



Rise of Child Marriages

Why in News?

A recent **Lancet** study on [child marriage](#) in India highlighted an overall decrease in child marriage across the country. However, it emphasized that certain states, specifically **Bihar (16.7%), West Bengal (15.2%), Uttar Pradesh (12.5%), and Maharashtra (8.2%)**, collectively contributed to over half of the total headcount burden of child marriages in girls.

Key Points

- According to the [National Family Health Survey 4 \(NFHS 2015-16\)](#), 39.1% of women within 20-24 years are married before 18 years.
 - This means 2 out of 5 adolescent girls are married off before they complete their higher secondary education.
- As per the **District Level Household Survey (DLHS-4, 2015-16)**, child marriage in the intervention areas of **CRY-supported projects** in Bihar, **Supaul had the highest percentage of child marriage, followed by Begusarai, Jamui, Samastipur and Gaya districts.**
- As the latest [Census \(2011\)](#) data reveals, there are over **13 million adolescent girls** who are **married between 10 to 19 years of age.**
 - A startling **3.8 million adolescent girls in India have children**, of which **1.4 million had two or more children**, even before completing adolescence.
 - A brief analysis of their education profile reveals that **39% of girls** who were **illiterate had begun child bearing**, compared to **26% who were literate, proving that even a little education goes a long way in empowering girls.**
- **To address the issue of child marriage** on a sustainable basis, the need of the hour is **to ensure inter-departmental convergence** where **schools, Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), and panchayati-raj institutions** need to play a pivotal role.
- Following the mandate of Integrated [Child Protection Scheme](#), formation and **strengthening of Child Protection Committees at the Gram Panchayat and block level** needs immediate attention, and these units would have to be accountable to address issues related to child marriage.

NFHS-4

- In addition to the 29 states, NFHS-4 **included all six union territories for the first time and provided estimates of most indicators at the district level** for all 640 districts in the country as per the 2011 census.
- The **survey covered a range of** health-related issues, including fertility, infant and child mortality, maternal and child health, perinatal mortality, adolescent reproductive health, high-risk sexual behaviour, safe injections, [tuberculosis](#), and [malaria, non-communicable diseases, domestic violence, Human Immunodeficiency Virus \(HIV\)](#) knowledge, and attitudes toward people living with HIV.

