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Synthesis of the risks and likelihood of pushback against the abandonment of harmful practices
Country Snapshot

Guinea

➤ RISK OF EXPERIENCING PUSHBACK: MODERATE

RISK OF EXPERIENCING
← PUSHBACK

Strong cultural expectations position FGM and child marriage as rites of passage, with religious leaders reinforcing these practices. Social norms and resistance to perceived foreign interventions sustain the high prevalence of FGM. The Government has taken significant steps to address these harmful practices, institutionalizing the fight against FGM in the Ministry of Religions Affairs and committing to a 20% reduction in child marriage by 2030.

The level of risk of pushback has been determined through a desk review and in-country consultations, undertaken in 2024.

Synthesis of the risks and likelihood of pushback against the abandonment of harmful practices

Female genital mutilation (FGM) remains widespread in Guinea, with the first evidence of decline from near-universal levels only becoming apparent within the last decade. Evidence dating back to at least the 1970s through the early 2010s consistently showed a prevalence of FGM of 95 per cent or higher. In 2018, the prevalence among adolescent girls dropped slightly to 92 per cent, a hopeful indication of decline.^{1,2} Most women who were cut (58 per cent) had flesh removed, though infibulation is also practiced in the country (10 per cent). There is evidence

of increasing medicalization, with the latest data showing 30 per cent of girls aged 10 to 14 who have undergone FGM being cut by health personnel, predominantly nurses and midwives.³

Child marriage is still prevalent, though progress is evident. Among women aged 20–24, 17 per cent were married before 15, and 47 per cent before 18. The prevalence of child marriage has dropped from over 60 per cent in the 1990s, representing a 24 per cent decline in 25 years.⁴ Child marriage among boys

¹ Institut National de la Statistique (INS) et ICF, 'Enquête Démographique et de Santé en Guinée 2018', 2019.

² Direction Nationale de la Statistique [Guinée] et Macro International Inc. 2000, 'Enquête Démographique et de Santé, Guinée', 1999.

³ UNICEF analysis based on DHS 2018, MICS 2016, DHS 2012, DHS 2005, and DHS 1999.

⁴ Institut National de la Statistique (INS) et ICF, 'Enquête Démographique et de la Santé en Guinée 2018', 2019.

is uncommon, with only 2 per cent of young men having married before 18.⁵

The primary driver of FGM is the need for social acceptance. As pointed out by a key informant, *“in certain traditions, if you do not commit FGM, you may face social sanctions, like not finding a husband for your daughter or not being invited to community events.”*⁶ Another key reason is the control of women’s sexuality to ensure that they remain virgins, do not fall pregnant outside marriage, and are faithful to their husbands during marriage.⁷ It is also understood by a majority of women to be a religious necessity. Although it is not mentioned in the Qur’an, some hadiths told by religious leaders back this misconception. Child marriage, on the other hand, is driven by factors such as poverty, lack of education, and religious and cultural justifications.⁸

These harmful practices are widespread despite the law explicitly prohibiting them. All forms of FGM are designated as criminal acts according to the new Constitution adopted in 2025, the Penal Code⁹ and the Children’s Code.¹⁰ The practitioners and the parents of the child who authorize the act are held equally responsible.¹¹ Medical practitioners also have a responsibility to report FGM under risk of punishment by law. It is also illegal for children (people under age 18) to marry.¹² Implementation of these laws remains inadequate, however. Convictions are rare and sentences are lenient due to judicial weakness and huge societal pressure to continue the practices.¹³

Evolving Trends and Discourse on Harmful Practices

The Government of Guinea has taken significant steps towards ending FGM and child marriage. Most recently, the inclusion of the ban on FGM in the Constitution, adopted in September 2025, demonstrates the government’s strong and renewed commitment to ending the practice. Charlotte Daffé, the Minister of Social Affairs and Promotion of Women and Children,

reaffirmed this commitment at the third meeting of the Young Girls’ Forum in Conakry, stating that *“culture and even less, religion, cannot justify sexist violence against our girls”*. At the Summit of the Future in New York in 2024, she also announced the Government’s objective of reducing the prevalence of child marriage by 20 percentage points by 2030, bringing it down to 26 per cent.¹⁴

A landmark development in this effort is the Ministry of Religious Affairs’ launch of a Strategic Plan to Promote the Abandonment of FGM in 2019. Guinea is one of only a few countries where the Ministry of Religious Affairs has institutionalized the fight against FGM, marking a critical achievement in countering religious justifications for the practice. This governmental commitment is particularly significant given that some religious leaders still advocate for FGM, interpreting its absence from the Qur’an as tacit permission. However, the strategic plan provides a framework to engage religious figures in abandoning the practice and mitigating backlash.

