



Special Press Release

GALLUP PAKISTAN ELECTORAL REPOSITORY / Gallup Pakistan History Project
The New Tide of Voter Turnout
Issue # 2

VOTER TURNOUT: Average Voter Turn Out in Pakistan has observed a 12% gain in 2013 general elections, where the voter turnout was 53%, compared to the 25 year average of 41%. Gallup Pakistan

Islamabad, August 2, 2017

Introduction to the series on Gallup Pakistan Electoral Repository:

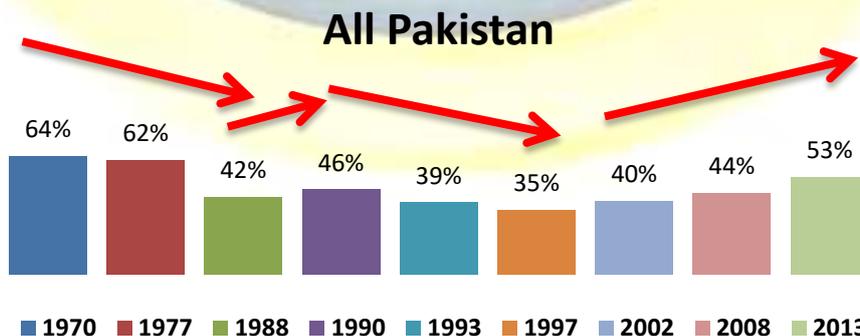
This press release is part of Gallup Pakistan Electoral Repository programme that aims to provide the readers interesting findings from Gallup Pakistan’s Electoral Database (GPED). The GPED has been consolidated from the Elections Commission of Pakistan (ECP) data on general elections since the 1970 till the general elections held in 2013. The Gallup Pakistan Electoral Repository program aims to fill void of dearth of data on elections and electoral outcomes in anticipation of the 11th General Elections in the country. The press releases, as part of this programme, are geared towards academics and policy makers as well as voters for the next general and provincial elections. For more information on the programme please contact Gallup Pakistan (isb@gallup.com.pk).

Abstract

This particular press release provides the average voter turnout since 1970 election to the 2013 general election. The voter turnout rate in the elections is a crucial predictor of representativeness of elections and an important indicator of health of democracy in any country. It is also arguably an important indicator of the competition between political parties, the legitimacy of the government, as well as the level of trust placed by the citizens in the elected representatives. Comparing voter turnout over time can help policymakers to understand why Pakistanis are unable or unwilling to exercise their right to vote and call for ways to improve participation in the future elections.

Voter Turnout in Pakistan – Trend Analysis: Average voter turnout over 9 party based general elections is 47%

Gallup Pakistan has computed the average voter turnout for a total of 1925 constituencies in Pakistan since 1970 to the last general election of 2013*. The average voter turnout in these 9 elections was 47%. The voter turnout was 42% in 1988 general election. 53% of the total eligible voters cast their ballot in the 2013 general election, a 7% increase compared to the 2008 elections. Comparing the turnout in previous 7 elections, the figures reveal that the average turnout was lowest in 1997 elections (35%). Average turnout has witnessed a rise ever since then.



Source: Gilani’s Index of Electoral Record, based on ECP data computed by Gallup Pakistan
 *Excluding 1985 non-party elections

Note: The total turn-out as reported by ECP, on May 22, is 55.04%. It includes valid votes, as well as not valid votes. The valid votes from 261 constituencies add up to 53.11%; rounded off above as 53%



Comparison with other countries:

A comparative analysis of average voter turnout between Pakistan and other regional countries reveals some interesting results. The period of comparison is 2013 general elections in Pakistan and 2014 general elections in India and Afghanistan.

In the 2014 General Elections held in India, 66.4% eligible voters cast their ballot, which beat the previous high in the 1984 election by nearly 2%.¹ Despite incessant threats of Taliban violence, 58% of the voters in Afghanistan are believed to have cast their votes in the 2014 Elections.

