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Freedom in the World 2024 - Pakistan

PARTLY FREE

35

/ 100

[Political Rights](#) 14 / 40

[Civil Liberties](#) 21 / 60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

37 / 100 Partly Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. [See the methodology.](#)

Note

The numerical scores and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Pakistani Kashmir, which is examined in a separate report. *Freedom in the World* reports assess the level of political rights and civil liberties in a given geographical area, regardless of whether they are affected by the state, nonstate actors, or foreign powers. Disputed territories are sometimes assessed separately if they

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meet certain criteria, including boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow year-on-year comparisons. For more information, see the report [methodology](#) and [FAQ](#).

Overview

Pakistan holds regular elections under a competitive multiparty system. However, the military exerts enormous influence over government formation and policies, intimidates the media, and enjoys impunity for indiscriminate or extralegal use of force. Relations between military and civilian leaders have grown more contentious in recent years, culminating in former prime minister Imran Khan's 2022 ouster and subsequent criminal charges. The authorities often impose selective restrictions on civil liberties. Islamist militants have conducted terrorist campaigns against the state and regularly carry out attacks on members of religious minority groups and other perceived opponents.

Key Developments in 2023

- The president dissolved the National Assembly in August, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) coalition government stood down, allowing a caretaker administration to oversee elections set for February 2024.
- Former prime minister Imran Khan, who had been ousted in a 2022 no-confidence vote, was mired in multiple criminal cases and ended the year in prison. In December, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) declared him ineligible to contest the parliamentary elections.
- Arrests of Khan and other leaders of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party triggered civil unrest during the year. After PTI supporters attacked public buildings including the military's headquarters in May, many party leaders resigned, and others faced prosecution in military courts.
- More than 500,000 Afghan residents of Pakistan relocated to Afghanistan in the last three months of the year, after the caretaker administration called for illegal migrants to leave the country. The government's expulsion campaign, which came amid a rise in attacks by Islamist militant groups based partly in Afghanistan, featured arrests, harassment, seizure of property, and demolition of settlements.

Political Rights

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A Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? 1 / 4

The prime minister holds most executive power under the constitution. In April 2022, Shehbaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N) replaced Imran Khan of the PTI, who had formed a coalition government after the 2018 general elections. The PTI had lost its majority a month earlier, when the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) withheld its support. Sharif's PDM coalition government served until August 2023, when the National Assembly was dissolved three days before its term expired. A nonpartisan caretaker administration, headed by Anwar ul-Haq Kakar, then took office until elections could be held, in line with constitutional provisions.

The president plays a more symbolic role as head of state and is elected for up to two five-year terms by an electoral college comprising the two chambers of the parliament and the provincial assemblies. PTI nominee Arif Alvi was elected in 2018 and was due to remain in office until a successor could be chosen after the general elections in 2024.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? 2 / 4

The parliament normally consists of a 342-member National Assembly and a 100-member Senate. National Assembly members are elected for five years; 272 seats are filled through direct elections in single-member districts, 60 are reserved for women, and 10 are reserved for non-Muslim minorities. Reserved seats are filled via party-list proportional representation.

In the 2018 elections, the PTI received 32 percent of the vote and 149 seats. The PML-N received 24 percent and 82 seats. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) received 13 percent and 54 seats. Parties and candidates linked to Islamist militant groups, including Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP), also participated in the polls. Voter turnout was 52 percent. Polling was orderly, but the elections were affected by reporting delays. A pattern of media restrictions, judicial rulings, and preelection manipulation were widely understood to have boosted the PTI at the expense of its main rival, the PML-N. However, the opposition PDM coalition—led by the PML-N, the PPP, and the Jamiat Ulema-e-

Islam-Fazal (JUI-F)—eventually secured enough support to trigger the no-confidence vote that ousted the PTI government in April 2022.

After the National Assembly elected in 2018 was dissolved in August 2023, the ECP set an election date of February 8, 2024, some three months later than constitutionally required. It said the added time was necessary to adjust constituency boundaries in light of census results.

For the Senate, each of the four provincial assemblies chooses 23 members. Senators serve six-year terms, with half of the seats being renewed every three years. The National Assembly chooses four senators to represent the Islamabad capital territory, while another four represent the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATAs). Because the FATAs have been integrated into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since the last elections, seats still reserved for those areas were set to be removed in 2024. In the 2021 Senate elections, the PTI won 18 of the 48 seats contested, leaving it with 26 seats in total and without a majority. The PPP, with 20 seats, became the Senate's largest opposition party.

Elections for provincial assemblies are normally held as part of nationwide general elections. However, the governors of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa dissolved their assemblies in January 2023, at the request of the two provinces' PTI chief ministers, in a move intended to precipitate early elections. The federal government successfully blocked the holding of provincial elections, despite a Supreme Court ruling that they should proceed. The ruling was criticized by dissenting justices as unwarranted overreach by the court.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the 2 / relevant election management bodies? 4

Elections are administered by the ECP, whose members are current or retired senior judges nominated through a consultative process that includes the government and the parliamentary opposition. The ECP has asserted its independence in the past, electoral laws are considered largely fair, and candidates can address electoral disputes via the judiciary. However, the ECP was unable to counteract judicial and military actors' efforts to manipulate the electoral environment in 2018.

Concerns about similar manipulation were on the rise ahead of the 2024 elections, and the ECP was accused in November 2023 of redrawing constituency boundaries to favor the PML-N and its allies.

The ECP was involved in the struggle to disqualify and jail Imran Khan during 2022 and 2023. In October 2022, the commission barred him from holding office for five years, ruling on a complaint that he had failed to accurately declare official gifts. The case provided the basis for Khan's arrest and corruption conviction in early August 2023, resulting in a three-year prison sentence. The Islamabad High Court suspended the sentence at the end of August, but Khan's appeal to suspend the conviction itself so that he could run for office was rejected in December. At the end of December, the ECP rejected Khan's application to run as a parliamentary candidate. The PTI named one of his lawyers to replace him as PTI chairman so that it could participate.

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 2 / 4

Several major parties and numerous smaller parties and independents compete in elections and are represented in the parliament and provincial legislatures. However, free competition has been distorted through coercive and quasi-legal measures directed by the military against political actors who have fallen out of favor, and by the willingness of political parties to seek the military's patronage. The measures taken against the PTI during 2023 included the arrest of multiple officeholders following violent protests in May. Those detained were pressured to disavow Khan and the party as a condition of release. Senior party figures who refused, such as Shah Mahmood Qureshi, remained in jail at year's end. Former PTI secretary general Jahangir Tareen announced the formation of a new party, Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), in June to attract PTI defectors; the project was widely thought to have been encouraged by the military.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1 / 4

Opposition parties campaign and contest elections, which regularly result in transfers of power at the national level. National opposition parties also hold power or significant representation at the provincial and local levels. However, the military has long been considered more powerful than elected politicians and able to influence electoral outcomes.

Law enforcement mechanisms have repeatedly been abused to impede opposition parties. Under the 2018–22 PTI government, the PPP and PML-N faced a succession of charges from the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the government's anticorruption body, and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif—the brother of Shehbaz Sharif—was banned from office in 2018 over corruption accusations. He was jailed and later went into self-imposed exile in London after receiving medical treatment. In October 2023, with his party back in government, Sharif returned to Pakistan, received bail, and subsequently had his graft convictions overturned; at year's end he was seeking the removal of his lifetime ban on holding office.

After his own ouster as prime minister in 2022, Imran Khan faced similar treatment. An NAB corruption investigation culminated in his May 2023 arrest. The various charges brought against him during the year included violating a terrorism law through an inflammatory speech, misappropriating state gifts, and leaking state secrets. In addition to the detentions and coerced defections of PTI politicians, the party faced obstacles such as an ECP effort to forbid its electoral symbol and the media regulator's June order to ban any broadcasts of Khan.

Separately, the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) has faced years of sustained repression from law enforcement bodies and courts. In February 2023, PTM lawmaker Ali Wazir was released after two years in detention, only to be rearrested in both August and November and accused of antistate agitation in his political speeches.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 due to the authorities' intensifying clampdown on the opposition party PTI and its leader, former prime minister Imran Khan, ahead of elections set for February 2024.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

1 / 4

The military has reasserted its role as a political arbiter in recent years, proving more powerful than either the judiciary or the elected government. By working to dismantle the PTI and influencing the composition of the caretaker administration during 2023, the military positioned itself to shape the conditions and outcome of the 2024 general elections.

Religious extremists have also long hampered voters' ability to freely express their political preferences. The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing at a JUI-F rally in Bajaur in July 2023, and increased attacks by another militant group, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), threatened political activity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially along the Afghan border. The TLP, a militant party that identifies with the Sufi Barelvi tradition, has sporadically conducted mass mobilizations and violent street protests since its launch in 2015.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, 1 / and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 4

Members of non-Muslim minority groups are able to participate in general voting while also being represented through reserved party-list seats in the national and provincial assemblies. However, non-Muslims' political participation remains marginal. Parties nominate members to the reserved seats, leaving voters with little say in the selection process. Ahmadis, members of a heterodox Muslim sect, face political discrimination and must register on a separate voter list that categorizes them as non-Muslims.

The women's branches of major political parties are active during elections, but women face practical restrictions on voting, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan, where militant groups and societal constraints are stronger. Women rarely hold party or government leadership posts, and millions of women are missing from the voter rolls, partly because many lack identity documents. Electoral laws state that at least 10 percent of votes must be cast by women for a result to be valid.

The interests of LGBT+ people are generally not represented by elected officials.

The national-level single-member constituency system ensures that the major ethno-linguistic groups from each province receive parliamentary representation. Although Sindhi, Pashtun, and

Baloch figures all play visible roles in national political life—alongside the largest ethno-linguistic group, Punjabis—the military works to marginalize figures from minority groups that it suspects of harboring antistate sentiments, as exemplified by its treatment of the PTM.

C Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives 1 / determine the policies of the government? 4

Formally, the prime minister and cabinet make policy in consultation with the parliament. However, there has been a long-running struggle between these civilian structures and the military establishment for control of national security policy. Most civilian politicians have concluded that, to remain in office, they must retain the confidence of the military leadership.

During the final months of his premiership and subsequently as opposition leader, Imran Khan was publicly critical of the military. This breakdown in relations was seen as the key factor in his ouster, even if the formal procedure of his removal was a parliamentary and constitutional one.

The PDM government, in the last month of its tenure in 2023, introduced legislation that expanded the powers of intelligence agencies to use the Official Secrets Act against civilians and elevated the role of the military in economic management, among other changes. The parliament passed the measures before dissolution in August; the PTI-allied president refused to sign them, but they took effect after his office failed to return them to the parliament within the 10 days allotted by the constitution.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Despite numerous formal safeguards, official corruption is endemic in practice. The use of accountability mechanisms is often selective and politically driven. The NAB focuses on cases against politicians and senior officials, which tend to be protracted. The military and judiciary have their own disciplinary systems for corruption.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 2 / 4

The government is subject to legal transparency requirements surrounding public finances, procurement processes, and general operations. However, the military is deeply opaque in its affairs. Military intelligence agencies act without oversight and often without public knowledge, including when they abduct, detain, interrogate, and torture individuals. Vaguely worded regulations empower military officials to monitor and censor media content that is deemed harmful to national security.

Access-to-information laws have long been applied in Pakistan, including a 2002 law that was updated in 2017, though implementation is inconsistent in practice. Government departments often ignore requests, and determined citizens can complain to provincial information commissions about noncompliance.

The parliament regularly debates and scrutinizes the budget, accompanied by commentary from the media. Lawmakers are expected to make themselves accessible to constituents. Parliamentarians and select public officials must submit asset declarations that civil society organizations often share online. Civic groups and journalists weigh in on policy debates, provided they do not touch on national security matters.

Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Pakistan has historically hosted a relatively vibrant media sector, with many television news channels and print publications presenting a range of news and opinions. However, both the civilian authorities and the military have curtailed media freedom in recent years.

Journalists who are deemed to have antagonized the military through their reporting have been subject to enforced disappearance and other abuses. In one recent case, Bol TV anchor Imran Riaz Khan was arrested in Sialkot in May 2023 and held incommunicado for four months. In March 2023, journalist Syed Fawad Ali Shah was released from detention in Peshawar, having been deported

from Malaysia in August 2022 and forcibly disappeared upon arrival in Pakistan. Journalists also face assaults and intimidation while reporting on demonstrations. During the violent May 2023 protests by PTI supporters, party activists ransacked the Pakistan Radio station in Peshawar and vandalized the equipment of several media teams covering the assemblies.

In addition, media outlets have encountered interference with distribution and broadcasting, withdrawal of government advertising, and bans on television stations or specific television presenters. As part of the flurry of legislative activity before the dissolution of the National Assembly in August 2023, the government pushed through an expansion of the discretionary power of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) to impose sanctions for broadly defined disinformation and misinformation; media groups warned that the law lacked adequate safeguards against suppression of legitimate reporting.

The military restricts access to militancy- and insurgency-affected areas, impeding media coverage. In Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, authorities have ordered local journalists to refrain from reporting on separatist activity, while rebel or militant groups threaten them when they allegedly side with the government.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private? 1 / 4

Constitutional religious-freedom guarantees have not provided effective safeguards against discriminatory legislation, social prejudice, and sectarian violence. Shiite Muslims, Christians, and members of other religious minority groups can face blasphemy accusations that arise from trivial disputes and escalate to criminal prosecution and mob violence. In an incident in the Punjab town of Jaranwala in August 2023, mobs burned down 24 churches and dozens of homes after local mosques broadcast claims that blasphemous content had been found on torn pages of the Quran near a Christian community. Blasphemy laws and their exploitation by vigilantes have also curtailed freedom of expression among Sunni Muslims.

Hindus have complained of vulnerability to kidnapping and forced conversions. Activists reported that a series of such crimes had occurred in September 2023.

Ahmadis are legally prohibited from calling themselves Muslims and face discrimination. A January 2023 report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan found that the Gujranwala district administration in Punjab, under pressure from the TLP and other groups, was involved in destroying minarets at Ahmadi places of worship and allowing cases to be filed against Ahmadis for following Muslim religious practices. Extremists also reportedly desecrated Ahmadi graves.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? 2 / 4

Pakistani authorities have long used the education system to portray Hindus and other non-Muslims negatively and to rationalize enmity between Pakistan and India, among other ideological aims.

In recent years, scholars have been somewhat more able to discuss sensitive issues involving the military. However, there is no academic freedom on matters pertaining to religion, as academics remain vulnerable to blasphemy accusations.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 2 / 4

Pakistanis are free in practice to discuss many topics, but the 2016 Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act gives the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) unchecked powers to censor material online. Its broad and poorly defined mandate includes prevention of both morally objectionable content and any maligning of the “state, judiciary, or armed forces.”

Direct or implied criticism of the military can draw criminal or extralegal punishment. Like the PTM’s Ali Wazir, lawyer and activist Imaan Mazari-Hazir was charged with sedition in August 2023 after publicly criticizing the military for enforced disappearances.

The threat of being accused of blasphemy and facing draconian legal action, murder, or mob attacks also deters unfettered speech.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 3 / 4

The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly, and protests are frequently allowed to proceed peacefully. However, the government can harness legal provisions to arbitrarily ban any gathering that they designate as a threat to public order.

There is a well-established pattern of law enforcement action against assemblies that the military considers prejudicial to its notion of national security. A number of arrests in 2023 targeted PTM rallies, and police tried to break up a Baloch women's march in December. PTI supporters held multiple assemblies during their confrontation with the PDM government in 2022 and early 2023, but they faced a sustained crackdown after the May 2023 demonstrations featured rioting and attacks on military installations.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

Foreign and domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) face government-imposed restrictions. Organizations are subject to intrusive registration requirements and vetting by military intelligence officials. Authorities can demand that NGOs obtain a "no-objection certificate" before undertaking even the most innocuous activity.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

The rights of workers to organize and form trade unions are recognized in law, and the constitution grants unions the rights to collective bargaining and to strike. However, these protections are not strongly enforced. Roughly 70 percent of the workforce is employed in the informal sector, where unionization and legal protections are minimal. Onerous procedures must be followed for a strike to be legal. Strikes and labor protests are organized regularly, though they often lead to clashes with police and dismissals by employers.

F Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

Although formally independent, the judiciary has been closely involved in power struggles between the military, the civilian government, and opposition politicians. In effect, it has acted as a center of political power in its own right. During recent confrontations, the judiciary has typically aligned itself with the military in curtailing the powers of targeted civilian politicians. After the violent May 2023 protests by PTI supporters, the courts sanctioned the detention of party leaders and delivered rulings that served to weaken the PTI and prevent Imran Khan from participating in the 2024 elections. However, the PDM government and some Supreme Court justices criticized the chief justice for certain actions that seemed to favor Khan, and a law enacted in April shifted key discretionary powers from the chief justice alone to a panel of three justices.

The broader court system is marred by endemic problems including corruption, intimidation, insecurity, a large backlog of cases, and low conviction rates for serious crimes.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 1 / 4

Police have long been accused of biased or arbitrary handling of initial criminal complaints. Police and prosecutors have been criticized for a chronic failure to prosecute terrorism cases and for their reliance on torture to obtain confessions.

During 2023, the trial of civilians in military courts under the Army Act reemerged as a key area of concern. In the wake of the May rioting by PTI supporters, the government and National Assembly approved the use of military courts to handle related cases, and the Supreme Court in December allowed military courts to proceed with the cases of over 100 detainees, many of them PTI activists. In addition to the lack of due process safeguards in military trial proceedings, those convicted by military courts have limited rights of appeal.

There has been progress in women's access to justice and generalized protection of rights for litigants in the former FATAs. However, informal jirgas remain a form of local dispute resolution alongside the formal justice system.

F3 0-4 pts

**Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and 1 /
insurgencies? 4**

The population and state institutions are subject to terrorist and insurgent violence from Baloch separatist groups, the TTP or Pakistani Taliban, and the regional branch of the Islamic State militant group, ISKP.

Operating largely from bases in Afghanistan, the TTP significantly escalated its campaign of violence in 2023, launching multiple assassinations, assaults on security posts, and mass-casualty suicide bombings. The pattern contributed to an increase of more than a 50 percent in the annual number of fatalities, for a total of 1,502 people—including civilians, terrorists, and security personnel—killed in 527 terrorist incidents in 2023, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal. The low-intensity insurgency in Baluchistan also persisted during the year, and several attacks were attributed to ISKP, including suicide bombings at the JUI-F event in Bajaur in July and religious celebrations in Mastung in September, each of which killed more than 50 people.

Enforced disappearances and summary executions carried out by state actors have long been a feature of counterterrorist and counterinsurgency operations, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. As of August 2023, the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (COIOED) had recorded nearly 10,000 cases nationally since 2011.

F4 0-4 pts

**Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the 0 /
population? 4**

Women face discrimination in employment despite legal protections and are placed at a disadvantage under personal status laws. Many perpetrators of gender-based violence and sexual harassment or discrimination enjoy impunity, and police are often reluctant to pursue complaints of crimes against women.

Members of ethnic and religious minorities as well as LGBT+ people also suffer legal or de facto discrimination and violence. The penal code prescribes prison terms for consensual sex “against the order of nature,” deterring LGBT+ people from acknowledging their identity or reporting abuses. Transgender and intersex people have been authorized to register for official documents under a

“third gender” classification recognized by the Supreme Court since 2009, and a 2018 law further protected transgender people’s right to legal recognition of their self-perceived gender identity, among other rights. However, they continue to face targeted violence and discrimination in housing and employment, and in May 2023 the Federal Shariat Court struck down core sections of the 2018 law. An appeal to the Supreme Court was pending at year’s end.

In October 2023, the caretaker government called for all illegal migrants to leave the country by November 1, later extending the deadline to the end of the year. The initiative was widely understood to apply primarily to the country’s 1.7 million undocumented Afghan residents. Arrests, harassment, seizure of property, demolition of settlements, and forced expulsions were subsequently reported. More than 500,000 Afghans were believed to have left the country during the last three months of the year, including many who had been long-term residents or were born in Pakistan, and some were forced out or chose to leave despite having valid documentation.

Score Change: The score declined from 1 to 0 due to the government’s harassment and arbitrary mass expulsions of Afghan refugees.

G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 2 / 4

Authorities routinely hinder internal movement in some parts of the country for security reasons. Foreign travel is restricted in part through the Exit Control List, which blocks named individuals from using official exit points. Though the list is intended to prevent those posing a security threat and those facing court proceedings from fleeing, authorities have used it to control dissent.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 2 / 4

The constitution, legal system, and social and religious values ostensibly guarantee private property and free enterprise. In reality, organized crime, corruption, a weak regulatory environment, and

subversion of the legal system often render property rights precarious. Powerful and organized groups continue to engage in land grabbing. During the mass expulsion of Afghan refugees in late 2023, property owners of Afghan origin reported being forced to sell assets at low prices or having them confiscated.

Inheritance laws discriminate against women, and women are often denied their legal share of inherited property through social or familial pressure.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and 1 / size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 4

In some parts of urban Pakistan, men and women enjoy considerable personal social freedoms and have recourse to the law in case of infringements. However, social practices in much of the country restrict personal behavior, especially choice of marriage partner. Despite attempts to abolish “honor killings” of people accused of breaking social and sexual taboos, the incidents remains common, and most go unreported.

About 18 percent of women aged 20 to 24 were married before age 18. Nearly one-third of Pakistani women have experienced gender-based violence, according to the UN Population Fund. Abortion is illegal, except when a pregnancy threatens the woman’s life.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

Efforts to enforce legal bans on bonded labor and child labor continue. Gradual social change has also eroded the power of landowning families involved in such exploitation. Nevertheless, other forms of extreme labor exploitation remain common. Employers use chronic indebtedness to restrict laborers’ rights and hold actual earnings well below prescribed levels, particularly among sharecroppers and in the brick-kiln industry. Marginalized groups, such as itinerant workers, face difficulties in obtaining identity documents. Women from marginalized communities are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking within Pakistan or to other countries.

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