

DYNAMICS OF EARLY MARRIAGE AND EARLY BIRTH IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

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Early marriage is a very complex problem, the main reason for which is a lack of understanding of the importance of education and the importance of the future social role of girls, that is, their role should not be limited only to housework and raising children.

Early marriage is a formal or informal agreement between two persons, at least one of whom is under the age of 18. Due to their age, an underage couple cannot give full consent to marriage, so early marriages should be recognized as a violation of human rights and children's rights.

Early marriage is a gendered phenomenon that comprehensively affects children of both sexes. Typically, the number of boys entering into early marriages is significantly less than the number of girls entering into such marriages. In marriage, girls are subjected to gender-based violence and other forms of discrimination, as well as difficulties during pregnancy and childbirth, because their bodies are not yet ready for childbearing. The right of girls to be protected from early marriage is enshrined in various international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Both of the aforementioned documents call on countries to set the minimum age for marriage at 18 in their national legislation. But despite this legal guarantee, thousands of girls get married before they turn 18.

Marriage age is one of the main factors affecting the strength of the family institution. Women who marry and become mothers before puberty





have a high incidence of serious illnesses, which is primarily due to the negligence of society. The formation of complete genital organs of girls and psychological readiness to create a family. This corresponds to the age of 19-20 years, the marriage of girls before the age of 18, the early onset of sexual activity causes serious harm to their health, and also leads to the birth of a fetus with birth defects. Mortality among children born to underage mothers is 50-90% higher than among children born to mothers aged 20-29.

On the basis of statistical data, the indicators of early marriages in some countries of the world were analyzed (Figure 1).

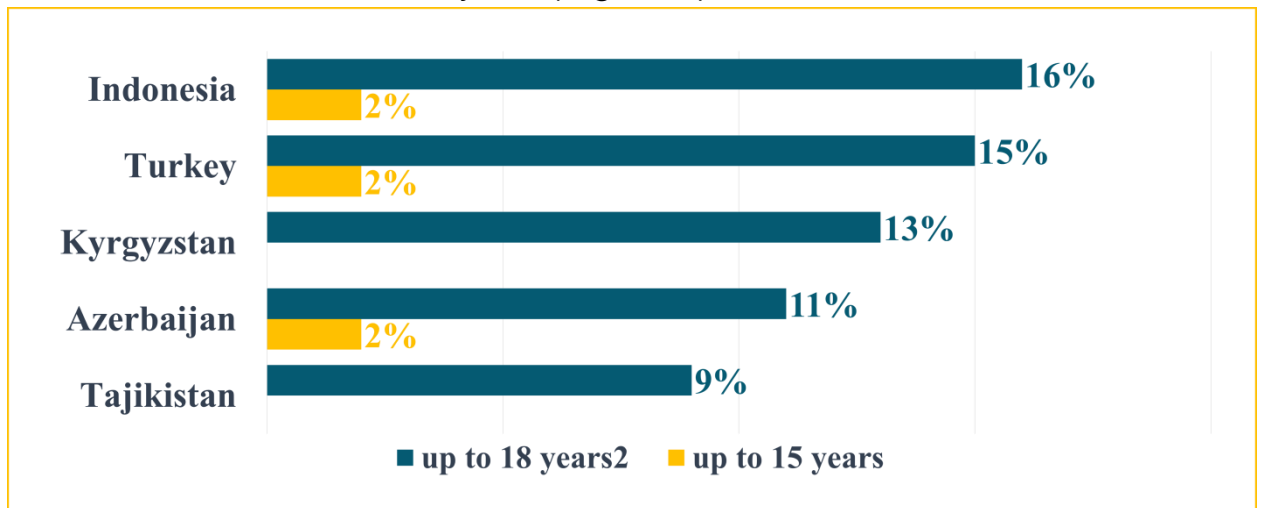


Figure 1. Early marriage rates in some countries of the world, % (2021)

Figure 1 shows that Indonesia, Turkey and Azerbaijan have high rates of early marriage. Let's get acquainted with the main reasons for early marriages in these countries.

In Turkey, girls are often valued not for their academic excellence, but for their ability to be good wives and mothers. Some young girls living on the country's border with Syria are forced to marry second or third wives with the consent of the traffickers. In addition, human trafficking gangs lure Syrian girls into exploitative conditions with the promise of dowry and marriage.

According to traditional beliefs in Azerbaijan, if girls do not marry at an early age, they are considered "old girls". Social pressure is also intensified by the large number of men leaving for labor migration, and some parents themselves offer the ambassador ("groom") to marry their daughters to the first suitable candidate.





Getting married in the country is considered a criterion of social progress, and some girls consider this the greatest achievement in their lives. Some parents give their daughters in marriage, believing that they help them in the role of spouses and mothers.

The social norms that allow child marriage in Indonesia affect all socio-economic levels of Indonesian society. The study shows that young marriages in the country are more common among the poor than among the rich. Girls are often married off early to reduce the economic burden on the family. This suggests that only financial security protects against early marriages.

In the country, marriage is sometimes used as a way to prevent or address the stigma associated with extramarital sex between women and teenage pregnancies, including sexual abuse.

In Kyrgyzstan, 33 percent of women married before the age of 18 do not have a primary education, and only 4 percent of women have a higher education.

Even though it is illegal in the country, bride kidnapping is still common. Local non-governmental organizations estimate that about 12,000 women and girls are kidnapped each year for the purpose of marriage. As a result, girls are particularly isolated and vulnerable, often without support. Often the victims' families are reluctant to allow them to return home due to family stigmatization.

In Tajikistan, some families choose religious schools for their daughters, which focus on doing housework in preparation for marriage.

According to a study by the European Psychological Association, almost all young people who marry early suffer from long-term depression. Also, as a result of early marriage, women can develop more than a hundred diseases. In addition, experts note that among the babies of women who gave birth before the age of 18, mortality is significantly higher than among women who become mothers after 20 years.

The main reasons for early marriages in Kazakhstan are the lack of higher education, poverty, ethnicity and lack of awareness about sexual and reproductive health. In the country, girls under 18 are twice as likely to marry





in poor families than in rich ones. In Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, the main reasons for early marriages are poverty, lack of higher education, and the presence of harmful traditional customs: some families choose religious methods and means for their daughters, pay attention to household skills when preparing them for marriage.

Today, the problem of early marriage and teenage pregnancy worries many. Because preterm birth increases a woman's risk of death and also causes health problems for mother and baby.

According to the UN and the World Bank, the lowest rates of teenage pregnancy per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 are in the Republic of Korea - 1, China and Switzerland - 3, Denmark and Singapore - 4, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway and Cyprus corresponds to 5. The highest rates correspond to African countries, the first three places belong to Nigeria (187), Mali (169), Chad (161). This source also mentions the situation in Uzbekistan: 24 preterm births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19¹³.

According to the World Health Organization, about 21 million girls aged 15-19 become mothers each year in developing countries. 2.5 million of them are girls under the age of 16. Difficulties during pregnancy and childbirth are also the cause of death for 15- to 19-year-old girls around the world¹⁴.

As teenagers enter adulthood, they are surrounded by ambiguous, negative, and confusing messages about sexuality. They can get information on a topic that interests them only from pages on the Internet or from acquaintances. This makes it difficult to understand that differences between the sexes are a normal physiological state. In addition, adolescents know little about family life, birth planning, and the correct use of contraceptives.


Statistics from the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report show that the level of education of mothers ensures children's health, proper nutrition and timely vaccination. At the same time, the medical education of young mothers is of great importance in reducing maternal and child mortality and the incidence of AIDS¹⁵.

¹³ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT?locations=HK&view=map>

¹⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy>

¹⁵ <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2020/inclusion>





Studies show that in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and France, due to the fact that the subject of sex education has taken a special place in the school curriculum, there are almost no cases of teenage pregnancy. Sweden, Denmark and Belgium are also taking this issue seriously. In these countries, regular positive indicators are noted due to the correct attitude towards the issue of sex education, gender roles in society, gender equality.

Today, countries such as Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong have the lowest rates of teenage pregnancy among countries in the world, and China has joined the ranks of these countries, even ahead of European countries.

In view of the above, it was determined that the main causes of early pregnancy in foreign countries are:

- lack of information on sexual and reproductive health and gender rights, as well as the lack of established sexual and reproductive health services in the country;
- high incidence of schooling failures among young people in the community, high probability of school and college dropouts, high tuition costs, high youth unemployment;
- early transfer of parents, the fact that girls have limited decision-making power, the presence of harmful traditional customs, lack of access to adequate services adapted to young people;
- prevalence of alcohol and drugs among young people in society, frequent drinking with friends at social events or parties, drug experimentation. Alcohol and drug use can lead to unwanted or unexpected pregnancies. These substances greatly affect the logical thinking and general thought process of adolescents, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will engage in unprotected and unsafe sex.¹⁶;
- widespread poverty, high levels of dissatisfaction with the spiritual needs of adolescents, teenage pregnancy most often come from families with low socioeconomic status, often suffering from poverty and not having all the necessary resources to raise a child¹⁷.

¹⁶ <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02673843.2012.655912#tabModule>

¹⁷ http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/Teenage_Pregnancies_-_Overview.pdf



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