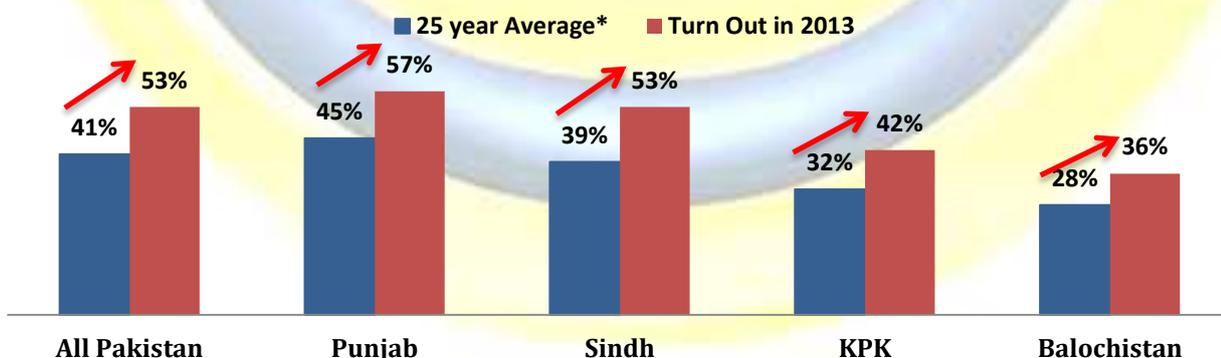
These results show that the average voter turnout was higher in the two neighbouring countries. While Pakistan and India are similar on different fronts, the difference in voter turnout (13%) indicates towards a higher electoral literacy in India.

Among various, not empirically tested reasons for lower turnout in Pakistan are behavioural reasons including; lack of interest in electoral process, voting at family level whereby when a man casts his vote females think their vote is not needed and gender related issues related to ‘Chaddar and Char Dewari’. Some logistical issues include distance of electoral booths from voters’ home and lack of transport, as well as threat of violence around election days.

Provincial Voter Turnout: Sindh had a 14% gain over the 25 year average voter turnout in 2013 elections.

The average voter turnout has varied differently across the four provinces over the past elections. Punjab had the highest 25 year average (45%), followed by Sindh (39%), KPK (32%), while Balochistan has had the lowest average turnout of 28%.

Compared to the 25 year average, the average voter turnout for 2013 elections has increased for all provinces. While provinces rank similar on turnout as their previous 25 year average, the highest gain in provincial voter turnout was witnessed in Sindh, where the average turnout was 53%, a 14% gain over the 25 year average. In 2013 elections, Punjab had the highest voter turnout of 57%, which means that more than half of the eligible voting population came to the polling stations to cast their ballot. Over the years, Balochistan has had the lowest voter turnout than other provinces.



Source: Gilani’s Index of Electoral Record, based on ECP data computed by Gallup Pakistan
Note: Average Turn-out in 6 Elections since 1988 (1988-2008)

The 25 year average turnout in Punjab was greater than the national average by 4%. Similarly, Punjab had a 4% edge over the national figures in 2013 elections. This trend has helped to substantiate PML (N)’s hold of power in the government over the years.

¹<https://qz.com/208578/heres-how-indias-record-setting-voter-turnout-compares-to-the-rest-of-the-world/>



Historically, militant forces operating in Balochistan have been accounted as a hindrance for people to come out of their homes and cast their ballots. It is encouraging to see an 8% increase in the voter turnout for Balochistan in 2013 elections, compared to the 25 year average.

Why 25 year average: In comparison here we are removing 1970 and 1977 election because in many ways the two elections were very different in nature than the succeeding 7 elections. 1970 elections happened when East Pakistan was still part of Pakistan and 1977 election results were annulled due to rigging allegations, and followed coup by the military.

Voter Turnout by Electoral Territory: Western Punjab had the highest turnout of 59% in 2013 elections, a gain of 11% over the 25 year average

Punjab

In 2013, Western Punjab accounted for the highest voter turnout (59%), followed by Southern Punjab (58%) and Central and Northern Punjab (55%). This trend is consistent with the 25 year average.

