

## CHAPTER 3

### BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Women's demographic and health-seeking behaviour is associated with several characteristics, including their age, marital status, religion, and caste. Modernizing influences, such as women's and men's education, exposure to mass media, and women's work participation, are also important catalysts for demographic and socioeconomic change. In addition, women's status and autonomy are critical in promoting change in reproductive attitudes and behaviour, especially in patriarchal societies (Dyson and Moore, 1983; Das Gupta, 1987; Jeffery and Basu, 1996). The National Population Policy, 2000, of the Government of India identifies the low status of women in India, typified by factors such as discrimination against the girl child and female adolescents, early age at marriage, and high rates of maternal mortality, as an important barrier to the achievement of population and maternal and child welfare goals (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2000).

This chapter presents a profile of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of ever-married women age 15–49 who were identified by the Household Questionnaire as eligible respondents for the NFHS-2 Woman's Questionnaire. In addition, data are presented on the extent to which women in Bihar enjoy autonomy, as measured by their participation in household decisionmaking, freedom of movement, and access to money they can spend as they wish. Finally, data on women's attitudes towards the acceptance of spousal violence under specific circumstances and their experience of physical violence are discussed.

#### 3.1 Background Characteristics

Table 3.1 presents the percentage distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by age, marital status, coresidence with husband, education, religion, caste/tribe, work status, and husband's education. In Bihar, the proportion of respondents in five-year age groups increases from 12 percent in the age group 15–19 years to 20 percent in the age group 20–24, remains at the same level in the age group 25–29, and then falls steadily to 8 percent in the age group 45–49. The initial increase reflects the increasing share of ever-married women in each of these age groups. The decline after age 25–29 (an age by which most women have been married) reflects the normal pyramidal shape of the population's age distribution. A greater proportion of rural women fall in the younger age groups than of urban women. This higher share of young respondents among rural women is largely a consequence of the lower average age at marriage in rural areas.

Ninety-five percent of respondents are currently married, 3 percent are widowed, and 2 percent are divorced, separated, or deserted. Eighty-six percent of respondents are living with their husbands. The distribution of respondents by marital status and coresidence with husbands does not vary between urban and rural areas. By contrast, there are sharp differences between urban and rural areas in the composition of respondents by religion and caste/tribe. The proportion of women who are Hindu is lower in urban areas (77 percent) than in rural areas (84 percent), whereas the proportion who are Muslim is higher in urban areas (21 percent) than in rural areas (14 percent). For Bihar as a whole, 84 percent of all ever-married women are Hindu, 15 percent are Muslim, and less than 1 percent are Christian.

Table 3.1 Background characteristics of respondents

Percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by selected background characteristics, according to residence and region, Bihar, 1998–99

Background characteristic	Residence		Region			Total	Number of women	
	Urban	Rural	North Bihar Plain	South Bihar Plain	Jhar-khand		Weighted	Unweighted
<b>Age</b>								
15–19	8.5	12.1	13.0	10.6	10.9	11.7	825	829
20–24	15.5	20.7	19.9	21.3	19.4	20.2	1,419	1,419
25–29	18.9	20.3	19.5	21.3	20.0	20.2	1,419	1,415
30–34	18.3	15.2	14.0	15.9	17.6	15.5	1,088	1,082
35–39	15.7	12.8	13.1	12.7	13.7	13.1	921	921
40–44	12.5	10.6	11.1	10.8	10.3	10.8	759	761
45–49	10.5	8.2	9.3	7.4	8.2	8.4	593	597
<b>Marital status</b>								
Currently married	94.2	94.9	94.9	94.3	95.3	94.8	6,661	6,662
Widowed	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.8	3.4	238	238
Divorced	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.2	15	15
Separated	1.7	1.4	1.2	2.3	0.6	1.4	99	98
Deserted	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	11	11
<b>Coresidence with husband</b>								
Living with husband	86.2	85.6	83.5	85.3	90.2	85.7	6,018	6,011
Not living with husband	8.1	9.3	11.4	9.1	5.1	9.2	643	651
Not currently married	5.8	5.1	5.1	5.7	4.7	5.2	363	362
<b>Education</b>								
Illiterate	46.2	80.1	79.4	72.9	76.3	76.6	5,383	5,397
Literate, < primary school complete	5.2	2.7	2.3	3.1	3.9	3.0	208	205
Primary school complete	12.8	7.6	7.1	9.7	8.1	8.1	570	568
Middle school complete	7.9	3.3	3.1	4.0	5.0	3.8	267	264
High school complete	14.6	4.7	5.3	7.9	3.8	5.7	403	401
Higher secondary complete and above	13.2	1.5	2.8	2.5	2.9	2.7	191	189
<b>Religion</b>								
Hindu	76.8	84.4	81.1	88.0	82.5	83.6	5,872	5,873
Muslim	20.5	14.1	18.6	11.7	11.7	14.8	1,038	1,044
Christian	1.9	0.7	0.2	0.0	3.0	0.8	59	56
Sikh	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	2	2
Jain	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	2	2
Zoroastrian/Parsi	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	3	3
No religion	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	2	2
Other	0.3	0.7	0.0	0.1	2.5	0.6	45	42
<b>Caste/tribe</b>								
Scheduled caste	16.6	21.1	20.0	25.8	15.2	20.7	1,452	1,446
Scheduled tribe	2.1	9.0	1.4	2.1	29.1	8.3	582	555
Other backward class	49.3	52.1	55.4	54.8	41.4	51.8	3,642	3,673
Other	32.0	17.7	23.1	17.4	14.3	19.2	1,348	1,350
<b>Work status</b>								
Working in family farm/business	3.8	9.7	7.5	9.4	11.7	9.1	639	632
Employed by someone else	5.3	12.3	10.6	12.9	11.7	11.6	814	817
Self-employed	3.9	6.0	4.3	5.9	8.3	5.7	404	398
Not worked in past 12 months	86.9	72.0	77.7	71.8	68.3	73.6	5,168	5,177
Contd.								

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**Table 3.1 Background characteristics of respondents (contd.)**

Percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by selected background characteristics, according to residence and region, Bihar, 1998–99

Background characteristic	Residence		Region			Total	Number of women	
			North Bihar Plain	South Bihar Plain	Jhar-khand		Weighted	Unweighted
	Urban	Rural						
<b>Husband's education</b>								
Illiterate	20.4	45.0	44.4	38.3	44.4	42.5	2,986	2,992
Literate, < primary school complete	3.8	5.6	5.4	3.6	7.9	5.4	383	382
Primary school complete	12.5	13.0	13.9	12.2	12.4	13.0	912	917
Middle school complete	9.8	9.2	8.2	8.8	11.6	9.2	649	647
High school complete	21.2	15.4	14.8	20.7	12.1	16.0	1,122	1,120
Higher secondary complete and above	32.2	11.6	13.0	16.3	11.6	13.7	963	956
Missing	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	10	10
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	NA	NA
<b>Number of women</b>								
Weighted	718	6,306	3,133	2,199	1,692	7,024	7,024	NA
Unweighted	687	6,337	3,295	2,115	1,614	7,024	NA	7,024
NA: Not applicable								

One-fifth (21 percent) of ever-married women in Bihar belong to scheduled castes, comprising 21 percent of women in rural areas and 17 percent of women in urban areas. Eight percent of ever-married women belong to scheduled tribes—9 percent of women in rural areas and 2 percent in urban areas. Scheduled tribes are mostly concentrated in the Jharkhand region. More than one-half of women in Bihar (52 percent) belong to other backward classes (OBC).

