

IMPACT OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION
ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE
RIGHTS AND PRACTICES OF WOMEN
IN SIERRA LEONE

A CONSULTANCY REPORT
FOR STATISTICS SIERRA LEONE

BY

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SECTION 1 : INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Female genital mutilation (FGM), also called female genital cutting, refers to the removal of all or part of the female genitalia. FGM remains widespread in many developing countries, and has spread to other parts of the world, such as Europe and North America, where some immigrant families have now settled.

In Sierra Leone FGM is usually regarded as a traditional practice which forms part of the initiation rites into the Bundo or Sande secret society, it has attracted assumed considerable business and political overtone in recent years. Local practitioners, called "Soweis", who have made a profession out of the practice, and is a source of income for them, argue that it is part of their culture. Local chiefs also benefit financially as the circumcisers pay a fee to the village chief for every initiation that is practised.

The practice has also received considerable attention from politicians. Some have used the practice to win popular support by meeting the entire cost of a mass initiation ceremony, or by refurbishing and modernizing the "bundo bush" in particular constituencies. In addition, other politicians who have failed in their quest for political office have ascribed their defeat in elections to popular perceptions that they were against female circumcision and would ban the practice.

FGM has been regarded by many advocates and supporters as part of their tradition, and repeated generations of women have been conditioned from childhood to uphold "the tradition".

However internationally, FGM is recognised as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. Both UNFPA and UNICEF, through a joint programme launched in 2007, are working to put an end to this persistent violation of the human rights of girls and women in this generation. The government of Sierra Leone and the World Health Organization are working to put a stop to FGM, but limited resources and the lack of political will on the part of Government, have yielded limited success, principally because it remains popular with most women in Sierra Leone.

The debate on whether to stop FGM has taken on a more public orientation in recent years with the formation of a number of Non-governmental organisations dedicated to the protection of the rights of women and children. Advocates and supporters of FGM have emphasized that

its value, and the justification for its continuation, are based on the premise that it is part of the culture of the people who practice it. Opponents of the practice, who would like to see its complete eradication, have emphasized the adverse medical and health consequences, both during the ceremony, immediately after the ceremony, and in the long term, that the surgery has for the girls.

Both internationally, and in Sierra Leone, the arguments for banning the practice have been largely based on health and medical grounds. Many studies around the world have shown that FGM has no health benefits, and that it harms girls and women in many ways. It involves removing and damaging healthy and normal female genital tissue, and interferes with the natural functions of girls' and women's bodies. It therefore has many immediate complications, and long term consequences, for the circumcised woman.

In Sierra Leone, much of the discourse on the merits or demerits of FGM, both in print and on the Web, has centred around its relevance in a modern Sierra Leone, in the face of the well documented health and medical hazards posed for the girls. Much of this argument has been subjective, sometimes emotional, but based on personal experiences, relying on anecdotal evidence, but devoid of any hard statistical evidence.

The more demographic and sociological aspects of the practice on the girls and their communities have received little attention. For example, the possible impact of which the practice has on the sexual and reproductive rights, practices and performances of women has never been examined in a systematic and scientific way.

One of the few major studies of FGM in Sierra Leone was by Olayinka Koso-Thomas (1987), in her book "The Circumcision of Women: A Strategy For Eradication", in which she provided a comprehensive analysis of the results of a survey of 300 women in the Western Area of Sierra Leone to identify the prevalence of female circumcision and consequent health hazards, and recommended a strategy for the eradication of the practice. While this study analysed, in detail, the traditions and health hazards of the practice, it did not cover the possible impact which the practice has on the immediate sexual and reproductive performance of the girls, and the implications for the violation or protection of their rights. The study was also limited to the Western Area. There is therefore a need for more evidence based research into FGM in Sierra Leone

2. SOURCE OF DATA : THE 2008 DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEY (SLDHS)

Until recently, public reluctance, and sometimes hostility, in discussing any aspect of the practice, has impeded any serious large scale national research on the impact of the practice on the lives of the circumcised. However the Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey, which was conducted in 2008, collected data from a nationally representative sample of women aged 15 to 49 years, and men aged 15 to 59 years, on a wide variety of demographic and health indicators, including female circumcision.

The SLDHS collected data on the practice of female circumcision in Sierra Leone.

The Women's Questionnaire included a series of questions on female circumcision.

All female respondents were asked whether they had heard of the Bondo, Sande, or other secret societies, or female circumcision. Women who had heard of a secret society or female circumcision, were asked whether they had been initiated/circumcised. Those who had been circumcised were asked what age they were at the time of circumcision, what type of circumcision was performed, who performed the operation, and a series of questions about their opinions regarding the practice.

Respondents were asked whether they had a daughter who was circumcised and, if so, the type of circumcision and age at circumcision of the daughter. Both women and men were asked about the perceived benefits of girls undergoing female circumcision and whether they thought that the practice was required by their religion.(July 2009 : SLDHS Report: 255 : 2-3)

For the purposes of this Study, the 2008 SLDHS dataset files, which are available in the standard recode SPSS and CPro file formats, were obtained from MEASURE DHS in the United States. There are 10 dataset recode files. For this Study data from two of these files are utilized. They are:

- i. **Individual Woman's Data** – Individual Recode (IR), which contains one record for every eligible woman as defined by the household schedule. It contains all the data collected in the woman's questionnaire plus some variables from the household questionnaire.

- ii. **Man's Data** – It has one record for every eligible man as defined by the household schedule. It contains all the data collected in the man's questionnaire plus some variables from the household. The unit of analysis in this file is the man.

3. METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Data from these two files, in SPSS format, provide the basis for the analysis of various characteristics of the circumcision status and opinions of women and men. The Individual Woman's file has the variable "respondent circumcised". Various other variables, relevant for the study, are then cross tabulated by the "respondent circumcised", thus facilitating the analysis of various characteristics of women, and a comparison of the characteristics of "circumcised women" and "non-circumcised women".

Data from the Individual Man's file are analysed to determine various aspects of male attitudes to female circumcision.

The statistical tables are shown in Appendix A.

Where it was considered appropriate, data from a recent study on "The Determinants and Consequences of Teenage Pregnancy and Motherhood in Sierra Leone" (Thomas 2010 : for UNFPA) which involved a series of focus group discussions on teenage pregnancy, and included topics on female circumcision, have been incorporated into this analysis to provide explanation for some of its findings.

SECTION 2 : ANALYSIS OF DATA

1. REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

As Table 1 and Figure 1 show, FGM is widespread in Sierra Leone. For the country as a whole, 90.9 percent of females aged 15 to 49 years were circumcised, and 9.1 percent were not circumcised. This pattern is replicated in the Eastern, Northern and Southern Regions, where over 90.0 percent of women are circumcised; the highest percentage, 97.8 percent, is in the Northern Region. The Western Region, however, has the lowest proportion of circumcised women, 79.2 percent.

At District level, the highest proportion of circumcised women are in the districts of the Northern Region; namely Kambia District (99.7 percent), Koinadugu District (98.5 percent), Bombali District (98.0 percent) and Port Loko District (97.1 percent). In contrast, the lowest proportions are in Western Area Urban (77.8 percent), and Western Area Rural (83.6 percent).

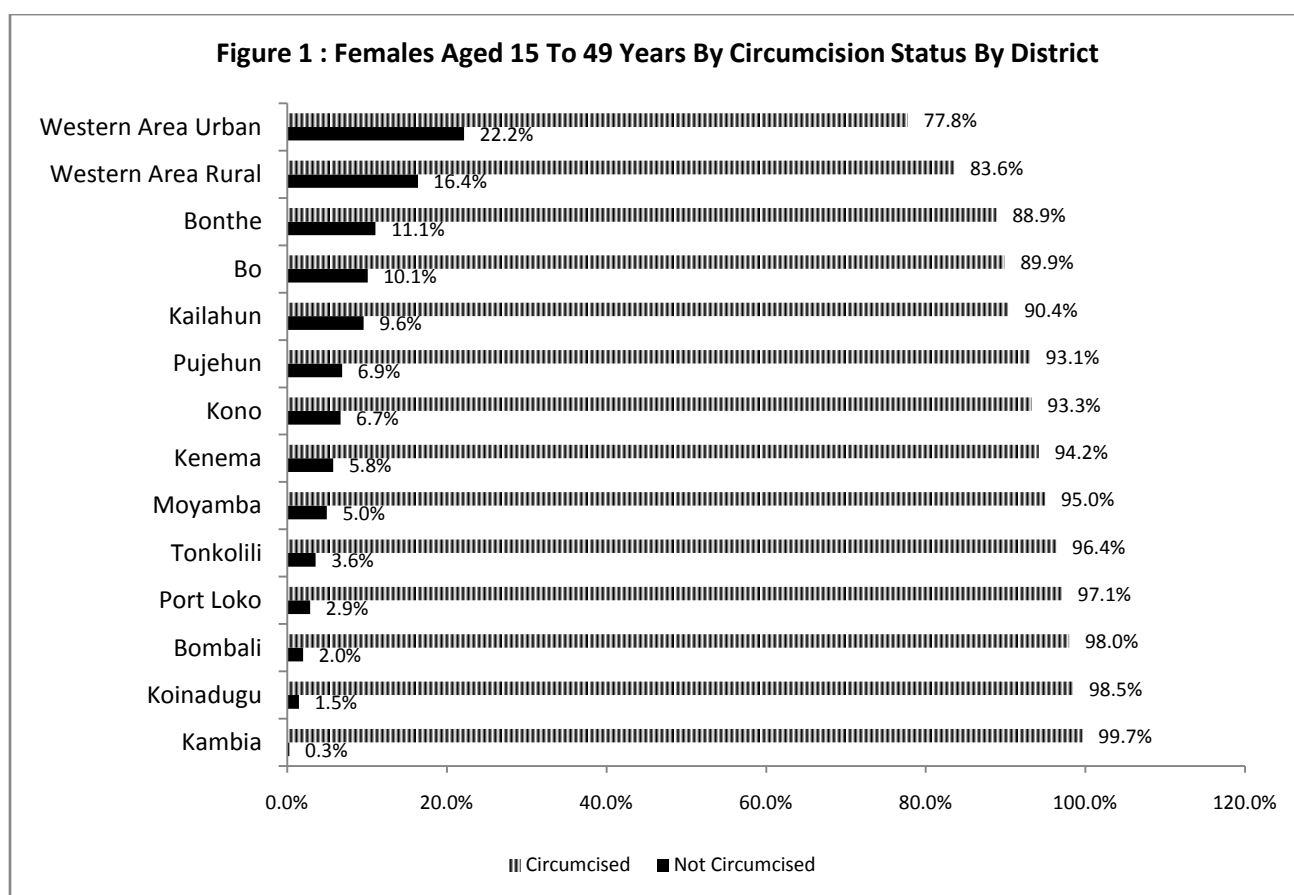


Table 2 indicates that circumcision is more prevalent in rural localities (95.8 percent) than in urban localities (84.5 percent). The figures also show that the proportion of circumcised women declines with higher levels of urbanisation, from 89.7 percent in “Towns”, to 87.7 percent in “Small City”, and to 77.8 percent in Freetown.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF CIRCUMCISION

a. Awareness Of Female Circumcision

Table 3 shows that almost all women have heard about female circumcision. However, 6.5 percent of non-circumcised women, and 0.2 percent of circumcised women, disclaimed any knowledge of the practice, a possible reflection of their refusal to talk about it.

b. Types Of Female Circumcision

Three main types of FGM are practised throughout the world : Type I or Sunna circumcision, Type II or excision, and Type III or infibulation.

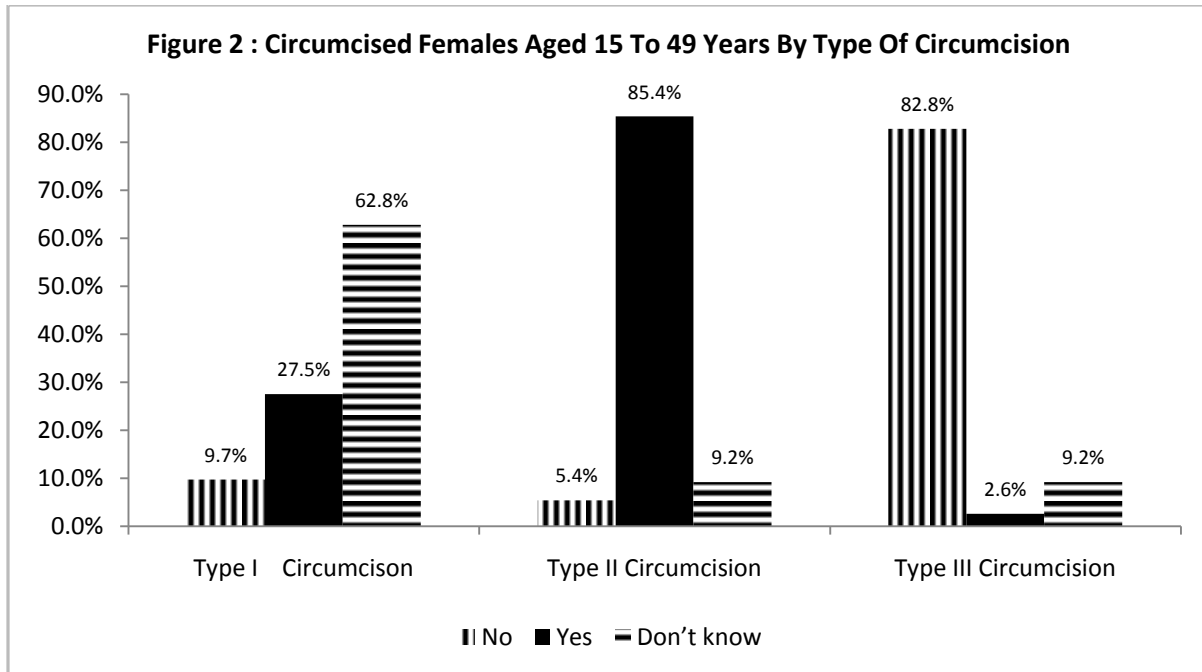
Type I or clitoridectomy involves the removal of the prepuce with or without the excision of part or all of the clitoris.

Type II or excision, involves the partial or entire removal of the clitoris, as well as the scraping off of the labia majora and labia minora.

Type III or infibulation, is the most drastic form of FGM, and consists of the removal of the clitoris, the adjacent labia (majora and minora), and the joining of the scraped sides of the vulva across the vagina, where they are secured with thorns or sewn with catgut or thread. A small opening is kept to allow passage of urine and menstrual blood. An infibulated woman must be cut open to allow intercourse on the wedding night and is closed again afterwards to secure fidelity to the husband.

i. Prevalence In Sierra Leone

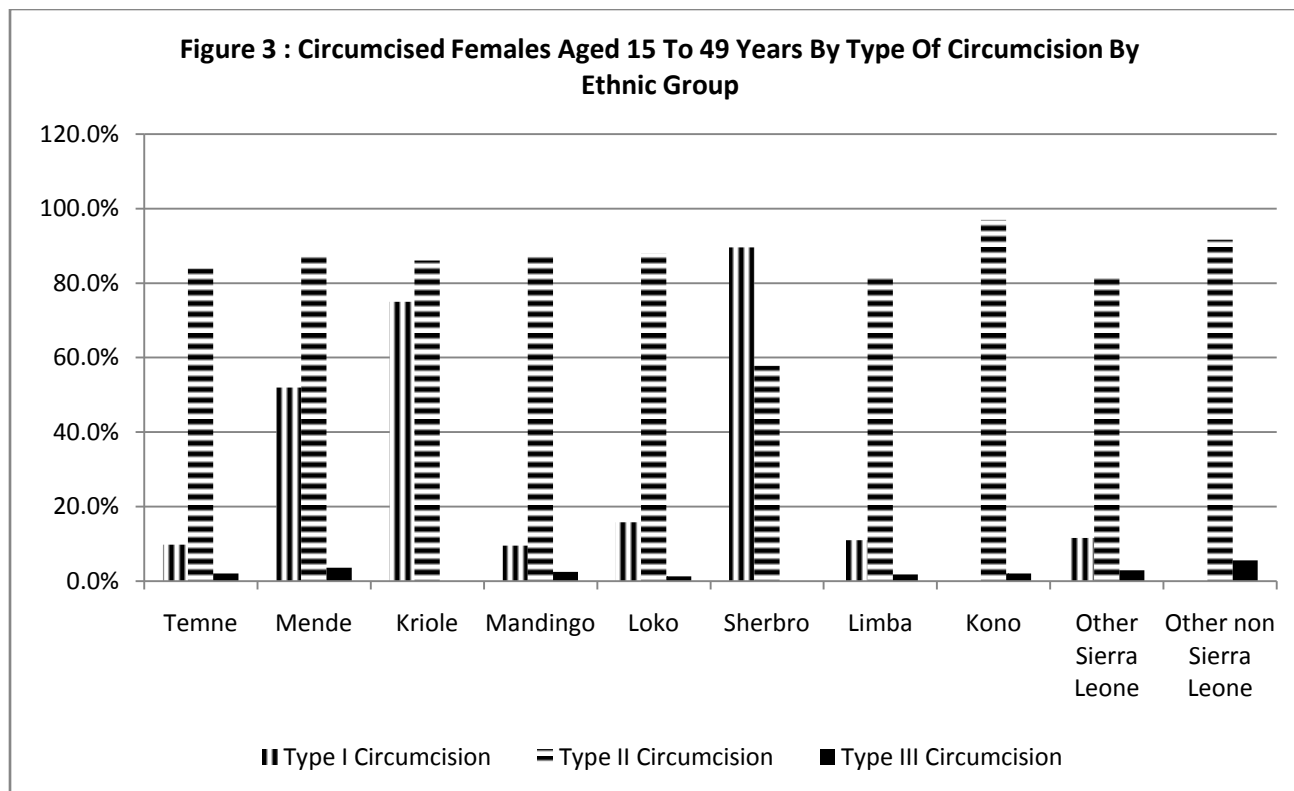
Table 4 and Figure 2 indicate that women in Sierra Leone have been affected by all three types of circumcision. Type II is the most widespread, reported by 85.4 percent of females, followed by Type I (27.5 percent), and Type III (2.6 percent).



The figures also indicate that many women did not know what type of circumcision they were put through. This lack of awareness is highest for Type I (62.8 percent), but much lower for Type II (9.2 percent), and Type III (14.6 percent). One possible reason for this lack of awareness is that the majority of these women were too young when they were circumcised to comprehend what was done to them, and subsequently, were never informed of the type of circumcision they had. It is also possible that many women may have feigned ignorance because they do not want to talk about the practice.

ii. Differences By Ethnic Group

Variations in type of circumcision by ethnic group, in Table 5 and Figure 3, show a number of interesting features.



On the whole Type II circumcision is the most popular form amongst all ethnic groups in Sierra Leone; at least 82.0 percent of women of each ethnic groups, except Sherbro (57.8 percent), had a Type II circumcision.

Type I circumcision was reported by the majority of Sherbro (89.6 percent), Kriole (75.0 percent) and Mende (52.0 percent). However, fewer than 16.0 percent of Temne, Mandingo, Loko, and Limba had a Type I circumcision.

Type III circumcision is relatively rare, affecting less than 5.0 percent of females of any ethnic group.

The figures reveal a number of inconsistencies in the reporting of the extent of Type I and Type II amongst some ethnic groups. The majority of Mende, Kriole and Sherbro women reported both Type I and Type II forms. One possible explanation for these unlikely contradictions is that the same ethnic group, in different parts of the country, may practise different forms of circumcision. Another likely explanation is that many women were circumcised when they were too young to be aware of the type of circumcision they had. A third reason may be that they were simply averse to answering questions on the practice.

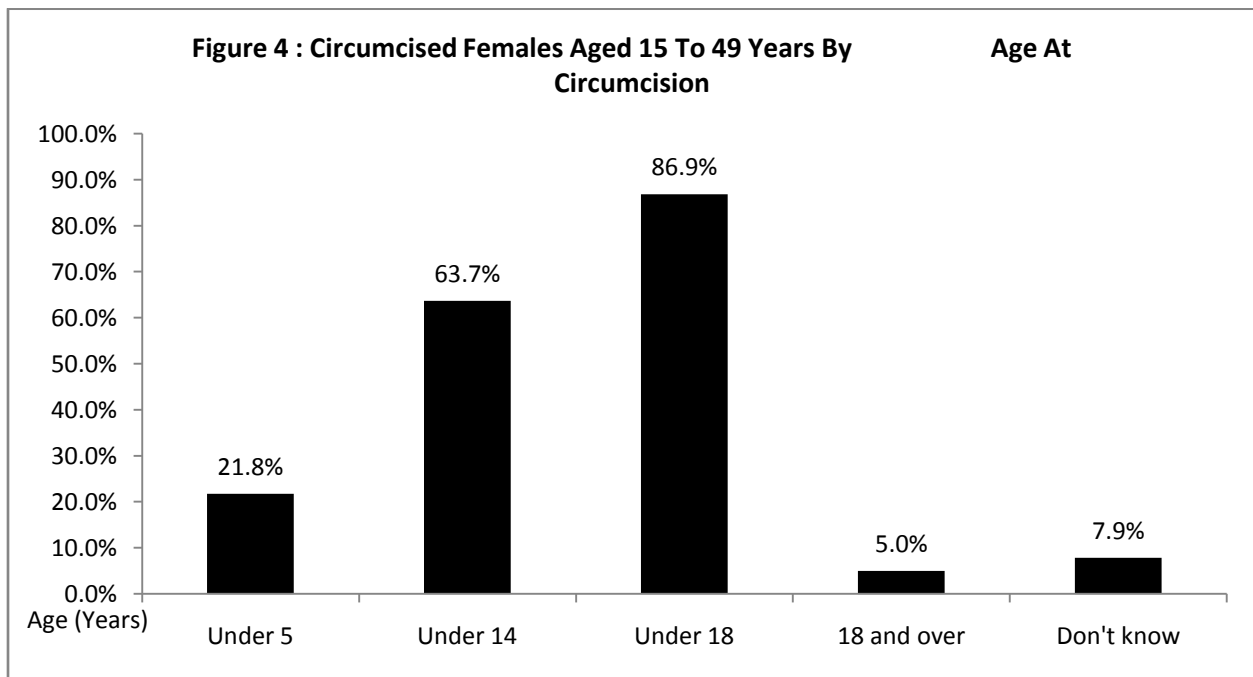
The relatively high percentages of women of all ethnic groups who reported “don’t know”, especially for Type I, but also for Types II and III, suggest either a lack of knowledge, or an unwillingness, to give correct responses. Neither factor is peculiar to any ethnic group.

c. Age At Circumcision

Advocates and supporters of FGM claim that circumcision is a traditional rite of passage of young girls to womanhood. But the single year age data in Table 6 indicate that for 20.7 percent of circumcised women, the cutting was done “at infancy”.

i. All Women

The grouped data on age at circumcision, in Table 6 and Figure 4, show that girls are circumcised at relatively young ages; 21.8 percent were circumcised at ages under 5 years, the majority at infancy (Figure 4). On the other hand, 63.7 percent were circumcised at ages under 14 years, and 86.9 percent at ages under 18 years. All of these practices would be illegal under Section 46 (1) of the 2007 Child Rights Act which makes it illegal to involve a child, defined as a person aged under 18 years, in any initiation ceremony.



ii. Differences By Ethnic Group

The single year data on age at circumcision by ethnic group, in Table 7, reveal that all the major ethnic groups circumcise children at infancy. Circumcision at infancy is most prevalent amongst Temne (27.6 percent), Loko (23.2 percent), and Limba (21.1 percent), and lowest amongst Kriole (8.6 percent).

The grouped age data in Table 8 further show that 28.9 percent of Temne, 25.3 percent of Loko, and 23.1 percent of Limba girls were circumcised at ages under 5 years. The lowest prevalence is amongst Kono (11.6 percent), Kriole (14.3 percent), and Mende (16.1 percent).

The figures also show that, for each ethnic group, except for Sherbro (31.8 percent), and Mende (35.5 percent), 40.0 percent or more of girls were circumcised at ages under 14 years. The highest rates were amongst Kono (61.0 percent), Mandingo (50.3 percent), and Loko (49.1 percent). By age 18 years, 80 percent or more of girls of all ethnic groups had been circumcised. This is in contravention of the 2007 Child Rights Act, which makes it illegal to involve a child under 18 years in any initiation ceremony.

iii. Differences By Level Of Education

The level of education of the woman appears to be related to the age at circumcision. This is shown in Table 9.

The percentage of girls who were circumcised at ages under 5 years declines from 24.2 percent for “no education” to 10.9 percent for “higher education”, while the percentage circumcised at ages under 14 years declines from 65.3 percent for “no education” to 51.6 percent for “higher education”. There is a similar decline for girls circumcised at ages under 18 years, from 86.9 percent for “no education” to 77.7 percent for “higher education”.

However, the figures do not permit an analysis of the causal relationship between age at circumcision and level of education. One possible explanation is that as girls become better educated the willingness to be circumcised declines. It is also possible that early age circumcision of girls triggers other behaviours like early sex, early marriage, and early child birth, and ultimately early and premature dropping out of the school system.

d. Person Who Performed Circumcision

Almost all circumcision is done by traditional practitioners. Table 10 shows that 96.4 percent of girls were circumcised by a “traditional circumciser” (the soweis), whose methods do not include the use of either anaesthetic or analgesic drugs. Much smaller percentages were done by “traditional birth attendants” (0.4 percent), and other unidentified traditional practitioners (0.2 percent). Medical personnel, namely “trained nurse/midwife” and “doctor” circumcised 0.3 percent of girls.

Figures in Table 11 show that this pattern is consistent across all the major ethnic groups. Of some significance is that the highest proportion of circumcision by “trained nurse/midwife”, 2.9 percent, was performed amongst Krio.

e. Benefits Of Circumcision

The DHS asked all females, aged 15 to 49 years, “what benefits do girls themselves get if they are initiated/circumcised?”. They were given the following pre-coded benefits to respond to : “cleanliness/hygiene”, “social acceptance”, “better marriage prospects”, “preserve virginity/prevent premarital sex”, “more sexual pleasure for the man”, “religious approval”, any “other benefit”, and “no benefits”. The responses of these women are shown in Table 12.

i. All Women

• **Non-circumcised Women**

Each of the stated options was considered to be a benefit by only relatively small proportions of non-circumcised women. According to them, the two highest ranked benefits are “social acceptance”(14.7 percent), and “cleanliness/hygiene”(5.5 percent). Fewer than 5.0 percent agreed that any of the options is a benefit. The lowest ranked option, “more sexual pleasure for men”, is rated by 0.2 percent.

In contrast, 68.7 percent say that circumcision has “no benefit”, while only 19.4 percent acknowledged that “circumcision is required by religion”.

• **Circumcised Women**

Amongst circumcised women, only “social acceptance” is accepted as a benefit by the majority (57.9 percent). Each of the other options is regarded as a benefit by fewer than 23.0 percent of women. The lowest ranked benefits are “more sexual pleasure for men”(1.4 percent), “religious approval”(5.1 percent), “preserve virginity/prevent premarital sex”(9.1 percent).

In addition, only 11.1 percent state that circumcision has “other unspecified benefit”, 23.8 percent that it has “no benefit”, and 45.8 percent that “circumcision is required by religion”.

ii. Differences By Ethnic Group

The possible impact of ethnicity on perceptions of benefits is shown in Table 13A for non-circumcised women, and in Table 13B for circumcised women.

• **Non-circumcised Women**

Figures in Table 13A indicate that amongst these women, support for any of the perceived options is minimal or non-existent across all ethnic groups. Only two benefits were

acknowledged by 10.0 percent or more of different ethnic groups. These are, firstly, “cleanliness/hygiene” by 28.6 percent of Mandingo; and secondly, “social acceptance” by 18.8 percent of Temne, 20.8 percent of Mende, 14.3 percent of Mandingo, and 13.5 percent of Kono.

In addition, 10.0 percent or more of five ethnic groups namely Temne (10.4 percent), Mende (14.1 percent), Kriole (17.5 percent), Mandingo (14.3 percent), and Loko (14.3 percent), claim that circumcision has some “other unspecified benefits”.

In contrast, 90.0 percent, or more, of women of almost all ethnic groups did not agree that any of the options was a benefit of circumcision. The highest levels of rejection were for “better marriage prospects”, “preserves virginity/prevents premarital sex”, “more sexual pleasure for men”, and “religious approval”.

Also, 50.0 percent or more of women of each ethnic group, state that circumcision has “no benefit”. The highest proportions were amongst Temne (67.7 percent), Kriole (81.6 percent), Loko (76.2 percent), Sherbro (81.8 percent), Limba (85.7 percent), and Kono (81.1 percent),.

The figures further indicate that for each ethnic group, except Mende (45.8 percent), the majority of women reject the idea that “circumcision is required by religion”.

- Circumcised Women

Table 13B shows the responses of circumcised women on the benefits of circumcision. The figures indicate that 75.0 percent of women, of each ethnic group, reject five of the options as a benefit of circumcision. These are “cleanliness/hygiene”, “better marriage prospects”, “preserves virginity/prevents premarital sex”, “more sexual pleasure for men”, or “religious approval”. On the other hand, “social acceptance”, is the most widely acclaimed benefit; by 42.0 percent or more of each ethnic group, except Kriole (22.2 percent).

However, 52.3 percent or more of women of each ethnic group, except Kriole (38.9 percent) reject the idea that circumcision has “no benefit”. But between 19.6 percent Mende and 61.1 percent Kriole, agree that circumcision has “no benefit”.

In addition, the majority of Kriole (61.1percent), Loko (58.6 percent), Limba (55.2 percent), and Kono (60.9 percent) do not accept that “circumcision is required by religion”. But 40.0 percent or more of four ethnic groups claim that “circumcision is required by religion. They are Temne (41.8 percent), Mende (57.4 percent), Mandingo (47.4 percent), and Sherbro (53.4 percent).

iii. Differences By Level Of Education

The possible impact of the woman's level of education on her perceptions of the benefits of circumcision, is shown in Table 14A for Non-circumcised women, and in Table 14B for Circumcised women. For both non-circumcised and circumcised women, the level of education appears to have a strong influence on whether or not each of the options is considered as a benefit.

- **Non-circumcised Women**

Figures in Table 14A show that the percentage of women who reject each option, as a benefit, increases as their level of education rises from "no education" to "higher education". For example, as a benefit of circumcision, "cleanliness/hygiene", is accepted by 12.7 percent of women with "no education", but by 2.9 percent with "higher education". Next, "social acceptance" is reported as a benefit by 29.7 percent with "no education", 20.3 percent with "primary" education, and 10.3 percent with "secondary" education, but by 1.4 percent with "higher education". "Better marriage prospects" was reported as a benefit by 10.2 percent with "no education", and 1.4 percent with "higher education".

All other options, are considered as beneficial to the girls by fewer than 6.0 percent irrespective of their educational level.

In contrast, the percentage of females who consider that circumcision has "no benefit" increases from 50.0 percent for "no education" to 85.7 percent for "higher" education. The percentage of those who reject the idea that "circumcision is required by religion" increases from 38.0 percent for "no education" to 87.3 percent for "higher" education.

- **Circumcised Women**

Table 14B shows that, with the exception of "social acceptance", for each of the perceived benefits, the percentage of females who reject the option as a benefit is always higher than the percentage who accept it.

As with non-circumcised women, there is a general decline in levels of acceptance, as the level of educational attainment rises, of all but two options. For example, acknowledgement of "social acceptance" as a benefit declines from 64.3 percent for "no education" to 29.0 percent for "higher" education; "better marriage prospects" as a benefit declines from 23.0 percent for "no education" to 8.4 percent for "higher" education; "more sexual pleasure for men" declines from 1.5 percent for "no education" to 0.8 percent for "higher" education; and "religious approval" from 5.7 percent for "no education" to 1.5 percent for "higher" education.

Two other “benefits”, whose acceptance rate does not decline progressively with levels of educational attainment are “cleanliness/hygiene” and “preserves virginity/prevents premarital sex” . For each of these, there is a decline in acceptance from “no education” to “secondary” education, but an increase for “higher” education.

In contrast, the percentage of women who see “no benefit” in circumcision increases as the level of educational attainment rises, from 17.4 percent for “no education” to 51.9 percent for “higher” education. In addition, the percentage of women who do not accept that “circumcision is required by religion” increases from 34.1 percent for “no education” to 65.6 percent for “higher” education.

3. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF CIRCUMCISED WOMEN

Data from the 2008 DHS are available to analyse various demographic characteristics of women who were circumcised, and to make comparisons with women who were not circumcised.

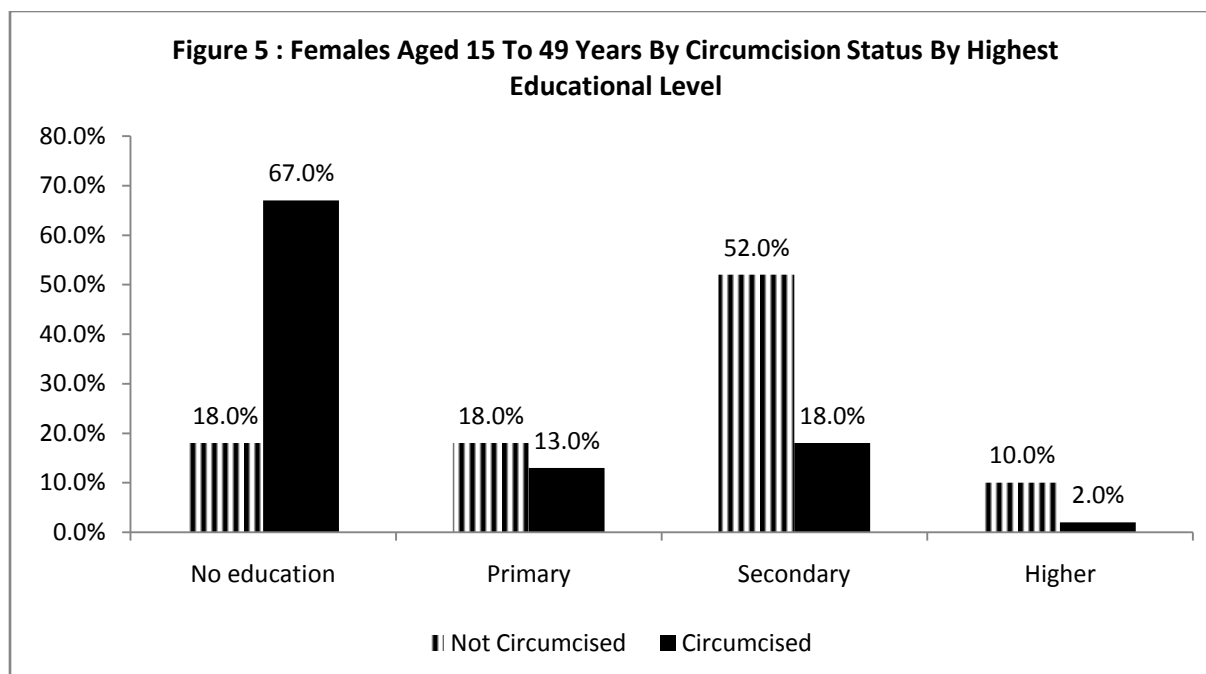
a. Current Age

Table 15 shows that circumcised women are fairly evenly distributed between the various ages 15 - 19 years, to 45 - 49 years. Only the two oldest age groups, 40 - 44 years and 45 - 49 years, have less than 10.0 percent of the population. All other age groups have between 14.5 percent and 21.5 percent of the total population. This is the consequence of the early age at which the majority of women were circumcised.

On the other hand, a greater percentage of non-circumcised women are relatively young; 49.5 percent are aged 15 – 19 years, with 21.1 percent at ages 20 – 24 years, and 11.4 percent at ages 25 – 29 years.

b. Levels Of Educational Attainment

Table 16 and Figure 5 show significant disparities in levels of education between circumcised women and non-circumcised women. In general, the circumcised women tend to be more poorly educated than non-circumcised women; 67.0 percent of circumcised women, compared to 18.0 percent of non-circumcised women, have “no education”.



In contrast, at all three levels of educational attainment, the percentage of circumcised women is lower than for non-circumcised women especially after primary level. For example, 13.0 percent of circumcised women, compared to 18.0 percent of non-circumcised women, attained primary level. At subsequent levels, the differences are even greater: 52.0 percent of non-circumcised women, compared to 18.0 percent of circumcised women, attained "secondary" level, while 10.0 percent of non-circumcised women, compared to only 2.0 percent of circumcised women, attained "higher" levels of education.

c. Religion

Table 17 shows that the majority of women of the two major religious groups, Christianity and Islam, have been circumcised, but there are significant differences between them: 94.9 percent of Islam women, compared to 79.8 percent of Christian women, were circumcised, while 5.1 percent of Islam women, compared to 20.2 percent of Christian women, were not circumcised.

d. Ethnicity

The majority of women of all the major ethnic groups, except Kriole, have been circumcised. Figures in Table 18 show that only 23.8 percent of Kriole are circumcised. In contrast, circumcised women constitute 80.0 percent or more of all other ethnic groups. The three highest levels of circumcision were amongst Mandingo (95.8 percent), Temne (95.3 percent), and Limba (92.4 percent).

e. Relationship To Head Of Household

Figures in Table 19 indicate sharp differences in the relationship which circumcised women, and non-circumcised, women have with the head of the household. For example, 58.2 percent of circumcised women, compared to 20.5 percent of non-circumcised women, is a “wife”. This difference is consistent with their relative distributions by marital status; marriage is more widespread amongst circumcised women than non-circumcised women.

In contrast, only 14.8 percent of circumcised women, compared to 44.7 percent of non-circumcised women, is a “daughter”. Another significant difference is that 10.2 percent of circumcised women, compared to 4.7 percent of non-circumcised women, is a “head” of household.

f. Wealth Status

Figures in Table 20 show that the majority of females have been circumcised, irrespective of the wealth status of the household,. However, the proportion of circumcised women declines consistently from 96.1 percent for the poorest quintile to 80.7 percent for the richest quintile.

g. Marital Status

Table 21 shows that marriage is more widespread amongst circumcised women than non-circumcised women. The majority of circumcised women have been married; 77.7 percent are either “currently married”, or “living together” with a man. On the other hand, while only 28.0 percent of non-circumcised women are “currently married”, or “living together” with a man.

Only 15.8 percent of circumcised women, compared to 68.8 percent of non-circumcised women, have never married.

In addition, there are more widows amongst circumcised women (2.9 percent), than amongst non-circumcised women (0.8 percent). This is consistent with two other aspects of their marital status; not only is marriage more widespread amongst circumcised women, but they also tend to have partners who are much older, than do non-circumcised women.

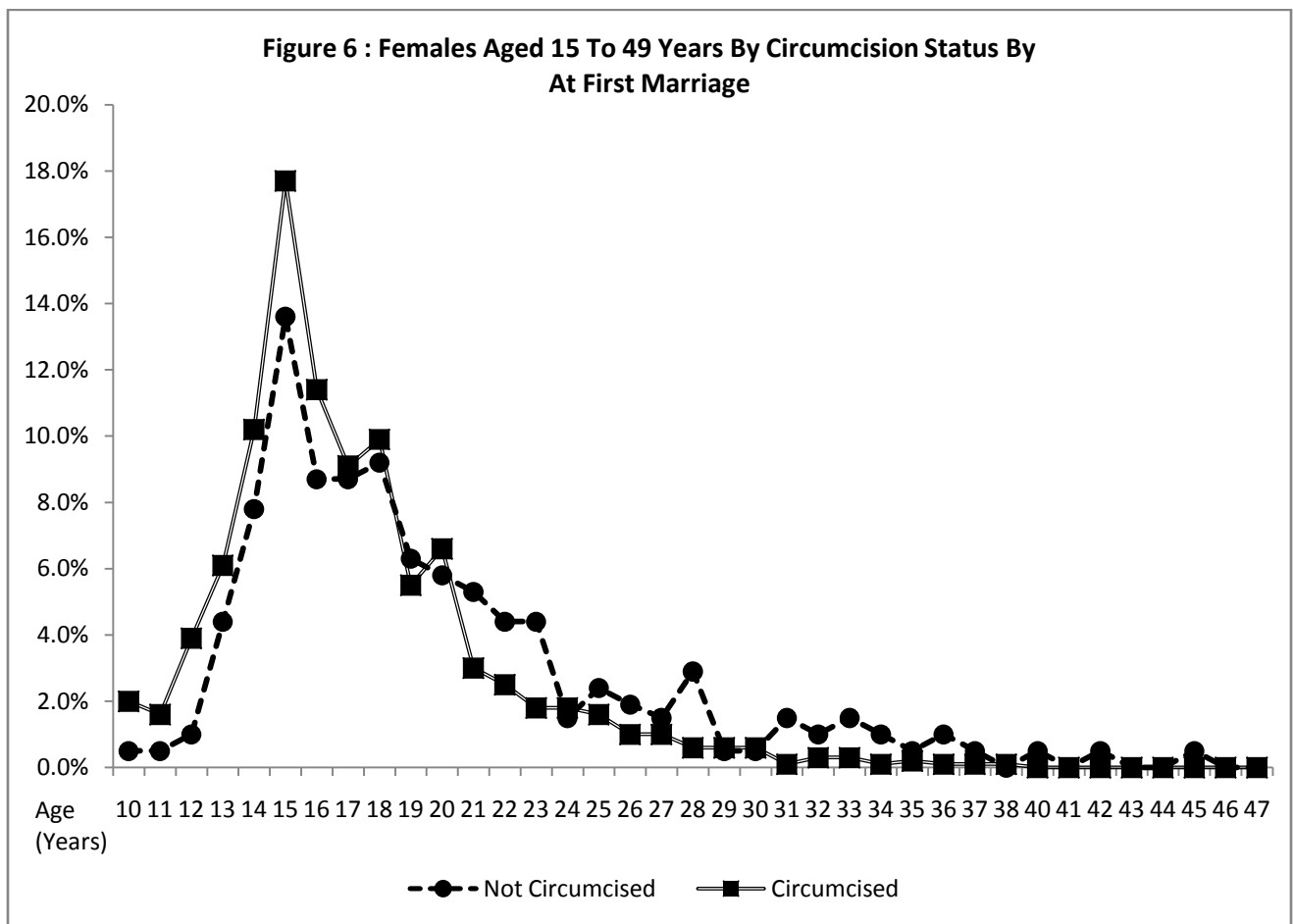
Figures on “number of unions” in Table 21 indicate that circumcised women have more multiple marital unions than non-circumcised women: 76.0 percent of circumcised women, compared to 86.3 percent of non-circumcised women, have had only one union. However, 20.0 percent of circumcised women, and 13.7 percent of non-circumcised women have had more than one marital union. These differences are consistent with rates of marriage, and

dissolution of marriage, especially through widowhood, which are higher amongst circumcised women.

The figures on “number of other wives” show that the incidence of polygamy is higher for circumcised women than for non-circumcised women: 63.9 percent of circumcised women, compared to 84.2 percent of non-circumcised women, do not have a co-wife. On the other hand, 25.9 percent of circumcised women, and 12.0 percent of non-circumcised women, have at least one co-wife, and 8.5 percent of circumcised women, compared to only 1.6 percent of non-circumcised women, have two or more co-wives.

h. Age At First Marriage

The single year data on age at first marriage in Table 22 and Figure 6 show that many girls, especially those who are circumcised, enter into marriage at relatively early ages, some as early as 10 years.



The data also show that at every age up to 18 years, the percentage of circumcised women who are married is always higher than the percentage of non-circumcised women.

The grouped data in the Table further show that 13.0 percent of circumcised women, and 6.0 percent of non-circumcised women, were married at ages under 14 years. In addition, 62.0 percent of circumcised women, compared to 45.2 percent of non-circumcised women, were married at ages under 18 years.

Although widespread, marrying children at these young ages has been rendered illegal by two legislations which provide protection against sexual abuse and early or forced marriage for the girl-child. The Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act of 1926 criminalises sexual intercourse with any girl under age 14 years, and the Child Rights Act of 2007 makes it illegal to marry a child aged under 18 years, whether she is willing or not.

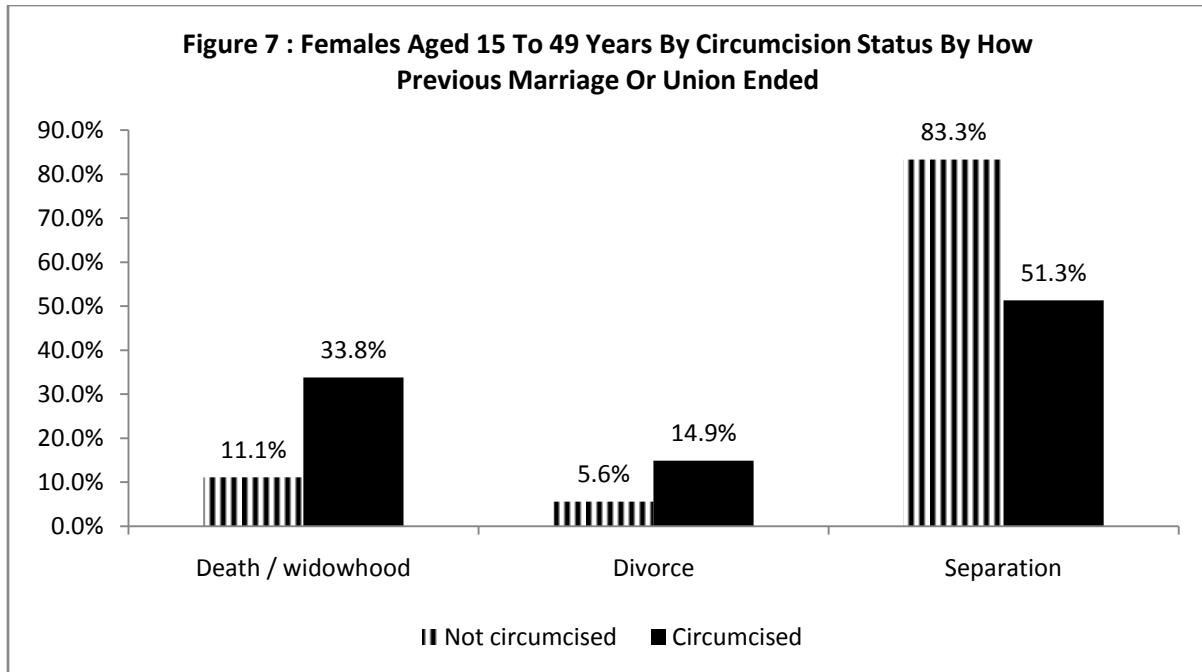
i. Partner's Age

There are also interesting differences in the ages of partners of women according to their circumcision status. This is seen in Table 23. In general, 45.0 percent of circumcised women, and 61.7 percent of non-circumcised women, have partners who are younger than 40 years. On the other hand, 55.0 percent of circumcised women, compared to 38.3 percent of non-circumcised women, have a partner who is 40 years and over.

The greater disparities in age between circumcised women and their partners provide some explanation for the higher incidence of widowhood they experience, in comparison with non-circumcised women.

j. How Previous Marriage Or Union Ended

The data in Table 24 and Figure 7 show significant differences, between circumcised and non-circumcised women, in how their marriage or marital union ended.

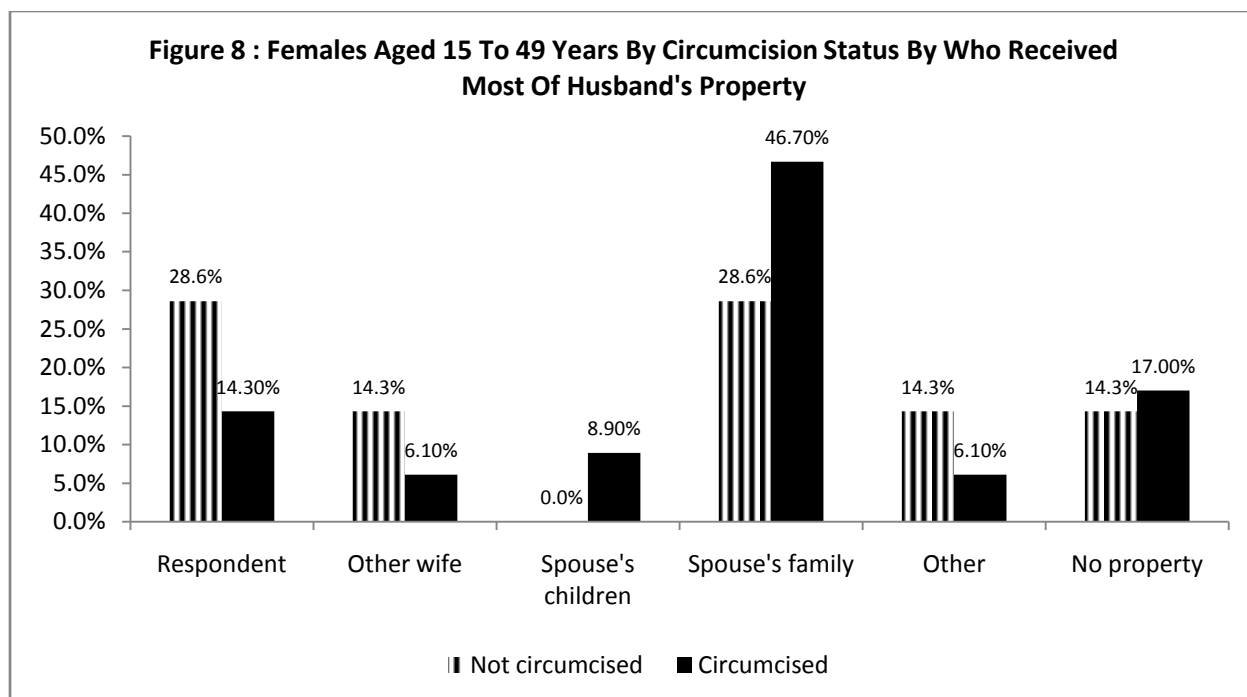


“Death of the husband/spouse” ended the union of 33.8 percent of circumcised women, but only 11.1 percent of non-circumcised women. This is consistent with the relative age differences with their partners; circumcised women consistently have much older partners than non-circumcised women.

In contrast, 5.6 percent of circumcised women, and 14.9 percent of non-circumcised women, were divorced. This factor, together with the higher levels of widowhood, are consistent with the prevalence of multiple marital unions, which is higher amongst circumcised women than non-circumcised women.

k. Inheritance Of Late Husband’s Property

Table 24 and Figure 8 also show that there are significant differences between circumcised women and non-circumcised women in the inheritance of the husband’s property after his demise.



Although the numbers of non-circumcised widows are relatively small, they show that a greater percentage of non-circumcised widows (42.9 percent), than circumcised widows (20.4 percent), inherited the husband's property. In contrast, for 46.7 percent of circumcised widows and 14.3 percent of non-circumcised widows, it was the "spouse's family" who inherited the property of the husband. In addition, 12.1 percent of circumcised widows, compared to 20.0 percent of non-circumcised widows, received "any part of the late husband's assets or valuables".

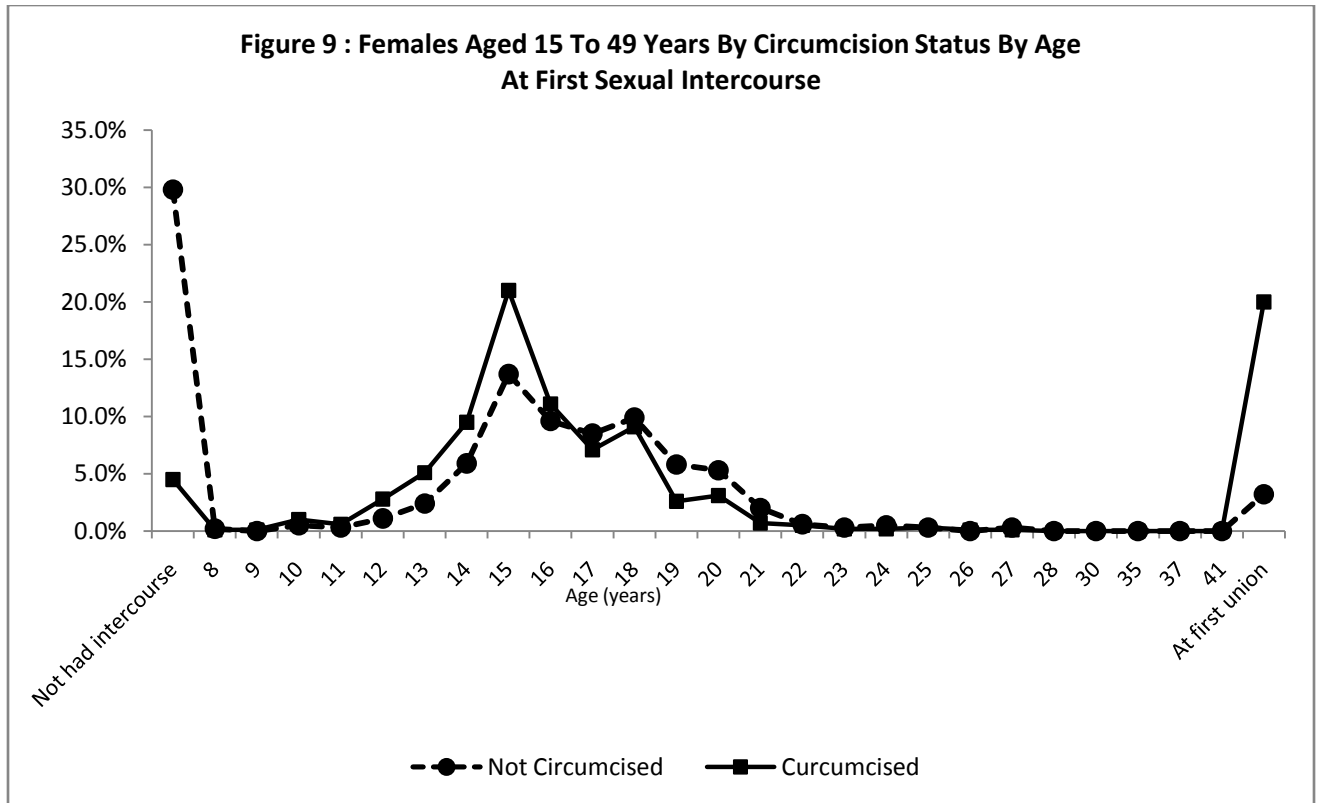
These findings are consistent with other social and cultural practices which this study has analysed, and which imply that traditional norms and practices have greater influences on the lives of circumcised women than on non-circumcised women.

4. SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF CIRCUMCISED WOMEN

The 2008 DHS Data provide data that permit analysis of some of the sexual and reproductive characteristics of women who are circumcised, in comparison with women who are not circumcised. These characteristics include the age at first sexual intercourse, the age of her first and last sexual partners, age at first birth, and knowledge and use of contraceptive methods.

a. Age At First Sexual Intercourse

According to the single-year age data in Table 25 and Figure 9, girls commence sexual intercourse at relatively early ages. However, there are significant differences between circumcised women and non-circumcised women.



Firstly, at the time of the survey, only 4.5 percent of circumcised women aged 15 to 49 years, had “not had intercourse”; compared to 29.8 percent of non-circumcised women. At every age up to 16 years, the percentage of circumcised women, who commenced sexual intercourse, was always higher than the percentage of non-circumcised women

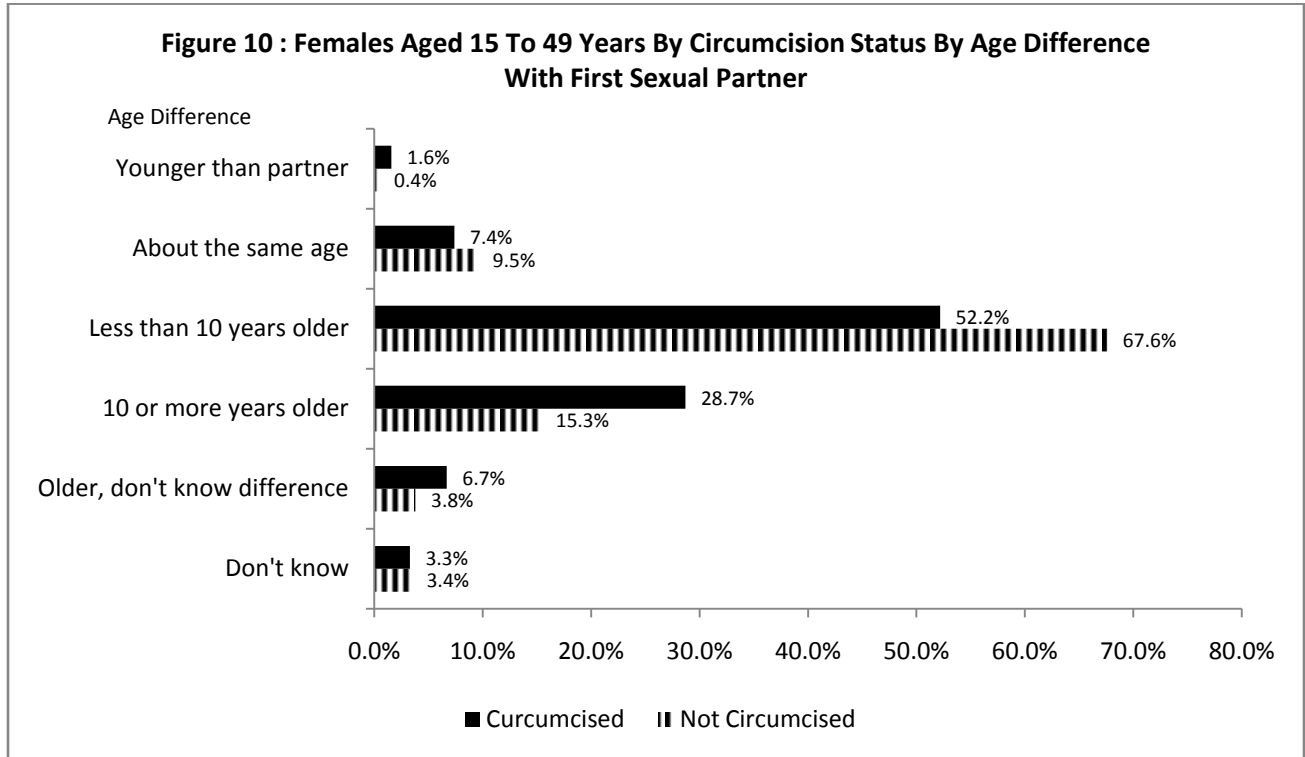
The age grouped on age at first intercourse show that 9,7 percent of circumcised women, and 4.5 percent of non-circumcised women, commenced sexual intercourse at ages under 14 years. Also, 58.4 percent of circumcised women, compared to 42.2 percent of non-circumcised women, had their first sexual intercourse at ages under 18 years.

In addition, 20.0 percent of circumcised women, compared to only 3.2 percent of non-circumcised women, had their first sexual intercourse “at first union”, that is when they were married, a possible consequence of a higher prevalence of early-age marriage.

As this study has already indicated, it is a criminal offence to have sexual intercourse with children aged under 14 years, and illegal to marry a child who is aged under 18 years, whether with or without her consent.

b. Age Of First Sexual Partner

A comparison of the woman’s age with the age of her first sexual partner, in Table 26 and Figure 10, shows significant differences between circumcised women and non-circumcised women.



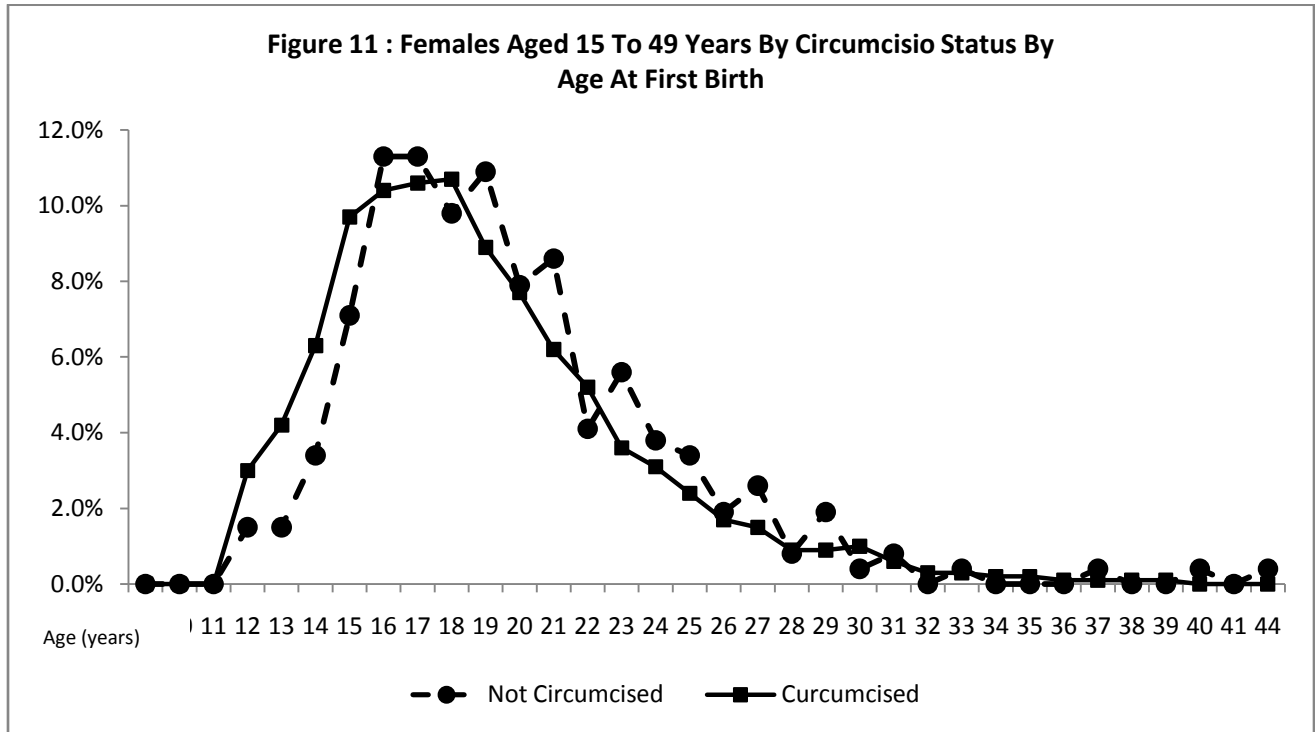
Only 9.0 percent of circumcised women, and 9.9 percent of non-circumcised women, had a first sexual partner who was either “younger” or “about the same age”. For the majority of women the first sexual partner was much older. For 52.2 percent of circumcised women, compared to 67.6 percent of non-circumcised women, the first sexual partner was “less than 10 years older”; for 28.7 percent of circumcised women, and 15.3 percent of non-circumcised women, the partner was “10 or more years older”.

In addition, 6.7 percent of circumcised women, compared to 3.8 percent of non-circumcised women, had a first sexual partner who was older, but whose age difference the woman did not know.

These figures are consistent with differences between circumcised and non-circumcised women in relation to their current marital status, and the age disparities with their partners. These factors provide some explanation for the greater prevalence of of widowhood and multiple marital unions amongst circumcised women than amongst non-circumcised women.

c. Age At First Birth

Consistent with the early age at which girls begin sexual intercourse, a handful of circumcised children start child bearing at ages 9, 10 and 11 years.



The single year data on age at first birth in Table 27 and Figure 11 show that, at every age between 12 years and 15 years, the percentage of women who had a first birth was consistently higher amongst circumcised women than non-circumcised women.

The grouped data show that 7.2 percent of circumcised women, compared to 3.0 percent of non-circumcised women, had a first birth under the age of 14 years, and 44.2 percent of circumcised women, compared to 36.2 percent of non-circumcised women, had a first birth at under 18 years.

In contrast, 55.8 percent of circumcised women, compared to 63.9 percent of non-circumcised women, had a first birth at ages 18 years and over.

d. Whether Pregnancy Was Wanted

In spite of the relatively young ages at which many girls had their first birth, figures in Table 28 show that the majority of them wanted the pregnancy. This desire was more prevalent amongst circumcised women than non-circumcised women. At the time they had the pregnancy, 69.0 percent of circumcised women, and 57.5 percent of non-circumcised women,

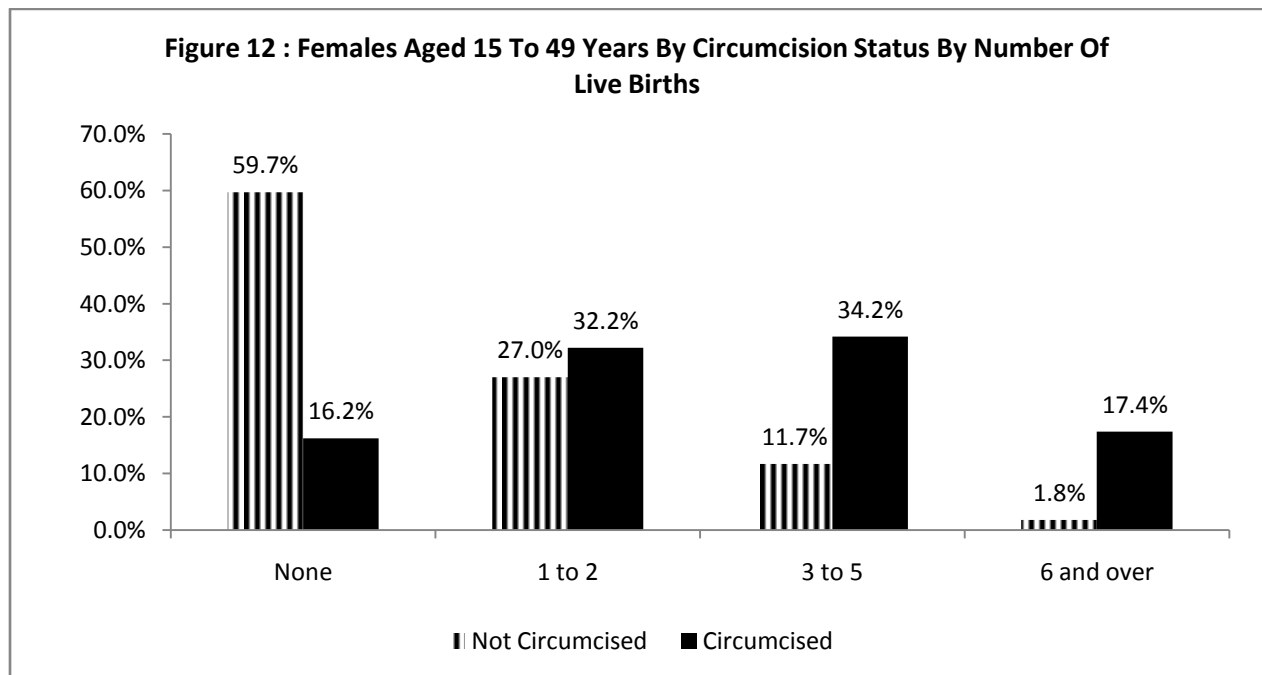
wanted the pregnancy. However, 19.0 percent of circumcised women, and 27.5 percent of non-circumcised women “wanted it later”.

In contrast, a greater percentage of non-circumcised women (15.0 percent), compared to circumcised women (11.9 percent) did not want the pregnancy at all.

In spite of the more negative reaction to the pregnancy, reported by non-circumcised women, the figures further show that fewer of them (9.3 percent), than circumcised women (11.6 percent), have ever terminated a pregnancy.

e. Total Children Ever Born

As Table 29 and Figure 12 show, circumcised women have had more live births than non-circumcised women.



Firstly, only 16.2 percent of circumcised women, compared to 59.7 percent of non-circumcised women did not have a live birth at the time of the survey, and 15.5 percent of circumcised women, compared to 17.6 percent of non-circumcised women, had only one live birth. At all higher birth orders, the percentage of circumcised women is higher than for non-circumcised women..

The grouped data show that 32.2 percent of circumcised women, compared to 27.0 percent of non-circumcised women, had 1 to 2 live births; 34.2 percent of circumcised women, compared

to 11.7 percent of non-circumcised women, have 3 to 5 children. In addition, 17.4 percent of circumcised women, compared to only 1.6 percent of non-circumcised women, had 6 or more children.

The pattern of differences between circumcised and non-circumcised women is consistent with other differences in their sexual and reproductive performances, which this study has already revealed; the greater number of live births amongst women who are circumcised is consistent with being married, commencing sexual intercourse, and having a first child birth, all at younger ages, than non-circumcised women.

5. KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

a. Modern Contraceptives

Figures in Table 30 show that 71.1 percent of circumcised women, and 73.8 percent of non-circumcised women, “know modern contraceptives”. However, slightly more circumcised women (24.3 percent), than non-circumcised women (21.4 percent) “know no method”. In addition, 4.4 percent of circumcised women, and 1.5 percent of non-circumcised women, “know only folkloric” methods.

In spite of this widespread knowledge of modern contraceptives, the figures further show that only 22.8 percent of circumcised women, and 32.9 percent of non-circumcised women, “used modern methods”. In contrast, the majority, that is 74.4 percent of circumcised women, and 63.0 percent of non-circumcised women, “never used” any modern method.

The current patterns of use, and the differences between circumcised women and non-circumcised women, are consistent with their past use. Only 10.6 percent of circumcised women, compared to 18.5 percent of non-circumcised women, “currently use” modern contraceptives.

In relation to their last live birth, the level of use of modern contraceptives is even lower; 4.2 percent of circumcised women, and 4.8 percent of non-circumcised women, “used since last birth”, while 10.8 percent of circumcised women, and 13.6 percent of non-circumcised women “used before last birth”.

As for the future use of modern contraceptives, only 30.5 percent of circumcised women and 38.0 percent of non-circumcised women intend to use a modern contraceptive later. On the other hand, 44.6 percent of circumcised women, and 27.0 percent of non-circumcised women, “do not intend to use” any. However, 24.9 percent of circumcised women, and 35.0 percent of non-circumcised women are “unsure about using” modern contraceptives in future.

b. Use Of Condoms

The data on use of condoms in Table 31 show that only a small minority of women, that is 2.5 percent of circumcised women and 6.2 percent of non-circumcised women, used a condom during their last intercourse. Even fewer, 2.9 percent of circumcised women and 4.1 percent of non-circumcised women, used a condom at first sexual intercourse.

The analysis of knowledge and use of modern contraceptives has revealed consistently lower prevalence rates amongst circumcised women than amongst non-circumcised women. These differences may be due to a combination of factors. With the majority of circumcised women in a marital union, or living with a man, the conditions would not be appropriate for the use of contraceptives. In addition, the lower levels of education amongst circumcised women, compared to non-circumcised women, may be responsible for the lower prevalence rates amongst circumcised women..

The more negative attitudes which circumcised women have to the use of modern contraceptives may also be rooted in traditional norm to child bearing, especially within a marital union, which have a greater impact amongst circumcised women than non-circumcised women

c. Future Preferred Contraceptive Method

As figures in Table 32 show there are significant differences in the methods which the two groups of women would prefer to use in future. “Injections” are preferred by 46.9 percent of circumcised women and 27.0 percent of non-circumcised women. The “pill” is the method preferred by 29.1 percent of circumcised women and 44.0 percent of non-circumcised women.

Other small, but significant, differences occur in the preference for three other methods, namely condom (circumcised women 3.0 percent, and non-circumcised women 5.5 percent), sterilization (circumcised women 2.4 percent, and non-circumcised women 1.0 percent), and IUD (circumcised women 1.5 percent, and non-circumcised women 3.5 percent). However, this analysis has not found any plausible explanations for these differences.

6. GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN FEMALE CIRCUMCISION

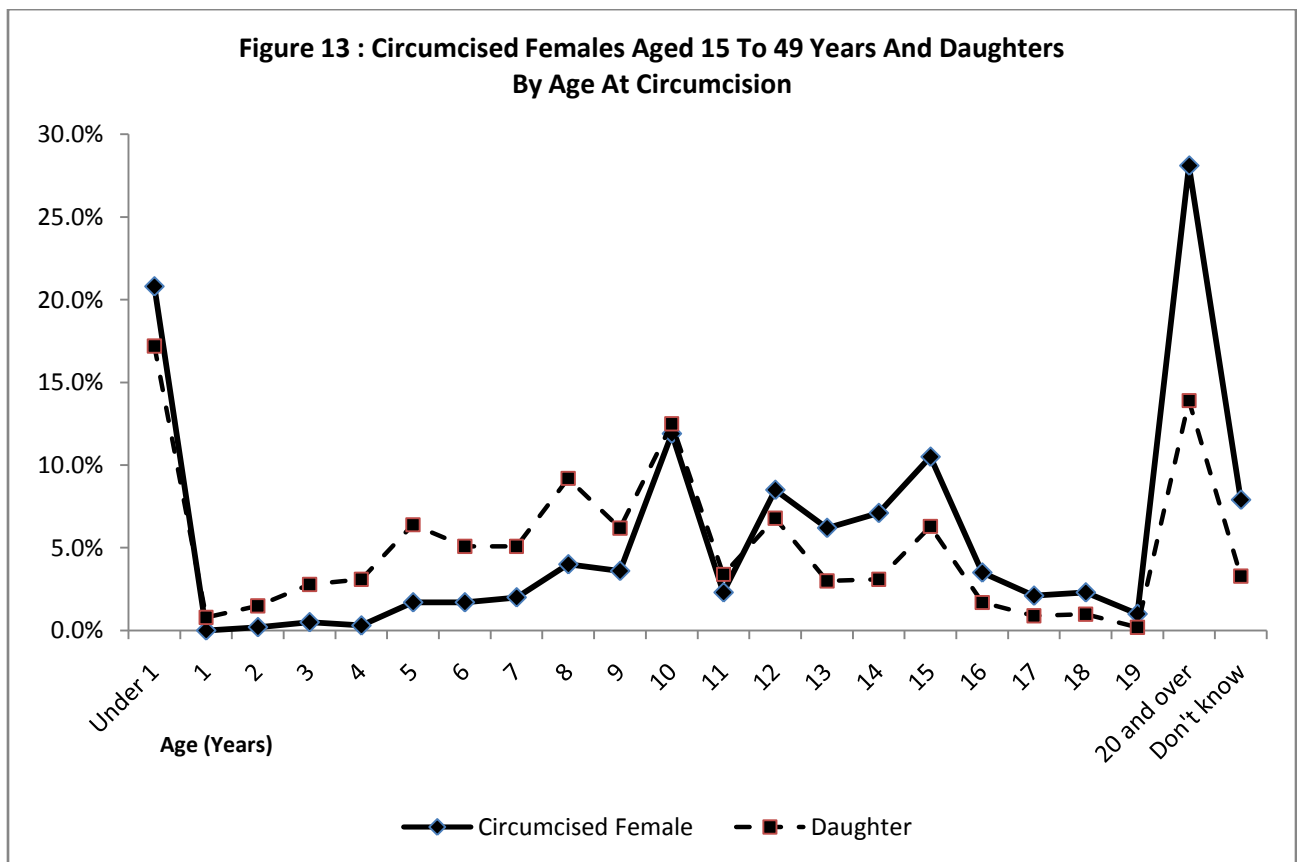
During the 2008 DHS women aged 15 to 49 years were also canvassed about the prevalence and practices of circumcision amongst their daughters. These responses have been analysed to determine trends in female circumcision between the two generations, namely “mother” and “daughter”, so as to detect any possible generational changes in attitudes or practices.

a. Trends In Type Of Circumcision

Figures in Table 33 indicate that the types of circumcision which women undergo have not changed between mothers and daughters. The majority have “flesh removed from genital area”, while smaller percentages have the “genital area just nicked without removing any flesh”, or the “genital area sewn closed”.

b. Trends In Age At Circumcision

The comparisons shown in Table 34 and Figure 13 indicate, firstly, that the practice of circumcising girls at infancy is as widely prevalent amongst daughters as it was amongst their mothers; 20.8 percent of mothers and 17.2 percent of daughters were circumcised at infancy.



However, the figures suggest that the age of circumcision may generally be getting younger. Mothers appear to be getting their daughters circumcised at ages younger than the ages at which they, the mothers, were circumcised. The single year age data show that at each age, from 1 year to 11 years, the percentage of “daughters” circumcised is higher than for “mothers”. On the other hand, the percentage of women who were circumcised at older ages, that is from age 12 years to age over 20 years, is always higher amongst “mothers” than “daughters”.

The 2008 DHS data do not provide information to explain these changes. However information collected from community members in focus group discussions, conducted for a study of teenage pregnancy in Sierra Leone, has revealed that children are being circumcised at relatively young ages for a variety of reasons. The most widely reported were “poverty of mothers/less expensive when young”, “tradition and culture”, and “to reduce the sexual urge of children”.

Other major reasons for circumcising girls when they are young include ensuring that “they do not refuse when they become older and more matured”; “children voluntarily give themselves up for circumcision to emulate their peers”; “circumcision is less painful when girls are young”; and “it is a disgrace to the parents if the girl is not a virgin at circumcision”.

c. Trends In Person Who Performed Circumcision

Table 35 indicates that there has been no significant change in the person who performed the circumcision of mothers and daughters. The principal performers are still “traditional circumcisers”. However, “trained nurse/midwife” appear to be slightly more active amongst daughters than their mothers.

d. Maintaining The Tradition

According to figures in Table 36, 49.3 percent of circumcised women, and 80.0 percent of non-circumcised women have a daughter who is not circumcised. The figures also show that 83.1 percent of circumcised women, compared to 17.9 percent of non-circumcised women, intend to circumcise their daughters in future. In contrast, only 10.7 percent of circumcised women and 76.2 percent of non-circumcised women, do not intend to circumcise their daughters in future.

Opinions on whether the practice of FGM should continue in future are sharply divided according to circumcision status: 69.0 percent of circumcised women, and 24.3 percent of non-circumcised women, want the practice to continue. However, 22.8 percent of circumcised women, and 65.4 percent of non-circumcised women, want the practice discontinued.

7. SOME MALE OPINIONS ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

The 2008 DHS also canvassed the views of men aged 15 to 59 years on the practice. In particular they were asked whether they were willing to marry a woman who was not circumcised, and to state whether they agreed or not with some of the popular perceptions of the benefits of circumcision. Their responses have been analysed in relation to their place of residence, ethnic group, religion, marital status and level of education.

a. Place Of Residence

Table 37 shows that 58.8 percent of males in Eastern Region, 58.7 percent in Southern Region, and 69.8 percent in Western Region, will marry a woman who has not been circumcised. In these three Regions, between 25.7 percent in the Western Region, and 33.6 percent in the Southern Region will not marry a woman who is not circumcised.

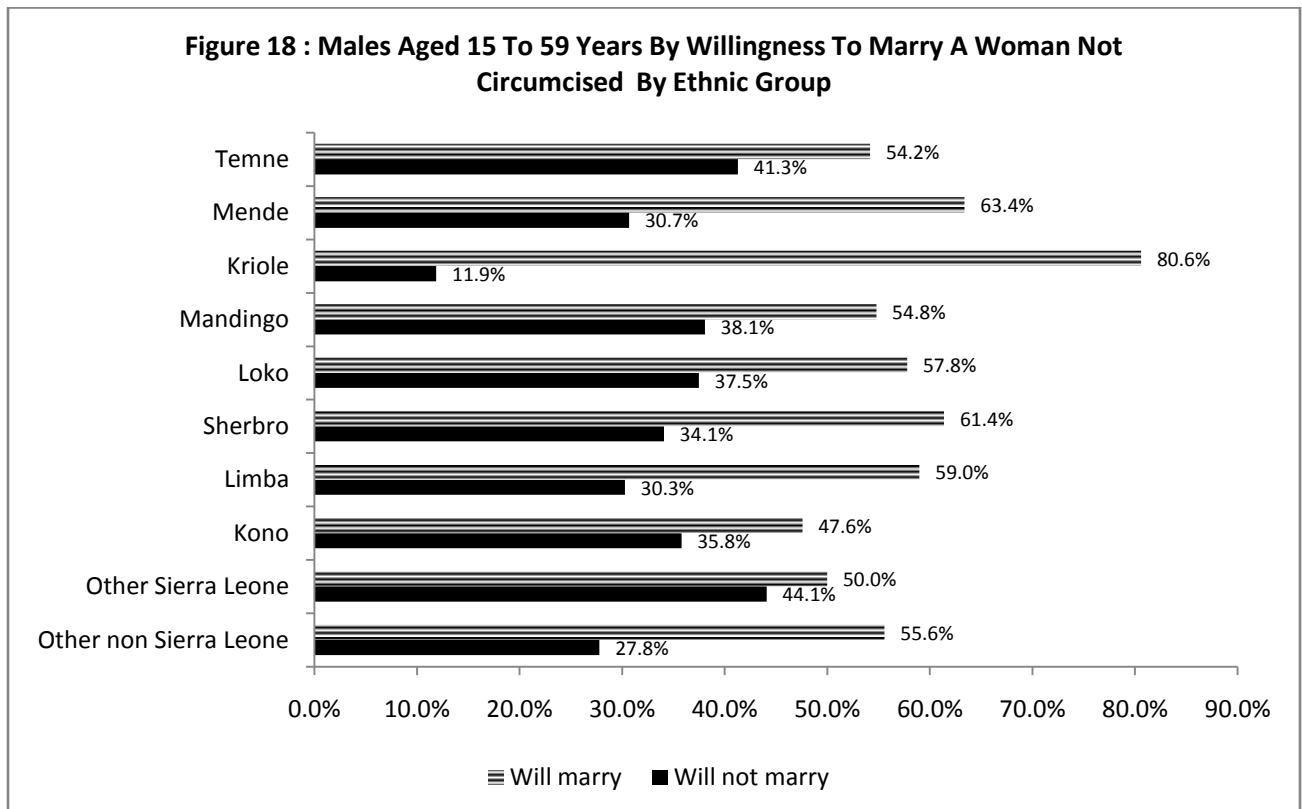
In the Northern Region, only 46.1 percent are willing to marry a woman who is not circumcised; the majority are either unwilling or don't know whether they would.

The figures further show that greater proportions of urban males (63.3 percent), than rural males (53.5 percent) are willing to marry a woman who is not circumcised. Only 29.5 percent of urban males, compared to 40.6 percent of rural males, will not be willing to do so.

As expected, the percentage of males willing to marry a non-circumcised women is highest in the "capital, large city" (69.8 percent) and lowest in the "countryside" (53,5 percent).

b. Ethnicity

Table 38 and Figure 14 indicate that the majority of males, of all the main ethnic groups, except Kono, are willing to marry a woman who is not circumcised.



The highest percentages are amongst Kriole (80.6 percent), Mende (63.4 percent), and Sherbro (61.4 percent). The lowest percentage, 47.6 percent, is amongst Kono.

On the other hand ethnic groups that are most unwilling to marry women who are not circumcised are the Temne (41.3 percent), Mandingo (38.1 percent), and Loko (37.5 percent).

c. Religion

Figures in Table 39 show that 62.8 percent of Christian men and 56.1 percent Muslim men, will marry a woman who is not circumcised, while 29.4 percent Christian men and 37.9 percent of Muslim men say they will not marry a woman who is not circumcised.

d. Marital Status

The figures on marital status in Table 39 indicate that, whether never married or ever married, the majority of males will marry a woman who is not circumcised.

e. Level Of Education

Similarly, irrespective of their level of education, the majority of males will marry a woman who is not circumcised. However, there are significant differences between males according to their level of education. In general, the percentage of males who are willing to marry increases as their level of education rises from 51.3 percent for males with “no education to 72.8 percent of those with “higher education”.

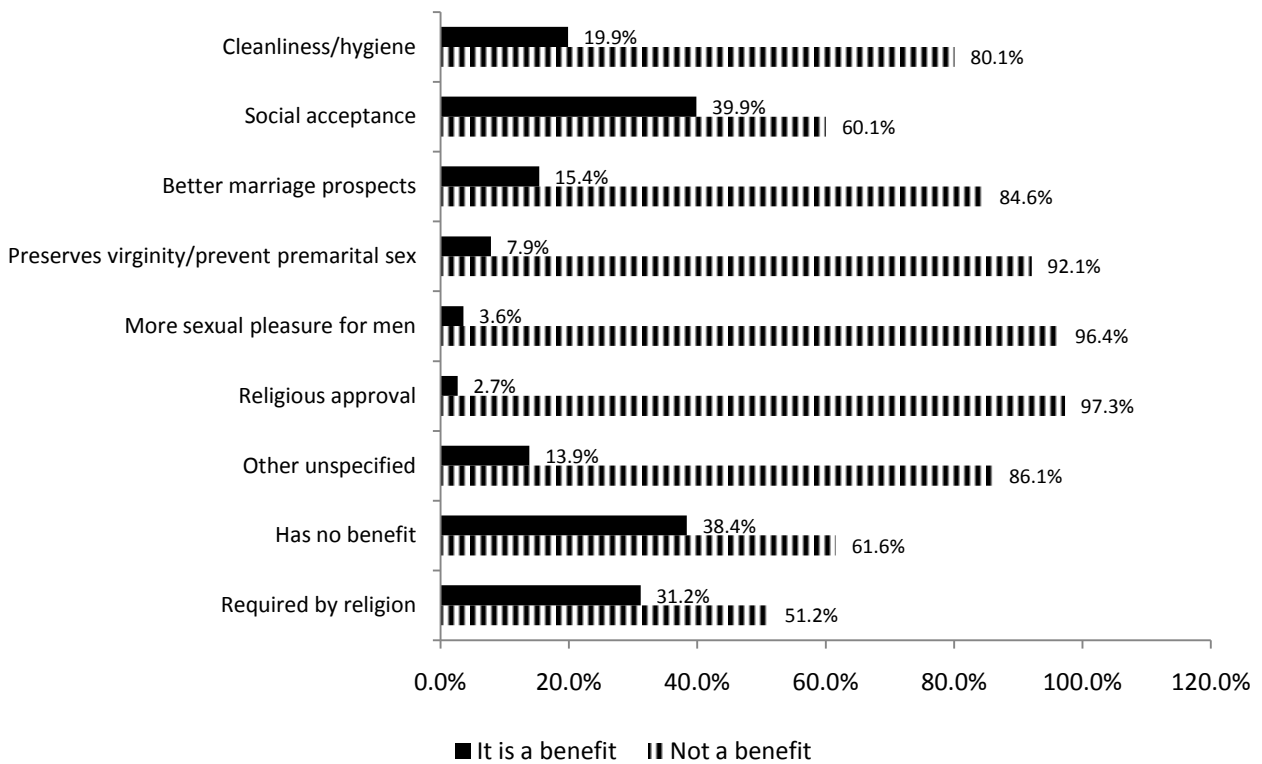
f. Wealth Index

On the relationship with the wealth index, the figures show that the percentage of males who will marry a non-circumcised woman increases from 49.1 percent for the “poorest” quintile to 52.5 percent in the “middle” quintile, and to 66.1 percent in the “highest” quintile.

g. Perceptions Of The Benefits Of Circumcision

Males stated whether they agreed, or not, with some of the popular perceptions of the benefits of circumcision. These are shown in Table 40 and Figure 15.

Figure 15 : Males Aged 15 To 59 Years By Perceptions Of Benefit Of Circumcision



In general, the majority of males have rejected each of the stated benefits of circumcision. In particular, 96.4 percent say that circumcision does not “give more sexual pleasure to men”, 92.1 percent that it does not “ensure virginity/prevents premarital sex”, 84.6 percent do not accept that it gives the female “better marriage prospects”, and 80.1 percent reject the benefit of “cleanliness/hygiene”.

In contrast, the benefit with the largest proportion of approval is that female circumcision leads to “social acceptance” (39.9 percent). However, 93.7 percent reject the idea that female circumcision requires “religious approval”. In addition, 86.1 percent do not think that circumcision has “other benefits”, which are unspecified, while 38.4 percent think that it has some other unspecified benefit.

On whether circumcision should be continued or stopped, the figures show that opinions are fairly evenly divided between males who think it should be “continued” (44.1 percent), and those who think it should be stopped (42.7 percent), with a significant minority who cannot make up their minds either way (12.8 percent).

SECTION 3 : CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CONCLUSIONS

FGM is universal in Sierra Leone. The majority of women are circumcised, irrespective of region, place of residence, ethnic group, religion, level of educational attainment and wealth status. However, the percentage circumcised is lower in the Western Region than in the other three Regions; is lower amongst Krioles than other ethnic groups; declines with higher levels of urbanization, education and wealth status; and is lower amongst Christians than Muslims.

Circumcision at infancy is widespread, and the majority of girls are circumcised by age 14 years, in all Regions, and amongst all ethnic groups. But this practice declines with increasing levels of educational attainment.

Almost all circumcision is done by traditional circumcisers using rudimentary cutting instruments, in the traditional secret society “bush”. The majority of women have had a Type II circumcision, although many reported a lack of knowledge of what type of circumcision they had. One possible explanation is that girls, at these young ages, were too young to know, or be told, what was done to them. Girls at these young ages would be too young to comprehend any of the practices and precepts of the ceremony, a situation that questions the credibility and the validity of one of the principal justifications for the initiation, that the initiation ceremony is a forum for teaching the girls about their cultures and traditions.

Another possible reason for their declared ignorance is that because they wish to continue to respect the codes of secrecy of the society, they may have deliberately refused to provide any accurate information about its practices .

This early age circumcision has a number of adverse social, economic, health and demographic consequences for the women, and violates a number of their key sexual and reproductive rights by involving them in under age sexual activity, early age marriage and early child birth.

Circumcised women appear to be more disadvantaged, than non-circumcised women, in many aspects of life. The majority of circumcised women do not have any education, or reached only primary level. They are more poorly educated than non-circumcised women.

Because they are married at relatively young ages, to much older men, they become widows more frequently, and are more often dispossessed of their husband’s property, valuables and assets, and become involved in multiple marital unions, more than non-circumcised women.

Circumcised women also start sexual intercourse at younger ages, with partners who are much older. Hence they have a first birth, at younger ages, and have a larger family size than non-circumcised women. Despite the early age pregnancy, the majority wanted the pregnancy, and only a relatively small percentage had the pregnancy terminated.

The majority of circumcised women have more negative attitudes to modern contraceptives than non-circumcised women. Although the majority know about modern contraceptives, only a small percentage have ever used them either before the first birth, or before and after the last birth, or intend to use them in future. These negative attitudes to modern contraceptives in general, are more prevalent in relation to condoms.

These more negative attitudes to modern contraceptives may be a combination of various factors. The majority of circumcised women are currently married, and are influenced by the traditional attitudes to child bearing within marriage. These conditions may not be appropriate for the use of contraceptives. The possible absence of any instructions on family planning during the teaching component of the initiation ceremony would not have prepared them to be more positive to the use of modern contraceptives.

Despite its universality, and against the social and economic constraints, and violations of sexual and reproductive rights, which circumcised women encounter, the majority of women, irrespective of their circumcision status, reject all of the perceived benefits that the practice presumably holds for the girl.

The only benefit which was recognised by the majority of circumcised women, and by fewer than 15.0 percent of non-circumcised women, is that the being initiated into the Society leads to “social acceptance”. All other perceptions of benefits were rejected by the majority of women, even by circumcised women, irrespective of their ethnic group. Higher levels of education were associated with even greater levels of rejection of the perceived benefits.

Although the majority of women do not think that female circumcision has any benefits, there are divided views about whether the practice should continue in future. Nearly 70.0 percent of circumcised women, and 24.0 percent of non-circumcised women, say the practice should continue. On the other hand, 65.4 percent of non-circumcised women, and 22.8 percent of circumcised women, say the practice should be discontinued.

Although, the majority of women, both circumcised and non-circumcised, do not accept that circumcision has any benefits, and in the face of the obvious disadvantages which the circumcised girl-child experiences in terms of early marriage, poor education, early age sexual activity, and early child birth, the majority of circumcised mothers have had their daughters circumcised, or intend to get them circumcised in future.

Increasingly, these daughters are being circumcised at younger ages than their mothers, but they are undergoing the same type of circumcision, which is administered by the same type of “traditional circumciser”, and within the same traditional precincts of the secret society “bush”

Circumcision at young ages invalidates the argument that the practice provides a forum to teach young girls about their traditions and culture in relation to their personal hygiene, child bearing and caring, marriage and home care.

Male attitudes to female circumcision reject many of the popular myths which are associated with the practice. Firstly, the majority of men, irrespective of region, ethnic group, level of education, religion and wealth index, will marry a woman who is not circumcised. The willingness to marry is greater amongst Christian men than Muslim men, and increases as the level of education, and wealth status of the man rises.

However the majority of men, as with the females, reject all the popular perceptions of the benefits of female circumcision, especially those that have links with cleanliness and personal hygiene, marriage, virginity, sex and religion.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. The International Response

The international community is identifying FGM more and more as a harmful traditional practice, and a violation of the fundamental human rights of girls and women. Global efforts to bring an end to the custom of female genital cutting are increasing, with many nations putting in place legislation against the practice, and a number of international organisations making the elimination of FGM a priority.

In 1997, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a joint statement with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) against the practice of FGM. A new statement, with wider United Nations support, was then issued in February 2008 to support increased advocacy for the abandonment of FGM.

The United Nations has designated 8 February as the "International Day of Zero Tolerance of Female Genital Mutilation".

B. Legislation against FGM in African Countries

In Africa, thirteen countries have responded to the problem of FGM by implementing legislation against it: According to the "Center for Reproductive Rights" there are 16 countries with criminal legislation against FGM, on the specified date of implementation of the legislation: Benin (2003), Burkina Faso (1996), Central African Republic (1966), Chad (2003), Côte d'Ivoire

(1998), Djibouti (1994), Egypt (Ministerial Decree, 1996), Ethiopia (2004), Ghana (1994), Guinea (1965), Kenya (2001), Niger (2003), Senegal (1999), Tanzania (1998), Togo (1998), Nigeria (multiple states, 1999-2002).

There have been reports of prosecutions or arrests in cases involving FGM in various African countries, including Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

Ten industrialised countries that receive immigrants from countries where FGM is practised have also passed specific laws criminalising the practice: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In Australia, six out of eight states have passed laws against FGM. In the United States, the federal government and 16 states have criminalised it. In France, existing legislation has been used to prosecute FGM practitioners and parents procuring the service for their daughters.

Lawmakers from 27 African countries in 2010 gathered in Dakar for a two-day conference to push for a UN ban on female genital mutilation as a breach of human rights.

C. The National Response

a. Policy and Legislation

This study has shown that FGM is a practice that violates the basic human rights of girls and seriously compromises their opportunities to be educated, participate fully in the social, economic and political life of the country, attain satisfactory standards of living for themselves and their children, and relieve the poverty situation of their families and communities. Nevertheless, among communities that practise FGM it is a highly valued tradition, making eradication difficult.

Although Sierra Leone signed the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1988, no laws outlawing female circumcision have been passed by the government. There is as yet no law on FGM in Sierra Leone.

On February 5th 2008, a senior member of the new government in Sierra Leone is reported to have vowed to outlaw female circumcision, saying "*female genital mutilation is a harmful practice and my government...will work to eradicate it in this country,*" adding that "*the practice is a fundamental violation of human rights as some women and girls may not have expressed their consent to undergo the practice.*" However, the Government has not taken any action to legislate a ban on the practice.

In spite of the lack of a specific legislation banning FGM, there are other legislations which can be used to protect girls against the practice. These include

- i. The Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act Cap 31 of 1926
- ii. The Child Rights Act of 2007
- iii. The Domestic Violence Act of 2007
- iv. The Registration Of Customary Marriage And Divorce Act 2007
- v. The Devolution of Estates Act 2007

i. The Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act Cap 31 of 1926

This Act protects girls against early sexual intercourse. Sections 6 and 7 define specific crimes, and prison sentences, for a man who has sexual intercourse with a girl under age 13 years, and between ages 13 and 14 years, whether with or without her consent.

The effective enforcement of this law will mean protection for hundreds of vulnerable girls

ii. The Child Rights Act of 2007

The Act provides protection for the girl-child against early marriage, forced marriage, and early age circumcision.

Section 34 (1 and 2) specify that:

“The minimum age of marriage of whatever kind shall be 18 years, and that no persons shall force a child to be betrothed, to be the subject of a dowry transaction, or to be married’.

The Act also provides protection for children against early age circumcision. Section 46 (1) states that

“no person or association shall subject a child to any of the following practices: an initiation ceremony, early marriage, and child betrothal”.

In addition, Section 33 (1) specifies that

“no person shall subject a child to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including any cultural practices which dehumanises or is injurious to the physical and mental welfare of the a child”

The effective enforcement of these provisions will provide immediate protection for circumcised girls who were married when they were still under 18 years, and will solve completely the problem of early child birth. As a result, thousands of circumcised teenage girls

will be protected, and many of them will be able to continue their education to secondary and post-secondary levels.

In addition, effective enforcement will reduce the incidence of early age circumcision before 18 years of age, thereby protecting thousands of girls not only from early age circumcision, but also from early marriage, early sexual relationships with men, and early childbirth.

iii. The Domestic Violence Act of 2007

This Act provides protection of the girl-child in three key areas of sexual and reproductive health. It defines Domestic Violence to include both “physical or sexual abuse of any age”. And adds that domestic violence

“is conduct that in any way endangers the safety, health or well being of another person, or detracts or is likely to detract from another person’s dignity or worth as a human being”

The effective enforcement of these provisions will ensure the protection of young girls against sexual violence and early age circumcision.

iv. The Registration Of Customary Marriage And Divorce Act 2007

This Act stipulates that customary marriage is valid only if “both spouses are not less than 18 years old, and consent to the marriage”. Under this Act

“where the personal law of cohabiting persons is customary law, and the persons are not below 18 years, and have lived together as husband and wife for a continuous period of not less than 5 years, they shall be deemed to be married under customary law notwithstanding that they may not have performed any customary rites of marriage”.

It further adds that

“A person who enters a customary marriage (whether it is potentially or actually polygamous) shall not subsequently marry any other person by Christian, Muslim, or Civil rites, during the existence of the customary marriage”.

The effective enforcement of these provisions will ensure that a teenage mother, irrespective of her circumcision status, who had been cohabiting with a man for at least five years, is protected from a unilateral and summary eviction from the “matrimonial home”, or from arbitrary divorce or separation on the grounds that she was not married

according to traditional rites and ceremonies, or to be made subservient to a subsequent wife married under Christian, Muslim or Civil Law.

v. The Devolution of Estates Act 2007

This Act deals with the distribution of the property of a deceased, who died without making a will. This is the situation with almost all marriages under Customary Law, including cohabiting couples.

The preamble to the Act says that

“this Act shall apply to every citizen of Sierra Leone, irrespective of religion or ethnic origin”.

Under its provisions, a woman who has been continuously cohabiting with the deceased person for a period of not less than 5 years, immediately preceding the death of that person, is legally his wife, and is therefore entitled to inherit his estate, including his house and other assets and valuables, either in whole or in part.

It thus provides both social protection, economic security and demographic safeguards for the teenage mother who marries an older partner, bears his children, and eventually becomes a widow. She cannot be coerced to marry a brother, or any other relative of the deceased, simply to remain in the matrimonial house, or to gain access to his assets and valuables. The demographic implication is that, after having a number of children for the deceased, she does not have to start having children for a new husband, and so increase her family size and risk her health.

vi. Need For New Legislation

FGM has been shown to be a severe violation of the rights of the child, and the girl-child needs protection. Existing laws only provide protection for girls under 18 years, but even these can be circumvented. What is required to safeguard the human rights of children, is to give them absolute protection against the practice by enacting a new law which prohibits female circumcision, in accordance with international with international treaties and conventions including the CRC, African Charter and CEDAW.

b. Education and Persuasion

With the majority of the public so strongly attached to female circumcision as part of their tradition, the implementation of existing legislations should be complemented with efforts at educating and persuading different components of society to abandon the practice. This would be a key strategy for eradicating female genital mutilation.

To effect the changes on female circumcision in the mind set of communities must be given correct information on the relevant issues surrounding the sexual and reproductive health and rights of the girl child, in general, and the immediate and long term harmful medical, social, and demographic effects the practice has on the girls, and the falsehood of the myths and popular perceptions of its assumed benefits. In addition, it must be stressed that culture has value only if it does not violate human rights.

Specific sensitization and advocacy campaigns should have as target groups all community members, especially adult females, soweis and traditional leaders. The messages should stress that circumcising girls when they are still children has no benefits for the children; that early age circumcision leads to early age sexual intercourse, early age marriage, and early age teenage pregnancy and motherhood; that those aspects which community members regard as the advantages of early age circumcision, may in fact be gross and inhuman violations of the human rights of the child; that there are considerable short term dangers, and long-term health risks to the child as a result of an early-age circumcision. Adult females, in particular, should be sensitised to end the practice of stigmatisation and social isolation of girls who are not circumcised.

As opinion leaders, the traditional and religious rulers, including Chiefs, Imams and Pastors, almost all of whom are males; have a crucial role to play in all sensitization campaigns to eradicate FGM. They should be informed and instructed, using simple and well illustrated guides, on the existing laws which protect girls against under-age circumcision, under-age sexual intercourse, under-age marriage, and the deprivation of the inheritance rights of children and women. Traditional rulers in particular should be reminded of their duties to enforce these laws, by making bye-laws within their chiefdoms, so as to protect girls from sexual intercourse, circumcision, and marriage when they are under the age stipulated by law..

Elements of the harmful effects of FGM and the existing laws protecting children against the practice should be included in the Social Science and the Moral and Religious Education Curricula of Junior and Senior Secondary Schools.

Research shows that, if practising communities themselves decide to abandon FGM, the practice can be eliminated very rapidly.

c. The Role Of Civil Society Organisations

A number of local non-governmental organizations, and community based organizations, whose objectives include the protection of the rights of the girl-child and women must be provided with enhanced capacity to continue their sensitization, advocacy and monitoring on the eradication of FGM. These CSO should endeavour to achieve an increasing number of women and men in practising communities who declare their support to end it.

d. Alleviating Poverty

Poverty alleviation is the only way forward in order to stop female genital cutting. Investing in education and alternative means of income will help people to turn away from the practice that is destroying countless young women and claiming the lives of hard working young mothers.

e. Need For Further Research

As this study has shown, there is a serious dearth of solid and accurate data on all aspects of FGM in Sierra Leone. Research work is required within communities to understand the implications of FGM on the lives of community members in a changing Sierra Leone, with an increasing trend towards urbanization, improvements in girl-child education, changes in the educational standard and outlook of local and traditional leaders, and changes in public policy including the devolution of civic functions to local councils.

APPENDIX 1

STATISTICAL TABLES

Table 1 : Females Aged 15 to 49 Years By Circumcision Status By Administrative Areas

Administrative Area	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Regions			
Eastern	7.0%	93.0%	100.0% (1734)
Northern	2.2%	97.8%	100.0% (2141)
Southern	8.8%	91.2%	100.0% (1811)
Western	20.8%	79.2%	100.0% (1593)
Total	9.1	90.9	100.0% (7279)
Districts			
Kambia	0.3%	99.7 %	100.0 % (319)
Koinadugu	1.5%	98.5 %	100.0 % (388)
Bombali	2.0%	98.0 %	100.0 % (460)
Port Loko	2.9%	97.1 %	100.0 % (525)
Tonkolili	3.6%	96.4%	100.0 % (449)
Moyamba	5.0%	95.0 %	100.0 % (318)
Kenema	5.8%	94.2 %	100.0 % (724)
Kono	6.7%	93.3 %	100.0 % (614)
Pujehun	6.9%	93.1%	100.0 % (291)
Kailahun	9.6%	90.4 %	100.0 % (396)
Bo	10.1%	89.9 %	100.0 % (895)
Bonthe	11.1%	88.9 %	100.0 % (307)
Western Area Rural	16.4%	83.6%	100.0 % (378)
Western Area Urban	22.2%	77.8 %	77.8 % (1215)
Total	9.1%	90.9 %	100.0 % (7279)

Table 2 : Females Aged 15 To 49 Years By Circumcision Status And Type Of Locality

Type Of Locality	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Type Of Locality			
Urban	15.5%	84.5%	100.0%(3126)
Rural	4.2%	95.8%	100.0%(4153)
Total	9.1%	90.9%	100.0%(7279)
Place of Residence			
Freetown	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%(1215)
Small city	12.3%	87.7%	100.0% (912)
Town	10.3%	89.7%	100.0% (999)
Countryside	4.2%	95.8%	100.0%(4153)
Total	9.1%	90.9%	100.0%(7279)

Table 3 : Females Aged 15 to 49 Years By Circumcision Status By Awareness Of Female Circumcision

Ever Heard	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
No	6.5%	0.2%	0.8%
Yes	93.5%	99.8%	99.2%
Total	100.0% (660)	100.0%(6619)	100.0%(7279)

Table 4 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 49 Years By Type Of Circumcision

Type Of Circumcision	Percentage
Type I : Genital area just nicked without removing any flesh	
No	9.7%
Yes	27.5%
Don't know	62.8%
Total	100.0%(959)
Type II : Flesh removed from genital area	
No	5.4%
Yes	85.4%
Don't know	9.2%
Total	100.0%(6582)
Type III : Genital area sewn closed	
No	82.8%
Yes	2.6%
Don't know	14.6%
Total	100.0%(6580)

Table 5 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 49 Years By Circumcision Status By Type Of Circumcision By Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	Type I Genital area just nicked without removing any flesh				Type II Flesh removed from genital area				Type III Genital area sewn closed			
	No	Yes	Don't know	Total	No	Yes	Don't know	Total	No	Yes	Don't know	Total
Temne	11.7%	9.8%	78.5%	100.0%(316)	3.3%	83.9%	12.8%	100.0%(1968)	80.8%	2.0%	17.2%	100.0%(1965)
Mende	9.7%	52.0%	38.3%	100.0%(298)	7.6%	87.7%	4.7%	100.0%(2406)	85.5%	3.6%	11.0%	100.0%(2409)
Kriole	-	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%(4)	11.1%	86.1%	2.8%	100.0%(36)	88.6%		11.4%	100.0%(35)
Mandingo	28.6%	9.5%	61.9%	100.0%(21)	3.2%	87.3%	9.5%	100.0%(158)	81.0%	2.5%	16.5%	100.0%(158)
Loko	5.3%	15.8%	78.9%	100.0%(19)	2.6%	88.1%	9.3%	100.0%(151)	84.2%	1.3%	14.5%	100.0%(152)
Sherbro		89.6%	10.4%	100.0%(48)	37.9%	57.8%	4.3%	100.0%(116)	94.8%		5.2%	100.0%(115)
Limba	6.6%	11.0%	82.4%	100.0%(91)	3.5%	82.0%	14.5%	100.0%(510)	77.7%	1.8%	20.5%	100.0%(511)
Kono	16.7%		83.3%	100.0%(12)	0.8%	97.0%	2.3%	100.0%(394)	89.8%	2.0%	8.1%	100.0%(393)
Other Sierra Leone	8.2%	11.6%	80.1%	100.0%(146)	3.6%	81.9%	14.5%	100.0%(799)	77.7%	2.9%	19.4%	100.0%(798)
Other non Sierra Leone	-	-	100.0%	100.0%(3)	-	91.7%	8.3%	100.0%(36)	83.3%	5.6%	11.1%	100.0%(36)

**Table 6 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 49 Years
By Age At Circumcision**

Age At Circumcision (Years)	Percentage
During infancy	20.7%
0	0.1%
1	0.0%
2	0.2%
3	0.5%
4	0.3%
5	1.7%
6	1.7%
7	2.0%
8	4.0%
9	3.6%
10	11.9%
11	2.3%
12	8.5%
13	6.2%
14	7.1%
15	10.5%
16	3.5%
17	2.1%
18	2.3%
19	1.0%
20	1.0%
21	0.1%
22	0.2%
Over 22	0.6%
Don't know	7.9%
Total	100.0%(6577)
Age At Circumcision(Years)(Grouped Data)	
Under 5	21.8%
Under 14	63.7%
Under 18	86.9%
18 and over	5.0%
Don't know	7.9%

Table 7 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 49 Years By Age At Circumcision By Ethnic Grpup

Age at Circumcision (Years)	Temne	Mende	Kriole	Mandingo	Loko	Sherbro	Limba	Kono	Other Sierra Leone	Other non-Sierra Leone
During infancy	27.6%	15.7%	8.6%	18.9%	23.2%	18.1%	21.1%	11.3%	24.2%	19.4%
0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%	0.0%
1	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.9%	0.4%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
3	0.5%	0.2%	5.7%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%
4	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%
5	2.0%	1.1%	2.9%	1.9%	0.7%	1.7%	1.2%	1.8%	2.9%	5.6%
6	2.1%	1.0%	0.0%	3.1%	6.6%	0.0%	2.0%	1.5%	2.1%	0.0%
7	2.3%	0.7%	0.0%	5.0%	4.0%	2.6%	2.3%	2.0%	3.4%	8.3%
8	5.0%	2.4%	0.0%	7.5%	7.9%	1.7%	4.3%	5.9%	4.5%	2.8%
9	3.6%	2.7%	2.9%	5.7%	2.0%	3.4%	3.5%	7.9%	4.3%	8.3%
10	11.8%	9.6%	14.3%	10.1%	10.6%	6.0%	11.9%	21.7%	15.7%	8.3%
11	2.2%	2.4%	2.9%	1.9%	2.0%	0.9%	2.3%	2.8%	2.0%	5.6%
12	7.8%	8.2%	5.7%	8.8%	9.3%	8.6%	10.2%	12.0%	7.9%	19.4%
13	5.5%	7.0%	8.6%	2.5%	4.6%	6.0%	6.3%	5.4%	7.0%	2.8%
14	5.7%	9.2%	8.6%	5.0%	6.0%	9.5%	6.5%	7.9%	5.0%	2.8%
15	7.0%	16.0%	14.3%	9.4%	6.0%	19.0%	6.5%	9.5%	5.8%	2.8%
16	2.6%	5.4%	5.7%	1.9%	2.6%	5.2%	2.9%	2.8%	1.0%	5.6%
17	1.7%	2.9%	2.9%	2.5%	0.0%	5.2%	2.0%	1.3%	1.0%	0.0%
18	1.1%	3.6%	8.6%	3.8%	2.6%	3.4%	2.3%	1.8%	1.0%	0.0%
19	0.6%	1.2%	5.7%	1.3%	1.3%	0.0%	1.2%	1.8%	0.5%	0.0%
20	0.6%	1.7%	2.9%	0.6%	0.7%	2.6%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%
21	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
22	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
23	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
24	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%
25	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
26	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
29	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
30	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
32		0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Don't know	9.0%	7.4%	0.0%	6.3%	6.6%	4.3%	10.8%	1.3%	9.4%	8.3%
Total	100.0% (1959)	100.0% (2413)	100.0% (35)	100.0% (159)	100.0% (151)	100.0% (116)	100.0% (511)	100.0 (391)	100.0% (798)	100.0% (38)

Table 8 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 49 Years By Age At Circumcision (Grouped) By Ethnic Group

Age at circumcision	Temne	Mende	Kriole	Mandingo	Loko	Sherbro	Limba	Kono	Other Sierra Leone	Other non-Sierra Leone
Under 5	28.9%	16.1%	14.3%	22.7%	25.3%	19.0%	23.1%	11.6%	25.7%	19.4%
Under 14	43.6%	35.5%	43.0%	50.3%	49.1%	31.8%	46.0%	61.0%	50.9%	61.1%
Under 18	88.2%	84.7%	83.1%	88.0%	87.6%	88.8%	85.0%	94.1%	88.3%	91.7%
18 and over	2.9%	7.8%	16.9%	5.7%	5.9%	6.9%	4.3%	4.7%	2.4%	0.0%
Don't know	8.9%	7.5%	0.0%	6.3%	6.5%	4.3%	10.7%	1.2%	9.3%	8.3%
Total	100.0% (1959)	100.0% (2413)	100.0% (35)	100.0% (159)	100.0% (151)	100.0% (116)	100.0% (511)	100.0% (391)	100.0% (798)	100.0% (38)

**Table 9 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 49 Years By Age At Circumcision
By Highest Level Of Education**

Age at Circumcision	Highest Level Of Education			
	No education	Primary	Secondary	Higher
During infancy	23.3%	19.2%	13.6%	9.2%
0	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.8%
1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%
3	0.4%	0.4%	0.9%	0.8%
4	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.0%
5	1.4%	2.5%	1.9%	2.3%
6	1.6%	1.2%	2.4%	2.3%
7	1.7%	2.1%	3.1%	1.5%
8	4.3%	3.4%	3.6%	2.3%
9	3.5%	3.8%	3.6%	6.2%
10	12.2%	11.8%	11.2%	8.5%
11	2.0%	2.6%	3.0%	5.4%
12	8.5%	8.0%	8.9%	9.2%
13	5.9%	6.4%	7.5%	3.1%
14	7.1%	6.3%	7.9%	8.5%
15	10.0%	12.9%	10.8%	9.2%
16	2.8%	5.4%	5.0%	4.6%
17	1.7%	2.2%	3.5%	3.8%
18	1.6%	2.6%	4.1%	9.2%
19	0.6%	1.1%	1.9%	3.8%
20	0.9%	0.4%	1.6%	3.1%
21	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%
22	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.8%
23	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.8%
24	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
25	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%
26	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
29	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
30	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
32	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Don't know	9.4%	6.2%	4.0%	3.8%
Total	100.00% (4410)	100.00% (853)	100.00% (1184)	100.00% (130)
Age at Circumcision(Grouped)				
Under 5	24.2%	20.3%	14.9%	10.8%
Under 14	65.3%	62.1%	60.1%	51.6%
Under 18	86.9%	88.9%	87.3%	77.7%
18 and over	3.8%	5.0%	9.1%	18.6%
Don't know	9.4%	6.2%	4.0%	3.8%

**Table 10 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 49 Years
By Person Who Performed Circumcision**

Person Who Performed Circumcision	Percentage
Traditional "circumciser"	96.4%
Don't know	2.7%
Traditional birth attendant	0.4%
Trained nurse / midwife	0.2%
Other traditional	0.2%
Doctor	0.1%
Total	100.0%(6488)

**Table 11 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 49 Years By Person Who Performed Circumcision
By Ethnic Group**

Ethnic Group	Who performed circumcision						Total
	Doctor	Trained nurse /Midwife Nurse	Traditional "circumciser"	Traditional birth attendant	Other traditional	Don't know	
Temne	0.0%	0.1%	98.3%	0.4%	0.0%	1.2%	100.0%(1936)
Mende	0.0%	0.0%	96.4%	0.6%	0.4%	2.4%	100.0%(2377)
Krio	0.0%	2.9%	97.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%(34)
Mandingo	0.0%	1.3%	91.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	100.0%(155)
Loko	0.0%	0.7%	95.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	100.0%(150)
Sherbro	0.0%	0.0%	99.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	100.0%(112)
Limba	0.2%	0.0%	96.8%	0.6%	0.0%	2.4%	100.0%(501)
Kono	0.0%	0.3%	98.4%	0.5%	0.0%	0.8%	100.0%(386)
Other Sierra Leone	0.5%	0.8%	91.7%	0.1%	0.1%	6.8%	100.0%(793)
Other non Sierra Leone	0.0%	5.6%	83.3%	0.0%	2.8%	8.3%	100.0%(36)

Table 12 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 49 Years By Benefits Of Circumcision

Circumcision Benefits	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Cleanliness/hygiene			
No	94.5%	77.40%	78.90%
Yes	5.5%	22.60%	21.10%
Total	100.0%(652)	100.0%(6605)	100.0%(7257)
Social acceptance			
No	85.3%	42.1%	46.0%
Yes	14.7%	57.9%	54.0%
Total	100.0%(652)	100.0%(6605)	100.0%(7257)
Better marriage prospects			
No	95.6%	80.8%	82.1%
Yes	4.4%	19.2%	17.9%
Total	100.0%(652)	100.0%(6605)	100.0%(7257)
Preserves virginity/prevents premarital sex			
No	97.9%	90.9%	91.0%
Yes	2.1%	9.1%	8.0%
Total	100.0%(652)	100.0%(6605)	100.0%(7257)
More sexual pleasure for men			
No	99.8%	98.6%	98.7%
Yes	0.2%	1.4%	1.3%
Total	100.0%(652)	100.0%(6605)	100.0%(7257)
Religious approval			
No	98.5%	94.9%	95.2%
Yes	1.5%	5.1%	4.8%
Total	100.0%(652)	100.0%(6605)	100.0%(7257)
Other unspecified benefit			
No	87.6%	88.9%	88.8%
Yes	12.4%	11.1%	11.2%
Total	100.0%(652)	100.0%(6605)	100.0%(7257)
No benefit			
No	31.3%	76.2%	72.2%
Yes	68.7%	23.8%	27.8%
Total	100.0%(652)	100.0%(6605)	100.0%(7257)
Circumcision is required by religion			
No	62.4%	39.1%	41.2%
Yes	19.4%	45.8%	43.4%
Don't know	18.2%	15.1%	15.4%
Total	100.00%(649)	100.00%(6572)	100.00%(7221)

Table 13 A : Non-Circumcised Females Aged 15 To 49 Years By Benefit Of Circumcision By Ethnic Group

Circumcision Benefits	Ethnic Group									
	Temne	Mende	Kriole	Mandingo	Loko	Sherbro	Limba	Kono	Other Sierra Leone	Other non Sierra Leone
Cleanliness/hygiene										
No	91.70%	92.50%	99.10%	71.40%	95.20%	100.00%	97.60%	100.00%	91.10%	100.00%
Yes	8.30%	7.50%	0.90%	28.60%	4.80%	0.00%	2.40%	0.00%	8.90%	0.00%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Social acceptance										
No	81.20%	79.20%	100.00%	85.70%	90.50%	90.90%	90.50%	86.50%	77.80%	91.70%
Yes	18.80%	20.80%	0.00%	14.30%	9.50%	9.10%	9.50%	13.50%	22.20%	8.30%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Better marriage prospects										
No	96.90%	92.20%	100.00%	100.00%	95.20%	100.00%	100.00%	97.30%	93.30%	100.00%
Yes	3.10%	7.80%	0.00%	0.00%	4.80%	0.00%	0.00%	2.70%	6.70%	0.00%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Preserves virginity/prevents premarital sex										
No	96.90%	97.60%	100.00%	85.70%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	91.10%	100.00%
Yes	3.10%	2.40%	0.00%	14.30%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	8.90%	0.00%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
More sexual pleasure for men										
No	100.00%	99.60%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Yes	0.00%	0.40%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%		0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Religious approval										
No	99.00%	96.50%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Yes	1.00%	3.50%		0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Other										
No	89.60%	85.90%	82.50%	85.70%	85.70%	90.90%	95.20%	97.30%	88.90%	91.70%
Yes	10.40%	14.10%	17.50%	14.30%	14.30%	9.10%	4.80%	2.70%	11.10%	8.30%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
No benefit										
No	32.30%	41.60%	18.40%	57.10%	23.80%	18.20%	14.30%	18.90%	37.80%	16.70%
Yes	67.70%	58.40%	81.60%	42.90%	76.20%	81.80%	85.70%	81.10%	62.20%	83.30%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Circumcision is required by religion										
No	64.60%	45.80%	85.20%	57.10%	85.70%	59.10%	85.70%	73.00%	51.20%	75.00%
Yes	17.70%	32.00%	2.60%	28.60%	9.50%	27.30%	7.10%	0.00%	23.30%	8.30%
Don't know	17.70%	22.10%	12.20%	14.30%	4.80%	13.60%	7.10%	27.00%	25.60%	16.70%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total Females	96	253	115	7	21	22	42	37	45	12

Table 13B : Circumcised Females Aged 15 To 49 By Benefit Of Circumcision By Ethnic Group

Circumcision Benefits	Ethnic Group									
	Temne	Mende	Krio	Mandingo	Loko	Sherbro	Limba	Kono	Other Sierra Leone	Other non Sierra Leone
Cleanliness/hygiene										
No	83.7%	69.2%	91.7%	82.4%	86.3%	87.1%	78.3%	94.2%	72.8%	86.1%
Yes	16.3%	30.8%	8.3%	17.6%	13.7%	12.9%	21.7%	5.8%	27.2%	13.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Social acceptance										
No	40.2%	40.0%	77.8%	57.9%	54.2%	34.5%	48.7%	54.8%	36.2%	58.3%
Yes	59.8%	60.0%	22.2%	42.1%	45.8%	65.5%	51.3%	45.2%	63.8%	41.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Better marriage prospects										
No	84.6%	74.3%	97.2%	87.4%	93.5%	96.6%	85.7%	96.2%	73.0%	94.4%
Yes	15.4%	25.7%	2.8%	12.6%	6.5%	3.4%	14.3%	3.8%	27.0%	5.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Preserves virginity/prevents premarital sex										
No	95.8%	86.7%	94.4%	91.2%	94.1%	97.4%	92.0%	97.2%	85.6%	97.2%
Yes	4.2%	13.3%	5.6%	8.8%	5.9%	2.6%	8.0%	2.8%	14.4%	2.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
More sexual pleasure for men										
No	99.5%	97.6%	97.2%	98.7%	99.3%	100.0%	99.0%	99.5%	98.5%	100.0%
Yes	0.5%	2.4%	2.8%	1.3%	0.7%		1.0%	0.5%	1.5%	
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Religious approval										
No	98.3%	90.2%	100.0%	95.6%	95.4%	99.1%	96.7%	99.0%	96.4%	97.2%
Yes	1.7%	9.8%		4.4%	4.6%	0.9%	3.3%	1.0%	3.6%	2.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Other benefit										
No	85.0%	91.7%	91.7%	87.4%	81.0%	96.6%	84.9%	98.0%	89.0%	80.6%
Yes	15.0%	8.3%	8.3%	12.6%	19.0%	3.4%	15.1%	2.0%	11.0%	19.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
No benefit										
No	77.1%	80.4%	38.9%	65.4%	66.0%	70.7%	71.0%	52.3%	82.9%	72.2%
Yes	22.9%	19.6%	61.1%	34.6%	34.0%	29.3%	29.0%	47.7%	17.1%	27.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Circumcision is required by religion										
No	46.7%	28.2%	61.1%	41.0%	58.6%	29.3%	55.2%	60.9%	28.8%	36.1%
Yes	41.8%	57.4%	25.0%	47.4%	28.9%	53.4%	26.7%	22.3%	47.5%	41.7%
Don't know	11.5%	14.4%	13.9%	11.5%	12.5%	17.2%	18.1%	16.8%	23.6%	22.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total All Circumcised Females	1963	2420	36	159	153	116	509	394	801	3636

Table 14A : Non-Circumcised Females Aged 15 To 49 Years By Benefit Of Circumcision By Highest Educational Level

Circumcision Benefits	Educational Level			
	No education	Primary	Secondary	Higher
Cleanliness/hygiene				
No	87.30%	91.90%	97.40%	97.10%
Yes	12.70%	8.10%	2.60%	2.90%
Total	100.0%(118)	100.0%(123)	100.0%(341)	100.0%(70)
Social acceptance				
No	70.30%	79.70%	89.70%	98.60%
Yes	29.70%	20.30%	10.30%	1.40%
Total	100.0%(118)	100.0%(123)	100.0%(341)	100.0%(70)
Better marriage prospects				
No	89.80%	94.30%	97.40%	98.60%
Yes	10.20%	5.70%	2.60%	1.40%
Total	100.0%(118)	100.0%(123)	100.0%(341)	100.0%(70)
Preserves virginity/prevents premarital sex				
No	96.60%	95.90%	98.80%	98.60%
Yes	3.40%	4.10%	1.20%	1.40%
Total	100.0%(118)	100.0%(123)	100.0%(341)	100.0%(70)
More sexual pleasure for men				
No	100.00%	100.00%	99.70%	100.00%
Yes	0.00%	0.00%	0.30%	0.00%
Total	100.0%(118)	100.0%(123)	100.0%(341)	100.0%(70)
Religious approval				
No	94.90%	100.00%	99.10%	98.60%
Yes	5.10%	0.00%	0.90%	1.40%
Total	100.0%(118)	100.0%(123)	100.0%(341)	100.0%(70)
Other benefit				
No	86.40%	89.40%	86.80%	90.00%
Yes	13.60%	10.60%	13.20%	10.00%
Total	100.0%(118)	100.0%(123)	100.0%(341)	100.0%(70)
No benefit				
No	50.00%	38.20%	25.80%	14.30%
Yes	50.00%	61.80%	74.20%	85.70%
Total	100.0%(118)	100.0%(123)	100.0%(341)	100.0%(70)
Circumcision is required by religion				
No	38.80%	44.60%	71.60%	87.30%
Yes	30.20%	28.10%	15.20%	7.00%
Don't know	31.00%	27.30%	13.20%	5.60%
Total	100.0%(116)	100.0%(121)	100.0%(341)	100.0%(71)

Table 14B : Circumcised Females Aged 15 To 49 Years By Benefit Of Circumcision By Highest Educational Level

Circumcision Benefits	Educational Level			
	No education	Primary	Secondary	Higher
Cleanliness/hygiene				
No	75.20%	81.40%	82.50%	78.60%
Yes	24.80%	18.60%	17.50%	21.40%
Total	100.0%(4423)	100.0%(860)	100.0%(1191)	100.0%(131)
Social acceptance				
No	35.70%	47.40%	58.90%	71.00%
Yes	64.30%	52.60%	41.10%	29.00%
Total	100.0%(4423)	100.0%(860)	100.0%(1191)	100.0%(131)
Better marriage prospects				
No	77.00%	84.80%	90.80%	91.60%
Yes	23.00%	15.20%	9.20%	8.40%
Total	100.0%(4423)	100.0%(860)	100.0%(1191)	100.0%(131)
Preserves virginity/prevents premarital sex				
No	90.30%	92.20%	92.60%	87.80%
Yes	9.70%	7.80%	7.40%	12.20%
Total	100.0%(4423)	100.0%(860)	100.0%(1191)	100.0%(131)
More sexual pleasure for men				
No	98.50%	99.10%	98.80%	99.20%
Yes	1.50%	0.90%	1.20%	0.80%
Total	100.0%(4423)	100.0%(860)	100.0%(1191)	100.0%(131)
Religious approval				
No	94.30%	94.80%	96.90%	98.50%
Yes	5.70%	5.20%	3.10%	1.50%
Total	100.0%(4423)	100.0%(860)	100.0%(1191)	100.0%(131)
Other				
No	88.50%	90.00%	89.20%	92.40%
Yes	11.50%	10.00%	10.80%	7.60%
Total	100.0%(4423)	100.0%(860)	100.0%(1191)	100.0%(131)
No benefit				
No	82.60%	69.40%	60.30%	48.10%
Yes	17.40%	30.60%	39.70%	51.90%
Total	100.0%(4423)	100.0%(860)	100.0%(1191)	100.0%(131)
Circumcision is required by religion				
No	34.10%	43.30%	51.80%	65.60%
Yes	49.10%	42.40%	38.00%	26.70%
Don't know	16.80%	14.30%	10.10%	7.60%
Total	100.0%(4402)	100.0%(856)	100.0%(1183)	100.0%(131)

Table 15 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Current Age

Age(Years)	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
15-19	49.5%	13.7%	17.0%
20-24	21.1%	15.7%	16.2%
25-29	11.4%	22.5%	21.5%
30-34	7.3%	15.2%	14.5%
35-39	4.7%	15.9%	14.9%
40-44	4.10%	9.5%	9.0
45-49	2.0%	7.5%	7.0%
Total	100.0%(660)	100.0%(6619)	100.0%(7279)

Table 16: Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Highest Educational Level

Highest Educational Level	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
No education	18.0%	67.0%	62.5%
Primary	18.0%	13.0%	13.5%
Secondary	52.0%	18.0%	21.1%
Higher	10.0%	2.0%	2.8%
Total	100.0%(660)	100.0%(6619)	100.0%(7279)

Table 17 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Religion

Religion	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Christian	20.2%	79.8%	100.0%(1908)
Islam	5.1%	94.9%	100.0%(5301)
Other	6.0%	94.0%	100.0%(50)
Total	9.1%	90.9%	100.0%(7279)

Table 18 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Temne	4.7%	95.3%	100.0% (2037)
Mende	9.7%	90.3%	100.0% (2685)
Kriole	76.2%	23.8%	100.0% (151)
Mandingo	4.2%	95.8%	100.0% (166)
Loko	12.1%	87.9%	100.0% (174)
Sherbro	15.9%	84.1%	100.0% (138)
Limba	7.6%	92.4%	100.0% (554)
Kono	8.8%	91.2%	100.0% (432)
Other Sierra Leone	5.3%	94.7%	100.0% (849)
Other Non Sierra Leone	25.0%	75.0%	100.0% (48)
Total	9.1%	90.9	100.0% (7270)

Table 19 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Relationship To Household Head

Relationship To Household Head	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Head	4.7%	10.2%	9.7%
Wife	20.5%	58.2%	54.8%
Daughter	44.7%	14.4%	17.1%
Daughter-in-law	1.4%	2.9%	2.8%
Grandchild	4.5%	1.2%	1.5%
Parent	0.0%	0.5%	0.5%
Sister	5.6%	4.7%	4.8%
Others	18.6%	7.9%	8.8%
Total	100.0%(660)	100.0%(6619)	100.0%(7279)

Table 20 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Wealth Status

Wealth Index (Quintile)	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Poorest	3.9%	96.1%	100.0%(1305)
Poorer	4.0%	96.0%	100.0%(1210)
Middle	4.4%	95.6%	100.0%(1289)
Richer	8.5%	91.5%	100.0%(1545)
Richest	19.3%	80.7%	100.0(1930)
Total	9.1%	90.9%	100.0%(7279)

Table 21 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Marital Status

Marital Status	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Current Marital Status			
Never married	68.8%	15.8%	20.6%
Married	20.6%	68.0%	63.7%
Living together	7.4%	9.5%	9.3%
Widowed	0.8%	2.9%	2.7%
Divorced	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Not living together	2.0%	3.2%	3.1%
Total	100.0%(660)	100.0%(6619)	100.0%(7279)
Number Of Unions			
Once	86.3%	76.0%	76.4%
More than once	13.7%	24.0%	23.6%
Total	100.0%(205)	100.0%(5545)	100.0%(5750)
Husband Lives In House			
Living with her	87.4%	86.1%	86.2%
Staying elsewhere	12.6%	13.9%	13.8%
Total	100.0%(183)	100.0%(5081)	100.0%(5264)
Number Of Other Wives			
No other wives	84.2%	63.9%	64.6%
1	12.0%	25.9%	25.4%
2	1.1%	6.9%	6.7%
3	0.5%	1.5%	1.5%
4	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%
Don't know	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%
Total	100.0%(183)	100.0%(5084)	100.0%(5267)

Table 22 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Age At First Marriage

Age At First Marriage (Years)	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
10	0.5%	2.0%	1.9%
11	0.5%	1.6%	1.5%
12	1.0%	3.9%	3.8%
13	4.4%	6.1%	6.0%
14	7.8%	10.2%	10.1%
15	13.6%	17.7%	17.6%
16	8.7%	11.4%	11.3%
17	8.7%	9.1%	9.1%
18	9.2%	9.9%	9.9%
19	6.3%	5.5%	5.6%
20	5.8%	6.6%	6.6%
21	5.3%	3.0%	3.1%
22	4.4%	2.5%	2.6%
23	4.4%	1.8%	1.9%
24	1.5%	1.8%	1.7%
25	2.4%	1.6%	1.6%
26	1.9%	1.0%	1.1%
27	1.5%	1.0%	1.0%
28	2.9%	0.6%	0.7%
29	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%
30	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%
31	1.5%	0.1%	0.2%
32	1.0%	0.3%	0.3%
33	1.5%	0.3%	0.3%
34	1.0%	0.1%	0.1%
35	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%
36	1.0%	0.1%	0.1%
37	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%
38	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
40	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%
41	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
42	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%
43	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
44	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
45	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%
46	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
47	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100.0%(206)	100.00%(5573)	100.0%(5779)
Age At First Marriage (Years)(Grouped)			
Under 14	6.0%	13.0%	13.0%
Under 18	45.2%	62.0%	61.3%
18 and over	54.8%	38.0%	38.7%
Total	100.0%(206)	100.00%(5573)	100.0%(5779)

**Table 23 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status
By Partner's Age**

Age(Years)	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
15 to 19	1.2%	0.2%	0.3%
20 to 24	7.3%	2.3%	2.4%
25 to 29	13.9%	9.4%	9.4%
30 to 34	15.7%	13.0%	13.1%
35 to 39	23.6%	20.1%	20.3%
40 to 44	8.9%	15.2%	14.8%
45 to 49	13.4%	14.6%	14.4%
50 to 54	7.3%	7.7%	7.7%
55 to 59	3.4%	5.8%	5.7%
60 to 64	1.1%	6.5%	6.4%
65 to 69	1.1%	3.1%	3.1%
70 and over	2.8%	2.0%	2.0%
Total	100%(178)	100%(4884)	100%(5062)

**Table 24 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By How Previous
Marriage Or Union Ended**

Aspect Of Marriage	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
How previous marriage or union ended			
Death / widowhood	11.1%	33.8%	33.4%
Divorce	5.6%	14.9%	14.7%
Separation	83.3%	51.3%	51.9%
Total	100.0%(18)	100.0%(1089)	100.0%(1107)
Who received most of late husband's property			
Respondent	28.6%	14.3%	14.5%
Other wife	14.3%	6.1%	6.2%
Spouse's children	0.0%	8.9%	8.8%
Spouse's family	28.6%	46.7%	46.4%
Other	14.3%	6.1%	6.2%
No property	14.3%	17.0%	17.9%
	100.0%(7)	100.0%(553)	100.0%(560)
Respondent received any of late husband's assets or valuable			
No	80.0%	87.9%	87.8%
Yes	20.0%	12.1%	12.2%
Total	100.0%(5)	100.0%(472)	100.0%(477)

Table 25 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Age At First Intercourse

Age (Years)	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Not had intercourse	29.8%	4.5%	6.8%
8	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
9	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
10	0.5%	1.0%	0.9%
11	0.3%	0.6%	0.6%
12	1.1%	2.8%	2.7%
13	2.4%	5.1%	4.8%
14	5.9%	9.5%	9.2%
15	13.7%	21.0%	20.3%
16	9.6%	11.1%	11.0%
17	8.5%	7.1%	7.2%
18	9.9%	9.1%	9.2%
19	5.8%	2.6%	2.9%
20	5.3%	3.1%	3.3%
21	2.0%	0.7%	0.8%
22	0.6%	0.5%	0.6%
23	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%
24	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%
25	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
26	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
27	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%
28	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
30	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
35	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
37	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
41	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
At first union	3.2%	20.0%	18.5%
Don't know	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Total	100.0%(658)	100.0%(6595)	100.0%(7253)
Age at first intercourse (Grouped)			
Age(Years)			
Not had intercourse	29.8%	4.5%	6.8%
Under 14	4.5%	9.7%	9.2%
Under 18	42.2%	58.4%	56.9%
18 and over	25.0%	16.9%	17.7%
At first union	3.2%	20.0%	18.5%
Don't know	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

Table 26 : Females Aged 15 to 19 Years By Circumcision Status By Comparison With Age Of First Sexual Partner (First Sexual Partner Younger, Same Age Or Older)

First Sexual Partner Younger, Same Age Or Older	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Younger	0.4%	1.6%	1.4%
About the same age	9.5%	7.4%	7.7%
Less than 10 years older	67.6%	52.2%	54.6%
10 or more years older	15.3%	28.7%	26.7%
Older, don't know difference	3.8%	6.7%	6.2%
Don't know	3.4%	3.3%	3.4%
Total	100.0%(262)	100.0%(1468)	100.0%(1730)

Table 27: Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Circumcision Status By Age At First Birth

Age(Years)	Whether Circumcised		
	No	Yes	Total
9	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
10	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
11	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
12	1.5%	3.0%	2.9%
13	1.5%	4.2%	4.0%
14	3.4%	6.3%	6.2%
15	7.1%	9.7%	9.6%
16	11.3%	10.4%	10.4%
17	11.3%	10.6%	10.6%
18	9.8%	10.7%	10.7%
19	10.9%	8.9%	8.9%
20	7.9%	7.7%	7.7%
21	8.6%	6.2%	6.3%
22	4.1%	5.2%	5.1%
23	5.6%	3.6%	3.7%
24	3.8%	3.1%	3.1%
25	3.4%	2.4%	2.5%
26	1.9%	1.7%	1.7%
27	2.6%	1.5%	1.6%
28	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%
29	1.9%	0.9%	1.0%
30	0.4%	1.0%	1.0%
31	0.8%	0.6%	0.6%
32	0.0%	0.3%	0.2%
33	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%
34	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
35	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
36	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
37	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%
38	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
39	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
40	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
41	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
44	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100.0% (266)	100.0% (5548)	100.0% (5814)

Table 28 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Aspect Of Pregnancy

Aspect Of Pregnancy	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Whether pregnancy wanted			
Then	57.5%	69.0%	68.2%
Later	27.5%	19.0%	19.7%
Not at all	15.0%	11.9%	12.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Ever had a terminated pregnancy			
No	90.7%	88.4%	88.6%
Yes	9.3%	11.6%	11.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 29 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Total Children Ever Born

Number Of Children	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
0	59.7%	16.2%	20.1%
1	17.6%	15.5%	15.7%
2	9.4%	16.7%	16.0%
3	6.4%	13.8%	13.1%
4	3.6%	11.7%	11.0%
5	1.7%	8.7%	8.0%
6	0.8%	6.7%	6.1%
7	0.3%	4.6%	4.2%
8	0.2%	3.0%	2.8%
9	0.3%	1.6%	1.4%
10	0.0%	0.9%	0.8%
11	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%
12	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
13	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	100.0%(660)	100.0%(6619)	100.0%(7279)
Number Of Children (Grouped)			
0	59.7%	16.2%	20.1%
1 to 2	27.0%	32.2%	31.7%
3 to 5	11.7%	34.2%	32.1%
6 and over	1.8%	17.4%	15.9%
Total	100.0%(660)	100.0%(6619)	100.0%(7279)

Table 30 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Contraceptive Knowledge And Practice

Contraceptive Knowledge And Practice	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Knowledge of any method			
Knows no method	21.4%	24.3%	24.1%
Knows only folkloric	1.5%	4.4%	4.2%
Knows only traditional. method	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%
Knows modern method	76.8%	71.1%	71.6%
Total	100.0%(660)	100.0%(6619)	100.0%(7279)
Ever use of any method			
Never used	63.0%	74.4%	73.3%
Used only folkloric	0.5%	1.9%	1.7%
Used only traditional method	3.6%	1.0%	1.2%
Used modern method	32.9%	22.8%	23.7%
Total	100.0%(660)	100.0%(6619)	100.0%(7279)
Pattern of use			
Currently using	18.5%	10.6%	11.3%
Used since last birth	4.8%	4.2%	4.3%
Used before last birth	13.6%	10.8%	11.0%
Never used	63.0%	74.4%	73.3%
Total	100.0%(660)	100.0%(6619)	100.0%(7279)
Intention to use			
Use later	38.0%	30.5%	31.1%
Unsure about use	35.0%	24.9%	25.7%
Does not intend	27.0%	44.6%	43.2%
Total	100.0%(526)	100.0%(5844)	100.0%(6370)

Table 31 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Use Of Condoms

Whether Used Condom	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Last intercourse used condom			
No	93.8%	97.5%	97.2%
Yes	6.2%	2.5%	2.8%
	100.0%(389)	100.0%(4794)	100.0%(5183)
Condom used at first sexual intercourse			
No	95.9%	96.1%	96.1%
Yes	4.1%	2.9%	3.1%
Don't know	0.0%	1.0%	0.9%
Total	100.0%(268)	100.0%(1593)	100.0%(1861)

Table 32 : Females Aged 15 to 49 By Circumcision Status By Future Preferred Method

Preferred Future Method	Respondent circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Injections	27.0%	46.9%	44.9%
Pill	44.0%	29.1%	30.6%
Other	4.0%	7.6%	7.2%
Condom	5.5%	3.0%	3.2%
Female Sterilization	1.0%	2.4%	2.3%
IUD	3.5%	1.5%	1.7%
Periodic Abstinence	1.0%	0.6%	0.6%
Lactational amenorrhea	0.5%	0.1%	0.2%
Male Sterilization	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%
Withdrawal	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Norplant	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Female condom	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%
Foam or jelly	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Don't know	12.5%	8.6%	9.0%
Total	100.0%(660)	100.0%(6619)	100.0%(7279)

**Table 33 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 19 Years And Daughters
By Type Of Circumcision**

Type Of Circumcision	Circumcised Female	Daughter
Flesh removed from genital area		
No	5.4%	5.4%
Yes	85.4%	83.5%
Don't know	9.2%	11.1%
Total	100.0%(6582)	100.0%(1336)
Genital area just nicked without removing any flesh		
No	9.7%	7.3%
Yes	27.5%	27.3%
Don't know	62.8%	65.5%
Total	100.0%(959)	100.0%(220)
Genital area sewn closed		
No	82.8%	80.0%
Yes	2.6%	5.5%
Don't know	14.5%	13.9%
Total	100.0%(6580)	100.0%(1333)

**Table 34 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 19 Years And Daughters
By Age At Circumcision**

Age(Years)	Circumcised Female	Daughter
Less than 1	20.8%	17.2%
1	0.0%	0.8%
2	0.2%	1.5%
3	0.5%	2.8%
4	0.3%	3.1%
5	1.7%	6.4%
6	1.7%	5.1%
7	2.0%	5.1%
8	4.0%	9.2%
9	3.6%	6.2%
10	11.9%	12.5%
11	2.3%	3.4%
12	8.5%	6.8%
13	6.2%	3.0%
14	7.1%	3.1%
15	10.5%	6.3%
16	3.5%	1.7%
17	2.1%	0.9%
18	2.3%	1.0%
19	1.0%	0.2%
20 and over	28.1%	13.9%
Don't know	7.9%	3.3%
Total	100.0%(6577)	100.0%(1325)

**Table 35 : Circumcised Females Aged 15 to 19 Years And Daughters
By Person Who Performed Circumcision**

Person Who Performed Circumcision	Circumcised Female	Daughter
Doctor	0.1%	0.1%
Trained nurse / midwife	0.2%	0.5%
Traditional "circumciser"	96.4%	98.0%
Traditional birth attendant	0.4%	0.5%
Other traditional	0.2%	0.1%
Don't know	2.7%	0.8%
Total	100.0%(6488)	100.0%(1324)

Table 36 : Females Aged 15 To 49 Years By Circumcision Status By Intention To Circumcise Daughter

	Whether Circumcised		Total
	No	Yes	
Any Daughter Who Is Not Circumcised			
No	20.0%	50.6%	50.5%
Yes	80.0%	49.3%	49.4%
Don't know	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Total	100.0%(5)	100.0%(1338)	100.0%(1343)
Intends to have daughter(s) circumcised in future			
No	76.2%	10.7%	13.4%
Yes	17.9%	83.1%	80.4%
Don't know	6.0%	6.2%	6.2%
Total	100.0%(151)	100.0%(3531)	100.0%(3682)
Whether The Practice Should Continue In Future			
Continued	24.3%	69.6%	65.5%
Discontinued	65.4%	22.8%	26.6%
Depends	4.8%	4.1%	4.1%
Don't know	5.5%	3.5%	3.7%
Total	100.0%(650)	100.0%(6582)	100.0%(7232)

**Table 37 : Males Aged 15 To 59 Years By Willingness To Marry A Woman
Not Circumcised By Type Of Place Of Residence**

Type Of Place Of Residence	Whether Willing To Marry A Woman Not Circumcised			Total
	No	Yes	Don't know	
Region				
Eastern	33.3%	58.8%	7.9%	100.0%(786)
Northern	48.2%	46.1%	5.7%	100.0%(841)
Southern	33.6%	58.7%	7.7%	100.0%(797)
Western	25.7%	69.8%	4.5%	100.0%(666)
Total	35.8%	57.7%	6.5%	100.0%(3090)
Type of place of residence				
Urban	29.5%	63.3%	7.3%	100.0%(1331)
Rural	40.6%	53.5%	5.9%	100.0%(1759)
Total	35.8%	57.7%	6.5%	100.0%(3090)
De facto place of residence				
Capital, large city	24.7%	69.8%	5.6%	100.0%(503)
Small city	33.4%	54.6%	12.0%	100.0%(416)
Town	31.3%	64.1%	4.6%	100.0%(412)
Countryside	40.6%	53.5%	5.9%	100.0%(1759)
Total	35.8%	57.7%	6.5%	100.0%(3090)

**Table 38 : Males Aged 15 To 59 Years By Willingness To Marry A Woman
Not Circumcised By Ethnicity**

Ethnic Group	Whether Willing To Marry A Woman Not Circumcised			Total
	No	Yes	Don't know	
Temne	41.3%	54.2%	4.4%	100.0%(907)
Mende	30.7%	63.4%	5.9%	100.0%(1116)
Kriole	11.9%	80.6%	7.5%	100.0%(67)
Mandingo	38.1%	54.8%	7.1%	100.0%(84)
Loko	37.5%	57.8%	4.7%	100.0%(64)
Sherbro	34.1%	61.4%	4.5%	100.0%(44)
Limba	30.3%	59.0%	10.8%	100.0%(195)
Kono	35.8%	47.6%	16.6%	100.0%(187)
Other Sierra Leone	44.1%	50.0%	5.9%	100.0%(404)
Other non Sierra Leone	27.8%	55.6%	16.7%	100.0%(18)
Total	35.8%	57.6%	6.5%	100.0%(3086)

**Table 39 : Males Aged 15 To 59 Years By Willingness To Marry A Woman
Not Circumcised By Selected Characteristics**

Characteristic	Whether Willing To Marry A Woman Not Circumcised			Total
	No	Yes	Don't know	
Religion				
Christian	29.4%	62.8%	7.9%	100.0%(776)
Islam	37.9%	56.1%	6.0%	100.0%(2295)
Bahai	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%(3)
Traditional	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	100.0%(3)
None	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%(3)
Total	35.8%	57.7%	6.5%	100.0%(3080)
Marital Status				
Never married	33.4%	57.6%	9.1%	100.0%(1049)
Married	37.6%	57.1%	5.3%	100.0%(1758)
Living together	33.9%	63.2%	2.9%	100.0%(171)
Widowed	36.8%	52.6%	10.5%	100.0%(19)
Divorced	39.1%	60.9%	0.0%	100.0%(23)
Not living together	30.0%	62.9%	7.1%	100.0%(70)
Total	35.8%	57.7%	6.5%	100.0%(3090)
Level Of Education				
No education	42.0%	51.3%	6.7%	100.0%(1437)
Primary	36.6%	55.5%	7.9%	100.0%(443)
Secondary	29.0%	65.0%	6.0%	100.0%(1030)
Higher	22.8%	72.8%	4.4%	100.0%(180)
Total	35.8%	57.7%	6.5%	100.0%(3090)
Wealth index				
Poorest	42.5%	49.1%	8.4%	100.0%(574)
Poorer	42.3%	53.5%	4.3%	100.0%(492)
Middle	41.3%	52.5%	6.2%	100.0%(533)
Richer	30.6%	61.9%	7.5%	100.0%(653)
Richest	27.9%	66.1%	6.0%	100.0%(838)
Total	35.8%	57.7%	6.5%	100.0%(3090)

Table 40 : Males Aged 15 To 59 Years By Perceptions Of Benefits
Of Circumcision

Circumcision Benefits	Percentage
Cleanliness/hygiene	
No	80.1%
Yes	19.9%
Total	100.0%(3121)
Social acceptance	
No	60.1%
Yes	39.9%
Total	100.0%(3121)
Better marriage prospects	
No	84.6%
Yes	15.4%
Total	100.0%(3121)
Preserves virginity/prevent premarital sex	
No	92.1%
Yes	7.9%
Total	100.0%(3121)
More sexual pleasure for men	
No	96.4%
Yes	3.6%
Total	100.0%(3121)
Religious approval	
No	97.3%
Yes	2.7%
Total	100.0%(3121)
Other unspecified benefit	
No	86.1%
Yes	13.9%
Total	100.0%(3121)
No benefit	
No	61.6%
Yes	38.4%
Total	100.0%(3121)
Circumcision is required by religion	
No	51.2%
Yes	31.2%
Don't know	17.6%
Total	100.0%(3121)
Circumcision should continue or be stopped	
Continued	44.1%
Discontinued	42.7%
Depends	7.3%
Don't know	5.9%
Total	100.0%(3121)

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