

# Female Genital Mutilation in the United States: Estimating the Number of Girls at Risk

By Phyllis Chesler in *Dignity: A Journal on Sexual Exploitation and Violence*



## Abstract

Female genital mutilation (FGM) destroys the capacity of women to experience sexual pleasure. It causes serious medical complications such as bleeding, painful urination, cysts, dangerous and recurrent bladder and urinary tract infections, the growth of scar tissue that make marital intercourse a nightmare and that turns childbirth into an experience of danger and torture. Due to immigration, FGM now poses a potential health crisis in the West, both in Europe and in the United States. To estimate how many girls who live in the West are at risk, one can measure the prevalence of FGM in the non-Western countries where it is practiced and then calculate how

many immigrants from such countries are living in the West. The highest number of girls and women at risk in the United States immigrated from three countries where the practice is the most prevalent: Egypt, Ethiopia and Somalia. It is estimated that the following numbers of girls are at risk: 65,893 in New York-New Jersey-and Pennsylvania; 51,411 in Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, WV; 37,417 in Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington-Wi; 23,216 in Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim; and 22,923 in Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA. Including seven other locations in the U.S., the number of girls at risk in the U.S. is 506,795. The largest at-risk populations (216,370) live in large metropolitan areas in New York, Washington, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Los Angeles, and Seattle.

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