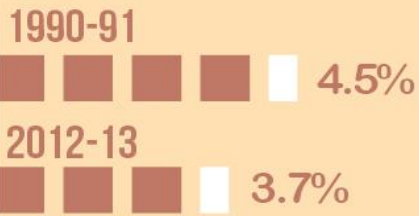
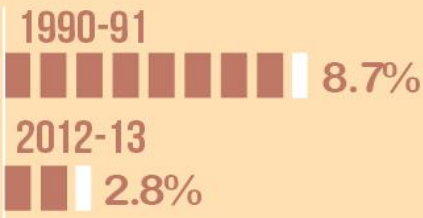


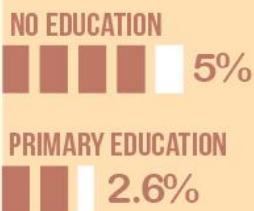
Key Takeaways About Polygyny in Pakistan: Past and Present



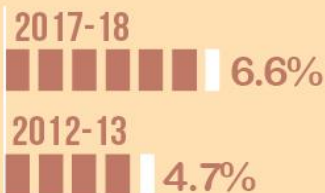
Percentage of women aged 15-49 with one or more co-wives peaked in 1990-91. 4.5% women in 1990-91 reported that they had one or more co-wives (or you could say their husbands had one or more wives other than them).



Older women are generally more likely than younger women to have co-wives. The percentage of women with co-wives peaked at 6% among those aged 40-44.



5% of women with no education report reported that their husbands had more than one wife, compared with 2.5% of women with primary education and 2.6% of those with higher education.



Wealth levels showed a negative correlation with the percentage of women with one or more co-wife. Women in the lowest wealth quantile were the most likely to be in a polygynous relationship, with 6.6% reporting as such.



Women in (5.8%) and FATA (5.7%) most likely to be in polygynous unions; those in rural areas more likely to have one of more co-wives than those in urban areas.

PRESS RELEASE

Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey

Women with no education were more likely to be in a polygynous relationship than women who were educated – Polygyny – Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18

Islamabad, 4th October, 2023

Gallup Pakistan, as part of its Big Data Analysis initiative, is looking at polygyny i.e., the marriage of an adult male to more than one woman. This data is part of a publication called the 'Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey'.

The current edition looks at data from past editions of the Pakistan DHS; 1990-91, 2012-13, and 2017-18.

All the previous PDHS reports can be found [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. In particular, polygyny as reported in Pakistan DHS 1990-91, 2012-13, and 2017-18*. This indicator can have socio-cultural implications and provide insight into one aspect of women's self-determination ability in Pakistan. 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.

*Data on Polygyny from PDHS 2006-07 was not used for this report because it contained combined numbers for cohabitation and polygyny, rendering the data incomparable to rest of the years.

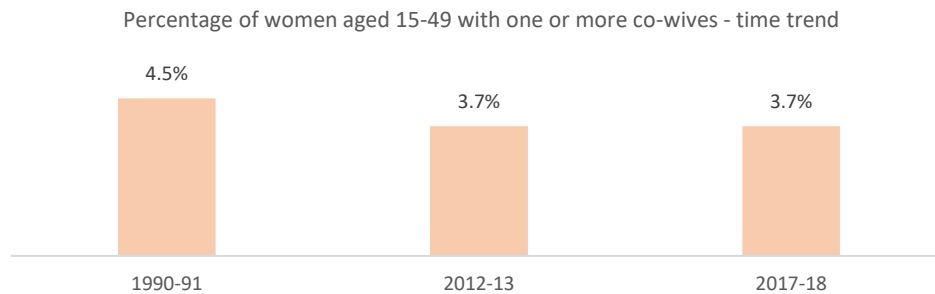
Today's topic is "Polygyny" from table 4.2.1 PDHS 2017-18 –Number of women's co-wives.

Key Findings:

- 1) **Percentage of women aged 15-49 with one or more co-wives peaked in 1990-91.** 4.5% women in 1990-91 reported that they had one or more co-wives (or you could say their husbands had one or more wives other than them).
- 2) **Older women are generally more likely than younger women to have co-wives.** The percentage of women with co-wives peaked at 6% among those aged 40-44.
- 3) **Women with no education were more likely to be in a polygynous relationship than women who were educated.** 5% of women with no education report reported that their husbands had more than one wife, compared with 2.5% of women with primary education and 2.6% of those with higher education.
- 4) **Wealth levels showed a negative correlation with the percentage of women with one or more co-wife.** Women in the lowest wealth quantile were the most likely to be in a polygynous relationship, with 6.6% reporting as such.
- 5) **Women in (5.8%) and FATA (5.7%) most likely to be in polygynous unions;** those in rural areas more likely to have one of more co-wives than those in urban areas.

