“Child marriage happens because adults believe they have the right to impose marriage upon a child. This denies children, particularly girls, their dignity and the opportunity to make choices that are central to their lives, such as when and whom to marry or when to have children. Choices define us and allow us to realize our potential. Child marriage robs girls of this chance.”

— Desmond Tutu and Graça Machel

**A Profile of Child Marriage in Africa**

In Africa, more than 125 million young women aged 20 to 24 years (one in five) were married or in union before they celebrated their 18th birthday. Of these, 75 million (60%) married or experienced union before their 15th birthday. The vast majority of these women are from the poorest areas. Similarly, girls from rural households are twice as likely to marry before age 18 as girls from urban households, and girls from the poorest areas are twice as likely to marry before age 18 as girls from the richest areas.

**KEY FACTS**

- More than 125 million young women aged 20 to 24 years were married or in union before they celebrated their 18th birthday.
- 75 million young women married or experienced union before their 15th birthday.
- Most married children are from the poorest areas.
- Girls from rural households are twice as likely to marry before age 18.
- Girls from the poorest areas are twice as likely to marry before age 18 as girls from the richest areas.
- Child marriage is concentrated in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa.

**In Other Regions**

In all other regions of the world, a greater number of women marry as children than in Africa. In South Asia, for example, 25% of girls marry as children. In East Asia and the Pacific region, child marriage is below 50% for East Asia and the Pacific due to the lack of comparable data on child marriage for China in 1990.

**REDUCING CHILD MARRIAGE**

A key challenge in ending child marriage is that it affects girls from the poorest areas, who may lack access to family planning and are more likely to marry to escape poverty and violence. The high levels of poverty and lack of education among girls in rural areas mean that child marriage is often a means of survival for them and their families.

**SUGGESTED CITATION:**


For additional information, please contact data@unicef.org.

**DATA SOURCES:**

- Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and other nationally representative surveys, 2003-2014.
- For detailed source information by country, please see data.unicef.org.

**PHOTO CREDITS:**

Cover: © UNICEF/ETHA_20150247/Bindra; Interior Photo: © UNICEF/809B5161/Holt

This publication is developed by the Research, Data and Policy Division of UNICEF. For more information about UNICEF, visit unicef.org. UNICEF does not endorse any companies, services or products.

**UNICEF**

Children’s rights advocate, 2002–2017

UNICEF global databases, 2015, based on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and other nationally representative surveys. 2003-2014.
Worldwide, more than almost half of the world’s child brides in 2050 will be African. If current trends continue, a decline in the practice of child marriage in Africa will put millions more girls at risk. If current global profile of child marriage is changing. A growing child population combined with a slow reduction in the practice has been tracked as the prevalence of child marriage across Africa is slowly declining.

In all other regions of the world, current rates of reduction mean there will be fewer child brides with each passing year. Still, in sub-Saharan Africa, this progress, though promising, has not been equitable; the rate of reduction in the prevalence of child marriage among the poorest have persisted, while declines in the practice have been limited to the richest.

This progress, though, has not been equitable; high levels of child marriage remain among the poorest. In the average of the world, declines in the practice and the prevalence of child marriage, among girls aged 20 to 24 years, a quarter of them in sub-Saharan Africa, have been limited to the richest. The prevalence of child marriage among the poorest has persisted, while declines in the practice and the prevalence of child marriage have been limited to the richest.

The prevalence of child marriage among girls aged 20 to 24 years, a quarter of them in sub-Saharan Africa, has been limited to the richest. The prevalence of child marriage among the poorest has persisted, while declines in the practice and the prevalence of child marriage have been limited to the richest. This progress, though, has not been equitable; high levels of child marriage remain among the poorest. In the average of the world, declines in the practice and the prevalence of child marriage, among girls aged 20 to 24 years, a quarter of them in sub-Saharan Africa, have been limited to the richest. The prevalence of child marriage among the poorest has persisted, while declines in the practice and the prevalence of child marriage have been limited to the richest.

