Risk estimations

Accurate estimations of the number of girls at risk are required to effectively tackle Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). EIGE estimates the number of girls at risk in different EU countries and provides tailor-made recommendations to help countries eradicate the practice.

Estimation of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in the European Union - Austria, Denmark, Luxembourg and Spain

EIGE is estimating the number of girls at risk of Female Genital Mutilation in Austria, Denmark, Luxembourg and Spain. You can find more information about the study here.

Estimation of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in the European Union - Belgium, Greece, France, Italy, Cyprus and Malta

This research built upon EIGE’s 2015 study estimating girls at risk of female genital mutilation in Ireland, Portugal and Sweden. EIGE’s risk estimation methodology was applied in a further six countries: Belgium, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy and Malta. This research provides comparable data and the assessment of trends within the EU.

The study supports the European institutions and EU Member States in providing more accurate qualitative and quantitative information on female genital mutilation and its risk among girls within the EU, taking into account new patterns of migration.

The research provides recommendations for improving or updating the methodology for risk estimation and contributes to more effective polices and services to prevent female genital mutilation and protect girls at risk.
Main outcomes

- Increased knowledge of recent developments in policy, legislation and research on the prevalence and risk of female genital mutilation in EU Member States;
- Better information for Member States on the potential numbers of girls at risk of female genital mutilation and of the effectiveness of measures to combat this harmful practice;
- Increased capacity of Member States to prevent female genital mutilation and protect girls at risk;
- Increased capacity of Member States to carry out independent and regular risk estimations using EIGE’s methodology;
- Promoting exchange of experiences and cooperation between Member States to reduce the risk of female genital mutilation.

The research was conducted in 2017.

Main findings

- In 2016:
  - In Belgium, 16 % to 27 % of girls were at risk of FGM out of 22 544 girls originating from countries where FGM is practised.
  - In Cyprus, 12 % to 17 % of girls were at risk of FGM out of 758 girls originating from...
In France, 12 % to 21 % of girls were at risk of FGM out of 205 683 girls originating from countries where FGM is practised.

In Greece, 25 % to 42 % of girls were at risk of FGM out of 1 787 girls originating from countries where FGM is practised.

In Italy, 15 % to 24 % of girls were at risk of FGM out of 76 040 girls originating from countries where FGM is practised.

In Malta, 39 % to 57 % of girls were at risk of FGM out of 486 girls originating from countries where FGM is practised.
Main report

The study shows that strong laws and anti-FGM campaigns are powerful deterrent factors when it comes to FGM. Discouraging factors also include awareness-raising about negative health consequences and the reality of being stigmatised.

On the contrary, push factors for performing FGM include traditional views on women’s sexuality, purity and aesthetics. The results also revealed that more than a religious requirement, FGM is rooted in traditions and cultural beliefs.

Law enforcement is essential so that those responsible for the crime, committed either in the EU or abroad, can be prosecuted. The involvement of FGM-practising communities is crucial to ensure the success of efforts to end the practice. The idea that FGM is a private matter leads to a reluctance to discuss it. A grass-roots approach will enable changes through engagement, education and awareness-raising.

Download the full report here

Step-by-step guide
Based on the outcomes of this study, EIGE also developed the second edition of a Step-by-step guide: Estimation of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in the European Union, first published in 2015. It sets out the minimum requirements for estimating FGM risk, as well as suggestions to enhance the quality and accuracy of the assessment. The guide aims to be a practical support for those appointed to the task to estimate the risk of FGM in a region or a country within the EU. At the same time, by offering a common methodological framework to estimate FGM risk in the EU, EIGE wants to contribute to the production of comparable and up-to-date data across EU Member States.

Estimation of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in the European Union

EIGE’s study focused on the estimation of the number of women and girls at risk of FGM in selected EU Member States. Estimating the number of girls living in the EU at risk of being subjected to FGM poses several challenges. Therefore the main objective of the research was to develop a methodological approach to be used in all EU Member States, so that countries can better design policies to combat FGM and support those at risk of being (or who have already been) subjected to the practice.

Specifically, this study strove to:

- Analyse and assess the methodological options for FGM risk estimation described and applied in the existing literature and studies;
- Propose a methodology that can be used to estimate the number of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in EU Member States.

A methodology to estimate FGM risk in the EU was developed and tested in Ireland, Portugal and Sweden. These Member States were selected based on various criteria, such as having a national action plan and a specific law to prosecute FGM, and creating FGM-specific records in different settings like healthcare, child protection, asylum, and immigration and border services. The study was published in June 2015.

Main findings

- Estimating the number of girls at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation in EU Member
Estimating the number of girls at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation in EU Member States is very complex owing to the intimate nature of the practice, and also due to the unavailability of data that allows for its measurement.

- In 2011:
  - In Ireland, 1 to 11 % of the 14,577 girls originating from FGM risk countries were likely to be at risk of FGM.
  - In Portugal, 5 to 23 % of 5,835 girls originating from FGM risk countries were likely to be at risk of FGM.
  - In Sweden, 3 to 19 % of 59,409 girls originating from FGM risk countries were likely to be at risk of FGM.

**Percentages of girls (aged 0-18) likely to be at risk of FGM in 2011 in Ireland, Portugal and Sweden:**

- More qualitative research is needed to gather insights about the influence of migration and acculturation on attitudes and behaviours towards female genital mutilation.
- Awareness-raising initiatives and the legal framework forbidding female genital mutilation seem to effectively prevent the continuation of the practice in EU Member States. They need to be maintained in order to influence migrants’ attitudes and behaviours towards female genital mutilation.
- Specialised services need to be established or continued in order to sufficiently respond to the needs of girls at risk of undergoing, or having undergone FGM. Risk assessment procedures are crucial for detecting individual cases where risk exists.
- Sufficient resources (human and financial) need to be considered when designing policies and funding programmes so that prevention measures can be continued, specialised services can be set up and/or maintained, professionals can be adequately trained, and necessary research on female genital mutilation can be undertaken.
- Considering the uncertainties and challenges that FGM risk estimations encounter, the research results need to be interpreted and communicated with caution, in order to avoid...
the misuse of data and information, as well as the stigmatisation of migrant communities.

Gaps in data collection

- Considering that FGM prevalence varies significantly between regions within the countries where it is commonly practised, data on the region of origin of the female migrant population (residents, asylum seekers, refugees and irregular migrants) collected in an EU Member State could exponentially enhance the accuracy of FGM risk estimations.

- FGM risk needs to be estimated regularly so that trends can be assessed. Countries that have a population register can carry out FGM risk (and prevalence) estimations more frequently than those that only have census data. Despite the disadvantages of using census data, this is currently the only source of information that ensures comparability of data across EU Member States.

Download the study report here

Metadata

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