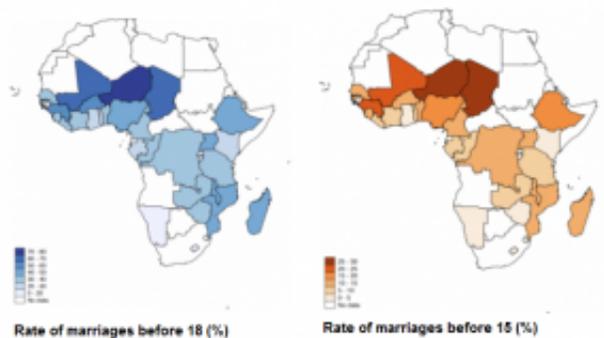


Study finds child marriage remains widespread in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa

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Credit: McGill University

Child marriage harms girls' health and development throughout the world. Although child marriage has become less common in sub-Saharan Africa, more than one third of girls continue to marry before reaching their 18th birthday in over half of the 31 countries examined in a new study from McGill University published in *Population and Development Review*.

"I was shocked to realize the extent of marriage among very [young girls](#) in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa," says Alissa Koski, lead author of the study. "I was not expecting to find that, in some countries, more than one of every five girls are married before the age of 15. Marrying at

such a young age poses many potential health problems. These girls are more likely to experience complications during childbirth and violence from their husbands, become infected with HIV, and in general they have very little control over their lives."

Older girls between the ages of 15 and 17 are delaying marriage until later in their lives. However, [girls](#) below the age of 15 are just as likely to be married now as they were 20 years ago in many countries. In Chad, Mali, Niger and Guinea, more than 20 percent of women were married before the age of 15.

"All of these countries have pledged to eliminate [child marriage](#) by 2030 as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. We have a lot of work to do to meet that target," says Koski.

More information: Alissa Koski et al. Has Child Marriage Declined in sub-Saharan Africa? An Analysis of Trends in 31 Countries, *Population and Development Review* (2017). [DOI: 10.1111/padr.12035](https://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12035)

Provided by McGill University

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