

TIPPING POINT TO ZERO

**EVIDENCE TOWARDS
A CHILD MARRIAGE
FREE INDIA**

REPORT BY



IN COLLABORATION WITH



TIPPING POINT TO ZERO

**EVIDENCE TOWARDS
A CHILD MARRIAGE
FREE INDIA**

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Centre for Legal Action and Behaviour Change for children (C-LAB), an initiative of India Child Protection (ICP)

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Table of Contents

Page No.

Table of Contents	i
List of Figures	iii
List of Tables	iii
List of Abbreviations	v
Executive Summary.....	vii
State Fact Sheet-Assam	xi
State Fact Sheet-Bihar.....	xv
State Fact Sheet-Karnataka.....	xix
State Fact Sheet-Maharashtra	xxiii
State Fact Sheet-Rajasthan	xxvii
 1. Introduction	
1.1. Background.....	1
1.2. Objectives.....	2
1.3. Access to Justice for Children Program	2
1.4. Methodology	4
1.5. Data Sources.....	6
1.6. Limitations	6
1.7. Initiatives Taken by State Governments Across Country to Prevent Child Marriages	6
 2. Study Findings	
2.1. Districts and Profile of Respondents.....	13
2.2. State of Schooling of Girls.....	16
2.3. Prevalence of Child Marriage	17
2.4. Perception of respondents about the actions that may help in addressing the incidence of child marriage	23
2.5. Awareness Efforts.....	24
 3. Conclusions and Recommendations	
3.1. Conclusions	31
3.2. Recommendations	31
 Annexure	35

List of Figures

	Page No.
Graph 1: Distribution of respondents' profiles across five states.....	14
Graph 2: Overall caste-composition across five states.....	14
Graph 3: Overall proportion of children under the age of 18 (boys and girls) across five states	15
Graph 4: Proportion of villages reporting school attendance among girls aged 6–18 years.....	16
Graph 5: Reasons for not going girls (6-18 years) to school.....	17
Graph 6: Child Marriages below legal age in last 3 years (2022-2025).....	18
Graph 7: Trend in child marriages of girls under 18 and boys under 21 in last 3 years (2022-2025).....	19
Graph 8: Villages with cases of child marriages in the last 3 years	20
Graph 9: Changes in the incidence of child marriage over 3-4 Years	23
Graph 10: Respondent perceptions on ways to reduce child marriage.....	24
Graph 11: Awareness about laws against child marriage.....	24
Graph 12: Sources of information on child marriage laws.....	25
Graph 13: Awareness of reporting channels for the instances of child marriage.....	26
Graph 14: Comfort of respondents in reporting child marriage cases	26
Graph 15: Barriers that prevent people from reporting child marriage	27
Graph 16: Awareness of campaigns against child marriage.....	27
Graph 17: Organizers of child marriage campaigns.....	28
Graph 18: Participation in pledge against child marriage	28

List of Tables

	Page No.
Table 1: Current child marriage situation in India.....	2
Table 2: Number of child marriages prevented and stopped and pledges taken	3
Table 3: Sample size and study location	5
Table 4: State and district-wise sample covered.....	13
Table 5: Sample representativeness	15
Table 6: Number of girls not attending school.....	16
Table 7: Reasons for prevalence of child marriage among girls under 18	22

List of Abbreviations

ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
A2J	Access to Justice
C-LAB	Centre for Legal Action and Behaviour Change for Children
CMPO	Child Marriage Prohibition Officer
FIR	First Information Report
ICP	India Child Protection
JRC	Just Rights for Children
NCRB	National Crime Records Bureau
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OBC	Other Backward Class
PoC	Point of Contact
PCMA (Act)	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
PDO	Panchayat Development Officers
POCSO (Act)	Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution
RTE (Act)	Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UDISE+	Unified District Information System for Education Plus
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Summary

Overview

Despite a gradual increase in the mean age of marriage for girls, as well as a decline in the proportion of girls married before the age of 18 in India¹, child marriage remains a significant and persistent challenge. Each year, hundreds of thousands of girls are married before reaching the legal marriage age, often leading to terrible consequences, including child sexual abuse. Child marriage is child rape, as it involves minor girls being forced into sexual relations with their married partners. The Supreme Court of India has held that if the husband of a girl child commits penetrative sexual assault on her, it constitutes aggravated penetrative sexual assault under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO). In response to the issue of child marriage, the Government of India, along with state governments and various civil society organisations, has implemented considerable initiatives over the past three years. This multi-state study demonstrates that legal deterrence measures have been instrumental in reducing the incidence of child marriage in the country.

Centre for Legal Action and Behaviour Change for children (C-LAB), an initiative of India Child Protection (ICP) in collaboration with Outline India Research Pvt Ltd, a research and consulting firm, carried out the present study to document the prevalence, drivers, and community perspectives on child marriage across five states of India. The study also aimed to assess the effectiveness of awareness campaigns such as *Child Marriage Free India*² campaign, including the *Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat*³, an initiative of Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India along with civil society's grassroots interventions on child marriage.

- 1 Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (2023). Sample Registration System Statistical Reports. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. <https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/data/SRSSTAT>
- 2 Child Marriage Free India, a nationwide campaign under the A2J program led by women activists, village leaders, and partner organizations, was launched in India to address the issue of child marriage at the village level in 2022.
- 3 Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat, the Government of India's flagship campaign against child marriage, inspired by the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India of a 'Viksit Bharat' by the year 2047, was launched in 2024.

Methods

A multistage stratified random sampling approach was followed in the present study. Multiple factors were considered for selecting the sample for this study, including the prevalence of child marriage, measured by the percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married before the legal age of 18 and the overall literacy rate in the targeted areas. To capture comprehensive village-level insights, respondents familiar with local socio-demographic and governance structures, such as members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Village level health and nutrition functionaries, school teachers, etc. were identified and interviewed.

The study draws on data collected from a sample of 757 villages across 15 districts in Bihar, Rajasthan, Assam, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. Villages within districts were randomly selected from the Just Rights for Children's flagship Access to Justice (A2J) program database aiming at prevention of child trafficking, child sexual abuse (including online sexual abuse of children) and child marriage, through legal intervention and behavior change. In each village, a key respondent with knowledge of socio-demographic details, education, governance, and child protection initiatives was interviewed. The survey captured information on village demographics, child marriage practices, educational barriers, legal awareness, and community participation in initiatives like Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat. Secondary data from the last three rounds of the National Family Health Survey, the Census of India 2011 and the latest report of the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) for the year 2024-25 were also referred to help contextualize findings and validate patterns observed in primary data.

Findings

A. Child Marriage Prevalence

- **The total number of girl child marriages** (girls marrying before age 18) **declined significantly by 69 percent** over the last three years (2022-23 to 2024-25). **Similarly, the number of boys getting married before age 21 also declined by 72 percent.**
- At the state level, **the highest decline in girl child marriages (under 18 years) was observed in Assam (84%), followed by Maharashtra (70%), Bihar (70%), Rajasthan (66%), and Karnataka (55%).** The highest percentage decline in Assam could be attributed to the legal action, including the registration of 5,225 FIRs and the “zero tolerance” approach of the state government of Assam.
- **77 percent respondents reported that child marriage in their villages has either “stopped completely” (19%) or “reduced to a large extent” (58%),** while 22 percent observed it has “reduced to some extent”.

(i) Reasons for Child Marriage

- **91 percent of the respondents cited poverty or poor financial condition** as the most dominant driver of child marriages in their area. This trend was found to be true in all states with varied percentages (95% in Assam; 91% in Rajasthan; 90% each in Bihar and Maharashtra; 87% in Karnataka).
- **44 percent respondents cited early marriage as a measure to provide protection to young girls.** 53 percent of the respondents in Assam and Bihar, 42 percent in Karnataka, 39 percent in Rajasthan, and 34 percent in Maharashtra reported early marriage as a protective measure.
- **45 percent of the respondents in Rajasthan and 39 percent in Bihar reported early marriage as a way to preserve purity,** while 22 percent in Karnataka and 21 percent in Assam linked it to preventing premarital pregnancy.

B. Addressing the Issue of Child Marriage

- Among 611 villages where child marriage is still prevalent, **nearly all respondents identified awareness campaigns (98%) and compulsory education for girls up to 18 years (89%)** as the most impactful interventions.
- **Arrests and FIRs were cited as strong deterrents by 68 percent** of respondents, whereas **cash incentives were considered effective by 44 percent** of the respondents.
- On reporting mechanisms, **80 percent** of respondents identified **local police stations** and **73 percent identified NGOs** as the primary points for reporting child marriages.

(i) Girls Education

- In **31 percent** of surveyed villages, all girls aged 6–18 years were reported to be attending school. However, wide regional disparities have been observed, with Maharashtra leading at 51 percent and Bihar at just 9 percent.
- **Poor economic conditions (88%) and lack of infrastructure (47%)** were cited as the most prevalent barriers to girls' education, followed by **safety concerns (42%),** lack of transportation (24%), and cultural stigma (25%).

C. Awareness on Child Marriage Laws

- **Near universal awareness amongst respondents regarding child marriage laws.**
- **NGOs (79%) were cited as the most prominent sources of information on child marriage law,** followed by awareness campaigns (66%), community meetings (63%), TV/radio (61%) and local authorities (53%). Schools (49%) were also found playing a major role. Newspapers (43%) were relatively less frequently cited.

(i) Awareness of Reporting Channels

- **Local police stations (80%)** and **NGOs (73%)** were most frequently cited as reporting avenues.
- **93 percent of respondents in Assam reported relying on police and 79 percent on NGOs**, whereas **in Karnataka, 75 percent relied on helplines** and 53 percent on Child Welfare Committees, compared to only 40 percent on police.

(ii) Respondent's Level of Comfort in Reporting Incidences of Child Marriage

- **63 percent of respondents found “very comfortable” and 33 percent “somewhat comfortable”** in reporting child marriage cases. Comfort in reporting child marriage cases was highest in **Maharashtra (76%)**, followed by **Bihar (66%)**, **Rajasthan (60%)**, and **Assam (59%)**, while it was comparatively lower in **Karnataka**.

(iii) Perceived Barriers in Communities for Reporting Incidences of Child Marriage

- **Fear of social stigma (83%) emerged as the most significant barrier** across states followed by lack of awareness (57%).
- **Distrust in authorities** was more evident in **Karnataka (36%)**, while **cultural beliefs** were cited majorly in **Rajasthan (40%)** and **Karnataka (37%)**.

D. Exposure to Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat Campaign

- **99 percent of the respondents had either seen or heard about Government of India's Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign.**
- **NGOs emerged as the most prominent campaign organizers**, especially in **Bihar (93%)**, **Maharashtra (89%)**, and **Assam (88%)**.
- **Schools** played a leading role in **Rajasthan (87%)** and **Maharashtra (77%)**, while **panchayats** were particularly active in **Maharashtra (83%)**.

Key Recommendations

Enforcement of Child Marriage Law: Strict enforcement of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006, to enhance the on ground efforts towards complete eradication of child marriage. Consideration may be given to amending the Act to criminalize attempts to include trafficking for marriage and mandatory reporting. Recognizing PCMA as the special law superseding all personal laws.

Registration of child marriages and enhancing reporting mechanisms: Launching nationwide drive mandating registration of all marriages with panchayats and municipalities. Strengthening helplines with resources, trained staff, and technology for quicker, effective responses.

Capacity building and convergence of all stakeholders: Strengthen multi-sectoral coordination and building capacity of law enforcement, judiciary, students, teachers, and frontline workers through regular training and capacity building workshops. Work with faith leaders to actively prohibit child marriages.

Awareness and use of Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat web portal: Designating a national day against child marriage to mobilize communities and spread awareness of its harmful impacts. Widely promoting the Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat web portal, especially in rural areas, as a key platform for education and reporting. Ensuring that CMPOs register all child marriages prohibited/prevented on the portal. Integration of the portal with the Ministry of Home Affairs is essential to ensure coordinated and timely action on complaints.

Rehabilitation of victims of child marriage: Developing rehabilitation frameworks under the Juvenile Justice Act, offering care, scholarships, mental health support, education, and vocational training for victims who annul marriages. Targeted skill development and collaborations with businesses and institutions to ensure employability and long-term reintegration into society.

Free and compulsory education for girls till 18 or completion of education till higher secondary level:

Extending free education to include girls until 18 years of age or till the completion of the higher secondary level, supported by retention programs, scholarships, and cash incentives for families. Conditional cash transfers to incentivize families/parents to educate their daughters through secondary schooling and targeted scholarships for adolescent girls. Increased efforts towards educating and spreading awareness on child rights, particularly among adolescent girls.

Effective use of child marriage prohibition officers:

Regular monitoring and evaluation of

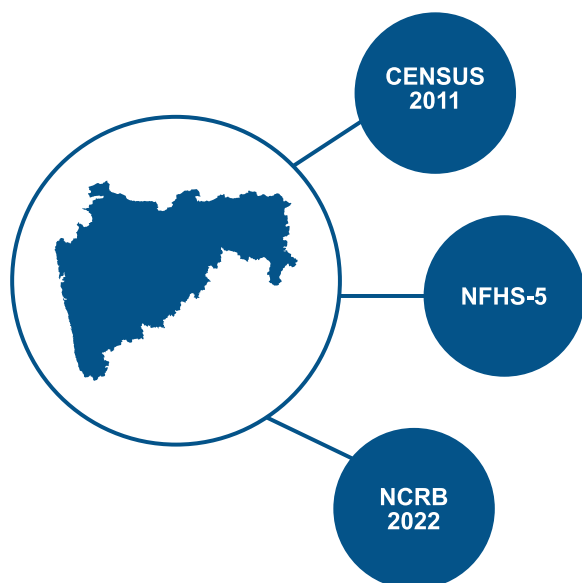
CMPOs through a centralized review system to ensure accountability, assess progress, and strengthen their role in preventing child marriage. Building the capacity of the CMPOs and other child protection stakeholders. Creation of State Special Child Marriage Prohibition Units, in accordance with the Supreme Court of India judgement⁴.

Leveraging Technology: Using technology for program monitoring, including school attendance tracking, and for information dissemination through social media and data analytics to identify vulnerable girls and enable swift interventions.

⁴ Writ Petition (C) No. 1234 of 2017. Dt. October 18, 2024. Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action & Anr. Versus Union of India & Ors. The Supreme Court of India.

STATE FACT SHEET

ASSAM



- **2.6 lakh married before legal age of marriage**
- **1.3 lakh girls married before 18**

- **31.8% of women between 20-24 years married before 18**
- **11.7% of women aged 15-19 already mothers or pregnant**

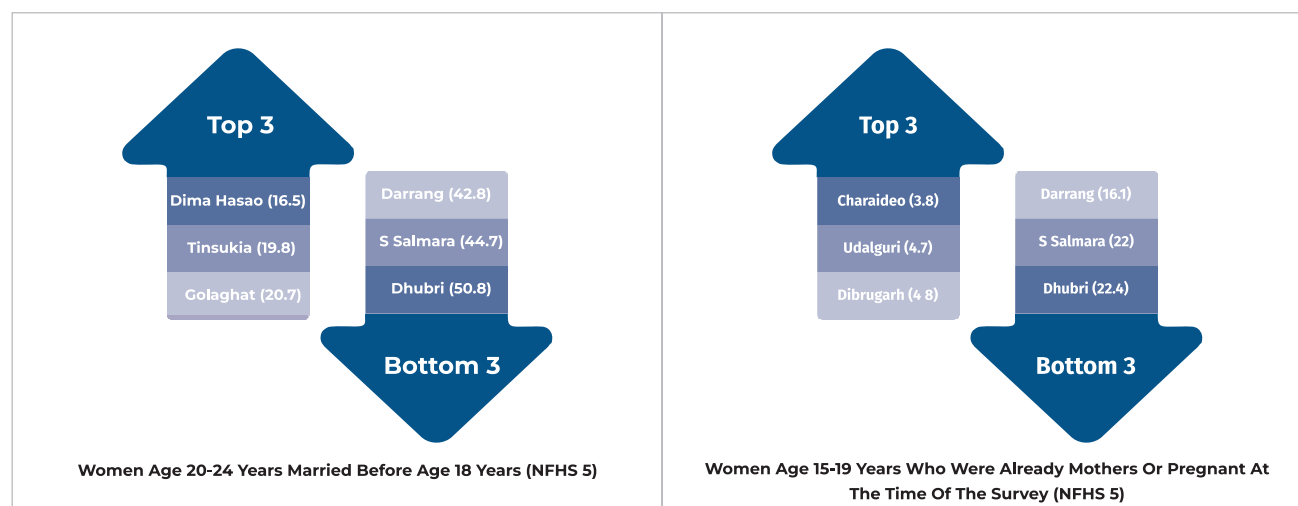
- **571 cases of child marriage registered between 2019-22 (2019-115; 2020-138; 2021-155; 2022-163)**

As per the Census 2011, in Assam 2.6 lakh children were married off before the attainment of the legal age of marriage, which constituted a 2 percent of all married children in the country. However, NCRB data suggests that only 571 cases of child marriage were registered in the state under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act during 2019-22.

Between NFHS 4 (2015-16) and NFHS 5 (2019-21), there is a 1 percentage increase in women aged 20-24 years falling prey to child marriage (from 30.8% to 31.8%) in Assam. Early marriage leads to early pregnancies which are detrimental to the health of both the mother and the child. It is then one of the major contributing factors to high maternal mortality and infant mortality. Teenage pregnancy data in NFHS

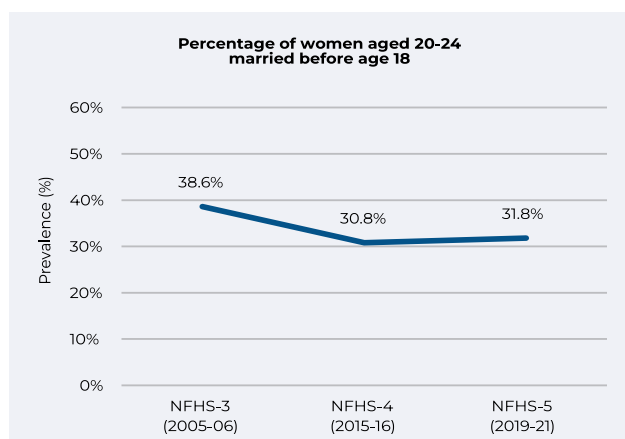
refers to women aged 15-19 who were already mothers or pregnant at the times of the survey. This has come down from 13.6 percent in 2015-16 to 11.7 percent in 2019-21 in the state.

25 out of 33 districts in Assam have a higher reading than the national average of 23.3 percent when it comes to women aged 20-24 getting married before 18. Dhubri is the worst performing district within the state, which also ranks 13th among the worst 100 districts of the country with a score of more than 50 percent in the particular indicator. Overall, 10 districts lie within the worst 100 of the country, which makes the state a hotspot for intervention in terms of child marriage.



Prevalence of Child Marriage in Assam according to NFHS

In Assam, the prevalence of child marriage among girls was 38.6 percent during NFHS-3 (2005-06). This figure declined to 30.8 percent in NFHS-4 (2015-16), reflecting significant progress in reducing the practice over the decade. However, a slight increase in the prevalence of child marriage was reported (31.8%) in NFHS-5 (2019-21), highlighting a need for renewed focus on interventions to curb child marriage.



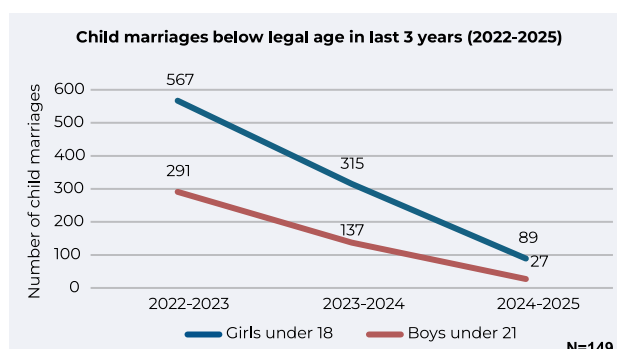
Source: NFHS-3 (2005-06), NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-21)

The Present Study

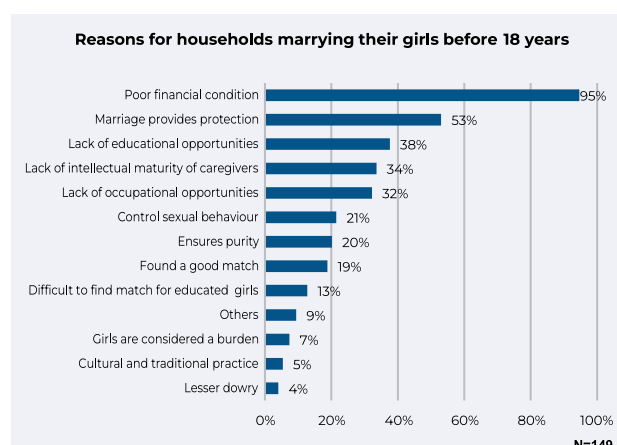
The present study gives an insight on understanding the ground situation on **the Impact of efforts made in India to address the issue of child marriage**. The study was conducted across 757 villages in 15 districts spread over five states (Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan) of India, selected using a multi-stage stratified random sampling approach. In Assam, 150 villages were surveyed as part of this study. The study engaged with key informants familiar with local socio-demographic and governance structures, such as members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), frontline service providers such as ASHA, ANM and school teachers, etc., for data collection. Interviews were conducted with the help of an online quantitative schedule.

