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 sex1570 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 households1606 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) senators1608 who labelled the bill as ‘un-Islamic’. 1609 In January 2026, the Domestic Violence Act was approved by Pakistan’s Parliament1610 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 20241630 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

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