

HUM 117

Pakistan Studies

Society and Culture of Pakistan

Dr. Sohail Ahmad

Learning Outcomes

- Explain Pakistan's linguistic, regional and religious diversity.
- Distinguish nationality, ethnicity, language and religion.
- Recognise major literary traditions and representative writers.
- Assess how cultural diversity contributes to national identity.

Section 1: Pakistan as a Plural Society

Society, culture, diversity, population and regional identities

Key Terminologies

Society

- A society is a population whose members live within shared social institutions and relationships.
- It includes families, communities, organisations, markets and political institutions.

Culture

- Culture refers to learned patterns of values, beliefs, language, customs, arts and everyday practices.
- Culture is transmitted across generations and changes through social interaction.

Key Terminologies

Diversity

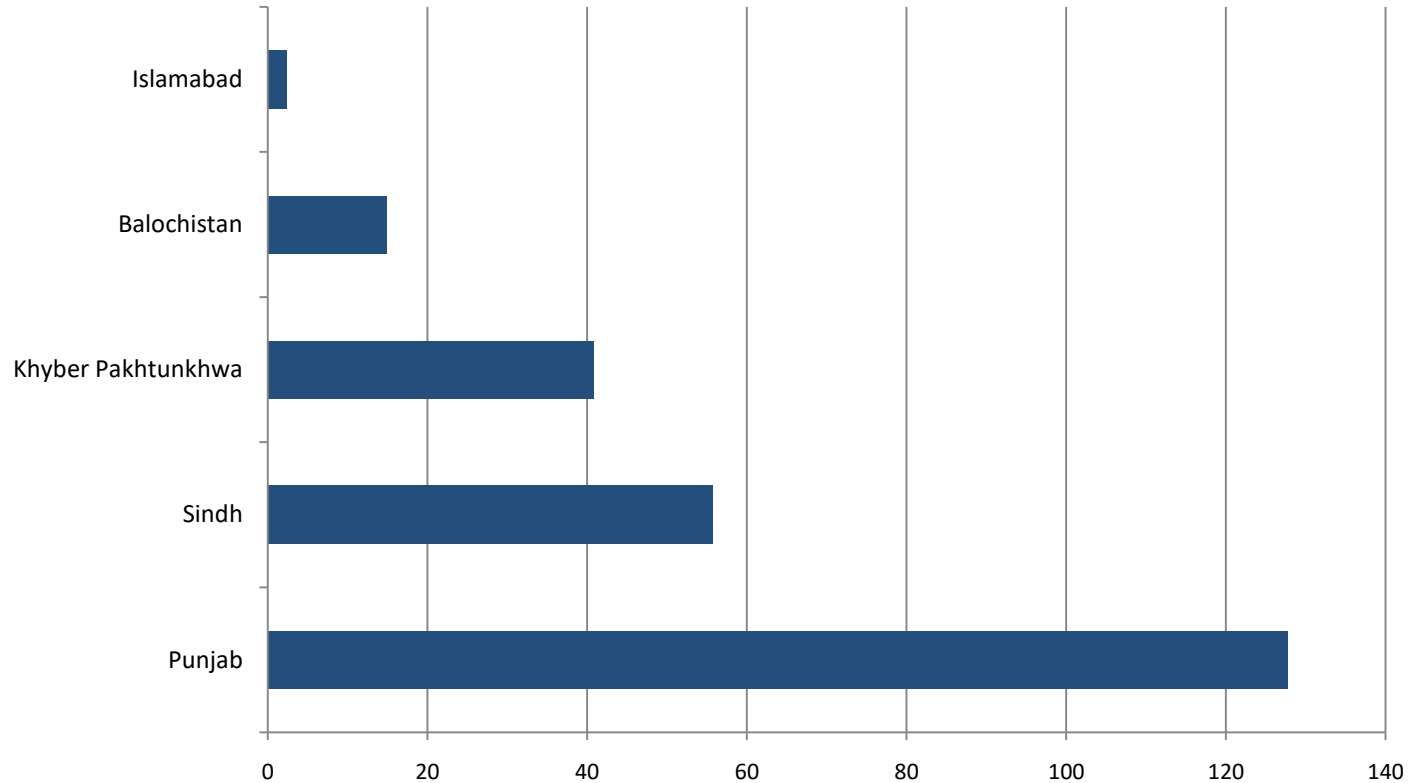
- Diversity means the presence of differences within a society.
- Differences include language, region, ethnicity, religion, occupation and social experience.

