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Country Policy and Information Note

Pakistan: Sexual orientation and gender identity or expression

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Executive summary

LGBT+ people in Pakistan form a particular social group.

The Constitution emphasises equality and privacy but does not mention sexual orientation or gender identity. Consensual same-sex acts are criminalised for men, with penalties ranging from fines to life imprisonment. There is no specific law criminalising sexual activity between women. Sharia (Islamic law) prescribes severe penalties for same-sex conduct, including stoning to death.

Despite these laws, prosecutions are rare, but police sometimes use punitive laws to extort bribes or sexual favours from men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans women. There are no known cases of the government applying Sharia to punish same-sex acts, and there were no known cases of executions for same-sex conduct.

Trans and intersex people are protected under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, though some provisions were declared 'un-Islamic' by the Federal Shariat Court in 2023.

LGBT+ people are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state.

Most LGBT+ people conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity due to significant societal, familial, religious, and community discrimination. While some larger cities reportedly have an underground 'gay scene', in the form of private parties accessible to the upper and middle classes, people coming out as gay or lesbian are likely to be ostracised by their families, face forced or coerced heterosexual marriage, harassment and violence. Some elite individuals living in urban areas enter into a 'lavender marriage' – a heterosexual union between a gay man and a lesbian – to protect themselves from societal and familial rejection.

If an LGBT+ person is not 'out' or conceals their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, including by entering into a heterosexual marriage, consider why this is the case. If it is because the person fears persecution or serious harm and this is well-founded, they are likely to require asylum or humanitarian protection.

Gay men are often targeted via dating apps for extortion and violence. Lesbian and bisexual women face severe discrimination and violence, including honour killings, domestic violence, forced to accept arranged marriages, and corrective rape. Economic dependence exacerbates their vulnerability.

Despite legal protections, trans people, particularly trans women, are often shunned and denied housing, living in slum communities and surviving by begging and dancing. Sexual violence against trans women is, according to one source, endemic. Positive actions promoting trans rights in Sindh province include the Sindh Moorat March in Karachi and the Hijra Festival.

LGBT+ people are likely to face persecution from non-state actors.

Protection is not likely to be available to LGB people but is generally available to trans people. Internal relocation is not likely to be reasonable for LGB people but may be reasonable for trans people.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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Assessment

Section updated: 24 November 2025

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of **whether, in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by state or non-state actors because of the person's actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

This note provides an assessment of the situation of actual and perceived lesbian, gay, bisexual and, trans and people of other minority sexual orientations and gender identities (LGBT+). Sources often refer to LGBT+ people collectively, but the experiences of each group may differ. Where information is available, the note will refer to and consider the treatment of each group discretely.

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#), the [Asylum Instruction on Sexual identity issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when one has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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- 1.1.5 The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.

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1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed particular social group (PSG).
- 2.1.2 LGBT+ people form a PSG in Pakistan within the meaning of the Refugee Convention because they share an innate characteristic or a common background that cannot be changed, or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it **and** have a distinct identity in Pakistan because the group is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.
- 2.1.3 Although LGBT+ people form a PSG, establishing such membership is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.
- 2.1.4 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3. Risk

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 There is limited information about the nature and extent of the treatment of lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) people by state and non-state actors as few openly express their sexual orientation or gender identity for fear of

discrimination and violence, or under threat of prosecution due to punitive laws. Most information focusses on trans women (Khawaja Sira) who are recognised and protected under the law, though still face harassment, discrimination and intimidation. For further information see [Social context](#), [Legal rights](#), [State attitudes and treatment](#) and [Societal attitudes and treatment](#).

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3.2 Risk from the state

- 3.2.1 LGBT+ people are unlikely to face persecution or serious harm from the state. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.2.2 Pakistan's Constitution does not explicitly mention sexual orientation or gender identity. Articles 25, 27, and 14 emphasise equality before the law, non-discrimination in public services, and the protection of privacy, respectively. However, there are no laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. Consensual same-sex acts are criminalised under Section 377 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), which prescribes penalties including fines and imprisonment from 2 years to life. The definition of 'carnal intercourse' under Section 377 is unclear, but it criminalises male-to-male sex. There are no specific laws criminalising sexual activity between women (see [Constitution](#) and [Penal Code](#)).
- 3.2.3 It is unclear if the Sharia-based Offence of Zina (Enforcement of Hudood) Ordinance (1979), which prohibits adultery (zina), applies to consensual same-sex conduct as the ordinance specifically mentions sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. Penalties include whipping or stoning to death. There are no known cases of the government applying the ordinance to same-sex acts, and there were no known cases of executions for same-sex conduct (see [Sharia \(Islamic law\)](#)).
- 3.2.4 Trans and intersex people are recognised under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, which provides protections against discrimination in various sectors. The Federal Shariat Court declared some provisions of the Act as 'un-Islamic' in 2023, leading to ongoing legal disputes (see [Trans rights](#)).
- 3.2.5 In practice, the proscriptive laws rarely lead to convictions or prosecutions under the PPC or Sharia provisions, although Sections 377 and 294 ('Obscene Acts and Songs') of the PPC are sometimes used by police as a means to extract bribes or sexual favours under threat of arrest and prosecution, particularly against men who have sex with men and trans women (see [Treatment by the police](#) and [Prosecutions and convictions](#)).
- 3.2.6 The Government of Pakistan (GoP) maintains that same-sex relations are against Islamic teachings and thus not permitted under the Constitution. This was reiterated in the GoP's reports on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) in 2023 and 2024. The Punjab government has also taken actions reflecting this position, such as banning the film 'Joyland' for depicting a relationship between a man and a trans woman, and the Ministry of Education prohibited a sociology textbook discussing same-sex marriage. Additionally, registration rules for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) prevent them using LGBT+ related terms in their publications (see

[Government views](#) and [Civil society groups and NGOs](#)).

- 3.2.7 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#), and the [Asylum Instruction on Sexual identity issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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3.3 Risk from non-state actors

- 3.3.1 LGBT+ people are likely to face persecution or serious harm from non-state actors.
- 3.3.2 Pakistan is a largely conservative, religious society where attitudes towards LGBT+ people are generally intolerant. They face significant societal, familial, religious, and community discrimination. This leads most to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity. While some larger cities reportedly have an underground 'gay scene', in the form of private parties accessible to the upper and middle classes, people coming out as gay or lesbian are likely to be ostracised by their families, face forced heterosexual marriage, harassment and violence. Some elite individuals living in urban areas enter into a 'lavender marriage' – a heterosexual union between a gay man and a lesbian – to protect themselves from societal and familial rejection. Individuals (especially women) who choose to marry (regardless of the reason) rather than accept an arranged marriage, may face rejection and, in extreme cases, 'honour' crimes. Gay and bisexual men face family pressure to marry a woman to fulfil social and religious expectations (see [Societal and familial views and treatment](#), [Violence, harassment and extortion](#), [Meeting places and events](#), and the section on love marriage in the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Women fearing gender-based violence](#)).
- 3.3.3 If an LGBT+ person is not 'out' or conceals their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, including by entering into a heterosexual marriage, consider why this is the case. If it is because the person fears persecution or serious harm and this is well-founded, they are likely to require asylum or humanitarian protection.
- 3.3.4 Gay men may be targeted via dating apps (accessible via VPNs as some dating apps are blocked in Pakistan) for extortion and violence. Lesbian and bisexual women face discrimination and violence, including honour killings. Families often control women's sexuality and mobility, which can lead to domestic violence, forced to accept arranged marriages, and corrective rape. Economic dependence further exacerbates the vulnerability of lesbian and bisexual women (See [Societal and familial views and treatment](#), and [Violence, harassment and extortion](#)).
- 3.3.5 For general information on the situation of women in Pakistan, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Women fearing gender-based violence](#).
- 3.3.6 Despite laws against discrimination, trans people (for information on definitions, see Social context – [Trans and intersex people](#)) are shunned, often denied access to housing, and live in slum communities, surviving by begging and dancing. Sexual violence against trans women is deemed by one source as endemic. There is very little information on the specific experiences of trans men. One source noted they are often not recognised

or visible in society. Some positive action has occurred, such as the Sindh Moorat March (Sindh Trans March), held in Karachi, Sindh in 2022, in support of trans rights. The march was also held in 2023 and 2024. The second 'Hijra Festival' was held in Karachi in November 2024 (See [Societal and familial views and treatment](#), [Violence, harassment and extortion](#) and [Meeting places and events](#)).

- 3.3.7 A survey published in 2022 documented 956 cases of violations that occurred between 2016 and 2022 based on SOGIE, with verbal harassment being the most common (611 cases). Over half of the cases involved discrimination, and there were 346 instances of sexual harassment, 181 sexual assaults and 180 rapes, including gang rapes. Physical abuse was reported in 322 cases. Most victims knew their perpetrators, and 75% of victims were trans persons, primarily from the Khawaja Sira community. Those who were economically disadvantaged were more susceptible to violence and abuse (see [Violence, harassment and extortion](#)).
- 3.3.8 Conversion therapy is not illegal, and some families resort to traditional or religious healers, involving forceful and violent methods to change sexual identity or expression (See [Societal and familial views and treatment](#)).
- 3.3.9 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instructions on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#), [Sexual identity issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#)

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4. Protection

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 A person who has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a rogue state actor and/or a non-state actor may be able to obtain protection from the state depending on their profile.
- 4.1.3 In general, the state is able but not willing to offer effective protection to lesbian, gay or bisexual people.
- 4.1.4 In general, the state is willing and able to provide effective protection to trans people. This is due to the prevailing trans rights laws, the reasonable steps taken by the state to operate an effective criminal justice system, and because protection is usually accessible via dedicated protection units and desks at some police stations. For instance, in Punjab province, between 2018 and 2023, there were 357 prosecutions in cases of violence against trans people (see [State protection](#) and [Prosecutions and convictions](#)). Each case must be considered on its facts.
- 4.1.5 For general information on protection, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Actors of protection](#).
- 4.1.6 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instructions on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#), [Sexual identity issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm

from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.

