

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

3.1 Background Characteristics

Table 3.1 presents the percentage distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by age, marital status, 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 9 percent in the age group 15–19 years to 20 percent in the age group 25–29 years, and then falls steadily to 8 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. Slightly less than half (47 percent) the respondents are in the early reproductive age group of 15–29. The concentration is particularly high in the high fertility age group of 20–29, which contains 38 percent of respondents. Fifty percent of ever-married women in rural areas and 44 percent in urban areas are in the age group of 15–29. Forty-eight percent of respondents in slum areas of Mumbai, 30 percent in non-slum areas of Mumbai, and 41 percent in Mumbai as a whole, are in the age group 15–29. This age pattern is largely a consequence of higher age at marriage in urban areas, especially in Mumbai and its non-slum areas. Non-slum respondents in Mumbai are older than other respondents in the sample. Thirty-four percent of respondents from non-slum areas of Mumbai are above age 40, compared with only 18 percent in slum areas, 19 percent in rural areas, and 23 percent in all urban areas of Maharashtra.

Ninety-two percent of respondents are currently married, 5 percent are widowed, and the remaining 3 percent are divorced, separated, or deserted. The distribution of respondents by marital status varies marginally by urban-rural place of residence. However, the proportion of currently married women is slightly higher in non-slum areas of Mumbai (95 percent) than in

Table 3.1 Background characteristics of respondents

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

Background characteristic	Residence						Number of women	
	Urban	Rural	Total	Mumbai		Total	Weighted	Unweighted
				Slum	Non-slum			
Age								
15–19	6.0	11.5	9.3	6.3	1.5	4.3	499	421
20–24	17.8	17.6	17.7	20.2	11.0	16.3	954	934
25–29	19.9	20.5	20.3	21.8	17.2	19.9	1,092	1,085
30–34	17.6	17.8	17.7	18.3	18.4	18.3	956	965
35–39	15.9	13.4	14.4	15.6	17.7	16.5	778	812
40–44	14.1	11.8	12.8	11.8	20.1	15.3	688	727
45–49	8.7	7.3	7.9	6.0	14.2	9.4	424	447
Marital status								
Currently married	91.7	92.3	92.1	92.3	94.8	93.3	4,963	4,982
Widowed	5.5	5.1	5.3	5.1	3.8	4.5	283	273
Divorced	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.7	32	34
Separated	0.8	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.7	52	47
Deserted	1.3	1.0	1.1	1.1	0.2	0.7	61	55
Co-residence with husband								
Living with husband	90.4	92.0	91.3	90.1	93.7	91.6	4,924	4,928
Not living with husband	1.3	0.3	0.7	2.1	1.1	1.7	39	54
Not currently married	8.3	7.7	7.9	7.7	5.2	6.7	428	409
Education								
Illiterate	29.0	55.6	44.6	33.6	11.0	24.2	2,405	2,072
Literate, < primary school complete	7.5	9.7	8.8	8.7	3.1	6.4	473	435
Primary school complete	20.8	16.2	18.1	27.6	15.8	22.7	975	1,051
Middle school complete	12.4	9.6	10.8	13.4	13.4	13.4	582	626
High school complete	15.8	5.6	9.8	11.1	25.4	17.0	529	646
Higher secondary complete and above	14.4	3.3	7.9	5.7	31.3	16.3	427	561
Religion								
Hindu	66.6	89.6	80.1	59.8	74.9	66.1	4,318	4,094
Muslim	18.8	3.5	9.8	31.3	8.5	21.8	531	719
Christian	2.7	0.3	1.3	4.3	2.5	3.6	71	105
Sikh	0.5	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.9	0.6	12	18
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	9.3	5.1	6.8	4.0	4.1	4.0	368	331
Jain	1.7	1.0	1.3	0.2	8.9	3.8	68	105
No religion	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1	1
Other	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1	23	18
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	17.6	10.6	13.5	12.2	7.3	10.2	728	685
Scheduled tribe	5.9	13.3	10.2	2.5	1.9	2.2	552	430
Other backward class	19.6	22.9	21.6	13.0	11.9	12.5	1,162	1,031
Other	56.8	52.4	54.2	72.1	78.4	74.7	2,923	3,223
Missing	0.1	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.4	25	22

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, Maharashtra, 1999								
Background characteristic	Residence						Number of women	
	Urban	Rural	Total	Mumbai		Total	Weighted	Unweighted
				Slum	Non-slum			
Work status								
Working in family farm/business	3.9	32.6	20.7	2.5	2.3	2.4	1,116	816
Employed by someone else	20.2	34.6	28.7	16.4	14.4	15.6	1,546	1,339
Self-employed	6.9	5.9	6.3	3.4	4.0	3.6	341	303
Not worked in past 12 months	69.0	26.9	44.3	77.8	79.2	78.4	2,388	2,933
Husband's education								
Illiterate	13.0	26.0	20.6	13.8	3.3	9.5	1,111	932
Literate, < primary school complete	7.9	14.0	11.5	8.6	2.6	6.1	617	533
Primary school complete	16.3	18.5	17.6	24.5	8.4	17.8	949	950
Middle school complete	15.5	14.9	15.2	19.5	11.1	16.0	817	831
High school complete	20.8	14.9	17.4	23.3	33.2	27.4	936	1,091
Higher secondary complete and above	26.0	11.5	17.5	9.7	40.8	22.7	942	1,032
Missing	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.6	19	22
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	NA	NA
Number of women								
Weighted	2,229	3,162	5,391	397	285	682	5,391	NA
Unweighted	3,191	2,200	5,391	1,177	833	2,010	NA	5,391
NA: Not applicable								

slum areas (92 percent). Almost all currently married women (99 percent) reside with their husbands. The proportion of respondents living with their husbands does not vary much by urban-rural residence. In Mumbai, however, a slightly higher proportion of non-slum respondents reside with their husbands (94 percent) than slum respondents (90 percent).

The educational levels of respondents and their husbands have an important influence on demographic and health-seeking behaviour. Forty-five percent of ever-married women age 15–49 in Maharashtra are illiterate, lower than the rate of 58 percent in India as a whole. The proportion of illiterates among women in Maharashtra declined from 50 percent at the time of NFHS-1 to 45 percent at the time of NFHS-2. Between the two surveys, illiteracy declined faster among rural women (from 63 percent to 56 percent) than among urban women (from 32 percent to 29 percent). The level of illiteracy for Mumbai (24 percent) is lower than for urban Maharashtra (29 percent), but it is much lower in non-slum areas (11 percent) than in slum areas of Mumbai (34 percent), as expected. Among women in Maharashtra who are literate, the largest proportion is of those who have completed primary school (but not middle school). Only 18 percent of women have completed at least high school, up slightly from 15 percent at the time of NFHS-1. Nine percent of rural respondents and 30 percent of urban respondents have completed at least a high school education. Thirty-three percent of respondents from Mumbai as a whole (17 percent of respondents from slum areas and 57 percent from non-slum areas) have completed at least a high school education.

Although 45 percent of women are illiterate, only 21 percent of their husbands are illiterate (down from 25 percent in NFHS-1). The decline in illiteracy for husbands is mainly due to a decline in illiteracy in rural areas (from 33 percent to 26 percent), as illiteracy in urban areas declined only marginally (from 14 percent to 13 percent). In NFHS-2, the proportion of respondents with illiterate husbands is twice as high in rural areas (26 percent) as in urban areas (13 percent). Ten percent of respondents in Mumbai, 14 percent in slum areas, and only 3 percent in non-slum areas reported that their husbands are illiterate. At the other end of the distribution, 35 percent of women in Maharashtra have husbands who have completed at least high school (up from 30 percent in NFHS-1). This percentage is much higher in urban areas (47 percent) than in rural areas (26 percent). Fifty percent of women in Mumbai (33 percent in slum areas and 74 percent in non-slum areas) have husbands who have completed at least high school. By contrast, there are comparatively small differences by urban-rural residence in the proportion of women with husbands who have completed primary or middle school education. The proportion of respondents whose husbands have completed primary or middle school is much higher in slum areas (44 percent) than in non-slum areas (20 percent). This reflects a higher school dropout rate in slum areas than in non-slum areas of Mumbai.

Eighty percent of the respondents in Maharashtra are Hindu, 10 percent are Muslim, 7 percent are Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist, 1 percent each are Christian and Jain, and the remaining 1 percent belong to other religious groups. Hindu women are more concentrated in rural areas (90 percent) than in urban areas (67 percent). Sixty-six percent of respondents in Mumbai are Hindu, however, they are more concentrated in non-slum areas (75 percent) than in slum areas (60 percent). The proportion of Muslim women is much higher in urban areas (19 percent) than in rural areas (4 percent). The proportion of Muslim women is higher in Mumbai (22 percent) and they are much more likely to live in slum areas (31 percent) than in non-slum areas (9 percent). The proportion of Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist women is also higher in urban areas (9 percent) than in rural areas (5 percent). However, a comparatively low proportion of Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist women live in Mumbai (4 percent in both slum and non-slum areas), indicating their greater concentration in other cities and towns.

Twenty-two percent of respondents belong to other backward classes, 14 percent belong to scheduled castes, and 10 percent belong to scheduled tribes. More than half of the respondents (54 percent) do not belong to any of these groups. This proportion is much higher in Mumbai (75 percent), with 72 percent in slum areas and 78 percent in non-slum areas. Disproportionately small proportions of women from scheduled tribes (2 percent) and other backward classes (13 percent) are found in Mumbai, with little variation by slum/non-slum residence. The proportion of scheduled-caste respondents in Mumbai is close to their proportion in rural Maharashtra; and within Mumbai, their proportion is higher in slum areas (12 percent) than in non-slum areas (7 percent).

Forty-four percent of respondents in Maharashtra did not participate in work other than their regular housework during the 12 months preceding the survey. This proportion is much higher in urban areas (69 percent) and even higher in Mumbai (78 percent) than in rural areas (27 percent). Within Mumbai, the proportion who did not work in the past 12 months does not vary much by slum/non-slum residence. Twenty-nine percent of respondents are employed by someone else, 21 percent work on the family farm or in a family business, and 6 percent are self-employed. The proportion of women working on the family farm or in a family business is very small (2 percent) in Mumbai. Nearly one-third of rural respondents in Maharashtra work on the

family farm or in a family business, compared with only 4 percent of urban respondents. Only about one-fifth of respondents in slum as well as non-slum areas of Mumbai are engaged in work other than housework.

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 53 percent at age 45–49 to 35 percent at age 20–24, but rises to 46 percent for

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, Maharashtra, 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	46.4	8.1	22.0	16.2	6.5	0.8	100.0	499
20–24	34.6	6.8	19.9	15.4	12.7	10.5	100.0	954
25–29	43.4	7.0	18.3	11.5	9.1	10.8	100.0	1,092
30–34	43.8	10.8	17.0	11.2	8.5	8.8	100.0	956
35–39	49.2	8.7	19.1	7.4	9.7	6.0	100.0	778
40–44	50.1	10.5	15.8	6.5	10.4	6.7	100.0	688
45–49	52.8	11.5	13.1	4.5	11.3	6.9	100.0	424
Religion								
Hindu	46.3	8.3	17.3	10.6	9.6	7.8	100.0	4,318
Muslim	37.8	11.6	25.7	9.3	9.6	6.0	100.0	531
Christian	32.3	6.3	17.9	14.4	13.1	16.0	100.0	71
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	42.8	11.6	14.4	13.9	9.5	7.8	100.0	368
Jain	4.0	2.6	31.9	15.3	21.7	24.6	100.0	68
Other	(56.6)	(9.1)	(9.4)	(6.9)	(15.2)	(2.8)	100.0	36
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	48.0	10.7	15.2	12.5	6.8	6.9	100.0	728
Scheduled tribe	69.5	5.8	11.2	7.0	3.3	3.2	100.0	552
Other backward class	38.8	10.2	18.8	13.6	12.0	6.5	100.0	1,162
Other	41.1	8.3	19.9	10.0	10.9	9.7	100.0	2,923
Husband's education								
Illiterate	85.0	5.0	6.8	2.2	0.8	0.3	100.0	1,111
Literate, < primary school complete	65.8	14.2	13.1	5.1	1.7	0.1	100.0	617
Primary school complete	49.1	12.4	27.4	7.2	3.0	1.0	100.0	949
Middle school complete	34.7	12.2	27.2	16.7	7.0	2.2	100.0	817
High school complete	24.1	7.7	24.1	16.7	22.1	5.3	100.0	936
Higher secondary complete and above	7.1	4.3	11.5	17.5	23.0	36.7	100.0	942
Total	44.6	8.8	18.1	10.8	9.8	7.9	100.0	5,391
Note: Total includes 25 and 19 women with missing information on caste/tribe and husband's education, respectively, who are not shown separately.								
() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases								

women age 15–19 (undoubtedly because illiterate women are more likely than literate women to marry at young ages). Therefore, even though illiteracy is declining, about half (46 percent) of women even in the youngest cohorts of ever-married women are illiterate. At the other end of the educational spectrum, the proportion of women who have completed at least high school is lowest among women in age 15–19 (7 percent) and highest among women age 20–24 (23 percent). In older age groups, the proportion of women who have completed at least high school fluctuates between 16 and 20 percent. The level of illiteracy is highest among Hindus (46 percent), followed by Buddhists/Neo-Buddhists (43 percent), Muslims (38 percent), and Christians (32 percent). The level of illiteracy is lowest among Jains (4 percent). The proportion illiterate is much higher among scheduled-tribe women (70 percent) than among other caste/tribe women (39–48) percent. At the other end of the educational distribution, however, the proportion of women who have completed at least high school is relatively high among Jain women (46 percent), Christian women (29 percent), and women who do not belong to a scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, or other backward class (21 percent).

Eighty-five percent of women with illiterate husbands are themselves illiterate. The proportion of illiterate wives decreases steadily with an increase in husband's education. Among women whose husbands have completed at least higher secondary education, only 7 percent 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 with an equal or higher level of education. Specifically, the proportion of women who have less education than their husbands is 66 percent for women whose husbands are literate but have not completed primary school, 62 percent for women whose husbands have completed primary school, 74 percent for women whose husbands have completed middle school, 73 percent for women whose husbands have completed high school, and 63 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 at first marriage/cohabitation with husband for a cohort of women is the age by which 50 percent of the cohort marries/cohabits. The table provides evidence of a steady rise in the age at first marriage. The proportion married before they reach age 15 falls from 39 percent for women age 40–49 to 17 percent for women age 15–19. The large decline in the proportion of women married by age 15 is evident in both rural and urban areas. For example, in rural areas the proportion declines from 56 percent among women age 45–49 to 23 percent among women age 15–19. In urban areas, however, the proportion of women married before age 15 rises from 20 percent among women age 45–49 to 24 percent among women age 40–44, and then declines steadily to only 7 percent among women age 15–19. The practice of very early marriage (by age 13) has virtually disappeared in urban areas, but in rural areas a few women age 15–19 (4 percent) still marry before age 13.

The median age at first marriage has also risen over the past three decades. In rural areas, the median age at first marriage is more than two years higher for women age 20–24 (17.0 years) than for women age 45–49 (14.6 years). In urban areas, the corresponding rise is smaller (one and a half years), but notably even among women age 45–49 the median age at first marriage is above 18 years, which is almost four years higher than the corresponding value in rural areas.

Table 3.3 Age at first marriage								
Percentage of women married by specific exact ages, median age at first marriage, and median age at first cohabitation with husband, according to current age and residence, Maharashtra, 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	0.7	7.3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	3.1	12.4	31.4	51.8	NA	NA	19.7	19.8
25–29	5.2	17.1	41.8	63.0	73.1	83.9	18.7	18.7
30–34	6.3	18.4	48.5	66.6	78.1	89.9	18.1	18.2
35–39	6.3	22.4	52.6	72.2	82.1	90.4	17.7	17.8
40–44	8.5	23.9	53.6	70.5	81.9	90.2	17.6	17.8
45–49	5.7	19.8	47.8	65.0	79.2	91.2	18.2	18.3
20–49	5.5	18.1	44.0	63.3	74.0	82.5	18.5	18.6
25–49	6.3	20.0	48.3	67.3	78.3	88.5	18.1	18.2
RURAL								
15–19	3.6	23.4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	5.6	31.9	62.4	82.8	NA	NA	17.0	17.1
25–29	10.5	40.1	71.0	87.4	93.4	96.4	15.7	16.0
30–34	11.5	39.1	77.4	88.4	95.9	98.6	15.7	16.1
35–39	13.6	43.1	79.5	92.6	97.3	98.3	15.5	15.9
40–44	20.9	52.0	85.5	95.0	97.3	98.4	14.9	15.3
45–49	31.5	55.6	85.8	93.1	96.7	97.3	14.6	15.4
20–49	13.1	41.4	74.8	88.8	94.4	96.3	15.6	16.0
25–49	15.2	44.0	78.1	90.5	95.7	97.7	15.4	15.8
TOTAL								
15–19	2.4	16.6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20–24	4.4	22.5	47.7	68.4	NA	NA	18.2	18.2
25–29	8.2	30.3	58.7	77.1	84.9	91.2	16.8	17.1
30–34	9.4	30.5	65.5	79.4	88.6	95.1	16.5	16.8
35–39	10.3	33.7	67.2	83.4	90.4	94.8	16.3	16.5
40–44	15.2	39.2	71.1	84.0	90.5	94.9	15.9	16.3
45–49	19.6	39.2	68.4	80.3	88.7	94.6	15.9	16.4
20–49	9.7	31.0	61.1	77.6	85.6	90.5	16.7	17.0
25–49	11.3	33.5	65.1	80.4	88.2	93.9	16.4	16.7
NA: Not applicable								
NC: Not calculated because less than 50 percent of women in the age group 15–19 have married or started living with their husband by age 15								
¹ The current age group includes both never-married and ever-married women.								

(The median age at first marriage could not be calculated for women age 15–19 because more than half of the women in this age group were not married at the time of the survey). For women age 20–24 and 25–29, the median age at first marriage is three years higher in urban areas than in rural areas.

Despite the evidence of a rising age at marriage in Maharashtra, Table 3.3 shows that 61 percent of women age 20–49 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, about half (48 percent) still marry before reaching the legal minimum age at marriage (62 percent in rural areas and 31 percent in urban areas).

Table 3.3 also provides information on the median age at first cohabitation with husband. This, along with age at first marriage, shows the gap between formal marriage and the time when a wife starts living with her husband. The median age at first cohabitation has been rising somewhat more slowly than the median age at first marriage in the state as a whole, and consequently the gap between the median age at first marriage and the median age at first cohabitation has been gradually narrowing over time. In fact, in both urban and rural areas of Maharashtra there is now virtually no gap between marriage and cohabitation, while 25–30 years back there was a gap of about six months in the state as a whole.

3.4 Exposure to Mass Media

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

In Maharashtra, 3 out of every 10 ever-married women are not regularly exposed to any of these media. As expected, the percentage not regularly exposed to the media is much higher (43–60 percent) among rural women, illiterate women, women belonging to scheduled tribes, and women belonging to low standard of living households than among other women. Fifty-three percent of illiterate women are not regularly exposed to any media, compared with only 2 percent of women who have completed at least a high school education. The percentage not regularly exposed to any media is 60 percent among women from low standard of living households, compared with only 3 percent among those from high standard of living households. Forty-three percent of rural women are not regularly exposed to any media, compared with only 10 percent of urban women. Only 7 percent of women from Mumbai are not regularly exposed to any media, and this percentage is much smaller in non-slum areas (3 percent) than in slum areas within Mumbai (11 percent). There are no consistent differences in media exposure by age. The proportion of women not regularly exposed to any media is highest for Hindu women (32 percent), followed by Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist women (23 percent), Muslim women (20 percent), Christian women (13 percent), and Jain women (8 percent). A relatively high proportion of women belonging to religions other than those listed individually in the table (31 percent) are not regularly exposed to any media. A much higher proportion of scheduled-tribe women (54 percent) are not regularly exposed to any media than other women (26–27 percent).

Among the different types of mass media, 62 percent of women in Maharashtra are regularly exposed to television, up sharply from 46 percent in NFHS-1. Thirty-six percent of women mentioned that they usually listen to the radio at least once a week, much lower than in NFHS-1 (52 percent). About one-third of women read a newspaper or magazine at least once a week, and 8 percent visit the cinema or theatre at least once a month. Exposure to every type of media is much higher in urban areas, especially in Mumbai, than in rural areas, except that the percentage of those visiting a cinema or theatre is lower in Mumbai than in other urban areas of Maharashtra. In Mumbai, exposure to every type of mass media is much higher in non-slum

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, Maharashtra, 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	20.7	50.2	28.7	10.1	37.4	499
20–24	34.3	62.9	35.6	13.2	26.0	954
25–29	33.1	62.6	36.2	9.5	28.9	1,092
30–34	34.0	63.8	37.1	7.4	27.8	956
35–39	32.3	60.9	36.2	5.6	32.4	778
40–44	34.9	65.9	40.4	4.4	26.8	688
45–49	30.2	61.5	36.4	5.1	33.3	424
Residence						
Urban	50.5	83.6	45.5	13.1	10.4	2,229
Rural	19.3	46.5	29.5	4.9	43.1	3,162
Mumbai	58.0	87.7	55.2	10.1	7.2	682
Slum	43.9	82.4	46.8	4.7	10.7	397
Non-slum	77.6	95.0	67.0	17.7	2.5	285
Education						
Illiterate	0.0	39.3	20.9	2.4	52.6	2,405
Literate, < middle school complete	38.5	71.0	41.2	6.3	18.1	1,448
Middle school complete	61.8	79.8	49.7	14.7	8.4	582
High school complete and above	85.6	93.5	58.3	22.2	1.8	956
Religion						
Hindu	31.2	59.2	35.8	7.7	31.9	4,318
Muslim	30.5	70.9	31.9	6.8	19.9	531
Christian	49.6	84.7	41.7	16.5	12.6	71
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	35.0	70.3	40.9	13.9	22.8	368
Jain	77.2	91.7	53.9	13.6	8.3	68
Other	(25.7)	(53.6)	(40.2)	(18.1)	(30.8)	36
Caste/tribe						
Scheduled caste	31.7	64.8	38.1	12.0	26.7	728
Scheduled tribe	14.7	35.2	26.0	3.6	54.0	552
Other backward class	34.9	64.1	35.9	8.3	27.1	1,162
Other	34.8	65.4	37.7	8.3	26.4	2,923
Standard of living index						
Low	6.9	28.6	19.0	3.1	60.2	1,639
Medium	30.7	68.0	36.1	6.4	22.3	2,409
High	67.9	93.9	57.9	19.1	2.9	1,176
Total	32.2	61.8	36.1	8.3	29.6	5,391

Note: Total includes 25 and 167 women with missing information on caste/tribe and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

areas than in slum areas, the difference being highest for women who regularly read a newspaper or magazine (78 percent for non-slum residents and 44 percent for slum residents). Although mass media can be an important means of spreading health and family welfare messages, as well as exposing women to modern views and lifestyles in general, innovative programmes will be necessary to reach 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 Maharashtra, 44 percent of women 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 49 percent in NFHS-1 to 54 percent in NFHS-2. Seventy-three percent of rural women, but only 31 percent of urban women, worked at any time in the 12 months preceding the survey. Among women who worked during that period, about three-quarters of women (74 percent) worked throughout the year. Although a smaller proportion of women in urban areas than in rural areas work, urban women who do work are more likely to work throughout the year (80 percent) than rural women (72 percent). Similarly, the proportion of women working in Mumbai is much smaller (22 percent), but most of them (86 percent) work throughout the year and this pattern is more or less the same in slum and non-slum areas. In rural areas, where women are predominantly engaged in agricultural activity, 23 percent of working women are engaged in seasonal work. Eighty-six percent of rural working women are agricultural workers. The occupational diversity is much greater in urban areas, where 21 percent of working women are engaged in production work, another 16 percent are professionals, 15 percent are agricultural workers, 9 percent are sales workers, 8 percent are service workers, and slightly less than one-third (31 percent) are in the residual category of 'other workers'. In Mumbai, 20 percent of working women are professionals, another 20 percent are engaged in production work, 12 percent are sales workers, 10 percent are service workers, only 3 percent are agricultural workers, and more than one-third are in the residual category of 'other workers'. A large variation is observed in the occupational pattern of slum and non-slum residents. The proportion of professionals is much higher among non-slum working women (30 percent) than among working women in slums (12 percent). On the other hand, the proportions of production workers and service workers are smaller among working women in non-slum areas (17 percent and 7 percent, respectively) than among working women in slum areas (21 percent

Table 3.5 Employment

Percent distribution of ever-married women age 15–49 by employment characteristics, according to residence, Maharashtra, 1999

Employment characteristic	Residence					
	Urban	Rural	Total	Mumbai		
				Slum	Non-slum	Total
Employment status						
Currently working	29.0	71.5	54.0	19.8	19.2	19.6
Worked in past 12 months (not currently working)	2.0	1.6	1.7	2.4	1.6	2.1
Not worked in past 12 months	69.0	26.9	44.3	77.8	79.2	78.4
Continuity of employment¹						
Throughout the year	79.9	71.6	73.5	85.9	85.5	85.7
Seasonally/part of the year	12.1	23.2	20.7	8.4	9.1	8.7
Once in a while	8.0	5.2	5.8	5.7	5.4	5.6
Type of earnings¹						
Cash only	88.1	54.3	62.1	86.5	92.4	88.9
Cash and kind	1.3	2.8	2.4	2.7	0.0	1.6
Kind only	0.4	8.2	6.4	0.4	0.0	0.2
Not paid	10.2	34.7	29.1	10.5	7.6	9.3
Occupation¹						
Professional	15.7	2.3	5.4	12.3	30.4	19.6
Sales worker	8.6	1.3	3.0	12.1	11.2	11.7
Service worker	7.7	0.1	1.9	11.5	6.9	9.7
Production worker	21.0	4.2	8.1	21.0	17.2	19.5
Agricultural worker	14.6	85.9	69.5	2.7	2.9	2.7
Other worker	30.9	5.6	11.4	39.3	29.8	35.5
Missing	1.4	0.5	0.7	1.2	1.6	1.4
Earnings contribution to total family earnings²						
Almost none	7.1	5.8	6.2	4.7	4.5	4.6
Less than half	39.9	61.8	54.8	33.0	32.6	32.9
About half	24.2	21.5	22.3	26.5	37.0	30.8
More than half	11.7	5.0	7.1	15.1	6.9	11.7
All	17.0	5.9	9.5	20.7	19.0	20.0
Missing	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	2,229	3,162	5,391	397	285	682
Number of employed women ¹	691	2,312	3,003	88	59	147
Number of women earning cash	618	1,319	1,937	79	55	133
¹ For currently working women and women who have worked in the past 12 months						
² For women earning cash						

and 12 percent, respectively). The proportion of women in the residual ‘other workers’ category is much higher in slum areas (39 percent) than in non-slum areas (30 percent).

Types of earnings of female workers are also quite diverse in Maharashtra. Sixty-two percent of working women are paid only in cash, 6 percent are paid only in kind, and 2 percent receive both cash and in-kind payments. Twenty-nine percent of women are unpaid workers and this proportion is even higher in rural areas (35 percent) because most of them work on the family farm or in a family business. Eighty-nine percent of urban working women receive at least some cash for their work, compared with 57 percent of rural working women. Ninety-one percent

of working women in Mumbai (89 percent in slum areas and 92 percent in non-slum areas) receive at least some cash for their work.

A significant feature of women's work participation in Maharashtra is their substantial contribution to family earnings. In NFHS-2, women who earned cash for their work in the past 12 months were asked how much their earnings contribute to the total family earnings. Ten percent of these women (17 percent in urban areas and 6 percent in rural areas) say the family is entirely dependent on their earnings. Another 29 percent report that they contribute about half or more than half of the total family earnings. Fifty-five percent contribute less than half of family earnings and 6 percent say their earnings contribute almost nothing to the total family earnings. The percentage of sole earners is higher in Mumbai (20 percent) than in other parts of Maharashtra, with little variation by slum and non-slum area of residence. In Mumbai, another 43 percent of women earning cash report that they contribute about half or more than half of the total family earnings, 33 percent contribute less than half of family earnings, and 5 percent say their earnings contribute almost nothing to the total family earnings. Overall, 39 percent of cash-earning women in Maharashtra and 63 percent in Mumbai report that their earnings contribute about half, more than half, or all of the total family earnings.

3.6 Women's Autonomy

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

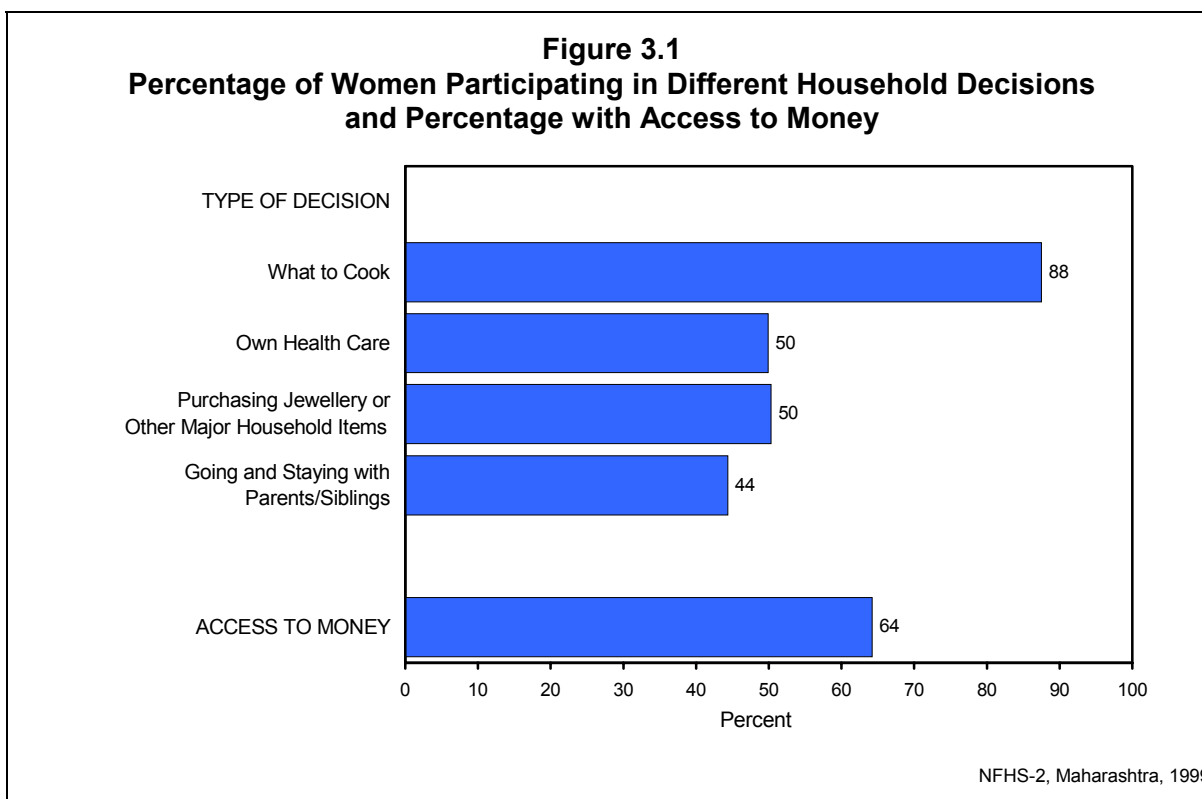
In order to measure women's participation in household decisionmaking, NFHS-2 asked women to report who in their households makes decisions about the following: what items to cook, obtaining health care for themselves, purchasing jewellery or other major household items, and their going and staying with parents or siblings. The survey also asked women who earn 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 Maharashtra are most likely to participate in the decision about what items to cook: 80 percent of women make this decision on their own and another 8 percent make this decision jointly with their husband or someone else in the household (see Figure 3.1). One in every eight women, however, are not involved at all in decisions about what to cook. About half of the women are not involved at all in decisions about seeking health care for themselves or purchasing jewellery or other major household items, and 56 percent are not involved in decisions about going and staying with parents or siblings. 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 (35 percent). Urban women are more likely to be involved in each of the decisions than their rural counterparts. Also, a larger proportion of rural women than urban

Table 3.6 Household decisionmaking							
Percent distribution of ever-married women by person who makes specific household decisions, according to residence, Maharashtra, 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	78.3	1.9	2.8	11.0	6.1	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	44.5	33.9	10.4	7.8	3.4	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	12.9	30.5	34.4	14.3	7.9	0.0	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	21.1	41.9	22.9	9.0	5.0	0.0	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	56.3	16.7	20.1	2.8	4.1	0.0	100.0
RURAL							
What items to cook	80.3	0.8	1.6	11.4	5.9	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	28.9	45.6	10.7	10.3	4.3	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	9.0	35.7	29.2	17.4	8.6	0.1	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	14.9	47.1	20.4	11.7	5.8	0.0	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	31.1	39.7	19.7	5.6	3.8	0.1	100.0
TOTAL							
What items to cook	79.5	1.2	2.1	11.3	6.0	0.0	100.0
Obtaining health care for herself	35.4	40.8	10.6	9.3	4.0	0.0	100.0
Purchasing jewellery or other major household items	10.6	33.5	31.4	16.1	8.3	0.1	100.0
Going and staying with her parents or siblings	17.5	45.0	21.4	10.6	5.5	0.0	100.0
How the money she earns will be used ¹	39.1	32.4	19.8	4.7	3.9	0.1	100.0
¹ For women earning cash							

women report that these decisions are taken by others in the household only, that is, neither the respondent nor her husband is involved in the decisions.

Thirty-seven percent of women who earn cash report that only their husbands or only others in the household make the decision about how the money they earn will be used. Thirty-nine percent of the women make that decision on their own, and 24 percent make the decision together with their husbands or others in their households. The proportion of women who do not participate at all in the decision about how the money they earn will be used is substantially



higher in rural areas (45 percent) than in urban areas (20 percent), and the proportion who make this decision alone is much higher in urban areas (56 percent) than in rural areas (31 percent).

Women's involvement in decisionmaking, alone or jointly with others in the household, increases with age, suggesting that autonomy also increases with age (Table 3.7). Specifically, among women age 35 and over, only 1–2 percent do not participate in any decisionmaking, compared with 25 percent of women age 15–19. Participation in each of the four specified decisions increases steadily with age up to age 35–39, and then levels out after that.

Urban women are more likely than rural women to participate in decisionmaking about own health care, purchasing jewellery and other major household items, and staying with their parents or siblings. Women residing in Mumbai are even more likely to participate in decisionmaking about obtaining health care for themselves than women in other urban areas of Maharashtra, but on the other three autonomy dimensions the proportions involved in decisionmaking are similar in Mumbai and other urban areas. Women from non-slum areas of Mumbai are much more likely to be involved in decisionmaking about their own health care and going and staying with their parents or siblings, but the slum/non-slum differential is negligible with regards to their involvement in the other two decisions. The proportion of women not involved in any decisionmaking does not vary much or systematically by education, religion, caste/tribe, or the standard of living. However, women with at least a high school education are more likely than less educated women to be involved in all types of decisionmaking except for cooking. Women from high standard of living households are more likely than women from low or medium standard of living households to be involved in all types of decisionmaking except for cooking. Women who worked for cash during the last year are somewhat more likely to be

involved in each type of decisionmaking than working women who did not earn cash or women who did not work.

Percentages of women involved in the four types of decisionmaking for Maharashtra given in Table 3.7 are more or less comparable with the corresponding percentages for women in India as a whole; but the percentage of women who are not involved in any decisionmaking is slightly lower for Maharashtra (7 percent) than for India as a whole (9 percent).

NFHS-2 also collected information on two other dimensions of women's autonomy, namely women's freedom of movement and their access to money that they can spend as they wish. With regard to freedom of movement, respondents were asked whether they need permission to go to the market or to visit friends or relatives. Women's access to spending money was measured by asking respondents, 'Are you allowed to have some money set aside that you can use as you wish?'

Table 3.7 shows that freedom of movement is limited for the majority of ever-married women in Maharashtra. About one-half of women (49 percent) say they do not need permission to go to the market and only about one-third (32 percent) say they do not need permission to visit friends or relatives. The corresponding percentages for the country as a whole are 32 and 24 percent, respectively, implying that women in Maharashtra enjoy more freedom of movement. Freedom of movement for women in Maharashtra increases substantially with age. For example, only 21 percent of women age 15–19 do not need permission to go to the market, compared with 63–65 percent of women age 40–49. Women who have completed at least high school have much more freedom of movement than less educated or illiterate women. In comparison with rural areas, freedom of movement is higher in urban areas, and still higher in Mumbai. Within Mumbai, freedom of movement is much higher in non-slum areas than in slum areas. Seventy-six percent of women in slums do not need permission to go to the market as against 84 percent in non-slum areas. The corresponding percentages of women that do not need permission to visit friends or relatives are 37 percent and 51 percent, respectively. Hindu women are somewhat more likely to need permission to go to the market than women belonging to other religions. Women belonging to scheduled castes and other backward classes enjoy slightly more freedom of movement than women belonging to other castes or tribes. Freedom of movement is lower for women who work but not for cash than for other women. Freedom of movement increases substantially with an increase in the household standard of living. For example, 62 percent of women from high standard of living households do not need permission to go to the market, compared with 39 percent from low standard of living households. Even in the groups with the greatest freedom of movement, however, a considerable proportion of women need permission to go to the market or to visit friends or relatives.

There is substantial variation in women's access to money by background characteristics. Overall, 64 percent of women in Maharashtra say that they are allowed to have some money set aside that they can spend as they wish, slightly higher than the estimate of 60 percent for the country as a whole. Access to money increases with age, from 44 percent for women age 15–19 to 74–75 percent for women age 40–49. The percentage of women with access to money is much higher in urban areas (74 percent) than in rural areas (58 percent), and much higher in non-slum areas (84 percent) than in slum areas of Mumbai (67 percent). Access to money increases with education (from 55 percent for illiterate women to 84 percent for women who have completed at least a high school education) and with the standard of living (from 55 percent for women from

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, Maharashtra, 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	24.9	67.0	31.1	29.8	26.3	21.3	13.0	44.4	499
20-24	12.7	80.2	41.6	40.7	37.1	36.8	25.0	55.8	954
25-29	7.1	88.0	50.4	49.8	41.6	45.0	26.9	62.3	1,092
30-34	3.7	91.7	51.4	54.7	45.9	51.9	29.6	66.4	956
35-39	1.9	94.9	54.7	58.7	54.0	58.0	39.9	72.8	778
40-44	1.0	93.9	60.9	59.5	54.4	65.1	49.0	74.8	688
45-49	1.2	93.2	59.5	56.9	52.0	63.4	48.1	73.7	424
Residence									
Urban	6.3	87.1	58.3	55.2	49.1	64.8	41.6	73.6	2,229
Rural	7.8	87.8	44.0	46.8	41.1	37.0	25.5	57.6	3,162
Mumbai	4.8	89.7	66.9	54.4	45.8	79.7	42.7	74.3	682
Slum	4.7	89.7	63.6	53.5	41.8	76.4	36.9	67.4	397
Non-slum	5.0	89.7	71.6	55.6	51.3	84.2	51.0	83.8	285
Education									
Illiterate	5.8	89.6	46.7	50.6	42.4	40.7	29.1	54.6	2,405
Literate, < middle school complete	7.8	87.9	49.0	48.6	43.0	49.0	29.7	65.0	1,448
Middle school complete	12.8	81.7	47.7	43.5	38.4	48.7	29.7	69.7	582
High school complete and above	6.2	85.1	60.7	56.2	55.1	67.1	44.7	83.8	956
Religion									
Hindu	7.2	87.8	49.3	49.7	44.3	47.2	31.6	62.6	4,318
Muslim	7.7	85.4	48.3	48.3	40.4	50.2	32.4	71.0	531
Christian	9.0	79.8	67.3	60.2	55.0	57.0	37.6	69.4	71
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	4.7	89.3	57.2	57.4	51.7	57.3	37.0	70.5	368
Jain	12.4	83.9	47.6	47.6	35.2	62.2	33.1	73.8	68
Other	(4.1)	(83.8)	(41.0)	(56.5)	(40.9)	(47.9)	(28.4)	(65.2)	36
Caste/tribe									
Scheduled caste	5.4	88.9	52.4	52.6	50.4	53.9	32.6	68.3	728
Scheduled tribe	6.5	87.1	46.3	50.5	44.0	46.6	32.1	53.5	552
Other backward class	7.3	87.5	47.3	50.9	42.8	53.9	36.2	67.4	1,162
Other	7.6	87.3	51.1	49.4	43.5	45.3	30.4	64.0	2,923
Cash employment									
Working for cash	5.4	90.4	53.3	56.0	49.6	50.9	35.7	67.1	1,937
Working but not for cash	9.9	84.6	42.3	40.9	37.3	31.9	23.0	50.6	1,066
Not worked in past 12 months	7.4	86.4	50.5	49.8	43.3	53.9	33.3	67.9	2,388
Standard of living index									
Low	6.4	90.0	45.4	49.3	42.3	38.5	27.8	54.9	1,639
Medium	7.6	87.3	47.0	48.6	42.2	48.4	30.2	63.2	2,409
High	7.3	84.8	61.6	54.8	52.1	62.0	41.5	79.7	1,176
Total	7.2	87.5	49.9	50.3	44.4	48.5	32.1	64.2	5,391

Note: Total includes 25 and 167 women with missing information on caste/tribe and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25-49 unweighted cases

low standard of living households to 80 percent for women from high standard of living households). Hindu women are less likely to have access to money (63 percent) than Jain, Muslim, Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist, or Christian women (69–74 percent). Scheduled-tribe women are less likely to have access to money (54 percent) than women in other caste/tribe categories (64–68 percent). Women who are working but not for cash are less likely to have access to money (51 percent) than women working for cash (67 percent) or those who did not work during the past 12 months (68 percent). The higher proportion with access to money among non-working women can be partly explained by the fact that non-working women tend to come from better-off households that enjoy a higher standard of living.

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, 33 percent of women believe that a boy should be given as much education as he desires, compared with only 24 percent who believe that a girl should be given as much education as she desires. Forty-three percent of women believe that an education above high school (higher secondary school, graduate and above, or professional degree) is appropriate

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, Maharashtra, 1999			
Educational level	Urban	Rural	Total
Education for girls			
No education	0.1	0.2	0.2
Less than primary school	0.0	0.3	0.2
Primary school	0.8	2.2	1.6
Middle school	3.0	7.0	5.4
High school	16.3	33.6	26.4
Higher secondary school	11.1	16.5	14.3
Graduate and above	15.5	8.6	11.5
Professional degree	12.0	5.3	8.0
As much as she desires	31.6	18.1	23.7
Depends	9.2	5.5	7.0
Don't know	0.4	2.7	1.8
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Education for boys			
No education	0.0	0.1	0.1
Less than primary school	0.1	0.0	0.0
Primary school	0.1	0.5	0.3
Middle school	0.6	1.8	1.3
High school	6.1	12.5	9.9
Higher secondary school	7.6	15.5	12.2
Graduate and above	15.0	16.6	15.9
Professional degree	18.3	12.2	14.7
As much as he desires	39.1	28.2	32.7
Depends	12.9	9.9	11.1
Don't know	0.3	2.7	1.7
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0

for boys, whereas 34 percent feel that it is appropriate for girls. Notably, less than 1 percent of women feel that girls should not be given any education or should be given less than a primary school education. Seven percent of women feel that girls should be given an education but not beyond middle school. The corresponding proportion for boys is less than 2 percent. It is notable that educational aspirations for both girls and boys are higher in Maharashtra than in India as a whole. The percentage of women that say that a graduate level education and above (including a professional degree) should be given to children is 31 for boys and 20 for girls in Maharashtra, while for India as a whole it is 18 for boys and 11 for girls.

