

# Child early marriages and child mothers in the Islamic Republic of Iran



## Early child Marriage

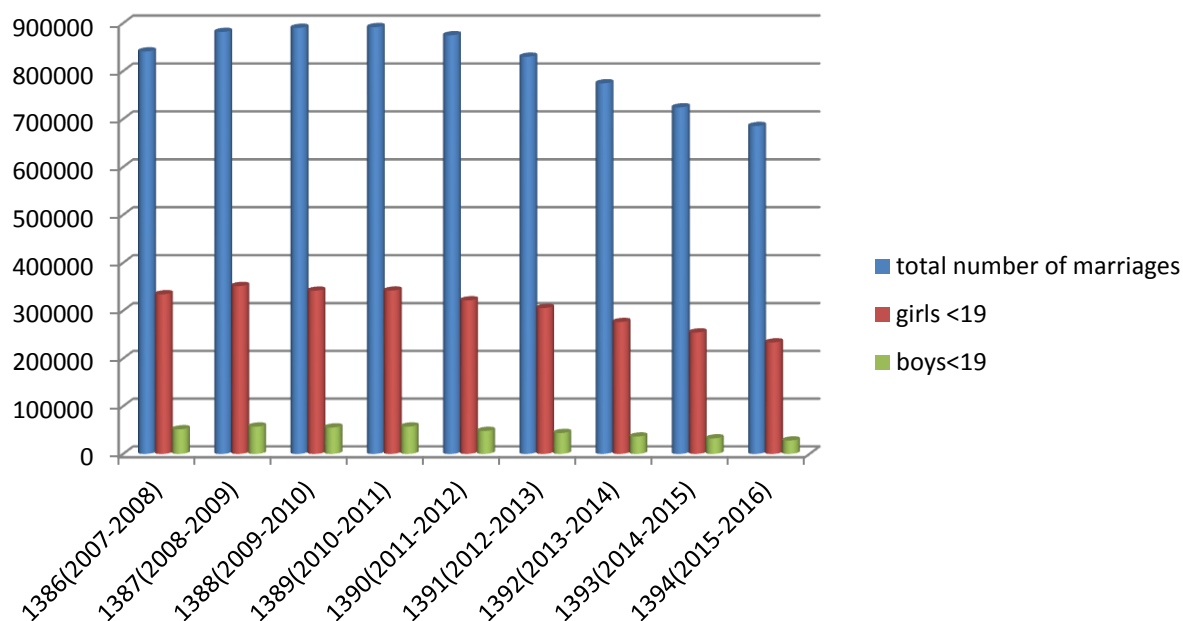
According to the law in Iran there is no minimum age for marriage. The girl child with the consent of the legal guardian and the sanction by court could be married off at any age. There is no limitation on the age difference of the girl child bride and the groom. The same situation exists for boys. The marriage of girls above 13 and boys above 15 don't need the court permission. However, girls and women above 13 need the permission of the legal male guardian to marry for the first time and that applies to any age. As could be seen on the table and the chart below, **over 34%** of all marriages registered officially in 1394 (2015-2016) is related to the underage brides. There is no statistics on unofficial under-age girl marriages but this phenomenon exists. Until 1393 (2014-2015) the statistics for underage girl brides was announce by 3 different age groups i.e. under 10, between 10-14 and 15-19, however since 1394 (2015-2016) these categories are changed to under 15 and 15-19. The same goes for boys as can be seen in the following table until 1393 (2014-2015) the age groups for under age grooms were under 15 and 15-19, however since 1394 (2015-2016) this was changed to under 20. The statistics are published after the Committee on the rights of the Child urged Iran to increase the minimum age for marriage for both girls and boys to 18 years and to take all necessary measures to eliminate child marriages. There are no changes in the law and no traces of any new policy regarding early child marriages. However the way statistics are published shows that there is a great tendency to cover up underage marriages by more generalizing it.

**Table 1: Child Marriages in Iran<sup>1</sup>**

Year	New Marriages of Girls			New Marriages of Boys		Total number of all
	Under 15	15-19		Under 20		New Marriages in Iran
1394(2015-2016)	37117		196592	28125		685352
Year	Under 10	10-14	15-19	Under 15	15-19	New Marriages in Iran
1393(2014-2015)	176	40228	214086	321	32266	724324
1392(2013-2014)	201	41,236	234,974	313	36155	774513
1391(2012-2013)	187	40,464	265,117	359	43549	829968
1390(2011-2012)	220	39,609	281,747	742	47403	874792
1389(2010-2011)	716	42,741	298,625	1452	55914	891627
1388(2009-2010)	449	40,160	301,246	1149	54377	890208
1387(2008-2009)	302	37,820	313,433	858	56391	881592
1386(2007-2008)	317	35,614	298,387	1011	50612	841107

Cover Cartoon: <https://tavaana.org/fa/content/%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AC-%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%87%D9%86%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%85>

<sup>1</sup>National Organization for Civil Registration's homepage, marriage age groups: <https://www.sabteahval.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=4770>



**Table-2: Percentage of number of underage marriages to total new marriages**

**Recommendation:**

- Public discussions on deprivation of childhood regarding early child marriages and changing the law to prohibit marriages under 18.

**Girl mothers**

The statistics of National Organization for Civil Registration of underage mothers is divided to two age ranges, i.e. under 15 and 15-19. As could be seen from the table below around 6.3% of all birth certifications issued in the country belongs to underage mothers. There is no published official statistics on infant mortalities regarding mother’s age.

Table 2: Number of births by mothers’ age<sup>2</sup>

Mothers age	Under 15	15-19	Total number of births
1394(2015-2016)	1511	96351	1529689
1393(2014-2015)	1713	102549	1493317
1392(2013-2014)	1727	107585	1430678
1391(2012-2013)	1646	109179	1375403
1390 (2011-2012)	1666	108900	1332274
1389 (2010-2011)	1731	111387	1299226
1388 (2009-2010)	1628	113233	1280449
1387 (2008-2009)	1683	113533	1223598
1386 (2007-2008)	1581	113234	1192406

The statistics of maternal mortality and morbidity associated with underage pregnancies are not officially published in Iran. However, the statistics of underage pregnancies’ mortality is said to be

<sup>2</sup>Ministry of Interior; National Organization for civil registration <https://www.sabteahval.ir/avej/tab-4763.aspx>

around 1% of all maternal mortalities in Iran according to the chairman of the mother-infant health office of the health ministry<sup>3</sup> last year 1394(2014-2015).

### **Recommendations:**

- Restart of family planning and birth prevention courses for underage girl brides and grooms,
- Public discussion on the risks and injuries of giving birth to a child for underage mothers

### **Education**

*Early child marriage of girls* is said to be the main reason of girls drop out of school<sup>4</sup> in Iran. There is no national official public statistics on out of school children. Every now and then some of the education authorities in a province give away in interviews the number of drop outs. There are some studies on the reasons of dropouts and dropout rates. However, the results are not discussed and announced publicly. The latest statistics published in the interview with the secretary of the secondary educations was related to dropouts of 180,000 students who finished the first cycle of secondary education in 2012 but were absent from school in 2015.

*Enrollment fees* are not officially collected in normal public schools in Iran. However, in practice the children of those families who are not able to provide the fees requested, will not even enrolled. The school system in Iran is a combination of public, private and special schools. However, the public schools are now divided to different categories which are: a) high rank public schools<sup>5</sup>, b) public boarding schools<sup>6</sup>, c) public schools for gifted and talented students<sup>7</sup>, d) normal public schools<sup>8</sup>. At the beginning of system change only students of category “a” schools were asked for fees. This gradually spread to categories “b” and “c” and now even the normal public schools ask for fees which many families cannot afford to pay. Enrollment in private schools and special schools requires payment of fees. Special schools are the schools for special categories of children such as those with disabilities, those whose fathers were martyrs<sup>9</sup>, those whose parents are employees of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran<sup>10</sup>, those whose parents are teachers<sup>11</sup> and so on. Special Schools includes the schools of some universities such as the schools of Sharif University of Technology, Shiraz University, Zahedan University, ...

### **Recommendation:**

- Publishing the statistics of dropouts in all grades with distinguishing the girls and boys both in urban and rural areas
- Publishing and publicising the reasons for dropouts and how this could be prevented.

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/94050502324/>

<sup>4</sup>Interview with the Secretary of secondary education of education ministry,  
<http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/81865295/>

<sup>5</sup>مدارس نمونه مردمی

<sup>6</sup>مدارس هیئت امنایی

<sup>7</sup>مدارس تیزهوشان

<sup>8</sup>مدارس دولتی

<sup>9</sup>مدارس شاهد

<sup>10</sup>دبیرستان انرژی اتمی

<sup>11</sup>مدارس فرهنگیان

## Veil in Pre-primary schools

As clearly visible in the UNESCO report on 2010-2015<sup>12</sup> of the image of Pre-primary education in Iran, girls as young as 5 years old are also forced to wear the Islamic Hijab in many Pre-Primary classes. There are national programs to “promote” the modesty and veil in pre-primary schools as mentioned by the Tehran executive chief<sup>13,14</sup> of state Welfare organization of Iran. Making a little girl wear a headscarf and a mantle deprives her of her childhood. Inevitably, little girls are taught to view themselves as sexual objects that must be covered up from an early age. This is not the only consequence. Men in society and boys of the same age learn at the same time that the body of a girl as young as 5 could potentially be considered as a sexual object.



A poster which won the 2015 prize on promotion “the modesty and veil”

At the bottom of the poster it is written: My daughter in this horrific shower of staring, don't forget the umbrella of Hijab.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

To achieve the Goals of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development regarding the protection of the rights of the child there should be a policy change regarding early child marriage and the role of women in the society. We regret to note that in the family policies ordered by the Supreme leader of Iran on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2016 there is no sign of any change in this direction. As in article 4 launching an all-inclusive national movement for promoting and facilitating successful and easy marriage for all

<sup>12</sup>Page 16, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002297/229715E.pdf>

<sup>13</sup><http://www.behzistitehran.org.ir/index.php/2012-04-06-13-10-28/2977>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.asriran.com/fa/news/425820/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://danesheroz.ir/%DA%86%D8%AA%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%BE%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1/>

girls and boys or in article 12 of this policy it is emphasized in the protection and dignity of women's role as spouses, mothers and housewives and men's role as fathers and breadwinners<sup>16</sup>.

This policy in combination with the population policy the second article<sup>17</sup> of which emphasizes on removing the obstacles of marriage, facilitating marriage, promoting the formation of family and *giving birth to more children, encouraging youth to marry at a younger age*, supporting young couples and enabling them to afford the cost of living and to raise righteous and competent children.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.leader.ir/en/content/16177/Family-Policies-promulgated-on-the-strength-of-Article-110-of-the-Constitution>

<sup>17</sup> <http://english.khamenei.ir/news/1911/Leader-Announces-General-Policies-on-Population>