4.9. Children

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October 2026

This profile refers to Pakistani citizens under the age of 18. This section covers certain child-specific circumstances of increased vulnerability and risks that children in Pakistan may be exposed to.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI products: COI Update 2026, 3., 4.; Country Focus 2026, 6.1.2., 6.1.4., 6.1.5.; Country Focus 2024, 6.6.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Children in Pakistan comprise nearly half of the total population, with an estimated number of 100 million children. Children's rights are enshrined in the constitution which also 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'. Nevertheless, they have been exposed to various forms of violence by various actors.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Being a child is to be taken into account in the assessment on whether an act reaches the threshold of persecution.

Some acts to which children could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, children in Pakistan are exposed to different forms of violence and exploitation, including killings, sexual abuse, trafficking in human beings, child marriage, child labour, disappearances and abductions.

Trafficking of children has been carried out mainly for the purpose of child sex and forced labour.

Not all forms of **child labour** would amount to persecution. An assessment should be made in light of the nature of the work and the age of the child. However, work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children would be considered sufficiently severe to reach the threshold of persecution (12). In Pakistan, child labour has been characterised by hazardous working conditions in workshops, kilns, tanneries, and domestic settings. Organised crime

groups have forced children to beg.

For **child marriage** and gender-based violence, including sexual violence, see also Women and girls.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable likelihood for children to face persecution should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Gender**: girls face a particularly high risk of child marriage. Additionally, girls going to schools other than *madrassas* are at higher risk of attacks from extremist groups such as Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and affiliated groups.
- **Age**: children within the age range 6–15-year-old are the most vulnerable age group for sexual violence.
- **Religious background**: Hindu, Christian and Sikh girls face a higher risk of kidnapping, forced conversion to Islam, and forced marriage.
- **Socio-economic status:** displaced children and children living in informal or poor urban settlements are particularly at risk of exploitation, child labour, child marriage and trafficking. Street children (13) are at a higher risk of abuse, child labour, exploitation, trafficking, and arbitrary arrest.
- **Access to education**: a lack of education reinforces a child's vulnerability to various forms of persecution, including child labour, economic exploitation, trafficking, and child marriage (14). The majority of out-of-school children are girls.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where a well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, the individual circumstances of the child need to be taken into account to determine whether a convention nexus to a reason for persecution can be substantiated. Persecution for this profile may be for reasons of **membership of a particular social group**, especially when this profile overlaps with other profiles (e.g. in relation to gender-based violence, see also Women and girls). For girls forcibly converted to Islam, including through forced marriage, **religion** grounds may also be substantiated.

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  Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, C182, 17 June 1999.

- 13

‘Children in street situations (CiSS) are defined as children whose world and livelihood depends upon what they can obtain in the streets. CISS include those who accompany their peers, siblings, or family members in the streets.’, UNICEF, *Children in Street Situations*, consulted on 23 July 2026.

- 14

  UN Economic and Social Council, *General Comment No. 11: Plans of Action for Primary Education (Art. 14 of the Covenant)*, 10 May 1999, para. 4.

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