1. Child Marriage Prevalence

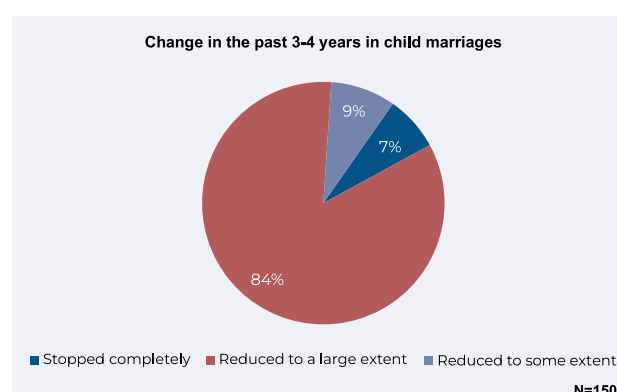
- 84 percent decline in child marriage amongst **girls** (under 18 years) between 2022-23 to 2024-25.
- 91 percent decline in child marriage amongst **boys** (under 21 years) between 2022-23 to 2024-25.



- Amongst the top reasons for child marriage were Poor financial condition (95%), Marriage provides protection (53%) and Lack of educational opportunities (38%).

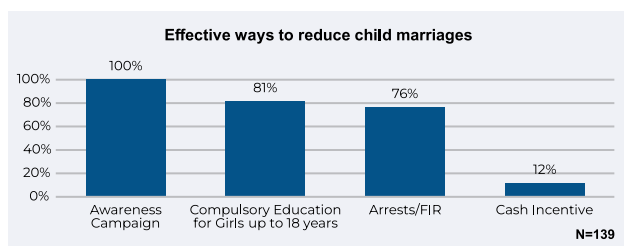


- 91 percent of the respondents reported that child marriage had either stopped completely or had reduced to a large extent.



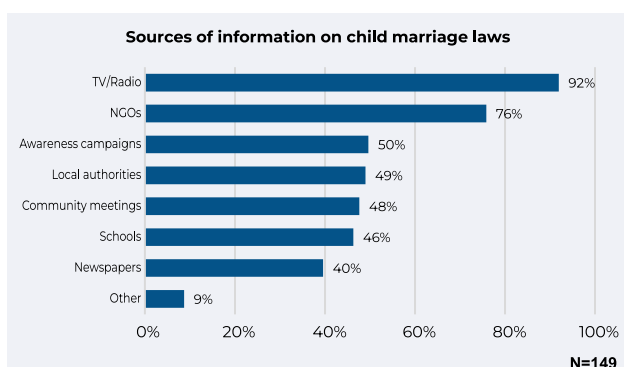
2. Addressing The Issue Of Child Marriage

- Awareness campaigns (100%) was reported as the most effective measure to reduce child marriage.
- 76 percent of the respondents identified prosecution measures (Arrest/FIR) as an effective approach to reducing child marriage.

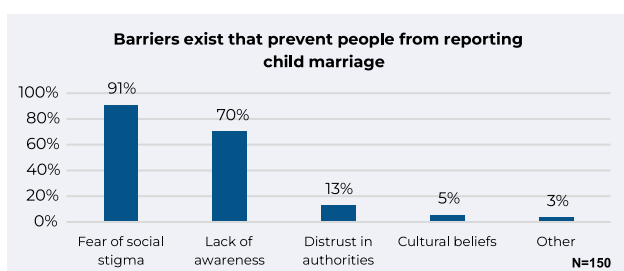


3. Awareness Of Child Marriage Laws And Reporting

- 99 percent of the respondents reported being aware of the law pertaining to child marriage (Prohibition of Child Marriage Act).
- TV/Radio (92%) and NGOs (76%) were reported to be the top sources of information on child marriage law.

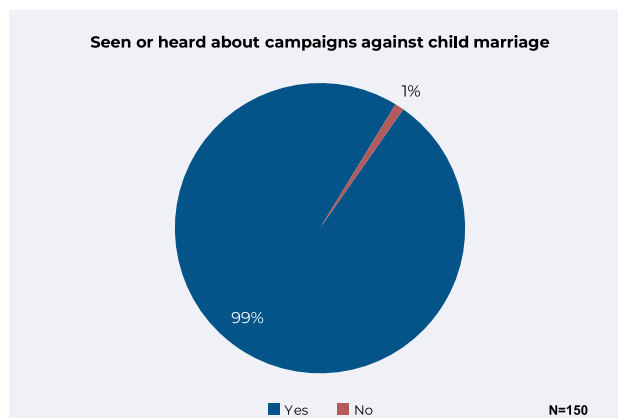


- Fear of Social Stigma (91%) and Lack of awareness (70%) were reported as the top barriers that prevent people from reporting child marriages.

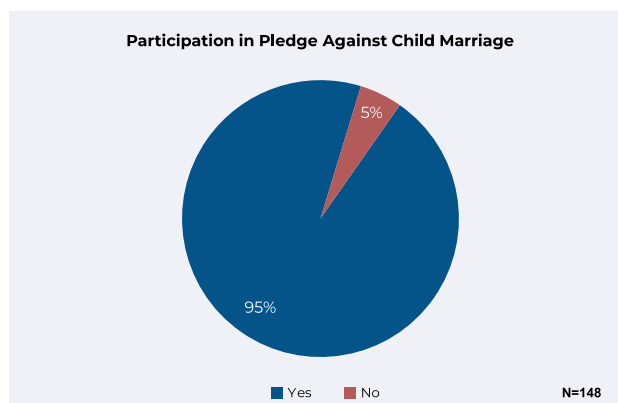


4. Exposure To Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat Campaign, a Government of India Initiative

- 99 percent of the respondents reported having seen or heard about Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat, a campaign against child marriage in the surveyed villages.

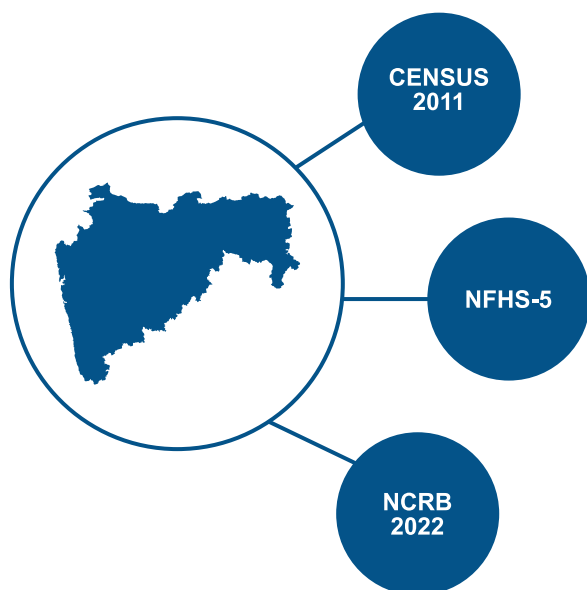


- 95 percent reported taking pledge against child marriage during the Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign.
- 88 percent of the respondents identified NGOs as the lead facilitator of the Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign and pledges against child marriage.



STATE FACT SHEET

BIHAR



- **12 lakh married before legal age of marriage**
- **4.8 lakh girls married before 18**

- **40.8% of women between 20-24 years married before 18**
- **11% of women aged 15-19 already mothers or pregnant**

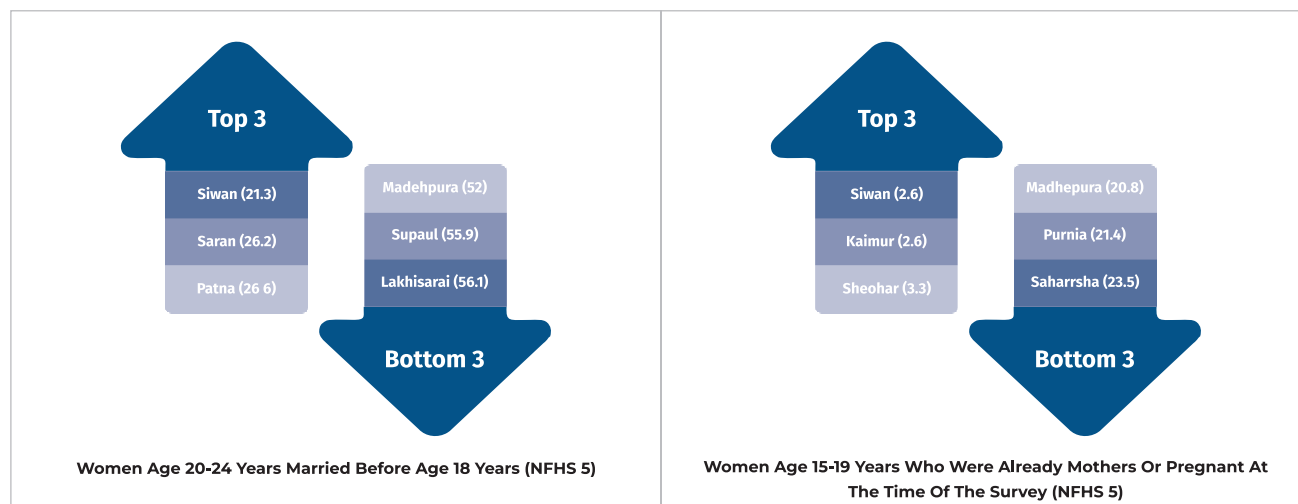
- **37 cases of child marriage registered between 2019-22 (2019-8; 2020-5; 2021-11; 2022-13)**

As per the Census 2011, in Bihar 12 lakh children were married off before the attainment of the legal age of marriage, which constituted a 10 percent of all married children in the country. However, NCRB data suggests that only 37 cases of child marriage were registered in the state under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act during 2019-22.

Between NFHS 4 (2015-16) and NFHS 5 (2019-21), there is a 1.7 percentage point decrease in women aged 20-24 years falling prey to child marriage (from 42.5% to 40.8%) in Bihar. Early marriage leads to early pregnancies which are detrimental to the health of both the mother and the child. It is then one of the major contributing factors to high maternal mortality

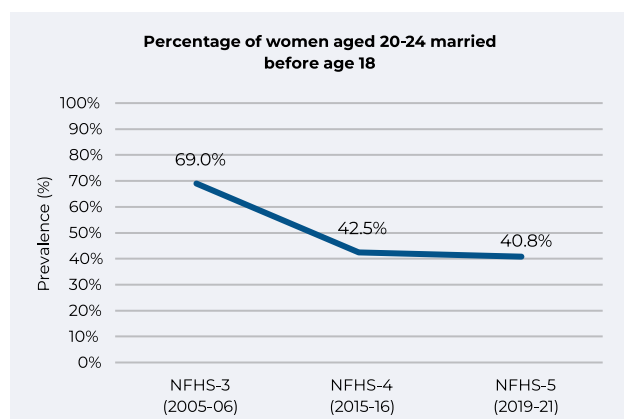
and infant mortality. Teenage pregnancy data in NFHS refers to women aged 15-19 who were already mothers or pregnant at the times of the survey. This has come down from 12.2 percent in 2015-16 to 11 percent in 2019-21 in the state.

26 out of 38 districts in Bihar lie within the worst 100 districts in the country when it comes to child marriage. 5 positions out of worst 10 are occupied by districts from Bihar, including Lakhisarai and Supaul which are ranked the 2nd and 3rd worst district in the country. Only Siwan has a reading which is lesser than the national average of 23.3 percent, and it makes Bihar one of the most vulnerable states in terms of child marriage.



Prevalence of Child Marriage in Bihar according to NFHS

Bihar continues to rank among the states with the highest prevalence of child marriage in India. According to NFHS-3 (2005-06), an overwhelming proportion of women (69%) aged 20-24 in Bihar were married before the legal age of 18. Subsequent rounds indicated a slow but steady decline: NFHS-4 (2015-16) reported 42.5 percent, and NFHS-5 (2019-21) recorded 40.8 percent of women married before 18 years.



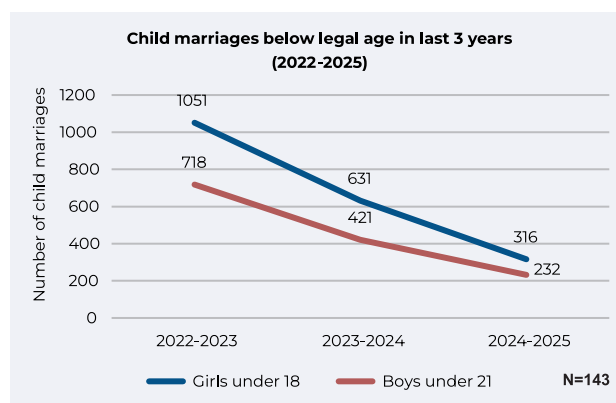
Source: NFHS-3 (2005-06), NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-21)

The Present Study

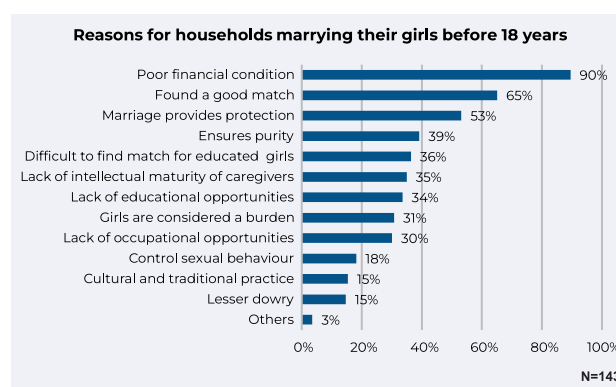
The present study gives an insight on understanding the ground situation on **the Impact of efforts made in India to address the issue of child marriage**. The study was conducted across 757 villages in 15 districts spread over five states (Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan) of India, selected using a multi-stage stratified random sampling approach. In Bihar 150 villages were surveyed as a part of this study. The study engaged with key informants familiar with local socio-demographic and governance structures, such as members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), frontline service providers such as ASHA, ANM and school teachers, etc., for data collection. Interviews were conducted with the help of an online quantitative schedule.

1. Child Marriage Prevalence

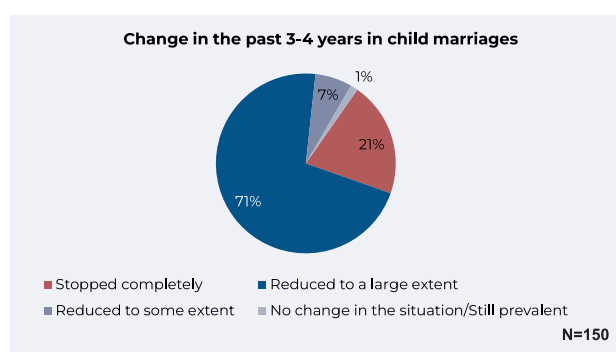
- 70 percent decline in child marriage amongst **girls** (under 18 years) between 2022-23 to 2024-25.
- 68 percent decline in child marriage amongst **boys** (under 21 years) between 2022-23 to 2024-25.



- Amongst the top reasons for child marriage were Poor financial condition (90%), Found a good match (65%) and Marriage provides protection (39%).

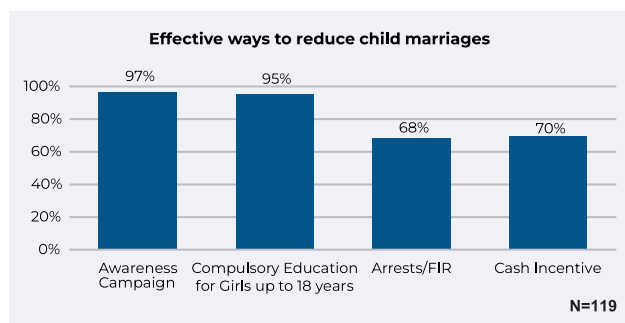


- 92 percent of the respondents reported that child marriage had either stopped completely or had reduced to a large extent.



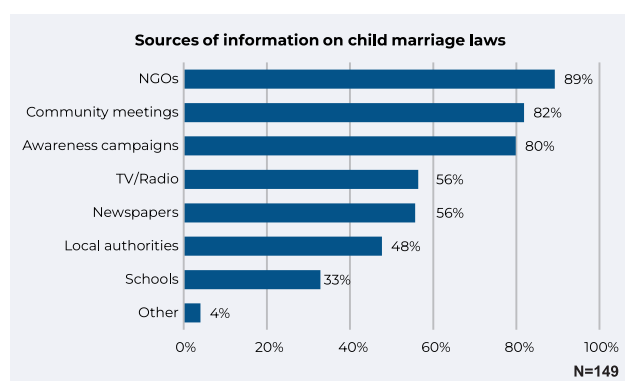
2. Addressing the issue of Child Marriage

- Awareness campaign (97%) was reported as the most effective measure to reduce child marriage.
- 68 percent of the respondents identified prosecution measures (Arrest/FIR) as an effective approach to reducing child marriage.

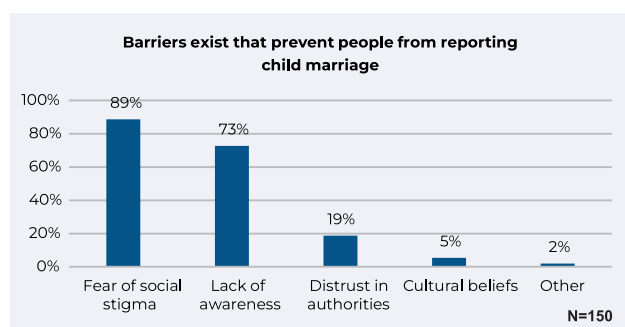


3. Awareness of Child Marriage Laws and Reporting

- 99 percent of the respondents reported being aware of the law pertaining to child marriage (Prohibition of Child Marriage Act).
- NGOs (89%) and Community meetings (82%) were reported to be the top sources of information on child marriage law.

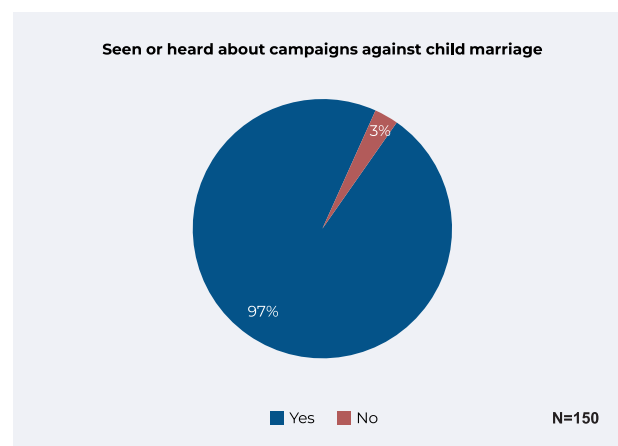


- Fear of Social Stigma (89%) and Lack of awareness (73%) were reported as the top barriers that prevent people from reporting child marriages.

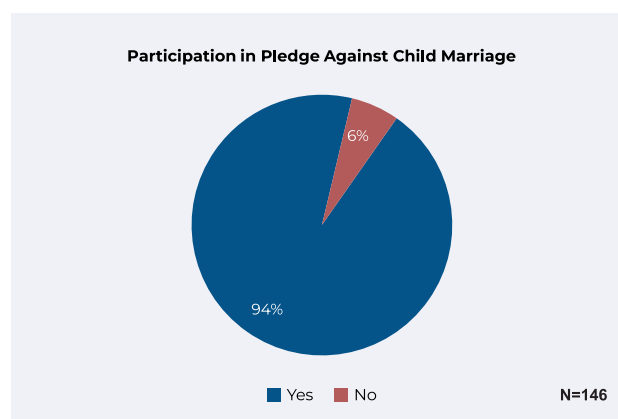


4. Exposure to Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat Campaign, a Government of India Initiative

- 97 percent of the respondents reported having seen or heard about Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat, a campaign against child marriage in the surveyed villages.

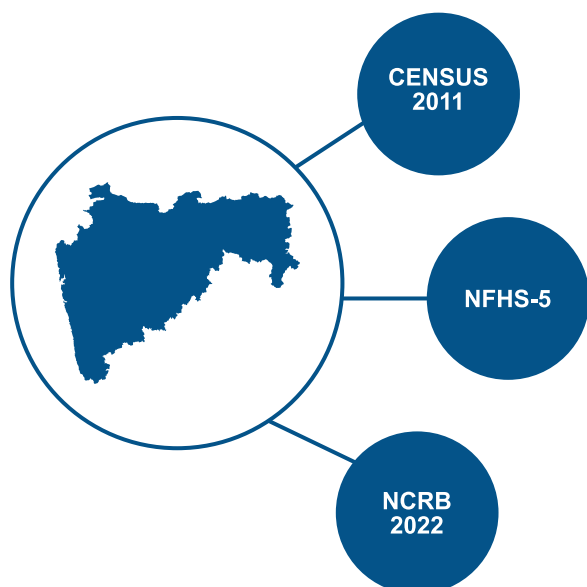


- 94 percent reported taking pledge against child marriage during Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign.
- 93 percent of the respondents identified NGOs as the lead facilitators of the Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign and pledges against child marriage.



