



6.1.5. Children

Pakistan is party to several international treaties and agreements related to the rights of children, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990; as well as the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict in 2016, and the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2011.[1634](#)

Children's rights are enshrined in the constitution, which guarantees the protected status of children,[1635](#) their right to education,[1636](#) and protection from employment in vocations unsuited to their age.[1637](#) Moreover, the constitution prohibits child labour, stating that 'no child below the age of fourteen shall be engaged in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment.'[1638](#)

In June 2025, the province of Punjab approved the first Comprehensive Child Protection Policy to improve the safety and well-being of children.[1639](#) However, according to Nida Aly, Executive Director of the Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell (AGHS) interviewed by EUAA in March 2026, the Punjab Child Protection Policy has been approved by the cabinet but has not yet been notified (gazetted), meaning that in the absence of a formal publication by the government in the Gazette, laws or subordinate regulations cannot legally take effect.[1640](#)

As reported by the local media The News and announced by the Punjab Home Secretary Dr Ahmed Javed Qazi, the Punjab government 'carries out a zero-tolerance policy against violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children.'[1641](#)

In 2024, Pakistan ranked 153rd out of 194 countries in the Kids Rights Index 2024,[1642](#) and declined to the 155th place out of 194 countries in 2025 as reported by the Kids Rights, an international non-governmental organisation that promotes the wellbeing of vulnerable children across the world.[1643](#)

Children in Pakistan comprise nearly half of the total population, with an estimated number of 100 million children.[1644](#)

The birth rate in Pakistan in 2025 was 25.11 births per 1 000 population, representing a 1.81 % decline from 2024, when it stood at 25.58 births per 1 000 population (an 8.01 % decline from 2023).[1645](#) Infant mortality rate for 2025 was 53.54, a 2.05 % decline from the 2024 rate of 54.66 (9.1 % increase from 2023).[1646](#) In contrast and per the findings of the Pakistan Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024-25, infant mortality rate has decreased from 60 to 47 per 1 000 live births.[1647](#) According to UNICEF Pakistan's 2024 Annual Report, infant and maternal mortality rates remain high in Pakistan, with approximately 1 000 children

under five dying every day - mostly from preventable causes.[1648](#) For example, in 2025, Pakistan was one of two countries in the region with a vaccination rate among one-year old children of less than 90 % (exact rate: 84 %).[1649](#)

Only one in three children under the age of five was registered at birth in Pakistan.[1650](#) According to Nida Aly, Executive Director of the Asma Jahangir Legal Aid Cell (AGHS) interviewed by EUAA in March 2026, 'low birth registration rates in Pakistan reflect limited government capacity, under-resourced offices, and weak implementation. The process has historically been complex, awareness of the importance of registration is low, and socio-economically disadvantaged families face high direct and indirect costs. For instance, physical inaccessibility in rural and remote areas severely constrains birth registration.'[1651](#) In 2024, UNICEF reported 600 000 births registered in health facilities.[1652](#)

Access to education

Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children with an estimated 25.1 million children aged 5-16 not attending school, which represents 35 % of the total population in this age group.[1653](#) In 2025, Save the Children reported an estimated number of 26 million children being out-of-school, which represented one of the highest percentages globally.[1654](#)

In contrast, the Pakistan HIES 2024-25 findings revealed that the number of out-of-school children has decreased from 30 % to 28 %.[1655](#) According to the household survey conducted between September 2024 and June 2025, the number of out of school children has dropped from 25.3 million to approximately 20 million.[1656](#) In January 2026, the expert of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Thuwayba Al Barwani, stated that 'Pakistan was facing a severe education crisis,' with some 77 % of children unable to read and comprehend simple texts by the age of 10.[1657](#)

In Punjab, the number of out-of-school and street children has reached 30 million and continues to rise. In 2023, there were around 53 000 government schools, while in 2026 this number decreased to 38 000.[1658](#)

To address the education emergency,[1659](#) the Pakistani government offered a cash stipend for girls which facilitated the enrolment of 800 000 girls. Furthermore, large-scale teacher training programmes were carried out by the government.[1660](#)

In an interview with the EUAA in March 2026, Nida Aly stated that 'overall [...] progress in education remains severely constrained by poverty, gender disparities, varying regional literacy rates, and weak infrastructure.'[1661](#)

Violence against children

Children in Pakistan have continued to face different forms of violence,[1662](#) including sexual abuse and exploitation, [1663](#) domestic labour,[1664](#) child trafficking[1665](#) and child labour.[1666](#) Moreover, according to UNICEF, children in Pakistan are highly vulnerable to climate-induced disasters.[1667](#) According to HRCP, as reported by Dawn, an increase in violence against women and children was recorded in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.[1668](#) In 2024, a total of 3 364 child abuse cases were reported in local media.[1669](#)

