# 4.2.2. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)

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### ○ (a) General description of the province

The area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is 101 741 square kilometres.[698] KP is located in northwestern Pakistan. It shares internal boundaries with Punjab province and the ICT to the south, as well as with GB and AJK —parts of Pakistan-administered Kashmir— to the northeast and east. KP shares its western and northern borders with Afghanistan.[699] In terms of administrative units, KP is divided into seven divisions (Mardan, Peshawar, Malakand, Bannu, Kohat, Dera Ismail Khan, Hazara), which are further subdivided into 35 districts. Peshawar is KP's capital city.[700]

KP is the country's third most populous province.[701] According to the 7th Population & Housing Census of Pakistan in 2023, its population was 40 856 097. Pashto-speaking (also: Pushto-speaking) groups made up 81 % of the KP's inhabitants, while Hindko-speaking groups made up about 9 % of KP's population. Smaller language groups include Saraiki, Kohistani, Urdu, and others.[702] According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (BPS), 99 % of people in KP are Muslim, although there are also Christians, Hindus/Jati, and Sikhs in the province.[703] In parts of Kurram district, Shiites formed a majority.[704]

According to reports, KP's economy is 'agrarian in nature'. For 83 % of the population, agriculture is their primary source of income and accounts for 22.7% of KP's GDP.[705] Additionally, KP engages in mining,[706] notably rare earth mineral extraction.[707] According to the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), quoted by the Pakistani newspaper The Nation in a May 2024 article, 48 % of KP's population is 'multidimensionally poor', the second-highest rate across the country (following Balochistan with 70 %).[708]

### ○ (b) Presence and general activities of the armed actors

During the reporting period, insurgents gained foothold throughout former FATA.[709] PICSS reported that while violence in the parts of KP excluding former FATA was 'traditionally' concentrated in the divisions of Peshawar and Malakand, in 2024, a 'shift in militant focus toward the southern districts' bordering North and South Waziristan was noticeable.[710] The security situation in the province was described as very unstable,[711] with ongoing militant attacks and counterterrorism operations.[712] Approximately 4 000 militants were reportedly based in KP,[713] especially in former FATA.[714] Key players in this environment included the TTP, its affiliates, such as the splinter group JuA[715] or the HGB group, local Taliban factions, and LeI.[716] The TTP maintained a robust presence in South and North Waziristan,[717] Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, and Kurram districts.[718] The HGB emerged as a rival in districts like North Waziristan and Bannu.[719] In April 2025, it became part of the Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP), a coalition of smaller Islamist militant factions, including the LeI, or the newly formed Inqilab-e-Islami Pakistan.[720] The HGB and TTP re-grouped and expanded their presence from the southern to almost all districts of KP. TTP militants reportedly infiltrated the region from Afghanistan and integrated into local villages, as per official sources cited by PIPS.[721] ACLED reported in December 2024 that the TTP and HGB aimed to expel security forces from KP to seize control of tribal territories,[722] while the Ahl-e Sunnat wa-l-Jamaat (ASWJ) (also: Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, SSP) was also present in Peshawar and Kurram districts as of late 2024.[723]

In 2024, 72 % (221) of all militant attacks in the parts of KP excluding former FATA occurred in Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat, Bannu, Tank, Kohat, Hangu, and Karak.[724] As for the former FATA region, PICSS reported that in 2024, militancy shifted from the northern and central areas to the south. This made South Waziristan the district most affected by militant attacks for the first time in over a decade. The district experienced 76 of the overall 259 militant attacks that occurred in the former FATA region. North Waziristan followed with 61 attacks. The two districts together accounted for 53 % of the overall attacks in the former FATA, followed by Bajaur (54), Khyber (36), and Kurram (20).[725]

In 2025, PIPS reported incidents in 27 districts of KP (including former FATA),[726] up from 22 in 2024.[727] SATP noted with reference to its database, that while 28 districts in KP (including former FATA) recorded militancy-related incidents in 2024 (up from 22 in 2023), the number decreased to 24 in 2025.[728] According to PICSS, militant attacks in the parts of KP province excluding former FATA increased in both frequency and intensity, while compared to 2024, the security situation in former FATA areas deteriorated further, with militant activity expanding and having a more severe human impact.[729] The TTP and allied factions were reported as the main perpetrators.[730]

Militant activity in 2025, according to PIPS, was particularly high in six southern districts: North and South Waziristan, Bannu, Tank, Lakki Marwat, and Dera Ismail Khan, which accounted for over 60 % (248) of total attacks in KP (including former FATA). Notable attacks were also reported in Bajaur (36), Peshawar and Khyber districts (50 together), and Kurram (17).731 Regarding former FATA districts, PICSS reported that South Waziristan was the most affected by militancy in 2025, recording 95 of overall 260 militant attacks recorded in the area, continuing the trend observed in 2024. The district was followed by Bajaur (65), North Waziristan (55), Khyber (31), and Kurram districts (20).732 Bannu (118) and Lakki Marwat (117) emerged as major hotspots in the other parts of KP (excluding former FATA), which overall recorded 419 militant attacks, as noted by PICSS, while Dera Ismail Khan recorded high fatalities relative to incidents (39 attacks). Militant violence in the area also spread beyond the south, impacting Peshawar, Swat, Lower Dir, and Shangla with significant attacks including suicide attacks and targeted strikes.733 ACLED highlighted an increase in militancy in the southern districts, particularly Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat, and Bannu.734 ISKP was also active in some parts of KP,735 such as in Bajaur district.736 There were also reports of drone strikes in KP737 by state forces, the TTP, and other groups.738

