



Female Genital Mutilation Remains Widespread in Many Countries

But attitudes are slowly shifting.

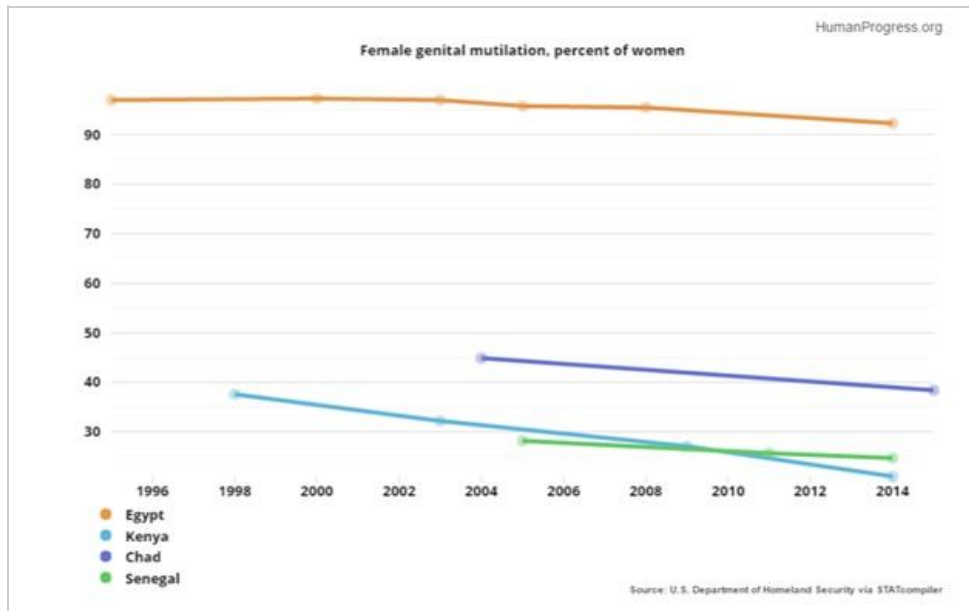
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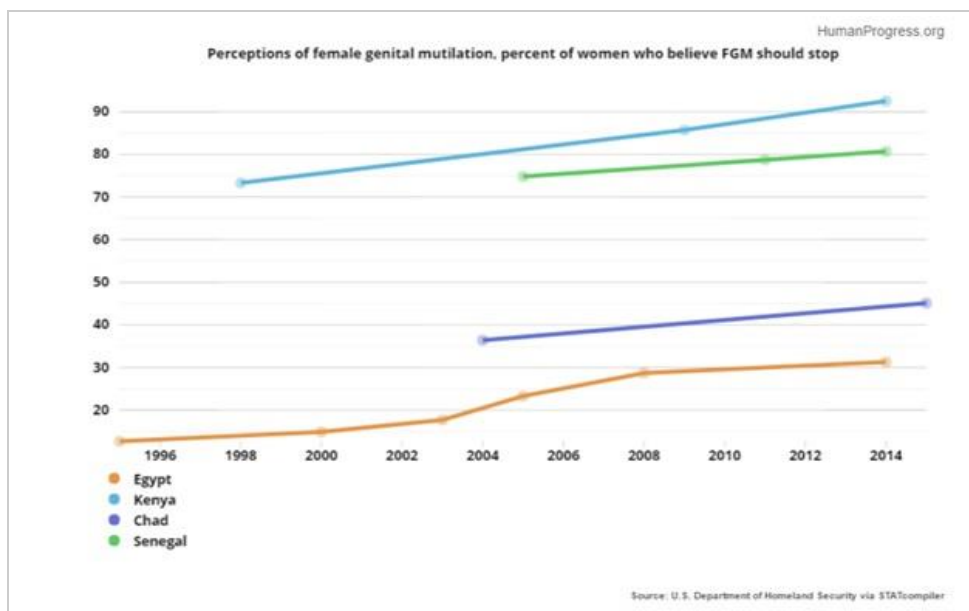
The United States is in the midst of an election where allegations about mistreatment of women abound. But in parts of the world, women do not enjoy even the most basic of rights—let alone a shot at political leadership and power over their male counterparts. In some Middle Eastern, Central Asian and African countries, women are subjected to "honor killings," sex trafficking and slavery. Female genital mutilation belongs among the most serious violations of women's rights. In fact, as the World Health Organization explains, there are, four distinct types of FGM:

- Removal of the clitoral hood, the skin around the clitoris, with partial or complete removal of the clitoris.
- Removal of the labia minora, with partial or complete removal of the clitoris and the labia majora.
- Removal of all or part of the labia minora and labia majora, and the stitching of a seal across the vagina, leaving a small opening for the passage of urine and menstrual blood.
- Then there are miscellaneous acts of genital mutilation, including cauterization of the clitoris, cutting of the vagina, and introducing corrosive substances into the vagina to tighten it.

At Human Progress, we have just added new statistics relating to FGM. In the above mentioned parts of the world, FGM remains a serious problem, but there are signs of hope. In Egypt, for example, over 92 percent of women had undergone some form of FGM in 2014. That was lower than 97 percent in 1995, but still shocking. Furthermore, a 2014 survey by the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population has "estimated that 56 percent of girls under 19 [years of age] were expected to undergo it [FGM] in the future." Other major culprits, including Kenya, Chad and Senegal, have seen similar declines in FGM—though the practice remains widespread.



Another positive development pertains to the increasing disapproval of FGM among its intended victims. In Kenya, for example, women's disapproval of FGM rose from 73 percent in 1998 to 93 percent in 2014. Even in Egypt, the share of women opposed to FGM rose from a paltry 13 percent in 1995 to 31 percent in 2014. Whether that disapproval will lead to the total elimination of FGM throughout the world will depend, among other things, on further empowerment of women, the evolution of political culture in more primitive societies, and the spread of information. For more data on gender equality, please visit www.humanprogress.org.



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