

PUBLIC EVIDENCE SERIES

District Youth Opportunity Index 2026

Youth Opportunity and Exclusion Across Pakistan's 136 Districts

Ahmad Nadeem Principal Investigator
Centre for Social Analytics and Development Support (CSADS)

First edition | Islamabad, 2026

MANĀRA POLICY & PRACTICE

CSADS Centre for Social Analytics & Development Support

CIVIC FRAMES lighting the Path

PUBLIC EVIDENCE SERIES

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL ANALYTICS AND DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

District Youth Opportunity Index 2026

Youth Opportunity and Exclusion Across Pakistan's 136 Districts

First edition | Baseline year 2023

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Ahmad Nadeem

AI Integrations and Systems Development Specialist

PUBLISHED BY

Centre for Social Analytics and Development Support (CSADS)

Islamabad, Pakistan | www.csads.org

Suggested citation

Nadeem, Ahmad. 2026. District Youth Opportunity Index 2026: Youth Opportunity and Exclusion Across Pakistan's 136 Districts. Islamabad: Centre for Social Analytics and Development Support.

Data reference periods

Population and Housing Census 2023, district tables. Evidence reviewed through October 2026.

Disclaimer

The findings and interpretations in this report are those of the author and CSADS. The District Youth Opportunity Index is an independent research measure and is not an official statistic of the Government of Pakistan.

About the Public Evidence Series

This knowledge product was independently initiated by the Centre for Social Analytics and Development Support (CSADS) under its Public Evidence Series. It was not commissioned, requested, reviewed or endorsed by any organization it covers and is not an official position of any of them. Drawing on public sources, it synthesizes what the evidence says about its subject, identifies where the evidence is too limited to support stronger claims, and considers implications for future policy, programming and planning. The Series offers briefs, reports, scorecards and notes that separate evidence from judgment. AI tools supported research and drafting, every statistic is traced to a cited source, and all content was reviewed by the principal investigator.

A PUBLIC EVIDENCE SERIES PUBLICATION



Contents

Executive Summary 5

Key Figures 6

Part I. The Evidence 9

Chapter 1. Pakistan's Youth Opportunity Challenge 10

Chapter 2. Youth Demography, Educational Attainment and Geographic Disparities 15

Chapter 3. Youth Economic Participation, Employment and Exclusion 20

Chapter 4. Youth Skills, Training and the Transition to Employment 26

Chapter 5. Youth Digital Access, Digital Skills and Economic Opportunities 31

Chapter 6. Gender Inequalities in Youth Opportunity and Economic Exclusion 36

Part II. The District Youth Opportunity Index 41

Chapter 7. Index Methodology and Validation 42

Chapter 8. District Results, Maps and Profiles 50

Chapter 9. Priorities, Targeting and Next Steps 62

References 66

Annex A. District Results, All 136 Districts 69

Annex B. Data Sources and Quality Notes 74

Annex C. Map Units and Boundary Concordance 76

Abbreviations

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
CSADS	Centre for Social Analytics and Development Support
DYOI	District Youth Opportunity Index
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan
HIES	Household Integrated Economic Survey
ICLS	International Conference of Labour Statisticians
LFS	Labour Force Survey
NAVTTC	National Vocational and Technical Training Commission
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
PBS	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
PMYP	Prime Minister's Youth Programme
PSLM	Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund



Executive Summary

Key Figures

136

district level units covered by the index

Census 2023

6.2 to 91.2

range of district scores on the index

DYOI 2023

14.2 million

young people aged 15 to 24 who cannot read and write

Census 2023

68.2%

youth literacy rate, ages 15 to 24

Census 2023

74 of 136

districts where female youth literacy is below 50 per cent

Census 2023

10.6%

of illiterate youth live in the 27 lowest band districts, home to 5.3 per cent of young people

DYOI 2023

5.6 million

illiterate young people in Punjab, which has no district in the two lowest bands

Census 2023

71.8 points

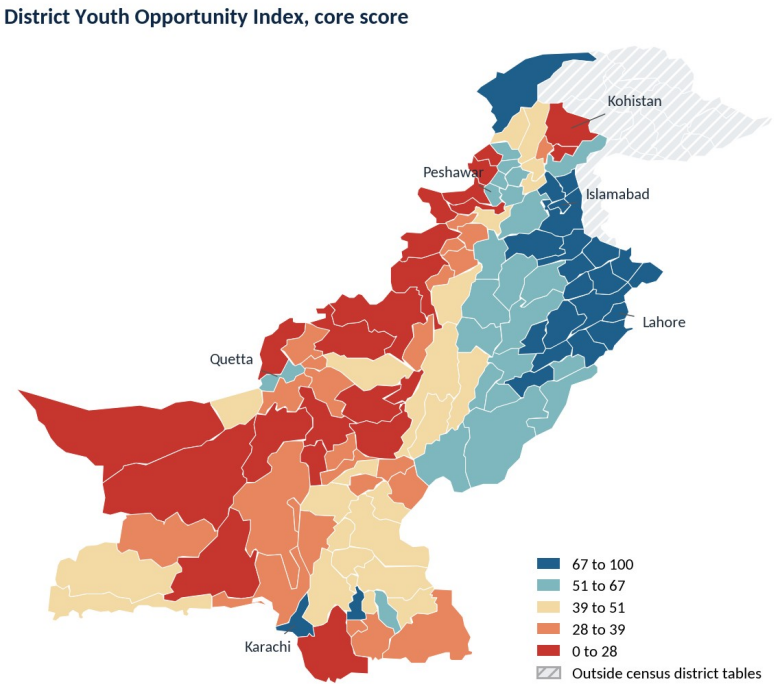
gap between the highest and lowest district score in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

DYOI 2023

48.7 points

literacy gap between young men and young women in Hangu, the widest of any district

Census 2023



Map 1. *District Youth Opportunity Index, 2023. Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023); authors' calculations. Mapping conventions in Annex C.*

Overview

Pakistan's future workforce is already here. The 2023 census counted 62.6 million people aged 15 to 29, a quarter of the population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023). How many of them finish school, gain usable skills and find decent work will shape the country's growth for decades. On the most recent evidence, too many are being left behind. In 2024 to 2025, 28.4 per cent of people aged 15 to 24 were neither working nor in education or training. Among young women, the share was 45.4 per cent (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025).

These national figures are well known. What has been missing is a clear picture of where the problem lies. Pakistan's surveys report averages for the country and its provinces, but decisions about schools, training centres and employment services are made district by district. A provincial average can hide both the best and the worst places in the country.

The gap between places is wide. In Lahore, 86 of every 100 young women aged 15 to 24 can read and write. In Upper Kohistan, 11 can. In Lahore, almost four in ten young people are still in education; in Upper Kohistan, fewer than one in thirteen. Even within Punjab, the province with the highest median score, youth literacy ranges from 91 per cent in Gujrat to 42 per cent in Rajanpur (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023).

This report introduces the District Youth Opportunity Index to make these differences visible. Using the 2023 census, it scores all 136 district level units on young people's literacy, enrolment, work in the market economy and the share outside both study and the labour force. It is the first measure to cover every district with complete counts of young people, and it shows how many young people are affected as well as how severe conditions are.

The results point in two directions at once. Disadvantage is most intense in remote districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Sindh. The 27 lowest scoring districts hold 5.3 per cent of young people but 10.6 per cent of those who cannot read and write. Yet most young people who cannot read do not live there. Thirteen larger districts outside the lowest band hold 3.8 million of them, among them Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Peshawar and Lahore. A policy that looks only at the bottom of the table would miss most of the young people who need help.

Young women carry the heaviest burden. Female youth literacy is below 50 per cent in 74 districts. In Hangu, the gap between young men and young women is 48.7 percentage points, and in Torghar nine in ten young women are outside both work and study. National averages show that young women are behind; district figures show where the gap is widest and where programmes for young women would matter most.

The message for policy is practical. Provincial governments, which hold primary responsibility for education, can direct foundational investment to the districts where conditions are worst and services built for scale to the populous districts where numbers are largest. They can set explicit targets for young women where gaps are widest. As the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics releases its new district youth survey, the index can be refreshed to show whether conditions are changing.

Summary of findings and actions

What the index measures

The District Youth Opportunity Index uses the 2023 census to score all 136 district level units from 0 to 100. It combines four measures for young people aged 15 to 24: whether they can read and write, whether they are enrolled in education, whether they work in the market economy, and whether they are outside both study

and the labour force. The score shows how each district compares with the others. Results were reproduced through two independent calculations and tested under 13 alternative assumptions.

What we found

Disadvantage is concentrated. The 27 districts in the lowest band, 13 in Balochistan, 12 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 2 in Sindh, are home to 5.3 per cent of young people but 10.6 per cent of those who cannot read and write. In 58 districts, fewer than half of young people are literate.

Yet most of the problem lies elsewhere. Thirteen districts outside the lowest band each hold at least 200,000 young people who cannot read and write: 3.8 million in total, more than twice the 1.5 million in the lowest band. Rahim Yar Khan alone has 456,445. Punjab has no district in the two lowest bands, but it is home to 5.6 million illiterate young people, more than any other province.

Young women carry the heaviest burden. Female youth literacy is below 50 per cent in 74 districts and below 30 per cent in 32. In Hangu, the literacy gap between young men and young women reaches 48.7 percentage points. In Torghar, 90 per cent of young women are outside both the labour force and study. Within provinces, district scores span 71.8 points in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 69.1 in Sindh.

What this means

Targeting by rank alone would miss most of the young people who need support. A district at the bottom of the table shows where disadvantage is deepest. A populous district further up may show where the largest numbers are. Both matter, and they call for different responses: intensive, foundational investment where conditions are worst, and services built for scale where numbers are largest. Gender gaps need to be read beside every score, because a reasonable average can hide a severe disadvantage for young women.

What should happen next

Five actions follow. Provincial education departments in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh can prioritise the lowest band districts for second chance literacy, secondary completion and safe access for girls. Provincial employment and skills departments can place youth transition services in the large districts with the most illiterate and inactive young people. Federal and provincial planners can set explicit targets for young women where their literacy is lowest. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics can release the Youth Development Index module from its 2026 district survey, so these results can be refreshed (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2026b). And all users can read the 17 districts with unstable ranks by band rather than by exact position.

How to use this report

The report is in two parts. Part I (Chapters 1 to 6) sets out the challenge and the national and provincial evidence on employment, skills, digital access and gender. Part II (Chapters 7 to 9) presents the index: how it is built, the results for every district, and priorities for action. Readers who want the headline results can turn to Chapter 8 and Annex A, which list every district. Those planning programmes will find priority groups and provincial guidance in Chapter 9. All results refer to 2023. Literacy is reported by households and may overstate tested skills, and the index has not been adopted by any government body.



PART I

The Evidence

The challenge, and what national and provincial evidence shows about young people's education, work, skills, digital access and gender gaps



CHAPTER 1

Pakistan's Youth Opportunity Challenge

Consider two young people in Punjab, the province with the highest median score. In Gujrat, 91 of every 100 people aged 15 to 24 can read and write. In Rajanpur, 42 can (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023). Both live in a province with no district in the two lowest bands of this index. A provincial average cannot show this difference; a district measure can. That is the starting point for this report.

1.1 Why districts matter

National and provincial averages say little about where to act. The 2023 census counted 44,622,831 people aged 15 to 24 across 136 district level units (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023). Youth literacy ranged from 20.4 per cent in Kolai Palas Kohistan to 94.7 per cent in Upper Chitral, and the same province can contain both strong and very weak districts. Decisions about where to build schools, place training centres and run employment services are made district by district, so the evidence behind them needs to be district level too.

1.2 The national picture

The census counted 62.6 million people aged 15 to 29, or 26.0 per cent of the population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023). The most recent Labour Force Survey, for 2024 to 2025, found that 28.4 per cent of people aged 15 to 24 were not in employment, education or training, including 45.4 per cent of young women and 13.0 per cent of young men. Provincial rates ranged from 24.8 per cent in Punjab to 36.0 per cent in Balochistan (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025). These survey estimates describe provinces, not districts, and cannot show where within a province young people are most excluded.

Schooling also does not guarantee learning. The ASER Pakistan 2025 assessment covered 138 districts and 183,876 children aged 3 to 16 (ASER Pakistan 2026). It found that only 7 per cent of Class 3 children could read a simple story in Urdu or Sindhi and 8 per cent could perform division (UKFIET 2026). Census literacy is reported by households rather than tested, so the literacy rates in this index measure basic literacy as reported, not demonstrated skills. Districts with high reported literacy may still face serious learning gaps.

1.3 The policy context

Youth opportunity is central to current national plans. Uraan Pakistan, the National Economic Transformation Plan for 2024 to 2029, gives special emphasis to youth, women, persons with disabilities and the least developed regions under its Equity and Empowerment pillar (Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives n.d.). Its stated equity targets include raising the literacy rate by 10 per cent, increasing female labour force participation by 17 per cent and reducing youth unemployment by 6 per cent (High Commission for Pakistan, Colombo 2025).

The Prime Minister's Youth Programme organises its work around education, employment, engagement and environment, and has expanded youth business lending and laptop financing (Associated Press of Pakistan 2025; State Bank of Pakistan 2025). Since the Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment, provincial governments have had primary responsibility for health and education services (Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives n.d.), so much of the spending that shapes youth opportunity is decided by provinces and delivered in districts. The index is designed to inform those decisions and relates directly to Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 8, including indicator 8.6.1 on young people not in employment, education or training.

1.4 Existing measures and what this index adds

Pakistan already has several measures that touch on youth opportunity, but none provides youth specific results for every district from complete counts. The 2017 National Human Development Report computed a sub national Youth Development Index, Human Development Index and Youth Gender Inequality Index, drawing on consultations with about 130,000 people, 90 per cent of them young (UNDP 2017). The Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement survey has produced district indicators through seven district level rounds (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics n.d.), and its 2026 round now includes a Youth Development Index module for people aged 15 to 29, added at the request of the Prime Minister's Office with support from UNFPA and SDPI (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2026b). ASER Pakistan reports children's learning by district, and UNDP's Digital Development Index ranks districts on digital readiness (UNDP 2024).

The District Youth Opportunity Index complements these sources in three ways. It uses complete census counts rather than samples, so every one of the 136 district level units has a result. It focuses on young people aged 15 to 24 and combines education with connection to study or market work. It reports the number of young people affected alongside rates, which matters when deciding where services are needed at scale. When the PSLM youth module is released, the two can be compared to test whether the district pattern found here holds.

Measure	Geographic level	Coverage and content	Latest reference period
National Human Development Report Youth Development Index (UNDP)	Provinces	National surveys and a National Youth Perceptions Survey	2017
PSLM district surveys (PBS)	Districts, sample based	Education, health and living standards; youth module added in 2026	2019 to 2020 latest completed; 2026 in progress
ASER Pakistan	Districts, sample based	Enrolment and tested learning of children	2025
Digital Development Index (UNDP)	Districts	Digital access, adoption and skills, all ages	2023 to 2024
District Youth Opportunity Index (this report)	All 136 census district level units	Literacy, enrolment and labour status of young people aged 15 to 24, complete counts	2023

Table 1.1. Existing measures related to youth opportunity in Pakistan. Sources: UNDP (2017, 2024); Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (n.d., 2026b); ASER Pakistan (2026).

1.5 Questions this report answers

The report is built around six questions. What does national evidence show about young people's education, work, skills and digital access, and why is it not enough (Chapters 2 to 6)? Where were young people's educational foundations and connection to study or work weakest in 2023 (Chapter 8)? Where do the largest numbers of disadvantaged young people live (Chapters 2 and 8)? Where are young women furthest behind young men (Chapters 6 and 8)? How confident can users be in each district's position (Chapter 7)? And what should planners do with these results (Chapter 9)?

1.6 What the index measures

The index summarises four census indicators for young people aged 15 to 24 and places each district on a scale from 0 to 100. It shows where educational foundations and connection to study or market work were weakest in 2023. It is a relative measure: a district's score shows its position within the range of all 136 districts, not the share of its young people with opportunity. Table 1.2 defines the terms used throughout the report.

Term	Meaning in this report
Youth literacy rate	Literate residents aged 15 to 24 as a share of all residents of that age, as reported in the census
Currently enrolled share	Young people aged 15 to 24 attending an educational institution at any level
Market employment share	Young people aged 15 to 24 working as paid employees, employers or non farm own account workers
Inactive non student share	Young people aged 15 to 24 recorded as Not L.F & Stud: outside the labour force and not students; related to, but not the same as, NEET
District score	Equally weighted average of the education and economic domains, scaled from 0 (lowest district) to 100 (highest)
Band	One of five groups of 27 or 28 districts, from Band 1 (highest scores) to Band 5 (lowest)

Table 1.2. Key terms. Source: authors' definitions based on Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023).

1.7 Who this report is for

The report is written for people who decide where and how to invest in young people. Table 1.3 suggests where each group of users might start.

User	Typical decision	Where to start
Provincial planning and development departments	Allocating development funds and setting district priorities	Chapter 9 priority groups and provincial guidance; Annex A
Provincial education and literacy departments	Locating second chance literacy, secondary schooling and programmes for girls	Chapters 2 and 8; female literacy in Annex A
Technical and vocational training authorities and employment services	Placing training and transition services where numbers are large	Chapters 3 and 4; Chapter 9, Group B
District administrations	Understanding their district's position against peers	Annex A; provincial rankings in Chapter 8
Development partners	Selecting programme districts and baseline values	Chapters 3 to 9; companion workbook
Researchers and media	Reusing the data and checking the methods	Chapter 7; Annex B; companion workbook

Table 1.3. Suggested starting points for different users. Source: authors.

1.8 How to read the results

Three cautions apply throughout. First, a score ranks districts against each other; a fall in rank does not mean conditions worsened. Second, rates and counts answer different questions: a high rate shows where disadvantage is concentrated, while a large count shows where the most young people are affected. Third, districts whose rank changes widely under alternative assumptions should be read by band rather than by exact position. District units follow the census tables. Districts created after the census, including Murree, Talagang, Wazirabad, Taunsa and Kot Addu in Punjab, which appear in later official notifications (Election Commission of Pakistan 2025), are counted within the census units from which they were formed.

1.9 How this report is organised

The report is in two parts. Part I sets out the evidence. Chapter 2 describes the youth population and educational foundations, from national totals to district differences. Chapters 3 to 6 examine economic participation, skills, digital access and gender in turn, and each ends by showing what national evidence cannot reveal about districts. Part II presents the index. Chapter 7 explains how it is built and validated, Chapter 8 presents the results for all 136 districts, and Chapter 9 turns them into priority groups, provincial guidance and practical uses. The next chapter begins with the young people themselves: how many there are, where they live and what education they have.

KEY MESSAGES

1. National averages hide wide differences: district scores range from 6.2 in Upper Kohistan to 91.2 in Lahore.
2. Provincial governments, which hold primary responsibility for education since the Eighteenth Amendment, need district evidence to target investment.
3. The index adds complete census coverage of all 136 districts to existing provincial and sample based measures.



CHAPTER 2

Youth Demography, Educational Attainment and Geographic Disparities

2.1 The scale of the youth cohort

Pakistan's youth opportunity agenda begins with population scale. The 2023 Population and Housing Census recorded 62.59 million people aged 15 to 29, representing 26.0 per cent of the enumerated national population of 240.46 million. Of these, 24.15 million were aged 15 to 19, 20.47 million aged 20 to 24 and 17.97 million aged 25 to 29 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023, Table 4). These are census observations for 2023, rather than estimates of the youth population in 2026 or 2027.

The distribution matters for public investment. The largest group, young people aged 15 to 19, is at an age when completion of secondary schooling, access to further learning and early transitions into work can shape subsequent opportunities. Those aged 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 are more likely to face decisions about tertiary study, vocational training, entry into paid employment and the stability of their livelihoods. A single composite score can obscure these different stages, so this report retains age band comparisons wherever the census tables permit.

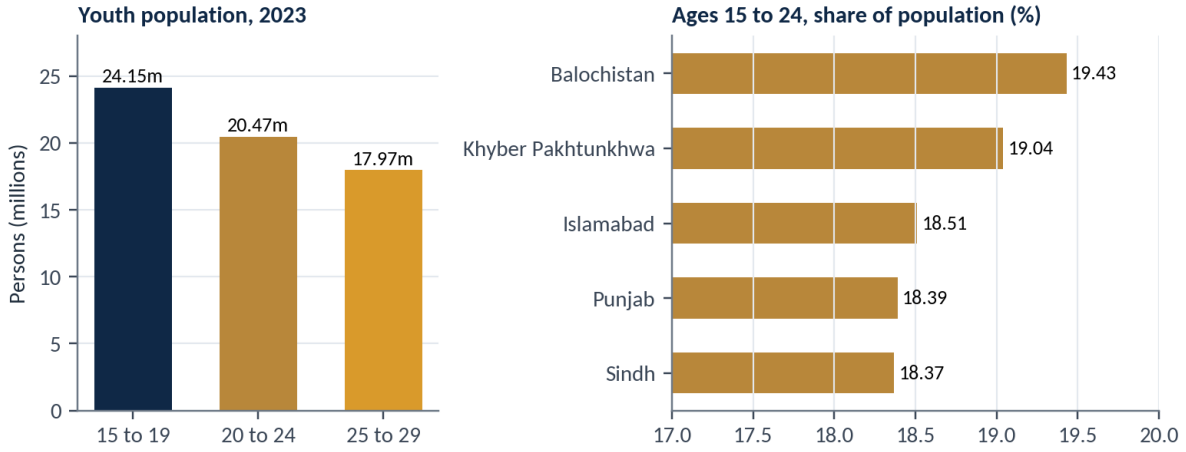


Figure 2.1. *Youth population by age band, 2023, and the share aged 15 to 24 by province Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), Census 2023 Table 4.*

Age group	Population, 2023	Share of total population
15 to 19	24,154,118	10.0%
20 to 24	20,468,713	8.5%
25 to 29	17,967,161	7.5%
Total 15 to 29	62,589,992	26.0%

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), Census 2023 Table 4, national file. Shares calculated from the published totals.

