



Contemporary Media Use in Pakistan

Pakistan remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists, who face threats and intimidation daily from various sources. Reporters without Borders' 2014 World Press Freedom Index ranks Pakistan 158 out of 180, calling it "the world's deadliest country for media personnel."

This reflects severe restrictions on media freedom in the country -- including widespread self-censorship among domestic outlets, particularly regarding coverage of the government's security or intelligence services, or the powerful nongovernment militias. Journalists are especially limited in their coverage of events in Pakistan's Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KPK), as access is restricted by the security services and any reporting is subject to censorship.

Pakistanis' News Habits

Just 18.1% of Pakistanis say they follow current events about the country "a lot," but almost half (47.7%) follow current events "somewhat." About one-third report being less attentive, following current events "very little" (29.6%) or "not at all" (4.6%). Results trend upward with education level; 30.0% of those with an intermediate education or more say they follow current events a lot.

As in many predominantly Muslim countries, interest in media coverage of religious issues is widespread in Pakistan; 78.4% of adults are very or somewhat interested in the topic, with little variation by gender or education. Pakistanis also tend to be attracted to news about domestic politics (67.6%), with men and better-educated residents being most likely to express interest. At least six in 10 Pakistanis overall are interested in three topics with direct relevance to their daily lives: health and healthcare (64.6%), education (60.7%) and human rights (59.8%). Science, technology and IT issues are least likely to elicit interest, though young adults are somewhat more likely than those 25 and older to be interested in these topics.

Pakistanis were also asked about their interest in news about different geographic regions. As with adults in many countries, Pakistanis tend to be relatively insular,

with domestic news and international perspectives on events in Pakistan the only topics in which a majority are very or somewhat interested (84.1% and 61.7%, respectively). About one-third (32.1%) are interested in general international news, though that figure rises to half (49.1%) among those with an intermediate education or higher. Relatively few Pakistanis are interested in news about the U.S. (14.9%), UK (12.2%) or Europe (11.4%).

Overall, 32.2% of Pakistani adults report discussing or sharing news with family or friends weekly or more, while 22.5% say they never do so. Like news consumption, news sharing trends upward with Pakistanis' education level; 28.0% of those with no formal education share news at least weekly vs. 40.6% of those with an intermediate education or more.

Television

Pakistan has only two terrestrial television options: a bouquet of PTV channels under the state-owned Pakistan Broadcasting Company and the semi-private ATV. However, the government liberalized the country's broadcast sector in 2002, offering official licenses for private cable and satellite channels for the first time. Since then, those markets have boomed — first and most prominently in urban areas, but increasingly in rural Pakistan as well.

Television is the dominant media platform in Pakistan, with more than three-fourths of adults (76.2%) watching weekly. Though this figure is higher in urban (89.3%) than rural (69.3%) areas, rural Pakistanis' TV use has risen significantly from 56.4% within the past week in 2011. Television use also increases substantially with Pakistanis' education level.

In 2014, cable and satellite services continue to expand in Pakistan, but remain limited geographically. Cable is the most common form of TV service in urban areas of Sindh, Punjab, and Baluchistan (in urban KPK, it is about as common as use of terrestrial antennas). However, in most of rural Pakistan satellite services and/or use of terrestrial antennas remain more common. Satellite TV is the dominant means of reception among rural TV owners in Baluchistan province (63.6%), but it is also relatively common among rural residents of the Sindh (38.5%) and KPK (31.0%) provinces.

Radio

Pakistan's liberalized its radio market in 2002 along with its satellite and cable TV markets. There are now more than 130 commercial radio stations licensed throughout the country, in addition to the 31 radio stations operated by state-owned broadcaster Radio Pakistan. Most radio stations focus on entertainment programming, given that political news and commentary is still restricted to government channels or international broadcasters such as VOA and the BBC.

Currently about one in six Pakistanis (16.5%) listen to the radio at least weekly. Notably, young Pakistani adults are most likely to listen to the radio weekly or more – 21.2% of those age 15 to 24 do so, with weekly listening trending downward by age group to just 10.4% among those 55 and older.

More than two-thirds of weekly radio listeners (71.2%) say they tune in via the FM waveband, though AM use is also relatively common at 29.7%. About one in eight weekly listeners (13.3%) report using shortwave radio.

Reflecting the rapid spread of feature phones equipped with FM radio receivers in Pakistan, the country's weekly radio listeners are now more likely to say they've tuned in using their mobile phones (61.9%) than to say they've listened via a conventional radio receiver (49.3%). This helps explain why overall radio use is now most common among young Pakistanis, who are more likely than their elders to say they've used their phones to listen to the radio in the past week.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are becoming ubiquitous in Pakistan, with 91.1% of adults saying they have one in their household and with little difference between urban and rural residents.

More than half of Pakistani adults (55.5%) say they have their own mobile phone. There is a dramatic difference in ownership rates between men (84.7%) and women (24.3%) suggesting gender norms may be a factor slowing the spread of mobile in the country. At the same time, an additional 61.4% of women report access to a mobile phone. The gender gap is also related to the finding that mobile phone ownership trends sharply upward with Pakistanis' education level; in the current study, most women (59.5%) have no formal education, vs. just 22.9% of men.

Most mobile owners use only the basic functions of making phone calls (98.2%) and sending or receiving SMS text messages (75.0%). All other functions remain much less common, though in most cases they are on the rise. About one in seven mobile owners (13.7%) say

they've used their phones to listen to the radio in the previous week, while 11.5% have used them to go online, and 9.5% more specifically to access social networking sites.

Internet and Social Media

Computers and household Internet access remain relatively rare at 15.8% and 8.7% of Pakistani households, respectively.

Only 8.4% of Pakistanis say they have gone online in the past week. Internet use is most common among men, young Pakistanis, and urban residents. Pakistanis with an intermediate education or more are particularly likely to be weekly Internet users (37.1%).

Most of Pakistan's weekly Internet users (n=242) say they go online at home (72.3%) rather than at work (15.5%), Internet cafes (4.4%) or school (3.9%). Weekly Internet users are more likely to say they have accessed the Internet on their phones in the past seven days (45.1%) rather than on a desktop computer (37.4%) or laptop computer (13.8%). Almost all (94.9%) past-week Internet users access online content in English, but more than two in three (68.8%) also say they go online in Urdu. Relatively few, 5.6%, access Internet content in Pashto.

The percentage of Pakistanis using social networks in the past week (8.5%) is similar to the proportion who used the Internet at all during that time.

Methodology

The target population for this study was the civilian, non-institutionalized adult (aged 15 and older) population living in four provinces of Pakistan: Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), and Baluchistan. The survey is representative of the views and opinions of approximately 114,134,000 people, representing 96.96% of the total population and excluding 3.04% population of Gilgit Baltistan and FATA Pakistani adults. Also of note, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) was not covered, for a total of 5% of the population excluded from the survey.

The survey consists of 3,000 face-to-face interviews with members of the target population. To accommodate more detailed analysis in Baluchistan, the sample includes a higher proportion of residents from that province than is found in the population. Interviews were conducted from June 3-30, 2014.

Contact

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