



6.1.4. Women and girls

Women in Pakistan face discrimination,[1562](#) including legal and economic, as well as various forms of societal violence.[1563](#) They are underrepresented or marginalised from public and political spheres, including in the electoral rolls,[1564](#) with a substantial voter gender gap of 9.9 million, which decreased from 11.8 % (2018) to 7.1 % (2025).[1565](#) The majority of out-of-school children in the country are girls.[1566](#)

Pakistan is a party to several international treaties and agreements related to the rights of women and girls, including the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). When Pakistan ratified CEDAW in 1996, it made reservations stating that it does not consider itself bound by Article 29(1),[1567](#) which stipulates that ‘States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband.’[1568](#) Pakistan did not ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.[1569](#)

Women’s rights are enshrined in the constitution, which guarantees fundamental rights, such as prohibiting discrimination based on sex[1570](#) and ensuring their full participation in national life.[1571](#) The ‘protection to women against misuse and abuse of law and to prevent their exploitation’ is stated by the 2006 Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act.[1572](#) For further background information on women, see section 6.5 of the EUAA COI report Pakistan - Country Focus (December 2024).

Patriarchy is still present in Pakistan, affecting women’s role in society,[1573](#) particularly from a young age.[1574](#) Women in Pakistan represent more than half of the total population;[1575](#) however, the female literacy rate stood at only 49 % as of 2025, according to the Global Gender Gap Index.[1576](#) The majority of out-of-school children in Pakistan are girls.[1577](#) The literacy rate among girls in Pakistan is impacted by militants targeting girls’ schools, specifically in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan provinces.[1578](#) For more information, see section [6.1.5. Children.](#)

Women engaged in politics and activism continue to experience challenges. During the general election in 2024, a *fatwa* (Islamic decree) prohibiting campaigning by women candidates was issued in Kohistan district. The *fatwa* was rejected by the Election Commission.[1579](#) In March 2026, 19 women activists of Aurat March were detained by police prior to the rally planned for the International Women’s Day.[1580](#)

Female-headed households

Under Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), a state-run programme, supporting more than 10 million families in Pakistan – a female beneficiary is recognised as the head of the household. [1581](#) In November 2025, a special support package for women and children was announced. According to the package details, all women registered as heads of households under BISP will receive a higher monthly stipend, an increase from Rs 8 500 [around 80 EUR] to Rs 10,500 [around 100 EUR]. The package also included free or subsidised health insurance for women, especially mothers. [1582](#)

Violence against women and girls, including sexual, domestic and honour related violence

Violence against women and girls remains a serious problem in Pakistan, [1583](#) ‘including rape, murder, acid attacks, domestic violence, denial of education, sexual harassment at work, and child and forced marriage,’ [1584](#) and an increase in gender-based violence cases, [1585](#) including digital based violence. [1586](#) In rape cases, perpetrators include both individuals known to survivors and strangers, including husbands. In some instances, the identity of the perpetrator was not reported [1587](#) or was attributed to the police. [1588](#) Many incidents of gender-based violence occurred within victims’ homes. [1589](#) For information on shelters for women and protection units centres in Pakistan, see section 6.5.1(b) of the EUAA COI report Pakistan - Country Focus (December 2024).

The law defines rape as sexual intercourse with a person against their will, without their consent, or with consent obtained by fear of death/hurt. It also includes intercourse with a minor under 16 or with a person unable to communicate consent. [1590](#)

In 2024, 70 % of gender-based violence (GBV) incidents went unreported. Of those reported, the national conviction rate stands at 5 %, with certain GBV offenses as low as 0.5 % and domestic violence convictions at 1.3 %. [1591](#)