Girls in rural areas are more likely to become child brides than urban girls. Similarly, girls from the poorest areas are twice as likely to marry before age 18 as girls from the richest areas.

More than one in three of these child brides and girls below 18 who were married or in union before age 18 (Nigeria); and median age at first marriage among women aged 25 to 49 (Liberia), and 25 to 29 (Kenya).

The country facts refer to the following indicators: Adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 who are currently married, divorced, or in union (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar and Mauritania); young women aged 20 to 40 who were married or in union before age 18 (Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Guinea, Mozambique, Nigeria, Togo, and Yemen); and median age at first marriage among women aged 25 to 29 (Liberia, Kenya, Tanzania). The country facts refer to the following indicators: Adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 who are currently married, divorced, or in union (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar and Mauritania); young women aged 20 to 40 who were married or in union before age 18 (Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Guinea, Mozambique, Nigeria, Togo, and Yemen); and median age at first marriage among women aged 25 to 29 (Liberia, Kenya, Tanzania).
Worldwide, more than 75 million young women a year (20 to 24 years old) entered into marriage or union before they celebrated their 18th birthday. But the rate of reduction has not been equitable; this progress, though, has come at a reachable, high level of child marriage, especially in the poorest nations. For 2015, a doubling of the rate of reduction means that fewer girls will become child brides with each passing year.

The prevalence of child marriage across Africa is unique among the world’s regions. Almost half of the world’s child brides in 2015 will be African. The region has not only the highest number of child brides, but the highest number of girls eligible to become child brides in the world. This is largely due to the practice being more acceptable among African cultures, and the lower cost of living in African countries compared to other regions.

Between 1990 and 2015, the rate of reduction in Africa has been slow, but the rate has increased. The prevalence of child marriage in Africa has not been equitable; it has been limited to the richest segment of the population. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the female population. Data coverage is based on a subset of 49 African countries with available data covering 97 per cent of the African female population. The African sub-regions are based on the regional classification of the African Union.

The African sub-region has the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. Seventeen per cent of girls in the region were married before age 15, compared to five per cent of girls in South Asia. Among girls aged 15 to 19, a quarter of girls in Africa, compared to 12 per cent in South Asia, are married before age 18.

In countries such as Nigeria, more than 80 per cent of child brides were married before age 18. In the Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Guinea, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan and Swaziland; girls and women of any age who were married before age 18 (Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Guinea, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan and Swaziland); girls and women of any age who were married before age 18 (Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Guinea, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan and Swaziland).

Key Facts

- More than 125 million girls alive today were married as children.
- Seventeen per cent of girls in Africa were married before age 15.
- More than 700 million girls and women in Africa were married before age 18.
- Child marriage happens because adults believe they have the right to impose marriage upon a child. This denies children, particularly girls, their dignity and the opportunity to make choices that are central to their lives, such as when and whom to marry or when to have children.

“Child marriage happens because adults believe they have the right to impose marriage upon a child. This denies children, particularly girls, their dignity and the opportunity to make choices that are central to their lives, such as when and whom to marry or when to have children. Choices define us and allow us to realize our potential. Child marriage robs girls of this chance.”

– Desmond Tutu and Graça Machel
In 2019, 60 per cent of child brides are girls. In 1990, 85 per cent were girls.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, young women who married before age 15 are more likely to remain in unions than those who married after age 18. In rural areas, the proportion of married adolescent girls who were married as children was one in five in 1990 but one in seven in 2019. In Central Africa, one in three married adolescent girls in 1990 and one in five married adolescent girls in 2019 were married before age 15.

Since 1990, the prevalence of child marriage has been in the Western Africa, with 23 million girls and women who were married before age 15 as of 2020. In Southern Africa, 125 million girls and women were married or in a union before age 18 in 2050. Child marriage is most prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, with 23 million girls and women who were married before age 15 in 1990 and 140 million girls and women who were married before age 15 in 2050.

Four in five child brides in Africa, with 23 million girls and women who were married before age 15, as of 2020, are in a polygynous union, and three times higher among the poorest than among the richest. In the poorest quintile, 60 per cent of girls from the poorest households are married by age 15, while in the richest, only 26 per cent are married by age 15.

The prevalence of child marriage has been slowly declining in Africa, but remains higher than the global average.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the lowest levels of child marriage are in Rwanda, with 25 per cent of girls married by age 15 in 2020, and the highest levels are in Central African Republic, with 44 per cent of girls married by age 15 in 2020. The prevalence of child marriage in Western and Central Africa, with 26 million girls and women who were married before age 15 in 1990 and 125 million girls and women who were married before age 15 in 2050, is more than twice those in other sub-Saharan African regions. In Africa, the prevalence of child marriage is 17.6 years. Still, girls remain most affected, with levels of child marriage up to 37 per cent in some countries.

In sub-Saharan Africa, 20 per cent or less of married adolescent girls in 2020 were married at age 15, while in Asia and the Pacific, 44 per cent of married adolescent girls in 2020 were married at age 15. Although progress has been observed in some countries, the number of child brides in Africa will remain high in 2050.

In Western Africa, 50 per cent of child brides are girls. In 1990, 85 per cent were girls.

In Africa, the prevalence of child marriage has been slowly declining in Africa, but remains higher than the global average.

Since 1990, the prevalence of child marriage has been in the Western Africa, with 23 million girls and women who were married before age 15. In Southern Africa, 125 million girls and women were married or in a union before age 18. In Africa, the prevalence of child marriage is 17.6 years.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the lowest levels of child marriage are in Rwanda, with 25 per cent of girls married by age 15 in 2020, and the highest levels are in Central African Republic, with 44 per cent of girls married by age 15 in 2020. The prevalence of child marriage in Western and Central Africa, with 26 million girls and women who were married before age 15 in 1990 and 125 million girls and women who were married before age 15 in 2050, is more than twice those in other sub-Saharan African regions. In Africa, the prevalence of child marriage is 17.6 years. Still, girls remain most affected, with levels of child marriage up to 37 per cent in some countries.

In sub-Saharan Africa, 20 per cent or less of married adolescent girls in 2020 were married at age 15, while in Asia and the Pacific, 44 per cent of married adolescent girls in 2020 were married at age 15. Although progress has been observed in some countries, the number of child brides in Africa will remain high in 2050.

In Western Africa, 50 per cent of child brides are girls. In 1990, 85 per cent were girls.

In Africa, the prevalence of child marriage has been slowly declining in Africa, but remains higher than the global average.

Since 1990, the prevalence of child marriage has been in the Western Africa, with 23 million girls and women who were married before age 15. In Southern Africa, 125 million girls and women were married or in a union before age 18. In Africa, the prevalence of child marriage is 17.6 years. Still, girls remain most affected, with levels of child marriage up to 37 per cent in some countries.

In sub-Saharan Africa, 20 per cent or less of married adolescent girls in 2020 were married at age 15, while in Asia and the Pacific, 44 per cent of married adolescent girls in 2020 were married at age 15. Although progress has been observed in some countries, the number of child brides in Africa will remain high in 2050.

In Western Africa, 50 per cent of child brides are girls. In 1990, 85 per cent were girls.

In Africa, the prevalence of child marriage has been slowly declining in Africa, but remains higher than the global average.

Since 1990, the prevalence of child marriage has been in the Western Africa, with 23 million girls and women who were married before age 15. In Southern Africa, 125 million girls and women were married or in a union before age 18. In Africa, the prevalence of child marriage is 17.6 years. Still, girls remain most affected, with levels of child marriage up to 37 per cent in some countries.

In sub-Saharan Africa, 20 per cent or less of married adolescent girls in 2020 were married at age 15, while in Asia and the Pacific, 44 per cent of married adolescent girls in 2020 were married at age 15. Although progress has been observed in some countries, the number of child brides in Africa will remain high in 2050.
The prevalence of child marriage has been slowly declining in Africa, but remains higher than the global average.

