

ACCELERATING EFFORTS TO **ELIMINATE** CHILD MARRIAGE IN AFRICA

2018 EDITION



unicef

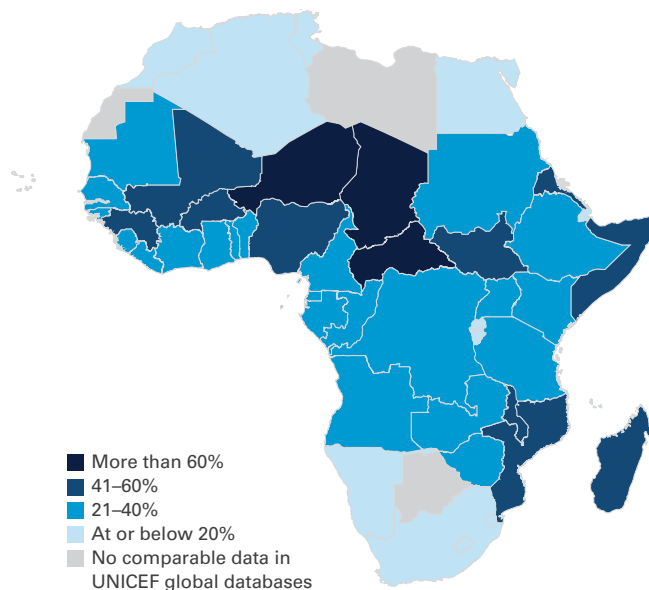
Overview

- Across Africa, 125 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthday.
- More than 1 in 3 young women in Africa were married in childhood, and 1 in 10 before their 15th birthday.
- In Central, Southern and Eastern Africa, at least 30 per cent of young women were married before age 18. In Western Africa, where the percentage is higher (over 40 per cent), child brides are also younger – this sub-region has the world's highest prevalence of marriage before age 15.
- The prevalence of child marriage varies across countries, ranging from as low as 2 per cent in Tunisia to as high as 76 per cent in Niger. Of the 10 countries worldwide where child marriage is most common, nine are located in Africa.
- Child marriage levels have decreased slightly compared to earlier generations; around 2000, nearly 40 per cent of young women were married before age 18.
- Today, levels of child marriage are below 10 per cent in seven countries (Algeria, Djibouti, Eswatini, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa and Tunisia) compared to just four countries (Algeria, Djibouti, Namibia and Tunisia) 15 years ago.
- Of the seven African countries with child marriage prevalence above 50 per cent, four (Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad and South Sudan) show no signs of decline.
- Progress in reducing child marriage in Africa is insufficient – at the current rate, it would take at least 100 years to eliminate the practice.



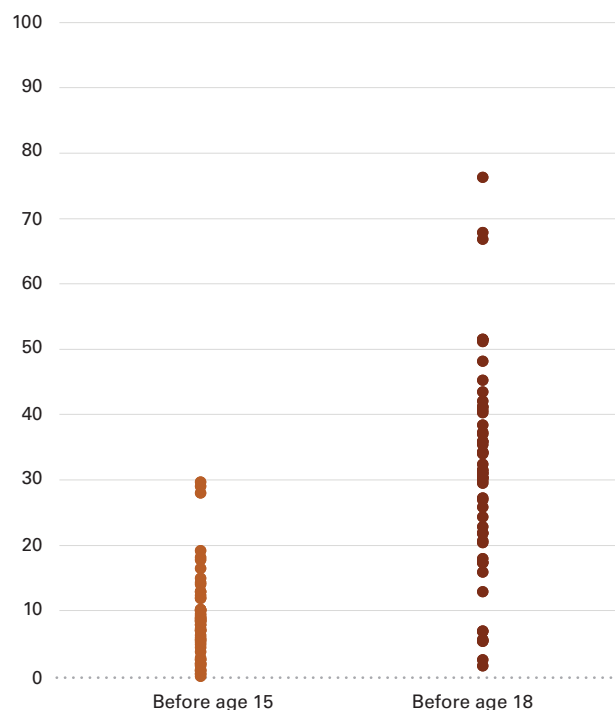
More than one in three young women in Africa were married or in union before age 18, with levels varying widely across countries

Fig. 1 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



Note: This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The final boundary between Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined.

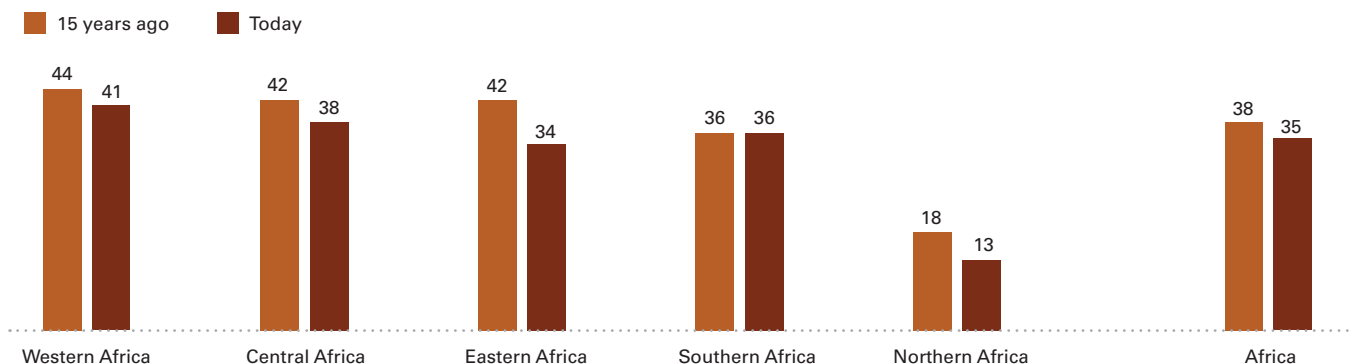
Fig. 2 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18