According to the 2024 Sustainable Social Development Organisation (SSDO), a non-governmental organisation working on issues of peace and sustainable development in Pakistan, a total of 32 617 cases of gender-based violence were reported in Pakistan in 2024, including 5 339 incidents of rape, and 24 439 incidents of kidnapping/abduction. [1592](#) The conviction rate in rape cases at the national level stood at 0.5 %. [1593](#) In 2024, Islamabad recorded seven convictions out of 176 reported rape cases. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reported one conviction from 258 cases, Sindh reported no convictions despite 243 cases, and Balochistan recorded 21 rape cases with no convictions. [1594](#) In December 2025, the Supreme Court of Pakistan issued a case judgement changing a rape conviction to fornication (consensual sex out of marriage). [1595](#)

In December 2025, Senator Sherry Rehman warned that despite numerous gender-based violence laws in Pakistan, [1596](#) weak enforcement and systemic gaps continue to hinder access to justice for survivors [1597](#) including insufficient police investigations and forensic practices, delays in judicial and procedural processes, and persistent impunity. [1598](#)

While gender-based violence in Pakistan includes acts such as rape, domestic violence, harassment, and so-called honour killings rooted in gender inequality, gender-based violence broadly refers to physical, sexual, psychological, and economic harm directed at individuals

because of their gender, and the country continues to face major gaps in addressing emerging forms such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence due to weak legal recognition, limited enforcement, low digital literacy, and insufficient institutional and survivor support mechanisms.[1599](#)

On 12 January 2026, six policemen reportedly gang raped a 17-year-old girl in custody in Jacobabad district (Sindh) after detaining her, her 15 years old sister, and their grandmother in a private place with male copes in connection with an alleged murder case.[1600](#) Initial medical check-up report confirmed that the victim was subjected to gang rape.[1601](#)

Conviction rates for crimes related to gender-based violence remained low across all provinces in Pakistan in 2024. For example, the national level conviction rate of rape and honour killings stand at 0.5 %, convictions. Furthermore, kidnapping and abduction cases demonstrate a lower conviction rate of 0.1 %, and domestic violence cases result in 1.3 % conviction rate.[1602](#)

In November 2025, the National Assembly passed the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill.[1603](#) The bill,[1604](#) applicable only in Islamabad, aims to provide protection to victims of domestic violence.[1605](#) The bill criminalises harassment, threats, and abuse within households[1606](#) and foresees penalties of a maximum period of three years and not less than six months and a fine of up Rs 100 000 [around 300 EUR], paid to the victim. In case of failure to pay the fine, the court may award additional imprisonment of three months.[1607](#) The bill was rejected by Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) senators[1608](#) who labelled the bill as ‘un-Islamic’.[1609](#) In January 2026, the Domestic Violence Act was approved by Pakistan’s Parliament[1610](#) and signed into law by President Asif Ali Zardari.[1611](#) Under the Act, the definition of domestic violence has been expanded and includes emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse.[1612](#) One in three women in Pakistan face some form of domestic abuse.[1613](#)

Honour killings remain prevalent in Pakistan. A total of 531 honour killings were recorded from January 2024 to November 2024, and 101 cases were reported between January 2024 and June 2024 in Sindh province. In the first half of 2024, 1 630 cases of child abuse (59 % of which were girls) were recorded by Sahil, a non-governmental organisation working on child protection.[1614](#)

As reported by Al Jazeera in 2025, honour killings have increased in recent years in Pakistan.[1615](#) According to HRCP, 405 women were killed in 2024, in comparison to 226 cases in 2023.[1616](#) To contrast, according to SSDO, a total of 2 238 incidents of domestic violence, and 547 cases of honour killing were recorded in 2024.[1617](#) HRCP’s 2025 update indicates continued prevalence of domestic and “honour”-related violence, including at least 470 “honour” killings and thousands of domestic violence cases.[1618](#)

In the period between January 2025 and June 2025, 50 cases of domestic violence were reported, and none resulted in conviction or acquittal. The findings highlighted that physical abuse remained the most prevalent, accounting for 76 % of all reported cases. Of these, 13 cases were still under investigation, while 24 had reached the trial stage. Sexual abuse constituted 14 %, financial abuse 8 %, and psychological abuse 2 % of the reported cases.[1619](#)

Forced and child marriage

In 2024, girls from religious minority groups faced forced conversions and marriages, particularly in Sindh and Punjab provinces, as reported by Amnesty International.[1620](#) For more information, see section (a) Conversion.

