Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) refers to “all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.” More than 125 million girls and women alive today have been cut in the 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East where FGM/C is concentrated. As many as 30 million girls are at risk of being cut before their 15th birthday if current trends continue. FGM/C is a violation of girls’ and women’s human rights and is condemned by many international treaties and conventions, as well as by national legislation in many countries. Yet, where it is practised FGM/C is performed in line with tradition and social norms to ensure that girls are socially accepted and marriageable, and to uphold their status and honour and that of the entire family. UNICEF works with government and civil society partners towards the elimination of FGM/C in countries where it is still practised.

FGM/C is highly prevalent among all girls and women of reproductive age living in Eritrea. Almost half of women were cut during the first year of life, and more than one in three daughters have experienced the most invasive form of the practice.

### WHEN AND HOW IS FGM/C PERFORMED?

Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM/C, by age at which cutting occurred:

- Under 1 month: 23%
- 1 month: 11%
- 2-11 months: 14%
- 1-4 years: 11%
- 5+ years: 27%
- Don’t know/missing: 11%

Percentage distribution of the most recently circumcised daughter according to the type of person/practitioner performing the procedure:

- Health personnel: 38%
- Traditional practitioner: 52%
- Don’t know/missing: 6%
- Cut, no flesh removed: 4%
- Cut, flesh removed: 0.1%

Source: DHS 2002
A majority of people in Eritrea think that FGM/C should stop.

Among girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have heard about FGM/C, the percentage who cite specific benefits or advantages for a girl to undergo the procedure:

- No benefits: 77%
- Cleanliness/Hygiene: 6%
- Social acceptance: 10%
- Better marriage prospects: 3%
- Preservation of virginity: 6%
- Required by religion: 1%
- Other: 5%

In Eritrea, there has been some decline in the prevalence of FGM/C over time.
INTER-COUNTRY STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

**Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM/C**

![Bar chart showing percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM/C across various countries.]

**Percentage of girls aged 0 to 14 years who have undergone FGM/C (as reported by their mothers)**

![Bar chart showing percentage of girls aged 0 to 14 years who have undergone FGM/C across various countries.]

**Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have heard about FGM/C and think the practice should continue**

![Bar chart showing percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have heard about FGM/C and think the practice should continue across various countries.]

Notes: Data on attitudes for Yemen refer to ever-married girls and women. In Liberia, girls and women who have heard of the Sande society were asked whether they were members; this provides indirect information on FGM/C since it is performed during initiation into the society. Egypt data refer to girls aged 0-17 years who have undergone FGM/C. Data on attitudes for Ghana are from MICS 2006 and for Sierra Leone from DHS 2008 as data from the most recently available MICS surveys are not comparable. In Liberia, only cut girls and women were asked about their attitudes towards FGM/C; since girls and women from practising communities are more likely to support the practice, the level of support in this country as captured by the DHS 2007 is higher than would be anticipated had all girls and women been asked their opinion.


Updated July 2014