

Education and Gender Gap

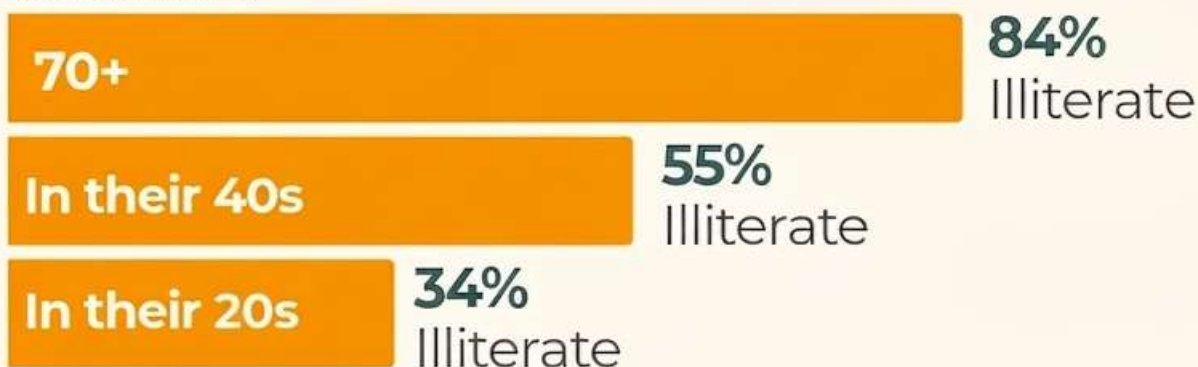
Pakistan's Young Men Are Keeping Pace with India. Its Women Are a Generation Behind.

Education levels across six age cohorts — from those in their twenties to those above seventy — revealing how dramatically Pakistan's women have been left behind across generations.

Men



Women



Source: Gallup & Gilani Pakistan
(www.gallup-international.com;
www.gallup.com.pk www.gilanifoundation.com)



(Also emailed*/faxed separately)



PRESS RELEASE

Big Data Analysis Education & Gender Gap

Pakistan's Young Men Are Keeping Pace with India. Its Women Are a Generation Behind.

(Islamabad), 21st July 2026

A new analysis of Pakistan's Labour Force Survey 2024–25 by Gallup Pakistan Digital Analytics, comparing 325,445 respondents against India's Periodic Labour Force Survey 2023, reveals an education landscape divided sharply along gender lines — and one that defies the standard narrative about Pakistan's economic performance.

The Headline Finding: Pakistan's Men Are Competitive. Its Women Are Not.

Among Pakistanis in their twenties, 16% of men are illiterate, compared with just 4% of Indian men in the same age group. However, Pakistani men in their twenties have achieved 54% secondary education attainment, compared with 38% in India, reflecting the rapid expansion of secondary schooling over the past two decades.

But the women's picture tells a different story entirely.

34% of Pakistani women in their twenties cannot read or write — compared to just 7% of Indian women in the same age group. Even among women in their thirties, Pakistan's illiteracy rate stands at 44%, compared with 27% among Indian women of the same age.

A Generational Comparison That Puts The Crisis In Sharp Relief

The analysis traces education levels across six age cohorts — from those in their twenties to those above seventy — revealing how dramatically Pakistan's women have been left behind across generations.

Pakistani men show rapid inter-generational improvement:

- Men above 70: 52% illiterate
- Men in their forties: 25% illiterate
- Men in their twenties: 16% illiterate

The same trend holds for women — but from a far higher baseline:

- Women above 70: 84% illiterate
- Women in their forties: 55% illiterate
- Women in their twenties: 34% illiterate

India's trajectory is steeper. Indian women above seventy register 72% illiteracy — a high figure, but one that drops to just 7% among women in their twenties. Pakistan's youngest adult women, with an illiteracy rate of 34%, are close to the level recorded among Indian women in their forties, at 38%.

Where Pakistan Leads — And Where It Falls Short

The comparison is not uniformly negative for Pakistan. On secondary education attainment, Pakistani men in their twenties (54% secondary-educated) exceed the comparable Indian figure (38%). Pakistan has invested heavily in secondary schooling for boys, and that investment shows in the cohort data.

Higher education, however, remains a gap. Among men in their twenties, Pakistan records 12% university-educated against India's 22%. The pipeline from secondary to tertiary remains broken.

For women in their twenties specifically, the indicators are: 34% illiterate in Pakistan versus 7% in India; 38% secondary-educated in Pakistan versus 33% in India; and 12% higher-educated in Pakistan versus 22% in India.

The Economic Stakes

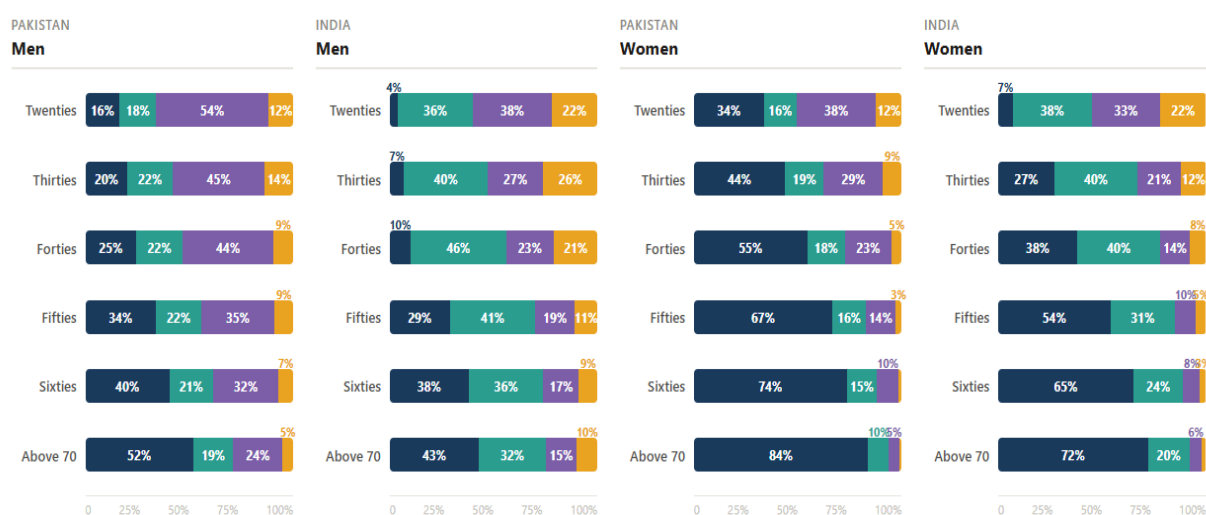
The education gap is not an abstract statistic. Maternal literacy is the single strongest predictor of child stunting, early marriage, and birth spacing in all DHS survey literature. Pakistan's female illiteracy rate among women in their forties (55%) is the primary driver of the country's persistently high stunting rate (40.2% nationally, NNS 2018) and its lowest-in-South-Asia female labour force participation rate (27.8%, LFS 2024–25).

If Pakistan's female literacy rate among 20-year-olds were at India's level — itself far below the OECD average — the second-order effects on child health, household income, and fertility would, by standard development economics estimates, add 6–8 percentage points to long-run GDP. On a \$375 billion economy, that is roughly \$25–30 billion annually — a permanent structural uplift larger than Pakistan's total annual export earnings.

Education levels by age group — Pakistan vs India (2024)

Pakistan's younger men match India on secondary attainment but trail on higher education. Pakistan's women remain far more illiterate at every age than Indian women.

■ Illiterate ■ Primary ■ Secondary ■ Higher education



Pakistan: LFS 2024–25 microdata · n=325,445 · DHS weighted · Gallup Pakistan Digital Analytics | India: PLFS 2023 (Data For India)
Illiterate = no schooling AND cannot read · Primary = up to class 5 · Secondary = class 6–12 · Higher = graduate & above

Source: Gallup Pakistan Digital Analytics Atlas of Development; Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey 2024–25 (microdata); India Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023.
(www.gallup-international.com; www.gallup.com.pk; www.gilanifoundation.com)

This analysis was conducted using the Gallup Pakistan Digital Analytics Atlas of Development, combining microdata from Pakistan's Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2024–25 (325,445 respondents) with comparable figures from India's Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023. Education levels were compared by age group and gender to assess long-term differences in literacy and educational attainment between the two countries.



Opinion Poll from Gallup Pakistan
*The Pakistani Affiliate of Gallup
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Gilani Research Foundation is a not-for-profit public service project to provide social science research to students, academia, policymakers, and concerned citizens in Pakistan and across the globe.

Gilani Research Foundation is headed by Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani who pioneered the field of opinion polling in Pakistan and established Gallup Pakistan in 1980. Currently, Dr. Gilani, who holds a Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and has taught at leading universities in Pakistan and abroad, is Chairman of Gallup Pakistan.

If you have any further questions regarding this poll, please feel free to contact us.

*Best Regards,
Gallup Pakistan*

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of Gallup Pakistan
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