

# PAKISTAN

(Last updated 2023)

Pakistan is located in Southern Asia, bordering Iran to the west, India to the south-east, Afghanistan to the north-west, China to the north-east and the Arabian Sea to the south. The mountain ranges of the Himalayas, the Karakorams and the Hindukush form Pakistan's northern highlands of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. The Indus River and its tributaries dominate the eastern and southern parts of Pakistan. The country's total area is 796 095 square km, with a coastline of 1 046 km. Pakistan's capital is **Islamabad** (1.014.825). Construction of the city began in 1961. Pakistan is a federal Islamic parliamentary republic with two legislative houses; its head of state is the president, and its head of government is the prime minister. The President is Arif Alvi. The administrative units of Pakistan comprise four provinces, one federal territory, and two disputed territories: the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan; the Islamabad Capital Territory; and the administrative territories of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

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**Official name:** Islamic Republic of Pakistan.



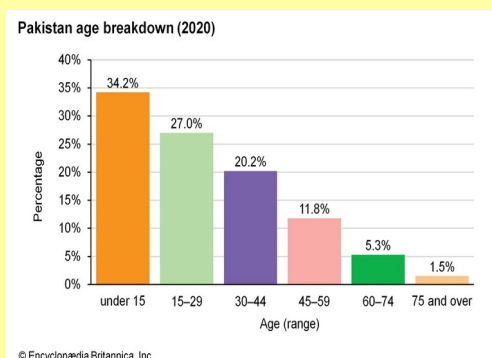
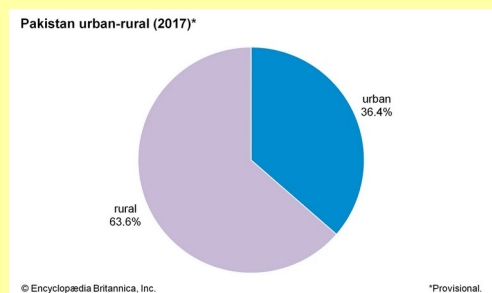
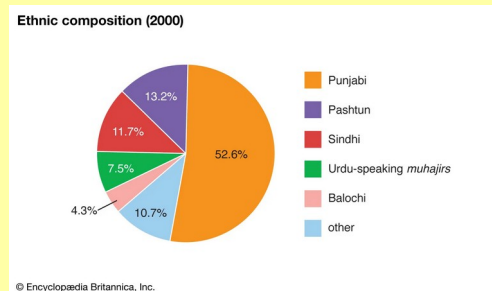
**Population:** Pakistan is the world's fifth-most populous country, its population was estimated to be 196 174 380 (male: 100 749 556; female: 95 424 824) as of July 2014. The main ethnic groups of Pakistan comprise of Punjabi 44.68 %, Pashtun 15.42 %, Sindhi 14.1 %, Sariaki 8.38 %, Mohajirs 7.57 %, Balochi 3.57 %, other 6.28 %. According to the 1998 census, 95 % of Pakistan's population was Muslim, of which about 75 % is Sunni and 25 % Shia. Figures estimating the number of Ahmadiyya in Pakistan varied greatly, ranging from 600 000, to 2-4 million. Hindus, Christians, Parsis/Zoroastrians, Bahais, Sikhs, Buddhists and others comprise a further 5 %.

**Language:** Urdu is the national language; English is used for official purposes. While Urdu is the first language for just 8 % of Pakistanis, an estimated 80-90 % uses it as their second functional language, making it a virtual lingua franca. Other main languages of Pakistan are Punjabi 48 %, Sindhi 12 %, Siraiki (a Punjabi variant) 10 %, Pashtu 8 %, Balochi 3 %, Hindko 2 %, Brahui 1 %.

### History and current situation:

Throughout history the fertile plains of the Indus River was occupied by different peoples. Originally a Hindu and Buddhist region, Muslims conquered large parts of the area in the 10th and 11th century. In later centuries the sultanate of Delhi and the Mughal occupied the area. When in the middle of the 18th century the Afghan Durrani Pashtun dynasty took control, the region was already predominantly Muslim. After several wars in the first half of the 19th century, almost all of the territory that constitutes present-day India and Pakistan came under the rule of the British East India Company. The 20th century saw the development of a movement calling for Indian independence. The All India Muslim League was formed in 1906 in Dhaka. Muhammad Ali Jinnah became its most significant leader, advocating an independent homeland for the Indian Muslims. On 14 August 1947 Pakistan became a dominion within the Commonwealth with Muhammad Ali Jinnah as governor general. As a result of the partition of British India into India and Pakistan, Bengal and Punjab were divided and only the provinces of Balochistan, the North-West frontier and Sindh came to Pakistan intact. The Maharadja principality of Kashmir acceded to India but this was rejected by the Muslim majority population. A raid of Pashtun invaders in Kashmir led to the intervention of the Indian army and caused the first Indian-Pakistani war (22 October 1947). After the ceasefire (2 January 1949), a temporary demarcation was decided which later became known as the Line of Control. Pakistan's economic situation was dire from the start and politicians struggled to maintain stability. In September 1948 Jinnah died. Six years later the Muslim League suffered a severe electoral defeat against a united opposition in Bengal East Pakistan, indicating an increasing political divide between East and West Pakistan. In 1956 a new constitution was adopted which declared Pakistan an Islamic republic.

In October 1958 the military staged a coup. Political parties were abolished, the constitution abrogated and martial law declared. Army Chief General Muhammad Ayub Khan became Prime Minister and soon assumed the presidency. Under Ayub Khan, there was a reasonable economic growth especially in the manufacturing industry, though a clear imbalance between East and West persisted. Poverty in East Pakistan increased while West Pakistan enjoyed economic growth. In 1965 war broke out with India over Kashmir, but both countries soon concluded a peace treaty. In Bengal, the nationalist Awami League appeared as the main political force. Opposition to President Ayub Khan's autocratic military rule grew and in February 1969 he announced that he would not contest in the 1970 presidential election. A month later he ceded power to army chief general Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan, who became President. In the general election of 1970 the Awami League, led by Mujibur Rahman, gained a majority of seats in the assembly (167 of the 300 total). In the West the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a Sindhi Shia nobleman, got 83 seats. Mujibur Rahman opted for far reaching autonomy which proved impossible to accept for Yahya Khan. The West Pakistani military invaded East Pakistan where heavy fighting broke out between the army and Awami League militants. In December 1971 India intervened successfully in the conflict and forced Islamabad to recognize the independence of the new republic of Bangladesh. President Yahya resigned and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the undisputed leader of former West Pakistan. In 1973 a new constitution was adopted and Bhutto became Prime Minister. A year later the Parliament adopted a law declaring the Ahmadi Non-Muslims. The elections of 1977 were contested



between Bhutto's PPP and an opposition alliance, which advocated more Islamism. Though the PPP won a large majority of the votes, violence broke out in large parts of the country.

On 5 July 1977 army chief General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq declared martial law, starting a new period of military rule. He soon became President and had Bhutto tried and executed. In order to gain more popular support for his leadership Zia acceded to Islamists and introduced a new Islamic code of laws. In 1979 elections were postponed indefinitely, political parties and strikes banned and the press experienced strict censorship. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had serious consequences for Pakistan. Backed by the US and a number of Muslim countries, Zia provided support to Afghan mujaheddin resisting Soviet influence and advocated a wider islamisation policy. Millions of Afghan refugees, fleeing the conflict, settled in Pakistan. In August 1988 President ul-Haq was killed in a mysterious plane crash.

In November 1988 Pakistan had its first open national election in more than 10 years. The PPP, led by Benazir Bhutto, daughter of Zulfikar, gained a distinctive victory. Bhutto formed a coalition government and became Prime Minister. In 1989 relations with the US started to sour after it became apparent that Pakistan had secretly developed a nuclear capacity. Economically, Pakistan entered a period of stagflation. The PPP lost the 1990 elections to a right wing conservative alliance led by Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. He promoted a policy of economic liberalization but was unable to restore the economy. Benazir Bhutto returned to power after the 1992 elections, starting a programme of nationalization. In the mid-1990s Pakistan started to support the Taliban, a Pashtun fundamentalist group that had made inroads in Afghanistan. Eventually Pakistan became one of three countries worldwide to recognise Mullah Muhammad Omar as the legitimate ruler of Afghanistan. The PPP lost the 1997 elections and Sharif became Prime Minister again. In 1999 Pakistani-backed militants engaged in heavy fighting with Indian troops in Kargil on the Line of Control. The incident almost escalated to full-scale war and soured relations between Sharif and the army command. On 12 October 1999 Sharif tried to replace the army chief, General Pervez Musharraf.

This led to an army coup. Military officers arrested Sharif who was soon after sent into exile to Saudi Arabia. General Musharraf became President, starting a third era of military rule. Economic policy turned towards liberalization and privatization. The 1999 military coup had severed Pakistan's ties with the West. This isolation came to an end after the attacks of 9 September 2001 when President Musharraf supported the US-led military operation in Afghanistan. Another factor ending the isolation was the US diplomatic intervention to stop the nuclear alert between India and Pakistan in 2002 because of the Kashmir crisis. Through a series of legal measures Musharraf increased the power of the Pakistani presidency. Support for the US Afghan campaign effort triggered fierce opposition from far right religious groups. Remnants of Taliban, Al-Qaeda and affiliated formations had infiltrated the porous Pakistani-Afghan border and were stirring up opposition to Islamabad in the eastern tribal areas while sectarian tensions rose. The position of President Musharraf further weakened in 2007 when he entered a prolonged conflict with chief justice Iftikhar Chaudry. The same year Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif returned to Pakistan from exile and started to mobilize their supporters in view of the 2008 elections. On 27 December 2007 Benazir Bhutto was assassinated at an election rally in Rawalpindi. Two months later, her Pakistan People's Party won the election.

PPP-stalwart Yousaf Raza Gillani became Prime Minister in early 2008 and in the following months tried to oust President Musharraf. Finally in August 2008, Musharraf resigned. Asif Zardari, the widower of Benazir Bhutto, succeeded him as head of state. Soon power was shifted again from the President to the Prime Minister through the 18th amendment to the constitution, voted for unanimously by Parliament. The government faced many difficulties. In Balochistan a separatist insurrection occurred following the violent death of tribal leader Nawab Akbar Bugti. Even worse was the situation in the eastern tribal areas where Tehrike-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was able to occupy large parts of the territory. The army offensive to oust them from KP caused devastation and created large numbers of refugees. The Taliban also engaged in terrorist attacks within Pakistan. The country was also increasingly affected by sectarian violence. In November 2008, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), an extremist organisation with links to Pakistani military intelligence, conducted a large terrorist attack in Mumbai, India. In May 2011 US Special Forces killed Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden during a raid in Abbottabad, without notifying Islamabad. The US also increasingly used drone attacks to kill terrorists in the Pakistani tribal areas. In April 2012 Prime Minister Gillani resigned after a series of corruption charges. At the elections of 11 May 2013 the conservative PML(N) gained a parliamentary majority. Nawaz Sharif once again became Prime Minister. Initial attempts to negotiate with the Taliban were frustrated due to the continued violence. Military action by the army against the Taliban in the FATA led again to terrorist strikes, the most notorious being an attack on an army public school in Peshawar in December 2014, which claimed 145 lives, including 132 schoolchildren.

Natural disasters, including earthquakes and severe floods, have affected millions of people in Pakistan in recent years. Floods in 2010 led to the death of nearly 2 000 people and caused widespread destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods. An estimated 14 million people required humanitarian assistance. Heavy monsoon rains in 2011 and 2012 caused further extensive flood damage. An earthquake in Balochistan in September 2013 killed at least 348 people and affected more than 300 000. Nearly 60 % of Pakistan's population faces food insecurity, and an estimated 35 % of deaths under 5 years old was attributed to malnutrition. As of August 2014, more than a million people were internally displaced due to ongoing military operations in the FATA and KP. See section 2.2 FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In 2017 the Supreme Court disqualified Sharif from holding public office, forcing his resignation. He was replaced by Shahid Khaqan Abbasi as prime minister. Sharif's brother Shehbaz Sharif was selected to lead the PML-N party in the



next elections.

When the elections were held in late July, Imran Khan's PTI party outperformed the PML-N, Imran Khan became prime minister. Under Imran Khan, Pakistan saw significant developments in its foreign relations. Just weeks into his premiership, the United States decided to withhold \$300 million in promised military aid, saying that the country had not done enough to fight terrorism. Relations improved, however, and the aid was restored the following year, after Pakistan made successful efforts to pressure the Taliban in Afghanistan into peace talks. Afghanistan's central government initially thanked Pakistan for its efforts, but diplomatic relations soured after comments by Khan undermined the authority of the Afghan central government.