STATE FACT SHEET

KARNATAKA



- **4.78 lakh married before legal age of marriage**
- **2.5 lakh girls married before 18**

- **21.3% of women between 20-24 years married before 18**
- **5.4% of women aged 15-19 already mothers or pregnant**

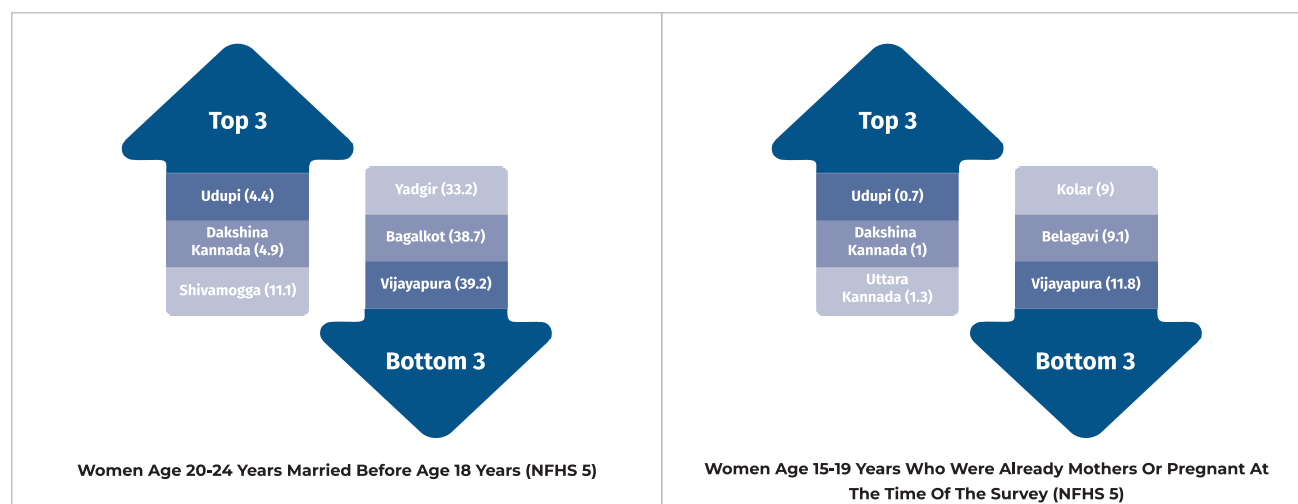
- **783 cases of child marriage registered between 2019-22 (2019-111; 2020-184; 2021-273; 2022-215)**

As per the Census 2011, in Karnataka 4.8 lakh children were married off before the attainment of the legal age of marriage, which constituted a 4 percent of all married children in the country. However, NCRB data suggests that only 783 cases of child marriage were registered in the state under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act during 2019-22.

Between NFHS 4 (2015-16) and NFHS 5 (2019-21), there is a 0.1 percentage point decrease in women aged 20-24 years falling prey to child marriage (from 21.4% to 21.3%) in Karnataka. Early marriage leads to early pregnancies which are detrimental to the health of both the mother and the child. It is then one of the major contributing factors to high maternal mortality and infant mortality. Teenage pregnancy data in

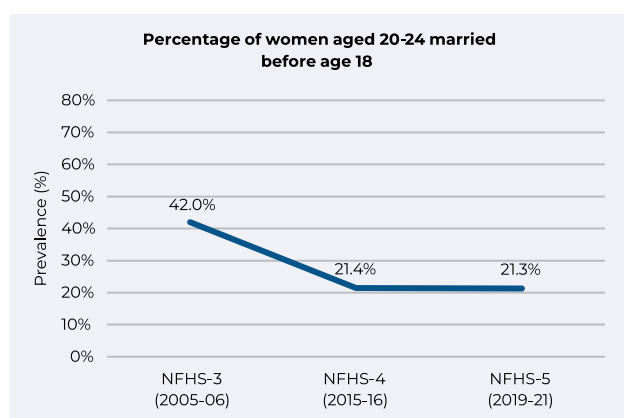
NFHS refers to women aged 15-19 who were already mothers or pregnant at the times of the survey. This has come down from 7.8 percent in 2015-16 to 5.4 percent in 2019-21 in the state.

Of the 30 districts, 10 have a higher reading than national average (23.3%) in terms of women aged 20-24 years falling prey to child marriage. Vijayapura and Bagalkot are the worst performing districts, with a little below 40 percent of women aged 20-24 getting married before 18; they occupy 68th and 73rd positions respectively in the ranking of worst performing districts of India in this regard. Udupi and Dakshina Kannada perform really well within the same domain with readings under 5 percent.



Prevalence of Child Marriage in Karnataka according to NFHS

In Karnataka, child marriage has seen a notable decline over the years. As per NFHS-3 (2005–06), 42 percent of women aged 20–24 were married before 18, but this reduced sharply to 21.4 percent in NFHS-4 (2015–16). The trend remained almost unchanged in NFHS-5 (2019–21) at 21.3 percent, suggesting that while the state has made substantial progress, further efforts are needed to sustain momentum and bring the rate down.



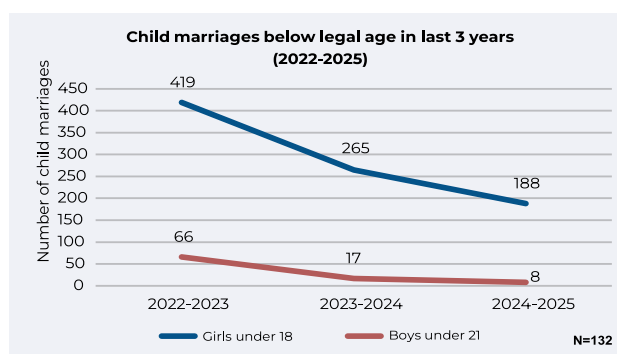
Source: NFHS-3 (2005-06), NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-21)

The Present Study

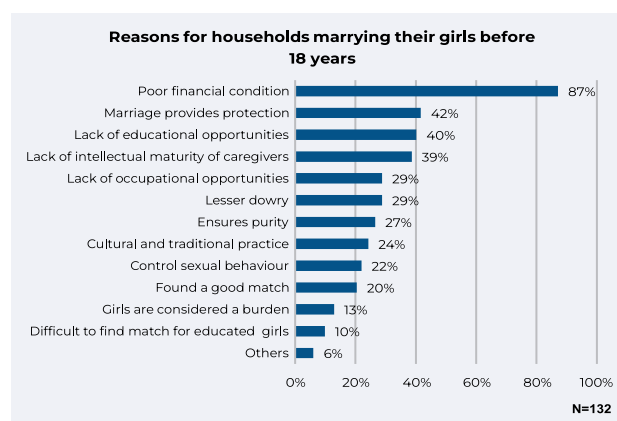
The present study gives an insight on understanding the ground situation on **the Impact of efforts made in India to address the issue of child marriage**. The study was conducted across 757 villages in 15 districts spread over five states (Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan) of India, selected using a multi-stage stratified random sampling approach. In Karnataka, 151 villages were surveyed as a part of this study. The study engaged with key informants familiar with local socio-demographic and governance structures, such as members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), frontline service providers such as ASHA, ANM and school teachers, etc., for data collection. Interviews were conducted with the help of an online quantitative schedule.

1. Child Marriage Prevalence

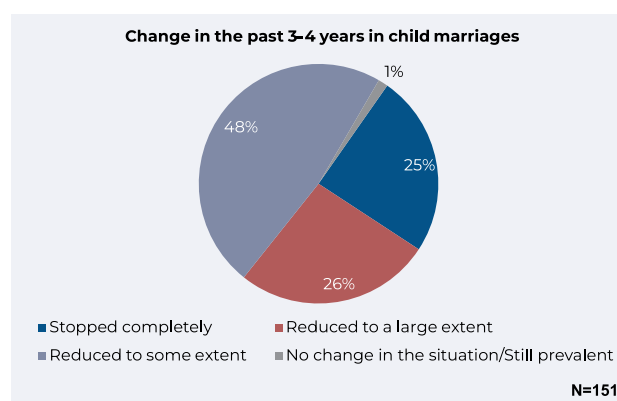
- 55 percent decline in child marriage amongst **girls** (under 18 years) between 2022-23 to 2024-25.
- 88 percent decline in child marriage amongst **boys** (under 21 years) between 2022-23 to 2024-25.



- Amongst the top reasons for child marriage were Poor financial condition (87%), Marriage provides protection (42%) and Lack of educational opportunities (40%).

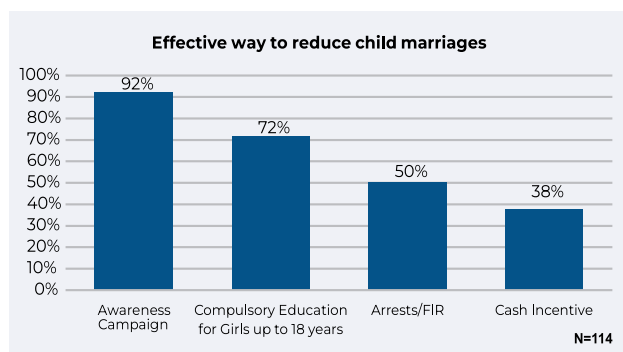


- 51 percent of the respondents reported that child marriage had either stopped completely or had reduced to a large extent.



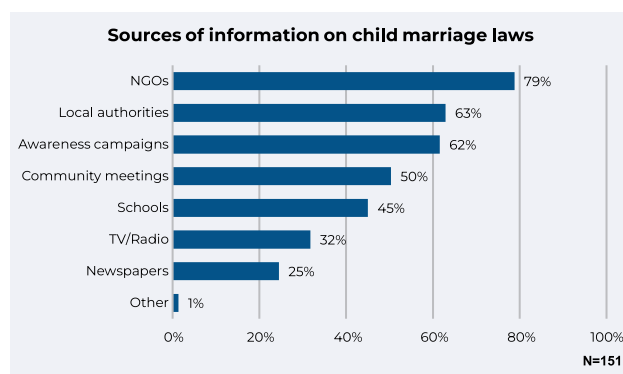
2. Addressing the Issue of Child Marriage

- Awareness campaigns (92%) was reported as the most effective measure to reduce child marriage.
- 50 percent of the respondents identified prosecution measures (Arrest/FIR) as an effective approach to reducing child marriage.

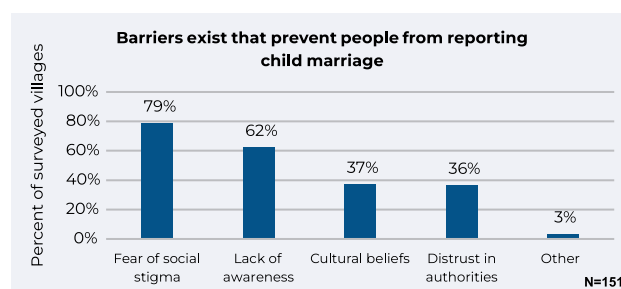


3. Awareness of Child Marriage Laws and Reporting

- 100 percent of the respondents reported being aware of the law pertaining to child marriage (Prohibition of Child Marriage Act).
- NGOs (79%) and Local authorities (63%) were reported to be the top sources of information on child marriage law.

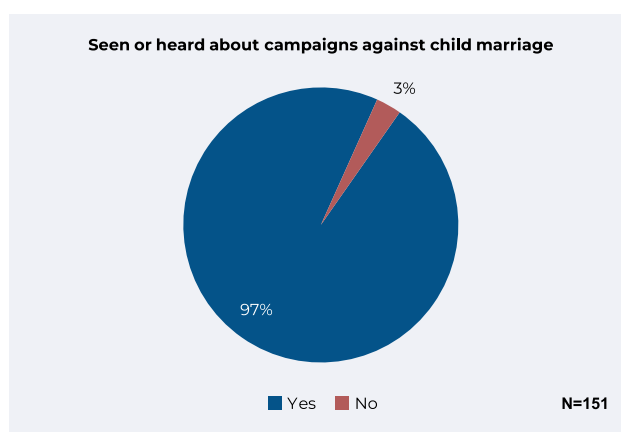


- Fear of Social Stigma (79%) and Lack of awareness (62%) were reported as the top barriers that prevent people from reporting child marriage.

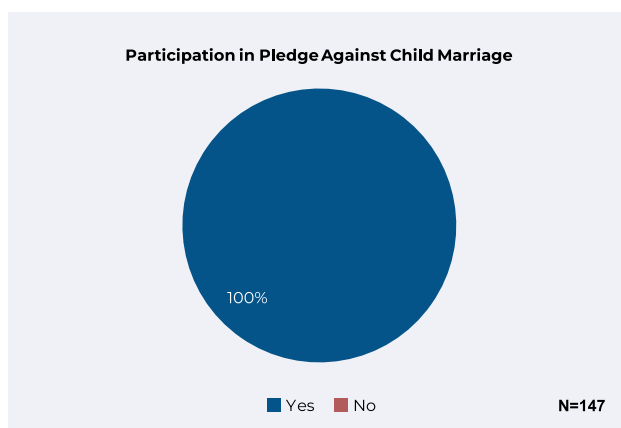


4. Exposure to Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat Campaign, a Government Of India Initiative

- 97 percent of the respondents reported having seen or heard about Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat, a campaign against child marriage in the surveyed villages.

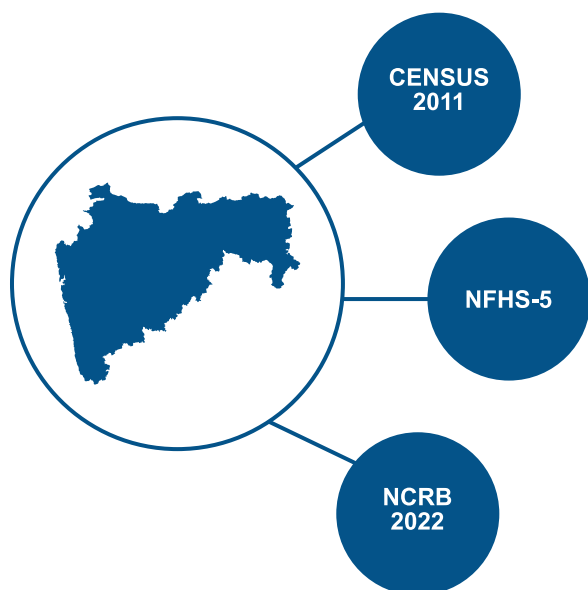


- 100 percent reported taking pledge against child marriage during the Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign.
- 78 percent of the respondents identified NGOs as the lead facilitator of the Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign and pledges against child marriage.



STATE FACT SHEET

MAHARASHTRA



- **11.6 lakh married before legal age of marriage**
- **5.2 lakh girls married before 18**

- **21.9% of women between 20-24 years married before 18**
- **7.6% of women aged 15-19 already mothers or pregnant**

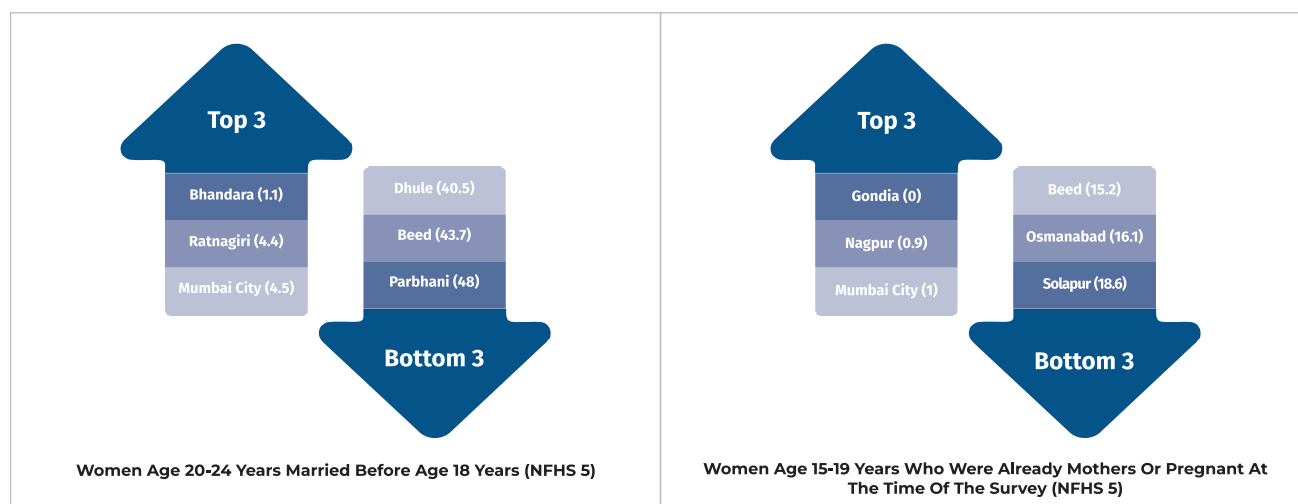
- **251 cases of child marriage registered between 2019-22 (2019-20; 2020-50; 2021-82; 2022-99)**

As per the Census 2011, in Maharashtra 11.6 Lakh children were married off before the attainment of the legal age of marriage, which constituted 10 percent of all married children in the country. However, NCRB data suggests that during the last 4 years, there has been a continuous increase in victims of child marriage in Maharashtra, from 20 in 2019 to 99 in 2022.

As per NFHS 4 (2015-16) and NFHS 5 (2019-21), there is a 3.5 percentage point decrease in women aged 20-24 years falling prey to child marriage between 2015-16 and 2019-21 (from 26.8% to 23.3%) in India, the comparative decrease in Maharashtra is slightly higher at 4.4 percentage point (from 26.3% to 21.9%) during the same period. Early marriage leads to early pregnancies which are detrimental to the health of

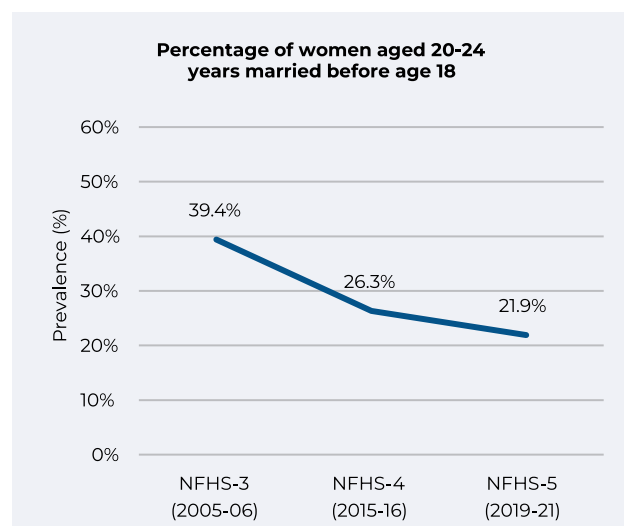
both the mother and the child. It is then one of the major contributing factors to high maternal mortality and infant mortality. Teenage pregnancy data in NFHS refers to women aged 15-19 who were already mothers or pregnant at the times of the survey. This has come down from 8.3 percent in 2015-16 to 7.6 percent in 2019-21 in the state.

Maharashtra manages to maintain a moderate profile in terms of vulnerability to child marriage, with 6 districts coming within the top 100 and 7 districts occupying places within the worst 100 districts of the country. Bhandara reports only 1.5 percent of women aged 20-24 getting married before 18, and is ranked as the 8th best district in the country as per its performance in the child marriage indicator.



Prevalence of Child Marriage in Maharashtra according to NFHS

In Maharashtra, the prevalence of child marriage among women aged 20–24 was 39.4 percent in NFHS-3 (2005–06). This figure dropped to 26.3 percent in NFHS-4 (2015–16), reflecting considerable progress in addressing the issue. By NFHS-5 (2019–21), the rate further declined to 21.9 percent, showing a steady downward trend, though continued focus is required to eliminate the practice.



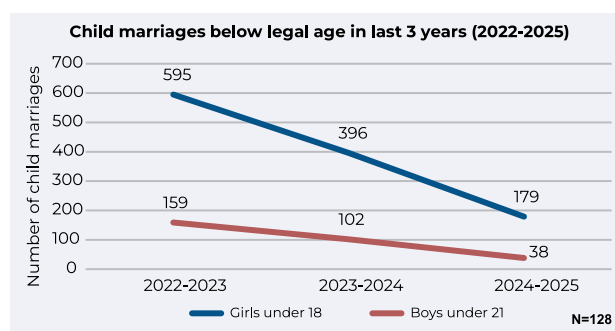
Source: NFHS-3 (2005-06), NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-21)

The Present Study

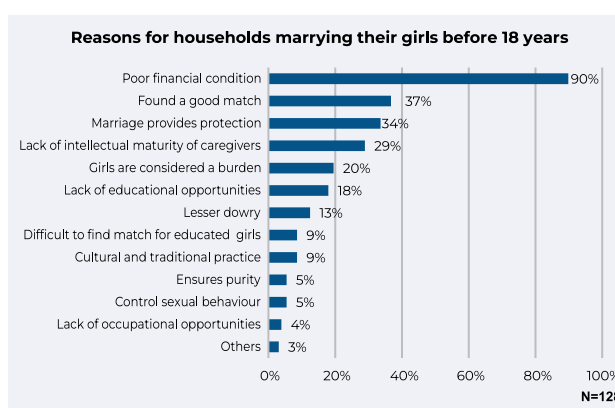
The present study gives an insight on understanding the ground situation on **the Impact of efforts made in India to address the issue of child marriage**. The study was conducted across 757 villages in 15 districts spread over five states (Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan) of India, selected using a multi-stage stratified random sampling approach. In Maharashtra, 150 villages were surveyed as a part of this study. The study engaged with key informants familiar with local socio-demographic and governance structures, such as members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), frontline service providers such as ASHA, ANM and school teachers, etc., for data collection. Interviews were conducted with the help of an online quantitative schedule.

1. Child Marriage Prevalence

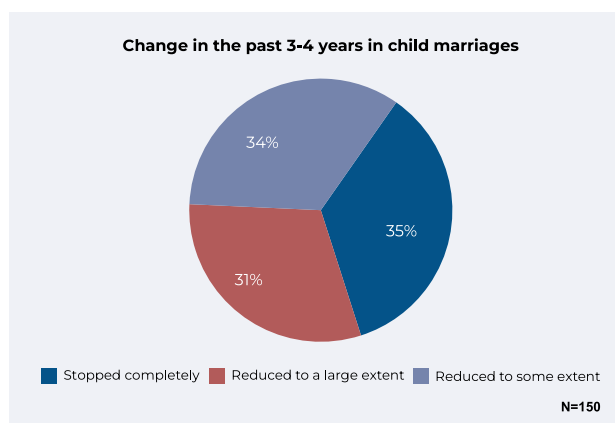
- 70 percent decline in child marriage amongst **girls** (under 18 years) between 2022-23 to 2024-25.
- 76 percent decline in child marriage amongst **boys** (under 21 years) between 2022-23 to 2024-25.



- Among the top reasons for child marriage were Poor financial condition (90%), Found a good match (37%), and Marriage provides protection (34%).

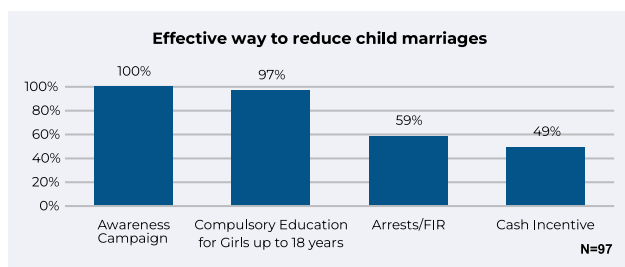


- 66 percent of the respondents reported that child marriage had either stopped completely or had reduced to a large extent.



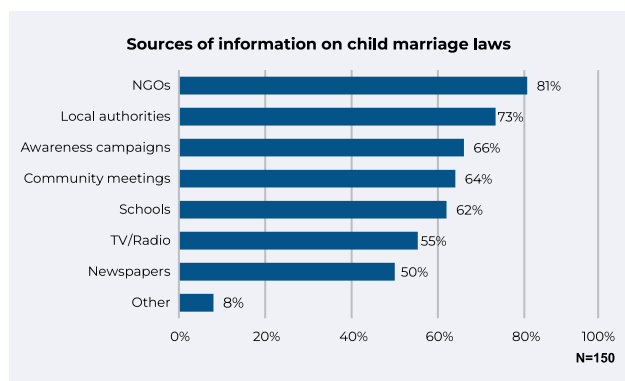
2. Addressing The Issue Of Child Marriage

- Awareness campaigns (100%) was reported as the most effective measure to reduce child marriage.
- 59 percent of the respondents identified prosecution measures (Arrest/FIR) as an effective approach to reducing child marriage.

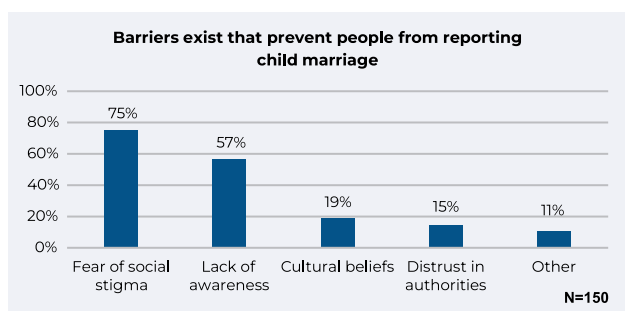


3. Awareness Of Child Marriage Laws And Reporting

- 100 percent of the respondents reported being aware of the law pertaining to child marriage (Prohibition of Child Marriage Act).
- NGOs (81%) and Local authorities (73%) were reported to be the top sources of information on child marriage law.

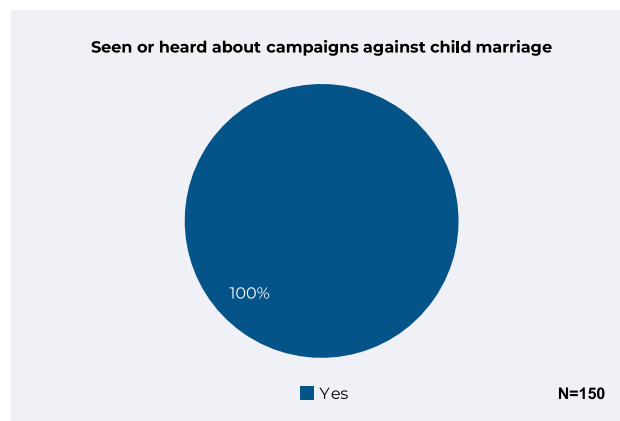


- Fear of Social Stigma (75%) and Lack of awareness (57%) were reported as the top barriers that prevent people from reporting child marriage.

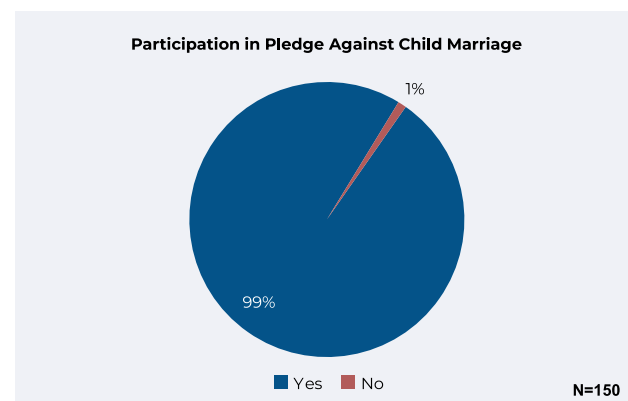


4. Exposure To Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat Campaign, A Government Of India Initiative

- 100 percent of the respondents reported having seen or heard about Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat, a campaign against child marriage in the surveyed villages.

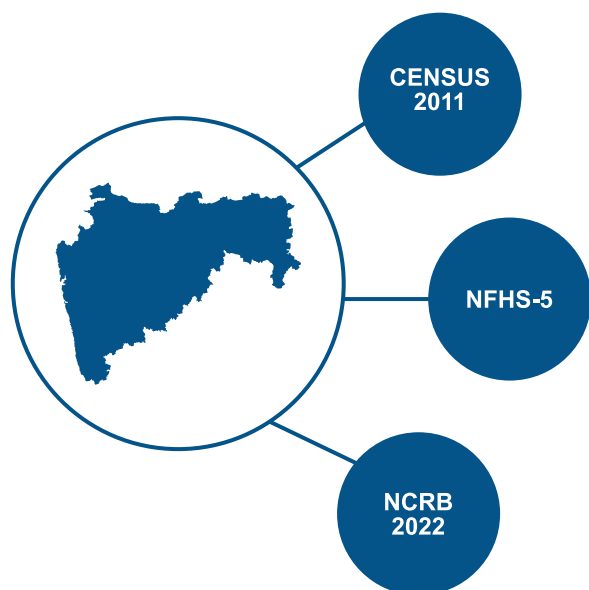


- 99 percent reported taking the pledge against child marriage during the Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat campaign.
- 89 percent of the respondents identified NGOs as the lead facilitator of the Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat campaign and pledges against child marriage.



STATE FACT SHEET

RAJASTHAN

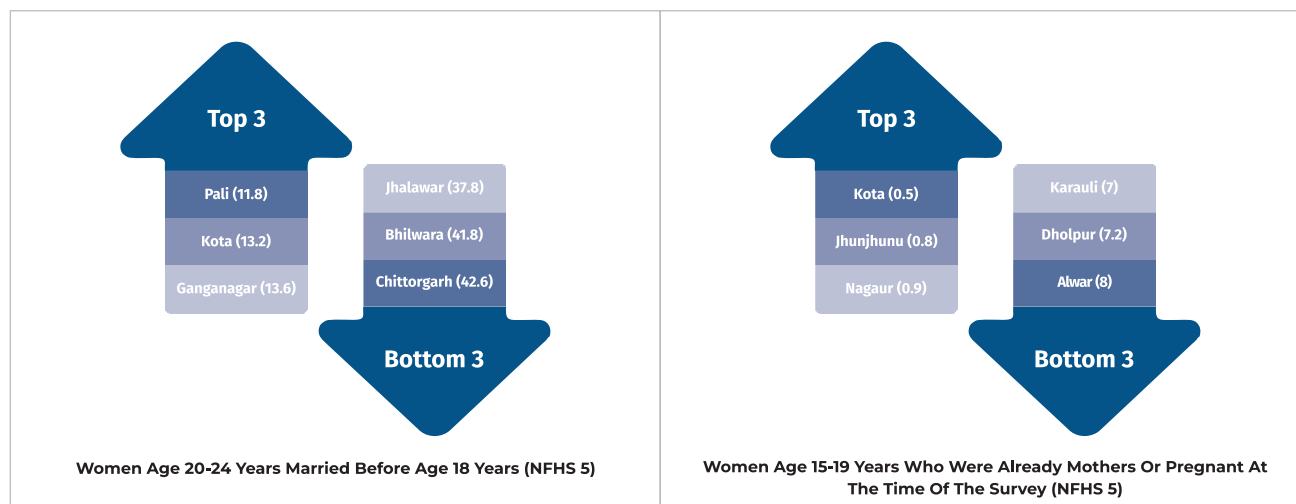


- **12.9 lakh married before legal age of marriage**
 - **5 lakh girls married before 18**
-
- **25.4% of women between 20-24 years married before 18**
 - **3.7% of women aged 15-19 already mothers or pregnant**
-
- **53 cases of child marriage registered between 2019-22 (2019-19; 2020-13; 2021-11; 2022-10)**

As per the Census 2011, in Rajasthan 12.9 lakh children were married off before the attainment of the legal age of marriage, which constituted approximately 11 percent of all married children in the country. However, NCRB data suggests that during the last 4 years, there has been a continuous fluctuating trend in victims of child marriage in Rajasthan, from 19 in 2019 to 13 in 2020 to 11 in 2021 to 10 in 2022.

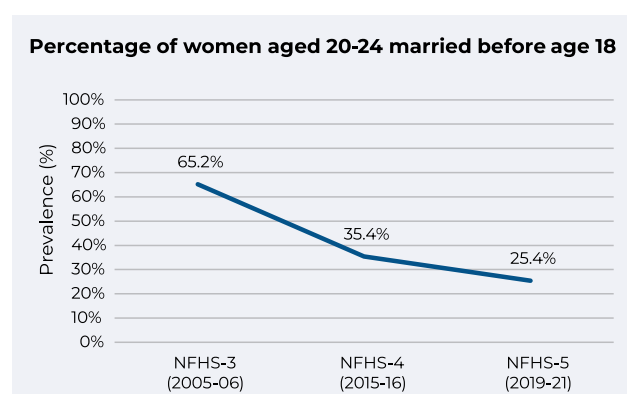
As per NFHS 4 (2015-16) and NFHS 5 (2019-21), there is a 3.5 percentage point decrease in women aged 20-24 years falling prey to child marriage between 2015-16 and 2019-21 (from 26.8% to 23.3%) in India, the comparative decrease in Rajasthan is 10 percent

(from 35.4% to 25.4%) during the same period. Early marriage leads to early pregnancies which are detrimental to the health of both the mother and the child. It is then one of the major contributing factors to high maternal mortality and infant mortality. Teenage pregnancy data in NFHS refers to women aged 15-19 who were already mothers or pregnant at the times of the survey. This number shows a decrease from 6.3 percent in 2015-16 to 3.7 percent in 2019-21 in the state. 5 out of 33 districts in Rajasthan occupy places among the 100 worst performing districts of the country in terms of child marriage, and with the state average lying above the national average of 23.3 percent the state is one of the vulnerable ones in this domain.



Prevalence of Child Marriage in Rajasthan according to NFHS

In Rajasthan, child marriage has historically been a major concern, with 65.2 percent of women aged 20–24 reporting being married before 18 in NFHS-3 (2005–06). Over the years, there has been a remarkable decline, with the rate falling to 35.4 percent in NFHS-4 (2015–16) and further to 25.4 percent in NFHS-5 (2019–21). This downward trend reflects the impact of sustained awareness, policy measures, and social reforms.



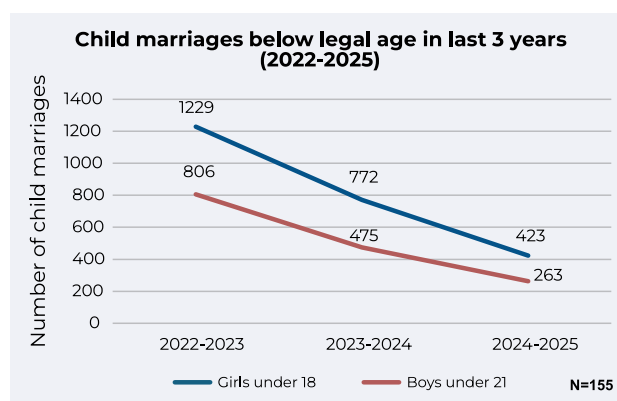
Source: NFHS-3 (2005-06), NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-21)

The Present Study

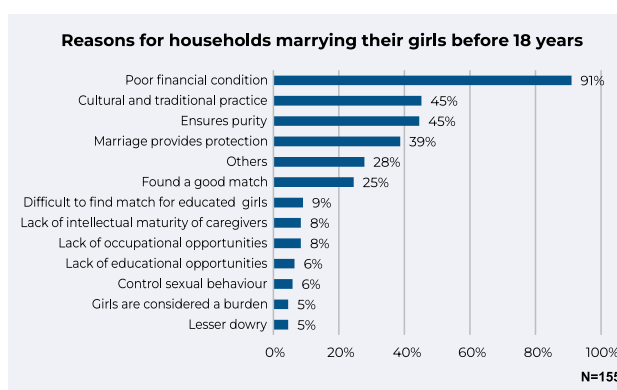
The present study gives an insight on understanding the ground situation on the Impact of efforts made in India to address the issue of child marriage. The study was conducted across 757 villages in 15 districts spread over five states (Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan) of India, selected using a multi-stage stratified random sampling approach. In Rajasthan, 156 villages were surveyed as a part of this study. The study engaged with key informants familiar with local socio-demographic and governance structures, such as members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), frontline service providers such as ASHA, ANM and school teachers, etc., for data collection. Interviews were conducted with the help of an online quantitative schedule.

1. Child Marriage Prevalence

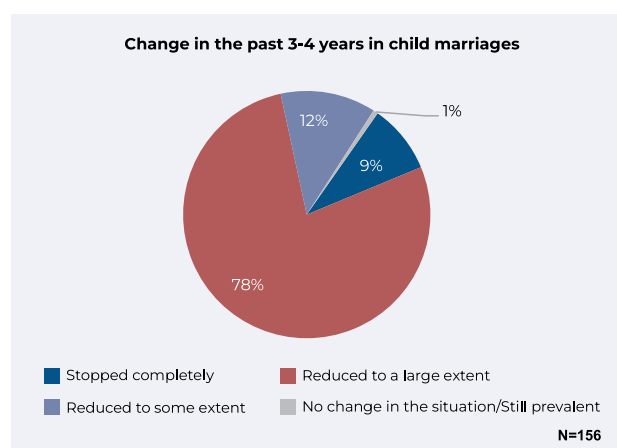
- 66 percent decline in child marriage amongst **girls** (under 18 years) between 2022-23 to 2024-25.
- 67 percent decline in child marriage amongst boys under 21 between 2022-23 to 2024-25.



- Amongst the top reasons for child marriage were Poor financial condition (91%), Cultural and traditional practices (45%), and Marriage at an early age ensures purity (45%).

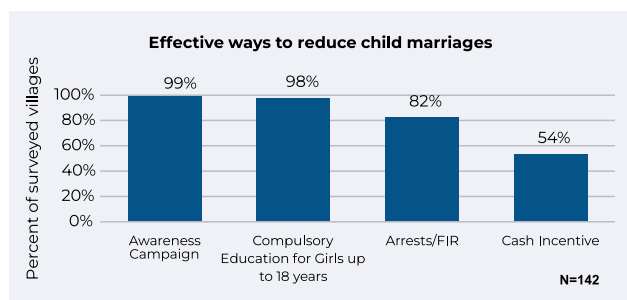


- 87 percent of the respondents reported that child marriage had either stopped completely or had reduced to a large extent.



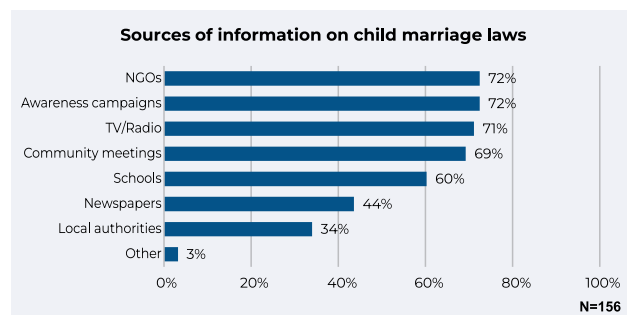
2. Addressing the Issue of Child Marriage

- Awareness campaigns (99%) was reported as the most effective measure to reduce child marriage.
- 82 percent of the respondents identified prosecution measures (Arrest/FIR) as an effective approach to reducing child marriage.

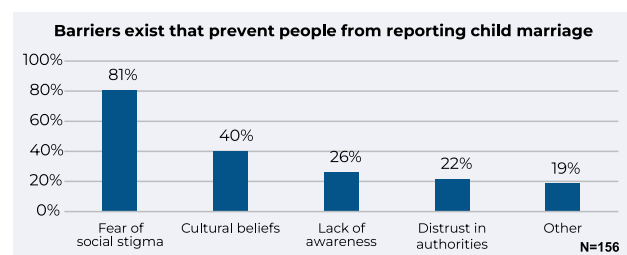


3. Awareness of Child Marriage Laws and Reporting

- 100 percent of the respondents reported being aware of the law pertaining to child marriage (Prohibition of Child Marriage Act).
- NGOs (72%) and Awareness campaigns (72%) were reported to be the top sources of information on child marriage law.

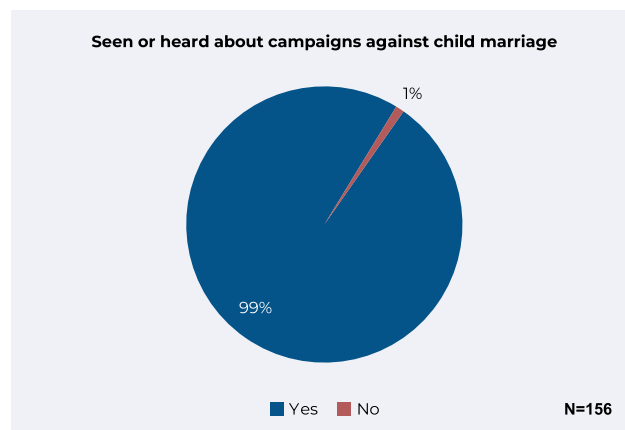


- Fear of Social stigma (81%) and Cultural beliefs (40%) were reported as the top barriers that prevent people from reporting child marriage.

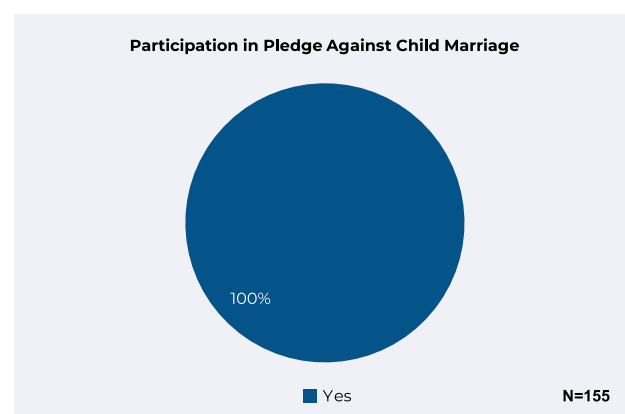


4. Exposure to Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat Campaign, a Government of India Initiative

- 99 percent of the respondents reported having seen or heard about Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat, a campaign against child marriage in the surveyed villages.



- 100 percent reported taking pledge against child marriage during the Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign.
- 75 percent of the respondents identified NGOs as the lead facilitator of the Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign and pledges against child marriage.



SECTION-1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Every minute, three girls are married in India, yet in 2022, only three cases of child marriage were officially registered each day, highlighting the significant gap between the prevalence of the practice and its reporting. According to Census 2011 data, an alarming 4,442 girls below the age of 18 were married every day, which translates into 185 minor girls married every hour and three every minute⁵. Child marriage remains a significant challenge in many developing countries, including India. Rooted in longstanding social and cultural traditions, it involves the marriage of girls or boys before they reach the legally prescribed minimum age. For girls in particular, early marriage often results in the loss of childhood, social isolation, and disconnection from family, peers, and support networks⁶. Despite notable policy and legislative advances, the practice continues to persist in many parts of the country, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. The Government of India has launched multiple policy initiatives to combat the issue of early marriage. The *National Population Policy (2000)* advocates delaying the age of marriage, particularly for girls. The *National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001)* acknowledges the importance of engaging both men and women in addressing child marriage and sets a target to eliminate the practice by 2010. Additionally, the *National Youth Policy (2003)* emphasizes the need to raise awareness among adolescents about the legally appropriate age for marriage⁷.

According to data from the *National Family Health Survey (NFHS)*, India has made progress in reducing the incidence of child marriage over the past two decades. The *NFHS-3 (2005-06)*⁸ reported that 47.4 percent of women aged 20-24 years were married before the legal age of 18. This figure declined to 23.3

percent in *NFHS-5 (2019-21)*⁹, indicating significant improvements in delaying marriage among adolescent girls. Nonetheless, regional disparities persist. States such as Bihar, Rajasthan, and Assam continue to report above-average rates, with early marriage often linked to poverty, safety concerns, dowry-related pressures, and social norms around female sexuality and purity¹⁰.

The latest statistical reports of the Sample Registration System¹¹ depict that the percentage of married females who were married before age 18 in India decreased from 2.4 percent in 2019 to 2.1 in 2023 indicating a declining trend in incidence of child marriages. Except for Assam, all four study states showed a decline during the same period. Assam had shown a slightly deviant trend where the percentage had increased from 1.9 percent in 2019 to 2.9 percent in 2023.

The reports also revealed that the mean age at marriage in India increased from 22 years in 2019 to 23 years in 2023. The one-year increase in the age at marriage of girls in a short span of four years is significant and remarkable for a thickly populated nation like India, where child marriage is widely prevalent.

5 India Child Protection (ICP) Report- Towards Justice Ending Child Marriages

6 UNICEF (2014) 'Ending Child Marriage: Progress and prospects', United Nations Children's Fund, New York

7 Gupta, P. (2012). Child marriages and the law.

8 International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS). (2007). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), 2005-06: India.

9 International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS). (2021). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019-21: India.

10 UNICEF. (2020). Child Marriage in India: Progress and Prospects.

Raj, A., Salazar, M., Jackson, E. C., Wyss, N., & McDougal, L. (2019). Girls' education and child marriage in India: A longitudinal analysis of NFHS data. *Journal of Global Health*, 9(2): 020415.

11 Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (2023). Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2023. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. <https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/data/SRSSTAT>

Table 1: Current child marriage situation in India

States	Percentage of Married Females Who Were Married Before Age 18			Mean age at Effective Marriage for Females		
	2019	2021	2023	2019	2021	2023
Assam	1.9	3.3	2.9	23.4	21.6	22.6
Bihar	3.1	2.4	2.6	21.4	22.5	21.6
Karnataka	1.5	1.5	1.2	22.6	22.4	23.1
Maharashtra	2.2	0.5	1.1	22.4	23.1	23.7
Rajasthan	3.4	2.4	2.3	22	22.3	22.6
India	2.4	2.6	2.1	22.1	22.5	22.9

Source: Sample Registration System Statistical Report (2019, 2021, 2023), Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Government of India.

In recent years, national and state-level campaigns like *Bal Vivah Mukat Bharat* campaign have sought to mobilize communities, enhance reporting mechanisms, and generate public awareness about the harmful effects of child marriage. However, a deeper understanding of how these efforts are perceived and experienced at the grassroots level remains limited.

1.2. Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to understand the ground situation concerning the issue of child marriage in the selected locations in India. It attempts to:

- To assess the current status and recent trends related to child marriage in high-prevalence districts across five states.
- To understand the impact of legal, policy, and community-level interventions aimed at preventing child marriage.
- To identify key local factors, social, economic, and institutional, that influence the incidence of child marriage.
- To capture insights from village-level stakeholders on community attitudes, awareness, and barriers related to reporting and preventing child marriage.

- To generate evidence-based recommendations for strengthening ongoing efforts and informing future child protection strategies.

1.3. Access to Justice for Children Program

Just Rights for Children's (JRC) flagship program Access to Justice for Children (A2J) aims at preventing child labor and child trafficking, child sexual abuse, child marriage and online sexual abuse of children, through legal interventions and behavior change. Access to Justice for Children is perhaps the largest civil society intervention against child trafficking and child labor in India, implemented across 24 states and Union Territories by more than 250 partner organizations under the Just Rights for Children.

Incubated since August 2021, the program was scaled up in May 2023. To bring about the behavior change required to have a lasting and sustainable impact on child protection, the program during this phase has been working to ensure implementation of current policies, schemes, and laws in three thematic areas. This phase of the Access to Justice for Children Program was operational in 265 districts spread across 17 States and Union Territories. Access

to Justice for Children is implemented in partnership with 161 civil society organizations. A further scale-up phase has been initiated to target more than 400 districts across the country, since May 2024 with 176 partner organizations.

Child Marriage Free India a nationwide campaign under the Just Rights for Children led by women activists, village leaders, and partner organizations, was launched to address the issue of child marriage at the village level in 2022.

Child Marriage Free India campaign is working to attain the tipping point of child marriage aimed at reducing it to 5.5 percent by 2030 from the current national prevalence rate of 23.3 percent¹². This is calculated as the point beyond which child marriages will organically become redundant in Indian society. Child Marriage Free India is the precursor to the Government of India's flagship Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign launched in 2024.

Table 2: Number of child marriages prevented and stopped and pledges Taken

States	Districts	Child Marriages prevented and stopped		Number of pledges
		FY 23-24	FY 24-25	FY 23-24
Assam	Kamrup	120	619	3,21,535
	Goalpara	27	383	2,50,506
	Kokrajhar	0	354	0
Assam Total (All Districts)		766	8,674	18,17,902
Bihar	Purba Champaran	33	824	2,07,696
	Muzaffarpur	308	949	5,07,484
	Supaul	79	378	2,20,000
Bihar Total (All Districts)		21,292	21,465	66,16,074
Karnataka	Vijayapura (Bijapur)	0	209	0
	Belgaum	0	297	0
	Yadagir	0	327	0
Karnataka Total (All Districts)		27	3,381	0
Maharashtra	Solapur	187	240	2,24,764
	Dhule	0	75	0
	Beed	816	417	2,67,362
Maharashtra Total (All Districts)		3,787	10,026	34,63,070
Rajasthan	Bundi	55	1,435	3,13,241
	Karauli	18	1,153	2,61,701
	Ajmer	146	705	1,75,000
Rajasthan Total (All Districts)		2,920	21,355	61,93,348

Source: JRC, A2J Program Data

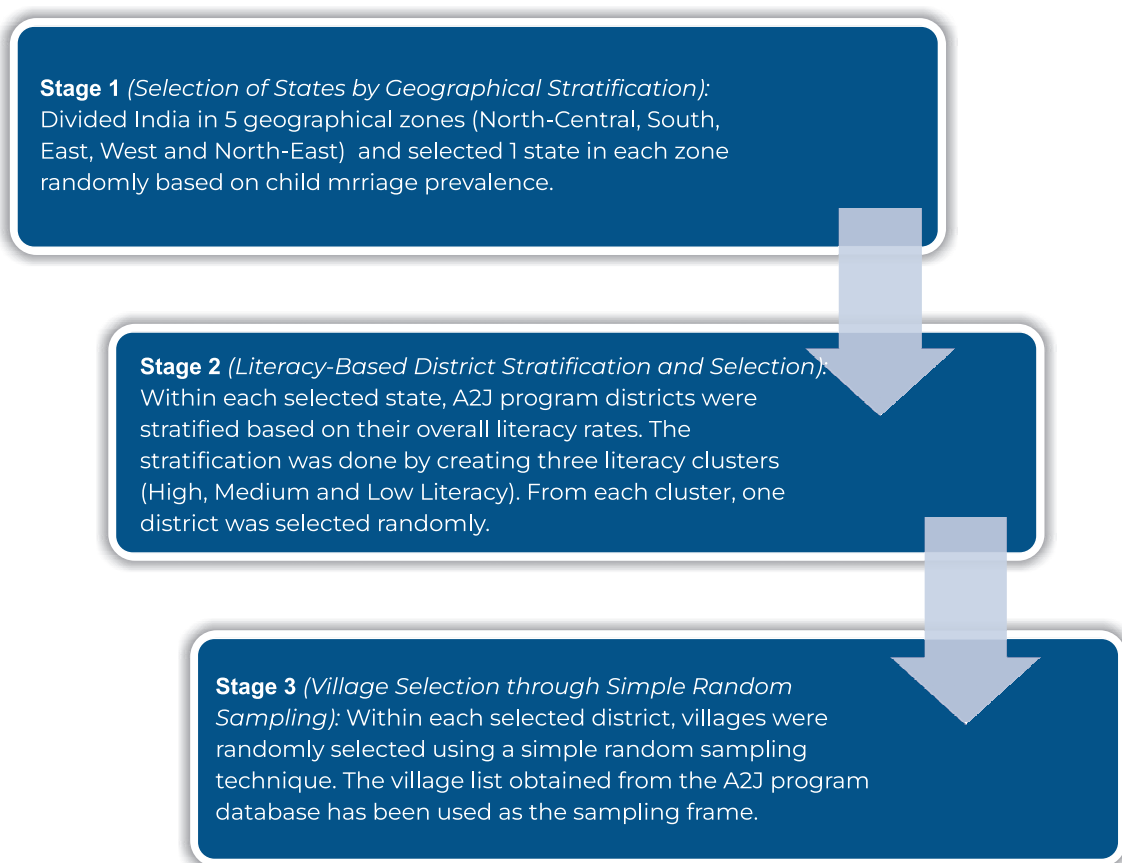
¹² Ribhu B. (2023) When Children have Children: Tipping Point to End Child Marriages. Prabhat Prakashan. New Delhi.

1.4. Methodology

Study Design

The study adopted a **Multistage Stratified Random Sampling** method to ensure a representative and unbiased selection of sample villages across the diverse socio-geographical landscape. The

sampling was conducted in three stages, designed to ensure stratification and randomness at different geographic and socio-demographic levels.



Study Location and Sampling

From each state, 150 villages (approximately 50 per district) were randomly selected from the program database, resulting in the final sample coverage of 757 villages.

Within each village, the survey was administered with adult respondents, preferably an elected member from the Panchayati Raj Institution or a frontline worker or teacher, familiar with the socio-

demographic profile and infrastructure of the area. One survey was administered in each village, thereby resulting in a total sample size of 757 interviews in 757 villages. This study did not include household-level or children interviews.

Sample Size

In total, the study covered **757 villages** across the five states. Table 3 summarizes the distribution of the sample across states and districts.

Table 3: Sample size and study location

State Name	No. of districts	Districts	Total surveys
Rajasthan	3	Ajmer	156 (1 per village)
		Bundi	
		Karauli	
Karnataka	3	Belgaum	151 (1 per village)
		Vijayapur	
		Yadagiri	
Bihar	3	East Champaran	150 (1 per village)
		Muzaffarpur	
		Supaul	
Assam	3	Goalpara	150 (1 per village)
		Kamrup	
		Kokrajhar	
Maharashtra	3	Beed	150 (1 per village)
		Dhule	
		Solapur	
Total	15		757

Study Respondents

The study was conducted with **respondents** who had knowledge about the survey village.

Respondents were purposefully selected for their ***in-depth understanding of the village's socio-economic conditions, demographic trends, and governance systems.*** These respondents were selected in consultation with the accompanying partner PoCs while keeping in mind the availability of the respondents and their ability to respond to the village-level questions. The respondent pool reflected a diverse representation of individuals in **formal and informal leadership** as well as **service delivery roles**, including: Sarpanch/ Village Head, Ward-Member, any other PRI functionary, School Teachers, ASHA, ANM, Anganwadi Worker, NGO personnel working in the village, and any other knowledgeable members of the village.

Tool Description

The quantitative tool consists of 15 questions distributed across three sections, as outlined below:

- **Section A: Respondent & Village Profile** - This section captures the position held by the respondents (e.g., PRI member, teacher, health worker) and the details about the village. It aims to gather demographic information such as population, caste composition, and child population by gender.
- **Section B: Education & prescription on trend on child marriage** - This section explores education-related barriers (specifically, the number of girls out of school), and reasons for non-enrollment/ drop-outs. It also documents the incidence of child marriage over the past three years and gathers perceptions on causes, trends, and potential solutions.

- **Section C: Legal awareness and reporting-**

This section seeks to assess the level of legal awareness among villagers and their understanding of reporting mechanisms related to child marriage. It also identifies barriers to reporting and captures awareness of campaigns like Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat and community participation in such initiatives.

1.5. Data Sources

Centre for Legal Action and Behaviour Change for Children (C-LAB), an initiative of India Child Protection (ICP) in collaboration with Outline India Research Pvt Ltd,

- a) Collected primary data through structured field surveys across the selected districts in Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan. Data collection was undertaken digitally using SurveyCTO-enabled tablets/mobile devices, enhancing accuracy and efficiency. Each enumerator was supported by an A2J point of contact (PoC) at the district level, who facilitated coordination with local partners, helped mobilize respondents, and provided on-ground guidance throughout the process. Only one data point was collected from each village.
- b) To contextualize the primary data and interpret observed trends, secondary data sources were systematically reviewed. The analysis primarily drew on the consolidated reports and factsheets of the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS-3, 2005-06; NFHS-4, 2015-16; and NFHS-5, 2019-21).
- c) Besides this, the Census of India 2011 of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, and the latest report of the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) for the year 2024-25 published by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, were also referred to help contextualize findings and validate patterns observed in primary data.

1.6. Limitations

The limitations of the present research study include the following:

- The study exclusively concentrated on the A2J program implementation areas, omitting non-program areas from the sample. This focus restricts the generalization of the findings, as the sample may not accurately represent the study state.
- The smaller sample size may result in a relatively higher error margin for state-level estimates. A larger sample size at the state level could have reduced this margin of error and allowed for more robust statistical analysis.
- The reported data on the incidence of child marriages at the village level could not be authenticated due to the non-availability of any records maintained at the village/block/district level.
- Along with quantitative data, qualitative insights from stakeholders would have enhanced the understanding of the child marriage situation at the village level and provided deeper context to the findings.

1.7. Initiatives Taken by State Governments Across Country to Prevent Child Marriages

Child marriage persists as a deeply rooted challenge in India, particularly affecting adolescent girls. Even though this issue is prevalent across India, it is highly concentrated in specific states and districts. Decades of policy attention and diverse state responses have shaped evolving patterns across regions, as consistently documented in national surveys and underlined by both domestic and international research.

India has made significant progress in addressing the issue of child marriage, as evidenced in three successive rounds of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS). According to NFHS-5 (2019-21)¹³, child marriage among women aged 20-24 years in India has declined to 23.3 percent, compared to 26.8 percent in NFHS-4 (2015-16)¹⁴. Among men aged 25-29 years married before age 21, the prevalence decreased from 20.3 percent in NFHS-4 to 17.7 percent in NFHS-5. These figures represent a gradual reduction in early marriages over time.

Child marriage in **Assam** has shown a marginally upward trend between NFHS-5 and NFHS-4, after a decline between NFHS-3 and NFHS-4. However, a recent study by India Child Protection (ICP), released in July 2024, and cited in national publications, reported an 81 percent reduction in the incidence of child marriage across 20 districts of Assam between 2021-22 and 2023-24¹⁵. The report credits the state government's assertive legal action, including over 3,000 arrests and a "zero tolerance" approach, for this pronounced decline. The Assam government has also initiated measures to counter child marriage, including the Nijut Moina 2.0 Scheme¹⁶, which provides financial support to girls pursuing education and strengthens incentives to delay marriage. Additionally, District Child Protection Officers have been designated as Child Marriage Prohibition Officers to enhance legal enforcement at the local level. Awareness programs organized by the Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (ASCPCR) further aim to educate communities about the risks and illegality of child marriage.

Bihar continues to rank among the highest prevalence states in India with respect to child marriage prevalence. According to NFHS-3 (2005-06), an overwhelming proportion of women aged

20-24 in Bihar were married before the legal age of 18, estimated at over 60 percent. Subsequent rounds indicated a slow but steady decline, NFHS-4 (2015-16) reported 42.5 percent, and NFHS-5 (2019-21) recorded 40.8 percent of women married before 18 years. The persistence of the issue is heavily attributed to entrenched issues of poverty, socio-economic vulnerability, and conservative socio-cultural norms¹⁷. In order to address these issues, the Bihar government issued a directive saying that if child marriage is reported from a village, the 'mukhiya' (village head) concerned will be held responsible for the illegal act. The government will also initiate proceedings for the removal of the 'mukhiya' and ward members of the panchayat concerned, said the directive issued by the Panchayati Raj Department¹⁸. Another notable effort undertaken is the "Bal Vivah aur Dahej Mukht Hamara Bihar" campaign, which focuses on creating awareness about the legal age of marriage, mobilizing communities, and enforcing the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act. These measures, combined with broader education and empowerment programs, have contributed to delaying marriage among adolescents and young adults. However, despite this progress, child marriage remains prevalent, particularly in rural areas (43.4% as per NFHS-5), where socio-cultural norms continue to influence early marriage practices¹⁹.

Rajasthan features consistently high child marriage prevalence, albeit with a marked decline over the past decade: from 65.2 percent (NFHS-3) to 25.4 percent (NFHS-5) for women aged 20-24. District-level data underscore severe disparities, with some districts having a prevalence of over 40 percent. The Rajasthan government has implemented a multi-pronged strategy comprising community awareness, compulsory marriage registration, integration of child marriage prevention into

13 International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. 2021. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019-21: Indian Volume 1. Mumbai: IIPS

14 International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. 2017. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015-16: India. Mumbai: IIPS.

15 India Child Protection. (2024). Towards justice: Ending child marriages. India Child Protection.

16 Final Guideline for Nijut Moina Scheme 2024-25.

17 UNFPA India. (2022). Child Marriage in Bihar: Key Insights from the NFHS-5 (2019-21). United Nations Population Fund

18 NewsDesk. (2022, July 28). Village heads to be held responsible for child marriages in Bihar. Indian Express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/patna/village-heads-to-be-held-responsible-for-child-marriages-in-bihar-8057709/>

19 International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. 2021. National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5, State and District Factsheets, Bihar. Mumbai: IIPS

local governance, and adoption of village-level child protection committees. Aapki Beti Yojana, a Rajasthan government scheme, provides cash incentives to girls enrolled in classes 1-12 of below poverty line (BPL) households, who are orphans or have one surviving parent, to promote education among girls. The state is also providing skill development programs for adolescents²⁰.

In **Maharashtra**, the downward trend in child marriage is notable, 47.7 percent prevalence among women aged 20–24 in NFHS-3 dropped to 21.8 percent in NFHS-5. The reduction of the incidence of child marriage in Maharashtra reflects the effectiveness of ongoing state and national efforts to curb early marriages, including awareness initiatives under the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign led by the Government of India²¹. In Maharashtra, in a case before the Bombay High Court listed the steps being taken by the government to fight against child marriages²². The Maharashtra government issued a notice for strict implementation of rules, inter-department liaison and officers' training. A notice was published by state women and child development department on October 21, 2022, laying out steps to prevent child marriages called the Maharashtra Prohibition of Child Marriage Rules, 2022. If a child is absent from school for more than 15 days, school authorities need to find out the reason and inform the Child Marriage Prohibition officer. The officers in turn need to keep a check on school dropouts and encourage gram sabhas to pass a resolution against child marriage²³.

At the district level, the Solapur Rural Police Anti-Child Marriage Campaign has played a significant role by actively monitoring potential cases, engaging with families, and intervening to prevent illegal marriages. The campaign works in coordination with local authorities and community organizations, reinforcing the legal framework under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, while promoting social awareness about the harms of early marriage²⁴.

The prevalence of child marriage in **Karnataka** has fallen from 42 percent in NFHS-3 to 21.3 percent in NFHS-5 for women aged 20-24. This reduction can be attributed to the "Spoorthi Scheme", a rights and community-based scheme, combining awareness generation, legal enforcement, and efforts related to the empowerment of girls²⁵. Along with this, marriage registration has been strengthened via Panchayat Development Officers. Additionally, school-based and mass media campaigns reinforce state and district-level actions²⁶. While marriage registration is not mandatory in Karnataka, the government is empowering Panchayat Development Officers (PDO) to register marriages so that record keeping is easier and hassle-free. This helps in maintaining a comprehensive database. Moreover, since the PDOs are closer and known to the villagers, it is easier for them to build awareness around it as well. This resulted in 2000 cases of child marriages being stopped in the state in 2021²⁷.

20 Government of Rajasthan. (2017). State Strategy and Action Plan for Prevention of Child Marriage: Towards creating a child marriage free Rajasthan

21 Bhartia, A., Agarwal, R., & Baruah, R. (2024). The Effectiveness of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme: Evidence from Madhya Pradesh (2015-2023). *Journal of Student Research*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.47611/jsrhs.v13i4.8016>

22 Dodhiya, K.A.Y. (2022, April 18). Bombay HC to state: List steps taken to prohibit child marriages in Maharashtra. *Hindustan Times*. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/bombay-hc-to-state-list-steps-taken-to-prohibit-child-marriages-in-maharashtra-101650294382881.html>.

23 Nambiar, N. (2022, November 1). WCD chief's emphasis on new rules to check child marriage. *Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/wcd-chiefs-emphasis-on-new-rules-to-check-child-marriage/articleshow/95218571.cms>.

24 Solapur Rural Police. (2024). "Balsnehi Award 2024" for Solapur Rural Police – Recognized for outstanding efforts against child marriage. Solapur Police. <https://www.solapurpolice.gov.in/initiatives/67fce13a55b3ebb412bde9b2>

25 Department of Women and Child Development, Karnataka. (n.d.). Details of government orders and guidelines for major schemes and programs of the department. Retrieved from <https://dwcd.karnataka.gov.in/64/details-of-government-orders-and-guidelines-for-major-schemes-and-programs-of-the-department/en>

26 Deccan Herald. (2022, April 16). Now, PDOs can register marriages. *Deccan Herald*. Retrieved from <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/how-pdos-can-register-marriages-1101376.html>

27 NewsDesk. (2022, May 3). A step that could help curb child marriages. *Deccan Herald*. <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/second-edit/a-step-that-could-help-curb-child-marriages-1105917.html>.

As per the existing literature, it can be argued that child marriage is a multi-dimensional issue shaped by region-specific socio-cultural and economic factors. A primary driver remains parental concern for the safety of minor daughters, with many families - particularly from marginalized communities - perceiving early marriage as protection against violence or harassment²⁸. Gender inequality and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms reinforce this practice, as girls are often viewed as economic liabilities while boys are considered assets. For families facing acute financial constraints, marrying daughters early is rationalized as a way to reduce economic burden²⁹.

This can be considered as evidence that girls from the poorest households are at greatest risk of early marriage. Limited access to education further exacerbates vulnerability. In contexts where opportunities and literacy rates for girls are low, marriage becomes the default pathway. The lack of awareness about the benefits of sustained schooling further perpetuates the cycle³⁰. Weak enforcement of existing laws, such as the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, compounds the problem, as informal justice systems often carry more weight than statutory law, undermining effective prevention and accountability³¹.

28 India Child Protection. (2024). Towards justice: Ending child marriages. India Child Protection
29 ICRW. (2006). Child Marriage and Poverty

30 HAQ. (n.d.). Child Marriage in India: Achievements, Gaps and Challenges, Response to Questions for OHCHR Report on Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriages for Twenty-sixth Session of the Human Rights Council
31 Girls Not Brides. (2022). The Status of Child Marriage in India: A Guide for NGOs and CSOs on Using the Law to End Child Marriages in India

SECTION-2

STUDY FINDINGS

Study Findings

This section presents the key findings of the study, highlighting patterns associated with child marriage prevalence, awareness, and community perception across the five study states.

