

Child Marriage in West and Central Africa

A statistical overview and
reflections on ending the practice

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),
June 2022

Permission is required to reproduce any part of this publication. Permission will be freely granted to educational or non-profit organizations.

To request permission or for any other information on this publication, please contact:
UNICEF Data and Analytics Section
Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
Telephone: +1 212 326 7000
Email: data@unicef.org

All reasonable precautions have been taken by UNICEF to verify the information contained in this publication. For any data updates subsequent to release, please visit www.data.unicef.org.

Suggested citation: United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Marriage in West and Central Africa: A statistical overview and reflections on ending the practice*, UNICEF, New York, 2022.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The preparation of this publication was led by Claudia Cappa and Colleen Murray (Data and Analytics Section, UNICEF Headquarters); with inputs from Munkhbador Jugder (Data and Analytics Section, UNICEF Headquarters); Lisa Fleming and Isabel Jijon (independent consultants); Karin Heissler, Céline Herbiet, Stephanie Kouv and Frederic Unterreiner (Child Protection and Programme Sections, UNICEF West and Central Africa); and Nankali Maksud (Child Protection Programme Group, UNICEF Headquarters).

The report was edited by Naomi Lindt and designed by Elwa Design Studio and Era Porth (independent consultants).

Child Marriage in West and Central Africa

A statistical overview and
reflections on ending the practice

Foreword

West and Central Africa has the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world and is home to nearly 60 million child brides. Four in 10 girls in the region are married before they turn 18. Their rights to a childhood have been trampled on: They have not been allowed to be children.

Child marriage impacts both girls and boys, but girls are disproportionately affected; gender inequality is one of the main drivers of the practice. For girls, being married as a child almost always means not attending school, early motherhood, and devastating impacts for socioemotional well-being. It affects their mental and physical health, and increases their vulnerability to violence and abuse.

Seven out of 10 countries with the highest levels of child marriage worldwide are in West and Central Africa. Many of the countries with the highest prevalence are also facing worsening humanitarian situations, whether provoked by climate change, food insecurity or growing situations of conflict. The Sahel is a region of particularly high risk; in the central Sahel, for instance, the level of child marriage reaches as high as 7 in 10 young women who were married before age 18. Overall, across the entire region, the highest levels of child marriage are seen in the poorest households, among those with little or no education and in rural areas.

Ending child marriage is a key priority for the African Union. The UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office has also prioritized it as one of our eight Key Results for Children. Our strategic approach to ending the practice is multisectoral, multipronged and contextualized. Experience has shown that key interventions include investments in girls' access to quality education at scale, and social and behaviour change in favour of girls' and women's full and active participation in social and economic life.

With the support of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage and the Spotlight Initiative, UNICEF – in collaboration with governments, local authorities, religious and traditional leaders, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, girls and young women, and communities – is working to end child marriage in West and Central Africa. These efforts support Goal 17 of the African Union Agenda 2063 for full gender equality in all spheres of life and Sustainable Development Goal target 5.3 on ending harmful practices by 2030.

While progress in West and Central Africa has been slow compared to other regions, there have been promising developments over the past decade. The leadership and prioritization of a growing number of governments in this region is evident through national development strategies and budgets in favour of investments at scale for girls and their families. Political commitment is also being spearheaded by economic and political regional organizations, notably the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, which have prioritized ending child marriage as a means to strengthen development and to uphold the rights of children and women.

In our mission to end child marriage, failure is not an option. If progress is not accelerated, an additional 25 million girls in West and Central Africa will become child brides in the next decade. Our hope is that the data findings presented in this report provide an important contribution to inform current and future regional initiatives. We need to learn from countries that have made strong progress and increase efforts in those that are still struggling. Together, we must act with urgency to guarantee every child's right to a childhood.

Marie-Pierre Poirier
UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa

Contents

06 Child marriage in West and Central Africa and in the global development agenda

08 Regional overview

13 Country profiles

14 How to read the profiles

16 Benin

20 Burkina Faso

24 Cameroon

28 Central African Republic

32 Chad

36 Congo

40 Côte d'Ivoire

44 Democratic Republic of the Congo

48 Gabon

52 Gambia

56 Ghana

60 Guinea

64 Guinea-Bissau

68 Liberia

72 Mali

76 Mauritania

80 Niger

84 Nigeria

88 Sao Tome and Principe

92 Senegal

96 Sierra Leone

100 Togo

104 Ending child marriage in West and Central Africa

106 Technical notes

Child marriage in West and Central Africa and in the global development agenda

Child marriage is a violation of human rights. Every child has the right to be protected from this harmful practice, which has devastating consequences for individuals and for society.

Child marriage is now firmly on the global development agenda, most prominently through its inclusion in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3, which calls for the elimination of the practice by 2030.

An estimated 650 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthdays. Nearly 60 million of them reside in West and Central Africa.

This publication provides a statistical overview of child marriage in the region. It highlights levels and trends overall and presents country profiles that allow a closer look into how the practice varies throughout the region. It also offers insights into the characteristics of early unions and the lives of child brides and identifies what is needed to eliminate child marriage by 2030.

SDG 5

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



TARGET 5.3

Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

INDICATOR 5.3.1

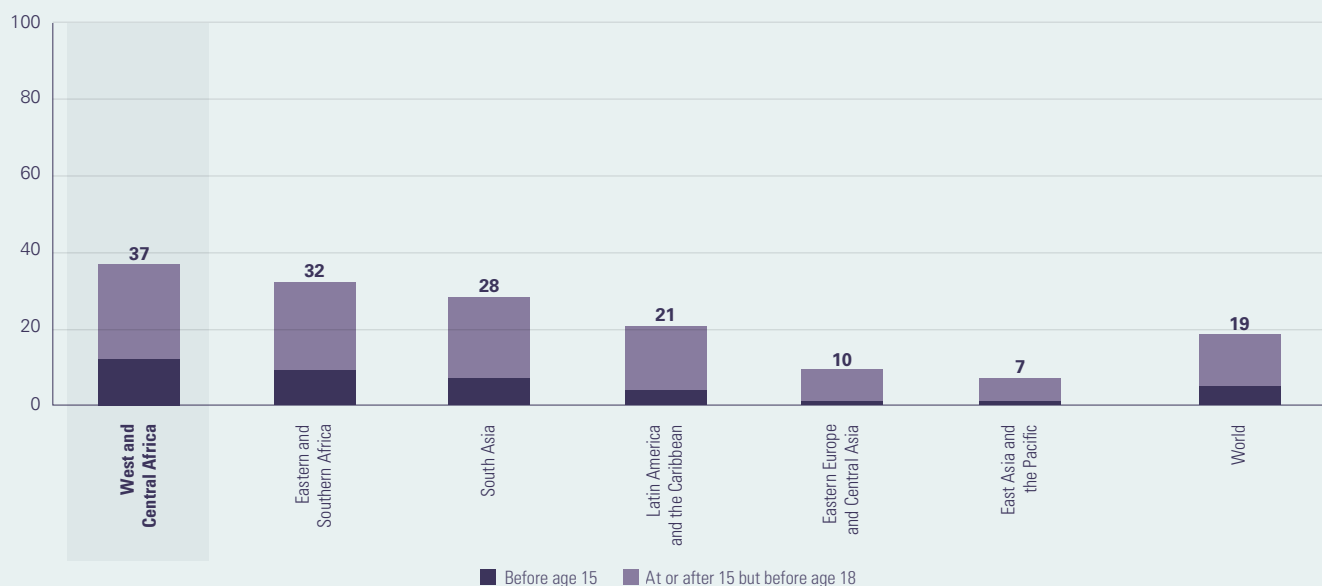
Proportion of women aged 20 to 24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18.



Regional overview

West and Central Africa is home to the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world: 37 per cent of young women married before age 18, and 12 per cent married before age 15

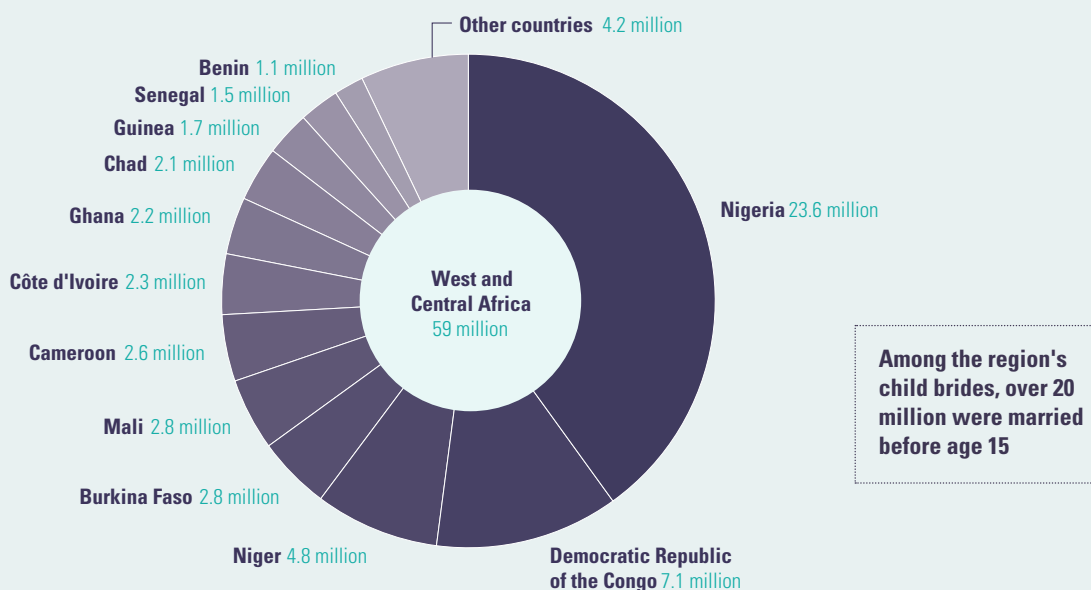
Figure 1. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



NOTES: Regional values are based on the latest available data per country, within the years 2015 to 2021. If data from prior to 2015 were also considered, the value for West and Central Africa would rise to 39 per cent. Data coverage was insufficient to calculate regional estimates for the Middle East and North Africa, North America and Western Europe. SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and other nationally representative sources, 2015–2021.

The region is home to nearly 60 million child brides, with the largest share in Nigeria

Figure 2. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before age 18



Among the region's child brides, over 20 million were married before age 15

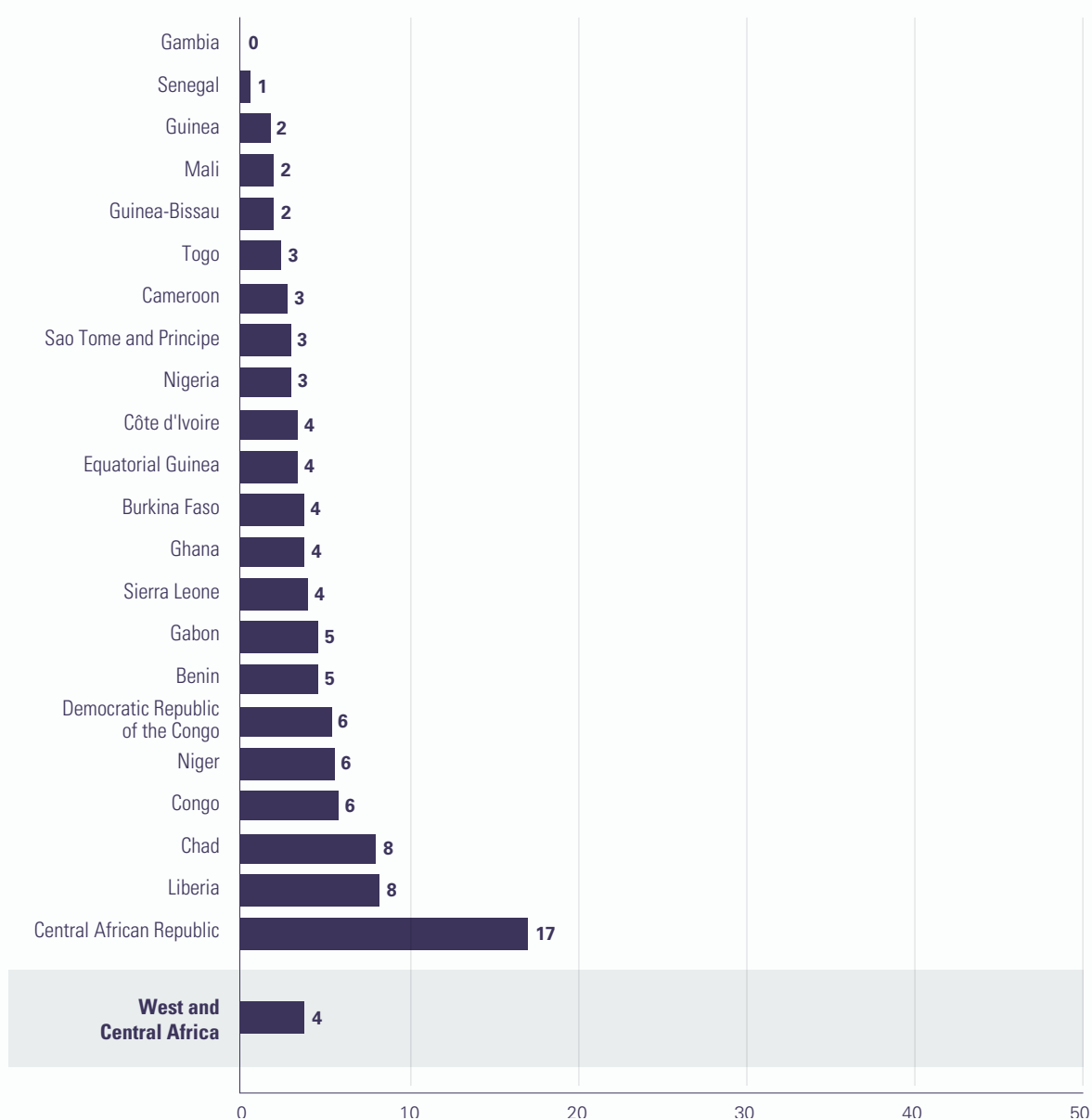
NOTES: Figures do not add up to total due to rounding. Estimates refer to the population as of 2020. For more details on the calculation, please see the technical notes on page 106. SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative sources, 2010–2021. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019.

Child marriage among boys

Although SDG indicator 5.3.1 measures child marriage among girls, the practice occurs among boys as well. West and Central Africa is also home to 1 of the 5 countries with the highest levels in the world for the practice among boys, the Central African Republic.

Across West and Central Africa, 1 in 25 young men were first married in childhood

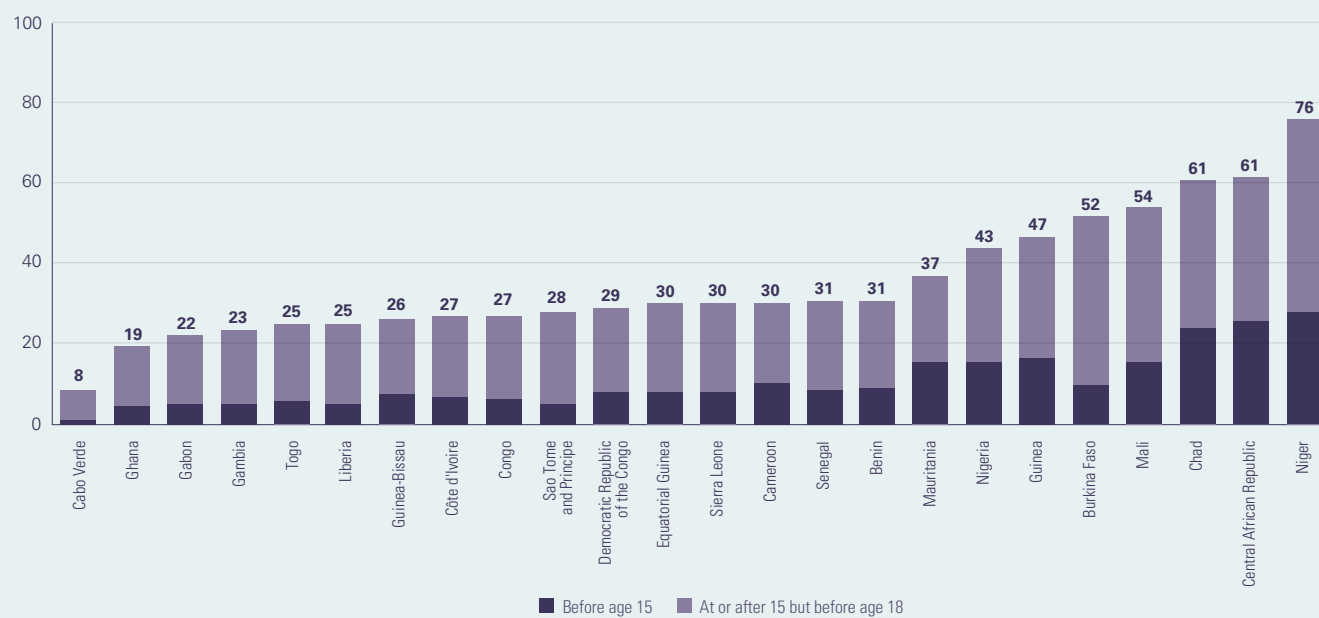
Figure 3. Percentage of men aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative sources, 2010–2021.

While levels of child marriage vary widely in the region, 7 of the 10 countries with the highest levels in the world are found here

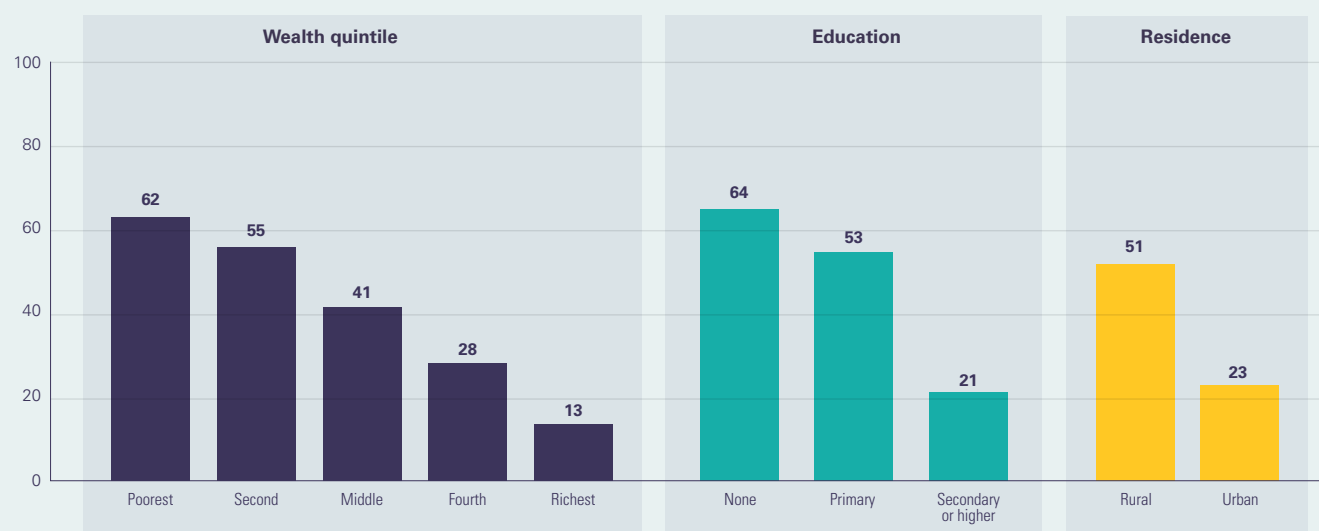
Figure 4. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative sources, 2010–2021.

Child marriage is most prevalent in the poorest households, among those with little or no education and in rural areas

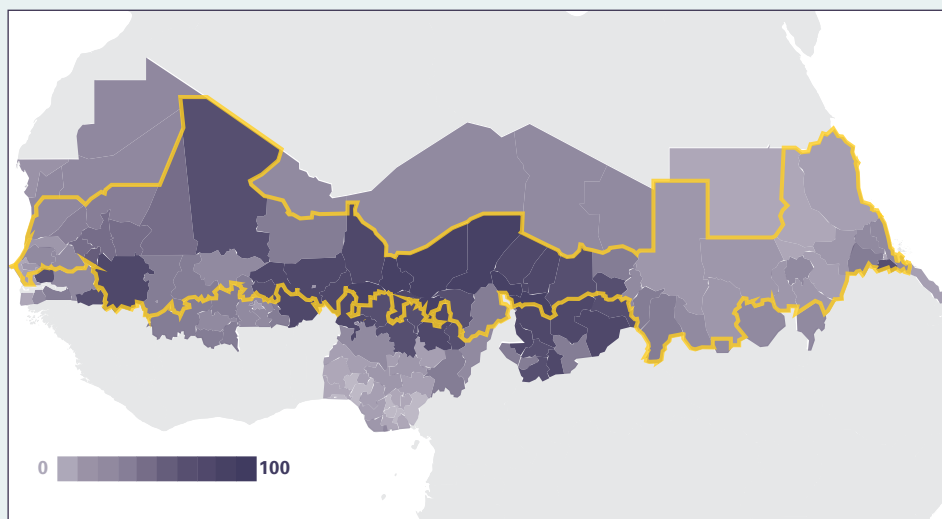
Figure 5. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative sources, 2015–2021.

In the Sahel, levels of child marriage are even higher than in the rest of West and Central Africa

Figure 6. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18

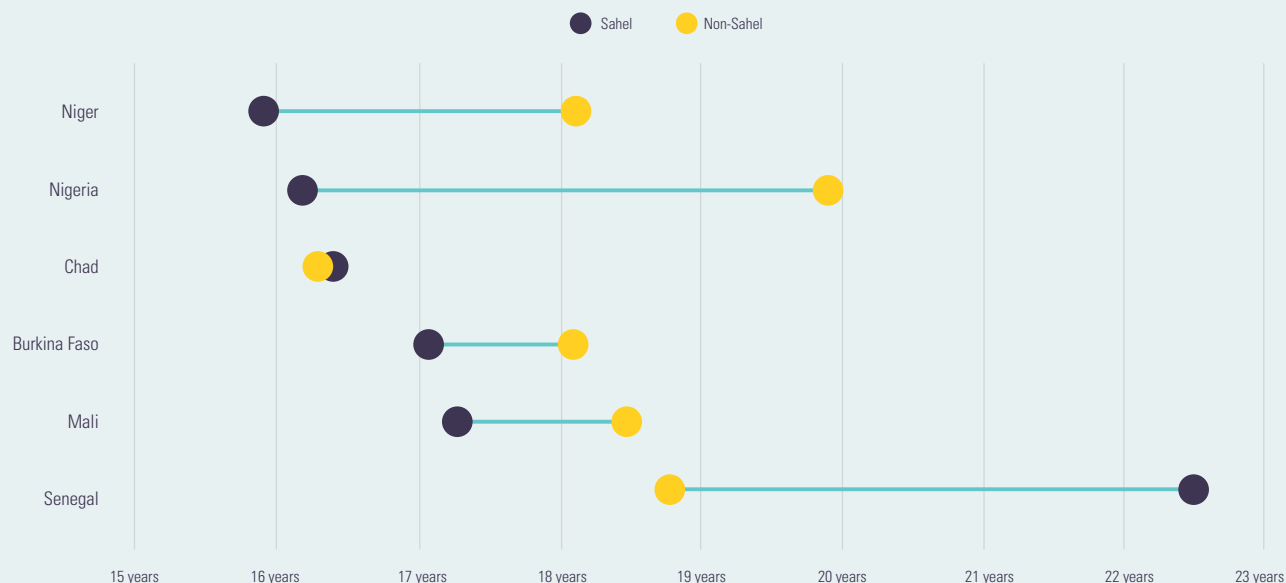


NOTES: This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The yellow border encloses the states and provinces included in the operational definition of the Sahel, which includes portions of Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, the Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan and Eritrea. For more details, see United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Marriage in the Sahel*, UNICEF, New York, 2020.

SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative sources, 2010–2021.

Girls and women in the Sahel marry nearly two years earlier than those outside the region

Figure 7. Median age at first marriage or union among women aged 20 to 24 years

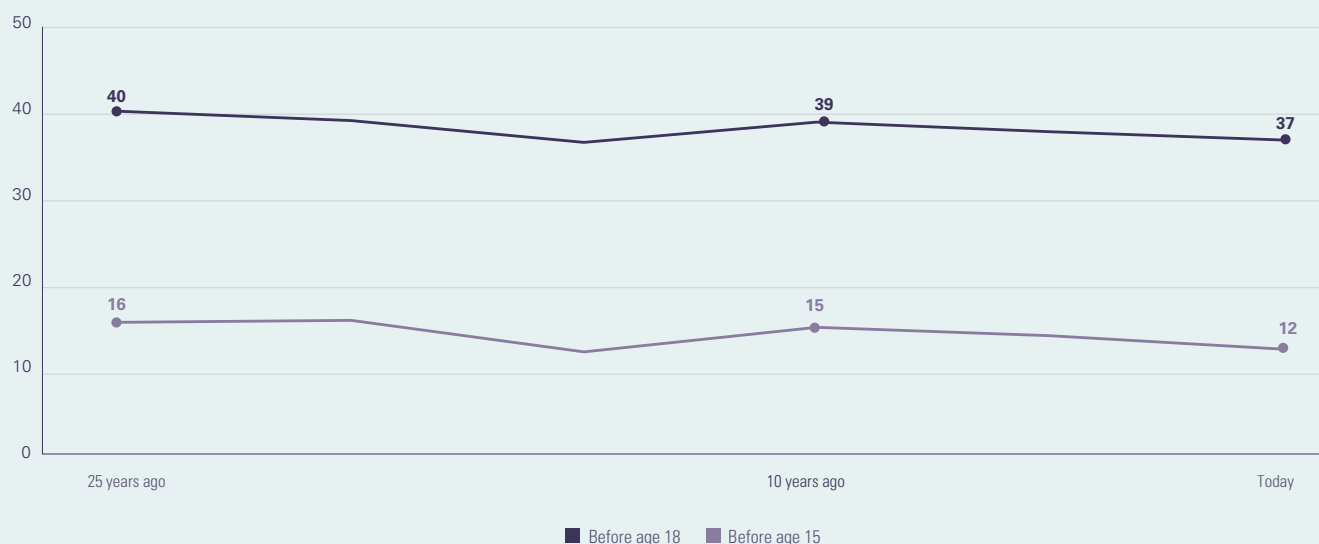


NOTES: This chart includes the countries in West and Central Africa that have states or provinces in the Sahel. For more details, see United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Marriage in the Sahel*, UNICEF, New York, 2020. Data for Mauritania have been excluded as the latest data source indicates that fewer than 50 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 years in the Non-Sahel regions of the country were married and thus a median could not be produced.

SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative sources, 2012–2021.

In West and Central Africa, the pace of progress has been slow overall and varies across countries

Figure 8. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

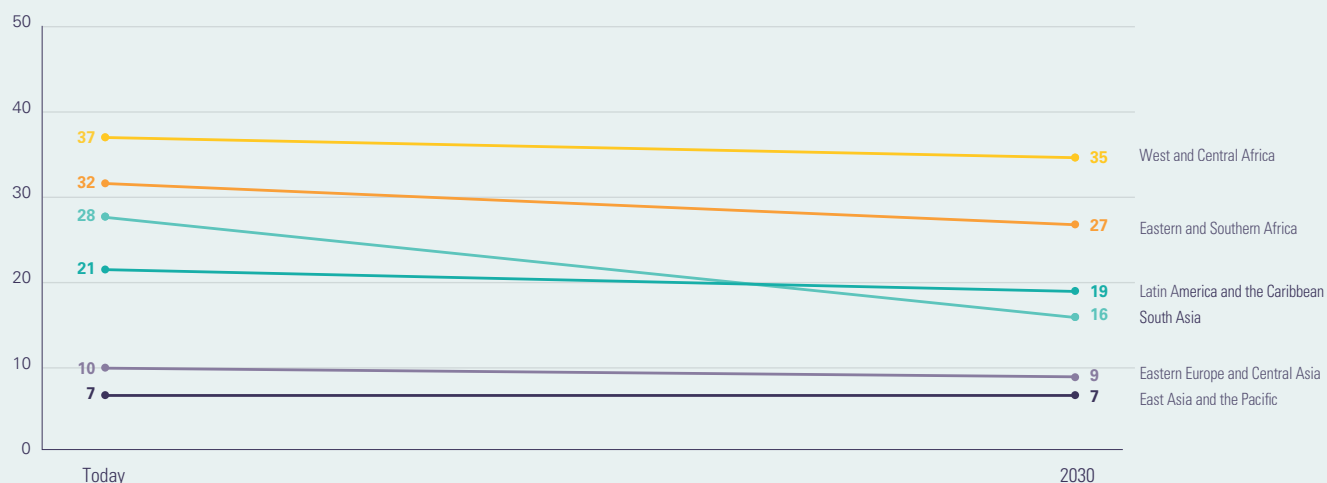


NOTES: Trend analysis is based on the latest available data at the time of publication, with new revisions superseding previously published results. Therefore, it is not advisable to compare results across publications to draw conclusions about trends in the practice.

SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative sources, 2015–2021.

The region remains off track for reaching the SDG target of eliminating child marriage by 2030; at the current rate, 25 million more girls in the region will marry in childhood in the next decade

Figure 9. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years first married or in union before age 18, projected



NOTES: Projected values build on existing trends and show expected values if progress over the past 10 years were to continue. Calculations are based on the average annual rate of change and project a continuation at the same rate, including for regions in which changes are slight and may not be statistically significant. Projections do not take into account the potential impact of factors such as humanitarian crises, conflict, climate change or the COVID-19 pandemic, whose broad and likely long-lasting effects on the population are not yet fully understood. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that through economic uncertainty, interruption to schooling, disruption of services and other avenues, the pandemic has the potential to threaten progress made thus far against child marriage.

SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative sources, 2015–2021.

Country profiles



How to read the profiles

The profiles on the following pages present an overview of child marriage – defined as a marriage or union that occurs before the age of 18 – in each country in West and Central Africa with available data.¹ The profiles detail how common the practice is across the population, describe the characteristics of unions, provide insights into the lives of child brides across key domains of well-being and illustrate trends in the practice and whether the country is on track to reach the 2030 SDG target.

This guide provides a description of the data featured throughout the profiles and notes on how to interpret the findings shown in each section. The notes are organized to correspond with the sequential sections of the profiles and refer to the name of each chart (marked in bold font).

¹ Profiles for Cabo Verde and Equatorial Guinea are not included in this publication as the datasets required for this analysis were unavailable for these countries.

Current levels of child marriage

The **burden of child marriage** captures the total number of girls and women in the country who married in childhood, including girls under 18 who are already married and women of all ages who were child brides. This can be interpreted alongside the **prevalence of child marriage**, or the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18 (SDG indicator 5.3.1), to give a sense of how common the practice is. The burden gives an absolute number, while the prevalence captures the proportion.

The prevalence is measured among this specific age group because, if unmarried, these women have recently passed the risk period for child marriage. Thus the prevalence is both complete – since women in this age group can no longer become child brides – and timely – since, compared to older women, they turned 18 more recently.

This section contains **regional and global comparisons**, again using the standard SDG indicator for measuring child marriage prevalence, to show where the country falls in relation to others in the region and the world. It also identifies **vulnerable populations**, showing the subpopulations in which child marriage is more common across household wealth, level of education and place of residence.

Characteristics of unions

This section illustrates the nature of child marriages, including the difference in age between child brides and their partners and the types of unions child brides are part of.

In some contexts, child brides marry men who are substantially older, while in others they marry peers. The **spousal age gap** shows the age difference between women and their partners for both child brides and those who married in adulthood.

The chart showing **types of unions** compares the share of formal marriages with the share of informal unions, in which girls live with a partner as if married. This chart also shows the share previously married who are now separated, divorced or widowed. Unlike most other charts in the profile, due to data availability, this chart refers to girls aged 15 to 17 years who have ever been married – since they are under 18, they are all considered child brides.

Lives of child brides

This section shows a selection of well-being indicators, comparing the outcomes for child brides to those of their peers who married later or who have not married.

The **autonomy, empowerment and violence** chart illustrates whether child brides are more or less likely than their peers to have a bank account (a measure of financial autonomy), to be employed, to have a say in decision-making, to believe wife-beating is justified and to have experienced intimate partner violence.

In the area of **education**, the profile compares the current school participation of girls aged 15 to 17 depending on their marital status, often showing that married adolescent girls are more likely to be out of school than their unmarried peers.

Child marriage is closely tied to **early childbearing**, and the first chart in this section shows how commonly child brides give birth before ages 18 and 20 compared to their peers who married later or never married. The second chart shows the timing of pregnancy and marriage, illustrating whether pregnancy preceded (or closely followed) marriage among those who married at different ages.

Lastly, the **reproductive health** chart shows whether child brides have less access to reproductive health services such as family planning and antenatal and delivery care than their peers.

It is worth keeping in mind throughout this section that this is a descriptive analysis, and age at marriage may not be the only factor contributing to differences across groups of women, especially since child brides are likely to be disadvantaged in other dimensions as well.

Generational trends

This section gives a long-term view of how common child marriage has been at the national level over the preceding 25 years. In many countries, the practice has become less common, while in others there has been little change.

Looking ahead to ending child marriage

In light of the SDG target of ending child marriage by 2030, this section illustrates whether the progress observed to date has set the country on a path to meet the goal or whether acceleration is required.

The chart on **observed and required rates of progress** shows the average annual rates of reduction, often contrasting modest annual improvements in the past decades with the much faster rates required to meet the 2030 target.



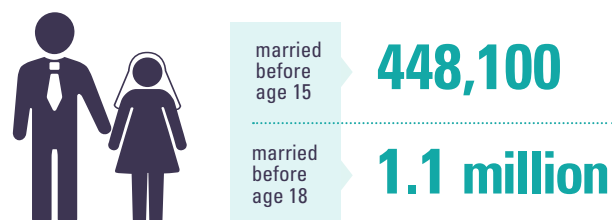
Benin

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 | with exceptions: n/a

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

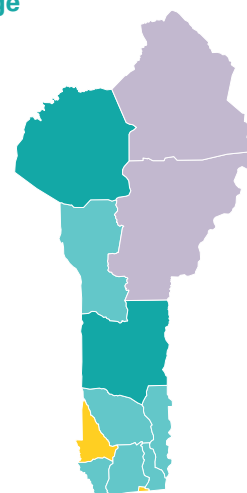
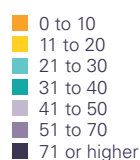
Figure 10. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Benin is home to over 1 million child brides; 1 in 3 young women were married in childhood

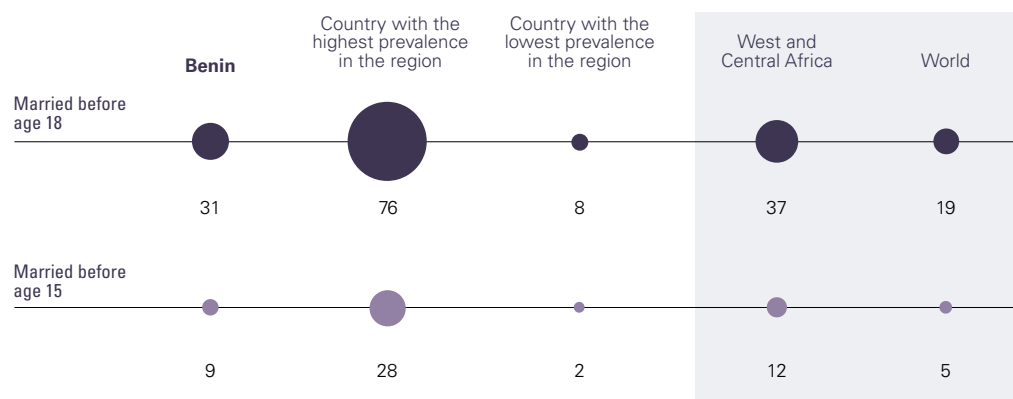
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 11. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



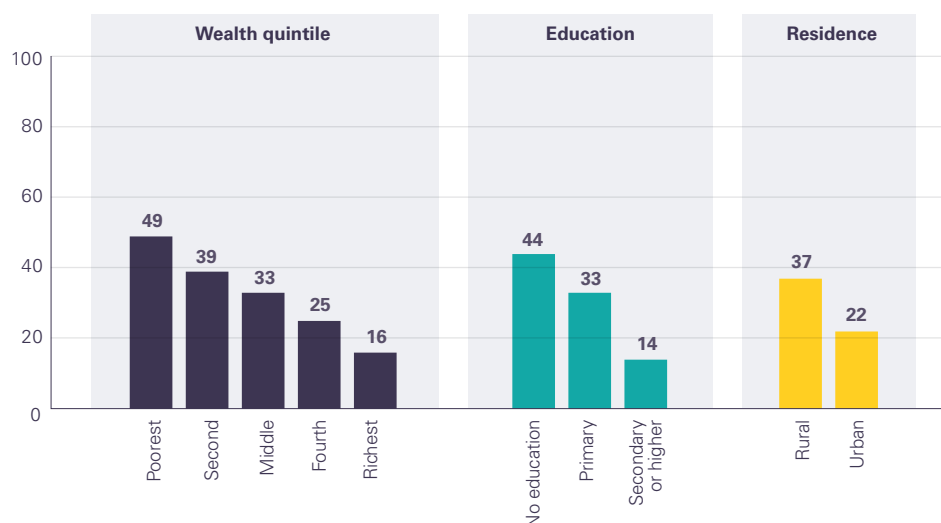
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 12. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

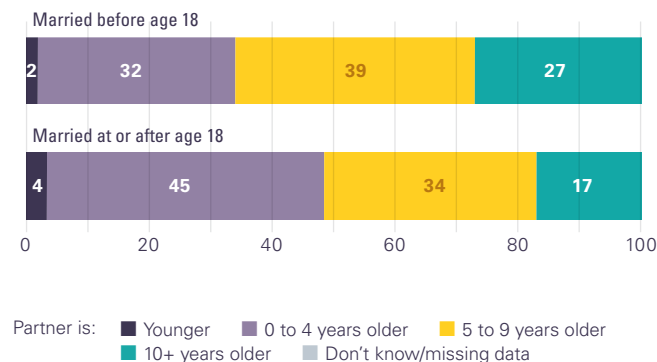
Figure 13. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

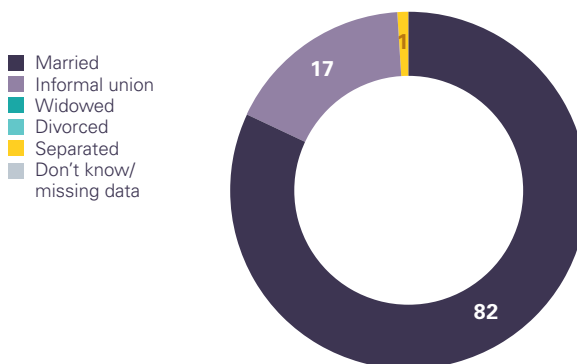
Spousal age gap

Figure 14. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

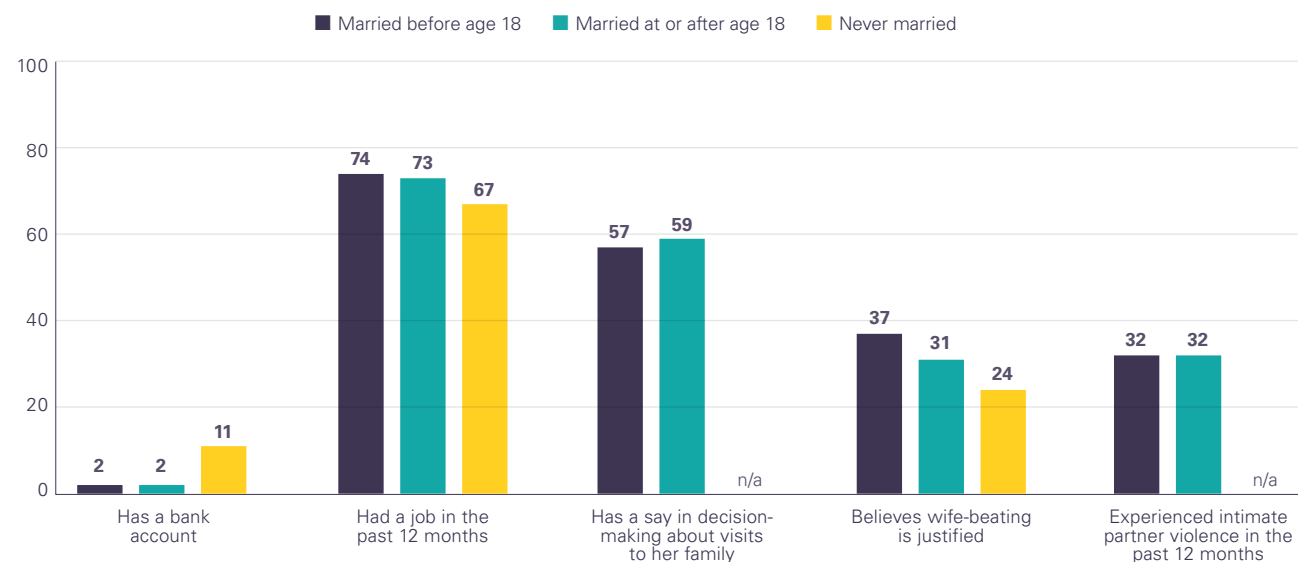
Figure 15. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

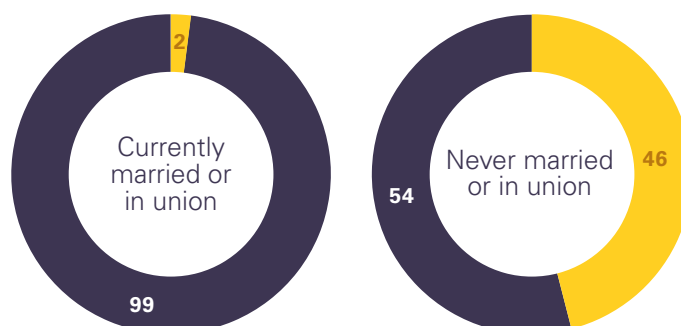
Figure 16. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months



Education

Figure 17. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

In school
 Out of school
 Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 18. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

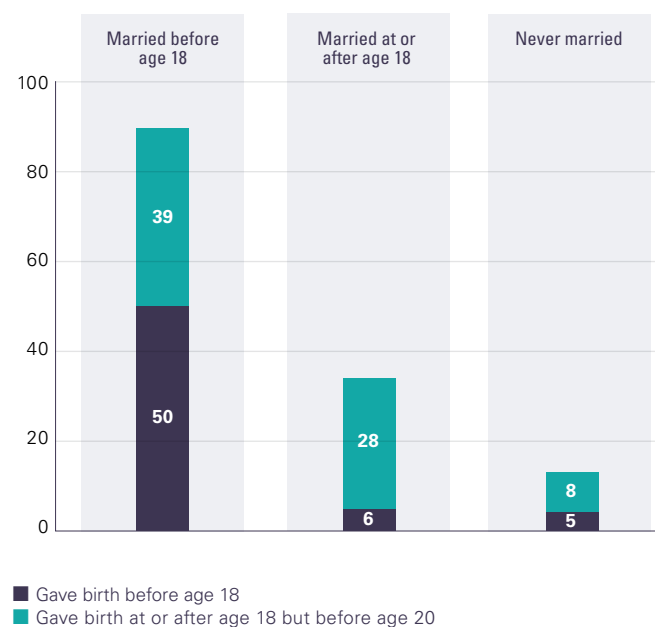
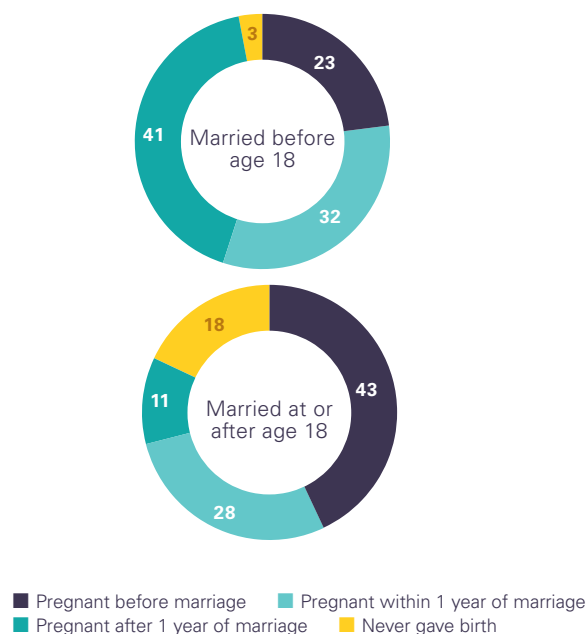
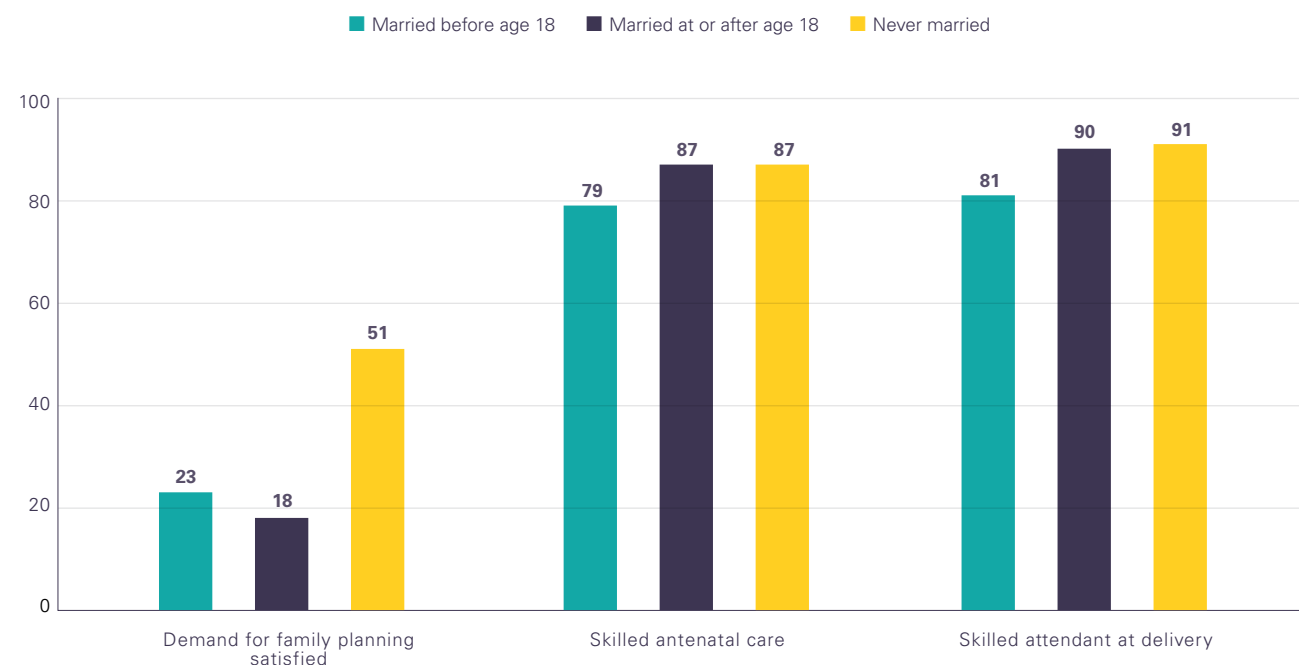


Figure 19. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



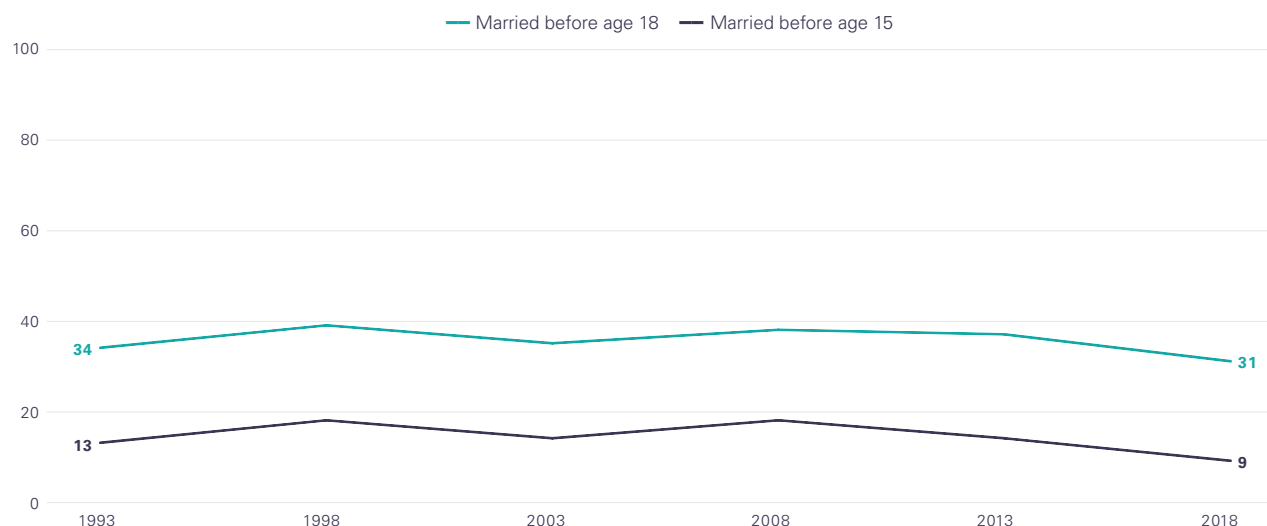
Reproductive health

Figure 20. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

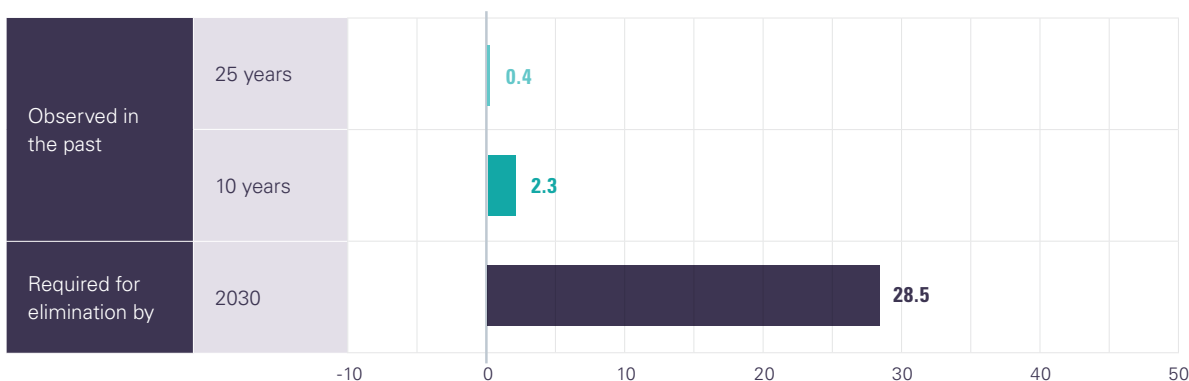
Figure 21. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 22. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2017–2018 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to ‘marriage’ or ‘child brides’ include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, ‘elimination’ is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as ‘n/a’ indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

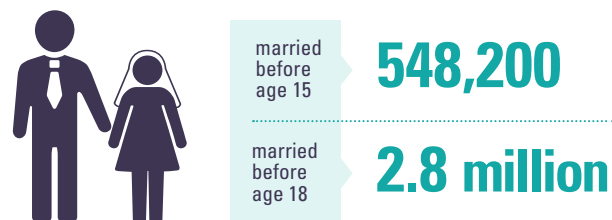
Burkina Faso

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls with parental permission: 17
without parental permission: 20 | with judicial authorization: 15

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

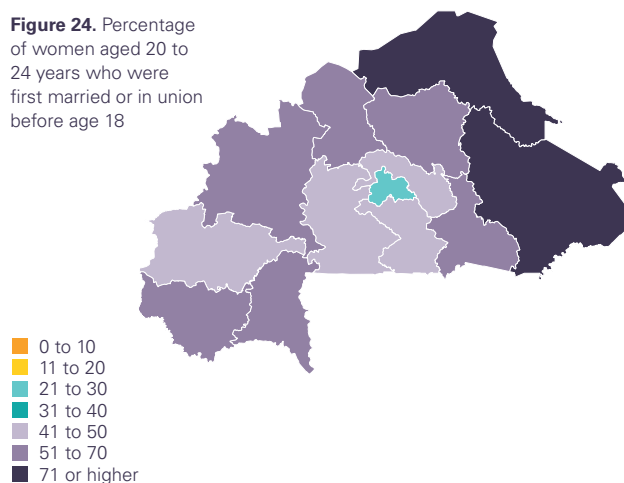
Figure 23. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Burkina Faso is home to nearly 3 million child brides; 1 in 2 young women were married in childhood

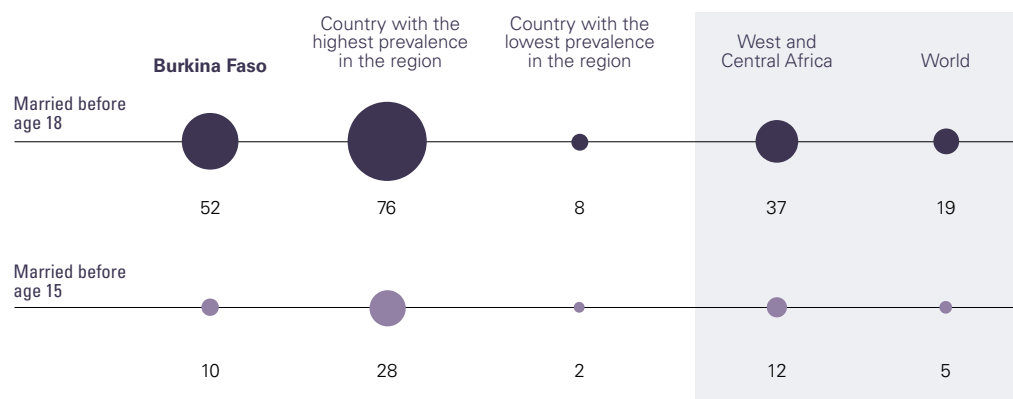
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 24. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



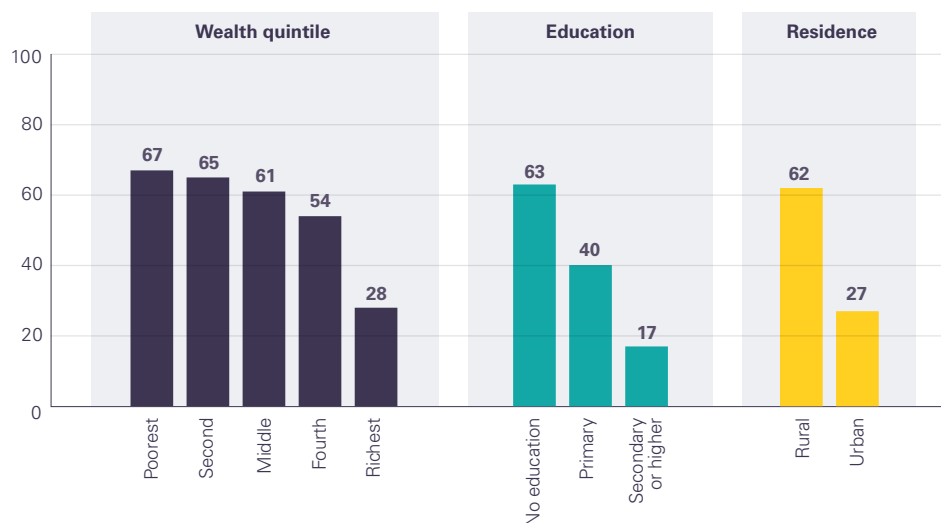
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 25. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

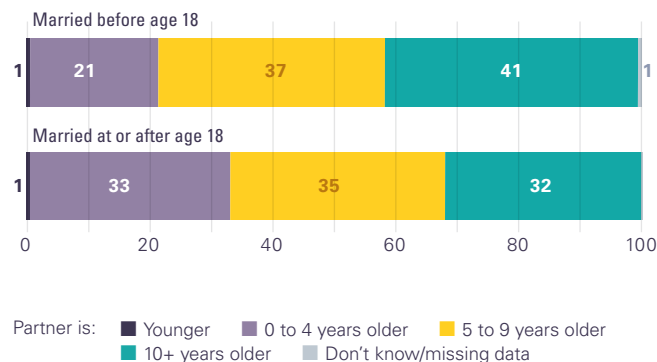
Figure 26. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

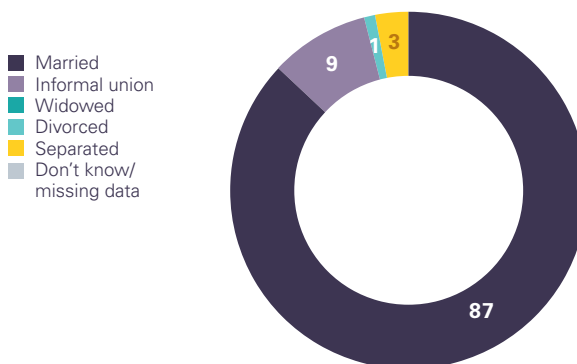
Spousal age gap

Figure 27. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

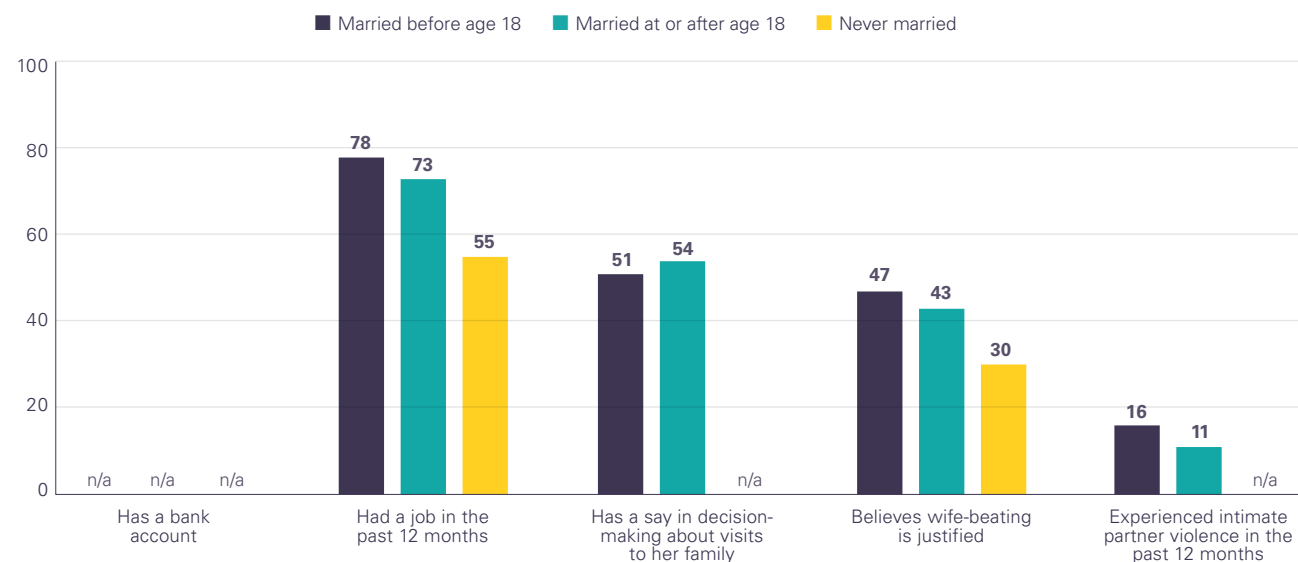
Figure 28. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

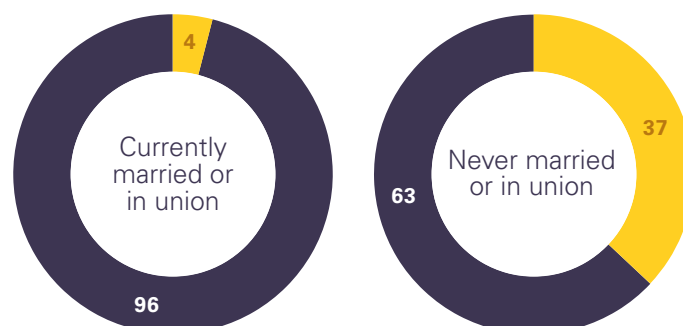
Figure 29. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months



Education

Figure 30. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

Figure 31. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

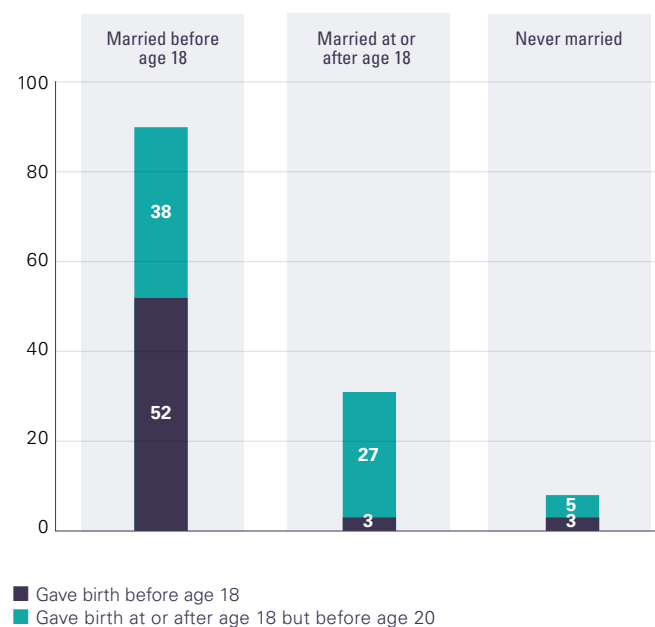
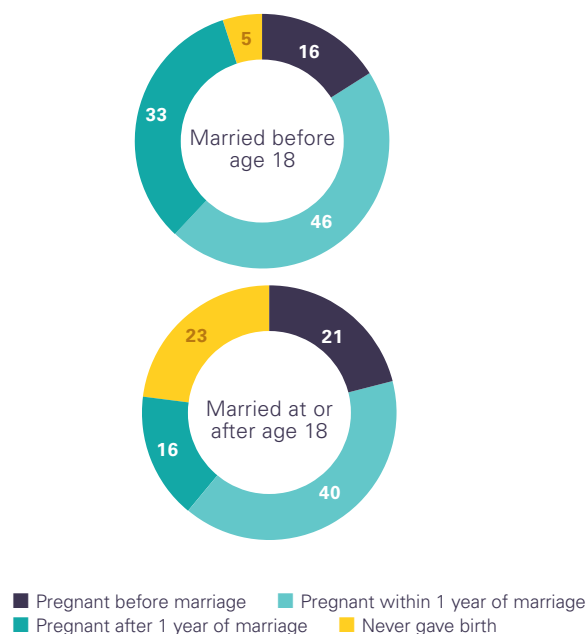
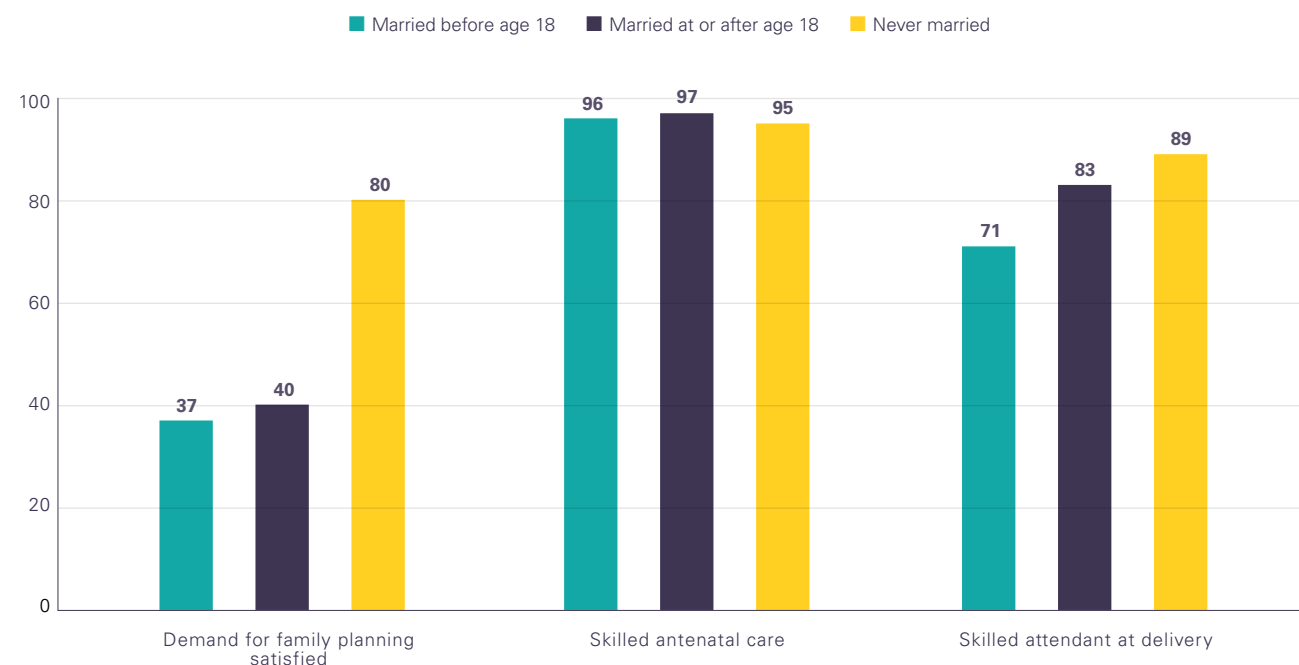


Figure 32. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



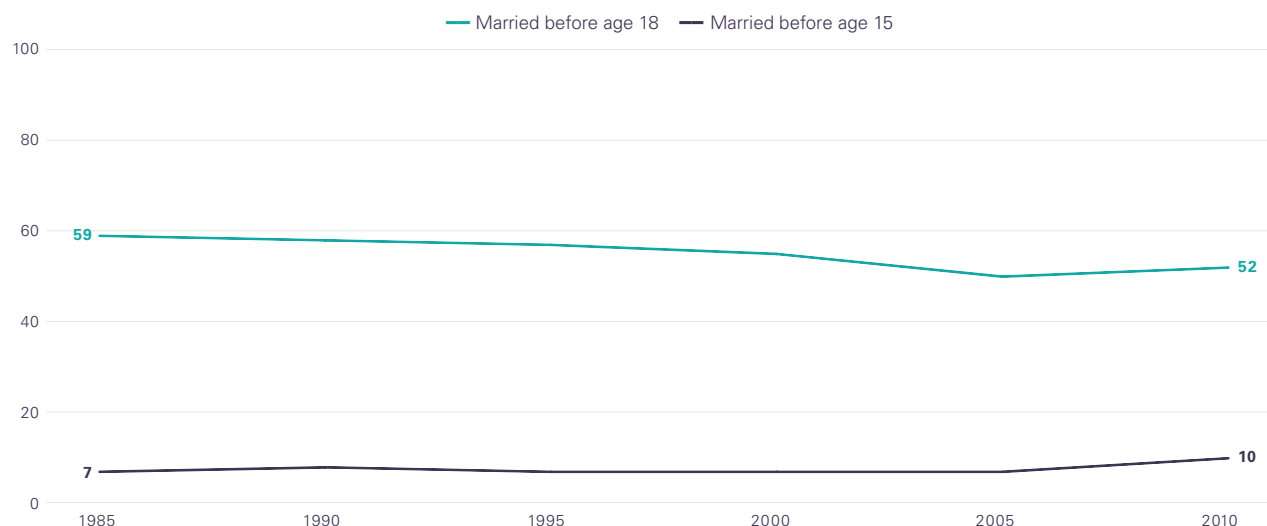
Reproductive health

Figure 33. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

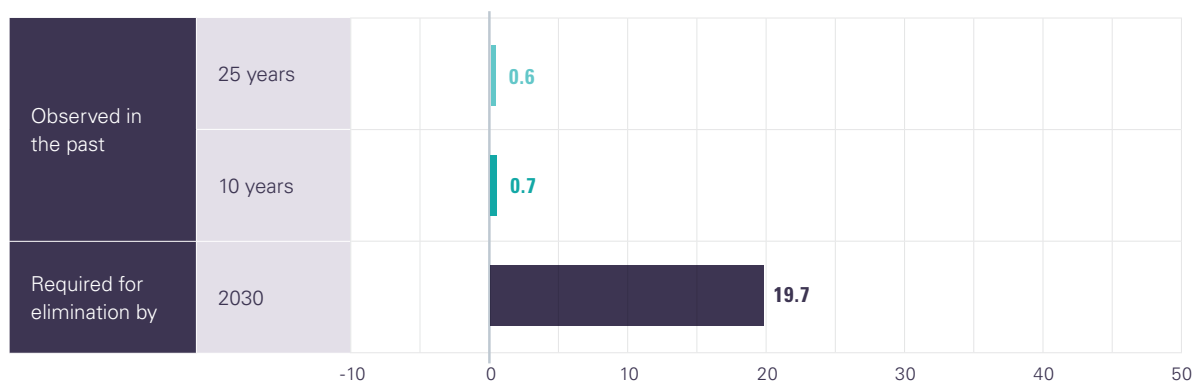
Figure 34. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 35. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2010 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. Trends in the prevalence of child marriage were calculated taking into account data from all available surveys. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

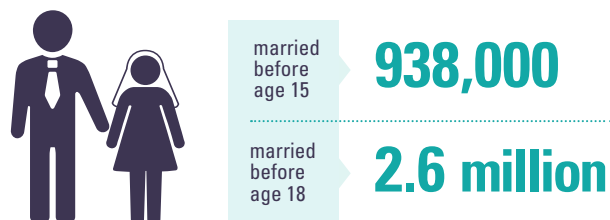
Cameroon

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 21 | with exceptions: 15

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

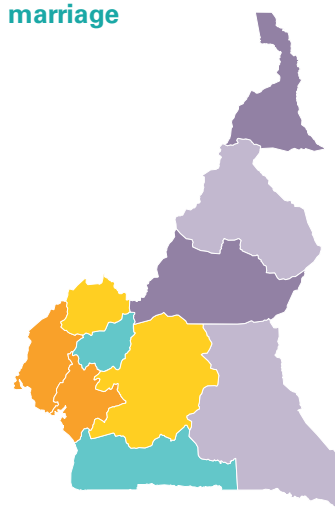
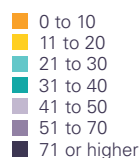
Figure 36. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Cameroon is home to over 2 million child brides; 3 in 10 young women were married in childhood

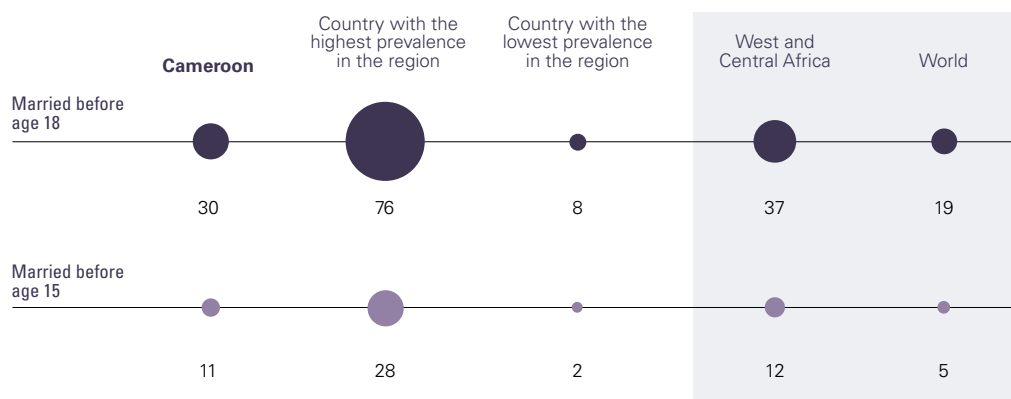
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 37. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



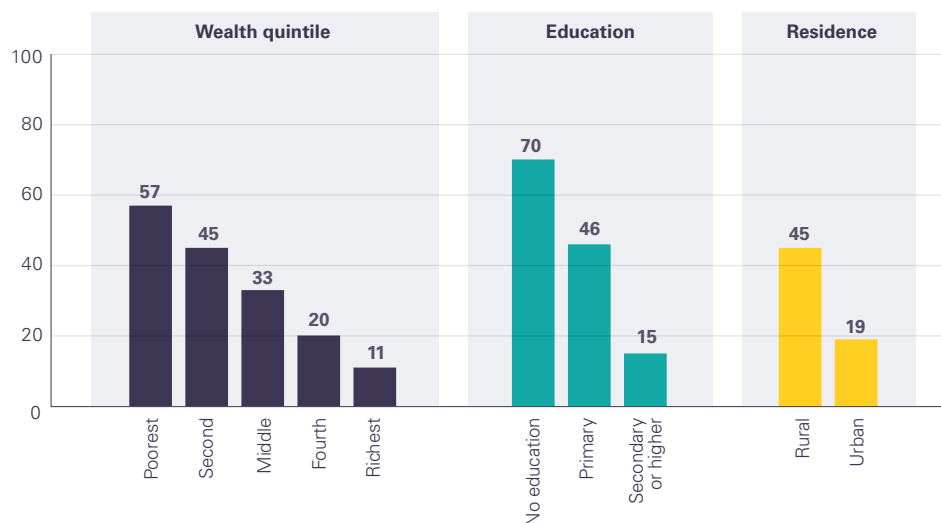
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 38. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

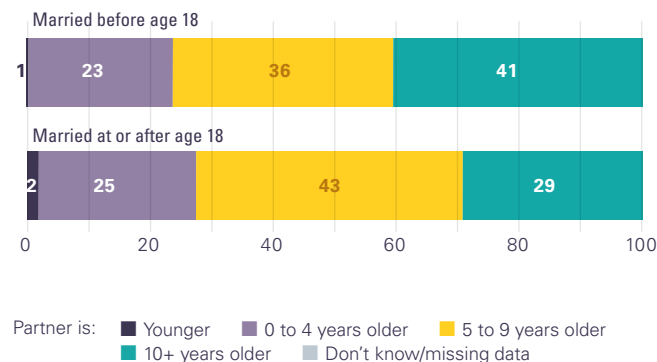
Figure 39. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

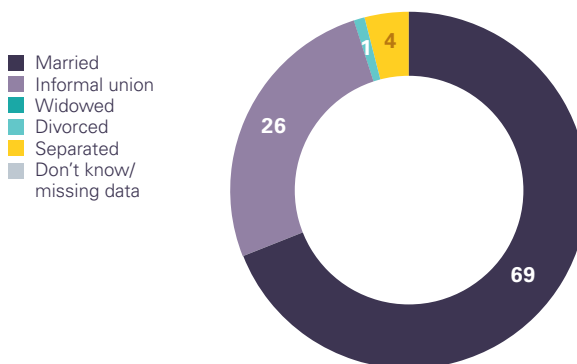
Spousal age gap

Figure 40. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

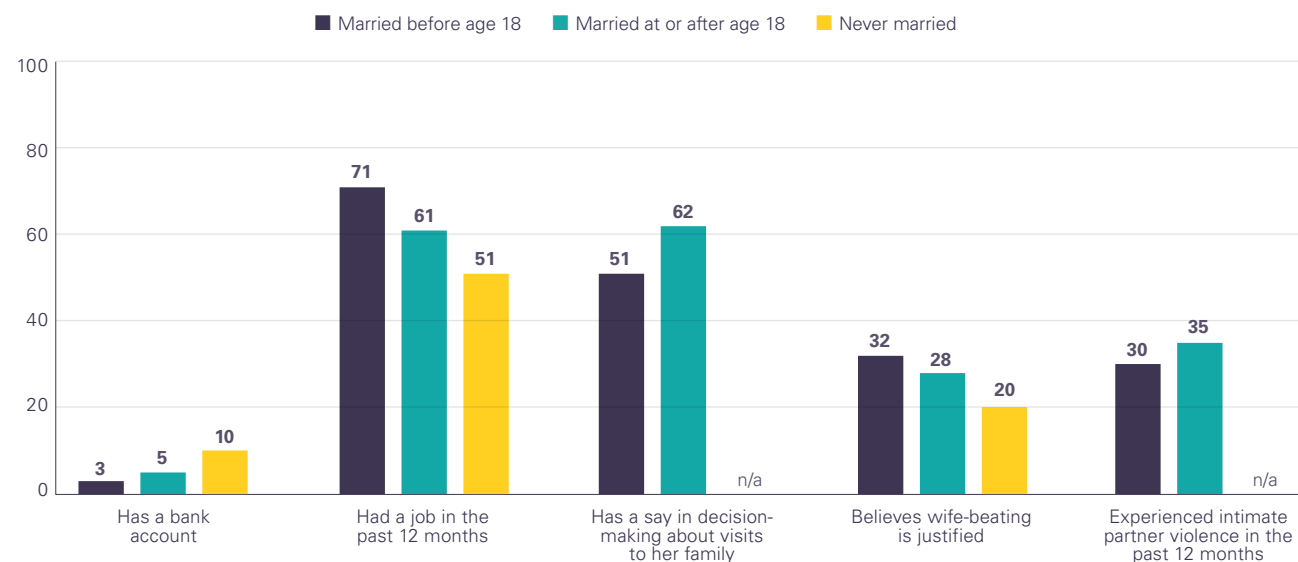
Figure 41. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 42. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months



Education

Figure 43. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 44. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

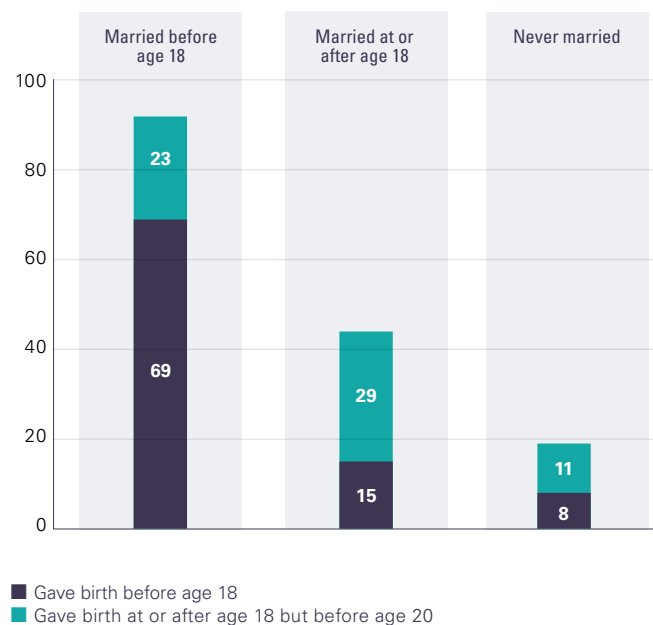
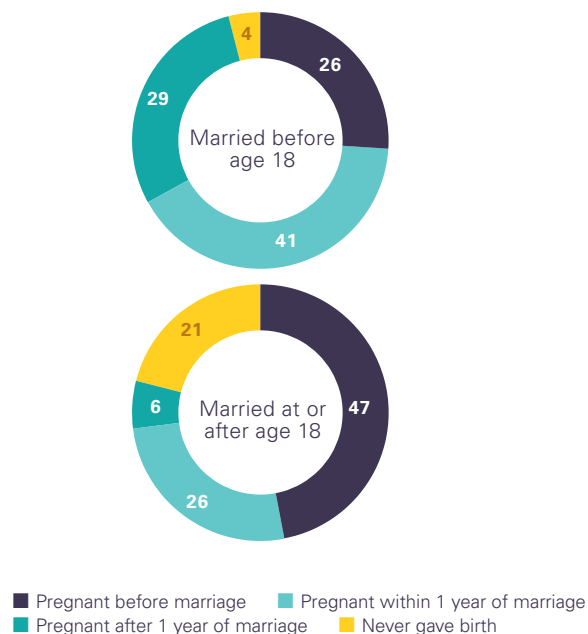
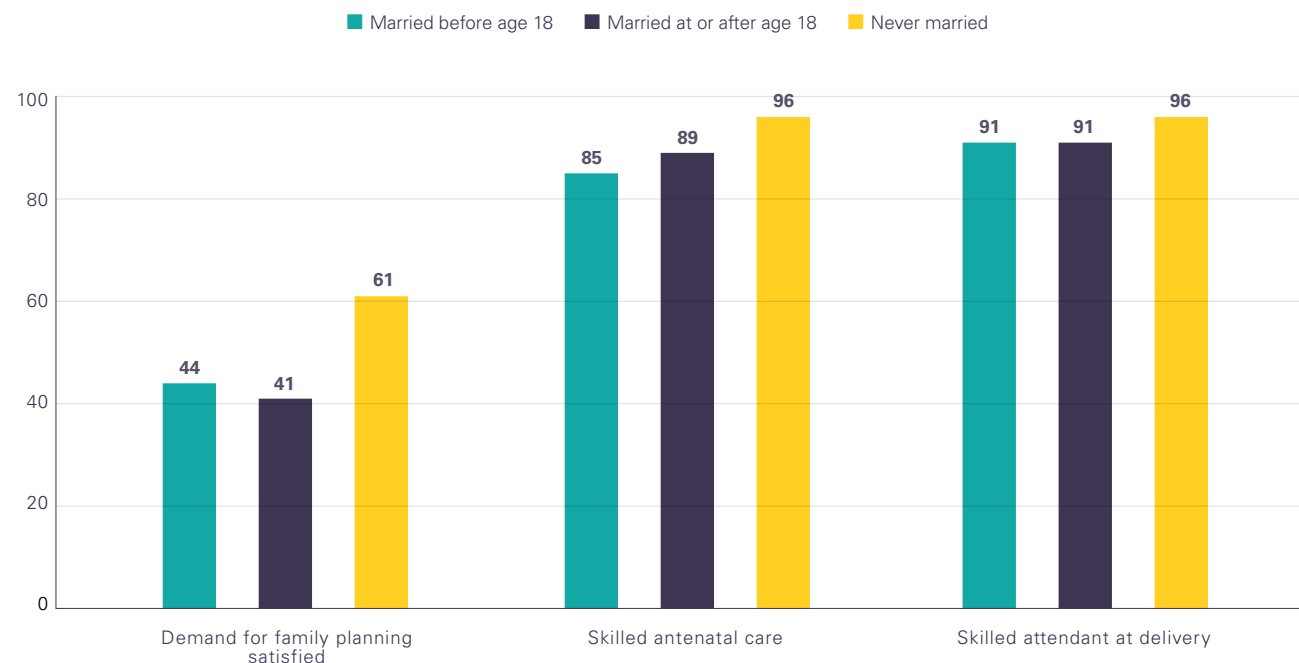


Figure 45. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



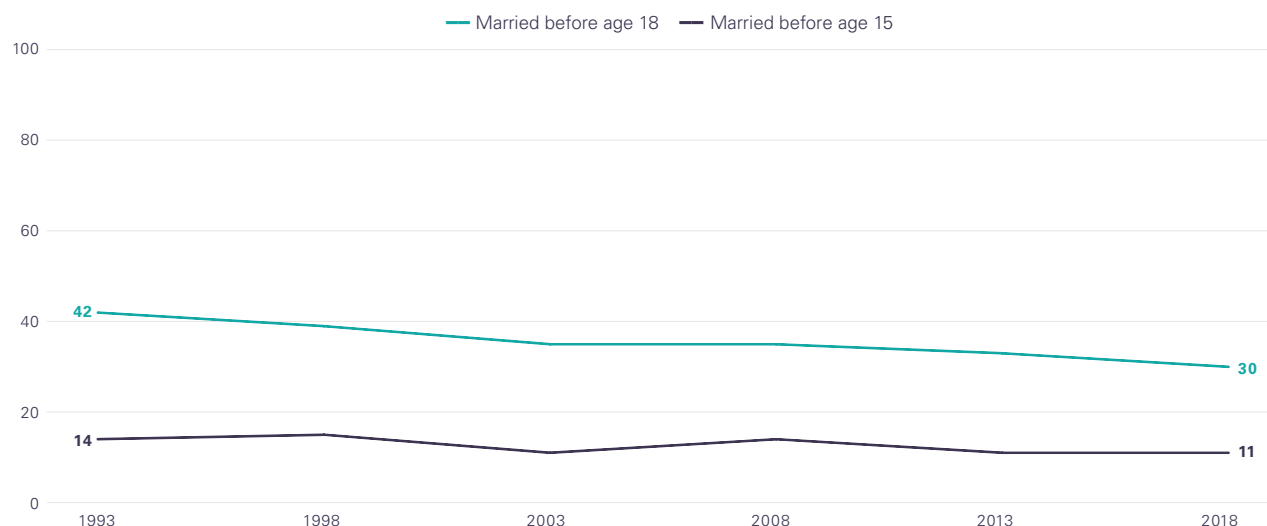
Reproductive health

Figure 46. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

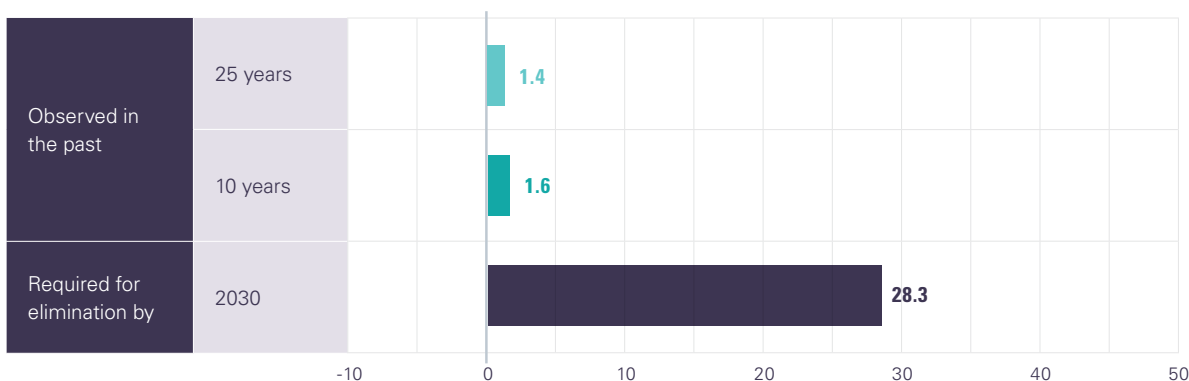
Figure 47. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 48. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2018 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

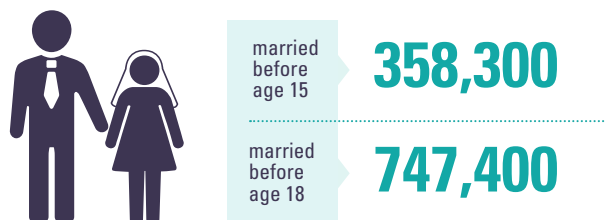
Central African Republic

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 | with exceptions: n/a

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

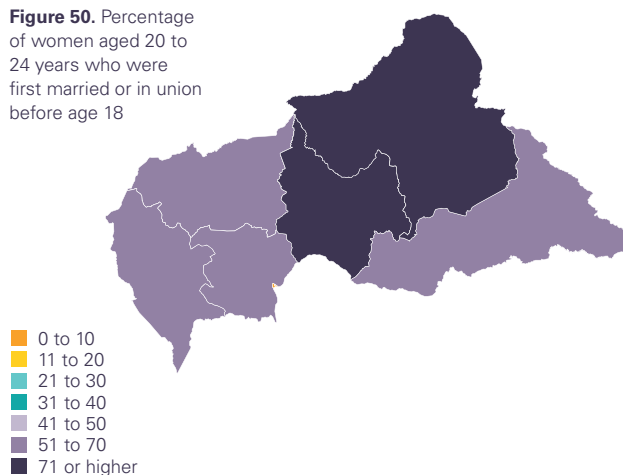
Figure 49. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



The Central African Republic is home to over 747,000 child brides; 3 in 5 young women were married in childhood

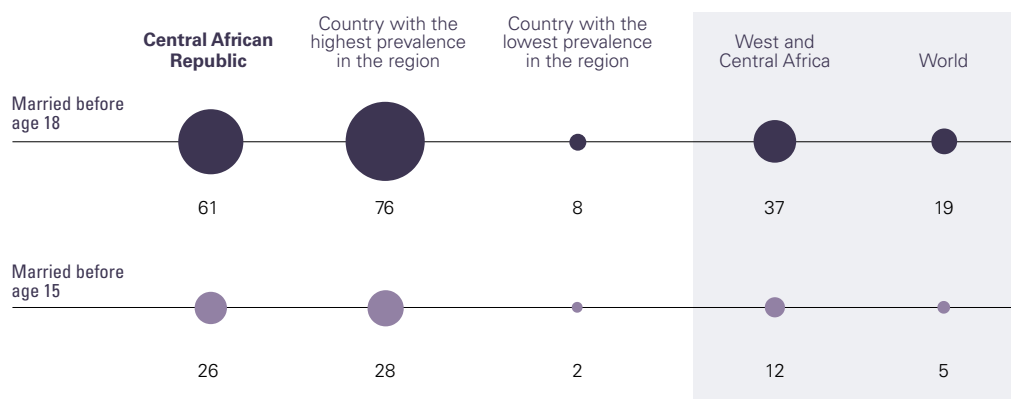
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 50. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



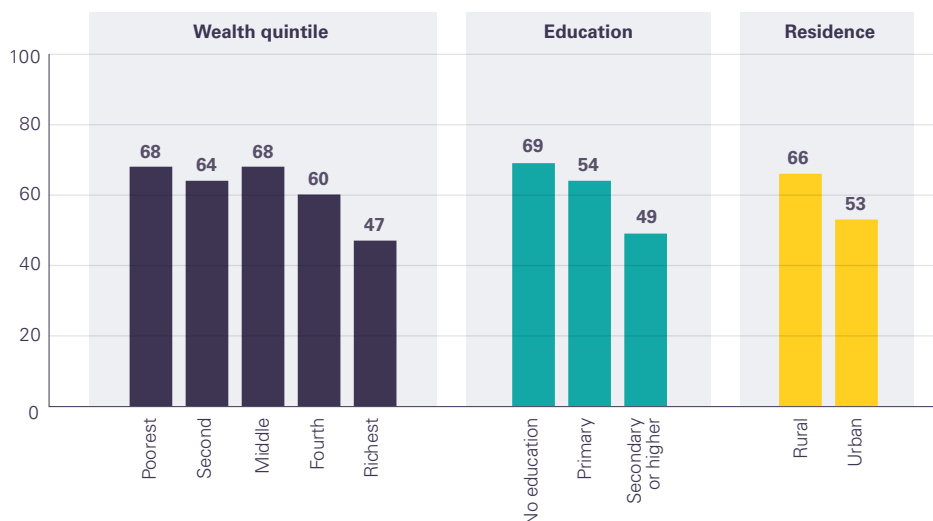
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 51. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

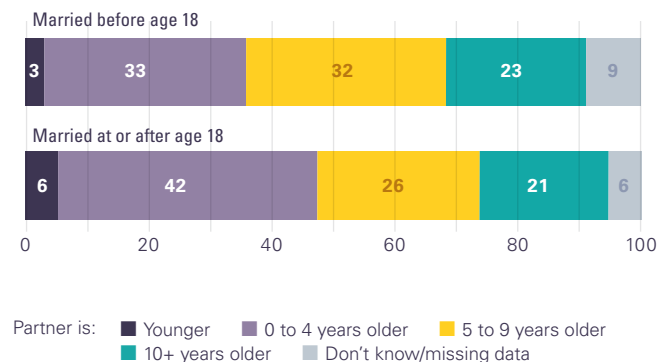
Figure 52. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

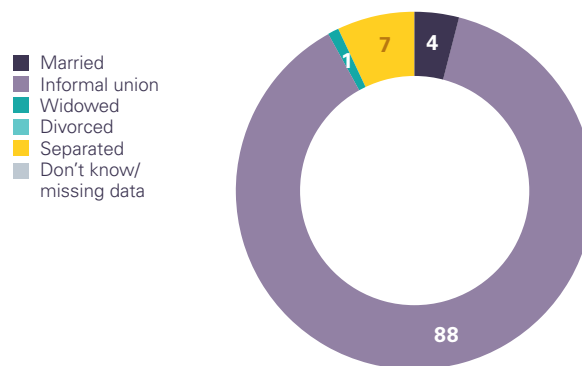
Spousal age gap

Figure 53. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

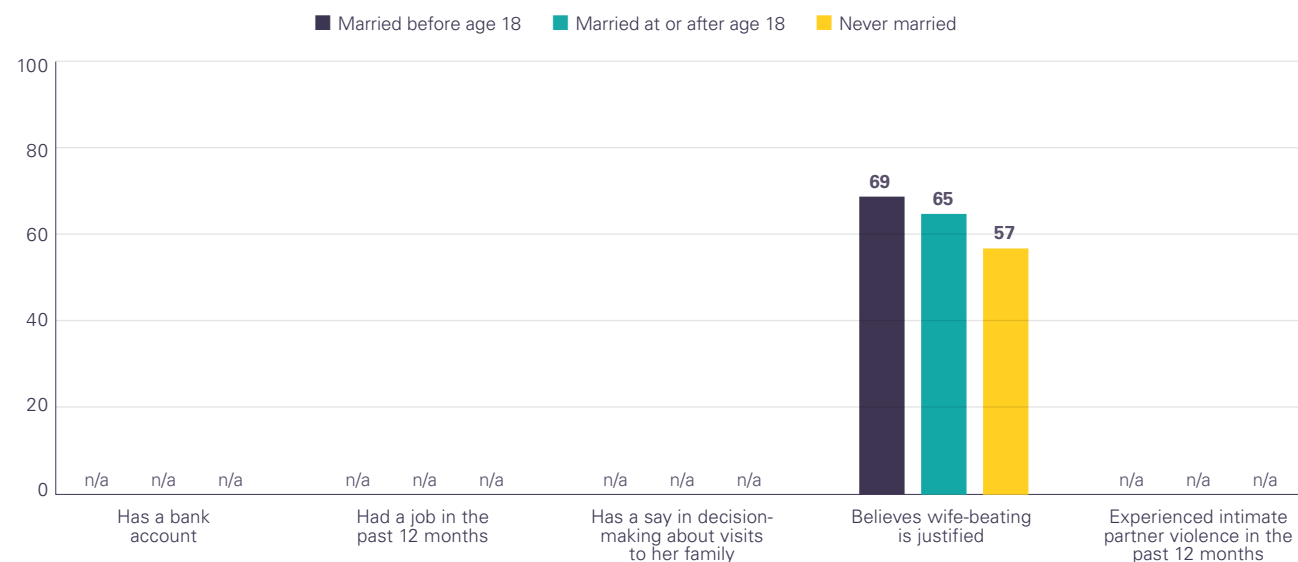
Figure 54. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 55. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months



Education

Figure 56. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

In school
 Out of school
 Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

Figure 57. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

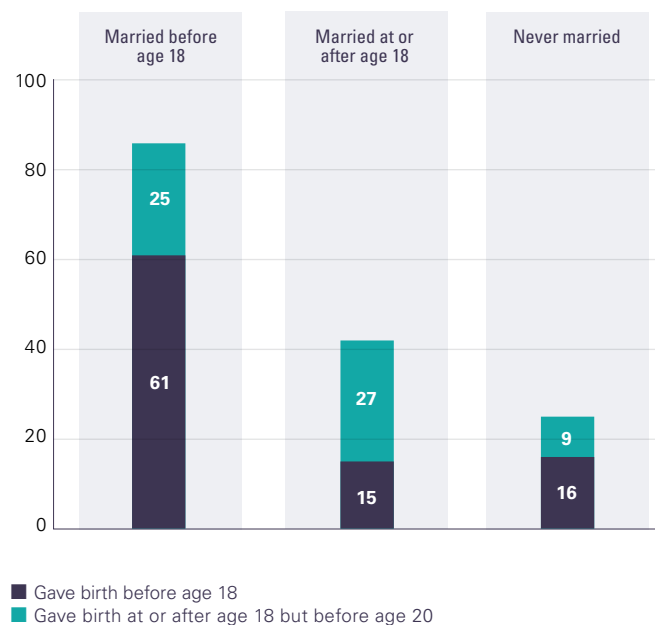
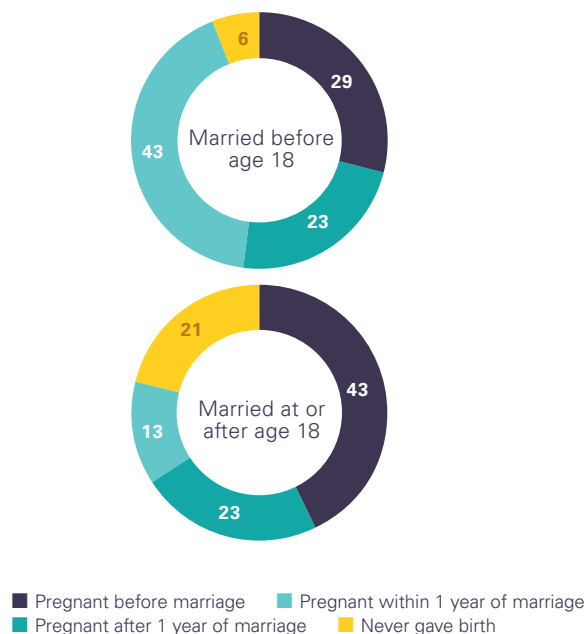
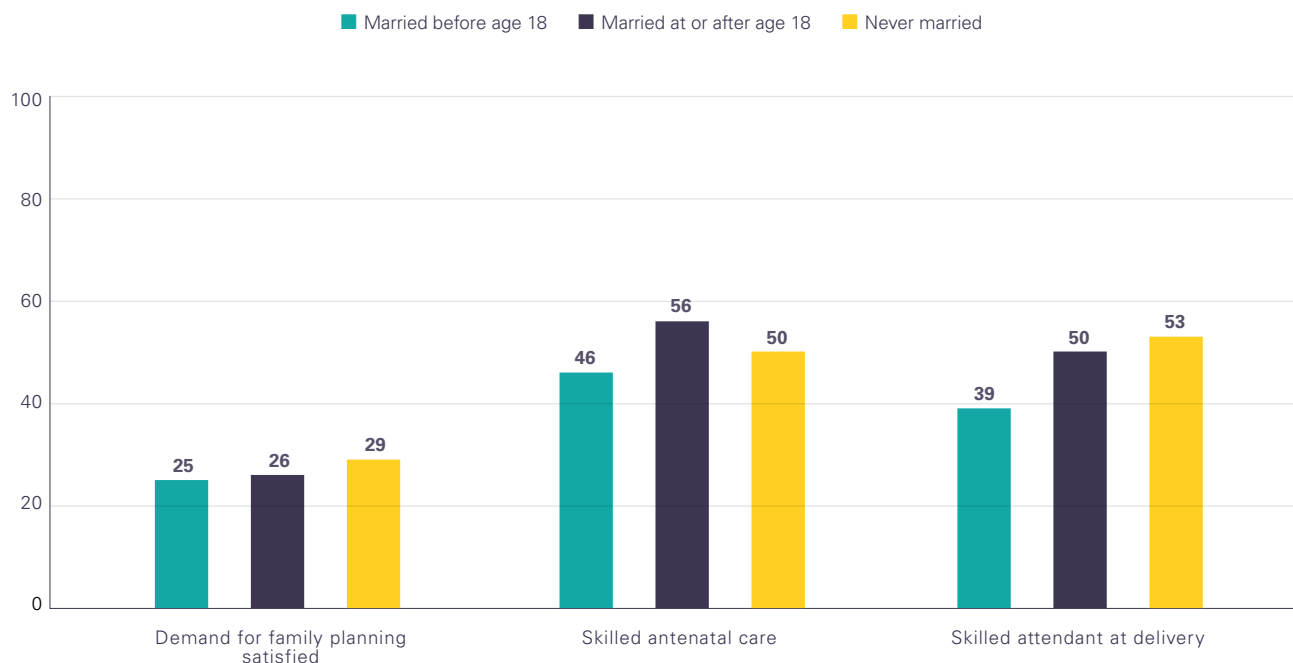


Figure 58. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



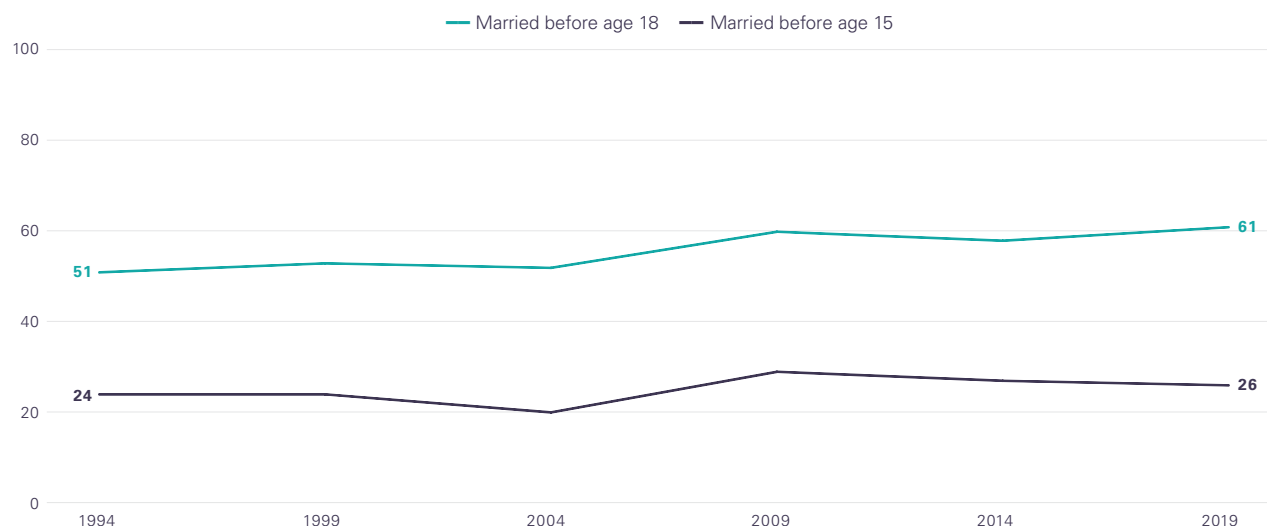
Reproductive health

Figure 59. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

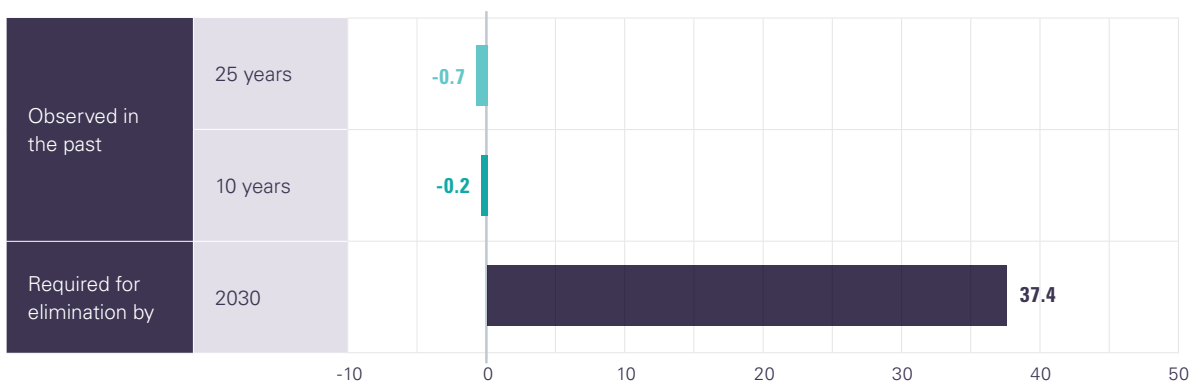
Figure 60. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 61. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2018–2019 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to ‘marriage’ or ‘child brides’ include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, ‘elimination’ is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as ‘n/a’ indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

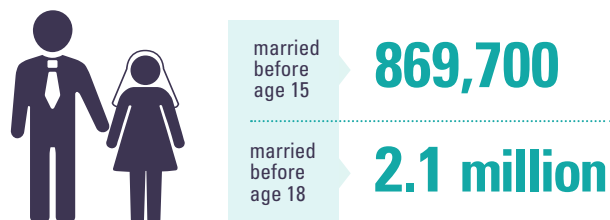
Chad

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 21 | with exceptions: 18

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

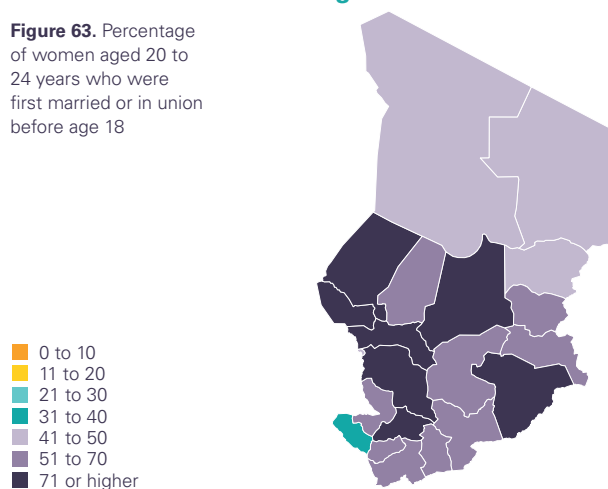
Figure 62. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Chad is home to over 2 million child brides; 3 in 5 young women were married in childhood

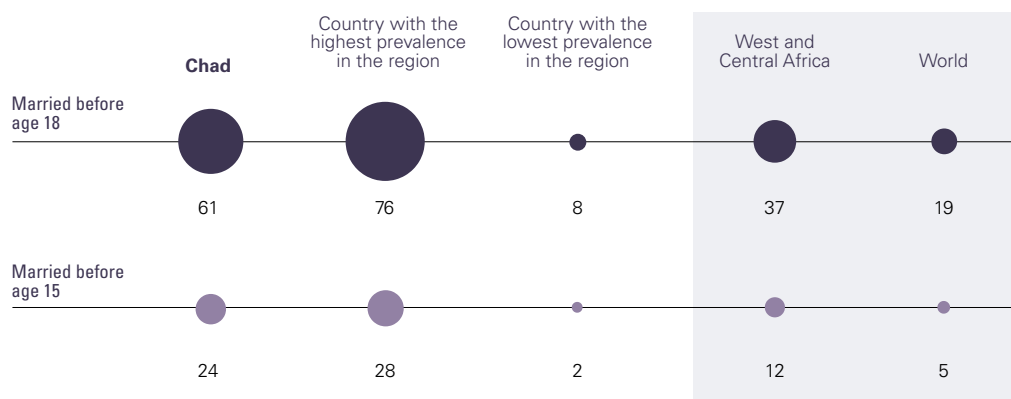
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 63. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



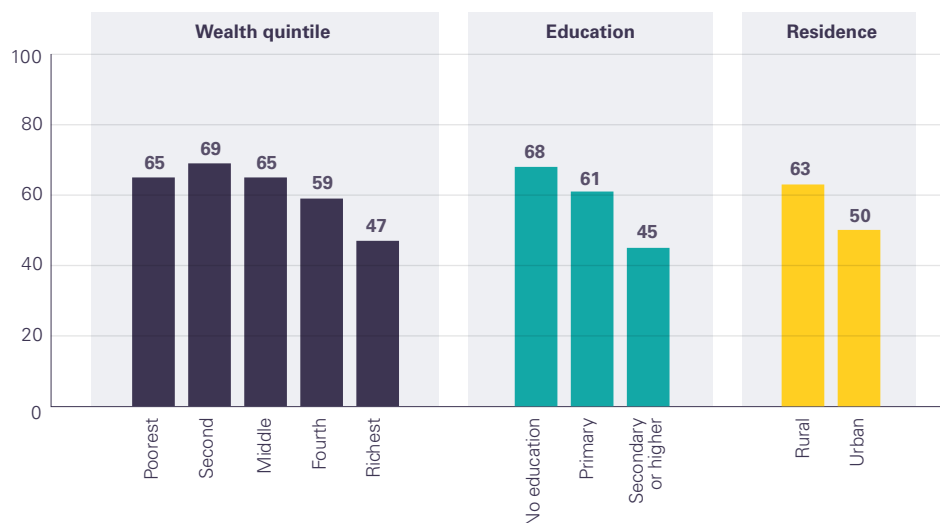
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 64. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

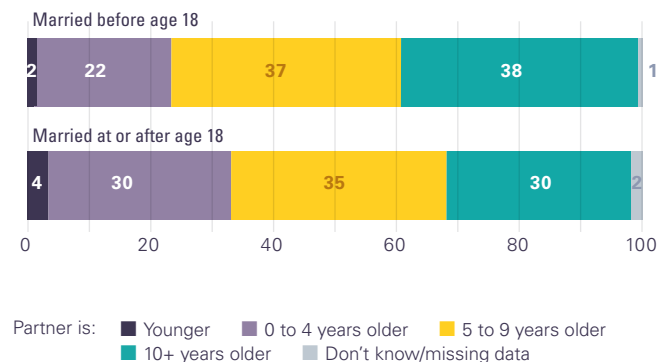
Figure 65. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

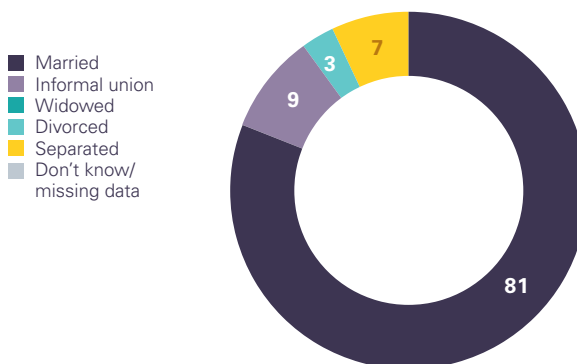
Spousal age gap

Figure 66. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 67. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 68. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

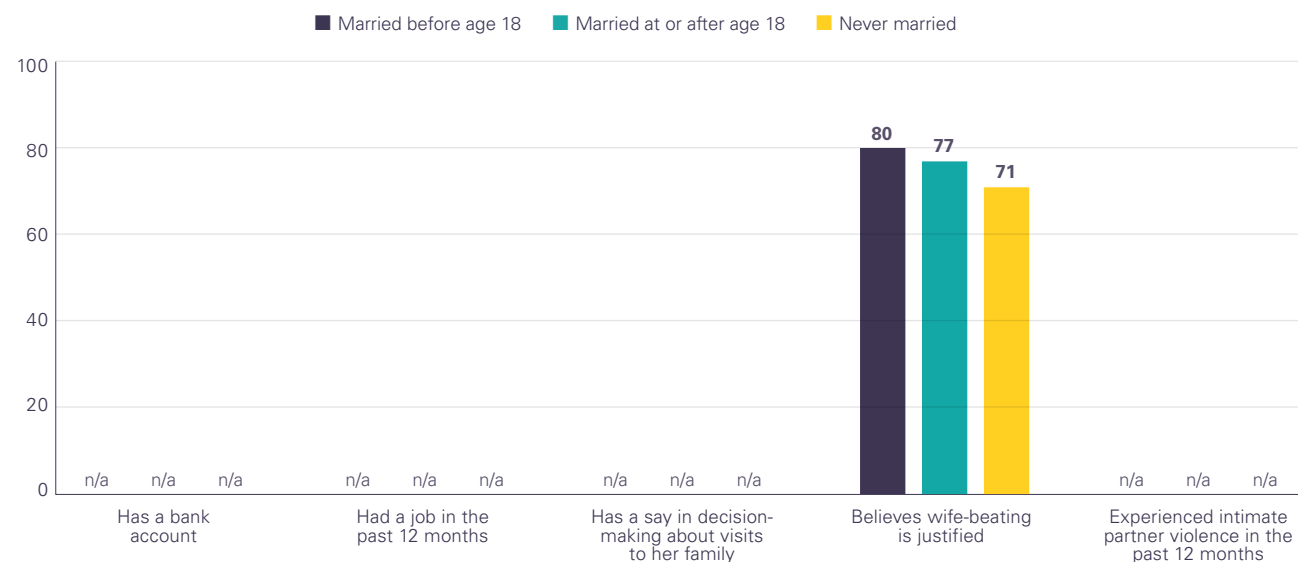
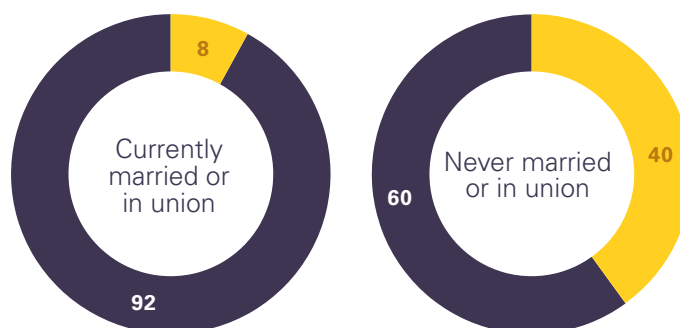


Figure 69. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 70. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

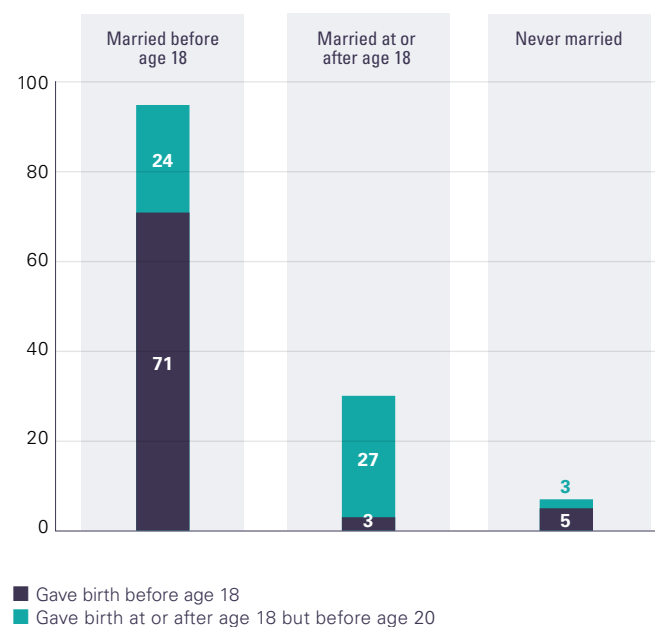
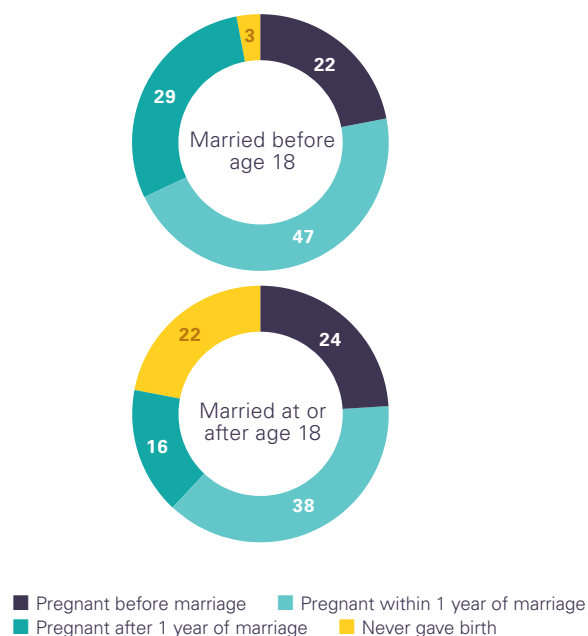
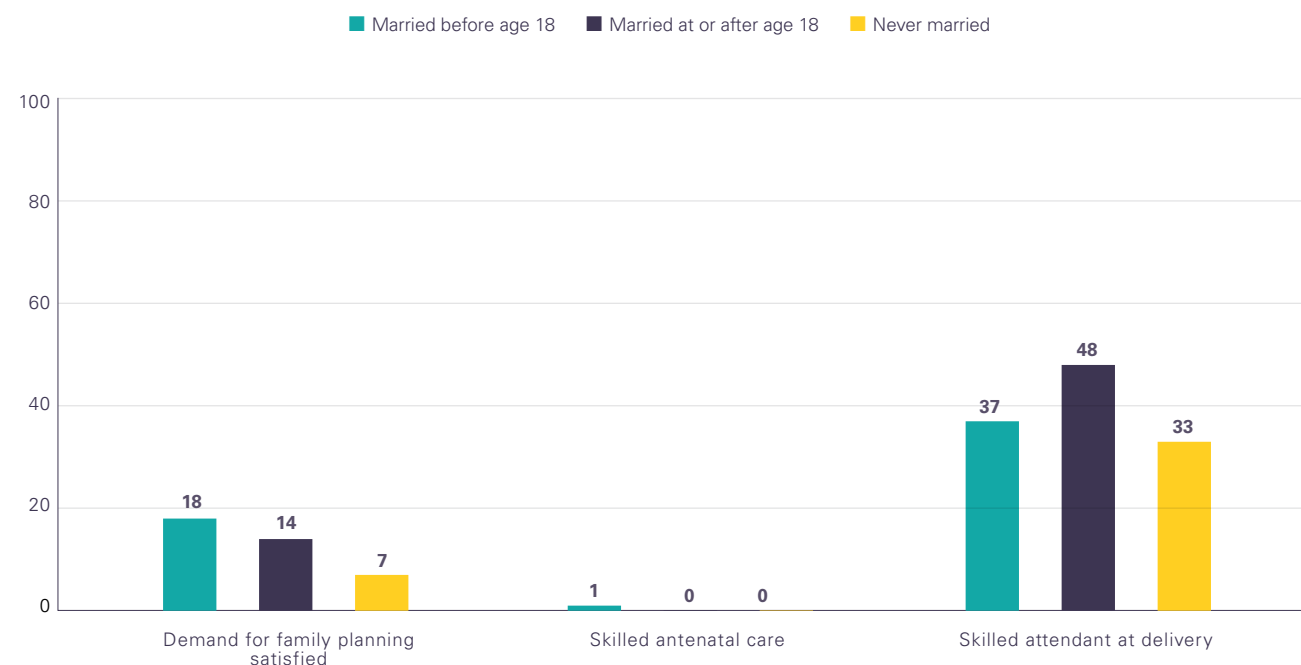


Figure 71. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



Reproductive health

Figure 72. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

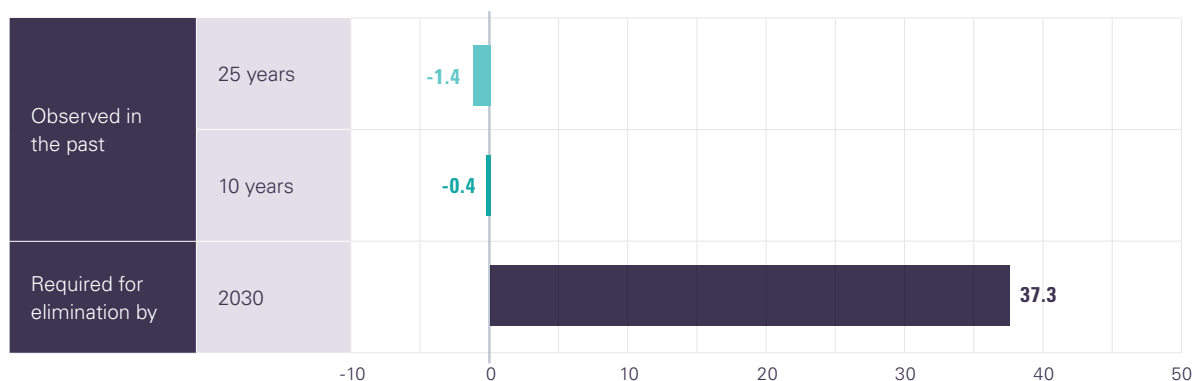
Figure 73. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 74. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

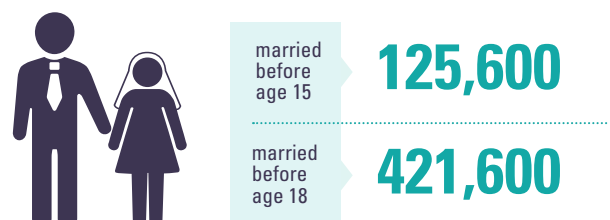
Congo

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 | with exceptions: n/a

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

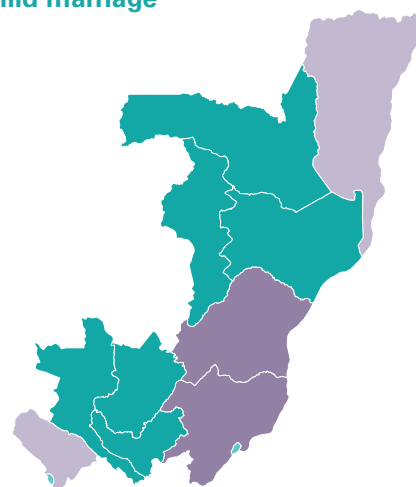
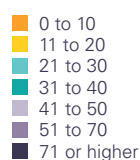
Figure 75. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



The Congo is home to over 421,000 child brides; 1 in 4 young women were married in childhood

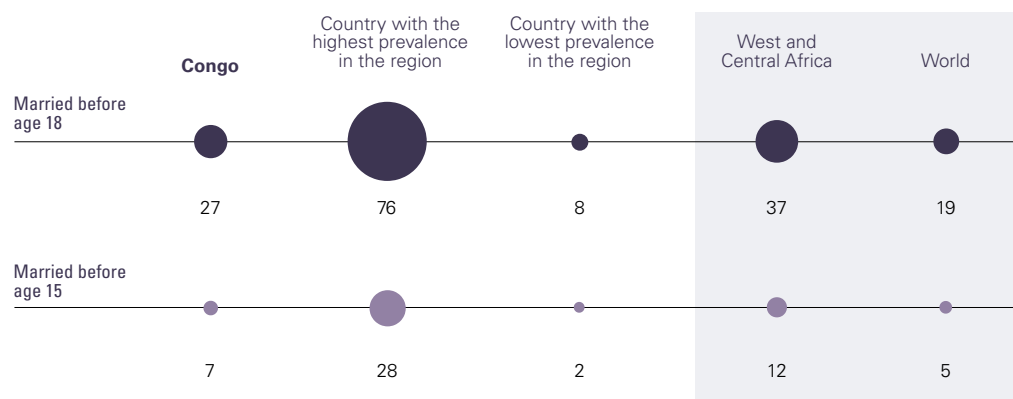
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 76. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



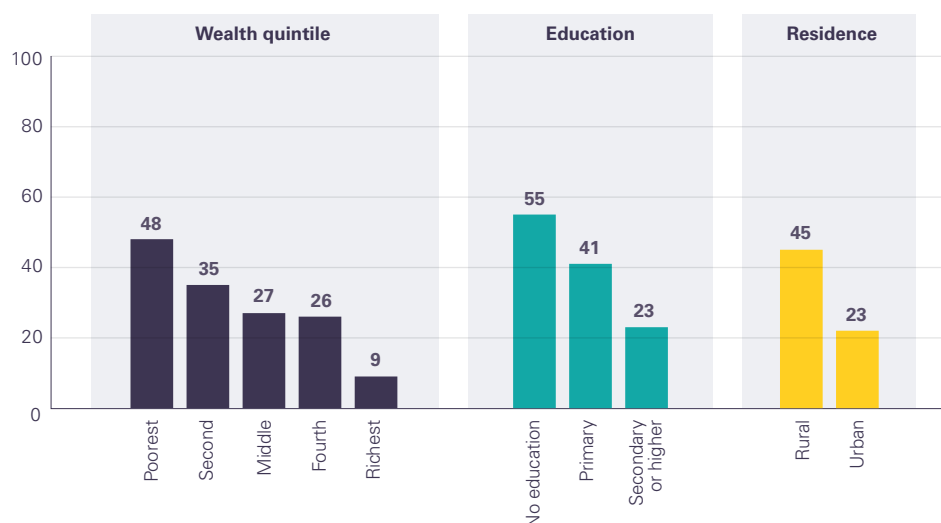
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 77. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

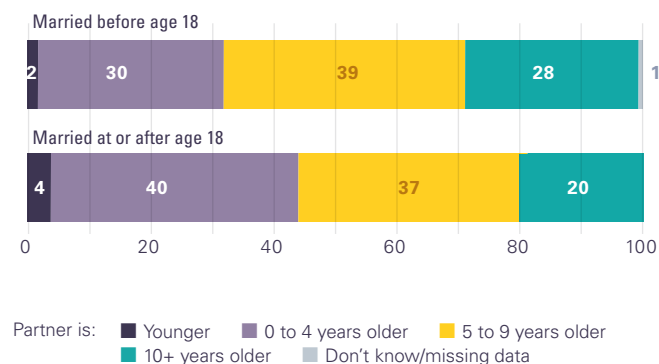
Figure 78. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

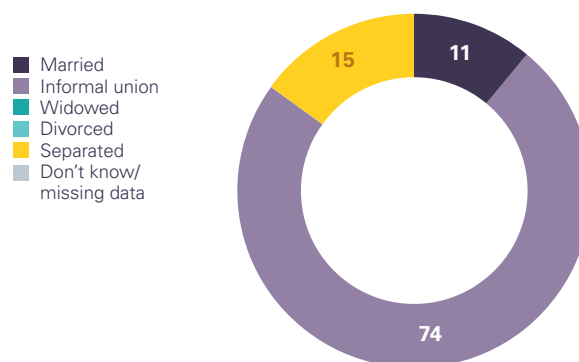
Spousal age gap

Figure 79. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

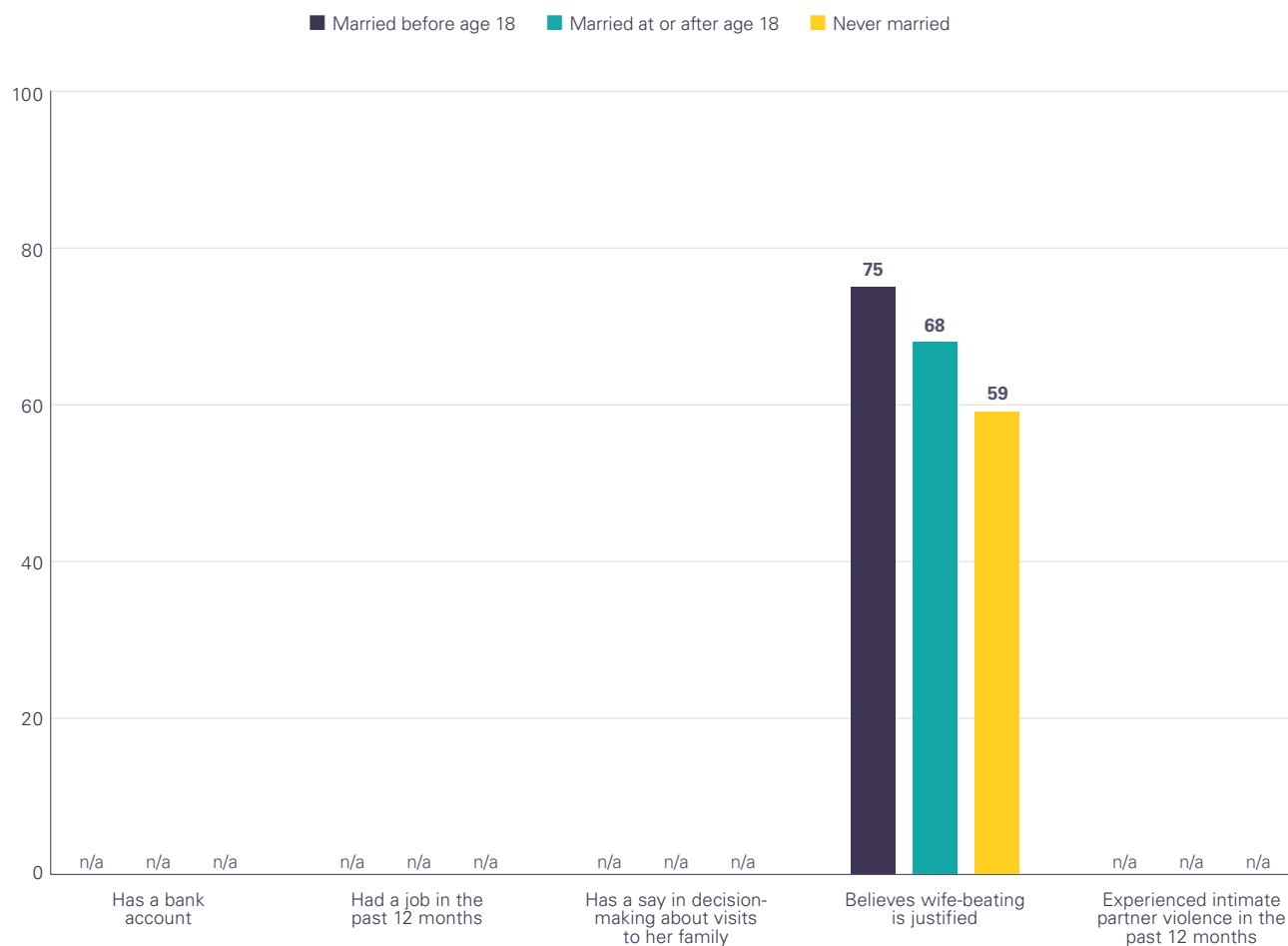
Figure 80. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 81. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 82. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

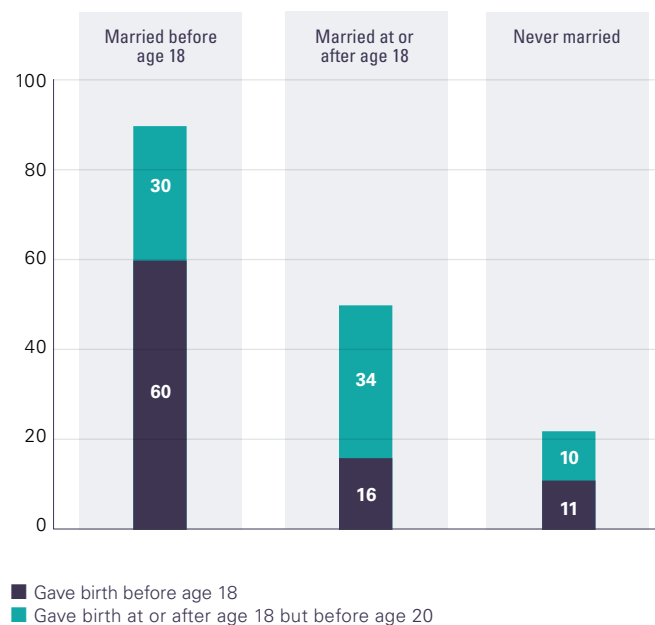
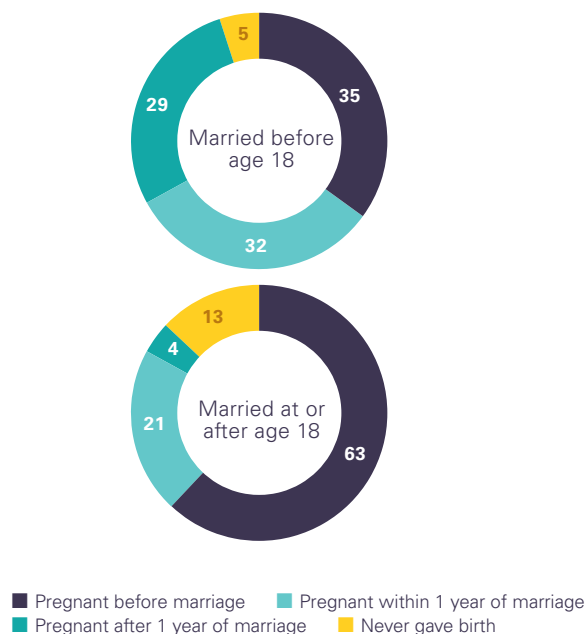
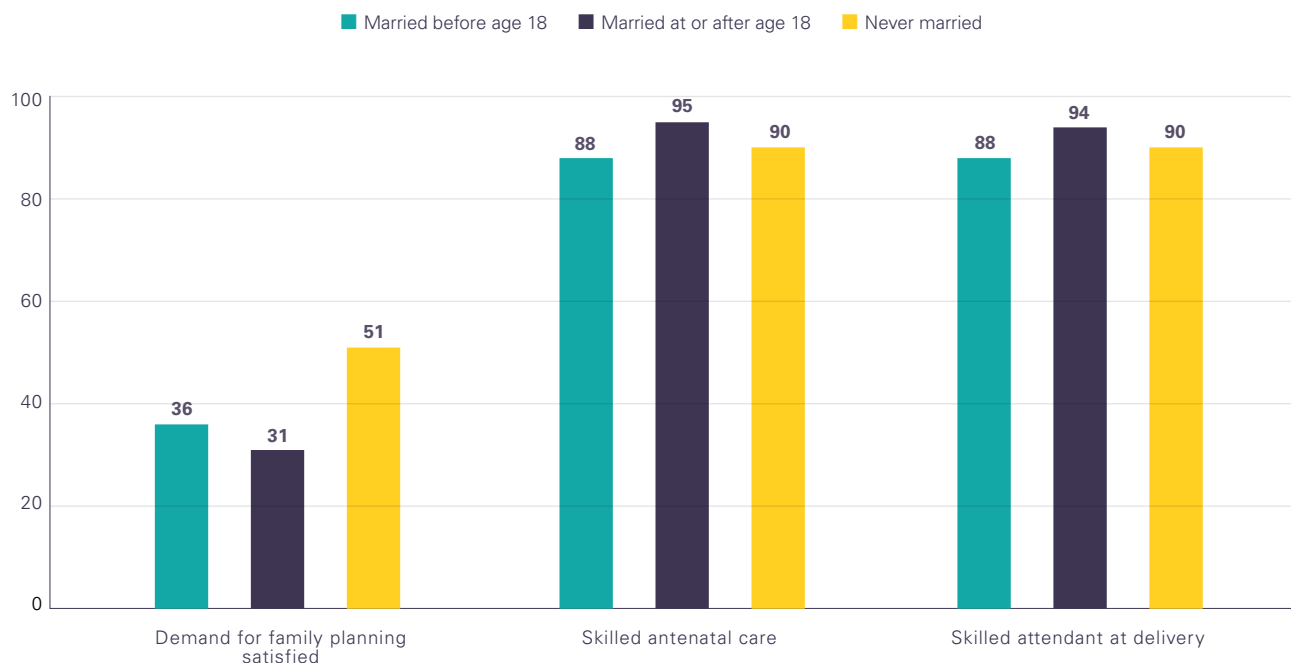


Figure 83. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



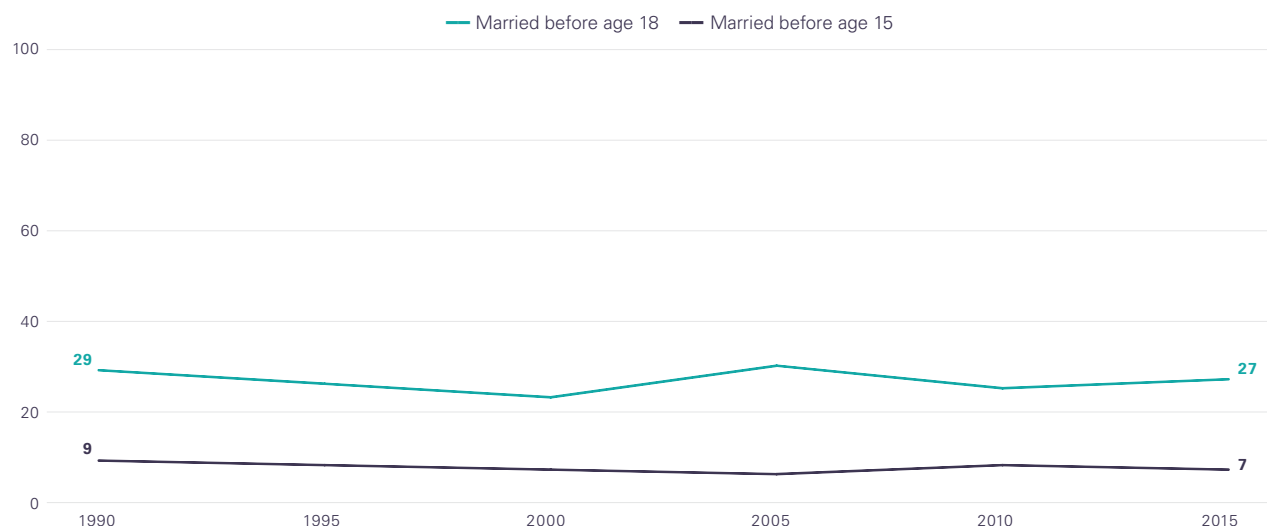
Reproductive health

Figure 84. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

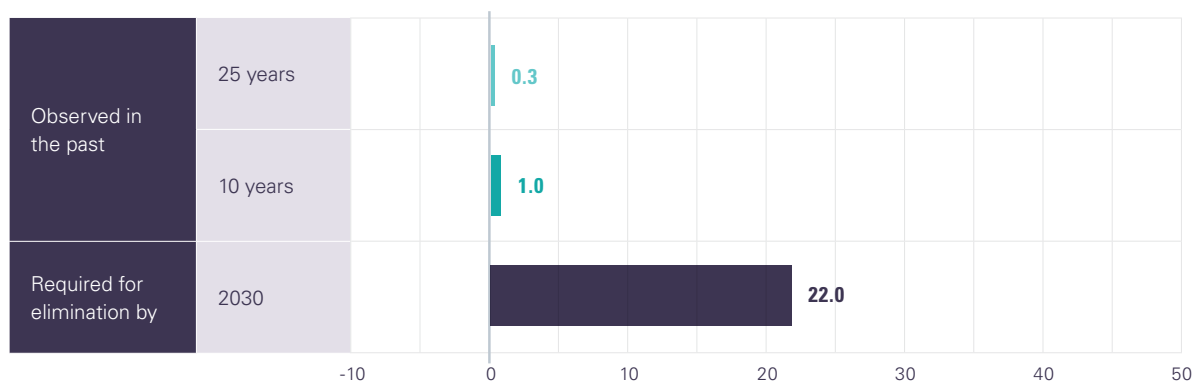
Figure 85. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 86. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014–2015 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to ‘marriage’ or ‘child brides’ include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, ‘elimination’ is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as ‘n/a’ indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

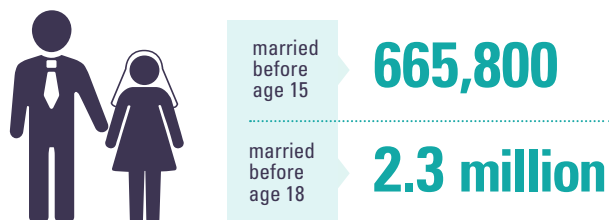
Côte d'Ivoire

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 21 | with exceptions: 18

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

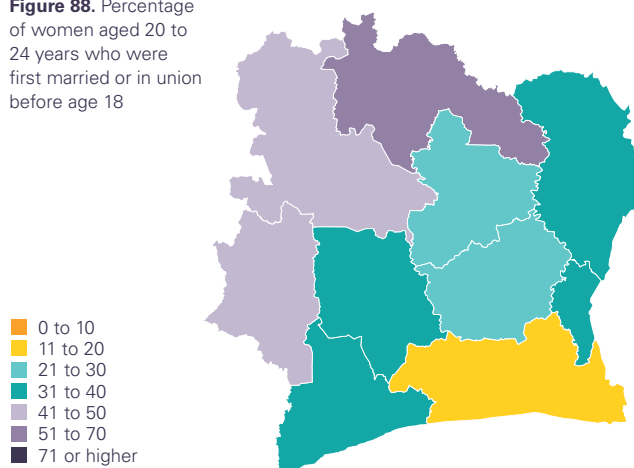
Figure 87. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Côte d'Ivoire is home to over 2 million child brides; 1 in 4 young women were married in childhood

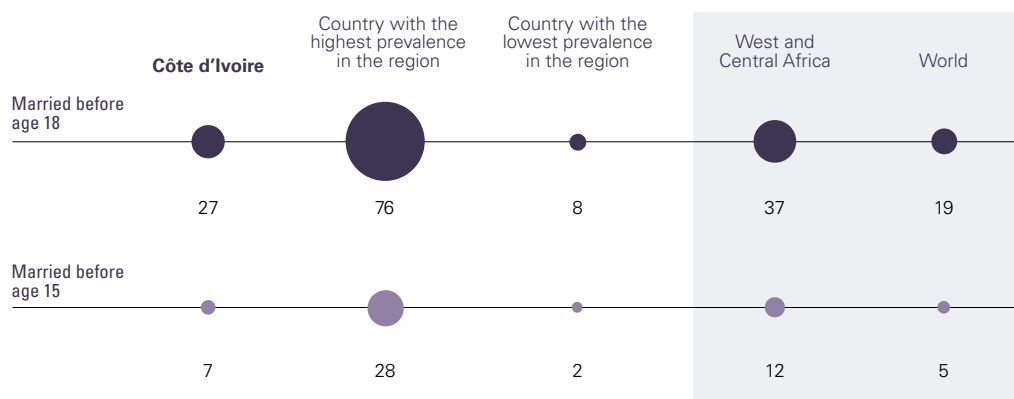
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 88. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



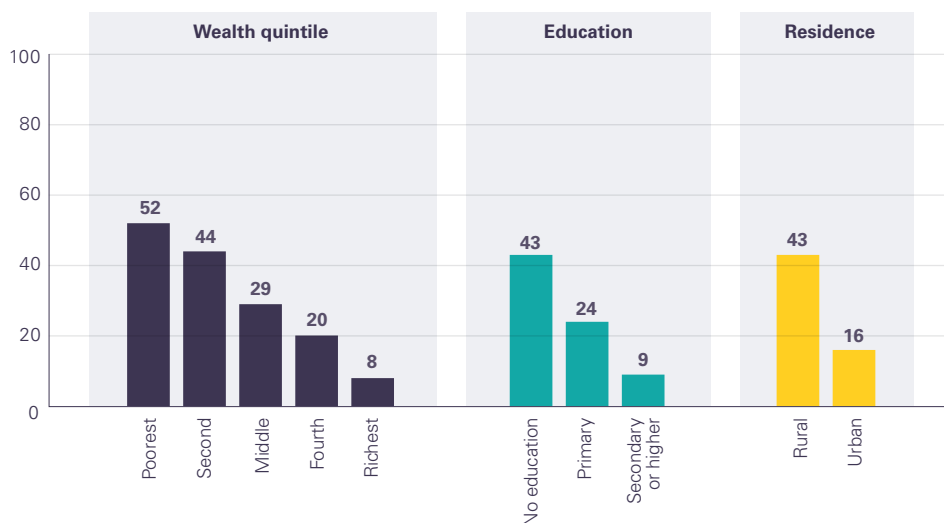
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 89. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

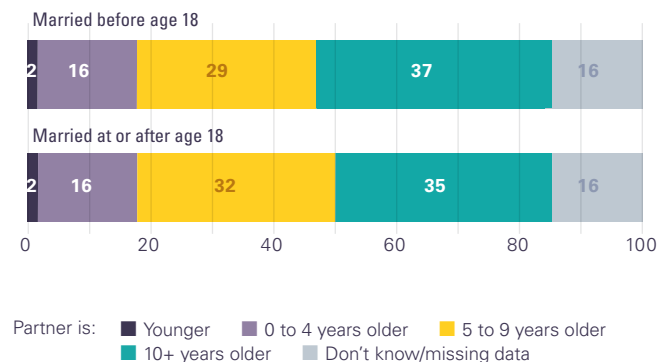
Figure 90. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

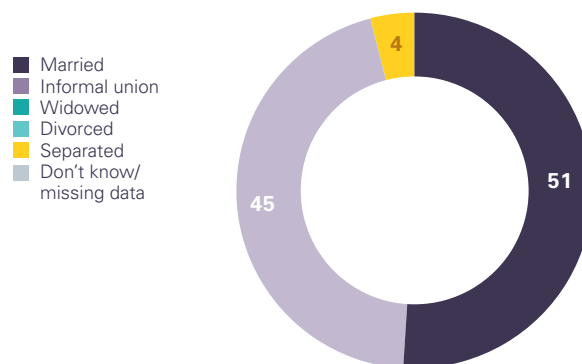
Spousal age gap

Figure 91. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 92. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 93. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

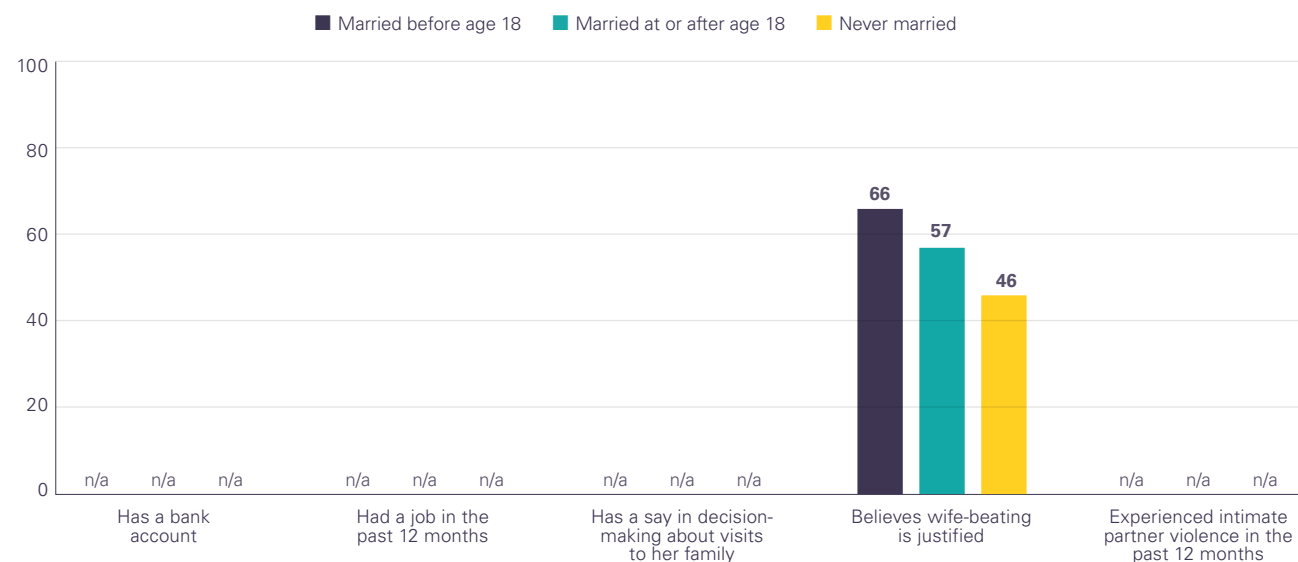
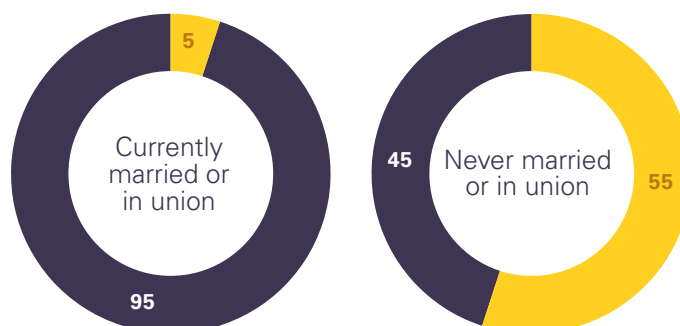


Figure 94. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

Figure 95. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

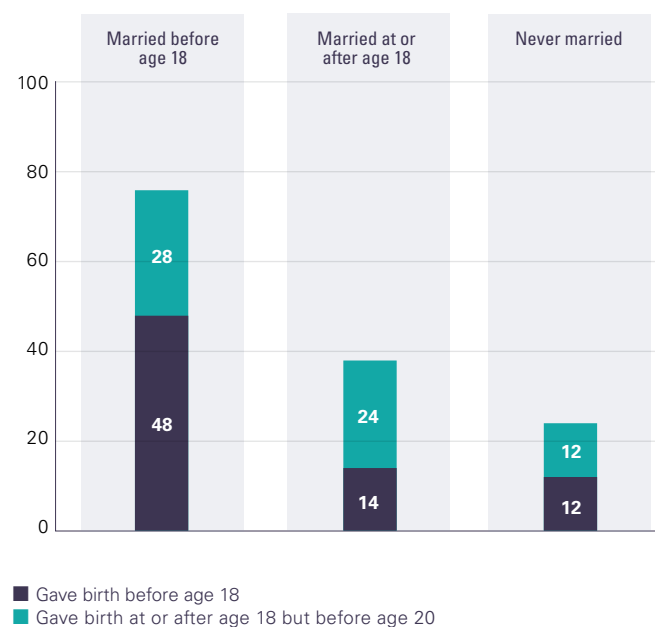
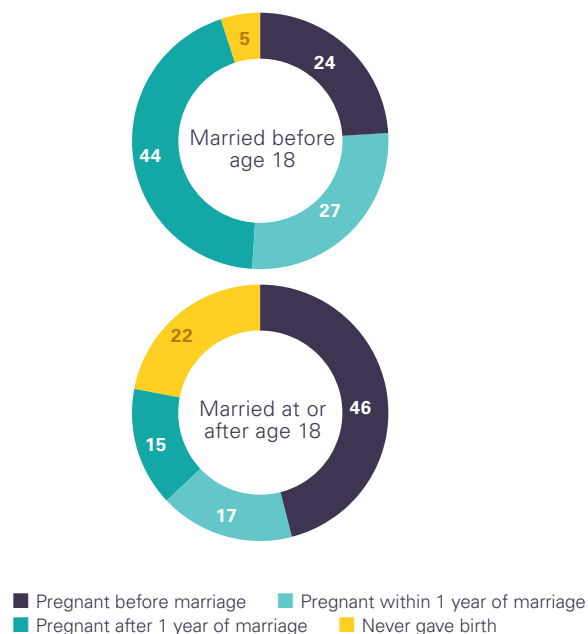
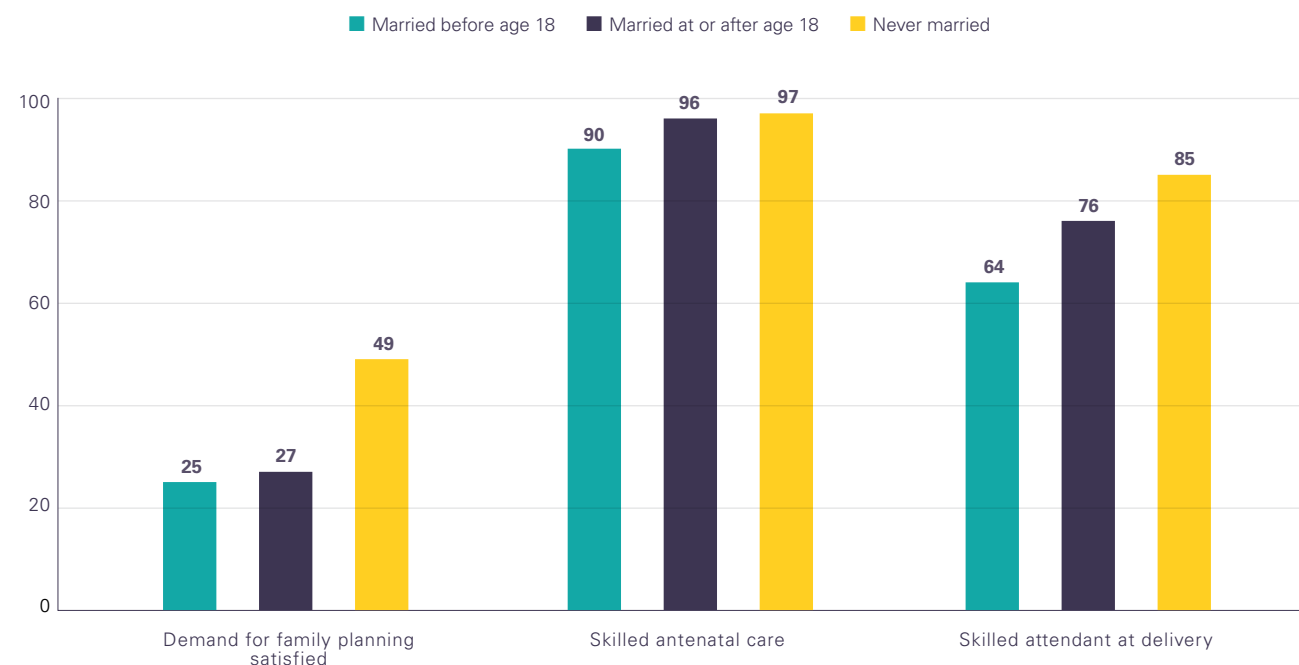


Figure 96. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



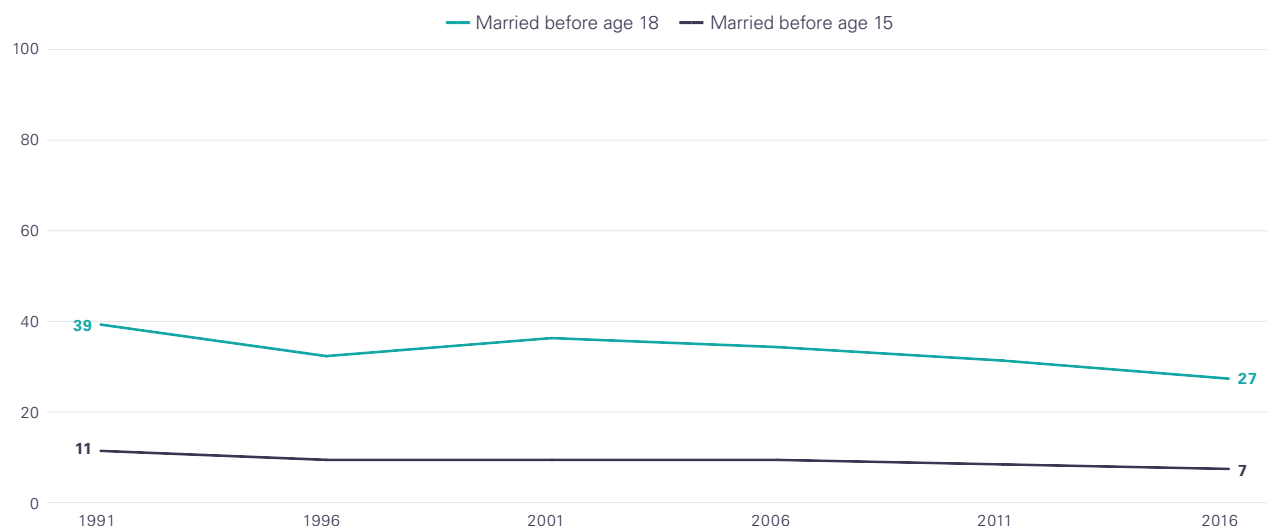
Reproductive health

Figure 97. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

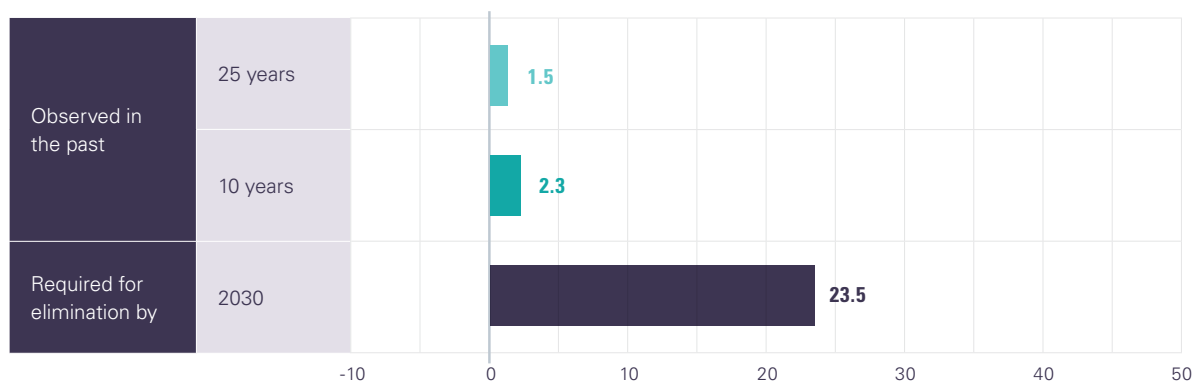
Figure 98. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 99. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

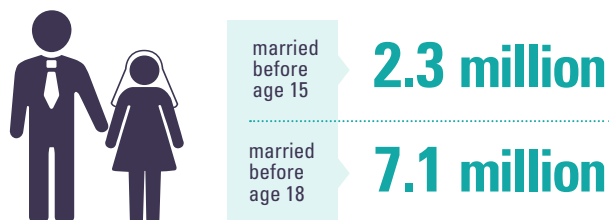
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 | with exceptions: n/a

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

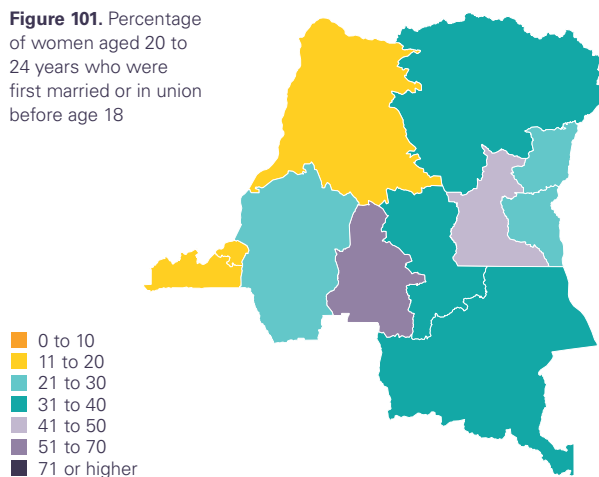
Figure 100. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



The Democratic Republic of the Congo is home to over 7 million child brides; 3 in 10 young women were married in childhood

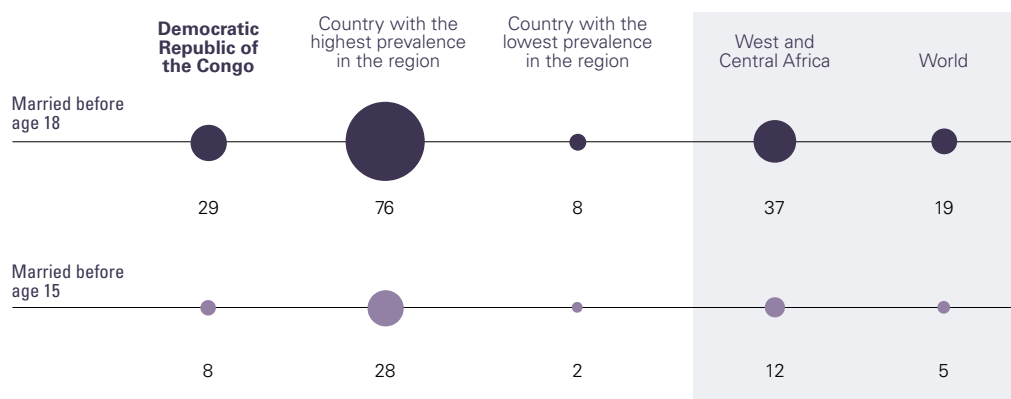
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 101. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



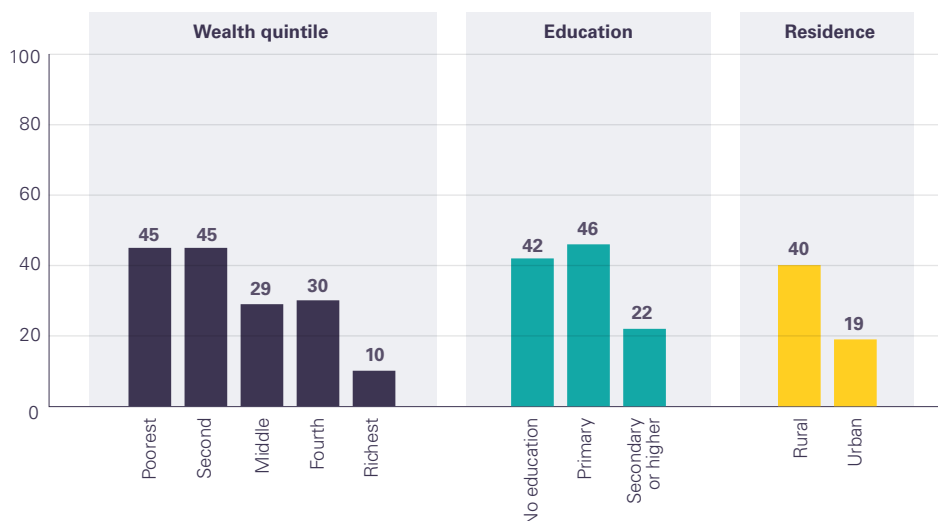
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 102. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

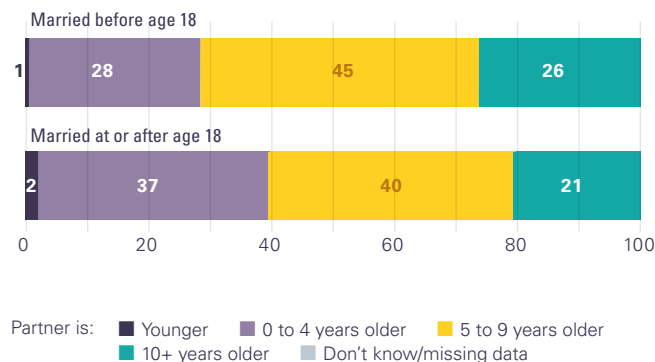
Figure 103. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

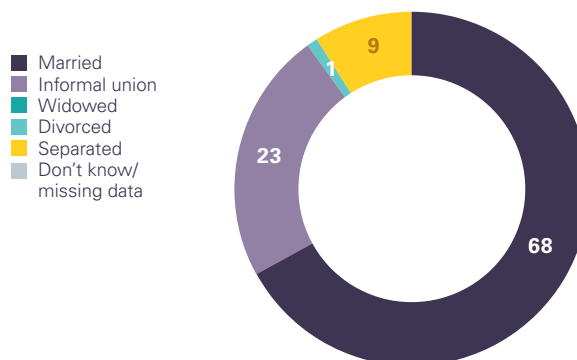
Spousal age gap

Figure 104. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 105. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 106. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

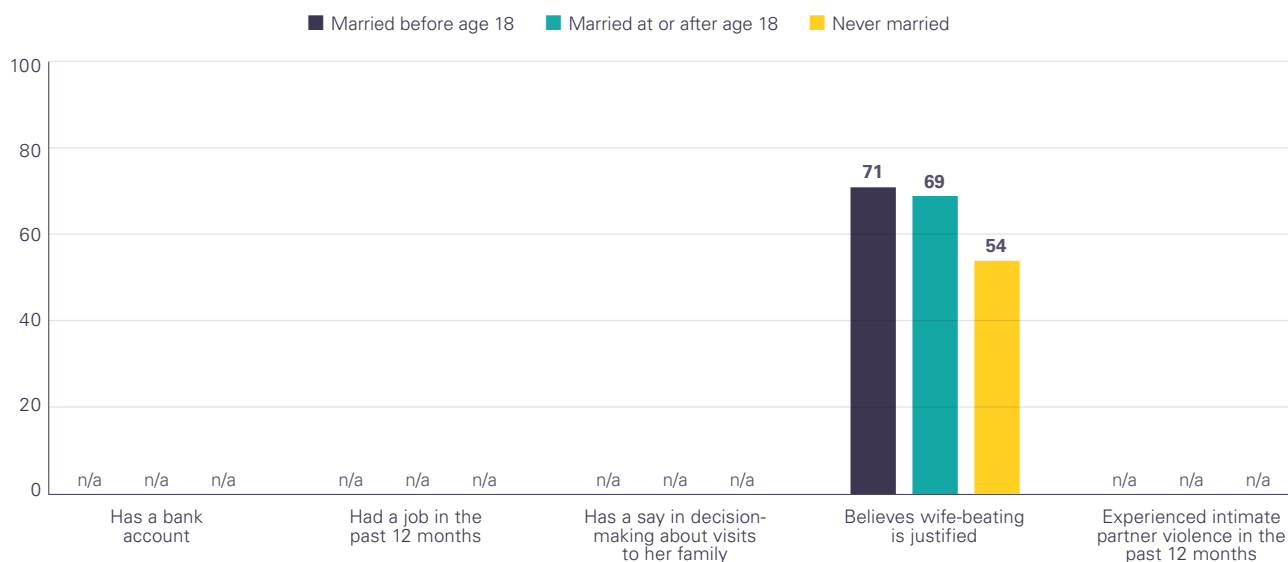


Figure 107. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 108. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

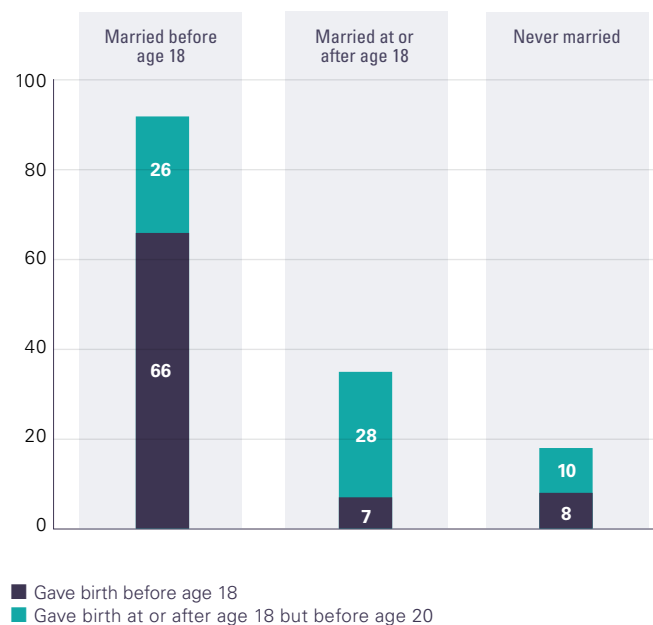
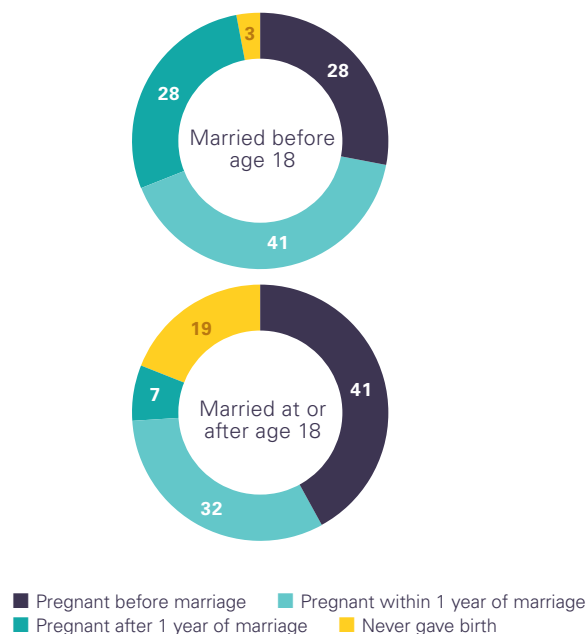
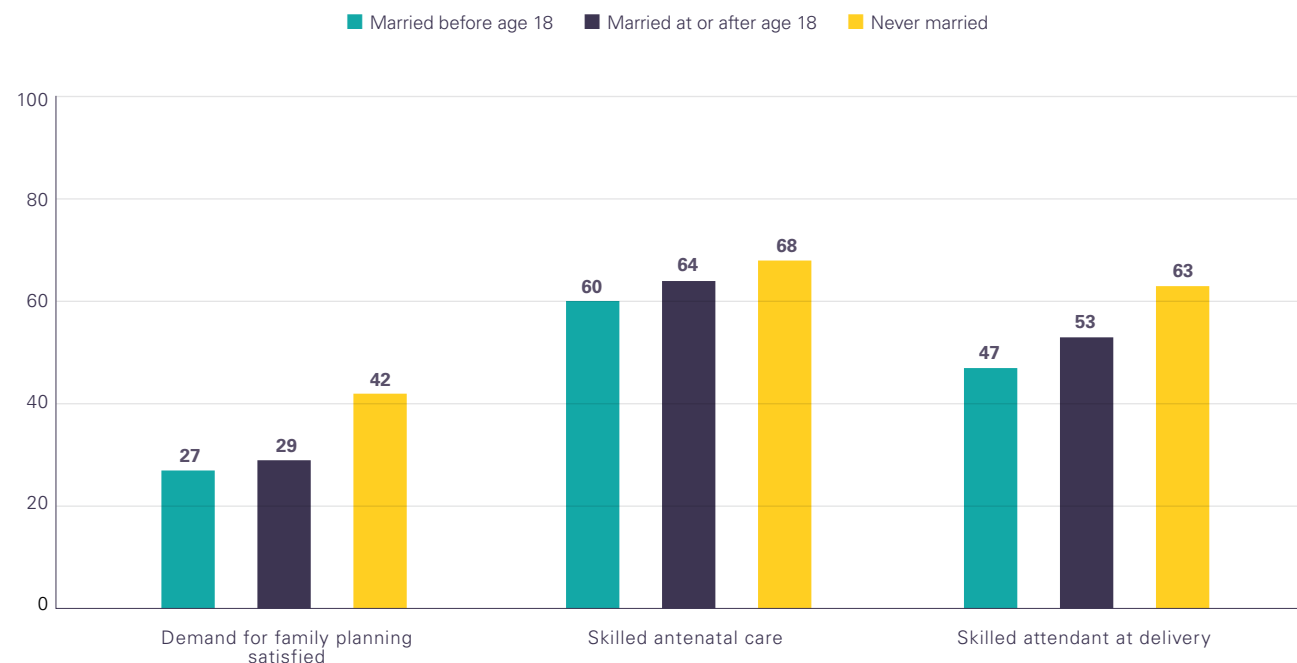


Figure 109. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



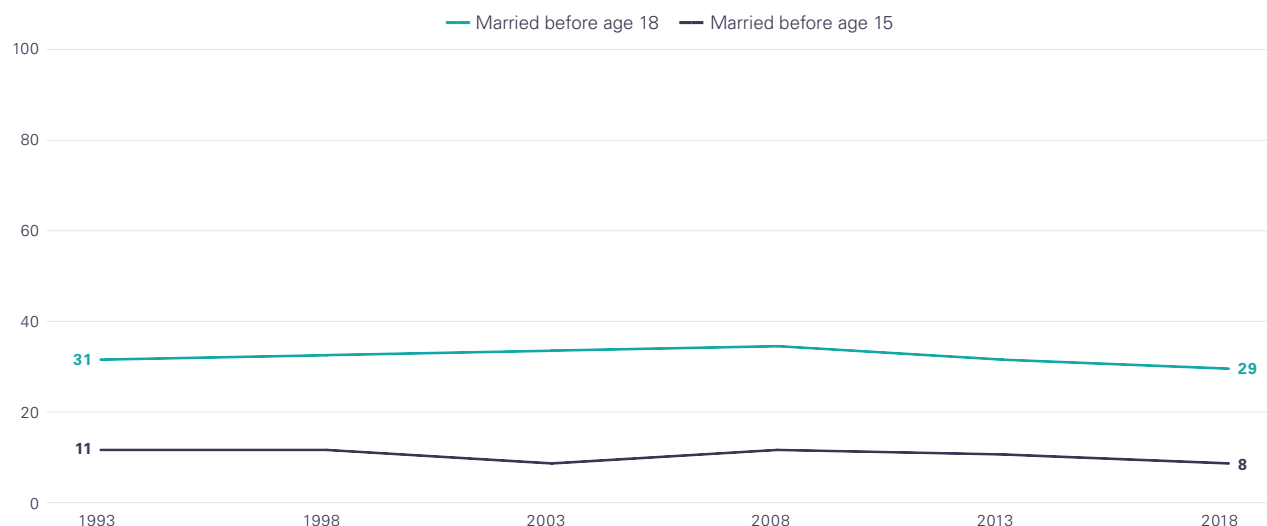
Reproductive health

Figure 110. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

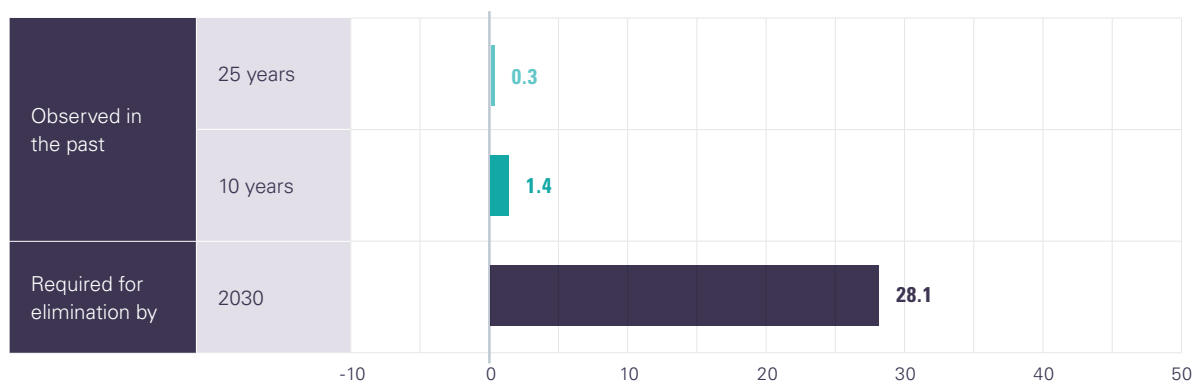
Figure 111. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 112. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017–2018 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to ‘marriage’ or ‘child brides’ include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, ‘elimination’ is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as ‘n/a’ indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

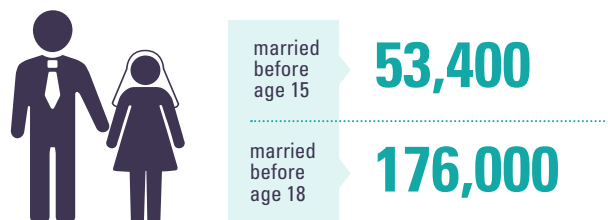
Gabon

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 21 | with exceptions: 15

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

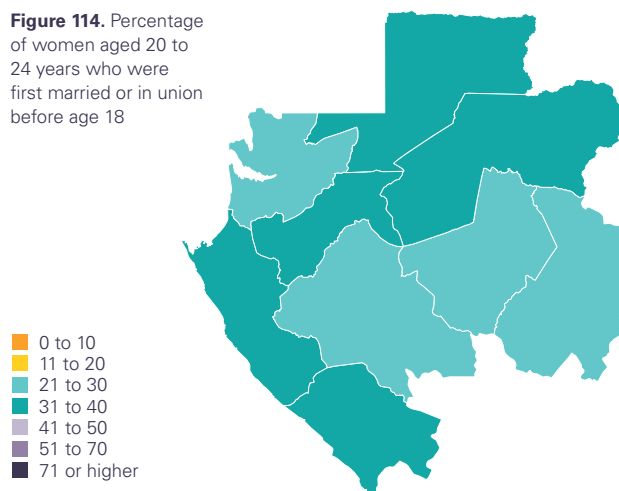
Figure 113. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Gabon is home to around 176,000 child brides; 1 in 5 young women were married in childhood

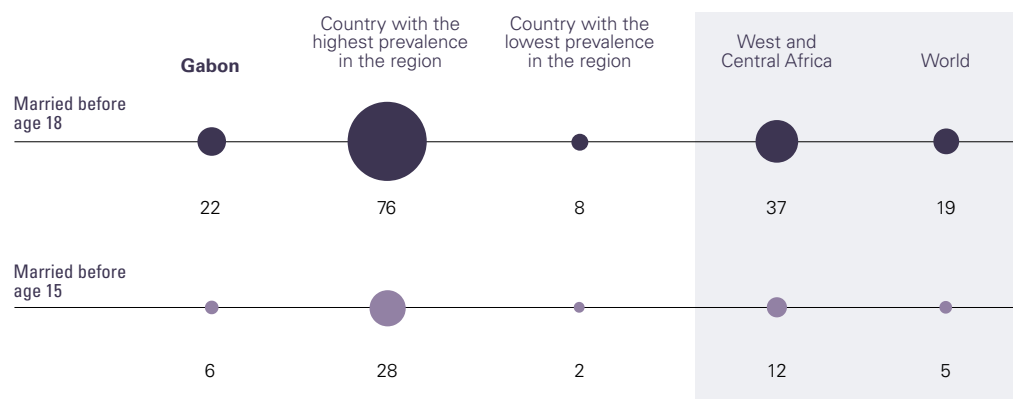
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 114. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



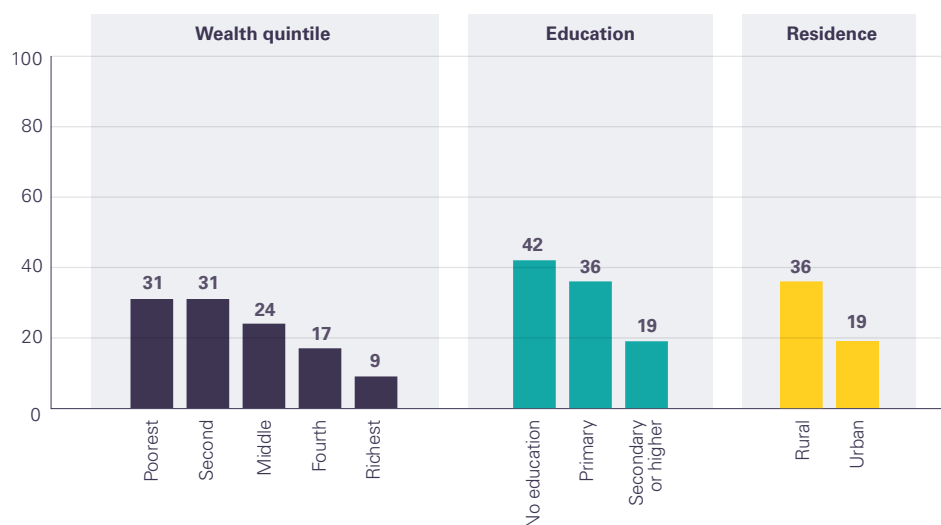
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 115. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

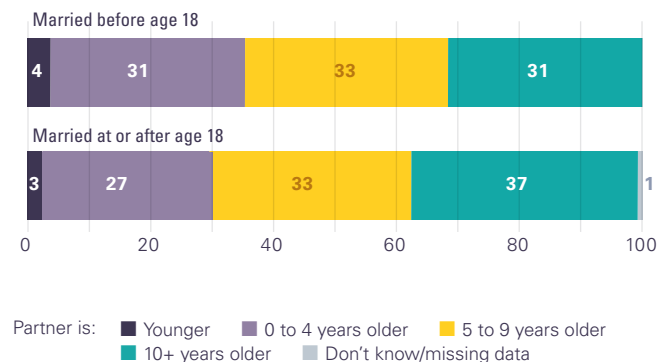
Figure 116. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

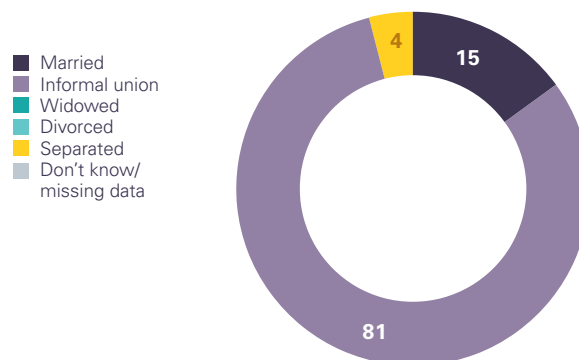
Spousal age gap

Figure 117. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 118. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 119. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

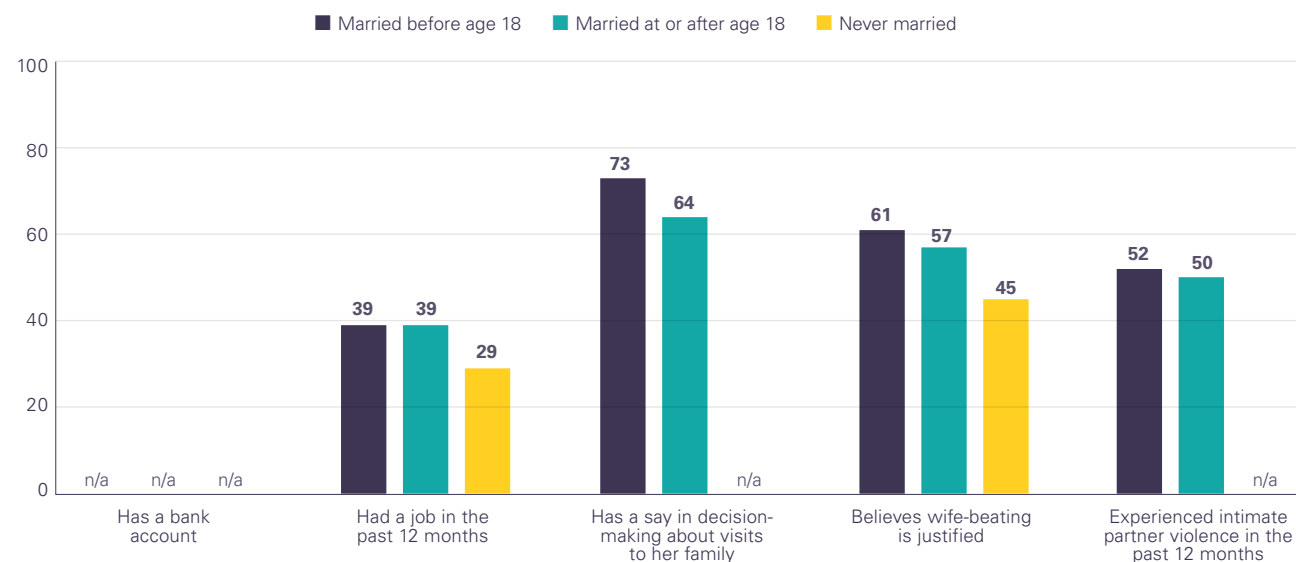
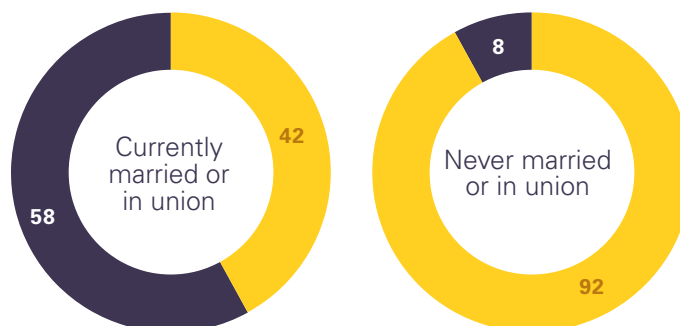


Figure 120. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 121. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

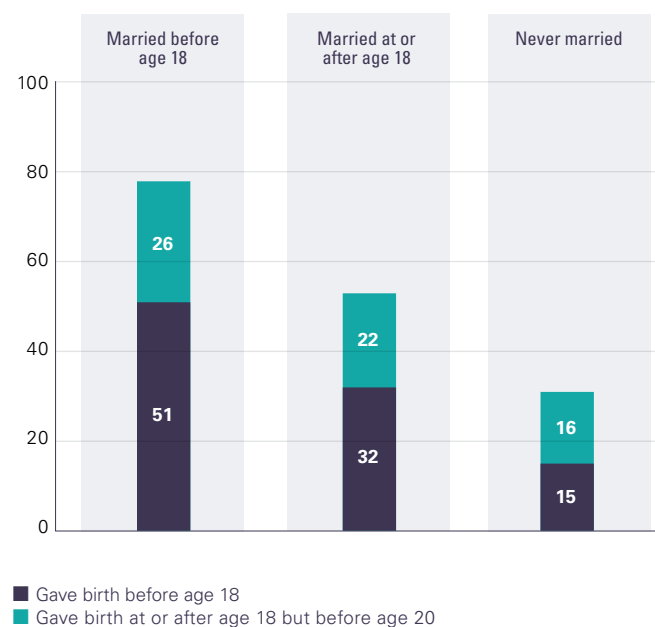
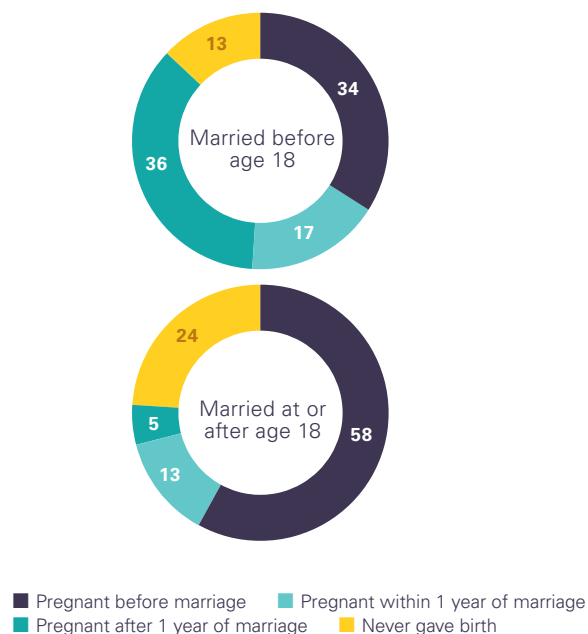
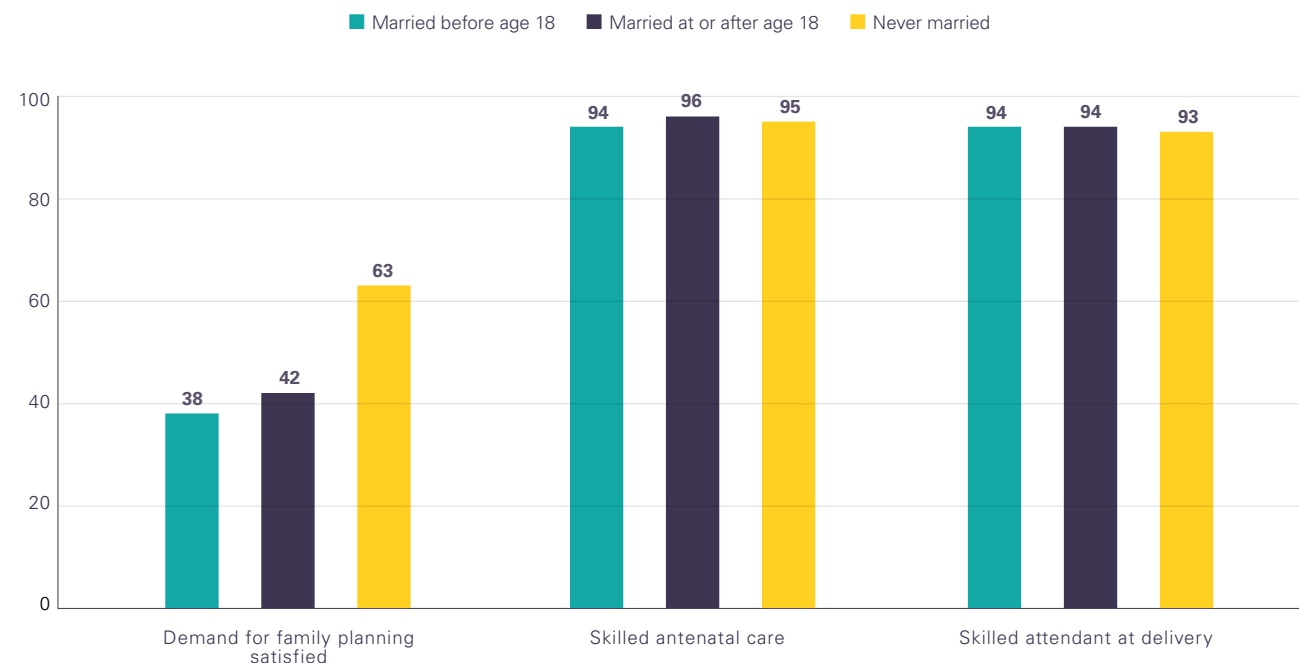


Figure 122. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



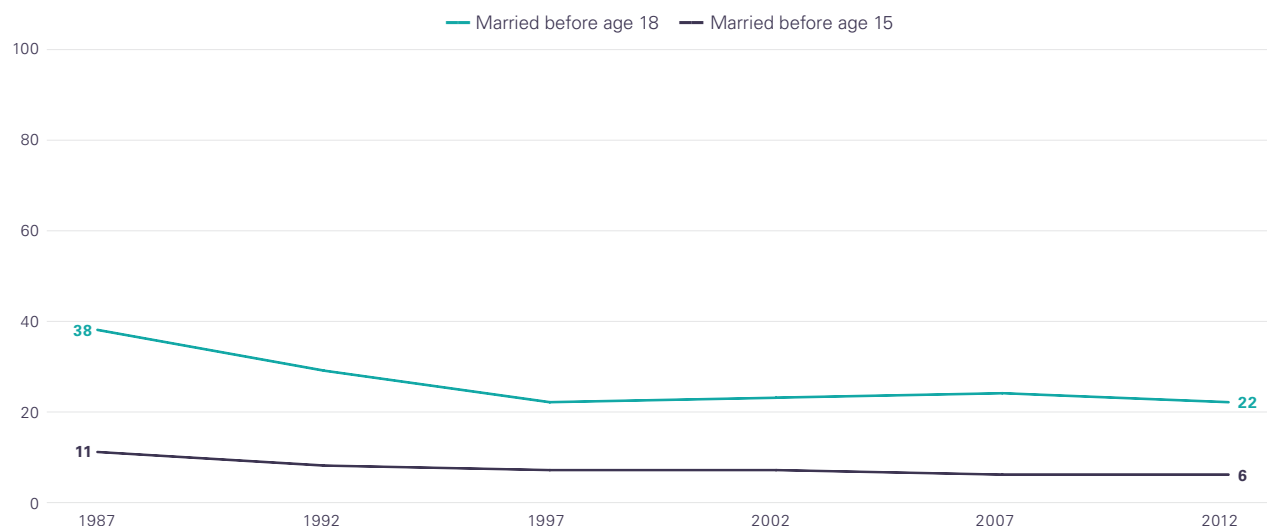
Reproductive health

Figure 123. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

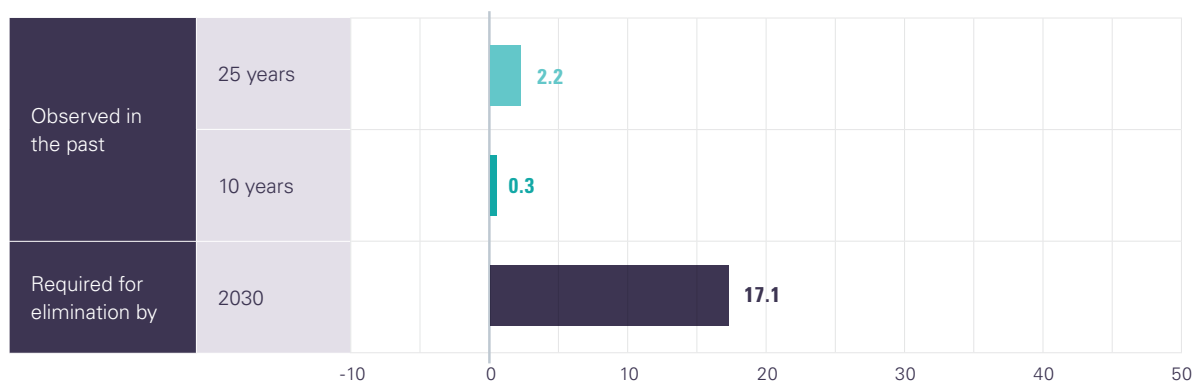
Figure 124. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 125. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2012 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

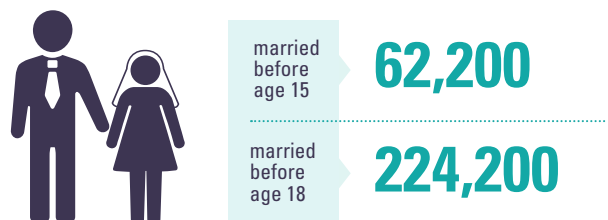
Gambia

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 | with exceptions: n/a

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

Figure 126. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



The Gambia is home to over 224,000 child brides; 1 in 4 young women were married in childhood

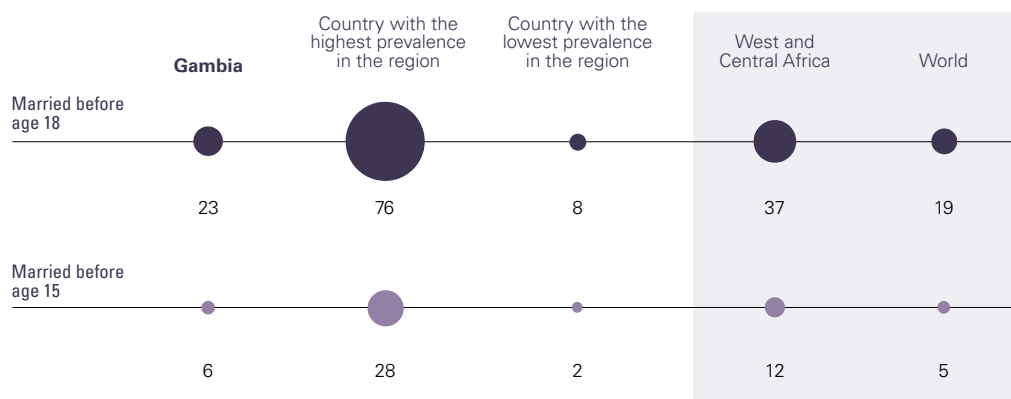
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 127. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



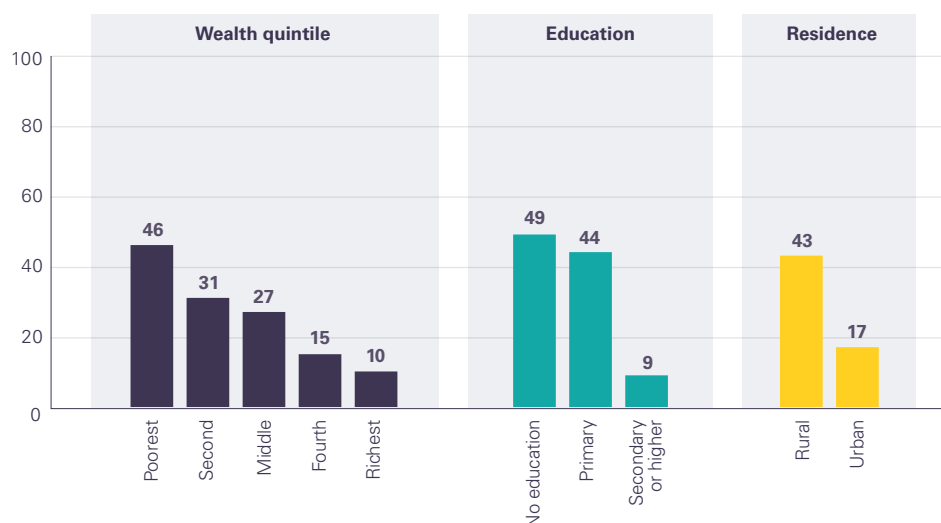
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 128. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

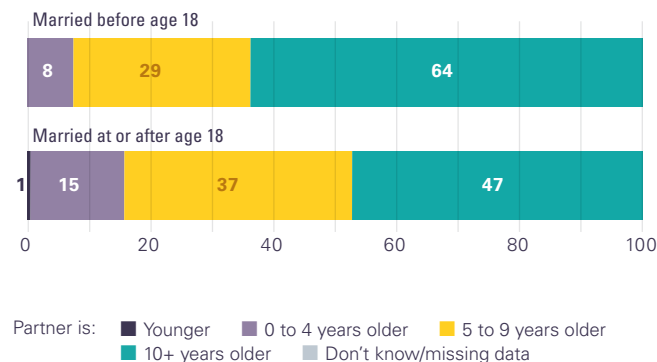
Figure 129. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

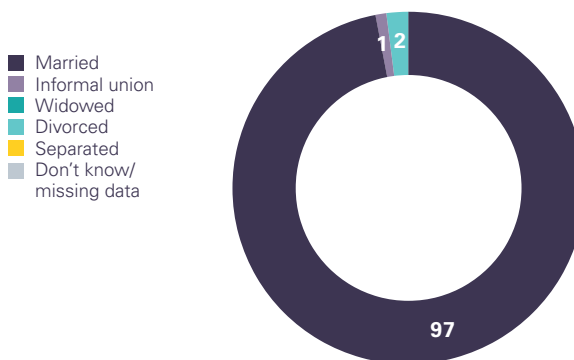
Spousal age gap

Figure 130. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 131. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 132. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

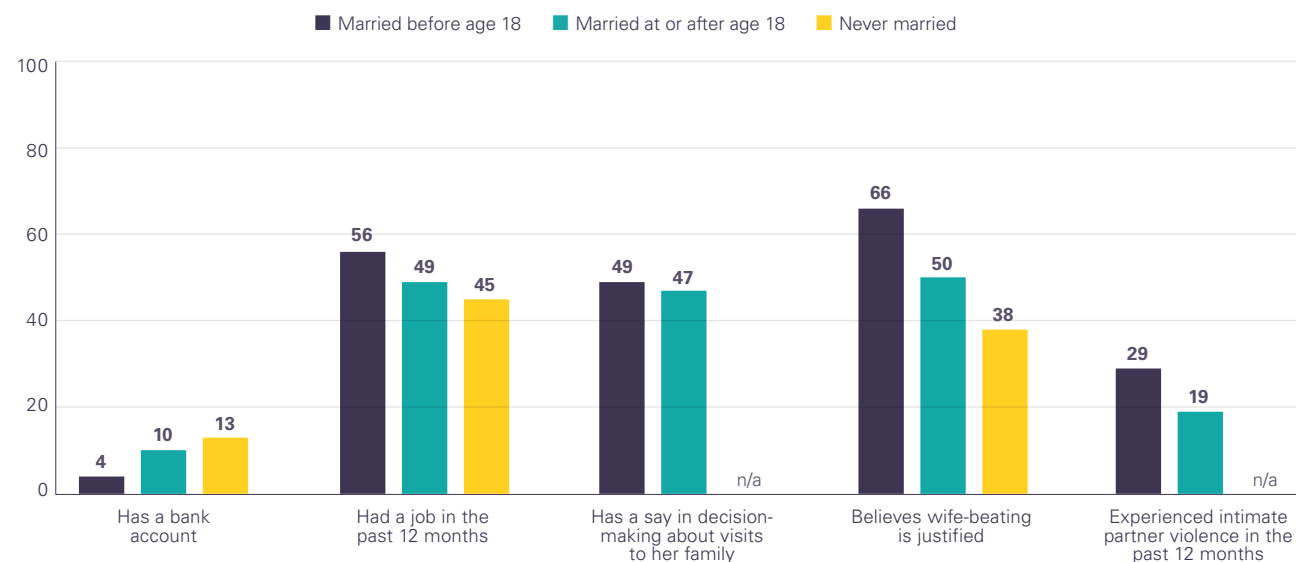


Figure 133. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 134. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

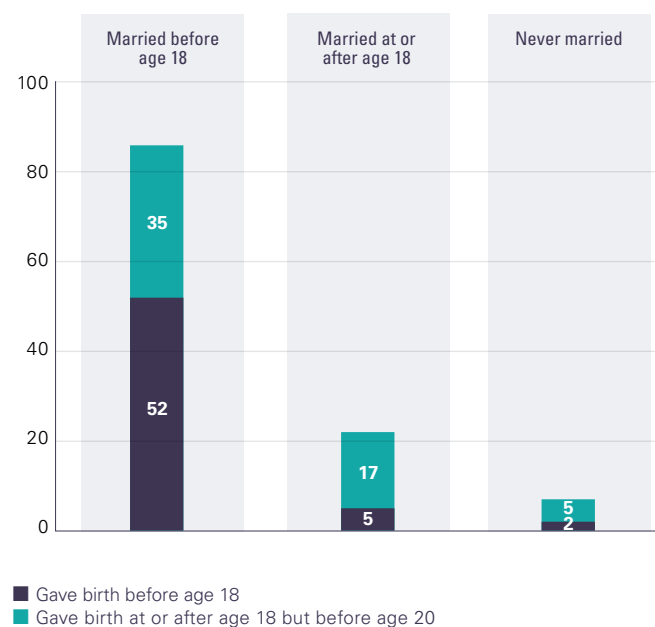
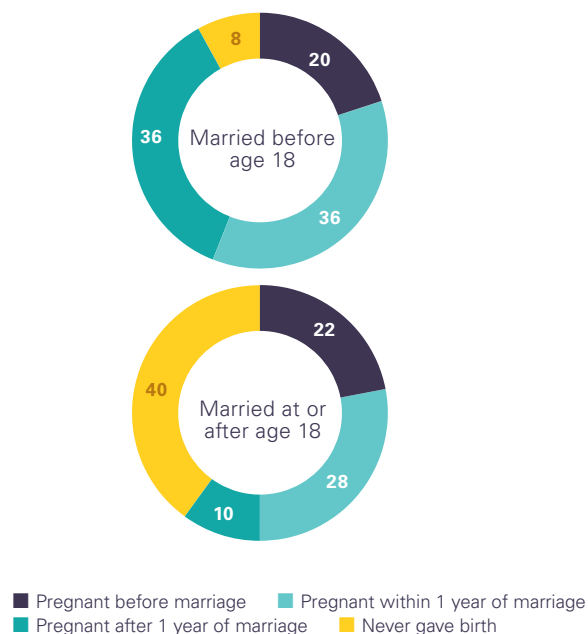
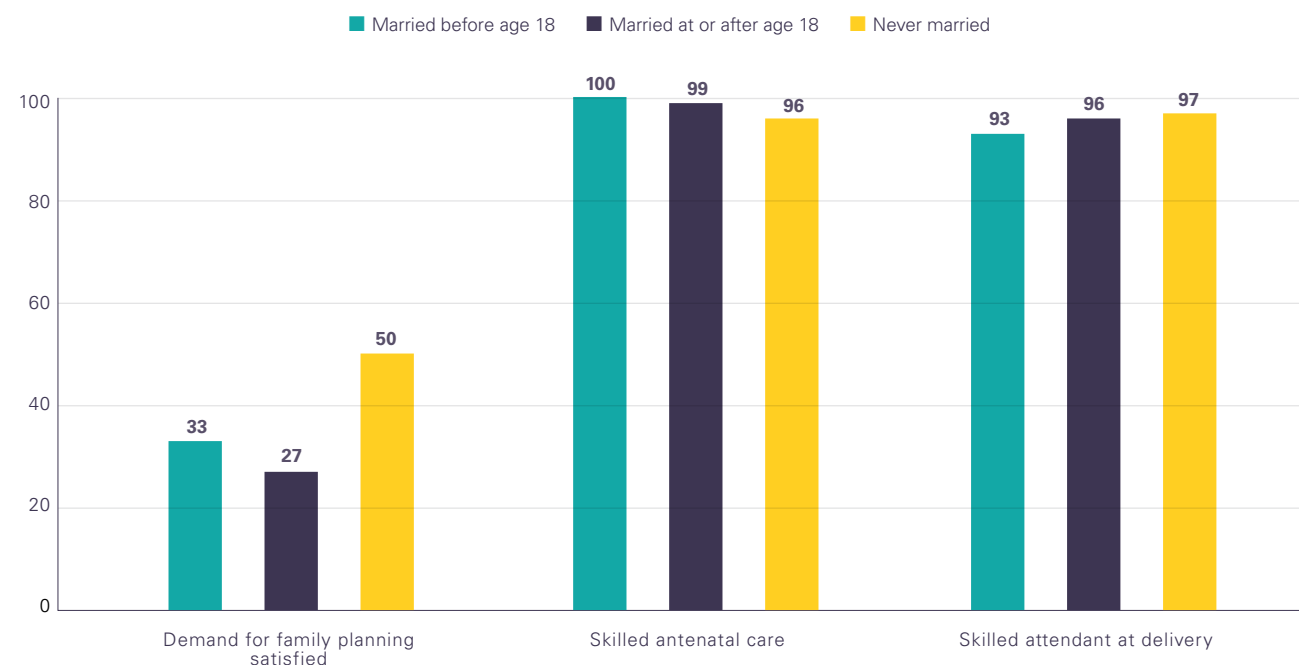


Figure 135. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



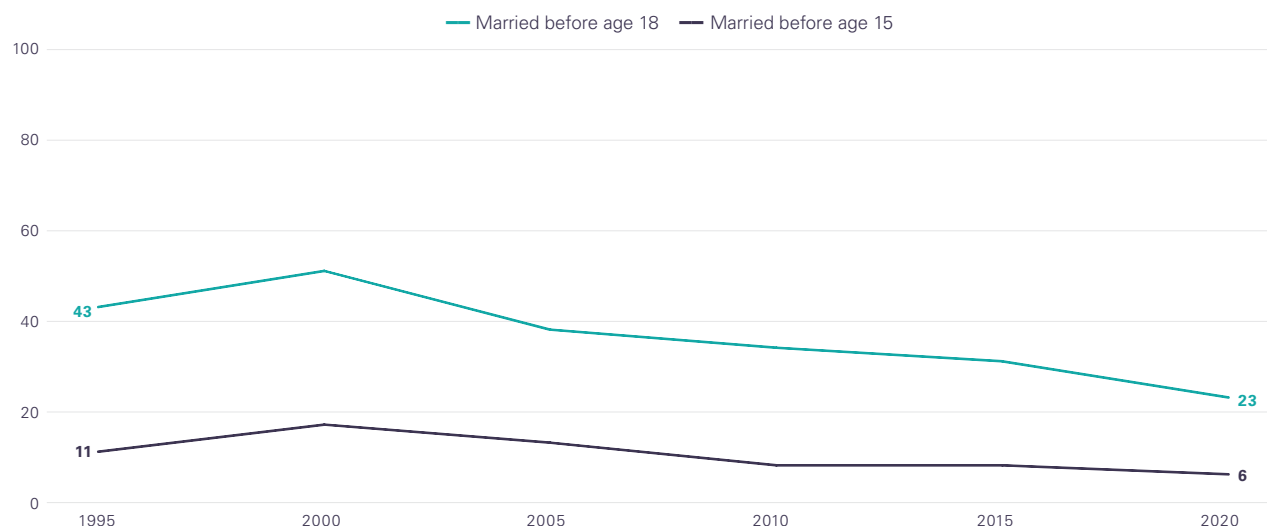
Reproductive health

Figure 136. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

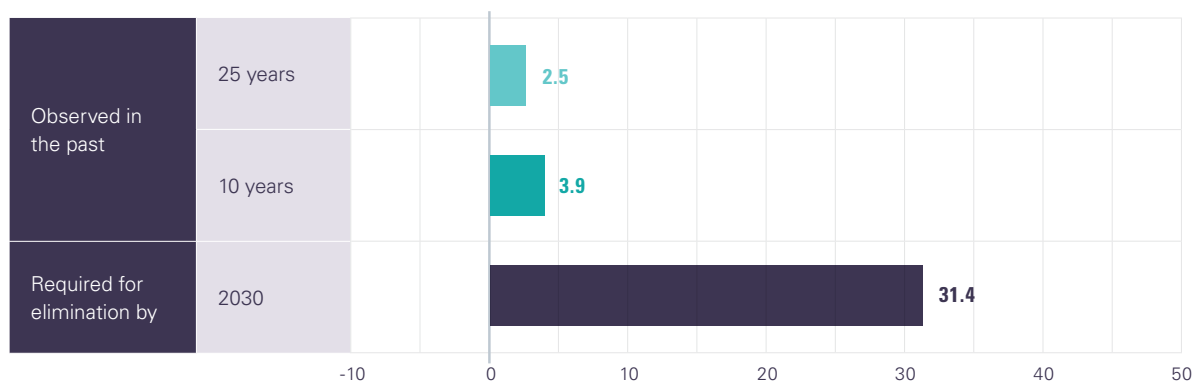
Figure 137. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 138. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2019–2020 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to ‘marriage’ or ‘child brides’ include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, ‘elimination’ is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators are population groups and suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as ‘n/a’ indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

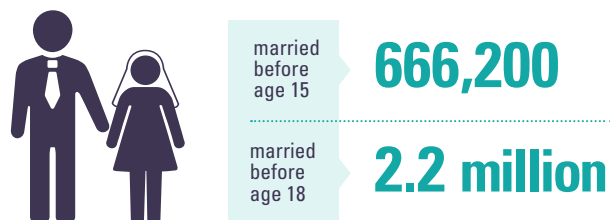
Ghana

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 | with exceptions: n/a

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

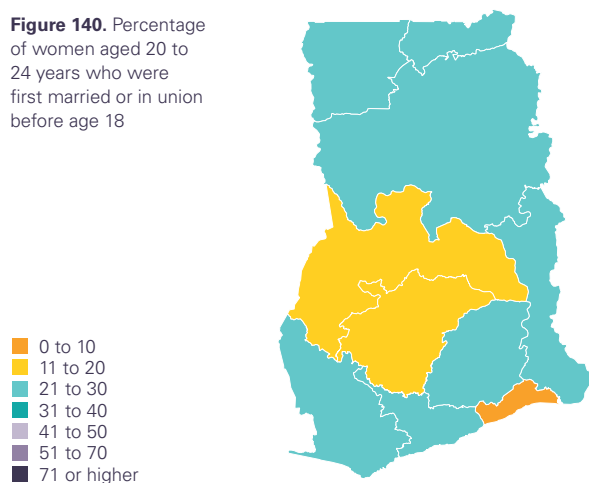
Figure 139. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Ghana is home to over 2 million child brides; 1 in 5 young women were married in childhood

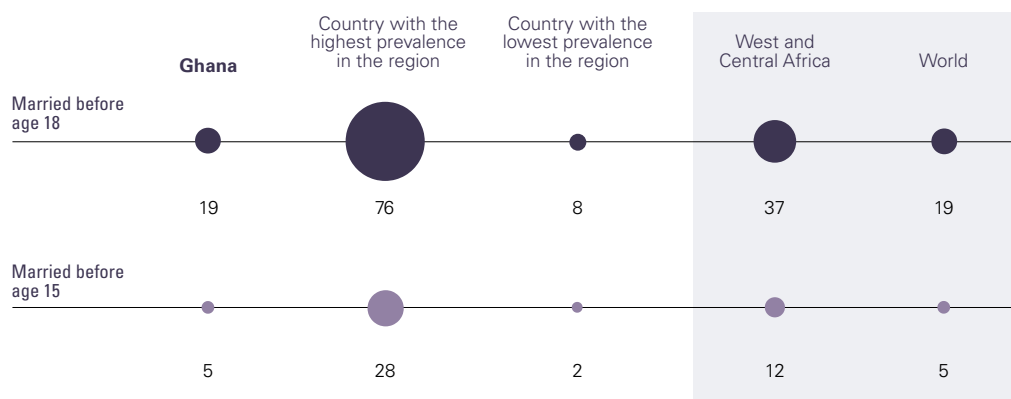
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 140. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



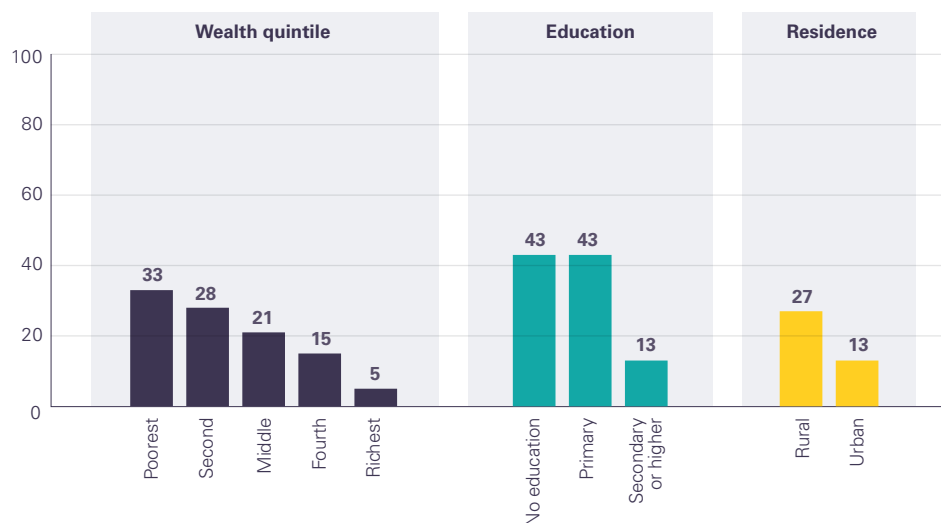
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 141. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

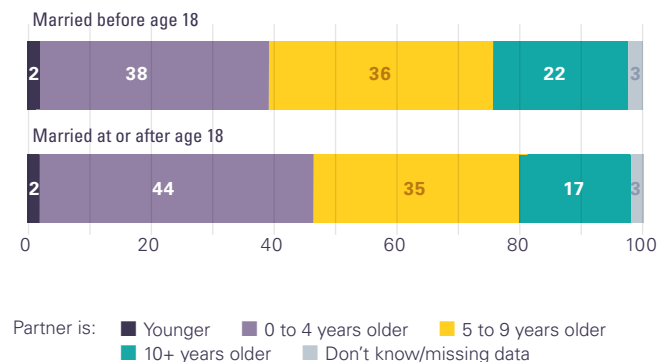
Figure 142. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

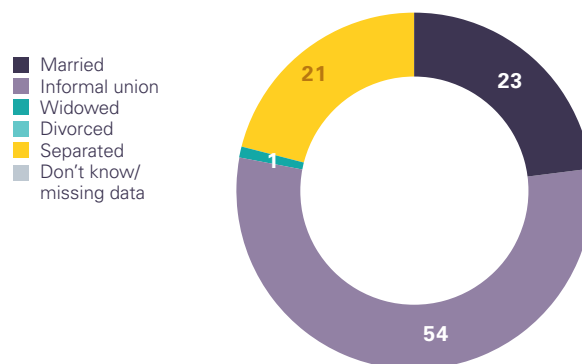
Spousal age gap

Figure 143. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 144. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 145. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

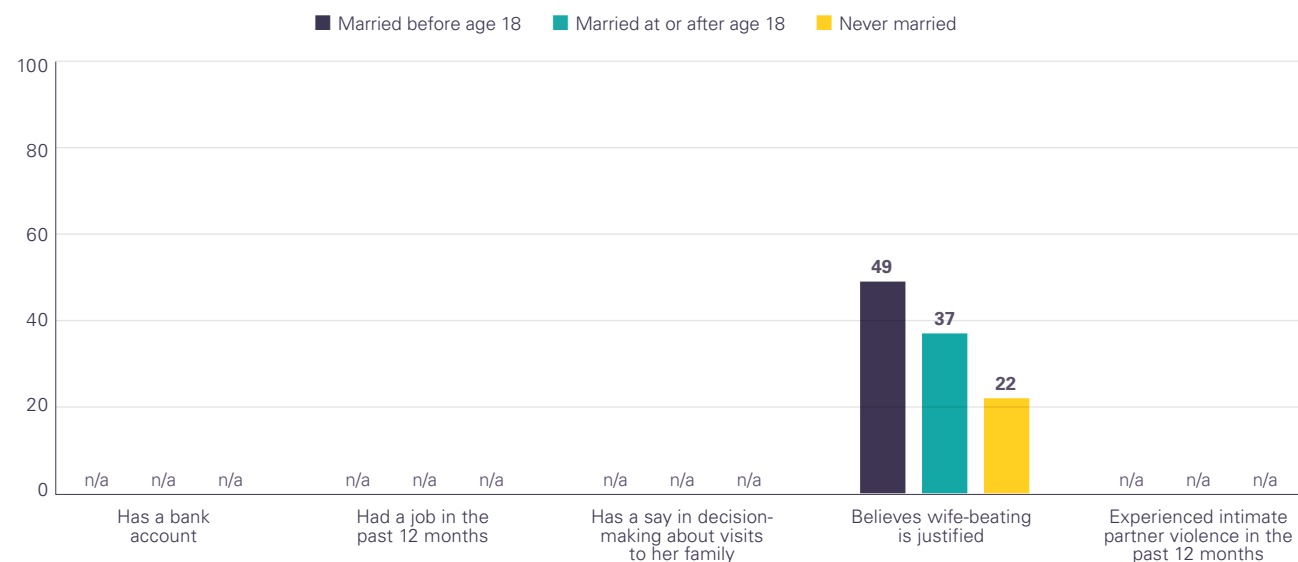


Figure 146. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 147. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

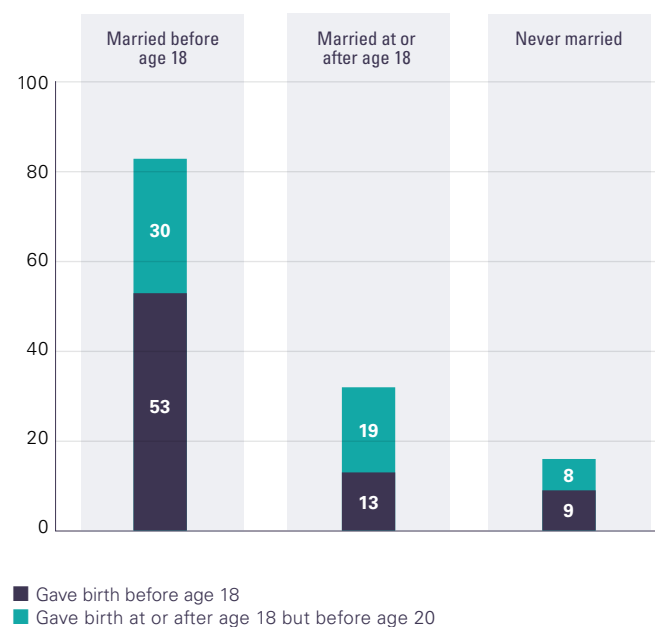
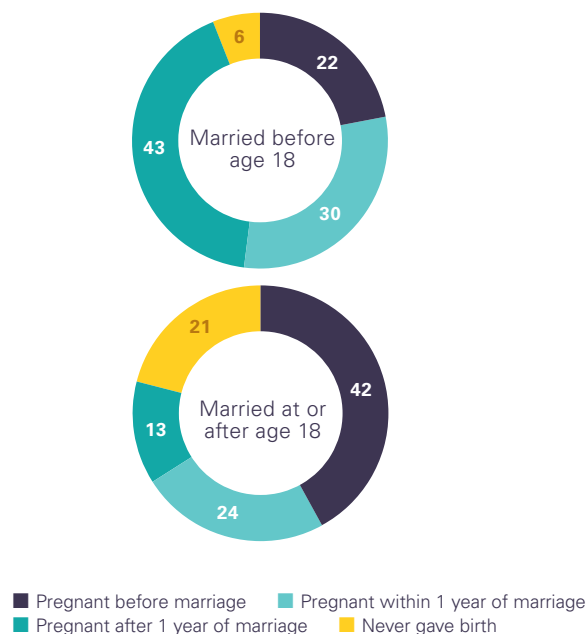
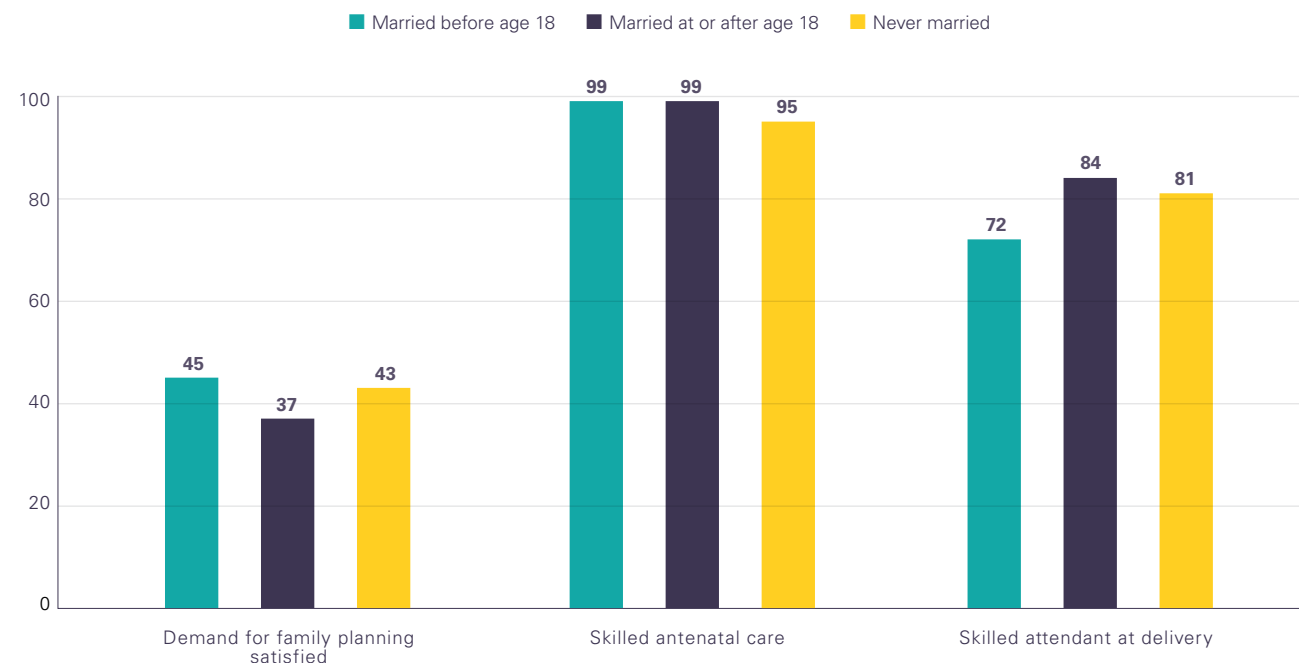


Figure 148. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



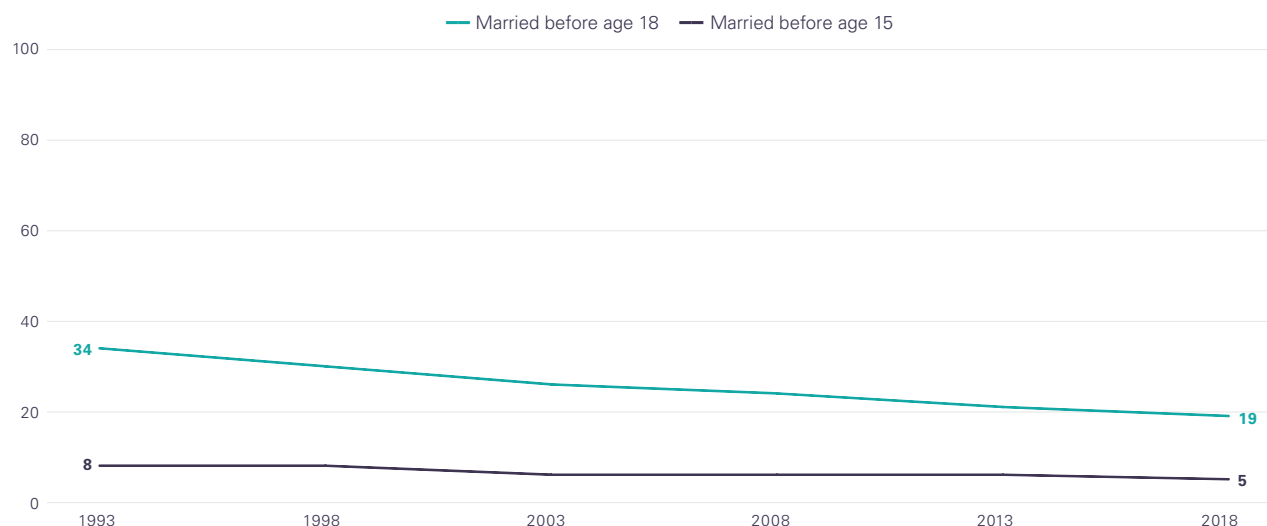
Reproductive health

Figure 149. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

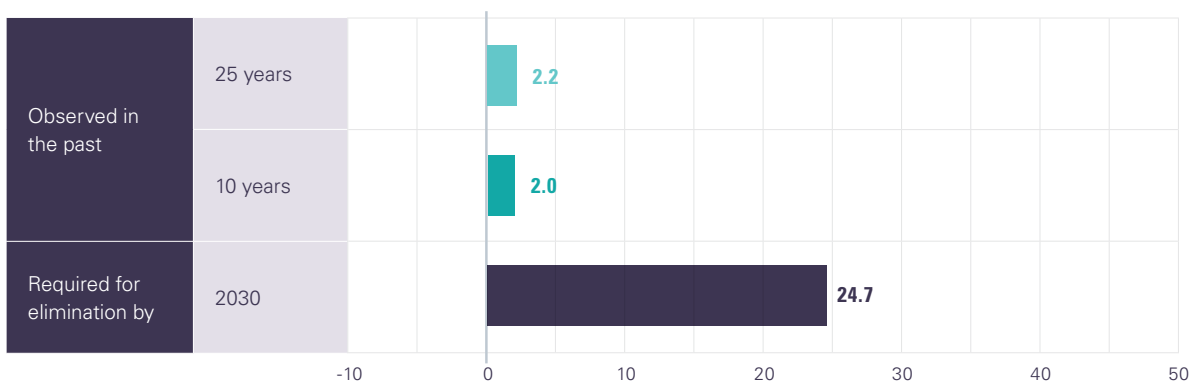
Figure 150. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 151. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017–2018 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to ‘marriage’ or ‘child brides’ include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. Trends in the prevalence of child marriage were calculated taking into account data from all available surveys. For statistical purposes, ‘elimination’ is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as ‘n/a’ indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

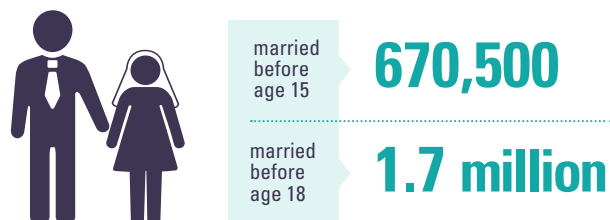
Guinea

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 21 | with exceptions: 18

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

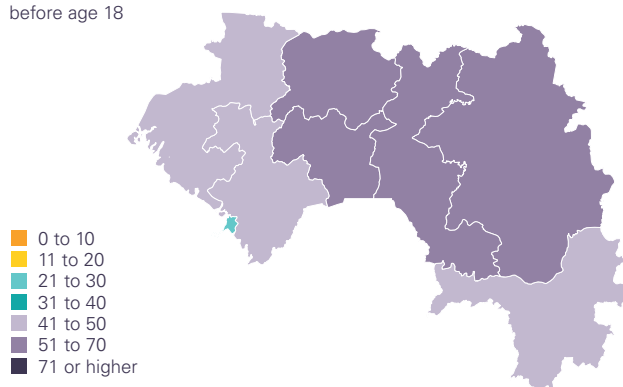
Figure 152. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Guinea is home to nearly 2 million child brides; 1 in 2 young women were married in childhood

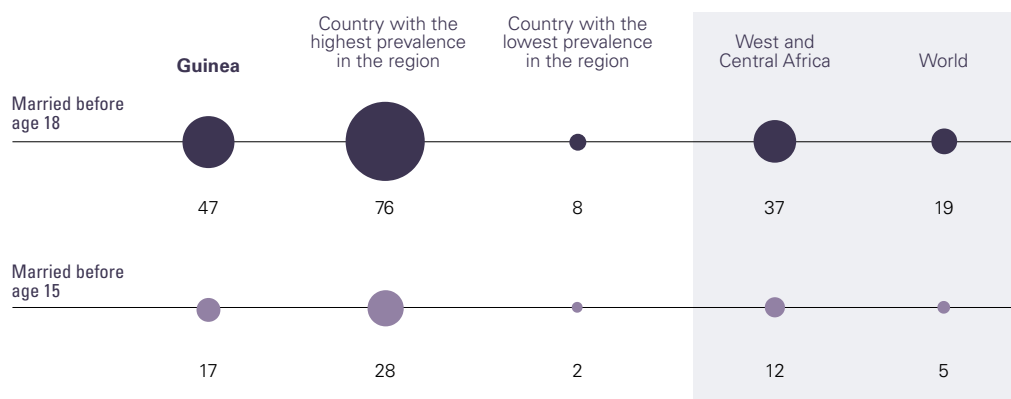
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 153. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



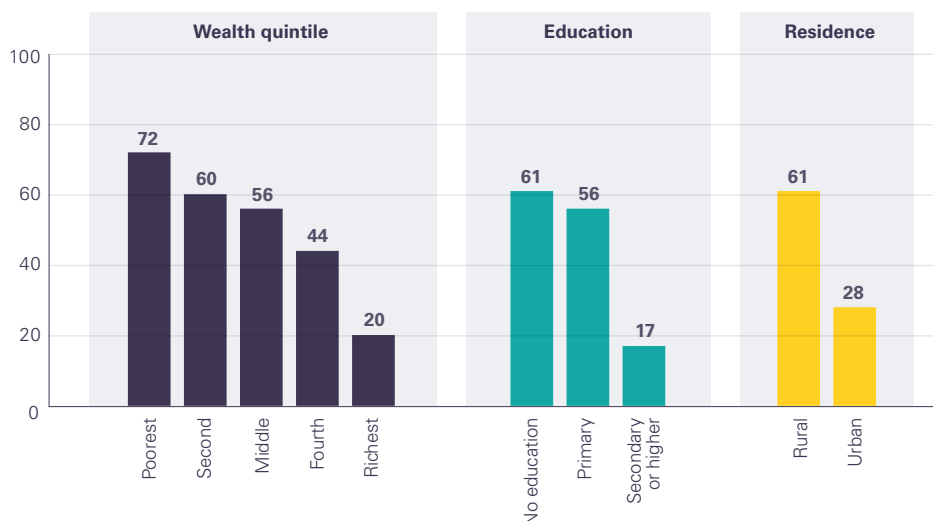
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 154. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

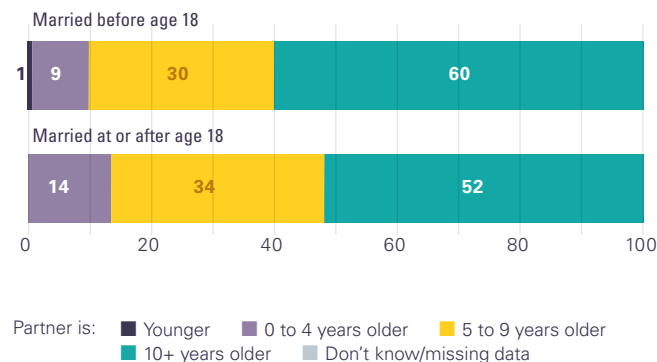
Figure 155. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

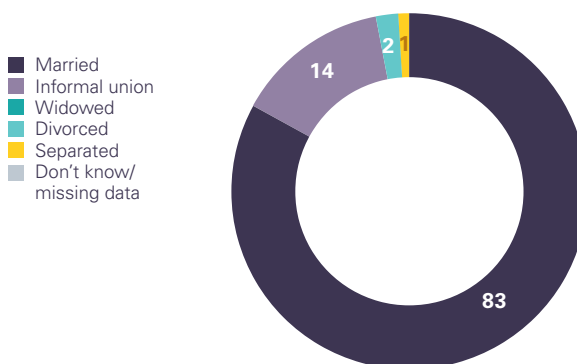
Spousal age gap

Figure 156. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 157. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 158. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

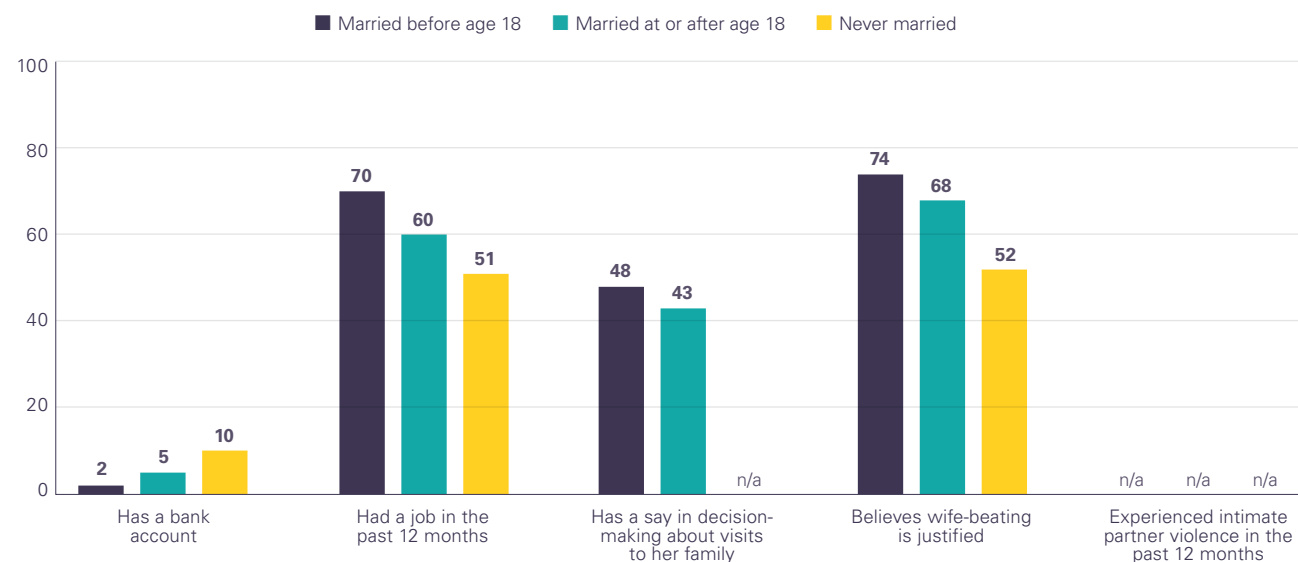
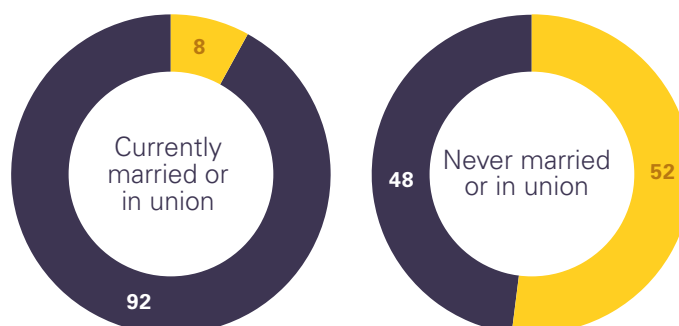


Figure 159. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 160. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

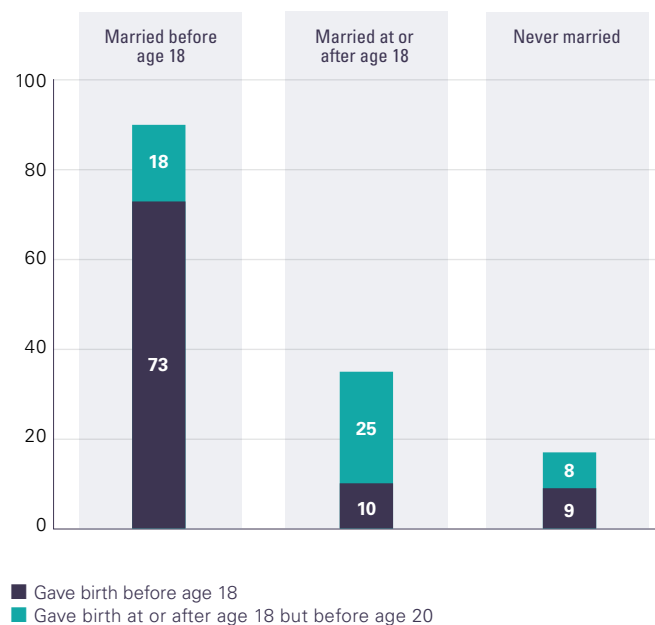
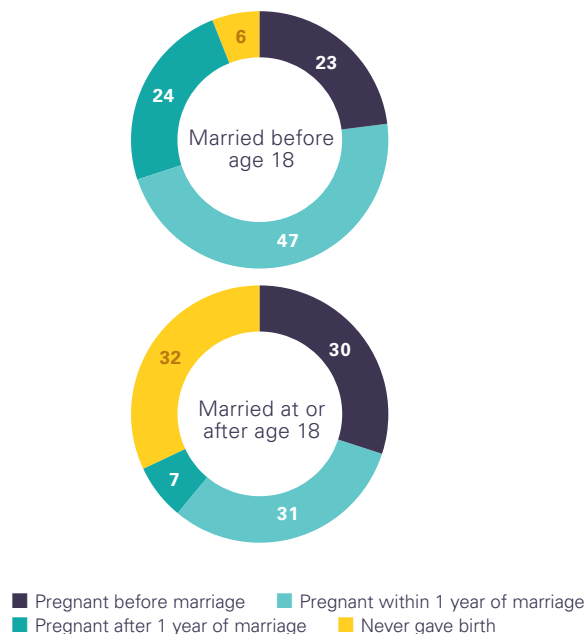
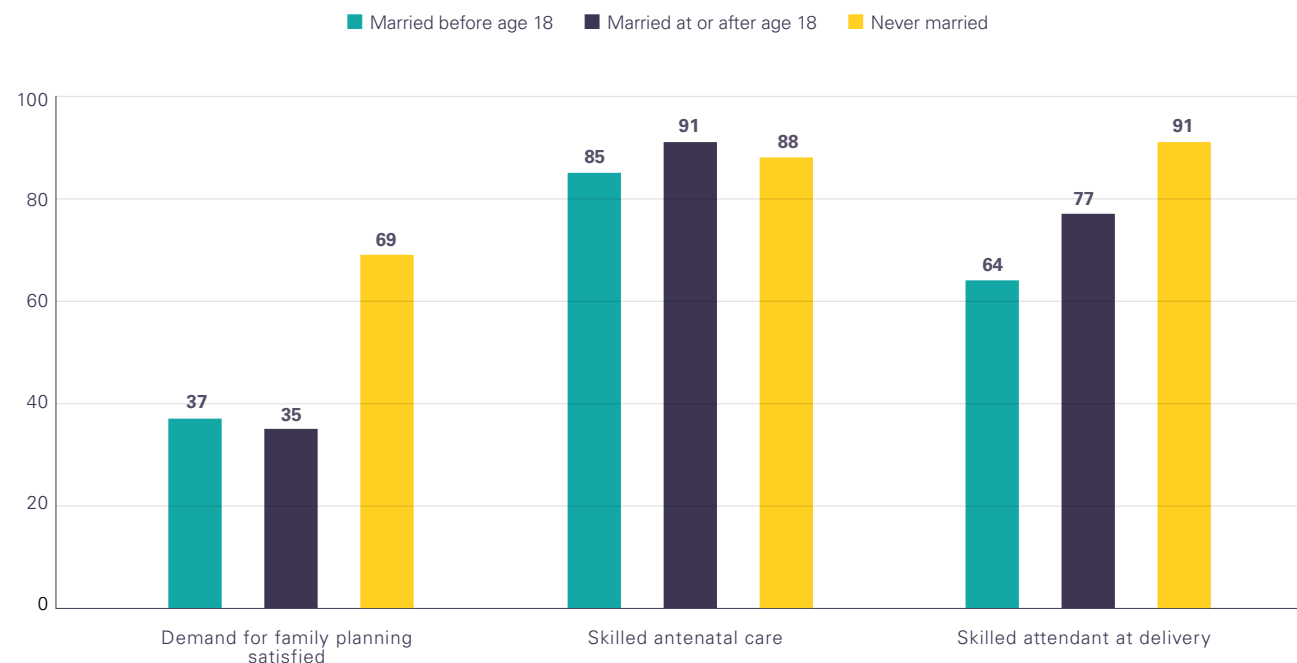


Figure 161. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



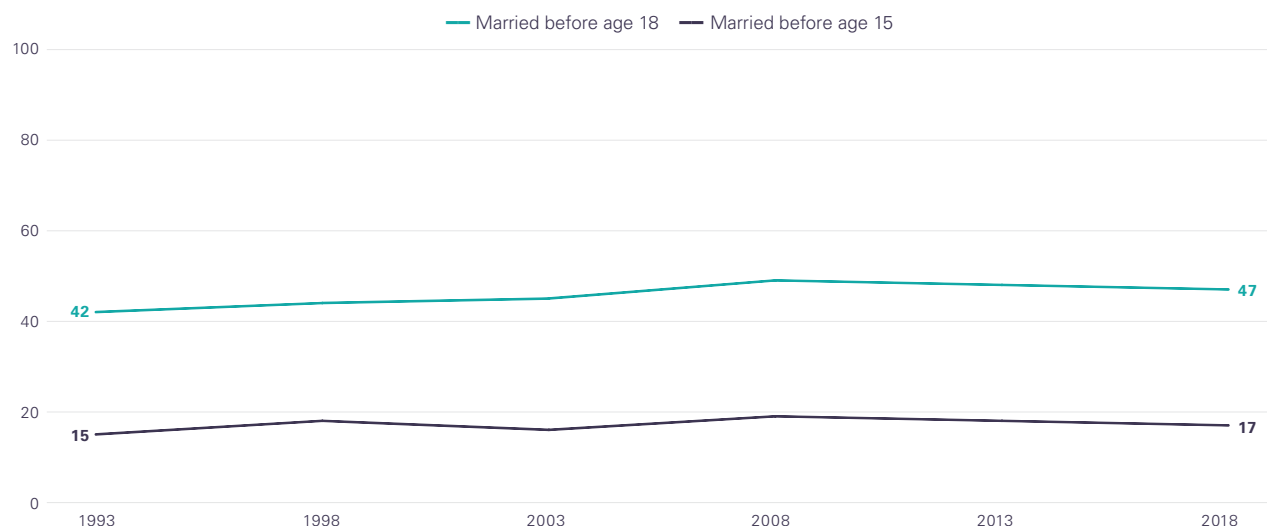
Reproductive health

Figure 162. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

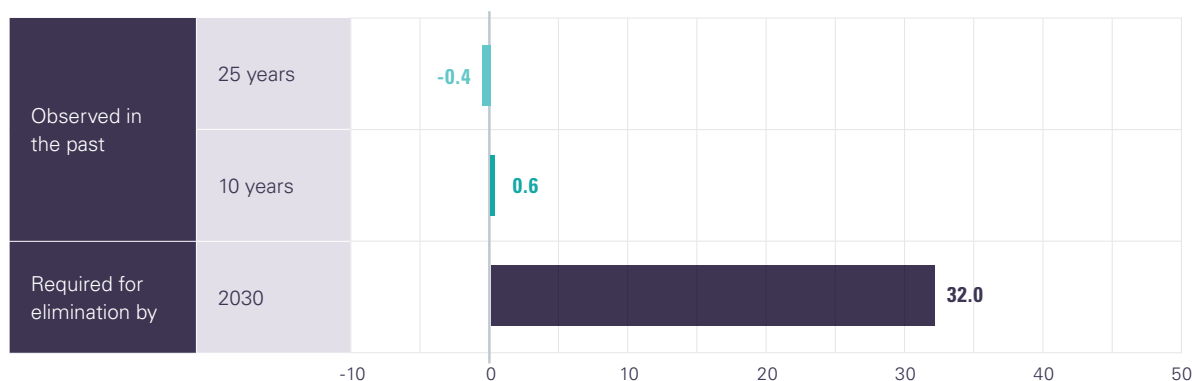
Figure 163. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 164. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2018 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

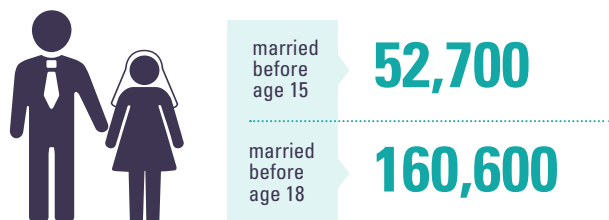
Guinea-Bissau

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 | with exceptions: 14

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

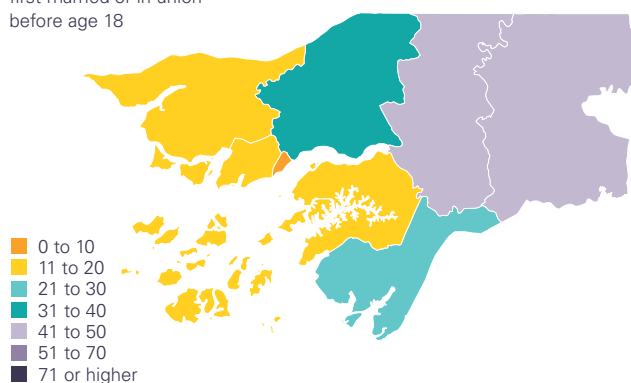
Figure 165. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Guinea-Bissau is home to over 160,000 child brides; 1 in 4 young women were married in childhood

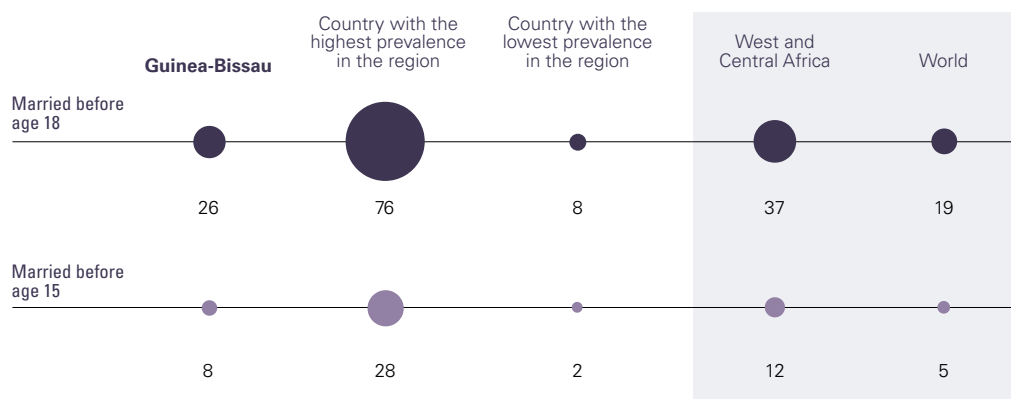
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 166. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



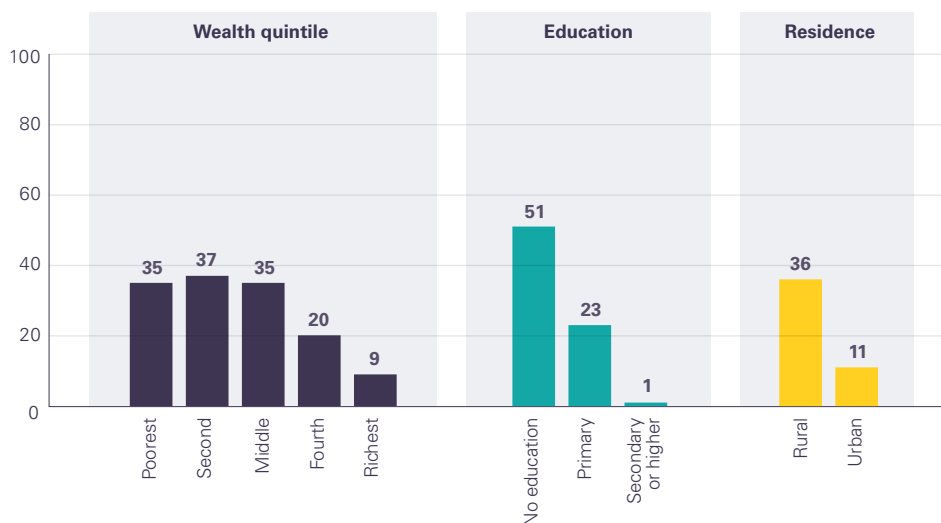
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 167. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

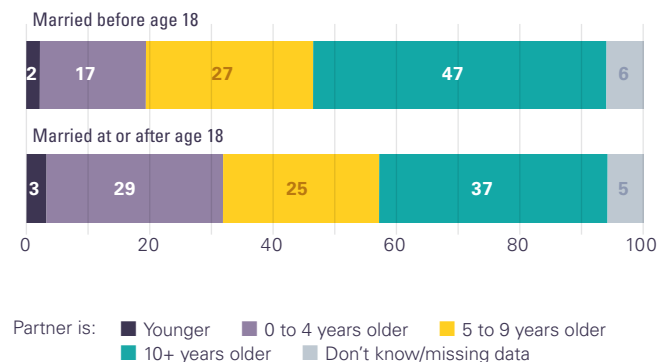
Figure 168. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

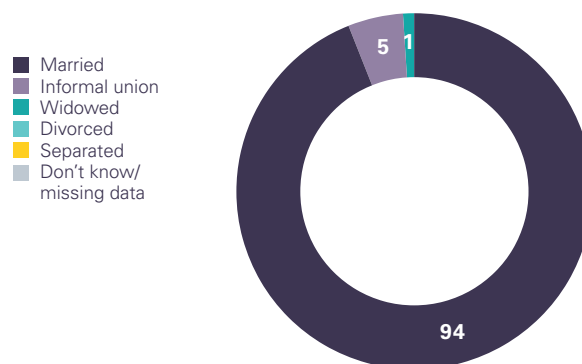
Spousal age gap

Figure 169. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 170. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 171. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

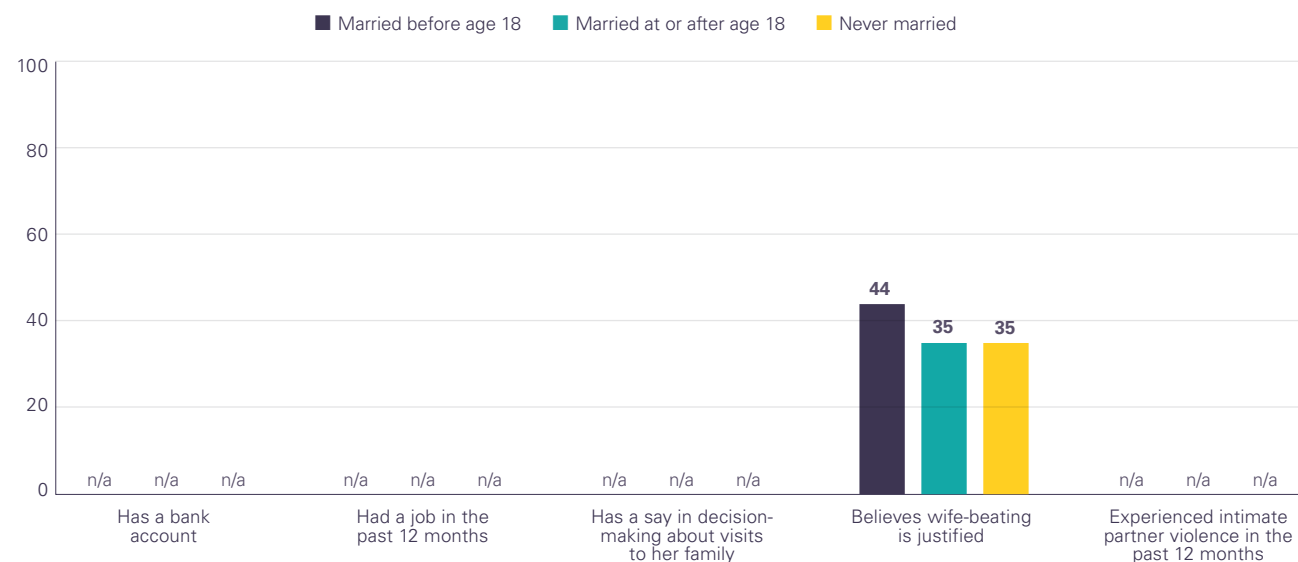
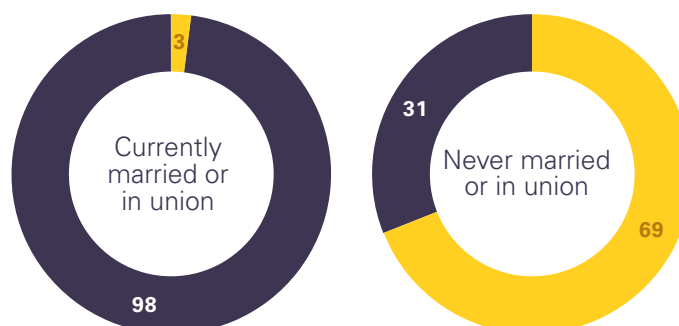


Figure 172. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 173. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

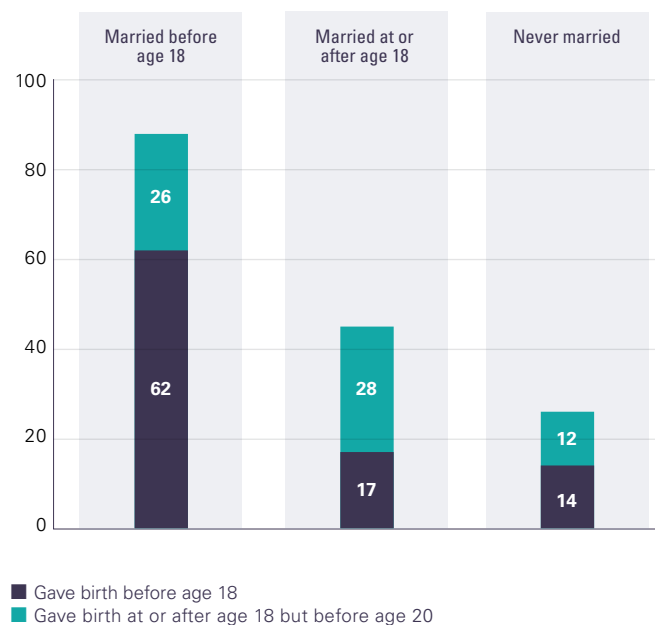
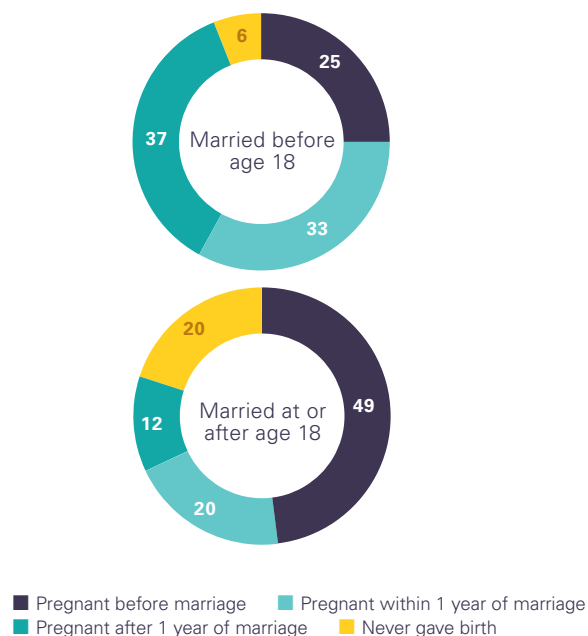
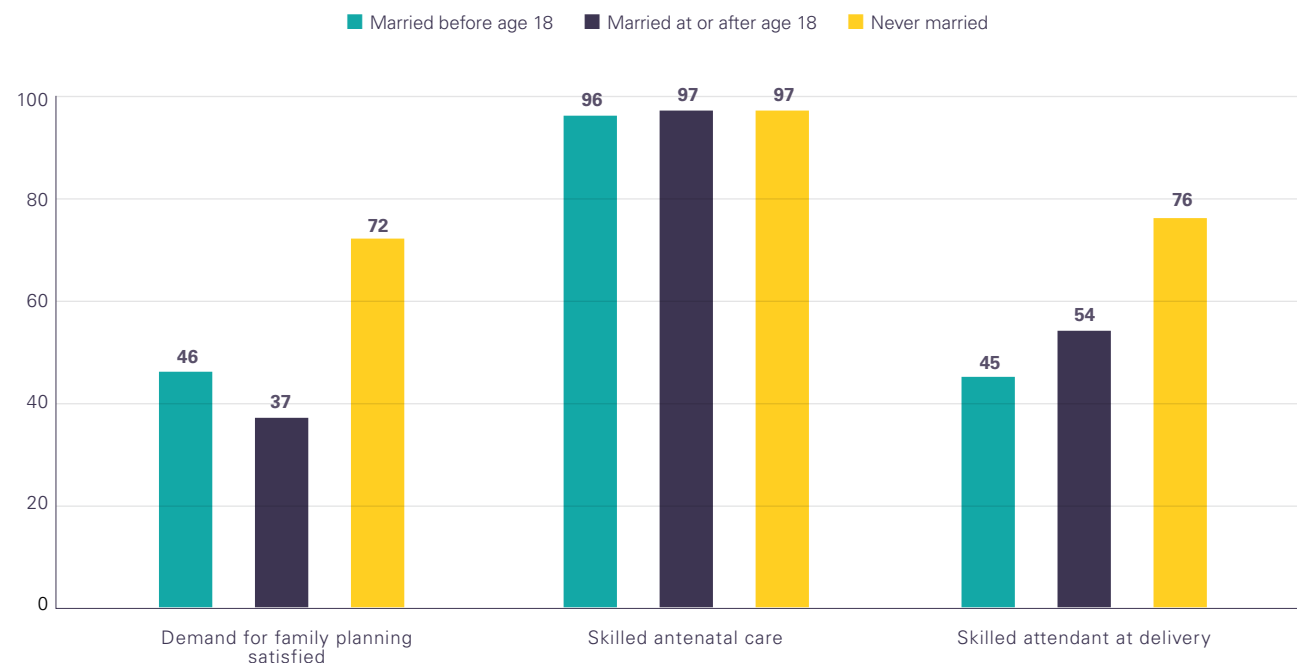


Figure 174. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



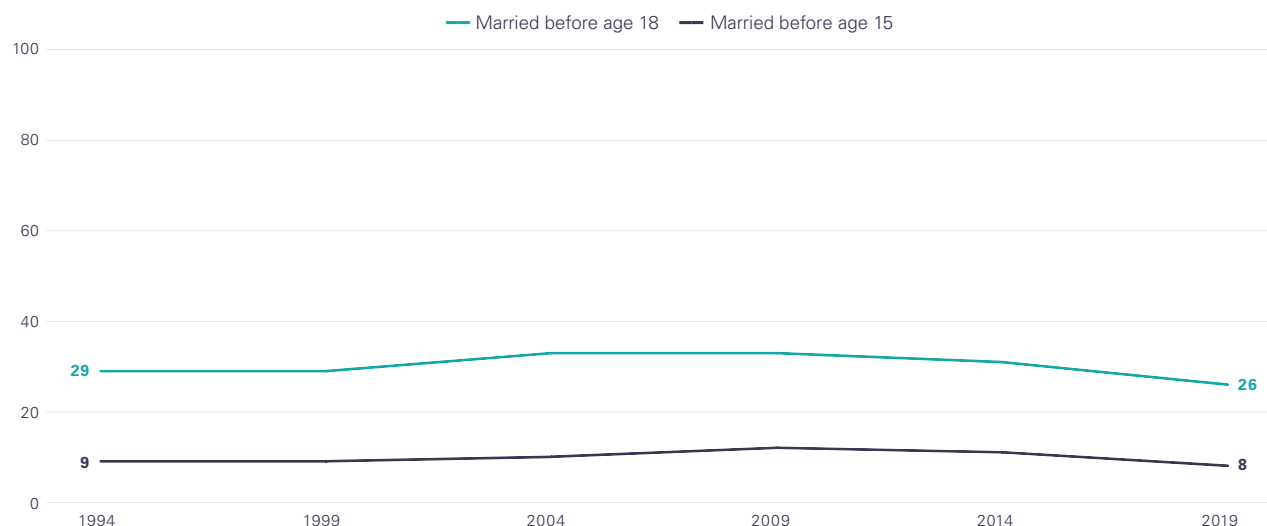
Reproductive health

Figure 175. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

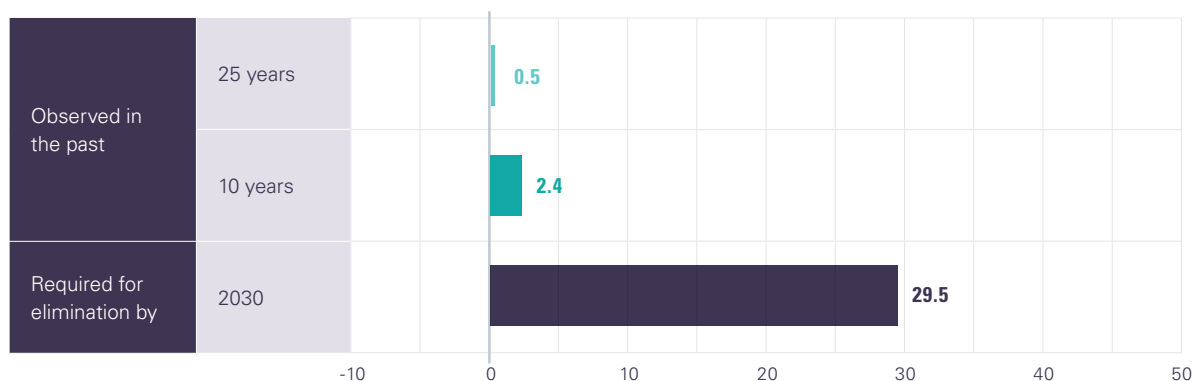
Figure 176. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 177. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2018–2019 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to ‘marriage’ or ‘child brides’ include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, ‘elimination’ is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as ‘n/a’ indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

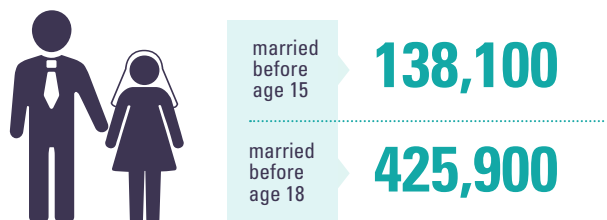
Liberia

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 | with exceptions: n/a

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

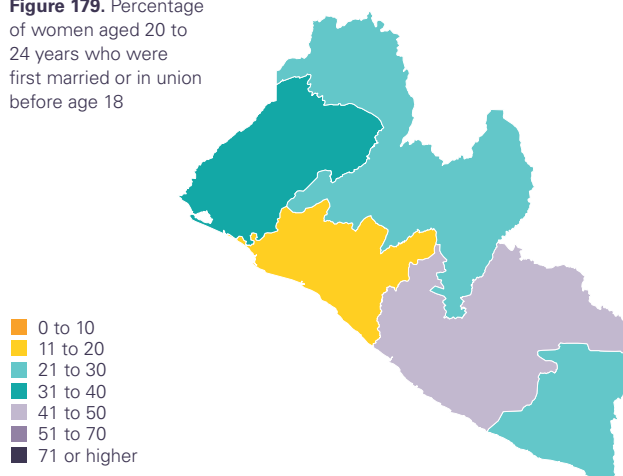
Figure 178. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Liberia is home to nearly 426,000 child brides; 1 in 4 young women were married in childhood

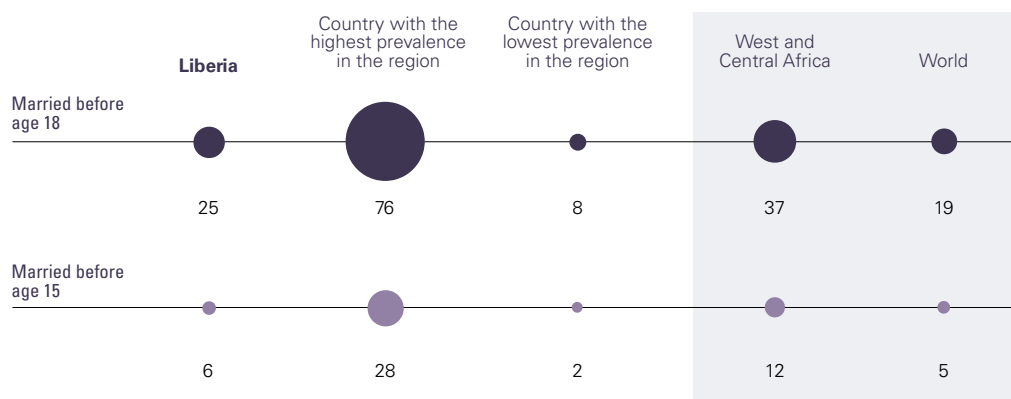
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 179. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



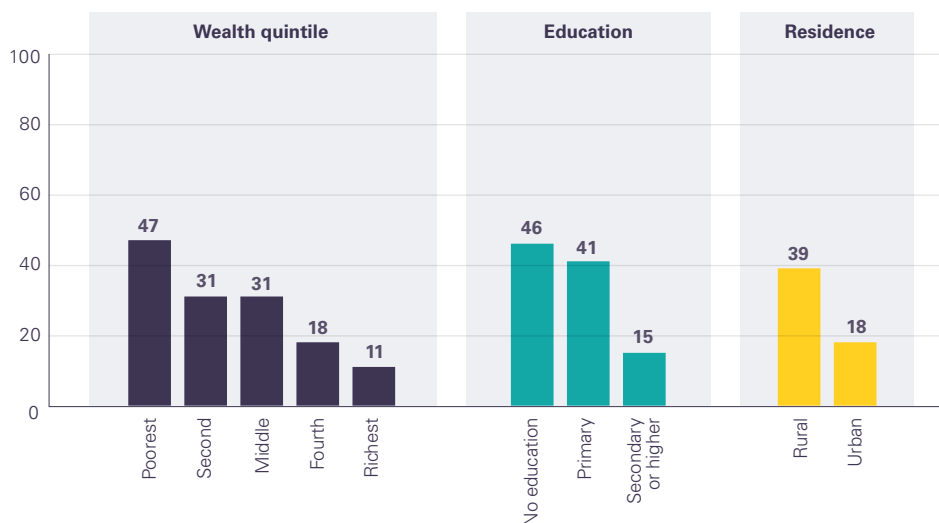
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 180. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

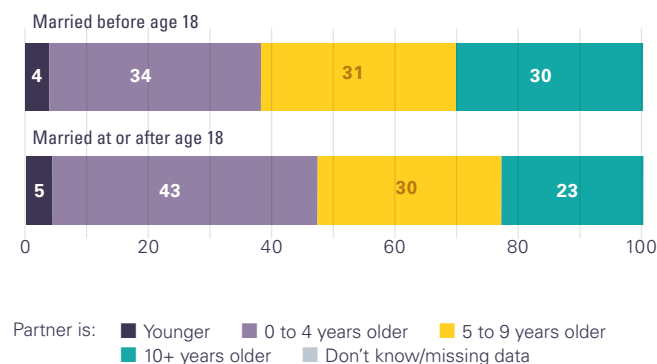
Figure 181. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

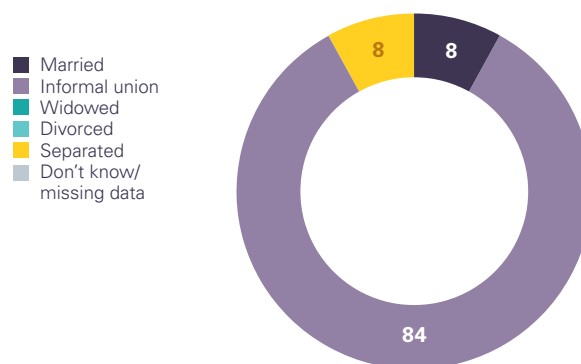
Spousal age gap

Figure 182. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 183. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 184. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

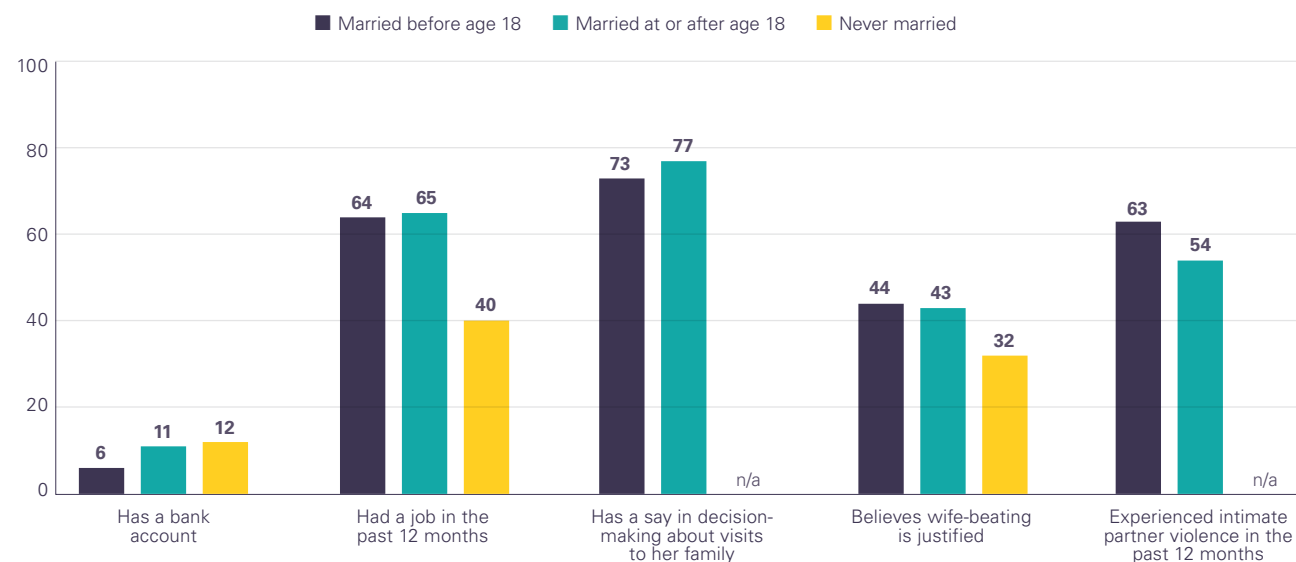


Figure 185. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 186. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

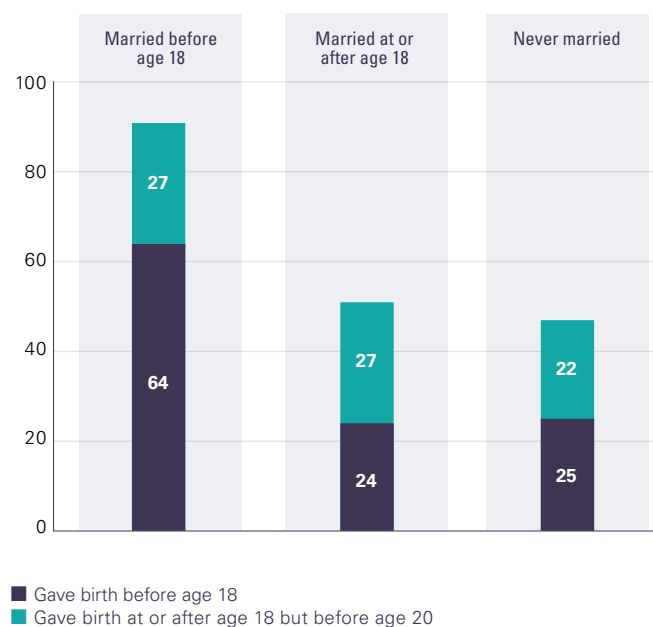
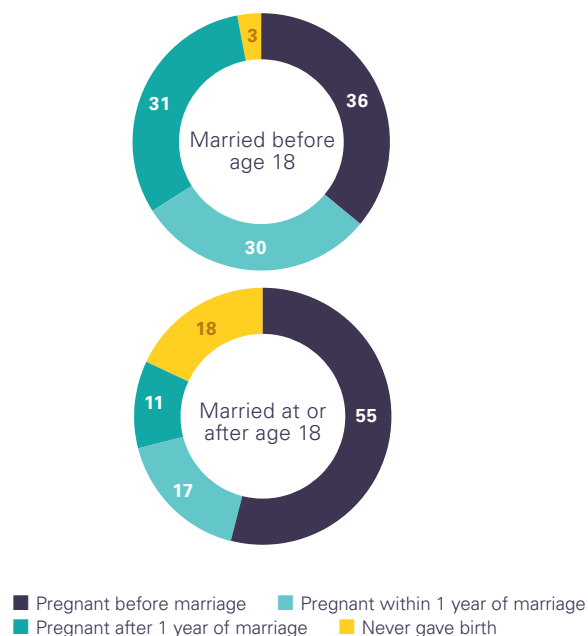
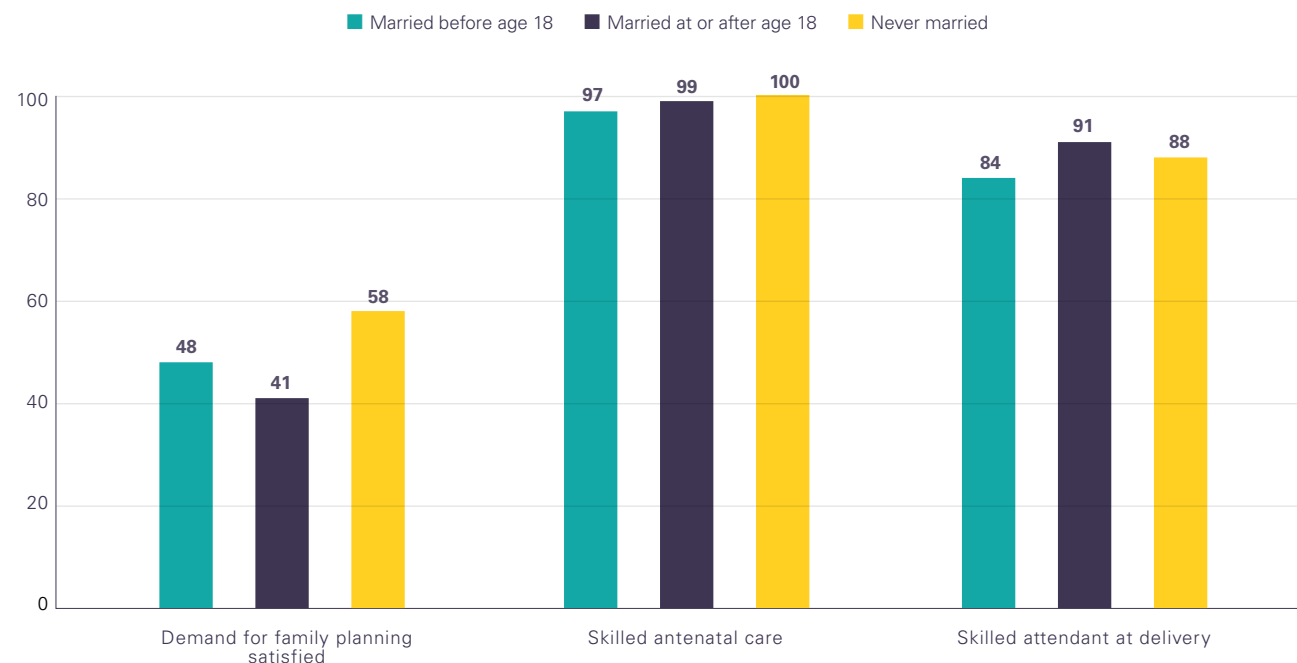


Figure 187. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



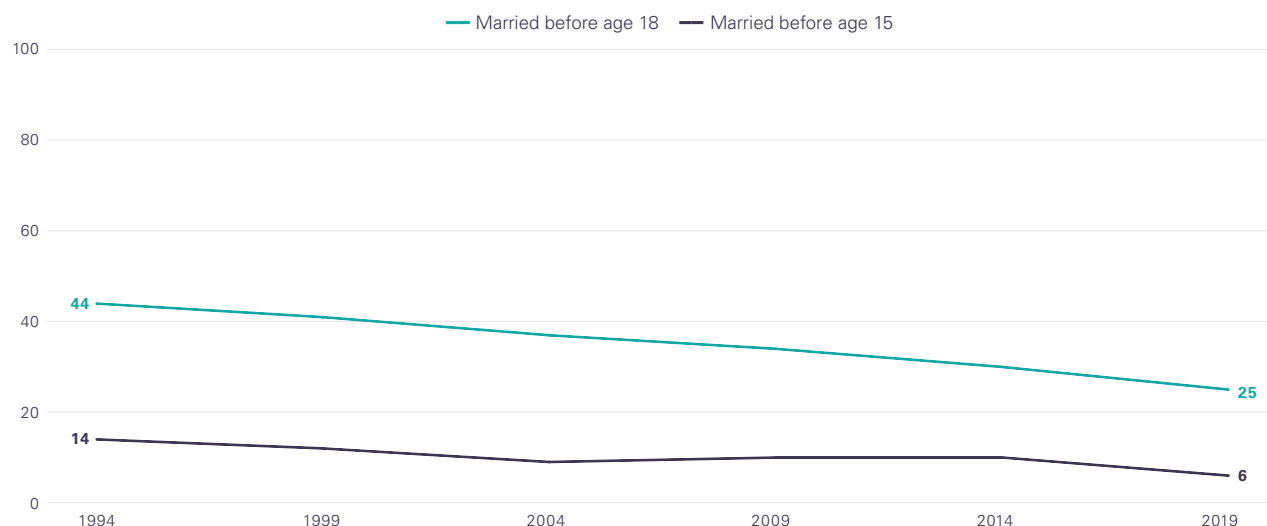
Reproductive health

Figure 188. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

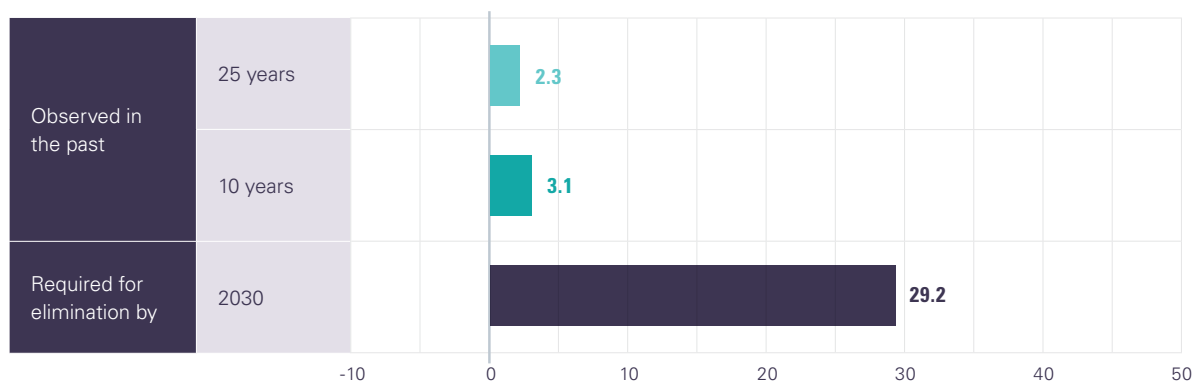
Figure 189. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 190. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2019–2020 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to ‘marriage’ or ‘child brides’ include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. Trends in the prevalence of child marriage were calculated taking into account data from all available surveys. For statistical purposes, ‘elimination’ is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as ‘n/a’ indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

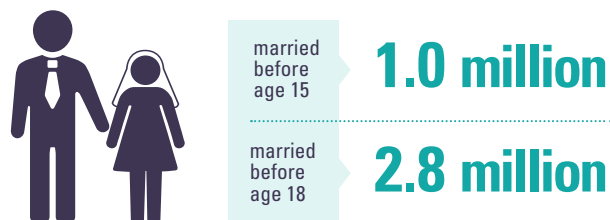
Mali

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 16 | with exceptions: 15

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

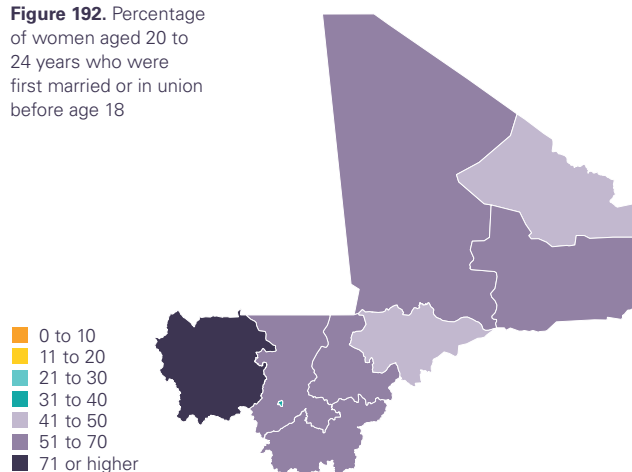
Figure 191. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Mali is home to nearly 3 million child brides; 1 in 2 young women were married in childhood

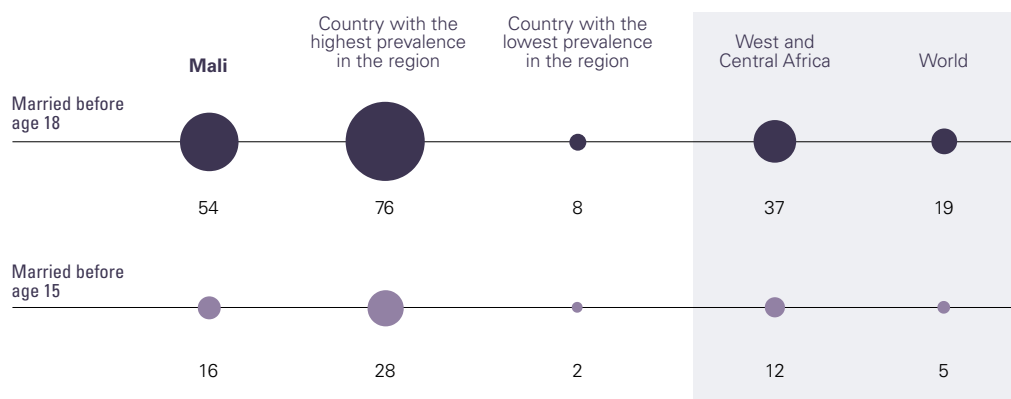
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 192. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



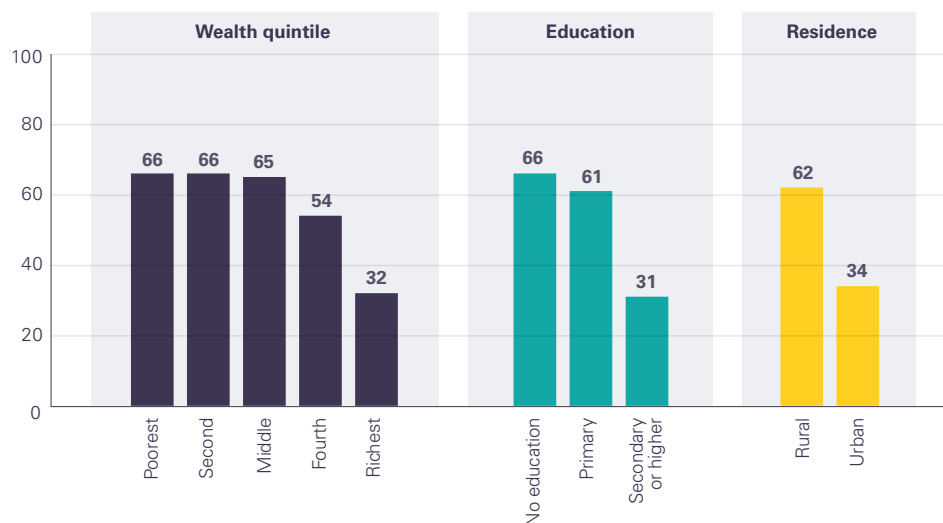
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 193. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

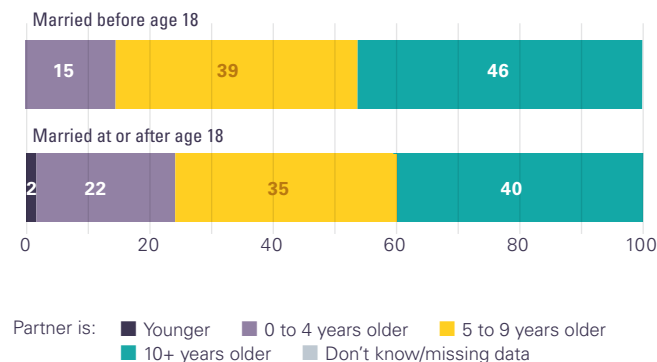
Figure 194. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

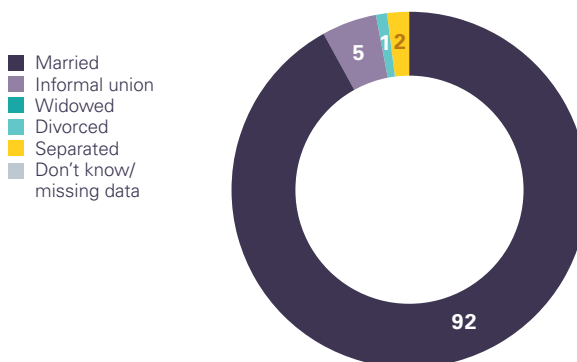
Spousal age gap

Figure 195. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 196. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 197. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

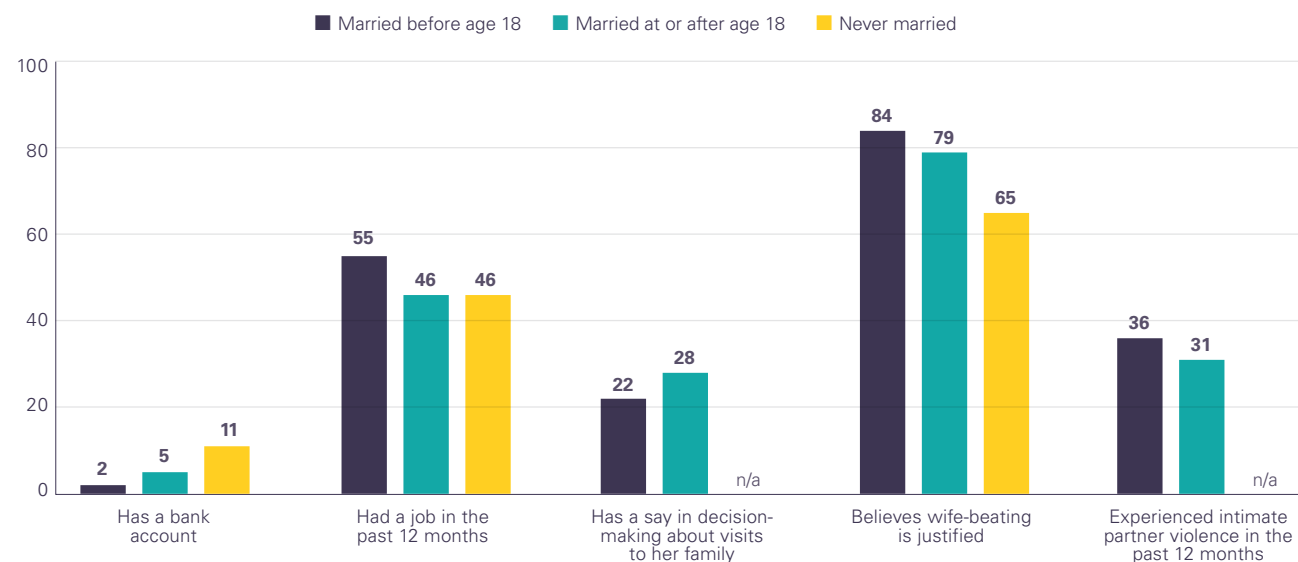
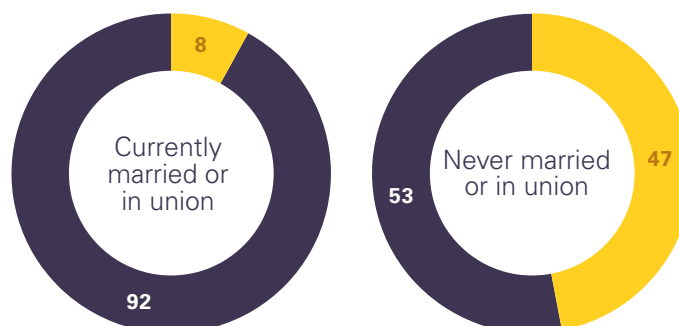


Figure 198. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 199. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

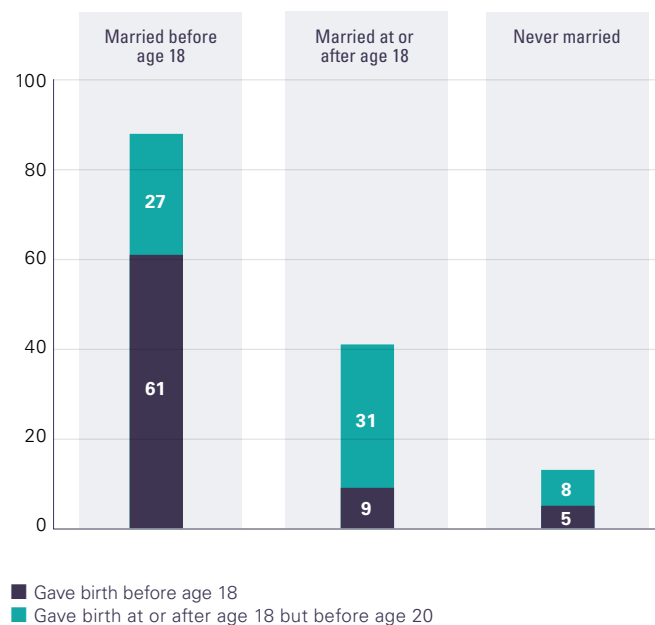
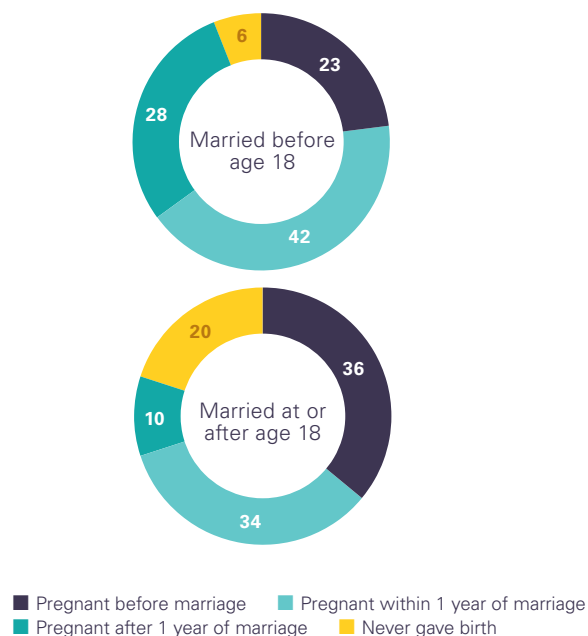
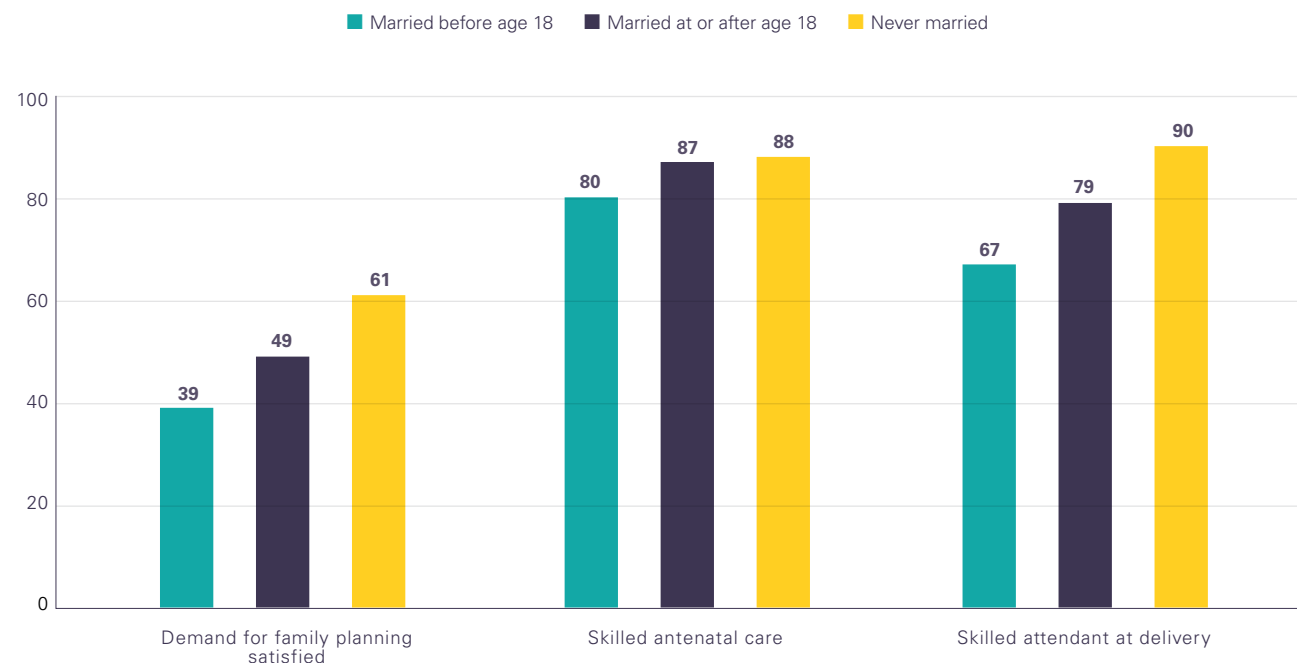


Figure 200. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



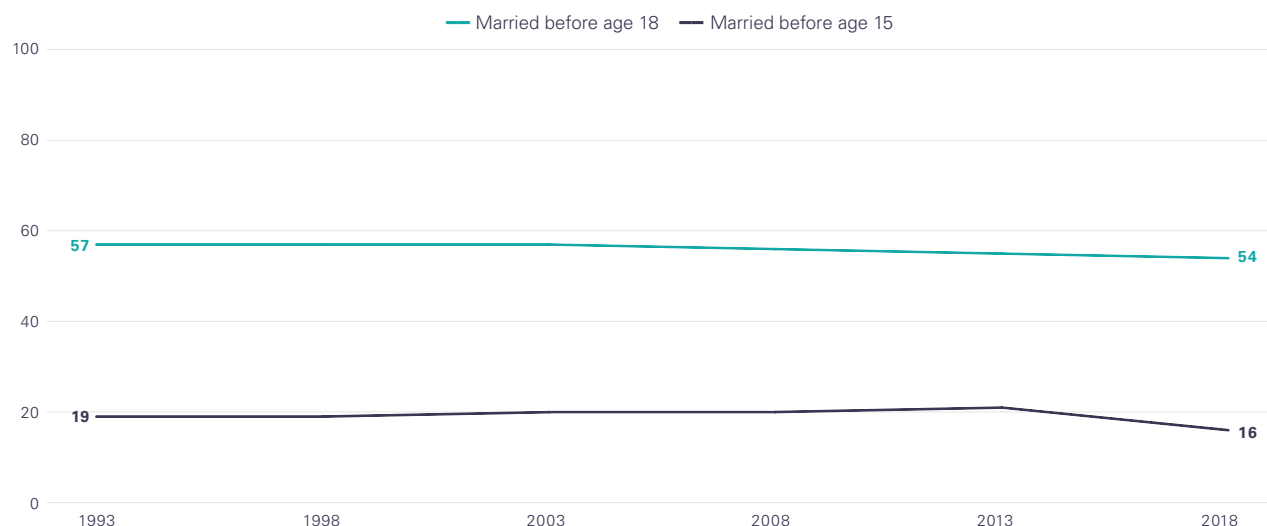
Reproductive health

Figure 201. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

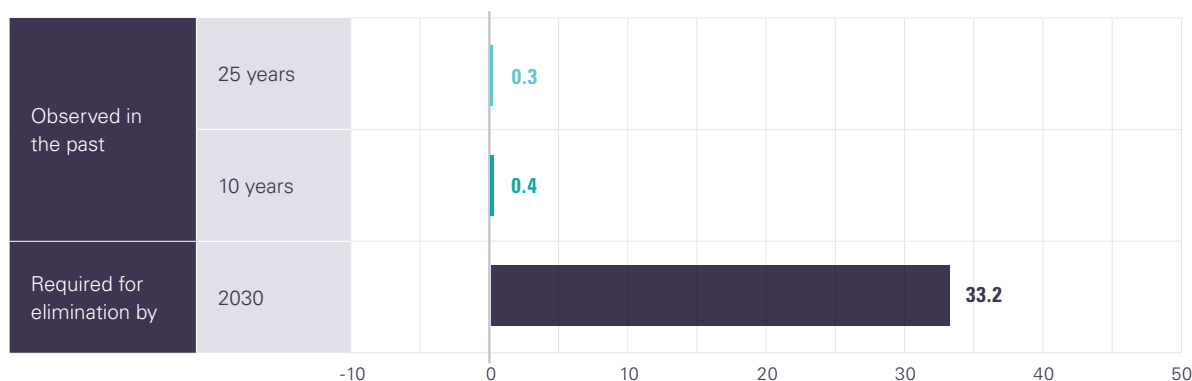
Figure 202. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 203. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2018 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. Trends in the prevalence of child marriage were calculated taking into account data from all available surveys. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

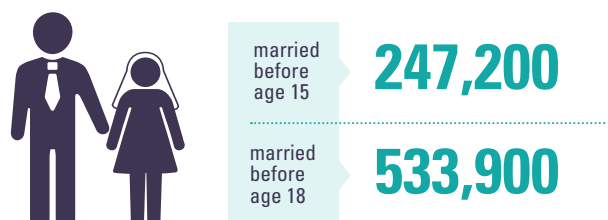
Mauritania

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: - | with exceptions: 0

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

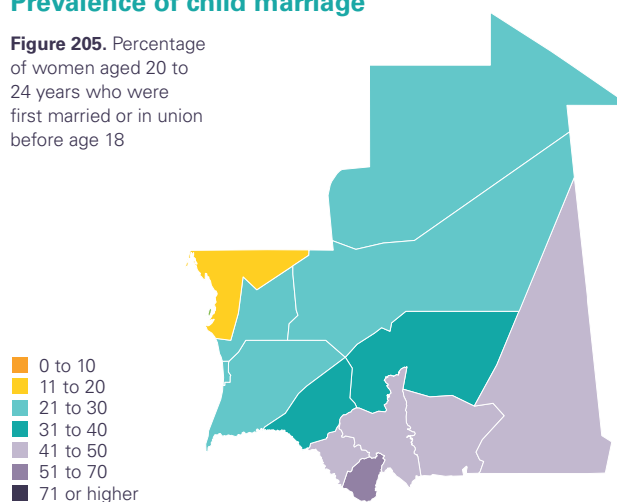
Figure 204. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Mauritania is home to nearly 534,000 child brides; 4 in 10 young women were married in childhood

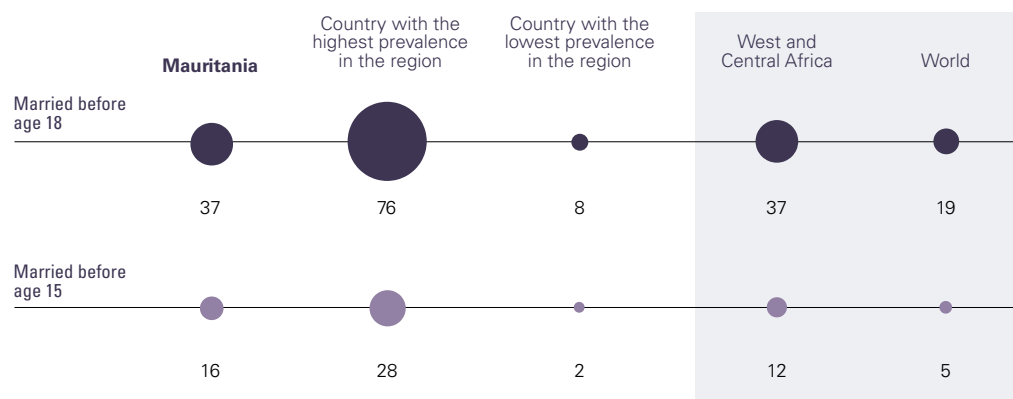
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 205. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



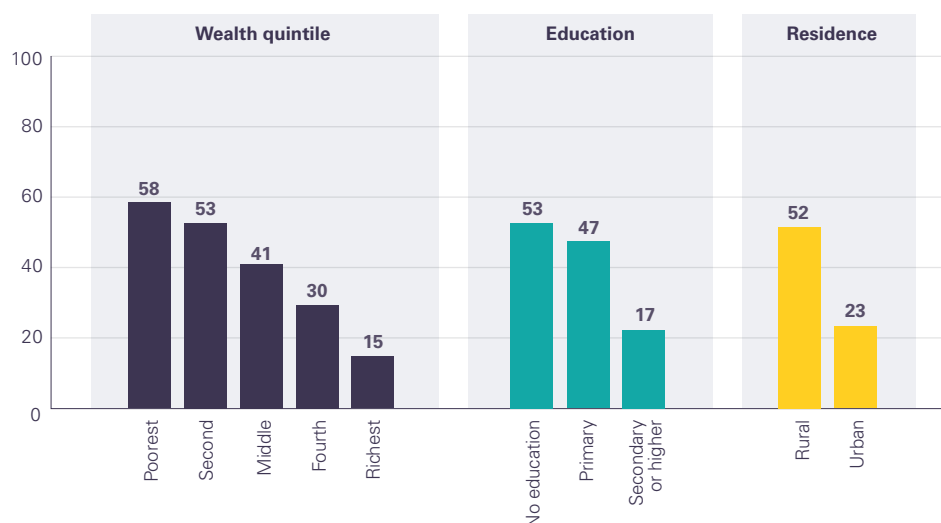
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 206. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

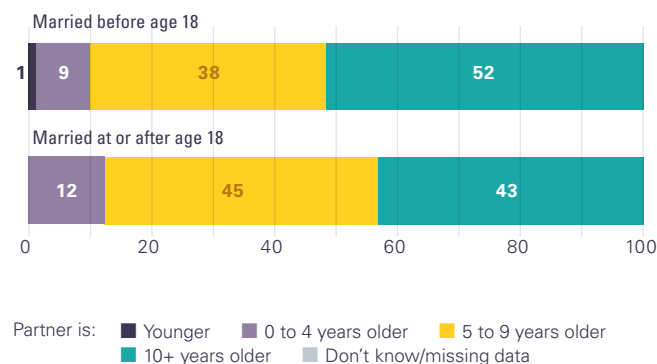
Figure 207. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

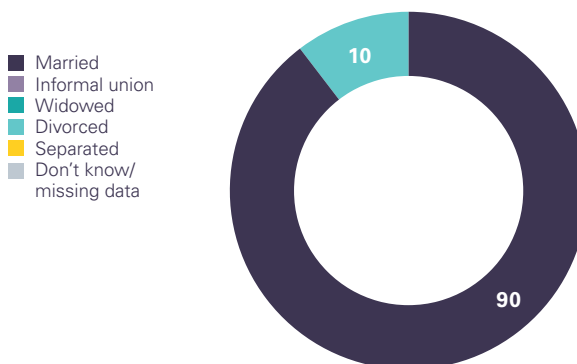
Spousal age gap

Figure 208. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 209. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 210. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

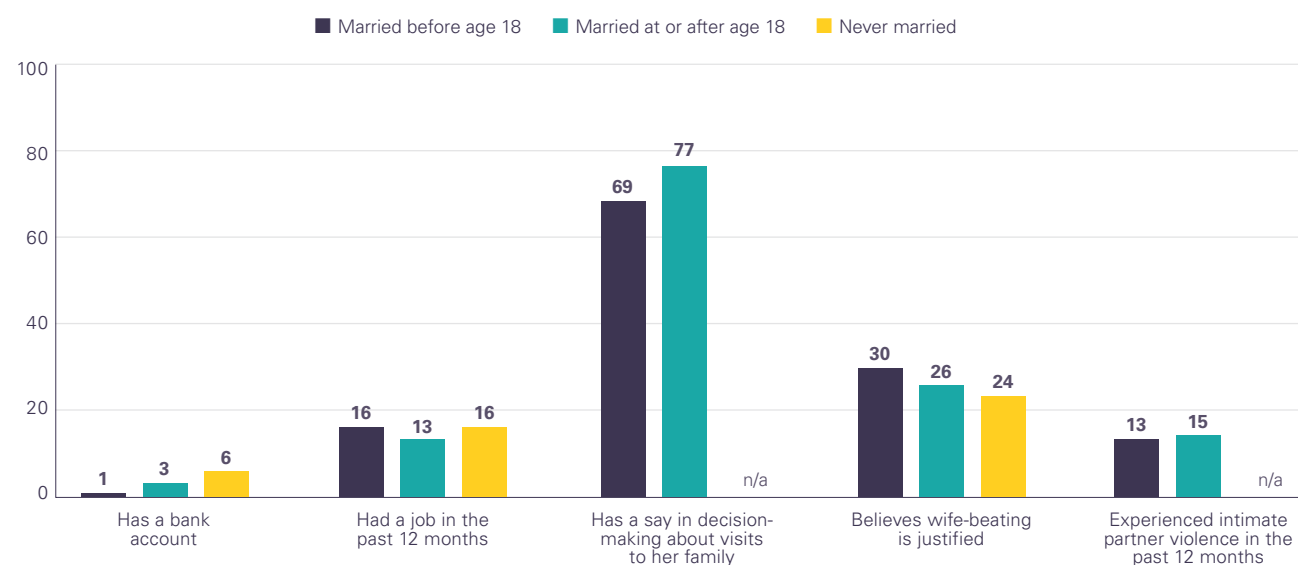
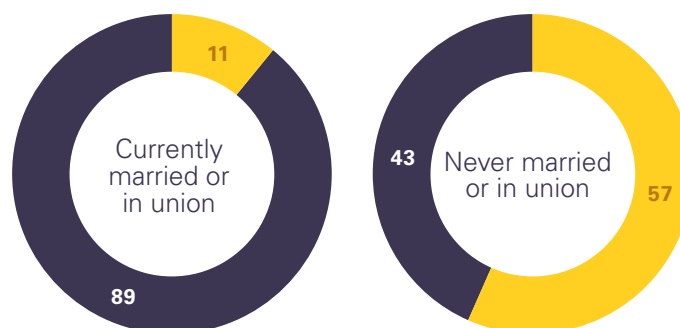


Figure 211. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

Figure 212. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

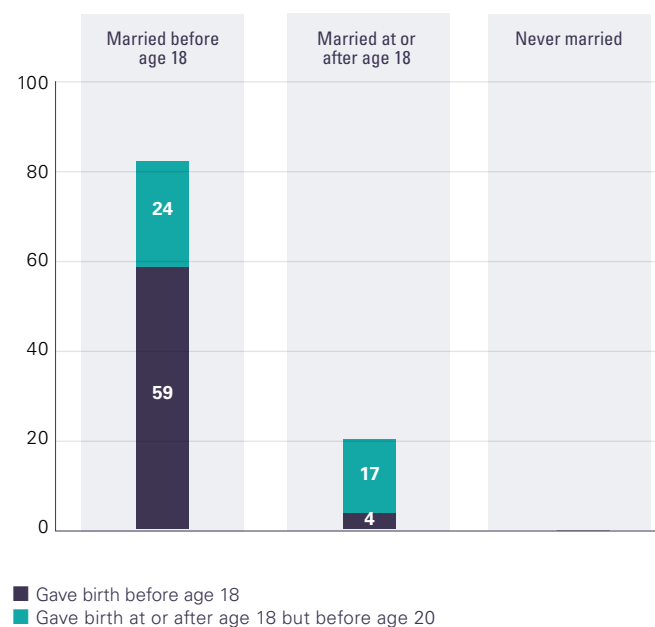
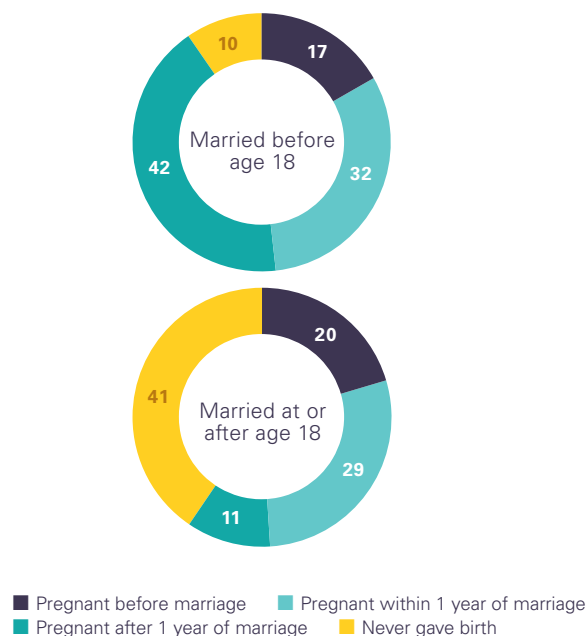
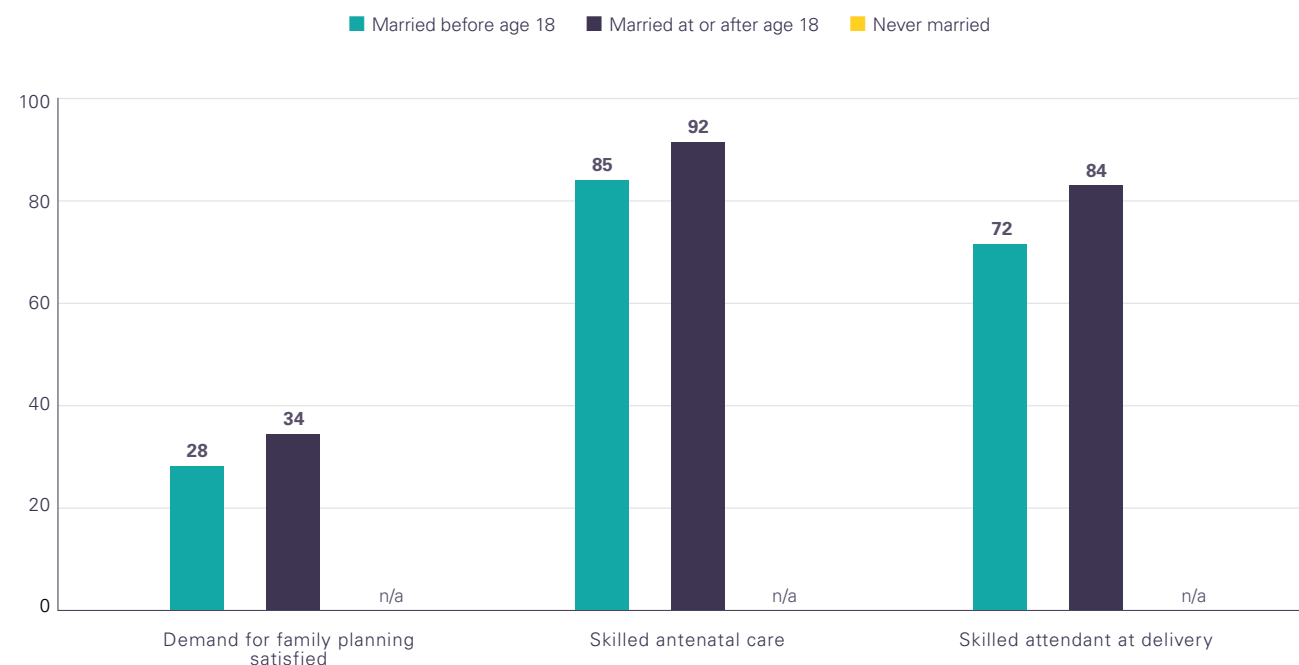


Figure 213. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



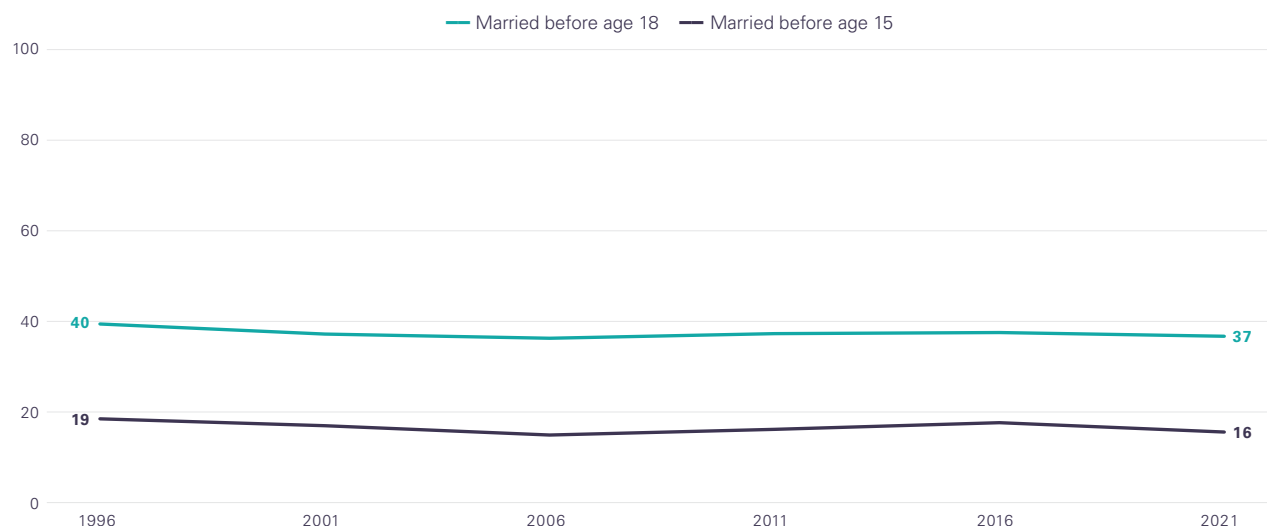
Reproductive health

Figure 214. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

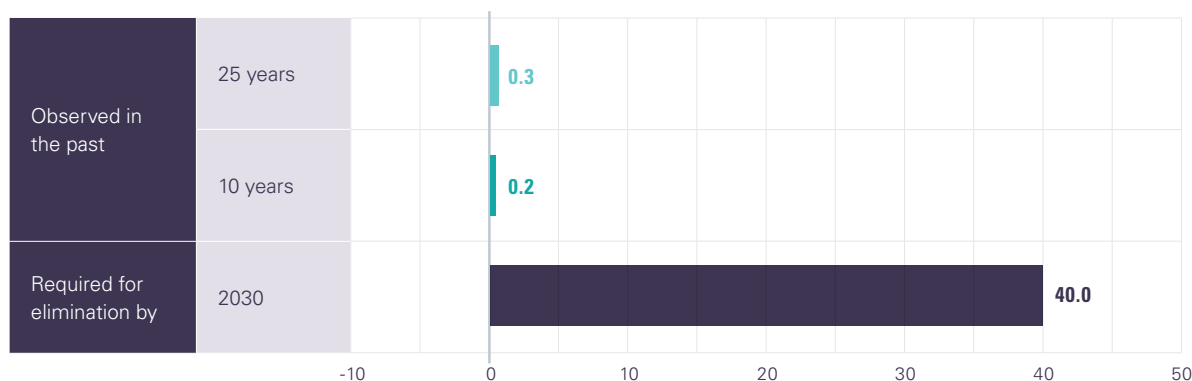
Figure 215. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 216. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2019–2021 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to ‘marriage’ or ‘child brides’ include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, ‘elimination’ is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as ‘n/a’ indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

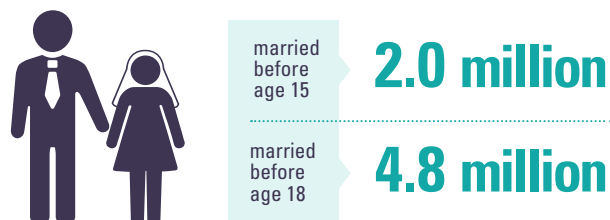
Niger

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 21 | with exceptions: 15

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

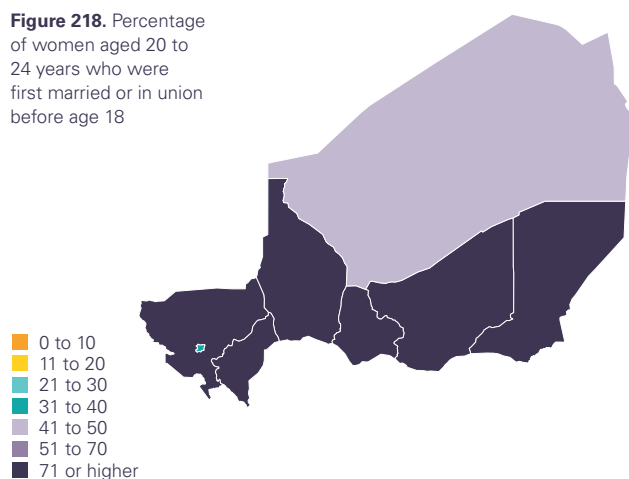
Figure 217. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



The Niger is home to nearly 5 million child brides; 3 in 4 young women were married in childhood

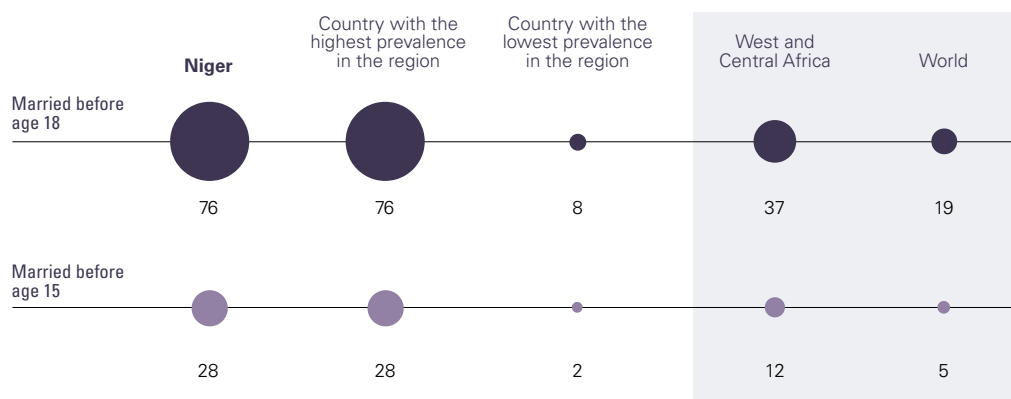
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 218. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



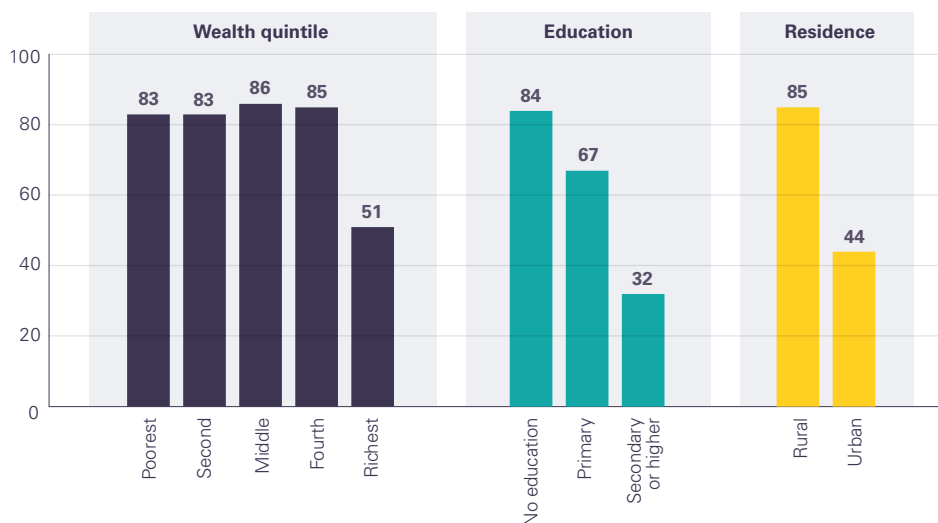
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 219. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

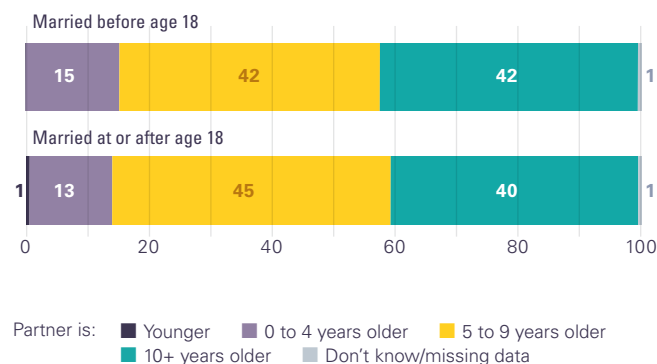
Figure 220. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

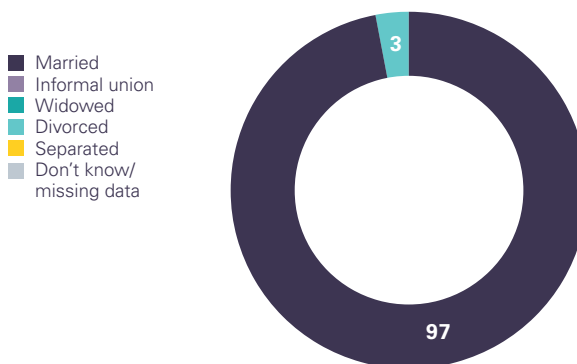
Spousal age gap

Figure 221. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 222. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 223. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

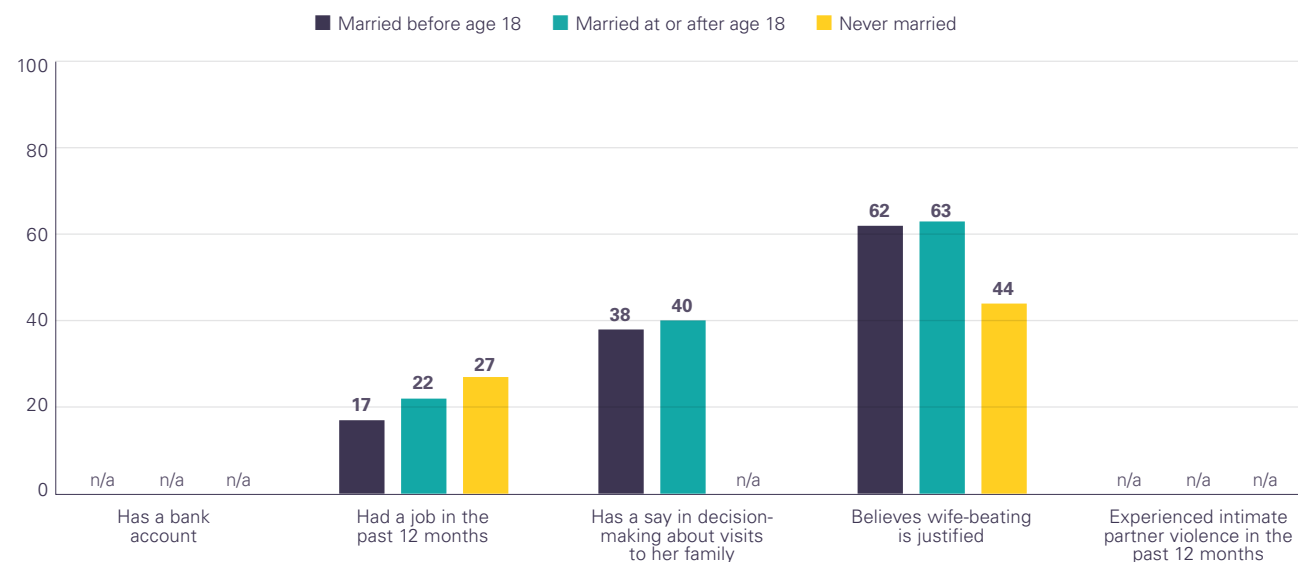
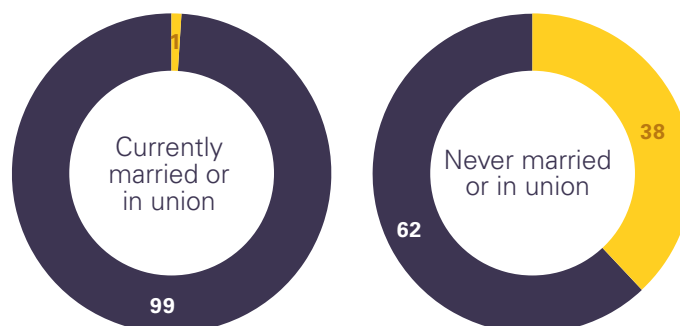


Figure 224. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 225. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

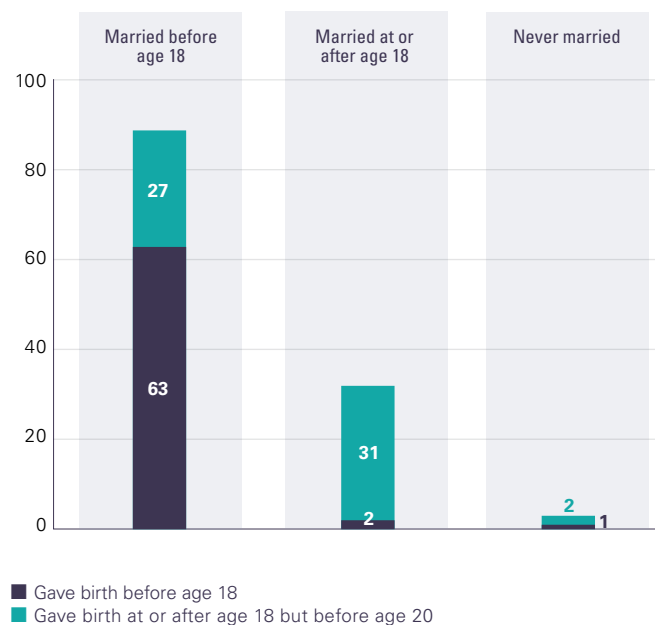
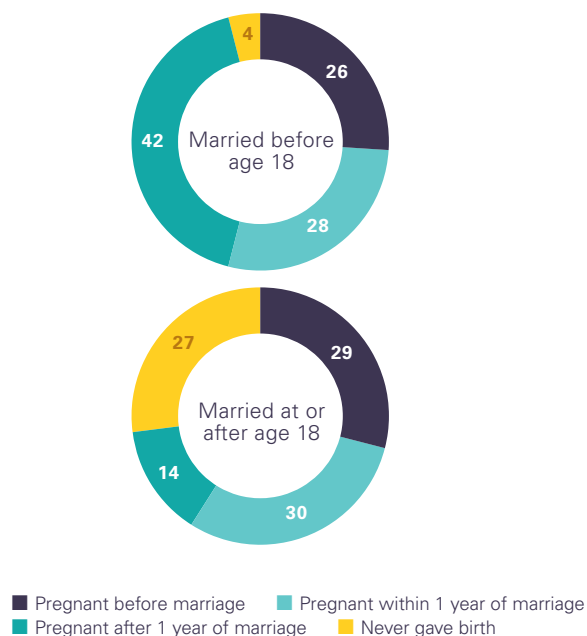
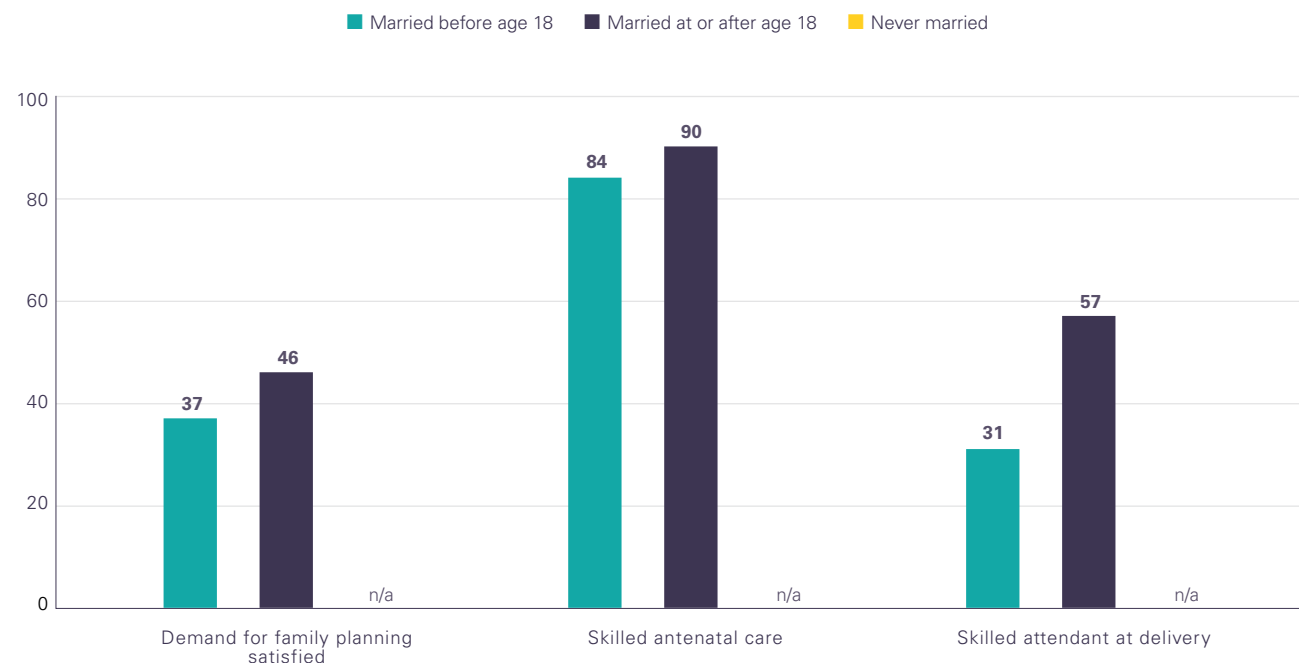


Figure 226. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



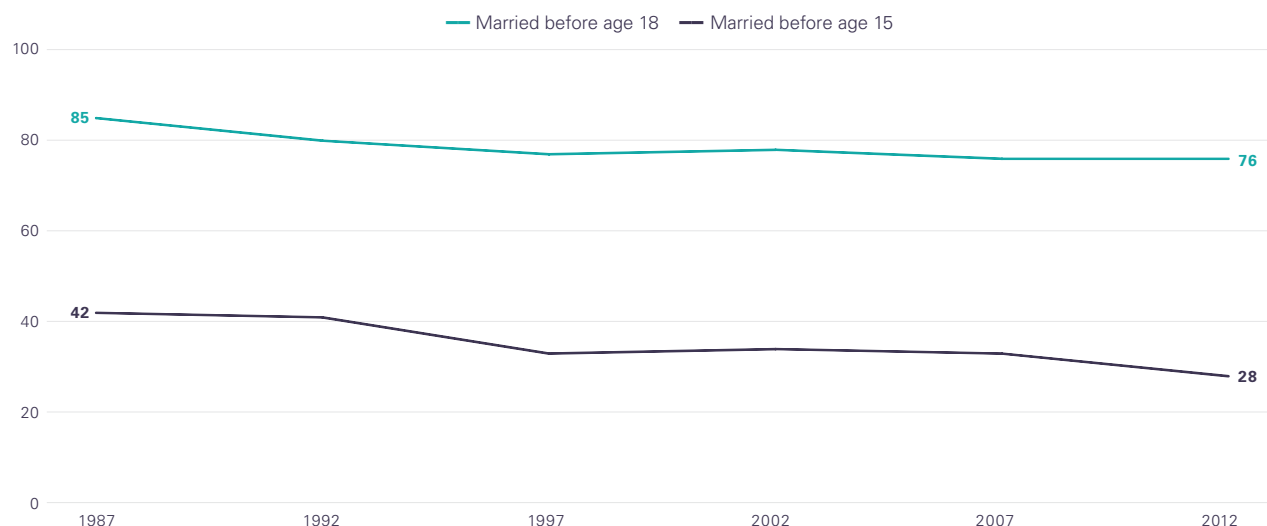
Reproductive health

Figure 227. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

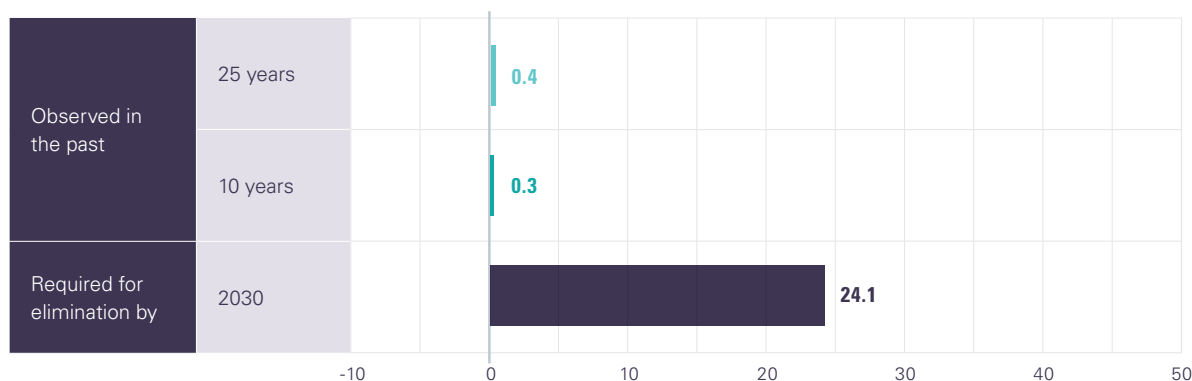
Figure 228. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 229. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2012 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. Trends in the prevalence of child marriage were calculated taking into account data from all available surveys. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

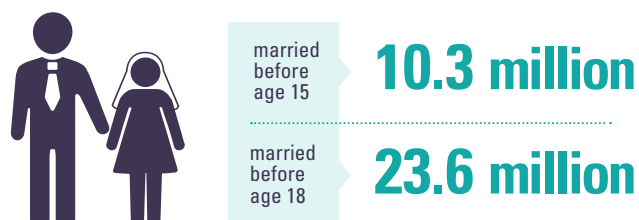
Nigeria

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 21 | with exceptions: 18

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

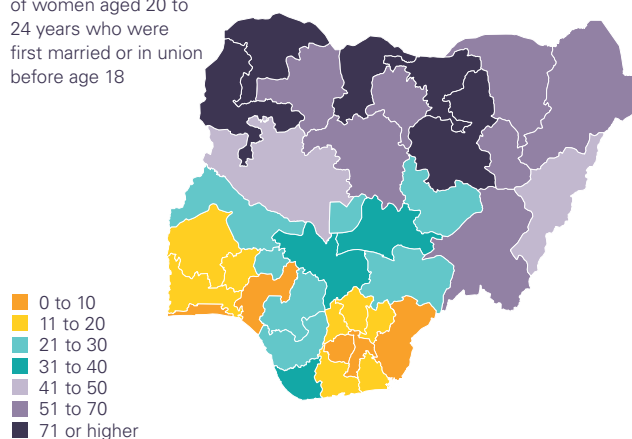
Figure 230. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Nigeria is home to over 23 million child brides; 2 in 5 young women were married in childhood

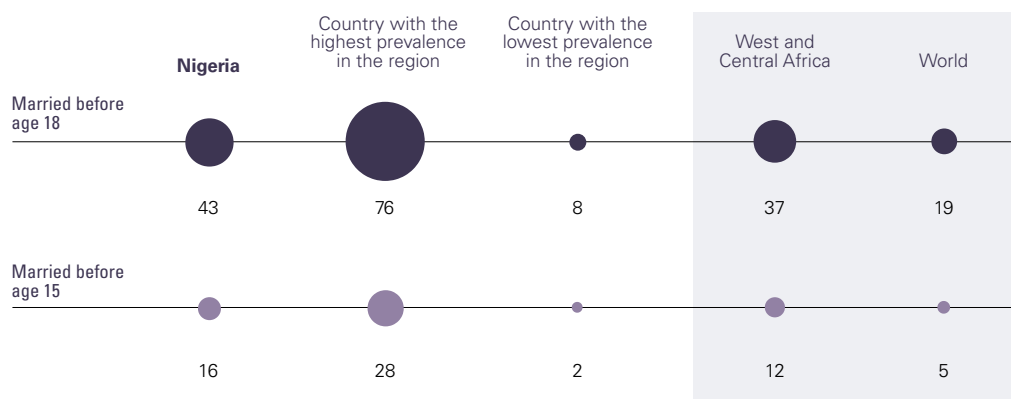
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 231. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



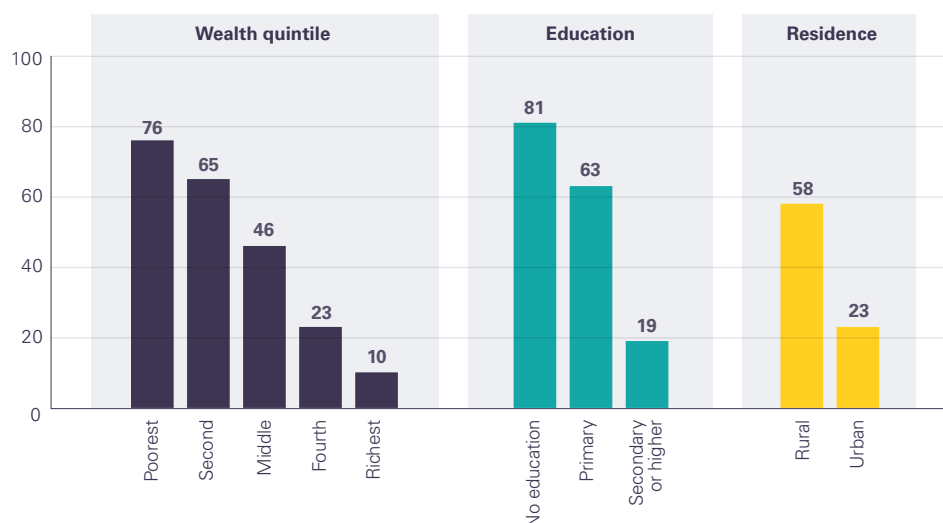
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 232. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

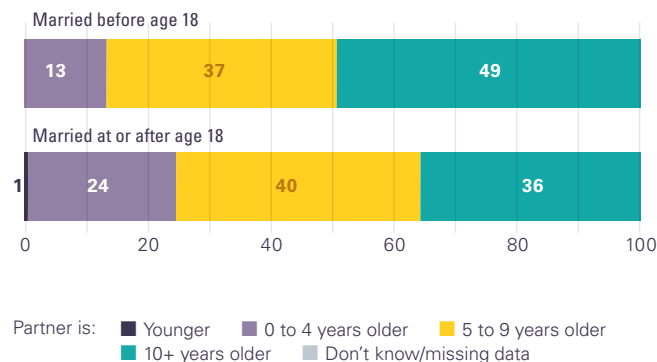
Figure 233. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

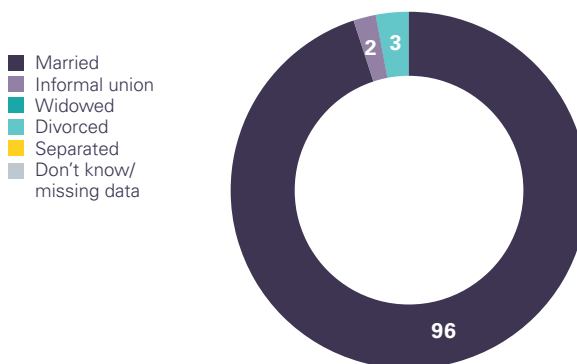
Spousal age gap

Figure 224. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 225. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 226. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

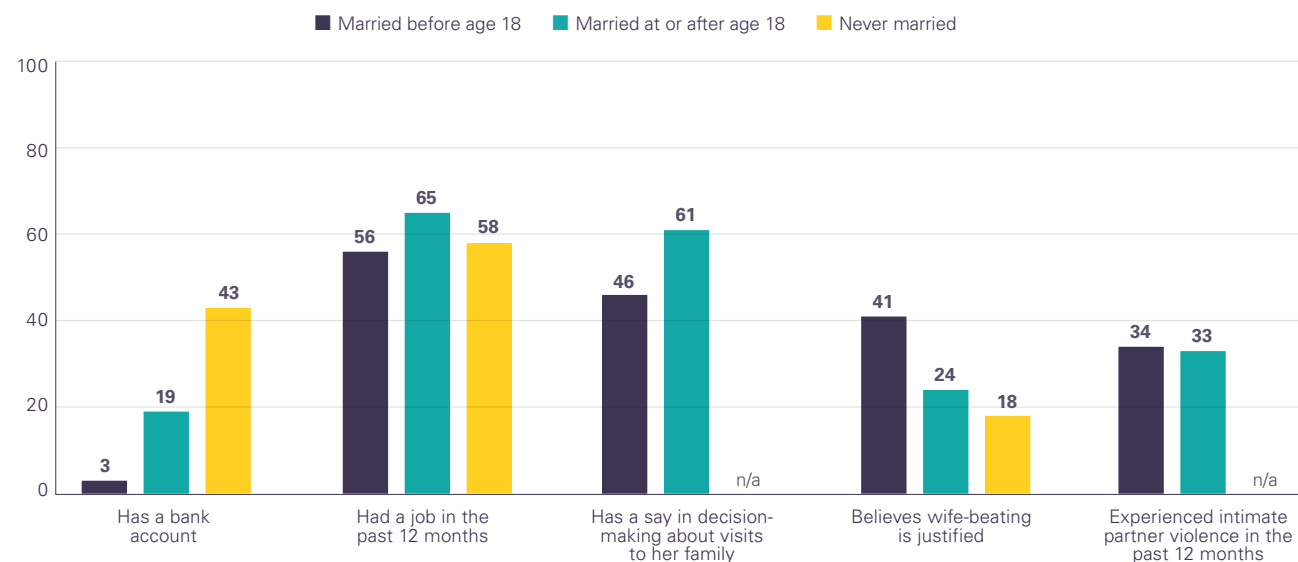
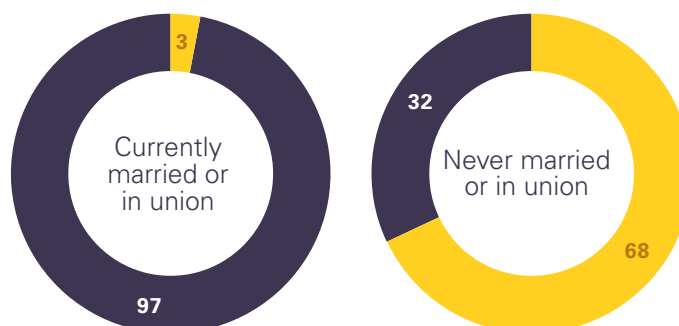


Figure 227. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 228. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

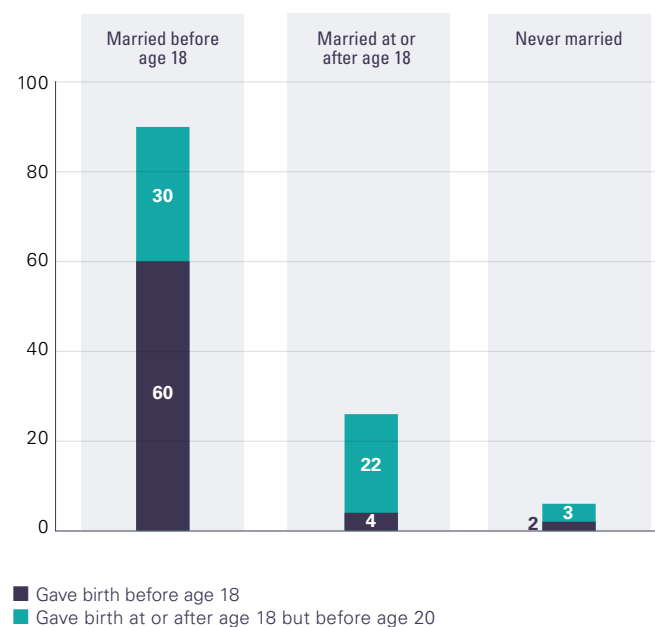
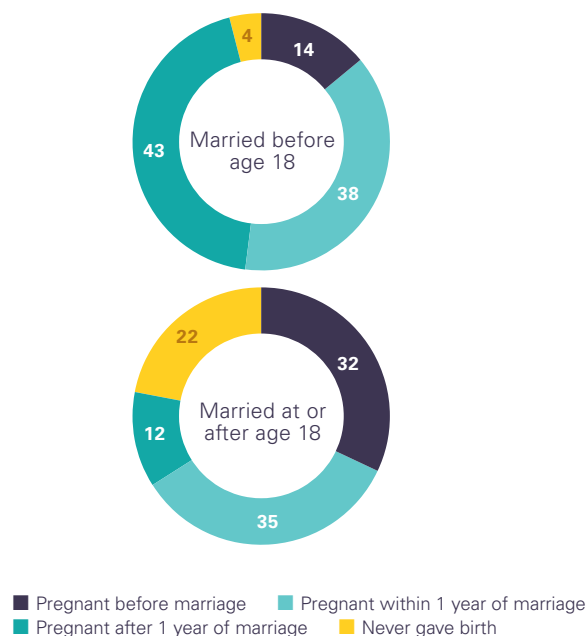
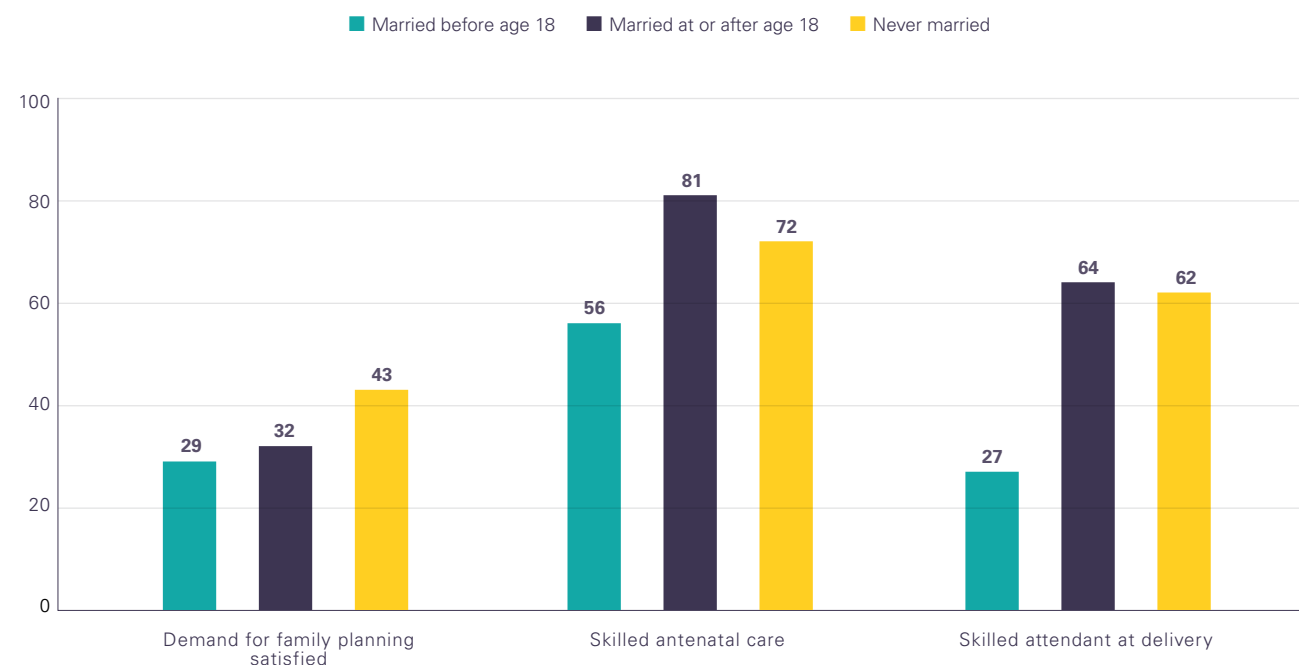


Figure 229. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



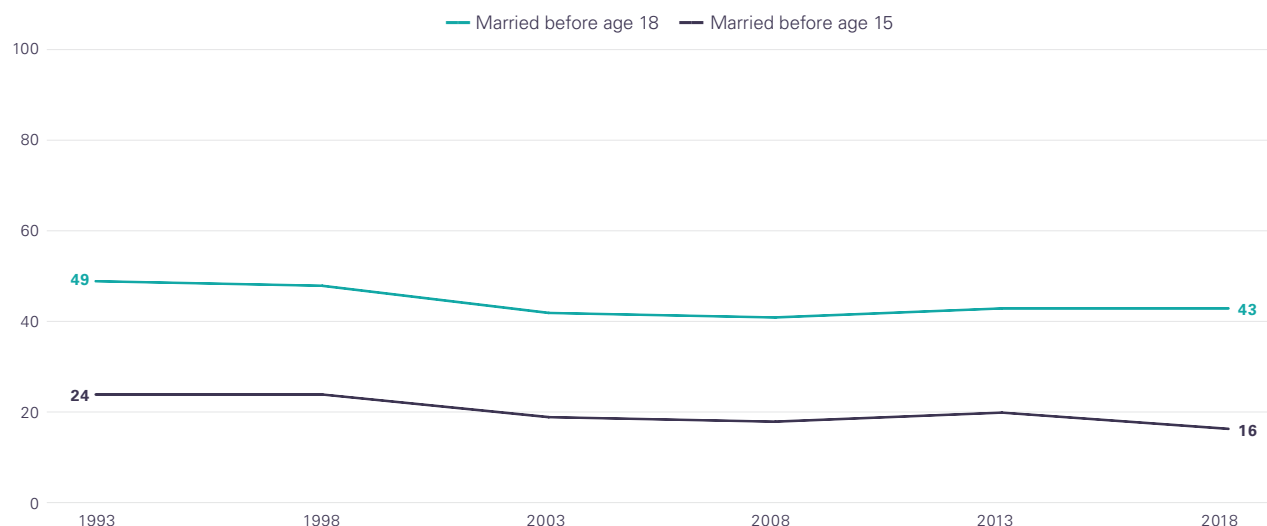
Reproductive health

Figure 230. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

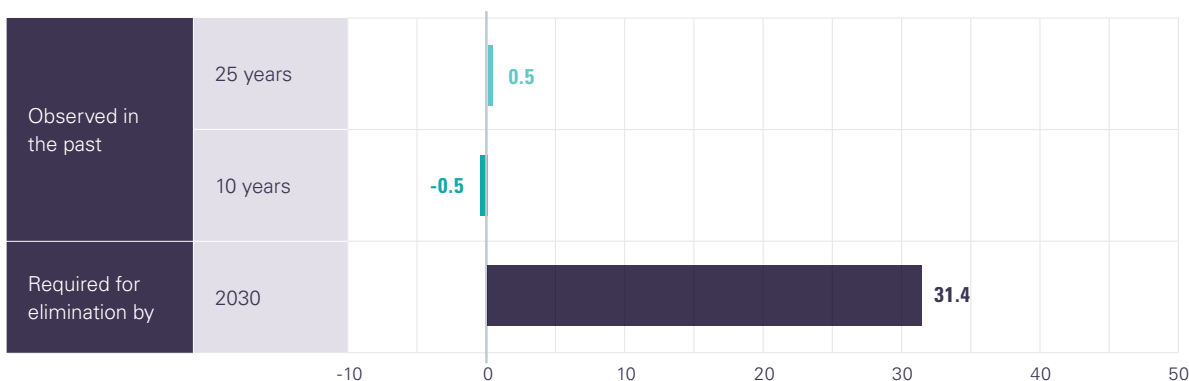
Figure 231. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 232. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2018 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. Trends in the prevalence of child marriage were calculated taking into account data from all available surveys. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

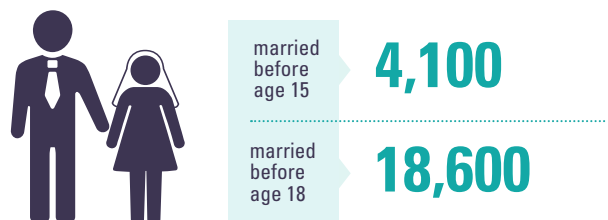
Sao Tome and Principe

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 | with exceptions: 16

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

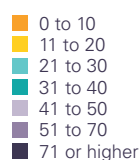
Figure 233. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Sao Tome and Principe is home to over 18,000 child brides; 3 in 10 young women were married in childhood

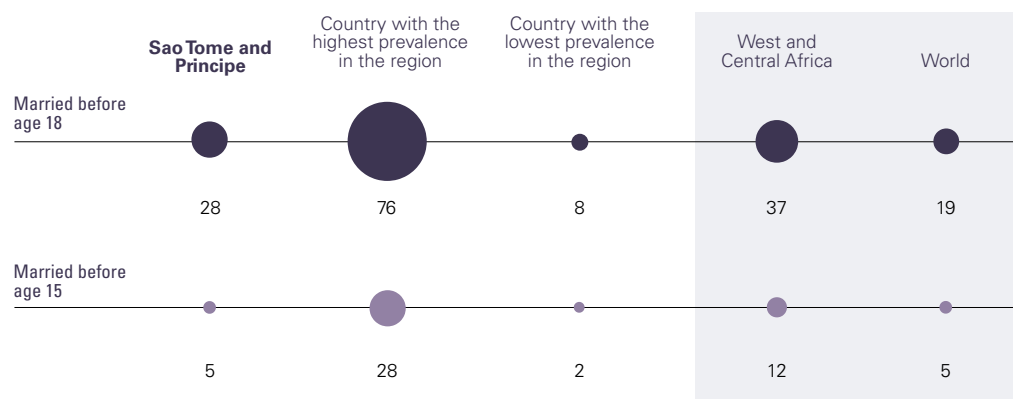
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 234. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



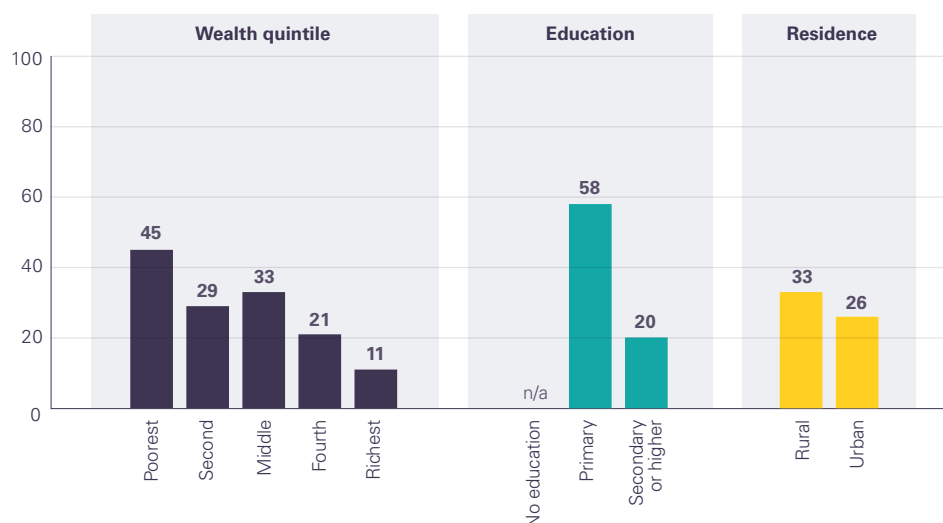
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 235. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

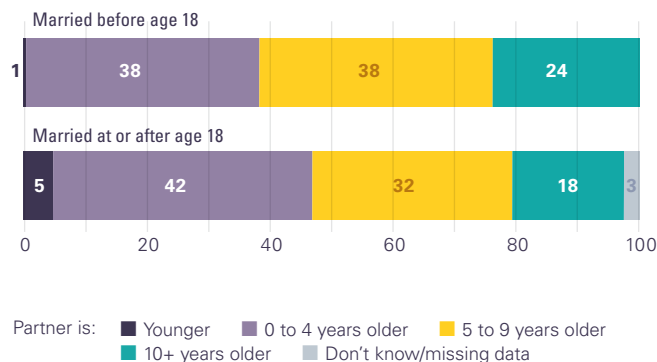
Figure 236. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

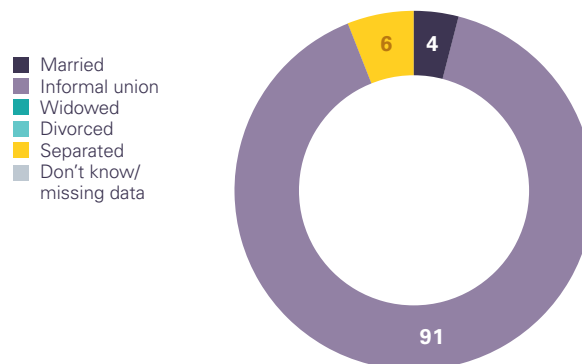
Spousal age gap

Figure 237. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 238. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 239. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

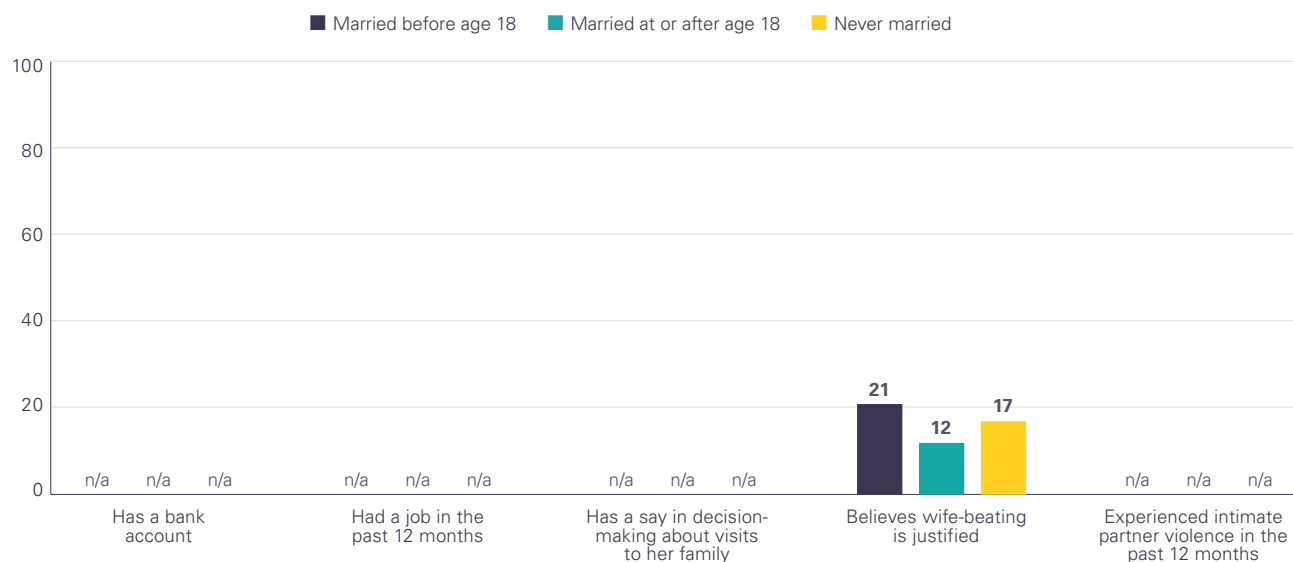
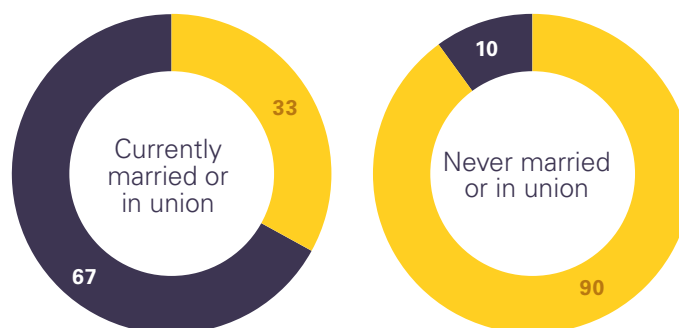


Figure 240. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 241. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

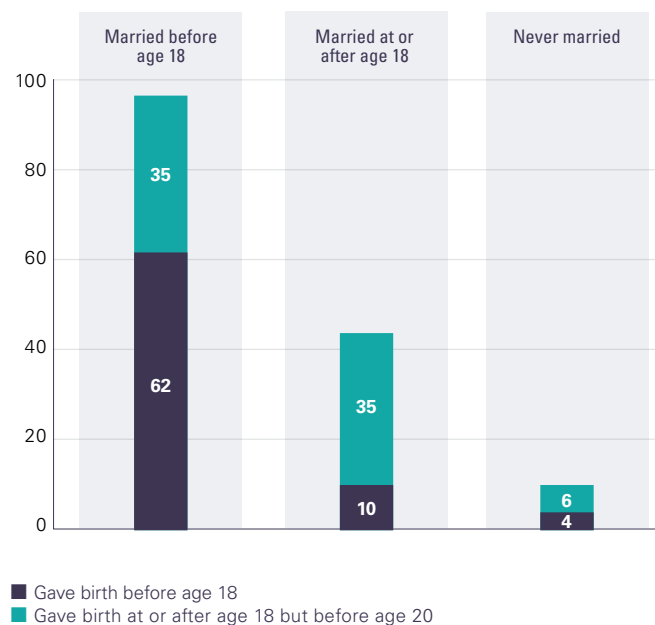
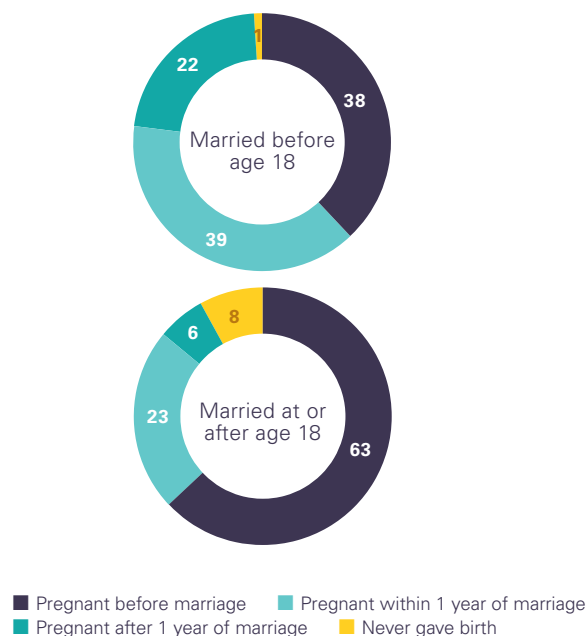
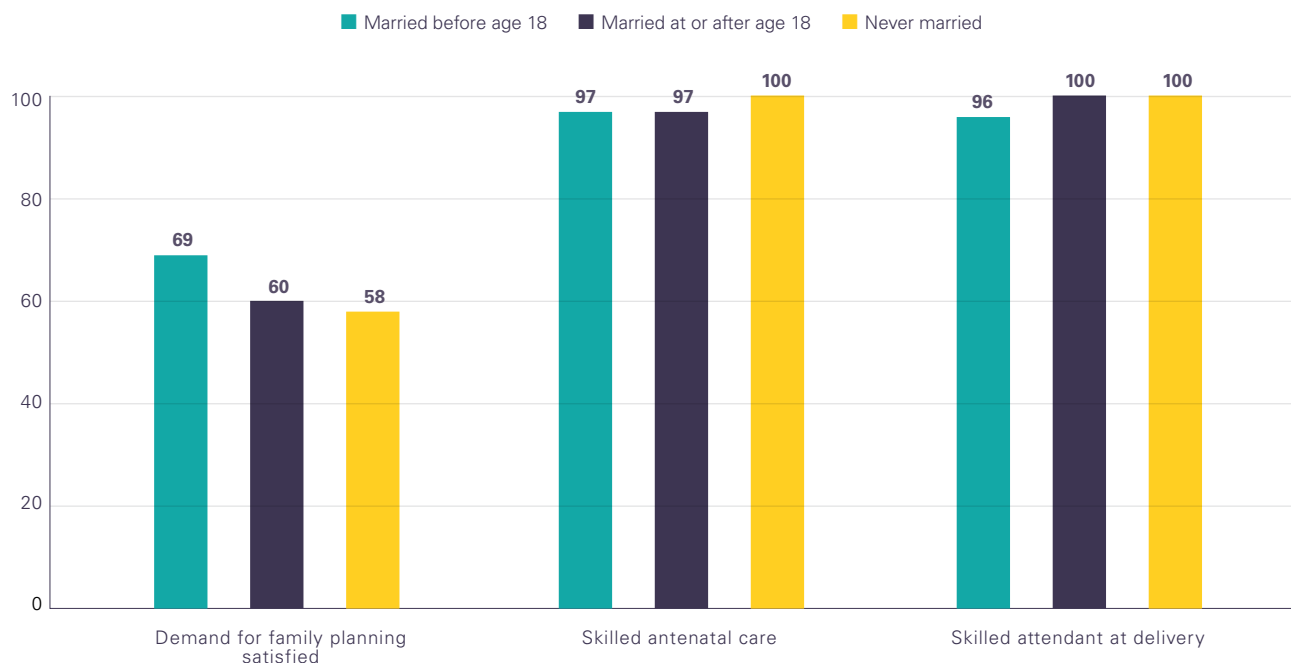


Figure 242. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



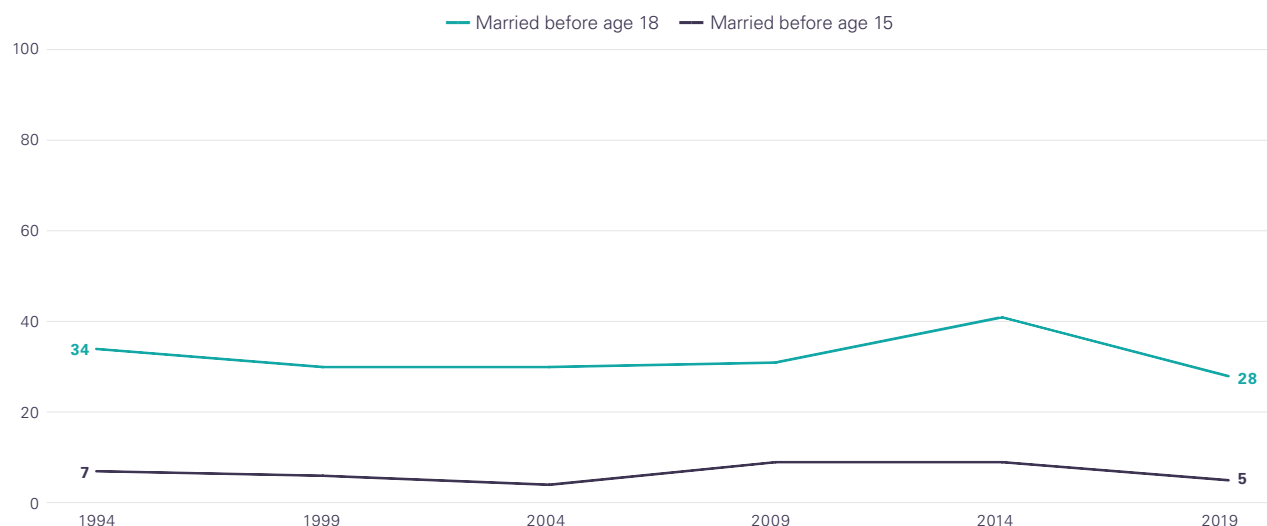
Reproductive health

Figure 243. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

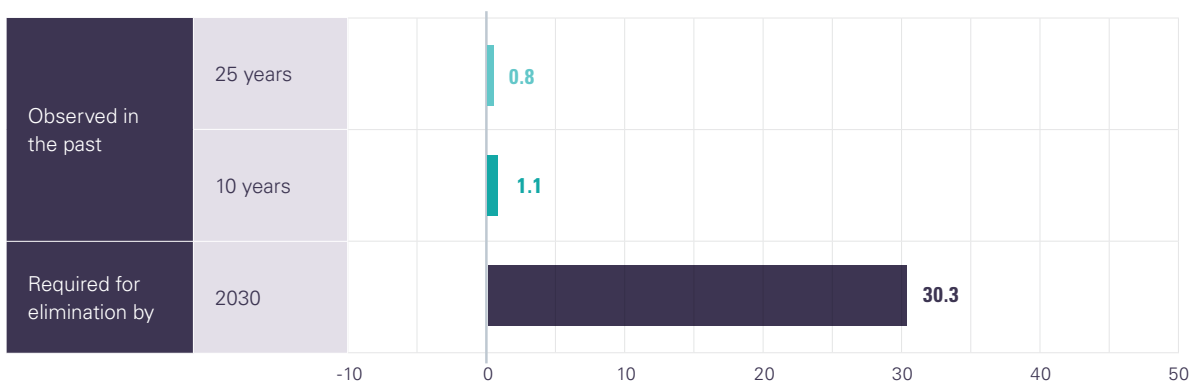
Figure 244. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 245. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

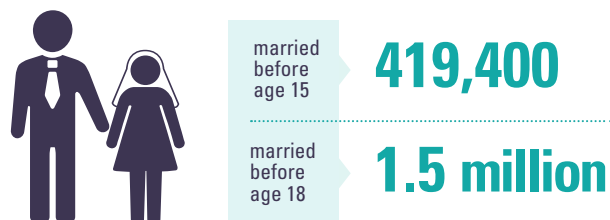
Senegal

Minimum legal age of marriage with parental permission: 16 | without parental permission: 18

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

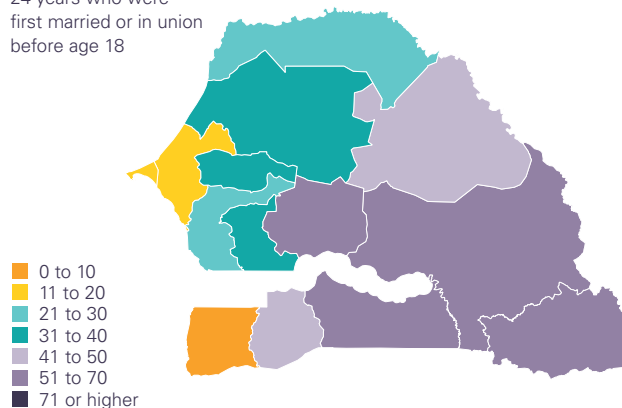
Figure 246. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Senegal is home to over 1 million child brides; 1 in 3 young women were married in childhood

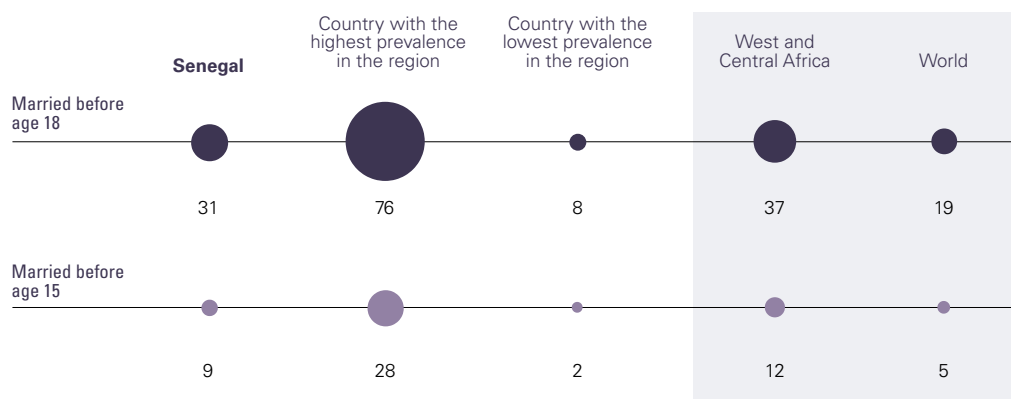
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 247. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



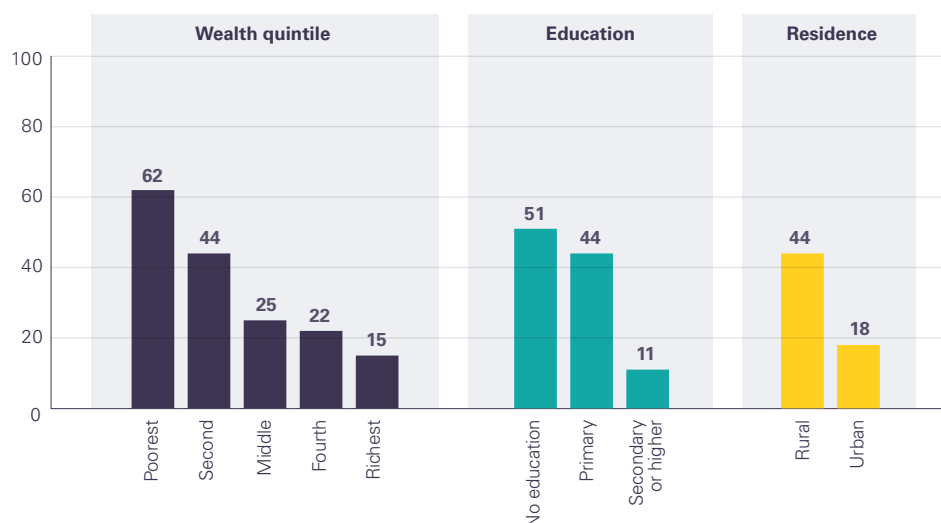
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 248. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

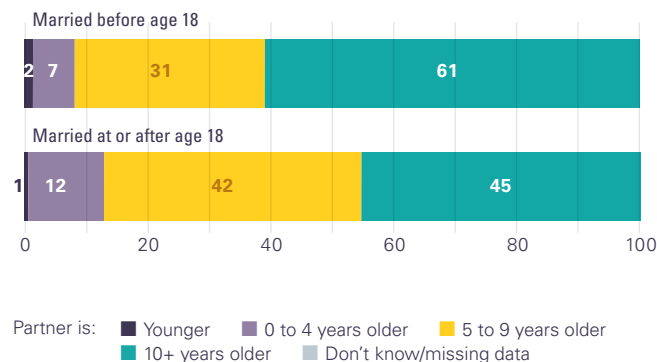
Figure 249. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

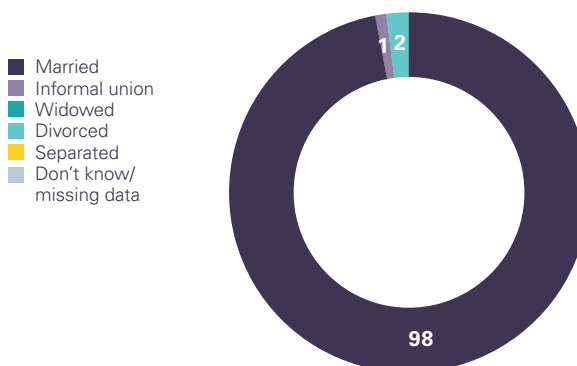
Spousal age gap

Figure 250. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 251. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 252. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

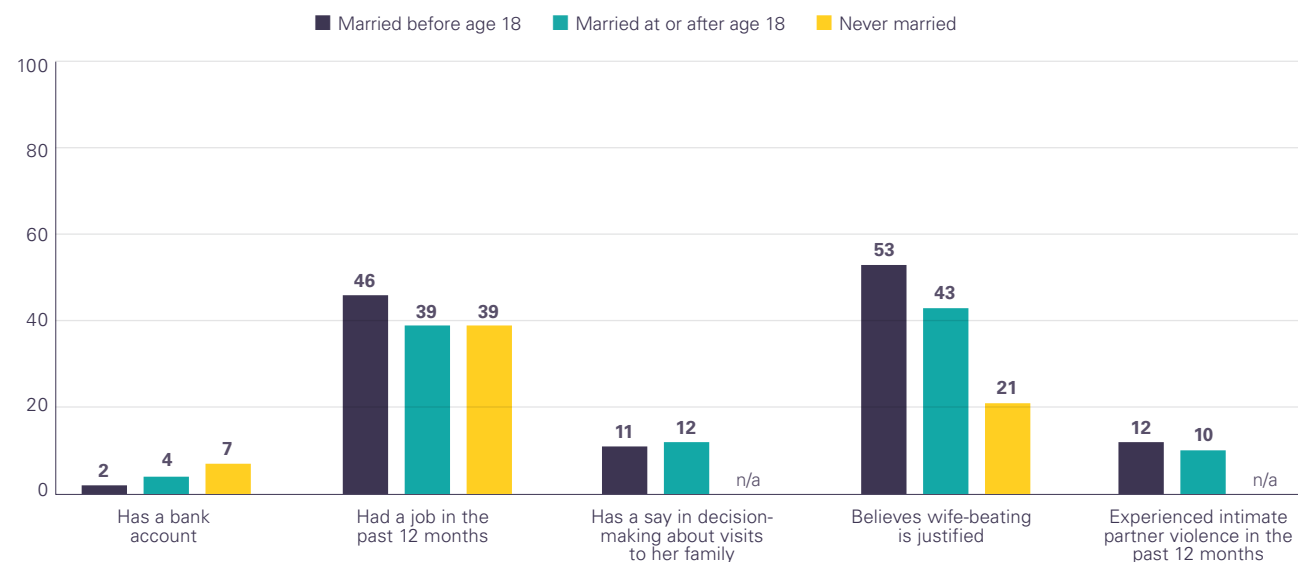


Figure 253. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides (continued)

Early childbearing

Figure 254. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

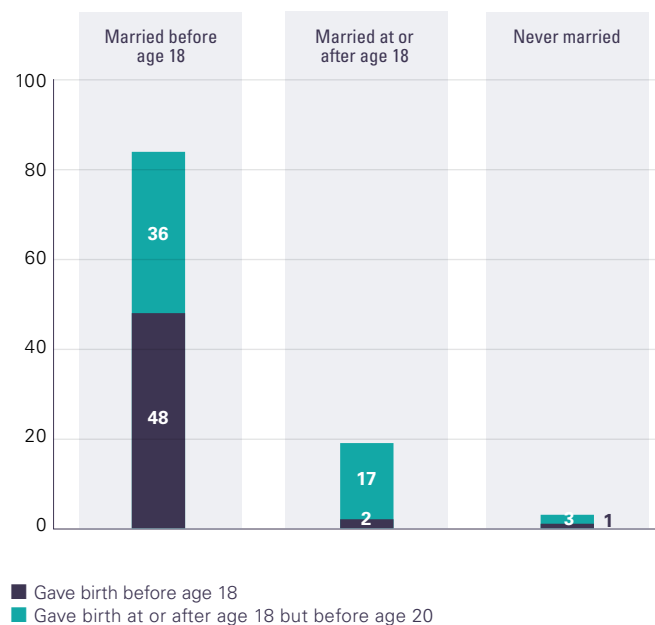
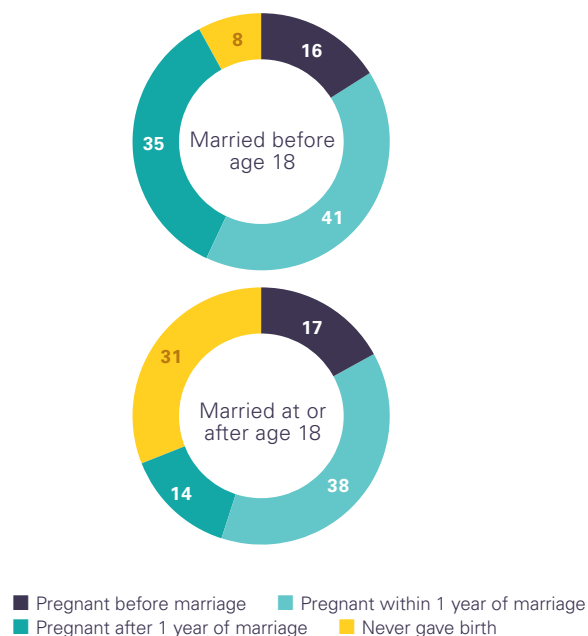
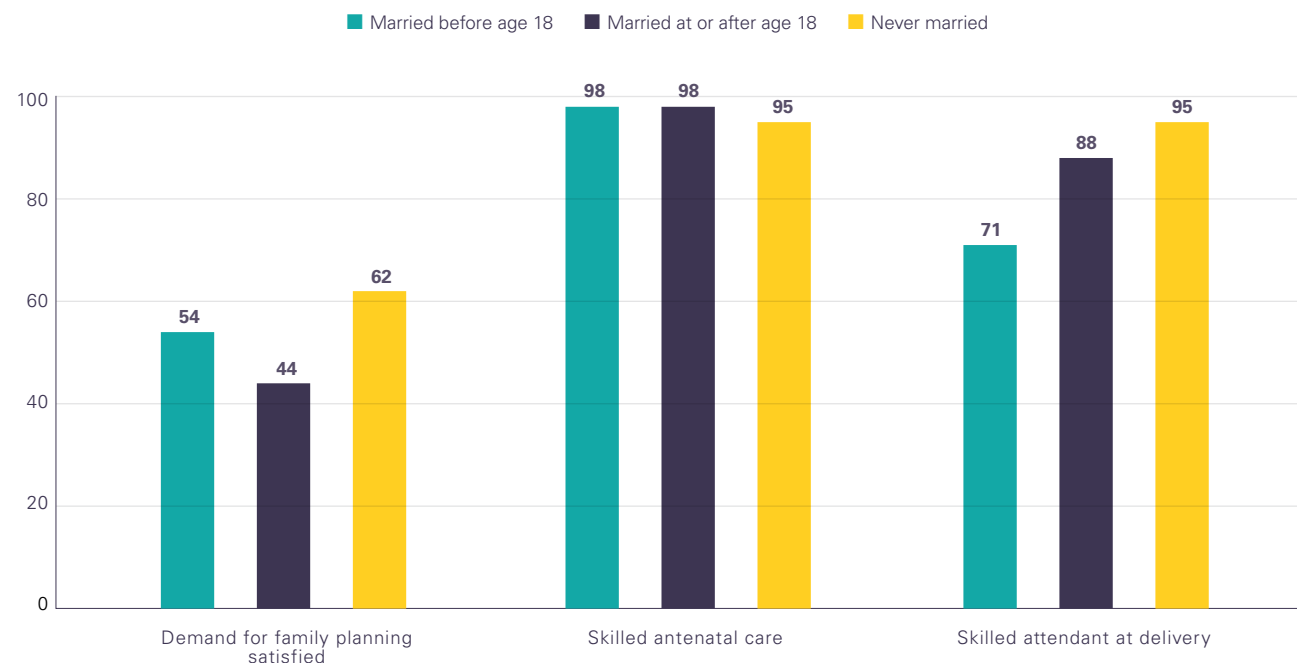


Figure 255. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



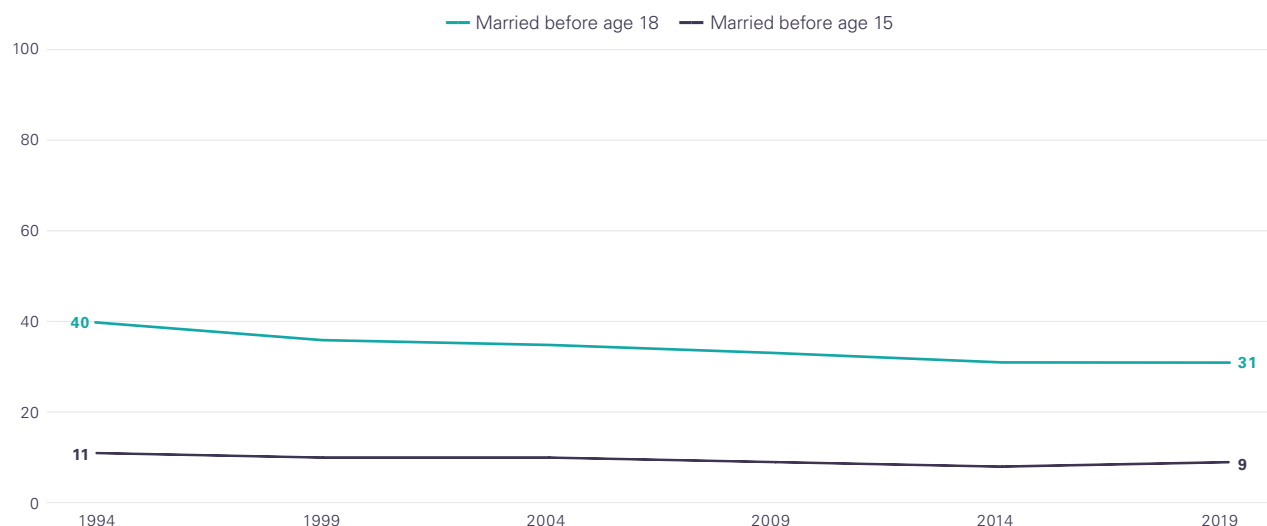
Reproductive health

Figure 256. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

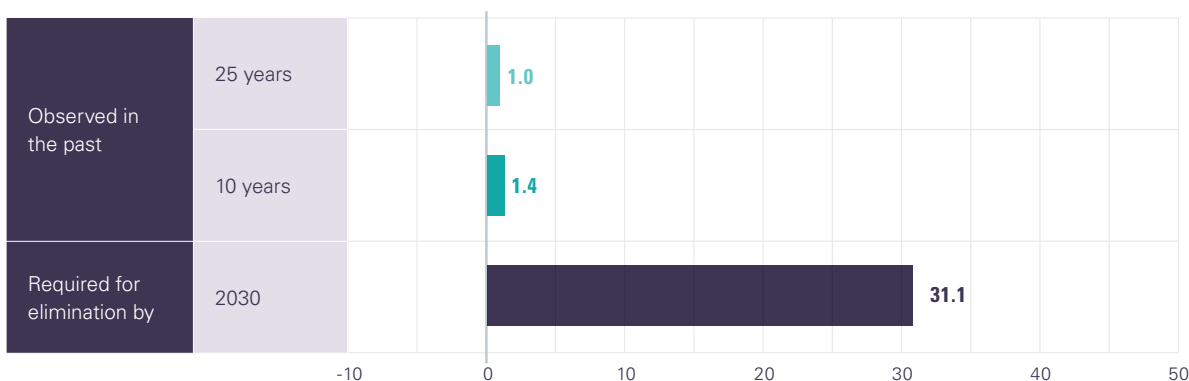
Figure 257. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 258. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2019 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. Trends in the prevalence of child marriage were calculated taking into account data from all available surveys. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

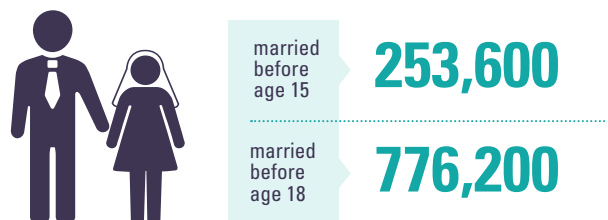
Sierra Leone

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 | with exceptions: n/a

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

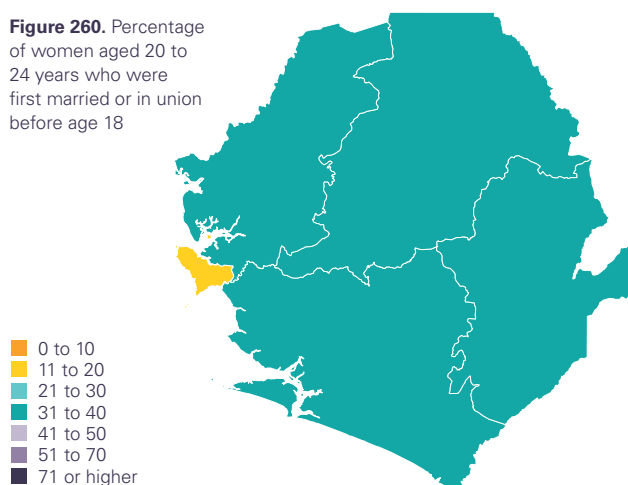
Figure 259. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Sierra Leone is home to over 776,000 child brides; 3 in 10 young women were married in childhood

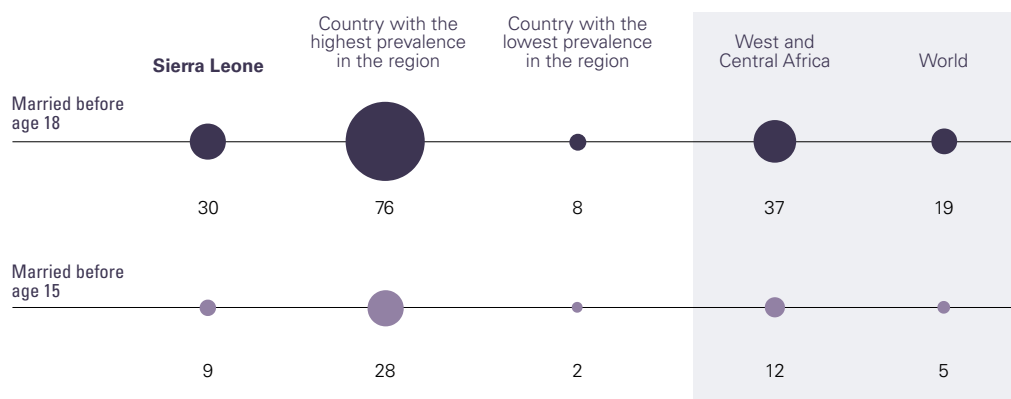
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 260. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



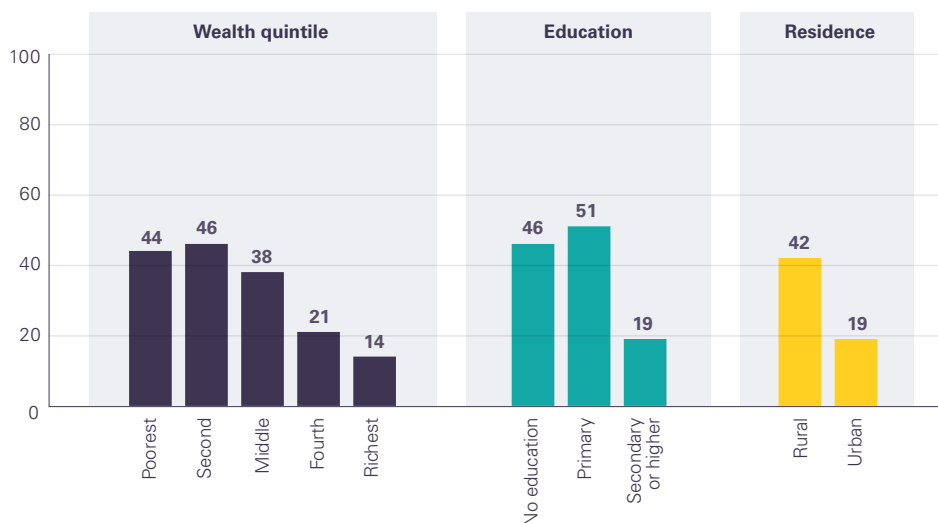
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 261. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

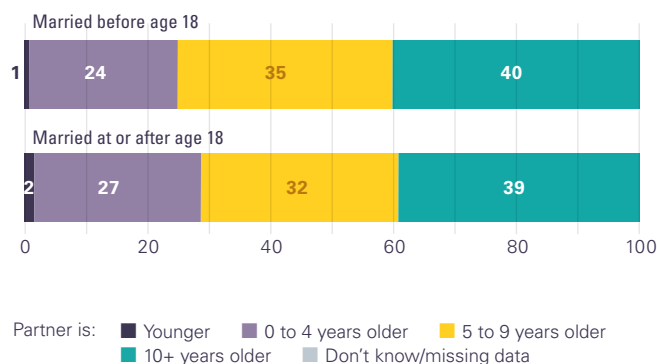
Figure 262. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

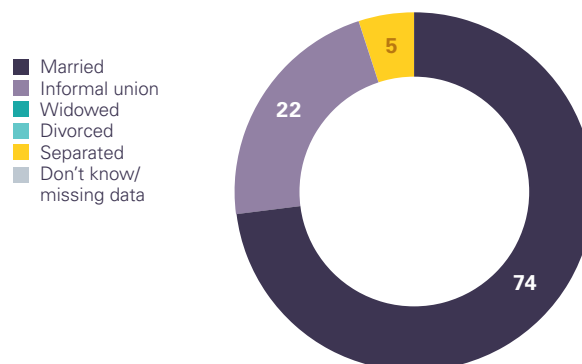
Spousal age gap

Figure 263. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 264. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 265. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

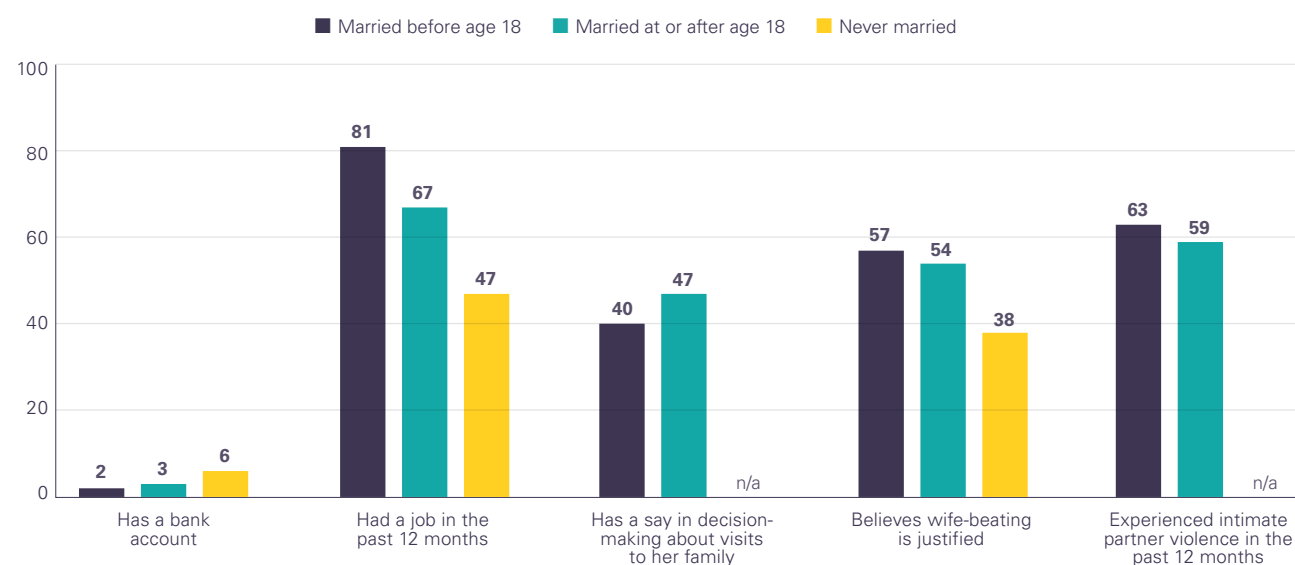
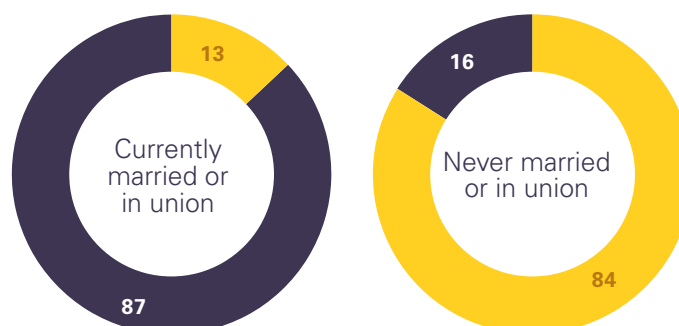


Figure 266. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

Figure 267. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

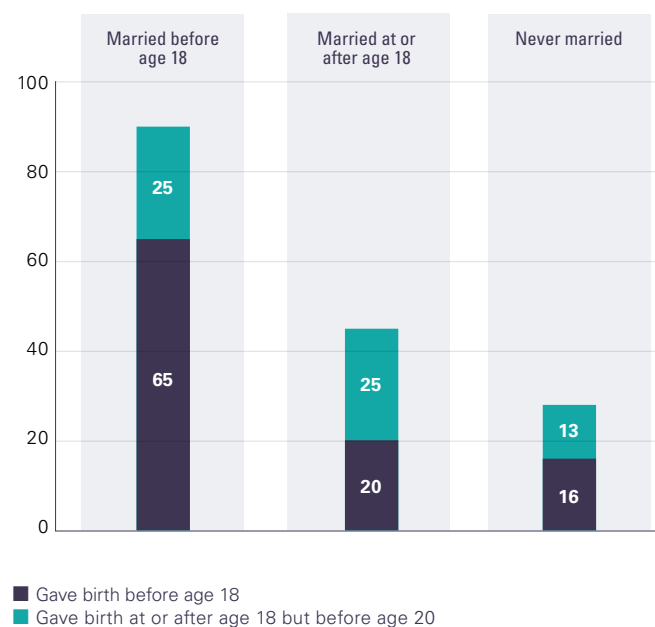
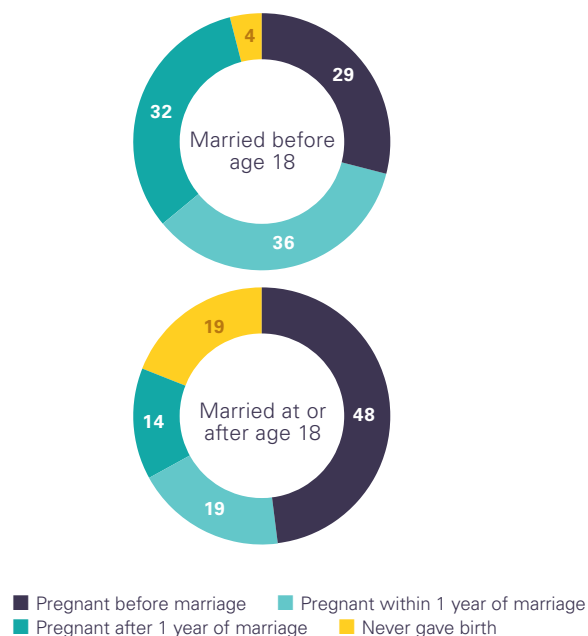
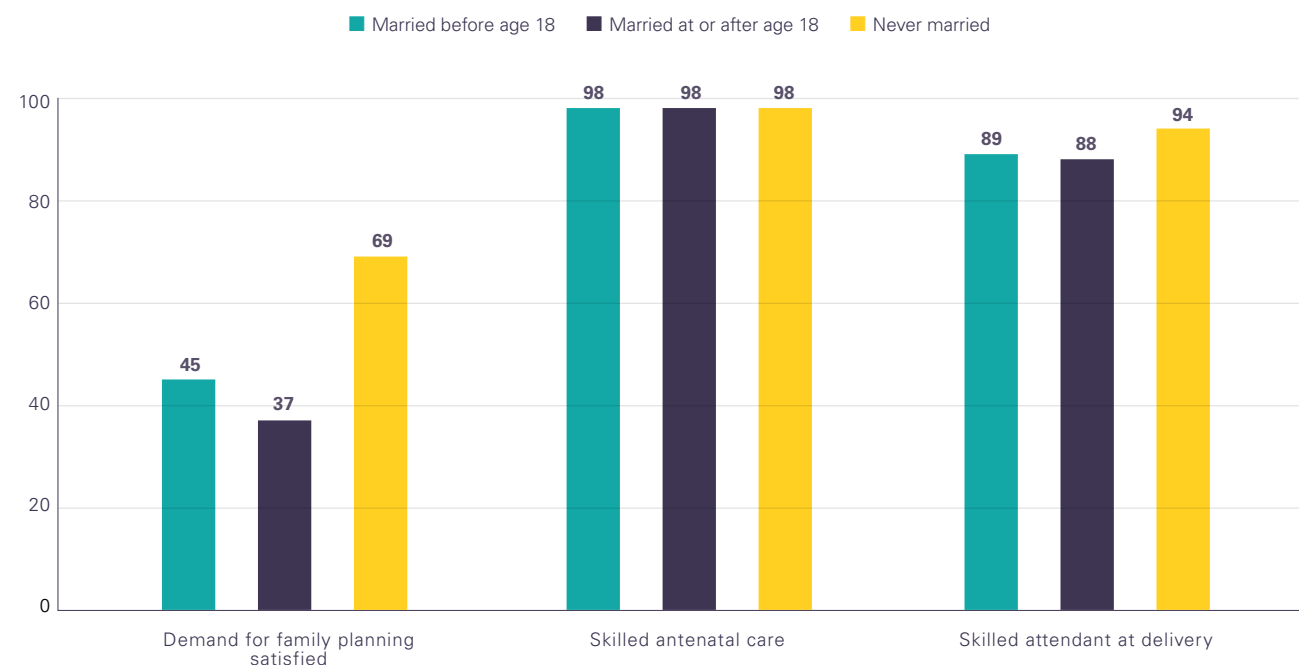


Figure 268. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



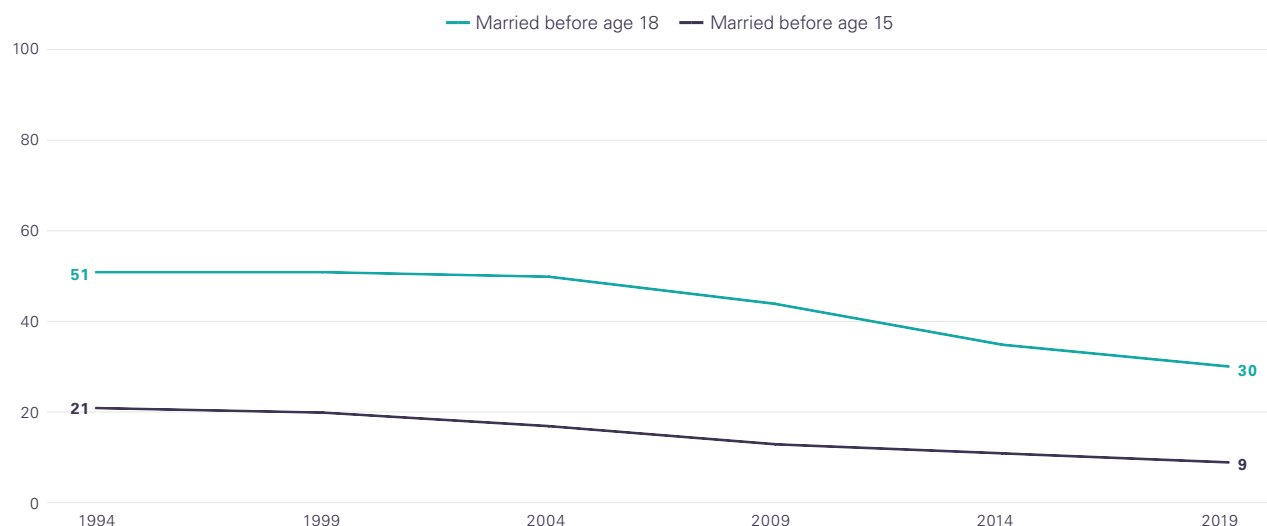
Reproductive health

Figure 269. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

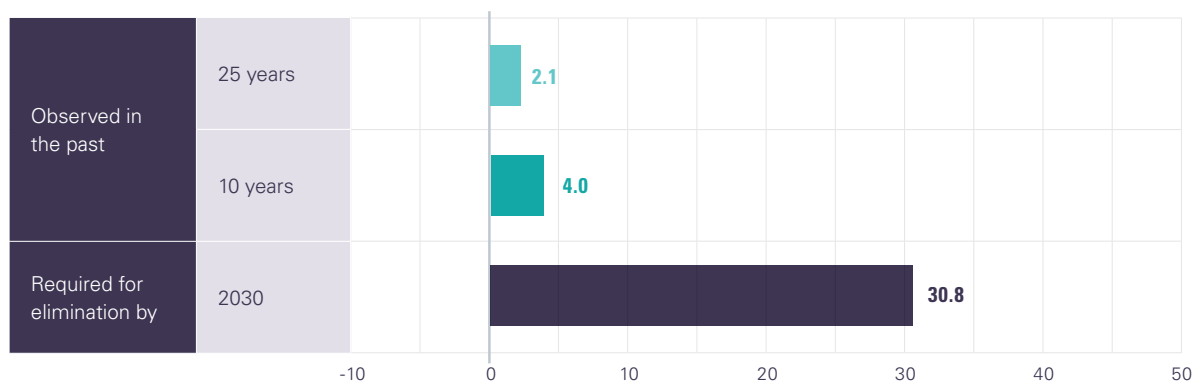
Figure 270. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 271. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2019 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. Trends in the prevalence of child marriage were calculated taking into account data from all available surveys. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

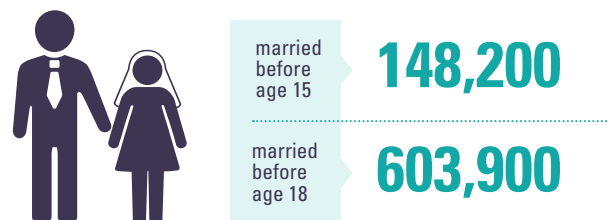
Togo

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 | with exceptions: 16

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

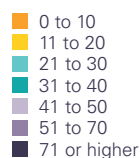
Figure 272. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Togo is home to nearly 604,000 child brides; 1 in 4 young women were married in childhood

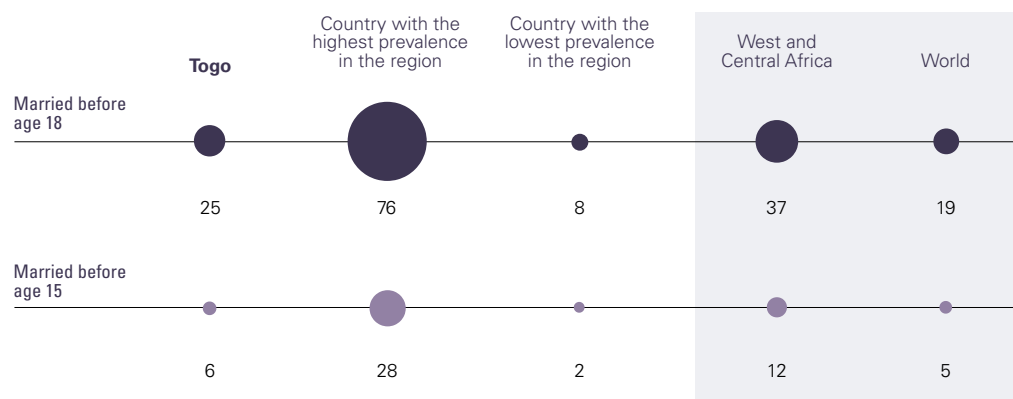
Prevalence of child marriage

Figure 273. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



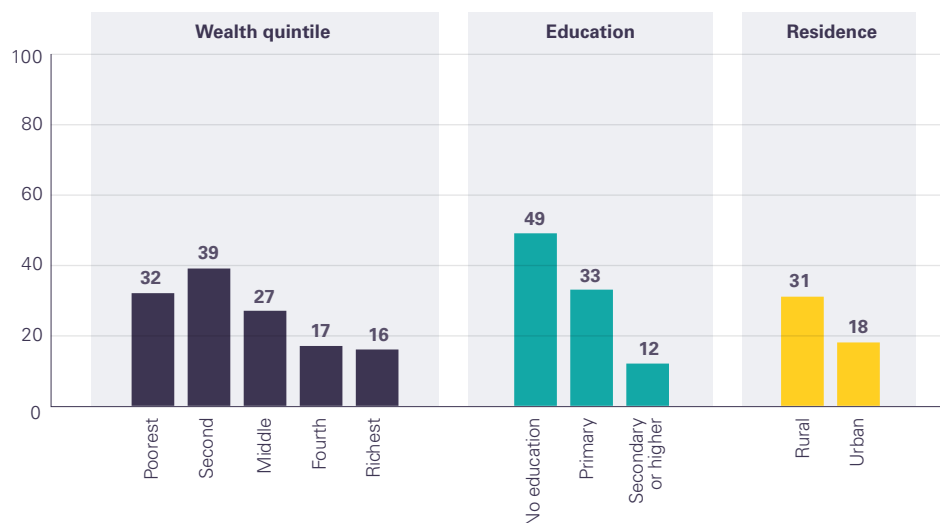
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 274. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Vulnerable populations

Figure 275. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence



Characteristics of unions

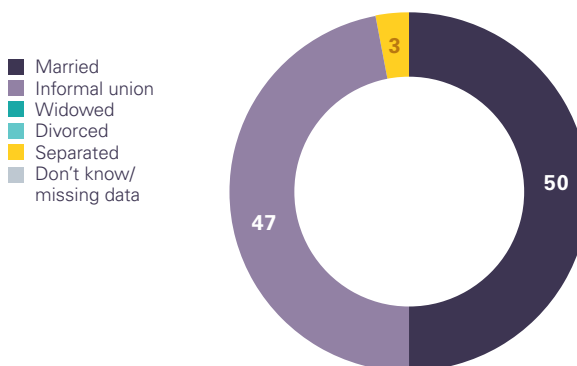
Spousal age gap

Figure 276. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners



Types of unions

Figure 277. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status



Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 278. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months

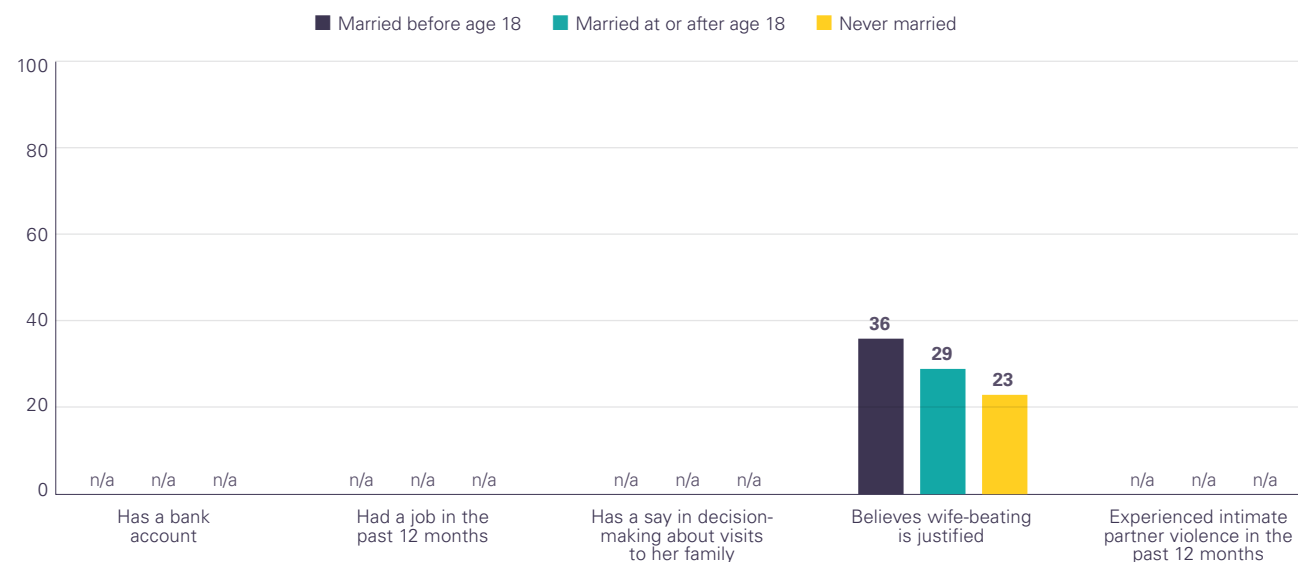
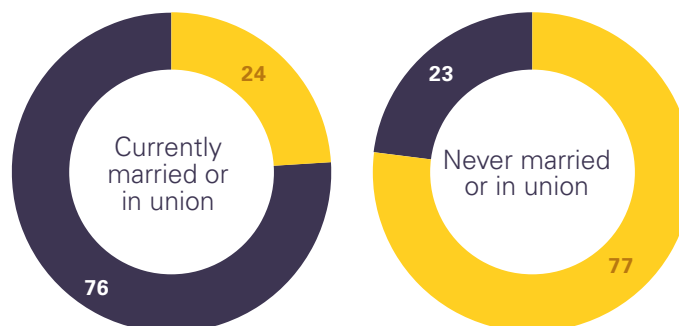


Figure 279. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

■ In school
■ Out of school
■ Don't know/missing data



Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

Figure 280. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

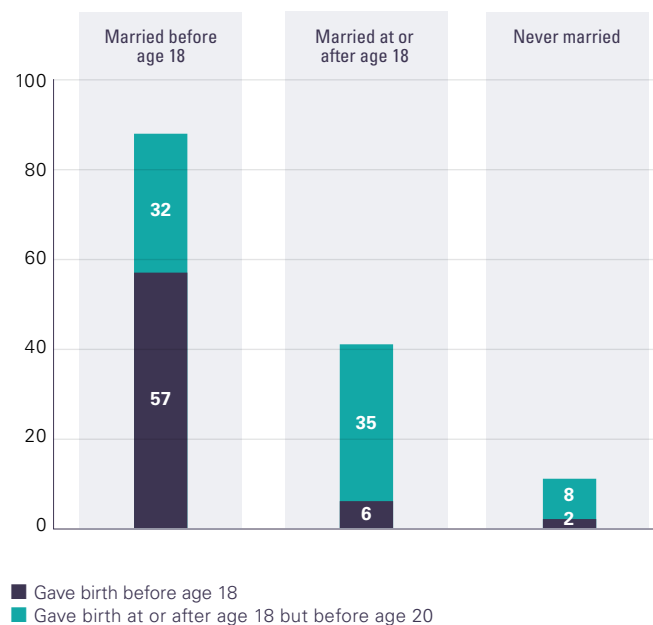
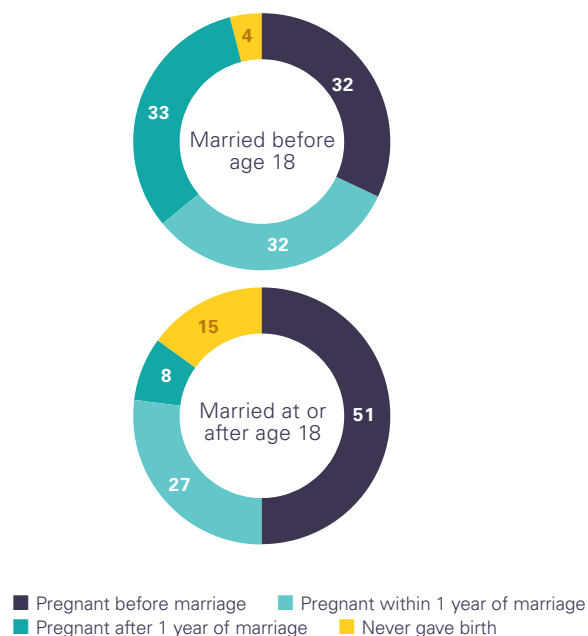
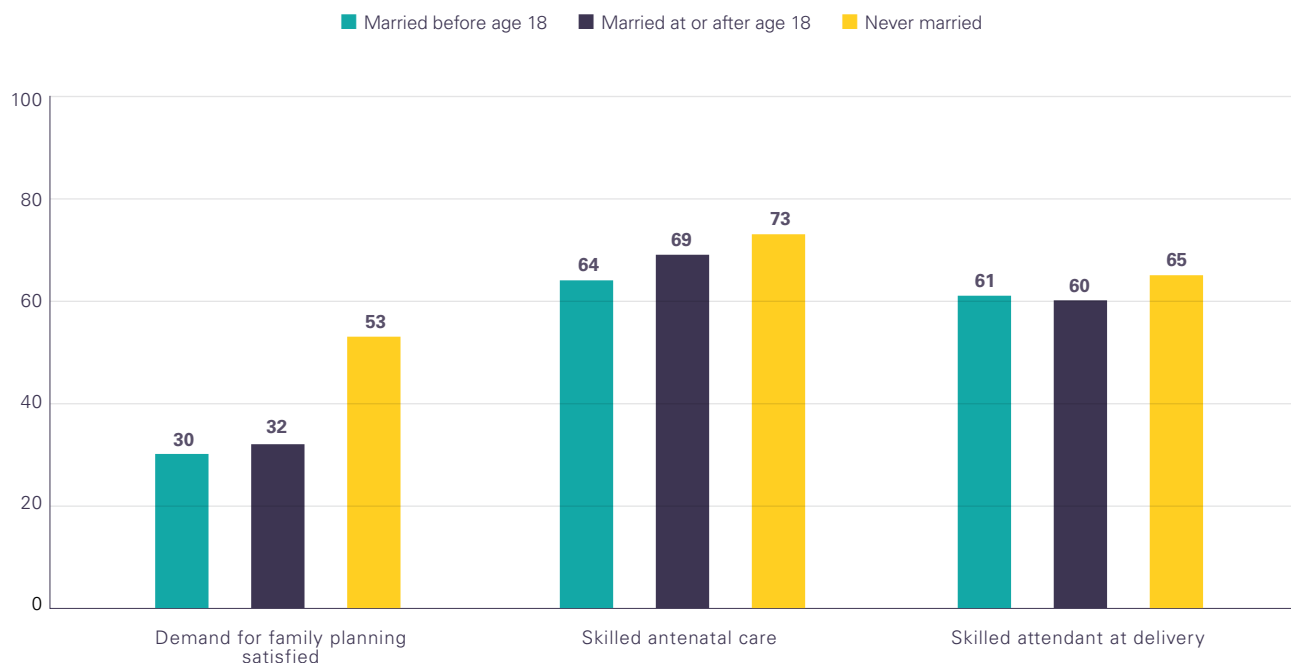


Figure 281. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage



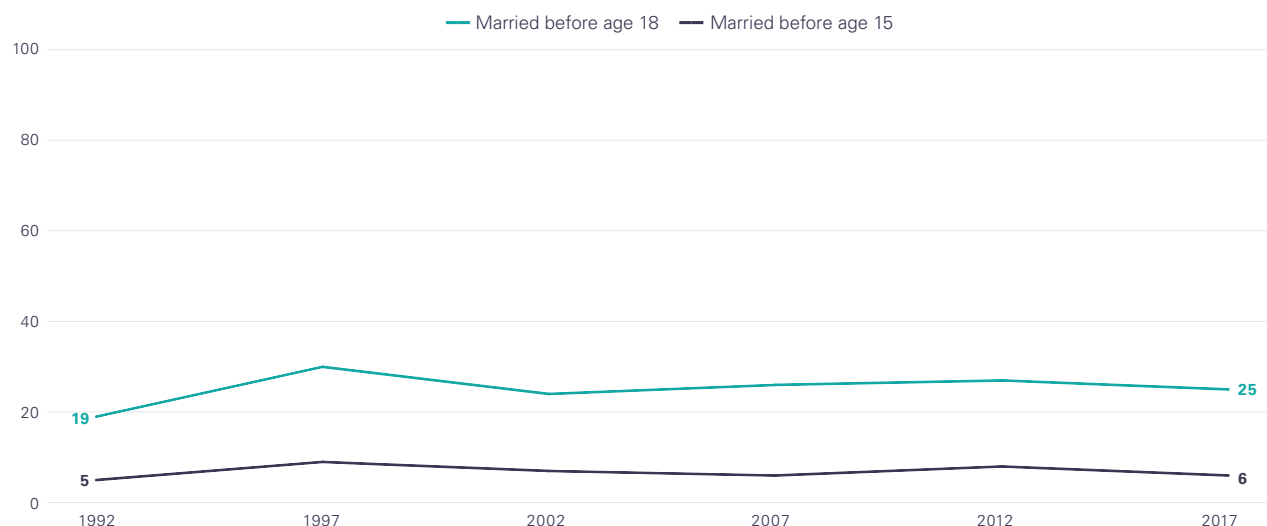
Reproductive health

Figure 282. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method, who received antenatal care from a skilled provider during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant during their last live birth



Generational trends

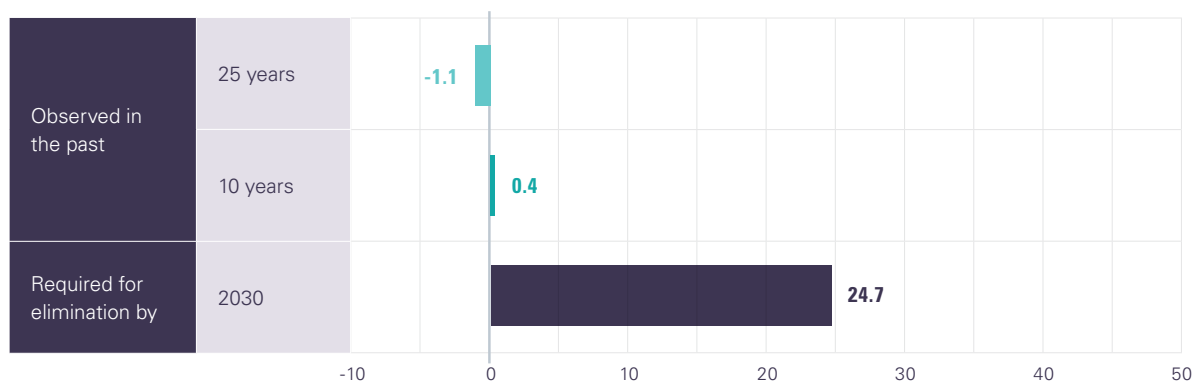
Figure 283. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 284. Average annual rate of reduction (%) in the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, observed and required for elimination



NOTES:

Data are sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 1 per cent. Values presented are based on at least 25 unweighted cases. Data for some indicators and population groups are suppressed due to insufficient numbers of cases to perform the analysis. Indicators marked as 'n/a' indicate either the value was suppressed or data were not collected. Numbers expressed in thousands and/or millions have been rounded. The burden of child marriage refers to the population in 2020. Figures in stacked bar and donut charts may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.



Ending child marriage in West and Central Africa

Child marriage remains far too common for girls in West and Central Africa. These girls face the highest risk in the world of marrying or entering into union before age 18. The lasting effects of COVID-19 – including interrupted education and economic shocks – have yet to be seen. These potential impacts, along with conflict and instability, may exacerbate the risk of child marriage for West and Central Africa’s most vulnerable girls.

To end the practice by 2030, its drivers must be addressed. This means a focus on reducing poverty while also ensuring girls’ education and learning in West and Central Africa, given the higher prevalence of child marriage in the poorest households, among those with little or no education and in rural areas.

In this regard, the UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office, through the ‘Ending Child Marriage’ Key Result for Children, is driving a comprehensive and multisectoral programme approach involving the following strategies:

Create an enabling environment to address structural drivers.

Political commitment to strengthening national legal and policy frameworks is critical. Governments need to develop and implement costed action plans and strategies to reduce and end child marriage, through interventions that reach adolescent girls, families and communities. Multisectoral coordination and collaboration and dedicated budget allocations across ministries are

needed, which can be directed towards high-impact preventative programming. These activities will vary by setting and context – rural and urban, development and humanitarian. Robust investments are also needed in child protection systems, such as the social service workforce, and in interoperability between sectors, such as social protection and education.

Address the economic drivers.

Poverty, which is already widespread in the region, is worsening due to climate change, COVID-19 and humanitarian crises. To end child marriage at scale, social protection programmes that increase families’ resilience to economic shocks, reduce financial pressures on families and improve girls’ educational opportunities should be prioritized. Expanded coverage of national social protection programmes is essential, along with social protection, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment programmes and services that are adolescent-friendly and accessible to the poorest girls and their families. The social costs of poverty that place girls at greater risk of marriage – including low levels of schooling, limited decision-making and inadequate access to knowledge- and skills-building (e.g., sexual and reproductive health and rights) – must also be addressed.

Support girls’ education, learning and resilience-building.

Keeping girls in school is a crucial protection mechanism and strategy to prevent and end child marriage. Access to quality education expands girls’ skills and knowledge,

exposes them to new opportunities and relationships, and ultimately delays the timing of marriage. Leveraging the education system, including policies, budgets and curricula that focus on keeping girls learning, supports prevention. Out-of-school adolescent girls require access to literacy and life skills education, economic empowerment programmes, and services and information that can strengthen their relationships, decision-making and resilience.

Education acts as an important conduit to gender equality, offering the opportunity to challenge discriminatory social and gender norms and drive meaningful changes in the way girls and others see their growing capabilities.

Use social and behaviour change approaches for social and gender norms change.

Because gender inequality is a key driver of child marriage, promoting positive social and gender norms plays a crucial role in prevention. Social and behaviour change programming must be evidence-based and attuned to the specificities of the local context to bring about meaningful, lasting change. Community-led interventions require a systematic approach focused on norms change rather than awareness-raising. In tandem, efforts to change discriminatory norms within families and communities should be supported by interventions that reduce poverty and improve access to quality education and other services.

Bolster access to services.

Children, in particular adolescent girls, need access to quality basic services, including health, education, legal, social welfare, and child and social protection. Cross-sectoral interoperability in the delivery of these services is important. Furthermore, the structural barriers that girls and their families face in accessing services must be addressed. Tailored approaches, including referral services, need to meet the specific needs of girls and boys of different ages across settings and circumstances who are vulnerable to marriage.

Differentiate between girls under age 15 and those between the ages of 15 and 18.

More investments are needed to understand the ways in which situations and experiences differ between younger and older girls who are married or at risk of marriage. Although the drivers of child marriage are generally the same across both cohorts, the way the practice is experienced and its consequences differ between the two age groups. Policymakers and service providers need to better understand the needs of girls in different age groups to most effectively meet these needs.

Enhance the evidence base.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are important instruments to understand trends and develop projections. These data, along with those from other sources such as qualitative research, need to be leveraged to strengthen and adjust programming as situations evolve and to inform advocacy. A strategic approach is needed that focuses on consolidating and augmenting existing knowledge, identifying and filling evidence gaps, and assessing the effectiveness of interventions to end child marriage. Evidence should be shared across contexts to inspire collective thinking around what is and is not successfully tackling child marriage.

In 2016, UNICEF, together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), launched the Global Programme to End Child Marriage in 12 countries with a high prevalence and/or high burden of child marriage. These 12 countries include 4 in West and Central Africa: Burkina Faso, Ghana, the Niger and Sierra Leone.

The programme works to address the complex sociocultural and structural factors that underpin the practice, with the goal of ending child marriage by 2030. Five approaches are being used: (1) increasing girls' agency and resources, (2) enhancing legal and policy frameworks, (3) using robust data and evidence, (4) improving systems and services that meet the needs of adolescents at risk and affected and (5) expanding investments in girls and shifting social expectations of girls and boys.

**end
child
marriage**
A voice. A chance. A future.

Technical notes

To assess the prevalence of child marriage, this analysis used SDG indicator 5.3.1: Proportion of women aged 20 to 24 years who were married or in union before age 18. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriages and informal unions in which women started living with a partner before age 18 as if married.

The number of child brides is defined as the number of girls under 18 who have already married plus the number of adult women who were married before age 18. This is calculated using the estimated prevalence of child marriage among each age cohort, applied to the female population in the respective cohort. This method relies on both household survey data for prevalence and demographic data for the size of the population. These total numbers refer to the population in 2020.

The percentage of currently married adolescent girls aged 15 to 17 years should not be interpreted as indicative of the risk of being married in childhood. Any prevalence measure among girls under age 18 will be an underestimate of the full extent of the practice, since girls who are unmarried at the time of data collection may still marry before their 18th birthday.

Confidence intervals are not shown in this publication. Caution is therefore warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences among groups may not be significant. Key messages were developed taking confidence intervals into account; in cases where the title indicates a difference among various population groups or countries, it has been confirmed as statistically significant.

Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable data from 2015–2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population.

This analysis draws on data from Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and other nationally representative household surveys that use comparable methodology. For detailed source information by country, see <data.unicef.org>. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019.





Key facts on child marriage in West and Central Africa

- West and Central Africa is home to the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world: 37 per cent of young women were married before age 18, and 12 per cent were married before age 15
- The region is home to nearly 60 million child brides, with the largest share, over 23 million, in Nigeria
- While levels of child marriage vary widely in the region, 7 of the 10 countries with the highest levels in the world are found here: the Niger, the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Nigeria
- In the Sahel, levels of child marriage are even higher than in the rest of West and Central Africa; girls and women in the Sahel marry nearly two years earlier than those outside the region
- Child marriage also occurs among boys: Across West and Central Africa, 1 in 25 young men were first married in childhood
- The risk of child marriage varies substantially across population groups, with the highest levels seen in the poorest households, among those with little or no education and in rural areas
- Child marriage takes different forms across countries: In some countries, such as the Central African Republic, the Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia and Sao Tome and Principe, informal unions are the predominant type, whereas in other countries nearly all are formal marriages
- Child marriage is closely linked to early childbearing: In nearly all the countries profiled, the majority of child brides also gave birth before age 18
- In some countries, child marriage has become less common, but others have not made progress and the region remains off track for reaching the SDG target of eliminating child marriage by 2030
- The least progress has been observed in the Central African Republic, Chad and Nigeria
- The Gambia and Sierra Leone have made the greatest progress in reducing levels of child marriage in the past decade; still, like all other countries in the region, they need a substantial acceleration of progress to eliminate the practice
- If progress is not accelerated, an additional 25 million girls in West and Central Africa will become child brides in the next decade

UNICEF Data and
Analytics Section
Division of Data, Analytics,
Planning and Monitoring
3 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017, USA
Email: data@unicef.org
Website: data.unicef.org

UNICEF West and Central
Africa Regional Office
Route des Almadies
Immeuble Madjiguène
BP 29720
Dakar, Senegal
Website: unicef.org/wca

unicef 
for every child