

2017

PAKISTAN CENSUS

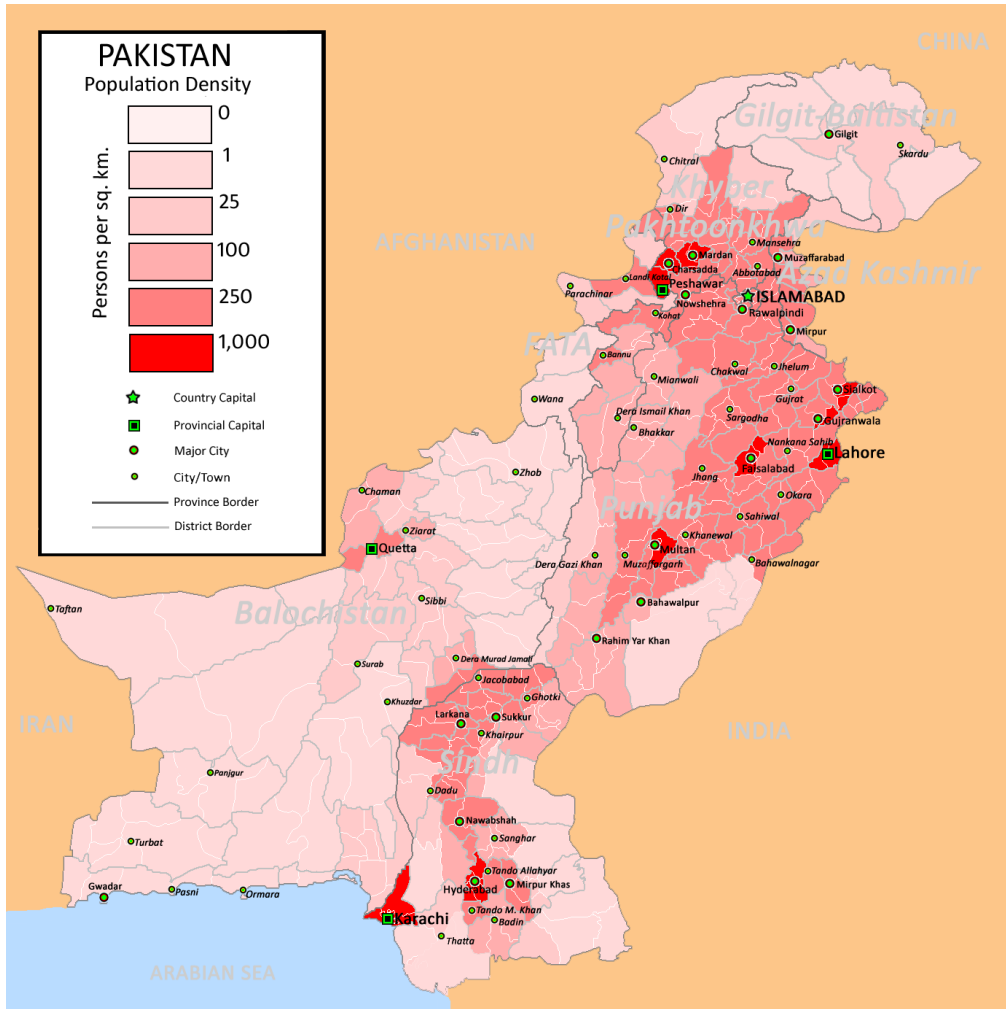


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Overview

Carrying out the upcoming population census with diligence could have a significant impact on the future political and socio-economic landscape of Pakistan. Various Provincial concerns have been raised with regard to the census.



In Sindh an urban-rural divide seems to be at play. Some people in the urban areas demand that the formation of the census blocks should be according to population changes, even though the process identifying census blocks is independent of population. The rural claims are also similar in terms of a population swell. Some forces allege that rampant issuance of CNIC's in rural areas, and encouraging residents of the province to register themselves as 'Sindhi's' during the form filling process blocks a fair census - the rural areas are also concerned about the out-of-province influx and its impact on the census.

In Balochistan, several Baloch leaders have asked for the census to be put off till the Afghan refugees (especially those believed to be carrying CNICs') and the matter of IDPs is dealt with because this can turn the Baloch into a minority. The local Pashtun population of Baluchistan on the other hand fears misunderstandings in 'proving' citizenship amidst the refugee influx.

In Punjab there is speculation that major migrations have occurred in the recent past especially from South Punjab, which has changed the population demographics. Some fear that a possible dent in the status quo may cause some forces to tamper with the enumeration.

In Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa there are grievances regarding the recent delay of KP-FATA merger and its impacts on enumeration of the Pashtun population. Some are of the view that this under-represents the total Pashtun population. Concerns have also been raised regarding the transfer of census data from KP to Islamabad.

In Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK regions the prime concerns appear to revolve around incomplete mention of various languages and religions in the census forms, thereby carrying the potential of hindering adequate representation of all people of the country.

According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) its first and foremost duty is to count all the people present in Pakistan's territorial limits on dates of enumeration, regardless of any other factor. One ethnicity residing in another province will only be recorded under the 'new province' if a person has been residing there for more than six months. If not then, the person will be recorded under the native province. Apart from the issue of people migrating to other provinces for socio-economic reasons several citizens are believed to be displaced from local areas due to security concerns. Finding out these shifts would help paint a more accurate picture of which regions require immediate development and indicate which regions are strained with population influx. The end goal should be towards uniform national development and a more even population dissemination across Pakistan, which in the long run also creates a positive impact on our political system.

As for apprehensions regarding prosecutions, according to the census ordinance 1959:

“(1) No person shall have a right to inspect any book, register or record made by a Census Officer in the discharge of his duties as such, and notwithstanding

anything to the contrary in the 'Qanun-e-Shahadet, 1984 (President's Order X of 1984', no entry in any such book, register or record shall be admissible as evidence in any civil proceeding whatsoever, or in any criminal proceedings other than a prosecution under this Ordinance or under any other law for any act or omission under this Ordinance, which constitutes an offence under such other law."

(In case anyone has apprehensions, nearly 200,000 armed personnel are being deployed alongside civilian enumerators for the exercise to ensure that rules are followed, and the process remains impartial and transparent. Some reports claim that external observers would also monitor the process and reports in the media indicate that judicial powers have been given to the military personnel employed on census duties.)

"(2) The individual information furnished in the Census returns, except so much of it as is not traceable to an individual, shall be confidential and shall not be used for any purpose other than compilation of Statistics."

However,

"Nothing in this ordinance shall be deemed to prevent any person from being prosecuted under any other law for any act or omission under this Ordinance, which constitutes an offence under such other law: Provided that no such prosecution shall be instituted except with the previous sanction referred to in section 14".

(A person can be prosecuted if he/she shares false information or shows non-compliance in sharing information. Similarly, a census officer can be prosecuted for lack of proper assistance, harassment or returning false information)

Collating census data of Balochistan and KP in the capital, has less to do with intentions to manipulate and more to do with lack of enhanced local data analysis facilities.

Several forces appear to be entangling issuance of CNIC with the census. However, the PBS chief has stated that for the sole purpose of enumeration. CNIC though highly preferable, doesn't translate to exclusion or prosecution of citizens (few reports claim NADRA's presence at the time of census, which could help fill in certain gaps). Nonetheless, once the exact number of population has been determined, the data would be shared with NADRA. This

would facilitate;

1. In analysing and cancelling fake ID cards (which helps in understanding the ratio of illegal immigrants).
2. Through matching with NADRA's records the number of locals without a CNIC, which could then be used to encourage such individuals to get registered much before elections, or updating of the electoral rolls.

Least to say, great responsibility has been put on the PBS, Armed Forces, NADRA for the census; and PBS, NADRA, and ECP post enumeration. These entities could look into drafting cooperative strategies to ensure smooth transition to the next general elections and beyond.

It is noteworthy, that the matter of census falls under Part II of the Federal legislative list, making it a matter of federal and provincial concern. After the 18th amendment the CCI was given the task of mediating federal-provincial dialogue and dispute resolution. It is also required to overview the census. Some believe the matter of census was not paid adequate attention until the Supreme Court's suo-moto notice last year. Utilisation of these mechanisms could be strengthened, especially in the upcoming days to ensure various parties and institutions formulate a uniform vision regarding the census.

Post Census Suggestions



A cumulative view of most concerns voiced so far reflects a line of thought revolving around possible shifts in political powers and provincial resource allocation. It is likely for contentions to surface in matters of politics and provincial resource allocation post-census results. PBS should ideally remain neutral; other institutions would also be required to take a neutral stance in order to subdue any potential contentions and to carve out unbiased, positive reforms to improve Pakistan's political, economic, and social standing in accordance with facts.

General Elections 2018



Once census data is shared with the ECP, the institution would most likely be occupied with the meticulous task of:

1. Delimiting constituencies.
2. Reallocating national and provincial assembly seats.
3. Updating electoral rolls.
4. Perpetuating programs aimed at informing citizens regarding any changes.

Sections 3, 7, 8 and 9 of the Delimitation of Constituencies Act 1974 stipulate:

3. Commission to delimit constituencies.

7. Allocation of seats in the National Assembly. (On the basis of population).

8. Delimitation of Constituencies. - for the purposes of election to the National Assembly, the Commission shall divide:

(a) Each Province into as many separate territorial constituencies as the number of general seats allocated to that Province under Section 7.

9. Principles of Delimitation. All constituencies for general seats shall, as far as practicable, be delimited having regard to the distribution of population in geographically compact areas, existing boundaries of administrative units, facilities of communication and public convenience and other cognate factors to ensure homogeneity in the creation of constituencies.

Furthermore, if the delimitation Act, Article 51 and 106 are added up not only does the deep link between delimitation and seat allocation appear to exist; but the prerequisite of an unbiased population census to evolve the above stated processes (in the Act) is very clear. And as per the constitution an alternate for population count other than a census doesn't seem apparent, for now.

Though, some are of the view that the 18th amendment lays a defined seat allocation for National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies, some are also of the view that electoral roles suffice delimitation of constituencies (a recommendation which was also offered by the IP3 EU - only because of lack of census).

Further, the changes stipulated in the Draft Election Bill 2017 appear to somewhat de-link the necessity of population count with delimitation (which could become a source of contention). However, certain local aspects would have to be kept in mind, before accepting a population count discount:

Pakistan has signed various international treaties conferring its support for protecting political rights. For most of these frameworks, including our local laws, so far, equal suffrage across constituencies is a key principle.

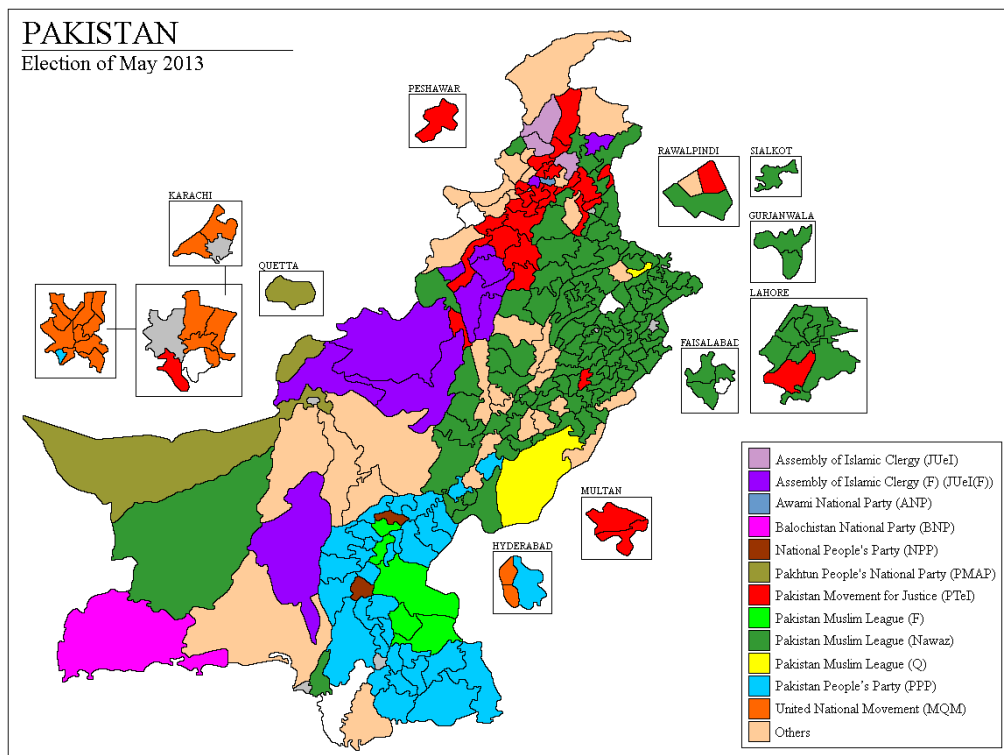
Several reports have recorded disparities across constituencies. According to a report by FAFEN in one case the voter density from one constituency to another varied by 500% (ideally the deviation should not exceed a maximum of 15%). The element of malapportionment carries the potential for voting advantages/disadvantages in certain areas and may compromise fairness.

