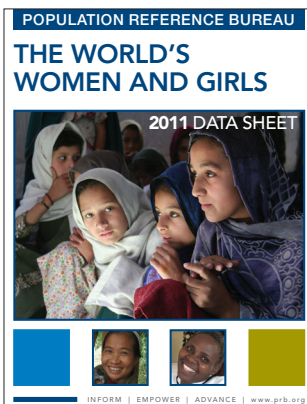


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# THE WORLD'S WOMEN AND GIRLS 2011 DATA SHEET



Improvement in gender equity and women's empowerment has been uneven around the world and slow in many regions, according to the Population Reference Bureau's World's Women and Girls 2011 Data Sheet. Fertility rates remain high in some sub-Saharan African countries where use of family planning is low. In parts of Asia and Africa, girls often marry by age 18, posing serious consequences to their health and development. Literacy among women has improved, as more girls attend school, but globally boys still lead in literacy, primary school completion, and secondary school enrollment. Maternal deaths remain stubbornly high in sub-Saharan Africa as well as Afghanistan, and some societies still consider wife-beating acceptable.

## Fertility Levels Still High in Sub-Saharan Africa

Fertility rates have been falling in most countries of the world. The average lifetime births per woman worldwide is 2.5; in the more developed countries, women have an average of just one or two children (1.7), while in the less developed regions (excluding China), the average is three children per woman (3.1). However, fertility levels in some countries are much higher.

- In sub-Saharan Africa, women have an average of more than five children, but in nine countries the average is six or more.
- Outside of Africa, the highest fertility levels are in Afghanistan (5.7 children per woman) and Yemen (5.5).
- The regions with the lowest fertility rates are East Asia and Europe, where women have an average of one or two children.

Women and men often hold very different views about the ideal number of children a family should have. Couples who live in urban areas, have a secondary school education, and make up the wealthiest 20 percent of the population frequently prefer fewer children and smaller families. In Kenya,

## Countries With the Highest Fertility Levels

COUNTRY	CHILDREN PER WOMAN
Niger	7.4
Mali	6.6
Somalia	6.5
Uganda	6.5
Congo, Dem. Rep.	6.4
Zambia	6.2
Chad	6.2
Burkina Faso	6.0
Malawi	6.0
Liberia	5.9

however, men consistently want more children than women. The diverse range of views about ideal family size suggests that programs need to reach out to men as well as to women, and to focus on improved couple communication regarding desired family size.

## Early Marriage Hinders Development

Girls who marry at a young age face the health risks that accompany adolescent childbearing. They also are more likely to leave school early and have fewer opportunities to earn an income than do their peers who finish school.

- In nine countries, at least half of women ages 20 to 24 had married before age 18. In Mali, Niger, and Chad, more than 70 percent of girls in their early 20s had married before 18, and in any single year, one in seven girls ages 15 to 19 has given birth.
- Teenage girls are twice as likely as women over 20 to die of complications from pregnancy and childbirth.

- In the poorest regions of the world, more than one-third of girls marry before age 18, ranging from 45 percent in South Central Asia, to nearly 40 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, to 25 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean.

## Gender-Based Violence Erodes Women's Authority

Violence against women remains a barrier to women's empowerment in many countries. In some countries both men and women believe that wife-beating is acceptable. Women who are abused face both physical and mental health problems, and they are less able to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

- In some countries, more women than men find wife-beating acceptable. In Uganda, 40 percent of women and 36 percent of men say wife-beating is acceptable if a wife argues with her husband. In India, 30 percent of women and 26 percent of men

say it's acceptable; in Ghana, the comparable numbers are 21 percent of women and 11 percent of men.

- Also in Uganda, India, and Ghana, women are more likely than men to say that wife-beating is acceptable if a wife refuses to have sex with her husband.
- In many countries, men are the household decisionmakers. In Malawi, 80 percent of men make the decisions on large household purchases and 70 percent make decisions regarding the wife's health care.

**The World's Women and Girls 2011 Data Sheet is available at [www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org). To request print copies, contact [idea@prb.org](mailto:idea@prb.org).**

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