2.2 Youth population by province

The four provinces and Islamabad have different demographic structures. According to the 2023 census, young people aged 15 to 24 represented 19.43 per cent of Balochistan's population, compared with 19.04 per cent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 18.39 per cent in Punjab, 18.37 per cent in Sindh and 18.51 per cent in Islamabad Capital Territory (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023, Table 4). The variation across these five jurisdictions is modest for the 15 to 24 age band. Substantially larger differences appear when younger children are considered: the population below age 15 accounted for 49.66 per cent in Balochistan and 32.28 per cent in Islamabad.

These contrasts imply different near term planning pressures. In places with a very large child population, the flow of future adolescents into secondary education, skills programmes and employment will be substantial relative to the current population. In other places, the immediate challenge may be the quality of opportunity

available to young people already reaching working age. This report therefore analyses the share and the number of young people together: a less youthful but populous district can have more young residents than a smaller district with a higher youth share.

Jurisdiction	Ages 15 to 24 as % of population	Below age 15 as % of population
Balochistan	19.43	49.66
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	19.04	43.45
Punjab	18.39	38.21
Sindh	18.37	41.78
Islamabad Capital Territory	18.51	32.28

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), Census 2023 Table 4, provincial files. Shares calculated from the published provincial totals.

2.3 What district census data can measure

A national district index requires observations recorded against a consistent geographic unit and an explicit population denominator. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics provides 2023 census district tables in spreadsheet and PDF formats. Table 4 includes population by single year of age and sex; Table 5 reports selected age groups; education and economic activity tables offer further relevant variables (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023). These tables have now been extracted for all 136 district level units and reconciled with the national totals (Chapter 7).

The report distinguishes three geographic comparisons. Population counts indicate the scale of potential service demand. Rates show the relative prevalence of an observed outcome among comparable groups. Gender gaps describe the difference between young women and young men on the same indicator. Each is useful, but none can substitute for the others. Reporting all three makes it possible to identify areas with large affected populations alongside districts where disadvantage is particularly concentrated.

The census is an appropriate baseline for geographic comparisons, but an observation collected in 2023 remains a 2023 observation in subsequent annual reports. New district rankings therefore await genuinely comparable data; the index is not updated with model based estimates. District boundaries, any renaming or reorganisation, census definitions and the treatment of areas outside the principal four provinces and Islamabad require an explicit harmonisation register, which accompanies the district database (Chapter 7).

2.4 Education as a foundation for opportunity

Education is an important pathway into work, but the relationship is neither automatic nor uniform. Literacy provides a foundation for navigating written information; secondary completion is often a prerequisite for further study or entry to formal training; and higher qualifications can broaden access to occupations. Yet credentials alone do not establish the availability, quality or accessibility of employment. The index measures educational outcomes directly and examines their association with economic opportunity, without treating one as proof of the other.

Pakistan Education Statistics 2023 to 2024, published by the Pakistan Institute of Education, reports enrolment, institutions and teachers across the education system (Pakistan Institute of Education 2025). The publication primarily describes educational institutions and learners, with a strong emphasis on ages 5 to 16. It provides context for the education pipeline but is not an interchangeable measure of educational attainment among youth aged 15 to 29.

School facilities such as electricity, drinking water, toilets and boundary walls describe school conditions rather than demonstrated youth skills or completion. They are relevant to the long term opportunity pipeline but belong in explanatory context rather than in a youth outcome index.

2.5 Gender and the education to work transition

District results in this report are presented by sex wherever the census tables allow. National averages can conceal sharply different educational and economic pathways for young women and men. The census provides the possibility of examining literacy, attendance and selected economic characteristics by sex and age. The extracted tables provide literacy, attendance and enrolment by sex for ages 15 to 24, while the census employment table has no sex split (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023).

Gender gaps are expressed in percentage points when rates are compared. For example, a district with 70 per cent literacy among young men and 50 per cent among young women would have a 20 percentage point gap, not a 20 per cent difference. The illustrative example is offered only to clarify statistical presentation. Verified district values are reported in Chapter 8.

The district profiles also differentiate educational disadvantage from economic disconnection. The latter requires particular caution: a census category describing people outside education and employment may differ from the internationally defined “not in employment, education or training” (NEET) measure. These labels are used only according to the source’s confirmed definitions.

2.6 How literacy and enrolment vary across districts

District differences are far wider than provincial ones. Youth literacy ranges from 20.4 per cent in Kolai Palas Kohistan to 94.7 per cent in Upper Chitral, both in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In 58 of the 136 districts, fewer than half of young people aged 15 to 24 can read and write. Current enrolment ranges from 4.6 per cent in Washuk to 45.2 per cent in Islamabad (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023). Table 2.1 shows how widely districts differ within each province.

Province	Districts	Young people 15 to 24 (millions)	Illiterate young people (millions)	Lowest youth literacy	Highest youth literacy	Districts with female youth literacy below 50%
Punjab	36	23.41	5.56	Rajanpur, 42.0%	Gujrat, 90.9%	3
Sindh	30	10.22	4.02	Sujawal, 29.4%	Karachi Central, 85.5%	19
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	35	7.74	3.03	Kolai Palas Kohistan, 20.4%	Upper Chitral, 94.7%	22
Balochistan	34	2.83	1.54	Washuk, 22.1%	Nushki, 66.0%	30
Islamabad Capital Territory	1	0.42	0.05	Islamabad, 88.7%	Islamabad, 88.7%	0

Table 2.1. Youth population, illiteracy and literacy range by province, ages 15 to 24, 2023. Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023); authors’ calculations.

Size and severity do not always coincide. Punjab’s lowest scoring district on literacy, Rajanpur, still has higher youth literacy than the lowest districts elsewhere, yet Punjab has the most young people who cannot read, because of its size. Balochistan has the fewest illiterate young people in absolute terms, 1.54 million, but 30 of its 34 districts have female youth literacy below 50 per cent.

2.7 Where the largest numbers of young people live

Scale matters as much as rates when planning services. Ten districts, led by Lahore with 2.44 million people aged 15 to 24, Faisalabad with 1.73 million and Gujranwala with 1.13 million, hold 26.8 per cent of the country's young people. The ten districts with the most illiterate young people hold 22.4 per cent of all illiterate youth, and none of them is in the lowest band. Thirteen districts outside the lowest band each have at least 200,000 young people who cannot read and write, 3.8 million in total, compared with 1.5 million across all 27 lowest band districts. Chapter 8 returns to this contrast between rates and counts.

2.8 Conclusion

District figures change the picture that national and provincial averages present. They show deep disadvantage concentrated in remote districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Sindh, and very large numbers of disadvantaged young people in populous districts in the middle of the table. Education is only the foundation, however. Whether young people can turn it into work, skills and wider opportunity is the subject of Chapters 3 to 6, beginning with their participation in the labour market.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Youth literacy ranges from 20.4 per cent in Kolai Palas Kohistan to 94.7 per cent in Upper Chitral.
2. In 58 of the 136 districts, fewer than half of young people aged 15 to 24 can read and write.
3. Ten districts hold 26.8 per cent of all young people, so scale must be read alongside rates.



CHAPTER 3

Youth Economic Participation, Employment and Exclusion

3.1 Working, seeking work and disconnection

Young people experience exclusion through different pathways. Some are unemployed and actively seeking employment; others work in activities that offer limited earnings or security; and a substantial group is neither employed nor engaged in education or training. These experiences have distinct policy implications. Treating them as one category would conceal the problems that education, skills programmes, social protection and employment policy are expected to address.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2024 to 2025 is the main recent source for nationally comparable labour market indicators. Its reported estimates describe the survey reference period and sampled populations, not the employment status of every young person counted in the 2023 census. The census is valuable for district distribution, whereas the LFS provides detailed labour concepts and nationally or provincially supported estimates (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025).

3.2 Almost three in ten young people are NEET

According to the PBS Labour Force Survey 2024 to 2025, 28.4 per cent of people aged 15 to 24 were not in employment, education or training (NEET). The corresponding rate was 13.0 per cent for young men and 45.4 per cent for young women. Thus, the recorded female rate exceeded the male rate by 32.4 percentage points. The gender disparity is more revealing than the national average alone: it indicates that the transition from education to work is markedly different for young women and men (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025, table 8.8).

Population aged 15 to 24	NEET rate, 2024 to 2025 (%)	NEET rate, 2020 to 2021 (%)
All youth	28.4	32.5
Young men	13.0	10.5
Young women	45.4	55.3
Female to male gap (percentage points)	32.4	44.8

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2025), Labour Force Survey 2024 to 2025, table 8.8; gender gaps calculated from published rates. NEET includes young people outside employment, education and training; it is not the same as unemployment. Changes across survey rounds should be interpreted with attention to questionnaires and statistical definitions.

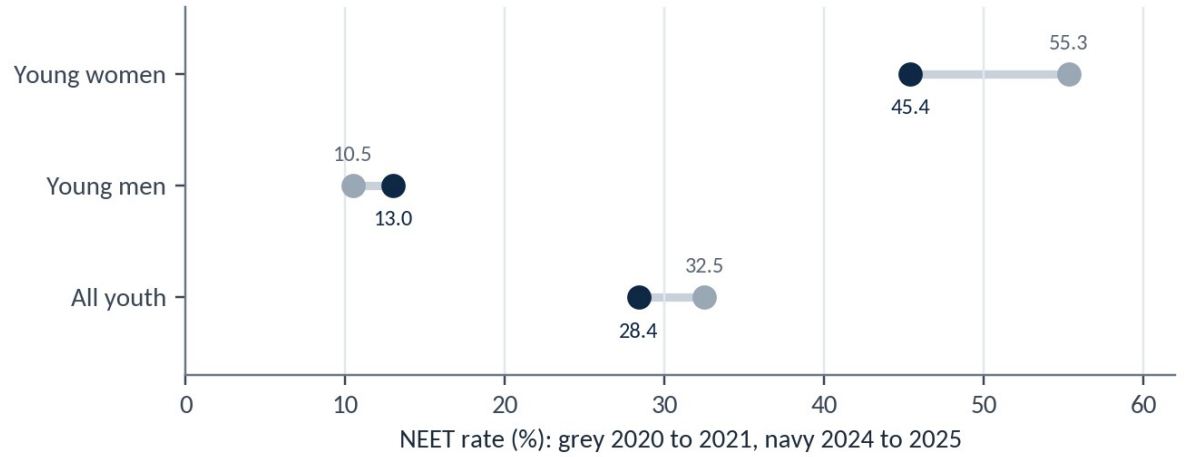


Figure 3.1. *Youth NEET rates, 2020 to 2021 and 2024 to 2025 Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2025), Labour Force Survey 2024 to 2025, Table 8.8.*

The total NEET rate was 4.1 percentage points lower in 2024 to 2025 than in 2020 to 2021. This combined movement conceals diverging trends: the female rate was 9.9 points lower, while the male rate was 2.5 points

higher. The resulting gender gap narrowed, although it remained substantial. These descriptive comparisons show how conditions differed between survey rounds; they do not, by themselves, attribute the change to any particular government initiative or economic event.

3.3 Provincial differences in exclusion

The latest LFS reports pronounced provincial variation. In 2024 to 2025, the NEET rate among young people was 24.8 per cent in Punjab, 32.0 per cent in Sindh, 32.7 per cent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 36.0 per cent in Balochistan. The 11.2 percentage point difference between Punjab and Balochistan illustrates why a single national measure offers an incomplete picture of youth opportunity. Female NEET rates varied even more widely: 37.6 per cent in Punjab, 51.6 per cent in Sindh, 57.6 per cent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 60.5 per cent in Balochistan (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025, table 8.8).

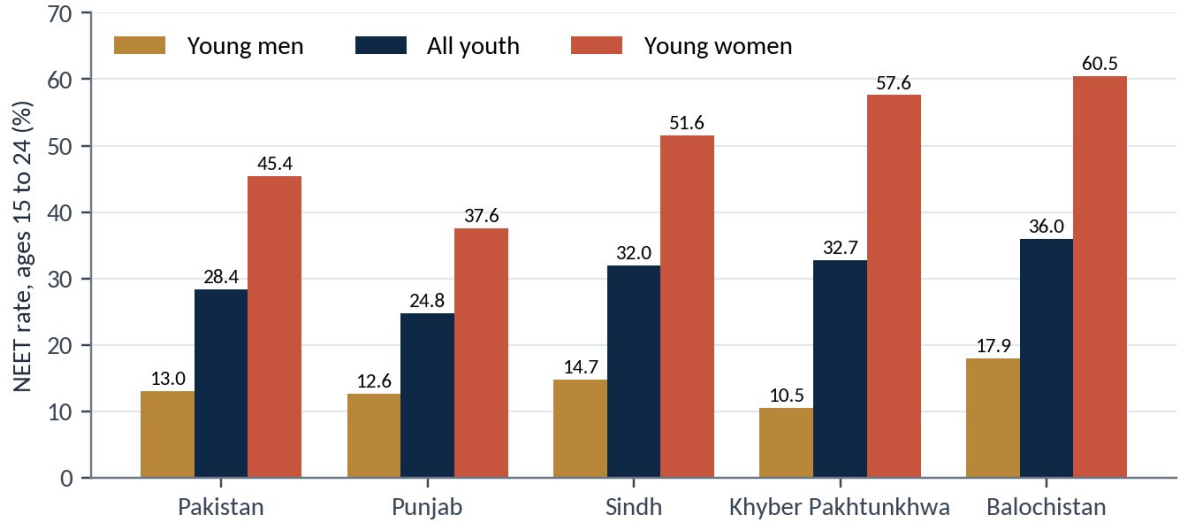


Figure 3.2. *Youth NEET rates by province and sex, 2024 to 2025 Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2025), Labour Force Survey 2024 to 2025, Table 8.8. Provincial survey estimates, not district rates.*

The spatial pattern should guide further investigation rather than a simplistic conclusion about district performance. Province level comparisons can identify regions requiring attention, but the causes of exclusion may differ substantially across local labour markets, education pathways, social norms, transportation conditions and household responsibilities. Targeted explanations require supporting evidence.

3.4 Youth unemployment and its limits

Under the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) presentation in the LFS 2024 to 2025, unemployment for people aged 15 to 24 was 12.5 per cent, compared with 11.1 per cent in 2020 to 2021. Among young men the reported rate was 12.3 per cent in 2024 to 2025 and among young women 13.2 per cent. For ages 25 to 34, the corresponding overall rate was 8.1 per cent, with female unemployment at 14.1 per cent (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025, table 9.5).

The LFS also provides estimates under the 19th ICLS labour standards. The distinction is consequential because standards for classifying employment and other labour force statuses affect comparisons. This chapter labels the 13th ICLS unemployment statistics explicitly and avoids mixing unemployment rates from different standard series. This report labels each standard explicitly, marks methodological breaks and does not mix the two official series.

Unemployment is calculated among people in the labour force, whereas NEET measures a share of the total youth population in the specified age band. Young people outside the labour force can therefore appear in NEET without being unemployed. For programme planning, both measures are necessary.

3.5 What the 2023 census adds

The 2023 Population and Housing Census makes possible a much finer geographical analysis. Its special age group employment Table 15 includes an age 15 to 24 population count and census classifications of employed and unemployed persons, alongside a category labelled "Not L.F & Stud (15 to 24)", which the tables do not define. At national level, Table 15 records 44,622,831 people aged 15 to 24 and 15,174,084 classified as employed in the census framework (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023, table 15).

These figures should be read as census descriptors rather than substituted for LFS labour rates. PBS explicitly warns in the census table that its employment information was collected with a one year reference period for demographic and social profiling and is not comparable to the detailed Labour Force Survey. This distinction also prevents the census category from being labelled an ILO standard NEET measure. In 54 districts the census labour categories overlap, so a NEET rate cannot be assembled from them (Chapter 7).

Source	Period	Geographic role	Use in flagship
Population and Housing Census	2023	Potentially district level	Age specific counts and census defined economic disconnection
Labour Force Survey	2024 to 2025	National/provincial and supported domains	NEET, unemployment, employment quality, sex and rural to urban comparisons
Future PSLM district youth module	2026 to 2027, not yet released	Prospective district source	Future index refresh following public release and definition checks

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023, 2025, 2026b). District tables have been extracted and validated for all 136 district level units (Chapter 7).

3.6 Employment quality

Being classified as employed says little on its own about earnings adequacy, stability, working hours, social protection or prospects for advancement. The LFS 2024 to 2025 includes tables on employment status, industry, occupation, informal sector work, underemployment, digital platform employment and unpaid domestic and care work. These provide a much richer picture of young people's work than a single unemployment headline (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025).

Measuring youth specific employment quality requires age disaggregated official tables or accessible microdata; until PBS publishes them, this report treats employment quality as context rather than as a scored indicator. Employment characteristics for all people aged ten and over cannot be presented as outcomes for youth aged 15 to 29. This distinction is particularly important for informal work, platform employment and wage statistics.

With such tabulations, future work could report the composition of young workers by employment status, education and industry; the proportion of youth in vulnerable employment categories; and the gender distribution of unpaid care responsibilities. Each indicator requires a consistent population base and a source defined meaning. No employment quality score is published until its variables have been tested for repeatability and double counting.

3.7 Gender, location and overlapping disadvantage

The combination of sex and location provides an essential analytical lens. The LFS reported NEET rates of 28.7 per cent in rural areas and 28.0 per cent in urban areas in 2024 to 2025. The national rural to urban difference of 0.7 percentage points appears modest; among young women, however, the rates were 47.0 and 42.9 per cent, respectively. The gap between young men and young women is therefore far larger than the national rural to urban difference (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025, table 8.8).

These comparisons warrant further examination of schooling histories, care responsibilities, available employment and barriers to participation. The index recognises that constraints accumulate but reserves causal statements for research designs that can support them. This report does not equate inactivity with individual preference or lack of effort.

3.8 Implications for the district index

The district index uses the 2023 census as a geographically consistent baseline, and its economic component is labelled according to census definitions. For each district, the report publishes the inactive non student share, the number of young people affected, and the gap between young women and young men wherever the census tables allow the comparison. The results are presented in Chapters 7 and 8.

Four Labour Force Survey measures provide the national and provincial context for the index: the NEET rate, unemployment under a fixed labour standard, labour force participation, and indicators of employment quality. Each is reported only at the geographic level the survey supports, so no district estimates are derived from provincial data. When new district representative data are released, the index will be recalculated using a documented bridging procedure.

Proposed recurring statistic	Required population / denominator	Status
Youth NEET rate	All people aged 15 to 24	Available in LFS 2024 to 2025 at published domains
Youth unemployment	Youth labour force under labelled ICLS standard	Available in LFS 2024 to 2025
Female to male exclusion gap	Comparable sex specific youth rates	Available provincially in LFS; district literacy and inactivity gaps calculated from the census (Chapter 8)
District census inactivity	Not L.F & Stud / census youth population aged 15 to 24	Extracted and validated for 136 districts; definition inferred
Youth employment quality	Employed youth in the specified age group	Age specific tabulation or microdata audit needed

3.9 Conclusion

The economic exclusion of young Pakistanis is measurable, substantial and unequal. In 2024 to 2025, 28.4 per cent of people aged 15 to 24 were outside employment, education or training, with a particularly pronounced disparity between young women and men. Provincial differences are large enough to demand geographic analysis, while the contrast between NEET and unemployment underscores the need for multiple, carefully defined indicators.

The intended evidence series has a workable division of labour: the census can locate district level disadvantage at a common baseline, and the LFS can provide a more current picture of employment and economic disconnection at its supported reporting levels. Combining them carefully gives a clearer account of

opportunity while keeping the two sources distinct. Work, however, is only one route to opportunity. Chapter 4 turns to the skills and training that shape young people's chances of finding it.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Youth NEET fell from 32.5 to 28.4 per cent between 2020 to 2021 and 2024 to 2025, as the female rate fell 9.9 points and the male rate rose 2.5.
2. Female youth NEET ranges from 37.6 per cent in Punjab to 60.5 per cent in Balochistan.
3. NEET and unemployment measure different things: youth unemployment was 12.5 per cent under the 13th ICLS standard and 12.8 per cent under the 19th.