- In 1990, 160 million girls were married in Africa at an average age of 19 years.
- By 2015, this number had declined to 125 million.
- If progress is accelerated, the prevalence of child marriage in Africa could be halved by 2050.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the lowest levels of child marriage are seen in

- South Africa: 16% in 2015, four years earlier than those with the highest levels.
- Mozambique: 44% in 2015, still more than double the global average.

In some countries,

- In Chad, girls are married before they are 15 years old.
- In Algeria, child marriage is more common among girls from the poorest households.

Child marriage is more prevalent among girls from the poorest households.

- The prevalence of child marriage is higher in the poorest households.
- Girls from the poorest households are nearly twice as likely to be married before age 15.

- Girls from the poorest households are nearly five times more likely to be married before age 15.

The prevalence of child marriage remains high in some countries.

- In Northern Africa, levels of child marriage are more prevalent in certain sub-Saharan African countries, and are highest among the poorest households.

Girls from the poorest households are more likely to be married before age 15.

- Girls from the poorest households are more likely to be married before age 15.
- Girls from the poorest households are more likely to be married before age 15.

- Girls from the poorest households are more likely to be married before age 15.
- Girls from the poorest households are more likely to be married before age 15.

One in three young women in Africa were married or in union by age 18.

- In Southern Africa, 28% of girls were married or in union at age 18.
- In Eastern Africa, 44% of girls were married or in union at age 18.
- In Western Africa, 34% of girls were married or in union at age 18.
- In Northern Africa, 23% of girls were married or in union at age 18.
- In Central Africa, 16% of girls were married or in union at age 18.

The prevalence of child marriage has been slowly declining in Africa, but remains higher than the global average.

- In 1990, 160 million girls were married in Africa at an average age of 19 years.
- By 2015, this number had declined to 125 million.
- If progress is accelerated, the prevalence of child marriage in Africa could be halved by 2050.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the lowest levels of child marriage are seen in

- South Africa: 16% in 2015, four years earlier than those with the highest levels.
- Mozambique: 44% in 2015, still more than double the global average.

In some countries,

- In Chad, girls are married before they are 15 years old.
- In Algeria, child marriage is more common among girls from the poorest households.

Child marriage is more prevalent among girls from the poorest households.

- The prevalence of child marriage is higher in the poorest households.
- Girls from the poorest households are nearly twice as likely to be married before age 15.

- Girls from the poorest households are nearly five times more likely to be married before age 15.

The prevalence of child marriage remains high in some countries.

- In Northern Africa, levels of child marriage are more prevalent in certain sub-Saharan African countries, and are highest among the poorest households.

Girls from the poorest households are more likely to be married before age 15.

- Girls from the poorest households are more likely to be married before age 15.
- Girls from the poorest households are more likely to be married before age 15.

- Girls from the poorest households are more likely to be married before age 15.
- Girls from the poorest households are more likely to be married before age 15.

One in three young women in Africa were married or in union by age 18.

- In Southern Africa, 28% of girls were married or in union at age 18.
- In Eastern Africa, 44% of girls were married or in union at age 18.
- In Western Africa, 34% of girls were married or in union at age 18.
- In Northern Africa, 23% of girls were married or in union at age 18.
- In Central Africa, 16% of girls were married or in union at age 18.
The prevalence of child marriage has been slowly declining in Africa, but remains higher than the global average.

- In 1990, 50% of girls aged 15 to 18 in Sub-Saharan Africa were married before age 18.
- In 2015, this number was reduced to 26%.
- Even with this decline, Africa still has the highest prevalence of child marriage globally.

The fastest progress in reducing child marriage has been in Northern Africa. In some countries, such as Chad, child marriage is 17.6 years.

Child marriage is common even among more advantaged families. Girls from the wealthiest households are nearly one and a half times more likely to marry as a child compared to those from the poorest households.

