

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	670
Land:	Pakistan
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan
Udgivet:	15. juni 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	26. juni 2023

2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan

PAKISTAN (Tier 2)

The Government of Pakistan does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, if any, on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Pakistan remained on Tier 2. These efforts included increasing investigations and prosecutions, and convicting traffickers. The government identified and referred more victims for protection services, and provincial labor departments referred more bonded labor cases to law enforcement. The government acceded to the UN TIP Protocol. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Law enforcement efforts against labor trafficking remained inadequate compared to the scale of the problem and for a fourth year, the government did not take adequate action against credible reports of official complicity in trafficking; victim protection services, especially shelter, remained inadequate; and inspection efforts continued to be insufficient to effectively enforce labor laws. There were reports of victims being re-victimized, and corruption continued to hinder anti-trafficking efforts. In Sindh, local officials continued to perpetrate bonded labor with impunity in brick kilns and on farms.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Vigorously increase the number of bonded labor victims identified and referred to services, including by ensuring labor inspectors have sufficient resources to conduct inspections and report potential trafficking cases to law enforcement.
- Implement measures to address corruption in law enforcement and take steps to shield trafficking investigators and prosecutors from external influence.
- At both the federal and provincial levels, increase prosecutions and convictions of all forms of trafficking, including bonded labor, and seek adequate penalties for convicted traffickers, including complicit officials, which should involve significant prison terms.
- Using the SOPs for victim identification, systematically and proactively identify trafficking victims and refer them to services through training of provincial police, labor inspectors, and social services on SOPs, and ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked.
- Establish an NRM that receives adequate input from NGOs, define processes and roles of all relevant government agencies and front-line actors (including federal and provincial agencies), and train those actors to ensure uniform implementation across the country.
- Continue to train officials, including law enforcement, judges, and prosecutors, on the implementation of the 2018 Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (PTPA) and increase registration of trafficking related cases under the PTPA.
- Expand services for bonded laborers, including vocational training and job placement support, debt and injury restitution, shelter, identity documents, and legal assistance, and ensure they are informed of the law that discharges all bonded laborers from any obligations to render such labor through awareness campaigns.
- Increase registration of brick kiln and farm workers to ensure their access to services and government relief, especially in response to sudden-onset disasters due to climate change.
- Increase the quality and availability of trafficking-specific services, including for males, and increase dedicated funding for services and staff training.
- Vigorously raise public awareness of forced labor, particularly in domestic servitude, brick kilns, and agriculture.

- Improve efforts to collect and accurately report anti-trafficking data, including by province and type of trafficking, including bonded labor.
- Take steps to eliminate all recruitment fees charged to workers, lift restrictions on female migrants, and increase protections of migrant workers in destination countries.
- Establish a national hotline, in collaboration with civil society, to report trafficking crimes and provide victim assistance and referral.

PROSECUTION

The government increased law enforcement efforts. Various Pakistani laws criminalized sex and labor trafficking. The 2018 PTPA as amended, criminalized sex and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment, a fine of up to 1 million Pakistani rupees (PKR) (\$4,420), or both, for trafficking crimes involving adult male victims and penalties of up to ten years' imprisonment and a fine of up to 1 million PKR (\$4,420) for those involving adult female or child victims. These penalties were sufficiently stringent. By allowing for a fine in lieu of imprisonment for sex trafficking involving adult male victims, however, these penalties were not commensurate with those for other serious crimes, such as rape. The government continued to use other sections of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) that criminalized some forms of human trafficking. For example, Section 371A and 371B criminalized the buying and selling of a person for prostitution and prescribed penalties of up to 25 years' imprisonment and fines. Section 374 criminalized unlawful compulsory labor and prescribed penalties of up to five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both. Section 366A criminalized procurement of a girl younger than 18 and prescribed penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine. Section 370 criminalized buying or disposing of any person as a slave and prescribed penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment and a fine, and Section 371 criminalized habitual dealing in slaves and prescribed penalties of up to life imprisonment and a fine if the imprisonment was less than 10 years. The federal Bonded Labor System Abolition Act (BLSA) criminalized bonded labor, with prescribed penalties ranging from two to five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both; these penalties were sufficiently stringent. The provincial governments have adopted their own labor laws, including anti-bonded labor laws, under a devolution process that began in 2010, and federal laws apply until provinces enact corresponding laws.

