



Measuring the change

- The fifth edition of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) provides a valuable insight into changes underway in Indian society. It throws light on traditional parameters, for instance, immunisation

EXCERPTS FROM NFHS SURVEY		
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT (WOMEN AGE 15-49 YEARS)		
	2020-21	2015-16
Participation of married women in household decisions	92%	73.8%
Women who worked in last 12 months and paid in cash	24.9%	21.1%
Women owning a house and/or land (alone or jointly)	22.7%	34.9%
Women having a bank or savings account that they use	72.5%	64.5%
Women having a mobile phone that they themselves use	73.8%	66.6%
NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF ADULTS (AGE 15-49 YEARS)		
	2020-21	2015-16
Women whose Body Mass Index (BMI) is below normal	10%	14.9%
Men whose Body Mass Index (BMI) is below normal	9.1%	17.7%
Women who are overweight or obese	41.3%	33.5%
Men who are overweight or obese	38%	24.6%
Average out-of-pocket expenditure per delivery in a public health facility (in Rs)	2,548	8,518
Women who have ever used the internet	63.8%	NA
Men who have ever used the internet	85.2%	NA
Households with any usual member covered under a health insurance/financing scheme	25%	15.7%

among children, births in registered hospital facilities, and nutritional levels.

- While there is a general improvement in these parameters, there were mixed signals in nutrition. Gains in childhood nutrition were minimal as were improvements in obesity levels.
- The prevalence of anaemia has actually worsened since the last survey in 2015-16.

Insight into the behavioural and sociological churn:

- The focus is on India's declining total fertility rate that had, for the first time in the country's history, dipped to below the replacement level, or a TFR (Total Fertility Rate) of 2.1.
- If the trend were to persist, India's population was on the decline in line with what has been observed in developed countries, and theoretically means improved living standards per capita and greater gender equity.

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3. Because this TFR had been achieved across most States, two notable exceptions being most populous Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, it was also evidence that population decline could be achieved without coercive state policies and family planning has struck deep roots.

Gender Questions:

1. Another set of subjective questions that the NFHS attempts to answer using hard data is gender equity. Less than a third of married women are working and nearly 44% do not have the freedom to go to the market alone.
2. However, a little over 80% have said that they can refuse demands for sex from their husband. This has implications for legal questions surrounding marital rape.
3. Only 72% of Indian men think it is not right to coerce, threaten or use force on a woman if denied sex, which again points to the vast territory that needs to be covered in educating men about equality, choice and freedom in marriage.

Multiple surveys such as the NFHS, Sample Registration Surveys, the Census, labour, economic surveys and ways of interrogation are necessary for insights into a country as vast and complex as India; the Centre should invest more substantially in improving their reliability.