

INDIA PROFILE – ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

Child marriage is closely associated with poverty and is likely to increase girls' vulnerabilities. Child marriage affects both girls and boys, but it affects girls disproportionately. Girls who marry young are often socially isolated and cut-off from family, friends and other support systems. They may face an increased risk of limited opportunities for education and decent work. The practice of child marriage remains pervasive due to factors spread across the socio-ecological spectrum, including structural inequalities and regressive social norms.

TRENDS

Figure 1: Prevalence of child marriage (2005-06 to 2019-21)

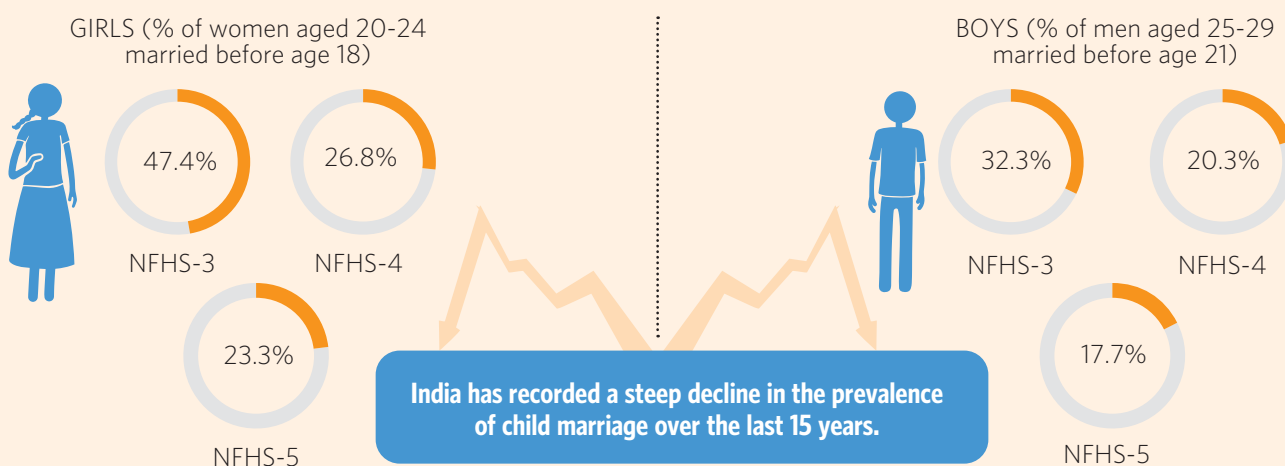
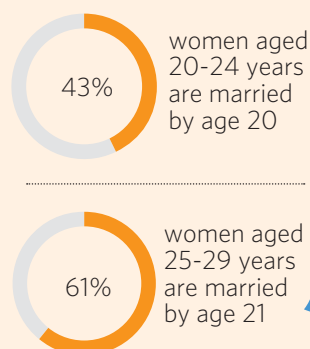
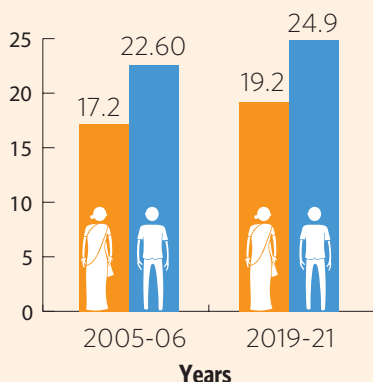


Figure 2: Median age at first marriage (in %)

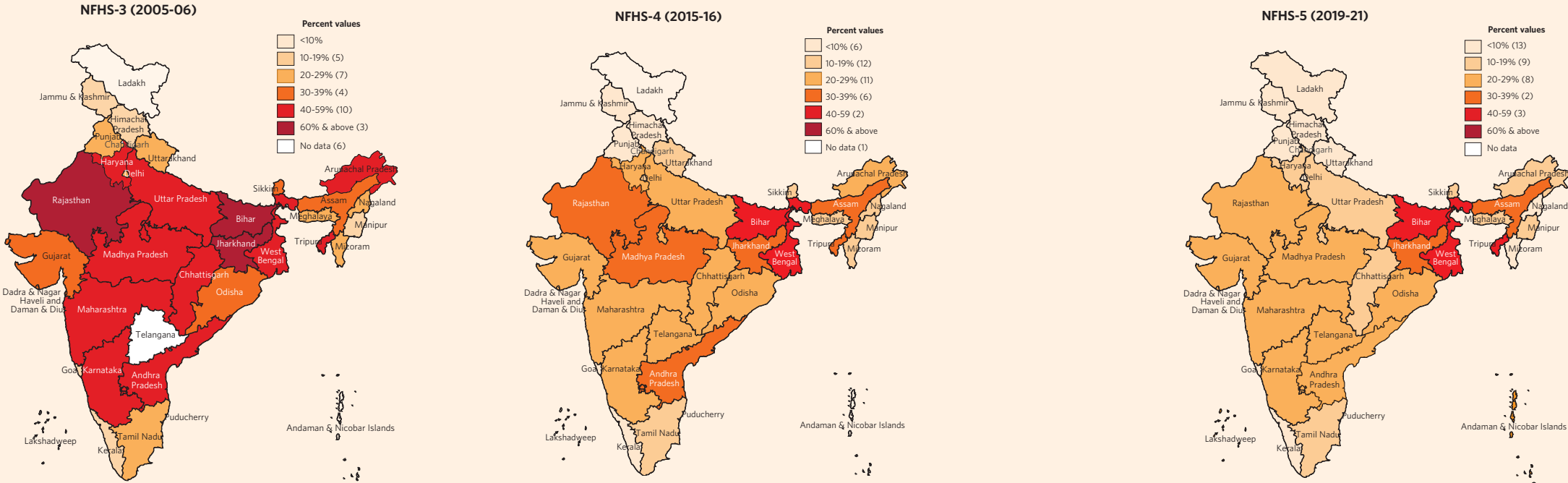
The median age at marriage in India (women aged 20-49 and men aged 25-49) is increasing over time and has now surpassed the minimum legal age at marriage.



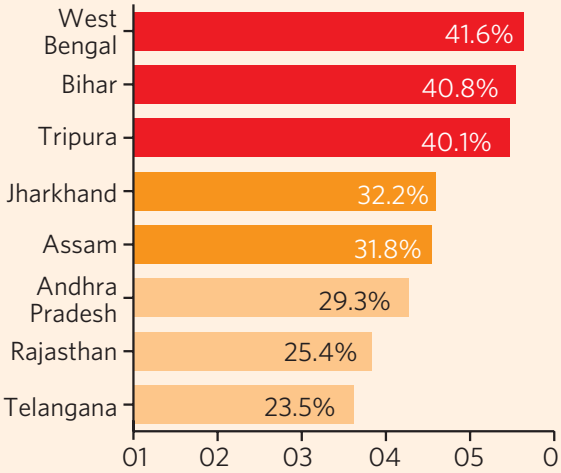
While increasingly lesser proportion of women are now married before age 18, a majority are married by age 21, signaling a transition in the marriage trends from child marriage to early marriage.

STATE TRENDS: CHILD MARRIAGES

Figure 3: State-wise trends in child marriage in India (NFHS-3, 4 & 5)



Eight states with child marriage prevalence rates above the national average (women aged 20-24 married before 18 years)



Source: NFHS-5 (2019-21)

CHILD MARRIAGE AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS

Girls belonging to poorer families, living in rural areas, and with little or no education are more likely to experience child marriage.

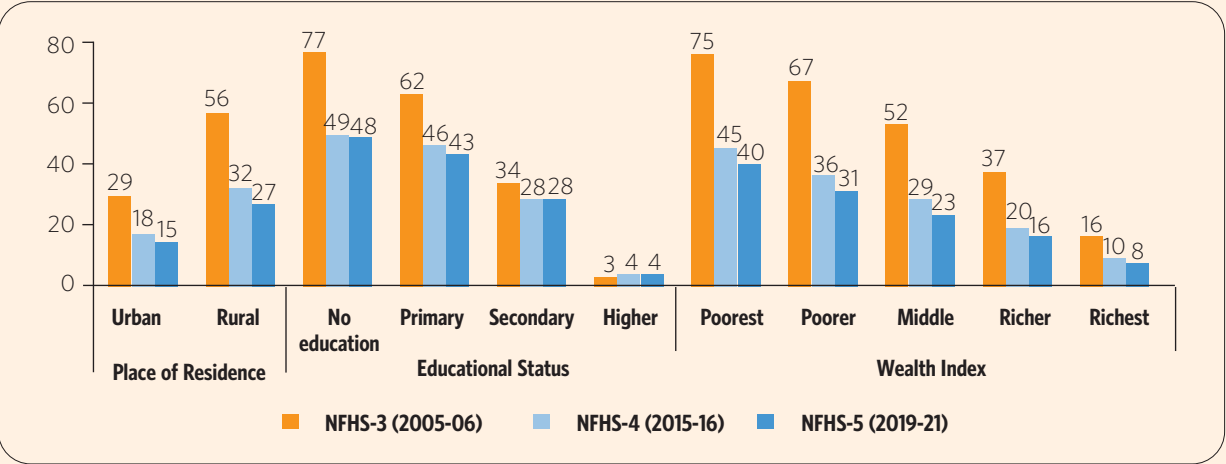
48% of girls with no education were married below 18 years of age as compared to only **4%** among those who attained higher education

40% of girls from the lowest quintile were married before they turned 18 years of age, contrasted against **8%** from the highest wealth quintile

The prevalence of child marriage is almost double in rural areas when compared to urban areas

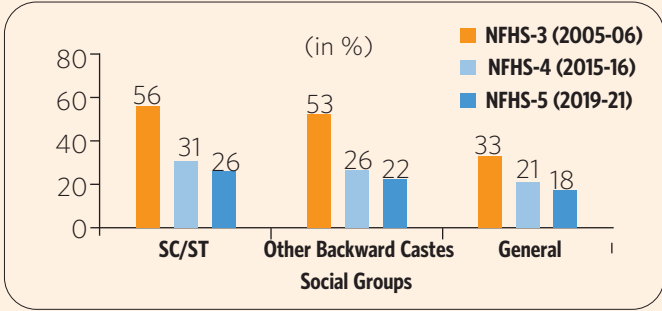
Source: NFHS-5 (2019-21)

Figure 4: Women aged 20-24 married before age 18 by place of residence, education and wealth index in India (NFHS-3, 4 & 5)



Data indicates a higher prevalence among Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SC/STs), with **26%** marrying below the stipulated legal age (**3** percentage points higher than the national average), highlighting a need to undertake more focused programming.

Figure 5: Women aged 20-24 married before age 18 by social group (NFHS-3, 4 & 5)



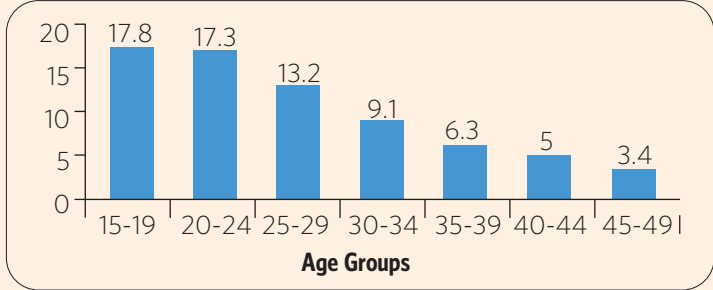
MOTHERHOOD IN CHILDHOOD



53% of currently married women aged 15-19 have already begun childbearing.

Currently married women aged 15-19 have the highest unmet need for contraception, compared to all other age groups.

Figure 6: Percentage of currently married women with unmet need for family planning by age group (in %)



Source: NFHS-5 (2019-21)

EXPERIENCE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

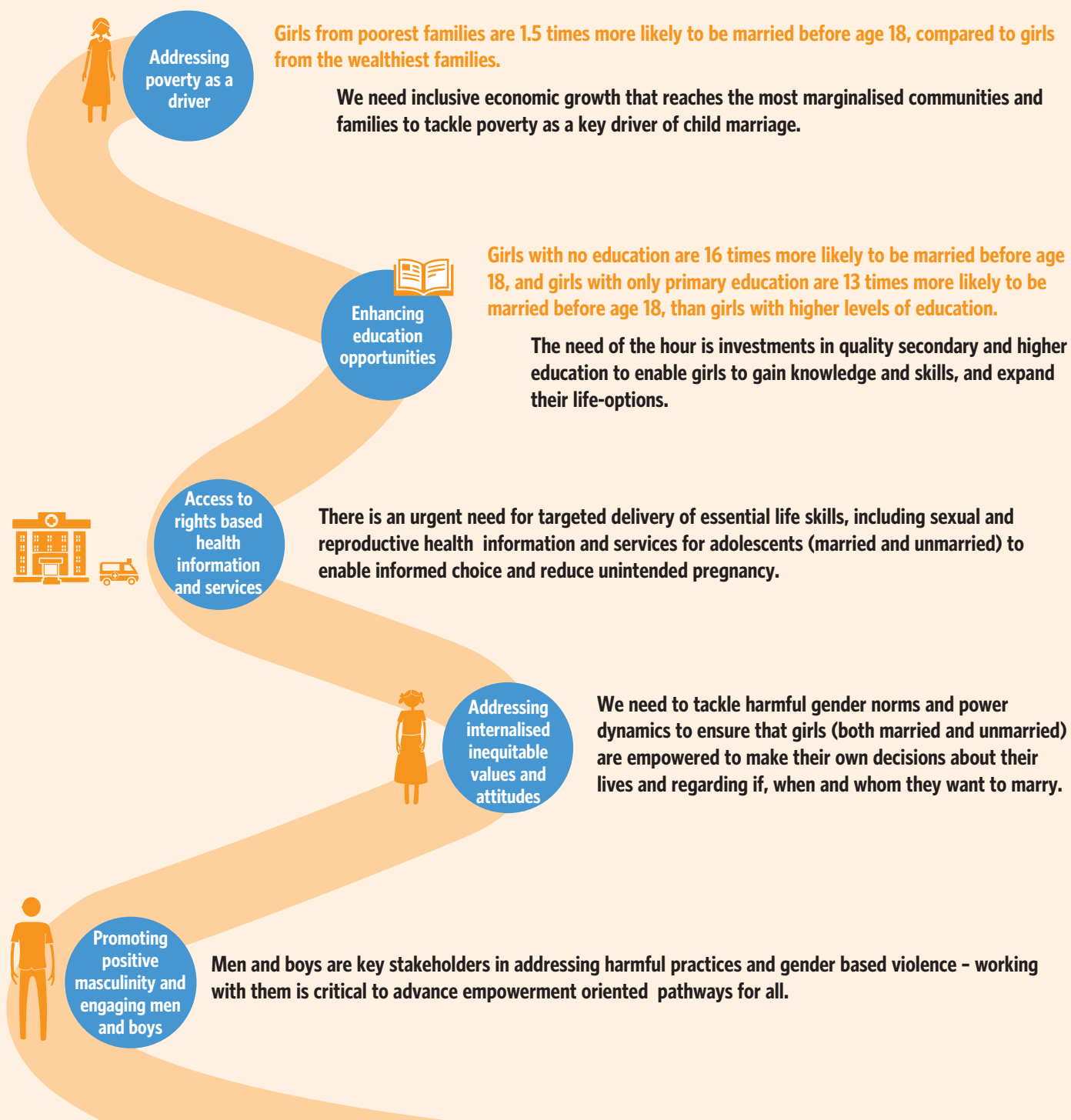


- **29.3%** of married women (aged 18-49 years) have faced spousal violence.
- **42%** girls and **46%** boys aged 15-19 years believe the husband is justified in beating his wife.

Source: NFHS-5 (2019-21)

PATHWAYS FOR CHANGE

Approaches to end child marriage should be ushered in through a human rights based approach that transforms the material realities (education, health, skills, decent work) for girls.



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