

# Ever-Married Women by Age of First Marriage

*Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey Trend Data*

In nearly 30 years, the median age at first marriage for women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has remained almost unchanged

## Percentage of women by age at first marriage:



Married by age 18 in 2017

**29.3%**

The percentage of women married by age 18 was 41% in 1990. It reduced by 1.5% by 2006, dropped a further 4% by 2012, and underwent an even steeper decline of 6% by 2017 (when it was 29.3%). Overall, this was a reduction of 12% over 30 years.

## Median age at first marriage – overall time trend



Median age at first marriage in 2017

**20.4**

The median age at first marriage has risen by 1.8 years over the last 30 years, from 18.6 in 1990 to 20.4 in 2017. Between 1990 and 2007, 50% of women aged 25-49 were married by 18 or 19 years old. Over the next decade, 50% of women got married by 19 to 20 years old.

## Rural/Urban divide:



50% of rural women marry by around 18 to 19 years old, and the-time trend of median age shows that this has not changed over the span of 30 years. In urban areas, during the same time frame, the median age increased two years from 19 in 1990 to 21 in 2017.

## By Education level:



In the past 30 years, the median age at first marriage has generally been higher for women who have attained a higher level of education.

## Provincial breakdown:



In three decades, the median age at first marriage for women rose by 2 years in Punjab and 3 years in Sindh, remained the same in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and increased 2 years in Balochistan.

## PRESS RELEASE

### Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey

*In nearly 30 years, the median age at first marriage for women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has remained almost unchanged – Ever-Married Women by Age of First Marriage – Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey Trend Data*

Islamabad, October 11, 2023

Gallup Pakistan, as part of its Big Data Analysis initiative, is looking at the background characteristics of ever-married women age 15-49 years by age of first marriage. 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, 2006-07, 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, this edition looks at the distribution of ever-married women aged 15-49 years by the age at which they first got married, as reported in past editions of the PDHS. This trend data can provide insight into gender and development 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.

Today's topic is "Percentage of women age 15-49 who were first married by specific exact ages" and "median age at first marriage."

## Key Findings:

1) **Percentage of women and men by age at first marriage:** The percentage of women married by age 18 was 41% in 1990. It reduced by 1.5% by 2006, dropped a further 4% by 2012, and underwent an even steeper decline of 6% by 2017 (when it was 29.3%). Overall, this was a reduction of 12% over 30 years.

2) **Median age at first marriage – overall time trend:** The median age at first marriage has risen by 1.8 years over the last 30 years, from 18.6 in 1990 to 20.4 in 2017. Between 1990 and 2007, 50% of women aged 25-49 were married by 18 or 19 years old. Over the next decade, 50% of women got married by 19 to 20 years old.

3) **Median age at first marriage by background characteristics:**

Rural/Urban divide: 50% of rural women marry by around 18 to 19 years old, and the time trend of median age shows that this has not changed over the span of 30 years. In urban areas, during the same time frame, the median age increased two years from 19 in 1990 to 21 in 2017.

By education level: In the past 30 years, the median age at first marriage has generally been higher for women who have attained a higher level of education. Women having attained higher education coincided with a significantly higher median age at first marriage compared to those attaining other levels of education

By wealth quintile: Women belonging to higher wealth quintiles tend to have their first marriage later than those belonging to lower wealth quintiles. However, over the years the median age at which a woman would get married for the first time does not change by more than a year or two for each quintile.

Provincial breakdown: In three decades, the median age at first marriage for women rose by 2 years in Punjab and 3 years in Sindh, remained the same in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and increased 2 years in Balochistan.

**Note:** Data for ever-married males within this topic was recorded only in 2012-13 and 2017-18, therefore patterns and trends might not be explicitly highlighted. There are various factors that influence change in age at first marriage over the years, therefore the trends and patterns in this report should not be taken as causal relationships.

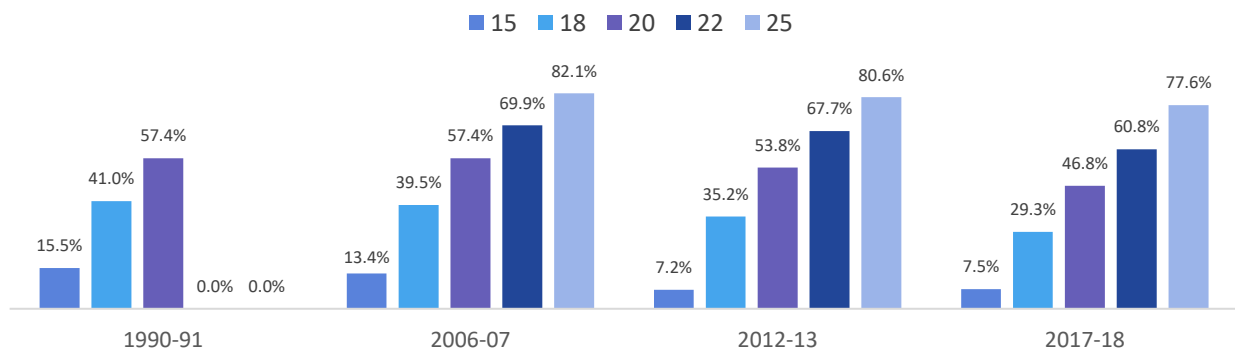
### 1) Percentage of women and men by age at first marriage

The PDHS (2012-13) defines age at first marriage as, “the age at which the respondent began living with her or his first spouse.”

16% of women in 1990 reported being first married when they were underage (15 years old) and while this trend of underage marriages among women persists over the decades, in the past 30 years (1990 to approximately 2020) the proportion has reduced by half.

The percentage of women married by age 18 was 41% in 1990. It reduced by 1.5% by 2006, dropped a further 4% by 2012, and underwent an even steeper decline of 6% by 2017 (when it was 29.3%). Overall, this was a reduction of 12% over 30 years.

Percentage of ever-married women aged 25-49 who were first married by specific exact ages

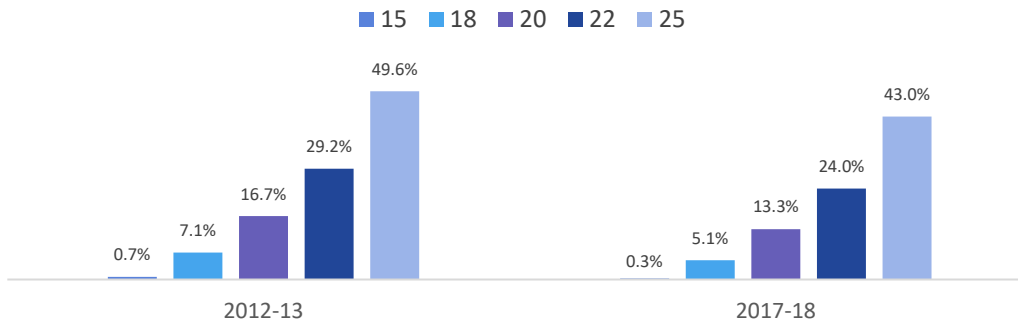


Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

\*1990-91 totaled percentage was available for ages 20-49 while for other years it was available for age brackets 20-49 and 25-49 (for those years the latter is reported here)

“Percentage of men by age at first marriage” was only measured by the DHS in 2012-13 and 2017-18. These figures show that, in comparison with women, more men report getting married for the first time in at older ages. 49.6% of men aged 25-49 years reported being married by the age of 25 in 2012-13, while the percentage was much higher amongst women at 80.6% for the same year.

Percentage of ever-married men aged 25-49 who were first married by specific exact ages

