

This report gives the major findings of the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) conducted from December 1990 to May 1991 on a nationwide basis. After the preliminary report, published in August 1991, this is the first in a series of reports on the PDHS findings with the objective of improving the Population Welfare Programme and health services in Pakistan. Besides presenting results at the national level, this report presents information by urban-rural areas and by province. Before presenting the major findings, this chapter discusses the physical features, people, culture, religion, language, population distribution and size, fertility and mortality levels, literacy and educational attainment, economy, population and family planning and health policies and programs of the country. The objective of this presentation is to make the reader familiar with the historical, geographic, socioeconomic and demographic features of the country.

Physical Features Pakistan, situated in the northwestern part of the South Asian subcontinent, obtained independence from the British on August 14, 1947 after the subdivision of the Indian subcontinent. It is a land mass of diversified relief with vast plains in the Indus basin, a rocky expanse of plateaus in the southwest and majestic mountains in the north with beautiful valleys, snow-covered peaks and glaciers. Pakistan extends from 24 ° to 37°N latitude and from 61 ° to 75°E longitude. On its east and southeast lies India, to the north and northwest is Afghanistan, to the west is Iran and, in the south, the Arabian Sea. It has a common frontier with China on the border of its Gilgit Agency. Tajikistan, formerly in the USSR, is separated from Pakistan by a narrow strip of Afghan territory called Wakhan.

This variety of landscape divides Pakistan into six major regions: the Northern High Mountainous Region, the Western Low Mountainous Region, the Balochistan Plateau, the Potohar Uplands, and the Punjab and Sindh fertile plains. Pakistan is a land of great rivers like the Indus and its tributaries, large dams like Tarbela, and high mountain peaks like K2 (Mount Goodwin Austin - 8,611 meters) and Nanga Parbat (8,126 meters).

Climate, Rainfall, and Seasons Pakistan has a continental type of climate, characterized by extreme variations of temperature depending on the topography of the country. Pakistan experiences a general deficiency of rainfall. Although it is in the monsoon region, it is arid, except for the southern slopes of the Himalayas and the submountain tract where the annual rainfall varies between 76 and 127 cm. Balochistan is the driest part of the country with an average rainfall of 21 cm.

There are four well-marked seasons in Pakistan, namely:

1. Cold season (December to March)
2. Hot season (April to June)

3. Monsoon season (July to September)

4. post-monsoon season (October to November).

The total land area of Pakistan is about 796,000 square kilometers. Pakistan is comprised of the provinces of Punjab, North West Frontier, Baluchistan and Sindh and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of the north and northwest (see map, page xxiv). Each province is divided into administrative divisions, districts, tehsils and talukas. There were 16 divisions and 72 districts in the country in 1991. Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, which lies in the northern part of the country at the bottom of the Margala hills near Rawalpindi, is a well-planned city which was constructed beginning in the 1960s.

People, Culture, Religion, and Language Pakistan historically attracted migrants from many nations in the northwest and the northeast. These include Dravidians, Aryans, Greeks, Turks, Persians, Afghans, Arabs and Mughals. The dominant racial type in Pakistan is Indo-Aryans. In the cultural arena, Pakistan has inherited a rich heritage. A highly developed way of life was attained by the people of Pakistan in the Indus Valley Civilization about 5000 years ago which came to an end around 1500 B.C. About 500 B.C., the northern city of Taxila emerged as a famous center of Buddhist culture which existed for a thousand years. Pakistan is an ideological state which came into existence as a result of the demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. The Muslim majority areas were mostly carved out into Pakistan. Therefore, the large majority of the population of Pakistan is comprised of Muslims. A negligible minority of Hindus is settled mainly in the border districts of Sindh. Christians are widely spread throughout the country and form about three percent of the total population. The Parsis (Zoroastrians), in number about 20,000, are an economically notable minority, mostly settled in Karachi. The constitution of Pakistan guarantees the right of minorities to profess, practice and propagate their religion and every administrative position is open to them with the exception of the Head of State and the Prime Minister. Urdu is the language most commonly spoken throughout the country. Balochi and Brahui are spoken in most of Balochistan, Pushto in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and also in some parts of Balochistan, Punjabi in Punjab, and Sindhi in the Province of Sindh. Saraiki is widely spoken in southern Punjab in the districts of Multan, Bahawalpur and Dera Ghazi Khan and adjoining areas in Balochistan, NWFP and Sindh. The medium of education is Urdu but English continues to be used in higher education and professional colleges, particularly in scientific and technical fields. English is widely used for commercial, legal and other official business in the country.

Population Population Size Pakistan is the ninth most populous country in the world after China, India, the former USSR, USA, Indonesia, Brazil, Japan, and Nigeria. The

population of Pakistan was 16.6 million at the beginning of the twentieth century (in 1901). By the time of independence in 1947, the population was estimated to have doubled to 32.5 million. In the first decennial census (1951), the population of Pakistan was reported to be 33.8 million while in the last decennial census in 1981 the population size was 84.3 million (see Table 1.1). In 1991, the population was estimated to be around 115 million with males comprising 52.5 percent of the population. The sex ratio of the population is estimated to be 111 males per 100 females