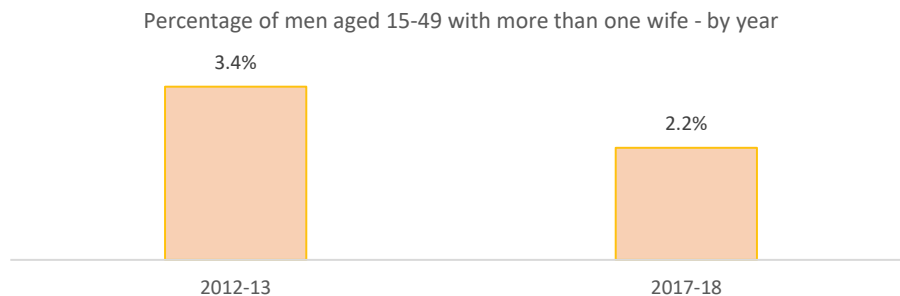
1) Percentage of women aged 15-49 with one or more co-wives has been declining over the decades.

4.5% women in 1990-91 reported that their husbands had one or more wife. The lowest percentage of women who reported being in a polygynous union was recorded in 2012-13, where 3.7% women reported having one or more co-wife; this did not change much in 2017-18, with the percentage remaining the same.



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

Comparing time trend data reveals that despite the percentage of women in polygynous unions staying relatively consistent at 3.7%, the proportion of men aged 15-49 with more than one wife has declined from 3.4% in 2012-13 to 2.2% in 2017-18*. It would be interesting to explore the factors behind this difference; can men in 2017-18 marrying more women than those five years ago a reason why more women are in polygynous unions than men?



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

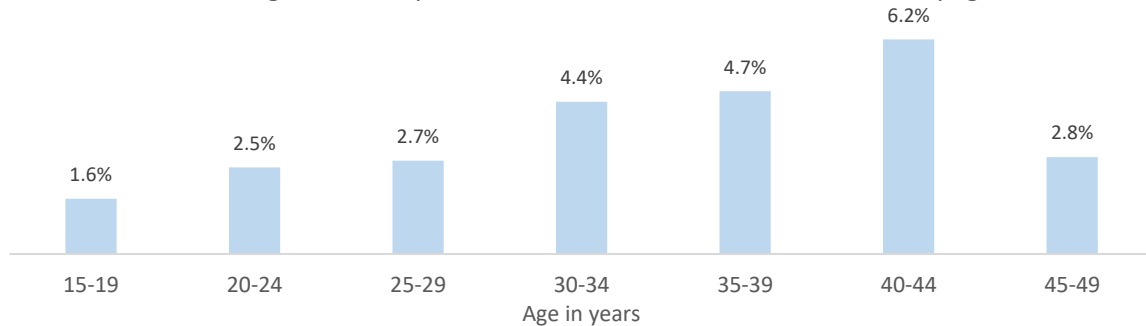
*Data for men engaged in polygyny was not reported in PDHS 1990-91.

2) Older women may generally have been more likely than younger women to have co-wives.

The percentage of married women with co-wives peaked at 6.2% among those aged 40-44. The next highest percentage was of those aged 35-29 followed by 30-34 years-olds, 4.7% and 4.4% of whom reported having co-wives, respectively. These numbers are higher than the national average reported by 15-49 years-olds, which was 3.7%.

The lowest proportion of women across age groups who reported having one or more co-wife was among the 15-19-years-olds, only 1.6% of whom reported that their husbands had wives other than themselves.