Sindh

Interestingly, Interior Sindh has had a higher average voter turnout of 54%, than the urbanized Karachi region at 52%. However, both show a gain of nearly 14% than the 25 year average.

KPK

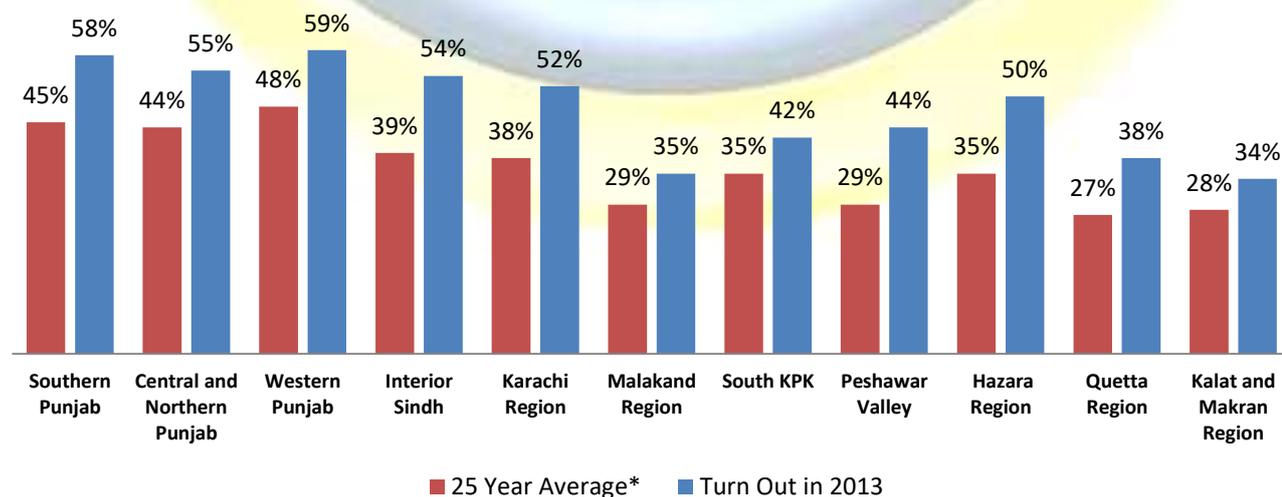
Voter turnout has been the highest in Hazara region at 50% (15% gain over the 25 year average), followed by Peshawar Valley at 44% (15% gain over the 25 year average), which includes regions such as Peshawar, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Hangu and Swabi. The lowest voter turnout was observed in Southern KPK at 42% (7% gain over the 25 year average).

Balochistan

Across the eleven regions, statistics have been the poorest for Kalat and Makran region at 34% (6% gain over the 25 year average), followed by Quetta at 38% (11% gain over the 25 year average).

It is interesting to see that the most undeveloped, neglected and illiterate regions of the country including Interior Sindh and Southern Punjab depict a much higher voter turnout rate than urbanized regions like Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi.

Potential reasons could be the general lack of confidence in the electoral process among the urban population, effective campaigning infrastructure of political parties such as PPP in order to mobilize their vote bank in Interior Sindh, and instances of political violence in urban areas like Karachi around the time of the elections.

