

# OpenVoiceNews Pakistan

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

## Thousands of Pakistani Students Migrate Annually to UK for Permanent Residency

July 19, 2025

— Categories: Politics & Government



Approximately 13,000 to 15,000 Pakistani students relocate to the United Kingdom (UK) each year seeking permanent residency, a Foreign Office (FO) official revealed to the Senate Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis on July 18, 2025. This trend, driven by economic opportunities and lax immigration policies, raises concerns about brain drain and integration challenges for Pakistan.

The Senate panel, chaired by Senator Zeeshan Khanzada, was told that many Pakistani students opt to stay in the UK rather than return home,

often accepting minimum-wage jobs to integrate into the labor market. “These students prefer to settle in the UK, even at low wages,” the FO official stated, as reported by Dawn, highlighting a significant loss of talent for Pakistan. With 1.8 million Pakistanis already residing in the UK, the influx contributes to a growing diaspora but strains Pakistan’s human capital. The official noted that limited English proficiency poses challenges, hindering integration and employability.

The UK’s recent immigration changes, including e-visas launched on July 15, 2025, have eased access for Pakistani students and workers, fueling this migration trend. However, proposed restrictions, outlined in the UK’s 2025 Immigration White Paper, aim to curb student visa misuse by limiting asylum claims and extending the Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) period from five to ten years. “This could deter some, but the UK remains a magnet for our youth,” said analyst Kamran Yousaf on X, pointing to the allure of globalized education and job prospects. In 2023, 403,000 sponsored study visas were issued, with Pakistanis among the top groups, though tougher rules may reduce future numbers.

Pakistan’s brain drain is a growing concern, as skilled youth seek better opportunities abroad. The FO official’s briefing underscored the need for domestic reforms to retain talent, such as improving education and job markets. Meanwhile, the UK’s policies, while welcoming high-skilled migrants, risk creating a dependency on foreign labor, with Pakistani students filling low-skill roles. As both nations navigate this migration wave, Pakistan must address internal challenges to stem the exodus, while the UK balances economic needs with immigration control, shaping the future of this bilateral dynamic.