

## Beijing Platform for Action + 30 - The Girl Child

### Girls' Mental Health - Background Document

#### Girls' Mental Health – External Stressors.

- **The US Surgeon General's Advisory 2021: Protecting Youth Mental Health.**
  - During the pandemic, young people also experienced other challenges that may have affected their mental and emotional wellbeing: the national reckoning over the deaths of Black Americans at the hands of police officers, including the murder of George Floyd; COVID-related violence against Asian Americans; gun violence; an increasingly polarized political dialogue; growing concerns about climate change; and emotionally-charged misinformation.
  - While some believe that the trends in reporting of mental health challenges are partly due to young people becoming more willing to openly discuss mental health concerns, other researchers point to the growing use of digital media, increasing academic pressure, limited access to mental health care, health risk behaviours such as alcohol and drug use, and broader stressors such as the 2008 financial crisis, rising income inequality, racism, gun violence, and climate change.
- **CDC: Emergency Department Visits for Suspected Suicide Attempts Among Persons Aged 12–25 Years Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic - United States.**
  - In 2020, the proportion of mental health-related emergency department visits among adolescents aged 12-17 years increased 31% compared with that during 2019.
  - During February – March 2021, suspected suicide attempt emergency department visits were 50.6% higher among girls aged 12-17 years than during the same period in 2019. Among boys of the same age, suspected suicide attempt emergency department visits increased 3.7%.
- **The US Surgeon General's Advisory 2021: Protecting Youth Mental Health.**

- “Research covering 80,000 youth globally found that depressive and anxiety symptoms doubled during the pandemic, with 25% of youth experiencing depressive symptoms and 20% experiencing anxiety symptoms.”

*Gender Inequalities in Youth Mental Health Outcomes.*

- [WHO: Mental Health in Europe and Central Asia: Girls Fare Worse than Boys](#)
  - The WHO Regional Office for Europe’s analysis of data from nearly 280,000 boy and girls from 44 countries in Europe and central Asia revealed that girls scored lower of life satisfaction and mental well-being and higher on loneliness than boys.
  - The report highlighted schools as an importance space for intervening early to promote girls' mental wellbeing.
  - Dr Kluge, “Our survey highlights the urgent need for more tailored mental health interventions for girls and women, in our school, in our homes and in our communities.”
  - Participating countries and regions: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Greenland, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, United Kingdom (England, Scotland and Wales)
- [Mental Health Foundation: Men and Women: Statistics](#)
  - Today, women are three times more likely than men to experience common mental health problems. In 1993, they were twice as likely
  - Rates of [self-harm](#) among young women have tripled since 1993
  - Women are more than three times as likely to experience [eating disorders](#) than men

- Young women are three times more likely than young men to experience [post-traumatic stress disorder](#)
- Young women are more likely to experience [anxiety](#)-related conditions than any other group
- [CDC: U.S. Teen Girls Experiencing Increased Sadness and Violence 2023](#)
  - Teen girls are experiencing record high levels of violence and mental health challenges.
  - In 2021, 57% of US teen girls felt persistently sad or hopeless – double that of boys.
  - In 2021, 30% of teen girls seriously considered attempting suicide.
  - Girls fared worse than boys across nearly all measures and LGBTQ+ teens were found to experience ongoing extreme distress.
  - Debra Houry, Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Director for Program and Science: “Proven school prevention programs can offer teens a vital lifeline in these growing waves of trauma.”
- [EU: Preventive approaches to anxiety and depression : European platform for investing in children 2021](#)
  - Some evidence suggests that girls are more likely to suffer from internalising disorders than boys. Girls are twice as likely to suffer from depression than boys, with the first differences in symptoms appearing around the age of 12.
- [SilverCloud Health: Reducing Inequalities in Women’s Mental Health](#)
  - “Women between the ages of 16 and 24 are almost three times more likely to experience a common mental health issue as males of the same age.”
  - “One third of mental health problems in adults are directly connected to an adverse childhood experience.”
  - “90% of teenage girls say they are unhappy with their bodies. Large numbers of girls say they hold themselves back from doing things they’d like to do for fear of their bodies being criticised.”

- “Analysis of 15,000 secondary pupils by Steer Education found that thousands of girls as young as 11 are hiding signs of deep distress from their parents and teachers.”
- “The NHS remains largely an intervention service, not a prevention service, and sometimes opportunities can be missed to empower girls and women as the focus is on intervening when things are more serious.”

### Girls’ Mental Health and Ethnicity

- **The US Surgeon General's Advisory: Protecting Youth Mental Health.**
  - “In recent years, suicide rates among Black children (below age 13) have been increasing rapidly, with Black children nearly twice as likely to die by suicide than White children.”
  - “During the pandemic, young people also experienced other challenges that may have affected their mental and emotional wellbeing: the national reckoning over the deaths of Black Americans at the hands of police officers, including the murder of George Floyd; COVID-related violence against Asian Americans; gun violence; an increasingly polarized political dialogue; growing concerns about climate change; and emotionally-charged misinformation.”
- **JED foundation: To Support Black Youth Mental Health, We Must Look to Community-Based Solutions,**
  - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed that suicide rates for Black youths (ages 10-24) rose significantly from 2018 to 2021.
  - Black Americans face barriers to care that make it harder to seek help, and the stigma of discussing mental health challenges adds an additional hurdle.
  - Black youths are at a higher risk for depression, anxiety, and other mental health struggles than their non-Black peers. The CDC reported that suicide is increasing at a faster rate for Black youths than it is for any other racial or ethnic group (36.6%).

- These issues cannot be traced back to one specific source; racial discrimination, financial and institutional barriers to care, and police killings of Black Americans are just some of the many contributing factors.
- Black youths who are also transgender face a higher risk of suicide than those with only one marginalized identity.
- **[KFF: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Mental Health Care: Findings from the KFF Survey of Racism, Discrimination and Health](#)**
  - People of colour also are more likely to report experiences of racism and discrimination, which are associated with worse mental health and well-being.
  - KFF survey based on adults but are likely to be generalisable to black children too.
- **[Canadian Government: Mental health and Wellness in First Nations and Inuit communities](#)**
  - The Canadian government acknowledges the impact of systemic discrimination on the mental health of Indigenous peoples and provides funded support for young Indigenous individuals such as through the [National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy \(NAYSPS\) Program Framework](#) and the [Indian Residential Schools Mental Health Support Program](#).
  - Historical determinants, such as the legacy of residential schools, are believed to have shaped the mental health of Indigenous peoples. A research project commissioned by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation found that the most common mental health diagnoses were post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse disorder and major depression (Research Series, 2003).
- **[National Black Women's Justice Institute: The Case for Focusing on Black Girls' Mental Health](#)**
  - Black girls are more likely to experience discrimination as well as the criminal justice and foster care systems than their white counterparts. All of the above are shown to have a negative impact on mental health.
  - See also their [Black Girls' Mental Health Factsheet](#)

- [Ontario Native Women's Association.](#)
  - In Canada, indigenous girls are more likely to be subject to human trafficking, often [due to resource extraction activities.](#)
    - Additionally, those girls who are subject to human trafficking are likely to experience substance addiction which further worsen their mental health outcomes.
    - The Canadian justice system's failure to meet the needs of indigenous girls who have been victim to human trafficking often leads to devastating mental health outcomes.
  - Indigenous girls in Canada make up [53.8% of children in the foster care system](#) despite only making up 7.7% of the child population.
  - The ONWA recommends:
    - that Canada provide sustainable funding to indigenous women's organisations to create/maintain culturally safe spaces for indigenous survivors of human trafficking and co-occurring issues such as mental health.
    - that Canada fund research to understanding impact of resource extraction projects on indigenous women's wellbeing.
- [International Journal for Equity in Health: Intersectional discrimination and mental health inequalities: a qualitative study of young women's experiences in Scotland.](#)
  - This study of young women and girls aged between 16 and 25 living in Scotland showed that, "structural disadvantages such as racism intersect with gender and age to compound the experience of discrimination for marginalised young women. To improve mental health and reduce health inequalities for young women, multi-level approaches are needed, with strong consideration of how the structural and cultural landscape as well as assumptions made by healthcare professionals have critical implications for young women's health."

- [Plan International: Girls in the shadow of war: Ukraine’s hidden mental health crisis](#)
  - “Two years on from the escalation of conflict in Ukraine, the war is having a profound impact on young people’s mental health.” Four young women impacted by the war in Ukraine spoke to Plan International about the toll conflict has taken on their mental health.
- [National Library of Medicine: Barriers and facilitators to seeking and accessing mental health support in primary care and the community among female migrants in Europe: a “feminisms” systematic review](#)
  - Refugee women and girls are disproportionately affected by prenatal depression and PTSD. However, they face barriers to care due to lack of information, stigma, religious and cultural practices and beliefs, language barriers, and a lack of consideration of gender-specific needs within the health system.
- [European Parliament: The traumas endured by refugee women and their consequences for integration and participation in the EU host country](#)
  - Sexual violence victims, many of whom are young refugee girls, experience high rates of PTSD and depression. However, mental health care is often inaccessible to refugee girls due to legal and systemic barriers in host countries.

*Girls’ Mental Health and Sexual Orientation.*

- [The US Surgeon General's Advisory: Protecting Youth Mental Health.](#)
  - During the pandemic, LGBTQ+ youth were sometimes confined to homes where they were not supported or accepted.
  - LGBTQ+ youth may be hesitant to engage with mental health services due to experiences with discrimination.
  - LGBTQ+ young people are more vulnerable than other young people to cyberbullying
  - Girls and LGBTQ+ people more likely to report suicidal thoughts.
- [National Library of Medicine: Increased risks for mental disorders among LGB individuals: cross-national evidence from the World Mental Health Surveys](#)

- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) women, are at a higher risk for psychiatric issues, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. This may be attributed to societal marginalization, discrimination and family openness.
- [National Library of Medicine: Mental health challenges of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people: an integrated literature review](#)
  - Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals experience higher levels of emotional distress, which may lead to negative mental health outcomes.
  - LGBT youth still experience a magnitude of mental health problems, and there are few empirically supported approaches for working with LGBT youth in clinical settings.
  - “According to Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., it is not so much sexual orientation, itself, that causes mental health problems, but rather social and structural determinants. The stigmatization, discrimination and violence that LGBT individuals suffer during their lifetime undeniably affect their mental health status.”
- [Mental Health America: LGBTQ+ Communities and Mental Health](#)
  - LGBTQ+ teens are six times more likely to experience symptoms of depression than non-LGBTQIA+ identifying teens.
  - LGBTQIA+ youth are more than twice as likely to feel suicidal and more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youth.

### Girls' Mental Health and Socio-Economic Status

- [The US Surgeon General's Advisory: Protecting Youth Mental Health.](#)
  - Socioeconomically disadvantaged children and adolescents— for instance, those growing up in poverty—are two to three times more likely to develop mental health conditions than peers with higher socioeconomic status.
  - The advisory recommends:
    - That economic and social barriers that contribute to poor mental health for young people, families and caregivers be addressed. For example,



reducing child poverty and ensuring stabled housing and safe neighborhoods.

- That students living in poverty be protected and prioritized in mental health programs, alongside those with higher needs or other risk factors.
  - That programmes address the social determinants of youth health such as poverty.
  - That mental health priorities should include reducing child poverty.
- [National Library of Medicine: Period Poverty and Mental Health in a representative sample of young women in Barcelona, Spain](#)
    - “The relationship between period poverty and respondents’ mental health is significant when controlling for factors known to confer an increased risk of poor mental health. If confirmed by further research, the public health burden of poor mental health in young women could be reduced by policy-level interventions to improve access to menstrual products.”
  - [Action for Children: How Poverty affects Children’s Mental Health](#)
    - “Poverty can have numerous effects on children’s physical and mental health. From affecting a family’s ability to access essentials like food and heating, to making it harder to take part in activities like sports clubs or school trips. These factors can all influence a child’s mental wellbeing and self-esteem.”
    - “The Children’s Society states that children living around debt are five times more likely to be unhappy than children who are not living around debt.”
    - “The number of children living in poverty differs across region and ethnic group. Unfortunately, those living in households where the head of the house is either Bangladeshi or Pakistani have a higher rate of poverty than those from white ethnic backgrounds.”

### Girls’ Mental Health and Generational Factors.

- [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\): Mental Health of Children and Parents](#)

- The mental health of parents and children is connected in multiple ways. Parents who have their own mental health challenges, such as coping with symptoms of depression or anxiety (fear or worry), may have more difficulty providing care for their child compared to parents who describe their mental health as good.
- Parents and children may also experience shared risks, such as inherited vulnerabilities, living in unsafe environments, and facing discrimination or deprivation.
- One in 14 children aged 0–17 years had a parent who reported poor mental health, and those children were more likely to have poor general health, to have a mental, emotional, or developmental disability, to have adverse childhood experiences such as exposure to violence or family disruptions including divorce, and to be living in poverty.
- Supporting parents and caregivers who act in the role of parent is a critical public health priority.
- CDC also examines issues related to health equity and social determinants of health, including racism, that affect the emotional health of parents and children.

*Preventative Approaches in Girls' Mental Health: Supporting Evidence*

- **The US Surgeon General's Advisory 2021: Protecting Youth Mental Health.**
  - Educators can: “provide a continuum of support to meet student mental health needs, including evidence-based prevention practices and trauma-informed mental health care.”
  - Health Professionals can: “recognize that the best treatment is prevention of mental health challenges.”
  - Funders can, “Create sustained investments in equitable prevention, promotion, and early intervention.”
  - Governments can, “provide resources and technical assistance to strengthen school-based mental health programs,” and “invest in prevention programs, such as evidence-based social and emotional learning.”

- [JED foundation: To Support Black Youth Mental Health, We Must Look to Community-Based Solutions](#)
  - “Schools, for one, must become safe havens for students, with suicide intervention programs and strong support systems for Black students. Schools are one of the most effective environments for early intervention, because that is where young people spend a majority of their time. Of course, for this to work, the education system must address its history of discrimination.”
- [EU: Preventive approaches to anxiety and depression : European platform for investing in children 2021](#)
  - The World Health Organization estimates that about 25% of the world’s population experiences a mental health problem at some point in their life. In about half of the cases, development of symptoms starts before a child’s 14th birthday. It is therefore important to develop evidence-based interventions that can help address mental health issues in children.
  - The objective of this research note is to summarise the findings presented by existing systematic reviews and meta-analyses of interventions aimed at preventing the development of anxiety and/or depression in children.
  - Because of the prevalence of mental health issues in children, the potential impacts on their well-being and the consequences for other areas of life, the importance of preventive approaches is becoming increasingly apparent.
  - Overall, the evidence suggests that these kinds of interventions can work, although effect sizes have been found to be small. There is some evidence that suggests interventions targeting children who are at risk of anxiety and depression yield greater results than universal interventions aimed at the general population. It is also suggested that interventions that are delivered over a longer period of time are more successful than interventions that might consist of only a few sessions.
- [OECD Library: Understanding effective approaches to promoting mental health and preventing mental illness.](#)

- The paper finds that there is a sound and quite extensive evidence base for effective and cost-effective actions which can promote mental wellbeing and prevent mental ill-health. However, the existence of actions and programmes in mental health promotion and prevention is uneven both between countries, and across different points of the life course. Many countries could stand to scale-up their promotion and prevention efforts in the mental health field,
- **WHO: Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030.**
  - **Objective 2:** To provide comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health and social care services in community-based settings.
    - **Global Target 2.3:** 80% of countries will have integrated mental health into primary health care, by 2030.
    - Integration of mental health into primary health care is essential to ensure universal health coverage. A range of mental health services including promotive, preventive, treatment and care services can be provided when integrated into primary health care.
  - **Objective 3: To implement strategies for promotion and prevention in mental health.**
    - **Global Target 3.1:** 80% of countries will have at least two functioning national, multisectoral mental health promotion and prevention programmes, by 2030.
    - **Actions:** Lead and coordinate a multisectoral strategy that combines universal and targeted interventions for promoting mental health and preventing mental disorders and for reducing stigmatization, discrimination and human rights violations, and which is responsive to specific vulnerable groups across the lifespan and integrated within the national mental health and health promotion strategies.
      - Provide early childhood programmes that address the cognitive, sensory-motor and psychosocial development of children as well as promote healthy child-caregiver relationships.

- Address the needs of children with parents with chronic mental disorders within promotion and prevention programmes.

*Preventative Approaches in Girls' Mental Health: Examples of Best Practice*

- **Mieli's Let's Talk About Children Initiative**
  - The *Let's Talk About Children* (LTAC) initiative is a structured, evidence-based approach designed to support parents' mental health and improve outcomes for children, particularly in families where a parent may have mental health challenges.
  - LTAC encourages open conversations about children's needs, strengthens parenting skills, and fosters a supportive family environment. By helping parents become more aware of their children's emotional and psychological needs, the initiative aims to promote resilience in children and reduce the risks of intergenerational transmission of mental health problems.
- **Glasgow's "Nurturing City" Objective**
  - Glasgow's *Nurturing City* programme is an initiative aimed at creating supportive and caring environments in schools and nurseries to promote the emotional, social, and academic development of children. It includes staff training on how to address emotional needs, build trust, and help students struggling with issues like anxiety or difficulty settling in school.
- **The Brown Girls and Mental Health Foundation**
  - The Brown Girls and Mental Health Foundation focuses on addressing mental health issues specific to women and girls from communities of color. Its mission is to promote mental well-being by dismantling the cultural stigmas, stereotypes, and systemic barriers surrounding mental health within these communities, providing resources that acknowledge the unique cultural contexts of Brown girls.
- **The Black Women's Health Imperative**
  - The Black Women's Health Imperative (BWHI) addresses mental health issues among Black women and girls through a comprehensive approach. BWHI

recognizes that Black women and girls face unique mental health challenges due to systemic racism, stigma, and cultural factors. Their mental health programs emphasize reducing these disparities

- **Jed Foundation**

- The Jed Foundation (JED) is a nonprofit organization focused on protecting emotional health and preventing suicide among teenagers and young adults. JED collaborates with high schools and universities to create supportive environments that foster mental health and well-being.

- **The Ontario Native Women's Association**

- The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)'s mission is to empower Indigenous women, their families, and communities by fostering leadership and well-being.
- Their mental health and wellness program supports Indigenous women and their families on their healing journey through culturally relevant mental health care, including land-based therapy, which reconnects them with traditional practices for emotional wellness.
- ONWA also offers support for Indigenous girls and women who have experienced trauma or violence, promoting a healthy lifestyle and mental well-being
- *See below for expertise from the Ontario Native Women's Association:*



### The Girl Child

**TOPIC:** In Canada, Indigenous girls are disproportionately impacted and targeted for human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

The impacts of colonization and its' lasting intergenerational legacies have created the conditions for Indigenous girls to be targeted by human traffickers, including:

- **Child Welfare System:** The child welfare system, as a colonial institution, continues to perpetuate the conditions whereby Indigenous children are disproportionately placed at risk of being targeted by traffickers as they are often isolated from family, community, and cultural supports. In Canada, 53.8% of children in foster care are Indigenous, but account for only 7.7% of the child population.<sup>1</sup>
- **Mental Health and Addictions:** Human trafficking is strongly linked with other co-occurring complex care needs, including mental health, addictions, and severe trauma. Traffickers often use substances to manipulate, control, and exploit Indigenous girls which often leads to complications related to addictions that are known to impact their healing journeys and ability to rebuild their lives (e.g., returning to their trafficker to gain access to substances). In Canada, mental health and addictions programs often have extraneously long waitlists, and mainstream mental health and addictions programs often do not meet the unique needs of Indigenous girls, especially those who have been trafficked/exploited.
- **Resource Extraction:** Resource extraction activities perpetuate the circumstances through which Indigenous women and girls experience heightened vulnerability to human trafficking and other forms of violence.<sup>2</sup>
- **Justice System:** Indigenous girls who are survivors of human trafficking have unique needs. Survivors flag that mainstream Victim Services supports are not appropriately meeting their needs, which is disruptive of their healing journeys and is often retraumatizing.

**CURRENT STATE:** Canada has a National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024. Though this Strategy expires this year, there has been no public indication of its continuance. To date, funding from Canada's National Strategy to Combat HT has focused on anti-human trafficking education, training, and public awareness campaigns. There have been no commitments of core funding to Indigenous women's organizations that support Indigenous survivors (e.g., crisis, exits, long-term healing).

The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery stated in his 2023 [End of Mission Statement](#) following his visit to Canada that he is "deeply concerned by the fact that Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, are victimised or at a higher risk of being victimised in contemporary forms of slavery in Canada."



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### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Canada must create a National Anti-Human Trafficking Coordination Body to coordinate service providers, police and child welfare agencies in addressing and responding to human trafficking that has imbedded Indigenous women/girls led pillars.
2. Canada must provide core, sustainable funding to Indigenous women's organizations to create and/or maintain culturally grounded safe spaces and services for Indigenous Survivors of Human Trafficking/sexual exploitation and co-occurring issues such as mental health.
3. Canada must follow the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery's recommendation to Canada to ensure full economic/financial, social and cultural and political self-determination of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the fulfilment of the Calls for Justice related to preventing and addressing contemporary forms of slavery.
4. Canada to fund Indigenous women's organizations to undertake research to understand the impact of resource extraction projects on Indigenous women's safety and to develop strategies to ensure Indigenous women's safety and wellbeing.



## Child Brides - Background Document.

### General Overview:

- [UNICEF: Evidence review: Child marriage interventions and research from 2020 to 2022](#)
- [Girls Not Brides: UN General Assembly adopts resolution on child, early and forced marriage](#)
  - 15 November 2022. UN General Assembly's Third Committee adopted resolution to END child, early and forced marriage (CEFM led by Canada and Zambia.)  
Highlights: Need to reach the most marginalized girls. Strengthened language on adolescents as priority group. References intersecting forms of discrimination for the first time.
- [UN Women: CSW 68 session outcomes](#)
  - Girls are more likely to be excluded from education due to child or forced marriage.

### Countries in UNECE and their Allowable Ages for Marriage:

#### Europe

- Countries where the lowest age is not regulated (with exceptions).
  - Albania, Belgium, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Slovenia
- Countries where the minimum allowed age of marriage with consent of public authority and/ or parents is 14 years old:
  - Andorra
- Countries where the minimum allowed age of marriage with consent of public authority and/ or parents is 15 years old:
  - Belarus (exceptional cases), Estonia
- Countries where the minimum allowed age of marriage with consent of public authority and/ or parents is 16 years old:
  - Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Northern Ireland, Portugal, \*Poland, Scotland, Serbia, Spain, Ukraine.

- Countries where the minimum allowed age of marriage with consent of public authority and/ or parents is 16 in exceptional cases (legally 18):
  - Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovakia
- Minimum allowed age of marriage with consent of public authority and or parents is 18.
  - Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Wales.
  - [Confédération suisse: Mariages avec un mineur](#)
    - It is correct that Switzerland and Germany set the age of marriage at 18. However, Switzerland is currently discussing in parliament a better and longer protection for married minors. See the following website of the Swiss Government in French:
      - According to the ruling of the German Federal Constitutional Court in February 2023, the law to combat child marriages is incompatible with the German Basic Law (Constitution) due to the lack of regulations on the consequences and continuation options for foreign child marriages that are invalid under domestic law.
      - See the press release of the Federal Court: [Bundesverfassungsgericht: Act to Prevent Child Marriages is incompatible with the Basic Law due to the failure to address the legal consequences of the invalidation of child marriages concluded abroad and the lack of possibility for a marriage to be recognised as valid after the age of majority is reached.](#)
    - [UK Government: Legal age of marriage in England and Wales rises to 18.](#)
      - In 2023 in England and Wales, the legal minimum age for marriage was raised from 16 to 18. Those found guilty of arranging child marriages face sentences of up to 7 years in prison.
- Albania:

- 'Trafficked by Someone I Know'  
<https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/4906/file/Trafficked%20by%20Someone%20I%20Know.pdf>

### West Asia:

- Armenia: Website Link?
  - In Armenia the legal age is 18. There has been discussion about changing this to 19. However, implementation of the law remains a challenge, and child marriage is especially common among the Yezidi population.
  - According to UNICEF, around 7% of women in Armenia aged 20-24 were married or in a union before the age of 18 as of 2023. Girls Not Brides also reports that child marriages are more prevalent in remote areas and among minority ethnic groups in Armenia.
- Uzbekistan
  - Has committed to eliminate child, early and forced marriage by 2030 in line with target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Kyrgyzstan
  - Under Article 13(1) of the Family Code, there must be mutual consent between a man and a woman who have attained the legal minimum age of marriage to enter into a marriage. The 2013 parliamentary approval of Article 155 of the Criminal Code, criminalises the abduction of a girl or woman for forced marriage.
- Tajikistan, Kazakhstan
  - [SSM - Population Health: Trends in Child Marriage and New Evidence on the Selective Impact of Changes in Age-At-Marriage Laws on Early Marriage](#)
- Azerbaijan:
  - [European Journal of Population: Wedding Amidst War? Armed Conflict and Female Teen Marriage in Azerbaijan](#)

### North America

- [Tahirih Justice Center: Understanding State Statutes on Minimum Marriage Age and Exceptions](#)

- In the U.S. federal system, state legislatures set the minimum age of marriage for each state:
  - 4 states have no official minimum age, but still require either parental consent, court approval or both: California, Mississippi, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.
  - 2 states have a minimum age of 15: Hawaii and Kansas.
  - 22 states have a minimum age of 16.
  - 10 states have a minimum age of 17.
  - 12 states have a minimum age of 18, which is the same as their general age: Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and Washington.
  - [NPR: Virginia lawmakers move to raise age of marriage to 18. Only a few other states have.](#)
    - Virginia became the 12th US state to pass legislation that says an individual must be 18 years old in order to get married, no exceptions. Signed by Governor Glenn Youngkin on April 9, 2024.
- [UnchainedAtLast](#) is an organization that advocates for setting the minimum age of marriage to age 18 in the United States.
  - *See video:* [UnchainedAtLast: "Unseen Housewives" Premiere and Discussion at UN Commission on the Status of Women](#)

#### **Child Widows - Background Document.**

- [Widows for Peace through Democracy](#)
- [Margaret Owen: The Hidden Lives of Child Widows](#)

#### **Recommendations for Child Brides and Widows - Background Document**

- To create legal documentation for all women, including marriage certificates, wills and death certificates.
- Women's land and property inheritance rights for all women including child widows.
- An Independent Expert to catalyse government engagement and policies.

- A mapping exercise to establish the numbers of widows, particularly child widows, and to document their needs in each ECE country to drive policy formulation.
- Develop a UN CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation on widows, a UN Human Rights Council Resolution on Widows and a UN Independent Expert on Widows to include child widows in the remit (based on [Fact Sheet on Widowhood in the UNECE Region](#), in October 2019 for CSW by Widows for Peace Through Democracy).
- Implementation of the [UN General Assembly's 2022 resolution on the Treatment of Widows](#).

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