

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 education and exposure to mass media 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 in the NFHS-2 Household Questionnaire as eligible respondents for the Woman's Questionnaire. In addition, data are presented on the extent to which women in Karnataka 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 percent 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. The proportion of respondents in five-year age groups increases from 10 percent in the age group 15–19 years to 20 percent in the age group 25–29 years, and then falls steadily to 10 percent in the age group 45–49 years. The initial increase reflects the increasing share of ever-married women in these age groups. The decline after age 25–29 (an age by which most women have been married) reflects the normal pyramid shape of the population's age distribution. Almost half of the respondents are in the early reproductive age group of 15–29. The concentration is particularly high in the high fertility age group of 20–29, which contains 38 percent of respondents. The age distribution of urban and rural women is similar with the notable exception that the proportion of rural respondents who are age 15–19 (12 percent) is twice as high as the proportion of urban respondents in this age group (6 percent). The higher share of respondents age 15–24 among rural women than among urban women is largely a consequence of the lower age at marriage in rural areas.

Ninety-two percent of respondents are currently married, 6 percent are widowed, and the remaining 3 percent are divorced, separated, or deserted. The proportion of respondents living with their husbands is 91 percent, indicating that almost all currently married women were co-resident with their husbands at the time of the survey. The distribution of respondents by marital status and co-residence with husbands is similar in urban and rural areas.

Table 3.1 Background characteristics of respondents

Percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by selected background characteristics, according to residence, Karnataka, 1999

Background characteristic	Residence			Number of women	
	Urban	Rural	Total	Weighted	Unweighted
Age					
15–19	6.1	11.7	9.8	427	430
20–24	15.6	18.9	17.8	777	777
25–29	20.5	19.3	19.7	863	863
30–34	18.0	15.7	16.5	721	720
35–39	15.4	13.9	14.4	631	630
40–44	13.3	11.6	12.2	534	535
45–49	11.0	8.8	9.6	419	419
Marital status					
Currently married	93.1	91.1	91.8	4,015	4,015
Widowed	4.8	5.9	5.5	242	242
Divorced	0.3	0.1	0.2	7	7
Separated	1.6	1.9	1.8	80	81
Deserted	0.2	0.9	0.7	29	29
Co-residence with husband					
Living with husband	92.1	90.2	90.8	3,974	3,974
Not living with husband	1.0	0.9	0.9	41	41
Not currently married	6.9	8.9	8.2	359	359
Education					
Illiterate	31.7	67.7	55.2	2,414	2,426
Literate, < primary school complete	3.7	4.8	4.4	192	192
Primary school complete	17.3	12.7	14.3	626	623
Middle school complete	9.5	5.0	6.6	289	288
High school complete	19.2	6.6	11.0	482	478
Higher secondary complete and above	18.6	3.1	8.5	371	367
Religion					
Hindu	76.8	90.2	85.5	3,741	3,744
Muslim	16.8	8.3	11.3	492	491
Christian	5.2	0.9	2.4	105	104
Sikh	0.0	0.0	0.0	1	1
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	0.0	0.0	0.0	1	1
Jain	1.1	0.5	0.7	33	32
No religion	0.0	0.0	0.0	1	1
Caste/tribe					
Scheduled caste	12.5	18.0	16.1	704	703
Scheduled tribe	3.7	6.9	5.8	252	252
Other backward class	35.9	44.3	41.4	1,809	1,812
Other	47.3	29.4	35.6	1,559	1,558
Missing	0.6	1.4	1.1	49	49
Work status					
Working in family farm/business	5.4	22.6	16.6	726	732
Employed by someone else	17.4	36.2	29.6	1,296	1,302
Self-employed	7.8	4.8	5.8	254	253
Not worked in past 12 months	69.4	36.5	47.9	2,097	2,086
Missing	0.1	0.0	0.0	1	1

Contd...

Table 3.1 Background characteristics of respondents (contd.)					
Percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by selected background characteristics, according to residence, Karnataka, 1999					
Background characteristic	Residence			Number of women	
	Urban	Rural	Total	Weighted	Unweighted
Husband's education					
Illiterate	17.0	46.6	36.3	1,588	1,598
Literate, < primary school complete	6.4	8.8	8.0	349	350
Primary school complete	15.8	18.1	17.3	756	755
Middle school complete	8.8	5.9	6.9	303	302
High school complete	22.5	11.6	15.4	673	669
Higher secondary complete and above	29.5	8.8	16.0	701	696
Missing	0.0	0.1	0.1	4	4
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	NA	NA
Number of women					
Weighted	1,523	2,851	4,374	4,374	NA
Unweighted	1,504	2,870	4,374	NA	4,374
NA: Not applicable					

Fifty-five percent of ever-married women age 15–49 in Karnataka are illiterate, compared with 58 percent of women in India as a whole. The level of illiteracy for women in Karnataka declined from 62 percent at the time of NFHS-1 to 55 percent at the time of NFHS-2. Between the two surveys, illiteracy declined for both rural women (from 73 percent to 68 percent) and urban women (from 38 percent to 32 percent). Among women who are literate, the largest proportion are those who have completed primary school (but not middle school). Twenty percent of women have completed at least high school, up from 14 percent at the time of NFHS-1. Thirty-eight percent of urban respondents have completed at least a high school education, compared with only 10 percent of rural respondents.

Although 55 percent of women are illiterate, only 36 percent of their husbands are illiterate (down slightly from 39 percent in NFHS-1). Between NFHS-1 and NFHS-2, illiteracy for husbands declined more in urban areas (from 21 percent to 17 percent) than in rural areas (from 48 percent to 47 percent). In NFHS-2, the proportion of respondents with illiterate husbands is almost three times as high in rural areas (47 percent) as in urban areas (17 percent). At the other educational extreme, 31 percent of women have husbands who have completed at least high school (up from 25 percent in NFHS-1), and the percentage is much higher in urban areas (52 percent) than in rural areas (20 percent). By contrast, there are only small differences by residence in the proportion of women with husbands who have completed primary or middle school.

Eighty-six percent of the respondents in Karnataka are Hindu, 11 percent are Muslim, and only 3 percent belong to other religious groups. The proportion of women who are Muslim is much higher in urban areas (17 percent) than in rural areas (8 percent).