Tensions with India over Kashmir came to a head in February 2019, after a suicide bombing there resulted in the deaths of 40 Indian security personnel. When a militant group believed to operate illegally in Pakistan took credit for the attack, the Indian Air Force conducted air strikes in Pakistan for the first time in five decades. Though India claimed it had destroyed a large training camp belonging to the militant group, Pakistan denied that any such camp had existed and said that India had struck an empty field instead. The next day Pakistan shot down two fighter jets from India and captured a pilot, who was soon returned to India. Despite the skirmishes, the two countries seemed to avoid further escalating the situation. Pakistan, meanwhile, began a crackdown on militants, arresting suspected militants, shutting down a large number of religious schools, and announcing its intent to update existing laws according to international standards.

Meanwhile, Khan faced a looming debt crisis. With the advent of the global COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, Khan was reluctant to implement a lockdown on the country's already ailing economy. In Sindh, the province most affected by the pandemic and the only province whose government was not led by either the PTI or an allied party, a strict lockdown was implemented on March 23. As the pandemic worsened across the country, a nationwide lockdown was eventually imposed at the beginning of April until early May, when restrictions began to be lifted in phases.

Opposition to Khan and the PTI flared in late 2020, fueled by allegations of corruption and economic discontent. Shehbaz Sharif, Nawaz Sharif's brother and leader of the PML-N, became prime minister in 2022. But his premiership proved tumultuous from the start, as the economy continued to worsen, further exacerbated by extreme weather during the summer monsoon. Heavy rainfall and a severe heat wave that caused Hindu Kush–Himalayan glaciers to melt led to widespread flooding. The flooding left about 1,700 people dead, tens of millions displaced, and, at its peak, one-third of the country's landmass underwater. The government's ineptitude at addressing the economy or mitigating the flood's devastation aided a comeback by Imran Khan's party. In a surprise landslide victory, the PTI won 15 of 20 seats in the July legislative elections of Punjab province, the country's largest province and a traditional stronghold for Sharif's PML-N party. As the PTI gained momentum, however, Khan faced a slew of legal challenges. In October, while on interim bail for charges related to a speech he had given in August and for allegedly having received foreign funding for his party, Khan was temporarily barred from holding public office after the election commission alleged he had concealed assets. Heightened tensions in the country were on full display in early November when an attempt was made on Khan's life, at which time he sustained injuries to his leg.

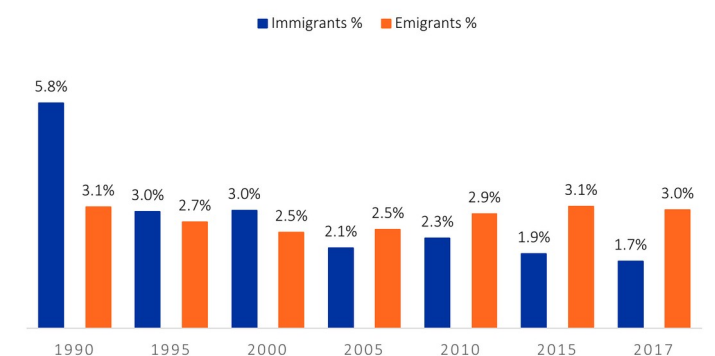
Since 1980, Pakistan has been hosting one of the largest refugee populations in the world. . Almost all refugee and asylum seeker populations in Pakistan are from Afghanistan. Registration of documented Afghan refugees is based on a Proof of Registration (PoR) card, which is a document that provides temporary legal stay and freedom of movement to registered Afghan refugees.

Afghan forced migration to Pakistan started in 1979 after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Within a decade, between 1979 and 1980, over 1.5 million Afghan nationals fled to Pakistan. Tribal kin and pre-existing cross-border networks allowed many Pashtun tribes living in the south and east of Afghanistan to flee across the border into Pakistan (International Crisis Group, 2009). Most refugees of this first wave of migration lived in refugee camps and were welcomed by both the Government of Pakistan and the international community. A second spike in immigration occurred between 1991 and 2000 during the rise of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. During this period, approximately 300,000 Afghan refugees fled to Pakistan (Government of Pakistan and UNHCR, 2005).

Simultaneously, beginning in 1990, the Pakistani Government began its first repatriation program. A recent large-scale migration to Pakistan from Afghanistan was in 2001, during the war between the Taliban and United States led coalition.

Amid the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan, and the Taliban takeover of power in August 2021, a large number of Afghan

Figure 1: Immigrant and emigrant populations in Pakistan as shares of the total population (1990 - 2017)

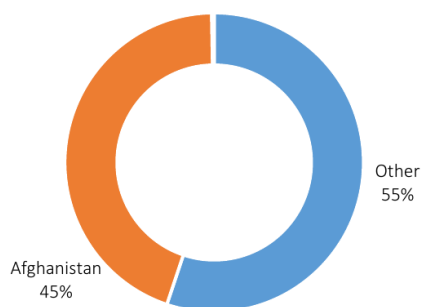


Source: UNDESA, 2017.

refugees crossed the Pakistani border. Between January 2021 and February 2022, UNHCR documented 117 547 new arrivals from Afghanistan in Pakistan, with a significant peak of 35 289 persons in August 2021. In recent years, Pakistan has shifted its policy towards Afghan refugees. Between early 2017 and January 2022, the country reportedly fenced around 90 % of its border with Afghanistan, making formal and informal border crossings much more difficult. However, due to the ‘porous’ nature of the border, undocumented crossings continue to occur. As of January 2022, there were approximately 3 million Afghans living in Pakistan, around 1.4 million of them are Proof of Registration (PoR) cardholders, approximately 840 000 hold an Afghan Citizen Card (ACC), and an estimated 775.000 are undocumented. While PoR and ACC cardholders are offered limited protection, mainly from refoulement, undocumented Afghans are exposed to arrest, detention and deportation (EASO).

