

7.2.2. Employment (formal and informal)

The Pakistan Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2024-2025 reported that the unemployment rate for Sindh province was at 5.3 %, with a higher rate among women (8.7 %) than men (4.6 %).2099 Out of 17.5 million employed people in Sindh, 13.5 million (77 %) worked in the informal sector, while 4 million (23 %) people were in a formal sector employment. Furthermore, 32 % of youth in Sindh aged 15-24 were 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET), with the rate for females (51.6 %) higher than for males (14.7 %).2100 At Karachi Division level, the 2023 Population & Housing Census, which uses a different definition of 'employment'2101 and is based on a different reference period to the LFS, reported that out of 15.4 million working-age population (aged ten and above), approximately 6 million were employed and 950 000 unemployed. Of the 4.4 million paid employees 87 % were male, 13 % female.2102 Furthermore, 3.4 million (67.1 %) of the age group 15-24 were neither employed nor in education in the urban areas of Karachi Division.2103

In July 2025, the government of Sindh set a new minimum wage at 40 000 Pakistani rupees [approximately EUR 121.2] per month for unskilled workers.2104 The monthly minimum wage for semi-skilled workers was set at 41 380 Pakistani rupees [approximately EUR 125.3], for skilled workers at 49 628 Pakistani rupees [approximately EUR 150.3], and for highly qualified workers, the minimum wage was set at 51 745 Pakistani rupees [approximately EUR 156.7]. 2105 According to the WFP, the daily wage for non-qualified labour was 1 478 Pakistani rupees [approximately EUR 4.5] as of February 2026.2106 According to the Economic Survey 2024-25 of the Pakistani Ministry of Finance, between July 2024 and March 2025, the daily wage of an unskilled labourer working in construction was 1 430.09 Pakistani rupees [approximately EUR 4.3] per workday.2107

According to a 2025 report on labour conditions in textile factories in Faisalabad and Karachi, 2108 the estimated monthly living wage in Pakistan varied between 47 416 Pakistani rupees [approximately EUR 143.6] and 75 321 Pakistani rupees [approximately EUR 228.1], while the legal minimum wage at the time of research (up to November 2024) was 37 000 Pakistani rupees [approximately EUR 112.1] and the average wage reported by the interviewed workers was 25 000 Pakistani rupees [approximately EUR 75.7]. A Karachi-based union leader reported that only an estimated five out of 100 factories complied with minimum wage laws. The study also found a gender pay gap, as female workers often received lower pay than male workers for the same numbers of working hours and the same tasks.2109

For another report on the working conditions at export-oriented garment manufacturers in Karachi and Lahore, published in 2025,2110 66 workers were interviewed in Karachi, of whom the majority declared that they worked between 57 and 70 hours a week, exceeding the legal limit of 56 hours.2111

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  Pakistan, PBS, Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2024-2025, September 2025, url, p. 105

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  Pakistan, PBS, Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2024-2025, September 2025, url, pp. 54, 101-102

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  For example, employment is defined by the LFS as ‘all persons ten years of age and over who worked at least one hour during the reference period [past week] and were either “paid employed” or “self-employed”’ (Pakistan, PBS, Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2024-2025, September 2025, url, pp. VI-VII), whereas the 2023 Census defines it as ‘an activity in which an individual works regularly [reference: past one year] for another person and gets remunerated in return’ (Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population & Housing Census – 2023 – National Census Report, August 2024, url, p. 157).

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  Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population & Housing Census 2023 – Detailed Results, Table 14 – Sindh, Province Wise, n.d., url

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  Pakistan, PBS, 7th Population & Housing Census 2023 – Dashboard, n.d., url. Set filters to Karachi Division, accessed on 17 February 2026

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  Pakistan, DG Labour Government of Sindh, The Sindh Minimum Wages Board convened a meeting today, 24th July 2025, n.d., url; Dawn, Sindh fixes Rs40,000 as minimum wage, 8 July 2025, url

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  Pakistan, Government of Sindh Labour & H.R. Department, Notification, 28 July 2025, url; Pakistan, DG Labour Government of Sindh, The Sindh Minimum Wages Board convened a meeting today, 24th July 2025, n.d., url

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  WFP, Data Visualized, Pakistan-Prices, Commodities in the selected Market(s), last updated February 2026, url. Set filters to Karachi/ Wage

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  Pakistan, Ministry of Finance, Pakistan Economic Survey 2024-25, n.d., url, p. 147

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For the report, 12 in-depth interviews and eight focus group discussions were conducted with factory workers in Faisalabad and Karachi in January-June 2023 and November 2024. Swedwatch and Awaz

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  For the report interviews with 124 workers in Lahore and Karachi took place, of which 66 were workers in Karachi, between January and October 2024. Arisa, Overworked and Underpaid: Excessive hours, wage theft and poor working conditions in Pakistan’s garment export factories, July 2025, url, pp. 6-7

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  Arisa, Overworked and Underpaid: Excessive hours, wage theft and poor working conditions in Pakistan’s garment export factories, July 2025, url, pp. 27, 29

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