

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 Tamil Nadu 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, co-residence with husband, education, religion, caste/tribe, work status, and husband's education. The proportion of respondents in five-year age groups increases from 5 percent in the age group 15–19 years to 21 percent in the age group 25–29 years, and then falls steadily to 11 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. Forty-two percent 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 37 percent of respondents. The age distribution of women is similar in urban and rural areas and Chennai, except that the share of ever-married women in the younger ages of 15–24 years is lower in urban areas than in rural areas. This age pattern is largely a consequence of the higher age at marriage in urban areas.

Ninety-one percent of respondents are currently married, 6 percent are widowed, 2 percent are separated, and the remaining 1 percent are either divorced or deserted. The distribution of respondents by marital status varies marginally by urban-rural place of residence. The proportion of respondents living with their husbands (88 percent) also varies little by urban-rural residence, although a particularly large proportion of women in Chennai are living with their husbands (93 percent).

Table 3.1 Background characteristics of respondents

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

Background characteristic	Residence				Number of women	
	Urban	Rural	Total	Chennai	Weighted	Unweighted
Age						
15–19	3.8	6.0	5.2	3.1	245	229
20–24	15.4	17.1	16.5	16.2	774	770
25–29	21.3	20.1	20.5	24.9	960	990
30–34	18.9	17.1	17.7	16.8	828	823
35–39	16.5	15.1	15.6	18.0	729	746
40–44	12.9	13.3	13.2	11.7	616	606
45–49	11.1	11.3	11.2	9.4	525	512
Marital status						
Currently married	92.4	89.9	90.8	93.7	4,245	4,266
Widowed	4.9	6.9	6.2	4.0	290	274
Divorced	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.1	25	22
Separated	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.2	97	97
Deserted	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.1	19	17
Co-residence with husband						
Living with husband	89.2	87.1	87.9	93.0	4,108	4,144
Not living with husband	3.2	2.8	2.9	0.6	137	122
Not currently married	7.6	10.1	9.2	6.3	431	410
Education						
Illiterate	27.8	57.9	47.5	29.6	2,221	2,084
Literate, < primary school complete	4.6	4.5	4.5	1.2	212	190
Primary school complete	20.8	17.5	18.7	18.0	873	870
Middle school complete	18.4	10.8	13.4	18.8	629	669
High school complete	13.3	5.5	8.2	15.9	384	440
Higher secondary complete and above	15.1	3.7	7.6	16.4	357	423
Religion						
Hindu	79.7	93.4	88.6	83.8	4,145	4,106
Muslim	11.5	3.0	5.9	9.0	277	301
Christian	8.2	3.6	5.2	5.6	242	247
Sikh	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	1	3
Jain	0.2	0.0	0.1	1.1	3	10
Zoroastrian/Parsi	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	2	3
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1	1
Missing	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	6	5
Caste/tribe						
Scheduled caste	17.3	26.4	23.3	20.4	1,089	1,063
Scheduled tribe	0.2	1.2	0.8	0.6	39	37
Other backward class	78.3	72.0	74.2	70.3	3,469	3,447
Other	4.1	0.4	1.7	8.4	79	126
Missing	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	1	3
Work status						
Working in family farm/business	3.5	14.1	10.4	2.3	488	427
Employed by someone else	28.3	45.0	39.2	18.0	1,834	1,682
Self-employed	5.4	3.5	4.2	6.0	195	208
Not worked in past 12 months	62.7	37.4	46.2	73.7	2,160	2,359
Husband's education						
Illiterate	14.1	35.4	28.0	15.3	1,309	1,212
Literate, < primary school complete	4.5	8.0	6.8	1.7	317	281
Primary school complete	19.7	23.6	22.3	15.6	1,041	995
Middle school complete	17.1	14.8	15.6	20.2	730	762
High school complete	21.9	10.9	14.7	21.4	687	738
Higher secondary complete and above	22.4	7.1	12.4	24.7	582	673
Missing	0.3	0.2	0.2	1.0	10	15
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	NA	NA
Number of women						
Weighted	1,620	3,056	4,676	289	4,676	NA
Unweighted	2,113	2,563	4,676	929	NA	4,676

NA: Not applicable

The educational levels of respondents and their husbands have an important influence on demographic and health-seeking behaviour. Almost half (48 percent) of ever-married women age 15–49 in Tamil Nadu are illiterate, compared with 58 percent of women in India as a whole. The level of illiteracy for women declined slightly in Tamil Nadu from 50 percent at the time of NFHS-1 to 48 percent at the time of NFHS-2. Between the two surveys, illiteracy declined only for rural women (from 62 percent to 58 percent) and remained stable for urban women (28 percent in both surveys). The level of illiteracy is higher among women in Chennai (30 percent) than among urban women as a whole. Among women who are literate, the largest proportion consists of those who have completed primary school (but not middle school). Sixteen percent of women have completed at least high school, barely higher than the 15 percent recorded at the time of NFHS-1. Thirty-two percent of Chennai respondents have attained that level of education, compared with 28 percent of urban respondents and only 9 percent of rural respondents.

Although 48 percent of women are illiterate, only 28 percent of their husbands are illiterate (29 percent in NFHS-1). In NFHS-2, the proportion of respondents with illiterate husbands is more than twice as high in rural areas (35 percent) as in urban areas (14 percent). At the other educational extreme, 27 percent of women have husbands who have completed at least high school (similar to 26 percent in NFHS-1), and the percentage is much higher in urban areas (44 percent) than in rural areas (18 percent).

