

# The Digital Divide: Internet Usage and Disruptions in Pakistan



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## **The Digital Divide: Internet Usage and Disruptions in Pakistan**

*(Islamabad), 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2024*

Gallup Pakistan has conducted a comprehensive study on internet usage and service disruptions across the country. The survey, conducted with a diverse and representative sample of the Pakistani population, reveals usage statistics across different demographics, and highlights the challenges faced by users—especially freelancers—due to disruptions in internet services in the country.

Access the full report [here](#).

The internet remains a crucial link between Pakistan and the rest of the world, and service disruptions causes sectoral difficulties across the nation. The internet disruptions during the first half of August were concerning for both individuals and organizations as they found themselves disconnected globally. This study focuses on the internet slowdown experienced during the first half of August, which the governmental body P@SHA claimed could cost the economy around \$300 million<sup>1</sup>. Conducting this study underscores the wide usage of the internet among Pakistani citizens, a large majority of whom experienced this slowdown in internet services. Although freelancers constitute a small proportion of these users, they are nevertheless an important and growing part of Pakistan's economy and must be supported with stable internet connections, as should the rest of Pakistan's internet users.

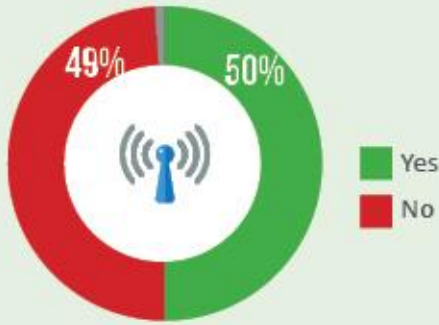
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1852555>

# The Digital Divide: Internet Usage and Disruptions in Pakistan

## Internet users in Pakistan:

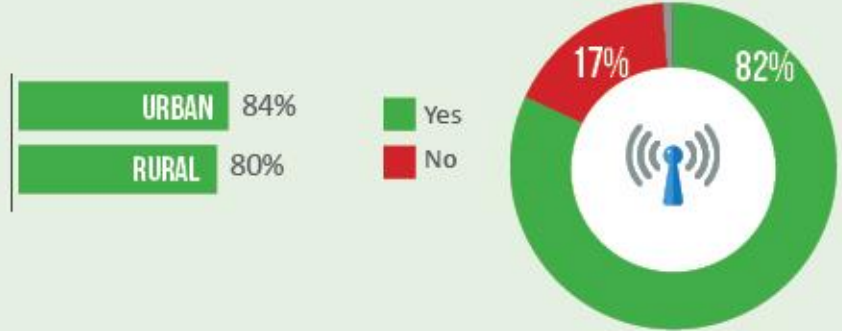
50% of the respondents were internet users, constituting roughly 55 million Pakistani adults.



Don't know/No response: 1%


## Internet service disruptions across Pakistan:


82% respondents reported experiencing service slowdowns during August. 84% urban residents were affected by this disruption, while 80% of rural residents were affected.




Don't know/No response: 1%

## Profile of Pakistani freelancers:

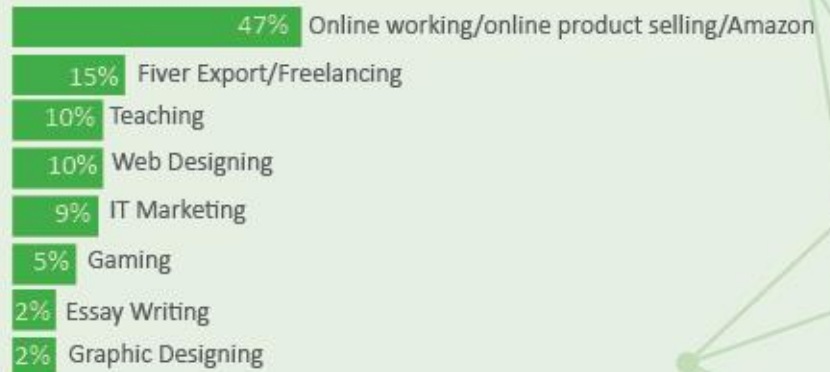
 Only 1% of internet users provide freelancing services abroad.

 Urban residents were more likely (2%) to be freelancing for international clients, as compared to rural residents (1%).

 5% of respondents said that someone from their family is providing their services abroad through the internet.

## Online services and platforms used by freelancers:

Amongst freelancers, the biggest proportion were those who were working as:



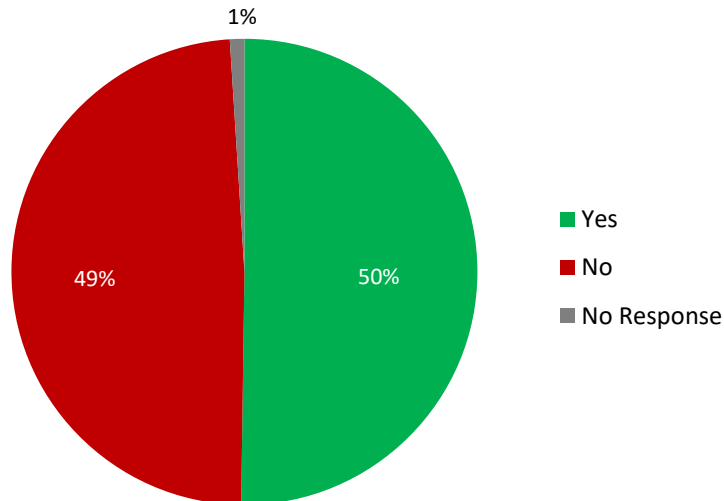
The online platforms that freelancers are registered with included



## 1. Internet Users in Pakistan

Half of Pakistan, i.e. 50% of respondents said they use the internet, while 49% answered that they did not use the internet, and 1% did not give a response (Figure 1). The total number of adult internet users in Pakistan amount to 55 million.

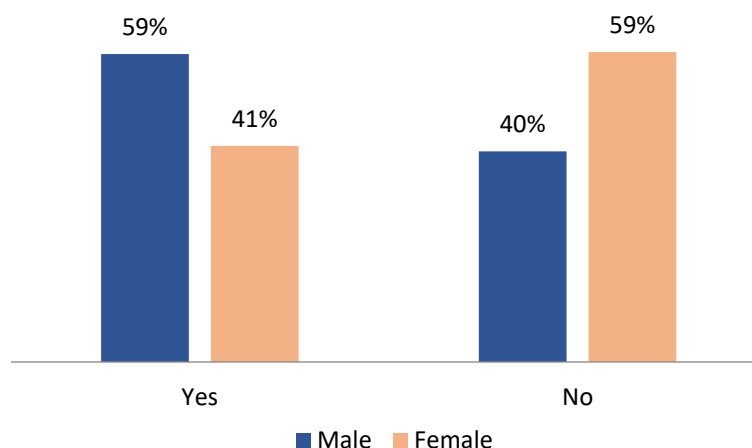
**Figure 1.1:** Internet Users in Pakistan



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

Internet users are more likely to be male, urban residents and under the age of 30. Among internet users, men constitute 59%, while women comprise 41% of this demographic (Figure 1.2). A lower proportion of women use the internet because of issues such as “limited access, affordability issues, inadequate education, and ingrained and socio-cultural norms and biases”<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 1.2.** Gender breakdown of Internet users in Pakistan



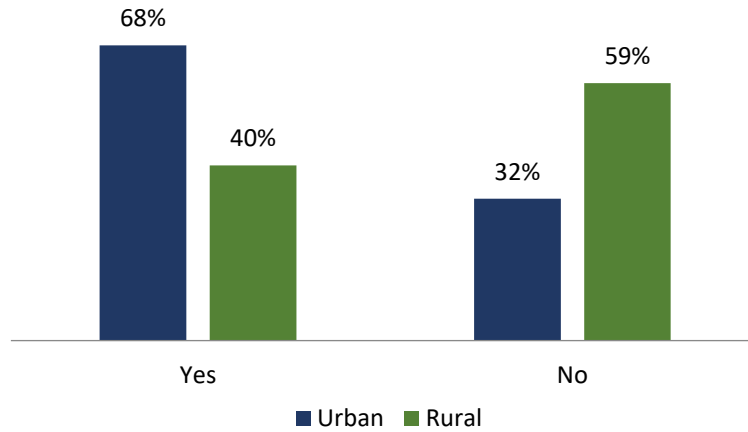
**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1834554>



As shown in Figure 1.3, a high 68% of urban residents use the internet, while 40% of rural residents are likely to do so.

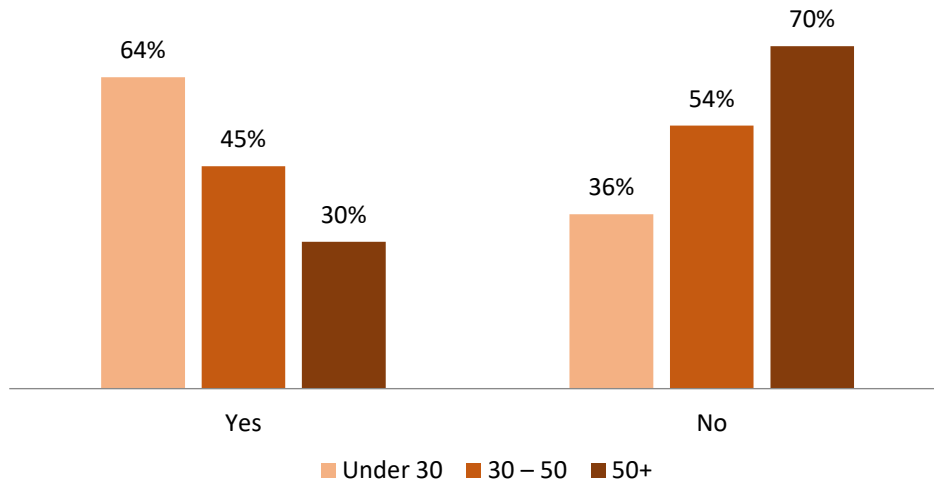
**Figure 1.3.** Urban-rural breakdown of internet users



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

We observe a clear trend across age groups where elder people were less likely to report usage. Adults aged from 18 – 29 years constitute the largest age group of internet users (64%), followed by 45% of adults aged 30 – 50 years, with only 30% of adults aged over 50 years being internet users (Figure 1.4).

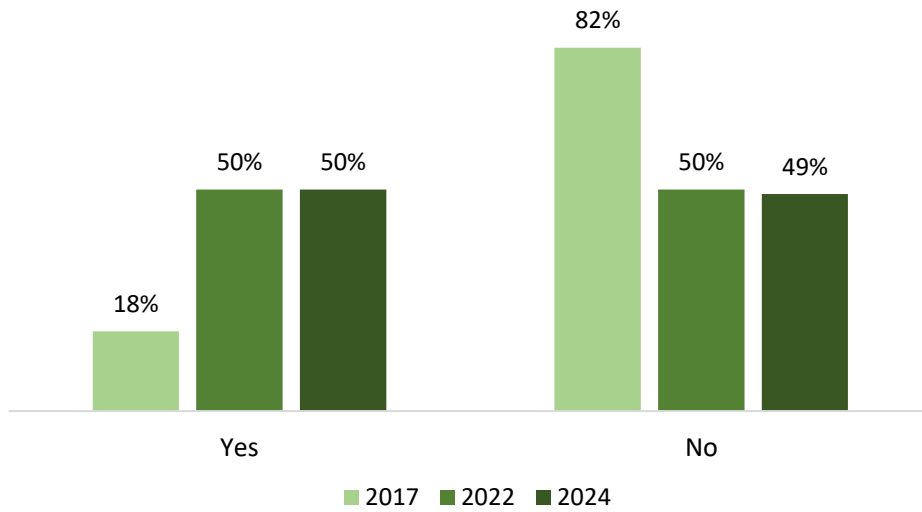
**Figure 1.4.** Age group breakdown of internet users



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

By analyzing data from 2017, 2022 and 2024, we see that internet users have increased by 32% between 2017 and 2022 and have remained stable at the new level of 50% in 2024 (Figure 1.5).

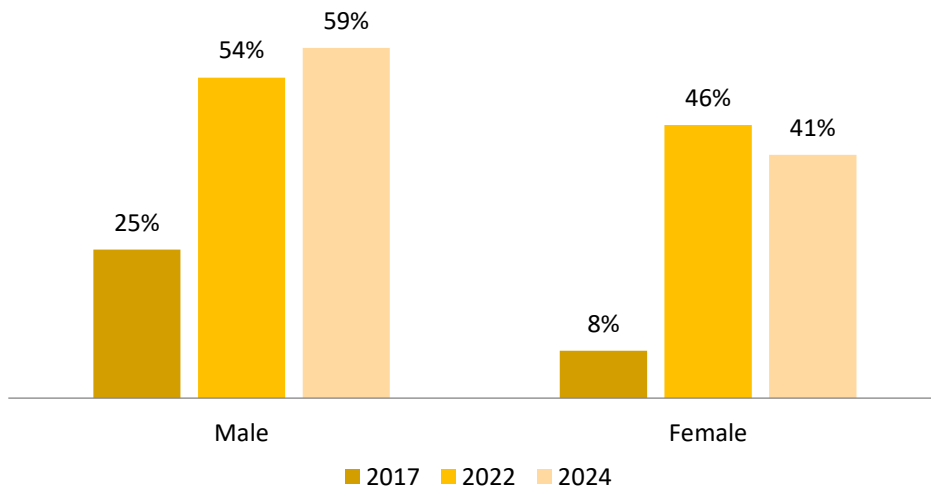
**Figure 1.5.** Trend analysis of internet users in Pakistan (2017, 2022, 2024)



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

Figure 1.6 shows that in 2017, the percentage of Pakistan men using the internet was 25%, which increased to 52% in 2022, and saw a further rise to 59% in 2024. While the proportion of male internet users steadily increased, the proportion of female internet users fluctuated. 17% of Pakistan women used the internet in 2017, making a huge jump to 46% in 2022, but then falling by 5% in 2024 to 41%.

**Figure 1.6.** Trend analysis of internet users in Pakistan, across gender (2017, 2022, 2024)

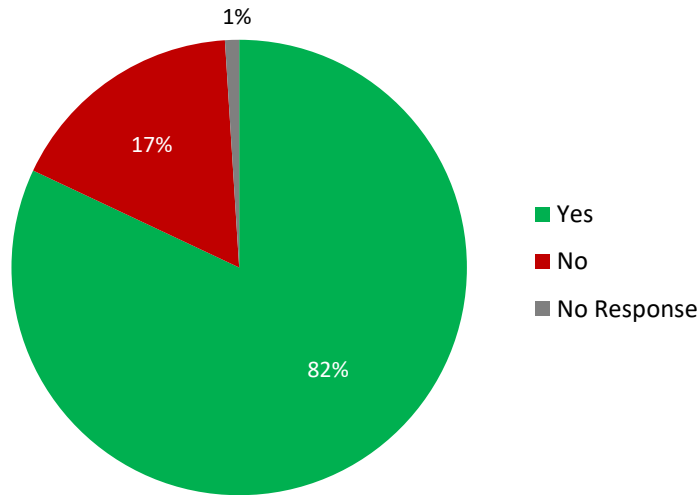


**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

## 2. Internet service disruptions across Pakistan

Among internet users, a high 82% responded that they had experienced slow internet speed in the past two weeks (during August), while 17% said that they had not done so, and 1% either said they did not know or did not respond (Figure 2.1).

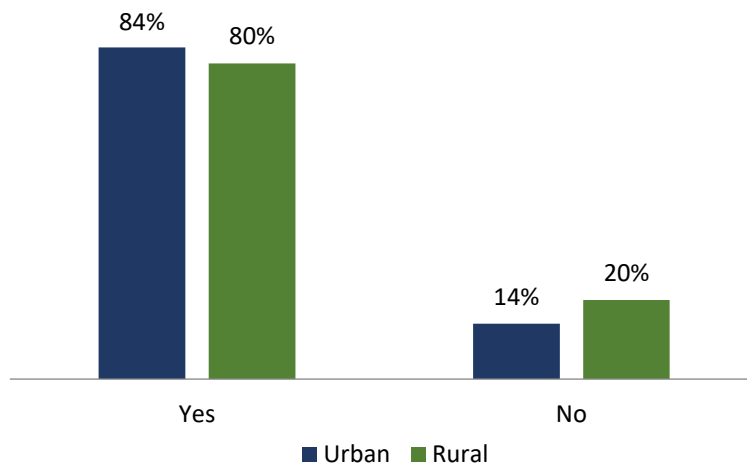
**Figure 2.1.** Individuals experiencing internet services slowdown in Pakistan



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

The slowdown in internet services was reported significantly across all genders, urban-rural residents, age groups, and provincial locations. Urban residents were 4% more likely to have experienced slow internet speeds in the past two weeks (Figure 2.2).

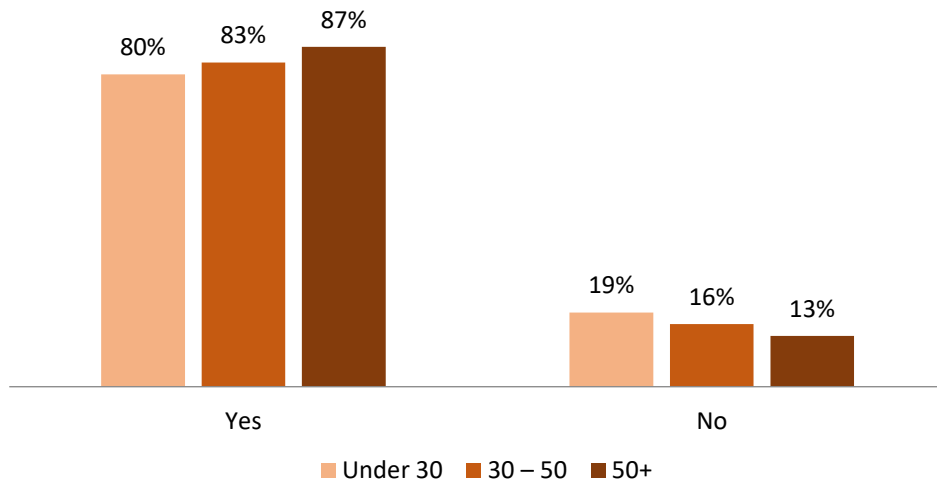
**Figure 2.2.** Urban breakdown for internet services slowdown



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

Surprisingly, as Figure 2.3 depicts, adults over the age of 50 were the most likely to experience this (87%), followed by the age group of adults aged between 30 to 50 (83%), with adults under 30 coming in last (80%).

**Figure 2.3.** Age group breakdown for internet services slowdown



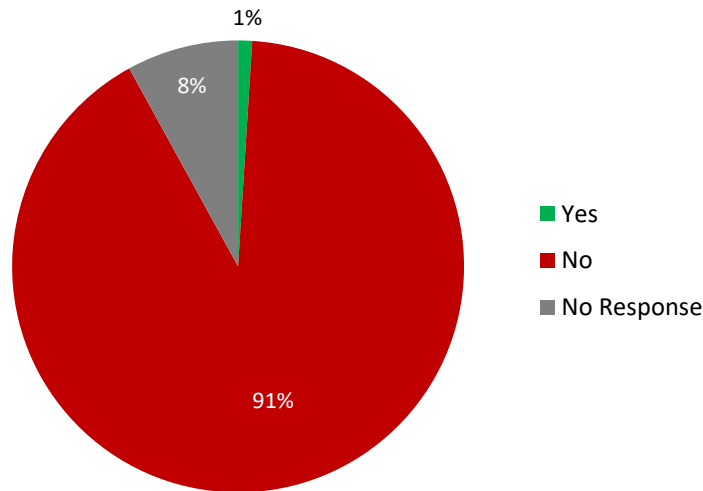
**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan



### 3. Profile of Pakistani freelancers

Only 1% of the respondents were providing their services abroad through the internet, while 91% said they were not doing so, and 8% either said they did not know or had no response (Figure 3.1).

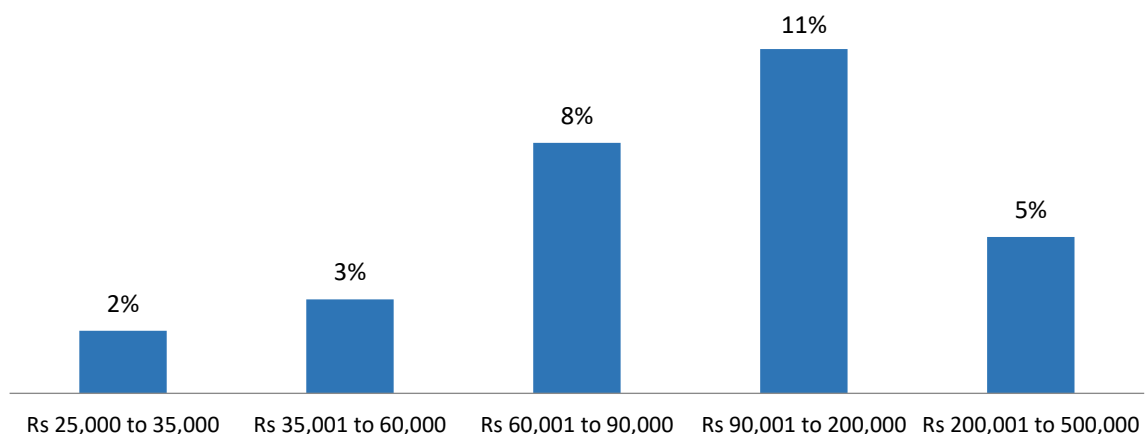
**Figure 3.1.** Number of Pakistani freelancers who provide international services



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

As Figure 3.2 visualizes, individuals earning a salary of between Rs 90,001 to 200,000 were the most likely (11%) to be using the internet to provide their services, followed by those earning between Rs 60,001 to 90,000 (8%), then those earning Rs 200,001 to 500,000 (5%), followed by individuals with a salary of Rs 35,001 to 60,000 (3%), and individuals with a monthly income of Rs 25,000 to 35,000 coming in last (2%) with a minimal decrease of 1%.

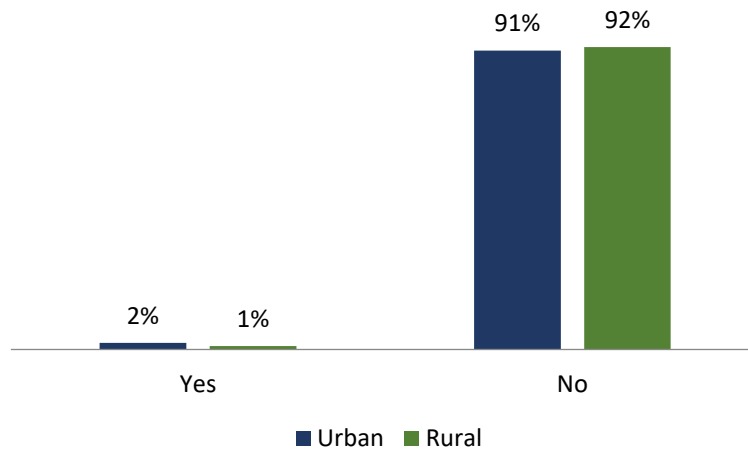
**Figure 3.2.** Income groups breakdown of Pakistani freelancers



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

Urban residents were twice as likely to be providing their services abroad through the internet, in comparison to rural residents. However, the specific proportions are very low for both types of residents; 2% of urban residents were internet freelancers working with international clients, while 1% of rural residents were doing the same (Figure 3.3).

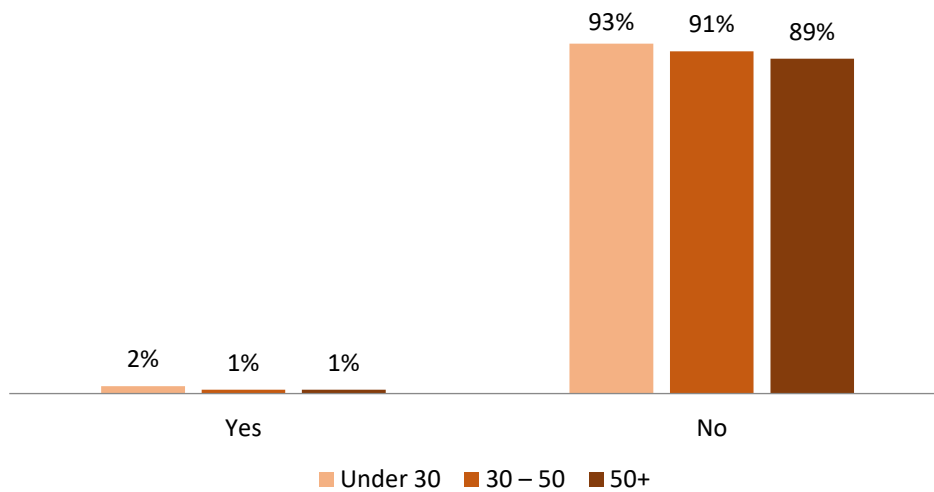
**Figure 3.3.** Urban-rural breakdown of Pakistani freelancers



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

Figure 3.4 shows that adults under the age of 30 were the most likely (2%) to be providing some services abroad using the internet, followed by the age groups of those between 30 and 50 years, and those over the age of 50 (both at 1%).

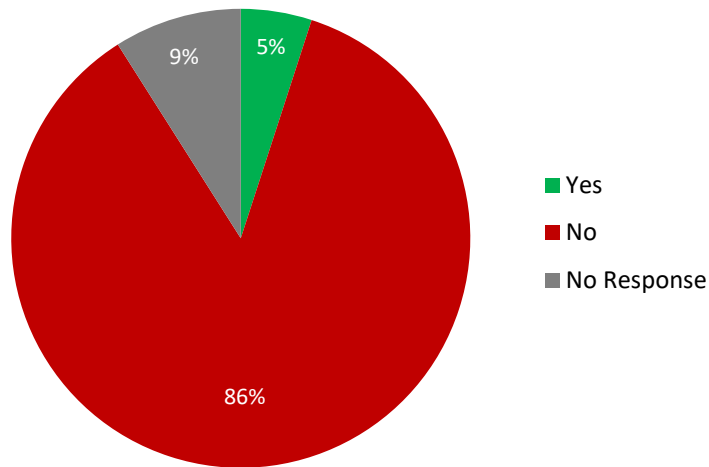
**Figure 3.4.** Age group breakdown of Pakistani freelancers



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

5% of respondents said that someone from their family is providing their services abroad through the internet, 86% said nobody from their family was doing so, and 9% either said they did not know or did not respond (Figure 3.5).

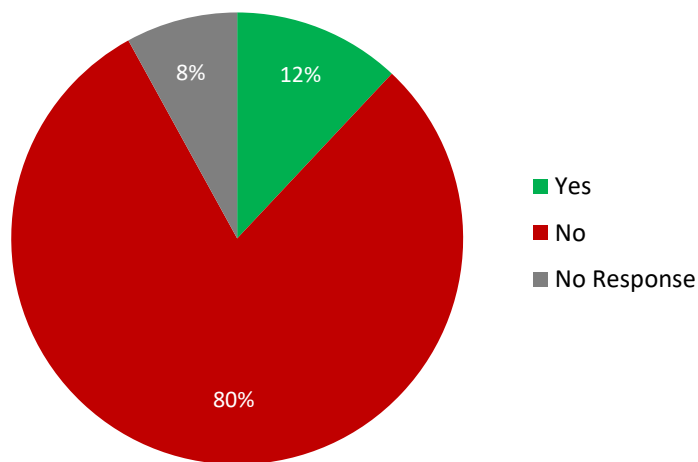
**Figure 3.5.** Individuals with family members providing freelancing services abroad



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

Further, 12% of the respondents knew someone who is providing their services abroad through the internet, 80% did not know anybody doing so, while 8% said they did not know or did not respond (Figure 3.6).

**Figure 3.6.** Individuals who know someone providing freelancing services abroad

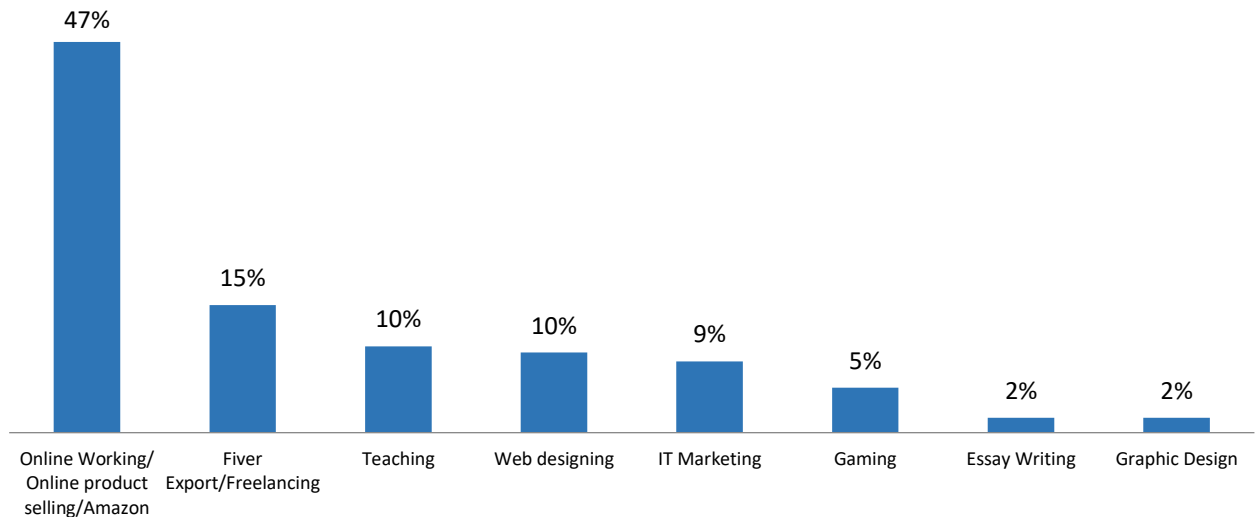


**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

#### 4. Online services and platforms used by freelancers:

Among those who were providing their services, 47% were working to sell their products online or worked for Amazon, 15% were freelancing on related websites such as Fiverr, 10% were teaching, 10% were involved in web designing, 9% were contributing to IT marketing, 5% were earning from gaming, 2% from essay writing, and 2% from graphic design (Figure 4.1).

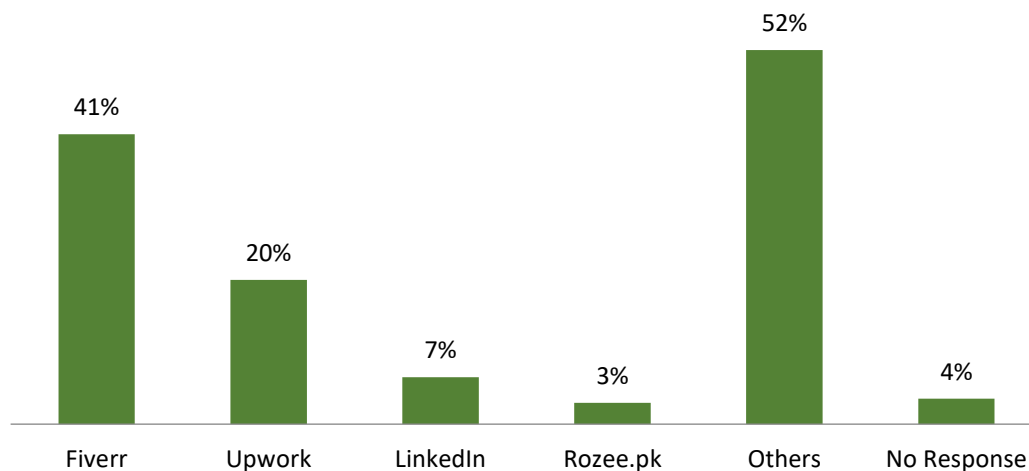
**Figure 4.1.** Services being provided by freelancers



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

Figure 4.2 shows the online platforms that service providers are registered with: 41% said Fiverr, 20% responded Upwork, 7% said LinkedIn, 3% answered Rozee.pk, and 52% said other platforms, while 4% had no response.

**Figure 4.2.** Online platforms that freelancers are registered with



**Source:** The Digital Divide, Report by Gallup Pakistan

**Methodology:**

The data for this analysis is based on the “*The Digital Divide: Internet Usage and Disruptions in Pakistan*” by Gallup Pakistan. The survey was carried out among a sample of 650 men and women in urban and rural areas of all four provinces of the country, conducted from 19th August – 1st September 2024. The error margin is estimated to be approximately  $\pm 3-5$  percent at the 95% confidence level. The methodology used for data collection was telephonic surveys (CATI).

The report “*The Digital Divide: Internet Usage and Disruptions in Pakistan*” by Gallup Pakistan can be accessed at: <https://gallup.com.pk/post/37379>

The Dawn article which includes information on the economy losing money from the internet slowdowns across the country can be accessed at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1852555>.

The Dawn article on women’s access to the internet can be accessed at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1834554>.

For more survey data, see our website <http://www.gallup.com.pk/> or contact Gallup Pakistan at [caf@gallup.com.pk](mailto:caf@gallup.com.pk)



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Gallup Pakistan has conducted this poll according to the ESOMAR Code of Ethics and internationally recognized principles of scientific polling. The results in this Report do not represent views held by the authors or Gallup Pakistan. The results only represent public opinion, computed on the basis of views expressed by anonymous respondents selected through the procedure outlined in the Methodology section of this Report.

Gallup Pakistan has provided this data in the public interest and gratis. It cannot be held liable, contractually or otherwise, to the users of this data.

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