The educational levels of women and their husbands have an important influence on demographic and health-seeking behaviour. Seventy-seven percent of ever-married women age 15–49 are illiterate, about the same proportion observed at the time of NFHS-1 (78 percent). There has been a marginal decline in illiteracy among rural women, from 84 percent in NFHS-1 to 80 percent in NFHS-2, whereas illiteracy levels among urban women are almost the same in NFHS-1 (45 percent) and NFHS-2 (46 percent). The difference in literacy level between urban and rural areas remains high, however. Only 8 percent of all respondents have completed high school and above, the same percentage as in NFHS-1. Twenty-eight percent of women in urban areas have attained this educational level, compared with only 6 percent of women in rural areas. Among women who are literate, the largest proportion have completed primary school (but not middle school). Thirteen percent of women in urban areas have completed primary school (but not middle school), compared with only 8 percent in rural areas.

Forty-three percent of ever-married women have illiterate husbands, about the same level as in NFHS-1 (45 percent). The proportion of respondents with illiterate husbands is more than twice as high in rural areas (45 percent) as in urban areas (20 percent). The proportion of women with illiterate husbands has declined in rural areas since NFHS-1, however, when it was 49 percent. Nearly one-third (30 percent) of women have husbands who have at least completed high school. This percentage is much higher in urban areas (53 percent) than in rural areas (27

percent). By contrast, there are only negligible differences by residence in the proportions of women with husbands who have completed primary or middle school.

Three-fourths (74 percent) of ever-married women in Bihar did not participate in work other than their regular housework during the 12 months preceding NFHS-2. A larger proportion of women fall in this category in urban areas (87 percent) than in rural areas (72 percent). In both urban and rural areas, the highest proportions of working women were employed by someone else (12 percent of all rural women and 5 percent of all urban women). Ten percent of rural women worked on their own family farm or in a family business, compared with only 4 percent of urban women. A slightly higher proportion of women are self-employed in rural areas (6 percent) than in urban areas (4 percent).

### **3.2 Educational Level**

Table 3.2 shows the percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by the highest level of education attained, according to age, religion, caste/tribe, and husband's education. The educational levels of women in various age groups reflect progress in the spread of education over a period of about three decades. Illiteracy is lower among younger women than among older women: 73 percent of women age 15–24 are illiterate, compared with 81 percent of women age 40–49. The proportion of women who have at least completed high school, although still very low, is about four times as high for women age 20–24 (12 percent) as for women age 45–49 (3 percent).

A higher proportion of Muslim women are illiterate (83 percent) than Hindu women (76 percent) or Christian women (43 percent), and Hindu women are more likely to have completed high school or more education (9 percent) than Muslim women (3 percent). Women's educational attainment also varies widely by caste/tribe membership. Ninety percent of women who belong to scheduled tribes, 88 percent who belong to scheduled castes, and 80 percent who belong to other backward classes are illiterate, compared with only 51 percent of women who do not belong to any of these disadvantaged groups. Scheduled-tribe women and scheduled-caste women are also less likely than other women to have completed middle school or high school.

Ninety-eight percent of women with illiterate husbands are themselves illiterate. Fifty-six percent of women whose husbands have completed high school (but not higher secondary school) and 26 percent of women whose husbands have completed higher secondary school and above are also illiterate. Nearly all women whose husbands are literate have a lower level of education than their husbands. Specifically, the proportion of women with less education than their husbands is 87 percent for women whose husbands are literate but have not completed primary school, 89 percent for women whose husbands have completed primary school, 91 percent for women whose husbands have completed middle school, 88 percent for women whose husbands have completed high school, and 81 percent for women whose husbands have completed higher secondary school and above.

**Table 3.2 Respondent's level of education by background characteristics**

Percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by highest level of education attained, according to selected background characteristics, Bihar, 1998–99

Background characteristic	Respondent's level of education						Total percent	Number of women
	Illiterate	Literate, < primary school complete	Primary school complete	Middle school complete	High school complete	Higher secondary complete and above		
<b>Age</b>								
15–19	74.0	3.5	10.1	6.9	4.6	0.9	100.0	825
20–24	72.9	2.5	8.0	4.2	9.6	2.7	100.0	1,419
25–29	75.1	2.8	6.6	4.6	6.9	4.0	100.0	1,419
30–34	77.0	2.1	7.9	3.8	5.3	3.9	100.0	1,088
35–39	80.2	3.5	7.7	2.3	3.4	2.9	100.0	921
40–44	79.6	4.2	8.8	1.6	3.6	2.1	100.0	759
45–49	83.1	2.8	9.3	1.7	2.7	0.5	100.0	593
<b>Religion</b>								
Hindu	75.7	2.6	8.3	4.2	6.3	3.0	100.0	5,872
Muslim	83.4	5.1	7.7	1.0	1.9	0.9	100.0	1,038
Christian	42.7	3.7	7.3	18.0	19.5	8.8	100.0	59
Other	90.3	2.0	2.0	0.0	2.1	3.6	100.0	55
<b>Caste/tribe</b>								
Scheduled caste	88.3	2.1	4.0	2.4	2.6	0.7	100.0	1,452
Scheduled tribe	89.5	1.3	4.1	2.2	2.2	0.7	100.0	582
Other backward class	79.6	3.2	7.3	3.4	4.8	1.7	100.0	3,642
Other	50.6	4.0	16.5	7.0	13.4	8.5	100.0	1,348
<b>Husband's education</b>								
Illiterate	97.7	0.7	1.0	0.3	0.2	0.0	100.0	2,986
Literate, < primary school complete	87.1	8.1	3.5	0.8	0.5	0.0	100.0	383
Primary school complete	84.2	4.5	9.0	1.6	0.6	0.1	100.0	912
Middle school complete	73.4	4.8	13.1	5.4	2.8	0.5	100.0	649
High school complete	55.7	4.8	18.4	8.8	11.6	0.7	100.0	1,122
Higher secondary complete and above	26.2	3.0	15.8	11.1	25.1	18.7	100.0	963
Total	76.6	3.0	8.1	3.8	5.7	2.7	100.0	7,024

Note: Total includes 10 women with missing information on husband's education, who are not shown separately.

### 3.3 Age at First Marriage

Table 3.3 gives information on age at first marriage. The table shows the percentage of all women (ever-married and never-married) who first married by specified exact ages as well as the median age at first marriage and first cohabitation by current age and residence. The median age at first marriage/cohabitation for a cohort of women is the age by which 50 percent of the cohort marries/cohabits.

