



**A Qualitative Study on the Underlying  
Social Norms and Economic Causes that  
**LEAD TO CHILD MARRIAGE IN JORDAN:**  
Developing an Actionable Multisectoral Plan  
for Prevention**





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## Acknowledgements

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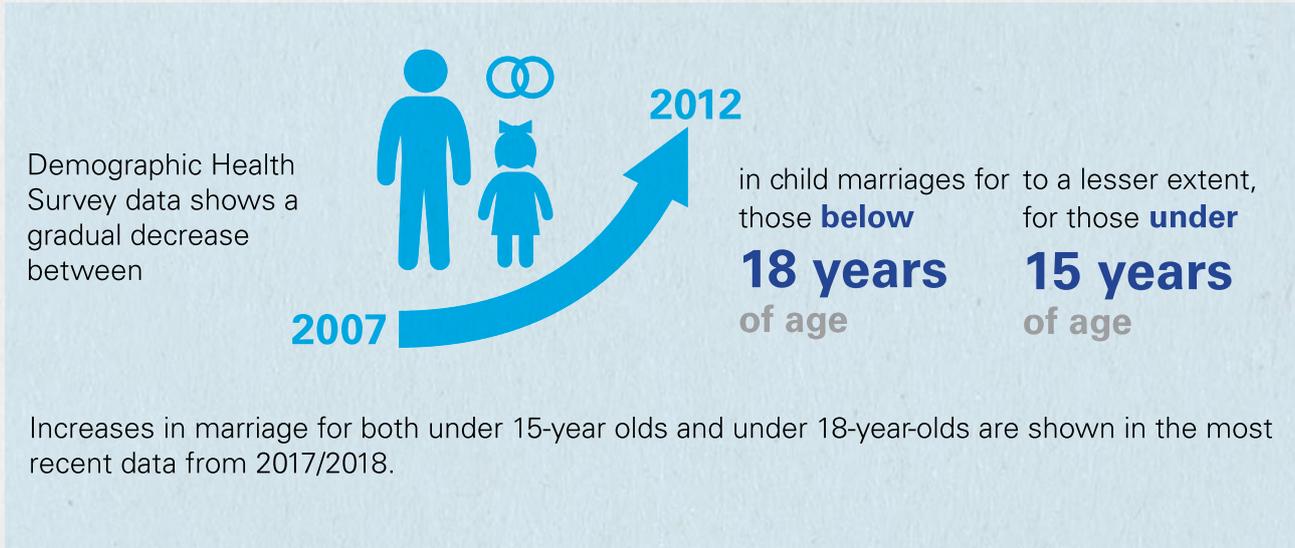


# SUMMARY



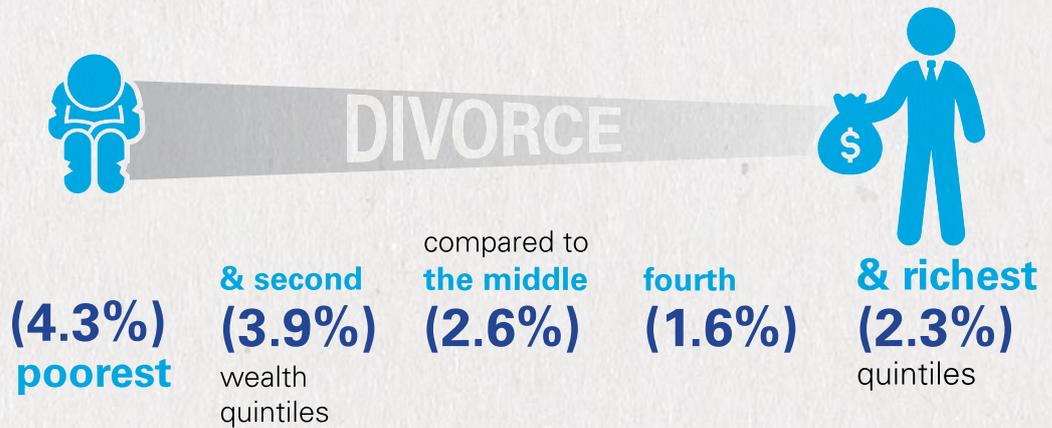
**The prevalence of child marriage is on the rise again after a decade of decline.**

Demographic Health Survey data shows a gradual decrease, between 2007 and 2012, in child marriages for those below 18 years of age and, to a lesser extent, for those under 15 years of age. Increases in marriage for both under 15-year olds and under 18-year-olds are shown in the most recent data from 2017/2018.

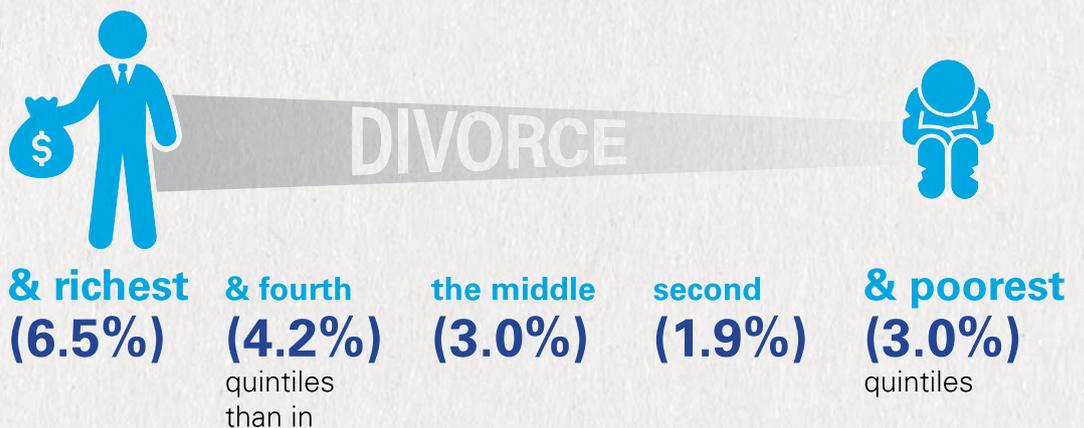


**The trend in child divorces is also changing according to the most recent DHS data.**

In 2012, divorce among those who married aged 18 years or younger was slightly more common in the



This trend changed in the 2017 findings, where child marriages were reported to end in divorce more frequently in the



## Children who marry are at an increased risk of experiencing violence within those relationships as compared to adults.

DHS trend analysis for the years 2007, 2009, 2012 and 2017 indicates that...

those who married **under the age of 18 years** were more likely **to suffer injuries** as a result of violence from their husband



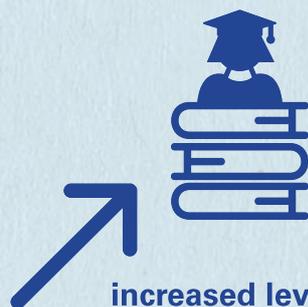
**29.9%** of those who married before **18** experienced these injuries,

compared with



**20.5%** of those who married after **18 years** of age.

**Education remains a strong preventative factor against child marriages, particularly for girls.** From a secondary analysis of DHS datasets of the prevalence of child marriage against educational attainment, a strong trend can be seen that shows that



increased levels of **educational** attainment are associated with

decreasing levels of **child marriage** for both those under 18 and those under 15 years of age.



In qualitative findings, the five key drivers of child marriage across all respondent groups are



(1) Custom and Tradition



(2) Poverty



(3) Broken Homes/ Family Disintegration



(4) Lack of Knowledge

(5) Sutra



which was defined by participants in multiple ways including financial stability and security, but was more often used to describe the protection of girls' reputations).

From all the data (qualitative, literature review and secondary analysis of quantitative data) we can find the following risk and protective factors as well as drivers of child marriages:

At the individual level, several factors emerged including....



**educational attainment** (both of the children and their parents)



**ethnicity** (including membership of the Dom community)



**gender** (girls being more at risk)



**refugee status**

Additionally, participants identified the importance of



**individual beliefs,** including attitudes towards education (especially for girls)



**sutra**



**family marriages** and the **importance of marriage.**

### At the interpersonal level,



we see poverty which leads



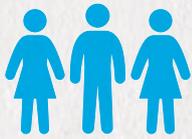
to family stress and



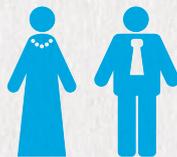
extended family interference



the size of the household



polygamy,



consanguineous marriages/  
family marriages



domestic violence



spousal conflict

### At the community level,



we found attitudes towards

the **high value and gender norms** around marriage,



**tribal and cultural beliefs** around family marriages,



**religious beliefs and customs,**



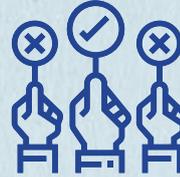
and **living in rural areas** as key factors in the prevalence of child marriage.

## At the institutional level



are the set of laws and policies surrounding child marriage, including

**new legislation** but also some of the practices (such as delayed registration, etc.) identified by participants as allowing child marriage to continue.



**Other institutional factors** emerging from the qualitative study include the varying definitions and beliefs among institutions around the terminology and definitions related to child marriage.

## At the structural level,

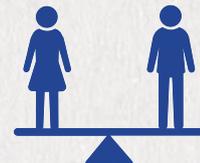


we found attitudes towards

**poverty** and the underlying causes of poverty emerged as a key driver,



as did the **lack of educational opportunities** (and beliefs around the importance of education—also a risk factor at the interpersonal and community levels)



**gender inequality** (preferential treatment of boys, the need for extra protection for girls, etc.).

## Several sociological drivers also emerged—including



**The concept of Sutra and the associated community pressure that was also tied to the high social value of marriage (especially for girls),** and the resulting potential for community gossip when Sutra was not protected. According to participants, gender norms, particularly around the age of marriage, underpinned each of the main causes of child marriage.



**The influence of extended family members and family marriages were also prominent themes in this area.** Finally, there were conflicting opinions on the importance of religious beliefs as a cause of child marriage but all participants did highlight the importance of the influence of religion in whether child marriage would decline or be allowed to continue.

## ADVOCACY MESSAGES

### Advocacy Message 1:

**“ We must address social norms through interventions if we are to reduce child marriages.**

Social norms are behaviours that are held in place by community expectations and beliefs. An individual may not actually agree with child marriage but may still marry their son or daughter as a child because of these existing expectations, beliefs and pressures and for the perceived benefit of this as a course of action. Customs and traditions was the most frequently prioritised main driver of child marriage by focus group respondents and also a key theme from within the in-depth interviews. When asked what drives

these customs and traditions, three causes were identified and explored including: (1) Unquestioned Inherited Beliefs & Behaviour, (2) Culture of Shame / Community Expectations and (3) Tribal Culture (& Family Based Marriages). The DHS secondary analysis also highlighted a higher prevalence of children in child marriages were married to relatives and that this remained a consistently higher proportion over time. In the latest DHS data 2017, 9.5% of children married before the age of 15 reported to be related to their husband. The difference is even greater among children married before the age of 18 with 28.09% reporting being related to their husband.

Additionally, social norms were also identified as the root causes of other drivers of child marriages across all groups including poverty –where attitudinal barriers to education among both parents (especially for girl’s education) and also adolescents was identified as a root cause.

Ensuring ‘sutra’ for the girl (protecting her reputation being the main definition given by participants) was one of the five top drivers of child marriage that emerged from analysis of the data, however, interview participants did not necessarily agree that Sutra was sufficient reason for a girl to be married. Respondents from within the Dom community however were more likely to consider Sutra to be THE most important reason for child marriage.

*Since social norms was identified as the key driver, legislation and policies alone without significant social norms and life skills programming, will not reduce child marriages.*

### Advocacy Message 2:

**“ Educational transition from primary to secondary school completion, especially for girls, is important for reducing child marriages in coordination with addressing attitudinal barriers to education among parents/caregivers and adolescents.**

Education remains a strong protective factor against child marriages, particularly for girls. From a secondary analysis of DHS datasets of the prevalence of child marriage by educational attainment of the child, a strong trend can be seen that shows that increasing levels of educational attainment is associated with decreasing levels of child marriage for both being married under 18 and being married under 15 years of age. However, qualitative data highlighted the significant attitudinal barriers to education that exist among both parents/caregivers and adolescents themselves. Several of the suggested drivers referred to attitudinal barriers to the education of female children specifically, such as ‘they think it is a shame for the girl to study’. Adolescents suggested that the attitude of the individual child to education might be a barrier to completion. Both male and female adolescents suggested that a ‘lack of interest in education’ was barrier to completing education, as well as ‘not being suited to educational streams’ and that some young people might not recognise the value in education and that ‘other people who work without a qualification set the example that education might be a waste of money.’

### Advocacy Message 3:

**“ Family Violence, in the form of intimate partner violence and spousal conflict, is both a risk factor and a consequence of child marriages. In order to reduce child marriages, we need to focus on family support and reducing intimate partner violence and addressing the root causes of family disintegration.**

Children who marry are at an increased risk of experiencing intimate partner violence within those relationships as compared to adults. DHS trend analysis for the years 2007, 2009, 2012 and 2017 indicates that those who married under the age of 18 years were more likely to suffer injuries as a result of violence from their husband, 29.9% of those married before 18 experiencing it as opposed to 20.5% for those who are not, as well as less severe forms of violence, 24.8% of those married before 18 experiencing it as opposed to 20.1% for those who are not (DHS, 2017). Children experience a higher prevalence of the following injuries as a result of intimate partner violence than do adults who are married: (1) Ever had bruises because of husband's actions, (2) Ever had eye injuries, sprains, dislocations or burns because of husband's actions, (3) Ever went to health facility because of husband's actions, and (4) Ever had wounds, broken bones, broken teeth or other serious injury because of husband's actions.

Those who report being in a child marriage more frequently report these severe forms of intimate partner violence compared to those in marriages initiated in adulthood. This trend is also consistent across the ten-year time period between the four DHS surveys. Qualitative data also showed that family disintegration and conflict was also a driver of child marriages. *In this way, family conflict and violence was found to be both a driver and a consequence of child marriage in Jordan.*

### Advocacy Message 4:

**“ All sectors must be engaged to address the root causes of child marriage.**

The drivers of child marriages identified in the study which are mapped against several social and behavioural change frameworks, highlight that in order to address the root causes *all sectors must be involved*, including child protection, youth, social development, justice, health education, planning, etc. The findings of the study are mapped onto a multi-sectoral strategy utilising what is known to be effective in preventing child marriages (the INSPIRE framework) and corresponding with the key elements of the existing National Action Plan.

Based on the findings of the study, the National Committee to End Child Marriage will review the national framework and revise it based on the suggested strategic plan of action that has been created based on the findings of the *study to address the root causes of child marriages*.

## Executive Summary

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Data from the most recent Demographic Health Survey (DHS) shows that child marriage in Jordan, which had been on a declining trend for decades, seems to be on the rise again. Why is this case?

Jordan is leading efforts globally to build an evidence base for limiting marriages under the age of 18 by being one of the first countries to undertake and publish results from a national mixed methods study on the Drivers of Child Marriage. This methodology and associated analytical frameworks were pioneered by UNICEF in partnership with the University of Edinburgh and the study was led in Jordan by the Higher Population Council. **This study systematically and comprehensively engages with the existing data and a wide range of respondents to understand why child marriages happen and what can be done to limit marriages under the age of 18.** In addition, Jordan is the first country to map these social and behavioural drivers of marriage under the age of 18 onto strategies that are highly likely or proven to be effective at preventing child marriages. This analysis will ensure that findings from this innovative study are used to inform evidence-based programming and policies that are grounded in the context and experiences of Jordan and that are harmonized with the *National Action Plan for Implementing the Recommendations of the "Child Marriage in Jordan" Study to Limit the Marriage of Individuals under the Age of 18 in Jordan (2018-2022)*.

The main research questions driving this study are:

- What are the underlying social and behavioural drivers of child marriage in Jordan?
- How do normative beliefs and expectations influence child marriage among different groups and in what circumstances?; and
- What can be done to address these drivers?

In order to address these questions, a mixed methods study was developed under the leadership of the Higher Population Council and guidance from the National Committee to End Child Marriage. This report details the findings from that mixed methods study which included the following components:

1. A systematic review of the academic and grey literature on the root causes, risk factors and preventative measures for child marriage in Jordan.
2. A secondary analysis of DHS datasets in order to triangulate this data with findings from the systematic literature review, and
3. A qualitative study on the social and behavioural drivers of child marriage with 526 individuals across a variety of groups (parents, extended family members, adolescents, refugees, Dom community members, policymakers, professionals, community leaders, etc.) from 7 different governorates (Mafraq, Zarqa, Irbid, Amman, Karak, Ma'an and Jerash) chosen in consultation with the National Committee to End Child Marriage. Within these qualitative focus groups and interviews, a short quantitative social norms survey was also conducted and discussed.

***"Jordan is the first country to map these social and behavioural drivers of marriage under the age of 18 onto strategies that are highly likely or proven to be effective at preventing child marriages."***

## Key Findings

**The prevalence of child marriage is on the rise again after a decade of decline.** Demographic Health Survey data shows a gradual decrease, between 2007 and 2012, in child marriages for those below 18 years of age and, to a lesser extent, for those under 15 years of age. Increases in marriage for both under 15-year-olds and under 18-year-olds are shown in the most recent data from 2017/2018.

**The trend in child divorces is also changing according to the most recent DHS data.** In 2012, divorce among those who married aged 18 years or younger was slightly more common in the poorest (4.3%) and second (3.9%) wealth quintiles compared to the middle (2.6%), fourth (1.6%) and richest (2.3%) quintiles. This trend changed in the 2017 findings, where child marriages were reported to end in divorce more frequently in the richest (6.5%) and fourth (4.2%) quintiles than in the middle (3.0%), second (1.9%) and poorest (3.0%) quintiles.

**Children who marry are at an increased risk of experiencing violence within those relationships as compared to adults.** DHS trend analysis for the years 2007, 2009, 2012 and 2017 indicates that those who married under the age of 18 years were more likely to suffer injuries as a result of violence from their husband, 29.9% of those who married before 18 experienced these injuries, compared with 20.5% of those who married after 18 years of age. For less severe forms of violence, 24.8% of those who married before 18 experiencing it, compared with 20.1% of those who married after 18 years of age (DHS, 2017). Children are more likely than those who married as adults to report having, as a result of their husband's actions: (1) Ever had bruises, (2) Ever had eye injuries, sprains, dislocations or burns, (3) Ever attended a health facility, and (4) Ever had wounds, broken bones, broken teeth or other serious injury.

This trend of more frequent and severe forms of intimate partner violence in a child marriage as compared to those in marriages initiated in adulthood is also consistent across the ten-year time period between the four DHS surveys. Qualitative data has also shown that the combination of family disintegration and conflict was also a *driver* of child marriages. The experience of family conflict and violence was found to be *both a driver and a consequence of child marriage in Jordan*.

**Education remains a strong preventative factor against child marriages, particularly for girls.** From a secondary analysis of DHS datasets of the prevalence of child marriage against educational attainment, a strong trend can be seen that shows that increased levels of educational attainment are associated with decreasing levels of child marriage for both those under 18 and those under 15 years of age. The same result was obtained from the study undertaken by the Higher Population Council, which was based on the analysis of the data from the General Census of Population and Housing 2015, where the study showed that married women under the age of 18 years are the least educated; 86.7% (80.3% Jordanians compared to 94.3% for Syrians in Jordan). The educational level of married couples under the age of 18 at the national level was 46.3% at the basic level and below, and the rest of them (35.6% secondary and diploma and 17.8% of bachelors and higher).

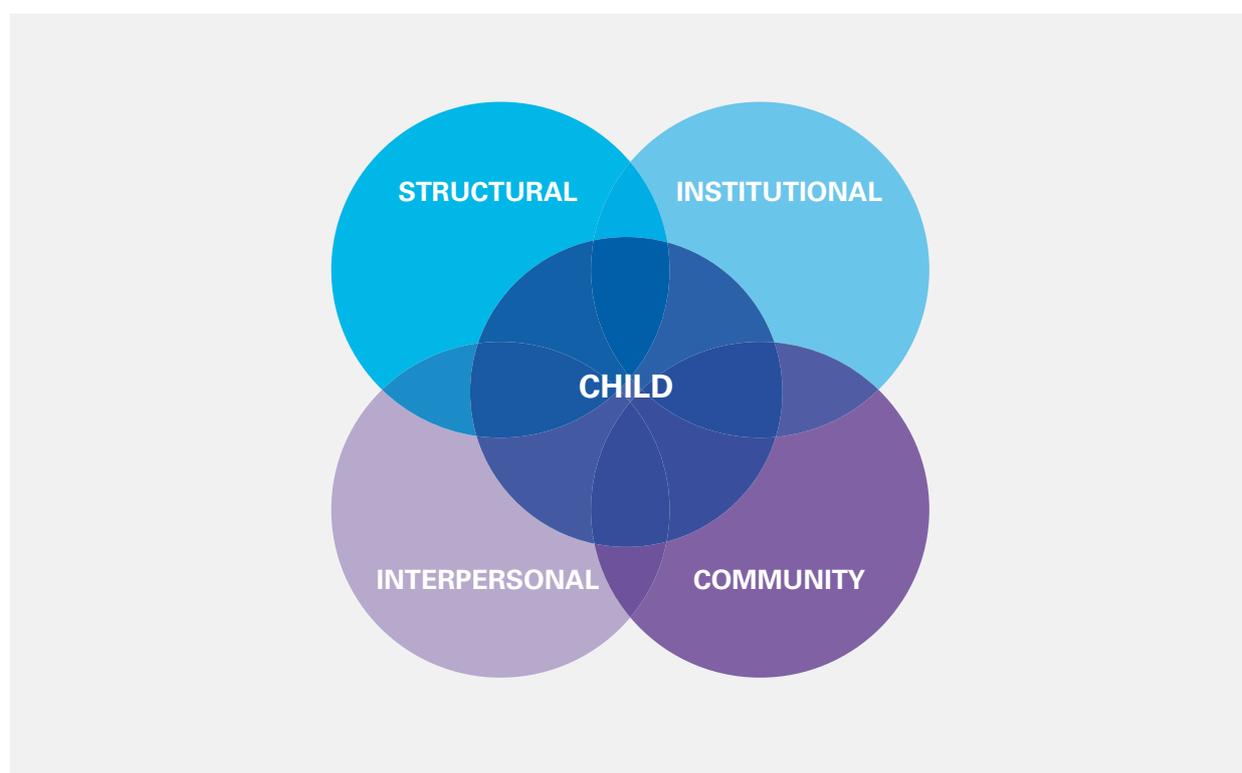
**In findings reinforced by nationally representative household survey data, the five key drivers of child marriage across all respondent groups are (1) Custom and Tradition, (2) Poverty, (3) Broken Homes / Family Disintegration, (4) Lack of Knowledge, and (5) Sutra** (which was defined by participants in multiple ways including financial stability and security, but was more often used to describe the protection of girls' reputations). Each of these causes were examined with participants for the deeper causes leading to each of these five factors. This helped to identify another 9 Level Two drivers (the causes of the causes) and a further 27 Level Three drivers of Child Marriage. These factors were then triangulated with social norms survey data (with a social norms survey being filled out individually by participants within the focus groups and then discussed as a group) and answers to in-depth interviews, and mapped against both a child-centred framework and a social and behavioural change framework to better identify multi-sectoral interventions.

Custom and tradition was the most frequently identified as the main driver of child marriage by focus group respondents, and was also a key theme in the in-depth interviews. When asked what drives customs and traditions, three factors were identified and explored including: (1) Unquestioned Inherited Beliefs & Behaviour, (2) A Culture of Shame / Community Expectations and (3) Tribal Culture / Family-Based Marriages. The DHS secondary analysis also highlighted a higher prevalence marriage to relatives in child marriages compared to marriages initiated in adulthood, and this remained a consistently higher proportion over time. In the latest DHS data from 2017, 9.5% of the children who were married before the age of 15 reported that their marriage was to a current family relative. The proportion is even greater among children married before the age of 18, with 28.09% reporting being already related to their husband.

A key theme emerging from within the in-depth interview data is a debate around the extent to which poverty is the preeminent driver of child marriage (to offload the financial burden of a daughter or to benefit from a dowry, for example) or whether it is the unquestioned following of traditions, linked with a lack of knowledge of the value of education, that is the primary driver. Responses notably differ on the relative significance of poverty or lack of knowledge. A secondary analysis of DHS datasets shows that the prevalence of child marriage generally declines as wealth increases—with those children in the richest quintiles having the lowest prevalence of child marriage compared to those in the lower wealth quintiles over time. Analysis of the DHS data from 2017/2018 shows that the gap between the poorest quintiles and the middle and richer quintiles in terms of child marriage has been increasing in the last five years, owing to several factors including increasing education standards within the middle and richer quintile households.

Ensuring 'sutra' for the girl (defined in several ways by participants but mostly as protecting her reputation) was one of the five top drivers of child marriage revealed by analysis of the data. Interview participants did not necessarily agree, however, that Sutra was sufficient reason for a girl to be married. Respondents from within the Dom community were more likely to consider Sutra as *the* most important reason for child marriage. The key risk and preventative factors were identified through the data and mapped onto two analytical frameworks: (1) the Child-Centred Socio-Ecological Framework, and (2) the Social and Behaviour Change Framework.

## The Integrated Child Centred Framework



The Integrated Child-Centred Framework is a newly developed adaptation of the socio-ecological framework, exploring the drivers of child marriage or the institutional and structural level factors that create the conditions in which child marriage is more (or less) likely to occur. These are distinct from the risk and preventative factors which reflect the likelihood of child marriage occurring due to characteristics most often measured at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels (Maternowska, Potts and Fry, 2018). Our findings support the idea that no single level within the socio-ecological model, and no single factor (drivers or risk/preventative factors) within or between those levels, determines or explains an act of marriage involving a child. Instead, each factor, when combined with one or more other factors, may lead to a situation where child marriage is more likely to occur. The changing nature of society at the structural level is thus mapped in different ways on to what happens to children in their everyday lives at home, in schools and in the community.

An integrated framework shows the potential intersectionality of each level, rather than presenting them in a diagrammatic manner which may be misinterpreted as less dynamic and more hierarchical than intended

(Maternowska and Potts, 2017). It is designed to assist practitioners in visualizing how the drivers of child marriage, and the risk and preventative factors interact. Importantly, it maintains the child at the centre—interacting, interfacing and overlapping with a variety of drivers, risk and preventative factors throughout the lifespan.

This study identified several key risk factors for child marriage **at the individual level** including educational attainment (both of the children and their parents), ethnicity (including membership of the Dom community), gender (girls being more at risk) and refugee status. Additionally, participants identified the importance of individual beliefs, including attitudes towards education (especially for girls), *sutra*, family marriages and the importance of marriage.

At the **interpersonal level**, we see poverty which leads to family stress and extended family interference, the size of the household, polygamy, consanguineous marriages/family marriages, domestic violence and spousal conflict as all being risk factors for child marriage.

At the **community level**, we found attitudes towards the high value and gender norms around marriage, tribal and cultural beliefs around family marriages, religious beliefs and customs, and living in rural areas as key factors in the prevalence of child marriage. Perhaps the single most important element at the community level—mentioned by every group and in almost every data source—was that of *sutra* and the cultural expectations around this and the culture of shame when *sutra* is seen as lost or not protected. When exploring the drivers of child marriage, this model explores the institutional and structural levels.

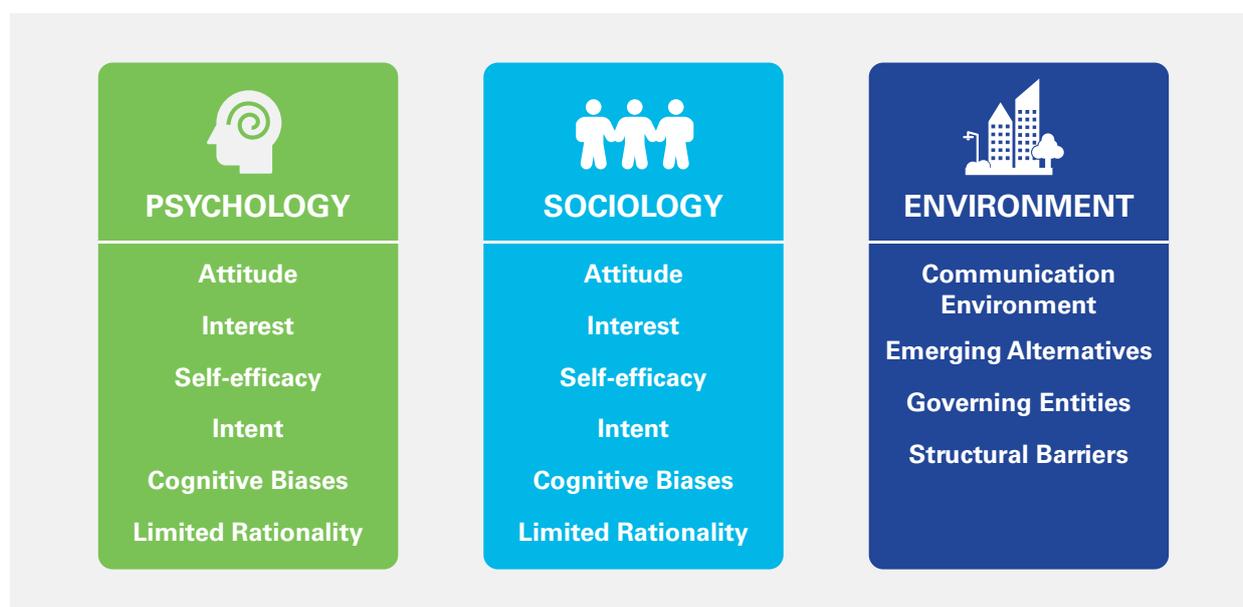
At the **institutional level** are the set of laws and policies surrounding child marriage, including new legislation but also some of the practices (such as delayed registration, etc.) identified by participants as allowing child marriage to continue. Other institutional factors emerging from the qualitative study include the varying definitions and beliefs among institutions around the terminology and definitions related to child marriage. Lastly, key themes emerged from the data around the differences between host and native country laws and practices, especially related to Syrian refugees, that allows the practice of child marriage to continue in Jordan.

At the **structural level**, poverty and the underlying causes of poverty emerged as a key driver, as did the lack of educational opportunities (and beliefs around the importance of education—also a risk factor at the interpersonal and community levels) and gender inequality (preferential treatment of boys, the need for extra protection for girls, etc.).



## Social and Behavioural Change Framework

After identifying the key risk and preventative factors through the data, the next difficulty is identifying where best to intervene in order to create social and behavioural change around child marriage. This model was developed by the Middle East and Northern Africa Regional Office of UNICEF with the purpose of adding clarity and rigour to the design and monitoring of Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) programmes (UNICEF, 2019). By exploring the question of why people do what they do, we unpack the constructs of behaviour to map out its main drivers as identified in the qualitative study and secondary analysis. This theoretical map can then be used as a checklist when trying to understand behaviours (research), influence behaviours (programmes), and track change (monitoring). We use this model here to understand the research and to make the multi-sectoral planning more systematic and evidence-based. One advantage of this framework is that it also creates a common reference and language to discuss SBC, collaborate and build capacity, and to anchor the various interventions and tools we develop.



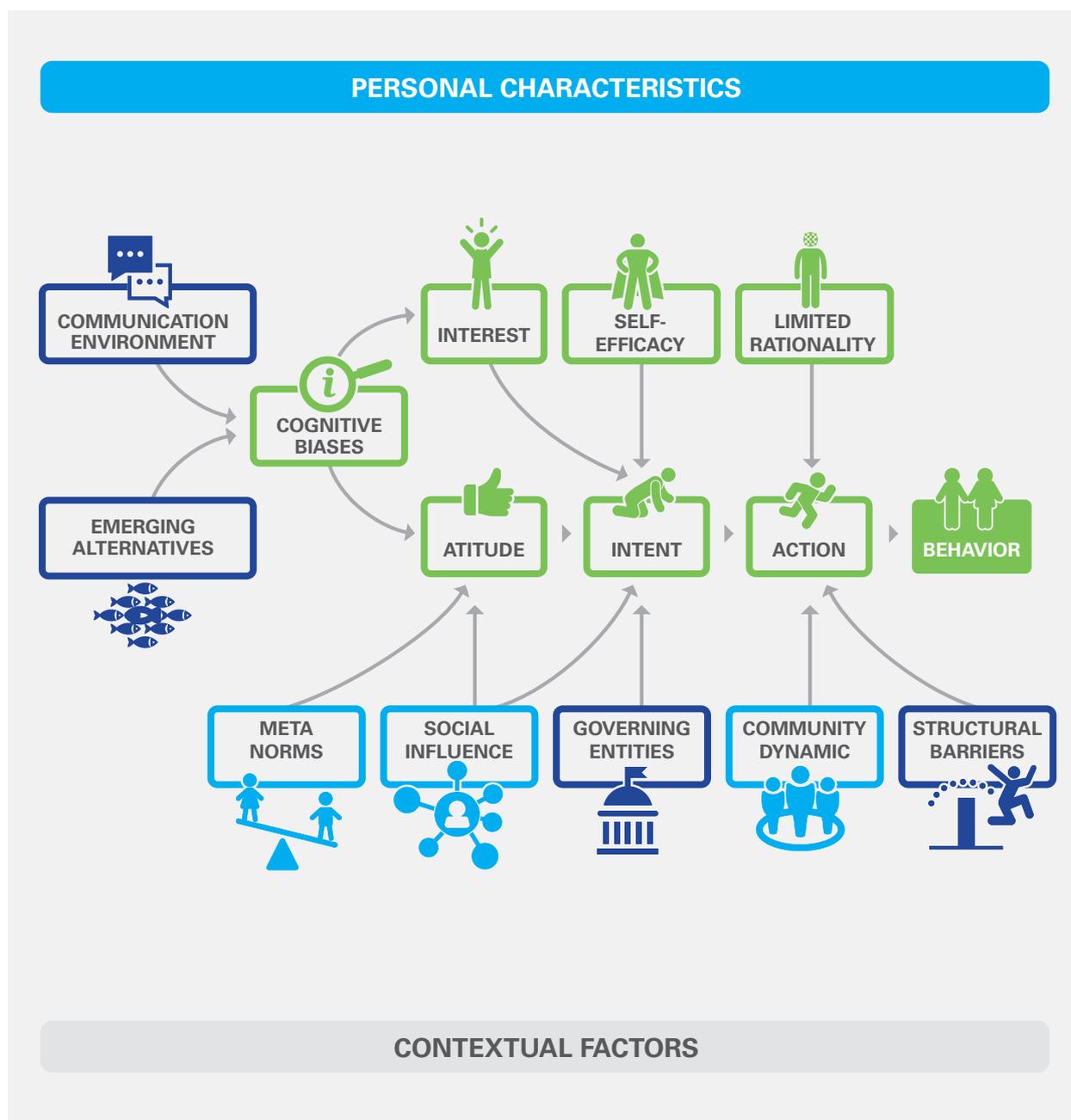
This model synthesizes many of the theories of behavioural change—e.g., how people move from one behaviour to another (such as reducing child marriages). If we look at each of the key areas as defined in this framework against the data themes emerging from the study, we find that under **psychological drivers** are the key issues related to beliefs, attitudes, interest and self-efficacy. Within the study, several key themes in these areas emerged including attitudinal barriers to education (and beliefs in its importance and efficacy), a desire for family persistence, and a desire to preserve one's and one's family's reputation (including a fear of gossip and ostracization). On the positive side, most respondents had an interest in living in a community without child marriage, but some communities lacked exposure or awareness of other ways (such as was shown in interviews with the Dom community). Tribal culture and family marriages were mentioned by several respondents and reinforced both the psychological and also the sociological drivers. There were also differences in family opinion as to the best age at which to marry, and gender differences between females and males in beliefs on child marriage (this emerged particularly among Palestinian refugees).

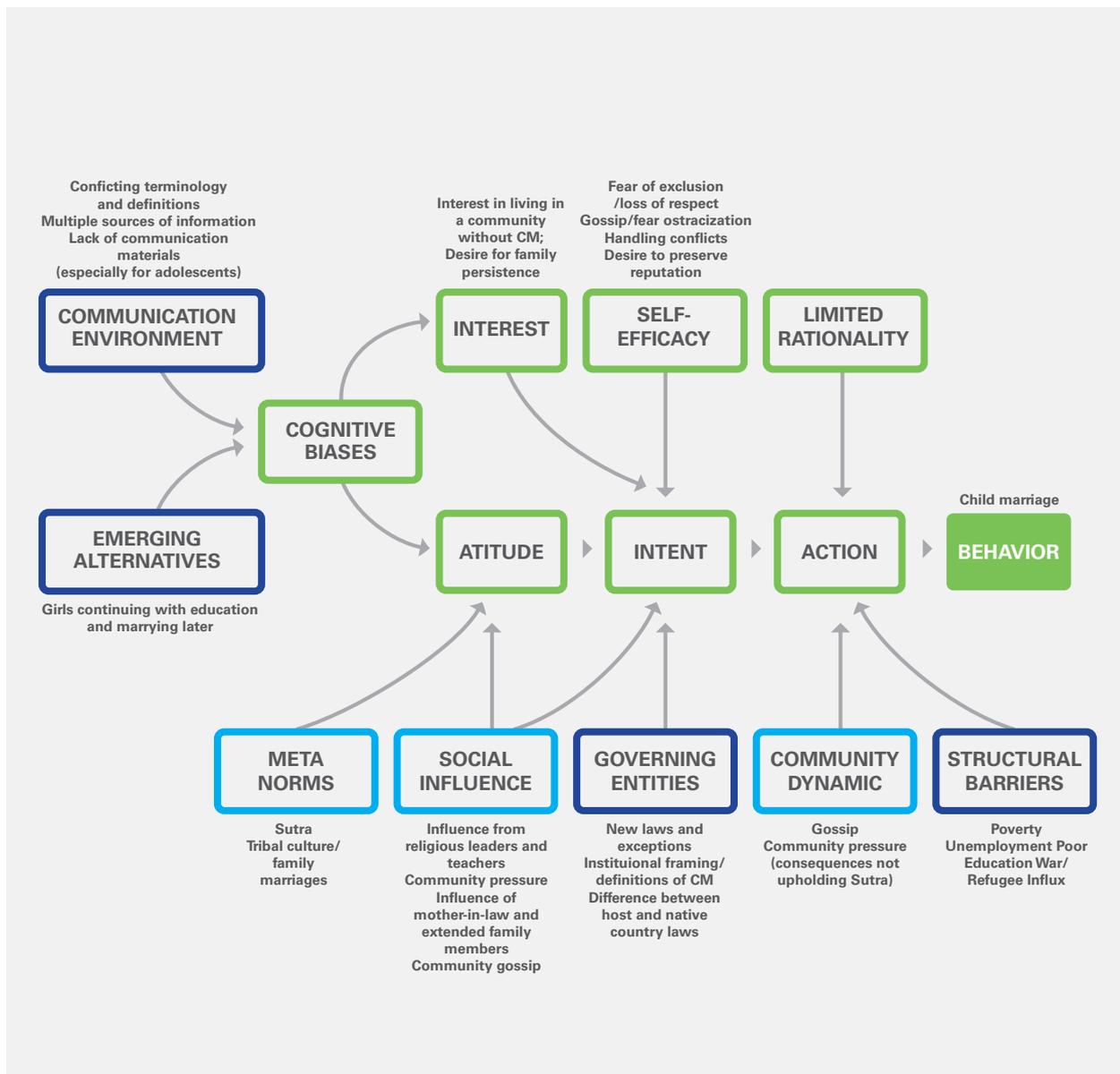
Several **sociological drivers** also emerged—and are similar to the 'community' and 'interpersonal' levels of the Child-centred Framework. These included the concept of *Sutra* and the associated community pressure that was also tied to the high social value of marriage (especially for girls), and the resulting potential for community gossip when *Sutra* was not protected. According to participants, gender norms, particularly around the age of marriage, underpinned each of the main causes of child marriage. The influence of extended family members and family marriages were also prominent themes in this area. Finally, there were conflicting opinions on the importance of religious beliefs as a cause of child marriage but all participants did highlight the importance of the influence of religion in whether child marriage would decline or be allowed to continue.

Lastly, the **environmental drivers** are similar to the 'institutional' and 'structural' drivers of the Child-centred Framework with the exception that this also identifies the communication environment and the emerging

alternatives. The communication environment included lots of conflicting messages—both from social media and religious sources, neighbours and community members but also within institutions such as those working in the policy and professional practice arenas, in terms of how child marriage is defined, and the terminology used to describe it. Adolescents also mentioned that they particularly lacked any information on the subject. Several emerging alternatives were highlighted by participants, the most frequent being that girls remain in education and marry later—often giving urban examples of this.

The SBC framework provides a model that describes how these factors interact to drive individual behaviour, and which interventions might work for which drivers. In the following diagram, psychological drivers are shown in green, social ones in orange, environmental ones in blue, and overarching personal and contextual characteristics in grey (UNICEF, 2019).





Each of the elements in the pathway are associated with interventions that are most effective for addressing those key factors—taken together, these interventions should form part of the Plan for the Reduction of Child Marriages.

## Multi-sectoral Plan

Finally, these two frameworks were used to develop a Multi-sectoral Plan to address the key drivers that complements the outcomes and outputs in the National Action Plan. To do this, we present the data using the INSPIRE framework (see Table below; for the complete version, see Table 4.2 at the end of this report)—a compilation of interventions that are proven or highly likely to prevent violence against children (also showing factors such as child marriage which increase children’s vulnerabilities to violence) developed by the WHO, UNICEF, CDC, Together for Girls, PEPFAR and other stakeholders (WHO, 2016). The multi-sectoral action plan has been developed based on the results of the study and cross checked and validated with the existing national plan of action developed by the Prime Minister’s Office to ensure that all interventions have been taken into consideration.”

INSPIRE Strategy	Related Risk and Preventative Factors Identified in the Study	Related Evidence and Recommendations from the Study	Sectors	Matched to Outcomes and Outputs from the National Action Plan	
 <b>Implementation and enforcement of laws</b>	<p><b>Community Level Risk Factors</b></p> <p>Tribal culture/Family Marriages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation and enforcement of laws to limit marriage under the age of 18</li> <li>• Enhance Processes for Registration of Marriages (especially among low registering groups alongside educational/awareness raising programming)</li> <li>• Harmonise multi-sectoral framing and definitions of child marriage so that external communication is clear</li> </ul>	Justice	<p>Outcome 1: Supportive legislation to limit marriage under the age of 18</p> <p>Output 1: Amended laws and legislation to limit marriage under the age of 18 in Jordan</p> <p>Output 2: Specific and comprehensive data on the numbers of marriages involving persons under the age of 18 to support decisions, legislation and facilitate monitoring and evaluation</p>	
	<p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Spousal conflict in the home</p> <p>Absent or violent father</p> <p><b>Institutional Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Norm of not registering marriages among certain groups</p>			 <b>Norms and values</b>	<p><b>Individual Level Risk Factors –Perpetration:</b></p> <p>Attitudinal barriers to education</p> <p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Inherited beliefs and values</p> <p>Tribal culture/Family marriages</p> <p><b>Community Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Culture of shame</p> <p>Gender norms</p>
 <b>Norms and values</b>	<p><b>Individual Level Risk Factors –Perpetration:</b></p> <p>Attitudinal barriers to education</p> <p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Inherited beliefs and values</p> <p>Tribal culture/Family marriages</p> <p><b>Community Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Culture of shame</p> <p>Gender norms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergenerational norms discussions (especially including tribal elders and grandparents) harnessing the <i>positive</i> elements of inherited beliefs and values to reduce child marriages (reshaping existing norms)</li> <li>• Norms programming/campaigns around addressing the culture of shame → changing perceptions of the possible sanctions from others about not following inherited beliefs and values</li> <li>• Norms programming/campaigns around family marriages with different messaging for men vs. women</li> <li>• Norms programming/campaigns about <i>sutra</i>→changing to positive influence to <i>reduce child marriages</i></li> <li>• Norms programming/campaigns to try and change attitudinal barriers to girl’s education (for both parents and adolescents)</li> <li>• Norms programming targeted at refugee groups and the Dom community (particularly for males)</li> <li>• Harness the influence of religious leaders and teachers—especially through their normal communication channels (Friday sermons, etc.)</li> </ul>	Health, Education, Social Development, Youth, Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places		<p>Outcome 3: Positive change in the perceptions and behaviour of members of society to limit marriage under the age of 18</p> <p>Output 1: Reinforce the culture of protection and knowledge of marriage under the age of 18 to create a society aware of the consequences of child marriage.</p> <p>Output 2: Protection concepts, values and methods to limit marriage under the age of 18 embedded in educational programmes and school curricula at all levels.</p>

INSPIRE Strategy	Related Risk and Preventative Factors Identified in the Study	Related Evidence and Recommendations from the Study	Sectors	Matched to Outcomes and Outputs from the National Action Plan
 <p><b>Safe environments</b></p>	<p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Tribal culture/Family marriages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide additional modes of dispute resolution (to address this as a driver of family marriages)</li> <li>• Enhance institutional capacity and resources to undertake multi-sectoral Plan</li> </ul>	<p>Interior, Planning, Justice</p>	<p>Output 2 (under Outcome 2): Create a health and social environment to limit the percentage and consequences of marriage under the age of 18, enhance institutional and human capacity, and secure funding sources to ensure access to the best services and implement the National Action Plan effectively and efficiently.</p>
 <p><b>Parent and caregiver support</b></p>	<p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Family stress due to large family sizes</p> <p>Quality of familial relationships and communication</p> <p><b>Community Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Poverty</p> <p><b>Preventative Factors:</b></p> <p>Influence of grandparents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent and caregiver support programming to improve parent-child communication (especially father to son to address driver of conflict in the home) and grandparent-child communication (noting the influence of grandparents)</li> <li>• Programming to reduce family stress due to large family sizes (family planning support, parenting/caregiver support, childcare support, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Social Development, Health</p>	<p>Output 2 (under Outcome 2): Create a health and social environment to limit the percentage and consequences of marriage under the age of 18, enhance institutional and human capacity, and secure funding sources to ensure access to the best services and implement the National Action Plan effectively and efficiently.</p>
 <p><b>Income and economic strengthening</b></p>	<p><b>Community and Individual Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Attitudinal barriers to education (because of need to prioritise survival, especially among refugee groups)</p> <p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Family stress due to poverty</p> <p>Poverty due to unemployment</p> <p><b>Structural Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop employability skills and job creation strategies particularly for older adolescents and young adults</li> <li>• Analyse existing labour sector policies for job creation and addressing unemployment and track and monitor (&amp; target) for those families most vulnerable to child marriages</li> <li>• Enhance social protection programmes particularly for refugee and other vulnerable groups</li> </ul>	<p>Finance, Labour</p>	<p>Output 2 (under Outcome 2): Create a health and social environment to limit the percentage and consequences of marriage under the age of 18, enhance institutional and human capacity, and secure funding sources to ensure access to the best services and implement the National Action Plan effectively and efficiently.</p>

INSPIRE Strategy	Related Risk and Preventative Factors Identified in the Study	Related Evidence and Recommendations from the Study	Sectors	Matched to Outcomes and Outputs from the National Action Plan
 <p><b>Response and support services</b></p>	<p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Domestic violence in the home</p> <p><b>Community Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Lack of information on current programmes for adolescents, need for increased case management</p> <p><b>Structural Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information and case management provided to adolescents about interventions to reduce child marriages</li> <li>Response and support services to address domestic violence (both as driver for children leaving homes but also as a driver of spousal conflict which leads to family disintegration)</li> <li>Response and support services for adolescent intimate partner violence</li> <li>Enhance social protection programmes particularly for refugee and other vulnerable groups</li> <li>Increase referrals from national institutions to the family protection department</li> </ul>	<p>Health, Justice, Social Welfare</p>	<p>Outcome 2: Health and counselling services available to support cases and implement programmes to limit marriage under the age of 18</p> <p>Output 1: Case management programme for intending spouses and married females under the age of 18.</p> <p>Output 2: Create a health and social environment to limit the percentage and consequences of marriage under the age of 18, enhance institutional and human capacity, and secure funding sources to ensure access to the best services and implement the National Action Plan effectively and efficiently.</p>
 <p><b>Education and life skills</b></p>	<p><b>Individual Level Risk Factors –Perpetration:</b></p> <p>Lack of education</p> <p>Attitudinal barriers to education for girls among parents and adolescents</p> <p><b>Preventative Factors:</b></p> <p>School attendance and transitioning from primary to secondary schooling for girls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interventions to improve transitioning from primary to secondary schooling especially for girls</li> <li>Life skills interventions for adolescent girls and boys around decision making, negotiation and strategic thinking.</li> <li>Awareness raising campaigns for children and families.</li> <li>Interventions aimed at ensuring an enabling environment for both boys and girls to study what they want rather than what they are expected to do according to gender stereotypes, by first examining classes/topics that boys and girls are taught or encouraged to major in and whether these are limiting employability and opportunities for young people.</li> <li>Inclusion of awareness raising and skills to limit child marriages under 18 in school curriculum</li> <li>Community campaigns to change attitudes towards education among both parents and adolescents</li> <li>Development of informal education programmes, educating school leavers, available at the Ministry of Education.</li> </ul>	<p>Education, Youth</p>	<p>Output 2 (under Outcome 2): Create a health and social environment to limit the percentage and consequences of marriage under the age of 18, enhance institutional and human capacity, and secure funding sources to ensure access the best services and implement the National Action Plan effectively and efficiently.</p> <p>Output 2 (under Outcome 3): Protection concepts, values and methods to limit marriage under the age of 18 embedded in educational programmes and school curricula at all levels.</p>

INSPIRE Strategy	Related Risk and Preventative Factors Identified in the Study	Related Evidence and Recommendations from the Study	Sectors	Matched to Outcomes and Outputs from the National Action Plan
 <p><b>Implementation and enforcement of laws</b></p>	<p><b>Community Level Risk Factors</b></p> <p>Tribal culture/Family Marriages</p> <p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Spousal conflict in the home</p> <p>Absent or violent father</p> <p><b>Institutional Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Norm of not registering marriages among certain groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the geographic coverage</li> <li>• Transportation and infrastructure of schools (especially in remote areas)</li> <li>• Activate tutoring lessons for students falling behind academically.</li> <li>• Provision of scholarships for university for underprivileged and poor students.</li> <li>• Encourage and design vocational training packages, especially for areas outside main cities (training for the purpose of employment).</li> <li>• Eradicate illiteracy: design realistic rights to eradicate illiteracy and include interventions for disabled and special educational needs students.</li> <li>• Provide school meals</li> </ul>	Justice	<p>Outcome 1: Supportive legislation to limit marriage under the age of 18</p> <p>Output 1: Amended laws and legislation to limit marriage under the age of 18 in Jordan</p> <p>Output 2: Specific and comprehensive data on the numbers of marriages involving persons under the age of 18 to support decisions, legislation and facilitate monitoring and evaluation</p>
 <p><b>Norms and values</b></p>	<p><b>Individual Level Risk Factors–Perpetration:</b></p> <p>Attitudinal barriers to education</p> <p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Inherited beliefs and values</p> <p>Tribal culture/Family marriages</p> <p><b>Community Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Culture of shame</p> <p>Gender norms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergenerational norms discussions (especially including tribal elders and grandparents) harnessing the <i>positive</i> elements of inherited beliefs and values to reduce child marriages (reshaping existing norms)</li> <li>• Norms programming/campaigns around addressing the culture of shame → changing perceptions of the possible sanctions from others about not following inherited beliefs and values</li> <li>• Norms programming/campaigns around family marriages with different messaging for men vs. women</li> <li>• Norms programming/campaigns about <i>sutra</i> → changing to positive influence to <i>reduce child marriages</i></li> </ul>	Health, Education, Social Development, Youth, Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places	<p>Outcome 3: Positive change in the perceptions and behaviour of members of society to limit marriage under the age of 18</p> <p>Output 1: Reinforce the culture of protection and knowledge of marriage under the age of 18 to create a society aware of the consequences of child marriage.</p> <p>Output 2: Protection concepts, values and methods to limit marriage under the age of 18 embedded in educational programmes and school curricula at all levels.</p>

INSPIRE Strategy	Related Risk and Preventative Factors Identified in the Study	Related Evidence and Recommendations from the Study	Sectors	Matched to Outcomes and Outputs from the National Action Plan
 <p><b>Safe environments</b></p>	<p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Tribal culture/Family marriages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norms programming/campaigns to try and change attitudinal barriers to girls' education (for both parents and adolescents)</li> <li>• Norms programming/campaigns to try and change attitudinal barriers to girls' education (for both parents and adolescents)</li> <li>• Norms programming targeted at refugee groups and the Dom community (particularly for males)</li> <li>• Harness the influence of religious leaders and teachers—especially through their normal communication channels (Friday sermons, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Interior, Planning, Justice</p>	<p>Output 2 (under Outcome 2): Create a health and social environment to limit the percentage and consequences of marriage under the age of 18, enhance institutional and human capacity, and secure funding sources to ensure access to the best services and implement the National Action Plan effectively and efficiently.</p>
 <p><b>Parent and caregiver support</b></p>	<p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Family stress due to large family sizes</p> <p>Quality of familial relationships and communication</p> <p><b>Community Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Poverty</p> <p><b>Preventative Factors:</b></p> <p>Influence of grandparents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent and caregiver support programming to improve parent-child communication (especially father to son to address driver of conflict in the home) and grandparent-child communication (noting the influence of grandparents)</li> <li>• Programming to reduce family stress due to large family sizes (family planning support, parenting/caregiver support, childcare support, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Social Development, Health</p>	<p>Output 2 (under Outcome 2): Create a health and social environment to limit the percentage and consequences of marriage under the age of 18, enhance institutional and human capacity, and secure funding sources to ensure access the best services and implement the National Action Plan effectively and efficiently.</p>

INSPIRE Strategy	Related Risk and Preventative Factors Identified in the Study	Related Evidence and Recommendations from the Study	Sectors	Matched to Outcomes and Outputs from the National Action Plan
 <p><b>Income and economic strengthening</b></p>	<p><b>Community and Individual Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Attitudinal barriers to education (because of need to prioritise survival, especially among refugee groups)</p> <p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Family stress due to poverty</p> <p>Poverty due to unemployment</p> <p><b>Structural Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop employability skills and job creation strategies particularly for older adolescents and young adults</li> <li>• Analyse existing labour sector policies for job creation and addressing unemployment and track and monitor (&amp; target) for those families most vulnerable to child marriages</li> <li>• Enhance social protection programmes particularly for refugee and other vulnerable groups</li> </ul>	<p>Finance, Labour</p>	<p>Output 2 (under Outcome 2): Create a health and social environment to limit the percentage and consequences of marriage under the age of 18, enhance institutional and human capacity, and secure funding sources to ensure access to the best services and implement the National Action Plan effectively and efficiently.</p>
 <p><b>Response and support services</b></p>	<p><b>Interpersonal Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Domestic violence in the home</p> <p><b>Community Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Lack of information on current programmes for adolescents, need for increased case management</p> <p><b>Structural Level Risk Factors:</b></p> <p>Poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and case management provided to adolescents about interventions to reduce child marriages</li> <li>• Response and support services to address domestic violence (both as driver for children leaving homes but also as a driver of spousal conflict which leads to family disintegration)</li> <li>• Response and support services for adolescent intimate partner violence</li> <li>• Enhance social protection programmes particularly for refugee and other vulnerable groups</li> </ul>	<p>Health, Justice, Social Welfare</p>	<p>Outcome 2: Health and counselling services available to support cases and implement programmes to limit marriage under the age of 18</p> <p>Output 1: Case management programme for intending spouses and married females under the age of 18.</p> <p>Output 2: Create a health and social environment to limit the percentage and consequences of marriage under the age of 18, enhance institutional and human capacity, and secure funding sources to ensure access to the best services and implement the National Action Plan effectively and efficiently.</p>

INSPIRE Strategy	Related Risk and Preventative Factors Identified in the Study	Related Evidence and Recommendations from the Study	Sectors	Matched to Outcomes and Outputs from the National Action Plan
 <p><b>Education and life skills</b></p>	<p><b>Individual Level Risk Factors –Perpetration:</b></p> <p>Lack of education</p> <p>Attitudinal barriers to education for girls among parents and adolescents</p> <p><b>Preventative Factors:</b></p> <p>School attendance and transitioning from primary to secondary schooling for girls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interventions to improve transitioning from primary to secondary schooling, especially for girls</li> <li>• Life skills interventions for adolescent girls and boys around decision making, negotiation and strategic thinking.</li> <li>• Interventions aimed at ensuring an enabling environment for both boys and girls to study what they want rather than what they are expected to do according to gender stereotypes, by first examining classes/topics that boys and girls are taught or encouraged to major in and whether these are limiting employability and opportunities for young people.</li> <li>• Inclusion of awareness raising and skills to limit child marriages under 18 in school curriculum</li> <li>• Community campaigns to change attitudes towards education among both parents and adolescents</li> </ul>	<p>Education, Youth</p>	<p>Output 2 (under Outcome 2): Create a health and social environment to limit the percentage and consequences of marriage under the age of 18, enhance institutional and human capacity, and secure funding sources to ensure access to the best services and implement the National Action Plan effectively and efficiently.</p> <p>Output 2 (under Outcome 3): Protection concepts, values and methods to limit marriage under the age of 18 embedded in educational programmes and school curricula at all levels.</p>

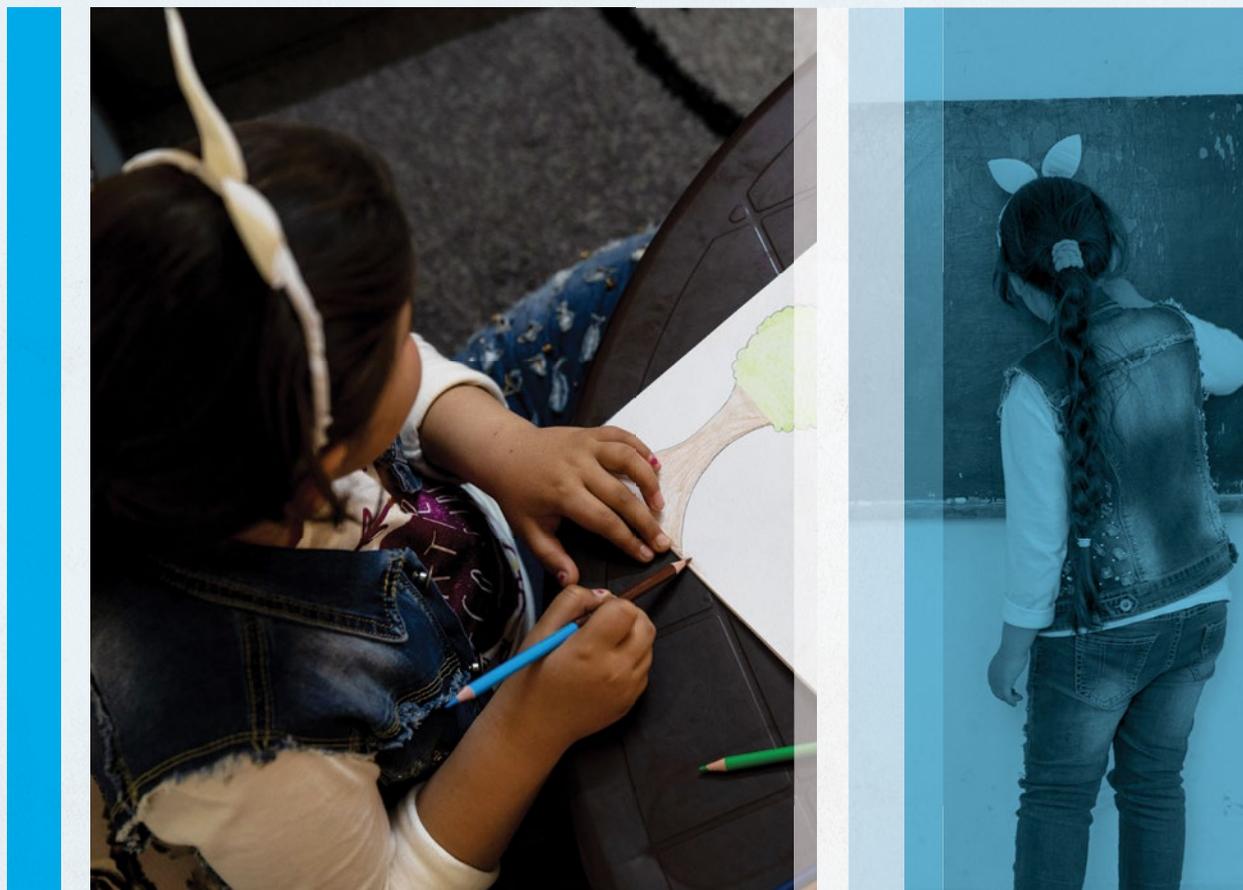
As highlighted by participants, the vast majority of Jordanians want to live in a society where child marriage is no longer a reality and all the participants gave their time and energy to help to identify the root causes at multiple levels in order for change to happen. For the first time, reducing and eliminating child marriage is also prioritised in the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030. Jordan has the opportunity to lead the region in evidence-based social and behaviour change for the reduction of child marriage, using evidence-informed programming that is contextually specific.

# 1. Introduction



Nationally representative data from the most recent Demographic Health Survey (DHS) shows that child marriage, which had been declining for decades, seems to be on the rise again. Why is this case? This study was commissioned by the UNICEF Jordan Country office to determine the underlying social norms and economic factors leading to child marriage in order to inform the development of a Multi-sectoral Plan to address it.

## 2. Methodology



The main research question driving this study is what are the underlying social norms and economic causes that lead to child marriage in Jordan and what can be done to address these? And how do normative beliefs and expectations influence child marriage among different groups, and in what circumstances?

In order to address these questions, a mixed methods study was developed under the leadership of the National Committee for the Elimination of Child Marriage. This report details the findings from that mixed methods study which included the following components:

1. A systematic review of the academic and grey literature, including 29 studies on risk and preventative factors, to analyse the situation and the root causes contributing to child marriage in Jordan.
2. A secondary analysis of DHS datasets from four separate years in order to triangulate this data with the findings from the systematic literature review on risk and preventative factors contributing to child marriage, and
3. A qualitative study on the social and behavioural drivers of child marriage.

Each of these components is further explored in the following sections.

## Systematic Review

This study included a systematic literature review of the existing evidence, to analyse the situation and root causes contributing to child marriage in Jordan. This methodology followed the 'Multi-country Study on the Drivers of Violence' approach developed by Maternowska and Fry.<sup>1</sup>

### Search strategy

Two separate searches were conducted in English and Arabic. The following global databases were searched for the academic literature in English: PubMed, PsycINFO, CINAHL/EBSCO, ERIC, Embase, and SocIndex. Initial searches were conducted on these databases for the Arabic search with few results. Alternative search strategies were then utilised to identify Arabic-language academic literature. This included searching Research Gate, Google and Google Scholar and University databases (Al al-Bayet University and Jordan University). The Almanhal database was also searched where possible. The *Jordanian Journal of Educational Sciences*, *Jordanian Journal of Social Sciences*, *Jordan Medical Journal* and the *Dirasat Journal* (Jordan University) were also hand-searched.

Google and Google Scholar were also used to search for the grey literature in both Arabic and English, as well as the UN i-Library. The UNICEF Jordan, UNICEF MENA, DFID, USAID, UNFPA and UNHCR Jordan websites were hand-searched.

Both administrative (e.g. service/system data) and primary research studies were included. This systematic review included the Annual Supreme Court Judges Reports as well as other important administrative data.

The review utilised both free text and controlled vocabulary of subject headings and keyword searches to identify articles and grey literature via the electronic databases. To provide the broadest coverage of articles and reports, the initial search term consisted of: (adolescents OR young people OR girls OR child\*) AND (child marriage OR early marriage OR forced marriage OR marriage) AND (Jordan). Strings to search specifically for different groups in Jordan (the Dom community, Syrian refugees and people in Palestinian refugee camps) did not yield any additional results.

### Study selection

All abstracts (for peer reviewed journal articles) and grey literature executive summaries were examined to determine whether they meet the inclusion criteria developed for the study (see box 2.1). If they met the inclusion criteria, paper and electronic copies of the full documents were retrieved and again reviewed against the inclusion criteria.

#### Box 2.1: Inclusion criteria

- Research studies on child marriage in Jordan including information on the prevalence as well as causes and risk factors of child marriage
- Published between 2000 and 2018.
- Peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports and other 'grey' literature, between 2000 and 2018.
- Geographic focus in Jordan
- Research published in English and Arabic.

When the abstract or executive summary did not provide sufficient information to determine inclusion, the full article was retrieved for further examination. Articles and other documents that ultimately met the inclusion criteria were reviewed and key variables of information extracted (see below). In addition, the bibliographies of all included articles, as well as relevant review articles, were examined as an additional measure to ensure that all articles which met the inclusion criteria were located. A total of 29 studies were included in the review (14 in English; 15 in Arabic).

<sup>1</sup> Maternowska, M.C., and Fry, D. (2015). *Understanding the drivers of violence. A step-by-step guide to conducting preliminary research around what drives violence*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. Retrieved from: <[www.unicef-irc.org/research/pdf/440-TOOLKITstep-by-step\\_28Sept2016\\_OK.pdf](http://www.unicef-irc.org/research/pdf/440-TOOLKITstep-by-step_28Sept2016_OK.pdf)>.

### Data Extraction Process

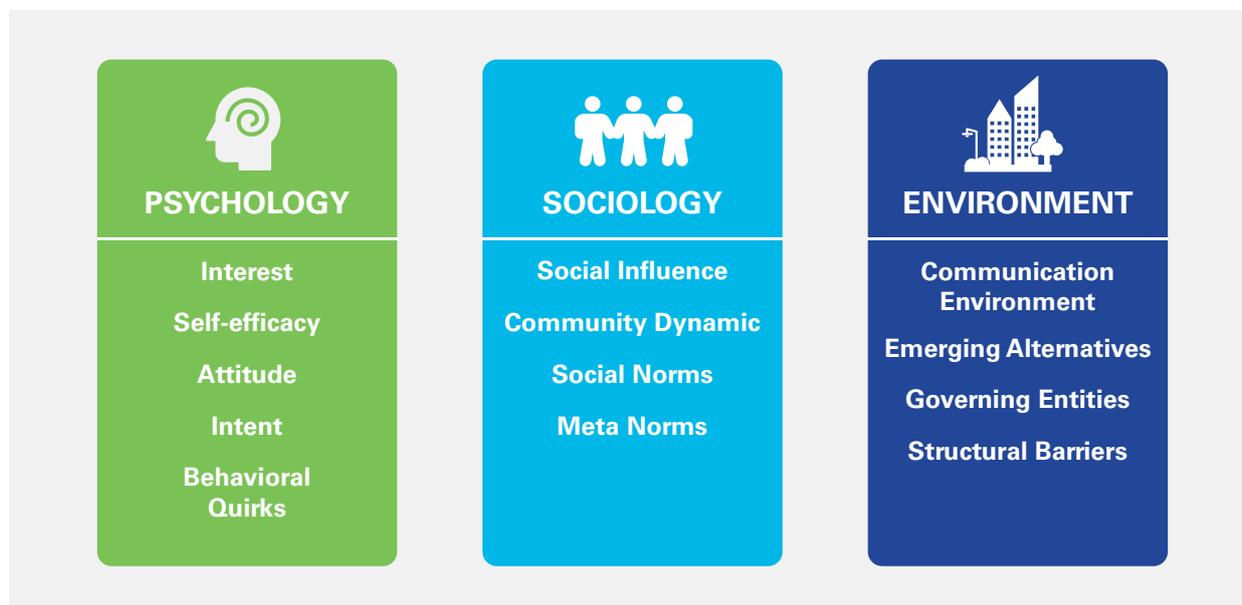
For all included studies, we extracted data based on key publication/research information into an Excel file. Extracted information included: Year of publication; Authors; Original language of publication; Location of study; Research question; Study design; Methods/setting of data collection; Duration of data collection; Model/theory: Study eligibility criteria; Sample size; Target population; Author-reported limitations/weaknesses of study design and methods. Findings variables including: 1) Prevalence of child marriage (if stated), 2) Risk factors for child marriage, 3) Preventative factors for child marriage, 4) Social norms related to child marriage, 5) Economic factors related to child marriage, 6) Confounding factors (mediating variables affecting child marriage); 7) Definitions of child marriage, and 8) Any other relevant information on study design or population.

### Quality Assessment

The quality assessment process of the studies selected for inclusion examined five main areas of research and report writing: inferences, methods, representativeness, the nature of the population and reporting bias. This allowed for the examination of each area by asking 17 specific questions about the ways in which information and research have been structured, implemented, recorded, reported and applied. Scores were tallied: 7 was used as the cut-off score for inclusion. This quality assessment tool was based on previous tools utilised in studies exploring gender-based violence and violence against children, and the guidelines for evaluating prevalence studies and qualitative studies.<sup>2</sup>

### Synthesising the findings

A mapping exercise using the data identified from the literature review was then conducted to analyse the information by: 1) Age and gender, 2) Community (general community, Dom community, Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees), and 3) District/governorate. In addition, this desk review also utilised the framework from the *Guidance Tool for Measuring Social and Behavioural Drivers of Child Protection Issues* to identify the full spectrum of possible factors influencing decision-making around child marriage (UNICEF MENA, 2018)—the key findings related to this framework are highlighted in the discussion sections of this report. This framework identifies three broad areas, with their own sub-categories, that should be taken into consideration in any study related to understanding individual and community behaviours:



Source: UNICEF MENA, 2018<sup>3</sup>

Under this conceptual framework, decision-making is multidimensional, involving many elements including social influences and factors. The key element of the current study is to understand how these factors operate together along different pathways to create drivers of child marriage.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF MENA C4D and Child Protection. *Measuring Social and Behavioural Drivers of Child Protection Issues: Guidance Tool*. UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, January 2018.

## Secondary Analysis

The systematic literature review was complemented by a secondary analysis of Demographic Health Survey (DHS) datasets. DHS surveys are available in many low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) globally including Jordan. Funded by the US Agency for International Development, DHS surveys collect nationally representative data in a number of health-related areas—including maternal and child health, family planning and HIV/AIDS. While the exact nature of the survey design and sampling frame varies slightly between countries, all of these household surveys make use of a clustered and stratified sampling scheme.

Using the findings emerging from the literature review, including the analysis of administrative data, hypotheses were developed and tested through secondary analyses to identify associations between variables. Specifically, analyses were done with the 2017/18, 2012, 2010 and 2007 DHS datasets to explore the extent of child marriage, factors leading to child marriage (exploring key factors such as educational status, wealth, ethnicity, adherence to negative gender norms, etc.), and to conduct a trend analysis on child marriage and whether its prevalence had changed over time.

All analyses accounted for the sampling and stratification scheme employed in the survey, to produce standard errors corrected for design. Weights related to the probability of selection were used where available to generate point estimates which reflect population prevalence and other estimates. All secondary analyses for this report utilised weighted raw DHS data. These analyses were conducted specifically for this study.

The secondary analysis data was triangulated with systematic review findings to provide hypotheses that were discussed with the Study Advisory Group, and that were further explored in the qualitative data.

## Qualitative Study

In order to ensure geographic coverage, and both the depth and breadth of interviews, a sampling frame was developed and discussed at length with UNICEF, Government and key civil society organisations of the National Committee to End Child Marriage. Based on these discussions, seven governorates (see Table 2.1) were chosen as the sites for qualitative fieldwork, for a number of factors including:

- The prevalence of child marriage
- The percentage of the population living below the national poverty line
- The number of people registered in Palestinian refugee camps
- The number of registered Syrian refugees
- Known/reported concentrations of Dom communities
- Geographic distribution across the three regions (North, Central, South), and targeting urban/rural/Badia.



**Table 2.1: Demographic Information of the Selected Governorates**

	Population (% of total population)	% Urban	% living below national poverty line	Number of people registered in Palestinian refugee camps <sup>4</sup>	Number of Registered Syrians <sup>5</sup> (urban or in camp)	Concentrations of Dom communities (Turkmen and/ or Bani Murra)?  <i>(Italics indicate location where interviewed in UNICEF's 2016 study)</i>	Number of marriages among those under the age of 18m 2017 <sup>6</sup>	Notes
<b>North Region</b>								
<b>Irbid</b>	1,137,100 (18%)	83%	15%	53,000 (25,000 registered in Husn camp; 28,000 in Irbid camp <sup>7</sup> )	139,905 urban	Y  <i>(Turkmen in Howwarah; Bani Murra in Al Sarieh)</i>	2,082  (98% girls)	
<b>Ajloun</b>	146,900 (2.4%)	76%	13%		7,269 urban		227  (99% girls)	
<b>Jerash</b>	191,700 (2.9%)	63%	20%	48,000 (29,000+ registered in Jerash camp; 19,000 registered in Souf camp <sup>8</sup> )	9,865 urban	Y  <i>(Bani Murra in Jerash Qasaba)</i>	361  (95% girls)	Lowest rate of unemployment (15.5%)
<b>Mafraq</b>	300,300 (4.7%)	39%	32%		161,981 (83,436 urban; 78,545 in Zaatari camp <sup>9</sup> )	Y	1,282  (96% girls)	
<b>Central Region</b>								
<b>Balqa</b>	428,000 (6.7%)	72%	20%	119,000 (Baq'a camp <sup>10</sup> )	19,806 urban		492  (96% girls)	

4 Official UNRWA figures from 1 December 2016. See: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>. See also [https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/insights\\_into\\_the\\_socio-economic\\_conditions\\_of\\_palestinian\\_refugees\\_in\\_jordan.pdf](https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/insights_into_the_socio-economic_conditions_of_palestinian_refugees_in_jordan.pdf) for more on situation of people living in Palestinian refugee camps.

5 Official UNHCR figures as of 31 May 2018. See: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/63935.pdf>

6 Source: Department of Supreme Judge, Annual Statistical Report for 2017.

7 Husn camp is known locally as Martyr Azmi el-Mufti camp. 23% are living under poverty line and 18% are unemployed (highest of 10 camps). In Irbid camp, 31% are living under the national poverty line.

8 Jerash camp is known locally as Gaza camp. It is the poorest among Palestine camps with 53% living in poverty. In Souf camp, 23% of people are living under the poverty line and 17% are unemployed.

9 Zaatari is the largest Syrian refugee camp. Its population is young, with 57% under age 24 years and 20% under 5 years which continues to grow as there is an average of 80 births a week. The majority are from Dar'a in southwest Syria (79%).

10 Baqa'a camp is the largest camp in Jordan. 32% of people live under poverty line and 17% are unemployed.

	Population (% of total population)	% Urban	% living below national poverty line	Number of people registered in Palestinian refugee camps <sup>4</sup>	Number of Registered Syrians <sup>5</sup> (urban or in camp)	Concentrations of Dom communities (Turkmen and/ or Bani Murra)?  <i>(Italics indicate location where interviewed in UNICEF's 2016 study)</i>	Number of marriages among those under the age of 18m 2017 <sup>6</sup>	Notes
<b>Amman</b>	2,473,400 (38.5%)	94%	8%	150,000 (57,000 registered in Amman New Camp; 32,000 registered in Jabal el-Hussein camp; 53,000+ are registered in Marka camp; 8,000 registered in Talbieh <sup>11</sup> )	194,630 urban	Y  (Bani Murra in Mhatta; Bani Murra & Turkmen in Zahour & Quasmeh; Turkmen in Bayader)	3,159  (97% girls)	
<b>Zarqa</b>	951,800 (14.9%)	95%	11%	20,000 (Zarqa camp <sup>12</sup> )	96,580 (49,358 urban; 6,484 in Emirati Jordanian Camp; 40,738 registered in Azraq camp)	Y	2,250  (98% girls)	
<b>Madaba</b>	159,700 (2.5%)	71%	15%		12,943 urban	Y	246  (96% girls)	
<b>South Region</b>								
<b>Karak</b>	249,100 (3.9%)	33%	17%		8,941 urban	Y	224  (97% girls)	
<b>Ma'an</b>	121,400 (1.9%)	55%	24%		7,755 urban		162  (98% girls)	Highest level of poverty 'severity' <sup>13</sup> and also highest rate of unemployment (26.2%) <sup>14</sup>
<b>Aqaba</b>	139,200 (2.2%)	86%	12%		3,572 urban		197  (98% girls)	
<b>Tafeleh</b>	89,400 (1.4%)	71%	21%		1,702 urban		51  (96% girls)	

11 Amman New Camp is overcrowded and sees second highest % of poverty among the 10 Palestinian camps – 34% have an income below national poverty line. Jabal el-Hussein is an urban-like quarter that has become part of Amman where 28% below poverty line. Marka camp is also in Amman metro, with many residents originally from the Gaza strip. Talbieh is the smallest camp. Living conditions and shelters are poor, and 28% are living under the national poverty line.

12 Zarqa camp is the oldest Palestine camp. 19% are living under the poverty line.

13 [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.15/2015/WP\\_11\\_EN\\_Jordan.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.15/2015/WP_11_EN_Jordan.pdf)

14 [http://dos.gov.jo/dos\\_home\\_e/main/archive/Unemp/2017/1stQ.pdf](http://dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/archive/Unemp/2017/1stQ.pdf)

## Sample Size

A total of 526 individuals participated in this qualitative study from 7 different governorates (Mafraq, Zarqa, Irbid, Amman, Karak, Ma'an and Jerash) chosen in consultation with the National Committee to End Child Marriage. Of these, 350 respondents—including 170 adolescents, 83 parents and 42 extended family members and 55 refugees—participated in focus group discussions, as outlined in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2: Focus Group Discussion Participant Information**

	Reference	Number of Participants in Focus Group	Group Details	
Youth	FGY1	7	12-14 boys	Mafraq
	FGY2	7	15-17 boys	Mafraq
	FGY3	7	12-14 boys	Zarqa
	FGY4	7	15-17 boys	Zarqa
	FGY5	7	12-14 girls	Mafraq
	FGY6	7	15-17 girls	Mafraq
	FGY7	7	12-14 girls	Zarqa
	FGY8	7	15-17 girls	Zarqa
Youth	FGY9	7	12-14 boys	Irbid
	FGY10	7	15-17 boys	Irbid
	FGY11	7	12-14 boys	Amman
	FGY12	7	15-17 boys	Amman
	FGY13	8	12-14 girls	Irbid
	FGY14	7	15-17 girls	Irbid
	FGY15	7	12-14 girls	Amman
	FGY16	7	15-17 girls	Amman
	FGY17	7	12-14 girls	Karak
	FGY18	7	12-14 boys	Karak
	FGY19	7	15-17 girls	Karak
	FGY20	7	15-17 boys	Karak
	FGY21	6	12-14 girls	Ma'an
	FGY22	7	15-17 girls	Ma'an
	FGY23	7	12-14 boys	Ma'an
	FGY24	8	15-17 boys	Ma'an
Parents	FGP1	7	Mothers	Amman
	FGP2	7	Fathers	Irbid
	FGP3	7	Mothers	Irbid
	FGP4	7	Mothers	Zarqa
	FGP5	7	Fathers	Zarqa
	FGP6	7	Mothers	Mafraq
	FGP7	6	Fathers	Amman
	FGP8	7	Fathers	Mafraq
	FGP9	7	Fathers	Karak
	FGP10	7	Fathers	Ma'an
	FGP11	7	Mothers	Karak
	FGP12	7	Mothers	Ma'an

	Reference	Number of Participants in Focus Group	Group Details	
Extended family	FGE1	7	Extended Family	Ma'raq
	FGE2	7	Extended Family	Zarqa
	FGE3	7	Extended Family	Amman
	FGE4	7	Extended Family	Irbid
	FGE5	7	Extended Family	Karak
	FGE6	7	Extended Family	Ma'an
Refugees	FGR1	7	Palestinians/ M	Irbid
	FGR2	7	Palestinians/ F	Irbid
	FGR3	7	Palestinians/ M	Zarqa
	FGR4	6	Palestinians/ F	Zarqa
	FGR5	7	Syrian/F	Ma'raq
	FGR6	7	Syrian/M	Ma'raq
	FGR7	7	Syrian/F	Jerash/ Am
	FGR8	7	Syrian/M	Jerash/ Am

Additionally, in-depth interviews were held with key respondents including professionals (n=3), policymakers (n=5), Sheikhs, religious and community leaders (n=9), refugees (n=4) and members of the Dom community (n=5). Further information is provided in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3: In-depth Interviews Participant Information**

	IDI #	Reference	Type of Respondent
Professionals	1	IDP1	Healthcare
	2	IDP2	Police
	3	IDP3	Healthcare
Policymakers	4	IDPM1	National Council
	5	IDPM2	Judge
	6	IDPM3	Higher Pop Council
	7	IDPM4	Women Council
	8	IDPM5	MOSD
Sheikhs, Religious and Community Leaders	9	IDS1	Teacher M
	10	IDS2	Teacher F
	11	IDS3	Sheikh
	12	IDS4	Teacher/Councillor F
	13	IDS5	Teacher F
	14	IDS6	Sheikh
	15	IDS7	Teacher F
	16	IDS8	Religious leader
	17	IDS9	Family protection advisor
Refugees	18	IDR1	Syrian
	19	IDR2	Syrian
	20	IDR3	Palestinian
	21	IDR4	Palestinian

	IDI #	Reference	Type of Respondent
<b>Dom Community</b>	22	IDD1	Bani murra
	23	IDD2	Bani murra
	24	IDD3	Bani murra
	25	IDD4	Ghazzawi
	26	IDD5	Ghazzawi

Finally, short social norms surveys were distributed during the focus group discussions (FGDs) to allow for individual respondent information to be gathered along with group discussion findings around the social expectations and beliefs relating to child marriage. Everyone who participated in a focus group discussion (n=350) also filled out a social norms survey. An additional 150 respondents also filled out the social norms survey, with key information about the type of respondent and their location shown in Table 2.4. In total, 500 social norms surveys were completed.

**Table 2.4: Survey Respondent Information**

Respondents	Governorates	Gender	Details	# Surveys filled in the FGDs	# Surveys filled (Extra)	
<b>Youth</b>	<b>Mafraq</b>	Males	12-17 years old	14	1	
		Females	12-17 years old	14	1	
	<b>Irbid</b>	Males	12-17 years old	14	1	
		Females	12-17 years old	15		
	<b>Amman</b>	Males	12-17 years old	14	3	
		Females	12-17 years old	14	4	
	<b>Zarqa</b>	Males	12-17 years old	14	1	
		Females	12-17 years old	14	3	
	<b>Ma'an</b>	Males	12-17 years old	13	1	
		Females	12-17 years old	15	1	
	<b>Karak</b>	Males	12-17 years old	14	1	
		Females	12-17 years old	14	5	
	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Mafraq</b>	Males	Fathers	7	
			Females	Mothers	7	2
		<b>Irbid</b>	Males	Fathers	7	4
			Females	Mothers	7	3
<b>Balqa</b>		Males	Fathers		1	
<b>Amman</b>		Males	Fathers	6	7	
		Females	Mothers	7	11	
<b>Zarqa</b>		Males	Fathers	7	3	
		Females	Mothers	7	4	
<b>Ma'an</b>		Males	Fathers	7	2	
		Females	Mothers	7	6	
<b>Karak</b>		Males	Fathers	7	2	
		Females	Mothers	7	6	

Respondents	Governorates	Gender	Details	# Surveys filled in the FGDs	# Surveys filled (Extra)
Extended Family (Grandparents, Aunt, Uncles, Sibling)	Mafraq	Mix	Mixed	7	
	Balqa	Mix	Mixed		3
	Ajloun	Mix	Mixed		1
	Jerash	Mix	Mixed		3
	Irbid	Mix	Mixed	7	9
	Amman	Mix	Mixed	7	25
	Zarqa	Mix	Mixed	7	7
	Tafleeh	Mix	Mixed		1
	Ma'an	Mix	Mixed	7	4
	Karak	Mix	Mixed	7	3
	Refugees	Mafraq	Males	Syrians	7
		Females	Syrians	7	2
Irbid		Males	Palestinians	7	1
		Females	Palestinian s	7	4
Jerash		Males	Syrians	3	1
		Females	Syrians	4	2
Amman		Males	Syrians	4	4
		Females	Syrians	3	3
Zarqa		Males	Palestinian Refugee Camp	7	
		Females	Palestinian Refugee Camp	7	2
<b>Total</b>				350	150

### Fieldwork

The national research organisation, Analyzeize, conducted the fieldwork. This included working with UNICEF and government partners in the districts to identify and recruit participants according to the attributes needed for each focus group and in-depth interview. Additionally, Analyzeize identified research participants and mobilised them for the study, secured venues for the study, sought clearances from the local leadership structures for the research, and acted as link persons between the research team and local leadership, assisted with transportation arrangements for the research participants, conducted the in-depth interviews and focus groups, and assisted with links to the relevant case management/referral pathways related to ethical issues as needed.

The study received ethical approvals from both the University of Edinburgh and UNICEF prior to collecting any data.

### Participatory focus group discussions

The qualitative participatory research utilises rigorously tested participatory activities with elements that have been proven to be effective in measuring social norms and other factors that drive behaviours.<sup>15</sup> The participatory focus group discussions (FGDs) utilised an iterative process, soliciting consecutive contributions from each participant and encouraging contributions from all participants in the group, allowing each participant an equal opportunity to voice their thoughts, and a space to present their ideas without undue influence by potentially overly assertive individuals.