Forty-one percent of respondents belong to other backward classes (OBC), 16 percent belong to scheduled castes, and 6 percent belong to scheduled tribes. Thirty-six percent of

women do not belong to any of these groups. Larger proportions of women from scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes are found in rural areas than in urban areas.

About half of respondents in Karnataka (48 percent) did not participate in work other than their regular housework during the 12 months preceding the survey (compared with 61 percent in India as a whole), and the proportion is much higher in urban areas of Karnataka (69 percent) than rural areas (37 percent). Seventeen percent of women work on the family farm or in a family business, 6 percent are self-employed, and 30 percent are employed by someone else.

3.2 Educational Level

Table 3.2 presents 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 distribution of women in different age groups illustrates the progress in the spread of education over a period of about three decades. As expected, the level of illiteracy declines with declining age, from 61 percent at age 45–49 to 52–53 percent at age 15–29. Even though illiteracy has been declining, more than half of women even in the youngest cohorts of ever-married women are illiterate. At the other end of the educational spectrum, the proportion of women who have completed at least high school is higher for women age 25–29 (26 percent) than for women age 45–49 (16 percent). The level of illiteracy is slightly higher among Muslim women (60 percent) than Hindu women (56 percent), but it is relatively low among Christian women (18 percent). The highest proportion of illiterate women is among scheduled tribes (83 percent), followed by scheduled castes (71 percent) and other backward classes (55 percent).

Eighty-seven percent of women with illiterate husbands are themselves illiterate. The table shows that husbands at each level of education are more likely to have wives with a lower level of education than with an equal or higher level of education. Specifically, the proportion of women who have less education than their husbands is 69 percent for women whose husbands are literate but have not completed primary school, 60 percent for women whose husbands have completed primary school, 70 percent for women whose husbands have completed middle school, 66 percent for women whose husbands have completed high school, and 60 percent for women whose husbands have completed higher secondary school.

3.3 Age at First Marriage

Table 3.3 provides information on age at first marriage for all women. The table shows the percentage of women who first married by specified exact ages, and the median age at first marriage and first cohabitation by current age and residence. The median age of first marriage/cohabitation with husband for a cohort of women is the age by which 50 percent of the cohort marries/cohabits. Although there is an early age pattern of marriage in Karnataka, the table provides evidence of a steady rise in the age at first marriage. The proportion married before they reach age 15 falls from 31 percent for women age 45–49 to 12 percent for women age 15–19. Even more remarkable is the fact that the proportion falls from 21 percent for women age 20–24 to 12 percent for women age 15–19, who are on average only five years younger. The large recent decline in the proportion of women married by age 15 is more pronounced in rural areas than in urban areas. In rural areas, the proportion declines from 27 percent among women age 20–24 to 16 percent among women age 15–19; the corresponding decline in urban areas is from 8 percent to 5 percent. The practice of very early marriage (by age 13) has virtually

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, Karnataka, 1999

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		
Age								
15–19	53.3	4.3	19.4	9.6	11.1	2.3	100.0	427
20–24	52.2	3.0	11.7	10.6	12.8	9.6	100.0	777
25–29	51.9	3.7	12.7	6.0	13.7	11.9	100.0	863
30–34	55.0	4.6	15.9	5.4	9.6	9.5	100.0	721
35–39	56.9	4.1	16.0	4.6	10.1	8.3	100.0	631
40–44	60.1	5.9	14.1	4.7	7.6	7.6	100.0	534
45–49	60.7	6.4	12.3	4.8	10.5	5.3	100.0	419
Religion								
Hindu	55.9	4.2	13.6	7.1	11.0	8.3	100.0	3,741
Muslim	60.2	5.9	18.4	3.6	7.3	4.6	100.0	492
Christian	18.1	3.7	13.7	4.8	29.1	30.6	100.0	105
Other	(19.8)	(5.8)	(34.2)	(5.6)	(17.3)	(17.3)	100.0	35
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	71.3	1.8	7.9	7.2	7.1	4.6	100.0	704
Scheduled tribe	83.3	3.6	4.8	1.6	4.8	2.0	100.0	252
Other backward class	55.1	4.7	14.6	7.6	10.8	7.2	100.0	1,809
Other	42.5	5.5	18.7	6.0	14.3	13.0	100.0	1,559
Husband's education								
Illiterate	86.7	3.4	7.1	1.5	1.0	0.3	100.0	1,588
Literate, < primary school complete	69.4	9.5	11.7	4.5	3.7	1.2	100.0	349
Primary school complete	53.1	6.5	23.5	7.4	7.9	1.6	100.0	756
Middle school complete	38.8	6.9	24.3	16.5	10.4	3.0	100.0	303
High school complete	30.8	3.4	20.0	11.5	25.0	9.3	100.0	673
Higher secondary complete and above	9.1	1.7	12.4	9.4	27.7	39.7	100.0	701
Total	55.2	4.4	14.3	6.6	11.0	8.5	100.0	4,374
Note: Total includes 49 and 4 women with missing information on caste/tribe and husband's education, respectively, who are not shown separately.								
() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases								

disappeared in both urban and rural areas, where only 1 and 3 percent of women age 15–19, respectively, still marry before age 13.

The median age at first marriage has risen by two years over the past three decades. In rural areas, the median age at first marriage is almost one and a half years higher for women age 20–24 than for women age 45–49, and in urban areas it is one year higher for women age 25–29 than for women age 45–49. (The median age at first marriage could not be calculated for women age 15–19 or for urban women age 20–24 because more than half of the women in these groups had not married by the start of the five-year age group.) For women age 25–29, the median age at first marriage is two and a half years higher in urban areas than in rural areas.