Eighty-nine percent of the respondents in Tamil Nadu are Hindu, 6 percent are Muslim, 5 percent are Christian, and less than 1 percent belong to other religious groups. The proportions of women who are Muslim and Christian are higher in urban areas (12 and 8 percent, respectively) than in rural areas (3 and 4 percent, respectively).

Seventy-four percent of respondents belong to other backward classes, 23 percent belong to scheduled castes, and only 1 percent belong to scheduled tribes. Only 2 percent do not belong to any of these groups. Disproportionately large percentages of women from scheduled castes are found in rural areas, while disproportionately large percentages of women from other backward classes are found in urban areas. Chennai has a relatively high proportion of women who do not belong to a scheduled caste, a scheduled tribe, or an other backward class.

Almost half of respondents in Tamil Nadu (46 percent) did not participate in work other than their regular housework during the 12 months preceding the survey, and the proportion is particularly high in urban areas (63 percent) and Chennai (74 percent). Ten percent of women work on the family farm or in a family business, 4 percent are self-employed, and 39 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 35 percent at age 15–19. Therefore, even though illiteracy is declining, about one-third of ever-married women even in the youngest cohorts are illiterate. At the other end of the educational spectrum, the proportion of women who have completed at least high school, although very low, is twice as high among women age 20–24 (22

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, Tamil Nadu, 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	35.3	3.3	23.8	26.0	6.9	4.6	100.0	245
20–24	35.5	4.1	18.2	20.1	11.2	10.8	100.0	774
25–29	43.8	4.5	18.9	14.4	7.0	11.4	100.0	960
30–34	47.6	4.4	19.4	12.3	6.9	9.4	100.0	828
35–39	50.0	5.5	18.1	10.5	9.7	6.3	100.0	729
40–44	58.7	3.3	19.8	8.6	6.8	2.7	100.0	616
45–49	60.9	6.3	14.6	7.4	8.2	2.5	100.0	525
Religion								
Hindu	50.0	4.6	17.9	13.1	7.7	6.8	100.0	4,145
Muslim	34.5	6.0	29.8	14.8	9.6	5.3	100.0	277
Christian	19.6	2.4	19.2	18.7	15.2	24.9	100.0	242
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	64.1	3.2	13.6	10.3	5.0	3.9	100.0	1,089
Scheduled tribe	(76.2)	(0.0)	(14.0)	(3.1)	(6.7)	(0.0)	100.0	39
Other backward class	42.9	5.1	20.4	14.5	8.8	8.1	100.0	3,469
Other	5.0	0.0	12.5	14.3	26.5	41.7	100.0	79
Husband's education								
Illiterate	77.6	4.1	12.6	4.5	0.9	0.2	100.0	1,309
Literate, < primary school complete	67.8	10.7	11.4	7.1	1.8	1.1	100.0	317
Primary school complete	52.2	5.1	25.3	11.0	4.7	1.8	100.0	1,041
Middle school complete	34.1	4.5	28.1	20.2	8.9	4.2	100.0	730
High school complete	21.3	3.6	21.4	24.9	20.2	8.6	100.0	687
Higher secondary complete and above	8.0	2.2	9.4	19.6	19.3	41.5	100.0	582
Total	47.5	4.5	18.7	13.4	8.2	7.6	100.0	4,676

Note: Total includes 7 women belonging to other religions and 6, 1, and 10 women with missing information on religion, caste/tribe, and husband's education, respectively, who are not shown separately.
() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

percent) as among women age 45–49 (11 percent). The level of illiteracy is highest among Hindus (50 percent), intermediate for Muslims (35 percent), and lowest for Christians (20 percent). Illiteracy is relatively low for women who belong to an other backward class and is particularly low among women who do not belong to a scheduled caste, a scheduled tribe, or an other backward class.

Seventy-eight percent of women with illiterate husbands are themselves illiterate. One-fifth (21 percent) of women whose husbands have completed high school (but not higher secondary school) are illiterate, as are 8 percent of women whose husbands have completed higher secondary school. 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 68 percent for women whose husbands are literate but have not completed primary school, 57 percent for women whose husbands have completed primary school but have not completed middle school, 67 percent for women whose husbands have completed middle school, 71 percent

for women whose husbands have completed high school, and 59 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. The table shows that there is a steady rise in the age at first marriage. The proportion married before they reach age 15 falls from 16 percent for women age 40–49 to 3 percent for women age 15–19. The decline in the proportion of women married by age 15 is evident in both rural and urban areas. The practice of very early marriage (by age 13) has virtually disappeared in Tamil Nadu.

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, Tamil Nadu, 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	0.0	1.4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	0.0	1.0	18.5	40.5	NA	NA	NC	NC
25–29	1.0	4.7	21.3	44.0	61.5	79.9	20.7	20.8
30–34	0.3	4.9	23.5	48.8	69.7	83.7	20.1	20.2
35–39	1.5	6.7	31.1	54.1	73.5	86.9	19.6	19.7
40–44	0.1	9.5	41.2	64.3	76.0	88.5	18.7	18.9
45–49	1.9	12.1	45.1	69.5	83.5	91.9	18.3	18.4
20–49	0.7	5.5	27.3	50.6	NA	NA	19.9	NC
25–49	0.9	6.9	30.0	53.6	70.9	85.1	19.7	19.8
RURAL								
15–19	0.3	3.5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	0.8	5.3	28.7	54.8	NA	NA	19.6	19.7
25–29	1.8	10.2	38.4	63.1	78.3	90.0	18.8	18.9
30–34	2.7	13.5	49.5	70.3	84.4	92.9	18.0	18.1
35–39	2.3	13.2	48.1	71.7	86.1	93.4	18.1	18.3
40–44	6.1	19.6	54.6	79.0	90.0	96.9	17.7	17.8
45–49	6.4	18.7	57.4	76.1	88.7	95.4	17.4	17.6
20–49	2.9	12.2	43.8	67.2	NA	NA	18.5	18.6
25–49	3.5	14.3	48.2	70.9	84.6	93.2	18.1	18.3
TOTAL								
15–19	0.2	2.8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	0.5	3.7	24.9	49.4	NA	NA	NC	NC
25–29	1.5	8.1	32.1	56.0	72.1	86.3	19.4	19.6
30–34	1.8	10.2	39.8	62.2	78.8	89.3	18.8	18.9
35–39	2.0	10.8	41.9	65.3	81.5	91.1	18.6	18.7
40–44	4.0	16.2	49.9	73.9	85.1	93.9	18.0	18.2
45–49	4.9	16.4	53.2	73.9	87.0	94.3	17.7	17.9
20–49	2.1	9.8	37.8	61.1	NA	NA	18.9	19.1
25–49	2.6	11.6	41.6	64.7	79.6	90.3	18.7	18.8
NA: Not applicable								
NC: Not calculated because less than 50 percent of women age 15–19, age 20–24, and age 20–49 have married or started living with their husband by the start of the age group.								
¹ The current age groups include both never-married and ever-married women.								

The median age at first marriage has also risen over the past three decades. In rural areas the median age at first marriage is two years higher for women age 20–24 than for women age 45–49, and in urban areas it is more than two years 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 and 20–24 in urban areas and for women age 15–19 in rural areas because more than half of the women in these age groups were not married at the time of the survey). For women age 25–29, the median age at first marriage is almost two years higher in urban areas than in rural areas.

Despite the evidence of a rising age at marriage in Tamil Nadu, Table 3.3 shows that 38 percent of women age 20–49 in Tamil Nadu 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, 25 percent still marry before reaching the legal minimum age at marriage (29 percent in rural areas and 19 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. In Tamil Nadu, there is little difference between the median age at first marriage and the median age at first cohabitation, both in urban and rural areas, implying that there is almost no delay between marriage and cohabitation.

3.4 Exposure to Mass Media

In a state like Tamil Nadu, where half the 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 Tamil Nadu, one-fifth of women (20 percent) are not regularly exposed to any of these media. As expected, the percentage not regularly exposed to the media is higher among older women, rural women, illiterate women, scheduled-caste women, and women with a low standard of living than among other women. The percentage of women not exposed to any media rises consistently with age of the women. Twenty-six percent of rural women are not regularly exposed to any media, compared with only 9 percent of urban women. One-third of illiterate women are not exposed to any media, compared with only 3 percent of women who have completed at least a high school education. Differences by religion are rather small. Over one-quarter of women who belong to scheduled castes are not exposed to any media. The percentage not regularly exposed to any media is 37 percent among women with a low standard of living and less than 1 percent among those with a high standard of living.

Among the different types of mass media, 63 percent of women are regularly exposed to television, up from 50 percent in NFHS-1. Fifty-two percent of women mentioned that they usually listen to the radio at least once a week, down from 60 percent in NFHS-1. Television has the greatest reach in urban areas; in rural areas, exposure to radio is almost as high as exposure to television. Only 23 percent of women read a newspaper or magazine at least once a week and 22 percent of women visit the cinema or theatre at least once a month. These results show that mass media can be an important means of spreading health and family welfare messages, as well as exposing women to modern views in general; however, innovative programmes will be

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, Tamil Nadu, 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	22.8	69.5	58.0	39.9	11.9	245
20–24	28.4	66.5	55.2	29.7	13.6	774
25–29	24.8	65.6	54.9	24.3	16.9	960
30–34	23.0	64.2	52.4	22.1	20.1	828
35–39	23.8	61.2	50.4	18.2	23.6	729
40–44	17.4	58.3	49.3	13.0	25.2	616
45–49	18.0	55.8	40.8	12.8	30.1	525
Residence						
Urban	36.9	81.3	56.4	26.0	9.0	1,620
Rural	15.8	53.2	49.2	19.7	26.2	3,056
Chennai	37.4	88.0	52.1	18.4	7.0	289
Education						
Illiterate	0.0	46.3	39.0	19.8	34.0	2,221
Literate, < middle school complete	27.5	70.7	60.2	20.7	11.6	1,085
Middle school complete	44.7	78.4	61.4	27.4	6.7	629
High school complete and above	67.3	88.4	68.8	25.1	3.3	741
Religion						
Hindu	21.7	62.2	51.4	22.9	20.7	4,145
Muslim	26.3	71.5	49.0	14.9	18.1	277
Christian	41.8	66.1	60.6	11.6	15.9	242
Caste/tribe						
Scheduled caste	14.1	50.9	46.4	22.1	27.8	1,089
Scheduled tribe	(0.0)	(63.0)	(56.2)	(13.2)	(18.5)	39
Other backward class	25.2	66.0	52.8	21.9	18.3	3,469
Other	61.3	94.4	72.3	21.6	1.8	79
Standard of living index						
Low	8.1	41.6	36.0	21.6	37.2	1,756
Medium	22.7	69.6	59.4	22.1	12.9	2,168
High	62.0	96.3	66.7	22.3	0.8	704
Total	23.1	63.0	51.7	21.9	20.3	4,676

Note: Total includes 7 women belonging to other religions and 6, 1, and 48 women with missing information on religion, caste/tribe, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

necessary to reach the one-fifth 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. 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 adopted by the Government of India in 2000 (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 Tamil Nadu, almost half of women (46 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 from 47 percent in NFHS-1 to 51 percent in NFHS-2. Employment is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Current employment is lowest in Chennai. More than 60 percent of rural women, but only 37 percent of urban women and 26 percent of women in Chennai, worked at any time in the 12 months preceding the survey. Among women who worked during that period, the majority of women (64 percent) worked throughout the year. Although a smaller proportion of women in Chennai and 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, 40 percent of working women are engaged in seasonal work. Almost three-quarters of rural working women (72 percent) are agricultural workers. The occupational diversity is much greater in urban areas, where 33 percent of urban working women are engaged in production work, another 13 percent are professionals, and 9 percent are sales workers. Surprisingly, 18 percent of working women in urban areas are engaged in agricultural activity.

Methods of payment for female workers are also quite diverse. Seventy-one percent of working women are paid only in cash, 2 percent are paid only in kind, and 11 percent receive both cash and in-kind payments. Sixteen percent of women are not paid for their work at all. In urban areas, 92 percent of working women receive at least some cash for their work.

A significant feature of women's work participation in Tamil Nadu is their substantial contribution to family earnings in many cases. 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. Nine percent of these women say the family is entirely dependent on their earnings. Another 19 percent report that they contribute half or more than half of the total family earnings. Seventy-one percent contribute less than half of family earnings and less than 1 percent say their earnings contribute almost nothing to the total family earnings.

Table 3.5 Employment				
Percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by employment characteristics, according to residence, Tamil Nadu, 1999				
Employment characteristic	Urban	Rural	Total	Chennai
Employment status				
Currently working	35.0	58.8	50.6	24.9
Worked in past 12 months (not currently working)	2.3	3.8	3.2	1.4
Not worked in past 12 months	62.7	37.4	46.2	73.7
Continuity of employment¹				
Throughout the year	78.9	59.0	63.7	91.8
Seasonally/part of the year	20.1	40.0	35.2	5.8
Once in a while	1.0	1.1	1.1	2.1
Missing	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.4
Type of earnings¹				
Cash only	87.5	65.8	71.0	93.8
Cash and kind	4.1	13.8	11.4	1.2
Kind only	1.1	2.3	2.0	2.9
Not paid	7.3	18.2	15.6	2.1
Occupation¹				
Professional	13.4	2.0	4.7	19.2
Sales worker	9.3	3.4	4.9	16.4
Service worker	2.6	1.2	1.5	4.5
Production worker	32.6	11.9	16.9	13.5
Agricultural worker	17.5	72.1	59.0	0.0
Other worker	24.2	9.3	12.9	43.0
Don't know/missing	0.4	0.1	0.2	3.3
Earnings contribution to total family earnings²				
Almost none	1.1	0.4	0.6	0.4
Less than half	66.1	73.0	71.2	61.3
About half	16.5	11.3	12.7	21.9
More than half	8.2	6.0	6.6	6.5
All	8.0	9.1	8.8	9.9
Missing	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	1,620	3,056	4,676	289
Number of employed women ¹	604	1,912	2,516	76
Number of women earning cash	553	1,522	2,075	72
¹ For currently working women and women who have worked in the past 12 months				
² For women earning cash				

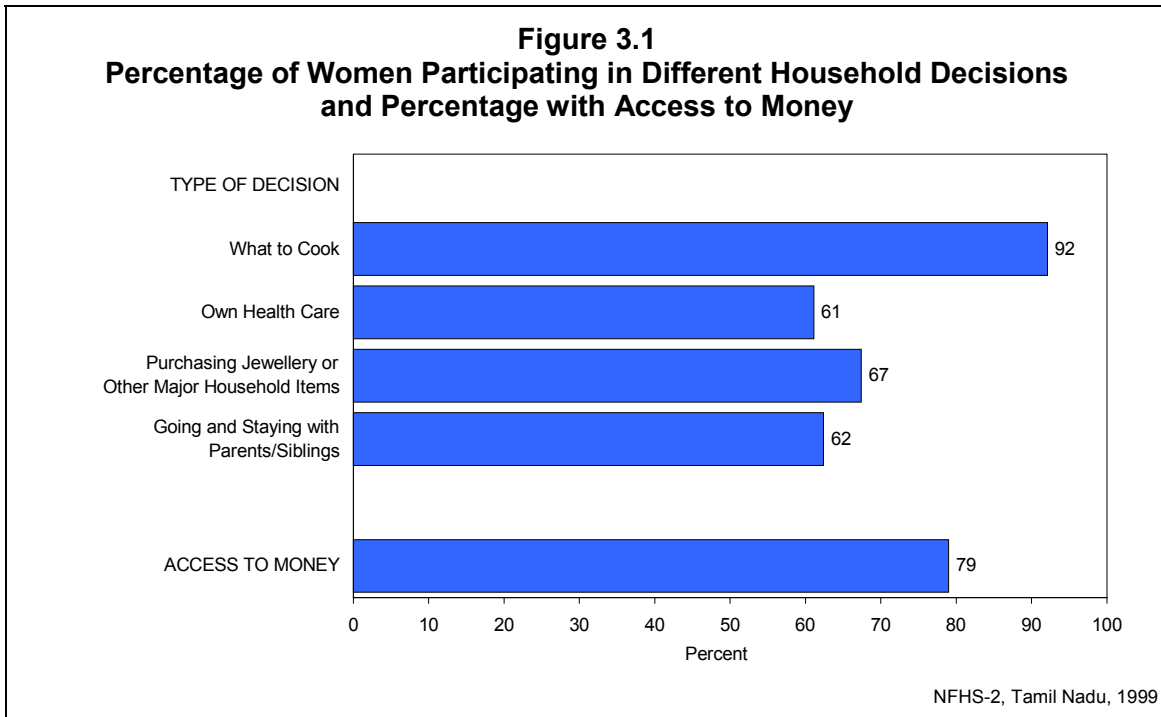
3.6 Women's Autonomy

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).

