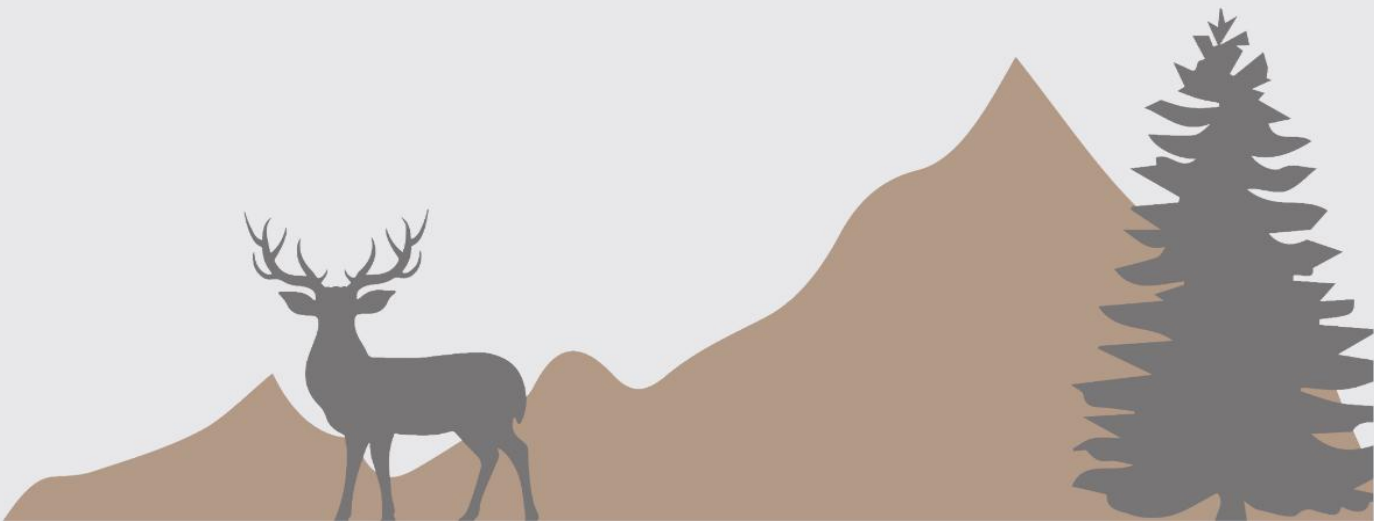




Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Punjab Development Statistics (50 Years) Forestry



PRESS RELEASE

Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Punjab Development Statistics (50 Years)

Punjab's Recorded Forest Area Declines from 3.4 Million to 665 Thousand Hectares After 2011 While Timber Values Continue Rising

Islamabad, March 13th, 2026

Forestry in Punjab has historically operated under severe structural constraints, shaped by intense land pressure, competing economic priorities, and long-standing sustainability concerns. Unlike agriculture or livestock, forestry has not experienced continuous expansion over the past five decades. Instead, the sector reflects a pattern of stagnation in land availability, fluctuating production cycles, and rising economic value driven more by scarcity than by growth. Long-term data reveal that Punjab's forest resources have increasingly shifted from being a source of expanding output to a tightly regulated, price-sensitive sector operating within narrowing ecological limits.

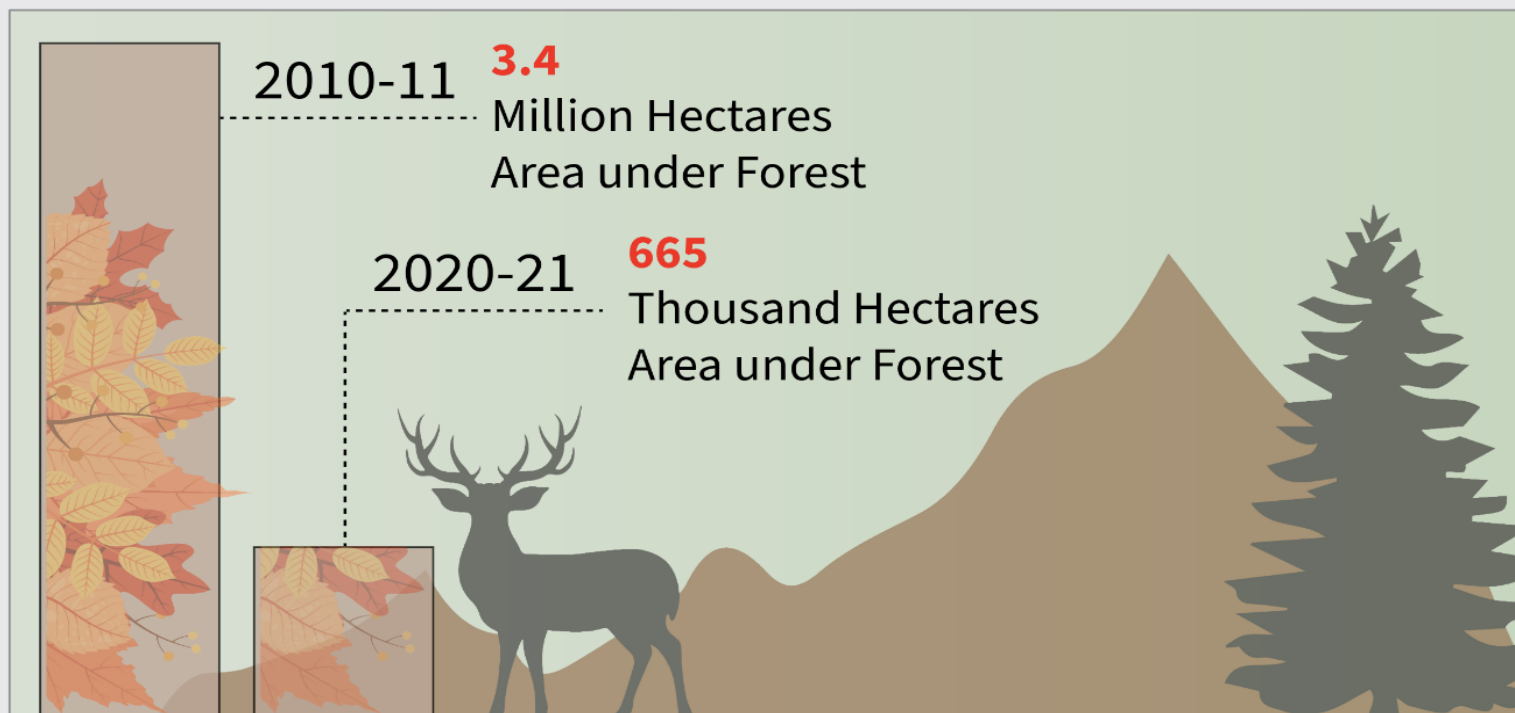
What is the Big Data Analysis Series by Gallup?

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 press release is based on official administrative statistics covering the period from the early 1970s to 2020–21, documenting forest area, timber production, and firewood production in Punjab. The data track both physical quantities and monetary values, allowing a long-term assessment of how forest resources have been utilized, monetized, and constrained over time. Together, these indicators provide a comprehensive picture of structural trends, short-term fluctuations, and underlying pressures shaping the forestry sector across five decades.

Punjab's Recorded Forest Area Declines from **3.4** Million to **665** Thousand Hectares After 2011 While Timber Values Continue Rising



Timber Production

Timber production has been highly volatile, marked by episodic spikes rather than sustained growth.



Firewood Output

Firewood output declined steadily in physical terms, even as its monetary value rose sharply.



Rising prices increasingly compensate for declining volumes, signaling growing scarcity. Forestry's economic footprint has shifted toward constrained, high-value extraction rather than expansion.

Key Findings:

1. Forest area in Punjab remained largely unchanged for decades before a sharp downward reclassification in the 2010s.
2. Timber production has been highly volatile, marked by episodic spikes rather than sustained growth.
3. Firewood output declined steadily in physical terms, even as its monetary value rose sharply.
4. Rising prices increasingly compensate for declining volumes, signaling growing scarcity.
5. Forestry's economic footprint has shifted toward constrained, high-value extraction rather than expansion.

Editor's Note

This edition examines long-term trends in Punjab's forestry sector using five decades of administrative data. The findings reveal a sector operating under increasing ecological and land-use constraints. Recorded forest area, which remained near 3.3–3.5 million hectares for decades, fell sharply to about 665 thousand hectares after 2011 following administrative reclassification. At the same time, timber production has fluctuated widely while its monetary value has risen sharply, reflecting growing scarcity rather than expansion. Firewood output has also declined substantially in physical terms, even as its market value increased. Taken together, these patterns suggest that Punjab's forestry sector has gradually shifted from one defined by resource availability to one increasingly shaped by scarcity, regulation, and rising economic value of limited forest resources.

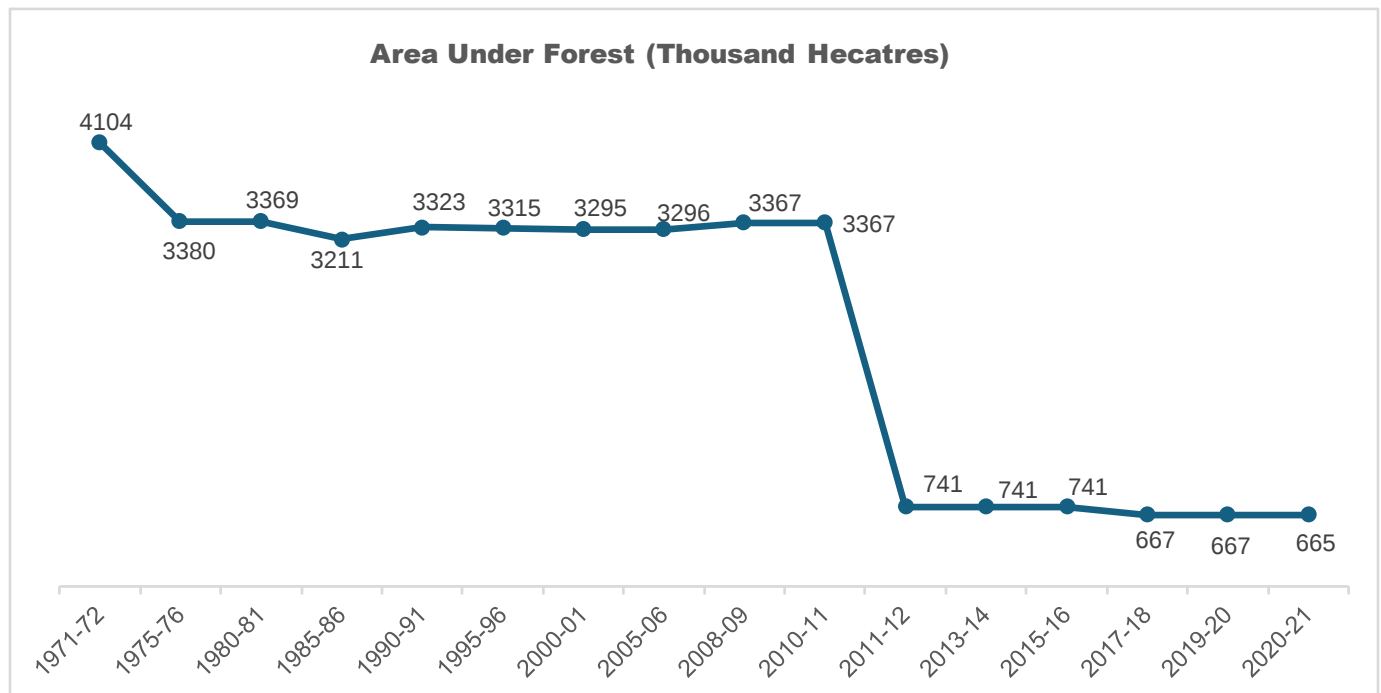
- **Aisha Aamir**

Assistant Manager Research, Gallup Pakistan

1. Forest Area: Persistent Constraints and a Structural Reclassification

For nearly forty years, Punjab's forest area showed remarkable rigidity, hovering within a narrow range of approximately 3.3 to 3.5 million hectares. This prolonged stability does not reflect conservation success alone; rather, it underscores the limited scope for expanding forest cover in a province where agricultural productivity, population growth, and urban expansion dominate land-use priorities. Forestry remained largely confined to marginal or ecologically sensitive zones, with little room for horizontal expansion.

A major structural break appears in the early 2010s, when the recorded forest area drops dramatically to well under one million hectares, reaching roughly 665 thousand hectares by 2020–21. While this decline partly reflects administrative reclassification—particularly the transfer of large tracts in Cholistan—the resulting statistics nevertheless highlight how narrow Punjab's officially recognized forest base has become. This redefinition has long-term implications, as a smaller recorded forest estate directly limits future extraction potential, conservation planning, and ecosystem services.

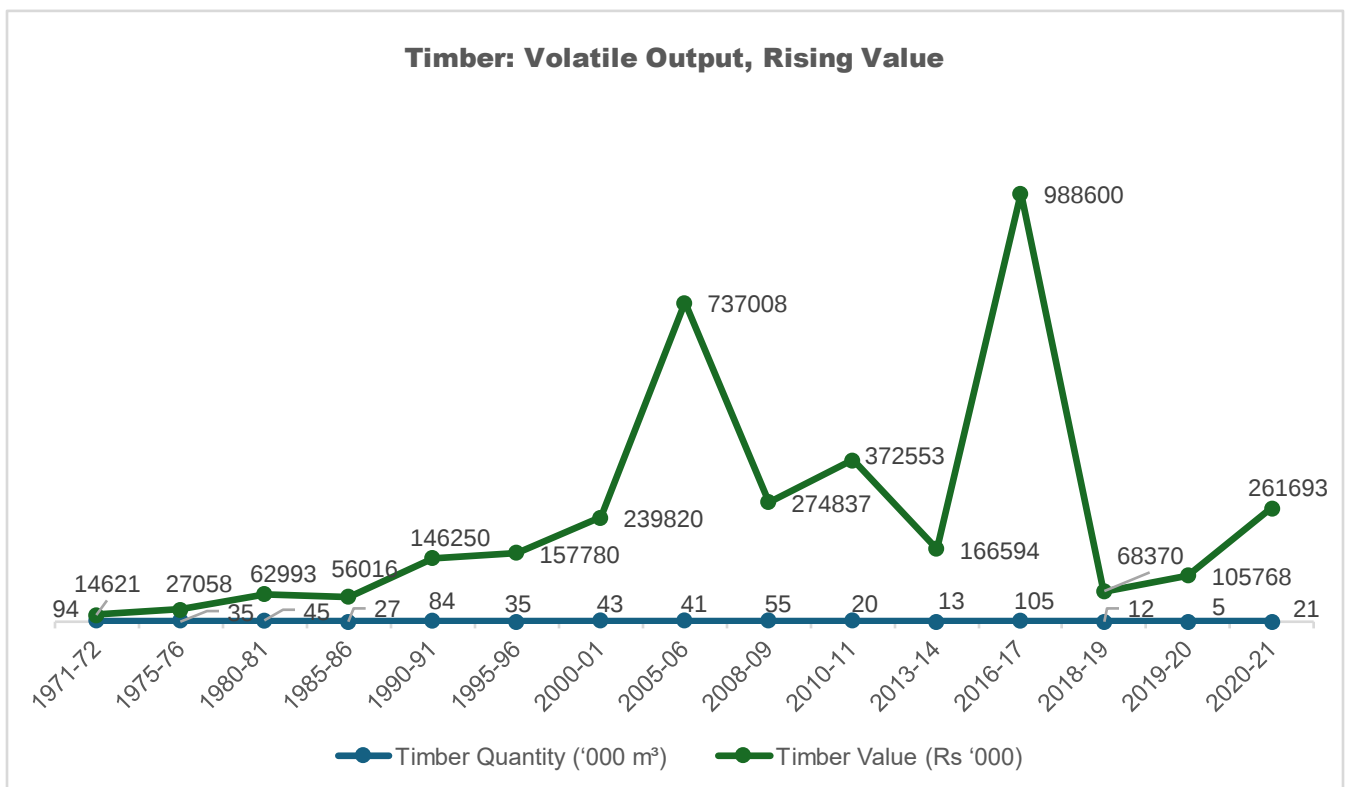


Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

2. Timber Production: Episodic Extraction Rather Than Structural Growth

Timber production trends over the past five decades reveal pronounced instability. Annual output oscillates sharply, with several years recording less than 30 thousand cubic meters, followed by intermittent spikes exceeding 100 thousand cubic meters. These peaks are not sustained, indicating that timber harvesting in Punjab is often driven by short-term policy decisions, salvage operations, or exceptional clearances rather than steady forest regeneration.

Despite this volatility in physical output, the value of timber has risen substantially, particularly in the later decades. In recent years, timber values reached over Rs. 250,000 million, even when quantities remained modest. This divergence suggests that market prices increasingly reflect scarcity and regulatory constraints rather than abundance. Timber's economic contribution, therefore, has become more dependent on price escalation than on increased production capacity.

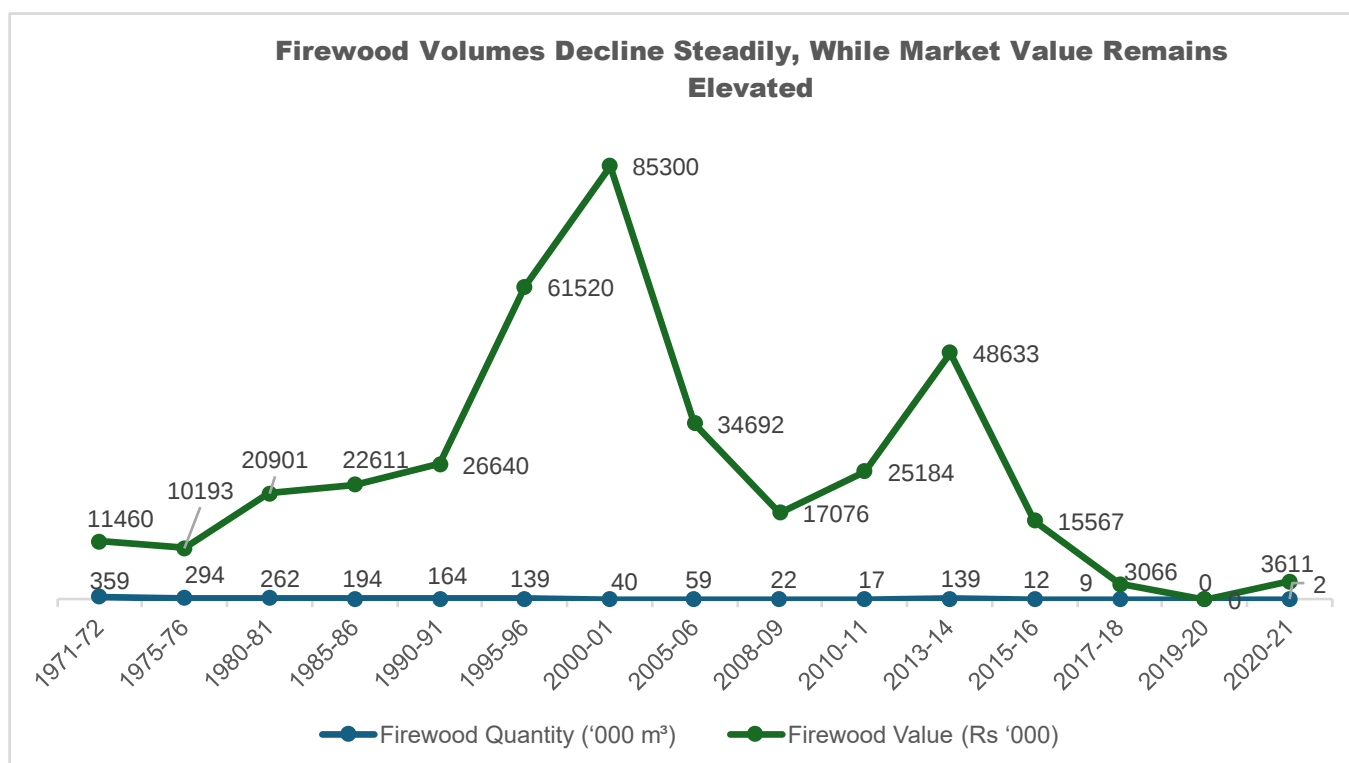


Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

3. Firewood Production: Declining Volumes Amid Persistent Demand

Firewood production presents a clearer long-term contraction in physical terms. From levels exceeding 350 thousand cubic meters in the early decades, output gradually declined, falling to low double-digit or even single-digit thousand cubic meters by the late 2010s. This steady reduction points to sustained pressure on forest biomass, combined with policy efforts to curb over extraction for fuel purposes.

Yet, firewood's economic value tells a contrasting story. Even as quantities fell, total value rose sharply, reaching tens of billions of rupees in several recent years. This pattern indicates that demand for firewood—particularly for household energy and small-scale commercial use—remains resilient. Rising prices appear to offset falling volumes, reinforcing the picture of a resource under constraint rather than decline in relevance.



Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

4. Scarcity, Prices, and the Sustainability Challenge

Viewed together, trends in forest area, timber output, and firewood production point to a forestry sector increasingly shaped by scarcity. The long-term rise in monetary value despite declining or stagnant quantities signals tightening supply conditions and heightened competition for forest resources. Rather than expanding its production base, Punjab's forestry sector has transitioned toward managed extraction under constraint, where economic returns are driven primarily by higher prices.

This trajectory raises important sustainability concerns. Without substantial investment in afforestation, farm forestry, and alternative energy sources, rising demand risks placing additional stress on already limited forest resources. The data suggest that Punjab's forestry future hinges less on expansion and more on how effectively scarcity is managed—balancing economic needs with environmental preservation.



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