

Knowledge, behavior and ambitions of adolescent girls

Introduction: CSO conducted Iraq Women Integrated Social and Health Survey (I-WISH) in July 2011 in cooperation with KRSO, ministry of health, ministry of woman affairs and other relevant public bodies, with support from United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and **Pan Arab** Population and Family Health Project (PAPFAM), as well as WHO, UN-Woman, UNICEF and UNDP. This survey is the first survey that addresses women issues on the basis of life cycle approach (adolescence, reproductive, after productive and elderly stages) from empowerment, health, reproductive health violence against women and other relevant social and health dimensions to establish a comprehensive database on Iraqi woman issues across life cycle. The innovation in I-WISH is the comprehensive approach beyond reproductive role of women, and the involvement of new modules on female adolescent and a module on man knowledge, perception and in regard to women issues. The survey is based on a cluster multi stage random sample of 10,620 households derived from the listing frame of population census conducted in 2009. Following is the main findings on “**Knowledge, behavior and ambitions of adolescent girls**”

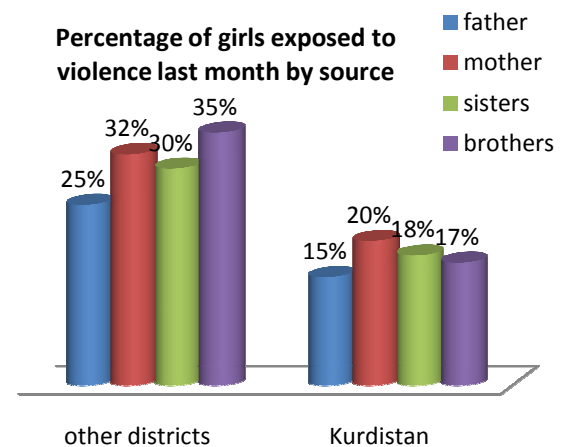
Demographic and social characteristics: Population projections of CSO reveal that the total number of girls 10-14 years in Iraq is estimated to 1.9 million; which comprises 6 percent of total population in Iraq. According to the survey, 65.4 percent of these girls are in urban areas, and 34.6 percent in rural areas. The survey results showed that 82.4 percent of girls 10-14 years are enrolled in schools, enrollment rate is higher in Kurdistan region (92.9%) compared with other governorates (80.7%); and it is higher in the urban areas (87.9%) compared with rural areas (70.7%). I-WISH survey results showed that 36.4 percent of the girls 10-14 years have already completed the elementary stage, while there are 42 percent are still at this schooling stage. Furthermore, 3.7 percent completed intermediate school. Interestingly, about 9.3 percent of girls 10-14 years were unable to read, of whom 4.8 percent in the urban areas against 18.8 percent in rural areas.



Knowledge of reproductive health: Survey results showed that about half (54.3 %) of girls 10-14 years know female's puberty changes, (52.4%) in Kurdistan against (54.6%) in other governorates. The main source of knowledge came from home, then from educational institutions with a major statistical differences. Only one fifth of girls reported to be aware of male's puberty changes; and the main source of this knowledge came from home then from school. School are more important as a source of knowledge about adolescent girls' knowledge on male's puberty. As for the period and girl's awareness on how to deal with it, the survey data showed that 52.8 percent of the girls have the right knowledge and the main source of this knowledge came from home. Generally speaking, home is the main source of girls knowledge about reproductive health, and there is lack of knowledge about male's puberty signs.

Behavior: Behaviors of household members represent an important element in upbringing adolescent girl; and in preparing her for an appropriate and a health reproductive age of her life cycle. I-WISH data showed that, in general, the Iraqi girl does not feel equal with her brother in the household.

Only 49.3 percent of girls reported to always receive equal treatment in the household with their counterparts brothers; this percentage is higher in Kurdistan (60%) compared with other governorates (47.5%). This applies to the way the mother and father deals with their children, where 30.6 percent of the girls 10-14 years reported that their mothers discriminate some time or always between boys and girls compared with 29.6 percent for their fathers. As for issues concerning reproductive health, more than half of the girls 10-14 years said that their mothers have already talked to them about female's puberty changes. This percentage decreases in Kurdistan (38%) compared with other governorates (49.9%).



On the other hand, Iraqi adolescent girl in general is exposed to domestic violence. More than one-fifth of them were beaten or insulted by their fathers during the month that preceded the survey, and more than one-quarter were beaten or insulted by their mothers or sisters, and less than third were victims of domestic violence by their brothers. Girls in Kurdistan are less exposed to domestic violence comparing to other Iraqi governorates. It is worth noting that brothers are the main source of violence against adolescent girls, and this may be connected to the way the family differentiates between boys and girls in treatment and rights.

Physical and physiological health and access to information: Almost one out of ten girls between 10-14 years old exercise sports regularly. 8.3 percent of the girls reported to know girls 10-14 years old who smoke cigarettes. On the other hand, about 51.9 percent of the girls have sometimes or regularly nightmares, and 65.6 percent suffer usually or sometimes from nyctophobia. Furthermore, 27.4 percent of girls prefer usually or sometimes to play alone and 77.8 percent said that they usually or sometimes are allowed to choose what to wear. As for access to IT only one-fifth of the girls said that they use computers and one-tenth of them have access to the internet. The percentage of using computers and having access to the internet is higher in Kurdistan than other governorates. About 8.5 percent of girls 10-14 years have mobile phones and this percentage is lower in Kurdistan (6.2%) compared (8.9%) in other governorates.

Attitudes and ambitions: Prevalence of marriage and reproduction are not seem to witness substantial changes in the coming years if the perceptions and attitudes of adolescent girls remain at this level in regard to age of marriage and number of ideal children which will affect household size and population growth. The results showed that girls in other governorates of Iraq believe that the ideal age of marriage is almost 20 years compared with 22 years in Kurdistan region. On the other hand, girls in other governorates believe that the suitable age of marriage for men is 23 years and in Kurdistan 24 years.

The survey results showed that adolescent girls in other governorates of Iraq reported that the average ideal number of children is 3.6 compared with 3.4 in Kurdistan. Most of the girls believe that number of children should be decided by mutual agreement with the husband. On the other hand, there is a different perspective between the girls about the level of education for both men and women; girls believe that men should have higher level of education than women. The table also show that parents decide the level of education that the girl must have more than they do with their sons. As for future ambitions of adolescent girls, 19.5 percent of them want to be house wives, 9 percent of them aspire to be a public or political figure and 64.1 percent of them want to have a job in education or health services. Girls also believe that there are many challenges that prevent them from achieving their ambitions. 11.4 percent of them reported early marriage, 12.0 percent reported economic challenges, 13.2 percent said it is the current security situation and 3.8 percent believe it is the society attitude regarding women roles.

Percentage of girls between 10-14 and their perspective of the lowest accepted level of education for men and women

Minimum level of education	Man	Woman
Not important	4.1	5.2
Elementary-primary	18.0	27.0
Diploma and higher education	47.6	41.9
Individual ambition	28.4	20.9
Family ambition	1.9	5.0
Total	100	100

Knowledge Needs: Most of the girls between 10-14 said that they need more information about different aspects concerning their health, reproductive health and other life skills. In particular, 87.1 percent of the girls reported to need more knowledge in different areas concerning their health and their future. The need for more religious information was the first need, followed by knowledge on their rights and duties towards their family, dealing with adults and self expression. It is remarkable that more than half of the girls need knowledge on how to deal with their male counterparts.

Percentage of girls 10-14 who need for more life skills knowledge

Area	Kurdistan	Other governorates	Iraq
Girls rights and duties inside the family	73.8	61.7	63.4
Right Nutrition	72.2	58.5	60.4
Sport activities	72.3	49.7	52.8
Free self expression	67.2	60.1	61.0
Dealing with adults	72.3	61.4	62.9
Dealing with disabled	75.0	57.8	60.2
Dealing with males	71.8	51.1	54.0
Child abuse and fighting against it	67.9	52.8	54.9
Religion rights and duties	74.2	70.6	71.1

This percentage increases in Kurdistan region (71.8%) compared with other governorates (51.1%). There is also an important proportion who need more knowledge about violence on children and how to combat it.

