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Pakistan: The socio-economic situation, including ethnic and religious composition, and access to employment, housing, education, and social and health services, particularly in Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi, and Hyderabad (2018–December 2020) [PAK200385.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. National Overview

According to the provisional summary of the results [1] of the population and housing census conducted by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) in 2017, Pakistan's population was 207,774,520 (Pakistan n.d., 1). The same source indicates that, of this population, 106,449,322 people were male, 101,314,780 were female, and 10,418 were transgender (Pakistan n.d., 1). The World Bank reports that Pakistan's total population in 2019 was 216,565,318 (World Bank 2019a). The same source cites 2018 statistics from the UN Population Division as indicating that 37 percent of people in Pakistan live in urban areas (World Bank 2019b).

A 2020 World Bank report on economic development in Pakistan states that "Pakistan is a multi-ethnic country, with a mixture of six major ethnicities and numerous small ethnic groups. The three largest ethnic groups are Punjabi, Pashtun and Sindhi" (World Bank 16 Sept. 2020, 17). The same source notes that over 70 languages are listed as being spoken in Pakistan, and that the five main languages are Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Saraiki, and Urdu (World Bank 16 Sept. 2020). The US Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report for 2019* cites the provisional results of the 2017 census as indicating that 96 percent of the population was Muslim (not including Ahmadi), 1.6 percent was Hindu, 1.59 percent was Christian, 0.22 percent was Ahmadi and 0.32 percent was "other [r]," which included Baha'is, Sikhs and Parsis (US 10 June 2020, 3, 4). The same source further states that the census results are disputed by some minority rights groups, who state that their population was undercounted (US 10 June 2020, 4). The same report adds that while the Ahmadi boycotted the census, community sources estimated the population at 500,000 to 600,000 (US 10 June 2020, 4).

According to PBS crime data broken down by offence type, there were 683,925 recorded crimes in Pakistan in 2017, including 8,235 murders, 9,499 attempted murders, 18,363 kidnappings/abductions, 1,280 cases of "[d]acoity" [robbery by an armed gang (Merriam-Webster n.d.)], 12,458 cases of robbery, and 13,833 cases of burglary (Pakistan [2017]).

The 2017–2018 Labour Force Survey (LFS) conducted by PBS between July 2017 and June 2018, based on a "representative sample" of 43,361 households, indicates that the unemployment rate was 5.8 percent (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, i, 15, 35). The same survey found that the unemployment rate for men was 5.1 percent and the unemployment rate for women was 8.3 percent (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 35). The LFS also indicates that the rural unemployment rate was 5 percent overall and 4.7 percent for men and 5.9 percent for women; the urban unemployment rate was 7.2 percent, with the rate for men at 5.6 percent compared to 17.5 percent for women (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 35). The UNDP's *Human Development Report 2019* cites data from the International Labour Organization (ILO) as estimating that in 2018, 23.9 percent of women aged 15 and older participated in the labour force, compared to 81.5 percent of men in the same age range (UN 2019, 318). The 2020 World Bank report notes that "[w]omen remain at the margin of Pakistan's labor market, mostly confined to employment in the agricultural sector" (World Bank 16 Sept. 2020, 24).

The 2017–2018 LFS found that the crude labour force participation rate [2] was 31.7 percent: 48.3 percent for men and 14.5 percent for women (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 21). The LFS also notes that this rate in rural areas was 32.7 percent overall and 47.2 percent for men compared to 18 percent for women; in urban areas, the rate was 30 percent overall and 50.3 percent for men compared to 8.4 percent for women (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 21). The same survey provides the following statistics on the distribution of non-agricultural workers in the informal and formal sectors:

2017–18			
Total (percent)	Male (percent)	Female (percent)	
Total	100	100	100
Formal	28	28	28.2
Informal	72	72	71.8

