

CENSUS 2017

Provisional Results: Issues and Concerns

By **Hira A. Shafi**

Research Analyst, Spearhead Research



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CENSUS DATA SUMMARY

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RESULTS OF 6TH POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS-2017			
Administrative Unit	Households	Total Population	1998-2017 Average Annual Growth Rate
Pakistan	32,205,111	207,774,520	2.40
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	3,845,168	30,523,371	2.89
FATA	558,379	5,001,676	2.41
Punjab	17,103,835	110,012,442	2.13
Sindh	8,585,610	47,886,051	2.41
Balochistan	1,775,937	12,344,408	3.37
ICT	336,182	2,006,572	4.91

POPULATION OF MAJOR CITIES CENSUS - 2017

TOP 10 CITIES	POPULATION	
	CENSUS - 2017	CENSUS - 1998
1	2	3
KARACHI CITY	14,910,352	9,339,023
LAHORE CITY	11,126,285	5,143,495
FAISALABAD M.CORP.	3,203,846	2,008,861
RAWALPINDI CITY	2,098,231	1,409,768
GUJRANWALA M.CORP.	2,027,001	1,132,509
PESHAWAR CITY	1,970,042	982,816
MULTAN CITY	1,871,843	1,197,384
HYDERABAD CITY	1,732,693	1,166,894
ISLAMABAD METROPOLITAN CORP	1,014,825	529,180
QUETTA CITY	1,001,205	565,137

(PBS)

OVERVIEW

The provisional results were finally presented to the Council of Common Interests on August 25, 2017 and subsequently released to the public. The results show a total population of 207.8 million. The male population is recorded at 106.4million, the female population is recorded at 101.3million while officially recognizing transgender as the third gender was recorded at 10,416.

An overall increase of 57% is recorded in population since 1998 with an average annual growth rate of 2.4%. It has been noted that the overall national growth has declined in comparison to the growth from 1981-1998 – which showed an increase of 146%. However, Pakistan’s growth rate is considered significantly higher in comparison to other South Asian Countries.

The Provinces of Sindh and Punjab in particular have shown a decrease in overall growth rate since 1998. Whereas, KP, FATA and Balochistan have indicated an increase.

Trends in Urbanization-in all provinces except for ICT- have also shown an increase. 36.38% of the population is noted to be residing in Urban Areas. Sindh is noted to be the most urban province. The 10 largest cities by population are as follow: Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Pindi, Gujranwala, Peshawar, Multan, Hyderabad, ICT and Quetta.

According to PBS “The total population as per the provisional results includes all persons residing in the country including Afghans and/or other aliens. The provisional results however do not include Afghans residing in refugee villages, diplomats and the population of AJK & GB (a population and housing count has been conducted for AJK & GB.) Overseas Pakistanis have also not been added to the count.

The provisional results show a count from a total of 130 districts (excluding AJK AND GB) :-

KP: 25 districts, FATA: 7agencies, Punjab: 36 districts, Sindh: 29, Balochistan: 32 and ICT:1.

The country was divided into 168,000 census blocks and each block was to include a 200-250 households. The census was conducted by 91,000 enumerators and the Army provided 200,000 security personnel.

The release of these provisional results have created ripples of multidimensional concerns at the social, economic, political and security fronts. But currently, the procedures and methodologies used in deriving the provisional results remain challenged by various voices. For now, causing some hiccups in release of verified results. Owing to widespread doubts regarding the inaccuracies, The Senate Standing Committee on Privatization and Statistics has recommended a reassessment of 1% of the census blocks, all this is to be done prior to May 2018 which is a deadline offered to PBS to present a final compilation of all results.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Provinces

Sindh: The province has shown stagnant growth. Sindh is said to retain the same share in NFC distribution and parliamentary representation. Major political parties in Sindh continue to voice concerns regarding the accuracy of the results, in their view there has been a significant population influx in the province, therefore their national shares need to be enhanced.

Punjab: Surprisingly, the most densely populated province of the country, which is the only one that has recorded a decline in growth remains muted on its set of concerns. Despite its rapid urbanization, not much has been discussed in terms of the province's Urban-Rural disparity. Nor has much been said about the migration trends in Punjab. The province is likely to lose up to 8 seats in NA and face a reduction in NFC share from 56% to possibly 53%. The provisional results need to be understood and discussed so that efficient future provincial development may take place and the province is not overburdened in the long run.