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, Karnataka, 1999								
Current age ¹	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	0.9	4.7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	1.9	7.9	25.9	47.3	NA	NA	NC	NC
25–29	4.3	15.5	38.4	56.8	69.9	82.1	19.0	19.2
30–34	3.5	18.0	48.6	66.2	77.3	87.4	18.1	18.2
35–39	4.1	17.0	46.8	63.9	73.4	84.9	18.3	18.4
40–44	7.9	20.0	53.6	71.4	81.7	90.1	17.7	17.8
45–49	6.0	16.2	50.1	68.2	79.0	92.3	18.0	18.1
20–49	4.2	15.1	41.8	60.4	NA	NA	18.7	18.8
25–49	4.9	17.2	46.4	64.2	75.4	86.5	18.3	18.4
RURAL								
15–19	3.3	16.3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	7.7	27.4	57.6	72.8	NA	NA	17.0	17.3
25–29	9.4	30.4	63.8	79.5	85.6	91.9	16.5	16.7
30–34	8.9	32.9	71.8	85.1	92.5	95.3	16.2	16.4
35–39	11.7	34.0	68.7	83.1	89.9	94.6	16.1	16.3
40–44	16.0	36.6	71.1	85.3	92.3	97.4	15.8	16.1
45–49	16.7	40.0	76.0	89.7	93.6	97.2	15.7	16.1
20–49	10.7	32.3	66.4	81.0	NA	NA	16.3	16.5
25–49	11.7	33.9	69.3	83.7	90.1	94.8	16.1	16.4
TOTAL								
15–19	2.5	12.4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	5.6	20.5	46.3	63.7	NA	NA	18.4	18.5
25–29	7.5	24.8	54.2	71.0	79.7	88.3	17.4	17.7
30–34	6.8	27.1	62.9	77.9	86.7	92.4	16.7	16.9
35–39	8.8	27.6	60.4	75.9	83.7	91.0	16.8	17.0
40–44	12.9	30.4	64.6	80.2	88.5	94.8	16.4	16.7
45–49	12.4	30.5	65.7	81.2	87.8	95.3	16.4	16.7
20–49	8.3	25.8	57.1	73.3	NA	NA	17.1	17.4
25–49	9.1	27.5	60.6	76.3	84.6	91.7	16.8	17.0
NA: Not applicable								
NC: Not calculated because less than 50 percent of women have married or started living with their husband by the start of the five-year age group								
¹ The current age groups include both never-married and ever-married women.								

Despite the evidence of a rising age at marriage in Karnataka, Table 3.3 shows that nearly three-fifths of women age 20–49 in Karnataka married before reaching the legal minimum age at marriage of 18 years for women, as set by the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1978. Even among younger women, age 20–24, nearly half still marry before reaching the legal minimum age at marriage (58 percent in rural areas and 26 percent in urban areas).

Table 3.3 also provides information on the median age at first cohabitation with husband. This, along with age at first marriage, shows the gap between formal marriage and the time when a wife starts living with her husband. The difference between the median age at first marriage

and the median age at first cohabitation is negligible in both rural and urban areas. This suggests that *prastha*, *gauna*, or similar practices that introduce a lag between marriage and cohabitation are not important in Karnataka or they usually take place at the same time as the marriage.

3.4 Exposure to Mass Media

In a state like Karnataka, where a majority of women are illiterate or have little formal education, informal channels such as the mass media can play an important role in bringing about modernization. In NFHS-2, women were asked questions about whether they read a newspaper or magazine, watch television, or listen to the 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 forms of mass media by selected background characteristics.

In Karnataka, one-fifth of the women are not regularly exposed to any of these media. As expected, the percentage not regularly exposed to the media is much higher among rural women, illiterate women, scheduled-caste and scheduled-tribe women, and women with a low standard of living than among other women. Thirty-five percent of illiterate women are not exposed to any media, compared with only 2 percent of women who have completed at least a high school education. The percentage not regularly exposed to any media is 45 percent among women with a low standard of living and only 2 percent among those with a high standard of living. Twenty-nine percent of rural women are not regularly exposed to any media, compared with only 7 percent of urban women. There are no consistent differences in media exposure by age. The proportion of women not regularly exposed to any media is highest for Muslim women (30 percent), followed by Hindu women (21 percent). A very small proportion of Christian women (3 percent) are not regularly exposed to any media. About one-third of women from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are not regularly exposed to any media, compared with 19 percent of women from other backward classes and 17 percent of other women.

Among the different types of mass media, 61 percent of women mentioned that they usually listen to the radio at least once a week, slightly lower than NFHS-1 (63 percent). Fifty-eight percent of women are regularly exposed to television, up sharply from 40 percent in NFHS-1. Television has the greatest reach in urban areas, but exposure to radio is more common than exposure to television in rural areas. Only 28 percent of women read a newspaper or magazine at least once a week and 20 percent of women visit the cinema or theatre at least once a month. Therefore, although mass media can be an important means of spreading health and family welfare messages, as well as exposing women to modern views in general, innovative programmes will be necessary to reach the sizeable proportion of women who are not regularly exposed to any form of mass media.

3.5 Women's Employment

Labour force participation not only gives women an opportunity to earn income, but also exposes them to the outside world and to authority structures and networks 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 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.

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, Karnataka, 1999

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	
Age						
15–19	22.3	51.0	57.4	29.3	24.6	427
20–24	27.8	55.6	60.5	25.9	21.4	777
25–29	30.3	61.2	62.2	21.7	19.0	863
30–34	29.3	58.7	59.5	17.9	22.3	721
35–39	29.7	58.8	60.2	14.3	23.3	631
40–44	24.9	61.5	63.8	13.9	18.1	534
45–49	28.0	60.3	62.0	12.4	22.7	419
Residence						
Urban	49.8	84.9	67.7	27.5	6.6	1,523
Rural	16.3	44.2	57.2	15.5	29.3	2,851
Education						
Illiterate	0.0	40.4	47.8	14.1	35.3	2,414
Literate, < middle school complete	41.7	69.4	71.4	20.3	7.7	818
Middle school complete	60.6	81.7	83.2	28.3	2.8	289
High school complete and above	82.7	90.7	80.2	31.7	1.5	853
Religion						
Hindu	27.9	58.2	62.5	21.1	20.9	3,741
Muslim	18.7	53.9	45.8	9.2	30.2	492
Christian	62.7	82.1	72.1	19.2	3.0	105
Other	(51.6)	(74.0)	(65.7)	(19.8)	(8.5)	35
Caste/tribe						
Scheduled caste	15.7	47.0	49.7	19.4	32.3	704
Scheduled tribe	9.1	38.4	42.6	18.6	34.7	252
Other backward class	28.2	59.3	64.3	22.2	18.6	1,809
Other	36.9	66.1	64.7	17.4	17.3	1,559
Standard of living index						
Low	5.6	26.4	40.6	16.7	45.2	1,314
Medium	24.4	63.0	64.6	18.4	15.1	2,141
High	68.7	93.8	81.4	26.9	1.9	904
Total	27.9	58.4	60.9	19.7	21.4	4,374

Note: Total includes 49 and 15 women with missing information on caste/tribe and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

It is generally expected that women who work at a regular job, who earn money, 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). The National Population Policy (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2000) explicitly recognizes the importance of women's paid employment in achieving the goal of

population stabilization in India and also specifies measures that will encourage paid employment and self-employment of women.

