

## **PAKISTAN — Country Profile**

### **Overview**

Pakistan is situated in the northwestern part of the south Asian subcontinent. Comprising a total land area of 796,096 square kilometers, it features a diversified terrain and topography. The country's northern areas include five of the world's 14 highest mountain peaks. Pakistan is an agricultural country, and about 64 percent of its population lives in rural areas. The country gained its independence on 14 August 1947, after the subdivision of the Indian subcontinent then ruled by the British Empire.

Pakistan is now the sixth most populous country in the world, with its population reaching 184.5 million in 2012-13. At present, the population density is 231 persons per square kilometer. The overall sex ratio is 102 males per 100 females, a decline from the ratio of 108 males per 100 females shown in the 1990-91 PDHS. The marked difference in the sex ratio between the two surveys could be the changing survival rates of females. 53 percent of women have no education, as compared with 34 percent of men.

Source: *Extracted from Pakistan Demographic & Health Survey (PDHS) 2012-13*

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health**

Key findings from the 2012-13 PDHS on the situation of SRHR in Pakistan are as follows:

#### Maternal Health:

- The maternal mortality rate in Pakistan is 276 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, indicating the dire state of reproductive health care and women's rights.
- More than 6 in 10 women face at least one problem in seeking healthcare for themselves when they are sick.
- More than 7 in 10 mothers receive antenatal care from a skilled provider.
- Thirty-seven percent of women make four or more antenatal care visits during their pregnancy.
- The median duration of pregnancy at the first antenatal visit is 3.7 months.
- Three-fifths of women giving birth in the two years preceding the survey received postnatal care for their last birth in the first two days after delivery.
- Sixty-four percent of mothers with a birth in the five years preceding the survey had their last birth protected against neonatal tetanus.
- Women with more than a secondary education and in the highest wealth quintile are one and a half times as likely to receive antenatal care from a skilled health provider (97 percent) as women with no education (60 percent).

#### Contraception:

- Knowledge of contraception is universal in Pakistan.
- The total fertility rate for the three years preceding the survey is 3.8 births per woman, with rural women having one child more on average than urban women.

- Women and men report an ideal family size of more than four children.
- More than one-third of currently married women of reproductive age are using a method of contraception, with most women using a modern method (26 percent).
- Childbearing begins early, with 15 percent of women age 25-49 giving birth by age 18 and 32 percent by age 20.
- The two most popular modern contraceptive methods are the male condom and female sterilization (9 percent each).
- The government sector remains the major provider of contraceptive methods, catering to the needs of nearly one in two users (46 percent).
- Twenty percent of currently married women have an unmet need for family planning services, with 9 percent having an unmet need for spacing and 11 percent having an unmet need for limiting.
- Sixty-nine percent of births occur within three years of a previous birth, with 37 percent occurring within 24 months.

#### Abortion:

- In Pakistan, induced abortion is illegal except in instances in which the life of the mother is at risk.
- In the 2012-13 PDHS report, twelve percent of pregnancies resulted in miscarriages in the five years before the survey, almost 2 percent resulted in an abortion, and 3 percent resulted in a stillbirth.
- Given that induced abortions are illegal, it is likely that some induced abortions are reported as miscarriages.
- Overall, Pakistani women have about one child more than their wanted number. This implies that the total fertility rate of 3.8 children per woman is 31 percent higher than it would be if all unwanted births were avoided.

#### HIV & AIDS:

- Four in 10 ever-married women and 7 in 10 ever-married men age 15-49 have heard of AIDS.
- Comprehensive knowledge of AIDS is not widespread among either women (7 percent) or men (12 percent).
- Only 12 percent of women and 18 percent of men know of ways to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.
- Only 17 percent of women and 15 percent of men express accepting attitudes toward people living with AIDS.
- Thirty-six percent of men and 11 percent of women know of a place where they can go to get an HIV test.
- Only 32 percent of women are aware that the risk of contracting the AIDS virus can be reduced by limiting sexual intercourse to one uninfected partner who has no other partners.
- 22 percent know that using condoms every time they have sexual intercourse reduces the risk of getting the AIDS virus.

