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The Language Question Public Attitudes on Language of Education and Employment

Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani

Gallup Pakistan and National Language Authority
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THE LANGUAGE QUESTION

PUBLIC ATTITUDES ON LANGUAGE OF
EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani
with
Syed Muttageen-ur-Rahman

FINDINGS OF A NATION-WIDE SURVEY

JOINTLY PUBLISHED BY:

GALLUP PAKISTAN
AND
NATIONAL LANGUAGE AUTHORITY

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GALLUP PAKISTAN

Gallup Pakistan (Pakistan Institute of Public Opinion) is a non-profit educational organisation devoted to the task of promoting public interest through scientific inquiry and dissemination of empirical data on Pakistani Society.

Being the first of its kind in the country, the Pakistan Institute of Public Opinion has played a pioneering role in introducing the use of independently conducted surveys in academic and public policy research. It was founded in 1978 by a group of prominent social scientists headed by Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani, a specialist in Political Science and Public Policy.

In recognition of its technical competence the Institute was elected associate member of Gallup International Research Institutes in 1981 and its full member in 1984.

NATIONAL LANGUAGE AUTHORITY

The National Language Authority was established in 1979, under the chairmanship of Dr. Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi. Its primary function is to consider ways and means to promote Urdu as the national language of Pakistan and to facilitate its introduction as the official language throughout the country. The National Language Authority has also been entrusted to develop dictionaries and other reading materials for the in-service training of personnel in government and semi-government offices, Courts and other national institutions.

Since its inception, the National Language Authority has published 93 books and monographs including several technical dictionaries in the fields of social and natural sciences. It publishes a monthly journal and holds frequent seminars and conferences on the subject of national language. The National Language Authority is presently chaired by Dr. Waheed Quraishi.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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The study is based on a scientific survey conducted by Gallup Pakistan (Pakistan Institute of Public Opinion) for National Language Authority.

The survey was conducted in approximately 100 statistically selected villages and 75 towns all over the country.

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THE LANGUAGE QUESTION

THE LANGUAGE QUESTION

Introduction

On the vast plains, hills and deserts of Pakistan live groups of people who speak a variety of local tongues, dialects and languages — Punjabi, Sindhi, Baluchi, Pushto, Brohi, Saraiki, Hindko, Balti and Shina, among them, besides, Urdu, Persian and English.

In view of this multiplicity of languages, the question arises: which one of these should serve as the medium of instruction in our schools and colleges?

The Pakistan Institute of Public Opinion recently held a survey to find an answer to this question. The conclusions arrived at were:

Sixty-two per cent of the households/families wanted their children to be instructed through the medium of Urdu Language. Fourteen per cent were in favour of English and twelve per cent for Sindhi. Three per cent were for languages other than Urdu, English and Sindhi. Nine per cent did not answer the question.

Further inquiries revealed that whereas 62 per cent of the students were actually receiving instruction through Urdu and about 12 per cent in Sindhi, only 7 per cent went to English-language schools/colleges. That meant only half of the families who wanted to send

their children to English medium institutions were able to do so. The gap between the wish (14%) and fulfilment of the wish (7%) vis-a-vis admission to English medium schools/colleges was interesting, even if not intriguing.

English medium of instruction is comparatively more popular in the urban areas (20%) than in the rural areas (11%).

The popularity of Urdu medium of instruction is overwhelming in the Punjab and NWFP provinces. Almost 72 per cent of the respondents in these two provinces wanted their children to be instructed in Urdu. Comparative figures for Baluchistan and Sind were 60 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively.

The situation in Sind is different from that obtained in the other three provinces because the Sindhi language is already the prevailing medium of instruction in the interior of that province. Almost 72 per cent of the families in Sind expressed themselves for retaining Sindhi as medium of instruction. In the larger cities of Sind like Karachi and Hyderabad, however, only 10 per cent were for Sindhi medium of instruction. In these cities about 90 per cent were for Urdu and English, in that order of preference. English medium of instruction is more popular in the cities than in the countryside and also among the relatively more affluent and better educated sections of the population. In the larger cities of Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad almost 30 per cent of the respondents were for English. In cities with a population of about one lakh, 13 per cent and in villages 11 per cent, were for English.

Among the Higher Income Group households 30 per cent were for English medium of instruction, among the

Middle Income Groups 21 per cent and among the *Lower Income Groups* 10 per cent.

There were noticeable differences of opinion among the respondents on the suitability of a particular language (Urdu, English, Sindhi) to serve as medium of instruction at different stages of education (Primary, Secondary, College, University). For higher levels of education the otherwise overwhelming preference for Urdu tended to lose some ground to English. Here public opinion was 45 per cent for Urdu and 34 per cent for English. For the primary stages it was 70 per cent for Urdu and only 4 per cent for English.

The variation in popularity percentages of languages from the primary to college/university levels seems to derive from the existing rule of thumb of English at higher levels of education.

An interesting revelation of the survey was that although about 30 per cent of the respondents were for the use of English at higher levels of instruction, yet for the Competitive Examinations (like CSS) only 26 per cent thought English should be the medium.

The survey brought into bold relief the fact that whereas the majority of the people of Pakistan use their local tongues/dialects for informal day-to-day communication, they employ Urdu for correspondence. About 62 per cent exchange letters in Urdu, 16 per cent in Sindhi and 3 per cent in other languages. English is employed by only 1 per cent for such purposes.

Twenty-one per cent of the respondents did not tell us their choice of language for correspondence. Possibly a good many of them did not know how to read or write.

Interpretation of Findings

Before we set out to analyse and interpret public opinion in our society on matters such as education, employment and language, it would not perhaps be out of place to refer to some aspects of the relationship that exists between Public Opinion and Policy Making.

As it is, an important advantage of conducting *representative* Public Opinion surveys is that they reflect the points of view of *all* sections/classes/groups of which a particular society (Super Group) is composed of, rather than highlight the views of only the more active and vocal among them. This corrects the erroneous situation in which the more active, vocal and influential individuals and groups in a society represent events in a manner that the spectators—among them Policy Makers—are misled and carry distorted impressions of the state of public opinion. In such circumstances, the Policy Makers cannot take correct policy decisions. Meanwhile, the 'silent' minority—or majority—suffers, acquiesces or revolts: or simply awaits opportunities to express itself in ways unexpected and unconventional. The 'silence' of any group should not be taken to mean that it does not exist; or, that the opinion of that group is of no consequence, now, or in another set of circumstances in future.

It would indeed be unfortunate if the opinions of 'silent' groups, or segments, of the society—especially if they happen to be in a majority—are ignored. Also while surveying and evaluating public opinion on social problems (subjects), we must remain alert to changing 'realities' and 'requirements' of the times in which we live. Nor should we hesitate from projecting our thinking to the likely shape of things to come in future. Our thinking must never be shorn of the relative values of

time and space.

Therefore, if while engaging in new and original thinking, or devising new policies, it is important to keep in view the existing state of public opinion, it is also important to realize that public opinion is not something static. It metamorphoses and undergoes changes. Sometimes the changes are very quick lending public opinion a mercurial quality. Socio-economic changes in the environment and leadership impinge upon opinion in degrees relative to given circumstances.

English and the Status Quo

The conclusion we arrived at after the survey was that the majority of our people are for making Urdu the medium of instruction at all stages of education and also, for the Competitive Examinations. But there are also a limited number of people who would rather assign this role to English.

Those who are for English medium seem, in many cases, to belong to the Establishment and could have been influenced by the fact that in the present administrative set up, English already plays the dominant role. For them to tread the beaten path is easier.

Another reason for a certain tilting of opinion in favour of English for Higher Levels of Education could be that English Language, in a significant measure, helps to perpetuate the status quo and dominance of the anglicized elite over the less vocal but vastly numerous "native" people. English language as medium of instruction and lingua franca, puts the powerful and influential in our society in an advantageous position and they are for it more than others. Yet, whenever and wherever, any section suffers due to the tyranny of alien

English (as for instance in the Competitive Examinations), they do not hesitate from expressing themselves against the system and the language.

The survey also demonstrated that even though Pakistan is a multi-lingual society, there exists a lingual unity and uniformity throughout the country to be found in the use of Urdu on formal occasions and for correspondence.

The survey left us in no doubt that Urdu, indeed, is the common link language of the majority of the people of Pakistan, particularly for formal liaison and inter-group communication.

The overwhelming majority of the people want that Urdu should be the medium of instruction and that it should also be used for the Competitive Examinations.

Regional Languages

The survey also indicated that the Regional Languages are used for communication and conversation within families and informal groups at what might be called the "popular level". Therefore while formulating policy guidelines on languages, this aspect of the objective situation, relative to the popular currency of the Regional Languages, must not be lost sight of: and in areas where regional languages are used for formal purposes also (as in the interior of Sind), these languages should continue to be so employed. On the other hand in areas where regional languages are not being used for formal purposes (as in large areas of the Punjab) there need not be any insistence for substituting the Regional Language for the National Language, Urdu.

It should be clearly acknowledged that Urdu is the official language of the country.

The Instrument of Injustice

In Pakistan — and for that matter in any Muslim society — group identity does not depend on language. Language is only a means to facilitate expression of ideas. Language should not, therefore, be made touchstone or criterion of national identity. Nor, must language be allowed to be turned into an engine of social or economic tyranny/injustices. Historically, English language was forged and is being so employed, in South Asia as an instrument to perpetuate the socio-economic injustices of an English-knowing elite (Establishment) over the vast majority of the 'silent' and suffering people.

In ordinary circumstances, it is the English-knowing privilege class which is heard and understood in the *councils* of the Decisions Makers and for that matter, they alone are in a position to influence 'decisions'.

Our survey afforded an opportunity to the people belonging to the so-called 'less educated' and 'lower income' groups living in the countryside to express themselves, along with the Highly Educated and High Income Groups in the urban areas. Indeed, the 'non-privilege' groups form the vast majority of the people of Pakistan. And they have definite ideas and opinions on important problems and issues facing the country. Their opinions deserve to be taken into consideration seriously.

The data collected and tabulated in connection with the survey is available for the readers to look into and interpret for themselves. It is possible that conclusions they arrive at from a perusal of the charts would be different from ours. Any differences of opinion would be welcome. In fact, differences of opinion often help the cause of research and make it meaningful.

SURVEY RESULTS

Preferred Medium of Instruction

The Respondents were asked the following question:

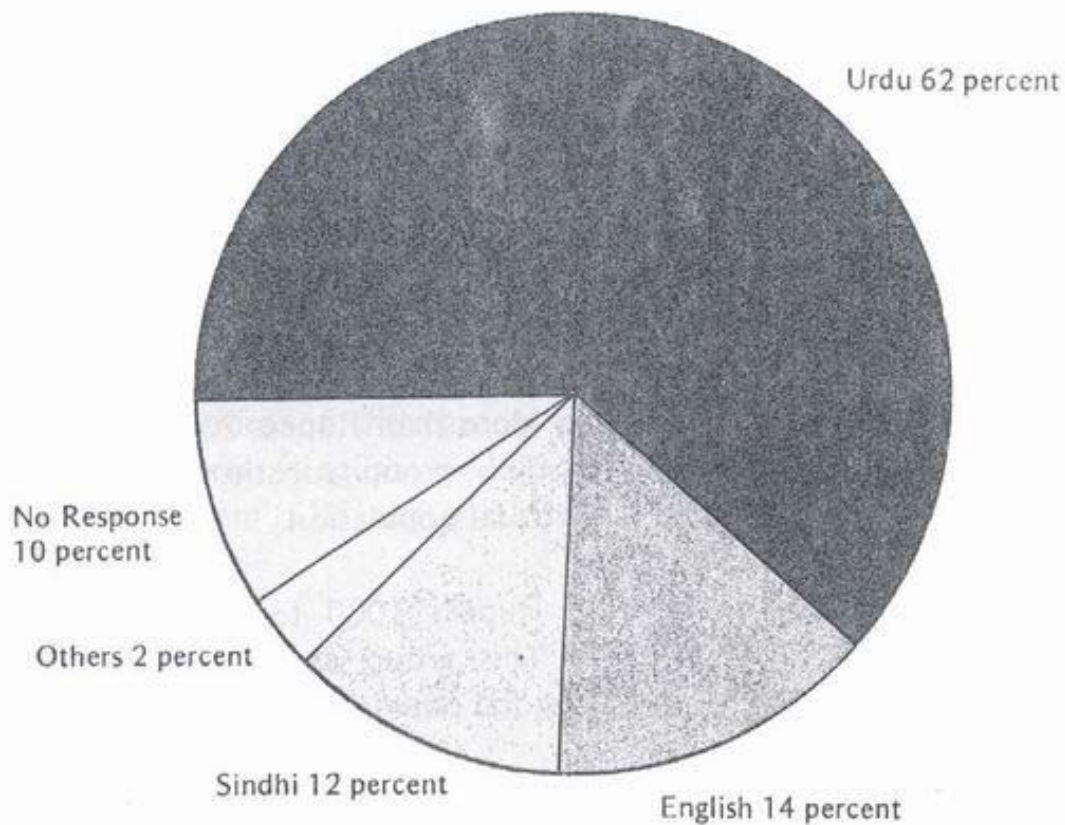
Do you prefer to send your children to Urdu, or English Medium Schools?

The answers to this question are presented in the following pages.

**Preferred Medium of Instruction
in Different Regions**

	<i>Urdu</i> %	<i>English</i> %	<i>Sindhi</i> %	<i>Others</i> %	<i>No Response</i> %
<i>All Pakistan</i>	62	14	12	2	10
Rural	62	11	15	3	10
Urban	64	20	4	2	10
<i>Punjab</i>	75	13	—	2	10
Rural	77	9	—	3	11
Urban	69	23	—	1	7
<i>Sind</i>	27	14	47	3	9
Rural	6	11	76	2	7
Urban	55	18	10	4	13
<i>NWFP</i>	72	16	—	3	9
Rural	72	16	—	4	8
Urban	72	15	—	—	12
<i>Baluchistan</i>	60	19	11	4	6
Rural	58	19	14	3	7
Urban	70	22	—	8	—
<i>Metropolitan</i>					
<i>Cities</i>	58	30	—	2	10
Cities	74	13	2	2	8
Towns	61	17	9	2	10
Villages	62	11	15	3	10

Preferred Medium of Instruction All Pakistan Figures



Sixty-two per cent of all households prefer to send their children to Urdu-medium schools, 14 per cent to English-medium and 12 per cent to Sindhi-medium schools. Two per cent name other languages, while 10 per cent give no opinion on this question.

Preferred Medium of Instruction in Different Income Groups

<i>Income Group</i>	<i>Urdu %</i>	<i>English %</i>	<i>Sindhi %</i>	<i>Others %</i>	<i>No Response %</i>
High	51	31	8	2	8
Upper Middle	59	21	13	3	5
Lower Middle	64	10	15	3	8
Lower	72	6	6	2	13

Urdu is the preferred medium in all income groups. But preference for English goes up with increase in income.

The definition of various income groups is as follows:

High	=	More than Rupees 2000 per month.* This group constitutes 11% of the total population.
Upper Middle	=	Rupees 1000 to 2000 per month. This group constitutes 26% of the total population.
Lower Middle	=	Rupees 500 to 1000 per month. This group constitutes 41% of the total population.
Lower	=	Up to Rupees 500 per month. This group constitutes 22% of the total population.

*Income figures refer to self reported income and exclude rental value of the house.

**Preferred Medium of Instruction
in Different Education Groups**

<i>Education</i>	<i>Urdu</i> %	<i>English</i> %	<i>Sindhi</i> %	<i>Others</i> %	<i>No Response</i> %
College educated	51	34	7	3	5
Matriculate	67	19	7	2	5
Primary	65	12	16	2	5
Illiterate	62	6	14	3	16

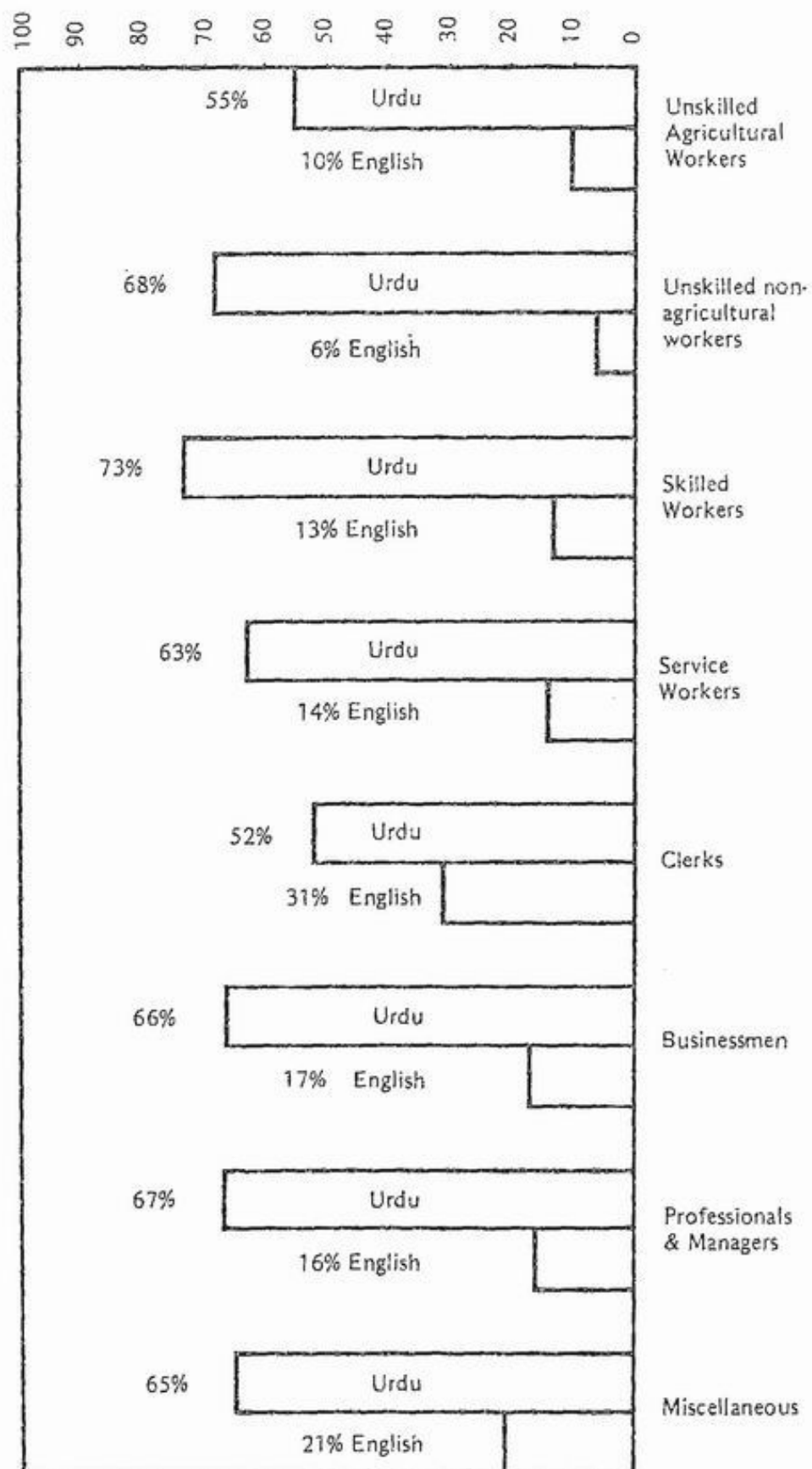
The comparatively less educated and illiterates, who together form the large majority of country's population, prefer Urdu-medium of instruction for their children (62–67 %).

Nearly one third of the parents with more than high school education prefer English medium of education. However a majority of them (51%) prefers Urdu medium.

**Preferred Medium of Instruction
in Different Professions**

<i>Profession</i>	<i>Urdu %</i>	<i>English %</i>	<i>Sindhi %</i>	<i>Others %</i>	<i>No Response %</i>
Unskilled (Agri. workers)	55	10	22	3	9
Unskilled (Non-Agri workers)	68	6	6	3	17
Skilled workers	73	13	3	4	6
Service workers	63	14	—	—	24
Clerks	52	31	—	—	17
Businessmen	66	17	7	3	8
Professionals & Managers	67	16	11	4	2
Miscellaneous	65	21	8	2	4

Preferred Medium of Education
in Different Professions



Preferred Language for Civil Service Examinations

The Respondents were asked the following question:

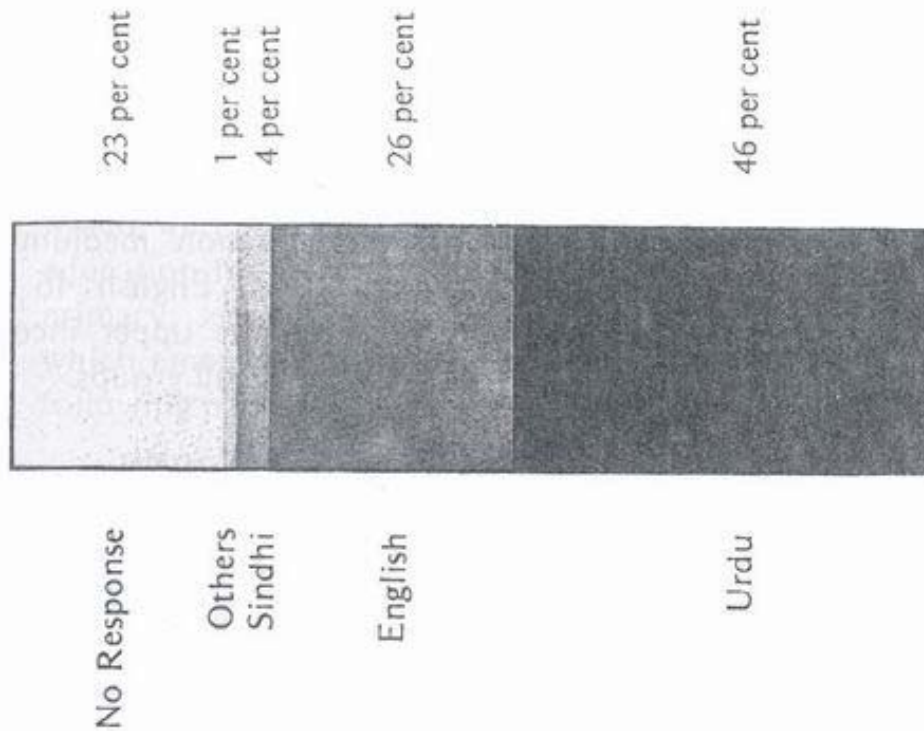
Presently, the Competitive Exams. for Civil Service jobs are conducted in English. In your view, what should be the language of these examinations?

The answers to this question are presented in the following pages.

Preferred Language for
Civil Service Examinations in Different Regions

	<i>Urdu</i> %	<i>English</i> %	<i>Sindhi</i> %	<i>Others</i> %	<i>No Response</i> %
<i>All Pakistan</i>	46	26	4	1	23
Rural	44	24	4	1	27
Urban	51	32	2	1	14
<i>Punjab</i>	52	20	—	1	27
Rural	51	15	—	1	32
Urban	56	30	—	1	13
<i>Sind</i>	22	48	15	1	15
Rural	6	55	21	2	17
Urban	43	38	6	—	12
<i>NWFP</i>	58	20	—	1	22
Rural	59	20	—	1	21
Urban	51	19	—	1	29
<i>Baluchistan</i>	47	26	4	2	22
Rural	47	25	5	2	20
Urban	42	26	—	4	28
<i>Metropolitan</i>					
<i>Cities</i>	50	31	—	1	8
Cities	55	24	3	2	18
Towns	47	40	4	1	17
Villages	44	24	4	1	27

Preferred Language for Civil Service Examinations



Forty-six per cent of the respondents want that the competitive examinations should be conducted in Urdu language: 26 per cent are for retaining English as the medium, whereas 23 per cent do not hold any opinion. Four per cent of the respondents wish Sindhi to be made the language of the competitive examinations. Only one per cent favoured all other languages put together.

**Preferred Language for Civil Service Examinations
in Different Income Groups**

<i>Income Group</i>	<i>Urdu</i> %	<i>English</i> %	<i>Sindhi</i> %	<i>Others</i> %	<i>No Response</i> %
High	39	46	3	2	11
Upper Middle	50	28	6	2	15
Lower Middle	49	25	4	1	21
Lower	43	22	1	1	33

Even as income of group increases, its preference for English grows, so that, in the high income group, the desire for making English the common medium of communication is higher than Urdu: English 46 per cent, Urdu 39 per cent. Barring the upper income group, preference for Urdu is greater in all groups.

**Preferred Language for Civil Service Examinations
in Different Education Groups**

<i>Education</i>	<i>Urdu</i> %	<i>English</i> %	<i>Sindhi</i> %	<i>Others</i> %	<i>No Response</i> %
College educated	47	44	4	1	4
Matriculate	60	27	3	1	9
Primary	50	28	2	2	18
Illiterate	35	20	5	1	39

The majority of each of the educational level groups is for making Urdu the medium for competitive examinations.

Those belonging to the lesser educated and illiterate categories pleaded inability to express themselves on the issue.

Preferred Medium for Different Stages of Education

The respondents were asked five different questions which were designed to seek their views on medium of education for different purposes and at different levels; primary, secondary and higher. The complete picture which emerges from these questions is presented in the following pages.

