![unicef for every child]

Child Marriage in West and Central Africa

A statistical overview and reflections on ending the practice

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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

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.
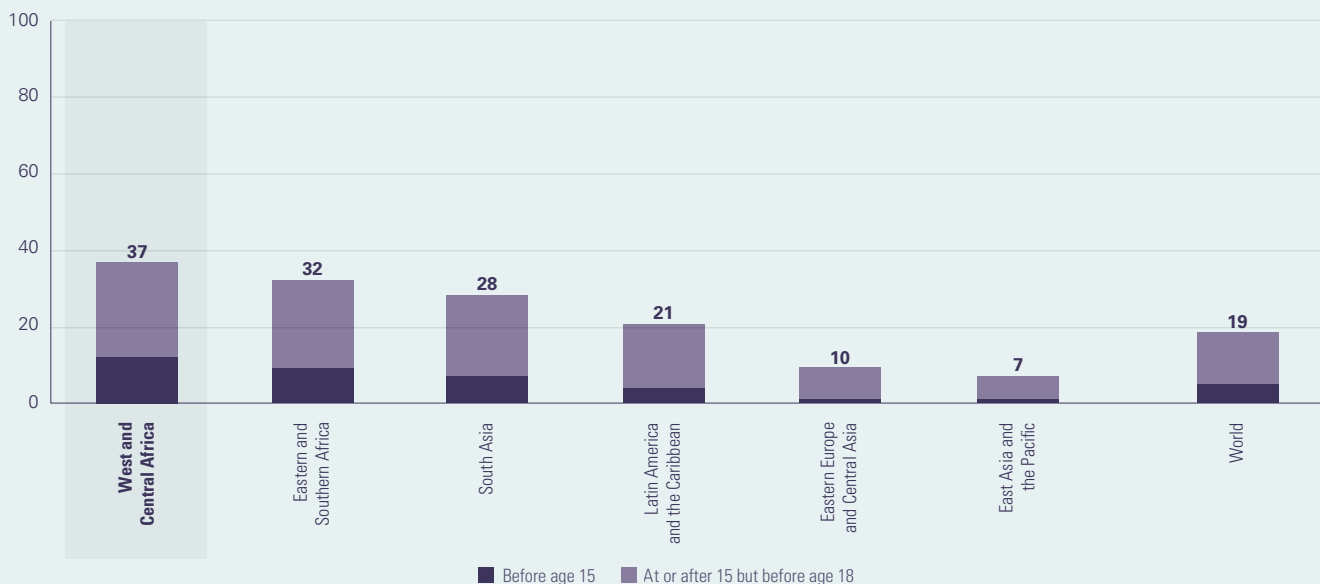
INDICATOR 5.3.1

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

Legend: ■ Before age 15 ■ At or after 15 but before age 18

West and Central Africa: 37
Eastern and Southern Africa: 32
South Asia: 28
Latin America and the Caribbean: 21
Eastern Europe and Central Asia: 10
East Asia and the Pacific: 7
World: 19

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

Other countries 4.2 million
Benin 1.1 million
Senegal 1.5 million
Guinea 1.7 million
Chad 2.1 million
Ghana 2.2 million
Côte d'Ivoire 2.3 million
Cameroon 2.6 million
Mali 2.8 million
Burkina Faso 2.8 million
Niger 4.8 million
Democratic Republic of the Congo 7.1 million
Nigeria 23.6 million

West and Central Africa 59 million

Among the region's child brides, over 20 million were married before age 15
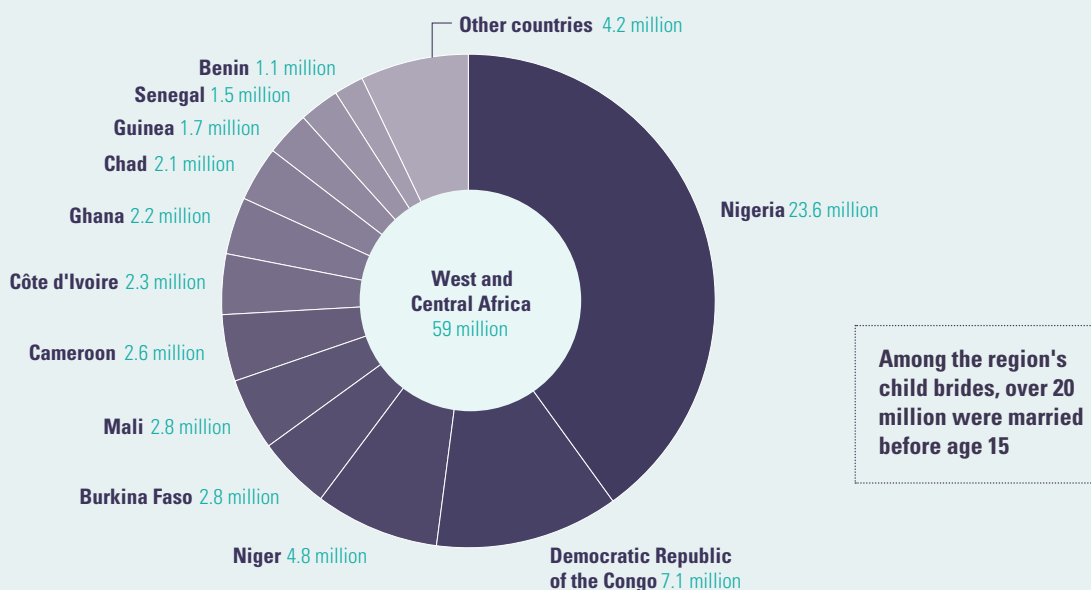
NOTES: Figures do not add up to total due to rounding. Estimates refer to the population as of 2020. For more details on the calculation, please see the technical notes on page 106.
SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative sources, 2010–2021. Demographic 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
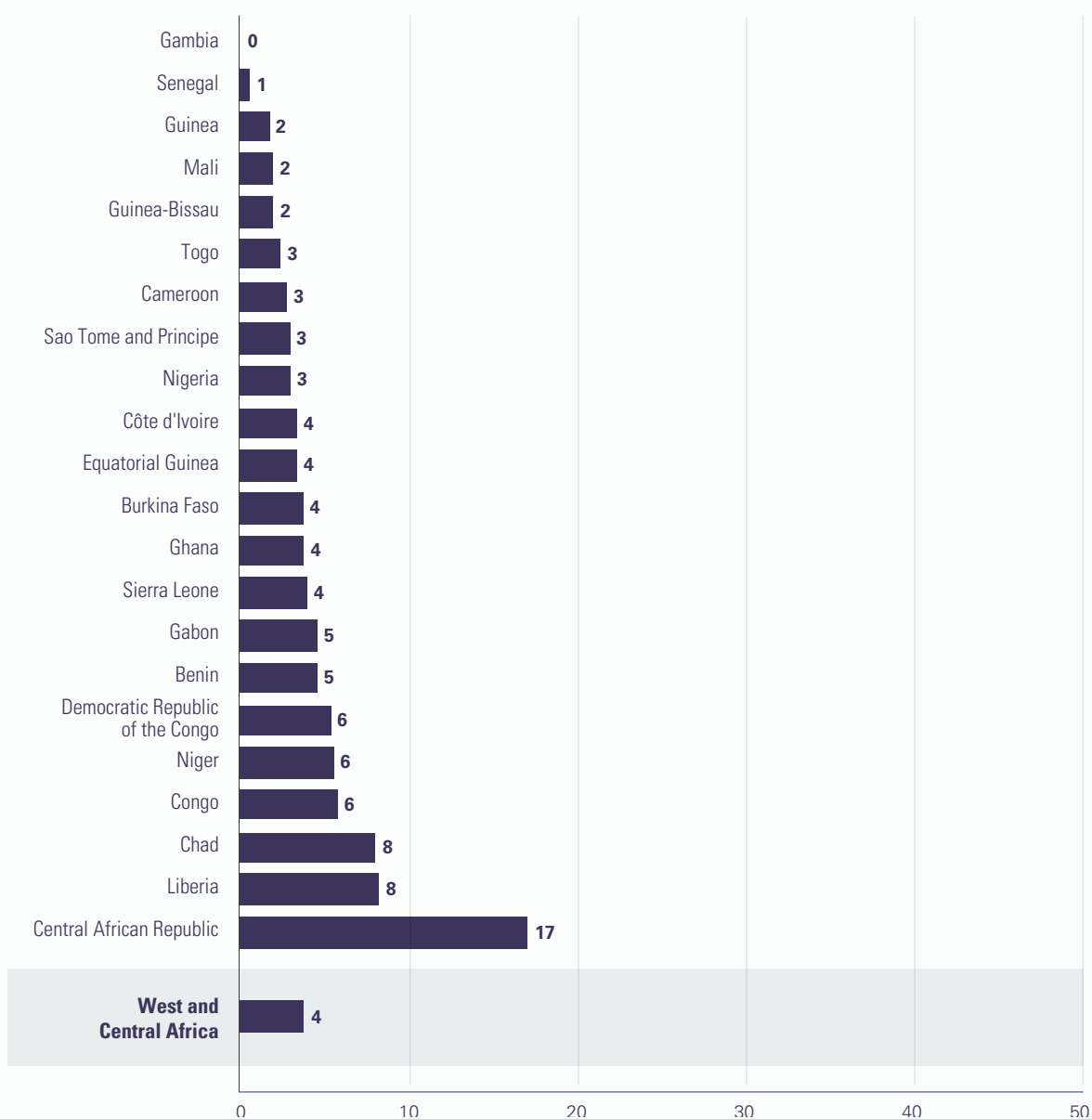
Country	Percentage
Gambia	0
Senegal	1
Guinea	2
Mali	2
Guinea-Bissau	2
Togo	3
Cameroon	3
Sao Tome and Principe	3
Nigeria	3
Côte d'Ivoire	4
Equatorial Guinea	4
Burkina Faso	4
Ghana	4
Sierra Leone	4
Gabon	5
Benin	5
Democratic Republic of the Congo	6
Niger	6
Congo	6
Chad	8
Liberia	8
Central African Republic	17
West and Central Africa	4

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

Legend: ■ Before age 15 ■ At or after 15 but before age 18

Country values (total): Cabo Verde 8, Ghana 19, Gabon 22, Gambia 23, Togo 25, Liberia 25, Guinea-Bissau 26, Côte d'Ivoire 27, Congo 27, Sao Tome and Principe 28, Democratic Republic of the Congo 29, Equatorial Guinea 30, Sierra Leone 30, Cameroon 30, Senegal 31, Benin 31, Mauritania 37, Nigeria 43, Guinea 47, Burkina Faso 52, Mali 54, Chad 61, Central African Republic 61, Niger 76
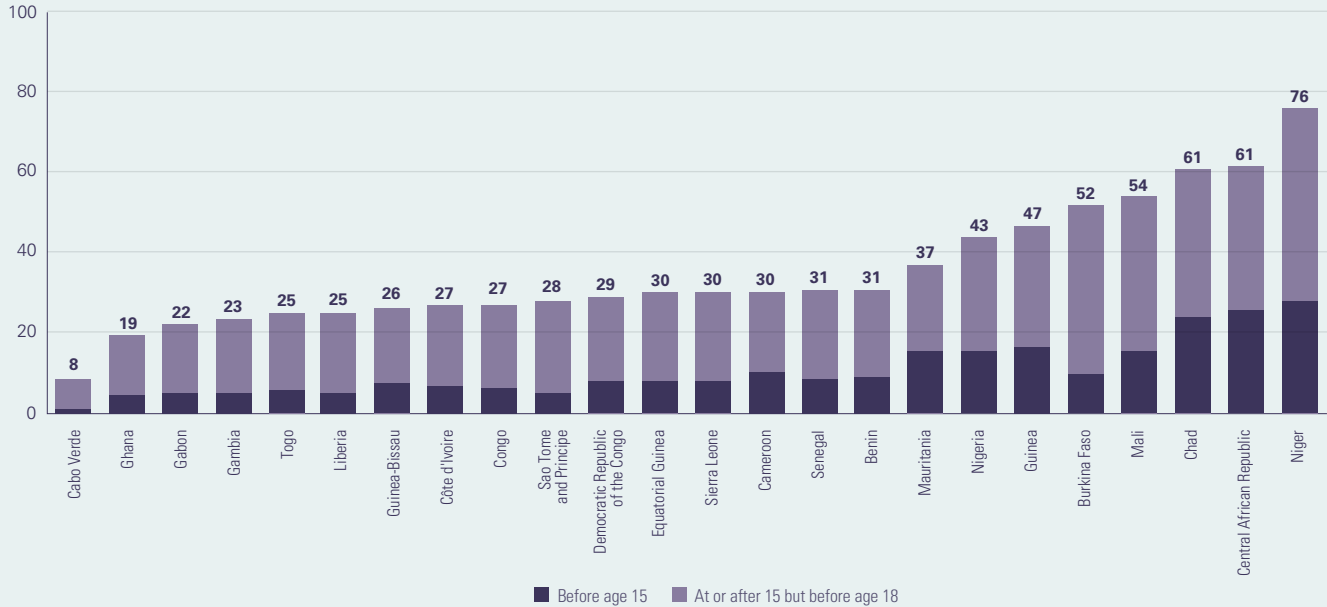
SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative sources, 2010–2021.

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

Wealth quintile: Poorest 62, Second 55, Middle 41, Fourth 28, Richest 13

Education: None 64, Primary 53, Secondary or higher 21

Residence: Rural 51, Urban 23
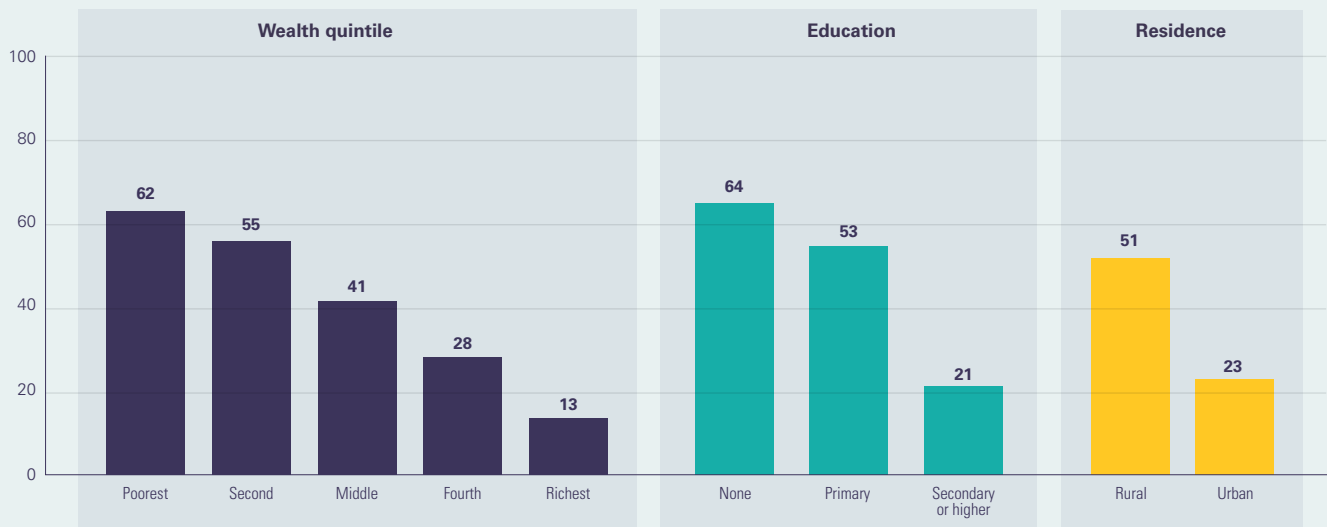
SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other nationally representative sources, 2015–2021.

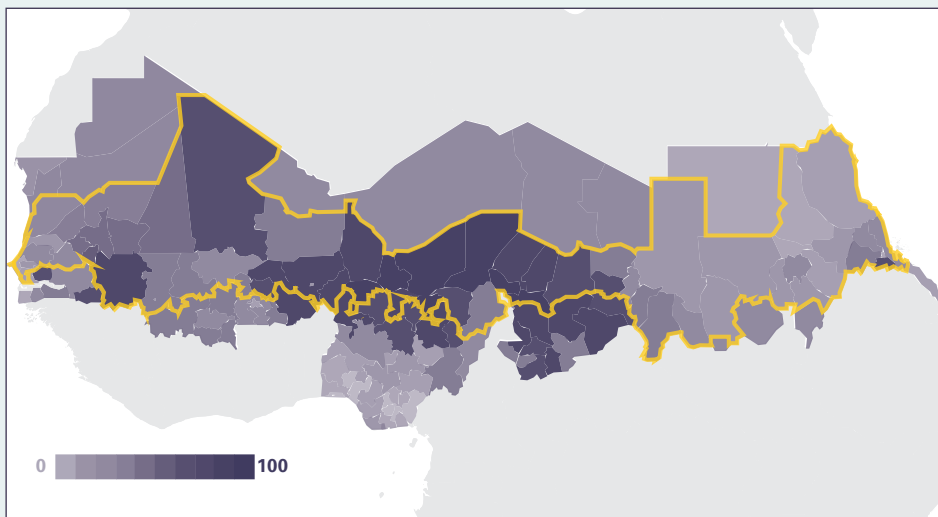## In the Sahel, levels of child marriage are even higher than in the rest of West and Central Africa

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
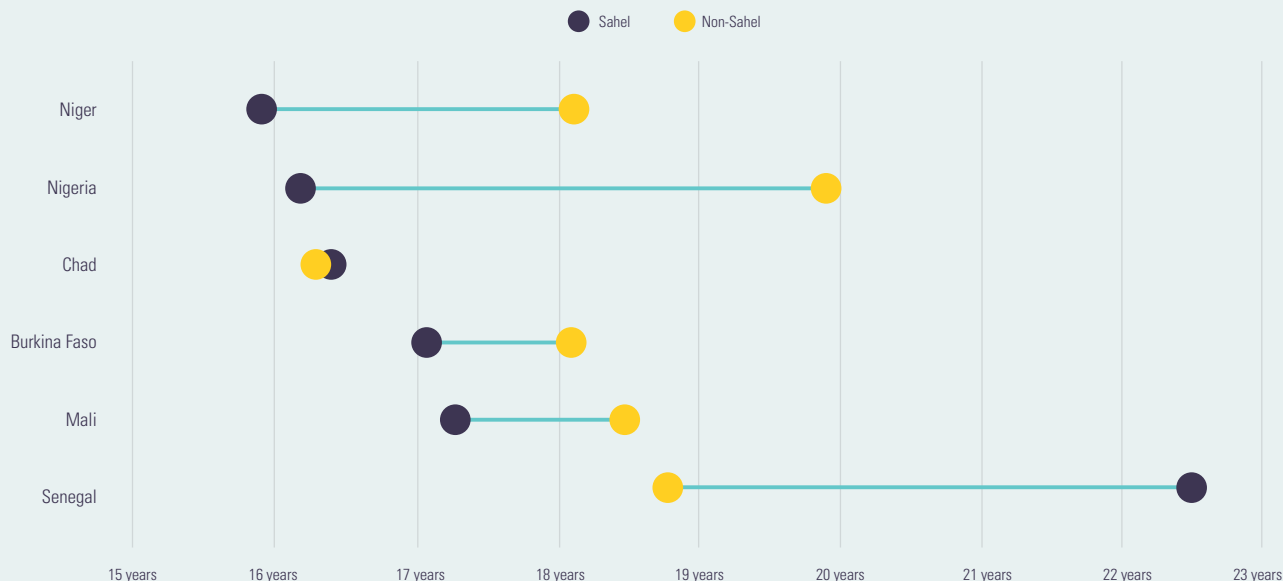
NOTES: This chart includes the countries in West and Central Africa that have states or provinces in the Sahel. For more details, see United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Marriage in the Sahel*, UNICEF, New York, 2020. Data for Mauritania have been excluded as the latest data source indicates that 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
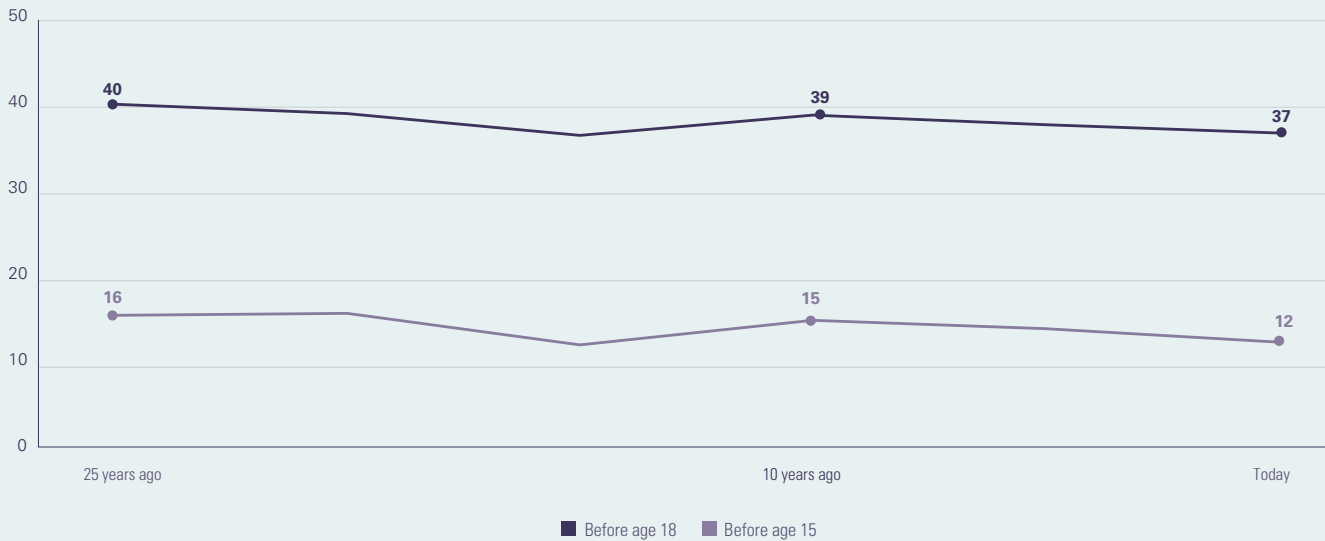
NOTES: Trend analysis is based on the latest available data at the time of publication, with new revisions superseding previously published results. Therefore, it is not advisable to compare results across publications to draw conclusions about trends in the practice.
SOURCE: UNICEF global databases, 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
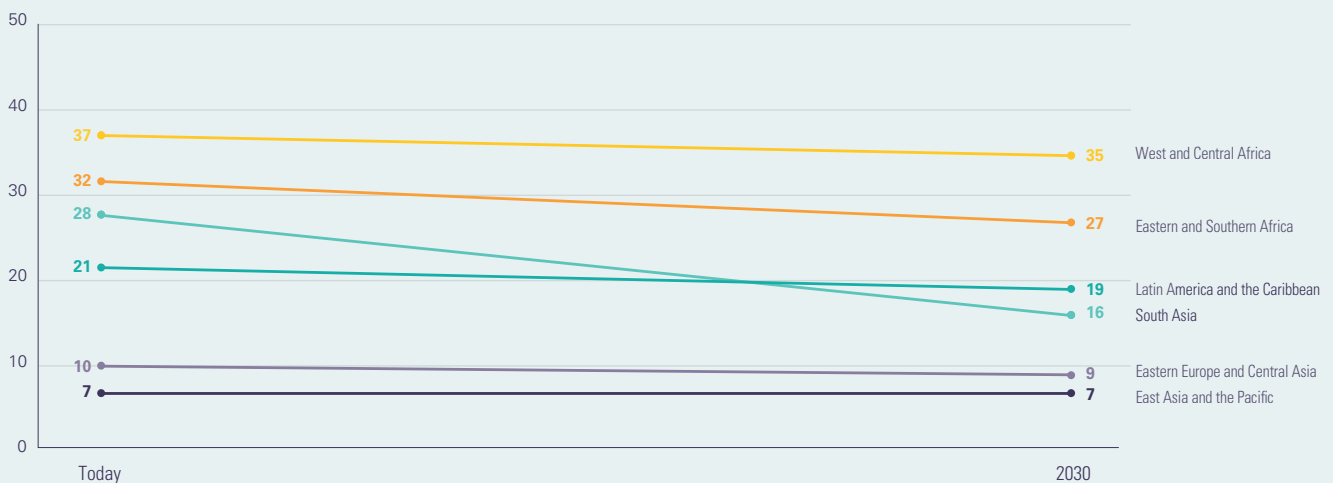
NOTES: Projected values build on existing trends and show expected values if progress over the past 10 years were to continue. Calculations are based on the average annual rate of change and project a continuation at the same rate, including for regions in which changes are slight and may not be statistically 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.

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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

married before age 15 → **448,100**

married before age 18 → **1.1 million**
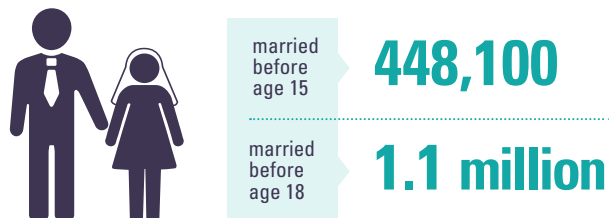
Benin is home to over 1 million child brides; 1 in 3 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
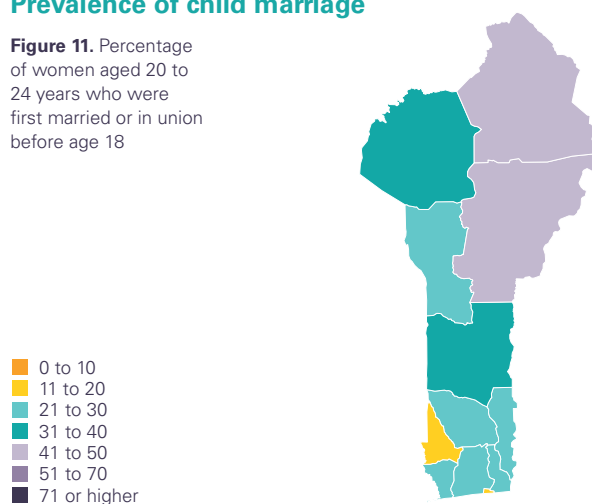
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Benin	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	31	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	9	28	2	12	5
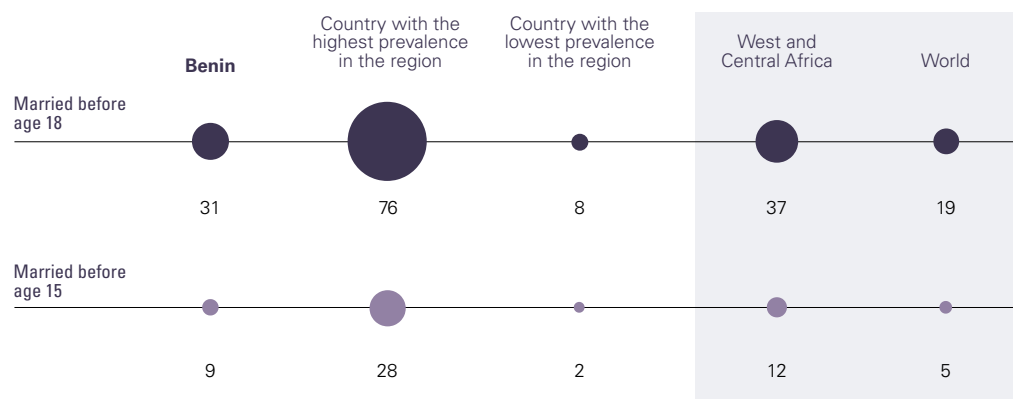
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile
- Poorest: 49
- Second: 39
- Middle: 33
- Fourth: 25
- Richest: 16

Education
- No education: 44
- Primary: 33
- Secondary or higher: 14

Residence
- Rural: 37
- Urban: 22
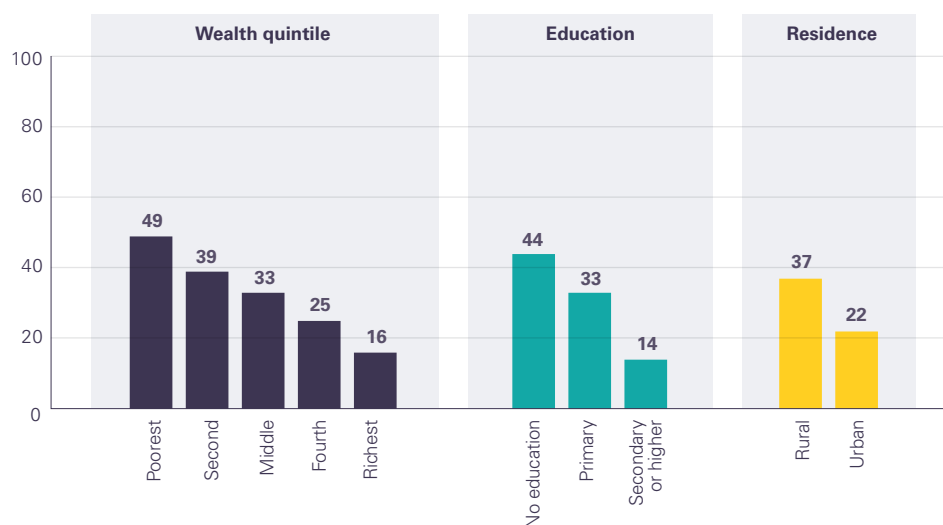
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18

| 2 | 32 | 39 | 27 |

Married at or after age 18

| 4 | 45 | 34 | 17 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

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

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
  missing data

82 17 1

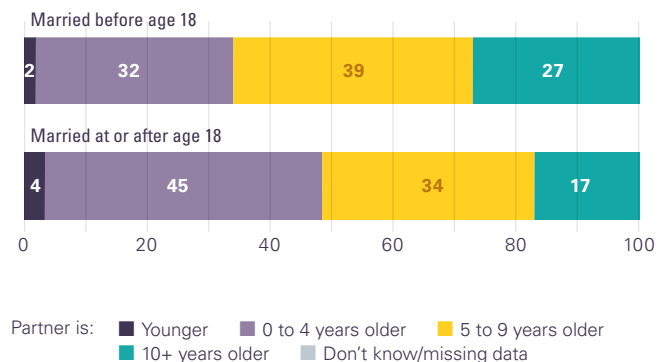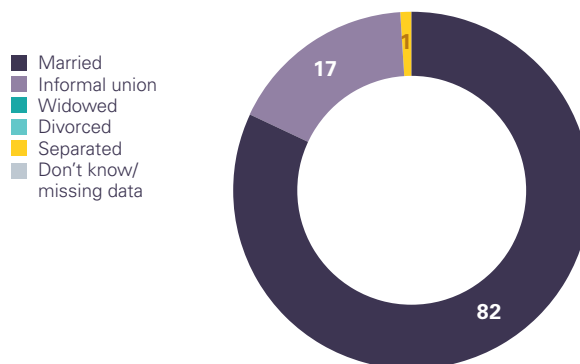## Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18	Never married
Has a bank account	2	2	11
Had a job in the past 12 months	74	73	67
Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	57	59	n/a
Believes wife-beating is justified	37	31	24
Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months	32	32	n/a
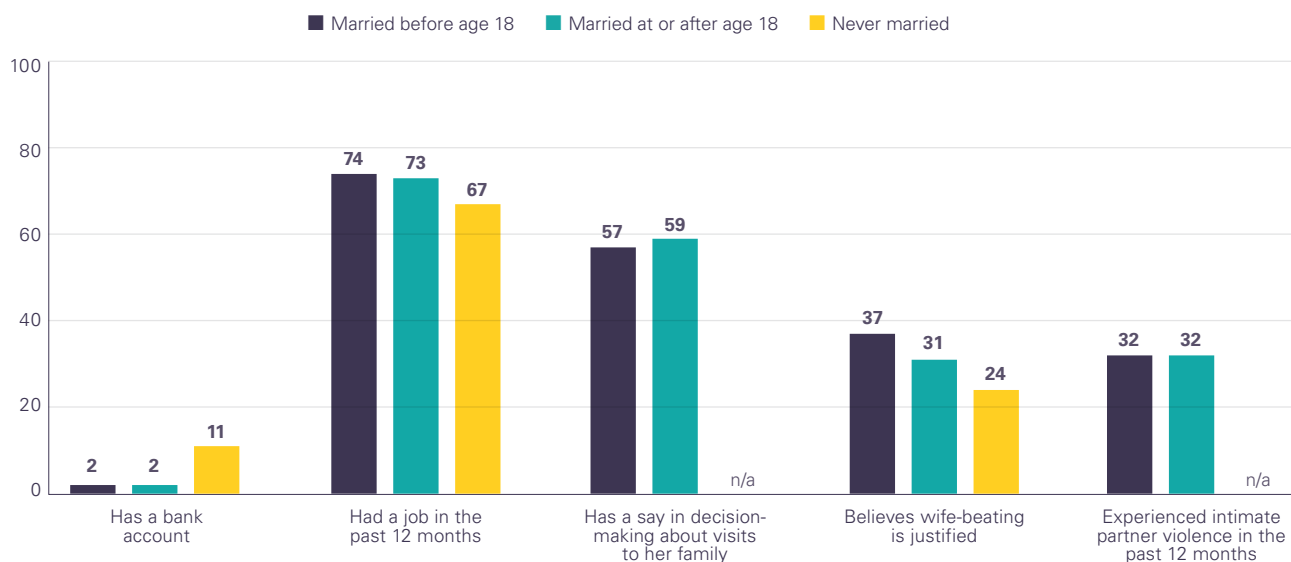
Education

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

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

Currently married or in union

2
99

Never married or in union

54 46
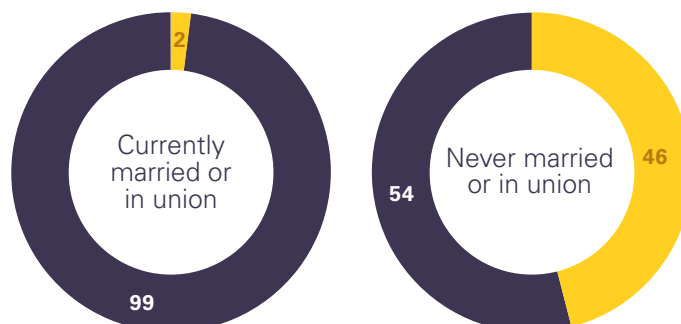
Early childbearing

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

- Gave birth before age 18
- Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20

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

- Pregnant before marriage
- Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
- Pregnant after 1 year of marriage
- Never gave birth

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

- Married before age 18
- Married at or after age 18
- Never married

Generational trends

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

— Married before age 18   — Married before age 15

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

Observed in the past	25 years	0.4
	10 years	2.3
Required for elimination by	2030	28.5

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 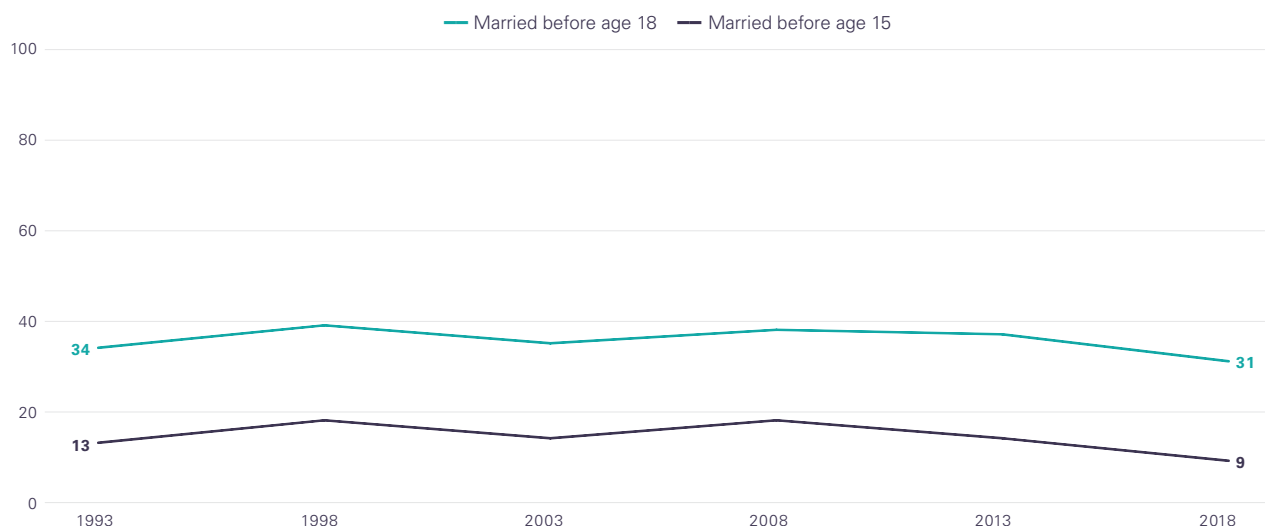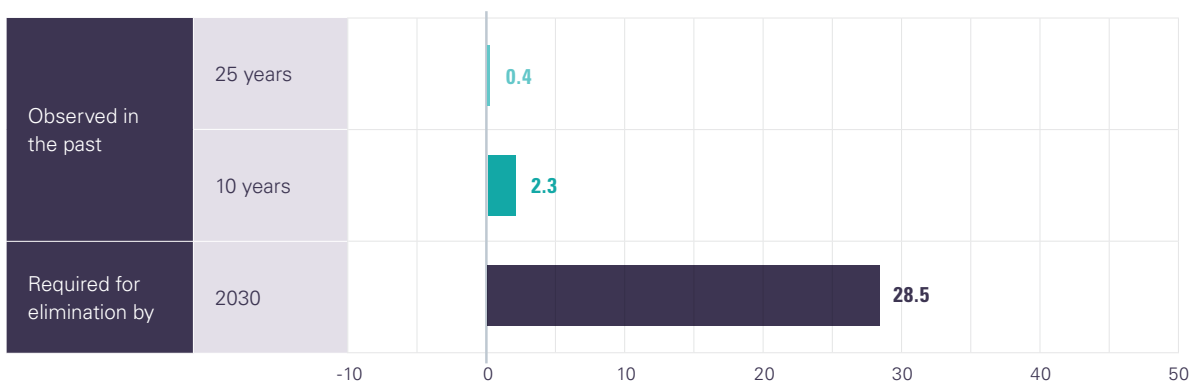'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional 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 I 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

married before age 15 **548,200**

married before age 18 **2.8 million**
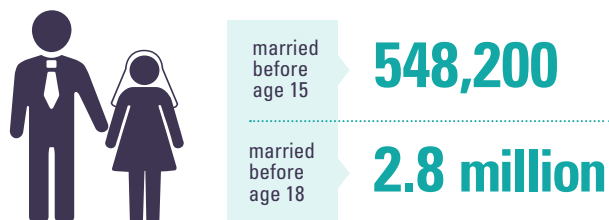
Burkina Faso is home to nearly 3 million child brides; 1 in 2 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
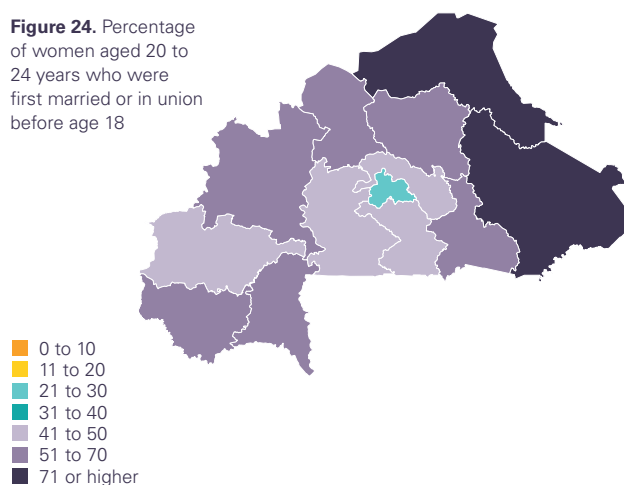
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Burkina Faso	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	52	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	10	28	2	12	5
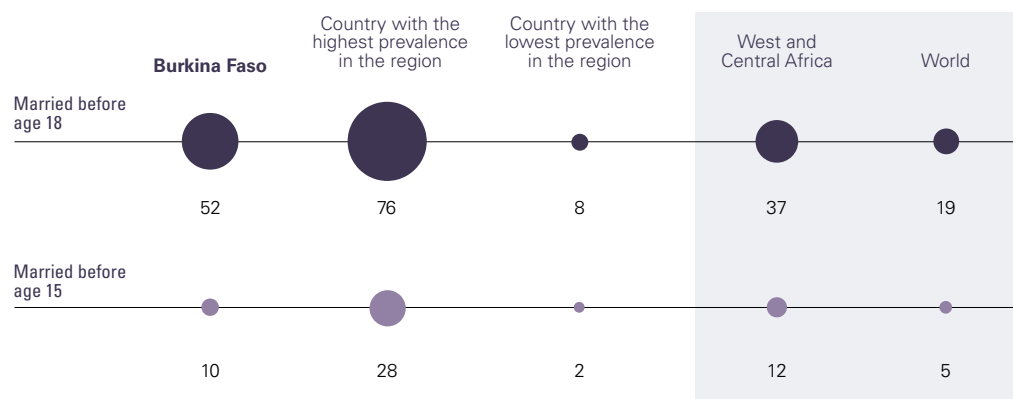
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile					Education			Residence	
Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest	No education	Primary	Secondary or higher	Rural	Urban
67	65	61	54	28	63	40	17	62	27
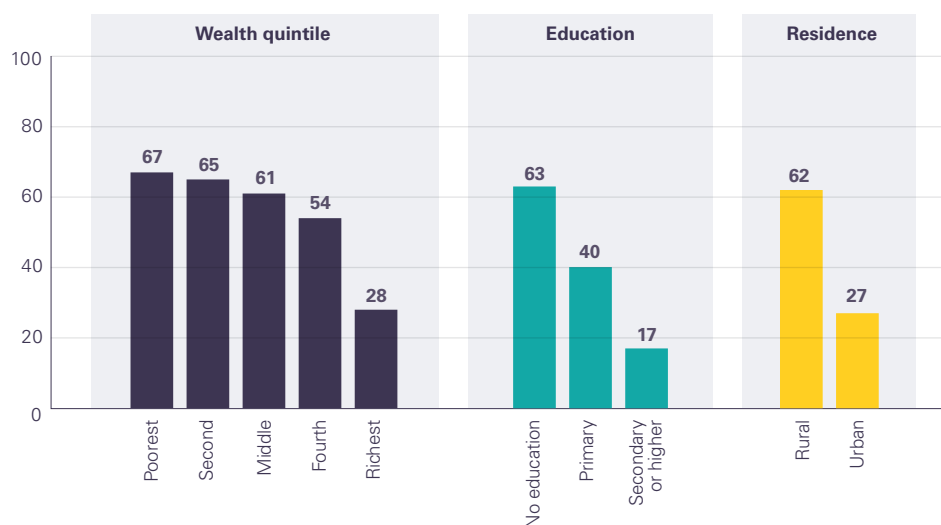
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18
| 1 | 21 | 37 | 41 | 1 |

Married at or after age 18
| 1 | 33 | 35 | 32 |

Scale: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100

Partner is:
- ■ Younger
- ■ 0 to 4 years older
- ■ 5 to 9 years older
- ■ 10+ years older
- ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

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

- ■ Married
- ■ Informal union
- ■ Widowed
- ■ Divorced
- ■ Separated
- ■ Don't know/ missing data

Values: 87, 9, 1, 3
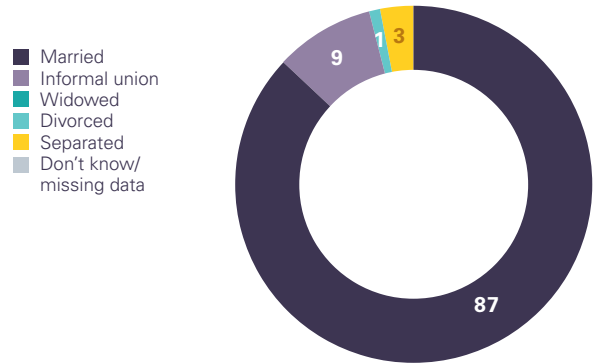
Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

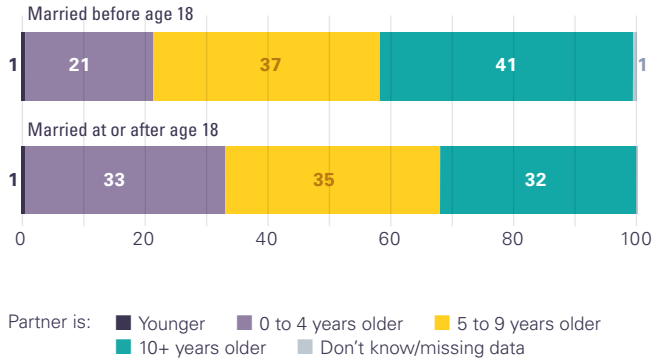**Figure 29.** Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who have an account at a bank or other financial institution, who have had a job in the past 12 months, who usually decide (alone or with their spouses) about visits to the women's families, who believe wife-beating is justified and who have experienced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

Legend: ■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	n/a	78	51	47	16
Married at or after age 18	n/a	73	54	43	11
Never married	n/a	55	n/a	30	n/a
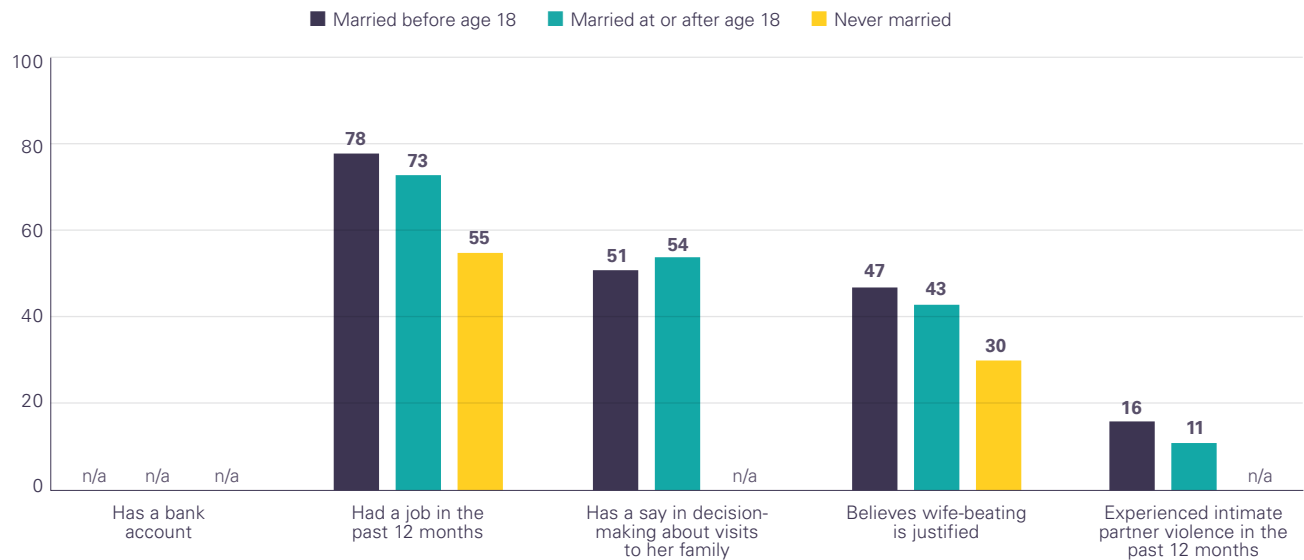
Education

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

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

Currently married or in union: 96, 4

Never married or in union: 63, 37
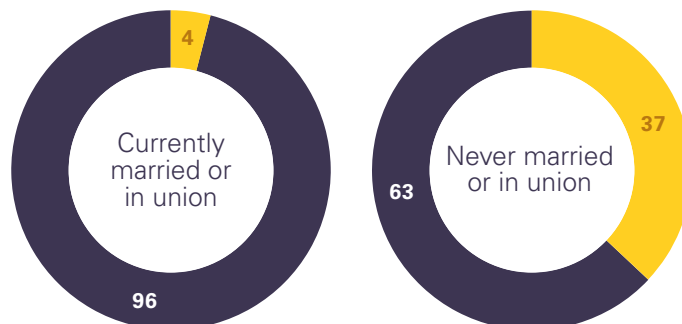
Early childbearing

