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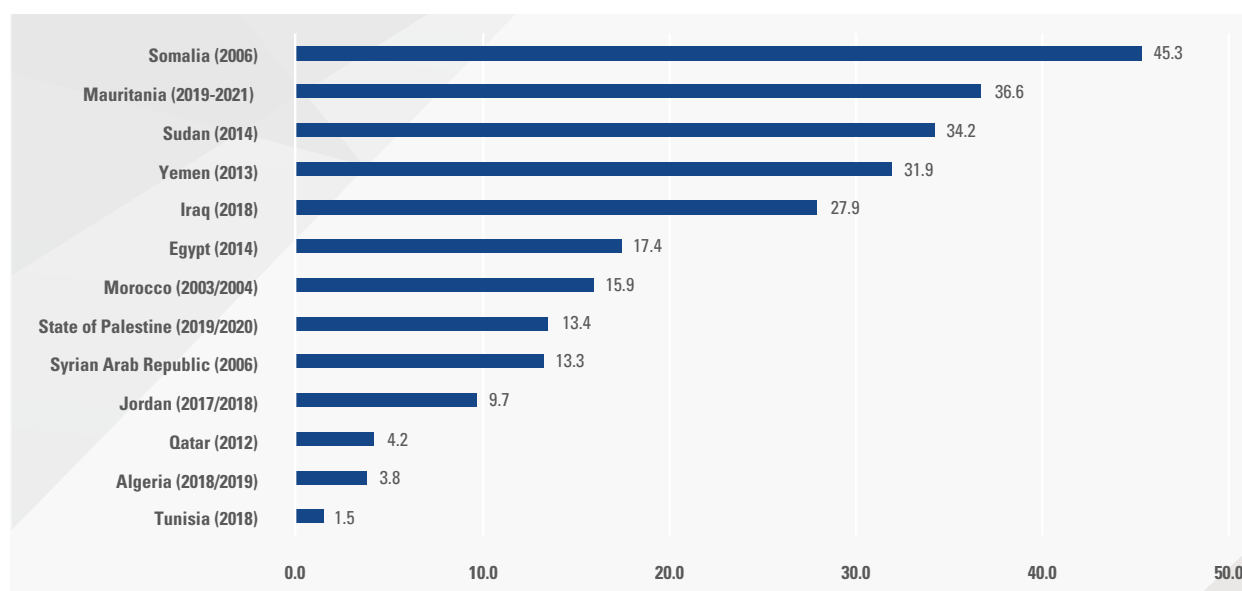
## Prevalence of child marriage: National and sub-national patterns

The study presents the national and sub-national patterns of child marriage prevalence<sup>37</sup> for the 13 Arab countries included in this study (figures 3 and 4).<sup>38</sup> According to the United Nations World Population Prospects (2022), these 13 countries contribute 80 per cent of the population in the Arab region.

There is considerable variation in the prevalence of child marriage across the region and among provinces within each

country. With 3.8 per cent of women married below 18 years of age at the national level in 2018/2019, Algeria is the second lowest in terms of the prevalence of child marriage among the countries investigated in this report. Despite the country's low prevalence of child marriage, there is considerable variation in the sub-national pattern. Across the seven regions in the country, the child marriage rate ranges from as low as 0.6 per cent in Nord Est to 6.2 per cent in Hauts Plateaux.

**Figure 3. Prevalence of child marriage in Arab countries**



Source: Authors' estimation using information from DHS and MICS.

As the most populous country in the Arab region, Egypt contributes around 24 per cent of the population. At the country level, child marriage prevalence stands at 17.4 per cent as at 2014. However, there are considerable variations among the provinces, with Fayoum, Beni Suef and Giza showing as high as 27 per cent, 26 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, and Suez showing just 4.4 per cent of females married before the age of 18.

Iraq constitutes 9 per cent of the total population of the Arab region. In terms of the prevalence of child marriage, with 28 per cent of women married before 18 years of age, Iraq stands among the top five countries regionally. Moreover, the sub-national pattern indicates a significant variation across the 18 provinces. The child marriage rate is lowest in Duhok with 8.14 per cent and highest in Misan with 44 per cent. Najaf (37.2 per cent), Karbala (37 per cent), Thi-Qar (35 per cent), Basrah (33.5 per cent), Diala (32 per cent) and Nineveh (31 per cent) exhibit more than 30 per cent of women marrying before the age of 18, as at 2018.

With 9.7 per cent of females married below 18 years of age at the national level in 2017/2018, Jordan shows a moderate prevalence of child marriage in the region. Jordan also shows a considerable variation in the sub-national pattern of child marriage prevalence. Across the 12 governorates in the country, the child marriage rate ranges from as low as 3.27 per cent in Tafilah to 15.4 per cent in Mafrq.

In terms of the prevalence of child marriage, with 36.6 per cent of females married before the age of 18, Mauritania stands in second place among all the Arab countries considered for the study. Besides, the sub-national pattern also indicates a significant variation across the 14 regions. The child marriage rate is lowest in Nouakchott-Ouest at 16.5 per cent and highest in Guidimaka at 57.3 per cent. Gorgol (50.3 per cent), Hodh

Ech Chargui (49.7 per cent), Assaba (46.2 per cent) and Hodh El Gharbi (43.7 per cent) depict more than 40 per cent of females marrying before age 18 as of 2019–2021.

The average child marriage rate in Morocco is 16 per cent as at 2003/2004. Within the country, the percentage of females married before the age of 18 varies from 7.7 per cent in Grand-Casablanca to 29.4 per cent in Laâyoune-Boujdou-Sakia Al Hamra.

With 13.4 per cent of females married below 18 years of age at the national level in 2019/2020, the State of Palestine shows a moderate prevalence of child marriage in the region. The State of Palestine also indicates a substantial difference in the sub-national pattern of child marriage prevalence. Across the 16 governorates, the child marriage rate ranges from as low as 5.3 per cent in Tulkarem to 22.8 per cent in North Gaza.

With an average of 4.2 per cent of females marrying before they are 18 years old in 2012, Qatar shows one of the lowest levels of child marriage prevalence in the Arab region. However, within the country, the percentage of females married before age 18 varies from 0 per cent in Al-Shamal and Al-Wakra to 13.36 per cent in Al-Daayen.

The average prevalence of child marriage in Somalia is 45.3 per cent, which is the highest among all the Arab countries included in this study. Across the regions, the prevalence of child marriage varies considerably. It ranges from 12 per cent in Awdal to 90 per cent in Middle Juba. Ten out of 18 regions in the country have more than the national average (i.e. 45 per cent and above).

The Sudan is the second largest country, contributing around 10 per cent of the population of the Arab region. At the country level, the child marriage prevalence rate in

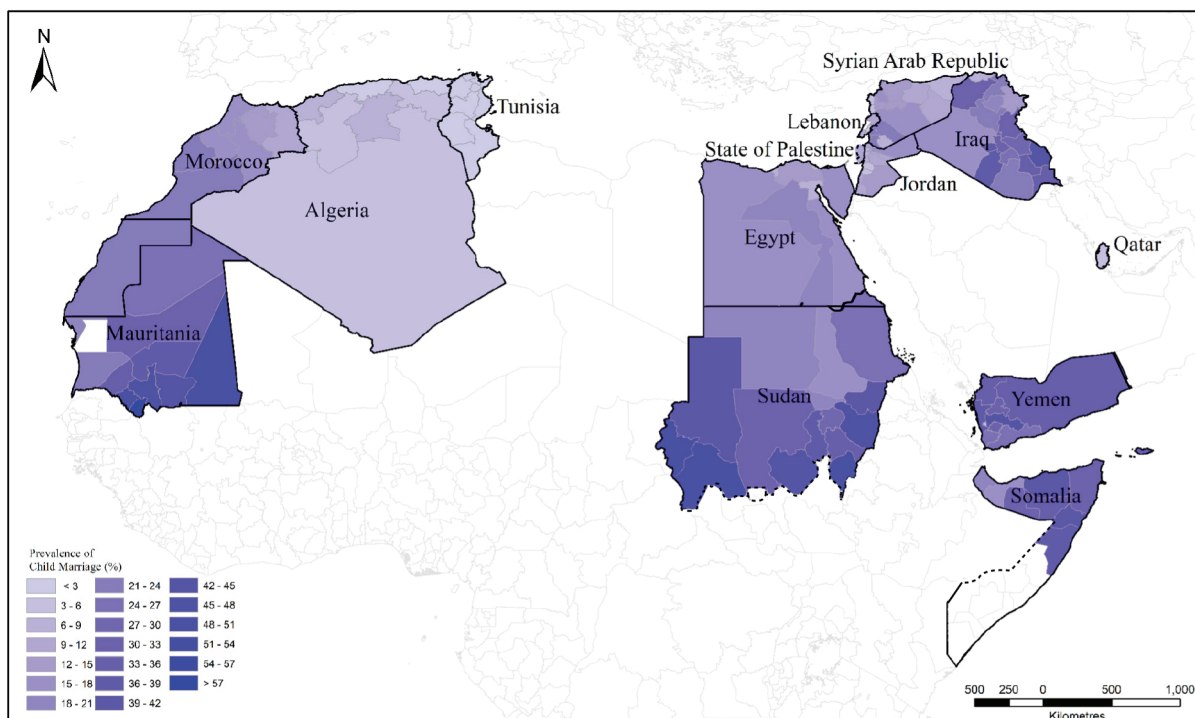
the Sudan stands at 34.2 per cent as at 2010. However, there are considerable variations in child marriage prevalence across 18 states, ranging from 56 per cent in Central Darfur to 17.6 per cent in River Nile. South Darfur (52.3 per cent), Blue Nile (49.6 per cent), El Gadarif (47.5 per cent), East Darfur (46.3 per cent), West Darfur (45 per cent), South Kordofan (43.7 per cent) and Kassala (40.6 per cent) have over 40 per cent of females marrying before they are 18 years old.

With an average of 13.3 per cent of females marrying before 18 years as at 2012, the Syrian Arab Republic shows a moderate child marriage prevalence in the Arab region. However, within the country, the percentage of females married before the age of 18 varies from 4.7 per cent in Tartus to 26 per cent in Quneitra.

At the country level, with an average child marriage rate of 1.5 per cent as at 2018, Tunisia shows the lowest prevalence among the 13 Arab countries included in this study. Even within the country, the percentage of females married before the age of 18 does not vary significantly.

With an average of 32 per cent of females marrying before 18 years as at 2013, Yemen stands in the top five countries in terms of child marriage prevalence in the Arab region. Also, the country shows huge sub-national variation across its 21 governorates. The percentage of females married before age 18 varies from 50.5 per cent in Dhamar to 10 per cent in Aden. Besides Dhamar, three other governorates (Al-Jawf, Al-Mhweit and Raymah) show a child marriage prevalence rate of more than 40 per cent.

**Figure 4. Prevalence of child marriage at the provincial level in selected Arab countries**



**Source:** Authors mapped using macro data from DHS and MICS.