

» Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.«

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16

Forced marriage is internationally recognized as form of gender-based violence. The Istanbul convention marks forced marriage as a serious form of violence against women.

In 2017, the International Labour Organization designated forced marriage as a form of modern slavery.

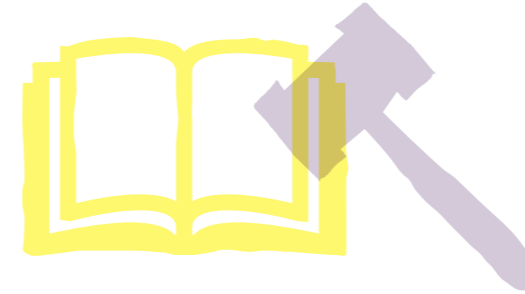
## Definitions

“ A forced marriage is a marriage contracted without the free and valid consent of one or both partners. There is always an element of constraint – be it the need to marry at all or the need to marry a certain partner.

“ The freedom to accept or refuse the marriage differentiates forced marriages from arranged marriages in which the families of one or both spouses take a leading role in choosing suitable partners.

“ Child marriages in which one or both spouses are under 18 are closely linked to forced marriages. It is recognized at international and EU level that children lack the capacity to take a fully informed and consensual decision to enter into a marriage. Child marriages hinder the victim's access to health, education or opportunities.

## Legal action and national policies



The Istanbul convention obliges its parties to take necessary legislative and other measures to criminalize any attempt to force an adult or child into a marriage or lure them abroad for that purpose.

Many EU Member States have policies to tackle forced marriage, often within the context of violence against women or trafficking. Until 2020 twelve EU Member States have marked forced marriage as a criminal offence. ■



Global estimations in 2016 stated, there were an estimated 15.4 million people in forced marriages. 88% of victims were women and girls.

37% of victims were under 18 at the time of the marriage. Of these, 44% were under 15 at the time of the marriage.

Among the EU there is a general lack of Data, but forced marriages are more common than one might think. In 2019 the British Forced Marriage Unit supported 1.355 cases related to a possible forced marriage. A German Survey from 2008 stated that German counselling centers were approached by 3443 victims of forced marriage in one year only. The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs estimated that in 2011, that 8.500 young people were worried that they would not be allowed to freely choose their spouse.

A French survey conducted with migrants and their descendants in 2008 showed that 'non-consensual marriage' was experienced by 4% of immigrant women and 2% of daughters of immigrants. ■

Numbers



Ways out of forced marriages

# You make a difference

The One-Chance-Rule: Victims of forced marriage are often closely controlled and forbidden to go out alone by their families. You might be their only chance to contact a person outside their family unobserved.

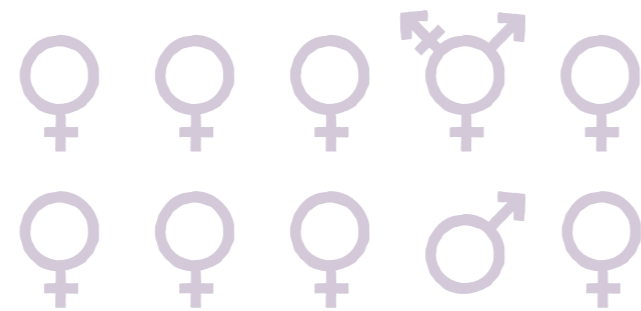
- ➔ As a teacher or social worker at school
- ➔ As a job manager at the job center
- ➔ As a doctor or a nurse during a medical examination
- ➔ As a registering person at the registry office
- ➔ As employer
- ➔ As police
- ➔ ...



## Who is at risk?

The overwhelming majority of victims of forced marriages are minor girls and young adult women. Forced marriage is an issue of child protection!

Men who resist an arranged marriage, have a partner their parents disapprove of, or are gay, may be coerced or tricked into a forced marriage too.  
**DO NOT FORGET:** Potential victims may be lured abroad, f.e. to their country of origin, where they cannot access support anymore. ■

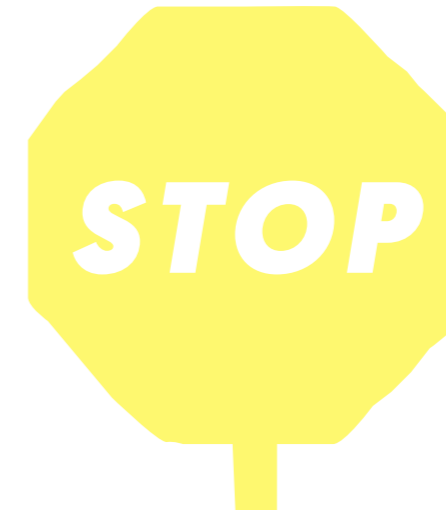


## What you should do

- ✓ As a frontline professional you can
  - Spread information material about rights and available support: Hang up posters, lay out leaflets, hand out leaflets (even without talking about it)
  - Encourage potential victims to speak to you
  - Assure that all information stays confidential
  - Inform yourself about existing specialized support, lobby awareness, connect to a network
- ✓ If a girl or young woman discloses her experiences a supportive response is crucial. Often, she is not sure whether what she experiences can be seen as violence. Therefore: Listen closely, address immediate safety means but act only with the consent of the victim. The best help places her needs central. Her safety is paramount and more important than that you know all the details of her biography.
- ✓ Provide transparency and clear agreements how to proceed or to stay in contact. Take notes.
- ✓ Warn potential victims to go abroad for family vacations.
- ✓ Call the police if necessary.

## What you shouldn't do

- ✗ Surrender to the myth that the best place for a girl or young woman is her family
- ✗ Contact family members to talk and sort it all out unless the victim urges you to do so
- ✗ Believe the view the family often provides: That this is a teenage problem of a young person rebelling against reasonable rules
- ✗ Act FOR the victim instead of TOGETHER with her
- ✗ Look away because you think that this is a cultural issue: It is not. It is a human rights violation and it's a crime!



## Where to refer a potential victim of forced marriage

➔ Forced Marriage Unit:

fmu@fcdof.gov.uk  
Telephone: 020 7008 0151  
From overseas: +44 (0)20 7008 0151  
Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm  
Out of hours: 020 7008 1500  
(ask for the Global Response Centre)

[www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage](http://www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage)

