The Long-Term Effect of Exposure to the Taliban Regime on Women's Age at Marriage in Afghanistan

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Abstract

We study the causal impact of exposure to the first Taliban government during 1996-2001 on women's age at first marriage in Afghanistan. The Talibans were dominantly Pashtuns and established a theocratic government that strictly enforced numerous restrictions on women and girls. Our estimation strategy exploits the variation in the age of exposure to the regime across ethnic identities. We find that exposure to the Taliban regime at younger ages raised the age at first marriage for Tajik/Uzbek women relative to those belonging to other ethnic groups by nearly 7 months. This indicates that women who were about to enter the marriage market and belonged to dominant ethnic groups that were politically opposed to the Taliban were less likely to be negatively impacted by the Taliban's strict enforcement of the Sharia law on women. We obtain similar findings with regard to women's age at first birth. Further, our findings do not appear to be driven by preexisting trends in these outcomes. As women's age at marriage has important intergenerational welfare implications, our results indicate potentially lasting human capital effects of the Taliban regime on Afghan society.

Keywords: marriage age; ethnic groups; women; Taliban; Afghanistan

JEL Codes: D74, J12, J13, J16, N45, Z12

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1 Introduction

Afghanistan has been categorized as one of the most fragile conflict affected states (World Bank, 2016). The country has been in constant conflict starting with the Soviet invasion in 1979. Wars fought by local warlords called *mujahideen* against the Soviets resulted in the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989. However, the period after the withdrawal of the Soviets was marked by factional fighting between the different warlords and the interim governments were often short-lived. The emergence of the *Taliban* as an important faction in the Afghan Civil War took place in 1994 with the attack and capture of the southern city of Kandahar [1]. The Taliban successfully took control of Kabul in 1996 and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. A totalitarian government was established based on the strict interpretation of the *Sharia* law ("Afghan Taliban", 2018). The Taliban governed Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001 and during this period controlled roughly 75% of the country's territory, consisting of largely the western, central and southern parts of the country. The remaining parts of the country were controlled by warlords who were opposed to the Taliban. Together, they formed a unified military front against the Taliban called United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, or the Northern Alliance.

One of the prominent characteristics of the Taliban regime were the laws governing the status of women. Girls older than eight years were prohibited from being in contact with males who were not their blood relatives or husband (Griffin, 2000). Some of the restrictions imposed on women include prohibition on travelling outside the home without a male relative/husband and without wearing a *burqa*; seeking education in schools and universities as well as working outside the home; being treated by male doctors; participating in sports; gathering for festivals and appearing on media outlets [2]. Failure to comply with the dress-codes and appearing outside the home without a male relative/husband were punishable offenses. Restrictions were also imposed on men's dress code and conduct. However, they appear to be less restrictive in curtailing men's rights and mobility relative to women. As girls were prohibited to continue their education and the need for a male relative/husband for mobility became crucial, marriage could be seen by parents as a coping mechanism to ensure the security and mobility of their daughters. Further, even after the fall of the Taliban government in 2001 following the US invasion of Afghanistan, the group remained active and eventually gained prominence by waging an insurgency against the then Afghan

[1] The word *Taliban* is the plural of the word *Talib* which means student in Pashto. Most of the supporters and members of the Taliban were students educated in religious schools of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries.

[2] Additional restrictions also included prohibition on riding bicycles even with male relatives; standing on balconies and even laughing and talking loudly.

government. The influence of the Talibans on Afghan society, particularly regarding the treatment of women could be potentially long-lasting. According to the UNFPA, underage marriages of girls remains common and prevalence of maternal mortality and obstetric fistula remains high on account of early childbearing following underage marriage in Afghanistan even several years after the fall of the first Taliban government [3].

It is well-known that women's age at first marriage has important welfare implications for women themselves as well as for the next generation [4]. In this paper we exploit exposure to the first Taliban regime as a natural experiment to understand its impact on women's age at first marriage in Afghanistan. In particular, we exploit the variation in the age of exposure to the regime and one's ethnic identity in the spirit of a difference-in-difference estimation method to study whether exposure to a theocratic governance structure that aimed to severely curtail the rights of women and girls had any impact on their eventual marriage outcome. We exploit the variation in the age at first exposure as women who were relatively "older" at the start of the regime (that is, at least 26 years old) are likely to have been already married and therefore unlikely to be impacted by the regime. On the other hand, women who were relatively "younger" and were yet to enter the marriage market (for instance, 0-5, 6-10 or 11-15 years old at the start of the regime) are likely to be potentially affected by the regime. In terms of variation in ethnic identity, we exploit the difference between Tajik/Uzbek women relative to those belonging to other ethnic groups (dominantly the Pashtuns and minorities such as Hazaras). The reason we choose to compare Tajik/Uzbek women to those belonging to other ethnicities is because the Tajiks/Uzbeks dominantly comprised the Northern Alliance that were opposed to the Talibans (who were largely Pashtuns) [5].

We find that the difference in the age at first marriage between "younger" Tajik/Uzbek women and women of other ethnicities is nearly 6-7 months higher than the comparable difference between "older" Tajik/Uzbek women and women of other ethnicities. In other words, there appears to be a divergence in the age at first marriage where Tajik/Uzbek women who were relatively younger at the start of the regime are found to have a higher age at first marriage relative to their counterparts from other ethnic groups and "older" women. In societies where early marriage of women are desirable, our finding indicates the potential for significant welfare improvement for "younger" Tajik/Uzbek women, while being

[3] https://afghanistan.unfpa.org/en/node/15233, accessed on April 25, 2022.

[4] See for example, Asadullah and Wahhaj (2019), Wahhaj (2022) Roychowdhury and Dhamija (2021), Nguyen et al. (2019).

[5] In the absence of data on migration histories of individuals and their childhood place of residence, we are unable to exploit any spatial variation in the exposure to the first Taliban regime. However, one's ethnic identity can, to some extent (although imperfectly), capture one's childhood place of residence.

detrimental to women belonging to other ethnic groups of similar age cohort.

Since our estimation follows a difference-in-difference estimation strategy, the main concern in establishing whether our findings are causal is if there were differential trends in the age at first marriage across Tajik/Uzbek and other ethnic groups among relatively "older" women as we expect such women to have been already married at the start of the regime. Therefore, for this exercise, we compare the difference in the age at first marriage between Tajik/Uzbek women and those of other ethnic groups between the oldest cohort (that is, those who were at least 26 years old) and the second oldest cohort (that is, those who were between 21-25 years old) at the start of the regime. The rationale behind this comparison is that it is very likely most Afghan women aged over 21 years would also be considered "old" enough to have been already married. We do not find any significant difference in the age at first marriage across Tajik/Uzbek and women of other ethnic groups between these two age cohorts. Further, we also find that there are significant differences in the age at first marriage between Tajik/Uzbek and other women across the "younger" and the second oldest cohorts. These provide some confidence that exposure to the first Taliban regime potentially impacts women's age at first marriage. Relatedly, we also test whether exposure to the first Taliban regime has had any impact on age at first birth. We find that the impacts on the age at first birth are somewhat similar to what we found for age at first marriage. As early marriage and lower age at first birth are correlated with maternal morbidity and mortality as well as adverse implications on health and educational attainment of children, our results indicate potentially significant inequality in human capital outcomes with intergenerational implications depending on the age of exposure and ethnic identity of the women. Additionally, our results are particularly topical at present on account of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan since August 2021.

A number of studies have documented the gendered impact of conflict or conflict-induced displacement on domestic violence, intra-household bargaining, educational attainment and marriage outcomes (La Mattina (2017), Lu et al. (2021), Shemyakina (2013)). Our paper attempts to contribute to this literature in economics. On the other hand, although a number of papers have studied impact of conflict and aid on poverty, standard of living, attitude to government, future violence in Afghanistan (Floreani et al. (2021), Beath et al. (2013b), Beath et al. (2013a), Bove and Gavrilova (2014), Lyall et al. (2020)), the impact of conflict and specifically of exposure to the Taliban regime on women has remained largely unexplored. All of the aforementioned studies are for the period after 2001, that is, after the fall of the Taliban government owing to the US invasion of Afghanistan. This paper seeks to contribute to the literature by studying how extreme forms of gender discrimination aimed at restricting civil rights of girls and women through law can influence well-being of

individuals years after such laws and governance structures have been abolished. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first paper that aims to understand how exposure to the first Taliban regime during the early years of one's life can affect eventual marriage outcomes.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the data, Section 3 explains the empirical strategy, Section 4 presents the results and discusses them and Section 5 concludes.

2 Data

We rely on the Demographic and Health Surveys of Afghanistan (hereafter, AfDHS) 2015 for our analysis. The AfDHS provides a nationally representative sample of ever married women aged 15-49 years old at the time of the survey. The survey also includes rich information on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents.

There are 29,461 women in the sample and of them 97% are currently married and close to 99% of them have been married only once. We include only those women who were born at the start of the Taliban regime in 1996 or earlier in our analysis. This leaves us with a sample of 28,862 women. We further divide our sample into five mutually exclusive five-year age cohorts (this leaves us with more or less equal number of women in each of the age cohort categories). In particular, our sample consists of women who were 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years, 21-25 and 26-31 years old at the time of the start of the Taliban regime. This enables us to exploit the variation in the age of exposure to the Taliban regime on our outcome - age at first marriage.

Table 1 provides the summary statistics. Panel A reports the findings for all women aged 19-49 years at the time of the survey and who are the usual residents in the surveyed household. We find that the average age at first marriage and first birth are 17.9 and 19.3 years respectively, with standard deviations of around 3.5 years. We find that that the proportion of the sample that are Pashtun, Tajik/Uzbek and Hazara ethnicity is 43%, 37% and 9% respectively and these largely correspond to the distribution of major ethnic groups in the Afghan population. We also find that 76% of the respondents reside in rural areas and 93% of them are in polygamous marriages. The average number of years of education of women in our sample is 1.1 years and those of her husband is 3.84 years. The average age of the husbands is around 36.16 years with a standard deviation of 10.84 years. We also find that around 36% women report that their father had ever beaten their mother, indicating some childhood exposure to domestic violence.

Panel B of Table 1 reports the summary statistics after dropping the youngest cohort of women (that is, those who are 19-23 years at the time of the survey), including only those who were 24 years or older at the time of the survey. We drop the youngest cohort of women

as including them may mechanically lower the average age at first marriage (as one's age at first marriage cannot exceed one's current age) and nearly 95% women are married by the age of 24 years in our sample. We find that dropping the youngest cohort of women raises the average age at first marriage and birth slightly to 18.24 and 19.65 years respectively. The summary statistics of the other variables are close to what we obtained in Panel A.

Appendix Table A.1 reports the summary statistics by further restricting the sample to include women who have been married only once. As nearly 99% of the women have been married only once, the summary statistics reported in Panels A and B in Appendix Table A.1 are largely analogous to those reported in Table 1 here.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Observations
Panel A:			
Age at First Marriage (yrs.)	17.90	3.51	28,436
Age at First Birth (yrs.)	19.27	3.51	25,691
If Pashtun	0.43	0.49	28,385
If Tajik/Uzbek	0.37	0.48	28,385
If Hazara	0.09	0.29	28,385
Rural	0.76	0.43	28,436
Not in Polygynous Marriage	0.93	0.25	28,245
Years of Education	1.10	3.02	28,412
Husband's Age (yrs.)	36.16	10.84	28,296
Husband's Years of Education	3.84	4.99	28,029
If Woman's Father Beat her Mother	0.36	0.48	20,645
Panel B:			
Age at First Marriage (yrs.)	18.24	3.80	20,478
Age at First Birth (yrs.)	19.65	3.71	19,781
If Pashtun	0.42	0.49	20,440
If Tajik/Uzbek	0.38	0.48	20,440
If Hazara	0.10	0.30	20,440
Rural	0.76	0.43	20,478
Not in Polygynous Marriage	0.92	0.27	20,326
Years of Education	0.76	2.56	20,465
Husband's Age (yrs.)	40.25	9.68	20,376
Husband's Years of Education	3.46	4.83	20,196
If Woman's Father Beat her Mother	0.36	0.48	15,610

Note: Data source is Demographic and Health Surveys of Afghanistan (or, AfDHS) 2015. Panel A is restricted to currently married women aged 19-49 years at the time of the survey who are usual residents in the surveyed household. Panel B is further restricted by dropping the youngest cohort of women, that is, those who were between 0 and 5 years old at the start of the Taliban regime from the sample.

3 Empirical Strategy

Prior to describing the estimation equation, it would be interesting to first study whether there exists any trends in the age at first marriage across women of different ages in Afghanistan.

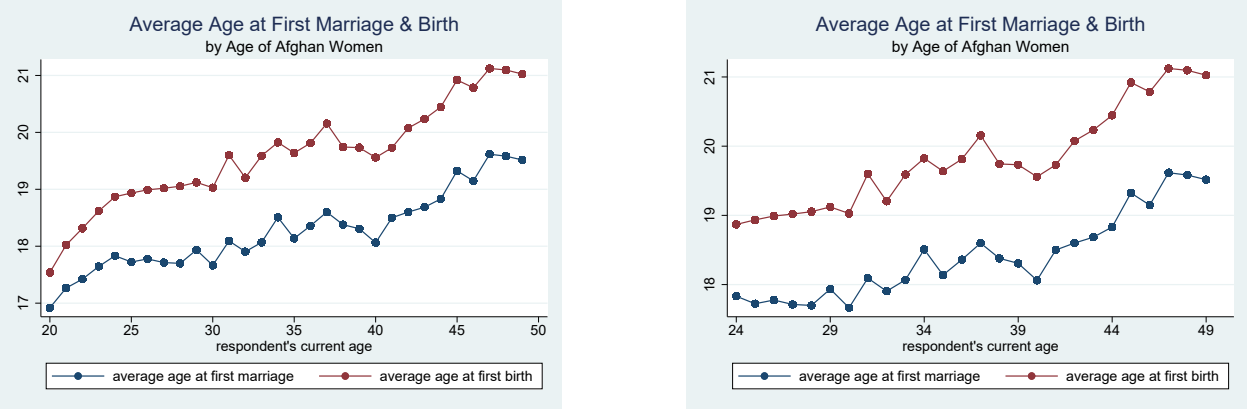

Figure 1: Average Age at First Marriage and Birth of Afghan Women Across Age Cohorts (right figure: includes only women aged >= 24 years at the time of the survey in 2015-2016)

Figure 1 plots the average age at first marriage by women's age at the time of the survey. We find that the overall age at marriage has lowered over time where the average age at first marriage for currently younger women is lower than that for their currently older counterparts. On the right figure in Figure 1, we include women who are 24 years or older at the time of survey to plot the average age at first marriage. This is because including very young women can mechanically lower the age at first marriage as it cannot exceed one's current age. As 95% of the women in the sample are married by the age of 24 years, we only include women who are 24 years or older at the time of the survey to study trends in the average age at first marriage. As before, we continue to find that the average age at first marriage has lowered over time. The decline in the average age at first marriage, unsurprisingly, is also accompanied by a concomitant decline in the average age at first birth over time as well from both figures in Figure 1. This provides us with the motivation to study whether being exposed to the first Taliban regime during 1996-2001 at younger ages vis-a-vis older ages has differential impacts on age at first marriage of Afghan women.

