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Building the Evidence Base for Effective Antislavery
Governance

Pakistan Country Profile

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About this report

This report was prepared by Dr Ana Valverde-Cano (Rights Lab Research Fellow in Antislavery Law and Policy), Dr Katarina Schwarz (Rights Lab Associate Director), and Dr Daniel Ogunniyi (Rights Lab Research Fellow).

The report is based primarily on research conducted from 2020-2021 and may not therefore consider more recent emerging evidence. Updates to the report to reflect new and emerging evidence are ongoing.

The authors welcome enquiries on the report and the project more broadly, which may be directed to Katarina Schwarz at Katarina.Schwarz@nottingham.ac.uk

About the project

The report was produced to support the research project 'Building the Evidence Base for Effective Antislavery Governance in the UK and the Top 20 UK Source Countries', funded by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre. The research team consisted of Dr Katarina Schwarz (Rights Lab, University of Nottingham), Dr Ana Valverde-Cano (Rights Lab), Dr Daniel Ogunniyi (Rights Lab), Alexandra Williams-Woods (CSIS, University of Liverpool), and Prof Jean Allain (Wilberforce Institute, University of Hull).

The **Rights Lab** is a University of Nottingham "Beacon of Excellence" and home to the world's largest and leading group of modern slavery researchers. Through its five research programmes, impact team, and INSPIRE project, the Rights Lab is underpinning antislavery with an advanced research agenda, collaborating with civil society, business, and government, and elevating survivor-informed research as a key part of knowledge production to help end slavery.

The **Wilberforce Institute** at the University of Hull aims to advance fundamental knowledge of slavery and emancipation, informing policy, business practice and public debate at local, national and international levels. The Wilberforce Institute brings together experts in humanities, law and social sciences to help tackle this global problem head on.

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1. Overview of antislavery and anti-trafficking governance

1.1. GSI rankings and government response ratings¹

	Vulnerability		Prevalence			Government response	
	Ranking ²	Score ³	Ranking ⁴	Absolute ⁵	/ 1000 ⁶	Ranking ⁷	Rating ⁸
2013	29 /162	63.71	3 /162	2,127,132	11.87	-	-
2014	21 /167	69.5	6 /167	2,058,200	11.3	125 /167	CC
2016	10 /167	62.47	6 /167	2,134,900	11.3	78 /161	CCC
2018	12 /167	74.1	8 /167	3,186,000	16.8	160 /162	C

Although the nature of modern slavery makes measuring the phenomenon an inherently difficult task, the Walk Free Foundation's Global Slavery Index (GSI) aims to provide the 'best available data and information about the scale and regional distribution of modern slavery'.⁹ This includes **national prevalence estimates** of the number of people experiencing modern slavery in each country, calculated on the basis of a predictive model that accounts for individual and country-level risk factors.

National prevalence estimates are analysed in the context of results of Walk Free's **Vulnerability Model**. This model uses 'statistical testing and processes to identify the factors that explain or predict the prevalence of modern slavery'.¹⁰ The 2018 Vulnerability Model features five factors, made up of 23 distinct variables: governance issues, lack of basic needs, inequality, disenfranchised groups, and effects of conflict.

Walk Free also tracks **government responses** to modern slavery, tracking government efforts across five milestones: (1) survivors of slavery are identified and supported to exit and remain out of slavery; (2) criminal justice mechanisms function effectively to prevent modern slavery; (3) coordination occurs at the national and regional level, and governments are held to account for their response; (4) risk factors such as attitudes, social systems, and institutions that enable modern slavery are addressed; and (5) government and business stop sourcing goods and services produced by forced labour.¹¹

It should be noted that the scope, methodology, and sources underpinning GSI findings has changed over the years. This means that data between different reporting years is not directly comparable.

¹ Walk Free Foundation, 'The Global Slavery Index 2013' (2013), available [here](#); 'The Global Slavery Index 2014' (2014), available [here](#); 'The Global Slavery Index 2016' (2016), available [here](#); 'The Global Slavery Index 2018' (2018), available [here](#).

² Note: a higher ranking (closer to 1) indicates high vulnerability relative to other countries.

³ Note: a higher score indicates increased vulnerability to modern slavery, with a median country score of 47.28 in 2018.

⁴ Note: a higher ranking (closer to 1) indicates a high number of people experiencing modern slavery per 1000 in the overall population relative to other countries.

⁵ Note: absolute prevalence measures the estimated number of people experiencing modern slavery in the country.

⁶ Note: prevalence /1000 measures the number of people estimated to experience modern slavery per 1000 people in the overall population.

⁷ Note: a higher ranking (closer to 1) indicates better government responses to modern slavery relative to other countries.

⁸ Note: government response ratings are broken into scoring bands, with an A rating representing the strongest government response to modern slavery (with a score of 70-79.9), followed by BBB (60-69.9), BB (50-59.9), B (40-49.9), CCC (30-39.9), CC (20-29.9), C (10-19.9), and D (<0-9.9).

⁹ Walk Free Foundation, 'Global Findings' (2018), available [here](#).

¹⁰ Walk Free Foundation, 'Methodology: Vulnerability' (2018), available [here](#).

¹¹ Walk Free Foundation, 'Methodology: Government Response' (2018), available [here](#).

1.2. TIP Rankings 2001-2020¹²



The Trafficking in Persons report ranks countries into one of four tiers, as mandated by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act 2000 (TVPA). A country's ranking is based on an assessment of the government's efforts to address trafficking in persons, rather than on the extent of trafficking within the country, and considers government action against the TVPA's minimum standards.¹³

Tier 1: Countries whose governments fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. To maintain a Tier 1 ranking, the country must continue to make progress in its anti-trafficking efforts each year.

Tier 2: countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

Tier 2 Watch List: Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards, and for which:

- (a) the absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing;
- (b) there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year, including increased investigations, prosecution, and convictions of trafficking crimes, increased assistance to victims, and decreasing evidence of complicity in severe forms of trafficking by government officials; or
- (c) the determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional steps over the next year.

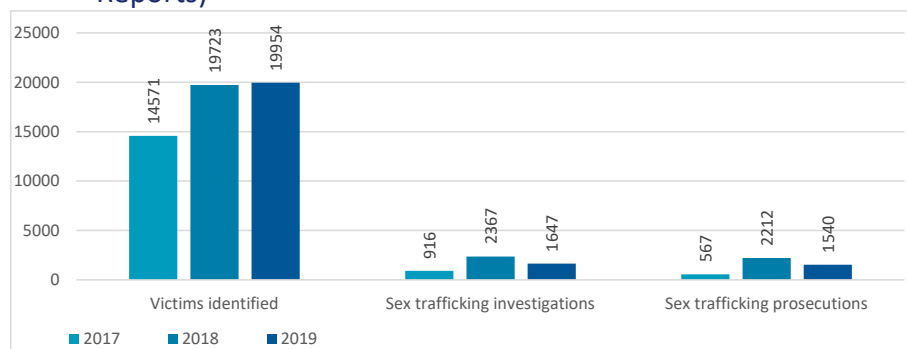
Tier 3: Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so. Countries ranked as Tier 3 may be subjected to restrictions on non-humanitarian, non-trade foreign assistance from the US. Impositions of such restrictions are determined by the President.¹⁴

¹² US Department of State, '2020 Trafficking in Persons Report' (2020), available [here](#); (2019) available [here](#); (2018), available [here](#); (2017), available [here](#); (2016), available [here](#); (2015), available [here](#); (2014), available [here](#); (2013), available [here](#); (2012), available [here](#); (2011), available [here](#); (2010), available [here](#); (2009), available [here](#); (2008), available [here](#); (2007), available [here](#); (2006), available [here](#); (2005), available [here](#); (2004), available [here](#); (2003), available [here](#); (2002), available [here](#); (2001), available [here](#).

