

Big Data Analysis | Marriage & Child Bearing

Pakistani Women Are Marrying and Starting Families Later but the Childbearing Window Remains Wide

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Median age at first
Marriage 1990-91

18
Years

Median age at first
Marriage 2017-18

19
Years

Median age at first
Birth 1990-91

20
Years

Median age at first
Birth 2017-18

21
Years

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



(Also emailed*/faxed separately)



PRESS RELEASE

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Pakistani Women Are Marrying and Starting Families Later — but the Childbearing Window Remains Wide

(Islamabad), 4th August 2026

Gallup Pakistan Digital Analytics analyzed microdata from the Pakistan Demographic and Health Surveys (PDHS) 1990–91 and 2017–18 to examine how key milestones in women's reproductive lives have shifted over nearly three decades.

The data show a modest delay in both marriage and the start of childbearing. The median age at first marriage increased from 18.0 years in 1990–91 to 19.0 years in 2017–18, while the median age at first birth rose from 20.0 to 21.0 years.

The median age at last birth also declined, from 36.2 to 33.8 years. This is a reduction of 2.4 years, but it still indicates that many women continue having children into their mid-30s.

Marriage and First Birth Have Shifted Later

The one-year increase in both first marriage and first birth suggests gradual change in the timing of family formation. Pakistani women are, on average, marrying and entering motherhood slightly later than they did in 1990–91.

The Childbearing Period Has Narrowed Only Modestly

Using the difference between median age at first and last birth as a simple descriptive indicator, the childbearing span declined from approximately 16.2 years in 1990–91 to 12.8 years in 2017–18.

This is a meaningful reduction, but the span remains long. Women continue to begin childbearing in their early twenties and, at the median, have their last birth in their mid-30s.

A prolonged reproductive period can be associated with more pregnancies over the life course and a greater likelihood of births at older maternal ages. However, these figures alone do not tell us about birth spacing, total fertility or individual pregnancy risk; those outcomes require separate analysis.

The broader picture is one of gradual rather than dramatic change. Marriage and motherhood are beginning slightly later, and the end of childbearing has shifted earlier, but Pakistan's reproductive transition remains incomplete.

Pakistani women are marrying and starting families later — but the childbearing window stays wide open

Median age at first marriage, first birth, and last birth. Age at last birth restricted to women 40–49 with at least one child.

● Median age at first marriage ● Median age at first birth ● Median age at last birth



Computed from Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey microdata (NIPS), weighted medians. Age at first marriage and first birth: women 25–49. Age at last birth: women 40–49 with at least one child (standard DHS convention).

MARRIAGE AND FIRST BIRTH HAVE SHIFTED LATER

Median age at first marriage rose from 18.0 to 19.0, and age at first birth from 20.0 to 21.0, over 27 years — a modest but real one-year shift on both fronts.

THE CHILDBEARING WINDOW HAS BARELY NARROWED

Median age at last birth fell only 2.4 years (36.2 → 33.8). Pakistani mothers are still bearing children well into their mid-to-late 30s — consistent with the slower decline in family size seen elsewhere in the data.

Source: Pakistan Demographic and Health Surveys 1990–91 and 2017–18 (NIPS).

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

Note: The span is calculated as median age at last birth minus median age at first birth. It is a descriptive comparison of separate medians, not the median reproductive span of individual women.

This analysis was conducted by Gallup Pakistan using microdata from the Pakistan Demographic and Health Surveys 1990–91 and 2017–18, conducted by the National Institute of Population Studies. Median age at first marriage and first birth is reported for women aged 25–49, while median age at last birth is reported for women aged 40–49 with at least one child, following standard DHS conventions.



Opinion Poll from Gallup Pakistan
The Pakistani Affiliate of Gallup
International



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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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