Repeat Poll on Harmful Practices
March 5, 2021

22,603 RESPONSES  92% RESPONSE RATE

70% 15,273
30% 6,422

U-Report Malawi has been working with the Spotlight Initiative which is a Malawi Government, United Nations, European Union and civil society multi-year programme focused on eliminating violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and harmful practices. In this partnership, polls and messages have been sent through U-Report to support the initiatives large-scale investments aimed at achieving significant impact in the lives of women and girls across the country. Recently a poll was sent out nationwide to understand young people’s attitudes and understanding of harmful practices among girls. This poll was a repeat one and followed a similar poll that was sent out in May, 2019. The repeat poll was sent out on 5th March 2021 to 231,855 U-Reporters who...
were presented with a choice to opt in or out of the poll. **24,658** U-Reporters opted in while **2,963** opted out. **22,603** responded to the poll representing a response rate of **92 per cent**.

**KEY HIGHLIGHTS:**

1. Which of these practices are common among girls in your community?

   **Hello U-Reporter, this poll is about harmful practices in your community. Which of these practices are common among girls in your community?**

   22,603 responded out of 24,658 polled

   - **Marriage before 18**: 69%
   - **Sexual initiation ceremonies**: 8%
   - **Both**: 21%
   - **None**: 2%

69 per cent of respondents say marriage before 18 is the most common practice in their community among girls. This is followed by 21 per cent who cite both marriage before 18 and sexual initiation ceremonies. **There was an increase in awareness of these harmful practices among girls.** In the previous poll, 64 per cent had cited marriage before 18 as the most common practice while 17 per cent had mentioned both marriage before 18 and sexual initiation ceremonies. **In 2019, six per cent stated these practices was not common in their commutes, against two per cent in the recent poll.**
2. Have any of these practices happened to you or someone close to you?

Have any of these practices happened to you or someone close to you?

22,122 responded out of 23,055 polled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>54%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half of the respondents (54 per cent) say these practices have happened to them or they know someone close to them who has experienced such practices. The previous poll in 2019 also reflected the same percentage of how respondents related to such practices in personal capacities or at family or community level.
3. What do you think of these practices?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important to Malawi's Culture</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary for Girls Development</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmful Practices</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Comment</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do you believe? These practices are:
21,247 responded out of 22,122 polled

Seven out of every ten respondents say they believe practices such as marriage before 18 are harmful practices. However, some respondents worryingly say such practices are important to Malawi’s culture (16 percent) and necessary for girls development (11 percent). There has been a small percentage increase in the number of respondents who believe that the practices are important in comparison with the last poll.
4. At what age are girls or women most likely to experience these traditional practices?

Almost half of the respondents (48 per cent) say the practices are most likely to happen to girls aged 15-17. Even girls aged 6-10 also experience these practices according to 5 per cent of the respondents. There is not much change in the ages of girls the respondents say are more vulnerable to such practices in comparison with the 2019 responses.
5. What is your source of information on traditional practices?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents/Guardians</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief/Faith Leaders</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/Siblings</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents and guardians are cited by 61 per cent of respondents as the main source of information on traditional practices followed by chiefs and faith leaders who are named by 17 per cent. School is mentioned by a few of the respondents in the open comment section as a source of information. There has been a small increase in the citation of parents/guardians as sources of information from 58 percent in 2019 to 61 per cent in 2021.
6. How can harmful practices be ended?

- Stricter laws and penalties: 55%
- Educating youths: 28%
- Work with community leaders: 14%
- These practices should not end: 3%

How can harmful practices be ended?

19,080 responded out of 19,815 polled

55 per cent of the respondents support introduction of stricter laws and penalties to stop harmful practices, against 45 per cent in 2019. We can also see a change in percentage on those who think educating young people can help eliminate these practices, from 37 per cent to 28 percent in 2021. 14 per cent call for the involvement of community leaders on eliminating harmful practices. Sadly, three per cent of respondents say these practices should not end at all.
Action Points

- With the high rate of respondents citing parents/guardians as main source of information on traditional practices, programme interventions to end harmful practices, could target parents and guardians as well as chiefs and faith leaders. Parents and guardians are cited by 61 per cent of respondents as the main source of information on traditional practices followed by chiefs and faith leaders who are named by 17 per cent. With schools now open, learning institutions can also be a safe space for reliable information as mentioned by some U-Reporters in the open comment section.
- Continued awareness on harmful practices is needed. Some respondents worryingly say such practices are important to Malawi’s culture (16 percent) and necessary for girls development (11 percent). Sadly, three per cent of respondents say these practices should not end at all.

About this Data

Full results of this poll can be accessed on https://ureport.mw/opinion/4889/. Results for the 2019 poll on harmful practices can be accessed on https://ureport.mw/opinion/3409/ The data reflects the information provided by the respondents, and is not statistically representative of young people nationwide, or in any specific district or region. U-Report as a community does not have a goal of statistical representativeness among its membership and no sampling stratification was employed. Post-stratification weighting was not applied during the analysis of this poll.

UNICEF values the voices of young people and seeks to recognize their experiences and views, and the data is considered a reliable reflection of the information the respondents have provided to U-Report.