The following sub-sections present detailed findings across the key themes that together provide a comprehensive understanding of the on-ground situation. Each theme includes an overall analysis

followed by a comparative analysis across all five states, facilitating the identification of similarities, differences, and state-specific insights.

2.1. Districts and Profile of Respondents

The study engages with key knowledgeable members of 757 villages across all five states, representing a wide range of community stakeholders. Table 4 shows the sample distribution across the 15 districts.

Table 4: State and district-wise sample covered

State	District	Frequency (N)
Rajasthan	Ajmer	52
	Bundi	51
	Karauli	53
Karnataka	Belgaum	50
	Vijayapur	50
	Yadagiri	51
Bihar	East Champaran	50
	Muzaffarpur	50
	Supaul	50
Assam	Goalpara	50
	Kamrup	50
	Kokrajhar	50
Maharashtra	Beed	50
	Dhule	50
	Solapur	50
Total		757

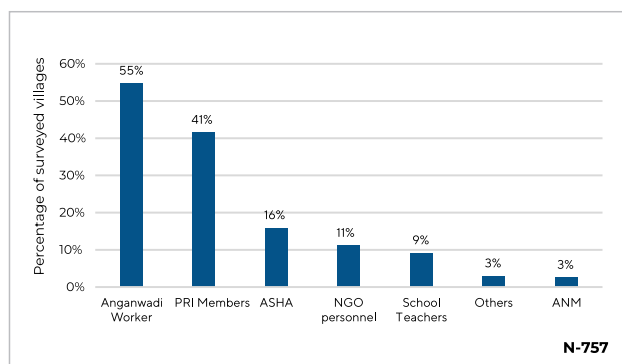
I. Respondent profile

Overall, frontline service providers such as ASHA, ANM, teachers, and PRI members (including Sarpanch/Village head, Ward members, and other PRI members) were approached to gather village-level data. Across 757 villages in the five states, Anganwadi workers (in 55% of the total

surveyed villages) formed the major proportion of the respondent pool. This category was followed by PRI members, who responded in 41 percent of surveyed villages, and ASHAs, who responded to the surveys in 16 percent of the total villages. The overall distribution of profiles of respondents surveyed in the study area is presented in Graph 1.

At the state level, **Anganwadi Workers** dominated in Karnataka (84% of 151 surveyed villages) followed by Bihar (61% of 150 surveyed villages) and Rajasthan (55% of 156 surveyed villages). However, their presence was relatively lower in Maharashtra (41% of 150 surveyed villages) and Assam (33% of 150 surveyed villages).

Graph 1: Distribution of respondents' profiles across five states



Note: Total may exceed 100% due to multiple choice responses

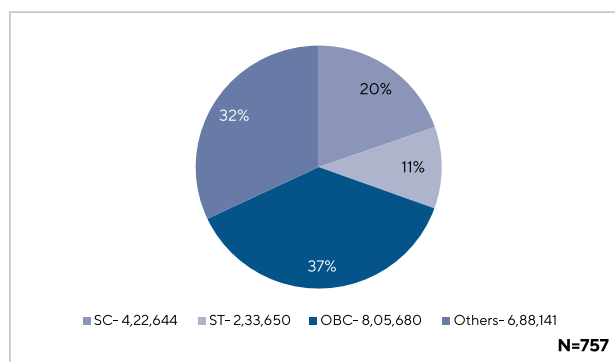
Apart from Anganwadi workers, Bihar also observed strong participation from PRI Members (51% of 150 surveyed villages). In Rajasthan higher participation from PRI members (65% of 156 surveyed villages), was followed by ASHAs (38% of 156 surveyed villages) and NGO personnels working in the village (34% of 156 surveyed villages). Assam presented the most diverse mix, led by PRI Members (44% of 150 surveyed villages) and Anganwadi workers. In contrast, the respondent profile in Karnataka was heavily skewed toward Anganwadi Workers, with minimal participation from other local government officials. The distribution of respondents' profiles surveyed in each of the five states is presented in Table 1A ([Annexure](#)).

II. Village and Child Population Profile

The survey captured data on the socio-demographic profile and population of children for the sampled locations. The information was captured based on respondents' recollection, with the numbers provided being approximate estimates. These details facilitate gathering insights on the village composition and potential risk factors for child marriage.

In the overall sample of 757 surveyed villages, "OBCs" form the largest group, comprising 37 percent of the population, followed by "Others" (including the General category and groups other than SC, ST, and OBC) at 32 percent. "Scheduled Castes (SCs)" account for 20 percent, while "Scheduled Tribes (STs)" represent 11 percent. Graph 2 illustrates the caste-wise composition across the study locations.

Graph 2: Overall caste-composition across five states



Interstate variations are evident in caste composition. The population of villages surveyed in **Assam** stands out with a predominance of "Others (including General category and categories other than SC, ST, and OBC)" (78%), while OBCs (8%) and SCs (3%) have minimal representation.

In sharp contrast, the population of villages surveyed in Rajasthan (52%) and Bihar (49%) features strong concentrations of OBCs and SCs (28% in each state), with STs having a marginal representation.

The population of villages surveyed in **Karnataka** displays the most balanced profile among the surveyed states, with OBCs accounting for 43 percent, "Others (including General category and categories other than SC, ST, and OBC)" at 21 percent, SCs at 19 percent, and STs at 17 percent. **Maharashtra** also shows a relatively even spread, with "Others (including General category and categories other than SC, ST, and OBC)" at 37 percent, OBCs at 30 percent, SCs at 16 percent, and STs at 17 percent of the total population of surveyed villages.

The state-level distribution of caste-composition is depicted in Table 2A ([Annexure](#)).

In order to assess the representativeness of sampled villages within the state, a comparison of the percentage of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population in these villages has been made to the state level averages as per Census 2011. Findings indicate that the sampled population closely represents the demographic structure of the

state, as there are nominal discrepancies between the proportions of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population in the sample and those reported in the Census 2011. However, some state-level values show slightly larger variations, particularly in the percentage of Scheduled Caste population in Bihar and Rajasthan, as well as the percentage of Scheduled Tribe populations in Karnataka and Maharashtra.

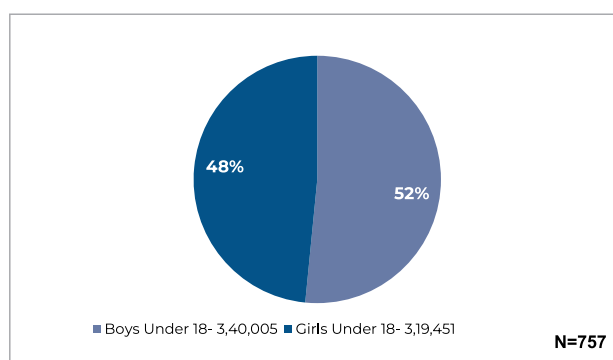
Table 5: Sample representativeness

States	Percent Scheduled Caste		Percent Scheduled Tribe	
	As per Census 2011	As per present survey	As per Census 2011	As per present survey
Assam	7%	3%	12%	11%
Bihar	16%	28%	1%	1%
Karnataka	17%	19%	7%	17%
Maharashtra	12%	16%	9%	17%
Rajasthan	18%	28%	13%	8%
India (Overall)	17%	20%	9%	11%

Proportion of Children (Under 18 Years) in the Total Population

The survey captured details of the child population under 18 years across states. Graph 3 presents this distribution across the five study states. At the aggregate level, across 757 villages, a total of 6,59,456 children were reported, with 52 percent of boys under 18 years and 48 percent of girls under 18 years of age. In each state, the data shows a relatively balanced gender distribution for children under the age of 18 years (Table 3A [Annexure](#)).

Graph 3: Overall proportion of children under the age of 18 (boys and girls) across five states



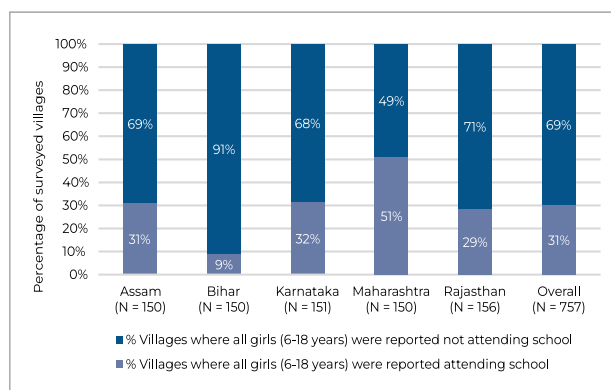
2.2. State of Schooling of Girls

The study further examines the status of schooling of girls across the five focus states, with particular attention to the number of girls not attending school, as well as the key barriers and contextual factors influencing the education of girls.

As shown in Graph 4, across the total sample of 757 surveyed villages, only 31 percent confirmed that all girls in this age group are attending school.

Inter-state comparison reveals substantial variation in the proportion of respondents reporting full school attendance among girls aged 6-18. **Maharashtra** stands out with the highest share, as respondents from 51 percent of surveyed villages reported full attendance. On the other hand, **Karnataka** (32% of surveyed villages) and **Assam** (31% of surveyed villages) hover around the overall average of 31 percent of total surveyed villages. **Rajasthan** fares slightly lower at 29 percent of surveyed villages, but **Bihar** records the lowest proportion at just 9 percent of surveyed villages.

Graph 4: Proportion of villages reporting school attendance among girls aged 6-18 years



In villages where not all girls aged 6-18 years go to school, the number of out-of-school girls varies from state to state, with the highest number of dropouts recorded in **Bihar** (5,781), followed by **Rajasthan** (1,627), **Assam** (1,127), **Karnataka** (1,051), and **Maharashtra** (888). These findings, summarized in Table 6, represent the significant disparities in access to education and retention for girls across different regions, pointing towards the need for state-specific strategies to address these gaps.

Table 6: Number of girls not attending school

States	Number of villages where at least 1 girl (6-18 years) was reported not going to school	Number of girls aged (6-18) not attending school
Assam	103	1,127
Bihar	136	5,781
Karnataka	103	1,051
Maharashtra	73	888
Rajasthan	111	1,627
Overall (N)	526	10,474

The Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 (RTE Act) in India establishes a justiciable legal framework that guarantees free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14 years. However, there is no specific government

program or regulatory framework in place to provide free and mandatory education for children older than 14. This makes children above 14 years of age, especially girls, more vulnerable to various types of exploitation, especially marriage.

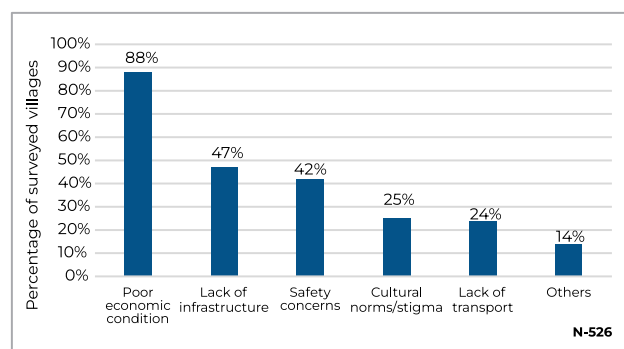
The latest report of the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) for the year 2024-25 indicates that the dropout rate for girls at the secondary level (Standards 9-10) is 10 percent, compared to less than one percent at the primary level (Standards 1-5) and three percent at the upper primary level (Standards 6-8). This data reveals that the dropout rate for girls in secondary education is three times higher than in upper primary education.

Triangulation of the present study results with the RTE Act and the latest UDISE+ report reveals that while the Right to Education Act protects access to education for girls up to the age of 14 or completion of the eighth standard, the dropout rate increases significantly thereafter. This suggests that a substantial number of girls who are reported not attending school during the survey are likely to be over 14 years of age, having exceeded the age limit specified in the RTE Act, which guarantees free and compulsory education.

Reasons for girls not going to school

Of the total villages surveyed, in 526 villages where full school attendance was not achieved (69% of total surveyed villages), the most cited barriers were poor economic conditions (88% of such villages) and inadequate infrastructure (47% of such villages), followed by safety concerns (42% of such villages), cultural norms or stigma (25% of such villages), and lack of transportation (24% of such villages). This finding (Graph 5) indicates that universal school attendance for girls remains an unmet objective in most villages, signaling a significant gap in educational inclusion at the grassroots level.

Graph 5: Reasons for not going girls (6-18 years) to school



Note: Total may exceed 100% due to multiple choice responses

The reasons for not sending girls (aged 6-18 years) to schools for each of the surveyed states are depicted in Table 4A ([Annexure](#)). Across all states, among villages where not all girls were going to school, **poor economic conditions** emerged as the most significant barrier, in Bihar (100% of such villages), followed by Assam (89% of such villages), Maharashtra (89% of such villages), and Rajasthan (84% of such villages). Inadequate **infrastructure** was found to be one of the prominent reasons in Assam (83% of such villages) and Karnataka (72% of such villages). On the other hand, **safety concerns** were also cited in Karnataka (59% of such villages), Rajasthan (44% of such villages), and Maharashtra (44% of such villages). **Cultural norms and stigma** emerged as the second most reported concern in Rajasthan (50% of such villages). These differences emphasize that the challenges to girls' education are influenced by a distinct mix of economic, infrastructural, cultural, and safety factors in each state. As such, targeted, context-specific interventions to improve girls' school attendance rates are crucial.

In summary, a state-wise comparison indicates that Bihar faces the most critical challenges in girls' schooling, primarily due to severe economic constraints and safety concerns. Assam and Rajasthan report moderate gaps, with infrastructure limitations and cultural norms playing significant roles. Karnataka reflects a combination of infrastructure and safety-related barriers.

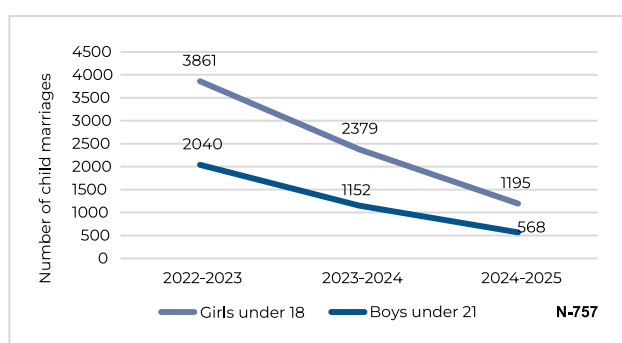
2.3. Prevalence of Child Marriage

The respondents were asked to recall and report the number of child marriages that took place in their respective villages during the last three financial years, i.e., 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25. Information was collected separately for **girls below the age of 18** and **boys below the age of 21 years**. These figures represent respondents' best recollections and should be interpreted as approximate numbers. The following section summarizes the average number of child marriages reported by respondents over the past three years, emphasizing emerging trends, community perceptions, and variations at the state level.

I. Number of child marriage cases (girls and boys) in the last 3 years (as reported by respondents)

As shown in Graph 6, between 2022-23 and 2024-25, child marriages among girls and boys have declined overall, though the magnitude and current prevalence vary across states. **For girls, the total number of child marriages declined by 69 percent.** Similarly, **the incidence of child marriage among boys declined by 72 percent.**

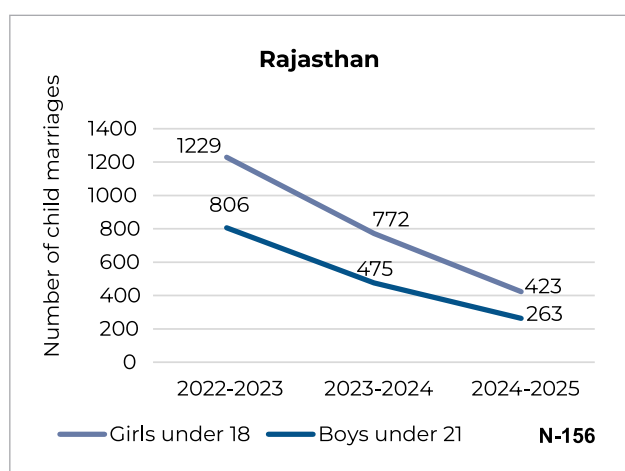
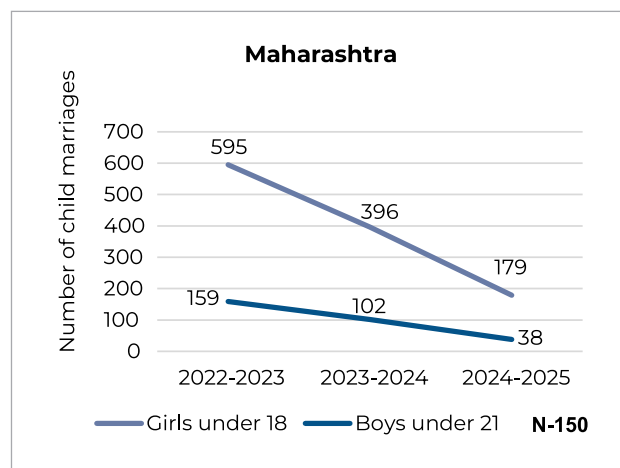
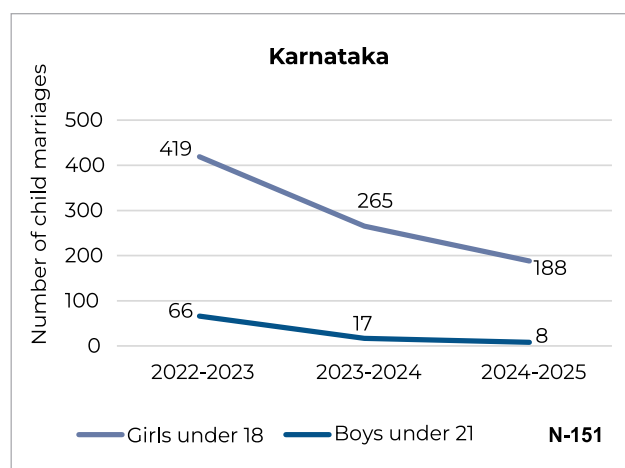
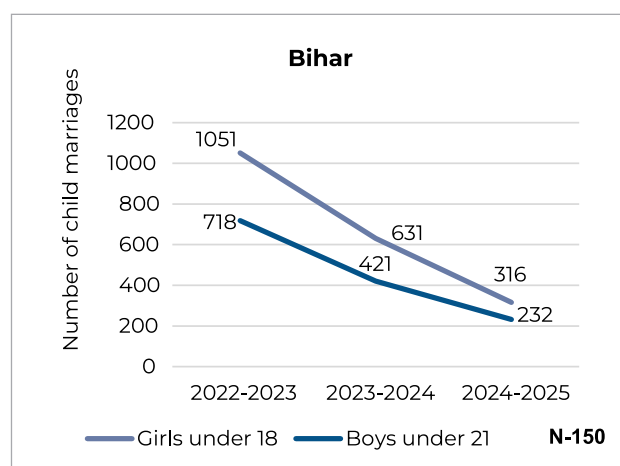
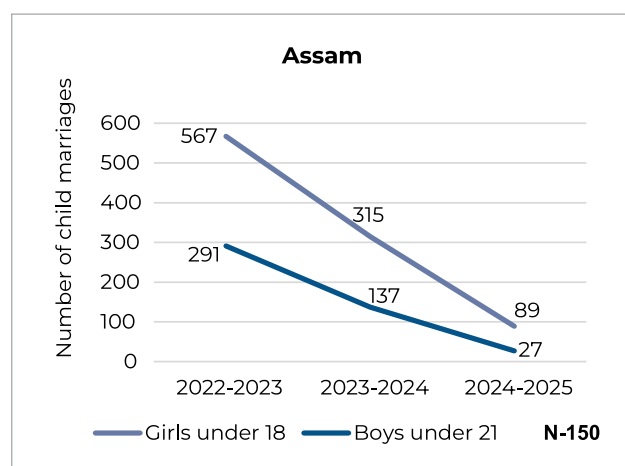
Graph 6: Child Marriages below legal age in last 3 years (2022-2025)



Inter-state comparisons (Graph 7) indicate significant variations in both the magnitude of reduction and the current prevalence of child marriage. With regards to **the incidence of child marriage for girls under 18 in the last 3 years**, **Assam** saw the highest reduction at 84 percent, followed by **Maharashtra** (70%), **Bihar** (70%), **Rajasthan** (66%), and **Karnataka** (55%). Interestingly, despite an overall decline in the number of cases, Bihar and Rajasthan consistently reported the highest incidence of girl-child marriage across the five states over the past three years.

The decline in the **incidence of child marriage for boys under 21** was also reported to be the highest in **Assam** (91%), followed by **Karnataka** (88%), **Maharashtra** (76%), **Bihar** (68%), and **Rajasthan** (67%). The trend observed in the incidence of girl-child marriage is mirrored in the case of boy-child marriage as well, wherein, despite a steady decline, Bihar and Rajasthan continue to have the highest absolute number of child marriage cases across the five states over the past three years.

Graph 7: Trend in child marriages of girls under 18 and boys under 21 in last 3 years (2022-2025)



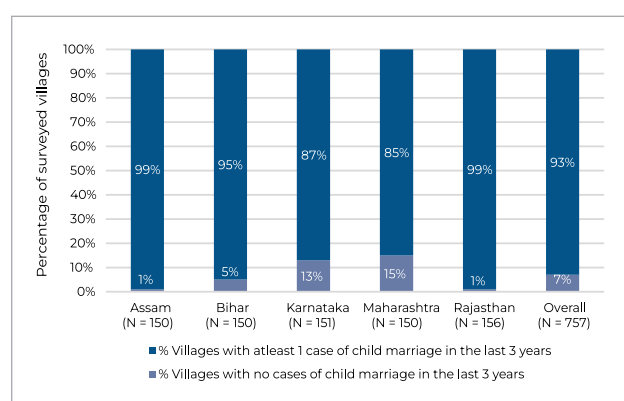
Comparing the prevalence of child marriage among boys and girls across the five states, it is observed that the girls remain disproportionately affected by early marriage. Further investigation of the findings from the study points out the critical connection between the state of education of girls and the incidence of girl-child marriage. A total of 5,781 girls aged 6-18 years in Bihar and 1,627 girls in Rajasthan were reported to be out of school. Limited educational opportunities, compounded by household-level challenges such as financial constraints, concerns around safety, and reliance on girls for domestic labor, create conditions where early marriage is perceived as a viable option.

II. Reasons for Early Marriage (community perceptions)

The present study aimed at documenting not just the prevalence of child marriage but also tried to examine the underlying factors contributing to this practice.

Across 757 surveyed villages, respondents from 7 percent of the villages reported that there have been no incidences of child marriage for girls under 18 in the last three years.

Graph 8: Villages with cases of child marriages in the last 3 years



Data shows that across states, the highest proportion of villages with no reported incidences of child marriage for girls were in **Maharashtra** (15% of surveyed villages) and **Karnataka** (13% of surveyed villages). This was followed by **Bihar** (5%) In contrast, only in 1 percent of the surveyed villages in **Assam** and **Rajasthan** no child marriage was being conducted.

However, in villages where instances of child marriage continued to be reported (707 villages out of 757 surveyed villages), the study examined the community-level perceptions to shed light on the reasons driving girl-child marriage. Table 7 shows that socio-economic, cultural, and familial factors collectively drive early marriage of girls.

Overall, *poverty or poor financial condition* emerges as the most dominant driver of child marriage, cited by 91 percent of the respondents reflecting the critical impact of economic hardship. In addition, 44 percent of the respondents cited the desire to *provide protection* while 28 percent linked early marriage to *notions of purity*. Additional factors include *limited parental awareness or intellectual maturity* (28% of villages), *inadequate educational opportunities for girls* (27% of villages), and *restricted occupational prospects* (21% of villages), all emphasizing the interconnectedness of education, awareness, and economic security. Factors such as *securing a good match* (33% of villages), *cultural or traditional practices* (20% of villages), *controlling sexual behavior and premarital pregnancy* (15% of villages), *perceiving girls as a burden and challenges in finding matches for educated or older girls* (15% of villages for each) also play a notable role.

State wise data shows that **poverty or poor financial conditions** were the most frequently cited reason for child marriage across all five states. It was reported in 95 percent of surveyed villages in **Assam**, 91 percent in **Rajasthan**, 90 percent in both **Bihar** and **Maharashtra**, and 87 percent in **Karnataka**, indicating that economic hardship compels families to marry off girls before the age of 18.

Concerns regarding **protection and social norms** were also significant. Early marriage as a means of protecting girls was reported in 53 percent of the surveyed villages from Assam and Bihar, followed by 42 percent in Karnataka, 39 percent in Rajasthan, and 34 percent in Maharashtra.

Similarly, the belief that marrying girls early **ensures purity** was reported mostly in Rajasthan (45% of surveyed villages) and Bihar (39% of surveyed

villages). While **controlling sexual behavior or preventing premarital pregnancy** was reported in Assam (21% of surveyed villages) and Karnataka (22% of surveyed villages).

Educational and occupational limitations were other major factors. **Lack of access to education** was cited by respondents from, 40 percent in Karnataka followed by 38 percent in Assam, and 34 percent in Bihar. However, in Maharashtra (18% of surveyed villages) and Rajasthan (6% of surveyed villages), a comparatively lower proportion of respondents reported this reason. **Lack of occupational**

opportunities followed a similar trend, pointing out that limited vocational prospects reinforce early marriage decisions for girls.

Cultural and traditional practices were particularly influential in Rajasthan, where respondents from 45 percent of the surveyed villages identified them as a reason for early marriage, compared to only 24 percent in Karnataka and 15 percent in Bihar. On the other hand, **securing a “good match”** was highly cited in Bihar (65% of surveyed villages) and Maharashtra (37% of surveyed villages), with only 25 percent of villages citing it as a reason in Rajasthan.

Table 7: Reasons for prevalence of child marriage among girls under 18

Reasons for households marrying their girls before 18 years	Assam (N-149)		Bihar (N-143)		Karnataka (N-132)		Maharashtra (N-128)		Rajasthan (N-155)		Overall (N-707)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Poverty or poor financial condition of the family	141	95%	128	90%	115	87%	115	90%	141	91%	640	91%
Marriage provides protection to a girl	79	53%	76	53%	55	42%	43	34%	60	39%	313	44%
Marrying girls at an early age ensures purity	30	20%	56	39%	35	27%	7	5%	69	45%	197	28%
To control sexual behavior and premarital pregnancy	32	21%	26	18%	29	22%	7	5%	9	6%	103	15%
Less dowry for underage girls	6	4%	21	15%	38	29%	16	13%	7	5%	88	12%
Lack of educational opportunities for girls	56	38%	48	34%	53	40%	23	18%	10	6%	190	27%
Lack of occupational opportunities for girls	48	32%	43	30%	38	29%	5	4%	13	8%	147	21%
Cultural and traditional/religious practice	8	5%	22	15%	32	24%	11	9%	70	45%	143	20%
Lack of intellectual maturity among parents/caregivers	50	34%	50	35%	51	39%	37	29%	13	8%	201	28%
Found a good match or secure girl's future	28	19%	93	65%	27	20%	47	37%	38	25%	233	33%
Girls are considered a burden on their families	11	7%	44	31%	17	13%	25	20%	7	5%	104	15%
Difficult to find a match for educated or higher-aged girls	19	13%	52	36%	13	10%	11	9%	14	9%	109	15%
Others	14	9%	5	3%	8	6%	4	3%	43	28%	74	10%

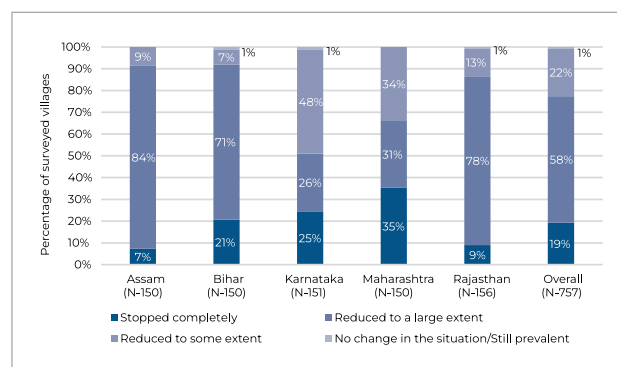
III. Changes observed in the last 3-4 years in the incidence of child marriage

The survey also sought to capture perceptions of respondents regarding the prevalence of child marriage in their villages. These perceptions reflect lived experiences and localized observations, which often provide a more nuanced understanding of change than what is revealed through large-scale quantitative data alone.

As shown in Graph 9, respondents across the 757 surveyed villages reported that in majority of the villages (58%) child marriage had “*reduced to a large extent*.” In 22 percent of villages, respondents noted a “*reduction to some extent*,” while in 19 percent they reported that child marriage had “*stopped completely*.” Only in one percent of the surveyed villages were reported to have “*no change in the situation*” over the last three to four years.

State level analysis indicates that in comparison to other states, **Assam**, **Rajasthan** and **Bihar** recorded the highest proportions of villages where respondents reported a significant decline in incidences of child marriage, with 84 percent, 78 percent and 71 percent, respectively, indicating a “*large extent of reduction*”. On the other hand, data shows that in **Maharashtra** 35 percent of the respondents reported that in their village child marriage had “*completely stopped*”. **Karnataka** revealed a mixed scenario, with nearly half of the respondents noting “*reduction in the incidence of child marriage to some extent*” along with a sizeable share (25% of surveyed villages) indicating that child marriage had “*stopped completely*”. These variations point out that while progress is evident across states, the pace and extent of change vary significantly, emphasizing the need for tailored, state-specific strategies to combat the issue of child marriage.

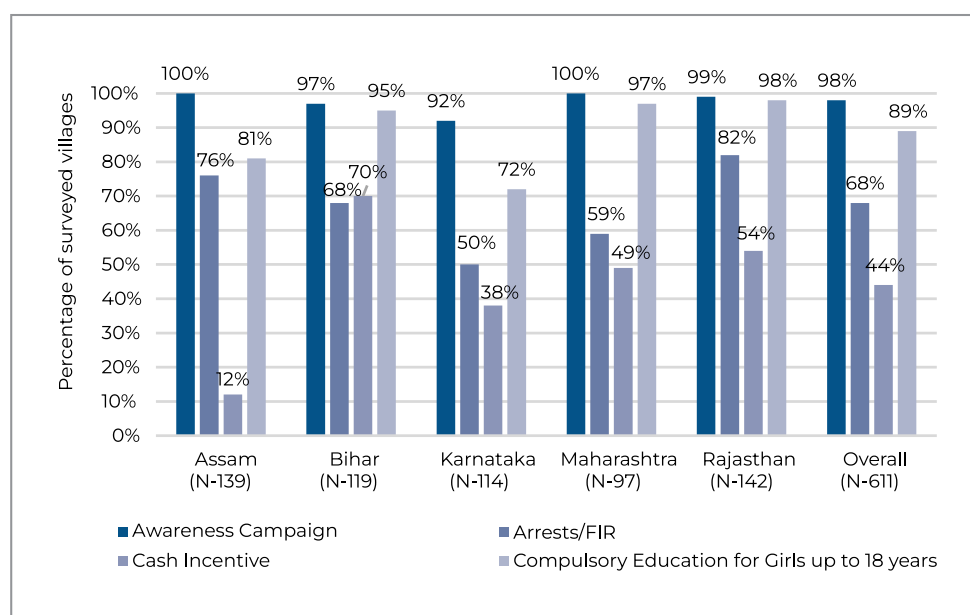
Graph 9: Changes in the incidence of child marriage over 3-4 Years



2.4. Perception of respondents about the actions that may help in addressing the incidence of child marriage

The respondents who did not report complete cessation of the child-marriage instances in their village were inquired about potential interventions they believed could help reduce incidence of child marriage. The study indicates that respondents identified multiple actions to be effective in addressing the incidence of child marriage, with notable variations across states (Graph 10).

Among the 611 villages (out of 757 surveyed) that did not report complete elimination of child marriage cases, nearly all respondents identified “*awareness campaigns*” (98%) and “*compulsory education for girls up to 18 years*” (89%) as the most impactful interventions. “*Arrests and FIRs*” were also cited as substantial deterrents by 68 percent of the respondents, while cash incentives were perceived to be an impactful approach by 44 percent of the respondents.

Graph 10: Respondent perceptions on ways to reduce child marriage

State-level analysis highlights nuanced differences in the prioritization of interventions. Almost all respondents across the five states **Awareness campaigns** as an effective measure to prevent child marriage.

In contrast, perceptions regarding the effectiveness of **arrests and FIRs** varied considerably, with the highest support in Rajasthan (82%) and the lowest in Karnataka (50%).

Cash incentives emerged as the most favored intervention in Bihar (70%) followed by Rajasthan (54%), Maharashtra (49%) and Karnataka (38%), but was viewed as considerably less effective in Assam (12%).

Compulsory education received strong support across all states, particularly in Maharashtra (97%) and Bihar (95%), while Karnataka reported the lowest, though still substantial, endorsement from 72 percent of the villages.

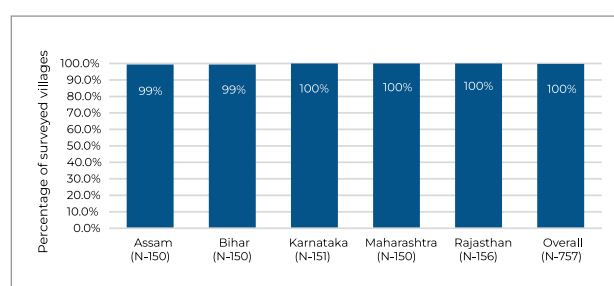
2.5. Awareness Efforts

I. Awareness about laws against child marriages

After identifying the range of interventions that villagers perceive as most effective in addressing child marriage, it is essential to examine the foundational knowledge shaping these perceptions. The success of any intervention strategy is closely

tied to the community's awareness of the laws governing child marriage, as well-informed stakeholders are more likely to endorse and actively participate in prevention efforts.

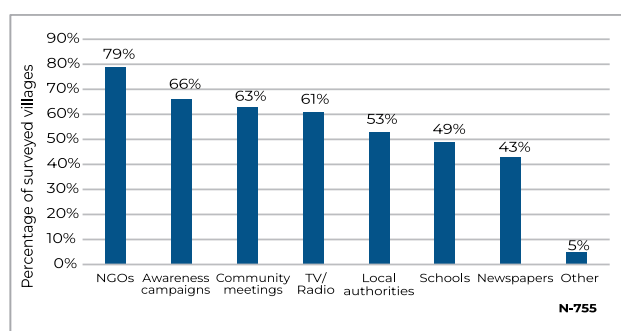
Graph 11 represents awareness of child marriage laws among surveyed villages, with approximately 100 percent of respondents indicating knowledge of the relevant legislation. This high level of legal literacy forms a strong basis for advancing policy enforcement and advocacy efforts.

Graph 11: Awareness about laws against child marriage

Understanding the channels through which respondents have acquired their knowledge of child marriage laws is crucial for informing future awareness strategies, especially considering the high level of legal awareness reported across all surveyed states. As highlighted above, respondents from 755 villages out of the 757 surveyed villages

reported being aware of the laws against child marriage. Respondents of these 755 villages were further probed to identify multiple sources through which they had learned about these laws (Graph 12). Overall, the data reveal that respondents rely on a diverse range of sources for information about laws against child marriage, with NGOs (79%), awareness campaigns (66%), and community meetings (63%) identified as leading channels across the surveyed villages. These sources were followed by TV/ radio (61%), Local authorities (53%), and schools (49%).

Graph 12: Sources of information on child marriage laws



Note: Total may exceed 100% due to multiple choice responses

Examining state-level variation, Bihar, **Maharashtra** and **Karnataka** are distinguished by high engagement with NGOs (89%, 81% and 79% respectively). Local authorities have been successful in disseminating information about child marriage laws as reported by majority in Maharashtra (73%) and Karnataka (63%). **Bihar** also demonstrates the strongest reliance on community meetings (82%) but lower engagement with schools (33%). TV/ radio also emerged as a primary source in **Assam** (92%) and **Rajasthan** (71%). However, Rajasthan also reports significant influence from awareness campaigns (72%) and community meetings (69%). The state-wise variation is explained in Table 5A ([Annexure](#)).

This emphasizes distinct preferences and outreach strategies across regions. While NGOs and awareness campaigns are consistently influential, states differ markedly in their reliance on local authorities, community meetings, and schools. These trends stress the necessity for multi-channel approaches tailored to regional dynamics in promoting legal literacy around child marriage.

II. Reporting of the instances of child marriage

The success of child marriage prevention relies not only on awareness of its risks but also on the ability of the community members and their confidence to report such cases. Assessing their knowledge of reporting channels and comfort in approaching authorities offers key insights into how accessible these mechanisms are.

a. Awareness of Reporting Channels for Child Marriage Cases

The study highlights that respondents across all five states demonstrate considerable awareness regarding where the instances of child marriage can be reported, though the prominence of specific reporting channels varies by state. As shown in Graph 13, overall, *local police stations* (80% of the surveyed villages) and *NGOs working on child rights* (73% of surveyed villages) were most frequently cited as primary reporting avenues. The state-wise distribution is shown in Table 6A ([Annexure](#)).

Assam, shows high reliance on *local police stations* (93% of the surveyed villages) and NGOs (79% of the surveyed villages). However, knowledge of specialized mechanisms like *Child Welfare Committees* (31% of the surveyed villages) and *helplines* (22% of the surveyed villages) is considerably lower.

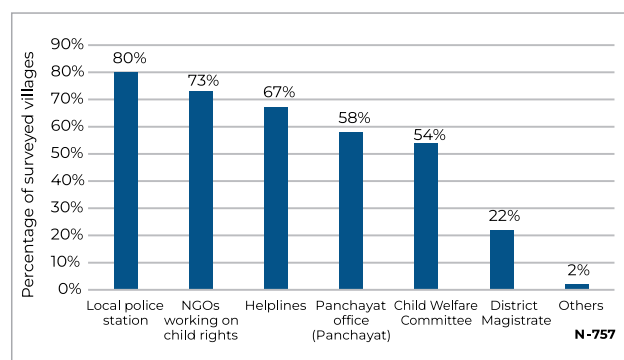
Bihar exhibits strong awareness of multiple channels, with *local police stations* (86% of the surveyed villages), NGOs (84% of the surveyed villages), *helplines* (80% of the surveyed villages), and the *Panchayat office* (54% of the surveyed villages) being commonly recognized.

Karnataka showed a slightly different pattern, where *helplines* (75% of the surveyed villages) and the *Child Welfare Committee* (53% of the surveyed villages) were cited more often than *local police stations* (40% of the surveyed villages).

In **Maharashtra**, the majority of respondents mentioned *local police stations* (95% of the surveyed villages), followed by NGOs (80% of the surveyed villages), and the *Child Welfare Committee* (79% of the surveyed villages).

Rajasthan demonstrates strong awareness of *local police stations* (87% of the surveyed villages), *helplines* (85% of the surveyed villages), and *Panchayat offices* (76% of the surveyed villages) as a channel for reporting child marriage.

Graph 13: Awareness of reporting channels for the instances of child marriage



Note: Total may exceed 100% due to multiple choice responses

While all respondents from the four states, i.e. Assam, Bihar, Maharashtra and Rajasthan reported local police stations as the main channel for reporting cases of child marriage, respondents in Karnataka, relied relatively more on helplines and the Child Welfare Committee. These patterns reflect state-level variations in outreach, accessibility and local engagement of different reporting channels.

b. Level of Comfort in Reporting Child Marriage Cases

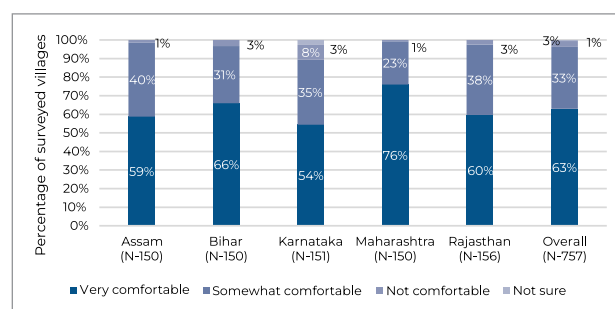
Understanding where to report child marriage cases is only one aspect of an effective reporting system, equally important is examining whether community members feel comfortable actually utilizing these mechanisms when confronted with such situations. The level of comfort in reporting child marriage cases and the barriers encountered reveal distinct state-level patterns.

The majority of respondents across surveyed villages express strong comfort in reporting child marriage cases, with 63 percent indicating they are very comfortable and another 33 percent stated being somewhat comfortable. Instances of discomfort (3%) and uncertainty (1%) are minimal, reflecting a generally positive climate for reporting and intervention.

As depicted in Graph 14, **Maharashtra** reported the highest proportion of respondents from of the surveyed villages (76%) feeling *very comfortable* in approaching authorities, followed by **Bihar** (66% of the surveyed villages), **Rajasthan** (60% of the surveyed villages), **Assam** (59% of the surveyed villages), and **Karnataka** (54% of the surveyed villages).

Notably, Karnataka registers the largest share of respondents expressing *not being comfortable* (8% of the surveyed villages) or *uncertainty* (3% of the surveyed villages), indicating comparatively lower confidence in local authorities. This corroborates the earlier analysis of awareness of reporting channels, where respondents from Karnataka show greater reliance on helplines and the Child Welfare Committee rather than direct engagement with local authorities, highlighting the critical link between trust in reporting mechanisms and respondents' comfort in utilizing them.

Graph 14: Comfort of respondents in reporting child marriage cases



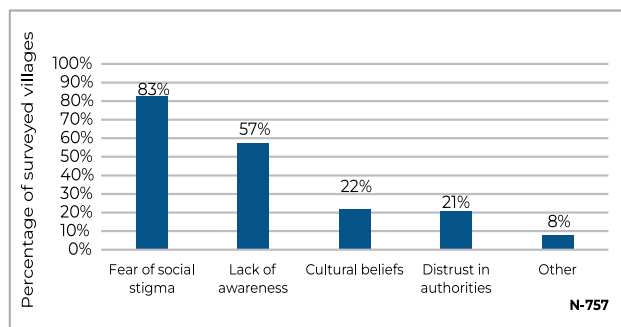
c. Barriers in reporting child marriage cases

While comfort levels in reporting provide insight into community readiness to take action against child marriage, understanding the specific obstacles that prevent or discourage reporting is essential for developing targeted interventions to strengthen reporting mechanisms. Hence, the survey attempted to understand these barriers preventing people from reporting child marriage across the states.

As shown in Graph 15, the **fear of social stigma** is the most significant barrier to reporting child marriage cases, cited by 83 percent of respondents across the surveyed villages. **Lack of awareness** also poses a substantial challenge, affecting 57 percent of the

respondents in the of surveyed villages. **Cultural beliefs** (22%) and **distrust in authorities** (21%) are less widespread but still notable impediments to reporting.

Graph 15: Barriers that prevent people from reporting child marriage



Note: Total may exceed 100% due to multiple choice responses

A closer look at the state-level data (Table 7A [Annexure](#)), highlights that *distrust in authorities* is a relatively more prominent barrier in Karnataka (36% of the surveyed villages) in comparison to the other four states. This is consistent with the lower comfort levels in approaching authorities for reporting child marriage in Karnataka vis-a-vis other states.