- 5.1.2 Internal relocation is unlikely to be reasonable for lesbian, gay or bisexual people due to prevailing homophobic attitudes across the country.
- 5.1.3 Trans people are protected by law and relocation to larger urban areas and cities, such as (but not limited to) Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, may be reasonable subject to individual circumstances.
- 5.1.4 The 2023 census recorded over 20,000 trans people in a population of over 240 million, although NGOs estimate the actual trans population to be much higher, at around 500,000. As sexual orientation outside of heterosexual norms is not recognised, there are no official statistics for the number of lesbian, gay or bisexual people in Pakistan (see [Population](#)).
- 5.1.5 Sindh province, which includes the city of Karachi, is considered by one source as more progressive in its attitude towards trans rights than other areas. The province has hosted trans events and marches since 2022 (see [Regional differences](#) and [Meeting places and events](#).)
- 5.1.6 For general information on internal relocation, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Internal relocation](#).
- 5.1.7 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instructions on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#), [Sexual identity issues in the asylum claim](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the [About the assessment](#), is the guide to the current objective conditions.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before 25 October 2025. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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7. Legal rights

7.1 Constitution

- 7.1.1 The Constitutional provisions on a citizen's fundamental rights do not explicitly include sexual orientation or gender identity¹. Article 25 of the Constitution states 'All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law.'² Similarly, Article 27 prohibits discrimination in public services based on race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth³. According to Article 14, 'The dignity of man and, subject to law, the privacy of home, shall be inviolable.'⁴
- 7.1.2 There are no laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, consensual same-sex sexual acts are prohibited, there is no legal recognition of same-sex civil unions or marriages, and same-sex couples are not permitted to adopt children⁵.

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7.2 Penal Code

- 7.2.1 Same-sex sexual conduct between men is a criminal offence under section 377 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) a law inherited from the British colonial period, with penalties including a fine, 2 years to life imprisonment or both^{6 7}. Section 377 of the Penal Code prohibits consensual 'carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal.'⁸
- 7.2.2 The Government of Pakistan (GoP) specified in their Global AIDS Monitoring

¹ The Pakistan Code, [Constitution of Pakistan](#) (Chapter 1: Fundamental Rights), 10 April 1973

² The Pakistan Code, [Constitution of Pakistan](#) (Article 25), 10 April 1973

³ The Pakistan Code, [Constitution of Pakistan](#) (Article 27), 10 April 1973

⁴ The Pakistan Code, [Constitution of Pakistan](#) (Article 14), 10 April 1973

⁵ ILGA Database, [Pakistan](#) (Legal Frameworks, Summary, Protection against discrimination), no date

⁶ The Pakistan Code, [Pakistan Penal Code \(PPC\)](#) (Section 377), 1860

⁷ Human Dignity Trust, [Pakistan](#) (Summary), 16 December 2024

⁸ The Pakistan Code, [Pakistan Penal Code \(PPC\)](#) (Section 377), 1860

2020 progress report (covering January to December 2019), submitted to UNAIDS, that Section 377 ‘... criminalizes male-to-male sex...’⁹ The Human Dignity Trust, an international organisation defending the rights of LGBT people¹⁰, noted, in December 2024, that ‘Only men are criminalised under this law.’¹¹

- 7.2.3 Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted in its 2025 World Report covering 2024 events that ‘Same-sex sexual conduct between men remains a criminal offense under Pakistan’s criminal code...’¹² The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) similarly noted that same-sex sexual acts were illegal¹³ but made no reference to a person’s sex or gender.
- 7.2.4 Section 294 of the PPC refers to obscene acts and songs and criminalises ‘any obscene act in any public place’ and ‘singing, reciting or uttering any obscene songs, ballad or words, in or near any public place’, ‘to the annoyance of others’, which may result in imprisonment for up to 3 months, a fine, or both¹⁴. According to ILGA ‘This section is reportedly often deployed to target male, trans and hijra sex workers.’¹⁵
- 7.2.5 Section 375 of the PPC was amended under the Criminal Law (Amendment Act) 2021, expanding the definition of rape and making the offence gender neutral in terms of victims and perpetrators^{16 17}.

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7.3 Trans rights

- 7.3.1 The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act was enacted in May 2018 and defines a trans person as someone who is:
 - ‘(i) intersex (khusra) with mixture of male and female genital features or congenital ambiguities; or
 - ‘(ii) eunuch assigned male at birth, but undergoes genital excision or castration; or
 - ‘(iii) a transgender man, transgender woman, Khawaja Sira or any person whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the social norms and cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at the time of their birth.’¹⁸
- 7.3.2 For further information on definitions, see Social context – [Trans and intersex people](#).
- 7.3.3 The law protects against discrimination of trans people in the provision of goods and services, health, education, employment and housing¹⁹.

⁹ UNAIDS, [Country progress report - Pakistan; Global AIDS Monitoring 2020](#) (page 26), 2020

¹⁰ Human Dignity Trust, [Who We Are](#), no date

¹¹ Human Dignity Trust, [Pakistan](#) (Summary), 16 December 2024

¹² HRW, [World Report 2025 – Pakistan](#) (Sexual orientation and gender identity), 16 January 2025

¹³ ILGA Database, [Pakistan](#) (Legal Frameworks, Summary), no date

¹⁴ The Pakistan Code, [Pakistan Penal Code \(PPC\)](#) (Section 294), 1860

¹⁵ ILGA Database, [Pakistan](#) (Legal Frameworks, section 1), no date

¹⁶ The Pakistan Code, [Pakistan Penal Code \(PPC\)](#) (Section 375), 1860

¹⁷ Jurist News, [Pakistan amends criminal laws on sexual assault while ...](#), 19 November 2021

¹⁸ The Pakistan Code, [Transgender Persons \(Protection of Rights\) Act](#) (Article 2n), 2018

¹⁹ The Pakistan Code, [Transgender Persons \(Protection of Rights\) Act](#) (Article 4), 2018

- 7.3.4 The US Department of State noted in its 2023 human rights report (USSD HR Report 2023) that ‘A 2012 Supreme Court ruling allowed transgender individuals to obtain national identification cards listing a “third gender.” Because national identity cards also served as voter registration, the ruling enabled transgender individuals to participate in elections, both as candidates and voters.’²⁰ The same source noted that the Transgender Persons Act ‘... accorded the right of transgender individuals to be recognized according to their “self-perceived gender identity,” but the government only allowed the registration of gender changes to an “X” third gender and not to a different binary male or female gender.’²¹
- 7.3.5 Information on LGBTI people was not included in the 2024 USSD HR report, published on 12 August 2025²². All the 2024 USSD HR reports were reduced in size and scope compared to previous years’ reports²³.
- 7.3.6 A COI report on Pakistan, dated December 2024, by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), covering the period 1 October 2023 to 25 October 2024 and based on a range of sources, noted that:
- ‘In 2018, the Parliament passed a “far-reaching and a very important” Transgender Act on the protection of transgender individuals and their rights. However, the law was not fully implemented and there was resistance from the religious lobby, from the vigilante groups and from some other segments of society. In May 2023, the Federal Shariat Court declared some provisions of the 2018 Transgender Act as “un-Islamic.” This verdict was however challenged in the Supreme Court of Pakistan ...’²⁴
- 7.3.7 [Petitions](#) to the Federal Shariat Court challenged sections of the Transgender Persons Act and its associated rules²⁵. ILGA noted that:
- ‘In May 2023, the Federal Shariat Court issued Shariat Petition No. 5 (2023) following a legal challenge to various provisions of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2018) and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules (2020), among others. A primary contention of the plaintiffs centred on the notion that the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2018) provided “legal cover for homosexuality”, facilitating its indulgence by those deemed “sexually perverted”. They further argued that the Act promoted illicit sexual activities, particularly homosexuality, within society. The ruling substantially altered the 2018 Act’s provisions by affirming the absence of individual autonomy to alter gender and deeming certain provisions incongruous with Shariah law. In July 2023, the decision was challenged in the Supreme Court.’²⁶
- 7.3.8 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted that ‘... after a challenge to the provisions of the 2018 Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act from the Federal Shariat Court, the National Database and Registration Agency (NADRA) halted the “X” national identity card registration for transgender persons, causing backlash from the legal community, civil society, and human rights

²⁰ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

²¹ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

²² USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#), 12 August 2025

²³ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#), 12 August 2025

²⁴ EUAA, [Pakistan – Country Focus](#) (page 140), December 2024

²⁵ Federal Shariat Court, [Shariat Petition](#), May 2023

²⁶ ILGA Database, [Pakistan](#) (Legal Frameworks, section 1), no date

activists. On September 27, facing intense pressure, NADRA resumed registration of “X” national identity cards.²⁷

- 7.3.9 At the time of drafting this CPIN, the appeal against the Federal Shariat Court Petition against the Transgender Persons Act was still pending in the Supreme Court.

See also [Government views](#).

