# Pakistan

**PARTLY FREE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Rights</th>
<th>16/40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil Liberties</td>
<td>22/60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## LAST YEAR’S SCORE & STATUS

39/100  
Partly Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.
Note

The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, which is examined in a separate report. Freedom in the World country reports assess the level of political rights and civil liberties in a given geographical area, regardless of whether they are affected by the state, nonstate actors, or foreign powers. Disputed territories are sometimes assessed separately if they meet certain criteria, including boundaries that are sufficiently stable to allow year-on-year comparisons. For more information, see the report methodology and FAQ.

Overview

Pakistan holds regular elections under a competitive multiparty political system. However, the military exerts enormous influence over security and other policy issues, intimidates the media, and enjoys impunity for indiscriminate or extralegal use of force. The authorities impose selective restrictions on civil liberties, and Islamist militants carry out attacks on religious minorities and other perceived opponents—though the rate of terrorist attacks has decreased markedly over the last decade.

Key Developments in 2019

- Prime Minister Imran Khan’s Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) completed its first full year in office at the national level, and continued to present itself as committed to institutional reform and anticorruption efforts. However, most major corruption cases targeted opposition leaders and their top aides.
- The opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) were profoundly disrupted by the barrage of cases brought against their leaders, as well as against party activists who tried to support them. The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) saw acute pressure from the country’s powerful army.
• While significant terrorist violence took place, the internal security situation continued to improve. There were 370 people killed in terrorist incidents during the year, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), compared with 694 in 2018 and a peak of over 11,700 in 2009.

• Access to due process increased in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which in 2018 were absorbed into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Province. The Pakistan Penal Code was extended to the area along with the writ of the superior courts, and the presence of the regular police force was established.

**Political Rights**

**A. Electoral Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A1</th>
<th>0-4 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?</strong></td>
<td>1/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A prime minister responsible to the bicameral parliament holds most executive power under the constitution. The president, who plays a more symbolic role, is elected for up to two five-year terms by an electoral college comprising the two chambers of parliament and the provincial assemblies. PTI-nominated candidate Arif Alvi was elected president in September 2018 by the electoral college, which had been newly constituted after the general elections that July.

Imran Khan became prime minister in August 2018 after the PTI emerged from the general elections as the largest party. In the run-up to the polls, observers documented concerted efforts by elements of the country’s military and judicial establishment to hamper the PML-N in order to increase the chances that Khan would attain a parliamentary majority. These included corruption, contempt-of-court, and terrorism charges against PML-N leaders and candidates, and their politicized adjudication. Observers also noted pressure on and interference with the media,
apparently at the behest of the security services, that resulted in muted coverage of the PML-N's campaign.

**A2  0-4 pts**

| Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? | 2/4 |

The parliament consists of a 342-member National Assembly and a 104-member Senate. Members of the National Assembly are elected for five years. Of the 342 seats, 272 are filled through direct elections in single-member districts, 60 are reserved for women, and 10 are reserved for non-Muslim minorities. The reserved seats are filled through a proportional representation system with closed party lists.

In the Senate, each provincial assembly chooses 23 members, National Assembly members representing the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) elect 8, and 4 are chosen by the National Assembly to represent the Islamabad capital territory. Senators serve six-year terms, with half of the seats up for election every three years. The most recent Senate elections were held in March 2018—before the final adoption in May of a constitutional amendment providing for the FATA's absorption into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province.

International and domestic election observers delivered a mixed verdict on the July 2018 National Assembly elections. Polling was orderly and generally took place according to the electoral law, though serious technical difficulties with the Result Transmission System resulted in delays in results reporting. At the same time, the rush of judicial actions against PML-N leaders and restrictions on and interference with media coverage significantly disadvantaged the party, contributing to a spectacular rise in PTI representation in the National Assembly. The PTI received 17 percent of the vote and 149 seats, compared with just 35 seats previously. The PML-N received 24 percent of the vote and 82 seats, down from 157 seats previously. The PPP received 13 percent of the vote and 54 seats, an increase of 12 from its previous representation.
Another notable feature of the elections was the participation of parties and candidates linked to active Islamist militant groups. These included Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) and Allah-o-Akbar Tehreek (AAT).

The PTI formed a coalition government at the national level, with the support of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), other minor parties, and independents. Voter turnout was 52 percent.

A3 0-4 pts

**Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?**

2/4

Elections are administered by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), whose members are current or retired senior judges nominated through a consultative process that includes the government and the parliamentary opposition. The electoral laws are largely fair, and candidates have extensive access to the courts in electoral disputes.

Election observer missions in 2018 acknowledged that the formal electoral framework and its implementation complied with international standards. However, the ECP proved unable to counteract efforts by elements of the judicial and military establishment and their allies to manipulate the campaign environment. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, politically orchestrated judicial activism resulted in the disqualification of candidates, while the “censorship, intimidation, harassment, and abduction” of journalists who were critical of the security establishment or favored the PML-N or PPP ensured uneven access to the media.

Other, ongoing problems include lower rates of voter registration among women, a requirement that members of the Ahmadi religious minority register as non-Muslims despite considering themselves Muslims, and vague moral requirements for candidate nomination.
B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1  0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

2/4

Several major parties and numerous smaller parties and independents compete in elections and are represented in the parliament and provincial legislatures. However, established parties maintain patronage networks and other advantages of incumbency that hamper competition in their respective provincial strongholds. In recent years, it has become increasingly apparent that major parties’ freedom to operate is related to the strength of their relationships with unelected arms of the state, which have sought to sideline figures not to their liking through a variety of legal and extralegal means.

B2  0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

2/4

Opposition parties campaign and contest elections, and each of the last three national elections has resulted in an erstwhile opposition party taking power at the federal level. Opposition parties also continue to hold power or significant shares of assembly seats at the provincial level. However, the military is currently considered more powerful than the elected politicians and the judiciary has shown a willingness to engage in politically targeted accountability. Therefore, opposition parties have increasingly concluded that their most plausible route to power is by winning the backing of the unelected establishment rather than through a straight electoral contest.
In 2019, the PML-N and PPP, both former governing parties, were profoundly disrupted by a barrage of cases brought against their first- and second-rank leaders, as well as against party activists who tried to support them. Cases brought by the government included corruption, alleged breach of media regulations, and participation in unauthorized demonstrations. Those targeted included former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz, his younger brother and former Punjab chief minister Shahbaz Sharif, and former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, all political figures within PML-N, as well as former president Asif Ali Zardari of PPP, and his sister, Faryal Talpur, also a PPP politician. They spent much of the year in court, in jail, or in court-authorized medical treatment. The judicial harassment in 2019 was a continuation of the 2017–18 preelection disruption of the PML-N campaign by the military and judicial establishment, which featured the effective removal from political life of Nawaz Sharif through a series of dubious court rulings, and subsequent weakening of his PML-N party.

The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), which campaigns against violence by both the state and Islamist militants in ethnic Pashtun areas, saw particular pressure from the army in 2019. Two lawmakers and senior party figures were detained during the year, including on allegations that they were linked to the Afghan and Indian intelligence agencies. The police and army also continued to disrupt PTM public events around the country. Three PTM activists were shot dead by security forces at a demonstration in North Waziristan in May.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 due to continued government and military pressure on leaders of the two main opposition parties, and further arrests and prosecutions targeting other opposition groups, including the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3</th>
<th>0-4 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the people’s political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapoliical means?</td>
<td>TOP 1/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The manipulation of politics by religious extremists has long hampered voters’ ability to freely express their political preferences. In recent years, the military has reasserted its role as the political arbiter—more powerful than either the judiciary or the elected government—that sets the constraints within which civilian politics play out.

In 2018, the heavy presence of security agents at many polling stations was interpreted by observers including the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan as tantamount to voter intimidation. A number of candidates in the 2018 election campaign had links with extremist groups that had advocated or carried out acts of violence, further contributing to a sense of unease among many voters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B4</th>
<th>0-4 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?</strong></td>
<td>1/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A joint electorate system allows members of non-Muslim minorities to participate in the general vote while also being represented by reserved seats in the national and provincial assemblies through the party-list system. However, the participation of non-Muslims in the political system continues to be marginal. Political parties nominate members to the legislative seats reserved for non-Muslim minorities, leaving non-Muslim voters with little say in the selection of their supposed representatives. Ahmadis, members of a heterodox Muslim sect, face political discrimination and are registered on a separate voter roll.

Political parties maintain women’s wings that are active during elections, but women face practical restrictions on voting, especially in KPK and Baluchistan, where militant groups and traditional societal constraints are more prevalent. Women rarely have leadership positions in parties or the government. The interests of LGBT+ people are generally not represented by elected officials.

**C. Functioning of Government**
C1  0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?  

1/4

Formally, the elected prime minister and cabinet make policy in consultation with the parliament, which holds legislative power. However, there has been a long-running struggle between these civilian structures and the military establishment for control of national security policy. The military has asserted primacy on relations with India, Afghanistan, China, and the United States, as well as on counterterrorism policy within Pakistan. In the last two years of the previous PML-N government, it appeared that the civilian administration aspired to act independently of some military priorities, most notably through exploring détente with India. Since the August 2018 installation of the PTI government, the civilian administration has aligned itself more closely than its predecessor with the foreign policy, domestic security, and economic priorities favored by the military.

C2  0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?  

1/4

While there are numerous formal safeguards against official corruption, it is endemic in practice, and the use of accountability mechanisms is often selective and politically driven. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) focuses on cases against politicians and senior officials. It claims to have doubled the number of investigations undertaken during 2019 and achieved an overall conviction rate of 70 percent since its inception 20 years ago. In 2019, the NAB pursued numerous corruption investigations against senior figures in the opposition PML-N and PPP. The military and judiciary have their own disciplinary systems.

C3  0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?  

3/4

TOP
There have been some moves to boost government transparency through the passing of Right to Information laws at provincial and federal level; these have been passed in KPK, Punjab, and Sindh. However, only KPK has activated the Information Commission required by the legislation as a watchdog to ensure that government departments fulfil their obligations to respond to information requests.

Think tanks, civil society organizations, and universities all contribute to lively debate on many aspects of public policy. However, debate on certain aspects of national security policy, such as the insurgency in Baluchistan, disappearances, and the military’s alleged support for militant groups targeting Afghanistan and Indian-controlled Kashmir, has in effect remained taboo.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

| Are there free and independent media? | 1/4 |

Pakistan has, over the past two decades, boasted a relatively vibrant media sector that presents a range of news and opinions. However, both the civilian authorities and military have acted in recent years to curtail media freedom. There were multiple instances in 2019 in which the government targeted individual journalists, television programs and stations, and media houses for raising issues the authorities considered unpalatable. A range of instruments were used, including the traditional approach of withdrawing government advertising from critical publications, as well as the more recent approach of fines and temporary bans imposed by the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA). Authorities are also believed to rely on “troll farms,” which are directed to harass out-of-line commentators. The state
continued efforts to enforce a media blackout on the PTM and its members during the year.

In October 2019, government refused to permit the Asia coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) into the country. The organization had documented ways in which the Dawn newspaper and associated television station had been singled out for harassment; in 2019, Dawn had notably reported on Prime Minister Khan’s controversial acknowledgement that Pakistan had sheltered anti-Iranian militants, and had giving prominence in the news of a major terrorist attack in the strategic port city of Gwadar. The critical television channel Geo also saw harassment by officials during the year. Numerous restrictions imposed by PEMRA in 2019 appeared arbitrary, such as a temporary ban on three television news channels after they covered a PML-N rally.

The government also sought to extend its powers to control the media. In December it proposed restrictions on media reporting of “convicts and absconders,” to silence opposition politicians accused of corruption. In September, a plan to establish new fast-track media courts was approved by the cabinet.

Access to certain areas is prohibited by the military, impeding coverage of issues there. In Baluchistan, local journalists are often caught between authorities who order them not to cover separatist rebel activity, and rebel groups that threaten them for siding with the government.

Twenty-two journalists have been murdered in Pakistan since 2008, according to CPJ, which noted in October 2018 that a recent decline in fatal violence against journalists “masks a decline in press freedom” characterized by the military’s pervasive intimidation of journalists. The perpetrators of violence against the media typically enjoy impunity. CPJ did not record any murders of journalists in Pakistan in 2019, though local organizations counted several.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D2</th>
<th>0-4 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?</td>
<td>1/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom have not provided effective safeguards against discriminatory legislation, social prejudice, and sectarian violence. Hindus have complained of vulnerability to kidnapping and forced conversions, and some continue to migrate to India. Members of the Christian and other religious minorities remain at risk of blasphemy accusations that can arise from trivial disputes and escalate to criminal prosecution and mob violence. The blasphemy laws and their exploitation by religious vigilantes have also curtailed freedom of expression by Muslims.

Members of the Ahmadi community are legally prohibited from calling themselves Muslims, and face discrimination. A May 2019 report released by the Ahmadi community concluded that the 2018 election campaign had exacerbated the prevailing atmosphere of hostility to Ahmadis because parties, including the PTI, often pandered to extreme Sunni groups and had adopted their anti-Ahmadi hate speech.

**D3** 0-4 pts

| Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination? | 2/4 |

Pakistani authorities have a long history of using the education system to portray Hindus and other non-Muslims negatively, and to rationalize enmity between Pakistan and India, among other ideological aims. Past attempts to modernize education and introduce tolerance into school textbooks have made little progress and minority groups consider negative portrayals of non-Muslims in textbooks as a continuing source of hostility towards them.

