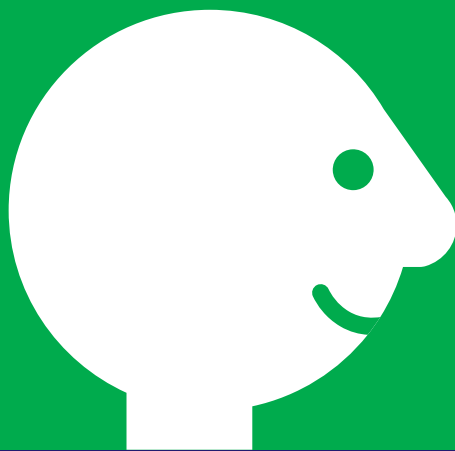


# COP26 South Asia Research on Young People, Cultural Relations and Climate Action

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## Country Brief: Pakistan



# South Asia Research on Perceptions of Young People on Climate Change and Action

## Country Brief: Pakistan

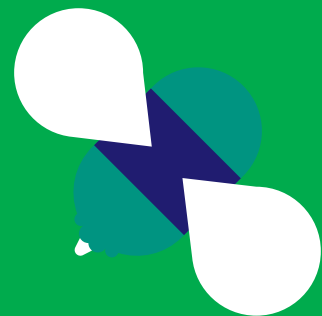
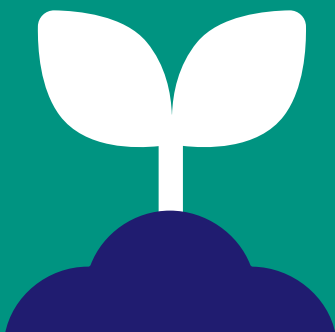
2021

### Background

Climate change is undoubtedly **one** of the most critical crises in today's world. In the Global South, where livelihoods are largely dependent on agriculture, climate change has had and will continue to have a devastating effect on critical sectors such as agriculture, ultimately negatively impacting food security as well.

As the **fifth** most populous and **one** of the youngest countries in the world, Pakistan currently has the largest population of young people ever recorded in its national history. Since young people form the biggest segment of society, they are also at the biggest risk of the effects of climate change and related challenges. While Pakistan's youth bulge has the potential to be **one** of its greatest assets, especially when it comes to mitigating climate risk, inaction, especially in terms of meaningful engagement of young people, can result in a vicious cycle of low economic growth and human development. It is critical therefore to harness the potential of youth to address looming threats such as those of climate change. Pakistan must adopt a climate compatible development pathway by engaging youth through various opportunities, enabling the transformation of the youth bulge into a youth dividend.

This research takes a deeper look into the perceptions, attitudes, challenges and readiness of youth in Pakistan around climate vulnerability and their action plan for the impending threats.



# Pakistan Snapshot

## Demographics

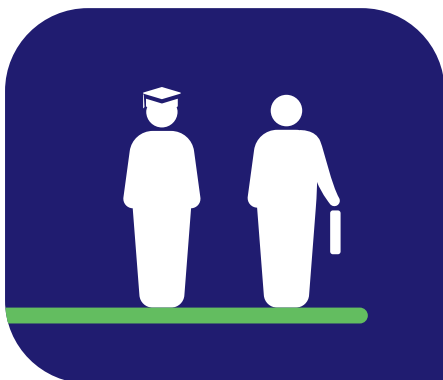
This research, primarily a perceptions and insights survey, engages with young people between the ages of **18** and **35** as well as other key stakeholders such as policymakers, academics, government representatives, global leaders and more.

Using several methods of data collection, including primary data collection through fieldwork as well as secondary data collection

through extensive web-based resources, this study was implemented based on participatory research techniques. The survey participants numbered **1,215** from across Pakistan. Additionally, to validate survey data, **14** focus group discussions and **thirty-two** interviews were also conducted with educationists, elected representatives, bureaucrats, civil society organisation and non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives.



A majority of participants had some level of education, with **78** per cent having secondary or higher education and only **nine** per cent having had no more than primary school education. **13** per cent reported having no schooling.



Of the respondents, **16** per cent were students, **23** per cent unemployed and **60** per cent employed.



**Four** per cent had a disability and **one** per cent were transgender. **61** per cent belonged to rural areas.

# Pakistan Snapshot

## Key Challenges for Young People

Focus group participants listed floods, droughts, extreme cold, heavy rainfall, snowfall and melting glaciers as major natural disasters that disrupted the livelihoods of young people all over the country. Many linked these increased natural disasters to deforestation. It was largely thought that food insecurity, an economic consequence of climate change, has increased.

Participants believed that poor people in rural areas are most vulnerable to climate change as they rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. Participants also felt that rural youth were more susceptible to climate-related natural disasters as they do not have the facilities that urban youth have access to.



More than **73** per cent of youth considered poverty and unemployment to be the top **two** most important issues for youth today, with quality healthcare highlighted as the **third** most important.



While males highlighted quality healthcare as the **third** most important issue in both urban and rural areas, females highlighted climate change as the third most important issue.



**Seven** out of **ten** participants agreed that climate change will be the biggest threat to Pakistan in the future.



The most common climate change challenges observed by Pakistani youth were depletion of freshwater resources (**25** per cent), followed by air pollution (**11** per cent) and disturbed rainfall patterns (**nine** per cent).



In urban areas, almost a **third** of the participants had observed climate challenges in the last **three to four** years, compared to a **third** of rural participants having observed these changes for more than **five** years now, indicating more recent climate changes in the urban areas.



