

A close-up photograph of two hands held palm-up. The right hand is heavily stained with bright red blood, with several large, circular spots and streaks covering the palm and fingers. The left hand is clean. The background is dark and out of focus.

## **INDIA CHILD MARRIAGE AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY**

Based on NFHS-4 (2015-16)



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### Message

Child marriage is a violation of child rights, and has a negative impact on physical growth, health, mental and emotional development, and education opportunities of the child. Both girls and boys are adversely affected by child marriage, but impact on girls is much larger with greater intensity. It also affects the society as a whole since child marriage reinforces a cycle of poverty and perpetuates gender discrimination, illiteracy and malnutrition as well as high infant and maternal mortality rates.

India has shown tremendous progress in lowering prevalence of child marriages and teenage pregnancies. This report is particularly interesting since it analyses prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancy amongst the age group of 15-19 year old, in addition to the prevalence rates of child marriage (below 18 years) reported amongst 20-24 year old. While regional disparities exist, child marriage has significantly decreased from 26.5% (NFHS-3, 2005-06) to 11.9% (NFHS-4, 2015-16) as reported by 15-19 year old girls. Though the decreasing trend in prevalence of child marriage seems promising at the country level, still there are 12 States in India that shows higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average, even though they also show a decrease in prevalence rates since NFHS-3.

The India Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy Report highlights some associated facts related to child marriage and teenage pregnancy amongst young adolescents aged 15-19 years.

I hope this report will trigger the required policy decisions at the national and state level and support formulation of action plans at the district levels focussed on preventing child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

I would like to thank Dr. Renu Singh, Country Director, Young Lives and her team for undertaking this analysis.

  
(Stuti Kacker)

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## Introduction

According to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006, any girl married below 18 years of age and any boy married before 21 years, is considered a “child marriage”, which is a cognizable offence. While child marriage has long term negative consequences for both boys and girls in terms of educational outcomes as well as transitions to the labour market and family formation - the adverse effect of child marriage on girls is grave. This includes early pregnancy, maternal and neonatal mortality, educational setbacks, lower employment prospects, exposure to violence and abuse - leading to negative physical and psychological outcomes. Besides the risk of early childbearing many child brides have little agency within their marital households.

In India, child marriage has been declining slowly over time, but the number of girls and boys getting married before their respective legal ages remain large with 12.1 million child marriages reported by Census 2011. Causes of child marriage are complex and varied based on various customs and traditions across several contexts and is deeply rooted in existing socio-cultural norms with economic and regional factors playing a significant role in determining child marriages. While it is important to note that child marriage persists amongst boys, this factsheet draws upon NFHS-4 data (2015-16) related to prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancy amongst girls in the age group 15-19 years and 20-24 years in India. This fact sheet also examines some predictors of child marriage in India as well as its states.

## National Statistics

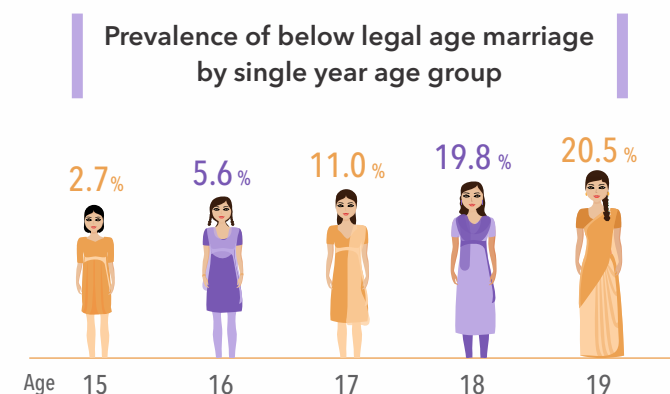
Unlike Census, which showed that at National level incidence of child marriage amongst girls aged 10<18 years was 4.5 per cent, National Family Health Survey - 4

(NFHS-4, 2015-6) data can only highlight prevalence rates of child marriage as reported by girls in the age group 15-19 years.

An overall comparison of prevalence rates of child marriage reported by 15-19 year old girls between NFHS-4 and NFHS-3 at national level shows that there is a considerable decrease in prevalence of child marriage since 2005-06.

## Country level findings

According to NFHS-4 data we find that prevalence of child marriage amongst 15-19 years old and 20-24 years old is 11.9% and 26.8% respectively for girls in India, highlighting a declining trend in child marriage. Child marriage prevalence in rural and urban India is 14.1% and 6.9% respectively for age group 15-19 years and 31.5% and 17.5% respectively for rural and urban areas for age group 20-24 years. Prevalence of below legal age marriage for single year age from 15 to 19 years are given below and findings show that prevalence of below legal age marriage is increasing with increasing age and found lowest and highest in age 15 (2.7%) and 19 (20.5%) respectively.



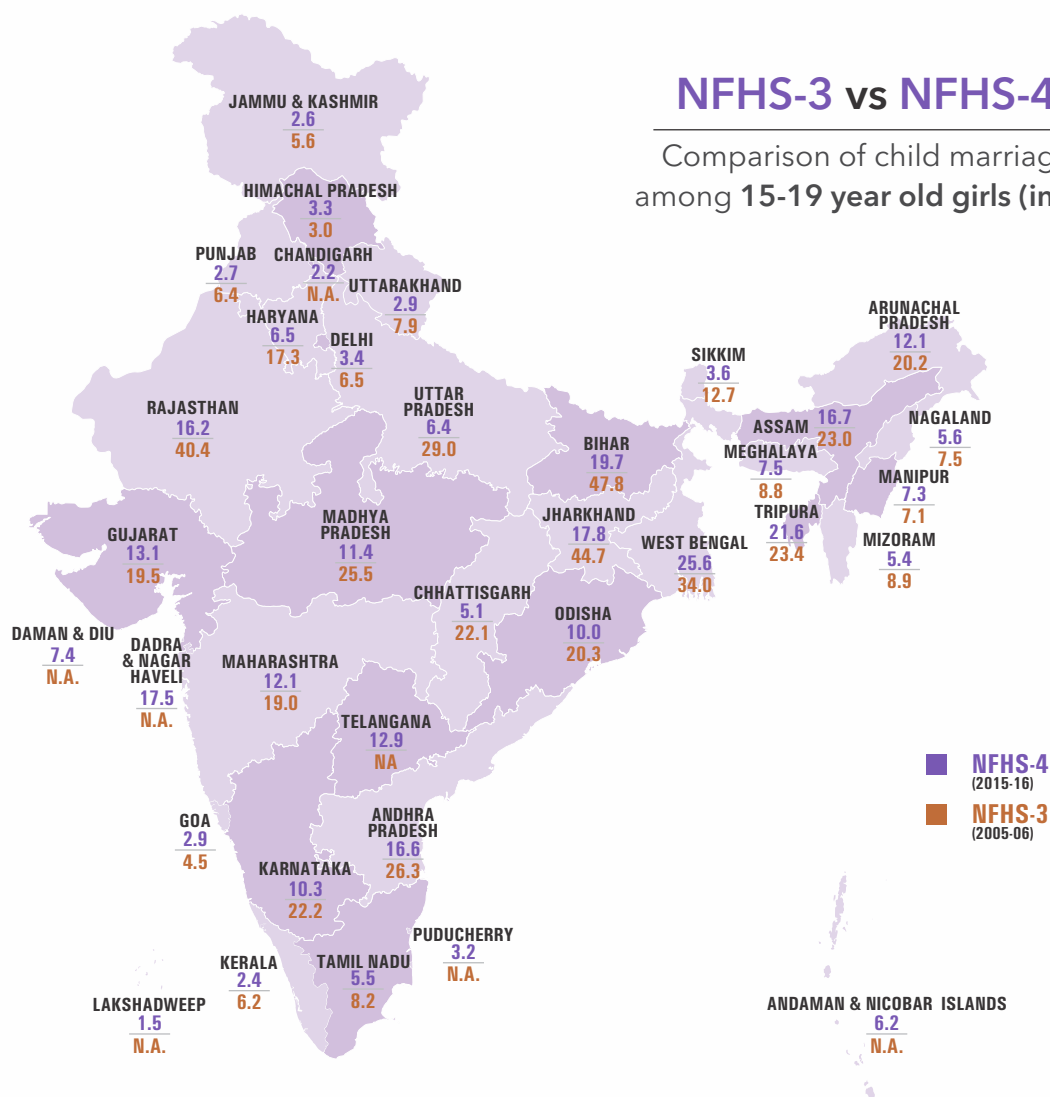
A comparison of below legal age marriage among girls aged between 15-19 years and 20-24 years by wealth index of the household shows that economic status of the households is negatively associated with the prevalence of child marriage across ages though significantly more child marriages were reported amongst 20-24 year old women. It is observed that child marriage is more prevalent amongst women from bottom wealth tercile households for both age groups (16.6% and 41.5% respectively) and least prevalent amongst women from the top tercile households (5.4% and 13.4% respectively).

Wealth Index***	PREVALENCE RATE OF CHILD MARRIAGE	
	Age 15-19	Age 20-24
Bottom Tercile	16.6	41.5
Middle Tercile	12.7	28.6
Top Tercile	5.4	13.4

Women's education***	PREVALENCE RATE OF CHILD MARRIAGE	
	Age 15-19	Age 20-24
No Education	30.8	49.3
Primary Education	21.9	45.7
Secondary Education	10.2	28.3
Higher Education	2.4	3.9

Significance level: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Women's educational level is also found to be negatively associated with the prevalence of child marriage for both 15-19 years and 20-24 years age groups. Higher the level of education, lower is the chance of child marriage. For example, the prevalence of child marriage among women with no education amongst 15-19 years and 20-24 years age groups is 30.8% and 49.3% respectively. On the other hand, the prevalence of child marriage is substantially lower among the women with higher education for both age groups (2.4% and 3.9% respectively).



## Trend analysis of child marriage across NFHS-3 and NFHS-4

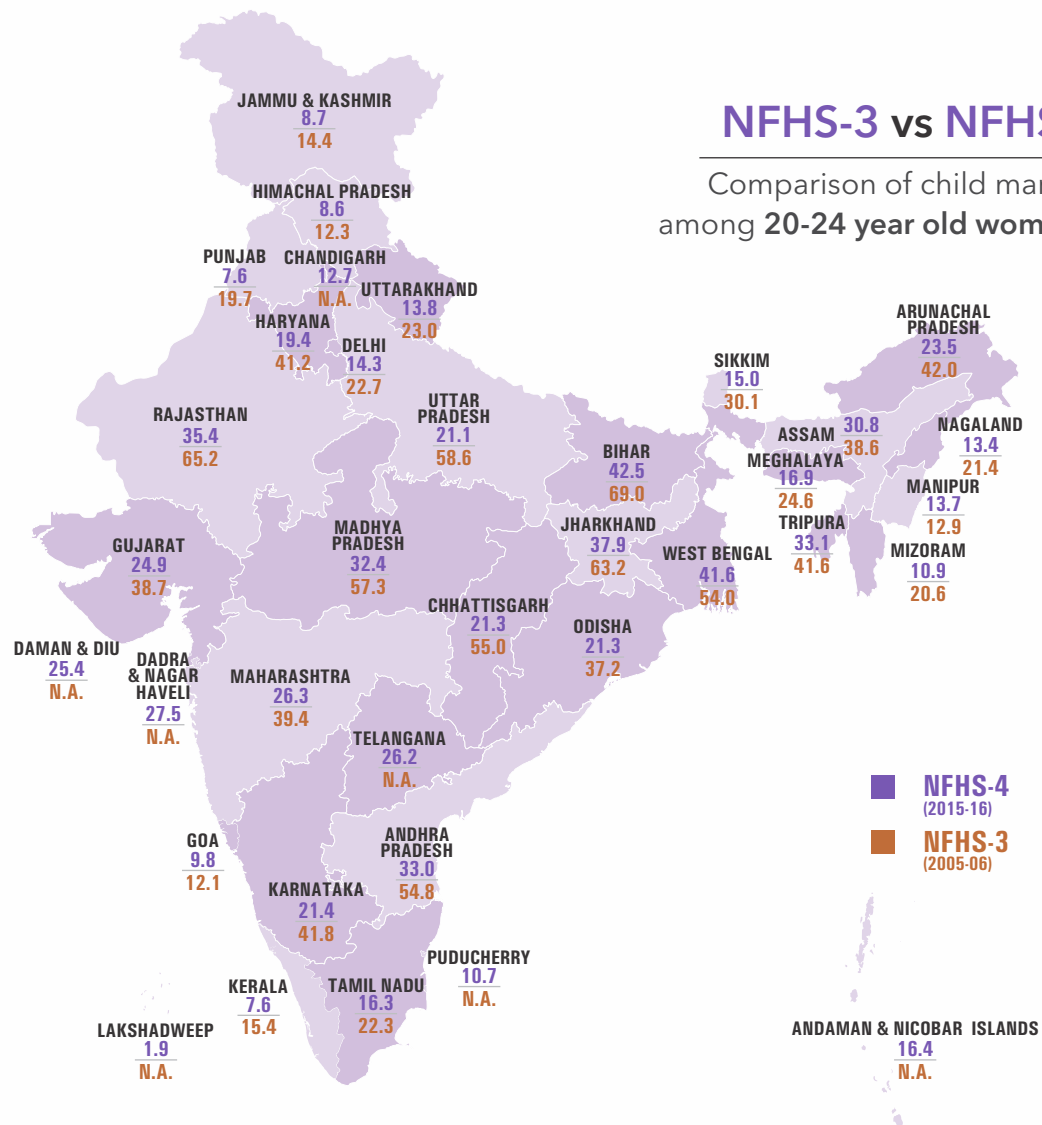
A comparative analysis of child marriage for 15-19 year old girls as reported in NFHS-3 (2005-06) and NFHS-4 (2015-16) reveals that overall prevalence of child marriage has reduced to a large extent in the last 10 years for a large number of states in India except marginal increase as observed in the states of Manipur and Himachal Pradesh. Substantial reduction of child marriage (more than 20 percentage points) is observed in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Similarly, a comparative analysis of child marriage as reported by 20-24 years old women between NFHS-3 (2005-06) and NFHS-4 (2015-16) reveals that overall prevalence has reduced for this age group in all states in India except Manipur which shows a marginal increase. More than 30 percentage points reduction of child marriage in this age group is observed in the states of



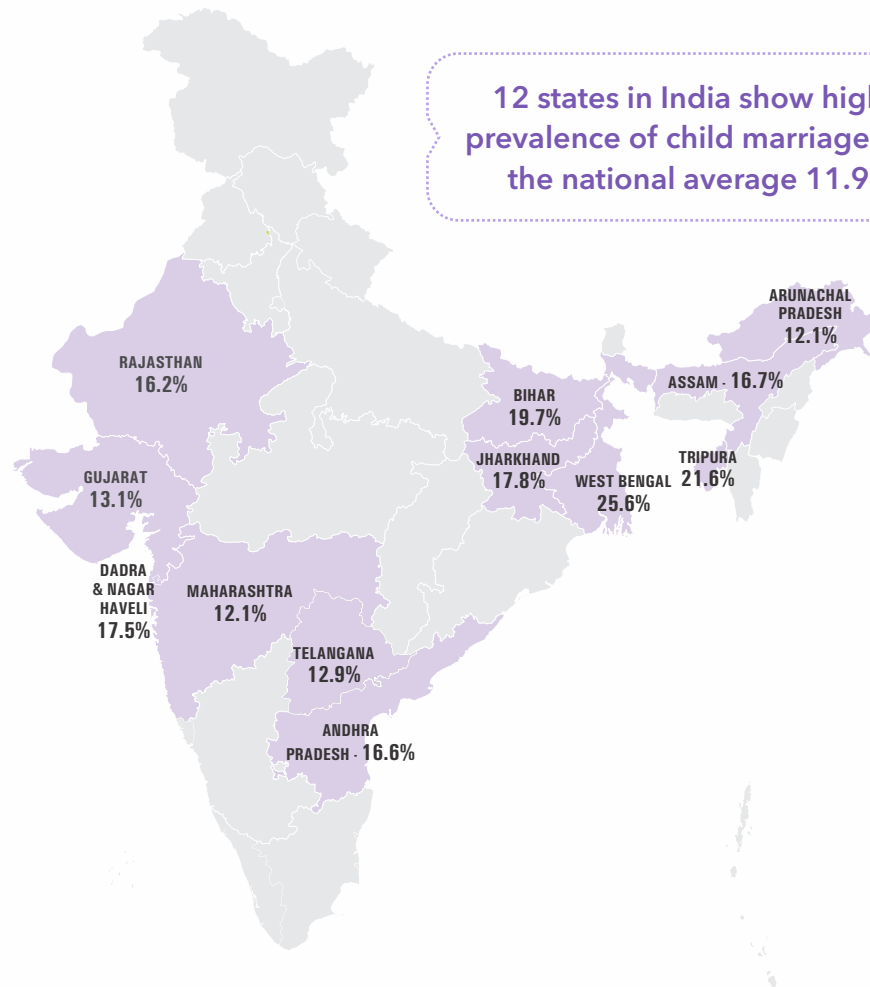
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Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, whereas more than 20% points reduction is observed in states Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Haryana. The analysis clearly indicates a positive trend and gains from efforts being made by various states to prevent child marriage.



## State level analysis of child marriage

As mentioned before, overall 11.9% of the 15-19 year old girls in India got married before the legal age. The prevalence of child marriage differs substantially across states. While twelve states in India show a higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average, other states have a relatively lower prevalence than the national average.



## Child marriage is a rural phenomenon

At this juncture, it would be important to examine the factors that lead to early marriage in different states. Findings reveal that prevalence of girl child marriage in the age-group 15-19 years is significant in rural areas. However, there are certain states including UTs which have large pockets of child marriage within urban areas. Some of these states are Haryana (41%), Tamil Nadu (37%), Maharashtra (33%) and Manipur (32%). The findings are particularly important because any campaign to prevent child marriage in India must focus on rural areas.

State	Age 15-19	
	Urban	Rural
Himachal Pradesh	1.3	98.7
Assam	6.6	93.4
Meghalaya	6.9	93.1
Bihar	8.6	91.4
Uttar Pradesh	8.9	91.1
Jammu and Kashmir	9.7	90.3
Rajasthan	10.6	89.4
Jharkhand	11.9	88.1
Madhya Pradesh	12.3	87.7
Odisha	13.9	86.1
Chhattisgarh	15.9	84.1
West Bengal	18.4	81.6
Nagaland	18.9	81.1
Andhra Pradesh	22.4	77.6
Tripura	24.6	75.4
Gujarat	25.5	74.5
Kerala	26.4	73.6
Sikkim	27.5	72.5

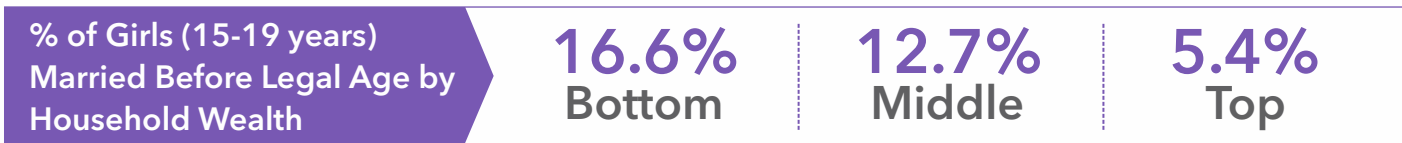
State	Age 15-19	
	Urban	Rural
Arunachal Pradesh	27.6	72.4
Karnataka	28.3	71.7
Telangana	30.0	70.0
Uttarakhand	30.1	69.9
Manipur	32.0	68.0
Punjab	32.1	67.9
Maharashtra	33	67
Tamil Nadu	36.5	63.5
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	39.9	60.1
Haryana	41.2	58.8
Lakshadweep	45.5	54.5
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	47.0	53.0
Mizoram	49.4	50.6
Puducherry	52.4	47.6
Goa	77.9	22.1
Daman and Diu	82.2	17.8
Delhi	96.9	3.1
Chandigarh	100.0	0