Table 3.5 provides information on these aspects of women's employment for ever-married women age 15–49 according to residence. In Karnataka, nearly half of women (48 percent) report that they did not work during the 12 months preceding the survey, aside from doing their own housework. Current employment of women increased slightly, from 47 percent in NFHS-1 to 51 percent in NFHS-2. Sixty-four percent of rural women, but only 31 percent of urban women, worked at any time in the 12 months preceding the survey. Among women who worked during that period, two-thirds worked throughout the year. Although a smaller proportion of women in urban areas than in rural areas work, urban women who do work are more likely to work throughout the year. In rural areas, where women are predominantly engaged in agricultural activity, one-third of working women are engaged in seasonal work. More than four-fifths of rural working women (84 percent) are agricultural workers. The occupational diversity is much greater in urban areas, where 26 percent of working women are production workers, 23 percent are agricultural workers, 15 percent are professionals, and 9 percent are sales workers.

Two out of three female workers are paid only in cash for their work. Five percent receive both cash and in-kind payments and a negligible proportion (1 percent) are paid in kind only. Twenty-seven percent of women are not paid for their work at all. In urban areas, 87 percent of working women receive at least some cash for their work.

A significant feature of women's work participation in Karnataka is their substantial contribution to family earnings. In NFHS-2, women who earned cash for their work in the past 12 months were asked how much their earnings contribute to the total family earnings. Six percent of these women say the family is entirely dependent on their earnings. Another 27 percent report that they contribute at least half of the total family earnings. Sixty percent contribute less than half of family earnings and 8 percent say their earnings contribute almost nothing to the total 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 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 by altering women's relative control over fertility and contraceptive use, and by influencing their attitudes (for example, attitudes towards 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: what items to cook, obtaining health care for themselves, purchasing jewellery or other major household items, and their going and staying with parents or siblings. The survey also asked women who earn

Table 3.5 Employment			
Percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by employment characteristics, according to residence, Karnataka, 1999			
Employment characteristic	Urban	Rural	Total
Employment status			
Currently working	30.2	62.6	51.3
Worked in past 12 months (not currently working)	0.5	0.9	0.7
Not worked in past 12 months	69.4	36.5	47.9
Continuity of employment¹			
Throughout the year	76.7	63.8	66.4
Seasonally/part of the year	19.4	33.5	30.6
Once in a while	3.9	2.6	2.9
Missing	0.0	0.1	0.0
Type of earnings¹			
Cash only	84.7	62.3	66.9
Cash and kind	2.2	5.7	4.9
Kind only	1.3	0.9	1.0
Not paid	11.8	31.1	27.1
Missing	0.0	0.1	0.0
Occupation¹			
Professional	14.8	2.1	4.7
Sales worker	8.7	2.3	3.6
Service worker	1.8	0.2	0.5
Production worker	25.7	6.7	10.6
Agricultural worker	22.7	84.1	71.5
Other worker	25.8	4.5	8.9
Missing	0.6	0.1	0.2
Earnings contribution to total family earnings²			
Almost none	10.9	6.6	7.7
Less than half	50.7	62.8	59.8
About half	23.3	19.7	20.6
More than half	9.3	5.5	6.4
All	5.8	5.3	5.5
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	1,523	2,851	4,374
Number of employed women ¹	466	1,811	2,277
Number of women earning cash	405	1,230	1,635
¹ For currently working women and women who have worked in the past 12 months			
² For women earning cash			

cash who decides how the money they earn is spent. Table 3.6 gives the percent distribution of the person (or persons) who makes each of the specified household decisions, according to residence.

As expected, ever-married women in Karnataka are most likely to participate in the decision about what items to cook: 85 percent of women make this decision on their own and another 3 percent make this decision jointly with their husband or someone else in the household (see Figure 3.1). One in every eight women, however, is not involved at all in decisions about what to cook. More than half of women are not involved at all in decisions about seeking health care (51 percent), purchasing jewellery or other major household items (53 percent), and going

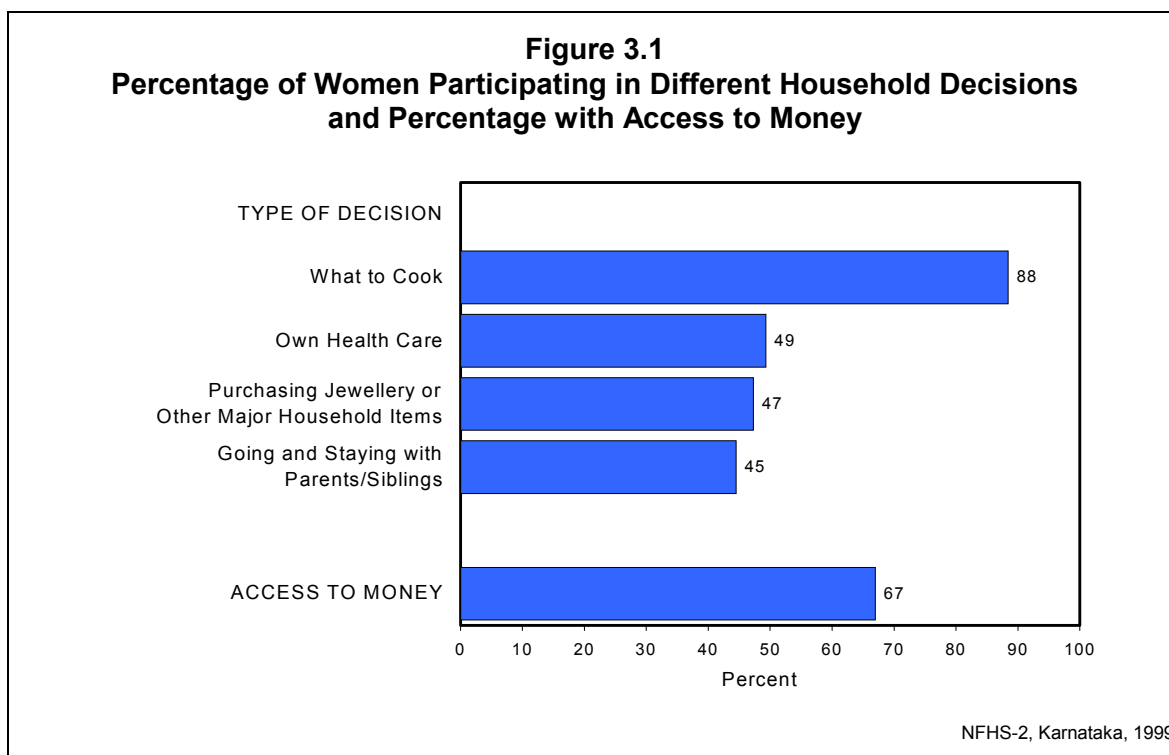
Table 3.6 Household decisionmaking

Percent distribution of ever-married women by person who makes specific household decisions, according to residence, Karnataka, 1999