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

Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18	Never married
38		
52	27	5
	3	3

■ Gave birth before age 18
■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
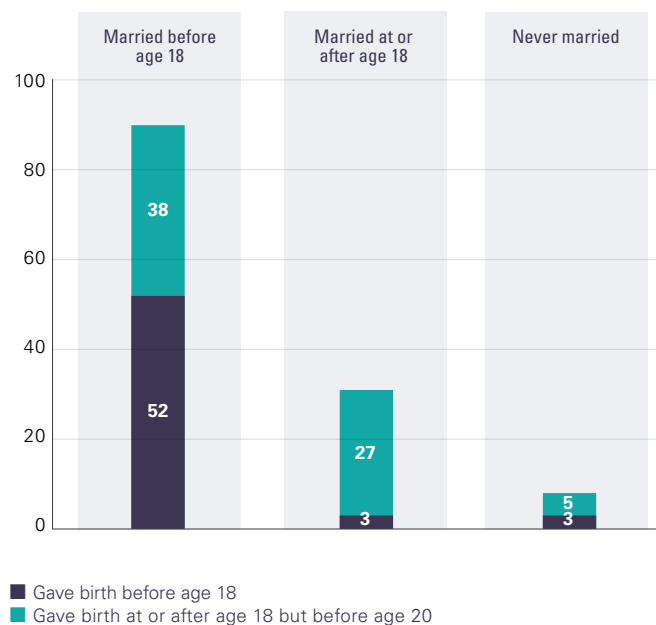
Figure 32. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

Married before age 18
5
16
33
46

Married at or after age 18
23
21
16
40

■ Pregnant before marriage   ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage ■ Never gave birth
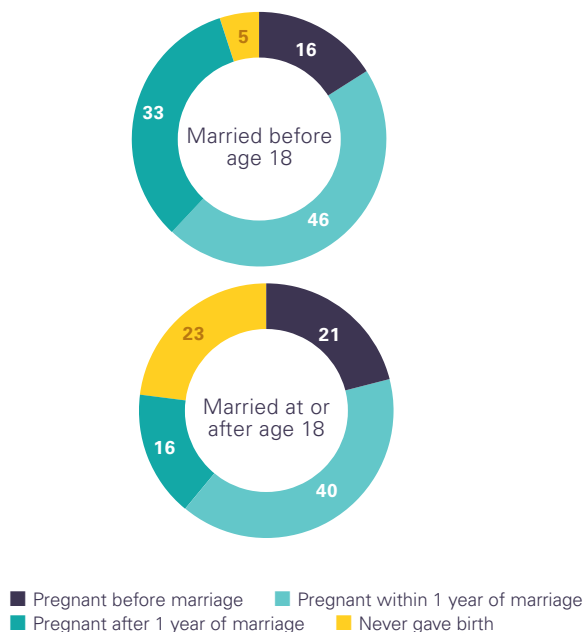
Reproductive health

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Demand for family planning satisfied	Skilled antenatal care	Skilled attendant at delivery
Married before age 18	37	96	71
Married at or after age 18	40	97	83
Never married	80	95	89
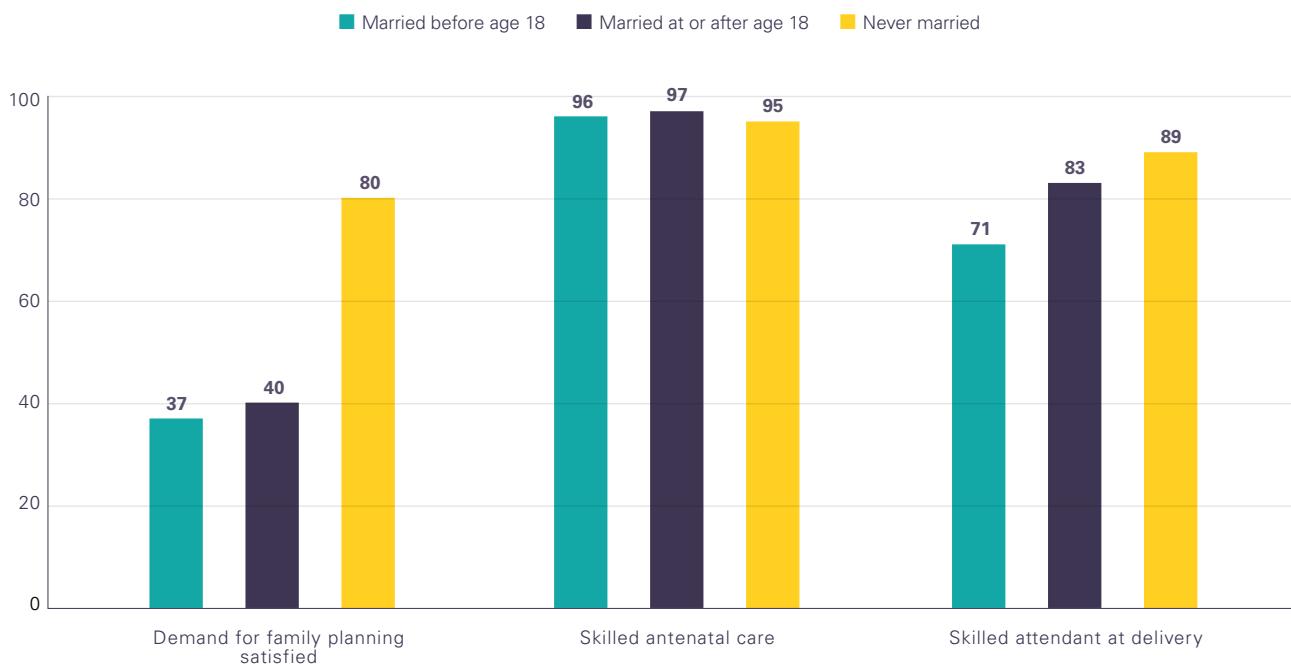
Generational trends

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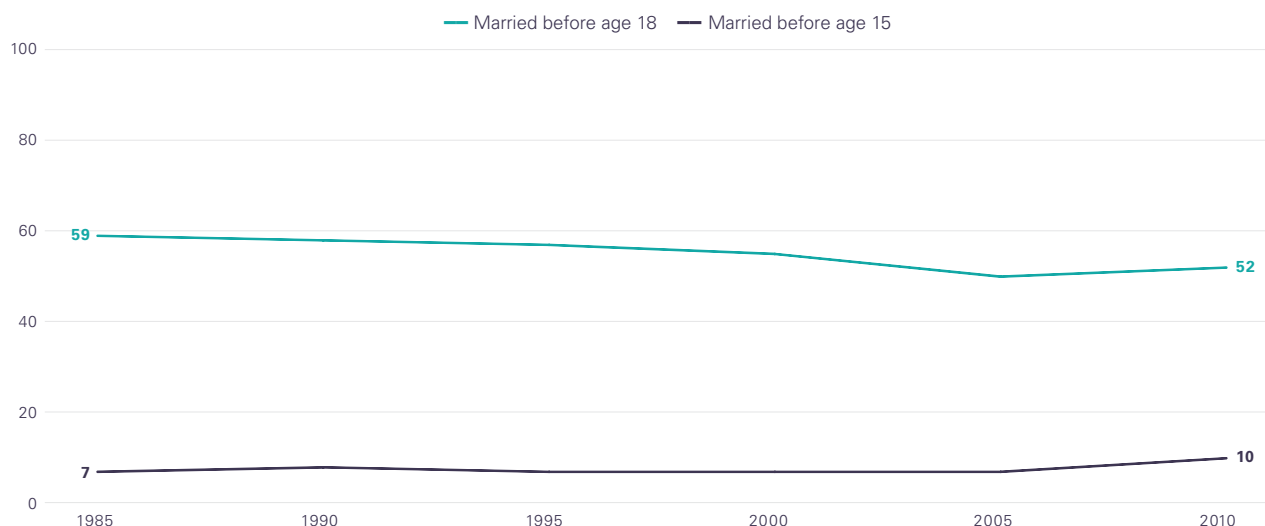
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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
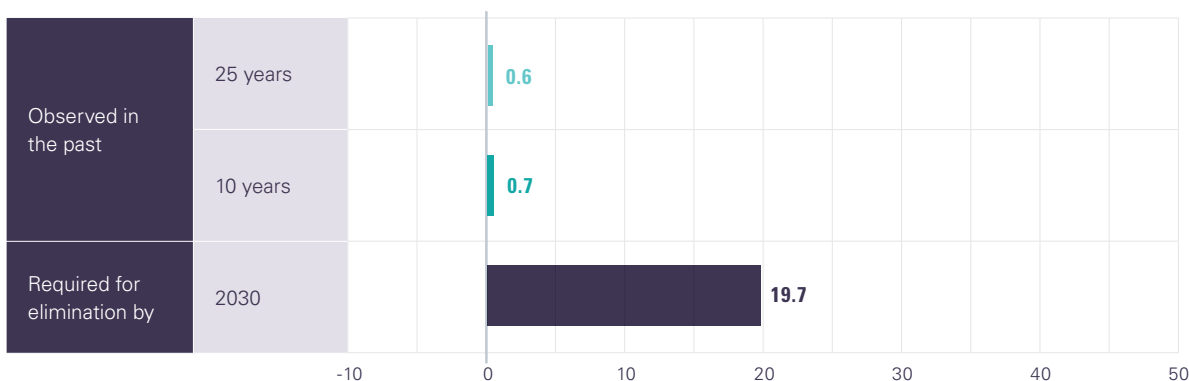
NOTES:
Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2010 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population 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

married before age 15 **938,000**

married before age 18 **2.6 million**
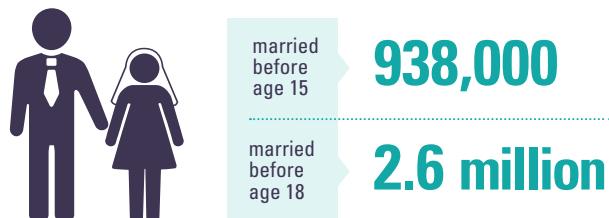
Cameroon is home to over 2 million child brides; 3 in 10 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
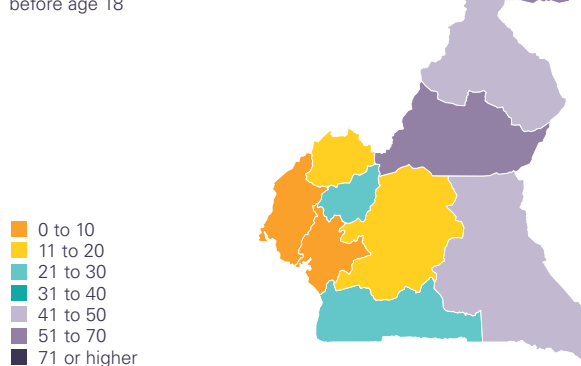
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Cameroon	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	30	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	11	28	2	12	5
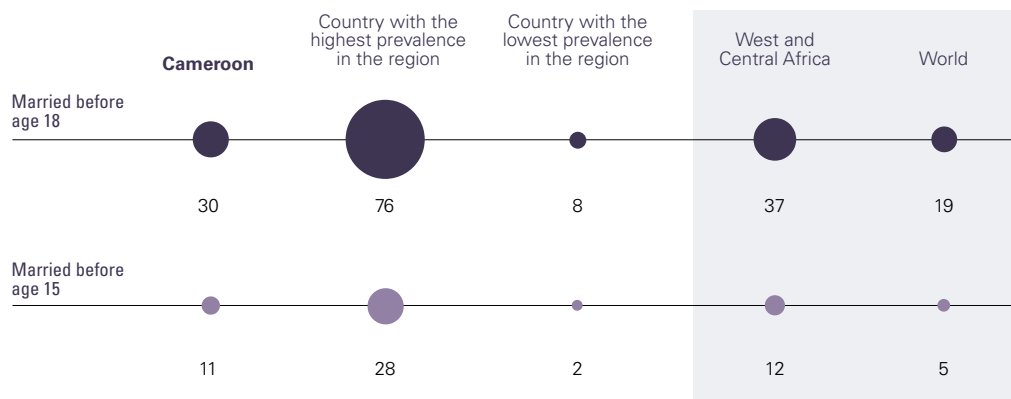
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile
- Poorest: 57
- Second: 45
- Middle: 33
- Fourth: 20
- Richest: 11

Education
- No education: 70
- Primary: 46
- Secondary or higher: 15

Residence
- Rural: 45
- Urban: 19
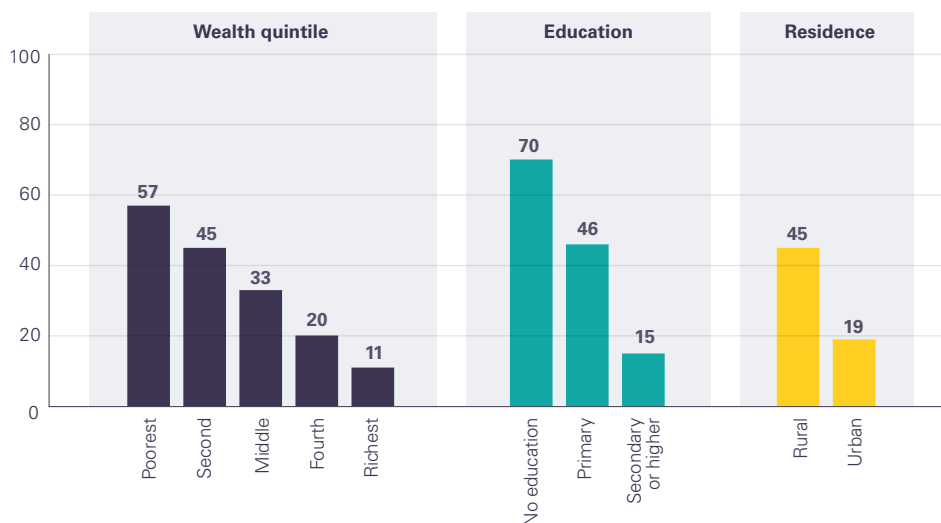
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18
| 1 | 23 | 36 | 41 |

Married at or after age 18
| 2 | 25 | 43 | 29 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

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

- ■ Married
- ■ Informal union
- ■ Widowed
- ■ Divorced
- ■ Separated
- ■ Don't know/ missing data

69 26 1 4
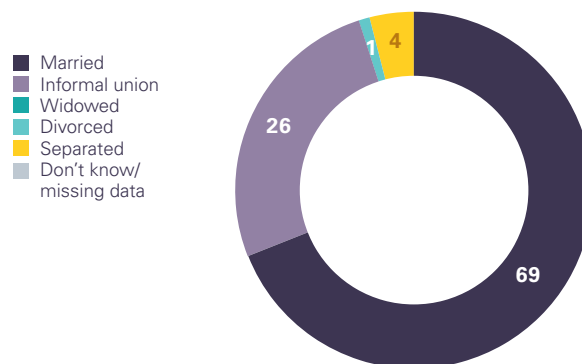
Lives of child brides
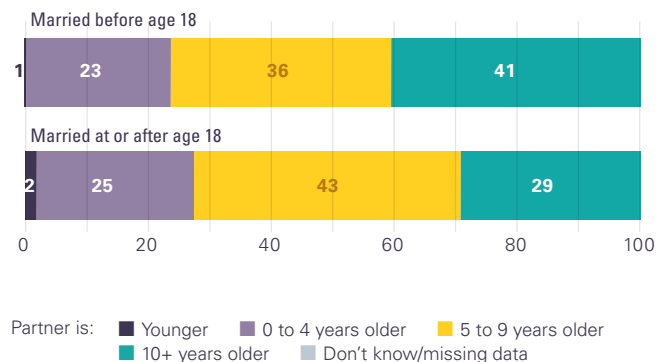
Autonomy, empowerment and violence

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

■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

	Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18	Never married
Has a bank account	3	5	10
Had a job in the past 12 months	71	61	51
Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	51	62	n/a
Believes wife-beating is justified	32	28	20
Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months	30	35	n/a
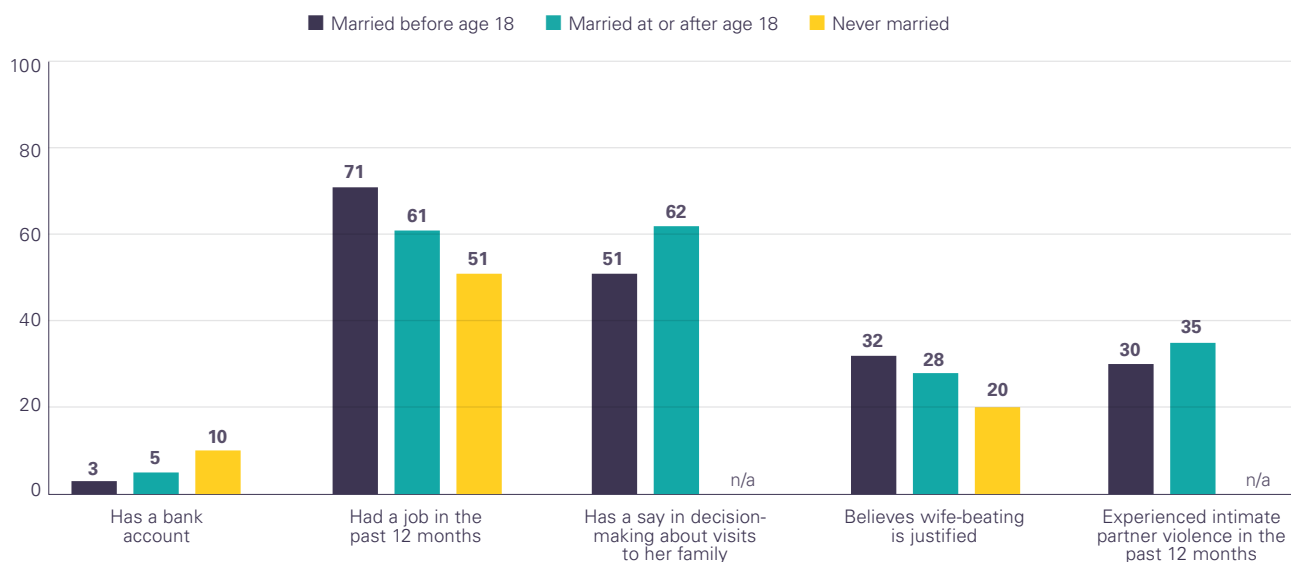
Education

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

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

Currently married or in union
11 89

Never married or in union
23 77

Early childbearing

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

Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18	Never married
23	29	11
69	15	8

■ Gave birth before age 18
■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
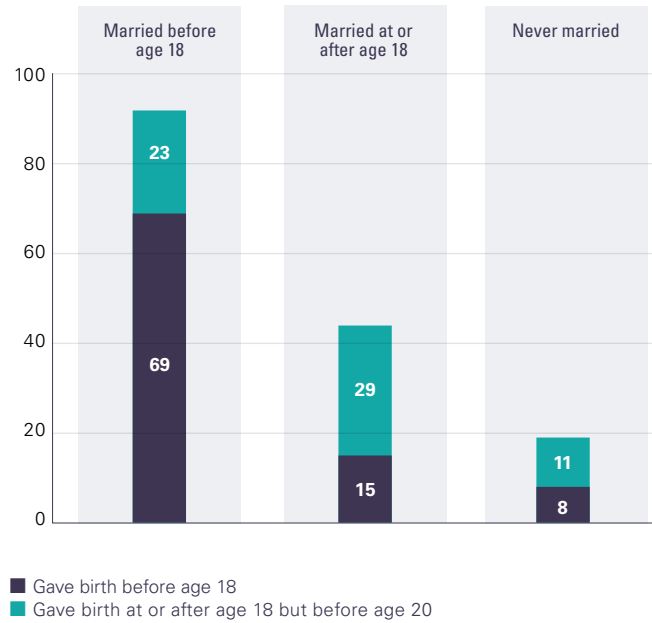
Figure 45. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

Married before age 18: 26, 41, 29, 4

Married at or after age 18: 47, 26, 6, 21

■ Pregnant before marriage   ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage   ■ Never gave birth
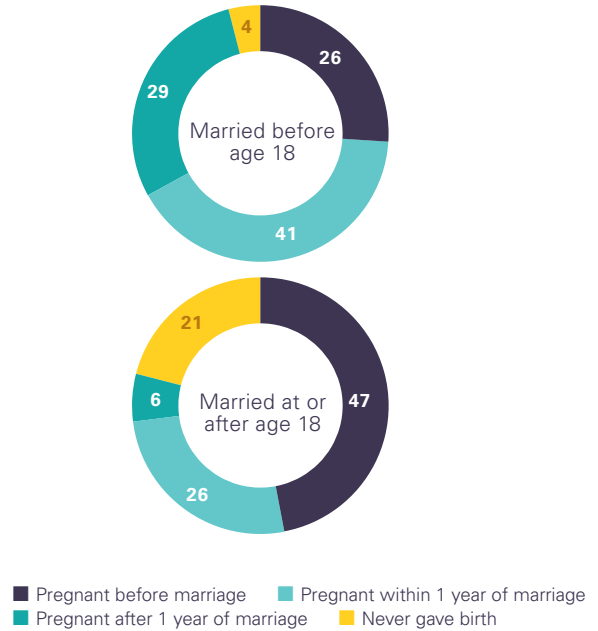
Reproductive health

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Demand for family planning satisfied	Skilled antenatal care	Skilled attendant at delivery
Married before age 18	44	85	91
Married at or after age 18	41	89	91
Never married	61	96	96

Generational trends

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

— Married before age 18   — Married before age 15
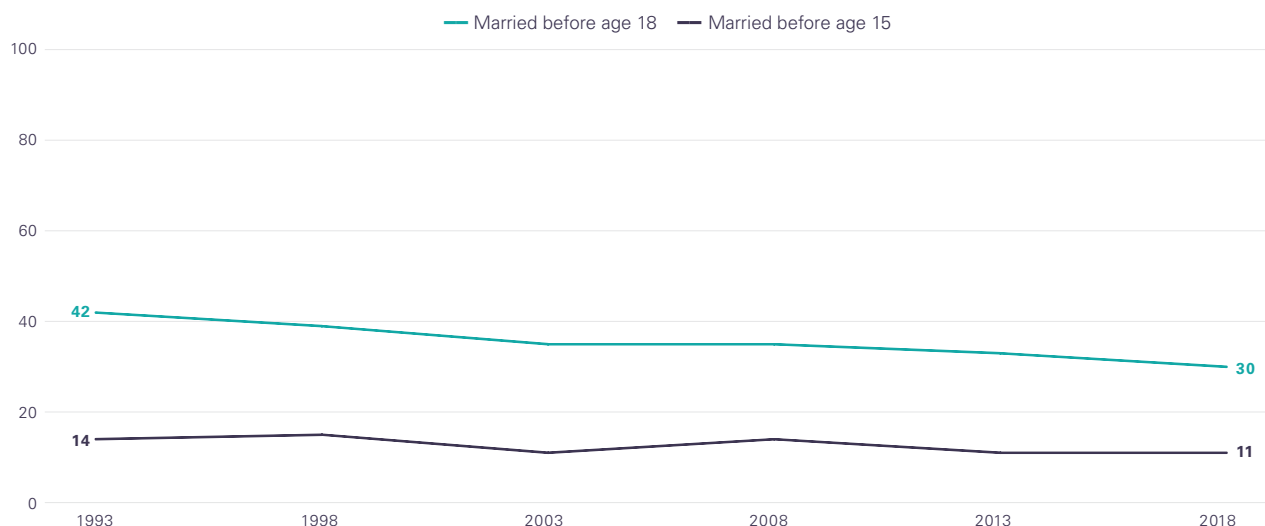
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

Observed in the past	25 years	1.4
	10 years	1.6
Required for elimination by	2030	28.3

Central African Republic

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 I 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

married before age 15 → **358,300**

married before age 18 → **747,400**
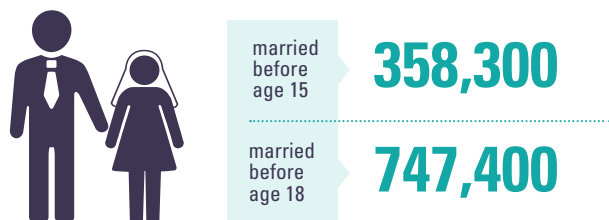
The Central African Republic is home to over 747,000 child brides; 3 in 5 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
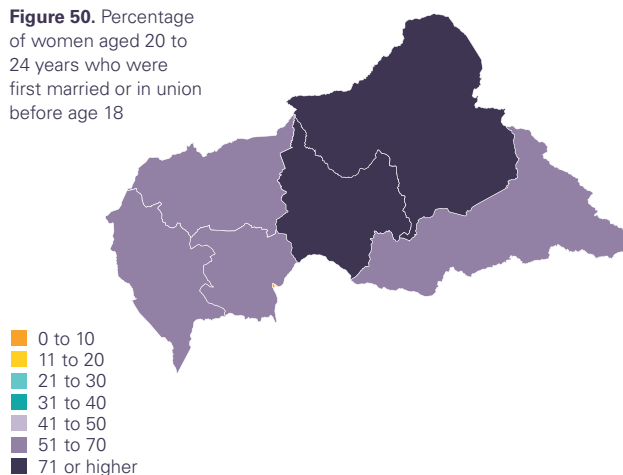
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Central African Republic	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	61	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	26	28	2	12	5
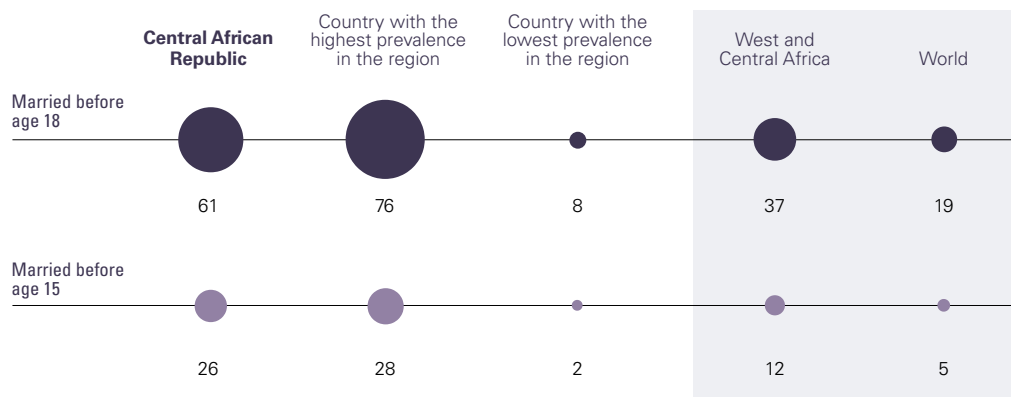
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile
- Poorest: 68
- Second: 64
- Middle: 68
- Fourth: 60
- Richest: 47

Education
- No education: 69
- Primary: 54
- Secondary or higher: 49

Residence
- Rural: 66
- Urban: 53
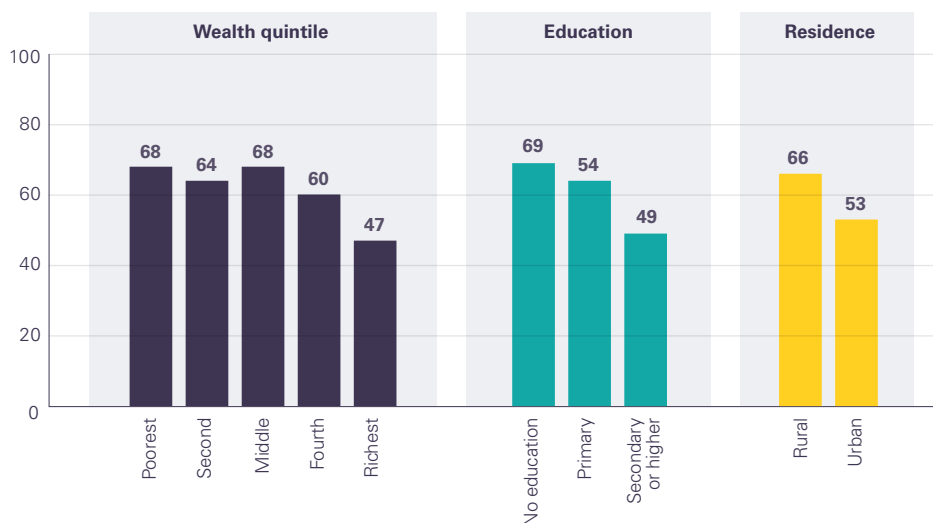
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18

| 3 | 33 | 32 | 23 | 9 |

Married at or after age 18

| 6 | 42 | 26 | 21 | 6 |

0 20 40 60 80 100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data
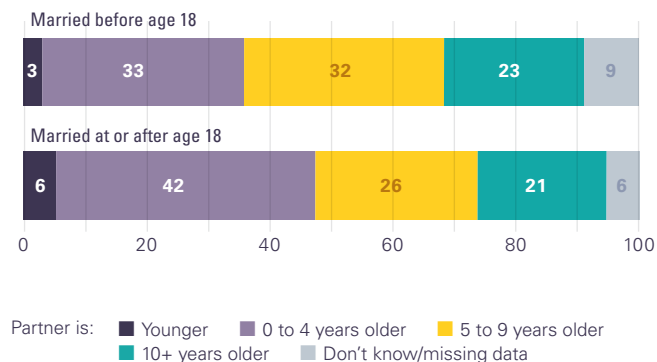
Types of unions

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

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
  missing data

1 7 4

88
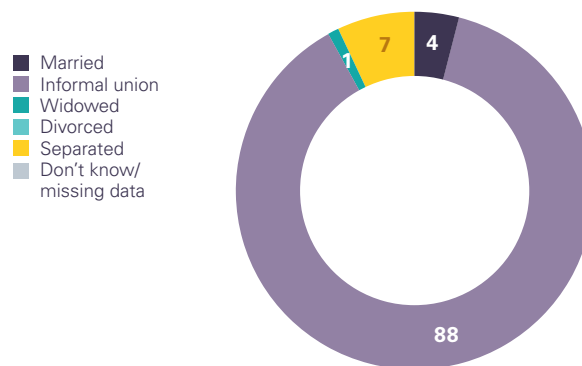
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	69	n/a
Married at or after age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	65	n/a
Never married	n/a	n/a	n/a	57	n/a
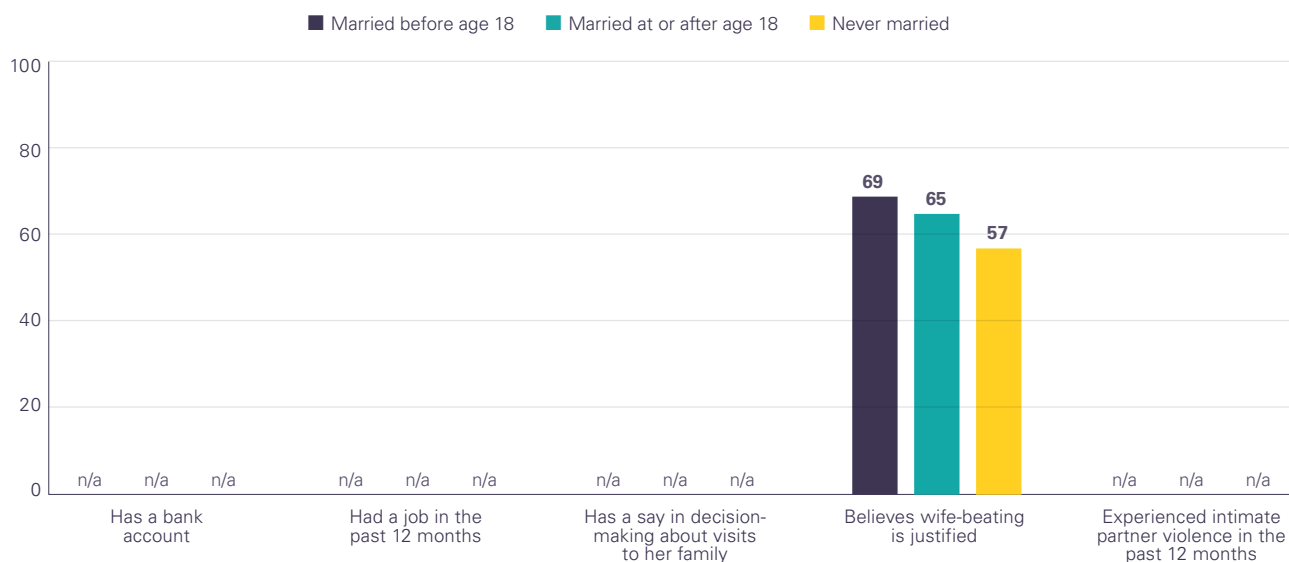
Education

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

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

Currently married or in union
22
78

Never married or in union
34
66

Early childbearing

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

- Gave birth before age 18
- Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
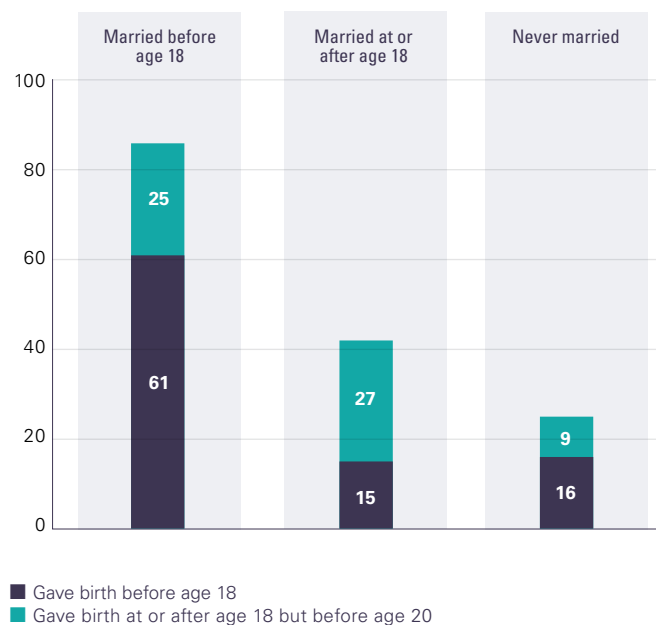
Figure 58. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

- Pregnant before marriage
- Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
- Pregnant after 1 year of marriage
- Never gave birth
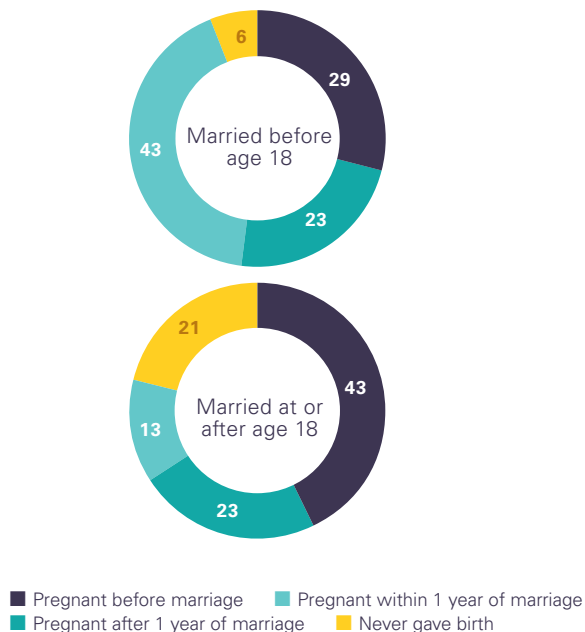
Reproductive health

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

- Married before age 18
- Married at or after age 18
- Never married

Generational trends

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

— Married before age 18 — Married before age 15
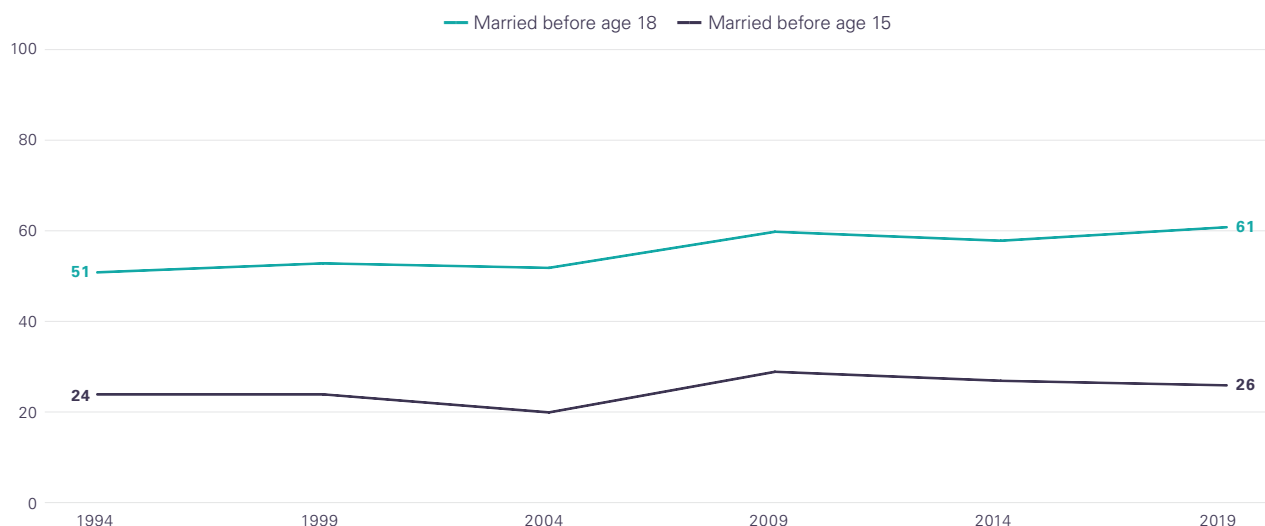
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

Observed in the past	25 years	-0.7
	10 years	-0.2
Required for elimination by	2030	37.4

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

married before age 15 → **869,700**

married before age 18 → **2.1 million**
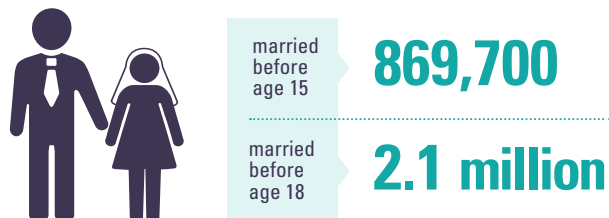
Chad is home to over 2 million child brides; 3 in 5 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
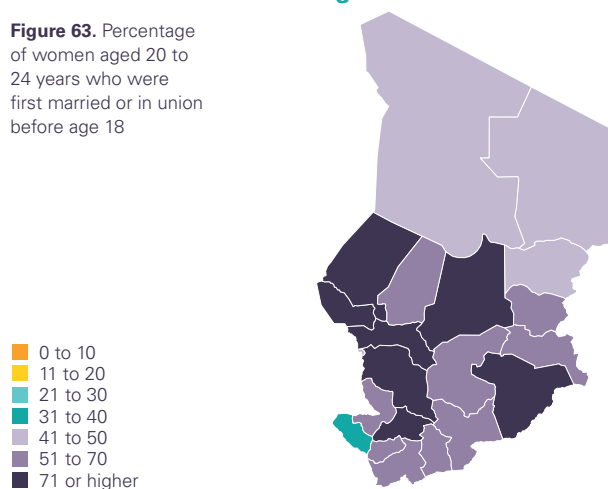
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Chad	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	61	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	24	28	2	12	5
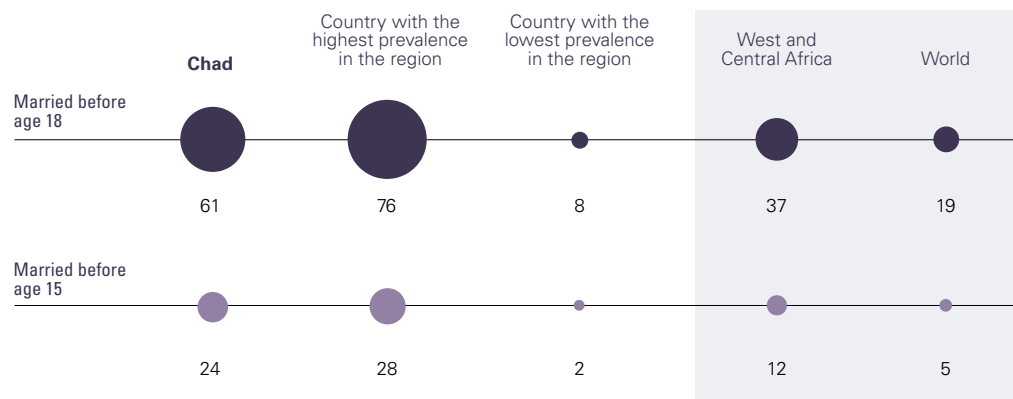
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile

Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest
65	69	65	59	47

Education

No education	Primary	Secondary or higher
68	61	45

Residence

Rural	Urban
63	50

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

Married before age 18: 2 | 22 | 37 | 38 | 1

Married at or after age 18: 4 | 30 | 35 | 30 | 2

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older ■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data
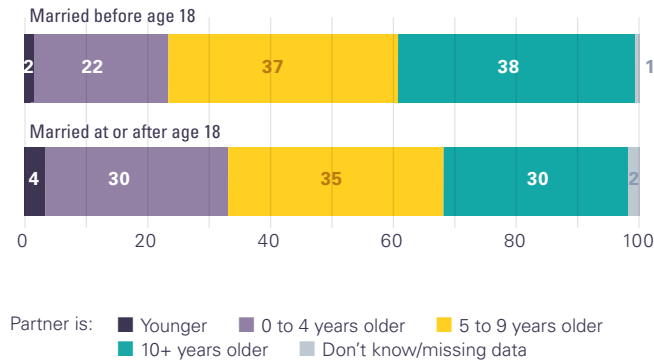
Types of unions

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

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/ missing data

81 | 9 | 3 | 7
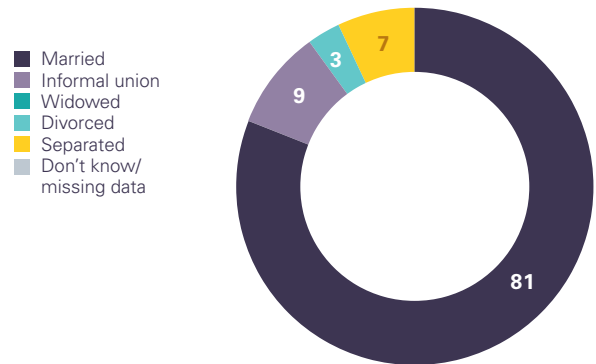
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
	n/a n/a n/a	n/a n/a n/a	n/a n/a n/a	80 77 71	n/a n/a n/a
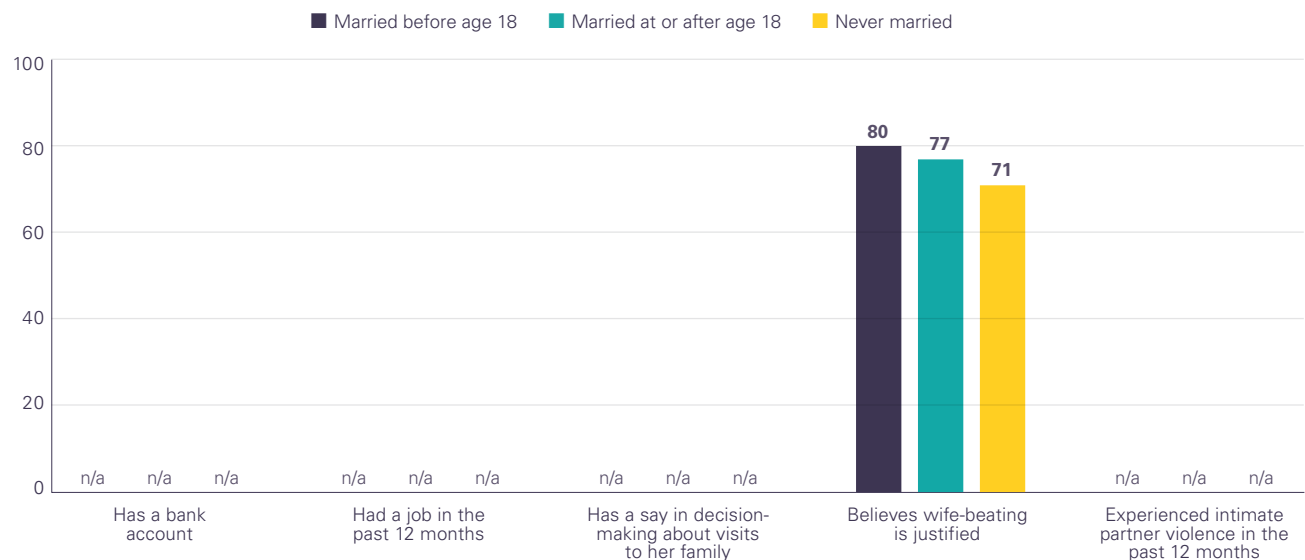
Figure 69. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union: 92 | 8

Never married or in union: 60 | 40
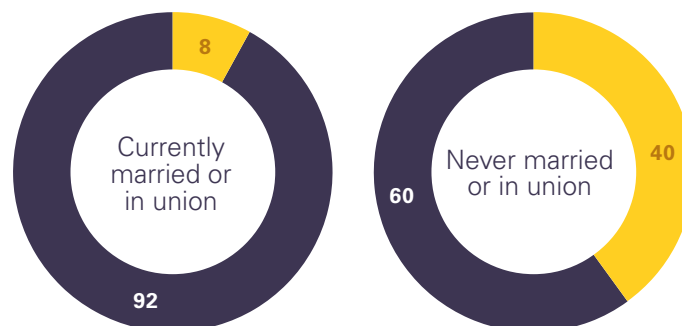
Early childbearing

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

	Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18	Never married
Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20	24	27	3
Gave birth before age 18	71	3	5

■ Gave birth before age 18
■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
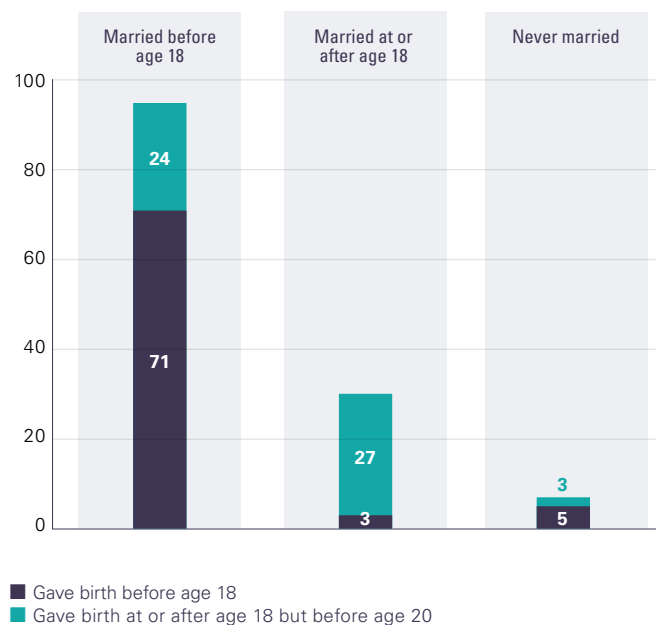
Figure 71. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

Married before age 18: 22, 47, 29, 3

Married at or after age 18: 24, 38, 16, 22

■ Pregnant before marriage ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage ■ Never gave birth
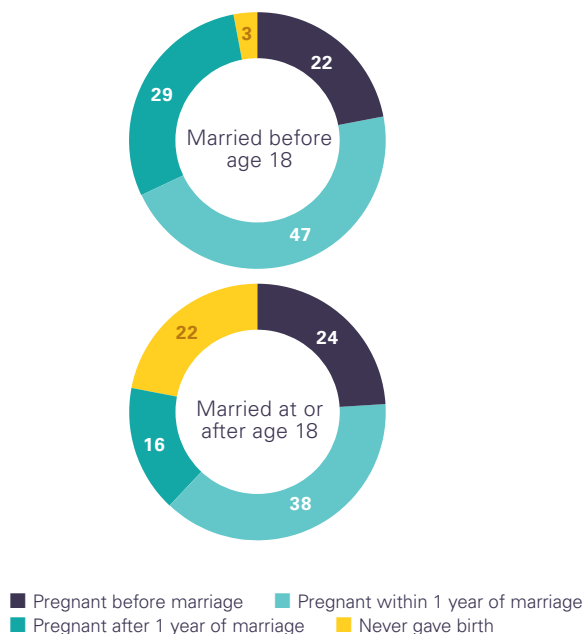
Reproductive health

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

■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

	Demand for family planning satisfied	Skilled antenatal care	Skilled attendant at delivery
Married before age 18	18	1	37
Married at or after age 18	14	0	48
Never married	7	0	33

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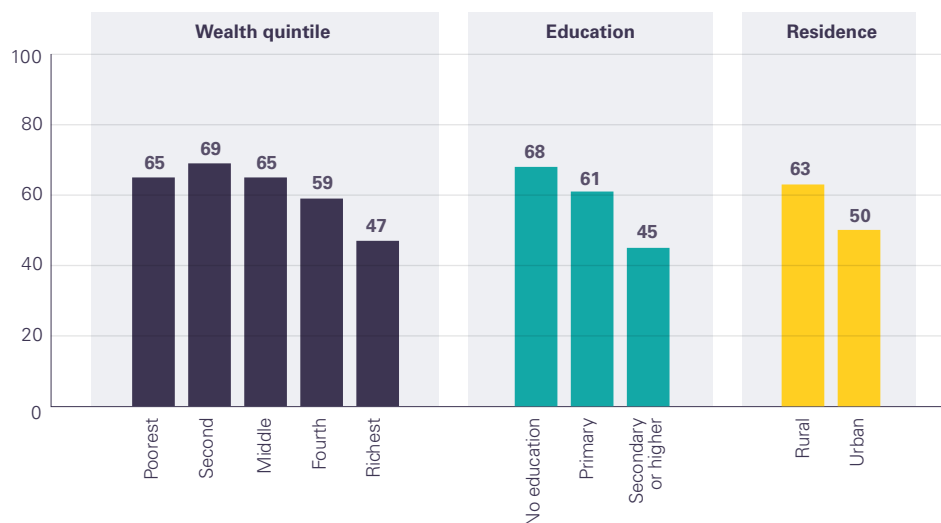
Figure 73. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

Legend: —— Married before age 18 —— Married before age 15
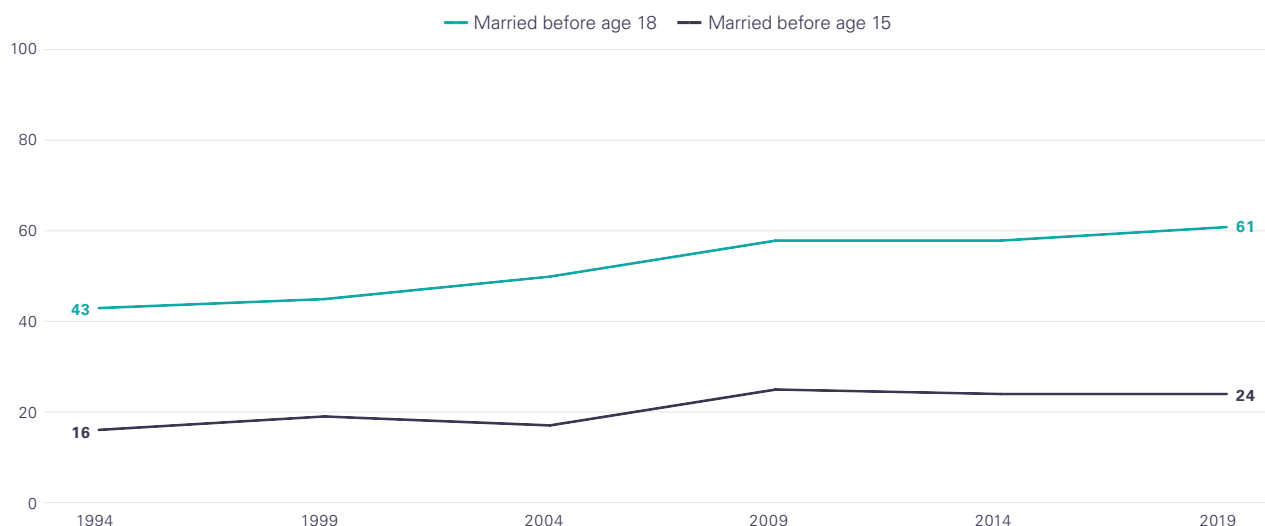
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

Observed in the past	25 years	-1.4
	10 years	-0.4
Required for elimination by	2030	37.3

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

married before age 15 **125,600**

married before age 18 **421,600**
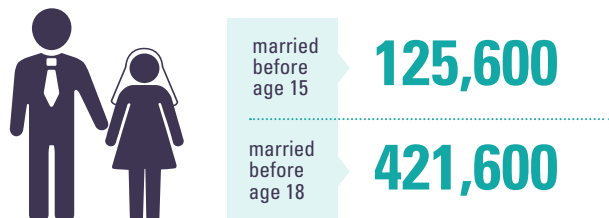
The Congo is home to over 421,000 child brides; 1 in 4 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
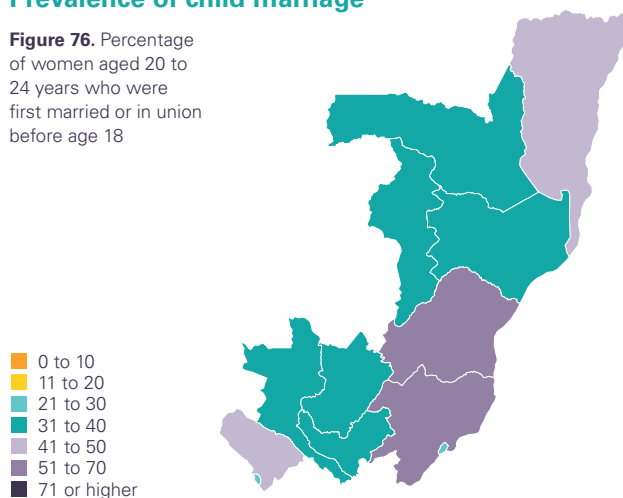
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Congo	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	27	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	7	28	2	12	5
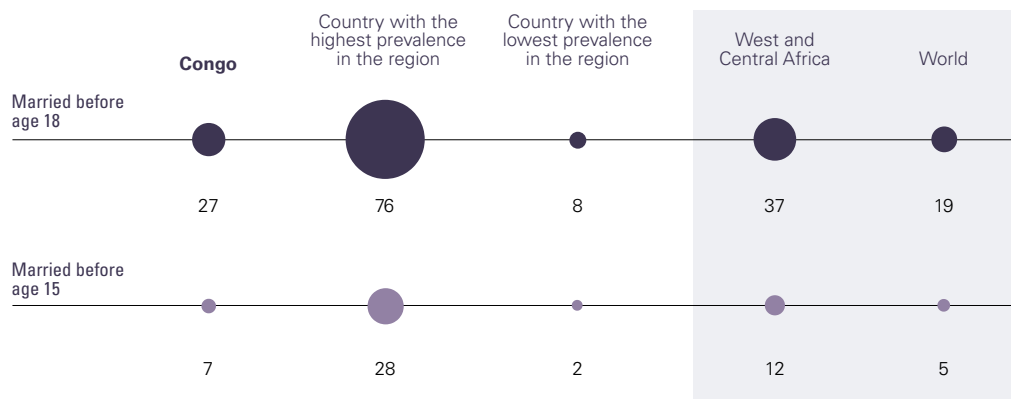
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile

Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest
48	35	27	26	9

Education

No education	Primary	Secondary or higher
55	41	23

Residence

Rural	Urban
45	23

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

Married before age 18

| 2 | 30 | 39 | 28 | 1 |

Married at or after age 18

| 4 | 40 | 37 | 20 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data
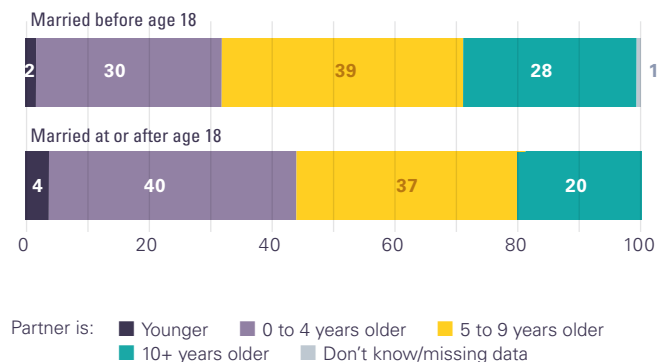
Types of unions

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

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
missing data

11
74
15
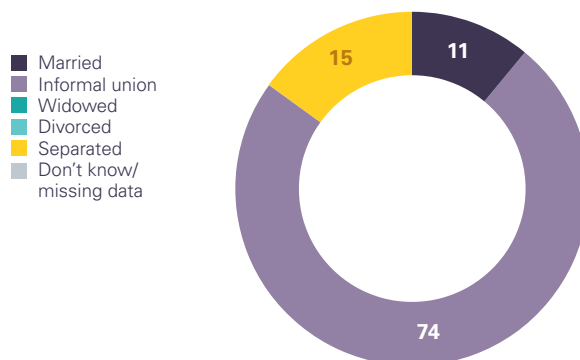
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	75	n/a
Married at or after age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	68	n/a
Never married	n/a	n/a	n/a	59	n/a
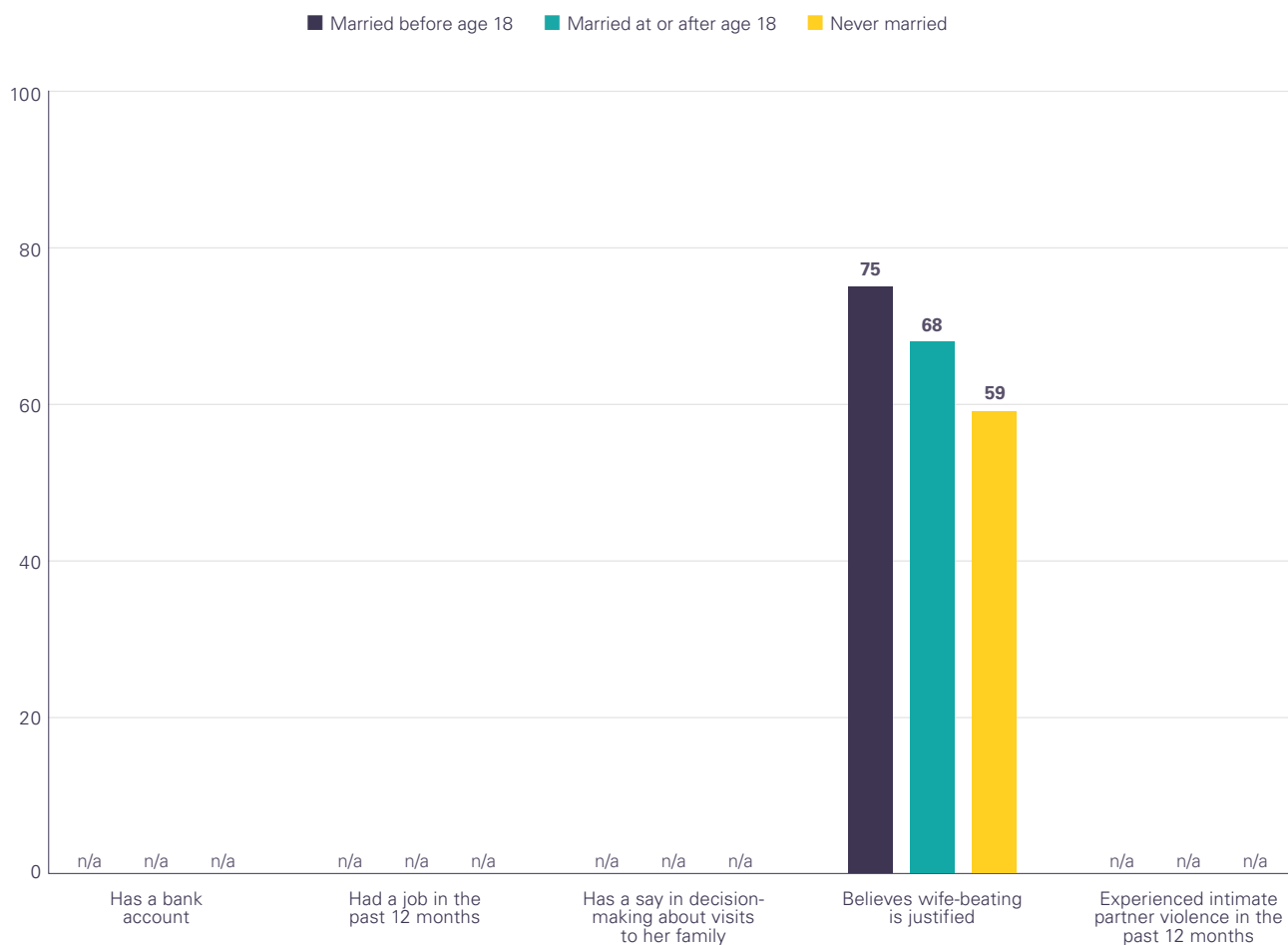
Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

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

- ■ Gave birth before age 18
- ■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
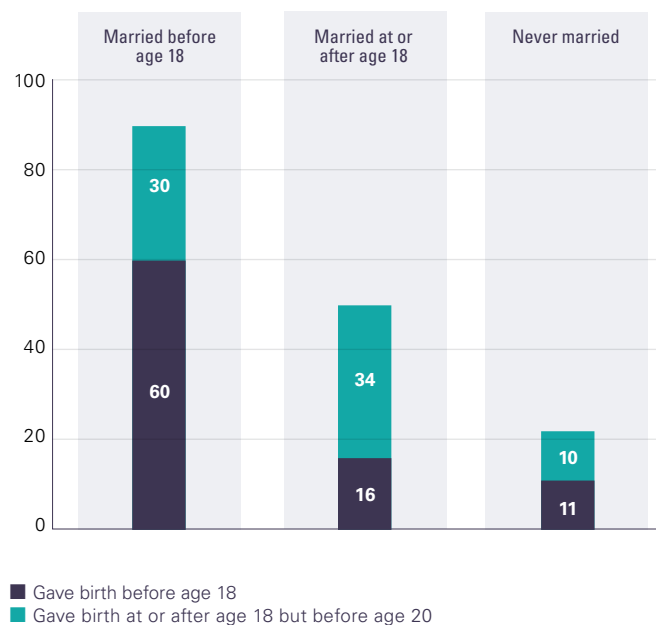
Figure 83. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

- ■ Pregnant before marriage
- ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
- ■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage
- ■ Never gave birth
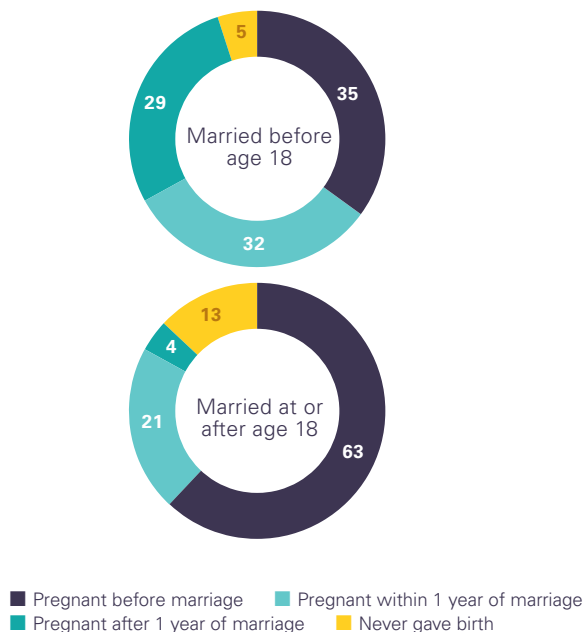
Reproductive health

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

- ■ Married before age 18
- ■ Married at or after age 18
- ■ Never married

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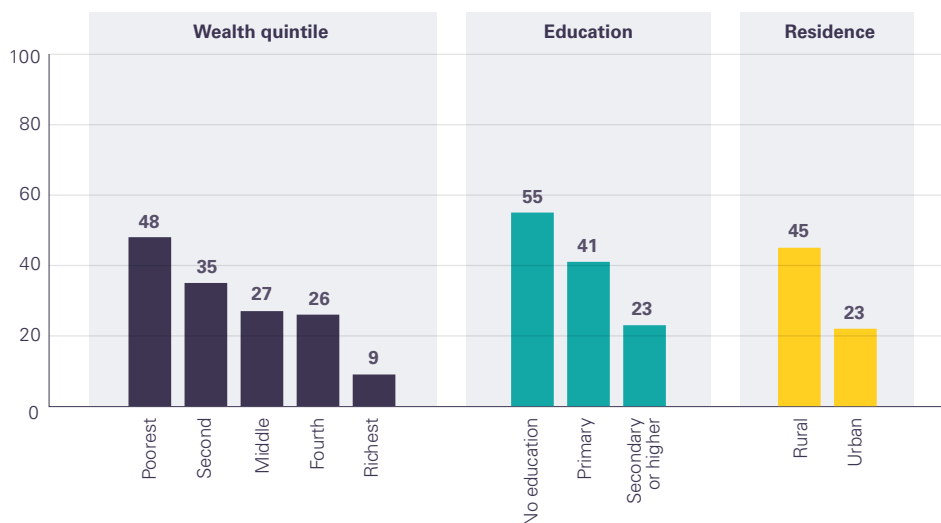
Figure 85. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

Legend: Married before age 18 — Married before age 15
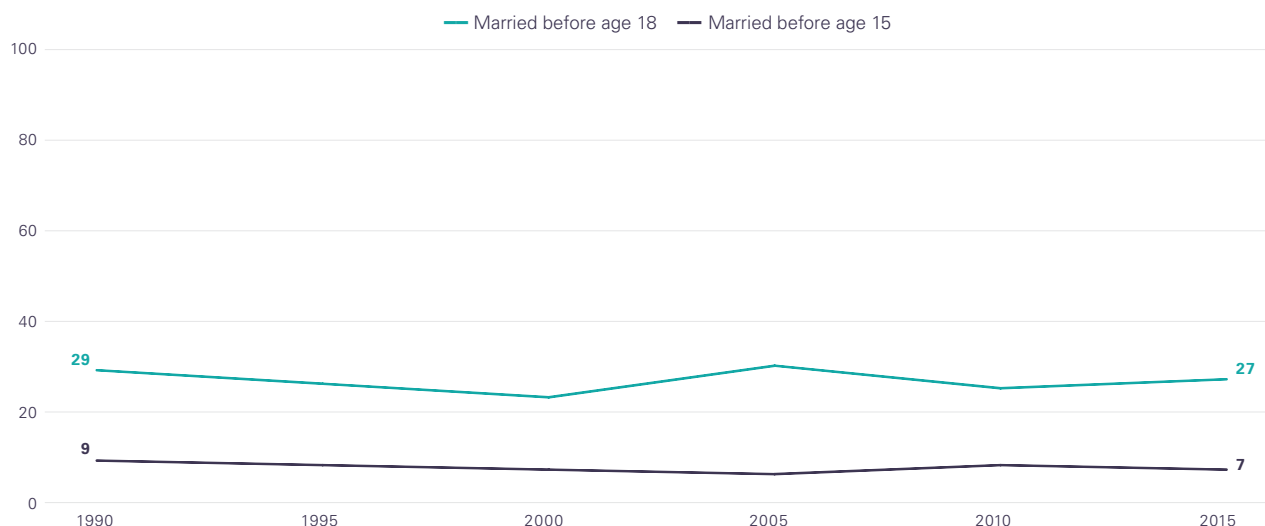
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

Observed in the past	25 years	0.3
	10 years	1.0
Required for elimination by	2030	22.0
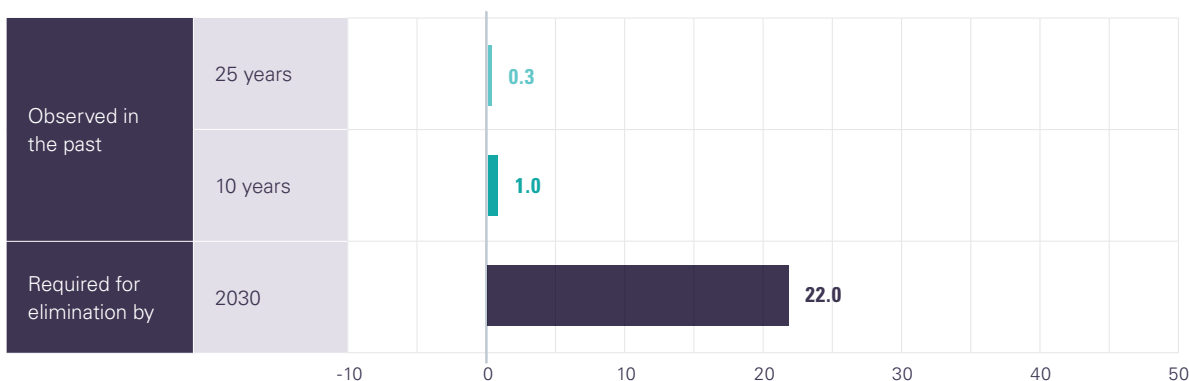
NOTES:

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 I 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

married before age 15 > **665,800**

married before age 18 > **2.3 million**
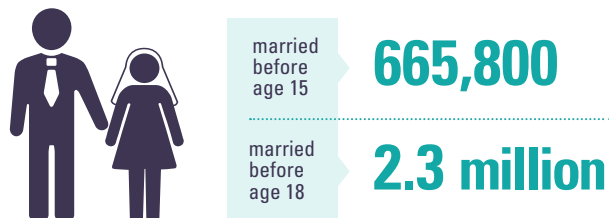
Côte d'Ivoire is home to over 2 million child brides; 1 in 4 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
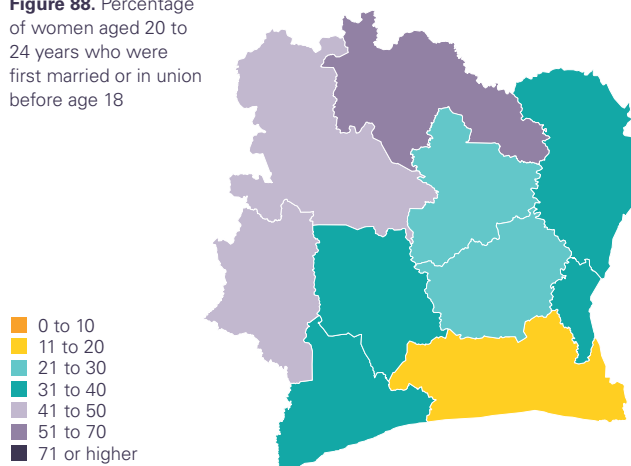
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Côte d'Ivoire	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	27	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	7	28	2	12	5
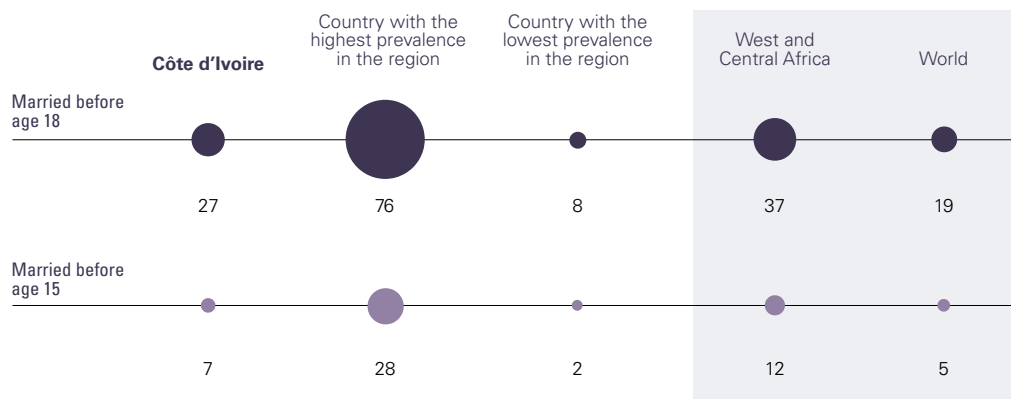
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile

- Poorest: 52
- Second: 44
- Middle: 29
- Fourth: 20
- Richest: 8

Education

- No education: 43
- Primary: 24
- Secondary or higher: 9

Residence

- Rural: 43
- Urban: 16

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

Married before age 18

| 2 | 16 | 29 | 37 | 16 |

Married at or after age 18

| 2 | 16 | 32 | 35 | 16 |

0 20 40 60 80 100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data
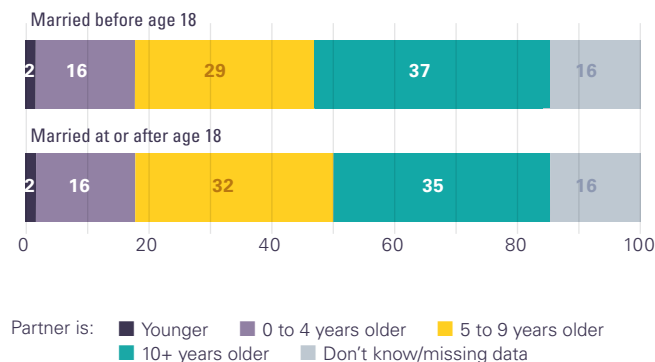
Types of unions

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

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
missing data

51
45
4
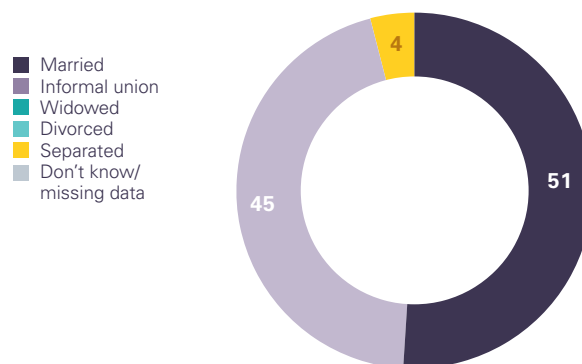
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
	n/a n/a n/a	n/a n/a n/a	n/a n/a n/a	66 57 46	n/a n/a n/a
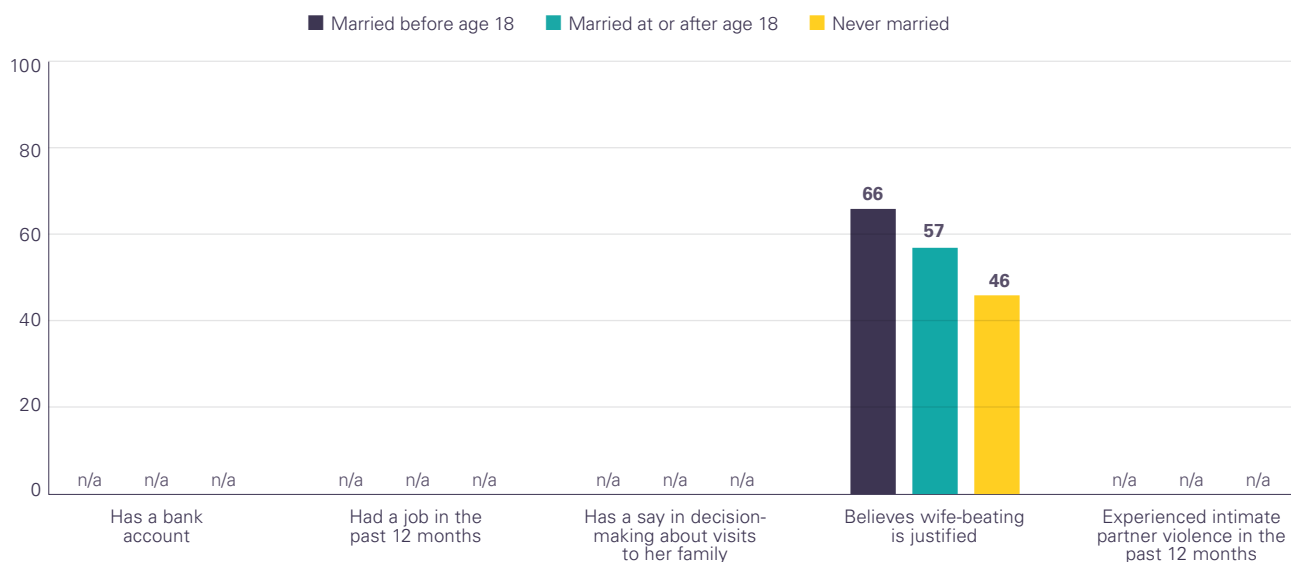
Figure 94. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union
5
95

Never married or in union
45
55
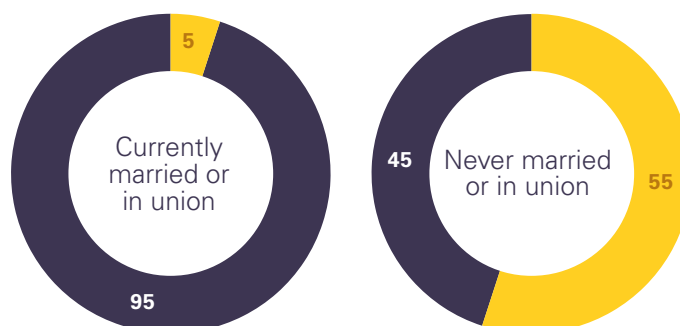
Early childbearing

Figure 95. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20
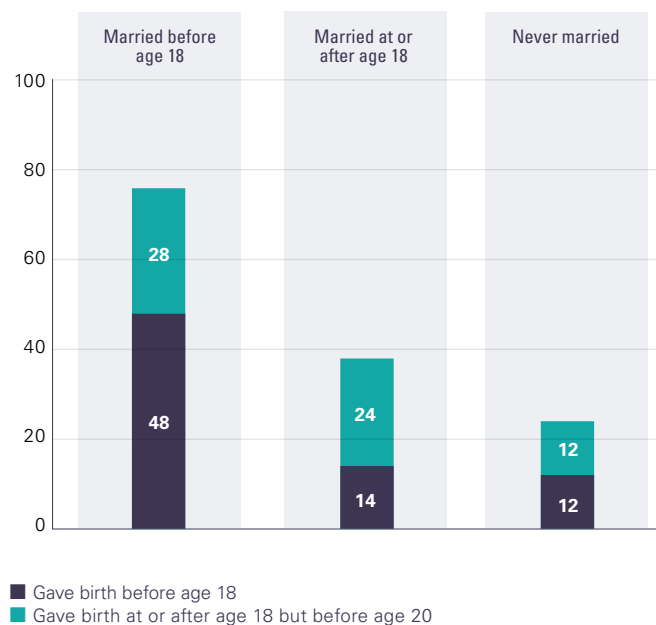
Figure 96. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

Married before age 18: 24, 27, 44, 5

Married at or after age 18: 46, 17, 15, 22

■ Pregnant before marriage ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage ■ Never gave birth

Married before age 18: Gave birth before age 18 = 48, Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20 = 28

Married at or after age 18: 14, 24

Never married: 12, 12

■ Gave birth before age 18
■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
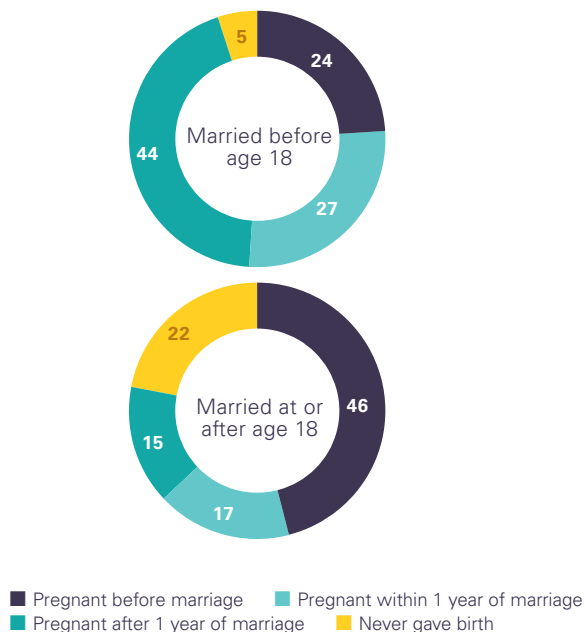
Reproductive health

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

Demand for family planning satisfied: 25, 27, 49

Skilled antenatal care: 90, 96, 97

Skilled attendant at delivery: 64, 76, 85

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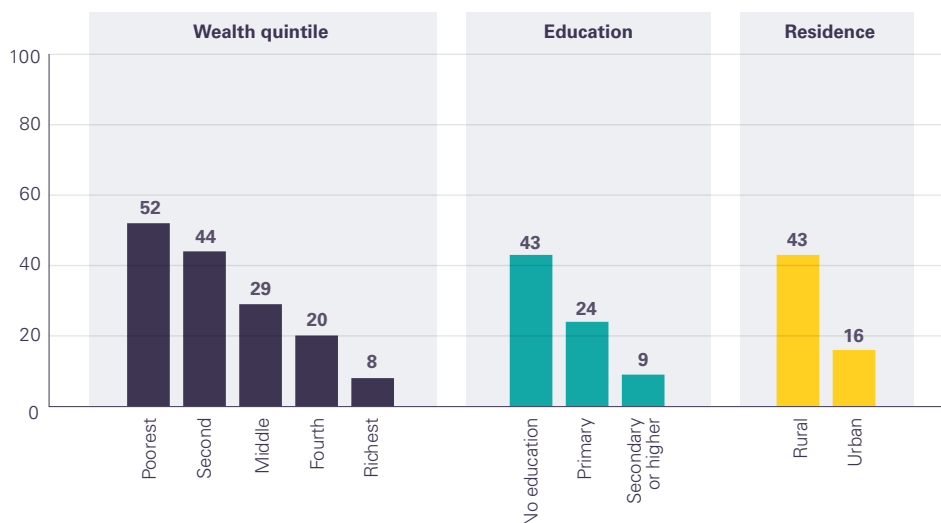
Figure 98. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

Married before age 18 — Married before age 15
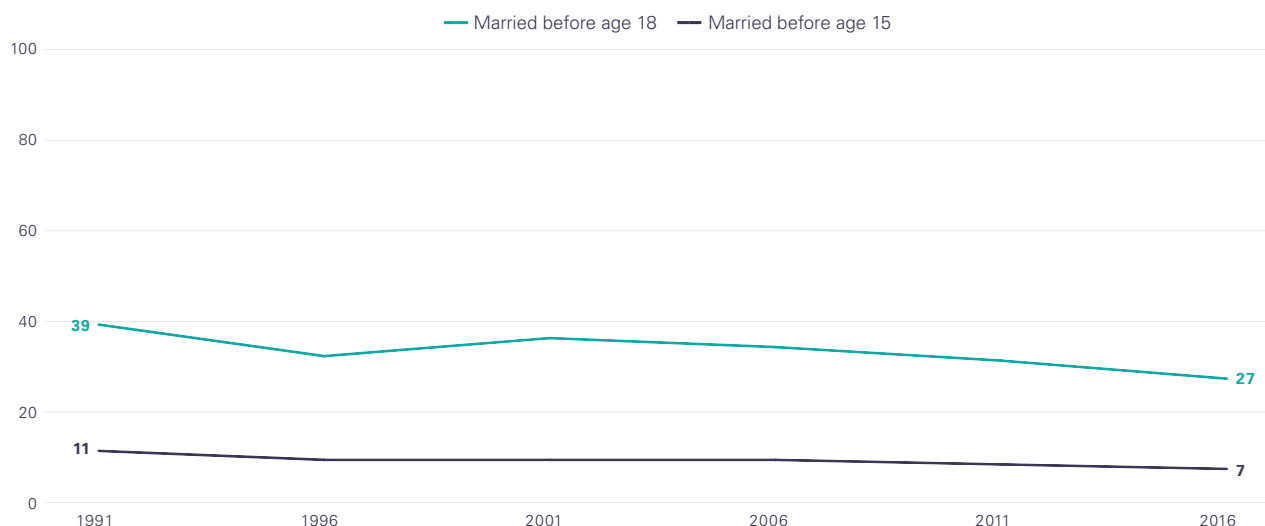
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

Observed in the past	25 years	1.5
	10 years	2.3
Required for elimination by	2030	23.5
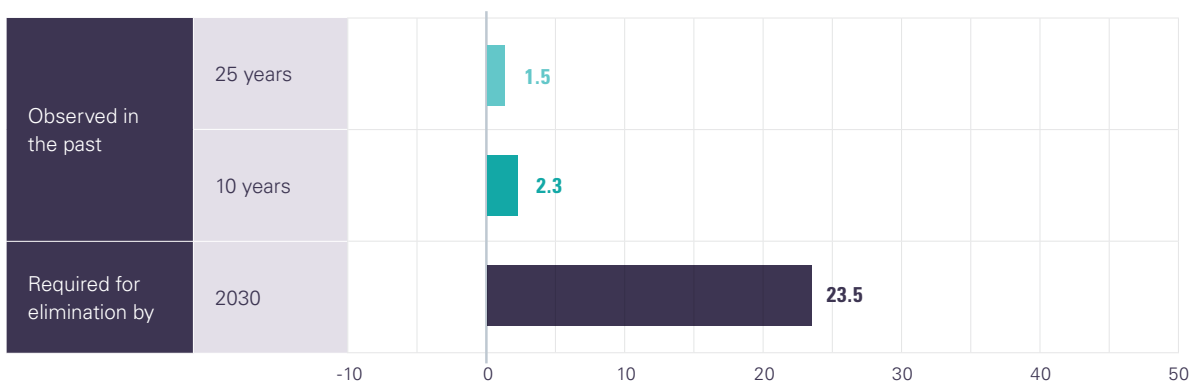
NOTES:

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 I 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

married before age 15	**2.3 million**
married before age 18	**7.1 million**
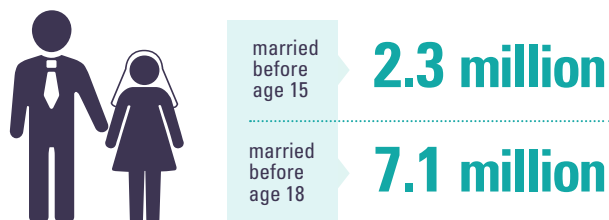
The Democratic Republic of the Congo is home to over 7 million child brides; 3 in 10 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
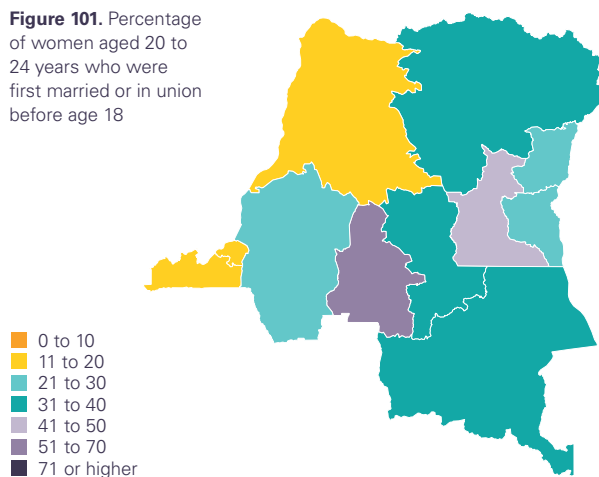
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	29	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	8	28	2	12	5
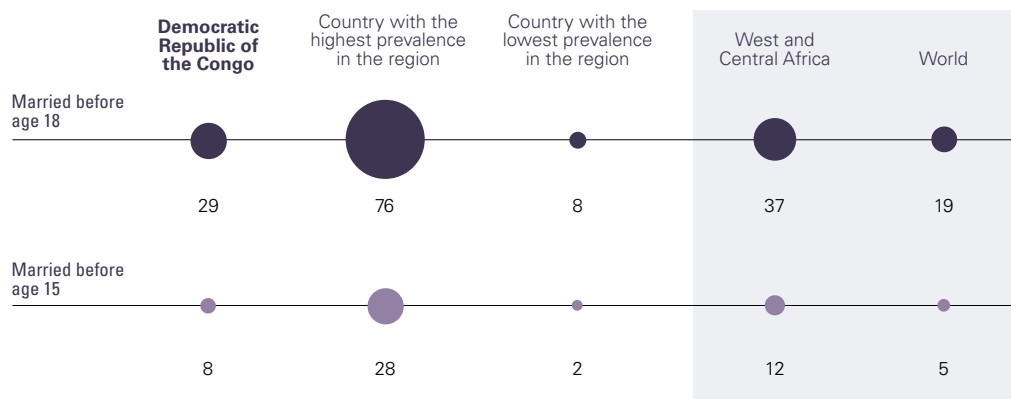
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile					Education			Residence	
Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest	No education	Primary	Secondary or higher	Rural	Urban
45	45	29	30	10	42	46	22	40	19

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

Married before age 18

| 1 | 28 | 45 | 26 |

Married at or after age 18

| 2 | 37 | 40 | 21 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is:
- ■ Younger
- ■ 0 to 4 years older
- ■ 5 to 9 years older
- ■ 10+ years older
- ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

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

- ■ Married
- ■ Informal union
- ■ Widowed
- ■ Divorced
- ■ Separated
- ■ Don't know/ missing data

9
1
23
68
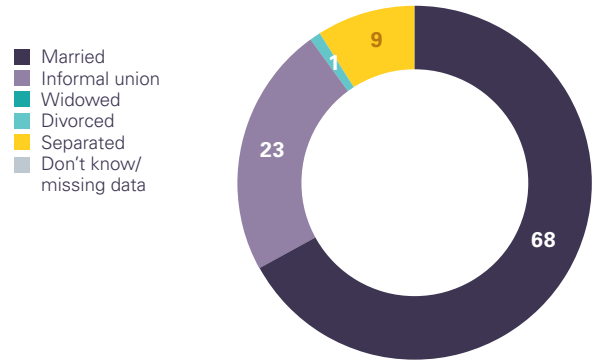
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	71	n/a
Married at or after age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	69	n/a
Never married	n/a	n/a	n/a	54	n/a
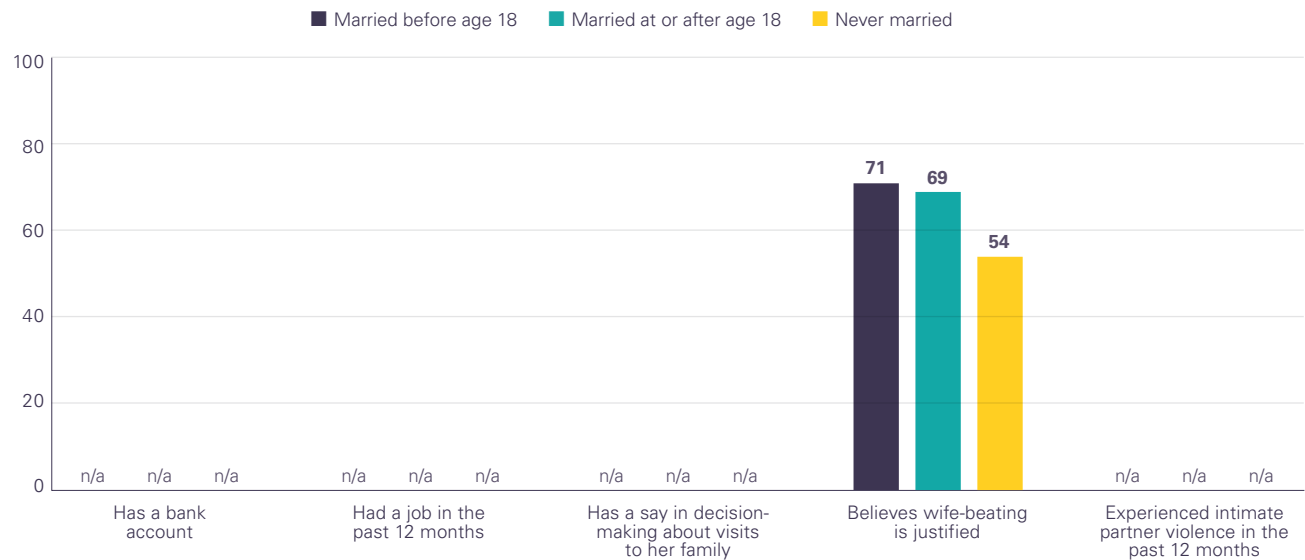
Figure 107. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union

13
87

Never married or in union

26
74

Early childbearing

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

■ Gave birth before age 18	
■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20	
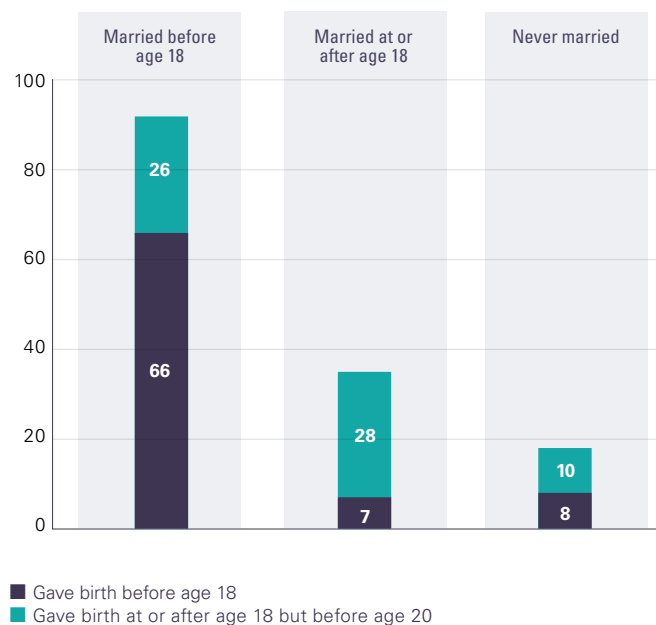
Figure 109. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

■ Pregnant before marriage	■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage	■ Never gave birth
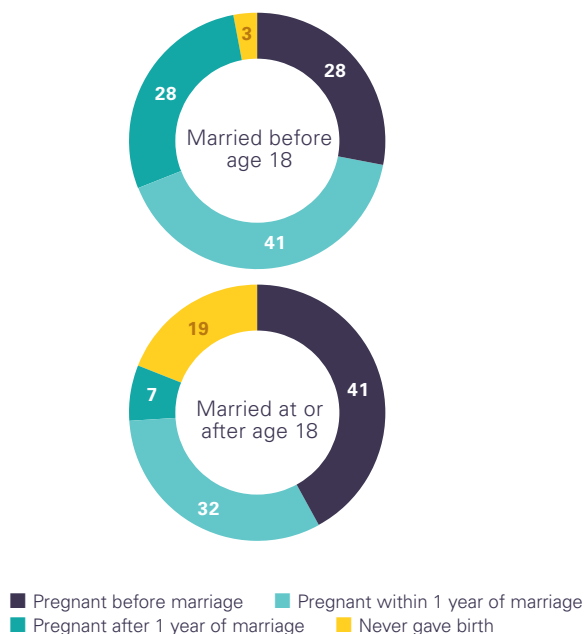
Reproductive health

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

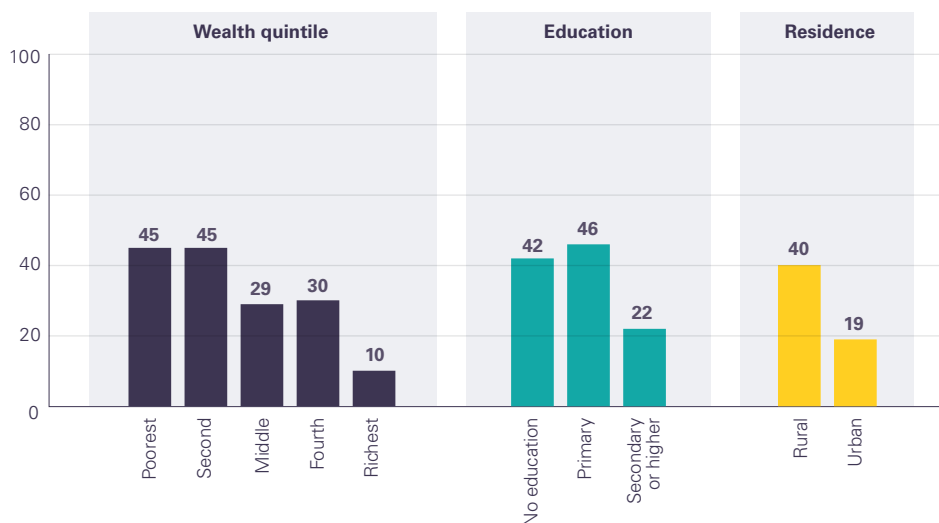## Generational trends

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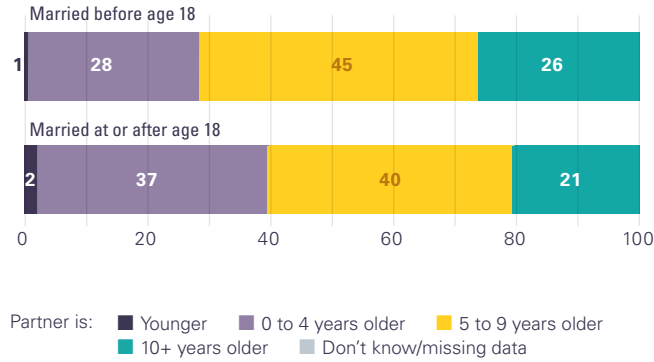

Legend: — Married before age 18 — Married before age 15
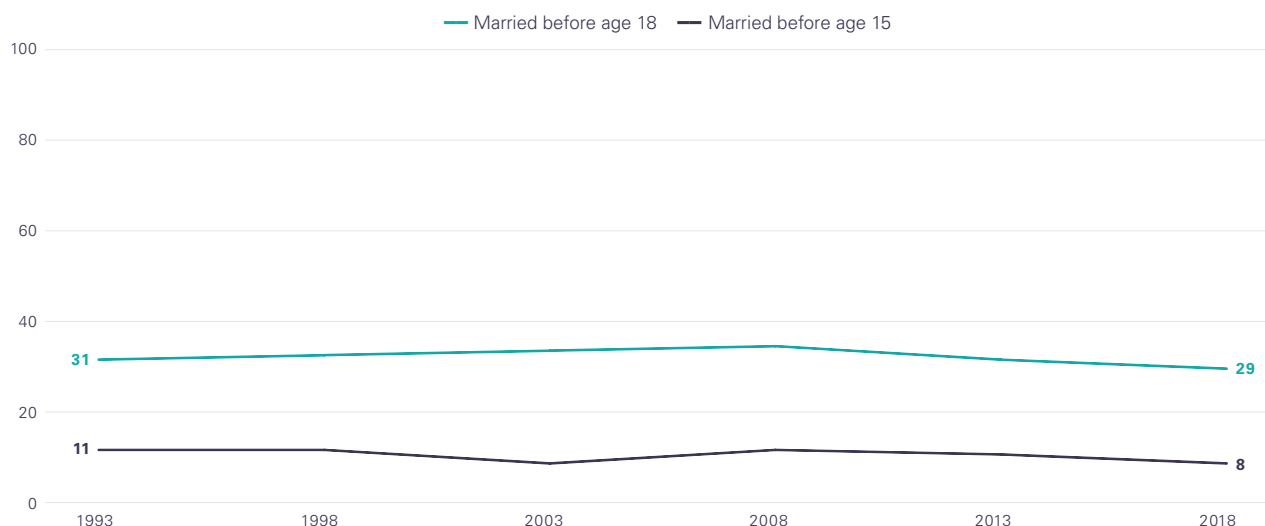
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

Observed in the past	25 years	0.3
	10 years	1.4
Required for elimination by	2030	28.1

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 l 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

married before age 15 **53,400**

married before age 18 **176,000**
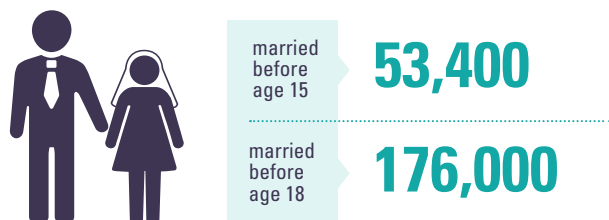
Gabon is home to around 176,000 child brides; 1 in 5 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
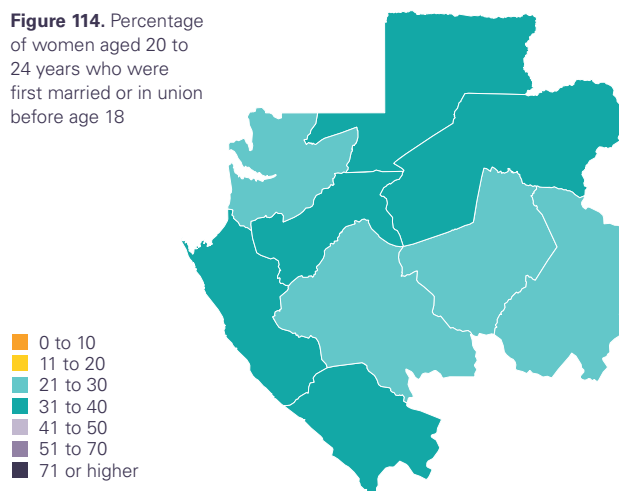
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Gabon	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	22	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	6	28	2	12	5
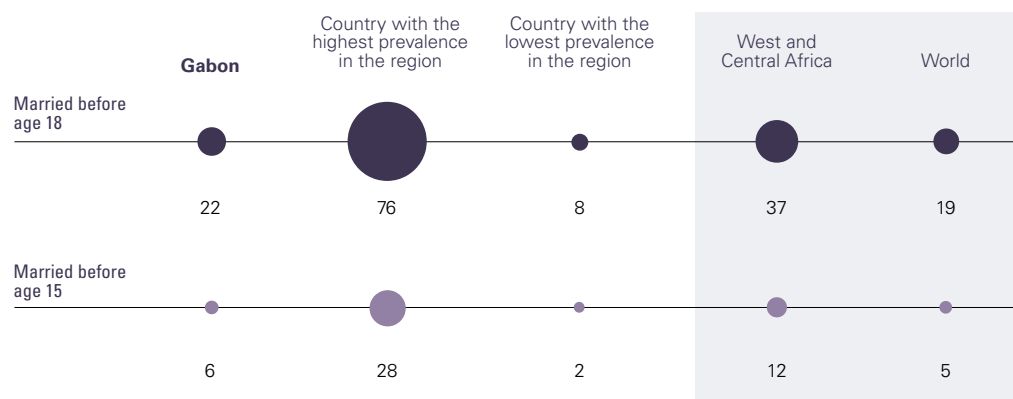
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile

Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest
31	31	24	17	9

Education

No education	Primary	Secondary or higher
42	36	19

Residence

Rural	Urban
36	19

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

Married before age 18

| 4 | 31 | 33 | 31 |

Married at or after age 18

| 3 | 27 | 33 | 37 | 1 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is:
- ■ Younger
- ■ 0 to 4 years older
- ■ 5 to 9 years older
- ■ 10+ years older
- ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

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

- ■ Married
- ■ Informal union
- ■ Widowed
- ■ Divorced
- ■ Separated
- ■ Don't know/ missing data

4
15
81
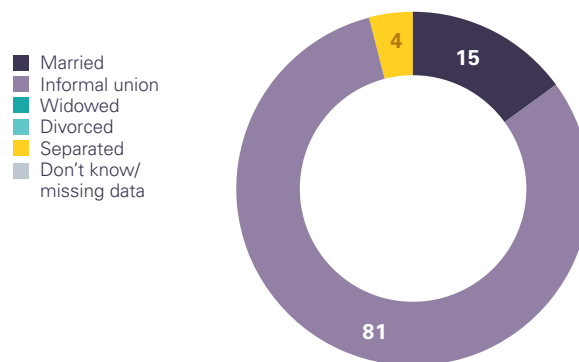
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	n/a	39	73	61	52
Married at or after age 18	n/a	39	64	57	50
Never married	n/a	29	n/a	45	n/a
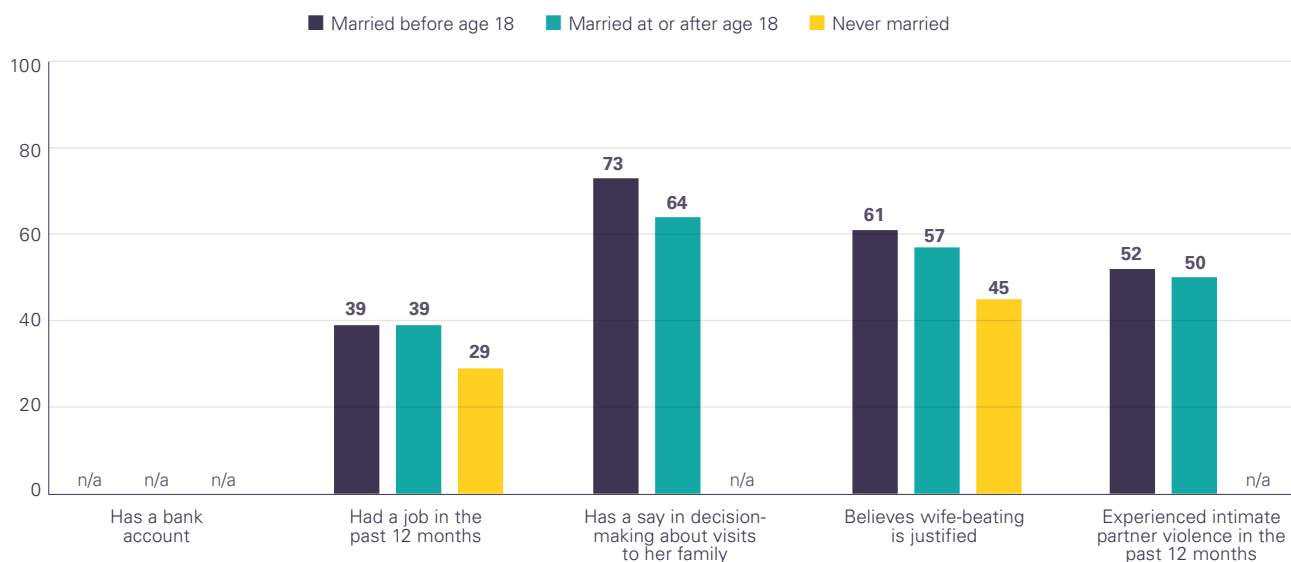
Figure 120. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union
42
58

Never married or in union
8
92

Early childbearing

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

Married before age 18

Married at or after age 18

Never married

- 26
- 51
- 22
- 32
- 16
- 15

■ Gave birth before age 18
■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
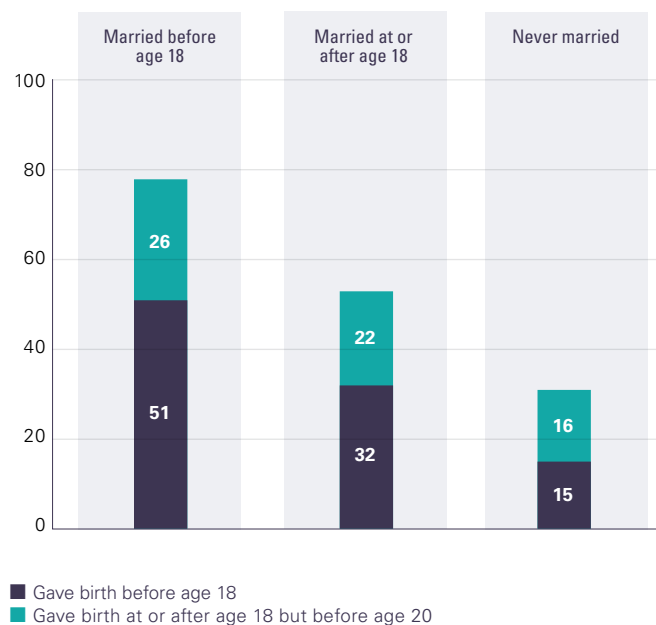
Figure 122. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

Married before age 18

- 13
- 34
- 17
- 36

Married at or after age 18

- 24
- 58
- 5
- 13

■ Pregnant before marriage ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage ■ Never gave birth
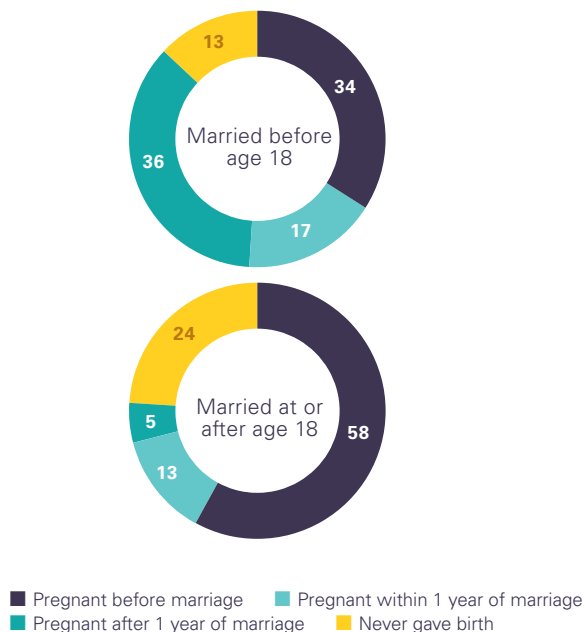
Reproductive health

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

■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

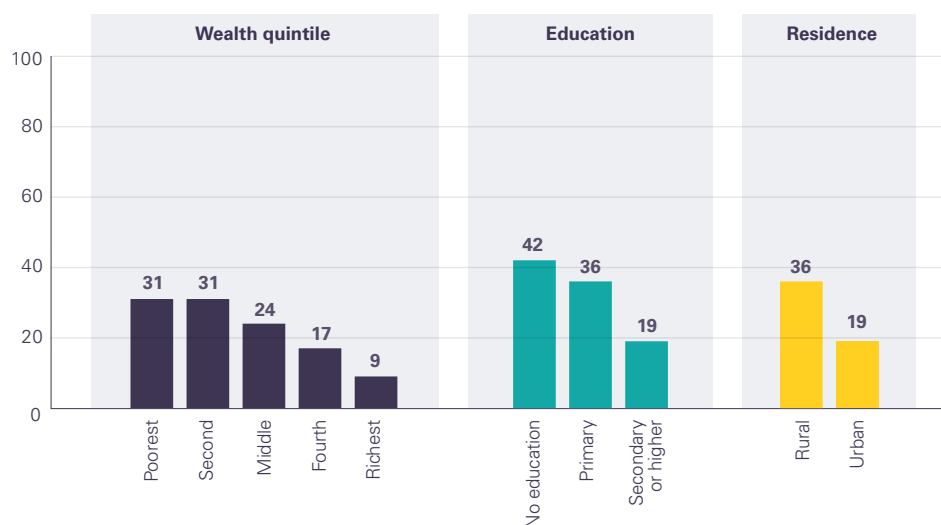|	Demand for family planning satisfied	Skilled antenatal care	Skilled attendant at delivery
Married before age 18	38	94	94
Married at or after age 18	42	96	94
Never married	63	95	93

Generational trends

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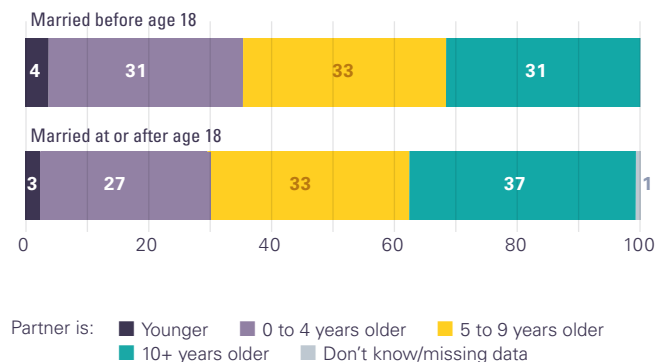

Legend: —— Married before age 18　—— Married before age 15

(Data points: Married before age 18 — 1987: 38, 2012: 22. Married before age 15 — 1987: 11, 2012: 6)
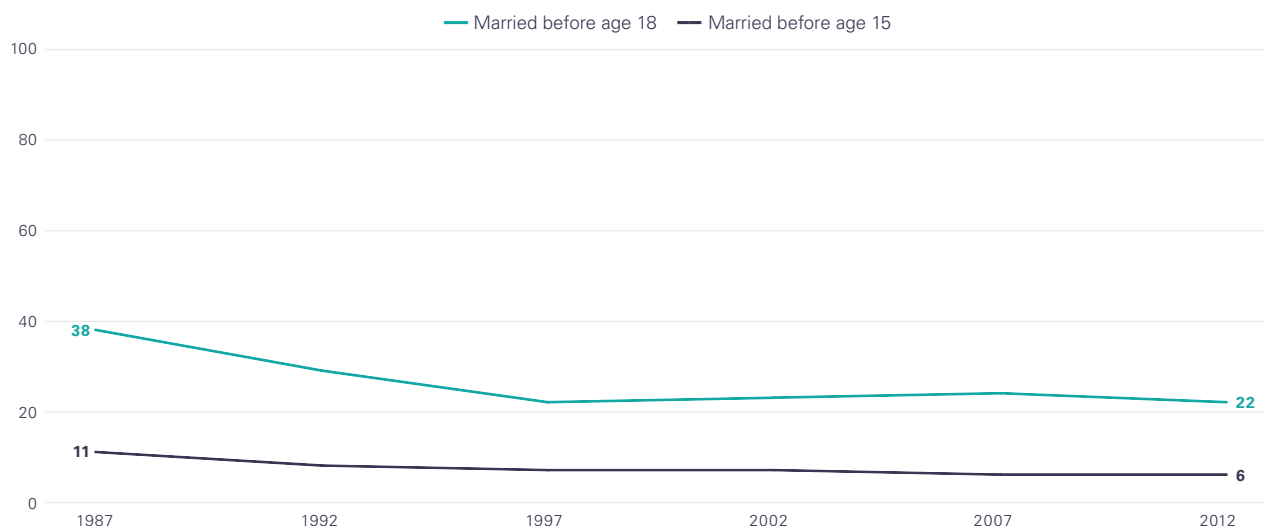
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

		Value
Observed in the past	25 years	2.2
	10 years	0.3
Required for elimination by	2030	17.1

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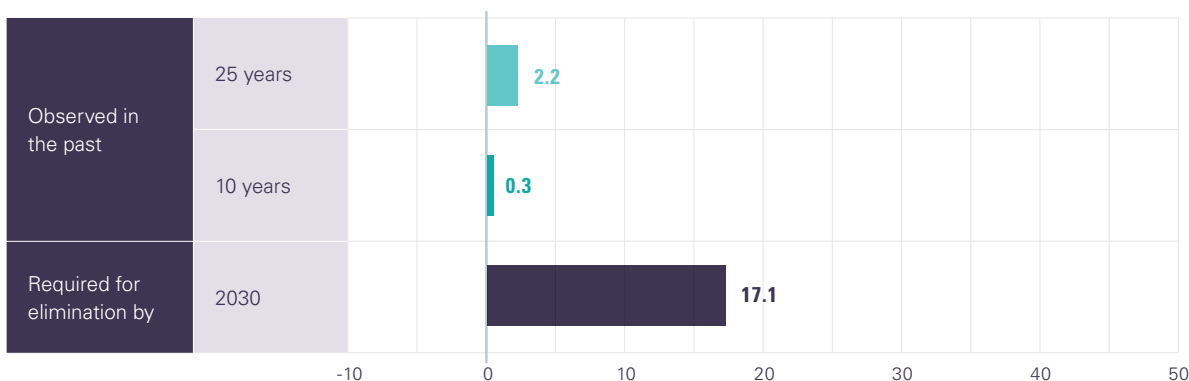 countries with comparable available data from 2015 to 2021, covering 77 per cent of the global female population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. For statistical purposes, 'elimination' is defined here as a child marriage prevalence of less than 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 I 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

married before age 15 > **62,200**

married before age 18 > **224,200**
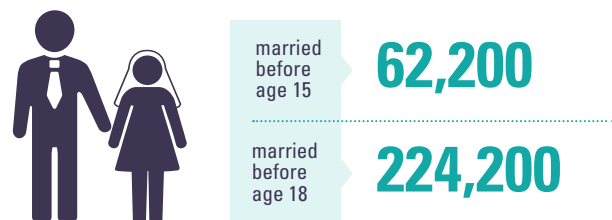
The Gambia is home to over 224,000 child brides; 1 in 4 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
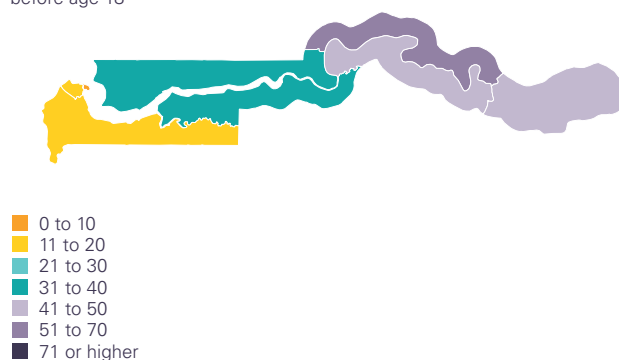
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Gambia	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	23	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	6	28	2	12	5
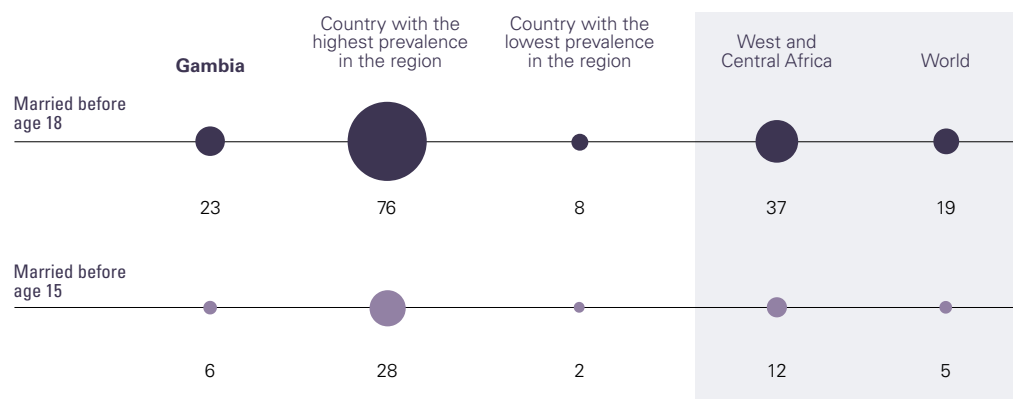
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile
- Poorest: 46
- Second: 31
- Middle: 27
- Fourth: 15
- Richest: 10

Education
- No education: 49
- Primary: 44
- Secondary or higher: 9

Residence
- Rural: 43
- Urban: 17
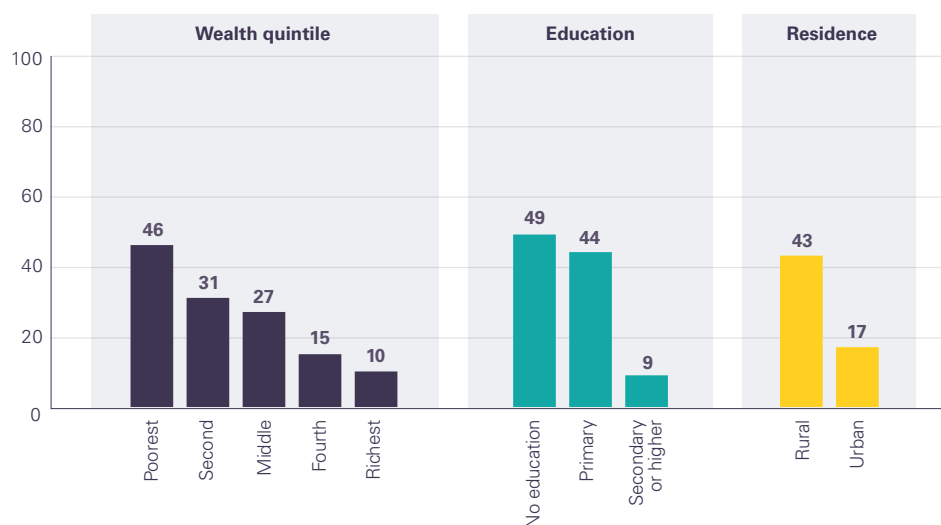
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18
| 8 | 29 | 64 |

Married at or after age 18
| 1 | 15 | 37 | 47 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is:
■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data
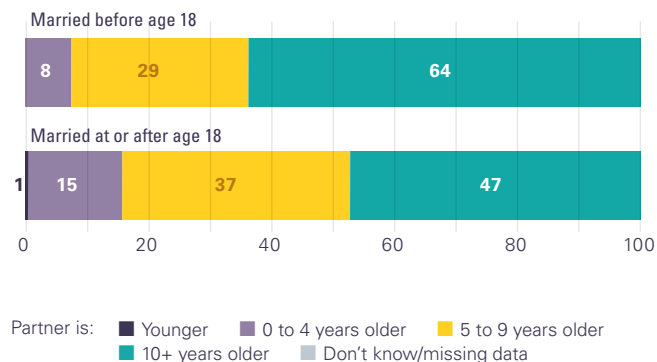
Types of unions

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

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/ missing data

1 2
97
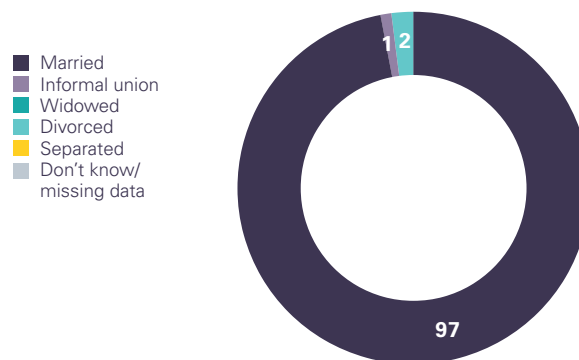
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	4	56	49	66	29
Married at or after age 18	10	49	47	50	19
Never married	13	45	n/a	38	n/a

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

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

Currently married or in union
11
89

Never married or in union
20
81
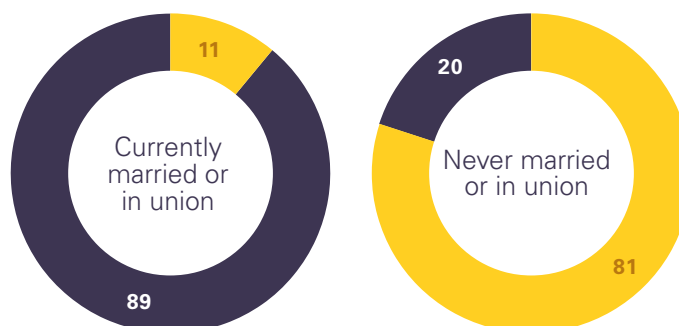
Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

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

Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18	Never married
35 / 52	17 / 5	5 / 2

■ Gave birth before age 18
■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
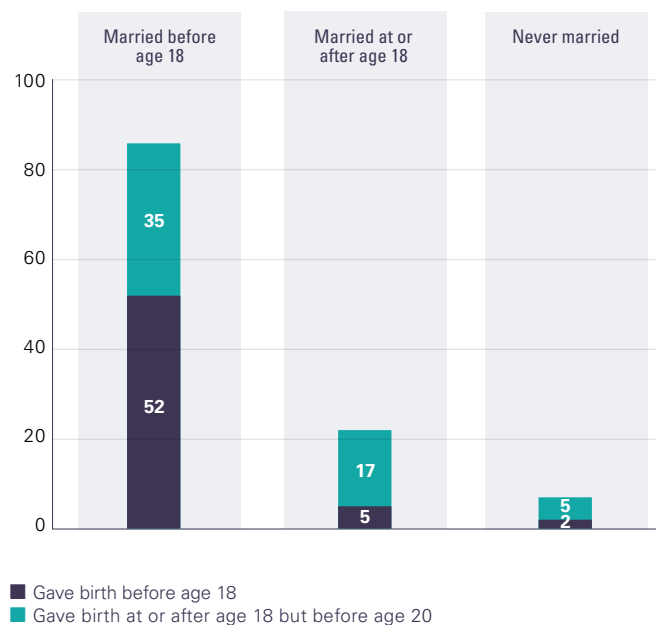
Figure 135. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

Married before age 18: 20, 36, 36, 8

Married at or after age 18: 22, 28, 10, 40

■ Pregnant before marriage   ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage   ■ Never gave birth
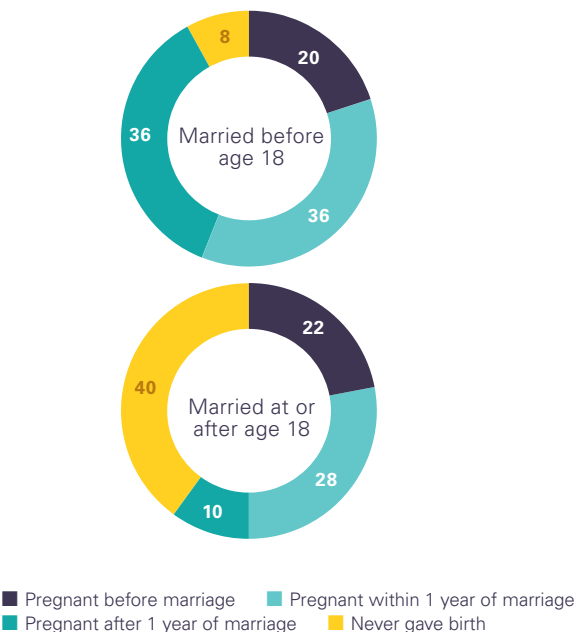
Reproductive health

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Demand for family planning satisfied	Skilled antenatal care	Skilled attendant at delivery
Married before age 18	33	100	93
Married at or after age 18	27	99	96
Never married	50	96	97

Generational trends

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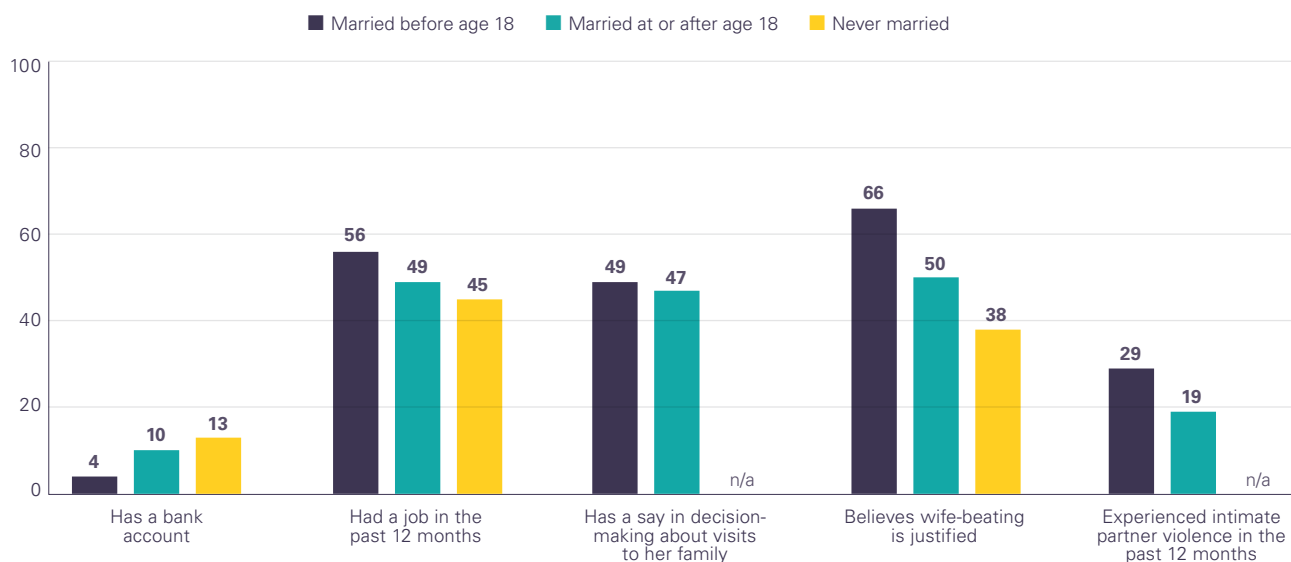

— Married before age 18   — Married before age 15
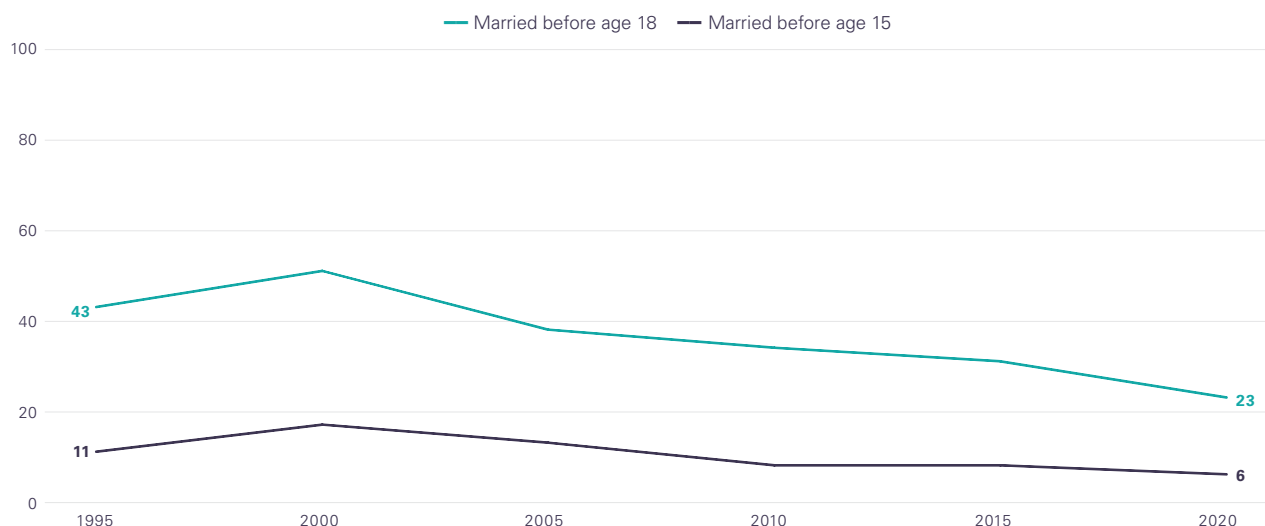
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

Observed in the past	25 years	2.5
	10 years	3.9
Required for elimination by	2030	31.4

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 si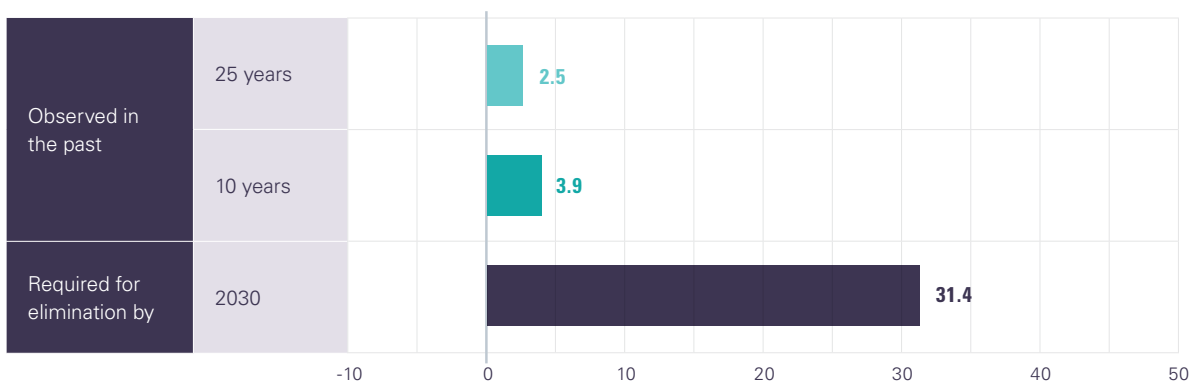nce apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. Global estimates are based on a subset of 101 countries with comparable available data 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

married before age 15	**666,200**
married before age 18	**2.2 million**
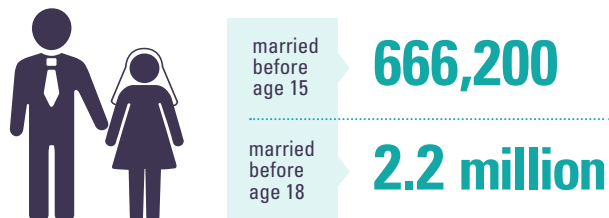
Ghana is home to over 2 million child brides; 1 in 5 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
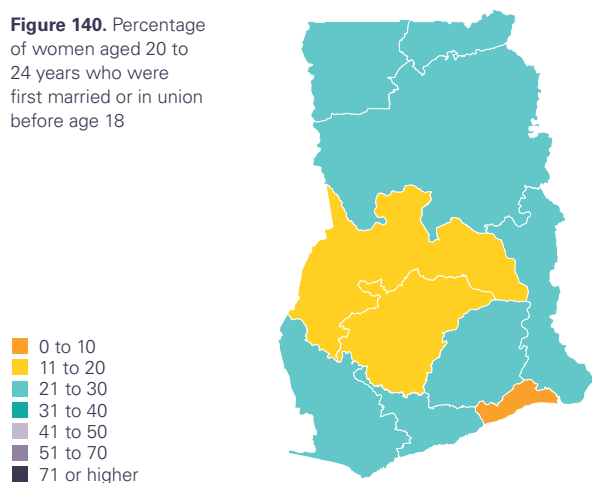
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Ghana	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	19	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	5	28	2	12	5
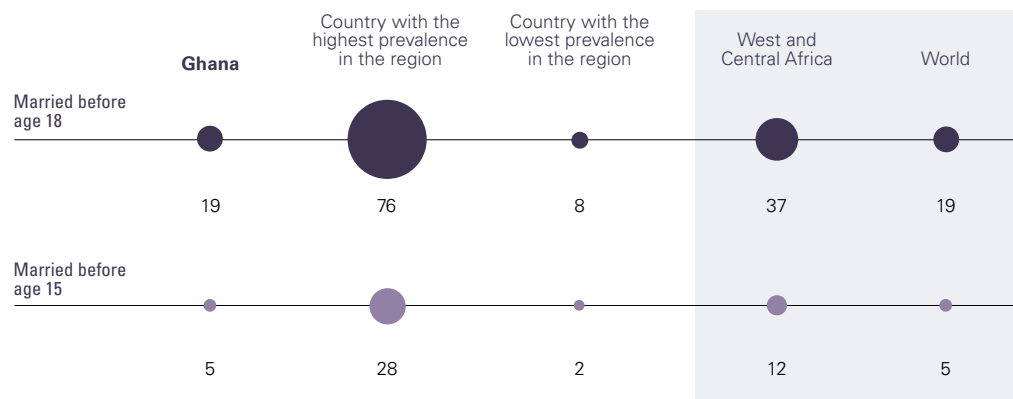
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile
- Poorest: 33
- Second: 28
- Middle: 21
- Fourth: 15
- Richest: 5

Education
- No education: 43
- Primary: 43
- Secondary or higher: 13

Residence
- Rural: 27
- Urban: 13
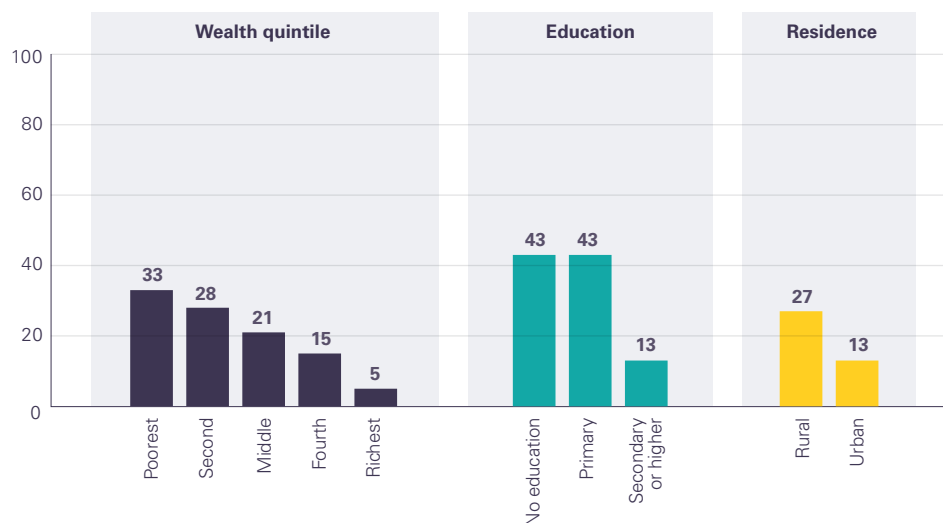
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18

| 2 | 38 | 36 | 22 | 3 |

Married at or after age 18

| 2 | 44 | 35 | 17 | 3 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

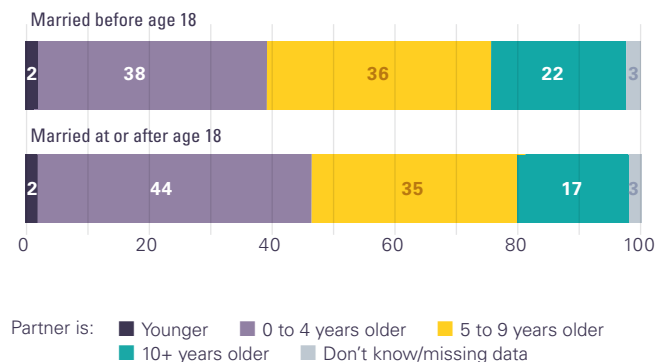**Figure 144.** Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
   missing data

23
54
1
21
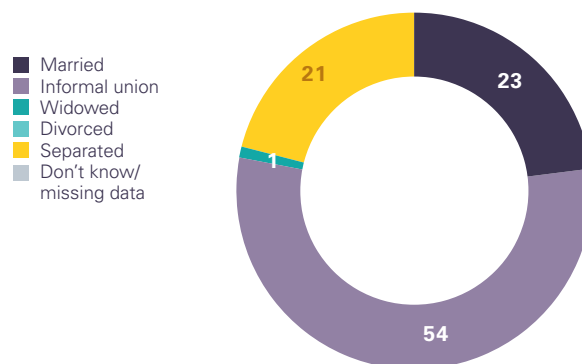
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	49	n/a
Married at or after age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	37	n/a
Never married	n/a	n/a	n/a	22	n/a
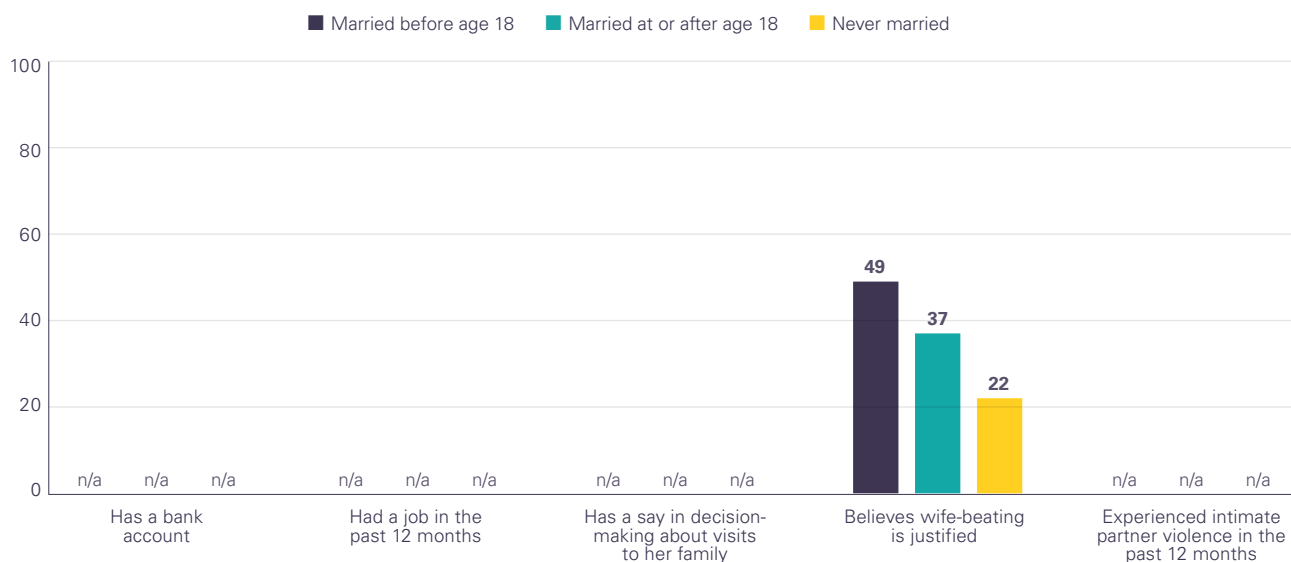
Figure 146. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union
6
94

Never married or in union
18
82

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

- ■ Gave birth before age 18
- ■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
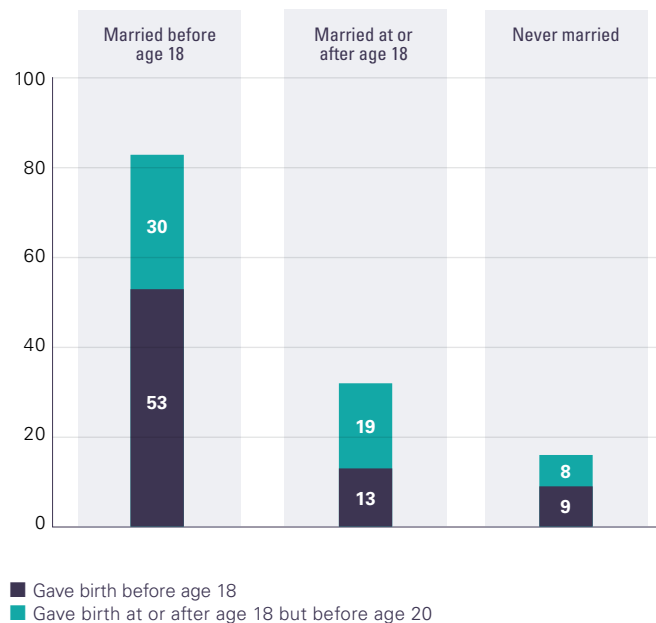
Figure 148. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

- ■ Pregnant before marriage
- ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
- ■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage
- ■ Never gave birth
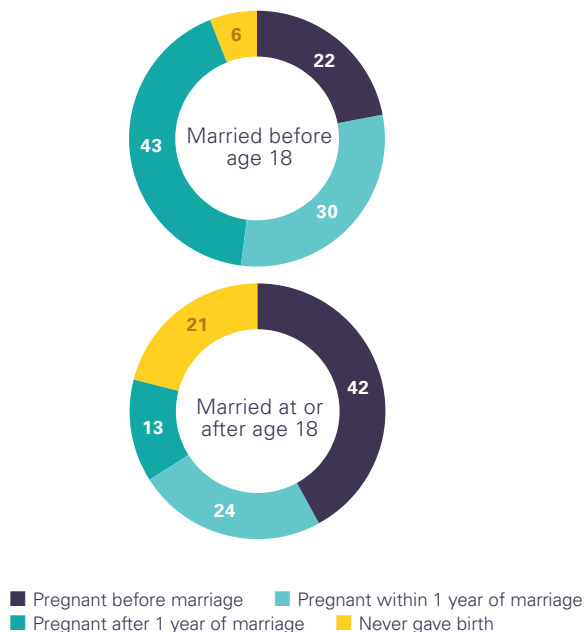
Reproductive health

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

- ■ Married before age 18
- ■ Married at or after age 18
- ■ Never married

Generational trends

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

Married before age 18 — Married before age 15

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

Observed in the past	25 years	2.2
	10 years	2.0
Required for elimination by	2030	24.7

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, P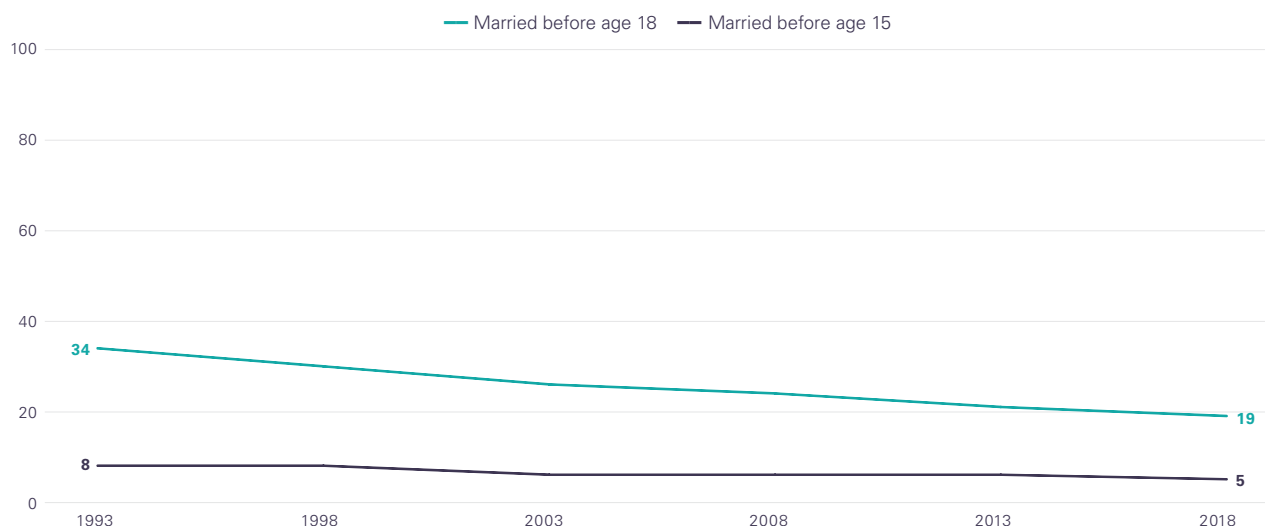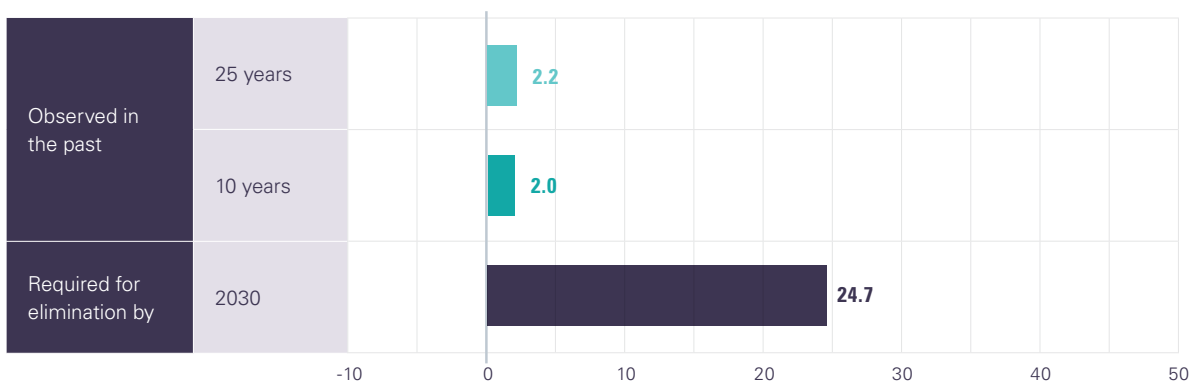opulation Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting 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 I 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

| married before age 15 | **670,500** |
| married before age 18 | **1.7 million** |
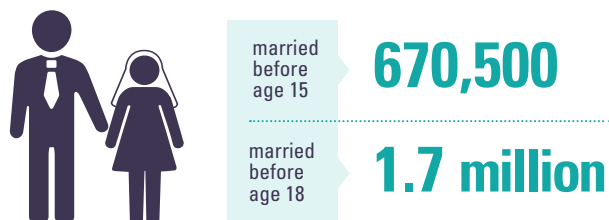
Guinea is home to nearly 2 million child brides; 1 in 2 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
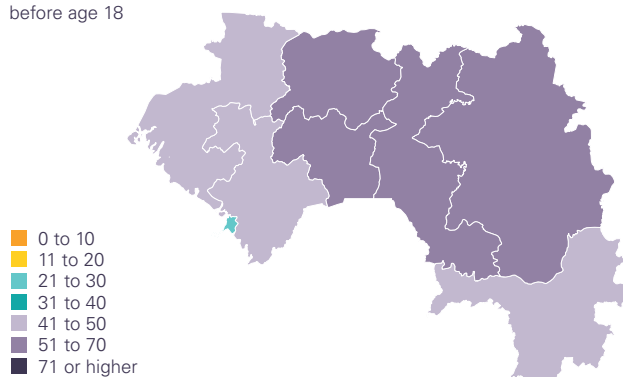
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Guinea	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	47	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	17	28	2	12	5
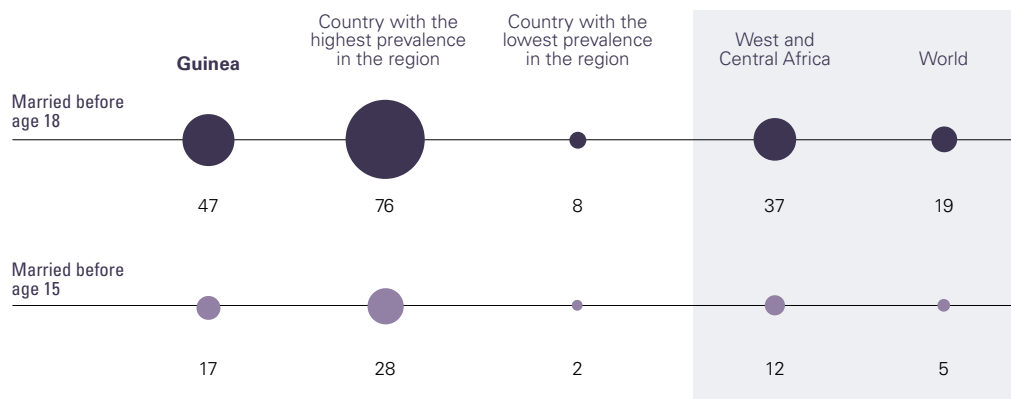
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile
- Poorest: 72
- Second: 60
- Middle: 56
- Fourth: 44
- Richest: 20

Education
- No education: 61
- Primary: 56
- Secondary or higher: 17

Residence
- Rural: 61
- Urban: 28
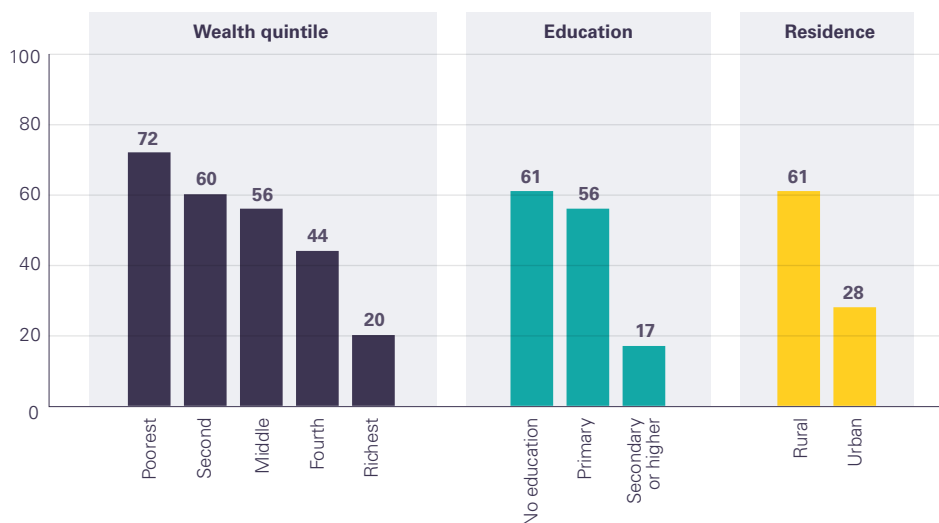
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18

| 1 | 9 | 30 | 60 |

Married at or after age 18

| 14 | 34 | 52 |

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older ■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

Figure 157. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status
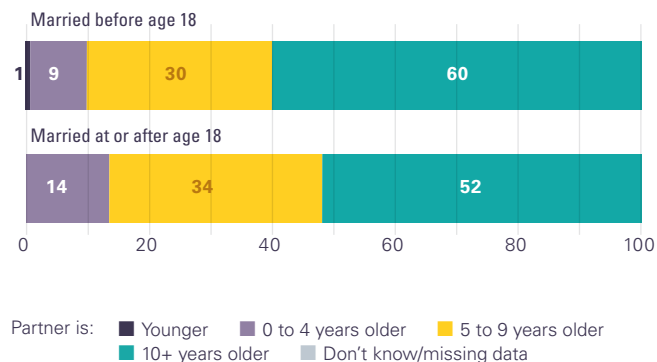
■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/missing data

83
14
2 1
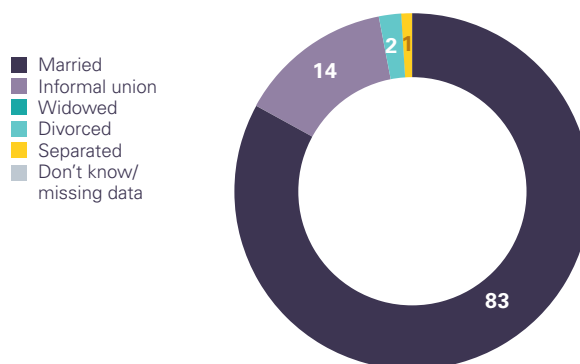
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	2	70	48	74	n/a
Married at or after age 18	5	60	43	68	n/a
Never married	10	51	n/a	52	n/a
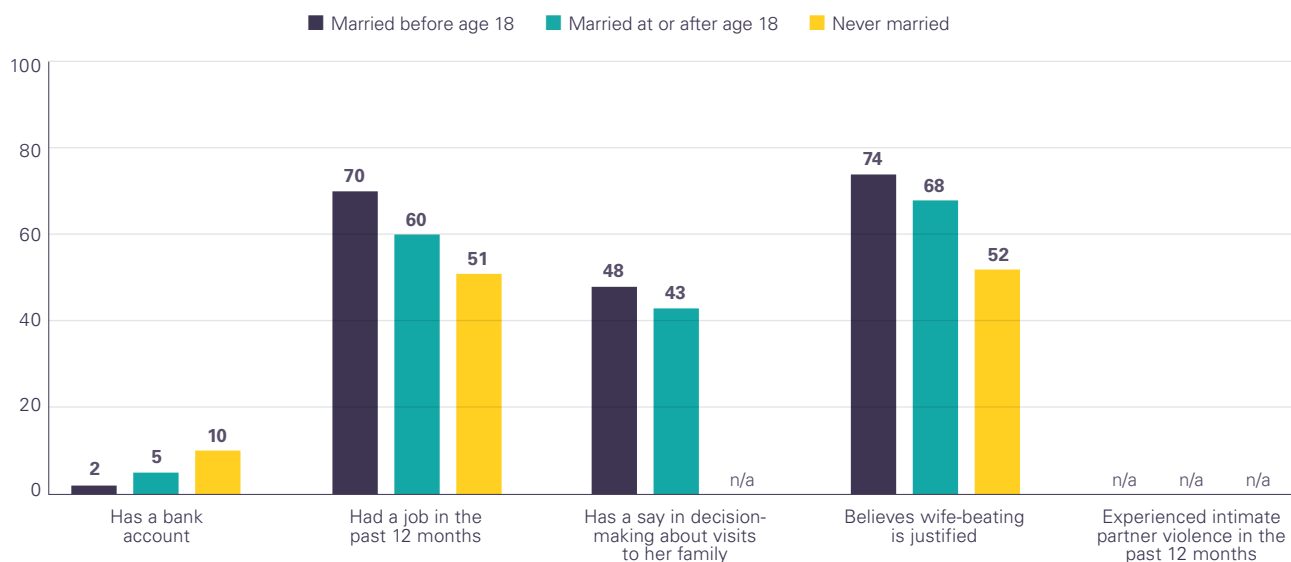
Figure 159. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union
8
92

Never married or in union
48
52
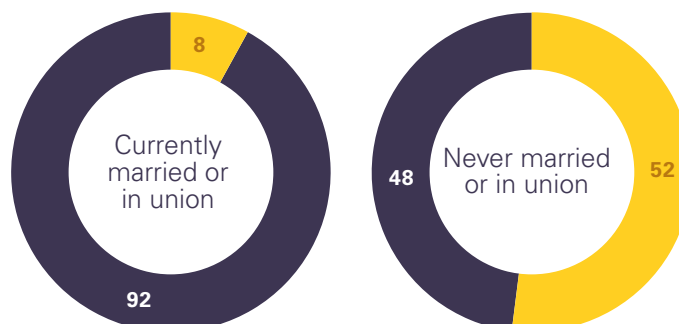
Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

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

- Gave birth before age 18
- Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
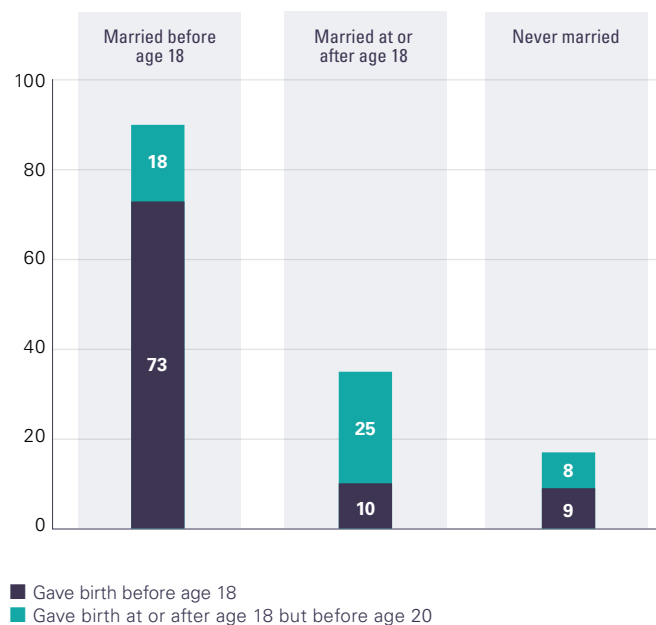
Figure 161. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

- Pregnant before marriage
- Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
- Pregnant after 1 year of marriage
- Never gave birth
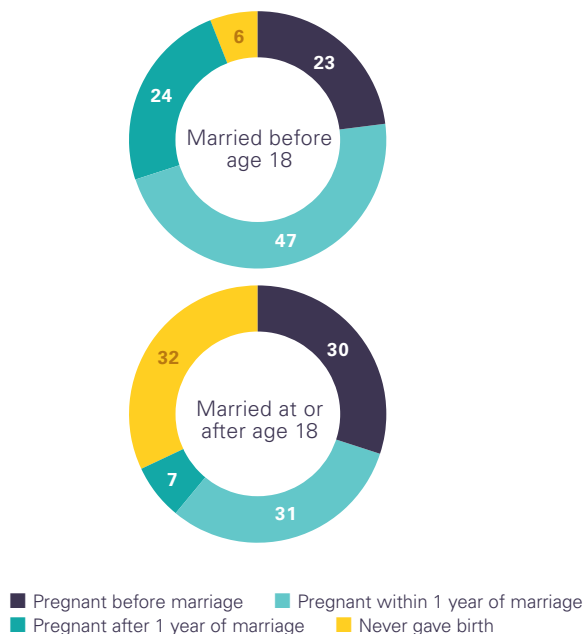
Reproductive health

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

- Married before age 18
- Married at or after age 18
- Never married

Generational trends

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

— Married before age 18   — Married before age 15
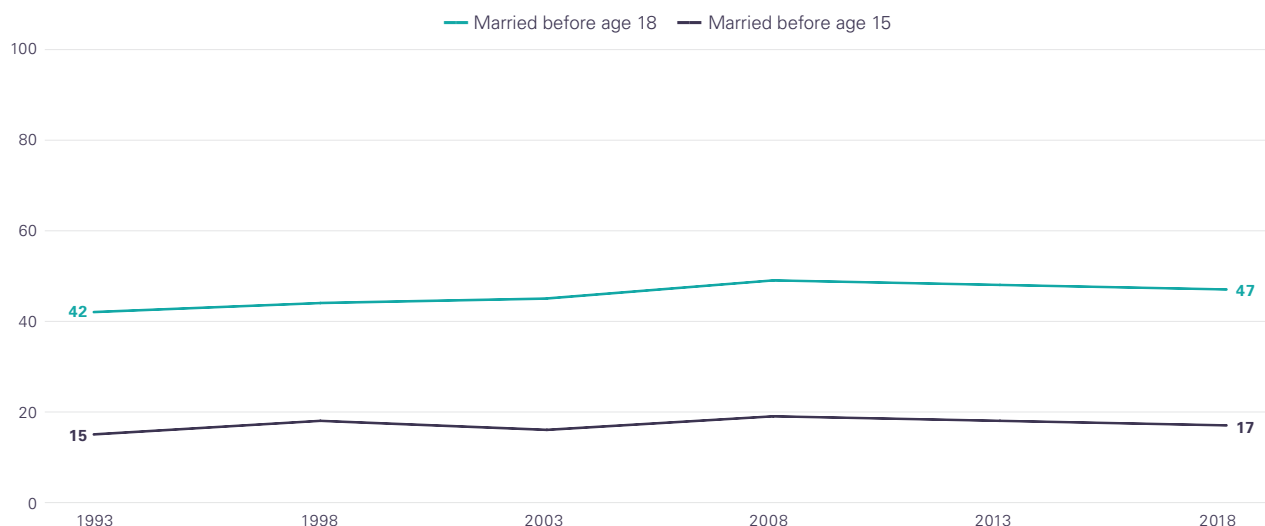
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

Observed in the past	25 years	-0.4
	10 years	0.6
Required for elimination by	2030	32.0

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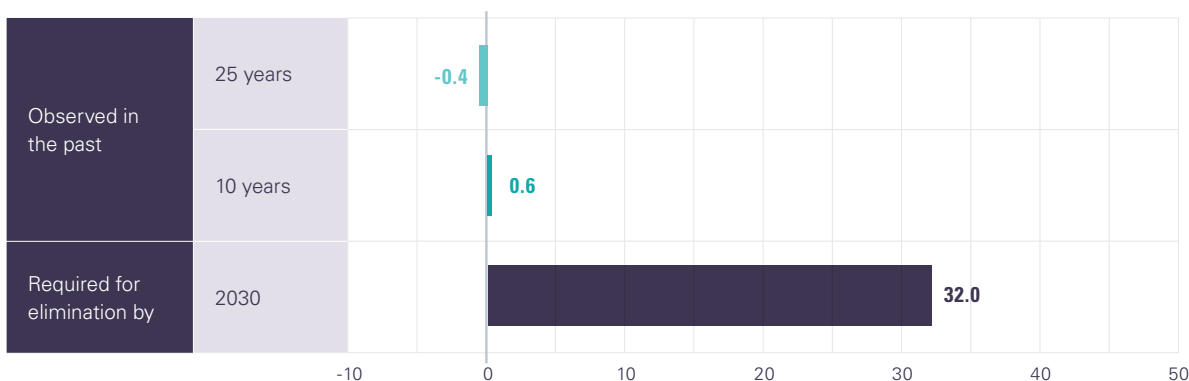 are not shown in this profile; therefore caution is warranted in interpreting the results since apparent differences may not be significant. All references to 'marriage' or 'child brides' include both formal marriage and informal unions in which women started living together with a partner as if married. 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 I 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

| married before age 15 | **52,700** |
| married before age 18 | **160,600** |
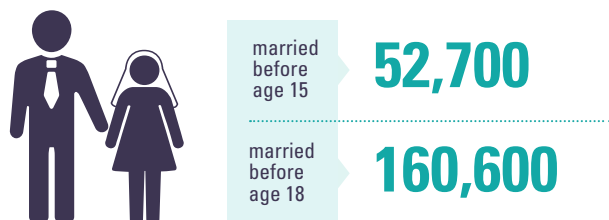
Guinea-Bissau is home to over 160,000 child brides; 1 in 4 young women were married in childhood

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
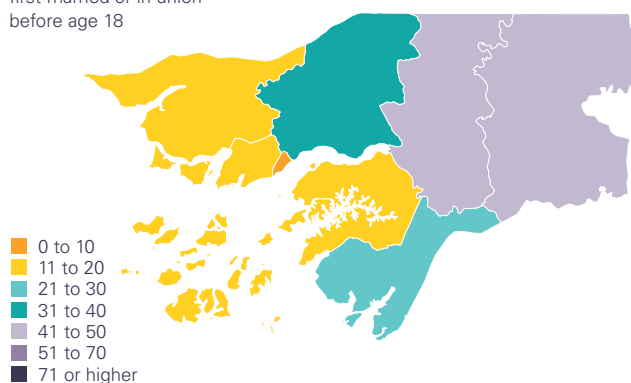
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Guinea-Bissau	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	26	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	8	28	2	12	5
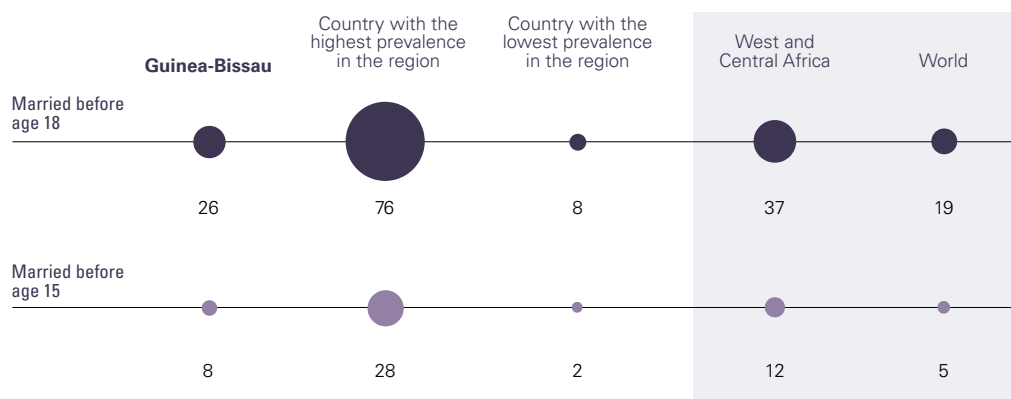
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile

Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest
35	37	35	20	9

Education

No education	Primary	Secondary or higher
51	23	1

Residence

Rural	Urban
36	11
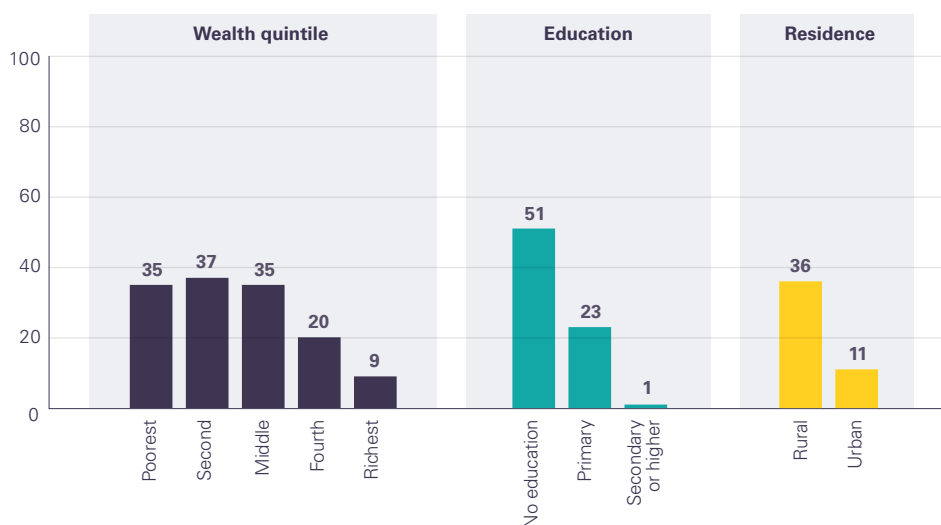
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18

| 2 | 17 | 27 | 47 | 6 |

Married at or after age 18

| 3 | 29 | 25 | 37 | 5 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

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

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
  missing data

5 1
94
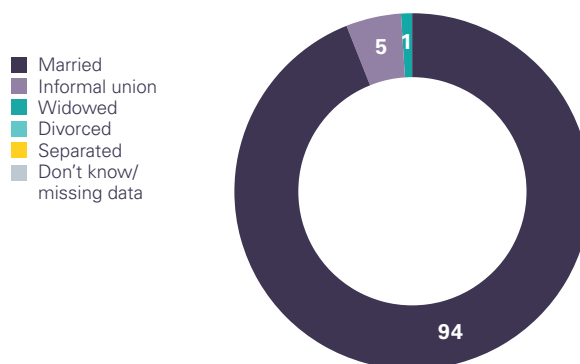
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
	n/a n/a n/a	n/a n/a n/a	n/a n/a n/a	44 35 35	n/a n/a n/a

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

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

Currently married or in union
3
98

Never married or in union
31
69
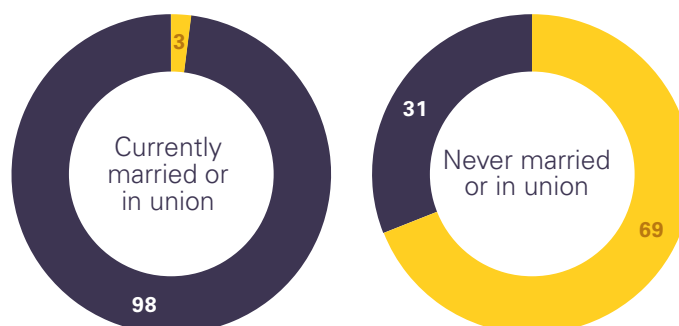
Lives of child brides *(continued)*

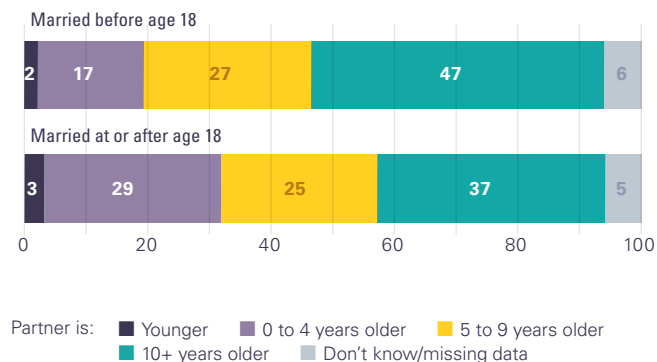## Early childbearing

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

Married before age 18
- 26 — Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
- 62 — Gave birth before age 18

Married at or after age 18
- 28
- 17

Never married
- 12
- 14

■ Gave birth before age 18
■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
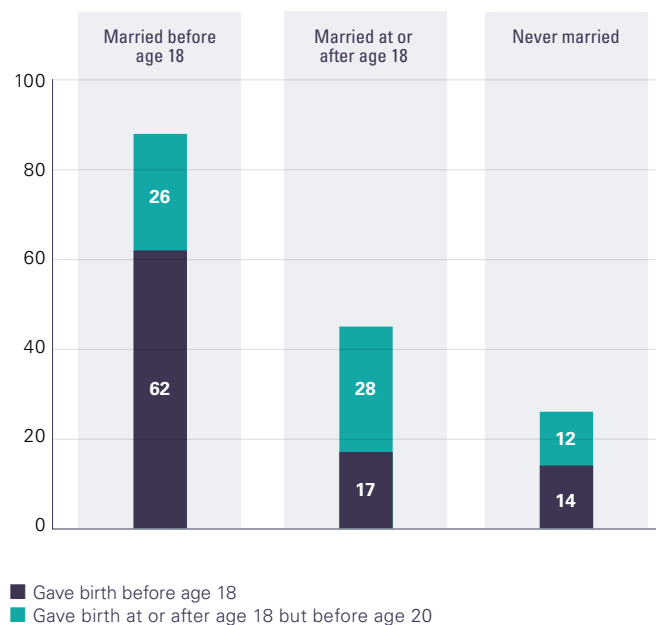
Figure 174. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

Married before age 18
- 25
- 33
- 37
- 6

Married at or after age 18
- 49
- 20
- 12
- 20

■ Pregnant before marriage   ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage   ■ Never gave birth
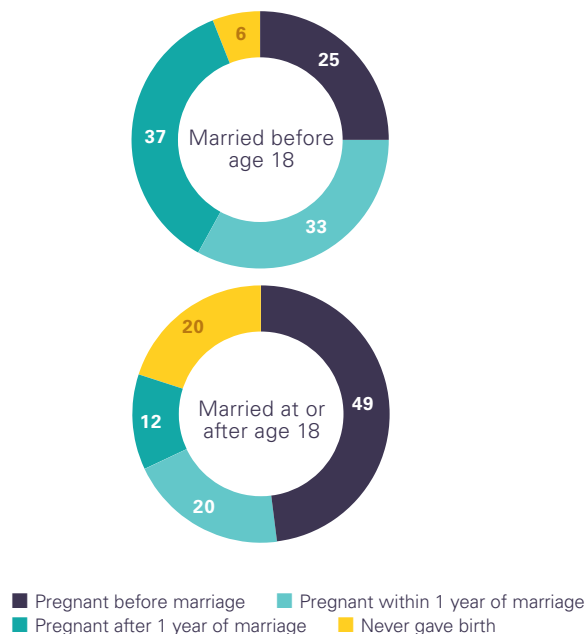
Reproductive health

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

Demand for family planning satisfied
- 46
- 37
- 72

Skilled antenatal care
- 96
- 97
- 97

Skilled attendant at delivery
- 45
- 54
- 76

Generational trends

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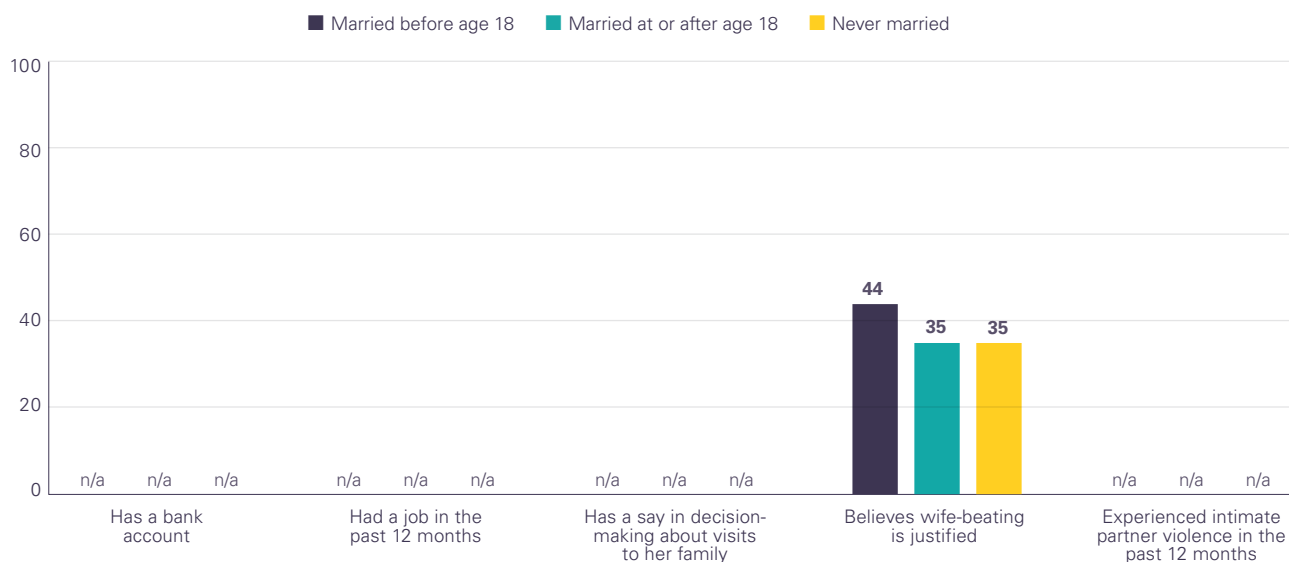

— Married before age 18   — Married before age 15

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

Observed in the past	25 years	0.5
	10 years	2.4
Required for elimination by	2030	29.5

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 Eco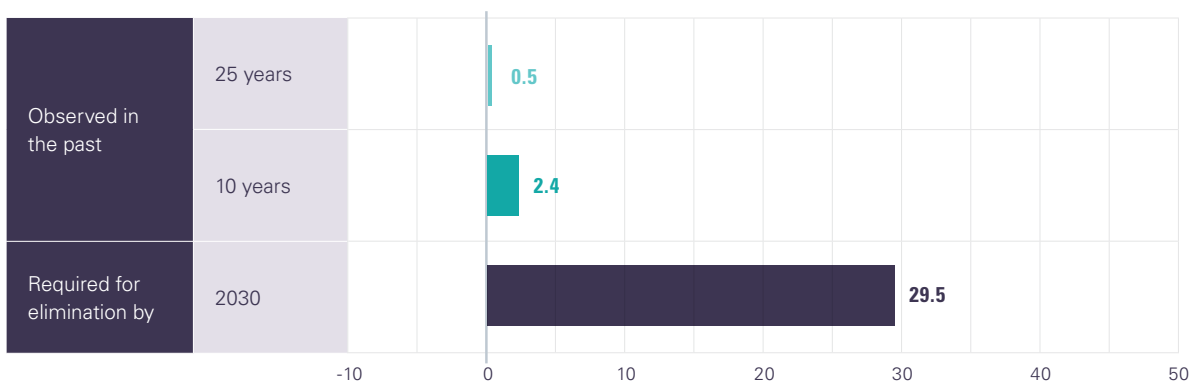nomic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2019*, online edition, 2019. Maps do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Confidence intervals are not shown in this profile; therefore caution 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.
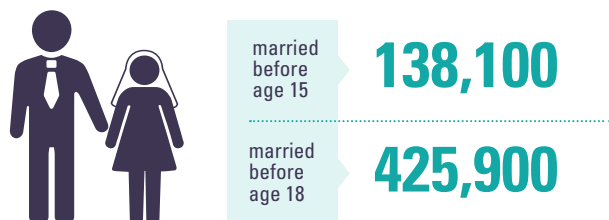
Liberia

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 18 I 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

married before age 15 > **138,100**

married before age 18 > **425,900**

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
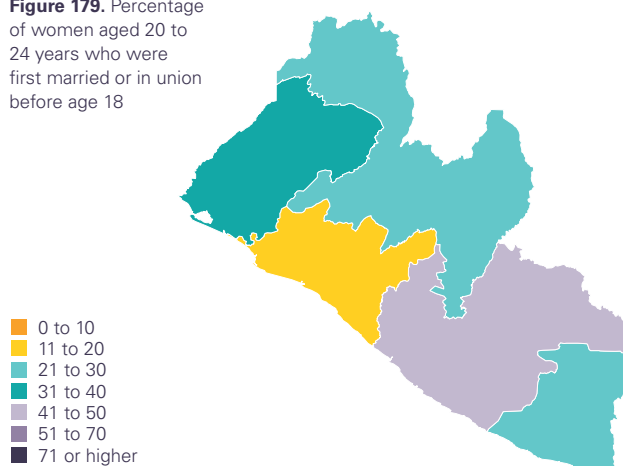
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Liberia	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	25	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	6	28	2	12	5
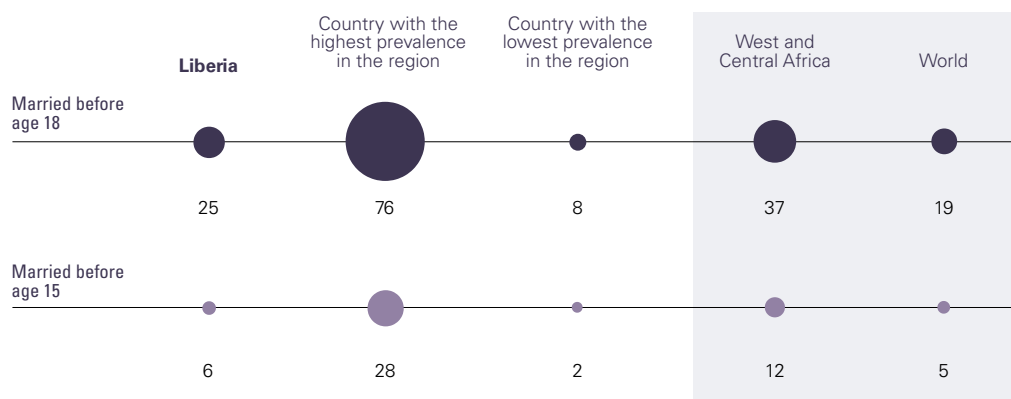
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile
- Poorest: 47
- Second: 31
- Middle: 31
- Fourth: 18
- Richest: 11

Education
- No education: 46
- Primary: 41
- Secondary or higher: 15

Residence
- Rural: 39
- Urban: 18
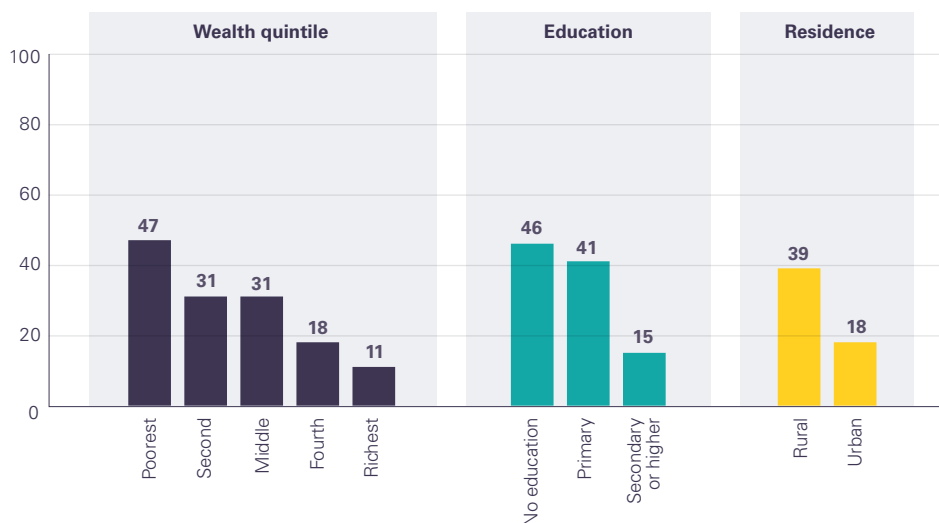
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18

| 4 | 34 | 31 | 30 |

Married at or after age 18

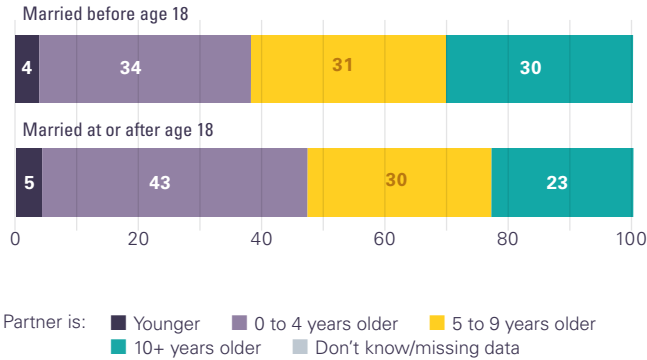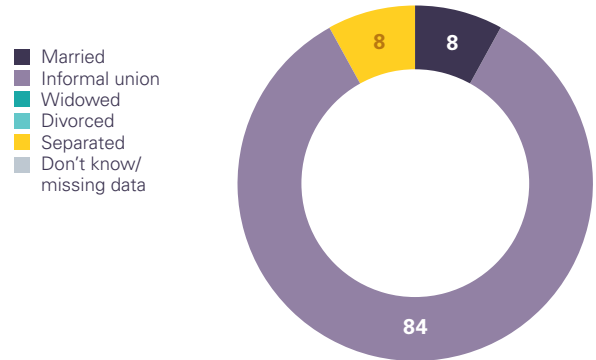| 5 | 43 | 30 | 23 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

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

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
   missing data

8 · 8 · 84

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

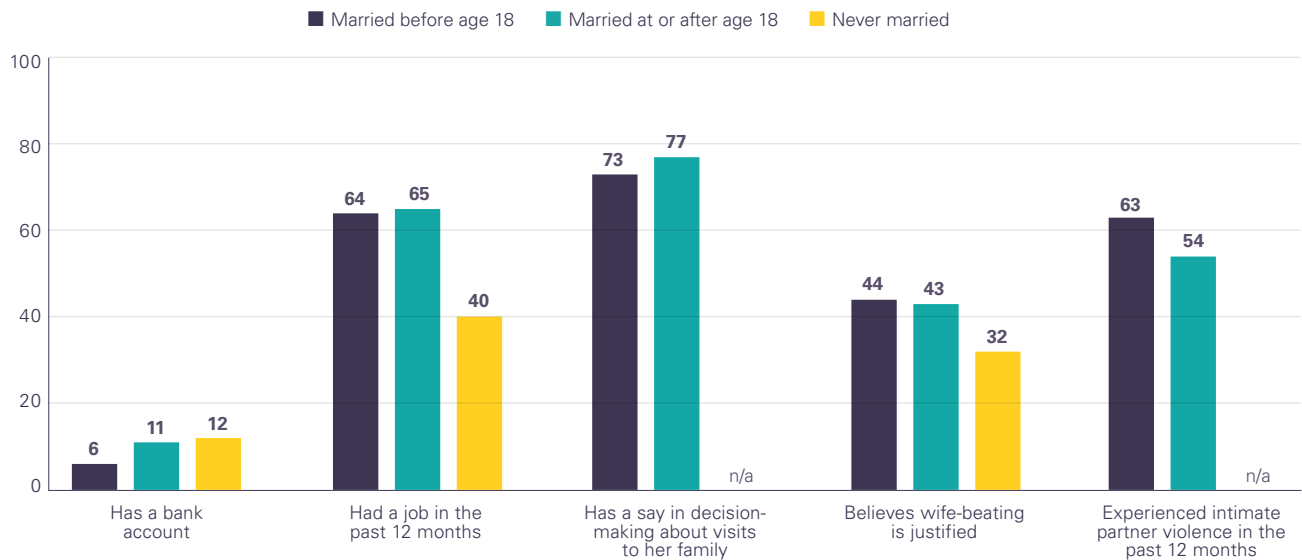|	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	6	64	73	44	63
Married at or after age 18	11	65	77	43	54
Never married	12	40	n/a	32	n/a

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

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

Currently married or in union: 31 · 69

Never married or in union: 20 · 81

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

- Gave birth before age 18
- Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
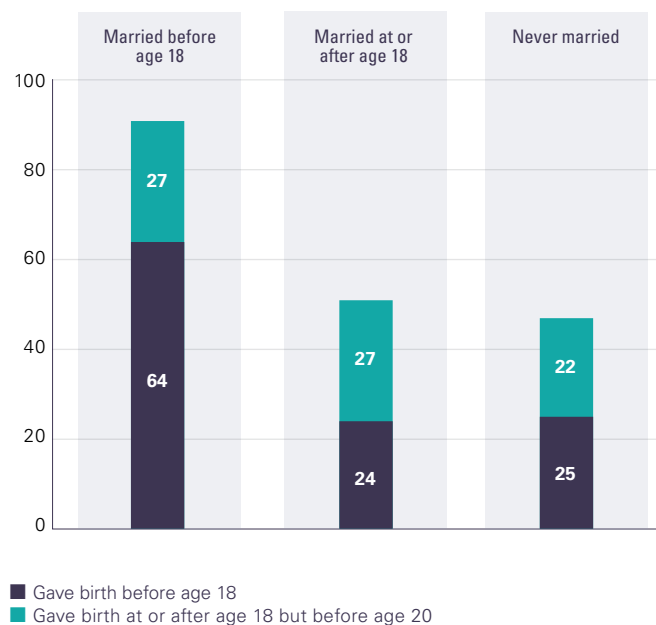
Figure 187. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

- Pregnant before marriage
- Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
- Pregnant after 1 year of marriage
- Never gave birth
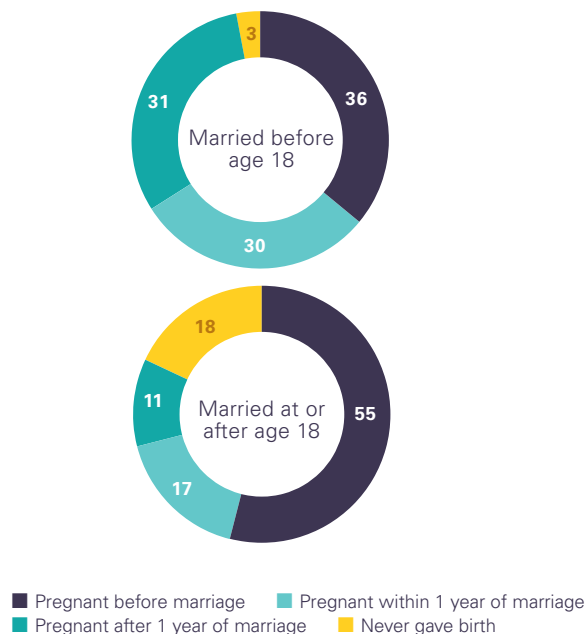
Reproductive health

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

- Married before age 18
- Married at or after age 18
- Never married

Generational trends

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

— Married before age 18   — Married before age 15

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

Observed in the past	25 years	2.3
	10 years	3.1
Required for elimination by	2030	29.2

NOTES:

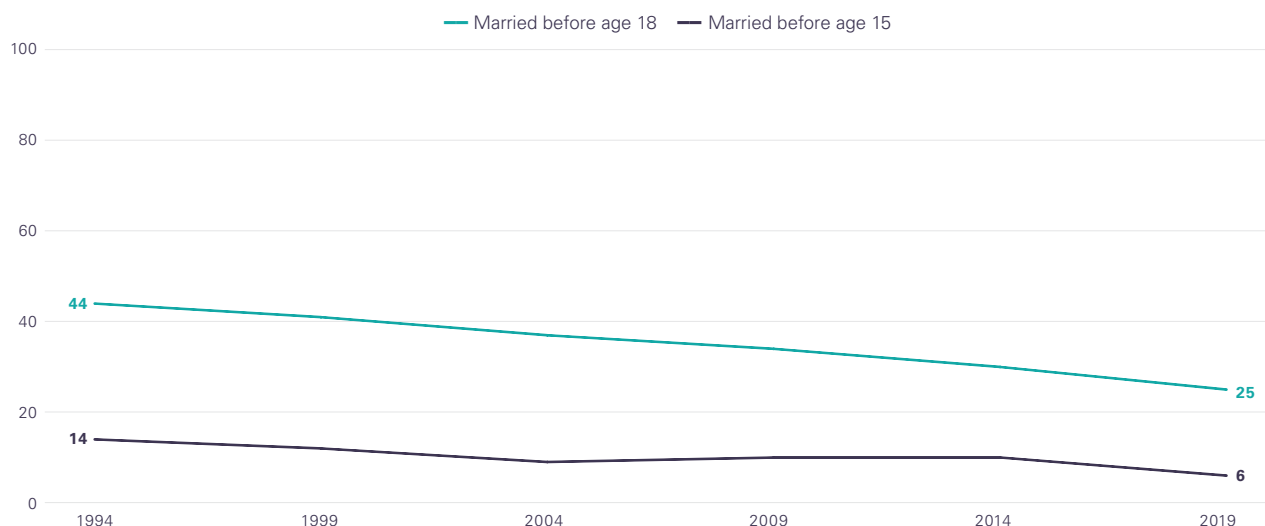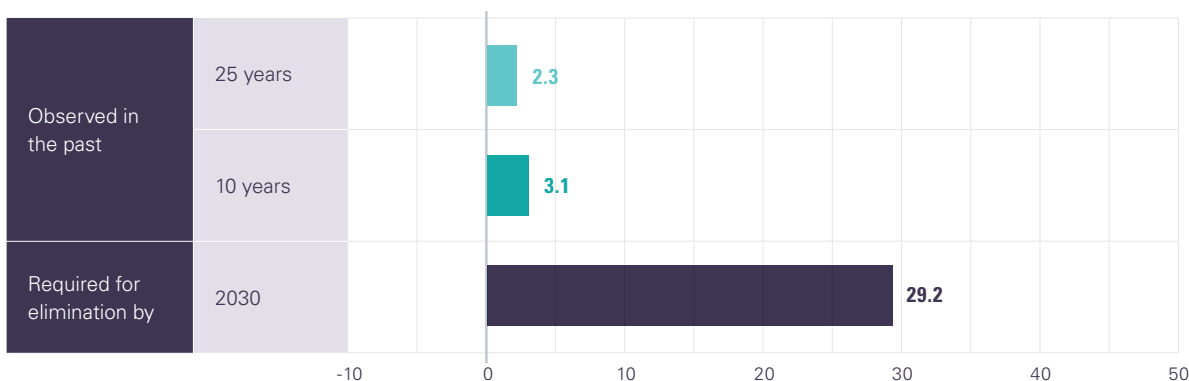Data are sourced from the Demographic and Health Survey 2019–2020 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *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.
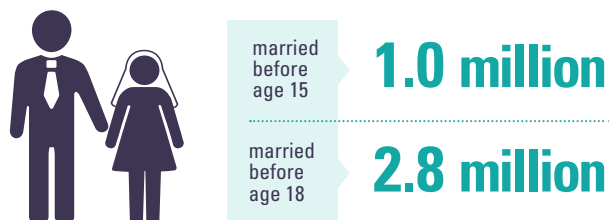
Mali

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

married before age 15 **1.0 million**

married before age 18 **2.8 million**

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
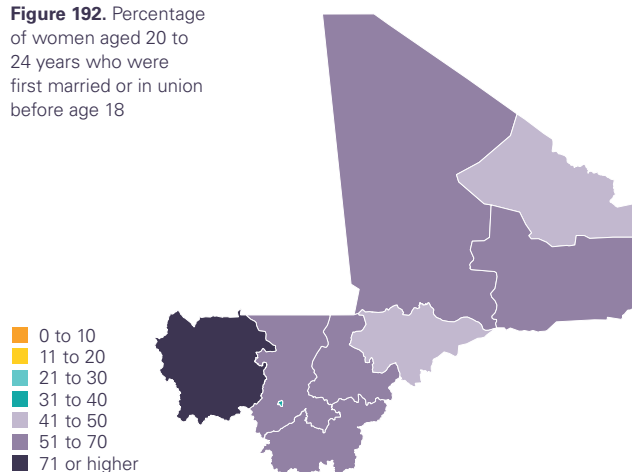
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Mali	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	54	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	16	28	2	12	5
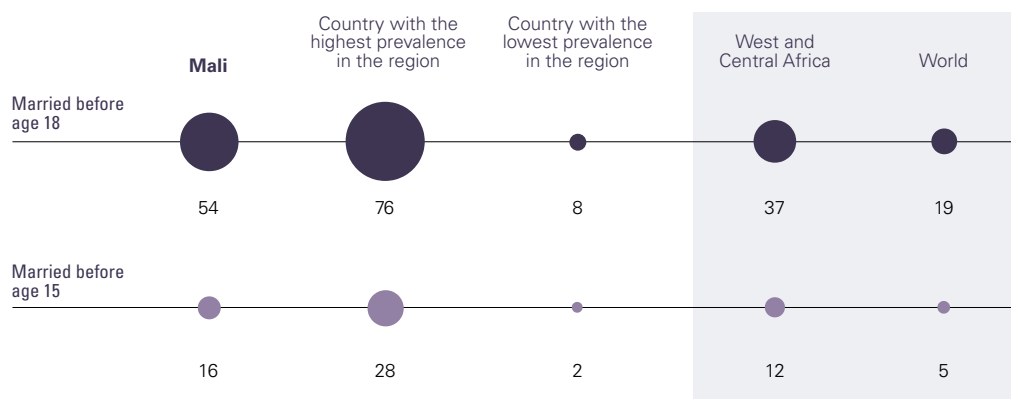
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile

Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest
66	66	65	54	32

Education

No education	Primary	Secondary or higher
66	61	31

Residence

Rural	Urban
62	34
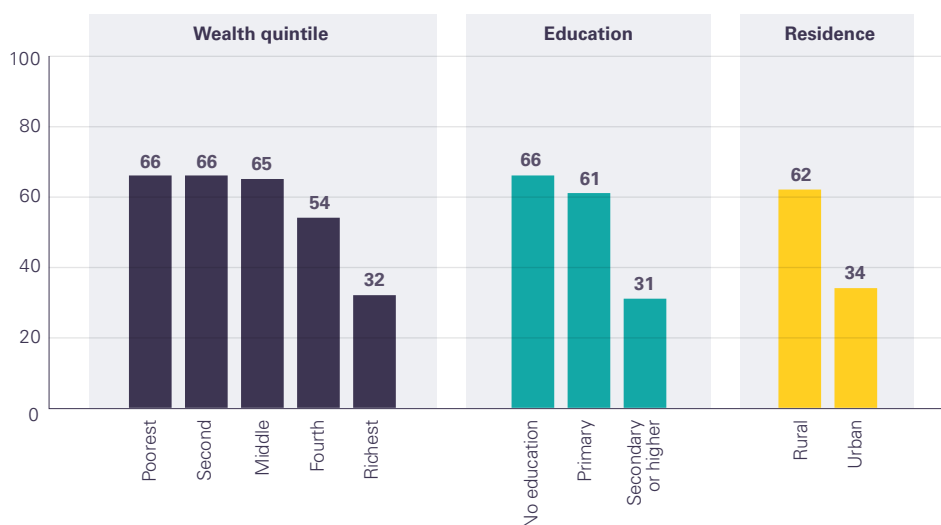
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18

| 15 | 39 | 46 |

Married at or after age 18

| 2 | 22 | 35 | 40 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

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

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
missing data

5 1 1 2
92
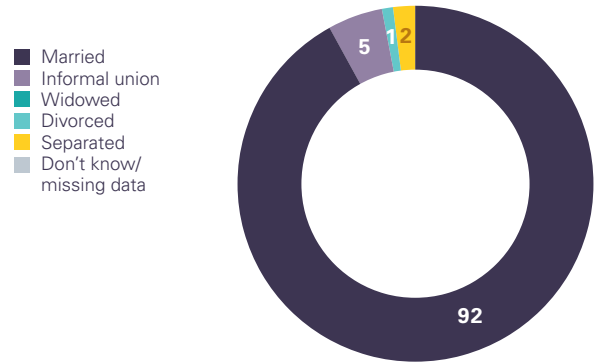
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	2	55	22	84	36
Married at or after age 18	5	46	28	79	31
Never married	11	46	n/a	65	n/a

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

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

Currently married or in union
8
92

Never married or in union
47
53

Early childbearing

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

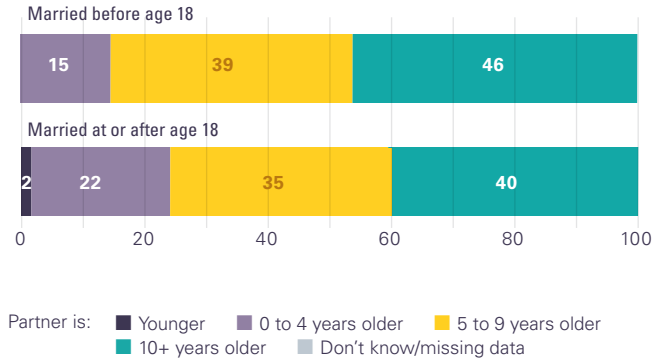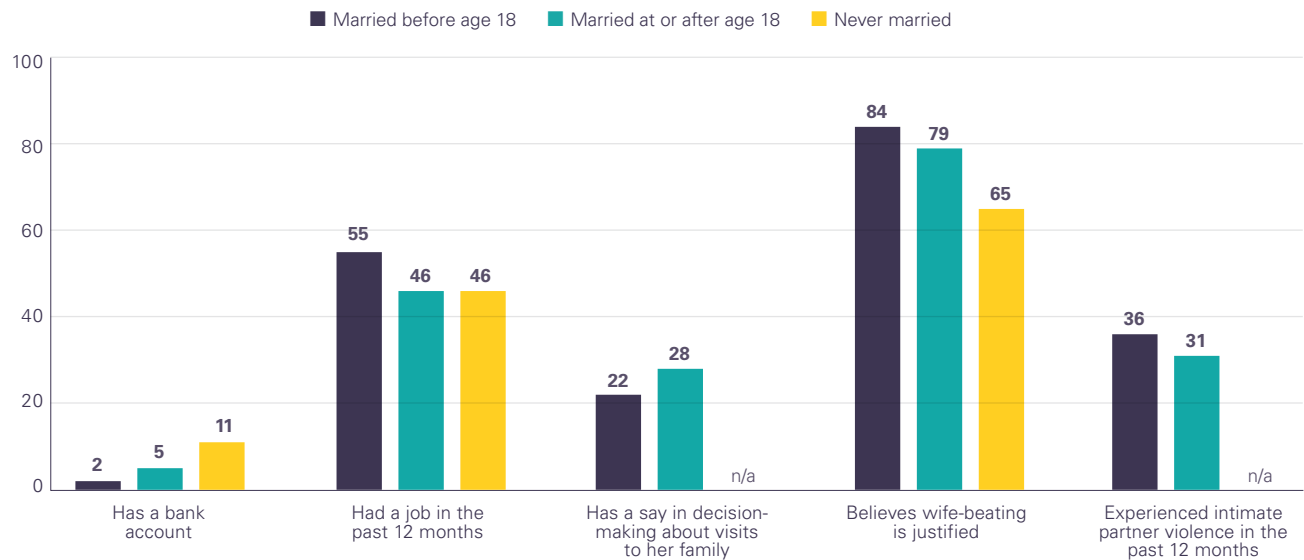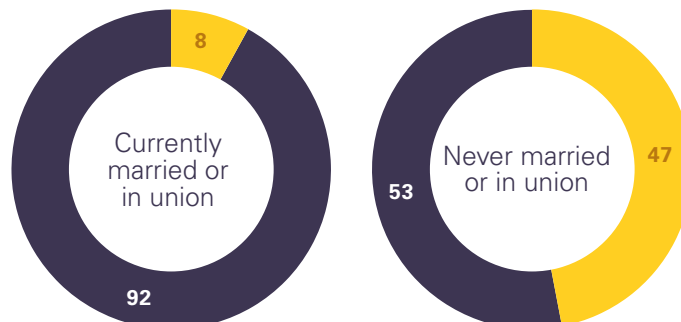|	Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18	Never married
Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20	27	31	8
Gave birth before age 18	61	9	5

- Gave birth before age 18
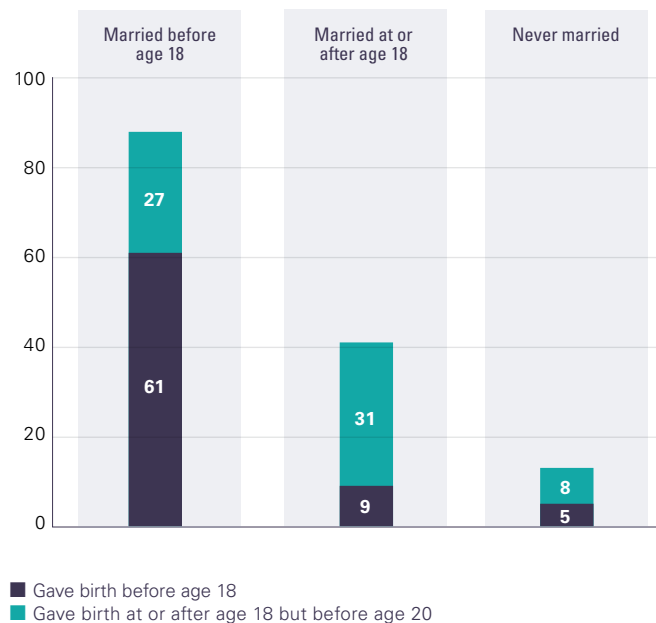- Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20

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

Married before age 18: 23, 42, 28, 6

Married at or after age 18: 36, 34, 10, 20

- Pregnant before marriage
- Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
- Pregnant after 1 year of marriage
- Never gave birth
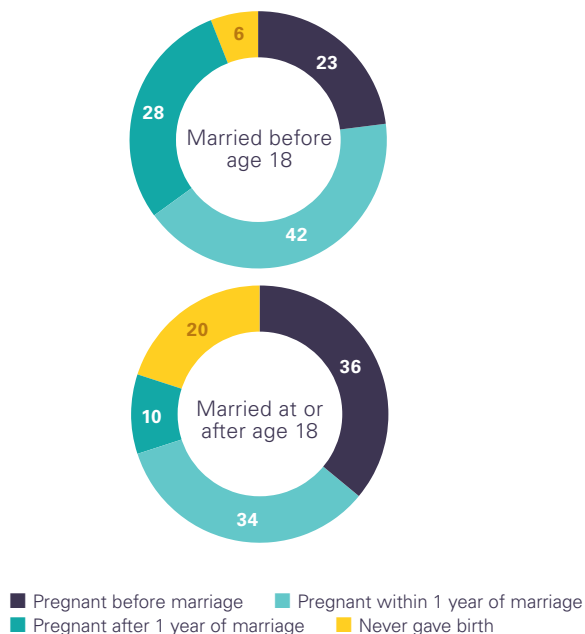
Reproductive health

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

- Married before age 18
- Married at or after age 18
- Never married

	Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18	Never married
Demand for family planning satisfied	39	49	61
Skilled antenatal care	80	87	88
Skilled attendant at delivery	67	79	90

Generational trends

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

— Married before age 18　— Married before age 15

| | 1993 | 1998 | 2003 | 2008 | 2013 | 2018 |
Married before age 18: 57 ... 54
Married before age 15: 19 ... 16
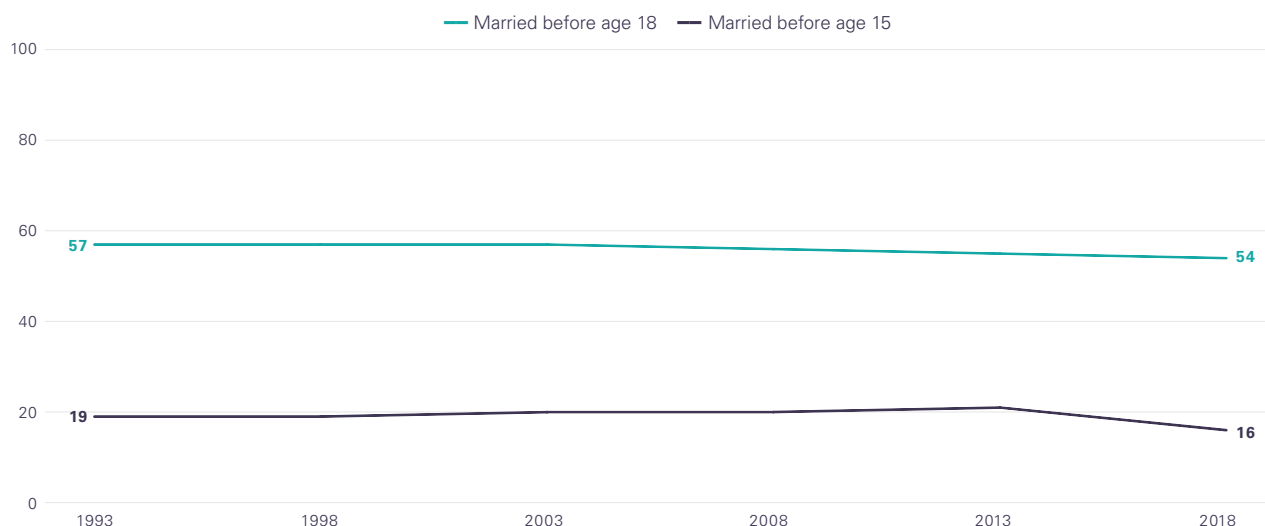
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

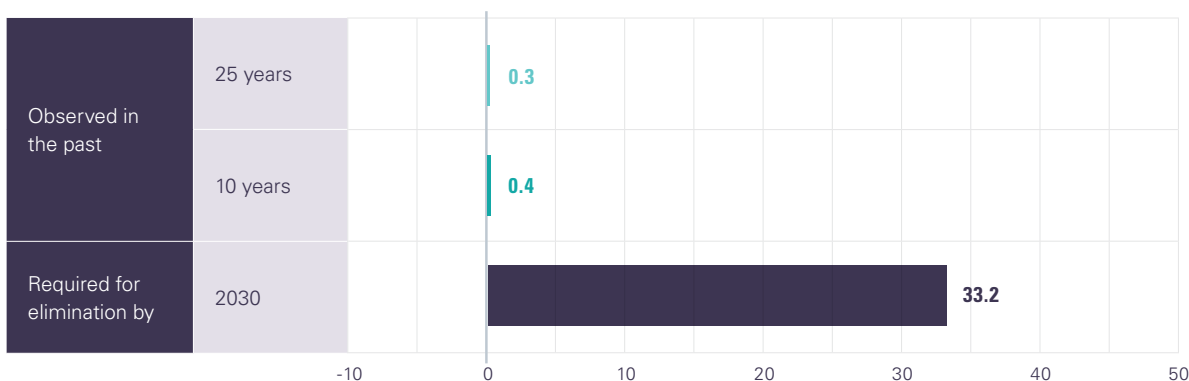| Observed in the past | 25 years | 0.3 |
| | 10 years | 0.4 |
| Required for elimination by | 2030 | 33.2 |

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.
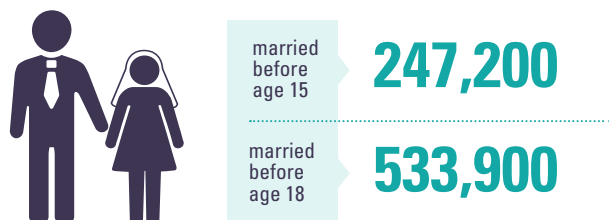
Mauritania

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: - I 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

married before age 15	**247,200**
married before age 18	**533,900**

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
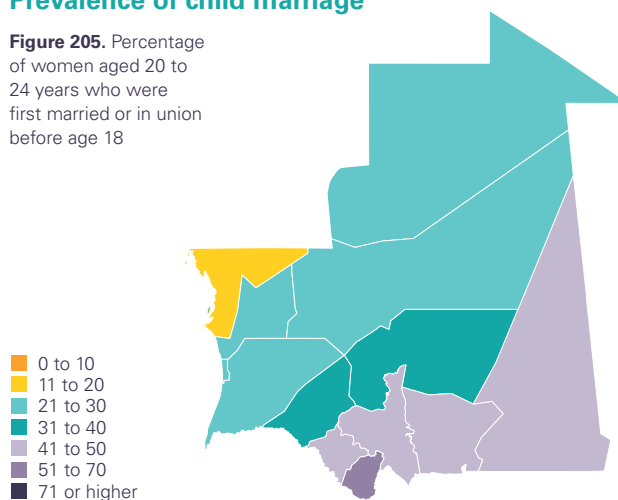
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Mauritania	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	37	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	16	28	2	12	5
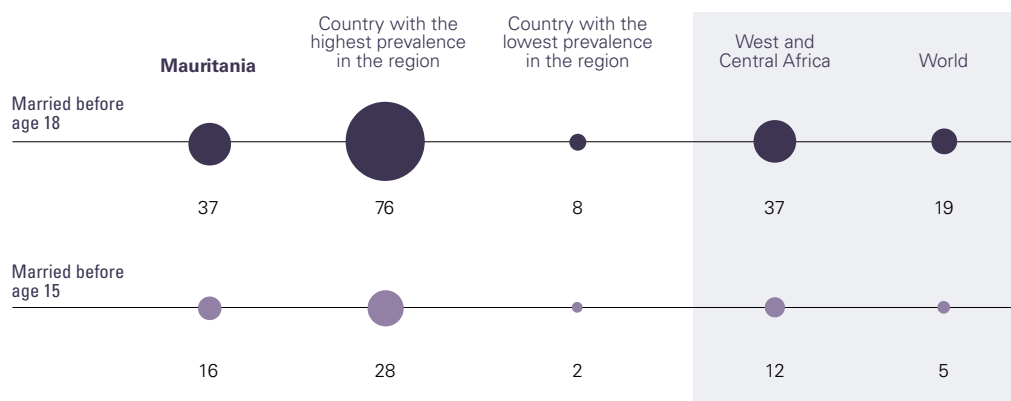
Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile

Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest
58	53	41	30	15

Education

No education	Primary	Secondary or higher
53	47	17

Residence

Rural	Urban
52	23
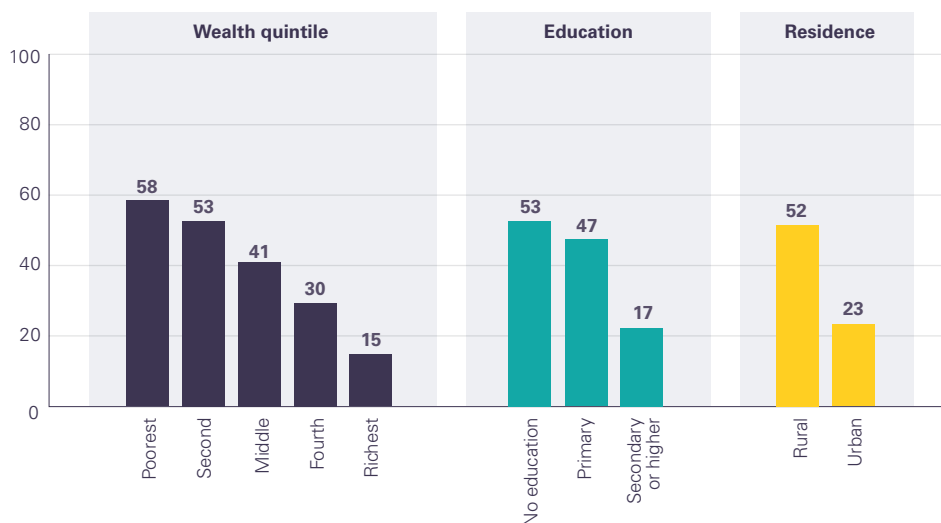
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18

| 1 | 9 | 38 | 52 |

Married at or after age 18

| 12 | 45 | 43 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
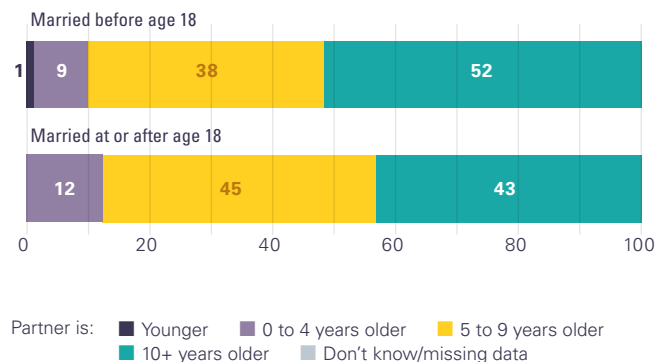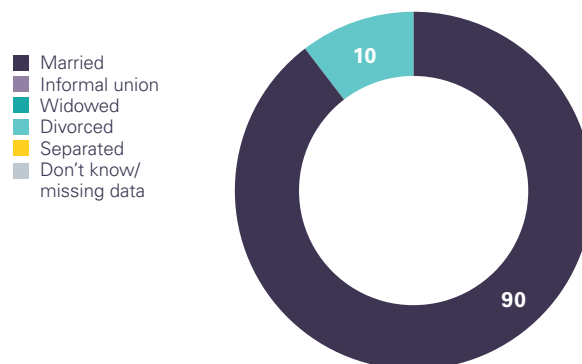■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

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

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
   missing data

10

90

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	1	16	69	30	13
Married at or after age 18	3	13	77	26	15
Never married	6	16	n/a	24	n/a

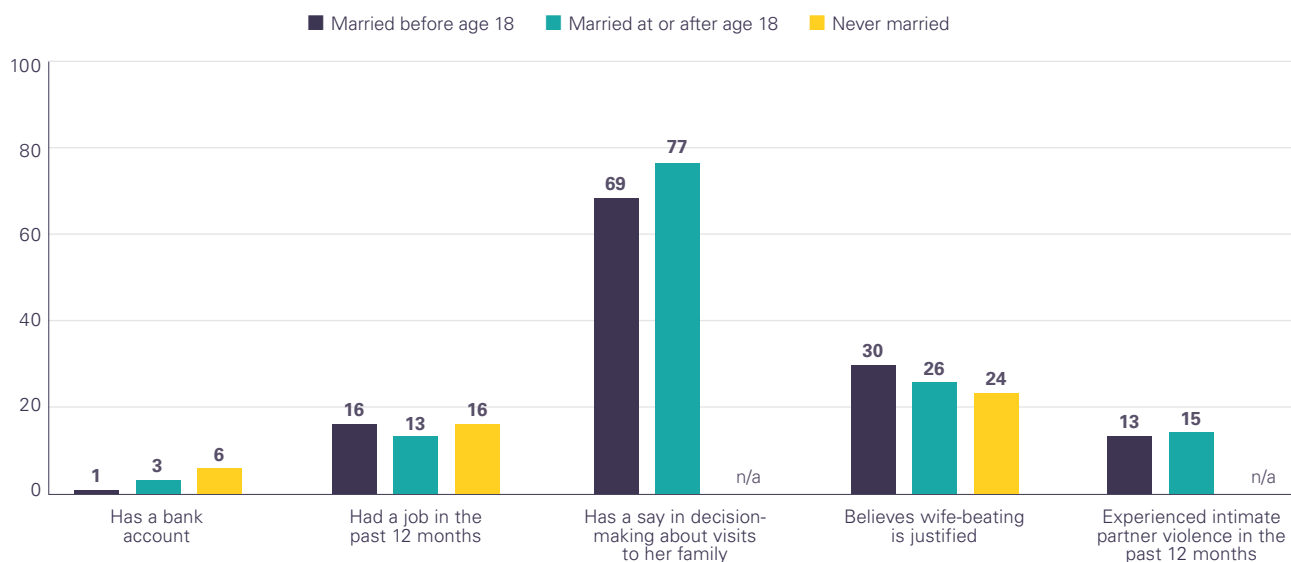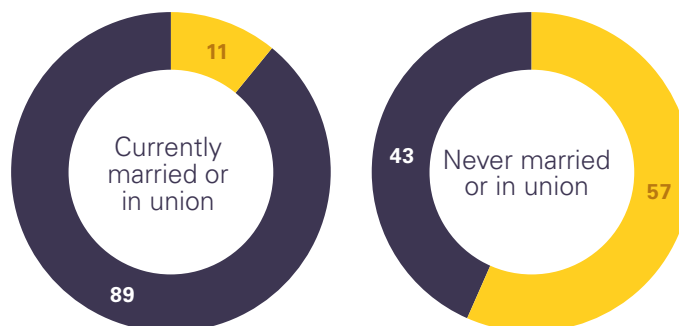**Figure 211.** Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union

11

89

Never married or in union

43

57

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

■ Gave birth before age 18
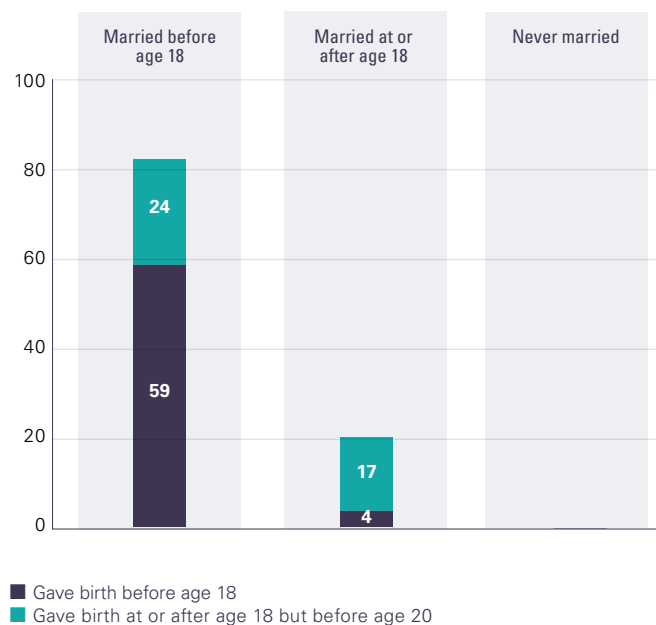■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20

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

■ Pregnant before marriage   ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage   ■ Never gave birth
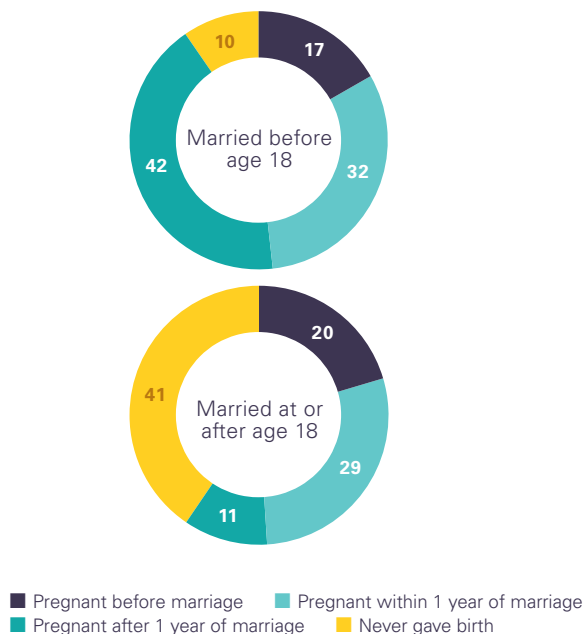
Reproductive health

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

Generational trends

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

Legend: — Married before age 18 — Married before age 15

Married before age 18: 40 (1996) → 37 (2021)
Married before age 15: 19 (1996) → 16 (2021)

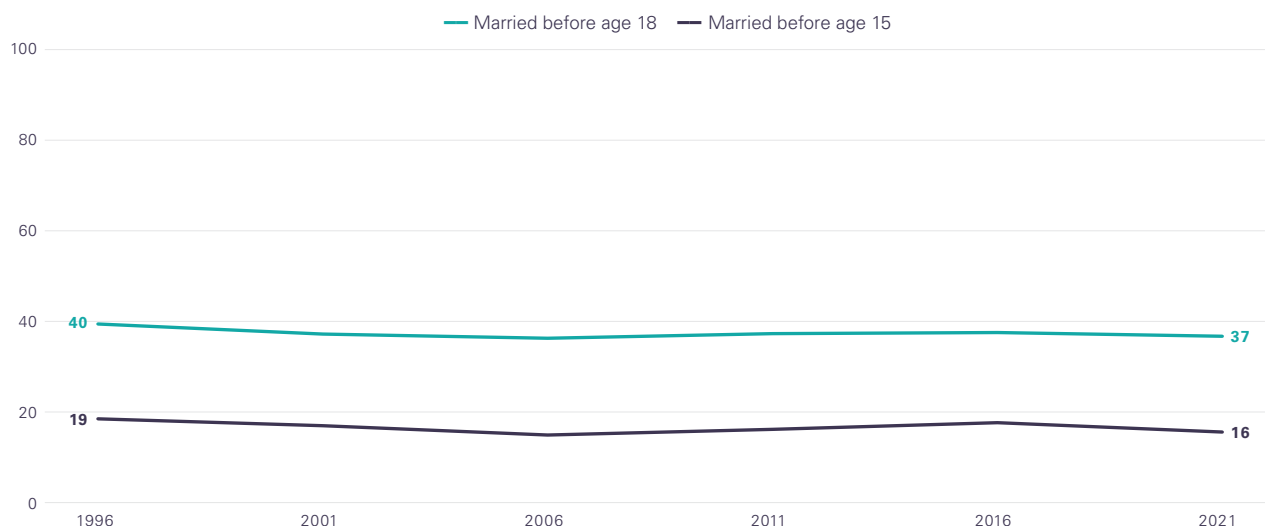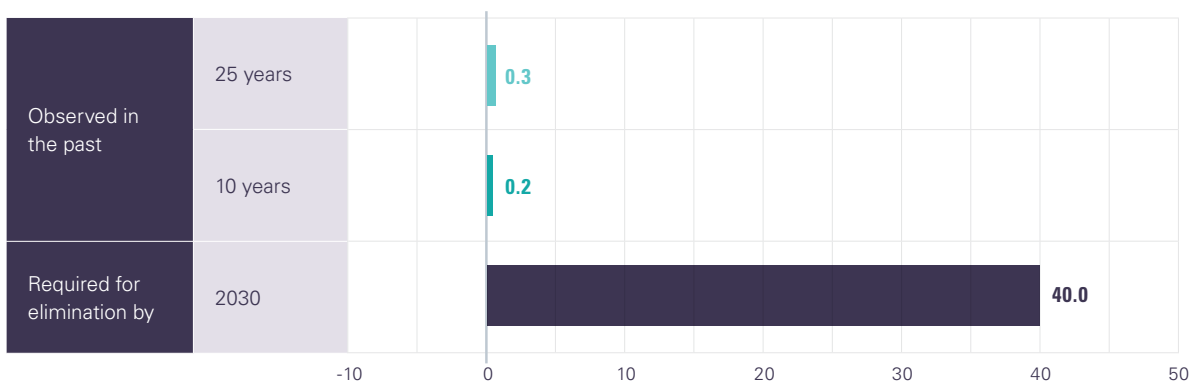## Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

		Value
Observed in the past	25 years	0.3
	10 years	0.2
Required for elimination by	2030	40.0

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.
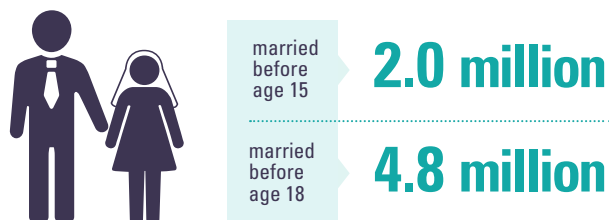
Niger

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

married before age 15 **2.0 million**

married before age 18 **4.8 million**

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
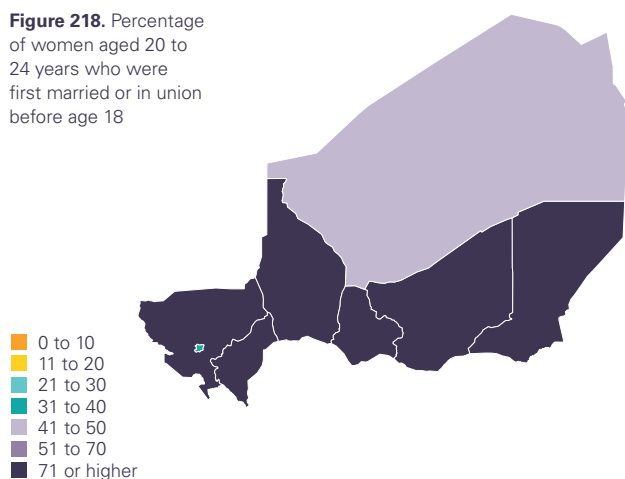
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Niger	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	76	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	28	28	2	12	5
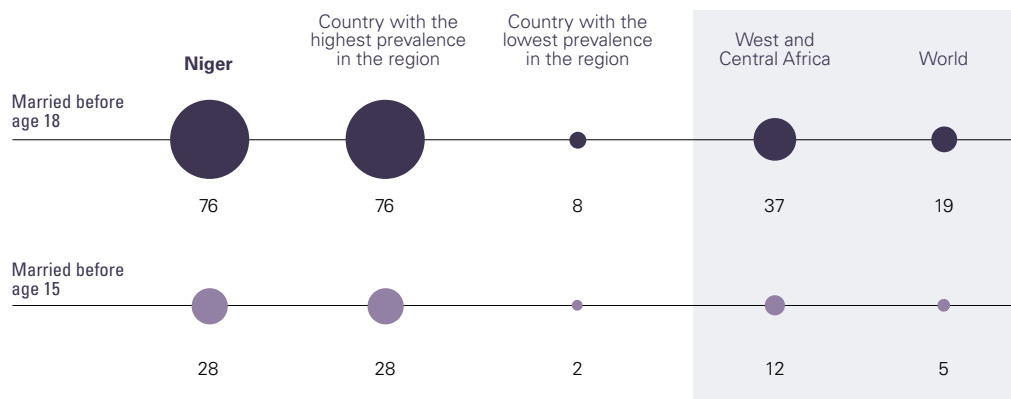
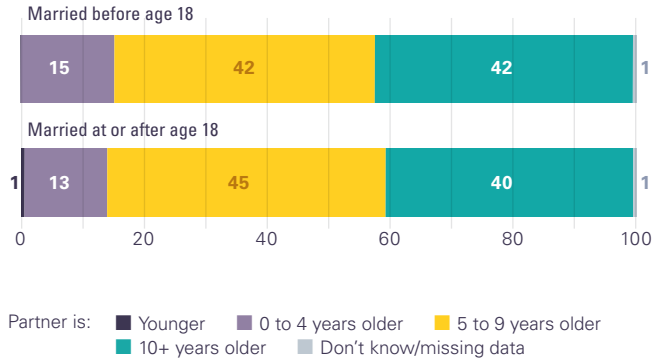### Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile: Poorest 83, Second 83, Middle 86, Fourth 85, Richest 51

Education: No education 84, Primary 67, Secondary or higher 32

Residence: Rural 85, Urban 44
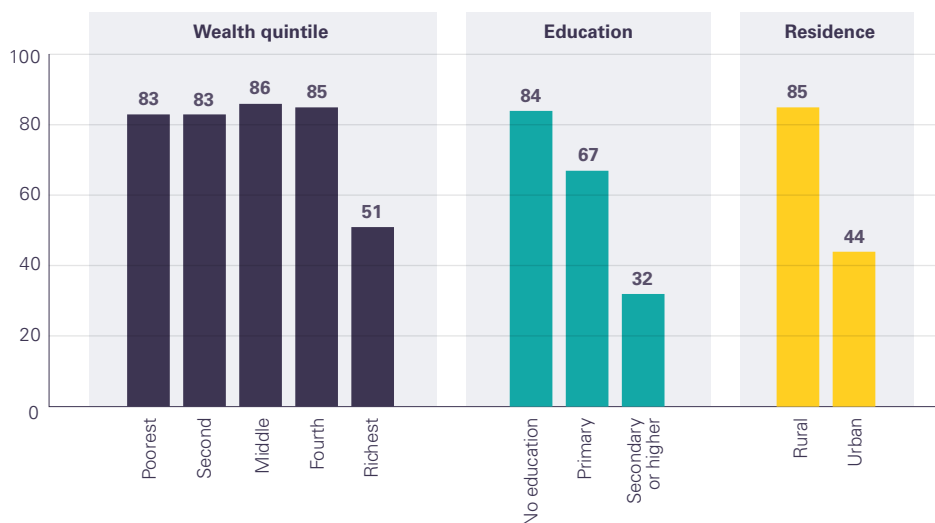
Characteristics of unions

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

Married before age 18

| 15 | 42 | 42 | 1 |

Married at or after age 18

| 1 | 13 | 45 | 40 | 1 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

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

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
  missing data

3

97
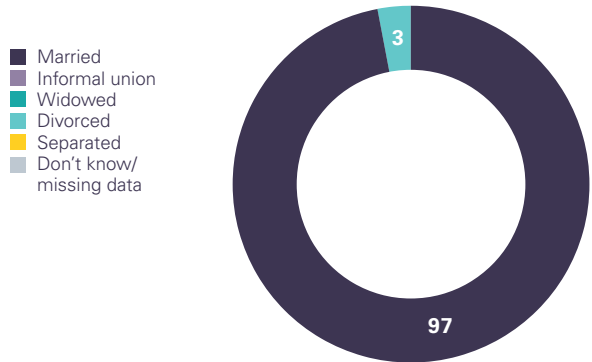
Lives of child brides

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

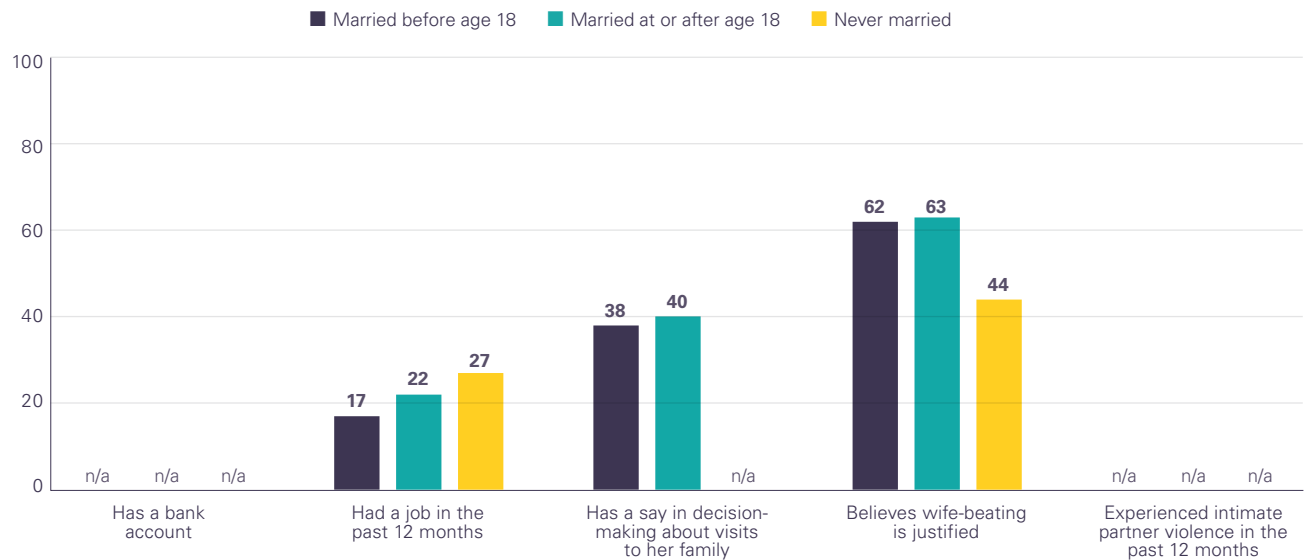|	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	n/a	17	38	62	n/a
Married at or after age 18	n/a	22	40	63	n/a
Never married	n/a	27	n/a	44	n/a

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

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

Currently married or in union

1

99

Never married or in union

38

62
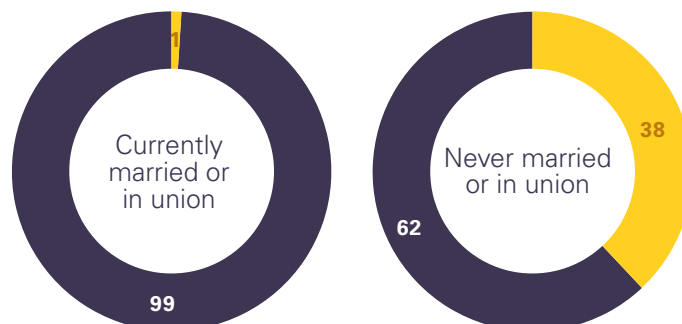
Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

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

| Married before age 18 | Married at or after age 18 | Never married |

- Married before age 18: Gave birth before age 18: 63, Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20: 27
- Married at or after age 18: 2, 31
- Never married: 2, 1

■ Gave birth before age 18
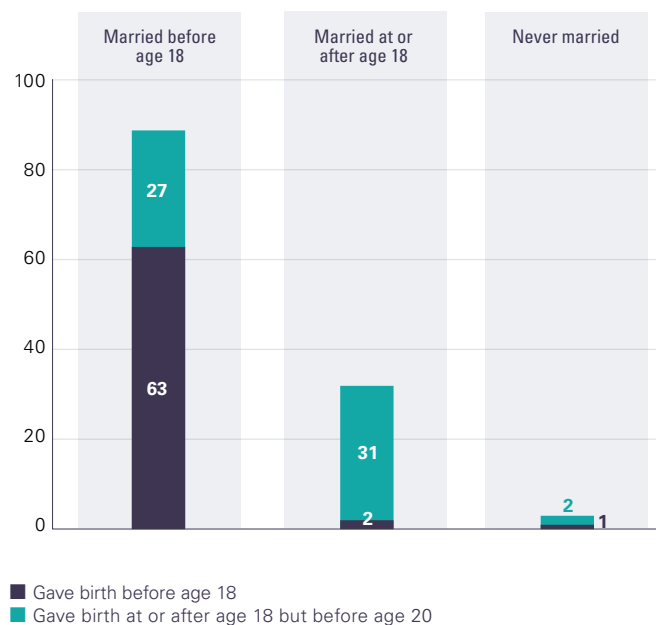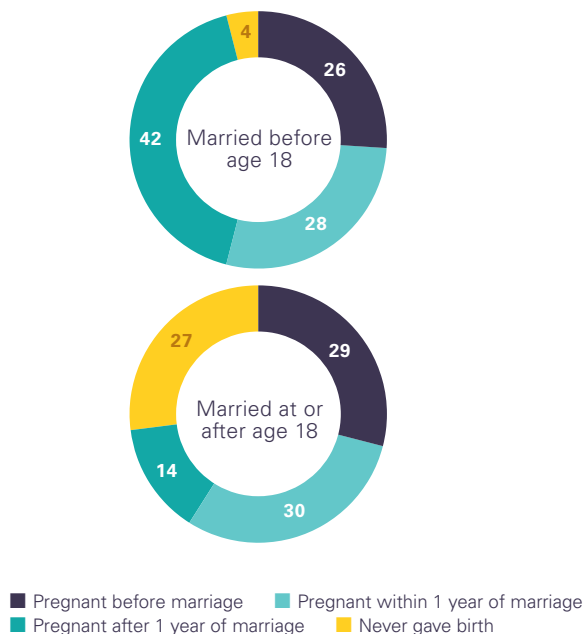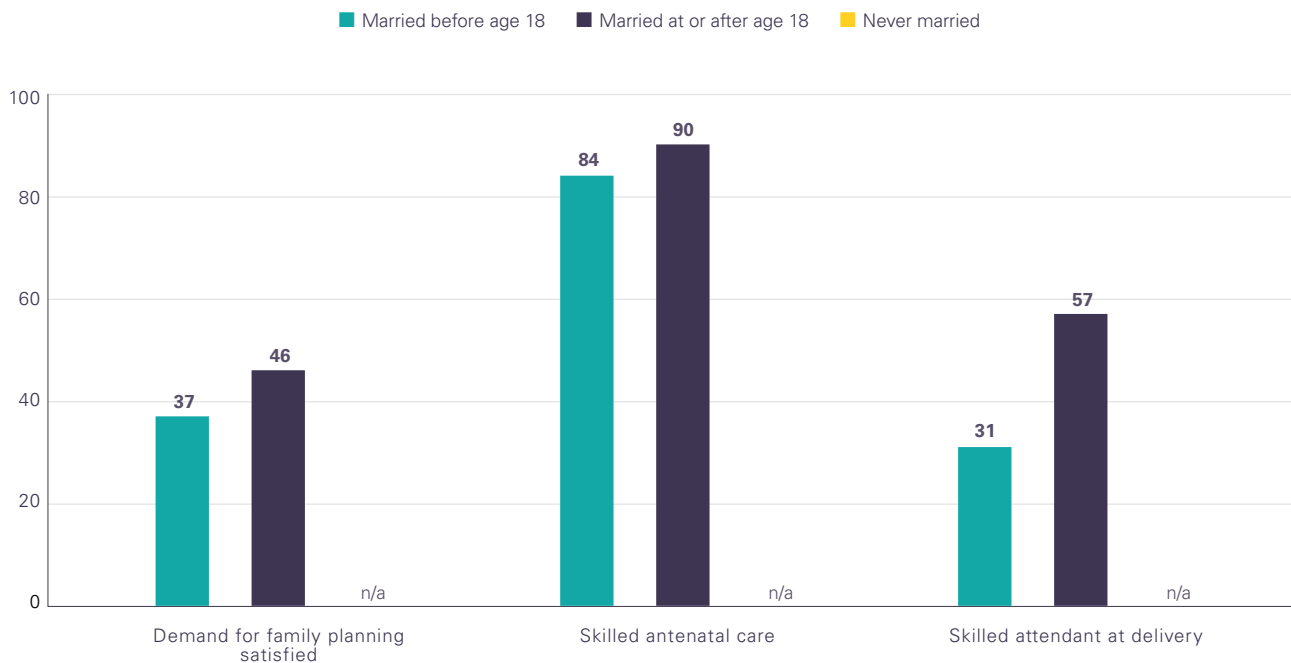■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20

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

Married before age 18: 26, 28, 42, 4

Married at or after age 18: 29, 30, 14, 27

■ Pregnant before marriage   ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage   ■ Never gave birth

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

■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Demand for family planning satisfied	Skilled antenatal care	Skilled attendant at delivery
Married before age 18	37	84	31
Married at or after age 18	46	90	57
Never married	n/a	n/a	n/a

Generational trends

Figure 228. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18
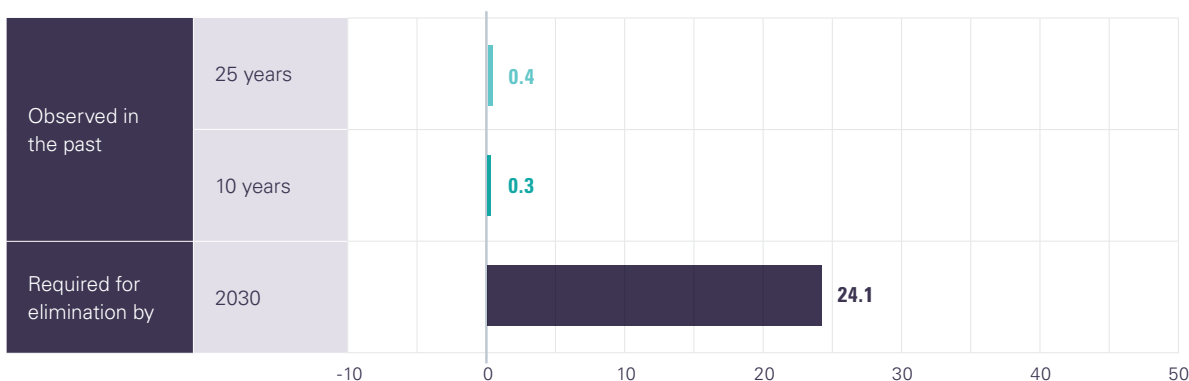
Married before age 18 ─── Married before age 15
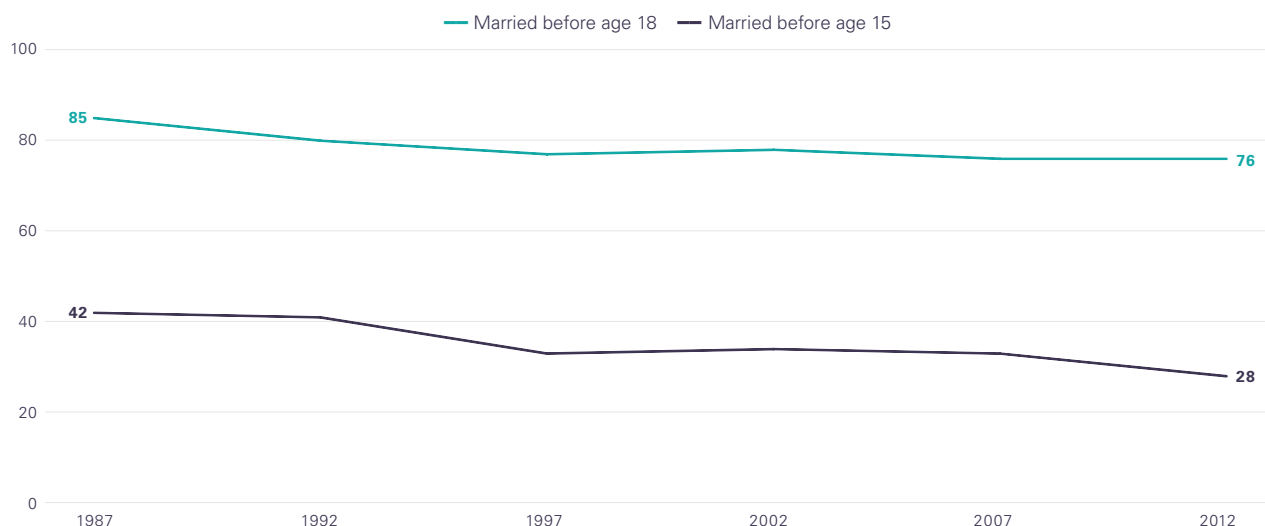
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

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

Observed in the past	25 years	0.4
	10 years	0.3
Required for elimination by	2030	24.1

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.
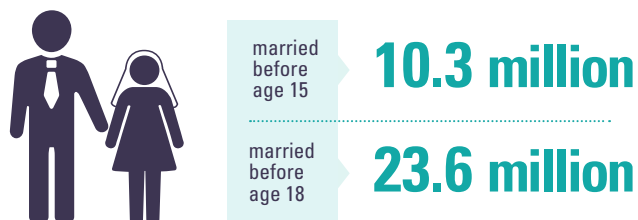
Nigeria

Minimum legal age of marriage for girls: 21 I 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

married before age 15 > **10.3 million**

married before age 18 > **23.6 million**

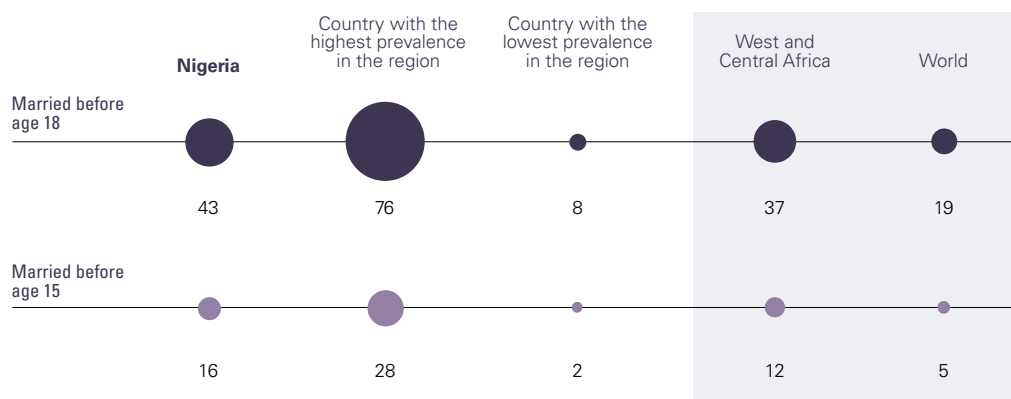**Nigeria is home to over 23 million child brides; 2 in 5 young women were married in childhood**

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
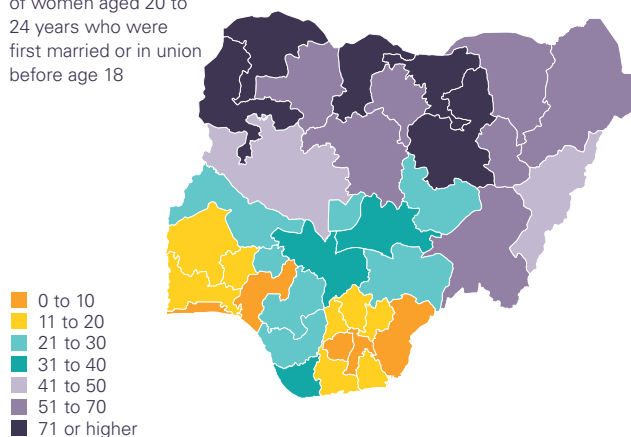
Regional and global comparisons

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

	Nigeria	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	43	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	16	28	2	12	5

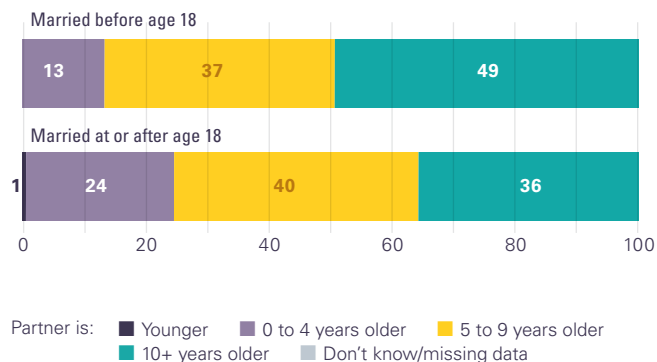### Vulnerable populations

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

Wealth quintile
- Poorest: 76
- Second: 65
- Middle: 46
- Fourth: 23
- Richest: 10

Education
- No education: 81
- Primary: 63
- Secondary or higher: 19

Residence
- Rural: 58
- Urban: 23
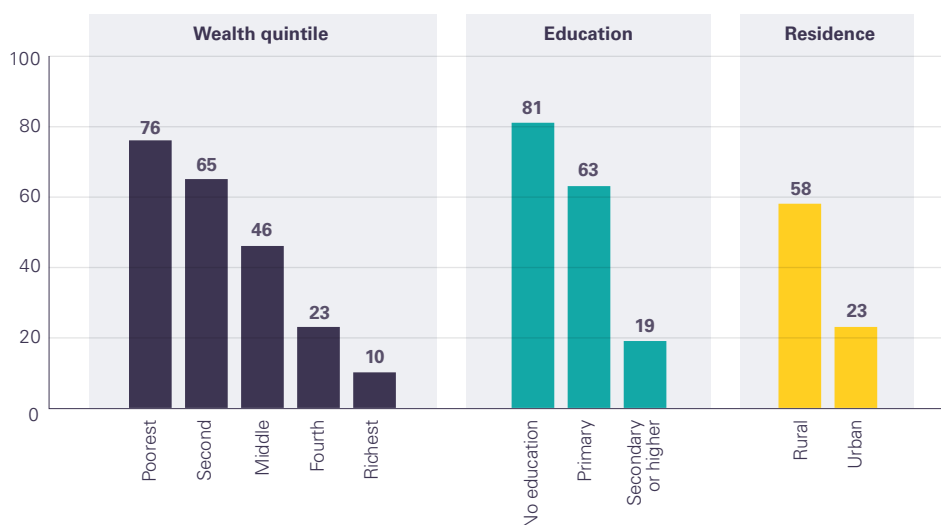
Characteristics of unions

Spousal age gap

Figure 234. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners

Married before age 18

| 13 | 37 | 49 |

Married at or after age 18

| 1 | 24 | 40 | 36 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

Figure 235. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/ missing data

2 3

96
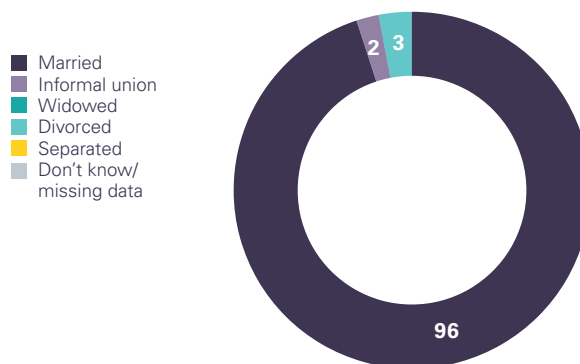
Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 236. 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
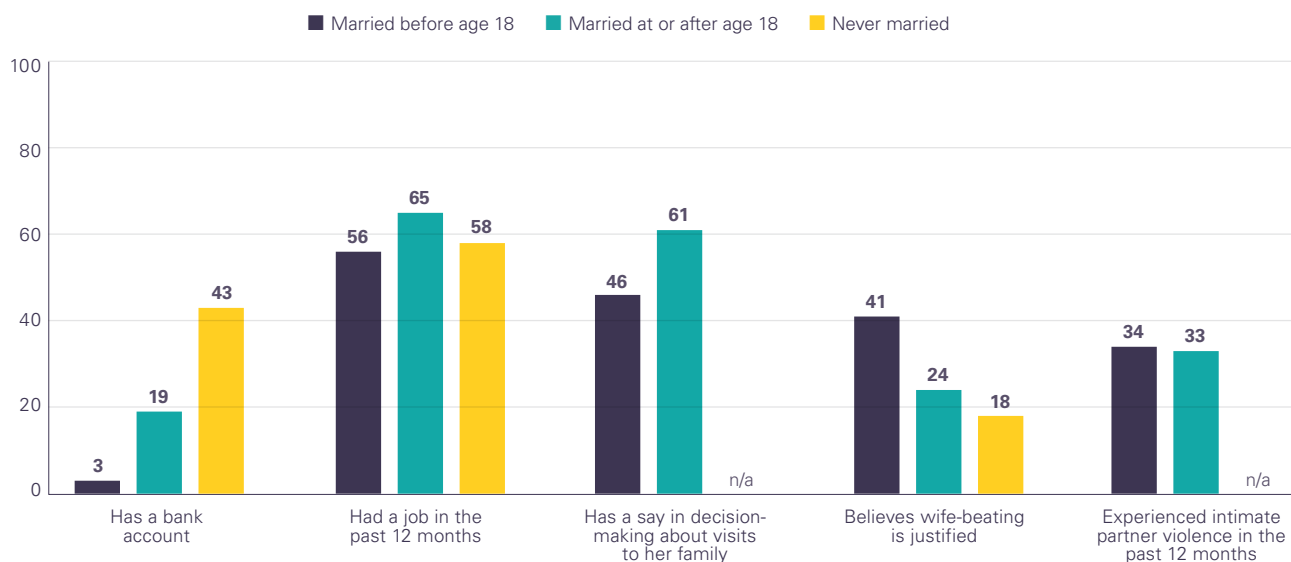
■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

|	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	3	56	46	41	34
Married at or after age 18	19	65	61	24	33
Never married	43	58	n/a	18	n/a

Figure 237. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union

3

97

Never married or in union

32

68
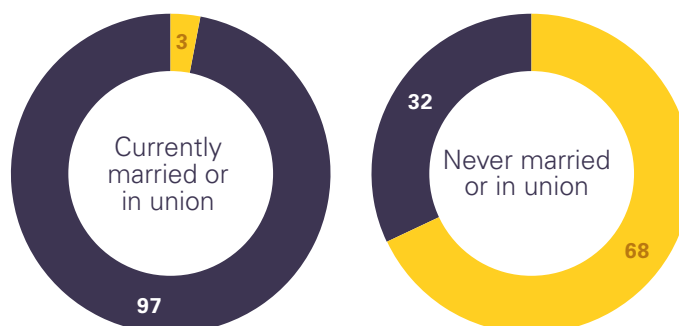
Early childbearing

Figure 238. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

Married before age 18

Married at or after age 18

Never married

- Gave birth before age 18
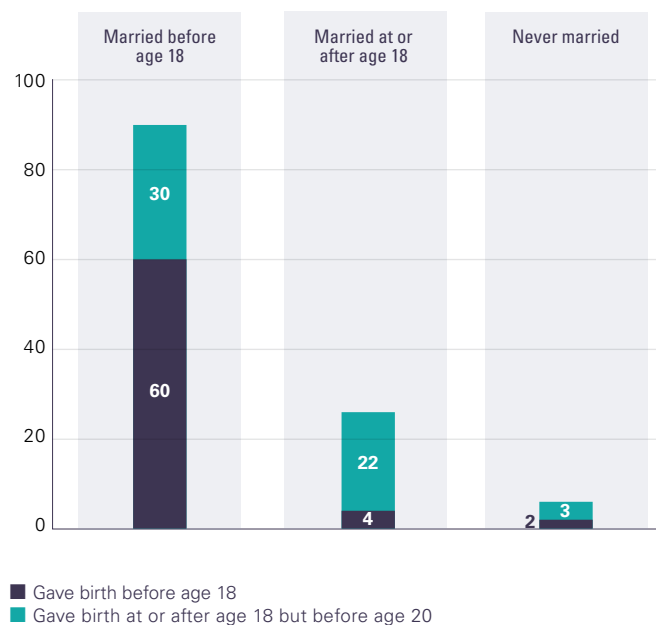- Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20

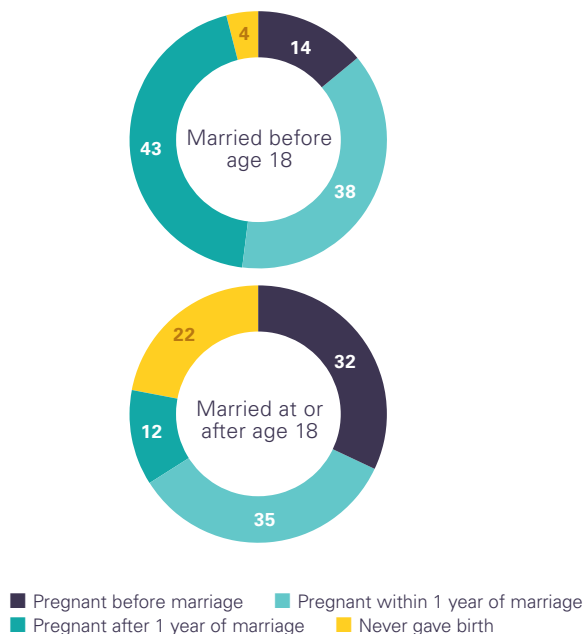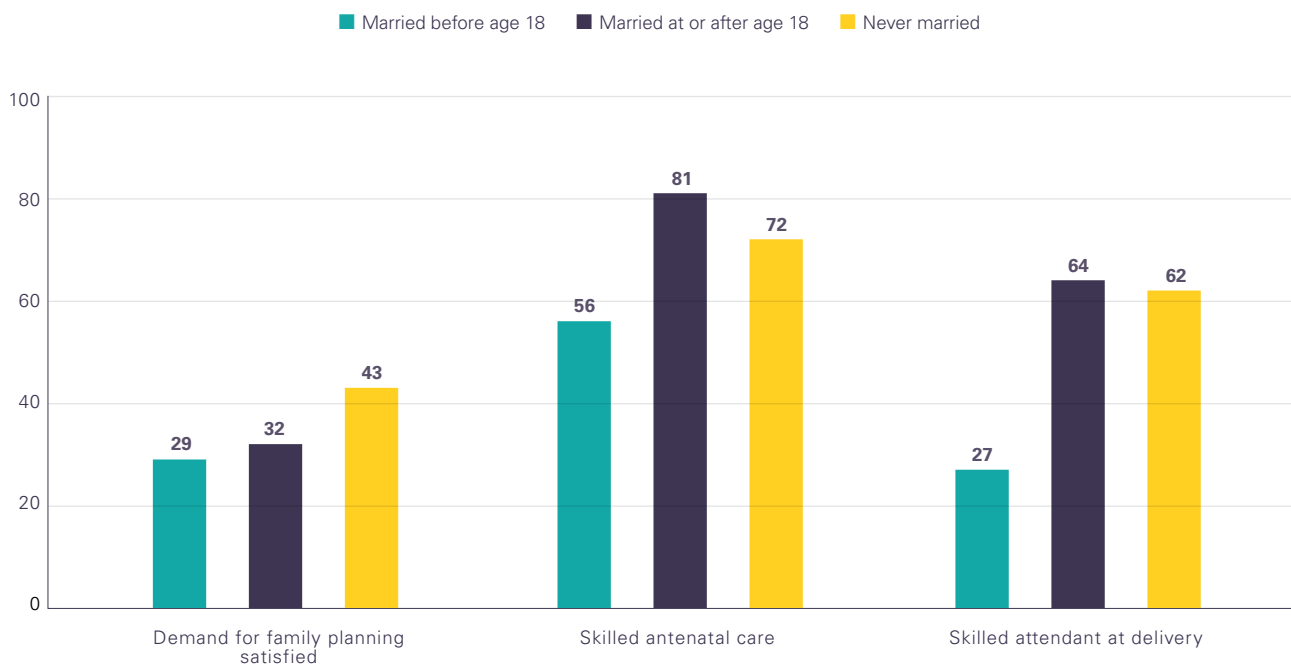**Figure 239.** Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

Married before age 18

Married at or after age 18

- Pregnant before marriage
- Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
- Pregnant after 1 year of marriage
- Never gave birth

Reproductive health

Figure 240. 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
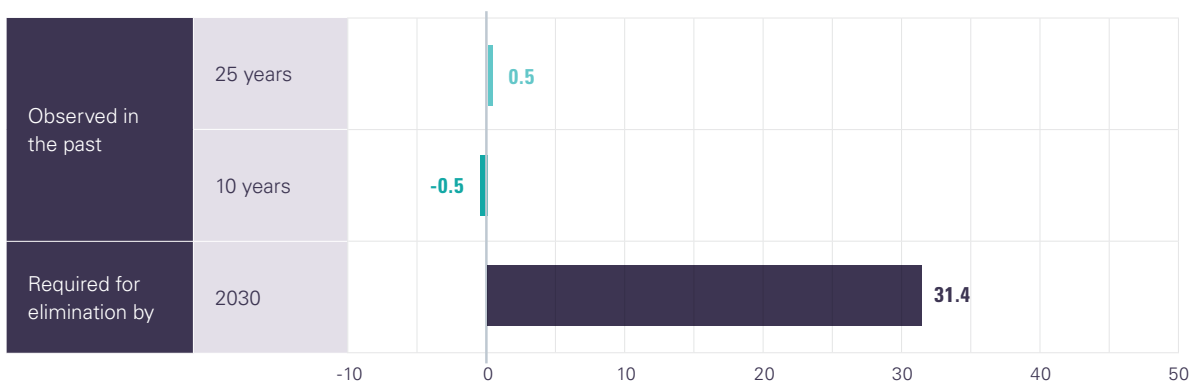
- Married before age 18
- Married at or after age 18
- Never married

Generational trends

Figure 241. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

— Married before age 18   — Married before age 15
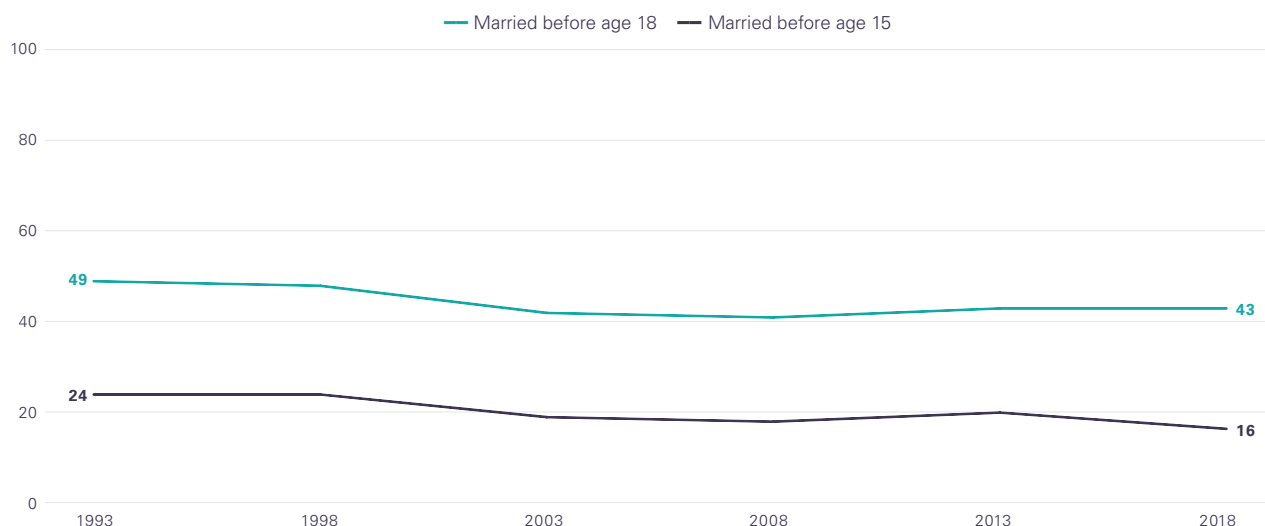
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 242. 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

Observed in the past	25 years	0.5
	10 years	-0.5
Required for elimination by	2030	31.4

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.
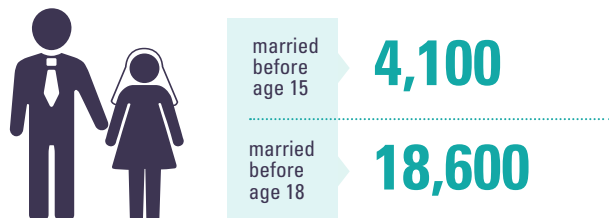
Sao Tome and Principe

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

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

Figure 243. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

married before age 15 > **4,100**

married before age 18 > **18,600**

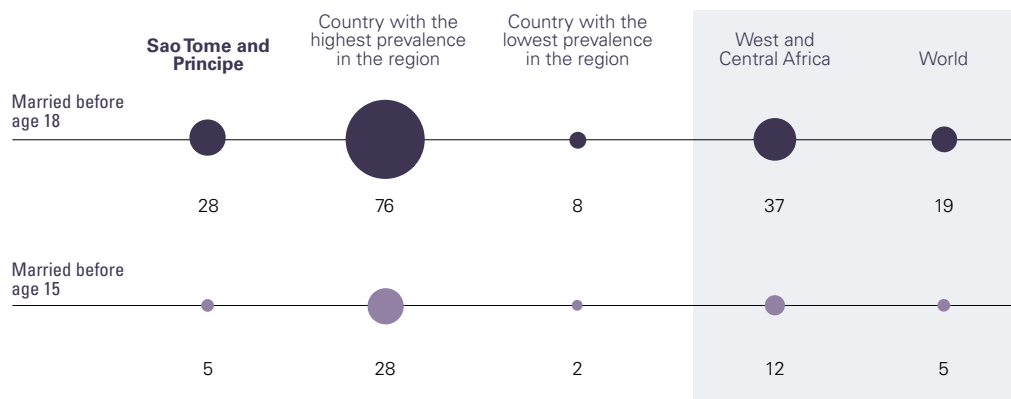**Sao Tome and Principe is home to over 18,000 child brides; 3 in 10 young women were married in childhood**

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
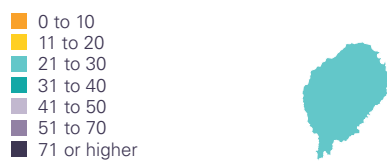
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 245. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

	Sao Tome and Principe	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	28	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	5	28	2	12	5

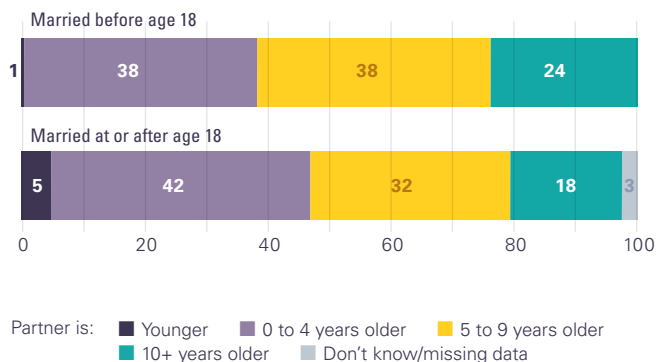### Vulnerable populations

Figure 246. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence

Wealth quintile

- Poorest: 45
- Second: 29
- Middle: 33
- Fourth: 21
- Richest: 11

Education

- No education: n/a
- Primary: 58
- Secondary or higher: 20

Residence

- Rural: 33
- Urban: 26
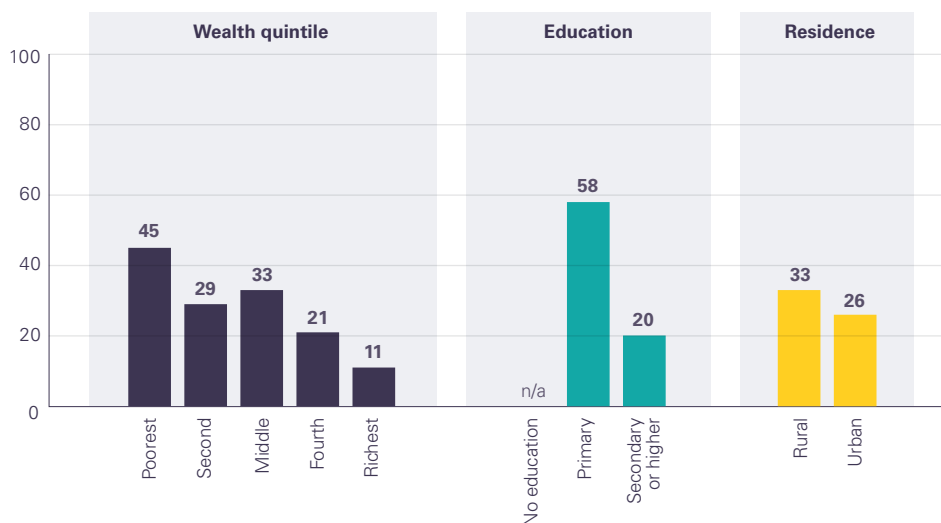
Characteristics of unions

Spousal age gap

Figure 247. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners

Married before age 18

| 1 | 38 | 38 | 24 |

Married at or after age 18

| 5 | 42 | 32 | 18 | 3 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

Figure 248. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/ missing data

6 4
91
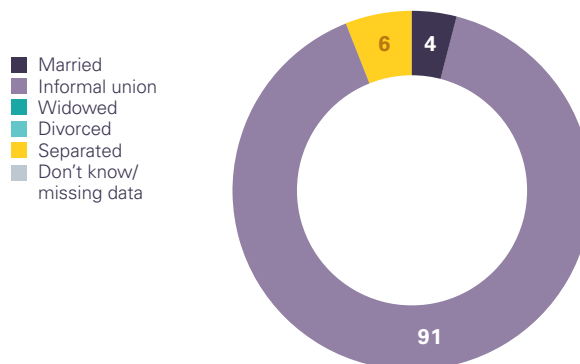
Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 249. 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
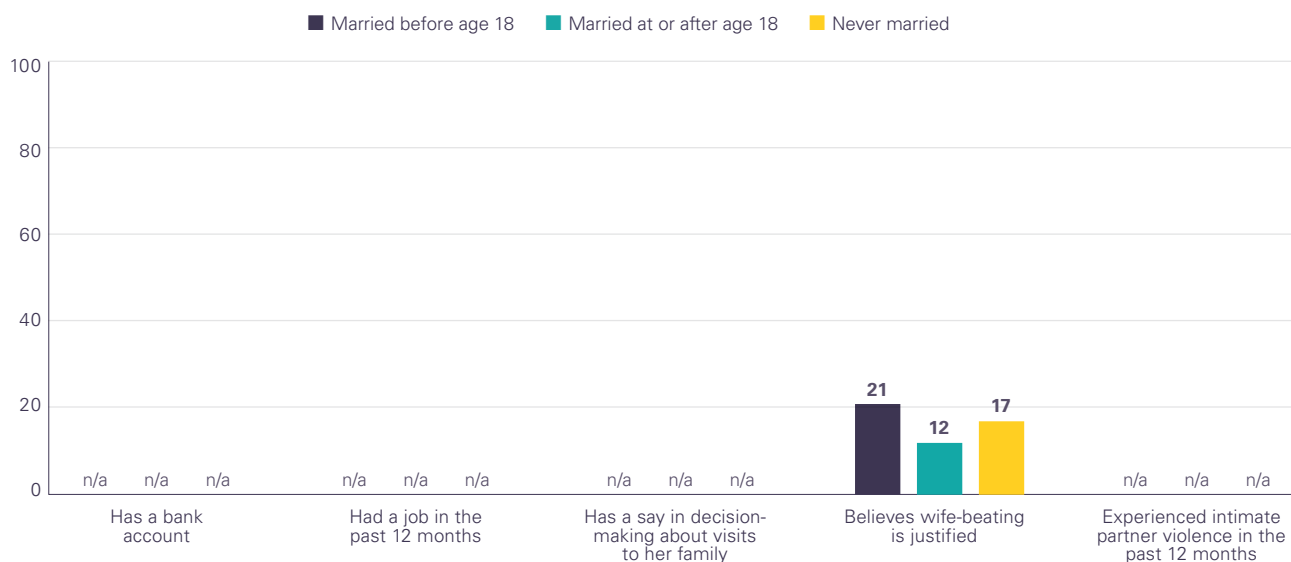
■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	21	n/a
Married at or after age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	12	n/a
Never married	n/a	n/a	n/a	17	n/a

Figure 250. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union
33
67

Never married or in union
10
90

Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

Figure 251. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

■ Gave birth before age 18
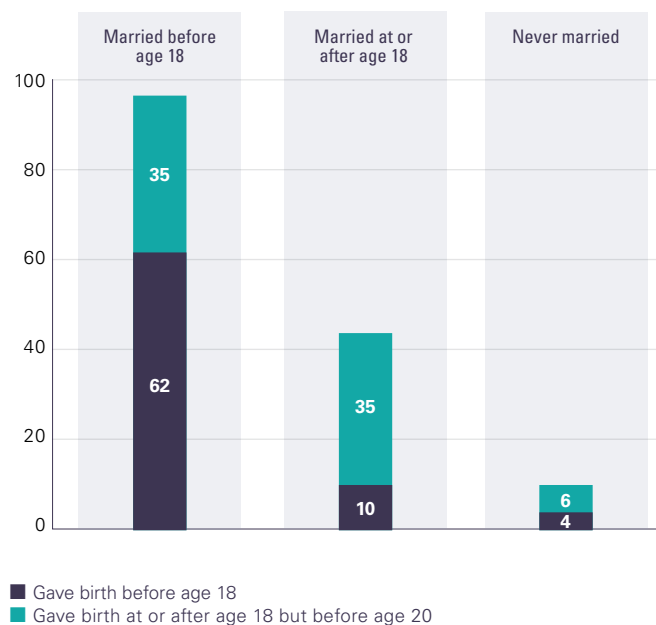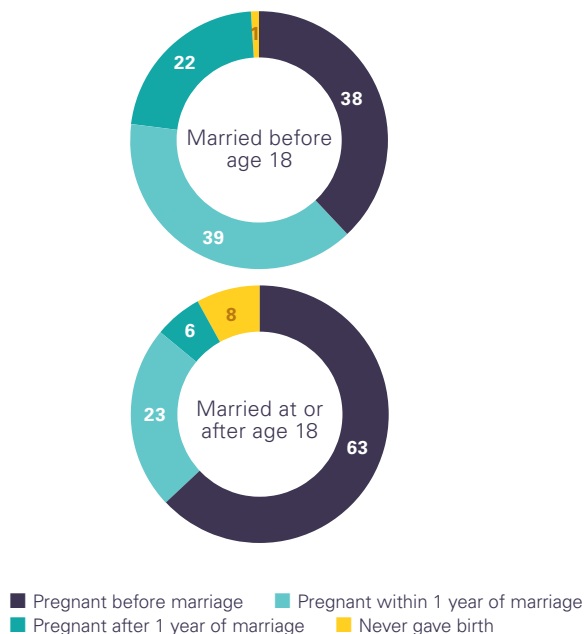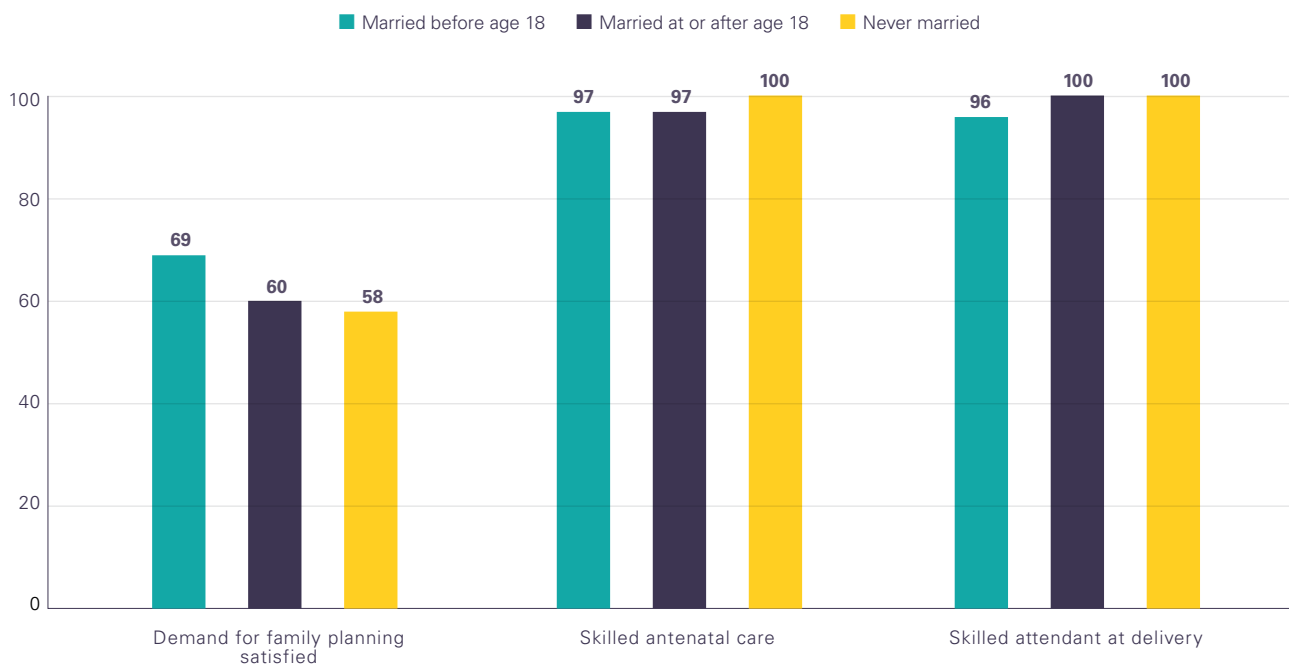■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20

Figure 252. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

■ Pregnant before marriage   ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage   ■ Never gave birth

Reproductive health

Figure 253. 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
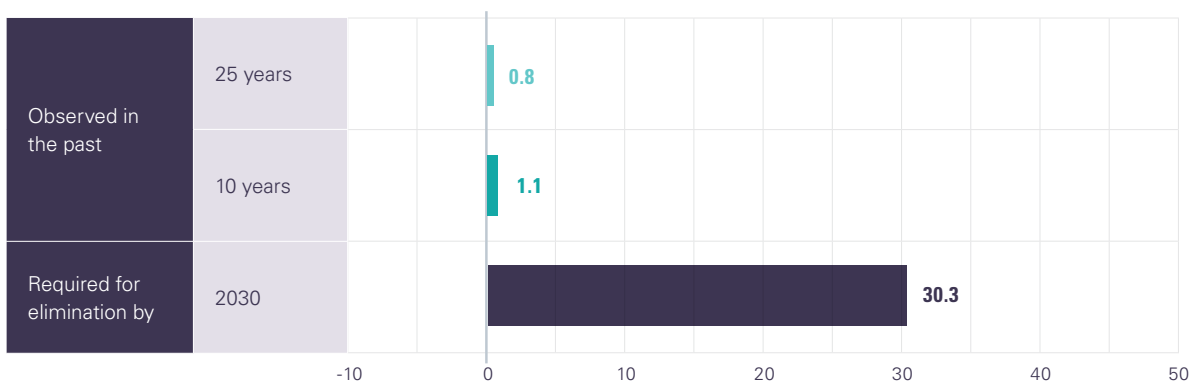
■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

Generational trends

Figure 254. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

Legend: — Married before age 18   — Married before age 15
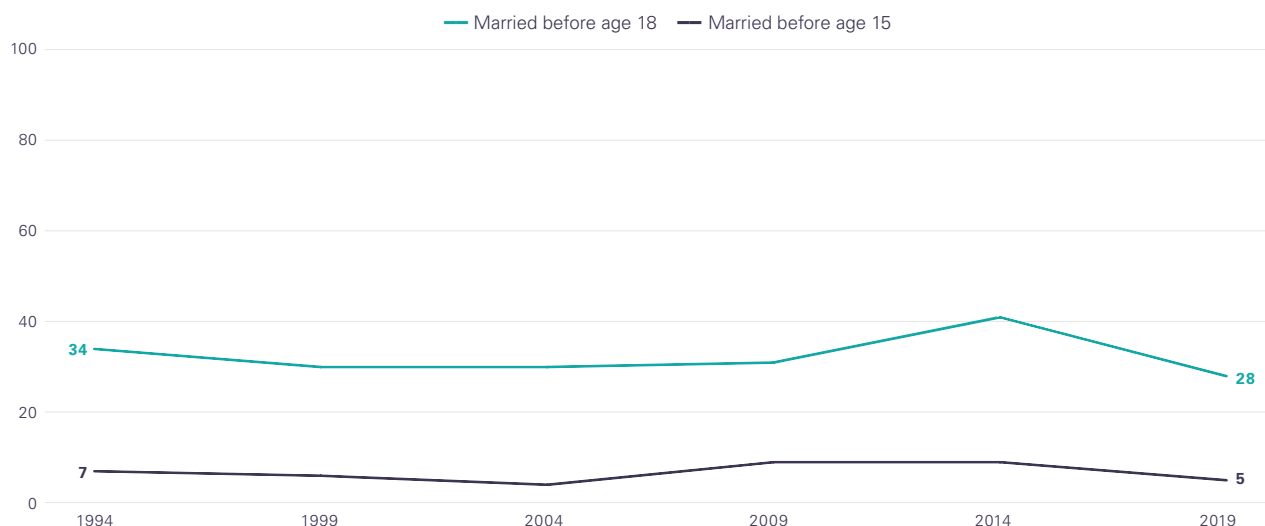
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 255. 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

		Value
Observed in the past	25 years	0.8
	10 years	1.1
Required for elimination by	2030	30.3

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.
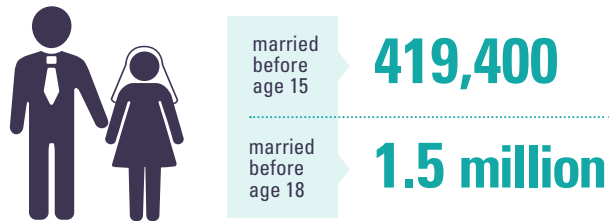
Senegal

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

## Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

Figure 256. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

married before age 15 > **419,400**

married before age 18 > **1.5 million**

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

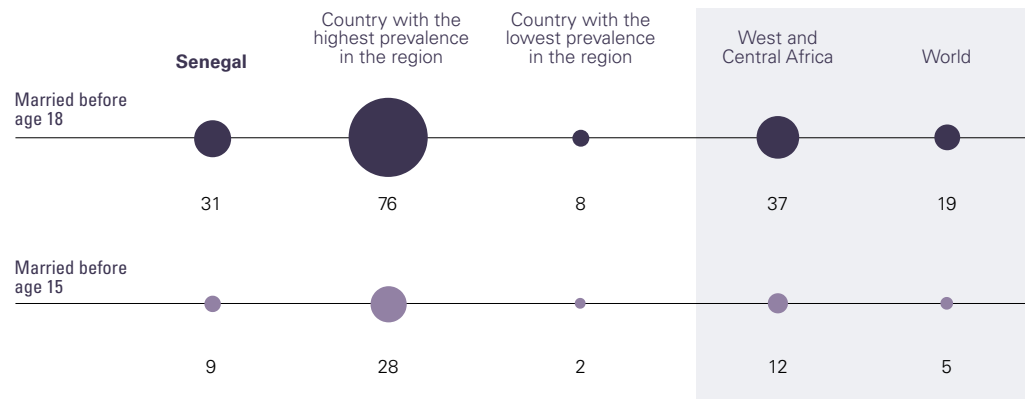### Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
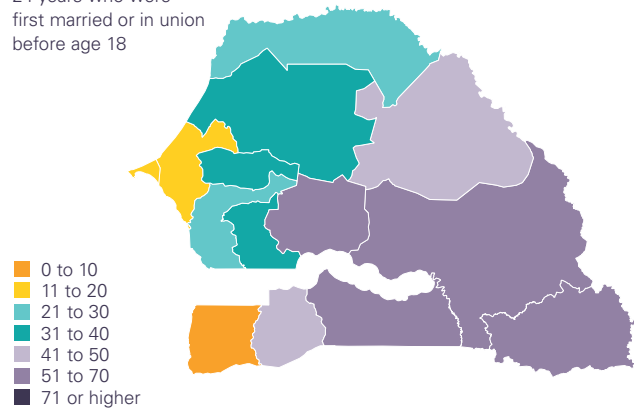
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 258. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

	Senegal	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	31	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	9	28	2	12	5

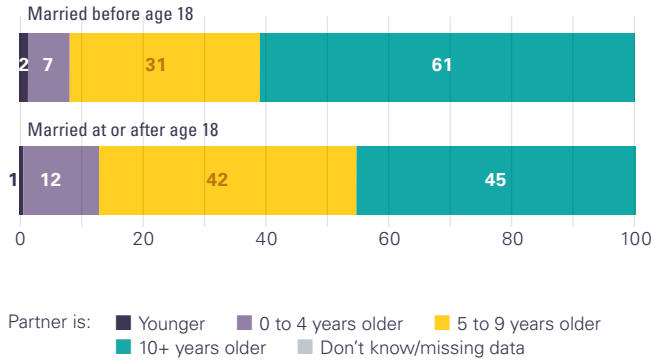### Vulnerable populations

Figure 259. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence

Wealth quintile
- Poorest: 62
- Second: 44
- Middle: 25
- Fourth: 22
- Richest: 15

Education
- No education: 51
- Primary: 44
- Secondary or higher: 11

Residence
- Rural: 44
- Urban: 18
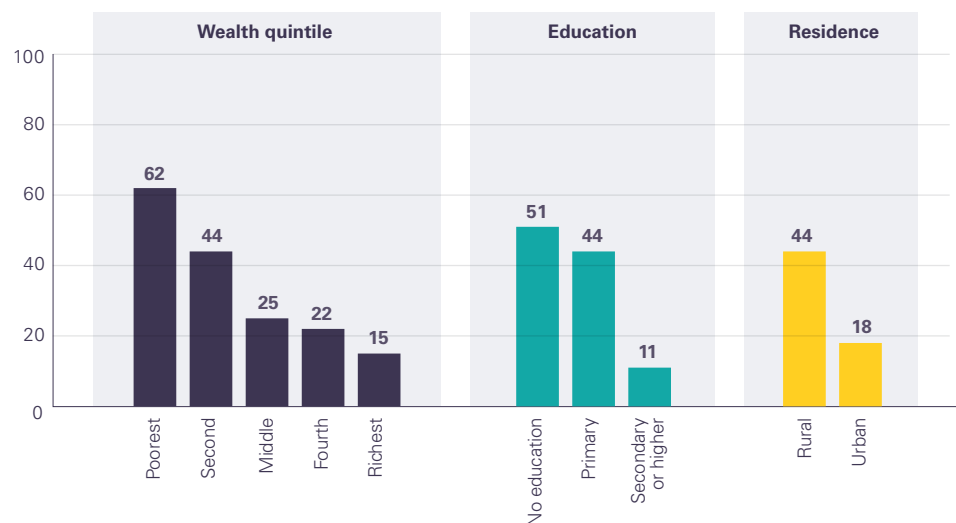
Characteristics of unions

Spousal age gap

Figure 260. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners

Married before age 18

| 2 | 7 | 31 | 61 |

Married at or after age 18

| 1 | 12 | 42 | 45 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

Figure 261. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
missing data

1 2

98
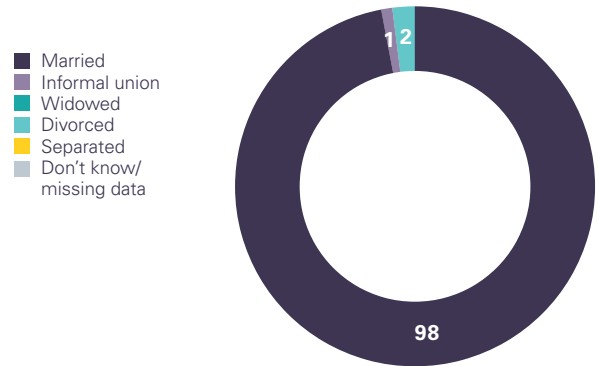
Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 262. 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
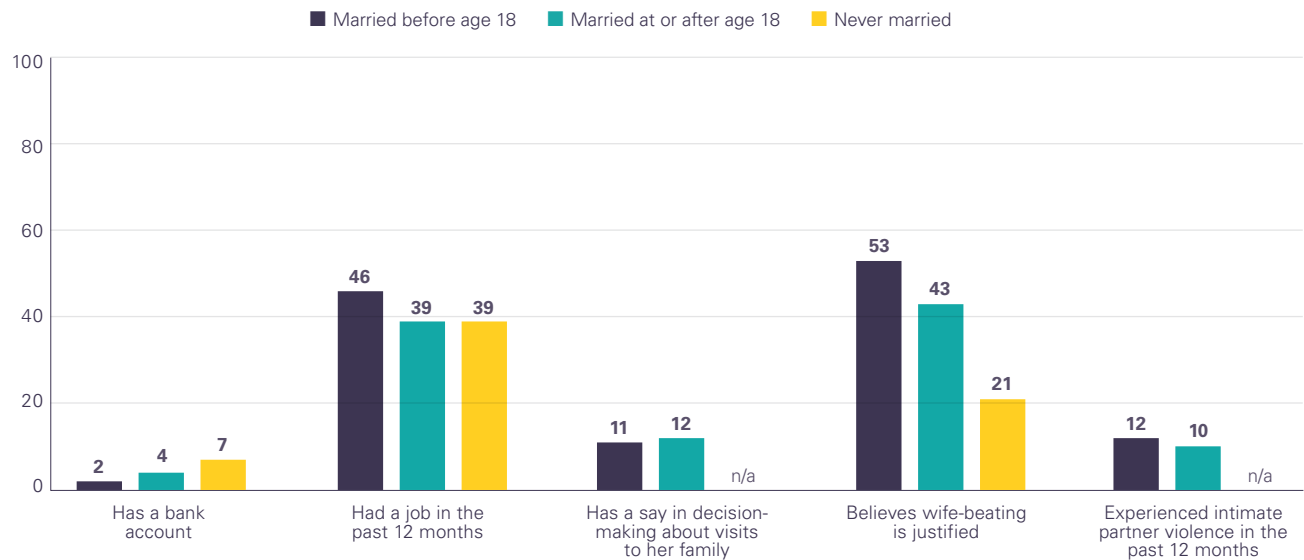
■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	2	46	11	53	12
Married at or after age 18	4	39	12	43	10
Never married	7	39	n/a	21	n/a

Figure 263. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union
7
93

Never married or in union
36
64

Early childbearing

Figure 264. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

■ Gave birth before age 18
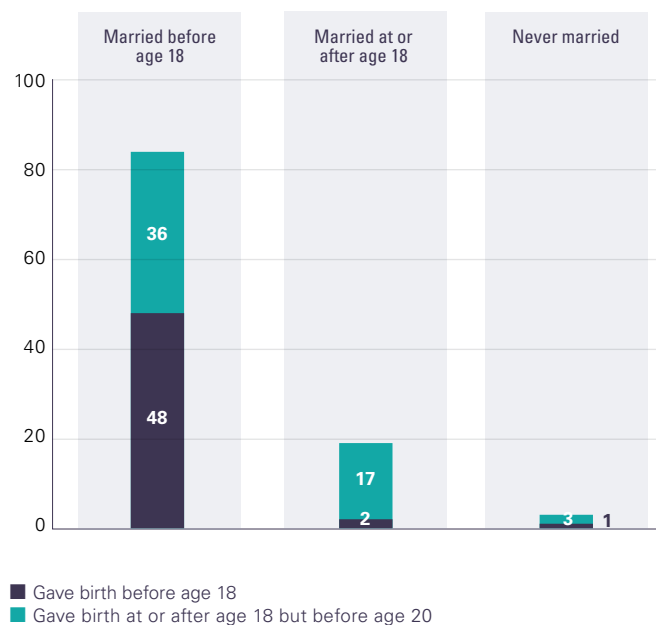■ Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20

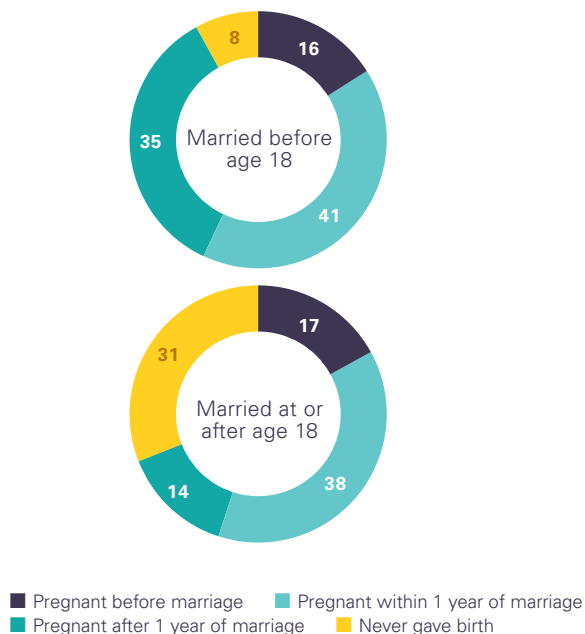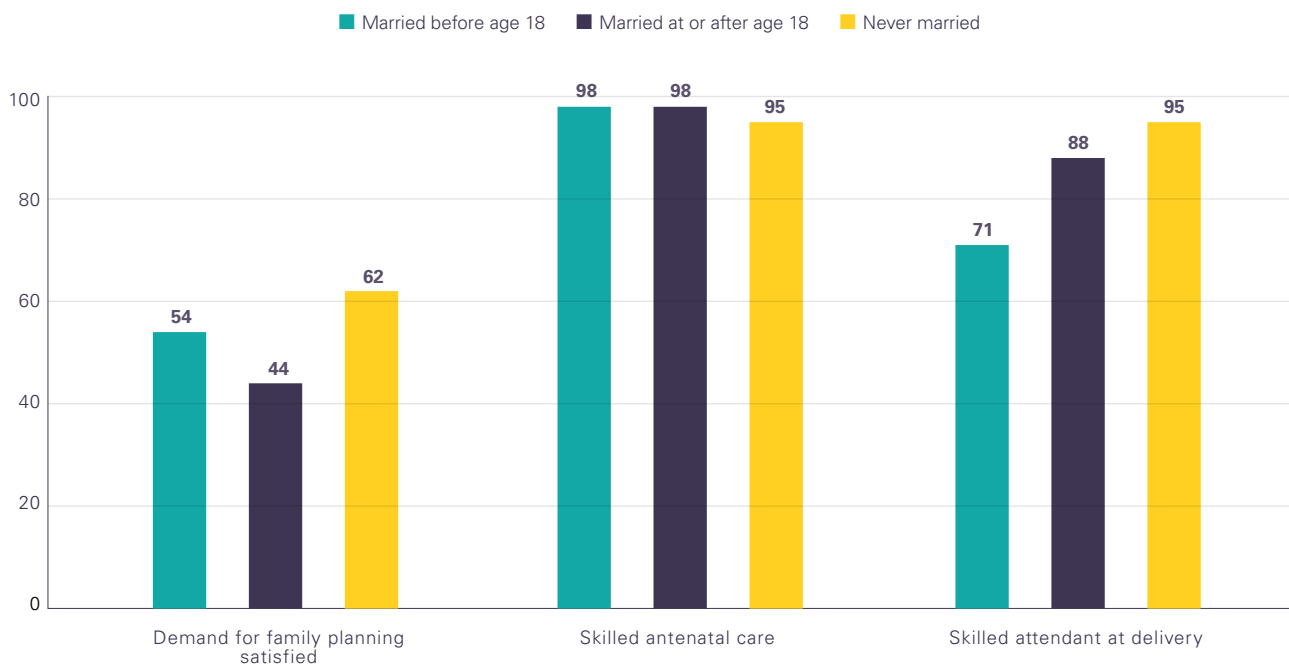**Figure 265.** Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

■ Pregnant before marriage   ■ Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
■ Pregnant after 1 year of marriage   ■ Never gave birth

Reproductive health

Figure 266. 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
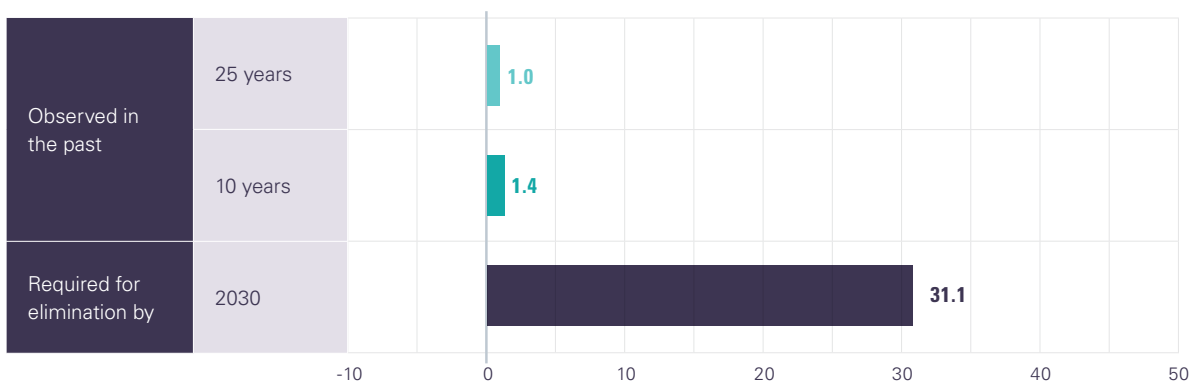
■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

Generational trends

Figure 267. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

— Married before age 18   — Married before age 15
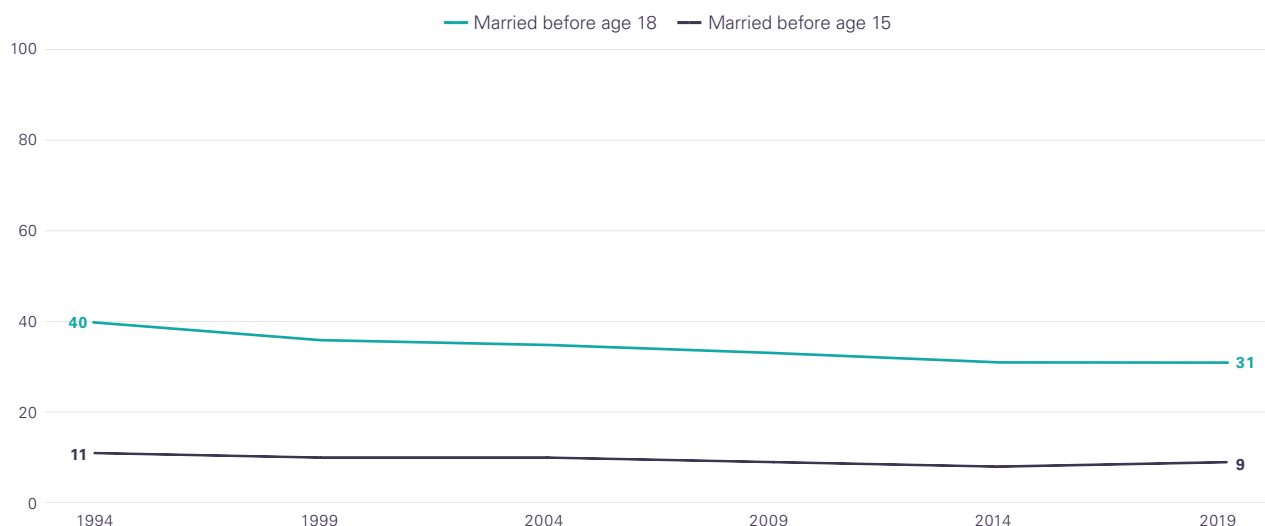
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 268. 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

Observed in the past	25 years	1.0
	10 years	1.4
Required for elimination by	2030	31.1

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.
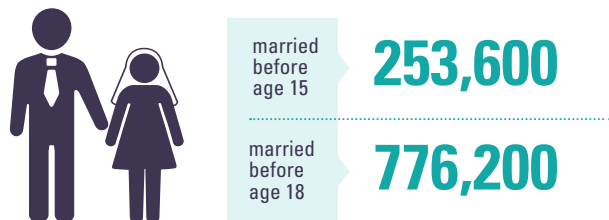
Sierra Leone

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

Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

Figure 269. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

married before age 15	**253,600**
married before age 18	**776,200**

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

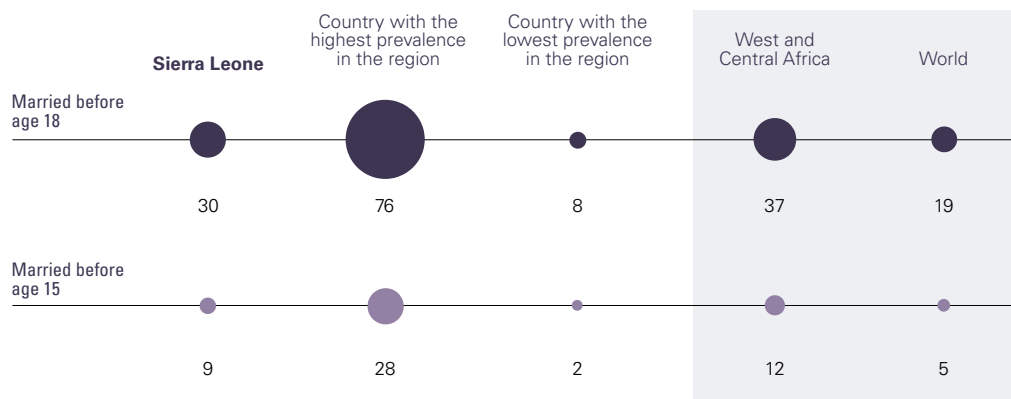### Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
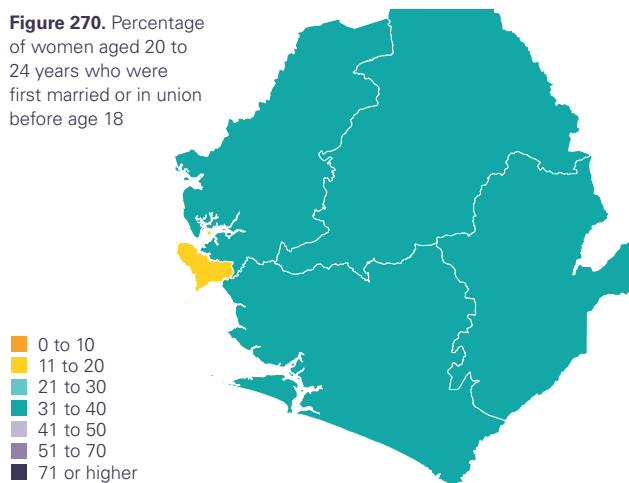
Regional and global comparisons

Figure 271. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

	Sierra Leone	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	30	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	9	28	2	12	5

Vulnerable populations

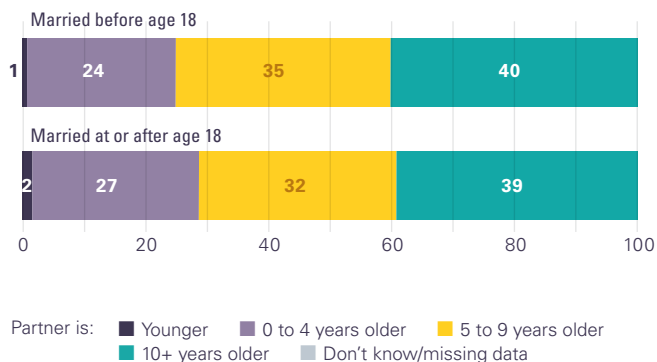**Figure 272.** Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence

Wealth quintile

Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest
44	46	38	21	14

Education

No education	Primary	Secondary or higher
46	51	19

Residence

| Rural	Urban
42	19
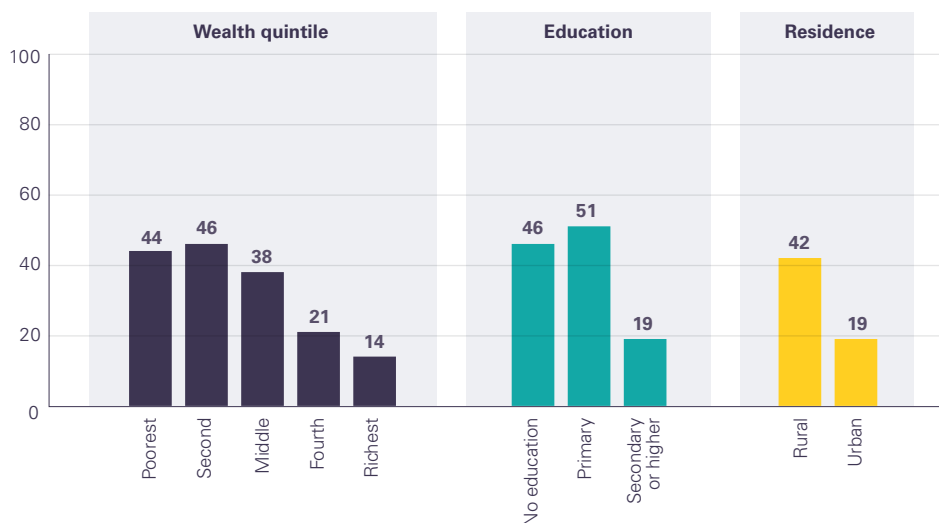
Characteristics of unions

Spousal age gap

Figure 273. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners

Married before age 18

1	24	35	40

Married at or after age 18

2	27	32	39

Partner is: ■ Younger ■ 0 to 4 years older ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

Figure 274. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
  missing data

- 5
- 22
- 74
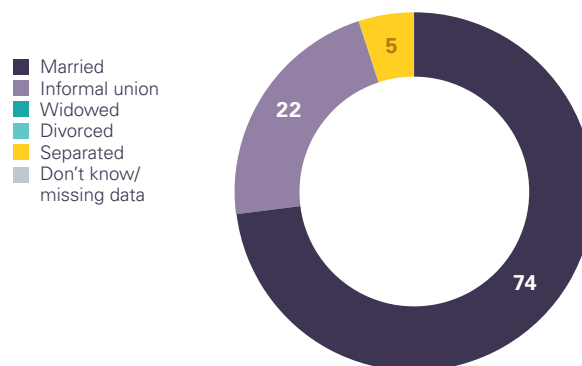
Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 275. 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
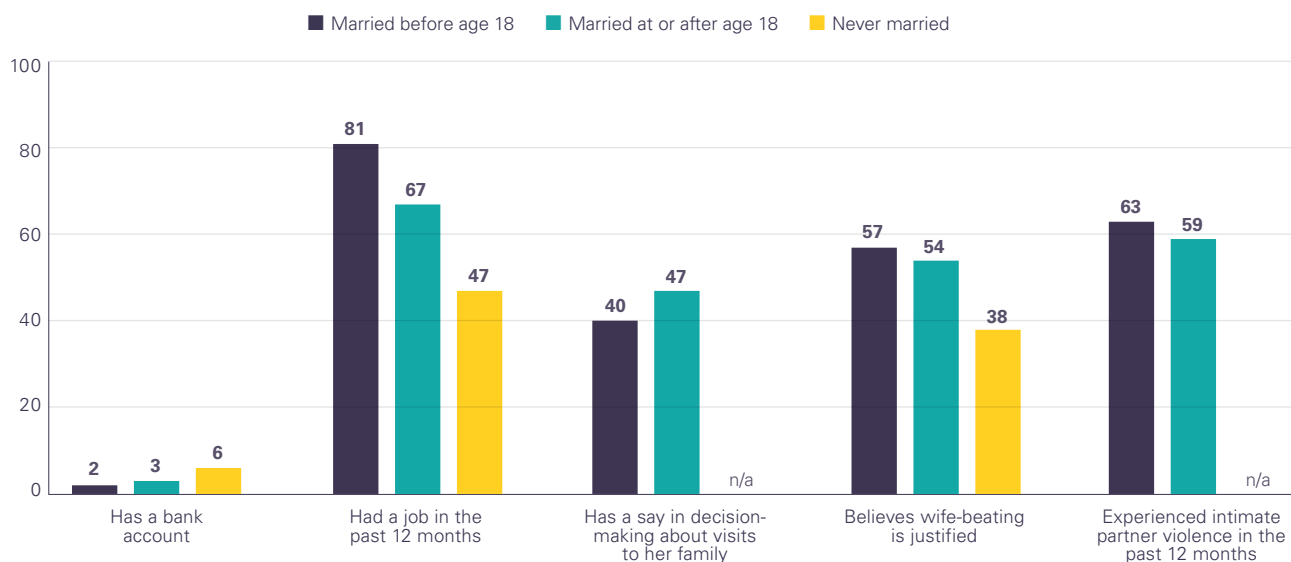
■ Married before age 18 ■ Married at or after age 18 ■ Never married

	Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18	Never married
Has a bank account	2	3	6
Had a job in the past 12 months	81	67	47
Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	40	47	n/a
Believes wife-beating is justified	57	54	38
Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months	63	59	n/a

Figure 276. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union
- 13
- 87

Never married or in union
- 16
- 84

Lives of child brides *(continued)*

Early childbearing

Figure 277. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20
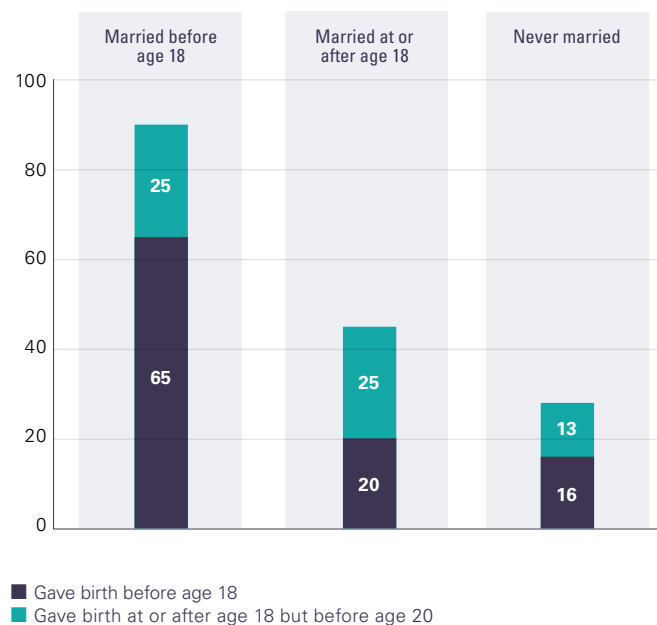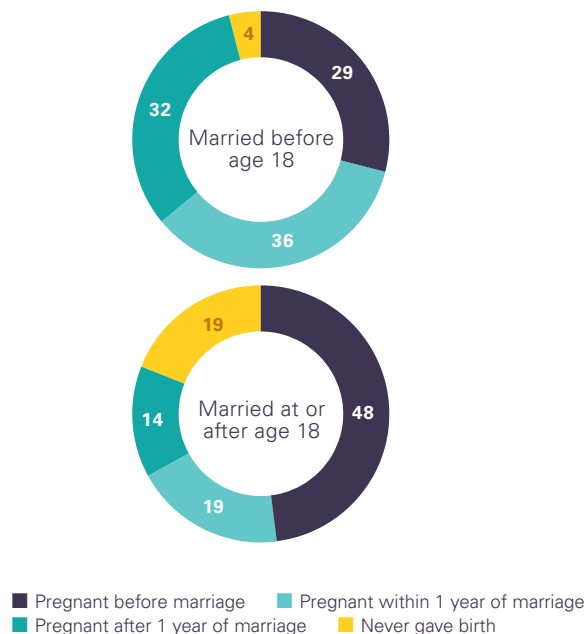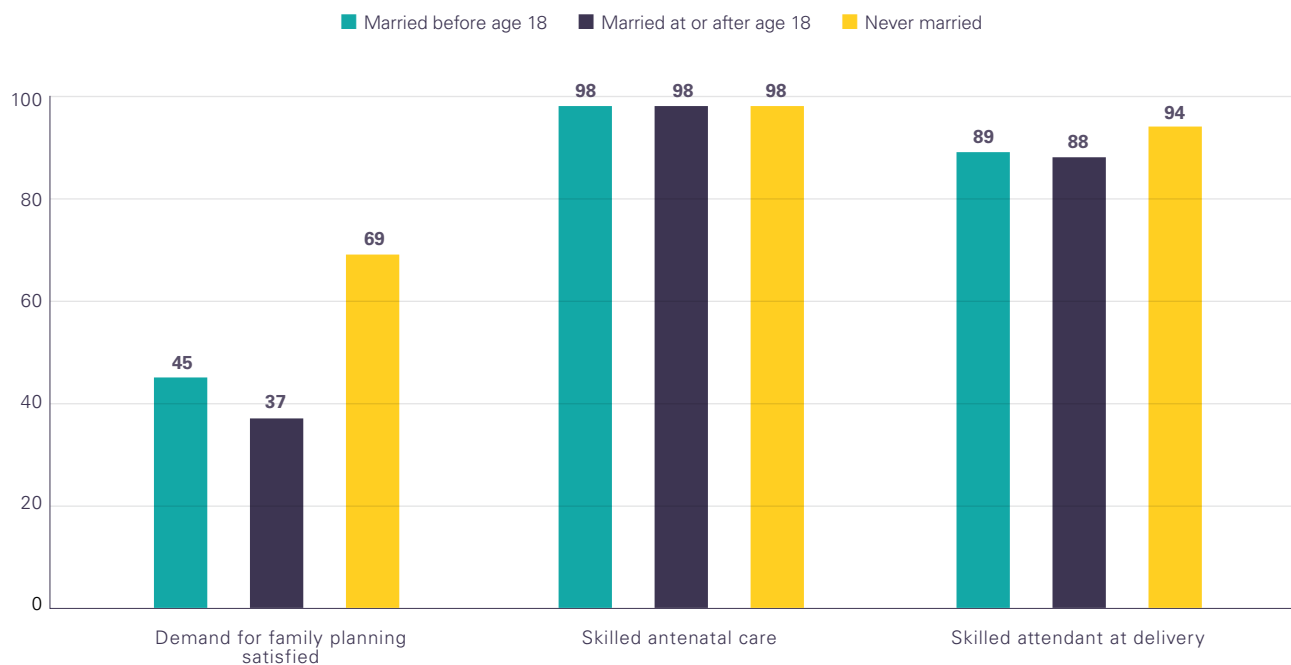

- Gave birth before age 18
- Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20

Figure 278. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

- Pregnant before marriage
- Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
- Pregnant after 1 year of marriage
- Never gave birth

Reproductive health

Figure 279. 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

- Married before age 18
- Married at or after age 18
- Never married

Generational trends

Figure 280. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

Legend: — Married before age 18   — Married before age 15

Data points: 51 (1994), 30 (2019) for Married before age 18; 21 (1994), 9 (2019) for Married before age 15. X-axis: 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019.

Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 281. 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

		Rate
Observed in the past	25 years	2.1
	10 years	4.0
Required for elimination by	2030	30.8
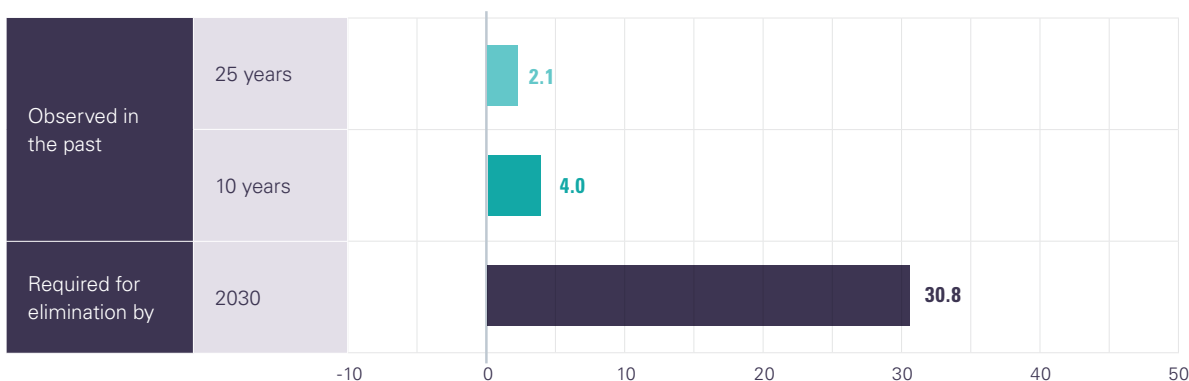
NOTES:

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.
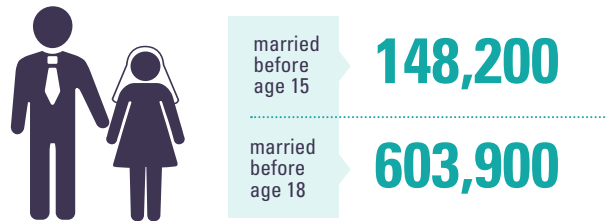
Togo

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

## Current levels of child marriage

Burden of child marriage

Figure 282. Number of girls and women of all ages who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

married before age 15 > **148,200**

married before age 18 > **603,900**

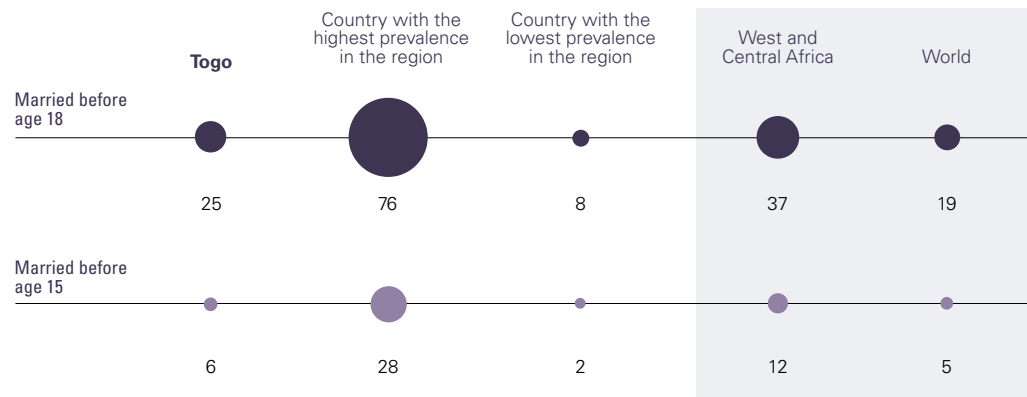**Togo is home to nearly 604,000 child brides; 1 in 4 young women were married in childhood**

Prevalence of child marriage

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

- 0 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 30
- 31 to 40
- 41 to 50
- 51 to 70
- 71 or higher
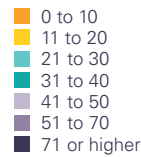
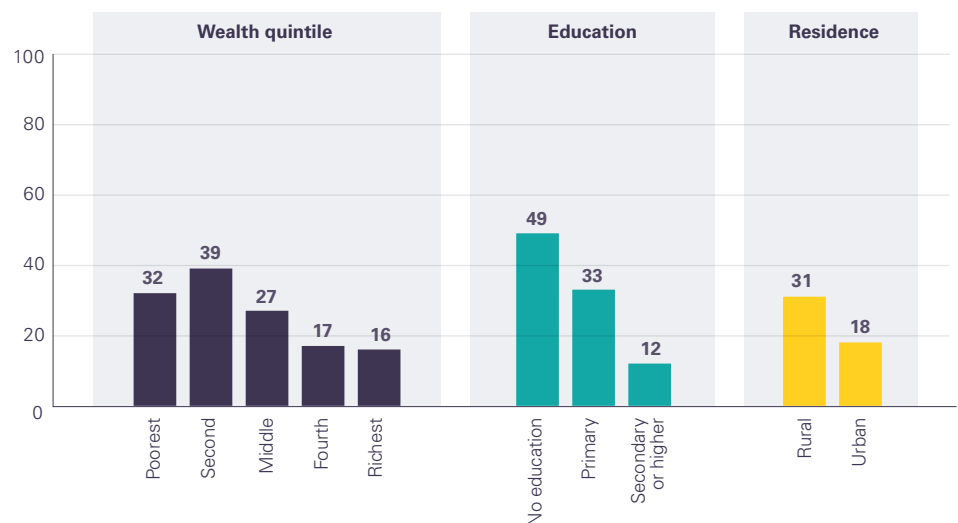### Regional and global comparisons

Figure 284. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

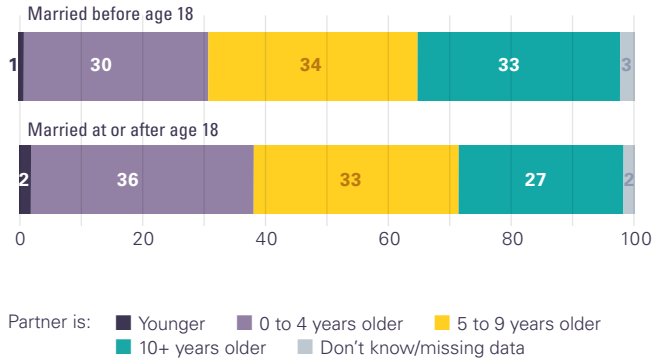|	Togo	Country with the highest prevalence in the region	Country with the lowest prevalence in the region	West and Central Africa	World
Married before age 18	25	76	8	37	19
Married before age 15	6	28	2	12	5

Vulnerable populations

Figure 285. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18, by wealth quintile, education and residence

Wealth quintile
- Poorest: 32
- Second: 39
- Middle: 27
- Fourth: 17
- Richest: 16

Education
- No education: 49
- Primary: 33
- Secondary or higher: 12

Residence
- Rural: 31
- Urban: 18

Characteristics of unions

Spousal age gap

Figure 286. Percentage distribution of currently married women aged 20 to 24 years by the age gap between the women and their partners

Married before age 18

| 1 | 30 | 34 | 33 | 3 |

Married at or after age 18

| 2 | 36 | 33 | 27 | 2 |

0   20   40   60   80   100

Partner is: ■ Younger   ■ 0 to 4 years older   ■ 5 to 9 years older
■ 10+ years older   ■ Don't know/missing data

Types of unions

Figure 287. Percentage distribution of ever-married girls aged 15 to 17 years by current marital status

■ Married
■ Informal union
■ Widowed
■ Divorced
■ Separated
■ Don't know/
   missing data

50
47
3
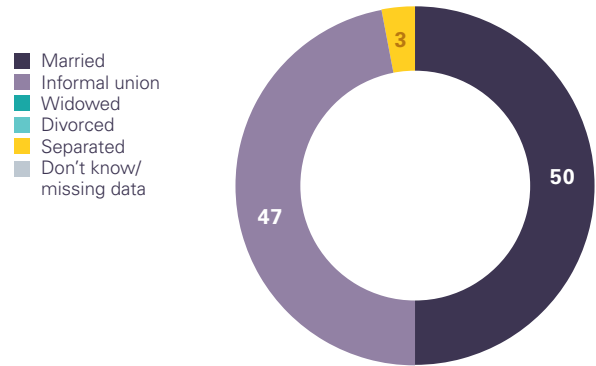
Lives of child brides

Autonomy, empowerment and violence

Figure 288. 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
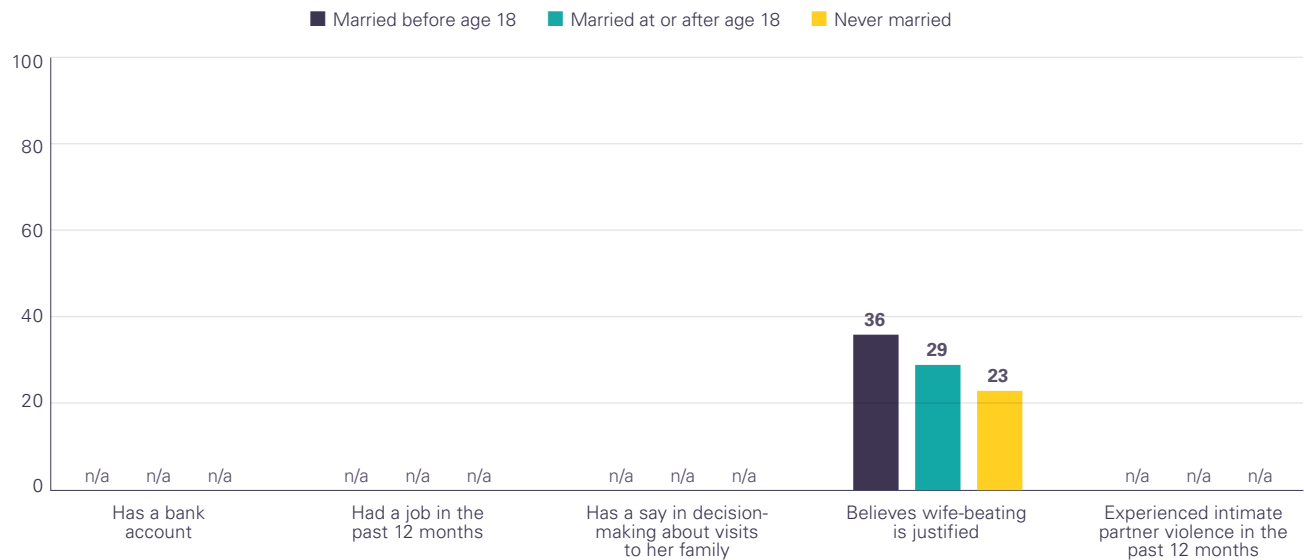
■ Married before age 18   ■ Married at or after age 18   ■ Never married

	Has a bank account	Had a job in the past 12 months	Has a say in decision-making about visits to her family	Believes wife-beating is justified	Experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months
Married before age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	36	n/a
Married at or after age 18	n/a	n/a	n/a	29	n/a
Never married	n/a	n/a	n/a	23	n/a

Figure 289. Percentage distribution of girls aged 15 to 17 years by schooling status

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

Currently married or in union
24
76

Never married or in union
23
77

Early childbearing

Figure 290. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who gave birth before ages 18 and 20

	Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18	Never married
Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20	32	35	8
Gave birth before age 18	57	6	2

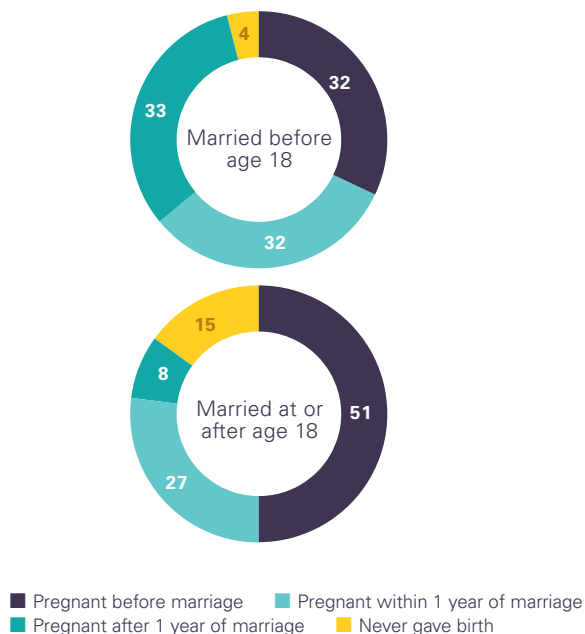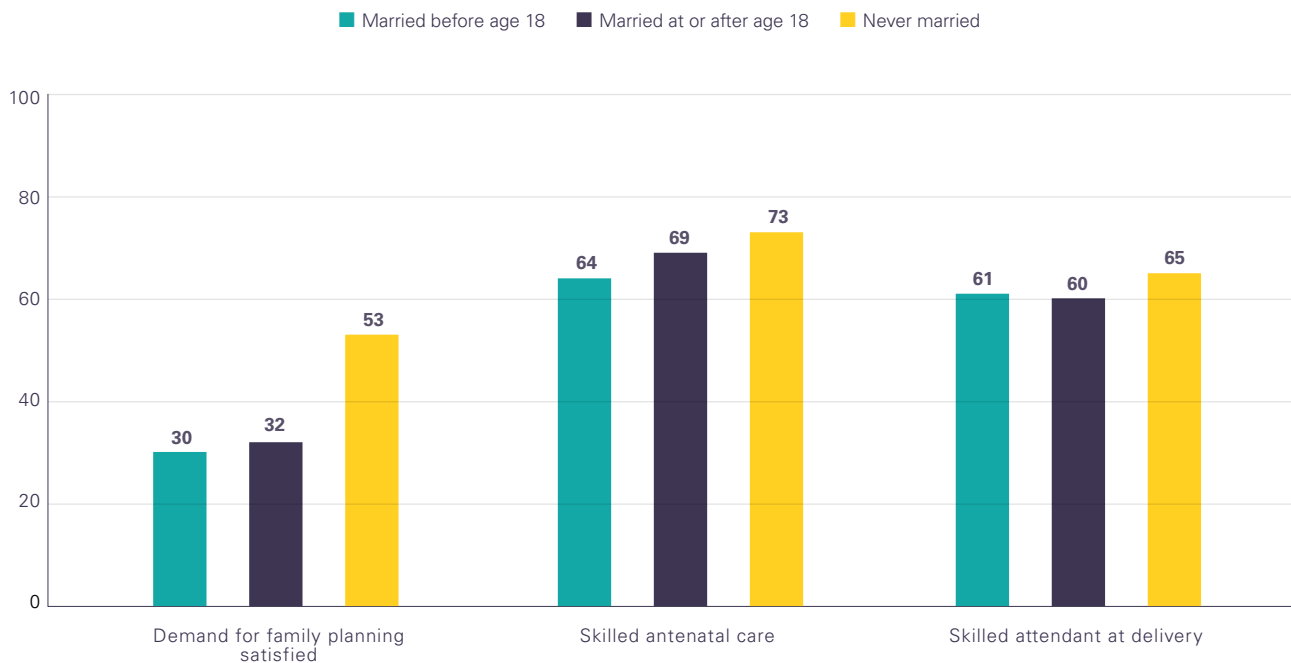- Gave birth before age 18
- Gave birth at or after age 18 but before age 20
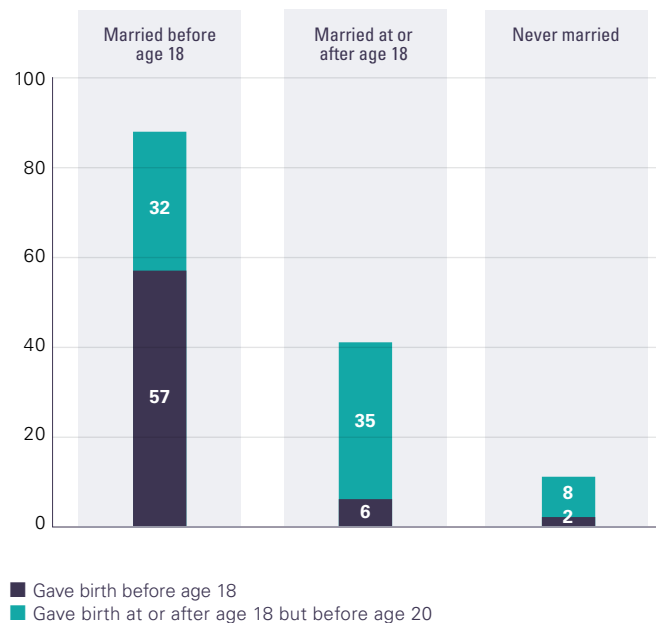
Figure 291. Percentage distribution of ever-married women aged 20 to 24 years by timing of pregnancy and marriage

Married before age 18: 32, 32, 33, 4

Married at or after age 18: 51, 27, 8, 15

- Pregnant before marriage
- Pregnant within 1 year of marriage
- Pregnant after 1 year of marriage
- Never gave birth

Reproductive health

Figure 292. 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

- Married before age 18
- Married at or after age 18
- Never married

	Married before age 18	Married at or after age 18	Never married
Demand for family planning satisfied	30	32	53
Skilled antenatal care	64	69	73
Skilled attendant at delivery	61	60	65

Generational trends

Figure 293. Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18

— Married before age 18   — Married before age 15
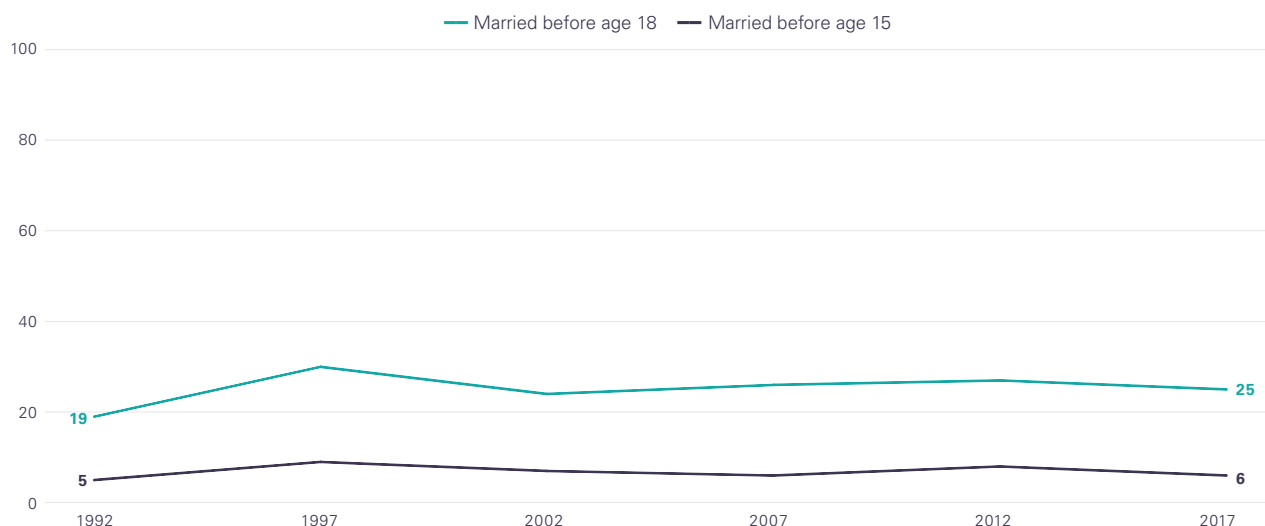
Looking ahead to ending child marriage

Observed and required rates of progress

Figure 294. 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

Observed in the past	25 years	-1.1
	10 years	0.4
Required for elimination by	2030	24.7
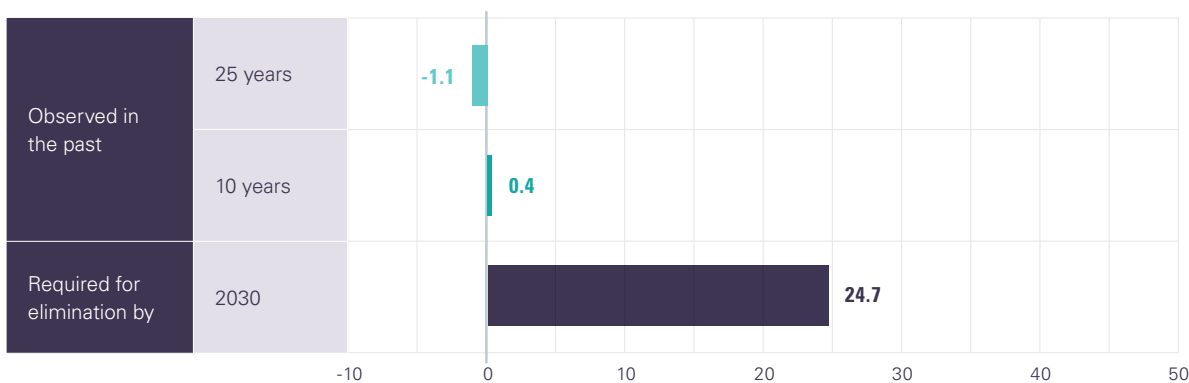
NOTES:
Data are sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017 unless otherwise noted. Data on the legal age at marriage are sourced from the World Bank, Women, Business and the Law, 2018 dataset. Demographic data are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population 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.

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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

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