



Pakistani Diaspora in the UK: Challenges and Responses

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Abstract

The Pakistani diaspora in the UK, established significantly following post-WWII labor recruitment, represents a complex and internally diverse ethnic minority facing persistent challenges across socio-economic, cultural, and political dimensions. While exhibiting notable entrepreneurial success, a considerable portion of the community contends with higher rates of income poverty and unemployment, compounded by issues of cultural friction, an identity crisis among second and third generations, and increasing instances of Islamophobia and discrimination. In response to these barriers, the diaspora demonstrates strong resilience, characterized by growing political engagement, the active maintenance of transnational socio-cultural and religious ties (including substantial philanthropic contributions), and the effective use of robust internal social networks for mutual support. Ultimately, the community remains an integral part of British society, with its continued progress requiring targeted policy interventions to address systemic disparities and prejudice alongside the institutional recognition of its significant contributions.

Keywords: Diaspora, Identity, acculturation, threats, challenges, extremism

Introduction

Today, the study of migrations is a vast, multidisciplinary area of research in which sociology has contributed more than any other discipline or branch of knowledge. However, according to Zanon and Sciortino, 'sustained sociological research on international migrations dates back only to the 1970s', a decade associated with the settlement of migrant workers across Europe.¹

Theoretical Framework: From Sojourners to Stakeholders



While early neoclassical models explain the initial economic *impetus* for migration specifically the wage differentials between the UK and Pakistan, they fail to capture the historical evolution of the community's identity over seventy years. To understand the Pakistani diaspora as a historical subject, this paper employs Paul Siu's concept of the "**Sojourner**"² (1952) and Stuart Hall's theory of "**New Ethnicities**"³ (1988).

Siu defines the "sojourner" as one who clings to the culture of their own ethnic group while in isolation, viewing their stay as temporary a "Myth of Return" that characterized the first generation of mill workers in the 19workersss. However, history demonstrates a rupture in this model. The collapse of the textile industry and the rise of 1980s racial politics forced a transition. As Stuart Hall argues, the community moved from a "defensive" posture to a "positional" identity, shifting from being politically "Black" (in the 1970s antiracist struggle) to culturally "Muslim" (post-Rushdie Affair). This paper traces this genealogy: how the Pakistani diaspora transitioned from **Economic Sojourners** (1950s–1970s) to **Contested Citizens** (1980s–1990s), and finally to **Institutional Stakeholders** (2000s–Present), actively reshaping the "Diaspora Space" of modern Britain.⁴

Pakistani diaspora in the UK

Pakistani diaspora is one of the major Diasporas of the world, contributing significantly in the homeland and host-land focusing the United Kingdom. The role of Pakistani Diaspora has not been much highlighted and evaluated in the academic circles. This work is an attempt to highlight the role of Pakistani Diaspora and their issues, problems and contribution in the host-land and homeland. In the modern times, many kinds of migrations and settlements occurred and one of the great examples is the division of Sub-Continent which observed the migration and settlement of millions of the masses at the both sides of the divide. The partition also observed an enormous number of masses settling in other parts of the world which later on was termed as *Diaspora*. Arguably, diaspora studies have gone through four phases, first, the classical use of the term, usually capitalized as *Diaspora* and used only in the singular, as mainly confined to the study of the Jewish experience. The Greek diaspora made an off-stage appearance. Excluding some earlier casual references, from the 1960s and 1970s the classical meaning was systematically extended, becoming more common as a description of the dispersion of Africans, Armenians and the Irish. With the Jews, these peoples conceived their scattering as arising from a cataclysmic event that had traumatized the group as a whole, thereby creating the central historical experience of victimhood at the hands of a cruel oppressor. Retrospectively and without complete consensus, the Palestinians were later added to this group.

In the second phase, in the 1980s and onwards, as Safran notably argued, diaspora was deployed as a metaphoric designation' to describe *different categories* of people expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court*.⁵ Moreover, a point again made by Safran, the term now designated a vast array of *different peoples* who either applied the term to themselves or had the label conferred upon them. Given their number (certainly now over one hundred), their historical experiences, collective narratives

and differing relationships to homelands and host-lands, they were bound to be a more varied cluster of diasporas than the groups designated in phase one.⁶