The government reported investigating 1,936 trafficking cases under the PTPA (856 for sex trafficking, 988 for forced labor and 92 for unspecified forms of trafficking), compared with 498 trafficking cases in the previous year (130 for sex trafficking and 368 for forced labor). Authorities prosecuted 1,236 individuals (1,000 cases) for trafficking under the PTPA (509 for sex trafficking, 677 for forced labor, and 50 for unspecified forms of trafficking), compared with 282 individuals in the previous year (39 for sex trafficking and 243 for forced labor). Authorities convicted 105 traffickers under the PTPA (eight for sex trafficking, 89 for forced labor, and eight for unspecified forms of trafficking), and one individual was acquitted, compared with no convictions the previous reporting period. The government reported investigating 32,806 cases (29,344 sex trafficking, 1,723 forced labor, and 1,739 unspecified cases), prosecuting 14,648 cases (11,404 sex trafficking, 1,623 forced labor, and 1,621 unspecified cases), and convicting 31 sex traffickers and 22 labor traffickers under the PPC; however, the government did not report which provisions were used, resulting in the possibility that some cases under the PPC contained elements inconsistent with the international law definition of trafficking. Civil society previously noted concerns that traffickers were not punished rigorously. According to experts, victims often do not trust law enforcement and decide not to cooperate in investigations. Civil society experts have noted that victims are often blamed by law enforcement for their situations and their vulnerability is overlooked. The Federal Investigative Agency (FIA) and provincial law enforcement agencies allocated a total of 1.07 billion PKR (\$4.73 million) for investigations, including for trafficking cases; 22 million PKR (\$97,170) for the FIA, 497 million PKR (\$2.2 million) for Sindh police, 274 million PKR (\$1.21 million) for Punjab police, 182 million PKR (\$803,890) for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police, and 91 million PKR (\$401,940) for Balochistan police. The FIA reported approximately 781 personnel are deployed in field units dedicated to human trafficking

and migrant smuggling investigations across Pakistan. Some law enforcement efforts, including efforts to investigate bonded labor, were interrupted due to the recent floods in Pakistan.

Despite the existence of the BLSA and increased forced labor investigations, bonded labor persisted, largely due to ineffective enforcement of the law and powerful local officials as perpetrators. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions under the BLSA. The Department of Labor handled bonded labor cases and provincial Labor Departments referred 442 bonded labor cases to police for criminal investigation in 2022. Authorities in Punjab released 30 Afghan victims of bonded labor during a law enforcement operation on a brick kiln. While the BLSA mandated the creation of District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) in each province to ensure implementation of the BLSA, including reporting and filing cases, DVCs had limited capacity to fulfill their mission. For example, in Sindh province, DVCs are led by district deputy commissioners; despite having 30 district DVCs, observers reported most have never held a meeting to address bonded labor. It was previously reported the government relied on often illiterate bonded labor victims to recognize their debt bondage violates the BLSA and provincial legislation, proactively leave their landowners, and file their own cases in court. Even when bonded laborers did so, often assisted by local NGOs, the courts either did not act on the claims or handled them administratively by freeing the laborers without any punishment for their employers. As a result, trafficking victims who came forward sometimes faced retaliation from their exploitative employers. Civil society noted that local authorities sometimes registered cases under older laws, which carry less penalties, instead of the PTPA and that some local officials believe that an increase in trafficking cases was damaging for the country's "image." Observers noted a lack of anti-trafficking legislation at the provincial level disempowered law enforcement as provinces did not always enforce the national anti-trafficking law.

The FIA remained the government's lead reporting and coordinating entity on human trafficking and had dedicated field offices in each of its provincial headquarters dedicated to trafficking. The agency focused on transnational crimes, while provincial police generally investigated domestic human trafficking cases. Law enforcement were required to file a First Information Reports (FIR) to launch a criminal investigation, including for trafficking crimes. The FIA established a new national trafficking unit to coordinate efforts across the country. The FIA also established new satellite offices at five embassies abroad in Türkiye, UAE, Spain, Italy, and the UK, in addition to existing offices in Iran, Oman, and Greece, to coordinate law enforcement efforts, including on trafficking cases. The FIA continued to provide in-person and online training, in collaboration with international organizations, to provincial police, police training colleges, federal and provincial prosecution departments, judicial academies, social welfare departments, labor inspectors, and child protection bureaus on trafficking investigations, anti-trafficking enforcement, laws, and SOPs for victim identification and referral; 2,318 officials from various departments were trained by the FIA during the reporting period, compared with 920 in 2021. Provincial governments trained 36,850 officials on anti-trafficking enforcement and laws, including 22,290 in Punjab, 2,853 in Sindh, 510 in KP, and 64 in Balochistan. Despite training efforts, NGOs noted a continued lack of capacity to address trafficking crimes, and that more training is needed for law enforcement, including on human trafficking and the anti-trafficking law as well as on completing FIRs. Observers also reported more training is needed for provincial police and courts. The government maintained bilateral law enforcement cooperation mechanisms and participated in a law enforcement operation with INTERPOL to combat trafficking and other related crimes.

The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes; however, corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns, inhibiting law enforcement action. The government did not report any efforts to address local government officials' reportedly endemic perpetuation of bonded labor, which created a culture of impunity for criminals. In Sindh province, a feudal system persisted, where bonded laborers experienced exploitation and traffickers continued to act with impunity as many landlords had political connections. Some landlords used their influence to prohibit policies in favor of laborers, who reportedly were paid very little or not at all; a significant number of women and girls subjected to bonded labor were also victims of sex trafficking. It was previously reported that when bonded laborers attempted to escape or seek legal redress, police refused to file a case and returned bonded laborers to their traffickers. Observers

alleged some police and influential landlords harassed civil society and journalists attempting to protect victims and raise awareness of bonded labor crimes. Observers noted police sometimes accepted bribes from perpetrators and demanded bribes from victims in order to register crimes. Observers noted women victims might be hesitant to report crimes to avoid harassment, including by law enforcement, which could prevent the identification of trafficking cases. NGOs previously reported some police colluded with farm and brick kiln owners to create fake criminal cases against victims who attempted to escape from situations of bonded labor. Some landowners restricted the movement of victims with armed guards or sold bonded laborers for the price of their debts. Some police reportedly assisted employers in kidnapping bonded laborers that authorities or NGOs had previously removed from exploitation. Police were reluctant to investigate cases of potential bonded labor when wealthy and influential individuals, such as local politicians, were the alleged perpetrators due to pressure from politicians and landowners. Police often reportedly acted against trafficking cases only when pressured by media and activists. Observers have previously alleged police accepted bribes to ignore prostitution crimes, some of which may have included sex trafficking, and border officials might have facilitated human trafficking. Some garment factories reportedly paid monthly bribes to DOL officials to avoid inspections; some factories in Sindh prevented government officials from conducting inspections.

PROTECTION

The government maintained protection efforts. The government reported identifying 35,309 trafficking victims, compared with 21,253 trafficking victims 2021. This included 29,334 for sex trafficking, 3,118 for forced labor, and 2,857 for unspecified forms of trafficking; and included 25,919 women, 6,199 men, 2,510 boys, 309 girls, 368 children where the gender was unknown and four unspecified. The government did not report the number of bonded labor victims identified for the second consecutive year. A civil society organization reported identifying 350 victims, including 149 sex trafficking victims (146 women, one boy, and two girls) and 201 men forced labor victims. While the government did not have uniform SOPs for victim identification and referral, federal and provincial departments, including law enforcement, labor inspectors, child protection bureaus, and social welfare departments had SOPs to identify and assist victims of human trafficking and coordinate with relevant government departments, NGOs, and other stakeholders. The government reported training law enforcement on the SOPs, including in collaboration with international organizations. Observers reported that the absence of an NRM contributes to inadequate cooperation among federal and provincial agencies in the protection of victims. Some SOPs lacked procedures to identify forced labor victims or were missing key indicators of bonded labor in the screening checklists. The government reported that law enforcement and labor inspectors screen for trafficking victims during law enforcement operations involving bonded labor, sex trafficking, or forced begging. The government coordinated with the Government of Laos and an international organization to repatriate 44 victims that were victims of forced labor in cyber scams under threat of torture in northern Laos. The FIA worked with the Pakistani embassies in Nepal and Oman to repatriate Pakistani victims of sex trafficking.