KP: Major political parties in KP have raised several concerns. The overall population has shown a surge and an enhanced growth rate. However, the province witness significant disparities in growth rate across various districts. The rural areas have shown a relatively lower growth rate—which many are concerned stem from: the issue of IDP's, other security concerns and overall lags in socio-economic development. The areas such Peshawar, DI Khan, Malakand and Bannu which have shown significant bulges in growth rates are concerned about the inclusion of Afghan refugees and other IDPS which may have led to this increase. While KP is likely to see an enhancement in NFC and parliamentary representation; the root causes of the population surges need a careful examination, resource management needs a rethink and efficient planning in order to unanimously enhance the provinces development is needed.

FATA: The concerns rising from KP are deeply interlinked to the FATA issue as well. Several voices from FATA have also raised serious doubts on the census results. The FATA population has shown a reduction. At the political level, many voices claim that the reduction is deliberate in order to further delay FATA-KP merger or at least hamper its effectiveness in the overall NFC share and representation. However, the merger in any case is a transitional process which requires tackling of some residual issues. Furthermore, according to one report, noticing the growth rate across the various agencies, it becomes evident that the less safe zones witnessed a significantly lower growth rate. The IDP crisis and other security concerns coupled with socio-economic deficiencies may well have added to the reduction in population. Despite the population reduction, not much has been said about any attempts to rework the federal formula for FATA's representation, which is perhaps a reasonable approach to abide by during the transitional period. One opinion suggests carrying out of a recount of the FATA regions population once the conditions return to some form of normalcy—therefore planning and resources need to be directed for that end.

Balochistan: Balochistan witnesses a complex conundrum. The province has seen an overall growth rate of 3.37%. Though interestingly, it has been noted that the the 'Baloch population' from Baloch dominated districts has fallen from 26.6% (1998) to 26%(2017). Whereas a significant growth has not been recorded in 'Pashtun dominated districts' either. Thus raising doubts regarding indigenous growth. Many claim that the Afghan refugee problem may have surged up the population. It is claimed that Pashtun parties such as PKMAP supported the inclusion of Afghan refugees in order to indicate an enlarged non Baloch population. The Baloch-Pasthun ratio in 1998 was noted to be 71:29 whereas the current percentage stands at 52% Baloch and 48 % Pashtuns—thus aggravating the Baloch-Pasthun divide even more and exacerbating fears of the Balochis of being termed a minority in the province. However, a recent article points out an interesting recollection—that during the 1998 census Mahmud Khan Achakzai of PkMAP had denied carrying out census in the Pashtun dominated areas of Balochistan, which could explain this drastic surge in Pashtun population as they may have not been

enumerated before. The author sheds light on another important aspect of the Baloch population issue, which suggests that the province maybe lost in its own translation. Several ethnic groups such as: Brahuīs, Kurds, Jamotes residing in Balochistan identify themselves as ‘Balochis’ even though they maintain distinct ethno-linguistic traits from ‘blue blooded Balochis’ and often times are not considered Balochi by the indigenous Baloch people. Such complexities raise confusions and contentions regarding the representation of the various ethnic groups residing in the province, furthermore it tends to leave the very definition of Balochi subjective. Political harmony amongst the various political groups needs to exist. The more pressing issues related to provincial planning and development and social welfare need to be addressed in the wake of these results.

Urban-Rural Issue

The Rural population is 63.6% whereas Urban is 36.4%. Several questions have been raised regarding the stark disparity, many are of the view that the Urban population ought to be much higher. The root of this disparity is believed to stem from outdated definitions of ‘urban’ and ‘rural’. According to one view, while the categorization of Urban is comparatively easier, it is the definition of rural—in modern day Pakistan—which requires revision. As, Pakistan is noted to have become much more integrated in terms of technology, means of production and availability of other facilities and services. Notably, in Punjab several former rural areas now fulfill definitions of urban or semi-urban. The Urban Rural Issue is raising widespread concerns regarding resource management, city planning and other political representation purposes. Currently, PBS faces heat for mismanaging the ‘Urban-Rural population counts’ even though the delineation of urban and rural areas is a duty of provincial governments—a matter which was paid little attention to across all provinces.

The Urban-Rural issue has been taken up most critically by Sindh, so far. It is being discussed from two fronts: Intra Provisional and Lahore-Karachi perspective.

The Urban-Rural population is comparatively evenly spread out in the case of Sindh. This has generated grievances and denunciation of results from several Karachi Based political parties. In their view- Karachi's population is under enumerated and several areas of the city are incorrectly classified as rural. Furthermore, it is believed that owing to rapid urbanization trends, Karachi's population count does not seem credible as mass migration has taken place from other areas of Sindh and even other provinces. The issue remains controversial, several counter arguments state that people from other areas in Sindh may seek livelihood in Karachi but do not always reside there-- despite that—managing Karachi's population has remained a critical issue for several years and requires attention. Karachi is noted to be housing several 'alien' communities, IDP's etc often residing in 'no go areas', whether these 'immigrants' are to be officially considered as a part of the city's fabric is a separate debate. But, their very existence translates to multifarious pressures on the city's capacity—which need to be dealt with effectively, either in form of enhancing the city's capacity or by providing suitable alternatives to the residents of Pakistan.

