

Marital Status in Pakistan

Gallup Pakistan Analysis of the 7th Population
Census of Pakistan 2023



PRESS RELEASE

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Between 1990 and 2017, this median age of first marriage for urban women rose from 19 to 21, and for men, it increased from 26 to 27 years between 2012 and 2017 – **Marital Status in Pakistan**

Islamabad, February 17th, 2025

Gallup Pakistan, as part of its Big Data Analysis initiative, is looking at the 7th Population Census of Pakistan 2023, 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 [7th Population Census of Pakistan 2023 dashboard](#), which provides a variety of demographic 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 the marital status in Pakistan, for policy makers, the public, as well as for marketers in an easy and understandable way. This edition looks at the 7th Population Census of Pakistan 2023. 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.

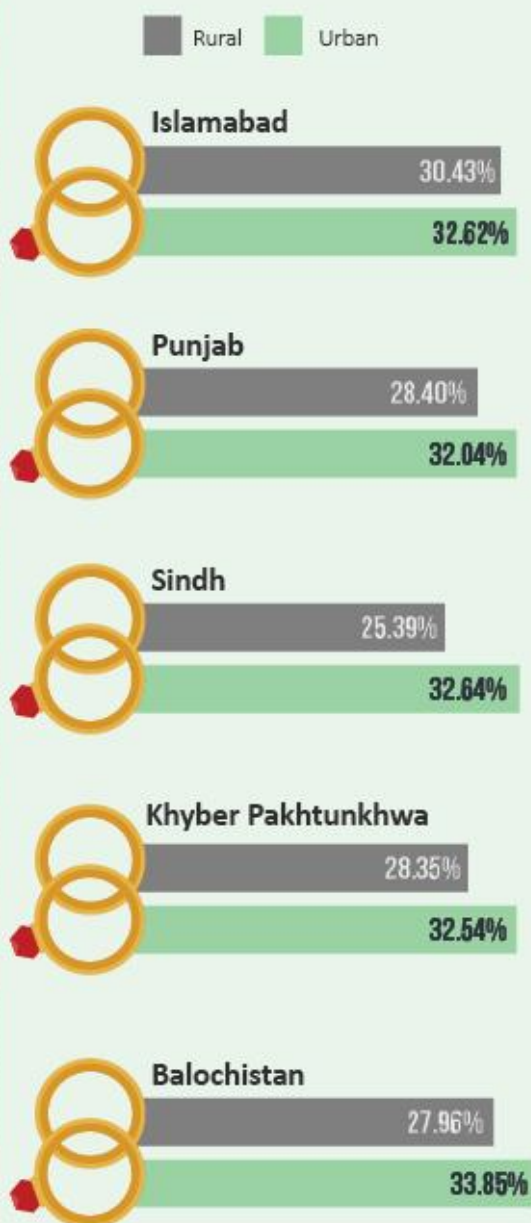
Marital Status in Pakistan

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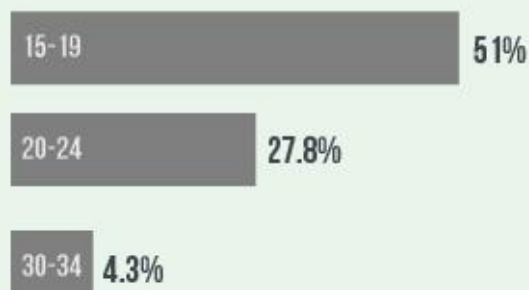
Percentage of total population reporting: Never Married (by province and region)

The highest percentages are observed in urban Balochistan (33.85%), followed by urban Sindh (32.64%), Islamabad (32.62%), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (32.54%), and Punjab (32.04%).



Percentage of total population reporting: Never Married (by age and gender)

A deeper look into gender and age distribution provides further insights. The highest proportion of unmarried individuals is found in the 15-19 age group, making up 51% (or 22 million) of the entire unmarried population.



Median age at first marriage or ever-married people:

The overall 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.



Source: 7th Population Census of Pakistan 2023, visualization by Gallup Pakistan



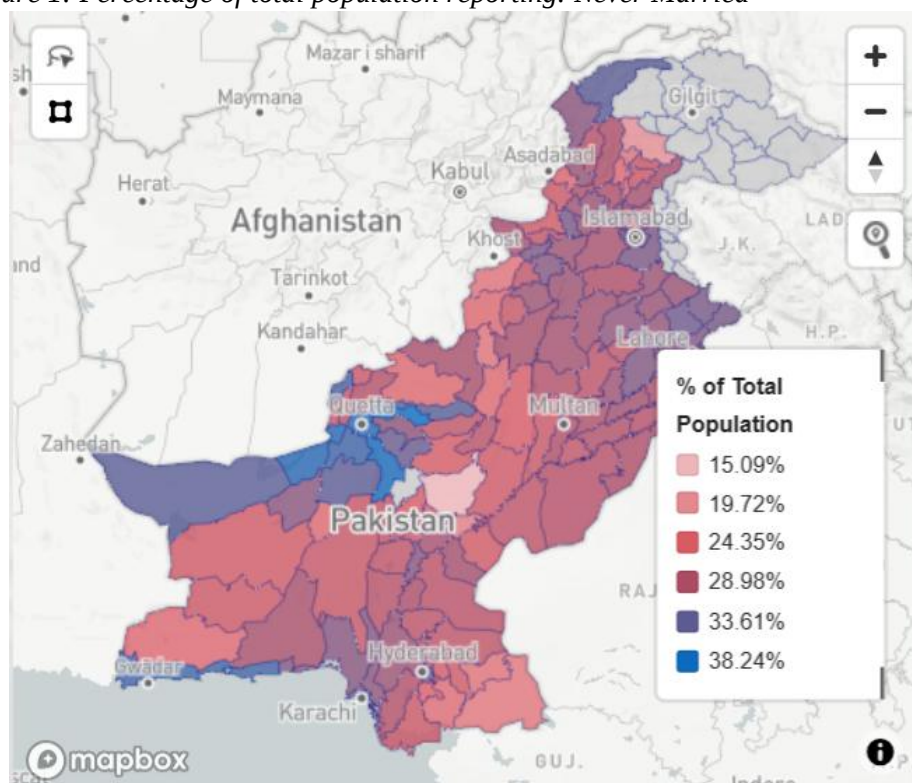
Key Findings:

1. According to the 7th Population Census of Pakistan, approximately 43 million individuals, or 29.73% of the total population aged 15 and above, report never being married.
2. The highest percentages are observed in urban Balochistan (33.85%), followed by urban Sindh (32.64%), Islamabad (32.62%), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (32.54%), and Punjab (32.04%).
3. The highest proportion of unmarried individuals is found in the 15-19 age group, making up 51% (or 22 million) of the entire unmarried population.
4. 4.8% (2,076,945) of the unmarried population is older than 35 years. Men make up 62.2% of this category (1,292,091).
5. The top five districts with the highest proportion of unmarried individuals are all located in Balochistan, including Ziarat (38.2%), Kachhi (37.7%), and Quetta (36.8%).
6. The overall 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.
7. Between 1990 and 2017, this median age of first marriage for urban women rose from 19 to 21, and for men, it increased from 26 to 27 years between 2012 and 2017.
8. 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%).

According to the 7th Population Census of Pakistan, approximately 43 million individuals, or 29.73% of the total population aged 15 and above, report never being married.

When analyzed geographically, between 25-30% of individuals aged 15 and above across Pakistan have never been married, with this proportion exceeding 30% in specific regions. These include northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, such as Chitral, major urban centers like Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi, and Quetta, and select areas of Balochistan.

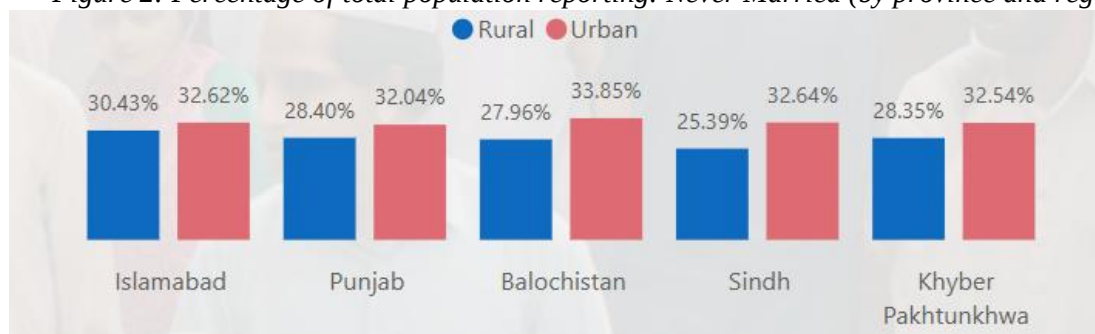
Figure 1: Percentage of total population reporting: Never Married



Source: 7th Population Census of Pakistan 2023, visualization by Gallup Pakistan
<https://galluppakistandigitalanalytics.com/>

A provincial and regional breakdown reveals that urban areas report a significantly higher proportion of unmarried individuals compared to rural regions. **The highest percentages are observed in urban Balochistan (33.85%), followed by urban Sindh (32.64%), Islamabad (32.62%), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (32.54%), and Punjab (32.04%).**

Figure 2: Percentage of total population reporting: Never Married (by province and region)

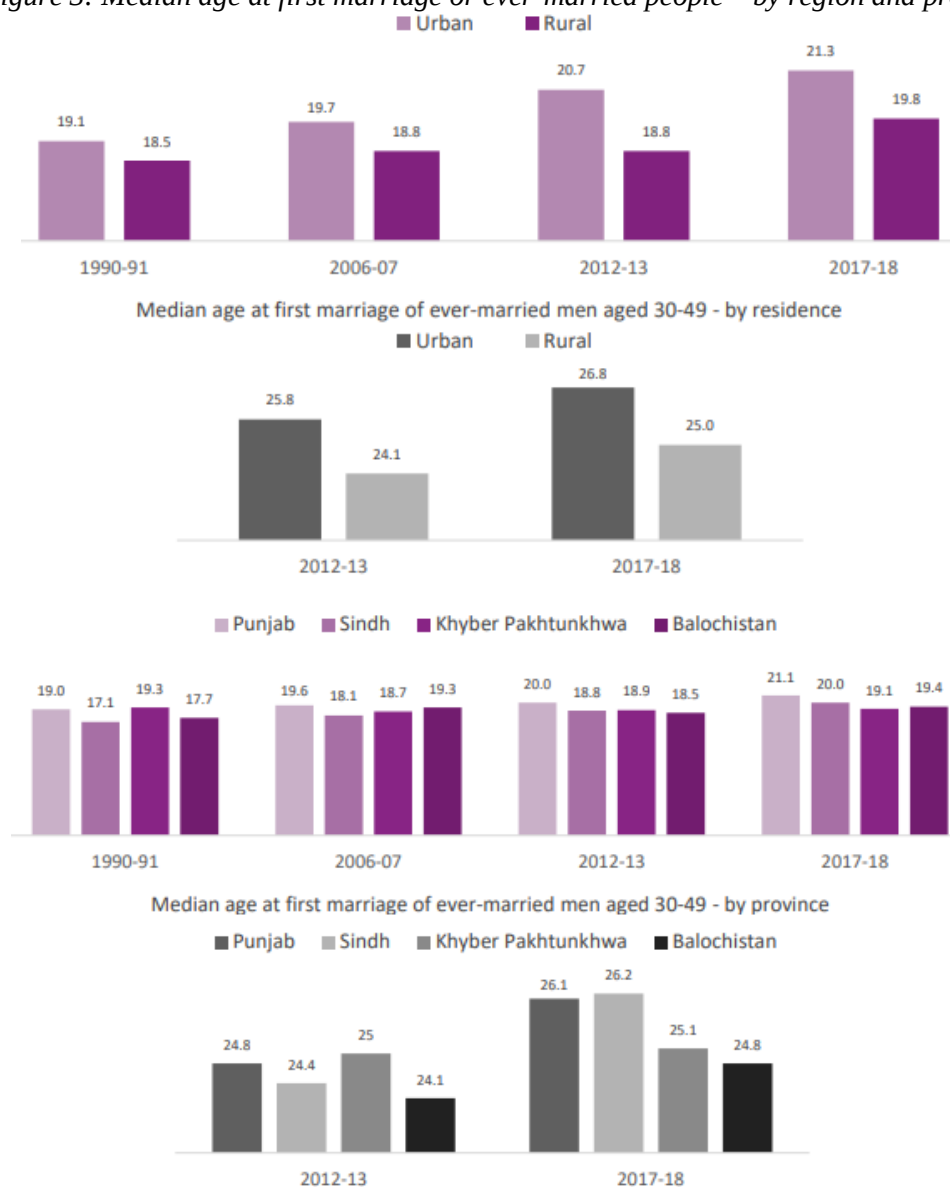


Source: 7th Population Census of Pakistan 2023, visualization by Gallup Pakistan
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This urban-rural divide is intuitive given the correlation between urbanization, education levels, and shifting socio-economic priorities. Urban dwellers are more likely to prioritize higher education and career advancement, which may delay marriage. This pattern aligns with Gallup Pakistan's analysis of the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) 2017, which highlighted that the median age of first marriage has gradually increased over time. In rural areas, 50% of women historically married by the ages of 18-19, a trend that has remained largely unchanged over three decades. For men, the median age at first marriage has shifted slightly from 24 to 25 years between 2012 and 2017.

In contrast, urban areas have seen a more pronounced increase in the median age of first marriage. Between 1990 and 2017, this median age for women rose from 19 to 21, and for men, it increased from 26 to 27 years between 2012 and 2017. Regionally, Punjab and Sindh saw an increase in the median age of marriage by two and three years, respectively, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remained unchanged, and Balochistan saw a modest increase of two years.

Figure 3: Median age at first marriage or ever-married people – by region and province

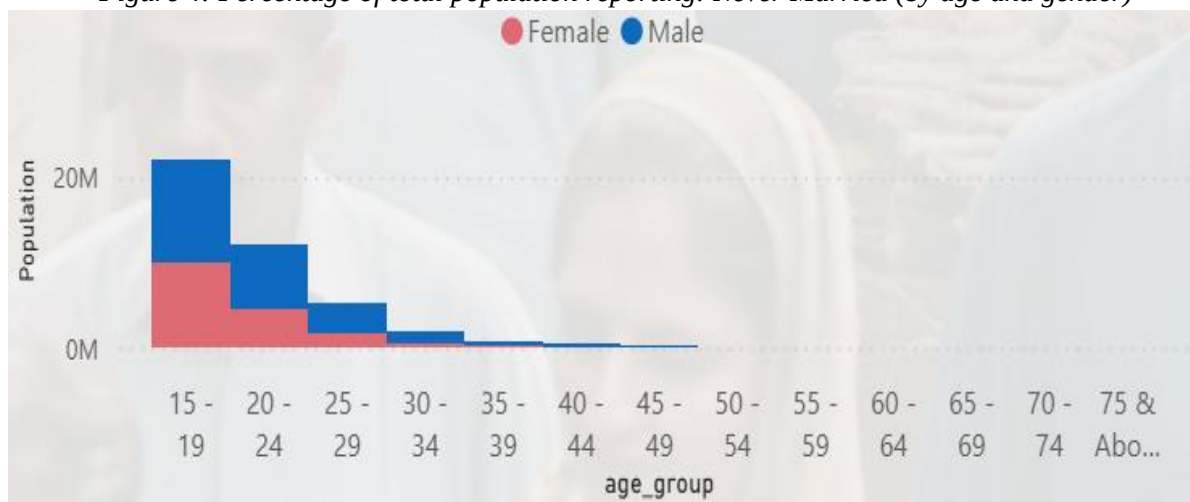


Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey, analyzed by Gallup Pakistan
<https://gallup.com.pk/post/35428>

These findings suggest that the rising proportion of unmarried individuals is more reflective of delayed marriage rather than a shift towards lifelong singlehood. As marriage ages increase, younger individuals who, in previous decades, would have reported being married at the time of the census, now fall into the unmarried category.

A deeper look into gender and age distribution provides further insights. **The highest proportion of unmarried individuals is found in the 15-19 age group, making up 51% (or 22 million) of the entire unmarried population.** Within this category, 54.7% are male, and 49.3% are female. As age increases, the proportion of unmarried individuals decreases in a stepwise manner. For example, individuals aged 20-24 form the next largest group of unmarried individuals at 27.8%, with men comprising 62% of this category. The proportion continues to decline significantly in the 30-34 (4.3%) and 35-39 (2%) age brackets, with men consistently outnumbering women in these older groups. The 75+ age group reports only 27,464 unmarried individuals, accounting for a mere 0.06% of the total. **4.8% (2,076,945) of the unmarried population is older than 35 years. Men make up 62.2% of this category (1,292,091).**

Figure 4: Percentage of total population reporting: Never Married (by age and gender)

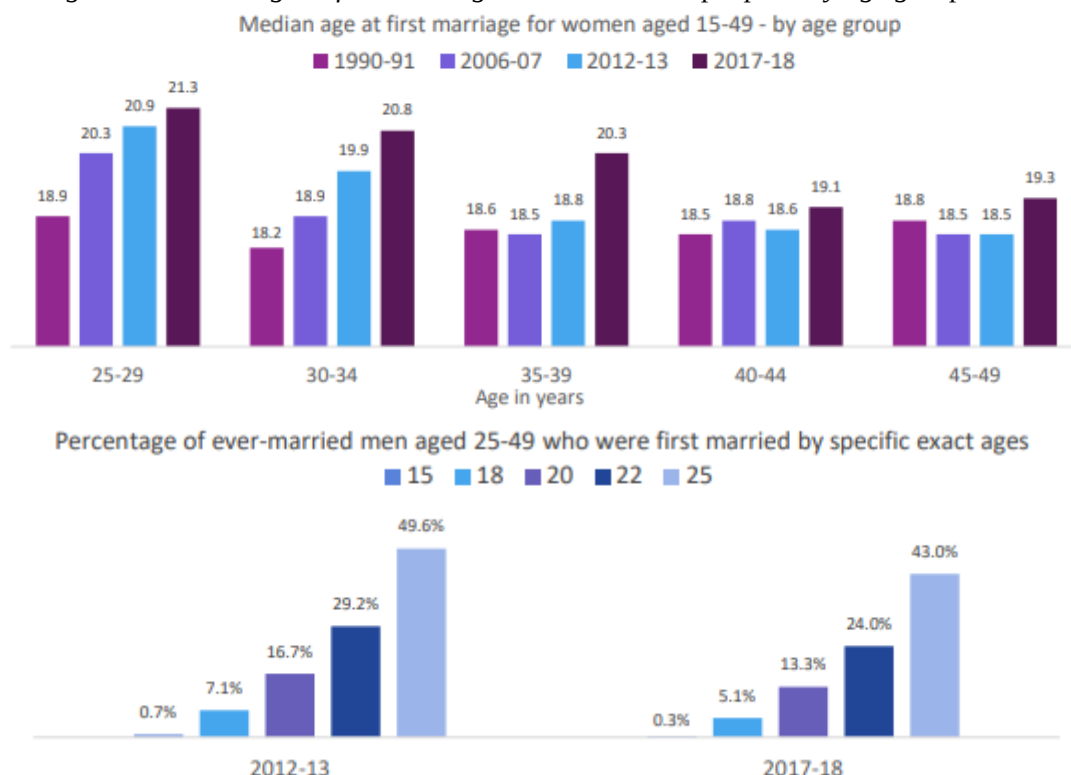


Source: 7th Population Census of Pakistan 2023, visualization by Gallup Pakistan
<https://galluppakistandigitalanalytics.com/>

These numbers suggest that the declining rate of early marriage is influenced by cultural shifts, including increased access to education, career aspirations, and a general change in priorities among younger generations.

Gallup Pakistan's analysis of the PDHS showed similar trends. **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. Similarly, **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.

Figure 5: Median age at first marriage or ever-married people – by age group



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

<https://gallup.com.pk/post/35428>

A district-level analysis further highlights regional disparities. **The top five districts with the highest proportion of unmarried individuals are all located in Balochistan, including Ziarat (38.2%), Kachhi (37.7%), and Quetta (36.8%).** Conversely, the districts with the lowest proportion of unmarried individuals are also found in rural provinces, such as Dera Bugti in Balochistan (15.5%), Upper and Lower Kohistan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (19% and 21.6%, respectively), and Kashmore (21.2%) and Tharparkar (21.8%) in Sindh.

Figure 6: Percentage of total population reporting: Never Married (Top 5 by district)

District	Population Reporting	% of Total Population
Ziarat	32184	38.24%
Kachhi	76271	37.65%
Quetta	460947	36.82%
Nushki	39375	36.77%
Mastung	113688	35.54%

Figure 7: Percentage of total population reporting: Never Married (Bottom 5 by district)

District	Population Reporting	% of Total Population
Dera Bugti	23677	15.09%
Kohistan Upper	31024	19.03%
Kashmore	124602	21.15%
Kohistan Lower	26716	21.45%
Tharparkar	186203	21.76%

Source: 7th Population Census of Pakistan 2023, visualization by Gallup Pakistan

<https://galluppakistandigitalanalytics.com/>

The concentration of unmarried individuals in rural provinces such as Balochistan and Sindh raises important questions. Are these figures indicative of shifting social attitudes and financial constraints that lead to delayed marriage? Or do they reflect potential data collection challenges in remote and underdeveloped regions, where census accuracy may be affected by logistical difficulties?

The 7th Population Census of Pakistan highlights a notable shift in marital patterns, particularly in urban areas, where rising education levels and changing socio-economic priorities have contributed to a delay in marriage. While marriage remains a significant institution, the increasing proportion of unmarried individuals does not necessarily indicate a move away from marriage altogether. Rather, it reflects an evolving landscape where marriage is happening later in life.

This trend has policy implications, particularly in areas of housing, employment, and social welfare. Urban centers experiencing delayed marriages may require targeted interventions to address associated economic and social challenges, such as affordable housing for young professionals and family planning initiatives. Additionally, further research is necessary to understand the disparities in marriage patterns across provinces and districts, particularly in rural areas where traditional norms continue to play a dominant role in shaping marital decisions.

In the coming years, as social attitudes and economic factors continue to evolve, it will be critical to monitor how these trends impact broader societal structures, including family dynamics, workforce participation, and demographic growth.

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.

Wish to know more about the 7th Population Census of Pakistan 2023?

The Gallup Pakistan 7th Population Census of Pakistan 2023 Dashboard presents an in-depth district and tehsil level analysis of demographic and housing data, covering key factors such as population distribution, age breakdowns, urbanization trends, household structures, literacy and living conditions across various regions.

You can find more information on the 7th Population Census of Pakistan at:

<https://www.galluppakistanandigitalanalytics.com/>

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