Table 3.6 Household decisionmaking							
Percent distribution of ever-married women by person who makes specific household decisions, according to residence, Tamil Nadu, 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	78.5	1.9	3.2	7.8	8.6	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	48.8	32.2	10.5	3.8	4.7	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	19.4	23.9	39.3	7.4	10.0	0.0	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	32.0	32.1	25.1	4.3	6.6	0.0	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	46.4	18.1	31.4	0.7	3.1	0.2	100.0
RURAL							
What items to cook	84.9	1.8	0.9	5.1	7.3	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	43.7	37.4	11.4	3.0	4.5	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	16.7	27.6	38.1	5.6	11.9	0.0	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	28.4	35.2	26.5	3.0	6.9	0.0	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	38.2	27.4	28.0	1.6	4.6	0.2	100.0
TOTAL							
What items to cook	82.7	1.8	1.7	6.1	7.7	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	45.5	35.6	11.1	3.3	4.5	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	17.7	26.3	38.5	6.2	11.2	0.0	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	29.6	34.1	26.0	3.4	6.8	0.0	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	40.4	24.9	28.9	1.4	4.2	0.2	100.0
¹ For women earning cash							

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 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 Tamil Nadu are most likely to participate in the decision about what items to cook: 83 percent of women make this decision on their own and another 9 percent make this decision jointly with their husband or someone else in the household



(see Figure 3.1). Only 8 percent of women are not involved at all in decisions about what to cook. At least 3 in every 10 women are not involved at all in decisions about seeking health care for themselves (39 percent), purchasing jewellery or other major household items (33 percent), and going and staying with parents or siblings (38 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 (46 percent). Although there are no sharp differences by residence in the proportion of women participating in the different types of decisions, urban women are slightly more likely to be involved in each of the decisions than their rural counterparts, with the exception of the decision as to what to cook.

More than one-quarter of women who earn cash report that only their husbands or only others make the decision about how the money they earn will be used. Forty percent of the women make that decision on their own, and 33 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 higher in rural areas (29 percent) than in urban areas (19 percent), and the proportion who make this decision alone is higher in urban areas (46 percent) than in rural areas (38 percent).

Women's involvement in decisionmaking, alone or jointly with others in the household, generally increases with age, suggesting that autonomy also increases with age (Table 3.7). Specifically, the percentage of women who are involved in making decisions about their own health care increases from 43 percent among women age 15–19 to 71 percent among women age 45–49. 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 residence, education, religion, caste/tribe, or the standard of living. Women

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, Tamil Nadu, 1999

Background characteristic	Percentage not involved in any decision-making	Percentage involved in decisionmaking on:				Percentage who do not need permission to:		Percentage 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/relatives		
Age									
15–19	5.8	86.4	42.8	58.3	56.8	70.0	46.4	68.3	245
20–24	4.7	88.6	53.5	60.4	56.8	70.5	45.8	75.5	774
25–29	3.2	90.7	56.1	64.6	59.4	77.2	49.9	78.9	960
30–34	0.8	94.9	63.1	69.3	63.7	78.5	54.5	78.0	828
35–39	1.1	95.9	64.9	70.4	66.0	81.4	61.9	83.2	729
40–44	1.0	94.2	69.9	73.2	65.6	82.7	64.5	82.0	616
45–49	1.9	90.5	71.0	73.5	68.3	87.7	70.2	81.6	525
Residence									
Urban	2.9	90.3	64.0	68.7	63.7	80.3	58.2	82.4	1,620
Rural	2.1	93.1	59.5	66.8	61.8	77.5	54.7	77.2	3,056
Chennai	5.6	86.6	51.0	65.4	61.8	81.8	64.5	84.8	289
Education									
Illiterate	2.1	93.7	61.9	68.7	63.8	80.5	58.6	77.2	2,221
Literate, < middle school complete	2.2	92.7	62.6	68.2	61.9	77.3	53.4	79.0	1,085
Middle school complete	2.6	90.3	56.3	62.3	58.9	76.5	49.1	77.1	629
High school complete and above	3.4	88.2	60.4	66.7	62.0	75.9	57.3	86.0	741
Religion									
Hindu	2.1	92.7	60.8	67.3	62.0	80.0	56.5	78.9	4,145
Muslim	6.4	87.2	62.7	71.0	68.2	56.6	40.9	78.1	277
Christian	2.9	88.9	65.2	66.8	64.9	79.6	62.6	81.0	242
Caste/tribe									
Scheduled caste	1.7	93.8	59.2	69.5	61.8	81.6	58.5	79.4	1,089
Scheduled tribe	(3.1)	(96.9)	(66.8)	(57.6)	(66.0)	(61.5)	(39.4)	(59.2)	39
Other backward class	2.5	91.8	61.7	67.0	62.7	77.7	55.3	78.9	3,469
Other	5.3	81.2	58.6	63.5	58.8	79.3	57.8	87.0	79
Cash employment									
Working for cash	1.8	93.4	64.5	70.8	63.9	82.9	61.6	82.0	2,075
Working but not for cash	1.6	93.4	63.6	67.1	67.2	79.9	57.6	77.7	441
Not worked in past 12 months	3.2	90.7	57.3	64.3	60.1	74.0	50.1	76.3	2,160
Standard of living index									
Low	1.9	94.1	60.9	68.3	60.9	79.5	57.7	77.1	1,756
Medium	2.3	92.5	61.7	67.2	63.4	79.9	55.8	79.3	2,168
High	4.0	85.8	59.6	65.5	62.6	71.0	52.3	82.7	704
Total	2.4	92.1	61.1	67.4	62.4	78.5	55.9	79.0	4,676

Note: Total includes 7 women belonging to other religions and 6, 1, and 48 women with missing information on religion, caste/tribe, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

who worked during the past year, whether or not they worked for cash, are slightly more likely to be involved in each type of decision than women who were not employed at all.

