

IPOR DEMOCRACY TRACKER SERIES

REPORT # 1



July 8, 2025



IPOR Democracy Tracker Series – Report #1

Strong Support, Fragile Landscape

Introduction

The Democracy Tracker in Pakistan is a new initiative by the Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR) designed to monitor and evaluate public opinion on democracy, governance, and political developments in the country. This first report in the series, titled 'Strong Support, Fragile Landscape', offers a snapshot of how citizens across Pakistan perceive the current state of democracy amidst growing political instability, institutional weaknesses, and shifting civil-military dynamics. The Democracy Tracker is envisioned as a recurring, evidence-based barometer that captures trends in democratic attitudes, satisfaction with governance, and the perceived legitimacy of political actors and institutions. Given Pakistan's complex democratic history—including alternating periods of civilian and military rule—this initiative seeks to provide policymakers, civil society, and the media with a reliable source of public insight to shape reforms and strengthen democratic accountability.

Key Findings:

1. Strong Public Faith in Democracy Amid Political Uncertainty in Pakistan:

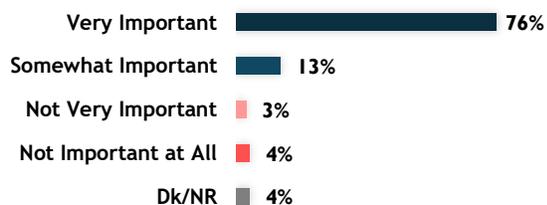


Figure 1: Q. How important do you think is democracy for Pakistan's stability and development?

The results reflect a strong public endorsement of democracy in Pakistan, with 76% of respondents viewing it as “very important” for the country’s stability and development.

Despite ongoing political instability, military influence, and governance challenges, the overwhelming support signals a public desire for democratic continuity. The low percentages expressing skepticism (7%) indicate that anti-democratic narratives still lack broad public traction.

2. Growing Public Disillusionment with The Current Democratic System:

The data reveals deep public dissatisfaction with the current democratic system, as 54% of respondents express discontent, with 43% being completely dissatisfied.

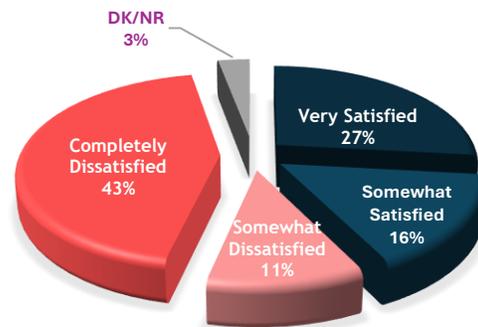


Figure 2: Q. How much satisfied are you with the current democratic system in Pakistan?

In contrast, only 43% report satisfaction to any degree. This sentiment reflects rising frustration with governance performance and democratic outcomes. While a core 27% remain strongly supportive, the overall picture points to a weakening trust in democratic institutions amid ongoing political and institutional challenges.

In the run-up to elections or by-elections, this dissatisfaction may convert into voter volatility, heightening anti-incumbency sentiment and opening the door for opposition parties to exploit public discontent and mobilize support.

3. Skepticism Toward the Military’s Political Role Gains Ground:

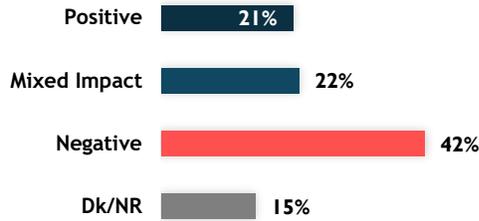


Figure 3: Q. In your view, has the involvement of the military in Pakistan’s political affairs had a positive or negative impact?"

A significant 42% of respondents view military intervention in Pakistan’s political system as having a negative impact, reflecting public unease with non-civilian interference in governance. Only 21% consider it beneficial, while 22% see a mixed impact, indicating divided but largely critical public opinion. These findings suggest a growing demand for democratic civilian supremacy and constitutional governance, with limited acceptance of military influence in political affairs.

4. Public Preference for Pakistan’s Future Political System: Strong Tilt Toward Democracy

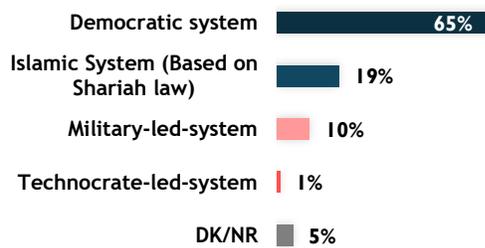


Figure 4: Q. Which of the following systems of governance do you believe is most suitable for Pakistan?

The results reflect strong public endorsement of democracy in Pakistan, with 65% of respondents identifying it as the best system for the country’s future. Despite ongoing political instability, military influence, and governance challenges, this overwhelming support signals a public desire

for democratic continuity. The lower preference for an Islamic system (19%) and military-led rule (10%) indicates that alternative governance models continue to lack broad public traction. The relatively low support for a Sharia-based system (19%) suggests that while religion holds significant cultural and social influence, most Pakistanis prioritize democratic governance—possibly valuing electoral participation, civil rights, and representative institutions over ideological rule.

5. Widespread Perception of Federal Neglect Across Provinces:

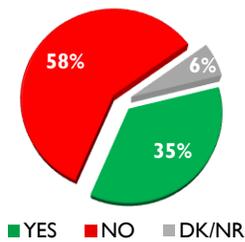


Figure 5: Do you feel that your province/region receives adequate political attention and development funds from the federal government?

The findings reveal a strong public sentiment that the federal government fails to provide adequate political attention and development funds to the provinces, with 58% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction.

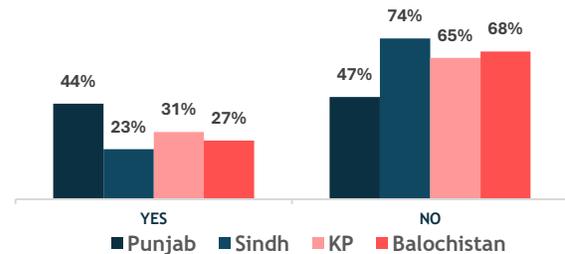


Figure 6: Percentage of respondents (Province-wise)

While Punjab shows relatively higher satisfaction (44%), other provinces—especially Balochistan (68%) and Sindh (74%)—highlight deep concerns about unequal treatment. The results reflect a growing perception of regional marginalization, emphasizing the need for more

inclusive and equitable governance from the center. The high disapproval across all regions, including KPK (65% dissatisfied), underscores a national-level trust deficit in federal resource allocation.

6. Crisis of Representation: Most Pakistanis Feel Their Voices Aren't Heard

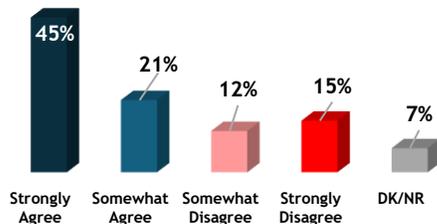


Figure 7: Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement “People in my area are deprived of genuine representation”?

The data reveals a deep-rooted sense of political alienation, with 66% of respondents (45% strongly, 21% somewhat) agreeing that people in their area are deprived of genuine representation. This sentiment reflects a crisis of political trust and inclusiveness, suggesting that many citizens feel disconnected from decision-making processes and unrepresented in governance structures. Only 27% (12% somewhat disagree, 15% strongly disagree) believe otherwise, highlighting the marginal public confidence in the current representative framework.

7. Perceptions of Political and Economic Marginalization Linked to Separatist Support:

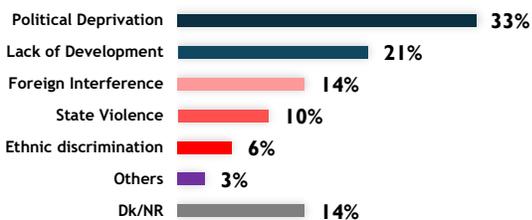


Figure 8: Q. In your opinion, what are the main reasons some people support separatist or nationalist movements in certain regions of Pakistan?”

The survey findings reveal that political deprivation (33%) is perceived as the leading reason people support separatist or nationalist movements in Pakistan. This is followed by lack of development (21%), suggesting that both governance and economic grievances are at the heart of regional unrest. Additional factors include foreign interference (14%), state violence (10%), and ethnic discrimination (6%), pointing to a complex mix of internal and external pressures. The data reflects a widespread belief that systemic neglect and exclusion—both political and developmental—are central to fueling dissent, underscoring the need for responsive and inclusive governance strategies.

8. Building National Unity Through Stronger Institutions and Inclusion:

Most respondents (28%) believe that strengthening democratic institutions is the most crucial step for promoting national unity and stability. This highlights a clear public demand for a robust democratic framework as a foundation for cohesive governance.



Figure 9: Q. In your opinion, what is the most important step the government should take to strengthen national unity and ensure long-term stability in Pakistan?

The second most cited measure is fair distribution of resources (19%), reflecting ongoing concerns over economic disparities and regional inequality. Additionally, 16% call for an end to military interference in politics, and 15% emphasize addressing human rights violations, pointing to broader concerns around civil liberties and civilian supremacy. Respect for regional identities (13%) also feature prominently, underlining the need for inclusive and culturally sensitive governance.

Conclusion

The findings from this first wave of IPOR's Democracy Tracker reveal a complex public attitude toward democracy in Pakistan. While democratic ideals enjoy strong normative support—with a clear majority identifying democracy as the preferred political system—there is growing disillusionment with the performance and inclusiveness of democratic governance. Citizens express dissatisfaction with federal responsiveness, institutional effectiveness, and their own political representation. The data reflects rising skepticism toward non-civilian political interference and increasing awareness of regional disparities and marginalization. These patterns indicate a fragile democratic landscape—one that is widely valued but underperforming in practice. If left unaddressed, this gap between democratic aspiration and democratic delivery risks deepening public frustration and weakening democratic legitimacy.

Data and Methodology

To systematically assess public opinion regarding the state of democracy in Pakistan, IPOR implemented a nationally representative survey based on a structured and methodologically robust design. The survey was conducted between May and June 2025, targeting adult residents of Pakistan aged 18 and above, with a total sample size of 1,104 respondents. Data collection was carried out through Computer Assisted Telephonic Interviews (CATI) by trained professionals, ensuring a close match to the national demographic spread. The sampling frame consisted of a phone panel of 425,820

randomly selected active mobile users, originally recruited through face-to-face interviews across all provinces. In the first stage of sampling, Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) were proportionally allocated according to provincial population shares; in the second stage, mobile numbers were stratified by province, and respondents were selected using Systematic Sampling with a Random Start (SSRS) to ensure representativeness. The survey achieved an approximate response rate of 55%, with a margin of error not exceeding $\pm 3-5\%$ at a 95% confidence level for national-level results. Minor rounding may cause figures in charts and tables to not total 100 percent.

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the survey sample was designed to reflect the national population distribution, ensuring representativeness across key segments. Most respondents (59%) resided in rural areas, while 41% were from urban localities. The gender composition included 61% male and 39% female respondents, highlighting a moderate gender imbalance commonly observed in telephonic surveys. Age-wise, the sample was weighed toward the working-age population, with 62% of respondents falling between 25 and 49 years, 17% between 18 and 24 years, and 21% aged 50 and above. Educational attainment varied, with 16% of respondents having no formal education, and others distributed across primary (12%), secondary (12%), matriculation (21%), intermediate (17%), graduate (13%), and master's level (9%) qualifications. This demographic distribution supports a comprehensive analysis of public opinion across rural divides, age cohorts, and educational backgrounds.

Note: Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR) is an independent research organization registered with SECP, specializing in public opinion on democracy, governance, and social issues. Its Executive Director is a member of ESOMAR, reflecting adherence to global research standards.



<https://www.facebook.com/lporPakistan/>



www.ipor.com.pk



<https://twitter.com/lporPakist>