Technical Note:
Pakistan Child Poverty
National and Subnational Trends

unicef
for every child

Prepared by

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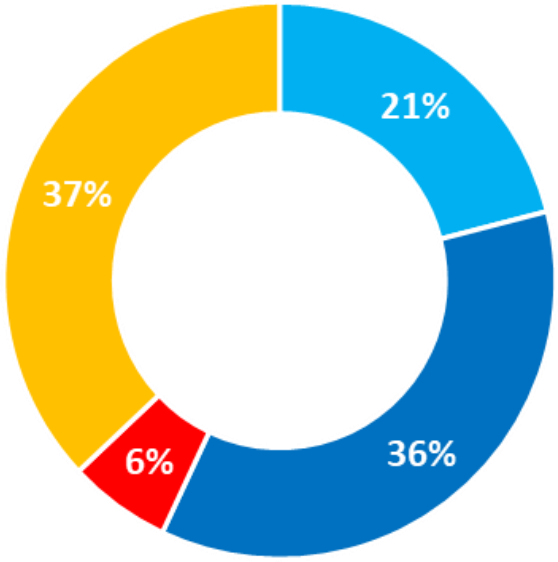
Acronyms and abbreviations

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
NNS	National Nutrition Survey
PCO	Pakistan Country Office
PSLM	Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

RESULTS HIGHLIGHTS

EVERY CHILD HAS AN EQUITABLE CHANCE IN LIFE

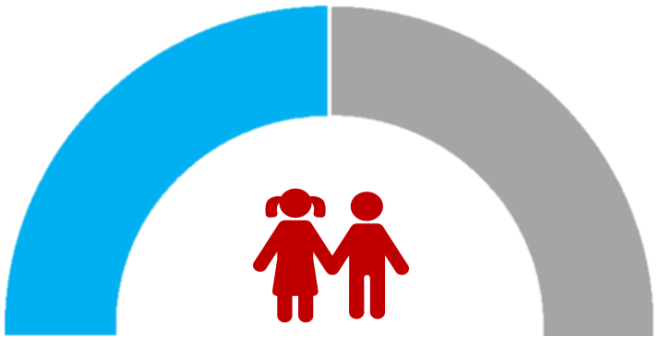


In 2019 compared to 2014, there is a reduction both in rural and urban child poverty

More than half of children suffering at least one severe deprivation are outside monetary poor households

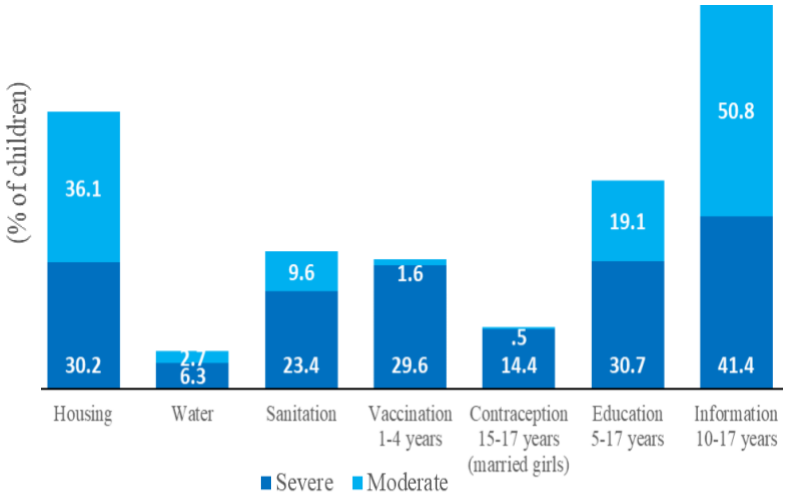
Children in Balochistan suffer the most severe deprivations

9 in 10 children suffer at least one moderate deprivation

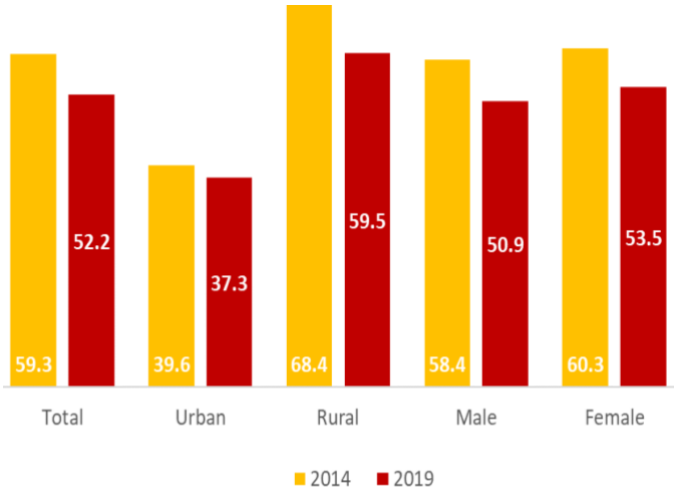


About half of the children suffer at least one severe deprivation in at least one dimension

Access to information devices and the internet is key for children's development



In recent years, gender disparities have marginally declined



1. Background

In recent decades, there has been a growing consensus that children experience poverty in ways that are different from adults. Children's needs (in terms of schooling, nutrition, health care, etc.) are different and the impacts (often irreversible) last a lifetime. Children's needs also change rapidly: a three-year-old's needs are quite different from those of an eight-year-old. This impacts heavily on the way poverty is experienced by children, even among children within the same household. Globally, about 1 billion children are multidimensionally poor, meaning they lack necessities as basic as nutrition or clean water. An additional 150 million children have been plunged into multidimensional poverty due to COVID-19.[1] Growing up in poverty can hinder children's physical, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive development, and fuels the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

Pakistan is a home to 96 million children[2]. At the international level, Pakistani children are entitled to the rights enshrined in international conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1990), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1996), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2011). In addition, Pakistan's constitution guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens (Articles 8–38). Article 25A ensures free, compulsory education to all children between the ages of five and 16. Article 38D requires that the State provide the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all citizens, irrespective of sex, caste, creed, or race, as are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, sickness, or unemployment. In spite of the fact that the constitution does not provide a definition of the child, legislators use Article 25A as reference.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG Target 1.2.2, calls for reducing, by 2030, multidimensional poverty for "men, women, and children", building a world in which all children have what they need to survive, thrive, and fulfil their potential. The focus of multidimensional poverty is to consider deprivations across many aspects of a child's life, focusing on children experiencing multiple deprivations simultaneously. This emphasis on the most deprived children can point to particular deprivations, say education or health, which may be driving multidimensional poverty, or if there are some deprivations that frequently overlap, leading to a focus on particular areas and cross-sectoral collaboration. As part of this commitment, UNICEF is working closely with the government to promote the understanding of poverty as multidimensional deprivations. Currently poverty measures, such as the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), that consider the household as the unit of analysis, represent a

[1] Save the Children and UNICEF. 2021. *Child poverty*. [online] Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/social-policy/child-poverty> [Accessed 20 July 2021].
[2] Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), 2017. *Summary Results of 6th Population and Housing Census, Islamabad*: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Statistics, Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

challenge when capturing intrahousehold inequalities experienced by girls and/or boys – and, consequently, child poverty.

According to recent recommendations from UNICEF's New York Headquarters and the Regional Office (ROSA), PCO worked on:

1. Using existing MICS data (In spite of the fact that it does not cover 100% of the population) to estimate child poverty for "internal" purposes/discussions; and,
2. Combining household survey data with other sources of information in order to obtain sub-national estimates and trends of child poverty at the provincial and district levels.

The **first suggestion** has already been addressed by PCO by developing a data matrix that will include calculations, analysis and data from MICS' existing results as of July and August 2021. These results will inform the development of PCO's Country Programme. The **second suggestion** was to work in partnership with Data and Analytics on a **child poverty estimation.**

Therefore, PCO and ROSA and NYHQs partnered for the development of a deprivation map to produce a multidimensional picture of children in poverty in Pakistan, looking at child poverty beyond an income-consumption lens. Analysing the situation of children in poor households is important and complementary (via cross-tabulation) to poverty suffered by individual girls and boys. It is important to go beyond identifying children living in monetary and/or multidimensionally poor households and measure children who are multidimensionally deprived of material resources at an individual level (regardless of the status of the household in which they live). This can ensure children who may be living in multidimensional poverty but not in (monetary or multidimensional) poor households are not missed.

1.1 Measuring child poverty

Child poverty and deprivation are different from poverty among adults (UNICEF et al, 2017). The main reason is that children's needs are different—from nutrition to schooling to health care. Their hopes, their worries, their dreams, and their expectations are different. Moreover, they depend on adults for support, care, and satisfaction of their needs. One of the most salient differences is that children should not work to earn a living; consequently, the main thrust of child poverty measurement is not on income/consumption shortfall.

Conceptually, and prior to delving into measurement issues, Child poverty is defined as[3],

> "*The child who lacks public and/or private material resources to realize the rights constitutive of poverty is considered poor. Rights constitutive of poverty are those rights that require, directly and fundamentally, material resources (publicly or privately provided) for their continued realization*."

Rationale

This definition of child poverty is independent of income. Thus, it is not that child poverty is a proxy, a substitute, a marker, a cause, or a consequence of lack of income. Actually, child poverty could be a cause and/or a consequence of monetary poverty. Just as monetary poverty could be a cause and/or consequence of child poverty.

The important issue is that child poverty is not measured because it could be a cause or a consequence of monetary poverty. We measure it because it is important in and of itself, and it directly affects children today (independently of any possible causal relationship with their parents' income). The deprivation of these rights is what makes the child poor.

Moreover, the concept of constitutive rights is important. It helps in establishing what is included in the measurement. The rights that are assessed become dimensions in the estimate. The test that is decisive in determining the inclusion of a dimension is to ask if the realization of the right depends crucially on the utilization of material resources (i.e., beyond monetary). Thus, housing, sanitation, and education, which require material resources, are included but privacy, religious freedom, or happiness are not. Besides including human rights, this approach is congruent with everyday language, the definition of poverty in a dictionary, and the capabilities, basic needs, and other long-standing criteria to measure poverty.

Principles

Four basic principles guide the estimates of child poverty. First, they should measure the individual child's condition, not a disaggregation of a household measure. Second, the dimensions of the metric are rights constitutive of poverty. Third, all rights are equally important; thus, all dimensions are equally weighted. Finally, besides the prevalence of poverty, it is important to measure how poor children are, in particular the poorest of the poor.

[3] Based on (OHCHR 2004 and 2006)

1.2 Purpose

This study makes ground-breaking efforts in producing evidence on the dimensions of deprivation of children living in poverty or vulnerable to it, what is driving their poverty, and where there is opportunity to make progress.

The primary purpose of this *internal exercise* is to generate strong and robust evidence to understand, measure, and analyse child poverty in Pakistan, with reference to both girls and boys differentially. The findings will also be used to inform discussions and decisions around the future strategic direction of UNICEF Pakistan's country programme in its new cycle to start from 2023, and to feed into the national and provincial dialogues for more investment in children in Pakistan. It is also anticipated that the study will inspire further research on the issue of child poverty in Pakistan, and/or strengthen UNICEF Pakistan's child rights-based approach to programming. Eventually, it is aimed to bring about changes in Pakistan's next generation of poverty-reduction strategies and actions, to become more inclusive and empowering, and thus more effective in mitigating the impact of child poverty on children and society as a whole.

The report structure is as follows:

Section 1 introduces the report and outlines the background.

Section 2 provides the methodological approach.

Section 3 presents the key results.

Section 4 offers overarching takeaways.

Section 5 lists the report appendices.

