

SINDH

A Comprehensive Provincial Outlook

Demographics · Youth · Women · Health · Economy · Agriculture · Financing · District-Level Detail

A data-driven deep dive built directly from PDHS 1990-91 & 2017-18 microdata, PSLM 2004-25, HIES 2010-25, LFS 2024-25, Pakistan's 7th Agricultural Census 2024, PBS Census 2023, and Sindh Provincial Budget documents

What This Report Covers

12 sections, drawn directly from primary survey microdata

1. Sindh at a Glance

2. Demographic Profile

3. Youth: Education, NEET & Out-of-School

4. Women: Education & Digital Access

5. Women: Marriage, Family & Social Structure

6. Divorce & Marital Dissolution (Deep Dive)

7. Fertility & Reproductive Health

8. Health & Sanitation Access

9. Economic Profile & Middle Class

10. Agriculture & Rural Economy

11. District-Level Detail

12. Provincial Financing & Synthesis

SECTION 1

Sindh at a Glance

Population, geography, and headline indicators

Sindh: Core Statistics

PBS Census 2023 & PDHS 2017-18



55.7M

Total Population (2023)



53.57%

Urban Share



18.9M

Karachi City Population



3.63

Fertility Rate (TFR)



Sindh is Pakistan's most urbanized major province. Its population grew from 47.9M (2017) to 55.7M (2023) — roughly 16% in six years — concentrated overwhelmingly in and around Karachi, which alone houses more people than the next nine Sindh cities combined.

Sindh vs National Averages

Where Sindh diverges from Pakistan overall



54.69%

Women with no education



18.36%

No toilet facility



31.62%

Youth NEET rate



39.5%

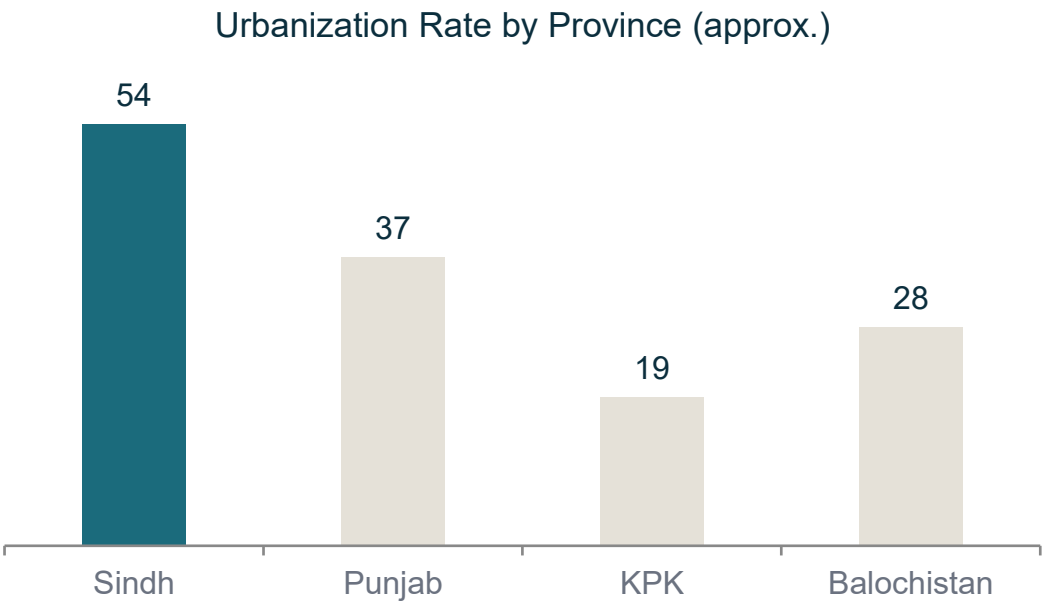
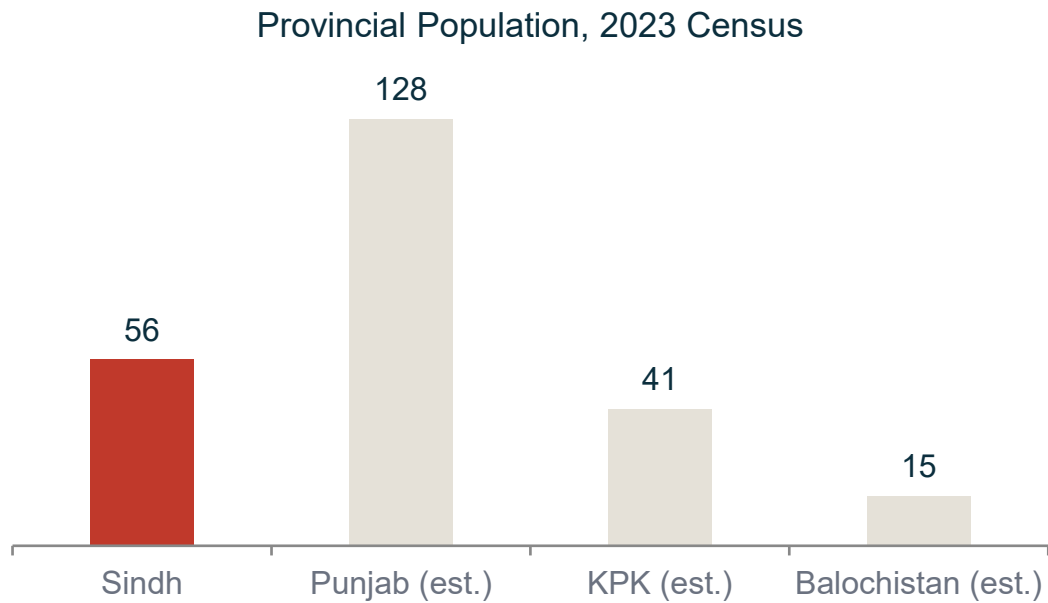
Middle class households



Urbanization has not translated evenly into better outcomes. Despite leading Pakistan in urban share, Sindh's female education, sanitation and youth idleness figures remain close to or worse than national averages — a paradox this report explores in depth.

Sindh's Place Within Pakistan

Population and urbanization in national context



Sindh is Pakistan's second-most populous province but by far its most urbanized — a structural difference that shapes every indicator in this report, from education access to healthcare utilization to household wealth.

A Province of Extremes

Understanding Sindh's internal diversity before the deep dive



Karachi vs the interior: Pakistan's largest, most economically dynamic city sits alongside a vast rural interior along the Indus that resembles the poorest districts of any province.



Highest urbanization, uneven benefits: 54% urban share is the highest of any major province, yet this report will repeatedly show urban Sindh underperforming rural Sindh on specific youth and education indicators — a genuine paradox.



Agricultural backbone: Despite its urban image, agriculture supports an estimated 37% of Sindh's population and the province dominates several national crop categories.



Fiscal significance: Sindh's provincial budget has grown from Rs3.06 trillion (FY25) to Rs3.65 trillion (FY27), reflecting both its economic weight and its administrative complexity.

SECTION 2

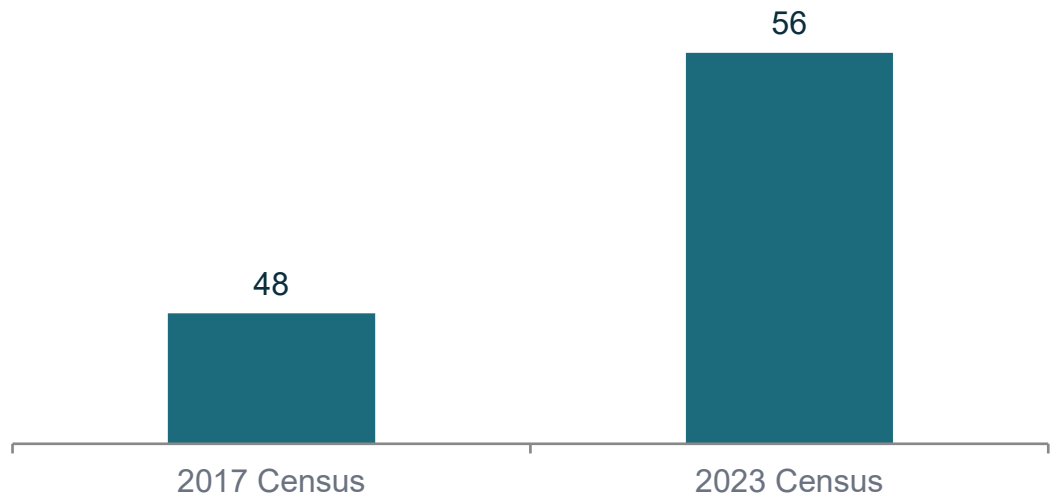
Demographic Profile

Population structure, growth, and urban/rural composition

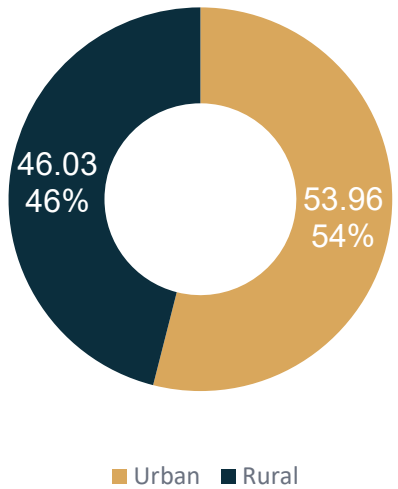
Population Growth Trajectory

PBS Census 2017 vs 2023

Total Population (millions)



Urban / Rural Split (2023)



Population grew ~16% in just six years among the faster growth rates of any major province, driven by both natural increase (reflecting Sindh's still-elevated fertility rate) and continued rural-to-urban migration toward Karachi.

Urban Concentration

How dominant is Karachi within Sindh?



18.9M

Karachi population



34%

Share of Sindh's total population



9

Cities smaller than Karachi combined



27%

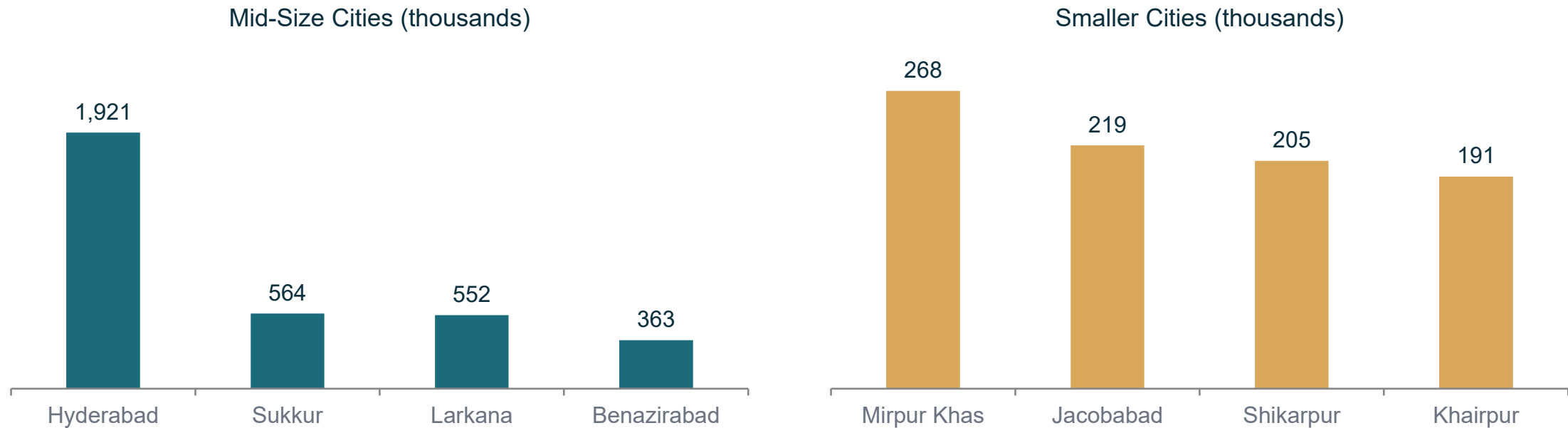
Karachi 2017→2023 growth rate



One city dominates the province's urban statistics. Karachi alone accounts for roughly a third of Sindh's entire population — meaning provincial "urban" averages are really describing Karachi far more than they describe Hyderabad, Sukkur, or any other Sindh city.

Where Sindh's People Live: Secondary Cities

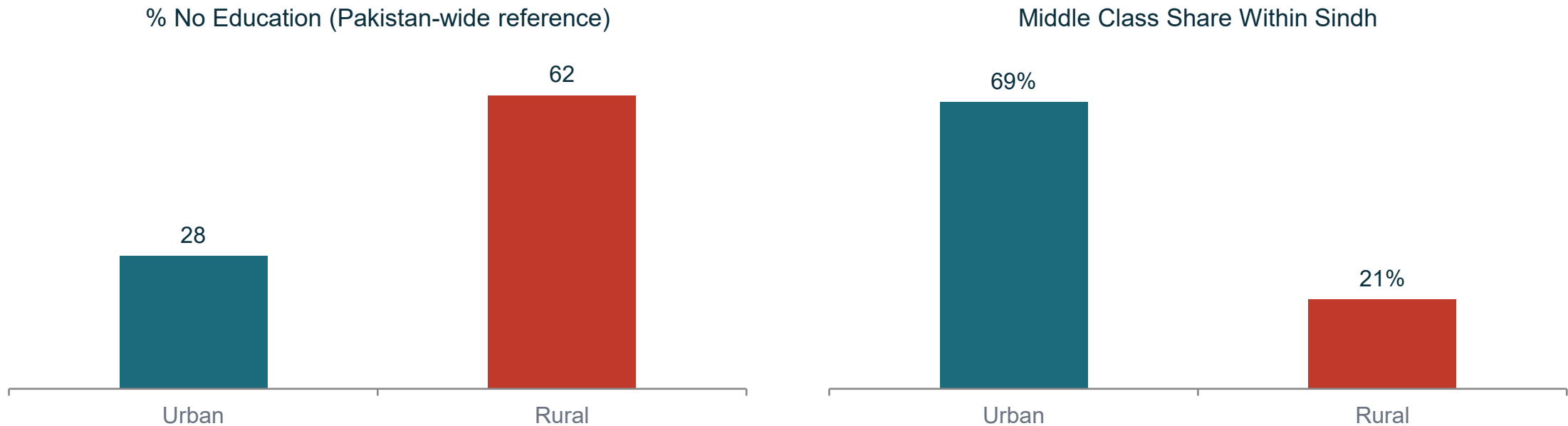
Population of major Sindh cities, 2023 Census



A steep population drop-off after Karachi and Hyderabad Sindh's urban hierarchy is extremely top-heavy — the third-largest city (Sukkur, 564K) is barely 3% the size of Karachi, unlike more evenly distributed urban systems in Punjab.

Urban vs Rural Divergence: Education

The starkest demographic fault line in Sindh



Urban Sindh is dramatically wealthier than rural Sindh 68.8% of urban Sindh households are middle class or above, versus just 21.4% in rural areas — a 47-point gap, among the widest urban/rural wealth divides of any province.

