

## How to read the profiles

These country profiles present an overview of child marriage – defined as a marriage or union that occurs before the age of 18 – detailing how common the practice is across the population, describing the characteristics of unions, providing insights into the lives of child brides across key domains of well-being and illustrating 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 to the sequential sections of the profiles and refer to the name of each chart (marked in **bold font**).

### 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 as well as 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 prevalence captures the proportion, while the burden gives an absolute number.

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

This section continues with a **regional and global comparison**, 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 sub-populations in which child marriage is more common across place of residence, level of education and household wealth.

### 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 improvement.

### 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 showing presents the average annual rates of reduction in the prevalence of child marriage, often contrasting modest annual improvements in the past decades with the much faster rates required to meet the 2030 target.