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National Statistical Office



# **Survey Report: Traditional Practices in Malawi**

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# Motivation

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- Dearth of credible evidence on social norms especially on sensitive subjects for planning, policy and advocacy
- Traditional practices that harm the development and well-being of children are **widespread in developing countries**, e.g. FGM/C (Efferson et al. 2015; Vogt et al. 2016), child marriage (Field and Ambrus 2008; Corno, Hildebrandt, and Voena 2016), or sexual initiation rituals (Skinner et al. 2013).
- Malawi has a particularly diverse cultural heritage. Different regions follow various practices, some of which may be potentially harmful to the development and well-being of children.
- There is no general answer to **why societies participate in harmful traditional practices**. Typical explanations include intrinsic or extrinsic motives related to the practice (e.g. Vogt et al. 2016) and conformity (e.g. Mackie and LeJeune 2009).

# Open questions for Research

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The main purpose of this survey is to provide nationally and regionally representative prevalence measures of some traditional practices in Malawi as well as possible decision makers and driving forces behind these practices.

- 1) Among traditional practices, what is the prevalence of those that potentially harm children?
- 2) Who shapes and reinforces these practices?
- 3) What are the drivers behind these practices?

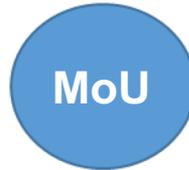
# A Four-Party Partnership



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# Survey Design

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## **A nationally representative multi-stage stratified cluster sampling:**

- Urban/rural strata
- Three regions = 8,260 HHs in total
- Oversampled three districts due to perceived high prevalence - Mangochi, Mulanje, and Phalombe
- 412 EAs/villages covered

## **5 questionnaires:**

- Household
- Female
- Male
- Experiments
- Village chiefs

# Summary Statistics

## Number of completed questionnaires:

	North	Center	South	Total
Households	2,297	2,302	2,907	7,506
Women's surveys	2,283	2,309	2,817	7,409
Men's surveys	1,786	1,660	1,774	5,220
Experiments	2,554	2,464	2,967	7,985

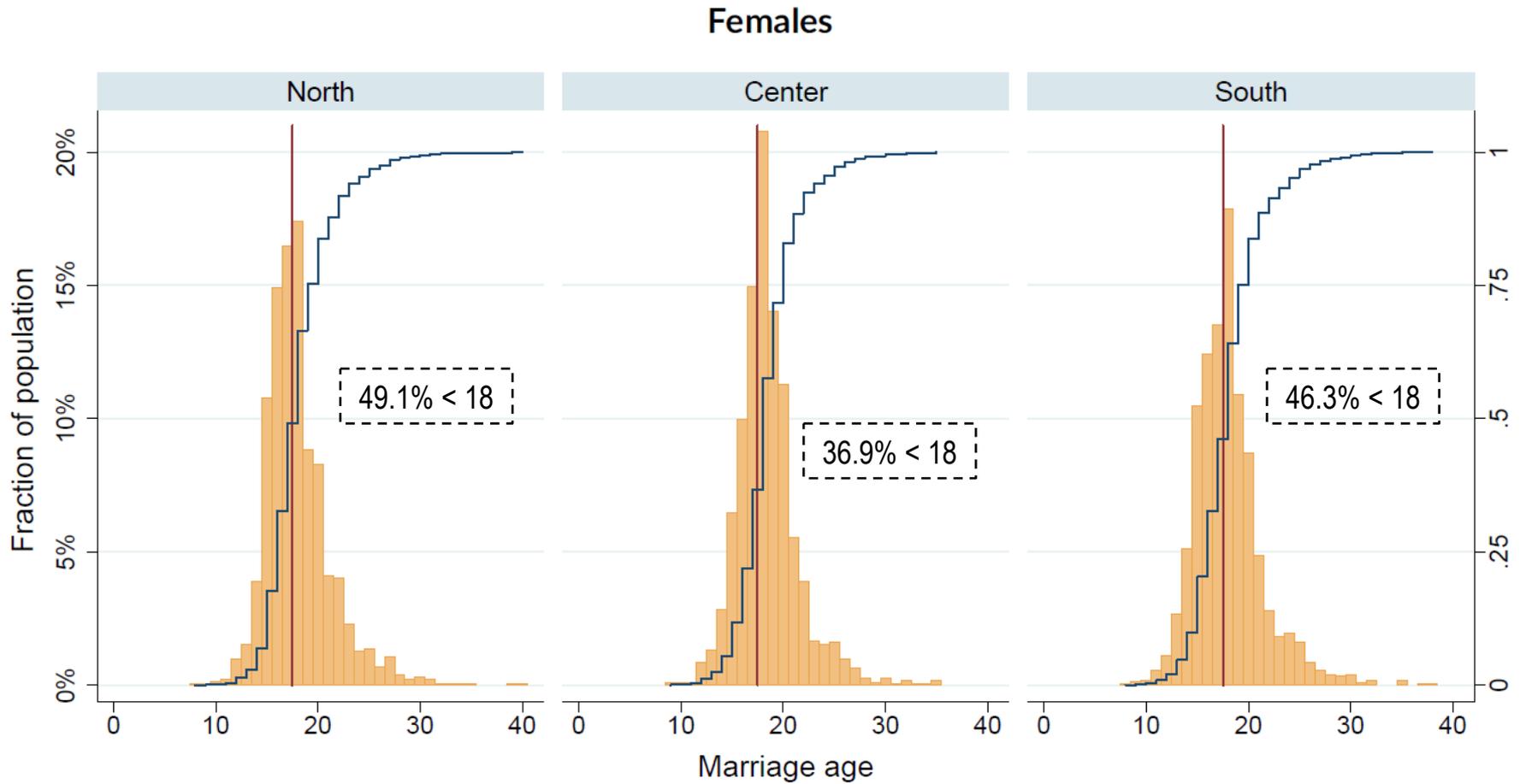
## Summary statistics of respondents:

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Female	0.58	0.49	0	1
Age	37.72	16.26	15	98

# Main results

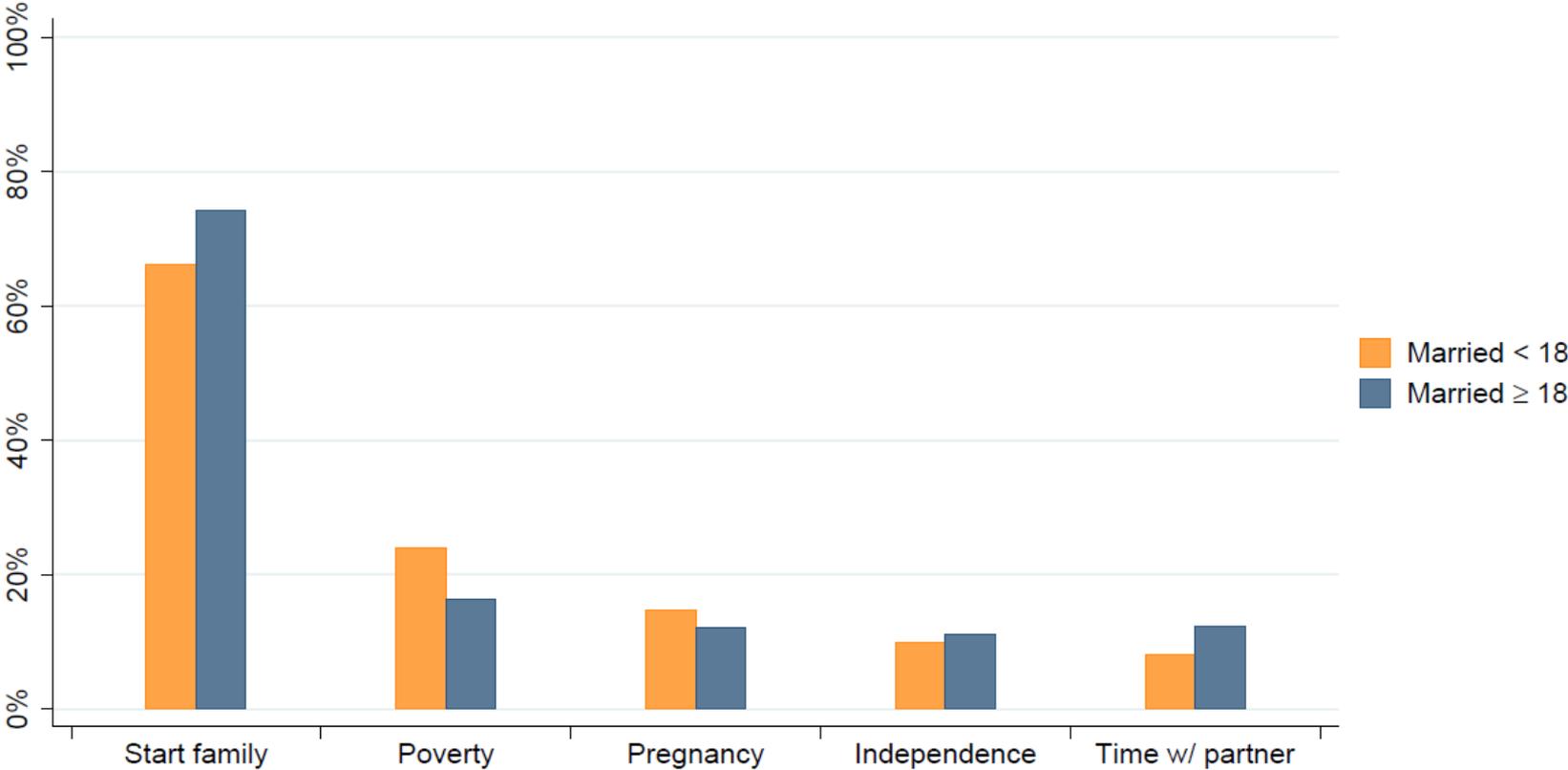
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# Age at First Marriage: Females



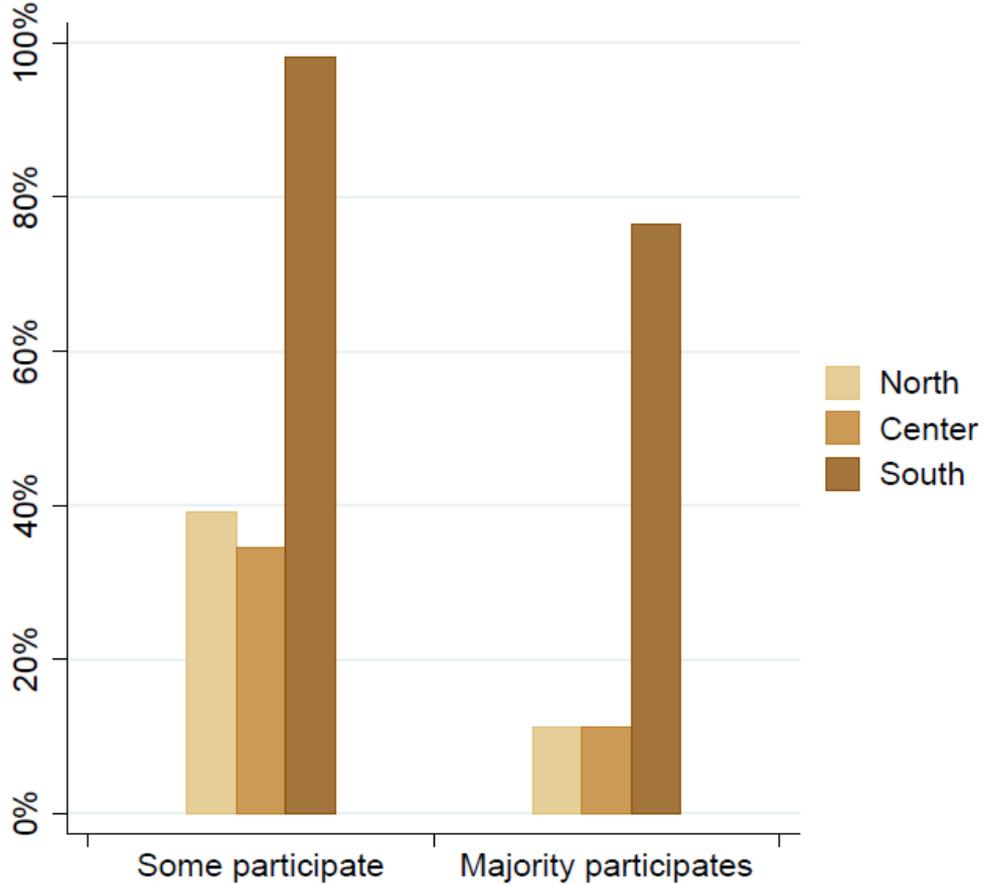
# Marriage: Drivers

*Reasons for female marriage by marriage age*



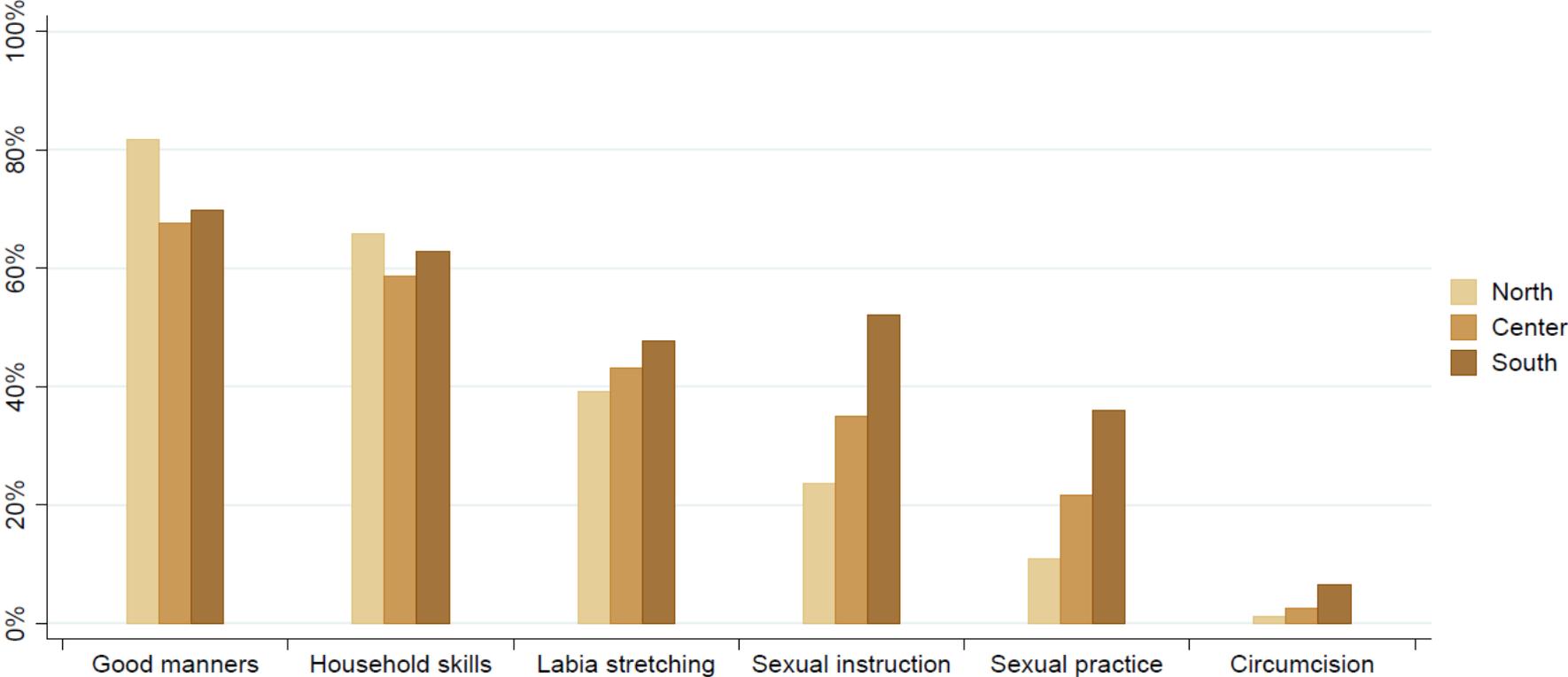
# Initiation Rituals: Participation

*Overall prevalence of initiation rituals*



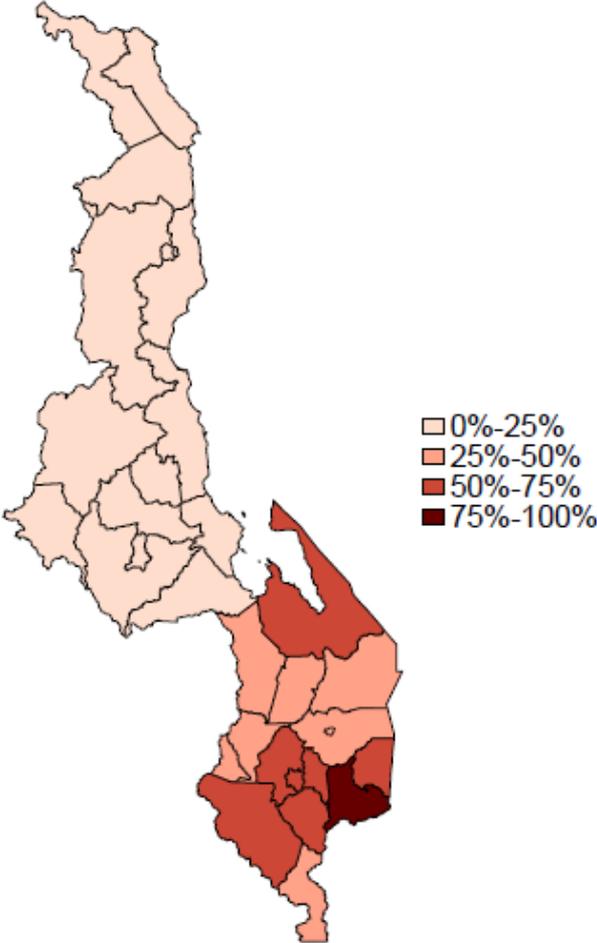
# Initiation Rituals: Content

*Content at girls' initiation rituals by region*



# Sexual Initiation Rituals: Participation

*Prevalence of sexual initiation rituals across districts of Malawi*



# Conclusion

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- Children in Malawi are often exposed to traditional practices that affect their future development.
- Child marriage, for example, is very common with at least two in every five girls getting married before the age of 18
- In Malawi traditional sexual initiation rituals may be closely related to child marriage.
- These rituals are often intended to prepare children for adulthood but may involve forced and unprotected sexual intercourse.
  
- The official report is **embargoed** until validation by relevant stakeholders in Malawi.
- The report will be published soon on CCWD and UNICEF's websites