2017–18			
Total (percent)	Male (percent)	Female (percent)	
Rural	100	100	100
Formal	24	24.3	22.3
Informal	76	75.7	77.7
Urban	100	100	100
Formal	31.7	31.4	33.9
Informal	68.3	68.6	66.1

(Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 32)

According to the *State of Pakistani Cities 2018 (SPC 2018)* [3], the service sector employs over 50 percent of total employed persons in "every major city" (Pakistan and UN 2018, i, 24). The 2017–2018 LFS provides the following statistics on the distribution of employment by economic sector:

2017–18			
Total (percent)	Male (percent)	Female (percent)	
Total	100	100	100
Agriculture/forestry/hunting and fishing	38.5	30.4	67.2
Manufacturing	16.1	16.1	16
Construction	7.6	9.7	0.3
Wholesale and retail trade	14.9	18.7	1.5
Transport/storage and communication	6.2	7.9	0.2
Community/social and personal services	14.7	14.8	14.6
Others (including mining and quarrying, electricity, gas and water, financing, insurance, real estate and business services and "extraterritorial organizations and bodies")	2	2.4	0.2

(Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 26)

According to World Bank data, in 2015 the percentage of the population living below the national poverty line was 24.3 percent (World Bank n.d.). According to the 2018–2019 Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurements (PSLM), a survey on socio-economic indicators that was carried out from August 2018 to June 2019 by the PBS, 84 percent of households in Pakistan owned their "dwelling unit"; this figure was 91 percent in rural areas and 72 percent in urban areas (Pakistan June 2020, vii, 121–122). A March 2017 report by the World Bank on a housing finance project for Pakistan estimates the housing shortage in Pakistan at 10 million units and adds that the deficit is growing, "particularly in the urban areas" (World Bank 3 Mar. 2017, 4). The same source indicates that "only about 100,000 to 350,000 formal units [are] being built annually," while annual new demand is estimated at between 400,000 and 700,000 units (World Bank 3 Mar. 2017, 4). The *SPC 2018* notes that the "real housing problem" is that "as many as 60% of [homes] are in informal settlements that do not have legal status," meaning that they are not "likely to get access to services or connections to infrastructure" (Pakistan and UN 2018, 61). The same source adds that "[y]oung people lack access to the housing market, as there are few options for entry-level housing and a small rental market[,] while women have significantly less security of tenure, land ownership and access to finance" (Pakistan and UN 2018, 68).

1.1 Education and Health

Regarding education, Article 25A of Pakistan's *Constitution* provides that "[t]he State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law" (Pakistan 1973).

The 2018–2019 PSLM survey found that the literacy rate for the population 10 years and older was 60 percent, compared to the rate of 58 percent reported in the 2013–2014 PSLM survey (Pakistan June 2020, 19). The same source notes that the literacy rate was 74 percent in urban areas compared to 51 percent in rural areas and 71 percent for men compared to 49 percent for women (Pakistan June 2020, 19). The 2018–2019 PSLM survey also found that Pakistan's youth literacy rate, defined as the percentage of people aged 15 to 24 "who can read and write simple statement[s] in any language with understanding," was 72 percent: 79 percent for men and 64 percent for women (Pakistan June 2020, 20). The same source reports that the adult literacy rate, defined as the percentage of the population 15 years or older that "can read and write simple statement[s] in any language with understanding," was 56 percent (Pakistan June 2020, 20). The same survey indicates that in 2018–2019, 61 percent of the population 10 years and older had "ever attended school," with 73 percent of men and 50 percent of women having "ever attended school" (Pakistan June 2020, 17). The same source reports that in 2018–2019, 51 percent of the population aged 10 and older had completed primary level education or higher (Pakistan June 2020, 18).

The 2020 World Bank report notes that federal and provincial authorities introduced measures to support the continued delivery of education during the COVID-19 lockdown, including a teleschool initiative introduced by the federal government that broadcasts classes for grades 1 to 12 through the state-owned Pakistan Television Network (World Bank 16 Sept. 2020, 19).

