

THE PREVALENCE OF EARLY MARRIAGE AND ITS KEY DETERMINANTS AMONG SYRIAN REFUGEE GIRLS/WOMEN THE 2016 BEKAA STUDY, LEBANON

Study background

Early marriage was a common practice in Syria before the conflict. It is believed that the rate of early marriage might be higher among Syrian refugees than it used to be in Syria before the conflict due to increased vulnerability caused by conflict and displacement.

Study design

A cross-sectional survey among refugees from Syria in 3 regions in Bekaa, Lebanon that host a large number of refugees from Syria compared to other neighbouring areas: Bar Elias, Marj and Qab Elias, in August and September 2016.

Objectives

1. To assess the prevalence of early marriage among 9-24 year old girls/women and school enrolment among 9 to 17 year old girls in all study areas
2. To explore social determinants that may contribute to early marriage and school enrollment

Study Sample

A random sample of 1,513 households was selected from inside and outside informal tented settlements yielding 2,400 9-24 year old girls/women.

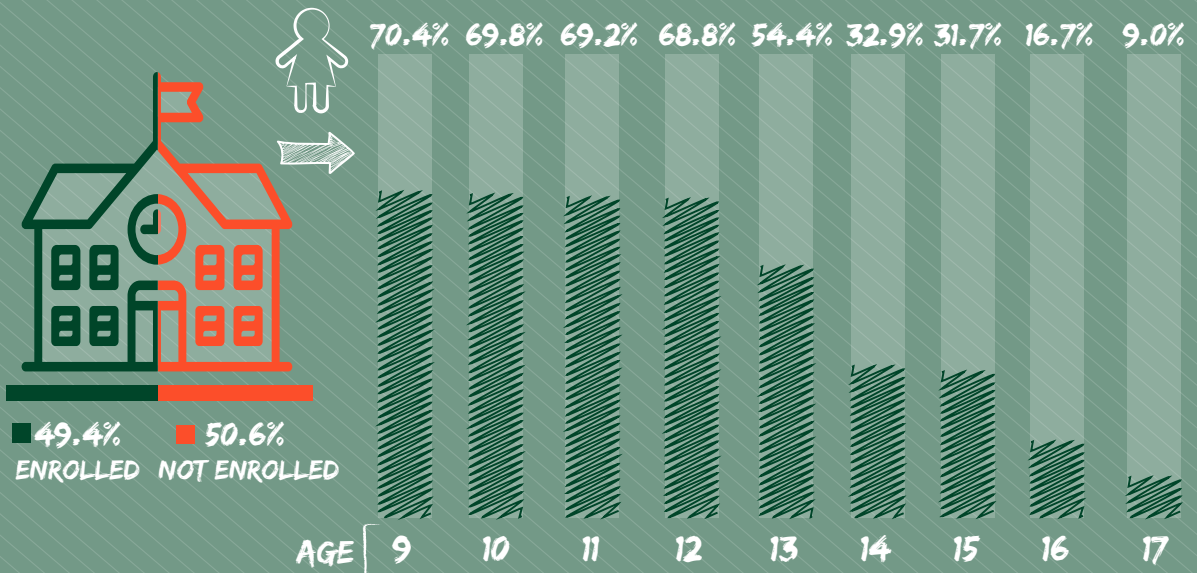
Early Marriage Research Team

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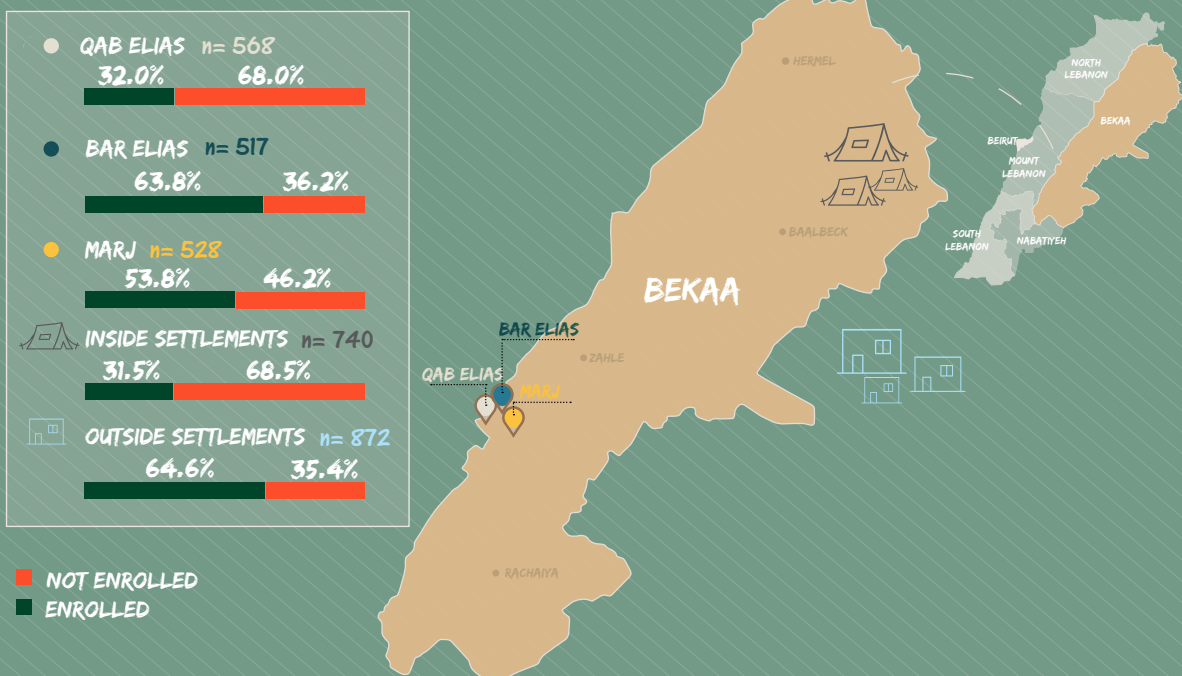
Marwan Khawaja

School Enrollment in 2015-2016 by Age 9-17 year Old Girls (n= 1612)



- For 9-17 year old girls, half were not enrolled in schools during the 2015-2016 school year
- School enrollment is close to 70% for 9-12 year old girls. However, it begins to drop at age 13, falling precipitously at ages 14 and 15 to one third only. At age 16, only 17% of the girls are enrolled and, at age 17, only 9% of the girls are enrolled.

School Enrollment by Place of Residence 9-17 Year Old Girls (n= 1612)

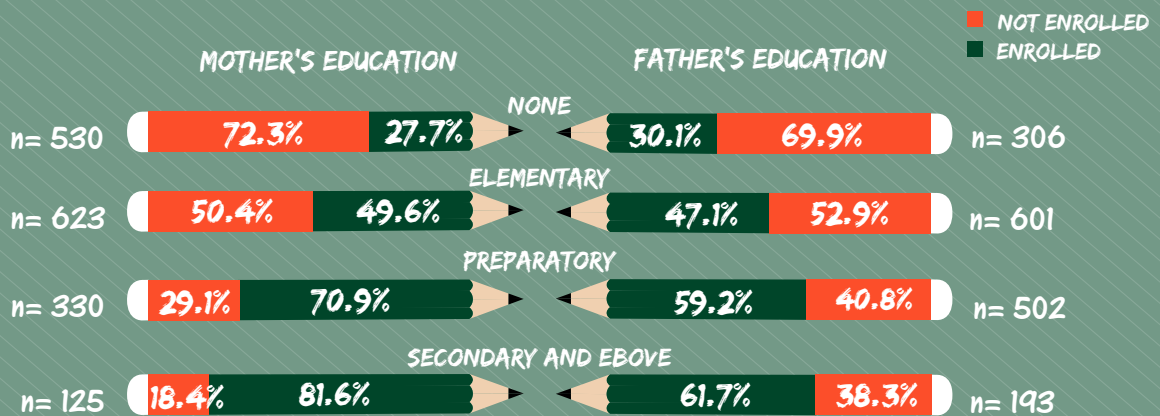


School enrollment is lower for girls living inside settlements (31.5%) as compared to those living outside settlements (64.6%), and is very low (32%) for girls in Qab Elias (agricultural area)

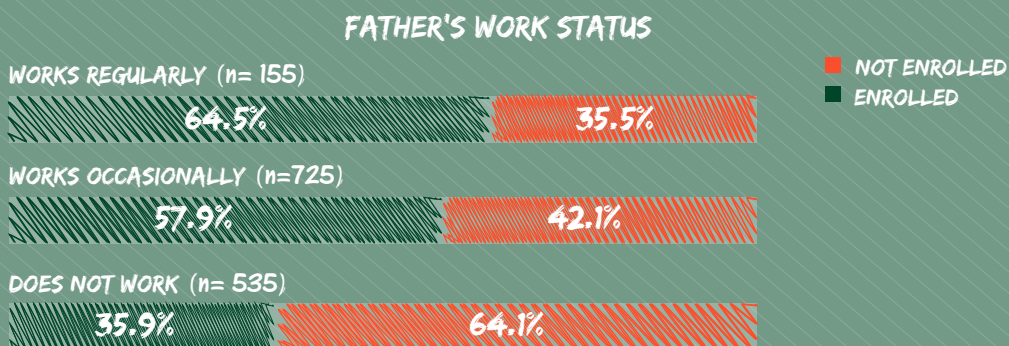
School enrollment is strongly influenced by the education of the girls' mothers and fathers, and the work status of the fathers.

For girls not enrolled in school in 2015-2016, getting engaged or married was reported in 20% of the cases as the reason for non-enrollment, showing engagement or marriage as a key reason for dropping out of school.

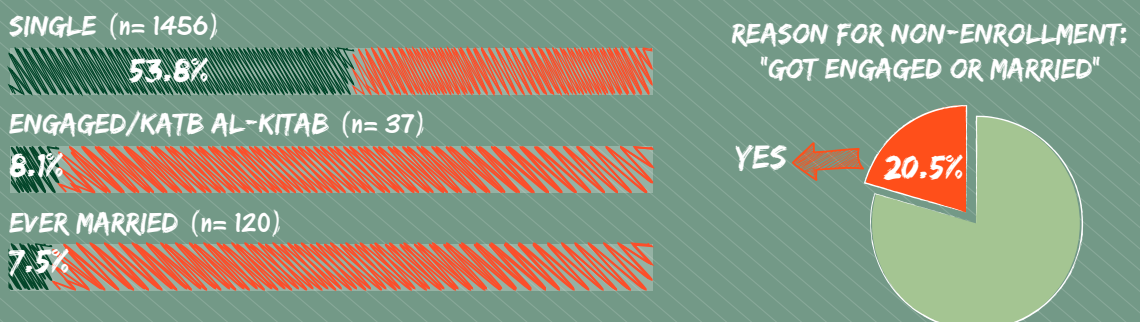
School Enrollment by Parental Education Level 9-17 Year Old Girls (n= 1612)



School Enrollment by Other Family Characteristics 9-17 Year Old Girls (n= 1612)

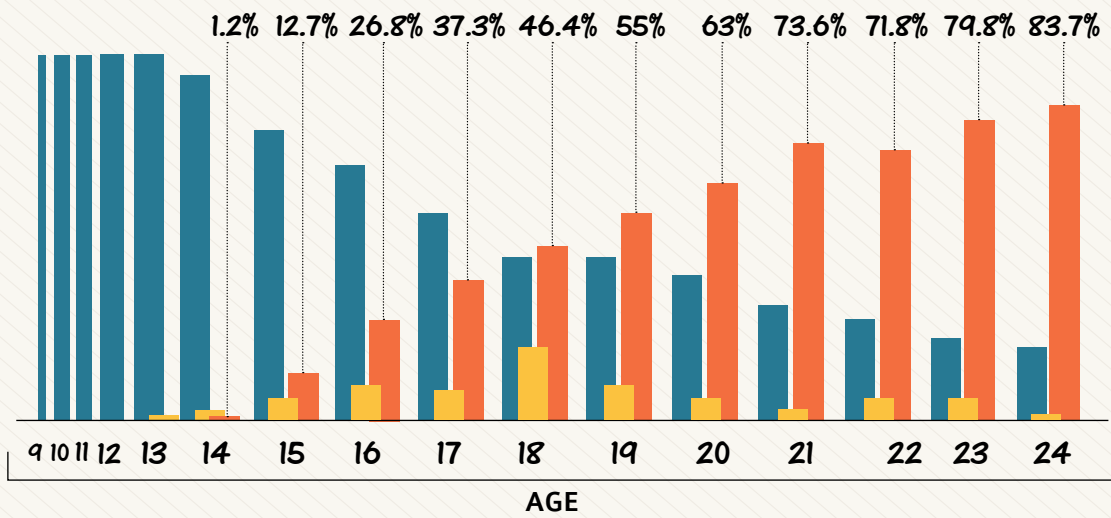


School Enrollment by Girls' Marital Status 9-17 Year Old Girls (n=1612)



Married and engaged girls are very unlikely to be in school.

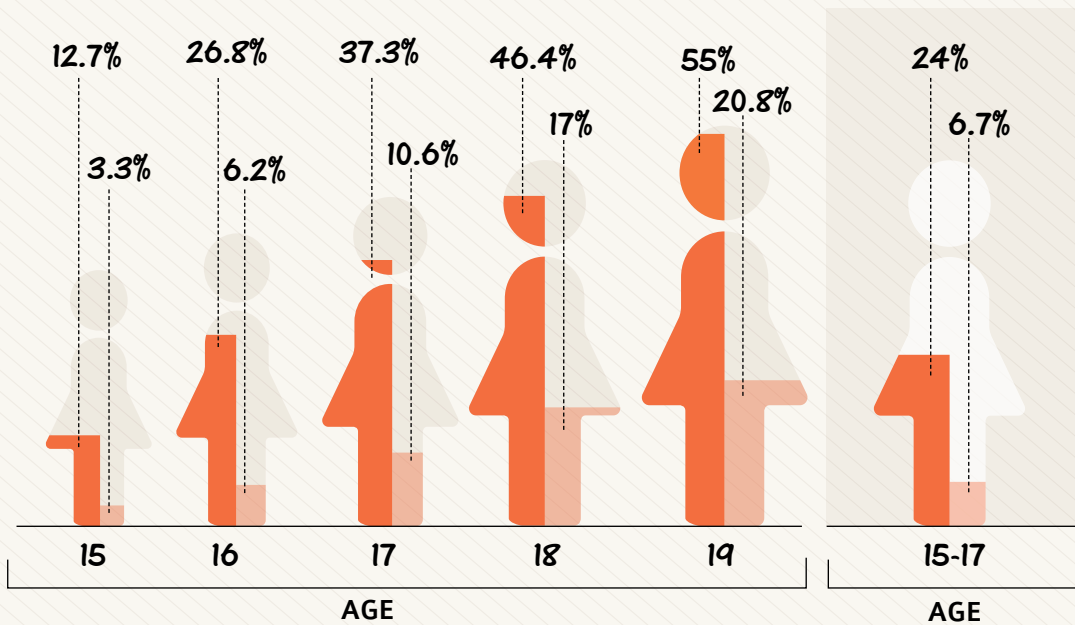
Marital Status by Age (n=2400)



The proportion of married 15 year old girls in the study was 13% and the proportion of married 17 year old girls was 37% (two out of five girls were already married).

- Single
- Engaged / Katb Al-Kitab
- Ever-Married

Percent Ever-Married 15-19 Year Old Women by Age in the 2016 Bekaa Study (n=721) Compared to Syria PAFAM 2009 (n=6598)



In the 2016 early marriage study among Syrian refugees in Bekaa (the 2016 Bekaa study), the proportion of 15-19 year old girls who are currently married is substantially higher at every age than it was in Syria in 2009. When looking at those difference, it should be noted that the PAFAM study in Syria is representative of all people in Syria whereas the Bekaa study focuses on refugees that are only a segment of the Syrian population.

- Syrian Refugees 2016
- Syria PAFAM 2009

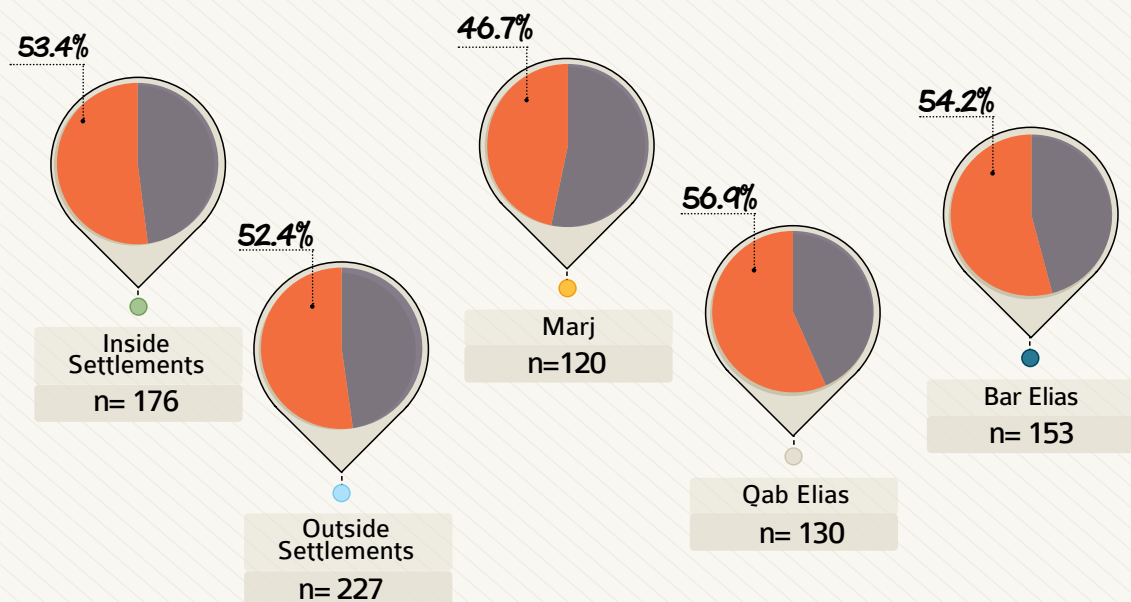
Early Marriage Rate 20-24 Year Old Women (n= 549)

- Early marriage: marriage before reaching age 18
- Early marriage rate (SDG): the number of 20-24 year old women who married below 18 divided by the total number of 20-24 year old women
- Early marriage rate (DHS surveys): the number of 20-24 year old women who married below 18 divided by the total number of ever-married 20-24 year old women

20-24 YEAR OLD WOMEN	A: # 20-24 YEAR OLD WOMEN	B: # 20-24 YEAR OLD EVER-MARRIED WOMEN	C: # who married < 18	D=C/A Early Marriage Rate (SDG)	E=C/B: Early Marriage Rate (DHS Studies)
Syrian Refugees in Bekaa (2016)	549	403	190	34.6%	47.1%
Syria PAFAM (2009)	5,683	2,325	985	17.3%	42.3%

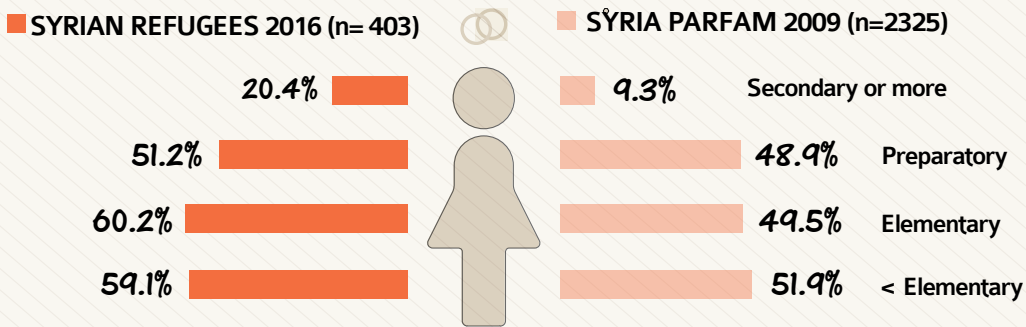
There are two measures of early marriage rate, and both are based on the 20-24 year old women. The first is used in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the second is used in studies in low-income settings based on Demographic and Health Survey data (DHS). In the (EmaSyr 2016) study, the early marriage rate among 20-24 year old Syrian refugee women is higher than it was in Syria in 2009 (PAFAM Study) using both measures of early marriage.

Early Marriage Rate (DHS) by Place of Residence 20-24 Year Old Ever-Married Women (n= 403)



The early marriage rate (DHS) among 20-24 year old ever-married women living outside the settlements is similar to the rate among those living inside the settlements, and is higher among those living in Marj as compared to those living in Bar Elias and Qab Elias.

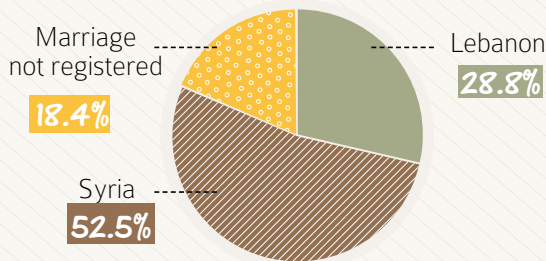
Early Marriage Rate (DHS) by Women's Education Level 20-24 Year Old Ever-Married Women



A much smaller proportion of 20-24 year old women who have secondary education or higher married before age 18 compared to those with lower education levels.

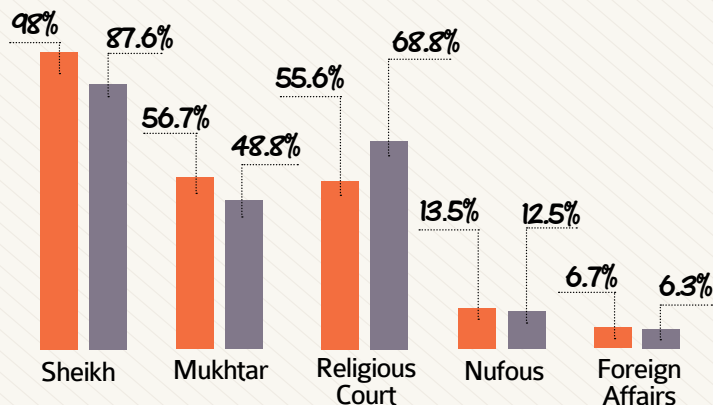
In examining the early marriage rate by women's educational level, it is shown that refugee women with secondary education or higher in the 2016 Bekaa study are more likely to marry before age 18 than women with the same level of education in Syria in 2009 (PAPFAM study).

The Proportion of Marriage Registration by Country 15-24 Year Old Ever-Married (n= 640)



In the 2016 Bekaa study, 1 out of 5 marriages among 15-24 year old ever-married women have not been registered.

Steps Taken towards Legal Registration of Marriages Registered in Lebanon 15-24 Year Old Ever-Married Women Whose Marriages Have Been Registered in Lebanon (n=184)

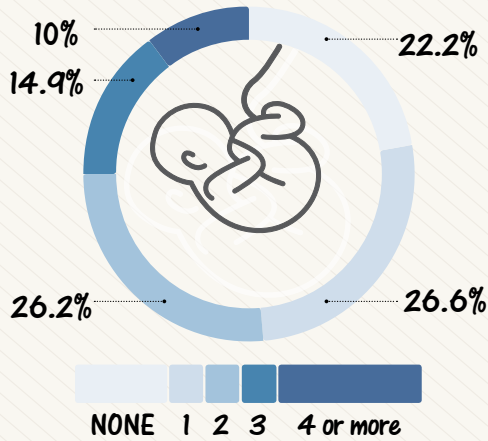


Of the marriages reported by respondents as "registered" in Lebanon, less than 7% have actually gone through all the legal steps needed to complete the registration process.

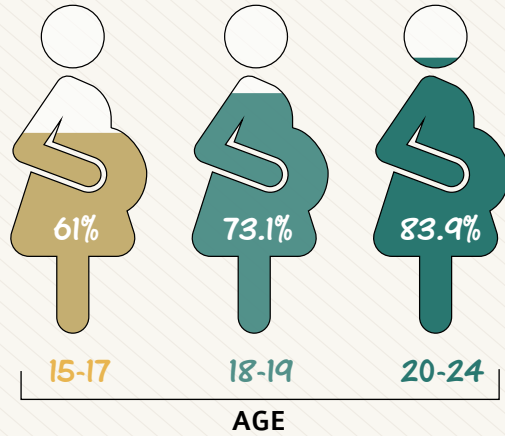
■ Early Marriage
■ Married at 18 And Over