Note: Each dot represents an African country

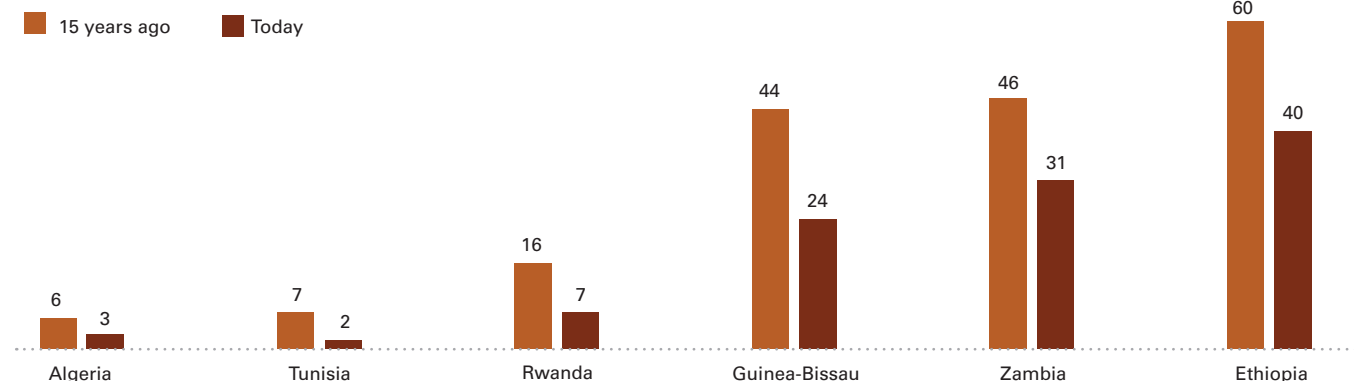
Child marriage has become slightly less common across Africa in the past 15 years

Fig. 3 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



Some countries in Africa have made great progress in reducing child marriage, even from high starting levels

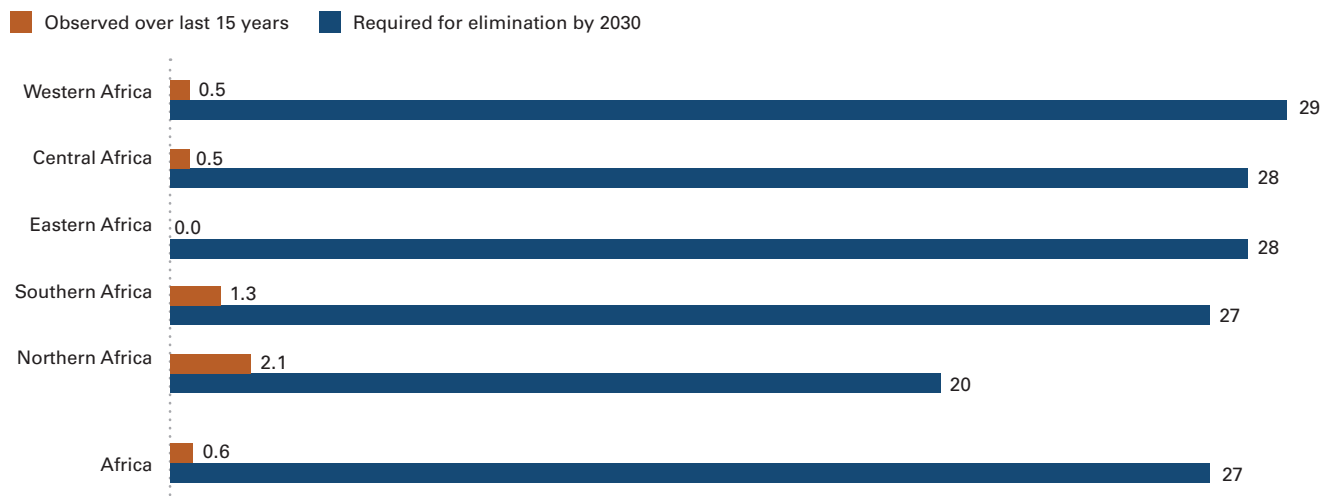
Fig. 4 Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



Note: Countries presented here include those with the greatest absolute and/or relative reduction in the prevalence of child marriage, among countries with data available from 2010 or later.

A substantial acceleration of progress will be needed across Africa in order to eliminate child marriage by 2030

Fig. 5 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



The background of the page is a photograph of a hand holding a tree branch. The hand is on the right side, gripping a thick, textured branch. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a forest or park setting. The text is overlaid on a solid orange rectangular area in the center of the page.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a new measure of ambition in social, economic and environmental development. The international community's adoption of this Agenda and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** represents an expanded commitment to complete the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in areas such as combating inequality, building peaceful societies, protecting human rights and preserving the planet.

Goal 5 of the SDGs seeks to achieve **gender equality** and empower all women and girls, acknowledging that gender inequality is a persistent reality and an impediment to global progress.

Within Goal 5, Target 5.3 aims to **eliminate all harmful practices**. This is one of the new aspirations introduced in the SDGs that the MDGs did not address. The target of **eliminating child marriage by 2030** is ambitious for a practice so widespread and persistent, but sends a clear message that there can be no tolerable level of child marriage.

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Notes: Aggregate estimates are based on a subset of 45 countries with available data from 2010-2017, covering 91 per cent of the female population in Africa. The African sub-regions are based on the regional classification of the African Union. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the corresponding female population.

Data sources: UNICEF global databases, 2018, based on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and other nationally representative surveys, 2003-2017. For detailed source information by country, see data.unicef.org. Population data are from: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision*, DVD Edition.

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