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7.4 Sharia (Islamic law)

- 7.4.1 Regarding Sharia and same-sex conduct, ILGA noted:

‘The Shariat-based Offence of Zina (Enforcement of Hudood) Ordinance (Ordinance No. VII) (1979) prohibits Zina (adultery). Section 5 provisions that consenting adults found guilty of Zina may be stoned to death. Commentators have noted that this may apply to consensual same-sex conduct in Pakistan if the high evidentiary requirements are met “insofar as non-heterosexual relationships cannot be legalised in any form of marriage”. However, it is unclear if this is applicable to consensual same-sex conduct. Section 4 specifically states: “A man and a woman are said to commit Zina if they willfully have sexual intercourse without being validly married to each other”. The phrase “to each other” suggests that the ordinance only contemplates a situation where a man and a woman commit adultery with each other. A textual reading of Section 5 further supports this. It provides that Zina is liable to hadd [a punishment ordered by the Koran or the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad²⁸] if: (i) it is “committed by a man [...] with a woman”, or (ii) it is “committed by a woman [...] with a man”. Section 5 does not provide for a situation where the act is committed between two individuals of the same gender.’²⁹

- 7.4.2 The Global AIDS Monitoring 2020 progress report for Pakistan noted that, ‘Sharia... carries heavy penalties for homosexuality – of imprisonment for 2-10 years or for life, or of 100 lashes or stoning to death (depending on whether the person is married or not).’³⁰

- 7.4.3 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted that ‘Although not enforced since the 1985 lifting of martial law, the Hudood Ordinance of 1979 criminalized sexual intercourse outside of marriage in accordance with sharia, with penalties of whipping or, potentially, death. There were disputes as to whether the Hudood Ordinance notionally applied to both opposite-sex and same-sex conduct, but there were no known cases of the government applying the ordinance to same-sex conduct, and there were no known cases of executions for homosexuality.’³¹

- 7.4.4 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Country Information Report for Pakistan, based on a range of sources, dated April 2025 noted, ‘The Hudood Ordinance (1979) also criminalises sexual intercourse outside of marriage in accordance with Sharia but there are no known cases of Pakistan’s government applying this ordinance to same-sex

²⁷ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

²⁸ GoP, [Offence of Zina \(Enforcement of Hudood\) Ordinance 1979](#) (Article 2b), 9 February 1979

²⁹ ILGA Database, [Pakistan](#) (Legal Frameworks, section 1), no date

³⁰ UNAIDS, [Country progress report - Pakistan: Global AIDS Monitoring 2020](#) (page 26), 2020

³¹ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

conduct and no known cases of executions for homosexuality.’³²

See also [Prosecutions and convictions](#)

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8. Social context

8.1 People who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)

- 8.1.1 Cedoca, the Documentation and Research Department of the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), Belgium, published a report about sexual minorities in Pakistan, dated April 2020, covering events from August 2016 to 6 May 2020³³. The report cited Qasim Iqbal, director of the NAZ Male Health Alliance (known as NAZ), a community-based organisation in Pakistan supporting men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans rights, who said in an email to Cedoca dated 15 April 2020:

‘Pakistan has a homo-friendly culture, meaning it is common for two men to walk on the streets holding each other’s hands. It is also common to hug and kiss on the cheek in public. This does not mean that they are gay... Walking hand in hand amongst two men is perceived normal in certain social economic classes – it does not necessarily raise questions on a person’s sexuality as the [male] South Asian community can be openly physically affectionate.’³⁴

- 8.1.2 A team of human rights monitors working under ‘Project ADAL’ documented incidents of human rights abuses and violations based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab provinces. These incidents occurred between 2016 and 2022³⁵. In its June 2022 report – authored by M. Jameel, a researcher and public policy practitioner with over a decade of experience in grassroots human rights and LGBTI rights activism³⁶ – the team submitted its findings to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Fourth Cycle for Pakistan (January–February 2023)³⁷. The report noted that:

‘... there is little tolerance for non-conformity in sexuality. Lesbian, gay and bisexual men and women keep their sexuality hidden due to threats or fear of backlash. The society places the burden of norms on the bodies of women and if there is resistance from the family, it becomes dangerous for queer women to express themselves freely. For gay, bisexual, queer men, the fear persists that if they open up about their sexuality publicly, they will be harassed by the security and law enforcement agencies. Transgender and intersex men and women who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual face even more stigma. Being “outed” is the biggest fear in a society for many where religious segments are openly hostile toward the existence of LGBTI people and the state offers little protection.’³⁸

- 8.1.3 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted that, due to general discrimination,

³² DFAT, [Country Information Report – Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.191), 30 April 2025

³³ CGRS-Cedoca, [Pakistan - Situatie van seksuele minderheden](#), 27 April 2020

³⁴ CGRS-Cedoca, [Pakistan - Situatie van seksuele minderheden](#) (page 17), 27 April 2020

³⁵ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (pages 10 to 13), June 2022

³⁶ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 52), June 2022

³⁷ UPR, [UPR Fourth Cycle – Pakistan – Reference Documents](#) (JS2, Annexe 2), no date

³⁸ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of SOGIE...](#) (page 8), June 2022

'LGBTQI+ persons rarely revealed their sexual orientation or gender identity in the public sphere.'³⁹

- 8.1.4 According to 'high-ranking representatives of the HRCP [Human Rights Commission of Pakistan]', interviewed by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) during a Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to Islamabad in May/June 2023, 'LGBTIQ people in Pakistan cannot be identified if they do not identify themselves. Only transgender people have a problem because they are easily identifiable. In Karachi and Lahore, even in Islamabad, there are men who wear lipstick in public or women who dress differently. If you go to a party in a middle-class household in Islamabad, gays, lesbians or transgender people could also be present.'⁴⁰

See also [Meeting places and events](#)

- 8.1.5 According to the senior representative of NGO Vision, a Pakistan NGO which advocates for marginalised groups, especially children and transgender individuals⁴¹, cited in the December 2024 EUAA report, '... there is a general lack of awareness on sexual orientation in Pakistan. For instance ... bisexuality is not even understood by the ones who are bisexual, both men and women, "unless they belong to a certain class and are exposed to the conceptual framework of bisexuality." These individuals, "exist in their own bubble mostly in urban areas of Pakistan. Families are okay with that as long as they do not disclose their sexual orientation, and the status quo is maintained".'⁴²
- 8.1.6 A COI report on Pakistan, covering the period from September 2022 to May 2024, published by The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in July 2024 (The Netherlands 2024 COI report), based on a range of sources, noted 'There is little tolerance for gays and lesbians in the conservative, family-oriented society of Pakistan.'⁴³

See also [Societal attitudes and treatment](#)

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8.2 Trans and intersex people

- 8.2.1 The Project ADAL report noted, regarding gender identity and expression, that 'There is widespread cultural familiarity with the idea gender outside the binary of "man" and "woman" in the society, owed largely to the historical presence of indigenous groups such as hijra or Khawaja Sira in South Asia. The traditional kinship of guru-chela (master-disciple) in the hijragiri sub-culture has provided a shelter and home to people of trans-feminine expression who are assigned male (or rarely, intersex) at birth.'⁴⁴
- 8.2.2 ACCORD – Austrian Centre for Country of Origin & Asylum Research and Documentation – noted in its Pakistan COI Compilation, dated April 2024, covering the period January 2022 to March 2024, citing a range of sources:
- 'The term Khawaja Sira (also: Khwaja Sira), the indigenous term for "third

³⁹ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

⁴⁰ BAMF, [Pakistan: Fact Finding Mission; Islamabad May/June 2023](#) (page 23), December 2023

⁴¹ EUAA, [Pakistan – Country Focus](#) (page 161), December 2024

⁴² EUAA, [Pakistan – Country Focus](#) (page 140), December 2024

⁴³ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [General Country of Origin ...](#) (page 70), 5 July 2024

⁴⁴ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of SOGIE...](#) (page 8), June 2022

gender”, was reportedly used across the Indian subcontinent in the 16th to the 19th century. It was used at the courts of the ruling Mughal Empire and referred to “a wide range of transgender, castrated, and gender-nonconforming advisers and officials”, according to *The Diplomat*, an international current-affairs magazine focused on the Asia-Pacific region. The Khwaja Sira community was “respected and trusted” until the arrival of the British colonial rulers who banned men from wearing female clothing, introduced the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 and “codified gender norms”. Much of the existing discrimination is reportedly due to this “colonial legacy” (*The Diplomat*, 13 June 2023). *New Lines Magazine* explains that Khwaja Sira used to earn their living by working as singers, dancers, by conferring blessings to newlyweds and newborns, a practice called “badhai”, but now also by begging and engaging in sex work. They live in communities organised by teacher-disciple (guru-chela) relationships and reportedly also use a specific dialect, Hijra Farsi (*New Lines Magazine*, 3 October 2022; see also Jaffer, 8 April 2022).⁴⁵

8.2.3 ACCORD noted that, according to a *New Lines Magazine* article of October 2022, ‘The third gender is also referred to as “hijras” in South Asia; however, this term has reportedly acquired a negative connotation and is considered an insult now...’⁴⁶

8.2.4 The Project ADAL report noted:

‘Transgender identities have, however, become recognized by the state and society more recently in Pakistan due to the extensive social and political organising of the community. The community has collectively agitated for their rights at different fora in the past two decades and there have been tremendous shifts in policies, practices and public attitudes pertaining to the rights of transgender people. While there is widespread familiarity with trans-femininity, or more precisely Khawaja Sira, there is little recognition or visibility of trans-masculine people in the society. The community of transmen is at the very beginning stages of self-organizing in Pakistan.’⁴⁷

8.2.5 Regarding trans men [men assigned female at birth⁴⁸], the Project ADAL report stated they were a ‘... generally invisible minority in Pakistan and there is very little social or political organizing among them. Some informal groups exist in larger cities. But, by and large, the experiences of transgender men are largely not visible in mainstream transgender rights movement in Pakistan.’⁴⁹

8.2.6 The December 2024 EUAA report noted that, according to the senior representative at Vision ‘... most of those who claim to be transgender [women] are “actually gay men who use the garb of transgender for sexually interacting with other men”.’⁵⁰

8.2.7 The Project ADAL report noted regarding intersex people that:

‘Although there is a common misperception of biological sexual ambiguity associated with the Khawaja Sira, the needs and lived realities of people

⁴⁵ ACCORD, [Pakistan – COI Compilation](#) (page 103), April 2024

⁴⁶ ACCORD, [Pakistan – COI Compilation](#) (page 103, footnote 53), April 2024

⁴⁷ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of SOGIE...](#) (page 8), June 2022

⁴⁸ Stonewall, [LGBTQ+Terms: Inclusive Glossary and Definitions](#), no date

⁴⁹ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of SOGIE...](#) (page 42), June 2022

