



Photo: UNFPA/Tayfun Dalkılıç

# Teenage pregnancy

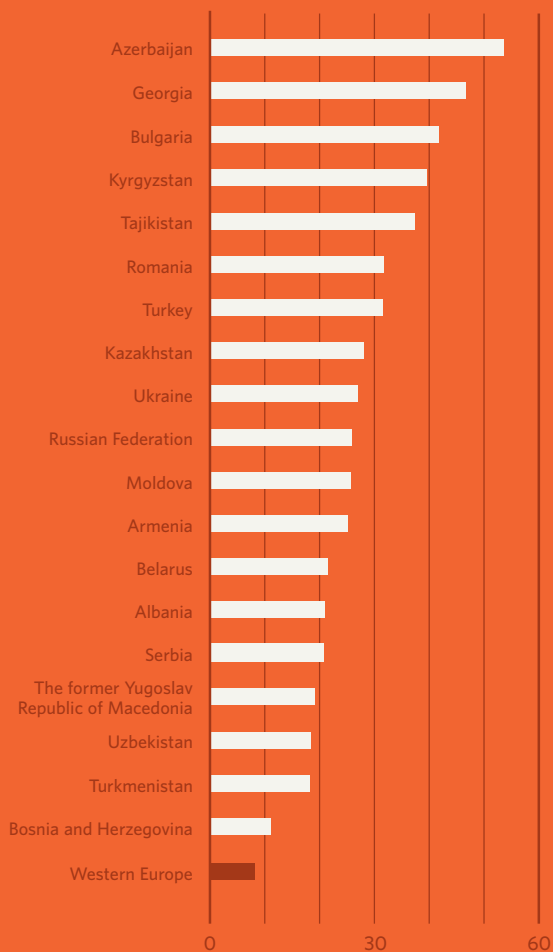
“I want to be grown up, I don’t want to marry young. I want to have two children, a girl and a boy”

**Azize, 10, is from Şanlıurfa in southeastern Turkey.** She spends most of the year away from home because her parents work as migrant farm workers. Azize helps with taking care of her siblings, cleaning the tent they live in, and many other household duties. But whenever there is time she goes to the temporary school now set up in the tent camp. Her father and her mother, who was 15 when Azize was born, both want her to get a good education, whatever it takes. Azize wants to become a doctor one day.



# Early child-bearing perpetuates poverty across generations.

## BIRTHS PER 1,000 WOMEN AGES 15-19



### → The situation

Although teenage pregnancy is on the decline in this region, many more girls still get pregnant and give birth when they are teenagers compared to their peers in Western Europe (see graph). In Azerbaijan and Georgia, the countries in the region most affected by adolescent pregnancy, the teenage fertility rate is about six times higher.

### → Why is it important?

Early child-bearing is associated with higher health risks for both the mother and the baby. Globally, pregnancy and childbirth complications are the second most common cause of death among 15 to 19-year-olds. Teenage pregnancy also often negatively affects the girls' prospects in life, as many drop out of school and have difficulties finding a job. In many cases, early child-bearing perpetuates poverty and social exclusion across generations.

### → Leaving no-one behind

Some population groups are disproportionately affected by teenage pregnancy. This includes married adolescents (see *Child Marriage*), adolescents from lower income groups or from rural areas, out-of-school youth, and linguistic, religious and ethnic minorities including Roma. In Serbia, for example, the teenage birth rate among Roma is 157, more than seven times the national rate of 22.



### → What needs to be done?

As quality school-based sexuality education rarely exists in the region, introducing such programmes in schools across the region, along with youth-friendly services, is one important way of empowering teenagers to make informed choices and avoid unintended pregnancies. And where teenage pregnancy is the result of child marriage, stronger measures to combat this harmful practice must be put in place (see *Child Marriage*).

