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**What is FGM?**

FGM is recognised internationally as a violation of human rights, the health, and the integrity of girls and women.

It comprises all procedures that involve altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons. Girls who undergo FGM face short-term complications such as severe pain, shock, excessive bleeding, infections, and difficulty in passing urine, as well as long-term consequences for their sexual and reproductive health and mental health.

The World Health Organisation has classified FGM into four different types:

1. Clitoridectomy
2. Excision
3. Infibulation
4. Any other harmful procedure e.g., pricking, piercing, incising, scraping etc.

The National FGM Centre offers a [helpful explanation of each type](https://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/fgm/).

Although primarily concentrated in Africa and the Middle East, FGM is a universal problem and is also practiced in some countries in Asia and Latin America. FGM continues to persist amongst immigrant populations living in Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand.

**What does the law say?**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in the UK. The law relating to FGM is contained in the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003[.](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/31/contents)

The Act also extends to extra-territorial acts or omissions, meaning it applies to any person (regardless of their nationality or residence status) who performs FGM in England and Wales, assists a girl to carry out FGM on herself in England and Wales, or assists (from England or Wales) a non-UK person to carry out FGM outside the UK on a UK national or UK resident.

If 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 could be guilty of the offence of failing to protect her from the risk of FGM. It is also an offence for a UK national or UK resident (even in countries where FGM is not illegal) to perform FGM abroad, assist a girl to perform FGM on herself outside the UK, or assist (from outside the UK) a non-UK person to carry out FGM outside the UK on a UK national or UK resident.

**Resources**

* [Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/31/contents)
* [GOV.UK – Female Genital Mutilation: the facts](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-leaflet/female-genital-mutilation-the-facts-accessible-version)
* [GOV.UK – Female Genital Mutilation: help and advice](https://www.gov.uk/female-genital-mutilation-help-advice)