Sindh and Islamabad enforced 18 as the minimum marriage age for girls in 2024.[1621](#) The ordinance was promulgated in February 2026 declaring child marriage a non-bailable offence.[1622](#) In addition, the Balochistan Assembly adapted the child marriage prohibition bill in November 2025,[1623](#) setting the marriage age to 18 years old.[1624](#)

In May 2025, Pakistan's parliament passed the landmark Child Marriage Restraint Bill.[1625](#) The bill, applicable only in the Islamabad territory,[1626](#) bans child marriages and establishes minimum legal age of 18 for girls and boys to get married.[1627](#) The bill was signed into law by the president Asif Ali Zardari on 30 May 2025.[1628](#) The Pakistan Council of Islamic Ideology criticised the bill, describing it as 'un-Islamic'.[1629](#)

In the period between 2024[1630](#) and 2025, there were over 19 million child brides in Pakistan, with nearly one in six girls married before the age of 18 while 4.8 million girls were married before the age of 15, according to UNICEF.[1631](#)

According to an article from November 2025, child marriages were still prevalent in parts of Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan, with child marriage cases allegedly rarely going through the formal legal system.[1632](#)

According to SSDO, inefficiencies, delays, and systemic biases of Pakistan's criminal justice system weaken justice for gender-based violence survivors. In addition, gender-based violence survivors have limited access to legal aid, face prolonged trial durations, as well as cultural pressures, that impede them from reporting or pursuing cases.[1633](#)

- [1562](#)

UN Women, National report on the status of women in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#), p. 2; BTI, BTI 2024 Country Report Pakistan, 19 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 13, 18

- [1563](#)

HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 7; UN Women, National report on the status of women in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#), pp. 2, 82-91

- [1564](#)

HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2023, 8 May 2024, [url](#), p. 7

- [1565](#)

HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2025, 4 May 2026, [url](#), p. 34

- [1566](#)

World Bank, Five major challenges to girls' education in Pakistan, June 2024, [url](#); Pakistan, Pakistan Institute of Education, Pakistan Education Statistics 2022-2023, [url](#), pp. 70-72

- [1567](#)

United Nations Treaty Collection, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, [url](#); UN OHCHR, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979, 18 December 1979, [url](#)

- [1568](#)

UN OHCHR, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979, 18 December 1979, [url](#), art 9(1)

- [1569](#)

United Nations Treaty Collection, Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1999, [url](#)

- [1570](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Art. 25

- [1571](#)

Pakistan, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, [url](#), Art. 34

- [1572](#)

Pakistan, Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006: [url](#)

- [1573](#)

Dawn, Pakistan's Struggle for Women's Rights, 21 September 2025, [url](#)

- [1574](#)

Shah M, Patriarchy starts young in Pakistan – so must equality, LSE, 7 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1575](#)

Dawn, Over 22m children out of schools in Pakistan, says PM Shehbaz, 11 January 2025, [url](#)

- [1576](#)

WEF, Global Gender Gap Report 2025, June 2025, [url](#), p. 32

- [1577](#)

Save the Children, Education spending in Pakistan hits new low with more than one in three children out of school – Save the Children, 19 June 2025, [url](#); AI, Pakistan 2024, April

2025, [url](#)

- [1578](#)

AI, Pakistan 2024, April 2025, [url](#)

- [1579](#)

AI, Pakistan 2024, April 2025, [url](#)

- [1580](#)