Human Rights Watch reported that child sexual abuse remained common in Pakistan in 2024. In the period between January 2024 and June 2024, 862 cases of child sexual abuse, 668 cases of abduction, 82 cases of missing children, and 18 cases of child marriages were reported, according to the children's rights organisation Sahil.¹⁶⁷⁰ Between January 2025 and June 2025, 950 cases of child sexual abuse, 605 cases of abduction, 192 cases of missing children, and 34 cases of child marriages or compensation marriage were reported,¹⁶⁷¹ with 31 children killed after sexual abuse, and 62 abandoned newborns (alive or dead).¹⁶⁷² In its 2025 update, HRCP cites NGO Sahil data reporting over 3 600 cases of violence against children, including 2 003 cases of child sexual abuse, 1 107 cases of abduction, 365 cases of missing children, and 53 cases of child marriage.¹⁶⁷³

Pakistan witnessed a 20 % increase in reported child sexual abuse cases between January 2025 and June 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, according to Sahil's Cruel Numbers report.¹⁶⁷⁴ According to a 2025 national report on violence against children, in the period between January 2025 and June 2025, 5 097 cases of violence against children were reported.¹⁶⁷⁵

While there has been an increase in the conviction rate for child sexual abuse cases from 5 to 17 % between 2021 and 2026, slow investigations and low number of cases resulting in convictions remain challenges when seeking justice in cases related to violence against children.¹⁶⁷⁶

In January 2026, the Pakistani delegation reiterated the national strategic plan to combat violence against children. According to the delegation, the strategic plan focuses on protection, prosecution and rehabilitation, and included actions against sexual and online abuse. State legislation-imposed penalties that were proportionate with the gravity of these crimes. District-level mechanisms had been established to protect children from sexual violence, including through inspections and rescue operations.¹⁶⁷⁷

Child trafficking and child labour

A 2025 national report expressed concern over the continued threat of internal and cross-border trafficking, with children forced into labour and sexual exploitation.¹⁶⁷⁸ According to USDOS, 'traffickers buy, sell, rent, and kidnap children for forced labor in begging, domestic work, work in small shops, agriculture, cotton, brickmaking, fishing, and child sex trafficking, and some children are at risk of trafficking in food stalls, restaurants, construction, street vending, the coal industry, and scavenging at garbage dumpsites.'¹⁶⁷⁹

A 2025 survey conducted by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics with the technical assistance of UNICEF revealed that Pakistan's children are subjected to hazardous labour in workshops, kilns, tanneries, and domestic settings.¹⁶⁸⁰

In 2025, more than 12.5 million children in Pakistan were involved in child labour. Displaced children, migrant children, and children living in informal or poor urban settlements faced 'disproportionately high risks of exploitation, early marriage, trafficking, and child labour', as reported by WHO.¹⁶⁸¹

According to the 2025 Pakistan Bureau of Statistics survey, over 1.6 million – 10.3 % of children aged 5-17 – were engaged in child labour in Sindh province.¹⁶⁸² District-level data showed wide disparities: Qambar Shahdadkot with child labour prevalence of 30.8 %, followed by Tharparkar

at 29 %, Tando Muhammad Khan at 20.3 %, and Shikarpur at 20.2 %. Karachi had the lowest rate, at 2.38 %.[1683](#)

In 2024, an official of the district administration in Hyderabad (Sindh) stated that an estimated number between 1.2 million and 1.5 million of children were involved in begging on streets in Pakistan.[1684](#) The Consortium for Street Children estimates that there are around 1.5 million street children in Pakistan, with numbers reportedly increasing due to poverty, displacement, and violence.[1685](#) Street children were at a higher risk of facing abuse, child labour, exploitation, trafficking, and arbitrary arrest.[1686](#) Children were also forced to beg by organised criminal groups.[1687](#)

In a 2024 Child Labor report, US Department of Labor (USDOL) highlighted that Pakistan's federal and provincial laws did not align with international standards for the minimum age for work or hazardous work. Moreover, Pakistan's federal and provincial laws did not prohibit the use of children in illicit activities. USDOL reported on the lack of sufficient human and financial resources by the provincial labour inspectorates, and unavailability of national enforcement data. Police corruption, and a lack of willingness to conduct criminal investigations were also reported as factors deterring Pakistan's ability to address child labour across the country.[1688](#)

According to UNICEF, children are highly vulnerable to recurrent natural disasters in Pakistan.[1689](#) Since the end of June 2025, more than 200 children were killed due to torrential monsoon rains across Pakistan. At least 674 schools were destroyed or damaged.[1690](#)

In the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, about 860 schools were damaged by floods or were not accessible, consequently placing education for more than 119 000 children on hold, according to Save the Children.[1691](#)

Some 2 000 schools were reconstructed in Sindh and Punjab following the floods as reported by UN OHCHR in January 2026.[1692](#)

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