

POPULATION EXPLOSION IN PAKISTAN: CHALLENGES AND REMEDIES



WEBINAR – MARCH, 2021



INTRODUCTION TO IQBAL INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES (IIPS)

Iqbal Institute of Policy Studies, an independent policy research institute, conducted a webinar on Population Explosion in Pakistan: Challenges and Remedies. The webinar focused on the challenges faced by Pakistan due to population growth, along with highlighting the underlying causes and proposed future strategies for sustainable growth.



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Pakistan is one of the most urbanised countries in South Asia. This growth is concentrated in the cities which continue to expand rapidly. Overpopulation and rapid urbanisation without proper planning have resulted in numerous challenges such as urban poverty. Keeping in mind the challenges posed by the increasing population of Pakistan, the Iqbal Institute of Policy Studies has organized a webinar on Population explosion in Pakistan: Challenges and remedies, to discuss the severity of the issue and suggest practical policy options to control population explosion.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. What is the situation of population growth in Pakistan?
2. What is the socioeconomic impact of population explosion in Pakistan?
3. What is the impact of unchecked population growth on the economy?
4. What is the minimum reform agenda for population planning in Pakistan?

OUR DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS



Mr Asif Bajwa

Former Chief Statistician,
Pakistan Bureau of Statistics



Dr Zeba Sathar

Senior Associate & Country Director,
Population Council Pakistan



Dr Shujat Ali

Member IIPS Advisory
Board



Ms Khadija Zareen Khan

Social Activist



**Lt Gen Haroon
Aslam (Retd)**

President IIPS Advisory Board



The details of speakers and video of webinar may be found on:
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*Population growth in Pakistan
(Past, Present and Future projections)*

**MR ASIF BAJWA
FORMER CHIEF STATISTICIAN, PAKISTAN BUREAU
OF STATISTICS**

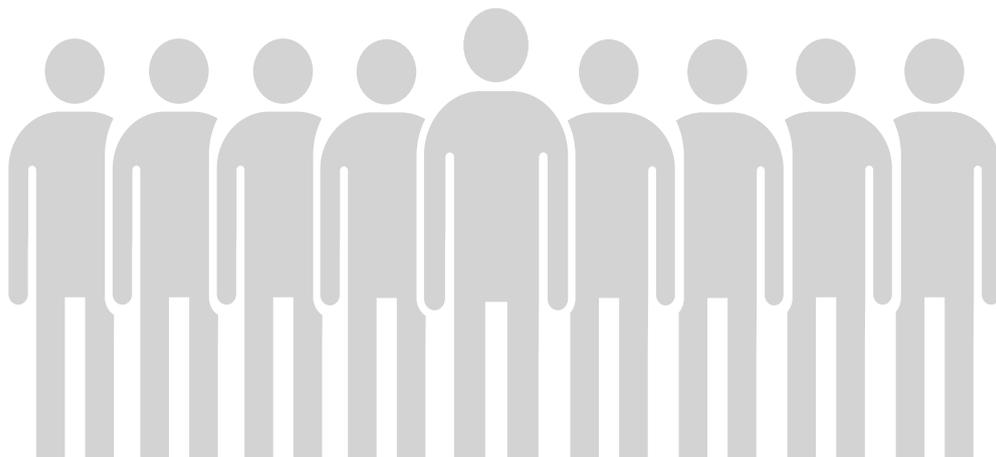
Mr. Asif Bajwa highlighted key indicators of Pakistan's population growth statistics. Currently, Pakistan has a population of 207.7 million and is the 6th most populous country in the world after China, India, USA, Indonesia, and Brazil. During the intercensal period of 1998 to 2017, Pakistan's population increased by 57 percent, with an average annual growth rate of 2.4 percent. Whereas during the previous intercensal period of 1981 to 1998, the average annual growth rate stood at 2.69 percent. Population density stood at 166 persons per square kilometre in 1998, compared to 261 persons per square kilometre in 2017. A look at the ten most populous countries in the world reveals that Pakistan is only second to Nigeria in terms of a high growth rate, with Pakistan being at 2.4 percent and Nigeria having 2.6 percent annual population growth. Also, a look at past census reports from 1901 onwards, in the areas which constitute Pakistan today, it can be seen that the population grew from 16 million people to 132 million in a hundred years, while it took only 19 more years to reach two hundred million. That is a cumulative increase in population of 515 percent.

A more in-depth look at Pakistan's population reveals that Punjab remains the most populated province followed by Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. But in terms of population distribution over the years, Punjab's share in the overall population demographics is decreasing, while Sindh and Balochistan are increasing with time. Based on the census data, Punjab has a growth rate of 2.13 percent, whereas Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stands at 2.89 percent, Sindh at 2.41 percent, and Balochistan at 3.37 percent. On the basis of this census, the seats in the national assembly have been redistributed, constitutional amendments have been made, and elections to the national assembly have been conducted.

MR ASIF BAJWA
**FORMER CHIEF STATISTICIAN, PAKISTAN BUREAU
OF STATISTICS**

Population is the basic denominator for all planning activities in the government. Population projections are based on three factors namely, fertility, mortality, and migration. The shorter the period, the better the projections. Although projections for less developed countries are less accurate, there is no escaping the fact that unless the population growth is controlled, Pakistan cannot develop and attain its full potential. In terms of population distribution by sex, males are 51 percent compared to females at 49 percent. Fertility rates worldwide are projected to decline from 2.3 to below replacement levels, which will lead to decrease in overall global population. Also, in the last sixty years, fertility fell nearly everywhere in the world. But based on Pakistan's growth rate of 2.4 percent, it will take only 30 years to double our population.

This phenomenal growth will not only be in the number of people, but will also result in demand for infrastructure, housing, and services. The government will have to provide these facilities with a scarce number of resources. In this regard, the government of Pakistan has set high standards for achieving a growth rate of 1.5 percent by 2025 and further reducing it to 1.1 percent by 2030. But the United Nations world population prospects report projects that Pakistan will have a population of 403 million by 2050, whereas the Lancet has published its Global Burden of Disease 2017 data which places Pakistan's population projection at 314 million by 2030, both being in line with the current growth rate of Pakistan.





Socioeconomic Impact of Population Explosion in Pakistan

MS KHADIJA ZAREEN KHAN
SOCIAL ACTIVIST

An increase in population is giving rise to many social evils such as child labour, exploitation, poverty, illiteracy, and increased extremism among the masses.

Pakistan is the 6th most populated country in the world and the 2nd most populated among the Muslim countries. Among the South Asian countries, Pakistan has the highest growth rate of population. If current population growth continues, more than 120 million jobs, 8500 primary schools, and 19 million new homes will be needed by 2040. Besides this, a huge amount of investment would be required in the healthcare sector. The growing population is already placing a huge burden on the natural resources of Pakistan. This can soon become a crisis of food security and national security. The issue of water security takes on new importance in light of these events. Pakistan already wastes a lot of clean and usable water in its agriculture sector due to water mismanagement and canal line losses. As an added burden, water is also being increasingly used in urban areas where rapid urbanization and rural to urban migration are expanding cities to agricultural lands and forest areas. This would eventually make Pakistan a food scarce country in the future. Pakistan is already facing double-digit inflation and the lower-income class is suffering heavily due to inability to afford even their basic necessities. In the last 60 years, Pakistan has only witnessed a 40 percent increase in its agricultural lands. But the population has increased five times. As Pakistan is a developing country, the resources available are much less than the population's actual needs. Healthcare and education facilities are also being heavily affected by the exponential growth in population. Pakistan needs proper planning mechanisms for its future. Population control is much needed in Pakistan. Models from other Islamic countries like Iran and Bangladesh can be studied to understand how these countries implemented population control plans.

**MS KHADIJA ZAREEN KHAN
SOCIAL ACTIVIST (CONTINUED)**

Although academic discourse has its own relevance, awareness campaigns are required on the domestic level to better disseminate a proper understanding on the issue among the masses. This has to be the focus of Pakistan's planning bureau.



***Unchecked Population Growth in Pakistan
and its Impact on the Economy***

**DR SHUJAT ALI
MEMBER OF IIPS ADVISORY BOARD**

Population growth can be a good or a bad thing for any country depending on the time period and context. Many developed countries have excess resources at their disposal, and they are more focused on increasing their population to better utilise these resources. In doing so, they are also focusing on educated individuals who are productive and skilled. For such countries, population is a boom and an additional resource that adds to their economic growth. In a country like Pakistan where every type of individual can be found, from skilled to unskilled, educated to illiterate, and rich to poor, population growth is not a boom. According to a projection carried out by the United Nations, Pakistan's population is expected to grow to 400 million till 2050. In view of the ongoing challenges posed by the population explosion in Pakistan, it can be said that these challenges will further increase in the future. Looking at Pakistan's position in global indicators of development, the country does not stand in the western, Asian, or south Asian league, rather the country can be found in the African league. In almost all comparisons, Pakistan can be found with African countries. Pakistan has 44 million people who are undernourished and food insecure. Among children aged 59 to 69 months, 40 percent are stunted, while 28 percent are underweight, 18 percent are wasted, and 10 percent are overweight. Moreover, 24 percent of Pakistan's population lives below the national poverty line, and 39 percent live in multidimensional poverty.

DR SHUJAT ALI
MEMBER OF IIPS ADVISORY BOARD (CONTINUED)

In terms of water stress, Pakistan has reached 1000 cubic metre per person per annum, which is a dangerous level. The per capita income is an indicator of the standard of living and wellbeing in the population. Pakistan's per capita income is around US \$1300, whereas the average per capita income of all the countries worldwide stands at US \$11500. Pakistan needs a strong reality check on these issues. If the country does not truthfully take up these matters, then Pakistan cannot move ahead in the future. Since Pakistan's population remains unchecked, it alludes to the fact that the authorities have not paid attention to the issue. The matter has remained at the backfoot of government policy making agenda. In the first decade of this millennium, the majority of the policy discussion were focused on alleviating poverty from the country. But population growth has a very strong linkage with poverty and illiteracy in the masses. Pakistan's national saving rate is 13.9 percent, and the investment ratio is at 15.4 percent. Neighbouring countries in the region are around the 30 percent mark in both categories, whereas Pakistan has been hovering around the same percentage for many decades now. If Pakistan aims to

achieve a growth rate of 7 to 8 percent, at present, it cannot be done with such low levels of development indicators. Pakistan's fertility rate stands at 3.6 percent, which is the highest even among the Islamic countries. This has a direct impact on savings. More dependents will require more expense and no savings can be achieved. China's one child policy can be studied, although it cannot be implemented in Pakistan, but valuable lessons can be learned from it. But this fertility rate has also made Pakistan a country with a large population consisting of youth, considerably the youngest nation in the world. This can be a sign of hope for Pakistan's future.

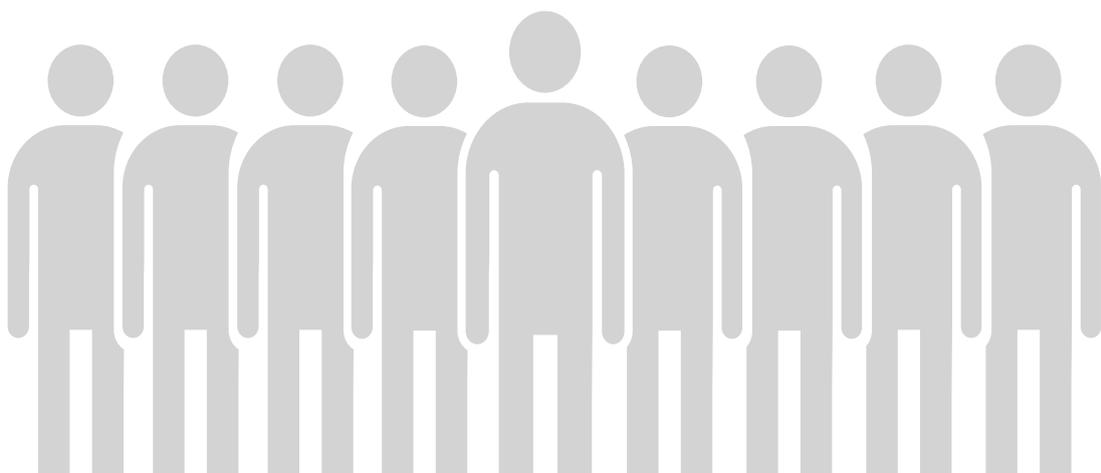




Minimum Reform Agenda for Population Planning in Pakistan

DR ZEBA SATHAR
SENIOR ASSOCIATE & COUNTRY DIRECTOR,
POPULATION COUNCIL PAKISTAN

It comes as a surprise that the government has very little on its plate in terms of population planning in Pakistan. There are three areas which require strong commitment on part of the government. Building a strong national narrative which aims to achieve balance between population size and resources, while also emphasizing on rights. The state cannot enforce a one child policy today because human rights are an important consideration in Pakistan. There is also enough data to show that a religious consensus among the scholars has also been reached on the issue of population planning. There should be proper birth spacing between successive children so as to protect the mother and give proper nourishment and care to each child. Pakistan's average funding on population planning is Rs 20 billion. This money is endorsed and approved by the authorities, but is not provided. Pakistan is currently spending US\$0.15 per person on population control whereas Bangladesh spends US \$2 per person. Family planning should be the cheapest option for population control. By increasing funds for population planning in the NFC awards, there is hope that enough resources can be allocated towards providing a healthy family planning campaign. Also, it cannot be said that Pakistan is experiencing a lack of family planning due to religious reasons. There is a dire lack of resources in the sector, where healthcare institutions do not have the facilities to accommodate people in this regard.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Pakistan has a population of 207.7 million and is the 6th most populous country in the world after China, India, USA, Indonesia, and Brazil.
- During the intercensal period 1998 to 2017, Pakistan's population increased by 57 percent at an average annual growth rate of 2.4 percent. Whereas during the previous intercensal period of 1981 to 1998, the average annual growth rate was 2.69 percent.
- In 1998, the population density stood at 166 persons per square kilometre compared to 261 persons per square kilometre in 2017.
- A look at the ten most populous countries in the world reveals that Pakistan is only second to Nigeria in terms of a high growth rate, with Pakistan being at 2.4 percent and Nigeria having 2.6 percent annual population growth.
- Also, a look at past census reports from 1901 onwards, in the areas which constitute Pakistan today, it can be seen that the population grew from 16 million people to 132 million in a hundred years, while it took only 19 more years to reach two hundred million.
- An increase in population is giving rise to many social evils such as child labour, exploitation, poverty, illiteracy, and increased extremism among the masses.
- If current population growth continues, more than 120 million jobs will be needed by 2040, 8500 primary schools, and 19 million new homes would also be needed.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The issue of water security takes on new importance in light of these events. Pakistan already wastes a lot of clean and usable water in its agriculture sector due to water mismanagement and canal line losses.
- Water is also being increasingly used in urban areas where rapid urbanization and rural to urban migration are expanding cities to agricultural lands and forest areas.
- In the last 60 years, Pakistan has only witnessed a 40 percent increase in its agricultural lands. But the population has increased five times.
- Models from other Islamic countries like Iran and Bangladesh can be studied to understand how these countries implemented population control plans.
- Looking at Pakistan's position in global indicators of development, the country does not stand in the western, Asian, or south Asian league, rather the country can be found in the African league. In almost all comparisons, Pakistan can be found with African countries.
- Pakistan has 44 million people who are undernourished and food insecure. Among children aged 59 to 69 months, 40 percent are stunted, while 28 percent are underweight, 18 percent are wasted, and 10 percent are overweight.
- 24 percent of Pakistan's population lives below the national poverty line, and 39 percent live in multidimensional poverty.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- In terms of water stress, Pakistan has reached 1000 cubic meter per person per annum.
- Pakistan's per capita income is around US \$1300, whereas the average per capita income of all the countries worldwide stands at US\$1500.
- Pakistan's national saving rate is 13.9 percent, and the investment ratio is at 15.4 percent. Neighbouring countries in the region are around the 30 percent mark in both categories, whereas Pakistan has been hovering around the same percentage for many decades now.

MINIMUM REFORM AGENDA FOR POPULATION PLANNING

- Build a strong national narrative which aims to achieve balance between population size and resources, while also emphasizing on rights. This can be achieved by strong media campaigns and on ground interaction with experts for a more efficient approach.
- A population planning campaign must be steered at the federal level from the Prime Minister's office, while the respective Chief Minister at the provincial level must take the issue on a priority basis.
- There is also enough data to show that a religious consensus among the scholars has also been reached on the issue of population planning. The Council of Islamic Ideology must involve scholars from all sects to encourage family planning in Pakistan. The Iranian model can also be studied in this regard.
- There should be proper birth spacing between successive children so as to protect the mother and give proper nourishment and care to each child. Pakistan must devise a long-term plan for population control, spanning over at least 20 to 25 years.
- Pakistan's average funding on population planning is Rs 20 billion. Pakistan is currently spending US\$0.15 per person on population control whereas Bangladesh spends US \$2 per person. Therefore, Pakistan must increase its annual budgetary allocation towards population planning.

MINIMUM REFORM AGENDA FOR POPULATION PLANNING

- Family planning should be the cheapest option for population control. By increasing funds for population planning in the NFC awards, there is hope that enough resources can be allocated towards providing a healthy family planning campaign.
- There is a dire lack of resources in the sector, where healthcare institutions do not have the facilities to accommodate people in this regard.