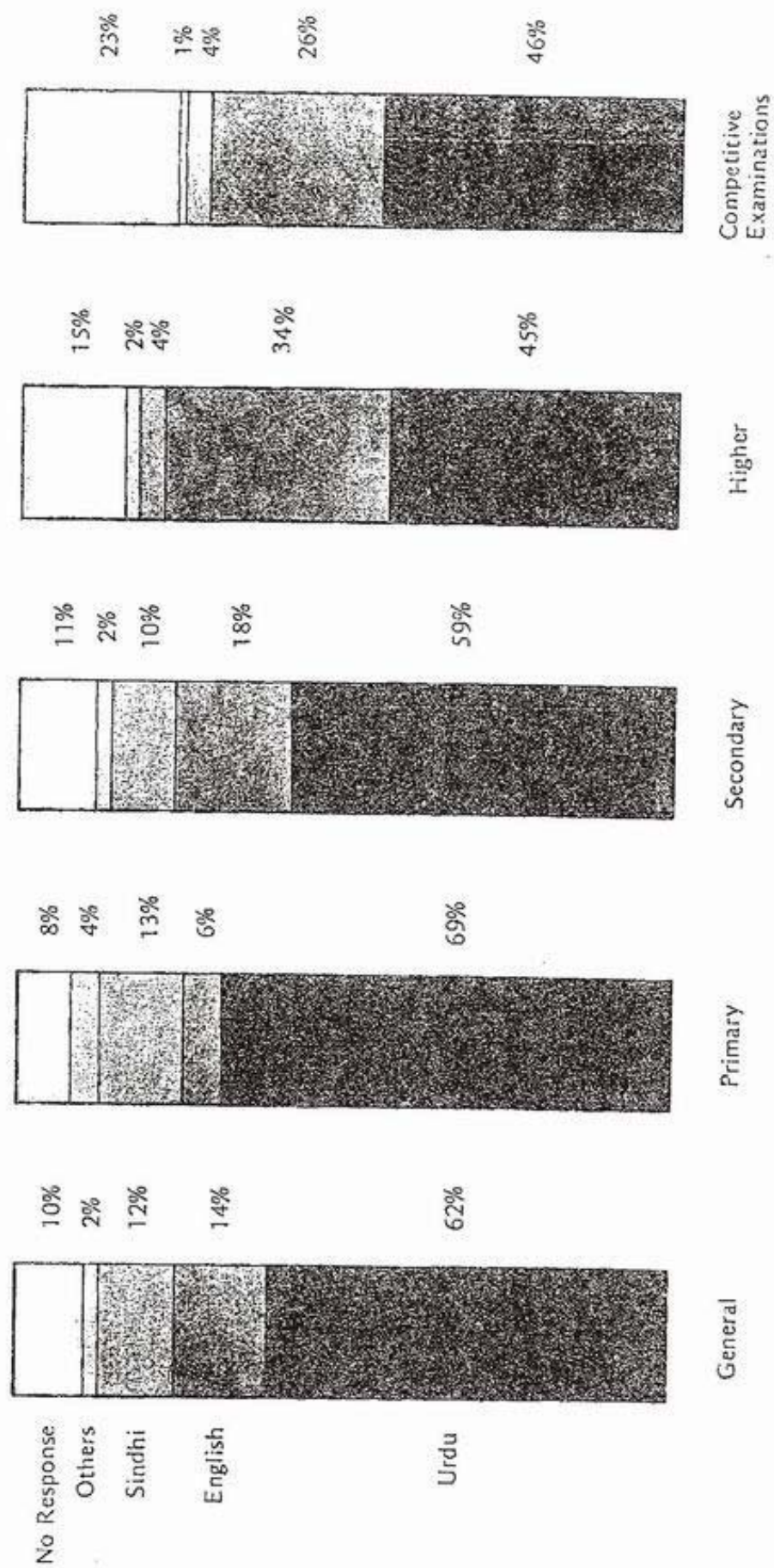
PREFERRED MEDIUM FOR DIFFERENT STAGES OF EDUCATION

<i>Medium of Education</i>	<i>General Education %</i>	<i>Primary Education %</i>	<i>Secondary Education %</i>	<i>Higher Education %</i>	<i>Competitive Education %</i>
Urdu	62	69	59	45	46
English	14	6	18	34	26
Sindhi	12	13	10	4	4
Others	2	4	2	2	1
No Response	10	8	11	5	23
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Generally, the majority of respondents want their children to be educated through the medium of Urdu (62%). This desire is particularly strong for instruction at the primary level (69%). For the secondary and higher stages partiality for Urdu tapers off somewhat in favour of English. Nevertheless, preference for Urdu at all stages of education is by far the greater.

For higher education 34% are for English medium, yet only 26% want competitive examinations to be conducted in English.

Preferred Medium at Different Levels of Education



Medium of Education for Children: Current State

The respondents were asked:

*Are your children being educated through the Urdu
or English medium?*

The answers to this question are presented in the
following pages.