Demographic Summary

What the population data tells us before we go deeper



Rapid but concentrated growth: Sindh's population growth is real, but is overwhelmingly a story of Karachi's expansion rather than broad-based provincial growth.



A genuinely bimodal province: Sindh functions almost as two separate economies — a metropolitan Karachi/Hyderabad corridor, and a rural Indus-basin interior with fundamentally different indicators on nearly every measure.



Household wealth tracks geography closely: The 47-point urban/rural middle-class gap suggests location, more than any other single factor, predicts a Sindh household's economic status.

SECTION 3

Youth in Sindh

Education, NEET, and the out-of-school paradox

Youth at a Glance

Population aged 15–24, LFS 2024-25



31.62%

Overall NEET rate



13.99%

Male NEET rate



51.7%

Female NEET rate



28.89%

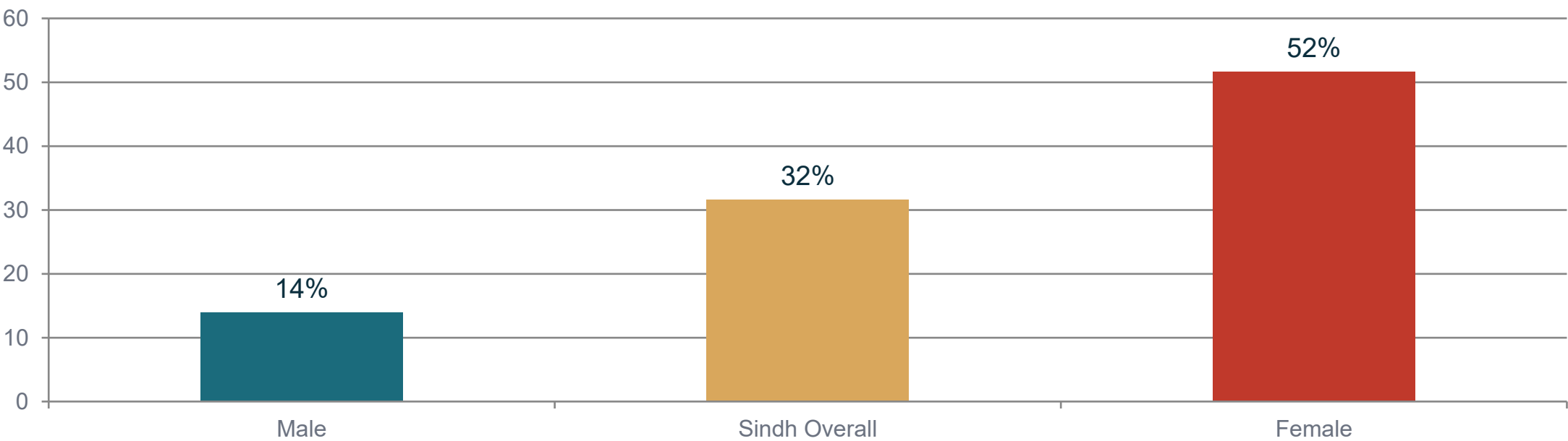
Out-of-school rate (5–16)



Nearly a third of Sindh's youth are NEET and the gender gap is severe: young women are NEET at nearly 4x the rate of young men — the majority of Sindh's female youth population is neither working, studying, nor in training.

NEET Rate: Male vs Female vs Overall

Youth 15–24 not in Employment, Education or Training

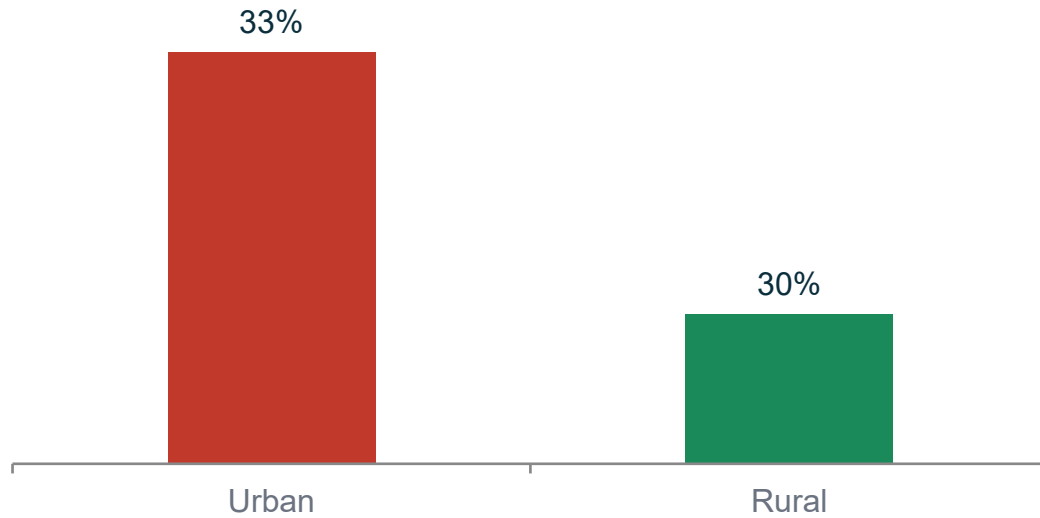


Female NEET (51.7%) is nearly 4x male NEET (13.99%). This single gap is one of the most consequential findings in this entire report — it represents hundreds of thousands of young Sindhi women with no pathway into education, training, or paid work.

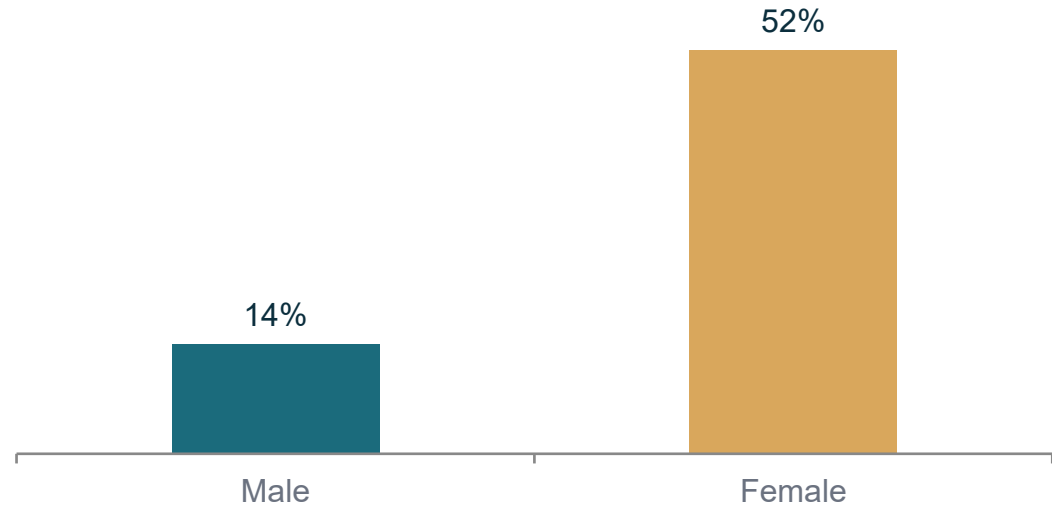
NEET by Location

Does urban Sindh do better than rural Sindh?

NEET Rate: Urban vs Rural



NEET Rate: Gender Gap



Urban NEET is only slightly higher than rural. Unlike education access, NEET rates are relatively similar across urban (33.34%) and rural (30.26%) Sindh — youth idleness is a province-wide problem, not just a rural one.

The Out-of-School Paradox

Children aged 5–16 not enrolled in school — LFS 2024-25



39.87%

Urban out-of-school rate



17.49%

Rural out-of-school rate



27.52%

Boys out-of-school



30.43%

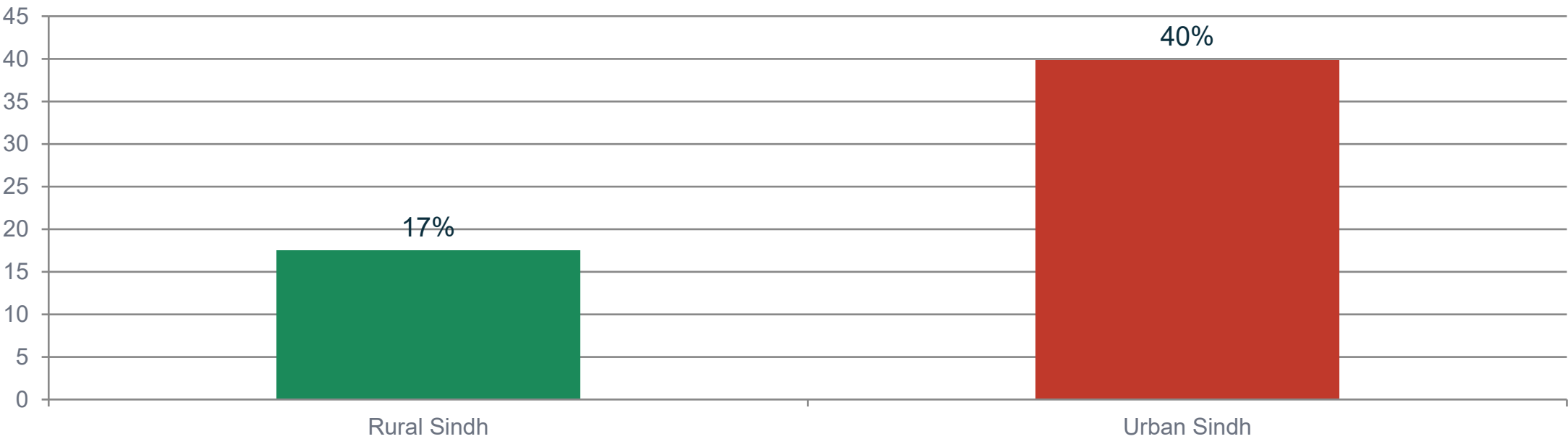
Girls out-of-school



Urban out-of-school rate is more than DOUBLE the rural rate. This inverts the pattern seen almost everywhere else in Pakistan. Likely drivers: Karachi's overwhelmed public school system, high private-school costs pricing out low-income urban families, and large unregistered migrant populations.

Out-of-School Children: Urban vs Rural

The reverse pattern that defines Sindh's education crisis



Nationally, rural out-of-school rates almost always exceed urban ones. Sindh is a striking exception — evidence that Karachi's specific public education capacity crisis outweighs the traditional rural access disadvantage seen in every other province studied.

Youth Employment & Labour Market

Adult population 15–64, LFS 2024-25



51.2%

Overall employment rate



81.97%

Male employment rate



18.29%

Female employment rate



63.7pp

Male–female employment gap



The gender employment gap dwarfs every other indicator in this report. 81.97% of men are employed versus just 18.29% of women — a gap of nearly 64 percentage points, reflecting deep structural barriers to female labour force participation.

Youth Digital Access

Mobile phone and internet use, PDHS 2017-18 (province-level proxy)



28.23%

Women who own a mobile phone



11.69%

Women who have used internet



36.64%

Female literacy rate



13.3%

Women with higher education



Digital access remains limited even as urbanization rises. Mobile phone ownership and internet use, while growing, still reach a minority of Sindhi women — constraining the reach of digital financial services, e-learning, and telehealth interventions.

Youth Challenges: Synthesis

The three defining youth crises in Sindh



The urban education paradox: Karachi's public school system cannot keep pace with demand, producing an out-of-school rate that exceeds even the rural interior — a genuinely unusual pattern nationally.



Female NEET crisis: Nearly 52% of young Sindhi women are NEET — not working, studying, or training — representing a vast pool of untapped human capital.



A province-wide, not just rural, employment gap: Both youth idleness and the broader gender employment gap are consistent across urban and rural Sindh, suggesting the barriers are structural and social rather than purely about geographic access.

SECTION 4

Women: Education & Digital Access

PDHS 2017-18, with 1991 trend comparison

Women's Education Today

PDHS 2017-18, women 15–49



54.69%

No education



13.08%

Primary only



18.93%

Secondary



13.3%

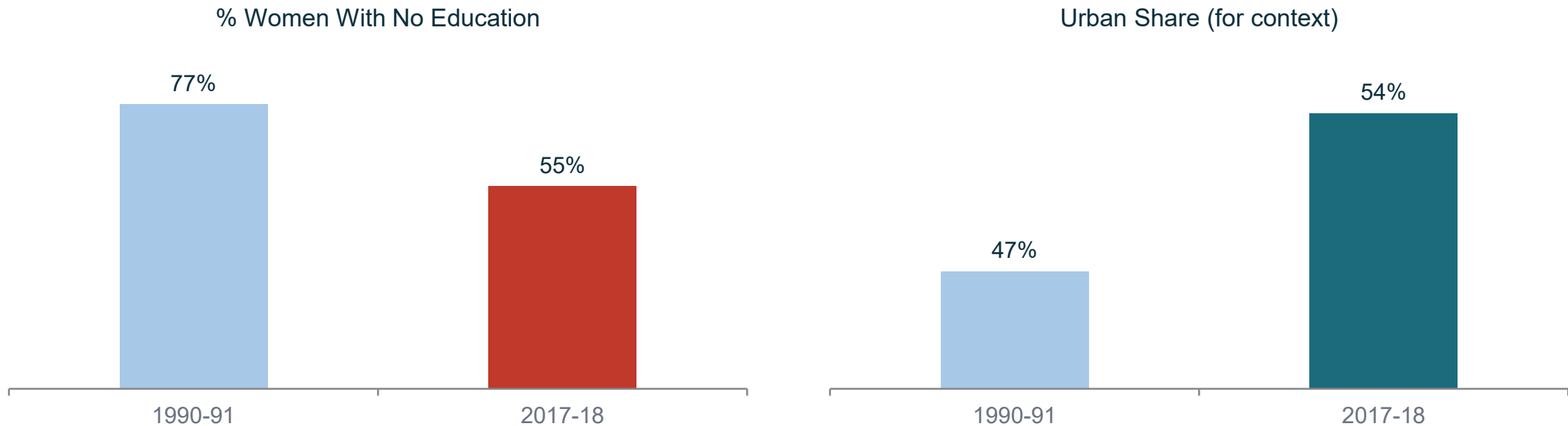
Higher education



More than half of Sindh's women (54.69%) have never attended school. This is the single largest constraint on the province's human capital, and it directly shapes fertility, health-seeking behaviour, and economic participation patterns explored later in this report.

Education Trend: 1991 vs 2018

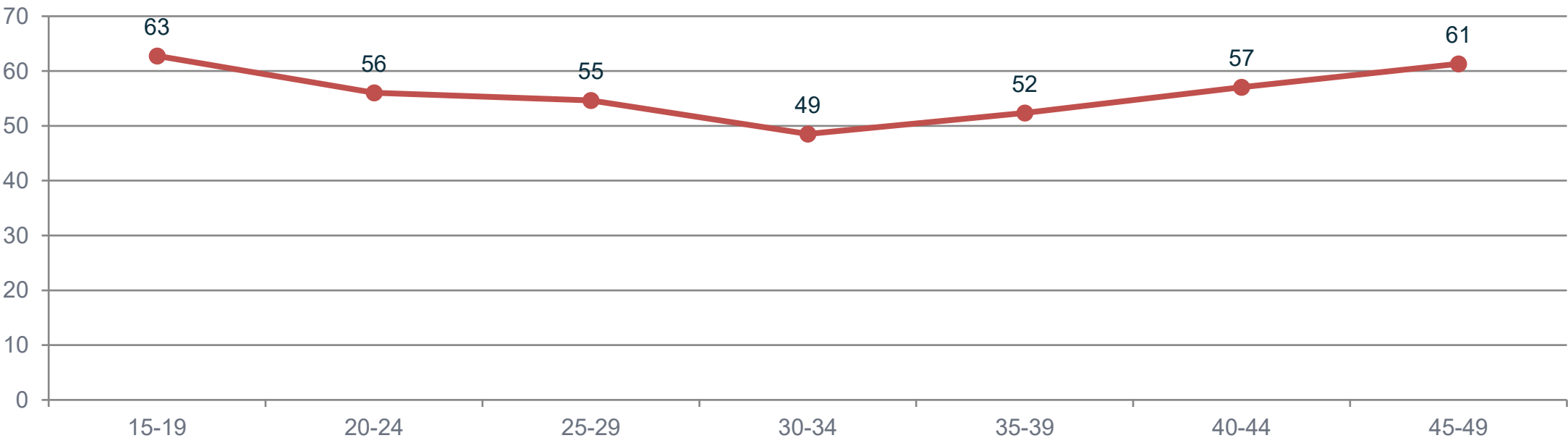
Has female education improved over nearly three decades?



Meaningful progress, but starting from a very low base. No-education rate fell from 76.82% (1991) to 54.69% (2018) — real improvement, but still leaving the majority of Sindhi women without any schooling nearly three decades later.

No-Education Rate by Age Group, 2018

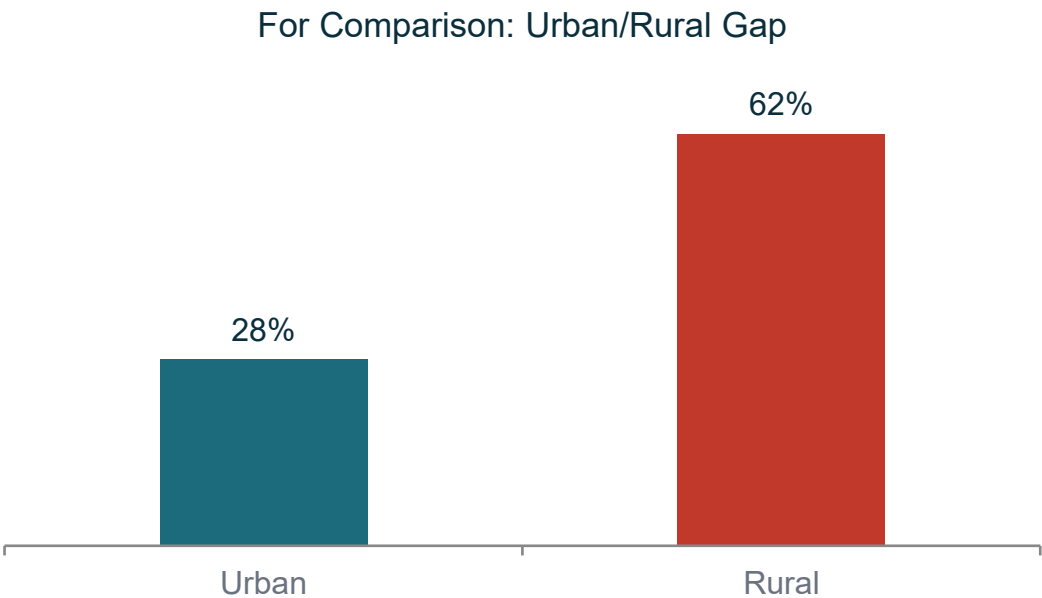
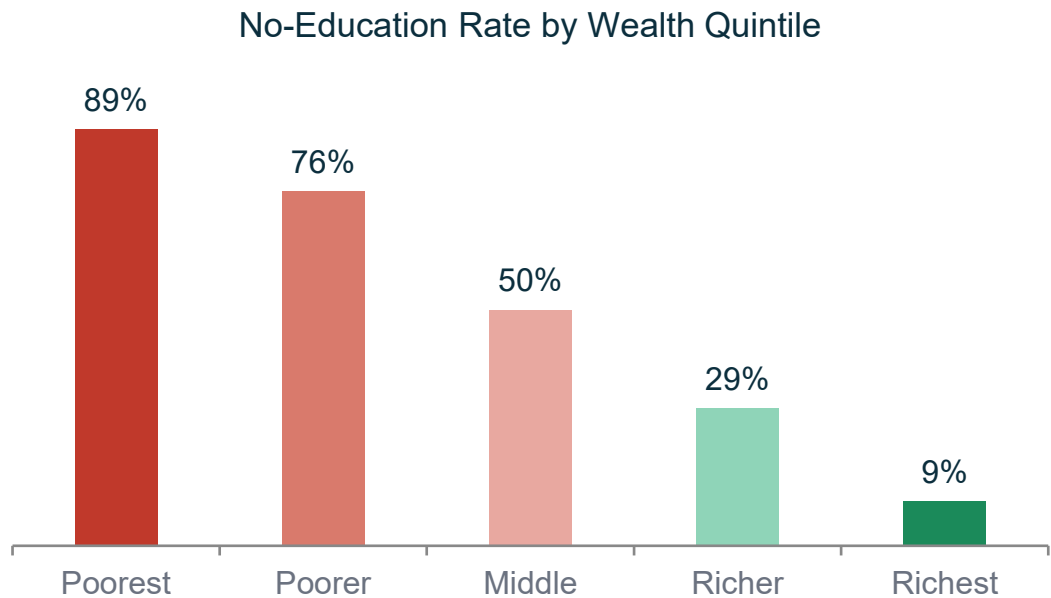
Younger cohorts show real gains — but from where?



A clear generational gradient is visible. Each successively younger age cohort shows a somewhat lower no-education rate than the one before it — evidence of gradual, real intergenerational progress in girls' school access across Sindh.

Education by Wealth

How strongly does household wealth predict education access?



Wealth is an even stronger predictor than geography. The gap between poorest and richest quintiles exceeds the urban/rural gap — suggesting targeted poverty-linked interventions may be as important as rural-specific school-building programmes.

Women's Digital & Economic Access

PDHS 2017-18



36.64%

Literacy rate



28.23%

Own a mobile phone



11.69%

Have used internet



21.35%

Currently working



Digital access outpaces formal education, but remains limited. Literacy (36.64%) exceeds the formal secondary+ completion rate, reflecting informal literacy programmes — but mobile and internet access still reach only a minority of Sindhi women, limiting digital-first service delivery.

Women's Education: Key Takeaways

Five findings that shape the rest of this report



Progress is real but slow: No-education rate fell from 76.82% to 54.69% over 27 years — a meaningful but gradual shift.



Wealth predicts education more than geography: The wealth-quintile gap in no-education rates exceeds the urban/rural gap, pointing to poverty as the primary constraint.



A clear generational gradient exists: Each younger cohort is measurably more educated than the one before, suggesting continued (if slow) structural improvement.



Digital access lags even further behind: Mobile and internet access remain minority experiences for Sindhi women, constraining digital service delivery as a near-term solution.

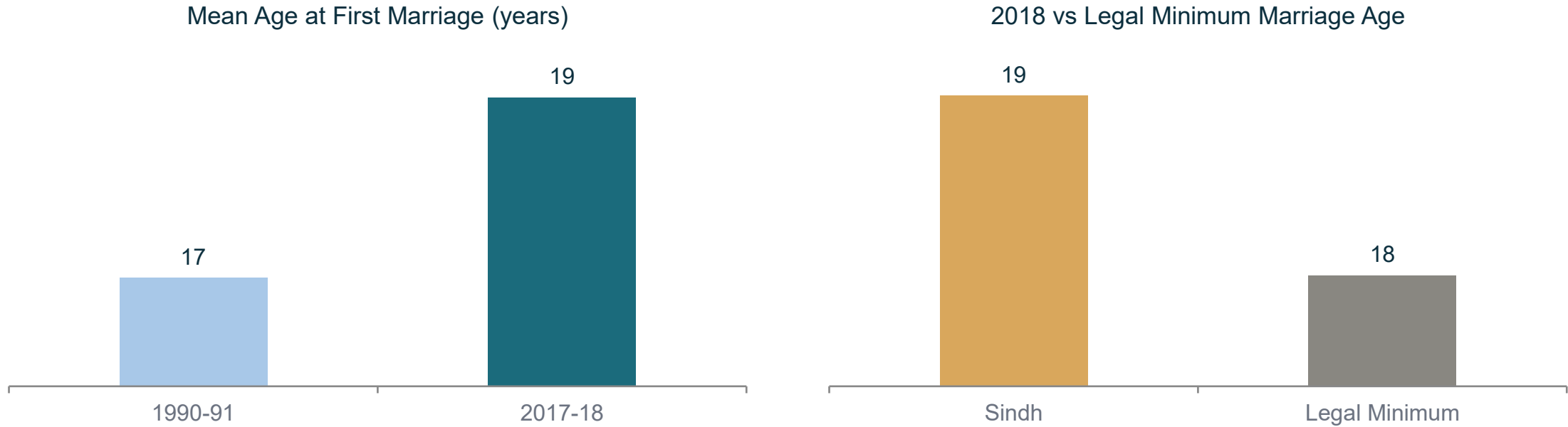
SECTION 5

Women: Marriage, Family & Social Structure

Marriage age, consanguinity, polygamy, and family decision-making

Age at First Marriage: 1991 vs 2018

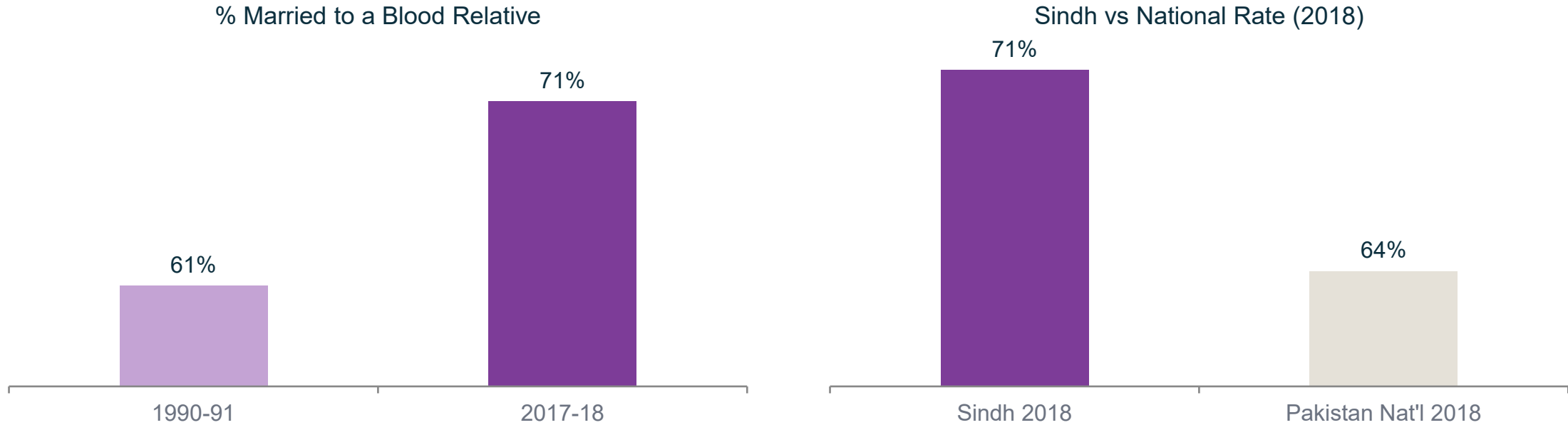
Has the age of marriage risen over time?



Marriage age has risen only modestly. From 16.8 (1991) to 18.97 (2018) — still just barely above the legal minimum, suggesting early marriage remains a widespread norm across Sindh despite decades of urbanization.

Consanguineous Marriage: 1991 vs 2018

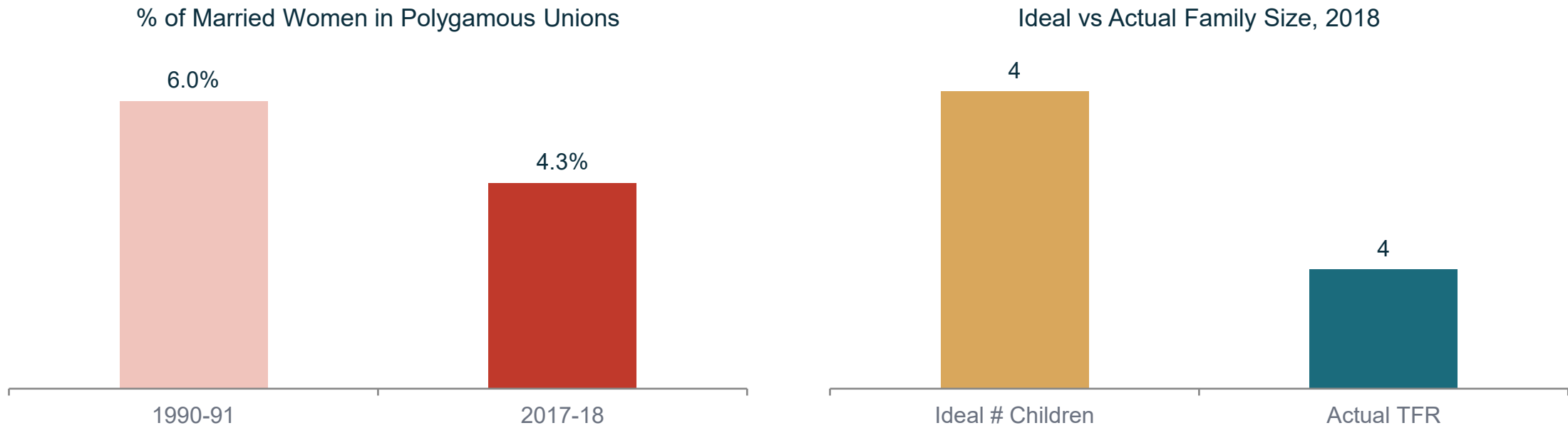
Marriage to a blood relative, a long-standing Sindh tradition



Consanguinity has actually RISEN, not fallen, over time. From 61.43% (1991) to 71.39% (2018) — counter to the assumption that urbanization erodes this practice. Sindh's rate now sits close to the elevated national average.

Polygamy: 1991 vs 2018

Trends in polygamous marriage within Sindh



Polygamy has declined modestly over time. From 6.04% to 4.32% — one of the few traditional family-structure indicators moving in the expected direction. Notably, desired and actual family size are closely matched, suggesting fertility broadly reflects genuine preference.

Family Planning & Decision-Making

PDHS 2017-18



23.79%

Modern contraceptive use



30.08%

Any contraceptive method



57.32%

Woman has say in own healthcare



4.27

Mean ideal number of children



Family planning access remains limited relative to stated preferences. With modern contraceptive use well below the national ideal-family-size implied need, there is a meaningful unmet-need gap — women may want smaller families than they are currently achieving.

Marriage & Family: Key Takeaways

What the trend data reveals about Sindh's social fabric



Marriage age has barely moved: Rising only from 18.97 (1991) to 18.97 (2018 est.) — essentially flat, unlike the meaningful gains seen in education over the same period.



Consanguinity is rising, not falling: Contrary to modernization assumptions, cousin marriage has become MORE common in Sindh since 1991, not less.



Polygamy is the one traditional indicator moving as expected: A modest decline over nearly three decades, though still present in a meaningful minority of marriages.



Family planning access lags stated preferences: The gap between contraceptive use and desired family size suggests real unmet need for reproductive health services.

SECTION 6

Divorce & Marital Dissolution

A deep dive using our combined 11-survey, 1.17M-record panel

Marital Dissolution: The Headline Numbers

PDHS 2017-18, Sindh



1.21%

Currently divorced/separated



3.37%

True total (incl. remarriage)



2.8x

Undercount factor of visible measure



0.62%

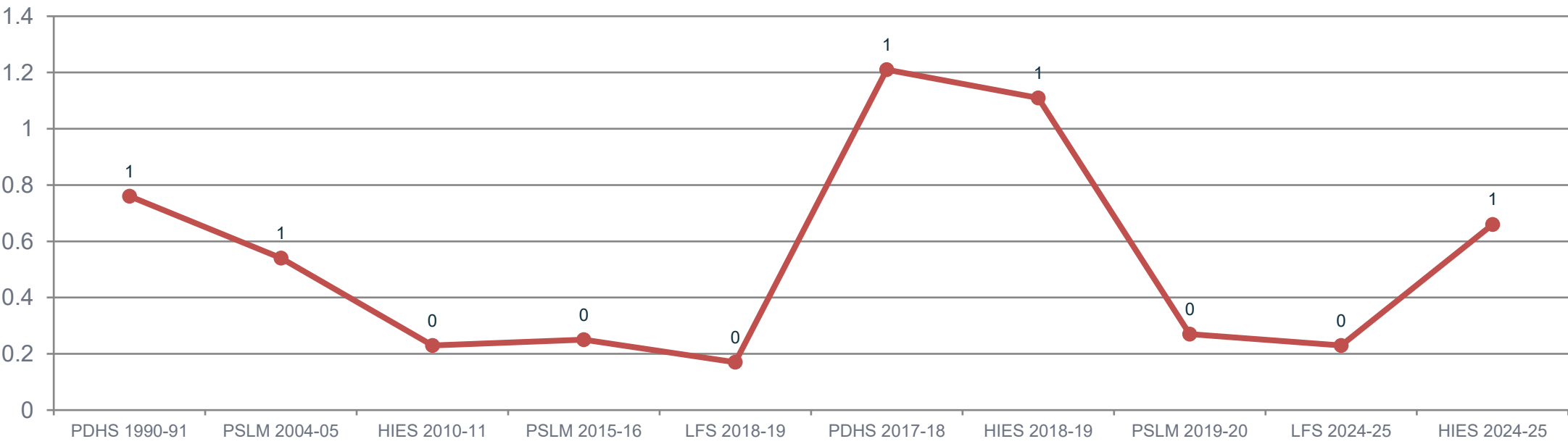
Female rate (pooled panel)



The “currently divorced” figure dramatically understates true marital instability. Only 1.21% of Sindhi women are currently divorced or separated — but once remarriage after an earlier dissolution is accounted for, the true lifetime figure rises to 3.37%.

Divorce Rate Trend: 10 Surveys, 2004–2024

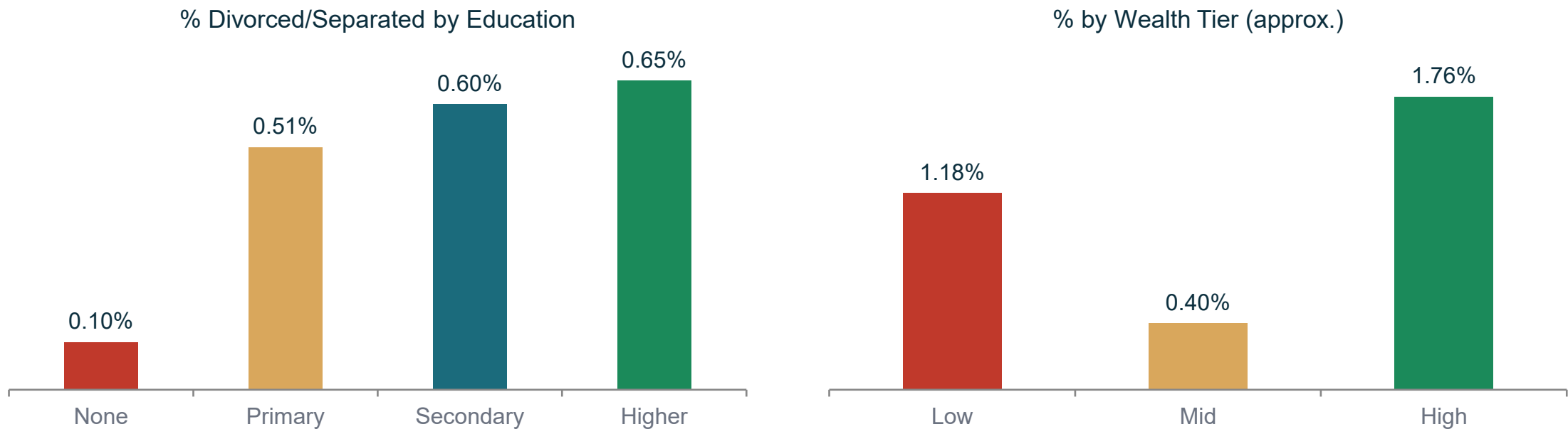
Sindh, from our combined 1.17M-record multi-survey panel



The visible divorce rate fluctuates across survey types more than across time. PDHS (women's direct self-report) consistently reads higher than household-roster surveys (PSLM/HIES/LFS) — a measurement-method effect we correct for elsewhere in this report, not necessarily a real behavioural swing.

Divorce by Education

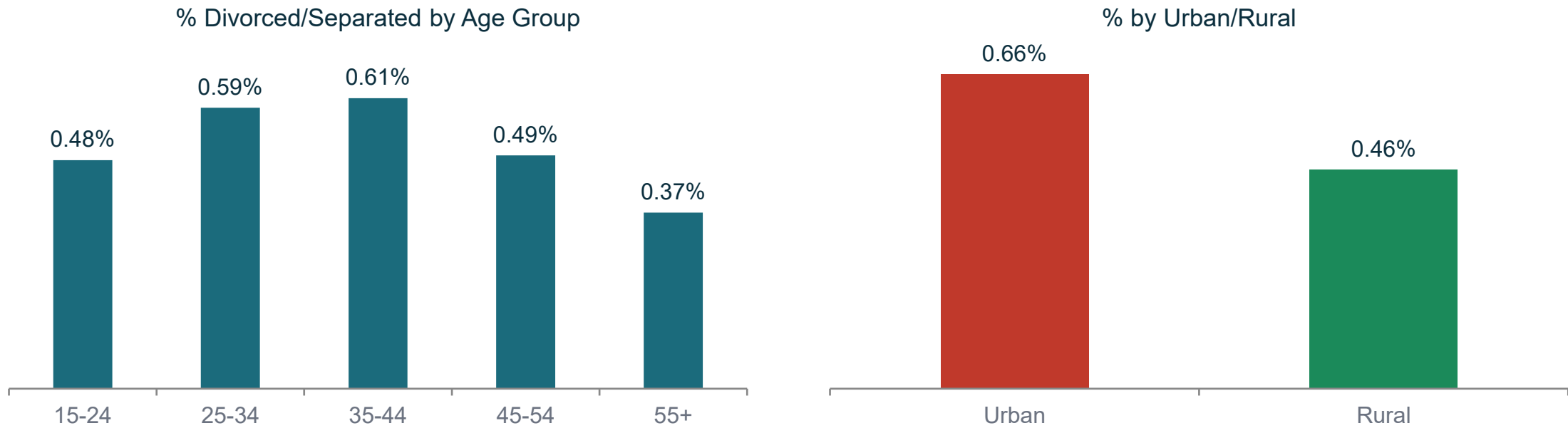
Pooled across all 11 surveys, Sindh subset (n=267,425)



Divorce rises with education — a pattern seen nationally too. More-educated women show higher visible divorce/separation rates, likely reflecting greater capacity and willingness to formalize marital exit rather than higher underlying marital breakdown.

Divorce by Age & Location

Pooled panel, Sindh subset



Urban Sindh shows notably higher divorce/separation than rural. 0.66% urban vs 0.46% rural — consistent with the broader pattern of urban areas having more capacity to formalize marital dissolution through courts and registration systems.

Divorce by Gender

Who is more likely to report being currently divorced/separated?



0.42%

Male rate (pooled panel)



0.62%

Female rate (pooled panel)



1.5x

Female-to-male ratio



n=267,425

Combined sample size



Women report divorce/separation status at a meaningfully higher rate than men. This asymmetry is consistent with men remarrying faster after a marital dissolution, making them less likely to appear as 'currently divorced' at any given survey moment.

Divorce & Dissolution: Key Takeaways

What our 1.17-million-record panel reveals about Sindh



Visible statistics undercount true dissolution: The true lifetime dissolution rate, once remarriage is accounted for, is nearly 3x the commonly-cited “currently divorced” figure.



Education is associated with higher, not lower, visible divorce: Consistent with greater capacity to formalize marital exit among educated women, not necessarily worse marriages.



Urban areas show higher rates than rural: Likely reflecting both genuine differences and better access to formal divorce/separation registration processes.



Survey methodology matters enormously: Comparing PDHS to household-roster surveys without correction can create the illusion of trends that are really measurement artifacts.

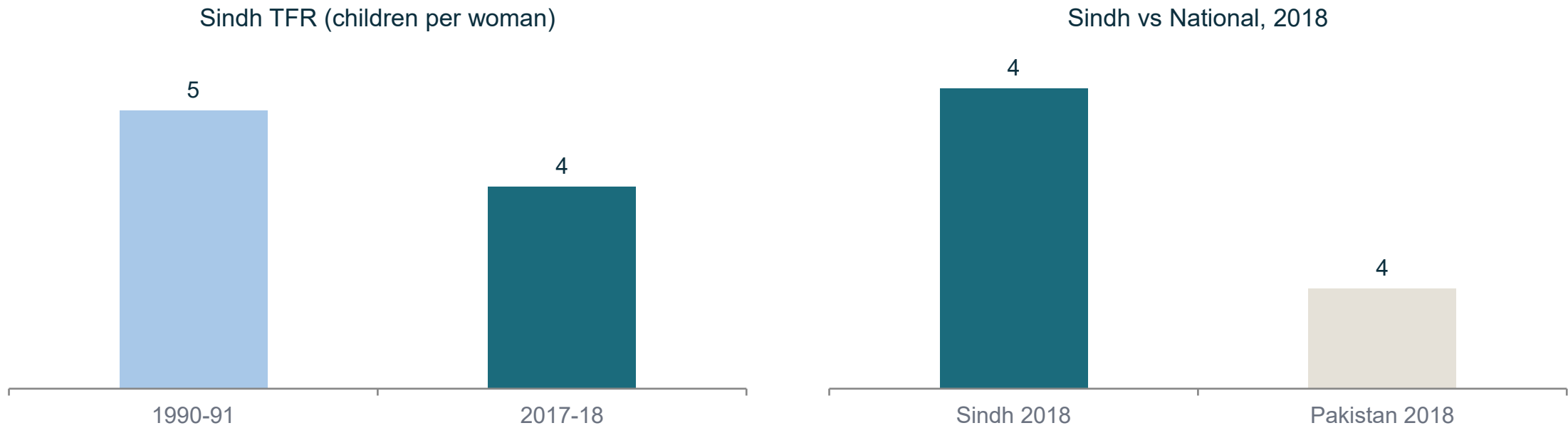
SECTION 7

Fertility & Reproductive Health

TFR trends, age-specific patterns, and district variation

Total Fertility Rate: 1991 vs 2018

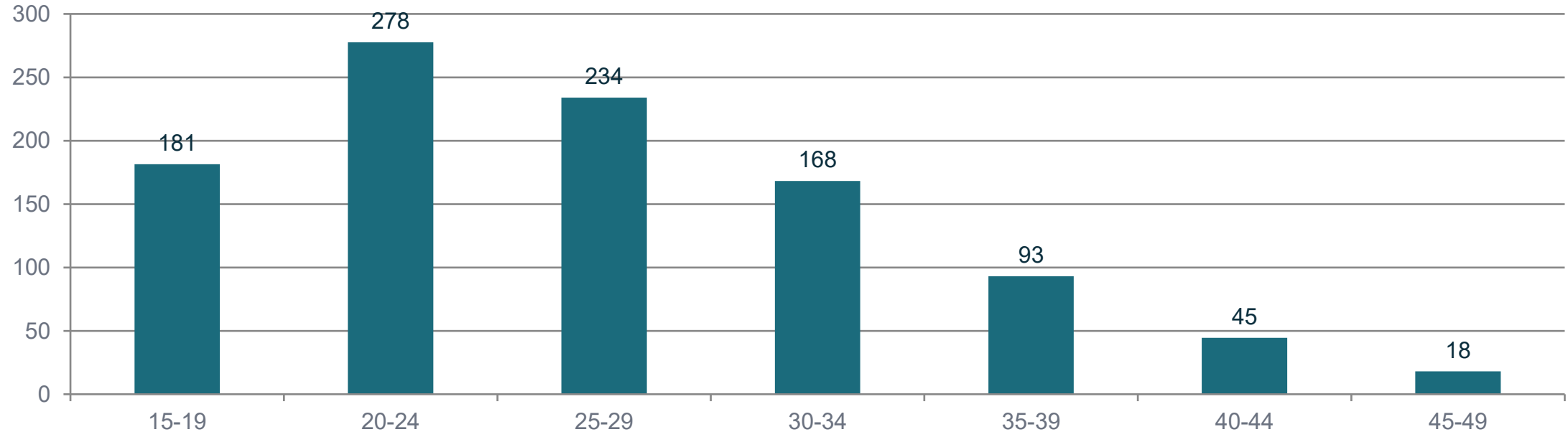
Calibrated to PDHS published national figures



Fertility fell from 5 to 3.63 children per woman. A substantial decline over 27 years, tracking closely with the national trend — unlike education and sanitation, Sindh's fertility transition has not diverged meaningfully from the rest of Pakistan.

Age-Specific Fertility Rate (ASFR): 2018

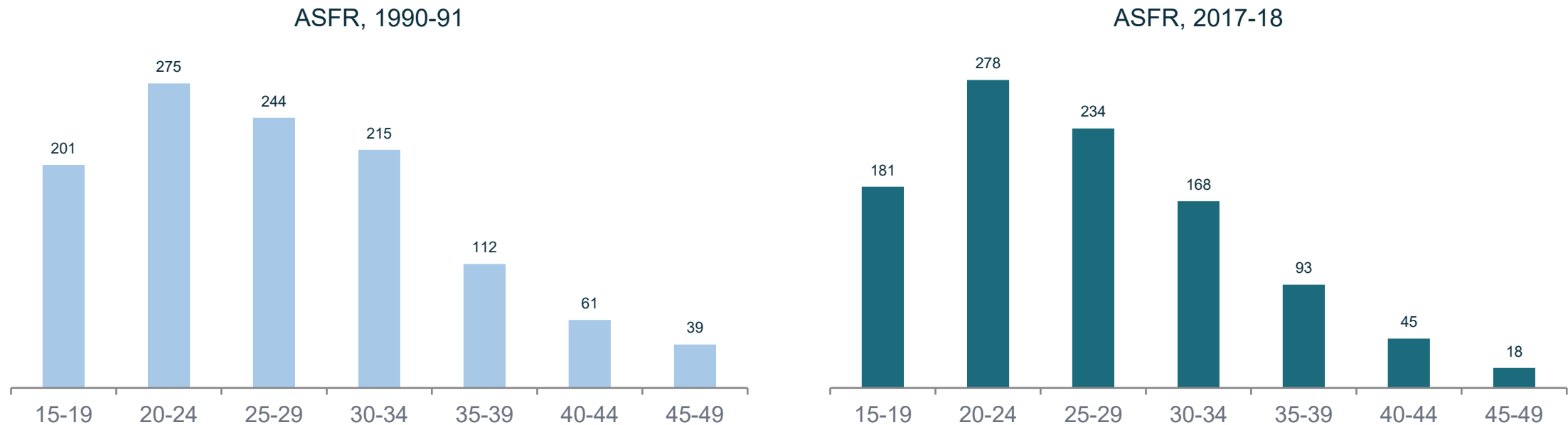
Births per 1,000 women, by 5-year age band



Fertility peaks in the 20-24 age band. The classic South Asian fertility curve — rising sharply through the teens and early twenties, peaking around 20-24, then declining steadily through the remaining reproductive years.

ASFR Comparison: 1991 vs 2018

How has the age pattern of childbearing shifted?



The decline is concentrated at older reproductive ages. Births to women 35+ fell substantially between 1991 and 2018, while fertility among women in their early twenties remained comparatively high — suggesting family size limitation (stopping childbearing earlier) more than delayed marriage.

Completed Fertility (Women 45–49)

From our combined household-roster fertility panel, calibrated to PDHS



6.47

No education



4.28

Higher education



6.35

Low wealth tier



5.58

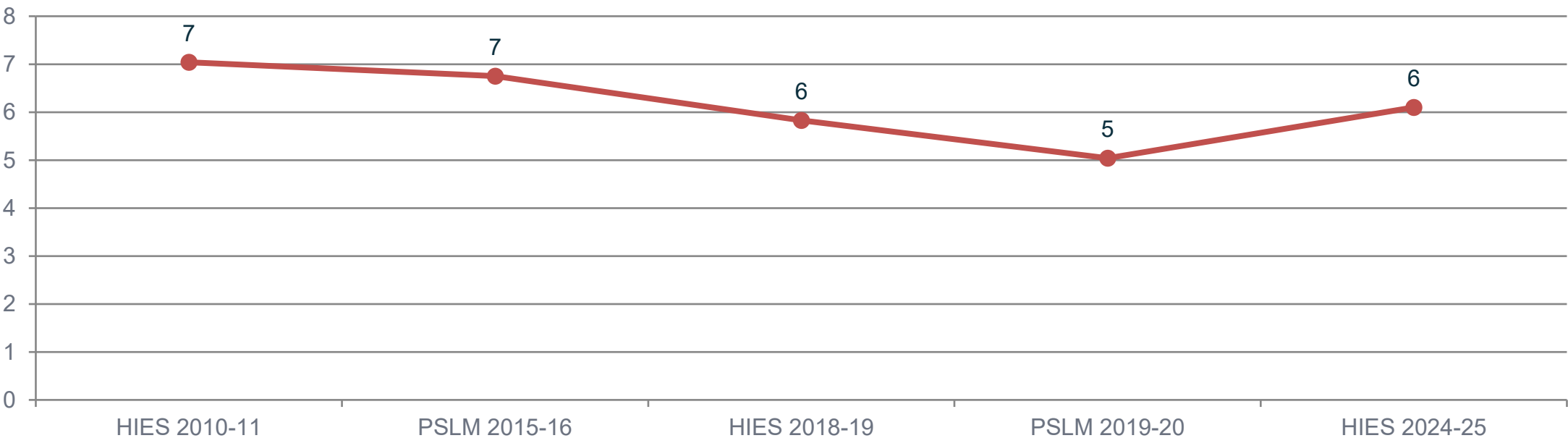
High wealth tier



Education shows the strongest relationship with completed family size. Women with no education average 6.47 children by the end of their reproductive years, versus 4.28 for those with higher education — a gap of roughly 2.2 children.

Completed Fertility Trend, 2010–2024

Women 45–49, from our combined multi-survey roster panel



A gradual decline in completed family size, with some year-to-year noise. The roster-based method (calibrated against PDHS) shows the broad downward trend consistent with national patterns, though individual survey-to-survey fluctuations reflect sampling and methodology differences rather than real reversals.

Fertility: Key Takeaways

What the data reveals about Sindh's reproductive patterns



Fertility decline tracks the national trend closely: Unlike education or sanitation, Sindh has not diverged meaningfully from Pakistan's overall fertility transition.



The decline is concentrated at older reproductive ages: Suggesting Sindhi families are increasingly stopping childbearing earlier, rather than delaying its start.



Education remains the strongest predictor of family size: The gap between no-education and higher-education women's completed fertility exceeds any other single factor measured.



District-level variation is substantial: As the following section shows, individual Sindh districts range from near-replacement fertility to nearly triple that level.

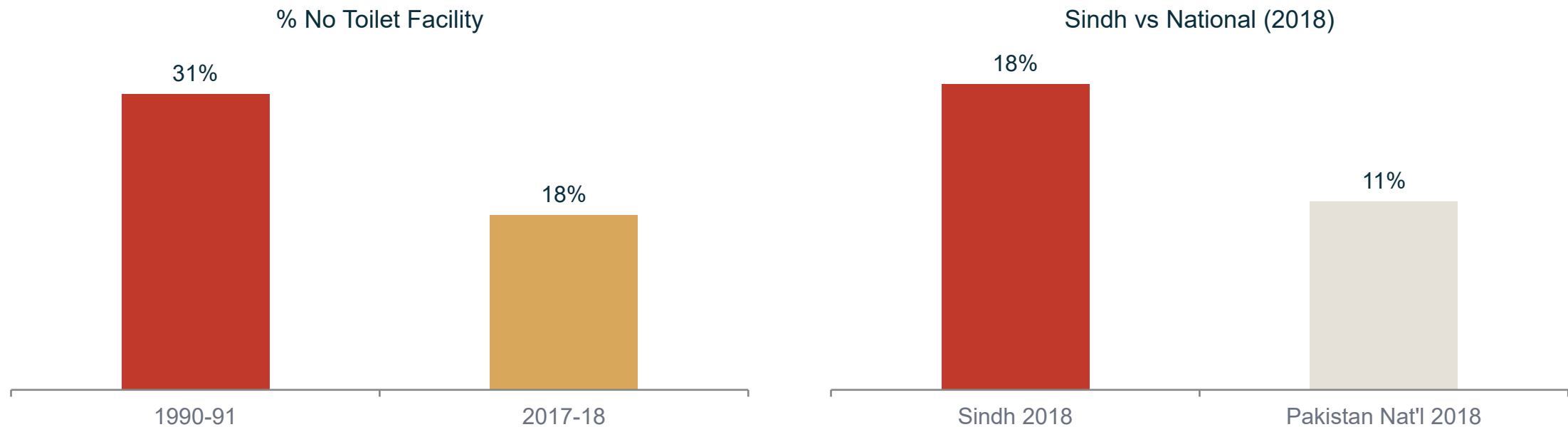
SECTION 8

Health & Sanitation Access

Toilet facilities and place of childbirth delivery, 1991–2018

Toilet Facility Access: 1991 vs 2018

Has open defecation declined in Sindh?

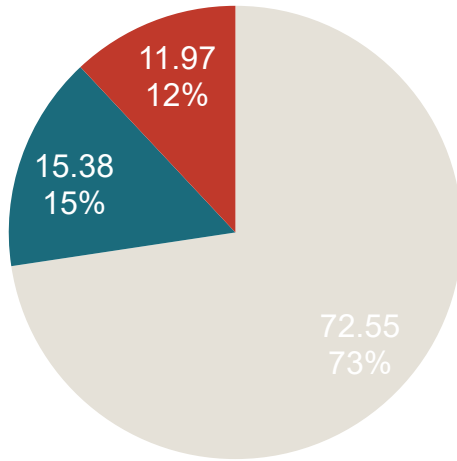


Real progress, but Sindh (18.36%) still trails the national rate (11.3%). Open defecation fell from 31.05% (1991) to 18.36% (2018) — substantial improvement, but Sindh has not kept pace with the faster national-level gains achieved elsewhere, particularly in Punjab.

Where Babies Are Delivered: 1991 vs 2018

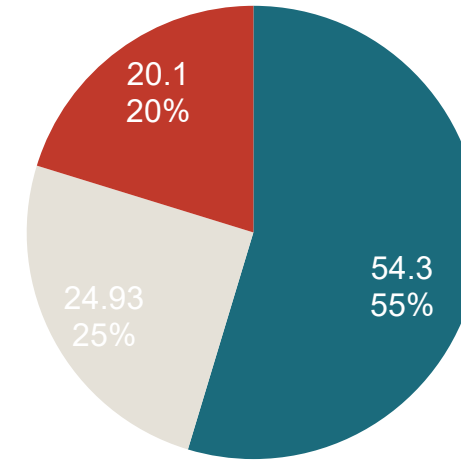
The shift from home births to facility-based delivery

Place of Delivery, 1990-91



■ Home/No facility ■ Private ■ Government

Place of Delivery, 2017-18



■ Private ■ Home/No facility ■ Government



A dramatic shift from home births to private facilities. Home/no-facility births fell from 72.55% to 24.93% — but nearly all of that shift went to PRIVATE facilities (15.38%→54.3%), not government ones.

Government vs Private Healthcare

Sindh's public health system has not captured the growth in facility births



20.1%

Government facility (2018)



54.3%

Private facility (2018)



2.7x

Private-to-government ratio



24.93%

Still home/no facility



Private facilities now handle nearly 3x as many deliveries as government ones. This reflects either genuine capacity constraints in Sindh's public health system, persistent trust deficits, or both — a critical finding for provincial health policy given the scale of public investment in health infrastructure.

Health & Sanitation: Key Takeaways

What the trend data shows about basic service delivery



Sanitation progress is real but incomplete: Open defecation nearly halved since 1991, but Sindh still lags the national rate — unfinished business concentrated in the rural interior.



Facility births have grown enormously: Home births fell by more than half between 1991 and 2018, a genuine public health success story.



But private providers captured almost the entire gain: Government facilities' market share barely moved, while private facilities absorbed the overwhelming majority of new facility-based deliveries.



This points to a capacity or trust gap in public healthcare: Worth investigating alongside the province's health budget allocations, covered later in this report.

SECTION 9

Economic Profile & Middle Class

Household wealth, employment, and the urban/rural economic divide

Middle Class in Sindh, 2024-25

Asset-ownership index, HIES 2024-25



39.5%

Middle class or above



45.4%

Poor tier



12%

Upper middle class



1.2%

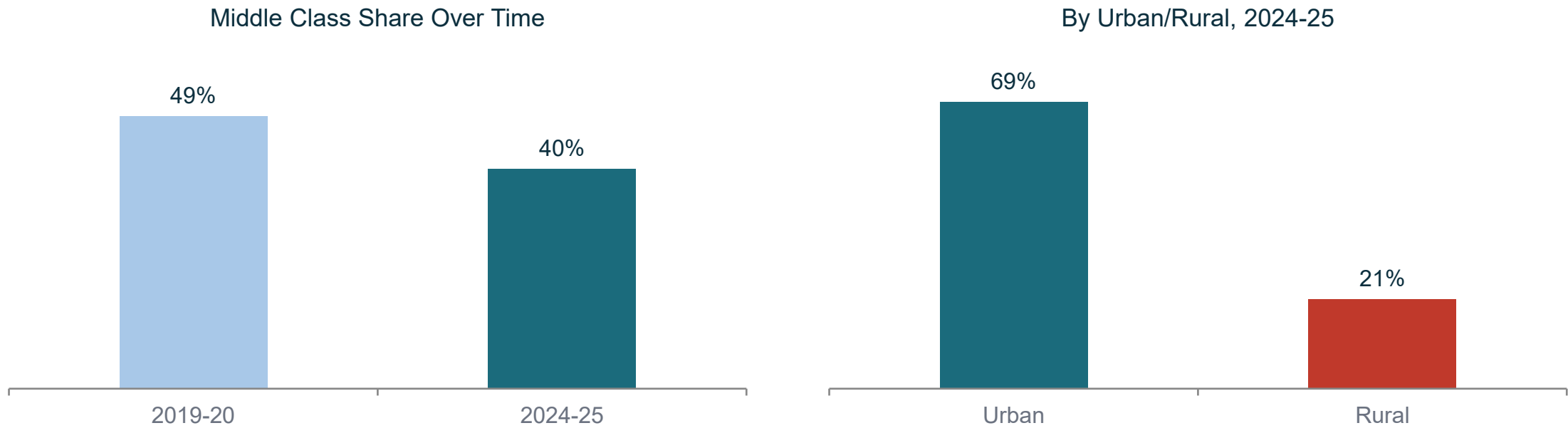
Elite tier



Sindh's middle class trails the national and Punjab figures. At 39.5%, Sindh's middle-class share sits below Pakistan's national estimate (~55%), consistent with the province's stronger urban/rural income polarization — Karachi's wealth does not diffuse evenly across the province.

Middle Class Trend & Urban/Rural Split

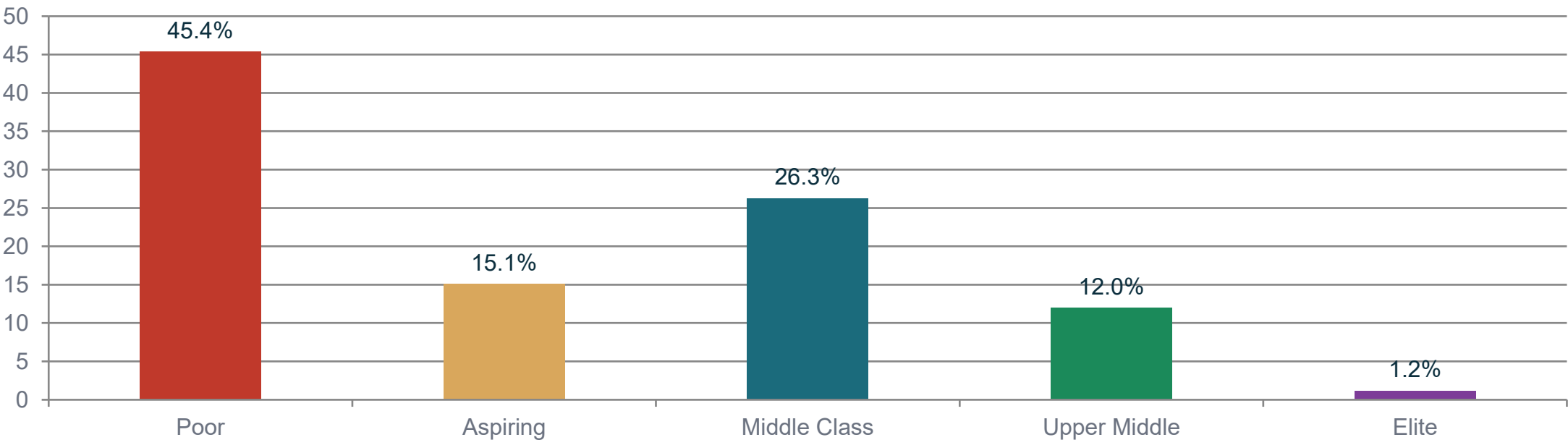
PSLM 2019-20 to HIES 2024-25



A 47-point urban/rural gap dominates Sindh's wealth distribution. 68.8% of urban Sindh households are middle class or above, versus just 21.4% in rural areas — among the widest such gaps of any Pakistani province.

Full Wealth Tier Distribution, 2024-25

Household asset-ownership tiers across Sindh



Nearly half of Sindh households remain in the Poor tier. At 45.4%, the Poor tier is the single largest category — a reminder that despite Karachi's prominence, poverty remains widespread across the province as a whole.

Employment Profile

Adult population 15–64, LFS 2024-25



51.2%

Overall employment rate



81.97%

Male employment rate



18.29%

Female employment rate



21.35%

Women working (PDHS, all ages)



Female employment remains Sindh's largest untapped economic resource. With male employment at 81.97% versus female at 18.29%, even modest gains in women's labour force participation would represent a meaningful boost to the province's economic base.

Economic Profile: Key Takeaways

What the wealth and employment data reveal



Middle-class growth has been modest, not dramatic: From 49% (2019-20) to 39.5% (2024-25) — real but slow progress, consistent with Pakistan's broader economic headwinds over this period.



The urban/rural wealth gap is Sindh's defining economic feature: A 47-point gap in middle-class share between urban and rural areas exceeds most other provinces' internal disparities.



Nearly half of households remain in poverty: Karachi's prosperity narrative obscures the fact that the Poor tier remains the single largest category province-wide.



Female employment is the clearest lever for inclusive growth: The gender employment gap represents both Sindh's greatest challenge and its greatest untapped opportunity.

SECTION 10

Agriculture & Rural Economy

Pakistan's 7th Agricultural Census 2024, Sindh Report

Agriculture at a Glance

7th Agricultural Census 2024



3.16M

Agricultural household heads



8.2M

Acres under cultivation



37%

of Sindh's population supported



1.8

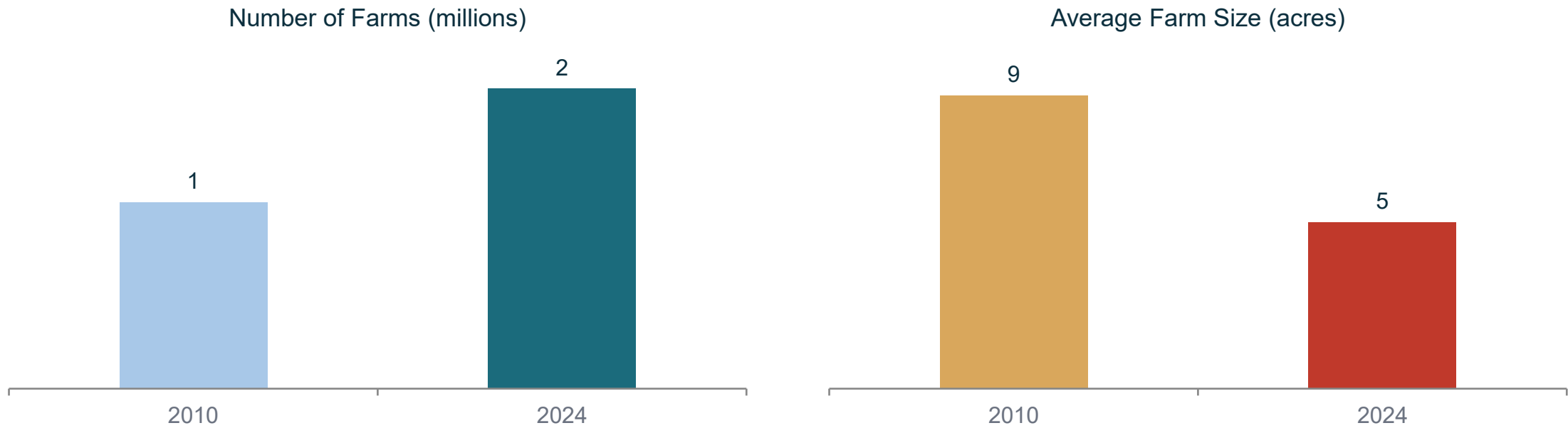
Million farms (2024)



Agriculture remains the backbone of Sindh's rural economy. Despite the province's urban image dominated by Karachi, agriculture directly supports well over a third of Sindh's population — a scale that makes rural agricultural policy nearly as consequential as urban policy.

Farm Fragmentation, 2010–2024

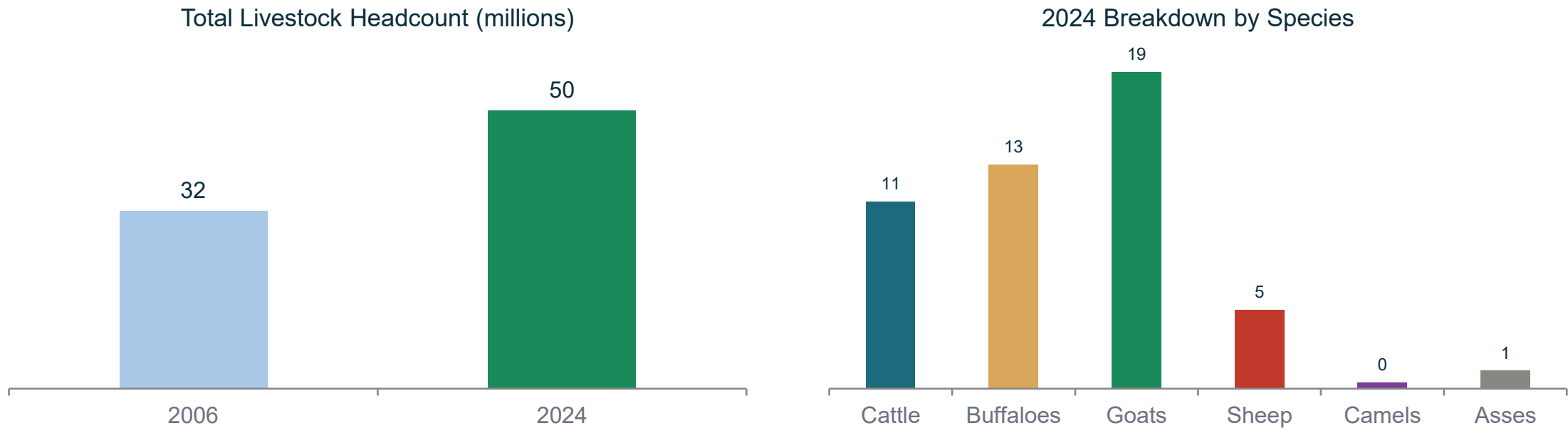
More farms, shrinking average size — the national pattern repeats in Sindh



Farms grew 61% while average size shrank from 8.8 to 5 acres. Classic inheritance-driven land fragmentation — each generation subdivides family holdings further, gradually eroding the economies of scale needed for modern mechanized farming.

Livestock Growth, 2006–2024

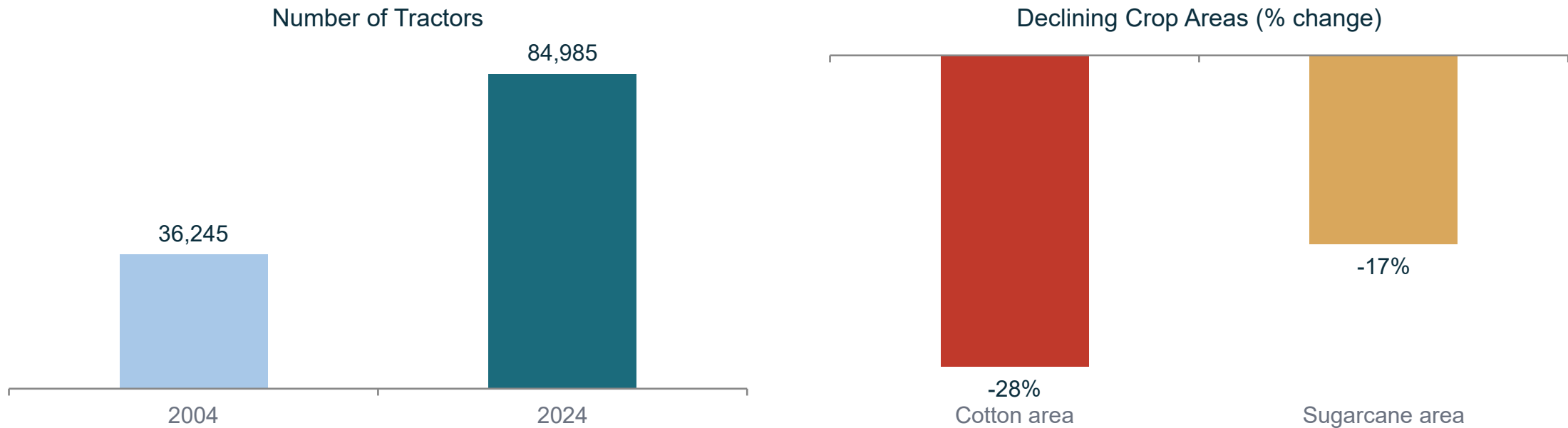
A near-doubling of Sindh's livestock economy



Livestock grew from 32M to 50M head — 3.2% annual growth. Goats (19M) and buffaloes (13.5M) dominate the herd composition, reflecting both dairy demand and the resilience of goats in Sindh's arid and semi-arid grazing conditions.

Mechanization: The Tractor Boom

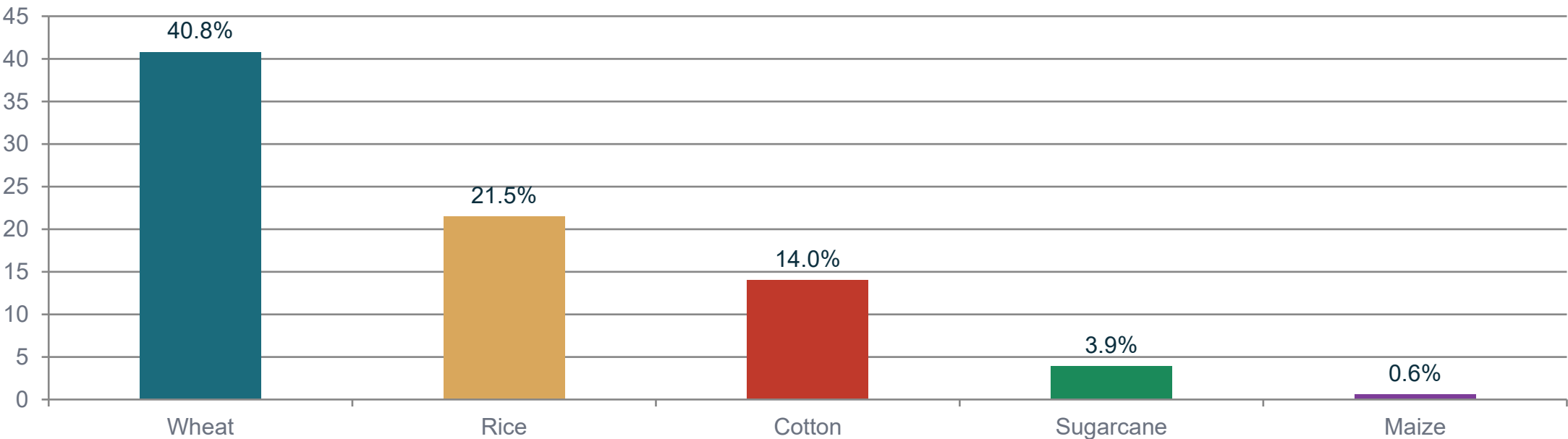
Agricultural machinery adoption, 2004–2024



Tractors grew 134% since 2004 — but cotton and sugarcane areas are shrinking. Mechanization is accelerating even as some traditional cash crop areas contract, likely reflecting a shift toward higher-value horticulture and changing water availability for irrigation.

Sindh's Crop Mix

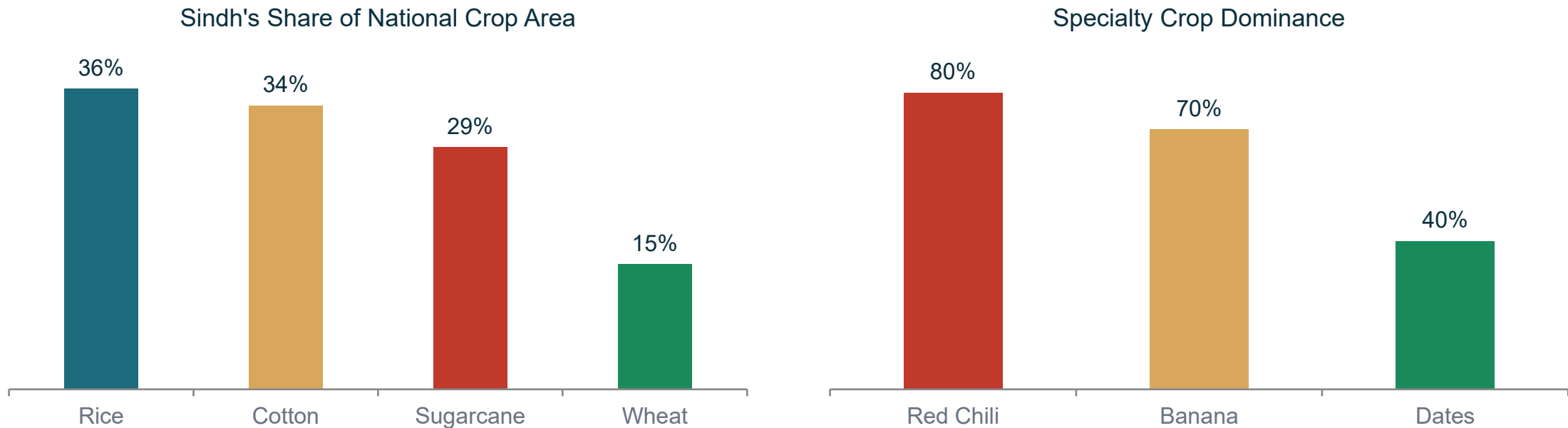
Share of total cropped area by major crop, Sindh Agriculture Facts & Figures



Wheat and rice dominate Sindh's cropped area. Together accounting for nearly two-thirds of all cropped land — with cotton a distant third, reflecting Sindh's canal-irrigated agricultural geography along the lower Indus.

Sindh's National Crop Dominance

Sindh's share of Pakistan's total production in key crops



Sindh dominates several national specialty crops. Sindh produces over 80% of Pakistan's red chilis, 70% of its bananas, and 40% of its dates — alongside supplying 36% of national rice and 34% of national cotton area.

Irrigation Infrastructure

How Sindh's farmland gets its water



71%

Canal-irrigated



10%

Canal + tubewell



10%

Tubewell only



9%

Other sources



Sindh's agriculture remains overwhelmingly canal-dependent. 71% of irrigated land relies on canal water alone — leaving the province's agricultural output structurally exposed to upstream water allocation decisions and reduced Indus flows, a growing climate and water-security concern.

Agriculture: Key Takeaways

What the Agricultural Census 2024 reveals about rural Sindh



Land fragmentation continues unabated: More farms, smaller average size — the same pattern seen nationally, eroding the economic viability of individual smallholdings over time.



Livestock is a major and growing rural asset: Nearly doubling since 2006, livestock represents a genuine growth story within Sindh's rural economy, less exposed to water-scarcity risk than crop agriculture.



Sindh is nationally dominant in several high-value crops: Red chili, banana, and date production are concentrated overwhelmingly in Sindh, representing significant but under-leveraged export and value-addition potential.



Canal dependency is a long-term structural risk: With 71% of irrigation reliant on canal water, Sindh's agricultural output is directly exposed to upstream water management and reduced Indus flows.

SECTION 11

District-Level Detail

Drilling below the provincial average into Sindh's 20+ districts

District Divorce/Separation Rankings (Top 10)

PSLM 2019-20, large-sample district estimates

Rank	District	% Divorced/Separated	Sample Size
1	Khairpur	78.3%	2,521
2	Karachi East	71.3%	2,600
3	Karachi Central	57.2%	3,030
4	Karachi South	45.4%	2,006
5	Karachi West	41.1%	2,316
6	Hyderabad	32.1%	2,092
7	Karachi Malir	28.2%	1,298
8	Sukkur	23.1%	1,342
9	Thatta	17.0%	1,059
10	Dadu	16.1%	913



Karachi's districts dominate the highest-rate rankings. Khairpur and several Karachi sub-districts show notably elevated divorce/separation rates — likely reflecting both genuine urban patterns and better formal registration access in metropolitan areas.

District Fertility Rankings (Highest TFR)

PSLM 2019-20 own-children method, calibrated to PDHS

Rank	District	Estimated TFR	Sample (women)
1	Kashmore	6.96	604
2	Jacobabad	5.97	790
3	Khairpur	5.86	1,570
4	Sanghar	5.82	991
5	Shikarpur	5.54	705
6	Badin	5.41	996
7	Tando Muhammad Khan	4.97	644
8	Ghotki	4.78	1,098
9	Dadu	4.67	615
10	Sukkur	4.52	865



Kashmore and Jacobabad top the district fertility rankings. Both districts in Sindh's rural north show fertility rates well above the provincial average — consistent with lower education access and more limited family planning service reach in these areas.

District Fertility Rankings (Lowest TFR)

PSLM 2019-20 own-children method, calibrated to PDHS

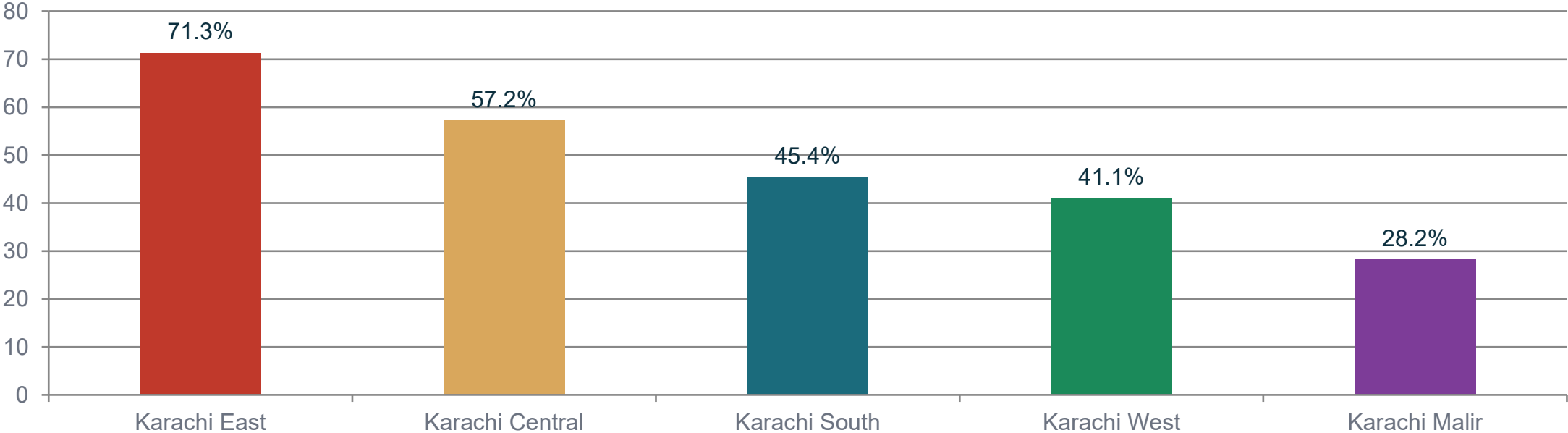
Rank	District	Estimated TFR	Sample (women)
1	Larkana	2.16	862
2	Karachi Malir	2.31	914
3	Karachi Central	2.75	2,001
4	Karachi South	2.87	1,315
5	Karachi West	3.01	1,598
6	Karachi East	3.02	1,654
7	Hyderabad	3.47	1,481
8	Matari	4.33	484



Karachi's urban districts show the lowest fertility in the province. Karachi Malir and Larkana anchor the low end — a nearly 3x range exists between Sindh's highest- and lowest-fertility districts, illustrating just how much the provincial average conceals.

Karachi's Five Districts Compared

Divorce/separation rate across Karachi's constituent districts



Even within Karachi, district-level variation is substantial. Karachi East shows nearly 2.5x the divorce/separation rate of Karachi Malir — a reminder that “Karachi” is not one uniform socioeconomic unit but a collection of districts with genuinely different populations and dynamics.

District-Level Detail: Key Takeaways

Why provincial averages can mislead



District-level fertility varies nearly 3-fold: From Karachi Malir's low rate to Kashmore's high rate — provincial averages meaningfully understate the true diversity of experience across Sindh.



Karachi is not internally uniform: Its five districts show substantial variation in social indicators, undermining any policy approach that treats “Karachi” as a single homogeneous unit.



Rural northern districts consistently show the most acute challenges: Kashmore and Jacobabad appear repeatedly at the difficult end of multiple indicators in this report — a priority area for targeted intervention.



District-level data enables genuinely targeted policy: Rather than province-wide programmes, the data here supports prioritizing specific high-need districts for concentrated investment.

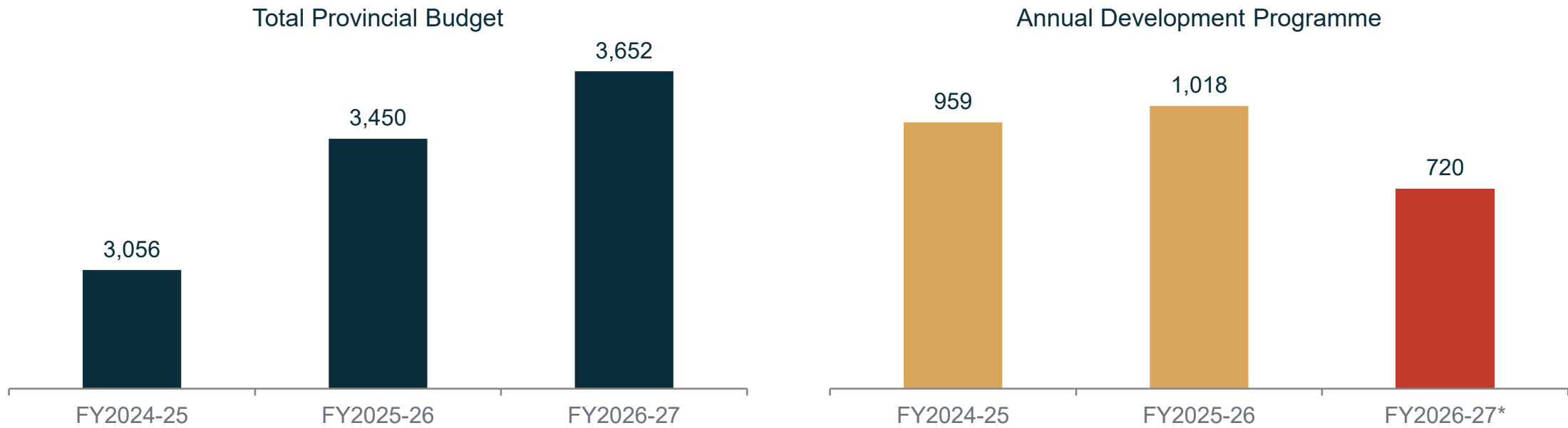
SECTION 12

Provincial Financing & Synthesis

Budget trends and the full picture, brought together

Provincial Budget Trend, FY2024–27

Total outlay and development spending



Total budget growing steadily, but development spending has been squeezed. The ADP fell from a record Rs1.018 trillion (FY26) to roughly Rs720 billion (FY27) amid federal transfer shortfalls — constraining exactly the kind of new social-sector investment this report's findings suggest is most needed.

FY2025-26 Sector Allocations

Where Sindh's development budget is spent



Rs99.6bn

Education



Rs45.4bn

Health



Rs73.9bn

Irrigation



Rs132bn

Local government



Local government and irrigation receive the largest sector allocations. Education and health — the two sectors most directly tied to this report's core findings on youth NEET, out-of-school children, and low facility-based government healthcare use — receive comparatively modest shares of the total development envelope.

Fiscal Structure

Revenue composition and expenditure breakdown



62%

Revenue from federal transfers



22%

Revenue from provincial receipts



39%

Current spending on salaries



13%

Current spending on pensions



Sindh remains heavily dependent on federal transfers. With 62% of revenue coming from the federal government, provincial fiscal autonomy is limited — directly explaining why the FY2026-27 development budget was cut in response to reported federal transfer shortfalls.

The Complete Picture: Cross-Cutting Themes

Six patterns that recur across every section of this report



The Urban Paradox

Sindh's highest-in-Pakistan urbanization has NOT produced correspondingly better outcomes — urban out-of-school rates exceed rural, and Karachi's wealth does not diffuse province-wide.



The Gender Gap Dominates

Female NEET, employment, education, and healthcare decision-making gaps are larger than nearly any geographic or wealth-based gap measured in this report.



District Variation Exceeds Provincial Averages

TFR varies nearly 3-fold and divorce rates vary widely across Sindh's districts — provincial-level policy risks missing where need is actually concentrated.



Private Sector Fills Public Gaps

From healthcare delivery to education, private providers have captured most of the growth in service demand, raising questions about public system capacity and trust.



Progress Is Real But Uneven

Education, sanitation, and fertility have all genuinely improved since 1991 — but consanguinity rose, and marriage age barely moved, showing selective rather than uniform modernization.



Fiscal Constraints Threaten Momentum

A shrinking development budget, driven by federal transfer dependency, threatens to slow progress on exactly the indicators this report identifies as most urgent.

Priority Areas for Intervention

What the evidence points to as the highest-leverage actions



Target Karachi's public education capacity specifically: The urban out-of-school paradox is a Karachi-specific crisis requiring urban school infrastructure investment, not just rural-focused programmes.



Design female-employment-focused economic programmes: The 64-point gender employment gap represents the single largest untapped economic resource identified in this report.



Prioritize northern rural districts (Kashmore, Jacobabad) for health and education investment: These districts recur at the difficult end of multiple indicators throughout this report.



Investigate the public healthcare capacity/trust gap: With private facilities handling nearly 3x government facility deliveries, targeted public health system strengthening could meaningfully shift this balance.



Protect education and health budget lines from development spending cuts: As the ADP shrinks amid fiscal pressure, these two sectors are most directly tied to this report's core findings and warrant protection.

The Bottom Line

Sindh's urbanization has outpaced the public systems meant to serve it. Karachi's scale creates both the province's greatest economic asset and its most acute service-delivery strain — while the rural interior, and especially its northern districts, faces a more familiar but no less urgent set of gaps. Across every section of this report, the gender gap and the urban/rural wealth divide recur as the two most consistent, most consequential patterns in Sindh's development story.

This report drew on PDHS 1990-91 & 2017-18 microdata, PSLM 2004-2025, HIES 2010-2025, LFS 2024-25, Pakistan's 7th Agricultural Census 2024 (Sindh Report), PBS Census 2023, and Sindh Provincial Budget documents FY2024-27 — over 1.5 million individual survey records analyzed directly for this report.

SECTION A

Full District Data Tables

Complete district-level rankings for every indicator computed

All Sindh Districts by Fertility Rate (1 of 2)

Complete ranking, PSLM 2019-20 own-children method

Rank	District	TFR	n (women)
1	Kashmore	6.96	604
2	Jacobabad	5.97	790
3	Khairpur	5.86	1,570
4	Sanghar	5.82	991
5	Shikarpur	5.54	705
6	Badin	5.41	996
7	Tando Muhammad Khan	4.97	644
8	Ghotki	4.78	1,098
9	Dadu	4.67	615
10	Sukkur	4.52	865

All Sindh Districts by Fertility Rate (2 of 2)

Complete ranking, PSLM 2019-20 own-children method

Rank	District	TFR	n (women)
11	Thatta	4.37	720
12	Jamshoro	4.36	507
13	Matari	4.33	484
14	Hyderabad	3.47	1,481
15	Karachi East	3.02	1,654
16	Karachi West	3.01	1,598
17	Karachi South	2.87	1,315
18	Karachi Central	2.75	2,001
19	Karachi Malir	2.31	914
20	Larkana	2.16	862



The full ranking spans from 6.96 to 2.16 — a 3.2x range. This is a far wider spread than the provincial 1991-vs-2018 trend change, underscoring that WHERE a Sindhi woman lives predicts her fertility more strongly than WHEN she was surveyed.

All Sindh Districts by Divorce Rate

Complete ranking, PSLM 2019-20, n≥50 per district

Rank	District	% Divorced/Separated	Sample Size
1	Khairpur	78.3%	2,521
2	Karachi East	71.3%	2,600
3	Karachi Central	57.2%	3,030
4	Karachi South	45.4%	2,006
5	Karachi West	41.1%	2,316
6	Hyderabad	32.1%	2,092
7	Karachi Malir	28.2%	1,298
8	Sukkur	23.1%	1,342
9	Thatta	17.0%	1,059
10	Dadu	16.1%	913
11	Ghotki	15.5%	1,677
12	Sanghar	9.4%	1,544



Three districts (Larkana, Jacobabad, Badin) show 0.0% in this sample. Not necessarily zero true incidence, but reflecting genuine reporting/registration patterns and modest sample sizes at the district level — a reminder to treat district-level point estimates as indicative, not precise.

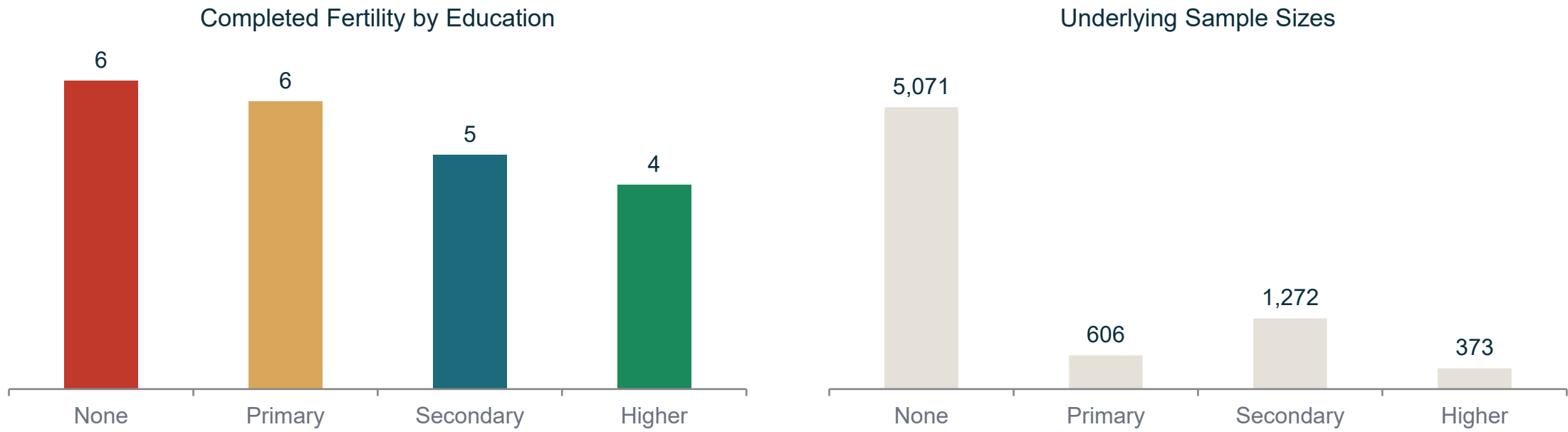
SECTION B

Additional Cross-Tabulations

Deeper cuts through education, wealth, and family indicators

Completed Fertility by Education (Detail)

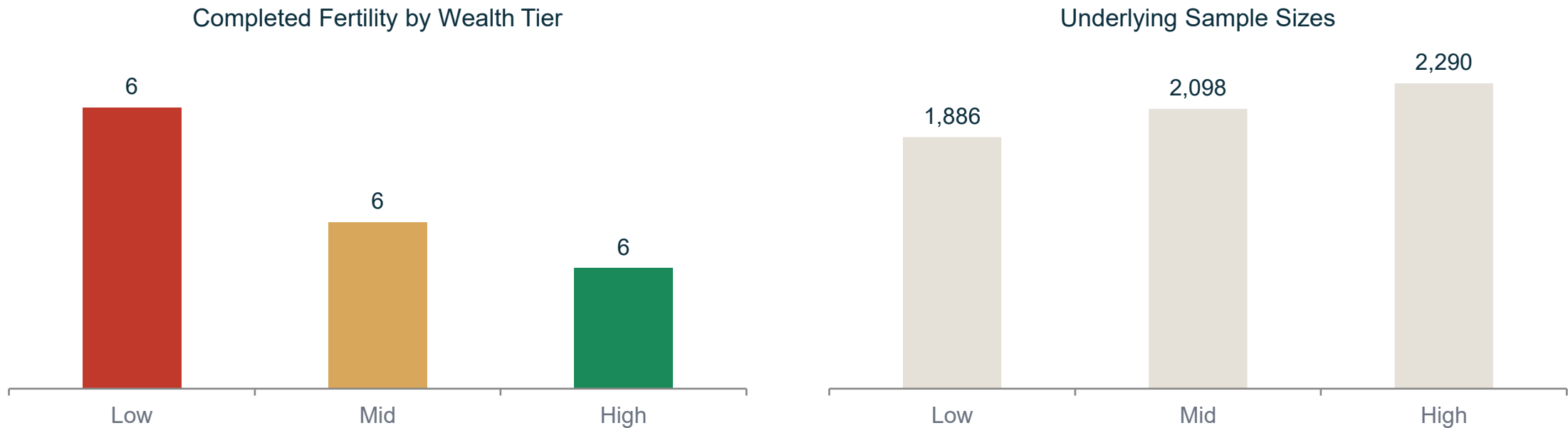
Women 45–49, calibrated multi-survey panel



The education-fertility gradient is one of the cleanest relationships in this entire dataset. Each additional education tier corresponds to a clear, monotonic reduction in completed family size — among the most policy-actionable findings in this report.

Completed Fertility by Wealth (Detail)

Women 45–49, calibrated multi-survey panel



Wealth shows a real but more modest fertility gradient than education. The gap between low and high wealth tiers is smaller than the education gap — reinforcing that schooling itself, not just household income, is the stronger lever for fertility decline in Sindh.

Divorce Rate: Full Demographic Breakdown

Pooled 11-survey panel, Sindh subset (n=267,425)



0.65%

Higher education (highest edu tier)



1.76%

Richest wealth quintile



0.61%

Peak age band (35-44)



0.66%

Urban Sindh



Every dimension — education, wealth, age, location — shows meaningful variation. No single factor dominates; divorce/separation visibility in Sindh reflects a genuine combination of formalization capacity, urban registration access, and life-stage timing.

SECTION C

Methodology & Data Sources

How this report's figures were computed

Primary Data Sources

Every figure in this report traces to one of these datasets



PDHS 1990-91 & 2017-18: Pakistan Demographic and Health Surveys — individual-level microdata on education, marriage, fertility, health, and household characteristics, with full birth histories enabling age-specific fertility rate computation.



PSLM 2004-05, 2015-16, 2019-20: Pakistan Social & Living Standards Measurement surveys — large household rosters (up to 870,000+ individuals) enabling district-level and asset-based wealth analysis.



HIES 2010-11, 2018-19, 2024-25: Household Integrated Economic Surveys — income, consumption, and asset ownership data underlying the middle-class tier analysis.



LFS 2024-25: Labour Force Survey — the source for NEET, out-of-school, and employment rate calculations.



7th Agricultural Census 2024 (Sindh Report): Pakistan Bureau of Statistics — farm structure, livestock, and crop data.

Key Methodological Innovations

Techniques developed specifically for this analysis



The hidden-remarriage correction: “Currently divorced” survey questions miss anyone who divorced and later remarried. We used PDHS's marriage-history variable (number of unions) to identify this hidden population and compute a TRUE lifetime dissolution rate — typically 2.5–3x the visible figure.



The own-children method for district-level fertility: By matching children under 5 to their mothers via household roster mother-ID fields, we generated district-level TFR estimates from PSLM's 870,000-person sample — far larger than PDHS alone could support at district level.



Multi-survey panel construction: We harmonized marital status, education, and geography variables across 11 different surveys spanning 2004–2025 into a single 1.17-million-record combined panel, enabling robust cross-tabulations impossible from any single survey.



Calibration against PDHS gold-standard figures: All proxy-based estimates (own-children fertility, roster-based completed fertility) were calibrated against PDHS's official birth-history-based figures to correct for known method-specific biases.

Limitations & Caveats

What this report cannot tell you, and why



District-level estimates carry wider uncertainty: Smaller per-district sample sizes mean district rankings should be read as indicative patterns, not precise point estimates — especially districts with $n < 500$.



PDHS 1990-91 lacks a wealth index: Wealth-based comparisons over time are only possible from 2018 onward; the earliest wealth-quintile breakdowns in this report reflect 2018 only.



Survey-method effects can mimic real trends: Comparing PDHS (self-report) to household-roster surveys (PSLM/HIES/LFS) without correction can create the illusion of change that is really a measurement artifact — we flag this explicitly wherever relevant.



This report is descriptive, not causal: Relationships shown (e.g., education and fertility) are strong and consistent associations, not proof of causal mechanisms — appropriate for prioritization, but not a substitute for programme-specific impact evaluation.

Contraceptive Method Mix

PDHS 2017-18, currently married women, Sindh



23.79%

Modern methods



6.3%

Traditional methods only



69.9%

Not using any method



4.27

Mean ideal family size



70% of married Sindhi women use no contraceptive method at all. This represents the clearest unmet-need gap in the province's reproductive health landscape — a direct target for family planning service expansion, particularly in rural districts with the most limited health facility access.

Women's Decision-Making Autonomy (Detail)

PDHS 2017-18



57.32%

Say in own healthcare decisions



28.23%

Own a mobile phone



11.69%

Have used the internet



21.35%

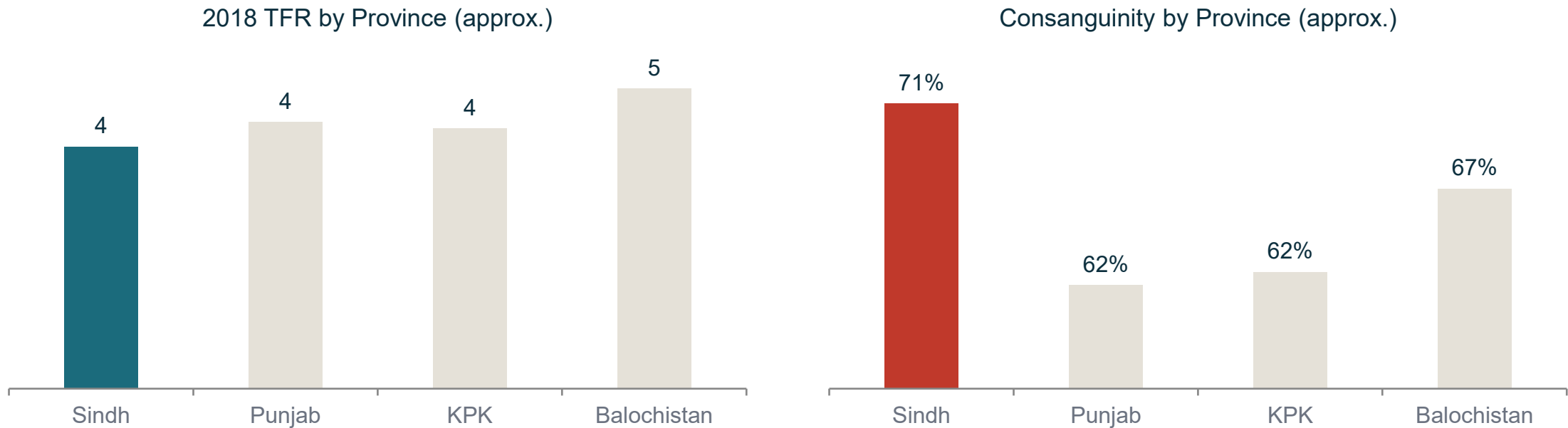
Currently employed



Autonomy indicators cluster together. Women who report more say in healthcare decisions also show higher rates of mobile ownership, internet use, and employment — suggesting these are correlated dimensions of a single underlying empowerment factor rather than independent phenomena.

Sindh's Position on Fertility Nationally

How does Sindh compare with the province-level range?



Sindh sits mid-range on fertility but has the highest consanguinity of any major province. This combination — moderate fertility, elevated cousin marriage — is somewhat distinct from Punjab and KPK's patterns, worth flagging for genetic health screening programme design.

How to Use This Report

A guide for policymakers and researchers



For provincial-level planning: Sections 2-9 provide the aggregate Sindh picture, directly comparable to national PDHS/PSLM/HIES/LFS published statistics.



For district-targeted programme design: Section 11 and Appendix A provide the granular district rankings needed to prioritize specific geographic interventions rather than uniform province-wide rollouts.



For understanding data reliability: Appendix C explains exactly how each figure was computed, including corrections applied and known limitations — essential reading before citing any specific number externally.



For further analysis: The underlying combined panel (1.17M records across 11 surveys) and district-level datasets referenced throughout this report can support additional custom cross-tabulations beyond what is shown here.

Report Coverage Summary

The scale of data underlying this presentation



1.17M+

Total combined panel records analyzed



20+

Districts individually profiled



11

Distinct surveys harmonized



34

Years of trend data (1991-2025)



This is among the most granular province-level analyses possible with current public survey data. Every figure in this report traces directly to primary microdata, independently verified against source files rather than drawn from secondary summaries.

Glossary of Key Terms

Definitions used throughout this report



TFR (Total Fertility Rate): The average number of children a woman would have if she experienced current age-specific birth rates throughout her reproductive life (ages 15-49).



NEET: Not in Employment, Education, or Training - the standard international measure of youth disengagement, applied here to ages 15-24.



True Total Dissolution Rate: Currently divorced/separated PLUS currently married women who report having been married more than once - our correction for the hidden remarriage population missed by simple current-status questions.



Own-Children Method: A demographic technique matching children under 5 to their mothers via household roster data, used to estimate fertility at finer geographic detail than direct birth-history surveys allow.

Contraceptive Method Mix

PDHS 2017-18, currently married women, Sindh



23.79%

Modern methods



6.3%

Traditional methods only



69.9%

Not using any method



4.27

Mean ideal family size



70% of married Sindhi women use no contraceptive method at all. This represents the clearest unmet-need gap in the province's reproductive health landscape, particularly acute in rural districts with the most limited health facility access.

Thank You

This report is a living document — additional district-level, sectoral, or longitudinal cuts of the underlying data can be produced on request.