Dawn, Dozens of Aurat March activists, participants detained by police in Islamabad ahead of International Women's Day rally, 8 March 2026, [url](#); Pakistan Today, Aurat March participants call for inquiry into police action after release, 10 March 2026, [url](#)

- [1581](#)

Business Recorder, Women recognised as head of household under BISP: chairperson, 9 January 2026, [url](#); Pakistan, Benazir Income Support Programme, About us, overview, n.d., [url](#)

- [1582](#)

BF ECS, Special BISP Support Package Planned for Women and Children in 2025, 10 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1583](#)

HRW, Pakistan, Events of 2024, 16 January 2025, [url](#); HRW, Pakistan, Events of 2025, 5 February 2026, [url](#)

- [1584](#)

HRW, Pakistan, Events of 2025, 5 February 2026, [url](#)

- [1585](#)

Tribune Express (The), Gender-based violence against women surges 25% in Pakistan, 2 December 2025, [url](#)

- [1586](#)

UNFPA, Technology-facilitated gender-based violence in Pakistan: Critical gaps in justice system's response, December 2025, n.d., [url](#)

- [1587](#)

Tribune Express (The), Gender-based violence against women surges 25% in Pakistan, 2 December 2025, [url](#)

- [1588](#)

Express Tribune (The), 6 cops arrested for 'gang rape of teen in custody', 20 January 2026, [url](#)

- [1589](#)

Tribune Express (The), Gender-based violence against women surges 25% in Pakistan, 2 December 2025, [url](#)

- [1590](#)

Pakistan, Pakistan Penal Code (Act XLV of 1860), Section 375, [url](#)

- [1591](#)

Dawn, Consent on trial: How Pakistan's courts are failing rape survivors, 10 January 2026, [url](#)

- [1592](#)

SSDO, SSDO Report 2024: Gender-Based Violence Surges in Pakistan with Dismal Conviction Rates, n.a., [url](#)

- [1593](#)

SSDO Report 2024: Gender-Based Violence Surges in Pakistan with Dismal Conviction Rates, n.a., [url](#)

- [1594](#)

Dawn, Consent on trial: How Pakistan's courts are failing rape survivors, 10 January 2026, [url](#)

- [1595](#)

Voicepk.net, Women's rights activists condemn Supreme Court for turning rape conviction into 'fornication', 17 December 2025, [url](#); Dawn, Consent on trial: How Pakistan's courts are failing rape survivors, 10 January 2025, [url](#)

- [1596](#)

Dawn, Call for effective implementation of gender-based violence laws, 19 December 2025, [url](#)

- [1597](#)

Dawn, Call for effective implementation of gender-based violence laws, 19 December 2025, [url](#); ANI, Pakistan's justice system fails women: Sindh's battle against gender violence exposes deep structural flaws, 17 October 2025, [url](#)

- [1598](#)

UN Women, How Pakistan's anti-rape crisis cells are transforming support for survivors, 18 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1599](#)

UNFPA Pakistan, Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Pakistan: CRITICAL GAPS IN JUSTICE SYSTEM'S RESPONSE, 7 December 2025, [url](#)

- [1600](#)

Express Tribune (The), 6 cops arrested for 'gang rape of teen in custody', 20 January 2026, [url](#)

- [1601](#)

Dawn, Six policemen held for raping girl in Jacobabad police station, 20 January 2026, [url](#)

- [1602](#)

SSDO Report 2024: Gender-Based Violence Surges in Pakistan with Dismal Conviction Rates, n.a., [url](#)

- [1603](#)

Dawn, Everything you need to know about the new Domestic Violence Bill passed by the National Assembly, 14 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1604](#)

Pakistan, Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2025, [url](#)

- [1605](#)

Dawn, NA rubber-stamps four bills linked to new tweaks, 14 November 2025, [url](#); Dawn, Anti-domestic violence bill promises 'stringent penalties' in ICT, 16 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1606](#)

Daily Times, Parliament passes Domestic Violence Act 2026, threats to wife criminalized, 24 January 2026, [url](#)

- [1607](#)

Dawn, Anti-domestic violence bill promises 'stringent penalties' in ICT, 16 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1608](#)

Dawn, Fazl objects to legislations enacted to combat child marriages and domestic violence, protect transgender people, 25 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1609](#)

Dawn, Senate okays domestic violence bill amid opposition outcry, 28 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1610](#)

Daily Times, Parliament passes Domestic Violence Act 2026, threats to wife criminalized, 24 January 2026, [url](#); Nation (The), Second marriage, divorce threats against wife now punishable offenses under new law, 25 January 2026, [url](#)

- [1611](#)

Pakistan Today, President Zardari signs Domestic Violence Bill into law despite earlier objections, 26 January 2026, [url](#); Express Tribune (The), President Zardari signs off on domestic violence bill, 26 January 2026, [url](#)

- [1612](#)

Friday Times (The), Lifeline For Survivors: Understanding Pakistan's Domestic Violence Act 2026, 23 January 2026, [url](#)

- [1613](#)

UN Women Pakistan, n.a., [url](#); Dawn, Anti-domestic violence bill promises 'stringent penalties' in ICT, 16 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1614](#)

AI, Pakistan 2024, April 2025, [url](#)

- [1615](#)

Al Jazeera, Father, ex-husband, among 9 arrested in alleged honour killing in Pakistan, 29 July 2025, [url](#)

- [1616](#)

Al Jazeera, Father, ex-husband, among 9 arrested in alleged honour killing in Pakistan, 29 July 2025, [url](#)

- [1617](#)

SSDO, SSDO Report 2024: Gender-Based Violence Surges in Pakistan with Dismal Conviction Rates, n.a., [url](#)

- [1618](#)

HRCP, State of Human Rights in 2025, 4 May 2026, [url](#), p. 16

- [1619](#)

Dawn, Conviction rate in domestic abuse cases between Jan-June remained zero, says report, 29 October 2025, [url](#)

- [1620](#)

AI, Pakistan 2024, April 2025, [url](#)

- [1621](#)

Dawn, Punjab set to fix minimum age for marriage at 18, 31 October 2025, [url](#)

- [1622](#)

Dawn, Punjab governor promulgates ordinance declaring child marriage non-bailed offense, 12 February 2026, [url](#)

- [1623](#)

Dawn, Balochistan Assembly passes child marriage bill, 15 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1624](#)

Save the Children, Balochistan becomes latest province to ban child marriage in Pakistan, 19 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1625](#)

UN Women Pakistan, Islamabad Capital Territory Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2025, 20 May 2025, [url](#); Li

- [1626](#)

UN Women Pakistan, Islamabad Capital Territory Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2025, 26 May 2025, [url](#)

- [1627](#)

UN Women Pakistan, Islamabad Capital Territory Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2025, 20 May 2025, [url](#); Girls Not Brides, A Turning Point in Pakistan's Fight to End Child Marriage: The Child Marriage Restraint Act 2025 for Islamabad Capital Territory, 11 July 2025, [url](#)

- [1628](#)

Dawn, President signs child marriage bill into law, 31 May 2025, [url](#)

- [1629](#)

Arab News, Pakistan Council of Islamic Ideology declares bill to criminalize child marriages 'un-Islamic', 28 May 2025, [url](#)

- [1630](#)

UN Women, Breaking tradition to end child marriage in Pakistan's remote village, 13 November 2024, [url](#)

- [1631](#)

Dawn, Pakistan home to over 19 million child brides: Unicef, 21 September 2025, [url](#)

- [1632](#)

Voicepk.net, National report warns of rising violence against children in first half of 2025, 25 November 2025, [url](#)

- [1633](#)

SSDO Report 2024: Gender-Based Violence Surges in Pakistan with Dismal Conviction Rates, n.a., [url](#)

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu