



Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Punjab Development Statistics (50 Years) Print Media & Periodicals



PRESS RELEASE

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Punjab's Registered Newspapers and Periodicals Rose from 927 in 1972 to 4,155 in 1998, Before Falling to 132 by 2021

Islamabad, June 3rd, 2026

Punjab's print media landscape expanded sharply from the 1970s to the late 1990s, before experiencing a major contraction after 1998. Data from *Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021)* shows that the total number of newspapers and periodicals increased from 927 in 1972 to 4,155 in 1998, then fell sharply to 546 in 1999 and further to 132 by 2021.

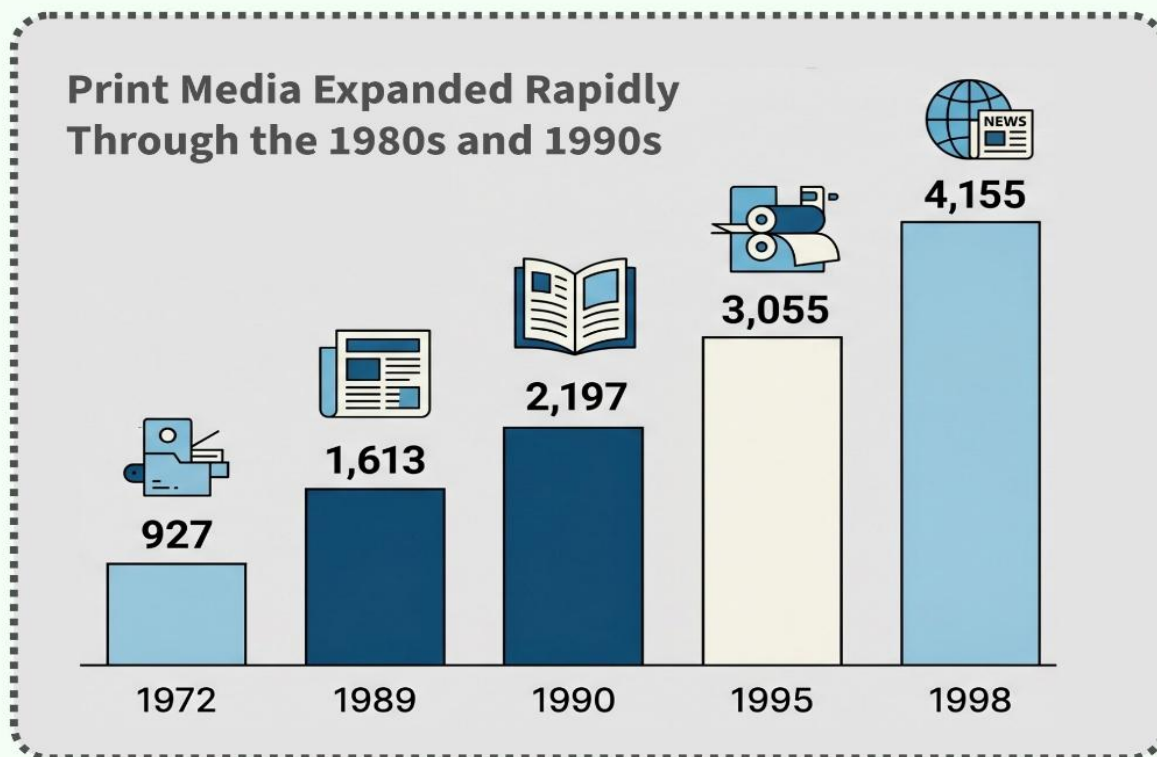
What is the Big Data Analysis Series by Gallup?

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:

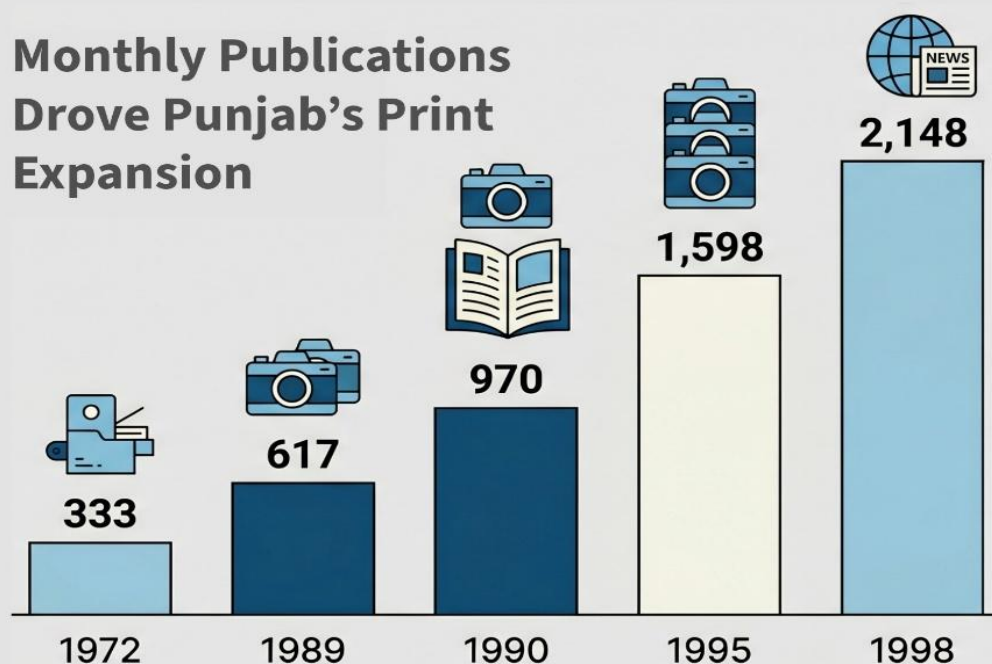
This analysis is based on Table 22.1(a): Newspapers and Periodicals by Frequency, The Punjab and Table 22.1(b): Newspapers and Periodicals by Language, The Punjab. The tables cover annual counts of newspapers and periodicals from 1972 to 2021, classified by frequency of publication and by language.

Punjab's Registered Newspapers and Periodicals Rose from 927 in 1972 to 4,155 in 1998, Before Falling to 132 by 2021



Punjab's print publication sector expanded steadily over nearly three decades. Total newspapers and periodicals increased from 927 in 1972 to 1,613 in 1989, before rising sharply during the 1990s to 2,197 in 1990, 3,055 in 1995, and finally 4,155 in 1998. Between 1972 and 1998 alone, the number of registered publications increased by nearly 4.5 times.

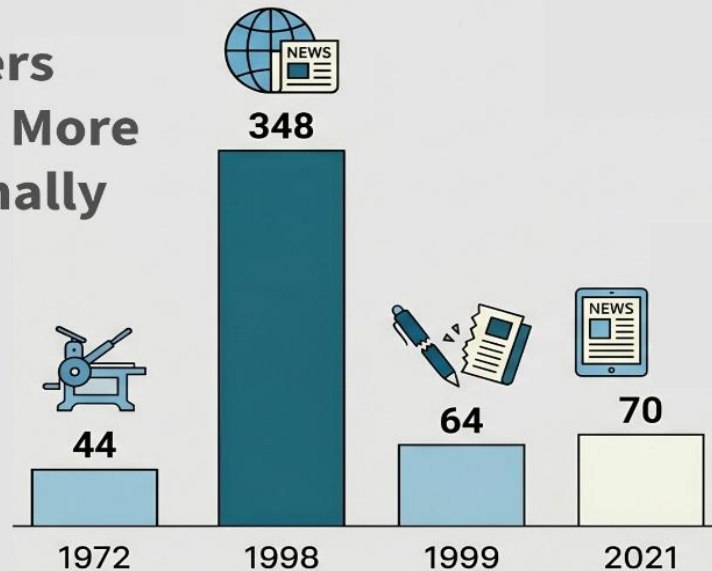
Monthly Publications Drove Punjab's Print Expansion



Monthly publications were the largest and fastest-growing segment of Punjab's print media sector during the expansion years. Their number rose from 333 in 1972 to 617 in 1989, then accelerated sharply during the 1990s to 970 in 1990, 1,598 in 1995, and 2,148 in 1998.

However, monthly publications also experienced one of the sharpest post-1998 contractions. Their number fell from 2,148 in 1998 to 253 in 1999, and later to only 12 by 2021. This suggests that periodic publications were especially vulnerable to changes in declaration policy and the broader contraction of the registered print ecosystem.

Daily Newspapers Remained More Institutionally Stable



Although daily newspapers also declined after 1998, they proved comparatively more resilient than other publication categories. Daily publications increased from 44 in 1972 to 348 in 1998, before declining to 64 in 1999 and later standing at 70 in 2021.

In proportional terms, daily newspapers represented only about 4.7% of total publications in 1972, but accounted for approximately 53.0% of all registered publications by 2021. This shift is important because it shows that the remaining print ecosystem became increasingly concentrated around daily publications after the collapse of periodic and less frequent publications.

Key Findings:

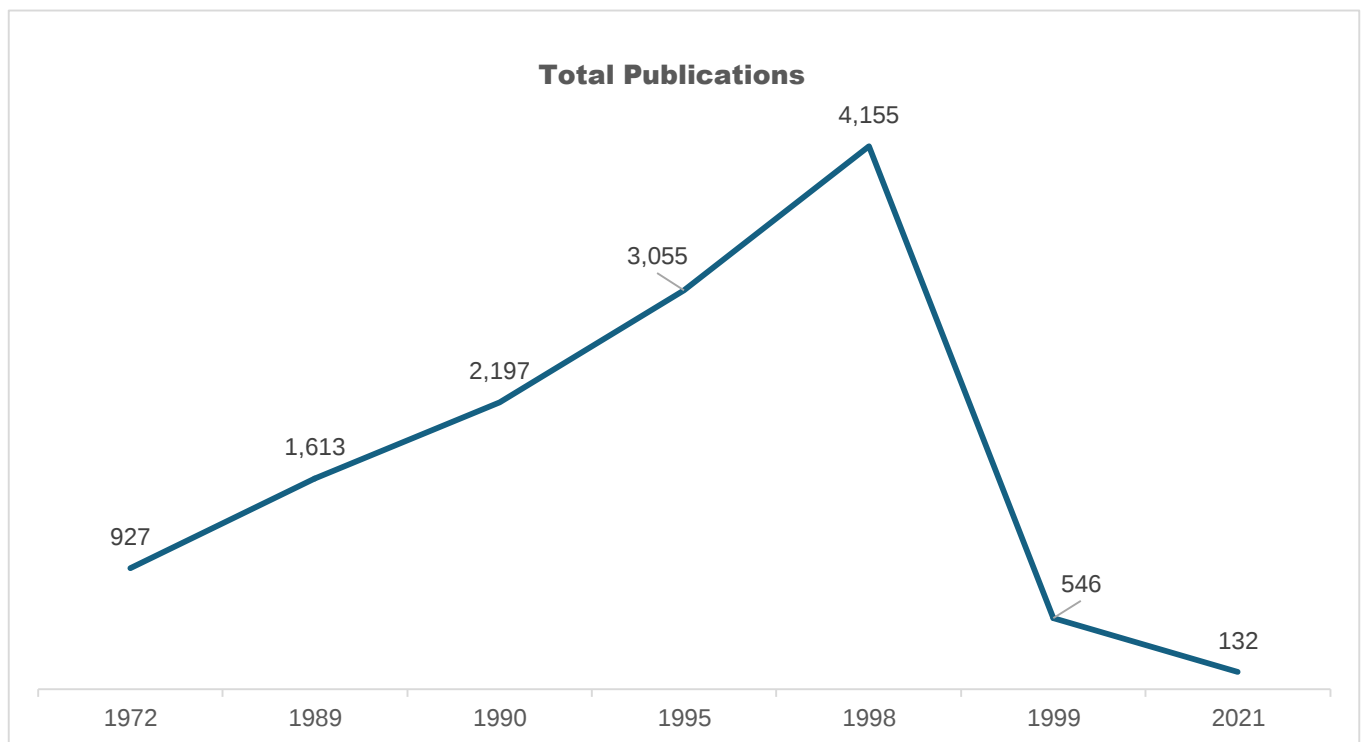
1. Total newspapers and periodicals increased from 927 in 1972 to a peak of 4,155 in 1998, before declining to 132 in 2021.
2. The largest single break occurred between 1998 and 1999, when total publications fell from 4,155 to 546, an 86.9% decline.
3. Monthly publications were the largest category at the 1998 peak, rising from 333 in 1972 to 2,148 in 1998.
4. Daily publications increased from 44 in 1972 to 348 in 1998, before falling to 70 in 2021.
5. Urdu remained the dominant publication language throughout the period, rising from 807 in 1972 to 3,752 in 1998, before declining to 105 in 2021.
6. English publications rose from 115 in 1972 to 330 in 1998, then fell to 27 in 2021.
7. Punjabi publications remained limited, reaching 55 in 1998, but falling to 0 by 2021.
8. The long-term data suggests that Punjab's print media sector moved from expansion and diversification toward a much smaller and more concentrated publication landscape after the late 1990s.

1. Print Media Expanded Rapidly Through the 1980s and 1990s

Punjab's print publication sector expanded steadily over nearly three decades. Total newspapers and periodicals increased from 927 in 1972 to 1,613 in 1989, before rising sharply during the 1990s to 2,197 in 1990, 3,055 in 1995, and finally 4,155 in 1998. Between 1972 and 1998 alone, the number of registered publications increased by nearly 4.5 times.

The expansion was broad-based across publication frequencies. Daily publications rose from 44 to 348, while bi-weekly and weekly publications increased from 204 to 1,117. Monthly publications grew most dramatically, increasing from 333 in 1972 to 2,148 in 1998. By the late 1990s, monthly publications alone accounted for more than half of all registered newspapers and periodicals in Punjab.

The data suggests that the print sector became increasingly diversified during this period. Growth was not confined to newspapers alone, but extended strongly into magazines, journals, and other periodic publications. The scale of expansion during the 1990s indicates that Punjab experienced a major broadening of its print publication ecosystem before the structural break that followed.



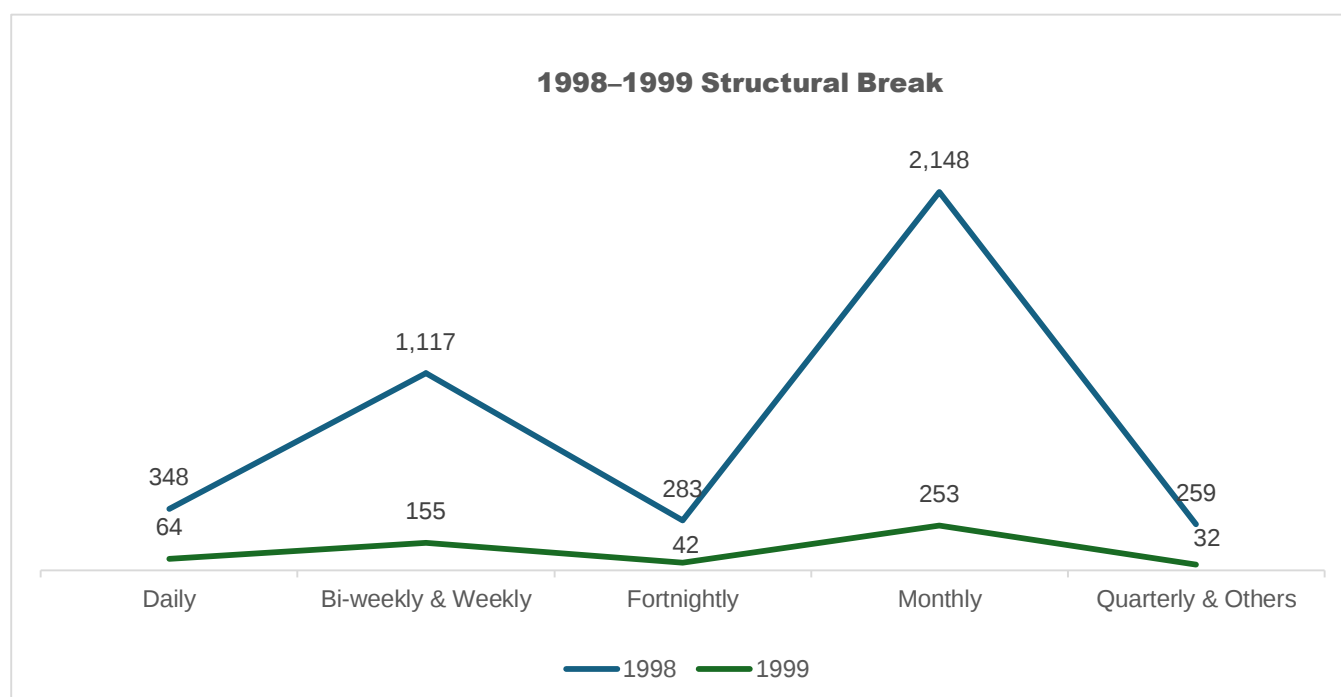
Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

2. The 1998–1999 Collapse Represents a Major Structural Break in the Dataset

The most dramatic shift in the entire series occurs between 1998 and 1999. Total registered newspapers and periodicals fell from 4,155 to 546, an 86.9% decline within a single year. The report footnote explicitly states that the sharp decrease occurred due to restrictions imposed on the grant of declaration, meaning the decline should not be interpreted simply as a sudden collapse in readership or media demand.

The contraction affected every major publication category simultaneously. Daily publications declined from 348 to 64, bi-weekly and weekly publications from 1,117 to 155, fortnightly publications from 283 to 42, monthly publications from 2,148 to 253, and quarterly/other publications from 259 to 32. Because all categories fell sharply at once, the data strongly suggests a regulatory or administrative restructuring of registered publications rather than a gradual market-led decline.

This break is important analytically because it changes the long-term interpretation of the series. The late-1990s decline reflects not only media sector contraction, but also changes in declaration policy and registration practices. The post-1999 print landscape therefore represents a structurally different publication environment from the one reflected in earlier decades.



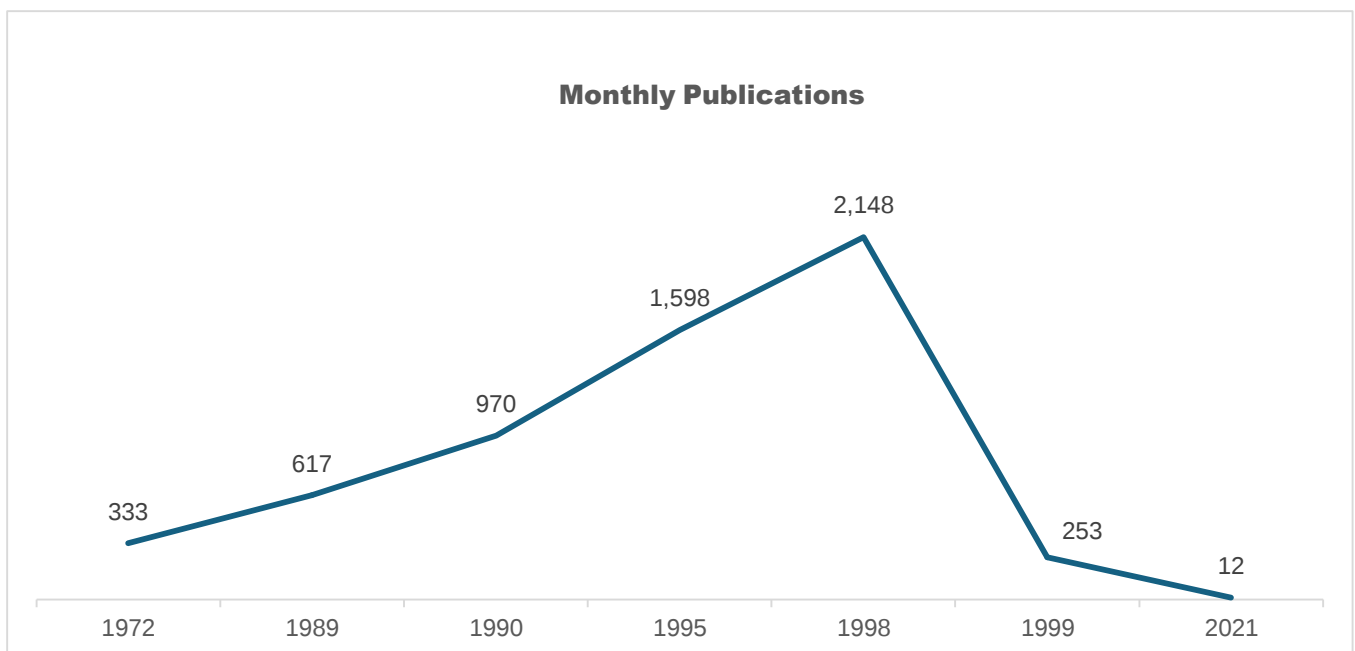
Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

3. Monthly Publications Drove Punjab's Print Expansion

Monthly publications were the largest and fastest-growing segment of Punjab's print media sector during the expansion years. Their number rose from 333 in 1972 to 617 in 1989, then accelerated sharply during the 1990s to 970 in 1990, 1,598 in 1995, and 2,148 in 1998.

This means monthly publications alone increased by more than six times between 1972 and 1998. At the 1998 peak, they accounted for roughly 51.7% of all registered newspapers and periodicals in Punjab. This indicates that much of the sector's expansion was driven not by daily newspapers alone, but by a broader rise in periodic publications such as magazines, journals, newsletters, and specialized publications.

However, monthly publications also experienced one of the sharpest post-1998 contractions. Their number fell from 2,148 in 1998 to 253 in 1999, and later to only 12 by 2021. This suggests that periodic publications were especially vulnerable to changes in declaration policy and the broader contraction of the registered print ecosystem.



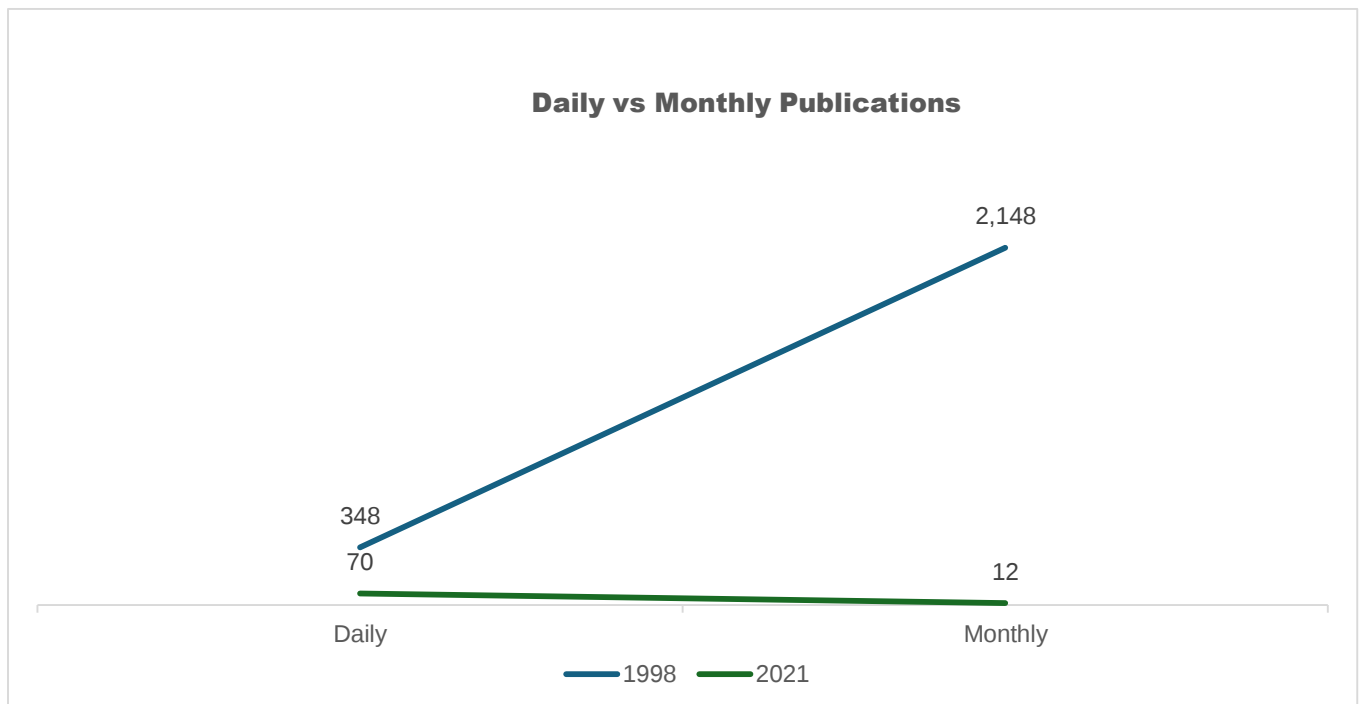
Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

4. Daily Newspapers Remained More Institutionally Stable

Although daily newspapers also declined after 1998, they proved comparatively more resilient than other publication categories. Daily publications increased from 44 in 1972 to 348 in 1998, before declining to 64 in 1999 and later standing at 70 in 2021.

In proportional terms, daily newspapers represented only about 4.7% of total publications in 1972, but accounted for approximately 53.0% of all registered publications by 2021. This shift is important because it shows that the remaining print ecosystem became increasingly concentrated around daily publications after the collapse of periodic and less frequent publications.

The data therefore suggests that daily newspapers retained a stronger institutional and commercial position within the media landscape, even as the broader publication sector contracted sharply. While magazines and periodic publications largely disappeared from the dataset, daily newspapers continued to maintain a visible presence.



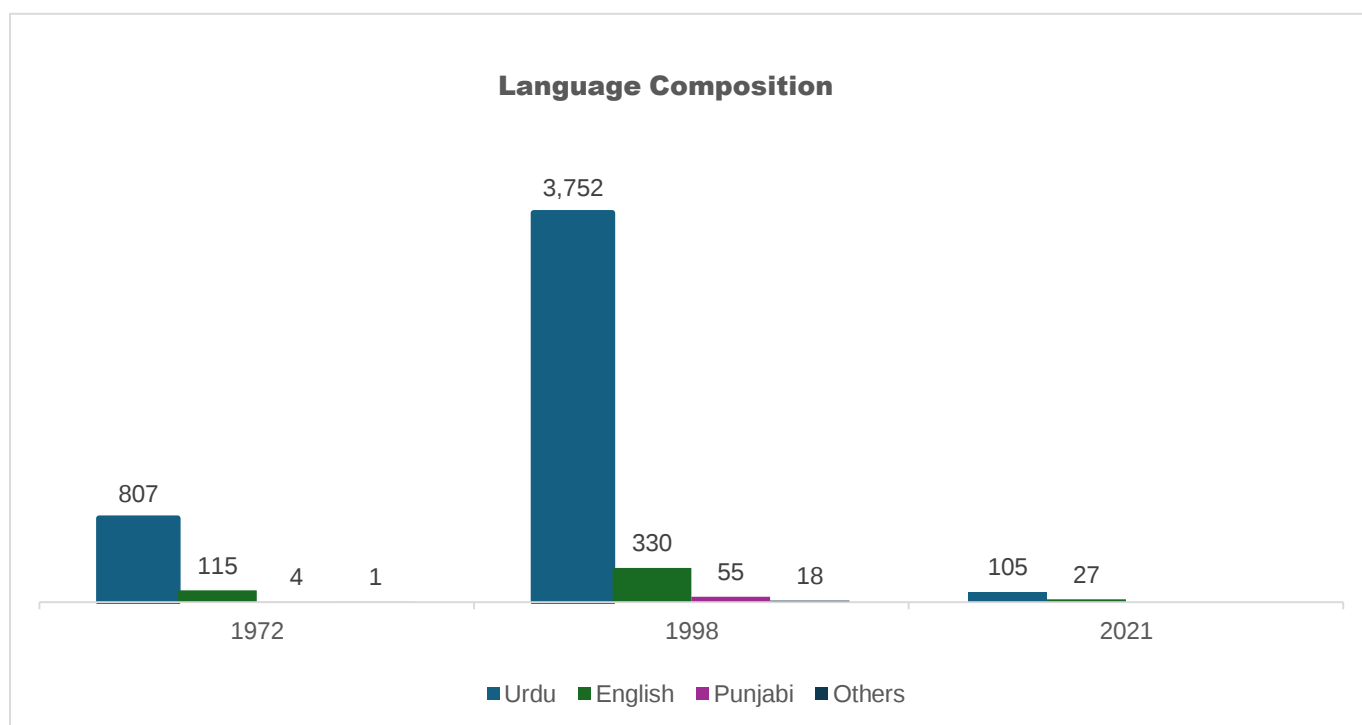
Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

5. Urdu Dominated Punjab’s Print Media Throughout the Entire Period

Urdu remained overwhelmingly dominant across the entire five-decade series. Urdu publications increased from 807 in 1972 to 3,752 in 1998, accounting for approximately 90.3% of all publications at the 1998 peak. Even after the sharp contraction of the sector, Urdu publications still accounted for 105 out of 132 registered publications in 2021, or roughly 79.5% of the total.

English publications also expanded during the growth years, rising from 115 in 1972 to 330 in 1998, before declining to 27 in 2021. While English publications remained much smaller than Urdu publications, the data suggests that they maintained a relatively stable niche presence within Punjab’s print ecosystem.

Punjabi publications remained comparatively limited throughout the period. Their number increased from 4 in 1972 to a peak of 55 in 1998, but later declined steadily until reaching 0 by 2021. This indicates that Punjabi-language print publications never developed at the same scale as Urdu or English publications within the registered publication framework.



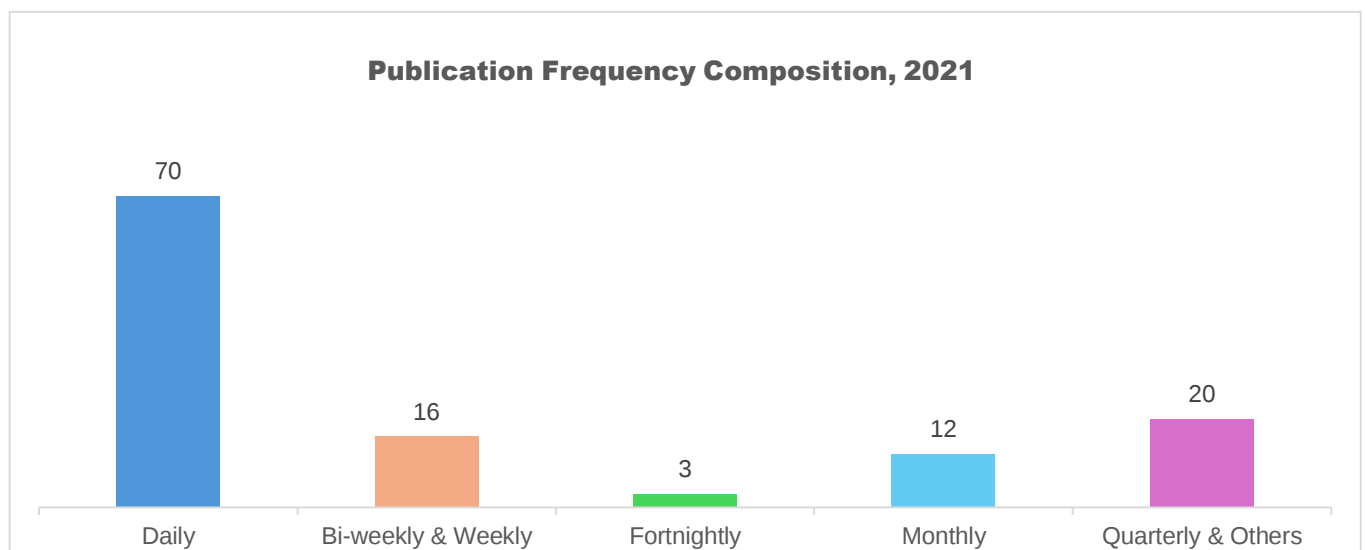
Source: Bureau of Statistics, Planning & Development Board, Government of the Punjab — Punjab Development Statistics for 50 Years (1972–2021).

6. Punjab's Print Media Landscape Became Smaller and Less Diverse by 2021

By 2021, Punjab's registered print media sector had become dramatically smaller and more concentrated than it was at its late-1990s peak. Total registered publications stood at 132, compared to 4,155 in 1998. Many publication categories that once formed large parts of the ecosystem had nearly disappeared from the dataset.

The sector that remained by 2021 was concentrated primarily in Urdu-language and daily publications. Monthly, fortnightly, and weekly publications all declined sharply, while Punjabi publications disappeared entirely from the registered data. This indicates not only a reduction in the size of the sector, but also a narrowing in its diversity.

The long-term series therefore points to three distinct phases in Punjab's print media history: gradual expansion during the 1970s and 1980s, rapid diversification and growth during the 1990s, and a sharp contraction and consolidation after 1998. While the dataset does not directly capture readership trends or digital media substitution, it clearly documents a major structural transformation in Punjab's registered print publication landscape over five decades.



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



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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