

Chapter III

Socio - Economic Characteristics of Women Respondents and Households

This chapter presents the socio-economic characteristics of the surveyed households and women respondents of the study. A comparison of the data from the earlier survey wherever relevant has been simultaneously provided. It can be seen that while certain characteristics have witnessed considerable changes across categories of households, little variation is observed over the decades in some others. Similarly, there are certain variables wherein caste- class factors have had considerable impact on them and vice-versa.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Since the criteria of selection of women respondents in the two surveys are different, the age distribution of respondents in the present survey shows concentration of younger respondents. (see Table 3.1.1 and 3.1.2). Respondents below age of 50 years consist of nearly four-fifth of total respondents in present survey, in comparison to little more than half in the previous survey. The reason is that in the previous survey, two interview schedules were used separately for ever-married and older women to give equal emphasis to relatively aged women. In the present survey the selection of the respondents has been random from ever-married and any age-groups.

Table 3.1.1: Agewise distribution of respondent across district, 1999

District	Age (in years)		Total
	15-49	50 & above	
Gaya	76.47	23.53	100.00
Gopalganj	67.11	32.89	100.00
Madhubani	83.70	16.30	100.00
Nalanda	67.68	32.32	100.00
Purnia	82.61	17.39	100.00
Rohtas	78.90	21.10	100.00
Total	78.41	21.59	100.00

Table 3.1.2: Agewise distribution of respondent across district, 1982

District	Age (in years)		Total
	15-49 years	50 & above	
Gaya	51.32	48.68	100.00
Gopalganj	48.28	51.72	100.00
Madhubani	57.52	42.48	100.00
Nalanda	53.41	46.59	100.00
Purnea	60.00	40.00	100.00
Rohtas	56.00	44.00	100.00
Total	55.44	44.56	100.00

For our analysis in the later chapters, we have mainly relied on ever-married women schedules for comparing with the present survey. This limitation of comparison of old data need to be kept in mind in drawing generalisations.

Table 3.2.1 present average age at marriage and age at co-habitation of both the surveys. It is distressing to find that in the span of almost two decades between the surveys, there is only marginal rise in average age at marriage and age at co-habitation. It clearly reflects the lack of improvement in the status of women. Average age at marriage in the present survey is 13.19 years which is way below the legal age of marriage of a girl child. Even age at co-habitation is also very low at 15.61 years. Age at marriage in poorer north Bihar district of Gopalganj and Purnea is relatively higher. But Gopalganj is surprisingly the only district showing fall in both age at marriage and age at co-habitation since last survey. Castewise expectedly, age at marriage is highest among Brahmin women and lowest for S.C. women. But in the earlier survey, age at marriage of Yadav women was the lowest. Across the class categories not much variation is observed. Women belonging to the class of landlords and big peasants continue to get married at relatively higher age as before.

Table 3.2.1: Average age at Current marriage & co- habitation, 1999

District	Age at current marriage	Age at co-habitation
	Mean	Mean
Gaya	13.34	15.90
Gopalganj	14.25	16.00
Madhubani	12.52	15.05
Nalanda	12.27	15.54
Purnia	14.12	15.88
Rohtas	12.79	15.83
Caste		
Brahmin	14.04	15.73
Bhumihar	13.17	15.77
Backward I	12.91	15.68
Yadav	12.64	15.73
Koiri	12.24	15.90
Kurmi	13.88	16.04
OBC II	13.69	16.15
SC	12.15	15.14
Muslim	14.45	15.37
Class		
ALNF	12.79	15.37
ALNA	12.67	15.93
ALLF	12.73	15.46
ALLA	12.12	15.12
POORMIDP	12.86	16.24
MIDP	13.00	16.01
BIGP	13.68	15.73
LANDLD	13.84	15.85
NONAG	13.38	15.50
Total	13.19	15.61

Table 3.3.1 presents marital status of ever-married women. It is related to women respondents in the age-group 15-49 years. In the present survey, proportion of married women- staying with husbands- is higher than that in the earlier survey. So also, married women (currently not staying with husbands) are relatively less than in the earlier survey. This is despite the fact that over the years there has been phenomenal increase in the rural-urban out-migration intensity in the state¹. However, it can be seen that the proportion of married women staying with their husband is comparatively higher in the high long term migration intensity districts such as Madhubani, Rohtas, and Gopalganj. In other districts, particularly in Gaya and Purnea, because of high intensity of short term migration the proportion of women not staying with husband is higher.

¹ For details about the nature and pattern of out-migration from these selected districts see, Sharma et al. 1999.

Table 3.2.2: Average Age at Current Marriage & Co-habitation, 1982

District	Age at Current Marriage	Age at Co-habitation
	Mean	Mean
Gaya	13.02	15.87
Gopalganj	15.50	16.40
Madhubani	11.72	14.56
Nalanda	12.11	15.55
Purnea	12.72	14.80
Rohtas	12.34	14.86
Class		
ALNF	12.55	15.27
ALNA	11.81	14.50
ALLF	12.96	15.83
ALLA	11.91	14.53
PMP	12.31	14.60
MP	11.07	14.57
BP	13.10	15.28
Landlord	13.22	15.41
NAG	12.46	14.74
Caste		
Brahmin	13.89	15.49
Bhumihar	13.40	15.42
Backwrdr I	11.36	14.87
Yadav	10.75	13.79
Koiri	14.00	15.95
Kurmi	13.00	15.83
OBC II	12.61	14.97
S.C.	12.23	15.19
Muslim	12.89	14.80
Total	12.62	15.14

Table 3.3.1: Percentage Distribution of Marital status within each district & Caste, 1999

District	Marital Status				
	Married (Staying with husband)	Married (Not staying with husband)	Separated/ Divorced	Widowed	Total
Gaya	74.36	21.79	1.28	2.56	100.00
Gopalganj	78.00	18.00		4.00	100.00
Madhubani	90.43	4.26		5.32	100.00
Nalanda	94.03	1.49		4.48	100.00
Purnia	74.69	19.14	1.85	4.32	100.00
Rohtas	84.88	9.30		5.81	100.00
Caste					
Brahmin	84.62	12.82	0.85	1.71	100.00
Bhumihar	79.03	12.90		8.06	100.00
Backward I	80.18	14.41		5.41	100.00
Yadav	73.68	21.05		5.26	100.00
Koiri	86.96	4.35	2.17	6.52	100.00
Kurmi	88.89	11.11			100.00
OBC II	66.67	27.45		5.88	100.00
SC	88.19	6.25	0.69	4.86	100.00
Muslim	88.89	6.35	1.59	3.17	100.00
Total	83.04	11.73	0.63	4.60	100.00

Table 3.3.2: Percentage Distribution of Marital status within each district & Caste, 1982

Caste	Marital Status				Total
	Married, Husband Present	Married Husband Away	Separated/ Divorced	Widowed	
District					
Gaya	71.70	26.42	0	1.89	100.00
Gopalganj	76.19	19.05	0	4.76	100.00
Madhubani	72.65	21.37	2.56	3.42	100.00
Nalanda	89.29	8.93	0	1.79	100.00
Purnea	78.26	15.22	4.35	2.17	100.00
Rohtas	92.86	7.14	0		100.00
Caste			0		
Brahmin	76.19	22.22	0	1.59	100.00
Bhumihar	60.00	35.56	2.22	2.22	100.00
Backwrđ I	86.96	10.14	2.9		100.00
Yadav	75.00	12.50	8.34	4.17	100.00
Koiri	90.91	9.09	0		100.00
Kurmi	83.33	11.11	0	5.56	100.00
OBC II	72.22	25.00	0	2.78	100.00
S.C.	86.17	9.57	0	4.26	100.00
Muslim	75.00	18.18	4.55	2.27	100.00
Total	79.09	16.83	1.68	2.40	100.00

The variation of the proportion of women staying with husband shows that the proportion is higher among lower castes and Muslims.

An overwhelming proportion of respondents in both surveys is reported to be wives of the head of the household. But the proportion of respondents reporting as head of the family is lower in present survey and the proportion of respondents having distant relation with head of the households have fallen substantially reflecting breakdown of extended family.

Table 3.4.1: Relation with Head of Household, 1999

Relation	No	Percent
Head	51	6.22
Wife	679	82.80
Daughter	4	0.49
Daughter in law	59	7.20
Sister in law	6	0.73
Cousin s wife	1	0.12
Other	20	2.44
Total	820	100.00

Table 3.4.2: Relation with Head of Household, 1982

Relation	Percent
Head	9.36
Wife	71.38
Daughter	0.92
Daughter in law	6.61
Sister in law	1.10
Cousin	0.18
Other	10.46
Total	100.00

Effective literacy level (ability to read and write) shows an increase of nearly fifty per cent in the span of nearly two decades from a low level of 14 per cent. Still, at present little more than one-fifth of respondents is found to be effectively literate. District-wise literacy rate shows substantial increase in literacy rate in two south Bihar districts of Rohtas and Gaya. But Purnea, highest literate district in the earlier survey did not show substantial rise in literacy rate. Among the various caste groups Kurmi- a backward caste show highest literacy rate as in 1981 survey and in the present survey too, they maintain a large gap with other caste groups who lag behind in literacy. Yadav caste also shows substantial rise in literacy rate between the intermittent periods. On the other hand, caste groups that come under the category of SC and Backward Caste I continue to languish in literacy level and thus restricting upward mobility of these caste groups. These caste barriers to literacy and elementary education exemplified here demands concerted efforts with cultural sensitivity and addressing the special needs of the communities.

Across the class categories, it can be seen that those respondents from the category of `agricultural labour households- attached' continue to be illiterates. At the same time, considerable improvement in the literacy levels of those who belong to the class of poor peasants to big peasants can be observed. However, respondents from landlord class shows fall in literacy as a consequence of swelling of households owning small land but not cultivating.