¹³ Minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking are found in section 108, Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act 2000 (United States), available [here](#).

¹⁴ See further Department of State (2020), above n **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, 40-41.

1.3. Quantitative measures on anti-trafficking governance (TIP Reports)¹⁵



Measure	Year	Qty	
Trafficking victims identified	2019	19,954	[1]
Sex trafficking cases investigated	2019	916	[1]
Sex trafficking prosecutions	2019	567	[1]
Sex trafficking convictions	2019	131	[1]
Trafficking victims identified	2018	19,723	[1]
Sex trafficking cases investigated	2018	2,367	[2]
Sex trafficking prosecutions initiated	2018	2,212	[2]
Brick Kiln owners prosecuted (Punjab)	2018	3,953	[2]
Trafficking victims identified	2017	14,571	[3]
Trafficking victims referred to rehabilitative care	2017	286	[3]
Sex trafficking cases investigated	2017	1,647	[2]
Sex trafficking prosecutions initiated	2017	1,540	[2]
Brick Kiln owners prosecuted (Punjab)	2017	1,516	[2]
Human smuggling and trafficking arrests	2014 to 2017	6,558	[4]

¹⁵ Sources:

[1] US Department of State (2020), above n **Error! Bookmark not defined..**

[2] US Department of State (2019), above n **Error! Bookmark not defined..**

[3] US Department of State (2018), above n **Error! Bookmark not defined..**

[4] UNODC, 'GLOTIP Report: West and South Asia' (UNODC 2018), available [here](#).

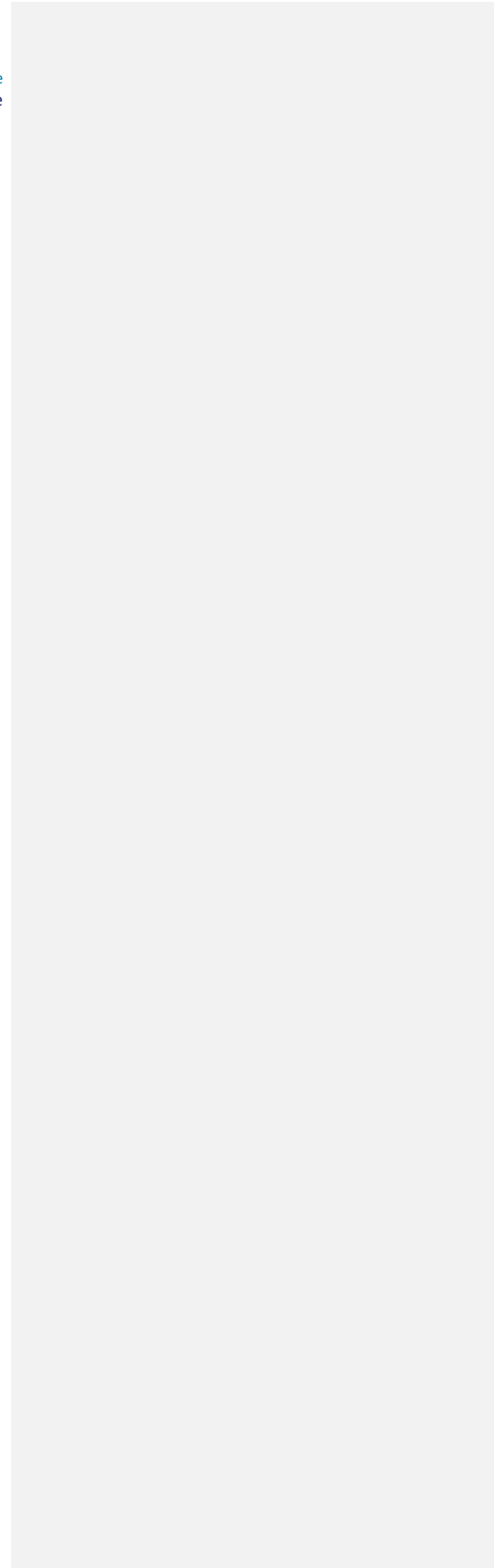
2. Treaty commitments¹⁶

Instrument	Ratification date
1926 Slavery Convention	30 September 1955
1953 Protocol to the Slavery Convention	N/A
1930 Forced Labour Convention	23 December 1957
2014 Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention	N/A
1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery	20 March 1958
1957 Abolition of Forced Labour Convention	15 February 1960
1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	23 June 2010
1966 Optional Protocol to the ICCPR	N/A
2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings	N/A
1990 Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families	N/A
1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court	N/A
1999 Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention	11 October 2001
2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children	N/A
2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	5 July 2011
2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict	17 November 2016
2011 Domestic Workers Convention	N/A
Key International Commitments	
1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights	
1985 Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power	
2005 UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law	
2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals (5.3, 8.7)	
2017 Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking	

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¹⁶ UN Treaty ratification info sourced from UN Treaty Collection available [here](#); ILO Convention ratifications available [here](#); Rome Statute ratification status available [here](#). Membership data on the 2017 Call to Action is found at Delta8.7, 'Call to Action' available [here](#).

Building the Evidence Base for Effective Antislavery Governance
Pakistan Country Profile



3. General country context

3.1. Constitutional structure

Pakistan is a Federal Parliamentary Republic based on English-style Common law and Islamic law.¹⁷ The country has a bicameral legislature consisting of a 104-seat Senate and a 342-seat National Assembly; members of Senate serve 6-year terms while National Assembly members are elected to serve 5-year terms.¹⁸ The Pakistani president, who is the chief of state, is indirectly elected by an Electoral College consisting of members of the Senate, National Assembly, and provincial assemblies for a 5-year term, while the Prime Minister, who is the head of government, is elected by the National Assembly.¹⁹ The Supreme court is the highest court in Pakistan. Justices are nominated by a parliamentary committee upon the recommendation of the Judicial Commission.²⁰

3.2. Political context

Pakistan's Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party won most National Assembly seats during the 2018 general elections, making party leader, Imran Khan, the country's prime minister.²¹ While independent observers noted technical improvements in the conduct of the elections, other observers and CSOs reported interference by military and intelligence agencies, which affected the credibility of the electoral process.²²

Pakistan is still faced with many problems, including disputes with neighbouring Afghanistan and India, which periodically sparks violence and continue to threaten geopolitical stability.²³ Further, while terrorist activities have largely declined in Pakistan, the country continues to grapple with violent conflicts amid growing intolerance for diversity.²⁴ A narrow conception of Pakistan's national identity by many is threatening the prospect for stability and social cohesion in the country.²⁵ In terms of its democratic processes in comparison to other countries, the 2019 Democracy Index of the Economist Intelligence Unit ranked Pakistan as 108 among 167 countries.²⁶ Despite the poor ranking, Pakistan has been experiencing successful political transition since 2013. The previous election held in 2013 was the first time a democratically elected government handed over power to another democratic government,²⁷ which was further consolidated in the 2018 elections.

However, evidence suggests that a range of rights continue to be violated by Pakistani authorities. The country's military has been notorious for clamping down on journalists, while newspaper printing and activities of media outlets are widely interrupted.²⁸ Unsurprisingly, the 2020 World Press Freedom Index ranks Pakistan as 145 of 180 countries, dropping three positions from the previous year.²⁹

¹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, 'The World FactBook: Pakistan' (2020), available [here](#).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Nordea, 'Country profile Pakistan' (2020), available [here](#).

²⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, above n 17.

²¹ US Department of State, '2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan' (2019), available [here](#).

²² Ibid.

²³ US Institute of Peace, 'The Current Situation in Pakistan' (2019), available [here](#).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The Economist Intelligence Unit, 'Democracy Index 2019: A year of democratic setbacks and popular protest' (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2020).

²⁷ Isaac Kfir, 'Sectarian Violence and Social Group Identity in Pakistan' (2014) 37(6) *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 461.

²⁸ Reporters without Borders, 'Under the military establishment's thumb' (2020), available [here](#).

²⁹ Ibid.

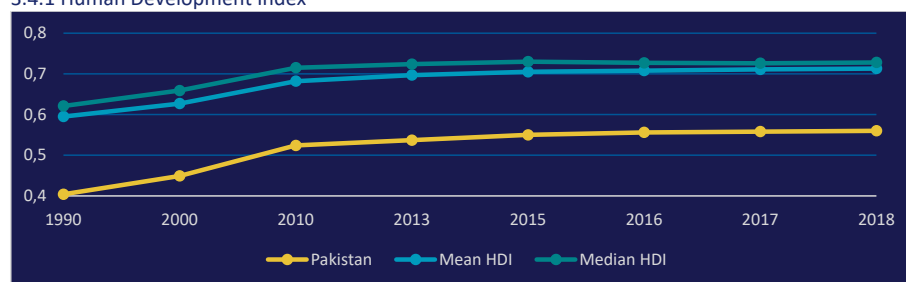
3.3. Migration profile

As of mid-2019, the total population of international migrants in Pakistan was 3.3 million, while the total number of Pakistani emigrants was 6.3 million.³⁰ Given its strategic geographical location, at a crossroad between South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East, Pakistan has since become a country of origin, transit, and destination for international migration.³¹ Pakistan hosts around 1.5 million Afghan born residents holding refugee status; a migration flow triggered by war and conflict in Afghanistan.³² Indians however constitute the largest migrant population in Pakistan with 1,873,650 individuals. Others include Myanmar 2,303, Iran 2,154, Sri Lanka 541, and Other 3,768.³³ Pakistanis themselves are however spread across the world. As of 2017, 22% (1,343,737) of the over 6 million Pakistani emigrants lived in Saudi Arabia, 18% (1,095,149) lived in India, 16% (950,145) in the United Arab Emirates, 15% (867,967) in Europe, and 6% (370,353) in the United States of America.³⁴ Another 6% lived in Kuwait, 4% in Oman, and 13% other.³⁵

Pakistani migrants in the Gulf states and Europe are mostly low-skilled workers who migrate voluntarily, working mostly in domestic service, agriculture, driving, and in the construction sector.³⁶

3.4. Development profile

3.4.1 Human Development Index³⁷



The Human Development Index (HDI) measures average life expectancy, level of education and income for each country in the world. Each country is given a score between 0 and 1 - the closer a country gets to 1, the more developed it is.³⁸ Pakistan's scores place it in the 'Low Human Development' grouping.

³⁰ Migration Data Portal (2020), available [here](#).

³¹ IOM, 'Pakistan: Migration Snapshot August 2019' (2019) 6, available [here](#).

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

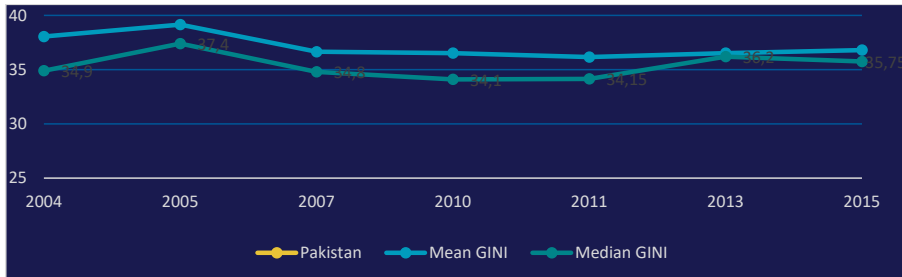
³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ US Department of State (2019), above n 12, 369.

³⁷ UNDP, 'Human Development Indicators - Pakistan' (2019), available [here](#).

³⁸ UNDP, 'Human Development Reports', available [here](#).

3.4.2 GINI Co-efficient³⁹



Gini index measures the extent to which income distribution or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality.⁴⁰

3.4.3 Pakistan’s achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals⁴¹

Year	Rank	Score
2020	134	56.17
2019	130	55.6
2018	126	54.9
2017	122	55.6
2016	115	45.7

The Sustainable Development Reports assess implementation of, and progress towards, the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals. The SDG Index and Dashboards summarise countries’ current performance and trends across the 17 SDGs. All SDGs are weighted equally in the index. Changing indicators, data, and methodology used to determine rankings and scores mean that SDG index results are not comparable over time.⁴²

3.4.4 Pakistan’s GDP Rates

GDP per capita (Constant LCU)⁴³



³⁹ The World Bank, ‘GINI index (World Bank estimate) – Pakistan’, available [here](#).

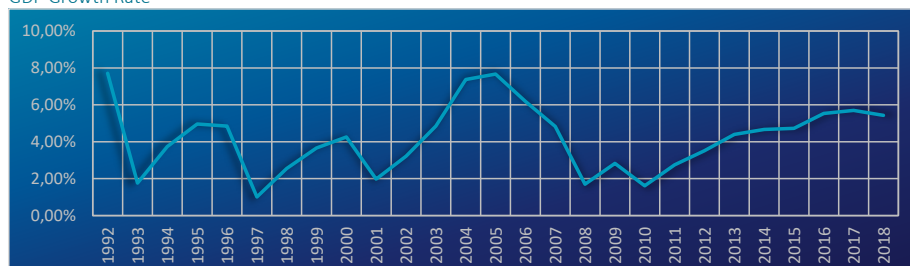
⁴⁰ World Bank, ‘Metadata Glossary’, available [here](#).

⁴¹ Sustainable Development Report (2020), available [here](#).

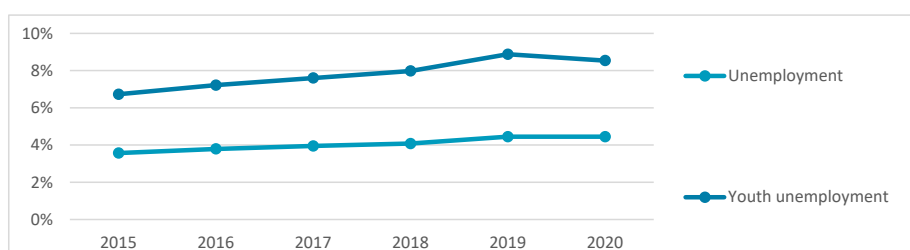
⁴² Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, ‘Sustainable Development Report 2019’ (June 2019) 19.

⁴³ World Bank, ‘GDP per capita (constant LCU) – Pakistan’, available [here](#).

GDP Growth Rate⁴⁴



3.4.5 Other relevant indicators⁴⁵



3.5. Pakistan’s Human Rights Record

Significant human rights abuses are recorded across Pakistan. Accounts of torture, unlawful killings, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and violation of privacy rights are frequently linked to government forces and its agents.⁴⁶ Free speech and press freedom are also highly restricted in Pakistan, with varying reports of high-level censorship and violence against journalists.⁴⁷ Other human rights issues include restrictions of religious freedom, largescale corruption by officials and reports of recruitment of child soldiers by non-state armed groups.⁴⁸ Human trafficking, violence against LGBTI members, and violence against members of racial and ethnic minorities are also notable human rights violations in the country.⁴⁹ A 2017 report submitted by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights indicates that Pakistani authorities generally do not recognise non-religious minorities, including the Balochi, Sindhi, or the indigenous peoples of Gilgit-Baltistan, who are mostly of Shia origin.⁵⁰ Further, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has expressed its concerns on the extent of forced conversion and forced marriage of Christian and Hindu Dalit women in Pakistan.⁵¹ Blasphemy laws existing in the

⁴⁴ World Bank, ‘GDP growth (annual %) – Pakistan’ (2020), available [here](#).

⁴⁵ Statista, ‘Pakistan: unemployment rate from 1999 to 2020’ (2020), available [here](#); Statista, ‘Pakistan: youth unemployment rate from 1999 to 2020’ (2020), available [here](#).

⁴⁶ Amnesty International, ‘Pakistan 2019’ (2020), available [here](#).

⁴⁷ Foreign & Commonwealth Office, ‘Human Rights and Democracy: The 2018 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report’ (2018) 51, available [here](#).

⁴⁸ US Department of State, above n 21.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, ‘Human Rights Violations in Pakistan: Submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the consideration of the 3rd Universal Periodic Review’ (2017) 8, available [here](#).

⁵¹ Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review, ‘Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights’ (A/HRC/WG.6/28/PAK/2, 4 September 2017) 9.

country are also used to settle personal disputes, which may be unfavourable to the Shia indigenous population of Gilgit-Baltistan.⁵²

There is further evidence of bonded labour, and disregard for women and children's rights in Pakistan.⁵³ Pakistan ranked 151 of 153 countries in the 2020 Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum, highlighting the huge gender divide in the country.⁵⁴ Despite these challenges, Pakistan is however recording some positive developments, including adoption of laws to protect transgender persons, and stronger efforts to tackle trafficking in persons.⁵⁵

3.6. Social support systems

Social insurance policy in Pakistan is mainly governed by the 1976 Employees' Old-Age Benefits Act (amended through 2014), containing provisions on old-age, disability, and survivor benefits.⁵⁶ The 2010 constitutional amendment while making it an obligation of the state to provide social security for all employed persons (art 38(c)), has however devolved social and labour issues, including adoption of laws to the provinces (37 (i)). Certain provinces have already adopted laws replicating some aspects of the existing federal legislation and programs.⁵⁷ At the Provincial level, the Sindh Employees Old-Age Benefits Act 2014, for instance, provides for certain benefits, including old-age pension, invalidity pension, and survivor's pension.⁵⁸ The 1976 Employees' Old-Age Benefits Act however continues to apply in province that have yet to pass a law.⁵⁹

⁵² Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, above n 50.

⁵³ Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 'Human Rights and Democracy: The 2018 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report', above n 47, 51.

⁵⁴ World Economic Forum, 'Global Gender Gap Report 2020' (2020), available [here](#).

⁵⁵ Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 'Human Rights and Democracy: The 2018 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report', above n 47, 51.

⁵⁶ Employees' Old-Age Benefits Act 1976 available [here](#).

⁵⁷ Social Security Office of Retirement and Disability Policy, 'Social Security Programs Throughout the World: Asia and the Pacific, 2016, Pakistan' (2016), available [here](#).

⁵⁸ The Sindh Employees Old-Age Benefits Act 2014 available [here](#).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

4. National modern slavery context

4.1. Modern slavery profile

Modern slavery manifests itself in different sectors across Pakistan. Despite the adoption of relevant laws, practices including bonded labour in brick kilns and textile industries remain widespread in the country. The 2018 Global Slavery Index of the Walk Free Foundation estimates that over three million people live in different modern slavery conditions in Pakistan.⁶⁰ The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations expressed its concern at the high rate of child labour exploitation in the country.⁶¹ However, a stakeholder report submitted to the Human Rights Council indicates that child domestic labour is generally not recognised as a worst form of child labour in Pakistan, which makes it difficult to estimate the scale and impact of this exploitative practice.⁶²

The 2020 TIP Report notes that traffickers, often including local government officials, force their victims to work in bonded labour in brick kilns in the Punjabi area and in agriculture in Sindh.⁶³ A high incidence of bonded labour also exists in carpet weaving, mining, as well as domestic service, where women and children are often exploited.⁶⁴ The practice exists both in rural and urban Pakistan and cuts across different sectors, with workers adapting themselves to the changing socio-economic landscape in the country. The transition from traditional to largescale mechanised farming in some part of the country has resulted in changing patterns of employment.⁶⁵ For instance, some discarded tenant farmers have moved to urban outskirts, where they work in brick kilns.⁶⁶

In agriculture, traffickers often exploit their victims in forced labour in wheat, cotton, and sugarcane farms. Also, landlords reportedly exploit illiteracy among workers and manipulate accounting records to perpetuate the cycle of exploitation, especially in bonded labour.⁶⁷ There are reports that landlords sometimes use armed guards to restrict the movement of bonded labourer and sometimes offer them up for sale. It is estimated that over 70% of bonded labourers in Pakistan are children.⁶⁸

4.2. Causes and drivers of modern slavery and transnational trafficking

Historical feudal practices and extreme poverty are some of the root causes of bonded labour in Pakistan.⁶⁹ The phenomenon is in many ways a surface manifestation of unequal power relations, and has formed part of the country's socio-economic fabric since the colonial era. It has been noted that the practice is 'so deeply entrenched as an economic model that bonded labourers tacitly accept it as a way of life'.⁷⁰

As earlier indicated, over 70% of bonded labourers in Pakistan are children. This is particularly the case because children are sometimes perceived to be 'cheaper, easier to control, easier to hide and more efficient as workers'.⁷¹ Also, it has been noted that parents

⁶⁰ Walk Free Foundation, 'Country Data: Pakistan' (2018), available [here](#).

⁶¹ Human Rights Council, above n 51, 6.

⁶² Human Rights Council, 'Summary of Stakeholders' submissions on Pakistan' Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' (A/HRC/WG.6/28/PAK/3, 23 August 2017), available [here](#).

⁶³ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 393.

⁶⁴ ILO, 'Promoting the Elimination of Bonded Labour in Pakistan (PEBLIP)', available [here](#).

⁶⁵ Fraser Murray et al, 'Modern Slavery in Pakistan Final Report' (2019) 8, available [here](#).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 393.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Fraser Murray et al, above n 65, 9.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 12.

⁷¹ Ibid, 20.

often play a role in facilitating child labour, giving out their children to work in differing exploitative conditions.⁷²

4.3. Particularly vulnerable groups

Bonded labourers mostly come from disadvantaged backgrounds and socially excluded groupings, including migrant workers and members of minority groups.⁷³ The stakeholders' report submitted to the Human Rights Council further indicates that most bonded labour victims in Pakistan are Christians, Sikhs, and Scheduled Caste Hindus.⁷⁴ Pakistani children are also vulnerable to different forms of modern slavery, including domestic labour, forced prostitution, street vending, forced begging, carpet weaving, garbage collection, exploitation in the brick kiln industry, mining as well as shipbreaking.⁷⁵

Trans women are also highly vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation in Pakistan. Many of these individuals live in the *guru-chela system* – a form of shelter where they receive food and social acceptance by members of their community. While the system can provide a safe haven to members of the group, it can also act as a breeding ground for commercial sexual exploitation, both within and outside Pakistan.⁷⁶

⁷² Ibid. 22.

⁷³ ILO, above n 64.

⁷⁴ Human Rights Council, above n 6262, 8.

⁷⁵ Fraser Murray et al, above n 65, 20.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 22, 23.

5. Antislavery governance frameworks

5.1. Legislative measures

5.1.1. Constitution 2012⁷⁷

The Constitution of Pakistan contains an express prohibition of slavery, forced labour and human trafficking. The Constitution further prohibits the use of children below the age of 14 in factory work or in mining and other hazardous employment.⁷⁸

5.1.2. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2018⁷⁹

The Act criminalises trafficking for the purpose of forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation, and prescribes a punishment of up to 7 years imprisonment or a fine of up to 1 million rupees or both. It specifically states 'Any person who recruits, harbours, transports, provides or obtains another person, or attempts to do so, for compelled labour or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud or coercion, commits an offence of trafficking in persons and shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to seven years or with fine which may extend to one million rupees or with both.'⁸⁰ The offence may be punished with 2 to 10 years imprisonment, or a fine or both, if the victim is a woman or a child.⁸¹ A number of aggravating circumstances are identified which could further extend the years of imprisonment to 14 years and the fine to 2 million rupees. The aggravating circumstances include causing serious injury, life threatening illness or death of the victim; activity involving an organised criminal group; confiscation of the victim's travel document.⁸² Prove of relevant means is not required where the victim is a child, and any consent given by such individuals are not considered valid by the court.⁸³

The anti-trafficking legislation is largely consistent with international law, although the scope of exploitation is rather limited, prohibiting only trafficking for forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation, whereas the Palermo Protocol further includes exploitation for slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, and trafficking for organ removal.

5.1.3. Penal Code 1860⁸⁴

Section 371(A) and 371(B) of the Penal Code criminalises the buying, selling, hiring, possession or disposal of persons with intent of using the victim for prostitution, illicit intercourse or other immoral purposes. The offence is punishable with imprisonment for 25 years and a fine. Section 374 further criminalises forced or compulsory labour, practiced in contravention of the law, with up to one-year imprisonment, or with fine or both. Section 366A criminalises the procurement of a girl below the age of 18 years for illicit sexual act and prescribed penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine.

Further, section 370 prohibits buying or disposing of any person as a slave and prescribes a punishment of up to 7 years' imprisonment and a fine, while section 371 criminalises habitual dealing in slaves, with penalties that could extend to life imprisonment or up to 10 years imprisonment in addition to a fine.

5.1.4. The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992⁸⁵

The statute prohibits one of the most dominant exploitative practices in Pakistan. Section 4 states 'On the commencement of this Act, the bonded labour system shall stand abolished and every bonded labourer shall stand freed and discharged from any obligation

⁷⁷ 2012 Constitution available [here](#).

⁷⁸ Article 11.

⁷⁹ The 2018 Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act is available [here](#).

⁸⁰ Article 3(1).

⁸¹ Article 3(2).

⁸² Article 4.

⁸³ Article 7.

⁸⁴ Penal Code 1860 available [here](#).

⁸⁵ The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992 available [here](#).

to render any bonded labour.’ Despite the adoption of the legislation, evidence continue to suggest the use of bonded labour in the country.

Different provincial level laws further prohibit exploitative labour, including the worst forms of child labour. Some of the laws include the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2015,⁸⁶ Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Ordinance 2016,⁸⁷ Punjab Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992,⁸⁸ the Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2017.⁸⁹

5.2. Prosecution

Pakistan’s Federal Investigation Agency reportedly made 6558 human smuggling and human trafficking arrests between 2014 and 2017.⁹⁰ Many provincial governments in Pakistan have adopted their own labour legislation, although federal laws continue to apply in provinces without corresponding laws. During 2019, Punjab investigated five cases of human trafficking involving 85 individuals; the authorities prosecuted an unknown number of suspects, and convicted 14 traffickers. Overall, during 2019, Pakistani officials investigated 916 sex trafficking cases, prosecuted 567 cases, which led to the conviction of 131 sex traffickers. In 2018, authorities investigated 2,367 sex trafficking cases, conducted 2,212 prosecutions, and convicted an unknown number of persons. Nearly all sex trafficking investigations took place in Punjab under Section 371A of the Penal Code. In the national statistics on sex trafficking, Punjab reported 85% of the investigations, 81% of prosecutions, and 98% of convictions.⁹¹

Despite the adoption of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, bonded labour remains widespread in Pakistan, largely due to weak enforcement of laws, police inaction, lower court judges’ lack of understanding of the law, and complicity of government officials.⁹²

5.3. National policies and plans

5.3.1. Pakistan’s National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking⁹³

The action plan sets out to, *inter alia*, institute poverty mitigation measures and provide safety nets to address the drivers of human trafficking. It also aims to achieve international cooperation with key destination countries to reduce the potentials for exploitation in those countries.⁹⁴

The 2019 US TIP Report further notes that the Pakistani government continued implementation of its 2015-2020 national strategic framework against trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling.⁹⁵

5.3.2. The National Action Plan on Human Rights 2016

Although a broader human rights action plan, it nevertheless recognises the prevalence of human trafficking, bonded and child labour and their negative impacts on the enjoyment of human rights. The action plan aims to improve human rights conditions through legal reform, implementation of international human rights treaties, awareness creation, protection of children’s rights and protection of minority rights.⁹⁶

⁸⁶ The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2015 available [here](#).

⁸⁷ The Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2017 available [here](#).

⁸⁸ The Punjab Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992 available [here](#).

⁸⁹ The Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Ordinance 2016 available [here](#).

⁹⁰ UNODC, ‘GLOTIP Report: West and South Asia’, above n 15 **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

⁹¹ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 390.

⁹² *Ibid*.

⁹³ Pakistan’s National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking available [here](#).

⁹⁴ UNODC, ‘Trafficking in Persons in Pakistan: A Review of National Laws and Treaty Compliance’ (2011) 55, available [here](#).

⁹⁵ US Department of State (2019), above n 12, 367.

⁹⁶ Ministry of Human Rights, Government of Pakistan, ‘National Action Plan on Human Rights 2016’ (2016), available [here](#).

5.3.3. National Framework to address Child Labour and Bonded Labour

The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) developed this framework to improve legislation on child labour and bonded labour, as well as improve enforcement efforts.⁹⁷

5.3.4. Decent Work Country Program

This government led program includes a strategy and action plan to promote the creation of decent work while prioritising gender equality.⁹⁸

5.3.5. Sindh and Punjab Provincial Plans of Action to Combat Bonded Labour

The action plans indicate how the Sindh and Punjab provinces plan to revise their bonded labour laws. They also contain plans to strengthen the capacity of labour inspectors, improve reporting, create awareness of bonded labour, and make labour inspection data available more accessible in a digital format.⁹⁹

5.3.6. Sindh Labour Policy

The policy aims to protect vulnerable workers, including children from exploitative labour. It also aims to enforce relevant laws dealing with hazardous child labour, as well as extend the minimum age for employment in domestic and home-based work.¹⁰⁰

5.4. National institutions and inter-departmental coordination

Various Provincial and Federal level agencies respond to modern slavery issues in Pakistan. The Federal Investigative Agency (FIA) is the government's lead anti-trafficking body. FIA provides anti-trafficking reporting and coordinates with other government agencies, focusing mainly on transnational offenses, while provincial level police deal with internal human trafficking cases.¹⁰¹ However, the 2020 US TIP Report notes that overall collaboration between FIA and Provincial Police remained largely weak and complicated law enforcement and data collection efforts.¹⁰² Further, the government's Interagency Task Force coordinates the anti-trafficking efforts of the Ministry of the Interior, intelligence and law enforcement agencies, the Ministry of Law and Justice, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁰³ The Task Force maintains an Integrated Border Management System and supports 27 Federal Investigation Agency anti-trafficking units that work with provincial and district police officers to monitor and combat domestic and transnational human trafficking.¹⁰⁴ Other agencies including the Ministries of Interior, Labour & Manpower, and Women Development, Bureau of Emigration, are involved in anti-trafficking research and data collection.¹⁰⁵

Provincial and Federal Tripartite Consultative Committees advise the government on the enforcement of labour laws and monitor the functioning of labour departments across the country.¹⁰⁶ The Child Labour Units at the Provincial level also support in coordinating child labour intervention programs in the provinces. Other provincial level agencies performing similar response and intervention roles include the Balochistan Child Protection Commission, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Commission, Punjab Child Protection and Welfare Bureau, Sindh Child Protection Authority.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁷ Human Rights Council, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, 'National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21' (A/HRC/WG.6/28/PAK/1, 4 September 2017) 12, available [here](#).

⁹⁸ Ibid 19.

⁹⁹ US Department of Labour, '2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labour' (2018), available [here](#).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 391.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ US Department of Labour, above n 9999.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ UNODC, above n 94.

¹⁰⁶ US Department of Labour, above n 9999.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

5.5. Victim support and assistance frameworks

Authorities noted the existence of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for identifying victims of trafficking, which guided the efforts of law enforcement, immigration, and social service personnel.¹⁰⁸ However, a copy of the SOP could not be located to assess its content; moreover, many provincial government officials indicated that they had never received and did not employ, SOPs, while others reported its use only on an ad hoc basis.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, there are provincial level programs designed to support victims of modern slavery. For instance, the Elimination of Child Labour and Bonded Labour Project is a Punjab Province-funded program that seeks to rehabilitate bonded labourers working in brick kilns, provide education to vulnerable children, and increase the capacity of law enforcement and service providers. Also, through the National Centres for Rehabilitation of Child Labour and the Child Support Program, the government aims to remove children from child labour, including its worst forms, while providing increased access to education. The social programs of the federal and provincial governments however seem insufficient to address the extent of bonded labour and human trafficking in Pakistan.¹¹⁰

During 2019, provincial police collectively identified 19,954 trafficking victims, a slight increase from 19,723 victims identified in 2018. When disaggregated, the 2019 victims included 15,802 female and at least 760 bonded labourers identified in Sindh and Punjab provinces. Lack of legal, financial, and social assistance however rendered nearly all 760 victims vulnerable to re-trafficking shortly afterwards.¹¹¹ Further, in 2017, the Federal Investigative Agency reported referring 17 victims to NGO-run shelter and rehabilitation services. The provincial police identified 14, 571 victims, of which only 286 were referred to rehabilitative care.¹¹²

Government-run shelters for women in vulnerable conditions, including trafficking, were the most notable services provided. According to the 2019 US TIP Report, 'Punjab operated women's shelters in each of its 36 districts; Sindh operated five women's shelters in its 29 districts and four centers that offered women in distress medical and legal aid and shelter for up to 72 hours; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa operated women's shelters in six of its 26 districts and 10 welfare homes for exploited children; Balochistan operated one women's shelter and one shelter for destitute male citizens among its 32 districts; and the Islamabad Capital Territory had one family and rehabilitation center that served women and children'.¹¹³ The report further notes that 'Punjab continued to operate its wholly integrated center that provided shelter, medical and psychological support, and legal assistance for female victims of violence. While all female victims of violence could access the center, including trafficking victims, the government did not report whether it assisted any trafficking victims'.¹¹⁴

5.6. Training and capacity-building for responders

The Pakistani government reportedly provided anti-trafficking training to its diplomatic and peacekeeping personnel.¹¹⁵ In a 2017 national report submitted to the Human Rights Council, the government indicated allocating Rs. 250 million (\$1.5 million) to establish the National Institute of Human Rights, a training, research and capacity building institute aiming to build the capacity of officials on human rights protection.¹¹⁶ The Federal Investigative Agency reportedly trains newly hired staff on countering human trafficking. The training include strategies for differentiating between human trafficking and migrant smuggling; although the two separate crimes continued to be conflated in some

¹⁰⁸ US Department of State (2018), above n 12, 338.

¹⁰⁹ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 391.

¹¹⁰ US Department of Labour, above n 9999.

¹¹¹ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 391.

¹¹² US Department of State (2018), above n 12, 338.

¹¹³ US Department of State (2019), above n 12, 367.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 368.

¹¹⁶ Human Rights Council, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, above n 9797, 9.

instances.¹¹⁷ FIA also provided in-kind support in six training programmes organised by international organisations and foreign governments during 2017.¹¹⁸

5.7. Public awareness raising

Human trafficking awareness campaigns fall within the broader mandate of the Pakistani Ministry of Information. In addition, the Federal Investigative Agency has set up a website to raise awareness and inform the public about 'most wanted' traffickers, including trafficking indicators. The website also publishes a list of authorised and illegal recruitment agents.¹¹⁹ In 2017, FIA reported partnering with an international organisation to run an anti-trafficking awareness campaign in Balochistan and Punjab.¹²⁰ The provincial authorities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also reported organising awareness raising events to inform the public on the risks of migrant smuggling and human trafficking.¹²¹

The Ministry of Human Rights has further initiated public awareness campaign on human rights education, implementing the 2016 Human Rights Action Plan. At least 60 seminars were organised in various Universities between 2015 and 2017.¹²² It is however unclear whether these awareness raising programmes specifically addressed human trafficking and other aspects of modern slavery.

5.8. Efforts to address vulnerabilities and drivers

The federal and provincial level governments have policies and programs in place to address the drivers of modern slavery, including bonded labour and child labour. As earlier indicated, through the National Centres for Rehabilitation of Child Labour and the Child Support Program, the government aims to remove children from child labour, including its worst forms, while providing increased access to education.¹²³

5.9. Frameworks for international coordination

The Pakistani government has concluded bilateral agreements with a number of countries to facilitate extradition, mutual legal assistance, and other forms of cooperation.¹²⁴ The government has signed Memorandum of Understanding on overseas employment with various countries, including UAE (2006), Qatar (1978, 2008), South Korea (2008), Jordan, and Malaysia.¹²⁵ In 2005, the government also signed an MOU with the UK known as 'Managed Migration', on the exchange of illegal migrants.¹²⁶

Further, at the regional level, Pakistan is a member of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), where members, inter alia, cooperate to address human exploitation. Pakistan is also party to the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. Since its establishment, the Bali Process has contributed to awareness raising efforts at the regional level, especially on the negative impacts of people smuggling, human trafficking and other transnational crimes.

¹¹⁷ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 391.

¹¹⁸ US Department of State (2018), above n 12, 338.

¹¹⁹ UNODC, above n 94, 63, 53.

¹²⁰ US Department of State (2018), above n 12, 339.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Human Rights Council, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, above n 9797, 9.

¹²³ US Department of Labour, above n 99.

¹²⁴ UNODC, above n 94, 63.

¹²⁵ Walk Free Foundation, above n 60.

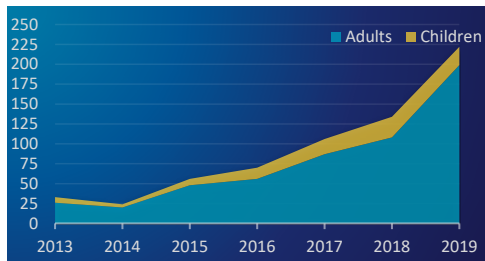
¹²⁶ Ibid.

6. Experiences of modern slavery of Pakistani in the UK

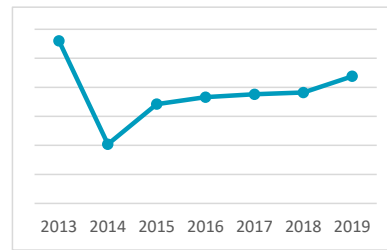
6.1. Pakistani nationals in the UK National Referral Mechanism

Pakistani nationals have consistently been in the top twenty nationalities represented in National Referral Mechanism referrals, although they have typically represented less than 3% of all referrals. The number of Pakistani nationals referred into the NRM has varied from 24 potential victims referred in 2014, up to 233 referrals in 2019. Adults have always made up the majority of Polish nationals referred into the NRM, with between 4 (2014) and 26 (2018) Pakistani nationals referred who were minors at the time of their exploitation from 2013-2019.¹²⁷ Since 2014 the proportion of Pakistani nationals referred, as a proportion of all referrals, has been steadily increasing.

Number of Pakistani nationals referred into the NRM by age at time of exploitation

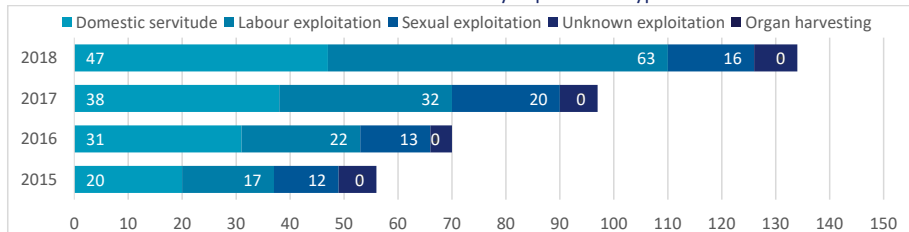


Proportion of potential victims referred into the NRM that are Pakistani nationals



Pakistani nationals referred into the NRM typically experience domestic servitude and to a lesser extent labour exploitation, except for 2018 in which labour exploitation was more prevalent. Only a relatively small proportion of Pakistani potential victims recorded as having experienced sexual exploitation or unknown forms of exploitation. While gender data was not disaggregated by nationality from 2015-2019, NRM reports included such data in the 2013 and 2014 reports. In these years, the majority of Pakistani nationals referred into the UK NRM were male (55% in 2013 and 58% in 2014).

Number of Pakistani nationals referred into the NRM by exploitation type¹²⁸



¹²⁷ Home Office, 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics UK: End of Year Summary 2019: Data tables' 2nd edn available [here](#); National Crime Agency, 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics – End of Year Summary 2018' (2019) available [here](#); National Crime Agency, 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics – End of Year Summary 2017' (2018) available [here](#); National Crime Agency, 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics – End of Year Summary 2016' (2017) available [here](#); National Crime Agency, 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics – End of Year Summary 2015' (2016) available [here](#); National Crime Agency, 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics – End of Year Summary 2014' (2015) available [here](#); National Crime Agency, 'United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre: National Referral Mechanism Statistics 2013' (2014) available [here](#).

¹²⁸ Ibid. Note that exploitation type data is not disaggregated by nationality in the 2013, 2014, or 2019 data and these years are therefore excluded.

6.2. Typical journeys from Pakistan to the UK for trafficking victims

There are various routes from Pakistan to Western Europe, including the UK, although Eastern Europe has been documented as a key land for illegal journeys from Pakistan to Western Europe.¹²⁹ Further, according to the UNODC, smuggled migrants leaving Pakistan for Western Europe also travel via the Eastern Mediterranean, arriving in Turkey via Iran on land, and then reaching Greece either by land or sea.¹³⁰ Once they have reached Greece, the journey may either go on by land through the Western Balkans or by sea to Italy, and then on throughout Western Europe, depending on the desired destination country.¹³¹ In order to arrive in the UK, this continued journey often consists of being smuggled on a ferry, whilst concealed in a truck or van, coming from France or Belgium.¹³² Whilst less common, the UK may also be reached by air from any one of the transit countries, however this relies on the use of false documents.¹³³

6.3. Experiences of exploitation and working conditions

As with other ethnic minority communities in the UK, data indicates that Pakistani nationals face certain barriers to employment in the UK. Specifically, a 2019 study focused on Sheffield found that some Pakistani national workers reported feeling exploited through their involvement in informal work, with the main complaints being long hours, no work insurance and pay under the UK's minimum wage.¹³⁴

Due to the solidarity feeling many Pakistani nationals felt they had to express to their communities, they described being trapped in exploitative work conditions rather than seeking better economic opportunities outside of them.¹³⁵ Other factors which play an important role in preventing Pakistani nationals from formal work are the racism of employers, as well as the pressure to find quick work to send money back to relatives in Pakistan, rather than pursuing education and qualifications.¹³⁶

6.4. Consequent effects of trafficking on survivors

There is critical lack of research on the particular effects of trafficking on Pakistani national survivors, however, a 2018 study cites that generally survivors experience 'anxiety, depression, alienation, disorientation, aggression, suicide ideation, attention deficit, and posttraumatic stress disorder'.¹³⁷

6.5. Particular needs, requirements, and considerations for support and engagement of Pakistani national survivors in the UK

The 2019 study also places emphasis on the need for policies that seek to integrate Pakistani communities into mainstream society (especially the economy) to understand and reflect their culture and history, and how these affect their labour patterns.¹³⁸

¹²⁹ Farooq Azam, 'Human Trafficking, Human Smuggling and Illegal Migration To and From Pakistan: Review of Government Policies and Programmes' (BEFARE, 2009) 19, available [here](#).

¹³⁰ UNODC, 'Migrant Smuggling in Asia and the Pacific: Current trends and Challenges Volume II' (UNODC, 2018) 11, available [here](#).

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 36.

¹³² *Ibid*, 39.

¹³³ *Ibid*.

¹³⁴ Peter Rodgers, Muhammad Shehryar Shahid and Colin C. Williams, 'Reconceptualising Informal Work Practices: Some Observations from an Ethnic Minority Community in Urban UK' (2019) 43(3) *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 384.

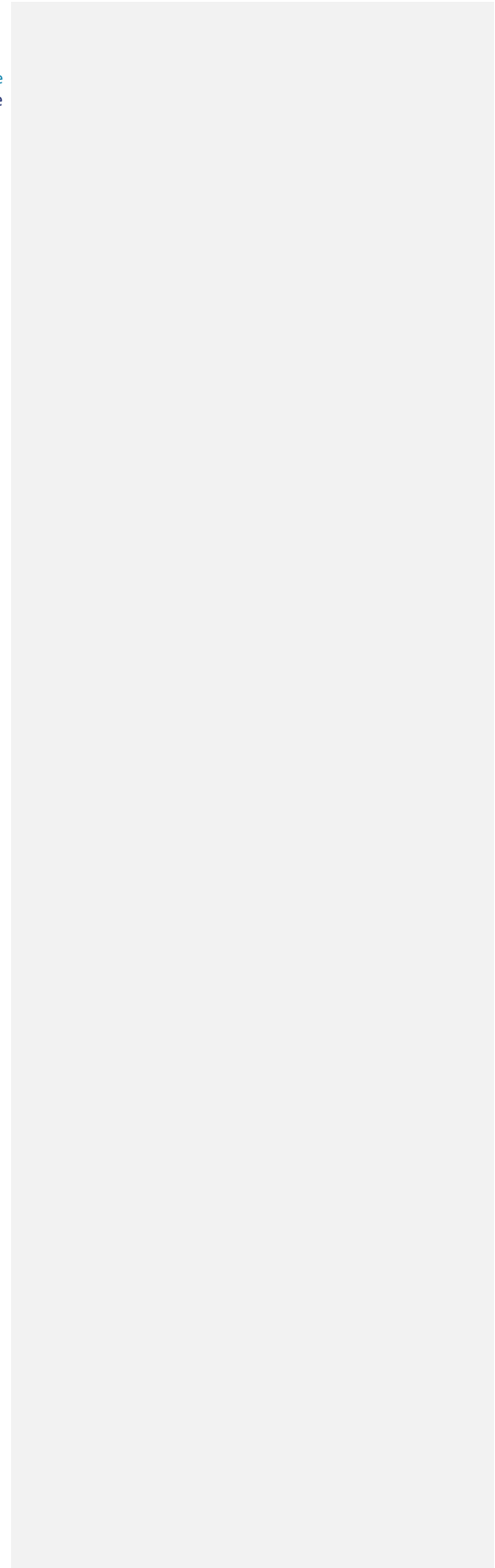
¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 385.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 385-386.

¹³⁷ David Okech, Nathan Hansen, Waylon Howard, John K. Anarfi and Abigail C. Burns, 'Social Support, Dysfunctional Coping, and Community Reintegration as Predictors of PTSD Among Human Trafficking Survivors', (2018) 44(3) *Behavioural Medicine* 209.

¹³⁸ Peter Rodgers, Muhammad Shehryar Shahid and Colin C. Williams, above n 134, 492.

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7. The impact of COVID-19

7.1. Government's Response to COVID-19

The response of the Pakistani government to the coronavirus has so far been mixed – a rejection of its fatality and imposition of some lockdown measures. Prime Minister Imran Khan himself adopted an anti-lockdown stance, noting its costs on the country's poor and national economy.¹³⁹ In particular, the prime minister urged provinces to loosen lockdown orders given its economic toll on over 150 million Pakistanis and the relatively low death rates.¹⁴⁰ On 23 April 2020, the federal government launched an initial \$595 million Pakistan Preparedness and Response Plan (PPRP) to combat and mitigate the spread of the virus.¹⁴¹ The PPRP identifies emerging public health needs in Pakistan and international assistance needed to stop the transmission by strengthening and reducing coordination gaps at all levels.¹⁴² On 10 June, the State Bank of Pakistan noted support and assistance provided under its Rozgar Scheme and the Risk Sharing Facility, to enable small corporations and SMEs pay wages and salaries to prevent layoffs, as well as relief package for the deferment of principal amount and restructuring of loans. The State Bank of Pakistan noted that, as of 5 June, banks had approved requests amounting to Rs. 21 billion for SMEs and corporate bodies.¹⁴³

The government has also set up the Ehsaas Emergency Cash Program, in which Rs. 144 billion is earmarked for 12 million vulnerable families affected by the coronavirus pandemic.¹⁴⁴ However, the Ehsaas program only assists individuals who register via text message, which may not be particularly friendly to rural families who do not own smartphones or persons that cannot read or send text messages.¹⁴⁵

In March, the Office of the Chief Commissioner, ICT of Pakistan issued an order preventing worker layoff, and specifically noted that employers shall pay all workers their full salaries and wages during the lockdown period.¹⁴⁶ At the provincial level, the government of Sindh took a similar measure, while the Balochistan government issued a notification that in case of complete or partial lockdown, employers must pay at least Rs. 17,500 to their workers.¹⁴⁷ Regarding the spread of the pandemic itself, Pakistani policymakers have been reluctant to adopt stringent measures for fear of a backlash from powerful religious leaders. As such, authorities have failed to impose a complete ban on religious gatherings, which are usually packed during meetings.¹⁴⁸ Also, coordination between the federal and provincial governments is weak, which is undermining responses to the pandemic.¹⁴⁹

7.2. Impact of COVID-19 on Pakistani workers and vulnerable population

The coronavirus pandemic continues to affect all sectors of the Pakistani economy, with particularly grave consequences for informal sector workers. Religious minority groups are also facing discrimination in the distribution of palliatives and supplies,¹⁵⁰ while others

¹³⁹ Madiha Afzal, 'With a mix of pandemic denialism and exceptionalism, Pakistan makes a cynical bet on the coronavirus' (2020), available [here](#).

¹⁴⁰ Ashish Kumar Sen, 'Pakistan's Battle with Coronavirus Reveals Governance Challenges' (2020), available [here](#).

¹⁴¹ ILO, 'Country policy responses: Pakistan', available [here](#).

¹⁴² Government of Pakistan, 'Pakistan Preparedness and Response Plan: COVID-19' (2020), available [here](#).

¹⁴³ State Bank of Pakistan, 'Governor SBP shares with Chambers of Commerce the measures to enhance utilization of Risk Sharing Facility under SBP's Rozgar Scheme' (2020), available [here](#).

¹⁴⁴ ILO, above n 141.

¹⁴⁵ Neha Maqsood, 'On the Coronavirus, Pakistan's Government is Missing in Action' (2020), available [here](#).

¹⁴⁶ ILO, above n 141.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Neha Maqsood, above n 145.

¹⁴⁹ Hina Shaikh, 'COVID-19: Pakistan's preparations and response' (2020), available [here](#). For updated information of Pakistani's response to the pandemic, see Our World in Data, 'Pakistan', available [here](#).

¹⁵⁰ Global Human Rights Defence, 'Religious discriminations amid COVID-19 in Pakistan' (2020), available [here](#).

engaged in essential work experience delays in payment of their wages.¹⁵¹ As of March, when the pandemic was still in its early stages, at least 500,000 textile and garment workers had lost their jobs in the Punjab province alone.¹⁵² The textile and garment sector accounts for around 4.4 million jobs in Pakistan and contributes 8.5% to the country's GDP.¹⁵³ Before the pandemic, ILO had noted that the sector was characterised by poor working conditions, low wages and other deficits in terms of decent work.¹⁵⁴ Declining demand in western countries as a result of the pandemic has prompted massive order cancellations, which in turn have led to mass layoffs in Pakistan, while those retaining their jobs are protesting non-payment of wages.¹⁵⁵

Informal labourers, accounting for around 75% of the country's workforce are worst affected by the pandemic. Around 40% of these individuals work in the agricultural sector, while others work in manufacturing, services, and other sectors.¹⁵⁶ The lack of employment contracts, official registration, and social security often means they cannot access government palliatives and relevant support.¹⁵⁷ Health care workers are also refusing to work, to avoid exposure to the virus given lack of personal protective equipment, while some are making out-of-pocket expenses to procure protective equipment for their own use.¹⁵⁸ Overall, the challenges facing Pakistan are stark. The government must act swiftly in terms of its economic responses, especially to informal sector workers while adopting effective social distancing measures.

¹⁵¹ Asif Aqeel, 'Unprotected, unpaid or unrecognised: Christian workers on the frontline in Pakistan's fight against Covid-19' (2020), available [here](#).

¹⁵² Human Rights Watch, 'Pakistan: Workers Face Health, Economic Risks' (2020), available [here](#).

¹⁵³ ILO, 'Promoting Decent Work in Garment Sector Global Supply Chains' (2020) 4, available [here](#).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Katherine Hearst, 'COVID-19 and the garment industry's invisible hands' (2020), available [here](#).

¹⁵⁶ Aamir Latif, 'Millions of Pakistani laborers struggle amid COVID-19 lockdown' (2020), available [here](#).

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Neha Maqsood, above n 145.