Reproductive Health (Pregnancy) 15-24 Ever-Married Women (n= 640)

NUMBER OF PREVIOUS PREGNANCIES



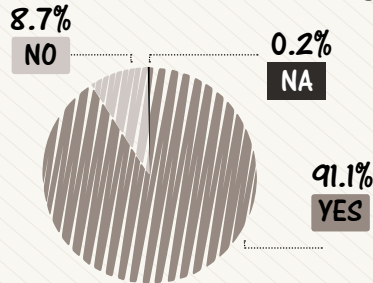
PROPORTION OF WOMEN WHO REPORTED AT LEAST ONE PREGNANCY BY AGE



Early marriage is often followed by early pregnancy, as the majority of 15-17 year old married girls reported at least one pregnancy.

Reproductive Health (Antenatal Care) 18-24 Year Old Ever-Married Women (n= 523)

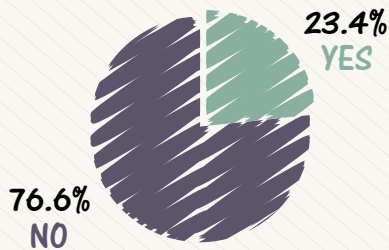
ANTENATAL CARE ATTENDANCE



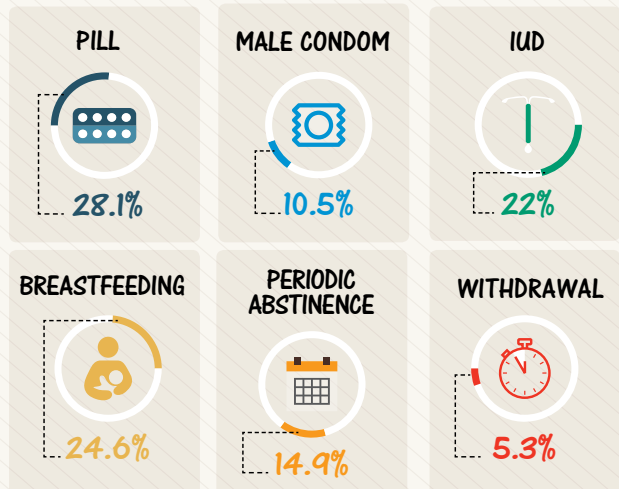
Over 91% of 18-24 ever-married women had access to antenatal care during their last pregnancy.

Reproductive Health (CURRENT Use of Contraception) 18-24 Year Old Ever-Married Women (n= 487)

CURRENT USE OF CONTRACEPTION



CONTRACEPTION METHODS USED (n= 114)



Almost 77% are not using any contraception method. Women who are using contraception mostly use birth control pills, breastfeeding, and the intrauterine device.

Recommendations Related to Education

Future early marriage interventions in displacement should focus on enhancing girls' access to education:

- Focus on 13-15 year old girls, when school enrollment drops dramatically
- Ensure entry into secondary school
- Enroll girls who have become detached from formal education into informal education programs, including within informal tented settlements

Recommendations Related to Early Marriage

- Address the intergenerational risks of early marriage through working with mothers, fathers, and male and female siblings to highlight the negative health effects of early marriage and early pregnancy
- Explore the provision of *tailored interventions* that interrupt pathways in which family, school, and structural determinants of early marriage intersect; engage multiple stakeholders and the community as a whole
- *Mitigate the social determinants* of early marriage through *coordinated interventions* between the education and protection actors, including mutual referrals
- Influence legal policies to enforce legislation on minimum age of marriage
- Adopt a framework that conceptualizes *early marriage as an outcome of coping with difficult social circumstances* (poverty, insecurity) rather than as an unmodifiable cultural practice

Recommendations Related to Reproductive Health

- Offer culturally-appropriate ways to increase the use of family planning methods among young married girls, through enhanced targeted awareness and information sharing and access to youth friendly services
- Explore in future studies the utilization of and access to post-natal care (in addition to antenatal care)

Acknowledgements

- Municipality staff in Marj, Qab Elias, and Bar Elias
- Union of Relief and Development Association
- Girls/women and their families (mothers)
- *Data collectors*

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