Plural society

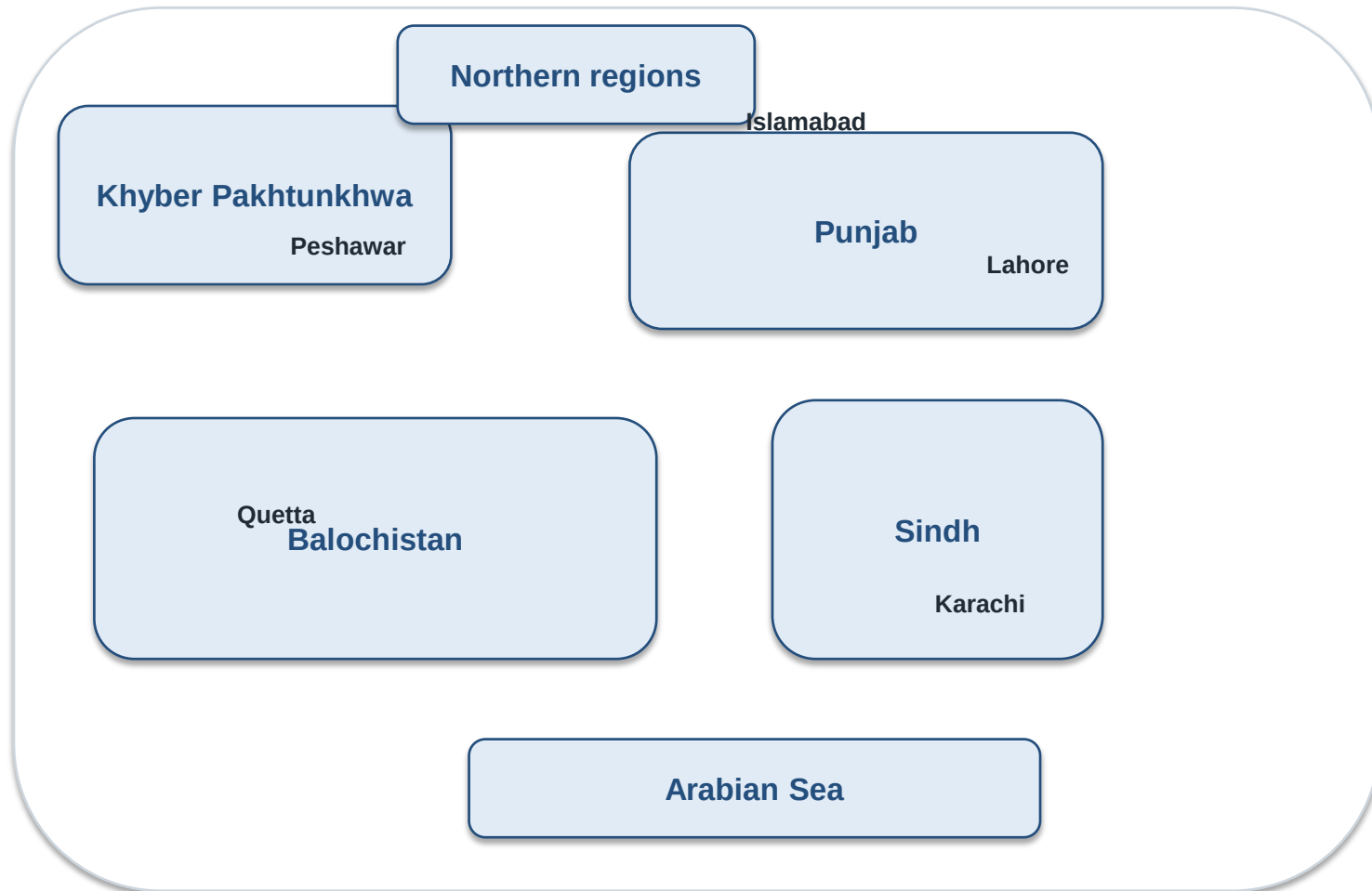
- A plural society contains multiple cultural, linguistic or religious communities.
- Pakistan's population contains several overlapping identities.