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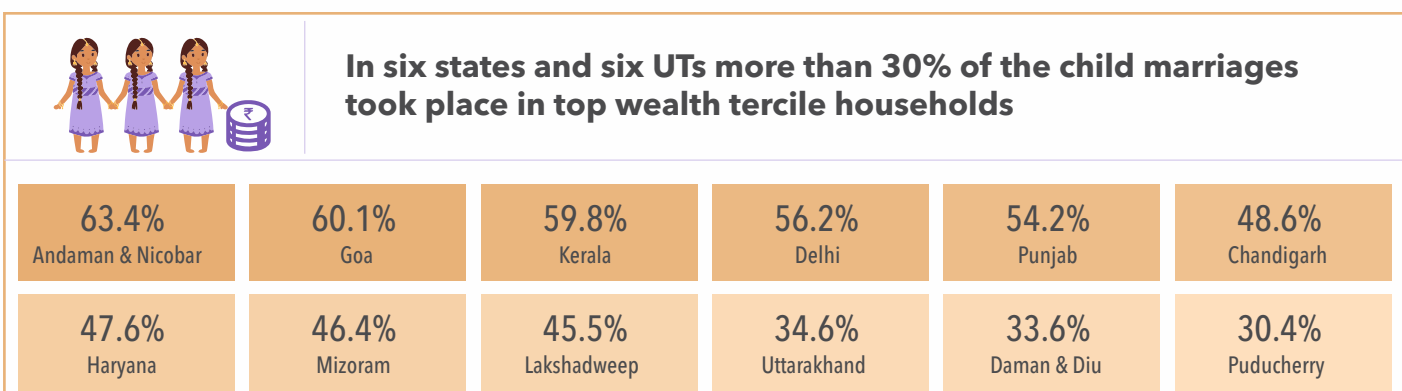
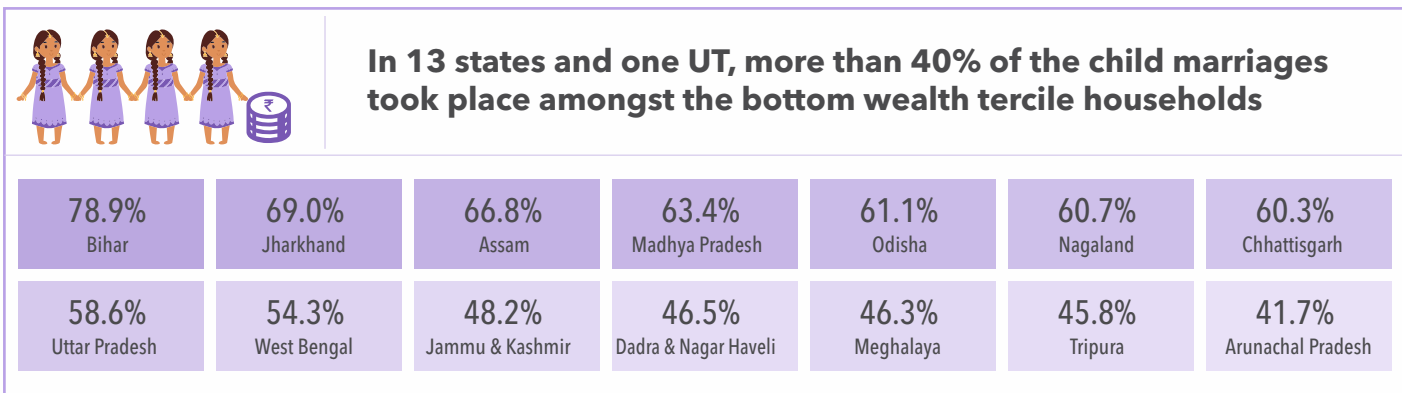
- 13 states** in which more than **80% of the child marriage** took place in **rural areas**
- 20 states** in which more than **70% of the child marriage** took place in **rural areas**
- 14 states** report prevalence of more than **25% child marriages in urban areas**; Haryana (41%), Tamil Nadu (37%), Maharashtra (33%) and Manipur (33%)

## Wealth index



At the state level, the relationship between girl child marriage and household wealth index is also significantly strong. It is evident from the findings that a girl from a poor family is more likely to getting married at a younger age than a girl from a wealthier family. The state level analysis also highlights that child marriage amongst girls is so entrenched in certain social groups that a substantial proportion of girls from middle and top wealth tercile households are also reported to be married before age 18.

Four out of ten child marriages in 13 states and one UT occur amongst the poorest households:



## Child marriages by caste amongst top 10 states with high prevalence of child marriage

State	Scheduled Caste (SC)	Scheduled Tribe (ST)	Other Backward Caste (OBC)	Other Caste (OC)
Andhra Pradesh	22	7	58	13
Assam	12	15	27	45
Bihar	24	3	63	9
Gujarat	10	17	57	12
Maharashtra	19	23	18	38
Rajasthan	22	15	55	7
Tripura	24	41	25	11
West Bengal	39	11	12	35
Telangana	19	15	58	7
Arunachal Pradesh	7	72	6	14
<b>India</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>

Further analysis of NHFS-4 reveals that the highest prevalence of child marriage is reported amongst Scheduled Tribe girls (15%) followed by Scheduled Castes (13%). However, when we analysed child marriages amongst the top 10 states with highest prevalence of child marriage we find that this phenomenon is occurring across caste groups. For instance In Arunachal Pradesh, 72% of the sample aged

between 15-19 years who had child marriages belong to Scheduled Tribes while 38% of the Other Castes girls in Maharashtra reported highest percentage of married girls before 18. Furthermore, while Bihar, Gujarat and Telangana report very high prevalence of child marriage amongst OBC girls, West Bengal has the highest prevalence of child marriage amongst SC girls.



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## Secondary education completion helps reduce child marriage

Analysis of the state level data also reveal that similar to the national level (as shown before), there exist a correlation between early child marriage and the educational attainment of girls. We find that that the completion of secondary education is found to be significant in delaying the age at marriage.

Findings show the completion rate of secondary schooling is considerably higher amongst unmarried girls aged 15-19 years in almost all states. Making secondary schooling a fundamental right and ensuring girls from poor households are provided safe learning environments as well as residential secondary schools for remote areas may be considered as necessary steps to prevent early marriage in Indian states. In Bihar, completion rate of secondary education amongst girls who married before age 18 is only 51%, followed by Delhi (54%) and Rajasthan (57%).

States & UTs	Lowest secondary completion rate by states amongst married girls (15-19 years)
Bihar	51.2
Delhi	53.6
Rajasthan	57.3
Uttar Pradesh	60.0
Meghalaya	61.0
Madhya Pradesh	62.6
Punjab	62.9
Uttarakhand	63.8
Jammu and Kashmir	63.9
Chhattisgarh	64.3

% of Women (15-19 Years) Married Before Legal Age by Educational levels

**30.8%**  
No Education

**21.9%**  
Primary

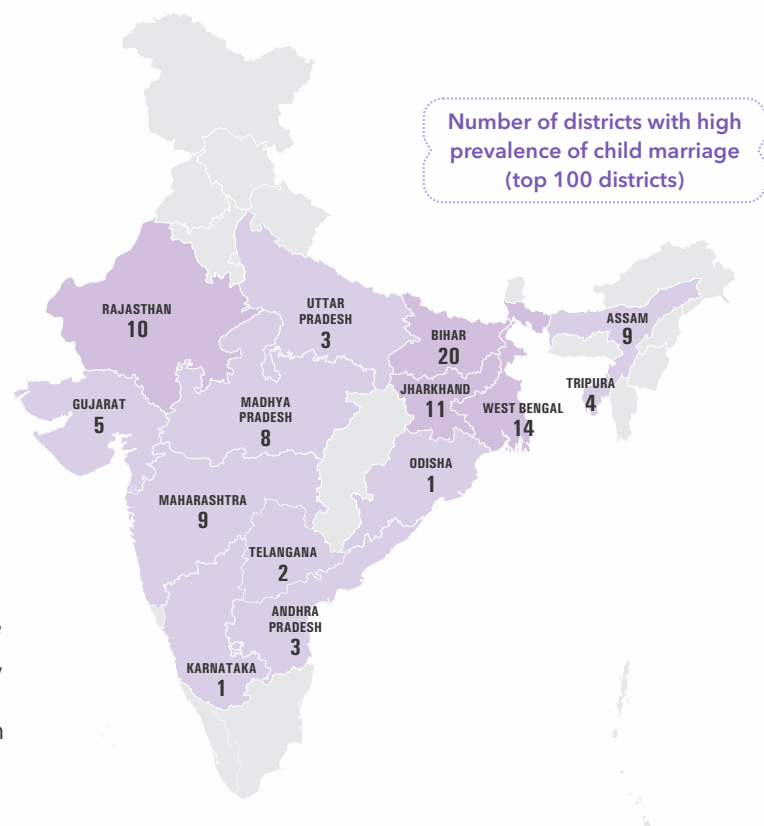
**10.2%**  
Secondary

**2.4%**  
Higher

## District level analysis of child marriage

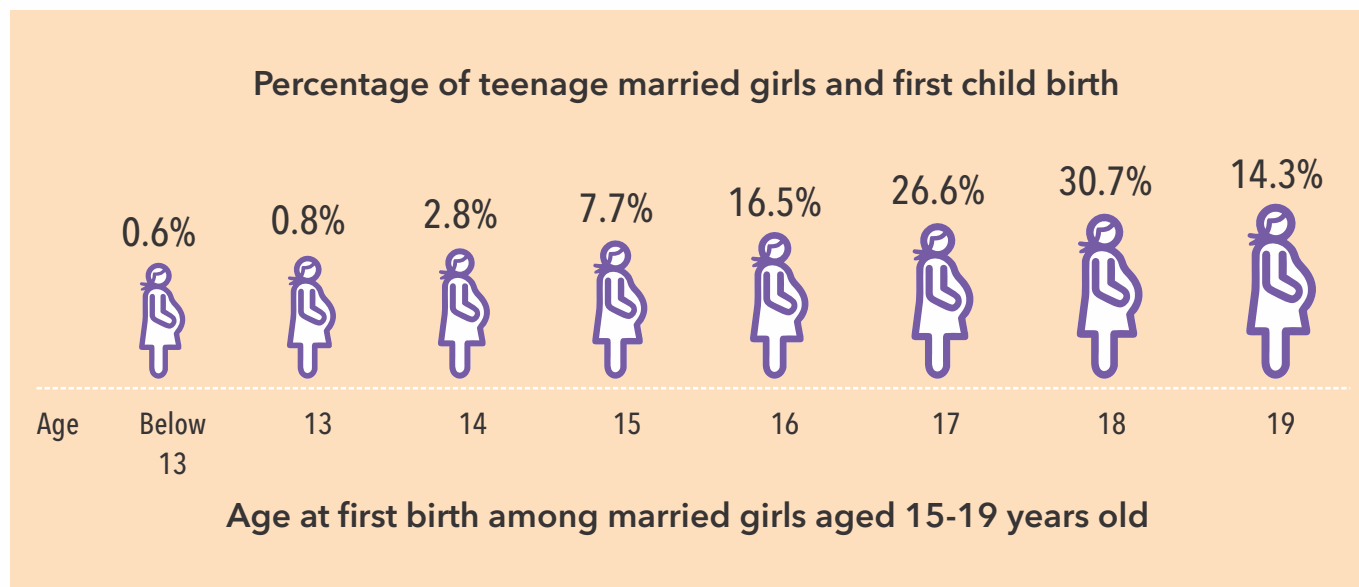
District level analysis using NFHS-4 reveals that amongst all the districts in India, Murshibad (39.9%) in West Bengal shows the highest prevalence of child marriage amongst 15-19 years old, followed by Gandhinagar (39.3%) in Gujarat, Bhilwara (36.4%) in Rajasthan, Shrawasti (36.3%) in Uttar Pradesh, Birbhum (35.2%) in West Bengal, Khagaria (34.4%) in Bihar, Goalpara (33.9%) in Assam, Deoghar (32.7%) and Giridih (32.2%) in Jharkhand.

Analysis of top 100 districts based on the high prevalence of child marriage reveals that 14 states have these high prevalence districts. Bihar has the maximum number of districts with high prevalence (20), followed by West Bengal (14), Jharkhand (11), Rajasthan (10), Assam (9), Maharashtra (9), Madhya Pradesh (8), Gujarat (5), Tripura (4), Andhra Pradesh (3), Uttar Pradesh (3), Telangana (2), Karnataka (1) and Odisha (1).



