BRITISH COUNCIL

Next Generation

Pakistan

February 2023

BACKGROUND

The British Council's Next Generation research programme (NG) is a global British Council research series that aims to understand youth attitudes and aspirations, amplify youth voice and support better youth policy-making. The research takes a mixed methods and participatory approach exploring topics including: Education and skills, employment and entrepreneurism, youth voice (political and civic engagement), digital access, and climate change.

Since 2016 and as of September 2022, the British Council has conducted NG research in 19 countries (including Nigeria, Poland, Pakistan, Colombia and Germany), engaged with over 48,000 young people (including over 16,000 youth across G20 countries and over 8500 in ASEAN countries). The programme has produced 21 country reports, 3 thematic and global comparison 'what we know' briefs and 1 regional Africa report. The programme has also provided longitudinal insights and attitude changes by commissioning follow up research in Lebanon, Myanmar and Pakistan.

Next Generation Pakistan

As of 2022, Pakistan is currently the sixth most populous country globally, with two-thirds of the population below the age of 30, making it among the world's youngest nations . This 'youth bulge' is now the driving force of this 220+ million strong people. In order to understand the trajectory of this country, it is key to identify major views, beliefs and practices of young Pakistanis. We firmly believe that the time is right for a new iteration of the Next Generation research, which can build on learning from previous studies, while also gathering new insights to help recognize and understand the shifts in how young people in Pakistan view themselves, their environments and the world.

It is in this landscape that the Next Generation Pakistan study was conducted. The report comprehensively examines the perceptions of the country's young population between the ages of 16 and 34 with specific focus on their views, values, beliefs, and actions. It assesses in detail the challenges which Pakistan's youth face today, how it impacts their choices and decisions, and the efforts they are undertaking to transform and better their lives. The project aims to ignite a critical conversation on what are the needs of the country's young citizens, and how the country's institutions could transform and adapt in order to realise their potential.

Methodology

The Next Generation Pakistan is a result of a comprehensive research exercise comprising of 7 in depth interviews with young thought leaders and change makers, 18 focus group discussions with young people nationwide and 3,446 respondents surveyed via research questionnaire covering all regions of Pakistan. A Task Force of prominent experts and practitioners from a diverse variety of fields was constituted to help analyse the findings and distil key insights.

Analytical Framework

The study sought to gather the evidence and categorise them via a four-step analytical framework called the 4E Model:

- **E1: Environment**

The key external factors prevalent in Pakistan which have great impact on young citizens in terms of their present and future challenges

- **E2: Emerging Challenges**

The areas which are key pressure points for young people, and hence critical to address in the coming years

- **E3: Effects**

The manifestations from the environment and challenges which show the negative and positive impact and prospects for young Pakistanis

- **E4: Enablers**

The institutions which have a crucial role to play in the success or the failure of our next generation, and how they should intervene

YOUTH TRAJECTORY → E1: ENVIRONMENT → E2: EMERGING CHALLENGES → E3: EFFECTS ← E4: ENABLERS

'Youth Bulge in Pakistan: Bane or Boon?' PIDE. 2022. https://pide.org.pk/research/youth-bulge-in-pakistan-bane-or-boon/

TOP FINDINGS

Young Pakistanis are:
Divided on their identity

44% identify themselves as Pakistani first, **47%** identify themselves on the basis of their religion first

Optimistic about their future lives and careers
69% have a positive outlook about their future, **73%** are optimistic about their future careers

Hopeful towards Pakistan
68% wish to stay in Pakistan than move abroad, **69%** are optimistic about the future of Pakistan

Politically passive and apathetic
57% say they have little or no trust in the political system

Socially Disempowered
43% feel they can decide about their future direction, **39%** feel they can't

What do young Pakistanis prioritise:
43% - Having a family, **40%** - Financial security, 38% - Living independently, **36%** - Having a career of choice

Analytical Framework - Findings

E1: Environment
Generation Gap
Evidence shows young people differing from the views and values of their parents in several areas, including social change, lifestyle and education.

"My parents and I differ on…."	Agree	Disagree
Social and religious values	44%	43%
Views, opinions and preferences on education	45%	40%
Lifestyle choices	42%	41%
Social change	46%	37%
Career choices	37%	46%

"Compared to the lives of our parents, our lives today are…"
Little/lot worse than parents   49%
Better/lot better than parents   32%

Social Discrimination
Young people feel that discrimination is prevalent in Pakistan towards several communities.

