



Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Punjab Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2024

Child Protection (Birth Registration, Violent Discipline and Child Labour)



PRESS RELEASE

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MICS 2023–24 Reveals Gaps in Child Protection: 20% Births Unregistered, 83% Face Violent Discipline, 8.5% in Child Labor

Islamabad, January 22nd, 2026

Gallup Pakistan, under its Big Data Analysis initiative, presents a comprehensive review of child protection indicators from the Punjab Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2023–24. Despite progress in birth registration and access to government services, Punjab’s children continue to face widespread violent discipline at home and significant involvement in child labour. The data show that one in five children under five lack birth registration, over four in five children experience violent discipline, and 8.5% of children aged 5–17 are engaged in child labour, revealing persistent vulnerabilities in children’s legal identity, safety, and protection. This analysis brings together three critical child protection dimensions—birth registration, child discipline, and child labour—to assess where Punjab has made strides and where major gaps remain.

What is the Big Data Analysis Series by Gallup?

Gallup Pakistan’s Big Data series was initiated by Bilal I. Gilani, Executive Director of Gallup Pakistan. As he explains: *“Pakistan does not suffer from a lack of data, but from limited accessibility and weak translation of numbers into understanding. Gallup Pakistan bridges this gap by analyzing large, often under-used datasets — from PSLM and Labour Force Surveys to Economic Surveys and National Census data — so these statistics can meaningfully inform policy and public discourse.”*

What data points this current edition covers:

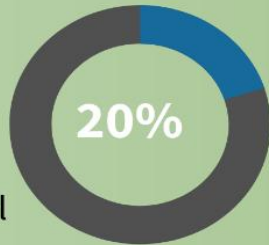
This PR analyzes three major child protection indicators from the Punjab MICS 2023–24: Birth registration of children under age 5 (Table PR.1.1), Violent and non-violent child discipline practices experienced by children age 1–14 (Table PR.2.1), and Child labor involvement among children age 5–17 (Table PR.3.3). Data are presented for Punjab overall, with emphasis on disparities by sex, residence, socioeconomic status, and functional difficulty status.

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MICS 2023–24 Reveals Gaps in Child Protection: **20%** Births Unregistered, **83%** Face Violent Discipline, **8.5%** in Child Labor

Birth Registration:

20% of children under five lack birth registration, leaving them without legal identity and at risk of exclusion from essential services.



Child Labor:

8.5% of children aged **5–17** are engaged in labour, with boys and rural children most affected.



Violent Discipline:

Violent discipline is widespread, with **83%** of children exposed to physical or psychological violence.

41.9% of children face severe physical punishment, including beating or hitting with objects.



School attendance shields children from labour, reducing child labour risk by more than two-thirds. Policy interventions must target the poorest and least educated households, where risks cluster most heavily.

Maternal Education Strongly Shapes Child Protection Outcomes:

Maternal education is a strong protective factor, reducing risks across all domains of child protection.



Wealth Inequalities Deepen Risks:

Poverty sharply increases vulnerability—poor children are less likely to be registered and far more likely to work.



Key Findings:

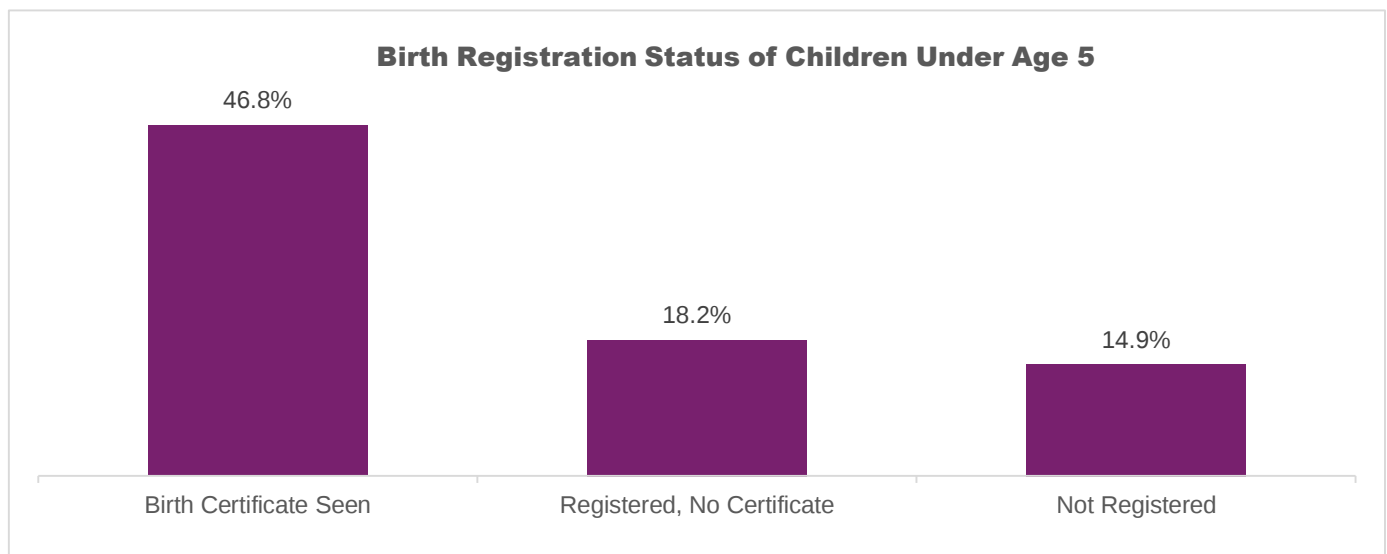
1. 20% of children under five lack birth registration, leaving them without legal identity and at risk of exclusion from essential services.
2. Violent discipline is widespread, with 83% of children exposed to physical or psychological violence.
3. 41.9% of children face severe physical punishment, including beating or hitting with objects.
4. 8.5% of children aged 5–17 are engaged in labour, with boys and rural children most affected.
5. Maternal education is a strong protective factor, reducing risks across all domains of child protection.
6. Poverty sharply increases vulnerability—poor children are less likely to be registered and far more likely to work.
7. School attendance shields children from labour, reducing child labour risk by more than two-thirds.
8. Policy interventions must target the poorest and least educated households, where risks cluster most heavily.

1. Birth Registration: One in Five Children Still Have No Legal Identity

Birth registration is a fundamental building block of child protection, enabling access to schooling, healthcare, social protection, and legal rights. The MICS data show that while Punjab has made progress—with 79.9% of children under age 5 registered—registration remains far from universal. The fact that 20% of young children lack any registration means they may grow up without the official identity needed to participate fully in society. Even among those registered, nearly one in five (18.2%) has *no birth certificate*, which weakens their ability to claim rights or access formal services.

Disparities reveal deeper systemic issues. Rural children remain substantially more unregistered than their urban counterparts, reflecting barriers such as distance to NADRA centers, limited documentation awareness, and cost burdens. Wealth is an even more powerful divider: children in the poorest households are disproportionately unregistered, whereas among the richest households, 90% are registered. Maternal education also plays a defining role—children of mothers with little or no education show significantly lower documentation rates. These patterns reveal that birth registration is not merely an administrative step, but a reflection of deeper socioeconomic inequalities.

Without corrective measures—mobile registration units, fee waivers, simplified procedures, and targeted outreach—Punjab risks leaving behind a segment of children who will face challenges across their entire lives, from school enrollment to employment and legal protection.



Source: Punjab MICS 2023–24 (Bureau of Statistics Punjab & UNICEF)

As of the latest data, 79.9% of children under age 5 in Punjab are registered in some form. However, there are gaps in documentation: while 46.8% of children have had their birth certificates seen, 18.2% are registered without a certificate. Additionally, 14.9% of children remain entirely unregistered. The remaining 20.1% represents children whose registration status could not be confirmed during the survey.