The second reasoning of this problem surfaces the " Lahore-Karachi issue"

A recent article by Fahim Zaman in DAWN discusses these anomalies in detail. Based on his observations Karachi's population in 1998 stood at 9.4 million in the 603km² of "Urban land". Whereas 3557km² back then was considered rural. While in the case of Lahore: 312km² of urban land housed 6.3 million people whereas 1772km² was considered rural—in 2015 the entire area of Lahore was declared urban, thereby off balancing the counts. Furthermore at this current growth rate Karachi's population should be more than what has been recorded .

He also looks into data on the census blocks provided by PBS, Karachi for 2017: census had 14,494 census blocks whereas Lahore had 6,585 census blocks. Based on his calculations of the average persons per household (i.e approx. 6) and average houses per census block (220-250) the current population breakdown doesn't add up and highlights an underrepresentation of Karachi households by 21% while Lahore's households are overrepresented by 18%. In another point, he

highlights that the numbers of voters registered with ECP—considering a registered voter is 18 and above—reveals that the ECP voter list itself for Lahore contains 46% of the total population of Lahore counted by PBS. This, in his view indicates dubious ageing trends and birth rates, thus adding on to possibilities of inaccuracies.

Hasaan Khawar in his recent article [Karachi's population- Fiction and Reality](#) presents a counter perspective to the Lahore-Karachi population discrepancies. Stating that “Karachi’s urban population stood at 5.2 million in 1981. It then grew at an average growth rate of 3.49%, reaching 9.3 million by 1998. Since then, however, the growth slowed down to 2.49%, as per recent census results, with the population now reaching 14.9 million. Interestingly, even if Karachi’s population had grown at the same rate, as was witnessed between 1981 and 1998, it would have still reached close to 18 million, way below what political parties are claiming. Moreover, in 2013, the total number of registered voters in Karachi division was 7.1 million –which represents 44% of the present population. The percentage in Lahore is not very different, with 4.4 million voters representing 40% of the city’s population... for Karachi to have 30 million people, it should have grown at an average growth rate of 6.33%, which is quite unrealistic. But even for Karachi to have a population of 22 million, this growth rate should have been 4.6%, significantly higher than that of Lahore. Those who had observed both cities grow over the last two decades know very well that the pace of change in Lahore’s infrastructure has been much more than that of Karachi. The rural population of Karachi division, however, stands at merely 1.1 million, spread across parts of Karachi West and Malir districts. Even if we consider all of it urban, it wouldn’t still make a sizeable difference to Karachi’s reported population, and would merely increase it to 16 million.

The Islamabad Capital Territory’s Urban-Rural disparity is another case that has left several pondering where the rural areas of ICT that house 6% of its population exist.

Delimitations

As an untraditional move, the ECP has recently been given a green light to use provisional results to carry out delimitations prior to next general elections. As, the PBS on its part would only be able to provide final results by April or May 2018 while the ECP has said it requires at least seven months to carry out delimitation processes. Naturally, given the massive surge in population fresh delimitations need to be carried out for proportionate representation. Furthermore, due to use of comparatively enhanced technology the total census blocks identified were also increased compared to those determined in 1998. Thus, in absence of fresh delimitations in accordance to these new data figures, would deny several people of their right to vote.

Transgender

The Transgender population was officially enumerated for the first time. They were recorded at only 10,418. The transgender community has largely denounced this figure, claiming they represent a much higher number.

Forecast errors

Several voices have raised concerns regarding the government's negligence in conducting research and multifaceted policy formulations in accordance to the flawed assumption that the annual growth rate was 1.9%. The World Bank and UNFPA had estimated a population of 197million for Pakistan, but the number has by far exceeded that estimate. It has also brought into question the utility of USAID and other international aid offered to the government for purposes of population control.

Gender Gap

The overall gender disparity in comparison to 1998 has reduced from 108:100 (male:female) to 105:100 ratio. However, many remain skeptical of these results and believe the female population to be much higher. This area needs to be verified as several critical social and economic development questions hinge on this information.

Disabilities

Unfortunately, the disability count has perhaps catered the most to raising doubts about the overall accuracy of the PBS numbers. Based on the current census only 0.48% population of Pakistan is disabled, which is even lower than that recorded in 1998. The number also stands in contrast with WHO estimates – according to which 15% of the Pakistani population is disabled. Representatives of disability movement and civil society organizations are demanding a nationwide survey to obtain a more realistic estimate.

Afghan Refugee Issue

The inclusion of Afghans has generated objections from most provinces. According to UNHCR, approximately 1.3 million Afghan refugees reside in Pakistan. But unregistered refugees are said to be present in much larger numbers.

However, Asif Bajwa (chief statistician at PBS) the final results would declare Afghans residing outside refugee areas as ‘non locals’ and would not be added in the final population count. However, the differentiation of Afghans from Pakistanis remains unanswered—in the case of those residing outside camps. So far, no estimate of Afghans identified has been given. The reliance on NADRA’s database for this purpose is also said to be ineffective as several Pakistani’s do not have CNIC’s.

CONCLUSION

The provisional results of the long delayed Census have raised multifarious objections and concerns. Obtaining and utilizing accurate information through Census is a necessity. It is through this information that one would be able to better understand various national demographic trends, gain improved insight on the root causes of various national issues and design more accurate frameworks to resolve the issues.

As of now, some institutions such as ECP are more or less compelled to rely on the results as is—owing to time constraints. Whereas on the other hand, a large segment of various provincial representatives and other social science experts have raised doubts on the accuracy of the results. The IPCC is also holding meetings in order to reach some form of intra provincial consensus on how to tackle the issue of alleged inaccuracies.

Expert opinions of various Pakistani social scientists and statisticians could be pooled, in order to determine if the results show slight variation errors or if they are indeed unrealistic. More utility of technology may also help in the verification processes.

Pre-Census the buzz was that NADRA would be closely aligned to PBS during the Census exercise. Its role was not just meant to be limited to verifying existing CNIC's, but it was thought that- in the flow of this demanding exercise- NADRA biometric systems would also register the prominent section of Pakistani population which remains without CNIC's. However, many observed that this helpful measure was not effectively taken up. Instead, some cases of 'harassment' were reported against those who did not hold a CNIC, even though the PBS categorically stated that CNIC was not a requirement for the count and that those without ID's would be assisted for registration.

Over-reliance on manual methods as opposed to several other efficient means to collect data, only raises the financial burden. Those demanding recounts, also need to keep in view the human, security and other economic costs involved. Another

example of inefficiency is that of the Afghan refugees. According the PBS mechanism “all Afghans’ residing out site designated refugee areas would be counted in the total population, and then subtracted later”. This mechanism used by PBS has not resonated well with several voices, as it not only sounds tedious, but largely fails to present what criteria was used to determine Afghans, estimate on their current populations have also not been presented so far. The actual number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan has been a critical national problem which would have been better understood through the census. Similar allegations of inefficiency are being enunciated by various civil society groups.

The issue reaches a unique dead end when PBS presents a more or less technically valid defense when it says – its role during the census is only and solely to count people, not ponder on the why’s and what’s. For example: The urban- rural controversy and the failure of provincial governments to revise and delineate areas in all these years cannot entirely be blamed on PBS, as the dents in effective management seem more broad based.

Technically, globally, the institution in charge of the population count is only meant to stick to that mandate and then disseminate findings to other relevant departments. However, in the case of Pakistan, the excessive reliance on manual means of counting was more or less bound to raise suspicions. Secondly, contrary to common justifications the census is more than just a mere headcount. The PBS is also in charge of the census forms—in a country where the various socio-economic and security problems are deeply interlinked, a multi-institutional input on what relevant information to obtain could have immensely helped. A more strategic plan, outlining distinct roles could have been devised by conglomerating various state institutions. It may have helped in resolving several issues at the same time in a more cost effective manner. Even now, a more coherent approach in resolving the inaccuracy dispute is needed.

Figures

PUNJAB	TOTAL POPULATION	URBAN	RURAL
	110,012,442	40,387,298	69,625,144

PUNJAB	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	URBAN	RURAL
	17,103,835	6,389,733	10,714,102

SINDH	TOTAL POPULATION	URBAN	RURAL
	47,886,051	24,910,458	22,975,593

SINDH	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	URBAN	RURAL
	8,585,610	4,399,782	4,185,828

KP	TOTAL POPULATION	URBAN	RURAL
	30,523,371	5,729,634	24,793,737

KP	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	URBAN	RURAL
	3,845,168	741,014	3,104,154

BALUCHISTAN	TOTAL POPULATION	URBAN	RURAL
	12,344,408	3,400,876	8,943,532

BALUCHISTAN	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	URBAN	RURAL
	1,775,937	474,725	1,301,212

FATA	TOTAL POPULATION	URBAN	RURAL
	5,001,676	114,898	4,859,778

FATA	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	URBAN	RURAL
	558,379	16,124	542,225

ICT	TOTAL POPULATION	URBAN	RURAL
	2,006,572	1,014,825	991,747

ICT	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	URBAN	RURAL
	336,182	170,936	165,246

(PBS data)