We compare women born and therefore exposed to the Taliban regime at different ages across ethnic identities to estimate the causal impact of exposure of the Taliban regime on the age at first marriage for women. While the motivation for studying the differential age of exposure is potentially clear as women who were old enough and likely to be already married at the start of the Taliban regime are unlikely to be affected and those who were younger and about to enter the marriage market are more likely to be impacted by the

regime's rules and restrictions on women and girls; we discuss the motivation for exploiting the differences in ethnic identities here. The Talibans were largely of Pashtun ethnicity. On the other hand, the alliance of leaders that were politically opposed to the Talibans were largely comprised of Tajik and eventually Uzbek ethnicities (some Hazara leaders eventually joined this alliance). Although the Afghan society is overall culturally conservative, it is likely that women who belonged to ethnic identities that were opposed to the Taliban were less likely to be impacted by the extremely harsh regulations on women that the Taliban had imposed. In other words, we hypothesize that Tajik/Uzbek women are less likely to be adversely affected by the restrictions on women imposed by the Taliban relative to Pashtun women or women of other ethnic minorities, thereby resulting in potential divergence in the welfare of Tajik/Uzbek women from those belonging to other ethnicities. As age at first marriage have important human capital implications on women as well as on their children, we choose to focus on this variable as our key outcome variable of interest.

The following is our estimation equations:

$$\begin{aligned} y_{icp} = {} & \beta_0 + \beta_1 TajikUzbek_{icp} \\ & + \Sigma_{c=1}^{5} \beta_{2c} CohortStartTaliban_{icp} \\ & + \Sigma_{c=1}^{5} \beta_{3c} TajikUzbek_{icp} \times CohortStartTaliban_{icp} + \gamma X_{icp} + \delta_{icp} \\ & + YOB_{icp} + \varepsilon_{icp} \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

Here, y_{icp} is the age at first marriage, measured in years, of woman i belonging to age cohort c and residing in province p. Since over 99% of the women in the sample have been married only once, age at first marriage is analogous to age at marriage here. The variable $TajikUzbek_{icp}$ is a dummy variable that assumes the value 1 if woman belongs to the Tajik or Uzbek ethnicity and is 0 otherwise. $CohortStartTaliban_{icp}$ are five binary variables that each assume the value 1 if the respondent belongs to a particular age cohort c at the start of the first Taliban regime in 1996 (these age cohorts being mutually exclusive). These include being 0-5 years (that is, $c = 1$), 6-10 years (that is, $c = 2$), 11-15 years (that is, $c = 3$), 16-20 years (that is, $c = 4$) and 21-25 years old (that is, $c = 5$) at the start of the Taliban regime in 1996. The omitted category for this variable is those who were 25-31 years old at the start of the first Taliban regime. $TajikUzbek_{icp} \times CohortStartTaliban_{icp}$, the interaction term between $TajikUzbek_{icp}$ and $CohortStartTaliban_{icp}$ are the variables of interest. There are five interaction terms, which include the interaction of belonging to the Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity and each of the five age cohort dummies described above. The interaction terms capture the difference in the age of exposure to the first Taliban regime by ethnic identities.

As such, this is a difference-in-difference estimation framework. The coefficients on the interaction terms β_{3c} are the coefficients of interest. Additionally, we control for various socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the women in our regression as these could potentially influence age at first marriage. These include the woman's and her husband's years of education, her husband's age, dummies indicating that the respondent is not in a polygynous marriage, rural residence and wealth quintiles to which her household belongs as well as a dummy for whether the respondent's father ever beat her mother to account for one's childhood exposure to gender-based violence at home. These variables are included in X_{icp}. We also include province fixed effects, δ_{icp} as they account of time-invariant potential cultural differences across provinces that could influence marriage outcomes. YOB_{icp} are birth year dummies to account for potential difference in exposure to overall macroeconomic shocks for individuals born in different years. We cluster the regression disturbance term, ε_{icp} at the primary sampling unit (PSU) level.

Alternatively, we drop the youngest cohort of women from the analysis, that is those who were between 0-5 years old at the time of the start of the Taliban regime in 1996. We do so to avoid mechanically lowering the age at first marriage as this variable cannot exceed one's current age. The 95th percentile of the distribution of age at first marriage is found to be 24 years, indicating that 95% of Afghan women are married by the age of 24. Therefore, including only those who are 24 years or older at the time of the survey (analogously, those who were 6 years or older at the start of the first Taliban regime in 1996) can potentially aid in addressing the above concern. For this, we estimate the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned} y_{icp} = {} & \beta_0 + \beta_1 TajikUzbek_{icp} \\ & + \Sigma_{c=2}^{5} \beta_{2c} CohortStartTaliban_{icp} \\ & + \Sigma_{c=2}^{5} \beta_{3c} TajikUzbek_{icp} \times CohortStartTaliban_{icp} + \gamma X_{icp} + \delta_{icp} \\ & + YOB_{icp} + \varepsilon_{icp} \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

Equation (2) is analogous to equation (1), except that we exclude all women who were 0-5 years at the start of the first Taliban regime in 1996. This leaves us with four age cohort dummies, $CohortStartTaliban_{icp}$ instead of five as in Equation (1), with those who were 25-31 years old at the time of the Taliban regime continuing to be the omitted category. Here, again we are interested in the coefficients on the four interaction terms $TajikUzbek_{icp} \times CohortStartTaliban_{icp}$, that is β_{3c}.

As an extension to our analysis, we also investigate whether any potential changes in the age at first marriage are also accompanied by a change in the age at first birth. We use the

regression equation (2) for this analysis, where y_{icp} now denotes the age at first birth for woman i belonging to age cohort c and residing in province p instead of age at first marriage.

It is crucial to understand how we might be able to estimate the causal impact of the exposure to the first Taliban regime on age at marriage and as an extension on the age at first birth of Afghan women. We hypothesize that age at first marriage for women who were younger at the time of the start of the Taliban regime and therefore were likely to be entering the marriage market are more likely to be affected by exposure to the Taliban regime. Therefore, identification rests on the assumption that trends in age at first marriage (concomitantly, at first birth) between Tajik/Uzbek women and those belonging to the other ethnic groups were similar for women who were "old enough" and therefore were likely to be already married at the start of the first Taliban regime. Figure 3 shows most women are married by the age of 19-20 years across age cohorts. We consider women aged 25-31 years at the start of the Taliban regime as our "control group" as we expect that these women were likely to be already married at the start of the Taliban regime and therefore their age at first marriage is unlikely to be influenced by exposure to the Taliban regime. Now if there are unlikely to be pre-existing trends in age at first marriage, we would also expect that the age at first marriage of women who were 21-25 years old at the start of the first Taliban regime to be similar to the age at first marriage for the oldest cohort, 25-31 years old across Tajik/Uzek and other ethnicities. Further, if it is exposure to the Taliban regime that is potentially influencing younger women's age at first marriage differently across ethnic groups, we should also expect that the coefficients on the interaction terms between age cohort at the start of the Taliban regime and belonging to Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity (that is, β_{31}, β_{32}, β_{33}, β_{34}) to be statistically different from the coefficient on the interaction between being 21-25 years old at the start of the Taliban regime and belonging to Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity (β_{35}), apart from being significantly different from the "control group" women. Therefore, we explicitly include the interaction of being 21-25 years old at the start of the Taliban regime and belonging to the Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity in our regressions.

4 Results

4.1 Age at First Marriage

Figure 2 provides a graphical representation of the coefficient estimates of the interaction terms between ethnic identity and age of exposure to the first Taliban regime, β_{3c}. The omitted category for ethnic group are all women who are non-Tajik/Uzbek, while the omitted category for age cohort is women who were 25-31 years at the start of the first Taliban regime.

The figure on the right only includes women who are older than 24 years old at the time of the survey in 2015-16, that is who were 6 years or older at the start of the first Taliban regime. Figure 2 shows us that relative to the oldest cohort of women (that is, 25-31 years old at the start of the Taliban regime), "younger" women who belonged to the Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity experienced a significantly higher age at first marriage. Importantly, there appears to be no significant difference in age at first marriage between 21-25 year old women and 26-31 year old women across ethnic groups, indicating that women who may have been "old" enough to have been already married at the start of the regime do not appear to have been impacted by it. However, we also need to understand whether the coefficient estimates for relatively "younger" women are also significantly different from the coefficient estimate corresponding to 21-25 year old women. We provide formal explanation of these results as well as the necessary tests in Table 2 here.

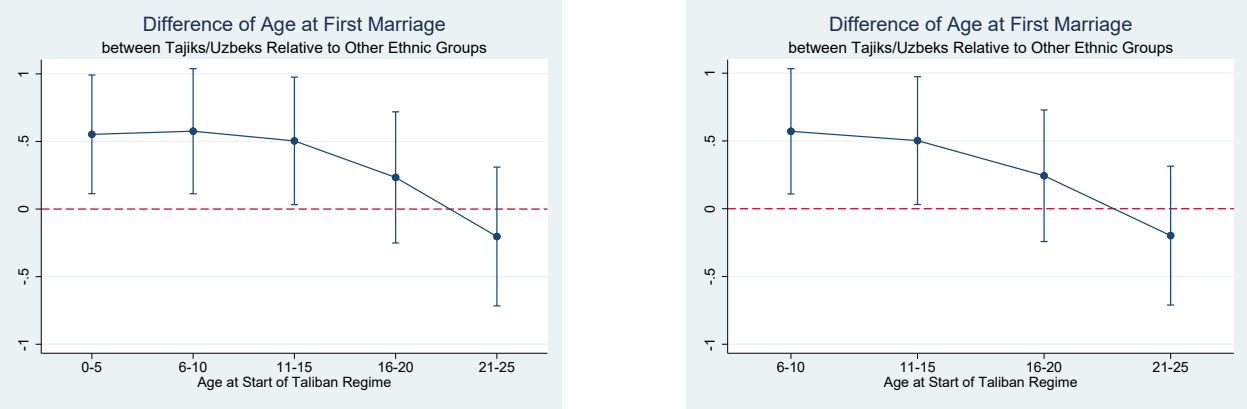

Figure 2: Coefficient Estimates of Difference in Age at First Marriage between Tajik/Uzbek women relative other ethnic group by age at the start of the Taliban regime (right figure: includes only women who were >= 6 years old at the start of the first Taliban regime)

Table 2 presents the results on the age at first marriage. Panel A shows that age at first marriage increased for women who were between 0-5, 6-10, 11-15 years old at the start of the Taliban regime and belonged to the Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity (that is, β_{31}, β_{32}, β_{33} respectively) relative to women who were 25-31 years old at the start of the Taliban regime and belonging to other ethnicities. In other words, the difference in age at first marriage between relatively "younger" Tajik/Uzbek and other women is higher than the analogous difference between relatively "older" women, where "younger" refers women who were young enough to be entering the marriage market and "older" implies and were old enough to be have been already married at the start of the first Taliban regime. This indicates a plausible divergence in the age at marriage trajectories across ethnic groups by age at exposure to the Taliban regime.

Table 2: Results: Age at First Marriage by Age of Exposure to the Taliban Regime and Ethnicity: Tajik/Uzbek vs Other Women

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Panel A:					
0-5 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{31})	0.45**	0.54**	0.60***	0.50**	0.55**
	(0.20)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.22)
6-10 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{32})	0.49**	0.53**	0.59**	0.53**	0.58**
	(0.21)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)
11-15 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{33})	0.21	0.50**	0.52**	0.49**	0.50**
	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)
16-20 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{34})	0.25	0.35	0.25	0.34	0.23
	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)
21-25 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{35})	-0.17	-0.18	-0.22	-0.16	-0.20
	(0.24)	(0.27)	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.26)
R^2	0.041	0.090	0.132	0.106	0.144
Observations	27,798	19,828	19,828	19,828	19,828
$H_0 : \beta_{31} = \beta_{35}$		13.07 [0.00]	18.11 [0.00]	11.43 [0.00]	16.03 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{32} = \beta_{35}$		11.66 [0.00]	15.78 [0.00]	11.14 [0.00]	15.00 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{33} = \beta_{35}$		9.94 [0.00]	12.20 [0.00]	9.24 [0.00]	11.38 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{34} = \beta_{35}$		6.38 [0.012]	5.08 [0.02]	5.66 [0.02]	4.51 [0.03]
Panel B:					
6-10 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{32})	0.48**	0.52**	0.58**	0.52**	0.57**
	(0.21)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)
11-15 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{33})	0.21	0.50**	0.51**	0.49**	0.50**
	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.24)
16-20 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{34})	0.25	0.35	0.25	0.34	0.24
	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.25)
21-25 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{35})	-0.17	-0.18	-0.21	-0.16	-0.20
	(0.24)	(0.27)	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.26)
R^2	0.027	0.081	0.117	0.089	0.124
Observations	20,440	15,233	15,233	15,233	15,233
$H_0 : \beta_{32} = \beta_{35}$		11.47 [0.00]	15.24 [0.00]	11.04 [0.00]	14.59 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{33} = \beta_{35}$		9.97 [0.00]	11.81 [0.00]	9.34 [0.00]	11.11 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{34} = \beta_{35}$		6.33 [0.01]	5.14 [0.02]	5.71 [0.02]	4.60 [0.03]
Controls		✓	✓	✓	✓
Province FE			✓		✓
Year of Birth FE				✓	✓

Note: Data source is Demographic and Health Surveys of Afghanistan (or, AfDHS) 2015. Panel A is restricted to currently married women aged 19-49 years at the time of the survey who are usual residents in the surveyed household. Panel B is further restricted by dropping the youngest cohort of women, that is, those who were between 0 and 5 years old at the start of the Taliban regime from the sample. Standard errors are clustered at the PSU level and reported in parentheses. *,**,*** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels of significance respectively. In the panels reporting hypothesis tests concerning equality of coefficients, the F-statistic is reported along with p-value in the parentheses.

Additionally, we find that the coefficient on the interaction between the dummies of being 21-25 years old and belonging to Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity (or, β_{35}) is insignificant, indicating that we cannot reject the hypothesis that it is no different from the coefficient on the interaction of the dummy of being 26-31 years old (the omitted category) and belonging to Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity. As 21-25 year old women are considered to be "old enough" to have been already married in the context of Afghan society, our finding provides some assurance

that there is unlikely to be overall preexisting trend in the age at first marriage. Importantly, we also need to check whether the coefficients, β_{31}, β_{32}, β_{33} are also significantly different from β_{35}. We find that across different columns, that is indeed the case. The p-values indicate that the coefficients β_{31}, β_{32}, β_{33} (and, additionally, β_{34}) are all statistically different from β_{35} at the 1% or 5% level of significance.

Focusing on column (5) which includes the full set of controls and fixed effects for the purpose of interpretation of the coefficients, we find that the difference at age at first marriage between Tajik/Uzbek and other "younger" women and that between Tajik/Uzbek and other "older" women is around 0.5 - 0.6 years or, between 6-7 months. In societies where women's age at marriage are typically low, these coefficient estimates suggest important improvement for younger Tajik/Uzbek women; while at the same time indicating potentially significant negative implications for women belonging to other ethnic groups.

Panel B of Table 2 excludes the youngest cohort of women, that is, those who were 0-5 years old at the start of the Taliban regime from the analysis. We find that the coefficients on the interaction between those who were 6-10 years old, 11-15 years old at the start of the Taliban regime and belonging to the Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity (that is, β_{32}, β_{33}) continue to positive, statistically significant and close to the corresponding estimates as in Panel A. Additionally, the coefficient on the interaction of those who were 21-25 years old and belong to Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity (that is, β_{35}) continue to be insignificant and we can also conclude that β_{32}, β_{33} are statistically different from β_{35} as in Panel A. This indicates that results are unlikely to be driven by including the youngest cohort of women in our estimation sample.

Appendix Table A.2 presents the results by restricting the estimation sample to women who have been married only once. Panel A (B) of Table A.2 is analogous to Panel A (B) of Table 2. As nearly 99% of women have been married only once, it is not surprising that our findings in Appendix Table A.2 remain similar to those found in Table 2 across columns and panels.

Our findings demonstrate that there has been potential divergence in the age at first marriage of Afghan women by ethnicity and age of exposure to the first Taliban regime. In particular, women belonging to dominant ethnic groups that were also politically opposed to the Talibans, that is, Tajiks/Uzbeks, and were young enough that they were yet to enter the marriage market, saw an increase in the age at first marriage. While enhancement in the age at first marriage is welfare improving, not all women ended up benefiting from this change. Therefore, this might contribute to overall unequal impacts on women belonging to different ethnic groups who may have potentially been differently affected by the first Taliban regime.

4.2 Age at First Birth

We also study whether the findings regarding women's age at first marriage are also similarly reflected when we consider women's age at first birth as the outcome variable. Table 3 here presents the results. Here, we restrict the sample by dropping the youngest cohort of women, that is, those who were 0-5 years old at the start of the first Taliban regime (analogous to Panel B of Table 2). Panel B additionally restricts the sample to include women who have married only once (analogous to Table A.2).

Table 3: Results: Age at First Birth by Age of Exposure to the Taliban Regime and Ethnicity: Tajik/Uzbek vs Other Women

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A:				
6-10 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{32})	0.48**	0.52**	0.49**	0.52**
	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.22)
11-15 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{33})	0.21	0.22	0.20	0.20
	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.23)
16-20 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{34})	0.19	0.12	0.17	0.10
	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)
21-25 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{35})	-0.38	-0.38	-0.36	-0.36
	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)
R^2	0.094	0.120	0.103	0.128
Observations	14,805	14,805	14,805	14,805
$H_0 : \beta_{32} = \beta_{35}$	17.23 [0.00]	19.77 [0.00]	17.04 [0.00]	19.34 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{33} = \beta_{35}$	7.53 [0.01]	8.01 [0.00]	6.92 [0.01]	7.34 [0.01]
$H_0 : \beta_{34} = \beta_{35}$	6.80 [0.01]	5.37 [0.02]	5.92 [0.02]	4.62 [0.03]
Panel B: married only once				
6-10 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{32})	0.46**	0.51**	0.47**	0.51**
	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)
11-15 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{33})	0.23	0.24	0.22	0.23
	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.23)	(0.24)
16-20 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{34})	0.17	0.10	0.16	0.08
	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)
21-25 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{35})	-0.33	-0.33	-0.30	-0.31
	(0.27)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)
R^2	0.096	0.124	0.106	0.132
Observations	14,436	14,436	14,436	14,436
$H_0 : \beta_{32} = \beta_{35}$	14.76 [0.00]	17.22 [0.00]	14.55 [0.00]	16.78 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{33} = \beta_{35}$	6.56 [0.01]	7.14 [0.01]	6.03 [0.01]	6.52 [0.01]
$H_0 : \beta_{34} = \beta_{35}$	5.27 [0.02]	3.94 [0.05]	4.58 [0.03]	3.36 [0.07]
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province FE		✓		✓
Year of Birth FE			✓	✓

Note: Data source is Demographic and Health Surveys of Afghanistan (or, AfDHS) 2015. Panel A is restricted by dropping the youngest cohort of women who are currently married who is a usual resident in the surveyed household, that is, those who were between 0 and 5 years old at the start of the Taliban regime from the sample. Panel B is further limited to include women who have been married only once. Standard errors are clustered at the PSU level and reported in parentheses. *,**,*** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels of significance respectively. In the panels reporting hypothesis tests concerning equality of coefficients, the F-statistic is reported along with p-value in the parentheses.

Across all columns in Panels A and B, we find that the coefficient on the interaction of being 6-10 years and being of Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity (that is, β_{32}) is positive and statistically significant. Additionally, the coefficient on the interaction of women who were 21-25 years old at the start of the first Taliban regime and belonged to the Tajik/Uzbek ethnicity, β_{35} is not significantly different from zero, indicating that there is no significant difference in between Tajik/Uzbek and other women who were 21-25 years old and that between Tajik/Uzbek and other women who were 26-31 year old at the start of the first Taliban regime. As the average age at first birth is around 19 years in our sample, women who were 26-31 years old as well as those who were 21-25 years old at the start of the Taliban regime are very likely to have given birth to their firstborn children already. Further, β_{32} is also significantly different from β_{35}. This provides some suggestive evidence that "early" exposure to the first Taliban regime created a potential divergence in the age at first birth across Tajik/Uzbek women and those belonging to other ethnicities by nearly 6 months and there is limited evidence that these entirely driven by preexisting trends in these outcomes.

We focus on column (5) for the purpose of interpretation of our results. We find that the difference at age at first birth between Tajik/Uzbek and other "younger" women and that between Tajik/Uzbek and other "older" women is around 0.5 years or, around 6 months. Although this indicates a modest increase in the difference in age at first birth between relatively younger and older Tajik/Uzbek women vis-a-vis those who belonged to other ethnic groups, this finding is significant especially in the context of a society where underage and early childbearing in marital unions is in general encouraged.

