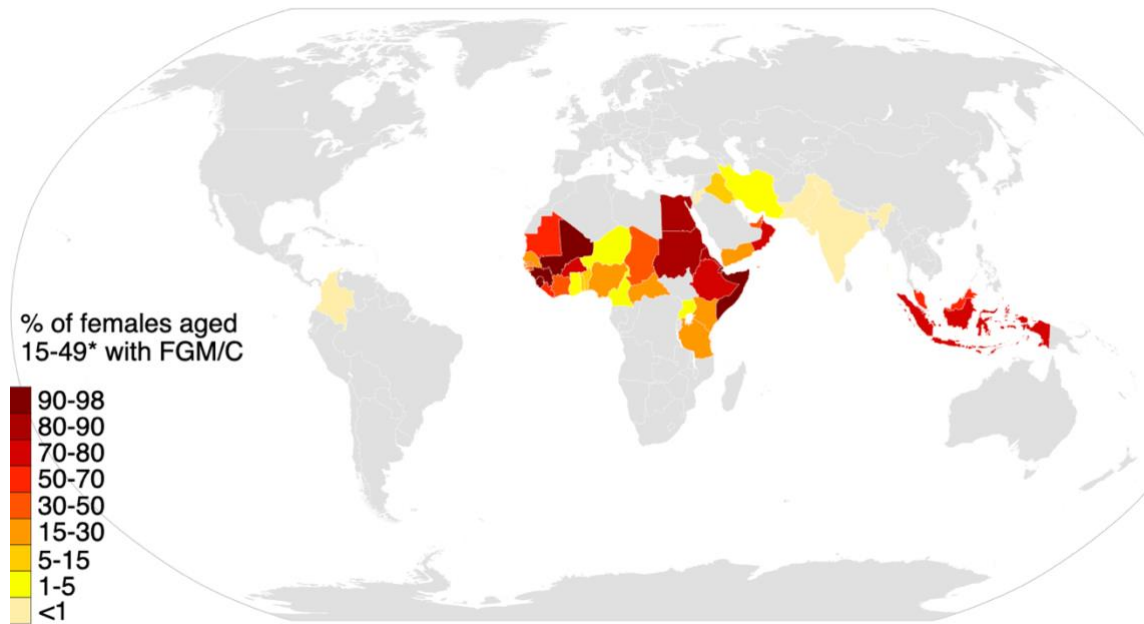




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| <p>What is FGM/C?</p> | <p>Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C)¹ refers to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. There are 4 types of FGM/C (WHO):²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type I: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the prepuce. Also called ‘clitoridectomy’ or ‘female circumcision’.³ • Type II: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora. Often called ‘excision’.⁴ • Type III: Narrowing of the vaginal opening by cutting and bringing together the labia minora and/or the labia majora to create a type of seal, with or without excision of the clitoris. In most instances, the cut edges of the labia are stitched together, which is referred to as ‘infibulation’. • Type IV: All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, for example: pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterization.⁵ <p>Types I and II (known as "female circumcision" or "cutting" and by many local terms such as ‘sunna’⁶) are the most common, but with large variation among countries. Type III – infibulation – is experienced by about 10 per cent of all affected women and is most likely to occur in Somalia, northern Sudan and Djibouti.⁷</p> |
| <p>How many women have undergone FGM/C?</p> | <p>At least 200 million girls and women alive today living in 31 countries in 3 continents have undergone FGM. Each year, > 3 million girls are at risk of undergoing FGM.⁸ Numbers have dropped considerably in the past 30 years, e.g. in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Kenya, Liberia and Togo.⁹ However, 2 million more girls may risk undergoing FGM/C in the coming years after Covid-19 measures closed schools and disrupted protection programmes for girls.¹⁰</p> |
| <p>Where is it practised?</p> | <p>The practice of FGM/C is highly concentrated in a range of countries from the Atlantic coast to the Horn of Africa, in the Middle East (Iraq and Yemen) in Asia (India, Indonesia), and Colombia, with wide variations in prevalence. The practice is almost universal in Somalia, Guinea and Djibouti, with levels above 90 %, while it affects no more than 1 % of girls and women in Cameroon and Uganda.¹¹ See country profiles¹² and map p. 2.</p> |
| <p>At what age?</p> | <p>This differs widely, from some days after birth to the day before marriage. Most girls are subjected to FGM/C between infancy and age 15, most often before puberty starts.¹³</p> |
| <p>Which factors play a role?</p> | <p>Numerous factors contribute to the prevalence of the practice. It is an ancient traditional cultural practice and not endorsed by Islam or Christianity, although religious motives are commonly used as justification.¹⁴ Islamic scholars have prohibited FGM/C and consider it an act of violence against women.¹⁵</p> <p>There is a large ethnic and regional variety within countries. Some communities endorse FGM/C as a means of controlling girls’ sexuality or safeguarding their chastity. Others force girls to FGM/C as a prerequisite for marriage or inheritance. Where the practice is most prevalent, societies often see it as a rite of passage for girls. Social pressure and traditions are major factors; as well as education of the mother and the girl herself; the higher education, the less favorable they are towards the practice.¹⁶</p> |
| <p>What are the consequences of FGM/C?</p> | <p>There are no health benefits.¹⁷ FGM/C can lead to serious health complications and even death. Immediate risks include haemorrhage, shock, infection, urine retention and severe pain; long-term risks are issues with sexuality and pain during sex; complications, and sometimes death, in pregnancy and childbirth; incontinence and fistula in bladder or rectum.¹⁸ Girls subjected to FGM/C are also at increased risk of dropping out of school and enter into early marriages.¹⁹</p> |
