

2.1.1. Landscape of political parties in Pakistan

The Election Commission of Pakistan listed on its website 171 registered political parties and one alliance of five parties.116 In practice, however, political competition remained dominated by a limited number of major actors,117 notably the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N), the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).118 Smaller parties, including the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (Pakistan) (JUI-P) and Pakistan Muslim League (PML) continued to hold limited representation at national level.119

Ethnic identity continued to play a significant role in Pakistan's political landscape120 with several parties drawing support from particular ethnic or regional constituencies, resulting in geographically concentrated patterns of political support.121 The PML-N remained strongest in Punjab,122 while the PPP maintained its dominant position in Sindh,123 particularly in rural areas of the province.124

The legal framework governing political parties is primarily set out in the Elections Act 2017, which regulates, *inter alia,* registration with the Election Commission, financial reporting requirements, and the conduct of intra-party elections.125 During the reporting period, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) was banned under anti-terrorism legislation following violent protests in October 2025.126 In December 2025, the Punjab Assembly passed a resolution to ban PTI and its founder, former prime minister Imran Khan, without explicitly mentioning either by name.127

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