2. Methodological approach

Approach to calculation

The methodology for calculating child poverty is very simple and within the canon for multidimensional poverty estimation. It is based on two steps. First, identification of the children who are deprived in each dimension and, second, aggregation of the individual child's measurement information in a summary metric. Although there are different ways to perform these two steps, all measures currently being used by countries or multilateral organizations use this two-step approach (UNDP, World Bank, and UNICEF, 2021).

For example, let us assume there are six children (A, B, C, D, E, and F), who could be deprived in nine dimensions (rights constitutive of poverty) as in the table below. It can be observed that child B is deprived in terms of sanitation services, and child C's rights to health, nutrition, and water are not realized. In addition, child E is deprived in the health and information dimensions while child F is deprived of the rights to play and water. These four children (B, C, E, and F) are identified as suffering at least one deprivation. Once identified, they are aggregated (counted) and expressed as a proportion of all children.

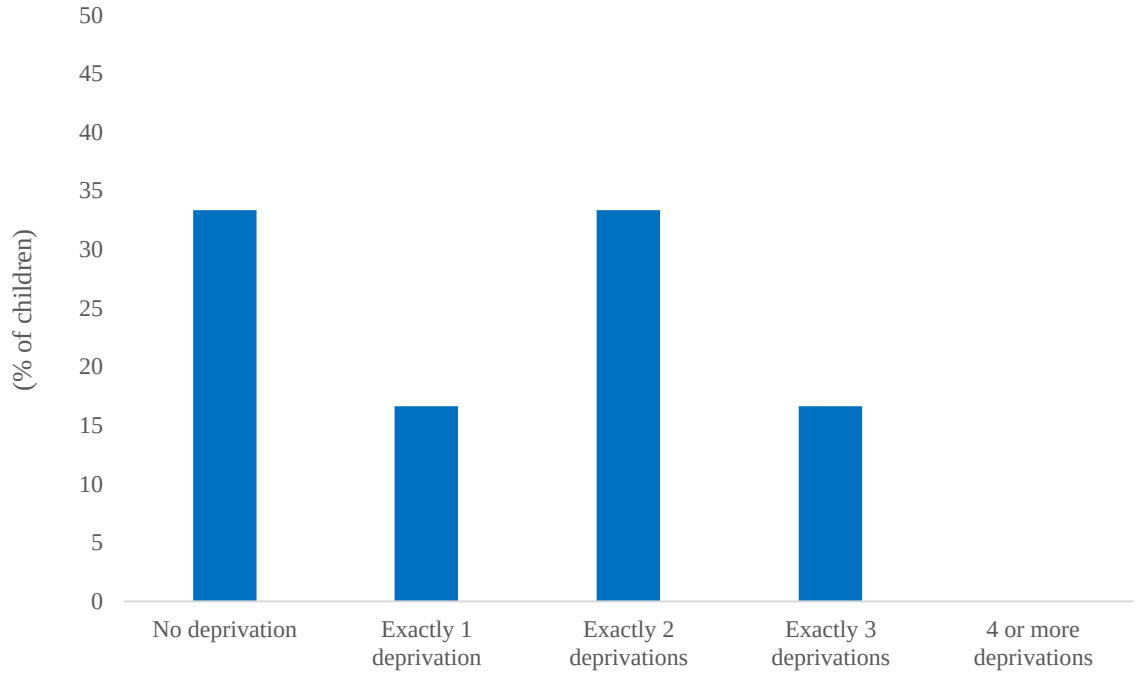
Table 1. Logic of Calculation

Access to:	A	B	C	D	E	F
Clothing	√	√	√	√	√	√
Education	√	√	√	√	√	√
Health	√	√	NO	√	NO	√
Housing	√	√	√	√	√	√
Information	√	√	√	√	NO	√
Nutrition	√	√	NO	√	√	√
Play	√	√	√	√	√	NO
Sanitation facilities	√	NO	√	√	√	√
Water	√	√	NO	√	√	NO
Poor: At least one right not realized	NO	POOR	POOR	NO	POOR	POOR

In this case, if suffering one deprivation is the minimum to be considered poor, the prevalence of poverty is two thirds (i.e., four of the six children are in poverty). More importantly, it can be seen that while two children suffer no deprivations (A and D), one of them (B) suffers one deprivation, two of them (E and F)—two deprivations each, and one (C, the poorest of the poor)—three deprivations

simultaneously. This classification results in a profile of poverty that is more important and helpful for analysis than only the single number describing prevalence.

Figure 1. Hypothetical child poverty profile example



Practical considerations

In the previous example, it is necessary to establish which indicators should be included to assess deprivation in each dimension (or right) and a threshold to determine if a child should be considered deprived in each dimension. Two thresholds were used in this internal exercise: one for severe deprivation and one for moderate deprivation. (See below.)

Furthermore, for simplicity and in order to avoid imbalance across dimensions, only one indicator per dimension was used. Unfortunately, there were not sufficient variables available across the three surveys to cover all the age groups with exactly the same indicators. As explained above, this is a source of the underestimation of child poverty as the available data permits most, but not all, of the dimensions to be simultaneously measured for any individual child.

Indicators

Several criteria were used to select the indicators and thresholds. These were based on

- Simplicity: One indicator per dimension or right
- Validity: Measures what it is supposed to measure
- Reliability: Accurate measurement
- Feasible to separate severe and moderate deprivation

The last point is captured in the following table (which also includes the age group to which the indicators apply)

Table 2. Dimensions, Indicators, and Thresholds for Moderate and Severe Material Shortcoming

Dimension	Unit of Analysis (age)	Severe Deprivation Definition	Moderate Deprivation Definition (includes severe deprivation)
Shelter	Children 17 years of age and younger	Children living in a dwelling with five or more persons per room.	Children living in a dwelling with three or more persons per room.
Sanitation	Children 17 years of age and younger	Children with no access to a toilet facility of any kind, i.e. open defecation.	Unimproved facilities (i.e. on-site sanitation consisting of pit latrines without slabs, hanging latrines, or bucket latrines) or no facilities at all.
Water	Children 17 years of age and younger	Children with no access to water facilities of any kind, i.e. using surface water.	Unimproved facilities (i.e. non-piped supplies) or no facilities at all.
Nutrition*	Children under 5 years of age	Stunting (3 standard deviations below the international reference population).	Stunting (2 standard deviations below the international reference population).
Education	Children between 5-7 years of age	Children who have never been to school.	Children who are not currently attending school.
	Children between 8-17 years of age	Children not attending school.	Children who are attending school but two classes behind the one corresponding to their age Ǝ.
Health	Children 15-59 months of age§	Children who did not receive full immunization against polio, measles, and Penta.	Children who are not fully immunized.
	Children 15-17 years of age**	Unmet contraception needs (none at all).	Unmet contraception needs (only traditional methods)
Information	Children 10-17 years of age§§	No mobile phone nor access to internet	Either ownership of mobile phone or access to internet but not both

Note: * Only available in NNS.
Ǝ Only available for some children in NNS as attendance is not included.
§ Not available in NNS.
**Not available in NNS. Only for adolescent girls in a marriage in the other surveys.
§§ Not available in NNS, the same indicators/thresholds as for the 0-9 age group were used.

In practice, this means that all children living in an overcrowded household are considered poor. In such case, a child is considered poor if he/she lives in a household where there is overcrowding, i.e., the number of persons in the household exceed three times the number of rooms (five times for severe

deprivation). In contrast, for education, school attendance is measured for each individual child. Thus, if two sisters live in a household and one is attending school, but the other is not, only the latter is considered deprived in education and, thus, is in poverty.

Water and sanitation are treated like housing. The deprivation affects all children. The categories for classifying various types of connections are based on the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program ladder. For example, for access to water, severe deprivation is established by analysing if the household uses unimproved water facilities of any kind or no facilities at all. Consequently, open wells, unprotected springs, or water from a canal or river are considered as unsafe and representing severe deprivation.

Realizing the right to information, which requires assessing access to the material means to receive information, is based on the presence of TV and computers in the household. If neither is available, then all the children in the household are considered information-deprived and, thus, poor. However, the data in PSLM 2018-19 allow a more detailed analysis, as there is information about mobile phones and access to computers/internet by individual children older than 10 years of age. This information was used.

Incidence and profile

While it is important to establish the proportion of children who are considered poor, it is also essential to understand how poor they are on average and how the poorest children are faring. This leads to the construction of a profile, establishing (for a given set of either severe or moderate thresholds) how many children suffer no deprivations as well as how many suffer exactly one, exactly two, exactly three, etc. deprivations. (See figure 1 above for the hypothetical example.) From the profile, it is easy to observe the depth/breadth of child poverty as well as its severity.

Data sources and limitations

Different dimensions were used for the child poverty estimates in various surveys. These dimensions are:

- *Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) 2014-15 and 2019-20*
  Reports about education, health (immunization and contraception), housing, information, sanitation, and water. This survey is conducted at the district level.
- *PSLM 2018-19*
  Reports about education, health (immunization and contraception), housing, information, sanitation, and water. This survey includes data about monetary poverty and can be used to cross-tabulate child poverty with children living in monetarily poor households.
- *National Nutrition Survey (NNS) 2018*
  Reports about education, health (immunization), housing, nutrition, sanitation, and water. This survey is taken at the district level.

There are three main data limitations. Most household surveys that can be used to estimate child poverty have a wealth of information to assess realization of the rights of individual children. However, they do not have a full set of ideal indicators. This applies to all surveys used in this exercise. Thus, the first limitation is that some elements could be missing (e.g., information about clothing); therefore, it is not possible to properly ascertain if all rights constitutive of poverty are realized. The second limitation is that even if the indicator is included in the survey, it is not applied to all children (e.g., nutrition is not usually measured for adolescents).

The third limitation is that some groups of children may need more material resources than others to realize *these very same rights*. For example, children who have experienced extreme forms or violence may require additional health (including mental health) services; children with disabilities may necessitate special learning or play devices; and those from linguistic minorities may need books and the learning materials in their own language. Unfortunately, the available surveys do not include this type of information (except PSLM 2019-20 and for some indicators NNS 2018) or do not indicate if a child is an orphan.

Further assumptions

An important consideration regarding data limitations is that no imputations are made in the absence of knowledge. For example, in a household with two school-aged children who are out of school and a child just below the age of mandatory schooling, the younger child is not considered poor, even if it is very likely that child will not attend school in a few weeks or months (once the mandatory age of schooling is surpassed).

This avoidance of imputation clearly leads to underestimation of child poverty. Nevertheless, it is better to err on the side of caution and not overestimate child poverty.

Additionally, although the estimation of child poverty is based on the individual child, some indicators are only measured at the household level (e.g., overcrowding). Absent information about how children are distributed across available rooms, all the children are treated the same way (i.e., if there is overcrowding in the household, all children therein are considered deprived of their right to housing).

Nonetheless, in some cases it is possible to be more specific about how these indicators affect various individual children differently. For example, in cases when the household is far from a safe water source, it is possible to know who actually fetches water. If girls fetch water while boys stay home (as is often the case), it is feasible to use this information to assess individual access to water. Similarly, access to communication and information devices (i.e., mobile phones) or access to reproductive health can sometimes be separated between boys and girls (Pandolfelli et al, 2019; UNSD, 2020). Thus, communication and information devices were included for both individual boys and individual girls in this estimation of child poverty.

3. Results

Summary results

1) Different surveys have different missing variables. Nevertheless, the range of variation from different sources is narrow, an attribute which makes it possible to estimate child poverty profiles with confidence.
2) Gender differences seem small when taking all children into account but are quite pronounced among adolescents.
3) There are gender and geographic differences, which are exacerbated when combined (intersectionality).
4) The profile of child poverty is similar across surveys geographically and through the last five to six years.
5) When strictly comparable indicators and thresholds are used, a decline in child poverty seems to be observed.

Child poverty profile

About half of the children suffer at least one severe deprivation (out of education, health, housing, information, nutrition, sanitation, and water) [4]. Around a quarter to a third of children suffer at least two severe deprivations. Less than five percent of children suffer four or more severe deprivations (a measure of the severity of poverty). On average, taking into account all children, each child suffers almost one severe deprivation (Figure 2).

Almost nine in ten children suffer at least one moderate deprivation (Figure 3). Around two thirds of children suffer at least two moderate deprivations. Less than ten percent of children suffer four or more moderate deprivations (a measure of the severity of poverty). On average, taking into account all children, each child suffers almost two moderate deprivations.

[4] Obviously, there are variations depending on the year, survey, and indicators/thresholds used for the estimates. Nevertheless, as is it shown in the Appendix, sensitivity analyses show all these differences are around similar and consistent values.

Figure 2. Child poverty profile (severe)

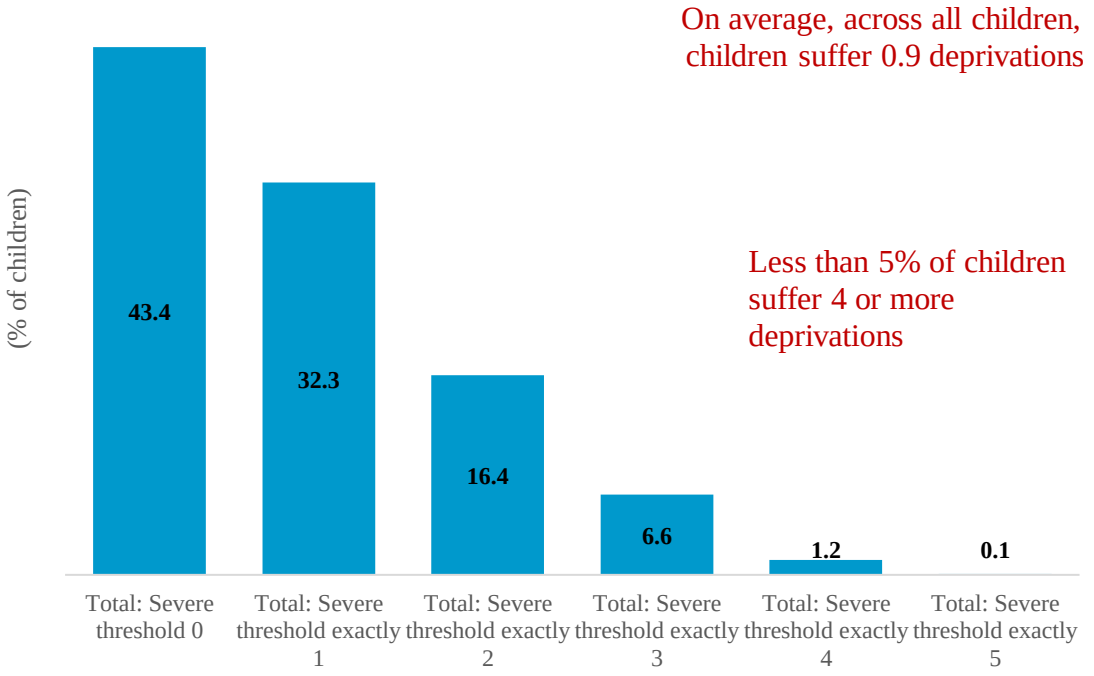
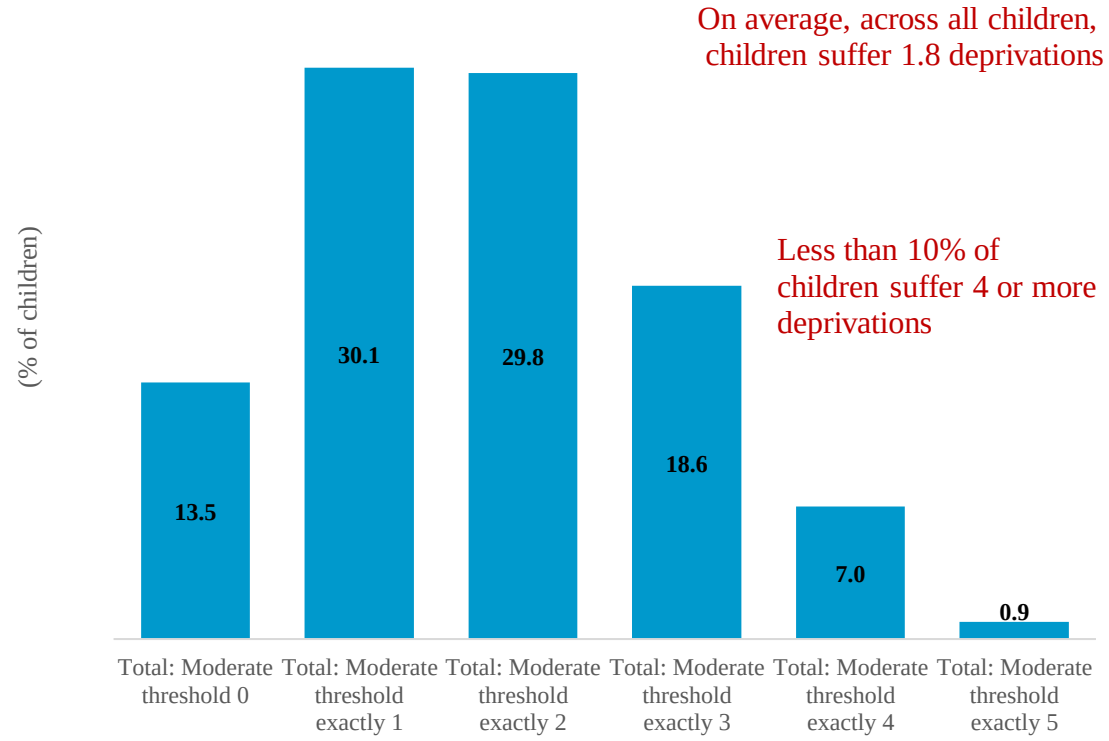


Figure 3. Child poverty profile (moderate)



Gender

Throughout the child poverty profile, girls have the same or higher levels of deprivation than boys. This happens both for severe and for moderate thresholds (Figures 4 and 5). However, most of the differences are small and probably are not statistically different. Girls' average number of deprivations is also marginally higher than boys'.

This result is in line with many other similar findings all over the world. The main reason is that most of the indicators (e.g. stunting for children under 5 years of age or immunization) usually do not show much of a disparity between boys and girls.

However, when focusing on older children, differences between boys and girls, precisely on account of gender dynamics and socialization reasons, start to widen. Thus, while overall, the percentage of girls suffering at least one severe deprivation is about 4 percent (as a proportion of boys' experience, not percentage points) higher than for boys. The difference is barely 1 percent among children 0–9 years of age while Among children 10–17 years of age, the difference is more than 7 percent (Figure 6).

Figure 4. Child poverty profile – boys and girls (severe)

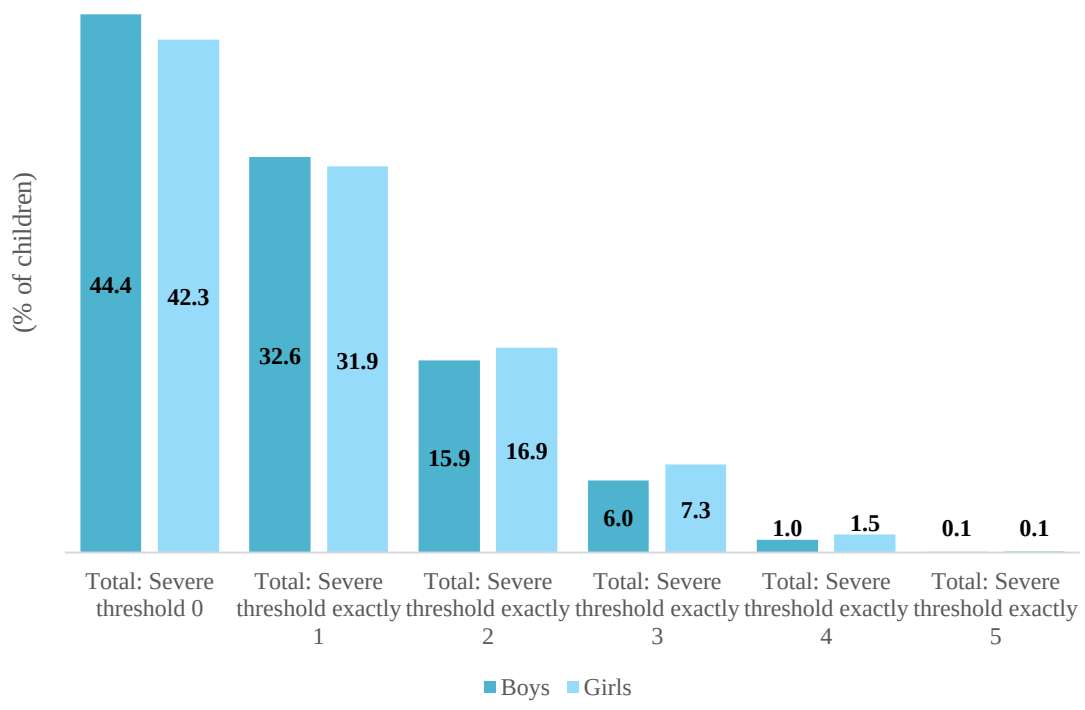


Figure 5. Child poverty profile – boys and girls (moderate)

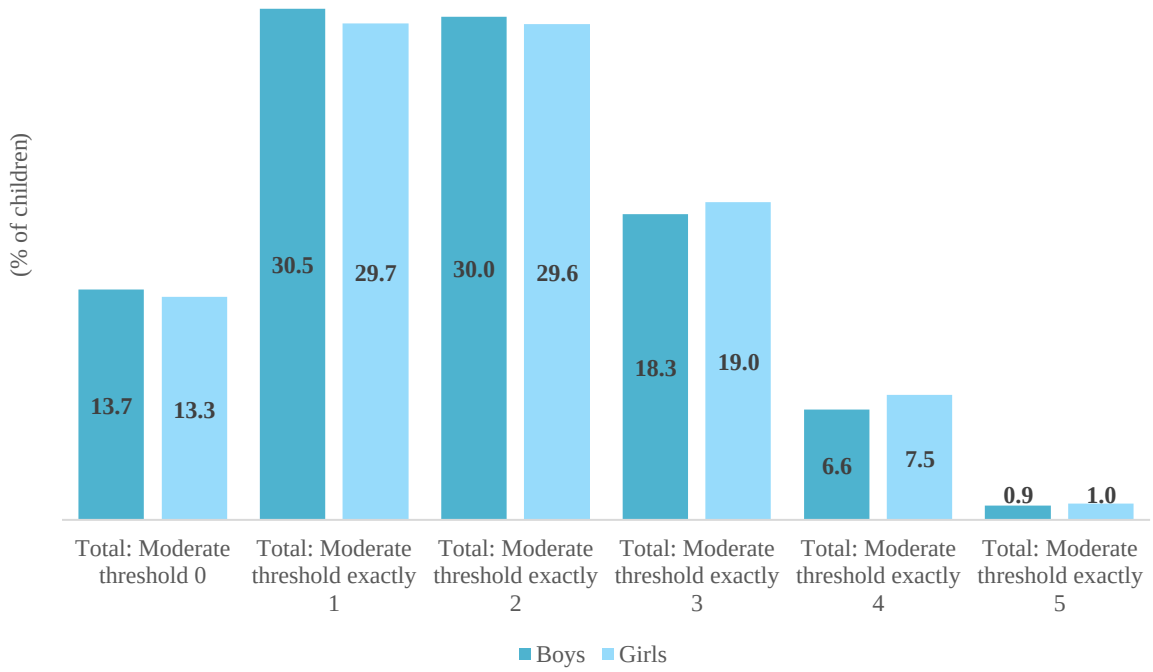


Figure 6. Child poverty gender ratio (severe thresholds, cut=off = 1)

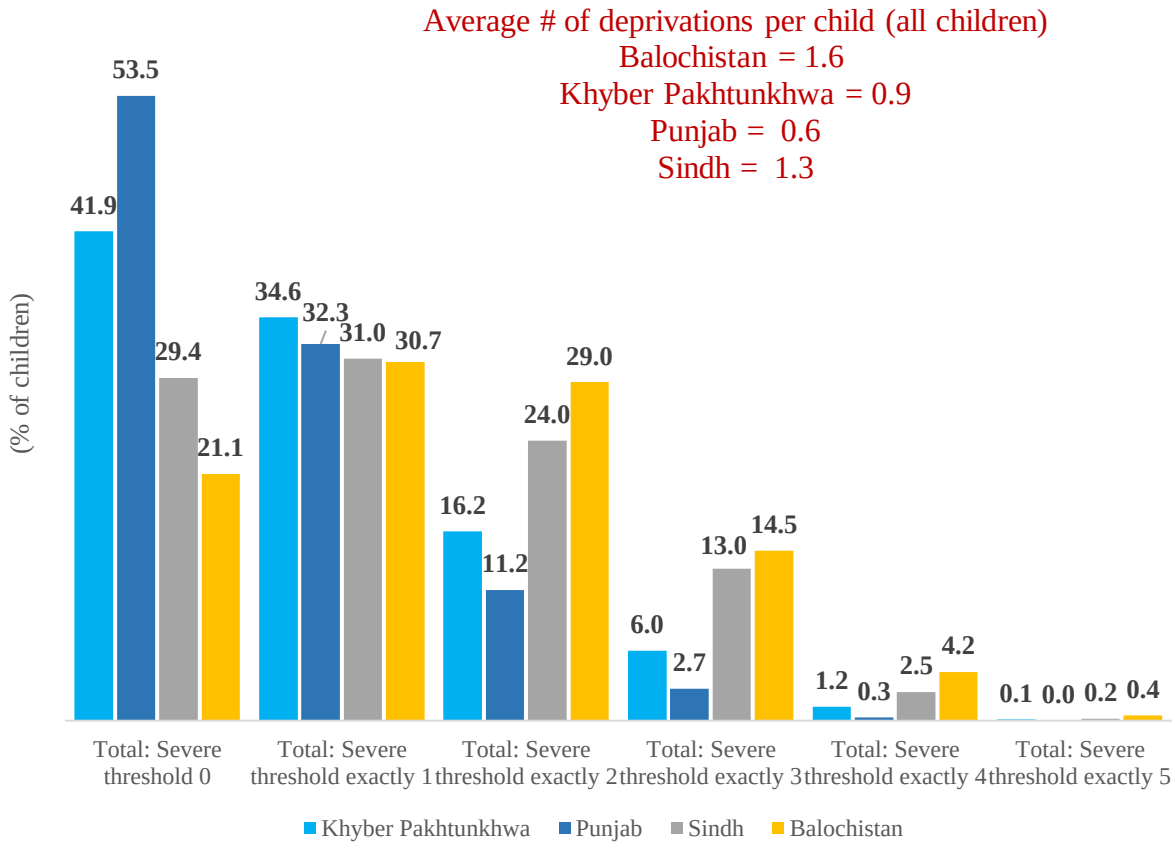
Geographic differences

There are important geographic differences. These can be observed both by province and by district. Nevertheless, different surveys and different specifications (e.g., in terms of deprivation thresholds and cut-offs) provide similar rankings (see appendix).

The child poverty profile for Punjab shows that it consistently outranks all other provinces with the lowest percentage of children suffering severe deprivations[5]. Moreover, the average number of deprivations (a measure of breadth/depth of poverty) in Punjab is considerably less than one. It is about two thirds of the average in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or and half the average in Sindh (Figure 7).

Children in Balochistan suffer the most severe deprivation. While a few of them suffer less than exactly one deprivation compared to children in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, they fare worse than in all the other provinces in exactly two, exactly three, etc. levels of severe deprivation. Furthermore, at 1.6 severe deprivations per child, Balochistan exhibits the highest breadth/depth of poverty.

Figure 7. Child poverty profile by province



The data by district also show a clear geographic difference (Figures 8-11). While there is no sudden jump when districts are ranked from the lowest to the highest percentage of children suffering at least one severe deprivation, the range is quite wide (from a bit less than 20% of children to almost 100%).

[5] There is a small exception, for exactly one deprivation. The percentage of children of children suffering exactly one deprivation in Punjab is a little bit higher than in two other provinces. However, this difference is not significant. In addition, these two percentage points are more than compensated by the substantially lower incidence at all other levels (exactly two, exactly three, etc). Actually, it is a sign of the lower child poverty in Punjab compared to other provinces that most of the children there "only" suffer one deprivation (this is also observed in the lower average number of deprivations per child in Punjab.

Figure 8. Child poverty profile by district - groups of children suffering at least 1 severe deprivation.

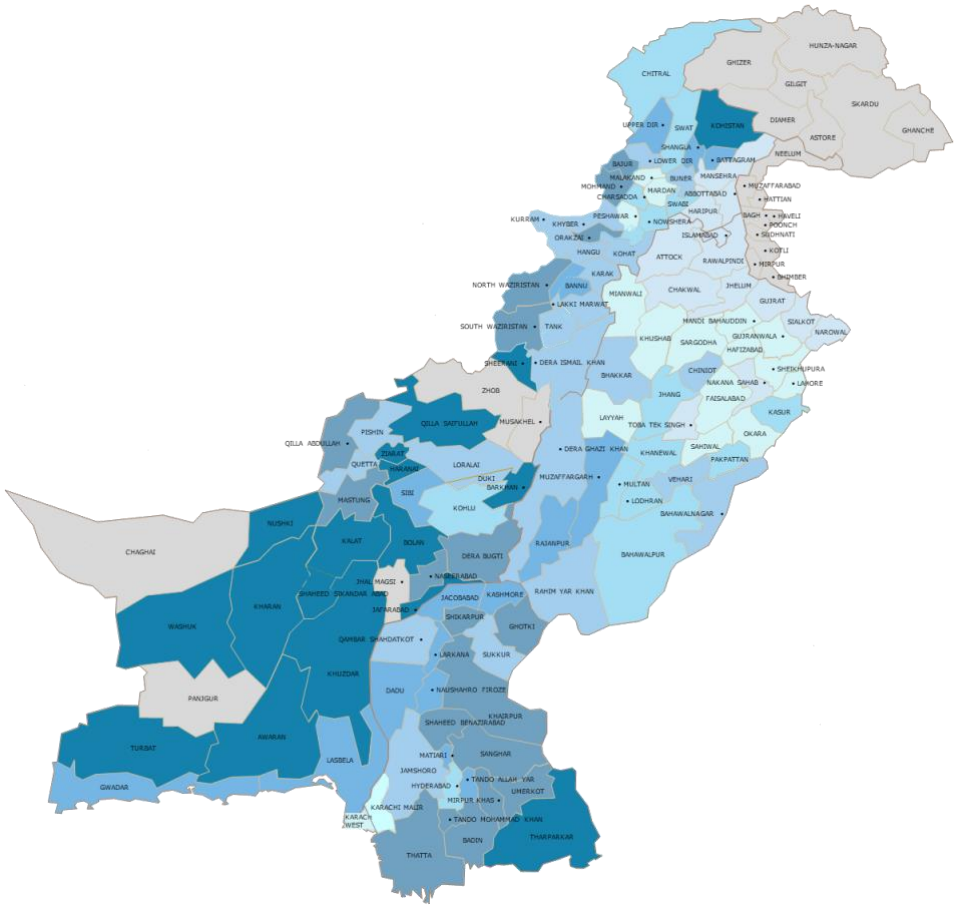
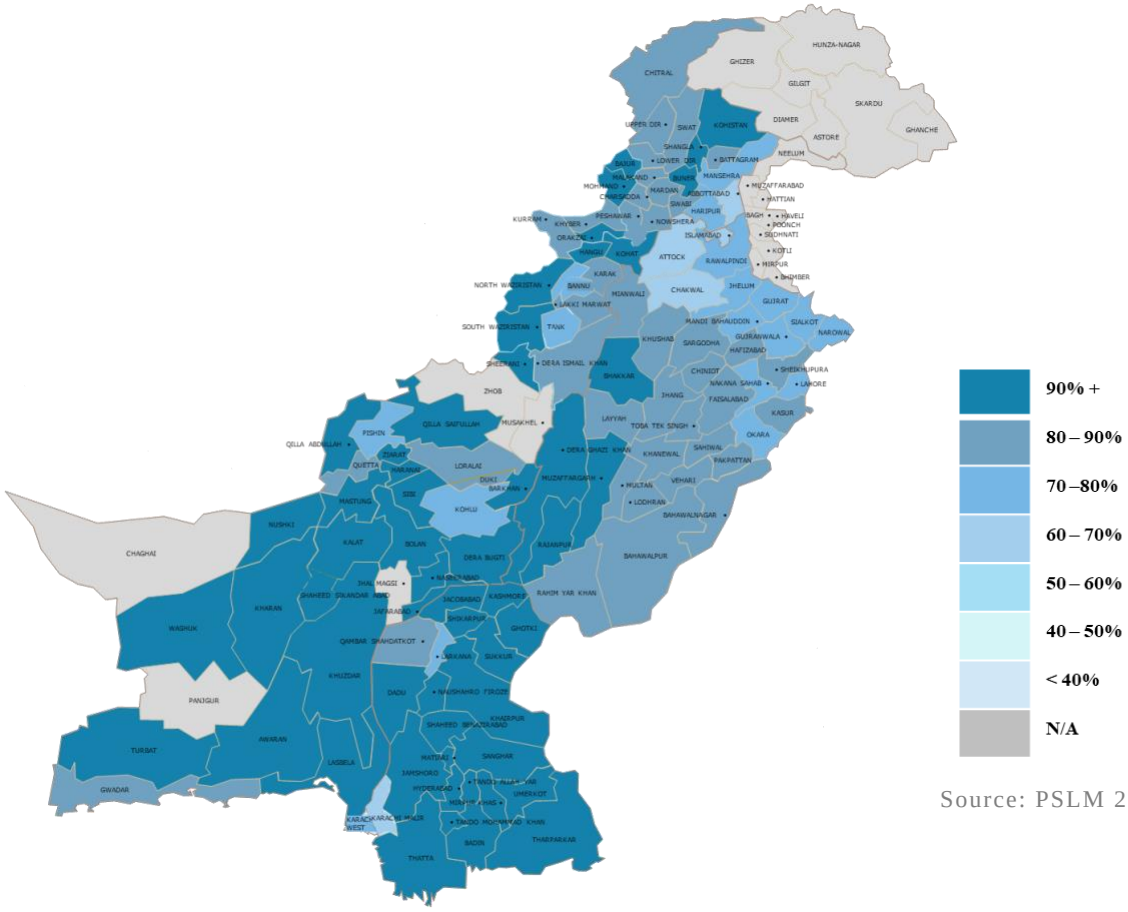


Figure 9. Child poverty profile by district - groups of children suffering at least 1 moderate deprivation.



Source: PSLM 2019-20

Figure 10. Child poverty profile by district - groups of children suffering at least 1 severe deprivation.

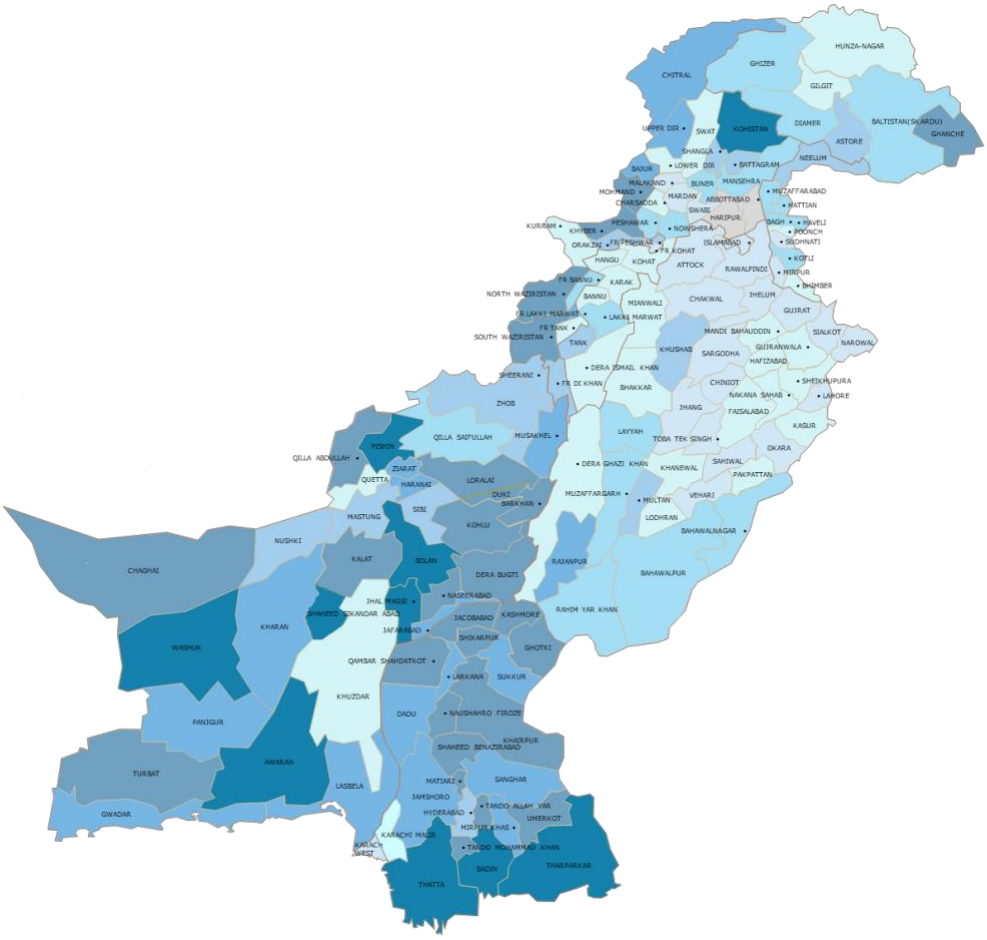
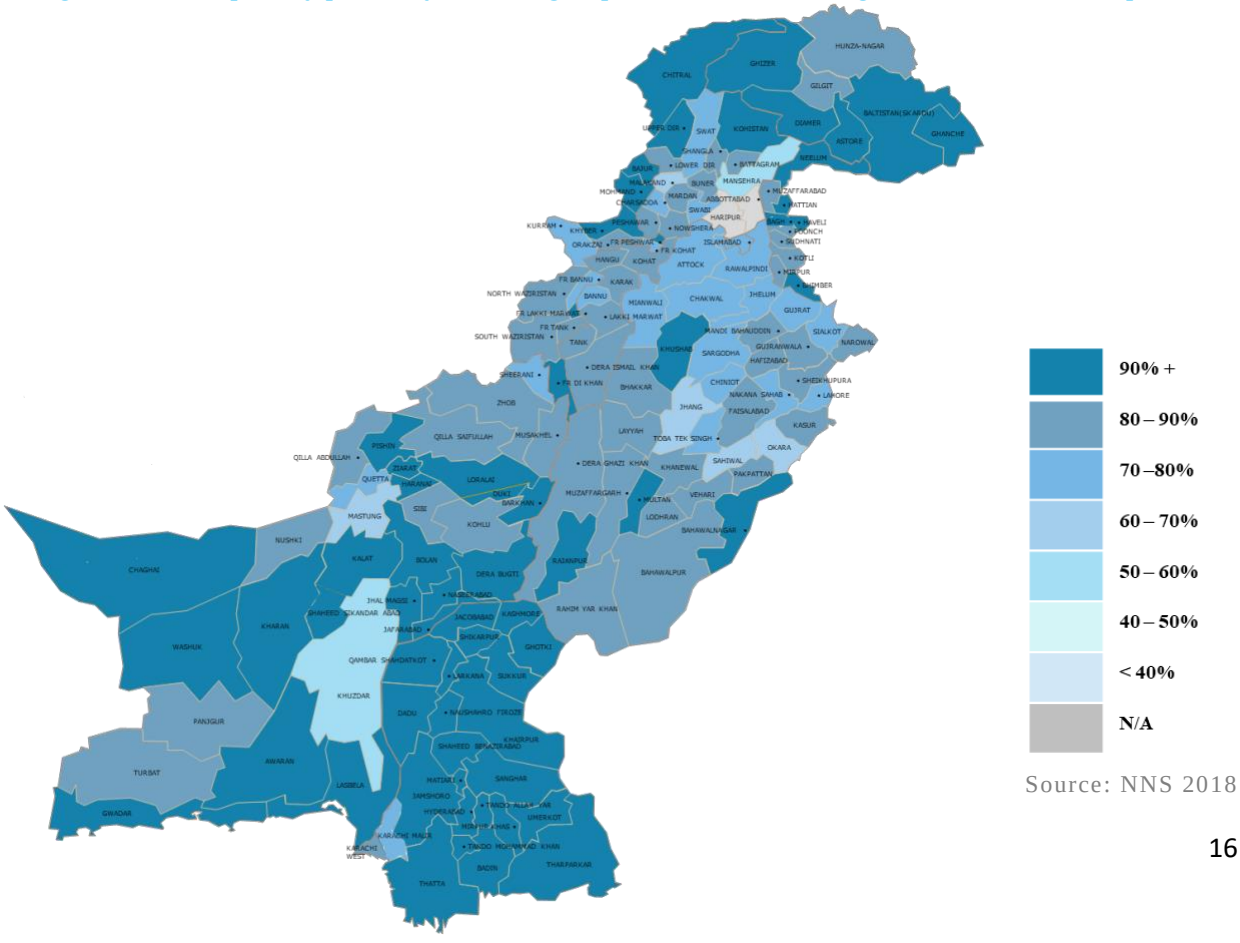


Figure 11. Child poverty profile by district - groups of children suffering at least 1 moderate deprivation.



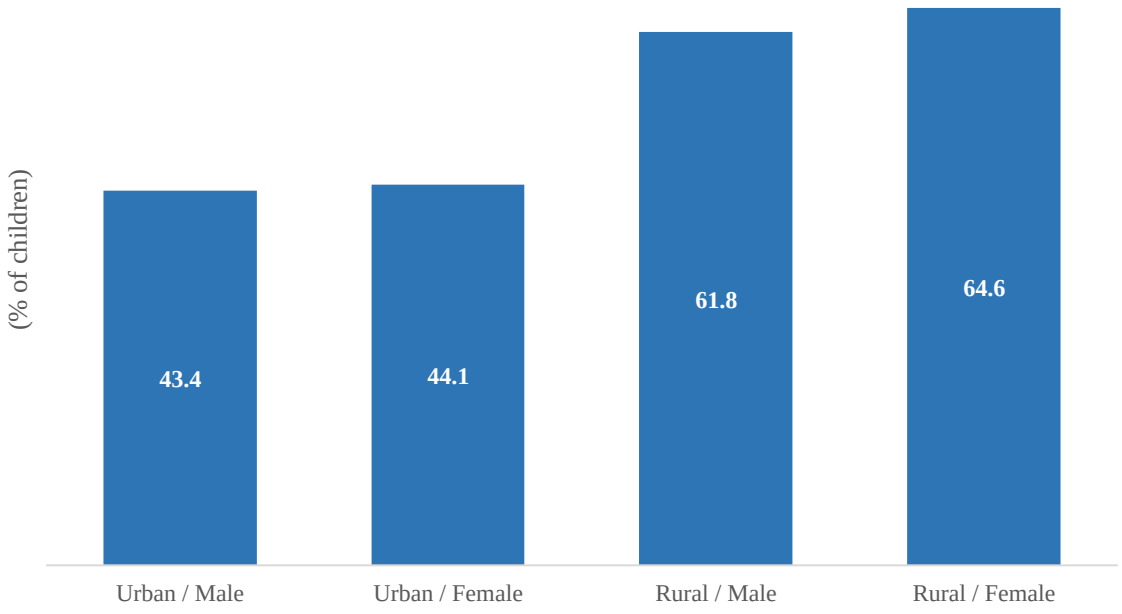
Source: NNS 2018

While the range of the percentage of children suffering at least one severe deprivation goes from around 20% to 100%, the median is around 50%. Some of the districts that display such levels are Bahawalnagar, Pishin, Pakpattan, and Shaheed Benazir Abad. Moreover, districts like Ghotki, Matiari, and Rajanpur, where about 70% children are suffering at least one severe deprivation, are around the border of the third quartile while districts like Bannu, Faisalabad, Hangu, Mastung, and Sheikhupura, with around 35% of children having at least one severe deprivation, place near the border of the quartile.

Intersectionality

Although at an aggregate level there does not seem to be much of a gender disparity, this is due to the fact that most of the indicators used (e.g., immunization) usually do not show much of a difference between boys and girls. However, when intersectionality is taken into account (e.g., rural girls compared to rural boys), the gender differences are clearer (Figure 12).

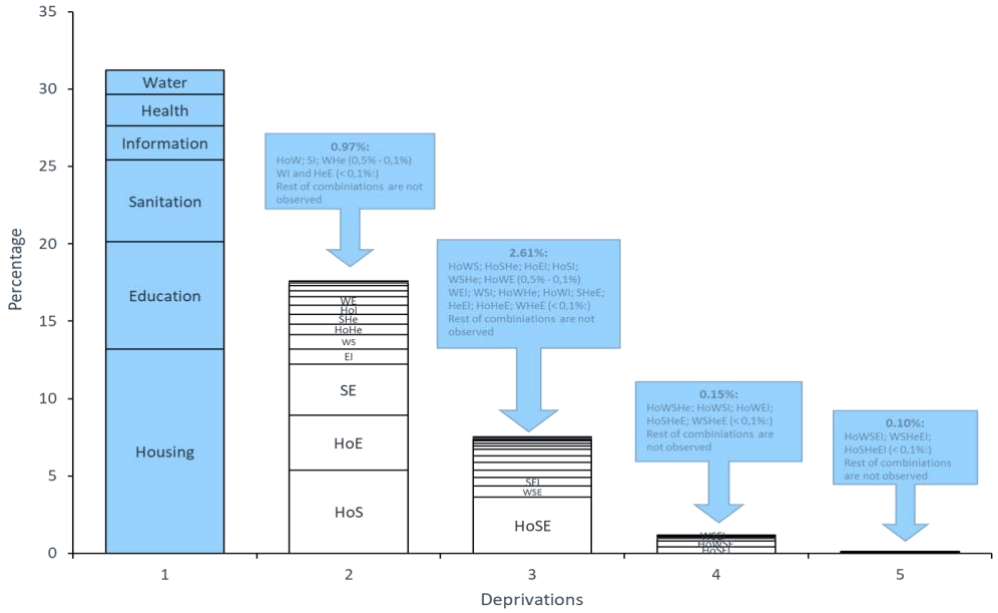
Figure 12. Intersectionality: child poverty by residence and sex (severe thresholds, cut-off = 1)



Simultaneous deprivations

It is possible to assess the simultaneity or overlapping of deprivations. The analysis can capture all possible combinations (Figure 13). The ones not shown in the graph did not occur.

Figure 13. Full mapping of simultaneous deprivations



Note: Acronyms should be self-explanatory (e.g., Who refers to Water and Housing, HeEW refers to Health, Education and Water, INHoS refers to Information, Nutrition, Housing and Sanitation etc.)
Source: PSLM/HIES, 2018-19.

Child poverty and children in monetary poor households

Although, as explained above, child poverty refers to multiple material deprivations, among other reasons because children are not supposed to earn a living (i.e., to work and to receive income to cover the cost-of-living expenses), it is important to know if children live in households that can or cannot make ends meet. Thus, analysing the situation of children in and outside of monetary poor households is important to complete a child's poverty profile.

Considering only children suffering at least one severe deprivation, it can be observed that more than half of them do not live in monetary poor households (Figure 14). This results highlights the importance of directly measuring child poverty for each individual child.

Analysing the specific number of deprivations suffered by children, it can be observed that many children suffering poverty are outside monetary poor households for all levels of simultaneous deprivation (Figure 15).

Figure 14. Child poverty (severe thresholds) and children in monetary poor households (% of all children)

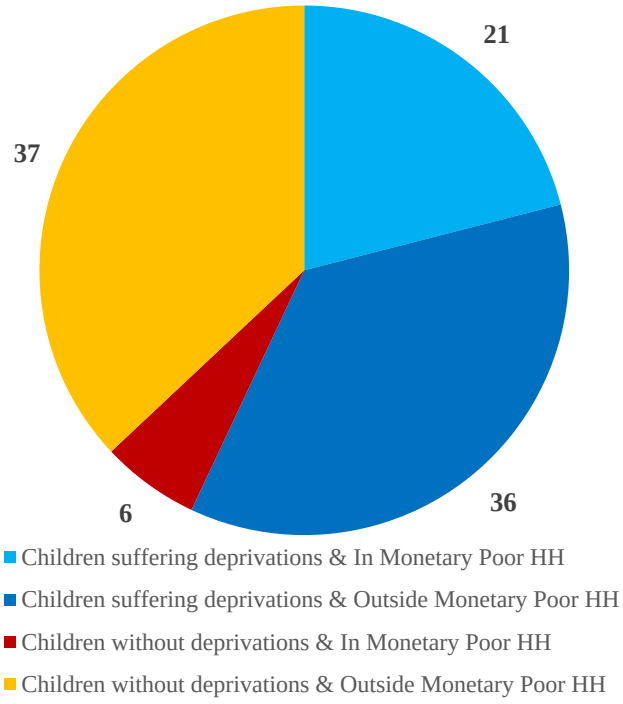
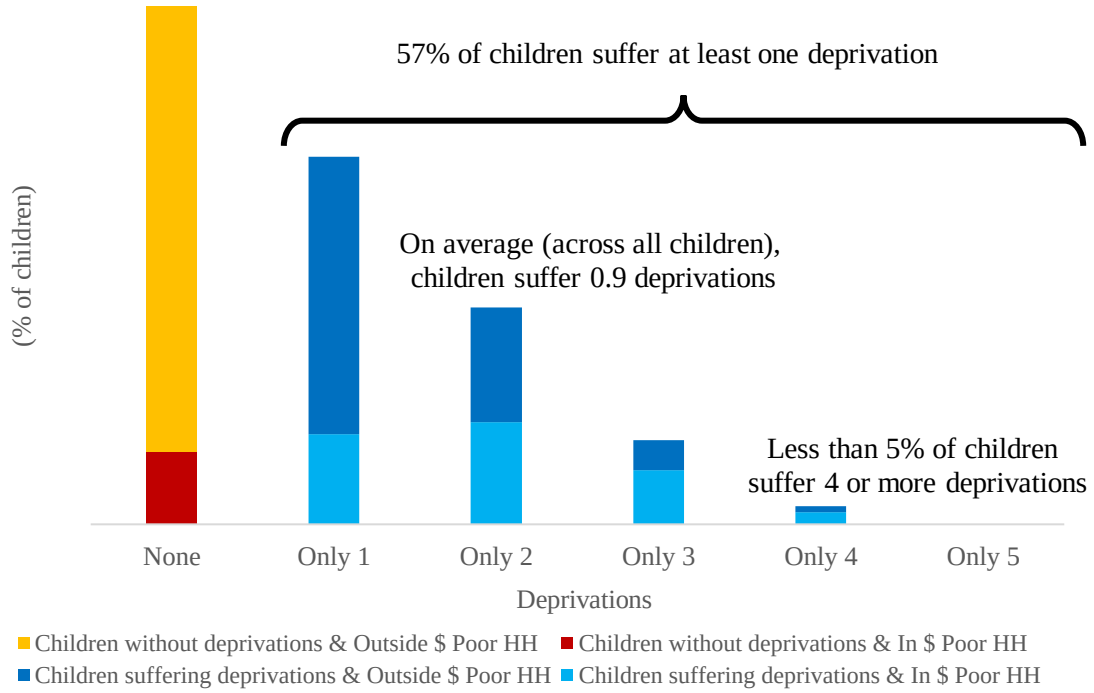


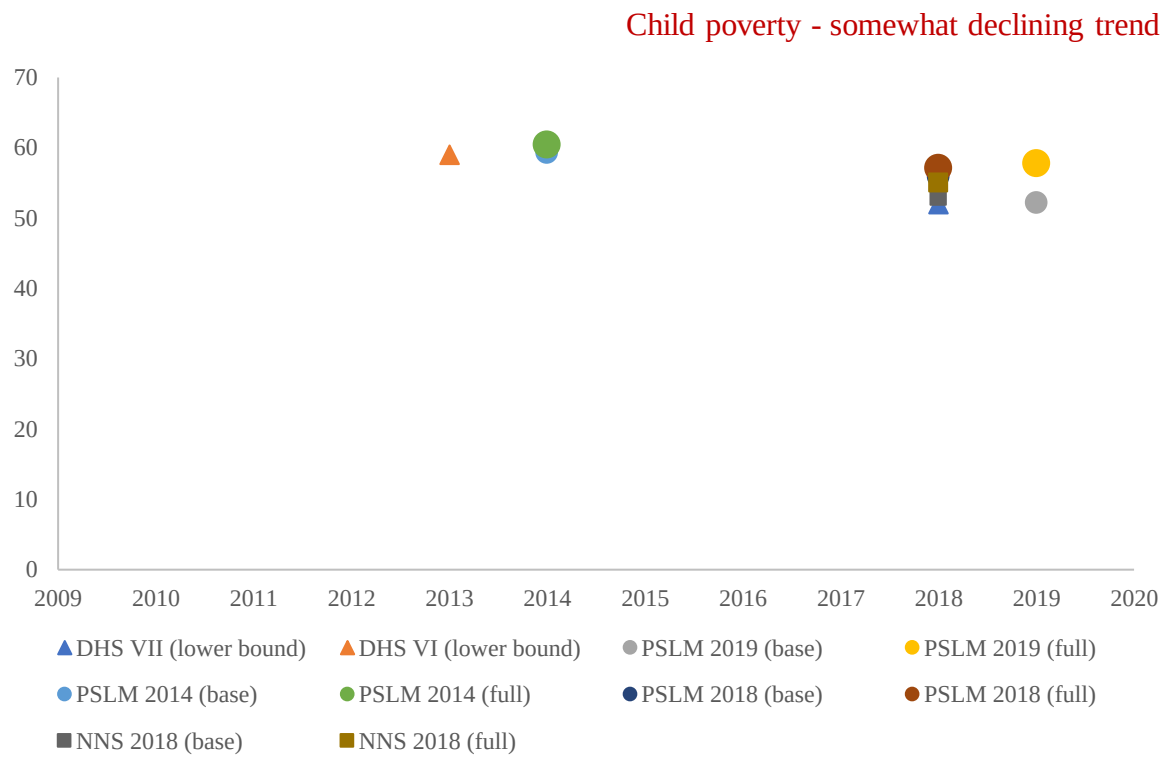
Figure 15. Child poverty (severe thresholds) and children in monetary poor households, by level of deprivation



Trends

In spite of the differences across surveys due to different questions, dimensions, and indicators, a pattern that indicates a slight reduction in child poverty during the last few years seems perceptible (Figure 16). This is particularly the case when comparable surveys are used to explore trends (Figures 17 and 18).

Figure 16. Child poverty – across surveys (%)



Note: The two estimates with DHS were carried out using global indicators/thresholds, not Pakistan-specific ones as the other estimates.

Both in terms of severe and moderate thresholds, child poverty profiles show that there are more children suffering no deprivations at all in 2019 than in 2014. For both severe and moderate thresholds, the number of children suffering exactly one deprivation is slightly higher. However, this increase is more than compensated by the decline in the number of children suffering exactly two, exactly three, etc. deprivations. A slight reduction is also observed for the average number of deprivations suffered per child; they declined from 1.2 in 2014 to just below 1 in 2019. Similarly, the average number of moderate deprivations per child declined from 2.4 in 2014 to 2.3 in 2019. Moreover, the percentage of children suffering four or more deprivations for both severe and moderate thresholds is also smaller in 2019 than in 2014.

Not only are totals lower in 2019 compared to 2014, but there also seems to be a reduction in both rural and urban child poverty. Similarly, the reduction seems to affect both boys and girls (Figure 19).

Figure 17. Child poverty, 2014 – 2019 (severe)

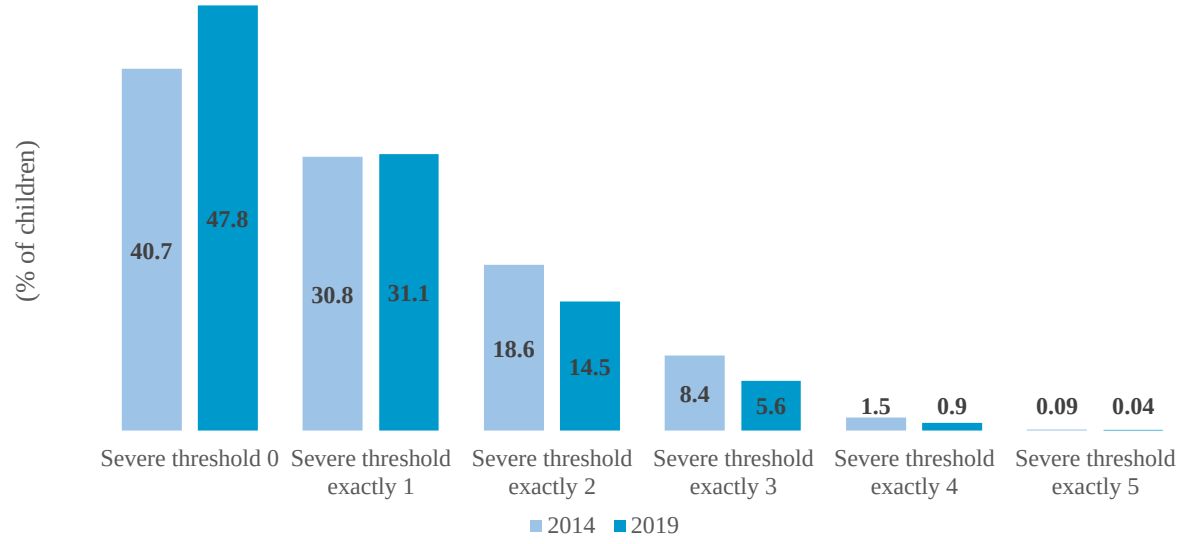


Figure 18. Child poverty, 2014 – 2019 (moderate)

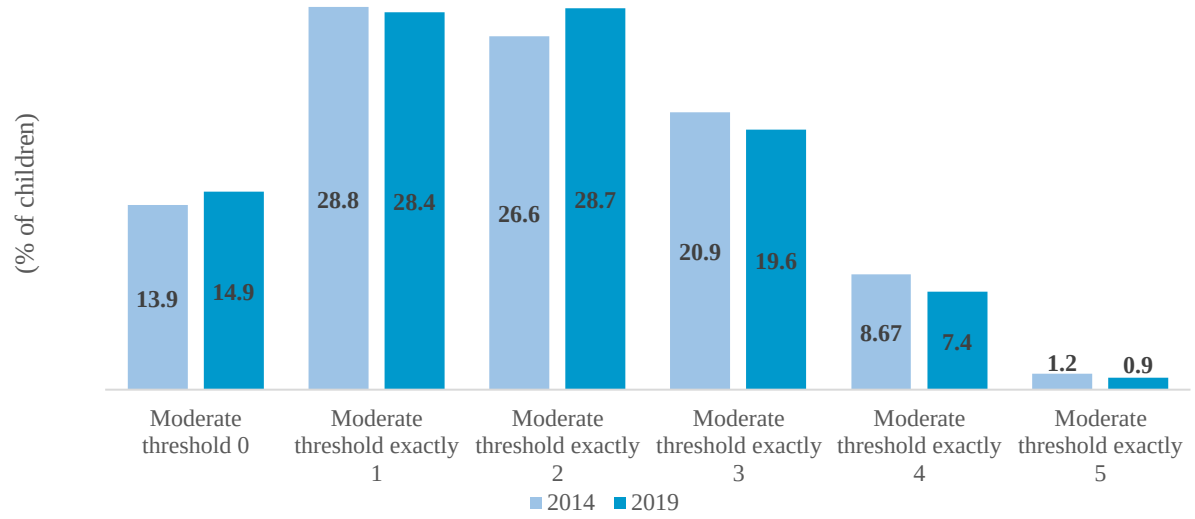
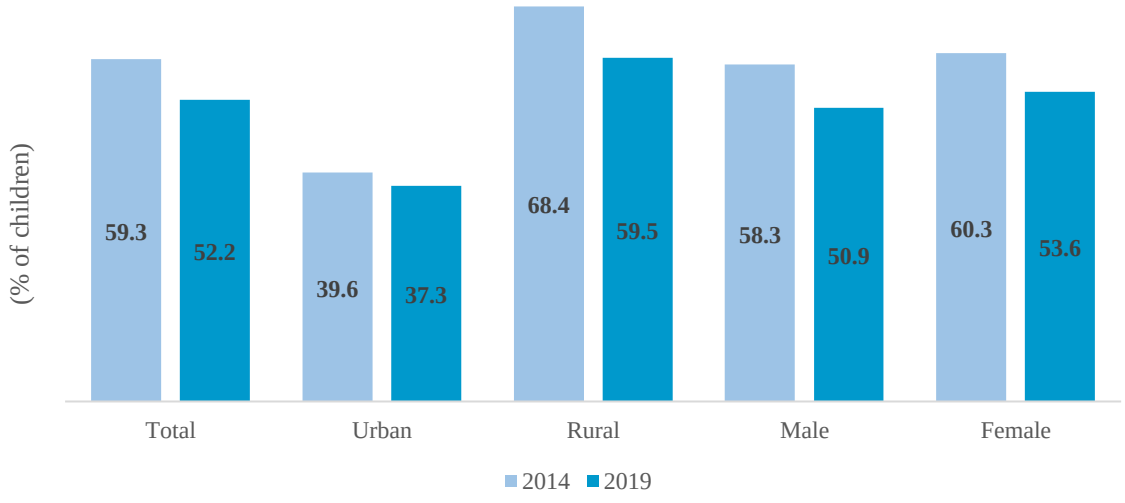
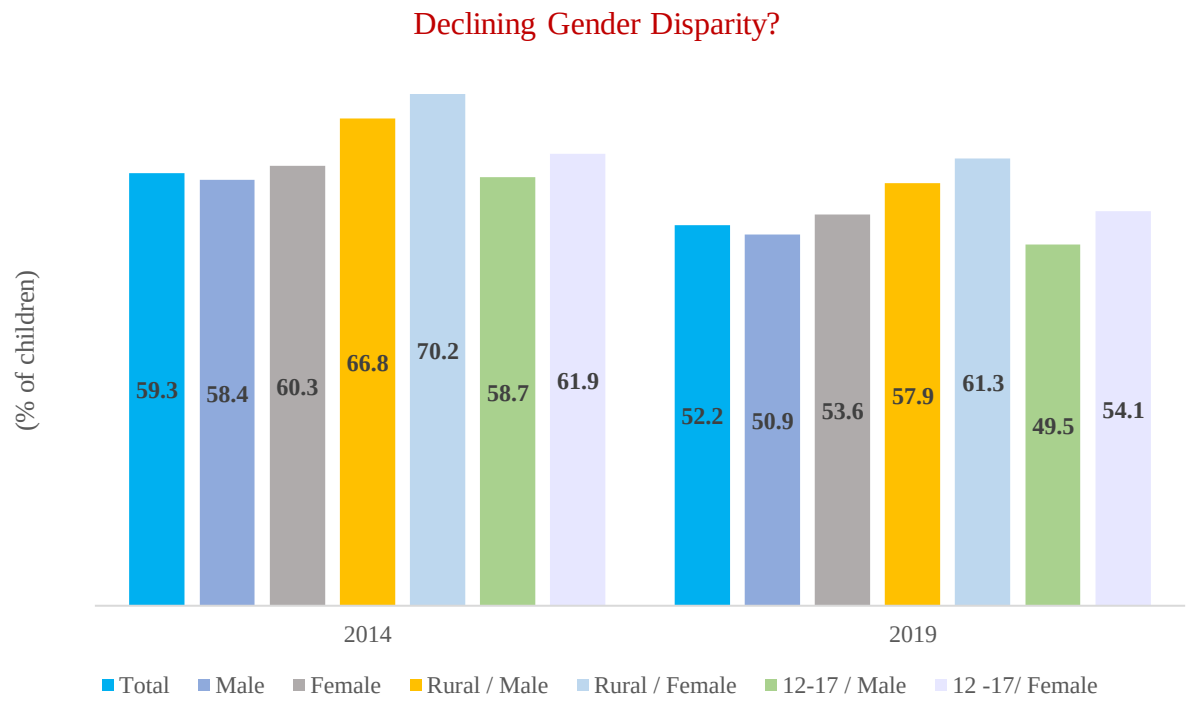


Figure 19. Child poverty, 2014 – 2019, groups of children suffering at least 1 severe deprivation.



Although the two points in time are not strictly comparable, it seems that gender disparities are smaller than a few years ago. However, the difference may not be statistically significant (Figure 20).

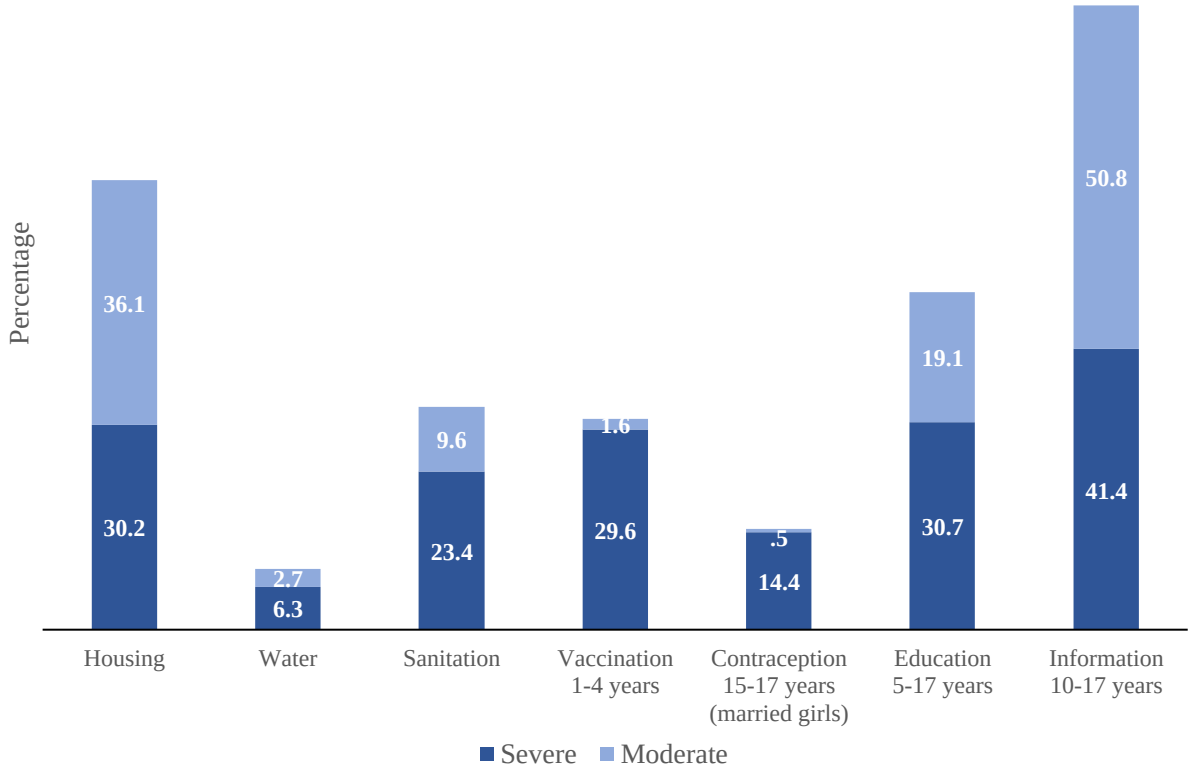
Figure 20. Child poverty, 2014 – 2019, gender disparity



Deprivations across dimensions

While the analysis of child poverty is about the combined effect of deprivations across dimensions, it is illustrative to explore the levels of severe and moderate deprivation in each individual deprivation. It can be observed that, given the available indicators, deprivation is considerably higher in some sectors than other ones (Figure 21). Also, changing the thresholds (i.e., assessing either severe material deprivation) provides a different pattern. For instance, health deprivation is higher than sanitation deprivation when severe thresholds are used, but the order changes when using moderate thresholds. It is important to remember that changing thresholds (even adding/deleting a dimension) has a much smaller impact on the ranking of districts based on the prevalence of child poverty see section on geographic differences). Also, deprivations by sector are not sufficient to assess "which dimension is more important" in determining child poverty. The latter depends also on the extent of overlaps across dimensions.

Figure 21. Severe and moderate deprivation by dimension



Source: PSLM/HEIS, 2018-19

The concept of child poverty should be differentiated from Quality of Life or the overall well-being of the child. While child poverty is about material shortcomings or deprivations, non-material elements (such as neglect or suffering from violence) are crucial for a child well-being and realizing all of a child's rights. Given the different nature of child rights abuses, which are not determined crucially or fundamentally by material resources, it is important not to mix within a measure of child poverty. Nevertheless, given their salience, it is useful to associate or correlate them. For example, it is important to correlate child poverty with issues like birth registration or child marriage. Such an exercise not only helps to explore the difference in the incidence of these problems between por and non-poor children but also according to the depth/breadth of poverty (i.e., among children suffering, two, three or more deprivations simultaneously). Moreover, if all possible detrimental issues affecting children were included in the measure of child poverty, it would not be possible to perform this type of analysis.

4. Conclusion

Key takeaways

Reducing deprivation experienced by children is the first step towards breaking the intergenerational poverty cycle that many are entrenched in and is one of the keys to future peace and prosperity in the country. It is critical that all children, regardless of their social status, have access to a full range of quality health and education services, adequate nutrition as well as social protection benefits to alleviate the impact of poverty. Going forward, it is imperative to:

- **Tackle child poverty in all its forms:** Policies and programmes must be implemented effectively and equitably within and across sectors, including in areas such as nutrition, education, and health, which represent the multidimensions of poverty. National and sub-national governments need to recognise age and gender-specific needs. They must protect the poorest children while helping them fulfil their potential and end the cycle of poverty. In order to facilitate this needed investment, it is important that governments have a clear understanding of the current level of public expenditure on children. This spending needs to be assessed based on its effectiveness, efficiency, equity, and adequacy so that investments can have a broader reach and public resources, which are constrained, can be put to their best possible use.

- **Prioritise investment in early years to yield the best returns later:** Early childhood education is foundational. To give children the best chance of reaching their potential, high quality programmes must target the first years of life. In addition, early to mid-adolescence is the time when poor children begin to fall behind and leave school, and it is also when external pressures, such as the need to work, increase. Providing good opportunities to learn includes efforts to create positive learning environments at school, thus ensuring children stay in school longer.

- **Expand fiscal space for child- and gender-sensitive social protection:** Social protection can be a powerful tool to mitigate the worst effects of both economic and social risks and to promote pathways out of poverty. Child- and gender-sensitive social protection, in particular, can support investments in human capital development and minimise deficits caused by exploitation, abuse and neglect. Selection of a particular social protection instrument should begin with a systematic assessment of contextualized gender- and child-specific vulnerabilities. It is essential, therefore, that care be taken to integrate a gender and age perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of such programs.

- **Continually revise the indicators and methodology of poverty measurement, which is a dynamic process requiring constant updates:** In order to enhance availability and use of child

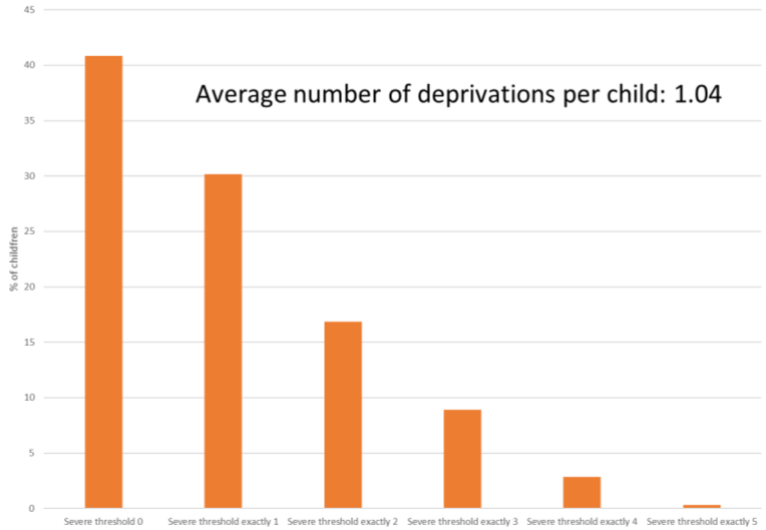
poverty data, Pakistan should collect data on all key dimensions related to children's rights, for instance health and nutrition, and introduce lifecycle appropriate indicators to measure the situation of each child in the household. Moreover, PCO may possibly introduce innovative ways to collect, monitor, and report on child poverty data, including ways to encourage child participation in the monitoring and discussion of child poverty data and potential policy responses.

5. Appendix

Sensitivity analysis

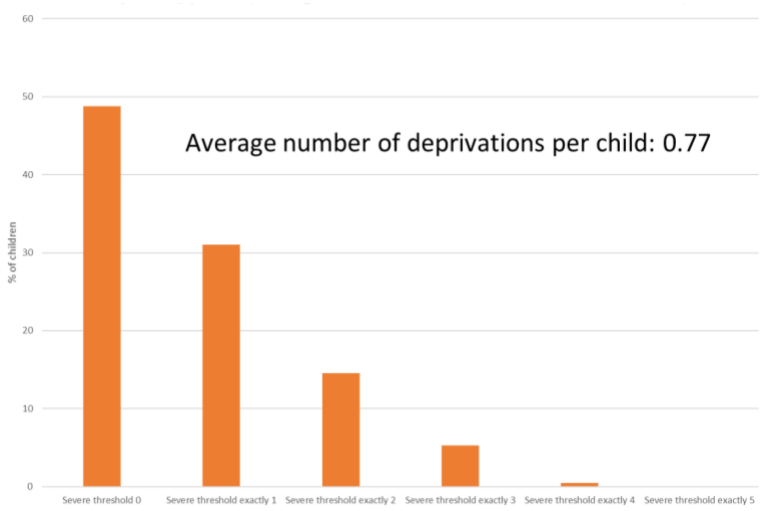
Child poverty profiles are similar whether the PSLM or NNS are used. This is the case, although these surveys are implemented in different years (Figures 22-25). The consistency across surveys is particularly important and striking because the various surveys cover different dimensions. Furthermore, even when the exact dimensions are included, the indicators are not strictly the same (and even when they are, the questions are asked differently).

Figure 22. Child poverty profile (Average PSLM and NNS 2018, including information)



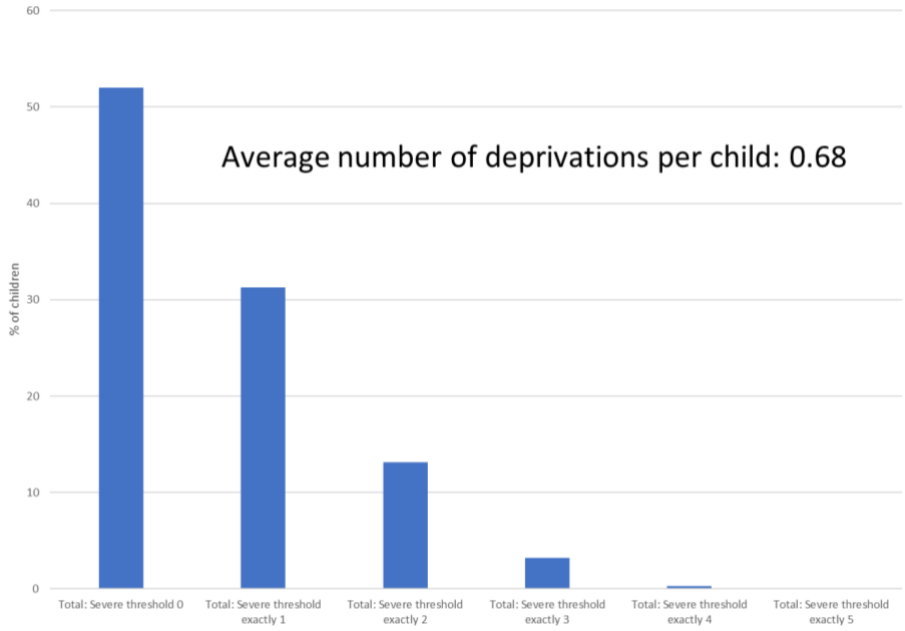
Source: PSLM and NNS, 2018.

Figure 23. Child poverty profile (Average PSLM and NNS 2018, without information)



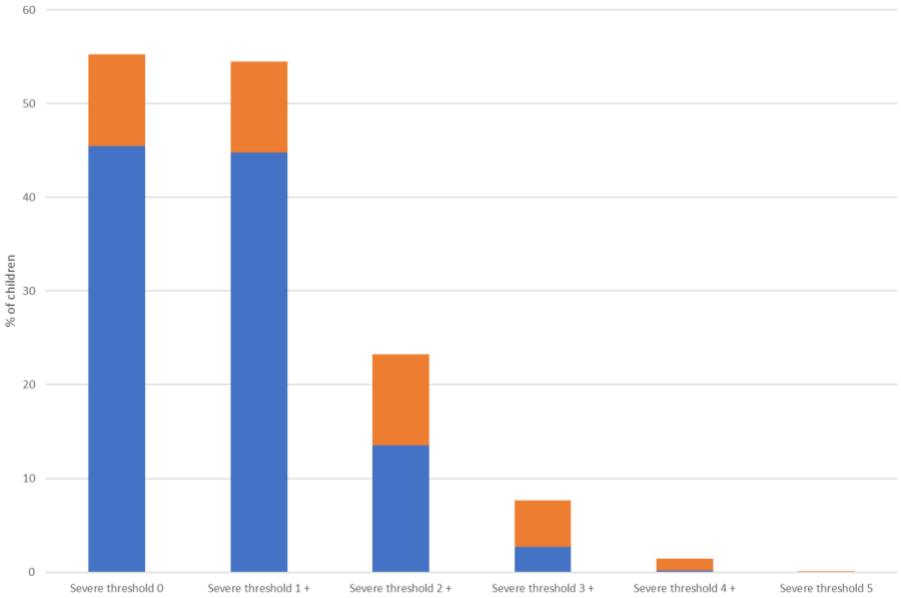
Source: PSLM and NNS, 2018.

Figure 24. Child poverty profile (PSLM 2014, without information and nutrition)



Source: PSLM, 2014.

Figure 25. Child poverty profile, severe thresholds – sensitivity analysis



Source and Series: NNS 2018 and PSLM 2014, 2018, and 2019

Geographic consistency

Using different dimensions (e.g. including or excluding information) and thresholds (i.e. severe and moderate thresholds), the ranking of districts is similar (Spearman correlation coefficients superior to

.80 and sometimes above 0.90). This conclusion applies to whether the cut-off is established at one or two dimensions (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. Sensitivity analysis: Rank correlation across all districts with or without information, with severe or moderate deprivation thresholds, and with one or two deprivations cut-off.

			Including Information			Without Information		
			Severe threshold	Moderate threshold		Severe threshold	Moderate threshold	
			1 + depr.	1 + depr.	2+ depr.	1 + depr.	1 + depr.	2+ depr.
Including Informati	Severe threshold	1+ depr.	1.00					
	Moderate threshold	1+ depr.	0.80	1.00				
		2+ depr.	0.86	0.89	1.00			
Without Informati	Severe threshold	1+ depr.	0.98	0.82	0.89	1.00		
	Moderate threshold	1+ depr.	0.86	0.81	0.95	0.87	1.00	
		2+ depr.	0.86	0.77	0.92	0.86	0.96	1.00

Source: PSLM, 2014.

Table 4. Sensitivity analysis: Rank correlation across all districts for indicators common across all surveys (base) and including nutrition, with severe or moderate deprivation thresholds, and with one or two deprivations cut-off

			Base + Nutrition			Base		
			Severe threshold	Moderate threshold		Severe threshold	Moderate threshold	
			1+ depr.	1+ depr.	2+ depr.	1+ depr.	1+ depr.	2+ depr.
Base + Nutrition	Severe threshold	1 + depr.	1.00					
	Moderate threshold	1+ depr.	0.84	1.00				
		2+ depr.	0.89	0.83	1.00			
Base	Severe threshold	1+ depr.	0.99	0.84	0.89	1.00		
	Moderate threshold	1+ depr.	0.84	0.99	0.836	0.84	1.00	
		2+ depr.	0.87	0.82	0.99	0.87	0.82	1.00

Source: NNS, 2018

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