Percentage of currently married women with one or more co-wives - by age

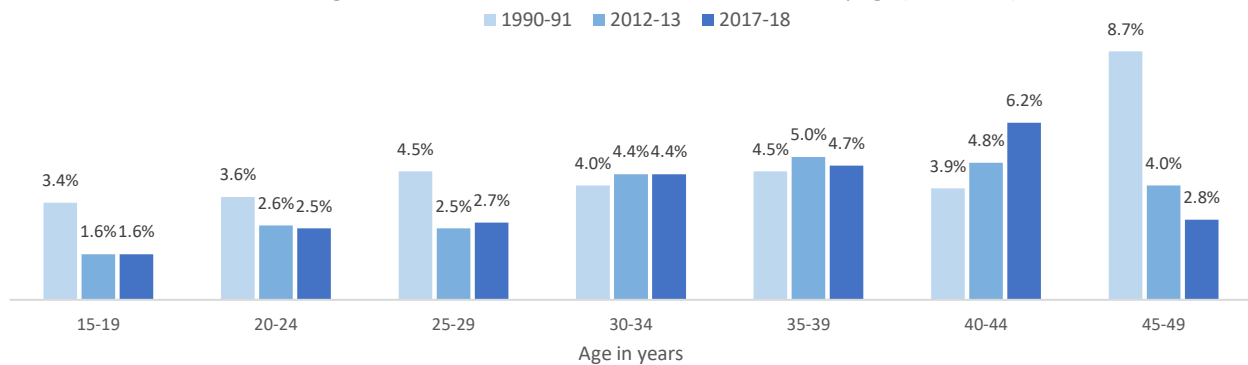


Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (2017-18); analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

Over the years, polygyny unions in the 45–49-year age group decreased from 8.7% in 1990-91 to 2.8% in 2017-18; the largest decrease across age groups. On the other hand, the highest increase was observed among women aged 40-44; 3.9% women in this group reported that they had one of more co-wives in 1990-91, which increased to 6.2% in 2017-18.

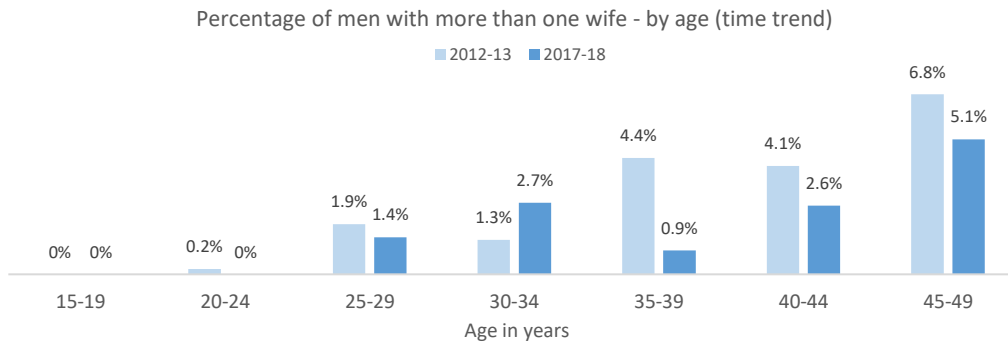
The percentage of women in the 15-19-year, 20-24-year and 25-29 age groups in polygynous relationships showed a decreasing trend from 1990 to 2017, while the rest stayed largely consistent over time.

Percentage of married women with one or more co-wives - by age (time trend)



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

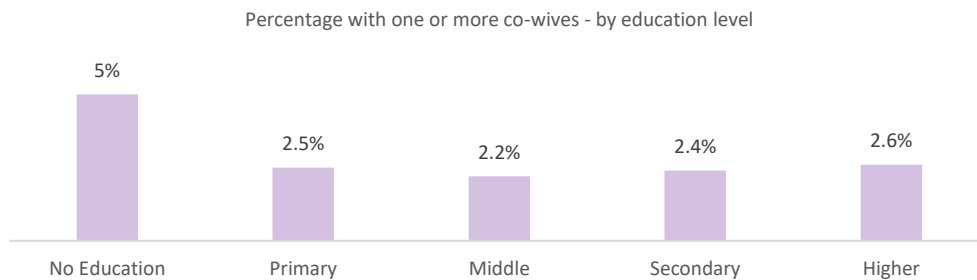
The percentage of men who reported having more than one wife increased with the respondents' age, with the 35-39 age group in 2017-18 and the 40-44 age group in 2012-13 being the only exceptions. The highest proportion of men who reported being in a polygynous union were from the 45-49 age group across both years (6.8% in 2012-13 and 5.1% in 2017-18). Those aged 15 to 24 were the least likely to have more than one wife; for 15-19-years-olds, the low polygyny numbers could be attributed to a low number of men in this age group getting married in the first place.



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

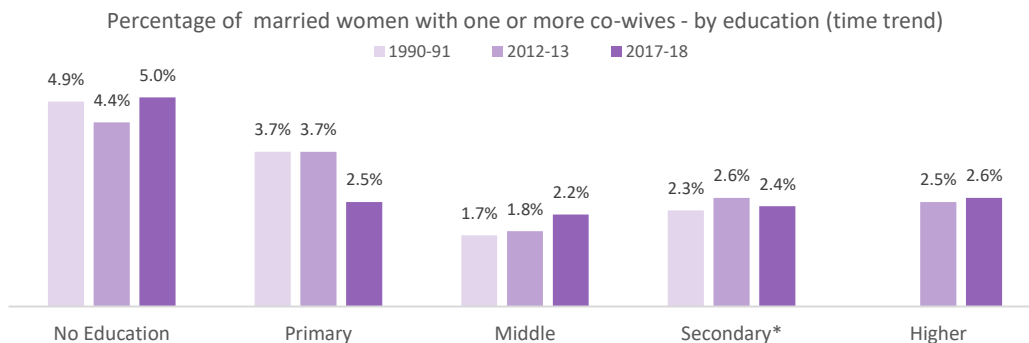
3) Women with no education were more likely to be in a polygynous relationship than women who were educated.

5% of women with no education reported that their husbands had more than one wife, compared with 2.5% of women with primary education and 2.6% of those with higher education.



Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (2017-18); analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

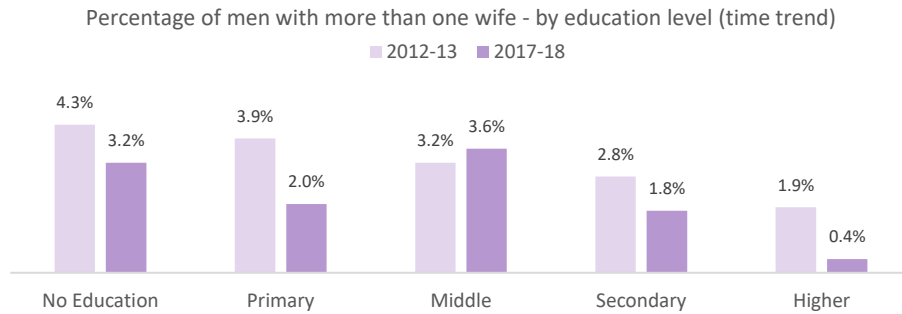
Trend data shows that across the past two decades, the majority of women in polygynous relationships have been those with no education, followed by women who had attained only up to primary education. The lowest percentage of women reporting their husbands have more than one wife were those who were educated till the middle school level, with the numbers rising as education levels increased to secondary and higher education.



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

*Secondary education data for 1990-91 comprises of both secondary and higher education numbers i.e., 2.3% of women with secondary or higher education were in a polygynous union.

The percentage of men who reported having more than one wife was inversely proportional to education levels, with middle-education men in 2017-18 being the only exception – 3.6% of them reported being in polygynous unions, the highest among all education levels for the year. Other than that, men with higher education were the least likely to make more than one wife (1.9% in 2012-13 and 0.4% in 2017-18). Overall, the average proportion of men in polygynous relationships decreased over time across education levels, except those with education up till middle school, for whom the trend was increased from 2012 to 2017.

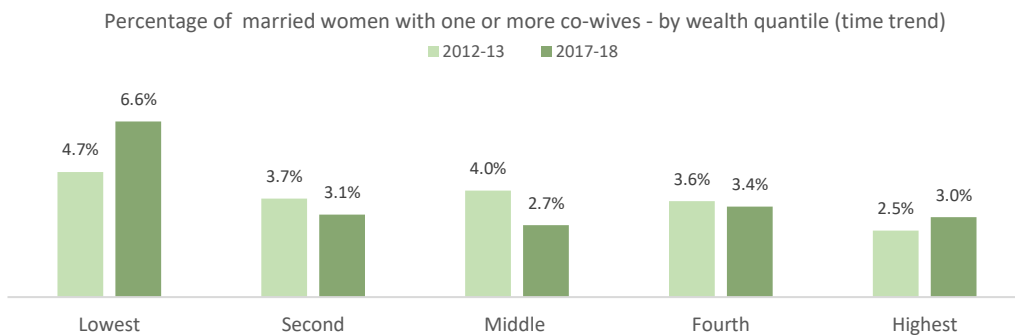


Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

4) Wealth levels showed a negative relationship with the percentage of women with one or more co-wife.

