrant workers, mainly to Gulf countries. In 2025, outflows of 762,499 workers were recorded: 70% went to Saudi Arabia, 23% to other GCC countries, and 7% to destinations outside the GCC.

The trend continued in 2026: 75,663 workers left the country in January. However, in March, the month following the US and Israel attack on Iran, the number of outmigrants dropped significantly to 50,506, representing a 33.2% decrease (see Table 1). Together, Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait experienced an almost 60% fall in the number of incoming Pakistani workers. By contrast, non-GCC destinations saw only a 15% decrease.

General laborers, constituting about half of all Pakistani migrants, decreased from about 46,000 to 32,000, while the number of drivers and construction workers declined by 35%. Highly skilled and skilled workers experienced a decline of about 40%, compared to about 30% of unskilled workers.

Table 1. Comparison of outmigrants from Pakistan according to destination, occupation, and skill level (January and March 2026)

	January 2026	March 2026	% Decrease
Destination			
GCC	70,381	46,016	34.6%
Saudi Arabia	41,892	28,828	31.2%
UAE	17,226	11,841	31.3%
Qatar	7,841	3,955	49.0%
Oman+Bahrain+Kuwait	3,422	1,392	59.0%
Other Destinations	5,282	4,490	14.9%
Occupation			
Labourer	46,220	32,236	30.2%
Driver	14,492	9,312	35.7%
Construction Worker	2,079	1,341	35.4%
Others	12,872	7,617	40.8%
Skill-Level			
Highly Skilled/ Qualified	3,003	1,806	39.8%
Skilled	20,016	12,257	38.7%
Semi-Skilled/ Unskilled	52,644	36,445	30.7%
Total	75,663	50,506	33.2%

Source: Pakistan [Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment](#) datasets

The above decline in outflows, if continued in the next few months, will have wide-ranging economic and social impacts on Pakistan. Families will lose their survival income and their standard of living will decline; the country will lose much-needed foreign exchange if remittances drop; and unemployment may increase, placing additional burdens on the labor market.

Recruitment costs may also increase if demand for labor in the Gulf countries shrinks while the supply of workers seeking overseas migration remains unchanged.

Another consequence could be a shift in destinations from the Gulf to Europe and other regions through legal and illegal channels.