Despite this progress, resistance persists. Some religious leaders argue that FGM is a means of protecting women’s modesty and controlling their sexuality. An imam from Conakry justified the practice by stating, *“Islam respects women. [It] must conserve women and protect their modesty. This includes protecting women’s genitals.”* Similarly, Emmanuel Koroman, the Guinean Director of Christian Affairs, noted that *“women believe that if they do not cut their daughters, their daughters will want sex all the time”*.¹⁵ These deeply ingrained beliefs highlight the need for a strategic approach to engaging both proponents and opponents of FGM.

Encouragingly, advocacy efforts have led to measurable progress. In 2020, Tostan’s Community Empowerment Programme facilitated public declarations to abandon FGM and child marriage in 180 villages in central

⁵ UNICEF analysis based on DHS 2018, MICS 2016, DHS 2012, DHS 2005, and DHS 1999.

⁶ KII23, UNICEF CO Guinea, 2024

⁷ Doucet, Marie-Hélène, Delamou, Alexandre, Manet, Hawa and Groleau, Danielle, ‘Beyond the Sociocultural Rhetoric: Female Genital Mutilation, Cultural Values and the Symbolic Capital (Honor) of Women and Their Family in Conakry, Guinea – A Focused Ethnography Among “Positive Deviants”’, *Sexuality and Culture*, vol. 26, no. 5, 11 May 2022, pp. 1858–1884.

⁸ Girls not Brides, ‘Guinea’, www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/guinea/

⁹ Guinée Loi 2016/059/AN Portant Code Pénal, articles 258-261, 2016.

¹⁰ Guinée L/2019/0059/AN loi portant Code de l’Enfant, articles 774-778, 2019.

¹¹ Guinée Loi L/2019/0059/AN portant Code de l’Enfant, articles 779-782, 2019.

¹² Guinée Loi L/2019/0059/AN portant Code de l’Enfant, articles 829-831, 2019.

¹³ 28 Too Many, ‘Guinea: The Law and FGM’, 2018.

¹⁴ Bah, Adama Hawa, ‘New York : la ministre Charlotte Daffé expose les défis de l’éradication du mariage précoce en Guinée’, *Guinée 360*, 25 September 2024, www.guinee360.com/25/09/2024/new-york-la-ministre-charlotte-daffe-expose-les-defis-de-leradication-du-mariage-precoce-en-guinee/

¹⁵ Hart, Madeleine, ‘To Spare Their Daughters: Ending FGC in Guinea’, 2 February 2023, Pulitzer Centre, <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/spare-their-daughters-ending-fgc-guinea>

and eastern Guinea.¹⁶ The UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM in 2023 engaged 376 communities in similar commitments and established community-level surveillance systems.¹⁷ Meanwhile, national media campaigns, alongside conferences and debates led by prominent religious leaders, have helped raise awareness of the need to end FGM.¹⁸

To sustain these gains, it is crucial to strategically map both allies and opponents of FGM and child marriage in the country. The current government

includes strong advocates for elimination efforts, such as the Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Their leadership, combined with the institutional backing of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, positions Guinea to counter potential pushback. Strengthening engagement with influential religious figures, alongside continued collaboration with health officials, educators, and civil society, will be key to reinforcing national and community-level commitments.



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¹⁶ Tostan, 'Public Declaration of Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage in Guinea', 23 December 2020, <https://tostan.org/public-declaration-of-abandonment-of-female-genital-mutilation-and-child-marriage-in-guinea/>

¹⁷ UNFPA-UNICEF, 'Addressing global challenges with local solutions to eliminate female genital mutilation', 2023.

¹⁸ 28 Too Many, 'FGM in Guinea: short report', September 2021.

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