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 the majority of ever-married women in Tamil Nadu have freedom of movement. Seventy-nine percent of women say they do not need permission to go to the market and 56 percent say they do not need permission to visit friends or relatives. Freedom of movement increases with age. For example, only 46 percent of women age 15–19 do not need permission to visit friends or relatives, compared with 70 percent of women age 45–49. Illiterate women have slightly more freedom of movement than educated women. Freedom of movement is also slightly higher in urban areas, especially in Chennai, than in rural areas. It is also relatively high among scheduled-caste women and relatively low among Muslim women. Women who earn cash have more freedom of movement than other women. Even in the groups with the greatest freedom of movement, however, 15–20 percent of women need permission to go to the market and 30 percent of women need permission to visit relatives or friends or they are not permitted to go at all.

There is substantial variation in women's access to money by background characteristics. Overall, 79 percent of 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 68 percent of women age 15–19 to 82–83 percent among women age 35–49. The percentage of women with access to money is higher in Chennai (85 percent) and urban areas (82 percent) than in rural areas (77 percent). Access to money is relatively high among women with at least a high school education and women who do not belong to a scheduled caste, a scheduled tribe, or an other backward class. It also increases gradually with the standard of living (from 77 percent of women with a low standard of living to 83 percent of women with a high standard of living). Differences in access to money by religion are negligible. As can be expected, women who earn cash for their work have greater access to money than women who are either working but not for cash or who did not work during the past 12 months.

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 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 son preference prevailing at the time of the survey.

As shown in Table 3.8, 30 percent of women believe that a boy should be given as much education as he desires, compared with only 20 percent who believe that a girl should be given as much education as she desires. Forty-eight percent of women believe that an education above high school (higher secondary school, graduate and above, or professional degree) is appropriate for boys, whereas 37 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 only a primary

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, Tamil Nadu, 1999			
Educational level	Urban	Rural	Total
Education for girls			
No education	0.0	0.2	0.1
Primary school	0.1	0.6	0.5
Middle school	3.0	8.5	6.6
High school	15.0	28.8	24.0
Higher secondary school	15.4	19.6	18.1
Graduate and above	18.5	9.1	12.4
Professional degree	9.4	5.2	6.7
As much as she desires	28.9	16.0	20.4
Depends	9.4	11.7	10.9
Don't know	0.2	0.4	0.3
Missing	0.1	0.0	0.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Education for boys			
No education	0.1	0.0	0.0
Primary school	0.1	0.2	0.1
Middle school	0.7	1.0	0.9
High school	6.6	10.6	9.2
Higher secondary school	11.2	24.0	19.5
Graduate and above	17.9	15.7	16.5
Professional degree	15.0	9.7	11.6
As much as he desires	38.0	25.6	29.9
Depends	10.1	13.0	12.0
Don't know	0.2	0.3	0.2
Missing	0.1	0.0	0.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0

school education. Seven 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 sharp urban-rural differences in women's educational aspirations for girls and boys. Rural respondents have lower educational aspirations than urban respondents, particularly for girls. Rural respondents are also less likely than urban respondents to say that girls and boys should be given as much education as they desire. It is notable, however, that even in rural areas 79 percent of women say that girls should be given at least a high school education or as much education as they desire.

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 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, 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 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 justifying wife-beating by background characteristics.

Almost three-quarters of ever-married women in Tamil Nadu (72 percent) 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 children (60 percent) and least likely to agree that wife-beating is justified if her natal family does not give expected money or other items (3 percent). If a wife goes out without telling her husband, 51 percent of women say that the husband would be justified in beating her. Forty-one percent of women agree that wife-beating is justified if the wife shows disrespect for in-laws, whereas roughly one-fifth of women agree that wife-beating is justified if the wife does not cook food properly (22 percent) or if the husband suspects that she is unfaithful (17 percent).

Table 3.9 indicates that there are few differences by age or marital duration in women's attitudes towards wife-beating. There are urban-rural differences in these attitudes. Not only do a higher proportion of rural women (75 percent) than urban women (66 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. Justification for wife-beating is less common in Chennai than in urban areas as a whole. Agreement with at least one reason and with each of the different reasons for wife-beating declines steadily with education, but differences are small except among women who have completed at least high school. Seventy-six percent of illiterate women agree with at least one reason justifying wife-beating, compared with 57 percent of women who have completed at least high school.

The proportion of women who agree with at least one reason for justifying wife-beating is highest among Hindu women, intermediate among Muslim women, and lowest among Christian women. This pattern holds for most of the specific reasons for justifying wife-beating. Table 3.9 also shows that women belonging to scheduled castes or other backward classes (71–77 percent) are somewhat more tolerant of wife-beating than are 'other' women (50 percent).

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, Tamil Nadu, 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 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	74.2	16.7	3.0	46.9	53.8	59.4	22.2	245
20–29	72.4	15.7	3.2	40.2	51.5	61.0	21.2	1,734
30–39	71.3	17.9	3.3	40.6	49.7	59.8	20.9	1,557
40–49	72.2	18.7	2.8	39.6	51.3	58.1	24.9	1,140
Marital duration (in years)								
< 5	68.9	15.1	2.5	40.0	50.5	56.1	19.7	954
5–9	70.9	16.5	3.1	37.2	48.5	61.2	20.5	837
10 or more	74.8	18.0	3.3	42.3	52.8	61.8	23.2	2,454
Not currently married	65.9	18.9	3.5	37.7	46.5	53.6	23.8	431
Residence								
Urban	66.2	12.8	1.5	33.9	45.3	55.2	14.5	1,620
Rural	75.2	19.6	4.0	44.0	54.0	62.2	26.1	3,056
Chennai	59.9	5.7	1.1	30.9	48.1	51.9	5.8	289
Education								
Illiterate	75.6	19.6	4.9	43.9	55.0	63.3	26.7	2,221
Literate, < middle school complete	75.3	18.5	1.9	42.8	54.7	62.7	22.8	1,085
Middle school complete	71.9	15.3	1.9	42.1	51.0	58.6	18.0	629
High school complete and above	57.0	10.1	0.6	25.8	33.4	45.9	10.5	741
Religion								
Hindu	72.9	17.3	3.3	41.0	51.4	60.5	23.1	4,145
Muslim	68.0	19.9	2.3	39.6	52.6	53.8	15.0	277
Christian	63.2	13.7	1.5	31.7	41.2	56.1	13.0	242
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	76.6	18.3	3.9	42.6	55.6	64.8	24.8	1,089
Scheduled tribe	(61.6)	(21.5)	(6.2)	(29.3)	(37.0)	(46.2)	(27.7)	39
Other backward class	71.3	16.9	2.9	40.5	50.1	58.8	21.4	3,469
Other	49.6	14.4	1.4	19.3	32.5	40.0	10.2	79
Cash employment								
Working for cash	73.6	19.6	4.1	40.6	51.6	60.3	23.7	2,075
Working but not for cash	73.2	16.0	3.5	40.3	50.9	62.2	26.0	441
Not worked in past 12 months	70.3	15.2	2.1	40.4	50.3	58.9	19.6	2,160
Standard of living index								
Low	76.0	20.2	4.3	45.0	55.9	63.2	27.1	1,756
Medium	73.7	16.7	2.5	40.9	51.9	61.2	22.0	2,168
High	57.9	11.7	1.7	28.4	36.2	47.2	10.3	704
Total	72.1	17.2	3.1	40.5	51.0	59.8	22.1	4,676

Note: Total includes 7 women belonging to other religions and 6, 1, and 48 women with missing information on religion, caste/tribe, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

As expected, the proportion of women who agree that wife-beating is justified declines as the standard of living increases. The difference is greatest between women with a low or medium

standard of living (74–76 percent) and women with a high standard of living (58 percent). 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 Tamil Nadu. Women who have not worked in the past 12 months are slightly less likely than women who have worked to justify wife-beating for each reason given in Table 3.9. The percentage of respondents who agree with at least one reason for justifying wife-beating is lower among women who did not work during the past 12 months (70 percent) than among women who either worked for cash or worked but not for cash (73–74 percent). This finding can be partly explained by the fact that the majority of working women in Tamil Nadu are agricultural workers, who are likely to live in rural areas and to have relatively low educational attainment. Overall, the majority of women in almost all groups agree with at least one reason for wife-beating. This finding attests to the widespread socialization of women 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 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, 40 percent of women in Tamil Nadu have experienced violence since age 15 (higher than the national average of 21 percent), and 36 percent have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husbands. Less than 1 percent have been beaten or physically mistreated by in-laws and 9 percent by other persons. This implies that among women who were beaten, 9 out of 10 (89 percent) have been beaten by their husbands and more than 2 out of 10 have been beaten by others.

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 (29 percent) than women who have been married longer (40–44 percent). Urban women (36 percent), including those in Chennai (35 percent), are less likely than rural women (43 percent) to experience violence, and illiterate women (50 percent) are much more likely to have experienced violence than women who have completed at least high school (21 percent). The

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 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 husband, in-laws, or other persons since age 15, according to selected background characteristics, Tamil Nadu, 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	29.7	23.6	0.5	9.4	245
20–29	38.7	33.2	0.4	11.3	1,734
30–39	41.5	38.0	0.3	8.2	1,557
40–49	43.6	40.2	0.7	6.7	1,140
Marital duration (in years)					
< 5	29.3	21.5	0.2	13.3	954
5–9	40.1	35.1	0.6	10.0	837
10 or more	43.9	40.8	0.3	7.4	2,454
Not currently married	45.2	42.9	1.4	6.9	431
Residence					
Urban	35.6	29.6	0.5	12.5	1,620
Rural	42.9	39.4	0.4	7.2	3,056
Chennai	34.7	28.9	0.4	12.1	289
Education					
Illiterate	50.0	46.8	0.5	8.0	2,221
Literate, < middle school complete	38.9	34.1	0.7	9.7	1,085
Middle school complete	32.3	27.0	0.3	11.2	629
High school complete and above	20.5	14.3	0.0	9.2	741
Religion					
Hindu	41.7	37.5	0.5	8.9	4,145
Muslim	30.8	25.9	0.0	8.9	277
Christian	28.5	22.0	0.5	10.2	242
Caste/tribe					
Scheduled caste	51.6	48.0	0.6	8.4	1,089
Scheduled tribe	(57.8)	(53.9)	(0.8)	(7.0)	39
Other backward class	37.2	32.7	0.4	9.2	3,469
Other	15.3	9.3	0.0	10.1	79
Household type					
Nuclear household	43.7	39.9	0.4	9.4	2,817
Non-nuclear household	35.3	30.1	0.5	8.4	1,859
Cash employment					
Working for cash	47.5	43.8	0.6	9.0	2,075
Working but not for cash	45.0	40.8	0.3	7.9	441
Not worked in past 12 months	32.6	27.6	0.3	9.2	2,160
Standard of living index					
Low	49.7	46.3	0.6	8.8	1,756
Medium	39.8	34.9	0.5	9.9	2,168
High	20.0	15.3	0.2	7.0	704
Living children					
No living children	31.8	24.3	0.0	12.6	519
Only daughters	38.8	34.6	0.3	9.5	905
Only sons	39.4	34.4	0.3	9.1	1,100
Both daughters and sons	43.6	40.3	0.7	7.9	2,153
Total	40.4	36.0	0.5	9.0	4,676

Note: Total includes 7 women belonging to other religions and 6, 1, and 48 women with missing information on religion, caste/tribe, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

prevalence of domestic violence decreases substantially as the standard of living increases. Specifically, 50 percent of women with a low standard of living have experienced violence, compared with 40 percent of women with a medium standard of living and 20 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. A similar finding was reported by Visaria (1999) among women in rural Gujarat. Working women, most of whom are agricultural workers, are much more likely than non-working women to experience violence.

It is generally believed that not bearing children and not bearing a son are important reasons for wife-beating. However, in Tamil Nadu women with no living children are somewhat less likely than women with living children to have experienced violence (32 percent compared with 39–44 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. There does not appear to be much variation in the prevalence of domestic violence by whether or not women have a son.

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, 89 percent of women who report beatings have been beaten by their husbands. The proportion of women who have been beaten or physically mistreated by their in-laws is too small to allow a meaningful discussion of differentials by women's background characteristics. Although the proportions of women who have been beaten by other persons is also small, the patterns according to background characteristics are often the reverse of those for the overall percentage beaten.

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. Four out of 10 women who experienced violence were beaten at least once during the 12 months preceding the survey and more than 3 out of 10 were beaten more than once in this period. Among women who report being beaten, younger women and women married less than five years are most likely to have been beaten in the past 12 months. Multiple beatings among ever-beaten women are particularly high for women age 15–19 and particularly low for women who are not currently married.

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 Tamil Nadu: *at least* two in five ever-married women in Tamil Nadu have experienced domestic violence since age 15, and *at least* one in six 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, Tamil Nadu, 1999

Background characteristic	Beaten or physically mistreated in the past 12 months					Total percent	Number of women
	Many times	A few times	Once	Not beaten	Missing		
Age							
15–19	11.9	29.4	23.0	35.6	0.0	100.0	73
20–29	8.5	25.6	13.4	52.4	0.0	100.0	671
30–39	7.1	21.5	10.8	60.6	0.0	100.0	646
40–49	7.3	13.7	5.5	73.3	0.1	100.0	497
Marital duration (in years)							
< 5	8.7	25.3	17.2	48.8	0.0	100.0	280
5–9	7.7	28.0	13.8	50.4	0.1	100.0	336
10 or more	8.3	21.0	9.6	61.1	0.0	100.0	1,077
Not currently married	4.4	5.0	3.2	87.5	0.0	100.0	195
Residence							
Urban	5.8	19.6	12.4	62.1	0.1	100.0	577
Rural	8.7	22.0	10.1	59.2	0.0	100.0	1,310
Chennai	10.9	20.5	12.1	55.9	0.6	100.0	100
Education							
Illiterate	9.4	20.8	9.5	60.2	0.0	100.0	1,111
Literate, < middle school complete	7.0	23.7	12.2	57.1	0.1	100.0	422
Middle school complete	3.8	21.0	12.2	63.0	0.0	100.0	203
High school complete and above	3.9	17.8	14.7	63.4	0.2	100.0	152
Religion							
Hindu	7.8	20.6	10.9	60.7	0.0	100.0	1,728
Muslim	8.3	29.1	12.8	49.7	0.0	100.0	85
Christian	8.3	24.7	6.4	60.5	0.0	100.0	69
Caste/tribe							
Scheduled caste	9.8	22.5	10.8	56.9	0.0	100.0	561
Other backward class	6.8	20.6	10.9	61.6	0.0	100.0	1,292
Household type							
Nuclear household	8.4	21.9	11.5	58.2	0.1	100.0	1,231
Non-nuclear household	6.8	19.9	9.6	63.7	0.0	100.0	656
Cash employment							
Working for cash	8.7	21.3	9.8	60.2	0.0	100.0	985
Working but not for cash	4.8	16.4	6.0	72.8	0.0	100.0	199
Not worked in past 12 months	7.5	22.5	13.5	56.4	0.1	100.0	704
Standard of living index							
Low	10.5	22.6	10.8	56.1	0.0	100.0	873
Medium	6.3	21.6	10.9	61.2	0.1	100.0	863
High	1.1	11.7	9.6	77.6	0.0	100.0	141
Living children							
No living children	6.5	23.4	15.8	54.3	0.0	100.0	165
Only daughters	9.4	23.6	11.2	55.8	0.0	100.0	351
Only sons	8.4	20.8	12.8	57.8	0.1	100.0	433
Both daughters and sons	7.2	20.1	8.9	63.7	0.0	100.0	938
Total	7.8	21.2	10.8	60.1	0.0	100.0	1,887

Note: Total includes 2, 22, and 12 women belonging to other religions, scheduled tribes, and 'other' caste/tribes, respectively, and 3 and 10 women with missing information on religion and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.