However, if the seat quota is somehow proven to be unchangeable and future delimitation changes are made in accordance with the Bill and with a reliance on registered voter list this then translates to: only changing sizes of constituencies in accordance with the set number of seats in order to resolve

the burgeoning issue of voter density disparities.

Though this could help resolve the issue of malapportionment to some extent, Pakistan relies on single member constituencies for representation of general seats in NA and PA, using first past the post voting system. Merely, enlarging or reducing constituency sizes in accordance to electoral rolls could bring significant complications for local body elections and the general elections as well.

Moreover, the voting system in itself is meant to bring few disadvantages when multiple parties exist as it is acknowledged to favor few parties, the element of wasted votes or low voter turnout under this system is also a noted concern, this in turn also leads to under or over representing certain parties.



Looking at the 2013 elections data, which was conducted under constituencies defined in 2002 based on the 1998 census data the total voter turnout was stated to be 55% of the approximated population, and the ruling party bagged nearly 14 million votes.

The votes of other majority parties varied from 7 million to 2 million from the 55% of voter population not the entire population. This somewhat diminishes the use of electoral rolls as a means to carve out major changes as they appear

to be in need of an improvement. Therefore, ideally the entire number of citizens should be accounted for purposes of delimitation and seat allocations.

Secondly, more people need to be encouraged to vote, possibly alongside a reform in the voting system, in a manner which caters to widespread representation while ensuring political stability as well. Multiple alternate voting solutions for improved representation have been suggested for Pakistan, which could be looked into. However, accepting new realities as they are may impact standings of several political forces, therefore hindering the process with non-related and often inaccurate allegations from some forces.

One possible chronological order could be:

1. Unbiased population count
2. PBS shares results with NADRA to identify any fake recordings, if NADRA is present during census; cross checking and new recordings could be done in tandem.

If it is not present then:

3. NADRA could cross check the PBS listings; devise a strategy that would reach out to non CNIC holding citizens, and create a final updated list
4. This data could be shared with ECP to cross check and update electoral rolls, work on delimitation process and stipulate changes accordingly.

Perhaps, efforts could be directed into drawing a line between ethnicity and province. Ethnicities need to be preserved and protected-under a separate mechanism. It should also be realized that migrations, due to whatever reasons, have occurred within the same country. This can also bring certain good opportunities in terms of:

1. Provincial mix-ups (?)
2. If in case political representation is subdued in a certain region, then focus on uplifting that region's socio-economic or security issues could be enhanced so population dissemination normalizes over time.
3. Altering the voting system, post a successful census, could also be looked into; if in case adherents of a certain party have migrated out of a certain region in large numbers mechanisms to compensate their representation in the province of residence could be carved out.

On the note of accepting realities, a stark disadvantage of postponement of census is the squeezed time frame on carrying several opportunities for positive political reforms before the next elections. The process of delimitation in particular stands out as a challenging and time consuming issue in most countries.

Nonetheless, several of ECPs initiatives in the local body elections 2015 were commended and the hope remains that public trust enshrined in the institution would be upheld in the near future. Because if the above challenges are not diligently worked out keeping in view Pakistan's multi-party-multi-ethnic environment it could dent political trajectory and enhance polarisation.