In recent years, scholars have been somewhat more free to discuss sensitive issues involving the military.

**D4** 0-4 pts

| Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? | 2/4 | TOP |
Pakistanis are free in practice to discuss many topics both online and off, but the 2016 Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECB) gives the executive-controlled Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) unchecked powers to censor material on the internet. The level of investment in tracking and blocking of sites is typically justified by a professed intention to prevent dissemination of blasphemous and pornographic content. However, the broad and poorly defined censorship mandate of the PTA also includes preventing the maligning of the “state, judiciary or armed forces,” and it claims to have blocked 900,000 sites on those grounds as of September 2019. In practice, the agency censors content arbitrarily. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) found in September, for example, that the PTA closed down the website of a leftist party during the 2018 election campaign without justification. Extralegal violence and allegations of blasphemy also deter unfettered speech.

### E. Associational and Organizational Rights

**E1  0-4 pts**

| Is there freedom of assembly? | 3/4 |

The constitution guarantees the right to assemble peacefully, though the government can harness legal provisions to arbitrarily ban gatherings or any activity designated a threat to public order. During 2019, the authorities restricted assembly by some groups considered antistate, though it proved relatively tolerant of other demonstrations, including those by the political opposition and religious right.

**E2  0-4 pts**

| Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? | TOP 1/4 |

https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-world/2020
The current government has continued a crackdown on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), both domestic and foreign, that was initiated by its predecessor in 2015. Organizations are subject to intrusive registration requirements and vetting by military intelligence. Officials can demand that NGOs obtain a “no-objection certificate” (NOC) before undertaking even the most innocuous activity. As of January 2019, just 74 of 141 international NGOs that had submitted a registration application since 2015 had been approved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E3</th>
<th>0-4 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?</strong></td>
<td>2/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rights of workers to organize and form trade unions are recognized in law, and the constitution grants unions the rights to collective bargaining and to strike. However, these protections are not strongly enforced. Roughly 70 percent of the workforce is employed in the informal sector, where unionization and legal protections are minimal. The procedures that need to be followed for a strike to be legal are onerous. Strikes and labor protests are organized regularly, though they often lead to clashes with police and dismissals by employers.

### F. Rule of Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F1</th>
<th>0-4 pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is there an independent judiciary?</strong></td>
<td>1/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The judiciary is politicized and has a history of involvement in the power struggle between the military, the civilian government, and opposition politicians, and has often issued rulings aligned with the priorities of the military. During 2019, the highest-profile role of the judiciary concerned the ongoing corruption cases against Nawaz Sharif and other senior PML-N and PPP opposition politicians; since 2017, these cases have effectively sidelined the top leadership of both main opposition
parties. The paucity of equivalent cases against PTI figures suggest that the judiciary had allowed itself to be instrumentalized in national politics.

However, senior judges periodically assert some independence from the military and government. In 2019, for example, the Supreme Court ruled that the Army Chief of Staff’s tenure could initially only be extended for six months, in a move viewed as subjecting the army to the rule of law.

The broader court system is marred by endemic problems including corruption, intimidation, insecurity, a large backlog of cases, and low conviction rates for serious crimes.

**F2 0-4 pts**

| Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? | 1/4 |

Police have long been accused of biased or arbitrary handling of initial criminal complaints, and both the police and the prosecution service have been criticized for a chronic failure to prosecute terrorism cases.

In the wake of the 2014 terrorist massacre at an Army Public School in Peshawar, the government allowed some civilians to be tried in military courts. These courts have since been criticized for lack of transparency and due process guarantees, such as access to a competent defense. A number of death sentences issued by the courts have been overturned for a lack of evidence. The government announced its intention to extend the life of the courts in January 2019, but was unable to secure support for the necessary legislation, and their mandate lapsed in March.

Access to due process has increased in the former FATA, which in 2018 were absorbed into KPK. Consequently, the Pakistan Penal Code was extended to the former tribal areas, along with the writ of the superior courts, and for the first time, the regular police force was established in the old tribal areas. The military’s ability to use powers of arbitrary detention in the area were being contested in the Supreme Court at year’s end.
A multiyear decline in terrorist violence continued in 2019, with 370 people killed in terrorist incidents during the year according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), compared with 697 in 2018 and a peak of over 11,700 in 2009. The reduction is due in large part to the military’s suppression of an Islamist insurgency in KPK and the former FATA, a tapering off of the nationalist insurgency in Baluchistan, and a clampdown on gang violence in Karachi. Nevertheless, terrorist attacks continue. Attacks against the Hazara minority in Quetta took place once again in 2019, and included an April suicide bombing of a vegetable market that killed 20 people. The same month, suspected Baloch insurgents, targeting security force members, took 14 men off a bus in southern Baluchistan and summarily executed them.

Tensions with India greatly intensified in 2019, to the point where Pakistan cautioned that India’s actions could lead to war. In February, the Pakistan-based jihadi group Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed responsibility for a high-profile terrorist attack in Pulwama, located in Jammu and Kashmir. In response, India launched air-strikes across the Line of Control and international border, against an alleged terrorist facility in Balakot, in KBK. Deescalation only occurred when Pakistan returned a captured pilot shot down by the Pakistan air force. However, Indo-Pakistan relations deteriorated again in August in the wake of Indian withdrawal of the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir. This prompted an increase in artillery exchanges and firing between the Pakistan and Indian armies.

Civilians face the threat of extralegal violence by state actors, including enforced disappearances. The number of pending cases of people registered as missing 2011 by the official Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances rose to 6,506 during 2019, of which 4,365 cases had reportedly been resolved by the end of the year. However, there was no sign of the commission’s deliberations leading to any effective sanctions against the agencies undertaking the disappearances—although the commission tracks cases, it has refrained from attributing responsibility. Most
victims were from KPK, the former FATA, or Baluchistan, and typically were held incommunicado by security and intelligence agencies on suspicion of antistate agitation, terrorism, rebellion, or espionage.

**F4** 0-4 pts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women face discrimination in employment despite legal protections, and they are placed at a disadvantage under personal status laws. Women are also subject to a number of harmful traditional practices and societal abuses, the perpetrators of which often enjoy impunity.

Other segments of the population that suffer legal or de facto discrimination and violence include ethnic and religious minorities, Afghan refugees, and LGBT+ people. The penal code prescribes prison terms for consensual sex “against the order of nature,” deterring LGBT+ people from acknowledging their identity or reporting abuses. Transgender and intersex people are authorized to register for official documents under a “third gender” classification recognized by the Supreme Court since 2009, and some transgender people were recognized in the 2017 census. However, they continue to face targeted violence as well as discrimination in housing and employment.

**G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights**

**G1** 0-4 pts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?</th>
<th>TOP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are some legal limitations on travel and the ability to change one’s residence, employment, or institution of higher learning. The authorities routinely hinder internal movement in some parts of the country for security reasons. The main tool for restricting foreign travel is the Exit Control List (ECL), which blocks named individuals from using official exit points from the country. It is meant to include those who pose a security threat and those facing court proceedings. However, periodically it has been used as a means of controlling dissent.

**G2 0-4 pts**

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?

2/4

In principle, Pakistan’s constitution, legal system, and social and religious values all guarantee private property and free enterprise. In reality, however, organized crime, corruption, a weak regulatory environment, and the subversion of the legal system often render property rights precarious. Powerful and organized groups continue to engage in land grabbing, particularly in Karachi and Punjab.

Inheritance laws discriminate against women, and women are often denied their legal share of inherited property through social or familial pressure.

**G3 0-4 pts**

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?

1/4

In some parts of urban Pakistan, men and women enjoy personal social freedom and have recourse to the law in case of infringements. However, traditional practices in much of the country subject individuals to social control over personal behavior, and especially choice of marriage partner. Despite successive attempts to abolish the practice, “honor killing,” the murder of men or women accused of breaking social and especially sexual taboos, remains common, and most incidents go unreported.
Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1/4

Bonded labor was formally abolished in 1992, and there have been long-standing efforts to enforce the ban and related laws against child labor. For example, in one example from May 2019, 63 brick kiln workers filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HCRP) that they had been sold along with the kiln where they worked. They were formally released from bondage by a court order in June. Gradual social change has also eroded the power of wealthy landowning families involved in such exploitation. Nevertheless, extreme forms of labor exploitation remain common. Employers continue to use chronic indebtedness to restrict laborers’ rights and hold actual earnings well below prescribed levels, particularly among sharecroppers and in the brick-kiln industry.

On Pakistan
See all data, scores & information on this country or territory.
See More  

Country Facts

Global Freedom Score
38/100  Partly Free

Internet Freedom Score
26/100  Not Free
Other Years

2019

Be the first to know what’s happening.

Join the Freedom House monthly newsletter

Email

Subscribe

ADDRESS
1850 M St. NW Floor 11
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 296-5101

GENERAL INQUIRIES
info@freedomhouse.org

PRESS & MEDIA
press@freedomhouse.org

@2020 FreedomHouse

TOP