<sup>15</sup> Fry, D., Casey, T., Hodzi, C. and Nhenga, T. "Exploring Determinants of Violence in Childhood: Methodology of research on Social Norms and Violence Prevention in Zimbabwe." *Understanding Violence Against Children in Zimbabwe Series*, No. 4. Harare: UNICEF, 2016.

The qualitative component of the study was designed to unpack the links between the potential risk factors for child marriage identified in the systematic literature review as well as to explore new emerging themes introduced directly by participants.

The FGDs consisted of interrelated qualitative participatory research activities which are further explained below:

1. Listing and ranking activity with drivers' pathways discussion
2. Social Norms Vignettes and Surveys

### **Format of the FGDs**

Each group included approximately 5-8 participants and started with an introduction, followed by going through the informed consent process and a ground-rules activity before starting the participatory research activities.

Parental consent was obtained for all participants under the age of 18 years. Adolescents were also asked to complete the assent forms. All groups were audio-recorded with participants' consent. All of the participatory activities were also flipchart-based to allow for comprehensive notetaking. A facilitator's report template was designed, based on the participatory activities that each facilitator completed during the week following data collection with a specific group.

### **Participatory Tool: Listing and Ranking Activity**

Listing and ranking is used widely in Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) and Participatory Action Research projects. The activity involves brainstorming and listing responses to a specific question, then grouping together any similar answers before each person in the group votes individually on their top three responses. This exercise was deployed in several previous studies led by the research team including: *Bringing the Global to the Local: Utilizing Participatory Research to Address Sexual Violence with Immigrant Communities in NYC*<sup>16</sup> and the *Research to Policy and Practice Process Studies in Paraguay, Swaziland and the Social Norms Study in Zimbabwe*.

The listing component of the activity involved thinking about the reasons why child marriage happens in their community. The facilitator listed their answers on the flipchart paper to the following question:

What influences **child marriage in your community?**

Probes adapted from UNICEF's Survey on Social and Behavioural Factors related to Child Marriage were used to help participants brainstorm. Once participants finished brainstorming and 'listing' their responses, the facilitator asked if any of the things listed could be grouped together and a new list was created of all the final items to be voted upon. Participants voted independently for their top three 'drivers' of child marriage. For each potential driver identified in the listing and ranking activity, participants then explored WHY those potential drivers happen.

### **Participatory Tool: Social Norms Vignettes and Short Survey**

The social norms vignettes and short survey were based on rigorously tested participatory activities, using a focus group discussion approach that are proven as effective measures of social norms.<sup>17</sup> The short vignette or story was used from UNICEF's Survey on Social and Behavioural Factors related to Child Marriage:

*Now, I will tell you the story of a girl who lives in this region/district. I will call her Sania, although this is not her real name. I would like you to listen carefully to her story. Sania is a 14-year-old girl. She lives with her parents, Aisha and Ahmed (not their real names), and has 2 siblings: a younger sister and an older brother. Sania goes to school and helps her mother with household chores. One day, Mounia, Sania's cousin, comes over to visit Sania's family. They are about the same age. Mounia's mother announces that Mounia is engaged and getting married in a month's time. She strongly suggests to Aisha that she should also have Sania married soon as she is getting old for marriage. Mounia's mother reveals that she also knows someone from their village who is interested in marrying Sania.*

<sup>16</sup> Paz, M. and Fry, D. *Bringing the Global to the Local: Utilizing Participatory Research to Address Sexual Violence with Immigrant Communities in NYC*. New York: The New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Mackie, G., Moneti, F., Shakya, H. and Denny, E. *What are Social Norms? How are they Measured?* UNICEF, 2015.

Participants were then asked to independently fill out a series of questions about what they think others would do in a similar situation, and how frequently they think this scenario is played out in their own community. After completing this survey, participants then engaged in discussions together about different actors and their expectations.

### ***In-Depth Interviews***

In-depth interviews were also conducted with key informants, including professionals (e.g., police, healthcare workers), Sheikhs, religious and community leaders, refugees and members of the Dom community, and local policymakers working on relevant issues. These informants were identified with the assistance of UNICEF and the Study Advisory Group. The interview guide for these interviews also asked the participants for their thoughts on some of the key risk and protective factors related to child marriage, but also explored their thoughts about how to improve the policy and legislative framework, and interventions and potential strategies which could be used to prevent child marriage.

### ***Interviewer Training and Pre-Testing***

Research interviewers received bespoke training on the study methodology and substantive issues, led by the University of Edinburgh, and including discussions to co-design the following areas: 1) background on the purpose of study and on data collection and design, 2) a participatory review of the focus group and in-depth interview tools, 3) the study safeguarding and referral pathways, 4) the procedures for and importance of maintaining confidentiality, 5) the importance of securing and maintaining the ground-rules during the focus group discussions, 6) referral services and 'checking-in' with participants throughout the interviews and focus groups, 7) logistics of scheduling and coordinating focus groups and in-depth interviews, 8) quality assurance and documentation, and 9) translation plans.

The research tools were pre-tested with each key participant group in Amman after the interviewer training. After pre-testing, the investigators made any necessary modifications to the tools including shortening the instruments. The relevant ethics committee was informed of all modifications to research instruments made as a result of pre-testing.

### ***Data Management and Quality Assurance***

Identifiers were removed from the data collected and replaced with pseudonyms, with the exception of the key policymaker interviewers, where participants were asked if they could be identified by organisation. The investigators follow data protection policies in data storage and back-up. Back-up data was checked on a biweekly basis to ensure it was up-to-date and for usability and version control. The raw data, which for the purposes of this study is defined as only the audio recordings, was maintained in Jordan and was transcribed and translated into non-raw data for the purposes of analysis. In accordance with the University of Edinburgh Data Management Policy, raw data (the audio recordings) will be securely stored and then destroyed three years from the collection end date.

Quality was assured through routine monitoring by the study investigators and periodic assessment against the protocols. The Fieldwork Coordinator checked through each transcript for consistency against the facilitator's guide. For translations, a fluent speaker checked the transcripts against the original recording to ensure quality.

### ***Safeguarding and ethical considerations***

While the study was not asking participants about their own experiences, the topic may nonetheless have caused some participants to feel uncomfortable. This potential risk of participating was clearly explained at the beginning of the focus group/interview and repeated throughout the data collection. Participants were encouraged to skip any questions that make them feel uncomfortable and the research went at the participant's own pace. There were warm-up and cool-down questions/activities, and, for groups of adolescents, all questions were youth-friendly. Research instruments were developed in line with social and behaviour change literature, and several participatory activities, validated in previous studies, have been used. Interviewers were trained to pick up on cues and distress, and to discontinue the interview if a participant was distressed. Furthermore, the researchers ensured that all participants were given information about local and accessible counselling services. Researchers also sought to ensure safe focus group spaces and spoke about ground-rules at the beginning of each focus group session.

The interviewer training included training on recognising and handling disclosures where a child might be at significant risk of harm. All data was held confidentially, subject to the laws of the country. All participants were informed about any limits to confidentiality (such as where a child may be experiencing harm) prior to taking part in the study.

There were potential ethical concerns around privacy and anonymity for participants, particularly in refugee camps. In accordance with the WHO guidelines on conducting research in humanitarian contexts, all interviews and FGDs were held in a safe place, somewhere that does not draw unnecessary attention, and where participants could not be overheard.

Obtaining parental consent also helped to ensure that parents are aware of the nature of the research (e.g., that personal experiences will not be discussed; that remuneration was provided; that participation will not affect any services, etc.) Participants were also briefed about the need for confidentiality and the safeguards that will be adopted to protect their privacy (e.g., anonymizing data). This was done at the beginning of the meeting and repeated at the end. Informed consent also included acknowledgement that confidentiality in focus groups is the responsibility of all group members, including both the nature of the discussion (e.g., what was discussed) as well as to what was said and who was present. Understanding of and sensitivity to the cultural context was also important, and the national team had extensive experience conducting research with all of the various participants' groups around the topic of child marriage.

## Data Analysis

The qualitative component of this study included two types of findings: 1) findings from the participatory activities that will include activities done with flipchart paper answering specific questions and 2) more narrative responses through the interviews. The participatory tools detailed in the previous section (listing and ranking, drivers' pathways and social norms vignettes and surveys) provide clear frameworks for documentation. Once all the flipchart papers were organised and written up, the data was analysed across the focus group as follows:

*Listing and Ranking (focus group data):* The range of all answers given in the listing and ranking activity were explored and combined into themes. There were 50 focus groups in total. The facilitator of each group agreed the top three drivers of child marriage with participants following a voting exercise. This meant that across all 50 groups, there were a possible 150 recorded key drivers. Visual inspection of the focus group data revealed a high level of consensus in respect of these key drivers—in particular from focus groups with adults (adolescents introduced a wider range of drivers).

An SPSS dataset was created to record the frequency with which specific drivers were mentioned across all focus groups. There were fourteen choices of possible driver as identified from the visual inspection of the Focus Group Facilitator reports. As explained in more detail in the body of this report, from this initial analysis it was decided to proceed to undertake an analysis of the three main drivers mentioned across all groups of:

- Traditions / Culture (n.33)
- Poverty (n.31)
- Broken Home / Family Disintegration (n.14)

SPSS datasets were also created for each of the Level Two drivers (the causes of the main causes) being investigated: 'Customs and Traditions,' 'Poverty,' and 'Broken Home /Family Disintegration.' For each topic, this process began by visual inspection of all the focus groups that had listed the particular Level Two driver under investigation. All listed drivers for each Level Two driver were entered in list form onto separate documents. Review of these (sometimes lengthy) single documents for each Level Two driver revealed a pattern of underlying causes identified for each Level Two Driver. SPSS data sets could then be set up with a field for each driver. The SPSS datasets enabled the recording of the frequency of these suggested drivers [of Poverty / Culture and Traditions / or Family Disintegration], and an analysis of the suggested drivers across group type (i.e., parents, extended family member, refugees, adolescents), age and geographical area of Jordan.

The SPSS dataset for 'Customs and Traditions' recorded the frequency with which 27 different drivers were mentioned, including the category 'other' for drivers mentioned only once. The SPSS dataset for 'Poverty' recorded the frequency with which 22 different drivers were mentioned, including the category 'other' for drivers mentioned only once. The SPSS dataset for 'Family Disintegration' recorded the frequency with which 19 different drivers were mentioned, including the category 'other' for drivers mentioned only once. These analyses enabled the 9 most frequently listed Level Two drivers to be determined (3 for each Level Two driver). This process was continued for level three drivers, so that pathways to the main drivers could be examined. Review of these completed lists revealed patterns of frequency and also commonalities of theme. The

combination of frequency and thematic analysis informed the content of the body of this report and enabled the identification of 27 Level Three drivers of Child Marriage in Jordan.

*Social Norms Surveys:* All surveys were entered into MS Excel and transferred to SPSS version 21 for analysis. Univariate and bivariate analyses were conducted. Data was disaggregated by question for respondent type, gender and geographic location.

*Interviews:* The interviews included more narrative discussions. In-depth interviews were digitally recorded with participants' consent and a template was used to write up detailed notes from the interviews. All of the data was entered into NVivo data analysis software and were analysed using inductive thematic coding (Ritchie and Spenser, 1994). A rigorous and systematic reading and coding of the transcripts was conducted to allow major themes to emerge. Similarities and differences across sub-groups and sites was also explored.

This inductive analysis has several underlying assumptions (Thomas, 2003):

- Data analysis is determined by both the research objectives (deductive) and multiple readings and interpretations of the raw data (inductive). Thus, the findings will be derived from both the research objectives outlined by the researcher(s) and findings arising directly from the analysis of the raw data.
- The primary mode of analysis is the development of categories from the raw data into a model or framework that captures key themes and processes, as per the conceptual frameworks agreed for the study by the Study Advisory Group.
- The validity of findings was assessed by a range of techniques such as (a) a comparison with findings from previous research through the systematic review, (b) a triangulation within the study with the other forms of data collection, and (c) feedback from policymakers, practitioners and users of the research findings through the validation event.



### 3. Findings



#### Systematic Review and Secondary Analysis of Existing Data

##### *Prevalence of child marriage*

Over the last 60 years, the age of first marriage has been increasing in Jordan (Gebel and Heyne, 2016). From 1998 to 2004, the prevalence of child marriage in Jordan reportedly decreased from 20 per cent of all marriages to 15 per cent, though it has increased in recent years (HPC, 2017). In 2016, there were 11,241 registered marriages to girls and boys under the age of 18 years (10,907 girls and 334 boys), accounting for 13.8% of all marriages that year (Department of Supreme Judge, 2016). Child marriage is more common in Amman, Mafraq, Zaraq and Irbid (HPC, 2017; see also Tables 3.1 and 3.2). Compared to other countries in the region (Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen), the prevalence of child marriage is relatively low, especially among younger girls (UNICEF, 2018). According to DHS data, the percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were married before the age of 15 years in Jordan is the lowest in the region (0.3% compared to a high of 11.9% in Sudan).

**Table 3.1: Number of marriages that took place in 2016 for those under the age of 18**

<b>Governorate</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
<b>Amman</b>	102	3318
<b>Irbid</b>	67	2265
<b>Zarqa</b>	38	2083
<b>Balqa</b>	31	536
<b>Karak</b>	10	257
<b>Ma'an</b>	4	151
<b>Ma'raq</b>	52	1318
<b>Tafeleh</b>	0	51
<b>Madaba</b>	14	231
<b>Ajloun</b>	6	223
<b>Aqaba</b>	2	177
<b>Jerash</b>	8	297
<b>Total</b>	334	10,907
<b>Percentage of all marriages that took place in 2016</b>	0.41%	13.4%
<b>Divorces</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
<b>Number of divorces that took place in 2016 for those under the age of 18</b>	21	893
<b>Percentage of all divorces that took place in 2016</b>	0.1%	4.06%

Source: Department of Supreme Judge, Annual Statistical Report for 2016.

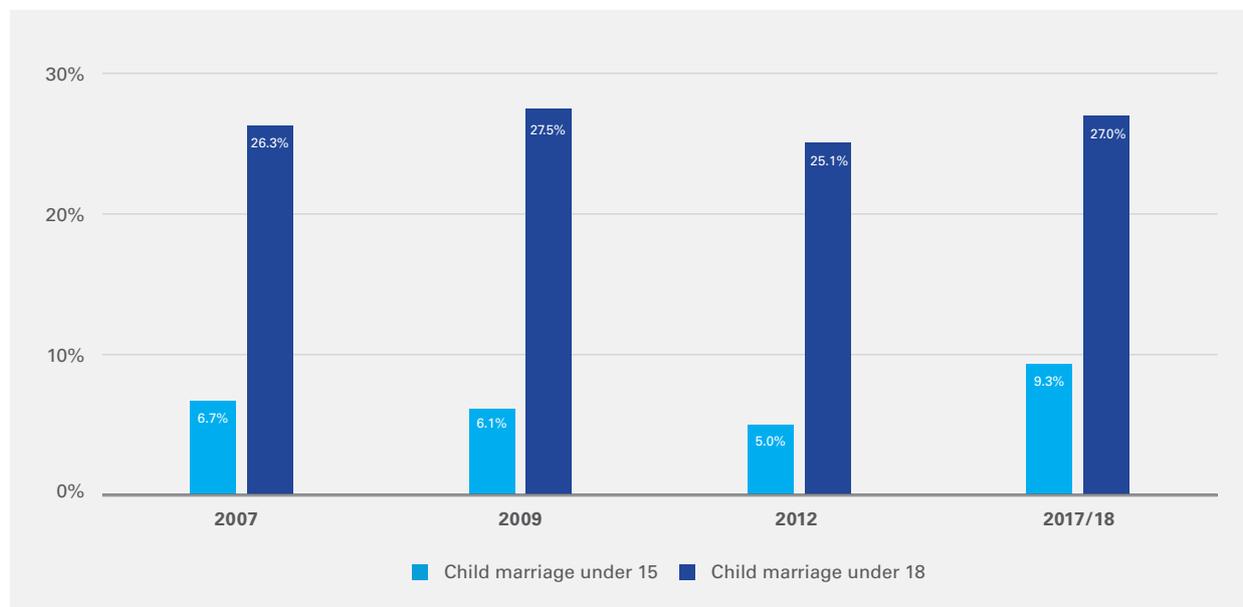
**Table 3.2: Number of marriages that took place in 2017 for those under the age of 18**

<b>Governorate</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
<b>Amman</b>	84	3075
<b>Irbid</b>	41	2041
<b>Zarqa</b>	53	2197
<b>Balqa</b>	21	471
<b>Karak</b>	6	218
<b>Ma'an</b>	3	159
<b>Ma'raq</b>	55	1227
<b>Tafeleh</b>	2	49
<b>Madaba</b>	11	235
<b>Ajloun</b>	1	226
<b>Aqaba</b>	4	193
<b>Jerash</b>	18	343
<b>Total</b>	299	10,434
<b>Percentage of all marriages that took place in 2017</b>	0.38%	13.4%
<b>Divorces</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
<b>Number of divorces that took place in 2017 for those under the age of 18</b>	16	976
<b>Percentage of all divorces that took place in 2017</b>	0.1%	4.6%

Source: Department of Supreme Judge, Annual Statistical Report for 2017.

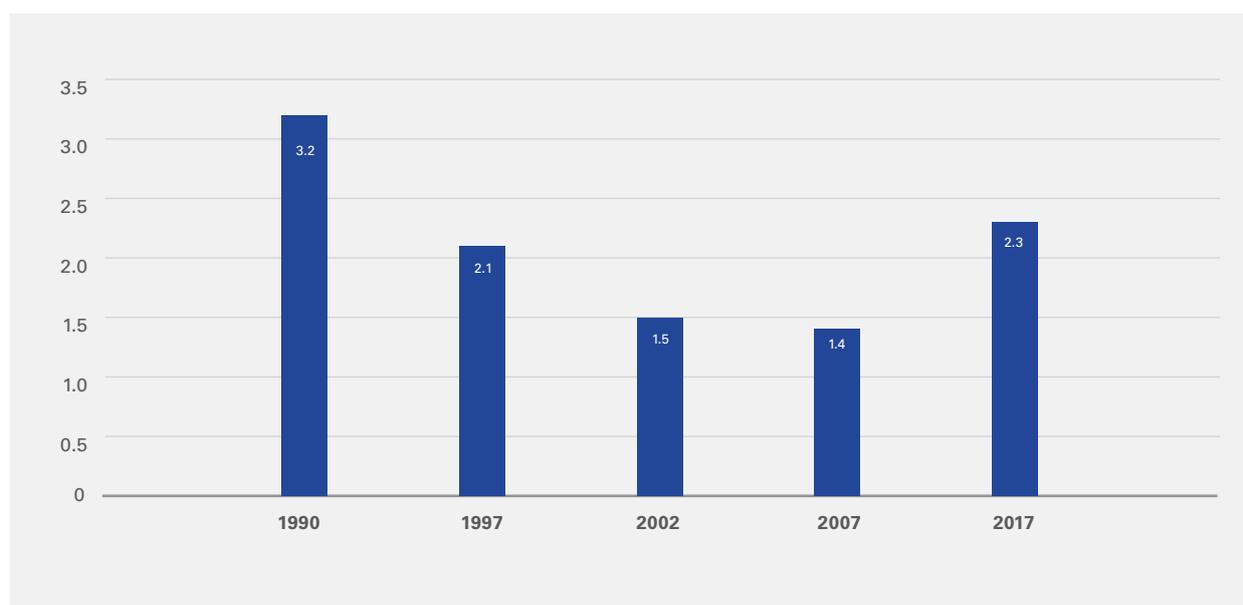
However, this data is likely to present an underestimation of the true prevalence of child marriage: nationally-representative survey data shows a higher prevalence of women aged 13 years and older who married under the age of 18 compared to data from the Chief Justice Department (18.2% vs. 13.4% in 2015, for example; HPC, 2017).

**Figure 3.1a: Proportion (%) of Women Aged 20-24 Years Old Who Were Married Before the Age of 15 and Before Age of 18, DHS Data**

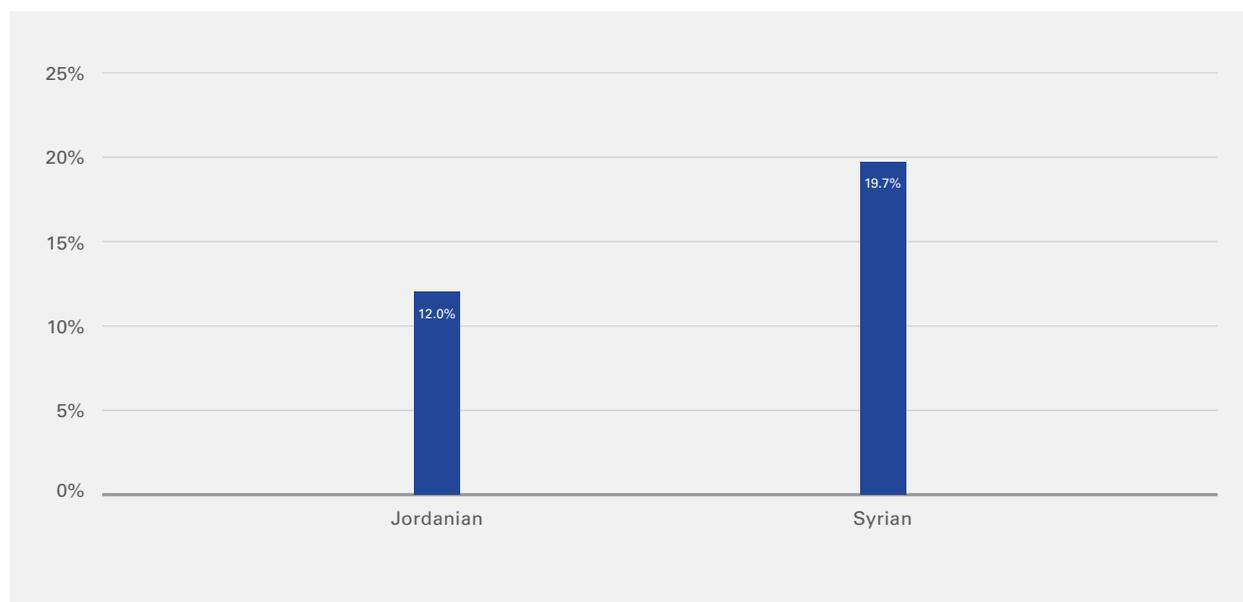


This is the same indicator used for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goal of reducing child marriages (the proportion of women aged 20-24 years old who were married before 15 and before 18 years old). We can also explore the differences in child marriage by key ethnic groups in Jordan (see figure 3.2)

**Fig 3.1b: Prevalence of Child Marriage at or before the age of 15 in Jordan among 18-22 year olds, DHS Data (all years)**



**Fig 3.1c: Proportion (%) of Women Aged 20-24 Years Old Who Were Married Before the Age of 18 by Ethnicity, DHS 2017 Data**



Demographic Health Survey data shows a gradual decreasing trend in child marriages for those below 18 years of age, and a lesser decrease for those married under 15 years of age between 2007 and 2012. However, increases in both marriage under 15 and under 18 among 18-22 year olds are shown in the most recent data from 2017/2018 (see Figures 3.1a and 3.1b).

The indicator used for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goal of reducing child marriages explores the proportion of women aged 20-24 years old who were married before 15 and before 18 years old. The table below tracks this indicator over time in the last two decades of DHS datasets.

Proportion (%) of women aged 20-24-year olds who were married or in a union before the age 15 and before age 18

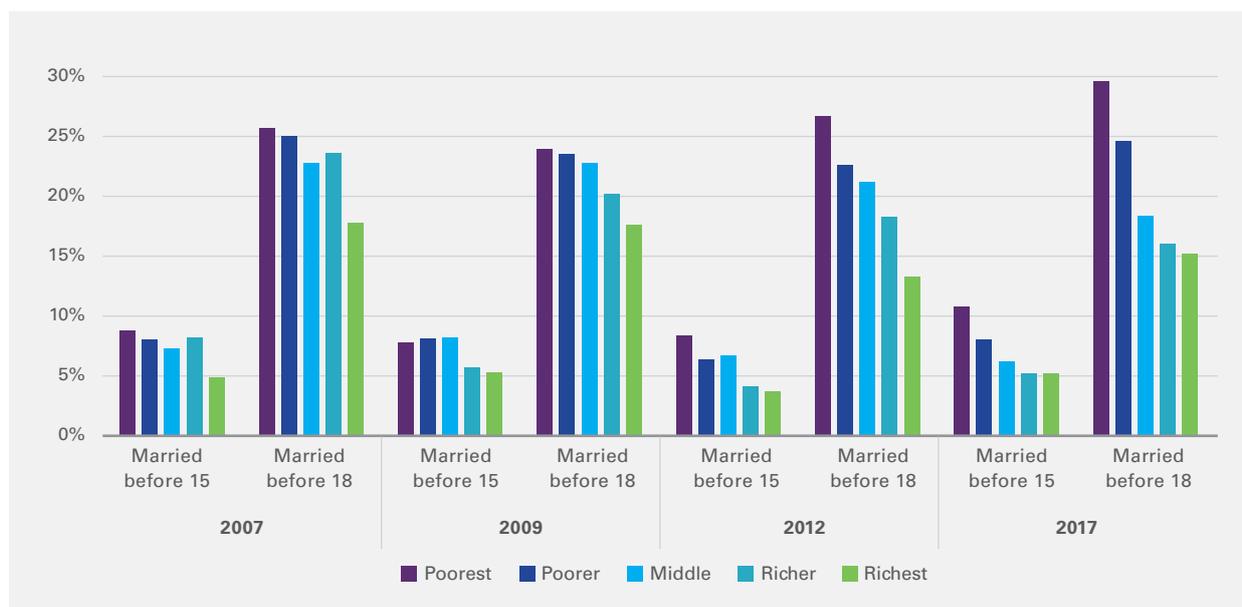
	2002	2007	2009	2012	2017/18
Child marriage under 15	0.9%	1.1%	0.7%	0.3%	1.5%
Child marriage under 18	11.1%	9.6%	10.2%	8.4%	9.7%

Though the legal age of marriage is 18 years, judges are able to authorise the marriage of minors, mainly on religious grounds, without the need for approval by the Chief Justice Department (SIGI, 2016; see the policy and legislation section for more on this). There are also informal and non-formal marriages that are not registered with the Jordanian authorities, especially among Syrian refugees (The Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women, 2013). Women who were interviewed for UNICEF's situation analysis (2007) indicated that parents find ways to evade the civil law regarding age at marriage, such as recording of a higher age than the actual age, arranging the marriage contract in Syria, or using their connections to get the judge to invoke the exception clause.

### ***Economic factors underlying child marriage***

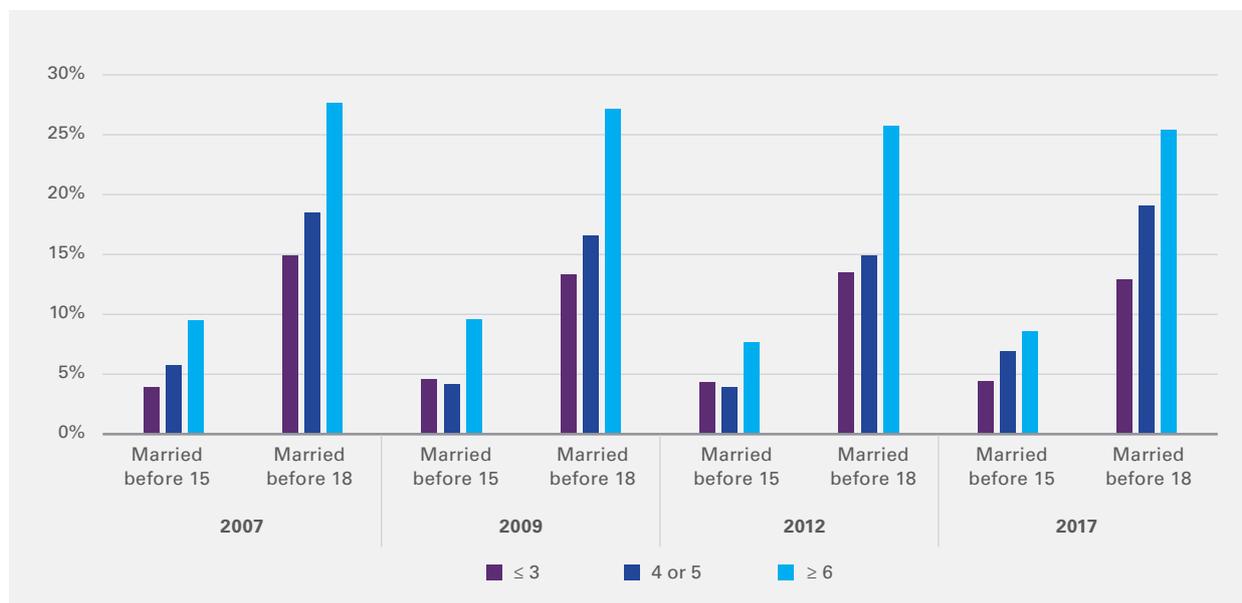
Low income and poverty were cited as the main reason for child marriage in several studies identified in the systematic review for both males and females (Al-Zyoud, 2012; Fihmy and Ibrahim, 2013; Ghazawi, 2007). A secondary analysis of DHS datasets shows that the prevalence of child marriage generally declines as wealth increases—with those children in the richest quintiles having the lowest prevalence of child marriage compared to those in the lower wealth quintiles over time (see fig. 3.2). The latest data from 2017/2018 shows that the gap between the poorest quintiles and the middle and richer quintiles in terms of child marriage is increasing.

**Figure 3.2: Percentage of child marriage by Wealth Index, DHS Data (2007-2012)**



This is likely tied to norms around gender, as girls are married early in order to relieve pressure on limited family incomes (UNICEF Situation Analysis, 2007; Al-Zyoud, 2012). Trend analysis of DHS data shows that the prevalence of child marriage increases for households where there are six or more household members living together (see fig. 3.3).

**Figure 3.3: Percentage of child marriage by the number of household members, DHS Data (2007-2012)**



Child marriage is believed not only to alleviate the economic burden on families, but is also seen as a way to provide financial stability and security, known as *sutra* (Shtwew and Karadsheh, 2013). Families typically have different expectations for girls and boys in terms of future roles. Typically, girls and women have fewer education and employment opportunities. While this is changing, it remains an issue among certain groups, including those with less education, those living in poverty/hardship and among certain refugee populations. The cultural belief that child marriage provides security and protection from hardship is a significant risk factor for child marriage for these girls (UNICEF, 2014).

### Cultural norms/beliefs underlying child marriage

Several cultural norms and beliefs were identified in the desk review as contributing to child marriage. In a study of 462 participants, 67% believed child marriage is viewed as a positive thing in Jordanian society (Al-Zyoud, 2016). There is a **high social value of marriage** (UNICEF, 2007) where marriage is seen as an achievement or a sign of social status (UNICEF, 2014).

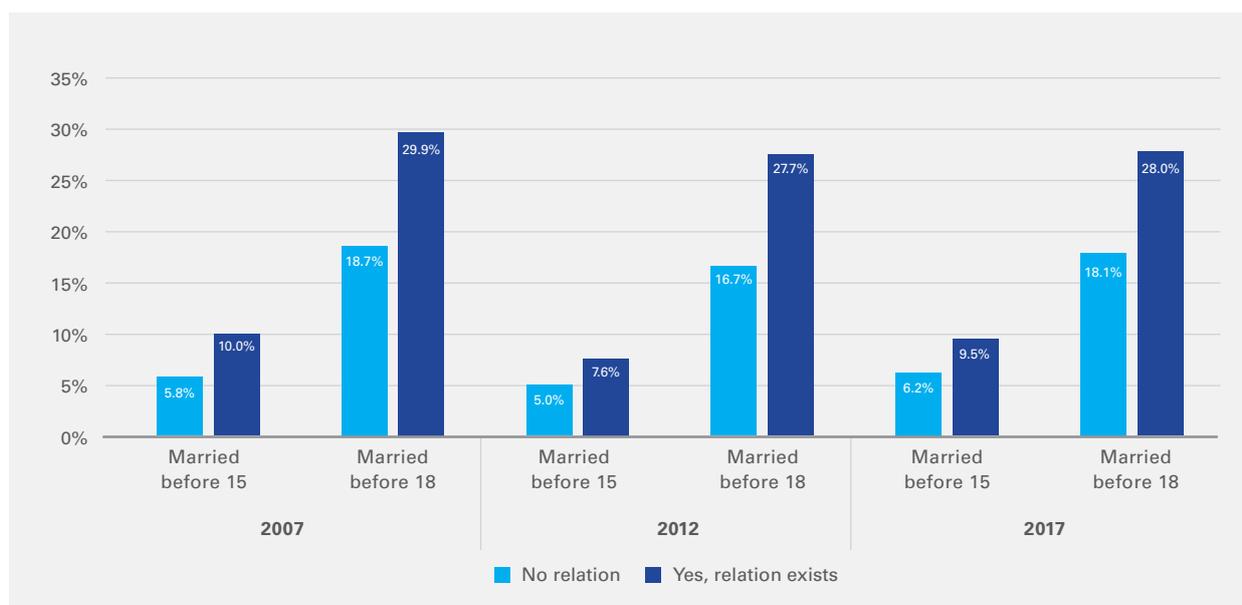
As in most Middle Eastern countries, **religious beliefs and customs** are important parts of life in Jordanian society (Bawadi and Al-Hamdan, 2017). The official religion is Islam; 92% of the people are Muslim; of these, most are Sunni Muslims (Department of Statistics, 2016). Shari'a law permits young people under the age of 18 years to marry (with some conditions and rules; Al-Nadaf and Al-Kurdi, 2013). There is also a cultural view that child marriage helps to maintain a girl's virtue (UNICEF Situation Analysis, 2007; Al-Zyoud, 2012). The family is the foundation for Jordanian society and is believed to be the key to social solidity (Bawadi and Al-Hamdan, 2017). Family structures and roles typically adhere to certain **gender norms**, with men acting as head of the extended family (Shoup, 2007).

The evidence shows that this contributes to child marriage in different ways. Some girls who married before the age of 18 years said that they had wanted to be free from their father's control (Al-Zyoud, 2012). However, the research more commonly shows that the decision-making around child marriage is typically with the child's father or male guardian (UNICEF, 2014; HPC, 2017). Parents generally value high-level education for both sons and daughters, though their aspirations for girls are slightly lower than for boys. Their perspectives differ in terms of future roles and freedom of choice in decisions regarding employment and marriage. Many young people also believe that male decisions should prevail in every respect, though these attitudes are slowly changing, especially among the more educated young girls (UNICEF, 2007).

**Polygamy** is also a risk factor for child marriage (Shtewe and Karadsheh, 2014) and still prevails in more conservative families. In 2002, as in 1997, seven per cent of married women were in polygamous unions (UNICEF, 2007). However, this appears to be declining as the latest DHS data shows that 4% of women report their husband is also married to another women and only 1% of men report having polygamous unions.

**Consanguineous** marriages are also common, though there is conflicting information in the literature as to whether this a risk factor for child marriage. Some research indicates that the average age of women marrying a relative is lower compared to women marrying outside the family (Karadsheh, 2012; UNICEF, 2007).

**Figure 3.4: Prevalence of consanguineous child marriages, DHS Data (2007, 2012 and 2017)**



In the DHS datasets where questions were asked about consanguineous marriages, it was found that a higher prevalence of children in child marriages were married to relatives and that this remained a consistently higher proportion over time (see fig. 3.4).

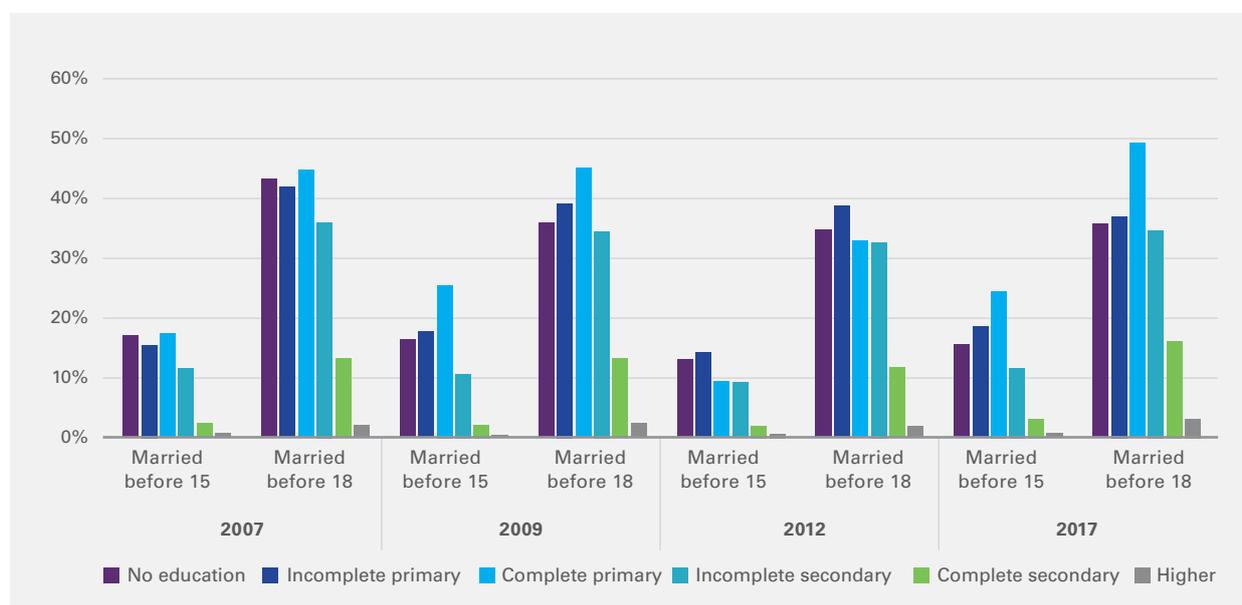
The earlier 2002 DHS data also found that 43% of married females aged between 15 and 49 years had been related to their current or previous husband prior to marrying. Twenty-six per cent had married first cousins, while four per cent were dual first cousin marriages. Girls married by the age of 20 or less were more likely to marry a relative than those who first married at older ages. Such marriages were more common among rural, less-educated women and those in the North and South. Reported reasons included social traditions, keeping economic resources within the family, lack of awareness about the health consequences of such marriages, and availability of suitable matches within the family.

### Other factors contributing to child marriage

#### Education

Research shows a strong relationship between child marriage and education in Jordan. *Low educational attainment of girls* was a risk factor for child marriage among a household survey of 3,444 married women aged 15-49 years (DHS; Karadsheh, 2012), a study of 462 adults (Al-Zyoud, 2012) and a study of 10,876 women aged 15-49 years who have been married (DHS; Shtewe and Karadsheh, 2013).

**Figure 3.5: Prevalence of child marriage by educational attainment, DHS Data (2007-2017)**



From a secondary analysis of DHS datasets of the prevalence of Early Marriage by educational attainment of the child, a strong trend can be seen that shows that increasing levels of educational attainment is associated with decreasing levels of child marriage for both being married under 18 and being married under 15 years of age (see fig. 3.5).

Girls who have married before the age of 18 years are far more likely to have attained only an elementary-level education compared to those with a secondary education or higher (69% vs. 16.99% in 2015; HPC, 2017). Another study analysing Judicial Judge statistics reported that 35.8% of Jordanian females with a primary school level education married at the age of 17 years or younger, and that 33% of illiterate Jordanian females married at the age of 17 years or younger (SIGI, 2016). *Illiteracy among men* was also identified as a risk factor for the early marriage of females. The average age of marriage for women who marry illiterate men is 19.7 years of age (Karadsheh, 2012).

#### Location

Child marriage is more common among young people **living in rural areas** (Karadsheh, 2012; HPC, 2017), and those who live in rural areas are more likely to be in favour of early marriage than those in urban areas (Al-Zyoud, 2012). A larger age gap between spouses is more acceptable in rural areas, as is the desire for larger families (Shtewe and Karadsheh, 2013).

#### Drivers of child marriage among Syrian refugees

Jordan is one of the countries most affected by the Syrian crisis, with the world's second highest share of Syrian refugees compared to its own population. According to the UNHCR, the Syrian crisis and influx of

refugees has increased Jordan's population by 10%, and the country's infrastructure has struggled to cope (Balsari, Abisaab, Hamill and Leaning, 2015). As of April 2018, there are 660,935 Syrian refugees registered in Jordan, 19% of whom live in camps. The remaining majority live in urban areas and also live in poverty, with over 80% living below the poverty line. The population is also young, with 51% of refugees being children under the age of 18.

Existing research on child marriage among Syrian refugee girls living in Jordan shows that these girls face specific vulnerabilities because of their refugee status. According to Shari'a court data of registered marriages in 2014, one third of new Syrian brides were under 18, far higher than among other nationalities in Jordan (HPC, 2017). Some research indicates that Syrian customs around child marriage may have started to influence northern Jordanian's decisions to marry early (HPC, 2017).

The phenomenon of early marriage is both common in some parts of Syria and legally acceptable (usually at 15-17 years); yet in Jordan, the increased rate of child marriage amongst this population group points to another negative coping mechanism for families trying to secure the economic future of their children, and to reduce the economic burden on their own households (UNICEF *Hajati Cash Transfer Report*, 2018). Such marriages are now argued to be precipitated by difficult circumstances and uncertainty (as a social and economic coping strategy), and to ensure *sutra*.

This belief around *sutra* is also held by Syrian refugees who were child brides. In a study of 300 Syrian refugees in Za'atari camp who had married before the age of 18 years, child marriage was seen as ensuring more security and economic stability. Child marriage was also commonly practiced in Syria before the asylum process (Al-Shawashreh and Jeet, 2017). Syrian refugee women also indicated that 'dwindling options and scarce resources' meant that early marriage was the only 'viable alternative' for daughters and for their families, and that marriages are often conducted hastily, without traditional background checks, and with a focus more on immediate needs (i.e., on the prospective husbands' ability to provide financial security) (IRC, 2014; UNICEF, 2014). Qualitative research with Syrian girls in their late teens and early 20s in Jordan found that unmarried girls felt as if they were an added burden and started to feel rejection from their families, with some experiencing emotional abuse (Spencer, 2015).

The influx of refugees has strained the country's infrastructure and led to an increase in social and political tensions. It has also had a negative effect on the Jordanian economy, resulting in disrupted trade routes, decreased tourism and lower investments. As a result, Jordan faces high unemployment rates and increased competition for jobs, particularly in Northern Jordan. These difficulties have led the Jordanian public to focus on the negative impacts of the Syrian refugee crisis, hampering the government's ability to effectively respond to the influx of refugees (UNICEF, 2018).

These community tensions between the host community and refugee populations have caused concerns for safety and limited social cohesion. This results in restricting children's freedom of movement, especially that of young girls. In wave 6 of UNICEF's panel survey on Syrian refugees (2018), more than 30% of the population reported that they do not feel safe to send their girls outside the house. Families have reported that they prefer to marry their girls early to avoid any safety or harassment risks. In Za'atari camp in particular, the lack of community safety and girls' vulnerability have contributed to forced and early marriage, as well as other gender-based issues including sexual exploitation and trafficking and domestic violence (Ritchie, 2017).

There are also strong links between education and child marriage among Syrian girls. In one camp (Azraq), 16% of adolescent girls aged 15-17 years are not in school due to being engaged or married.<sup>18</sup> Women refugees discussed the poor quality of education as a factor encouraging girls to drop out of school to get married (Ritchie, 2017).

There are specific gender norms within southern Syrian culture which influence marital practices. Among **Syrian refugees**, there is a **cultural expectation** that a girl's role is to be a wife, so they are prepared for marriage from a very young age. In rural southern Syria, where many refugees in Jordan come from, men are expected to provide for the family financially, and women are typically responsible for taking care of the house and are expected to act modestly as their behaviour is seen as a reflection of their husband's character (Ritchie, 2017). To ensure that their family's honour is maintained, Syrian women often 'face strong pressure to conform to prevailing social norms' regarding what is deemed acceptable female behaviour (SIGI, 2016). For many Syrians, this notion of honour remains paramount, and is embedded in perceptions of girls' pre-marriage virginity and women's faithfulness. Child marriage is therefore encouraged by religious leaders for

Syrian girls in order to ensure their virtue and protect their honour (The Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women, 2013).

### ***Drivers of child marriage among people in Palestinian refugee camps***

As of December 2016, there are more than 2 million registered Palestinians who live in Jordan. While most have been granted full citizenship rights, about 18% still live in one of the 13 Palestinian refugee camps. The age at first marriage among Palestinians living in Jordan is lower within camps, and twice as many females aged 15-19 years are married inside camps compared to those living outside camps (12% vs. 6%). The 2014 UNICEF Child Marriage study indicates that there is a higher acceptance of child marriage in the Palestinian Jerash (or Gaza) camp.

People living in Palestinian refugee camps report poverty—as well as large family size—as the most significant factor contributing to child marriage (UNICEF CM, 2014). UNICEF's 2014 Child Marriage study found that among Palestinians living in refugee camps, families of girls who were not doing well academically were more likely to accept offers from a 'suitable' husband (e.g., those with a stable income). Among those without a national identification number, marriage to a Jordanian spouse provides the girl with Jordanian nationality and the associated rights and opportunities, which, by extension, are made available to her parents and family as well (UNICEF, 2014).

### ***Drivers of child marriage in Dom communities***

There is less research available about the Dom community, though a recent study by UNICEF (2016) shows that they are amongst the most marginalized communities in Jordan. There are two main sub-groups within this heterogeneous community, the Bani Murra and the Turkman. Sources differ but suggest that there are an estimated 30,000-80,000 people in the Dom community in Jordan, though some of the population remains nomadic, travelling through the Jordan Valley and throughout the region. Obtaining precise figures are further complicated by the fact that many are said to hide their ethnic identity because of prejudice and discrimination. UNICEF's 2016 study reported that the marriage of girls between the ages of 15 and 16 years in the Bani Murra community is common, while Turkman women reported an even lower age of marriage at 12 or 13 years. The research identified different reasons for child marriage including harassment, poverty (and the prospect of receiving dowry) and lack of educational and employment opportunities.

### ***Preventative Factors***

Attitudes toward child marriage appear to be shifting among the younger population. Data from 2002, 2006, 2012 and 2017 show that there was general consensus among the young that starting a family requires a considerable degree of mental and physical maturity and that as such marriage should not take place before the age of 18 years (Al, Zyoud, 2012; HPC, 2017). Research with adolescents in 2006 confirmed a generally negative view of early marriage, especially among girls. In a study of 462 adults in 2012, those in the youngest age group (17-25 years) were less likely to support child marriage than older participants (Al-Zyoud, 2012).

Other factors preventative of child marriage are **involvement in the workforce (employment)** and **education** (Gebel and Heyne, 2016). The average age of working women at first marriage is 23 as opposed to 20 for those who are unemployed (Karadsheh, 2012), while women with secondary education tend to marry two years later than those with no education or with elementary or preparatory education only (UNICEF Situation Analysis, 2007).

### ***Associated outcomes of child marriage***

The literature shows that child marriage can be linked to a number of negative impacts for girls, their families and wider society. In a study of the poorer Jordanian and Syrian families, Jordanians were found to believe more strongly than Syrians that there are risks to child marriage (UNICEF *Hajati Cash Transfer Report*, 2018). This is likely to be a result of the unique challenges faced by the Syrian population in Jordan (Sahbani, Al-Khateeb and Hikmat, 2016).

Some research shows that impacts of child marriage differ depending on the circumstances surrounding the marriage. In a study assessing young girls' mental health, those who had not suffered from instability such as parental absence and poverty, and those who wanted to have children early had better mental health outcomes than those who were married because their parents wanted them to, and those who did not feel secure. Girls who married younger at the age of 13 or 14 years scored worse on mental health than girls who married at 17 years of age (Al-Shawashreh and Jeet, 2017).

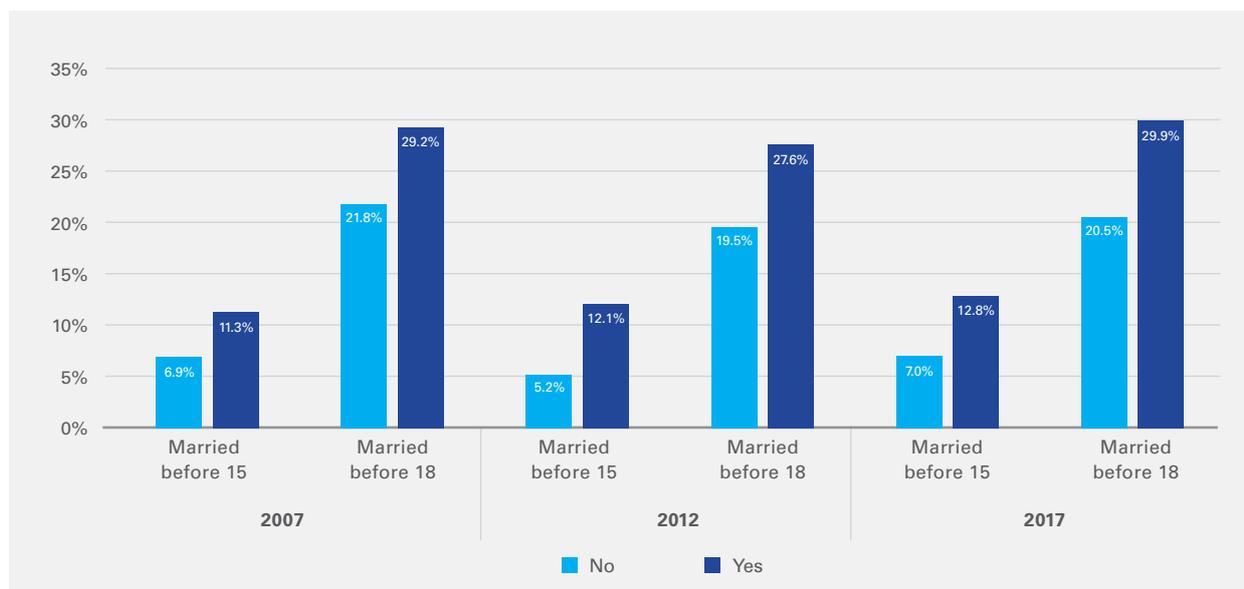
However, the majority of the research highlights negative effects of child marriage, showing that it is linked to a significant increase in maternal mortality, child and foetal mortality, poor health due to malnutrition, the unanswered need for family planning (Karadsheh, 2012), and leads to poor educational attainment for girls (Al-Zyoud, 2012; HPC, 2017).

It also increases the rate of divorce (Al-Zyoud, 2012) and increases the risk of intimate partner violence (Safadi et al., 2018; Clark et al., 2016; DHS). DHS trend analysis indicates that those who married under the age of 18 years were more likely to suffer injuries as a result of violence from their husband (fig. 3.6), as well as less severe forms of violence (fig. 3.7). Figure 3.6 shows the proportion of those who have experienced the following injuries as a result of intimate partner violence:

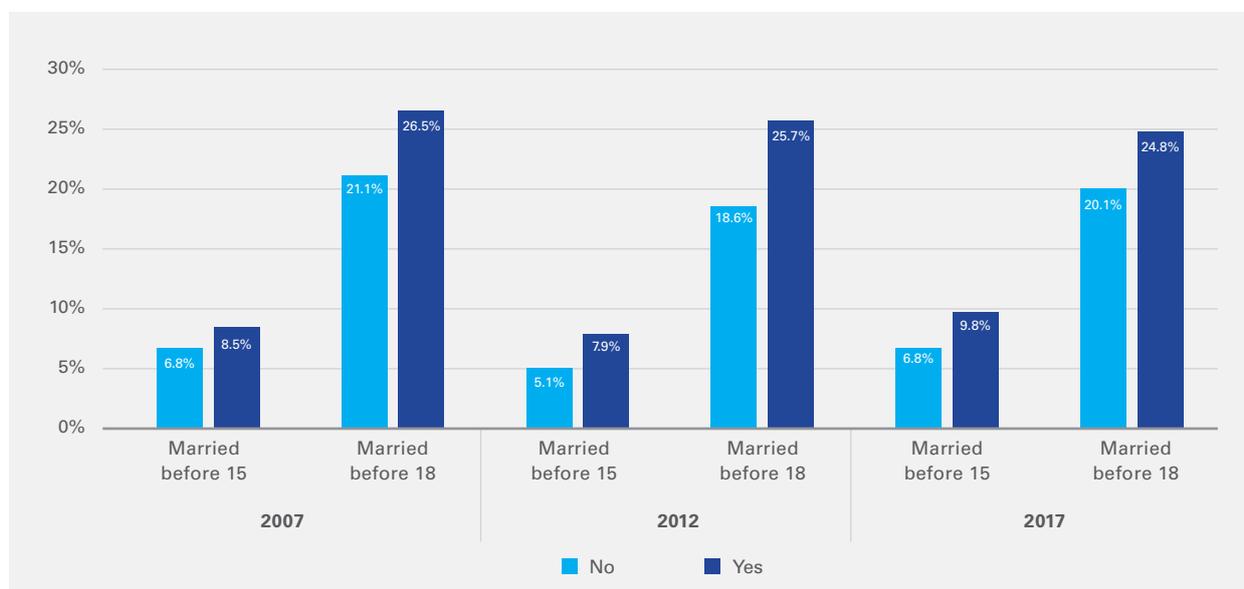
- Ever had bruises
- Ever had eye injuries, sprains, dislocations or burns
- Ever attended a health facility with injuries, and
- Ever had wounds, broken bones, broken teeth or other serious injury.

Those who report being in a child marriage more frequently report these severe forms of intimate partner violence compared to those in marriages initiated in adulthood. This trend is also consistent across the ten-year time period between surveys.

**Figure 3.6: Percentage of married children experiencing injury from intimate partner violence, DHS Data (2007, 2012, 2017)**



**Figure 3.7: Percentage of married children experiencing less severe intimate partner violence, DHS Data (2007, 2012 and 2017)**



In addition to intimate partner violence, another consequence of child marriage can be divorce. By region, the Central and North regions have nearly equal percentages of divorce (3.0% for the Central region and 3.1% for the Northern region), whereas the Southern region has a slightly lower prevalence of divorce among those married as children (2.4%).

**Figure 3.8: Percentage of divorces among those married at 18 or younger by Wealth Index.**

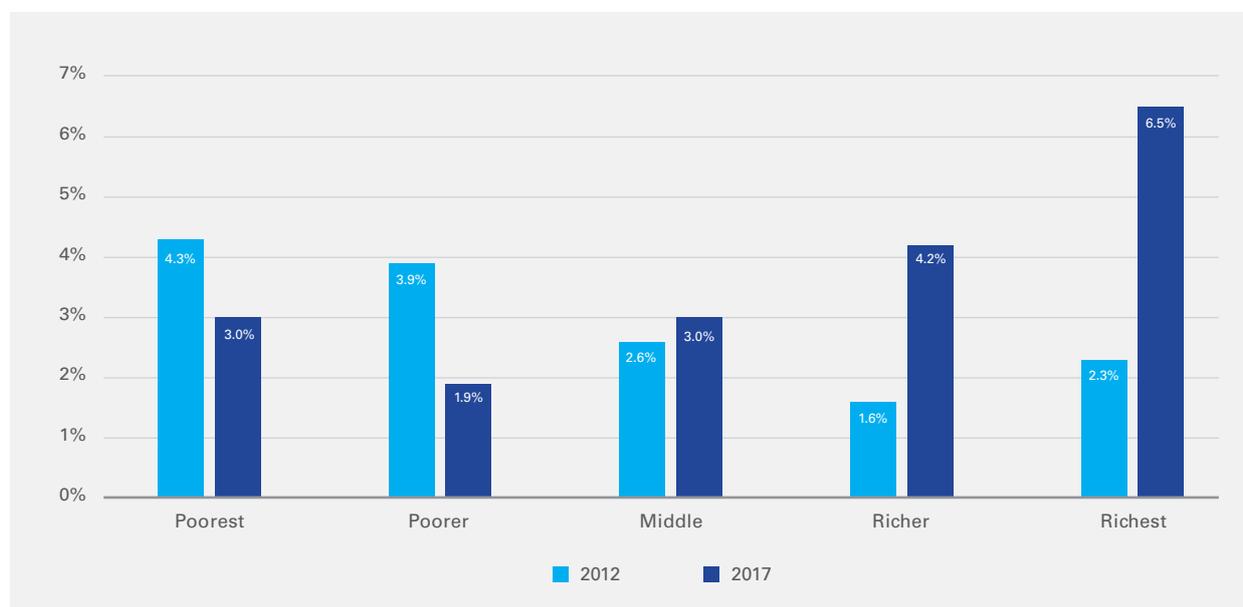
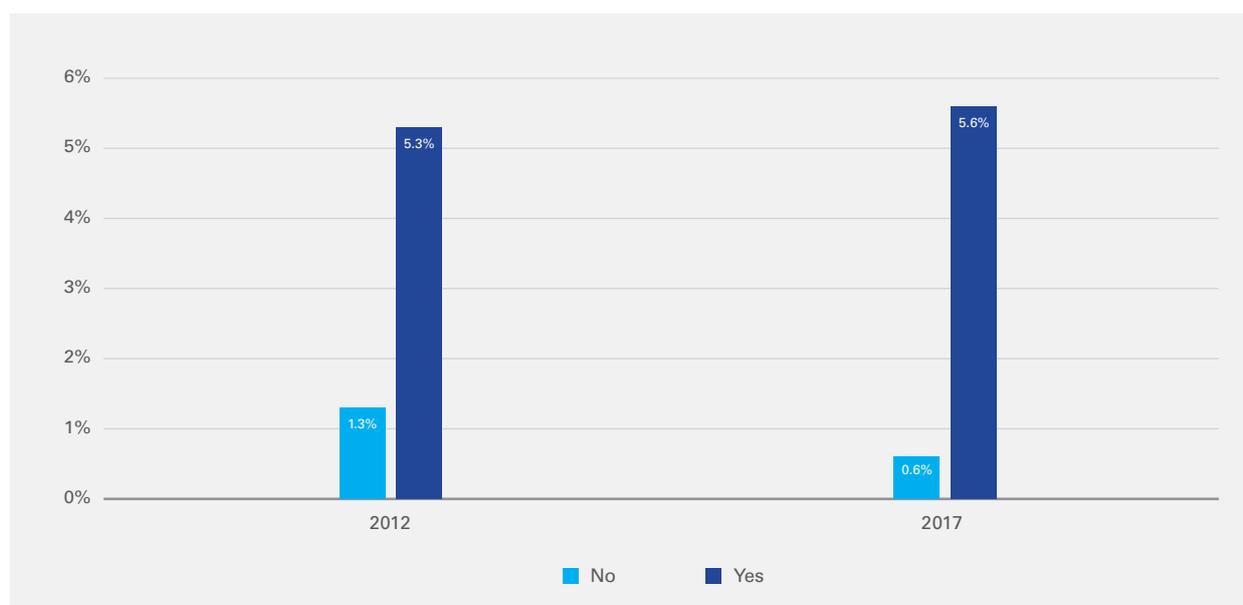


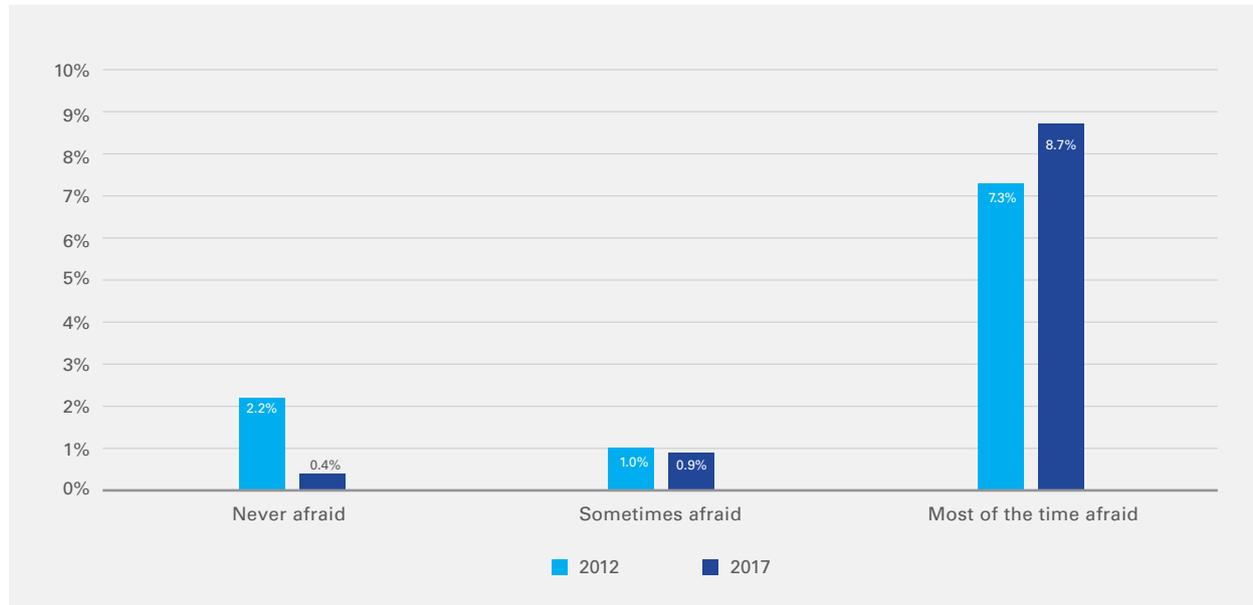
Figure 3.8 shows the prevalence of divorce by wealth index. In 2012, divorce among those who married aged 18 years or younger was slightly more common in the poorest (4.3%) and poorer (3.9%) wealth quintiles compared to the middle (2.6%), richer (1.6%) and richest (2.3%) quintiles. This trend has changed in 2017, where the richest and richer quintiles are more likely to get divorced.

**Figure 3.9: Percentage of those married at 18 or younger, now divorced, by experience of emotional violence.**



There is also an associated link between the intimate partner violence in child marriages and divorce, with 5.3% of those who experienced emotional violence from their spouse in 2012 and 5.6% in 2017 reporting they got divorced, compared to 1.3% who did not experience emotional violence from their partner in 2012 and 0.6% in 2017. The relationship is even starker when respondents are asked if they are afraid of their partner (see fig. 3.11).

**Figure 3.10: Percentage of those married at 18 or younger, now divorced, by fear of husband**



The secondary analysis of DHS data makes the links much clearer between child marriages and the negative consequences for children, including violence and divorce (which then has additional negative societal consequences, especially for girls).

**Figure 3.11: Mapping of relevant legislation and policy enactment by percentage of children married before 15 and 18 years, DHS data**

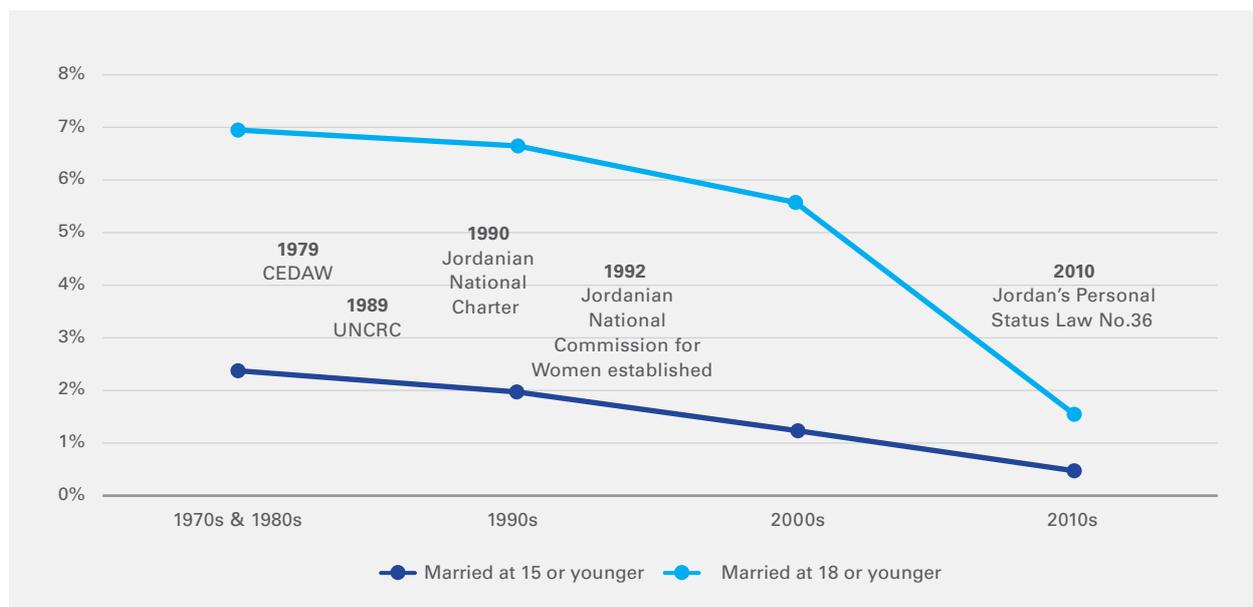


Figure 3.11 highlights the combined DHS data and maps the decade during which those who reported being married as children were married across the previous DHS datasets.<sup>19</sup> What is evident, even despite the current increase from the 2017 DHS data, is a downward trend of child marriages across time which is also reflected in administrative data. The key legislative and policy highlighted in the review are also mapped against this downward trajectory. While it is impossible to causally link the legislation to decreases in child marriage, there does appear to be a temporal association.

In 2017, additional regulations were passed which forbids the marriage of girls less than 18 years of age if:

- The intended husband is more than 15 years older than the girl.
- The intended husband is currently married.
- The marriage would prevent the girl from pursuing her education [UNICEF, n.d., pg. 11]

## Qualitative Study

This report sets out the drivers of child marriage as suggested by participants across 50 focus groups. The focus groups were conducted with parents, extended family members, refugees and adolescents (see methodology chapter for further details). The top drivers identified by participants across all focus groups were:

- Custom and Tradition (n.32/50)
- Poverty (n.31/50)
- Broken Home / Family Disintegration (n.14/50)
- Lack of Knowledge (n.20/50)
- Sutra (n.10/50)

Of the above key drivers of Child Marriage, the causes of the first three in the above list were further explored. While 'Broken Home / Family Disintegration' received fewer total votes than 'lack of knowledge' (as a driver of child marriage) it was considered important to understand the drivers within the homes / immediate family units of those living in Jordan.

### What Causes these Drivers?

Analysis of the suggested causes of these main drivers of child marriage found the following:

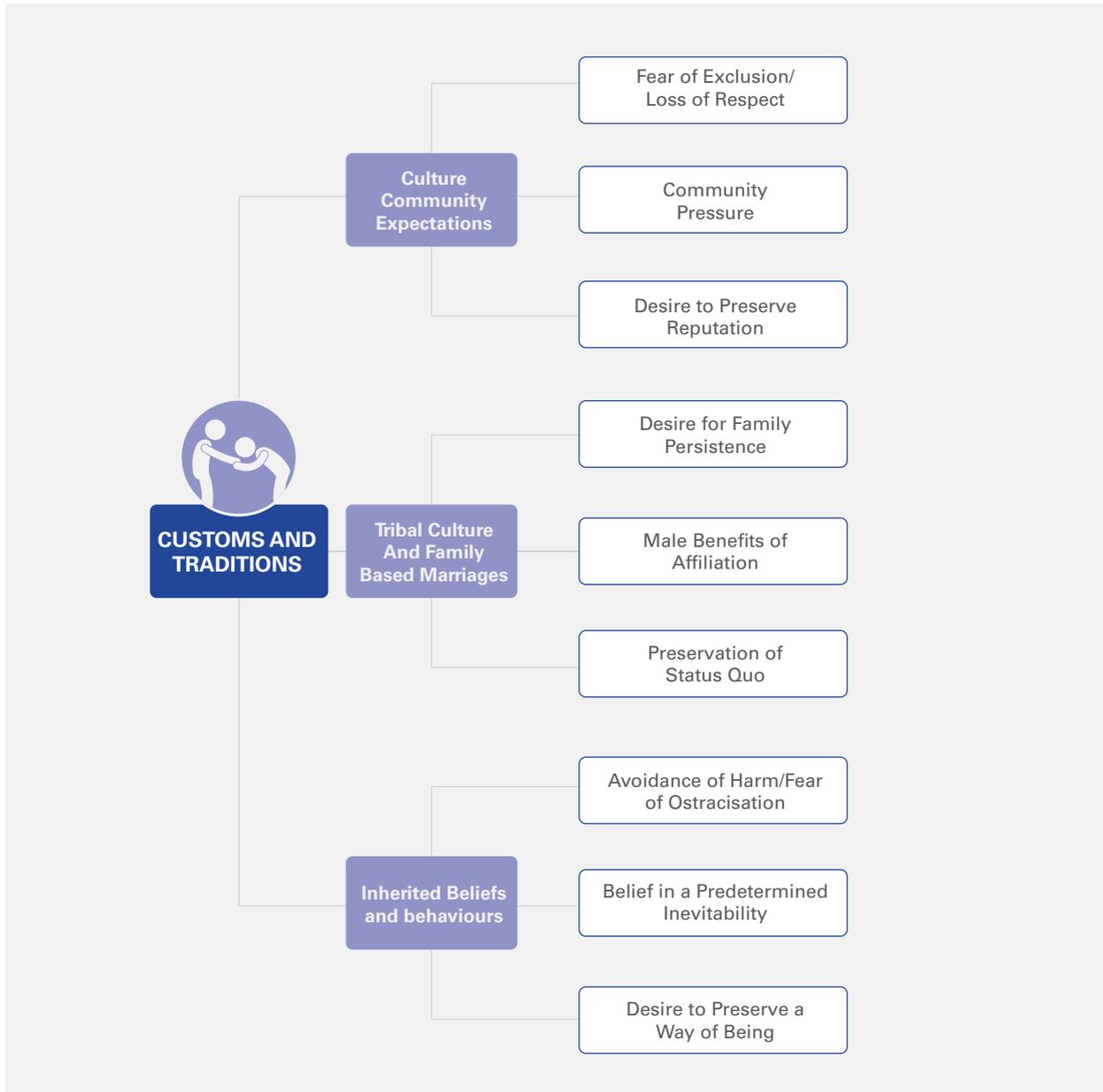
**Table 3.3: Findings on the Main Drivers from Qualitative Study**

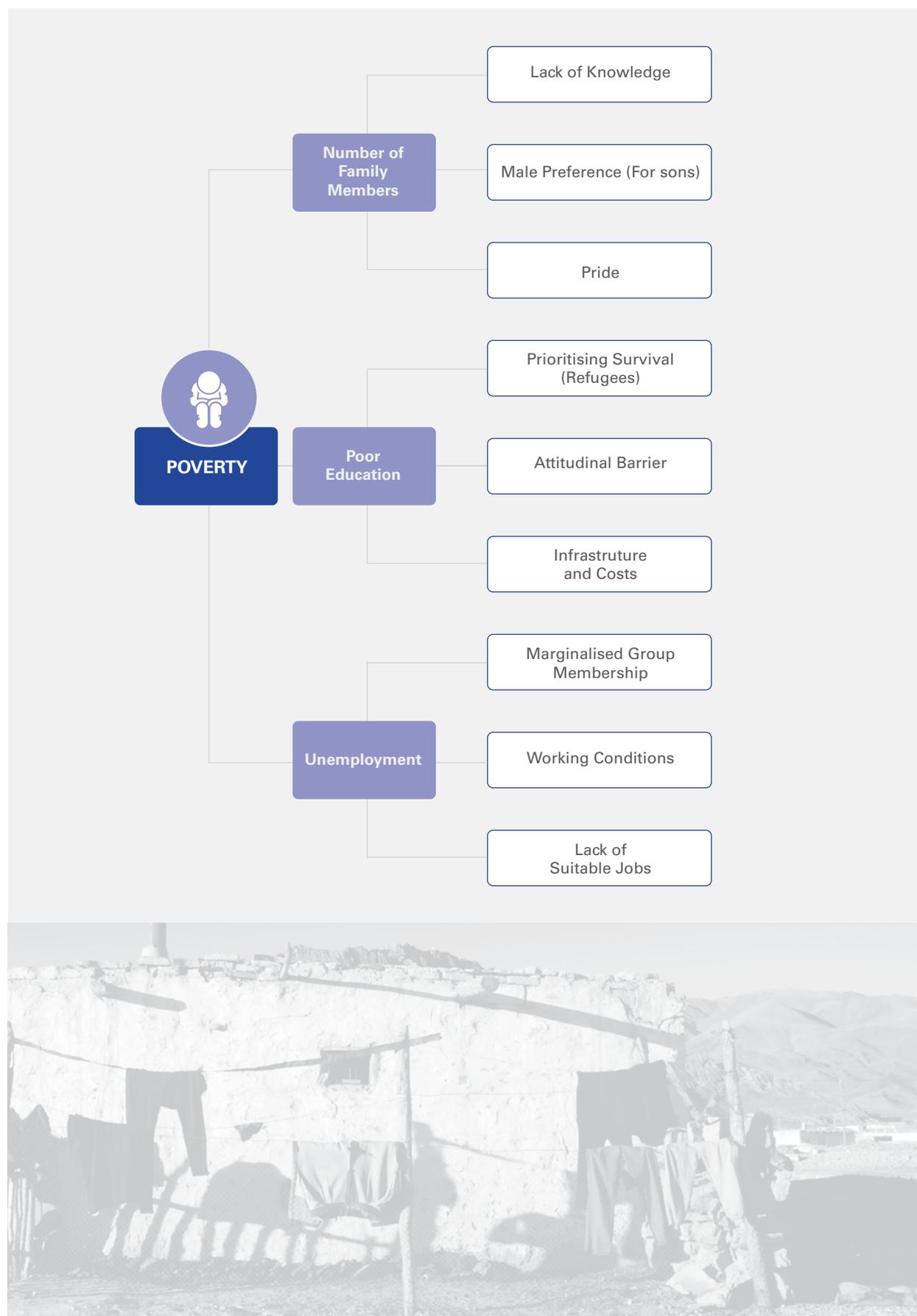
Main Driver	Custom and Tradition	Poverty	Family Disintegration
	Inherited Beliefs and Behaviours	Unemployment	Spousal Conflict
<b>Causes of the main driver</b>	Tribal Culture / Family-Based Marriages	Poor Education	Multiple Wives
	Culture of Shame / Community Expectations	Number of Family Members	Family Interference

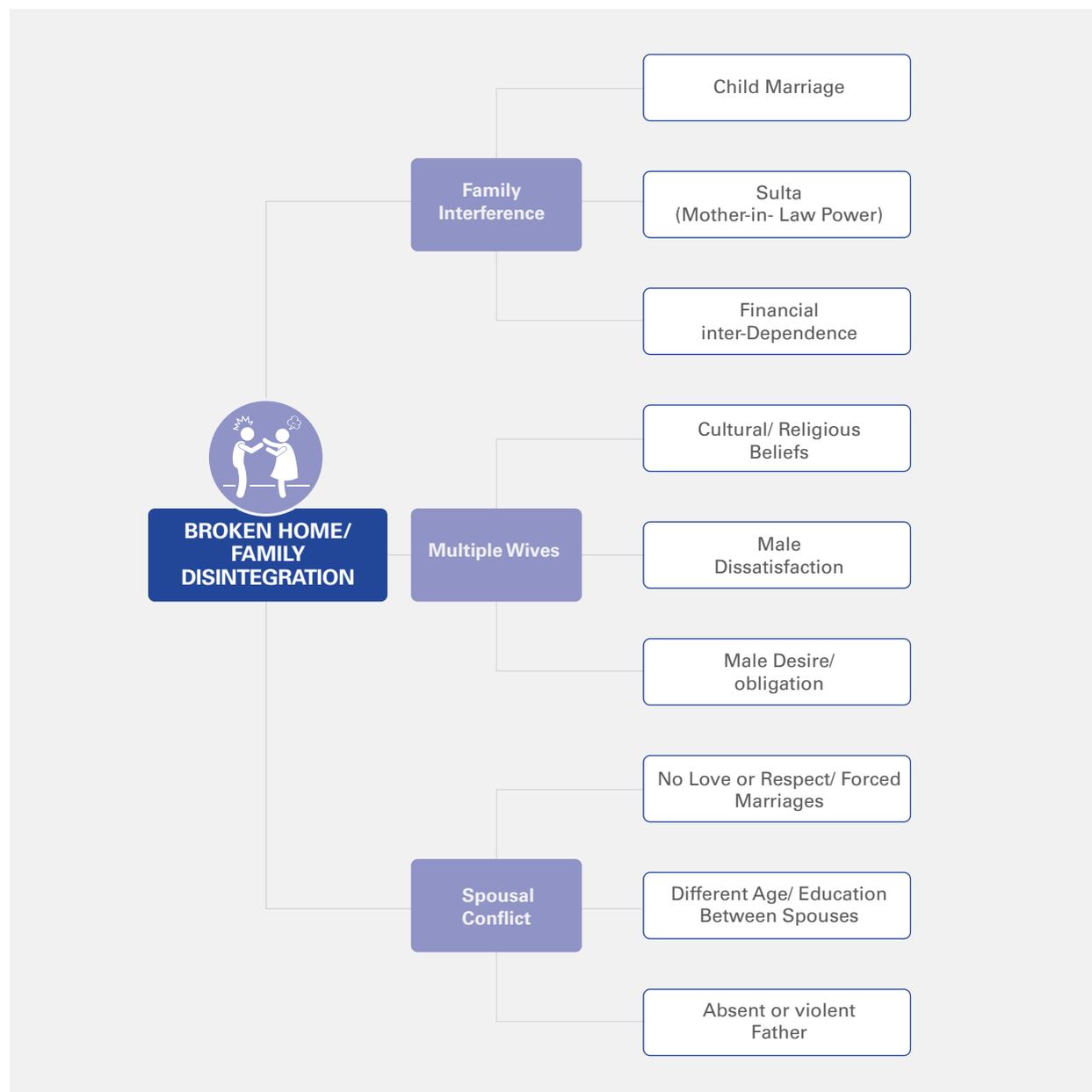
The drivers of these nine factors (or Level Two drivers) as suggested by the focus group participants were then explored. This resulted in 27 Level Three drivers of Child Marriage. These 27 Level Three Drivers are listed below, under the Level Two driver to which they relate.

<sup>19</sup> One dataset was created to include each of the years of collected DHS data. According to DHS, "the samples in successive DHS surveys are completely independent of one another. It is not impossible for the same household to be included in more than one DHS survey, but if that did happen, there is nothing in the ID codes for households that would allow anyone to know that." Therefore, there might be a small limitation of some overlap of sampling between years, however the impact on these analyses is likely to be minimal.

**Figure 3.12: Level Two and Three Drivers of Custom and Tradition**



**Figure 3.13: Level Two and Three Drivers of Poverty**

**Figure 3.14: Level Two and Three Drivers of Broken Homes/Family Disintegration**

This report, presents a description of the 27 Level Three drivers which propel the 9 Level Two drivers that then drive child marriage. As shown in the last of the Level Three drivers in figure 3.4, child marriage itself was seen as a cause of the family disintegration that may result in further child marriage.

### ***The Causes of the Causes: Level Three Drivers of Custom and Tradition***

There were 32 focus groups that suggested that 'Custom and Tradition' is the key driver of child marriage. The three most-mentioned Level Two drivers behind Custom and Tradition were found to be:

- 1A. (Unquestioned) Inherited Beliefs and Behaviours (n.20/32)<sup>20</sup>
- 1B. Culture of Shame / Community Expectations (n.20/32)<sup>21</sup>
- 1C. Tribal Culture / Family-Based Marriages (n.17/32)<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Note this is a composite of two fields: 'Inherited beliefs and behaviours' (n.13/32) and 'unquestioned imitation of how things have always been done' (n.7/32).

<sup>21</sup> Note this is a composite of two fields: 'Culture of Shame' (n.13/32) and 'Community Expectations' (n.7/32)

<sup>22</sup> Note this is a composite of two fields: 'Tribal Culture/Customs' (n.12/32) and 'Family-Based Marriage' (n.5/32)

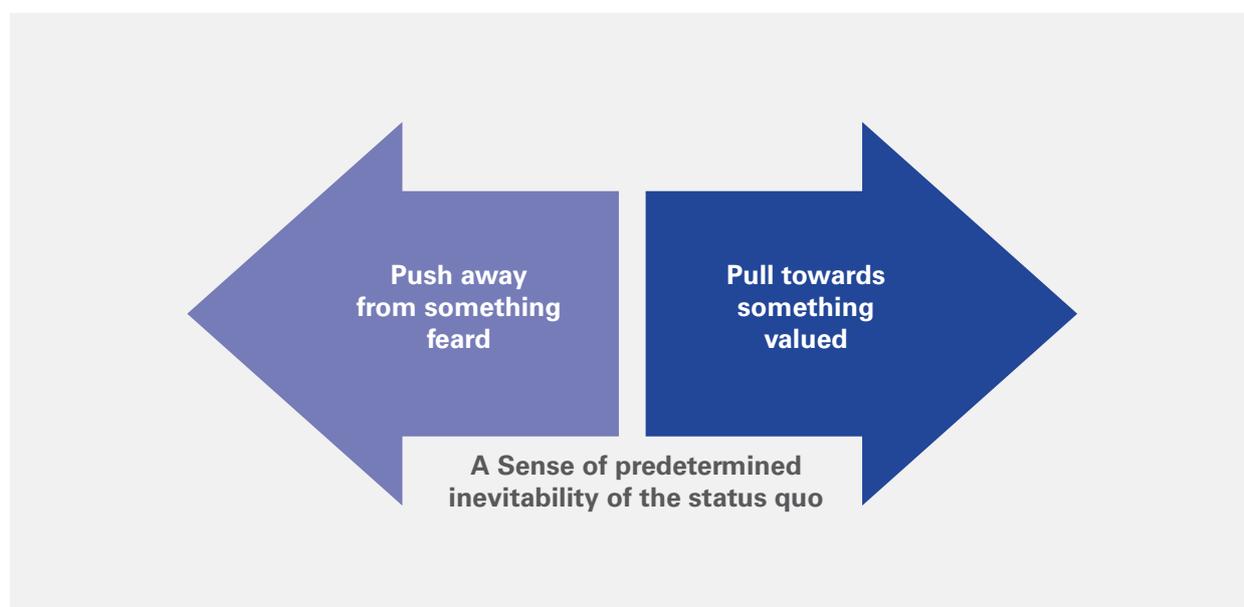
### • **1A. (Unquestioned) Inherited Beliefs and Behaviours**

Thirteen focus groups gave 'inheritance' as a core driver of 'Customs and Traditions', while a further seven groups referred to 'unquestioned imitation of how things have always been done' or 'blind imitation.' These two drivers were combined as '(Unquestioned) Inherited Beliefs and Behaviours.

The key Level Three drivers of '(Unquestioned) Inherited Beliefs and Behaviours' were:

- Belief in a predetermined inevitability
- Desire to preserve a way of being
- Avoidance of harm / fear of ostracization

Listing all the drivers of 'Inherited Beliefs and Behaviours' that were given by focus group participants onto one document revealed drivers that broadly fell into three groups. Thirteen of the drivers were expressed in a positive way and suggested a desire to preserve something of value (a pull towards something valued), while twelve of the suggested drivers were negative in tone and suggestive of harm that would result from *not* following traditions (a push away from something feared). Seven of the drivers given were ostensibly 'neutral' reasons for the following of traditions. This latter group were expressive of a sense of the predetermined inevitability of the status quo. We consider each of these groups in turn here.



#### **1A.1 Belief in a Predetermined Inevitability**

All of the comments grouped together in this subsection alluded to an inevitability surrounding behaviour. They include: 'There is no other option', 'we can't abandon them', 'it is routine,' 'the surrounding environment drives them,' 'they are convinced their way is the right / only way.' One focus group of 15- to 17-year-olds expressed the essentialist view that 'we were born that way'—suggesting the perception that beliefs and behaviour are pre-determined (rather than learnt through social-interaction and the experiences of reward and punishment).

#### **1A.2 Desire to preserve a way of being (pull towards)**

The largest grouping of drivers were those that were expressed in positive terms and spoke to a desire to preserve existing ways of doing and being. These included references to both 'love of' and 'trust in' tribal elders and 'grandfathers.' Examples include: 'love of grandparents and wanting to emulate them,' 'we know what is right and wrong from our grandparents.' There was even the suggestion that doing as they did is a way of keeping them alive—'we preserve them and keep them alive' (females aged 12-14, Karak). This 'trust of tribal elders' was explained as 'trust because everyone does it' and 'trust as there is evidence.' Even more than this, an internalised commitment was expressed with regard to inherited beliefs and behaviours: 'love of inherited beliefs' and 'something they believe in,' with apparent comfort being drawn from these beliefs ('something constant'), as well as these beliefs and behaviours being integral to identity ('something to make us unique') and group cohesion ('positive impact on one another.') Respondents also expressed the belief that inherited beliefs and traditions 'protects us' and help them to 'stay on the right direction in life,' while one group of male parents explained how 'I want my son to turn out like me.'