CHAPTER 4

Youth Skills, Training and the Transition to Employment

4.1 From training provision to economic opportunity

The central question for youth policy is increasingly whether education and training translate into sustained economic opportunity. Training institutions can count seats, courses and certificates with relative ease. Establishing whether a young person subsequently secures suitable work, improves earnings or establishes a viable enterprise requires evidence that follows participants beyond course completion. These outcomes are especially important for Pakistan's proposed Youth Opportunity and Exclusion framework: a district with many training places may still offer weak pathways into employment.

Pakistan's most recent official labour survey and Economic Survey provide complementary views. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2024 to 2025 reports previous exposure to technical or vocational training among the population aged 10 years and above. The Pakistan Economic Survey 2025 to 2026 records TVET enrolment and NAVTTC programme activity. These sources have different populations, units of measurement and reporting periods and should be interpreted together without aggregating their counts (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025; Finance Division 2026).

4.2 Reach of technical and vocational training

The LFS reports that 19.8 million people aged 10 and above had ever received technical or vocational training in 2024 to 2025, or 11.0% of the population in that age group. The corresponding proportion in 2020 to 2021 was 10.9%. The change is 0.1 percentage point; it offers little evidence of a substantial increase in population level training exposure over the period. These are lifetime training exposure measures and are neither annual trainee counts nor estimates restricted to youth (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025, Table 10.4).

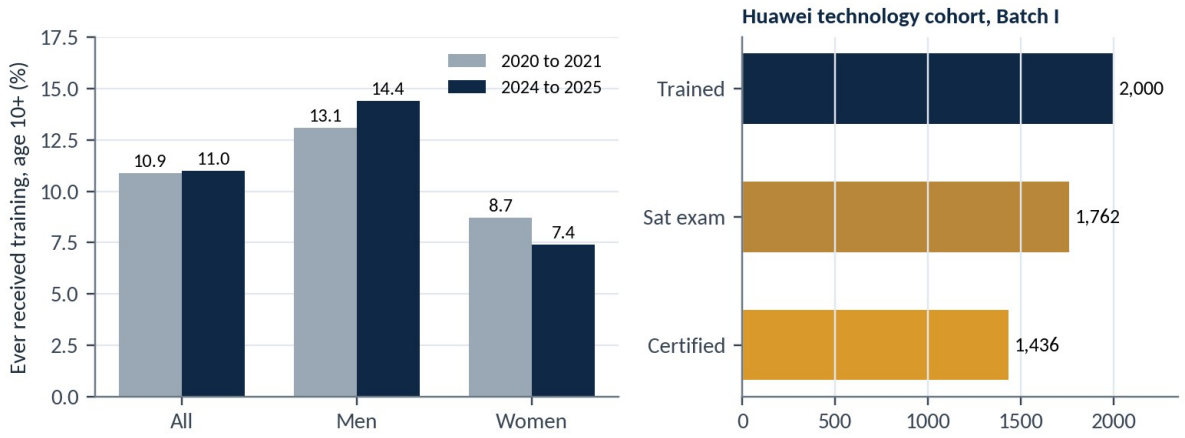


Figure 4.1. *Lifetime technical or vocational training among people aged 10 and above, and the Huawei Batch I cohort Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2025), Labour Force Survey 2024 to 2025, Table 10.4; NAVTTC (2026). In 2024 to 2025, 19.8 million people aged 10 and above had ever received training, against 17.4 million in 2020 to 2021.*

The gender difference deserves attention. Men's reported training exposure increased by 1.3 percentage points, whereas women's decreased by 1.3 percentage points between the two survey rounds. In 2024 to 2025 the male to female gap was 7.0 percentage points. Changes in the age composition of respondents, survey definitions and the nature of training reported should be examined before inferring the causes of this divergence. The figures nonetheless identify a clear question for programme design: whether existing provision reaches young women on equitable and practically usable terms.

4.3 Training institutions and programme delivery

The Economic Survey 2025 to 2026 reports technical and vocational institute enrolment of approximately 0.46 million in 2023 to 2024, compared with 0.45 million in 2022 to 2023. It also reports an estimated 4,746 functional technical and vocational institutes and 51,440 teachers during 2024 to 2025. These are institutional and enrolment estimates; they are not unique annual entrants to the labour market, nor can they be directly compared with lifetime training exposure in the LFS (Finance Division 2026, section 10.1).

The same Economic Survey states that NAVTTC and participating public and private institutions provided training to more than 100,000 youth during FY2025 in information technology, industrial and conventional trades. Its associated programme table combines training targets, implementation statuses and one completed initiative. Care is therefore needed when interpreting the programme summary: target numbers and completed trainees cannot be combined into a single verified outcome total (Finance Division 2026, section 10.4).

Programme or system figure	Reported value	Meaning / limitation
Technical/vocational enrolment, 2023 to 2024	0.46 million	Recorded sector enrolment; not completions
Functional TVET institutes, 2024 to 2025	4,746 (estimated)	Institutional supply indicator
NAVTTC reported youth trained in FY2025	More than 100,000	Programme delivery statement; not independently verified employment outcomes
Registered institutes under NAVTTC reforms	1,503	Registration based system measure, not access in each district
Licensed national assessors, 2025 to 2026	1,600	Assessor capacity, not trainee competence

Source: Finance Division (2026), Pakistan Economic Survey 2025 to 2026, chapter 10. Measures refer to different years and statistical units.

4.4 Evidence linking training to jobs

Employment tracer studies offer more direct insight into transitions than simple training totals. NAVTTC's published account of its Huawei technology initiative reports that 2,000 trainees completed Batch I; 1,762 sat certification examinations and 1,436 passed. The observed pass proportion among examination participants was approximately 81.5%, calculated from the reported counts. The same institutional account cites overall employment of 67%, an average monthly income of PKR 87,298 among employed graduates, and approximately 88% placed within six months (NAVTTC 2026).

These are useful programme specific monitoring results, but they should not be generalised to all vocational graduates. The public summary does not establish a national probability sample, a counterfactual comparison group or fully documented tracer response rates. The employment figure also needs to be distinguished from causal programme impact: participants might have obtained jobs without the intervention.

Huawei Batch I indicator	Institutional report	Interpretation
Trained participants	2,000	Programme cohort
Sat certification examination	1,762	Examination participants
Passed certification	1,436	81.5% of examination participants, calculated
Reported employment	67%	Tracer reported outcome; denominator/method to be verified
Average earnings of employed graduates	PKR 87,298/month	Conditional average for employed respondents

Source: NAVTTC (2026), Planning and Development. Calculated examination pass rate = 1,436 ÷ 1,762 × 100; programme reported outcomes may reflect selection and response biases.

4.5 The missing transition evidence

A young person's path from education to employment is a sequence: access to a course, attendance, completion, demonstrated competence, job search, entry into employment and retention. Nationally accessible sources document the early stages of this sequence more consistently than the later stages. This makes a straightforward national "training to jobs conversion rate" difficult to calculate from public administrative reports alone.

For future monitoring of training, a clear distinction is needed among programme reach (unique participants), completion (participants who finish), certification (participants who meet an assessed standard), placement (participants entering work), sustained employment (remaining in work after a specified interval) and earnings. A complete indicator would identify the reporting cohort, eligible denominator, follow up date, response rate and definition of employment.

The quality of work matters alongside entry to employment. A short term placement, unpaid family work, platform activity and sustained paid employment have different implications for economic inclusion. Sex disaggregated and age disaggregated outcomes also matter: a national aggregate can conceal barriers faced by young women and other groups with limited mobility, resources or access to training facilities.

4.6 Implications for the district index

District rankings require evidence that is both geographically complete and conceptually comparable. Publicly reported national training participation rates and NAVTTC programme totals do not, on their own, establish district representative skills outcomes. Geographic location of an institute is also a weak proxy for youth access: students may commute or migrate, and registered institutes may vary greatly in capacity, programme quality and completion rates.

Candidate district metric	Readiness for DYOI	Recommended treatment
Youth educational attainment	Conditional: census district tables	Retain within education opportunity domain after age specific checks
Technical/vocational institutes per youth population	Conditional: validated district inventory	Context indicator; exclude from core score subject to a coverage check
Youth technical training participation	Awaiting representative district data	Future candidate from PSLM 2026 to 2027
Certified youth by district of residence	Currently unverified	Report only with comparable administrative records
Employment six months after training	Not nationally district comparable	Use programme case studies, not district ranking

Training supply and tracer outcomes are therefore treated as context in this report rather than included in the composite index, until the PSLM 2026 to 2027 youth module or verified administrative datasets provide suitable district evidence. This protects the composite index from mixing direct outcomes with institutional activity counts.

4.7 Policy and programme implications

Three priorities emerge. First, NAVTTC and provincial technical education and vocational training authorities should move routine reporting beyond aggregate training targets and report unique enrolments, completions, certifications and subsequent employment using consistent cohort identifiers. Second, federal and provincial training authorities should record trainees' districts of residence and employment destinations, with explicit privacy safeguards. Third, institutions commissioning tracer surveys should publish instrument definitions,

follow up timing, response rates and disaggregated outcomes, so that decision makers can judge the robustness of placement claims.

There is also a clear opportunity to connect labour market intelligence with training provision. Industry participation, verified occupational demand and employer feedback can improve programme selection, but training demand must be distinguished from demand for actual jobs. Longitudinal records could eventually show whether a training intervention increases earnings and employment stability, with appropriately designed impact evaluations used where causal claims are required.

4.8 Skills evidence and the index

For the District Youth Opportunity Index, available evidence supports cautious treatment of skills as a future domain rather than a current core score. Until comparable district level observations are validated, the district comparison rests on census education and economic indicators. At national level, training exposure, TVET capacity and selected programme outcomes are already reportable, provided source year, population and statistical limitations accompany each value.

The resulting distinction is useful: the district index describes relative structural opportunity, while national surveys and programme records document newer changes in training provision, participation and observed transitions. Connecting these sources over time will make the evidence more informative without overstating what current administrative data establish. Skills increasingly depend on digital access, which Chapter 5 examines.

KEY MESSAGES

1. About one in nine people aged 10 and above (11.0 per cent) has ever received technical or vocational training.
2. Training exposure is diverging by sex: it rose to 14.4 per cent among men but fell to 7.4 per cent among women.
3. Tracer evidence exists only for named cohorts, such as 1,436 certified of 2,000 trained in the Huawei Batch I; no national measure links training to jobs.



CHAPTER 5

Youth Digital Access, Digital Skills and Economic Opportunities

5.1 Digital connectivity and opportunity

Digital connectivity is increasingly a condition of participation in education, training, job search and enterprise. Yet the presence of internet service or a mobile phone does not establish whether a young person can use digital tools independently, safely or productively. For the Youth Opportunity and Exclusion Report, the central concern is the progression from access to useful capabilities and, ultimately, demonstrable economic opportunity.

The latest Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024 to 2025 provides an important recent account of digital access and use. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) National Human Development Report 2023/24 provides an established district oriented Digital Development Index. These sources are complementary, but neither should be presented as a national district by district measure of youth digital competency in 2026 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2026a; UNDP 2024).

5.2 Connectivity has expanded rapidly

The Household Integrated Economic Survey 2024 to 2025 reports that 70 per cent of households had internet access, up from 34 per cent in 2018 to 2019, and that 57 per cent of individuals used the internet, up from 17 per cent. Ninety six per cent of households had a mobile phone or smartphone (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2026a). Individual mobile phone ownership among people aged 10 and above rose more slowly, from 45 per cent to 50 per cent, while 92 per cent of individuals used a mobile phone (Associated Press of Pakistan 2026). Household ownership of a computer, laptop or tablet stayed at 14 per cent across the two survey rounds (FAFEN 2026).

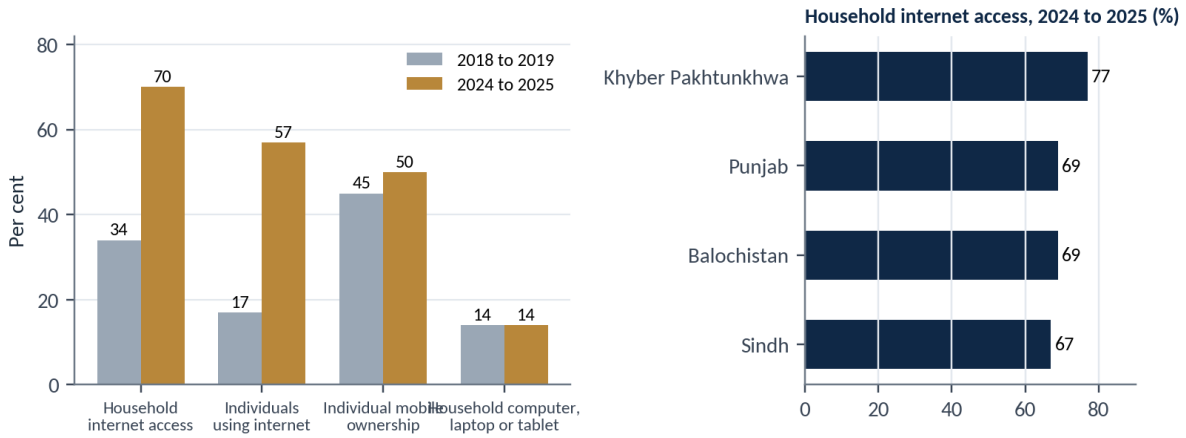


Figure 5.1. *Household and individual digital access, 2018 to 2019 and 2024 to 2025, and household internet access by province Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2026a); Associated Press of Pakistan (2026); FAFEN (2026). Individual measures cover people aged 10 and above; none of the measures is specific to young people.*

The pattern is clear. Access through mobile devices has spread quickly, while access to devices suited to document preparation, spreadsheets and technical work has not changed. Mobile access supports communication, platform work and course access, but many employment related tasks still depend on a computer, reliable connectivity or shared facilities.

5.3 Access, use and ownership differ

The 70 per cent household access figure and the 57 per cent individual use figure measure different things and should not be subtracted from each other. The first counts households with a connection. The second counts

persons who used the internet. Individual ownership of a phone, at 50 per cent, is lower again because household members share devices or use them under different conditions (Associated Press of Pakistan 2026). For young women in particular, the presence of a device in the household does not guarantee independent and regular use.

At the national level, women and men used the internet at almost the same rate in 2024 to 2025, and in urban areas women's use (71 per cent) exceeded men's (67 per cent) (Associated Press of Pakistan 2026). Use is not skill, however. Parity in reported use does not show whether young women and men can complete the same practical tasks, apply for jobs online or earn through digital work.

5.4 Provincial differences in access

Household internet access was highest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at 77 per cent, followed by Punjab and Balochistan at 69 per cent and Sindh at 67 per cent. Individual phone ownership was 51 per cent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 50 per cent in Punjab and Sindh, and 42 per cent in Balochistan (FAFEN 2026). These provincial patterns differ from the provincial ordering of youth NEET rates, a reminder that connectivity and economic participation are separate dimensions of opportunity. Survey reports on reasons for non use, such as cost, lack of need and lack of knowledge, are not specific to young people and require youth specific tabulation before they can guide programme design.

5.5 From connectivity to digital skills

Useful digital proficiency can be demonstrated through tasks such as searching for vacancies, completing application forms, using spreadsheets, sending documents, evaluating online information, protecting personal information and receiving digital payments. Each task requires a clear assessment rule. A respondent's declaration that they can complete a task is different from observed performance under a standardised assessment.

HIES includes reported digital skills indicators, providing a potential national or provincial source once the age specific tables and microdata are assessed. For an index focused on ages 15 to 29, overall digital skill percentages should not be repurposed as youth estimates. The planned PBS district survey 2026 to 2027 includes a youth development module with digital literacy questions, which may create an important opportunity for improved geographic coverage after its results are released (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2026a; Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2026b).

Four concepts should be reported separately where data allow: (i) device access, (ii) individual internet use, (iii) self reported digital tasks and (iv) directly demonstrated competencies. No composite digital readiness percentage is published until consistent age group data and clear proficiency thresholds exist.

5.6 District digital inequalities

UNDP's Pakistan National Human Development Report 2023/24 introduced a Digital Development Index covering access, adoption, skills and broader transformative potential. It places Pakistan in the moderate category with an index value of 0.205, finds that almost half of the country's districts have low digital development, and classes Islamabad as the only district with very high digital development, followed by Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Haripur and Abbottabad in the high category (UNDP 2024). The measure is an important precedent for geographic digital analysis.

The existence of this index has direct implications for the proposed District Youth Opportunity Index. Reproducing UNDP's digital district rankings would add little independent value. The more useful question is whether young people in districts with weaker infrastructure and digital opportunities also face greater educational and economic exclusion, using matched periods and defensible units of analysis. This is a hypothesis for investigation, not a relationship demonstrated by the evidence compiled in this chapter.

This report therefore treats the UNDP index as contextual evidence. Incorporating its score directly into a youth specific composite would risk double counting the relationship between connectivity, education and economic disadvantage, and could introduce indicators that do not isolate the youth population.

5.7 Digital programme outputs and outcomes

Digital public programmes and development initiatives may report learners reached, courses delivered, certificates issued, freelance registrations or enterprises assisted. These are different from demonstrable paid work, sustained earnings or business survival. Programme reports of this kind document reach rather than proficiency or employment, and they should not be read as national youth rates.

A defensible digital opportunity framework would require information on the percentage of trainees who complete a curriculum; demonstrate specific skills; secure paid digital employment or self employment; continue earning after a defined period; and have access to safe payment channels. The source register currently supports reporting selected programme outputs, while nationally comparable outcomes, especially at district level, remain a substantive evidence gap.

Potential monitoring measure	Evidence type	Publication treatment
Individual internet use by age and sex	Representative household survey	Include when age specific estimates verified
Practical digital skills by age and sex	Self report or task assessment	Clearly distinguish measurement mode
Programme participants completing digital training	Administrative programme records	Report named programme, period and denominator
Digital course graduates in paid work after 6 months	Tracer study	Include only for eligible cohort with response rate disclosure
District digital opportunity score	Composite/model based	Exclude until youth relevant district evidence validated

5.8 Implications for the district index

Digital exclusion is substantively relevant to youth opportunity, but current public statistics establish stronger national and urban to rural comparisons than a complete, youth specific district indicator series. Digital variables therefore remain outside the core score of the District Youth Opportunity Index, because district data for the same age range, definitions and coverage are not available.

When district representative youth digital data become available, they will be tested for incremental validity: whether a digital indicator captures a genuinely new aspect of opportunity after controlling for education and household socioeconomic position. Indicators that add little will be published as a stand alone profile rather than used to alter composite district ranks. Across employment, skills and digital access, one pattern recurs: young women are furthest behind. Chapter 6 brings that evidence together.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Household internet access more than doubled, from 34 to 70 per cent, between 2018 to 2019 and 2024 to 2025; individual use rose from 17 to 57 per cent.
2. Only 14 per cent of households own a computer, laptop or tablet, unchanged across the two surveys.
3. Access and use are not skills: youth specific digital capability is not yet measured.



CHAPTER 6

Gender Inequalities in Youth Opportunity and Economic Exclusion

6.1 Measuring gender across the opportunity pathway

The transition from education to economic participation is shaped by several linked opportunities: completing foundational education, acquiring usable skills, accessing information, obtaining work and sustaining earnings. Women and men encounter these conditions differently. A narrow focus on unemployment misses young people who are outside the labour force altogether, including those reporting household responsibilities or other forms of economic inactivity. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2024 to 2025 therefore provides an unusually useful starting point for examining gender differences in youth opportunity (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025).

This chapter examines economic disconnection among 15 to 24 year olds alongside supporting evidence on skills and digital participation. Where a statistic covers everyone aged 10 or above, the chapter explicitly treats it as contextual evidence, not an estimate for young women or men. The resulting analysis identifies what can be reported now and what must be calculated from district census tables before geographic conclusions are drawn.

6.2 Young women face far higher disconnection

The LFS 2024 to 2025 reports that 28.4% of young people aged 15 to 24 were neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET). The female NEET rate was 45.4%, compared with 13.0% among males: a gap of 32.4 percentage points. On this measure, young women were approximately 3.5 times as likely as young men to be outside these three pathways. These are survey estimates for 2024 to 2025 and should not be read as district rates (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025).

Indicator: ages 15 to 24	Female	Male	Total / derived
NEET rate, 2024 to 2025	45.4%	13.0%	28.4% overall
Female to male NEET gap	,	,	32.4 percentage points
Female/male NEET ratio	,	,	3.49 : 1

Source: PBS (2025), Labour Force Survey 2024 to 2025, youth NEET tables. Gap and ratio calculated from the published rounded rates; ratio is indicative.

