

NFHS-2019-20 on Domestic Violence in India

December 15, 2020

In news

According to NFHS-2019-20, Domestic violence against women doubles in Karnataka

Key findings

- According to National Family Health Survey-2019-20, in Karnataka 44.4% women experienced domestic violence in 2019-20 as compared to 20.6% in 2015-16
- The survey also states that Assam(32%) and Maharashtra(25%) too saw a jump on that count
- Barring these three states, the incidences of domestic violence against women are on a decline in the remaining 19 provinces.
- NFHS mentions that the percentage of women in the 18-49 age group who experienced spousal violence – physical and sexual – was 20.6% in Karnataka in 2015-16 when the NFHS-4 report was released.
 - It rose to 44.4% in 2019-20 (NFHS-5) with barely any difference between rural and urban areas.
- Other big states with a large number of women facing spousal violence are Bihar (40.7%), Telangana (36.9%) and West Bengal (27%).
- As per the survey, Karnataka, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Assam are also the four big states that saw an increase in the number of young women (18-29 years) who experienced sexual violence by the age of 18.
 - The number of such women in Karnataka is 11% in 2019-20, followed by West Bengal (9.7%), Assam (8%) and Maharashtra (6.2%).
- However, several other parameters to measure women

empowerment such as independent savings accounts, separate mobile phones and participation in household decisions, improved in the last five years.

- For instance, the number of women with an independent savings account rose to 76.7% in Bihar in 2019-20 from mere 26.4% in 2015-16.

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005

- It is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to protect women from domestic violence.
- The Act provides for the first time in Indian law a definition of “domestic violence”, with this definition being broad and including not only physical violence, but also other forms of violence such as emotional/verbal, sexual, and economic abuse.

Who is covered under the act?

The Act covers all women who may be mother, sister, wife, widow or partners living in a shared household. The relationship may be in nature of marriage or adoption. In addition relationships with family members living together as a joint family are also included. However, no female relative of the husband or the male partner can file a complaint against the wife or the female partner, for e.g. the mother-in-law cannot file an application against a daughter-in-law, but she can file an application against her daughter-in-law for abetting her son to commit violence against her.

Key provisions

- It is a civil law meant primarily for protection orders and not for meant to be enforced criminally
- The Act seeks to cover those women who are or have been in a relationship with the abuser where both parties have lived together in a shared household and are related by consanguinity, marriage or a relationship in the nature of marriage, or adoption; in addition

relationship with family members living together as a joint family are also included.

- “Domestic violence” includes actual abuse or the threat of abuse that is physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and economic.
 - Harassment by way of unlawful dowry demands to the woman or her relatives would also be covered under this definition.
- One of the most important features of the Act is the woman’s right to secure housing.
- The Act provides for the woman’s right to reside in the matrimonial or shared household, whether or not she has any title or rights in the household.
 - This right is secured by a residence order, which is passed by a court. These residence orders cannot be passed against anyone who is a woman.
- The act also provides for the appointment of protection officers by the state government