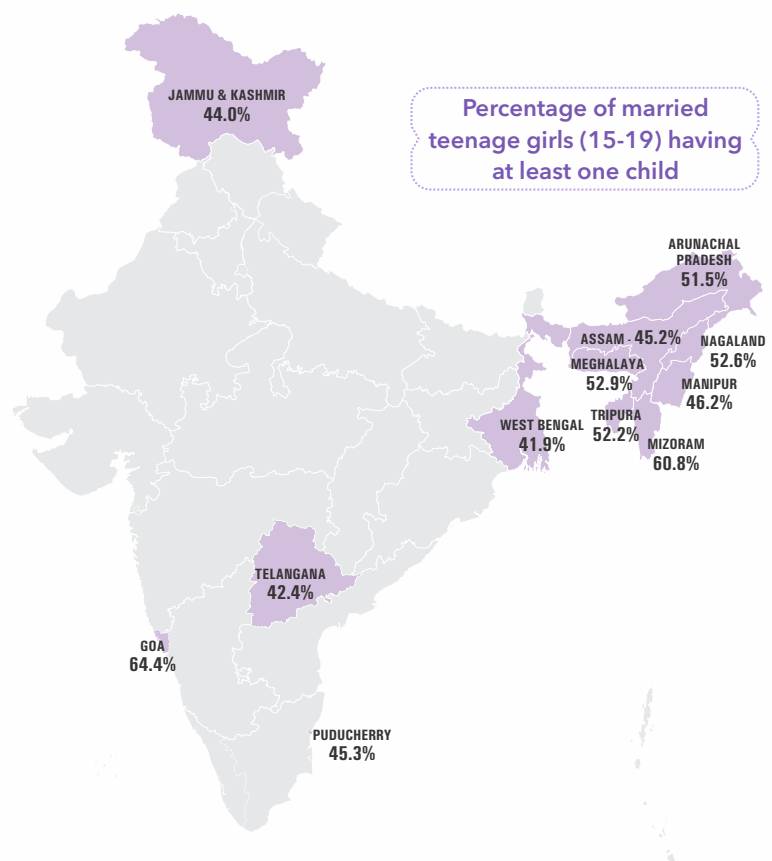
## Teenage pregnancy

Since most child marriages result in teenage pregnancy due to societal pressure and lack of sexual and reproductive health knowledge, we analyse level of teenage pregnancy amongst 15-19 year olds. Analysis of NFHS-4 reveals that amongst the married girls aged 15 to 19 years in India, 31.5 percent of the sample girls in this age group are found to have babies. It is important to note that almost a quarter of the married girls in the 15-16 years age group had at least one baby while more than a quarter of the married teenage girls had at least one child at age 17 while 31% had a child by age 18.



## More than one out of four married teenage girls become a mother

Further analysis of number of children born to teenage mothers reveals that 27.3 percent of married teenage girls have given birth to one child while 4.2 percent of married girls have 2 or more children. The pattern of children ever born amongst these girls differ across different states in India. Findings reveal that there are 12 states where more than 40% of these girls have at least one child or more. Interestingly we find emergence of states such as Goa (64%), Mizoram (61%) and Meghalaya (53%) with the highest prevalence of teenage pregnancy amongst early married girls.



## Girls' body mass index

It is also important to examine the health status of the girls who had early marriages because early marriage can result in poor nutritional status of teenage pregnant girls, which will in turn result in the birth of undernourished children. Analysis of Body Mass Index (BMI) shows that overall, 36% of married teenage girls (15-19 years) who had below legal age marriage are found to be underweight. State level analysis further indicates that prevalence of underweight amongst 15-19 year old married girls who had below legal age marriage are found higher in Dadra and Nagar Haveli (68.9%), Gujarat (50.9%), Daman and Diu (44.0%), Rajasthan (43.9%), Nagaland (41.4%) etc.

## Conclusion

As per NFHS-4 (2015-16), 11.9% of the 15-19 year old girls were married before age of 18 years in India, with variations across states. Substantial reduction of child marriage has been observed across states since 2005-06.

- There are 12 states in India that show higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average. These are West Bengal (25.6%), Tripura

(21.6%), Bihar (19.7%), Jharkhand (17.8%), Dadra and Nagar Haveli (17.5%), Assam (16.7%), Andhra Pradesh (16.6%), Rajasthan (16.2%), Gujarat (13.1%), Telangana (12.9%), Maharashtra (12.1%) and Arunachal Pradesh (12.1%)

- There are 100 districts located in 14 states that report the highest prevalence of child marriage across the country. These states are Bihar (20), West Bengal (14), Jharkhand (11), Rajasthan (10), Assam (9), Maharashtra (9), Madhya Pradesh (8), Gujarat (5), Tripura (4), Andhra Pradesh (3), Uttar Pradesh (3), Telangana (2), Karnataka (1) and Odisha (1)
- Prevalence of girl child marriage is found more common in rural areas than urban areas
- Wealth index of the households is significantly related to child marriage amongst girls in India. Poorer the households, higher the chance of girls getting married early
- Completion of secondary education is much lower amongst married teenage girls than the unmarried girls amongst 15-19 age group across all states
- There are 12 states where more than 40% of the teenage married girls have at least one child or more

