

# Being born female is dangerous to your health.

## INFANCY (0–5 years)

**70 million girls** come into the world every year. At least as many are never born.



### challenges

#### sex-selective abortion and infanticide

Many fewer young girls reach childhood than biology would predict, due mainly to the devaluing of girls and women.

#### neglect in allocating food, nurturance, and health care

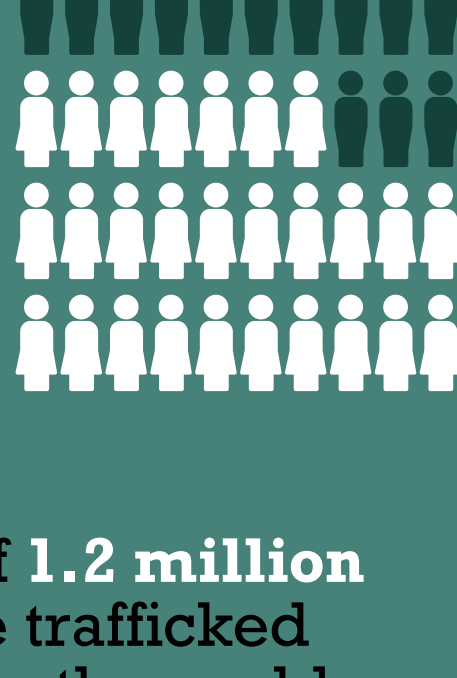
In poor areas, infant boys are breastfed longer than infant girls and have priority access to medical care.



**250,000 girls die each year** primarily in South Central Asia and China, because they experience some kind of disadvantage relative to boys.

## CHILDHOOD (5–10 years)

Of the **142 million** children out of school worldwide, girls make up **54%**.



### challenges

#### child labor

Millions of girls work as domestic servants and unpaid household help, and are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

#### child trafficking

Girls are deprived of the right to control their physical person through exploitation for prostitution, because of poverty and lack of education.

#### female genital mutilation (FGM)

This violent and traumatic practice with no health benefits and many horrific effects determines the value of a girl in some societies.

**90% girls of 1.2 million children** are trafficked every year in the world



particularly in Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, Central and Eastern Africa, and some regions of Latin America.

Trafficking is modern-day slave trading for domestic labor and sex work.

**age of female genital mutilation:**

**18 months–2 years**  
Somalia and Sudan  
**6–7 years**  
most of Africa



## ADOLESCENCE (10–24 years)

Between **20%** and **48%** adolescent girls worldwide are **forced** into their first sexual experience.



### challenges

#### early marriage

Women who marry young often have little control over fertility-related decisions, and they may miss opportunities to attend school or develop job skills.

#### early childbearing

Babies born to mothers younger than 18 or even 20 are more likely to be born underweight and to die within the first year.

#### HIV / AIDS

HIV is spreading fastest in adolescent girls and young women. Babies can be infected by HIV+ mothers at birth or through breastfeeding.

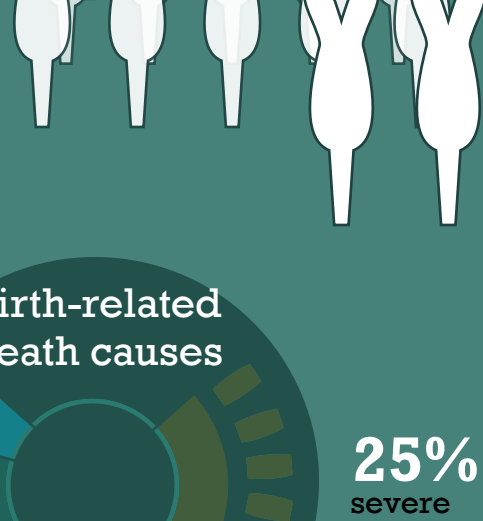
**In Eastern and Southern Africa, the main risk factor for women contracting HIV is being married.**

Their husbands are usually older and have several extramarital partners.



## ADULTHOOD (24–45 years)

Over **half a million women** die every year of almost completely preventable birth-related injuries and illnesses.



### challenges

#### maternity death road

Maternal mortality is the end of a road connecting poverty, illiteracy, lack of access to nutrition and family planning, and lack of access to health and maternal care.

#### domestic violence

A pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion.



#### The need for safe, legal abortion

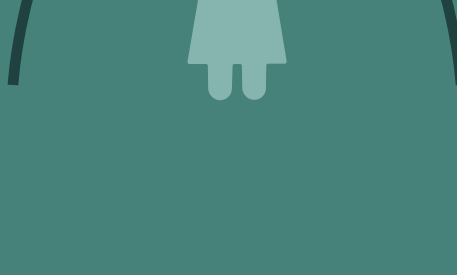
Contraceptives reduce the incidence of abortion, but do not eliminate the need. Even if used perfectly, their failure rate would cause 6 million unwanted pregnancies a year. In their usual imperfect use, they produce 28 out of the

**yearly 44 million unwanted pregnancies.**

## AGING (over 45 years)

Women do **66%** of the world's work, but earn **10%** of income and possess **1%** of property.

Yet, women past reproductive age are considered old and unproductive.



### challenges

#### the feminization of aging

Older women face a level of isolation, abandonment, social exclusion, deprivation of choices, status, finances, and property that does not affect older men.

#### caregiving

Elderly women are caregivers for the young, the ill, the even older, and the dying, particularly of HIV/AIDS. They provide more health care than the health system.

#### a lifetime of labor

The harmful effects of women's domestic labor are compounded with time. In old age, many will suffer from malnutrition, indoor pollution exposure, and wear and tear on their bodies and minds.

Every year in Tanzania, **500 women are murdered**

as a result of **witchcraft accusations.**

Older women receive the majority of witchcraft allegations because they embody certain characteristics associated with witches: grey hair, wrinkled skin, red eyes, living alone.

married in sub-Saharan Africa:



In parts of Kenya and Zimbabwe, when a woman is widowed, she and her possessions become the property of her husband's family, usually a brother. If the widow challenges this practice, she is isolated by society.

## Sources and Further Reading

Still an Unequal World: Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (1995) [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/256/hdr\\_1995\\_en\\_complete\\_nostats.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/256/hdr_1995_en_complete_nostats.pdf)

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Violence Against Women: A Factsheet from Amnesty International USA (2005) [http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/vaw\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/vaw_fact_sheet.pdf)

Women, Ageing and Health: A Framework for Action from World Health Organization (2007) <http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Women-ageing-health-lowres.pdf>