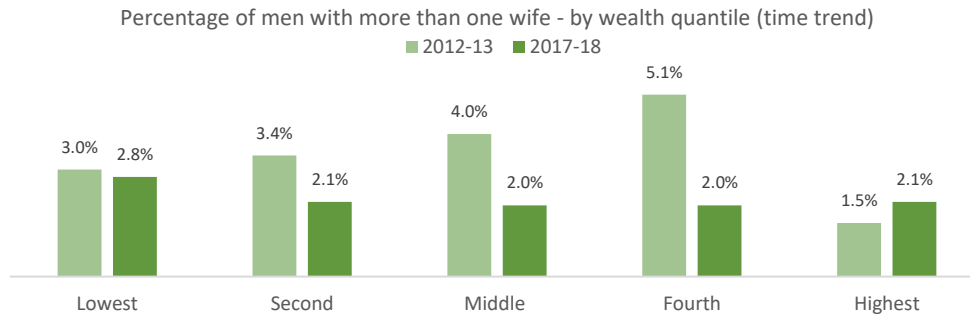
Women in the lowest wealth quantile were the most likely to be in a polygynous relationship, with 6.6% in 2017-18 reporting as such. While the percentage was lower for women in the lowest quintile in 2012-13 (4.7%), it was still higher than the rest of the wealth levels.

In 2018, the women in the middle wealth quantile were the least likely to be in a polygynous union (2.7%) while those in the highest quantile were the lowest to report having co-wives in 2012-13 (2.5%).



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

The percentage of men reporting to have more than one wife decreased across wealth quantiles from 2012-13 to 2017-18, with the exception of those in the highest quantile – their proportion increased from 1.5% to 2.1% in the span on five years. The largest decrease across years was in the fourth quantile: 5.1% men reported having more than one wife in 2012-13, which decreased by 3.1 percentage points to 2% in 2017-18.

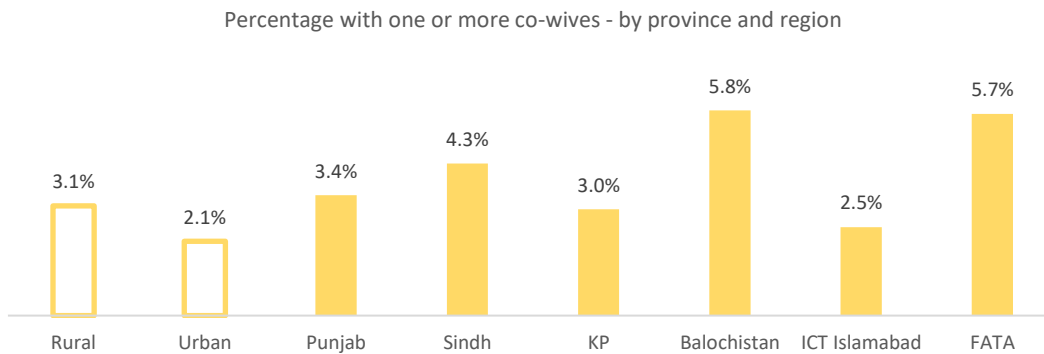


Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

5) Women in Balochistan and FATA most likely to be in polygynous unions; those in rural areas more likely to have one of more co-wives than those in urban areas.

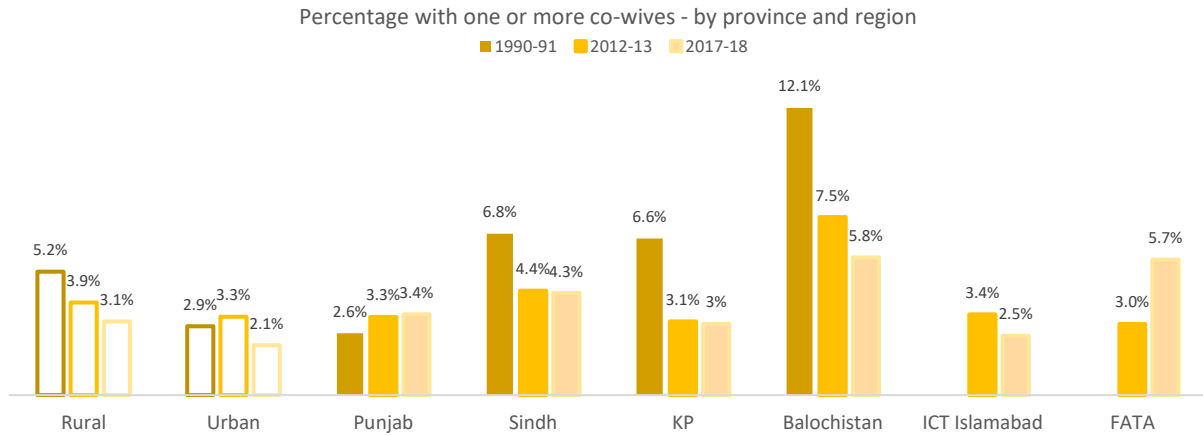
Among the provinces, Balochistan had the highest percentage of women who reported that their husbands had more than one wife, at 5.8%. This was closely followed by those in FATA, 5.7% of whom were in polygynous unions. Women from Islamabad (2.5%) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (3.0%) were the least likely to have one or more co-wives.

Similarly, 3.1% women from rural areas reported being in a polygynous union, compared to the 2.1% from urban areas.



Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (2017-18); analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

Time trend analysis shows a declining trend for all regions and provinces over the years (except FATA, where polygynous unions reportedly increased by 2.7% from 2012-13 to 2017-18, and Punjab, where they increased by 0.1%). The percentage of women with one or more co-wives peaked in 1990-91, for Balochistan, where 12.1% women reported being in such a union. Women in urban areas, in 2017-18, were least likely to be in a polygynous marriage (2.1%). Overall, the data presents a declining trend in polygyny across provinces and regions, over the years. Perhaps exploring the cultural and economic factors contributing to this shift could reveal interesting insights.

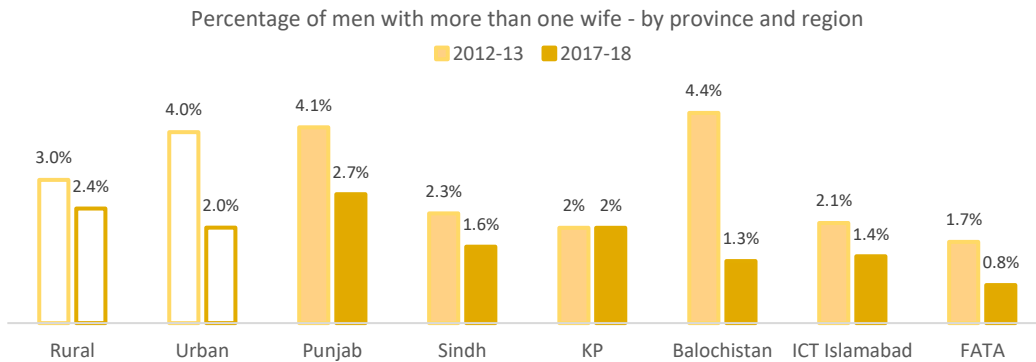


Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

*Data for ICT and FATA for 1990-91 was not reported.

The percentage of men who reported to have more than one wife declined across all regions and provinces from 2012-13 to 2017-18. However, it is interesting to note that in 2012-13, a significantly higher percentage of urban men reported being in a polygynous union (4.0%) compared to rural men (3%). However, this reversed in 2017-18, where men from rural areas (2.4%) were more likely to have more than one wife than men from urban areas (2.0%).

Among the provinces, Balochistan saw the steepest decline of men in polygynous unions from 2012 to 2017, with the percentage decreasing from 4.4% to 1.3%.



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 PDS 2017-18. If you have any ideas, please write to Bilal I Gilani, Project Director of the Big Data Analysis at Gallup Pakistan.

Wish to know more about the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18?

“The primary objective of the 2017-18 PDHS is to provide up-to-date estimates of basic demographic and health indicators. The PDHS provides a comprehensive overview of population, maternal, and child health issues in Pakistan. Specifically, the 2017-18 PDHS collected information on:

- Key demographic indicators, particularly fertility and under-5 mortality rates, at the national level, for urban and rural areas, and within the country’s eight regions
- Direct and indirect factors that determine levels and trends of fertility and child mortality
- Contraceptive knowledge and practice
- Maternal health and care including antenatal, perinatal, and postnatal care
- Child feeding practices, including breastfeeding, and anthropometric measures to assess the nutritional status of children under age 5 and women aged 15-49
- Key aspects of family health, including vaccination coverage and prevalence of diseases among infants and children under age 5
- Knowledge and attitudes of women and men about sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, and potential exposure to risk
- Women's empowerment and its relationship to reproductive health and family planning
- Disability level
- Extent of gender-based violence
- Migration patterns”

You can find out more at: <https://dhsprogram.com/>

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