ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE:
A profile of progress in Bangladesh

unicef❁

for every child

Suggested citation
United Nations Children's Fund, *Ending Child Marriage: A profile of progress in Bangladesh*, UNICEF, New York, 2020.

KEY FACTS

about child marriage in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is home to **38 million** child brides, including currently married girls along with women who were first married in childhood. Of these, 13 million married before age 15.

Fifty-one per cent of young women in Bangladesh were married before their 18th birthday.

Bangladesh ranks among the **top 10 countries** in the world with the highest levels of child marriage.

A girl's risk of child marriage is influenced by certain background characteristics. Child brides are somewhat more likely to reside in **rural areas** and to live in **poorer households**, and are less likely to have more than a secondary education.

Married girls are over four times more likely to be **out of school** than unmarried girls.

Nearly **5 in 10** child brides gave birth before age 18, and **8 in 10** gave birth before age 20.
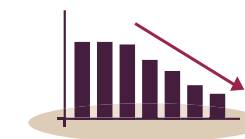
The practice of child marriage is **less common** today than in previous generations.

Declines in the practice have been observed across wealth groups, with more progress seen **among the richest**.

Meeting the SDG target to end child marriage by 2030, or the national target to end child marriage by 2041, will require a major push. Progress must be at least **8 times faster** than the rate observed over the past decade to meet the national target, or **17 times faster** to meet the SDG target.

Child marriage 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 aims to eliminate the practice by 2030. Although indicator 5.3.1 measures child marriage among girls, the practice occurs among boys as well. Regardless of gender, marriage before adulthood is a breach of children's rights. In addition, child marriage has an impact on the realization of other SDGs related to education, health and well-being. For girls, the specific power dimensions and negative gender norms must be considered in the progressive realization of human rights.

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

CURRENT LEVELS OF CHILD MARRIAGE

In Bangladesh, 51 per cent of young women were married in childhood

FIG. 1 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before age 18

- 20% to 29%
- 30% to 39%
- 40% to 49%
- 50% to 59%
- 60% to 69%
- 70% to 79%
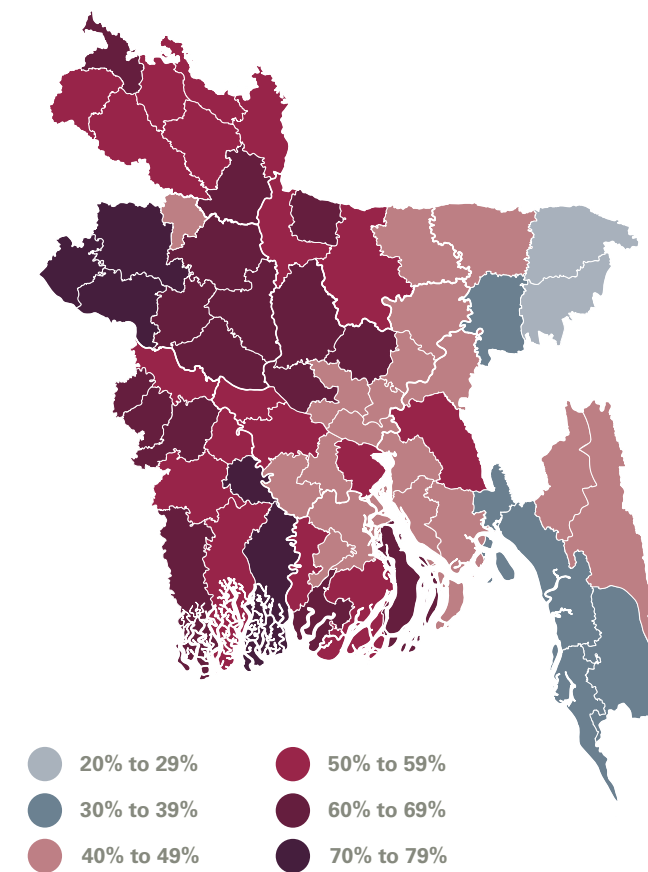
Among the country's entire population of girls and women, 38 million married before the age of 18; of those, 13 million married before the age 15

FIG. 2 Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married before age 18

- Sylhet, 2 million
- Barishal, 2 million
- Mymensingh, 2 million
- Dhaka, 9 million
- Rangpur, 4 million
- Chattogram, 7 million
- Khulna, 5 million
- Rajshahi, 6 million

Note: Figures do not add up to total due to rounding.

In many districts across Bangladesh, the majority of young women were married in childhood

FIG. 3 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before ages 15 and 18, selected districts

■ Married before age 15   ■ Married at or after age 15, but before age 18
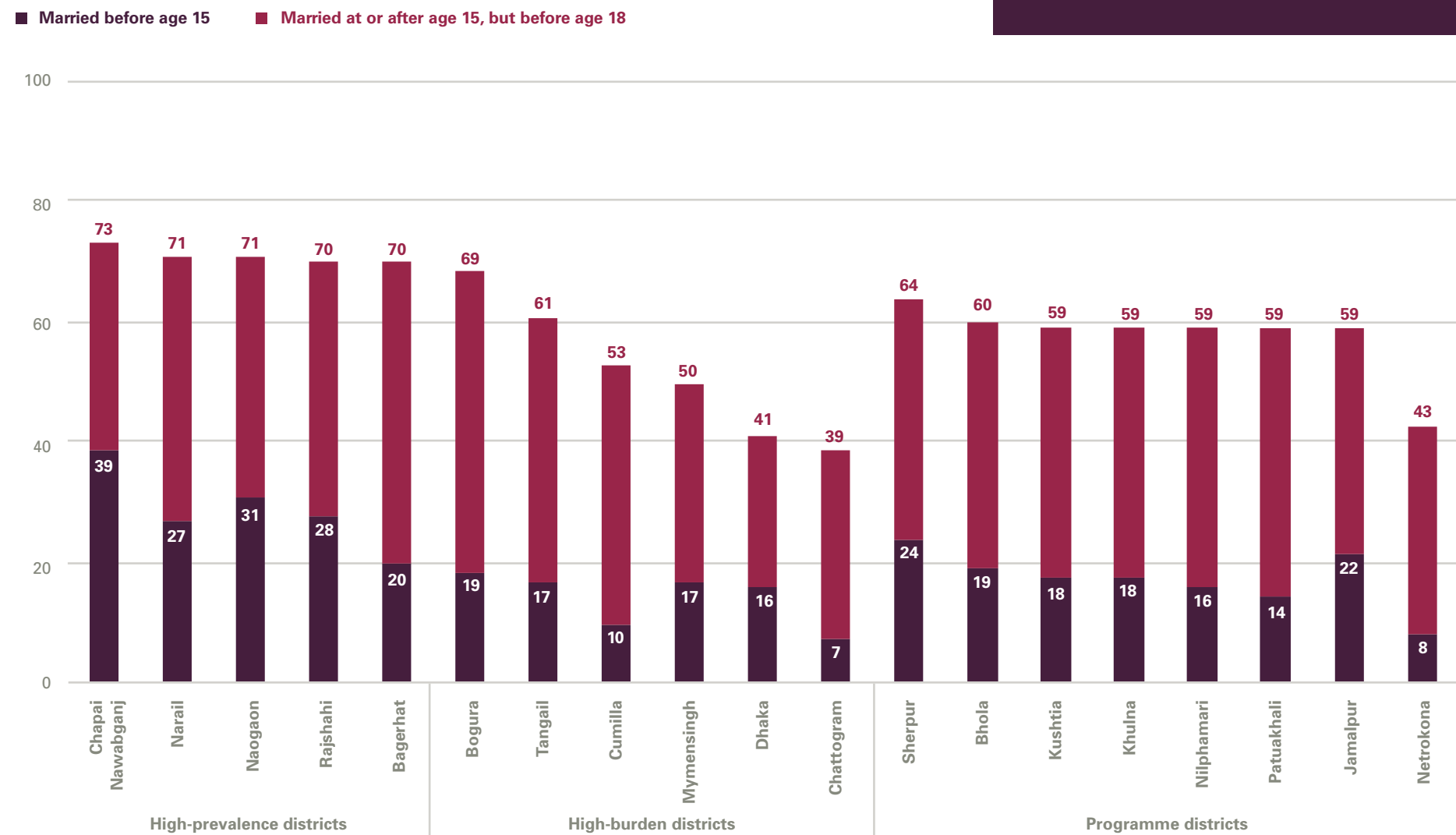
Notes: For the purpose of this analysis, high-prevalence districts were defined as those with a prevalence of child marriage of 70 per cent or higher. High-burden districts, or those with the largest number of girls and women of all ages who were married in childhood, were defined as those home to at least 1 million child brides. Bogura is both a high-burden district and a programme district.

Bangladesh has the highest prevalence of child marriage in South Asia, and is among the 10 countries worldwide with the highest levels

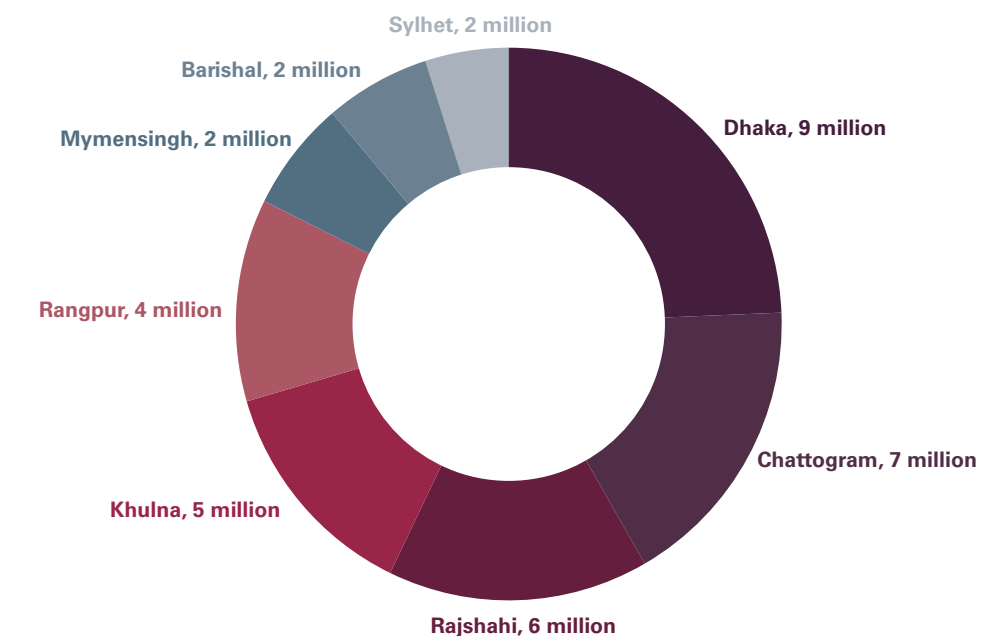FIG. 4 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18
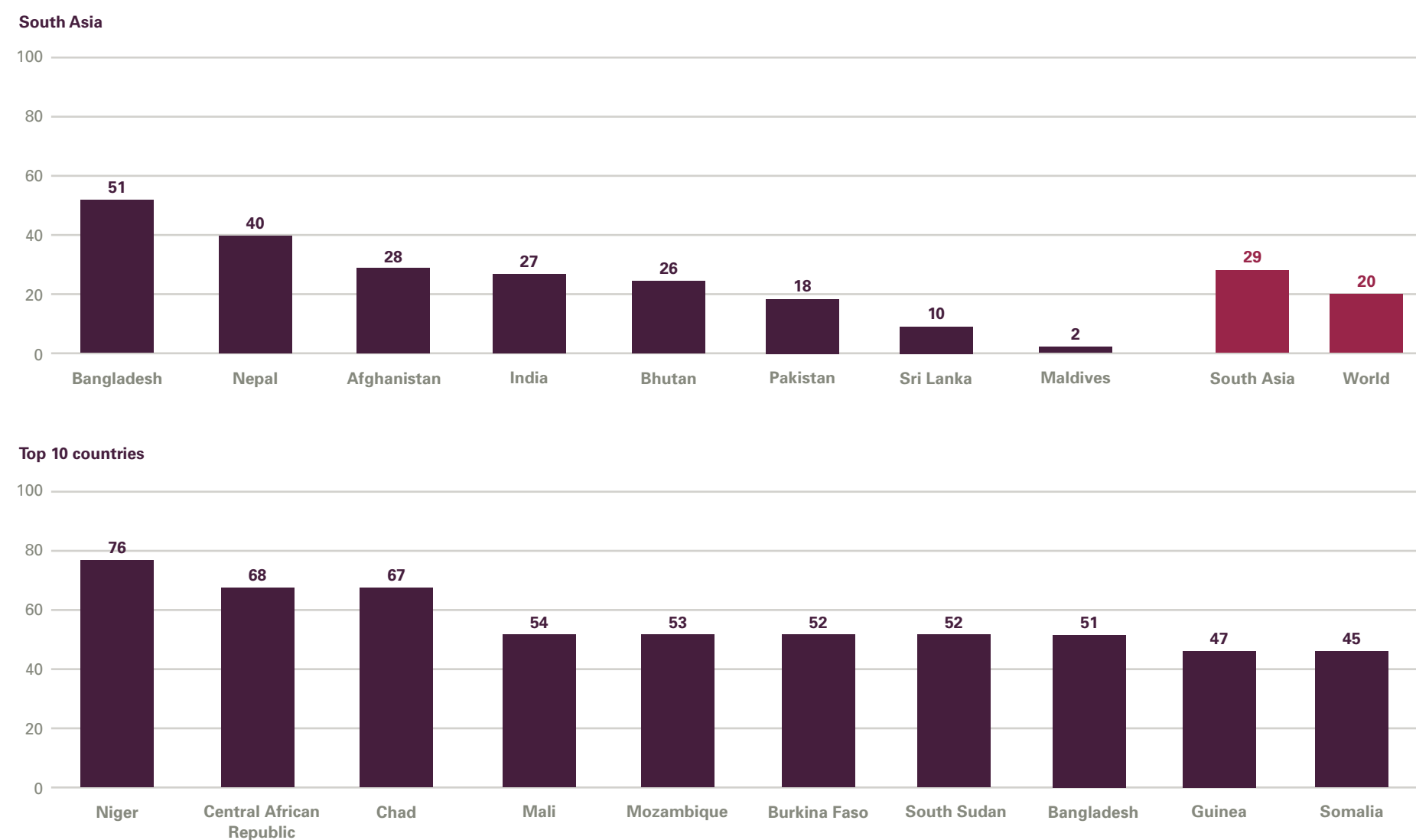
Notes: The standard measure of child marriage refers to both formal marriage and informal unions. Data for Bangladesh refer to marriage only, as information on informal unions was not collected, but data for other countries shown in this figure use the standard definition, which refers to both types of unions.