Government security operations, according to PIPS, focused on North Waziristan, Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat, and Bannu districts, with activities also noted in Khyber, Karak, and South Waziristan.739 Other sources reported operations in Bajaur,740 Mohmand,741 and Orakzai districts.742 According to PICSS, in 2025, 139 ‘security force actions’ were documented in former FATA districts. The report states that the focus was on the North and South Waziristan districts, with Bajaur and Kurram being identified as other relevant areas. PICSS also reported damage to civilian infrastructure and civilian casualties resulting from these operations.743 PICSS further reported that operations in the parts of KP excluding former FATA were expanded into the peripheries of cities, with frequent support by ‘local peace committees and armed villagers’, in particular in Lakki Marwat and the south.744 Drone strikes were reportedly used.745 In December 2025, ACLED reported the use of quadcopter drone strikes in support of military operations targeting militant hideouts in KP. Civilian casualties from at least six air and drone strikes reportedly sparked backlash. The source also noted a more direct involvement of local communities, with tribal councils directly negotiating with members of the TTP and an increased support of security forces by armed local militias. 746 The government did not officially confirm the use of drones in anti-militant efforts by 2025.747

In December 2024, hostilities escalated between Pakistan and Afghanistan due to Pakistan's airstrikes on alleged TTP hideouts in Afghanistan.748 Tensions intensified in early 2025, particularly in the Kurram district, leading Pakistan to reinforce its border fortifications.749 They erupted again in October 2025, when Pakistan launched attacks

on Kabul, and Afghanistan targeted Pakistan's border area.750

For border incident details, see section 4.1.2. Border security, including incidents along the Durand Line (Afghanistan), the Line of Control (India), and the Pakistan–Iran border, and for information on Pakistan's relationship with neighbouring countries, see section 2.2. Regional context

### ○ (c) Recent security incidents and impact on civilian population and infrastructure

*Security incidents*

PIPS, PICSS, and CRSS reported that in 2025, KP saw the highest number of militant attacks in Pakistan,751 with incident counts ranging from 413 (PIPS)752 to 699 (PICSS, including former FATA).753 CRSS documented 795 violent incidents (including militant attacks and counter-militancy operations). The CRSS figure constituted about 63 % of all violent incidents in the country that year.754 These figures marked a 36 to 44 % increase from 2024.755 The TTP carried out 96 % of its assaults in KP in 2024, more than doubling 2023 counts.756 Moreover, about 75 % of 158 security operations in Pakistan during 2024 occurred in KP,757 which increased to 80 % of 259 attacks in 2025. Of the 23 suicide and *fedayeen*758 attacks recorded by PIPS in 2025, 14 took place in KP, attributed to groups including TTP, HGB, IMP, and ISKP.759 As of March 2026, KP remained either the country's most760 or second-most militant violence-affected province, alternating with Balochistan.761 Sources reported civilian casualties resulting from government security operations during the reference period.762 In a June 2025 publication, Amnesty International cited its Regional Director for South Asia who stated that the authorities had failed to protect civilian lives, including those of children, and civilian property in KP province. They noted that civilians were continuing to fall victims of the increasing number of drone strikes.763 An attack by the Pakistani air force on villages in the Northwest's Tirah valley in September 2025 reportedly targeting TTP hideouts, for example, resulted in 30 civilian fatalities, including children, while others were injured.764

In 2024, PICSS reported 54 abducted individuals in KP (including 12 in former FATA), including police officials, marking a 'concerning' increase.765 This trend escalated in 2025, with 127 abducted individuals reported (including 66 in former FATA).766 PIPS reported that in 2025, abductions of security personnel, tribal elders and government officials, as well as business people and traders by the TTP and affiliated groups intensified, with 39 of the country's 40 such incidents taking place in KP, some resulting in civilian fatalities.767

In the second half of 2024, long running sectarian tensions[768] around land in Kurram district[769] have led to violence between Sunnis and Shiites,[770] causing civilian deaths [771] and injuries.[772] Sporadic clashes persisted until the beginning of September 2025. [773] PIPS recorded 11 sectarian attacks in 2024, including 4 in Kurram, which also saw 12 out of 13 recorded clashes,[774] involving mainly Shiite and Sunni groups and rival tribes.[775]

In 2025, PIPS reported 21 border incidents,[776] a decrease from 26 in 2024.[777] The situation peaked in October 2025, characterised by intense military escalation between Pakistan and Afghanistan, including Pakistani airstrikes and cross-border clashes,[778] and again in February 2026.[779] Hostilities continued into March 2026.[780]

Protests against security operations in KP province, including in Bajaur, Waziristan, Khyber, and Swat were reported.[781] After a March 2025 security operation in Mardan district, resulting in civilian fatalities among a nomadic tribe from the Swat region, reportedly acknowledged by the Pakistani government, large protests erupted.[782] In September 2025, an explosion in the Tirah valley, reportedly at a TTP compound, resulted in the deaths of at least 24 civilians, including children. Local opposition figures and authorities claimed that the Pakistani military was responsible for conducting nighttime airstrikes under the guise of a ‘counterterror operation’ targeting fighters in the mountainous areas near the Afghanistan border, according to Al Jazeera. [783] Protests also erupted in mid-2025 in Bajaur district in response to the sudden initiation of a security operation.[784] According to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), military operations in the Tirah Valley in FATA have resulted in the displacement of thousands of people since 2009.[785]

From 1 November 2024 to 24 April 2026, ACLED reported 2 003 security incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: 1 070 were coded as battles, 507 as explosions/remote violence and 426 as incidents of violence against civilians. Security incidents in Bannu, Lakki Marwat and South and North Waziristan districts accounted for nearly half of all recorded security incidents in the province (990).[786]

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**Figure 4: Evolution of security events coded ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ and ‘violence against civilians’ in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province between 1 November 2024 and 24 April 2026, based on ACLED data**[787]

**Fatalities**

From 1 November 2024 to 24 April 2026 ACLED reported 3 963 fatalities.[788]

*Civilian casualties*

SATP reported 48 civilian deaths due to militant violence in KP from 1 January 2026 and 7 March 2026.789 In 2025, civilian casualties in KP included 129 deaths and 211 injuries reported by PICSS,790 alongside a December 2025 KP police report cited by SATP noting 223 deaths and 570 injuries due to militant violence.791 In comparison, in 2024, 89 civilians were killed and 80 were injured according to PICSS,792 indicating an increase in civilian deaths of 45 %. According to PICSS, the rise in civilian casualties indicated a growing spread of violence into populated areas.793 CRSS reported that KP suffered more than 68 % (2 331) of all violence-related deaths in 2025,794 compared to more than 63 % (1 616) in 2024.795 The IEP reported that, in 2024, 545 of 558 militancy-related deaths took place in KP.796

73 % of all militant attacks in KP in 2025, according to PIPS, targeted security personnel, particularly army and police staff,797 continuing a 2024 trend.798 ISKP, for its part, carried out a few attacks against civilians, including members of the Shia community, religious minorities, politicians, and tribal leaders.799

In 2024, Kurram district accounted for 97 % of deaths from sectarian violence, totalling 227 fatalities, according to PIPS.800 The above-mentioned November 2024 sectarian incident in Kurram was described as one of the region's most lethal attacks in recent years by the German BAMF, resulting in at least 130 deaths and 186 injuries.801

Drone strikes in South and North Waziristan districts caused civilian deaths, including children, and injuries,802 along with civilian fatalities from an alleged government drone strike in Mardan district in March 2025.803 According to Amnesty International, '[d]rone strikes have been long part of "counterterrorism" efforts in Pakistan.'804

*Impact on infrastructure*

As of June 2025,805 Kurram district has been inaccessible since November 2024 due to road blockages by authorities following the sectarian clashes mentioned above. The blockages have sparked protests.806 Due to the road blockages and insecure overland travel, essential commodities have been transported into Kurram by helicopter.807 Sources reported that the ongoing security conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan has led to the indefinite closure of state-run schools in Kurram, Bajaur, and Khyber,808 as well as Mohmand and North Waziristan districts.809

*Displacement and return*

Militant activity and military operations in KP and the former FATA have led to large-scale displacement,810 affecting over 6 million residents between 2003 and 2014.811 Sources indicated that security operations in KP812 and a worsening security situation have led to significant displacement during the reporting period.813 After the above-mentioned November 2024 incidents in Kurram district, residents were moved to temporary shelters, while a security operation reportedly targeting militants was carried out in several areas, such as Bagan city.814 In mid-2025, a targeted government offensive against the TTP in Bajaur district (Operation Sarbakaf)815

displaced around 100 000 individuals, according to official sources cited by Arab News.[816] In February 2025, Pakistan closed the Torkham border crossing over disputes regarding an Afghan border post,[817] resulting in the displacement of thousands, but it was later reopened after a ceasefire.[818] In January 2026, significant displacement reportedly occurred[819] amid 'talk of a limited offensive' against the TTP in KP's Tirah valley.[820] However, there were conflicting reports as to whether such an offensive was officially planned,[821] with Pakistan's defence minister reportedly denying claims that a military operation was planned or about to be implemented.[822] Reports regarding the number of people evacuated[823] and whether an official evacuation order was given also vary.[824] Many displaced individuals have found temporary housing in Khyber district,[825] while others settled with host communities in Bara or rented accommodations in Jamrud and Peshawar countryside due to inadequate government housing solutions for IDPs from Tirah Valley, as reported by Dawn in March 2026.[826]

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