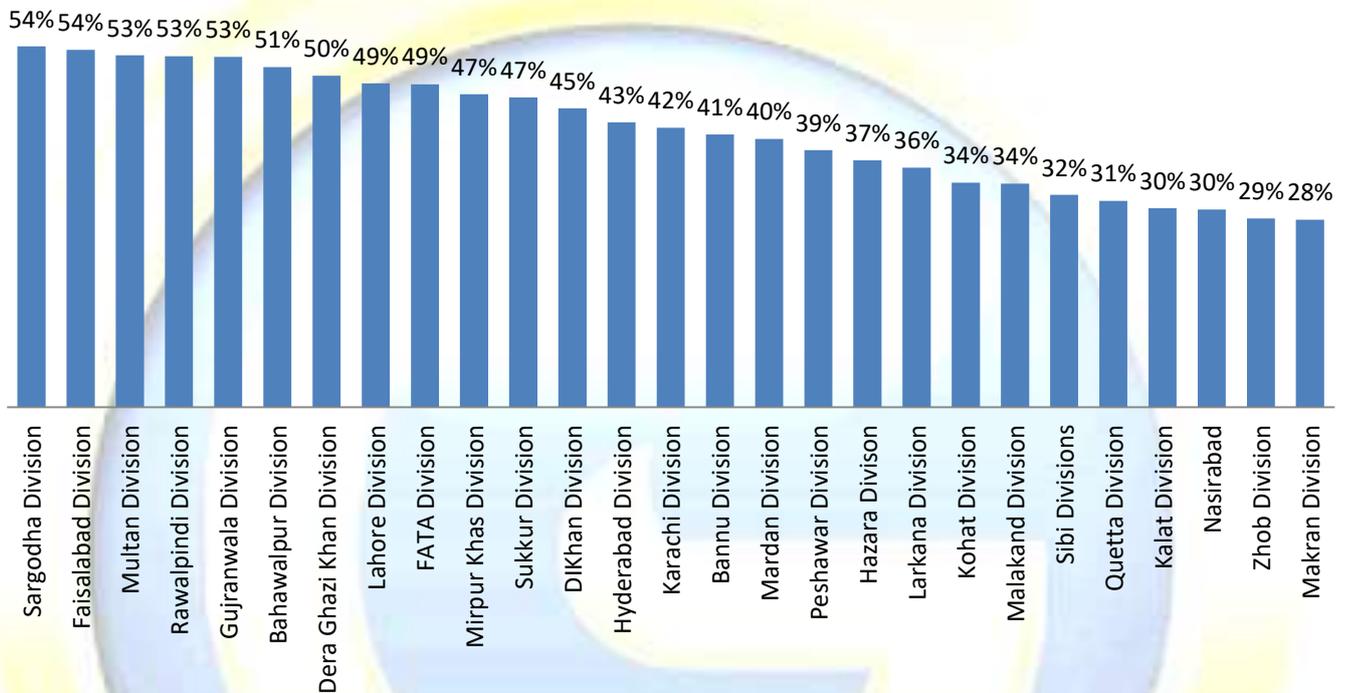


Source: Gilani's Index of Electoral Record, based on ECP data computed by Gallup Pakistan



Voter Turnout by Division: Sargodha and Faisalabad Division had the highest average voter turnout (54% each) in past 9 elections; the lowest was in Makran Division

Gallup Pakistan, in addition to the national and provincial breakdown of election results, provides sub-level analysis at divisional level as well. Over the past nine elections, Sargodha and Faisalabad division has had the highest voter turnout of 54 % each, while the turnout has been the lowest at 28% in Makran.



Source: Gilani's Index of Electoral Record, based on ECP data computed by Gallup Pakistan

Note on Gilani's Index of Electoral Record:

Data for 1985 election has not been combined into the database for logistical and computational issues, main issue being that 1985 election was non-party election and therefore non-comparable with the other 9.



Gallup Pakistan Electoral Repository: An Introduction

The Gallup Pakistan Electoral Repository is comprised of the following sources:

1. Election Commission data on past 10 elections in Pakistan, available over each constituency. This data was acquired from Election Commission website and converted into digital database in SPSS form and is now referred to as Gilani Index of Electoral Record.
2. Gallup Exit Polls for every election since 1985.
3. Gallup pre and post-election survey record since 1985.
4. Analysis by Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani on elections piece by piece, as well as in combined form.

For complete access to reports or the Gallup Electoral Database, please visit the following links:

<http://gallup.com.pk/polls/gallup-pakistan-digital-libraries/digital-library-pakistan-elections/>

For definition of Gallup Electoral Territories, please visit the following link: <http://gallup.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Gallup-Pakistan-Electoral-Repository-3.pdf>

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