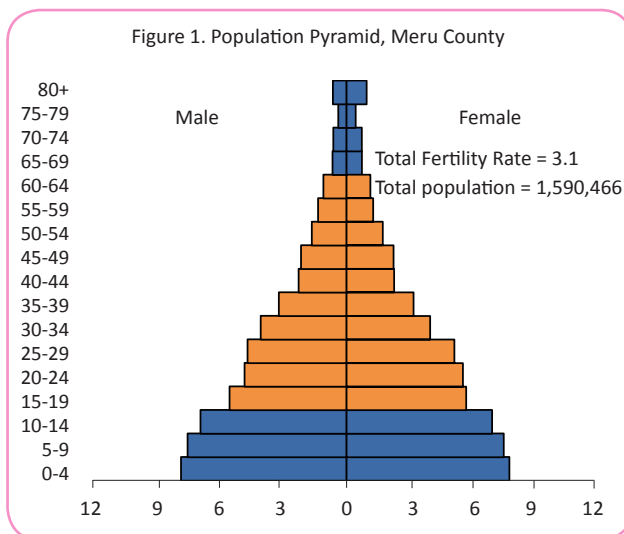




ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN MERU COUNTY

Introduction

Meru County has a youthful population with people below age 15 making up 39% of the total population (Figure 1). This is mainly because many more people are added to the population than the number of people dying.



This youthful population has implications on the County's health and development agenda as it puts increasing demands on provision of services including health and education. One of the main areas of concern in Kenya is the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) of adolescents and the extent to which their SRH needs are met. About one in five (22%) people in Meru County are adolescents aged 10-19.

This fact sheet highlights the status of adolescent SRH in Meru County in relation to the national trend. The data are drawn from the 2014 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey, 2012 Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey and the 2014 Basic Education Statistical Booklet.

Policy and legal context

Kenya has favourable policy and legal frameworks that promote adolescent SRH and SRH rights. These frameworks include the Constitution (2010), National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy (2015), National Guidelines for Provision of Adolescent Youth Friendly Services (YFS) in Kenya (2005), the Children Act (2001) and the National Youth Policy (2007) among others.

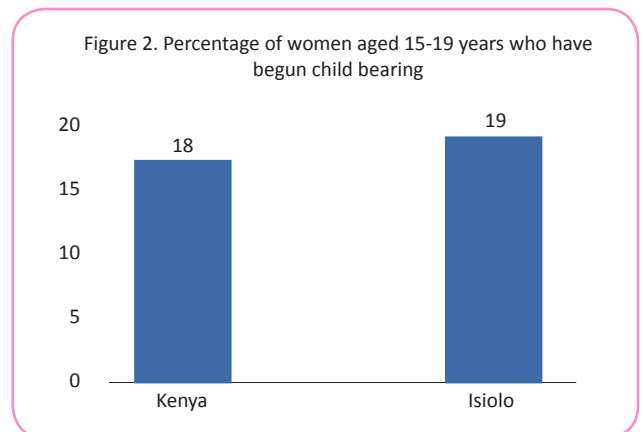
Adolescent SRH Indicators

Age of sexual debut and first marriage

- Half of Meru County women (20-49 years old) and men (20-54 years old) first had sex by age 17 and 15, respectively. At national level, women and men in the same age groups first had sex at age 18 and 17, respectively.
- Half of Meru County women (25-49 years old) and men (30-54 years old) first married by age 20 and 25, respectively. This is the same as the national trend.

Teen pregnancy

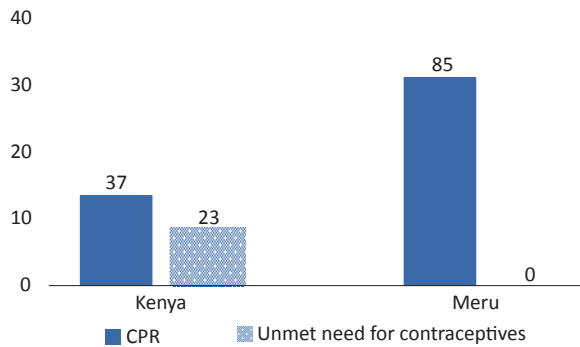
- One in five (20%) girls aged 15-19 in Meru County have begun childbearing. This is about the same as the national rate (Figure 2). Specifically, 1.5% are pregnant with their first child and 18% have ever given birth compared to 3.4% and 14.7%, respectively, at the national level.
- Meru County's age specific fertility rate for girls aged 15-19 (adolescent birth rate) is 115 births per 1000 girls, which is higher than the national rate (96).



Contraceptive use among adolescents

- Teenage pregnancies often result from low use of contraceptives and/or unmet need for contraceptives. In Meru County, 85% of currently married girls aged 15-19 use modern contraceptives which is considerably higher than the national level (37%) (Figure 3).
- Unmet need for contraceptives among currently married girls aged 15-19 in Meru is recorded as zero compared to 23% at the national level.

Figure 3. Current use of modern contraceptives and unmet need for contraceptives among women aged 15-19 (%)



HIV prevalence and prevention among adolescents

- County level HIV data are not yet available. At regional level, 0.5% of youth aged 15-24 in Eastern North region, where Meru County is located, have HIV. This is lower than the national youth HIV prevalence rate.
- One of the most effective ways of preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV is through correct and consistent use of condoms during sex.
- In Eastern region where Meru County is located, a significant proportion of young people practice safe sex but a significant proportion also engage in risky sex. In 2014, 52% of never married women used a condom during their last sexual encounter. Whereas, 73% of never married men used a condom during their last sexual encounter.
- This means that between 30 and 50% of never married young people in the region did not use a condom during their last sexual encounter

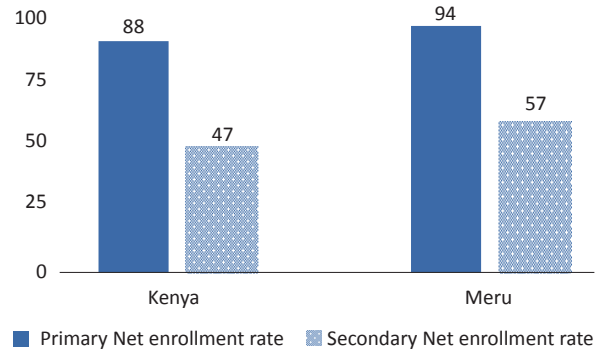
Other important indicators

Education outcomes

- Education is an important determinant for sexual and reproductive health particularly among girls. Girls who complete secondary and higher education have better sexual and reproductive health outcomes – they are less likely to have unwanted pregnancies and more likely to have higher socio-economic status.
- Meru County is performing well on primary school enrollment relative to the country average. Majority (94%) of children in the official primary school-age are enrolled in primary school (Net enrollment rate).

- However, only 57% of children in the official secondary school-age are enrolled in secondary school.
- At national level, 88% of children in the official primary school-age are enrolled in primary school and less than half (47%) of children in the official secondary school-age are enrolled in secondary school (Figure 4)

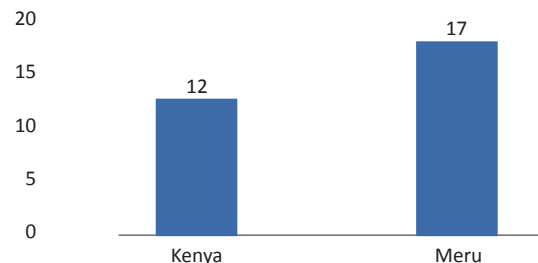
Figure 4. Net Enrollment Rate (%)



Female circumcision among adolescents

- Female circumcision, commonly referred to as Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting is linked to obstetric complications and gynecological problems, and long-term negative effects on women's wellbeing.
- It is also often linked to girl child marriage which also has long-term negative effects on women's health and wellbeing.
- About one in five (17%) girls aged 15-19 reported that they have been circumcised compared to 12% at the national level (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Percentage of women aged 15-19 self-reporting as being circumcised



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