⁵⁰ EUAA, [Pakistan – Country Focus](#) (page 140), December 2024

born with intersex variations, particularly children, are often misunderstood by the state and society. Intersex persons face immense societal pressure to conform, often extending to coercive medical and psychotherapeutic interventions. Intersex people have only gained some visibility recently in a medical paradigm.⁵¹

- 8.2.8 According to the USSD HR Report 2023, 'There were no reports of medically unnecessary and irreversible "normalization" surgeries performed on children or on nonconsenting adult intersex persons.'⁵²
- 8.2.9 In its concluding observations on the second period report of Pakistan on the CCPR, published 2 December 2024, the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) expressed concern about '... reports that intersex children and adolescents are subjected to irreversible and invasive medical interventions.'⁵³
- 8.2.10 The April 2025 DFAT report stated that 'Gender affirming surgery does not exist in Pakistan, with castration being the accepted method due to a lack of domestic opportunities to obtain a vaginoplasty.'⁵⁴
- 8.2.11 See also [Societal attitudes and treatment](#)

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9. State attitudes and treatment

9.1 Government views

- 9.1.1 In their report on the implementation of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), dated 22 June 2023, the GoP stated regarding the criminalisation of same-sex relations that, 'The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan ensures that no legislation in Pakistan can be promulgated against the teachings of Islam. Same-sex relation is against the teachings of Islam; therefore, the Government of Pakistan is not obligated to allow same-sex relations in Pakistan.'⁵⁵ This was repeated by the GoP in their response to the list of issues in relation to their reports on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)⁵⁶, and on the CESCR⁵⁷, dated May 2024 and March 2025 respectively.
- 9.1.2 On 11 November 2022, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting revoked permission for the national cinema release of the film Joyland, which depicts the relationship between a man and a trans woman⁵⁸. Whilst that decision was overturned 5 days later by a review committee set up by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Punjab government maintained the ban on its distribution in that province 'in the wake of persistent complaints received from different quarters.'⁵⁹ ⁶⁰ The film could still be screened in other

⁵¹ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of SOGIE...](#) (page 8), June 2022

⁵² USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

⁵³ CCPR, [Concluding observations on the second periodic ...](#) (paragraph 12), 2 December 2024

⁵⁴ DFAT, [Country Information Report – Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.191), 30 April 2025

⁵⁵ CESCR, [Second periodic report submitted by Pakistan...](#) (paragraph 38), 22 June 2023

⁵⁶ CCPR, [Replies of Pakistan to the list of issues in relation to ...](#) (paragraph 15), 20 May 2024

⁵⁷ CESCR, [Replies of Pakistan to the list of issues in relation to ...](#) (paragraph 29), 21 March 2025

⁵⁸ AI, [Pakistan: Ban on film Joyland showcasing transgender character must ...](#), 16 November 2022

⁵⁹ Images, [Govt decides to clear Joyland for release in Pakistan: Salman Sufi](#), 16 November 2022

⁶⁰ Images, [Punjab govt bans Joyland less than 24 hours after federal govt ...](#), 17 November 2022

provinces⁶¹.

- 9.1.3 Sindh province took positive steps towards the rights of trans people, as reported by HRW, who said that in January 2023, ‘... the Sindh Cabinet approved reserved seats for transgender people on local councils, so that each local council has at least one transgender representative. In December [2022], the Sindh government extended the benefits of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), the country’s largest social safety net, to transgender people. Previously, the BISP provided targeted subsidies to women from low-income households.’⁶²
- 9.1.4 In May 2023, Pakistan-based daily English-language news site, The Express Tribune, reported that the Ministry of Education had banned a sociology textbook whose content relating to same-sex marriage was deemed to be against ‘the social and cultural traditions of Pakistan.’⁶³
- 9.1.5 The December 2024 EUAA report stated ‘As noted by a senior representative at local NGO Vision, same sex relationships from the government’s perspective do not exist in Pakistan. The country is “by the virtue of its constitution an Islamic Republic, and therefore anything repugnant to the tenets of Islam is rejected legally and should be rejected by the society”’.⁶⁴ Furthermore, non-governmental organisation (NGO) registration rules prohibit NGOs from using terms such as ‘lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, queer, or intersex (LGBTQI+)’ in their documents and annual reports, which the authorities consider controversial⁶⁵. (See also [Civil society groups and NGOs](#))
- 9.1.6 Amnesty International’s (AI) submission to the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) 142nd session, held between 14 October to 8 November 2024, noted that, in parallel to the Federal Shariat Court’s decision declaring aspects of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act as against Islamic principles (see [Trans rights](#)), ‘... members of Parliament from the Jamaat e Islami political party tabled regressive amendments to the Transgender Protection Act which included requiring medical examination as a pre-requisite for affirming one’s gender, replacing the word “transgender” with “intersex” in the Act, and criminalizing the provision of gender-affirming healthcare.’⁶⁶
- 9.1.7 A report published on 10 September 2025 by LGBTI+ rights group, Outright International, on the participation of LGBTI people in elections that took place in countries across the world during 2024, noted regarding Pakistan’s February 2024 elections, that:
- ‘While no major party’s campaign platform addressed discrimination and criminalization based on sexual orientation, all three major parties promised to protect trans people’s rights in their manifestos. The center-left PPP [Pakistan People’s Party] vowed to advance trans people’s political participation at all levels and “ensure implementation in letter and spirit of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018.” PTI [Pakistan

⁶¹ Al Jazeera, [Pakistan lifts ban on Joyland, film will be released nationally](#), 17 November 2022

⁶² HRW, [Pakistan’s Sindh Province Backs Transgender Rights](#), 25 April 2023

⁶³ Express Tribune, [Two ‘anti-Pakistan’ course books banned](#), 4 May 2023

⁶⁴ EUAA, [Pakistan – Country Focus](#) (page 140), December 2024

⁶⁵ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 5), 22 April 2024

⁶⁶ AI, [Pakistan: Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee 142...](#) (page 8), 23 September 2024

Tehreek-i-Insaaf], characterized as a populist party, was more specific, committing to training legal professionals on transgender people's rights and improving trans people's access to higher education.

'The manifesto of PML-N [Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz], a self-described conservative party, was the most comprehensive, vowing to ensure equal opportunities for trans people in all areas, penalize discrimination and "degradation," and ensure the "seamless and dignified provision" of identity documents.

'Only one major party tackled the rights of intersex people. Muttahida Qaumi Movement – Pakistan (MQM-P), the fourth biggest party in parliament, did not address transgender people's rights, but devoted a section to intersex people, referring to them as khawaja saras (an alternative spelling of khawaja sira). It proposed, among other things, legal recognition of intersex people's rights, a one percent quota for intersex people in all levels of government, and collaboration with intersex-led groups to ensure inclusion in decision-making.'⁶⁷

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9.2 Treatment by the police

- 9.2.1 The April 2025 DFAT report noted that although Section 377 of the PPC was rarely enforced, '... in-country sources told DFAT police sometimes threatened men who had sex with men with its use to extract bribes or sexual favours. According to in-country sources, Section 377 has not been used against women or transgender people.'⁶⁸
- 9.2.2 The Project ADAL report stated that 'Gay, bisexual and queer men (GBQ) face threats of arrest and punishment for engaging in consensual sexual relations. This environment enables blackmail, harassment and extortion for many vulnerable young men.'⁶⁹ HRW repeatedly noted in their annual World Reports that men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans people (in its 2024 annual report, HRW specified transgender women) were at risk of police abuse due to laws criminalising same-sex conduct between men^{70 71 72}.
- 9.2.3 According to data collected under Project ADAL, from victims or witnesses, and verified with state authorities if such cases were reported, police officials were the perpetrators of abuse against people due to their SOGIE in around 35 cases in 2021 to 2022. The report found that most cases involved verbal harassment and discrimination, though other violations included 'torture and sexual abuse in custody', and the majority of victims were trans people⁷³.
- 9.2.4 The Project ADAL report cited an alleged incident of physical and sexual abuse whilst in police custody of 5 trans women in 2021, where they were 'stripped naked and tied to poles at the Iqbal Town police station and beaten with batons and littar (a leather pad) by the police officers. Some were also

⁶⁷ Outright International, [Queering Democracy ...](#) (page 119), 9 September 2025

⁶⁸ DFAT, [Country Information Report – Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.191), 30 April 2025

⁶⁹ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of SOGIE ...](#) (page 12) June 2022

⁷⁰ HRW, [World Report 2023: Pakistan](#) (Sexual orientation and gender identity), 12 January 2023

⁷¹ HRW, [World Report 2024: Pakistan](#) (Sexual orientation and gender identity), 11 January 2024

⁷² HRW, [World Report 2025: Pakistan](#) (Sexual orientation and gender identity), 16 January 2025

⁷³ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of SOGIE ...](#) (page 23) June 2022

allegedly subjected to electric shocks and sexual abuse in police custody.⁷⁴

9.2.5 The same report added:

‘The incident of police torture garnered widespread condemnation, including from members of the Punjab Assembly. A large number of transgender persons protested near Moon market, Iqbal Town against increasing police violence. However, the protestors were baton-charged and dispersed by the police. As per a report in Dawn [Pakistani English-language newspaper], the police also took some of the protesters into custody and registered cases for blocking the roads and creating problems for the citizens. The [Inspector General] IG Punjab took notice of the incidence, however, no action was reportedly taken against the police officers accused of torture.’⁷⁵

9.2.6 HRW reported in April 2023 that the independent statutory body, the Sindh Human Rights Commission, issued guidance advising police to stop harassing and arresting trans people based on offences relating to homelessness and poverty⁷⁶.

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9.3 Arrests and detention

9.3.1 Of the 956 documented cases of human rights abuses against people due to their SOGIE between 2019 and 2021, Project ADAL recorded 21 incidences of arrest and detention⁷⁷. The report noted that laws against vagrancy and begging were used against trans persons and cited the arrest of 5 trans people in September 2021 for begging, who were then reportedly physically and sexually abused whilst in police custody⁷⁸.

9.3.2 A man who applied to the authorities to open a gay club in Abbottabad in May 2024⁷⁹ was detained in a psychiatric hospital after the application was leaked on social media^{80 81}. India digital news site, The Print, reported that doctors found no mental illness, ‘declaring that homosexuality is not a psychiatric disorder under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mental Health Act of 2017’, although the man had apparently been subjected to ‘harsh electroconvulsive treatments.’⁸² Although it was not clear how long he was detained, Mehrub Moiz Awan, a trans politician and rights activist, indicated he had been released and told The Print that ‘... Right-wing parties namely Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) protested against it. They led street processions and brought a mob to the hospital, which vandalised the facility and threatened the medical professionals.’⁸³

9.3.3 In August 2025 it was reported that Punjab police registered a case against 50 to 60 individuals in what was described as an ‘objectionable’ LGBT event

⁷⁴ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of SOGIE ...](#) (page 27) June 2022

⁷⁵ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of SOGIE ...](#) (page 27) June 2022

⁷⁶ HRW, [Pakistan's Sindh Province Backs Transgender Rights](#), 25 April 2023

⁷⁷ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of SOGIE ...](#) (page 17) June 2022

⁷⁸ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (pages 24, 27) June 2022

⁷⁹ Pakistan Observer, [LGBTQ community seeks approval for Pakistan's first gay club ...](#), 9 May 2024

⁸⁰ The Telegraph, [Man detained in mental hospital after trying to set up Pakistan's ...](#), 9 June 2024

⁸¹ The Print, [Pakistani man lands in asylum after he tries opening a gay club, given ...](#), 11 June 2024

⁸² The Print, [Pakistani man lands in asylum after he tries opening a gay club, given ...](#), 11 June 2024

⁸³ The Print, [Pakistani man lands in asylum after he tries opening a gay club, given ...](#), 11 June 2024

in Lahore^{84 85}. Two trans people and 3 others were arrested following allegations that a private party promoted ‘obscenity’⁸⁶. Renowned fashion designer and outspoken critic of LGBTI representation, Maria B, shared content of the party on social media claiming it was ‘against the moral values of the country.’^{87 88} However, a magistrate dismissed the case due to lack of evidence^{89 90}.

- 9.3.4 Dawn reported on 11 September 2025 that 5 trans people were amongst 226 arrested in Swabi district of [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa] KP during a late night raid on a music show⁹¹. The event was described as an ‘obscene and immoral gathering.’⁹²

See also [Meeting places and events](#)

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9.4 State protection

The GoP noted in their report on the implementation of the CCPR, dated 7 December 2022, that as per the Transgender Persons Act 2018, the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) ‘... has established a Protection Centre for Transgender Persons in Islamabad to provide shelter, rehabilitation and other medical and psychological care.’⁹³ The GoP noted that, according to the Transgender Protection Centre, Islamabad, the services provided to trans persons between 2021 and 2023 included:

Service	Shelter	Legal Aid	Medical Assistance	Psychological Counselling	Complaints Redressal
Recipients	142	200	192	155	50

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- 9.4.1 According to the USSD HR Report 2023, the police ‘generally took little action’ when they received reports of crimes against LGBT+ people⁹⁵. Regarding protecting trans people, the same report noted that:

‘In 2020, Rawalpindi police launched a pilot project to protect transgender individuals. The project, called the Tahafuz Center, included the first transgender victim-support officer, who was also a member of the transgender community. In February 2022, Islamabad police established the Tahafuz Police Khidmat Markaz and Reporting Center to handle cases perpetuated against transgender individuals. The Islamabad Transgender Protection Unit reported 30 criminal cases and complaints were filed, involving violence or harassment against transgender persons, from January to November. A volunteer at the Tahafuz Center reported that 36

⁸⁴ Pakistan Today, [Transgender persons released as court dismisses case over ...](#), 17 August 2025

⁸⁵ Dawn, [Five arrested for ‘obscenity’ released by court](#), 18 August 2025

⁸⁶ Dawn, [Five arrested for ‘obscenity’ released by court](#), 18 August 2025

⁸⁷ Dialogue Pakistan, [Maria B lashes out at ‘obscene, satanic’ LGBT event in Lahore](#), 16 August 2025

⁸⁸ The Opinion, [Punjab government cracks down on LGBT event in Lahore](#), 17 August 2025

⁸⁹ Pakistan Today, [Transgender persons released as court dismisses case over ...](#), 17 August 2025

⁹⁰ Dawn, [Five arrested for ‘obscenity’ released by court](#), 18 August 2025

⁹¹ Dawn, [Over 220 held during raid on Swabi music show](#), 11 September 2025

⁹² Lead Pakistan, [Over 200 arrested from transgenders’ music gathering ...](#), 12 September 2025

⁹³ CCPR, [Second periodic report submitted by Pakistan...](#) (paragraph 21), 7 December 2022

⁹⁴ CCPR, [Replies of Pakistan to the list of issues in relation to ...](#) (paragraph 17), 20 May 2024

⁹⁵ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

transgender persons had been appointed as protection officers across Punjab Province.

'A local NGO reported in 2022 that prison officials in KP held transgender prisoners separately and that the provincial government formed a jail oversight committee to improve the prison situation. KP police stations had a dedicated intake desk for transgender persons and added transgender rights education to police training courses. In November [2023], Gulbar police station in Peshawar established its first "transgender desk" in KP. The desk was a designated space for transgender persons to take criminal complaints, and each desk was staffed by individuals recommended by local transgender associations. Local NGOs working in the Islamabad Capital Territory and Punjab conducted transgender sensitization training for police officers. Balochistan hired a transgender police officer in October to serve as a Transgender Victim Support Officer at the Women and Juvenile Facilitation Centre Quetta.'⁹⁶

- 9.4.2 According to a confidential source cited in The Netherlands 2024 COI report, '... members of the LGBTIQ+ community protected themselves by staying in a group and supporting one another. Little protection is to be expected from ordinary police. Within police stations, however, there is sometimes a victim-assistance desk [for trans people], where people are addressed without the usual discrimination.'⁹⁷ According to the Project ADAL report, 'An attitude of mistrust toward the police contributes toward the lack of reporting of cases of sexual abuse. A culture of victim blaming and hostility at the police stations has been widely documented.'⁹⁸
- 9.4.3 The Project ADAL report noted that 956 cases of human rights abuses and violations on the basis of a person's SOGIE were documented over 3 years (2019 to 2021), and 75% of the victims identified as trans, mostly from the Khawaja Sira indigenous community⁹⁹. However, only 17% of the total 956 cases were reported to state authorities (nearly all of whom were trans¹⁰⁰) as victims said they had a 'fear of police and law enforcement agencies', mainly due to 'fear of going to the police station alone, fear of being blackmailed, threatened or otherwise abused by the police and fear of their complaint being rejected and not taken seriously ...'¹⁰¹ However, the report also found a slight increase in the proportion of cases reported to the authorities over the duration of the study¹⁰². No information could be found to determine if this trend continued.
- 9.4.4 Regarding lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) women, the Project ADAL report noted that '... provincial laws on domestic violence lack effective implementation ... These laws do not even acknowledge actual or perceived SOGIESC as grounds that could incite violence, thus failing to provide adequate protections to LBQ women.'¹⁰³
- 9.4.5 In its concluding observations on the second period report of Pakistan on the

⁹⁶ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

⁹⁷ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [General Country of Origin ...](#) (page 71), 5 July 2024

⁹⁸ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 31) June 2022

⁹⁹ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 12, 14) June 2022

¹⁰⁰ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 21) June 2022

¹⁰¹ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 20) June 2022

¹⁰² Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 21) June 2022

¹⁰³ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 44), June 2022

CCPR, published 2 December 2024, the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) expressed concern at ‘... the lack of reporting [of crimes committed against LGBT+ people to the authorities] by victims due to fear of reprisals and the lack of prompt and thorough investigations, leading to impunity for perpetrators.’¹⁰⁴ (see also [Violence, harassment and extortion](#)).

- 9.4.6 For information on the situation of women in Pakistan in general, and regarding gender-based violence, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Women fearing gender-based violence](#).

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9.5 Prosecutions and convictions

- 9.5.1 According to sources, Section 377 of the PPC was rarely enforced^{105 106}. The USSD HR Report 2023 stated that ‘... there were no known cases of the government applying the [Hudood] ordinance to same-sex conduct, and there were no known cases of executions for homosexuality.’¹⁰⁷
- 9.5.2 Project ADAL noted that incidents of sexual violence against trans people were rarely reported to the police and those that were ‘rarely go to trial and close to none see convictions.’¹⁰⁸ According to police data presented to the KP assembly, there was only one conviction out of a reported 267 cases of violence against trans people in KP from 2019 to 2023¹⁰⁹.
- 9.5.3 The GoP recorded the number of complaints, prosecutions and disposal of cases of violence against trans people in Punjab¹¹⁰:

Violence against trans people 2018 to 2023			
Year	Complaints	Prosecutions	Disposal
2018	25	25	3
2019	11	11	0
2020	39	38	1
2021	102	90	8
2022	116	103	11
2023	131	90	38
Total	424	357	61

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9.6 Access to services

- 9.6.1 The UN Development Programme (UNDP), in a December 2023 report on the protection and political inclusion of trans persons, noted that despite recognition by the state as a third gender, the trans community ‘continues to face marginalization and discrimination.’¹¹¹ The report added ‘The exclusion of transgender community from mainstream society has resulted in limited access to education, healthcare, employment, and housing, leading to extreme poverty and a lack of opportunities. The political exclusion of the

¹⁰⁴ CCPR, [Concluding observations on the second periodic ...](#) (paragraph 12), 2 December 2024

¹⁰⁵ DFAT, [Country Information Report – Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.191), 30 April 2025

¹⁰⁶ IRB, [Pakistan: Treatment of sexual and gender minorities...](#), 17 January 2019

¹⁰⁷ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

¹⁰⁸ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 28) June 2022

¹⁰⁹ ICJ, [UN Human Rights Committee, 142nd session ...](#) (paragraphs 65), September 2024

¹¹⁰ CCPR, [Replies of Pakistan to the list of issues in relation to ...](#) (paragraph 21), 20 May 2024

¹¹¹ UNDP, [National Strategic Framework for Transgender Persons ...](#) (page 11), December 2023

transgender community has further marginalized them in society.’¹¹²

- 9.6.2 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted that, although the law prohibited the discrimination of trans people in education, employment, health care, housing and other services, ‘... Local authorities often denied transgender individuals their share of inherited property and admission to schools and hospitals. Property owners frequently refused to rent or sell property to transgender persons.’¹¹³

See also [Societal and familial views and treatment](#).

- 9.6.3 Citing a 2022 academic paper, a joint stakeholder submission on sexual and reproductive health and rights to the UPR Fourth Cycle of Pakistan, January to February 2023, noted that:

‘Transgender people face barriers to accessing quality healthcare in Pakistan, largely due to marginalization. Healthcare providers lack knowledge on how to treat transgender people, and approximately 70% of the transgender persons in Pakistan believe they receive poor quality of healthcare services. Non acceptance, feeling ashamed, non-availability of Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) and non-affordability have been reported as the major barriers in obtaining healthcare.’¹¹⁴

- 9.6.4 Citing a confidential source, The Netherlands 2024 COI report said that:

‘Trans people have difficulty finding medical care. Not many doctors are willing to treat trans people, and trans people are often afraid of the doctor’s reaction in advance. Not many doctors are willing to perform transgender transformation surgeries. Although breast reductions in themselves are not illegal, they are performed within the context of transformation. Doctors fear losing their licences. For this reason, many transitions take place in a dubious manner. There are many bad doctors, and this increases the risk of infection. High fees are also demanded.’¹¹⁵

- 9.6.5 The April 2025 DFAT report noted that ‘Transgender people ... reported they sometimes faced barriers to accessing health, policing and other government services.’¹¹⁶

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10. Societal attitudes and treatment

10.1 Societal and familial views and treatment

- 10.1.1 Qasim Iqbal of NAZ stated in April 2020 that ‘The religious establishment is heavily influenced by the mainstream muslim doctrine of Islam and has no tolerance towards queerness. The queer community is considered a negative Western influence that needs to be cured with religious practices and local treatments. Islam is more tolerant of the transgender community as compared to the other LGBTQ community. There is either no acknowledgement or only condemnation.’¹¹⁷

- 10.1.2 The USSD HR Report 2023 stated that ‘Societal, family, religious, and

¹¹² UNDP, [National Strategic Framework for Transgender Persons ...](#) (page 11), December 2023

¹¹³ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

¹¹⁴ UPR, [Joint Stakeholder Report on Sexual and Reproductive Health...](#) (paragraph 25), no date

¹¹⁵ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [General Country of Origin ...](#) (page 71), 5 July 2024

¹¹⁶ DFAT, [Country Information Report – Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.198), 30 April 2025

¹¹⁷ CGRS-Cedoca, [Pakistan - Situatie van seksuele minderheden](#) (page 21), 27 April 2020

community discrimination reportedly meant most LGBTQI+ individuals did not self-identify.¹¹⁸

10.1.3 The April 2025 DFAT report noted:

‘People self-identifying as gay or lesbian in Pakistan often face ostracism from their families, forced heterosexual marriage, discrimination, bullying and violence. Homosexuality is culturally taboo in Pakistani society, according to in-country sources. LGBTQIA+ people rarely self-identify or reveal their sexual orientation in the public sphere because of stigma, fear of societal discrimination and the threat of violence and criminal prosecution. In-country sources told DFAT there were pockets of acceptance towards LGBTQIA+ people among urban, upper-class communities in 2023 but even wealthy individuals faced discrimination, and in some cases, their families still forced them into heterosexual marriage to preserve the family’s reputation.’¹¹⁹

10.1.4 Lifestyle magazine, VICE, reported in July 2022 on how some queer individuals enter into ‘lavender marriages’ – heterosexual unions between a gay man and a lesbian – to protect themselves from societal and familial rejection. These marriages allowed them to maintain a socially acceptable facade while preserving their personal identities in private. Couples like ‘Sarah and Bilal’, both gay, lived together as husband and wife to avoid being disowned or forced into traditional marriages. Though these arrangements offered some safety, they came with emotional strain, secrecy, and mental health challenges. The practice was reportedly growing among Pakistan’s elite in urban areas but remained largely undocumented due to fear and lack of research¹²⁰.

10.1.5 The Gaylaxy Magazine article ‘Queer and Married in Patriarchal Pakistan’ (April 2020), focussed on the problems faced by gay or bisexual men who were forced or coerced into arranged marriages. The author explained that, in Pakistan’s deeply patriarchal, heteronormative society, queer men like 28-year-old Kamal were under enormous family pressure to marry a woman to fulfil social and religious expectations. Marriage was seen as a duty, especially for men, to carry on the family name. Many queer men were bullied into it as families used emotional blackmail, such as threatening disinheritance, to coerce them. Once married, gay men often endured feelings of guilt, shame, and a sense of failure because they could not satisfy their wives sexually. Some continued to have relationships with men in secret. Others suffered the collapse of their marriage: one bisexual man’s wife divorced him after discovering his bisexuality, and he was barred from seeing his own child¹²¹.

10.1.6 See also the section on love marriage in the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Women fearing gender-based violence](#), which refers to marriages that are chosen rather than arranged.

10.1.7 In an overview of its findings, the Project ADAL report noted that ‘Lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) women face discrimination on the basis of their sex and sexuality at workplaces and homes. Many such women attempt to run away from their families and face much physical, emotional and sexual

¹¹⁸ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

¹¹⁹ DFAT, [Country Information Report – Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.192), 30 April 2025

¹²⁰ VICE, [Inside the Lives of Queer People in Heterosexual Marriages](#), 13 July 2022

¹²¹ Gaylaxy, [Queer and Married in Patriarchal Pakistan](#), 22 April 2020

violence in the process – sometimes ending up murdered in “honour killings”.¹²²

10.1.8 Of 7 men who had relationships with people of the same sex, interviewed as part of a UNDP national survey on Pakistan’s response to HIV, published in February 2024, 5 reported violence from family members due to their purported feminine behaviour and/or suspected same-sex relationships, and they ‘had to leave their families and live elsewhere.’¹²³

10.1.9 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted that ‘According to LGBTQI+ NGOs and activists, society generally shunned transgender women, eunuchs, and intersex persons, who often lived together in slum communities and survived by begging and dancing at carnivals and weddings.’¹²⁴ Although the law prohibited the discrimination of trans people’s access to housing, the USSD HR Report 2023 noted that, ‘... Property owners frequently refused to rent or sell property to transgender persons.’¹²⁵

10.1.10 According to the April 2025 DFAT report:

‘There is some societal acceptance in Pakistan of khwaja siras or hijra (a male-to-female transgender identity often referred to by the broader term ‘transgender’ in English). For example, the Council on Islamic Ideology has spoken out against discrimination against khwaja siras. Transgender candidates have competed in general and provincial elections. Punjab’s educational department opened Pakistan’s first government-run school for transgender students in July 2021 in Multan.’¹²⁶

10.1.11 The same report added:

‘Although in-country sources told DFAT the socio-economic standing of transgender people in Pakistan had improved since 2021, transgender people were still marginalised and discriminated against. Trans women were often rejected by their families and turned to sex work or earned their income by begging or dancing at carnivals and weddings. This work was highly visible, and workers were vulnerable to physical and sexual violence, which was often not reported due to fear it would impact employment and ability to earn an income.’¹²⁷

10.1.12 The Netherlands 2024 COI report stated that, according to one source, the situation for LGBT+ people had deteriorated since their [last COI report](#) [dated September 2022, available in Dutch only]¹²⁸. For example, the report noted that ‘Landlords often refused to rent to members of the LGBTIQ+ community. One NGO working for their rights had to relocate four times within three months.’¹²⁹

10.1.13 An article in The Express Tribune’s T Magazine, dated 8 June 2025, noted that landlords often charged trans people inflated rents or refused to rent to them altogether, while other trans people who were able to rent faced bullying and harassment by other residents. Despite legal protections under

¹²² Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 12), June 2022

¹²³ UNDP, [Community voices. An HIV gender assessment in Pakistan](#) (page 35), February 2024

¹²⁴ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

¹²⁵ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

¹²⁶ DFAT, [Country Information Report – Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.194), 30 April 2025

¹²⁷ DFAT, [Country Information Report – Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.198), 30 April 2025

¹²⁸ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [General Country of Origin ...](#) (page 70), 5 July 2024

¹²⁹ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [General Country of Origin ...](#) (page 70), 5 July 2024

the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, enforcement was weak. Many trans people lacked proper identity documents due to societal and family pressure, which further limited access to housing and utilities. While some provincial governments announced housing support schemes, implementation remained poor¹³⁰.

- 10.1.14 In September 2025, the HRCP condemned the decision by a committee of elders in Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to expel trans people from the district¹³¹. A trans-rights activist said the move was ‘... part of an intensifying campaign of hate against trans persons across the province.’¹³²
- 10.1.15 The Project ADAL report noted the control of women’s sexuality and mobility by families in general, adding ‘In the case of lesbian, bisexual and queer women, this extends to domestic violence, forced marriage and corrective rape... In a few cases, family members even threatened to murder women in the name of “honor” upon finding out about their sexuality.’¹³³
- 10.1.16 The same report noted that ‘Lesbian, bisexual and queer women are vulnerable to violence from their intimate partners, particularly in cases of forced marriages. Wilful denial of contraception or gynaecological health by partners and families, particularly in cases of forced marriages of LBQ women, is not recognized as a form of domestic violence.’¹³⁴
- 10.1.17 The Project ADAL report also noted a lack of economic independence for women generally and that ‘Being a lesbian, bisexual or queer woman further adds to the vulnerability and economic dependence is used as a control mechanism by families over women.’¹³⁵
- 10.1.18 According to the USSD HR Report 2023, ‘There were no laws addressing or forbidding so-called conversion therapy ... Psychiatric services were reportedly limited, and some families of LGBTQI+ persons consulted traditional or religious healers for exorcisms. Occasionally these involved forceful beatings, physical violence, or forceful detention in homes as coercive punishment or an attempt to force a change to the person’s sexual identity or expression.’¹³⁶

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10.2 Violence, harassment and extortion

- 10.2.1 The Project ADAL report recorded the types of violations based on SOGIE, broadly categorised as verbal abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse, and found that, of the 956 documented cases ‘... verbal harassment was most common and observed in almost two-third [611] cases.’¹³⁷ Over half the cases (511) included instances of discrimination. Sexual harassment occurred in 346 cases, there were 181 sexual assaults, and 180 cases of rape, including gang rape. There were 322 incidents of ‘beating/torture.’¹³⁸ The report added that in most cases (79%) the victim knew the

¹³⁰ Express Tribune, [Living in filth & fear](#), 8 June 2025

¹³¹ Express Tribune, [HRCP slams Swabi Jirga over transgender expulsion](#), 15 September 2025

¹³² Voicepk.net, [“We are not expendable”: transgender community resists ...](#), 16 September 2025

¹³³ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 44), June 2022

¹³⁴ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 44), June 2022

¹³⁵ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 46), June 2022

¹³⁶ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

¹³⁷ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 18), June 2022

¹³⁸ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 17), June 2022

perpetrator¹³⁹, and that 75% of the victims identified as trans, mostly from the Khawaja Sira indigenous community¹⁴⁰. State officials were perpetrators in 12% of cases¹⁴¹. The study also found that people from more economically disadvantaged backgrounds were more susceptible to violence and human rights abuses, highlighting that the majority of trans people 'live in poverty.'¹⁴²

- 10.2.2 Project ADAL reported that some gangs sought out vulnerable gay men through dating apps [see [Online and social media presence](#)] and subjected them to torture, rape and extortion¹⁴³. The report also cited an increase in gangs targeting trans women, particularly those engaged in sex work, for abuse and extortion¹⁴⁴, and deemed that sexual violence against trans people was 'endemic'¹⁴⁵.
- 10.2.3 On 9 August 2024, trans women at a protest in Peshawar, KP province, called for more protection against hate crimes. Shouting the slogan 'Arrest the blackmailers!' they referred to gangs who kidnap trans women to extort ransom money. Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (RFERL) noted that members of the trans community said acts of violence against them often go unpunished¹⁴⁶.
- 10.2.4 In their submission to the HRC dated September 2024, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) – an NGO of international judges and lawyers promoting human rights and the rule of law – and its partner organisations recorded at least 45 trans people murdered between August 2019 to March 2024 in Punjab and KP provinces and noted that perpetrators had not been brought to justice in the majority of cases. According to police data presented to the KP assembly, of 267 cases of violence against trans people reported in KP in 2019 to 2023, there was only one conviction¹⁴⁷.
- 10.2.5 RFERL reported on 22 October 2024 that 2 trans individuals were killed in an attack in Mardan, KP province. According to the authorities, investigations were ongoing. RFERL added that according to an NGO which campaigns for trans rights, 122 trans people had been killed in KP province since 2009, but no one had been convicted¹⁴⁸. An Express Tribune article dated April 2024 cited NGO data that said 126 trans people had been killed in KP in the past 5 years¹⁴⁹.
- 10.2.6 Trans people reported they were commonly subjected to harassment, abuse and so-called honour killings by relatives on account of perceived sexual transgressions¹⁵⁰.

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¹³⁹ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 18), June 2022

¹⁴⁰ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 12, 14) June 2022

¹⁴¹ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 19), June 2022

¹⁴² Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 16) June 2022

¹⁴³ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (pages 12, 19) June 2022

¹⁴⁴ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 32) June 2022

¹⁴⁵ Project ADAL, [Human Rights Abuses and Violations on the basis of ...](#) (page 28) June 2022

¹⁴⁶ RFERL, [Pakistani Transgender Women Demand Safety](#), 10 August 2024

¹⁴⁷ ICJ, [UN Human Rights Committee, 142nd session ...](#) (paragraphs 59, 65), September 2024

¹⁴⁸ RFERL, [2 Transgender People Killed In Northwest Pakistan](#), 22 October 2024

¹⁴⁹ Express Tribune, [Trans persons continue to face ostracisation after death](#), 21 April 2024

¹⁵⁰ RFERL, [2 Transgender People Killed In Northwest Pakistan](#), 22 October 2024

10.3 Regional differences

- 10.3.1 The 2024 Netherlands COI report noted that, according to the personal opinion of a confidential source, there were regional differences regarding the treatment of LGBT+ people, roughly described as:

‘Sindh: more progressive; a hijra festival exists. Karachi: somewhat progressive.

‘Balochistan: situations have deteriorated for transwomen; there are no LGBTIQ+ organisations – only groups that work to fight AIDS. Not safe for LGBTIQ+ people.

‘Punjab: conservative culture.

‘KP: traditional and tribal. Tradition of dancing boys. Sexual exploitation of boys. Not safe for LGBTIQ+ people. There was an increase in violence and threats against transgender women. In 2022, at least seven transgender women in the province were killed.’¹⁵¹

- 10.3.2 No further information specifically relating to regional differences could be found amongst the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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11. LGBT+ community

11.1 Population

- 11.1.1 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted that ‘LGBTQI+ persons rarely revealed their sexual orientation or gender identity in the public sphere. There were communities of openly transgender persons, but they were marginalized and frequently targets of violence and harassment.’¹⁵² The USSD made the same findings in their 2022¹⁵³ and 2021¹⁵⁴ HR reports.

- 11.1.2 Although preliminary data of the 2017 census, released in August 2017, reported the trans population was 10,418 persons¹⁵⁵, the final results approved in April 2021¹⁵⁶, and published by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), took the number to 21,774¹⁵⁷. The final results of the 2023 census recorded fewer trans people – 20,331 – in a total population of over 240 million¹⁵⁸. The trans community and rights groups consider the trans population to be far greater^{159 160}, with estimates of around 500,000¹⁶¹.

- 11.1.3 As sexual orientation outside of heterosexual norms were not recognised, there were no official statistics for the number of lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

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¹⁵¹ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [General Country of Origin ...](#) (pages 70, 71), 5 July 2024

¹⁵² USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

¹⁵³ USSD, [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 20 March 2023

¹⁵⁴ USSD, [2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 12 April 2022

¹⁵⁵ Dawn, [Census shows over 10,000 transgender population in Pakistan](#), 26 August 2017

¹⁵⁶ PBS, [Brief Regarding Census-2017](#), no date

¹⁵⁷ PBS, [Final Results of Census-2017](#) (Table-1, Pakistan), no date

¹⁵⁸ PBS, [7th Population and Housing Census](#) (Table-1, Pakistan National level), no date

¹⁵⁹ UNDP, [Transcending Binaries for Gender Justice in Pakistan](#), 6 November 2024

¹⁶⁰ The Daily Star, [Pakistan elections 2024: Widespread exclusion of the Trans ...](#), 7 February 2024

¹⁶¹ NBC News, [Pakistan's transgender community gets a ride-sharing service ...](#), 11 September 2024

11.2 Meeting places and events

- 11.2.1 Qasim Iqbal told Cedoca in April 2020 that Pakistan's 'gay scene' was generally underground in large urban areas such as Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, in the form of private parties, which were mostly accessible to the upper and middle classes¹⁶². A person of upper or middle class in Pakistan may be described as someone who typically has access to quality education, holds professional or managerial employment, and maintains a lifestyle characterised by stable housing, social respectability, and aspirations for cultural or economic advancement^{163 164 165}.
- 11.2.2 Pakistan gay man and LGBT+ activist, Sal, who was born and grew up in Karachi before moving to the USA circa 2019, spoke about being gay in Pakistan in an interview with gay travel blog, Nomadic Boys, posted in June 2024. Sal said that gay men met via dating apps (accessible via a VPN, or Virtual Private Network) as there were no official gay bars or clubs [see [Online and social media presence](#)]. He added '... most big cities in Pakistan will have some form of underground gay scene taking place behind closed doors, particularly in Karachi and Lahore. The trick is to know people. Any LGBTQ events/parties will never be advertised for fear of inciting violence and will simply be promoted by word of mouth.'¹⁶⁶
- 11.2.3 In June 2024 a man was detained in a psychiatric hospital after requesting authorisation for opening a gay club¹⁶⁷. (See also [Arrest and detention](#)).
- 11.2.4 In his email to Cedoca, dated 15 April 2020, Qasim Iqbal of NAZ stated that sexual and gender minorities had become more organised and visible as evidenced by their active participation in various events¹⁶⁸.
- 11.2.5 Events included the annual Aurat March (Women's March), who have been organising demonstrations in the country's main cities since 2018, usually on International Women's Day, to denounce the discrimination faced by cisgender and trans women^{169 170 171}. However, the USSD HR Report 2023 noted that the Aurat March '... sometimes faced hardships in obtaining assembly permits because of alleged support to sexual minorities or the alleged support of LGBTQI+ activists', and that they 'continued to receive threats from extremist groups, including the right-wing newspaper Ummat, which considered the march to be "vulgar and anti-Islamic."¹⁷² Furthermore, many NGOs did not participate after receiving direct threats¹⁷³. The USSD made similar findings in their 2022¹⁷⁴ and 2021¹⁷⁵ HR reports.
- 11.2.6 In addition, the USSD HR reports for 2022 and 2023 noted that public places were reportedly more reluctant to host trans events given the increase in

¹⁶² CGRS-Cedoca, [Pakistan - Situatie van seksuele minderheden](#) (page 17), 27 April 2020

¹⁶³ Dawn, [Defining income groups](#), 20 November 2006

¹⁶⁴ The Nation, [Social Stratification in Pakistan](#), 23 December 2022

¹⁶⁵ The News International, [Where is our middle class?](#), 16 January 2024

¹⁶⁶ Nomadic Boys, [Gay Pakistani boy Salman tells us about gay life in Pakistan](#), 17 June 2024

¹⁶⁷ The Print, [Pakistani man lands in asylum after he tries opening a gay club, given ...](#), 11 June 2024

¹⁶⁸ CGRS-Cedoca, [Pakistan - Situatie van seksuele minderheden](#) (page 17), 27 April 2020

¹⁶⁹ SuPWR, [Aurat March and Aurat Azadi March](#), no date

¹⁷⁰ Express Tribune, [Aurat March attracts diverse crowd](#), 9 March 2024

¹⁷¹ Express Tribune, [Aurat March kickstarts in February this year](#), 14 February 2025

¹⁷² USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

¹⁷³ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

¹⁷⁴ USSD, [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 20 March 2023

¹⁷⁵ USSD, [2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 12 April 2022

religiously motivated anti-LGBT+ protests^{176 177}.

- 11.2.7 In November 2022, the first Sindh Moorat March (Sindh Trans March) was held in Karachi to defend the rights of trans people¹⁷⁸. In 2023 and 2024 the trans-pride event brought participants demanding equal rights from across the province of Sindh^{179 180}.
- 11.2.8 The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) noted that, on 31 March 2023, the 'International Day of Trans Visibility was observed in Sindh, with events held in Karachi.'¹⁸¹
- 11.2.9 In November 2023 the country's first 'Hijra Festival' was also held in Karachi, attended by members of the trans community from across the country¹⁸². The festival was held again in November 2024¹⁸³. In the opinion of a confidential source, cited in the 2024 Netherlands COI report, the existence of the festival demonstrated Sindh's more progressive stance on LGBT+ issues compared to the rest of the country¹⁸⁴.

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11.3 Online and social media presence

- 11.3.1 Some dating and live-streaming apps, including gay dating app Grindr, as well as Tinder, Tagged, Skout, and SayHi., were banned in Pakistan in 2020, after the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) described their content as 'immoral/indecent.'^{185 186 187}. Grindr, and other blocked sites, were only accessible via a Virtual Private Network (VPN)^{188 189}. The dating app Hullo was marketed as an LGBT dating site in Punjab¹⁹⁰.
- 11.3.2 Freedom House noted in their report on digital media and internet freedom (Freedom on the Net 2024 – reporting period June 2023 to May 2024) that, 'Authorities frequently block content that is critical of Islam or the military, content that is deemed a threat to national security, sites that host pornography or nudity, and sites related to or offering circumvention and privacy tools, in addition to other political and social content.'¹⁹¹
- 11.3.3 According to the USSD HR Report 2023, 'Online harassment and doxing (publicly identifying individuals online) were common and used to silence prominent transgender figures.'¹⁹²
- 11.3.4 Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2024 stated that, 'Social taboos and the criminalization of same-sex relations mean that local content addressing

¹⁷⁶ USSD, [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 20 March 2023

¹⁷⁷ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

¹⁷⁸ The Guardian, ['We deserve to be treated equally': Pakistan's trans ...](#), 20 November 2022

¹⁷⁹ Dawn, [Trans community raises demand for identity at Moorat March](#), 20 November 2023

¹⁸⁰ Dawn, [Sindh Moorat march in Hyderabad seeks equal opportunities ...](#), 25 November 2024

¹⁸¹ HRCP, [State of human rights in 2023](#) (page 76), 2024

¹⁸² Dawn, [Bold and colourful trans people celebrate their proud identity](#), 11 November 2023

¹⁸³ Dawn, [Trans people demand freedom to live life on their own terms at ...](#), 10 November 2024

¹⁸⁴ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [General Country of Origin ...](#) (pages 70, 71), 5 July 2024

¹⁸⁵ PTA, [PTA Blocks Five Dating/Live Streaming Applications](#), 1 September 2020

¹⁸⁶ BBC News, [Pakistan blocks Tinder and Grindr for 'immoral content'](#), 2 September 2020

¹⁸⁷ Reuters, [Pakistan blocks five dating apps including Tinder and Grindr](#), 1 September 2020

¹⁸⁸ Cybernews, [Best VPNs for Grindr in 2025](#), 24 October 2025

¹⁸⁹ Insights by Data Darbar, [Pakistan's digital blackout & the rise of VPN apps](#), 23 May 2023

¹⁹⁰ Hullo, [Free online dating Pakistan](#), no date

¹⁹¹ Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2024 – Pakistan](#) (B1), 16 October 2024

¹⁹² USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 6), 22 April 2024

the interests of LGBT+ people is limited and that some people avoid organizing around issues related to these identities.’¹⁹³

- 11.3.5 The same report noted regarding trans people that ‘Throughout the coverage period, transgender individuals continued to be subjected to organized online disinformation campaigns related to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2018, particularly by the religious party Jamaat-e-Islami, social media influencers, and public figures like Maria B.’¹⁹⁴
- 11.3.6 Freedom House noted in regard to creating online community spaces that ‘... when the Sindh High Court denied permission to hold “Scrap Fest” – a festival consisting primarily of transgender performers – in Karachi in February 2023, the event was moved online.’¹⁹⁵

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11.4 Civil society groups and NGOs

- 11.4.1 Information on support groups for people identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual was scarce amongst the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 11.4.2 The USSD HR Report 2023 noted that ‘The domestic NGO registration agreement with the government required NGOs not to use terms the government found controversial, such as ... lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex (LGBTQI+) persons, in their annual reports or documents.’¹⁹⁶ The USSD reported the same in their 2022¹⁹⁷ and 2021¹⁹⁸ HR reports.
- 11.4.3 According to Qasim Iqbal of the NAZ association, as communicated to Cedoca in 2020:
- ‘There are many organizations that operate all across Pakistan that cater towards the LGBTQ community or are at least inclusive of them in their project interventions. These organizations are mostly concentrated in larger cities but some can also be found in smaller areas. Most of the organizations operating in Pakistan are part of a network called the Gulabi Triangle, of which NAZ is the secretariat. This network consists of all the local organizations that have been working for the LGBTQ community in Pakistan.’¹⁹⁹
- 11.4.4 Organisations offering support and/or advocacy for sexual and gender minorities (primarily trans people) included:
- Neengar Society
 - Forum for Dignity Initiatives
 - NAZ Male Health Alliance
 - Blue Veins
 - Gender Interactive Alliance Pakistan

¹⁹³ Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2024 – Pakistan](#) (B7), 16 October 2024

¹⁹⁴ Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2024 – Pakistan](#) (B5), 16 October 2024

¹⁹⁵ Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2024 – Pakistan](#) (B8), 16 October 2024

¹⁹⁶ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 5), 22 April 2024

¹⁹⁷ USSD, [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 5), 20 March 2023

¹⁹⁸ USSD, [2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan](#) (section 5), 12 April 2022

¹⁹⁹ CGRS-Cedoca, [Pakistan - Situatie van seksuele minderheden](#) (page 18), 27 April 2020

- Khawaja Sira Society (founded by NAZ)
- TransAction^{200 201}

- 11.4.5 The April 2025 DFAT report noted that ‘Some support groups exist in Pakistan for members of the LGBTQIA+ community; however, they tend to operate in secret to avoid harassment, threats and state surveillance. In-country sources told DFAT security services often pressured CSOs not to work with, or provide services to, members of the LGBTQIA+ community because of their “un-Islamic” and “Western-orientation”’.²⁰²
- 11.4.6 The same source noted that ‘In-country sources said 17 districts in Punjab had organisations providing assistance to transgender people who had experienced domestic violence. Transgender people have successfully brought lawsuits against people and organisations in Pakistan who had discriminated against them, although not all transgender people would be comfortable with the higher profile in society that comes with these actions.’²⁰³

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²⁰⁰ IRB, [Pakistan: Treatment of sexual and gender minorities...](#), 17 January 2019

²⁰¹ AsyLex, [Pakistan LGBTQI+ Resources](#), July 2024

²⁰² DFAT, [Country Information Report – Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.192), 30 April 2025

²⁰³ DFAT, [Country Information Report – Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.194), 30 April 2025

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Legal context
 - constitution, criminal, penal and civil codes, Sharia law
 - general anti-discrimination provisions
 - same-sex couples, including civil union and marriage
 - gender reassignment/transition, and recognition of gender identity of trans persons
- State attitudes and treatment
 - government rhetoric
 - policies/programmes that assist or discriminate against LGBT+ persons
 - application of laws – arrests and detentions, prosecutions, convictions, acquittals
 - restrictions/enforcement of law against LGBT+ organisations
 - other state treatment, such as harassment, blackmail, bribery, corrective therapy
 - access to public services, including education, healthcare, employment, justice system
 - state protection – response and assistance provided, including arrests and prosecutions of persecutors, witness protection, assistance in relocation
 - geographic, socio-economic or other factors affecting variation in attitudes/treatment
- Societal attitudes and treatment
 - public opinion/views/surveys, including anti-LGBT+ movements and public demonstrations
 - societal norms – prevailing cultural and family attitudes to male/female relationships, family and non-conforming behaviour
 - religious group attitudes, statements and actions
 - media representation, language and discourse
 - treatment by society, including family members, such as shunning and stigma, harassment and violence, mob attacks and gender-specific forms of violence such as corrective rape or conversion therapy
 - accessing accommodation, education, employment and healthcare
 - geographic, socio-economic or other factors affecting variation in attitudes/treatment
- LGBTI individuals, communities and groups

- size and location of LGBTI population
- presence, projection and location of openly LGBT+ persons and communities into public life
- numbers, aims and location of openly LGBT+ communities
- services, meeting places and events, such as bars, restaurants and Gay Pride
- operation, activities and restrictions of LGBT+ civil society and other supportive groups or associations, including websites

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **6.0**
- valid from **26 November 2025**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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Changes from last version of this note

Update of country information since May 2025.

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Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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