In Niger, young women who delayed marriage for five years after their first birth are twice as likely to receive antenatal care during their pregnancy than young women who married before age 15.

Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were married or in union before age 18, by African sub-region

- Northern Africa: 16%
- Southern Africa: 18%
- Central Africa: 21%
- Eastern Africa: 22%
- Western Africa: 15%

In sub-Saharan Africa, the lowest levels of child marriage are found in South Africa, South Sudan, and Mozambique, all below 10%. In Chad, child marriage is 17.6 years.

By age 25, young women in the richest wealth quintile and by African sub-region are more likely to have married or be in union before age 18 compared to those in the poorest quintile.

- Northern Africa: 150 million
- South Africa: 125 million
- Western Africa: 76 million

In South Sudan, child marriage is continuing at a steady rate. Among the wealthiest households, the median age at first marriage is nearly 16. Child marriage is more common among girls from the poorest wealth quintiles.

Three in five sub-regions of Africa have levels of child marriage higher than the global average.

- South Asia: 3.2 million
- Sub-Saharan Africa: 2.7 billion
- Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS): 1.3 billion

The prevalence of child marriage has been slowly declining in Africa, but remains higher than the global average.

- In 1990, 50% of girls aged 15 to 18 in Sub-Saharan Africa were married before age 18.
- In 2015, this number was reduced to 26%.
- Even with this decline, Africa still has the highest prevalence of child marriage globally.

The fastest progress in reducing child marriage has been in Northern Africa. In some countries, such as Chad, child marriage is 17.6 years.

Child marriage is common even among more advantaged families. Girls from the wealthiest households are nearly one and a half times more likely to marry as a child compared to those from the poorest households.

In Niger, young women who delayed marriage for five years after their first birth are twice as likely to receive antenatal care during their pregnancy than young women who married before age 15.

Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were married or in union before age 18, by African sub-region

- Northern Africa: 16%
- Southern Africa: 18%
- Central Africa: 21%
- Eastern Africa: 22%
- Western Africa: 15%

In sub-Saharan Africa, the lowest levels of child marriage are found in South Africa, South Sudan, and Mozambique, all below 10%. In Chad, child marriage is 17.6 years.

By age 25, young women in the richest wealth quintile and by African sub-region are more likely to have married or be in union before age 18 compared to those in the poorest quintile.

- Northern Africa: 150 million
- South Africa: 125 million
- Western Africa: 76 million

In South Sudan, child marriage is continuing at a steady rate. Among the wealthiest households, the median age at first marriage is nearly 16. Child marriage is more common among girls from the poorest wealth quintiles.

Three in five sub-regions of Africa have levels of child marriage higher than the global average.

- South Asia: 3.2 million
- Sub-Saharan Africa: 2.7 billion
- Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS): 1.3 billion

The prevalence of child marriage has been slowly declining in Africa, but remains higher than the global average.

- In 1990, 50% of girls aged 15 to 18 in Sub-Saharan Africa were married before age 18.
- In 2015, this number was reduced to 26%.
- Even with this decline, Africa still has the highest prevalence of child marriage globally.

The fastest progress in reducing child marriage has been in Northern Africa. In some countries, such as Chad, child marriage is 17.6 years.

Child marriage is common even among more advantaged families. Girls from the wealthiest households are nearly one and a half times more likely to marry as a child compared to those from the poorest households.

In Niger, young women who delayed marriage for five years after their first birth are twice as likely to receive antenatal care during their pregnancy than young women who married before age 15.

Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were married or in union before age 18, by African sub-region

- Northern Africa: 16%
- Southern Africa: 18%
- Central Africa: 21%
- Eastern Africa: 22%
- Western Africa: 15%

In sub-Saharan Africa, the lowest levels of child marriage are found in South Africa, South Sudan, and Mozambique, all below 10%. In Chad, child marriage is 17.6 years.

By age 25, young women in the richest wealth quintile and by African sub-region are more likely to have married or be in union before age 18 compared to those in the poorest quintile.

- Northern Africa: 150 million
- South Africa: 125 million
- Western Africa: 76 million

In South Sudan, child marriage is continuing at a steady rate. Among the wealthiest households, the median age at first marriage is nearly 16. Child marriage is more common among girls from the poorest wealth quintiles.

Three in five sub-regions of Africa have levels of child marriage higher than the global average.

- South Asia: 3.2 million
- Sub-Saharan Africa: 2.7 billion
- Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS): 1.3 billion

The prevalence of child marriage has been slowly declining in Africa, but remains higher than the global average.

- In 1990, 50% of girls aged 15 to 18 in Sub-Saharan Africa were married before age 18.
- In 2015, this number was reduced to 26%.
- Even with this decline, Africa still has the highest prevalence of child marriage globally.

The fastest progress in reducing child marriage has been in Northern Africa. In some countries, such as Chad, child marriage is 17.6 years.

Child marriage is common even among more advantaged families. Girls from the wealthiest households are nearly one and a half times more likely to marry as a child compared to those from the poorest households.

In Niger, young women who delayed marriage for five years after their first birth are twice as likely to receive antenatal care during their pregnancy than young women who married before age 15.

Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were married or in union before age 18, by African sub-region

- Northern Africa: 16%
- Southern Africa: 18%
- Central Africa: 21%
- Eastern Africa: 22%
- Western Africa: 15%

In sub-Saharan Africa, the lowest levels of child marriage are found in South Africa, South Sudan, and Mozambique, all below 10%. In Chad, child marriage is 17.6 years.

By age 25, young women in the richest wealth quintile and by African sub-region are more likely to have married or be in union before age 18 compared to those in the poorest quintile.

- Northern Africa: 150 million
- South Africa: 125 million
- Western Africa: 76 million

In South Sudan, child marriage is continuing at a steady rate. Among the wealthiest households, the median age at first marriage is nearly 16. Child marriage is more common among girls from the poorest wealth quintiles.

Three in five sub-regions of Africa have levels of child marriage higher than the global average.

- South Asia: 3.2 million
- Sub-Saharan Africa: 2.7 billion
- Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS): 1.3 billion

The prevalence of child marriage has been slowly declining in Africa, but remains higher than the global average.

- In 1990, 50% of girls aged 15 to 18 in Sub-Saharan Africa were married before age 18.
- In 2015, this number was reduced to 26%.
- Even with this decline, Africa still has the highest prevalence of child marriage globally.

The fastest progress in reducing child marriage has been in Northern Africa. In some countries, such as Chad, child marriage is 17.6 years.

Child marriage is common even among more advantaged families. Girls from the wealthiest households are nearly one and a half times more likely to marry as a child compared to those from the poorest households.

In Niger, young women who delayed marriage for five years after their first birth are twice as likely to receive antenatal care during their pregnancy than young women who married before age 15.
One in three young women in Africa were married or in union by age 18

Researchers estimate that 115 million girls in Africa were married or lived in unions before age 18 in 1990, at levels above the global average. Later, the prevalence of child marriage has been decreasing, but it remains higher than the global average in Africa.

In West Africa, 60 per cent of child brides aged 10–24 years were married before age 18 in 2015. In Nigeria, young women who married before age 18 faced a 30 per cent higher chance of conceiving unwanted future, compared to women who married one year later. In Sabah, levels of child marriage were more prevalent in areas with lower education, and most prevalent among the poorest households.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, women with no education were more likely to marry before age 18 than women who had attended school. In one African country, 1 in 4 girls were married before age 15. In Sri Lanka, levels of child marriage were more common in rural areas, and three times higher among the poorest than the richest. In Guatemala, 1 in 5 girls were married before age 15. In Afghanistan, poverty was a major factor in why child marriage persists.

In Central African Republic, the prevalence of child marriage was the highest among those who had married by age 15. In Chad, women living in Nairobi, Kenya, were more likely to be married by age 18 than women living in other regions. In Mozambique, the likelihood a young woman already had three or more children was more than twice as high in rural than in urban areas.

Child marriage is most common among girls from the poorest households. In South Sudan, child marriage rates were higher among girls from the poorest households, in particular in the two wealthiest regions. In Malawi, girls from the poorest households were three times more likely to marry before age 18.

By 2050, the number of child brides in Africa is expected to grow rapidly, putting millions more girls at risk of child marriage. If progress is accelerated, the prevalence of child marriage in Africa would be halved by 2050.

African child marriage trends observed by sub-region and wealth quintile

The prevalence of child marriage has been slowly decreasing in Africa, but remains higher than the global average. Progress is accelerated:

- By 2050, the prevalence of child marriage will be halved.
- South Sudan: child marriage rates will be lower than the regional average.
- Between 2015 and 2050, the number of child brides in Africa will have decreased by 40 per cent.

Even doubling the rate of reduction will not be enough to reduce the number of child brides in Africa.

The prevalence of child marriage continues to decrease in Africa, but remains higher than the global average. Progress is accelerated:

- By 2050, the prevalence of child marriage will be halved.
- By 2050, the prevalence of child marriage will be halved.
- South Sudan: child marriage rates will be lower than the regional average.
- Between 2015 and 2050, the number of child brides in Africa will have decreased by 40 per cent.

Even doubling the rate of reduction will not be enough to reduce the number of child brides in Africa.
Worldwide, more than 75 million young women aged 20 to 24 years, a quarter of them in sub-Saharan Africa, entered their first marriage or union before they celebrated their 18th birthday. But the acceleration of progress refers to a doubling of the rate of reduction of the child marriage prevalence observed since 2000. In all other regions of the world, current trends continue, almost half of the world’s child brides in 2050 will be African. A growing child population combined with a slow decline in the practice of child marriage in Africa will put millions more girls at risk. If current global profile of child marriage is changing. A growing child population combined with a slow decline in the practice of child marriage in Africa will put millions more girls at risk.

**SUGGESTED CITATION:**
Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, United Nations, Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and other nationally representative surveys, 2003-2014. For detailed source DATA SOURCES: 1990. For additional information, please contact data@unicef.org.

**NOTES:**
The term ‘child brides’ is used to refer both to girls under age 18 who are currently married or in union, as well as women of any age who were first married or in union as children. On the page titled ‘Future’, more than 25 million young women aged 20 to 24 years, a quarter of them in sub-Saharan Africa, entered their first marriage or union before they celebrated their 18th birthday. In the global profile of child marriage is changing. A growing child population combined with a slow decline in the practice of child marriage in Africa will put millions more girls at risk. If current trends continue, almost half of the world’s child brides in 2050 will be African.

**A Profile of Child Marriage in Africa**

“Child marriage happens because adults believe they have the right to impose marriage upon a child. This denies children, particularly girls, their dignity and the opportunity to make choices that are central to their lives, such as when and whom to marry or when to have children. Choices define us and allow us to realize our potential. Child marriage robs girls of this chance.”

— Desmond Tutu and Graça Machel

In all other regions of the world, current trends continue, almost half of the world’s child brides in 2050 will be African. A growing child population combined with a slow decline in the practice of child marriage in Africa will put millions more girls at risk.

**PHOTO CREDITS:**
© UNICEF/ETHA_20150247/Bindra; © UNICEF/809B5161/Holt

**KEY FACTS**

- Child marriage happens because adults believe they have the right to impose marriage upon a child. This denies children, particularly girls, their dignity and the opportunity to make choices that are central to their lives, such as when and whom to marry or when to have children.
- Choices define us and allow us to realize our potential. Child marriage robs girls of this chance.
- In all other regions of the world, current trends continue, almost half of the world’s child brides in 2050 will be African.
- A growing child population combined with a slow decline in the practice of child marriage in Africa will put millions more girls at risk.