

**SOMALIA
COUNTRY PROFILE ON CHILD
MARRIAGES**
August 2022

What Is the Prevalence rate of Child Marriages in Somalia?

With an [estimated](#) 45% of girls getting married before the age of 18, Somalia has the tenth highest prevalence of child marriage in the world.

What are the Causes of Child Marriage in Somalia

Harmful Religious, Traditional norms and cultural practices:

Parents prefer to marry their daughters off early than face the [public shame](#) if their daughters are abused on the way to or from school.

Religious leaders in particular refrain from decrying child marriage while others [permit](#) it to happen.

Girls are also pressured into marriage by their [peers](#) as part of a bandwagon effect although most of these marriages end in divorces worsening the family social status.

Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C): Somalia is one of few countries in the world where it is estimated that almost [all](#) of women and girls have experienced Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C). This is strongly linked to attempts to [control](#) female sexuality and prepare girls for marriage.

Gender norms and power dynamics: About [30%](#) of girls aged 15 to 24 marry husbands who are 10 or more years older, and about [one in five women](#) aged between 15 and 49 are in polygynous marriages. This contributes to placing women and girls in a [subservient](#)

Poverty and Humanitarian Crises:

While gender inequality is a root cause of child marriage in both stable and crisis contexts, often in times of crisis, families see child marriage as a way to cope with greater economic hardship and to protect girls from increased violence. For decades, [Somalia](#) has suffered from extreme weather, especially recurrent droughts and floods, and a

prolonged conflict, all of which add on to widespread poverty in the country. [6.3 million people](#) are at risk of food shortages and as of August 2018, there are [2.6 million internally displaced people](#) in Somalia.

Armed conflict and the resulting displacement: A high rate of [defilement](#) of Somali Girls has been reported by armed groups especially the Al-Shabaab, with subsequent forced marriages to the perpetrators as an exemplification of the harsh [Sharia law](#). Families have fled their homes to Internally Displaced Camps where they seek to protect their daughters although these setting equally pose a [risk to sexual violence](#) and forced marriage.

What is the minimum legal requirement around child marriage in Somalia?

- The provisional Somalian Constitution (2012) states that a “marriage shall not be legal without the free consent of both the man and the woman, or if either party has not reached the age of maturity.” However, the Constitution does not define the age of maturity meaning that girls could marry at any age under 18.
- In addition, according to the Family Code (1975), the legal age for marriage in Somalia is 18 for both men and women. But it provides exceptions for girls to be married at age 16 or younger with a guardian’s consent.

What are the Global, Regional and National Commitments made by the Somali Government to End Child Marriage

- The 1991 signature of the [African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child](#), including Article 21 regarding the prohibition of child marriage.
- The 2006 signature of the [African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa](#), including Article 6 which sets the minimum age for marriage as 18.
- Somalia has committed to the 2030 [target 5.3](#) of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Co-sponsorship of the [2014 UN General Assembly resolution](#); the 2013 Human Rights Council [resolution](#) on child, early and forced marriage; the 2014, [joint](#)

- [statement](#) at the Human Rights Council calling for a resolution on child marriage.
- Ratification of 2015 [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) in 2015, which sets a minimum age of marriage of 18. Although the country has not signed or ratified the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (CEDAW), which obligates states to ensure free and full consent to marriage.
- During its 2016 [Universal Periodic Review](#), Somalia agreed to examine recommendations to counteract serious human rights violations of women and girls, including child marriage.
- In 2019, at the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, the Somali Government [committed](#) to zero tolerance for gender-based violence by addressing vulnerability factors, especially among internally-displaced people, and strengthening policy and legal frameworks.
- At the London Girl Summit in July 2014, the government signed a [charter](#) committing to end child marriage by 2020.
- [Somalia](#) is a partner country of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

What is the government doing to End Child Marriage in Somalia?

- The Somali Ministry of Women and Family Affairs has drafted legislation to protect children from child marriage and FGM/C. In 2019, Somalia [reported](#) to the UN Child Rights Committee that the Sexual Offences Bill, which is currently on the floor of parliament, provides sanctions for child marriages.
- The [National Development Plan \(2017–2019\)](#) also stated the government intention of eliminating child marriage.
- The Ministry of Justice has [trained](#) some religious leaders on child marriage awareness and has provided them with templates to ensure proper documentation and action plans on minimising child marriages. It is also working to register *sheikhs* (religious leaders) and provide licenses for the performance of *nikahs* (“marriage” in Islamic law) to keep track of and control child marriage.

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African Union Ending Harmful Practices
Unit

Website: <https://au.int/hhs>

Email: AUHPU@africa-union.org

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