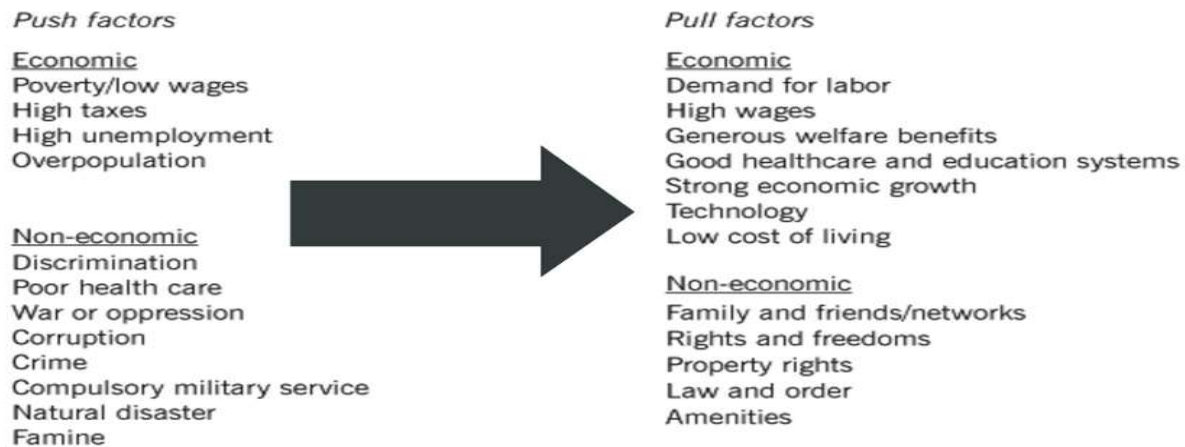
The Pakistani diaspora in the UK is a significant, thriving community that forms the second-largest ethnic minority in the country, with a population exceeding 1.6 million as of the 2021 Census.⁷ Their presence in the UK began with soldiers in the British Indian Army in the mid-19th century, expanded significantly after Pakistan's independence in the 1950s and 1960s, and now contributes substantially to various sectors, including healthcare, retail, and public office. This vibrant community has established strong cultural centers, such as areas in London and Bradford, and plays a key role in enriching British culture through cuisine, music, and community services. United Kingdom (UK) hosts the largest Pakistani migrant population in Europe. The Pakistani diaspora constitutes the third largest ethnic minority residing in the UK, after British Indians.⁸ According to the 2021 census, there were a total of 1.6 million people of Pakistani descent in the UK, a number that has grown from only 5000 in 1951.⁹

Pakistani migration and Textile mills

Following the Second World War, a period of labor shortage in Britain coincided with economic pressures in Pakistan, driving many men from regions such as Mirpur and Punjab to the UK. During the period from 1950 to 1970, Pakistani migrants played a key role in the British industrial economy, especially in the textile mills of Lancashire. Several factors propelled this migration, including the economic upheavals following the Partition of India, the construction of the Mangla Dam, and labor shortages in post-war Britain.

The textile industry in Lancashire offered readily available jobs, particularly in mills that required workers for less desirable night shifts. This practice allowed mills to increase output and remain competitive, but the harsh working conditions were often shunned by the local workforce. Initially, many migrants intended to work temporarily and send money home before returning. However, a significant number ended up settling permanently in cities like Blackburn, Bradford, and Rochdale, bringing over their families and reinforcing a pattern of chain migration. These workers formed the nucleus of a growing Pakistani diaspora, which provided a new source of labor for Britain's industries.

Pakistani diaspora to the UK went there due to push and pull factor. The push factors like the construction of Mangla Dam and insufficient job opportunities forced the Pakistanis to move abroad, on the contrary the pull factor are the dynamics of the host land which attract the potential labor.



Historically, the records states that *Mirpuris (Kashmiris)* after the uprising against the *Dogra* Raja, sought for alternate sources to increase their income and they tilted towards the foreign countries especially the UK. During the *Dogra* raj, the maharaja was the owner of almost 90% land of Kashmir and the tenants had to pay rent to him. So, the farms were small and to increase their monetary assets, they were in sue to find new avenues for better earning.

Ballard argue that the long history of migration from Mirpur and the specific connection of stokers on British Merchant Navy ships are the primary reasons for the mass migration of Mirpuris to Britain. Ballard states:

“In the late 1940s and early 1950s an increasing number of seamen left their ships to take industrial jobs on shore, and soon afterwards began actively to call kinsmen and fellow villagers over to join them; it was thus that a process of chain migration began”.¹⁰

According to Ballard, the earliest source of international exposure, for the people of Mirpur, came in the form of work in the British merchant navy. Ballard argues that the stokers were the pioneer immigrants who paved the way for the subsequent mass migration to Britain. Certainly, recruits to the merchant navy would have gained experience of Britain through the docks in Liverpool and Plymouth. From this point it is not too hard to imagine men finding work labouring in Britain.¹¹

The partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, nominally along religious grounds, led to the division of three regions - the Punjab, Bengal and Kashmir. The wave of migration towards UK got boom as the project of Mangla Dam was started in 1960, merging almost 200 villages and areas adjacent to Mirpur.

Pakistani workforce who went there in 1970 and they initially considered themselves only as the labor force and they were with the mind set to return soon but later the sense of responsibilities and families liabilities forced them to stay there and ultimately the journey took shift from sojourner to settler in the host land. The myth of return ultimately shifted to the settlement and immersed them into the British community and later on the second generation finally adopted the

British culture; despite having strong bond with homeland, they got closer association with the host land as the land of their own dreams.

By returning to the imperial motherland and specifically to the development of the textile industry in Lancashire, another piece of the migration puzzle is put in place. The growth of the British textile industry and the colonisation of the Indian sub-continent form part of the same historical frame in which migration from Mirpur took place. Cotton textiles link together various corners of the world in a complex web of economic and social relations.

The textile industry of Britain witnessed many boosts and recessions after 1920. the general decrease in employment in the textile industry, the specific demand for South Asian workers came from the introduction of a number of measures most prominent of which was the introduction of the night-shift. As noted in the first section, by the end of the 1950s, the cotton industry was in the process of restructuring. In addition to the steps taken by the government in the form of the Cotton Reorganisation Act and the introduction of import tariffs, further measures were deployed within the industry. The most relevant of these changes was the introduction of a twenty-four-hour working day via a three-shift system.

This system of production organisation had actually been in operation in Japan since the 1930s. However, it was only in the post-war years that it was introduced into Lancashire and even then, at a slow rate. By 1954 there were only one hundred and sixty-three double shifts in receipt of formal union authorisation.¹² This relatively late introduction of shift work follows from the fact that it was only with the 1959 Cotton Act that the investment in new equipment took place which, for economic viability, had to be operated twenty-four hours a day. Mill owners found it almost impossible to fulfil the demand for labour on the night-shift from white workers. Fevre has noted that many firms in the woollen industry in Yorkshire would have never considered operating a night-shift if it had not been for the availability of South Asian labour.¹³

A similar situation existed over the Pennines in Lancashire. A generation before, young white working-class women had been commonly available for working in the mills, but they were now gaining employment in factories with better pay and conditions. Two additional factors limited the recruitment of white women on to the night-shift. Firstly, it was illegal for women to work during the night and had been so since 1844.¹⁴ Therefore, even those women, such as those from the European Workers Scheme and other migrants, were available to work, they were barred by legislation. Secondly, the twenty-four hour, three-shift system mitigated against the kind of flexibility that suited family life. Historically, shift work in the mills had been organised to take into account child care responsibilities. Women were allowed to work around school opening and closing times and to take time off, if a child was ill. This system worked well within the historical 'family firms' which dominated the industry.

However, the take-over by multi-national corporations such as Courtaulds, and the introduction of twenty-four hour working, required a workforce that was flexible in terms of working longer hours, not fewer. In 1955, sixty-four percent of spinning operatives were female (Cotton Board 1958) which, given the changes in shift system, reflects the pressure mill owners were under to

find male labour to employ on the night-shift. With the competition from the indigenous workforce at almost nil, several other factors favoured the recruitment of South Asian workers into the mills of UK. Labor immigration was not a novel phenomenon as it had begun even before Pakistan's independence, but the post-partition migration necessitated a more open-minded stance by the governments of both countries towards it.¹⁵ Initially, migrants from the subcontinent prior to its partition in 1947, to Britain went as far back as 300 years ago during the seventeenth century, due to the requirement of cheap labor by the British East India Company. The workers recruited mostly comprised of sailors with early migrants residing in port towns.¹⁶ Pre-partition migration was temporary in nature with travelers returning to their home country after completing their jobs.¹⁷ The migration flows from Pakistan after independence in 1947 were very different owing to its more permanent nature.

From 5000 in 1951 the numbers increased to 24,900 in 1961 after which the figure dramatically rose to 119,700 in 1966.¹⁸ This marked the ending of the first phase of migration to the United Kingdom triggered by the post-war economic boom and the losses during the Second World War. Britain faced the shortage of labor, mainly in labor intensive sectors such as the textile industry, with inherently poor working conditions. Most of these first-generation migrants worked as factory workers saving the major part of their wages to set up their own businesses and buy properties.¹⁹

Most of these businesses relied on cost effective labor, in most instances family members. The influx of a large number of migrants from 1954 onwards, comprising not only of migrants from South Asia but also from West Indies and other post-colonial states as well as the series of racially charged riots in Notting Hill, London, encouraged the British government to consider imposing immigration controls. The Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 was the very first attempt by the British Government to control immigration of Commonwealth passport holders by requiring prospective immigrants to apply for work vouchers.²⁰ These developments reinforced the pattern of chain migration with those already settled inviting their family and friends to the UK.

The Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1968 imposed restrictions on the future rights of entry of the Commonwealth citizens to those who had at least one parent or grandparent born in the UK or themselves were born in UK.²¹ Initially, most of the first-generation migrants travelled to Britain with plans of returning after some time. However, as a result of immigration controls, migration then became more permanent and family oriented, the 'myth of return' now having been completely disregarded.²²

The Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1971 placed further controls on immigrants²³, with the primary immigration of Pakistani nationals almost coming to a standstill, only asylum seekers and holders of special vouchers and those who wanted to enter for family reunification were allowed entry.²⁴ A cyclical pattern characterized the next wave of migration to the UK. Pakistani migrants continued moving to Britain for marriage or on student or work visas permits, the latter of which requires individuals to be highly skilled professionals in professional fields.²⁵ The overall Pakistani diaspora community rose from 747,285 in 2001 to 1,174,983 in 2011²⁶ and then

raised to the figure of 1,662,286 people of Pakistani origin in the UK, making up 2.5% of the total population.²⁷ This data incorporates not only first-generation migrants but also their second and third generation counterparts. However, it is the UK born Pakistanis who account for over half of the Pakistani population growth since 1991. It is surprising considering the rise in immigration controls, which should ideally have decreased the percentage of arrivals.

