

BASICS Notes

Desire to Live in Pakistan: Stay or Leave?

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In our daily lives, we often hear people say, “things are so bad in Pakistan, I wish I could leave”. On the contrary, we also hear, “I can never ever think of leaving Pakistan, no matter what”. While there is almost a consensus among the population that the country is not going the way it should have been,¹ the response to it is varied.

To gauge the desire of the people to stay in or leave the country, the PIDE BASICS Survey² asks the respondents if they were given a chance to leave Pakistan would they like to do it, and if yes, the reason(s) for it. We see this sentiment in the four provinces and the three territories, and across regions, sex, age, and education and income levels.

WANT OUT

Let us now see how people responded when they were asked about their desire to leave the country if they were offered such an opportunity.

Desire by Province, Territory and Region

Figure 1 shows the desire to leave Pakistan across the four provinces and the three territories. We see that 37 percent of the total population would like to leave the country if they are given an opportunity to do so. The figure shows:

- Slightly more people in urban Pakistan (40 percent) than in rural Pakistan (36 percent) desire to leave the country.
- Among the four provinces, the desire to leave the country is highest in Balochistan (42 percent), followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Sindh. The desire is lowest in Punjab but not by much.
- Among the three territories, people in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) have the highest proportion (44 percent) of those wanting to leave the country, followed by Gilgit Baltistan (GB).

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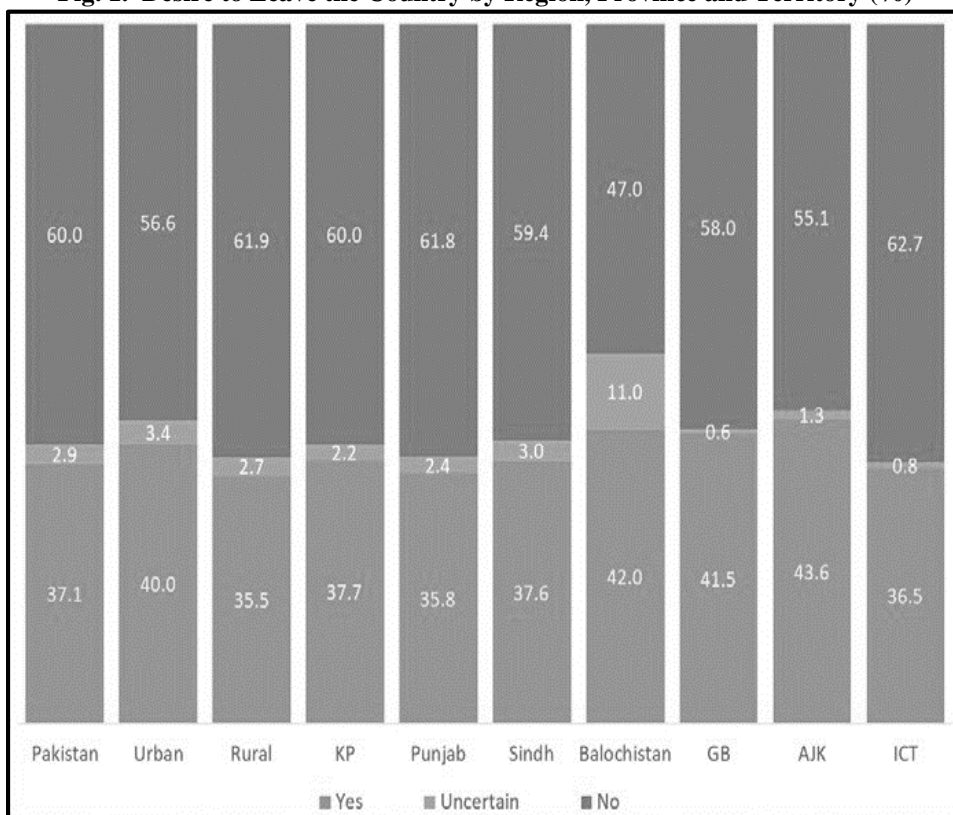
Author's Note: Basics Notes, Number 4, shows that a major proportion of Pakistanis, given a chance, would like to leave the country. Search for better income notwithstanding, is not the level of social and civic engagement binding people to each other and strengthening the community?

¹The question was asked in the PIDE BASICS Survey, and a forthcoming BASICS Note will talk about it.

²See BASICS Note 1 for details about the survey sample and methodology used.

- Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) has the lowest proportion of those wanting to leave the country across all administrative categories.
- Balochistan has not just the lowest number (47 percent) of those wanting to stay in the country but also the largest proportion of those who are ambivalent, expressed by the 11 percent who are uncertain about whether they want to leave the country or stay on.

Fig. 1. Desire to Leave the Country by Region, Province and Territory (%)



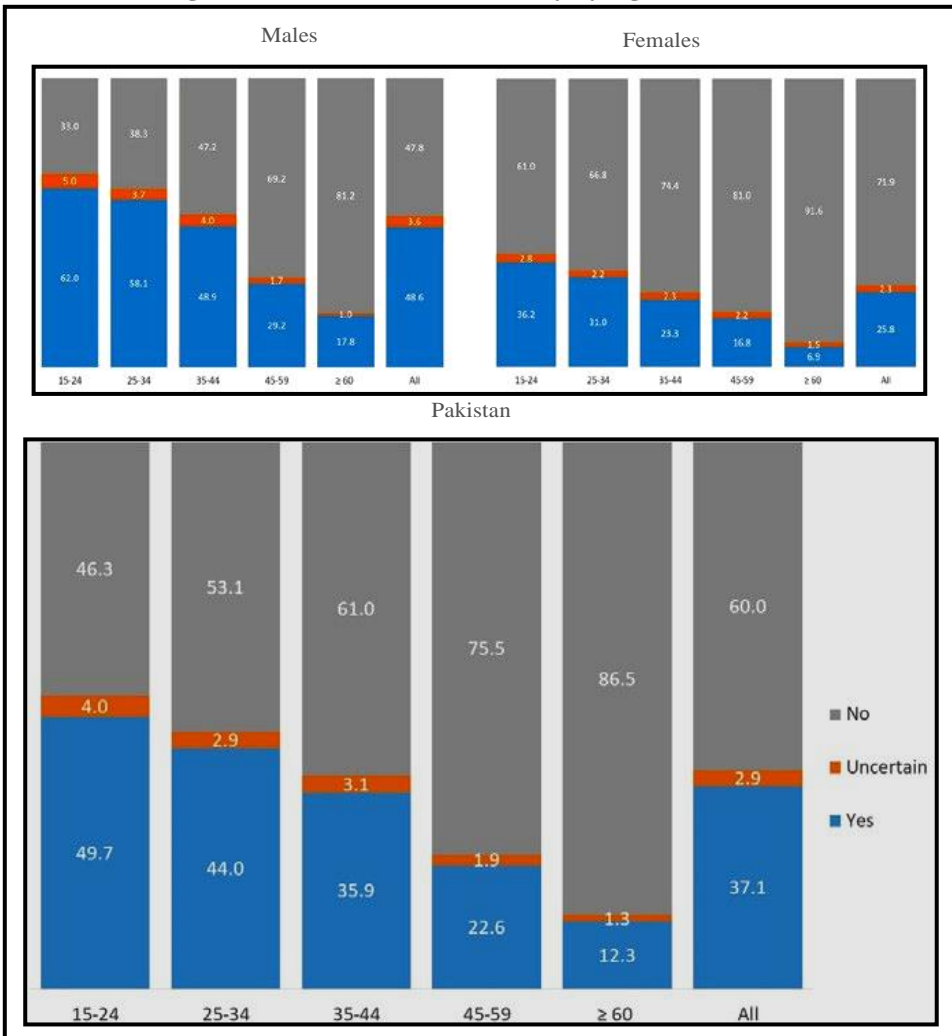
Source: Author's estimation using the PIDE BASICS Survey dataset.

Desire by Age and Sex

We saw in BASICS Note Number 3 how strongly age and sex affect the way people conceptualised their identity. We find that the desire to leave the country is even more strongly linked to a person's age and sex, and Figure 2 shows this striking pattern. The desire to leave the country:

- Is much higher for males than females, across all age groups without any exception.
- Is the strongest among the youngest age group (15-24-year-olds) males, with a huge 62 percent wanting to leave the country.
- Dims with age for both males and females.

Fig. 2. Desire to Leave the Country by Age and Sex (%)

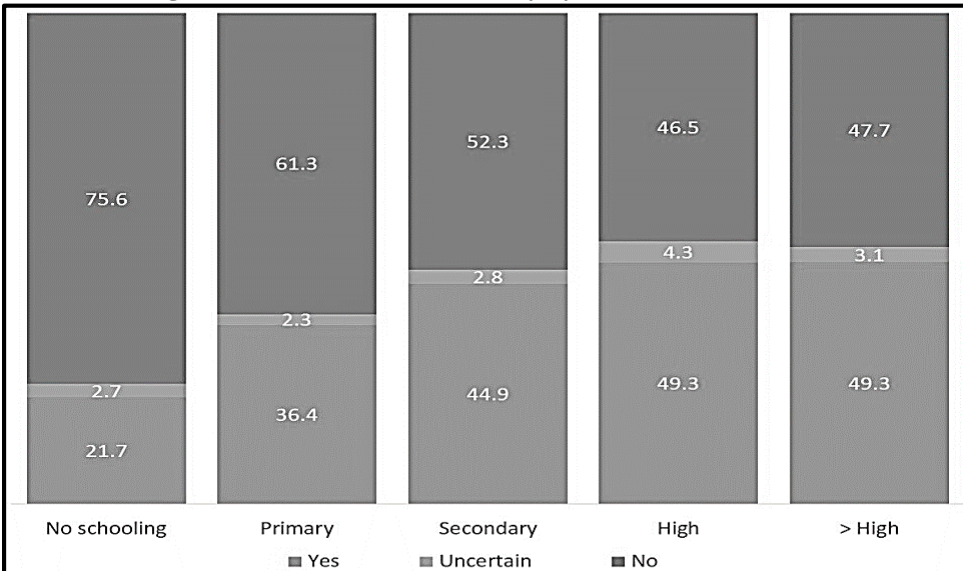


Source: Author’s estimation using the PIDE BASICS Survey dataset.

Desire by Education Level

Education, as mentioned in the previous BASICS Notes as well, is considered a variable that can have far-reaching consequences for most aspects of a human’s life. Figure 3 shows that education does influence the desire, or lack of it, to leave the country but after a certain level of education, the trend stagnates. It can be observed in Figure 3 that:

- The desire to leave the country is the weakest among those who have never been to school (22 percent).
- Those wanting to leave the country increase with increasing level of education but the increase is not proportionate to the level of education achieved. The rates stagnate after secondary schooling.

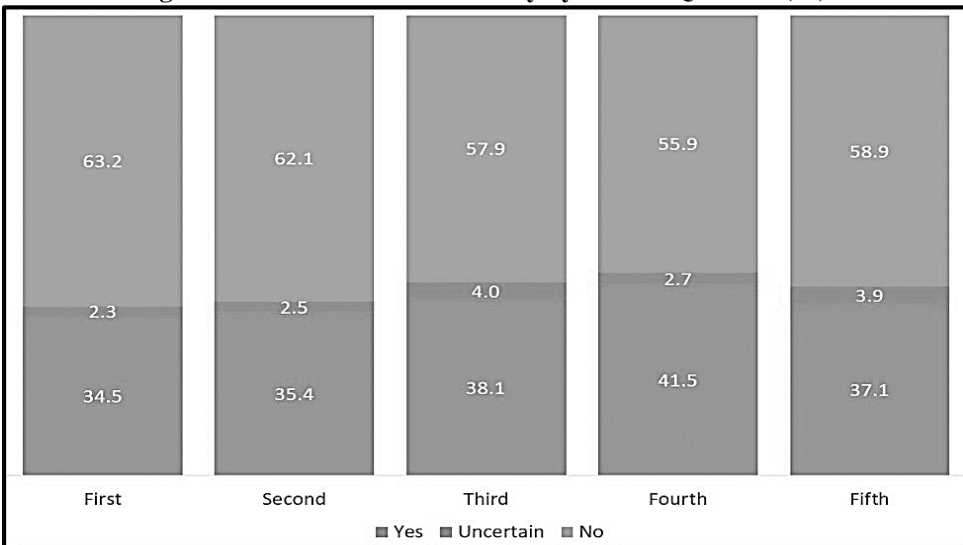
Fig. 3. Desire to Leave the Country by Education Level (%)

Source: Author's estimation using the PIDE BASICS Survey dataset.

Desire by Income Level

Are those with less income more likely to wish for leaving the country? The answer from the PIDE BASICS Survey says, not really! Looking at the income quintiles and the proportion wanting to leave the country, we see in Figure 4:

- The desire increases with increasing income but not by any drastic proportions.
- After the fourth quintile (42 percent), the desire dips again (37 percent).

Fig. 4. Desire to Leave the Country by Income Quintiles (%)

Source: Author's estimation using the PIDE BASICS Survey dataset.

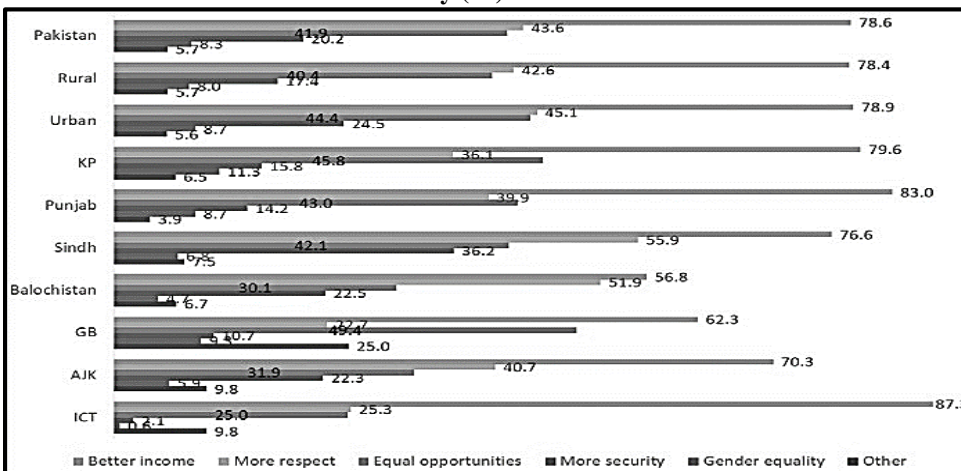
WHY WANT OUT?

Why do people want to leave if they want to leave? Leaving one’s home is not an easy option, but if people desire to do so there have to be some very strong reason(s) behind it. The PIDE BASICS Survey look into these reasons and find economic reasons to be the most dominant one (see Figure 5). Search for equal opportunities and more respect comes out to be the next two important reasons. Looking for gender equality and more security also feature among the major reasons for the desire to leave the country.

Looking at the trends across regions, provinces and territories we see some very interesting reasons reported for the wish to leave the country, including:

- Looking for more income and equal/better all-around opportunities was not surprising but moving out to gain more respect was an unexpected response. At the national level, it is the second most reported reason (44 percent) for the desire to leave the country.
- Not much difference is found between urban and rural Pakistan, defying yet again the notion that people in these two regions are very different.
- Across the provinces and regions, we see quite different reasons spurring the desire to leave the country. The monetary factor (better income) is the major factor for all, but in Sindh and Balochistan, the desire for more respect outweighs the urge for equal opportunities.
- Moving out for more security was reported the most in Sindh, followed by Balochistan and AJK.
- Gender equality as a reason to desire moving out of the country was reported the most in KP. This links to the biological basis for identity as a major source reported by the people of the province, as shown in BASICS Note Number 3.
- GB has a large proportion giving ‘other’ reasons, and it mainly comprised of reasons linked to getting better/higher education.

Fig. 6. Reasons for the Desire to Leave the Country by Region, Province & Territory (%)

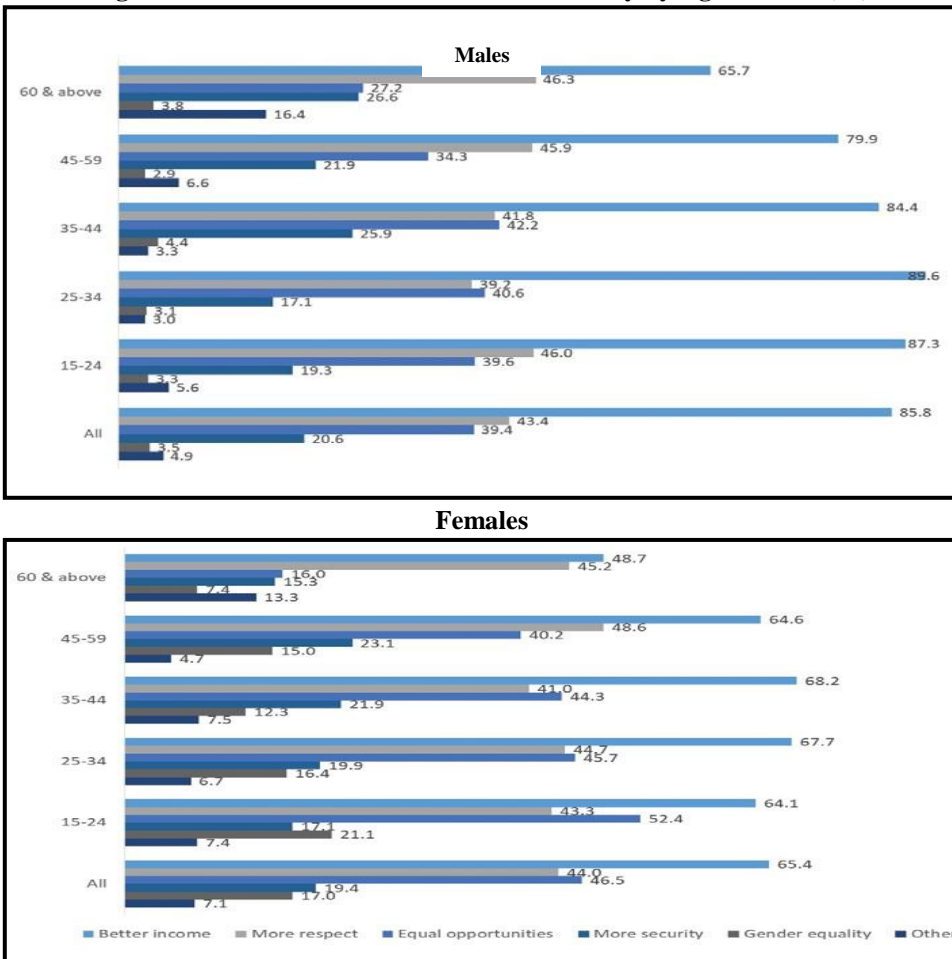


Source: Author’s estimation using the PIDE BASICS Survey dataset.

In the discussion above we saw the younger population, especially young males, to be overwhelmingly inclined towards leaving the country. Figure 7 shows the reasons for this desire disaggregated by age and sex, and we observe:

- Better income remains the top reason for both males and females, of all ages but the rates are much higher for the former (above 80 percent) than the latter (\pm 65 percent).
- Gender equality as a pull factor to other countries is higher for females than males, and more so for younger females than older ones.
- The idea that moving overseas would bring in more respect can be seen for both sexes across all age categories.
- ‘Other’ reasons become substantial at the oldest age category for both the sexes, and analysis of the survey data shows that it is mainly to be with children residing overseas.

Fig. 8. Reasons for the Desire to Leave Country by Age and Sex (%)



Source: Author’s estimation using the PIDE BASICS Survey dataset.