Over the past 20 years, natural disasters, especially floods, earthquakes and violent conflicts in the northern provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) led to the **internal displacement** of millions of individuals in Pakistan. Since 2009, 5.2 million people were displaced due to conflicts; in 2010 floods affected 20 million individuals and the 2005 earthquake left 3.5 million people homeless. Flood exposure is very high throughout the country, especially during the monsoon season, and earthquakes that affect the north of Pakistan. Poor quality buildings, ineffective early warning systems and a lack of awareness and education on disasters and response are all factors in the high damage caused by natural disasters in the country. Pakistan ranks eight among the most adversely affected countries on the 2019 Global Long-Term Climate Risk Index published by German Watch, and it is expected to be severely impacted by the negative effects of climate change in the future. Pakistan has experienced a wide range of disasters over the past 40 years, including floods, earthquakes, droughts, cyclones and tsunamis. On average, approximately 3 million people are affected by natural catastrophes each year in Pakistan, which equates to approximately 1.6 percent of the total population.

Figure 2: Origin of migrants in Pakistan (2017)

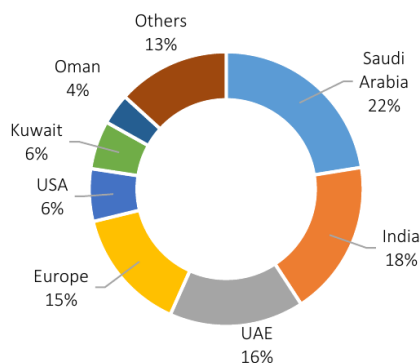


Source: UNDESA, 2017.

Table 2: Origin of Immigrants in Pakistan (2017)

Origin	Immigrants	Immigrants %
Total	3,398,154	100%
India	1,873,650	55%
Afghanistan	1,515,738	45%
Myanmar	2,303	0%
Iran	2,154	0%
Sri Lanka	541	0%
Other	3,768	0%

Figure 3: Destination of migrants from Pakistan (2017)



Source: UNDESA, 2017.

Table 3: Destination of Emigrants from Pakistan (2017)

Destination	Emigrants	Emigrants (%)
Total	5,978,635	100%
Saudi Arabia	1,343,737	22%
India	1,095,149	18%
UAE	950,145	16%
Europe	867,967	15%
USA	370,353	6%
Kuwait	340,481	6%
Oman	218,522	4%
Other	792,281	13%

# 1.33

MILLION approx

TOTAL REGISTERED PERSONS OF CONCERN



# 68.5%

OUTSIDE REFUGEE VILLAGES



# 31.4%\*

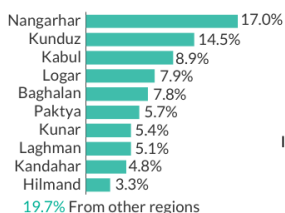
LIVING IN REFUGEE VILLAGES

# 1.29

MILLION approx

AFGHAN (PoR) CARD HOLDERS

% PLACE OF ORIGIN (TOP 10)

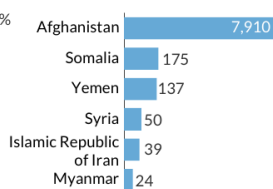


19.7% From other regions

# 8,429

REGISTERED REFUGEES UNDER UNHCR'S MANDATE

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

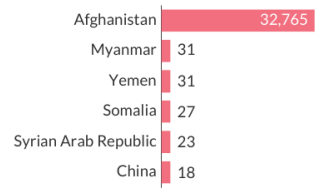


94 From other countries

# 32,946

REGISTERED ASYLUM SEEKERS UNDER UNHCR'S MANDATE

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



51 From other countries

### Outgoing Migration:

With around 6 million emigrants, representing 3 per cent of the total Pakistani population, Pakistan is one of the top ten emigration countries in the world. Main destination countries for Pakistani emigrants are the Gulf States, India and Europe, particularly the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UNDESA, 2017).

As of mid-2017, there were 136,527 refugees from Pakistan worldwide. 87,082 of them were hosted in Afghanistan, 14,872 in Italy and 7,003 in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In addition, there were 66,405 asylum applicants. Most of them applied for refugee status in Germany (19,355), Italy (12,291) and Greece (6,080).

Remittances received make up 6.5 per cent of the country's GDP and represent a core part of the economy of Pakistan. In general terms, people from Pakistan migrating to North America and Europe tend to move overseas with their family and plan to stay long-term. Migrants who travel to neighbouring countries or to the Gulf States are on average low-skilled and semi-skilled seasonal migrants. Their migration is short-term and typically lasts for four or five years.

In 2016 most emigrants came from Punjab followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Sindh and Baluchistan regions in Pakistan. According to an extensive study from the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis, between 1981 and 2018, 52 per cent of all migrant workers from Pakistan originated from Punjab, 26 per cent from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 9.5 per cent from Sindh.

Pakistan is making significant efforts in increasing **student mobility**. The number of Pakistani students abroad increased sharply in 2010 (36,366) as compared to 2006 (24,671), more than what was initially expected by the Government projections. In 2011, some 49,000 students from Pakistan were studying abroad, 65 per cent of whom were doing so in OECD countries. Between 2002 and 2012, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan sent 8,537 students abroad for higher studies. A great majority of students migrate with their own finances or are financed by their families.

UNHCR Help:

<https://help.unhcr.org/pakistan/new-arrivals/>

Family Reunification:

<https://help.unhcr.org/pakistan/family-reunification/>



Flow monitoring data collected in Europe by IOM DTM operations between 2016 and 2018 provide a comprehensive picture of the most recent emigration trends of Pakistani migrants to Europe. In total 2,795 Pakistani nationals were surveyed, 98 per cent of the total were males, suggesting that migration to Europe is predominantly male, like migration to the Gulf States. Most respondents were young and single, half of whom were between the ages of 18 and 25. Educational backgrounds were diverse, with most had completed lower secondary (28%) and primary (24%) education, while secondary education (18%) was less common. Thirty-nine per cent of the total sample population were unemployed prior to departure, while 51 per cent were employed and only 10 per cent were students (10%). This might suggest that being unemployed is not necessarily a factor influencing the decision to migrate. Yet, participants reported that economic reasons were the main reason for migration (42%), followed by war and conflict (28%) and violence and persecution (14%). At the time of the interview, the most common intended destinations in Europe were Italy (54%) and Germany (14%). Participants reported socio-economic conditions (42%) and perceived access to asylum (31%) as the main determinants of their choice of destination country. Almost none of the Pakistani nationals interviewed were travelling with family and relatives, though 54 per cent were traveling in groups.

Italian embassy in Islamabad,  
Visa section:  
[https://ambislamabad.esteri.it/ambasciata\\_islamabad/it/informazioni\\_e\\_servizi/visti/](https://ambislamabad.esteri.it/ambasciata_islamabad/it/informazioni_e_servizi/visti/)

UNHCR Italy:  
<https://help.unhcr.org/italy/>

Table 5: Refugees and asylum seekers from Pakistan, mid-2017

Country of Destination	Refugees	Country of Destination	Asylum Seekers
Afghanistan	87,082	Germany	19,335
Italy	14,872	Italy	12,291
UK	7,003	Greece	6,089
Germany	5,773	USA	4,662
Canada	4,744	UK	2,897
Other	17,053	Other	21,131
Total	136,527	Total	66,405

Source: UNHCR, 2017.

#### Pakistan migration to Italy:

Italy is home to around 120,000 Pakistanis, making it one of the largest largest communities in Europe. In terms of numbers, Italy is second only to the United Kingdom (with more than one million), followed by France and Greece. To get to Italy, the majority left from Pakistan, travelled through Iran, Turkey and Greece and then up along the Balkan peninsula. (Mixed Migration Centre, 2022)

In 2020, citizens of Pakistan ranked first among asylum seekers in Italy with 5,515 applications submitted. In the first four months of 2021, out of 4,874 asylum applications filed in the EU, almost half were addressed to Italy, despite the low chances of obtaining a residence permit as a refugee; in fact, 82% of applications were rejected in the first instance in 2020. Despite the high level of denials by Territorial Commissions, asylum applications continue to be substantial, as seeking international protection is almost the only possibility for Pakistan nationals to enter Italy.

Asylum applications in Italy (Minister of Interior-National Commission Statistics, 2021):

	Examined	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Special protection	rejection	Refugee rate	Subsidiary protection rate	Special protection rate	Rejection rate
Pakistan	7,734	414	1519	722	5,079	5%	20%	9%	66%
						V.%	Variazione % 2020/2019		
Lavoro					0,9%	-18,5%	comunitari		
Famiglia					36,9%	-37,0%			
Studio					3,9%	14,6%			
Asilo, richiesta asilo e altre forme di protezione					46,5%	-37,2%			
Residenza elettiva, religione, salute					11,8%	174,5%			
Totale=100%					7.925	-29,3%			

Fonte: Elaborazione Area SpINT di Anpal Servizi su dati Ministero dell'Interno

### Education in Italy:

With reference to the Pakistani community in Italy, the number of students enrolled for the 2020/2021 school year is 22,547, representing 3.3% of the non-EU school population as a whole. Compared to the previous school year, the number of pupils increased slightly (+2.1%), in contrast to the total number of non-EU pupils, which decreased slightly (-0.4%). The increase mainly concerned secondary schools (+13.1%) and primary schools (+1.8%), while the number of Pakistani children enrolled in nursery schools decreased (-4.9%).

For the Pakistani community, it is the primary school that receives the highest percentage of students, with an incidence decidedly higher than that for non-EU pupils as a whole (41% against 36.3%). Girls make up 46.5% of the Pakistani school population, a figure slightly lower than that recorded for non-EU students as a whole (48%); the female incidence is higher in the lower school orders, while it falls sharply from secondary schools.

The **Pakistani presence in universities** is growing strongly, with 2,133 students enrolled from the community in the 2020/21 academic year, or 2.6% of the total non-EU academic population. Their number increased sharply compared to the previous year: +40.1%. With reference to the world of education, there is a rather high drop-out rate for the community between the ages of 18 and 24. (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2021)

Enrolment in Florence University of non-EU students residing abroad:

<https://www.unifi.it/index.php?module=CMpro&func=viewpage&pageid=10338&newlang=eng>

EU Immigration Portal – Italy: [https://immigration-portal.ec.europa.eu/italy-student\\_en](https://immigration-portal.ec.europa.eu/italy-student_en)

Study permit in Italy (in Italian): [https://www.portaleimmigrazione.it/APR\\_PDS\\_Motivi\\_Studio.aspx](https://www.portaleimmigrazione.it/APR_PDS_Motivi_Studio.aspx)

Procedures for entry, residency and enrollment of international students and the respective recognition of qualifications for higher education courses in Italy – Academic year 2022-2023:

[https://www.studiare-in-italia.it/studentistranieri/moduli/2022/Circolare\\_2022\\_2023\\_EN.pdf](https://www.studiare-in-italia.it/studentistranieri/moduli/2022/Circolare_2022_2023_EN.pdf)

## EDUCATION

(Sources: EASO; NUFFIC)

**Literacy and enrollment:** Currently, Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC) with an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 not attending school, representing 44 per cent of the total population in this age group. In the 5-9 age group, 5 million children are not enrolled in schools and after primary-school age, the number of OOSC doubles, with 11.4 million adolescents between the ages of 10-14 not receiving formal education. Disparities based on gender, socio-economic status, and geography are significant; in Sindh, 52 percent of the poorest children (58 percent girls) are out of school, and in Balochistan, 78 percent of girls are out of school.

English has traditionally been the primary language of instruction in private schools. Despite the government's attempts to raise it, the literacy rate in Pakistan has remained steady at approximately 60 percent since 2014-15, with a 78 percent literacy rate in urban areas and 59 percent in rural areas.

The government's 2021-22 Pakistan Economic Survey estimates that from 2020-21 there were 14.4 million students enrolled in pre-primary education, 25.7 million in primary education (grades 1-5), approximately 8.3 million in middle education (grade 6-8), 4.5 million in secondary education (grade 9-10), and 2.5 million in higher-secondary education (grade 11-12). The survey further indicates there were approximately 500,000 students enrolled in technical & vocational education, approximately 760,000 in degree-awarding colleges, and 1.96 million students in universities in 2020-21. Pakistan has 59,784 students studying abroad, according to UNESCO.

### Education system

The Pakistan public school system consists of 12 school years, starting from primary school and ending at Intermediate level or Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC). The national curriculum was designed by the federal government before April 2010, but the adoption of the 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment restored parliamentary democracy and

#### Useful links:

Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC): <https://ibcc.edu.pk/>

HEC Pakistan:

<https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/Pages/default.aspx>

Nuffic:

<https://www.nuffic.nl/en/education-systems/pakistan>



transferred power on many issues, such as education, to provincial levels. Provincial governments now devise educational policy, planning, and curriculum according to their own priorities.

The language of instruction varies by region and social classes. After independence, the State imposed Urdu as the national language and the language of instruction, although a large part of the population was non-Urdu speaking. In 2012, regional languages were promoted in schools where these were the mother tongue of the majority of children, such as Pashtun or Sindhi. Higher class (elite) children are educated in English private schools, while the large majority of the poor attend public schools taught in Urdu, or private schools with poor command of English. Proficiency in English is needed to succeed in higher education and higher-level jobs in Pakistan. Therefore, in 2014, the new government announced English as the instruction language from class one. However, the lack of English-speaking teachers is a significant challenge to its implementation.

### Institutes and organizations

Pakistan has 146 185 primary, 42 147 middle level, and 29 874 secondary schools. Of these, 75 % are public sector schools, 10 % private schools and the remaining non-formal basic education schools and religious schools. Private-sector schools range from expensive elite to low-cost establishments. Among the institutions running these schools are religious organizations, non-profit or civil society institutions and international development organizations. Non-formal education basic and middle schools are, according to the Ministry of Education, very cost-effective, for example for out-of-school children in remote areas where formal schools are absent or to encourage children to attend formal schools.

Deeni madrassas, the religious schools, are cost effective in promoting (religious) education and literacy, according to the Ministry of Education. Madrassas serve children of less-privileged urban settlements, rural and remote areas of the country. In most of the cases, Madaris provide food, clothes and shelter to deserving students. The curriculum of madrassas contains not only religious education but often also languages (Urdu and English), mathematics and 'General Science'.

However, the ICG cautions that the madrassas 'fill the gaps of a dilapidated public education sector but contribute to religious extremism and sectarian violence'. The Ahmadiyya community runs its own private schools due to discrimination and abuse within the public education system. In addition, they face discrimination in admission to higher educational institutions. They are generally better educated than the general population in Pakistan.

**Primary education** lasts 8 years in Pakistan. Pupils aged 5 to 13 complete the following 2 phases:

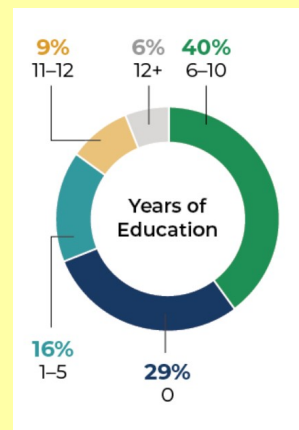
- lower primary education (primary school, grade 1-5);
- upper primary education (middle school, grade 6-8).

**General secondary education** lasts 4 years and consists of 2 phases. Students aged 13 to 18 obtain a diploma after completing each phase:

- a Secondary School Certificate or a Matriculation Certificate after completing lower general secondary education;
- a Higher Secondary School Certificate or a Intermediate School Certificate after completing upper general secondary education.

Students complete lower secondary education by taking exams for a Secondary School Certificate. This diploma can also be called Matriculation Certificate. In Pakistan, lower secondary education is also known as plain 'secondary education'. Duration: 2 years (grade 9 and grade 10). Content: usually 8 exam subjects (see 'Lower general secondary education curriculum' below). Function of the diploma: access to upper secondary education (Higher Secondary School Certificate/Intermediate School Certificate). Diploma: Secondary School Certificate or Matriculation Certificate.

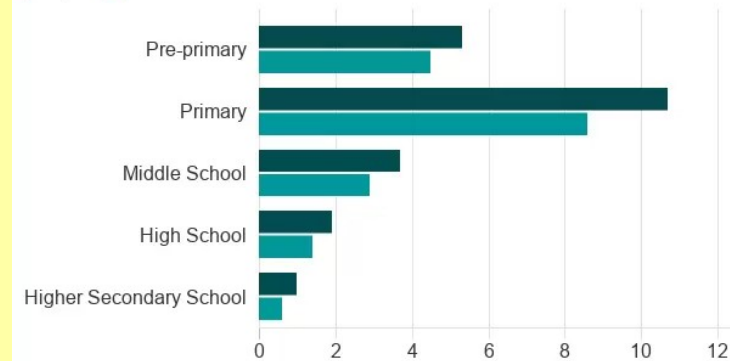
Students usually take exams in 8 subjects to obtain their Secondary School Certificate or Matriculation Certificate. They often take exams in the following subjects: English; Urdu; Islamic studies (Islamiyat); Pakistan studies (history,



### Access to education in Pakistan by gender

Students aged 5-17, numbers in millions

Boys Girls



Source: Pakistan Ministry of Education

BBC

geography, politics and culture of Pakistan); 4 electives. Students usually choose a subject cluster (group) at the beginning of the 1st year (grade 9), which then includes the electives. Common subject clusters are: science (exact sciences, such as biology and chemistry); humanities (social sciences, such as civics and economics); technical (technical subjects, such as woodworking and electrical engineering).

