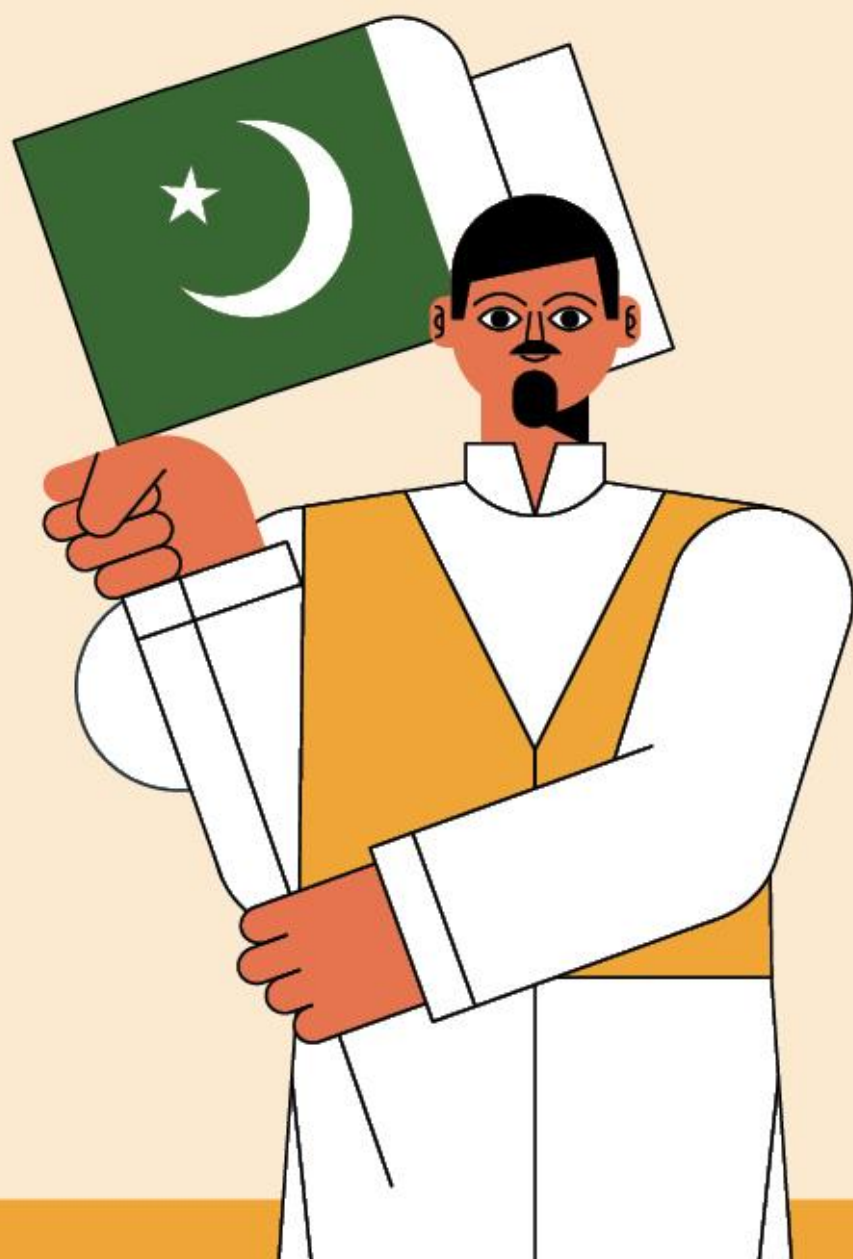


Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Language in Pakistan



PRESS RELEASE

Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Language in Pakistan

In Punjab, Urdu's influence is growing as 12.2% use it colloquially, while only 2.6% and 2.8% identify it as their father's and mother's mother tongue, respectively – **Language in Pakistan**

Islamabad, December 24th, 2024

Gallup Pakistan, as part of its Big Data Analysis initiative, is looking at Language in Pakistan, which 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 [PIDE-BASICS Survey dataset](#), which provides a variety of visa-related statistics. 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 about Language in Pakistan, for policy makers, the public, as well as for marketers in an easy and understandable way. This edition looks at the PIDE-BASICS Survey dataset. 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.

Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Language in Pakistan

In Punjab, Urdu's influence is growing as 12.2% use it colloquially, while only 2.6% and 2.8% identify it as their father's and mother's mother tongue, respectively.

32.2% of those in Islamabad Capital Territory consider Urdu a colloquial language, while it is the mother tongue of 4.3% fathers and mothers respectively



In AJK, 31.9% see Urdu as the dominant language, while 5.8% and 5.2% consider it their paternal and maternal tongue respectively.

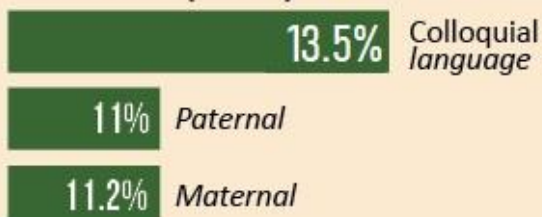


Urdu is considered the colloquial language by 12.2% in Punjab, while 2.6% report it as their fathers' mother tongue and 2.8% say it is their maternal mother tongue.



In Sindh, 39.6% of urban residents report Urdu as their mother tongue, compared to just 1.1% of those in rural areas

Urdu in Sindh (overall)



Source: Weighted PIDE-BASICS Survey dataset, visualization by Gallup Pakistan



Key Findings:

1. 32.2% of those in Islamabad Capital Territory consider Urdu a colloquial language, while it is the mother tongue of 4.3% fathers and mothers respectively.
2. In AJK, 31.9% see Urdu as the dominant language, while 5.8% and 5.2% consider it their paternal and maternal tongue respectively.
3. Urdu is considered the colloquial language by 12.2% in Punjab, while 2.6% report it as their fathers' mother tongue and 2.8% say it is their maternal mother tongue.
4. In Sindh, 39.6% of urban residents report Urdu as their mother tongue, compared to just 1.1% of those in rural areas.

The linguistic landscape of Pakistan, as reflected in the PIDE-BASICS¹ survey, highlights significant variation in the usage of mother tongues versus colloquial languages across different provinces. The survey provides a nuanced perspective by distinguishing between the mother tongue of the father, the mother tongue of the mother, and the language used for informal communication, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of linguistic dynamics in the country.

Table 7: "Mother Tongue" and Colloquial Language by Province

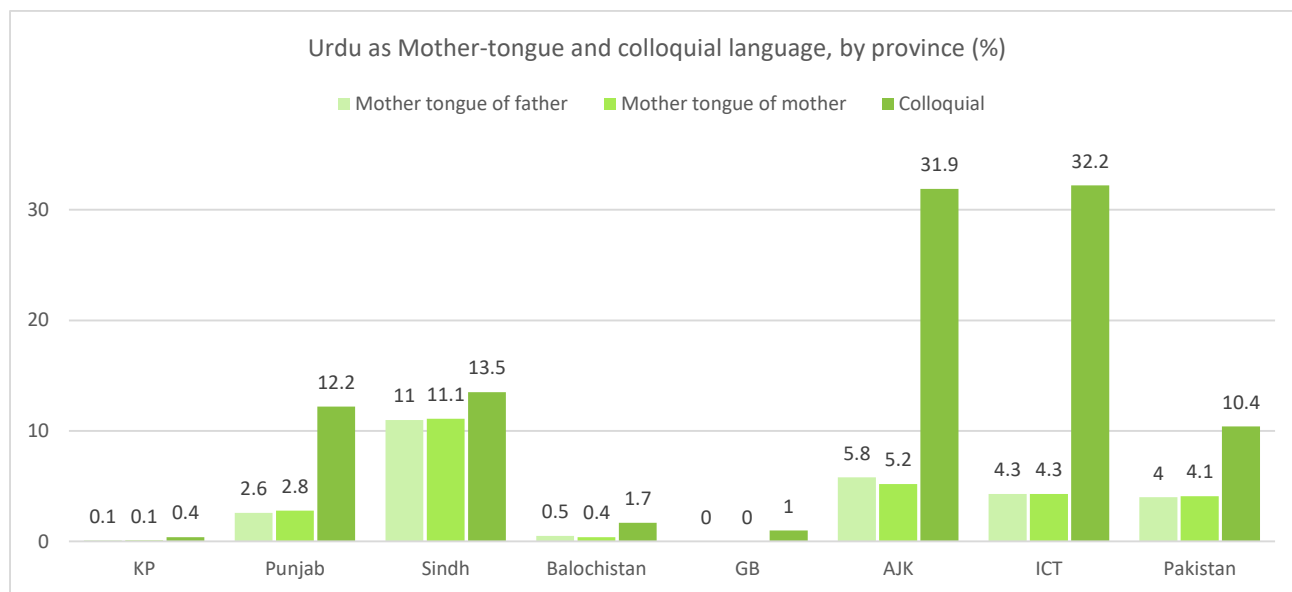
	Languages										Total
	Urdu	Punjabi	Sindhi	Balochi	Pashtu	Pothohari	Shina	Kashmiri	Seraiki	Others	
	MOTHER TONGUE OF FATHER										
KP	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	80.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	2.9	16.7	100.0
Punjab	2.6	68.1	0.5	0.6	0.9	0.1	0.1	0.1	26.2	0.9	100.0
Sindh	11.0	3.0	60.4	2.5	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.1	8.4	12.5	100.0
Balochistan	0.5	0.3	6.5	49.2	28.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	13.0	100.0
GB	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	35.4	0.0	0.1	64.3	100.0
AJK	5.8	7.7	0.0	0.0	0.4	9.7	0.0	9.4	0.0	66.9	100.0
ICT	4.3	70.4	0.1	0.0	5.1	14.8	0.2	1.5	0.4	3.3	100.0
Pakistan	4.0	36.6	14.2	3.7	15.9	0.4	0.3	0.3	16.0	8.6	100.0
	MOTHER TONGUE OF MOTHER										
KP	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	79.9	0.0	0.1	0.0	2.9	16.6	100.0
Punjab	2.8	67.8	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.1	26.1	0.9	100.0
Sindh	11.1	3.1	60.4	2.5	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.6	12.4	100.0
Balochistan	0.4	0.4	6.8	48.9	28.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	12.9	100.0
GB	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	35.0	0.0	0.0	64.8	100.0
AJK	5.2	7.6	0.0	0.0	0.3	10.3	0.0	9.3	0.2	67.0	100.0
ICT	4.3	70.0	0.1	0.0	5.2	15.0	0.2	1.3	0.4	3.5	100.0
PAKISTAN	4.1	36.6	14.2	3.7	15.9	0.4	0.3	0.3	16.0	8.5	100.0
	COLLOQUIAL										
KP	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	79.5	0.0	0.1	0.0	2.9	16.8	100.0
Punjab	12.2	59.4	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.3	0.7	100.0
Sindh	13.5	2.2	63.2	2.1	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.4	10.2	100.0
Balochistan	1.7	0.3	6.7	48.1	28.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9	13.1	100.0
GB	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	35.8	0.1	0.0	63.2	100.0
AJK	31.9	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.1	7.9	0.1	4.9	0.1	49.3	100.0
ICT	32.2	48.3	0.1	0.0	4.2	10.9	0.1	1.1	0.3	2.7	100.0
PAKISTAN	10.4	31.7	14.7	3.5	15.5	0.3	0.3	0.1	15.8	7.6	100.0

Source: Weighted PIDE-BASICS Survey dataset.

A striking observation is the substantial shift towards Urdu in informal communication, especially in Islamabad Capital Territory, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and Punjab. In these regions, Urdu usage far exceeds what one would expect based on the mother tongues of parents. For instance, **32.2% of those in ICT consider it a colloquial language, while it is the mother tongue of 4.3% fathers and mothers respectively.** Similarly, **in AJK, 31.9% see Urdu as the dominant language, while 5.8% and 5.2% consider it their paternal and maternal tongue respectively.** A similar pattern can be observed in the most populous

¹ https://file.pide.org.pk/uploads/bn-01-pakistanis-who-are-we.pdf?_gl=1*8v5ee7*_ga*MTQyNjg4MTE0OS4xNzMxNjk3MjU1*_ga_T5TLWHEVW9*MTczMTgyMTUxMC4yLjEuMTczMTgyMTgxOC4zOC4wLjE2NTYxMTA3NDM

province, **Punjab**, where Urdu is considered the colloquial language by 12.2%, while 2.6% report it as their fathers' mother tongue and 2.8% say it is their maternal mother tongue.



Source: Weighted PIDE-BASICS Survey dataset, visualization by Gallup Pakistan

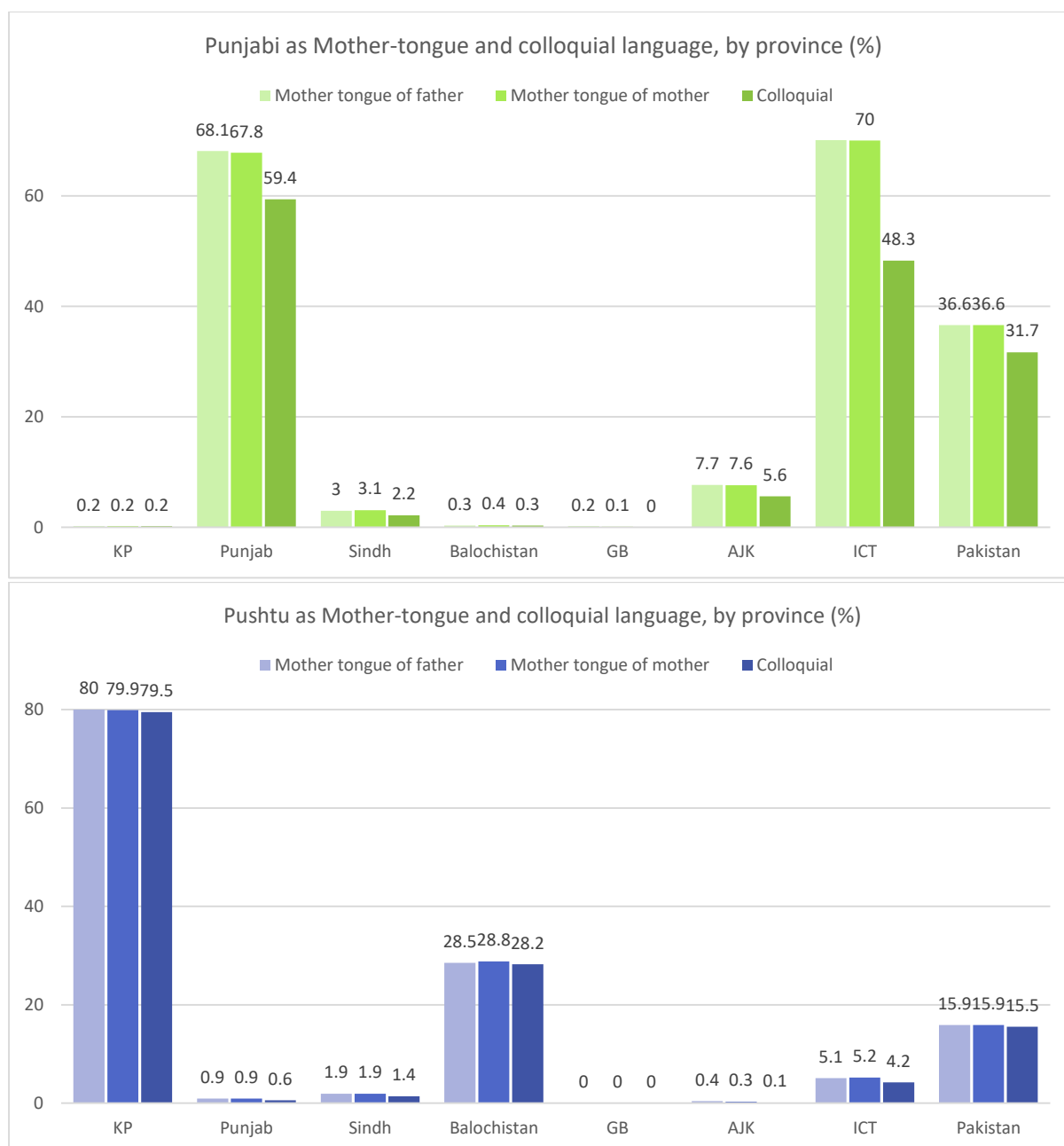
The data also highlights that, across Pakistan, the mother tongues of fathers and mothers often align within regions, reflecting the possible prevalence of intra-language group marriages. This alignment is particularly pronounced in areas with strong linguistic homogeneity, such as Sindh, where Sindhi dominates, or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where Pashto is prevalent. However, subtle variations in the data suggest the possibility of inter-language group marriages in certain contexts. For instance, in regions like Punjab and urbanized areas, where linguistic diversity and inter-provincial migration are more common, there is greater potential for such linguistic mixing. Despite this, the overall patterns indicate that inter-language group marriages remain relatively rare in Pakistan, with most linguistic differences arising from sociolinguistic shifts, such as the use of Urdu for informal communication rather than from significant cross-linguistic parental influences.

This trend underscores Urdu's role as a lingua franca in these areas, likely driven by its status as the national language and its widespread use in education, media, and official discourse. Among the four major provincial languages, Punjabi exhibits the most pronounced transition to Urdu for colloquial purposes. This phenomenon suggests a degree of linguistic fluidity and perhaps a cultural adaptation to the prominence of Urdu in urban and official contexts.

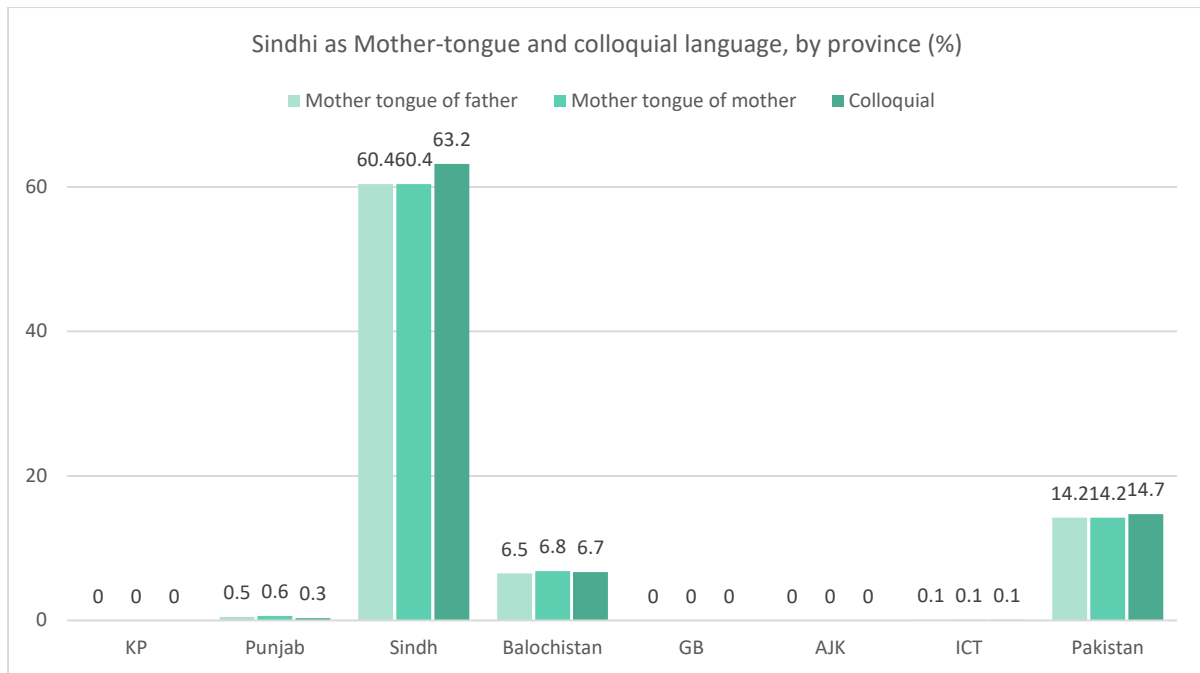
The disparity between mother tongue and colloquial language usage is particularly notable when comparing the languages spoken by fathers and mothers to the language used for everyday interactions. While the father's and mother's mother tongues often align within regions, the shift to a different language for informal communication highlights the sociolinguistic influences at play. This pattern may be influenced by factors such as inter-provincial migration, urbanization, and the role of Urdu as a unifying language in a linguistically diverse society.

Besides Urdu, other provincial languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi maintain significant regional importance. Punjabi, being the most widely spoken language in the country, is predominantly used in Punjab but shows a considerable shift to Urdu in urban

and mixed settings. Sindhi, deeply rooted in the cultural identity of Sindh, remains resilient in rural areas but also faces challenges in urbanized environments where Urdu tends to dominate. Pashto, primarily spoken in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and parts of Balochistan, exhibits a strong presence in informal communication within its native regions, although its usage diminishes in cross-provincial contexts. Balochi, while less widespread, holds cultural significance in Balochistan and among its diaspora. These languages not only serve as mediums of daily communication but also play pivotal roles in preserving the cultural heritage and literary traditions of their respective communities.



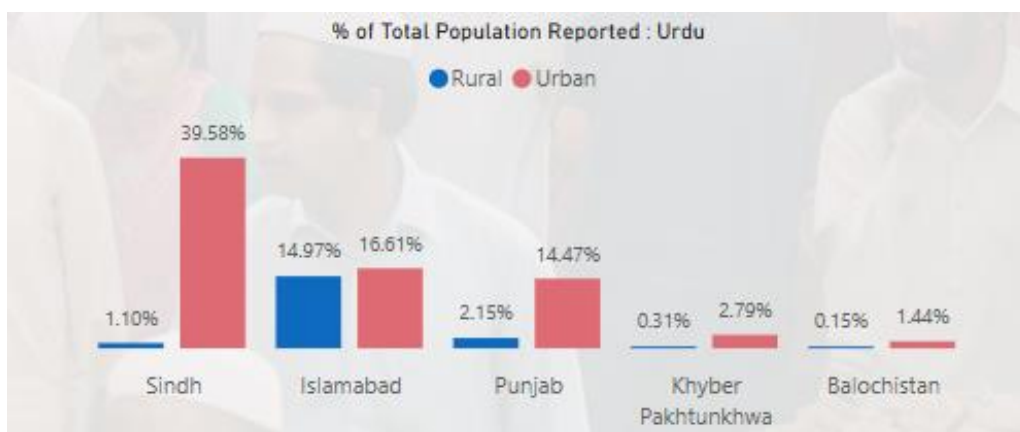
Source: Weighted PIDE-BASICS Survey dataset, visualization by Gallup Pakistan



Source: Weighted PIDE-BASICS Survey dataset, visualization by Gallup Pakistan

The linguistic diversity extends further to include languages such as Saraiki, Hindko, Brahui, and others, which cater to localized populations and contribute to the rich tapestry of Pakistan's linguistic identity. These languages often coexist with Urdu and other major provincial languages, adapting to the social and geographical contours of the regions they inhabit. The interplay of these languages with Urdu reflects a dynamic process of linguistic negotiation, where cultural preservation and practical communication needs intersect.

This divergence also reveals the varying degrees of dominance and resilience among provincial languages. For example, while languages like Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi remain robust in certain regions, they may yield to Urdu in urban centers or in mixed linguistic environments. This interplay of languages reflects not only the practical need for a common medium of communication but also the complex cultural and historical forces shaping Pakistan's linguistic identity.



Source: 7th Population Census of Pakistan, visualization by Gallup Pakistan²

² <https://galluppakistandigitalanalytics.com/digital-population-and-housing-census-2023/>

The 7th Population Census of Pakistan provides further insights by distinguishing between rural and urban residents who identify Urdu as their mother tongue. The data reveals a clear trend across all provinces: Urdu is more commonly spoken in urban areas. This pattern is particularly striking in Sindh, where 39.6% of urban residents report Urdu as their mother tongue, compared to just 1.1% in rural areas. Similarly, in Punjab, 14.5% of urban inhabitants speak Urdu, whereas only 2.2% of rural residents do so.

Overall, the data from the survey illustrates a layered and dynamic linguistic reality in Pakistan. The contrast between parental mother tongues and colloquial language choices underscores the ongoing negotiation between cultural heritage and modern-day practicalities, with Urdu playing a pivotal role in bridging linguistic divides across provinces, while provincial and regional languages continue to enrich the cultural mosaic of the nation.

Wish to Contribute to Gallup Big Data Analysis?

Gallup Pakistan is looking for collaboration with researchers to expand the Big Data Analysis project. If you have any ideas, please write to Bilal I Gilani, Project Director, Big Data Analysis at Gallup Pakistan.

Disclaimer: Gallup Pakistan is not related to Gallup Inc. headquartered in Washington D.C. USA. We require that our surveys be credited fully as Gallup Pakistan (not Gallup or Gallup Poll). We disclaim any responsibility for surveys pertaining to Pakistani public opinion except those carried out by Gallup Pakistan, the Pakistani affiliate of Gallup International Association. For details on Gallup International Association see website: www.gallup-international.com

Disclaimer: The views and inferences expressed in the article are that of the author himself and Gallup Pakistan does not take any responsibility in this regard. This series, and many such initiatives, are internally funded by Gallup Pakistan and Gilani Research Foundation. No outside country or local funding has been received for this current activity.

Disclaimer: Gallup International Association or its members are not related to Gallup Inc., headquartered in Washington D.C. which is no longer a member of Gallup International Association. Gallup International Association does not accept responsibility for opinion polling other than its own. We require that our surveys be credited fully as Gallup International (not Gallup or Gallup Poll).

Contact Details:
Islamabad: +92 51 2655630
Email: isb@gallup.com.pk
www.gallup.com.pk