Household decision	Respondent only	Husband only	Respondent with husband	Others in household only	Respondent with others in household	Missing	Total percent
URBAN							
What items to cook	84.3	3.8	1.8	7.1	2.9	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	32.9	38.0	19.7	6.4	2.9	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	13.6	37.1	36.7	8.6	4.1	0.0	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	17.8	41.8	29.7	7.5	3.2	0.0	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	54.4	19.1	22.3	2.5	1.8	0.0	100.0
RURAL							
What items to cook	85.4	3.5	1.1	8.4	1.6	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	21.7	45.5	22.0	8.6	2.3	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	10.0	43.6	29.2	12.9	4.3	0.0	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	13.0	47.4	24.5	11.4	3.6	0.1	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	35.9	36.9	19.3	5.5	2.3	0.1	100.0
TOTAL							
What items to cook	85.0	3.6	1.4	8.0	2.0	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	25.6	42.9	21.2	7.8	2.5	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	11.3	41.3	31.8	11.4	4.2	0.0	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	14.7	45.5	26.3	10.0	3.5	0.0	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	40.5	32.5	20.0	4.7	2.2	0.1	100.0
¹ For women earning cash							

and staying with parents or siblings (56 percent). Among these three types of decisions, the decision that women are most likely to take on their own is the decision about their own health care (26 percent). Urban women are more likely than rural women to be involved in every type of decision.

Thirty-seven percent of women who earn cash report that only their husbands or only others in the household make the decision about how the money they earn will be used. Two-fifths of the women make that decision on their own, and 22 percent make the decision together with their husband or someone else. The proportion of women who do not participate at all in the decision about how the money they earn will be used is substantially higher in rural areas (42 percent) than in urban areas (22 percent), and the proportion who make this decision alone is higher in urban areas (54 percent) than in rural areas (36 percent).



Women’s involvement in decisionmaking, alone or jointly with others in the household, increases with age, suggesting that autonomy also increases with age (Table 3.7). Specifically, among women age 25 and over, only 2–8 percent do not participate in any decisionmaking, compared with 21 percent of women age 15–19. Participation in each of the four specified decisions increases more or less steadily with age.

The proportion of women not involved in any decisionmaking does not vary much or systematically by place of residence, education, caste/tribe, or the standard of living. Urban women, Christian women, and women who worked for cash during the last year are more likely to be involved in each type of decision than other women.

NFHS-2 also collected information on two other dimensions of women’s autonomy, 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 to spending money was measured by asking respondents, ‘Are you allowed to have some money set aside that you can use as you wish?’

Table 3.7 shows that freedom of movement is limited for the majority of ever-married women in Karnataka. Only 43 percent of women say they do not need permission to go to the market and only 34 percent say they do not need permission to visit friends or relatives. Freedom of movement increases substantially with age. For example, 26 percent of women age 15–19 do not need permission to go to the market, compared with 54–55 percent of women age 40–49. Women who have completed at least high school have more freedom of movement than less educated or illiterate women. Freedom of movement is also relatively high in urban areas, for Christian women, and for women living in households with a high standard of living. Even in the

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, Karnataka, 1999

Background characteristic	Percentage not involved in any decision-making	Percentage involved in decisionmaking on:				Percentage who do not need permission to:			Number of women
		What to cook	Own health care	Purchasing jewellery, etc.	Staying with her parents/siblings	Go to the market	Visit friends/relatives	Percentage with access to money	
Age									
15–19	20.7	70.5	35.1	35.4	35.3	26.1	21.4	46.6	427
20–24	13.6	81.4	38.9	36.4	35.2	34.4	28.3	62.3	777
25–29	7.9	88.8	46.5	44.5	42.3	41.0	32.7	67.1	863
30–34	5.4	92.6	52.5	48.6	45.2	45.1	32.7	68.7	721
35–39	4.4	93.7	57.1	55.9	52.0	48.6	39.6	72.0	631
40–44	1.9	96.0	59.4	57.7	52.5	54.8	46.6	75.8	534
45–49	3.8	93.7	58.2	56.8	52.5	53.5	41.6	74.4	419
Residence									
Urban	6.9	89.1	55.5	54.4	50.7	52.9	41.2	79.5	1,523
Rural	8.8	88.1	45.9	43.5	41.1	37.7	30.7	60.3	2,851
Education									
Illiterate	8.0	89.3	45.7	44.0	40.9	38.6	31.3	59.9	2,414
Literate, < middle school complete	6.8	89.5	52.3	48.6	45.7	41.7	32.4	68.3	818
Middle school complete	11.1	84.5	52.1	50.3	47.1	45.9	32.7	72.9	289
High school complete and above	8.9	86.1	55.4	54.3	52.4	55.7	45.3	83.7	853
Religion									
Hindu	8.1	88.4	49.7	47.2	44.4	44.6	35.4	66.9	3,741
Muslim	9.2	87.3	42.3	44.5	40.9	26.7	23.1	62.0	492
Christian	4.8	91.3	60.3	57.9	59.2	56.7	43.4	86.5	105
Other	(6.0)	(91.1)	(68.9)	(62.9)	(56.9)	(57.6)	(54.7)	(83.2)	35
Caste/tribe									
Scheduled caste	8.4	88.9	43.4	43.2	39.5	38.7	32.3	64.4	704
Scheduled tribe	7.1	88.6	46.6	43.9	42.7	46.2	35.4	53.8	252
Other backward class	7.4	89.2	52.9	49.8	47.2	45.1	35.0	67.9	1,809
Other	8.8	87.6	48.4	46.9	44.2	42.1	34.4	69.7	1,559
Cash employment									
Working for cash	6.0	90.7	51.8	50.5	48.3	44.6	36.6	66.5	1,635
Working but not for cash	10.5	86.3	46.5	44.6	40.8	36.2	31.0	59.0	641
Not worked in past 12 months	9.1	87.3	48.1	45.6	42.6	43.9	33.7	69.9	2,097
Standard of living index									
Low	7.6	90.0	47.2	45.2	44.0	37.2	31.1	58.7	1,314
Medium	8.4	88.2	48.2	46.2	42.5	42.3	33.4	66.1	2,141
High	8.3	86.5	55.0	52.7	49.9	52.9	41.0	80.9	904
Total	8.1	88.4	49.3	47.3	44.5	43.0	34.3	67.0	4,374

Note: Total includes 49, 1, and 15 women with missing information on caste/tribe, cash employment, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

groups with the greatest freedom of movement, however, about half of women need permission to go to the market or to visit friends and relatives or they are not permitted to go at all.

There is substantial variation in women's access to money by background characteristics. Overall, two-thirds of the women say that they are allowed to have some money set aside that they can spend as they wish. Access to money increases with age, from 47 percent of women age 15–19 to 74–76 percent for women age 40–49. The percentage of women with access to money is higher in urban areas (80 percent) than in rural areas (60 percent). Access to money also increases with education (from 60 percent of illiterate women to 84 percent of women who have completed at least a high school education) and with the standard of living (from 59 percent of women with a low standard of living to 81 percent of women with a high standard of living). Christian women have greater access to money than Hindu or Muslim women. Scheduled-tribe women have lower access to money than women in any other socioeconomic category. Surprisingly, women who did not work at all during the last year are slightly more likely to have access to money (70 percent) than women who worked for cash (67 percent).

3.7 Women's Educational Aspirations for Children

The desire to invest in improving the quality of children, including investing in their education, is important for bringing about a transition to lower levels of fertility and improved health. In order to obtain information on this subject, NFHS-2 asked ever-married women for their opinion about how much education should be given to a boy or a girl. Women's responses to these questions also provide an indication of the degree of the importance given to boys relative to girls.

As shown in Table 3.8, 67 percent of women believe that a boy should be given as much education as he desires, compared with only 51 percent who believe that a girl should be given as much education as she desires. Twenty percent of women believe that at least a high school education (high school, higher secondary school, graduate and above, or a professional degree) is appropriate for boys, whereas 32 percent feel that it is appropriate for girls. Notably, less than 1 percent of women feel that girls should not be given any education or should be given less than a primary school education. Four percent of women feel that girls should be given an education but not beyond middle school. The corresponding proportion for boys is only 1 percent.

Table 3.8 indicates that there are some urban-rural differences in women's educational aspirations for girls and boys. Thirty-six percent of women in rural areas want girls to be educated at least up to high school, compared with 26 percent of urban women. However, rural respondents are much less likely than urban respondents to say that girls should be given as much education as they desire. Even in rural areas, four-fifths of women say that girls should be given at least a high school education or as much education as they desire, and 85 percent of women give the same responses for boys.

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 the basic human rights of women, but an increasing amount of

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, Karnataka, 1999			
Educational level	Urban	Rural	Total
Education for girls			
No education	0.1	0.5	0.4
Less than primary school	0.0	0.1	0.1
Primary school	0.3	1.5	1.1
Middle school	1.0	4.4	3.2
High school	13.7	24.2	20.6
Higher secondary school	3.0	5.3	4.5
Graduate and above	5.7	3.2	4.1
Professional degree	3.7	2.8	3.1
As much as she desires	63.4	43.6	50.5
Depends	6.8	8.8	8.1
Don't know	2.3	5.6	4.4
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Education for boys			
No education	0.0	0.3	0.2
Less than primary school	0.0	0.1	0.0
Primary school	0.0	0.3	0.2
Middle school	0.4	0.8	0.7
High school	3.7	7.5	6.2
Higher secondary school	2.3	4.4	3.7
Graduate and above	3.8	4.8	4.5
Professional degree	6.8	4.7	5.4
As much as he desires	74.1	63.1	66.9
Depends	7.6	9.5	8.8
Don't know	1.4	4.4	3.4
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0

research highlights the health burdens, intergenerational effects, and demographic consequences of such violence (Heise et al., 1998; 1994; 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). The recent IndiaSAFE multi-site study of family violence in India, conducted at about the same time as NFHS-2, finds violence by husbands to be fairly widespread (International Clinical Epidemiology Network, 2000). 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, the survey asked whether respondents 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 reasons that involve suspicions about a wife's moral character to those that may be considered more trivial, such as not cooking properly, were chosen to provide variation in the perceived seriousness of behavioural-norm violation. Table 3.9 gives the percentages of ever-married women who agree with various reasons for wife-beating by background characteristics.

Half of women in Karnataka accept at least one reason as justification for wife-beating. Women are most likely to agree that wife-beating is justified if the wife neglects the house or the children (40 percent) and least likely to agree that wife-beating is justified if her natal family does not give expected money or other items (6 percent). About one-third of women agree that wife-beating is justified if the wife shows disrespect for in-laws (35 percent) or if she goes out without telling her husband (33 percent). One-fifth of women agree that wife-beating is justified if she does not cook food properly. Sixteen percent of women say that wife-beating is justified if the husband suspects his wife of being unfaithful.

Table 3.9 indicates that younger women are slightly more likely than older women to justify wife-beating. Women who have been married for less than five years are slightly less likely than other women to justify wife-beating. There are notable urban-rural differences in these attitudes. Not only do a higher proportion of rural women (54 percent) than urban women (44 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. Agreement with at least one reason and with each of the different reasons for wife-beating declines sharply with education. Fifty-eight percent of illiterate women agree with at least one reason justifying wife-beating, compared with 32 percent of women who have completed at least high school.

As expected, the proportion of women who agree that wife-beating is justified declines sharply as the standard of living increases, from 60 percent for women with a low standard of living to 35 percent for women with a high standard of living. However, the expectation that women who work, especially those who work for cash, would be less likely than other women to justify wife-beating, is not borne out for Karnataka. The percentage of respondents who agree with at least one reason justifying wife-beating is lower among women who did not work during the past 12 months (43 percent) than among women who either worked for cash or worked but not for cash (56–58 percent). This finding can be partly explained by the fact that rural women are much more likely to work than urban women and rural women are also more likely to agree with various reasons justifying wife-beating. Overall, in every category of women more than 31 percent agree with at least one reason for wife-beating. This finding attests to the widespread socialization of women into norms that give husbands the right to use force to discipline wives who are perceived to be violating traditional gender norms.

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, Karnataka, 1999

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	
Age								
15–19	54.6	22.9	8.1	41.4	39.6	41.6	24.1	427
20–29	50.5	16.1	6.2	34.3	33.0	41.3	22.0	1,641
30–39	50.4	15.5	5.9	34.8	32.9	39.9	20.2	1,353
40–49	47.6	14.2	6.5	33.6	32.2	38.6	18.0	953
Marital duration (in years)								
< 5	45.9	15.7	5.9	32.5	30.5	35.7	19.6	978
5–9	49.3	16.1	4.8	33.3	30.8	40.9	22.9	630
10 or more	51.7	16.0	6.3	36.1	34.6	41.6	20.4	2,407
Not currently married	53.3	19.1	10.8	37.5	37.9	43.2	22.5	359
Residence								
Urban	44.1	12.1	4.8	30.4	28.8	34.9	15.7	1,523
Rural	53.5	18.4	7.2	37.4	35.9	43.2	23.4	2,851
Education								
Illiterate	57.6	21.7	9.2	40.7	40.5	47.3	25.8	2,414
Literate, < middle school complete	50.9	13.9	4.3	35.6	32.7	39.8	19.4	818
Middle school complete	41.8	11.1	2.1	29.3	26.7	32.7	16.2	289
High school complete and above	31.5	4.6	1.8	20.1	16.3	23.5	9.2	853
Religion								
Hindu	50.1	16.0	6.3	34.9	33.2	39.8	20.4	3,741
Muslim	53.9	19.7	6.8	37.8	38.5	46.2	26.0	492
Christian	37.8	8.7	5.9	24.3	22.4	31.0	9.6	105
Other	(45.4)	(8.2)	(5.4)	(34.1)	(22.4)	(33.9)	(13.8)	35
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	56.9	20.6	8.2	38.7	38.9	46.4	25.7	704
Scheduled tribe	60.5	22.8	10.7	40.8	39.9	49.4	23.0	252
Other backward class	47.6	15.1	5.8	33.5	32.6	38.1	19.5	1,809
Other	48.2	14.2	5.4	33.5	30.4	38.3	19.4	1,559
Cash employment								
Working for cash	56.3	20.0	8.8	40.0	39.0	45.2	24.6	1,635
Working but not for cash	58.4	21.3	9.0	40.7	40.9	47.5	26.2	641
Not worked in past 12 months	43.0	11.6	3.6	29.4	26.8	34.3	16.1	2,097
Standard of living index								
Low	60.2	22.1	10.4	42.5	42.2	50.2	27.3	1,314
Medium	50.5	16.6	5.7	35.3	33.6	39.8	21.0	2,141
High	34.7	6.6	2.1	23.5	20.0	26.6	10.6	904
Total	50.2	16.2	6.4	35.0	33.4	40.3	20.7	4,374

Note: Total includes 49, 1, and 15 women with missing information on caste/tribe, cash employment, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

In order to assess the prevalence of domestic violence, NFHS-2 asked women if they had been beaten or mistreated physically since age 15.¹ Women who reported being beaten or physically mistreated were asked who beat or physically mistreated them. Interviewers recorded all the persons mentioned by the respondent. As mentioned earlier, there is a culture of silence surrounding the topic of domestic violence that makes the collection of data on this sensitive topic particularly difficult. Even women who want to speak about their experience with domestic violence may find it difficult because of feelings of shame or fear. This may be more true if violence occurred recently (for example, in the preceding 12 months) 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 their experience of domestic violence because they do not view it as violence or physical mistreatment. For these reasons, NFHS-2 results on the prevalence of domestic violence need to be interpreted with caution.

Table 3.10 presents results on the prevalence of beatings or physical mistreatment since age 15 by women's background characteristics. Prevalence is also shown according to the person(s) who beat or physically mistreated them—their husbands, their in-laws, or other persons. According to the reports of respondents, 22 percent of women in Karnataka have experienced violence since age 15 (almost the same as the national average of 21 percent), and 20 percent have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husbands. One percent have been beaten or physically mistreated by in-laws and 2 percent by other persons. This implies that among women who were beaten, more than 9 out of 10 (92 percent) have been beaten by their husbands and 1 out of 20 have been beaten by their in-laws.

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 less likely to have been beaten (12 percent) than women who have been married longer (21–24 percent). Rural women (24 percent) are more likely than urban women (17 percent) to have experienced violence and illiterate women (28 percent) are much more likely to have experienced violence than women who have completed at least high school (8 percent). The prevalence of domestic violence decreases substantially as the standard of living increases. Specifically, 31 percent of women with a low standard of living have experienced violence, compared with 21 percent of women with a medium standard of living and 8 percent of women with a high standard of living.

Women from nuclear households are more likely than women from non-nuclear households to experience domestic violence (26 percent as compared with 18 percent). This result is consistent with similar findings from research among women in rural Gujarat (Visaria, 1999). Women who worked in the 12 months preceding the survey are more than twice as likely as women who did not work to have ever been beaten.

¹The question does not limit women to reporting only domestic violence, but almost all women who report any violence report beatings or physical mistreatment only by their husbands or relatives.

