

Discrimination and Inequality in Employment

Stories
from
Urban
Sindh



Child and Labour Rights
Welfare Organisation



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**Human Rights
Commission
of Pakistan**

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Contents

Acknowledgments	v
Introduction	1
The 'Other': Voices from Urban Sindh	3
Countering Inequality at the Policy Level	12
Everyday Discrimination: Focus Group Discussions.....	22
Conclusion: Patterns of discrimination	28
Annex: Survey Results.....	30

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Syed Moazzam Ali
President
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Introduction

This report documents instances of discrimination against religious minorities in employment and workplaces in urban Sindh (Karachi and Hyderabad). The research was carried out by the Child and Labour Rights Welfare Organisation (CLWO), in conjunction with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). The report presents a series of case studies, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with respondents based in Hyderabad and six districts of Karachi (Karachi East, Karachi West, Karachi South, Karachi Central, Korangi and Malir).¹

Several important findings emerge from this report. It was generally felt that religious minorities faced difficulties in finding decent employment commensurate with their qualifications. In many cases, respondents were clearly overqualified for the position they held, and felt they had been discriminated against on account of their faith. This seemed to be an ‘unwritten policy’ on the part of many employers.

Discrimination in terms of employment opportunities was compounded by the pressure on religious minorities to convert: while many respondents reported having received ‘advice’ from colleagues and acquaintances encouraging them to convert to Islam, some had even been offered bribes to do so. Harassment in this regard was common experience. Indeed, the pressure to convert had sometimes proved unbearable, affecting their work.

There were also many instances in which religious minorities subjected to unfair practices at work or to harassment, intimidation and even violence at the hands of non-state actors, could not rely on the state for access to justice. This is especially concerning when we consider that class, poverty, gender and disability compound the discrimination that religious minorities face.

¹ The following areas were identified based on their large religious minority communities: Essa Nagri, Safora Goth, Ayub Goth, Pehlwan Goth, Azam Basti, Akhtar Colony, Baldia Town, Creek, Kemari, Mahmoodabad, Punjab Colony, Saddar, Lyari, Nazimabad No. 2, Khamosh Colony, D’Silva Town, Golimar, Bhangoria Town, Christian Colony, Bilal Colony, Qayyumabad, Zia Colony, Ibrahim Hyderi, Saudabad and Khokhrapar.

Sadly, faith-based discrimination seems woven into the social fabric in Pakistan. The state must make a concerted effort to eliminate discrimination in education, employment, access to public services, and access to justice. The message that must be put across is that all citizens are equal in the eyes of the state as guaranteed by the Constitution and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Pakistan has a moral obligation to uphold. For its part, mainstream society must develop not just tolerance, but also embrace its religious diversity and endorse pluralism at every level.

The 'Other': Voices from Urban Sindh

The following case studies from the Hindu and Christian communities document a diverse range of stories, cutting across occupation, gender and class.

Dr Sabir Michael, 41, Christian. Associate professor of sociology. Blind from birth.

According to Sabir, the most difficult thing for a visually impaired/blind person is mobility, as there are no specific transport facilities of any kind, nor pavements to walk along roads.

He came from a poor family with few financial resources. He originally wanted to be a diplomat but was dissuaded from studying international relations by a college teacher and encouraged to do social work to benefit his own people.

He encountered discrimination in his college days. Coming from conservative backgrounds, his college-mates viewed Christians, especially differently abled ones, in a negative light. He was urged, threatened, and even offered bribes, to change his religion, ostensibly to improve his prospects. Christians would be served food and drink from different utensils.

He was ignored in class, even though he was always a good student. Some of his teachers even ignored him, and he felt that those from a military background even hated him. He contends that Christians are blamed whenever Muslims are involved in adversarial situations – the Iraq war; the Babri Mosque issue in India, the war in Afghanistan.

“You are Christian, why don't you go to America? – People thought of us as direct beneficiaries and they would connect us directly with these issues.”

Throughout his 20-25 years of human rights activism, Sabir has felt that it is an unwritten state policy not to treat minorities equally with the majority of citizens and that the general attitude is to use them only as sanitation workers. After 2002, he says that non-state actors have played

an increasing role, but whether that is beyond the control of the state is unclear. This is a major factor in the rising levels of concern for minorities.

Sabir believes that it is extremely difficult for minorities to find respectable and well-paid jobs and any Christian or Hindu who is in a position of importance faces numerous problems. He is aware that people still think of him as an untouchable, a *bungi* (Urdu term used to characterise someone in the lowest social order). He says that propaganda has spread in his university that he is a 'liberal', that he is an 'agent of the West'.

"When we allow one type of prejudice to take root, all other prejudices will automatically follow and flourish. The problem persists."

When he first applied for his job in the university, his appointment was opposed by some senior academics who said that a blind person could not do the work. A member of the university syndicate who also happened to belong to the Jamaat-e-Islami, supported Sabir. Other syndicate members, as well as friends from the MQM, also gave their support and eventually he was appointed.

Shirley Anjum, 54, Christian. Staff Nurse

Shirley's husband is Muslim and they have five children. She has faced numerous difficulties since joining the staff at an eye hospital.

According to her, the local government has always been controlled by political parties, and is rife with corruption and abuse of power.

She was living in the hospital's staff housing facility in Lea market, Lyari when it was attacked by workers belonging to the local ruling party. The house was looted and, bereft of their belongings, the family had to shift to North Nazimabad. The life of her husband, a religious person, was continually under threat from Lyari gangs.

Fearing for her life, Shirley took leave from the hospital and had to stop working from 2001 to 2010.

She was reinstated without pay in 2011 and has been working ever since without recompense. Her repeated requests and demands for her salary were ignored. She submitted a complaint to the Ombudsman in May 2017. The Ombudsman passed an order with full back benefits and directed the KMC to pay all her dues within forty-five days through the proper channels.

The order was at first ignored then, after further direction from the Ombudsman, her back benefits were calculated at over three million. This was rejected by the hospital's Medical Superintendent and re-estimated at around 1.9 million. Despite the Ombudsman's orders, her dues have not been paid and her children have to contribute to the household expenses.

"The reason for all this injustice is that I am Christian."

Shirley says that Christians have to work for half a day on their religious festivals, even if they miss church services.

She believes that non-Muslims are treated differently from Muslims, who even work somewhere else while on the hospital's payroll. She quotes the case of the Director HRM who stayed in Canada for 14 years yet received a substantial amount in back payment on his return.

However, Shirley says, if you argued with them they would stop your salary in the bank, even if you were right. She is considering appealing once again to the Ombudsman.

Parveen Frank, 67, Christian. Physiotherapist.

In Parveen's locality, there are around 300 Christian homes and 8 to 10 Hindu families. She has lived there since 1958. The locality is not leased by the government and therefore they do not qualify for loans. According to her, the people do not know how to have the locality improved, so they have no amenities from the government. There are no water supplies and they have to buy water at Rs 30 per gallon. A large tanker costs Rs 1,800.

Parveen currently goes door to door providing rehabilitation physiotherapy services to the needy that have been recommended treatment by doctors. She provides services to handicapped children free of charge.

She previously ran a centre 'Maa Sahara' (mother support) in her home. In the morning, she ran a Montessori, and then from 3pm to 9pm she did rehabilitation work. An NGO used to give her Rs 200 per child and most of that went to providing transportation to children.

Her problems started after she reconstructed her house. She says non-state actors (religious extremists and political gangsters) victimise Christians, beat up children and are involved in armed robberies. The police do nothing.

Parveen says these gangsters have connections with the Taliban. They would come to her door and demand that her sons should come out. She sent her sons away to their uncle's and was alone with only her special needs son when her house was attacked.

"I feel scared, threatened. How long will this continue?"

Her home was pelted with stones and she was told to leave. She had no roof on her house, and they stole electricity from her by hooking onto the power line. They also vacated other houses by force on apparently 'religious grounds'. When local people went for a picnic, the gangsters showed up and tried to abuse women. When they resisted, a man and a woman were shot dead. They also shot two brothers in their shop when they refused to pay extortion money. Only after the Ranger's intervention were people able to return to their homes.

She eventually had to close down her centre.

Recently, her son Duncan was attacked as he left home for work. He was beaten mercilessly, on his legs, back, body and head. He was found lying in a pool of blood. The police were reluctant to help and they were unable to register a First Investigation Report (FIR).

Disillusioned and frustrated, Parveen sought the help of HRCP, which helped pursue her case.

Raj Kumar, 34, Hindu. Qualified associate engineer, working as a mason.

Despite having a diploma in civil engineering, Raj Kumar works as a mason. He moved from Dadu (in western Sindh) to Karachi to find work to make ends meet when he was unable to find a permanent job. He worked for two years in the Forest Department before being laid off, he believes on religious grounds. He has nine children, seven daughters and two sons.

His 13-year-old daughter was kidnapped by influential people in the area. It took him three days to find out who had taken her. He went to the village feudal head who at first said to come the next day and his daughter would be handed over. However, when he went back, he was shown a document that said his daughter had converted to Islam. He was told that nothing could be done otherwise a religious issue would arise. He was

advised to give up and leave, or the police would come after him and lock him up because his daughter would testify that she had become Muslim.

He wanted to register an FIR but was told it would cost Rs 30,000-40,000 (clearly a bribe to police officials). They also said if he engaged a lawyer, it would cost him at least Rs 15,000 to 20,000 in court.

Raj Kumar moved from that place. He had been threatened, the people involved were feudal and had power. According to him, the men are gangsters and have weapons. They run a drug trade in the neighbourhood. He thought it was best to use what little money he made to feed his children rather than give it to the police or lawyers.

"I am poor, I am Hindu; what can I do to them?"

He says there are other Hindus in the area, mostly labourers who work in factories, and they all face prejudice. They try to keep their heads down and stay out of trouble. They want to live with some dignity but are not allowed to do so. He says other people's daughters have also been kidnapped; the same thing happened to his relatives in Larkana.

"We are labourers, we don't know where to find justice, how to seek help."

He has never been allowed to meet his daughter. Her maternal grandmother wanted to look for her, but they are not even allowed to pass through their streets. The family is told they are Hindus and his daughter is a Muslim now so they will be killed if they dare to come.

Rehana Jung, 38, Christian. Professional swimming coach.

Mother of five children, Rehana was previously employed as a swimming instructor at DHA. There, the Sports-in-charge was the leader of a group of both Muslims and Christians. She was subjected to extreme pressure to convert, which she consistently resisted. This led to her being harassed on a regular basis. Even the Christians sided with the others, perhaps out of fear of reprisals.

Rehana says that almost every day she suffered from this type of mental torture until finally they forced her to resign from her job. Afterwards her financial position became very bad. Her salary was stopped and her benefits blocked. She was not given a copy of her resignation.

“They would ask me to convert like Yusuf Youhana [former cricketer who converted to Islam and changed his name to Muhammad Yusuf]. They would tell me that I would become famous like him.”

She approached the head office for help but when her own sister, under pressure, did not support her, her complaint was disregarded on the grounds that all the Christians were under threat and not just her alone.

She later opened a beauty salon, but even there her clients would ask her to convert. She would tell them to read the Bible, and then arguments and fights would break out. Now she stays silent.

Rehana believes there is no place in this country for minorities and no opportunities to advance. She says people are not aware that there is a quota for minorities in government jobs.

Where she lives, everyone is Christian. She says there is no available water and they have to purchase it for Rs 24,000-25,000 per month. The elected councillors do nothing and people do not petition for their rights. All they want is for their voice to be heard. Water is life.

Yunus Sadiq, 60, Christian. Salesman.

Yunus Sadiq lives in Mahmudabad. His son, Edric Shimson was working as an accountant in a Korean hospital in Orangi Town.

Edric was travelling to work in the office vehicle along with three colleagues when the vehicle was stopped at Shamshi Colony by men in another car. The men first demanded to know who was Korean. When they said that they were all Pakistani, the men searched the vehicle then put Edric and a manager, Ilyas Javed, into another car. The manager apparently escaped by jumping out of the car at Tool Plaza but Edric has not been seen since.

Ilyas Javed reported the incident to security personnel but they told him to go to the Gadap police station. By then, the vehicle was no longer at Tool Plaza. He was then sent to Pakistan Police Station at Pakistan Bazar, Orangi Town. A case was then initiated in the High Court in Sindh. It was revealed that Ilyas Javed had not escaped in Tool Plaza, but had been taken there. The case was transferred to Client Branch in Karachi, following which Ilyas Javed fled to Sri Lanka in 2014 and has not returned since.

The IRO has been changed about 16-17 times since and each time there is no progress. A Joint Investigation Team (JIT) has been formed 5-6 times. Yunus Sadiq says there has been no cooperation from the police in his case. He was told by a lady doctor at the Korean hospital that the police would regularly come and take away some of the staff to question them about the case. They were tortured and money was extorted. She advised him to withdraw his case.

Yunus Sadiq says they have no peace of mind now. His wife is grieving for her son. They are in debt. His son was engaged to be married but Yunus had to tell the father of the girl that she should marry someone else as there was no news of his son.

“The people who want to come to power say too much about doing good things, but when they come to power they forget all the promises.”

He heard that the kidnappers had asked for money but there was no proof. The incident was converted to a missing persons case in December 2016 and transferred to the city court. There has been no progress since he filed an FIR on the advice of the JIT.

Yunus wrote to the Chief Justice of Pakistan and the Chief of Army Staff, as well as the Governor of Sindh and Inspector General Sindh. He did not receive any satisfactory response. An order was passed but no concrete action has been taken. He believes it is because he comes from a minority community and no attention is paid to them. He has no money to pay for a criminal law advocate who could handle his case properly. He has approached HRCPC and the Sarim Burney Welfare Trust but no settlement is in sight.

Amjad Daniel, 43, Christian. Water and sanitation administration.

For 20 years, Amjad Daniel has been a sanitation worker in the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) in Hyderabad. He has a B.A. degree. When he requested promotion to the general clerical section, which was his right, he was told that promotion was impossible. He approached HRCPC and was referred to Justice Majida Rizvi, Chairperson of the Commission for Women’s Rights, Sindh. She suggested he should submit an application, which he subsequently did.

He had also applied to the Human Rights Cell of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and HRCPC liaised with them on his behalf. The Supreme Court

intervened and two hearings were held in Karachi, attended by HRCP and a judge. Finally, with the help of HRCP and the Supreme Court his case was settled and he was given his promotion.

Amjad says departments are not observing the 10% promotion quota for minorities, nor the 5% quota for minorities or the quota for people with disabilities. Merit and performance are ignored. He says that biases and discriminatory attitudes towards the minorities prevails in the departments, though he thinks this is decreasing, especially if people come to know that cases can be taken to the Supreme Court.

According to Amjad, one of the biggest problems is that minority members spend their whole life in service and retire at the age of 60 without a single promotion. Members of the majority community are promoted and retire in higher grades with all benefits. Religious minorities can join the union but can never hold higher posts because of the general biased attitude towards them.

“We are all like brothers. If we talk of minority and majority we cannot be successful.”

Salaries remained unpaid for at least four months because the department operates on a subsidy from the government and there is no proper system for recovery of water bills. They have no other source of income so people are in great difficulties and cannot pay their children’s school fees.

He says when minority leaders enter politics and come into power, they take no further interest in minorities and remain only loyal to their political parties. The roads, sewage and water systems in the Christian colonies are in disrepair. Christians with BA and MA degrees are forced to get cleaning and sweeping jobs. The younger generation are all trying to go abroad because they see no future for themselves.

Amjad believes that the Human Rights Cell of the Supreme Court should monitor all government departments to ensure the rights of all minorities. These injustices, he says, would end if the departments were aware that they were being monitored and held to account.

Rajesh,² 22, Hindu. NGO administration.

Coming from a family of eight brothers and two sisters, Rajesh lives in Umerkot. His father died of cancer and he is the only one who earns in the family. He has a BA degree from Sindh University, Hyderabad.

He started working for a microfinance organisation in 2017. He was the only Hindu amongst a staff of eight. He performed his duties so well that he was given an award. His Muslim colleagues were envious and responded by tormenting him. They told him his religion was 'not good' and he should not go to the temple. He should fast and pray with them and should eat their food with them. They created such a tense situation for him that he could not work.

"We are all Pakistanis and we should not think as Hindu, Muslim or Christians etc. If we live in unity our country will progress."

His branch manager was supportive and the office administration transferred the staff who were involved in the harassment to another office. Rajesh continues to work there.

He had applied for a job in an NGO where there were 25 vacancies but was not selected. He was told he had to bring a reference/recommendation letter from an MPA or MNA of his area which was not possible for him.

² Pseudonym, name withheld.

Countering Inequality at the Policy Level

As part of this study, the CLWO team interviewed eight key informants to gauge what steps should be taken to better protect and promote religious minorities' rights at a legislative and policy level. Their interviews provide important insight into the everyday problems that many such communities continue to face.

Dr Jaipal Chabria, 55, president, Hindu Forum.

Dr Jaipal has been involved in politics for 35 years, since his student days, and is President of the Hindu Forum in Pakistan. He has considerable knowledge of Pakistan and its political affairs and is well-acquainted with issues relating to both the Hindu and Christian communities.

Dr Jaipal emphasises the need to recognise the contributions of Hindus and Christians towards nation-building. He points out that the first mayor of Karachi was Jamshed Mitra, Ganga Ram Hospital was launched by a Hindu, and the DG College was also formed by a Hindu.

He believes that the Quaid's vision for all citizens to receive equal rights has not been followed and non-Muslims have become second-class citizens. Attitudes across departments and organisations vary; there are fewer problems in areas where there are liberal-minded people, but discrimination exists where people are illiterate or very religious. He quotes the case of a Muslim friend in a shipping department being ostracised by his colleagues because he ate lunch with a Hindu cleaner.

Dr Jaipal expresses extreme concern over the misuse of the blasphemy law, where a non-Muslim can be accused by anyone with a personal grudge and can face the death penalty or lynching by a mob. He calls for the rule of law to ensure cases are properly investigated and people held to account for false allegations.

In Dr Jaipal's opinion, the government and political parties could play a major role in establishing the rights of non-Muslims by ensuring that curricular material highlights the contributions of non-Muslims to the country. Perceptions need to be changed.

His wife is a doctor and helped deliver a female child. The mother was so happy she wanted to name her child after his wife, but then asked her why she could not be Muslim. He regrets the prevailing practice, particularly in Sindh, where girls are abducted then 'converted' to Islam. The law preventing anyone under the age of 18 from changing their religion is not observed.

"We have to work together and make people understand the rights of all communities."

Dr Jaipal advocates for the curriculum to be changed in madrassahs, and subjects such as civics, mathematics and vocational courses introduced. He believes that this would engage students in development and draw them away from radicalised ideas.

Dr Jaipal's message to society, the government, political parties and civil society organisations is to work on brotherhood which can be promoted through education, trade unions and the media.

Amar Nath Motomal, 76. Lawyer, human rights activist and leader of Karachi's Hindu community.

Amar Nath has witnessed both good and bad times during his long residence in Pakistan. He says 95% of Hindus in Pakistan are illiterate and poor and do not benefit from the funds allocated for minorities by the government, which instead go towards the repair of temples or to more privileged people. He says the government needs to ensure that such funds go towards rehabilitating needy Hindus in colonies.

The pressure to convert is a major problem, according to Amar Nath, with young girls abducted from their homes and kept in confinement, only to be declared converts later and kept from their parents. He says the police offer no assistance in returning these girls to their homes.

Amar Nath says that Hindus elected to Parliament are too afraid to speak out and are under constant threat not to raise their voices for their community.

He contends that the 5% quota is not observed and those who have jobs have only succeeded through their own initiatives. He has no knowledge of anyone complaining in the courts or to the local unions about injustice or discrimination.

There are many social problems, he says, but no escape, and they live in a hate-filled and enmity-riddled environment. Although he believes in general that the government has satisfactorily managed the education systems for minorities, religious education remains a problem. Facilities for religious education do not exist in schools, and civics has been suggested as an alternative. He says that hate material in religious education propagates prejudice.

“Religious education is a problem for our children.”

Amar Nath says the government has no power to control terrorism, which continues unabated. He believes the government itself has increased the power of fundamentalists and extremists by seeking compromises with them.

Ashok Sharma, 40. Journalist.

Ashok has experienced discrimination at work, although he says after 17 years he is accustomed to handling it. He says minority journalists have been advised not to report on religious gatherings or demonstrations for Islamic rights, or what he calls ‘organisational reporting’ involving the Rangers, police and other law enforcement agencies. He has even been questioned on why he was reporting on sanitation workers’ issues and their work in the Hyderabad City Corporation, instead of reporting on minority issues. Although leave is granted for religious occasions, such as Diwali, it is unpaid.

Ashok cites several issues that both Hindus and Christians face. In Hyderabad, their graveyards are surrounded by factories and residential areas and swamped with water and garbage. There is illegal occupation. Following protests from the communities, the Mayor and parliamentarians visited the graveyard and some improvement work is ongoing. Other issues include lack of maintenance of roads, poor drainage and sanitation, and a faulty water supply system. The residents are mainly illiterate and are unsure how to report these problems.

Ashok says minority factory workers are paid lower salaries; for example, workers in a cotton factory or pulse mill receive Rs 3,000 less per month than their Muslim counterparts. They are helpless because they are needy and have no alternative. He says the women are blackmailed in many ways that would not be tolerated in a Muslim community.

“Sometimes jobs are sold or given to a candidate with influential recommendations.”

He acknowledges that conversion is happening, but he says it is not coerced although the ‘proper system of conversion is not followed’. He points to poverty and lack of opportunities as factors that influence a girl into accepting that conversion is the only way out. He quotes an incident in Khipro that was reported in the media, where a qualified doctor married his daughter to someone from the Punjab. Within four months, the marriage was over and the girl was blackmailed for money.

Ashok also says that the job quota is not being implemented, and jobs are being filled by Muslims. When 90,000 jobs were advertised, many candidates applied but were unsuccessful. Sometimes jobs are ‘sold’ or given to candidates with influential recommendations. He says even sanitary worker/sweeper posts are not being given to non-Muslims.

According to Ashok, the Hindu Marriage Bill is a political issue in Sindh and the Hindu community are seeking more amendments. He thinks that many people, including the leaders, did not actually understand the Bill but helped its passage because they wanted the credit in Parliament.

The laws exist, Ashok says, but lack implementation. He says the minority affairs ministry in Sindh and the capital need to be more active and work to protect minorities; this should include helping widows, improving education and scholarships for children, and maintaining the communities’ graveyards and temples. There are district committees under the ministry in Sindh, for example in Sanghar, Umarnot and Mithi, about which people have no knowledge. There are no minority representatives on the committee.

Ashok says that Hindus in politics are not elected as representatives of their community. They are selected from the party and do not attend to the needs of the Hindu community.

M. Parkash, 60. Advocate.

M. Parkash has worked on minority rights for the last 30-35 years. He was also a member of the District Council, Hyderabad. He says that the minority communities face many difficulties. In particular, he highlights the issue of the 5% quota, which social activists are still struggling to have implemented. He believes that the 5% quota is politically utilised and jobs could even be sold.

He states that the job quota for children in a death-in-service case should be applied immediately. The son of a friend who was martyred had to wait 3-4 years for a job and he says this is a particular problem for minorities.

Hindus and Christians are employed mainly on a contract basis to clean drains and gutters. They have no job security and are often involved in accidents due to the lack of safety measures.

He has taken up cases of death, pensions, gratuity cases and, where possible, promotion, all of which he cites as examples of discrimination against minorities.

M. Parkash says the system of reserved seats has weakened the status of representation for the minorities. When members are elected, they have more power and it has benefited minorities, women, labour and *haris*. He was often told by his contacts in KMC and UC councils that they could do nothing for him as he had no right to a reserved seat. Without powerful councillors, the infrastructure for minorities is very poor.

“Until liberal education is provided, things will not improve.”

M Parkash stresses that discrimination will continue to exist until a more liberal education is introduced which promotes tolerance and understanding. His message to the Hindu and Christian youth is to educate themselves, without which they cannot progress or improve their situation. Implementation of the laws and policies and recognition of merit are also essential.

Pushpa Kumari, 40. Social worker.

As part of her work in various social sectors and organisations, Pushpa has observed discrimination at the workplace, especially for women. In particular, women face problems with regard to transport, with ‘low-caste’ Hindu women being forced to stand on buses for up to two hours, and lack of separate seating arrangements in the offices. Prayer times are not allowed for minority workers and, in some organisations, separate plates and glasses are provided for minority males and females.

According to Pushpa, people are also discriminated against in their jobs. She gives the example of a journalist friend who was told to keep his utensils separate during Ramazan because he was a Hindu. He

complained to HRCP and the government authorities. Nothing was done and he was transferred from his place of work. He had to shift with his family to a village in Dadu and faced continuous harassment. His salary was stopped for three months. He finally left the country. The situation caused his family a lot of fear and anxiety. As a result, his wife suffered from insomnia and developed psychiatric problems and doctors felt she was a suicide risk.

“Parents think they will not be able to take care of their daughters properly, so they arrange their marriage at an early age. Although it creates health problem for the girls.”

Pushpa welcomes the introduction of legislation on Hindu marriages and on divorce laws for the Christian community, which she says will benefit both communities. She believes the Bills will alleviate the suffering of the minorities who have to endure domestic violence, burning and torturing.

She says the government should reform the laws to protect workers and allocate a budget for the welfare of minorities. Factory workers are not given proper salaries and women workers have health and insurance problems. The conditions in which they live are also very poor. The slums where Christians and Hindus reside lack basic facilities such as water, gas and electricity and sanitation is a particular problem. Pushpa says up to 450 sanitation workers are employed on a temporary basis only.

She concedes that child marriage is prevalent, particularly in Thar, Mithi, Hyderabad, Mirpur Khas and Umarmkot districts where the minorities were poor and uneducated. She attributes this to the fact that these people work in the fields and do not want to leave their 12-year-old girls at home. So, they marry them off early, even though it means that they give birth to children at a very early age, causing health problems. She quotes the example of 400 new-born deaths in Tharparkar due to lack of proper nutrition.

Pushpa believes that efforts are being made to introduce minority protection laws and, if they are implemented, improvements in society will follow. She thinks the education system for minority children should be strengthened and given priority, and that their attendance in government schools should be monitored and ensured.

Renuka Swami, 35. Social worker and female rights activist.

Renuka says there is discrimination against minorities in general, and mentions that it is particularly hard for Hindu males. She believes the root of the problem is in the education sector. At a certain level Islamiat is compulsory, which she says is unfair and discriminatory for non-Muslims. Books and curricular material should promote values of tolerance and acceptance, yet they encourage prejudice and hate. Hindus are portrayed as misers, cheats and womanisers.

Renuka says Hindus and Christians are trapped in a vicious circle when it comes to lack of opportunities in development, education and employment. Because they are considered only worthy of sanitation jobs, they do not earn enough to educate their children who are in turn only equipped to do the same jobs as their parents. She asserts that it is the responsibility of the state to change these circumstances, and improve the safety, security and health concerns of women.

“Minorities in Parliament are not the representatives of the minority. They are the representatives of the political party and not the people.”

On the question of child marriages, Renuka says this is a general problem and not confined to the Hindu community although she is aware that it is highly prevalent. She believes it is predominately in rural areas where the people fear that their daughters will be vulnerable and therefore marry them off. She thinks the Christian community has a stronger support system from churches, missionaries and health institutions.

She herself has not experienced discrimination at work, but has come across it in education and other institutions. During the Babri Masjid issue in 1992/93, a group of her friends questioned her about it and she was told her people were responsible. At the airport, she is asked if she is Hindu and what part of India she comes from, and she says this divisive perception is not dispelled by the media.

Renuka says problems exist for all poor people, but they are worse for the minorities. People are reluctant to suffer the indignity of being questioned over and over at NADRA and are therefore discouraged from applying for an ID card. She says there is discrimination in school admission, but doubts whether any research has been conducted on that issue. Health rights and education are not accessible for the poor because they cannot seek justice.

She is adamant that minority members in Parliament do not represent their people, only their political parties, and they do not avail the opportunities of their position to argue for the needs of their own communities.

In Renuka's opinion, there is no particular formula for improvement. Along with education, she emphasises the need for freedom of expression and a supportive media. She thinks the youth has a big role to play and should be actively engaged by civil society organisations. At an institutional level, she believes political empowerment, awareness, implementation of laws, education, and a review of curriculum are essential for the minorities and overall development. She advocates for research into how many women from minorities are in decision-making jobs.

Karamat Ali, 70. Veteran trade unionist.

Discrimination issues affect all labour, according to Karamat Ali, but he acknowledges that the religious minorities face discrimination in all walks of life with regard to health, education, business and access to civic facilities such as supply of water and sanitation etc.

He says the majority of Hindus and Christians in the country are considered low-caste and given the most menial jobs such as cleaning and sweeping. He has observed that in their place of work their food and drink utensils are kept separate. Once, when he ate with them, the Muslim workers were very unhappy with him. He tried unsuccessfully to change this practice.

He also wanted the cleaners to have representation in the union he was forming and proposed the name of a Christian. Soon after, the workers said that the man had converted to Islam. The man left his home but was very unhappy because he was isolated and no one would arrange a marriage for him in the Muslim community. Karamat Ali then arranged a reconciliation with the man's Christian wife.

Karamat Ali says the situation worsened after the Ahmadiyya community was declared non-Muslim and became second-class citizens. In his opinion, it is immaterial to base the argument for equality on the fact that non-Muslims contributed to the creation of Pakistan. As citizens, they are entitled to equal rights under the Constitution.

“According to the state and the law, all citizens are equal, but they are not.”

He states that the discrimination against non-Muslims takes many forms. They are confined to low-paid, menial jobs and cannot afford to maintain their families, let alone educate them. They are vilified by preachers in mosques. He points to the hate material in textbooks and the biased curriculum at schools as exacerbating divisions among the citizens of Pakistan, even for the different Muslim sects. The 5% quota is not observed.

Safina Jawed, 51, NGO worker

According to Safina, harassment takes two forms for women – one is because of their gender and the other is if they belong to a minority. They lack support in their workplace and do not complain because they need to work and fear losing their jobs. They also do not share their problems at home because they might be stopped from going to work and the family would suffer. The most vulnerable are the factory workers; at least in schools and universities harassment cases are reported.

She says minorities lack awareness of their rights and how to seek redress. She thinks the Church and other institutions such as schools and colleges need to help publicise such awareness programmes and the community leaders, councillors and local government minority members should take up discrimination and harassment cases.

“There are two types of harassment for minority women. One for being women and another for being a minority.”

Safina says that while NGOs are working on increasing awareness, they cannot operate alone. They must have meetings and discussions with MNAs, MPAs, legislators and political leaders on minority issues, as well as the Islamic Council, and take up issues with them. She says, however, that the country is based on Islamic ideologies and therefore does not provide equal status to non-Muslim citizens and minorities. Even the name Islamic Jamhuria Pakistan signifies this. She thinks minority communities are not organised and should unite.

She says that human rights groups and political leaders often express their solidarity over the rights of minorities but they back down when their

lives are threatened. This is another reason minorities stay silent and the momentum is lost.

Safina says the joint electoral system has been useful and political parties are beginning to think about the minority voters, but they have their own issues and do not concentrate on the problems of minorities. The attitudes of bureaucrats must change and useful legislation has to be introduced.

She also advocates the formation of committees against harassment in organisations with large numbers of employees. Posters and noticeboards should display information about the committee and its members so that the staff knows where to go and whom to contact if they have a complaint. She also emphasises that heads of departments need to be sensitised to the issues faced by female and minority workers.

Everyday Discrimination: Focus Group Discussions

Three focus group discussions were held as part of this study: two in Karachi and one in Hyderabad. The groups discussed the types of discrimination that religious minorities tend to face. Among the issues raised were (a) employment, including equitable access to employment opportunities and working conditions; (b) the administration of justice, looking at negative experiences vis-à-vis the police and the courts; (c) health, education and housing, including access to health services, living conditions and the provision of other services such as water, sanitation and infrastructure; and (d) violence and harassment. The common issues that emerged from these discussions are detailed below.

Employment

Participants felt that access to employment was often politically motivated and that the correct selection procedures were not applied – to the detriment of religious minorities. White-collar jobs were more likely to be awarded based on education and qualifications, but if the person appointed was from a religious minority, it was harder for them to exercise their authority. Meanwhile, blue-collar jobs such as sanitation work, which employed a majority of Christians and Hindus, did not offer adequate occupational safety measures. In general, participants felt that workers from religious minorities were paid less than their Muslim counterparts.

Participants spoke of first-hand encounters with occupational disparity. A participant said that she had a Christian working under her supervision and had to put her foot down because other Muslim employees had refused to share utensils with the former. Another participant stated that he had applied for a Grade 15 position in the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) but, because he was unable to answer two or three questions relating to the Quran and Hadith, failed the interview.

While the five percent reserve quota was being followed to some extent in Punjab, this was not the case in Sindh. Some participants pointed out that Christians and Hindus employed in low-paid jobs were not given pay slips, so that many did not even know what their salaries were; when they

wanted to avail annual leave, they were told to pay a bribe of Rs 2,000 to have their application approved. Upon retirement, it would take four to five years to receive a pension and other retirement benefits, but only after up to 30 percent was paid in bribes.

One participant recounted a case in the municipal corporation of Hyderabad, where sanitation workers were employed on a temporary basis. The union said that long-term workers would be given permanent positions. Therefore, workers were asked to pay Rs 10,000 for a permanent post; some even paid Rs 12,000 to the union. Although some were made permanent, the majority were not and lost their money – most were from minority groups.

Political parties often employed ‘ghost’ employees (employees who exist only on the books): this was another form of discrimination in taking away whatever jobs were available to minorities in the first place. In conjunction with downsizing in factories, which again affected minorities disproportionately, it was observed that community members would have to resort to changing their names to find employment.

There was a consensus among the participants that the following improvements were needed: stringent laws against discrimination and sexual harassment of minority women at workplace, workplace training to institute a more inclusive environment, adherence to minority rights under labour law, proper implementation of job quota and ban on discriminatory job advertisements in the newspapers.

Administration of justice

Many participants pointed out that the police were more likely to employ violence against religious minorities than their Muslim counterparts. Moreover, minorities are generally not allowed to file First Information Reports (FIRs) in cases of blasphemy, forced conversion of religion, women trafficking and even murder cases.

The judiciary was seen to be too rigid, especially in the lower courts, and seldom sided with religious minorities. The general attitude was one of indifference, and proof of nationality was often demanded when minorities applied for government documents, with questions such as ‘where were your parents born?’ Bribes were often the only solution.

Participants also expressed dismay to the exclusion of religious minorities to take up official office in government when equality is enshrined in Article 25 of the Constitution of Pakistan. Moreover, legislation such as the

Hindu Marriage Bill 2016-17, which does not recognise Parsi (Zoroastrians) or Sikhs and the blasphemy law required amendments to prevent further discrimination and misuse. As a result, participants advocated that religious minorities should be given due representation in the superior judiciary.

At the local government level, the attitude was better on religious occasions such as Christmas as this had an international focus, however, threats were still delivered during religious events of minorities for which little security was provided. Aside from this, the response was not positive. The Muslim local councillors were influential in their areas but ignored Christian localities. Lobbying against water unavailability in Malir (a district in eastern Karachi) only resulted in water being supplied through water tankers.

One participant, a pastor, shared his experience at immigration en route to Italy for religious training. He had planned to go 10 days early to do some sightseeing, but was asked why he was going before his training was scheduled to start. Then, as all the papers were in Italian, he was asked to translate them for the immigration officer. He felt he had been discriminated against because he was a Christian with a Pakistani passport.

A group member also pointed out the problems of public and private transport for males and females who travel in the rural areas of Sindh. Female travellers are not given seats. When Muslim women in burqas enter the local bus, Hindu females are asked to stand and vacate seats for them. Women from the minorities remain standing throughout their journey regardless of the distance they are travelling. Furthermore, the male Muslim workers do not think it fit to give up their seats to minority female workers.

One of the main takebacks was an urgent need for police training in regard to fundamental human rights, with a focus on minority rights.

Education

While participants said that they had access to schools, this was not free of discrimination. For example, their children do not have the right to select religious subjects. A group member shared that his child in Class 1 was taunted for 'being an Indian'. Another participant narrated how her sister was not given a job in a school because she was Hindu, though she herself had not faced similar discrimination, her headmistress had asked her not to drink water from the same glass as she was Hindu.

Consequently, students live in fear of being accused of blasphemy and are often, and sometimes aggressively, asked to convert to Islam. One of the participants recalled that when she was a student of Class IX she took Islamiyat as a subject, but her teacher told her she could not touch the Holy Quran. Another participant of the group stated that students from the minorities are taught Islamiyat and the curriculum books contain a lot of hate material. Hindus are termed 'kaafirs' (non-believers) because they 'worship stones'.

A teacher from the YWCA told of how Muslim teachers were intimidated by their Christian colleagues as their English fluency was considered of a higher level. Some people thought if they were Hindu, Muslim or Parsee they would not be admitted, but the motto of the YWCA was 'we love education and we love each other'.

Participants said that educational reforms are necessary to introduce a neutral and unbiased curriculum. An improvement in the admission system is also needed as a participant stated that his choice of university had a quota for Hafiz Quran but none for minorities and therefore, was unable to gain admission.

Health

Participants said that minorities were treated as a low priority in hospitals, mostly government ones. Moreover, it was felt that medical and paramedical staff's treatment was inappropriate and discriminatory towards minority patients. They also experienced hindrances in accessing an ambulance and medicines. Though there were many Christian-run hospitals over the years their quality had deteriorated.

In an extreme case, one participant shared a story involving a Muslim doctor from Umerkot in eastern Sindh, who had refused to treat a non-Muslim sanitation worker because he was fasting in the month of Ramazan. The worker had almost drowned in sewage water and was in critical condition. The doctor said his fast would be broken if he treated the dirty, 'untouchable' Christian. This indicates how important it is for patients to be treated on a humanitarian and equal basis.

Housing

Most of the participants agreed that it was not an issue if housing was found within one's own community. However, it is difficult to get rented accommodation in non-Muslim areas. In some cases, participants said that landlords were reluctant to rent houses to religious minorities because

they feared tenants 'would recite verses from the Bible', and considered this unacceptable

The minority residential areas, particularly of those on lower incomes or social status, are devoid of most civic services such as water supply, electricity, sanitation and proper sewerage system. Additionally, infrastructure developments were lacking in minority areas. Thereby, the participants agreed that minority slums should be given facilities equal to other areas.

Selling and purchasing of houses also proved difficult as one participant relayed that her sister had been trying to rent a house in the Saddar Area in Karachi but was told that this was not an area for the Hindu community. Besides that, the landlord asked a lot of irrelevant questions. Hindus are viewed suspiciously when trying to rent a house.

Another participant shared her experience of her locality, known as 'Father's Colony', in the Mauripur neighbourhood of Karachi. Consisting of around 300 households, it had been deprived of basic amenities for many months. Water lines had been dug, but the work had been left incomplete. On the other hand, in a Baloch locality the digging was done in the morning and by 3.00 pm water connections had been provided. Nothing was done in the Christian area. Participants felt they were accorded low priority when it came to the provision of services.

Goods and services

This aspect was relatively free of discrimination, but unfair. Participants of the group stated that it was extremely difficult for minorities to do business, even as hawkers on the roads. A participant shared an incident where a Christian boy wanted to buy fruit from a Muslim fruit seller. The vendor had no problem in selling the fruit to the boy but as soon as the boy touched the fruit to select it, the vendor was angered. He assaulted the boy for making his fruit 'dirty' as it had been touched by the 'unholy' hands of a Christian. The issue escalated and resulted in riots in the locality.

Another participant told the group how a bookbinder had refused to touch or repair a book when he was told that it was a Bible.

Violence and harassment

A pastor recounted an incident from his area, where a Christian family had started a business purchasing waste from textile units. They became affluent through hard work but their success was envied by the

neighbourhood. Some people from the surrounding area conspired together and during the night placed pages from the Quran in the family's yard; the next day, they claimed the family had desecrated the Quran. The family sought the pastor's help as the police were uncooperative. Fearing for their safety, and unable to do anything for them, the Church advised them to leave the area. They left and there has been no contact with them since.

A Hindu participant narrated his ordeal that his 13-year-old daughter was abducted by a local feudal landlord after he moved to Karachi from his native Dadu in search of work. She was forcibly converted to Islam and married to someone. The police would not help as they believed the girl had converted of her own free will. The feudal landlord was too powerful and the story's narrator had no recourse to justice. At times, the police even harass them sometimes, making comments about Hindus praying and worshipping with *murtis*/stones and statues.

Another participant, a Christian woman, said that her son had been romantically involved with a Muslim girl in 2000. At first, the Muslim family agreed to their daughter marrying him but at the last minute they refused and forcibly married their daughter to someone else. They then registered a false case against the son with the police and had him sent to jail for three years. With the help of human rights lawyers, her son was released from jail, but she still faces threats from religious activists in her area.

Conclusion: Patterns of discrimination

A key finding of the study is that it is common for members of religious minorities to be 'advised' or exhorted – even offered bribes – by colleagues and acquaintances in educational institution and other workplaces to convert to Islam. The pressure to convert has sometimes proved unbearable, affecting their work.

It is also generally felt that religious minorities face difficulties in finding decent employment commensurate with their qualifications. Not only is the five percent quota for minorities not implemented, but some religious minorities, notably the Hindu and Christian communities, are often relegated to low-paid and menial jobs, for example, sanitation, in which workers are mostly employed on a contract basis and have no job security.

Members of minority communities are generally paid less than their Muslim counterparts. Moreover, they are segregated in canteens and often forced to eat from separate utensils. In some cases, they must resort to bribes to have their pensions and benefits released or even to have annual leave approved.

Women from religious minorities say they are often provided inadequate office seating arrangements. Many find they have to stand when traveling on buses, particularly in rural areas, and are even forced to vacate their seats for Muslim women. Muslim men are reluctant to give up their seats to non-Muslim women colleagues when travelling to work. Non-Muslim women are also subject to disparaging comments at the workplace, for example, concerning the way they dress.

Access to services and accommodation remains a problem. Many respondents report that basic amenities, such as electricity, water, gas and infrastructure, are neglected in non-Muslim areas. They also say that hospitals do not give priority to non-Muslim patients. Even renting accommodation can be difficult, with Muslim landlords reluctant to rent their premises to non-Muslims. At a political level, many respondents feel that minority members elected to Parliament do not represent their communities effectively.

Educational institutions are also sites of discrimination. Foremost, the content of curricular material encourages negative perceptions about non-

Muslims. Even teachers are sometimes prejudiced against non-Muslim students, ignoring them in class. Religious education is not provided for non-Muslims who end up either having to take Islamiyat or another subject such as civics. Non-Muslims are reluctant to study Islamiyat because they fear that a mistake or inadvertent mispronunciation could be misconstrued – in extreme cases, as blasphemy.

Child marriage is widespread although this is not perceived to be a specifically non-Muslim issue. It is generally attributed to poverty and safety concerns for the children involved, who might be left vulnerable when their families are at work.

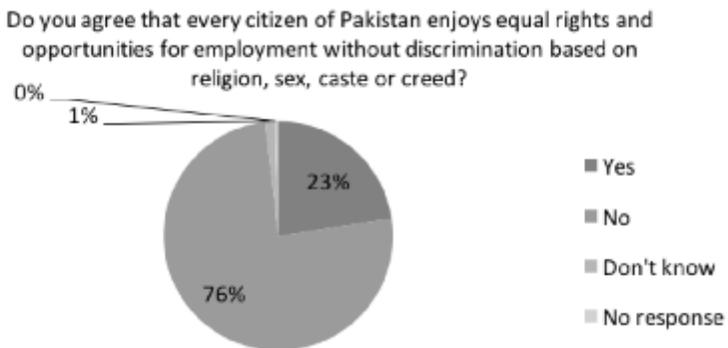
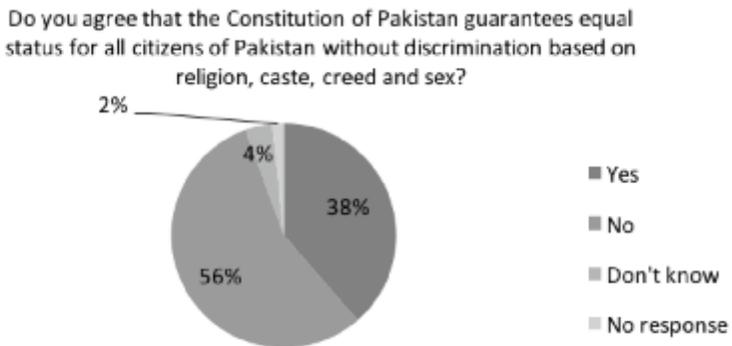
The abduction and forced conversion of Hindu girls is a regular occurrence. Parents have no recourse, lacking funds for legal support and being advised not to pursue their case as it could become a religious issue. Generally, non-Muslim citizens feel they are more likely to be targets of violence, while the police are uncooperative, often obstructing the filing of first information reports (FIRs).

Some key recommendations that have emerged from this study include the following:

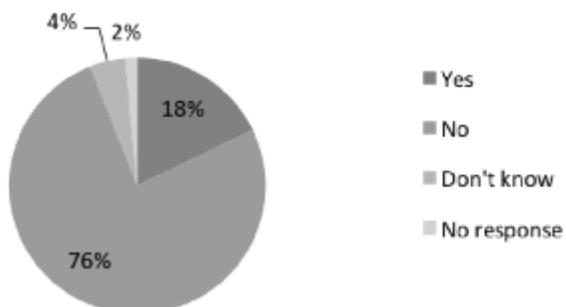
- Upper-level employment should also be provided to minorities.
- The job quota for minorities should be increased.
- Minority rights legislation should be implemented and monitored for compliance.
- Equal rights should be ensured for minorities in accordance with the Constitution.
- The government should take steps to change the general attitude towards religious minorities.
- Better technology should be introduced in the sanitation sector, where most workers are from religious minorities.
- Hate material should be removed from academic books/curricula.
- Paid leave should be ensured for minority workers, especially on their religious occasions.
- Minority seats (representation in assemblies) should be increased.
- Local councillors elected on reserved seats should be paid for their services in the city council.

Annex: Survey Results

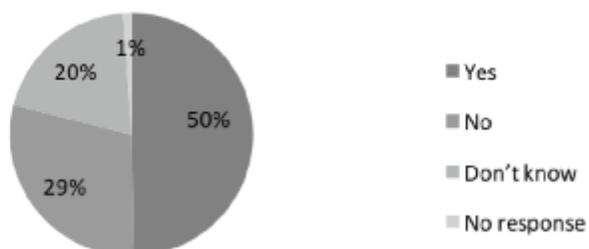
This annex provides a snapshot of the responses received from the three focus group discussions held in Karachi and Hyderabad. These provide interesting insight into the lived experience of discrimination. The infographics below collate responses from across all three focus group discussion locations: 300 survey questionnaires from six districts of Karachi (Karachi Central, Karachi West, Karachi East, Karachi South, Malir and Korangi) and 100 survey questionnaires from Hyderabad.



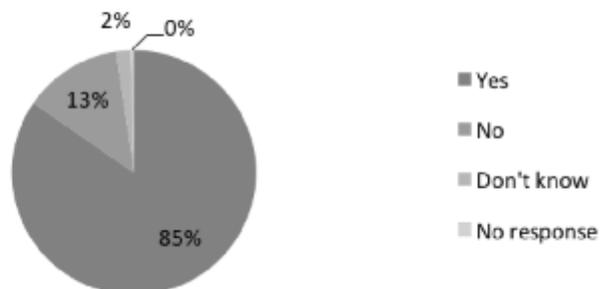
According to the Constitution of Pakistan, non-Muslim citizens cannot hold office as the head of state. Do you think this is justified?



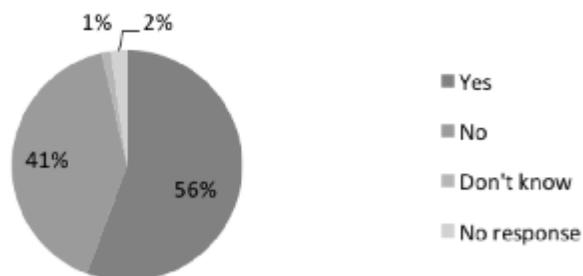
Are you aware that Pakistan has signed and ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, which ensure equal rights to all citizens?



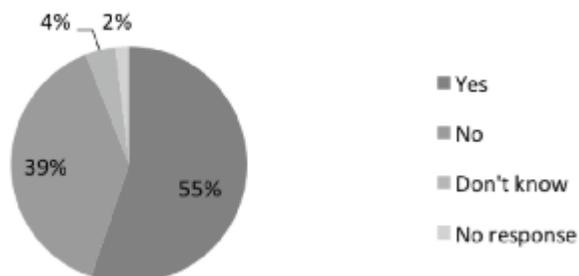
Do non-Muslim citizens in your city face problems in obtaining employment in the government and private sectors?



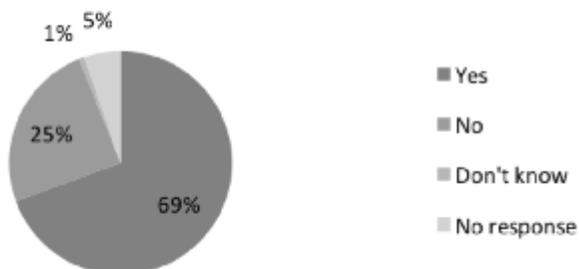
Do you think interfaith harmony exists at your workplace, institution or organization?



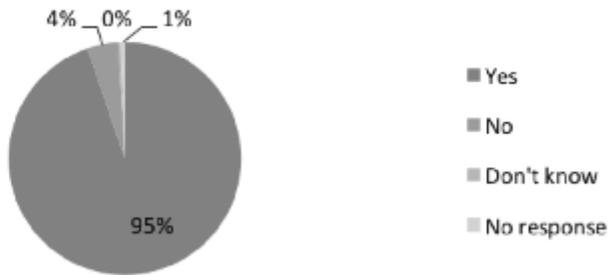
If yes, can you say your prayers at your workplace or institution without any fear of harrassment?



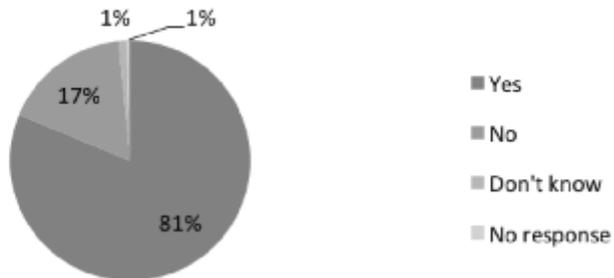
Are you entitled to leave with pay on religious occasions such as Christmas, Holi and Diwali?



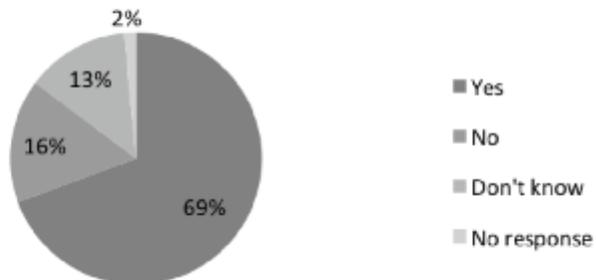
Do you greet colleagues and celebrate the religious occasions and events of people who do not share your religion at your workplace?



Do colleagues of other faiths greet you on your religious occasions and celebrate with you at the workplace?



Do you know that religious minorities have a 5 percent quota provision in employment?



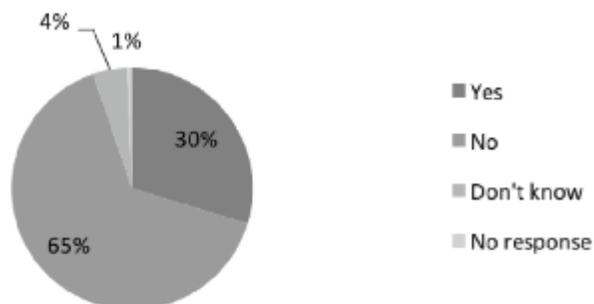
If yes, is the employment quota being implemented properly and are non-Muslims benefitting from it?



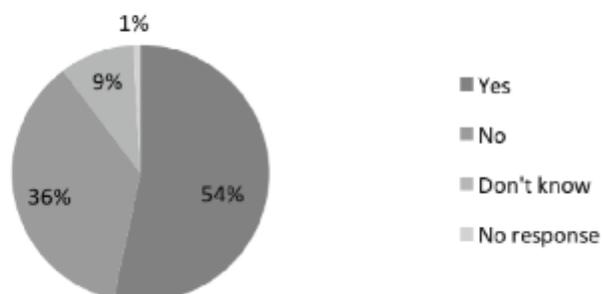
Do you think that minorities face bias at workplaces and institutions/organizations?



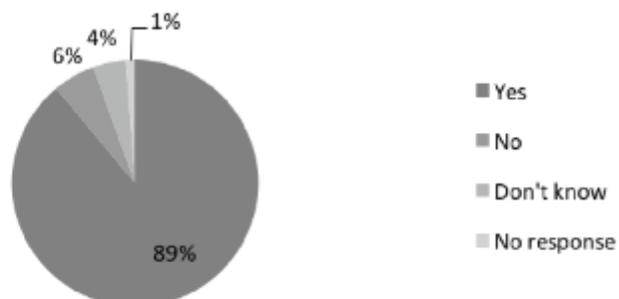
Do non-Muslim residential areas have access to proper services such as health, sanitation, water, electricity and gas?



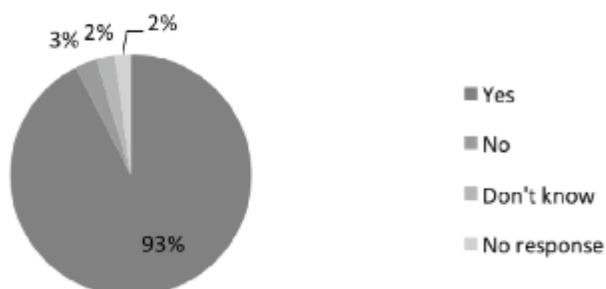
Do you think that civil society organizations become involved and work with non-Muslim communities without any discrimination?



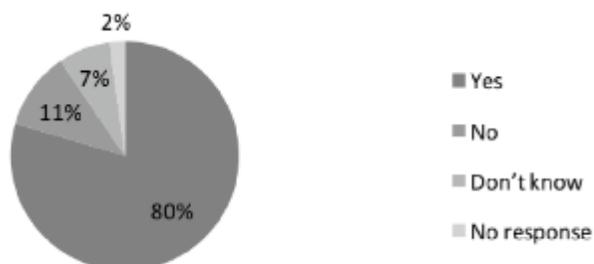
Do you think that increasing religious extremism in Pakistan is a serious threat to minorities?



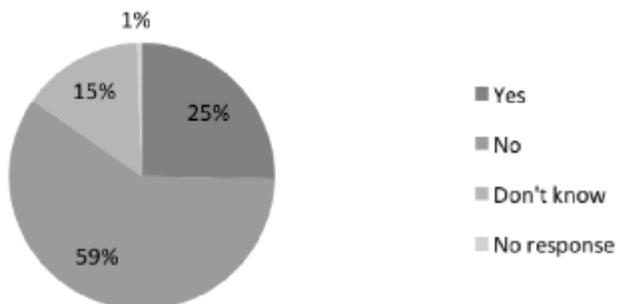
Do you think that the blasphemy laws are misused and have become sources of victimization and persecution for both Muslim and non-Muslim citizens of Pakistan?



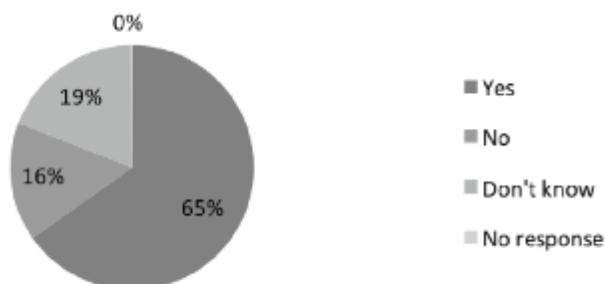
The educational curricula contain hate material against non-Muslims. Do you agree that the curricula at school level should be reviewed and modified so that it is acceptable to all citizens of Pakistan?



Do you feel that minorities' representatives address their communities' problems in assemblies/parliament?



Did you know that there are a large number of bonded labourers in the agriculture sector in Sindh and that most of them belong to minorities?



Do you think that religious minorities face bias from law enforcement agencies and institutions because of their identity and minority status?

