

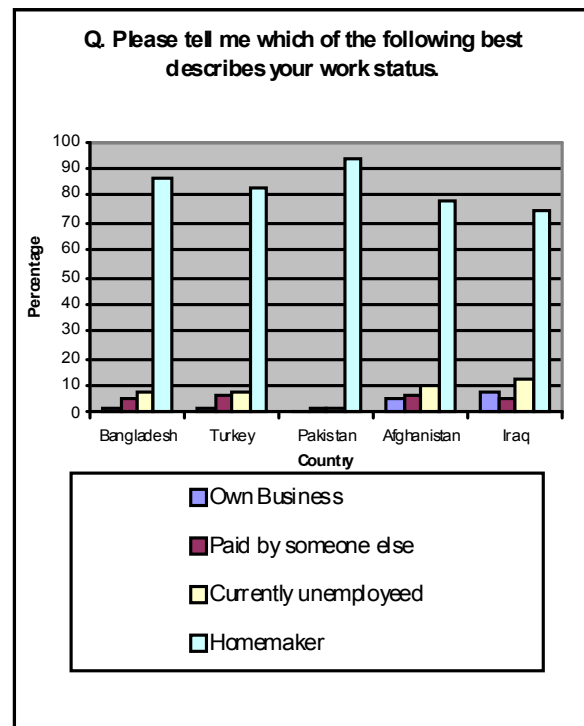
Domestic Lives Of Pakistani Women

by Karl Feld & Will Hayes
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Survey research has a role to play in providing Muslim women with a public voice where custom and culture do not permit them their own. It can be used to inform and shape empowerment policies from the perspective of each population. The Women In Muslim Countries (WIMC) study¹ is designed to measure women's empowerment in actual daily practice, providing a deep look into the oft-perceived gap between current public policy and empowerment initiatives and actual practice on the personal and local level. The answers are intended to yield a metric for promoting excellence in public policy by informing policymakers on women's attitudes about the affects of policy initiatives, as well as a measure of the degree of effectiveness of those policies.

The survey explores several issues Pakistani women are faced with which merit consideration when making policy. Notable matters include employment status, education, the protection of the rights afforded under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) within shari'a as well as the ramifications of poverty.

Of the twenty-two countries in the survey, Pakistan has the highest percentage of women who are homemakers (93%). Though these women are primarily limited to the domestic domain, they still have some



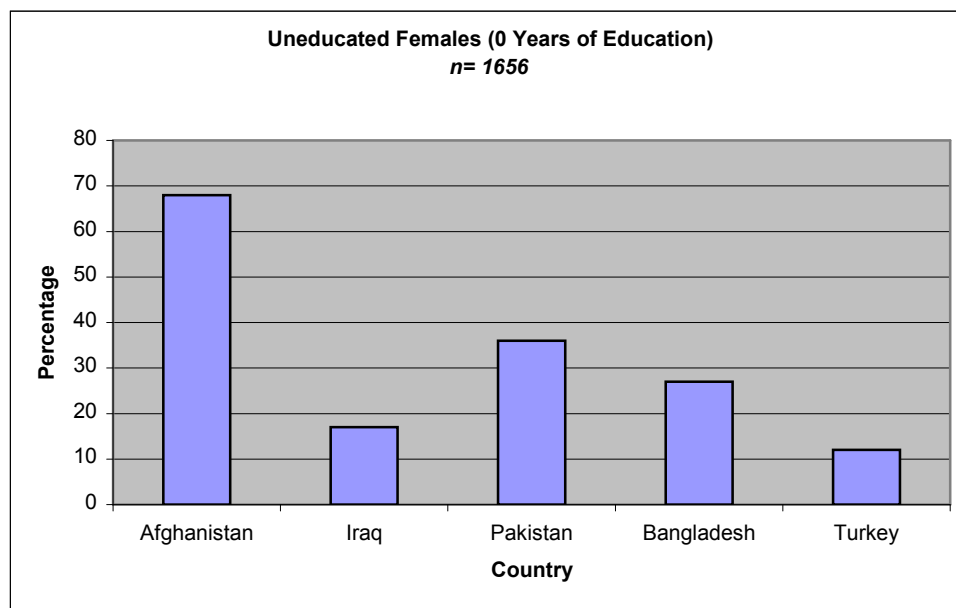
¹ WIMC is sponsored and managed by D3 Systems (www.d3systems.com) and is conducted in 22 Muslim majority countries of the world. Data for Pakistan was collected from March 17 to 30, 2007 from $n=960$ women sampled nationwide on a stratified, random basis. Interviewing was conducted face-to-face by native Pakistanis.



influence concerning household matters. Forty-one percent jointly decide with their spouse what purchases need to be made to meet daily household needs and 28% make these choices on their own. Another 38% manage savings with their spouse and also 47% indicate they control their own independent savings. Despite the reasonable amount of financial influence and freedom, 22% say they have no savings whatsoever.

Over 90% of homemakers follow the news suggesting they are interested in events and matters outside of the home. Homemakers' primary source of news and information is television (68%). Nine percent rely on radio and another 9% turn to their friends and family for news. Those that rely on their family and friends primarily reside in Punjab suggesting strong communal and familial units in this province.

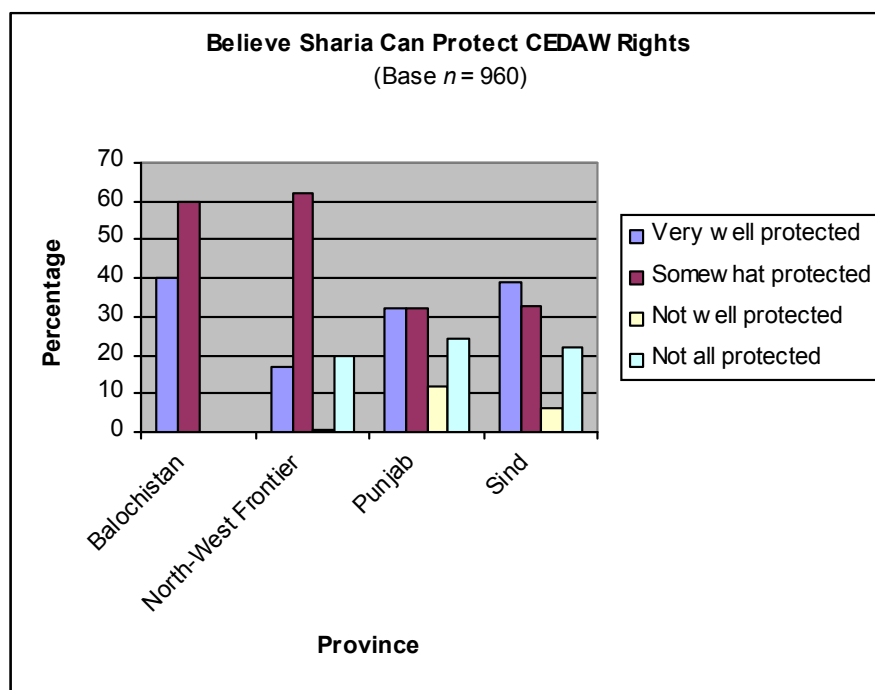
Female education in Pakistan is comparatively poor regardless of employment status. Thirty-five percent have 1-9 years of education while another 36% have no formal education at all. The only country in the survey with lower female education rates is Afghanistan (see "[Living Female in Afghanistan](#)").²



² "Living Female in Afghanistan." D3 Systems, Inc.
<http://www.d3systems.com/public/public/wimc.asp>. 19 June 2008.



A significant portion of Pakistani women do not feel their rights are as protected. As a whole, 31% of Pakistani women indicate shari'a limits their CEDAW rights. Of those who live in Punjab, 36% say their rights are not protected and 27% in Sind feel the same. In the North-West Frontier, the area where the Taliban is the most active in Pakistan, 21% of women feel shari'a infringes on CEDAW rights, the lowest of all provinces. These women tend to be under 40 years of age, poorly educated, non-voters, homemakers, live in rural areas and be either Punjabi, Sindhi or Pashtun.



The overwhelming majority of Pakistani women (99%) express interest in starting their own business if provided with the necessary resources. The appeal in founding their own endeavor most likely stems from poverty. The WIMC data indicates that 57% of Pakistani women's households live on less than one hundred dollars a month (\$3 per day). When asked if they could change one thing to make their life happier, top mentions include having more money (32%), better health (22%) and better education (22%), implying women do not have access to these resources.



On average, Pakistani women give birth to 4.1 children. This rate has not declined since 2001 despite government efforts to reduce it.³ The static birthrate coincides with reports that poverty levels in Pakistan have been increasing since the late 1990s.⁴ One possible contributing factor to the birthrate issue in Pakistan is the lack of access to healthcare for Pakistani women. Thirty percent report they have been denied healthcare because of their gender.

Though regional variances exist, women in Pakistan are largely impoverished homemakers with limited access to healthcare and education. They have varying geographically varied opinions about the role of shari'a in protecting their rights. However, they actively follow the news and view founding their own business as a vessel to economic and social liberties. This suggests that despite their environment many are looking for opportunities to economically improve themselves.

³ "Pakistan: New survey indicates family planning weaknesses." United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=79254>. 15 July 2008.

⁴ "Poverty in Pakistan: Issues, Causes, and Institutional Responses." Asian Development Bank. http://www.adb.org/documents/reports/poverty_pak/. July 2002.