"Discrimination happens in Pakistan on the basis of…."	Agree
Religious beliefs	67%
Gender	62%
Ethnicity	66%
Disability	66%
Political beliefs	67%

61% believe the transgender community is denied opportunities in Pakistan.

Economy
Economic issues remain among the biggest concerns for young Pakistanis

Top concerns for young Pakistanis
61%   Unemployment
61%   Poverty
26%   Economic growth
89%   Consider improving the economy as a key voting issue at the national level

Climate Change
The 2022 floods have sensitised young people to the impact of climate change.

70% are concerned with the environmental impact of climate change
56% link the 2022 floods to climate change
68% say they have an understanding of the science behind climate change
80% consider climate change as a key voting issue at the national level
56% say they can play an active role as citizens in mitigating climate change

E2: Emerging Challenges

Employment
Employment is one of the top concerns of young Pakistanis. However, job prospects, satisfaction and optimism is dependent on several factors.

Gender
The Next Generation study reflects on growing disparity on gender lines.

Female male ratio as:

Students	2:1
Employed	12:1
Self-employed/entrepreneur	7:1
Unemployed	7:1

Top employment challenges for young Pakistanis

62%	Low wage
36%	Long working hours
32%	Corruption in the workplace
29%	Unfair treatment

Career optimism
Young Pakistanis who are internet users or educated are more optimistic than those who are not.

"I am optimistic about my future career"

Internet Users	79%
Non-Internet Users	62%
Educated from private institution	75%
Educated from public institution	71%
Illiterate	58%

Education
The views of respondents on the education system of the country reflect their disappointment and frustration. The vast gap between the institutes and industry is a major source of discontentment, with millions of graduates lacking employability not just because of lack of opportunities, but because the higher education system has failed to adapt and innovate to the requirements of the current job market.

"Our education system does not provide the knowledge and skills needed for jobs in the 21st Century"   58%

"University curricula is badly outdated and lacks innovation"   55%

"Public School systems are severely dysfunctional"   52%

"Teachers are ill equipped to deal with children belonging to religious minorities and PWDs   51%

"What one factor requires the greatest improvement in our education system?"

Teaching Quality	35%
School Curriculum	14%
Fee Structure	12%

E3: Effects
Striving to find new avenues and solutions for themselves, young Pakistanis are increasingly engaging in the online space, which is now being explored to learn new skills, open doors to e-commerce and freelance work, and usher in a new era of civic and political activism. However, these effects are not all positive. The digital landscape has is also creating further wedges in society through negative and divisive engagement.

Digital Enhancement and Skill Development
Young people are increasingly preferring digital/technological skills and problem-solving skills over traditional skills like math and literacy.

Skills considered most important for employment

Problem solving skills	40%
Digital and technological skills	27%
Communication skills	25%

"Online learning can provide me with the skills needed for future work"   58%

E-Professionalism
Far from the perceived risk aversion towards the challenging and risky, young Pakistanis are opting for starting something of their own rather than being part of the traditional workforce. The online space is being seen as an important part of this process, as freelancing and e-commerce is being seen as increasingly more viable. This is also being seen as a way for young women who have been traditionally restricted from traditional sources of employment, by using e-commerce to empower themselves.

"I am in starting your own business within the next 5 years?"   49%

"In the future, the internet will be the predominant source of employment"   68%
"Online freelancing is seen as a viable path by the youth"   59%
"Women will be major beneficiaries of ecommerce"   62%
"Women can use the internet to avail new economic opportunities"   68%

Expression and Engagement
The survey results show a high level of political engagement. Internet users showed far higher levels of engagement.

Percentage who agree	Overall	Internet Users
"I regularly post on political issues on my social media accounts"	57%	66%
"Online political and civic activism will help change Pakistan"	56%	58%
"I believe that I can play an active role as a citizen in mitigating climate change"	56%	63%

Online Polarisation
The survey results suggest that young internet users in Pakistan are more divided or extreme in their political views.

Percentage who agree	Internet Users	Non-users
"The political ideology and party that I support is the only one that can save Pakistan"	65%	45%
"I do not accept the political choices and views of others if they are in conflict with mine"	57%	47%

Internet users also report being exposed to hate material that targets their communities and beliefs on social media.
61% say they have seen material that targets their community on social media
63% say they have seen content on social media that is intolerant of their political views

E4: Enablers
Institutional support is key to the next generation reaching its potential. Two enabling factors central to this process: politics/governance, and education.