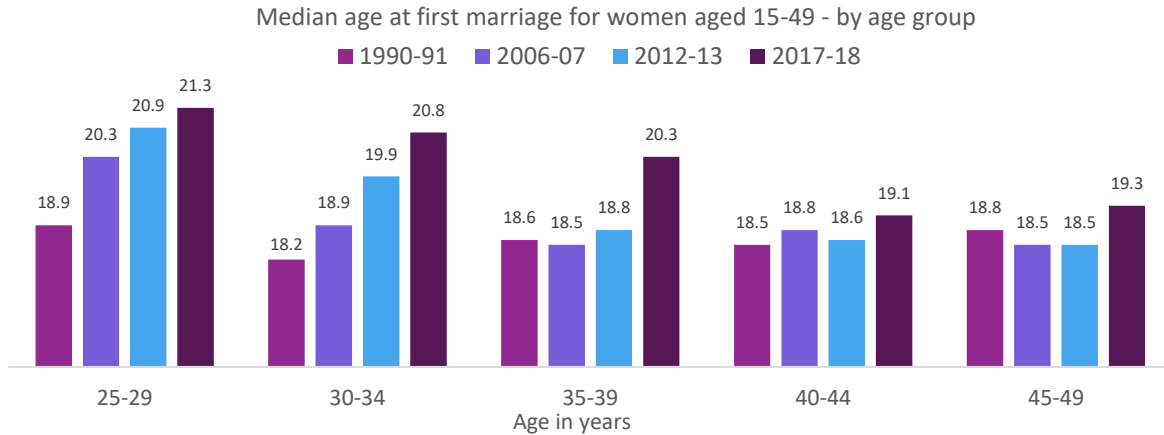


Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

\*Age at first marriage of ever-married men was available only for 2012-13 and 2017-18

## 2) Median age at first marriage – overall time trend

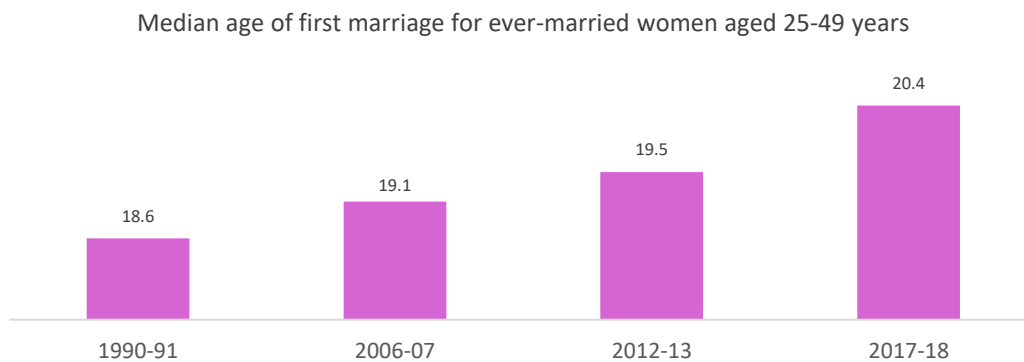
Between 1990-2018, the median age at first marriage rose by 2.4 years for women aged 25-29, 2.6 for women aged 30-34, 1.7 years for women aged 35-39, 0.6 years for those aged 40-44, and 0.5 years for those aged 45-49.



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

\*Median age at first marriage of ever-married women aged 15-49 was not available for age groups 15-19 and 20-24 “due to censoring”

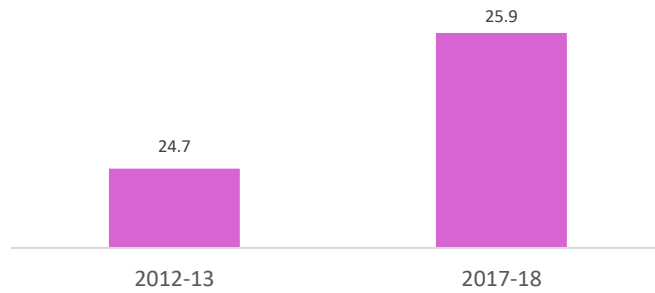
The median age at first marriage has risen by 1.8 years over the last 30 years, from 18.6 in 1990 to 20.4 in 2017. Between 1990 and 2007, 50% of women aged 25-49 were married by 18 or 19 years old. Over the next decade, 50% of women got married by 19 to 20 years old.



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

Figures for the median age at which men were first married were only available in the last two waves of the PDHS. The Median age of marriage is much higher for men than for women in these waves; half of men aged 30-49 years did not get married until their mid-twenties.

Median age of first marriage for ever-married men aged 30-49 years



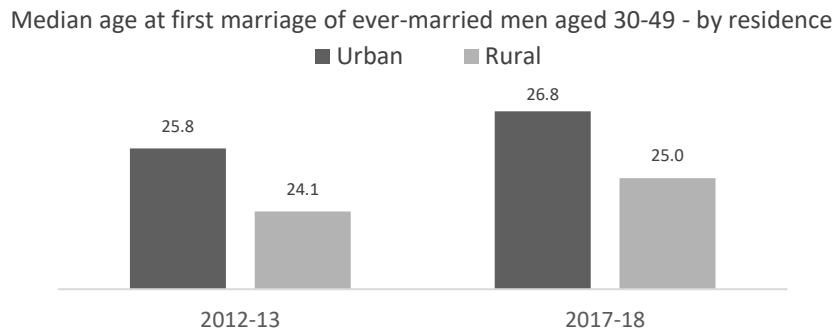
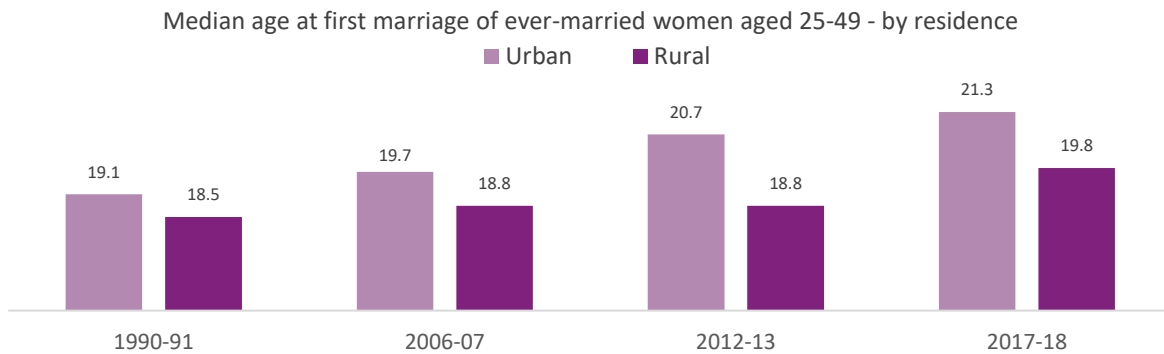
**Source:** Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

### 3) Median age at first marriage by background characteristics

#### (i) By residence

50% of rural women marry by around 18 to 19 years old, and the time trend of median age shows that this has not changed over the span of 30 years. In urban areas, during the same time frame, the median age increased two years from 19 in 1990 to 21 in 2017. Up until 2006, the median age at first marriage across rural and urban areas was nearly the same. From 2012 onwards however, the gap started increasing as urban women started getting married later than their rural counterparts over time.

Urban men tend to get married earlier than their rural counterparts, though the difference in median age is under two years across both waves. Men's median age at first marriage has increased in both urban and rural areas by nearly two years between 2012-18.



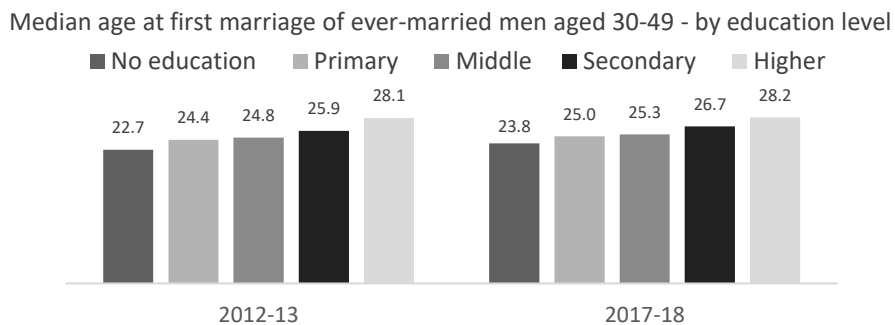
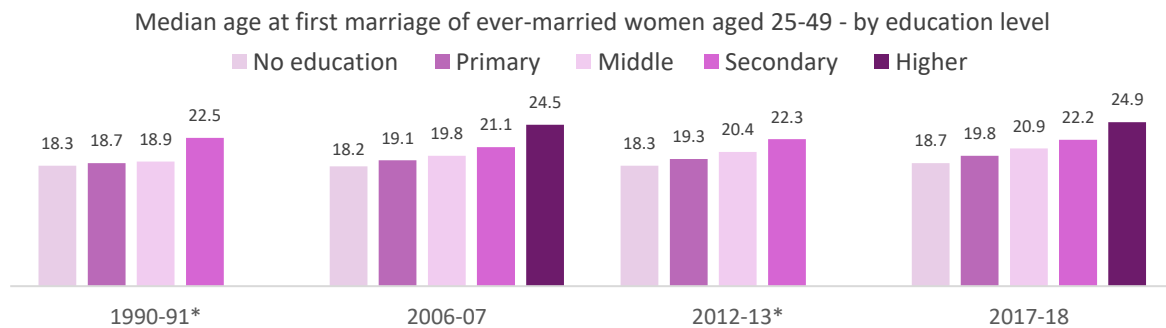
Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

(ii) By education level

In the past 30 years, the median age at first marriage has generally been higher for women who have attained a higher level of education. In 1990 the median age remained consistent at 18 to 19 years olds for women having 0-11 years of education (up to middle school) while in subsequent waves the median age increases with each additional level of education completed.

Comparing women who attained higher education with those who have a secondary level education, the difference in median age at first marriage is higher (3 years in 2006-07, and nearly the same in 2017-18) than that between secondary- and middle-school-educated women (2 years in 2006-07, 2012-13, and 2017-18). The contrast is similar when comparing to the difference in median age at first marriage between middle- and primary-educated women, and primary-educated and uneducated women.

Women having attained higher education coincided with a significantly higher median age at first marriage compared to those attaining other levels of education. It is interesting to note that, in 2017-18, women with university degrees were likely to marry for the first time at nearly the same age as men with no education.



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

\*During 1990-91 there was no “Higher” education category, “Secondary +” was the highest option which includes those with tertiary education; during 2012-13 the “Higher” category was omitted

(iii) By wealth quintile

Women belonging to higher wealth quintiles tend to have their first marriage later than those belonging to lower wealth quintiles. However, over the years the median age at which a woman would get married for the first time does not change by more than a year or two for each quintile.

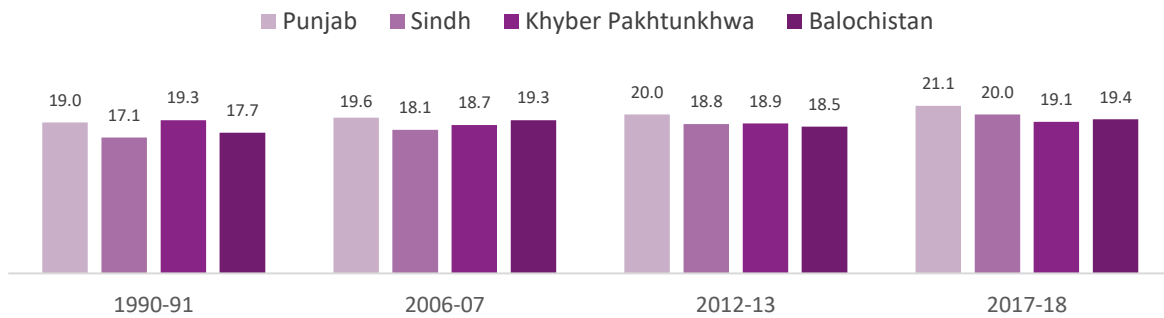


Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey; analyzed by Gallup Pakistan

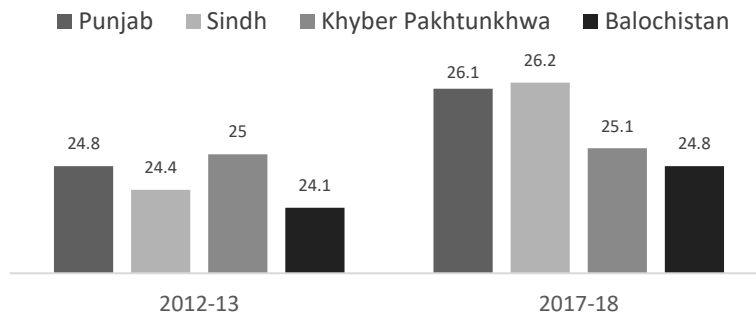
(iv) By province

In 1990, around half of the women in Sindh and Balochistan were getting married while under-aged (17 years old), while in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa half of the women were getting married for the first time at 19 years. In subsequent waves, the median age in all provinces rose to the legal minimum, and the median age at first marriage from 2006 onwards was highest in Punjab, followed by Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. In three decades, the median age at first marriage for women rose by 2 years in Punjab and 3 years in Sindh, remained the same in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and increased 2 years in Balochistan.

Median age at first marriage of ever-married women aged 25-49 - by province



Median age at first marriage of ever-married men aged 30-49 - by province



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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