## Sexual and Reproductive Rights

### Child Early & Forced Marriage (CEFM):

- The minimum legal age at marriage in Pakistan is 18 years for males and 16 years for females.
- The percentage of women who were married by age 15 decreased from 10 percent among those age 45-49 to 2 percent among those age 15-19.
- There is evidence that age at marriage among women in Pakistan is rising; the median age at first marriage increased from 19.1 years in 2006-07 to 19.5 years in 2012-13.
- A higher proportion of teenage girls age 15-19 (14 percent) are married than teenage boys (2 percent).
- Pakistan has a high rate of marriages between cousins, with approximately half of all marriages occurring between first cousins (49 percent). There is evidence that children born in marriages between first cousins have double the risk of congenital anomalies.

### Violence Against Women (VAW):

- Thirty-two percent of ever-married women age 15-49 have experienced physical violence at least once since age 15, and 19 percent experienced physical violence within the 12 months prior to the survey.
- Overall, 39 percent of ever-married women age 15-49 report ever having experienced physical and/or emotional violence from their spouse, and 33 percent report having experienced it in the past 12 months.
- Among ever-married women who had experienced spousal physical violence in the past 12 months, 35 percent reported experiencing physical injuries.
- One in 10 women reported experiencing violence during pregnancy.
- Fifty-two percent of Pakistani women who experienced violence never sought help or never told anyone about the violence they had experienced.

## Our current presence in Pakistan

ARROW has worked with its partners in Pakistan for many years to further the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in the country. Here are the ongoing projects in Pakistan:

- ARROW is the regional coordinator for the **Right Here Right Now (RHRN)** partnership that focuses on young people's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). The RHRN partnership works with youth-lead, youth-serving organisations such as [Aware Girls \(AG\)](#), [Aahung](#), [Bargad](#), [Blue Veins \(BV\)](#), [Chanan Development Association \(CDA\)](#), [Forum for Dignity Initiative \(FDI\)](#), [Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi \(ITA\)](#), [Indus Resource Centre \(IRC\)](#), [Rahnuma - Family Planning Association of Pakistan \(Rahnuma-FPAP\)](#), [Youth Advocacy Network \(YAN\)](#) and [Rutgers Pakistan](#). The partnership strives for the protection, respect and fulfilment of young people's SRHR, including girls, young women and young lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (LGBTI). Specific attention is given to: freedom from stigma, discrimination and violence; access to comprehensive youth-friendly services; access to comprehensive information; and space for young people's voices.

- ARROW works together with partners such as the Youth Advocacy Network (YAN) and Chanan Development Association (CDA) towards **building the next generation movement leaders and organisations in South Asia for young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights**. It strives for the improved capacity of the youth led, youth serving organisations and youth champions to conduct effective advocacy for CSE with greater understanding of intersectionality issues. One of the programme's main objectives is to position comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) as a crucial element for young people's education and health by adopting components of CSE into the formal and informal education system at the national level.
- ARROW and its partners in Pakistan continue to work towards **ICPD+25: Revitalising and implementing the Sexual and Reproductive Rights Agenda in the Asia Pacific Region**. This ICPD+25 monitoring and advocacy initiative aims to show the progress gaps and challenges towards ICPD implementation in Pakistan. In-depth monitoring is currently underway on the youth SRHR policies and programmes.
- ARROW is also engaged in **innovative advocacy programmes on SRHR and environmental sustainability** with rights-based climate change/environmental groups. The Women and Earth Initiative (WORTH) is an innovation programme and fund that aims to create a platform where civil society can unleash creativity and develop new integrated solutions to gender equality, SRHR and climate change adaptation challenges. For 2019, the programme is focused on climate change/environmental civil society organisations from four countries experiencing devastating consequences from climate change: Philippines, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan.