

## Impact of COVID-19 on child marriage and teenage pregnancy: Technical note

The mitigation policies for, and economic repercussions of, COVID-19 are likely to have devastating effects for many children's rights. Girls and young women are particularly at risk, as the pandemic is expected to both exacerbate risk factors for child marriage and teenage pregnancy and cause critical interruptions to prevention efforts. Our estimates predict that the economic fallout COVID-19 occasioned in 2020 will result in 1.8-2.5 million more child marriages over the next 5 years and cause between 750,000 and 1 million additional teenage pregnancies in 2020, with some regions being disproportionately affected (Table 1).

Region†	Additional girls at risk of child marriage		Additional girls at risk of adolescent pregnancy
	1 year	5 years	1 year
East Asia and the Pacific	61,000	305,000	118,000
East and Southern Africa	31,600	158,000	282,000
Europe and Central Asia	37,200	186,000	53,000
Latin America and the Caribbean	73,400	367,000	181,000
Middle East and North Africa	14,400	72,000	7,000
South Asia	191,200	956,000	137,000
West and Central Africa	90,000	450,000	260,000
<b>WORLD</b>	<b>498,000</b>	<b>2,490,000</b>	<b>1,040,000</b>

Table 1. The pandemic will likely cause up to 2.5 million more child marriages over the next 5 years and up to 1 million additional teenage pregnancies in 2020. They are, nevertheless, likely to be an underestimate of the true effects, as our methodology only include the income effect of the pandemic, and does not look at other risk factors, such as school closures.

Prevalence of both child marriage and adolescent pregnancy are in most countries strongly correlated with household wealth (Figures 1 and 2). Household survey data from 2012 or later for 94/84 low- and middle-income countries (for child marriage and teenage pregnancy, respectively) illustrate the differences in prevalence rates between various wealth quintiles and are the basis for this analysis. The national average is hereby the prevalence rate of the various wealth quintiles weighted by the population size of those quintiles. We use the latest information on GDP (World Bank) and income distribution (UN WIDER) to estimate the income threshold pre-COVID between the various quintiles.

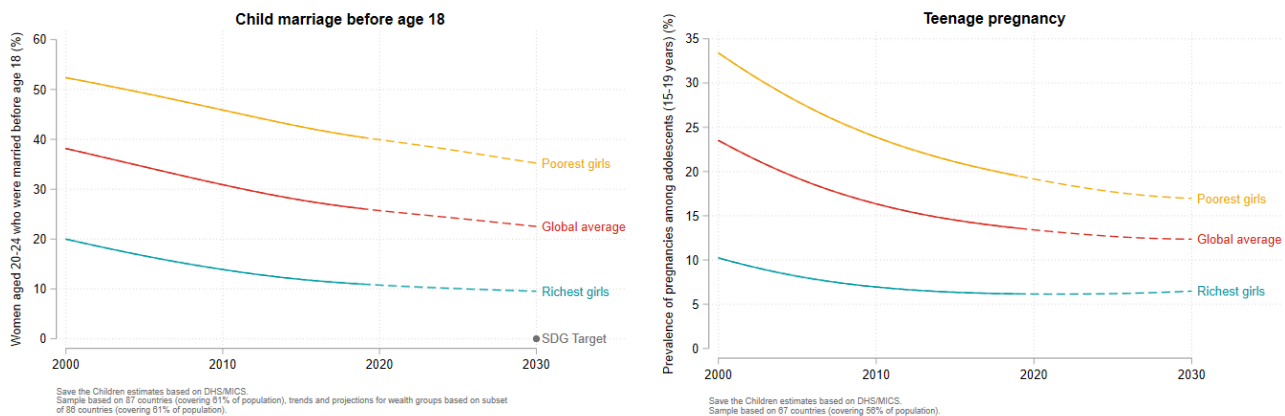


Figure 1 & 2. Poorer girls are disproportionately affected by the risk of child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

To simulate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, we use both projected changes in income (based on World Bank/IMF estimates from June 2020) as well as evidence on the previous impact of economic disruptions on a country's income distribution. For both components, our analysis relies on the joint analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on [children in monetary poor households by Save the Children and UNICEF](#). We then compare the share of the population living in each quintile pre-COVID, with the new share post-COVID when applying the new distribution of income to the pre-COVID thresholds. Finally, we re-estimate the post-COVID prevalence rate, using the previously reported child marriage and teenage pregnancy rates per quintile, but weight those now with the new population shares in each quintile. As income has decreased in most countries, this results in larger shares of the population living in poorer wealth quintiles and therefore a larger weight towards quintiles with higher prevalence rates. The delta between the pre-COVID and post-COVID national rates, multiplied by the population of the relevant age groups, gave us the final number. We repeated the second and third step for every poverty scenario.

The upper and lower range of the estimates are shaped by the more and less optimistic scenarios to account for different assumptions about the income effect and the distribution effects.