

General Information

Child marriage occurs when one or both spouses are below the age of 18. While boys can be affected, the practice predominantly impacts girls. It is often referred to as "early and forced" marriage because the girls, given their young age, can rarely make a free and informed decision about their marriage partner, the timing or the implications of this binding commitment. An element of coercion may be involved because their families may pressure or force the girls into marriage. Strong social and cultural norms also drive the practice despite legislation in place.

Legal Age at Marriage (2010)

Without / with parental consent or approval by pertinent authority	Female 18 / 16	Male 18 / 16
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Source: World Fertility Policies 2011, UNPD

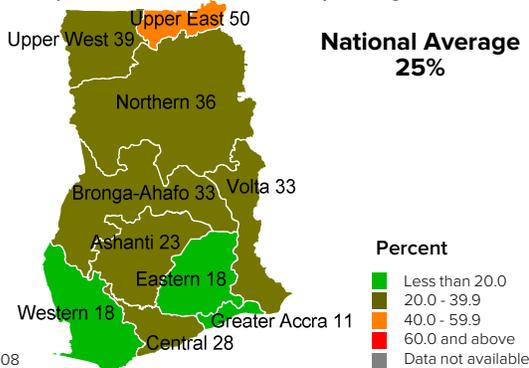
DEMOGRAPHICS

Total Population (000)	24,392 (UNPD, 2010)
Population under 18 (%)	45 (UNPD, 2010)
Life expectancy at birth (Years)	56 (UNPD, 2010)
Adolescent birth rate (Per 1,000 women)	66.0 (DHS, 2008)
CPR (15-19) (%)	13.6 (DHS, 2008)
UNR (15-19) (%)	61.7 (DHS, 2008)
PDS* (15-19) (%)	18.1 (DHS, 2008)
Net enrolment in secondary, female (%)	44 (SOWC, 2007-2010)

*PDS (Percentage of demand satisfied) = CPR/(UNR + CPR)*100

Child Marriage by Sub-National Regions

Percent of 20-24 year old females married by the age of 18



Source: DHS, 2008

Ghana has one of the highest child marriage prevalence rates in the world. On average, one out of four girls will be married before their 18th birthday. In 2008, about 25% of the women aged 20-24 were married/in union before age 18. Data shows a 11% decline since 2003 (28%).

While child marriage is common in Ghana, prevalence is highest in Upper East (50%), followed by Upper West (39%), Northern (36%), Volta (33%), Brong-Ahafo (33%), Central (28%), Ashanti (23%), Western (18%), Eastern (18%), and Greater Accra (11%).

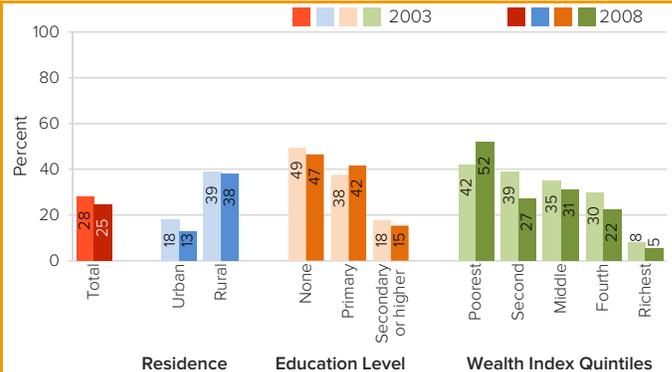
Once girls in Ghana are married, only a few of them (13.6%) are using contraception in spite of their needs to space their childbearing time. Of them, 18.1% have their demand for contraception satisfied.

Background Characteristics - Which Girls are Affected?

Child marriage occurs more frequently among girls who are the least educated, poorest and living in rural areas. In 2008, women aged 20-24 and living in rural areas were about 3 times as likely to be married/in union before age 18 than their urban counterparts. This urban-rural divide has increased 35% since 2003 (2.2 times).

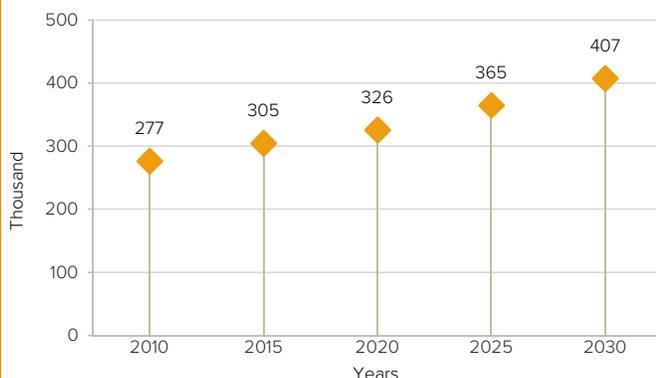
Education is associated with the prevalence of child marriage in Ghana. 47% of women aged 20-24 with no education and 42% with primary education were married or in union at age 18, compared to only 15% of women with secondary education or higher.

Household wealth influences the prevalence of child marriage among all wealth quintiles. Girls from the poorest 20% of the households were more than 10 times as likely to be married/in union before age 18 than girls from the richest 20% of the households.



Source: DHS

Future Child Brides: Projections for the Next Two Decades



Source: UNFPA

Urgent action is needed to take solutions to scale and prevent the thousands of girls in Ghana today from being married in the next decade(s). In 2010, 277,000 women aged 20-24 were married/in union before age 18. **If present trends continue, 407,000 of the young girls born between 2005 and 2010 will be married/in union before age 18 by 2030.** This projection shows an increase of 47% from the 2010 estimate of married girls, which is compounded by high fertility and low mortality in the recent past.

Ending child marriage requires strategies for girls' empowerment, social and cultural norms change, legal reform, and policy action. Proven solutions involve girls' schooling (especially lower secondary) and programmes that offer life skills, literacy, health information and services, and social support. Married girls especially need access to sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning and maternal health services.

Indicator Definitions

Total Population (000) ?	Estimates produced by the United Nations Population Division based on population projections.
Population under 18 (000) ?	Estimates produced by the United Nations Population Division based on population projections.
Life expectancy at birth (Years) ?	Number of years newborn children would live if subject to the mortality risks prevailing for the cross section of population at the time of their birth.
Adolescent birth rate (Per 1,000 women) ?	The adolescent birth rate measures the annual number of births to women 15 to 19 years of age per 1,000 women in that age group. It represents the risk of childbearing among adolescent women 15 to 19 years of age. It is also referred to as the age-specific fertility rate for women aged 15-19.
Adolescent Contraceptive Prevalence Rate, CPR (15-19) (%) ?	Percentage of women 15-19 years old married or in union currently using contraception.
Adolescent Unmet need for Contraception Rate, UNR (15-19) (%) ?	Percentage of women 15-19 years old married or in union currently with unmet need for contraception. They expressed a desire to control their fertility but were not using contraception.
Adolescent Percentage of Demand Satisfied, PDS (15-19) (%) ?	Percentage of the total demand for contraception that is satisfied and is obtained as : $PDS = CPR / (UNR + CPR)$.
Net enrolment in secondary, female (%) ?	Number of girls enrolled in secondary school who are of official secondary school age, expressed as a percentage of the total number of girls of official secondary school age.
Child Marriage (%) ?	Child marriage is presented here as the percentage and number of women 20-24 that marry/in-union before reaching age 18.

Abbreviations

DHS ?	Demographic and Health Surveys
SOWC ?	The State of the World's Children reports, produced by the United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA ?	United Nations Population Fund
UNPD ?	United Nations Population Division
UNSD ?	United Nations Statistics Division
MICS ?	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey