

Methodological note – Global Girlhood Report 2024

Child marriage and fragility

Our analysis shows the overlapping risks of child marriage and fragility for girls on a global scale. To identify countries where both levels of child marriage and fragility is high, we combine data from UNICEF and the OECD.

Child marriage is measured by the proportion of women (age 20-24 years) who were married or in a union before their 18th birthday. UNICEF currently reports data for 140 countries. Data on fragility is taken from [OECD States of Fragility index 2022](#) which categorises countries as “Extremely fragile”, “Other Fragile”, and “Rest of the World” based on a multidimensional measure of fragility. The States of Fragility index includes economic, environmental, human, political, security and societal dimensions of fragility, identifying 15 countries as ‘extremely fragile’.

We identify 12 countries which are categorised as ‘extremely fragile’ and have child marriage rates above the population-weighted global average. Using 2024 [UN population estimates](#), we estimate that 32 million adolescent girls (age 10-17) are living in those hotspot countries. Four of the ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage globally are currently classified as ‘extremely fragile’.

Girls living in extremely fragile settings are twice as likely to marry as girls in countries experiencing periods of greater stability (when comparing population-weighted child marriage rates in extremely fragile countries compared to non-fragile settings). Furthermore, 10% (one in ten) child marriages (using the latest available rates for each country and applying those to the relevant girl population) occurs in extremely fragile states. This means that two girls are getting married as children in extremely fragile settings every minute.

Combining the OECD fragility classification and 2024 UN population estimates, we further find that 170 million adolescent girls are currently growing up in fragile countries, 36 million in countries considered *extremely* fragile.

Refugee girls, education and early childbearing

Using [UNHCR](#) data, we calculate the number of refugee girls in fragile contexts, estimating that 5.9 million girls in these countries are refugees or ‘living in refugee-like circumstances’. We use the latest available data from [UNESCO UIS](#) to estimate the number of girls out-of-upper

secondary school. We find that more than two-thirds of girls in extremely fragile countries are not in school, at an age when they face the greatest risk of child marriage. Finally, using latest available national level estimates for early childbearing from [UNICEF](#), we estimate that almost 558,000 – or one-in-four girls – give birth before her 18th birthday in extremely fragile countries (with data available for 9 out of 15 countries).