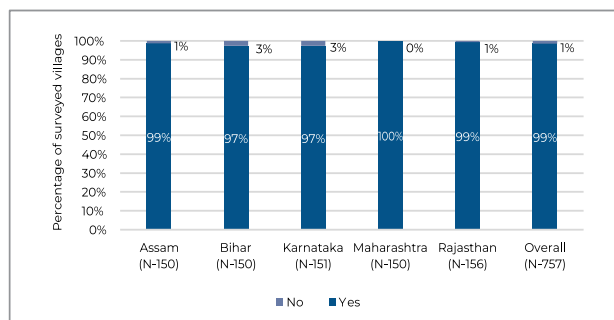
Cultural beliefs were reported as one of the notable barriers in Rajasthan (40% of the surveyed villages) and Karnataka (37% of the surveyed villages), which aligns with earlier findings showing that cultural and traditional practices were cited as key reasons for early marriage in these states. Other barriers, such as procedural difficulties or family pressure, are relatively less common but present in Rajasthan (19% of the surveyed villages) and Maharashtra (11% of the surveyed villages).

III. Exposure to Government Campaigns (Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat)

Given the critical role of awareness campaigns in shaping community perceptions and behaviors regarding child marriage, it becomes important to assess the reach and effectiveness of specific government initiatives designed to address this issue. As depicted in Graph 16, respondents across all five states demonstrated high exposure to government-led campaigns against child marriage (Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat), with nearly universal awareness reported in Maharashtra (100% of the

surveyed villages), Rajasthan (99% of the surveyed villages) and Assam (99% of the surveyed villages), followed by Karnataka (97% of the surveyed villages), and Bihar (97% of the surveyed villages).

Graph 16: Awareness of campaigns against child marriage



Beyond measuring the reach of the government-led campaigns (Bal Vivah Mukh Bharat), understanding which organizations or entities were responsible for its implementation provides valuable insights into the most effective delivery mechanisms for government initiatives. Out of the 757 surveyed villages, 746 villages reported being aware of the government-led campaigns. These 746 villages were further inquired about who organized these campaigns and their level of engagement.

As shown in Graph 17, overall, **NGOs** emerged as the leading organizers of campaigns against child marriage, being involved in 84 percent of villages. **Schools and Panchayats** were also significant contributors, each highlighted in 64 percent of villages, illustrating the critical role of educational institutions and local governance structures in awareness efforts. **District or block government officials** organized campaigns in 37 percent of villages, while other organizers were reported by only six percent.

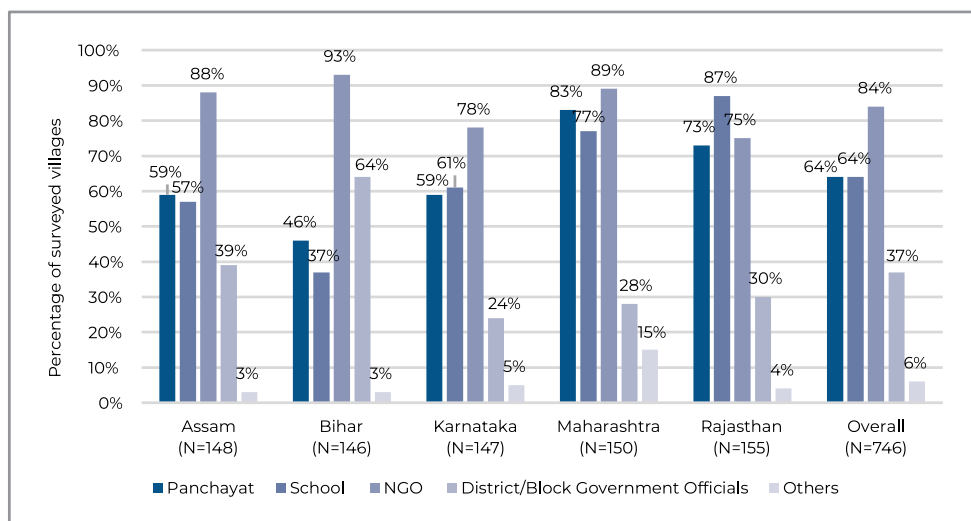
NGOs, as campaign organizers were prominent particularly in Bihar (93%) Maharashtra (89%) and Assam (88%), followed closely by, Karnataka (78%) and Rajasthan (75%).

Furthermore, **schools** also played a significant role, with the highest participation in Rajasthan (87% of

the surveyed villages aware of the government-led campaigns) and Maharashtra (77% of the surveyed villages aware of the government-led campaigns). **Panchayats** were notably active in Maharashtra (83% of the surveyed villages aware of the government-led campaigns) and Rajasthan (73% of the surveyed

villages aware of the government-led campaigns), whereas **government officials at the district/block level** had comparatively lower involvement across all states, ranging from 24 percent in Karnataka to 64 percent in Bihar.

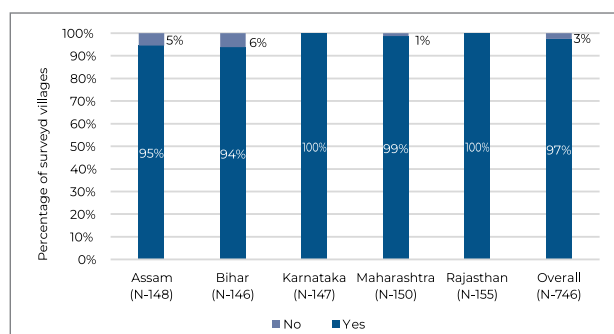
Graph 17: Organizers of child marriage campaigns



Beyond identifying the key implementers of awareness campaigns against child marriage, assessing the level of active participation through pledge-taking serves as a crucial measure of campaign effectiveness and public commitment to addressing this issue.

As captured in Graph 18, among the villages where respondents had seen or heard about campaigns against child marriage, **97 percent reported active participation in pledge-taking activities.**

Graph 18: Participation in pledge against child marriage



SECTION-3

**CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 Conclusions

India is making significant progress towards elimination of child marriage. The all-round efforts made by the central and state governments and civil society organizations in India are resulting in a successful reduction of the incidence of child marriages since the last round of the National Family Health Survey in 2019-21. Prosecution measures adopted by various states have proven effective, serving as a strong deterrent in areas where child marriage is common as shown through the study. Use of mass and social media campaigns to publicize child marriage incidences and prohibition interventions and actions have yielded national level awareness and urgency on eradication of child marriage.

To further accelerate progress and achieve the goal of zero child marriages in India, it is crucial that interventions encompass a multifaceted approach and are sustained through government and civil society collaboration, implementing the mandate of the Supreme Court judgment in the SEVA vs Union of India (SCC Online 2024 2922) case in its entirety. The significant success and outreach of the Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign of the Government of India, needs to be bolstered and amplified through concrete actions in prevention, prohibition and prosecution of child marriages through the exclusive Child Marriage Prohibition Officers and other duty bearers. Investing in girls' education is the fundamental to ensure girls' agency and empowerment, and a critical tool to keep girls in school and away from the risks of child marriage.

3.2 Recommendations

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of multifaceted context driven interventions that are guided by the national legal frameworks, enforcement mechanisms, and acknowledge the deep-rooted complexities with many actors and diverse motivations. Against this backdrop, the following priorities for action for policy, investments in institutions, capacity building and convergence

among the range of stakeholders, knowledge and awareness generation, education support, and use of technology aimed at preventing child marriages– and ultimately a just and safe world for all the children.

A. ENFORCEMENT OF CHILD MARRIAGE LAW

(i) **Strict Enforcement of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA):**

To effectively combat the issue of child marriage, it is crucial to strictly implement the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 across India. Any person who performs or conducts child marriages, such as priests, or persons/organizations who promote or permit child marriages, such as parents/ guardians/ relatives/ neighbors/ middlemen, must face stricter punishment as per the Act. This approach will convey a strong deterrent message across the country. Widespread awareness campaigns should accompany enforcement measures to educate people about the legal consequences of child marriage.

(ii) **Amendments in Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA):**

Though the current Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) is comprehensive enough, it requires a certain amendment to expand its scope. Specifically, the current PCMA needs to be amended to include the following:

- a) Attempt to marry a child to be made a criminal offence
- b) Trafficking for the purpose of marriage to be made a separate offense
- c) Enhance criminal justice and codify mandatory reporting to challenge cases of child marriage

These amendments should specifically address and incorporate provisions targeting crimes related to the forced marriage of underage girls. By expanding the scope, the Act can more effectively combat the practice of child marriage and provide better protection to vulnerable girls.

(iii) Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 (PCMA) to be Declared as the Special Act Which Supersedes all Personal Laws Relating to Child Marriage:

Recognizing that the PCMA supersedes all personal laws related to child marriage is vital in addressing the loopholes that allow child marriage to persist under various cultural practices in India. If needed, the government may take necessary steps to amend the existing Act and ensure uniform application of child marriage laws across the country. This will create the much needed just and universal child protection system that treats all children equally and has homogeneous benchmarks for justice delivery and redressal.

(iv) Orientation of Law Enforcement Agencies and Judiciary:

Once the changes are made to the existing child marriage act, it is essential to provide comprehensive training and orientation for law enforcement agencies and the judiciary on the changes. Enhancing the capacity of these institutions will result in the swift and consistent enforcement of the Act.

B. REGISTRATION OF CHILD MARRIAGES AND ENHANCING REPORTING MECHANISM

(i) Registration of Child Marriages: A nationwide campaign needs to be initiated to mandate the registration of child marriages. This initiative should include mechanisms to hold panchayats and municipalities accountable for their role in preventing child marriages and for the accurate maintenance and registration of all marriages at the village and municipal levels. It is also essential that marriage registers are systematically maintained at both the village panchayat and municipal levels to ensure comprehensive tracking of all child marriages.

(ii) Strengthening Helpline for Reporting: Allocation of adequate resources must be ensured to expand helpline accessibility, responsiveness and follow-up mechanisms. To enhance the effectiveness of helplines, it is crucial to implement regular training programs

for staff that focus on effective communication and crisis intervention, including counselling and mental health support. Additionally, integrating advanced technology, such as AI-driven chatbots, can optimize response time and better understand the complainant.

(iii) Establishing Community Level Reporting Platforms:

Developing community-level reporting platforms is crucial for prompt reporting of child marriage cases. Implementing child-friendly online and offline applications can facilitate easy reporting. The effective implementation of it requires active engagement with civil society organizations and other local stakeholders.

C. ESTABLISHMENT OF FAST TRACK COURTS

(i) Establishment of Fast Track Courts for Child Marriage Cases:

Once the registration of complaints is made easy, it will be essential to create fast-track courts dedicated to dealing with child marriage cases. These specialized courts can expedite legal proceedings and ensure a time-bound hearing process to ensure speedy justice for the child victims.

D. CAPACITY BUILDING AND CONVERGENCE OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS

(i) Building Multi-sectoral Coordination and Convergence Mechanism:

Build a strong and dedicated multi-sectoral coordination and convergence mechanism of all stakeholders across child protection, education, health, justice delivery and governance system to drive national and local approaches to ensure zero child marriages, including specialized child marriage prohibition units and specialized police units, per the Supreme Court judgement in the SEVA vs Union of India.

(ii) Capacity Building: Training and capacity building of law enforcement and judicial officers, school functionaries and teachers, frontline community healthcare workers like Anganwadi Workers, ASHA, police officers, and prioritize mandatory and periodic training

of CMPOs, to challenge and change both community behavior on child marriages and ensure protection services for children.

(iii) Engagement with Children: Enhance knowledge and awareness that empowers children, especially girls, to say no to child marriage, and participate in the decision making with deliberate agency.

(iv) Engagement with Faith Leaders: Work with faith leaders to actively discourage child marriages and build partnerships with faith institutions to prevent and prohibit child marriages in communities and across the country.

(v) Engagement with Civil Society Organizations: Engage civil society organizations like the Just Rights for Children and other organizations to proactively identify and collaborate with state actors in preventing, prohibiting and prosecuting child marriages.

E. AWARENESS AND WIDE CIRCULATION AND USE OF BAL VIVAH MukT BHARAT WEB PORTAL

(i) Designating a Day Against Child Marriage: Establishing a specific day dedicated to raising awareness and advocating against child marriage can serve as a powerful tool for mobilizing communities and enhancing visibility. This designated day can be used for a nationwide campaign aimed at informing the people about the detrimental impacts of child marriage on the child victims in particular and society as a whole.

(ii) Promoting the Bal Vivah MukT Bharat Web Portal: To enhance awareness and accessibility, promoting the Bal Vivah MukT Bharat web portal of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, is crucial. A concerted effort should be made to increase

its circulation, especially in rural areas, where awareness may be limited. This digital platform can serve as a primary tool for education and reporting child marriage cases.

(iii) Integration of Bal Vivah MukT Bharat Web Portal with the Ministry of Home Affairs:

Integrating the Bal Vivah MukT Bharat web portal with the Ministry of Home Affairs will enable a more coordinated and speedy response to complaints related to child marriage across the country. This integration can streamline operational protocols and ensure that reported cases are addressed promptly and effectively.

F. REHABILITATION OF VICTIMS OF CHILD MARRIAGE

(i) Rehabilitation of Child Marriage Victims: The states and Union Territories must prioritize the rehabilitation of victims of child marriage under the framework of the Juvenile Justice Act. State specific rehabilitation framework should be developed for children who wish to annul their marriages, including alternative institutional care and scholarships. Comprehensive support mechanisms, including mental health services, educational opportunities, and vocational training, should be implemented to empower the victims and facilitate their reintegration into society.

(ii) Skill development training for victims of child marriages to make them employable:

Targeted skill development training programs specifically designed for victims of child marriages, focusing on both vocational and soft skills, should be implemented in order to make them employable. Collaborations with local businesses and vocational institutions can enhance access to real-world job opportunities, while educational components may empower these children with knowledge about their rights and available resources.

G. FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION FOR GIRLS TILL 18 OR COMPLETION OF EDUCATION TILL HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL

- (i) Amendments to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act), to include all girls till age 18:** Making necessary amendments to the RTE Act to include girls until 18 years of age or till the completion of the higher secondary level is essential for promoting education for girls and discouraging child marriage. Also, it is essential to introduce targeted retention programs for girls to address school drop-outs, and scholarship schemes to incentivize education completion.

These changes will ensure that girls are in school till they attain the legal age for marriage without bringing any financial burden on their families.

- (ii) Incentivizing families:** Conditional cash transfers to incentivize families/parents to educate their daughters through secondary education, targeted scholarships for adolescent girls schooling across the country to support girls' education.
- (iii) Skill Development:** Vocational and skills training, including targeted economic support programs, need to be prioritized to address both the underlying economic drivers of child marriage, and support.

H. EFFECTIVE USE OF CHILD MARRIAGE PROHIBITION OFFICERS

- (i) Monitoring of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs):** Though 34,895 Child Marriage Prohibition Officers have been appointed countrywide, there is no concrete mechanism in place to monitor their functioning. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the work performed by Child Marriage Prohibition Officers are essential to ensure accountability and effectiveness in combating child marriage. Establishing a centralized review system will help assess progress, identify gaps, and enhance the capacity of CMPOs in fulfilling their mandate.

I. LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY

- (i) Technology-assisted Program Monitoring:** Technology-assisted program delivery and monitoring including school attendance tracking have real potential in ensuring last mile and transparent service delivery.
- (ii) Information Dissemination:** Information dissemination including social media and using data analytics to track vulnerable girls and families and enable swift interventions.

ANNEXURE

Annexure

Table 1A: Respondent Profile

Respondent Profile	Assam (N-150 surveyed villages)		Bihar (N-150 surveyed villages)		Karnataka (N-151 surveyed villages)		Maharashtra (N-150 surveyed villages)		Rajasthan (N-156 surveyed villages)		Overall (N-757 surveyed villages)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
PRI Members	66	44%	76	51%	6	4%	64	43%	102	65%	314	42%
School Teachers	14	9%	3	2%	9	6%	9	6%	34	22%	69	9%
ASHA	16	11%	10	7%	10	7%	25	17%	59	38%	120	16%
ANM	0	0%	1	1%	4	3%	4	3%	10	6%	19	3%
Anganwadi Worker	50	33%	91	61%	127	84%	61	41%	85	55%	414	55%
NGO personnel working in the village	21	14%	3	2%	3	2%	4	3%	53	34%	84	11%
Others (specify)	19	13%	0	0%	2	1%	1	1%	0	0%	22	3%

Table 2A: Caste composition of population of surveyed villages

Caste Composition	Assam (N-150 surveyed villages)		Bihar (N-150 surveyed villages)		Karnataka (N-151 surveyed villages)		Maharashtra (N-150 surveyed villages)		Rajasthan (N-156 surveyed villages)		Overall (N-757 surveyed villages)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
SC	9442	3%	145496	28%	67421	19%	96912	16%	103373	28%	422644	20%
ST	34234	11%	5448	1%	59743	17%	103254	17%	30971	8%	233650	11%
OBC	22908	8%	252723	49%	155140	43%	180427	30%	194482	52%	805680	37%
Others	231535	78%	112934	22%	75116	21%	226222	37%	42334	11%	688141	32%
Total	298119	100%	516601	100%	357420	100%	606815	100%	371160	100%	2150115	100%

Table 3A: Composition of children (boys and girls under 18) in surveyed villages

Children Composition	Assam (N-150 surveyed villages)		Bihar (N-150 surveyed villages)		Karnataka (N-151 surveyed villages)		Maharashtra (N-150 surveyed villages)		Rajasthan (N-156 surveyed villages)		Overall (N-757 surveyed villages)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Boys Under 18	52181	51%	80209	53%	44104	51%	97187	53%	66324	50%	340005	52%
Girls Under 18	51146	49%	72314	47%	42264	49%	86889	47%	66838	50%	319451	48%
Total	103327	100%	152523	100%	86368	100%	184076	100%	133162	100%	659456	100%

Table 4A: Reasons for not sending girls (6-18 years) to school

Reason for not sending their children to school	Assam (N = 103 surveyed villages)		Bihar (N = 136 surveyed villages)		Karnataka (N = 103 surveyed villages)		Maharashtra (N = 73 surveyed villages)		Rajasthan (N = 111 surveyed villages)		Overall (N = 526 surveyed villages)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lack of infrastructure	85	83%	31	23%	74	72%	32	44%	27	24%	249	47%
Lack of transport	38	37%	6	4%	45	44%	8	11%	28	25%	125	24%
Poor economic condition	92	89%	136	100%	75	73%	65	89%	93	84%	461	88%
Safety concerns	21	20%	57	42%	61	59%	32	44%	49	44%	220	42%
Cultural norms/stigma	21	20%	26	19%	20	19%	10	14%	55	50%	132	25%
Others	12	12%	18	13%	5	5%	0	0%	38	34%	73	14%

Table 5A: Sources of information for laws against child marriage

Learn Laws against Child Marriages	Assam (N=149 villages)		Bihar (N=149 villages)		Karnataka (N=151 villages)		Maharashtra (N=150 villages)		Rajasthan (N=156 villages)		Overall (N=755 villages)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Local authorities	73	49%	71	48%	95	63%	110	73%	53	34%	402	53%
Community meetings	71	48%	122	82%	76	50%	96	64%	108	69%	473	63%
TV/Radio	137	92%	84	56%	48	32%	83	55%	111	71%	463	61%
Newspapers	59	40%	83	56%	37	25%	75	50%	68	44%	322	43%
NGOs	113	76%	133	89%	119	79%	121	81%	113	72%	599	79%
Awareness campaigns	74	50%	119	80%	93	62%	99	66%	113	72%	498	66%
Schools	69	46%	49	33%	68	45%	93	62%	94	60%	373	49%
Other	13	9%	6	4%	2	1%	12	8%	5	3%	38	5%

Table 6A: Where to report a child marriage cases

Where to report a child Marriage case in your area	Assam (N-150 surveyed villages)		Bihar (N-150 surveyed villages)		Karnataka (N-151 surveyed villages)		Maharashtra (N-150 surveyed villages)		Rajasthan (N-156 surveyed villages)		Overall (N-757 surveyed villages)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Local police station	139	93%	129	86%	60	40%	142	95%	136	87%	606	80%
Helplines	33	22%	120	80%	113	75%	106	71%	132	85%	504	67%
Child Welfare Committee	46	31%	67	45%	80	53%	119	79%	95	61%	407	54%
Panchayat office (Panchayat)	97	65%	81	54%	70	46%	73	49%	119	76%	440	58%
District Magistrate	25	17%	34	23%	9	6%	44	29%	55	35%	167	22%
NGOs working on child rights	119	79%	126	84%	73	48%	120	80%	113	72%	551	73%
Other (specify)	5	3%	0	0%	2	1%	10	7%	1	1%	18	2%
Don't Know	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Table 7A: Barriers exist that prevent people from reporting child marriage

Barriers exist that prevent people from reporting child marriage	Assam (N-150 surveyed villages)		Bihar (N-150 surveyed villages)		Karnataka (N-151 surveyed villages)		Maharashtra (N-150 surveyed villages)		Rajasthan (N-156 surveyed villages)		Overall (N-757 surveyed villages)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fear of social stigma	136	91%	133	89%	119	79%	113	75%	126	81%	627	83%
Lack of awareness	105	70%	109	73%	94	62%	85	57%	41	26%	434	57%
Distrust in authorities	19	13%	28	19%	55	36%	22	15%	34	22%	158	21%
Cultural beliefs	8	5%	8	5%	56	37%	28	19%	63	40%	163	22%
Other (specify)	5	3%	3	2%	5	3%	16	11%	29	19%	58	8%

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