

Somerset Youth and Community Service

Female genital mutilation



Aims: To raise awareness of the issue

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the session participants will:

- Understand what FGM means
- Understand why different cultures carry out this practice
- What to do if this is happening, or going to happen, to someone they know.
- Understand the legal position

Group size: 4-6 young people – aged over 13 years

Time: 1 hour

Venue: Youth club

Materials:

- Flip chart & pens
- Blank maps
- Fact sheets
- Shaded map

Time	What	Who	With
5 mins	Welcome to everyone and mention this is a sensitive subject which can be difficult to talk about. Explain that the session will not go into graphic detail.	Youth worker	
10 mins	Explain what is meant by genital mutilation. The cutting of female organs. Ask the group why they think this is done. Ensure answers include protection of virginity, religion, purification, culture, taking away sexual urges and hygiene.	Youth worker	Flip chart and pens
10 mins	Go through the fact sheet.	All	Fact sheet
10 mins	Discussion: who does this and how many young people does it happen to?	All	Flip chart, pens
10 mins	How does this happen in the UK and around the world? Give young people a map so they can shade in where they think it happens and explain how families get away with doing this in our society.		Blank maps and map with the areas on that FGM happens
10 mins	How do UK laws protect our citizens from this?		Info on Serious Crime Act 2015
5 mins	Discussion: what should you do if you suspect it's happening to a friend who is going on a long holiday, maybe to see their families in a country discussed earlier? It may be younger sisters of people we know <i>This is the end of the session. You need to check that everyone is OK because this is quite a heavy subject.</i>	Youth worker	Info on who to speak to – an adult e.g. a teacher, parent or youth worker.



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Notes for the youth worker

Female genital mutilation is a very sensitive topic, so the young people in your group need to be of a mature mind. FGM is a graphic term; when working with young people it may be more useful to talk about cutting the genitals - removing the clitoris and cutting other areas. The procedure is often done with an unsterilized razor blade and with no anaesthetic.

Often young women in the UK are taken to visit family in other countries during the summer holidays and this is where the procedure happens so the child or young person has time to heal. There is some evidence that FGM also takes place in the UK.

Female Genital Mutilation is child abuse, and the Serious Crime Act 2015 states that it is an offence to fail to protect a child from FGM, and applies to all family members who know about it. The court can confiscate a person's passport if they think the procedure will be carried out on a child during a holiday.

FGM is generally carried out on young women who are less than 15. Often the young women know nothing about what will happen until they arrive in a different country.

It is estimated that 125 million girls and young women alive have had this done to them and about 24,000 in the UK are at risk of this being done. It is a significant problem. The girls involved have a human right to say no, but are rarely given a choice. This is a family issue which often involves mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sisters, some of whom may even carry out the procedure themselves.

A map is attached which shows the countries where FGM is most prevalent.

Why is this done?

FGM is about culture and tradition. It is nothing to do religion; all the main religions have condemned the act.

Families that take part say it de-sexualises the women, taking away sexual arousal and pleasure so they are not promiscuous. This is a ridiculous suggestion as sexual stimulation starts in the brain. It is also suggested that FGM ensures the genital areas won't be smelly and look ugly.

The effects of FGM on the individual can include physical and psychological trauma. The results can be pain, infection, trapped menstrual blood, scarring, mental health problems and, later in life, problems giving birth.

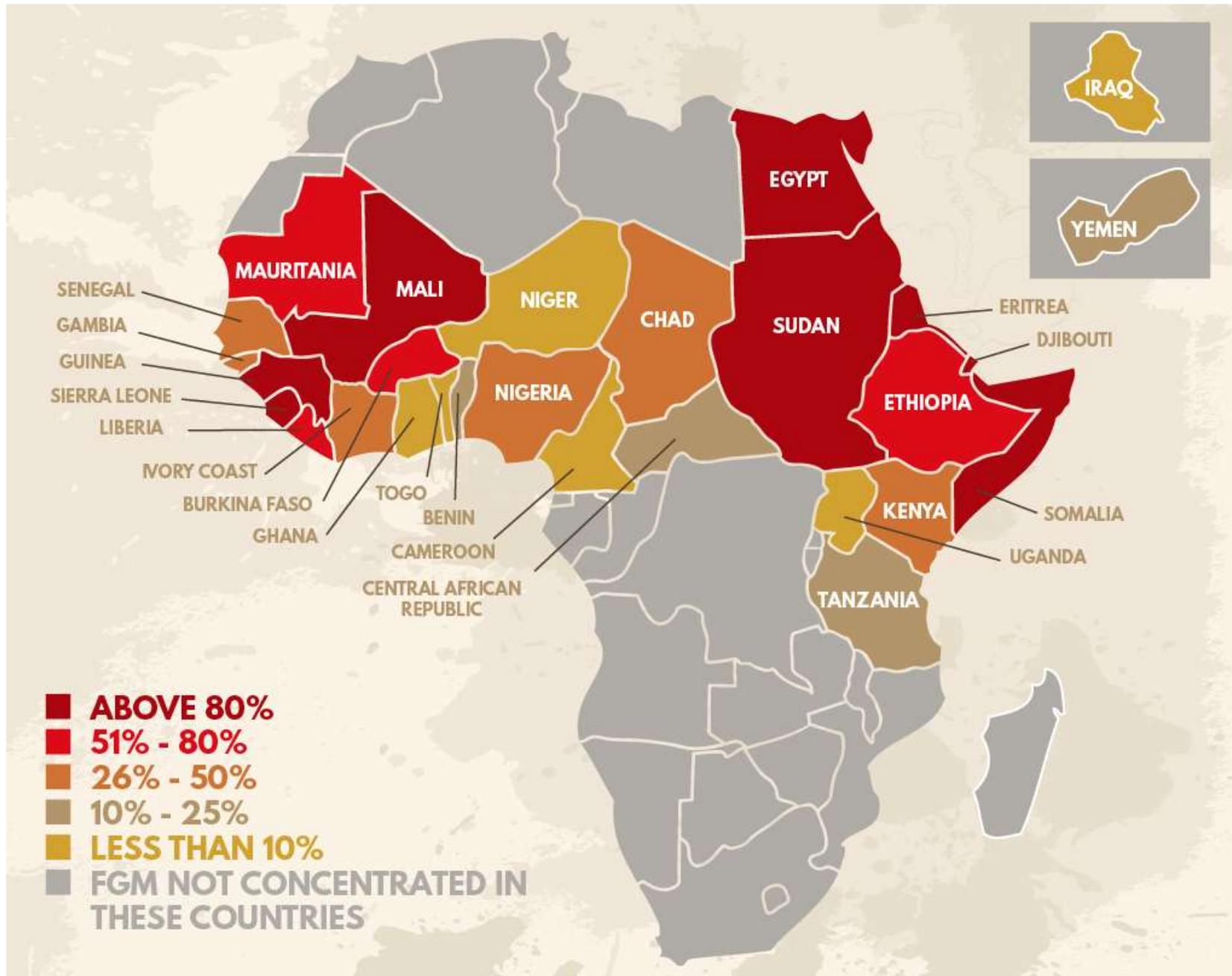
This is a horrific ordeal for the child or young woman so young people need to be aware not just for them, but for friends who have younger sisters.

If you have a worry or are concerned phone Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224. Young people can phone Childline on 0800 1111.



Where do you think FGM is happening most?





Serious Crime Act 2015

FGM has been a specific criminal offence in the UK since 1985 when the UK wide Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 was passed. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 replaced the 1985 Act in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It modernised the offence of FGM and the offence of assisting a girl to carry out FGM on herself while also creating extra-territorial offences to deter people from taking girls abroad for mutilation. To reflect the serious harm caused, the 2003 Act increased the maximum penalty for any of the FGM offences from five to 14 years' imprisonment.

To date no-one has been convicted of FGM in England and Wales. In July 2014, the UK Government and UNICEF hosted the first Girl Summit aimed at mobilising domestic and international efforts to end FGM. The Government has made a number of commitments for new legislation to tackle FGM.

Current law

Under the 2003 Act it is an offence for any person in England, Wales or Northern Ireland (regardless of their nationality or residence status) to perform FGM or to assist a girl to carry out FGM on herself. It is also an offence to assist a non-UK national or resident to carry out FGM outside the UK on a UK national or permanent UK resident.

Section 4 extends sections 1 to 3 to extra-territorial acts so that it is also an offence for a UK national or permanent UK resident to: perform FGM abroad; assist a girl to perform FGM on herself outside the UK; and assist (from outside the UK) a non-UK national or resident to carry out FGM outside the UK on a UK national or permanent UK resident.

Anonymity

Reluctance to be identified as a victim of FGM is believed to be one of the reasons for the low incidence of reporting of this offence. It is anticipated that providing for the anonymity of victims of alleged offences of FGM will encourage more victims to come forward.

The Act can prohibit the publication of any information that would be likely to lead to the identification of a person against whom an FGM offence is alleged to have been committed. This is similar, although not identical, to the anonymity given to alleged victims of sexual offences. Anonymity will commence once an allegation has been made and will last for the victim's lifetime.

Failing to protect a girl from risk of FGM

If an offence of FGM is committed against a girl under the age of 16, each person who is responsible for the girl at the time the FGM occurred will be liable under this offence. The maximum penalty is seven years' imprisonment or a fine or both.

To be 'responsible' for a girl, the person will either have parental responsibility for the girl (such as mothers, fathers married to the mother at the time of birth and guardians) and have frequent contact with her. Where the person is aged 18 or over they will have assumed responsibility for caring for the girl 'in the manner of a parent', for example family members to whom parents might send their child during the summer holidays.

Female Genital Mutilation Protection Order (FGMPO)

At the Girl Summit on 22 July 2014 the Prime Minister launched a consultation on a proposal to introduce a specific civil law measure for the purpose of protecting potential or actual victims of FGM, closely modelled on the Forced Marriage Protection Order in the Family Law Act 1996. 85% of respondents to the consultation supported the proposal.

The Act provides, therefore, for FGMPOs for the purposes of protecting a girl against the commission of a genital mutilation offence or protecting a girl against whom such an offence has been committed. Breach of an FGMPO would be a criminal offence with a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment, or as a civil breach punishable by up to two years' imprisonment.

An FGMPO might contain restrictions or other requirements to protect a victim or potential victim of FGM. This could include, for example, surrendering a person's passport or any other travel document; and not to enter into any arrangements, in the UK or abroad, for FGM to be performed on the person to be protected.

Responsibility to report FGM

The intention is that the duty will make the responsibility of professionals working in health and social care and teachers absolutely clear, and that it will aid police investigations and support an increase in the number of perpetrators caught and prosecuted.

The duty applies where, in the course of their professional duties, a professional discovers that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl aged under 18 (at the time of the discovery). The duty applies where the professional either:

- is informed by the girl that an act of FGM has been carried out on her, or
- observes physical signs which appear to show an act of FGM has carried out and has no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth.

For the more detailed fact sheet see www.gov.uk