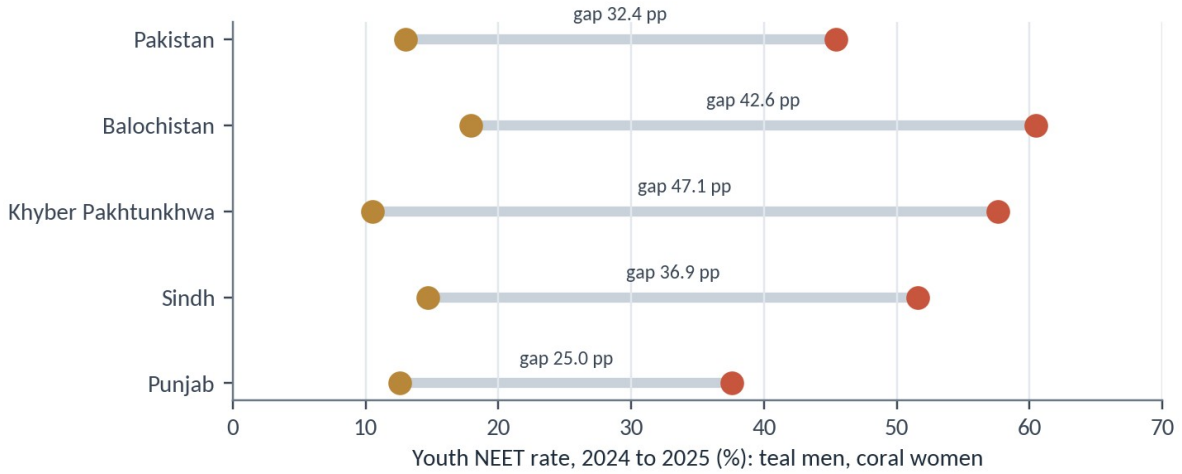


Figure 6.1. *Female and male youth NEET rates by province, 2024 to 2025 Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2025), Labour Force Survey 2024 to 2025, Table 8.8.*

This gap identifies an important exclusion pattern, although the NEET category combines individuals with varied circumstances. Some are seeking work; others are engaged in unpaid care or domestic responsibilities;

others may face constraints associated with distance, affordability, safety, health or local employment demand. The survey rate alone cannot establish which factor predominates. Explanatory claims require additional tabulations and, where appropriate, specialised research.

6.3 A widening gender gap in training

The same LFS finds that 11.0% of the population aged 10 and over had ever received technical or vocational training in 2024 to 2025. The corresponding shares were 14.4% among males and 7.4% among females. The resulting difference is 7.0 percentage points. Compared with 2020 to 2021, the reported share rose from 13.1% to 14.4% among males but fell from 8.7% to 7.4% among females (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025, Table 10.4).

Technical/vocational training received, age 10+	Male	Female	Gap (male to female)
2020 to 2021	13.1%	8.7%	4.4 pp
2024 to 2025	14.4%	7.4%	7.0 pp
Change in percentage points	+1.3	minus 1.3	+2.6 pp

Source: PBS (2025), LFS 2024 to 2025, Table 10.4. The indicator concerns lifetime receipt of any technical/vocational training among people aged 10+, not current youth training enrolment.

The difference indicates unequal reported exposure to training, rather than differences in competence, training quality or employment returns. Nor do these aggregate figures reveal whether women and men received similar course content or credentials. Separately reporting access to training and transitions from training into work is essential. National programme completion totals should not be converted into employment outcomes without appropriate tracer evidence.

6.4 Digital use and skills

Digital use shows a different gender pattern from economic participation. In 2024 to 2025, women and men used the internet at almost the same rate nationally, and urban women's use (71 per cent) exceeded that of urban men (67 per cent) (Associated Press of Pakistan 2026). These figures cover people aged 10 and above and are not youth specific rates.

Parity in reported use does not establish parity in capability or economic return. Searching for work online, preparing applications, managing documents and using professional platforms require skills, suitable devices and practice. Household ownership of computers, laptops or tablets stood at 14 per cent (FAFEN 2026), which limits the tasks that many young people can complete at home. Youth specific tabulations of practical digital tasks by sex are needed before digital capability can enter the monitoring framework as a gender indicator.

6.5 Educational foundations by district

The 2023 Population and Housing Census supplies a direct district level pathway to measuring female to male differences in youth literacy and educational attainment. Its national Table 13(a) identifies a specific 15 to 24 age group; for that group, the overall literacy rate was 68.18% in 2023. A district gender gap analysis requires separate male and female numerators and denominators for precisely the same age group and boundary definition (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023).

District extraction now shows where these gaps are widest. Hangu has the largest youth literacy gap in the country, 48.7 percentage points (78.6 per cent for young men against 29.9 per cent for young women), and female youth literacy is below 50 per cent in 74 of 136 districts (Chapter 8).

6.6 Gender in the district index

A composite index can conceal substantial differences within districts if a favourable overall score offsets a large female disadvantage. The District Youth Opportunity Index therefore reports sex specific rates and gender gaps alongside the composite score, together with the underlying population counts (Chapter 8 and the companion workbook). The gender gaps are a companion output and are not absorbed into the weighted composite score.

District statistical measure	Required inputs	Interpretation / guardrail
Female youth literacy rate	Literate females aged 15 to 24 / total females aged 15 to 24	Direct census measure once district table validated
Male youth literacy rate	Literate males aged 15 to 24 / total males aged 15 to 24	Uses identical age range and census definition
Literacy gap	Male youth literacy % minus female youth literacy %	Percentage points; retain direction and source year
Female youth economic exclusion	Validated census category and denominator	Label according to census wording; do not equate mechanically with ILO NEET
Scale of exclusion	Rate × matching sex/age population denominator	Report persons as well as percentages

Analytical specification. Calculated values are reported in Chapter 8 and the accompanying workbook.

A stable geographic comparison also requires a district master code, administrative boundary version and treatment of newly formed districts. The index preserves each observation year, and administrative information published later is not used to claim that the underlying 2023 census indicator has changed.

6.7 Interpreting overlapping disadvantages

The available evidence points to disadvantages that may reinforce one another: educational exclusion can restrict entry to training, limited digital engagement can narrow search and application options, and household responsibilities can reduce time available for paid work. The size of each pathway and the extent of overlap cannot be inferred from marginal national percentages. For example, comparing the female NEET rate with the female training rate does not reveal how many individuals belong to both groups, because the survey populations and concepts differ.

The next analytical step is joint tabulation within each representative dataset: NEET status by sex, educational attainment, urban/rural location, marital status and province where sample sizes allow. Association tables would clarify which patterns are observed together. Identifying causal barriers or programme effects would require additional designs and evidence.

6.8 Conclusions and policy priorities

The documented gender gap in youth economic disconnection is large: 45.4% of young women and 13.0% of young men aged 15 to 24 were classified as NEET in 2024 to 2025. Wider population evidence also shows different exposure to technical training, while reported internet use is now close to parity between women and men. Together, these patterns justify a sustained gender lens across education, skills and labour market monitoring, while each indicator retains its own population and measurement definition.

For governments and development partners, the immediate priority is to locate geographic concentrations of disadvantage and distinguish barriers that require different programme responses. District census evidence locates where gaps are widest, the labour survey provides the national and provincial context, and more detailed joint tabulations can inform interventions for young women in different circumstances. National and provincial evidence shows how large the gaps are; it cannot show where they are widest. Answering that question requires evidence for every district, which the District Youth Opportunity Index provides. Chapter 7 explains how it is built.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Young women are 3.5 times as likely as young men to be NEET: 45.4 against 13.0 per cent.
2. The gender gap in NEET is widest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, at 47.1 percentage points.
3. Internet use is close to parity between women and men, but use does not establish skill or earnings.



PART II

The District Youth Opportunity Index

How the index is built, the results for all 136 districts, and priorities for action



CHAPTER 7

Index Methodology and Validation

About the index. The District Youth Opportunity Index is calculated for 136 district level units and validated through an independent second calculation. It measures relative differences in observed educational and economic conditions among young people aged 15 to 24 at the Census 2023 reference date. It is not a NEET measure and does not describe conditions after 2023.

7.1 Purpose, scope and design decisions

The District Youth Opportunity Index (DYOI) is a diagnostic tool. It shows where young people face the weakest educational foundations and the weakest connection to education or market work, and it places those differences beside the number of young people affected. A score summarises selected indicators. It does not measure each district's whole youth development performance, and it does not explain why differences exist.

Three design decisions follow from the structure of the census tables and from testing the candidate indicators.

- **Age band.** The census literacy, enrolment and labour status tables report a special age group of 15 to 24 only. Table 4 reports single year ages, so the population aged 15 to 29 is available for every district, but no census rate for ages 25 to 29 can be built. All index rates therefore refer to ages 15 to 24. Counts of the population aged 15 to 29 are reported as context (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023).
- **Labour category label.** The tables published by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) label the census labour category "Not L.F & Stud (15 to 24)" and give no definition note. This report uses the published label and a descriptive name, "inactive non student share", and does not call it NEET.
- **Employment indicator.** The share recorded as employed counts unpaid family helpers in agriculture and moves in the opposite direction to education across districts (Section 7.7). The core index therefore uses a market employment share, and the total employment share is retained as an alternative specification.

7.2 Source architecture

The index uses four district level tables from the 7th Population and Housing Census, published by PBS as Excel files on its detailed results page (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023). Each file was downloaded on 11 October 2026 and archived with a checksum in the companion source inventory.

Table 7.1. Census tables used and their roles

Table	Content used	Population and sex detail	Role
13(a)	Population, literate, ever attended, enrolment by level, never attended	Ages 15 to 24; all sexes, male, female; rural and urban	Education indicators and sex specific literacy
15	Employed by status, unemployed, Not L.F & Stud	Ages 15 to 24; rural and urban; no sex split	Economic indicators
14	Not L.F & Stud by sex	Ages 15 to 24 for this row only; all other rows cover ages 10 and over	Sex specific inactivity share
4	Single year age by sex	All ages; used for ages 15 to 29	Population context and reconciliation

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), Census 2023 district tables 4, 13(a), 14 and 15. Table 15 contains no sex disaggregation, so no sex specific employment indicator can be built from the census.

Four other evidence streams were considered and kept outside the index. The Labour Force Survey 2024 to 2025 supports provincial and national estimates and cannot be allocated to districts (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025). The district Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement survey of 2019 to 2020 has not been reconciled with the census age definitions and boundaries. The Youth Development module planned for

2026 to 2027 has not been released. Household survey measures of digital access and administrative training counts are not representative at district level for young people. All index inputs therefore carry one observation year, 2023.

7.3 Eligibility audit

Before any score was calculated, every district record passed a set of internal consistency tests, and the district totals were reconciled with the national totals published in the same tables. One coverage issue requires care. Malakand is labelled "Malakand Protected Area" in the PBS file rather than with the word District; omitting it leaves Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 825,377 persons short of its provincial total. With Malakand included, the 136 units reconcile exactly. Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan reconciled exactly from the start. The Punjab file also lists a "De Excluded Area Rajanpur" sub unit. It lies inside the Rajanpur district total and is not counted separately.

Table 7.2. Internal consistency tests applied to each of the 136 district records

Test	Records tested	Failures
Population aged 15 to 24 in Table 13(a) equals Table 15	136	0
Population aged 15 to 24 equals Table 4 ages 15 to 19 plus 20 to 24	136	0
Not L.F & Stud in Table 14 equals Table 15	136	0
Male plus female plus transgender equals all sexes (population, literate, Not L.F & Stud)	136 each	0
Rural plus urban equals all localities (population)	136	0
Literate does not exceed population	136	0
Ever attended plus never attended equals population	136	0
Employment status components sum to employed	136	0

Source: authors' extraction from files retrieved from the PBS website on 11 October 2026.

Table 7.3. Sum of 136 districts compared with published national totals

Measure	Sum of districts	Published national	Difference
Population aged 15 to 24 (Table 13(a))	44,622,831	44,622,831	0
Literate aged 15 to 24	30,422,227	30,422,227	0
Employed aged 15 to 24 (Table 15)	15,174,084	15,174,084	0
Unemployed aged 15 to 24	6,197,628	6,197,628	0
Not L.F & Stud aged 15 to 24	18,160,400	18,160,400	0
Population aged 15 to 19 (Table 4)	24,154,118	24,154,118	0
Population aged 20 to 24	20,468,713	20,468,713	0
Population aged 25 to 29	17,967,161	17,967,161	0
All ages	240,458,089	240,458,089	0

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), authors' calculations. The national population aged 15 to 29 is 62,589,992, or 26.0 per cent of the total.

Two further audit findings shape how the labour indicators are used. First, in 54 of the 136 districts the sum of employed, unemployed and Not L.F & Stud exceeds the population aged 15 to 24, so the three categories are not a clean partition of youth. A NEET rate cannot be assembled from them. Second, the meaning of the Not L.F & Stud label is not documented in the tables. The reading used here is that it records young people outside the labour force who are not students. Two facts support that reading: nationally 58.4 per cent of young women and 23.9 per cent of young men fall in the category, and the number of young people left unassigned after subtracting the three labour categories from the population tracks enrolment closely across districts

(correlation 0.97). The reading remains an inference until PBS confirms the definition, so the index has been tested with the indicator removed (Section 7.8).

7.4 Indicator specification

Table 7.4. Core and companion indicators

Domain	Indicator	Definition, ages 15 to 24	Direction	Weight in index
Education	Youth literacy rate	Literate persons divided by population	Higher is better	25 per cent
Education	Currently enrolled share	Persons enrolled at any level (primary to graduation and above) divided by population	Higher is better	25 per cent
Economic	Inactive non student share	Persons recorded as Not L.F & Stud divided by population	Lower is better	25 per cent
Economic	Market employment share	Paid employees, employers and non agricultural own account workers divided by population	Higher is better	25 per cent
Companion	Sex gaps in literacy and inactivity	Male rate minus female rate, in percentage points	Smaller is better	Not weighted
Context	Affected counts	Illiterate youth; inactive non student youth; population aged 15 to 29	Not scored	Not weighted

Source: authors' specification. Every indicator has complete values for all 136 districts, so no imputation was used and no provincial averages were substituted for district values.

Literacy and enrolment capture a stock and a flow of educational opportunity. Literacy reflects the cumulative result of past access to schooling. Enrolment shows how many young people are still in education. The two economic indicators separate young people who are outside both study and the labour force from those in market work, where market work means paid employment, employers and non agricultural self employment. Agricultural own account work and unpaid family help are left out of the market employment share because they are common where wage opportunities are scarce and do not signal access to paid work.

The share of young people who have never attended school was tested and excluded from the core. It is almost the mirror image of literacy (correlation negative 0.99), so including it would count one condition twice. Digital access, technical training and school quality were excluded because no comparable district measure for young people exists in the public record.

7.5 Construction of the score

Each indicator is rescaled to run from 0 to 100 using the lowest and highest district values. For a beneficial indicator, the score is 100 multiplied by the difference between the district value and the lowest district value, divided by the difference between the highest and lowest district values. For an adverse indicator, the result is subtracted from 100, so that a low inactive share scores high. The education score is the mean of the two education indicator scores. The economic score is the mean of the two economic indicator scores. The DYOI score is half the education score plus half the economic score (OECD, European Union, and Joint Research Centre 2008).

Districts are ranked from 1 for the highest score. No two districts share a score, so no ties occur. For presentation, districts are divided into five bands of 27 or 28 districts each by core rank. Band 1 holds the highest opportunity districts and Band 5 the lowest.

Three interpretation rules apply. The score is relative to the 136 district range and moves if districts are added or removed, so it is not a percentage of young people with opportunity. A national figure should be computed

from national counts, not by averaging district scores. And the sex gaps are shown beside the score and are not deducted from it, because a district with high average attainment and a wide gap and a district with low attainment and no gap answer different questions.

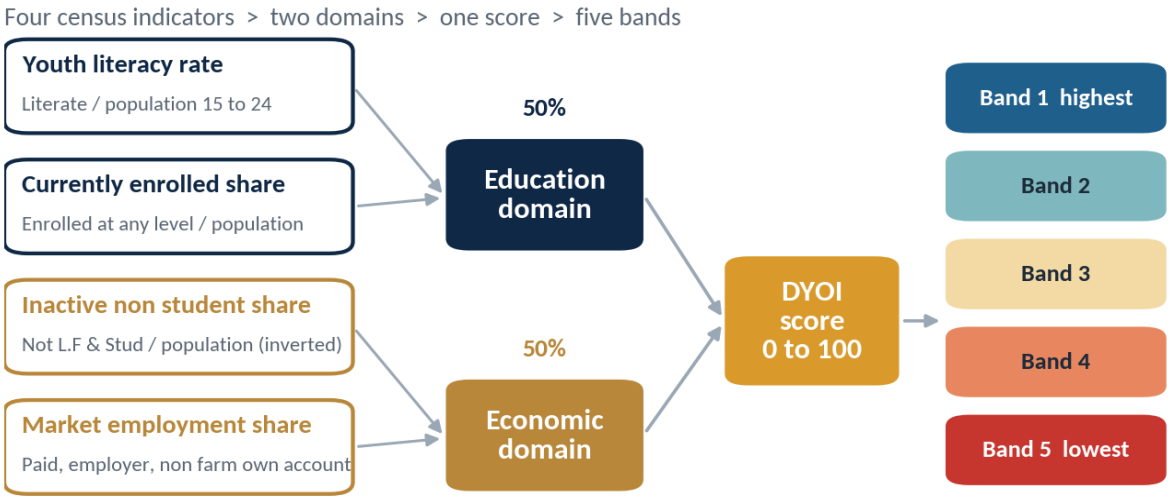


Figure 7.1. *How the District Youth Opportunity Index is built. Source: authors' specification.*

7.6 Independent verification

The index was calculated twice by separate routes. The primary route read the Excel files with a label driven parser and wrote every extracted value with its source file and cell address. The second route read the same files again with a different library and a position based parser, recomputed all four indicators and the DYOI with separately written code, and compared the results. All 136 districts matched. The largest difference in any score was 0.000000000000007 points, and no rank differed. Recomputed literacy rates also matched the percentages printed in the PBS tables exactly. The calculation workbook contains live Excel formulas for the core index next to the Python values, so a reader can reproduce every score without running code.

136	0	2	13
district units, all with complete values	difference between district sums and national totals	independent calculation routes; identical results	alternative specifications tested
Coverage	Reconciliation	Verification	Robustness

Source: authors' calculations.

7.7 Indicator correlations

Table 7.5. Correlations across 136 districts

Pair	Correlation	Reading
Literacy and currently enrolled share	0.93	Related, kept as separate stock and flow measures
Literacy and never attended share	negative 0.99	Redundant, never attended excluded
Literacy and inactive non student share	negative 0.67	Districts with low literacy have more inactive youth
Literacy and market employment share	0.63	Market work is more common where literacy is higher
Literacy and employed share of all youth	negative 0.50	Total employment is higher where literacy is lower
Enrolled share and employed share of all youth	negative 0.68	Employment replaces study where enrolment is low
Market employment and employed share of all youth	negative 0.01	Different constructs
Education score and economic score	0.67	Domains overlap but carry distinct information

Source: authors' calculations.

The negative relationship between total employment and education explains the change to the core specification. In the census, the employed category includes unpaid family helpers and agricultural own account workers, and the employed share of youth is highest in the districts with the lowest literacy. Rewarding that share would score the lowest education districts better on the economic domain for reasons that do not indicate opportunity. The market employment share does not behave this way. The original specification remains in the robustness set as specification S12.

7.8 Robustness and rank stability

Thirteen specifications were calculated: the core, two alternative domain weightings, a set with all candidate indicators, a geometric aggregation, percentile rank and truncated z score normalisation, fixed goalposts at 0 and 100, four versions that drop one indicator at a time, and the original candidate employment indicator. Rank order is highly stable across them.

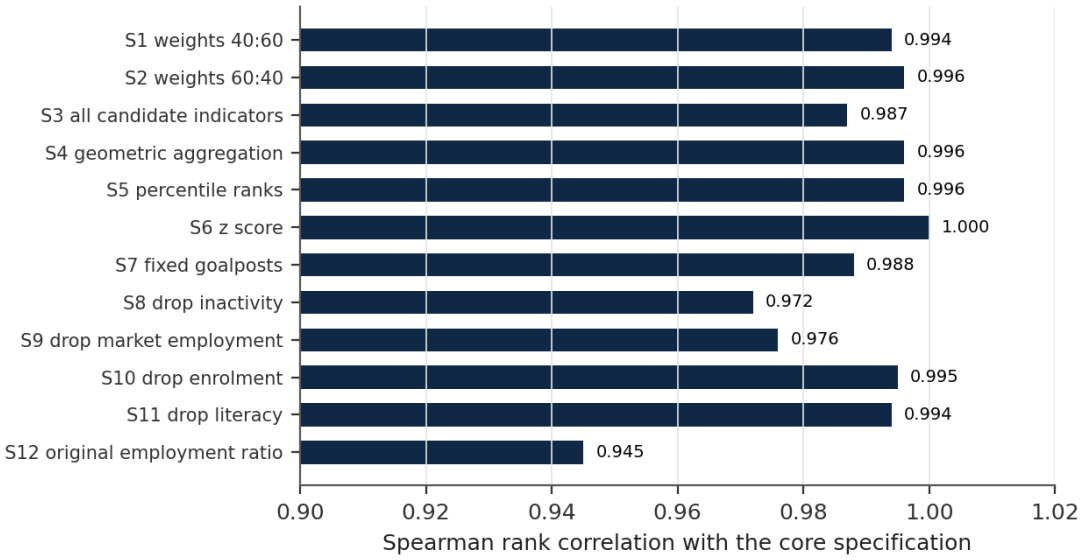


Figure 7.2. *Spearman rank correlation of each specification with the core. Source: authors' calculations.*

The lowest correlations arise when the inactivity indicator is dropped (0.972) and when the original employment ratio replaces market employment (0.945). Even so, no specification reorders the districts radically. Individual positions are less secure than the overall order. Across the thirteen specifications, the

median district's rank spans 16 places, and the mean span is 19.2. Sixty one districts have a rank range of 15 or less, 58 have a range between 16 and 30, and 17 have a range above 30. The least stable districts are Karachi West, Keamari, Malir, Quetta, Kohat, Kech, Sohbatpur, Swat, Karak, Panjgur, Kashmore, Hangu, Nasirabad, Khyber, Barkhan, Kohlu, Torghar.

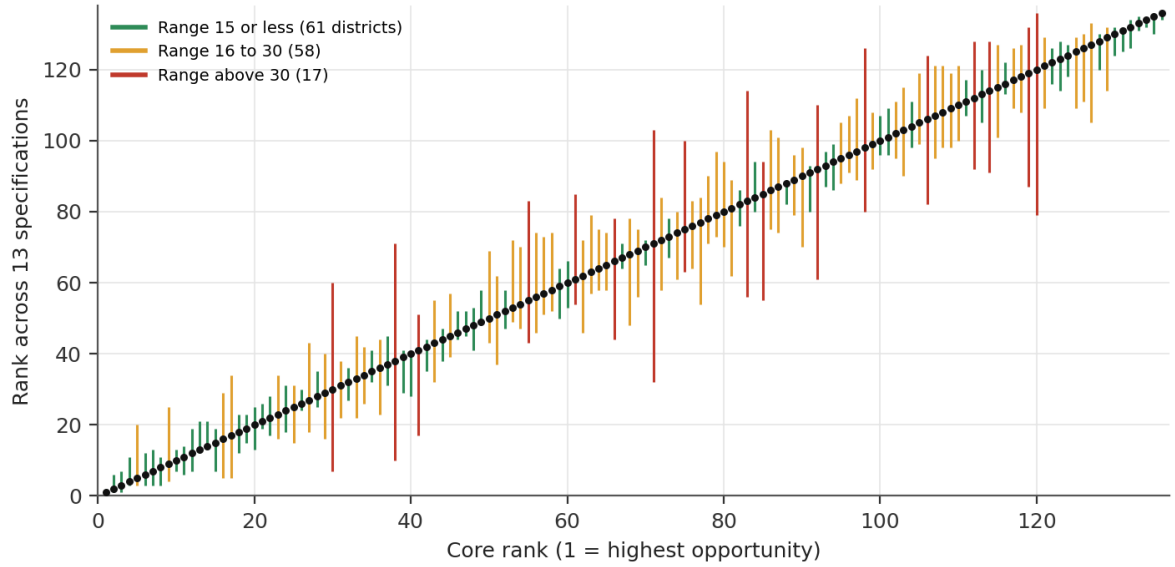


Figure 7.3. *Rank of each district across 13 specifications, shown as a vertical line with the core rank as a dot. Source: authors' calculations.*

The practical rule is to read the band and the rank range beside the rank. The extremes are secure. The three highest ranked districts stay within positions 1 to 7 under every specification, and the three lowest stay within positions 130 to 136. In the middle of the distribution, many scores lie within one or two points of their neighbours, and a rank difference of a few places should not be interpreted as a difference in conditions.

7.9 Companion outputs

Four companion outputs accompany the score for every district. The sex specific literacy rates and the male minus female gap in percentage points describe education equity. The female and male inactive non student shares describe differences in economic disconnection. The counts of illiterate young people and of inactive non student young people describe scale. The count of the population aged 15 to 29 gives the larger youth cohort for planning. A rate identifies intensity and a count identifies scale, and the two lead to different districts (Chapter 8).

7.10 Limitations

- **Reference period.** All values are census observations for 2023. The census employment variables use a one year reference period and are not comparable with Labour Force Survey estimates, which PBS states in the census tables.
- **Measurement scope.** The index covers literacy, enrolment and market work. It does not measure learning quality, skills, job quality, earnings, digital capability or the availability of local jobs.
- **Definition risk.** The Not L.F & Stud definition is inferred. Removing the indicator changes ranks modestly (correlation 0.972), but the economic domain should be read as conditional until PBS confirms the definition.

- **Heterogeneity inside districts.** A district score averages urban and rural conditions. Large urban districts such as Karachi and Lahore are internally diverse.
- **Relative scale.** Scores depend on the 136 district range. The fixed goalpost variant correlates 0.988 with the core, so the order is robust, but the numeric score is not an absolute standard.
- **Boundaries.** The index uses Census 2023 district geography as published. Comparison with earlier surveys requires a boundary reconciliation that has not been done.
- **Inference.** The results are cross sectional and descriptive. They do not identify causes or programme effects.

7.11 Release rules and updates

This is version 1.0 of the DYOI. A national ranking is published because all 136 units pass the eligibility audit, reconcile exactly with national totals and have been reproduced independently. Release as an official statistic would additionally require external statistical review and PBS confirmation of the labour category definition. Neither has occurred, and no government body has adopted the index.

The index will be recalculated when comparable district representative data become available, most likely the district survey Youth Development module once released. Indicators that remain comparable will extend the series. Indicators whose meaning changes will start a new series and a new version number. National and provincial evidence from the Labour Force Survey and household surveys is set out in Chapters 3 to 6, with each statistic labelled by its own observation year. With the method established, Chapter 8 presents the results for all 136 districts.

KEY MESSAGES

1. The index combines four census indicators for ages 15 to 24 in two equally weighted domains: education and economic participation.
2. District totals reconcile exactly with national figures, and two independent calculations give identical results for all 136 districts.
3. Ranks are robust at the top and bottom; 17 districts with wide rank ranges are best read by band.



CHAPTER 8

District Results, Maps and Profiles

Evidence status. Every figure in this chapter is calculated from the Census 2023 district tables for 136 district level units and has been reproduced by an independent second calculation (Chapter 7). Findings describe conditions among young people aged 15 to 24 in 2023. They are descriptive, they do not show causes, and they are not a measure of NEET.

8.1 Results at a glance

The census counted 44,622,831 people aged 15 to 24, and 30,422,227 of them were literate, a national youth literacy rate of 68.2 per cent. That leaves 14,200,604 young people who could not read and write, or 31.8 per cent of the age group. About 26.4 per cent were enrolled in education at some level. The census recorded 18,160,400 young people, 40.7 per cent, in the category published as Not L.F & Stud. The category is far more common among young women (58.4 per cent) than among young men (23.9 per cent) (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023). These are census measures for 2023. They differ in reference period and definition from the Labour Force Survey NEET rate of 28.4 per cent reported for 2024 to 2025 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025).

District scores on the DYOI range from 6.2 to 91.2, with a median of 46.2. The middle half of districts lies between 30.4 and 64.0. The spread is therefore wide: the gap between the highest and lowest scoring district is 85.0 points on a 100 point scale. Bands of 27 or 28 districts summarise the distribution.

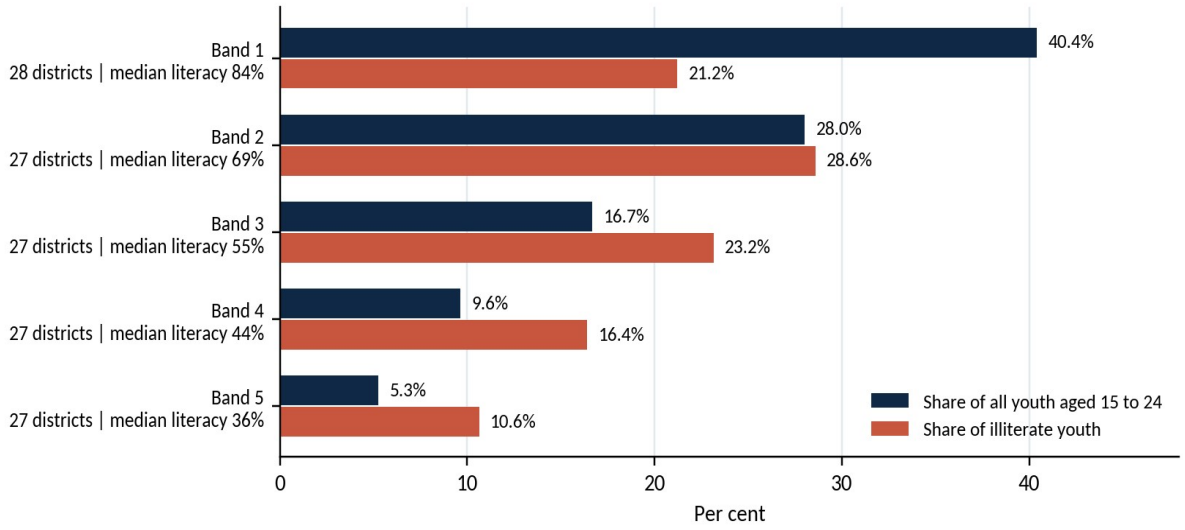


Figure 8.1. *The five opportunity bands: share of all youth and of illiterate youth, with the number of districts and median youth literacy in each band. Bands are quintiles of the core rank; score ranges are 66.6 to 91.2 (Band 1), 51.2 to 66.5, 38.9 to 50.5, 28.0 to 38.8, and 6.2 to 27.5 (Band 5). Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023); authors' calculations.*

8.2 National distribution and rankings

Table 8.1. The ten highest and ten lowest ranked districts

Rank	District	Province	Score	Literacy %	Inactive non student %	Band	Rank range, 13 specifications
1	Lahore	Punjab	91.2	85.8	32.6	Band 1	1 to 2
2	Karachi Central	Sindh	89.9	85.5	34.7	Band 1	1 to 6
3	Islamabad	Islamabad	87.4	88.7	33.3	Band 1	1 to 7
4	Karachi East	Sindh	86.3	80.1	35.2	Band 1	3 to 11
5	Karachi South	Sindh	83.8	84.2	38.4	Band 1	3 to 20
6	Rawalpindi	Punjab	83.5	90.1	35.2	Band 1	3 to 12
7	Sialkot	Punjab	82.6	88.9	33.9	Band 1	3 to 13

Rank	District	Province	Score	Literacy %	Inactive non student %	Band	Rank range, 13 specifications
8	Gujranwala	Punjab	81.8	86.6	34.4	Band 1	3 to 11
9	Korangi	Sindh	81.5	82.8	39.4	Band 1	4 to 25
10	Faisalabad	Punjab	80.1	82.8	35.2	Band 1	7 to 13
127	Kachhi	Balochistan	21.1	31.6	46.8	Band 5	105 to 133
128	Sujawal	Sindh	20.8	29.4	50.9	Band 5	120 to 130
129	Bajaur	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	20.3	32.6	55.6	Band 5	114 to 132
130	Chagai	Balochistan	18.0	36.8	53.9	Band 5	124 to 132
131	Sherani	Balochistan	17.1	25.0	52.4	Band 5	125 to 132
132	Dera Bugti	Balochistan	14.6	27.8	56.4	Band 5	126 to 134
133	Washuk	Balochistan	12.9	22.1	53.9	Band 5	131 to 135
134	Lower Kohistan	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	10.4	24.1	55.0	Band 5	132 to 134
135	Kolai Palas Kohistan	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	7.5	20.4	53.1	Band 5	130 to 136
136	Upper Kohistan	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	6.2	21.4	56.7	Band 5	134 to 136

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), authors' calculations. The complete ranking of 136 districts is in the accompanying workbook.

Band 1 contains 28 districts: 19 in Punjab, 5 in Sindh, 3 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. The Sindh districts are Karachi Central, Karachi East, Karachi South, Korangi and Hyderabad. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts are Abbottabad, Haripur and Upper Chitral. Lahore ranks first with a score of 91.2, followed by Karachi Central (89.9) and Islamabad (87.4). Four of the seven Karachi districts rank within the top nine, while Karachi West, Keamari and Malir rank 30, 38 and 41.

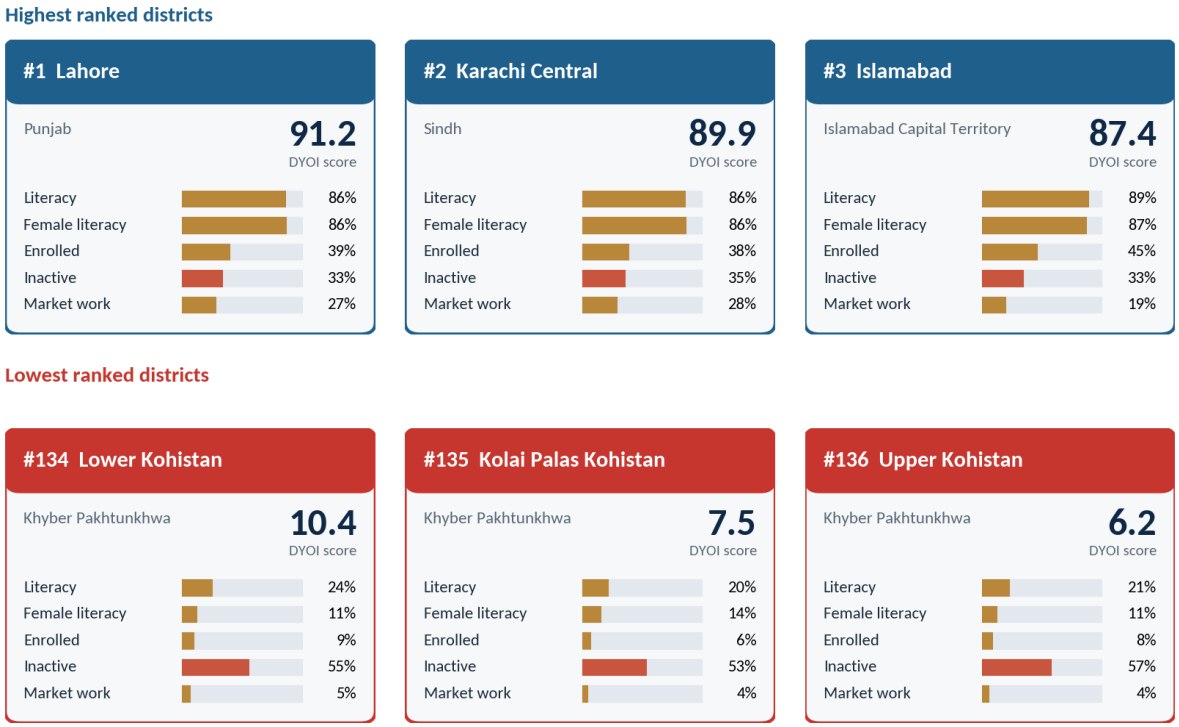


Figure 8.2. *Profiles of the three highest and three lowest ranked districts, ages 15 to 24, 2023. Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023); authors' calculations.*

Upper Chitral illustrates why the score and the headline literacy rate can diverge. It has the highest youth literacy rate in the country, 94.7 per cent, and ranks 17th overall, but only 9.0 per cent of its young people are in market employment, the economic score is low, and the district holds only 38,022 young people. The bottom of

the ranking is dominated by the three Kohistan districts (Upper Kohistan, Kolai Palas Kohistan and Lower Kohistan) and by Washuk, Dera Bugti, Sherani and Chagai in Balochistan, with Bajaur, Sujawal and Kachhi completing the lowest ten. In Upper Kohistan, 21.4 per cent of young people are literate and 56.7 per cent are in the inactive non student category.

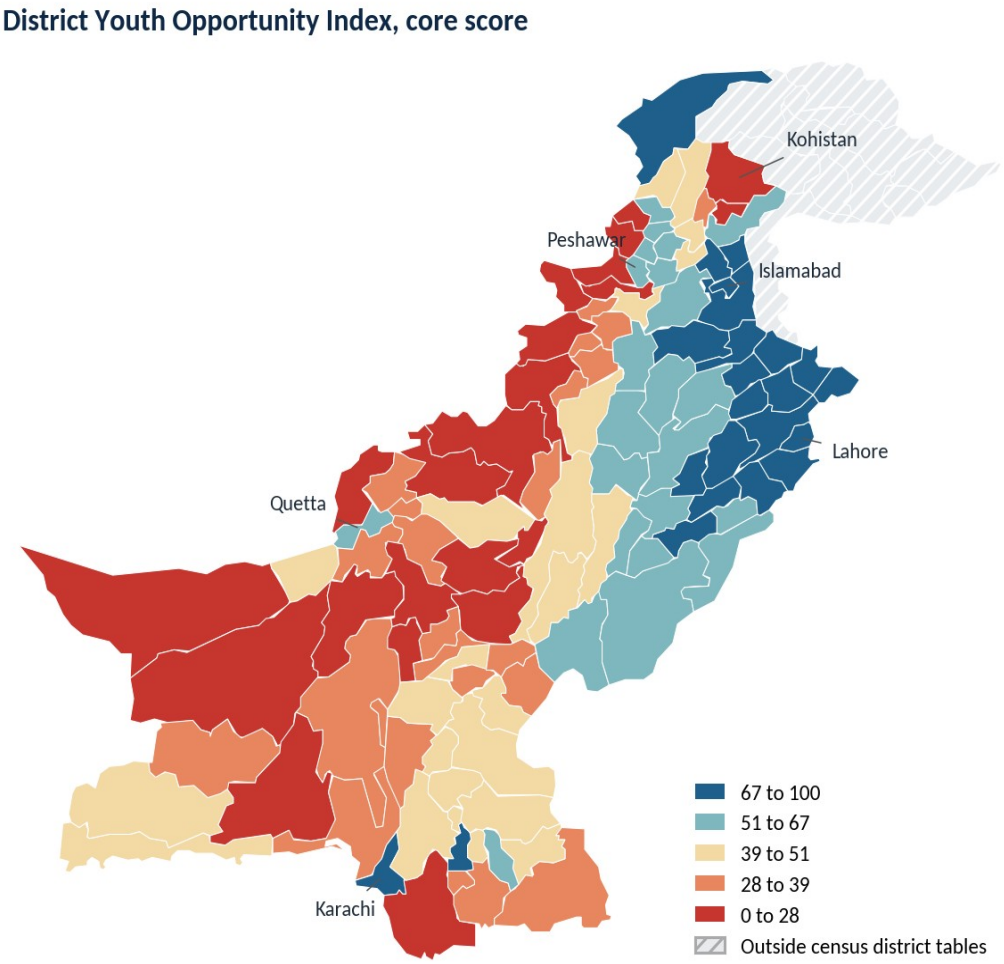


Figure 8.3. *District Youth Opportunity Index core scores, 2023. Classes follow the five bands. Districts created after 2019 are shown within their 2019 boundary unit, with values recomputed from summed census counts. Areas hatched are outside the census district tables. Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023); boundaries from geoBoundaries (Runfola et al. 2020); authors' calculations.*

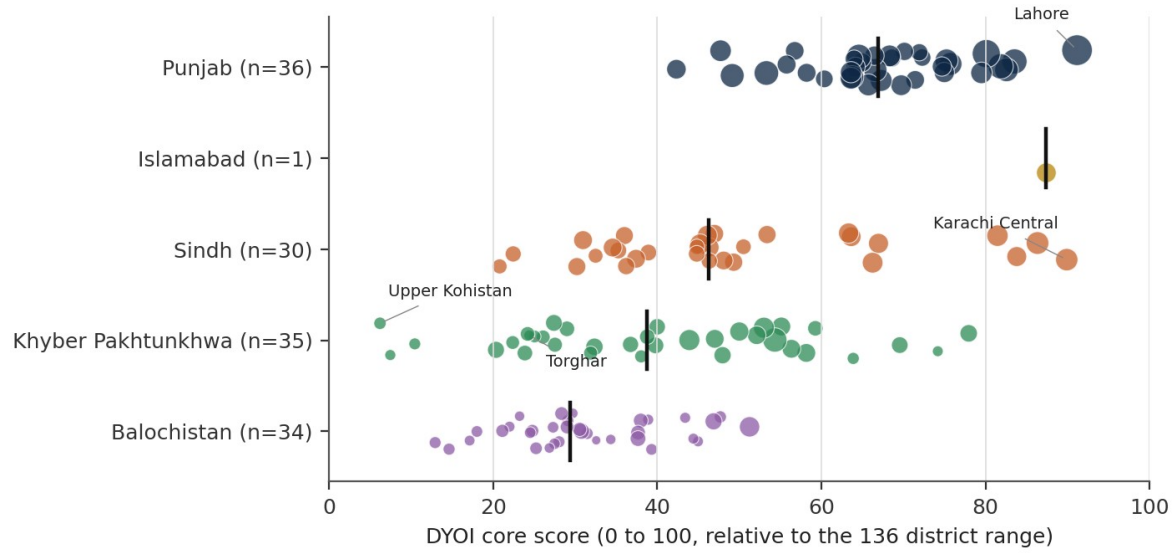


Figure 8.4. *District DYOI core scores by province. Bars mark provincial medians; bubble area scales with the population aged 15 to 24. Source: authors' calculations.*

8.3 Provincial comparison

Table 8.2. Provincial summary

Province	Districts	Youth 15 to 24	Literacy %	Female literacy %	Female inactive non student %	Median score	Lowest to highest score	Illiterate youth
Punjab	36	23,414,305	76.2	73.6	53.6	66.9	42.3 to 91.2	5,563,331
Sindh	30	10,219,410	60.7	54.8	61.0	46.2	20.8 to 89.9	4,018,171
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	35	7,737,721	60.8	47.3	69.3	38.8	6.2 to 78.0	3,032,413
Balochistan	34	2,828,786	45.6	37.8	60.7	29.4	12.9 to 51.2	1,538,855
Islamabad	1	422,609	88.7	86.9	46.0	87.4	87.4	47,834

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), authors' calculations. Literacy and inactivity percentages are population weighted province totals.

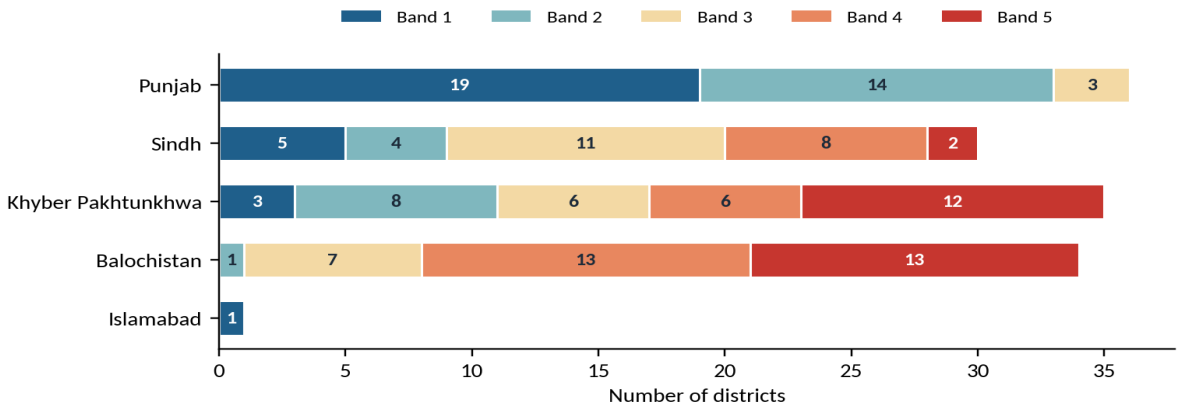
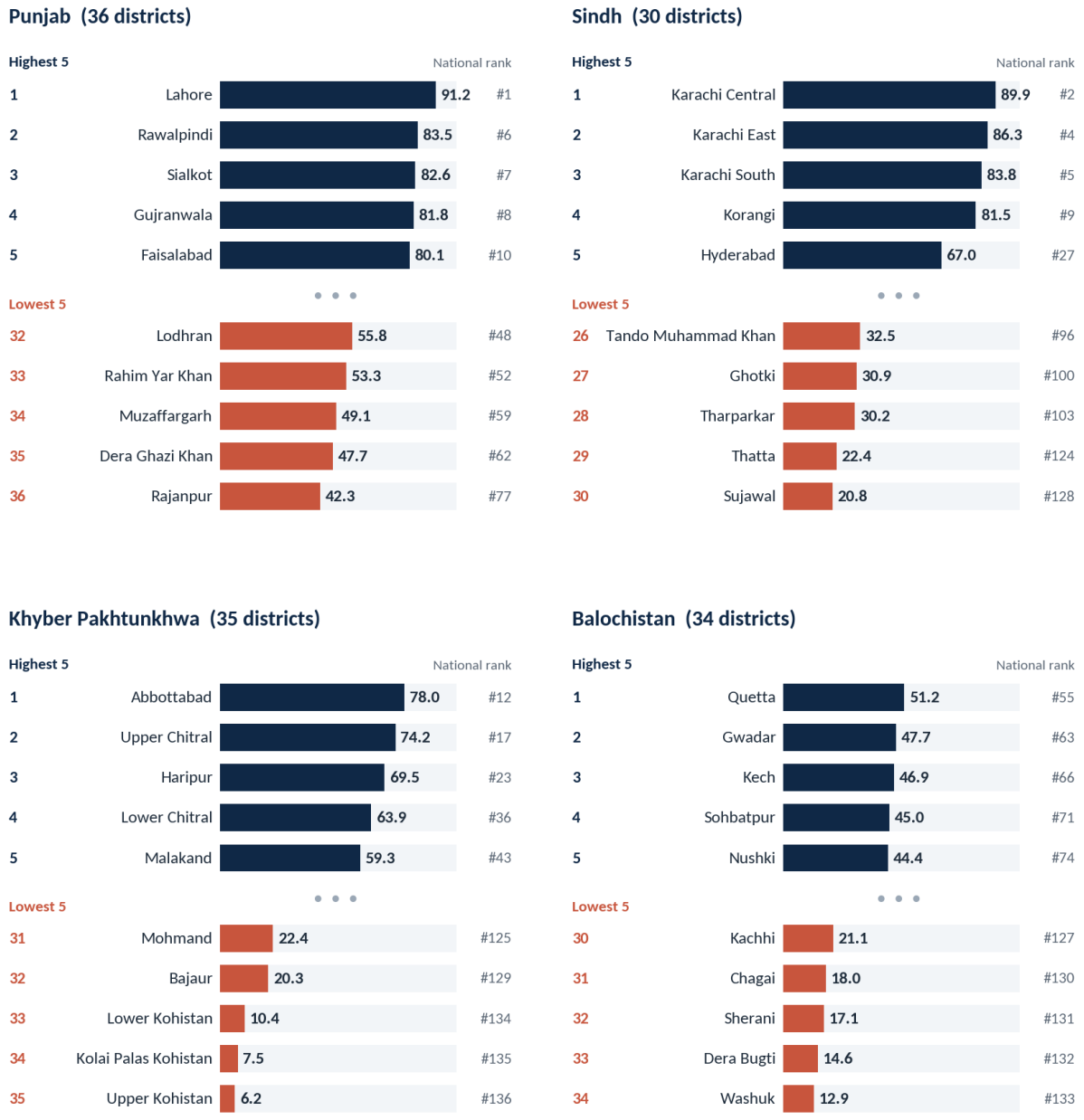


Figure 8.5. *Number of districts in each band, by province. Source: authors' calculations.*

Ranking districts within each province shows how wide internal differences are and where provincial programmes might look first (Figure 8.6). The gap between the highest and lowest scoring district is 71.8 points in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 69.1 in Sindh, 48.8 in Punjab and 38.3 in Balochistan. In Sindh, the four highest ranked districts are in Karachi, while the coastal districts of Thatta and Sujawal rank last. Punjab's five lowest ranked districts, Lodhran, Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur, all lie in the south

of the province. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abbottabad, Upper Chitral and Haripur lead, while the three Kohistan districts, Bajaur and Mohmand rank lowest. Balochistan's ranking is compressed at a lower level: its highest scoring district, Quetta (51.2), would rank 34th of 37 if placed among Punjab's districts. Within province ranks carry the same uncertainty as national ranks (Section 8.7), so neighbouring positions should not be read as firm differences.



Bars show the DYOI core score (0 to 100). Numbers on the left are ranks within the province. Islamabad, a single district, ranks 3rd nationally.

Figure 8.6. *Five highest and five lowest ranked districts within each province, DYOI core score, 2023. Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023); authors' calculations.*

The provincial order matches the order in the Labour Force Survey NEET rates for 2024 to 2025, which are lowest in Punjab (24.8 per cent) and highest in Balochistan (36.0 per cent), with Sindh (32.0) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (32.7) between them (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025). That agreement is reassuring, but it is a consistency check and not a validation. The two sources measure different things, in different years, for different populations. The district results add what the provincial rates cannot show. Punjab has no district in

Bands 4 or 5, yet it contains 5.6 million of the country's illiterate youth. Balochistan has 13 districts in Band 5 and only one above Band 3. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has the widest internal range, from Upper Chitral and Abbottabad in Band 1 to the three Kohistan districts at the bottom.

8.4 When education and work diverge

The education score and the economic score are positively related (correlation 0.67), but the relationship is far from one to one. Several Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts rank well on education and poorly on the economic domain. Karak has a youth literacy rate of 76.3 per cent, above the national rate, yet it ranks 32nd on education and 135th of 136 on the economic domain, with 56.5 per cent of its young people in the inactive non student category and 5.9 per cent in market employment. Lower Dir (literacy 71.8 per cent), Hangu, Upper Dir and Kohat show the same pattern. The reverse pattern appears in parts of Sindh and Balochistan, where economic positions are better than education positions: Tando Allahyar ranks 96th on education and 24th on the economic domain, and Panjgur 117th and 53rd.

These patterns show where the two domains diverge. They do not show why. A high inactive share among young women in the census, local job availability, migration of young men for work, and the way household work is recorded could each contribute, and the census tables cannot separate them. Both domains are shown for every district so that planners can see which kind of gap they face.

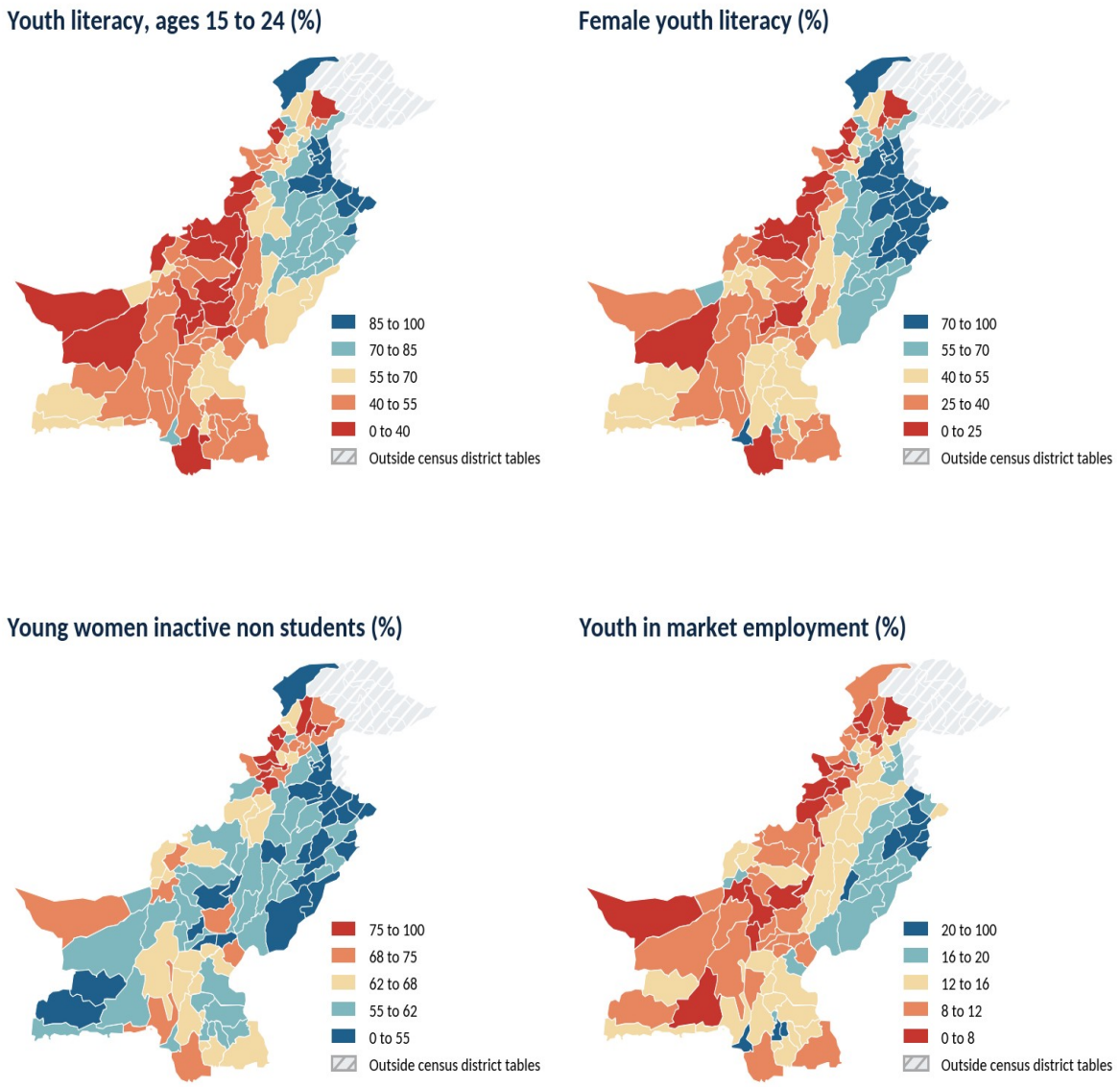


Figure 8.7. *Youth literacy, female youth literacy, young women recorded as inactive non students, and market employment, ages 15 to 24, 2023. Mapping conventions as in Figure 8.3. Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023); boundaries from geoBoundaries (Runfola et al. 2020); authors' calculations.*

8.5 Gender disparities

Table 8.3. The ten largest male to female literacy gaps, ages 15 to 24

District	Province	Male literacy %	Female literacy %	Gap, percentage points	Female inactive non student %	Core rank
Hangu	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	78.6	29.9	48.7	81.7	98
Khyber	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	68.6	20.9	47.6	81.4	112
Torghar	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	61.4	16.4	45.0	90.0	120
Orakzai	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	64.4	19.6	44.8	76.0	117
Shangla	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	60.9	21.0	39.9	77.1	107
Lakki Marwat	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	76.8	37.3	39.5	67.0	89
Mohmand	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	57.5	18.2	39.2	76.7	125
Batagram	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	66.4	29.7	36.6	80.8	115
Buner	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	75.0	38.6	36.4	72.2	79
Bannu	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	66.0	29.8	36.2	71.0	97

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), Tables 13(a) and 14, authors' calculations. Gaps are in percentage points, not per cent.

Hangu has the widest gap in the country. Its young men have a literacy rate of 78.6 per cent and its young women 29.9 per cent, a gap of 48.7 percentage points. Khyber (47.7), Torghar (45.0), Orakzai (44.8) and Shangla (39.9) follow. Female literacy is below 50 per cent in 74 of the 136 districts: 30 of Balochistan's 34 districts, 22 of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's 35, 19 of Sindh's 30, and 3 in Punjab. It is below 30 per cent in 32 districts: 15 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 12 in Balochistan and 5 in Sindh.

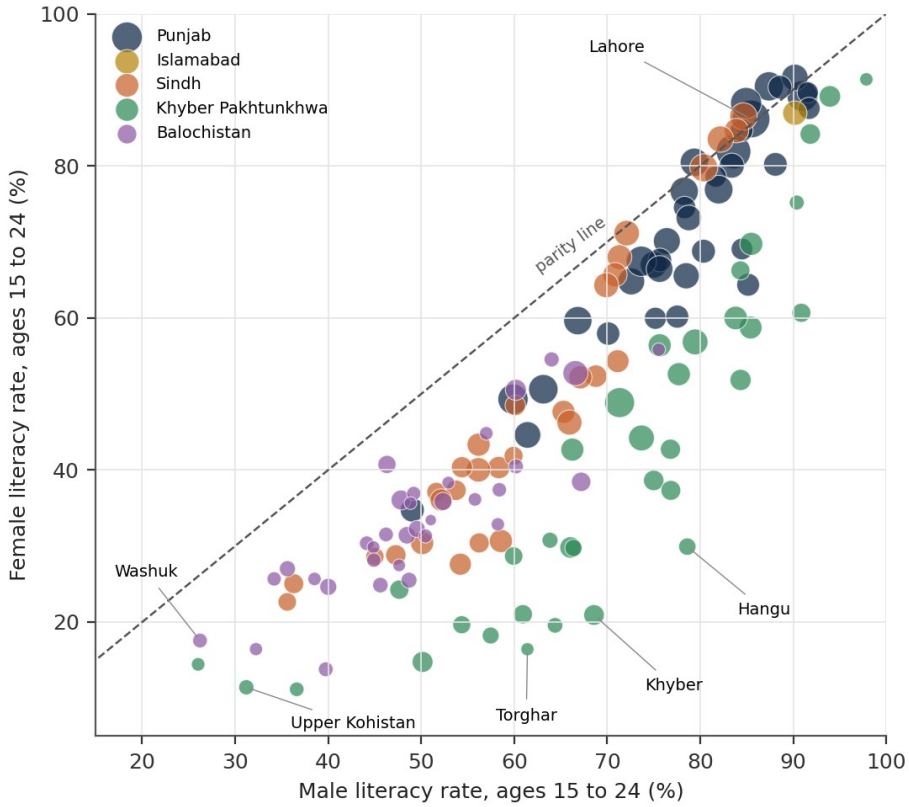


Figure 8.8. *Male and female youth literacy by district. Districts below the dashed line have higher male literacy. Bubble area scales with youth population. Source: authors' calculations.*

Ten districts show female literacy at or above male literacy: Lahore, Karachi Central, Karachi South, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Korangi, Gujrat, Sheikhupura, Narowal and Mandi Bahauddin. Economic disconnection shows a similar divide. The median gap between female and male inactive non student shares across districts is 34.1 percentage points. In ten districts, all in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, at least 75 per cent of young women fall in the category: Torghar (90.0 per cent), Hangu, Khyber, Batagram, Bajaur, Shangla, Mohmand, Orakzai, Swat and Karak. A narrow gap is not always good news. Washuk has a literacy gap of only 8.6 points because female literacy (17.6 per cent) and male literacy (26.2 per cent) are both very low.

8.6 Rates versus counts

Table 8.4. The ten districts with the most illiterate young people

District	Province	Illiterate youth	Youth literacy %	Core rank	Band
Rahim Yar Khan	Punjab	456,445	54.8	52	Band 2
Muzaffargarh	Punjab	388,491	56.9	59	Band 3
Peshawar	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	383,937	60.2	50	Band 2
Lahore	Punjab	346,694	85.8	1	Band 1

District	Province	Illiterate youth	Youth literacy %	Core rank	Band
Faisalabad	Punjab	297,803	82.8	10	Band 1
Multan	Punjab	296,416	70.6	33	Band 2
Bahawalpur	Punjab	283,527	63.3	37	Band 2
Dera Ghazi Khan	Punjab	279,834	53.1	62	Band 3
Rajanpur	Punjab	233,784	42.0	77	Band 3
Sanghar	Sindh	221,080	48.2	69	Band 3

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), authors' calculations. Illiterate youth equals population aged 15 to 24 minus literate.

Rates and counts identify different places. The 27 districts in Band 5 hold 5.3 per cent of the country's young people but 10.6 per cent of its illiterate youth, which shows concentrated intensity. Bands 4 and 5 together hold 14.9 per cent of young people and 27.0 per cent of illiterate youth. None of the ten districts with the largest number of illiterate young people is in Band 5, and six of them are in Bands 1 or 2: Rahim Yar Khan, Peshawar, Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan and Bahawalpur. Rahim Yar Khan has the largest number, 456,445, with a youth literacy rate of 54.8 per cent and a core rank of 52. Lahore has 346,694 illiterate young people despite a literacy rate of 85.8 per cent, because its youth population is 2.4 million. For economic disconnection the largest counts are again in large districts: Lahore (794,457), Faisalabad (607,524), Peshawar (432,931), Multan (422,173) and Rahim Yar Khan (408,885).

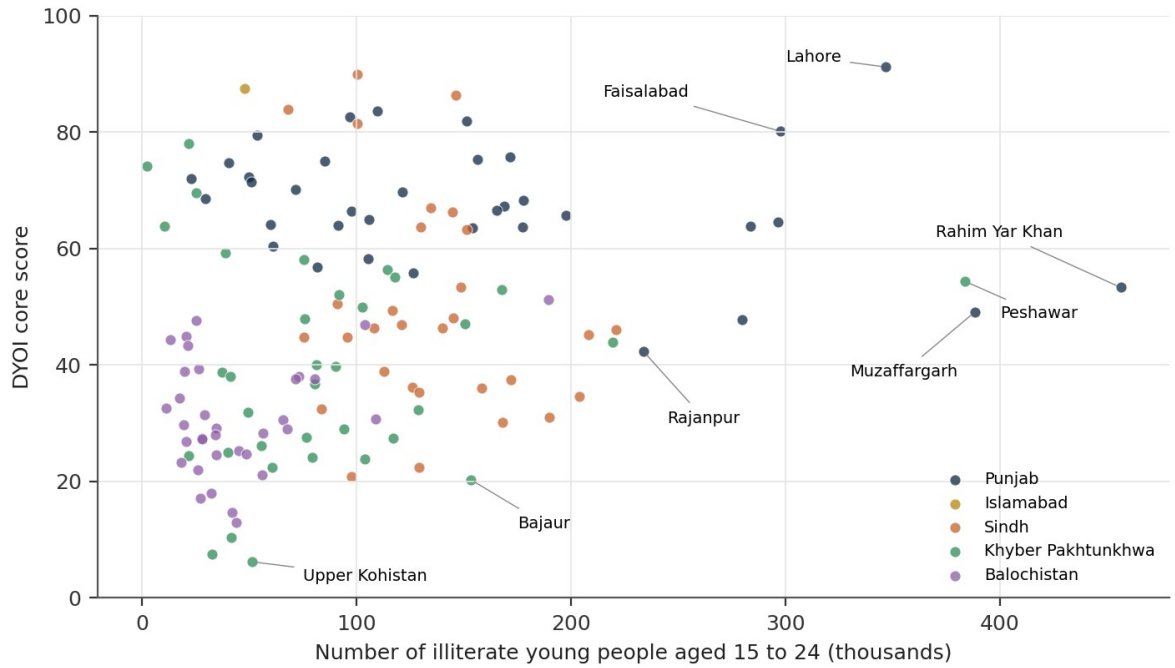


Figure 8.9. *Illiterate youth and DYOI core score by district. Source: authors' calculations.*

A cluster of South Punjab and Sindh districts combines large counts with middle or low ranks: Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Bahawalpur, Sanghar and Khairpur each have more than 200,000 illiterate young people. A targeting rule based on rank alone would miss most of them.

8.7 How to read the ranks

The ranking is more reliable at the extremes than in the middle (Chapter 7). Seventeen districts have a rank range wider than 30 positions across the thirteen specifications and should be described by band only: Karachi West (7 to 60), Keamari (10 to 71), Malir (17 to 51), Quetta (43 to 83), Kohat (54 to 85), Kech (44 to 78),

Sohbatpur (32 to 103), Swat (63 to 100), Karak (56 to 114), Panjgur (55 to 94), Kashmore (61 to 110), Hangu (80 to 126), Nasirabad (82 to 124), Khyber (92 to 128), Barkhan (91 to 128), Kohlu (87 to 132), Torghar (79 to 136). Hangu, for example, has a core rank of 98 but ranks between 80 and 126, because its literacy is moderate while its inactive non student share is among the highest. Three districts often used as examples show the spread: Attock ranks 34th (literacy 84.2 per cent), Chiniot 35th (67.6 per cent) and Hangu 98th (54.5 per cent). None is a national extreme. District youth literacy runs from 20.4 per cent in Kolai Palas Kohistan to 94.7 per cent in Upper Chitral.

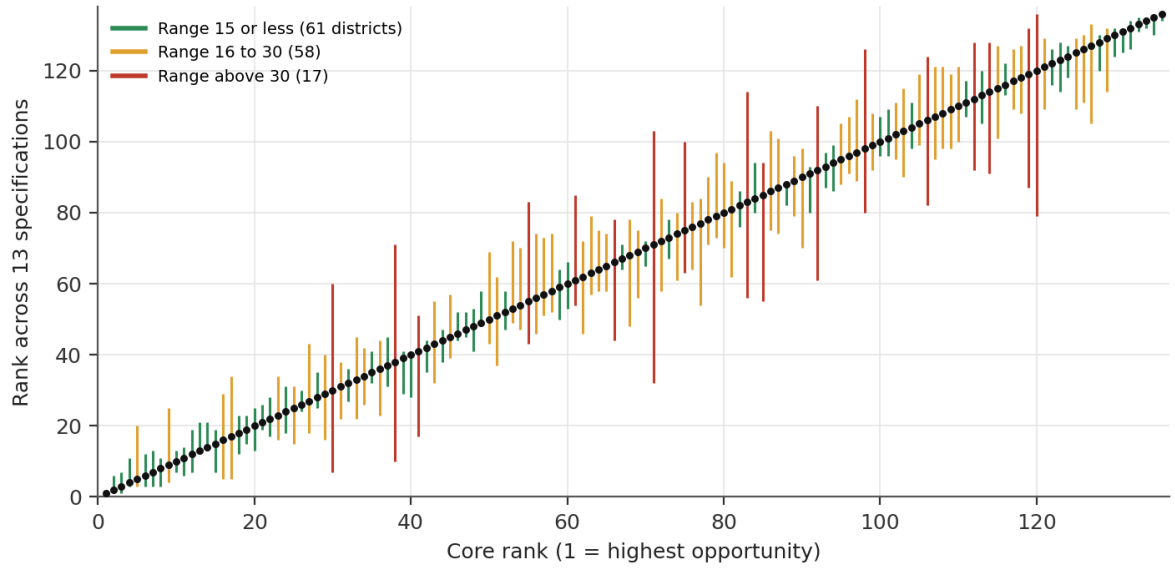


Figure 8.10. *Core rank and rank range across 13 specifications. Source: authors' calculations.*

8.8 Implications for targeting

The central policy question is where Pakistan should prioritise investment in youth education, skills and employment opportunity, and how progress should be measured. The census evidence supports four complementary targeting lenses. Each answers a different question and none replaces the others.

Table 8.5. Targeting lenses derived from the district evidence

Lens	Question	Evidence in the data	Implication for planners
Intensity	Where is disadvantage deepest?	27 Band 5 districts: 13 in Balochistan, 12 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2 in Sindh (Thatta, Sujawal). 10.6% of illiterate youth.	Candidates for foundational education and school completion support, with delivery capacity assessed first
Scale	Where are the most young people affected?	Largest illiterate counts in Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Peshawar, Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan; largest inactive counts in Lahore, Faisalabad, Peshawar	Candidates for large volume skills and employment services; rate alone understates need
Gender	Where is the female gap widest?	74 districts with female literacy under 50%; 10 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts with female inactivity of 75% or more	Programme design that tracks access, completion and placement separately for young women
Evidence quality	Where is the ranking itself uncertain?	17 districts with rank range above 30	Collect local data before allocating funds by rank in these districts

Source: authors' calculations from Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023).

These findings are relevant to national priorities. The World Bank Group states that its Country Partnership Framework for Pakistan for fiscal years 2026 to 2035 is aligned with Uraan Pakistan, the government's National Economic Transformation Plan (World Bank 2025). The Labour Force Survey reports youth NEET as the measure for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 8.6.1 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2025). The DYOI

complements that indicator by showing the geography beneath provincial averages, while the Labour Force Survey continues to track the national and provincial NEET series (Chapter 3). No government body has adopted the DYOI, and nothing in this chapter should be read as an official allocation formula.

The district patterns suggest questions for programme design, not conclusions about what works. Where literacy and enrolment are low and young women are most affected, the evidence points to foundational learning, secondary school completion and safe access to education as first order questions. Where literacy is moderate but few young people are in market work, as in several Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts, the question shifts to local employment pathways and to why so many young women are recorded outside study and work. Programme effects in either setting would need to be established through evaluation. Progress should be measured by repeating the same district indicators when new comparable data arrive, and by reporting rates, counts and sex gaps together.

8.9 Limits of the analysis

Three limits apply. First, the maps use the most recent openly licensed district boundaries, which represent 2019 geography. Twenty five Census 2023 districts lie inside a 2019 unit that has since been divided, such as the seven Karachi districts, the three Kohistan districts, and Chiniot within Jhang. These units are mapped with values recomputed from the summed census counts of the districts they contain, so the maps show the combined value while the tables and rankings use each Census 2023 district separately. Second, the results are cross sectional observations for 2023. They do not show change since the census, and the Labour Force Survey provincial figures for 2024 to 2025 cannot be placed on the district ranking. Third, the economic domain depends on the interpretation of the Not L.F & Stud label, which PBS has not documented in the published tables. The education domain stands without that assumption, and its ranking is provided separately in the accompanying workbook. What these results mean for decisions is the subject of Chapter 9.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Lahore, Karachi Central and Islamabad rank highest; the three Kohistan districts rank lowest.
2. The 27 lowest band districts hold 5.3 per cent of young people but 10.6 per cent of illiterate youth.
3. Female youth literacy is below 50 per cent in 74 districts, and within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa district scores span 71.8 points.



CHAPTER 9

Priorities, Targeting and Next Steps

A ranking is only useful if it helps someone decide what to do. This chapter turns the district results into four priority groups, sets out what they mean for each province, and suggests how the index can be used in planning and programme design. It describes patterns in the 2023 data; it does not test which interventions would change them.

9.1 From rankings to decisions

A district's rank is a starting point, not a decision. Four lenses help turn the results into choices. Intensity asks where conditions are worst, as in the lowest band districts such as Upper Kohistan, Kolai Palas Kohistan and Washuk. Scale asks where the most young people are affected: Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh and Peshawar each hold more than 380,000 young people who cannot read and write. Gender asks where young women are furthest behind: Hangu, Khyber and Torghar have literacy gaps of 45 points or more between young men and young women. Reliability asks how firmly a district's position is established: 17 districts move more than 30 places under alternative assumptions and should be read by band.

9.2 Four priority groups

Applying the four lenses produces four groups of districts, summarised in Table 9.1. The groups overlap. Torghar, for example, is in the lowest band, has female youth literacy of 16.4 per cent and has an unstable rank, so it appears in Groups A, C and D. Users should consider all four groups together rather than any one in isolation.

Group	Which districts	Scale	Examples	Suggested emphasis
A. Deepest disadvantage	The 27 Band 5 districts: 13 in Balochistan, 12 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2 in Sindh	2.35 million young people; 1.51 million cannot read and write	Upper Kohistan, Kolai Palas Kohistan, Lower Kohistan, Washuk, Sujawal	Foundational and second chance education; access to secondary school, especially for girls
B. Largest numbers	13 districts outside Band 5, each with at least 200,000 illiterate young people	3.82 million illiterate young people	Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Peshawar, Lahore, Faisalabad	Literacy and transition services designed for scale
C. Widest gender gaps	32 districts with female youth literacy below 30%; 10 districts where at least 75% of young women are outside study and the labour force	Female youth literacy from 11.2% (Lower Kohistan) to just under 30%	Lower Kohistan, Dera Bugti, Bajaur, Torghar, Hangu	Secondary access for girls, safe mobility, learning and work available close to home
D. Read with care	17 districts whose rank changes by more than 30 places across specifications	Not applicable	Quetta, Swat, Hangu, Kohat, Karachi West	Confirm with local data before allocating funds by rank

Table 9.1. Four priority groups of districts. Groups overlap. Source: authors' calculations from Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023).

9.3 What the results mean for each province

Each province faces a different mix of intensity, scale and gender gaps.

Punjab has the highest median score, 66.9, and no district in the two lowest bands. Its challenge is scale: 5.56 million young people who cannot read and write, the most of any province, with Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur in the south all among the ten districts with the most illiterate youth.

Sindh has a median score of 46.2. Karachi's districts rank among the highest in the country, while Sujawal and Thatta rank among the lowest, a spread of 69.1 points. Nineteen of its 30 districts have female youth literacy below 50 per cent, and Sanghar alone has 221,080 young people who cannot read and write.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa contains both the highest youth literacy in the country, in Upper Chitral (94.7 per cent), and the lowest, in Kolai Palas Kohistan (20.4 per cent), and has the widest spread of scores, 71.8 points. Twelve of its districts are in the lowest band. All ten districts where at least 75 per cent of young women are outside study and the labour force are in this province.

Balochistan has the lowest median score, 29.4, and 13 districts in the lowest band. Its highest scoring district, Quetta, scores 51.2. Thirty of its 34 districts have female youth literacy below 50 per cent, and its 1.54 million illiterate young people are spread across all 34 districts.

Islamabad ranks third nationally, with youth literacy of 88.7 per cent and the highest enrolment of any district, 45.2 per cent.

9.4 Using the index in planning and programme design

The index is a reference for decisions, not a formula for them. Table 9.2 sets out common uses and the cautions that go with each.

Use	How the index helps	Caution
Annual development programmes and district education plans	Identifies districts for priority allocation using intensity and scale together	Combine with service capacity and costs; do not allocate by rank alone
Programme design by development partners	Supports the choice of programme districts and provides 2023 baseline values	Baselines refer to 2023; refresh when newer district data are released
Programmes for young women	Shows where gaps in female literacy and inactivity are widest	Census data do not explain causes; local diagnosis is needed
Public communication and accountability	Gives a common, reproducible reference for district comparisons	Ranks are not performance ratings of district administrations

Table 9.2. Uses of the index and associated cautions. Source: authors.

9.5 Next steps for the index

The most important next step is the Youth Development Index module in the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2026 district survey, which covers people aged 15 to 29 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2026b). Once its results are published, the index will be recalculated where indicators are comparable, with any change of definition starting a new, clearly labelled series. Three further steps would strengthen the next edition: publication of the definition of the census inactivity category, census employment tables by sex for young people, and an official boundary file for the 2023 census districts and for districts created since. Gender gaps will continue to be reported beside each score rather than inside it, so that a reasonable average cannot hide a severe disadvantage for young women. CSADS also plans to track national and provincial youth outcomes in a separate publication.

9.6 Conclusion

Pakistan does not lack evidence that its young people face barriers. It has lacked evidence on where those barriers are highest and where the most young people are affected. This report fills part of that gap. It shows that disadvantage is deepest in a small number of remote districts, that the largest numbers of disadvantaged young people live in populous districts in the middle of the rankings, and that young women are furthest behind almost everywhere. Using these results well means combining intensity with scale, reading gender gaps beside every score, and refreshing the evidence as new district data arrive. Used this way, district evidence can help investment in young people reach the places, and the people, that need it most.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Four priority groups emerge: deepest disadvantage, largest numbers, widest gender gaps, and districts to read with care.
2. Thirteen districts outside the lowest band each hold at least 200,000 illiterate young people, 3.8 million in total.
3. Each province faces a different mix of challenges, so provincial plans need district level targeting.



References

References

ASER Pakistan. 2026. Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Pakistan 2025: Provisional. Lahore: ASER Pakistan Secretariat. Retrieved October 26, 2026. https://curated-library.iiep.unesco.org/library-record/annual-status-education-report-aser-pakistan

Associated Press of Pakistan. 2025. “Govt Expands Prime Minister’s Youth Initiatives to Boost Economic Growth.” June 9, 2025. Retrieved October 26, 2026. https://www.app.com.pk/?p=1008723

Associated Press of Pakistan. 2026. “Pakistan Records Significant Gains in Digital Connectivity, Internet Use.” January 2, 2026. Retrieved October 11, 2026. https://www.app.com.pk/?p=1140479

Election Commission of Pakistan. 2025. Notification on Delimitation of Local Government Constituencies, Punjab. Islamabad: Election Commission of Pakistan. Retrieved October 26, 2026. https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/uploads/po4xMww52h6tmhGuiu3IA4qak22CFafc6A8cbxmA.pdf

FAFEN. 2026. “PSLM: Mobile and Internet Access Rises, Computer Ownership Stays Flat.” Islamabad: Free and Fair Election Network. Retrieved October 11, 2026. https://fafen.org/pslm-mobile-internet-access-rises-computer-ownership-stays-flat/

Finance Division, Government of Pakistan. 2026. Pakistan Economic Survey 2025 to 2026, Chapter 10: Education. Islamabad: Government of Pakistan. Retrieved October 11, 2026. https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter_26/10_education.pdf

High Commission for Pakistan, Colombo. 2025. “URAAN Pakistan: National Economic Transformation Plan (2024 to 2029).” March 10, 2025. Retrieved October 26, 2026. https://www.pakistanhc.lk/?p=11409

Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives. n.d. “Equity and Empowerment: Leaving No One Behind.” URAAN Pakistan. Islamabad: Government of Pakistan. Retrieved October 26, 2026. https://uraanpakistan.pk/?p=4218

National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC). 2026. Planning and Development. Islamabad: NAVTTC. Retrieved October 11, 2026. https://navttc.gov.pk/wing/planning-and-development/

OECD, European Union, and Joint Research Centre. 2008. Handbook on Constructing Composite Indicators: Methodology and User Guide. Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264043466-en

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. 2023. 7th Population and Housing Census Detailed Results: District and National Tables 4, 13(a), 14 and 15. Islamabad: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved October 11, 2026. https://www.pbs.gov.pk/result-excel/

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. 2025. Labour Force Survey 2024 to 2025: Annual Report. Islamabad: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved October 11, 2026. https://www.pbs.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/LFS-2024-25-Annual-Report.pdf

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. n.d. Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey. Islamabad: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved October 26, 2026. https://www.pbs.gov.pk/?p=7442

Pakistan Institute of Education. 2025. Pakistan Education Statistics 2023 to 2024. Islamabad: Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. Retrieved October 11, 2026. https://pie.gov.pk/Publications

Runfola, Daniel, Austin Anderson, Heather Baier, Matt Crittenden, Elizabeth Dowker, Sydney Fuhrig, Seth Goodman, et al. 2020. “geoBoundaries: A Global Database of Political Administrative Boundaries.” PLOS ONE 15(4):e0231866. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0231866

State Bank of Pakistan. 2025. Circular No. 01 of 2025: Prime Minister’s Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme. Karachi: State Bank of Pakistan. Retrieved October 26, 2026. https://www.sbp.org.pk/smefd/circulars/2025/C1.htm

UKFIET. 2026. “Beyond Enrolment: Pakistan’s Real Education Crisis Is Learning.” The Education and Development Forum. Retrieved October 26, 2026. https://www.ukfiet.org/2026/beyond-enrolment-pakistans-real-education-crisis-is-learning/

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2017. Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017: Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan. Islamabad: UNDP. Retrieved October 26, 2026. https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents//pk-nhdr.pdf

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2024. “UNDP’s Pioneering Digital Development Index for Pakistan Finds That Districts Performing Better on Digital Transformation Are Also Performing Better on Human Development.” Press release, April 23, 2024. Islamabad: UNDP. Retrieved October 11, 2026. https://www.undp.org/pakistan/press-releases/undps-pioneering-digital-development-index-pakistan-finds-districts-performing-better-digital-transformation-are-also

World Bank. 2025. Country Partnership Framework for Pakistan (FY 2026 up to FY 2035). Brief, February 14, 2025. Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved October 11, 2026. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/pakistan/brief/country-partnership-framework-for-pakistan-fy-2026-up-to-fy-2035



ANNEX A

District Results, All 136 Districts

Annex A. District Results, All 136 Districts

Indicators refer to young people aged 15 to 24 at the 2023 census. Band 1 is the highest opportunity quintile and Band 5 the lowest. Rank in province compares each district with others in the same province. The rank range shows the best and worst national rank across 13 alternative specifications. KP: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; ICT: Islamabad Capital Territory.