## Top 100 districts with highest prevalence of child marriage

State	District	Prevalence of Child Marriage	State	District	Prevalence of Child Marriage	State	District	Prevalence of Child Marriage
West Bengal	Murshidabad	39.9	Assam	Bongaigaon	27.2	Bihar	Banka	21.9
Gujarat	Gandhinagar	39.3	Jharkhand	Jamtara	27.1	Assam	Kokrajhar	21.7
Rajasthan	Bhilwara	36.4	Gujarat	Patan	27.1	West Bengal	Uttar Dinajpur	21.6
Uttar Pradesh	Shrawasti	36.3	West Bengal	Puruliya	27.0	West Bengal	Paschim Medinipur	21.3
West Bengal	Birbhum	35.2	Madhya Pradesh	Shajapur	26.7	Rajasthan	Ajmer	21.1
Bihar	Khagaria	34.4	Uttar Pradesh	Bahraich	26.3	Jharkhand	Saraikela Kharsawan	21.1
Assam	Goalpara	33.9	Bihar	Sheikhpura	26.3	Bihar	Araria	20.9
Rajasthan	Chittaurgarh	33.1	Jharkhand	Garhwa	26.2	Maharashtra	Osmanabad	20.9
Jharkhand	Deoghar	32.7	Madhya Pradesh	Rajgarh	26.1	Assam	Chirang	20.9
Jharkhand	Giridih	32.2	Rajasthan	Rajsamand	26.0	West Bengal	Bardhaman	20.7
Bihar	Jamui	31.5	Bihar	Supaul	25.7	Tripura	West Tripura	20.4
Jharkhand	Godda	31.4	Jharkhand	Dumka	25.4	Andhra Pradesh	Krishna	20.3
Bihar	Gaya	31.4	Rajasthan	Sawai Madhopur	25.4	Karnataka	Bagalkot	20.2
West Bengal	North Twenty Four Par	31.4	Bihar	Samastipur	25.3	Bihar	Vaishali	20.2
Maharashtra	Jalna	31.3	Bihar	Lakhisarai	25.2	Telangana	Khammam	20.1
Madhya Pradesh	Jhabua	31.2	Madhya Pradesh	Mandsaur	25.2	Maharashtra	Bid	20.1
Assam	Dhubri	31.0	Rajasthan	Bundi	25.1	Bihar	Darbhanga	19.9
West Bengal	Nadia	30.8	Madhya Pradesh	Tikamgarh	25.0	Assam	Golaghat	19.8
West Bengal	Koch Bihar	30.7	West Bengal	Hugli	25.0	Tripura	North Tripura	19.8
Gujarat	Kheda	30.4	Rajasthan	Tonk	24.7	Andhra Pradesh	Prakasam	19.8
Bihar	Madhepura	29.7	Tripura	Dhalai	24.7	Madhya Pradesh	Shivpuri	19.7
West Bengal	Maldah	29.7	Jharkhand	Kodarma	24.5	Assam	Nagaon	19.7
Bihar	Purba Champaran	29.6	Bihar	Nalanda	24.4	Jharkhand	Chatra	19.6
West Bengal	South Twenty Four Par	29.5	Tripura	South Tripura	24.1	Jharkhand	Sahibganj	19.5
Bihar	Nawada	29.4	Bihar	Saharsa	24.1	Rajasthan	Alwar	19.4
Maharashtra	Solapur	28.9	Maharashtra	Ahmadnagar	24.0	Telangana	Nalgonda	19.3
West Bengal	Dakshin Dinajpur	28.8	Gujarat	Banaskantha	23.8	Maharashtra	Latur	19.3
Jharkhand	Pakur	28.6	Rajasthan	Karauli	23.5	Andhra Pradesh	Vizianagaram	19.3
West Bengal	Purba Medinipur	28.5	Maharashtra	Parbhani	23.3	Madhya Pradesh	Ujjain	19.1
Gujarat	The Dangs	28.3	Uttar Pradesh	Siddharth Nagar	23.1	Madhya Pradesh	Ratlam	19.0
Maharashtra	Aurangabad	27.8	Bihar	Sheohar	22.7	Odisha	Koraput	18.9
Maharashtra	Hingoli	27.7	Assam	Morigaon	22.3	Rajasthan	Jodhpur	18.9
Bihar	Pashchim Champaran	27.3	Bihar	Jehanabad	22.0			
Bihar	Begusarai	27.2	Assam	Barpeta	21.9			

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# CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDIA AT A GLANCE



**There are 13 states in which more than 80% of the child marriages took place in rural areas and 20 states where more than 70% of the child marriages took place in rural areas**



**Completion rate of secondary schooling is considerably higher amongst unmarried girls aged 15-19 years in all states. Making secondary school completion, a fundamental right and ensuring girls from poor households are provided residential secondary schools may be considered as necessary steps to prevent early marriage in Indian states**



**Analysis of top 100 districts based on the high prevalence of child marriage reveals that in India, 14 states have these 100 high prevalence districts. Bihar has the maximum number of districts with high prevalence (20), followed by West Bengal (14), Jharkhand (11), Rajasthan (10), Assam (9), Maharashtra (9), Madhya Pradesh (8), Gujarat (5), Tripura (4), Andhra Pradesh (3), Uttar Pradesh (3), Telangana (2), Karnataka (1) and Odisha (1)**



**27.3 percent of married teenage girls have given birth to one child while 4.2 percent of married girls have 2 or more children**

**The report has been prepared by Young Lives India in collaboration with National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), New Delhi India.**

*This report compliments the earlier publication of Young Lives and NCPCR entitled "A Statistical Analysis of Child Marriage in India - Based on Census 2011"*

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