

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 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 Delhi enjoy autonomy as measured by their participation in household decision-making, freedom of movement, and access to money they can spend as they wish. Finally, data on women's attitudes towards the acceptance of spousal violence under specific circumstances and their experience of physical violence are discussed.

3.1 Background Characteristics

Table 3.1 presents the percentage distribution of ever-married women 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 3 percent at age 15–19 to 20 percent at age 25–29, and then falls steadily to 10 percent at age 45–49. 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. Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of ever-married women are in the age group 20–39. The share of ever-married women at 15–19 is relatively low in Delhi because only a small proportion of women are married in this age group. The proportion age 15–19 is somewhat larger in rural Delhi than in urban Delhi. The sample of ever-married women for Delhi is 9 percent rural.

Ninety-six percent of these ever-married women are currently married, 4 percent are widowed, and less than one percent are divorced, separated, or deserted. Ninety-five percent are currently married and live with their husbands, 1 percent are currently married but do not live with their husbands, and 4 percent are not currently married. The proportion who are currently married is higher in rural Delhi than in urban Delhi.

The educational levels of respondents and their husbands have an important influence on demographic and health-seeking behaviour. Twenty-nine percent of ever-married women age 15–49 in Delhi are illiterate, compared with 58 percent of women in India as a whole. The level of illiteracy for women declined in Delhi from 37 percent at the time of NFHS-1 to 29 percent at the time of NFHS-2. The proportion illiterate is considerably higher in rural Delhi (46 percent)

Table 3.1 Background characteristics of respondents

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

Background characteristic	Residence			Number of women	
	Urban	Rural	Total	Weighted	Unweighted
Age					
15–19	2.3	5.3	2.5	62	62
20–24	14.9	24.3	15.6	387	388
25–29	20.2	21.7	20.3	504	504
30–34	19.7	17.3	19.5	483	482
35–39	19.1	15.7	18.8	466	466
40–44	14.1	8.9	13.7	339	339
45–49	9.8	6.8	9.6	237	236
Marital status					
Currently married	95.5	99.5	95.8	2,372	2,372
Widowed	3.9	0.5	3.7	91	91
Divorced	0.1	0.0	0.1	3	3
Separated	0.3	0.0	0.3	8	8
Deserted	0.1	0.0	0.1	3	3
Co-residence with husband					
Living with husband	94.6	98.4	94.9	2,352	2,352
Not living with husband	0.8	1.0	0.8	21	20
Not currently married	4.5	0.5	4.2	105	105
Education					
Illiterate	27.7	45.8	29.1	721	724
Literate, < primary school complete	2.8	1.6	2.7	68	68
Primary school complete	12.1	17.3	12.5	310	313
Middle school complete	11.1	15.2	11.5	284	285
High school complete	15.9	10.6	15.4	382	381
Higher secondary complete and above	30.3	9.4	28.7	711	705
Missing	0.0	0.0	0.0	1	1
Religion					
Hindu	84.7	88.2	85.0	2,106	2,106
Muslim	7.8	11.2	8.1	199	199
Christian	1.2	0.0	1.1	27	27
Sikh	5.1	0.0	4.7	116	116
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	0.1	0.0	0.1	2	2
Jain	0.7	0.0	0.6	15	15
No religion	0.1	0.0	0.1	3	3
Other	0.1	0.0	0.1	3	3
Missing	0.2	0.5	0.2	6	6
Caste/tribe					
Scheduled caste	18.8	11.0	18.2	451	456
Scheduled tribe	0.9	0.5	0.9	22	22
Other backward class	13.0	44.8	15.5	385	386
Other	67.1	43.6	65.3	1,616	1,610
Missing	0.1	0.0	0.1	3	3
Work status					
Working in family farm/business	3.0	9.3	3.5	88	88
Employed by someone else	13.9	6.9	13.4	331	329
Self-employed	4.2	1.1	3.9	97	97
Not worked in past 12 months	78.8	82.7	79.1	1,960	1,962
Missing	0.0	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, Delhi, 1999					
Background characteristic	Residence			Number of women	
	Urban	Rural	Total	Weighted	Unweighted
Husband's education					
Illiterate	10.2	10.0	10.2	253	255
Literate, < primary school complete	2.9	1.6	2.8	68	69
Primary school complete	9.3	10.5	9.4	234	235
Middle school complete	12.1	20.0	12.7	315	316
High school complete	21.0	33.1	21.9	543	544
Higher secondary complete and above	43.8	24.8	42.3	1,049	1,043
Missing	0.7	0.0	0.6	15	15
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	NA	NA
Number of women					
Weighted	2,282	195	2,477	2,477	NA
Unweighted	2,287	190	2,477	NA	2,477
NA: Not applicable					

than in urban Delhi (28 percent). Only 9 percent of respondents in rural Delhi have completed at least higher secondary, compared with 30 percent in urban Delhi. The proportion of respondents who completed at least high school increased from 37 percent in NFHS-1 to 44 percent in NFHS-2.

