

## Incorporation of the Child Marriage Indicator to the Gender Equality Observatory

Physical Autonomy



The child marriage indicator corresponds to the proportion of women between the ages of 20 and 24 who were married or were in a stable union before turning 15 and before turning 18, measured as a percentage.

Child marriage is a violation of the human rights of children and adolescents, as it limits, especially in the case of adolescent girls, their integral development and autonomy to make decisions about their bodies and their lives. Early unions (formal or informal) affect the continuity of education and social inclusion, lead to less participation in the labor market as adults, greater risk of facing gender violence, and early pregnancy, which affects both their physical and mental health.

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Given its relevance, this indicator is part of the indicators included in target 5.3. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation from Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

**INDICATOR 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18 (%)** (percentages) Last year available



Source: CEPAL, ECLAC on the basis of UN Global SDG Database.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the proportion of women between the ages of 20 and 24 who were married or maintained a stable union before turning 18 years old reaches one in four women (25%). The region's prevalence is above the global average, but lower than that of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (UNICEF, 2019)<sup>1</sup>. The Dominican Republic (36%), Nicaragua (35%), Honduras (34%), Belize (33%) and Guyana (30%) lead with over 30%. There are only two countries with percentages below 15%: Trinidad and Tobago (11%) and Jamaica (8%).

Several countries in the region have legislated the prohibition of marriage under the age of 18, without exceptions (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama and Mexico). In South America, on the other hand, only Ecuador prohibits child marriage and although other countries such as Argentina, Bolivia or Brazil have undertaken legal reforms on this issue in recent years, they continue to recognize child marriage if there is a court order or permission from parents or legal guardians (UNICEF, 2019)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (2019), A Profile of Child Marriage and Early Unions in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF, New York. <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/reports/profile-child-marriage-and-early-unions>

<sup>2</sup> Lud, A. (2019), Adecuación normativa a la Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño en América Latina. Avances y deudas con la niñez, UNICEF, Panamá. <https://www.unicef.org/lac/informes/la-adequacion-normativa-la-convencion-sobre-los-derechos-del-nino-en-america-latina>