Table 3.8 indicates that there are substantial 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 more than four-fifths 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.

In order to assess women's attitudes towards wife-beating, the survey asked whether respondents thought that a husband is justified in beating his wife for each of the following reasons: if he suspects her of being unfaithful; if her natal family does not give expected money, jewellery, or other items; if she shows disrespect for her in-laws; if she goes out without telling him; if she neglects the house or children; or if she does not cook food properly. These reasons, which range from reasons that involve suspicions about a wife's moral character to those that may be considered more trivial, such as not cooking properly, were chosen to provide variation in the perceived seriousness of behavioural-norm violation. Table 3.9 gives the percentages of ever-married women who agree with various reasons for wife-beating by background characteristics.

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, Maharashtra, 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	82.1	36.9	7.6	60.8	63.6	71.4	53.5	499
20–29	76.3	32.7	6.7	56.5	55.1	68.7	50.5	2,046
30–39	73.4	32.0	6.7	53.6	51.5	64.5	47.6	1,734
40–49	68.3	29.6	6.7	49.2	49.2	58.8	43.5	1,112
Marital duration (in years)								
< 5	74.7	33.0	5.6	56.3	52.2	65.2	43.0	994
5–9	73.7	32.0	6.3	53.0	52.7	66.5	50.0	920
10 or more	74.6	31.9	7.0	54.3	54.1	65.7	49.1	3,050
Not currently married	72.3	33.4	8.6	54.1	54.0	63.6	52.2	428
Residence								
Urban	65.1	28.5	4.9	46.2	41.7	55.3	33.5	2,229
Rural	80.7	34.9	8.1	60.3	61.9	72.8	58.8	3,162
Mumbai	50.3	14.9	0.9	32.0	27.8	42.3	17.7	682
Slum	62.3	18.8	1.5	41.4	36.1	52.7	22.9	397
Non-slum	33.6	9.5	0.1	18.8	16.1	27.7	10.4	285
Education								
Illiterate	81.5	37.4	10.3	60.4	62.4	73.8	58.2	2,405
Literate, < middle school complete	77.9	32.4	4.8	58.4	56.4	70.4	52.5	1,448
Middle school complete	71.1	29.2	3.6	50.5	47.8	59.0	39.2	582
High school complete and above	52.4	20.8	2.8	35.8	30.3	41.5	23.1	956
Religion								
Hindu	74.9	32.1	6.7	55.2	54.3	66.7	50.1	4,318
Muslim	72.0	33.2	6.4	50.5	51.3	59.4	35.9	531
Christian	56.4	29.5	12.0	37.4	40.4	46.3	33.8	71
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	76.7	35.9	7.8	58.1	53.5	68.0	53.0	368
Jain	56.2	18.9	2.1	37.0	34.6	46.5	26.7	68
Other	(76.3)	(29.4)	(11.2)	(52.7)	(57.6)	(70.5)	(51.1)	36
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled caste	78.0	34.8	6.5	59.1	55.9	68.8	52.5	728
Scheduled tribe	81.1	37.8	12.2	57.8	59.5	70.3	52.6	552
Other backward class	73.4	33.7	6.8	53.1	50.4	64.3	47.4	1,162
Other	72.4	30.1	5.8	53.1	53.0	64.4	46.8	2,923
Cash employment								
Working for cash	74.4	32.6	8.5	53.8	55.9	65.5	52.5	1,937
Working but not for cash	82.7	33.6	7.9	63.3	65.2	75.4	61.8	1,066
Not worked in past 12 months	70.4	31.4	4.9	51.0	46.4	61.3	39.1	2,388
Standard of living index								
Low	79.8	35.0	10.0	59.4	62.6	72.3	58.9	1,639
Medium	78.8	35.6	6.2	58.6	56.4	69.7	51.4	2,409
High	57.7	22.0	3.6	39.8	35.9	48.1	28.9	1,176
Total	74.3	32.2	6.8	54.4	53.5	65.6	48.4	5,391

Note: Total includes 25 and 167 women with missing information on caste/tribe and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.

() Based on 25–49 unweighted cases

Three out of four women in Maharashtra accept at least one reason as justification for wife-beating, compared with 56 percent in India as a whole. Women are most likely to agree that wife-beating is justified if the wife neglects the house or children (66 percent), and least likely to agree that wife-beating is justified if her natal family does not give expected money or other items (7 percent). More than half of women say that the husband would be justified in beating her if a wife shows disrespect for in-laws or if a wife goes out without telling her husband (54 percent in each case). About one-half (48 percent) of women agree that wife-beating is justified if she does not cook food properly. About one-third (32 percent) of women say that a husband is justified in beating his wife if he suspects that the wife is unfaithful. As compared with women in India as a whole, a higher percentage of women in Maharashtra justify wife-beating for four of the six reasons, i.e., showing disrespect for in-laws, going out without telling her husband, neglecting the house or children, and not cooking food properly.

Table 3.9 indicates that the percentage justifying wife-beating for at least one reason declines from 82 percent among women age 15–19 to 68 percent among women age 40–49. The percentage justifying wife-beating for each specific reason also declines with age. There are no sharp differences, however, by marital duration in women's attitudes towards wife-beating. There are notable differences by place of residence in these attitudes. Not only do a higher proportion of rural women (81 percent) than urban women (65 percent) agree with at least one reason justifying wife-beating, rural women are also much more likely than urban women to agree with each specific reason. It is notable that although justification for wife-beating is less common in Mumbai (50 percent) than in other parts of Maharashtra, it is much more common in slum areas (62 percent) than in non-slum areas of Mumbai (34 percent), and the percentage justifying each specific reason is also much higher in slum areas than in non-slum areas. Agreement with at least one reason for wife-beating and with each specific reason declines sharply with education. Eighty-two percent of illiterate women agree with at least one reason justifying wife-beating, compared with 52 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 household standard of living increases. The biggest difference in the percentage who agree with at least one reason is between women from low or medium standard of living households (79–80 percent) and women from high standard of living households (58 percent). However, the expectation that women who work would be less likely than other women to justify wife-beating is not borne out. Women who have not worked in the past 12 months are less likely than women who have worked to justify wife-beating for each reason given in Table 3.9. The percentage of women who agree with at least one reason for justifying wife-beating is lower among woman who did not work during the past 12 months (70 percent) than among women who either worked for cash (74 percent) or those who worked but not for cash (83 percent). This finding can be partly explained by the fact that a majority of working women in Maharashtra are agricultural workers, who are likely to live in rural areas and to have relatively low educational attainment. Besides, non-working women are more likely to come from households with a high standard of living where, as discussed above, women are less likely to justify wife-beating. Overall, a majority of women in all groups, except non-slum women in Mumbai, agree with at least one reason for justifying wife-beating. This finding attests to the acceptance of unequal power relations between men and women by a majority of women and 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, 18 percent of women in Maharashtra have experienced violence since age 15 (slightly less than the national average of 21 percent), and 17 percent have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husbands. Two percent have been beaten by their in-laws and 2 percent by other persons. This implies that among women who were beaten, more than 9 out of 10 (92 percent) have been beaten by their husbands and 1 out of 9 have been beaten by their in-laws.

Women age 15–19 are less likely than older women to have been beaten or physically mistreated, but because of their young age they have had less time to be exposed to the risk of being beaten since age 15. For the same reason, women who have been married for less than five years are less likely to have been beaten (12 per cent) than women who have been married for 10 years or longer (19 percent). However, women who are not currently married are much more likely to have been beaten (28 percent) than currently married women (12–19 percent). Urban women (17 percent) are slightly less likely than rural women (19 percent) to experience violence. Relatively few women (10 percent) residing in Mumbai are likely to be beaten, however, women residing in slum areas (13 percent) are more than twice as likely to be beaten as women in non-slum areas (6 percent). Illiterate women (23 percent) are much more likely to have experienced violence since age 15 than women who have completed at least high school (9 percent). The prevalence of violence against women decreases substantially as the standard of living increases. Specifically, 22 percent of women from low standard of living households have experienced violence, compared with 19 per cent from medium and 11 percent from high standard of living households.

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, Maharashtra, 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	15.8	14.2	0.6	3.4	499
20–29	17.3	16.0	2.0	1.9	2,046
30–39	19.8	18.5	2.3	2.3	1,734
40–49	17.9	16.6	2.0	1.6	1,112
Marital duration (in years)					
< 5	11.9	9.6	0.7	3.9	994
5–9	17.1	16.2	1.0	1.9	920
10 or more	19.1	18.0	2.1	1.5	3,050
Not currently married	27.5	25.5	5.5	2.8	428
Residence					
Urban	16.9	15.1	2.2	2.9	2,229
Rural	18.9	17.9	1.8	1.6	3,162
Mumbai	9.9	8.3	0.6	1.8	682
Slum	13.0	11.1	0.8	2.3	397
Non-slum	5.7	4.4	0.5	1.2	285
Education					
Illiterate	22.7	21.8	2.2	1.3	2,405
Literate, < middle school complete	18.8	17.6	2.2	2.8	1,448
Middle school complete	13.2	11.0	1.6	2.6	582
High school complete and above	8.5	6.3	1.1	3.0	956
Religion					
Hindu	18.0	16.7	1.9	2.0	4,318
Muslim	16.8	15.2	1.9	2.2	531
Christian	18.9	13.2	3.8	5.7	71
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	22.3	21.5	2.9	3.0	368
Jain	10.8	10.8	0.0	0.0	68
Other	(17.9)	(17.0)	(0.0)	(0.9)	36
Caste/tribe					
Scheduled caste	24.6	23.2	2.9	2.9	728
Scheduled tribe	20.8	19.5	1.7	1.3	552
Other backward class	18.0	16.9	2.6	2.5	1,162
Other	16.0	14.5	1.5	2.0	2,923
Household type					
Nuclear household	20.0	18.5	2.3	2.4	2,540
Non-nuclear household	16.4	15.2	1.7	1.9	2,851
Cash employment					
Working for cash	25.0	23.5	3.2	2.6	1,937
Working but not for cash	16.0	15.2	2.2	0.7	1,066
Not worked in past 12 months	13.5	12.0	0.8	2.4	2,388

Contd...

Table 3.10 Women's experience with beatings or physical mistreatment (contd.)					
Percentage of ever-married women who have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husband, in-laws, or other persons since age 15, according to selected background characteristics, Maharashtra, 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	
Standard of living index					
Low	22.4	21.5	1.9	1.7	1,639
Medium	19.2	18.0	2.7	2.4	2,409
High	10.5	8.4	0.8	2.2	1,176
Living children					
No living children	15.9	12.3	2.2	5.3	590
Only daughters	17.3	16.1	1.2	2.5	688
Only sons	15.8	14.8	1.5	1.7	1,101
Both daughters and sons	19.6	18.5	2.3	1.6	3,012
Total	18.1	16.7	2.0	2.1	5,391
Note: Total includes 25 and 167 women with missing information on caste/tribe and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately. () Based on 25–49 unweighted cases					

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, especially those working for cash, 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 violence against women. In Maharashtra, however, domestic violence does not vary much by the number and sex of living children.

Differentials in the proportions of women who have been beaten or physically mistreated by their husbands according to various background characteristics are similar to differentials in the proportions of all women who have experienced domestic violence. This is not surprising since, as already noted, more than 90 percent of women who report beatings are 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. Nonetheless, it is notable that women who are not currently married (divorced, widowed, separated, or deserted) are more likely than currently married women to have been beaten by their in-laws.

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. Two out of five women who experienced violence since age 15 were beaten at least once during the 12 months preceding the survey and about 3 out of 10 (28 percent) were beaten more than once in this period. Among women who have been beaten or physically mistreated since age 15, younger women and women married less than five years are much more likely than other women to have been beaten 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, Maharashtra, 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		
Age						
15-19	20.9	38.5	19.9	20.6	100.0	79
20-29	10.4	21.9	16.1	51.6	100.0	354
30-39	6.7	16.1	10.1	67.1	100.0	344
40-49	9.1	9.7	4.4	76.8	100.0	199
Marital duration (in years)						
< 5	20.2	32.9	18.9	27.9	100.0	119
5-9	10.3	24.7	17.6	47.4	100.0	158
10 or more	8.1	17.5	10.0	64.4	100.0	582
Not currently married	5.7	2.6	6.5	85.1	100.0	118
Residence						
Urban	11.3	20.6	10.2	57.9	100.0	377
Rural	8.6	17.6	13.0	60.8	100.0	599
Mumbai	12.3	25.8	8.4	53.5	100.0	68
Education						
Illiterate	9.4	19.8	10.8	60.1	100.0	545
Literate, < middle school complete	8.4	19.3	12.9	59.4	100.0	272
Middle school complete	16.5	18.0	17.4	48.0	100.0	77
High school complete and above	9.2	10.8	10.8	69.2	100.0	81
Religion						
Hindu	9.5	17.9	12.1	60.6	100.0	777
Muslim	7.8	25.9	9.9	56.4	100.0	89
Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist	10.8	22.8	11.8	54.5	100.0	82
Caste/tribe						
Scheduled caste	9.7	24.5	13.1	52.7	100.0	179
Scheduled tribe	9.9	14.5	19.2	56.4	100.0	115
Other backward class	10.8	12.4	12.6	64.3	100.0	209
Other	9.2	20.6	9.1	61.0	100.0	468
Household type						
Nuclear household	8.9	17.3	9.3	64.5	100.0	507
Non-nuclear household	10.6	20.3	14.7	54.5	100.0	469
Cash employment						
Working for cash	10.3	16.4	11.7	61.6	100.0	483
Working but not for cash	6.0	17.5	16.9	59.7	100.0	170
Not worked in past 12 months	10.7	22.9	9.6	56.9	100.0	322
						Contd...

Table 3.11 Frequency of beatings or physical mistreatment (contd.)

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, Maharashtra, 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		
Standard of living index						
Low	10.7	17.9	13.0	58.3	100.0	368
Medium	10.1	19.6	12.8	57.5	100.0	462
High	6.6	14.3	7.2	71.9	100.0	123
Living children						
No living children	11.0	15.7	14.7	58.7	100.0	94
Only daughters	15.9	22.7	11.2	50.3	100.0	119
Only sons	7.2	21.2	17.3	54.3	100.0	174
Both daughters and sons	8.9	17.7	10.0	63.3	100.0	589
Total	9.7	18.7	11.9	59.7	100.0	976
Note: Total includes 13, 7, and 6 women belonging to Christian, Jain, and 'other' religions, respectively, and 5 and 23 women with missing information on caste/tribe and the standard of living index, respectively, who are not shown separately.						

Multiple beatings among ever-beaten women are also particularly high among younger women and women married less than five years, 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 Maharashtra: almost 1 in 5 ever-married women in Maharashtra have experienced domestic violence since age 15, and 1 in 14 have experienced domestic violence in the past 12 months.