Child brides are somewhat more likely to reside in rural areas and to live in poorer households, and are less likely to have more than a secondary education

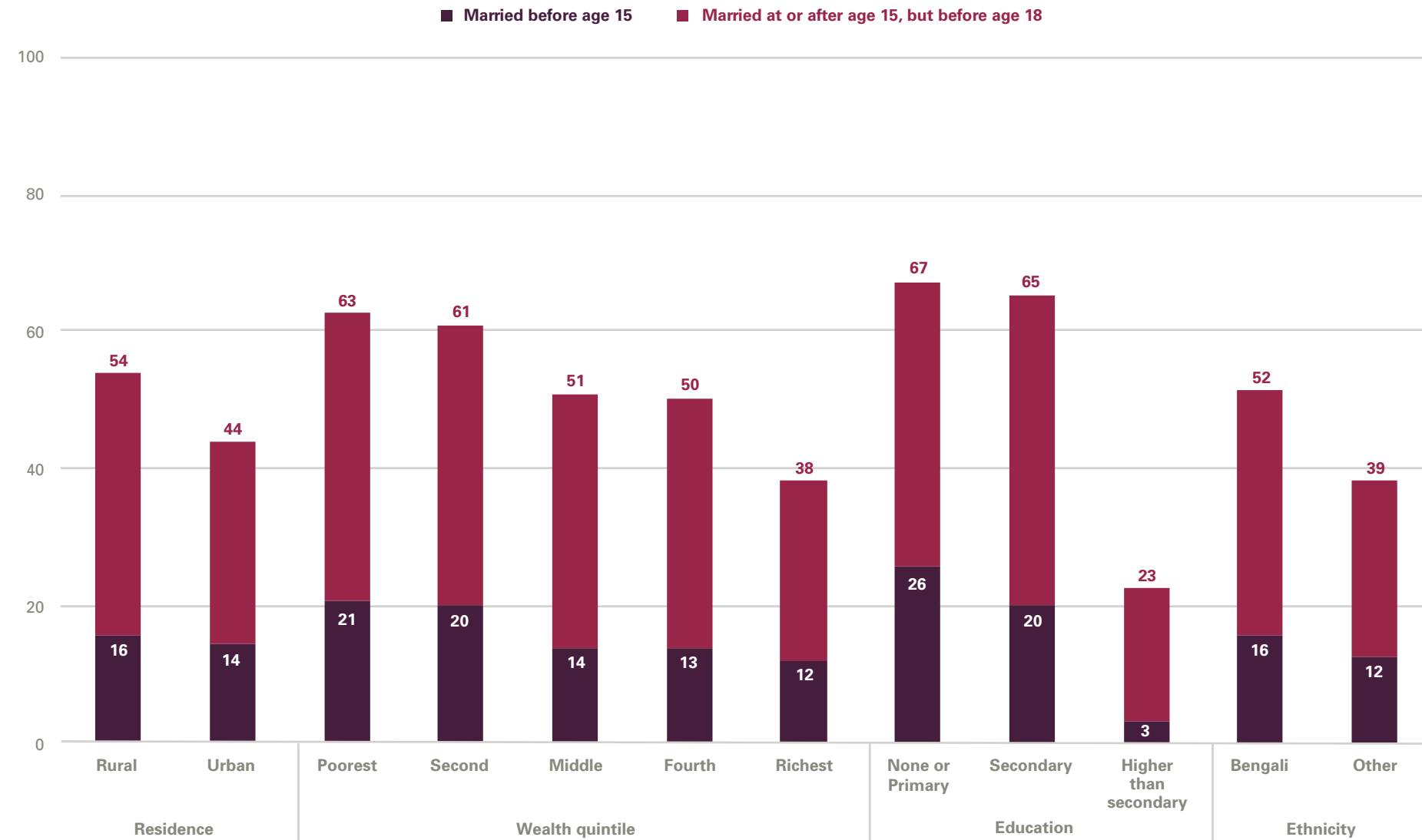FIG. 5 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before ages 15 and 18

■ Married before age 15   ■ Married at or after age 15, but before age 18

Residence
- Rural: 54 (16)
- Urban: 44 (14)

Wealth quintile
- Poorest: 63 (21)
- Second: 61 (20)
- Middle: 51 (14)
- Fourth: 50 (13)
- Richest: 38 (12)

Education
- None or Primary: 67 (26)
- Secondary: 65 (20)
- Higher than secondary: 23 (3)

Ethnicity
- Bengali: 52 (16)
- Other: 39 (12)

Notes: Ethnicity was determined by asking respondents about their ethnic identity. The "Other" category includes Chakma, Saotal, Marma, Tripura, Garo, Tonchangya, Mro, Khashia and Manipuri, as well as any other ethnic groups aside from Bengali. Data for these ethnic groups are collapsed for reporting as they comprised only 1.2% of the survey population in total.

Child marriage begins to decline only among those with at least 10 years of schooling, and prevalence falls below 50 per cent among those with at least 12 years of schooling

FIG. 6 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before ages 15 and 18
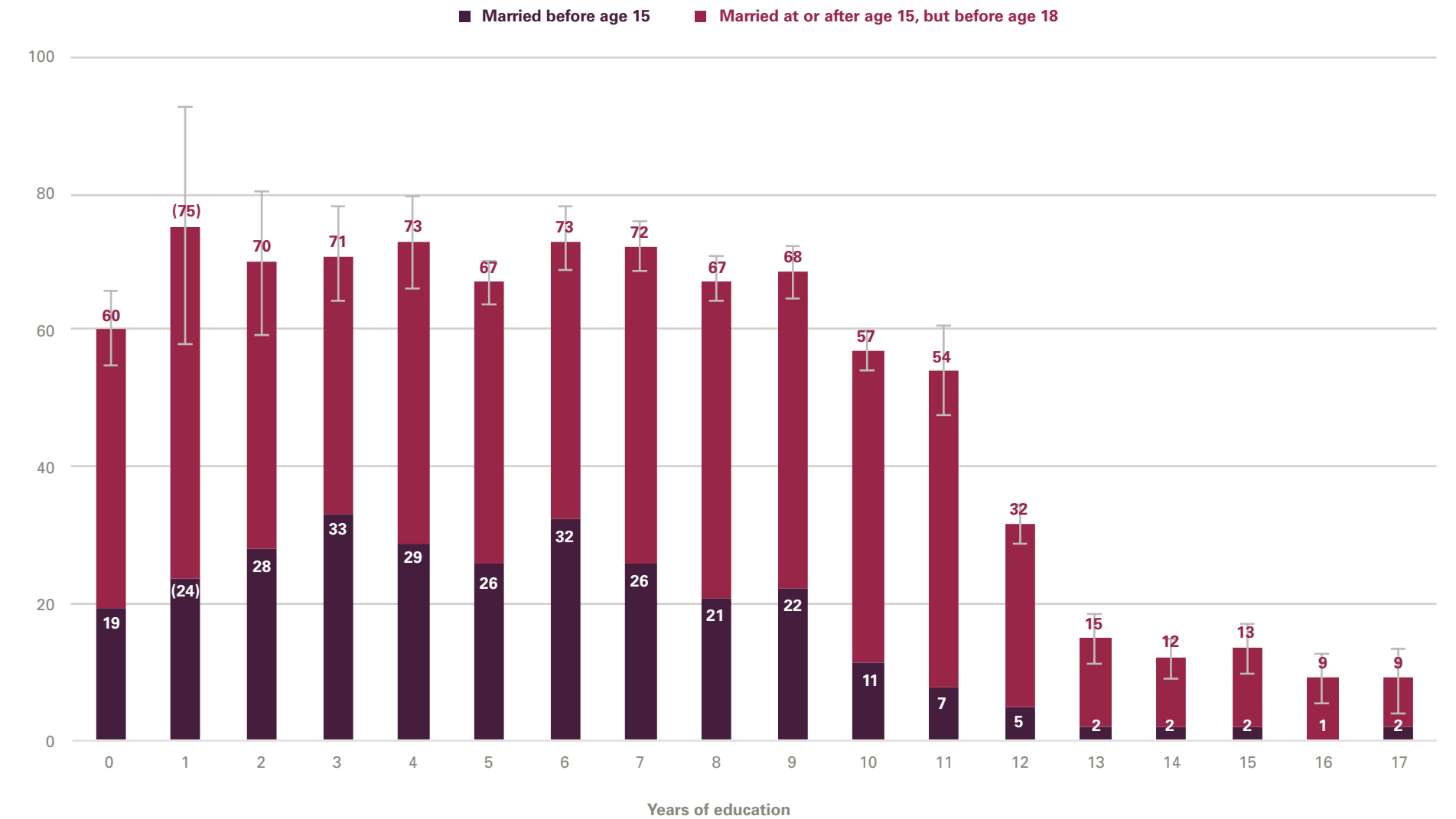
■ Married before age 15   ■ Married at or after age 15, but before age 18

Years of education
- 0: 60 (19)
- 1: (75) (24)
- 2: 70 (28)
- 3: 71 (33)
- 4: 73 (29)
- 5: 67 (26)
- 6: 73 (32)
- 7: 72 (26)
- 8: 67 (21)
- 9: 68 (22)
- 10: 57 (11)
- 11: 54 (7)
- 12: 32 (5)
- 13: 15 (2)
- 14: 12 (2)
- 15: 13 (2)
- 16: 9 (1)
- 17: 9 (2)

Notes: Values in parentheses are based on 25 to 49 unweighted cases. Values based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases are suppressed.

Those with an education beyond secondary school are least likely to be child brides, even if they live in poorer households and reside in rural areas

FIG. 7 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before age 18
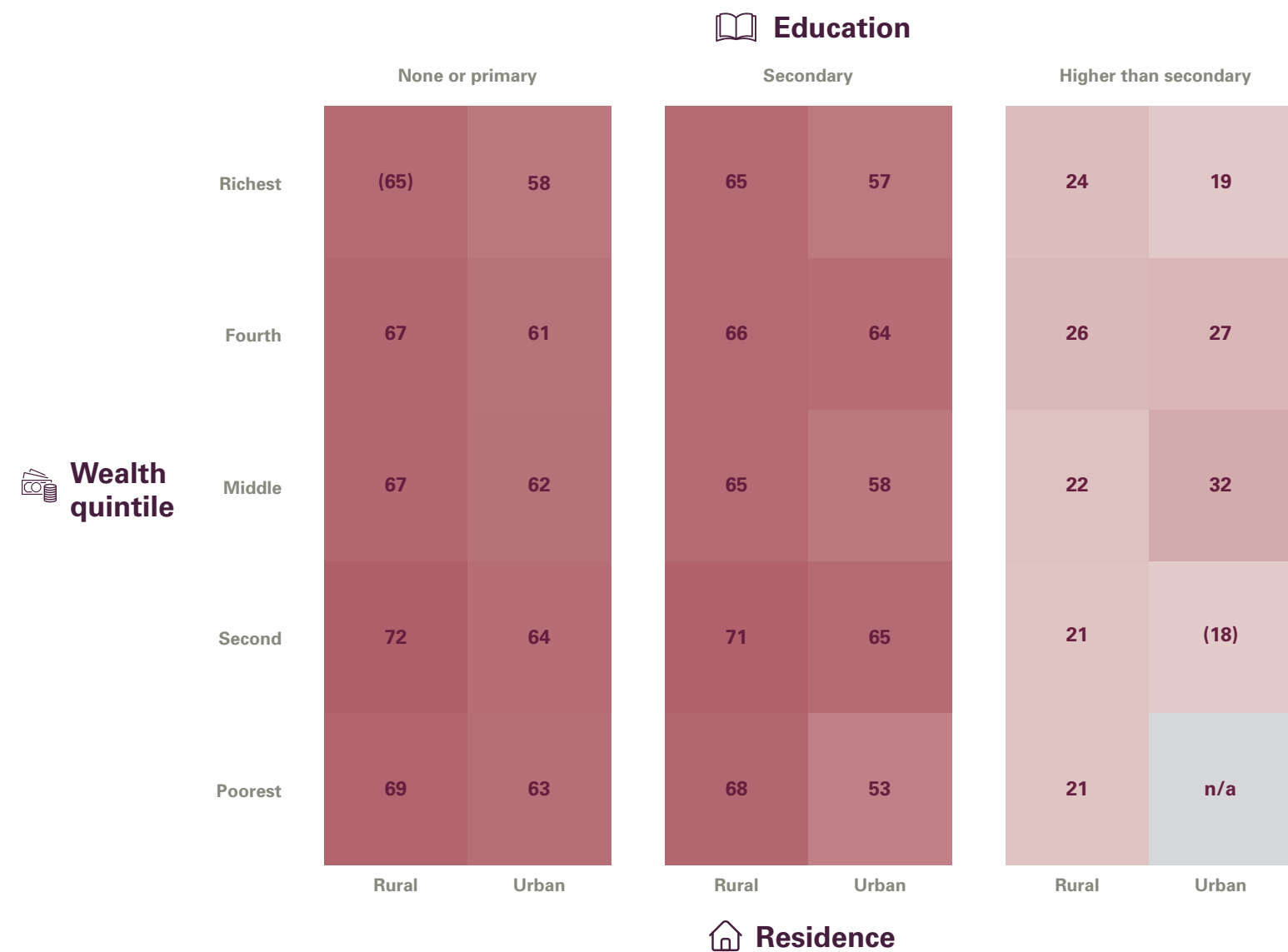
📖 **Education**

	None or primary		Secondary		Higher than secondary	
	Rural	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural**	**Urban**
Richest	(65)	58	65	57	24	19
Fourth	67	61	66	64	26	27
Middle	67	62	65	58	22	32
Second	72	64	71	65	21	(18)
Poorest	69	63	68	53	21	n/a

💰 **Wealth quintile**

🏠 **Residence**

Notes: Values in parentheses are based on 25 to 49 unweighted cases. Values based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases are suppressed.

Among districts most affected by child marriage, differences in prevalence are most evident by education levels, rather than wealth or place of residence

FIG. 8 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before age 18, selected districts

Residence   ● Rural   ● Urban

Rajshahi, Chapai Nawabganj, Bogura, Tangail, Khulna, Nilphamari, Cumilla, Dhaka, Chattogram

Wealth   ● Poorest 40%   ● Richest 60%

Naogaon, Kushtia, Narail, Bogura, Bagerhat, Chapai Nawabganj, Rajshahi, Nilphamari, Tangail, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Patuakhali, Khulna, Bhola, Mymensingh, Cumilla, Chattogram, Netrokona

Education   ● None or primary   ● Higher than secondary

Patuakhali, Bogura, Sherpur, Bagerhat, Chapai Nawabganj, Tangail, Nilphamari, Jamalpur, Narail, Mymensingh, Cumilla, Chattogram, Netrokona, Bhola, Dhaka

Notes: See page 6 for information on the selection of districts shown here. In each of the three charts, only districts with 25 or more unweighted cases in both categories are presented.

LIVES OF CHILD BRIDES

Spousal age gap

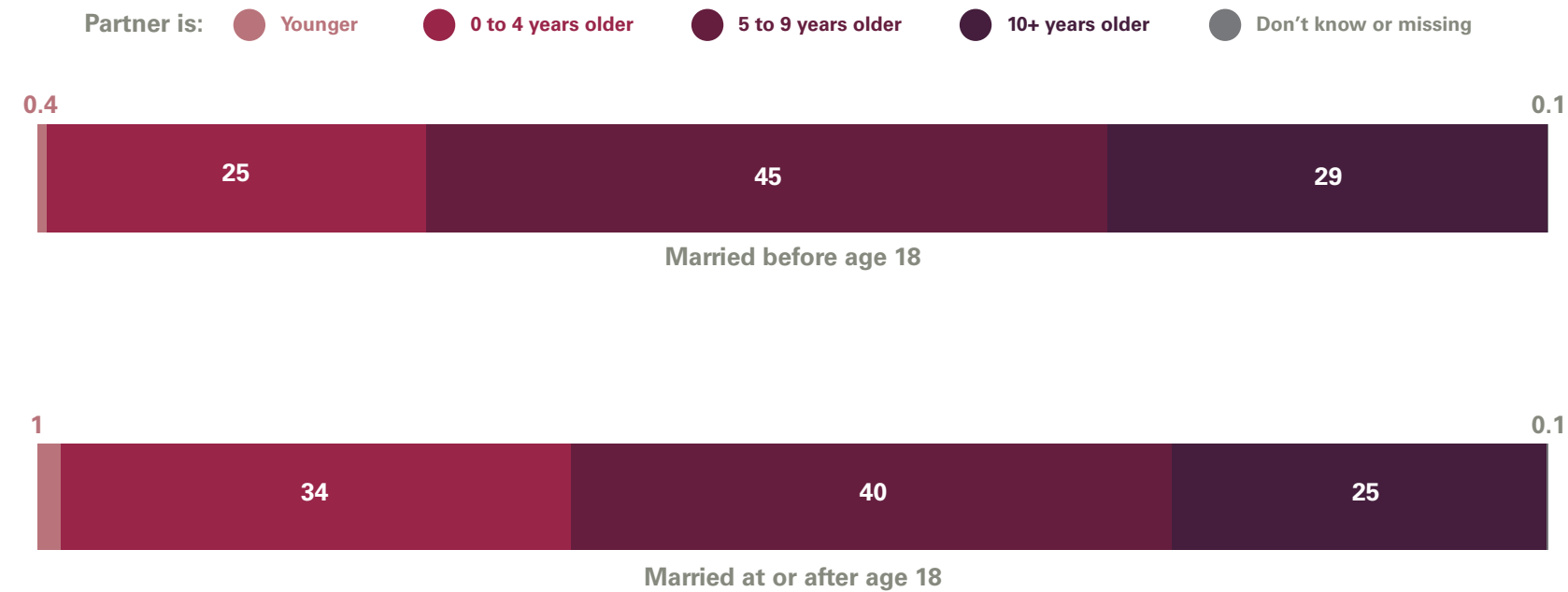**Nearly one in three child brides have a spouse who is at least 10 years older compared to one in four young women who married in adulthood**

FIG. 9 Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by spousal age gap between the women and their partners

Partner is: ● Younger   ● 0 to 4 years older   ● 5 to 9 years older   ● 10+ years older   ● Don't know or missing

0.4 | 25 | 45 | 29 | 0.1

Married before age 18

1 | 34 | 40 | 25 | 0.1

Married at or after age 18

Note: Some figures do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Early childbearing

Nearly 5 in 10 child brides gave birth before age 18, and 8 in 10 gave birth before age 20. Early childbearing is much less common among those who married later

FIG. 10 Percentage of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

Married before age 18

Married at or after age 18

18

83

Gave birth before age 18

Gave birth at or after age 18, but before age 20
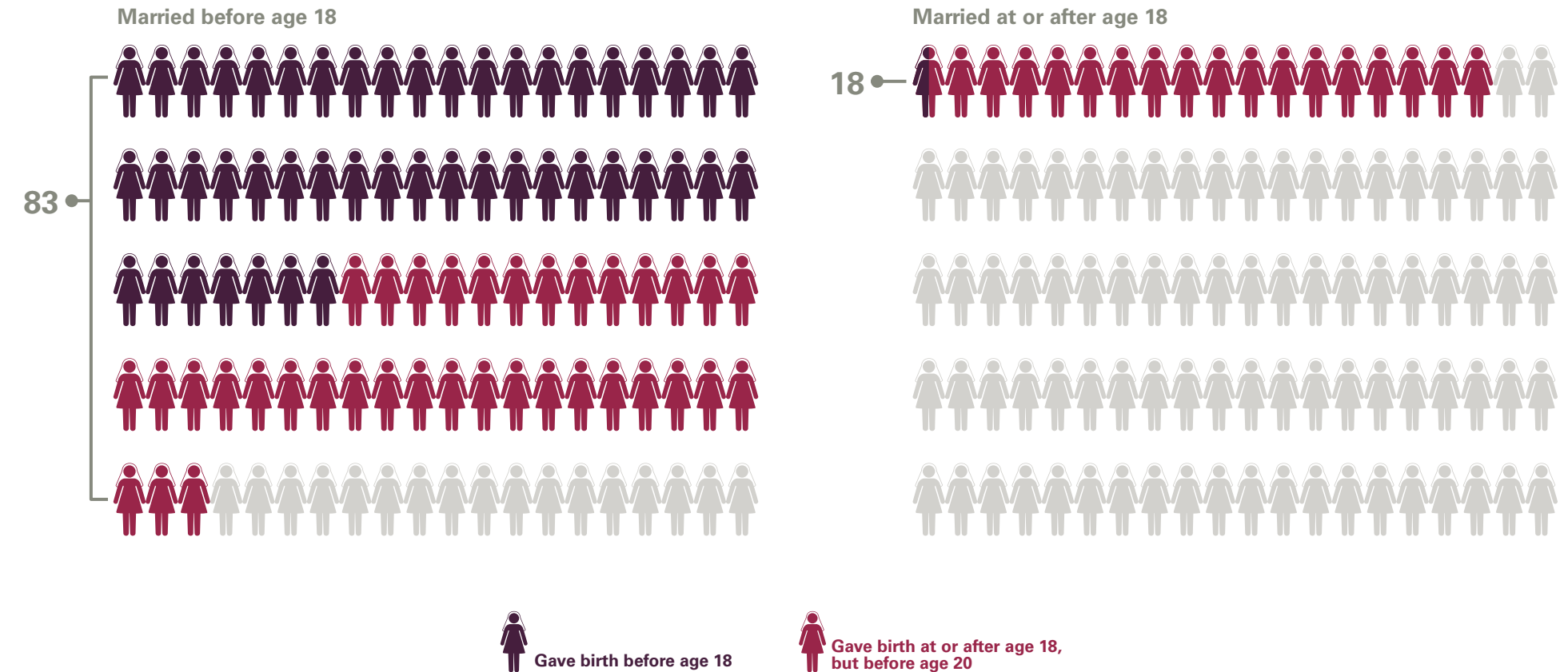
Many districts show large disparities in early childbearing between child brides and women who married in adulthood

FIG. 11 Percentage of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before age 20, selected districts

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18

Bhola
95
(15)

Cumilla
92
19

Narail
88
(6)

Jamalpur
88
(3)

Bagerhat
88
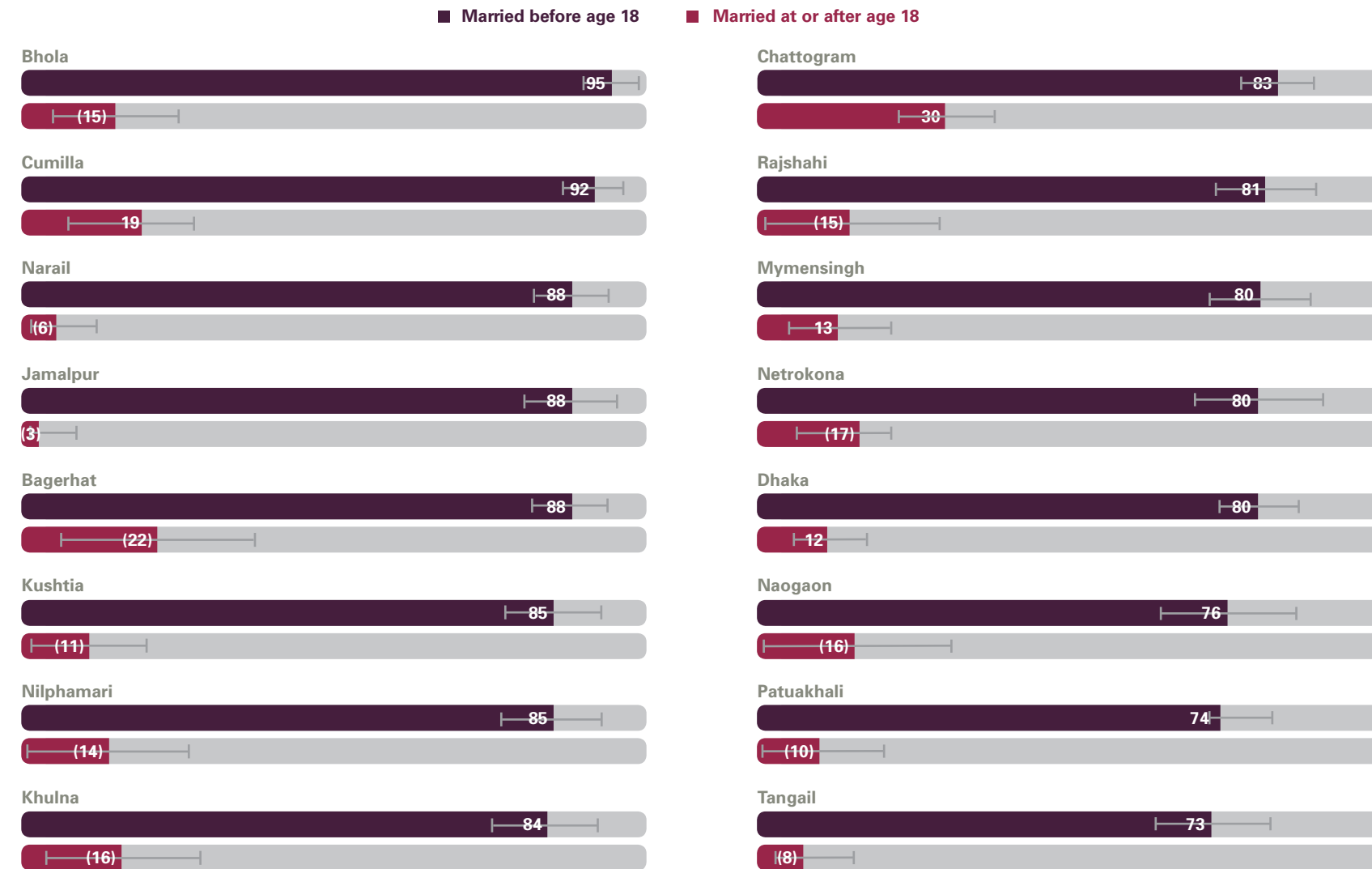(22)

Kushtia
85
(11)

Nilphamari
85
(14)

Khulna
84
(16)

Chattogram
83
30

Rajshahi
81
(15)

Mymensingh
80
13

Netrokona
80
(17)

Dhaka
80
12

Naogaon
76
(16)

Patuakhali
74
(10)

Tangail
73
(8)

Notes: See page 6 for information on the selection of districts shown here. Only districts with 25 or more unweighted cases in both categories (married before age 18 and married at or after age 18) are presented. Values in parentheses are based on 25 to 49 unweighted cases.

Even among child brides it is rare for young mothers to have several children, although child brides do go on to have somewhat larger families than women who marry in adulthood

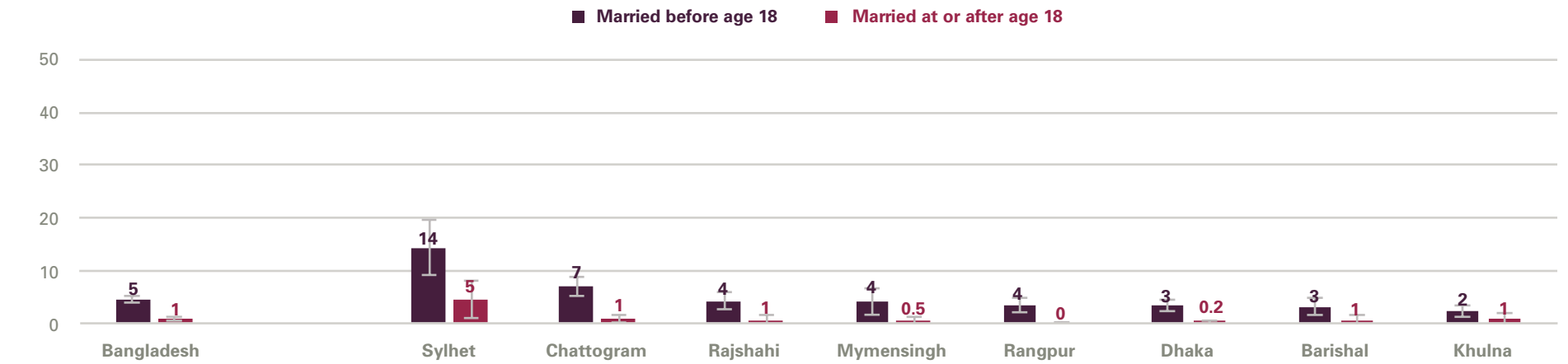FIG. 12 Percentage of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years who have had three or more live births

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18

	Bangladesh	Sylhet	Chattogram	Rajshahi	Mymensingh	Rangpur	Dhaka	Barishal	Khulna
Married before age 18	5	14	7	4	4	4	3	3	2
Married at or after age 18	1	5	1	1	0.5	0	0.2	1	1

FIG. 13 Mean number of children of ever-married women aged 45 to 49 years

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18

	Bangladesh	Sylhet	Chattogram	Mymensingh	Barishal	Dhaka	Rangpur	Rajshahi	Khulna
Married before age 18	3.7	4.8	4.5	4.2	4.1	3.6	3.5	3.3	3.2
Married at or after age 18	3.3	4.0	3.9	3.6	3.6	2.9	3.1	2.4	2.5
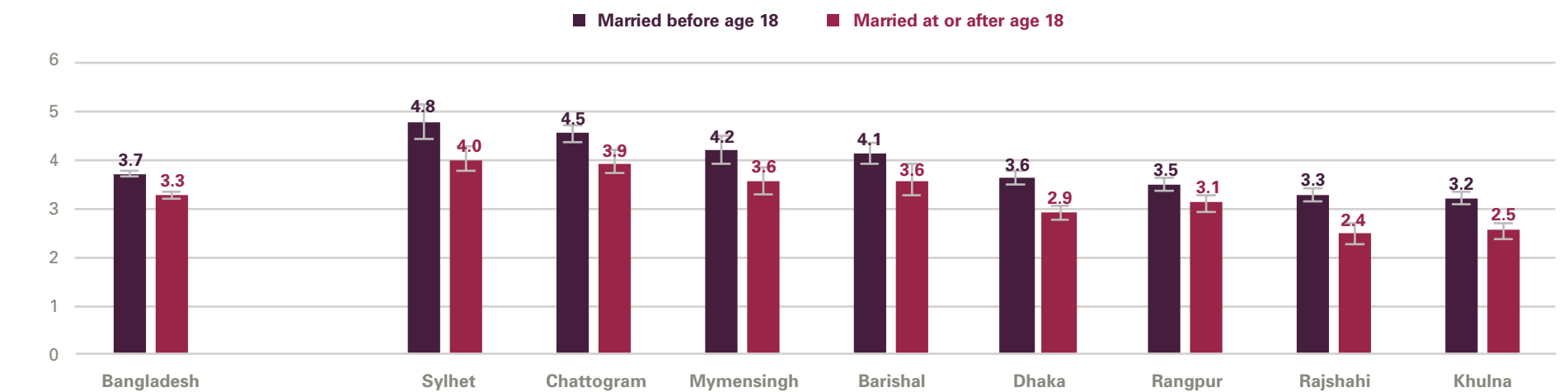
Reproductive health

At least 2 in 10 women have family planning needs that are unmet by modern methods; levels are similar among child brides and those who married in adulthood

FIG. 14a Percentage of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years whose demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method and whose last pregnancy was desired
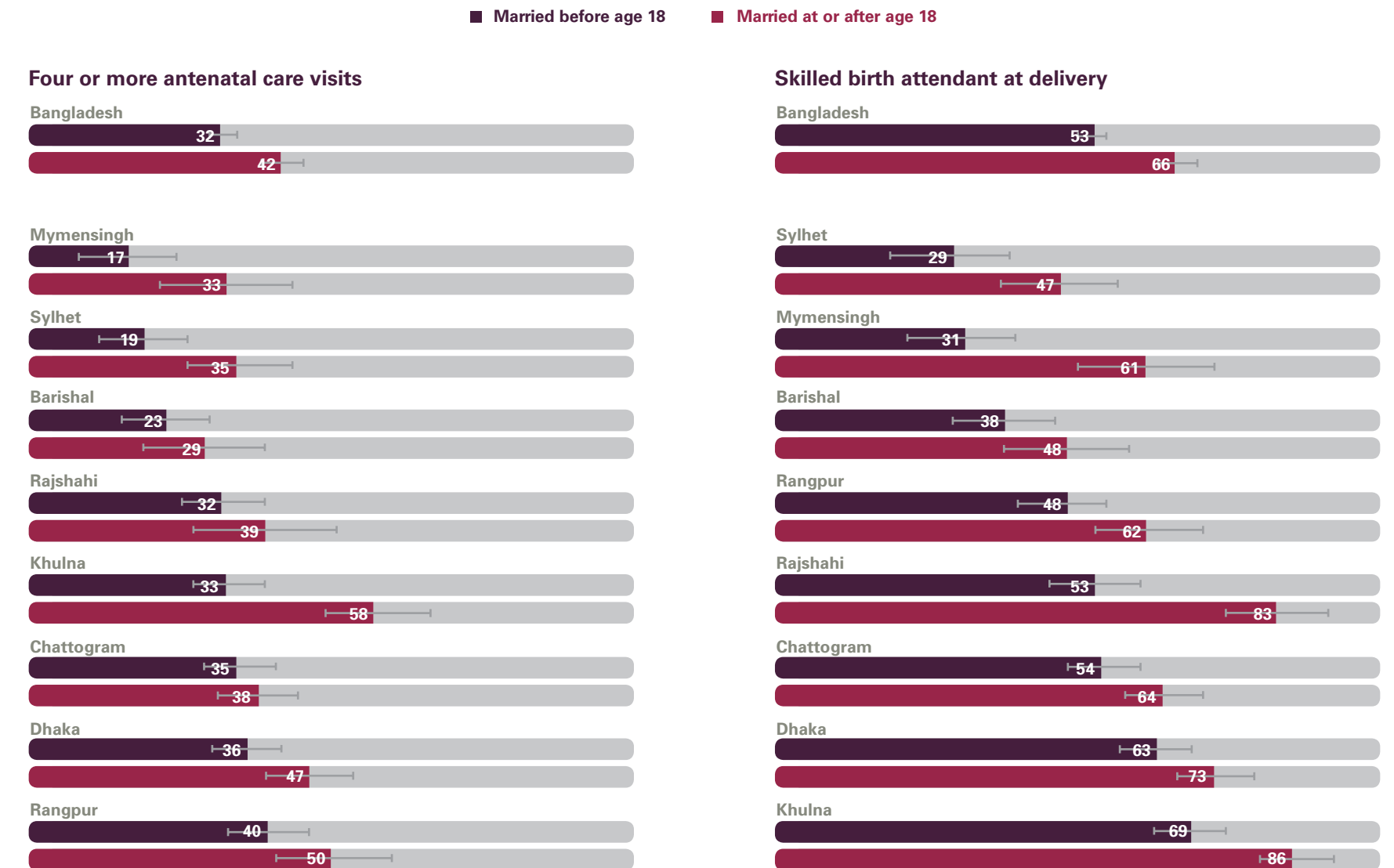
■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18

Demand for family planning is satisfied by a modern method

Bangladesh
- 79
- 74

Chattogram
- 68
- 63

Dhaka
- 76
- 74

Sylhet
- 77
- 69

Khulna
- 79
- 76

Barishal
- 81
- 76

Mymensingh
- 82
- 76

Rajshahi
- 85
- 87

Rangpur
- 88
- 90

Last pregnancy was desired

Bangladesh
- 75
- 83

Mymensingh
- 72
- 88

Barishal
- 73
- 82

Rangpur
- 74
- 88

Dhaka
- 74
- 84

Khulna
- 74
- 75

Rajshahi
- 75
- 71

Sylhet
- 76
- 86

Chattogram
- 80
- 84

Many women lack antenatal and delivery care in Bangladesh. In some divisions, child brides are even less likely to receive such services than other women
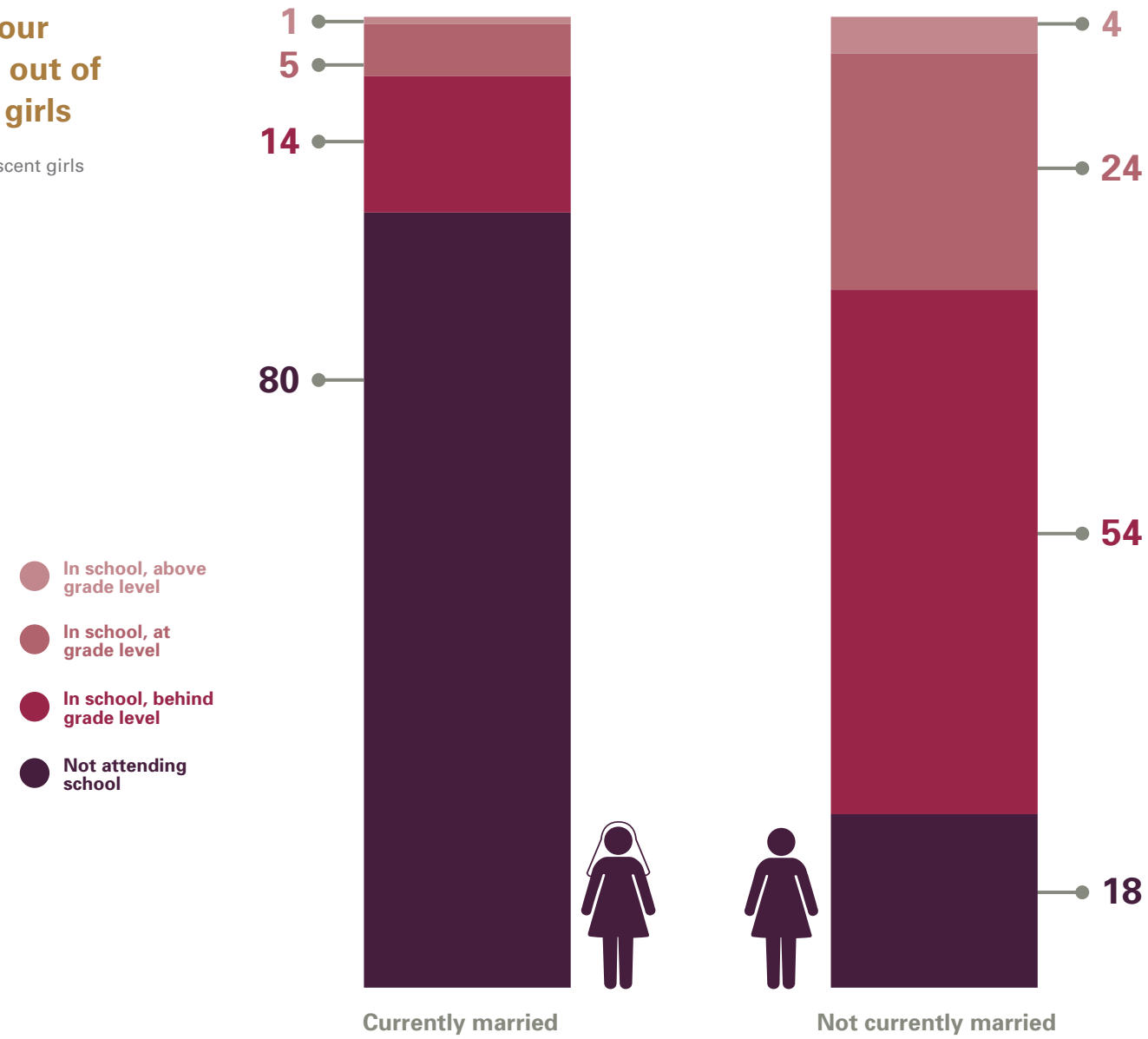
FIG. 14b Percentage of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years who had four or more antenatal care visits during their last pregnancy and who had a skilled attendant at their last live birth

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18

Four or more antenatal care visits

Bangladesh
- 32
- 42

Mymensingh
- 17
- 33

Sylhet
- 19
- 35

Barishal
- 23
- 29

Rajshahi
- 32
- 39

Khulna
- 33
- 58

Chattogram
- 35
- 38

Dhaka
- 36
- 47

Rangpur
- 40
- 50

Skilled birth attendant at delivery

Bangladesh
- 53
- 66

Sylhet
- 29
- 47

Mymensingh
- 31
- 61

Barishal
- 38
- 48

Rangpur
- 48
- 62

Rajshahi
- 53
- 83

Chattogram
- 54
- 64

Dhaka
- 63
- 73

Khulna
- 69
- 86

Education

Married girls are over four times more likely to be out of school than unmarried girls

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

- In school, above grade level
- In school, at grade level
- In school, behind grade level
- Not attending school

Currently married
- 1
- 5
- 14
- 80

Not currently married
- 4
- 24
- 54
- 18

Justification of wife-beating

### Child brides are more likely to say that wife-beating is justified than their peers who married later

FIG. 16 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who believe a husband is justified in beating his wife under certain circumstances

- Married before age 18
- Married at or after age 18

Region	Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18
Bangladesh	28	18
Rangpur	39	23
Rajshahi	33	16
Mymensingh	31	18
Dhaka	28	18
Barishal	26	21
Chattogram	23	17
Khulna	22	13
Sylhet	19	16
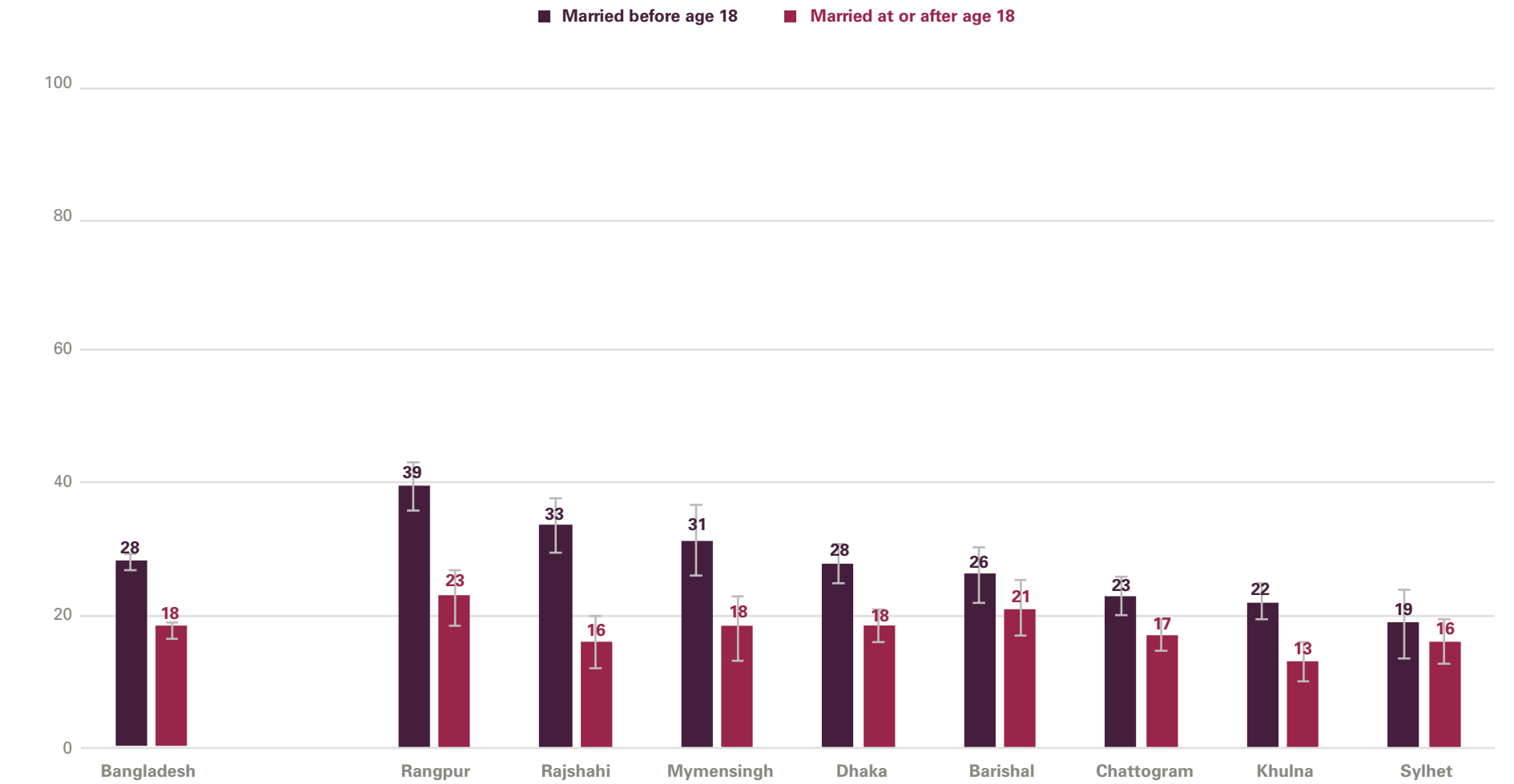
Attitudes towards child discipline

At least one in three women say that physical punishment of children is acceptable, though child brides are no more likely to hold this view than women who married later
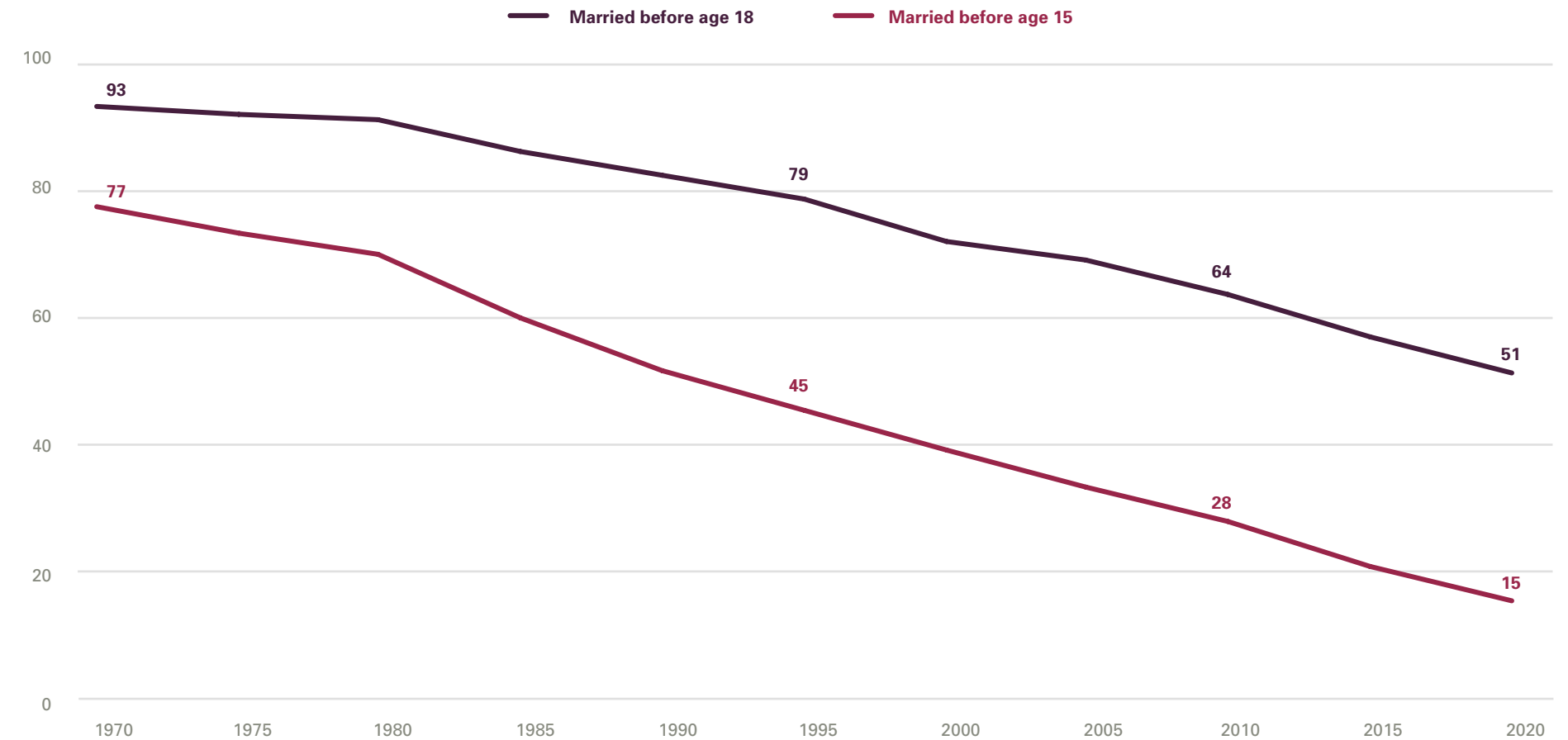
FIG. 17 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who are mothers or caregivers of children aged 1 to 14 years and believe that physical punishment is needed to bring up, raise or educate a child properly

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18
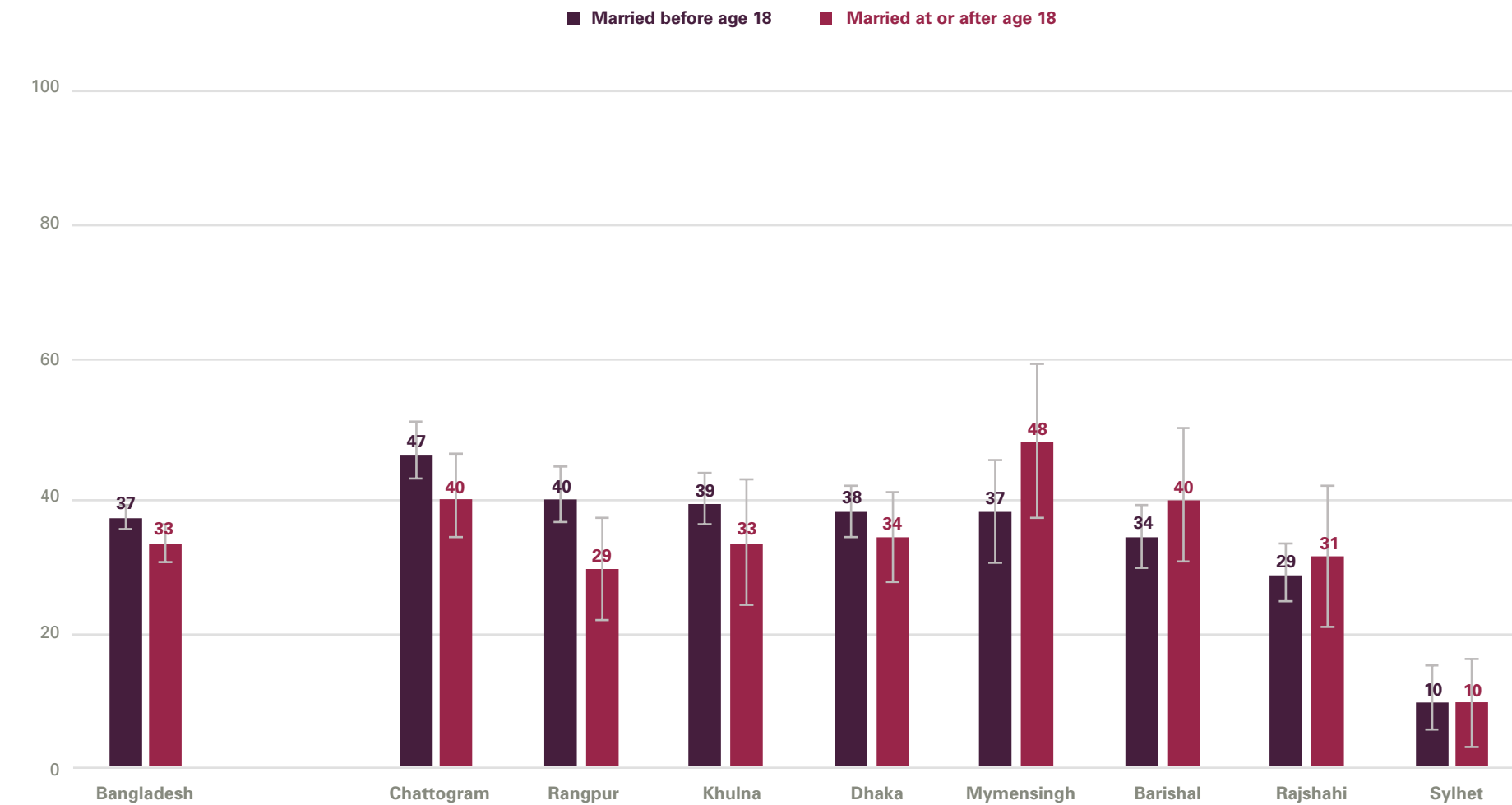
GENERATIONAL TRENDS

Child marriage is becoming less common in Bangladesh. The prevalence of marriage by age 18 dropped from over 90 per cent around 1970 to just over 50 per cent today
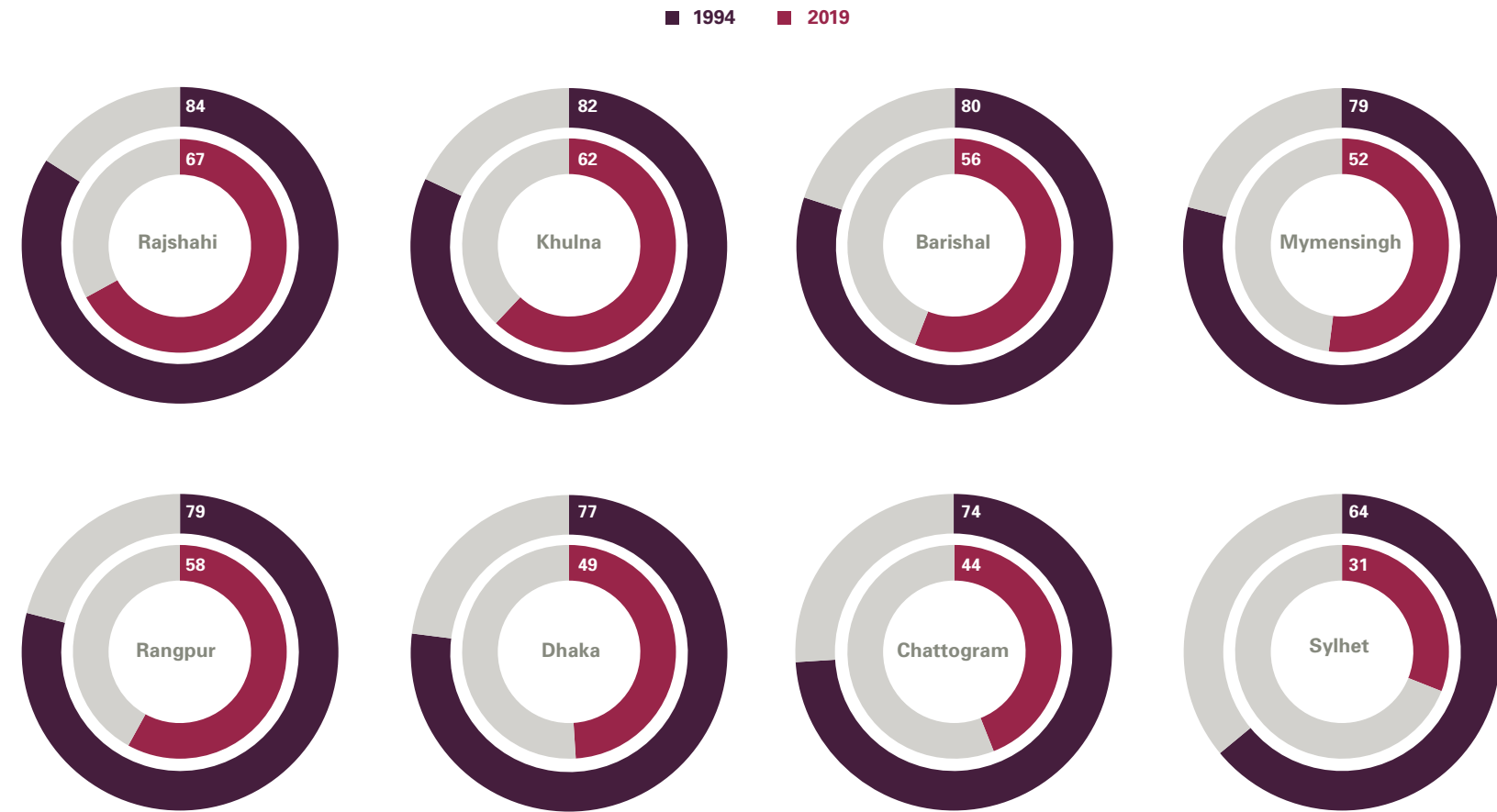
FIG. 18 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before ages 15 and 18

■ Married before age 18   ─── Married before age 15

Note: See page 29 for details on the calculation of trends.

Among divisions, Sylhet and Chattogram have made the most progress over the last 25 years in reducing child marriage
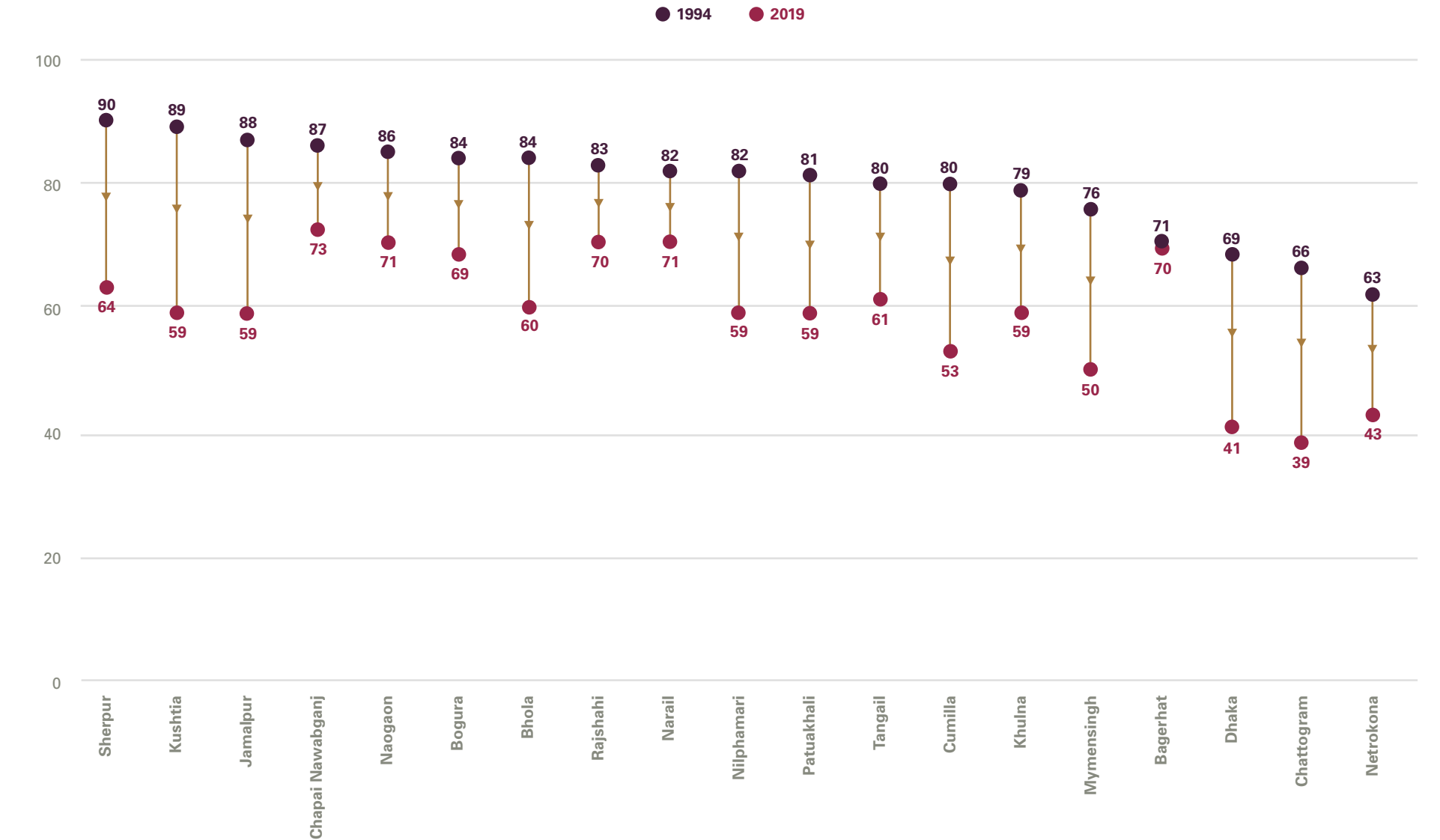
FIG. 19 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before age 18

■ 1994 ■ 2019

	1994	2019
Rajshahi	84	67
Khulna	82	62
Barishal	80	56
Mymensingh	79	52
Rangpur	79	58
Dhaka	77	49
Chattogram	74	44
Sylhet	64	31

Notes: See page 29 for details on the calculation of trends. Divisions named in this figure represent the populations living in the respective geographic areas as they were defined in 2019.

## Most districts designated as priorities for ending child marriage have made progress over the last 25 years

FIG. 20 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before age 18, selected districts

● 1994 ● 2019

District	1994	2019
Sherpur	90	64
Kushtia	89	59
Jamalpur	88	59
Chapai Nawabganj	87	73
Naogaon	86	71
Bogura	84	69
Bhola	84	60
Rajshahi	83	70
Narail	82	71
Nilphamari	82	59
Patuakhali	81	59
Tangail	80	61
Cumilla	80	53
Khulna	79	59
Mymensingh	76	50
Bagerhat	71	70
Dhaka	69	41
Chattogram	66	39
Netrokona	63	43

Notes: See page 6 for information on the selection of districts shown here. See page 29 for details on the calculation of trends.

Declines in child marriage have been observed across wealth groups, with more progress seen among the richest

FIG. 21 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before age 18

Wealth quintile:
Poorest
Second
Middle
Fourth
Richest
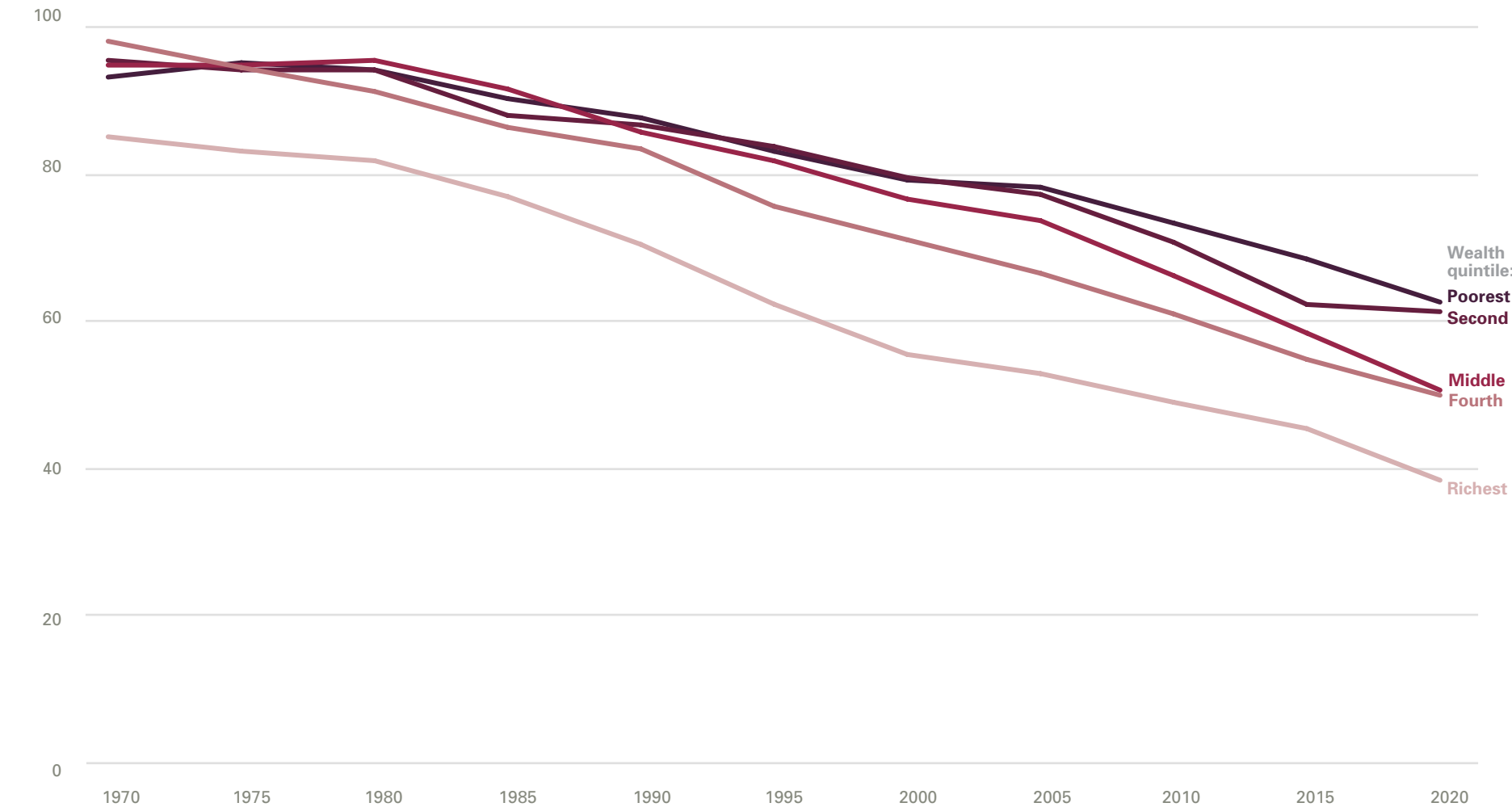
Note: See page 29 for details on the calculation of trends.

Bangladesh has made less progress than its South Asian neighbours, but compared to other countries with the world's highest levels of child marriage, its progress is exceptionally strong

FIG. 22 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18 (prevalence of child marriage) and average annual rate of reduction (%) in the prevalence of child marriage

South Asia

| Country	Prevalence of child marriage	Average annual rate of reduction in the prevalence of child marriage
Maldives	2	13.4
India	27	5.5
Afghanistan	28	4.8
Pakistan	18	3.5
Nepal	40	2.7
Bhutan	26	2.6
Sri Lanka	10	2.4
Bangladesh	51	2.1

Top 10 countries

Country	Prevalence of child marriage	Average annual rate of reduction in the prevalence of child marriage
Bangladesh	51	2.1
Somalia	45	0.8
Chad	67	0.8
Guinea	47	0.6
Burkina Faso	52	0.4
Mali	54	0.1
Niger	76	0.1
Mozambique	53	-0.5
South Sudan	52	-1.3
Central African Republic	68	-2.0

Notes: The first table includes all countries in South Asia with nationally representative data on child marriage, and the second table includes the 10 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. Countries are ranked from highest to lowest according to the 10-year rate of reduction. A negative rate indicates an increase in the prevalence of child marriage over the specified period. Caution is warranted in interpreting these rates, as in some cases the differences in prevalence in the last 10 years may not be significant.

ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE: WHAT IT WILL TAKE

If the rate of decline observed over the past 10 years doubled, the prevalence of child marriage in Bangladesh would drop to around 30 per cent by 2030 and to less than 15 per cent by 2050
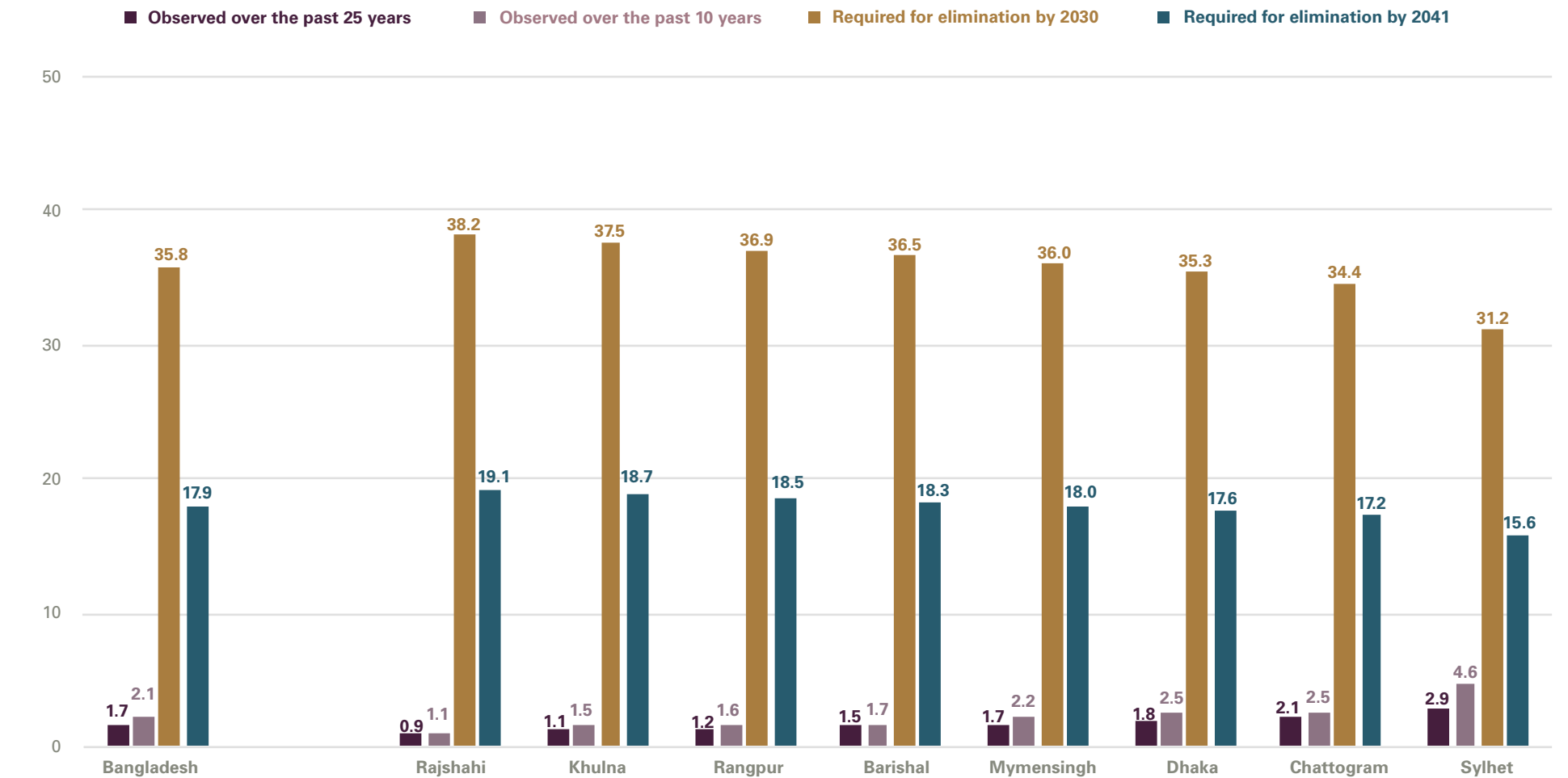
FIG. 23 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married before age 18, observed and projected

Progress over the past 25 years continues

Progress over the past 10 years continues

Progress is accelerated
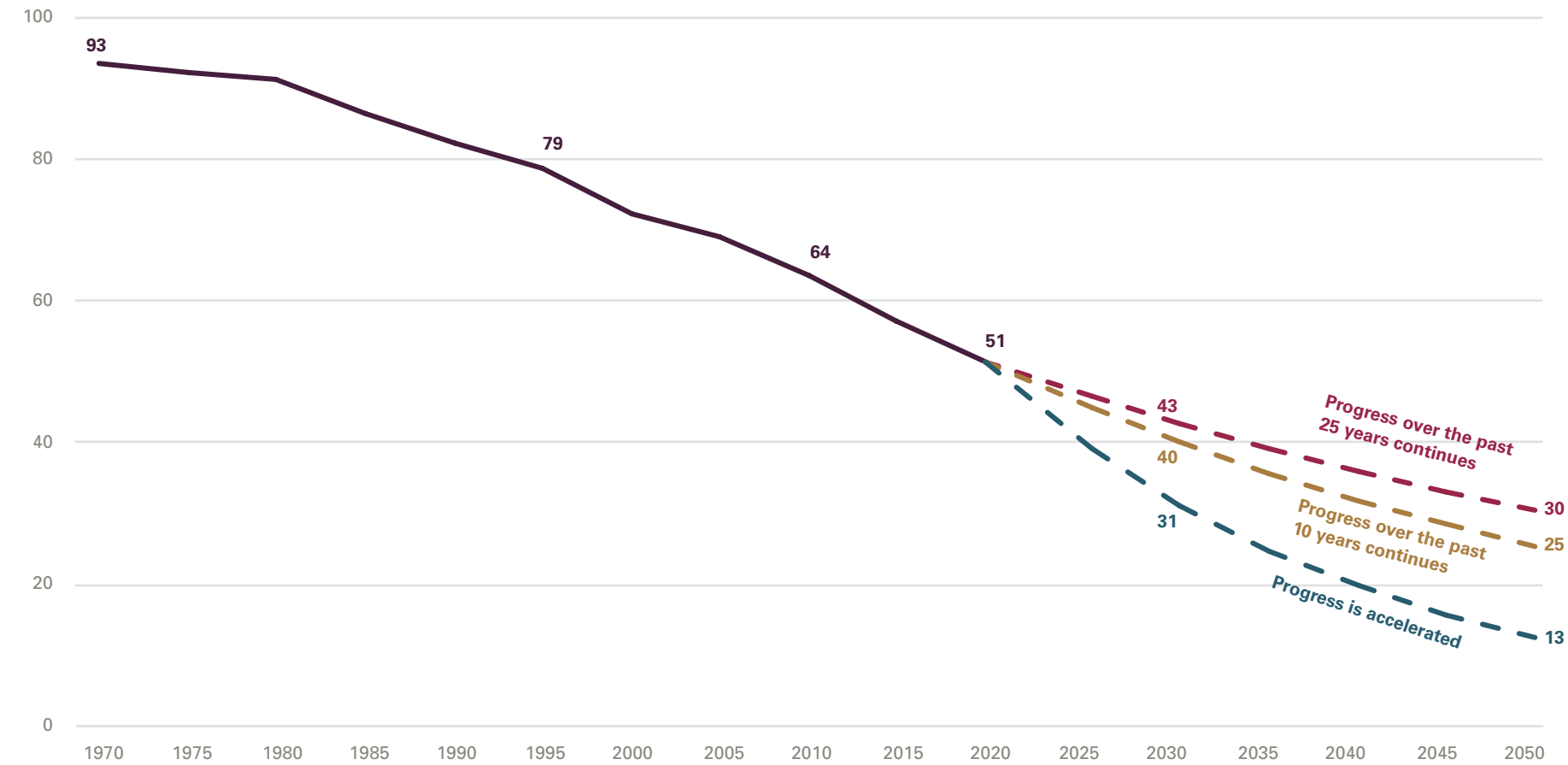
Notes: The projection scenarios build on existing trends. They show expected values if progress over the past 25 years were to continue (in red), or if progress over the past 10 years were to continue (in yellow). A third scenario (in green) illustrates what could happen if the rate observed over the past 10 years were to double. The projections do not take into account the potential impact of events such as 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, because of economic uncertainty, interruptions in schooling, disruptions of services and other factors, the pandemic has the potential to threaten progress made thus far against child marriage.

Meeting the SDG target to end child marriage by 2030, or the national target to end child marriage by 2041, will require a major push in Bangladesh

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

Legend: ■ Observed over the past 25 years ■ Observed over the past 10 years ■ Required for elimination by 2030 ■ Required for elimination by 2041

Notes: The observed average annual rates of reduction quantify the rate of progress in the prevalence of child marriage over each period. A higher rate indicates faster progress. Required rates are calculated to illustrate what rate would be necessary in order to eliminate the practice by 2030, target 5.3 of the SDGs, and by 2041, the target set by the Government of Bangladesh.

Progress must be at least 8 times faster than the rate observed over the past decade to meet the national target, or 17 times faster to meet the SDG target

FIG. 25 Ranking of the amount of acceleration needed to eliminate child marriage by 2030 and by 2041, compared to the division's progress over the past 10 years

Most acceleration needed

	By 2030	By 2041
Rajshahi	36	18
Khulna	26	13
Rangpur	23	11
Barishal	22	11
Mymensingh	17	8
Dhaka	14	7
Chattogram	14	7
Sylhet	7	3
Bangladesh	17	8

Least acceleration needed

How to read this table

In Dhaka, for example, progress would need to be 14 times faster than the rate observed over the past 10 years in order to eliminate child marriage by 2030, and 7 times faster in order to eliminate child marriage by 2041.

Technical notes

The purpose of this publication is to offer a descriptive analysis of the practice of child marriage in Bangladesh, covering: the proportion and number of girls and women affected; disparities in risk across different populations; a selection of key outcome measures for women who married in childhood; an evaluation of historical trends in prevalence; and projections for the coming decades. It relies on nationally representative survey data, namely from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), which provide comparable data on the practice over time, along with data on respondents' background characteristics and key measures of well-being that facilitate this analysis. Additional research questions, including on families' decision-making about marriage, the impact of programmes and drivers of change fall outside the scope of this analysis.

To assess the prevalence of child marriage, this analysis used the proportion of women aged 20 to 24 years who were married before age 18. This differs slightly from the standard definition used in SDG indicator 5.3.1, which includes both formal marriage and informal unions, since data on informal unions were not collected in Bangladesh. Levels of child marriage can also be measured among women aged 18 to 19 years; in Bangladesh, prevalence of child marriage among this age group is 44 per cent. 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 (See section below on 'Data sources').

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.

Global estimates are based on a subset of 91 countries with comparable data from 2013–2019, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population.

Confidence intervals are shown for a subset of charts in this publication, including those that present results disaggregated by both subnational regions (divisions or districts) and background characteristics of the respondents, when the chart type allows. For the remainder, caution is 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 groups or countries, that difference has been confirmed as statistically significant.

Trends in the prevalence of child marriage presented at the national level and by wealth quintiles in Figures 18 and 21 relied on an age-cohort analysis taking into account data from the Bangladesh DHS 1993-1994, 1996-1997, 1999-2000, 2004, 2007, 2011 and 2014, and the MICS 2006, 2012-2013 and 2019. Estimates for each age cohort were validated across surveys, and on this basis some data were excluded from the trend calculation.

Trends at the division level in Figure 19 were calculated using a tailored approach for each division due to changes in administrative boundaries over the period of analysis. For each division, all available surveys conducted after the division was established were used for the trend analysis. In Barishal and Khulna, all 10 surveys were used since no boundaries have changed. For trends in Sylhet and Chattogram (formerly Chittagong), all available surveys except the DHS 1993-1994 were used since Sylhet was separated from Chattogram in 1995. For trends in Rangpur and Rajshahi, DHS 2011 and 2014 and MICS 2012-2013 and 2019 were used since Rangpur was separated from Rajshahi in 2010. Since Mymensingh separated from Dhaka in 2015 and thus these divisions with their present borders are not represented in earlier surveys, the trend lines for these two divisions were constructed using district-level data for the districts that make up each division. For trends at the district level in Figure 20, all available surveys that are representative at the district level were used (MICS 2006, 2012-2013 and 2019).

'Childhood' refers to the period from birth until the 18th birthday. 'Adulthood' refers to the period starting at age 18.

Data sources

Bangladesh data are from the DHS 1993-1994, 1996-1997, 1999-2000, 2004, 2007, 2011 and 2014, and the MICS 2006, 2012-2013 and 2019. Data for other countries are from UNICEF global databases, 2020, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative surveys, 2006-2019. 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 and the Bangladesh Population and Housing Census 2011.

Bangladesh's programmatic response to end child marriage

Ending child marriage is a priority for both the Government of Bangladesh and its development partners, who recognize the need to preserve childhoods, secure children's rights to life and education, reduce their exposure to violence and exploitation, and contribute to ending intergenerational poverty. The country's Child Marriage Restraint Act (2017) as well as the National Plan of Action to End Child Marriage (2018-2019) lay out the steps the Government is taking to reach these goals. Political engagement at the highest levels has paved the way for all development partners to explore more targeted solutions to this important issue.

Bangladesh is among the selected countries covered under the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage. The goal of the programme is to shift existing social norms and ease structural causes of gender inequality so that girls are free from the risk of child marriage and have a wider range of life options. The programme contributes to the National Plan of Action to End Child Marriage and is aligned with its five pillars: sector-based policies; legal reform, policies and accountability; positive social values and norms; empowerment of adolescent girls; and social protection systems for adolescent girls.

As the programme transitions into phase II, it will expand and improve its activities to target the most marginalized and hard-to-reach girls. Its focus is on strengthening systems and increasing government ownership in order to translate policies and laws at the subnational level, provide better monitoring and accountability of progress, and build stronger partnerships with civil society and non-governmental organizations. The programme is built around evidence-based strategies in the following areas:

Enhancing the agency and voice of adolescent girls
Government-owned adolescent clubs are key venues through which girls are being reached. Club members, who include both adolescent girls and boys, are provided with leadership and life skills, along with peer education training focusing on the prevention of child marriage and other issues, including health; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); HIV/AIDS; nutrition; and the prevention of gender-based violence. Sports activities for girls are helping dismantle gender stereotypes and have promoted greater acceptance of girls interacting with boys in the community. Girls are being trained in communications and media so their voices can be heard nationally through mass and social media. Research shows that empowering girls through clubs for adolescents has contributed to their knowledge about their rights and discriminatory social norms. It has also enabled them to raise their voices about the choices available to them and to engage in dialogue with peers, parents and community influencers.

Investing in and supporting adolescent girls through community engagement and positive behaviour
Families, communities and local and religious leaders are being mobilized through community dialogues to act as allies to end child marriage. Positive gender norms and key behavioural issues are also being introduced through communication at the household level, social mobilization among local/ward-level community groups, and conversations with parents, among others. In addition, messages about the negative consequences of child marriage and actions to stop the practice are being disseminated through multimedia and social media, reaching more than 150 million people.

Increasing resources and opportunities for adolescent girls
A key thrust of the programme is building the capacity of systems to deliver integrated, coordinated and quality programmes and services for adolescent girls. The main focus is on education, health and WASH. Education interventions seek to improve access and develop gender-equitable learning and skills. Many of these interventions target barriers faced by both girls and boys, but have a greater impact on girls' access to education and learning. An abilities-based accelerated learning approach is being used to provide non-formal primary education to out-of-school girls who are 8 to 14 years old. The most marginalized out-of-school adolescents receive informal on-the-job apprenticeship training to which theoretical and life skills training have been added. Improving health and well-being through gender- and age-responsive adolescent health services is another key intervention, focusing on gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, nutrition and mental health.

Strengthening legislative and policy frameworks to protect and promote the rights of adolescent girls
A central strategy of the programme is advocacy with the Government, particularly the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, to foster an enabling legal and policy framework to end child marriage. A consultative group for women's advancement and gender equality, with representatives from Government, UN agencies and donors, is an important platform for advocating for greater coordination and cross-sectoral collaboration among line ministries. Towards this end, a monitoring and evaluation framework is being developed, along with a budget, for the implementation and monitoring of the National Plan of Action to End Child Marriage at the subnational level. Preparation of a National Adolescent Strategy is also under way, which will include child marriage as a chief concern.

Generating and using robust data and evidence
Evidence-based advocacy and programming are steering the design and implementation of activities to end child marriage in Bangladesh. Critical research is under way to better understand why child marriage levels are not declining, particularly in selected districts. It will also concentrate on assessing the models that have worked and how they can be scaled up and institutionalized. A qualitative analysis of social norms and social networks will facilitate an understanding of the key actors that perpetuate or challenge the social and gender norms linked to child marriage. The research will also address ways to keep girls in school and thereby reduce child marriage in rural Bangladesh and will include a needs assessment of adolescent girls (married, divorced and widowed) in urban settings. A scoping study will produce a baseline assessment of government expenditures related to child marriage at subnational levels.

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh has pledged to:

End marriage for girls under the age of 15 by 2021 and for those under the age of 18 by 2041

Reduce by at least one third the number of girls married between ages 15 and 18 by 2021.

unicef ♦ | for every child

For information on the data in this brochure:

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

For information on child marriage in Bangladesh:

UNICEF Bangladesh
BSL Office Complex
1, Minto Road, Ramna
Dhaka 1000
Bangladesh

Email: infobangladesh@unicef.org
Website: unicef.org/bangladesh