Pakistan's population by province, 2023

Population (million)



Pakistan: provincial and regional diversity



Schematic map for teaching; provincial positions and shapes are simplified.

Identity: four terms

Nationality

- Membership of a political community or state.
- A Pakistani citizen belongs to Pakistan's national political community.

Ethnicity

- A sense of shared ancestry, history, culture or community.
- Ethnic identity and nationality are not the same thing.

Identity: language and religion

Language

- A system used for communication and cultural expression.
- One person can speak several languages.

Religion

- A system of faith, beliefs and religious practices.
- Religious identity is distinct from nationality and language.

Urbanisation and Cultural Interaction

- Urbanisation means the growth of towns and cities and the increasing share of people living in urban areas.
- Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad-Rawalpindi and Peshawar bring together people from different regions.
- Internal migration creates multilingual workplaces, mixed neighbourhoods and new cultural forms.
- Migration means movement of people from one place to another for work, education, family, security or other reasons.

Section 1: Key Takeaways

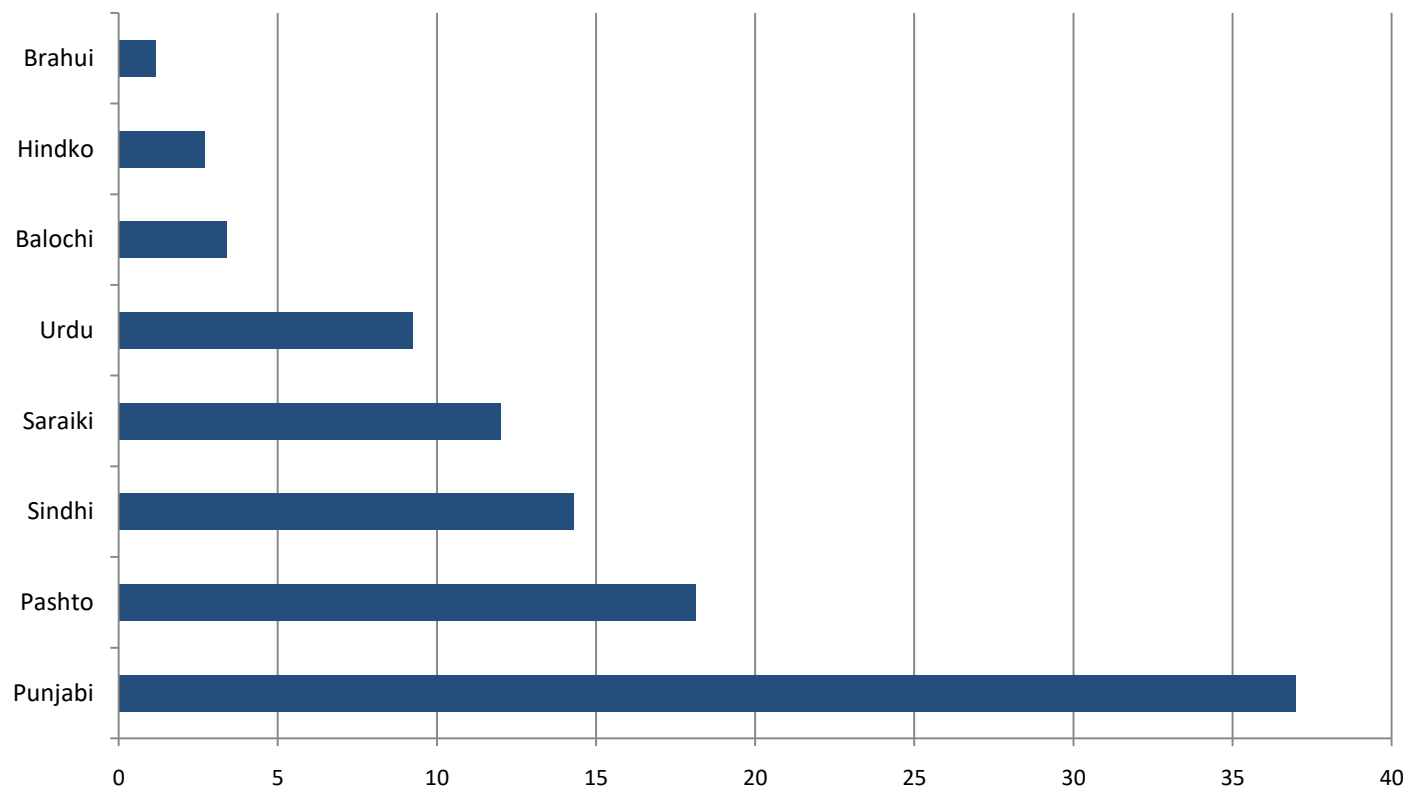
- Pakistan is a plural society with multiple identities.
- Regional and linguistic diversity is a structural feature of Pakistani society.
- Nationality, ethnicity, language and religion describe different aspects of identity.
- National integration does not require cultural uniformity.

Section 2: Languages of Pakistan

Mother tongues, Urdu, English and regional languages

Pakistan's major mother tongues, 2023

Share (%)



Key Terminologies

Mother tongue

- The language identified by a person or household as the first or home language.
- It is a census category, not a complete measure of every language a person speaks.

Multilingualism

- The use of more than one language by an individual or community.
- It is common in education, employment, trade and urban life.

Urdu and English

Link language

- A language used to communicate across groups with different first languages.
- Urdu has a major national link-language role in Pakistan.

English

- English has an important role in higher education, law, administration, business and international communication.
- Its role differs from that of a mother tongue.

Regional Languages and Cultural Memory

- Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, Brahui, Saraiki and Hindko carry regional histories and identities.
- Shina, Balti, Kashmiri, Khowar, Burushaski, Kalasha, Kohistani and other languages represent further linguistic diversity.
- Language transmits poetry, folklore, oral history, social memory and local knowledge.
- The 2023 Census separately reports several smaller languages, increasing their statistical visibility.

Language Policy: Integration and Preservation

- A national link language supports communication across linguistic communities.
- Regional-language education and cultural programmes support preservation.
- Preservation means maintaining a language's use, transmission and literary or cultural traditions.
- A multilingual society does not require every citizen to have the same mother tongue.

Section 2: Key Takeaways

- Punjabi is the largest reported mother tongue in the 2023 Census.
- Urdu has a national link-language role despite being the mother tongue of a smaller share of the population.
- English remains important in formal and international domains.
- Regional and smaller languages are essential parts of Pakistan's cultural heritage.

Section 3: Literature and Intellectual Traditions

A multilingual literary heritage

What is a Literary Tradition?

- A literary tradition is a body of poetry, fiction, drama, criticism, oral literature and other written or performed works transmitted within a language or cultural community.
- Literature records social experiences and ideas that are not always visible in official political histories.
- Pakistan has literary traditions in Urdu and numerous regional languages.

Major Urdu Literary Figures

- Muhammad Iqbal: philosophical poetry in Urdu and Persian and a major figure in Muslim intellectual thought.
- Faiz Ahmad Faiz: a major modern Urdu poet whose work addressed social and political themes.
- Saadat Hasan Manto: short fiction dealing with social realities, Partition and human vulnerability.
- Qurratulain Hyder: major Urdu fiction writer known for historically wide-ranging narratives.

Regional Literary Traditions

- Punjabi: Bulleh Shah, Shah Hussain and Waris Shah.
- Sindhi: Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai and Sachal Sarmast.
- Pashto: Khushal Khan Khattak and Rahman Baba.
- Balochi and Brahui: strong oral, poetic and historical traditions.
- Other literary traditions include Hindko, Shina, Balti, Kashmiri and Saraiki.

A Simplified Literary Timeline

Waris Shah
Punjabi
18th c.

**Shah Abdul
Latif Bhattai**
Sindhi
18th c.

**Khushal
Khan
Khattak**
Pashto
17th c.

Iqbal
Urdu/Persian
20th c.

Faiz
Urdu
20th c.



Why Literature Matters in Pakistan Studies

- Literature offers evidence about social attitudes, emotions and lived experience.
- Themes include love, religion, migration, gender, class, rural life, colonialism, Partition and identity.
- Literary texts complement political and institutional histories.
- Reading writers in historical context supports both appreciation and critical academic study.

Section 3: Key Takeaways

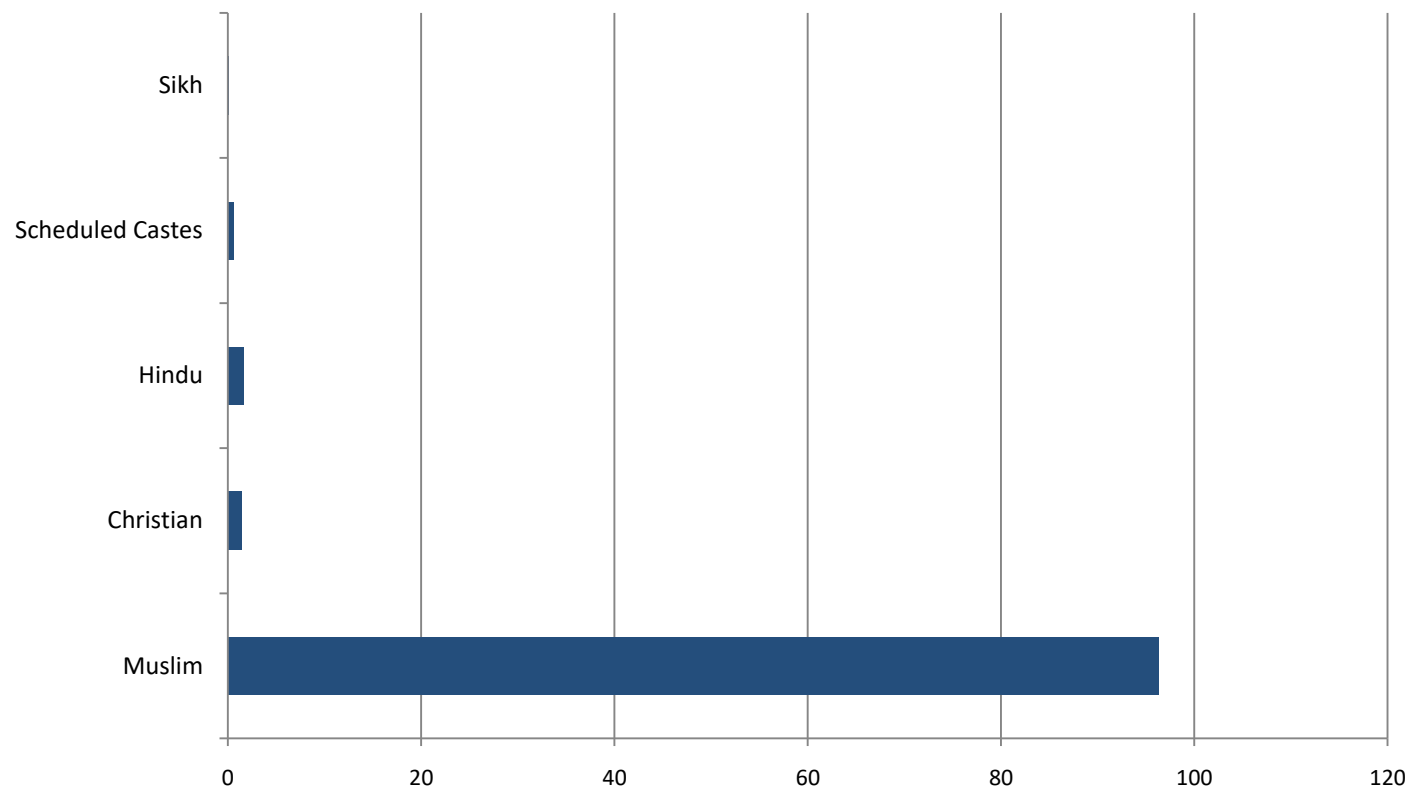
- Pakistan's literary heritage is multilingual.
- Regional traditions are part of the country's wider intellectual history.
- Literature provides a record of social experience across centuries.
- National cultural identity is strengthened by recognising the breadth of literary traditions.

Section 4: Religion and Everyday Culture

Religion, festivals, food, dress, music and heritage

Religion in Pakistan: 2023 Census

Share (%)



Religious Diversity: Key Terms

- Religious diversity means the presence of more than one religious community within a society.
- A religious majority is the largest religious population group.
- A religious minority is a smaller religious community within the state.
- The 2023 Census records Muslims as 96.35 per cent of the enumerated population in its religion table.
- The same table records Christians, Hindus, Scheduled Castes, Sikhs, Ahmadis, Parsis and other categories.

Culture in Everyday Life

Festival

- A recurring social or religious celebration.
- Examples include Eid celebrations, Urs traditions and regional festivals.

Cultural heritage

- Practices, expressions, knowledge and skills transmitted across generations.
- Heritage includes music, crafts, stories, food practices, dress and performance.

Examples of Pakistani Cultural Heritage

- Truck art combines visual design, craft skills and popular expression.
- Qawwali is a major musical and devotional tradition.
- Ghazal is an established poetic and musical form.
- Shandur polo reflects a distinctive northern sporting tradition.
- Regional dance, embroidery, folk tales and traditional food practices express local identities.

Culture and Change

Cultural transmission

- The process through which practices, values, skills and knowledge pass between generations or communities.
- Families, schools, religious institutions, markets and media all contribute.

Cultural change

- Changes in practices and meanings over time.
- Urbanisation, migration, media and global communication introduce new influences.

Section 4: Key Takeaways

- Pakistan has a Muslim majority alongside constitutionally recognised religious communities.
- Cultural life includes religious practices, regional traditions and minority-community heritage.
- Food, dress, music, sport and crafts show culture in everyday life.
- Culture changes through migration, urbanisation and communication while traditions continue.

Section 5: Diversity, Integration & National Identity

How multiple identities coexist within one state

National Integration: Key Terminology

- National integration means building social and political connections among citizens across regional, linguistic and cultural differences.
- Integration does not mean eliminating regional identities.
- It depends on equal citizenship, common institutions, social cooperation and interaction across regions.

Identity as Layers of Belonging

Pakistani identity

Province / region

Language

Local community

Institutions that Connect Citizens

- The Constitution and common citizenship provide a shared legal framework.
- Education systems and universities bring people from different regions into common institutions.
- Public administration and national markets connect communities.
- Media spreads cultural forms across provincial boundaries.
- Internal migration creates everyday interaction among linguistic and regional communities.

Diversity and National Unity

- Cultural diversity and national unity are compatible.
- A shared Pakistani identity does not require cultural sameness.
- Provincial and linguistic identities provide legitimate forms of belonging.
- Equal citizenship and constitutional institutions provide common ground.
- National identity becomes more resilient when identities are understood as overlapping layers of belonging.

Final Synthesis

- Pakistan is a plural society with linguistic, regional, religious and cultural diversity.
- The 2023 Census provides clear evidence of linguistic and demographic pluralism.
- Urdu supports national communication while regional languages preserve local heritage.
- Literature provides a multilingual record of social and intellectual experience.
- National integration is strengthened through equal citizenship, constitutional institutions, interprovincial interaction and respect for cultural heritage.

Selected Sources

- Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023 Census, population, language and religion tables.
- Library of Congress, classification and resources on Pakistani literature.
- UNESCO, Intangible Cultural Heritage resources relating to Pakistan.
- Lecture 3 source handout: Society and Culture of Pakistan: Socio-Cultural Diversity, Languages and Literature.