

Betty Akello, a member of a group of women supported by Reproductive Health Uganda, which provides family planning information. Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment.



Audience Segmentation in Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Programming

Introduction

Child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM), defined as marriage before age 18 or marriage that occurs without the consent of those in the marriage,¹ affects an estimated 15 million girls each year.² CEFM is perpetuated by many factors, including but not limited to poverty, conflict, gender inequality, social and cultural norms, religious beliefs, and economic incentives.^{3,4} Looking forward, efforts to reduce the number of girls at risk for CEFM will increasingly struggle to keep pace with population growth, leading to virtually the same number of girls at risk for

CEFM within the next few decades if actions to end CEFM are not accelerated.²

CEFM impacts many aspects of a girl's life, including her self-esteem, education, income, nutrition, social development, and health.⁵ Girls who marry young tend to have more children and at a younger age.⁴ In a study of 25 countries, three out of four early childbirths came from child marriages.⁶ Early pregnancies and childbirth can cause health complications for girls due to biological immaturity, inadequate access to care, and financial insecurity, among other factors.⁷ Globally, pregnancy and childbirth complications are the leading [cause of death](#) for girls age 15–19.⁸



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Along with harming girls, CEFM also places a burden on the societies where it is prevalent. Children born to young mothers are more likely to suffer from health complications (e.g., low birth weight, malnutrition, and late development),⁶ as well as lower educational attainment and reduced earning potential.¹ Governments and communities with high levels of CEFM experience economic burdens due to the health costs, welfare needs, and population growth associated with CEFM.⁹ Because of these costs, it is estimated that governments could save 5% or more on their annual budgets if they were to invest in efforts to eliminate CEFM.⁶

Evidence increasingly shows that successful interventions to reduce CEFM and improve girls' lives are possible.¹⁰⁻¹² [The Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide](#), produced for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), provides guidance to program designers and implementers on how to integrate CEFM prevention activities and messages into other programs, accompanied

by examples of successful programs and tools.

This series of briefs has been created to complement and add additional content to the Resource Guide and propose social and behavior change (SBC) approaches to strengthen the collective effort to reduce CEFM. There are seven topical briefs in the series: Advanced Audience Segmentation; Collective Action; Gender Synchronization; Human-Centered Design; Social Norms Programming; Theories; and Youth Engagement. Breakthrough ACTION developed each brief for an intended audience of program designers and implementers by analyzing successful interventions conducted in many regions of the world. The briefs serve as an “SBC Addendum” to the Resource Guide, providing guidance and examples of how to use SBC to reduce CEFM. Creative, multi-faceted, and innovative interventions and programs that utilize the methods in these briefs are required to address the factors contributing to the prevalence and impact of CEFM.



Youth ages 15 to 19 attend a Pathfinder International training about adolescent sexual and reproductive health in Bihar, India. Photo by Paula Bronstein/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment

How Can Audience Segmentation Enhance Efforts to End CEFM?

Audience segmentation is the process of dividing a large population into smaller groups of people—or segments—who have similar needs, values, or characteristics.

Basic segmentation uses socio-demographic or geographic factors such as sex, age, or urban vs. rural to create sub-groups within a population.

Advanced segmentation uses behaviors, attitudes, and psychographic (e.g., lifestyle) characteristics to understand the differences between populations, along with more sophisticated validation techniques to estimate the size of each segment in the population.



Figure 1. A comic strip from *Aya: Life in Yop City* reveals the starkly different aspirations of three 19-year old women from the same town in Côte d'Ivoire. An advanced audience segmentation would differentiate these women into segments that can provide insight into how messaging, products, and services relate to marriage, gender equality, and other norms relevant to preventing CEFM will be best received and meet each woman's unique needs.

Image source: Aboutet, Marguerite. "Aya of Yop City." [Words without Borders](#), Translated by Helge Dascher, April 2007.

Advanced segmentation recognizes that even within a particular age or geographic population, differences exist between the needs, attitudes, and behaviors of children at risk to be married or children, in particular girls, who are already married, as well as between different groups of parents and influencers in the community. These sub-groups will respond differently to SBC messages and interventions. This is particularly true for interventions seeking to shift deeply embedded social and cultural norms in the community, such as those related to gender, marriage, and communication tactics between married couples.