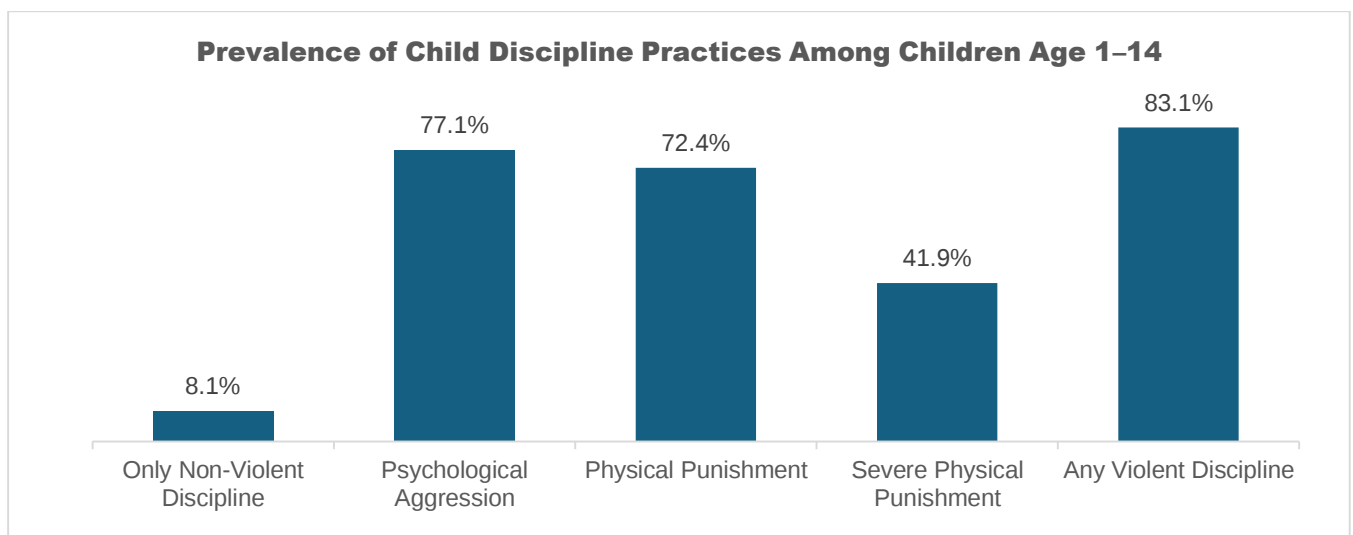
2. Violent Discipline: 83% of Children Face Harsh Treatment at Home

The MICS survey on violent discipline reflects the experiences reported by parents or primary caregivers of children aged 1–14. These respondents provided information on the discipline methods they use at home, which could include physical or psychological punishment. With 83.1% of children ages 1–14 experiencing at least one form of violent discipline in the previous month, the overwhelming majority grow up in environments where physical or psychological punishment is normalized. Even more concerning, 41.9% endure *severe* forms of physical punishment, highlighting the intensity of violence faced by many children.

Psychological aggression—shouting, threats, humiliation—is equally widespread, affecting 77.1% of children. These forms of violence, while sometimes overlooked, are strongly associated with stress, anxiety, and long-term psychological harm. Only 8.1% of children receive non-violent discipline, indicating extremely low penetration of positive parenting approaches in the population.

Social patterns show that violent discipline cuts across all groups—rich and poor, rural and urban, male and female. However, disparities still exist: children of mothers with higher education face significantly less violence, demonstrating the powerful influence of parental awareness and education on child welfare. Rural children and boys are somewhat more likely to face physical punishment, but the differences are not large; violent discipline is a *generalized practice* across Punjab.

These findings point to an urgent need for widespread awareness campaigns, early childhood parenting programs, and community-based interventions to shift social norms toward safer, developmentally appropriate discipline practices.



Source: Punjab MICS 2023–24 (Bureau of Statistics Punjab & UNICEF)

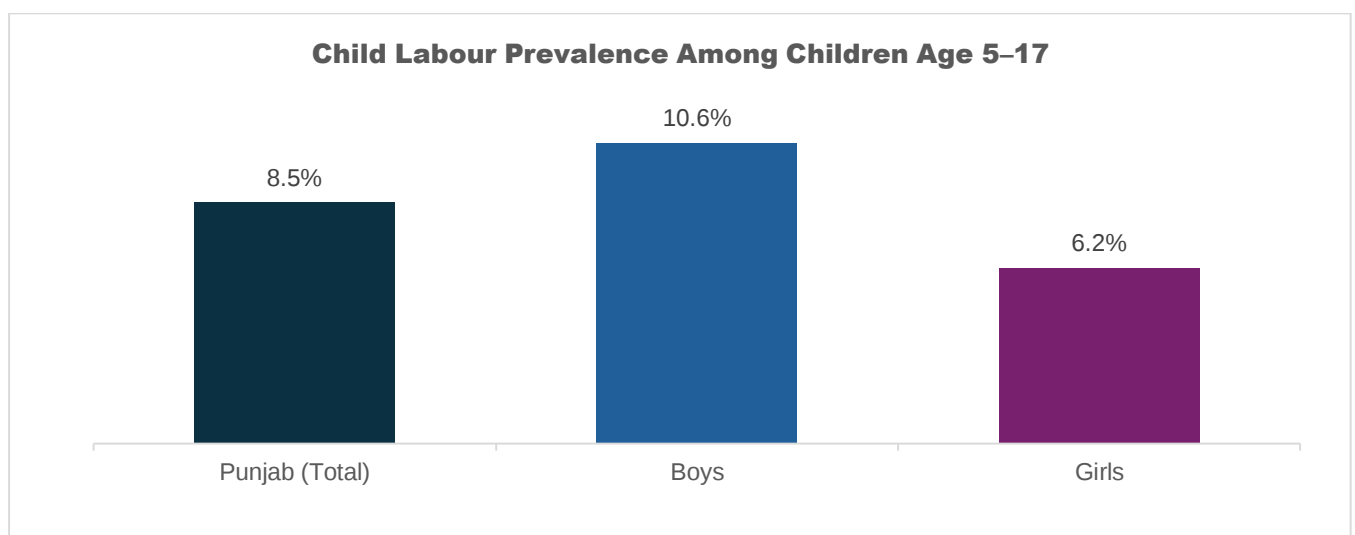
3. Child Labor: 8.5% of Children Involved, With Boys and Rural Children Most Affected

Child labor in Punjab continues to reflect economic hardship and limited opportunities for vulnerable households. At 8.5%, child labor affects a significant proportion of children aged 5–17, comprising both economic work and excessive household chores. Boys are particularly exposed, with 10.6% engaged in labor compared to 6.2% of girls—a pattern driven by gendered expectations that boys contribute to income or assist in family businesses. Rural children experience nearly doubles the child labor rate of urban children, underscoring the role of agricultural work, informal employment, and lack of schooling alternatives.

Age intensifies vulnerability. Labor involvement rises sharply as children enter adolescence, reaching its highest levels among those aged 15–17. This aligns with rising economic pressures on families and limited access to secondary schooling, especially in rural areas. One of the clearest findings is the strong link between schooling and labor: children not attending school have a labor rate of 17.9%, three times higher than children in school (5.4%). This suggests that staying in school is one of the strongest protective factors against child labor.

Child labor is also heavily shaped by poverty. In the richest households, only 2.3% of children are engaged in labor, compared to 17.4% in the poorest households. Maternal education further influences outcomes—children whose mothers have no education are far more likely to be involved in labor than children of mothers with secondary or higher education.

These findings highlight both chronic household vulnerability and structural gaps in schooling access, economic support, and child protection enforcement. Effective policies must go beyond enforcement to address the root causes—poverty, limited schooling access, and lack of social safety nets.

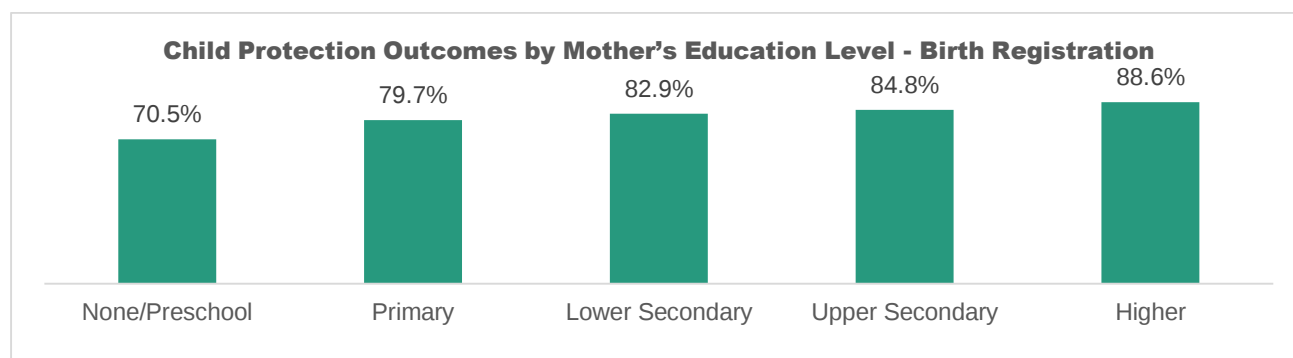


Source: Punjab MICS 2023–24 (Bureau of Statistics Punjab & UNICEF)

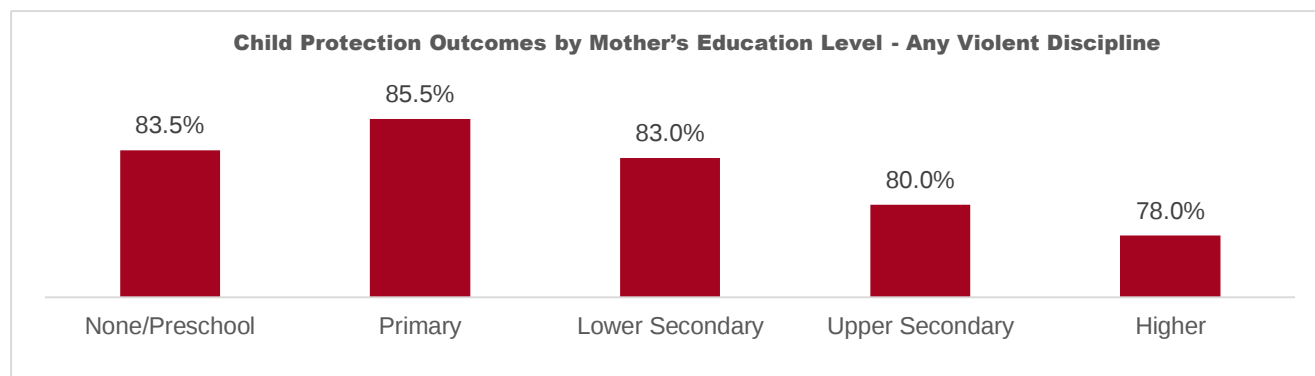
4. Maternal Education Strongly Shapes Child Protection Outcomes

One of the clearest patterns across all three indicators is the role of maternal education. Children whose mothers have no education face significantly higher risks of non-registration, violent discipline, and labour involvement. Birth registration climbs from 70.5% among children of mothers with no schooling to 88.6% among children of mothers with higher education.

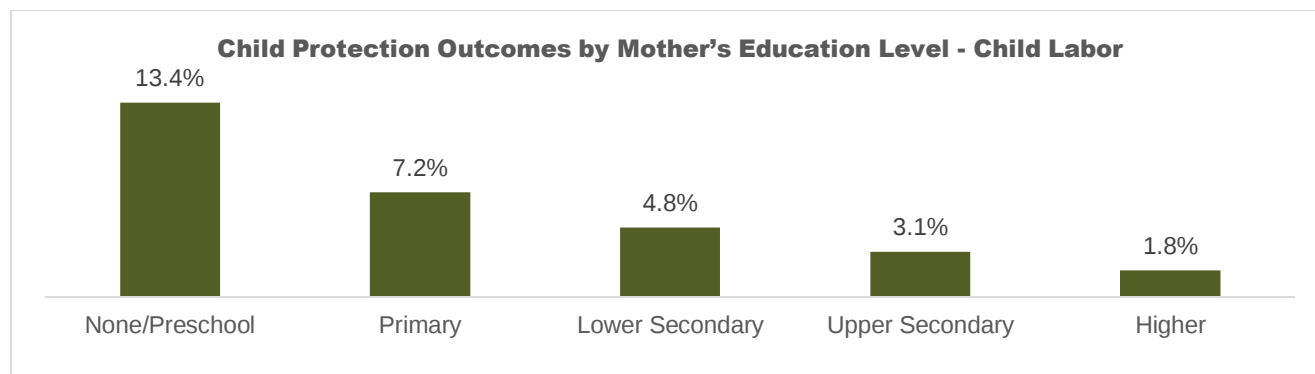
A similar gradient appears in discipline: 85.5% of children of mothers with primary schooling experience violent discipline, compared to 78% among children whose mothers have higher education. Child labour shows the starkest inequality: 13.4% of children of mothers with no education work, versus only 1.8% of children whose mothers have higher education. This consistent pattern highlights the intergenerational benefits of women's education—not only for household income and wellbeing but also for children's safety, nurturing, and long-term development.



Source: Punjab MICS 2023–24 (Bureau of Statistics Punjab & UNICEF)



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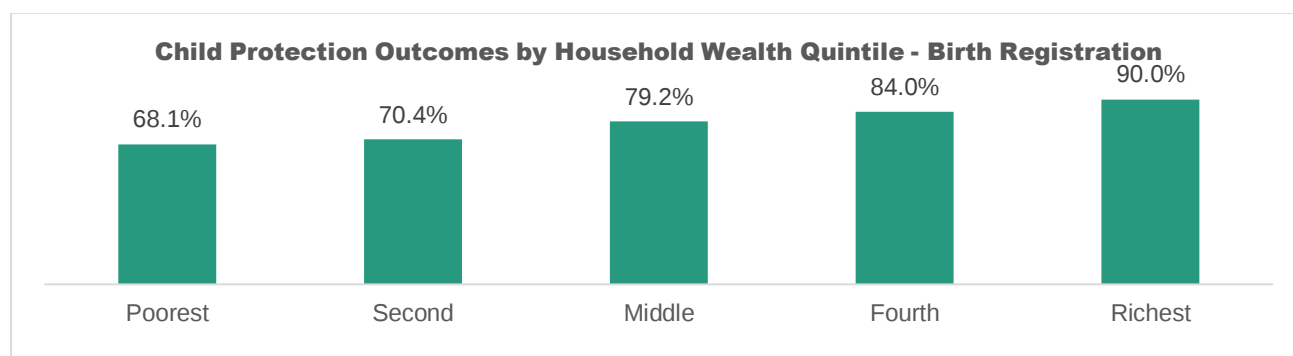
Source: Punjab MICS 2023–24 (Bureau of Statistics Punjab & UNICEF)

5. Wealth Inequalities Deepen Risks: Poorer Children Least Protected

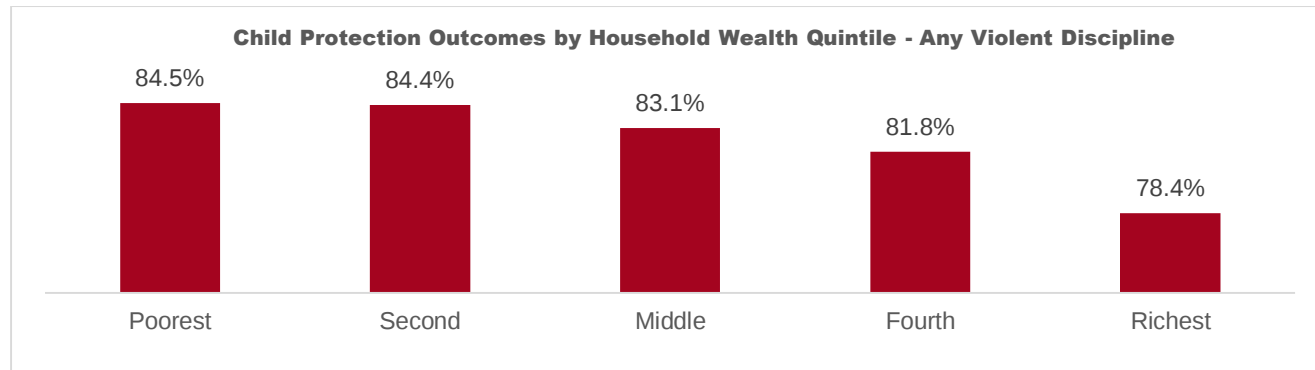
Household wealth is another powerful predictor of child protection outcomes. Children in the poorest households face severe disadvantages: only 68.1% are registered at birth, compared to 90% in the richest households. Exposure to violent discipline shows a downward gradient as wealth rises, but remains extremely high across all groups.

Child labor exhibits the most dramatic wealth gap. Labor rates fall from 17.4% in the poorest quintile to 3.6% in the richest—nearly a fivefold difference. Poverty intensifies the pressures that drive child labor, including the need for children to supplement household income or contribute to family work.

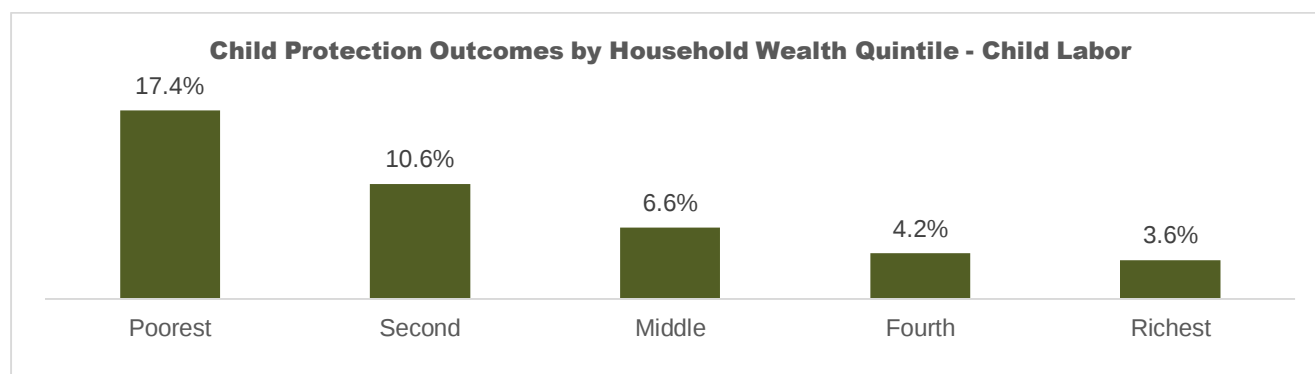
These inequalities emphasize that child protection policies must be paired with poverty reduction, social safety nets, and targeted support for the poorest households.



Source: Punjab MICS 2023–24 (Bureau of Statistics Punjab & UNICEF)



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About the MICS Punjab 2023–24 Survey

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2023–24 is Punjab’s largest and most comprehensive source of population and social sector statistics, conducted by the Bureau of Statistics, Government of Punjab, in collaboration with UNICEF. The survey provides high-quality, internationally comparable data on the well-being of women and children across the province. MICS follows a globally standardized methodology used in more than 120 countries, ensuring that results are reliable, representative, and comparable over time.

The 2023–24 round covers a wide range of indicators—including child mortality, nutrition, health, education, water and sanitation, child protection, reproductive health, and socio-demographic characteristics. The survey sampled tens of thousands of households across urban and rural Punjab using a stratified, multi-stage cluster sampling design that guarantees statistical precision at both provincial and district levels. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews, with rigorous quality checks, real-time monitoring, and global MICS validation standards applied throughout the fieldwork.

MICS data are widely used by policymakers, researchers, development partners, and civil society to assess service delivery gaps, track progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and monitor the situation of women and children. The Punjab 2023–24 edition is especially significant as it provides post-COVID evidence on vulnerabilities, inequalities, and emerging demographic patterns in the province. By offering granular insights across wealth quintiles, education levels, geographic regions, and demographic groups, MICS enables a deeper understanding of who is being left behind and where targeted investments are most urgently needed.

This PR series by Gallup Pakistan draws directly on this authoritative dataset to translate complex indicators into accessible insights for decision-makers and the wider public. The goal is to ensure that the rich evidence generated by the MICS survey meaningfully informs policy, programming, and public dialogue across Pakistan.

Editor’s Note

This analysis underscores the persistent child protection challenges in Punjab, particularly the high rates of unregistered births, violent discipline, and child labor. The data reveal deep inequalities, with children from the poorest and least educated households facing the greatest risks. However, maternal education and wealth remain strong protective factors, highlighting the importance of targeted interventions. To address these issues, policy efforts must focus on bridging these gaps, ensuring that all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, can grow up in safe and nurturing environments.

— **Aisha Aamir**

Assistant Manager Research, Gallup Pakistan



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.

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Contact Details:

Islamabad : +92 51 2655630

Email: isb@gallup.com.pk

www.gallup-international.com