**Seven** out of **ten** participants believed that **Covid-19** has increased their communities' vulnerability towards climate threats.



# Pakistan Snapshot

## Youth Preparedness for Climate Action

Focus group discussions highlighted that young people thought it was important for climate leaders to have management, community-building and communication skills. Most underlined the importance of education and suggested that useful skills can be developed through education,

which needs to be more widespread. Pakistani youth also thought that it would be helpful for young climate leaders to develop good stress management skills to deal with the rigors of their work as well as computer skills to speed up work and the ability to reach more people.



More than **85** per cent of rural and **79** per cent of urban youth were not familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals.



More than **91** per cent of participants did not have any knowledge of **COP26**.



More than **13** per cent felt that their opinion on climate change will not matter, while **68** per cent believed that it will.



**Eight** out of **ten** participants believed that acquiring knowledge on climate change and informing others is a public responsibility.



More than **78** per cent felt that they have learned enough about local climate change threats.



**70** per cent of participants expressed their eagerness to learn about climate issues.

# Pakistan Snapshot

## Youth Readiness for Climate Action

Pakistani youth felt that young people could assist the government in climate action through involvement in initiatives such as reforestation, clean-up drives and anti-air pollution campaigns. They suggested mobilising local community leaders such as imams to garner more support for climate action.



More than **90** per cent of respondents from Pakistan have never participated in any climate change awareness or mitigation activity.



More than **65** per cent felt that they had spoken about the threat of climate change within their communities, and almost **60** per cent felt that they are taking practical steps to protect their communities, peers and friends.



Almost **60%** of Pakistani felt that they are taking practical steps to protect their communities, peers and friends



Urban females were more likely to be participating in climate action (**62** per cent) than rural females (**51** per cent).



**Three-quarters** of Pakistani youth expressed their desire to build their communities' resilience.



Of urban females, **56** per cent were engaged in community development activities compared to **36** per cent of rural females.



More than **58** per cent of youth believed that they could provide immediate relief in case of a climate-posed incident.



More than **73** per cent expressed their ability to play the role of an awareness agent.



In rural areas, **77** per cent of males and **57** per cent of females believed that they can be change agents in their communities, whereas **86** per cent of urban males and **80** per cent of urban females believed they can be change agents.

# Pakistan Snapshot

## Youth Engagement Opportunities

Across the country, government representatives spoke of various government initiatives on climate change. Officials at the Ministry of Climate Change in particular mentioned a plan to include climate-related education in school curricula. They also emphasised that inclusion and promotion of youth through projects such as Clean Green Pakistan and the Prime Minister's Green Stimulus Program is an active mandate of the current government. Further, they spoke about increasing awareness of youth regarding climate change so they can contribute to the formulation of Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans.

**1** Of the young participants, **64** per cent believed that the government thinks of climate change as a serious and urgent challenge.

**2** Youth felt that their participation in climate action can support the government with its climate initiatives.

## Youth Engagement Challenges

Pakistani youth are aware that youth constitute a major proportion of the total population and were concerned about unemployment. Many, including experts, noted that young people were passionate about climate change, and many had even gained specialised knowledge but lacked employment opportunities.

**1** Almost **one-third** of participants from Pakistan ranked lack of or no access to knowledge resources as the biggest climate-related challenge.

**2** Lack of education on climate change in educational institutions was felt by **39** per cent of transgender, **30** per cent of female and **29** per cent of male participants to be restricting youth participation in climate action.

**3** The insufficient role of the media in creating awareness was reported as a barrier to mitigating climate risks by **15** per cent of participants.

# Pakistan Snapshot

## Sources of Information

Students felt that youth events such as those organised in schools and colleges were an effective way of creating awareness. Many focus group participants thought campaigns on social media, virtual events and competitions for students would be effective as a means of youth engagement. Further, interviewees and participants suggested that social media and television campaigns are more effective, with one interviewee citing the example of a successful Facebook group,

Green Islamabad, run by development sector practitioners. They also expressed the need to involve religious leaders to create awareness in religious schools and provide information during Friday sermons. Most felt that the NGOs and civil society actors could expand their roles to establish educational programmes at the local level, distributing pamphlets and flyers and conducting awareness sessions in rural areas.



Television emerged as the most common and reliable source of information on climate change, cited by more than **27** per cent of participants, closely followed by social media (**25** per cent).



In rural areas **29** per cent of females cited their parents as the most common source of information, compared to urban areas where a similar proportion of females cited social media as the most common source of information instead.



**One in four** Pakistani youth considered television news as the most reliable digital medium, closely followed by Facebook (**24** per cent) and YouTube (**19** per cent).



Females in urban areas considered Twitter as the next most reliable digital medium (**22** per cent) after television news.



**Three** out of **four** participants agreed to social media being a good source of information.



# Pakistan Snapshot

## English Language and Climate Activism

Young people in Pakistan were divided on the importance of fluency in English language and its role in climate action. While some thought speaking English was a useful skill in climate-related work, others thought that it was either unnecessary or in some cases even detrimental to their work. A number of participants highlighted the importance of communicating information in local languages in order to reach the masses.



**Seven** out of **ten** participants considered English useful in communicating ideas and influencing others.



English was thought to be a useful tool for awareness and advocacy by **83** per cent of urban and **56** per cent of rural participants.



Females in rural areas were less likely to consider English useful (**52** per cent) than males (**61** per cent).