Current Medium of Education for
Children in Different Regions

	<i>Urdu</i> %	<i>English</i> %	<i>Sindhi</i> %	<i>No School-going</i> <i>Children</i> %	<i>No</i> <i>Response</i> %
<i>All Pakistan</i>	57	7	9	26	2
<i>Punjab</i>	65	6	—	28	1
Rural	66	3	—	30	1
Urban	61	14	—	22	2
<i>Sind</i>	32	12	35	19	2
Rural	21	8	50	19	2
Urban	46	18	16	19	1
<i>NWFP</i>	64	4	—	28	4
Rural	65	2	—	29	4
Urban	58	13	—	26	4
<i>Baluchistan</i>	61	6	10	22	1
Rural	60	4	12	24	—
Urban	63	19	—	12	6
<i>Metropolitan</i>					
<i>Cities</i>	50	26	—	23	1
Cities	56	12	3	27	2
Towns	62	5	15	13	4
Villages	57	4	10	27	2

Current Medium of Education for
Children in Different Income Groups

<i>Income Group</i>	<i>Urdu %</i>	<i>English %</i>	<i>Sindhi %</i>	<i>No School-going Children %</i>	<i>No Response %</i>
<i>High</i>	51	26	5	17	1
<i>Upper Middle</i>	57	12	9	22	—
<i>Lower Middle</i>	60	5	10	24	1
<i>Lower</i>	53	3	8	33	3

A clear majority of each of the income groups are getting their children educated through the Urdu medium.

Corresponding with increase in income, preference for English medium increases.

Current Medium of Education for
Children in Families
of Different Educational Attainment

<i>Father's Education</i>	<i>Urdu %</i>	<i>English %</i>	<i>Sindhi %</i>	<i>No children/Small %</i>	<i>Others Response %</i>
<i>Above Matric</i>	52	25	4	19	—
<i>Upto Matric</i>	67	9	6	18	—
<i>Primary</i>	61	5	15	17	1
<i>Illiterate</i>	51	2	8	35	3

Comparatively, preference for English medium is higher among the better educated parents and weaker amongst illiterate/lesser educated parents.

Language of Correspondence

A language is used for oral conversation. It is also used for conducting written correspondence.

The respondents were asked:

In which tongue or language do you do your correspondence?

The answers to this question are presented in the following pages.

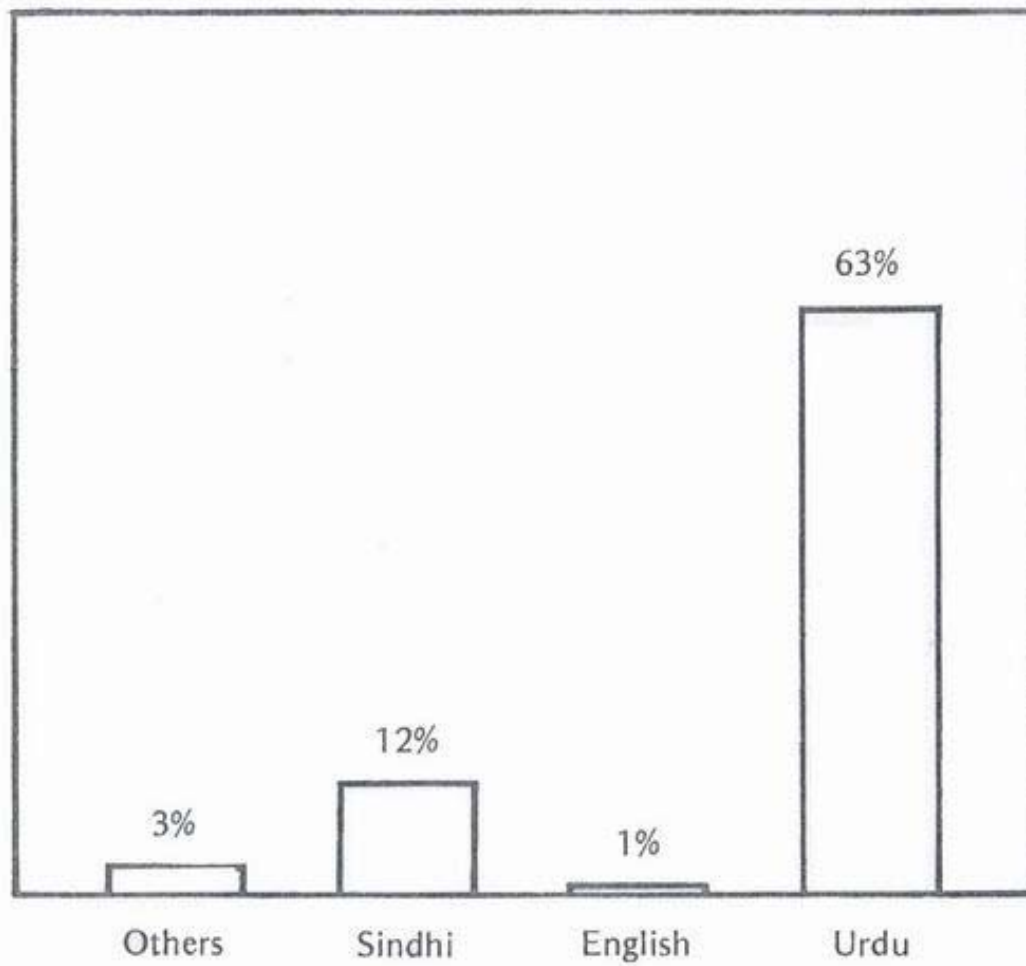
Language of Correspondence

Per cent among Respondents

Urdu	63
English	1
Sindhi	12
Others	3
No Response	21
Total	100

The above table highlights the interesting fact that in our society Urdu serves as the major medium for correspondence (63%); and dependence on English for fulfilment of this vital need is the least of all (1%). Comparative figure for Sindhi is 12%.

The Language of Correspondence



Language Spoken at Home

The respondents were asked:

What language do you speak at home?

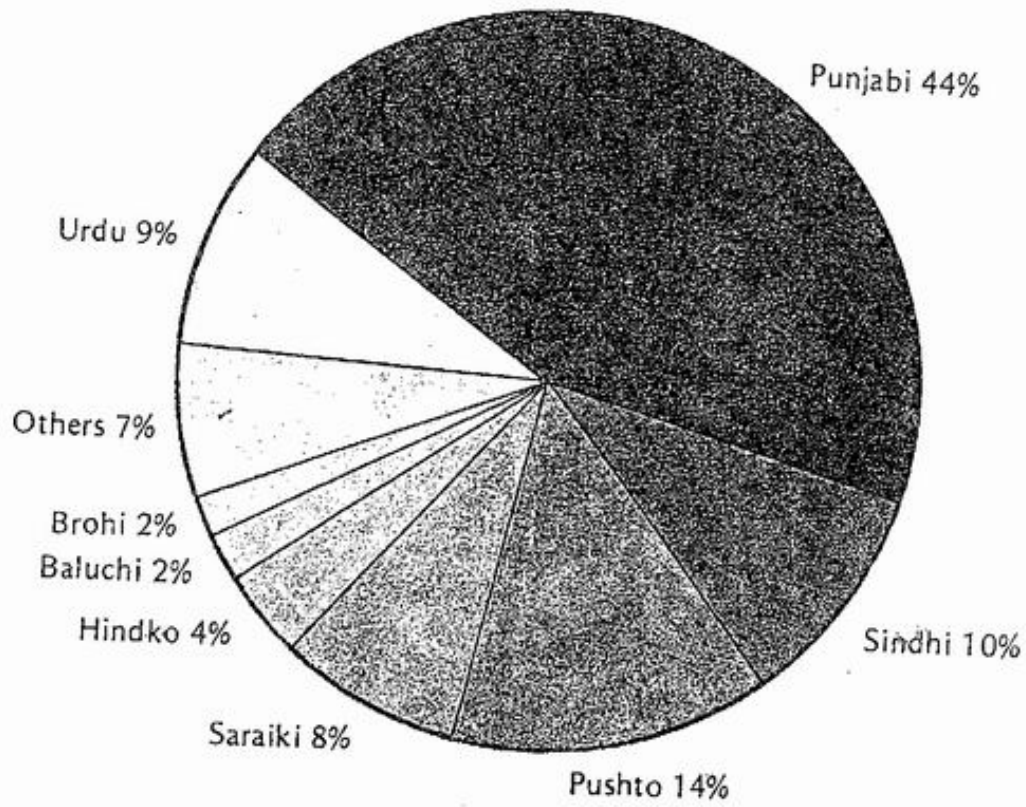
The answers to this question are presented in the following pages.

Language Spoken at Home

Percent among Respondents

Urdu	9
Punjabi	44
Sindhi	10
Pushto	14
Saraiki	8
Hindko	4
Baluchi	2
Brohi	2
Other languages	7
Total:	<u>100</u>

Language Spoken at Home



SAMPLING AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLING AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Research Design followed in the study is according to the scientific procedures followed by Gallup Polls. The procedures were initially designed by Dr. George Gallup, a renowned psychologist in the 1930s and have been tested and verified by repeated experiments all over the world since then.

The findings reported in this study are based on a statistical survey conducted all over Pakistan. The sample for the survey was selected on the basis of a two-stage area probability sampling. In the first stage, 100 representative villages and 75 urban locations were selected through the scientific procedure of random sampling. In second stage, approximately 1700 households were statistically selected for interviews. This procedure ensured that a statistical cross-section of the entire population was interviewed.

A sample selected through the above procedure includes interviews with people of all regional backgrounds, economic classes (Rich, Middle, Poor Sections), educational groups (Illiterates, Educated and Highly Educated). As a result, the findings of this survey are representative of the entire population.

The margin of error in a survey of this size is 2-3 per cent.

The field work for this survey was conducted by approximately 200 interviewers who were carefully trained for the purpose of this survey. It was ensured that all scientific procedures are followed in designing the questionnaire and in implementing the survey. The findings were subsequently computer processed.

The figures in this report have been rounded off to whole numbers. Therefore, the total can be lesser or more than hundred.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The Respondents were asked the following questions:

1. Do you prefer to send your children to Urdu, or English medium schools?

English Medium
Sindhi Medium

Urdu Medium
Others

2. Which language in your opinion should be the medium of instruction from the 1st to 5th classes?

(only one language)

3. Likewise which language should be the medium of instruction from the 6th to 10th classes?

.....

4. And which language should be used for higher education?

.....

5. Presently Competitive Examinations for Superior Government Services are conducted in English. Which language, in your opinion, should be employed for that purpose?

.....

6. In which language do you generally conduct your correspondence?

.....

7. Are your children being educated through the Urdu, or English medium?

.....

8. Which language do you speak at home?

.....

9. Would you kindly tell us your own formal academic education?

.....

10. What is your profession?

.....

11. What is the total income per month of your family?
(only a rough estimate would do!)

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