The *SPC 2018* indicates that health care in Pakistani cities is “usually provided through public, private and welfare[-] based facilities” (Pakistan and UN 2018, 57). The same report further states that people from smaller towns and cities “commonly” travel to Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta to seek “advanced healthcare services,” leading to public hospitals becoming “overburdened” (Pakistan and UN 2018, 57). The same source adds that there are “issues relating to regulatory checks on the quality of health care services, hygiene and cleanliness of the facility, infection control and schedules of charges” (Pakistan and UN 2018, 57). A November 2019 health care resource guide by the International Trade Administration of the US Department of Commerce similarly states that

[d]espite an elaborate and extensive health infrastructure, health care delivery suffers from some key issues such a[s] high population growth, uneven distribution of health professionals, deficient workforce, insufficient funding, and limited access to quality healthcare services. (US Nov. 2019)

The Government of Pakistan's COVID-19 Dashboard states that, from 1 March 2020 to 30 November 2020, there were 398,024 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Pakistan (Pakistan 30 Nov. 2020). The same source indicates that there were 8,025 deaths from COVID-19 in Pakistan during that same period (Pakistan 30 Nov. 2020). The 2020 World Bank report observes that

[t]he COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted economic and social activity in Pakistan. ... A lockdown, which entailed closure of schools, markets and restaurants, a ban on religious/social gatherings, prohibition of movement across provinces and suspension of air travel and inter-city public transport was imposed at the end of March and remained in effect, with varying degree[s] of enforcement, [until] the end of May. ... The closure of all non-essential businesses and disruptions in global and domestic supply chains during the lockdown significantly affected the services and manufacturing sectors – which collectively account for nearly 80 percent of the total GDP. (World Bank 16 Sept. 2020, 18)

The same source reports that the government announced a fiscal stimulus package of approximately US\$7.5 billion aimed at supporting the health sector, enhancing social welfare measures to assist vulnerable households impacted by the economic slowdown, and providing resources to businesses and industries (World Bank 16 Sept. 2020, 18-19).

2. Lahore (Capital of Punjab Province)

According to the provisional summary of the 2017 population and housing census results, the population of Lahore District was 11,126,285, which was broken down into 5,824,131 male, 5,300,931 female, and 1,223 transgender individuals (Pakistan n.d., 6). Information on the ethnic and religious composition of Lahore or Punjab province could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The *SPC 2018* states that the urban crime rate in Lahore is “modest” (Pakistan and UN 2018, 79). According to data from the Punjab Police, from 1 January 2020 to 30 September 2020, there were 415,377 reported crimes in Punjab province, including 41,351 crimes “against person[s],” 92,014 crimes “against property,” 135,009 offences against “local [and] special laws,” and 147,003 “miscellaneous” crimes (Punjab [2020]). The police crime data also indicates that during the same period, 3283 murders, 4719 attempted murders, 10,815 cases of kidnapping/abduction, 35 cases of kidnapping/ransom, 2,897 cases of rape, and 157 cases of gang rape were “registered” with the police (Punjab [2020]).

The 2017–2018 LFS found that the unemployment rate in Punjab province was 2.39 percent: 1.55 percent for men and 0.84 percent for women (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 37). The same survey reports that the urban unemployment rate in Punjab province was 0.94 percent, with the rate for men at 0.62 percent and for women at 0.32 percent (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 37). The 2017–2018 LFS indicates that the crude labour force participation rate was 35 percent in Punjab province, 50.5 percent for men and 19.6 percent for women (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 21). The same survey found that in urban areas of Punjab province, the crude labour force participation rate was 31.1 percent, and 51.2 percent for men compared to 10.3 percent for women (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 21). The same survey indicates that 60.94 percent of employed persons aged 10 and above in Punjab province were working in the informal sector; in urban areas of the province, 29.83 percent of workers aged 10 and over were engaged in the informal sector, with 25.59 percent for men and 4.24 percent for women (Pakistan Dec. 2018b). The *SPC 2018* indicates that of Lahore city's total labour force, 36.6 percent were employed, of which 66 percent were working in the services sector, 33 percent in the industrial sector and 1 percent in the agriculture sector (Pakistan and UN 2018, 26).