Rank	District	Province	Rank in province	Score	Band	Literacy %	Female literacy %	Enrolled %	Inactive non student %	Market work %	Rank range	Youth 15 to 24
1	Lahore	Punjab	1 of 36	91.2	1	85.8	86.2	38.9	32.6	26.9	1 to 2	2,438,029
2	Karachi Central	Sindh	1 of 30	89.9	1	85.5	86.5	37.9	34.7	28.2	1 to 6	692,655
3	Islamabad	ICT	1 of 1	87.4	1	88.7	86.9	45.2	33.3	18.8	1 to 7	422,609
4	Karachi East	Sindh	2 of 30	86.3	1	80.1	79.7	39.1	35.2	26.2	3 to 11	735,406
5	Karachi South	Sindh	3 of 30	83.8	1	84.2	84.6	35.4	38.4	27.4	3 to 20	432,500
6	Rawalpindi	Punjab	2 of 36	83.5	1	90.1	89.2	41.1	35.2	18.6	3 to 12	1,104,561
7	Sialkot	Punjab	3 of 36	82.6	1	88.9	90.5	36.2	33.9	19.9	3 to 13	870,774
8	Gujranwala	Punjab	4 of 36	81.8	1	86.6	88.3	32.4	34.4	22.8	3 to 11	1,126,252
9	Korangi	Sindh	4 of 30	81.5	1	82.8	83.5	32.5	39.4	28.2	4 to 25	581,660
10	Faisalabad	Punjab	5 of 36	80.1	1	82.8	81.9	32.0	35.2	23.3	7 to 13	1,727,702
11	Gujrat	Punjab	6 of 36	79.5	1	90.9	91.6	33.2	37.6	21.4	6 to 14	590,854
12	Abbottabad	KP	1 of 35	78.0	1	91.5	89.1	39.0	38.0	16.4	7 to 19	257,126
13	Kasur	Punjab	7 of 36	75.7	1	77.5	76.7	28.9	36.0	23.3	12 to 21	760,709
14	Sheikhupura	Punjab	8 of 36	75.3	1	79.9	80.5	28.7	37.1	23.2	13 to 21	777,994
15	Toba Tek Singh	Punjab	9 of 36	75.0	1	81.8	80.0	28.7	33.8	19.3	7 to 19	466,307
16	Narowal	Punjab	10 of 36	74.7	1	89.4	90.3	34.5	34.8	13.7	5 to 29	382,086
17	Upper Chitral	KP	2 of 35	74.2	1	94.7	91.4	42.1	37.3	8.9	5 to 34	38,022
18	Hafizabad	Punjab	11 of 36	72.3	1	80.1	78.6	29.8	35.3	17.8	12 to 23	249,517
19	Jhelum	Punjab	12 of 36	71.9	1	90.6	89.7	33.8	39.8	15.5	15 to 23	242,732
20	Mandi Bahauddin	Punjab	13 of 36	71.4	1	84.5	84.7	30.2	36.6	16.3	13 to 25	330,082
21	Nankana Sahib	Punjab	14 of 36	70.1	1	76.4	74.5	28.4	37.5	19.6	19 to 26	302,882
22	Sahiwal	Punjab	15 of 36	69.7	1	76.0	73.1	27.8	35.7	18.2	17 to 28	505,722
23	Haripur	KP	3 of 35	69.5	1	88.0	84.2	36.0	41.8	14.4	16 to 34	210,479
24	Chakwal	Punjab	16 of 36	68.6	1	89.7	87.6	31.9	41.1	14.8	18 to 31	286,670
25	Vehari	Punjab	17 of 36	68.3	1	71.0	67.0	24.2	34.5	19.6	15 to 31	613,260
26	Okara	Punjab	18 of 36	67.3	1	73.3	70.1	26.0	37.1	19.1	24 to 30	632,221
27	Hyderabad	Sindh	5 of 30	67.0	1	69.8	68.0	28.7	41.7	22.5	18 to 43	444,844
28	Sargodha	Punjab	19 of 36	66.6	1	79.4	76.9	29.9	40.5	17.0	25 to 35	802,919
29	Layyah	Punjab	20 of 36	66.5	2	74.7	68.8	27.0	35.2	15.4	16 to 40	387,042
30	Karachi West	Sindh	6 of 30	66.2	2	71.6	71.2	23.3	46.2	28.5	7 to 60	510,654
31	Bahawalnagar	Punjab	21 of 36	65.7	2	68.8	64.8	23.4	35.1	18.8	22 to 38	634,421
32	Pakpattan	Punjab	22 of 36	64.9	2	71.7	67.6	23.9	37.2	18.7	27 to 36	372,790
33	Multan	Punjab	23 of 36	64.6	2	70.6	67.5	27.0	41.9	20.9	22 to 45	1,007,721
34	Attock	Punjab	24 of 36	64.2	2	84.2	80.2	29.2	42.0	14.7	26 to 42	376,766
35	Chiniot	Punjab	25 of 36	64.0	2	67.6	60.0	24.8	38.1	19.4	32 to 41	281,672
36	Lower Chitral	KP	4 of 35	63.9	2	82.8	75.2	36.9	42.1	10.1	23 to 44	59,314
37	Bahawalpur	Punjab	26 of 36	63.8	2	63.3	59.6	24.5	36.3	19.1	31 to 45	771,809
38	Keamari	Sindh	7 of 30	63.6	2	68.4	65.7	21.9	47.3	28.8	10 to 71	411,355
39	Khanewal	Punjab	27 of 36	63.6	2	71.2	66.4	23.4	37.6	18.2	29 to 41	614,906
40	Jhang	Punjab	28 of 36	63.6	2	72.3	65.5	24.6	37.7	17.1	28 to 40	555,955
41	Malir	Sindh	8 of 30	63.3	2	67.2	64.3	23.9	43.8	24.5	17 to 51	461,798
42	Khushab	Punjab	29 of 36	60.4	2	77.0	69.1	27.2	41.7	14.2	35 to 44	265,699
43	Malakand	KP	5 of 35	59.3	2	75.5	66.2	34.9	41.8	8.9	32 to 55	157,445

Rank	District	Province	Rank in province	Score	Band	Literacy %	Female literacy %	Enrolled %	Inactive non student %	Market work %	Rank range	Youth 15 to 24
44	Bhakkar	Punjab	30 of 36	58.2	2	69.1	60.2	24.1	40.3	15.4	38 to 47	341,137
45	Mansehra	KP	6 of 35	58.2	2	77.7	69.7	29.8	45.8	13.8	39 to 57	338,742
46	Mianwali	Punjab	31 of 36	56.8	2	75.1	64.4	27.2	43.3	12.7	44 to 52	327,978
47	Nowshera	KP	7 of 35	56.3	2	66.1	56.4	27.8	43.0	14.7	45 to 52	337,174
48	Lodhran	Punjab	32 of 36	55.8	2	64.3	57.9	19.8	39.6	16.6	41 to 53	353,702
49	Charsadda	KP	8 of 35	55.1	2	65.4	52.6	27.0	43.9	15.0	48 to 58	340,119
50	Peshawar	KP	9 of 35	54.3	2	60.2	48.9	28.0	44.9	16.2	43 to 69	965,304
51	Mirpur Khas	Sindh	9 of 30	53.4	2	49.9	40.3	20.3	36.1	15.6	37 to 62	296,749
52	Rahim Yar Khan	Punjab	33 of 36	53.3	2	54.8	49.3	18.3	40.5	19.1	47 to 58	1,009,967
53	Mardan	KP	10 of 35	53.0	2	68.3	56.8	30.4	46.9	12.4	49 to 72	529,620
54	Lower Dir	KP	11 of 35	52.1	2	71.8	58.7	34.9	46.9	7.6	47 to 70	324,930
55	Quetta	Balochistan	1 of 34	51.2	2	59.8	52.7	22.9	47.1	18.4	43 to 83	471,458
56	Tando Allahyar	Sindh	10 of 30	50.5	3	44.5	37.1	15.2	41.6	22.7	46 to 74	163,935
57	Swabi	KP	12 of 35	50.0	3	72.1	60.0	28.4	47.9	10.3	51 to 73	367,793
58	Sukkur	Sindh	11 of 30	49.3	3	61.1	52.3	21.3	46.8	16.8	52 to 74	299,835
59	Muzaffargarh	Punjab	34 of 36	49.1	3	56.9	50.6	18.9	41.3	14.5	50 to 64	902,256
60	Shaheed Benazirabad	Sindh	12 of 30	48.1	3	56.6	47.6	19.4	42.2	14.0	53 to 66	334,455
61	Kohat	KP	13 of 35	48.0	3	68.7	51.8	29.5	49.0	9.7	54 to 85	241,858
62	Dera Ghazi Khan	Punjab	35 of 36	47.7	3	53.1	44.6	17.8	39.3	13.2	46 to 72	596,285
63	Gwadar	Balochistan	2 of 34	47.7	3	59.5	54.5	24.0	46.4	13.6	57 to 79	62,404
64	Dera Ismail Khan	KP	14 of 35	47.0	3	55.2	42.7	23.7	44.8	13.1	58 to 75	336,293
65	Naushahro Feroze	Sindh	13 of 30	47.0	3	62.8	54.3	19.2	44.5	13.0	58 to 74	325,131
66	Kech	Balochistan	3 of 34	46.9	3	55.5	50.5	17.8	39.4	11.7	44 to 78	232,920
67	Larkana	Sindh	14 of 30	46.4	3	60.0	52.2	21.4	45.4	12.8	64 to 71	350,569
68	Umer Kot	Sindh	15 of 30	46.3	3	44.2	30.4	17.6	38.6	14.4	48 to 78	193,339
69	Sanghar	Sindh	16 of 30	46.1	3	48.2	40.0	17.0	41.1	15.3	56 to 75	426,850
70	Khairpur	Sindh	17 of 30	45.2	3	56.2	46.2	20.8	44.6	12.6	65 to 72	475,721
71	Sohbatpur	Balochistan	4 of 34	45.0	3	45.9	32.9	18.2	34.4	8.2	32 to 103	38,186
72	Matiari	Sindh	18 of 30	44.8	3	51.0	41.9	16.5	45.3	17.2	58 to 84	153,785
73	Jamshoro	Sindh	19 of 30	44.8	3	54.5	48.5	20.1	45.6	14.1	67 to 78	210,263
74	Nushki	Balochistan	5 of 34	44.4	3	66.0	55.8	20.1	46.0	10.1	61 to 80	38,658
75	Swat	KP	15 of 35	43.9	3	59.2	44.2	28.9	49.9	10.0	63 to 100	537,952
76	Duki	Balochistan	6 of 34	43.4	3	46.4	36.1	11.6	42.6	18.0	64 to 83	39,930
77	Rajanpur	Punjab	36 of 36	42.3	3	42.0	34.7	15.2	39.1	13.0	54 to 84	402,926
78	Upper Dir	KP	16 of 35	40.0	3	59.3	42.7	28.0	48.0	4.9	71 to 90	199,296
79	Buner	KP	17 of 35	39.8	3	56.9	38.6	27.6	49.0	6.6	73 to 97	209,660
80	Loralai	Balochistan	7 of 34	39.3	3	48.5	37.4	21.3	43.4	7.8	70 to 94	51,239
81	Jacobabad	Sindh	20 of 30	38.9	3	45.6	37.3	14.1	41.8	11.4	62 to 89	207,542
82	Sibi	Balochistan	8 of 34	38.9	3	51.1	44.8	17.7	44.8	10.0	76 to 86	40,548
83	Karak	KP	18 of 35	38.8	4	76.3	60.7	27.4	56.5	5.9	56 to 114	156,565
84	Tank	KP	19 of 35	38.0	4	47.6	30.8	17.3	45.9	11.6	80 to 94	78,746
85	Panjgur	Balochistan	9 of 34	38.0	4	43.6	40.7	9.2	39.9	12.5	55 to 94	129,665
86	Lasbela	Balochistan	10 of 34	37.7	4	44.3	35.9	15.4	47.8	15.2	75 to 103	128,537

Rank	District	Province	Rank in province	Score	Band	Literacy %	Female literacy %	Enrolled %	Inactive non student %	Market work %	Rank range	Youth 15 to 24
87	Pishin	Balochistan	11 of 34	37.6	4	52.1	38.4	13.1	48.5	14.7	74 to 101	168,278
88	Dadu	Sindh	21 of 30	37.4	4	49.8	43.3	16.0	46.2	11.3	82 to 88	342,586
89	Lakki Marwat	KP	20 of 35	36.7	4	57.3	37.3	19.6	49.2	8.6	79 to 96	187,944
90	Shikarpur	Sindh	22 of 30	36.2	4	47.5	40.4	13.5	43.6	10.1	70 to 98	240,009
91	Kambar Shahdad Kot	Sindh	23 of 30	36.0	4	44.5	36.1	14.1	44.6	11.4	80 to 93	285,519
92	Kashmore	Sindh	24 of 30	35.3	4	38.2	28.8	12.9	40.0	9.4	61 to 110	209,141
93	Badin	Sindh	25 of 30	34.6	4	40.6	30.4	13.5	46.0	12.9	87 to 97	343,231
94	Ziarat	Balochistan	12 of 34	34.3	4	45.7	38.3	16.4	46.0	9.1	86 to 99	31,886
95	Harnai	Balochistan	13 of 34	32.6	4	42.8	33.4	14.2	45.9	9.6	88 to 105	19,688
96	Tando Muhammad Khan	Sindh	26 of 30	32.5	4	37.0	28.6	13.1	46.4	12.7	91 to 107	132,968
97	Bannu	KP	21 of 35	32.3	4	48.6	29.8	22.2	50.6	6.7	89 to 112	250,363
98	Hangu	KP	22 of 35	31.9	4	54.5	29.9	25.5	57.0	8.1	80 to 126	108,220
99	Mastung	Balochistan	14 of 34	31.4	4	51.1	40.5	18.1	50.7	7.6	92 to 108	59,434
100	Ghotki	Sindh	27 of 30	30.9	4	45.3	30.7	15.4	49.8	10.0	96 to 107	346,938
101	Khuzdar	Balochistan	15 of 34	30.7	4	42.3	36.0	12.0	48.3	11.6	96 to 109	188,377
102	Jaffarabad	Balochistan	16 of 34	30.5	4	40.1	31.4	15.0	46.3	8.4	95 to 111	109,607
103	Tharparkar	Sindh	28 of 30	30.2	4	41.0	27.6	13.5	45.8	8.2	90 to 115	284,922
104	Musakhel	Balochistan	17 of 34	29.7	4	37.8	27.5	12.1	47.1	10.9	98 to 111	31,354
105	Zhob	Balochistan	18 of 34	29.1	4	37.7	30.4	16.0	46.6	7.4	99 to 119	55,358
106	Nasirabad	Balochistan	19 of 34	29.0	4	32.5	24.6	11.5	42.5	8.2	82 to 124	100,160
107	Shangla	KP	23 of 35	29.0	4	41.5	21.0	21.6	53.5	8.8	95 to 121	161,071
108	Chaman	Balochistan	20 of 34	28.3	4	41.6	32.3	8.0	48.6	12.2	98 to 121	96,673
109	Surab	Balochistan	21 of 34	28.0	4	38.9	31.5	8.3	46.2	10.3	98 to 119	55,687
110	Kurram	KP	24 of 35	27.5	5	44.7	28.7	22.5	52.8	5.0	100 to 121	138,641
111	Kharan	Balochistan	22 of 34	27.5	5	41.2	31.3	11.7	50.0	10.3	107 to 117	47,581
112	Khyber	KP	25 of 35	27.4	5	46.0	20.9	19.8	56.0	9.1	92 to 128	216,922
113	Kalat	Balochistan	23 of 34	27.3	5	43.2	36.9	15.4	49.0	6.3	105 to 120	48,992
114	Barkhan	Balochistan	24 of 34	26.8	5	37.8	29.8	13.1	45.2	5.6	91 to 128	33,262
115	Batagram	KP	26 of 35	26.1	5	48.4	29.7	19.4	56.2	7.3	101 to 127	107,368
116	Killa Saifullah	Balochistan	25 of 34	25.2	5	35.2	24.9	13.0	49.8	9.1	113 to 122	69,367
117	Orakzai	KP	27 of 35	25.1	5	43.2	19.6	21.2	53.5	4.5	109 to 126	70,416
118	Killa Abdullah	Balochistan	26 of 34	24.8	5	37.1	25.5	6.8	50.1	12.2	108 to 127	76,819
119	Kohlu	Balochistan	27 of 34	24.5	5	30.1	25.7	6.9	43.0	7.7	87 to 132	49,503
120	Torghar	KP	28 of 35	24.4	5	39.3	16.4	15.1	60.4	15.2	79 to 136	35,679
121	North Waziristan	KP	29 of 35	24.2	5	37.1	19.6	14.6	48.5	5.2	109 to 129	126,022

Rank	District	Province	Rank in province	Score	Band	Literacy %	Female literacy %	Enrolled %	Inactive non student %	Market work %	Rank range	Youth 15 to 24
122	South Waziristan	KP	30 of 35	23.9	5	36.3	24.3	14.2	49.9	6.7	116 to 126	163,161
123	Awaran	Balochistan	28 of 34	23.2	5	42.4	35.6	18.0	55.0	6.2	114 to 128	31,362
124	Thatta	Sindh	29 of 30	22.4	5	30.8	25.1	10.0	50.8	10.6	118 to 127	186,670
125	Mohmand	KP	31 of 35	22.4	5	38.0	18.2	13.8	55.1	9.6	109 to 129	97,871
126	Jhal Magsi	Balochistan	29 of 34	22.0	5	32.3	25.7	9.4	48.0	7.4	111 to 130	38,493
127	Kachhi	Balochistan	30 of 34	21.1	5	31.6	27.0	8.4	46.8	6.3	105 to 133	81,948
128	Sujawal	Sindh	30 of 30	20.8	5	29.4	22.6	7.8	50.9	10.9	120 to 130	138,380
129	Bajaur	KP	32 of 35	20.3	5	32.6	14.8	14.3	55.6	9.5	114 to 132	227,032
130	Chagai	Balochistan	31 of 34	18.0	5	36.8	28.1	9.8	53.9	6.9	124 to 132	50,949
131	Sherani	Balochistan	32 of 34	17.1	5	25.0	16.4	6.7	52.4	10.6	125 to 132	36,168
132	Dera Bugti	Balochistan	33 of 34	14.6	5	27.8	13.8	9.9	56.4	8.8	126 to 134	58,023
133	Washuk	Balochistan	34 of 34	12.9	5	22.1	17.6	4.5	53.9	10.1	131 to 135	56,272
134	Lower Kohistan	KP	33 of 35	10.4	5	24.1	11.2	8.7	55.0	5.3	132 to 134	54,499
135	Kolai Palas Kohistan	KP	34 of 35	7.5	5	20.4	14.4	5.9	53.1	3.5	130 to 136	40,767
136	Upper Kohistan	KP	35 of 35	6.2	5	21.4	11.4	7.6	56.7	4.2	134 to 136	65,307

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), Census 2023 Tables 13(a), 14 and 15; authors' calculations. The formula driven workbook reproduces every value from the census counts.



ANNEX B

Data Sources and Quality Notes

Annex B. Data Sources and Quality Notes

Every district value in this report comes from the Population and Housing Census 2023 district tables, downloaded from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and reconciled to published national totals. The sources below are those used for district results, maps and context.

Source	Observation period	Used for	Quality notes
Population and Housing Census 2023, district Tables 4, 13(a), 14, 15	2023	All district indicators, youth population, literacy, enrolment, labour status	Retrieved as original Excel files; district sums equal published national totals; employment uses a one year reference period and is not comparable with the LFS
UNDP National Human Development Report 2023/24	2023 to 2024	District Digital Development Index categories	Used as context; not combined into the DYOI
geoBoundaries Pakistan ADM2	2019 boundaries	District maps	Public domain; newer districts shown within 2019 parent units (Annex C)

Source: authors' source register.



ANNEX C

Map Units and Boundary Concordance

Annex C. Map Units and Boundary Concordance

The maps use the geoBoundaries second level administrative boundaries for Pakistan, released in the public domain and representing 2019 geography (Runfola et al. 2020). Census 2023 reports 136 district level units. Where a 2019 unit contains more than one Census 2023 district, the map shows that unit with indicators recomputed from the summed census counts of its districts, and the composite score is calculated with the same normalisation range as the district index. Rankings, tables and all statements about individual districts use the 136 Census 2023 districts. Areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan lie outside the census district tables and are shown hatched.

2019 map unit	Census 2023 districts shown within it
Mansehra	Mansehra, Torghar
Sheikhpura	Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib
Qilla Abdullah	Killa Abdullah, Chaman
Kharan	Kharan, Washuk
Zhob	Zhob, Sherani
Loralai	Loralai, Duki
Sibi	Sibi, Harnai
Kalat	Kalat, Surab
Jafarabad	Jaffarabad, Sohbatpur
Karachi	Karachi Central, Karachi East, Karachi South, Karachi West, Korangi, Keamari, Malir
Thatta	Thatta, Sujawal
Qambar Shahdadkot	Kambar Shahdad Kot, Larkana
Jhang	Jhang, Chiniot
Chitral	Upper Chitral, Lower Chitral
Kohistan	Upper Kohistan, Lower Kohistan, Kolai Palas Kohistan

Source: authors' concordance, using point in polygon tests on district headquarters locations against the 2019 boundaries.

About the Team and Partners

Ahmad Nadeem, Principal Investigator

Ahmad Nadeem is a development professional with 25 years' experience in programme implementation, communication, resource mobilization, research and AI integration. He has led donor funded projects, helped organizations secure funding and advised on implementation. His work has involved the World Bank, European Commission, ILO, UNICEF, UNDP, UN Women, OHCHR, USIP, GCF, KfW, Government of Italy and the Canadian High Commission. At the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund and the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy, he engaged, advised and supervised a wide range of development sector organizations, including charities, microfinance institutions, private universities, NGOs and INGOs, and worked with government bodies such as the Federal Board of Revenue, NACTA and social welfare departments. He has also worked on projects involving parliamentarians, law enforcement agencies, the National Police Bureau, police training colleges and churches. He is visiting faculty at Quaid-e-Azam University and SZABIST, holds an MPhil (Gold Medal, Iqra University) and a certificate (LUMS, McGill), and leads CSADS and Manāra.

Centre for Social Analytics and Development Support (CSADS)

The Centre for Social Analytics and Development Support (CSADS), established in 2023, is a research and advisory centre that uses artificial intelligence to generate evidence for informed policy, programme and strategic decisions. It serves public institutions, private sector organizations, UN agencies, INGOs and other development stakeholders, and makes research accessible to the media, students, parents and communities. It also helps organizations adopt AI responsibly, combining credible sources, transparent methods, human expertise and ethical safeguards. Within the Series, CSADS leads research design, source verification and final quality assurance.

Manāra Policy and Practice Private Limited

Manāra is a strategic design and advisory practice that bridges evidence and action across critical development and institutional challenges. It works globally at the intersection of government, development organizations and the private sector, where efforts converge to generate social impact, mobilize capital and advance equity. Through policy analysis, systems thinking, strategic design, development finance advisory and public communication, it delivers solutions grounded in rigorous research, contextual realities and international best practices.

CivicFrames

CivicFrames is a creative knowledge communication initiative founded by Danyal Nadeem, a student of media sciences and an aspiring storyteller. It translates credible research into accessible creative forms, bridging the gap between data and public understanding. It explores how evidence can reach people through music, poetry and stories. Danyal intends to learn how creative formats can help evidence travel. Within the Series, it helps make findings easier to understand and share.

MANĀRA
POLICY & PRACTICE

www.manarapolicy.com

CSADS
Centre for Social Analytics & Development Support

www.csads.org

CIVIC FRAMES
lighting the Path

www.civicframes.org