The government referred 22,597 trafficking victims (19,143 sex trafficking victims, 1,222 forced labor victims, and 2,229 victims of unspecified forms of trafficking, including 3,144 men, 16,958 women, 2,181 boys, 269 girls, and three children where the gender was unknown) to government or NGO services, compared with 18,543 trafficking victims, including 2,316 men, 14,607 women, and 1,595 boys, in the previous reporting period. The government reported foreign victims are legally entitled to the same benefits as Pakistani citizens. The government reported victims received psychological services, legal assistance, and financial aid, and educational training. Police reported some victims declined government services. Victim services were not available for many trafficking victims, with a lack of available shelter and services in many regions, particularly for male victims. Government-run shelters for vulnerable women, including trafficking victims, were the most predominately available service, followed by shelters for children. The government reported 103 shelters, welfare homes, and child protection units operated across the country that could provide assistance to trafficking victims, including for males and transgender individuals. The government also operated a center for irregular migrants in Balochistan that could assist

trafficking victims. All of these facilities provided victims with psycho-social support. Trafficking victims were referred to both government-run shelters and NGO shelters for services. NGOs and local officials continued to note the low quality of victim care at many of the government shelters, including insufficient space and lack of basic necessities, such as showers. In some cases, victims' movement was reportedly restricted at the government shelters and some victims may have been pressured to return to their traffickers; there were reports of women exploited in sex trafficking in shelters. Due to limited availability of services, including employment and vocational training, some victims were re-victimized and may have returned to their exploitative situation. Child trafficking cases in which parents might have been complicit were of particular concern, since authorities often returned potential child trafficking victims to their families immediately following identification without effective methods to ensure families would not subject their children to trafficking again. Both government and NGO contacts previously noted that, due to cultural norms, male victims were less likely to seek or accept assistance. Observers noted that transgender persons often faced discrimination when seeking assistance from law enforcement or government services. Although Section 6 of the PTPA provides victims of trafficking with some protection from criminal liability for trafficking crimes, in part due to cultural sensitivities, authorities may have penalized unidentified victims of sex trafficking for moral crimes committed as a direct result of being trafficked. Social stigma continued to inhibit reporting of child commercial sexual exploitation. The provincial governments allocated 420 million PKR (\$1.86 million) for victim protection and assistance; Punjab allocated 257 million PKR (\$1.14 million), Sindh allocated 50 million PKR (\$220,850), KP allocated 113 million PKR (\$499,120); Balochistan did not allocate any funding.

Observers reported that limited government oversight of brick kilns, coupled with their remote locations, allowed landlords to prevent workers from formally registering with the government, which limited workers access to social welfare benefits guaranteed under provincial laws. KP, Punjab, and Sindh provinces previously worked with an international organization to register brick kilns and their workers to regulate the industry and provide workers with services; however, brick kilns in KP often employed fewer than 10 workers to avoid registration. NGOs previously noted most cases of bonded labor ended with financial settlement in lieu of criminal prosecution, in part because police and the judiciary often ceased support for victims after authorities had removed the victim from exploitation and did not guide them through the process of pursuing a formal civil or criminal case. Those who lacked identity documents were even more vulnerable since they could not access government services, such as health care and food stipends. Some NGO-run shelters could accommodate bonded laborers, including entire families, but often had insufficient resources to provide long-term housing. Recent floods and subsequent limited government assistance forced bonded laborers to accumulate more debt with landlords as many were out of work for months due to destroyed cultivated land. Observers noted landlords restricted the movement of brick kiln workers with accumulated debts, furthering their lack of access to humanitarian assistance and their dependence on continued accrual of debt.

Government policy included witness protection for those cooperating in trafficking-related investigations; however, the government did not report how often it provided this support. Victims were not obligated to participate in investigations in order to receive protective services. The FIA operated an e-investigations system for witnesses to provide statements via video, but there were no reports it was utilized. Victims expressed reluctance to testify against their traffickers due to threats of violence against them and their families. The PTPA and sections of the PPC allowed courts to provide trafficking victims with restitution; the government did not report any court orders during the reporting period. Observers in Sindh and Balochistan provinces noted the lack of restitution orders for victims was due to unwillingness by the courts. The provinces of Punjab, Sindh, and KP reported allocating funding to provide free legal aid for victims; however, the provinces did not report whether any victims received this assistance. Pakistan's Social Welfare Departments provided lawyers to assist victims at women shelters with free legal assistance; 4,771 victims received legal services, however, the government did not specify if any were trafficking victims.

PREVENTION

The government increased efforts to prevent trafficking. In November 2022, Pakistan acceded to the UN TIP Protocol. National and provincial stakeholders, comprise the National Coordination Committee on Trafficking in Persons, which is headed by the Minister of the Interior, was established in 2022, and held three federal-level meetings. All provincial and district Anti-Human Trafficking and Anti-Bonded Labour Monitoring Committees became operational during the reporting period to coordinate anti-trafficking efforts; increase general public awareness; collect data on law enforcement efforts and victims identified and referred; and provide recommendations to inform future legislation. The government maintained implementation of the 2021-2025 NAP and every province designated a point of contact to work with the FIA on its implementation. Civil society reported an increase in coordination with the government on trafficking issues. However, observers reported continued challenges in coordination and data collection across provincial governments and between provincial and federal agencies. The government, including at the provincial level, continued to conduct awareness campaigns, in collaboration with international organizations. The government collaborated with NGOs on trafficking awareness raising campaigns in areas affected by floods. The government operated several hotlines that could assist with trafficking inquiries. The FIA operated a hotline for victims of crime, the Ministry of Human Rights maintained a hotline to provide legal support for victims of human rights abuses, and some provinces reported hotlines where gender-based violence, worker complaints, or child protection issues could be reported; no trafficking cases were reported.

Labor inspectors remained the front-line officials to inspect and identify forced labor – including bonded labor – in several sectors, including brick kilns, farms, and factories. Labor departments had SOPs to carry out inspections under the PTPA. However, labor inspectors received inadequate training to identify indicators of trafficking and had insufficient funding and resources to conduct inspections; access to worksites was often limited. Punjab conducted 53,058 child labor inspections (49,363 in 2021), which resulted in 1,101 FIRs (982 in 2021). Separately, Punjab conducted 6,983 inspections under the Punjab Prohibition of Child Labor at Brick Kiln Act, which resulted in 217 FIRs and 60 arrests. Observers noted the Sindh province labor department did not provide inspectors with funding to travel outside Karachi and Hyderabad to conduct inspections, leaving inspectors reliant on the factories they were inspecting for transport. Observers reported inspectors often used their own personal resources to carry out inspections and factory owners often denied inspectors access to enter facilities. Experts reported the number and quality of inspections remained inadequate to enforce labor regulations across the country. Moreover, inspectors did not have the authority to remove children or bonded laborers from exploitative situations. Inspectors are not authorized to assess labor law infraction penalties – they take note of the infractions, and labor courts assess the penalties. Observers noted that some inspectors avoided inspecting farms owned by elite landlords. Despite estimates of more than 264,000 child domestic workers in Pakistan and reports of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and forced labor by employers, provincial labor laws and protections did not extend to adult or child domestic workers. Observers reported a lack of coordination between labor inspectorates and social services hindered referrals of potential victims for assistance.

Provinces continued to use labor laws to investigate, prosecute, and convict offenders for child and exploitative labor crimes at brick kilns. However, because such laws only prescribed fines and authorities did not refer these cases to police for criminal investigations, suspected traffickers did not receive sufficiently stringent sentences. The federal and provincial governments continued their nationwide child labor survey for a third year – the first since 1996 – that will reach approximately 250,000 households. The government continued to collaborate with international organizations to improve data collection on trafficking.

The Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment issued licenses to private employment promoters and monitored workers who migrated through licensed agencies. The Emigration Ordinance of 1979 prohibited the role of unregulated and unregistered sub-agents; however, sub-

agents continued to operate widely with impunity. The government allowed licensed employment promoters to charge migrant workers a service fee of 6,000 PKR (\$26.50) for a welfare fund to compensate workers' families in case of the workers' death abroad, and workers to pay all costs associated with overseas employment. While the government stipulated employers should provide workers with a receipt for these costs, the government did not specify any cost limit and did not consistently review migrant workers' receipts. The government continued to ban female migrant workers younger than 35 from migrating for domestic work. Observers previously reported any ban on female migration increased the likelihood such women would migrate irregularly, increasing their vulnerability to trafficking.

The government continued to host approximately 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees and as many as 3.7 million Afghans in total. According to media reports, some Afghans who entered the country without a visa have been deported and many have been turned back from borders since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan – it is not known if these Afghans were screened for trafficking indicators before being sent back to Afghanistan.

The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. The government reported providing pre-departure briefings on human trafficking to all its peacekeeping officers. The government reported providing anti-trafficking training to its diplomatic personnel.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE:

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Pakistan, and traffickers exploit victims from Pakistan abroad. The country's largest human trafficking problem is bonded labor, in which traffickers exploit an initial debt assumed by a worker as part of the terms of employment and ultimately entrap other family members, sometimes for generations – bonded labor disproportionately affects religious and ethnic minorities. Experts estimate 4.5 million workers nationwide are trapped in bonded labor, primarily in Sindh and Punjab provinces. Traffickers, including local government officials, force men, women, and children to work primarily in bonded labor in Sindh in agriculture and in both Sindh and Punjab in brick kilns, and also in the coal and carpet industries. Traffickers also force men, women, and children to work to pay off exaggerated debts in other sectors in Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, and KP in agriculture and brick kilns and, to a lesser extent, in fisheries, mining, and textile-, bangle-, and carpet-making. In agriculture, traffickers force workers to labor in the agricultural sectors of wheat, cotton, and sugarcane, among other areas. Traffickers often did not provide workers with access to their expenditure and earnings receipts, so traffickers control how much money they earn, the accrual of interest on their debt, and when they have repaid the debt. Landlords exploit widespread illiteracy among workers and manipulate accounting records to continue the cycle of bonded labor. Many feudal landlords and brick kiln owners, that employ bonded laborers, are local government officials or use their affiliation with political parties to protect their involvement in bonded labor. Some landlords use armed guards to restrict bonded laborers' movements, and others buy and sell workers among one another. In some kilns that employ entire families, kiln owners have sold bonded laborers to repay a family member's outstanding debt. Observers reported employers in Sindh are moving carpet- and bangle-making productions into private homes to further increase the difficulty in monitoring labor conditions. Reports estimate more than 70 percent of bonded laborers in Pakistan are children, predominately in brick kilns and agriculture, with some children forced into domestic work in landowners' houses. The number of children in domestic work has increased as a result of the recent floods. Many families take loans from their employers and subject their children to bonded labor until the debt is paid back. Traffickers also target lower-caste Hindus, Christians, and Muslims specifically for forced and bonded labor. Observers report climate change, including sudden-onset disasters such as floods, increased poverty, displacement, food insecurity, and loss of work in Pakistan; bonded labor has been exacerbated by recent floods, as bonded laborers accumulate increased debt from landlords; flood mitigation efforts have sometimes caused internal displacement.

Traffickers buy, sell, rent, and kidnap children for forced labor in begging, domestic work, work in small shops, agriculture, brickmaking, and child sex trafficking, and some children are at risk of trafficking in food stalls, restaurants, construction, street vending, the coal industry, and scavenging at garbage dumpsites. According to an international report, there are 8.5 million domestic workers in Pakistan, including many children. Media reports cases of employers forcing children as young as age 7 into domestic work, where they are often subjected to severe physical abuse, including torture, and sexual abuse; several government officials were among the suspected perpetrators. Some children are forced to work in the agricultural sector due to their parent's debt bondage to landlords. According to civil society, the majority of children working in the streets of Pakistan are subjected to forced begging and are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking. According to media estimates, there are 1.5 million children who are experiencing homelessness in Pakistan, with a third of those in Sindh province, that are often forced to beg by organized criminal groups. Begging ringmasters sometimes maim children to earn more money and sometimes force children to steal. The high rate of out-of-school children and the lack of access to schools, which was exacerbated by the recent floodings and economic hardships caused by the pandemic, left many children vulnerable to trafficking throughout the country. Due to the consistent lack of law enforcement efforts against those who exploited children experiencing homelessness, traffickers operated openly and with impunity. Traffickers subject boys to sex trafficking around hotels, truck stops, bus stations, and shrines. NGOs reported the pandemic increased vulnerabilities of children to sex trafficking. Observers reported online child exploitation for the purpose of child pornography, including potential child sex trafficking crimes. Traffickers have forced Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani children into drug trafficking, drug production, contraband production, and smuggling of goods in border areas and in urban centers. In previous years, widespread sexual exploitation of boys in one coal mining community in Balochistan was reported. Boys as young as 6 years old from Balochistan, KP, and Afghanistan, are purportedly lured to work in the mines but subjected to sex trafficking; in some cases, parents are complicit in sending their children to the mines for sex trafficking. Within Pakistan, NGOs and police report some employers, including in restaurants and factories, require boy child laborers to provide sexual favors to obtain a job with the employer, to keep the job, and/or for accommodation. An NGO previously reported multiple cases of forced labor of students in government-run schools.

Some factories pay monthly bribes to labor department officials to avoid inspections. Illegal labor agents charge high recruitment fees to parents in return for employing their children, some of whom are subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Some police accept bribes to ignore prostitution crimes, some of which may include sex trafficking, and some police may have refused to register cases of child sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, without a bribe, according to NGOs. Some Pakistani traffickers lure women and girls away from their families with promises of marriage, create fraudulent marriage certificates, and exploit women and girls in sex trafficking, including in Iran and Afghanistan. Traffickers target impoverished Christian communities to send women and girls to the People's Republic of China (PRC) for arranged marriages. Upon arrival in the PRC, hundreds of Pakistani women reported their "husbands" forced them into commercial sex. PRC nationals employed in Pakistan at worksites affiliated with the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative are vulnerable to forced labor. In other cases, traffickers, including some extra-judicial courts, use girls as chattel to settle debts or disputes. Some traffickers force sex trafficking victims to take drugs and exploit the addiction to maintain control.

Past reporting indicates the government provided material support to non-state armed groups that operated in Pakistan and Afghanistan and recruited or used child soldiers. Non-state militant groups have kidnapped children as young as 12, purchased them from destitute parents, coerced parents with threats or fraudulent promises into giving their children away, or recruited children from *madrassas*, and have forced children to spy, fight, and conduct suicide attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Pakistani men and women migrate overseas voluntarily, particularly to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), other Gulf states, and Europe, for employment. The majority of Pakistani migrants seek employment in agriculture, domestic service, transportation, and construction work. Traffickers exploit some of them in labor trafficking, including via false or misleading job offers, such as sham recruitment agencies, falsely advertised terms or conditions of employment, fake

modeling advertisements, and high recruitment fees charged by illegal labor agents or sub-agents of licensed Pakistani overseas employment promoters, who in several instances have entrapped Pakistanis in bonded labor or sex trafficking, including in the Gulf countries. In 2021, foreign countries had thousands of Pakistanis detained abroad, a large number of them in Saudi Arabia, for criminal or immigration violations. In many cases, observers alleged foreign law enforcement had arrested workers for fraudulent documents procured by recruitment agents or for lack of documents because their employers had withheld them – indicators of forced labor. Traffickers have exploited Pakistani girls in sex trafficking in Kenya and have forced Pakistani adults, including those with disabilities, to beg in the UAE. Pakistani boys are vulnerable to sex traffickers in Greece. Some traffickers, including organized criminal groups, subject Pakistani adults and children to forced labor in domestic work, construction, and begging in Iran; some traffickers have targeted Pakistanis with disabilities for forced begging. Pakistan is a destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor, particularly from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Traffickers exploit women and girls – and, to a lesser extent, boys – from Afghanistan, Iran, and other Asian countries in sex trafficking in Pakistan. LGBTQI+ individuals face violence and discrimination, as the law criminalizes same-sex conduct, which increases their risk of trafficking. Refugees from Afghanistan and stateless persons, particularly of Bengali, Bihari, and Rohingya ethnicities, as well as religious and ethnic minorities such as Christians, Hindu Dalits, and Hazaras, are particularly vulnerable to traffickers in Pakistan, particularly in bonded labor. Afghans without formal documentation often rely on informal networks for basic needs and have limited access to legal protections; many seek work in the informal economy, increasing vulnerabilities to trafficking. The government does not recognize the existence of stateless persons, despite international organization estimates of hundreds of thousands of stateless persons that face increased vulnerabilities due to their lack of access to identity documents and services. Traffickers have exploited Rohingya ethnicity stateless persons and Afghans in forced labor in Pakistan.