BIHAR
CHILD MARRIAGE AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY

(AGE GROUP 15-19 YEARS)

FACTSHEET

Based on NFHS-4 (2015-16)

Introduction

In India, statistically, the incidence of child marriage has been declining slowly over time, but the number of girls and boys getting married before their respective legal age (18 years for girls and 21 years for boys) remains large with 12.1 million child marriages reported by ("**Census 2011**"). The causes of child marriage are complex and varied, based on various customs and traditions across contexts, and remain rooted in existing sociocultural norms. Besides this, economic and

> *" Not being enrolled in secondary school at age of 15 years is the most powerful predictor of child marriage"*
>
> *Young Lives, 2016*

regional factors play a significant role in determining the magnitude of child marriage. While Census 2011 allows us to investigate incidence of child marriage, data from the National Family Health Survey 2015-16 ("**NFHS-4**") highlights the prevalence[1] of child marriage. Though it is acknowledged that child marriage persists amongst both boys and girls, this factsheet analyses prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancy only amongst girls in the age group of 15-19 years in the State of Bihar using NFHS-4 data. This factsheet also examines some factors related to child marriage and teenage pregnancy at the State and district level.

National Statistics

An overall comparison at the national level of the prevalence of child marriage amongst 15-19-year-old girls between National Family Health Survey 2005-06 ("**NFHS-3**") and NFHS-4 shows a considerable decrease. The prevalence of child marriage as per NFHS-3 is 26.5% and as per NFHS-4 it has reduced to 11.9% (14.1% in rural areas and 6.9% in urban areas). It is important to note that the prevalence of child marriage differs substantially across States of India. As per NFHS-4, there are 12 States in India, including Bihar, that show higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average (11.9%). Furthermore, there are 13 States in India including, Bihar, where more than 80% of child marriages took place in rural areas (within their respective State).

It is observed that at the national level, child marriage is more prevalent amongst girls from bottom wealth tercile households (16.6%) and least prevalent amongst girls belonging to the top wealth tercile households (5%). Similarly, educational level is also negatively associated with the prevalence of child marriage amongst girls of this age group, i.e higher the level of education, lower is the chance of child marriage.

Findings show that completion of secondary education is much lower amongst married teenage girls than unmarried girls in the age group of 15-19 years across all States. The analysis related to teenage pregnancy reveals that 39.4% of child brides[2] aged 15-19 years have given birth to at least one child, with the highest prevalence in Goa (69.4%), Mizoram (65.6%) and Nagaland (65.5%).

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[1] Prevalence refers to "*the total number of individuals in a population who have a disease or health condition at a specific period of time, usually expressed as a percentage of the population*". Whereas, incidence refers to "*the number of individuals who develop a specific disease or experience a specific health-related event during a particular time period (such as a month or year)*". (School of Public Health. Prevalence and Incidence Defined. Retrieved from Harvard University)

[2] Girls married before 18 years of age.

Bihar

Bihar is a land-locked State located in the eastern part of India. Primarily a rural State, Bihar shares its border with Nepal in the north, West Bengal in the east, Uttar Pradesh in the west and Jharkhand in the south. It is the 12th largest State in India in terms of area (94,163 km[2]), 3rd largest in terms of population (104.1 million) and has a literacy rate of 61.8% as per Census 2011[3].

Although, Bihar is the fastest growing State in terms of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), it also suffers from widespread poverty and malnutrition. According to NFHS-4, 67% of households in Bihar do not use sanitation facilities and only 4% have piped water in their dwelling/yard/plot(s). Of the total population of Bihar, 9.9% is in the age group of 15-19 years, and the overall infant and under-five mortality rates are 48 and 58 (per 1,000 live births) respectively[4].

Prevalence of Child Marriage Amongst Girls in the Age Group 15-19 Years

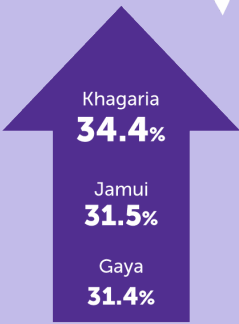**National Average** 11.9% VS **Bihar Average** 19.7%

Bihar is amongst the top five States with high prevalence of child marriage amongst girls aged 15-19 years at 19.8%, which is significantly higher than the national average of 11.9%. Young Lives India also listed the top 100 districts with highest prevalence of child marriage in India, amongst which 21 districts are identified from Bihar. While there are plethora of reasons why large numbers of young adolescents are married before the legal age, this factsheet does not examine causality and only provides descriptive analysis related to child marriage and teenage pregnancy amongst the girls in the age group of 15-19 years in Bihar.
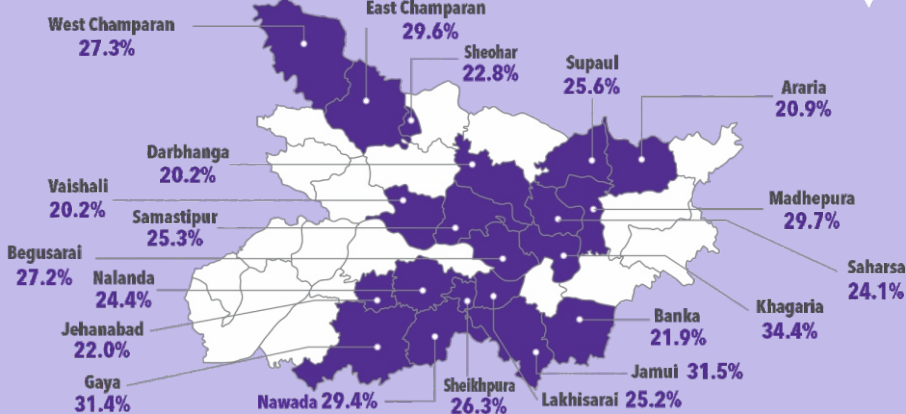
Child Marriage (District Level Findings)

The prevalence of child marriage differs substantially across districts in Bihar as per the data collected from 38 districts. While 20 districts in Bihar show higher prevalence of child marriage than the State average, the remaining 18 districts have a relatively low prevalence. The top three districts with highest prevalence of child marriage amongst girls in the 15-19 years age group are Khagaria (34.4%), Jamui (31.5%) and Gaya (31.4%), whereas lowest prevalence is found in Kishanganj (5.8%).

Top Three Districts with Highest Prevalence of Child Marriage Amongst Girls in the Age Group 15–19 Years
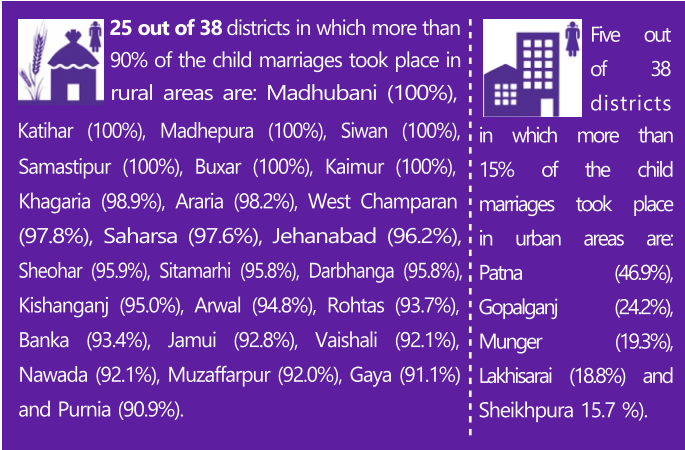
Khagaria **34.4%**
Jamui **31.5%**
Gaya **31.4%**

20 districts in Bihar show higher prevalence of child marriage than the State average **19.8%**

West Champaran 27.3%
East Champaran 29.6%
Sheohar 22.8%
Supaul 25.6%
Araria 20.9%
Darbhanga 20.2%
Vaishali 20.2%
Samastipur 25.3%
Madhepura 29.7%
Begusarai 27.2%
Nalanda 24.4%
Saharsa 24.1%
Jehanabad 22.0%
Banka 21.9%
Khagaria 34.4%
Gaya 31.4%
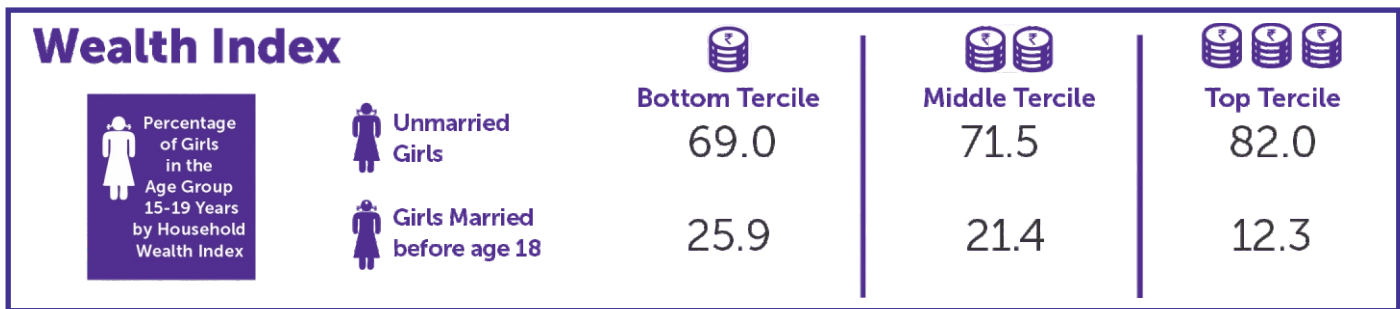Sheikhpura 26.3%
Nawada 29.4%
Lakhisarai 25.2%
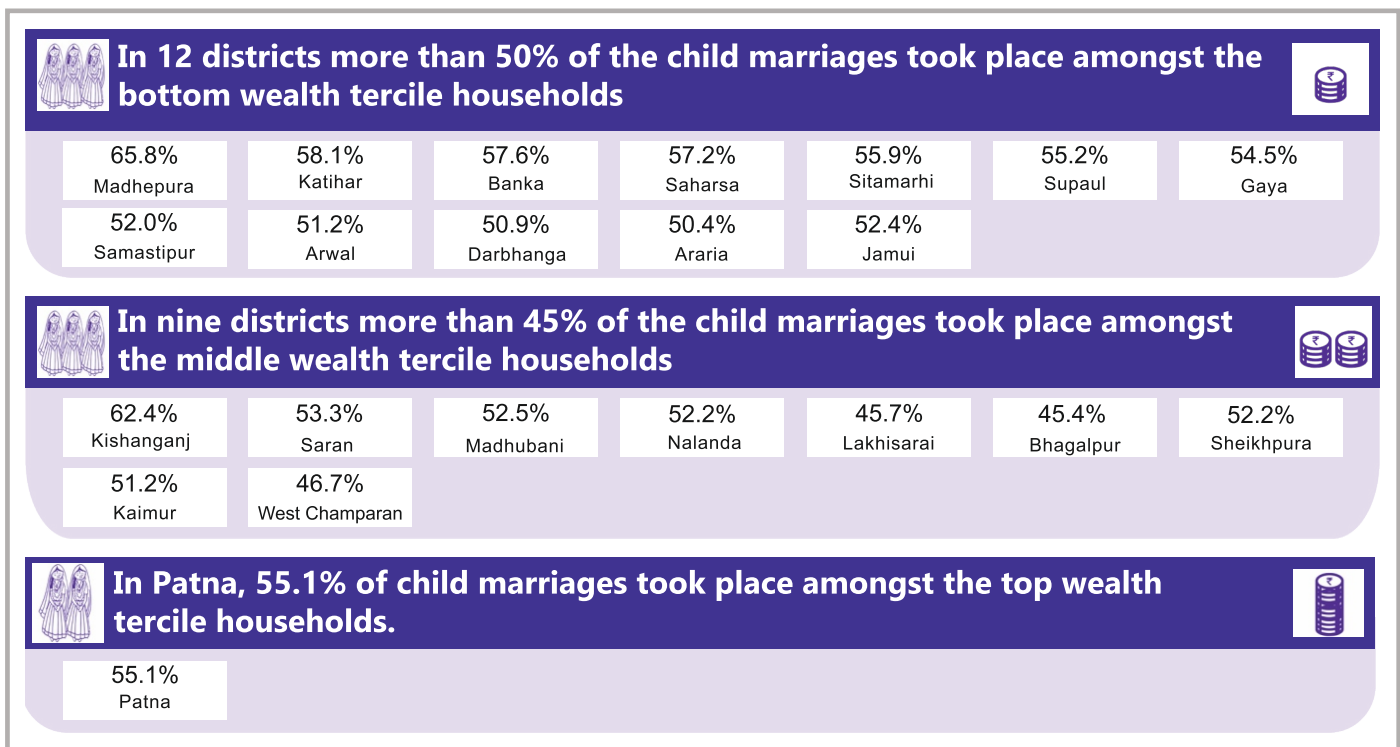Jamui 31.5%

Location

It is relevant to note that there are 13 States in India, where more than 80% of child marriages took place in rural areas. Amongst these States, Bihar features at the fourth position with 91.5% of child marriages in rural areas. Findings reveal that prevalence of child marriage amongst girls in the age group of 15-19 years is significantly higher in rural areas across all districts of Bihar. These findings are particularly important since any intervention or campaign planned to prevent child marriage in Bihar must specifically focus on rural areas.

25 out of 38 districts in which more than 90% of the child marriages took place in rural areas are: Madhubani (100%), Katihar (100%), Madhepura (100%), Siwan (100%), Samastipur (100%), Buxar (100%), Kaimur (100%), Khagaria (98.9%), Araria (98.2%), West Champaran (97.8%), Saharsa (97.6%), Jehanabad (96.2%), Sheohar (95.9%), Sitamarhi (95.8%), Darbhanga (95.8%), Kishanganj (95.0%), Arwal (94.8%), Rohtas (93.7%), Banka (93.4%), Jamui (92.8%), Vaishali (92.1%), Nawada (92.1%), Muzaffarpur (92.0%), Gaya (91.1%) and Purnia (90.9%).

Five out of 38 districts in which more than 15% of the child marriages took place in urban areas are: Patna (46.9%), Gopalganj (24.2%), Munger (19.3%), Lakhisarai (18.8%) and Sheikhpura 15.7 %).

3. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Institute. (2016). *Bihar State Profile 2015-16.* Patna: Government of India.
4 International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. (2017). *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), India, 2015-16: Bihar.* Mumbai: IIPS.

Wealth Index

Percentage of Girls in the Age Group 15-19 Years by Household Wealth Index

	Bottom Tercile	Middle Tercile	Top Tercile
Unmarried Girls	69.0	71.5	82.0
Girls Married before age 18	25.9	21.4	12.3

The relationship between child marriage amongst girls and household wealth index[5] is significantly strong. It is evident from the findings that girls from the poorest households are more likely to get married at a younger age than girls from wealthier households. At State level, more than one-fourth (25.9%) of the girls aged 15-19 years from bottom wealth tercile households are married as child brides, compared to 21.4% of girls from middle wealth tercile and 12.3% from top wealth tercile households.

In 12 districts more than 50% of the child marriages took place amongst the bottom wealth tercile households

65.8% Madhepura	58.1% Katihar	57.6% Banka	57.2% Saharsa	55.9% Sitamarhi	55.2% Supaul	54.5% Gaya
52.0% Samastipur	51.2% Arwal	50.9% Darbhanga	50.4% Araria	52.4% Jamui		

In nine districts more than 45% of the child marriages took place amongst the middle wealth tercile households

62.4% Kishanganj	53.3% Saran	52.5% Madhubani	52.2% Nalanda	45.7% Lakhisarai	45.4% Bhagalpur	52.2% Sheikhpura
51.2% Kaimur	46.7% West Champaran					

In Patna, 55.1% of child marriages took place amongst the top wealth tercile households.

55.1% Patna

These findings have immense policy implications, indicating that households across wealth terciles must be addressed in order to reduce child marriage.

Educational Attainment

Education is essential for developing a sense of agency in young adults, especially in girls. It instils within them a confidence in their abilities and self-efficacy that can push them to achieve their goals. The established correlation between child marriage and educational attainment of girls suggests that higher the level of education, lower is the chance of girls getting married before the legal age. In this context, the completion of secondary education amongst girls is found to be significant in delaying the age at marriage.

Findings show that the completion rate of secondary education is, generally, higher amongst unmarried girls (15-19 years) than married girls. For example, the secondary school completion rate amongst unmarried girls in Nawada district is 50.4% while it is only 24.8% amongst girls married before legal age. Another example can be drawn from Khagaria district which has emerged as a district with highest prevalence of girl child marriage in the State. In Munger, the secondary school completion rate amongst unmarried girls is 38.4% compared to only 18.3% amongst girls married before 18 years.
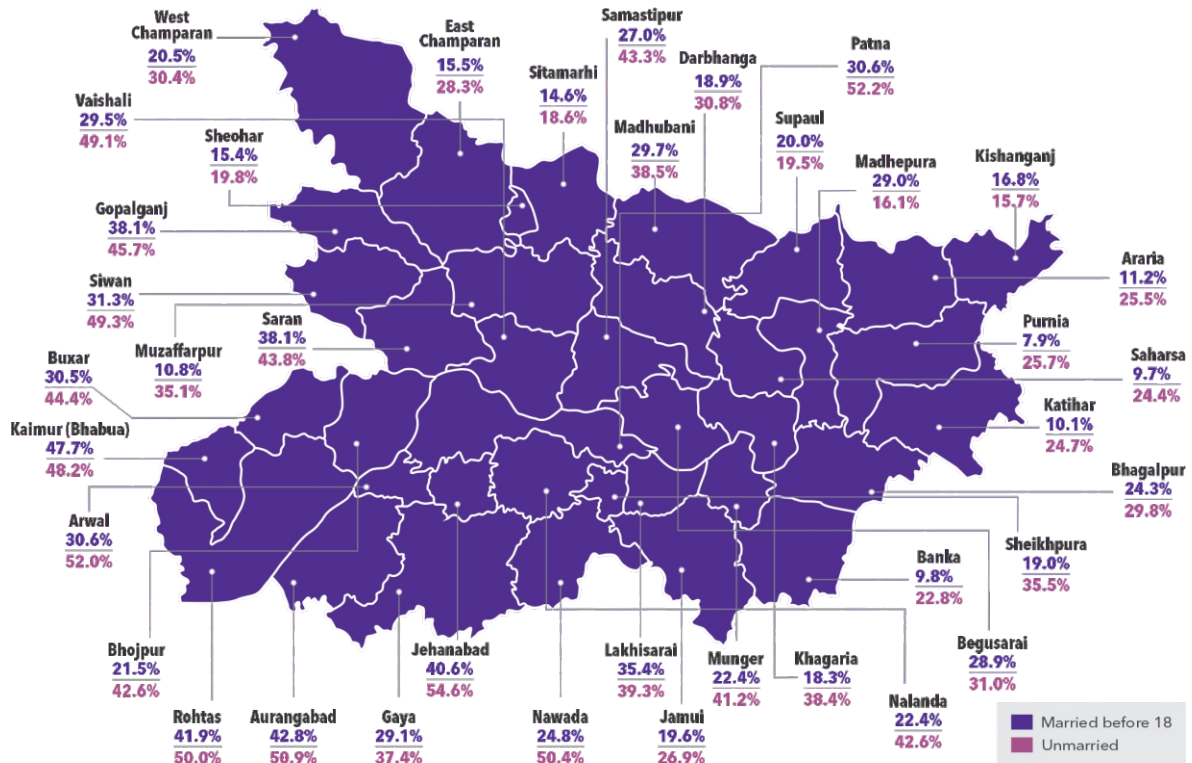
Making secondary school completion a fundamental right, and ensuring that girls from poor households are provided residential secondary schools may be considered as necessary steps to prevent early marriage in Bihar.

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5 The wealth terciles are estimated based on the State level wealth index cut-offs to highlight the disparities within the State.
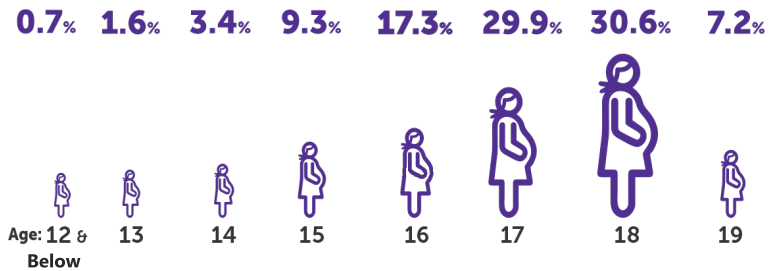
Completion of Secondary Education by Marital Status Among 15-19 Years Old Girls in Different Districts of Bihar

West Champaran 20.5% 30.4%
East Champaran 15.5% 28.3%
Samastipur 27.0% 43.3%
Darbhanga 18.9% 30.8%
Patna 30.6% 52.2%
Vaishali 29.5% 49.1%
Sitamarhi 14.6% 18.6%
Sheohar 15.4% 19.8%
Madhubani 29.7% 38.5%
Supaul 20.0% 19.5%
Madhepura 29.0% 16.1%
Kishanganj 16.8% 15.7%
Gopalganj 38.1% 45.7%
Siwan 31.3% 49.3%
Saran 38.1% 43.8%
Araria 11.2% 25.5%
Buxar 30.5% 44.4%
Muzaffarpur 10.8% 35.1%
Purnia 7.9% 25.7%
Saharsa 9.7% 24.4%
Kaimur (Bhabua) 47.7% 48.2%
Katihar 10.1% 24.7%
Bhagalpur 24.3% 29.8%
Arwal 30.6% 52.0%
Sheikhpura 19.0% 35.5%
Banka 9.8% 22.8%
Bhojpur 21.5% 42.6%
Jehanabad 40.6% 54.6%
Lakhisarai 35.4% 39.3%
Munger 22.4% 41.2%
Khagaria 18.3% 38.4%
Begusarai 28.9% 31.0%
Rohtas 41.9% 50.0%
Aurangabad 42.8% 50.9%
Gaya 29.1% 37.4%
Nawada 24.8% 50.4%
Jamui 19.6% 26.9%
Nalanda 22.4% 42.6%

Legend: Married before 18 / Unmarried

Pregnancy Amongst Child Brides

In the context of child marriage, it is important tobstudy when these child brides gave birth to their first child. Research in this area has revealed that child marriage is also associated with teenage pregnancy. Amongst girls married before the legal age in the age-group of 15-19 years in Bihar, 35.1% of the sample girls are found to have given birth to at least one child by the age of 19 years, according to NFHS-4.
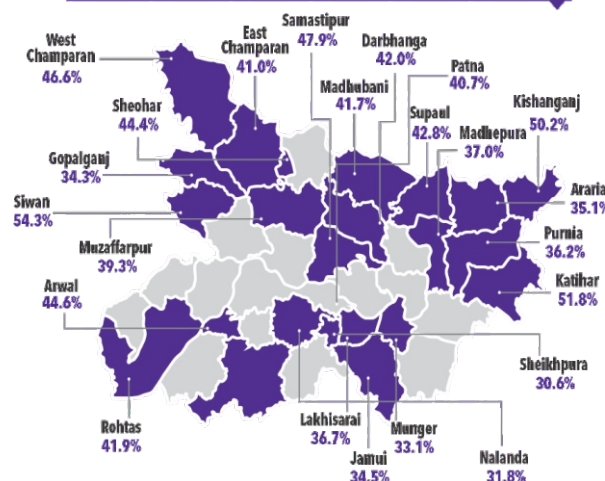
Age Wise Percentage of Child Brides at First Child Birth

0.7%	1.6%	3.4%	9.3%	17.3%	29.9%	30.6%	7.2%
Age: 12 & Below	13	14	15	16	17	18	19

Children Born to Child Brides

Further analysis of number of children born to child brides reveals that 29.5% had given birth to one child, while 4.9% had given birth to two children and less than one percent (0.7%) had given birth to more than two children by the age of 19 years. Findings reveal that in 23 districts, more than 30% of child brides had one child or more, with highest prevalence in Siwan (54.3%), followed by Katihar (51.8%) and Kishanganj (50.2%).

Districts with More Than 30% Child Brides Becoming Teenage Mothers

West Champaran 46.6%
East Champaran 41.0%
Samastipur 47.9%
Darbhanga 42.0%
Patna 40.7%
Sheohar 44.4%
Madhubani 41.7%
Supaul 42.8%
Kishanganj 50.2%
Madhepura 37.0%
Gopalganj 34.3%
Araria 35.1%
Siwan 54.3%
Purnia 36.2%
Muzaffarpur 39.3%
Katihar 51.8%
Arwal 44.6%
Sheikhpura 30.6%
Rohtas 41.9%
Lakhisarai 36.7%
Munger 33.1%
Jamui 34.5%
Nalanda 31.8%

Girls' Body Mass Index

It is also important to examine the health status of the girls who had early marriages. Analysis of Body Mass Index (BMI) shows that in 32 districts of Bihar, more than 30% of child brides in the age group of 15-19 years are underweight (below 18.5 kg/m^2). Some of these districts are Purnia (57.5%), Bhagalpur (51.8%), Darbhanga (51.6%) Sheikhpura (51.3%), Saran (49.3%), and Siwan (48.5%).

Conclusion

- As per NFHS-4 (2015-16), 19.8% of the 15-19 year old girls are married before the age of 18 years in Bihar, with variations across districts.
- There are 20 districts in Bihar that show higher prevalence of child marriage than the State average.
- Prevalence of child marriage amongst girls is found to be more common in rural areas than in urban areas.
- Wealth index of the households is significantly related to child marriage amongst girls in Bihar. Poorer the households, higher the chance of girls getting married early.
- Findings show that the completion rate of secondary schooling is considerably higher amongst unmarried girls aged 15-19 years.
- Child marriage leads to early pregnancy which may cause poor health status of both - the mothers and the children.

CHILD MARRIAGE AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN BIHAR AT A GLANCE

In **25** districts, more than **90%** of the total child marriages amongst girls took place in rural areas of Bihar.

The completion rate of secondary education amongst girls (15-19 years) who got married before the legal age is 23.1% whereas, the completion rate is significantly highter(36.9 %) amongst unmarried girld of the same age group.

In **32** districts, more than **30%** of the girls married before 18 are found to be underweight.

Of the child brides, **35.1%** had already given birth; **29.5%** had one child and **5.6%** has two or more children by the age of 19 years.

This factsheet has been prepared by Young Lives India, New Delhi.

Photo Credit: Young Lives / Sarika