Although 29 percent of women are illiterate, only 10 percent of their husbands (the same percentage in both urban and rural Delhi) are illiterate, down from 14 percent in NFHS-1. Sixty-four percent of women have husbands who have completed at least high school, up from 57 percent in NFHS-1.

Eighty-five percent of the respondents in Delhi are Hindu, 8 percent are Muslim, 5 percent are Sikh, and 2 percent belong to other religious groups. In NFHS-1, 10 percent of ever-married women were Muslim and 6 percent were Sikh. In NFHS-2, the proportion Muslim is 11 percent in rural Delhi and 8 percent in urban Delhi.

Eighteen percent of respondents belong to a scheduled caste (up from 6 percent in NFHS-1), less than 1 percent belong to a scheduled tribe, and 16 percent belong to some other backward class. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of respondents do not belong to any of these groups.

Nearly four-fifths (79 percent) of respondents in Delhi did not participate in work other than their regular housework during the 12 months preceding the survey. This proportion is slightly higher in rural Delhi (83 percent) than in urban Delhi (79 percent). Only 4 percent of respondents work on a family farm or in a family business. Four percent are self-employed, and 13 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 progress in the spread of

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, Delhi, 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	Missing		
Age									
15–19	30.4	3.2	24.5	17.7	16.2	8.0	0.0	100.0	62
20–24	21.8	2.5	15.0	18.3	13.0	29.4	0.0	100.0	387
25–29	25.5	2.6	11.6	10.9	16.4	32.9	0.2	100.0	504
30–34	28.7	2.9	11.7	11.0	16.6	29.2	0.0	100.0	483
35–39	34.0	2.8	11.3	10.7	15.3	26.0	0.0	100.0	466
40–44	34.5	3.0	11.6	7.7	14.1	29.1	0.0	100.0	339
45–49	32.1	2.6	12.7	7.6	17.3	27.8	0.0	100.0	237
Religion									
Hindu	28.7	2.5	13.0	11.7	15.6	28.5	0.0	100.0	2,106
Muslim	54.4	6.9	10.6	11.1	10.6	6.3	0.0	100.0	199
Sikh	4.2	0.8	9.4	9.5	19.7	56.3	0.0	100.0	116
Other	3.9	2.1	3.9	10.0	18.3	61.8	0.0	100.0	50
Caste/tribe									
Scheduled caste	55.6	3.8	15.4	11.4	7.4	6.4	0.0	100.0	451
Other backward class	49.3	4.4	15.3	11.3	9.1	10.6	0.0	100.0	385
Other ¹	16.8	2.0	10.9	11.5	19.2	39.5	0.1	100.0	1,616
Husband's education									
Illiterate	79.6	2.7	11.5	4.2	2.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	253
Literate, < primary school complete	62.0	14.5	17.6	4.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	100.0	68
Primary school complete	59.2	3.4	21.2	8.9	4.7	2.6	0.0	100.0	234
Middle school complete	43.5	3.4	21.4	18.4	7.9	5.4	0.0	100.0	315
High school complete	22.2	3.6	16.6	19.2	25.5	12.6	0.2	100.0	543
Higher secondary complete and above	7.4	1.1	5.9	8.3	18.9	58.4	0.0	100.0	1,049
Total	29.1	2.7	12.5	11.5	15.4	28.7	0.0	100.0	2,477
Note: Total includes 22 scheduled-tribe women and 6, 3, and 15 women with missing information on religion, caste/tribe, and husband's education, respectively, who are not shown separately.									
¹ Not belonging to a scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, or other backward class									

education over a period of about three decades. As expected, the level of illiteracy is somewhat higher for women at ages above 35. It is also higher for women age 15–19 (30 percent). The high rate of illiteracy at 15–19 may occur partly because of high rates of rural-urban migration into Delhi, inasmuch as these immigrants have relatively high rates of illiteracy, and inasmuch as illiterate women are more likely than literate women to marry at young ages. Illiteracy at 15–19 was 44 percent in NFHS-1 and 30 percent in NFHS-2, indicating the illiteracy has actually declined much faster than the age differentials in Table 3.2 indicate.

The level of illiteracy is substantially higher among Muslims (54 percent) than among Hindus (29 percent), and is much lower among Sikhs (4 percent). The proportion of women who are illiterate is highest among women from scheduled castes (56 percent), followed by women from other backward classes (49 percent). It is only 17 percent among women who do not belong to any of these groups.

Eighty percent of women with illiterate husbands are themselves illiterate. Twenty-two percent of women whose husbands have completed high school (but not higher secondary school) and 7 percent of women whose husbands have completed higher secondary school are illiterate. The table shows that husbands at each level of education are more likely to have wives with a lower level of education than to have wives with an equal or higher level of education. The proportion of women who have less education than their husbands is 62 percent for women whose husbands are literate but have not completed primary school, 63 percent for women whose husbands have completed primary school but have not completed middle school, 68 percent for women whose husbands have completed middle school, 62 percent for women whose husbands have completed high school, and 42 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, regardless of marital status. The table shows the percentage of women who first married by specified exact ages, and the median ages at first marriage and first cohabitation by current age. The median age of first marriage/cohabitation with husband for a cohort of women is defined as the age by which 50 percent of the cohort marries/cohabits. Comparison of the younger and older age cohorts indicates some increase in median age at first marriage/cohabitation with husband during the last decade or so. The incidence of very early marriage has declined substantially, as indicated by the fact that the proportion married by age 15 declines from 15 percent among women age 45–49 to 1 percent among women age 15–19.

The difference between the median age at first marriage and the median age at first cohabitation with husband is a measure of the gap between formal marriage and the time when the wife starts living with her husband, which typically takes place after the *gauna* ceremony. In Delhi, there is only a very small difference between the median age at first marriage and the median age at first cohabitation.

<u>Table 3.3 Age at first marriage</u>									
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, Delhi, 1999									
Current age ¹	Percentage ever married by exact age						Number of women	Median age at first marriage	Median age at first cohabitation with husband
	13	15	18	20	22	25			
15–19	0.6	1.3	NA	NA	NA	NA	671	NC	NC
20–24	2.1	4.5	19.8	36.8	NA	NA	666	NC	NC
25–29	3.9	11.1	31.5	52.3	71.9	86.7	543	19.7	19.9
30–34	4.9	12.2	37.4	59.4	77.7	91.6	492	18.9	19.2
35–39	4.4	14.2	40.6	61.6	78.9	92.6	471	18.7	19.1
40–44	5.5	15.4	41.6	58.1	75.0	90.8	341	18.8	19.1
45–49	5.4	15.4	39.8	58.5	73.5	90.3	239	18.8	19.1
20–49	4.0	11.2	33.3	52.7	69.7	82.5	2,752	19.6	19.9
25–49	4.7	13.3	37.6	57.7	75.5	90.3	2,087	19.0	19.3

NA: Not applicable
 NC: Not calculated because less than 50 percent of women in the age group 15–19 or 20–24 have married or started living with their husband by the start of the five-year age group
¹The current age groups include both never-married and ever-married women.

3.4 Exposure to Mass Media

In a highly urbanized state like Delhi, women are exposed to many kinds of media associated with 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 Delhi, a large majority of respondents (93 percent) are regularly exposed to at least one of these media. As expected, the percentage not regularly exposed to the media is higher among

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, Delhi, 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	38.9	91.8	50.4	24.4	6.5	62
20–24	47.9	88.5	55.6	20.6	8.0	387
25–29	53.3	89.4	55.0	15.7	8.6	504
30–34	48.4	92.3	53.7	13.5	5.0	483
35–39	49.6	91.3	54.0	10.8	5.3	466
40–44	50.0	88.8	54.0	12.0	9.1	339
45–49	54.8	88.5	52.1	11.8	9.3	237
Residence						
Urban	51.9	90.9	55.2	15.3	6.4	2,282
Rural	29.5	80.4	42.0	4.8	16.9	195
Education						
Illiterate	0.0	77.0	32.7	3.7	19.3	721
Literate, < middle school complete	40.0	88.3	49.4	8.4	6.9	378
Middle school complete	56.4	94.4	57.9	9.7	3.2	284
High school complete and above	85.2	98.2	69.0	24.9	0.5	1,093
Religion						
Hindu	50.5	91.1	55.3	14.7	6.6	2,106
Muslim	24.0	72.4	36.2	7.0	20.0	199
Sikh	74.6	97.5	58.5	17.4	0.8	116
Other	80.0	97.9	65.7	27.8	2.1	50
Caste/tribe						
Scheduled caste	25.8	87.4	43.7	7.6	10.5	451
Other backward class	28.6	81.4	42.8	8.5	13.9	385
Other ¹	62.1	93.0	59.7	17.8	4.8	1,616
Standard of living index						
Low	6.2	35.9	18.7	1.5	55.0	63
Medium	21.3	80.7	38.1	5.8	14.0	695
High	63.3	96.0	62.2	18.2	2.6	1,638
Total	50.1	90.1	54.1	14.5	7.3	2,477
Note: Total includes 22 scheduled-tribe women and 1, 6, 3, and 80 women with missing information on education, religion, caste/tribe, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.						
¹ Not belonging to a scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, or other backward class						

rural woman (17 percent), illiterate women (19 percent), Muslim women (20 per cent), and women belonging to scheduled castes (11 percent) and other backward classes (14 percent). Fifty-five percent of women in households with a low standard of living are not regularly exposed to any media. There are no consistent differences in media exposure by age.

Among the different types of mass media, 90 percent of respondents are regularly exposed to television (up from 83 percent in NFHS-1), and 54 percent listen to the radio at least once a week (down from 64 percent in NFHS-1). Half of the women read a newspaper or magazine at least once a week, and 15 percent of the women visit the cinema or theatre at least once a month (up from 6 percent in NFHS-1).

3.5 Women's Employment

Labor force participation not only gives women an opportunity to earn income, but also exposes them to the outside world and to 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 Delhi, four out of five women (79 percent) report that they did not work during the 12 months preceding the survey, aside from doing their housework. Among women who worked during that period, the majority of women (81 percent) worked throughout the year. Urban-rural differentials in continuity of employment tend to be small, although the proportion who work seasonally is somewhat higher in rural areas (18 percent) than in urban areas (7 percent). Occupational diversity is pronounced in Delhi, where 26 percent of working women are engaged in professional work, 20 percent are engaged in production work, and 13 percent are sales or service workers. There are, as expected, substantial urban-rural differentials in occupational pattern. Half of rural workers are agricultural workers, but only 2 percent of urban workers are agricultural workers. A large majority of workers (94 percent) get their wages in cash, while a very small proportion (3 percent) are not paid for their work. Twenty-four percent of rural respondents but only 1 percent of urban respondents are not paid for their work.

A significant feature of women's work participation in Delhi 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 total family earnings. Thirty-four percent of these women say that the family is entirely dependent on their earnings. Another 30 percent report that they contribute at least half of total family earnings. Only 17 percent

Table 3.5 Employment			
Percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by employment characteristics, according to residence, Delhi, 1999			
Employment characteristic	Urban	Rural	Total
Employment status			
Currently working	19.7	16.2	19.4
Worked in past 12 months (not currently working)	1.5	1.1	1.5
Not worked in past 12 months	78.8	82.7	79.1
Continuity of employment¹			
Throughout the year	81.0	75.9	80.6
Seasonally/part of the year	7.3	18.1	8.0
Once in a while	11.1	6.0	10.8
Missing	0.6	0.0	0.6
Type of earnings¹			
Cash only	96.1	63.9	94.0
Cash and kind	1.0	12.1	1.8
Kind only	1.0	0.0	1.0
Not paid	1.4	24.0	2.9
Missing	0.4	0.0	0.4
Occupation¹			
Professional	26.4	12.2	25.5
Sales worker	6.7	6.0	6.6
Service worker	6.6	0.0	6.2
Production worker	21.3	0.0	19.9
Agricultural worker	2.1	51.1	5.3
Other worker	33.2	24.4	32.6
Missing	3.8	6.2	3.9
Earnings contribution to total family earnings²			
Almost none	18.9	20.2	19.0
Less than half	17.1	12.1	16.9
About half	19.7	15.9	19.5
More than half	10.3	3.9	10.0
All	33.5	47.8	34.2
Missing	0.4	0.0	0.4
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	2,282	195	2,477
Number of employed women ¹	483	34	517
Number of women earning cash	469	26	495
¹ For currently working women and women who have worked in the past 12 months			
² For women earning cash			

contribute less than half of family earnings, and 19 percent say their earnings contribute almost nothing to total family earnings. In rural areas, nearly half (48 percent) of respondents who work reported that their family is completely dependent on their 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 decision-making, 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 childbearing and contraceptive use, and by influencing their attitudes (for example, attitudes

Table 3.6 Household decisionmaking

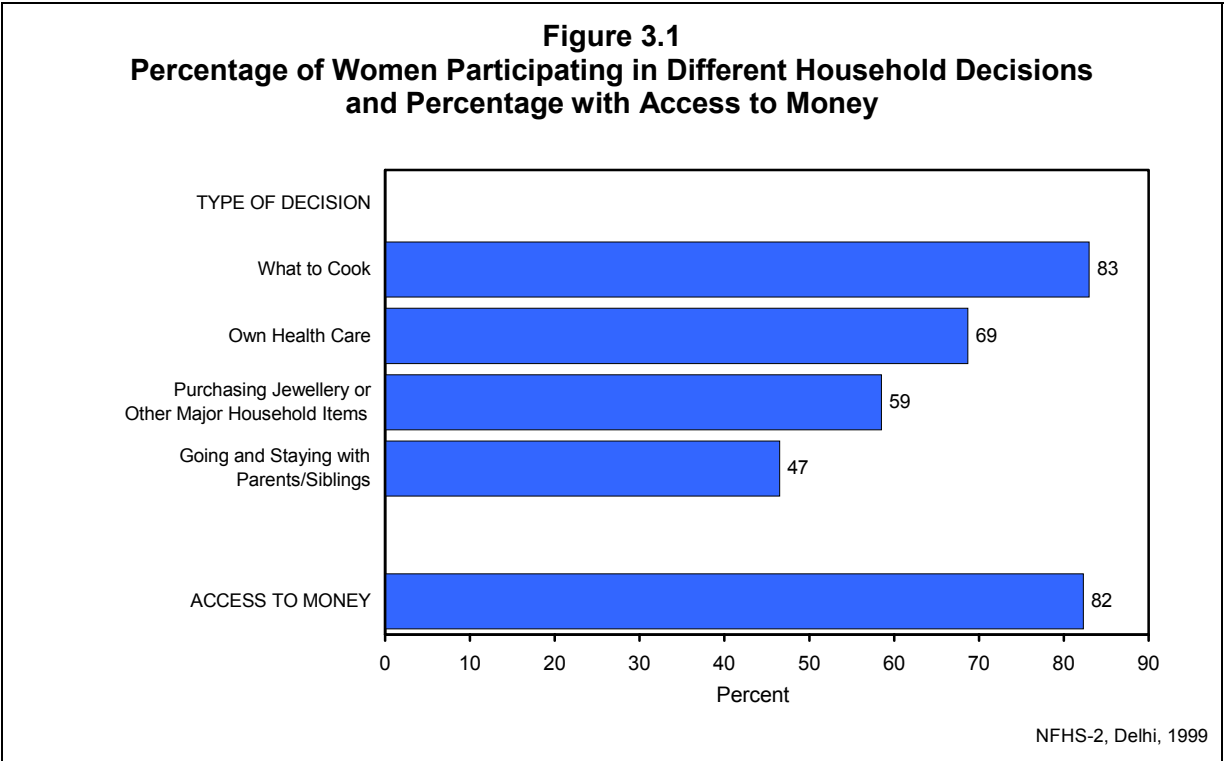
Percent distribution of ever-married women by person who makes specific household decisions, according to residence, Delhi, 1999

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	63.5	7.7	12.1	9.8	7.0	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	50.8	28.0	15.8	3.0	2.4	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	11.6	32.6	42.3	8.6	4.8	0.0	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	13.9	45.1	29.3	8.2	3.5	0.0	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	65.7	7.6	24.0	0.4	2.1	0.2	100.0
RURAL							
What items to cook	67.0	3.2	13.2	8.3	8.3	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	46.1	30.4	16.2	3.7	3.6	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	2.6	33.7	42.8	11.0	9.9	0.0	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	5.3	45.3	29.1	10.4	9.9	0.0	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	(59.8)	(16.2)	(24.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	100.0
TOTAL							
What items to cook	63.8	7.3	12.2	9.6	7.1	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	50.4	28.2	15.8	3.1	2.5	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	10.9	32.7	42.4	8.8	5.2	0.0	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	13.2	45.1	29.3	8.4	4.0	0.0	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	65.4	8.0	24.0	0.4	2.0	0.2	100.0
¹ For women earning cash () Based on 25–49 unweighted cases							

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 decision-making, 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 ever-married women by person (or persons) who makes each specified household decision, according to residence.

As expected, ever-married women in Delhi are most likely to participate in the decision about what items to cook: 64 percent of women make this decision on their own, and another 19 percent make this decision jointly with their husband or someone else in the household (see Figure 3.1). One in every six women (17 percent), however, are not involved at all in decisions



about what to cook. From one-third to one-half of women are not involved at all in decisions about seeking health care (31 percent), purchasing jewellery or other major household items (42 percent), and going and staying with parents or siblings (54 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 (50 percent). Participation in decisions about obtaining health care for herself, purchasing jewellery or other major households items, and going and staying with her parents or siblings is lower in rural areas than in the urban areas.

Sixty-five percent of women who earn cash report that only they decide how the money they earn can be spent, and another 26 percent make the decision jointly with their husbands or others in the household. In only 8 percent of cases does the husband alone decide how to spend the money the wife earns.

Women’s involvement in decision-making, alone or jointly with others in the household, increases with age, suggesting that autonomy increases with age. Table 3.7 confirms that, among women age 35 and over, only 1–4 percent do not participate in any decision-making, compared with 27 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 decision making does not vary much by most of the background characteristics.

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 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, Delhi, 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	27.0	58.6	46.9	35.5	29.0	16.0	12.8	69.3	62
20–24	9.8	77.1	61.6	51.8	46.2	34.6	20.6	78.4	387
25–29	6.2	79.9	68.1	54.6	43.4	43.1	26.0	81.5	504
30–34	3.7	84.4	69.1	60.9	48.0	54.4	33.3	83.8	483
35–39	3.9	85.4	73.1	62.1	46.4	57.6	38.1	80.8	466
40–44	1.7	89.2	72.2	64.9	47.8	65.1	47.8	85.8	339
45–49	1.2	89.5	73.1	62.6	53.3	71.0	50.9	88.3	237
Residence									
Urban	5.4	82.6	69.0	58.8	46.7	52.7	35.5	83.4	2,282
Rural	4.2	88.5	66.0	55.3	44.2	39.5	15.2	68.5	195
Education									
Illiterate	6.1	83.7	66.4	54.7	44.6	51.1	33.2	73.2	721
Literate, < middle school complete	6.3	85.1	69.2	54.6	46.5	48.6	30.7	80.3	378
Middle school complete	4.8	80.6	69.9	63.6	47.6	47.8	29.6	81.4	284
High school complete and above	4.5	82.6	69.9	61.1	47.5	54.2	36.6	89.1	1,093
Religion									
Hindu	4.4	83.8	69.6	59.0	47.6	52.4	33.6	82.5	2,106
Muslim	13.4	78.0	63.1	54.5	36.2	42.5	32.4	75.7	199
Sikh	6.9	75.6	67.3	61.1	47.5	49.0	31.8	88.9	116
Other	6.1	87.8	63.6	56.0	44.2	62.2	52.3	86.2	50
Caste/tribe									
Scheduled caste	7.9	80.1	68.3	56.7	47.8	51.7	31.4	76.2	451
Other backward class	6.5	82.9	69.1	55.9	45.6	45.5	29.0	75.8	385
Other ¹	4.2	83.9	68.7	59.7	46.2	53.1	35.7	85.3	1,616
Cash employment									
Working for cash	3.0	84.3	77.0	64.8	52.6	61.9	44.3	88.4	495
Not worked in past 12 months	5.8	82.7	66.7	57.1	45.1	49.0	31.2	80.9	1,960
Standard of living index									
Low	7.4	87.8	66.1	44.9	46.7	52.7	38.7	56.8	63
Medium	5.3	85.9	69.6	57.7	47.4	49.1	30.8	76.3	695
High	5.2	81.7	68.7	60.0	46.5	52.4	34.5	85.7	1,638
Total	5.3	83.0	68.7	58.5	46.5	51.7	33.9	82.3	2,477

Note: Total includes 22 scheduled-tribe women, 20 women who work but do not earn cash, and 1, 6, 3, 2, and 80 women with missing information on education, religion, caste/tribe, cash employment, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

¹Not belonging to a scheduled caste, a scheduled tribe, or an other backward class

Table 3.7 shows that 52 percent of women say they do not need permission to go to the market, and 34 percent say they do not need permission to visit friends or relatives. Freedom of movement increases substantially with age. For example, only 16 percent of women age 15–19 do not need permission to go to the market, compared with 71 percent of women age 45–49. Women who have completed at least high school have more freedom of movement than less

educated or illiterate women, although the differences are small. Freedom of movement is relatively high for Hindu women and women of “other” religions. Differences by level of standard of living are small. Women who earn cash have comparatively more freedom of movement than other women. Freedom of movement does not vary much by caste or tribe. Freedom of movement is substantially lower in rural Delhi than in urban Delhi.

Overall, 82 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 69 percent of women age 15–19 to 88 percent of women age 45–49. Access to money is substantially higher for urban women (83 percent) than rural women (69 percent). Access to money also increases with education (from 73 percent of illiterate women to 89 percent of women who have completed at least a high school education) and with standard of living (from 57 percent of women with a low standard of living to 86 percent of women with a high standard of living). Muslim women have less access to money than Hindu or Sikh women, but the differences are not large. Scheduled caste women and women from other backward classes have somewhat less access to money than other women. As expected, women who earn cash for their work have greater access to money than women who did not work during the past 12 months, but again the difference is not large.

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, 64 percent of women believe that a boy should be given as much education as he desires, compared with 59 percent who believe that a girl should be given as much education as she desires. Fifteen percent of women believe that an education above high school (higher secondary, graduate and above, or professional degree) is appropriate for boys, as well as for girls. There are no substantial urban-rural differentials in women’s educational aspirations for children.

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, not only are women socialized into being silent about their experience of violence, but also traditional norms teach them to accept, tolerate, and even rationalize domestic violence (Jaisingh, 1995; Hegde, 1996; Prasad, 1999). The recent India-SAFE 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.

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, Delhi, 1999			
Educational level	Urban	Rural	Total
Education for girls			
No education	0.1	0.0	0.1
Less than primary school	0.1	0.5	0.2
Primary school	0.6	1.1	0.6
Middle school	1.1	1.1	1.1
High school	7.6	11.6	7.9
Higher secondary school	3.6	4.7	3.7
Graduate and above	6.0	3.7	5.8
Professional degree	5.3	3.2	5.1
As much as she desires	59.7	56.7	59.4
Depends	15.2	16.4	15.3
Don't know	0.6	1.1	0.6
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Education for boys			
No education	0.0	0.0	0.0
Less than primary school	0.1	0.0	0.1
Primary school	0.4	1.0	0.4
Middle school	0.6	0.0	0.6
High school	4.4	3.7	4.3
Higher secondary school	3.7	5.3	3.8
Graduate and above	5.7	4.2	5.6
Professional degree	6.2	3.7	6.0
As much as he desires	63.5	64.6	63.6
Depends	14.9	16.4	15.0
Don't know	0.4	1.1	0.4
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0

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 wife-beating by background characteristics.

Only one in five women (21 percent) in Delhi accept at least one reason as justification for wife-beating. Women are most likely to agree that wife-beating is justified if there is a suspicion that the wife is unfaithful (14 percent), and least likely to agree that wife-beating is justified if her natal family does not give expected money or other items (less than 1 percent). If a wife goes out without telling her husband, 12 percent of women say that the husband would be

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, Delhi, 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	24.4	16.1	1.7	17.8	12.9	4.8	6.5	62
20–29	22.0	14.0	0.4	13.2	11.9	11.9	7.9	891
30–39	20.1	13.7	0.6	12.7	12.2	10.3	8.2	948
40–49	19.5	13.2	0.5	10.9	9.9	8.5	7.0	576
Marital duration (in years)								
< 5	19.3	12.7	0.2	11.9	10.8	10.6	7.1	457
5–9	20.5	11.8	0.9	11.9	9.8	9.2	6.2	460
10 or more	21.4	14.8	0.6	12.7	12.3	10.6	8.3	1,455
Not currently married	19.8	11.4	0.0	17.1	12.3	10.5	10.5	105
Residence								
Urban	20.3	13.4	0.5	11.9	11.2	10.2	7.6	2,282
Rural	25.8	17.8	1.1	20.5	15.3	12.6	10.5	195
Education								
Illiterate	28.8	19.2	1.1	19.5	17.9	16.0	11.9	721
Literate, < middle school complete	25.3	17.9	1.1	16.8	15.9	13.5	10.6	378
Middle school complete	21.5	13.3	0.4	11.3	11.5	10.3	8.9	284
High school complete and above	13.6	8.7	0.1	6.9	5.8	5.5	3.8	1,093
Religion								
Hindu	21.3	14.4	0.6	12.9	11.9	10.5	8.2	2,106
Muslim	18.6	11.1	1.0	12.1	10.1	10.5	6.0	199
Sikh	18.3	9.6	0.0	10.4	11.1	11.2	6.9	116
Other	10.5	8.4	0.0	6.3	4.3	2.1	0.0	50
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	26.3	17.7	0.5	17.9	15.4	13.7	10.4	451
Other backward class	28.7	19.0	1.3	18.9	16.7	14.7	12.1	385
Other ¹	17.2	11.3	0.4	9.6	9.2	8.2	5.9	1,616
Cash employment								
Working for cash	21.8	13.2	0.0	12.4	12.2	10.8	8.4	495
Not worked in past 12 months	20.5	13.9	0.7	12.6	11.5	10.3	7.6	1,960
Standard of living index								
Low	36.4	15.1	1.6	25.7	25.8	22.8	15.3	63
Medium	27.5	17.3	1.0	16.8	15.7	15.2	10.4	695
High	17.6	12.4	0.3	10.6	9.5	8.1	6.3	1,638
Total	20.8	13.7	0.6	12.6	11.6	10.3	7.8	2,477

Note: Total includes 22 scheduled-tribe women, 20 women who work but do not earn cash, and 1, 6, 3, 2, and 80 women with missing information on education, religion, caste/tribe, cash employment, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

¹Not belonging to a scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, or other backward class

justified in beating her. There is some agreement that wife-beating is justified if the wife neglects the house or children (10 percent), if she shows disrespect for in-laws (13 percent), or if she does not cook food properly (8 percent).

Table 3.9 indicates that there are no sharp differences by age or marital duration in women's attitudes about wife-beating, although the percentages justifying wife-beating tend to be somewhat lower than average for older women (age 40–49 years). The differences by urban-rural residence in women's attitudes towards wife-beating are also rather small. The proportion who agree with at least one reason is 20 percent in urban Delhi and 26 percent in rural Delhi. Agreement with at least one reason and with each of the specific reasons for wife-beating declines sharply with education. Twenty-nine percent of illiterate women agree with at least one reason justifying wife-beating, compared with 14 percent of women who have completed at least high school.

As expected, the proportion of women who agree that wife-beating is justified declines as the standard of living increases. The difference is sizable between women with a low or medium standard of living (36 and 28 percent, respectively) and women with a high standard of living (18 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 Delhi, probably because most women who work do so because they are poor. The percentage of respondents who agree with at least one reason for justifying wife-beating is about the same for women who did not work during the past 12 months (21 percent) and women who are working for cash (22 percent).

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 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.

¹The question does not limit women to reporting only domestic violence, but most 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, Delhi, 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	11.3	4.8	0.0	6.6	62
20–29	16.4	10.6	1.2	6.9	891
30–39	13.1	9.9	1.1	3.9	948
40–49	12.7	9.1	1.2	3.9	576
Marital duration (in years)					
< 5	11.6	5.6	0.5	6.8	457
5–9	16.6	10.8	1.5	6.3	460
10 or more	14.2	10.9	1.1	4.1	1,455
Not currently married	13.2	9.4	2.9	4.7	105
Residence					
Urban	14.1	9.9	1.1	5.0	2,282
Rural	14.7	9.4	1.6	5.2	195
Education					
Illiterate	20.3	17.5	1.6	4.0	721
Literate, < middle school complete	17.7	14.3	2.1	4.7	378
Middle school complete	16.4	10.4	1.8	6.3	284
High school complete and above	8.1	3.0	0.3	5.5	1,093
Religion					
Hindu	13.9	9.8	1.1	4.8	2,106
Muslim	17.0	13.6	2.0	5.0	199
Sikh	15.3	7.6	0.0	9.5	116
Other	12.0	4.0	0.0	8.0	50
Caste/tribe					
Scheduled caste	22.2	18.7	2.6	4.1	451
Other backward class	13.6	9.6	1.8	4.5	385
Other ¹	11.9	7.3	0.6	5.3	1,616
Household type					
Nuclear household	14.8	10.8	1.2	4.8	1,305
Non-nuclear household	13.3	8.7	1.0	5.4	1,172
Cash employment					
Working for cash	18.2	13.5	1.0	5.8	495
Not worked in past 12 months	12.8	9.0	1.1	4.7	1,960
Standard of living index					
Low	30.8	27.7	3.0	3.1	63
Medium	22.4	16.8	2.2	6.2	695
High	10.3	6.4	0.7	4.8	1,638
Living children					
No living children	10.4	6.3	0.9	4.6	216
Only daughters	13.3	7.8	1.3	5.2	312
Only sons	14.3	8.4	1.5	6.7	529
Both daughters and sons	14.8	11.3	1.0	4.5	1,421
Total	14.1	9.8	1.1	5.1	2,477

Note: Total includes 22 scheduled-tribe women, 20 women who work but do not earn cash, and 1, 6, 3, 2, and 80 women with missing information on education, religion, caste/tribe, cash employment, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

¹Not belonging to a scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, or other backward class

According to the reports of respondents, 14 percent of women in Delhi have experienced violence since age 15 (lower than the national average of 21 percent), and 10 percent have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husbands. Only 1 percent have been beaten or physically mistreated by in-laws and 5 percent by other persons. This implies that among women who were beaten, 7 out of 10 (70 percent) have been beaten by their husbands and 1 out of 13 have been beaten by their in-laws. There is no urban-rural differential in women's experience with beatings and physical mistreatment since age 15.

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 (14–17 percent). Illiterate women (20 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 22 percent of women with a medium standard of living and 10 percent of women with a high standard of living. Working women, most of whom may be from poor families, are 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. In Delhi, however, women with no living children are slightly less likely than women with living children to have experienced violence (10 percent compared with 13–15 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 is little 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, 70 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 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. One out of two women (54 percent) who experienced violence since age 15 were beaten at least once during the 12 months preceding the survey, and more than four out of ten (41 percent) were beaten more than once during this period.

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 Delhi: at least 14 percent of ever-married women in Delhi have experienced domestic violence since age 15, and at least 8 percent 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, Delhi, 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							
20–29	18.4	27.9	12.2	41.5	0.0	100.0	146
30–39	16.7	21.6	17.1	44.5	0.0	100.0	124
40–49	13.5	21.5	4.0	59.6	1.4	100.0	73
Marital duration (in years)							
< 5	13.0	20.6	22.5	43.9	0.0	100.0	53
5–9	16.8	33.9	9.3	40.0	0.0	100.0	76
10 or more	17.2	21.9	12.6	47.7	0.5	100.0	207
Residence							
Urban	16.9	24.3	13.4	45.1	0.3	100.0	321
Rural	(10.6)	(25.1)	(7.2)	(57.1)	(0.0)	100.0	29
Education							
Illiterate	20.4	25.1	13.1	40.8	0.7	100.0	147
Literate, < middle school complete	13.2	33.8	13.1	39.9	0.0	100.0	67
Middle school complete	(12.6)	(29.7)	(15.2)	(42.6)	(0.0)	100.0	47
High school complete and above	13.4	13.4	11.3	61.9	0.0	100.0	89
Religion							
Hindu	16.2	25.1	12.0	46.4	0.3	100.0	292
Muslim	(18.1)	(23.2)	(17.6)	(41.1)	(0.0)	100.0	34
Caste/tribe							
Scheduled caste	21.7	29.5	12.0	35.8	1.0	100.0	100
Other backward class	17.3	21.1	15.7	46.0	0.0	100.0	52
Other ¹	13.4	22.2	12.5	51.9	0.0	100.0	192
Household type							
Nuclear household	19.4	27.0	10.8	42.8	0.0	100.0	194
Non-nuclear household	12.7	21.0	15.5	50.2	0.6	100.0	156
Cash employment							
Working for cash	18.7	26.5	11.3	42.4	1.1	100.0	90
Not worked in past 12 months	15.3	23.5	13.1	48.1	0.0	100.0	252
Standard of living index							
Medium	17.2	29.1	14.5	38.4	0.6	100.0	156
High	12.2	19.0	12.1	56.7	0.0	100.0	168
Living children							
Only daughters	(16.6)	(19.0)	(13.9)	(50.5)	(0.0)	100.0	42
Only sons	17.1	23.2	16.0	43.7	0.0	100.0	76
Both daughters and sons	16.1	25.6	10.6	47.2	0.5	100.0	210
Total	16.4	24.3	12.9	46.1	0.3	100.0	350

Note: Total includes 7 women age 15–19, 14 women who are not currently married, 18 Sikh women, 6 women belonging to 'other' religions, 6 scheduled-tribe women, 7 women who work but do not earn cash, 19 women from households with a low standard of living index, 22 women with no living children, and 1, 1, and 6 women with missing information on education, cash employment, and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

¹Not belonging to a scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, or other backward class

Among women who report being beaten, women with at least a high school education, women age 40–49, rural women, and women who live in households that have a high standard of living are least likely to have been beaten in the past 12 months.