Figure 1: Long-term net migration continues to fall

Total long-term net migration, immigration and emigration in the UK, year ending (YE) June 2012 to YE June 2025

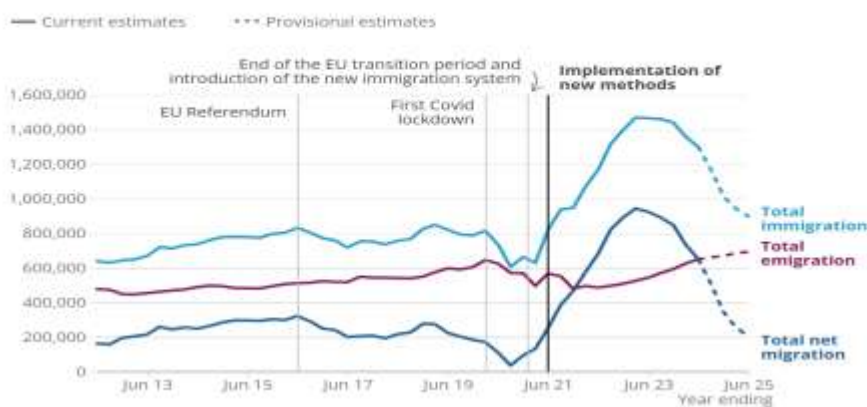


Fig. 1. Total long-term net migration, immigration and emigration in the UK, year ending (YE) June 2012 to YE June 2025²⁸

The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act

The growing influx of Commonwealth citizens led the British government to introduce the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962. The Act was the first piece of legislation designed to restrict immigration from Commonwealth countries by requiring prospective immigrants to apply for employment vouchers. The legislation had a profound impact on the Pakistani diaspora. Many immigrants, fearing that family members would be unable to join them later, expedited their plans to settle permanently in the UK. This shift meant that what had often been temporary male labor migration turned into permanent family settlement. The Act contributed to reinforcing patterns of “chain migration”, where settled individuals used the voucher system and family reunification provisions to help relatives join them.

Economic Integration

The migrants from the rural Mirpur valley in Azad Kashmir, who often took jobs in the textile sector in the north of England or West Midlands, were adversely affected by its decline. Also, these migrants undertook low paying jobs, precipitating entire families to migrate and join them

in these labor-intensive sectors. On closer inspection, three striking factors affecting economic aspects of the current diaspora emerge; their geographical distribution, their occupational characteristics and the role of women in the workforce. The economic characteristics and disparities among the British Pakistanis may be reinforced due to a north-south divide. Those residing in London and south-eastern parts of the UK maintain higher educational attainment levels and are relatively more socially mobile whereas the Pakistani population in the west of Midlands and north of England has suffered from a switch to service industry and a decline in the manufacturing sector.²⁹

Samad found that most of the middle-class professional Pakistanis including health professionals, scientists, IT and financial sector workers and businessmen are concentrated in London.³⁰ Pakistani communities, particularly Kashmiris concentrated in Birmingham, Bradford, and Oldham and nearby northern towns, were found to be economically less affluent than the other Pakistani ethnic minorities. Economic wellbeing hence may be dependent on where the diaspora is settled. For instance, in The Humber, West Midlands, and Yorkshire, less than half of the Bangladeshis and Pakistanis were in employment.

Overall, in terms of employability for the Pakistani diaspora, statistics present a grim picture. The economic success of Diasporas is inevitably also shaped by occupational characteristics. For example, of those who were employed, 57% of the men from Pakistani origin were engaged in low skilled jobs. They formed the highest proportion in this category followed by Black Africans (54%) and Bangladeshi men (53%). The figure was slightly higher for women i.e. around 61%.³¹ It is noteworthy that a considerable percentage of British Pakistani men, particularly are engaged in self-employment. A number of British Pakistanis have been successful in setting up retail and wholesale businesses, reaping benefits off cheap labour. For instance, Joe Bloggs, which was a multimillion-pound company, had Pakistani origins.³² British Pakistanis have established a foothold in the housing rental market, beginning with renting out to Pakistani immigrants with settlers now primarily consisting of Asian students.³³ An example of a property dealing company created by a British Pakistani is the MCR property group that operates in Liverpool and Manchester³⁴. In Bradford, Glasgow, and Manchester almost all of the restaurateurs are Pakistanis. The highly renowned 'Balti' dish that is perceived to have its roots in Kashmir, having been created in 1977 by an immigrant of Kashmiri origin, is considered a trademark Pakistani dish, with it receiving a protected geographical status by the Birmingham City Council in 2009. Yet another sector where the presence of British Pakistanis has remained notable is the transport or the taxi driving business. This has been a particularly lucrative sector for those without any formal qualifications. The labor market census of 2021 also revealed that the labor force participation of Pakistani diaspora was 53% employees and 10% were self-employed and 5% are economically active³⁵.

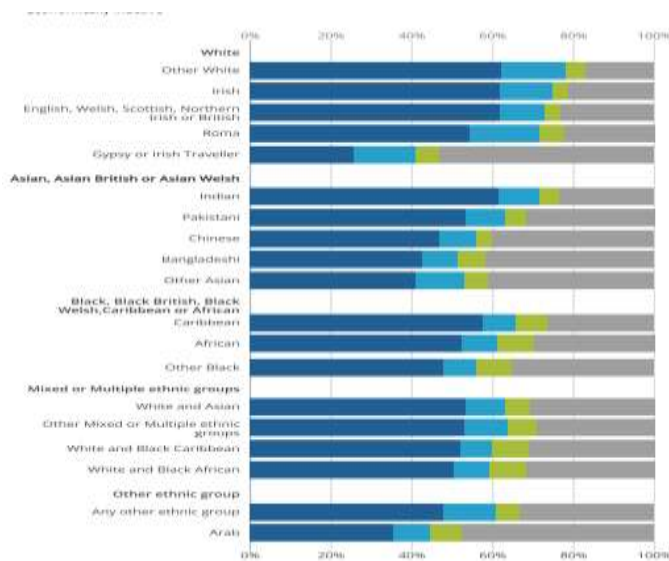


Figure.5. Economic activity status by ethnic group, of those aged 16 to 64 years, England and Wales, Census 2021³⁶

Over half of the Pakistani women were also more likely to work part-time. Low educational qualifications and less fluency in the English language make their economic integration difficult. Labor market performance has distinct welfare implications for different South Asian ethnic groups. However, official statistics do not take into account Pakistanis or more broadly the involvement of South Asians in the informal economy. Low participation rates of the Pakistani women, large family sizes and generally lower wage rates for British ethnic minorities can be perceived as important factors accounting for high levels of poverty³⁷. Lack of appropriate education and training may partly serve as an explanation as well as the solution to the problem. In general, the Kashmiris who comprise over half of the Pakistani settler population in the UK are economically less well off. Excluding this group, the entry of non-Kashmiri Pakistanis into public service professional occupations and businesses is similar to the Indians.³⁸ Instead, the migration history, class background and sub continental regional origins need to be considered. Even though Pakistanis are characterized by lower socio-economic characteristics, there have been indicators of improving educational and labour market outcomes.

The Pakistanis on the contrary also contributed very well in the national arena of the UK and they actively participated into the national sphere and tried their best to shift status from sojourner to settler and well-established magnets. They not only established themselves in the UK but also established well known business empires and the story of Sir Anwer Pervez of Bestway group is true emblem of the success and determination of Pakistanis who not only became a beacon of success but also presented the beautiful picture of Pakistanis in the UK. He migrated to the UK in 1950 and started business startup in 1963 and in 1976, the Bestway Group was formally formed and that group invested over £50 million on welfare and educational projects which caused very good name and fame for the Pakistanis.³⁹ During the Covid-19, the

Pakistani philanthropists initiated an project titled “One Million Meals” for the healthcare workers and renowned personalities not only appreciated this campaign but also joined this campaign. In this way, the Pakistani diaspora is also changing the mentale apparatus of the locals.⁴⁰ The 1980s were a turning point for the Pakistani diaspora’s identity due to increasing globalization, political instability in Pakistan, and the distinct experiences of its diaspora in host countries. Globalization led to more transnational interactions, while political and economic issues in Pakistan, such as military rule and the aftermath of the Bangladesh Liberation War, spurred emigration and impacted the diaspora’s connection to the homeland. Meanwhile, diaspora communities abroad faced new challenges related to assimilation, cultural practices, and discrimination, which sharpened their sense of identity. Remittances from the diaspora significantly boosted Pakistan's economy, creating an emerging middle class. This economic power and the resulting transnational contact influenced local customs, family structures, and social values back home, affecting the identity of both the migrant and the migrant’s family in Pakistan.

Socio-Political aspects of Pakistani Diaspora

The government’s stance on multiculturalism may be blamed here, as it has led to greater segregation instead of integration, with communities being deeply connected with their roots. One important facilitator for this has been the practice of kinship marriages. Internationally arranged marriages have been a focal point behind the formation of ghettos in Britain. South Asian communities, in particular, arrange marriages back home to strengthen biradiri relationships and engender their ethnic identities. British Pakistanis display a high rate of close kin or consanguineous marriages conforming to cultural practices. Arranging these marriages highlights commitment to migrant’s kin, enabling British Pakistanis to strengthen their communities.⁴¹ Conserving cultural and religious values in children and protecting from the influence of the western culture serve as potential motivating factors as well. Over time, Pakistani citizens in the UK have to some extent managed a say in the workings of the British society. An important facilitator for this has been political representation. Political affiliation of British Pakistanis is mostly aligned with the labor party. Their engagement with British politics has increased considerably since the 1970s, in reaction to concerns over allegations of discrimination and racism levied by British Pakistanis on the government.⁴²

Identity Crisis

The Pakistani Diaspora has been a well-researched community in the British context. In particular, the Pakistani diaspora has received a considerable amount of attention from the media with regards to its integration into the British society. A number of studies have examined the cause of integration in the British-Pakistani community, with terms like “myth of return” and “ghettoization”, being constantly employed for the community.⁴³ Settlement among the Pakistani diaspora in the UK can be seen to have developed from early migration concentrated in cities and urban areas for industrial work, to a pattern which encompasses suburbanization through reasons of family formation, economic advancement; seeking better housing opportunities for the next generation etc. Citizenship identities of British Pakistanis have varied with different generations,

with first generation Pakistanis still displaying a deep connection to their home country, second generation Pakistanis also exhibiting a strong connection with Pakistan, while third generations primarily identifying themselves as British.

All three generations, however primarily describe themselves as British Muslims signifying a greater association with religion as compared to culture. In the aftermath of 9/11 and 7/7, the issue of identity has become more critical with the increase in Islamophobia being seen as engendering discontentment amongst British-Pakistanis. While it is true that the Pakistanis of Great Britain were de facto citizens with full rights, there was a backdrop of racialization and inferiorization, which made them feel unwanted, as shown in Anwar's extensive fieldwork in Rochdale, and in order to make life in the West easier, they believed in the myth of their return to the homeland.⁴⁴ Claudio Bolzman makes a similar point writing that "immigrants may reside in the host country with nostalgia for a place where they are considered more than guest workers. Since immigrants are not fully recognised as part of society, they dream about a mythical return".⁴⁵ Whether that mythical return takes place or not, the distant homeland has been glorified by most diasporas, and the home country kept alive and reminisced thanks to the myth of the homeland. In the face of racism and intergenerational disadvantage and envisaging the grim scenario of 'what if things got worse than they already are', the myth of the homeland reminds diasporas they have a home to go back to. The first-generation Pakistanis consider themselves denizens, living but not belonging in Britain while second generation British Pakistanis limiting their protests to a need for tolerance.⁴⁶

Beginning in the 1980's, South Asians, including many British Pakistanis started becoming more vocal about racism, particularly after antiracist policies and theories of the 1980's failed to account for the South Asian experience. South Asians thus began to reject the use of the term 'Black' to represent them.⁴⁷ They popularized the term 'cultural racism' as opposed to color-racism in connection to them. Ethnic issues increased manifold after incidences such as the Honeyford Affair in Bradford, where after insulting Pakistani culture, the head teacher was reprimanded by the students.⁴⁸

Such incidents engendered a feeling of unity amongst the South Asian community. Discrimination towards British Pakistanis in the labour market is reflected in their lower chances of selection and promotion and in educational institutions by dropping out of school early.⁴⁹ On the other hand, evidence points towards British Pakistanis also producing higher numbers of university entrants and applicants. Theories on deprivation and discrimination faced by the Pakistani diaspora may not be giving full justice to both sides of the argument.

Political ascendancy

The period from 2000 to 2025 saw significant growth in the number of British Pakistanis elected to public office, demonstrating increasing political integration and influence. The number of British Pakistani Members of Parliament (MPs) rose significantly, particularly between the 2015 and 2024 general elections. In the 2015 election, ten MPs of Pakistani origin were elected. By 2024, that number had grown to 15, with many serving in prominent positions, primarily within

the Labour Party. British Pakistanis have secured some of the UK's most high-profile political roles. Sajid Javid held several senior cabinet positions, including Chancellor of the Exchequer and Home Secretary. Prominent ministers of Pakistani heritage like Shabana Mahmood and Nusrat Ghani have also held senior government roles.

The Pakistani diaspora now has developed affiliations with all major political parties in the UK; with Pakistani women in recent times have a greater interest and participation in the political and public realms.⁵⁰ Political representation of British Pakistanis has significantly risen with the 2015 elections in the UK resulting in the election of 10 citizens of Pakistani heritage in the House of Commons.⁵¹ Noteworthy Britons of Pakistani origin in the House of Lords include former minister for faith and communities, Saeeda Warsi of the conservative party and Lord Tariq Ahmed of Wimbledon.⁵² Sayeeda Warsi, in particular, has been quite vocal about issues of discrimination and the rights of Muslims and Pakistanis in the country. Pakistani origin politicians performed well. There are ample examples that Pakistani origin politicians are performing very well. They have very significant and growing representation in the British Parliament which shows their integrity and active political and societal role in the UK. Not only male but females also actively took part into the politics and very towering example of Saeeda Warsi is there who became the first Muslim female cabinet member in the David Cameron's cabinet. She was also the first Asian to chair any political party in the UK and also the youngest member of parliament.⁵³

Sadiq Khan, a Pakistan origin first mayor of London and Ch. Muhammad Sarwar and many others are the glittering examples of active political role of the Pakistani diaspora in the UK. In the elections of 2024, 15 Pakistani origin candidates have been elected⁵⁴ and even the current home secretary of the UK *Shabana Mahmood* is also Pakistani origin.⁵⁵ Many politicians in Pakistan held dual nationalities such as Altaf Hussain, Ishrat-ul-Ibad Khan and Rehman Malik who were active in the political arena of Pakistan. The diaspora community also takes an active interest in the political sphere of Pakistan. The Kashmiri community, for instance, has been a strong advocate of the settlement of the Kashmir issue, signifying a culture of diaspora politics.⁵⁶ It is important to note that some minority candidates over time have managed to win seats in areas without significant ethnic minority populations.

However, widespread support does come through biradiri politicking and kinship networks with many politicians till date depending on mobilizing support from their own community networks.⁵⁷ Many believe that although such biradiri politicking has been an important contributor towards greater political say for the British Pakistanis, this practice now requires reform, with second and third generation Pakistanis moving away from it.⁵⁸ However, kinship politics is seen as the only way of gaining legitimacy by many Pakistanis as racism and discrimination has historically kept British Muslims out of politics.⁵⁹

Legal and judicial ascendancy

The legal field has seen a steady increase in representation, with British Pakistanis reaching significant judicial and legal milestones. The Judicial Appointments Commission has worked to

improve the diversity of the judiciary, leading to a rise in British Pakistani judges. Judge Tariq Sadiq, a Civil Circuit Judge in Sheffield,⁶⁰ is an example of a British Pakistani from a working-class background who succeeded in the competitive legal field. British Pakistanis have increasingly entered the legal profession, with a growing number becoming barristers and solicitors. However, representation in senior legal positions, such as the High Court, remains limited compared to the community's size. The Pakistani diaspora has established a strong presence in the UK business sector, though progress is uneven. Many British Pakistanis have become successful entrepreneurs and founders of prominent businesses.

Homeland and Pakistani Diaspora

The diaspora community had always remained connected with their roots, the frequency and intensity of these transnational relations have magnified over time, allowing the migrants to play a more significant role in strengthening connections between the host and home country. After the end of foreign exchange controls by the UK in 1979, there is no official mechanism to record remittances that cross international borders including their volume, destination, and usage. A considerably large number of flows are sent via unofficial channels e.g. through friends and family visiting the UK, leading to further underestimation in the figures. Another factor that makes it hard to record remittances is that estimates are based on non-standardized data from recipient countries. In the fiscal year 2024-25, the UK accounted for approximately 15% of the total final remittance flows to Pakistan. The total remittances reached a record high of \$38.3 billion in FY2024-25.⁶¹ According to some studies, there are differences in the number of remittances sent depending on the ethnicity.⁶² Based on the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities, Clark and Drinkwater, concluded that those of the Caribbean and Pakistani origin are more likely to remit (37% of Caribbeans and 30% of Pakistanis) compared to the Chinese (27%), Bangladeshis (21%) and Indians (14%).⁶³ The trade surplus that exists between Pakistan and the UK provides an indication of the potential of the bilateral trade relations to contribute to foreign exchange reserves. In 2013, the UK-Pakistan trade in goods and services stood at 2.2 billion pounds.⁶⁴ The UK Investment and Trade roadmap, which aimed to increase trade between both countries to 5.5 billion pounds to 2025, clearly highlights the positive impact that diaspora engagement can have on enhancing the perception of Pakistan as a place of doing business.⁶⁵ In addition to remittances, the diaspora also contributes to the economic development of their home country by spending on Pakistani goods available in the UK market. They help facilitate trade by creating demand for Pakistani goods and services. In the UK particularly, there is a considerable demand for Pakistani export goods ranging from fruits (mangoes and citrus) and spices (Shan masala) to furniture and local clothing brands.⁶⁶ The diaspora helps local companies gain international recognition by acting as a bridge between the consumers and producers in the country of origin and destination.

Challenges to Pakistani diaspora

Despite the notable progress, the path to institutional ascendancy is fraught with challenges. The Pakistani Diaspora is facing systemic issues, including racial bias, and political and economic factors, continue to hinder advancement. Research has pointed out that despite achieving high

educational levels, some highly educated women from the Pakistani diaspora still face social and cultural barriers. Social mobility varies significantly within the community due to class and regional factors. For example, a larger middle-class professional cohort is concentrated in London, while working-class Pakistanis are more likely to live in economically disadvantaged areas in the Midlands and the north. While parliamentary representation has increased, there is still work to be done to ensure British Pakistanis have a fair chance at leadership positions within all major political parties. Some research notes that the gains in representation do not yet fully reflect the community's demographic weight.

Extremism and Pakistani Diaspora

Pakistani diaspora in the United Kingdom has increasingly been linked with notions of extremism; resulting from factors such as economic marginalization combined with perceived injustices and discriminations against Muslims around the world. The Muslim victimization or discrimination theories were fuelled by events such as Rushdie affair, a war on Iraq as well as the continuing Israel-Palestine confrontation.⁶⁷

An important factor influencing the victimization theory is the role of media in creating a bias against Muslims. For instance, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights identified a bias created by the media against Muslim terror suspects, mostly of Pakistani origin, even when they were released without charges. The Muslims had to face much victimization and hatredness and their religious sentiments were disrespected many times.⁶⁸ The Honeyford like incidents the lives and life pattern of the Muslims of the UK and they were shamed on the name of freedom of speech and expression.⁶⁹

The overriding consequence of ethnic and religious marginalization can be witnessed in the case of career opportunities. Essentially, getting a job in Britain that meets ones educational and professional qualifications is observed as being easier for some groups of people than others, signifying ethnic and religious biases. These biases have been especially prevalent in the case of Muslims, an issue that has worsened since 9/11.⁷⁰ Islam phobia together with cultural racism had a considerable impact on job prospects of Muslims, particularly Pakistani Muslims in Britain.

Conclusion

Pakistanis are the one of the most dominant diasporas of the UK and they are actively contributing in the national life of the host land and despite many odds and obstacles they are resilient to engage themselves into the national life. They are in various age groups and professions.

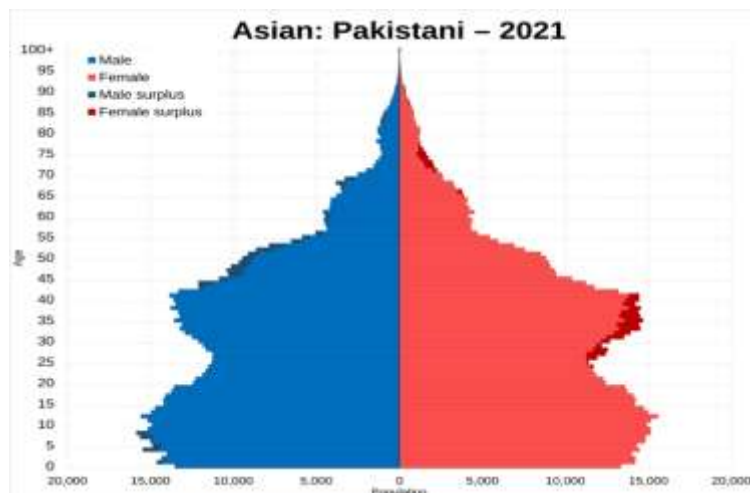
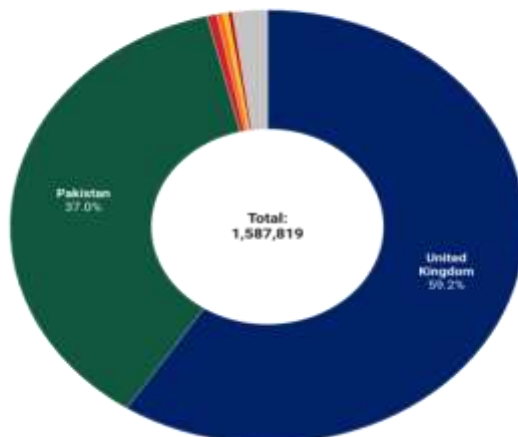


Fig. 2. Asian Pakistani population pyramid 2021⁷¹

British Pakistanis in England and Wales by Country of Birth, 2021 Census

United Kingdom (59.2%) Pakistan (37.0%) Italy (0.6%) India (0.4%)
Spain (including Canary Islands) (0.3%) Kenya (0.3%) Other countries (2.2%)



Only countries of birth representing at least 0.3% of the British Pakistani population are shown
Source: Country of birth (extended) and ethnic group (Office for National Statistics, 2023)

Fig. 3. British Pakistanis by Country of Birth, 2021 Census⁷²



Fig. 4. Birthplace/year of arrival of British Pakistanis in England and Wales (2021 census).⁷³

The Pakistani diaspora has contributed greatly to the social, economic, and cultural life of the United Kingdom (UK), which exemplifies its potential as a vehicle of soft power in relations between Pakistan and the UK. Soft power is a persuasive and influential, rather than coercive, approach to international relations. This influence shows both Pakistan and the UK that they have shared interests, which can be more easily secured through cooperation. Members of the Pakistani diaspora are well-placed to highlight the benefits of bilateralism in securing these interests. Though a pattern of migration from the Indian-subcontinent has been established prior to Partition, the number of Pakistanis migrating to England peaked in 1961 and 1962. One factor that commentators have suggested contributed to this was the creation of the Mangla Dam in Pakistan which began in 1961, for which the citizens of Mirpur were compensated for its flooding of the town. With this compensation, many migrated and settled in the UK. The importance of the Pakistani diaspora in all aspects of UK society is by no means a purely historical phenomenon. Some of the most vital contemporary contributions include the ongoing participation in the NHS, particularly through the COVID-19 pandemic, business, and cultural influence. Secondly, in terms of business, there are a number of success stories in which British Pakistanis have made empires from nothing. They have the status and ability to represent the interests of the Pakistani diaspora and Pakistan to the wider society.

Thirdly, the Pakistani diaspora, which is constituted of a significant number of public figures, has manifested soft power through its cultural influence. These figures have been able to raise awareness of issues in Pakistan through their work and thereby encourage greater involvement in issues that affect Pakistan within the UK. For example, British Pakistani politicians, like Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, have been campaigning against Islamophobia within the UK's political system. Baroness Warsi remarked in 2019 that she felt that she did not want to be pitted against the entire Conservative party, but "it's increasingly becoming like that because there are so few other voices."⁷⁴

Indeed, the issue of Islamophobia has become increasingly pertinent in the UK, which aligns with Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan's message. Khan had called for Muslim countries to stand up to the West, which highlights that, the dangerous dichotomy between Western civilization and Islam is still strong.⁷⁵ This signaled that the campaigns by British Pakistanis against Islamophobia must be accompanied by action from allies of Muslims in the West. The Pakistani diaspora in the UK is a resilient and complex community that is confronting serious external threats, such as rising Islamophobia and discriminatory political narratives. Internally, challenges remain regarding socio-economic inequality and the navigation of identity for younger generations. However, the community's established presence, strong familial ties, economic contributions, and growing political engagement underscore its vital role in the UK

In sum, the UK's Pakistani diaspora has demonstrated that it is indispensable to British society. Issues like Islamophobia show there is still more to be done to ferment the diaspora's soft power but, through cooperation between the Pakistani diaspora and other Brits, these issues can also be set aside for the greater good of humanity. Globalization, alongside traditional forces, created conflict between tradition and modernity within the diaspora community. The diaspora's relationship with its homeland became more complex, with the influence of media, literature, and fashion contributing to a transnational identity.

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