NFC award and National Budget



With the current fiscal year nearing its end and working on the upcoming one initiated, two core issues appear to have resurfaced, especially with a new population census on the way:

The federal government aspiring to reduce the size of the divisible pool and the provinces aspiring for a larger share. This has stirred concerns regarding lack of adequate provincial autonomy in matters of taxation, overpowering role of the federal government in development related matters and the demands to forsake a percentage of population as the major criteria in the NFC award formulation. When speaking of provincial autonomy: the deep link of financial matters and development projects with security concerns and foreign relations (strict federal concerns) cannot be overlooked in the present day. Secondly, even legally, provincial autonomy does not translate into unchecked independence from the centre. Instead the relevant laws call for closer coordination between centre and provinces in decision making. Multiple mechanisms are in place for resolutions, which need to be utilized.

As per Article 160; the duration of each NFC award is 5 years. But, the methodology of the 7th NFC award is still in use.

Some widely accepted changes were implemented under the 7th NFC award which included: increase in vertical allocation, which is at nearly 57.7% of the divisible pool, various indicators such as: poverty and backwardness (10.3%), revenue collection/generation (5%) and inverse population density (2.7%) were considered for horizontal distribution. Population carries 82% weightage.

KP was awarded additional 1% from the pool and an increase in grants of approx Rs.83 billion were offered to Balochistan. Nonetheless, something still remains amiss.

In Pakistan, resource allocation is carried out in four major ways:

1. Vertically—from federal to provincial (% of funds set aside for provinces - revenue generated from tax collection is a major source of these federal funds)
2. Horizontally - percentage of funds allocated to each province.
3. Funds are further distributed internally amongst the various tiers of local governments under the Provincial Financial commission awards.
4. The federal government often offers loans or grants to various provinces.

Presently, the federal side claims that a strain on funds is a result of security crises whereas provinces blame lack of access to adequate funds for their depressed development. Moreover, the densely populated regions, contributing to higher revenue generation are demanding more funds; and so are the socio-economically backward regions, in order to catch up.



This could turn into an endless argument, which would cost the nation valuable time. There is a close relationship between the tax system, total population and economic growth. Therefore, to start off the tax system itself could undergo some changes.

The details of the census data could be shared with FBR and other tax

authorities in order to better understand the tax dynamics and devise policies accordingly. It remains unclear whether the new data would be implemented in carving out this year's national budget or in the formulation of the 9th NFC award. Ideally it should.

Further, other indicators, besides population, could be offered a more balanced weightage during horizontal budget allocation for the intended purpose of disseminating population across the country as over-development of a single region could add to increased influx, which is not sustainable in the long run.

Another issue which has been raised is the exclusion of overseas Pakistani's from the census.

Firstly, the form does not entirely discount overseas Pakistani's as the 'number of family members residing outside Pakistan for more than 6 months and their gender' is included in the form. It does, however, skip details such as name, reasons for migration and so on. Perhaps a collaboration with DG I&P's (Ministry of Interior) and NADRA could be carried out for obtaining more details during the data analysis period.

Such details could be of crucial importance for identifying, expanding and utilising national revenue sources.

Vision 2025 and UN Sustainable Development Goals



Pakistan conceded to the Millennium Sustainable Development Goals in 2000 with the deadline to implement changes proscribed by the framework in 2015. Based on UN's review of Pakistan, glitches were witnessed in terms of improving health and education as per the standards. In 2016, Pakistan ratified the new framework of the Sustainable Development Goals the deadline for which is in 2030. In the same timeframe our own Vision 2025 was also released.

The three key indicators used while determining Human Development include: life expectancy (health), mean years of schooling (literacy), GNI per capita (decent work and poverty eradication).

The objectives set under Vision 2025 for the purpose of Human Development include:

1. Increase Primary school enrolment and completion rate to 100% & literacy rate to 90%.
2. Increase Higher Education coverage from 7% to 12 %, and increase the number of PhD's from 7,000 to 15,000.
3. Improve Primary and Secondary Gender Parity Index to 1, and increase female workforce participation rate from 24% to 45%. Increase proportion of population with access to improved sanitation from 48% to 90%.
4. Reduce infant mortality rate from 74 to less than 40 (per 1000 births) and reduce maternal mortality rate from 276 to less than 140 (per 1000 births).
5. Reduce the incidence/prevalence of Hepatitis, Diarrhea, Diabetes and

Heart Disease by 50%.

6. Pakistan will be World Champions in 2 sports and win at least 25 medals in the Asian games.

Progress reports on Vision 2025 are unavailable so far.

The UN would also be releasing their first Pakistan-SDG review in 2018. However, a separate report on Human Development was released in 2015. Some highlighted facts were:

- The HDI for Pakistan was 0.538 overall placing it in low human development category. It ranked 147/188.
- Life expectancy was 66.2 (which has improved over the years)
- Expected years of schooling was 7.8; however the mean years of schooling was 4.7 (slight improvement over the years could be witnessed)
- GNI per capita was 4,866 PPP USD (which has improved over the years)

Despite the fact that the social development budgets aimed at improving education and health have increased in the recent past, these results perhaps highlight certain issues in regards to the application process. Obtaining accurate data and identifying areas of weakness and strength would be an imperative step to further improve the use of allocated funds for improving social conditions.

The elimination of form 2A from the main exercise could create a blur in obtaining an insight into mortality, fertility rates, diseases ratio, disabilities & life expectancies. As health related questions are not included in the main form-2.

Secondly, the questions phrased regarding literacy (in the main form) appear to be unclear as the question asks 'ability to read and write and do simple math'. Standard Language(s) or a certain level used to determine reading or writing is not specified.

Thirdly, the sections for recording economic activity provide limited options such as agricultural or home based work, anything apart from the stated options would be recorded as "etc". This could create certain vagueness during analysis of income, types of economic activities and types of occupations.

However, according to PBS, once the overall enumeration is completed, form 2A which is more detailed in regards to questions related to health, education and income would be filled out later, if allowed by random sampling.

The PBS also has a separate division of Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurements, which solely focuses on collecting such data to support Vision 2025 and UN SDGs. Random sampling is also applied here.

Random sampling comes with the disadvantage of skipping certain issues or members. Implementation of such data during the main exercise could have been more advantageous. Nonetheless, obtaining a complete headcount and understanding the population densities across the country would be a very significant step in reforming the random sampling methodology as well. The PBS, could also look into enhancing clarity of the text of the long form, before the random sampling process.

Conclusion



There appears to be a subdued emphasis on a crucial prerequisite i.e a fair and impartial census, instead, the focus is on procedures

Measures to spread awareness regarding the impartiality of the process described or adopted by PBS should be amplified in order to enhance public cooperation, which could be hindered by influences of political voices.

However, steps should be taken to improve the overall quality of the census methodology for future purposes.

Pakistan's 6th housing and population census would complete its enumeration process across the 168,120 country wide census blocks by end of May 2017. 84,000 civilian enumerators would be deployed for data collection and 34,000 individuals are staff and supervising members.

200,000 army personnel are also included in the exercise in order to ensure security. Each civilian enumerator would be accompanied by a soldier.

55 million forms have been printed for data collection. A hefty budget has been assigned for this exercise.

Though, manual population census still remains a widely used method globally but there are alternatives, which incorporate use of technology to attain a headcount, systems applicable to Pakistan's dynamics could be designed. This could help in improving fairness and impartiality of the process.

As for data collection purposes; the main form (2) could use improvement. Most questions, especially those related to literacy, occupation, languages, religions and marital status offer limited options and overuse the term 'etc' which could lead to an element of generalisation in the results.

Statements from the PBS suggest that they carry a stronger inclination towards use of random sampling for collecting detailed data on various socio-economic indicators even though this extensive exercise could have been used to collect sufficient, relevant data keeping in view Pakistan's current challenges. Nonetheless, post enumeration the sampling techniques would also require a re-working as complete and accurate population frame is essential for purposes of random sampling.

Despite certain flaws in the current census methodology, especially in regards to obtaining 'details' it cannot be discarded as a defective exercise. If conducted with impartiality and fairness, it provides crucial insight on total population within the territorial limits of Pakistan, and reflects population densities across the country. Clarity in these two core areas would serve as strong building blocks for further research purposes and provide ample opportunities to carve out fair political-economic and social reforms.

However, post-results little attention should be paid to engaging in arguments directed by political contentions and fact-based changes, which benefit the people of Pakistan should be the immediate focus.