Table 3.5.1: Effective literacy of Respondents, 1999

District	Literate	Illiterate	Total
Gaya	28.43	71.57	100.00
Gopalganj	17.11	82.89	100.00
Madhubani	17.62	82.38	100.00
Nalanda	21.43	78.57	100.00
Purnia	24.15	75.85	100.00
Rohtas	21.30	78.70	100.00
Caste			
Brahmin	34.39	65.61	100.00
Bhumihar	34.88	65.12	100.00
Backward I	11.43	88.57	100.00
Yadav	28.57	71.43	100.00
Koiri	9.80	90.20	100.00
Kurmi	56.00	44.00	100.00
OBC II	26.15	73.85	100.00
SC	5.00	95.00	100.00
Muslim	26.74	73.26	100.00
Class			
ALNF	8.98	91.02	100.00
ALNA		100.00	100.00
ALLF	10.53	89.47	100.00
ALLA	7.69	92.31	100.00
POORMIDP	28.57	71.43	100.00
MIDP	16.36	83.64	100.00
BIGP	34.97	65.03	100.00
LANDLD	42.11	57.89	100.00
NONAG	19.20	80.80	100.00
Total	21.52	78.48	100.00

Household Characteristics

Having discussed the profile of the respondents, this section presents some of the basic characteristics of the surveyed households. The main characteristics discussed in this section are caste and class status of the households, demographic features, literacy and asset holdings etc.

Table 3.5.2: Effective Literacy of Respondents, 1982

District	Illiterate	Literate	Total
Gaya	84.91	15.09	100.00
Gopalganj	85.71	14.29	100.00
Madhubani	87.18	12.82	100.00
Nalanda	80.36	19.64	100.00
Purnea	82.61	17.39	100.00
Rohtas	91.07	8.93	100.00
Class			
ALNF	100.00		100.00
ALNA	100.00		100.00
ALLF	94.34	5.66	100.00
ALLA	100.00		100.00
PMP	91.43	8.57	100.00
MP	96.43	3.57	100.00
BP	70.45	29.55	100.00
Landlord	57.63	42.37	100.00
NAG	89.29	10.71	100.00
Caste			
Brahmin	65.08	34.92	100.00
Bhumihar	68.89	31.11	100.00
Backwrd I	100.00		100.00
Yadav	95.83	4.17	100.00
Koiri	90.91	9.09	100.00
Kurmi	61.11	38.89	100.00
OBC II	80.56	19.44	100.00
S.C.	98.94	1.06	100.00
Muslim	84.09	15.91	100.00
Total	85.34	14.66	100.00

Caste-Class Status of Households

Many scholars have exemplified the caste-class nexus in Bihar. (Sharma et al. 1999, Rodgers 1999). In the sample villages too, this nexus is evident in that the districts with a higher proportion of lower castes have a higher proportion of agricultural labour. For instance, the districts of Rohtas and Nalanda have a higher proportion of households in the Scheduled castes² and a higher proportion of agricultural labour. However, between the surveys, the phenomenal fall in the proportion of attached labour class in the districts of Madhubani and Nalanda is noticeable.

² This is also revealed in Raju et al's (1999) Atlas, where in using Census data 1991, they found that Nalanda and Rohtas have a high percentage of population in the Scheduled Caste category - 36.8per cent and 35.6per cent respectively.

Similarly, the districts with a higher proportion of lower caste Muslims have a higher concentration of non-agricultural household especially artisan-based work. In contrast, the districts of Rohtas and Nalanda have the highest proportion of agricultural labour and low concentration of women belonging to non-agricultural households. This reflects the economy of the district as well as its well-defined class structure across the caste categories (Table 3.6.1 and Table 3.6.2).

Table 3.6.1: District wise distribution of households across class, 1999

District	Class									
	ALNF	ALNA	ALLF	ALLA	POORMIDP	MIDP	BIGP	LANDLD	NONAG	TOTAL
GAYA	17.65	0.98	6.86	0.98	1.96	9.80	24.51	24.51	12.75	100.00
GOPALGANJ	5.26	1.32	27.63	7.89	5.26	6.58	26.32	18.42	1.32	100.00
MADHUBANI	16.74	1.32	11.01	3.52	2.20	6.61	11.45	20.70	26.43	100.00
NALANDA	34.34	6.06	13.13	3.03	4.04	10.10	10.10	11.11	8.08	100.00
PURNIA	23.67	0.48	17.39	1.93	2.42	4.83	19.81	11.59	17.87	100.00
ROHTAS	22.02	2.75	28.44	2.75	0.92	4.59	22.02	11.01	5.50	100.00
Total	20.37	1.83	16.22	3.05	2.56	6.71	17.80	16.22	15.24	100.00

Table 3.6.2: District wise distribution of households across class in first survey, 1982

District	Class									
	ALNF	ALNA	ALLF	ALLA	POORMIDP	MIDP	BIGP	LANDLD	NONAG	TOTAL
Gaya	18.42		6.58	3.95	10.53	7.89	27.63	14.47	10.53	100.00
Gopalganj	8.62		13.79	15.52	17.24	8.62	25.86	6.90	3.45	100.00
Madhubani	16.34	7.19	13.07	5.88	7.19	7.84	14.38	19.61	8.50	100.00
Nalanda	17.24	2.30	13.79	14.94	3.45	9.20	19.54	11.49	8.05	100.00
Purnea	20.83	5.00	12.50	3.33	5.83	0.83	21.67	22.50	7.50	100.00
Rohtas	18.67		13.33	13.33	14.67	2.67	20.00	8.00	9.33	100.00
Total	17.22	3.34	12.30	8.44	8.79	5.98	20.39	15.47	8.08	100.00

The caste- class relationship of the sample households is more clearly presented in table 3.7.1 and table 3.7.2. The relationship has been analysed here in terms of both: the concentration of different castes in class (Table 3.7.1) and proportion of different castes in different class categories (Table 3.7.2).

Table 3.7.1: Percentage Distribution of Households From Different Class Group by Caste, 1999

Caste	Class of HH									Total
	ALNF	ALNA	ALLF	ALLA	POORMIDP	MIDP	BIGP	LANDLD	NONAG	
Upper caste1	2.66		2.86		11.54	3.51	42.58	37.84	22.39	18.63
Upper caste2	0.53		0.71		3.85		28.39	23.65	4.48	9.88
Kurmi	1.60		1.43			12.28	4.52	4.73	1.49	3.14
Yadav	2.66		8.57	11.11	11.54	29.82	4.52	1.35	2.24	5.84
Koeri	1.06		7.86		7.69	5.26	0.65	6.76	0.75	3.37
Other OBC II	4.26		8.57	14.81	7.69	12.28	5.81	7.43	14.18	8.08
OBC I	25.00	18.75	19.29	29.63	30.77	15.79	3.23	9.46	25.37	17.40
SC	46.81	81.25	37.86	40.74	19.23	10.53	1.94	1.35	12.69	22.22
ST	1.06						0.65			0.34
Moslem (upper)	4.79		3.57		3.85	1.75	2.58	2.03	3.73	3.14
Moslem (lower)	9.57		9.29	3.70	3.85	8.77	5.16	5.41	12.69	7.97
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Upper caste1 = (Brahmin + Kayastha); Upper caste2 = (Bhumihar + Rajput)

Table 3.7.2: Percentage Distribution of Households From Different Caste Groups by Class, 1999

Caste	Class of HH									Total
	ALNF	ALNA	ALLF	ALLA	POORMIDP	MIDP	BIGP	LANDLD	NONAG	
Upper caste1	3.01		2.41		1.81	1.20	39.76	33.73	18.07	100.00
Upper caste2	1.14		1.14		1.14		50.00	39.77	6.82	100.00
Kurmi	30.32	1.94	17.42	5.16	5.16	5.81	3.23	9.03	21.94	100.00
Yadav	10.71		7.14			25.00	25.00	25.00	7.14	100.00
Koeri	9.62		23.08	5.77	5.77	32.69	13.46	3.85	5.77	100.00
Other OBC II	6.67		36.67		6.67	10.00	3.33	33.33	3.33	100.00
OBC I	11.11		16.67	5.56	2.78	9.72	12.50	15.28	26.39	100.00
SC	44.44	6.57	26.77	5.56	2.53	3.03	1.52	1.01	8.59	100.00
ST	66.67						33.33			100.00
Moslem (upper)	32.14		17.86		3.57	3.57	14.29	10.71	17.86	100.00
Moslem (lower)	25.35		18.31	1.41	1.41	7.04	11.27	11.27	23.94	100.00
Total	21.10	1.80	15.71	3.03	2.92	6.40	17.40	16.61	15.04	100.00

Upper caste1 = (Brahmin + Kayastha); Upper caste2 = (Bhumihar + Rajput)

It is evident from the table 3.7.1 and table 3.7.2 that there is strong linear relationship between the caste and class status of the households. The agriculture labour class (AL) is mainly constituted by the lower castes such as SC, OBC I, and other OBC II, while the class of Landlord (LANDLD) and Big Peasant (BP) are constituted mainly by Upper Castes. Accordingly, the middle castes Kurmi, Yadav, Koeri mainly form the middle class category of Middle Peasant (MIDP).

Household Characteristics

This section discusses the household size and structure across districts along with more detailed analysis of class and migration status. The household size shows quite a variation across district without any definite pattern. Female-headed households are in larger proportion in two undeveloped districts of North Bihar- Purnea and Madhubani. However, across different classes the land-owning classes of middle peasants, big peasants and landlord classes show a large family size- large number of men and lesser proportion of children than the average of all classes. Conversely, non-cultivating agricultural labourer family, both attached and casual, show smaller family size with larger proportion of children and lower age groups for head of the household reflecting that due to their lower possession of property they are more prone to nuclear family structure. Similar characteristics can be observed for non-agricultural households. But non-cultivating casual wage labourers and non-agriculturist classes exhibit much higher proportion of households with female heads reflecting their precarious economic position as well.

By out-migration status, it can be seen that families with out-migrants have larger family size, much larger number of men, higher proportion of children and higher age of head of households than non-migrant family. It shows that families with larger family size and larger number of adult males are in better position to out-migrate. The average size of the households ranges between 6 and 7 with 2-3 adult males and 1-2 adult females per family. The consequence of having fewer women per family becomes obvious when sex ratio is calculated. The sex ratio is unfavourable to women and stands at about 900 females per thousand of males. Table 4.4 also reveals that there is a burgeoning young population with 40 per cent of the population in the sampled households and villages being children. The average age of the head of the household is about 46 years and most of them are expectedly males. However, interestingly 4 per cent of the households reported themselves to be women headed households.

During the PRA exercises, women from lower castes and class groups were asked to prepare a food calendar and during the discussions that followed, women shared the every day discriminations that they face. Across the districts, women revealed that during the lean season, women are the first to sacrifice their share of food, less likely to be treated when ill and more likely to suffer physical violence at the hands of their own men folk. The

lower overall sex ratio is a manifestation of this phenomenon where women eat less and sometimes even starve. However, it would be reductionism to say that this alone is responsible for the lower female presence in the sample population.

For a comparative understanding, a detailed table is given below. (Table 3.8.1 and Table 3.8.2):

Table 3.8.1: Household Size and Structure by District, Detailed Class and Migration Status, 1999

	Av. HH. Size	Av. No. of Men	Av. No. of Women	% Children in HH.	Av. Age of Head	Prop. Of Female headed HH.	No. of HH.
<i>District</i>							
Gaya	7.02	2.29	1.94	39.82	50.62	0.01	479
Gopalganj	7.38	2.52	2.12	37.12	48.40	0.02	254
Madhubani	5.62	1.70	1.60	41.34	42.90	0.07	1187
Nalanda	6.23	1.99	1.86	38.19	44.63	0.02	392
Purnea	5.06	1.53	1.36	42.84	42.09	0.05	1179
Rohtas	7.11	2.20	2.05	40.26	47.76	0.02	415
<i>Class</i>							
ALLF	6.25	1.91	1.73	41.69	45.38	0.03	851
ALNF	5.01	1.40	1.34	45.27	40.07	0.07	1170
ALLA	6.18	1.81	1.70	43.18	42.92	0.01	184
ALNA	5.39	1.41	1.46	46.75	39.39	0.03	94
PMP	5.99	2.11	1.74	35.84	45.79	0.02	102
MP	6.72	2.17	1.96	38.59	51.18	0.01	238
BP	7.10	2.46	2.09	35.80	48.74	0.01	655
LANDLD	6.48	2.24	1.97	35.11	49.22	0.08	341
NAG	5.08	1.51	1.37	43.21	43.27	0.08	271
<i>Out-Migration for Work</i>							
No	5.47	1.62	1.53	42.38	43.95	0.05	2518
Yes	6.83	2.28	1.94	38.25	45.91	0.03	1388
All	5.96	1.86	1.68	40.70	44.65	0.04	3906

In the earlier survey, households with migrants showed a deficit of men, a higher percentage of children. The reason given for deficit of men was due to migration -- out-migrants were not counted as household members. Whereas in the present survey, household with migrants show a surplus of men but with higher proportion of children and a relatively older household head.

Table 3.8.2: Household Size and Structure by District, Detailed Class and Migration Status, 1982

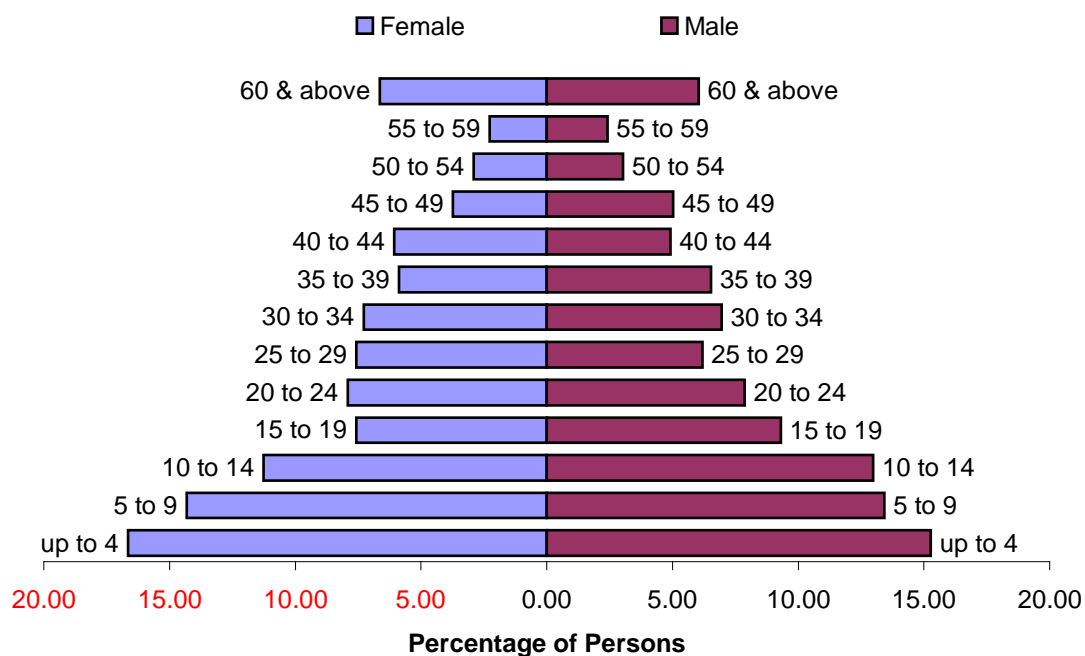
	Av. HH. Size	Av. No. of Men	Av. No. of Women	% Children in HH.	Av. Age of Head	Prop. Of Female Headed HH.	No. of HH.
<i>District</i>							
Gaya	7.04	1.88	1.97	39.28	49.14	0.13	72
Gopalganj	6.65	2.10	2.03	31.17	46.76	0.04	59
Madhubani	5.50	1.50	1.66	40.52	44.89	0.06	150
Nalanda	6.79	1.91	1.94	38.68	44.87	0.01	83
Purnea	5.96	1.56	1.68	41.81	43.68	0.09	116
Rohtas	7.06	1.89	2.04	39.43	45.64	0.02	84
<i>Class</i>							
ALLF	6.30	1.75	1.92	38.26	45.08	0.00	113
ALNF	4.59	1.13	1.40	40.57	41.06	0.13	73
ALLA	5.66	1.69	1.68	33.94	45.62	0.04	50
ALNA	5.10	1.60	1.36	34.37	39.49	0.12	24
PMP	6.54	1.71	1.89	39.66	46.77	0.06	40
MP	8.11	2.15	2.12	47.38	45.10	0.00	42
BP	8.67	2.62	2.51	37.04	50.14	0.01	108
LANDLD	6.01	1.52	1.84	37.56	49.93	0.13	81
NAG	3.90	0.91	1.12	35.92	46.38	0.23	39
<i>Out-Migration for Work</i>							
No	6.28	1.79	1.80	37.87	45.59	0.06	470
Yes	6.87	1.70	1.14	41.79	46.70	0.05	94
All	6.39	1.78	1.86	38.57	45.79	0.06	564

It can also be seen that the gap among different classes in household size has got reduced since last survey with landed class of big and middle peasant experiencing fall in household size on one side and non-cultivating agricultural casual labour and non-agricultural class experiencing rise in average household size.

In comparison to the previous survey, household size in the present survey and the number of women per household has fallen but mean number of men and proportion of children have gone up along with the proportion of female headed households.

The concentration of males and females in different age groups has been shown in Fig. 3.1. The age pyramid depicted in Fig. 3.1 shows that the proportion of female to male is favourable in the earliest two age groups, but it becomes unfavourable to female in the age groups of adolescents, showing strong gender bias in these age groups.

Fig. 3.1: Percentage Distribution of Males and Females by Age Groups



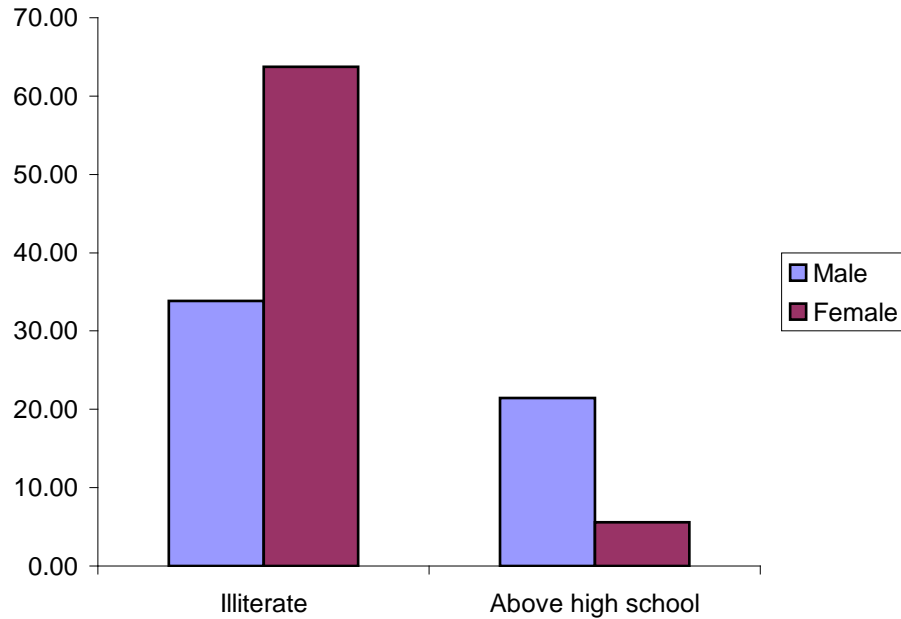
In the middle and older age groups also the female-male ratio is unfavourable except the age group of 35-39, indicating high morbidity and mortality rates of the women in these age groups. However, a comparison with the earlier survey data (1982) also shows that the survival rates of women have increased over the years in the reproductive age group of 20-30 years.

Literacy and Level of Education

Although the level of literacy among women has increased over time, there is still acute gender bias in terms of education of women. Chart 3.2 presents relative level of illiteracy and higher level of education among males and females.

Fig 3.2 clearly shows that illiteracy among female is as high as 65 per cent against approximately 35 per cent among males. As a consequence, there is also very low proportion of women attaining education of the levels of above high school. The percentage of female children attaining education above high school is as low as 5 per cent against approximately 20 per cent in case of males. In fact, in rural Bihar high levels of illiteracy is coupled with high gender discrimination in terms of education.

Fig. 3.2: Percentage of Illiterate and Above High School Males and Females



The level of illiteracy and education also show wide variations over different castes. To see the changes in terms of levels of education of women we have classified the women into two age groups i.e. below 25 years and above 25 years (Table 3.9). This classification serves two purposes: first, by this classification it is possible to compare the level the literacy between younger and older women, and two, this presents a comparability of the same over a time period stretching over the two intervening periods of survey.

Table 3.9 suggests that although the level of female literacy is higher among higher castes in general, it is more prominent in the younger women. Because of very high illiteracy among lower caste women there is very little difference between younger and older women of these castes. The vertical mobility of younger women among the upper and middle castes is also noticeable. Among the lower castes, besides high female illiteracy this vertical mobility in education also shows limited scope.

Table 3.9: Percentage Distribution of Women Below and Above Age 25 Years by Level of Education

Caste groups	Age groups	Level of Education						
		Illiterate	Below Primary	Primary	Middle	Matric/High School	High Secondary	Graduate and above
Brahmin	Below 25	23.04	31.80	17.97	12.44	11.52	0.46	2.76
	Above 25	59.89	15.93	11.54	7.14	4.95	0.00	0.55
	Total	39.85	24.56	15.04	10.03	8.52	0.25	1.75
Bhumihar	Below 25	17.78	32.59	25.93	10.37	11.11	1.48	0.74
	Above 25	69.29	14.96	3.94	6.30	3.94	0.00	1.57
	Total	42.75	24.05	15.27	8.40	7.63	0.76	1.15
Backward I	Below 25	73.22	12.57	7.65	3.28	2.73	0.55	0.00
	Above 25	87.92	4.70	2.01	2.68	0.67	2.01	0.00
	Total	79.82	9.04	5.12	3.01	1.81	1.20	0.00
Yadav	Below 25	51.52	30.30	9.09	6.06	1.52	0.00	1.52
	Above 25	88.52	3.28	3.28	1.64	3.28	0.00	0.00
	Total	69.29	17.32	6.30	3.94	2.36	0.00	0.79
Koiri	Below 25	32.43	35.14	13.51	13.51	2.70	2.70	0.00
	Above 25	79.49	2.56	7.69	2.56	7.69	0.00	0.00
	Total	56.58	18.42	10.53	7.89	5.26	1.32	0.00
Kurmi	Below 25	11.76	20.59	11.76	47.06	8.82	0.00	0.00
	Above 25	66.67	8.33	5.56	8.33	8.33	2.78	0.00
	Total	40.00	14.29	8.57	27.14	8.57	1.43	0.00
OBC II	Below 25	56.44	21.78	12.87	6.93	1.98	0.00	0.00
	Above 25	82.72	14.81	2.47	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Total	68.13	18.68	8.24	3.85	1.10	0.00	0.00
SC	Below 25	74.14	15.52	6.47	2.59	0.86	0.43	0.00
	Above 25	96.89	1.55	0.52	0.00	1.04	0.00	0.00
	Total	84.47	9.18	3.76	1.41	0.94	0.24	0.00
Muslim	Below 25	70.37	13.89	5.56	3.70	3.70	0.93	1.85
	Above 25	88.37	3.49	3.49	1.16	2.33	0.00	1.16
	Total	78.35	9.28	4.64	2.58	3.09	0.52	1.55
Total	Below 25	50.58	22.37	12.31	8.00	5.21	0.63	0.90
	Above 25	80.40	8.28	4.40	3.25	2.83	0.42	0.42
	Total	64.34	15.87	8.66	5.81	4.11	0.53	0.68

Economic Characteristics of Households

Some of the important economic characteristics of households are land endowments, income level, asset holdings etc. In the following section, we discuss some of these indicators of the sample households and variations in these endowments from the perspective of women's access to these endowments.

Land

The pattern of land distribution among the sample households is presented in Table 3.10. The land distribution pattern shows that the landlessness is the highest among SCs and lowers caste Muslim households, followed by OBC I, and OBC II.

Table 3.10: Percentage Distribution of Households from Different Castes by Land Size

Caste group	Size of owned land (in acres)							Total
	nil	up to 1	1 to 2.5	2.5 to 5	5 to 10	10 to 20	20 & above	
Upper caste1	15.66	22.89	25.90	19.28	12.05	3.01	1.20	100.00
Upper caste2	9.09	36.36	25.00	19.32	6.82	2.27	1.14	100.00
OBC I	61.29	24.52	11.61	1.94	0.65			100.00
Kurmi	17.86	14.29	32.14	21.43	7.14	7.14		100.00
Yadav	17.31	53.85	19.23	7.69	1.92			100.00
Koeri	20.00	66.67	3.33	6.67	3.33			100.00
Other OBC II	37.50	44.44	8.33	6.94	2.78			100.00
SC	73.23	23.74	2.02	1.01				100.00
ST	33.33	66.67						100.00
Moslem (upper)	42.86	28.57	10.71	7.14	10.71			100.00
Moslem (lower)	64.79	23.94	4.23	5.63	1.41			100.00
Total	42.65	29.85	13.36	8.64	4.15	1.01	0.34	100.00

Among the upper and middle castes, not only landlessness is very low but also they have bigger land size in substantial proportion. Among the middle castes, Kurmi has better land possession in comparison to Yadav and Koeri.

Land distribution is also skewed against women headed households. Table 3.11 shows that apart from high intensity of landlessness among women headed households, the entire pattern of land distribution is unfavourable to these households. It can be seen from the table that only 10 per cent of the women headed households come in the category of land size class of 2.5 acres and more. The corresponding figures for other households are approximately 15 per cent.

Table 3.11: Percentage of Women Headed and Other Households with Own Land

Household types	Land Endowment	
	Nil or Negligible	More than 2.5 acres
Women headed	80.49	9.76
Others	71.12	15.35

Further, it is more likely that all the women headed households are not able to do cultivation through its own family members and consequently a number of these households lease out land to other households. As a result of inability of these households to cultivate their own land, the land endowment position further deteriorates against these households. Table 3.12 shows that on the basis of land percentage of women headed households, operating nil or negligible size of land increases up to 90 per cent while the percentage falls to merely 7 per cent in case of operating size of 2.5 acres or more.

Table 3.12: Percentage of Women Headed and Other Households with Operated Land

Household types	Land Endowment	
	Nil or Negligible	More than 2.5 acres
Women headed	90.24	7.32
Others	67.06	15.76

The reverse is the case with other types of household. This clearly points out that most of the women headed households are not doing cultivation on their own land but lease/mortgage out their land for cultivation to others. The cultural and social barriers of women and lack of access to various inputs required for cultivation, it is not surprising that women cultivators are not the order of the day in Bihar.

Asst holding

Table 3.13.1 presents the assets per capita for each caste. In assets the land value is excluded. Kurmi and households belonging to upper caste groups form the richest class in our sample. Even the per capita cultivable land among them is far higher than other castes. Per capita assets of above-mentioned caste groups constituting nearly one-fifth of all households, are more than three times of the average assets per capita of all other households. Backward caste I is the poorest with scheduled caste and Muslims showing a marginally better position. As such, 60 per cent of households are very poor and in assets terms are highly polarised. As expected, per capita value of cattle assets of Yadav is highest closely followed by upper castes.

A comparison with the earlier survey vis a vis asset structure is given below:

- We gather that upper castes along with Kurmi caste continue to be the richest group. But scheduled caste groups that was poorest in terms of per capita asset are replaced by groups belonging to backward caste I is quite intriguing and needs more sociological insights. One reason could be that land asset is not included in the calculation of value of assets in present survey.
- Further, among the middle caste groups, per capita cultivable land for Kurmi have gone up though per capita cultivable land has fallen by half as a whole. For intermediate castes like Koiri and Yadav, per capita assets have relatively improved. This is more visible in the case of Yadav community as they have gained significantly in per capita value of cattle stock.

Table 3.13.1: Assets by Caste and Religion, 1982

Caste	Percentage Distribution of Households	Per Capita Value (in rupees) of		Per Capita Cultivable Land in Acres
		All Assets	Cattle	
Muslims	10.46	2403	179	0.25
Upper Castes	25.18	10301	200	0.54
Yadav	5.50	3040	109	0.45
Koiri	4.79	4958	159	0.23
Kurmi	4.26	11262	188	0.43
Oth. Backward II	9.56	4890	153	0.32
Backward I	17.55	1393	149	0.17
S.C. & S.T.	22.70	904	139	0.12
All	100.00	4779	187	0.37

Table 3.13.2: Assets by Caste and Religion, 1999

Caste	Percentage Distribution Of Households	Per Capita Value (in rupees) of		Per Capita Cultivable Land in Acres
		All Assets	Cattle	
Muslims	13.80	3048	375	0.15
Upper Castes	21.70	18609	1501	0.41
Yadav	5.40	5637	1510	0.36
Koiri	3.40	9326	699	0.18
Kurmi	2.90	15613	734	0.54
Oth. Backward II	7.40	3674	539	0.21
Backward I	19.00	2738	634	0.17
S.C. & S.T.	26.40	3054	391	0.08
All	100.00	5089	608	0.22