



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 reported¹⁵⁸⁷ 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 survivors¹⁵⁹⁷ 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 copses 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 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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