



Child marriage: the facts

Who?

- An estimated **10 millions girls** are married every year before they reach 18*, the age below which people are defined as children by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- **1 in 3 girls** in the developing world is estimated to be married before the age of 18.**

Where?

Child marriage occurs **around the world**. 46% of girls under 18 are married in sub-Saharan Africa; 38% in South Asia; 21% in Latin America and the Caribbean; 18% in the Middle East and North Africa**. Child marriage happens in some communities in Europe and North America too. Niger has the highest rate of girls married before the age of 18 (75%**). More than a third of child brides live in India.** Yemen is one of the few countries with no legal minimum age of marriage.

A health hazard

- Girls under 15 are **five times more likely to die in childbirth** than women in their 20s. Girls aged 15-19 are twice as likely to die.**
- Girls under 18 are at much higher risk of pregnancy-related injuries such as fistula.
- Child brides are at greater risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases than unmarried, sexually active girls of the same age, often because they lack the power to reject unsafe sexual practices.
- The **children of child brides are 60% more likely to die before their first birthday** than the children of mothers who are over 19.**

A major challenge for development

- Child brides usually **drop out of school**. They are deprived of the education and economic opportunities to lift themselves and their children out of poverty.
- Girls from poor families are nearly twice as likely to marry before 18 than girls from wealthier families.***
- **Child marriage hinders the achievement of 6 of the 8 [Millennium Development Goals](#).**

A human rights violation

"Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). Child marriage violates girls' basic rights to health, education, security and choice about when and whom they marry.

A harmful tradition

The practice of child marriage has been rooted in the traditions of many communities for generations and remains largely unchallenged. It happens across religious groups, although no religion formally endorses child marriage.

Girls Not Brides

Girls Not Brides is a global partnership of civil society organisations committed to ending child marriage. Initiated by The Elders, *Girls Not Brides* amplifies the voices of girls at risk of child marriage and strengthens efforts to end child marriage at local, national and global levels.

Find out more on: www.GirlsNotBrides.org (website launch: 16 September)