When inherited beliefs and behaviours were imposed onto females this was seen as 'for her own benefit,' 'to take care of her so she won't lose control' (both of these last two comments were made by extended family members).

### 1A.3 Negative Drivers: Avoidance of Harm / Fear of Ostracization

The review of the suggested drivers for inherited beliefs and behaviours included a number that indicate coercion (rather than the exercise of choice). It was clear that adherence to inherited beliefs and behaviours may, at least to some extent, be due to a wish to avoid the *negative consequences of not doing so*. These included: 'gossip' and 'if I did not follow traditions people will start talking about me' (both suggested by extended family members). Refugees suggested the following: 'no freedom,' 'controlling parents,' 'parents want to make their dreams come true by enforcing them on their children,' and 'lack of trust' (in other family members). Male adolescents explained: 'the family insist their child inherits their beliefs,' 'it's rude not to follow the traditions;' while a group of adolescent girls spoke of 'fear of crossing the limits of certain traditions' (15-17-year-olds, Ma'an).

Two groups of refugees also suggested that a 'weak personality' and 'no self-confidence' may be a factor—presumably perceiving that a stronger person might stand up against an imposed expectation on them. Three groups (two of refugees and one of male adolescents) expressed the view that 'ignorance' was a driver, with one group of refugees opining that the beliefs promulgated may be 'wrongful.'

Also listed within this category are some drivers that focus group members gave for the affiliated driver 'unquestioned imitation of how things have always been done.' The negative drivers of 'unquestioned imitation,' and 'fear from society' were given. These fears were said to be driven by 'ignorance' or being 'closed minded;' as well as resulting from 'when people do not interact with others beyond their village of immediate family/community.' Once again respondents also suggested that 'wrongful thinking' underpins the absence of questioning.

## 1B. Culture of Shame / Community Expectations

A 'culture of shame' was given as a driver of 'Customs and Traditions' by twelve focus groups (across all group types), while 'community expectations' were referred to by six focus groups – five of adolescents and one of refugees. As the causes were remarkably similar the two were combined as the 'Culture of Shame / Community Expectations' composite driver of 'Custom and Tradition' influence on child marriage.

'Culture of shame' refers to the gossip and ostracization that may occur if a person is perceived to have acted in a socially unacceptable way (for a person of their gender, age and position). It was also apparent from the analysis of the focus group discussions that it can refer to a failure to act in a time-appropriate manner to an expectation of behaviour (such as a failure to marry while still young).

The Level Three drivers of 'Culture of Shame / Community Expectations' were found to be:

- Desire to preserve reputation
- Community pressure
- Fear of exclusion and loss of respect

### 1B.1 Desire to preserve reputation

It appeared from the focus group facilitator reports, that no-one was exempt from the power exerted by the 'culture of shame.' However, it was also notable that the drivers for this were either gender neutral or expressly referred to females. In respect of females it was said: 'If a female marries late, society will question her integrity' (fathers, Irbid); while extended family members observed that the 'culture of shame' is driven by a wish to 'avoid females making mistakes,' and to 'preserve the girls' reputations.' When asked for drivers for the 'culture of shame,' adolescents said it is 'so they don't speak ill of their daughter' and a question of 'protecting a girl's reputation.' This echoes the negative drivers given for 'inherited belief and behaviours' (also a driver of 'Custom and Tradition'), as discussed previously.

Adolescents also said that the culture of shame 'allows parents to follow blind customs for their daughter's Sutra' (even to the extent that she may be denied the opportunity to go to work in order that she does not meet men). Adolescent boys said 'their reputation is the most important thing in life.' One group of parents gave the desire for 'social acceptance' as a driver of the culture of shame.

When not specifically speaking about the shaming of females, the language was generally gender neutral. However, one group of parents observed that 'if a man marries late, society may no longer consider him a man.' Among the gender-neutral comments was the statement that the culture of shame affects 'how the person sees him/herself,' as well as 'if they are accepted in society.'

### 1B.2 Community pressure

Of the six focus groups that gave 'community expectations' as a driver of 'Custom and Tradition', most named the individuals in the community who perpetuate these. For example, one group of refugees said, 'The mother's friends are of the same mindset,' and that 'cousins and relatives' and 'fear and authority in the environment' drive customs and traditions. Adolescents said that it was the 'effect of neighbours and friends,' and that 'child marriage is forced by the elders and extended family.' They also said 'the society is pressuring them,' and that they 'imitate the community they belong to.'

### 1B.3 Fear of exclusion / loss of respect

Notably, both 'culture of shame' and 'community expectations' were said to be driven by 'gossip' and 'criticism.' These were referred to by all respondent group types. It was also evident that fear of loss of respect was a driver. Comments include: 'the fear of being socially outcast, shamed or publicly criticised' (adolescent girls), and 'fear of shame and loss of respect,' as well as 'not to ruin family reputation.'

These comments illustrate the entrenched nature of custom and tradition, and that risk to anyone who challenges the status quo—given that both they and their family may be ostracised for so doing.

## 1C. Tribal Culture / Family-Based Marriages

Twelve focus groups gave 'tribal culture' as a core driver of 'Custom and Tradition', while a further five groups referred to 'family-based marriages.' These two drivers were combined as the composite driver 'Tribal Culture / Family-Based Marriages.'

The key drivers of Tribal Culture / Family-Based Marriages were found to be:

- Preservation of the status quo
- Male benefits of affiliation
- Desire for family persistence

These are considered in more detail here:

### 1C.1 Preservation of the status quo

Some of the drivers suggested by male respondents spoke to a drive to maintain the status quo. Male parents suggested: 'no disintegration within society,' 'not mixing with other tribes, and only marrying in the same one,' 'not questioning traditions,' 'Jordan was founded on tribalism,' 'blindly following customs' as ways in which the status quo is maintained; male adolescents suggested that 'every tribe has their own special traditions' (Karak); male Palestinian refugees suggested that 'strong relationships/bonds' and 'religious sects' act as drivers of tribalism in Jordan.

### 1C.2 Male benefits of affiliation

Many drivers for tribalism suggested by men spoke to the benefits to the (male) individual of affiliation within the tribe. These included references to power, as a mode of dispute resolution, and as a way to acquire brides. In respect of power it was said: 'Tribe is a role model and power to the person,' that one could 'secure rights through tribalism,' and '[a] regime to control citizens'. It was also suggested by one group of male parents from Amman that tribalism enables tribe members to circumvent national laws. They suggested that 'trying to evade the law,' and 'corruption' were drivers for tribalism. They also suggested that there is a perception that 'the government/regime want to free themselves from responsibility and therefore encourage tribalism.' This latter point speaks to the self-governance of tribes and customs for dispute resolution.

Notably, 'dispute resolution' or the 'resolution of problems' were suggested as drivers of tribalism by male parents, male extended family and adolescent males. For example: 'for settling disputes amongst tribesmen in a way that officials and government cannot' (Extended family, Mafraq); or as a way to 'solve problems and disputes' (Adolescents, Karak and also from Irbid). The only mode of dispute resolution that was expressly referred to in the focus groups was the exchange of female family members in marriage: 'Men may marry off their sister to a relative, and in turn receive their relative's sister to marry for themselves' (parents, Irbid). One

group of male parents from Amman also pointed out this had the advantage of a 'cheaper dowry if marrying young to their cousins in the same tribe' (parents, Ma'an). Notably, female participants from Amman also spoke of 'marriage as a way of resolving disputes among relatives and starting over.'

### 1C.3 Desire for family persistence

Women's responses to the question of what drives 'tribalism' or what drives 'family-based marriages' spoke to the maintenance of group status; for example, 'pride' and 'honour.' A key benefit women referred to was 'family persistence,' being the continuation of the family line through their children and their children's children. They also referred to 'keeping inheritance within the family,' and 'reinforcing family linkages.' Women also referred to some social benefits of connectedness: 'unity,' 'cooperation,' 'understanding,' and 'a means of organising people and avoiding problems.'

Women's narratives were more elaborate in respect of negative drivers for the continuation of tribalism and family-based marriages; for example, 'fear of gossip if [we] dared go against tradition' (extended family, Irbid). They also spoke of how 'the country in which we live imposes tribalism on us. It is a tribal country' (extended family, Ma'an). They observed that 'we cannot deny a suitor who is a family member' (extended family, Amman). Women listed 'power' and 'extremism' as drivers. One final point is that a group of extended family members from Irbid were of the view that low health awareness is a driver of family-based marriages and that 'hereditary disease is prevalent.'

### *The Causes of the Causes: Level Three Drivers of 'Poverty'*

There were twenty-five focus groups that suggested poverty as a key driver of child marriage. The three most-mentioned Level Two drivers of poverty were found to be:

- 2A. Unemployment (n.25/31)
- 2B. Poor Education (n.18/31)
- 2C. Number of Family Members (n.13/31)

#### **2A. Unemployment' as a driver of Poverty**

Twenty-five of the focus groups that identified Poverty as a driver of child marriage, then suggested unemployment as a driver of this poverty. Analysis of the suggested drivers for unemployment found the Level Three drivers to be:

- A lack of suitable jobs
- Working conditions
- Marginalised group membership

These will each be discussed in turn.

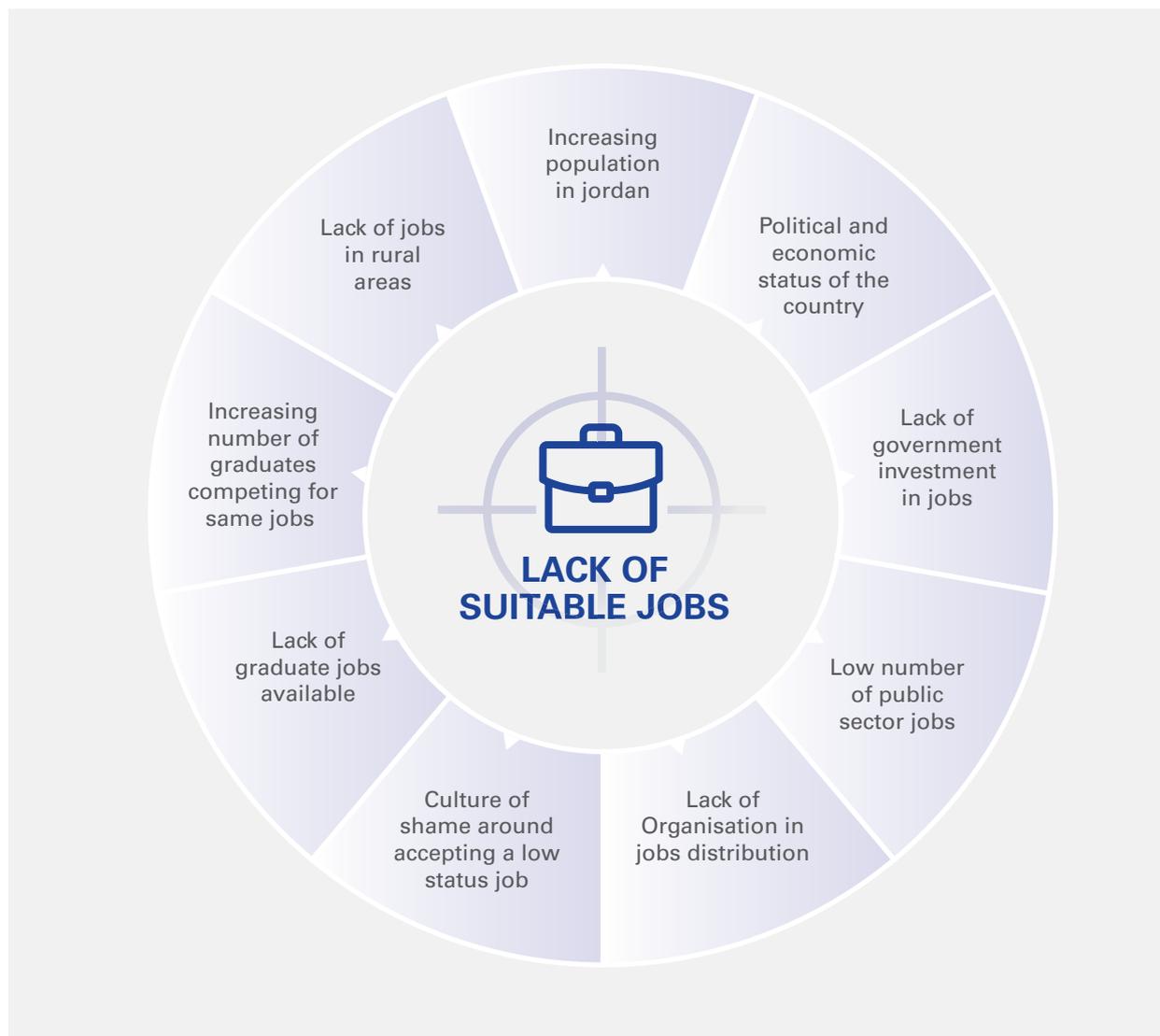
#### **2A.1 A lack of suitable jobs**

Reviewing the factors that results in a 'lack of suitable jobs' reveals a number of core themes. For Jordanians, there may be a 'culture of shame' around accepting a low-status job. There was therefore said to be a lack of interest in some jobs.

Parents, extended family members and some adolescents mentioned the lack of graduate jobs available, with increasing numbers of graduates with the same 'majors' competing for these jobs. They identified a lack of choice in respect of degree subjects. They also identified a lack of government investment in jobs, a low number of public sector jobs, and a lack of organisation in job distribution. A lack of jobs in rural areas was also noted. More broadly, 'the political and/or economic status of the country' was listed as a cause of a lack of suitable jobs.

A further cause for the lack of suitable jobs was said by respondents to be the increasing population in Jordan. This was said to be due to the 'rise in foreign workers,' and the 'rise in the population,' whilst some focus group reports named 'refugees' specifically.<sup>23</sup> 'War' was also listed as a driver of unemployment by three groups, perhaps due the impact of war in driving refugees into Jordan.

23 Being mentioned by eight focus groups (three were parents, one extended family members, one refugee focus group and three older teenage groups).



## 2A.2 Working conditions

Refugees in particular drew attention to poor working conditions as drivers of unemployment. However, parents and extended family members also referred to 'low wages' and 'low salary scales' as drivers of poverty. One group of parents pointed out that refugees will accept lower wages than Jordanians could because, it was claimed, refugees have lower rents to pay due to receiving an 'accommodation allowance.' The lack of a minimum wage in Jordan was also commented on, as was the 'retirement age,' as a driver of unemployment.

Refugees painted a fuller picture of poor working conditions. They spoke of a 'lack of refugee rights,' of working long hours, and of employers wanting to employ children because they were cheaper. They also spoke of the emotional shock of owning one's own business in Syria and them moving to Jordan as a refugee and being incapable of finding work. One group spoke of requiring a work permit, which was expensive.

Young adolescents thought that the treatment a person received in work might cause further unemployment; they mentioned 'favouritism' and 'racism' specifically.

Corruption was a recurrent theme as a driver of unemployment. It was mentioned eight times across the 25 groups that discussed unemployment. These groups included parents, refugees and older adolescents. It was also the case that nepotism or 'wasta' was mentioned across seven groups as a driver of unemployment (by parents, refugees, and adolescents of both age groups—i.e. 12-14 and 15-17 years). Two groups of parents also referred to a lack of law enforcement on employment.

### 2A.3 Less advantaged/marginalised group membership

The focus groups with younger adolescents in particular tended to hone in on the characteristics of the individual unemployed person. That said, both parents and both ages of adolescents referred to low or insufficient education as a driver of unemployment,<sup>24</sup> as well as the possibility that some individuals are lazy and reluctant to work, or to work to the required standard. However, children also referred to the impact that illness, disability or age could have on a person's employment status. Young adolescents were also the only individuals to identify being female as a driver for unemployment. They stated that having children would prevent females having time to work, while a 'lack of suitable jobs,' 'traditions,' and also a lack of interest in paid employment were also suggested as drivers of female unemployment specifically.

### 2B. Poor Education' as a driver of Poverty

Eighteen of the focus groups that identified 'Poverty' as a driver of child marriage, suggested 'poor education' as a driver of this poverty. Analysis of the forty-six suggested drivers for 'poor education' found the key underlying Level Three drivers to be:

- Infrastructure and cost
- Attitudinal barriers
- Prioritising survival (Refugees)

These will each be discussed in turn.

#### 2B.1 Infrastructure and cost

These were mentioned by eleven of the eighteen groups. Three groups (parents and extended family groups) suggested that there is a lack of 'decent government schools' (Amman) or that schools were too far away (Ma'an). The lack of education centres was also raised by adolescents in Ma'an. One group of refugees identified a difficulty with transportation to school (Syrian Refugees, Mafraq). The 'high cost of tuition fees,' 'expensive private education,' and 'university tuition fees are expensive' were mentioned by all respondent groups except by extended family member groups.

Related to the cost of education, seven focus groups listed 'being poor,' or a 'lack of funds' (such as due to 'illness or disability') as a driver of poor education which results in 'Poverty'. In so doing, they illustrated one of the circular routes by which poverty may be driven.

#### 2B.2 Attitudinal barriers to education

All the focus groups who gave 'poor education' as a driver of 'Poverty', suggested one or more 'attitudinal barriers' to education. Parental attitudes to education were considered a driver. For example, 'they do not accept that learning is important.' The father having a business was suggested as a driver by one group (presumably because he will want his sons to join his business). Parents themselves not being educated was given as a driver too: 'ignorant family.' However, rather than a definite hostility to education, it was suggested that some parents simply might fail to plan for success for their children: 'parents do not raise children with a plan for their success,' 'careless family' (extended family, Amman and Ma'an).

Several of the suggested drivers referred to attitudinal barriers to the education of female children specifically. These include: 'they think it is a shame for the girl to study,' and 'they think the girl should stay the way her parents raised her and not learn' (both from mothers' groups, Ma'an); keeping girls from education was also seen as a way 'to avoid the girl communicating with the other gender' (mothers, Ma'an; and also stated by Palestinian refugees). One group of Palestinian refugees simply referred to 'sexism.'

Adolescents suggested that the attitude of the individual child to education might be a barrier to completion. Both male and female adolescents suggested that a 'lack of interest in education' was a barrier to completing education, as well as 'not being suited to educational streams,' and being 'influenced by bad friends.' They thought that some young people might not recognise the value of education, and that 'other people who work without a qualification set the example that education might be a waste of money.' One group of male adolescents in Amman (aged 15-17) referred to a 'perception that it is better to depend on oneself and earn, instead of spending on education.'

#### 2B.3 Prioritising survival (Refugees)

While one group of adolescent girls did suggest being a 'refugee' and another 'wars' as drivers of 'poor education', it was the focus groups conducted with Syrian refugees that illustrated the nature of the drivers for a poor education in their own experiences. These included: 'moving from one place to another,' 'lack of

<sup>24</sup> Eight of the twenty-five groups that considered the drivers of unemployment listed this.

support and opportunities to study,' 'violence in schools,' 'education will not get bread on the table,' 'only one breadwinner in the family,' 'kids are working,' 'some youth depend on just themselves,' and 'child marriage' (again suggesting a circular route between child marriage and poor education).

### **2C. 'Number of Family Members' as a driver of Poverty**

Thirteen of the focus groups that identified 'Poverty' as a driver of child marriage, suggested that large families, the 'number of family members' is a driver for this poverty. Of the nine Level Three drivers of child marriage, it is notable that there was more agreement, and fewer suggestions, on the drivers for the number of family members. These were the top three:

- Pride
- Male preference
- Ignorance

Each will be discussed in turn.

#### **2C.1 Pride**

Ten of the thirteen focus groups identified 'pride' as a driver for a large number of family members. This was elaborated in one group as 'tribal society pride in having more children.' One group of male parents stated that 'Religion' encourages large families; with the same group observing that there is an Arabic saying that 'each child brings his own livelihood' (fathers, Mafraq). One group of adolescent girls observed that adults may want 'as many children as possible to look after them someday.' Only one group (of Syrian refugees) identified 'many wives' as a driver of large family size.

#### **2C.2 Male preference**

Six of the thirteen focus groups stated that having female children was a driver for increased family size as the parents would keep trying for a male child. One group suggested that they may keep trying for many sons as 'boys are a pride to the family.' One group of adolescent girls suggested that female children may also be of some use to their families, observing that 'girls are deemed as a commodity to sell by some' (girls, 15-17, Zarqa).

#### **2C.3 Ignorance**

Given that 'pride' was the a commonly cited reason for having many children, it is perhaps surprising that 'ignorance' was mentioned even more frequently and by the same groups that put forward 'pride' as a driver. Most focus groups did not specify what the parents were believed to be ignorant of, but three further groups did specify a lack of awareness of family planning resulting in births.

#### **Note on additional drivers for large family size:**

Child marriage itself, but by just one group of extended family members, was listed as a driver of large family size, presumably because the female would have so many years of fertility ahead of her at the time she married. The boredom of the wife who has 'nothing to do' and who 'keeps herself busy with children' was given as a driver by one group of mothers from Irbid, and one group of Palestinian refugees. 'Mother-in-law pressures' was also mentioned by one group of mothers from Irbid.

### **The Causes of the Causes: Level Three drivers of Family Disintegration**

A total of fifteen focus groups listed 'Family Disintegration' as a Level Two driver of child marriage. The three most-mentioned Level Two drivers of 'Family Disintegration' were found to be:

- 3A. Spousal conflict (n.9/14)
- 3B. Multiple wives (n.7/14)
- 3C. Family interference (n.4/14)

#### **3A. Spousal conflict**

The driver 'spousal conflict' is a composite of three drivers that were named as leading to 'Family Disintegration'. These were 'Lack of understanding,' 'Anger' and 'Violence' which were mentioned by nine of the fourteen groups who discussed family disintegration pathways. An extensive range of drivers were given as underpinning spousal conflict. Three core sub-themes were detected. These are:

- Absent or violent father / husband
- Different age / education (between spouses)
- No love or respect / forced marriage

These three Level Three drivers are discussed below:

### 3A.1 Absent or violent father / husband

Both adult and adolescent respondents listed an absent father as a driver for conflict leading to family disintegration. This might be because he was 'working away' or 'living abroad'. Adolescents also spoke of a father being present in the household but avoiding responsibilities; while a lack of communication was also listed. One group of male adolescents stressed poor communication between father and sons in particular. Violence from fathers was mentioned, including (by adolescents) violence directed towards children. One group of adolescents also listed 'no strict rules over domestic violence,' while a group of extended family members observed that parents 'may not know their rights and limits.'

### 3A.2 Impact of different age or educational level

Two groups of parents and a group of adolescents listed 'differences in age' as underpinning a lack of understanding between spouses. A 'lack of self-confidence' was also suggested as a driver of anger. Female parents in one focus group (from Ma'an) observed that husbands can be jealous of a wife's success or greater education.

### 3A.3 No love or respect / forced marriages

These level three drivers of spousal conflict were listed as drivers by five focus groups. One was a group of parents (who listed a lack of respect) and the remainder were all adolescents (who mentioned all three).

#### Note on additional drivers of spousal conflict:

Other drivers for spousal conflict that were mentioned by *more than one* group were 'mental illness,' 'bad choice of spouse,' 'large numbers of children,' and 'affairs'—including online relationships over social media.

#### Important note on spousal conflict as a driver of Divorce

The review of the drivers of 'Family Disintegration' revealed that divorce was regularly mentioned. Divorce may be seen as a consequence of family disintegration as well as potentially triggering a range of consequences of its own. The drivers of 'divorce' were reviewed and found to be essentially *the same* as those given for 'Family Disintegration' more broadly (which are the focus on this section of the report). Following this review, 'Divorce' was added to the pathway between 'Family Disintegration' and 'Child Marriage'. This is because, when family disintegration leads to divorce, daughters may be married off, rather than their father allow them to live in the home of another man. Respondents also commented that the father may not want them to live with him as this could create conflict with his new wife. However, as not all 'Family Disintegration' results in divorce, a direct link between 'Family Disintegration' and 'Child Marriage' was retained.<sup>25</sup>

## 3B. Multiple Wives

Half of the focus groups that choose 'Family Disintegration' as a key driver of child marriage, listed 'multiple wives' as one of the key drivers of 'Family Disintegration'—with the explanation for this being that there would be conflict between the wives. These were four focus groups with parents and three focus groups with adolescents. The drivers of multiple wives were said to be 'self-evident' by one group. However, in the suggested drivers given by the other groups it was possible to discern certain themes. These will be discussed under the following headings:

- Male desire/obligations
- Male dissatisfaction
- Culture/religious beliefs

### 3B:1 Male desire/obligations

Male desire as a driver for multiple wives was described in many ways, whether because the 'wives are pretty' or for 'love' or the 'husbands' desire' or because they 'want multiple children' or, more specifically, 'want male children.' One group suggested a husband who travelled would be more likely to become involved in multiple marriages.

It could also be because a male owed another male a debt (which could be eradicated by giving his daughter to the other man). 'Child marriage' was stated by one group to be a driver of multiple wives. 'Being rich' or 'having money to spend on multiple wives' was also listed as a driver of multiple wives by two groups of parents.

<sup>25</sup> Focus group members gave a child seeking to leave an oppressive home as a driver of child marriage.

### 3B.2 Male dissatisfaction

Male dissatisfaction as a driver for multiple wives was described to include situations where the 'family choose a wife for him' (presumably rather than the man's own choice); where the man is 'bored' (or wants 'renewal'), or where the existing wife is 'careless' or there is 'no love' between the man and his existing wife. Adolescents suggested that a 'dispute with his first wife' or a desire to get his first wife jealous' may be a driver for taking multiple wives, or that the 'other wife lacks skills.' It was notable that the taking of multiple wives appeared to be interpreted by participants as indicating a deficiency with the existing wife.

### 3B.3 Culture/religious beliefs

The first two themes identified the majority of causes of taking multiple wives; religious beliefs were only expressly listed as a driver of multiple wives by one group (of adolescents), while a further group mentioned 'culture'.

## 3C. Family Interference

Four of the thirteen focus groups that provided a list of drivers for 'Family Disintegration', listed 'family interference' as one of these drivers. This comprised two focus groups with mothers, one with male Palestinian refugees (aged 18-30) and one with male adolescents (aged 15-17 years). These groups suggested around fifteen drivers of 'family interference,' most of which may be subsumed within the following drivers:

- Financial interdependence
- Sulta (mother-in-law power)
- Child marriage

These will each be considered in turn here.

### 3C.1 Financial interdependence

Both the group of male Palestinian refugees and adolescents suggested that parents-in-law may be supporting the couple. This might be because the husband could not afford to provide all they need, or because of high rents. It was also suggested that the mother of the husband may expect to be cared for and supported by her son.

### 3C.2 Sulta (Mother-in-law power)

Both the Palestinian refugees and adolescents referred to the power of the mother-in-law (Sulta), while one group of female parents said that a mother invests so much in raising her son that she feels it is her right to interfere after he is married. Mothers stated interference was more likely when the couple fought or when they were unable to control their children. This demonstrates a certain circularity as the interference may, it seems, be *because* of conflict as well as being listed as a cause of it. Whether or not the husband or the wife has a 'weak personality' was also listed by mothers and the Palestinian refugee focus group as a driver of family interference.

### 3C.3 Child marriage

Child marriage was suggested to be a driver for family interference, considering the fact that the girl will have been part of her husband's family since she was young and will have been 'raised by them.' In focus groups with mothers, some respondents pointed out they might interfere in order to 'protect their daughter.' The circularity of the issues underpinning child marriage is evident; as here, we have child marriage driving 'family interference' which drives 'family disintegration', which in turn drives 'child marriage.'

## Social Norms Surveys

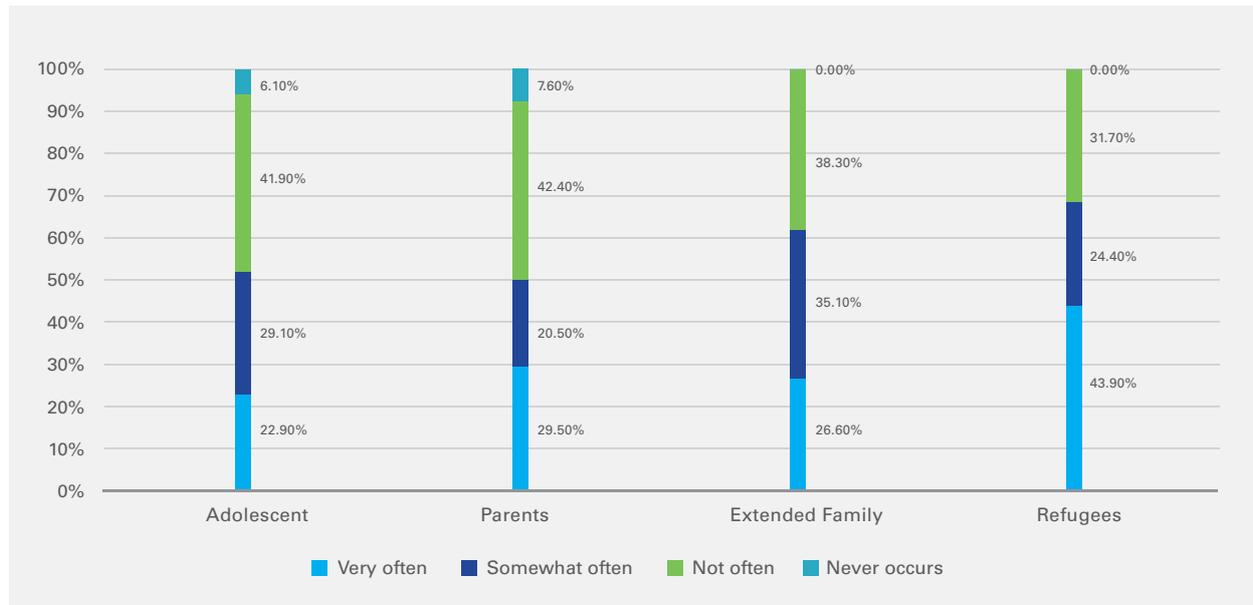
In addition to discussing and prioritising the drivers of child marriage within the focus group discussions, participants also individually took a short survey related to social norms and then discussed as a group the key areas (350 focus group participants and another 150 respondents, *see Methodology section for breakdown of participants' demographics*). This allows us to present the perceptions related to social norms as quantitative data within this section to complement the qualitative thematic analysis.

Participants were asked to reflect on a short story as follows:

*Now, I will tell you the story of a girl who lives in this region/district. I will call her Sania, although this is not her real name. I would like you to listen carefully to her story. Sania is a 14-year-old girl. She lives with her*

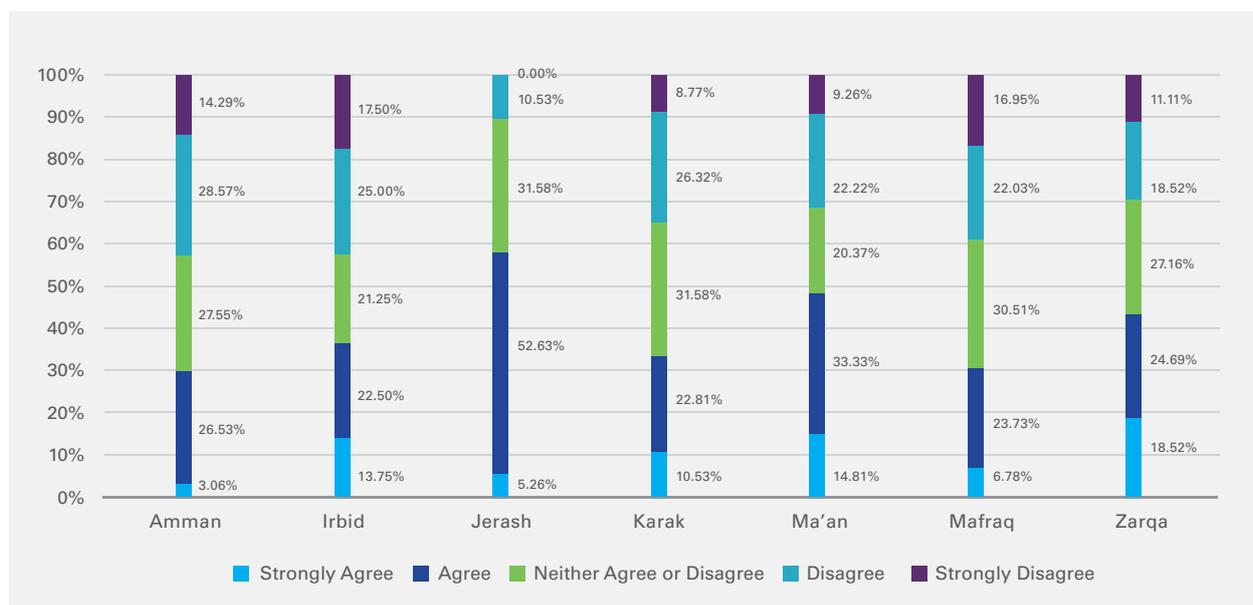
parents, Aisha and Ahmed (not their real names), and has 2 siblings: a younger sister and an older brother. Sania goes to school and helps her mother with household chores. One day, Mounia, Sania’s cousin, comes over to visit Sania’s family. They are about the same age. Mounia’s mother announces that Mounia is engaged and getting married in a month’s time. She strongly suggests to Aisha that she should also marry Sania soon, as she is getting old for marriage. Mounia’s mother reveals that she also knows someone from their village who is interested in marrying Sania.

**Figure 3.15: How frequently do you think this story occurs in your community by respondent type?**



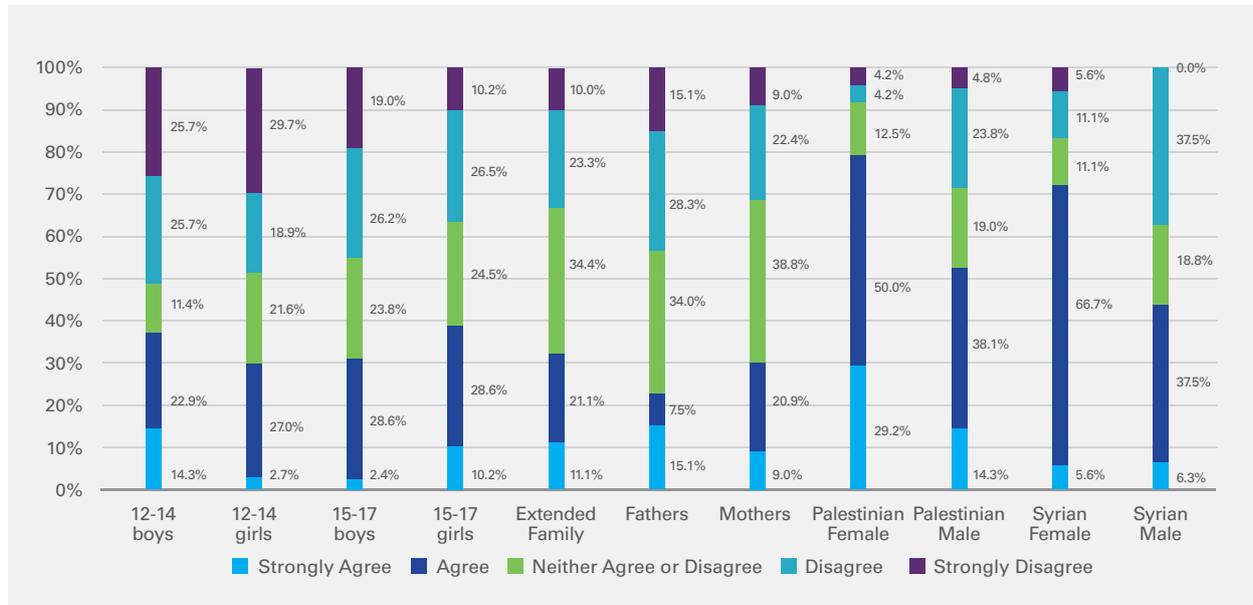
When talking about the story, we asked participants how frequently they think this type of story occurs in their community. Refugee respondent groups more frequently mentioned this type of story occurs ‘very often’ or ‘somewhat often’ in their communities. Adolescents were more likely to say it happens ‘not often’ compared to other respondent groups.

**Figure 3.16: Percentage of respondents by region who agree or disagree with the statement: “Most people in my community approve of marrying children before they turn 18.”**



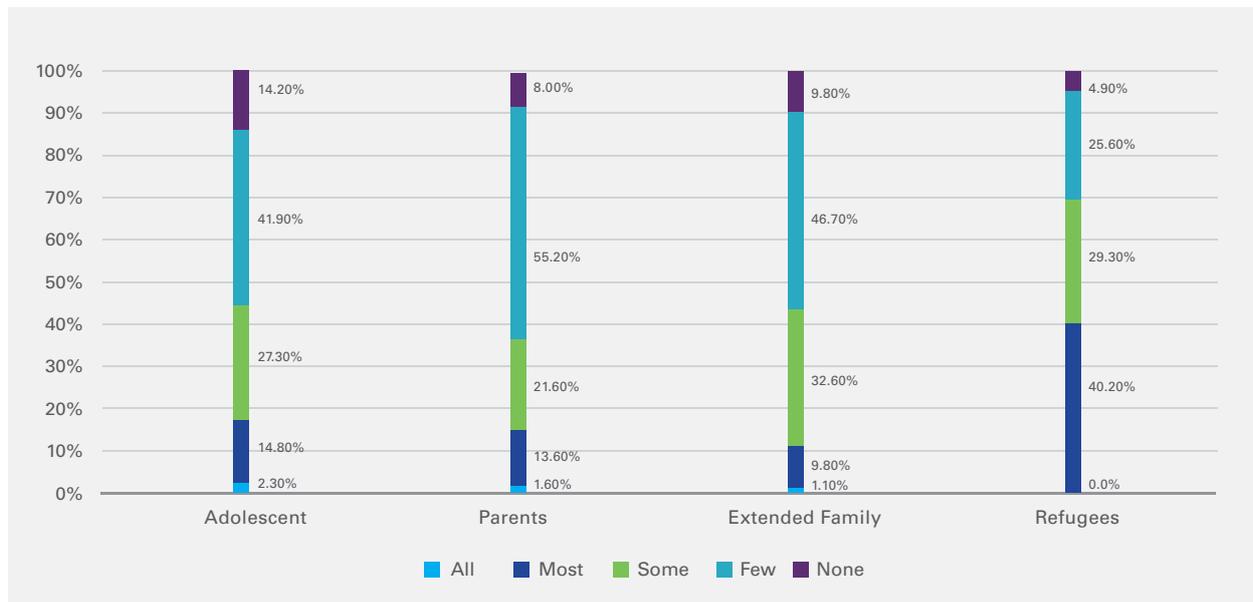
The survey also asked whether most people in the community approve of child marriage—as beliefs about others’ opinions is a key component of identifying whether a behaviour is driven by a social norm. The majority of respondents from Jerash (58%), Karak (33%), Ma’an (48%), and Zarqa (33%) either agree or strongly agree that most people in their community approve of marriage before the age of 18. In Amman (43%), Irbid (42%), and Mafraq (39%), most of the respondents either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. More than a fifth across all regions neither agree nor disagree with the statement that most people in their community approve of marriage before the age of 18.

**Figure 3.17: Percentage of respondents by type of respondent group who agree or disagree with the statement: “Most people in my community approve of marrying children before they turn 18.”**



When examining the agreement or disagreement with the statement “Most people in my community approve of marrying children before they turn 18”, we can see that there is stronger agreement among Palestinian and Syrian females than among any other group. The second highest agreement groups are Palestinian and Syrian males.

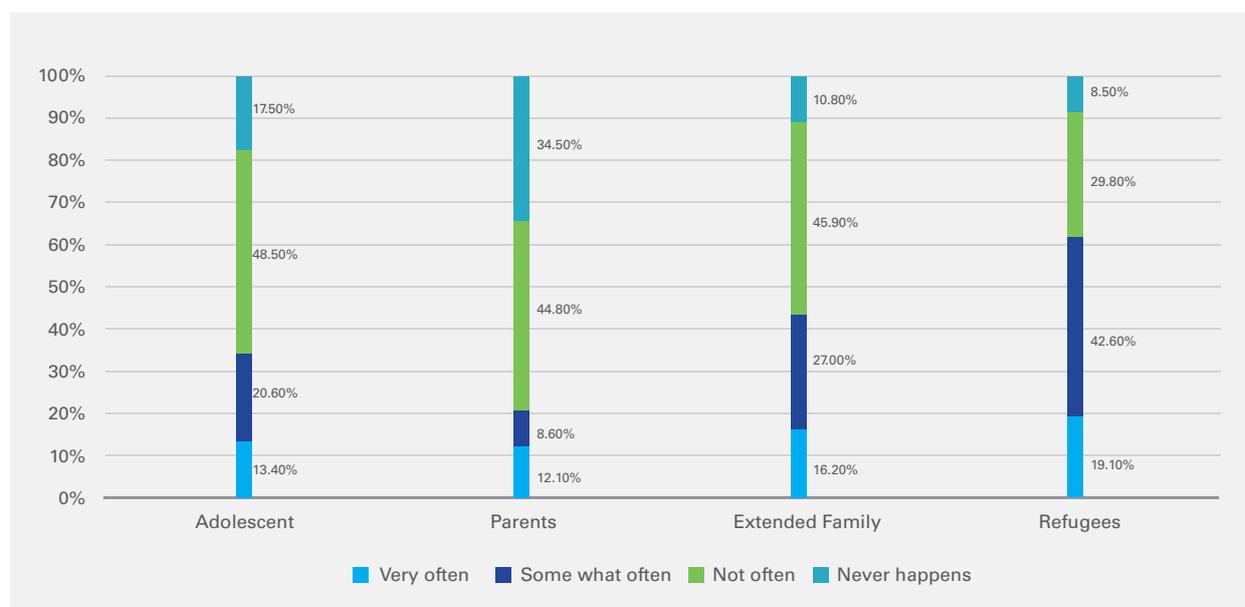
**Figure 3.18: Percentage of respondents by respondent type on how many girls under 18 are married in their community.**



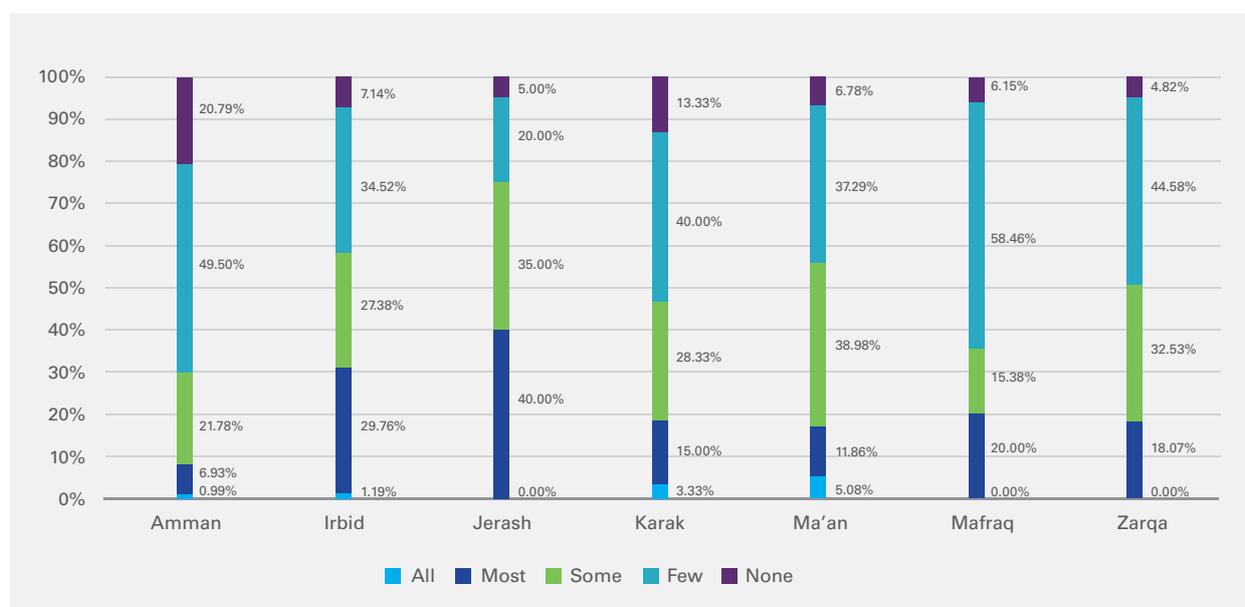
Only a small percentage across all groups said that all girls under 18 are married in their community. However, an even smaller percentage said that none have been married before 18. There is a consensus that at least a few girls have been married at an early age. For refugee respondents, 40% said that most are married under the age of 18.

**Figure 3.19: Percentage of respondents by respondent type on how many boys under 18 are married in their community.**

Almost half of adolescents, 44% of parents and 45% of extended family members claim it is not often that boys are married before 18. However, for refugees, almost 43% said it is a somewhat often occurrence.

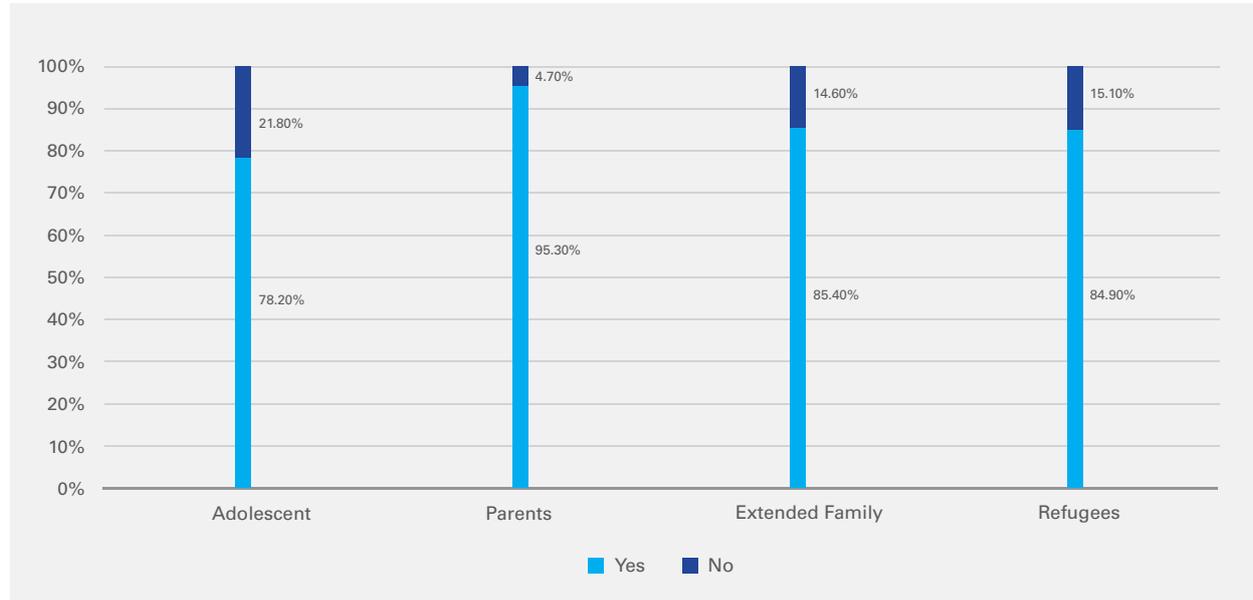


**Figure 3.20: Percentage of respondents by region on how many girls under 18 are married in their community.**



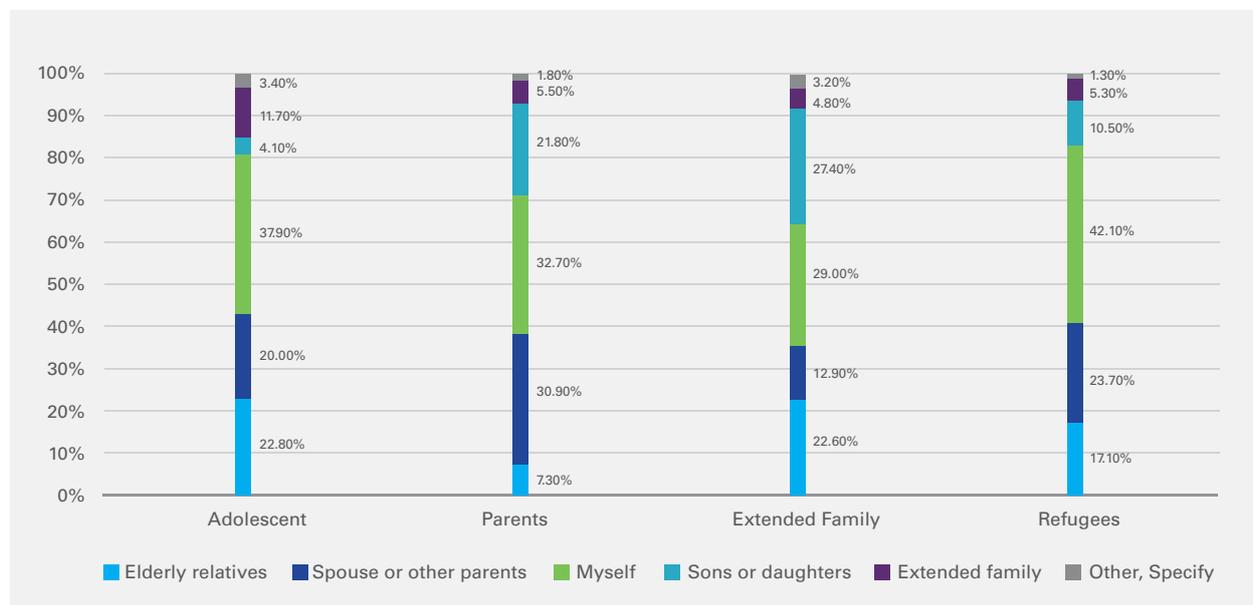
Across all regions, except for Jerash (20%), more than a third of the respondents said that a few girls are married in their community before the age of 18. Except for Amman (21%) and Mafraq (15%), more than a quarter answered 'some'. More than a fifth of the sample population from Irbid (29%), Jerash (28%), and Mafraq (20%), and 40% from Jerash answered 'most'.

**Figure 3.21: Percentage of respondents by type of respondent group on whether it is common for family members to disagree on when girls should marry.**



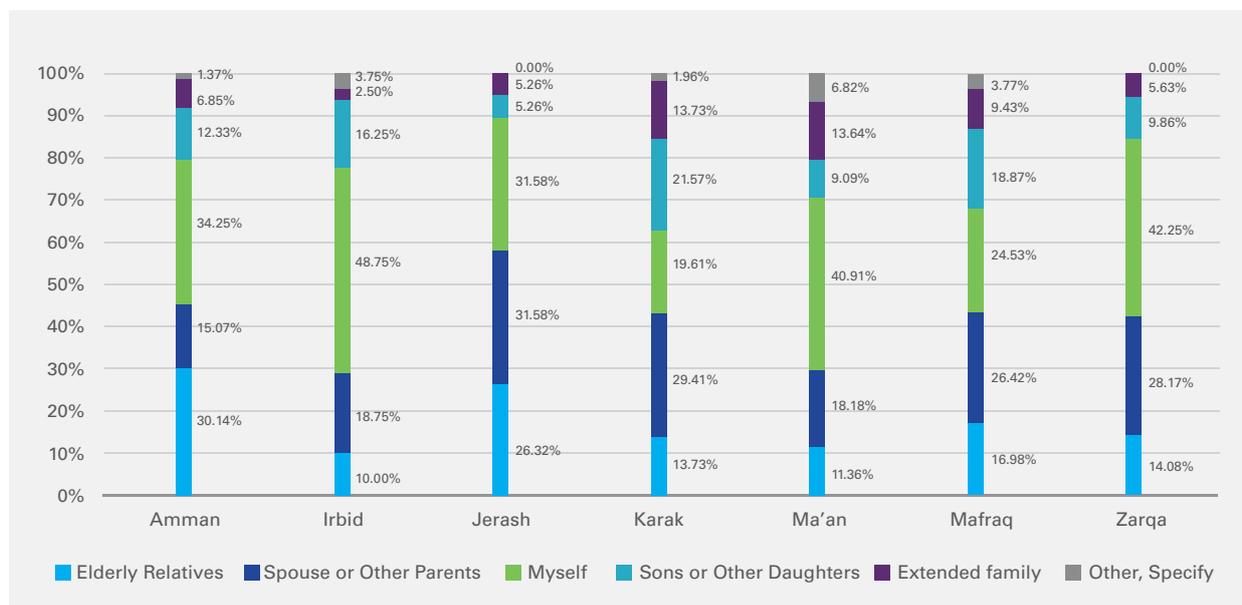
Most of the respondents said that it is common for family members to disagree regarding girls' marriage, with more than 78% of adolescents, more than 85% of extended family members, almost 85% of refugees, and more than 95% of parents saying there was disagreement.

**Figure 3.22: Percentage of respondents by type of respondent group on which family members tend to be against marrying before the age of 18.**



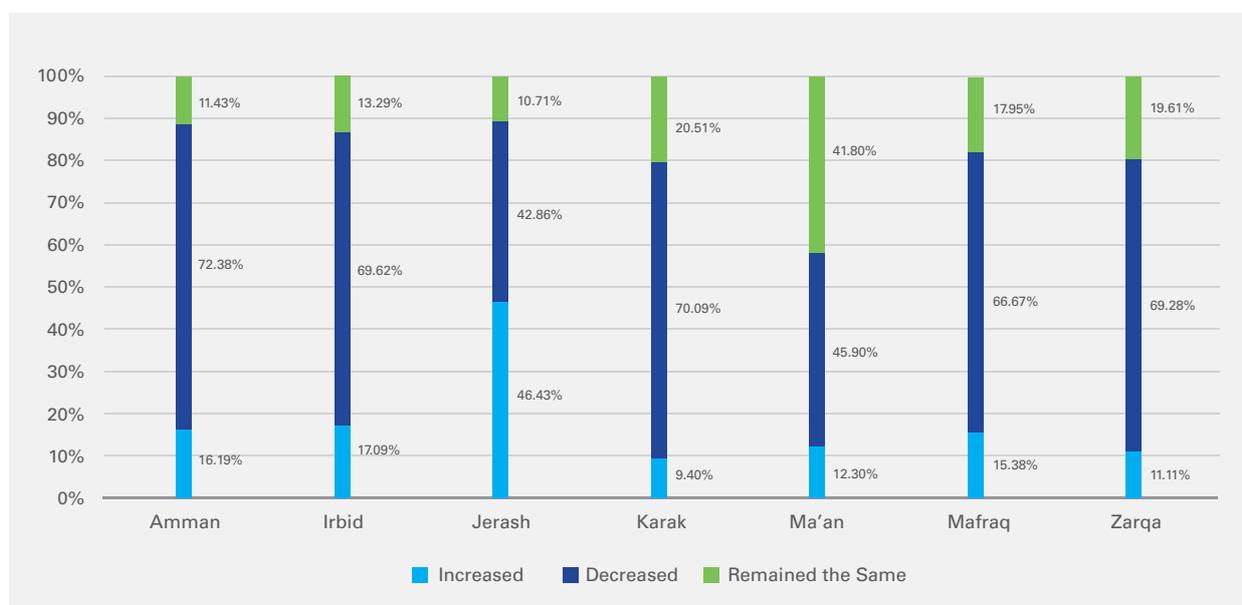
Interestingly, across all groups, more than a third of the respondents themselves tend to be against early marriage—almost 38% of the adolescents, 32% of parents, 29% of extended families, and 42% of refugees. A fifth of adolescents believe that one of their parents is against and another fifth believes that elderly relatives are against the practice. More than a third of parents believe that their spouse is against their child's early marriage, and more than a fifth of the parents believe that their own sons or daughters are against their own marriage before 18. More than a quarter of extended family members believe that the sons and daughters are against their own child marriage.

**Figure 3.23: Percentage of respondents by region on which family members tend to be against marrying before the age of 18.**



Across all regions, except for Karak, a quarter of the respondents said it is they themselves who tend to be against marriage before the age of 18. In Amman and Jerash more than a quarter said elderly relatives are against early marriages. In Irbid and Ma'an, more than 18% said it is their spouse or the other parent. In Karak, Mafraq, and Zarqa more than a quarter; and more than a third from Jerash said that it is their spouse or the other parent who tend to be against child marriage.

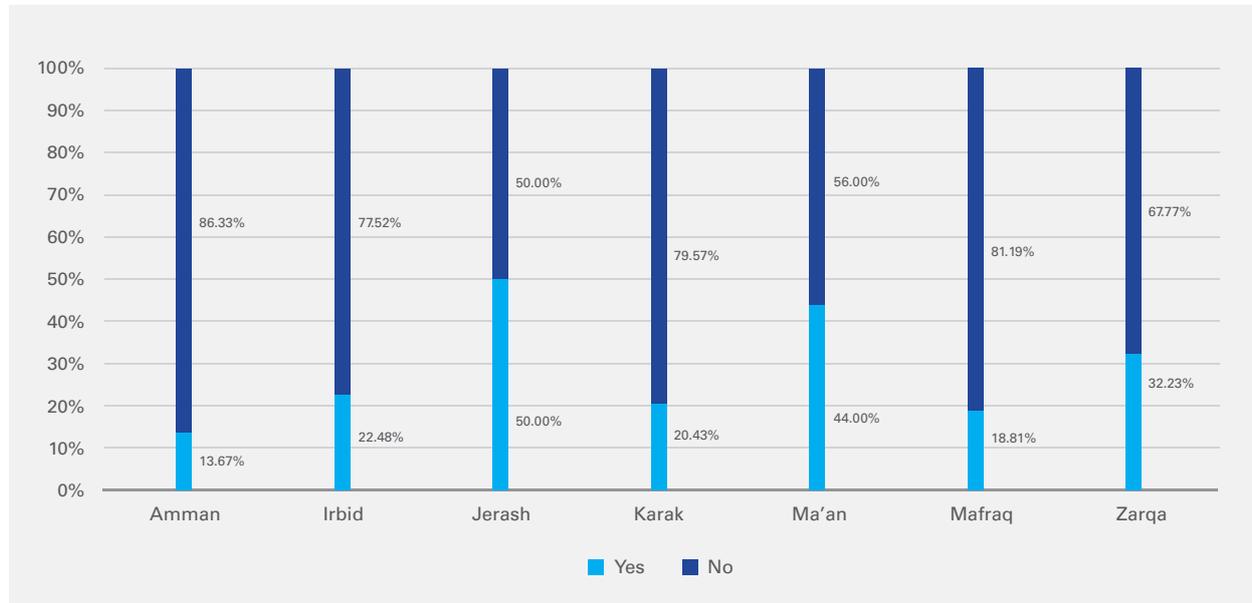
**Figure 3.24: Percentage of respondents by region on whether they think that the practice of marrying girls before 18 has increased, decreased, or remained about the same in their community in the last 5 years.**



The majority of respondents from Amman (72%), Irbid (69%), Karak (70%), Mafraq (66%), and Zarqa (69%) said that there had been a decrease in the practice of marrying girls before the age of 18 within their community in the last five years. However, almost half the participants from Jerash (46%) indicated an increase in the practice. In the region of Ma'an, almost half (46%) indicated a decrease, a quarter (25%)

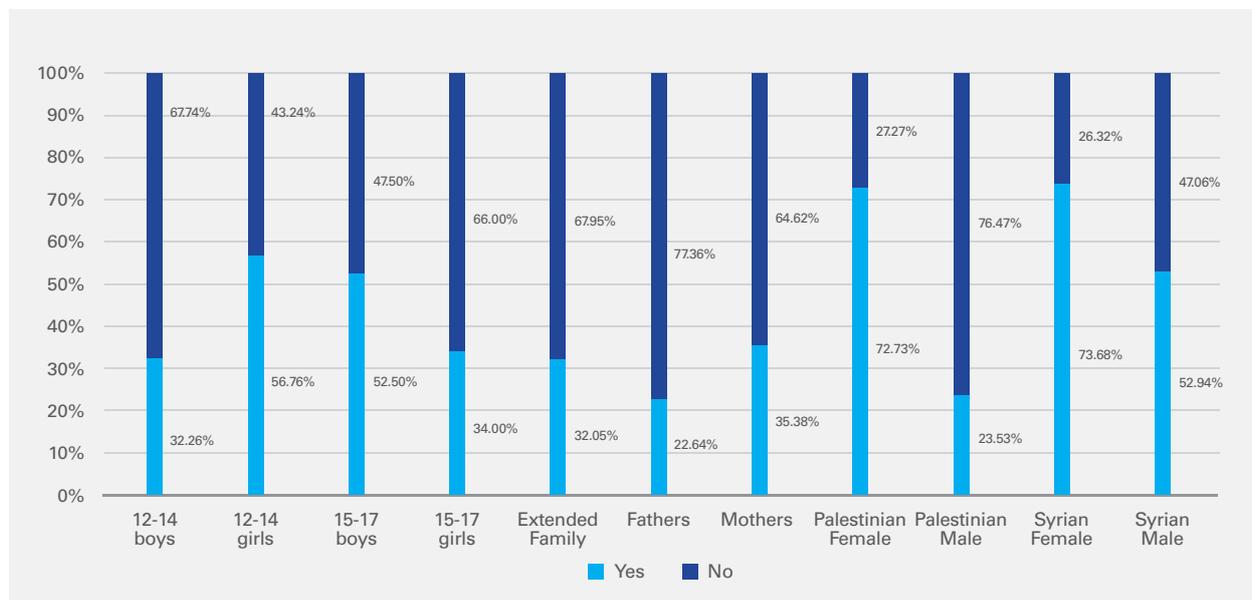
indicated an increase and more than a quarter (28%) noted that it remained the same. For boys, a similar trend is seen with the majority saying that it is decreasing for boys across all geographic areas (though 29% in Jerash think it is also increasing for boys).

**Figure 3.25: Percentage of respondents by region on whether they think it is common in their community for families to wait to formally register marriages of girls until they are 18 but they get engaged or are in unregistered marriages before they are 18.**



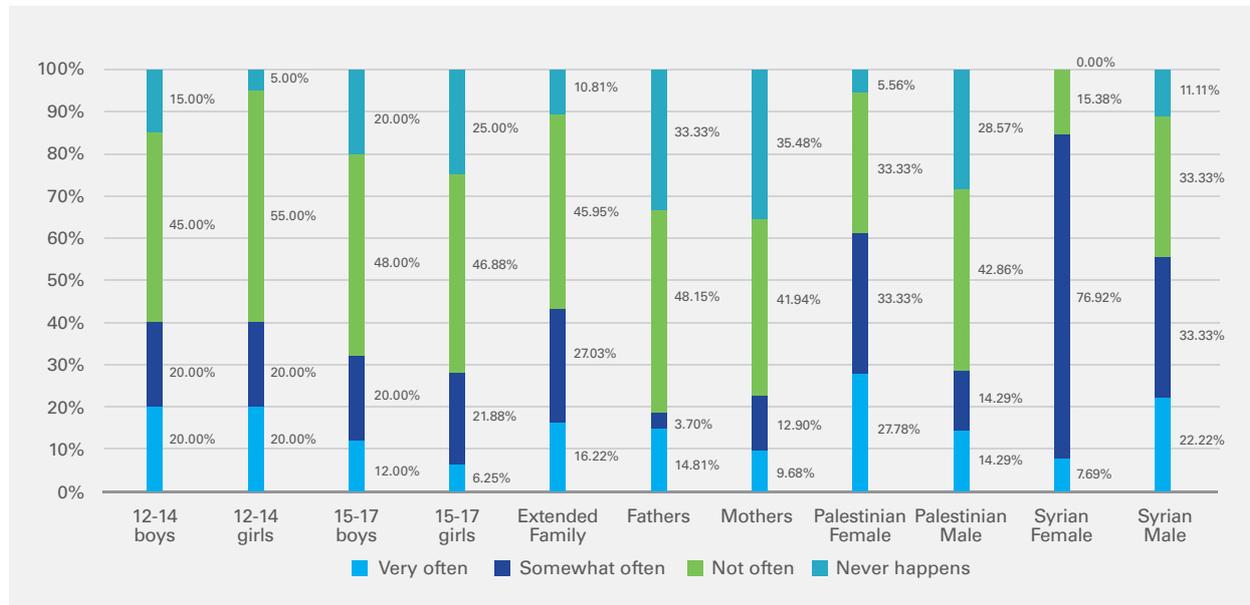
Most of the respondents across all regions, with the exceptions of Jerash, Ma'an and Zarqa, said that it is uncommon for families to wait to formally register marriages of girls until the age of 18. However, nearly a third of respondents in Zarqa and Ma'an, and half of all participants from Jerash said this was a common practice. For boys, only participants from Jerash (57%) said that it is common for families to wait to formally register marriages of boys until the age of 18 who are otherwise engaged or are in unregistered marriages before the age of 18.

**Figure 3.26: Percentage of respondents by respondent group on whether they think it is common in their community for families to wait to formally register marriages of girls until they are 18 but they get engaged or are in unregistered marriages before they are 18.**



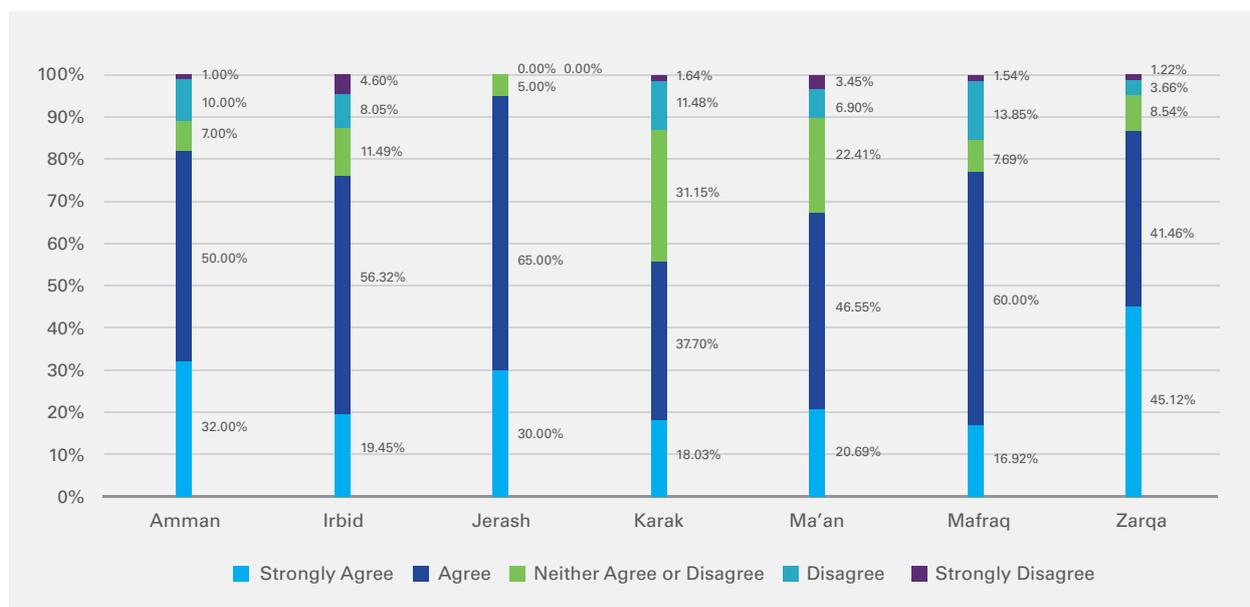
When examining this question by participant group, we can see much higher percentages of respondents saying it is common for families to wait to formally register the marriage of girls, especially among Syrian and Palestinian female groups. Younger girls (ages 12-14) and older adolescent boys (15-17-year-olds) also felt that this was more common than not for families.

**Figure 3.27: Percentage of respondents by respondent group on how often they think it happens in their community for families to wait to formally register marriages of girls until they are 18.**



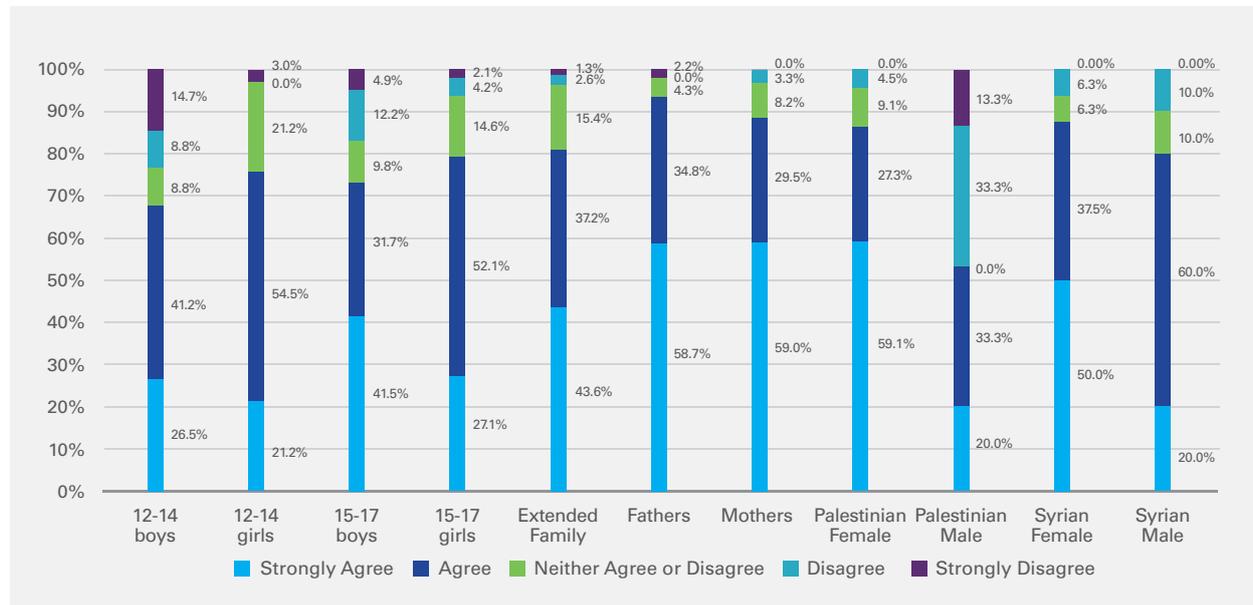
When asked how often they think this happens, stark differences are found by respondent group, with Syrian females stating that it happens ‘very often’ or ‘somewhat often’ in most instances. Nearly 1 in every 2 Palestinian males and also Syrian males who participated in the study also think this happens often (either very often or somewhat often).

**Figure 3.28: Percentage of respondents by region who agree or disagree with the statement: “Children living in rural areas are more vulnerable to child marriage in Jordan compared to those in urban areas.”**



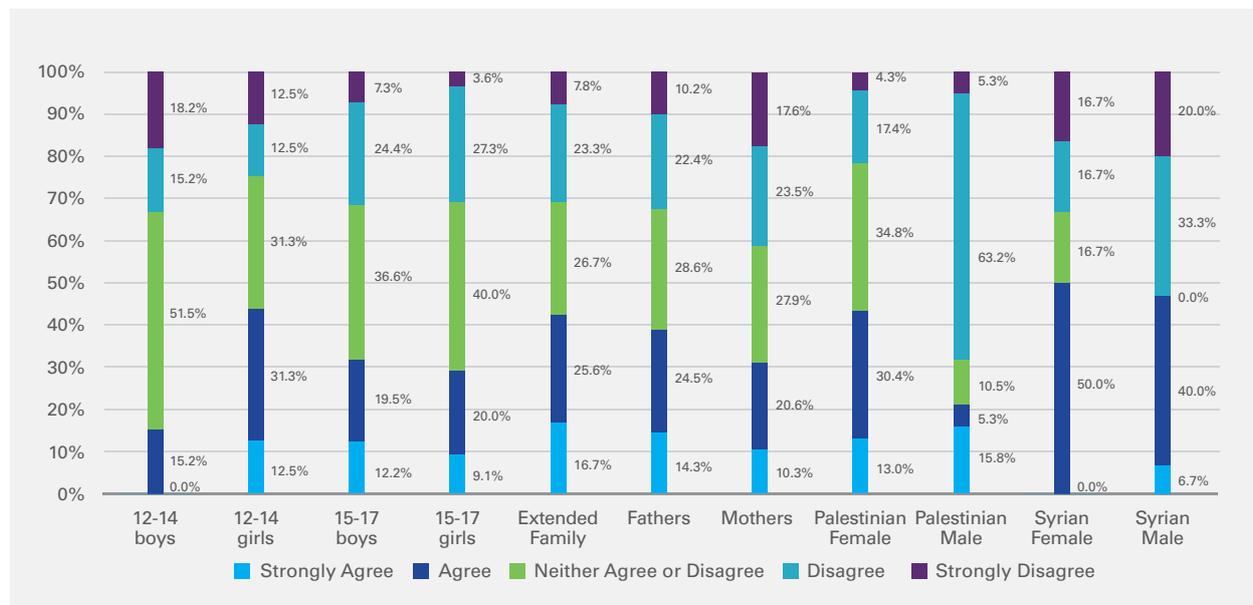
The majority of respondents across all regions either agree or strongly agree that children living in rural areas are more vulnerable to child marriage in Jordan compared to those in urban areas.

**Figure 3.29: Percentage of respondents by respondent type who agree or disagree with the statement: “Dom children are more vulnerable to child marriage in Jordan compared to children from other communities.”**

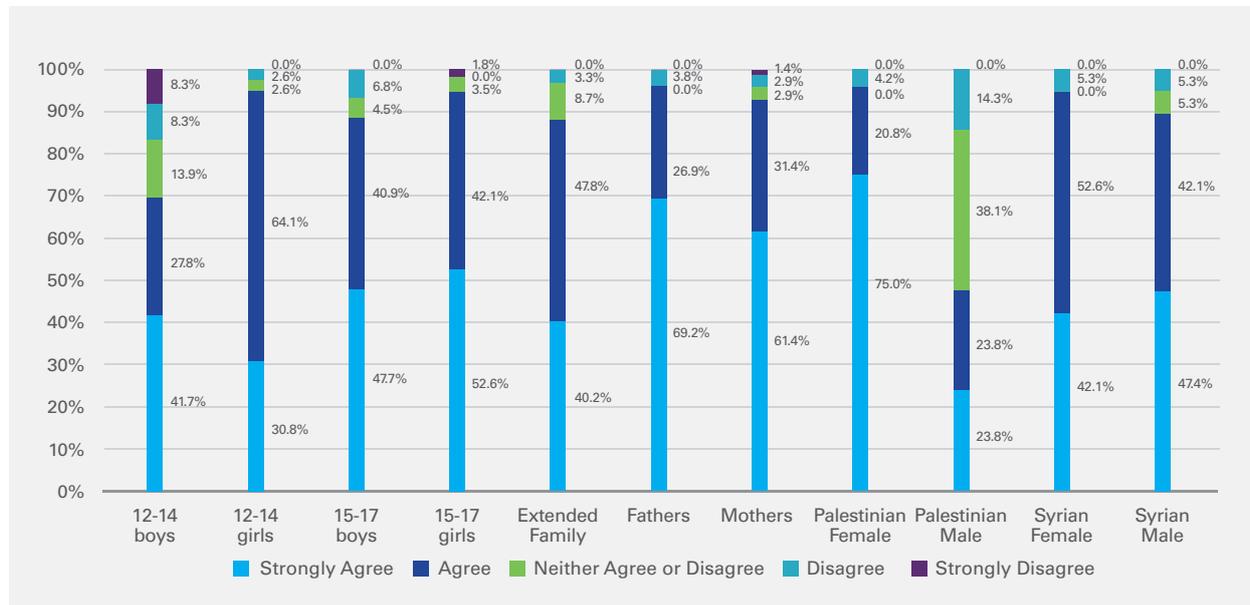


The majority of respondents across all groups agree or strongly agree that Dom children are more vulnerable to child marriage in Jordan compared to children from other communities, with the exception among the Palestinian male respondents.

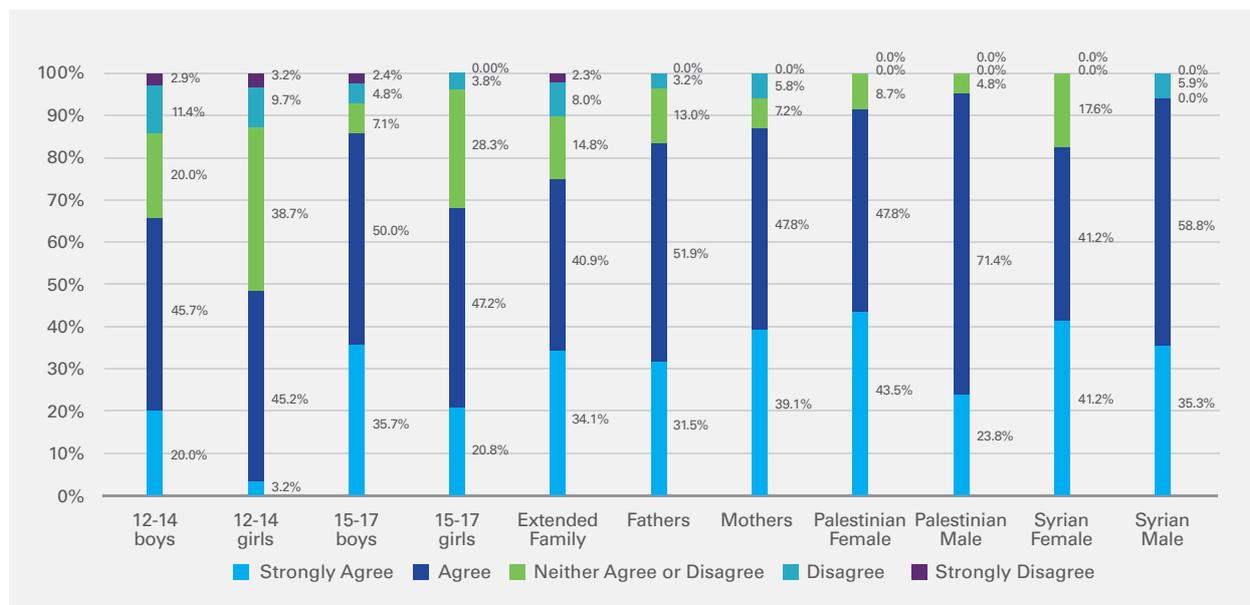
**Figure 3.30: Percentage of respondents by respondent type who agree or disagree with the statement: “Palestinian refugee children are more vulnerable to child marriage in Jordan compared to children from other communities.”**



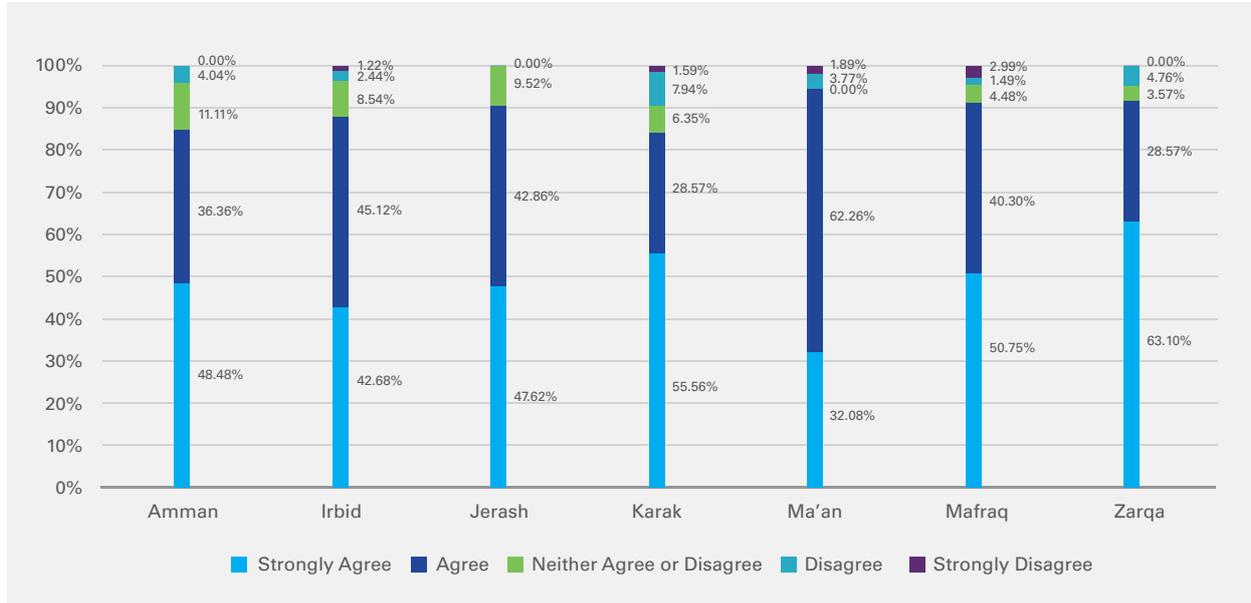
**Figure 3.31: Percentage of respondents by respondent type who agree or disagree with the statement: “Syrian refugee children are more vulnerable to child marriage in Jordan compared to children from other communities.”**



**Figure 3.32: Percentage of respondents by region who agree or disagree with the statement: “Children in the Badia are more vulnerable to child marriage in Jordan compared to children from other communities.”**

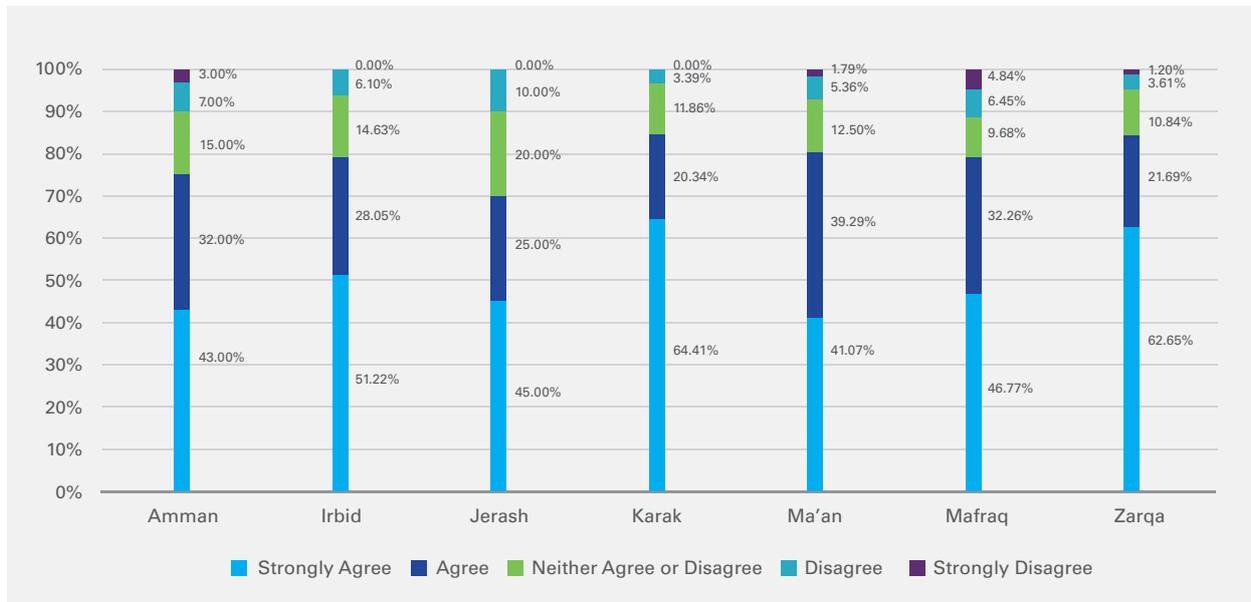


**Figure 3.33: Percentage of respondents by region who agree or disagree with the statement: “Syrian refugee children are more vulnerable to child marriage in Jordan compared to children from other communities.”**



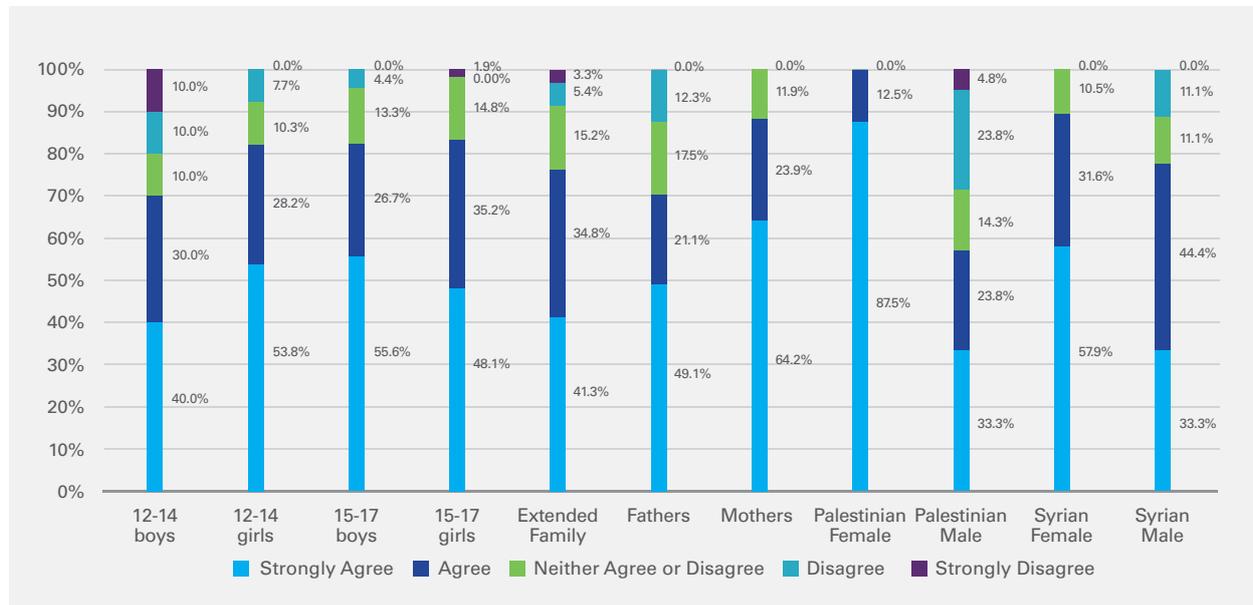
Similarly, the majority of respondents across all regions either agree or strongly agree that Syrian refugee children are more vulnerable to child marriage in Jordan compared to children from other communities. Less than 10% of respondents across all regions either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.

**Figure 3.34: Percentage of respondents by region who agree or disagree with the statement: “I would like to live in a community where girls below 18 do not have to marry.”**



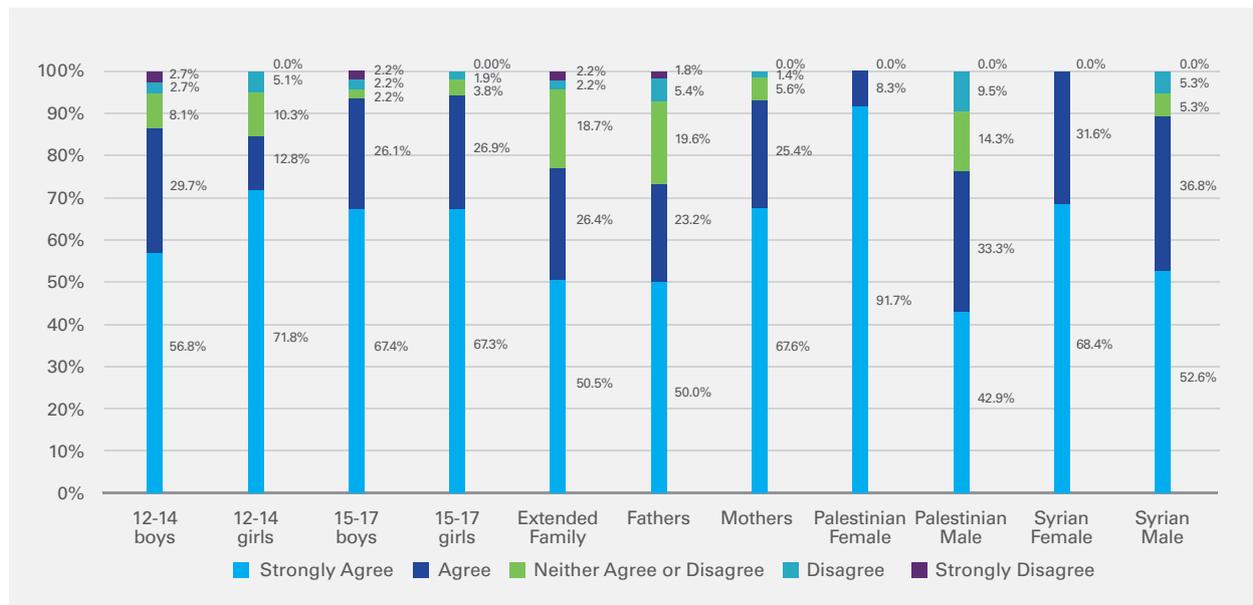
Despite the beliefs on the commonality of child marriage, especially among certain communities, the majority of respondents across all regions either agree or strongly agree that they would like to live in a community where girls below 18 do not have to marry.

**Figure 3.35: Percentage of respondents by respondent type who agree or disagree with the statement: “I would like to live in a community where girls below 18 do not have to marry.”**



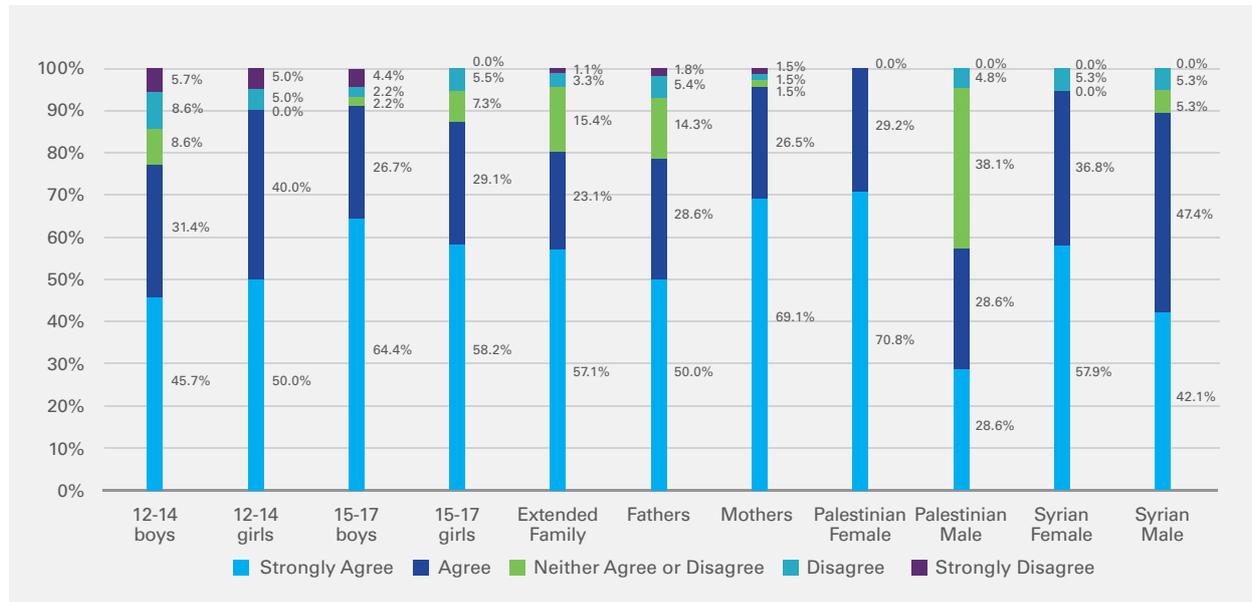
When asked if they want to live in a community without child marriage, nearly 3 in every 4 adolescents said they ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’. An even higher percentage of Palestinian females and Syrian females would also agree with this statement. The lowest level of agreement with the statement was among Palestinian males—but even then, nearly 1 in every 2 of these males said they would like to live in a community where girls do not have to marry.

**Figure 3.36: Percentage of respondents by respondent type who agree or disagree with the statement: “We should stop marrying children under 18 in my community.”**



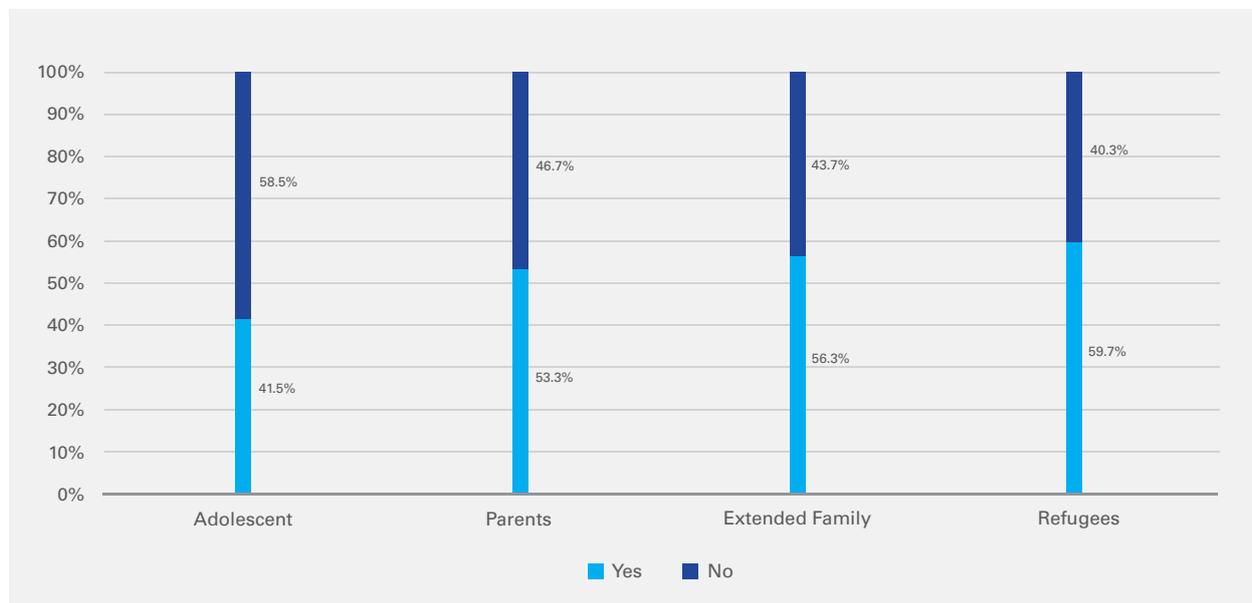
There is vast support for the statement “We should stop marrying children under 18 in my community” by most respondent types.

**Figure 3.37: Percentage of respondents by respondent type who agree or disagree with the statement: "Marrying before age 18 has negative consequences for a person."**



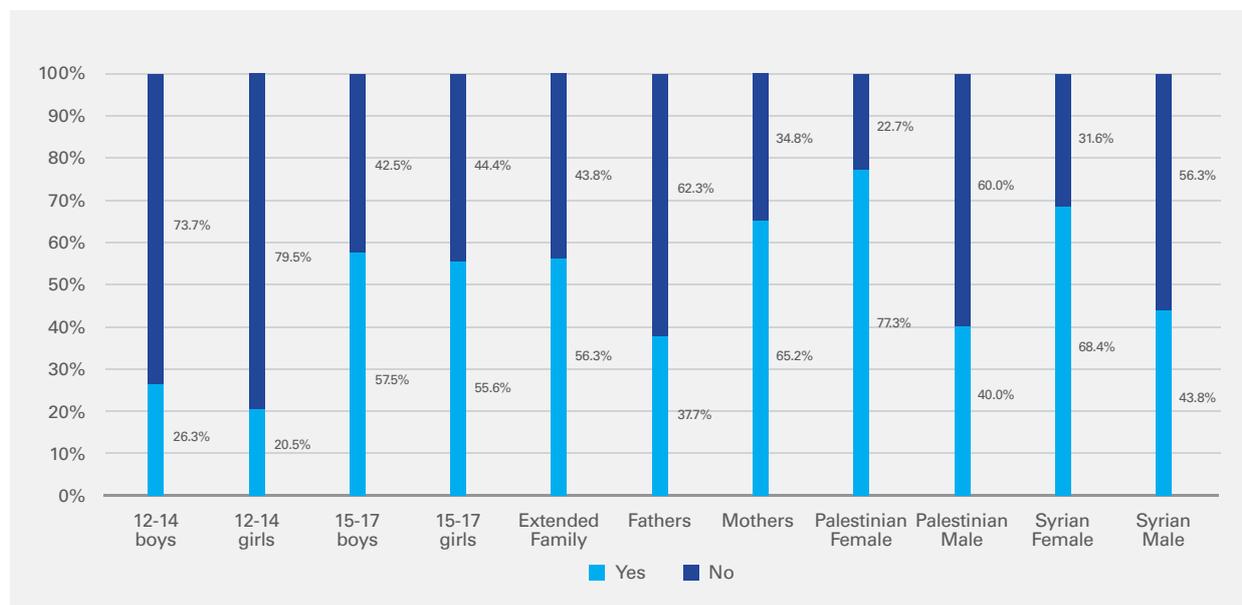
Most respondents also agree that child marriage has negative consequences for the children with nearly universal agreement from mothers and refugee women, and less agreement among Palestinian males.

**Figure 3.38: Percentage of respondents by respondent type who report that in the last 12 months they have seen, heard or read anything promoting the elimination of child marriage.**



More than half of parents (53%), extended family members (56%), and refugees (59.7%) have been exposed to materials advocating against child marriage. However, the majority of adolescents (58%) said they have not seen, heard or read anything promoting the elimination of child marriage.

**Figure 3.39: Percentage of respondents by respondent group type who report that in the last 12 months they have seen, heard or read anything promoting the elimination of child marriage.**



## In-depth Interviews

A total of twenty-nine interviews were conducted with six different group types (community leaders, professionals, Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees and participants from the Dom community).

### *How child marriage is defined and understood by respondents*

There were some differences between policymakers, professionals and community leaders on the terminology that should be used. One respondent felt that the term 'child marriage' was confusing and gave the wrong impression, one respondent suggested using the term "restrained marriage". Another participant stressed that as a committee they don't refer to marriage before the age of 18 as early marriage but as child marriage, and how important it was to use the right vocabulary.

*"Child Marriage is a form of violence"*—Policymaker

A religious leader stated that he refers to the practice as child marriage or forced marriage because it speaks to the truth of the situation and elaborated on how religion is used as a tool to promote child marriage in Shari'a courts today. He argued that even with the children's consent, they are too young to comprehend or understand the implications of their decisions.

Some participants agreed that marriage taking place before the age of 18 should be described as child marriage. Other participants had a more complex interpretation on the definition. One participant said:

*"I don't define it based on age as much as I define it with the personal growth of the individuals, both genders not only female, of course when we hear about early marriage we relate it to girls. However, there are plenty of boys who enter this kind of marriage without their complete will. Of course, age plays a big role, and according to the laws in Jordan and to the Islamic Shari'a, I imagine that an early marriage age is considered from 14-15 up till 20 years old"* Community Leader/Teacher, Jerash

*"She would be a child until she becomes fertile and mature. But as you said, marriage at the age of 18 is considered child marriage."* Community Leader/Professor of Shari'a

One participant believed that the legal age of marriage is 15 since the change in law was made 2 years ago, but stated that a judge should not accept a case of Child Marriage unless it is a case of "rape" or an orphan child.

Most policymakers and professional participants agreed that child marriage includes reference to those married between the ages of 15 and 18. A member of the Judiciary further classified child marriage into two categories: marriage under the age of 15 years and marriage between 16 to 18 years old.

### ***Further insights into the drivers of child marriage***

The review and analysis of the individual interviews has 'fleshed out' some of the ideas listed by focus group respondents as being drivers of child marriage.

As a reminder, the top drivers across all fifty focus groups were found to be:

- Custom and Tradition (n.32/50)
- Poverty (n.31/50)
- Broken Home / Family Disintegration (n.14/50)
- Ignorance (n.20/50)
- Sutra (n.10/50)

The following section of this report sets out additional insights on these top five drivers that are emerging from the analysis of the individual interviews (IDIs).

#### ***Custom and Tradition***

A key emerging finding from the interview data is that many interview respondents choose to distance themselves from the practice of child marriage—preferring to refer to this as something that is part of the traditions of other groups in Jordan but not a practice where they live or in their community.

For example, when a professional was asked about whether traditions may play a role in child marriage, he responded:

*In other communities yes, religion and traditions might play a role. The Syrian refugee community traditions are unchangeable in camps, with all the awareness campaigns, lecture and brochures about the negatives of child marriage and the high rates of divorce in child marriages, we're unable to change the situation because they have traditions where, if the girl is 19 or older and unmarried, then she is too old for marriage and will never be married [IDP2]*

The four refugees who took part in individual interviews however, expressed the view that they were opposed to child marriage and wanted it stopped. Notably, these individuals were aware that many in their community (or former community where they had now left the camps) hold views that are more supportive of child marriage than theirs.

Those from the Dom community expressed views supportive of child marriage, with no reference to groups outside of the Dom community doing things differently. One woman expressed the view that 'we just know about our tribes' [IDD6]. However, one group of Dom community interviewees did also refer to 'other' tribes selling off their daughters for the dowry and of being supportive of 'kidnappings' of their daughters, so that the fathers could ask for a higher dowry.

#### ***Poverty***

A key emergent theme within the IDI data is a debate around the extent to which poverty is the preeminent driver of child marriage (such as to offload the financial burden of a daughter and to benefit from a dowry), or whether it is the unquestioned following of traditions supportive of child marriage, linked with ignorance of the value of education, that is the primary driver. Respondents notably differ in the views they express on the relative significance of poverty or ignorance.

For example, one respondent expressed the following view on the significance of the financial situation (after describing a father who forced his daughter to return to a highly conflictual marriage for a further dowry):

*The financial situation plays a big role. This person who sold his daughter for 150Jds, is mentally zero, but financially if he was well off, would he do that? No way! [IDS1]*

However, another respondent who was a Palestinian refugee (and had spent six years of his childhood living in a camp) was not of the view that child marriage was an inevitable consequence of living in poverty. Rather, for him, it was (mis)beliefs supported by traditions. One Syrian refugee mother similarly opined:

*They used to say this [poverty] is an excuse, but now there are different resolutions. You can work and help your children work as well. Whatever you do at home, you can get an income [IDR2]*

It is probably significant that both the Palestinian refugee and the Syrian refugee quoted above had had exposure to other ways of being and living. This is something, the interview data suggests, that many people living in the Dom Community may not experience.

### **Broken Home / Family Disintegration**

Emerging within the IDI data are examples of cases in which young girls have been driven into accepting child marriage. Consistent with the drivers for 'Broken Home / Family Disintegration' uncovered in the analysis from the focus group data, these illustrate how death or desertion or having an ill parent may leave girls with little choice:

*Where is your father?*

*He died, that's why I got married. Life was not beautiful*

*Where you happy when you got married?*

*no*

*Why?*

*After 4 months it was beautiful, then after 2 months it all became bad. The father used to love me like his daughter, but now he doesn't love me [...] he hit me*

*Did your mother say anything when he hit you?*

*My mother says nothing*

*Why?*

*She is sick, her head is heavy and she doesn't talk or do anything. She is very sick [IDD6]*

As with the analysis of the focus group data, a father's remarriage could also be a driver:

*The girl might have a stepmother and the father wants to marry the girl to avoid problems with his new wife or to cut on financial expenses, so the stepmother plays a role in the marriage. This happened to our neighbours—he married his daughter at 15 [IDS5].*

*Divorce, the main reason is that the girl would be forced. The girl wouldn't know the reason why is she getting married. The girl wouldn't be ready for marriage and going to live with someone else [IDS3].*

Another related theme emerging within the IDIs is some acceptance among participants of the norm of early divorce, and of repeat divorce. Many respondents suggested divorce as being one of the disadvantages of child marriage, for example:

*Divorce, because of the lack of knowledge on marriage and the influence of people around them. If the mother [in-law] tells her daughter [in-law] to leave the house, she would leave without thinking of what rights she has, and what would she be risking [IDS6].*

However, it is not clear from the narratives what the ramifications of this for a girl may be. While some professionals spoke of girls returning to school after a divorce, in the experience of one, the reluctance to allow unmarried girls to mix with married girls (in order to maintain the protection of the former group) meant girls might not in some instances be permitted to return to school to complete their education.

### **Ignorance**

Twenty of the fifty focus groups had listed 'Ignorance' as one of their top three drivers for child marriage. However, from focus group data alone it was not possible to discern 'who' was purported to be ignorant, nor what they were ignorant of. The individual interviews provided informative insights into this. Interviewees described the ignorance of a number of individuals. These included the girl herself who was subject to child marriage, as well as her parents. The types of 'ignorance' described varied and included 'poor education,' 'not knowing the value of education,' a failure to mix with other communities and 'misinterpretation of religion.' We consider some of the descriptors of ignorance here in a bit more detail.

In respect of girls who enter into a child marriage, respondents explained that they are ignorant of sex and of sexual relations—possibly not even knowing that men have different genitals from females. One child bride explained that ‘I knew just the night before [getting married]’ as ‘my mum told me’ [IDD8]. Although girls may go to school, it appears this topic may be avoided. One policymaker explained that he had studied science at school but ‘when we reached the unit on sexual growth, the teacher skipped it!’ [IDPM1].

Ignorance was also regularly described as a ‘lack of education’—with a key view being that uneducated parents would not value education, or see the point in it and therefore were likely to support child marriage for their daughters.

*Having uneducated parents plays a major role. Because they were deprived of education they don’t understand the importance of it. In some cases where the parents were not educated, all the children are educated, but you still feel the parents approve ideas like child marriage [IDP1].*

Parents who took part in the research, who had not been educated, did sometimes express this view. For example, this group of mothers from the Dom community responded in the following manner:

*If your daughter is not doing well at school, would you let her leave school and get married?*

*- Yes, she is not benefiting from school anyways*

*- If she is 13 and doesn’t want to study or anything, then getting married is the best thing [IDD5]*

However, it is important to note that parents who had mixed with other groups (for example, Syrian refugees) said they had changed their view on child marriage, due to observing other people choosing a different course for their daughters. For example:

*In Syria they get married early. This is wrong, it is like we suddenly woke up and realised that this is a big issue. At 13 a girl is engaged, at 14 she is married, at 15 she has a kid and that’s her life. But her life is destroyed, no education for her. We found out that this is really wrong. But it all goes back to our parents, that’s how they are. As soon as she is mature, she gets married. Anyone could marry her [IDR2]*

A further point here is that ‘ignorance’ was also explained by some respondents as ignorance of the girls as a person with rights. When asked ‘what do you mean by ignorance?’ one father, originally from Palestine said:

*Ignorance of the parents, they don’t value that girls have rights before getting married, like continuing their education, to take her right as a child. The parents have a lot of kids! Soon as the girl is 15 or 16, they’d want to get rid of her [IDR4]*

### **Views on the influence of religion**

Individual interviews provided insights into whether or not ‘religion’ was considered to be a driver of child marriage by different groups within Jordan. In the focus group data ‘religion,’ ‘misinterpretation of religion,’ and ‘distance from religion’ had all been given as drivers of child marriage but without narrative explanation.

Discussions within the interview data reveal that the issue is two-fold. The first consideration is that ‘marriage’ per se is generally believed to be required of followers of Islam; while a separate issue is that child marriage may (or may not) be believed to also be part of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>26</sup> This latter belief is underpinned by the belief that the Prophet Muhammad took a wife, Aisha, who was very young (possibly as young as 9) at the time of marriage.

A range of views on this latter issue were expressed by interview respondents.

One Shari’a law expert expressed the following view (which is permissive of marriage from puberty):

*“In my opinion as a Shari’a specialist, we believe that the age of 18 is not a young age, our standard is puberty. So, after puberty she is free to decide and choose. We want to stress on the fact that below the age of 18 she might be matured enough. However, it differs from girl to girl. Puberty age is not considered as the mature age but it is the standard that we use to determine that she has the right to marry and make her own choices” [IDS3].*

<sup>26</sup> Although those practicing this are unlikely to consider it ‘child’ marriage as they believe it is appropriate for a girl to be married as soon as she has her first period.

However, other respondents were outspoken against this belief:

*"Religion has nothing to do with this, they think that if a girl is grown up, she should be married, but there is nothing in religion about this. Religion talked about the importance of education for girls and raising them well, so they would be able to pick the right husband in the right time. If she started to wear a scarf she should be married, this all comes from ignorance and not from religion. The father himself doesn't know how to read and write but interprets religion to his own needs, our religion didn't ask you to stay ignorant!" [IDR4]*

*"Our community is too scared to say child marriage is wrong because of the religious connection, where if something is allowed by religion it is never wrong; this is done by sheikh,; some see that marrying women early is a duty to protect the family's honour; they mix everything together! So even if a person doesn't get involved in child marriage, still he would defend it because it is related/ justified by religion. Hence, most people do approve it." Religious Leader*

In the data, the only community that appears to be firmly supportive of the idea of marriage at puberty were those who were part of the Dom Community.

*"Whoever gets married at a young age, he completes half of his religion" [IDD5]*

However, the narratives of individuals from the Dom community reveal that it may not necessarily be blind adherence to a belief that drives marriage at puberty, but fear of [sexual] harm coming to their daughters. Through marriage, their daughter's 'Sutra' may be secured.

When asked 'do you think overprotection is causing early marriage?' one Imam observed:

*Sometimes bad things happen to very good girls [IDS4]*

### **Sutra**

Ensuring 'sutra' for the girl (protecting her reputation) was one of the five top drivers of child marriage that emerged from the previous analysis of the focus group data. The idea of marrying a girl off in order to protect her from accusations of improper behaviour was referred to within the interview transcripts also. Examples include:

*If a girl is caught talking to a guy, the parents marry them to avoid problems, but it doesn't make any sense in my opinion, because they're only teenagers and they shouldn't be held responsible [IDR4]*

*They believe this is better for the girl. We ask the father, why do you want her to get married? He says to keep her morals [IDS3]*

*Unfortunately, there are some communities that think the most important thing is morals and marriage, they don't care about education. I have been working as an Imam for 20 years, nobody ever asked for my opinion about marriages, they can just ask me sometime about the groom, if he is a good person. But I was never asked if the marriage itself is a good thing at a young age [IDS4]*

As the above quotes indicate, interview participants did not necessarily agree that Sutra was sufficient reason for a girl to be married.

Respondents from within the Dom community however were more likely to consider Sutra to be *the* most important reason for child marriage as the excerpts from two interviews (below) indicate:

*Sutra is the most important thing. You worry more about your daughters than your sons [IDD8]*

*They just consider providing Sutra for their girl, nothing more*

*Everyone is convinced that marriage means Sutra?  
-Yes [IDD4, group interview]*

It is perhaps pertinent to point out that references to kidnapping of girls were only made by those within the Dom community. One male interviewee explained:

*I did it, I asked to marry her 11 times and her father refused, then I kidnapped her and lived with her in a room that we rented [IDD5].*

It is possible that in communities where the potential for sexual violence appears higher, families may be persuaded that at least if their daughter is married she will be protected or no one will question a pregnancy. There is a general reluctance on the part of interviewees to discuss pregnancy outside of marriage. However, one policymaker observed that an infant born outside marriage will be considered a 'foundling' and will be removed from the mother. She also observed:

*This is one of the main reasons Chief of Judges discussed, if we ban early marriage, we will face higher number of undocumented new-borns [IDPM1]*

This observation is indicative of how a legal rule (that the children of unmarried mothers are 'foundlings') could drive child marriage.<sup>27</sup> However, it is important to be aware that attitudes to a pregnant unmarried mother will also be crucial. One policymaker gave an example:

*Abortion is not allowed. Would a raped girl follow legal measures?—No. The solution would be killing her. The society allows a girl to give birth to a child who is her brother (the father raped her), but the society rejects abortion saying it is Haram [IDP4]*

### **The primary decision maker in respect of child marriage**

Interviewees were asked 'whose beliefs and expectations do you think are most important for decision-making around child marriage?' The general trend appears to be that the father is seen as the person that is the primary decision maker (from both interview and social norms survey data). This was consistently the case amongst interviewees who work with adolescents as teachers or school counsellors.

*When the father has the desire to let his daughter marry, it is hard for anyone to change his opinion [IDS4, school counsellor/teacher]*

*[The father] is like his father and his father is like his grandfather. I was in 5th grade, they told me that I am healthy and my breasts are so... so I should leave school. I cried a couple of days begging to go back to school, but nobody responded. Now I regret this and feel like I don't want to forgive my parents for this. Life is difficult when you are illiterate [IDR2]*

However, a minority of interviewees have stressed that mothers will be worried for their daughters and keen for them to marry.

*She wants what is best for her daughter, she wants her to marry as soon as possible instead of becoming spinster, if it was her son she wouldn't worry because he is a man and will eventually marry! [IDP3]*

Those from the Dom community appear fairly unequivocal in respect of the decision resting with the father:

*The father, even if the mother doesn't want the marriage, the father's opinion is the most important one [DD1].*

*The decision is my father's. As per our traditions, if a girl is studying, if she receives a proposal, she leaves school to get married, since this provides Sutra [IDD4]*

However, when asked whether the girl's opinion would be considered, one interviewee from the Dom community stated:

*Yes, if I force her and then she comes back to me a couple of days after marriage [DD5, group interviewee]*

Indeed, at least when probed, many respondents thought the girl would be consulted and, just as in the above quote, that there was no point forcing her against her will as this would be more likely to result in divorce.

<sup>27</sup> In many nation states, the marital status of the parents of a child have no bearing on the legal status of the child (with the status of 'illegitimacy' having been abolished). Mothers in those nation states generally remain free to keep and raise their children (often with some degree of financial state support).

One Sheikh described his experience of trying to gauge the views of the girl concerned:

*Who do you think makes the final decision in marriages?*

Unfortunately, parents decide. Now we even ask girls in a special way if she agrees on this marriage.

*Can she answer freely?*

We take the parents outside and ask the girl alone. Few girls come and cry, it would be too obvious. Unfortunately, some girls have no opinion. We have cases where the girl would come back two months after marriage and tell us it was forced [IDS3]

The above quote is indicative of the difficulty in trying to ascertain the opinion of such a young individual who is likely to be ignorant of what is expected of her as a wife.

One 16-year-old interviewee from the Turkman community who had been married at fourteen explained how her friends had persuaded her that it would be beautiful to be married and how she agreed to it partly out of fear that bad things might be said about her:

*When you got married, the guy proposed to your parents?*

Yes

*Did they take your opinion?*

Yes, and I accepted. If I said no, then it wouldn't have happened

*When you said yes, did anyone give you any advice about marriage?*

Yes, my friends told me that I should get married because it is beautiful. I like the idea.

*What did they tell you?*

They talked about love. And they would say, why should I go to school, there are boys and they might say bad things about you

*So, you were scared that someone might harass you?*

Yes, these things are scary [IDD6]

The above quotes are suggestive of the need for girls to be able to obtain advice and guidance so that they can make an informed decision in respect of marriage. Another of the questions asked of interview respondents was: 'where (or to whom) do children in your community go to when they need help relating to child marriage? How do they get information about where to go for help?' We now consider the emergent findings in respect of this question.

### ***Where can children go when they need help relating to child marriage?***

Most of those who named a possible source of help have suggested relatives. For example:

*First, she might think of talking to her mother, she would tell her that she doesn't want to get married and her mother might accept her daughter's opinion and try to reason with the father so he would cancel the idea. And sometimes it's possible that the mother doesn't accept her daughter's point and says no; and it has happened, cases where the father forces the daughter to get married and the daughter runs away [IDR3]*

Individuals from the Dom community expressed the view that:

*She would be embarrassed to talk about the fact that her parents want to let her marry at a young age. She can't talk to others about this. [It] may be if she asks the social workers or people at the health centre, her father would know and she would be scared that he would know*

However, one Syrian refugee mother was of the view that if such an organisation did exist:

*There is not one, but if there was such an organisation, everyone would go [IDR2].*

### ***Is child marriage increasing or decreasing?***

Participants generally agree that Child Marriage is on the rise in certain communities and in certain circumstances.

*“One point I’d like to highlight is that at a national level we’re trying to reduce early marriage, not ban it.”—Policymaker*

Some respondents felt that Child Marriage had changed for the better, parents are more educated and are more aware leading them to better ascertain if their child/children are ready for marriage and the responsibilities it entails.

*“Social media and communication channels changed the perception of males and females, and allows them to know if they are ready for marriage.”—Policymaker*

Participants identified the need for more analytical studies as the current studies were seen to look at the issue of Child Marriage in a shallow way and are based on forecasts. Accurate studies are necessary to distinguish between cases of divorce from engagements (unconsummated marriages) and what is deemed an actual consummated marriage. The Higher Council for Women stated that they have requested these distinctions to be made when reporting cases of divorce from the Supreme Judicial Council.

### ***Key legislation and policy considerations***

Participant views varied on the key legislations and policies on Child Marriage. The new regulations that came into effect in 2017, only allow marriage of children aged 15-18 through personal civil laws and with Chief of Judges approval, where he has the jurisdictions to allow in special cases the marriage of someone below the age of 18. Participants stated that a set of conditions need to be met before a case can be considered. Participants stated that the introduction of these new regulations has led to a drop in the number of applications, but given the nature and traditions of society at large, some cases still justify the need for an child marriage.

A majority of participants agreed that changes in legislation and policies alone cannot solve the problem of child marriage. One example in support of this statement was that of Egypt, where, when the legal age for marriage was set at 18 in the area of Saeed, the numbers of undocumented marriages increased, causing girls to lose their rights.

One policymaker stated that contradictions in education, labour and citizen laws were acting as a blind spot, promoting the approval of child marriage requests. Education is mandatory until the age of 16, labour laws demand a person is at least 16 years of age before starting work, and national ID cards are not issued to anyone until they reach the age of 16.

Some participants stressed that the new laborious procedures involved in getting approval for child marriage (aged 15-18), will make people ‘think twice’ before going through the process. This, in effect, will change the mentality, combined with awareness-raising campaigns.

*“At the end of the day, the legal framework requires 3 to 6 kinds of approval—the parent’s approval, the girl’s, the judge’s, the legal counsel’s, the family affair department’s that studied this case, and finally the Supreme Court’s approval, they all need to be present for the marriage to be approved of legally.”—Policymaker*

Not all participants agreed on the new legislation, which still provides a loophole for marriages with children aged 15-18. Another policymaker stated:

*“The age should be raised to 18 rather than 16 with no exceptions, and anyone breaking that law should face a harsh punishment. They should run rehabilitation programmes for underage married girls, to protect their rights. A lot of things can be done, raising awareness, and having more funds.”*

Article 308, which protected rapists from punishment if they married their victims, was also mentioned by participants. Participants said that in instances where children under 18 wanted to get married and the parents or the judge wouldn't approve the marriage, they would engage in a sexual act in order to force the marriage using Article 308. One participant said *"Now this is no longer in the law and there is a punishment, I believe the percentages of child marriage will become lower."* The main reasons for child marriage under Article 308, was pregnancy.

Some participants believed that Child Marriage for girls under "special circumstances" was necessary to secure a future for them. Reasons varied from school drop-outs, familial poverty or a father's inability to provide for his family, to cases of orphaned girls and victims of rape.

*"I support raising awareness. This is the parents' role and the government's role. We don't want the community to rebel against the law, there are people that need child marriage because of certain special conditions (a girl is an orphan, a rape issue)"* Community Leader/Teacher & Imam

Honour killings as a result of a girls 'immoral' (Haram) actions by her brother or father could rise if they aren't able to carry out a marriage.

A religious-studies teacher stated that even if laws were legislated, as long as people saw child marriage as necessary, they could always find a way around laws. Keeping the cultural and societal norms in perspective is important in tackling an issue as complex as child marriage in order to prevent unwanted consequences.

### **Engagement period and registering marriages**

One key issue raised by participants was that the number of documented marriages doesn't distinguish between an "engagement" and legal marriage. An engagement is by tradition recorded as a legal marriage, but the marriage may not be consummated until a later date, often a year or two from the date of contractual marriage. The number of divorces from child marriage do not necessarily represent consummated marriages.

*"They might get engaged at 15 but do not marry before 17 or 18, because they take their time with the wedding preparations."* —Policymaker

Several participants noted that people don't need to avoid registering a marriage until both parties reach the age of 18 because they can now outplay the law and get married legitimately as young as 15 years of age.

*"An uncle of mine married his second wife and she was younger than his girls! ... She was 15 or 16. I remember back then that they bribed someone and it worked. Now, there is no need, within the legal framework it works, they had a law a year or two ago, that says if the girl is over 15 years old and wants to get married, the judge can make an exception. There is no need to bribe anyone now!"* —Community Leader/Teacher, Jerash

A religious leader contradicts this from his experience, stating that it is very common that marriages are currently agreed and take place without being officially registered until both parties turn 18 years old.

### **Geographic differences**

*"The term early is different from one area to another, if you say early marriage in Amman, they think it's marrying at 18 or 20 or 21, which is okay."* —Policymaker

One policymaker stated that the highest percentage of Child Marriage happens in Amman. Other participants believe that it isn't as related to an area as it is the circumstances of the families involved.

In Syrian camps the rates are higher and this can be traced back to traditions, which exist within a sub-set of the Syrian community at large. Some participants stated that before the influx of Syrian refugees, it was common amongst certain Jordanian communities to travel to Syria and marry girls there (a marriage that would not be acceptable under Jordanian Law) and return with their spouses.

Limited studies have been conducted with the Dom community and very few cases are registered for marriages or births. One participant stated that they are not "controlled" by any laws. Child marriage is

believed to be high among the Dom community, one policymaker stated “...men in this community prefer to marry a 13-year-old so that he can raise her the way he wants”.

Several participants highlighted the issue of child marriage may be more widespread in Northern Jordan and less prevalent in the South.

### **Ethnic differences**

Difference between Syrians and Jordanians in child marriage was highlighted by all participants, some participants quoted the percentage of child marriage among Syrians to be between 33% and 35%. One participant stated:

*“In civil laws in Syria, girls can marry at the age of 13, boys at the age of 16. In Syria it is acceptable to conduct the marriage with a Sheikh only, without immediately registering the marriage officially. So, when they came to Jordan they kept this tradition, but this isn’t allowed anymore, they need to follow Jordanian law!”*—Policymaker

Syrian girls under the age of 15 are still being married inside refugee camps in Jordan, this is done without a Sheikh and any resultant children have no documents or proof of existence. Participants suggested that this remains a big problem. Participants believed that refugee camps in general, whether Palestinian or Syrian, have higher levels of child marriage compared to the national average.

Participants agreed that traditions and community expectations are key drivers for child marriage. One participant said on the topic:

*“Yes, it does for sure. In my case my family came from Palestine and every girl in my family married at 18, this is the norm. However, in Jordan, the acceptable age for marriage is after the female finishes college at 24. In Amman it is older, she reaches 30 and still acceptable.”*—Policymaker

Participants believed that there is a balance in traditions now which has changed over the last 10 years towards marrying at an older age. Participants agree that it depends on the family but that generally, “families are okay with the girl getting married at an older age.”—Policymaker

There was consensus among participants that males in the community in general prefer younger girls as, according to one participant, they are considered to be “more innocent and easily controlled;” which in turn encourages child marriage. This example was especially pertinent in a Palestinian camp environment, where the following scenario was described:

*“At this age he will have a business, like a super supermarket, so at 20 years old he is married since he has an income and doesn’t want to continue his education. There should be an age difference between them, so the girl would be very young then.”*—Policymaker

With regards to the Dom communities, respondents mentioned that most cases of marriage are not registered for this group, they don’t have official family books to prove their relatedness and it is therefore hard to give official statistics on marriage trends.

### **Drivers of Child Marriage**

Policymakers across the board identified three main risk factors for Child Marriage: poverty, dropping out of school, and cultural perceptions and norms—echoing the findings from the focus group discussions. Parents and the family environment were seen to be the biggest risk factor for child marriage. Parents have the biggest influence in deciding to marry their child off early, whether it is due to financial reasons or more ingrained views on the place of girls/women within society. One participant stated that:

*“... some families marry their girls early to shelter them, or because they don’t believe she should have the right to work, they believe that the man is the only one responsible for providing. I was with them in focus groups and I know how they think; the girl should have no voice or opinion.”*—Policymaker

Financial and economic reasons are seen to be a driving force behind some families' decisions to marry their daughters off early. Members of the Judiciary saw a low level of education as an important risk factor for child marriage. A combination of financial status and education level could predict child marriage, but this was not seen as absolute as some families that are better off also have higher percentages of child marriage occurring, a perception that is backed up by the most recent DHS data on child marriage.

Crowding in urban communities and camps are both seen as risk factors for child marriage.

Conservative religious communities are also identified as a driver towards increasing child marriage in the future. Participants noted that, increasingly, adolescents are more exposed to the outside world and have better ways of communicating with each other and thus religious values instilled in children and adolescents are not seen to be solid enough to withstand these changes. This in turn leads their parents to resort to marrying them off to prevent the occurrence of anything "shameful" or harmful to the family's reputation. Respondents also said that religious organisations and Imams have a big influence on people through Friday sermons. The idea of *Sutra* in society was also mentioned by interviewees: *"We always relate the honour to the girl's virginity"*—Policymaker

One cause identified for child marriage in Syrian camps was that newlyweds are given a living space; when a family's daughter marries, they can join their caravan with their daughter's new family next to them, creating a larger living space. This was one of the main reasons to marry off their daughters early as they would gain more space when marrying their daughters.

*"...based on my experience within the community, there are no parties, whether official or unofficial that encourages this marriage. Whether in mosques or not, this goes back to individual cases, their financial and educational status."*—Judiciary

The educational system was identified by participants as key to preventing child marriage. They said that girls who don't do well academically are currently allowed to drop out of school, and that there is a lack of extra-curricular opportunities and apprenticeships that could train these girls and capitalize on their unique talents. Participants felt this would reinforce the girls' independence and ability to make long-term decisions, where marriage is no longer seen as the only possibility.

### ***Respondents' views on the prevalence of specific traditions—such as cousin marriage (consanguinity) and early engagement (in their community and in others)***

Marriage between cousins is prevalent in poor and marginalized areas with lots of domestic problems. Despite the risk of genetic diseases, they still opt to marry first cousins.

*"In the camp's community, you see a lot of relatives marrying each other. It depends on the family: if they are well educated and enlightened then they will be against this idea; if they are all illiterate they will be in favour of it. We talk about the familial relationships, it depends if they agree with you or not."*—Community Leader/Teacher, Jerash

A professor of Shari'a Law stated that some families 'reserve' their daughters for their cousins.

A teacher and Imam in Russeifeh said that consanguinity is popular and is a common contributor to unregistered marriages (before the age of 18). A girl is betrothed to her cousin as young as 15, while the boy is between 17 and 20 years of age. In some communities, families prefer their children to marry outside of the family.

Child Marriage for love, and preventing any 'mistakes' from happening, is not uncommon according to one participant from Russeifeh. The participant expressed the view that younger girls were more fertile, stating:

*"No doubt, this idea exists. When the tree gives its first fruits, the fruits would be very good. When a girl gets married at the age of 16, she would be able to give birth to more kids, if she gets pregnant once every two years. It is known that women get older before men."*—Community Leader/Teacher & Imam, Russeifeh

*"Child marriage is common within certain families or villages—not in the whole country of Jordan. Not all Jordanians have the same perspective towards child marriage; there are some families that accept child marriage"*—Media & Legal Advisor, Awqaf

*“Educating girls is a very important resolution to avoid child marriage; it will surely decrease child marriage. An educated girl would be aware of what is going on around her. Education is a weapon that she can use to fight child marriage, as she would be aware of her rights and duties, she would be educated enough to know that marriage should not be at such a young age. She can also influence the people around her and she would do anything possible to avoid child marriage and the related traditions.”—Media & Legal Advisor, Awqaf*

### **Respondents’ personal views on the desirability of stopping child marriage (and why)**

Participants believe that Child Marriage (under the age of 18) should be stopped as the child will lack maturity and real understanding of what they are getting involved in. It will take 10 or 20 years for them to reflect and realise how their life was taken away.

A Professor of Shari’a Law stated that in the 20 years of his practice no one ever asked his opinion on whether to go through with a Child Marriage or not. The participant said that the court tries in every way to prevent Child Marriage, but there are as many loopholes as barriers.

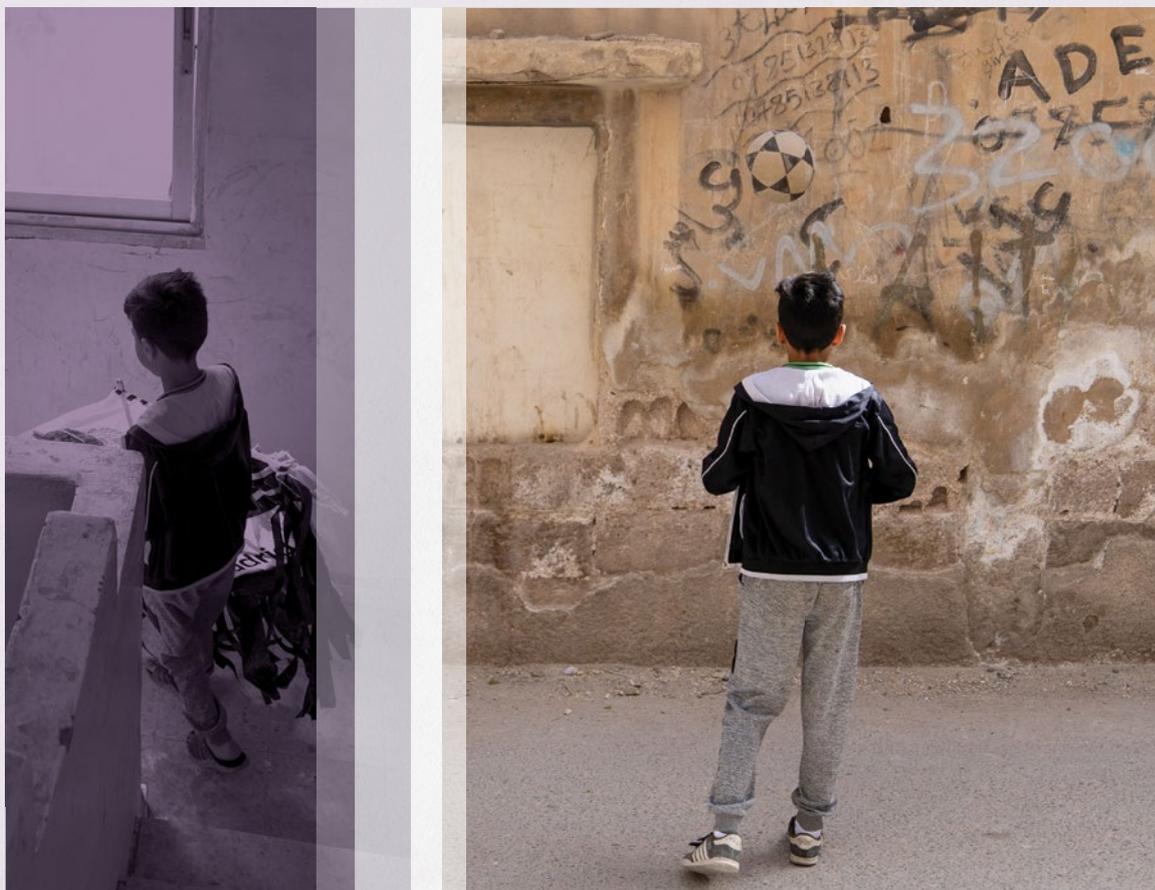
*“In my point of view, 18 is the legal age, and we should keep marriages at a younger age very rare and under special circumstances.”—Community Leader/Professor of Shari’a*

A school counsellor and advisor commented on the importance for girls to finish their education to ensure their independence in the long run. Educating fathers and raising their awareness of overprotection and false beliefs about chastity is important to curb Child Marriage.

Participants shared their experiences of child marriages that occurred within their own families and communities, where all but a couple were failed marriages.

*“Personally, I am against this marriage, because this practice is related to what could be called ‘the history of the dead;’ in other words it is related to very old traditions. In the past, this was a tradition within families and tribes, so I think that this is not beneficial and could cause a lot of problems. Most of the time child marriages fail.”—Media & Legal Advisor, Awqaf*

## 4. Conclusion and Multi-sectoral Plan



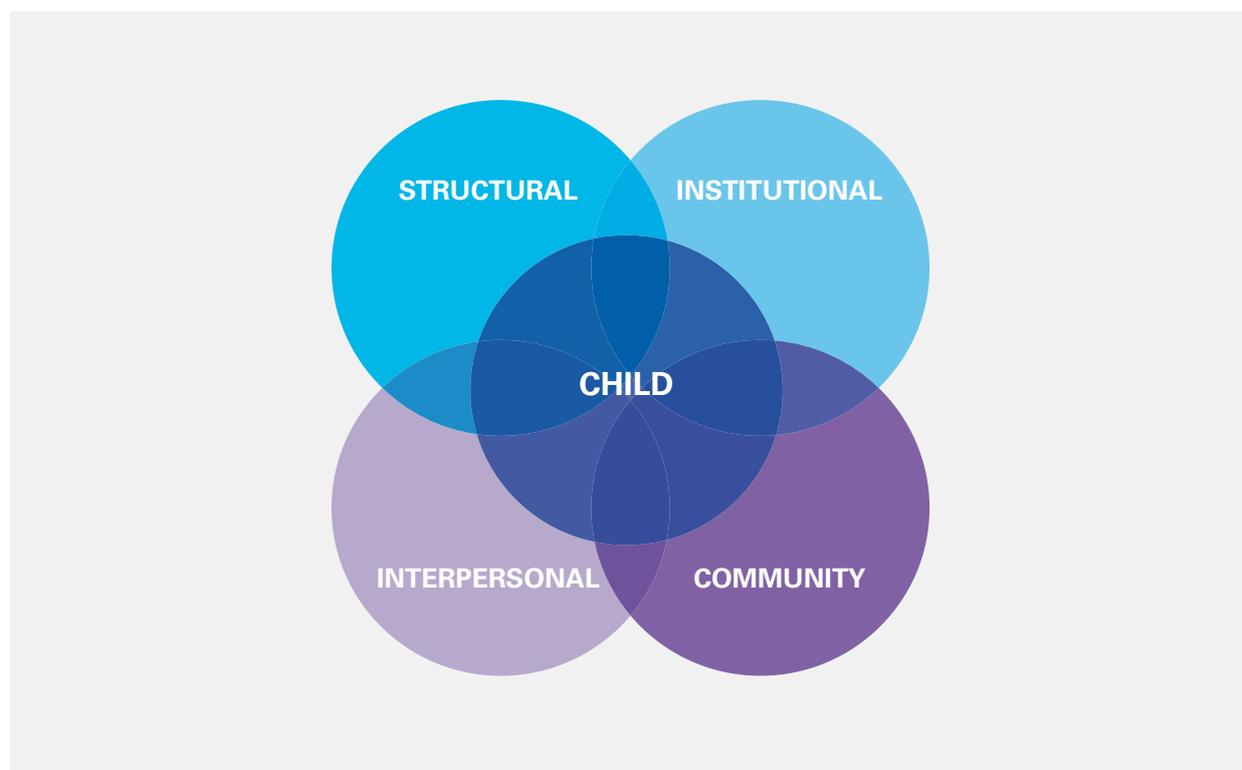
This chapter analyses the findings presented in the mixed methods study through two separate frameworks: 1) the Child-Centred Framework to understand the drivers of child marriage (Maternowska, Potts and Fry, 2018) and 2) the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENA) Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) Framework (UNICEF, 2019). By applying these two frameworks, we can explore ways in which the key findings can be put into action—in this case, the key elements that need to be considered in a Multi-sectoral Plan to reduce child marriage in Jordan.

### The Child-Centred Framework

The Child-Centred Framework is a newly developed adaptation of the socio-ecological framework, exploring the drivers of child marriage or the institutional and structural level factors that create the conditions in which child marriage is more (or less) likely to occur. These are distinct from the risk and preventative factors which reflect the likelihood of child marriage occurring due to characteristics most often measured at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels (Maternowska, Potts and Fry, 2018). Our findings support the idea that no single level within the socio-ecological model, and no single factor (drivers or risk/preventative factors) within or between those levels, determines or explains an act of marriage involving a child. Instead, each factor, when combined with one or more other factors, may lead to a situation where child marriage is more likely to occur. The changing nature of society at the structural level is thus mapped in different ways on to what happens to children in their everyday lives at home, in schools and in the community.

An integrated framework shows the potential intersectionality of each level, rather than presenting them in a diagrammatic manner which may be misinterpreted as less dynamic and more hierarchical than intended (Maternowska and Potts, 2017). It is designed to assist practitioners in visualizing how drivers of child

marriage, and the risk and preventative factors interact. Importantly, it maintains the child at the centre—interacting, interfacing and overlapping with a variety of drivers, risk and preventative factors throughout the lifespan.



This study identified several key risk factors for child marriage **at the individual level** including educational attainment (both of the children and their parents), ethnicity, gender (girls being more at risk) and refugee status. At the **interpersonal level**, we see poverty which leads to family stress and extended family interference, the size of the household, polygamy, consanguineous marriages/family marriages, domestic violence and spousal conflict as all being risk factors for child marriage. At the **community level**, we found attitudes towards the high value and gender norms around marriage, tribal and cultural beliefs around family marriages, religious beliefs and customs, and living in rural areas as key factors in the prevalence of child marriage. Perhaps the single most important element at the community level—mentioned by every group and in almost every data source—was that of *sutra* and the cultural expectations around this and the culture of shame when *sutra* is seen as lost or not protected. When exploring the drivers of child marriage, this model explores the institutional and structural levels. At the **institutional level** are the set of laws and policies surrounding child marriage, including new legislation but also some of the practices (such as delayed registration, etc.) identified by participants as allowing child marriage to continue. Other institutional factors emerging from the qualitative study include the varying definitions and beliefs among institutions around the terminology and definitions related to child marriage. Lastly, key themes emerged from the data around the differences between host and native country laws and practices, especially related to Syrian refugees, that allows the practice of child marriage to continue in Jordan. At the **structural level**, poverty and the underlying causes of poverty emerged as a key driver, as did the lack of educational opportunities (and beliefs around the importance of education—also a risk factor at the interpersonal and community levels) and gender inequality (preferential treatment of boys, the need for extra protection for girls, etc.).

## Social and Behavioural Change Framework

After identifying the key risk and preventative factors through the data, the next difficulty is identifying where best to intervene in order to create social and behavioural change around child marriage. This model was developed by the Middle East and Northern Africa Regional Office of UNICEF with the purpose of adding clarity and rigour to the design and monitoring of Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) programmes (UNICEF, 2019). By exploring the question of why people do what they do, we unpack the constructs of behaviour to map out its main drivers as identified in the qualitative study and secondary analysis. This theoretical map can then be used as a checklist when trying to understand behaviours (research), influence behaviours

(programmes) and track change (monitoring). We use this model here to understand the research and to make the multi-sectoral planning more systematic and evidence-based. One advantage of this framework is that it also creates a common reference and language to discuss SBC, collaborate and build capacity, and to anchor the various interventions and tools we develop.

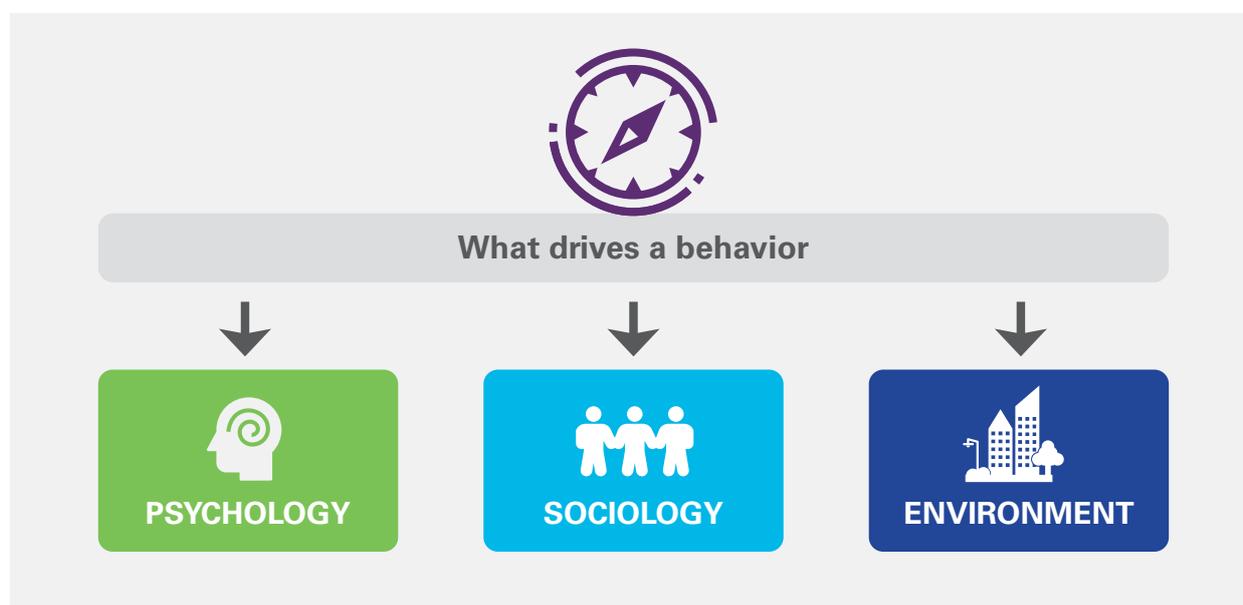
This model synthesizes many of the theories of behavioural change—e.g., how people move from one behaviour to another (such as reducing child marriages). The text box below highlights the behavioural theories and models that have been used to inform this framework.

**Table 4.1: Theories Contributing to the UNICEF MENA Social and Behaviour Change Framework**

- Attribution Theory
- Behavioural economic theories
- Communication for Social Change Model
- Community engagement models
- Complex Systems Theory
- Decision-Theoretic Model of Collective Behaviour
- Diffusion of innovations
- Evolutionary theory of cognitive biases
- Flower for Sustained Health
- Social theories of Gender
- Health Belief Model
- Integrated Behavioural Model
- Ideation Theory
- Media effects
- Reasoned Action and Planned Behaviour Model
- Self-efficacy Theory
- Social Cognitive Theory
- Social Ecological Model
- Social marketing and community-based social marketing
- Social movements
- Social Network Theory and orbits of influence
- Social norm theories
- Sociology of Organisations
- Theory of Normative Social Behaviour
- Transtheoretical Model (Stages of Change)

*From UNICEF, 2019*

**Figure 4.1: The Three Factors Influencing Behaviour**

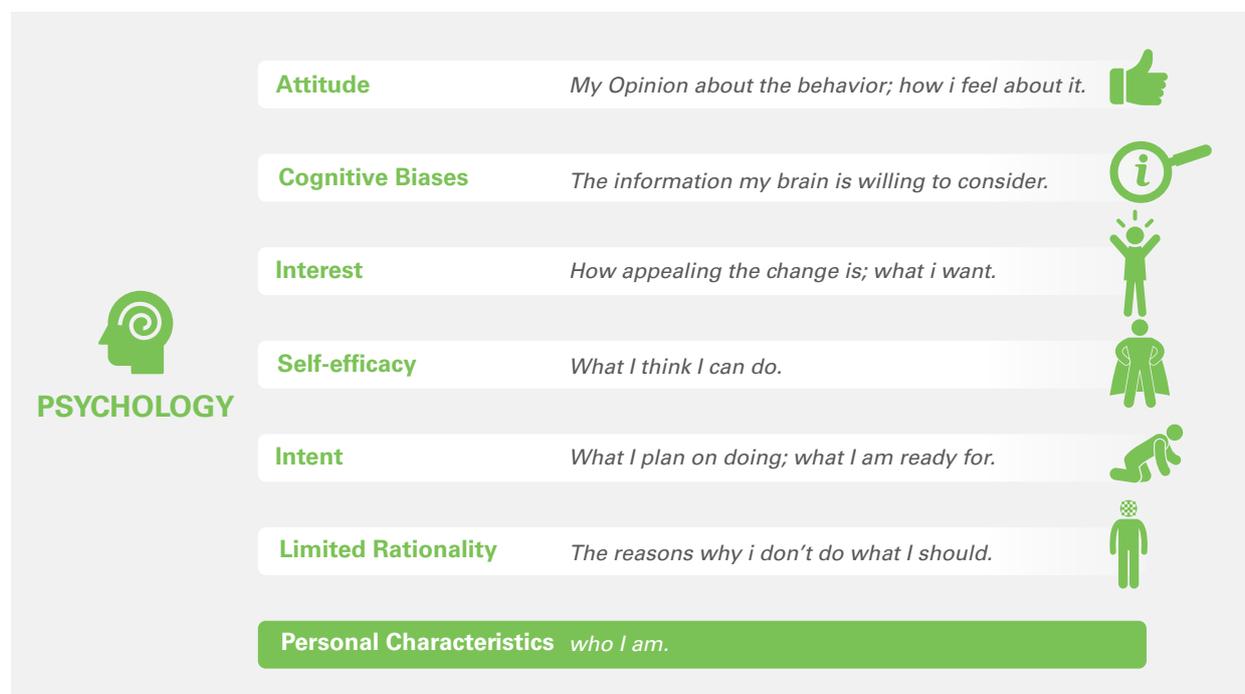


*From UNICEF, 2019*

This model identifies drivers under three different categories (Psychology, Sociology and Environment). Under each category, the drivers are organised according to two levels:

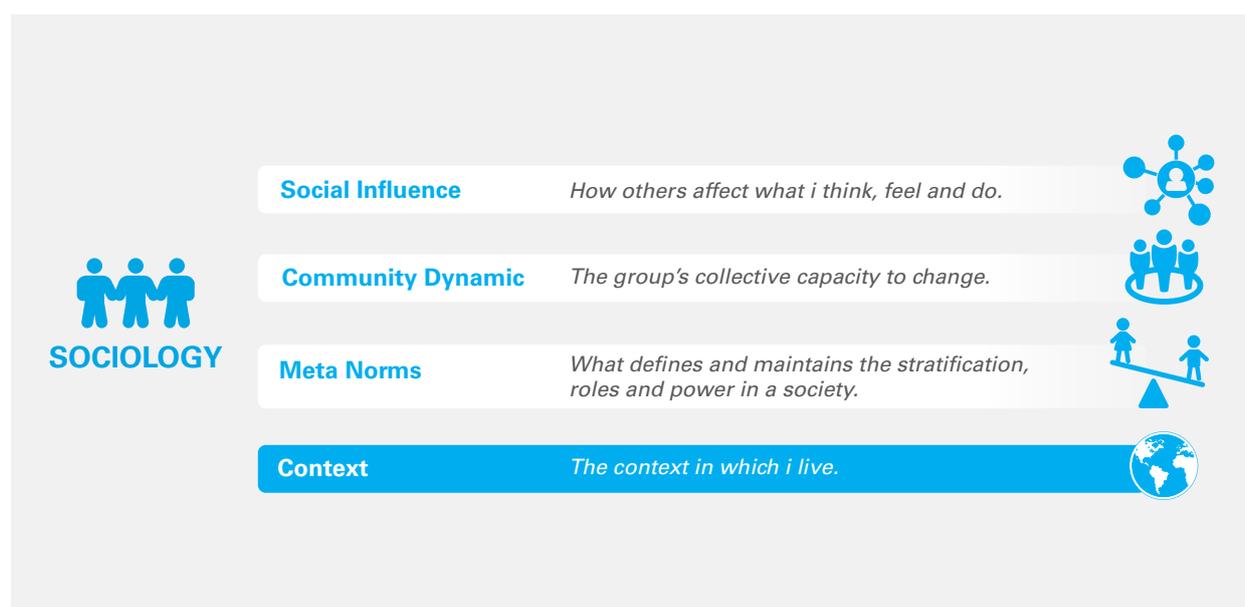
- Level 1: the higher-level drivers, called **factors**
- Level 2: each factor is unpacked into the several **dimensions** that compose it. These concepts are illustrated below for each of the three categories.

**Figure 4.2: The Factors Underpinning Psychological Drivers**



From UNICEF, 2019

**Figure 4.3: The Factors Underpinning Sociological Drivers**



From UNICEF, 2019

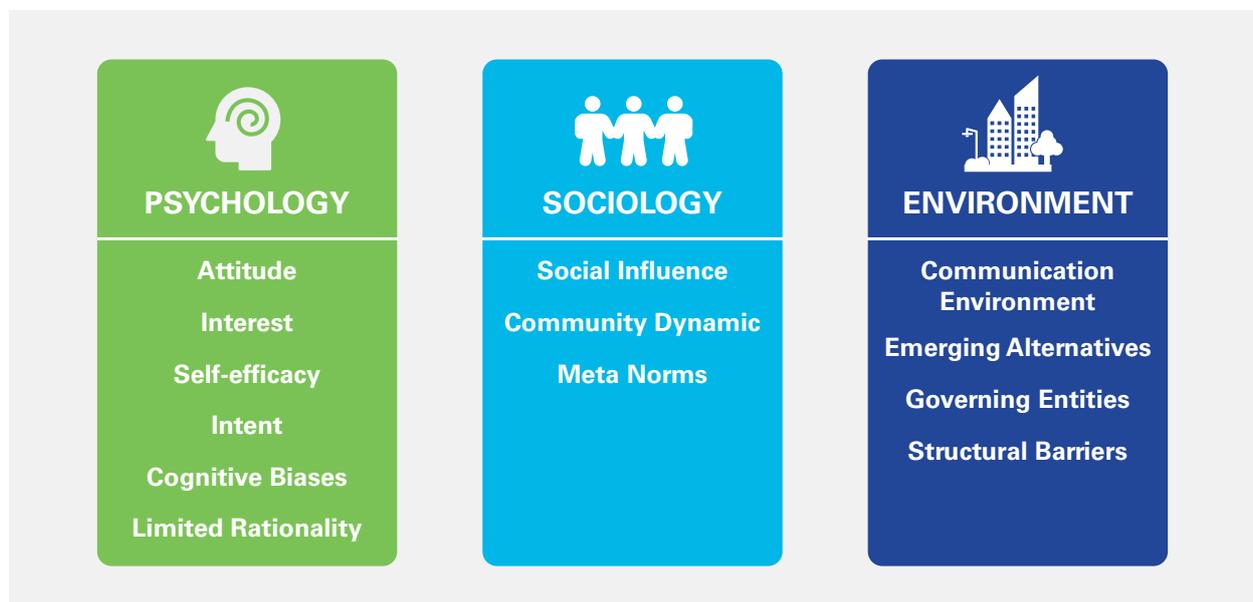
**Figure 4.4: The Factors Underpinning Environmental Drivers**



From UNICEF, 2019

Figure 4.5 gives a summary of each of the main elements and below this are the key themes emerging from this study in each of these areas.

**Figure 4.5: Combining the Elements of the Framework**



From UNICEF, 2019

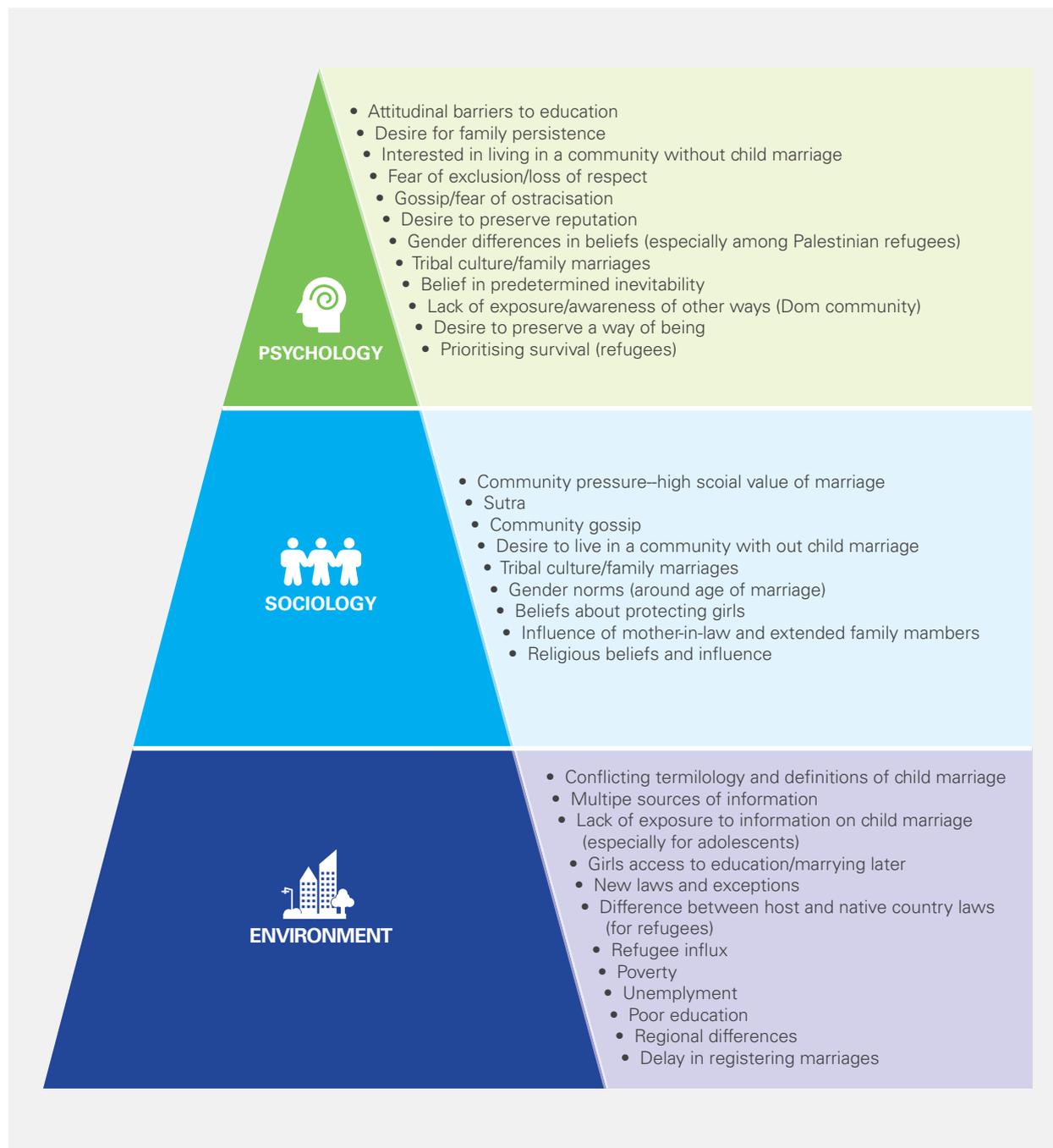
If we look at each of the key areas as defined in this framework against the data themes emerging from the study, we find that under **psychological drivers** are the key issues related to beliefs, attitudes, interest and self-efficacy. Within the study, several key themes in these areas emerged including attitudinal barriers to education (and beliefs in its importance and efficacy), a desire for family persistence, and a desire to preserve one's family's reputation (including a fear of gossip and ostracization). On the positive side, most respondents had an interest in living in a community without child marriage, but some communities lacked exposure or awareness of other ways (such as was shown in interviews with the Dom community). Tribal culture and

family marriages were mentioned by several respondents and reinforced both the psychological and also the sociological drivers. There were also differences in family opinion as to the best age at which to marry, and gender differences between females and males in beliefs on child marriage (this emerged particularly among Palestinian refugees).

Several **sociological drivers** also emerged—and are similar to the ‘community’ and ‘interpersonal’ levels of the Child-centred Framework. These included the concept of *Sutra* and the associated community pressure that was also tied to the high social value of marriage (especially for girls), and the resulting potential for community gossip when *Sutra* was not protected. According to participants, gender norms, particularly around the age of marriage, underpinned each of the main causes of child marriage. The influence of extended family members and family marriages were also prominent themes in this area. Finally, there were conflicting opinions on the importance of religious beliefs as a cause of child marriage but all participants did highlight the importance of the influence of religion in whether child marriage would decline or be allowed to continue.

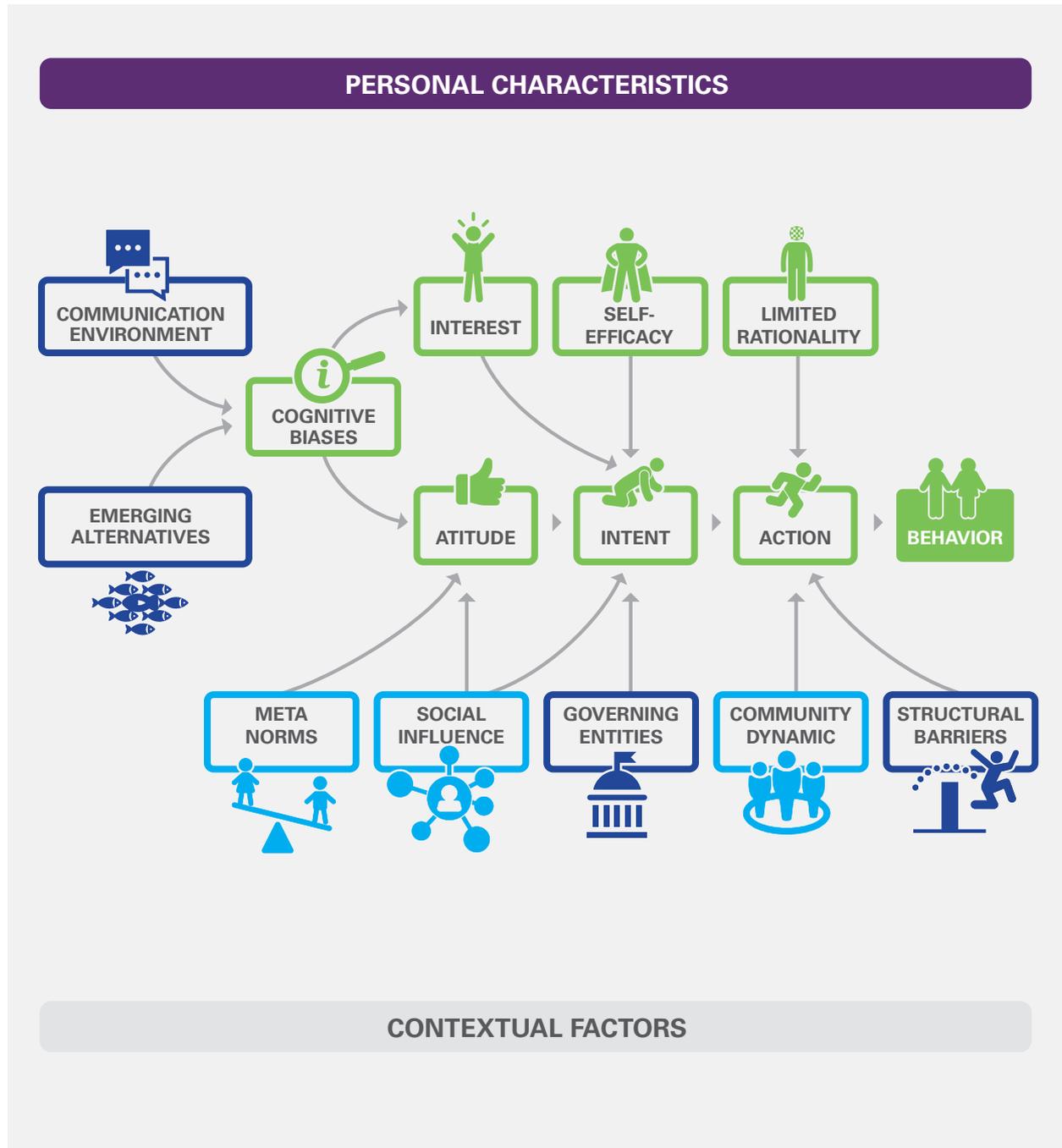
Lastly, the **environmental drivers** are similar to the ‘institutional’ and ‘structural’ drivers of the Child-centred Framework with the exception that this also identifies the communication environment and the emerging alternatives. The communication environment included lots of conflicting messages—both from social media and religious sources, neighbours and community members but also within institutions such as those working in the policy and professional practice arenas, in terms of how child marriage is defined, and the terminology used to describe it. Adolescents also mentioned that they particularly lacked any information on the subject. Several emerging alternatives were highlighted by participants, the most frequent being that girls remain in education and marry later—often giving urban examples of this.

**Figure 4.6: The Factors Underpinning Each Element of the Framework Based on Data from this Study**



The SBC framework provides a model that describes how these factors interact to drive individual behaviour, and which interventions might work for which drivers. In figure 4.7, psychological drivers are shown in green, social ones in orange, environmental ones in blue, and overarching personal and contextual characteristics in grey (UNICEF, 2019).

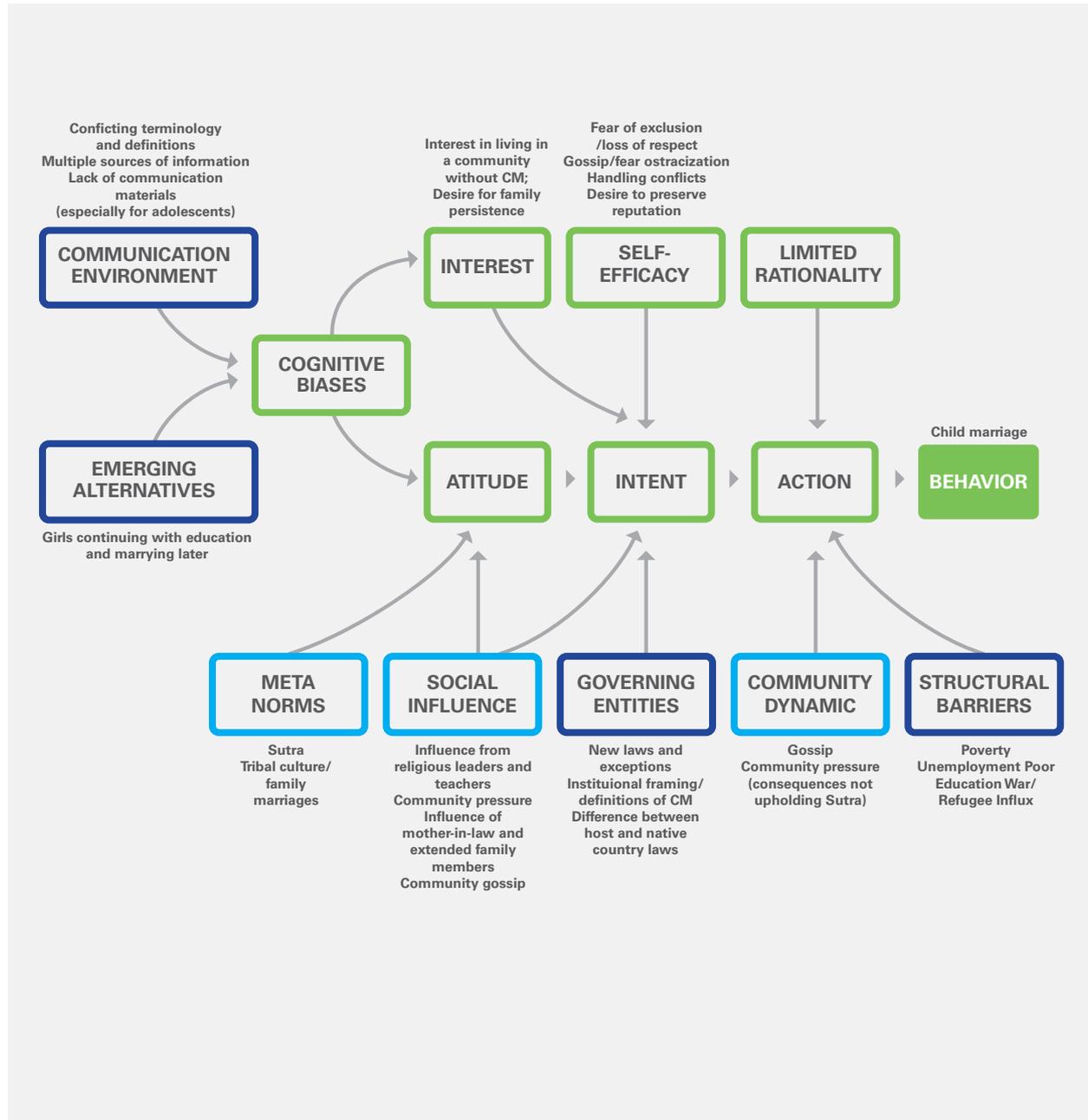
**Figure 4.7: The Factors Underpinning Each Element of the Framework Based on Data from this Study**



From UNICEF, 2019

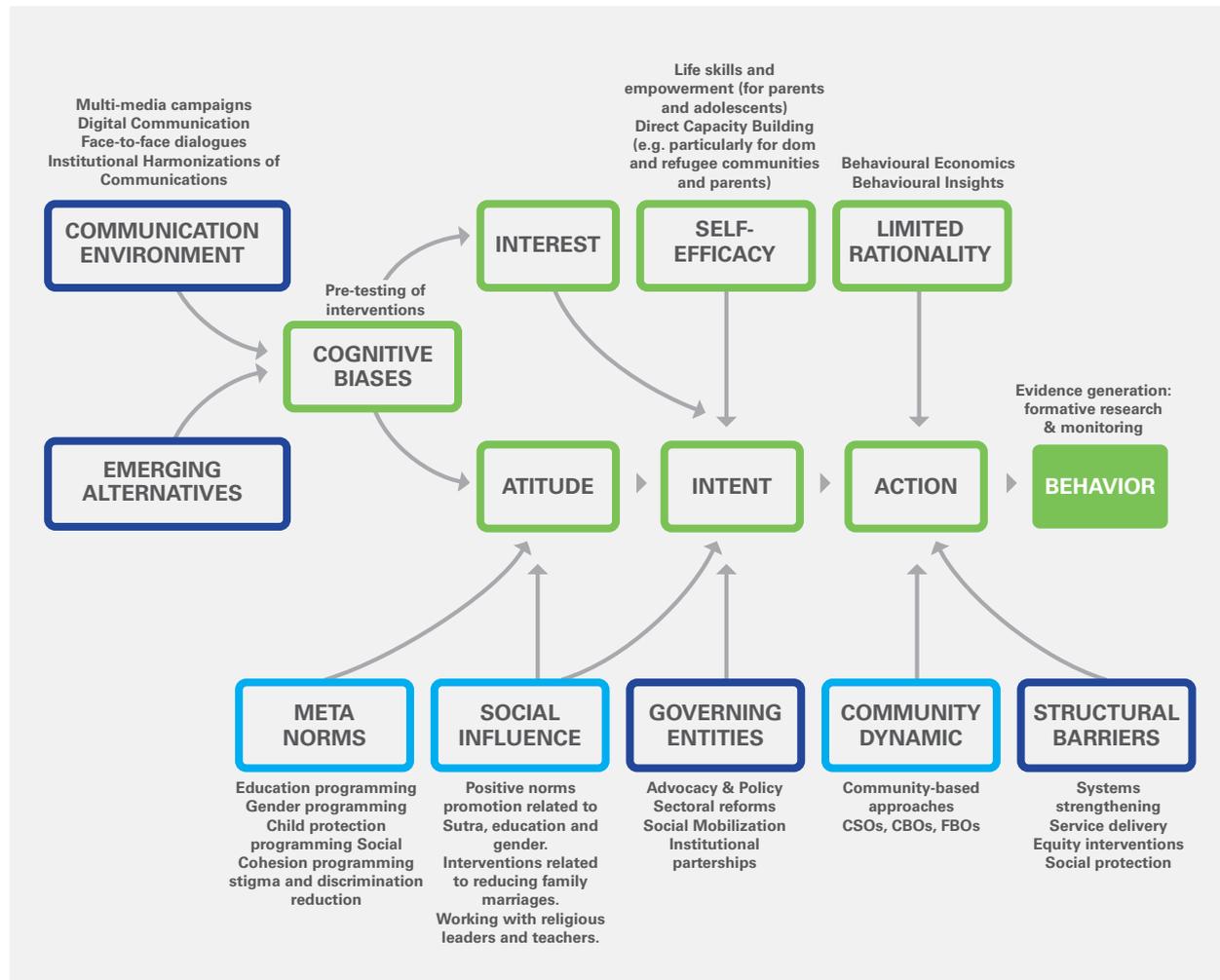
We can map the key themes emerging from the data onto the SBC model as follows:

**Figure 4.8: Key Drivers from the Study Mapped Against the SBC Model**



In the SBC framework, each factor is also related to appropriate interventions for that factor. When examining this data against the framework, the following intervention examples can be explored for each part of the framework:

**Figure 4.9: Key Potential Interventions Mapped onto the SBC Model**



### Multi-sectoral Plan

Finally, these two frameworks were used to develop a Multi-sectoral Plan to address the key drivers that complements the outcomes and outputs in the National Action Plan. To do this, we present the data using the INSPIRE framework (see Table 4.2) – a compilation of interventions that are proven or highly likely to prevent violence against children (also showing factors such as child marriage which increase children’s vulnerabilities to violence) developed by the WHO, UNICEF, CDC, Together for Girls, PEPFAR and other stakeholders (WHO, 2016). This Multi-sectoral Plan was discussed and enhanced at the validation meeting for the study. At this meeting, groups identified key institutions involved in implementing programmes and interventions nationally including: 1) the Ministry of Education, 2) the Ministry of Social Development, 3) the Ministry of Youth, 4) the Ministry of Labour, 5) the Vocational Training Corporation, 6) the Development and Employment Fund, 7) the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places, 8) Civil Society Organisations, 9) Private sector (social societies), 10) International organisations, and 11) the Ministry of Health. The multi-sectoral action plan has been developed based on the results of the study and cross checked and validated with the existing national plan of action developed by the Prime Minister’s Office to ensure that all interventions have been taken into consideration.

The role of these institutions was further clarified in terms of their work on reducing child marriages:

1. Ministry of Social Development: Raising awareness about the dangers of Child Marriage
2. The Information and Research Centre: Undertaking research studies for health and social campaigns
3. National Aid Fund: Training and qualifying and continuing operations
4. Ministry Agency of Civil Affairs: Continuing discussions with all parties involved in Child Marriage

5. Protection of the Humanitarian Forum on Women's Rights: Promoting constitutional and legislative awareness
6. National Centre for Human Rights: Studying the constitution for all elements relating to Child Marriage, and monitoring complaints.
7. Jordanian's Women's Union: Organising awareness lectures and programmes involving men.

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