YOUNG LIVES INDIA

TRIPURA
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 (girls below 18 years and boys below 21 years) remains large with 12.1 million child marriages as per ("**Census 2011**"). The causes of child marriage are complex and varied, based on various customs and traditions across contexts, and remain rooted in existing socio-cultural norms.

> " *Gendered social norms regulate women's roles in society, restrict their sexuality and agency,and determine the importance of certain attributes for marriageability"*
> **Young Lives, 2016**

Besides this, the economic and 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 amongst girls in the age group of 15-19 years in the State of Tripura 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 the States of India. As per NFHS-4, there are 12 States in India, including Tripura, that show higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average (11.9%). Furthermore, there are 13 States in India in which 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 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 amongst 15-19 years age group across all States. 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)
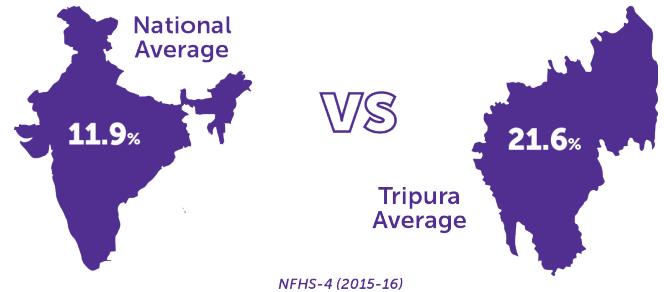
[2] Girls married before 18 years of age.

Tripura

Tripura is a State in North-East India. The third-smallest State in the country in terms of area, it is bordered by Bangladesh to the north, south, and west, and the Indian States of Assam and Mizoram to the east. In 2011, the State had 36,73,917 residents, constituting 0.3% of the country's population. According to Census 2011, Tripura is one of the most literate States in India with a literacy rate of 87.2%. It is an agrarian State with more than half of the population dependent on agriculture and allied activities. However, due to hilly terrain and forest cover, only 27% of the land is available for cultivation[3].

According to NFHS-4, only 9% of households have piped water in their dwelling/yard/plot. Of the total population of Tripura, 8.6% is in the age-group of 15-19 years, and the overall infant and under-five mortality rates are 27 and 33 (per 1,000 live births), respectively[4].

Tripura occupies the second position in the country with respect to the prevalence of child marriage amongst girls aged 15-19 years at 21.6%, which is significantly higher than the national average of 11.9%. Young Lives India also listed the top 100 districts

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

National Average **11.9%**

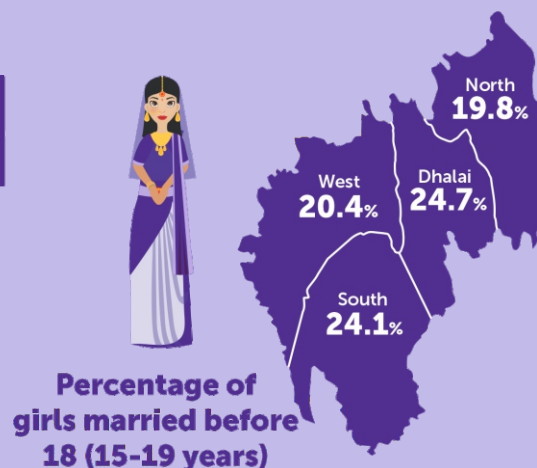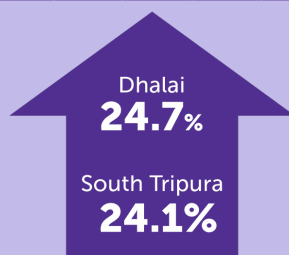VS

Tripura Average **21.6%**

NFHS-4 (2015-16)

with highest prevalence of child marriage in India, which includes all the four districts of Tripura[5]. While there are a 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 Tripura.

Child Marriage (District Level Findings)

Data collected from four districts across Tripura suggests that prevalence of child marriage differs substantially across districts. While two districts have a higher prevalence of child marriage among girls aged 15-19 than the State average (21.6%), the other two districts fall below this average. The districts with highest prevalence of child marriage amongst girls in the 15-19 years of age group are Dhalai (24.7%) and South Tripura (24.1%), whereas lowest prevalence is found in North Tripura (19.8%) and West Tripura (20.4%).

Highest Prevalence of Child Marriage Among Girls aged 15-19 Years

Dhalai **24.7%**
South Tripura **24.1%**

North **19.8%**
West **20.4%**
Dhalai **24.7%**
South **24.1%**

Percentage of girls married before 18 (15-19 years)

3. Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises Development Institute. (2016). *State Industrial Profile 2014-15.* Agartala: Government of India.
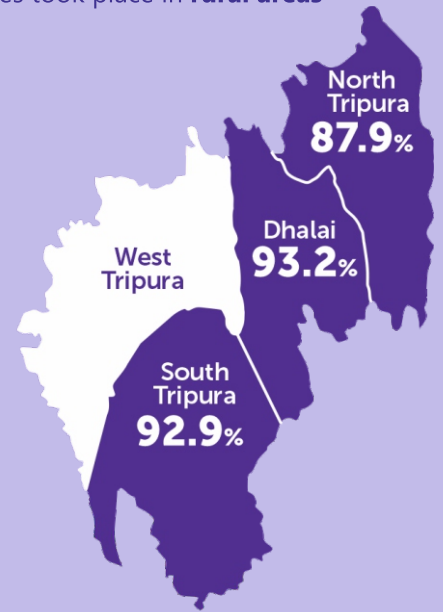4. International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. (2018). *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), India, 2015-16: Tripura.* Mumbai: IIPS.
5. NFHS-4 captures information related to 640 districts as recorded by Census 2011. While NFHS-4 captures data from 4 districts of Tripura, the State has eight districts since 2012.

Location

Findings reveal that prevalence of child marriage in the age group 15-19 years is significantly higher in rural areas across all districts of Tripura. This finding is important, since any intervention or campaign planned to prevent child marriage in Tripura must focus on rural areas.

Three out of **four** districts where more than **80%** of the child marriages took place in **rural areas**

North Tripura **87.9%**

Dhalai **93.2%**

West Tripura

South Tripura **92.9%**

Wealth Index

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

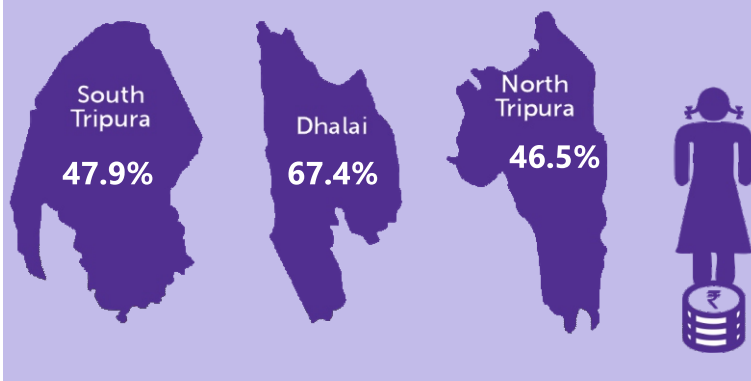|	Bottom Tercile	Middle Tercile	Top Tercile
Unmarried Girls	76.1	67.7	80.8
Girls Married before age 18	21.5	26.2	15.7

The relationship between girl child marriage and household wealth index[6] is significantly strong. It is evident from the findings that girls from poor and middle wealth tercile households are more likely to get married at a younger age than girls from top wealth tercile households. At State level, 21.5% and 26.2% of the girls aged 15-19 years from bottom and middle wealth tercile households, respectively, are married as child brides, compared to 15.7% of girls from top wealth tercile households.

In **three districts** more than **45%** of the child marriages took place amongst the **bottom wealth tercile households**

In **West Tripura**, **53.7%** of the child marriages took place amongst the **middle wealth tercile households**

South Tripura **47.9%**

Dhalai **67.4%**

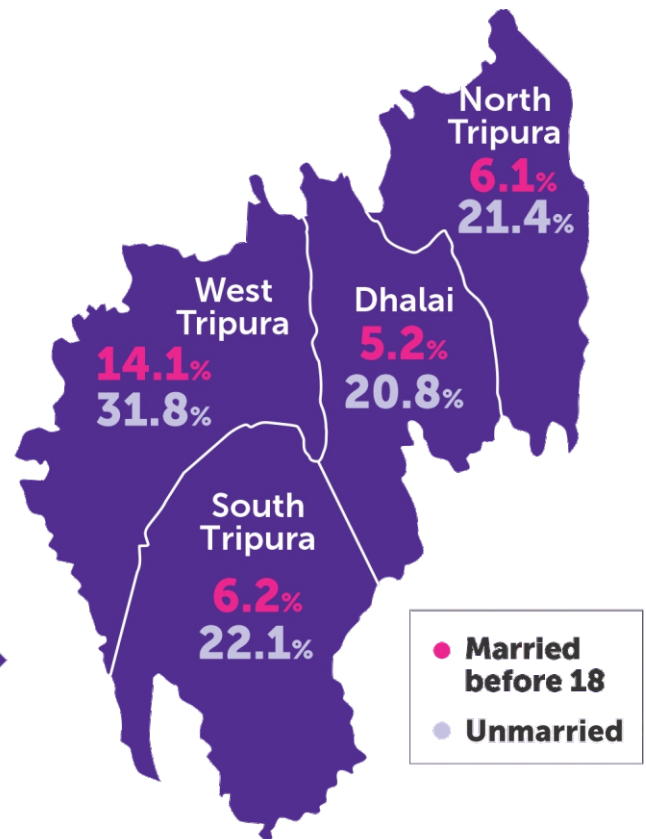North Tripura **46.5%**

West Tripura **53.7%**

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

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6. The wealth terciles are estimated based on the State level wealth index cut-offs to highlight the disparities within the State.

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. Findings show that the completion rate of secondary schooling is higher amongst unmarried girls aged 15-19 years across all districts. For example, in West Tripura, secondary school completion rate among unmarried girls is 31.8% as compared to only 14.1% completion rate amongst girls married before 18 years. The same pattern is seen in districts such as Dhalai, with 20.8% of unmarried girls completing secondary education compared to only 5.2% completion rate amongst girls married before the legal age.
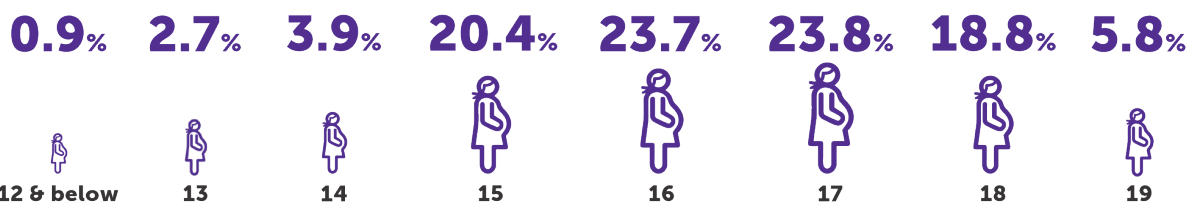
Completion of secondary education by marital status among 15-19 year old girls in different districts of Tripura

North Tripura 6.1% 21.4%
West Tripura 14.1% 31.8%
Dhalai 5.2% 20.8%
South Tripura 6.2% 22.1%

● Married before 18
● Unmarried

Pregnancy Amongst Child Brides

In the context of child marriage, it is always important to study 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 the girls married before the legal age in the age group of 15-19 years in Tripura, 60.5% 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.

Percentage of Child Brides and Age at First Child Birth

0.9% 2.7% 3.9% 20.4% 23.7% 23.8% 18.8% 5.8%

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 60.5% of child brides have given birth to atleast one child, while 52.6% of had given birth to only one child, 6.6% had given birth to two children and 1.3% had given birth to more than two children by the age of 19 years. The pattern of children ever born amongst child brides differs across different districts in Tripura. Findings reveal that there are two districts (South Tripura and North Tripura) where more than 60% of child brides have a child or more by the age of 19 years.

Child Brides Becoming Teenage Mothers

South Tripura 70.6% | North Tripura 61.8% | Dhalai 57.0% | West Tripura 54.2%

Girls' Body Mass Index

It is also important to examine the health status of girls who had early marriages, as early marriage can result in poor nutritional status of teenage pregnant girls, which will in turn result in the birth of undernourished children. Analysis of Body Mass Index (BMI) shows that in two districts in Tripura, one out of three child brides are found to be underweight (below 18.5 kg/m^2). These districts are North Tripura (34.1%) and South Tripura (32.2%).

Conclusion

- As per NFHS-4 (2015-16), 21.6% of the 15-19 years old girls are married before the age of 18 years in Tripura, with variations across districts.
- There are two districts in Tripura 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 urban areas.
- Wealth index of the households is significantly related to child marriage amongst girls in Tripura. Poorer the households, higher the chance of girls getting married early.
- Findings show that the completion rate of secondary schooling is 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 TRIPURA AT A GLANCE

In **three districts**, more than **80%** of child marriages took place in **rural areas.**

The completion rate of secondary education amongst 15-19 years who got married before legal age is **9.3%**. On the other hand, the completion rate is higher at **26.2%** amongst those who remained unmarried in 15-19 age group.

In **two districts**, more than **20**% of the girls married before 18 are found to be underweight.

Of the child brides, **60.5%** had already given birth; **52.6%** had one child and **7.9%** had two or more children by the age of 19 years.

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