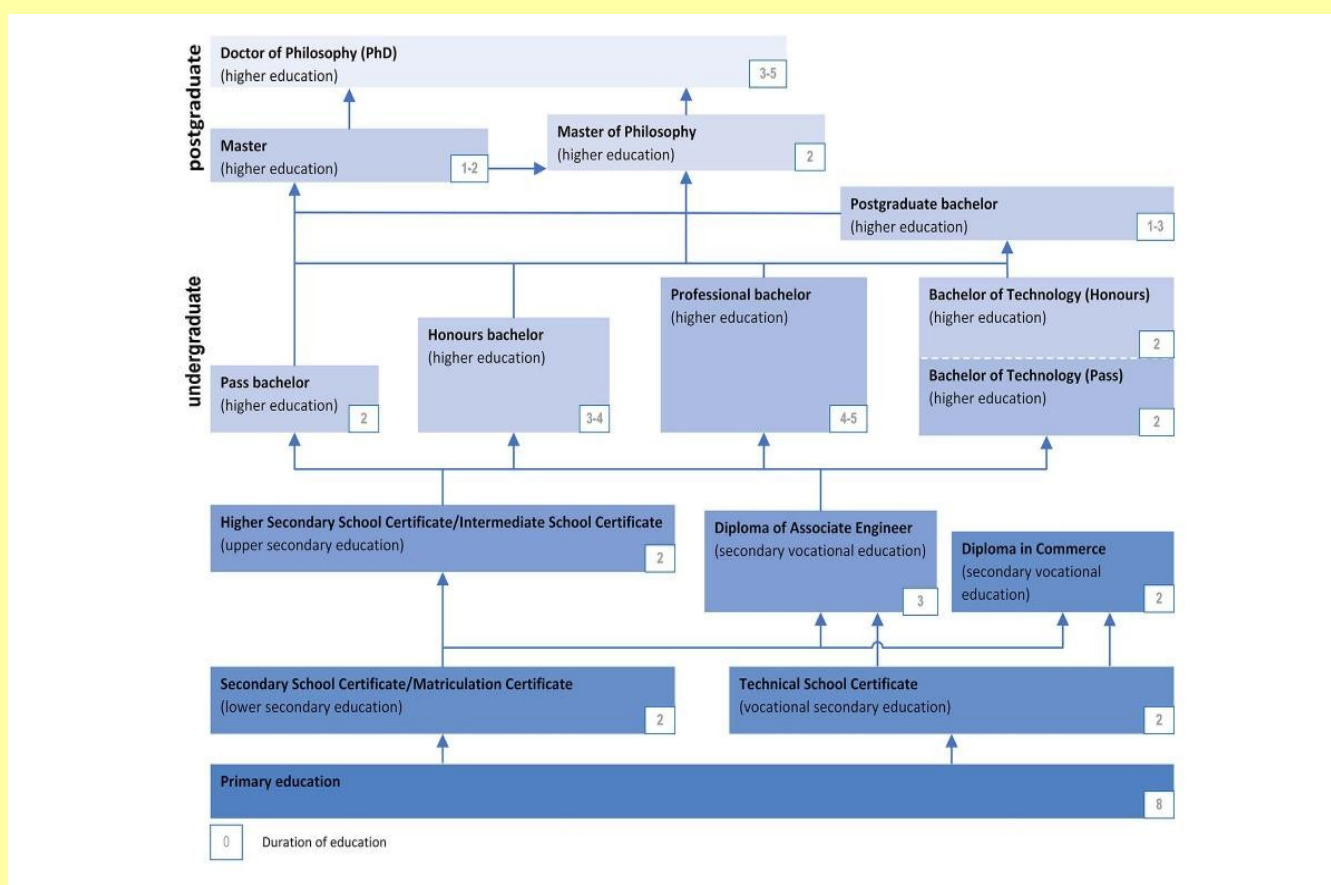
After obtaining the Secondary School Certificate or Matriculation Certificate, students can continue on to upper general secondary education. Or they choose secondary vocational education instead. In Pakistan, secondary vocational education is part of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

In Pakistan, upper secondary education is also known as **higher secondary education** or intermediate education. Students complete upper secondary education by taking exams for a Higher Secondary School Certificate. This diploma can also be called Intermediate School Certificate. Duration: 2 years (grade 11 and grade 12). Content: usually 7 exam subjects. Function of the diploma: access to higher education. The curriculum usually consists of the following subjects: English; Urdu; Islamic studies or civics (for non-Muslims); Pakistan studies (history, geography, politics and culture of Pakistan); 3 electives. Students usually choose a subject cluster (group) at the beginning of the 1st year of upper secondary education (grade 11). The elective subjects (electives) fall under the group the student chooses. Usually, students choose a group that matches the group they chose in lower secondary education. Common groups are:

- commerce (e.g. accounting, economics, statistics);
- general (exact sciences, such as mathematics, physics, informatics);
- home economics (e.g. home nursing, cooking, childcare);
- humanities (social sciences such as psychology, geography, history);
- medical technology (microbiology, anatomy, pathology);
- pre-engineering (mathematics, physics, chemistry);
- pre-medical (biology, chemistry, physics).

Students take exams at the end of lower secondary education (grade 10) and at the end of upper secondary education (grade 12). These exams are administered by a board with which their secondary school affiliated. The board issues the official diploma and transcript, not the secondary school.

Instead of general secondary education, students can choose **vocational secondary education** after primary education. It is offered by Vocational Institutes and Technical Training Colleges. Students complete vocational secondary



education by taking exams for a Technical School Certificate. Duration: 2 years. Content: English, a Pakistani language, Islamic studies (Islamiyat), physics, mathematics, technical drawing and theory (trade – theory) and practical training (trade – practical) for a particular profession, such as woodworker or auto mechanic. Function of the diploma: access to secondary vocational education. Students take exams administered by a Board of Technical Education with which their school is affiliated. The board issues the official diploma and transcript, not the school. There are many types of study programmes in Pakistani secondary vocational education. The study programmes vary in terms of their admission requirements, duration, content and transfer entitlements. You will need information about this in order to determine the level of a qualification. You can find an overview of study programmes on the NAVTTC website: <https://navttc.gov.pk/>

In Pakistani secondary vocational education, many students choose a **Diploma programme**. Duration: 2 to 3 years. Content: often technical study programmes (engineering or technology) or study programmes in business and economics (commerce). Students usually take exams administered by a Board of Technical Education. Other fields of study are also possible, sometimes with exams administered by a different kind of board. Admission requirements: usually a Secondary School Certificate or a Matriculation Certificate. Sometimes schools have extra requirements, such as certain subjects and/or grades. Function of the diploma: work or sometimes admission to higher education. Diploma: Diploma in/of + name of field of study. Usually, a Board of Technical Education issues the Diploma. Examples are the Diploma in Commerce and the Diploma of Associate Engineer.

With a Higher Secondary School Certificate/Intermediate School Certificate, students can continue on to higher education in Pakistan. Pakistani higher education institutions may set extra requirements. Students may need certain subjects or a certain grade average. For example, students must have taken exam in science subjects, such as mathematics, physics and chemistry, to be admitted to a technical bachelor's program. Students often need to take an entrance exam from the National Testing Service (NTS). Sometimes they also have to explain their motivation in an interview.

**Higher education institutions** in Pakistan can offer both higher professional education and research-oriented higher education. There are different types of higher education institutions:

- universities; and
- degree-awarding institutions.

### **Pass bachelor**

During a pass bachelor, student do not specialize in a certain subject, but they choose a track. For example, they choose the science track with the electives biology, mathematics and chemistry. They do not specialize in 1 of these subjects. Duration: 2 years. Study hours: 60-72 credit hours. Content: usually, the compulsory subjects are English, Urdu and Pakistan studies. Students take 3 electives in 1 of the following tracks: arts, science, commerce, business administration or technology. They do not write a thesis. In technology, students study technical subjects and undergo 1 year of practical training (industrial training). Admission requirements: a Higher Secondary School Certificate or Intermediate School Certificate, sometimes with extra requirements, such as certain subjects and/or grades. An institution may also accept other qualifications, such as the Diploma of Associate Engineer. Diploma: Bachelor of Arts (Pass), Bachelor of Science (Pass), Bachelor of Business Administration (Pass), Bachelor of Commerce (Pass), Bachelor of Technology (Pass).