Political Support
The majority of respondents feel their voices are not being heard by the country's leadership. This has left them distrusting of the political system, and has resulted in low levels of direct participation.
8% of young people believe that there has been significant action based on youth priorities
10% say they have voted in elections in the last 12 months

Educational Support
The second key area that young people identify key to their betterment is education. There is a near unanimous view among youth that education is a major enabler of social change.
87% believe that education drives change in society
82% say that education enables young people to take on challenging situations
Yet young people feel that they need more guidance from their educators, particularly on their careers.
76% say they have never received any kind of career guidance at their institute.

Recommendations
- Youth Participation in Policy and Decision Making
•   Policy makers should have access to research and data that helps them to understand their young constituents especially marginalised groups i.e. young women, young people with disabilities, young religious minorities and transgenders.
•   A three-way engagement strategy should be developed between policymakers (those with power at the state level),), institutions (delivery sectors integral to youth interests), and young people.
•   Engaging young people should be a sustained, long-term approach in policy making. The government and policy makers can reform planning and implementation mechanisms in a way that youth engagement is a permanent feature of policy and decision making.

Education
•   Introducing practical learning over academic learning is becoming increasingly important, particularly in areas like entrepreneurship. Allying with public and private incubators will also help budding entrepreneurs tremendously.
•   Enhancing learning facilities and teaching methods is key, particularly in new industries like information technology and online freelancing. Curriculum upgradation is an area where the Higher Education Commission and education ministries can play an active role.
•   Career   counselling   services   must   be

professionalized to meet the needs of the youth for growth and employment as per global standards.

- Co-curricular activities including sports, culture and performing arts, creative industries, literature and heritage awareness should be amplified within the educational institutions' offer in addition to academics and qualifications.
- Non-formal education and skill centers should be established for youth who have dropped out from mainstream education. TVET sector needs reforms to upgrade existing qualifications and add new skills, especially digital and IT.

Civil Society and Media

- CSOs and media can act as a conduit between young citizens and policymakers, particularly on social inclusion, political and civic engagement. Aiding the development of young people as advocates is important in this regard, as well as creating well organised and inclusive platforms to communicate policy priorities of young people to the implementation stage.
- Development organisations need to work with communities to create resources for families in the areas of mental health, gender and career guidance. This will help to create a more youth-centric approach to community wellbeing.
- Safe spaces for young people to seek support, advice and counselling are needed more than ever! CSOs and local stakeholders can create such spaces which are trusted by youth at large and are equipped with services needed by young people

Politics

- While youth participation has been encouraged by political parties, it continues to focus purely on their use for message propagation and amplification on social media. Young people desire more and wish to have better representation for their interests at the policy level. New forums can be created for policy input to come from young people directly.
- Avenues like the Young Parliamentarians Forum can be mobilised to engage with youth from different segments of life to enhance their inclusion and participation in political activities. This can be done through direct engagement, traditional or social media.

Health and Wellbeing

- Access to health and wellbeing services needs special attention particularly for vulnerable youth groups, young people need better awareness on such services and how to access them. Government and private sector should conduct awareness raising campaigns, outreach drives at large scale to increase accessibility and service delivery.

Gender and Social Inclusion

- An enabling environment is required to support more young women taking up professional leadership positions in public and private sectors. This environment should be supported by legislative and practical measures.
- Young people with disabilities, religious minority youth and young transgenders are a key interest group in Pakistan, their inclusion in policy making and implementation is critical. Inclusivity guidelines for policy making and implementation should be developed for policy makers and administration.
- There existing mechanisms for protection and safeguarding for vulnerable groups in Pakistan, the implementation needs to strengthened. Monitoring and accountability measures for gauging effectiveness need to be reviewed and improved so that vulnerable groups can use these mechanisms and receive protective services.

Digital

- As the internet is becoming more critical for learning and economic opportunities, it is essential that infrastructure development be prioritised so that young people from all walks of life, rural or urban, rich or poor, have access to internet facilities.
- Too much of internet usage is concentrated in major urban centres. This needs to change. Subsidising IT services for people from disadvantaged areas or creating more public internet facilities will play a significant role.
- Digital citizenship is a key subject area where all stakeholders should be involved to define an ethical code and guidelines that protect right to freedom of expression, reduce or eliminate cybercrimes, bullying and harassment and promote sensible use of internet and social media.

Young People

- New advocacy groups working on emerging issues such as climate change need to be empowered to engage young people and create a bridge between them and their representatives.
- Young people should play an active role in addressing the big challenges faced by Pakistan and themselves by engaging in dialogues, advocacy campaigns and local programmes by suggesting solutions and taking real time actions
- Young people should exercise their right to elect their parliamentary representatives by casting their vote and encourage others around them.