

EGYPT — Country Profile

Overview

Egypt is located on the northeast corner of the African continent. It is bordered by Libya to the west, Sudan to the south, the Red Sea to the east, and the Mediterranean Sea to the north. Egypt has the largest, most densely settled population among the Arab countries. The total area of the country covers approximately one million square kilometers. However, much of the land is desert, and only 7.7 percent of Egypt's area is inhabited. The majority of Egyptians live either in the Nile Delta located in the north of the country or in the narrow Nile Valley south of Cairo.

Source: *extracted from Egypt Demographic & Health Survey (EDHS) 2014*

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Key findings from the 2014 EDHS on the situation of SRHR in Egypt are as follows:

Maternal Health:

- Mothers saw a medical provider for antenatal care in the case of 90 percent of last births, and 83 percent reported having the recommended four or more antenatal care visits during the pregnancy.
- Three in four last-born children were fully protected against neonatal tetanus.
- Eighty-seven percent of births in the five-year period before the survey occurred in a health facility.
- More than 8 in 10 mothers giving birth to their last child within two years of the survey had a postnatal checkup with a medical provider within two days of delivery.
- Only 14 percent of newborns were seen for a postnatal checkup within two days following birth.
- Two-thirds of ever-married women report at least one barrier to accessing health care for themselves that they consider to be a big barrier. The most frequent concerns women report are a lack of drugs (54 percent) and a lack of health providers (48 percent).
- Few women (8 percent) are covered by health insurance. The highest coverage levels were found among women with a secondary or higher education (14 percent) and women in the highest wealth quintile (18 percent).

Contraception:

- The total fertility rate for the three years prior to the survey is 3.5 births.
- In rural areas, the total fertility rate is 3.8 births per woman, around 30 percent higher than the rate in urban areas (2.9 births).
- Childbearing begins early for many Egyptian women; more than one quarter of women age 25-49 had their first birth by age 20, and 45 percent gave birth by age 22.
- Six in ten currently married women do not want another birth or are sterilized, and 17 percent would like to delay the next birth for at least two years.
- The average married woman considers a three-child family to be ideal.
- More than one-fifth of married women believe their husband wants more children than they do.

- One in 6 births in the five-year period before the survey was either not wanted at the time or not wanted at all.
- Fifty-nine percent of currently married women in Egypt are currently using a family planning method, which represents a slight drop from the level in 2008 (60 percent).
- The IUD remains the preferred method; however, the proportion using the IUD has dropped from 36 percent in 2008 to 30 percent.
- Around 3 in 10 users in Egypt stop using a method within 12 months of starting use.

Abortion:

- According to the UN Abortion Policies and Reproductive Health around the World (2014), abortion is permitted to save a woman's life.

HIV & AIDS:

- Seven in 10 ever-married women age 15-49 have heard about HIV/AIDS.
- However, only 4 percent of women have comprehensive correct knowledge about AIDS.
- Only around 4 in 10 women are aware that a healthy-looking person can have AIDS.
- Similar proportions of women reject each of two common misconceptions about how the AIDS virus can be transmitted, i.e., through mosquito bites (38 percent) or sharing food with an infected person.
- AIDS awareness is generally lowest among women in rural Upper Egypt.
- Only 15 percent of mothers are aware that the HIV virus can be transmitted during pregnancy and that it is possible to prevent mother-to-child transmission by providing the mother with special drugs during pregnancy.
- Accepting attitudes were expressed on all four indicators of HIV/AIDS stigma by only 2 percent of women.
- 12 percent of ever-married women age 15-49 know where to go for an HIV test.

Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Child Early & Forced Marriage (CEFM):

- Seven percent of adolescents are already mothers, and 4 percent are pregnant with their first child.
- Consanguineous unions are common; overall, 31 percent of ever-married women report their current or most recent husband was a blood relative.

Violence Against Women (VAW):

- Around one-third of ever-married women age 15-49 agree that wife beating is justified in at least one of the following circumstances: if she goes out without telling him, neglects the children, argues with him, refuses to have sex with him, and burns the food.
- Around 1 in 4 women think that a husband is justified to hit or beat his wife if she goes out without telling the husband or neglects the children.

- The proportions using the IUD and the pill decrease with the number of reasons for which wife beating is accepted. On the other hand, the rate of injectable use increases with the wife-beating index.
- As noted earlier, this may reflect in part a tendency for women who are less empowered to use a method which is easier to conceal from the husband.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):

- Ninety-two percent of the ever-married women age 15-49 interviewed had been circumcised.
- More than half of the women who were circumcised were between seven and ten years of age when they were circumcised.
- Virtually all of the women were circumcised before age 15.
- It is estimated that more than half of daughters age 0-19 will be circumcised in the future.
- Medical personnel were much more likely to have performed the circumcisions among daughters (82 percent) than among the women themselves (38 percent).
- Slightly more than half of women believed that female circumcision is required by religion.
- Around 6 in 10 women believed the practice should continue.
- About half of women thought that men also preferred the practice continue.

Current initiatives in Egypt

- ARROW works with The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) to produce a desk study as part of a project to conduct evidence-based evaluations of the SRHR situation in different regions of the Global South. Along with other regional studies by other SRHR NGOs, this study aims to assess 20 years of implementation of ICPD and the progress or lack of progress made on the PoA and to point to the way forward post-2014 across the Global South.