### **Honours bachelor**

During an honours bachelor, students specialize in a certain field. They only take chemistry courses, for example. This is different from the pass bachelor. In that case, students do not specialize. Duration: usually 3 years, sometimes 4 years. Study hours: 90-140 credit hours. Content: usually, students specialize in 1 of these tracks: arts, science, commerce, business administration or technology. Sometimes students write a thesis or do a graduation project. Admission requirements: a Higher Secondary School Certificate or Intermediate School Certificate, often with extra requirements, such as certain subjects and/or grades. An institution may also accept other qualifications, such as the Diploma of Associate Engineer. Diploma: Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours), Bachelor of Commerce (Honours), Bachelor of Science (Honours) and Bachelor of Technology (Honours). Please note: there are also other honours bachelors.

### **Professional bachelor**

There are various professional bachelors in Pakistan. Professional bachelors often prepare students for a certain profession. Duration: usually 5 years (medical study programmes), sometimes 4 years (other study programmes). Study hours: 124-170 credit hours. Content: students attend lectures. They often do practicals and/or an internship. Sometimes they write a thesis or do a graduation project. Admission requirements: a Higher Secondary School Certificate or Intermediate School Certificate, often with extra requirements, such as certain subjects and/or grades. An institution may also accept other diplomas, such as the Diploma of Associate Engineer. Diploma: Bachelor of Engineering (BE), Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS), Doctor of Pharmacy (DPharm), Doctor of Veterinary

Medicine (DVM), Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), Bachelor of Engineering (BE) and Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.). Please note: there are also other professional bachelors.

### **Postgraduate bachelor**

After completing a bachelor's programme, students can continue studying for a postgraduate bachelor. We often see the following 2 postgraduate bachelors: Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.); Bachelor of Education.

- Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.): If students complete a study programme in law after a pass bachelor, they receive a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.). Duration: 3 years. Content: law. The study programme is mostly about theory, but students usually do not write a thesis. Admission requirements: a pass bachelor, sometimes with extra requirements, such as certain grades. Diploma: Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.). Please note: there is also a professional bachelor in law. It has a duration of 5 years and students do not need a pass bachelor for admission. Both the postgraduate bachelor and professional bachelor in law lead to the same diploma (in terms of level), the Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.).
- Bachelor of Education: If students complete a teacher training programme after a pass bachelor, they receive a Bachelor of Education. Duration: 1 year or 1½ years. Content: a teacher training programme, usually aimed at teaching 2 school subjects. Students study educational subjects, such as pedagogy and education methods. They also do an internship, but do not write a thesis. Admission requirements: a pass bachelor, sometimes with extra requirements, such as certain grades. Diploma: Bachelor of Education (Bed). The level of a Bachelor of Education varies.

Please note: there are also teacher training programmes for honours bachelors and professional bachelors. These study programmes take longer to complete than the postgraduate bachelor. They usually have a duration of 4 years. You can recognise this by the number of credits hours that students must obtain for the diploma. Students also receive a different diploma at the end of an honours bachelor, for example a Bachelor of Education (Honours) or a Bachelor of Science Education.

### **Postgraduate Diploma**

It is not only possible to obtain degrees in Pakistani higher education, such as bachelors or masters. Students can also obtain a different kind of diploma on completion of some study programme. An example is the Postgraduate Diploma. Duration: usually 1 year. Content: subjects in the area of the chosen specialisation (often business administration and management). In some cases, students also take 1 or 2 subjects on academic research methods. They usually do not write a thesis. Admission requirements: these depend on the study programme and educational institution. Often a pass bachelor with a certain average grade is required, sometimes an entrance exam as well. Previous education may often be in a non-relevant field of study. Diploma: Postgraduate Diploma in + field of study, for example Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration. The level of a Postgraduate Diploma varies. Please contact us for a credential evaluation.

### **Master with a pass or honours bachelor as an admission requirement**

It is important to check the admission requirements of a master. This gives you information about the level of the study programme. For admission to some master's programmes, students need a pass bachelor or honours bachelor. You can find information about the admission requirements on the website of the Pakistani higher education institution. You cannot tell from the name of the diploma. Duration: 1 to 2 years. Study hours: 30-60 credit hours. Content: usually subjects in arts, science, commerce, business administration or technology. Sometimes students do an internship, often they do not write a thesis. Students usually do not learn how to carry out academic research. Admission requirements: a pass bachelor or honours bachelor with Division II results. Sometimes the pass or honours bachelor needs to have been obtained in a specific field of study. Diploma: Master of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Commerce and Master of Business Administration. Please note: there are also other master's degrees.

### **Master with a 4-year bachelor's degree as an admission requirement**

It is important to check the admission requirements of a master. This gives you information about the level of the study programme. For admission to some master's programmes, students need a 4-year bachelor's degree. You can find information about the admission requirements on the website of the Pakistani higher education institution. You cannot tell from the name of the diploma. Duration: 1½ to 2 years. Study hours: 30-60 credit hours. Content: course work and sometimes research and/or a thesis as well. Admission requirements: a 4-year bachelor's degree, usually in a relevant field of study and with at least Division II results.

Diploma: Master of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Engineering and Master of Business Administration. Please note: there are also other master's degrees. The level of a master with a 4-year bachelor's degree as an admission requirement varies.



### Master of Philosophy

The Master of Philosophy (MPhil) is a research master. Please note: in this context, the term ‘philosophy’ does not refer to any association of the programme with the study of philosophy, but rather to its foundation in research. MPhil programmes may be found in any branch of studies. Duration: 2 years. Study hours: at least 36 credit hours. Content: usually 1 year of coursework, 1 year of research and writing a thesis. Admission requirements: 4 years of higher education, often in a relevant field of study. This can be a 4-year bachelor’s degree or a master’s degree after a pass or honours bachelor. Often students need a certain average grade for admission as well.

### Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

A Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is a doctorate from a higher education institution. Usually, candidates continue to study in the field of study of their master’s degree. Duration: 3 to 5 years. Study hours: at least 18 credit hours. Content: research and a dissertation, in some cases several subjects with regard to the research specialisation as well. Admission requirements: usually a master, often with a certain average grade and an entrance exam. For some study programmes, students must first obtain a Master of Philosophy. Diploma: Doctor of Philosophy.