There is evidence that age at first marriage is rising in Bihar. The proportion married by age 15 falls steadily from the oldest to the youngest age group. More remarkable, the proportion falls from 40 percent for women age 20–24 to 24 percent for women age 15–19, who are only five years younger on average. This decline in the proportion of women married by age 15 is evident in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas, the proportion of women married by age 15 declines from 43 percent among women age 20–24 to 26 percent among women age 15–19; the corresponding decline in urban areas is from 20 percent to 9 percent. The median age at first

Table 3.3 Age at first marriage								
Percentage of women married by specific exact ages, median age at first marriage, and median age at first cohabitation with husband, according to current age and residence, Bihar, 1998–99								
Current age <sup>1</sup>	Percentage ever married by exact age						Median age at first marriage	Median age at first cohabitation with husband
	13	15	18	20	22	25		
URBAN								
15–19	2.8	8.8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	5.1	19.7	38.8	57.7	NA	NA	19.0	19.5
25–29	6.2	22.5	54.5	72.5	80.2	87.0	17.1	18.3
30–34	11.6	31.7	62.9	78.8	85.7	92.1	16.7	17.5
35–39	14.6	37.8	66.7	86.6	91.9	93.7	16.3	17.6
40–44	11.6	28.8	68.9	88.4	97.4	97.4	16.3	17.4
45–49	17.7	44.0	80.3	92.9	97.2	98.5	15.3	16.9
20–49	10.1	29.0	58.9	76.7	NA	NA	16.9	18.0
25–49	11.6	31.7	64.7	82.1	88.9	92.8	16.4	17.6
RURAL								
15–19	9.0	26.4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	15.8	42.7	74.7	85.7	NA	NA	15.5	17.0
25–29	19.8	48.8	83.3	93.1	95.4	97.1	15.1	16.6
30–34	22.2	50.9	86.3	95.9	98.2	98.8	14.9	16.5
35–39	25.5	54.0	87.4	95.6	98.5	99.0	14.7	16.4
40–44	30.2	60.7	89.3	97.0	99.6	99.8	14.3	16.3
45–49	32.3	60.8	89.1	95.5	99.2	99.6	14.2	16.5
20–49	22.3	50.8	83.4	92.7	NA	NA	14.9	16.6
25–49	24.6	53.6	86.4	95.1	97.7	98.6	14.8	16.5
TOTAL								
15–19	8.2	24.0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	14.7	40.4	71.0	82.7	NA	NA	15.7	17.2
25–29	18.4	46.1	80.4	91.0	93.9	96.2	15.3	16.7
30–34	20.9	48.5	83.4	93.7	96.6	98.0	15.1	16.6
35–39	24.2	52.1	84.9	94.6	97.8	98.5	14.9	16.5
40–44	28.0	57.0	86.8	96.0	99.4	99.5	14.5	16.4
45–49	30.5	58.7	87.9	95.2	98.9	99.4	14.4	16.6
20–49	20.9	48.3	80.6	90.8	NA	NA	15.1	16.7
25–49	23.0	51.0	83.9	93.6	96.7	97.9	14.9	16.6
NA: Not applicable NC: Not calculated because less than 50 percent of women in the age group 15–19 have married or started living with their husband by age 15. <sup>1</sup> The current age groups include both never-married and ever-married women.								

marriage has also risen over the past three decades. In urban areas, the median age at first marriage is nearly four years higher for women age 20–24 than for women age 45–49; in rural areas, the corresponding increase in the median age at first marriage is more than one year.

Despite this evidence of a rising age at marriage, Table 3.3 shows that in Bihar most women age 20–49 were married before they reached the legal minimum age of 18 years, as set by the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1978. Specifically, 81 percent of all women age 20–49, including 83 percent of rural women and 59 percent of urban women, married by exact age 18. Although the median age at first marriage for women age 20–49 is two years higher in urban

areas (16.9) than in rural areas (14.9), both are less than 18 years. The only group with a median age at first marriage of 18 years or higher is urban women age 20–24. Even among young urban women, more than one-third marry before reaching the legal minimum age. In Bihar, the difference between median age at first marriage and median age at first cohabitation is about one and one-half years among women age 20–49. It is also one and one-half years for women age 20–24. This suggests that *gauna* or similar cultural practices that create a lag between marriage and cohabitation are still observed in Bihar.

### 3.4 Exposure to Mass Media

In a country such as India, where the majority of women are illiterate or have little formal education, information channels such as the mass media play an important role in bringing about modernization. NFHS-2 asked women whether they read a newspaper or magazine, watch television, or listen to radio at least once a week, and whether they visit the cinema or theatre at least once a month. Table 3.4 gives information on women's exposure to these media by selected background characteristics.

In Bihar, nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of women are not regularly exposed to any mass media. Media exposure is similar among women in different age groups, but exposure varies widely by women's education and household standard of living. As expected, regular exposure to mass media increases with education, ranging from 14 percent among illiterate women to 57–86 percent among women in other education categories. Regular exposure to media also increases with household standard of living, ranging from 8 percent among women living in households with a low standard of living to 87 percent among women in households with a high standard of living.

Seventy-seven percent of rural women are not regularly exposed to any media, compared with 33 percent of urban women. Slightly more Muslim women are not regularly exposed to any media (79 percent) than Hindu women (72 percent). Eighty-eight percent of scheduled-tribe women, 82 percent of scheduled-caste women, and 75 percent of women from other backward classes are not regularly exposed to any media, compared with only 50 percent of women who do not belong to any of these disadvantaged groups.

Among the different types of mass media, radio has the greatest reach across all categories of women including illiterate and poor women. Overall, 20 percent of ever-married women listen to the radio at least once a week, and 17 percent watch television at least once a week, compared with less than 10 percent who are regularly exposed to print media or cinema/theatre. The proportion of women who listen to the radio at least once a week has declined since the time of NFHS-1, however, when it was 26 percent. By contrast, regular exposure to television has risen over the same period—from 13 percent in NFHS-1 to 17 percent in NFHS-2. Cinema/theatre is the least widely used medium. Exposure to each type of media increases sharply with women's education and household standard of living.

**Table 3.4 Exposure to mass media**

Percentage of ever-married women age 15–49 who usually read a newspaper or magazine, watch television, or listen to the radio at least once a week, who usually visit a cinema/theatre at least once a month, or who are not regularly exposed to any of these media by selected background characteristics, Bihar, 1998–99

Background characteristic	Exposure to mass media					Number of women
	Reads a newspaper or magazine at least once a week	Watches television at least once a week	Listens to the radio at least once a week	Visits the cinema/theatre at least once a month	Not regularly exposed to any media	
<b>Age</b>						
15–19	9.5	13.9	19.5	4.9	72.7	825
20–24	10.3	15.9	22.4	5.1	71.5	1,419
25–29	9.5	17.7	21.5	4.7	72.4	1,419
30–34	10.7	17.6	20.2	4.9	71.5	1,088
35–39	8.8	16.6	18.2	4.2	75.2	921
40–44	7.6	17.5	19.1	3.8	73.6	759
45–49	6.3	18.1	18.8	1.3	73.7	593
<b>Residence</b>						
Urban	31.4	59.1	39.6	18.3	32.7	718
Rural	6.8	11.9	18.1	2.8	77.3	6,306
<b>Region</b>						
North Bihar Plain	9.2	14.6	22.0	4.3	73.8	3,133
South Bihar Plain	9.6	17.3	19.8	5.3	72.3	2,199
Jharkhand	9.0	20.0	17.8	3.4	71.2	1,692
<b>Education</b>						
Illiterate	0.0	7.0	10.6	1.4	85.9	5,383
Literate, < middle school complete	21.9	34.7	41.6	7.5	42.6	779
Middle school complete	40.7	46.9	50.2	13.4	26.3	267
High school complete and above	62.7	68.1	66.9	23.4	14.0	595
<b>Religion</b>						
Hindu	10.0	17.4	21.3	4.4	71.7	5,872
Muslim	4.2	13.2	14.1	4.0	78.9	1,038
Christian	24.8	23.2	40.7	12.2	57.5	59
Other	7.7	13.5	9.8	1.8	82.5	55
<b>Caste/tribe</b>						
Scheduled caste	4.2	9.6	13.1	2.7	82.1	1,452
Scheduled tribe	2.7	4.2	10.4	1.1	88.3	582
Other backward class	7.1	14.9	18.4	3.7	74.9	3,642
Other	23.4	34.9	37.5	9.4	50.0	1,348
<b>Standard of living index</b>						
Low	1.3	2.5	6.2	1.2	91.8	3,709
Medium	10.2	20.3	27.6	5.3	62.0	2,595
High	47.6	77.8	67.2	17.7	12.6	712
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>72.7</b>	<b>7,024</b>

Note: Total includes 8 women with missing information on the standard of living index, who are not shown separately.

### 3.5 Women's Employment

Labor force participation not only gives women an opportunity to earn income but also exposes them to the outside world and to networks and authority structures other than kin-based ones (Dixon-Mueller, 1993). In a developing country such as India, however, where women's workforce participation is often motivated by poverty, these benefits are likely to be mediated by

Table 3.5 Employment			
Percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by employment characteristics, according to residence, Bihar, 1998–99			
Employment characteristic	Urban	Rural	Total
<b>Employment status</b>			
Currently working	12.6	26.5	25.1
Worked in past 12 months (not currently working)	0.5	1.5	1.4
Not worked in past 12 months	86.9	72.0	73.6
<b>Continuity of employment<sup>1</sup></b>			
Throughout the year	70.2	61.2	61.7
Seasonally/part of the year	24.1	35.4	34.9
Once in a while	5.6	3.4	3.5
<b>Type of earning<sup>1</sup></b>			
Cash only	69.2	34.7	36.4
Cash and kind	17.3	34.2	33.4
Kind only	3.4	12.1	11.7
Not paid	10.1	19.0	18.5
<b>Occupation<sup>1</sup></b>			
Professional	16.4	2.2	2.9
Sales worker	14.2	4.7	5.2
Service worker	4.3	0.3	0.5
Production worker	18.9	10.6	11.0
Agricultural worker	21.2	70.9	68.4
Other worker	23.7	10.6	11.3
Don't know/missing	1.1	0.7	0.7
<b>Earnings contribution to total family earnings<sup>2</sup></b>			
Almost none	10.3	7.7	7.8
Less than half	42.2	33.1	33.7
About half	15.0	16.4	16.3
More than half	16.9	9.8	10.2
All	15.6	33.0	32.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	718	6,306	7,024
Number of employed women <sup>1</sup>	94	1,763	1,856
Number of women earning cash	81	1,215	1,296
<sup>1</sup> For currently working women and women who have worked in the past 12 months			
<sup>2</sup> For women earning cash			

the social context of women's work and their total work burden (Bardhan, 1985; Desai and Jain, 1994). In addition, the empowering effects of employment for women are likely to depend on their occupation, the continuity of their workforce participation, and whether they earn income. It is expected that women who work at a regular job, who earn cash, and who perceive that their contribution is a substantial part of total family earnings are more likely to be empowered than other employed and unemployed women (Youssef, 1982; Sen, 1990; Mahmud and Johnston, 1994). Table 3.5 provides information on these aspects of women's employment for ever-married women age 15–49 according to residence.

In Bihar, 26 percent of ever-married women age 15–49 were either currently employed at the time of NFHS-2 or had been employed during the 12 months preceding the survey. Twenty-eight percent of rural respondents but only 13 percent of urban respondents worked at any time during the preceding 12 months. The majority of women in both urban (70 percent) and rural areas (61 percent) who worked at any time during the 12-month period worked throughout the

year. The majority who worked earned cash for their work, but the proportion earning cash was higher in urban areas (87 percent) than in rural areas (69 percent). Nearly one in five (19 percent) working women in rural areas and 1 in 10 (10 percent) in urban areas were unpaid workers.

Nearly three-quarters (71 percent) of rural women who work are farm workers. In urban areas, there is greater occupational diversity. Twenty-one percent of urban women who work are farm workers, 19 percent are production workers, 19 percent are in sales and services, and 16 percent are professionals.

A significant feature of women's work participation in Bihar is their substantial contribution to family earnings. One-third (33 percent) of rural women and nearly one-sixth (16 percent) of urban women who earned cash in the 12 months preceding the survey report that their family is entirely dependent on their earnings. Another one-third (32 percent) in urban areas and one-fourth (26 percent) in rural areas report that they contribute about half or more of total family earnings. Only 10 percent of women in urban areas and 8 percent in rural areas report that they contribute almost nothing to family earnings.

### **3.6 Women's Autonomy**

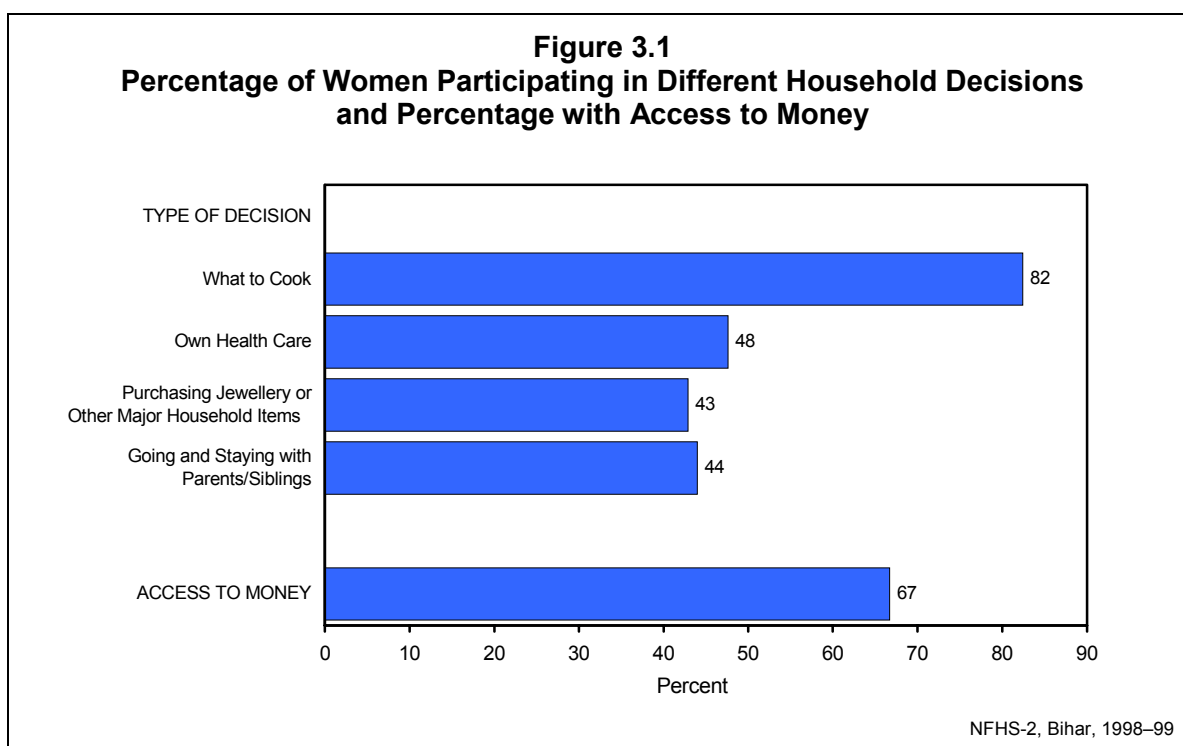
Education, work participation, and exposure to mass media are some of the means by which women gain status and autonomy, both important aspects of their empowerment. To measure women's autonomy and empowerment more directly, NFHS-2 asked about women's participation in household decisionmaking, their freedom of movement, and their access to money that they can spend as they wish. Women's autonomy is likely to have a significant impact on the demographic and health-seeking behaviour of couples because it affects women's relative control over fertility and contraceptive use and influences women's attitudes (for example, attitudes concerning the sex composition of children) and abilities (for example, the ability to obtain health services for themselves and their children) (Sen and Batliwala, 1997).

In order to measure women's participation in household decisionmaking, NFHS-2 asked women to report who in their households makes decisions about the following: choosing what items to cook, obtaining health care for the woman, purchasing jewellery or other major household items, and deciding about the woman going and staying with parents or siblings. The survey also asked women who earn cash who decides how the money they earn is spent. Table 3.6 gives the percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by the person (or persons) who makes each of the specified household decisions according to residence.

As expected, women in Bihar are most likely to participate in the decision about what to cook: 64 percent of women make this decision on their own, and another 18 percent make this decision jointly with their husband or someone else in the household. The remaining 18 percent of women are not involved in decisions regarding what to cook. More than half of women are not involved in decisions about seeking their own health care (52 percent), purchasing jewellery or other major household items (57 percent), or going and staying with parents or siblings (56 percent) (Figure 3.1). Among these three types of decisions, the decision that women are most likely to take on their own is the one about their own health care (19 percent); the decision that they are least likely to take on their own is about the purchase of jewellery or other major household items (9 percent). Surprisingly, there are no sharp differences by residence in the proportion of women participating in these different types of decisions.

Table 3.6 Household decisionmaking						
Percent distribution of ever-married women by person who makes specific household decisions, according to residence, Bihar, 1998–99						
Household decision	Respondent only	Husband only	Respondent with husband	Others in household only	Respondent with others in household	Total percent
<b>URBAN</b>						
What items to cook	65.6	6.6	8.1	10.2	9.4	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	22.8	36.8	24.0	9.0	7.4	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	13.1	36.3	28.9	11.7	10.0	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	11.8	37.7	28.7	11.0	10.8	100.0
How the money she earns will be used <sup>1</sup>	63.3	12.7	20.2	2.6	1.2	100.0
<b>RURAL</b>						
What items to cook	64.3	7.1	8.2	10.6	9.7	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	19.0	41.8	19.4	11.3	8.5	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	9.0	46.1	23.2	12.1	9.6	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	9.7	44.5	23.1	12.4	10.4	100.0
How the money she earns will be used <sup>1</sup>	50.4	26.7	19.9	0.4	2.6	100.0
<b>TOTAL</b>						
What items to cook	64.4	7.1	8.2	10.6	9.7	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	19.4	41.3	19.8	11.1	8.4	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	9.4	45.1	23.8	12.0	9.7	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	9.9	43.8	23.7	12.2	10.4	100.0
How the money she earns will be used <sup>1</sup>	51.3	25.8	19.9	0.5	2.5	100.0
<sup>1</sup> For women earning cash						

About half (51 percent) of women who earn cash report that they decide on their own how the money they earn will be used, and more than one-fifth (22 percent) make this decision together with their husbands or other members of the household. One-fourth of these women (26 percent) are not involved in decisions about how the money they earn will be used. The proportion of women who decide independently on the use of money they earn is higher in urban areas (63 percent) than in rural areas (50 percent), while the proportion who do not participate in such decisions is higher in rural areas (27 percent) than in urban areas (15 percent).



The proportion of women who are not involved in any household decisionmaking tends to go down with age, ranging from 24 percent among women age 15–19 to 9 percent among women age 35–44 (Table 3.7). Participation in decisions about what to cook tends to increase with women's age, but there is not much variation by age in other areas of decisionmaking. Urban women are somewhat more likely than rural women to participate in decisions about their own health care, about purchasing jewellery or other major household items, and about going and staying with parents or siblings. Women in the Jharkhand region are consistently more involved in household decisionmaking than are women in the other two regions of Bihar.

Scheduled-tribe women are much more likely to be involved in household decisionmaking than are women in any other caste/tribe group. Women who worked in the 12 months preceding the survey, whether or not for cash, are more likely to be involved in household decisionmaking than are women who did not work. Hindu women are slightly more likely than Muslim women to be involved in household decisionmaking (except for decisions about what to cook), and Christian women and women of 'other' religions are much more likely to be involved. Women with at least a high school education are more likely than other women to participate in three of the four types of decisions covered by the survey, but illiterate women have the lowest proportion not involved in any decisionmaking. Similarly, women from households with a high standard of living are more likely than other women to participate in three out of four types of decisions, but they also have the highest proportion not involved in any decisionmaking.

Table 3.7 also gives information on two other dimensions of women's autonomy measured in NFHS-2, namely, women's freedom of movement and their access to money that they can spend as they wish. With regard to freedom of movement, respondents were asked whether they need permission to go to the market or to visit friends or relatives. Women's access

Table 3.7 Women's autonomy

Percentage of ever-married women involved in household decisionmaking, percentage with freedom of movement, and percentage with access to money by selected background characteristics, Bihar, 1998–99

Background characteristic	Percent- age not involved in any decision- making	Percentage involved in decisionmaking on:				Percentage who do not need permission to:		Percent- age with access to money	Number of women
		What to cook	Own health care	Purchasing jewellery, etc.	Staying with her parents/ siblings	Go to the market	Visit friends/ relati- ves		
<b>Age</b>									
15–19	24.3	70.4	42.0	41.8	43.9	10.5	10.6	54.1	825
20–24	16.7	78.3	47.5	44.0	45.0	13.2	12.8	60.3	1,419
25–29	13.6	81.8	47.4	43.6	44.8	20.9	19.2	66.1	1,419
30–34	10.4	85.7	51.2	43.3	44.4	23.7	21.9	68.1	1,088
35–39	8.6	88.8	48.4	41.3	43.3	28.3	27.0	72.8	921
40–44	8.6	89.9	48.1	41.9	41.9	28.5	26.7	74.6	759
45–49	10.6	84.2	47.9	42.7	42.7	36.9	35.1	79.1	593
<b>Residence</b>									
Urban	10.4	83.2	54.2	52.0	51.3	30.5	28.2	77.0	718
Rural	13.9	82.3	46.9	41.8	43.1	20.7	19.6	65.6	6,306
<b>Region</b>									
North Bihar Plain	14.3	82.4	36.5	32.6	34.4	16.9	16.4	73.6	3,133
South Bihar Plain	19.0	76.1	48.7	40.2	41.0	15.2	14.4	58.6	2,199
Jharkhand	4.9	90.5	66.8	65.4	65.5	39.1	35.9	64.5	1,692
<b>Education</b>									
Illiterate	12.5	83.9	46.9	41.9	43.2	22.4	21.2	64.5	5,383
Literate, < middle school complete	16.5	78.0	47.1	41.3	41.9	19.2	17.9	72.6	779
Middle school complete	19.0	74.1	51.4	48.3	48.0	20.9	20.5	69.8	267
High school complete and above	16.0	77.8	52.9	51.6	51.8	19.3	17.7	78.0	595
<b>Religion</b>									
Hindu	13.9	81.8	47.9	43.0	44.3	21.5	20.4	66.6	5,872
Muslim	12.3	84.3	44.3	40.0	40.0	18.7	18.0	67.0	1,038
Christian	7.1	91.0	59.3	64.7	62.9	52.4	39.6	78.1	59
Other	4.1	95.9	68.7	64.8	66.7	68.3	60.5	68.0	55
<b>Caste/tribe</b>									
Scheduled caste	15.0	81.5	43.8	40.5	42.7	20.5	20.2	60.2	1,452
Scheduled tribe	5.6	90.6	73.2	61.2	63.8	48.3	41.6	63.8	582
Other backward class	14.2	81.5	45.7	41.6	42.4	19.2	18.1	67.3	3,642
Other	13.5	82.0	45.8	40.9	41.2	18.4	18.2	73.4	1,348
<b>Cash employment</b>									
Working for cash	8.2	89.4	53.3	48.0	49.9	28.6	28.2	67.0	1,296
Working but not for cash	7.7	90.0	54.7	51.4	54.3	32.2	30.5	61.4	561
Not worked in past 12 months	15.5	79.8	45.4	40.7	41.4	18.8	17.5	67.2	5,168
<b>Standard of living index</b>									
Low	12.1	85.1	47.7	42.1	43.5	24.2	22.7	63.2	3,709
Medium	14.4	80.5	46.5	42.7	43.4	18.0	17.5	68.7	2,595
High	17.9	74.7	51.5	47.4	48.7	22.2	20.0	78.1	712
Total	13.5	82.4	47.6	42.9	44.0	21.7	20.5	66.7	7,024
Note: Total includes 8 women with missing information on the standard of living index, who are not shown separately.									

Note: Total includes 8 women with missing information on the standard of living index, who are not shown separately.

to spending money was measured by asking respondents, ‘Are you allowed to have some money set aside that you can use as you wish?’

Most women say that they need permission to go to the market or to visit friends or relatives. Only 22 percent say that they do not need permission to go to the market, and 21 percent say that they do not need permission to visit friends or relatives. Freedom of movement tends to increase with age. It is relatively high for urban women, women who live in the Jharkhand region, Christian women and women of ‘other’ religions, scheduled-tribe women, and women who worked in the 12 months preceding the survey, whether or not they worked for cash. Freedom of movement does not vary widely according to women’s educational level or household standard of living.

Women are much more likely to have access to money that they can spend as they wish than the freedom to go to the market or visit friends or relatives without permission. Two-thirds (67 percent) of women say that they are allowed access to some money. As with freedom of movement, access to money increases with age. Access is relatively high for urban women, women who live in North Bihar Plain region, women who have at least completed high school, Christian women, women in households with a high standard of living, and women who do not belong to a scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, or other backward class. Perhaps surprisingly, women who worked for cash in the 12 months preceding the survey are no more likely to have access to money than are women who did not work.

### **3.7 Women’s Educational Aspirations for Their Children**

The desire to invest in children, including investing in their education, is an important aspect of the transition from uncontrolled to controlled fertility. In order to obtain information on this subject, NFHS-2 asked ever-married women how much education, in their opinion, should be given to a girl or a boy. Women’s responses to these questions also provide an indication of the degree of son preference prevailing at the time of the survey.

As shown in Table 3.8, 28 percent of women believe that a boy should be given as much education as he wants, compared with only 16 percent who believe that a girl should be given as much education as she wants. Although women are somewhat more likely to say that boys should receive higher education than girls, the largest proportion of women specifying any particular level of education feel that both boys and girls should complete high school. Very few women feel that girls should not be given any education at all (3 percent), and even fewer feel that boys should not be educated (1 percent). One-third (34 percent) of women said that the level of education appropriate for boys ‘depends’ on the circumstances, compared with less than one-fourth (22 percent) who gave this response for girls.

Table 3.8 indicates that there are sharp differences in educational aspirations for both girls and boys among women in rural and urban areas. Rural women have lower educational aspirations for their children than do urban women, particularly for girls.

Table 3.8 Perceived educational needs of girls and boys			
Percent distribution of ever-married women by their opinion on how much education should be given to girls and boys, according to residence, Bihar, 1998–99			
Educational level	Urban	Rural	Total
<b>Education for girls</b>			
No education	1.0	3.0	2.8
Less than primary school	0.9	2.3	2.1
Primary school	1.3	6.6	6.1
Middle school	3.5	16.4	15.1
High school	17.9	24.4	23.8
Higher secondary school	6.1	5.8	5.8
Graduate and above	7.4	3.0	3.5
Professional degree	5.2	1.5	1.9
As much as she desires	31.2	13.8	15.5
Depends	24.5	21.9	22.1
Don't know	1.0	1.3	1.3
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Education for boys</b>			
No education	0.1	0.6	0.6
Less than primary school	0.2	0.3	0.3
Primary school	0.1	0.8	0.7
Middle school	1.0	3.0	2.8
High school	6.4	15.1	14.2
Higher secondary school	3.0	7.4	6.9
Graduate and above	9.0	7.7	7.9
Professional degree	7.3	3.4	3.8
As much as he desires	39.9	26.5	27.9
Depends	32.0	34.4	34.1
Don't know	0.9	0.9	0.9
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0

### 3.8 Domestic Violence: Attitudes and Prevalence

In recent years, there has been increasing concern about violence against women in general and domestic violence in particular, in both developed and developing countries (United Nations General Assembly, 1991). Not only has domestic violence against women been acknowledged worldwide as a violation of basic human rights, but a growing body of research is highlighting the health burdens, intergenerational effects, and demographic consequences of such violence (Heise et al., 1994, 1998; Jejeebhoy, 1998; Ramasubban and Singh, 1998; Rao and Bloch, 1993). In patriarchal societies such as India, women are not only socialized into being silent about their experience of violence, but traditional norms teach them to accept, tolerate, and even rationalize domestic violence (Jaisingh, 1995; Hegde, 1996; Prasad, 1999). Both tolerance of and experience of domestic violence are significant barriers to the empowerment of women, with consequences for women's health, their health-seeking behaviour, their adoption of a small-family norm, and the health of their children. In NFHS-2 an attempt was made to assess whether women view wife-beating as justified and to measure the prevalence of violence against women including, but not limited to, violence committed by a woman's husband. Special training was provided to interviewers to sensitize them to the issue of domestic violence and impress upon them the necessity of ensuring privacy when asking these questions.

In order to assess women's attitudes towards wife-beating, before asking about personal experience with domestic violence, the survey asked all respondents whether they thought that a husband is justified in beating his wife for each of the following reasons: if he suspects her of

being unfaithful; if her natal family does not give expected money, jewellery, or other items; if she shows disrespect for her in-laws; if she goes out without telling him; if she neglects the house or children; or if she does not cook food properly. These reasons, which range from suspicions about a wife's moral character to issues that might be considered rather trivial, were chosen to provide variation in the perceived seriousness of violations of behavioural norms. Table 3.9 gives the percentages of ever-married women who agree with specific reasons for wife-beating according to sociodemographic background characteristics.

Nearly one-half of women in Bihar (47 percent) accept at least one reason as justification for wife-beating. Women are most likely to agree that wife-beating is justified when a husband suspects his wife is unfaithful (28 percent). They are slightly less likely to agree that wife-beating is justified if a wife neglects her house or children, if she goes out without telling her husband, if she shows disrespect for her in-laws, or if she does not cook food properly (21–25 percent). Women are least likely to agree that wife-beating is justified if a wife's natal family does not give expected money, jewellery, or other items (4 percent).

There are no sharp differences in women's attitudes towards wife-beating by age or marital duration, but there are consistent differences between women in rural and urban areas. Not only do a higher proportion of rural women (48 percent) than urban women (37 percent) agree with at least one reason justifying wife-beating, but rural women are also more likely than urban women to agree with each specific reason. Among the regions, agreement is much higher in the North Bihar Plain than in the other regions. Agreement with at least one reason for wife-beating and with each specific reason declines consistently with increases in women's level of education and household standard of living. Women who work but not for cash are more likely than women in the other employment categories to agree with at least one reason for wife-beating and with all of the specific reasons.

Overall, one-third to one-half of women in almost every group agree with at least one reason justifying wife-beating. These findings indicate that women in Bihar are socialized in norms that give husbands the right to use force to discipline wives who are perceived to be violating traditional gender norms.

In order to assess the prevalence of domestic violence, NFHS-2 also asked women if they had been beaten or physically mistreated since age 15.<sup>1</sup> Women who reported being beaten or physically mistreated were asked who beat or physically mistreated them, and interviewers recorded all the persons mentioned. The culture of silence surrounding the topic of domestic violence makes the collection of data on this sensitive topic particularly difficult. Even women who want to speak about their experience of domestic violence may find it difficult because of feelings of shame or fear. This may be particularly true if violence occurred recently (for example, in the preceding 12 months) rather than in the more distant past. In addition, depending on the varied cultural meanings ascribed to different acts, there may be women who do not report domestic violence because they do not view what they experienced as violence or physical mistreatment. For all of these reasons, NFHS-2 results on the prevalence of domestic violence need to be interpreted with caution.

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<sup>1</sup>The question does not limit women to reporting only domestic violence. Nonetheless, almost all women who reported any violence only reported beatings or physical mistreatment by husbands or other relatives.

Table 3.9 Reasons given for justifying a husband beating his wife

Percentage of ever-married women who agree with specific reasons for justifying a husband beating his wife by selected background characteristics, Bihar, 1998–99

Background characteristic	Percentage who agree with specific reasons							Number of women
	Percentage who agree with at least one reason	Husband suspects wife is unfaithful	Natal family does not give expected money or other items	Wife shows disrespect for in-laws	Wife goes out without telling husband	Wife neglects house or children	Wife does not cook food properly	
<b>Age</b>								
15–19	48.5	30.4	4.1	22.1	28.9	25.0	22.3	825
20–29	44.2	26.4	3.7	20.7	23.6	23.9	20.3	2,838
30–39	47.1	29.6	3.7	20.6	23.4	25.5	20.0	2,009
40–49	49.4	29.7	5.3	22.5	27.2	27.7	22.3	1,353
<b>Marital duration (in years)</b>								
< 5	43.9	26.8	4.0	19.8	24.6	22.3	20.0	1,603
5–9	46.5	27.7	3.4	21.8	24.1	24.8	21.5	1,102
10 or more	48.1	29.6	4.1	21.6	25.2	26.7	21.1	3,955
Not currently married	40.5	24.7	5.2	21.2	24.5	23.5	19.1	363
<b>Residence</b>								
Urban	36.7	19.9	2.9	18.4	19.3	21.2	16.6	718
Rural	47.6	29.4	4.2	21.5	25.5	25.7	21.3	6,306
<b>Region</b>								
North Bihar Plain	54.1	33.1	4.6	21.8	26.9	26.3	22.0	3,133
South Bihar Plain	42.2	21.4	4.3	21.4	23.3	27.8	26.1	2,199
Jharkhand	38.1	28.8	2.6	19.8	23.1	19.8	11.9	1,692
<b>Education</b>								
Illiterate	50.0	31.0	4.7	22.5	27.0	27.5	22.9	5,383
Literate, < middle school complete	41.5	25.1	2.2	18.9	21.5	22.3	17.2	779
Middle school complete	34.5	19.4	3.0	16.3	18.9	19.0	14.3	267
High school complete and above	27.1	13.5	1.0	14.3	12.6	11.5	9.9	595
<b>Religion</b>								
Hindu	46.2	27.1	3.9	20.7	24.3	25.0	21.0	5,872
Muslim	49.1	35.7	4.3	23.4	28.0	26.3	20.4	1,038
Christian	41.4	35.8	1.9	23.6	20.1	25.4	11.2	59
Other	34.1	20.1	12.1	26.1	32.1	24.2	20.2	55
<b>Caste/tribe</b>								
Scheduled caste	49.8	32.6	4.9	23.8	28.5	26.4	23.8	1,452
Scheduled tribe	40.3	28.9	2.8	20.2	24.5	21.9	13.2	582
Other backward class	47.9	27.5	4.3	21.5	24.6	26.7	22.7	3,642
Other	41.9	26.0	2.9	18.2	21.7	21.3	16.0	1,348
<b>Cash employment</b>								
Working for cash	48.0	29.0	6.0	25.5	28.0	28.4	24.3	1,296
Working but not for cash	54.7	37.0	6.5	29.8	31.2	35.1	25.9	561
Not worked in past 12 months	45.2	27.3	3.3	19.2	23.4	23.3	19.4	5,168
<b>Standard of living index</b>								
Low	50.2	32.8	4.4	22.4	28.0	26.7	22.2	3,709
Medium	45.1	25.5	3.8	20.5	23.6	25.5	21.1	2,595
High	32.3	15.6	3.2	17.5	13.3	17.0	13.0	712
Total	46.5	28.4	4.0	21.2	24.9	25.2	20.8	7,024

Note: Total includes 8 women with missing information on the standard of living index, who are not shown separately.

Table 3.10 presents results on the prevalence of beatings or physical mistreatment since age 15 according to women's background characteristics. Prevalence is also shown according to the person(s) who beat or physically mistreated the women reporting violence—their husbands, their in-laws, or other persons. Twenty-seven percent of women in Bihar have experienced violence, and 25 percent have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husbands. Relatively few have been beaten or physically mistreated by their in-laws (2 percent) or other persons (3 percent). These findings indicate that more than 9 out of 10 women (94 percent) who report violence have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husbands.

Women age 15–19 are less likely than older women to have been beaten, but because of their young age they have had less time to be exposed to the risk of being beaten since age 15. Similarly, women who have been married for less than five years are also less likely to have been beaten (19 percent) than women who have been married longer (29–30 percent). Rural women (28 percent) are more likely than urban women (19 percent) to have experienced violence, and illiterate women (30 percent) are three times more likely to have experienced violence than are women who have completed high school or more education (10 percent). The prevalence of violence also decreases substantially as the household standard of living increases, ranging from 32 percent of women in households with a low standard of living to 11 percent of women in households with a high standard of living.

Women from nuclear households are more likely than women from non-nuclear households to experience domestic violence. A similar finding was reported by Visaria (1999) among women in rural Gujarat. Women who worked in the 12 months preceding the survey, and particularly women who did not work for cash, are more likely than nonworking women to have experienced violence.

In Bihar, women with no living children are somewhat less likely than other women to have experienced violence (19 percent compared with 25–29 percent). This may be due in part to the fact that childless women tend to be younger, and younger women have had less time to experience violence than do older women. There is no apparent variation in the prevalence of violence among women who do or do not have a son.

Among women with specific socioeconomic background characteristics, the proportions who have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husbands are similar to the proportions who have experienced violence in general. This is not surprising since, as already noted, most women who report beatings are beaten by their husbands. The proportions of women who have been beaten or physically mistreated by their in-laws or by other persons are too small to allow a meaningful discussion of differentials by background characteristics. Nonetheless, it is notable that women who are not currently married (divorced, separated, deserted, or widowed) are more likely than currently married women to have been beaten or physically mistreated by their in-laws or other persons.

Table 3.10 Women's experience with beatings or physical mistreatment					
Percentage of ever-married women who have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husband, in-laws, or other persons since age 15, according to selected background characteristics, Bihar, 1998–99					
Background characteristic	Percentage beaten or physically mistreated since age 15	Percentage beaten or physically mistreated since age 15 by:			Number of women
		Husband	In-laws	Other persons	
<b>Age</b>					
15–19	16.5	14.3	2.2	2.9	825
20–29	28.1	26.5	2.7	3.3	2,838
30–39	30.7	29.2	2.4	2.8	2,009
40–49	23.6	21.6	2.0	3.0	1,353
<b>Marital duration (in years)</b>					
< 5	18.6	16.6	2.0	3.0	1,603
5–9	29.0	27.6	2.1	3.5	1,102
10 or more	29.7	28.2	2.5	2.7	3,955
Not currently married	20.7	17.4	4.2	5.2	363
<b>Residence</b>					
Urban	18.9	18.0	1.5	1.5	718
Rural	27.5	25.7	2.5	3.2	6,306
<b>Region</b>					
North Bihar Plain	27.5	26.2	2.0	3.1	3,133
South Bihar Plain	29.3	26.9	3.2	3.7	2,199
Jharkhand	21.5	20.0	2.2	2.0	1,692
<b>Education</b>					
Illiterate	30.2	28.4	2.7	3.4	5,383
Literate, < middle school complete	17.7	16.2	2.1	2.2	779
Middle school complete	17.0	15.4	2.0	2.3	267
High school complete and above	10.4	8.8	0.8	1.7	595
<b>Religion</b>					
Hindu	26.2	24.6	2.4	2.7	5,872
Muslim	28.9	27.2	2.7	5.0	1,038
Christian	19.9	18.1	3.6	0.0	59
Other	34.1	28.1	0.0	8.0	55
<b>Caste/tribe</b>					
Scheduled caste	34.5	32.0	3.6	3.3	1,452
Scheduled tribe	23.8	22.5	1.5	2.3	582
Other backward class	26.5	25.1	2.4	2.8	3,642
Other	19.6	17.9	1.7	3.9	1,348
<b>Household type</b>					
Nuclear household	29.7	28.3	2.0	3.2	2,879
Non-nuclear household	24.5	22.6	2.7	3.0	4,140
<b>Cash employment</b>					
Working for cash	38.0	36.4	3.3	3.9	1,296
Working but not for cash	40.7	38.4	3.6	6.9	561
Not worked in past 12 months	22.2	20.6	2.1	2.4	5,168
<b>Standard of living index</b>					
Low	31.6	29.8	2.8	3.0	3,709
Medium	23.9	22.3	2.3	3.4	2,595
High	10.8	9.4	1.2	1.9	712
Contd...					

Table 3.10 Women's experience with beatings or physical mistreatment (contd.)					
Percentage of ever-married women who have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husband, in-laws, or other persons since age 15, according to selected background characteristics, Bihar, 1998–99					
Background characteristic	Percentage beaten or physically mistreated since age 15	Percentage beaten or physically mistreated since age 15 by:			Number of women
		Husband	In-laws	Other persons	
<b>Living children</b>					
No living children	19.1	16.5	2.9	3.4	984
Only daughters	25.7	23.8	2.1	2.9	885
Only sons	25.3	23.5	2.6	3.8	1,232
Both daughters and sons	29.1	27.7	2.3	2.8	3,922
Total	26.6	24.9	2.4	3.1	7,024
Note: Total includes 5 women in households with no usual residents and 8 women with missing information on the standard of living index, who are not shown separately.					

NFHS-2 asked women who experienced violence how often they were beaten or physically mistreated in the 12 months preceding the survey: many times, a few times, once, or not at all. Table 3.11 shows the frequency of violence in the past 12 months for all women who report beatings or physical mistreatment. Two-thirds (69 percent) of women who experienced violence were beaten or physically mistreated at least once during the 12 months preceding the survey. Fifty-one percent were beaten or physically mistreated more than once during this period. Among women who have experienced violence since age 15, women with the following characteristics are most likely to have been beaten or physically mistreated in the 12 months preceding the survey: younger women, women married less than 10 years, and women with no living children.

As mentioned earlier, largely due to a general tendency to underreport domestic violence, these results need to be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the NFHS-2 estimates set a lower bound on the proportion of women experiencing violence in Bihar: *at least* one in four ever-married women in Bihar has experienced violence since age 15, and *at least* one in five has experienced violence in the 12 months preceding the survey. These estimates of the prevalence of physical violence in Bihar are somewhat higher than the estimates provided by the IndiaSAFE study of family violence in India conducted at about the same time as NFHS-2. According to the IndiaSAFE study, one in five women report ever being hit, kicked, or beaten by husbands and 1 in 10 women report violent physical behaviours by husbands in the past 12 months (International Clinical Epidemiology Network, 2000).

Table 3.11 Frequency of beatings or physical mistreatment

Percent distribution of ever-married women who report being beaten or physically mistreated since age 15 by frequency of beatings or physical mistreatment in the 12 months preceding the survey, according to selected background characteristics, Bihar, 1998–99

Background characteristic	Beaten or physically mistreated in the past 12 months				Total percent	Number of women
	Many times	A few times	Once	Not beaten		
<b>Age</b>						
15–19	14.8	43.9	23.1	18.2	100.0	136
20–29	23.0	29.8	20.1	27.2	100.0	798
30–39	19.5	31.6	17.2	31.7	100.0	616
40–49	13.0	27.7	17.0	42.4	100.0	319
<b>Marital duration (in years)</b>						
< 5	17.6	35.6	23.7	23.1	100.0	298
5–9	24.8	28.3	20.4	26.4	100.0	320
10 or more	18.6	31.8	17.8	31.9	100.0	1,176
Not currently married	19.0	13.6	9.4	58.0	100.0	75
<b>Residence</b>						
Urban	28.6	23.9	13.9	33.5	100.0	136
Rural	18.8	31.6	19.2	30.4	100.0	1,733
<b>Region</b>						
North Bihar Plain	13.3	30.5	20.4	35.8	100.0	860
South Bihar Plain	28.5	26.3	18.3	26.9	100.0	645
Jharkhand	18.3	41.0	15.9	24.8	100.0	364
<b>Education</b>						
Illiterate	20.0	32.1	18.4	29.5	100.0	1,624
Literate, < middle school complete	16.6	25.7	19.7	38.0	100.0	138
Middle school complete	(15.8)	(20.7)	(25.1)	(38.4)	100.0	45
High school complete and above	16.4	22.8	22.5	38.3	100.0	62
<b>Religion</b>						
Hindu	19.7	31.0	19.3	30.1	100.0	1,538
Muslim	19.0	30.7	16.6	33.7	100.0	300
<b>Caste/tribe</b>						
Scheduled caste	23.5	35.9	15.8	24.9	100.0	501
Scheduled tribe	17.1	38.8	20.5	23.7	100.0	138
Other backward class	19.4	28.0	20.1	32.4	100.0	965
Other	13.7	29.2	18.9	38.3	100.0	265
<b>Household type</b>						
Nuclear household	18.3	35.1	16.9	29.7	100.0	855
Non-nuclear household	20.5	27.7	20.5	31.3	100.0	1,014
<b>Cash employment</b>						
Working for cash	26.9	30.5	19.3	23.3	100.0	493
Working but not for cash	15.9	31.2	17.7	35.2	100.0	228
Not worked in past 12 months	17.1	31.3	18.8	32.8	100.0	1,148
<b>Standard of living index</b>						
Low	21.4	34.1	17.6	26.8	100.0	1,172
Medium	17.8	26.1	21.0	35.0	100.0	619
High	4.1	23.8	19.6	52.5	100.0	77
<b>Living children</b>						
No living children	25.9	27.7	23.2	23.2	100.0	188
Only daughters	21.0	30.4	20.4	28.2	100.0	227
Only sons	19.2	33.8	18.5	28.5	100.0	311
Both daughters and sons	18.3	31.0	17.9	32.8	100.0	1,142
Total	19.5	31.1	18.8	30.6	100.0	1,869

Note: Total includes 12 and 19 women belonging to Christian and 'other' religions, respectively, and 1 woman with missing information on the standard of living index, who are not shown separately.

( ) Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