According to the PSLM survey, 73 percent of urban households in Punjab province owned their dwelling unit and 20 percent lived in rented housing between 2018 and 2019 (Pakistan June 2020, 122, 135).

According to the 2018–2019 PSLM survey, Punjab province had the “top” literacy rate at 64 percent (Pakistan June 2020, 19). The same source indicates that Punjab was also the “leading province” for youth literacy with the rate at 79 percent overall: 82 percent for men and 75 percent for women (Pakistan June 2020, 20). The 2018–2019 PSLM survey also indicates that Punjab province had the “highest” adult literacy rate (percentage of the population aged 15 or older) at 61 percent (Pakistan June 2020, 20). The same source reports that Punjab had the “highest” percentage of the population over 10 years of age who had “ever attended school,” with 67 percent of the population, 59 percent of women and 76 percent of men, having ever attended (Pakistan June 2020, 17). The PSLM survey also indicates that in 2018–2019, of people in Punjab province who were aged 10 or older, 57 percent had completed primary education or higher (Pakistan June 2020, 18).

The Government of Pakistan's COVID-19 Dashboard indicates that there were 119,035 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 2,991 deaths from COVID-19 in Punjab province from 1 March 2020 to 30 November 2020 (Pakistan 30 Nov. 2020).

3. Islamabad (Islamabad Capital Territory Administration (ICTA), National Capital)

According to the provisional summary of the 2017 population and housing census results, the population of Islamabad was 2,006,572, which was broken down into 1,055,712 male, 950,727 female, and 133 transgender individuals (Pakistan n.d., 1).

According to 2019 Islamabad Capital Police crime statistics, there were 106 murders, 1 kidnapping for ransom, 28 cases of dacoity, 367 robberies, 279 burglaries, and 142 "fatal accidents" in 2019 (ICTA [2019]). The same source reports that there was a 16.47 percent reduction in "heinous crimes," including a 10.92 percent decrease in murders in Islamabad in 2019 (ICTA [2019]).

The *SPC 2018* indicates that 87 percent of total employed persons in Islamabad were working in the service sector, while 13 percent worked in the industrial sector (Pakistan and UN 2018, 28).

The Government of Pakistan's COVID-19 portal reports that from 1 March 2020 to 30 November 2020 there were 30,123 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 314 deaths from COVID-19 in Islamabad (Pakistan 30 Nov. 2020).

Information on the ethnic and religious composition and access to housing and education in Islamabad could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4. Karachi (Capital of Sindh Province)

According to the provisional summary of the 2017 population and housing census results, the population of Karachi Division was 16,051,521, which was broken down into 8,439,659 male, 7,610,365 female, and 1,497 transgender individuals (Pakistan n.d., 9). The 2020 World Bank report notes that there is "large-scale heterogeneity" and there are "tensions between ethnic groups" in Karachi (World Bank 16 Sept. 2020, 54).

According to the 2020 World Bank report, "Karachi has experienced high levels of criminality" (World Bank 16 Sept. 2020, 54). Sources indicate that while security operations have improved the situation in Karachi, crime remains a "major" concern (Pakistan and UN 2018, 79) or a "considerable risk" (US 17 Apr. 2020). Sindh Police crime statistics indicate that, from 1 January 2019 to 15 October 2019, there were 3,973 crimes "[a]gainst person[s]," 10,193 crimes "[a]gainst [p]roperty," 12,555 "[m]iscellaneous" crimes, 8 cases of "blasphemy ([o]ffences relating to religion)," and 457 "[a]ccidents" in Karachi (Sindh [2019]). According to Sindh Police data on "heinous crime," there were 386 murders, 5 murders in the form of "[t]arget[ed] [k]illing[s]," 40 murders "during [d]acoity/[r]obbery," 0 suicide bombings/blasts, 21 cases of "[h]ighway" dacoity/robbery, 3 cases of "[b]ank" dacoity/robbery, 140 cases of "[c]ar [s]natching," and 54 cases of "[g]ang [r]ape" in the Karachi Range in 2019 (Sindh [Dec. 2019]).

The *SPC 2018* indicates that of Karachi's total labour force, 37 percent were employed; of these, 64 percent were employed in the services sector and 36 percent were employed in the industrial sector (Pakistan and UN 2018, 26).

Information on access to housing and health care in Karachi could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

5. Hyderabad (Sindh Province)

According to the provisional summary of the 2017 population and housing census results, the population of Hyderabad District was 2,199,463, which was broken down into 1,145,788 male, 1,053,510 female, and 165 transgender individuals (Pakistan n.d., 8).

The *SPC 2018* indicates that the employment rate in Hyderabad was 38 percent; of the total employed persons in the city, 64 percent worked in the services sector, 35 percent in the industrial sector and 1 percent in the agricultural sector (Pakistan and UN 2018, 28).

Information on the ethnic and religious composition and access to housing and health care in Hyderabad could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

6. Sindh Province

The 2017–2018 LFS indicates that the unemployment rate in Sindh province was 0.75 percent, 0.52 percent for men and 0.23 percent for women (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 37). The same source reports that the urban unemployment rate in Sindh province was 0.54 percent, 0.37 percent for men and 0.17 percent for women (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 37). The same survey found that in Sindh province as a whole, 21.67 percent of employed persons aged 10 and over were working in the informal sector; in urban areas, 14.83 percent of workers were engaged in the informal sector, 13.89 percent of men and 0.94 percent of women (Pakistan Dec. 2018b).

The 2017–2018 LFS indicates that the crude labour force participation rate was 30.2 percent in Sindh province, 49.4 percent for men and 8.6 percent for women (Pakistan Dec. 2018, 21). The same survey found that in urban areas in Sindh province, the crude labour force participation was 29.9 percent: 51.3 percent for men and 5.9 percent for women (Pakistan Dec. 2018, 21).

According to the 2018–2019 PSLM survey, Sindh province had a literacy rate of 57 percent (Pakistan June 2020, 19). The same source indicates that the youth literacy rate for Sindh province was 64 percent, 73 percent for men and 55 percent for women, whereas the adult literacy rate was 55 percent (Pakistan June 2020, 20). The same survey found that in 2018–2019, 57 percent of people aged 10 or older had "ever attended school," 45 percent of women and 69 percent of men (Pakistan June 2020, 17). The 2018–2019 PSLM survey reports that 49 percent of the population 10 years or older in Sindh province had completed primary education or higher (Pakistan June 2020, 18).

According to the PSLM survey, 71 percent of urban households in Sindh province owned their dwelling unit and 21 percent lived in rented housing between 2018 and 2019 (Pakistan June 2020, 122, 135).

The Government of Pakistan's COVID-19 portal reports that from 1 March 2020 to 30 November 2020 there were 173,014 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 2,924 deaths from COVID-19 in Sindh province (Pakistan 30 Nov. 2020).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] Media sources published in November and December 2020 indicate that the final results of the 2017 population and housing census have not been published by the government (*The Nation* 13 Nov. 2020; *Dawn* 4 Dec. 2020).

[2] The 2017–2018 Labour Force Survey (LFS) defines the crude labour force participation rate as the "currently active population," which is "all persons ten years of age and above who can be categorized as employed or unemployed," expressed as a percentage of the total population of Pakistan (Pakistan Dec. 2018a, 10).

[3] The *State of Pakistani Cities 2018 (SPC 2018)* is a report on the "urbanization challenges" of the ten largest cities in Pakistan by the Pakistan Ministry of Climate Change and the UN Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT) with the support of the Australian High Commission to Pakistan.

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