| <p>Where is FGM/C prohibited?</p> | <p>Female genital mutilation is an internationally recognized human rights violation.²⁰ 84 countries in the world have legally prohibited FGM/C (map²¹). Also many international treaties and declarations call for states to abolish the practice.²² However, prohibition may lead/have led to the practice going underground if not combined with awareness raising.²³</p> |
| <p>Does FGM/C occur in Europe? In Malta?</p> | <p>FGM/C is also practised in pockets of Europe and in Australia and North America which, for the last several decades, have been destinations for migrants from countries where the practice still occurs.²⁴ Malta has prohibited the practice in 1854.²⁵</p> |



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- ¹ https://28toomany.org/media/uploads/Country%20Images/PDF/fgm-terminology_nat_fgm_centre.pdf
- ² <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>; https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation/#_edn1; <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-frequently-asked-questions>
- ³ <https://www.28toomany.org/what-is-fgm/>
- ⁴ <https://www.28toomany.org/what-is-fgm/>
- ⁵ https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation/#_edn1
- ⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/protection/female-genital-mutilation>
- ⁷ <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-frequently-asked-questions>
- ⁸ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>; <https://www.unicef.org/protection/female-genital-mutilation>
- ⁹ <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/no-time-lose-new-unicef-data-show-need-urgent-action-female-genital-mutilation-and-child>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/2-million-additional-cases-female-genital-mutilation-likely-occur-over-next-decade>
- ¹¹ https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation/#_edn1
- ¹² <https://www.28toomany.org/research-resources/>
- ¹³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>; <https://www.unicef.org/protection/female-genital-mutilation>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/protection/female-genital-mutilation>
- ¹⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/egypt/media/3576/file/FGM%20Summary.pdf>
- ¹⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/protection/female-genital-mutilation>
- ¹⁷ <https://www.28toomany.org/what-is-fgm/>
- ¹⁸ <https://www.28toomany.org/what-is-fgm/>
- ¹⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/protection/female-genital-mutilation>
- ²⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/protection/female-genital-mutilation>
- ²¹ https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation/#_edn1
- ²² <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-frequently-asked-questions>
- ²³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5840226/>; <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2018/06/19/how-outlawing-female-genital-mutilation-in-kenya-has-driven-it-underground-and-led-to-its-medicalization/>
- ²⁴ https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation/#_edn1
- ²⁵ <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-frequently-asked-questions>; <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/35112/Compendium-of-International-and-National-Legal-Frameworks-on-Female-Genital-Mutilation-Fifth-Edition.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>; <https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/9/eng/pdf>
- ²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prevalence_of_female_genital_mutilation#/media/File:Composite_FGM_world_map.svg; based on <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation/>

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This factsheet was compiled by Adri van den Berg for Blue Door Education. Adri worked for many years as a Country of Origin Information (COI) researcher, her final post before retiring being with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in Malta.