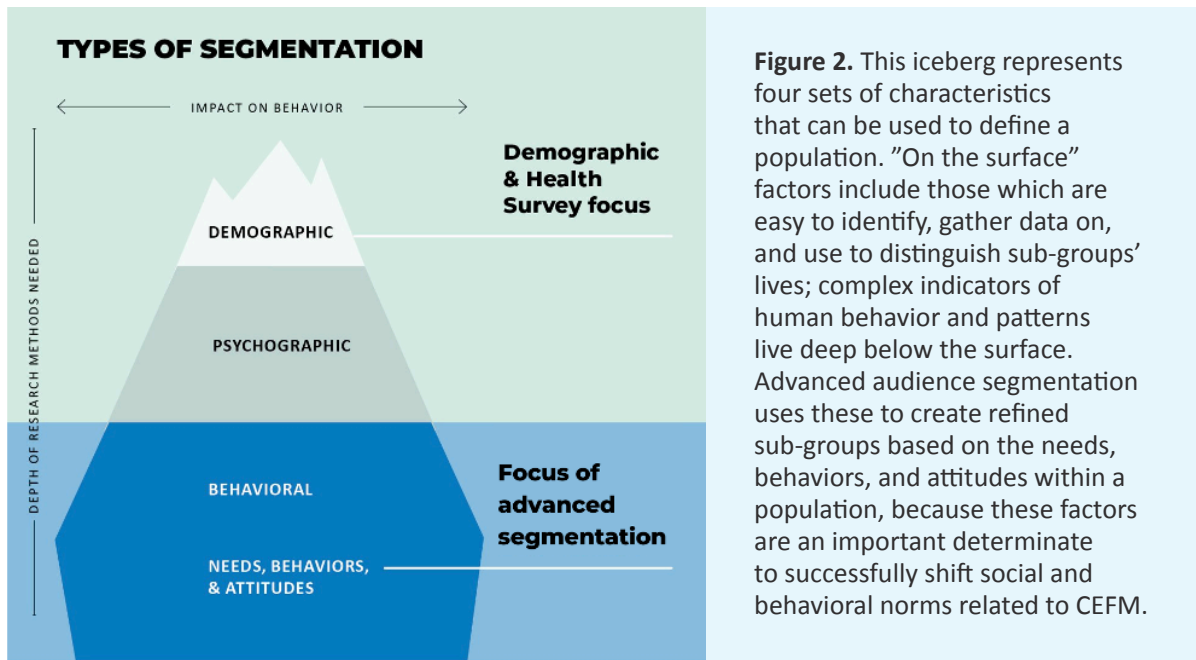


Figure from the re(solve) project by Pathfinder International.

Advanced audience segmentation provides SBC practitioners with information to better allocate their program's resources, use a cross-sector approach, and maximize the impact of their program:

- **Maximize impact:** Segmentation enables SBC programs to tailor messaging, products, and services in ways that are most likely to drive behavior change within each sub-group, which increases the chance of success in ending CEFM and reaching married children.
- **Prioritize specific segments:** In resource-constrained environments, segmentation can be an extremely useful tool to focus programming and communication on the population segments most at risk for CEFM or most likely to change their behavior.
- **Foster cross-sectoral approaches:** CEFM practitioners have increasingly recognized the importance of cross-sector approaches. Audience segmentation can integrate notions related to various sectors that can be linked to CEFM, including health, education, economic empowerment, democracy, human rights, governance, and more.

How to Incorporate Segmentation in CEFM Programming

The process for segmenting audiences has been well documented, ranging from simple demographic-based approaches to more complex behavioral ones.

The Compass' [How to Do Audience Segmentation Guide](#) outlines seven key steps for conducting an audience segmentation. This process should be conducted in partnership with representatives from the community and input should be solicited from key stakeholders throughout the process.

1. Review audience information. This can include how the audience is affected by a problem, demographics, size, knowledge and behaviors, psychographics, and other information as appropriate. In some instances, if the information is not readily available additional data collection (including quantitative and qualitative, ranging from cross-sectional surveys to focus group discussions or interviews) might be needed. For CEFM, segmentation might be done for the primary audience (adolescents) as well as for secondary audiences (e.g., parents, family members, community members, and traditional and religious leaders).

2. Decide whether to segment.

Segmentation is recommended if the audience cannot be reached effectively with the same messages, interventions, and channels and if the program has a budget that allows for multiple approaches. If the budget does not allow for multiple approaches, identify the most important audience segment

within your primary audience and focus on that segment. Criteria for prioritizing the most important segments will differ depending on the program goals and settings but might include the size of the group, potential for impact, feasibility, and government priorities.

3. Determine segmentation criteria. Look at the primary audience(s) and identify traits that make a subgroup significantly different from other audience members. These differences are typically based on socio-demographic (e.g., age, gender, marital status), geographic (e.g., urban, rural), behavioral (e.g., use of contraception), and psychographic (e.g., lifestyle) differences among members of the audience.

4. Segment the audience by using the criteria identified in Step 3. There are various methods teams can use to segment audiences, either through a segmentation table or segmentation tree (see Audience Segmentation Tree in the Useful Resources section).

5. Decide which segments to target. Look at impact, accessibility, and program priorities in addition to conducting discussions with key stakeholders. Holding consultations and making decisions in partnership can help ensure the right segments are being addressed for each specific community.

6. Assess the proposed segments. Use a checklist to ensure each segment meets the criteria for effective segmentation (see Audience Segmentation Checklist in the Useful Resources section).

7. Develop audience profiles. Outline key barriers to behavior change and key messages.

Examples of Segmentation

Though segmentation is widely recognized as a best practice, there are limited applications of advanced segmentation in the CEFM space. The example described is from a program to increase the use of family planning in Niger but has implications for the design of child marriage programs.

ACCELERATING FAMILY PLANNING DEMAND IN NIGER¹³

Implementing Organization: Camber Collective

Overview: Provide a common fact base that family planning (FP) programs in Niger could use to drive decision-making, as well as to highlight gaps between supply and demand.

Location: Niger

Program Description

Funded by Hewlett Foundation, Camber Collective conducted a segmentation based on a cross-sectional survey of 1,589 women of reproductive age (15–49) representative of the population of Niger. Using advanced statistics, **the analysis derived five segments of women** with discrete family planning needs, attitudes, and behaviors. These segments supported the design of a counseling tool to equip providers with a targeted counseling approach for each population segment.

Modern Elites
(16%)

“I want a good life for myself and my children, and that starts with good family planning”

Healthy Proactives
(28%)

“My health is important, so I try to learn as much as I can, and reduce my burden by spacing”

Traditional Autonomists
(10%)

“What my husband and I decide is our business, and for now we think traditional methods are better”

Conservative Passives
(19%)

“It’s important to me that others do not oppose my FP choices”

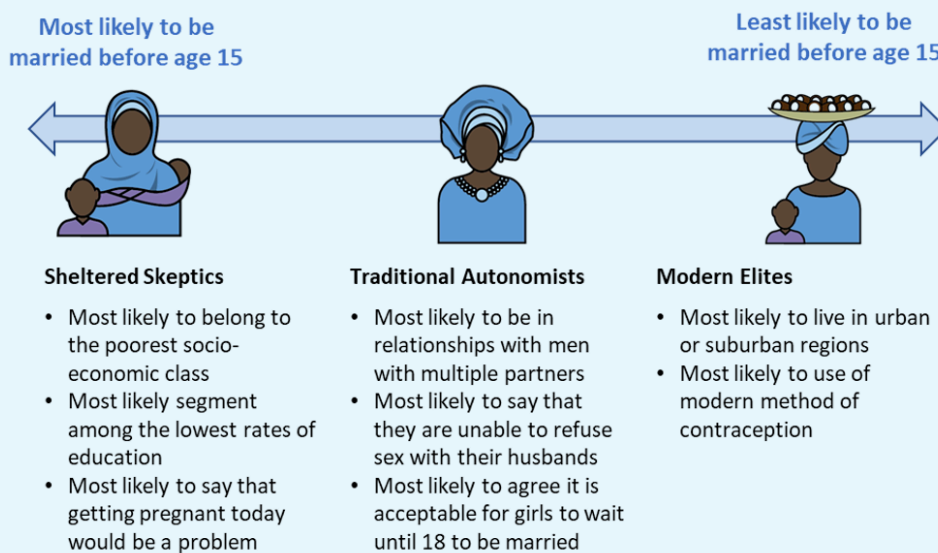
Sheltered Skeptics
(28%)

“I’m not too familiar with Family Planning methods, but I don’t trust them”

Key Learnings

Though these segments were created for a family planning initiative, the data revealed some preliminary findings for how this segmentation could be useful for CEFM prevention and support.

- Camber determined there is a statistically significant difference between women in the Sheltered Skeptics, Traditional Autonomists, and Modern Elites segments versus all other segments on variables related to CEFM (see image below).



- Camber also conducted an audience segmentation of men in Niger, which revealed six unique segments of the male population and showed a statistically significant difference between segments on variables related to CEFM, including the likelihood of marrying off their daughters under the age of 16 or age of men at first marriage.

Source: Camber Collective. (2020). [Using social and behavioral insights to reshape policy and programming.](#)

Conclusion

At this time, there are limited applications of segmentation in the child marriage space. More research is needed to better understand the diverse expressions of child marriage and how best to target interventions towards the population segments most at risk for CEFM or most likely to change their behavior. However, advanced segmentation principles and methodologies offer an opportunity to improve CEFM program outcomes.

Useful Resources

- [Advanced Audience Segmentation for Social and Behavior Change: How-to Guide](#)
- [How to Do Audience Segmentation](#)
- [Audience Segmentation Template](#)
- [Audience Segmentation Checklist](#)
- [Audience Segmentation Tree](#)

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