

Marriage Between Relatives – Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18 and 1990-91

Around half of Pakistani women in 2017-18 married their first cousins, a proportion almost unchanged since 30 years ago .

PERCENTAGE OF COUSIN MARRIAGES:



49.6% of Pakistani women in 2017 reported marrying their first cousins, a reduction of less than 1%, virtually unchanged, in three decades

PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION:



First-cousin marriages have decreased slightly in all provinces (5% in Punjab, 4% in KP, and 3% in Balochistan). In Sindh, however, they have increased 8% over the last 30 years

RURAL-URBAN DISTRIBUTION



The propensity of rural women to marry their first cousins has decreased between 1990 and 2018, by 2%, but among urban women has increased in this timeframe, by 3.8%

BY WEALTH QUINTILES:



50% to 60% of women in the lowest three wealth quintiles reported being married to their first cousins, and 40% to 45% in the top two did the same.

BY EDUCATION LEVEL:



There may be more resistance to changing cultural norms in the recent past than there was three decades ago; in 1990 an increase in women's education level from middle to secondary school was accompanied by an 11% drop in women who married their cousins. In 2017, the same increase was accompanied by only a 1% drop in cousin marriages.

PRESS RELEASE

Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey

*Around half of Pakistani women in 2017-18 married their first cousins, a proportion almost unchanged since 30 years ago – **Marriage Between Relatives – Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18 and 1990-91***

Islamabad, August 28, 2023

Gallup Pakistan, as part of its Big Data Analysis initiative, is looking at Marriage Between Relatives among women aged 15-49 years. This data is part of a publication called the ‘Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey’.

The current edition looks at data from Pakistan DHS 2017-18 (which can be found [HERE](#)), as well as the 1990-91 edition (accessible [HERE](#))

What is the Big Data Analysis Series by Gallup?

Gallup Pakistan’s Big Data series was started by Bilal I Gilani, Executive Director of Gallup Pakistan. Bilal explains the rationale of the series: “The usual complaint from academics and policy makers is that Pakistan does not have data availability. Our experience negates that. Pakistan has lots of data, but it is not available in a usable form and not widely accessible. At Gallup we plan to bridge this gap in terms of accessibility and use of data. The Gallup Big Data series has earlier worked with data sets such as PSLM, Labour Force Survey, and Economic Survey reports as well as National Census Reports and Election Commission Data sets. The current series is using the Pakistan Demographic Survey, an annual compilation which seldom has data points not covered in many other reports. We hope that these series are useful, and we welcome both feedback as well as possible collaborations as we create a public good in the form of useful data sets in Pakistan.”

What data points this current edition covers:

This series aims to present the important learnings from the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey for policy makers, the public, as well as for marketers in an easy and understandable way. This edition looks at Marriage Between Relatives in 2017-18 and 1990-91. These insights are important to examine because the continued prevalence of consanguinity in Pakistan can have implications for healthcare and social welfare. The series’ main aim is to provide data. Implications of these data points for development sector as well as wider socio-political ramifications is something we would like to trigger in relevant circles.

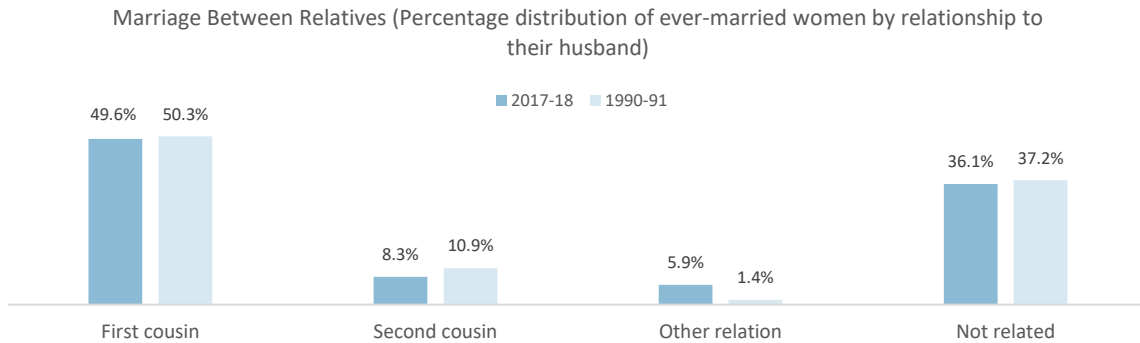
Today's topic is "Marriage Between Relatives" from table 4.5 PDHS 2017-18, and table 7.6 PDHS 1990-91

Key Findings:

- 1) **Percentage of cousin marriages:** 49.6% of Pakistani women in 2017 reported marrying their first cousins, a reduction of less than 1%, virtually unchanged, in three decades
- 2) **Rural-urban distribution:** The propensity of rural women to marry their first cousins has decreased between 1990 and 2018, by 2%, but among urban women has increased in this timeframe, by 3.8%
- 3) **Provincial distribution:** First-cousin marriages have decreased slightly in all provinces (5% in Punjab, 4% in KP, and 3% in Balochistan). In Sindh, however, they have increased 8% over the last 30 years
- 4) **By education level:** there may be more resistance to changing cultural norms in the recent past than there was three decades ago; in 1990 an increase in women's education level from middle to secondary school was accompanied by an 11% drop in women who married their cousins. In 2017, the same increase was accompanied by only a 1% drop in cousin marriages
- 5) **By wealth quintiles:** 50% to 60% of women in the lowest three wealth quintiles reported being married to their first cousins, and 40% to 45% in the top two did the same

1) Percentage of cousin marriages over time

In 1990-91, 50.3% of Pakistani women aged 15-49 years reported being married to their first cousins. 30 years later in 2017-18, that proportion was 49.6%, virtually unchanged in three decades.



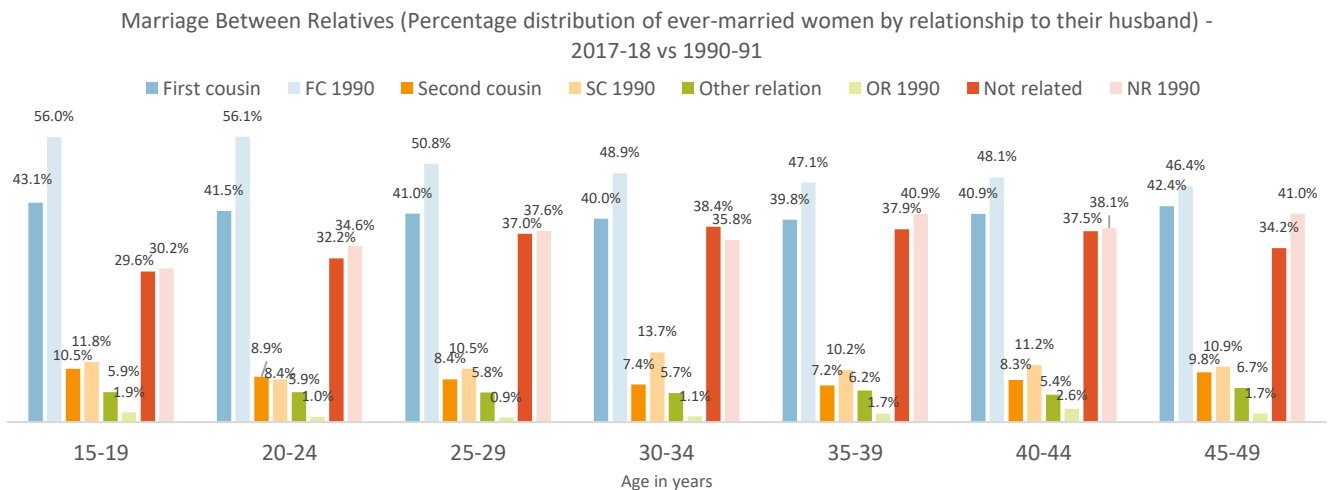
Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

* “Missing” category excluded so may not sum to 100%

In 2017, an average of 42% of the women between age groups 15-29 years had married their first cousins compared to 54% on average for the same age group in 1990. Rate of marrying second cousins is markedly lower – it seems women largely marry either first cousins, or non-relatives, with minority of women marrying second cousins or distant relatives.

There is no significant variation in cousin marriage with age. However, the trend of marriage to non-relatives increases very slightly with age.

The proportion of women reporting being married to their first cousins has decreased over the last two decades overall, but not by much. In 2017-18 there was minimal variation across age groups in the proportion of women who married their first cousins. Thirty years prior however, the proportion of first-cousin marriages was highest among younger women, growing smaller as age increased.



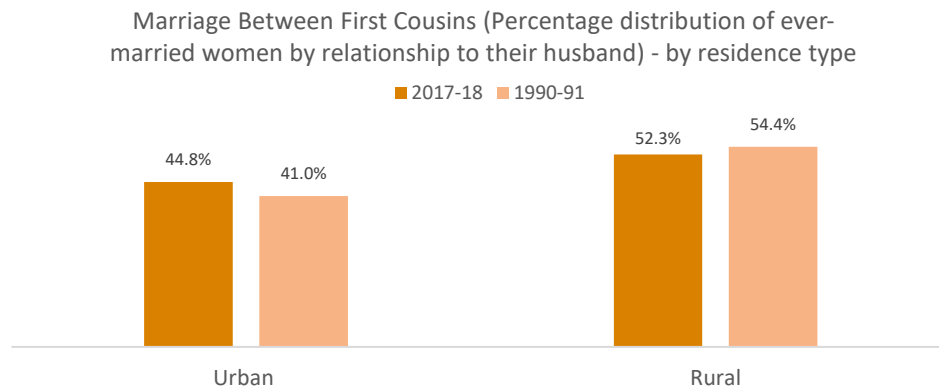
Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

* “Missing” category excluded so may not sum to 100%

2) Rural-Urban divide and first-cousin marriages:

Women from rural areas marry their first cousins in greater proportion than those from urban areas, and this has not changed over the last thirty years.

The propensity of rural women to marry their first cousins has decreased between 1990 and 2018, by 2%, but among urban women has increased in this timeframe, by 3.8%.



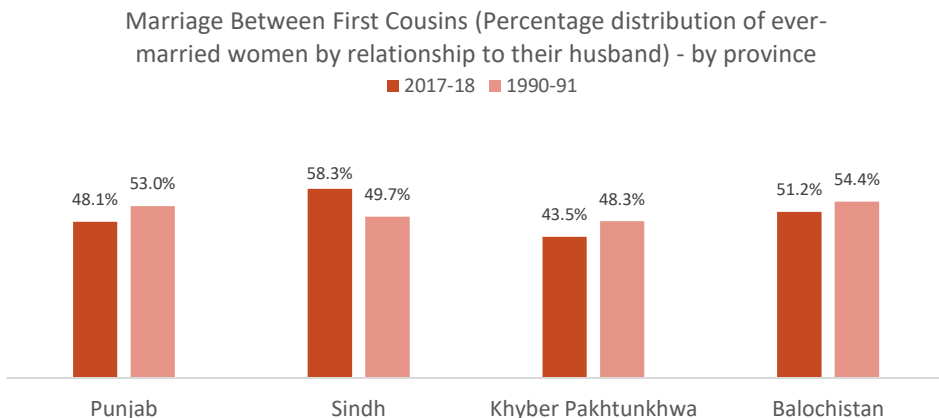
Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

3) Province and first-cousin marriages:

The provincial compositions of women who marry their first cousins have changed over the last 30 years, though the margins of change remain narrow.

In 2017, Sindh had the highest proportion of women reporting marrying their first cousins, followed by Balochistan and then Punjab. 1990 this was found to be in Balochistan, followed by Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

First-cousin marriages have decreased slightly in all provinces (5% in Punjab, 4% in KP, and 3% in Balochistan). In Sindh, however, they have increased 8% over the last 30 years.



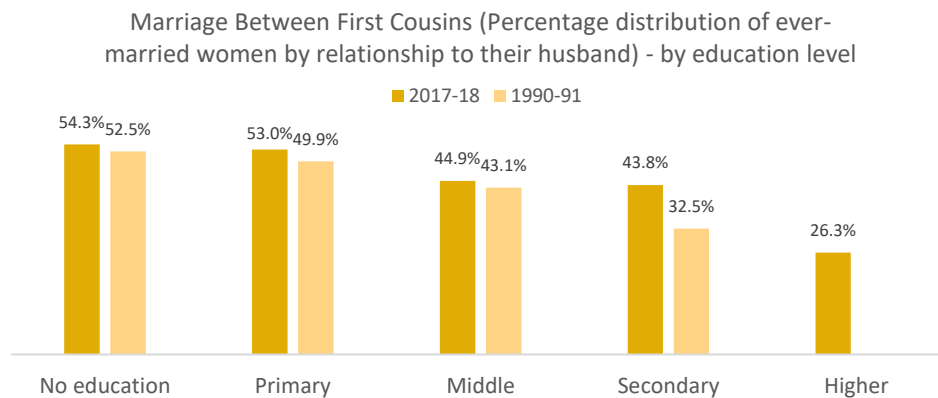
Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

4) Education level and first-cousin marriages:

An increase in education has a clear correlation with decreasing levels of first-cousin marriages, even across the decades.

However, there may be more resistance to changing cultural norms in the recent past than there was three decades ago; in 1990 an increase in women's education level from middle to secondary school was accompanied by an 11% drop in women who married their cousins. In 2017, the same increase was accompanied by only a 1% drop in cousin marriages.

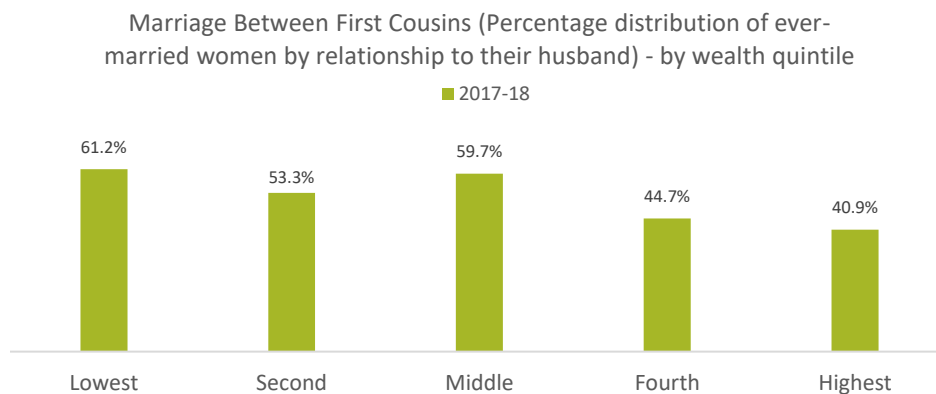
Attaining higher education corresponds with the largest gap compared to the previous education level, for women who married their first cousins.



Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

5) Wealth quintile and first-cousin marriages:

Like education, wealth may be considered a deterring factor in women being married to their first cousins; 50% to 60% of women in the lowest three wealth quintiles reported being married to their first cousins, and 40% to 45% in the top two did the same.



Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

Wish to Contribute to Gallup Big Data Analysis?

Gallup Pakistan is looking for collaboration with researchers to expand both the Big Data Analysis project as well as this study of Pakistan Demographic Survey 2020. If you have any ideas, please write to Bilal I Gilani, Project Director, Big Data Analysis at Gallup Pakistan.

Wish to know more about the Pakistan Demographic Survey 2020?

Pakistan Demographic Survey (PDS) is a regular activity of PBS, conducted during inter-censal period to provide reliable data on Demographic Indicators. These Demographic statistics are inevitable for policymakers, planners, and administrators for planning of development programs for the National & Provincial Governments.

Pakistan Demographic Survey (PDS), 2020 is the twentieth round of a series of surveys, initiated in 1984. After 1984 nineteen rounds of PDS were completed till 2007. Current round of PDS was started after a gap of 13 years, which provides the detailed information on various demographic indicators for the year 2018-2020 at National level with Urban-Rural breakdown. These indicators are Life Expectancy, Crude Birth Rate, Crude Death Rate, General Fertility Rate, Age Specific Fertility Rates, Age Specific Death Rates, Infant Mortality Rate and Rate of Natural Increase etc. Results of the survey are compiled at National level with Urban Rural Segregation.

You can find more information on the Pakistan Demographic Survey 2020, and complete tables, on www.pbs.gov.pk

Or visit:

[Pakistan Demographic Survey 2020](#)

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