



National Family Health Survey National-level Factsheet

October 2022

INTRODUCTION

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) factsheet provides a broad overview of the socio-economic conditions of women in India from 2015-16 to 2019-21. Their decision-making power, access to basic amenities, and their skewed responsibility for provision of resources in the household are highlighted. While, on the one hand, certain women are privileged enough to live independently, regressive social norms keep others tied inside their homes. These two categories of women can be seen as the two extremes of the spectrum across which lie various shades of women with varying degrees of agency and freedom.

The NFHS dataset is used as the instrument for understanding the women's conditions. The survey is conducted by the International Institute of Population Sciences (IIPS) to gauge fertility levels, maternal and child health, and mortality at the national and state levels. NFHS 5 was conducted in 2019-21 and includes new topics, such as preschool education, disability, access to a toilet facility, death registration, bathing practices during menstruation, and methods and reasons for abortion¹.

The factsheet is divided into six themes. The first one features the household profile. The quality of infrastructure, such as access to fuel, directly affects the workload of women. If a woman collects wood for cooking purposes, then the effort and time spent by the woman is much higher than that of a woman living in a household with liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) access². The second theme highlights access to education and media exposure of women. This is an important factor which unlocks a woman's future to its fullest potential. The third theme looks at reproductive and maternal health. The well-being of a female in a household is often neglected by other members. Several welfare programmes have been implemented to bring this aspect to the forefront. The next theme focuses on violence faced by women, and adds on to the previous section on well-being of women. Finally, the sixth and the last theme focuses on women's work outside the home. In a utopian situation, a woman whose well-being is ensured would have the ability and time to work outside. However, usually, women's engagements often remain distress driven — women end up managing both the house and work. Thus, women carry a double burden of both home and work outside and have little time for leisure and recuperation.

¹ International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF. 2021. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019-21: India. Mumbai: IIPS.

² HomeProduction, Technology and Women's Time Allocation in Rural India, November 2020, <https://iwwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Home-production-Technology-and-Womens-Time-Allocation-ed.pdf>

THEME 1

Household Profile



One of the most important necessities in a household is drinking water. Access to piped water remains a pipe dream for households in rural areas with access being available to only around 20 per cent; in comparison approximately 50 per cent in the urban areas have access. Given this disparity, the huge burden of fetching water from outside the house falls on adult women. Around 82 per cent of women fetched water from outside sources during the NFHS 4 round (2015-16); this number has reduced by around 9 percentage points to 73 per cent during the NFHS 5 round (2019-21). This shows that other household members are beginning to share the responsibility of fetching water.

Access to toilets has improved impressively in the rural areas, from 46 per cent during NFHS 4 to 74 per cent during NFHS 5. This is attributed to the Swachh Bharat Mission, started in 2014, which focuses on creating “open-defecation free” spaces. Currently, the mission’s second phase focuses on safe management of solid and liquid waste in villages³.

Similarly, access to clean forms of fuels has also improved in the rural areas. The disparity between rural and urban areas has decreased but not completely. Also, a scheme initiated by the Government of India called the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) in 2016 has improved access to LPG but actual usage remains limited⁴. Improving both access and usage of cleaner fuels will not only be environmentally more sustainable, but also reduce the time taken by the woman to finish household chores. Similarly, the disparity in access to electricity has been bridged to some extent with respect to rural and urban areas.

Table 1: Household profile

S.No	Indicators	NFHS-4			NFHS-5		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
A	Percentage of households having access to piped water ⁵	52.10	18.38	30.14	53.59	22.61	32.9
B	Percentage of household where adult women fetch water from water sources located outside their dwelling/plot	71.24	82.25	80.16	56.25	73.64	70.46
C	Percentage of households having access to toilet facilities	89.5	45.91	61.12	93.89	74.06	81.92
D	Percentage of households having access to improved fuel ⁶	80.59	24.02	43.75	89.65	43.21	58.62
E	Percentage of households having access to electricity	97.51	83.21	88.2	98.97	95.31	96.53



³ Swachh Bharat Mission <https://swachhbharatmission.gov.in/sbmcms/index.htm#:~:text=Under%20the%20mission%2C%20all%20villages,million%20toilets%20in%20rural%20India.>

⁴ HomeProduction, Technology and Women's Time Allocation in Rural India, November 2020, <https://iwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Home-production-Technology-and-Womens-Time-Allocation-ed.pdf>

⁵ This indicator includes the following sources of water: public tap, tube well, well, spring, river, rainwater, tanker truck, cart with small tank, bottled water and others.

⁶ Improved fuel includes LPG, natural gas and bio-gas.

THEME 2

Education and exposure to media for women



Access to education is one of the most important factors in empowering women. It can improve their socio-economic conditions by providing them agency over their lives. The percentage of women that have received any schooling has increased over the last five years. In 2019-20, 77.57 per cent of women had received some form of education nationally. However, the school drop-out rate – due to responsibility of household activities, taking care of siblings, and marriage – has increased from 19.95 to 34 per cent nationally. This shows that marriage and household chores are a huge part of regressive social norms which impede women's access to education and attainment of fundamental rights.. Women's exposure to media in the form of newspapers, radio, magazines and television has reduced slightly perhaps due to the rising prevalence of social media as an alternative form of mass communication.

Table 2: Education and exposure to media for women

S.No	Indicators	NFHS-4			NFHS-5		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
A	Percentage of women that has received any education	84.45	66.23	72.54	87.4	72.83	77.57
B	Percentage of women that dropped out or are not attending school due to household work or marriage	17.75	20.58	19.95	30.77	35.22	34
C	Percentage of female children currently attending pre-school	-	-	-	45.07	39.34	40.87
D	Percentage of women that read newspapers or magazines, listen to radio or watch television	94.59	73.97	81.11	91.17	70.97	77.3

THEME 3

Reproductive and maternal health and related issues



The percentage of women that is unhappy with the current pregnancy is around 11-12 per cent in both time periods. The percentage of abortions performed by skilled health personnel was quite high at 72 per cent in 2015-16; this number decreased slightly to 71 per cent in 2019-21. A large percentage of women are still excluded from receiving financial assistance for delivery care, supplementary nutrition, health check-ups, health and nutrition education during pregnancies. Around 36 per cent of women has never heard about family planning on media (radio, television, newspaper, etc.).



Table 3: Reproductive and Maternal Health and related issues

S.No	Indicators	NFHS-4			NFHS-5		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
A	Percentage of women that wanted the current pregnancy	90.25	87.3	88.14	90.73	88.88	89.46
B	Percentage of women going through abortion performed by skilled health personnel ⁷	76.92	69.7	72.66	75.57	68.42	71.08
C	Percentage of women that did not receive any financial assistance for delivery care in any of the pregnancies	73.70	51.43	58.8	73.43	53.71	59.55
D	Percentage of women that received supplementary nutrition, health check-ups, health and nutrition education from Anganwadi/ Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres during pregnancies	39.36	62.71	55.77	56.97	77.92	71.92
E	Percentage of women that heard and read about family planning on radio, television, newspaper, magazine, wall painting, hoarding, or the internet	78.92	55.73	63.76	76.32	58.75	64.46

THEME 4

Different forms of violence and discrimination faced by women and awareness about their rights



The questions on which the indicators in Table 4 are based draw from the current state of regressive social norms that restrict women's freedom and hamper their physical, emotional and mental well-being. Thus, it is expected that these numbers might be underestimated. Approximately 94 per cent of women in urban areas has access to the same bathroom as others when they are menstruating, and the number is slightly higher for women in rural areas at 96 per cent. The percentage of women that can refuse sexual intercourse with their husbands when they don't desire it has increased from NFHS 4 to NFHS 5 by 10 percentage points in both rural and urban areas. This might imply that the agency of women is improving. However, the number of women who think it is okay to be beaten by their husbands stands at around 40 per cent, showing a slight decline over time.

The various forms of emotional, sexual and physical violence that has been reported by the women stands at 14 per cent, 6 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, at the national level during 2019-20.



⁷ Skilled personnel includes doctor, nurse, homeopath.

Table 4: Different forms of violence and discrimination

S.No	Indicators	NFHS-4			NFHS-5		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
A	Percentage of women that take bath in the same bathroom during their menstrual period as other household members	-	-	-	93.99	96.11	94.71
B	Percentage of women that can refuse sexual intercourse to their husband if they do not want it	74.56	73.74	74.03	84.81	81.39	82.45
C	Percentage of women that think that husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife in some situations, for example, being unfaithful, etc.	39.77	47.35	44.63	33.58	40.40	38.20
D	Percentage of women facing interference in their freedom from their spouse in interacting with other men/women friends/family	43.99	53.53	50.23	39.55	49	46.09
E	Percentage of married women facing emotional abuse from their husbands	11.98	14.82	13.84	12.13	14.88	14.03
F	Percentage of women facing sexual violence from their spouses	5.22	7.88	6.96	4.7	6.73	6.10
G	Percentage of married women suffering from injuries due to physical violence from their spouse	5.95	8.5	7.61	5.89	7.84	7.24

The questions on which the indicators in Table 4 are based draw from the current state of regressive social norms that restrict women's freedom and hamper their physical, emotional and mental well-being. Thus, it is expected that these numbers might be underestimated. Approximately 94 per cent of women in urban areas has access to the same bathroom as others when they are menstruating, and the number is slightly higher for women in rural areas at 96 per cent. The percentage of women that can refuse sexual intercourse with their husbands when they don't desire it has increased from NFHS 4 to NFHS 5 by 10 percentage points in both rural and urban areas. This might imply that the agency of women is improving. However, the number of women who think it is okay to be beaten by their husbands stands at around 40 per cent, showing a slight decline over time.

The various forms of emotional, sexual and physical violence that has been reported by the women stands at 14 per cent, 6 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, at the national level during 2019-20.



3 Swachh Bharat Mission <https://swachhbharatmission.gov.in/sbmcms/index.htm#:~:text=Under%20the%20mission%2C%20all%20villages,million%20toilets%20in%20rural%20India.>

4 HomeProduction, Technology and Women's Time Allocation in Rural India, November 2020, <https://iwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Home-production-Technology-and-Womens-Time-Allocation-ed.pdf>

5 This indicator includes the following sources of water: public tap, tube well, well, spring, river, rainwater, tanker truck, cart with small tank, bottled water and others.

6 Improved fuel includes LPG, natural gas and bio-gas.

THEME 5

Decision on how to spend money and asset holding



Conventionally, it has been a man's role to decide how to manage the household finances. The decision-making power of a woman declines by around 40 percentage points when the money is not her own. Decision making has been defined here in the most inclusive way. In this definition, women can either be the sole deciders or jointly decide with their husband. In this scenario, 85 per cent of women decide on how to spend their own money in NFHS 5, and 76 per cent of women decide how to spend their husband's money nationally. The situation becomes grim when women alone decide. In NFHS 5, 51 per cent of women decided how to use the money (either earned or given by the household). This decision-making power is lower in rural areas by around 10 percentage points across both rounds.

Despite changes in land ownership rights in favour of women through amendments in the Hindu Succession Act, the percentage of women owning agricultural land or their house remains abysmally low, ranging from 10.27 per cent to 19.87 per cent across both rounds. However, the accuracy of estimates of land ownership using national surveys is contested⁸.

Table 5: Decision on how to spend money and asset holding

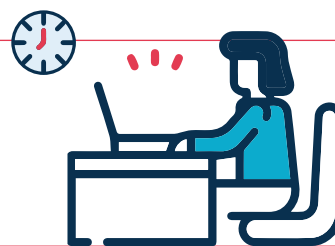
S.No	Indicators	NFHS-4			NFHS-5		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
A	Percentage of women that decide how the money they earn will be used (either alone or jointly with husband)	85.82	80.36	82.06	89.06	83.43	85.09
B	Percentage of women that decide how their husband's earnings will be used (either alone or jointly with husband)	71.52	68.80	69.74	78.24	75.38	76.26
C	Percentage of women that have some money of their own and they alone decide how to use	48.40	37.82	41.66	56.80	48.55	51.21
D	Percentage of households where female members own any agricultural land	12.77	10.27	10.57	12.6	11.45	11.57
E	Percentage of households where female members own the house	19.64	13.4	15.37	19.87	15.03	16.47



⁸ Agarwal, B., Anthwal, R. and Malvika, M. 2020. Which women own land in India? Between divergent data sets, measures and laws. GDI Working Paper 2020-043. Manchester: The University of Manchester <http://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/institutes/gdi/publications/workingpapers/GDI/gdi-working-paper-202043-agarwal-anthwal-mahesh.pdf>

THEME 6

Women's work and access to banks



The female labour force participation rate has always been low in India and is declining as compared to the rest of the world. Participation rates in the rural areas are a few percentage points higher than urban areas across both rounds. This might be due to rural women's participation in agriculture on land owned by their households. Women in urban areas are paid more by around 10 percentage points in both rounds. Around 10 per cent of the working women are self-employed. The number has increased by 1 percentage point in both urban and rural areas from NFHS 4 to NFHS 5. The percentage of women having bank accounts has improved significantly between 2015-16 and 2019-21.

Table 6: Women's work and access to banks

S.No	Indicators	NFHS-4			NFHS-5		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
A	Percentage of women that has done any work in the past 12 months	21.28	25.51	23.99	23.69	25.96	25.23
B	Percentage of working women that ia paid in cash, kind or both	95.35	82.08	86.27	94.13	83.67	86.84
C	Percentage of women that is self-employed	13.46	9.31	10.53	14.60	10.15	11.42
D	Percentage of women that has bank accounts	60.95	48.52	52.99	80.93	77.43	78.56

The NFHS data provide a wealth of information. The numbers show that several indicators representing the socio-economic conditions faced by women have improved over the past five years. While it is relatively easy for policies to address infrastructural problems and economic conditions, normative and behavioural changes take a longer time to take root. This is reflected in the fact that access to toilets, electricity, clean fuel, and use of bank accounts has improved immensely, but indicators on decision-making and violence seem mostly stagnant and incidents have increased slightly. In addition to information provided in the factsheet, NFHS data contain anthropometric data, geo-spatial details and information related to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). However, one needs to be aware about the problems mentioned earlier, especially relating to the data on domestic violence, and exercise caution while using the information.



This factsheet has been prepared by Aparna G. and Bidisha Mondal, and reviewed by Sona Mitra, IWWAGE – LEAD at Krea University. Copyright @2022

This document is for private circulation and is not a priced publication. Published in September 2022. Reproduction of this publication for educational and other non-commercial purposes is authorised, without prior written permission, provided the source is fully acknowledged. For further information, please write to info@iwwage.org.

This factsheet was developed with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions in this factsheet are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

IWWAGE is an initiative of LEAD, an action-oriented research centre of IFMR Society (a not-for-profit society registered under the Societies Act). LEAD has strategic oversight and brand support from Krea University (sponsored by IFMR Society) to enable synergies between academia and the research centre.



IWWAGE

M-6, 2nd Floor, Hauz Khas, New Delhi – 110 016
Phone.: +91 11 4909 6529



www.iwwage.org