5 Conclusion

We study how exposure to the first Taliban regime affects age at first marriage for Afghan women by their age of exposure and ethnic identity. We find that age at first marriage increased for younger women who were about to enter the marriage market and belonged to dominant ethnic groups, Tajiks/Uzbeks, that were politically opposed to the Talibans relative to women belonging to other ethnic groups (such as the Pashtuns) and who were old enough to have been already married by the time the Talibans started governing. The Talibans imposed strict restrictions on women's rights and mobility, including prohibition on continuing education and stepping outside the home without a husband/male blood relatives. These laws and regulations may have encouraged parents of girls who were relatively young at the start of the Taliban regime to use early marriage as a coping mechanism that would ensure security and continuity of mobility of their daughters. The Talibans were dominantly Pashtuns, whereas the alliance of leaders opposed to the Talibans were dominantly

Tajiks/Uzbeks. Although the Afghan society is overall conservative, the imposition of the Taliban governance may have led to potential divergence in how women were treated among dominant ethnic groups that were opposed to the Talibans relative to the Talibans. Therefore, Tajik/Uzbek younger women appear to be less likely to have been negatively impacted by the Taliban regime relative to their counterparts who belong to other ethnicities. We also find that the change in age of marriage is also accompanied by a concomitant change in age at first birth and that these do not appear to be driven by preexisting trends in these variables across ethnic groups among older women. As women's age at first marriage crucially influences women's welfare as well as human capital outcomes for their children, our findings indicate long lasting effects of the first Taliban regime on Afghan society.

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Appendix

Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics: Sample Restricted to Women who have been Married Once

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Observations
Panel A:			
Age at First Marriage (yrs.)	17.92	3.50	27,727
Age at First Birth (yrs.)	19.27	3.49	25,049
If Pashtun	0.43	0.49	27,677
If Tajik/Uzbek	0.37	0.48	27,677
If Hazara	0.09	0.29	27,677
Rural	0.76	0.43	27,727
Not in Polygynous Marriage	0.94	0.24	27,568
Years of Education	1.11	3.03	27,705
Husband's Age (yrs.)	36.09	10.76	27,605
Husband's Years of Education	3.86	4.99	27,352
If Woman's Father Beat her Mother	0.36	0.48	27,352
Panel B:			
Age at First Marriage (yrs.)	18.25	3.79	19,929
Age at First Birth (yrs.)	19.64	3.69	19,257
If Pashtun	0.42	0.49	19,892
If Tajik/Uzbek	0.38	0.48	19,892
If Hazara	0.10	0.30	19,892
Rural	0.76	0.43	19,929
Not in Polygynous Marriage	0.93	0.26	19,801
Years of Education	0.77	2.57	19,916
Husband's Age (yrs.)	40.18	9.59	19,838
Husband's Years of Education	3.48	4.84	19,673
If Woman's Father Beat her Mother	0.36	0.48	15,204

Note: Data source is Demographic and Health Surveys of Afghanistan (or, AfDHS) 2015. Panel A is restricted to currently married women aged 19-49 years at the time of the survey who are usual residents in the surveyed household and who have been married only once. Panel B is further restricted by dropping the youngest cohort of women, that is, those who were between 0 and 5 years old at the start of the Taliban regime from the sample.

Table A.2: Results: Age at First Marriage by Age of Exposure to the Taliban Regime and Ethnicity for Women who have been married only once: Tajik/Uzbek vs Other Women

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Panel A:					
0-5 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{31})	0.37*	0.47**	0.52**	0.43*	0.48**
	(0.20)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.22)
6-10 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{32})	0.42**	0.47*	0.52**	0.46*	0.51**
	(0.21)	(0.23)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.23)
11-15 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{33})	0.14	0.42*	0.45*	0.42*	0.44*
	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.24)
16-20 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{34})	0.18	0.28	0.17	0.27	0.16
	(0.23)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)
21-25 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{35})	-0.22	-0.24	-0.28	-0.23	-0.27
	(0.24)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.26)
R^2	0.041	0.091	0.134	0.107	0.146
Observations	27,103	19,352	19,352	19,352	19,352
$H_0 : \beta_{31} = \beta_{35}$		12.55 [0.00]	17.51 [0.00]	11.02 [0.00]	15.60 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{32} = \beta_{35}$		11.35 [0.00]	15.40 [0.00]	10.85 [0.00]	14.67 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{33} = \beta_{35}$		9.54 [0.00]	11.81 [0.00]	8.95 [0.00]	11.13 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{34} = \beta_{35}$		6.21 [0.01]	4.85 [0.03]	5.59 [0.02]	4.38 [0.04]
Panel B:					
6-10 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{32})	0.42**	0.46*	0.52**	0.46*	0.51**
	(0.21)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.23)
11-15 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{33})	0.14	0.43*	0.45*	0.42*	0.44*
	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.24)
16-20 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{34})	0.18	0.28	0.18	0.27	0.17
	(0.22)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)
21-25 years at Start of Taliban Regime × Tajik/Uzbek (β_{35})	-0.22	-0.24	-0.28	-0.23	-0.26
	(0.24)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.26)
R^2	0.028	0.082	0.119	0.091	0.127
Observations	19,892	14,846	14,846	14,846	14,846
$H_0 : \beta_{32} = \beta_{35}$		11.19 [0.00]	14.95 [0.00]	10.76 [0.00]	14.31 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{33} = \beta_{35}$		9.61 [0.00]	11.53 [0.00]	9.07 [0.00]	10.93 [0.00]
$H_0 : \beta_{34} = \beta_{35}$		6.19 [0.01]	4.88 [0.03]	5.65 [0.02]	4.44 [0.04]
Controls		✓	✓	✓	✓
Province FE			✓		✓
Year of Birth FE				✓	✓

Note: Data source is Demographic and Health Surveys of Afghanistan (or, AfDHS) 2015. Sample is limited to include women who have been married only once. Panel A is restricted to currently married women aged 19-49 years at the time of the survey who are usual residents in the surveyed household. Panel B is further restricted by dropping the youngest cohort of women, that is, those who were between 0 and 5 years old at the start of the Taliban regime from the sample.