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 husbands, in-laws, or other persons since age 15, according to selected background characteristics, Karnataka, 1999					
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	
Age					
15–19	14.1	12.7	0.7	1.6	427
20–29	21.2	19.4	1.0	1.8	1,641
30–39	23.7	21.6	1.4	2.8	1,353
40–49	22.0	20.4	1.1	2.4	953
Marital duration (in years)					
< 5	12.0	10.0	0.3	2.2	978
5–9	21.2	19.4	1.0	2.2	630
10 or more	23.8	22.3	1.1	1.9	2,407
Not currently married	32.0	28.5	4.1	4.4	359
Residence					
Urban	16.8	15.2	1.0	2.3	1,523
Rural	24.0	22.1	1.2	2.2	2,851
Education					
Illiterate	27.8	26.1	1.7	1.9	2,414
Literate, < middle school complete	19.0	17.6	0.4	2.6	818
Middle school complete	15.7	12.2	1.4	3.5	289
High school complete and above	7.9	6.0	0.3	2.3	853
Religion					
Hindu	21.5	19.7	1.0	2.2	3,741
Muslim	23.8	21.5	1.8	2.5	492
Christian	15.2	13.4	1.9	3.8	105
Other	(8.5)	(8.5)	(0.0)	(0.0)	35
Caste/tribe					
Scheduled caste	31.0	29.4	0.8	1.9	704
Scheduled tribe	29.0	27.4	2.0	1.2	252
Other backward class	21.3	18.9	1.0	3.0	1,809
Other	16.2	14.9	1.2	1.6	1,559
Household type					
Nuclear household	25.5	23.3	1.3	3.1	2,101
Non-nuclear household	17.8	16.3	1.0	1.4	2,273
Cash employment					
Working for cash	29.1	27.0	1.6	2.6	1,635
Working but not for cash	28.6	26.9	1.1	1.7	641
Not worked in past 12 months	13.4	11.7	0.8	2.1	2,097
Standard of living index					
Low	30.9	28.9	2.1	2.3	1,314
Medium	21.2	19.5	0.9	2.2	2,141
High	8.3	6.6	0.3	2.1	904

Contd...

It has sometimes been suggested that not bearing children may be an important reason for wife-beating. However, in Karnataka women with no living children are somewhat less likely than women with living children to have experienced violence (16 percent compared with 19–24 percent). This may be due in part to the fact that childless women tend to be younger women, and younger women have a lower prevalence of domestic violence than older women.

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 husbands, in-laws, or other persons since age 15, according to selected background characteristics, Karnataka, 1999					
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	
Living children					
No living children	15.7	13.5	1.6	2.8	495
Only daughters	18.5	16.3	0.7	3.2	689
Only sons	21.0	18.4	1.5	2.5	900
Both daughters and sons	23.8	22.5	1.0	1.7	2,290
Total	21.5	19.7	1.1	2.2	4,374
Note: Total includes 49, 1, and 15 women with missing information on caste/tribe, cash employment, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately. () Based on 25–49 unweighted cases					

The proportions of women who have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husbands according to various background characteristics are similar to the proportions of all women who have experienced domestic violence. This is not surprising since, as already noted, more than 90 percent of women who reported beatings were beaten by their husbands. The proportion of women who have been beaten or physically mistreated by their in-laws or by other persons is too small to allow a meaningful discussion of differentials by women's background characteristics.

NFHS-2 asked women who experienced violence since age 15 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 beatings in the past 12 months for women who report beatings or physical mistreatment. Nearly half (46 percent) of women who experienced violence were beaten at least once during the 12 months preceding the survey and 37 percent were beaten more than once in this period. Among women who report being beaten, younger women, women married less than five years, rural women, illiterate women, women living in non-nuclear households, and women who live in households with a low standard of living are more likely than other women to have been beaten in the last 12 months. Multiple beatings among women who have ever been beaten are particularly high for younger women and particularly low for women who have completed at least high school and women in households with a high standard of living.

As mentioned earlier, largely due to the inherent tendency for underreporting of 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 domestic violence in Karnataka: *at least* 1 in 5 ever-married women in Karnataka have experienced domestic violence since age 15, and *at least* 1 in 10 have experienced domestic violence in the past 12 months.

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, Karnataka, 1999

Background characteristic	Beaten or physically mistreated in past 12 months					Total percent	Number of women
	Many times	A few times	Once	Not beaten	Missing		
Age							
15–19	24.6	29.7	19.6	26.1	0.0	100.0	60
20–29	15.1	26.7	11.2	46.7	0.3	100.0	348
30–39	14.9	21.1	8.2	55.8	0.0	100.0	321
40–49	6.7	16.7	5.7	70.9	0.0	100.0	210
Marital duration (in years)							
< 5	16.0	28.2	18.6	37.2	0.0	100.0	117
5–9	17.1	26.8	12.6	43.4	0.0	100.0	133
10 or more	13.4	23.6	7.9	54.9	0.2	100.0	574
Not currently married	9.6	8.0	4.3	78.0	0.0	100.0	115
Residence							
Urban	12.5	19.5	10.3	57.6	0.0	100.0	256
Rural	14.2	24.0	9.2	52.5	0.1	100.0	683
Education							
Illiterate	15.6	24.5	8.3	51.5	0.1	100.0	671
Literate, < middle school complete	12.0	23.3	10.5	54.3	0.0	100.0	156
Middle school complete	(9.3)	(10.9)	(13.4)	(66.4)	(0.0)	100.0	45
High school complete and above	3.0	11.9	16.5	68.6	0.0	100.0	67
Religion							
Hindu	14.9	22.8	9.6	52.8	0.0	100.0	803
Muslim	7.6	24.7	8.7	58.2	0.9	100.0	117
Caste/tribe							
Scheduled caste	20.3	23.9	11.0	44.8	0.0	100.0	218
Scheduled tribe	14.9	29.1	11.0	45.0	0.0	100.0	73
Other backward class	12.6	20.1	9.8	57.4	0.0	100.0	385
Other	9.3	23.3	7.2	59.7	0.4	100.0	252
Household type							
Nuclear household	14.4	21.0	9.1	55.2	0.2	100.0	536
Non-nuclear household	12.9	25.1	10.0	52.1	0.0	100.0	403
Cash employment							
Working for cash	15.5	23.0	8.0	53.3	0.2	100.0	476
Working but not for cash	12.4	22.0	8.1	57.6	0.0	100.0	184
Not worked in past 12 months	11.8	22.9	12.9	52.4	0.0	100.0	281
Standard of living index							
Low	19.0	25.0	9.4	46.3	0.2	100.0	406
Medium	11.1	21.9	8.6	58.5	0.0	100.0	454
High	2.7	17.2	13.2	66.9	0.0	100.0	75
Living children							
No living children	17.8	20.6	13.9	47.7	0.0	100.0	78
Only daughters	16.4	24.1	11.0	48.5	0.0	100.0	128
Only sons	13.2	25.6	11.7	49.4	0.0	100.0	189
Both daughters and sons	12.8	21.7	7.7	57.6	0.2	100.0	545
Total	13.8	22.7	9.5	53.9	0.1	100.0	940

Note: Total includes 16 and 3 women belonging to Christian and 'other' religions, respectively, and 11 and 4 women with missing information on caste/tribe and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases