অসম চৰকাৰ
GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

A Study of Early Marriage in Assam (ASEMA) 2024-25

Department of Women and Child Development
Government of Assam

International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)
Mumbai, India

A STUDY OF EARLY MARRIAGE IN ASSAM (ASEMA)

2024-25

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR POPULATION SCIENCES (IIPS)MUMBAI

FEBRUARY 2026

Suggested citation: Saikia, N., Srinivas, G., Lhungdim, H., Adhikary, M., & Neve, P. (2026). *A study of early marriage in Assam (ASEMA), 2024–25*. Report submitted to International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Government of Assam. Mumbai: IIPS

For additional about the 2024-25 A study of Early Marriage in Assam (ASEMA), please contact:
Dr. Nandita Saikia, International Institute for Population Sciences, Govandi Station Road, Deonar, Mumbai- 400-088
Telephone: 022-4237-2455, 022-4237-2442
E-mail: nanditasaikia@iipsindia.ac.in
For related information, please visit https://www.iipsindia.ac.in.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Dr. Nandita Saikia

Dr. Srinivas Goli

Dr. Hemkhothang Lhungdim

Contents

List of tables

List of figures

মুখ্যমন্ত্রী, অসম
Chief Minister, Assam

সত্যমেব জয়তে

ড° হিমন্ত বিশ্ব শর্মা
Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma

D.O No. CMO.1/2026/7625
February 11, 2026

Foreword

The elimination of child marriage is integral to Assam's vision of inclusive growth, social justice, and women's empowerment. Every girl has the right to education, health, dignity, and the freedom to shape her own future. The Government of Assam remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting these rights and addressing practices that hinder our collective progress.

A Study of Early Marriage in Assam, 2024–25, conducted by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai, presents a comprehensive and timely assessment of child marriage across the State. Based on large-scale primary data from all districts, the study offers valuable insights into recent trends, regional variations, and the impact of ongoing policy interventions.

The findings indicate meaningful progress, while also reminding us that continued, focused efforts are essential—particularly in districts and communities where vulnerabilities persist. This report will serve as an important guide for evidence-based policymaking, targeted interventions, and strengthened convergence across departments.

I commend the dedicated efforts of field investigators, researchers, and all stakeholders for conducting this intensive study and coming out with this publication. It will reinforce our collective resolve to eliminate child marriage and ensure a safer, more empowered future for the children of Assam.

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

Office : Lok Sewa Bhawan,
Janata Bhawan, Dispur,
Guwahati-781006.

T - 0361-2320961, 2320960
e-mail - cm@assam.gov.in
@himantabiswasarma @ himantabiswa

Residence : M-6. Ministers' Colony,
Dispur, Guwahati-781006

Acknowledgements

A study of Early marriage in Assam *(ASEMA)-2024-25* is the first large-scale survey conducted in Assam to assess the prevalence of child marriage at the state, district, and community levels, including variations across socioeconomic and ethnic groups. This scientific and empirical study provides crucial insights for designing effective policies and interventions aimed at eliminating child marriage in Assam.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all individuals and institutions who contributed to the successful completion of this study.

We express our gratitude to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma for emphasizing the importance of empirical evidence in policymaking. We sincerely thank the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Assam, for funding and supporting this important initiative. We are especially grateful to Mr. Bivash Modi (former Director), Mr. Rahul Kumar Das (former Director), and Mr. Gauri Shankar Sharma (current Director) for their constant guidance, encouragement, and cooperation throughout the study.

Our special appreciation goes to Ms. Smriti Rekha Dutta Baruah, Deputy Director, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Assam, for her unwavering engagement and support during the fieldwork. We are also thankful to all District Social Workers across Assam for their valuable assistance and coordination during data collection.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of former director Prof. SK Singh, Prof. Hemkhothang Lhungdim and current director Prof. D. Nagdeve of the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), who have been associated with the study from its inception in February 2024 to its completion. We also extend our thanks to the IIPS administration, particularly the Assistant Finance Officer and Assistant Registrar, for their administrative and logistical support. We would also like to thank the Institutional Review Board (IRB) members, specially professor Aparajita Chattopadhyay for their prompt review and approval for the study.

We gratefully recognize the cooperation and assistance provided by the officers and staff of the Government of Assam during various stages of the survey.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the Research Officers, Junior Research Officers, and female field investigators, whose dedication and hard work made the extensive data collection process possible.

Finally, we express our sincere appreciation to all the respondents and households for their time and valuable responses. Their participation has been central to the success of this study.

Dr. Nandita Saikia

Dr. Srinivas Goli

Dr. Hemkhothang Lhungdim

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Form
ASEMA	A Study of Early Marriage in Assam
BBBP	Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
GOI	Government of India
GPS	Global Positioning System
HH / HHs	Household / Households
IIPS	International Institute for Population Sciences
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LASI	Longitudinal Ageing Study in India
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NFHS-3	National Family Health Survey – Round 3
NFHS-4	National Family Health Survey – Round 4
NFHS-5	National Family Health Survey – Round 5
NSSO	National Sample Survey Office
OBC	Other Backward Class
PCMA	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act
PI	Principal Investigator
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
PSU	Primary Sampling Unit
SC	Scheduled Caste
SD	Standard Deviation
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Finding

Background and Purpose

The practice of child marriage continues to pose a significant social and developmental challenge in Assam, with long-term implications for women's education, health, workforce participation, and overall human capital development. Recognising the importance of updated, district-level evidence to guide policy and programme implementation, *A Study of Early Marriage in Assam* (ASEMA) 2024–25 was undertaken to assess the current magnitude, distribution, and determinants of child marriage in the state.

The study is based on large scale primary data collected from **14,921** women aged 15–30 years across all thirty-five districts of Assam, covering both rural and urban areas. It provides one of the most comprehensive and recent assessments of early marriage in the state following intensified government interventions initiated after 2021.

Magnitude and Trends of Child Marriage

The study finds that **25.2 percent of women aged 20–24 years in Assam were married before attaining the legal age of 18 years**. This indicates that nearly one-fourth of young women continue to experience child marriage, despite sustained policy attention and legal prohibition under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006.

A comparison with previous survey rounds shows a consistent decline in prevalence over time. Child marriage in Assam declined from 38.6 percent in NFHS-3 (2005–06) to 31.8 percent in NFHS-5 (2019–21), and further to 25.2 percent in ASEMA 2024–25.

However, the pace of decline has been uneven, with substantial inter-district variation. While several districts have achieved relatively low levels of child marriage, others continue to report persistently high prevalence.

District and Regional Disparities in Child Marriage

Districts and administrative divisions show substantial variation in child marriage rates. Districts such as **Jorhat (11.0%), Sonitpur (14.0%), Majuli (15.2%), Golaghat (15.7%), and Dima Hasao (14.7%)** report relatively low prevalence of child marriage.

In contrast, districts including **Dhubri (40.8%), Darrang (40.1%), South Salmara–Mankachar (39.0%), Morigaon (35.0%), and Chirang (35.2%)** continue to report remarkably high prevalence. Of child marriage

At the divisional level, **Lower Assam (28.7%) and Central Assam (26.9%)** record the highest prevalence, followed by North Assam (26.2%). Upper Assam (19.6%) and Barak Valley (20.7%) show comparatively lower levels.

These findings underline the need for **district-specific strategies**, rather than uniform state-level approaches.

Socio-Economic Differentials in Child Marriage

- The prevalence of child marriage shows a strong association with household economic status. Among women belonging to **the poorest wealth quintile, 37.5 percent** were married before 18, compared to only **11.4 percent** among the richest quintiles. This gradient highlight poverty as a key structural driver of early marriage.
- Educational attainment also emerges as a critical protective factor. Women with secondary or higher education are substantially less likely to experience child marriage. Education delays marriage directly by keeping girls enrolled in school and indirectly by increasing awareness, aspirations, and decision-making capacity.
- Rural–urban differences remain pronounced. Child marriage prevalence in rural areas (26.5%) is significantly higher than in urban areas (16.3%). Rural settings continue to face constraints related to school availability, transport, livelihood opportunities for women, and effective monitoring of legal provisions.

Social and Community Differentials in Child Marriage

- Marked differences are observed across ethnic, religious, and caste groups. **Bengali-origin communities** record the highest prevalence of child marriage (33.9%), followed by **Karbi and Tea Garden** communities. Assamese and Nepali communities show comparatively lower prevalence.
- By religion, **Muslim women record the highest prevalence** (38.7%), followed by Hindu (19.2%) and Christian (18.8%) women. These differences reflect the interaction of socio-economic vulnerability, early fertility norms, and district-specific contexts.
- Caste patterns reveal an important nuance. Child marriage is highest among **General caste households (31.4%)**, followed by SC (25.5%), ST (21.2%), and OBC (19.7%). However, deeper analysis shows that this pattern is driven largely by the **intersection of caste and religion**, particularly the concentration of high-prevalence Muslim households within the General caste category.
- Women living in joint or extended families experience slightly higher child marriage prevalence than those in nuclear households, suggesting the influence of elder-led decision-making in marriage timing.

Awareness, Attitudes, and Gender Norms

While awareness of the legal minimum age of marriage is widespread, social acceptance of early marriage persists in several communities. Attitudinal findings indicate that preferences for early marriage of girls, son preference, and tolerance of polygamy-though declining-remain present, particularly among poorer, rural, and less educated households.

These normative factors continue to shape behaviour and limit the effectiveness of legal enforcement alone.

Role of Government Schemes and Programme Reach

The study highlights the significant role of government schemes in shaping marriage

outcomes, while also identifying gaps in awareness and utilisation.

Schemes such as **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Majoni, Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana, Arunodoi, POSHAN Abhiyaan, and Assam Amrit Abhiyan** have contributed indirectly to delaying marriage by improving girls' education retention, nutritional status, and household economic security. Women who reported awareness and utilisation of these schemes generally showed lower prevalence of child marriage.

However, the study finds that **scheme awareness and uptake remain uneven**, particularly in high-burden districts. Strengthening last-mile delivery, improving beneficiary identification, and enhancing convergence between the departments of Social Welfare, Education, Health, and Panchayati Raj are essential for maximising impact.

Key Implications for Policy and Implementation

The findings indicate that while Assam has made measurable progress in reducing child marriage, the practice remains deeply entrenched among economically and socially vulnerable groups. Enforcement-driven approaches must be complemented by sustained investments in girls' education, poverty alleviation, social protection, and community-level norm change.

Priority attention is required for high-prevalence districts in Lower and Central Assam, with district-specific action plans, strengthened monitoring mechanisms, and targeted outreach to marginalised communities.

Conclusion

The ASEMA 2024–25 study demonstrates that child marriage in Assam is declining but remains a significant concern requiring continued policy focus. Achieving the state's commitment to eliminating child marriage will depend on coordinated, data-driven, and locally responsive strategies that address both structural inequalities and social norms.

The evidence presented in this report provides a strong empirical foundation to guide future planning, programme refinement, and inter-departmental convergence aimed at safeguarding the rights, health, and development of girls in Assam.

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

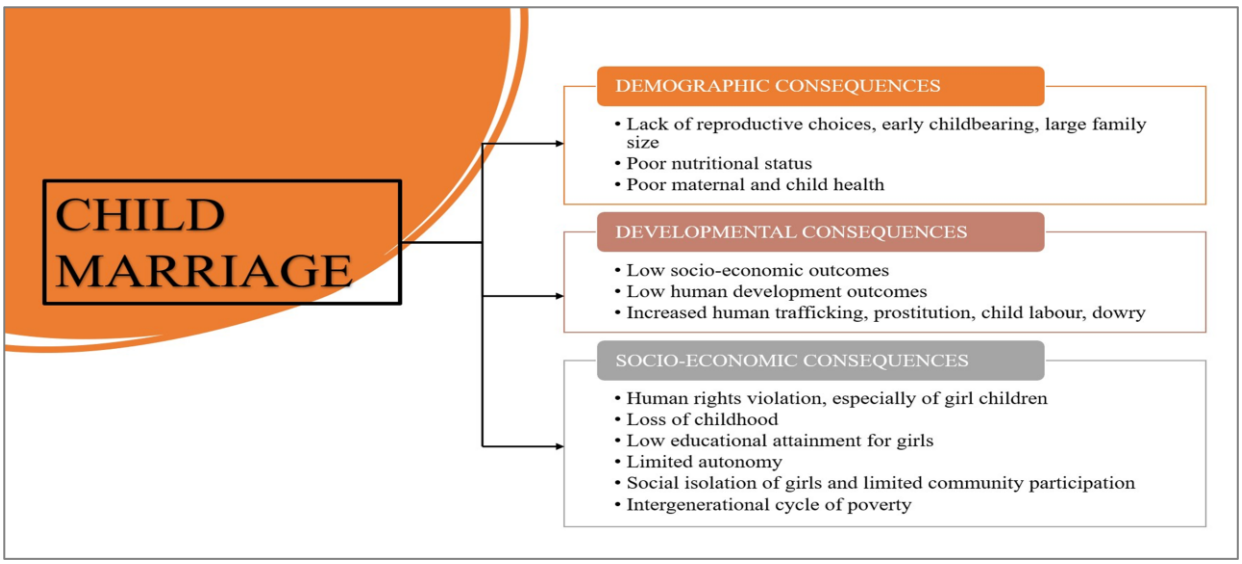
1.1 Background and Context

Child marriage defined as a formal or informal union in which at least one partner is below the age of eighteen is widely recognized as a violation of human rights and a barrier to sustainable development (UNFPA, n.d.; UNICEF, n.d.; United Nations, 2015). It undermines the physical, emotional, and social well-being of young girls, often depriving them of education, economic opportunities, and autonomy.

Early marriage has a significant impact on women's health and well-being. The economic and social development of societies is accordingly hampered by the cycle of poverty, low education, high fertility, and poor health that is further perpetuated by child marriage. Due to the long-term and frequently intergenerational nature of the associated effects, girls are particularly affected. Boys may not experience the same social or biological repercussions from child marriage, but it does force them to start supporting their families at an early age itself and thereby negatively impacts their career path because of low educational attainment.

From a developmental standpoint, child marriage is both a cause and consequence of structural deprivation. Early marriage violates the rights to education by depriving girls of the opportunity to attend school and that further hinders their personal development. Girls married early are more likely to discontinue schooling, experience early and repeated pregnancies, and face adverse health outcomes, including higher risks of maternal morbidity and mortality (WHO, 2024). Girls who marry early are often forced to drop out of the school, preventing them from acquiring knowledge and skills for their future (Goli, et al., 2015). Some recent studies have also shown that child marriage, is associated with an

Figure 1.1 Demographic, Socio-Economic and Developmental Consequences of Child Marriages



increased risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and thyroid disorder (Vikram et al., 2023). Furthermore, early marriage has been linked to adverse reproductive health outcomes, including miscarriage, giving birth before the age of eighteen, and child mortality. It also affects women's access to contraception and skilled care during pregnancy and delivery. Emotional immaturity and lack of autonomy are identified as factors that contribute to the negative impact of early marriage on marital relationships.

Early marriages also perpetuate intergenerational poverty and restrict women's participation in the workforce, weakening broader social and economic development indicators. Studies show that adolescents aged 10–19 who become mothers face **higher risks of eclampsia, puerperal endometritis, and systemic infections** than adult women aged 20–24 (WHO, 2024). These factors collectively highlight that preventing child marriage is not only a gender or social issue but also a major public health and development priority.

Globally, approximately **650 million girls and women alive today were married before reaching 18 years of age**, meaning that nearly **one in five young women aged 20–24** was married as children (UNICEF, 2023). While the global prevalence has declined from 23% a decade ago to 19% today, progress remains uneven, with South Asia accounting for nearly **45% of all child brides worldwide** (UNICEF, 2023).

India bears a substantial share of this global burden. Despite significant social and economic progress, the country still reports **over 22% of women aged 20–24 years married before age 18** (NFHS-5, 2021–22). Historically, the prevalence was nearly 47% in the early 1990s, showing a steady but slow decline over three decades. This reduction reflects the impact of legal frameworks such as the *Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006*, and the implementation of national programs like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*, *POSHAN Abhiyaan*, and *Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana*, which aim to delay marriage by empowering girls through education, nutrition, and financial incentives. However, despite these policy gains, child marriage remains deeply entrenched in several regions due to socio-economic inequalities, gender norms, and limited access to education.

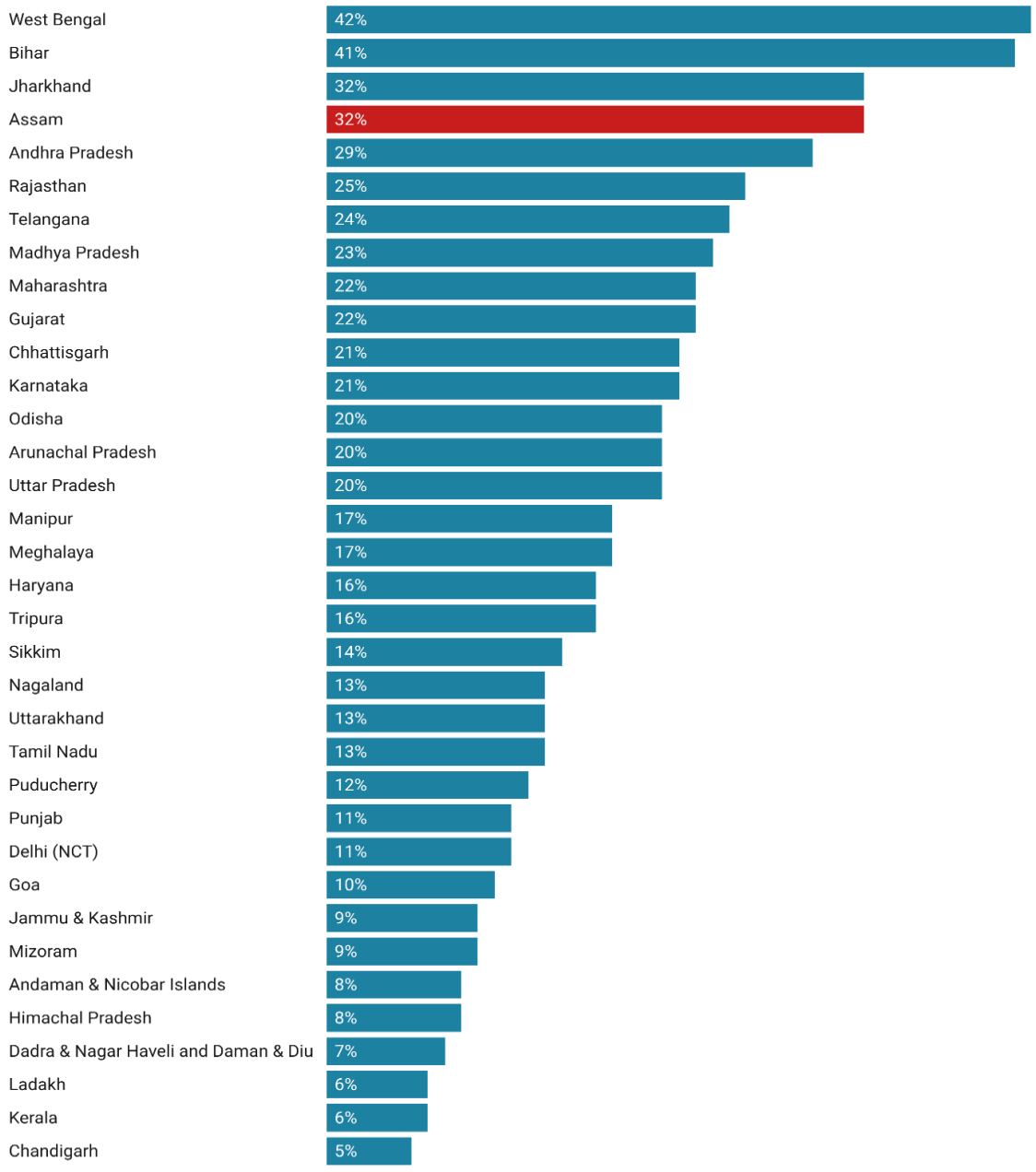
1.2 Situation in Assam: Magnitude and Trends

Assam presents one of the most complex demographic and socio-cultural landscapes in the country. The state is characterized by wide ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity, with substantial rural populations and varying access to education, health, and social welfare services. Within this diversity, the problem of child marriage remains deeply rooted, reflecting persistent gender inequities, poverty, and uneven development outcomes across districts. According to the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019–21), 31.8% of women aged 20–24 years in Assam were married before reaching 18 years**, compared to **23.3% nationally** (IIPS & MoHFW, 2021–22), shown in figure 2. This places Assam among the top five states with the highest prevalence of child marriage in India, alongside Bihar (40.8%), West Bengal (41.6%), Jharkhand (32.2%), and Tripura (40.1%). While Assam recorded a modest decline from **38% in NFHS-4 (2015–16)** to **31.8% in NFHS-5**, the rate of reduction remains slower than the national average, suggesting persistent structural barriers.

District-level variations within Assam further highlight the uneven nature of the problem. Data from the NFHS-5 and the *Assam Fact Sheet (2021)* show that the prevalence of child marriage exceeds **35%** in districts such as Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, and South Salmara-Mankachar-predominantly rural and socio-economically disadvantaged areas. In contrast, relatively urbanized districts like Kamrup (Metropolitan) and Jorhat show lower levels, below 20%. These disparities reflect differences in educational attainment, economic status, and cultural practices. Districts with higher concentrations of Muslim populations, limited access to schools, and greater poverty tend to record significantly higher rates of early marriage.

Rural–urban differentials are also pronounced. In rural Assam, **34.6% of women aged 20–24**

Figure 1.2 Child Marriage among Women (aged 20-24) in India, NFHS-5 (2019-21)



years were married before 18, compared to **21.2% in urban areas** (NFHS-5, 2021–22). This gap underscores the continued intersection of poverty, early school dropout, and limited employment opportunities for young women in rural settings. The proportion of girls completing secondary education is only **44% in rural areas**, compared to **63% in urban areas**, which directly correlates with higher marriage rates among adolescents.

Recent administrative data and media reports indicate some encouraging progress following intensified state-level interventions. The **Government of Assam's 2023 crackdown on child marriage**, under the *Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006)* and related laws, resulted in the arrest of more than **five thousand individuals** across districts such as Barpeta, Dhubri, and Nagaon (NCRB report, 2023). According to a 2024 report by the India Child Protection (ICP) network, the prevalence of registered child marriage cases in surveyed villages **declined by 81% between 2021–22 and 2023–24**, dropping from **3,225 to 627 cases** (The Print, 2024). About **30% of surveyed villages** reported having completely eliminated the practice, while **40% recorded significant declines** (New Indian Express, 2024).

1.3 Need for the primary survey

However, these statistics may not fully capture hidden or informal unions, particularly in rural and marginalized communities where under-reporting remains common. The underlying socio-cultural acceptance of early marriage as a social norm, combined with limited awareness of legal provisions, continues to challenge sustained progress. Moreover, the state's exposure to periodic natural disasters such as floods and riverbank erosion-affecting livelihoods and displacing families-has been shown to indirectly contribute to early marriages as a coping strategy for economic insecurity (UNICEF Assam, 2023).

Assam presents a context that is both urgent and instructive. The urgency stems from the state's persistently high prevalence of early marriage, one of the highest in India. At the same time, Assam provides an important setting to examine how policy interventions, social awareness efforts, and welfare programmes shape outcomes.

Using primary survey data focused on early marriage, this study goes beyond reporting prevalence. It identifies the socio economic groups and administrative areas where child marriage persists, as well as those showing signs of progress. Since the Assam government launched initiatives to curb child marriage, no comprehensive study exists on its district-level status for the period 2021–2025. The most recent NFHS-5 report provides prevalence data only for 2019–2021, while NFHS-6 data collection remains ongoing and incomplete. Given Assam's high diversity in cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic dimensions, district-level survey data with adequate representation of various socio-economic subgroups is essential. A primary study of this nature would provide a more nuanced and context-specific understanding of the disparities in age at marriage, as well as the underlying factors that vary across communities and geographical regions. Moreover, assessing the effectiveness of newly introduced welfare programs aimed at empowering girl children and preventing child marriages would require specially designed survey instruments tailored to capture these program-level impact.

CHAPTER 2 : METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overview

This chapter describes the data sources, sampling design, data collection procedures, survey instruments, and analytical methods adopted in the study *"A Study of Early Marriages in Assam (ASEMA), 2024–2025."* The study aimed to collect comprehensive primary data on the prevalence, determinants, and perceptions surrounding early marriage and associated gender norms across the state.

2.2 Sampling Design

The ASEMA study employed a **cross-sectional, multi-stage stratified random sampling design** to produce reliable district- and state-level estimates. The sampling framework and sample size were structured to enable the estimation of **district-level prevalence of child marriage** as well as **state-level prevalence across key population subgroups**, including **linguistic, religious, and caste divisions**.

Sampling Procedure

A two-stage sampling design was adopted separately for rural and urban areas:

- **First Stage (Selection of PSUs):** Villages in rural areas and urban wards in urban areas were treated as **Primary Sampling Units (PSUs)**. PSUs were selected using **Probability Proportional to Size (PPS)** based on the village population as per the *Census of India, 2011 Primary Census Abstract (PCA)*.
- **Second Stage (Selection of Households):** Within each selected PSU, a fresh household listing was undertaken. From the updated list, **20–25 households** were systematically selected using random sampling.

Sampling Frame

For rural areas, the list of villages from the **Census 2011 PCA** served as the sampling frame. For urban areas, enumeration block maps were obtained from the **NSSO (National Sample Survey Office)** to identify and select wards and households.

2.3 Sample Size Determination

The required sample size for each district was determined using the formula:

The **sample size** for each district was estimated using the following formula:

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times q \times \text{Design Effect}}{d^2}$$

where:

- Z =1.96 corresponds to a 95% confidence level,
- d = 0.063 is the margin of error,
- Design Effect=2,
- p represents the district-level prevalence of child marriage (taken from NFHS-5, 2019–21), and $q = 1 - p$.

An additional **10% non-response rate** was incorporated into the final estimates. The final survey included **women aged 15–30 years**, irrespective of their marital status, as the primary respondents. Table 2.1 presents the targeted and completed samples by district.

2.4 Selection of Respondents

From each selected household, one eligible woman aged **15–30 years** was chosen. The study included both ever married and unmarried women to capture a broader understanding of early marriage perceptions and intergenerational attitudes.

2.5 Survey Tools and Questionnaire

The survey instruments were designed by the ASEMA research team to capture multidimensional information on early marriage. The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into Assamese. It included the following components:

1. **Identification Section:** PSU and household identification, interviewer details, and GPS coordinates.
2. **Household Roster:** Age, sex, education, occupation, and relationship of all members.
3. **Household Characteristics:** Ownership, dwelling type, assets, cooking fuel, source of water, sanitation, and electricity etc.
4. **Media Exposure:** Access to newspapers, television, radio, cinema, internet, and social media platforms.
5. **Marriage Information:** Marital status, age at marriage, spousal age gap, inter-caste or consanguineous unions, marital dissolution, and marriage expenditures.
6. **Fertility and Mortality Outcomes:** Pregnancy history, child deaths, and contraceptive use.
7. **Government Program Awareness:** Knowledge and use of state and central government schemes related to women and child welfare.
8. **Perceptions and Attitudes:** Ideal age at marriage for boys and girls, ideal number of children, son preference, perception of polygamy, and awareness of legal marriage age.

2.6 Training and Pre-testing

A two-day training program was organized from **19–20 February 2024** at the **Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati**, to train the **Junior Research Officers** and **female field investigators** involved in the study. The training sessions were conducted by **two Principal Investigators** and **two Research Officers** from the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)**. The program focused on familiarizing participants with the study objectives, survey instruments, field protocols, and data collection procedures. Following the training, a **pre-test of the survey tools** in bilingual (English/Assamese) was carried out at **Amsing Tea Estate, Jorabat**, located approximately **thirty-five Kilometers** from the training venue, to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and flow of the questionnaire before field implementation.

Following the pre-testing exercise, the tools were modified and finalized considering the observations and feedback received from field investigators and respondents.

2.7 Data Collection

The data collection was conducted through face-to-face interviews using KoboToolbox, a rapid digital survey tool designed for field-based data gathering. KoboToolbox is a widely used digital platform for field data collection, particularly in development research and large-scale surveys. KoboToolbox is a widely used digital platform for field data collection, particularly suited for large-scale surveys, development research, and humanitarian assessments. It offers a user-friendly interface

that allows researchers to design, edit, and deploy survey forms without requiring advanced technical expertise. One of its major advantages is offline functionality, which enables enumerators to collect data in remote areas without internet connectivity and automatically synchronize responses once a connection becomes available. The platform also supports real-time monitoring, allowing supervisors to review incoming data, track field progress, and identify errors or missing information promptly. KoboToolbox provides flexibility in form design, supporting various question types, skip logic, validation rules, GPS coordinates, and multimedia inputs such as photos and audio. These features help capture complex information while maintaining high data quality. Built-in validation checks and logical constraints minimize human error, ensuring more reliable results compared to traditional paper-based surveys. Additionally, the tool is open-source and free, making it cost-effective for institutions and organizations with limited resources. Data security is maintained through encryption and user authentication, ensuring the confidentiality of respondent information. Respondents were household head and women irrespective of marital status aged 15-30 years old.

2.8 Fieldwork duration

Data collected from each district of Assam in two distinct phases to ensure full geographic coverage and account for administrative changes and logistic feasibility.

- **Phase I (February–April 2024):** Data were collected from 29 districts - Baksa, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Cachar, Charaideo, Chirang, Darrang, Dhemaji, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Dima Hasao, Goalpara, Golaghat, Hailakandi, Hojai, Jorhat (partial), Kamrup Metro, Kamrup Rural, Karbi Anglong, Karimganj, Kokrajhar, Lakhimpur, Morigaon, Nagaon, Nalbari, South Salmara, Tinsukia, Udalguri, and West Karbi Anglong.
- **Phase II (August–September 2025):** Data collection was completed in the remaining districts - Bajali, Biswanath, Jorhat (partial), Majuli, Sibsagar, Sonitpur, and Tamulpur.

The two-phase approach ensured full coverage of all **thirty-five districts** of Assam, representing both urban and rural areas across the five administrative divisions of the state.

2.9 Monitoring and Quality Control

To ensure high-quality data collection, a comprehensive quality assurance framework was implemented throughout both phases of fieldwork.

First, **female investigators** with prior experience in large-scale demographic and health surveys were **carefully selected** to serve as field enumerators. Their familiarity with community contexts and ability to conduct gender-sensitive interviews contributed to improved data reliability.

Second, all field investigators and supervisors underwent **intensive training** covering the study objectives, questionnaire content, ethical protocols, and digital data collection using **KoboToolbox**. Hands-on sessions were conducted to strengthen enumerators' proficiency in using digital forms, managing skip patterns, and resolving technical issues during interviews.

Third, **on-site supervision** was provided continuously by the **Principal Investigators and**

Research Officers from the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), who accompanied field teams during both phases of data collection. Junior research officers reviewed the work of each investigator daily, verified completed questionnaires, and conducted random spot checks and back-verifications to ensure adherence to survey protocols.

Finally, **weekly online assessments** of the collected data were conducted by the Principal Investigators and research officer. These reviews focused on identifying and correcting inconsistencies, monitoring field progress, and ensuring the completeness and accuracy of responses. Feedback was promptly communicated to field teams, allowing immediate corrective action wherever necessary.

Together, these measures ensured that the ASEMA 2024–25 data met the highest standards of consistency, precision, and methodological rigor comparable to national-level household surveys.

2.10 Respondent Consent and Ethical Approval

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality of responses, and approximate interview duration (15–20 minutes).

Written or verbal consent was obtained from each respondent before the interview. For minor respondents (below 18 years), **parental consent** was mandatory.

The study protocol received **ethical clearance** from the **Institutional Review Board (IRB) of IIPS, Mumbai**. The proposal was presented to the IRB on **30 January 2024**, and final approval was granted on **27 February 2024** [1] after incorporating the committee's recommendations.

2.11 Data Processing and Analysis

Data were exported from KoboToolbox and processed using **R** and **Stata**. Cleaning and validation involved consistency checks, duplicate removal, and missing value imputation where appropriate. Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and summary measures were used.

[1] **https://iipsindia.ac.in/sites/default/files/IRB_StatusReport_Feb2024.pdf**

https://www.iipsindia.ac.in/sites/default/files/IRB_Signed_Minutes_27022024.pdf

Measuring Wealth Quintile: To assess the relative socioeconomic status of the surveyed population, a Wealth Index was constructed using Principal Components Analysis (PCA) to generate a composite proxy for long-term economic standing. This index utilized data from a comprehensive range of household indicators, including the ownership of durable consumer goods (such as televisions, refrigerators, and air conditioners etc.), transportation assets (cycles, motorcycles, and cars etc.), livestock (cows, goats, and poultry etc.), and productive tools (power or hand looms etc.). By assigning statistical weights to these variables based on their contribution to the total variance, each household was assigned a continuous wealth score; the population was subsequently ranked and partitioned into five equal segments - wealth quintiles - ranging from the Poorest (Quintile 1) to the Richest (Quintile 5). This methodology ensures that socioeconomic disparities within the report are analysed through the lens of cumulative asset-based wealth rather than volatile, self-reported income.

Figure 2.1 Geographic Distribution of PSUs Across Assam

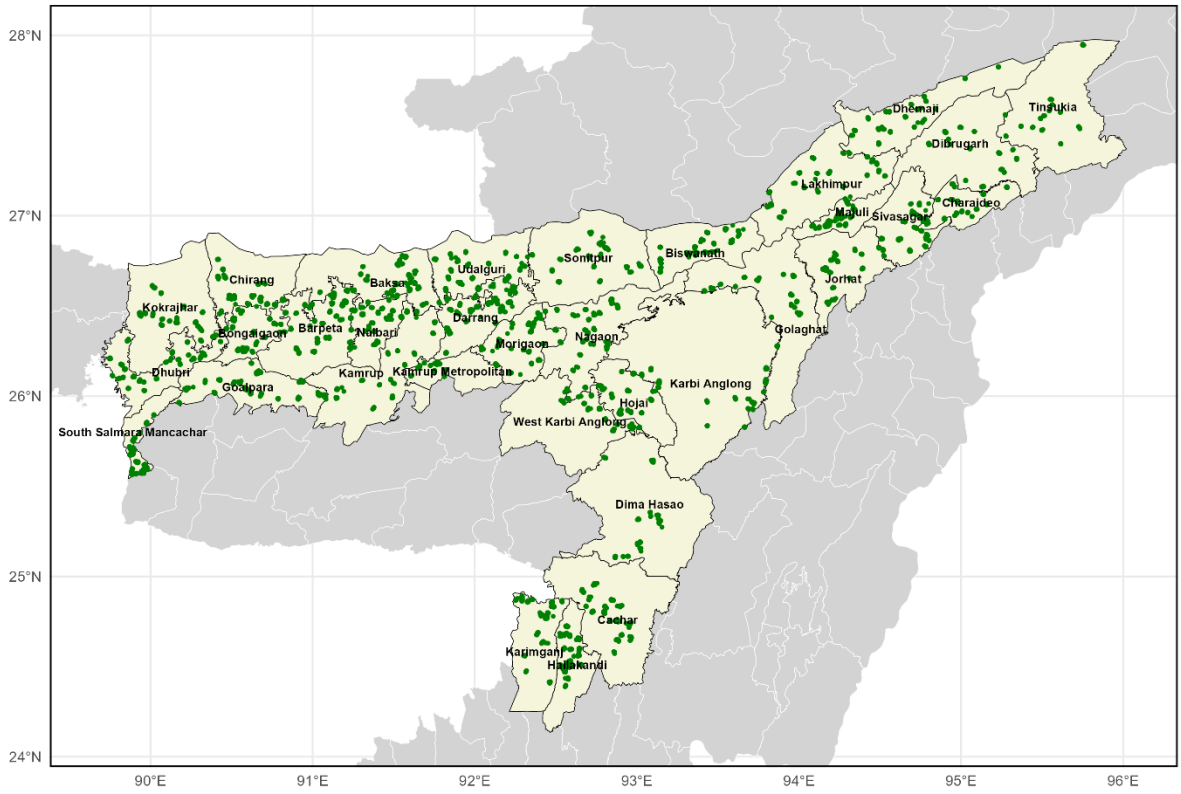


Table 2.1: District wise sample size distribution, Assam, 2024-24

Districts	Target Sample size	Completed Sample	% share of the sample by each district out of total sample
Goalpara	523	525	3.5
South Salmara	532	524	3.5
Dhubri	538	553	3.7
Kokrajhar	497	501	3.4
Chirang	459	449	3.0
Bongaigaon	523	524	3.5
Nalbari	435	425	2.8
Baksa	402	400	2.7
Barpeta	517	525	3.5
Kamrup Metro	368	375	2.5
Kamrup (Rural)	368	375	2.5
Darrang	527	531	3.6
Morigaon	512	501	3.4
Nagaon	526	536	3.6
Hojai	459	399	2.7
West Karbi Anglong	361	351	2.4
Dima Hasao	296	293	2.0
Karbi Anglong	415	438	2.9
Hailakandi	475	459	3.1
Karimganj	431	423	2.8
Cachar	451	445	3.0
Udalguri	468	470	3.1
Sonitpur	392	405	2.7
Biswanath	406	398	2.7
Golaghat	353	349	2.3
Jorhat	402	396	2.7
Majuli	409	400	2.7
Dhemaji	468	475	3.2
Tinsukia	342	350	2.3
Lakhimpur	497	501	3.4
Dibrugarh	381	375	2.5
Charaideo	376	375	2.5
Sivsagar	433	424	2.8
Bajali	201	250	1.7
Tamulpur	259	201	1.3
Total	**15002**	**14921**	**100**


6 No SANTIPUR L P SCHOOL
P.O -GOHPUR
DIST.-SONITPUR (ASSAM)

CHAPTER 3 : HOUSEHOLD POPULATION AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

3.1 Overview

This chapter presents a detailed account of the socio-demographic and housing characteristics of the surveyed households. Understanding household structure, demographic composition, and living conditions provides essential context for interpreting subsequent analyses related to child marriage. The data used in this chapter are derived from household-level observations encompassing 14,893 households across every district of Assam. Detailed characteristics of the surveyed households are given in table 3.2 in this chapter.

3.2 Demographic Composition of Households

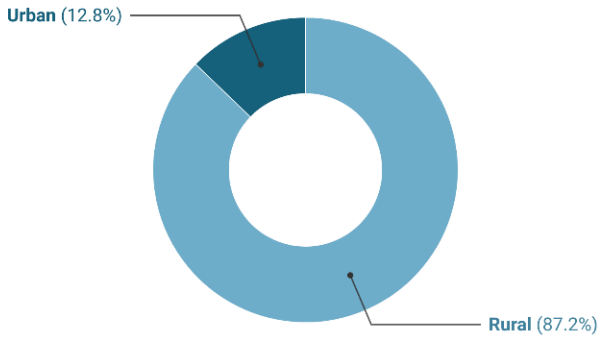
The surveyed households have an **average household size of 4.5 persons** (table 3.1), which is consistent with the national rural average reported by the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019–21). The minimum household size was one member and the maximum was thirty-one, indicating a moderate level of variation across the sample.

The **mean number of females** per household is **2.45**, slightly higher than the **mean number of males (2.04)**. This subtle gender imbalance could reflect male out-migration for employment or education, a common feature in rural and semi-urban parts of Assam. The **mean age of household heads** stands at **45.8 years**, suggesting that most households are headed by middle-aged adults, often the key economic contributors within the family unit (table 3.1).

3.3 Residence

A large majority of households (**87.2%**) reside in **rural areas**, with only **12.8%** situated in **urban regions** (figure 3.1). This distribution reflects the predominantly agrarian economy of Assam, where rural livelihoods-especially in agriculture, tea plantation work, and allied sectors-continue to dominate.

Figure 3.1 Distribution of Households by Place of Residence



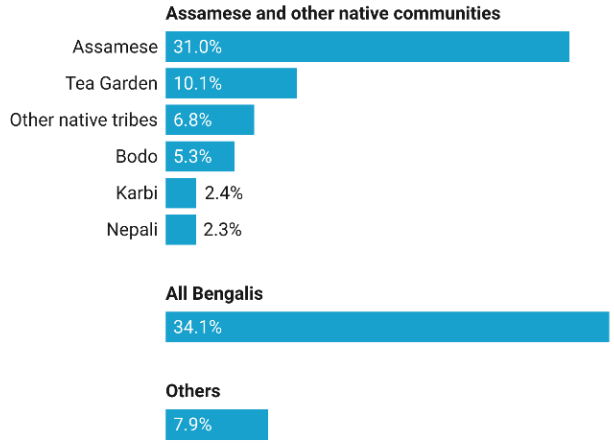
3.4 Ethnic Composition

The ethnic profile of the study population is dominated by Assamese and other native communities, which together account for more than half (58%) of the total population. Within this broad Assamese category, Assamese-speaking households form the largest subgroup (31.0 percent), followed by Tea Garden communities (10.1 percent), Bodo (5.3 percent), Karbi (2.4 percent), Nepali (2.3 percent), and other native tribes (6.8 percent). These subgroups collectively represent the indigenous and long-settled populations of Assam and reflect the internal diversity within the broader Assamese identity, prior to British period.

Bengali households constitute the second major ethnic group, accounting for 34.1 percent of the population, underscoring their significant demographic presence in the state. The remaining 7.9 percent of households belong to other ethnic groups (figure 3.2).

Overall, the distribution highlights that while Assamese and other native communities together form the majority of the population, the study area is characterized by substantial ethnic heterogeneity. This diversity provides an important backdrop for understanding variations in household characteristics, socio-economic conditions, and social practices examined in later chapters, including marriage patterns.

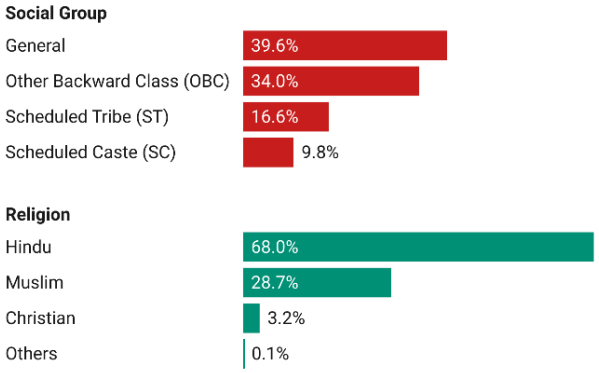
Figure 3.2 Distribution of Households by Major Communities



3.5 Social Group wise Composition

The caste or social group structure shows that **39.6%** of households belong to the **General category**, followed by **Other Backward Classes (OBC, 34%)**, **Scheduled Tribes (ST, 16.6%)**, and **Scheduled Castes (SC, 9.8%)**. This distribution reflects the broader demographic pattern of Assam, where OBCs and STs together form half of the population (figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 Distribution of Households by Social Group and Religion



3.6 Religious Composition

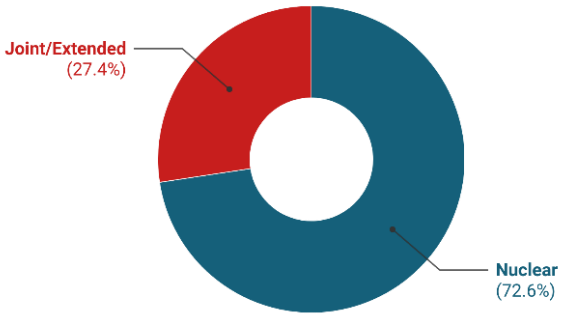
Religion remains an important axis of social identity in Assam. The majority of respondents identified as **Hindu (68%)**, followed by **Muslim (28.7%)** and **Christian (3.2%)**. A negligible share (**0.1%**) reported other religions (figure 3.3).

The Hindu–Muslim composition roughly mirrors the state's demographic profile from Census 2011, suggesting the sample's representativeness.

3.7 Type of Family

The structure of family units indicates that **72.6%** of households are **nuclear**, while **27.4%** live in **joint or extended family arrangements**. (figure 3.4) The predominance of nuclear families is consistent with urbanization and socioeconomic change, even in rural settings. This shift toward nuclear living arrangements may influence intra-household resource distribution and caregiving dynamics, particularly concerning children and the elderly.

Figure 3.4 Distribution of Households by Their Type

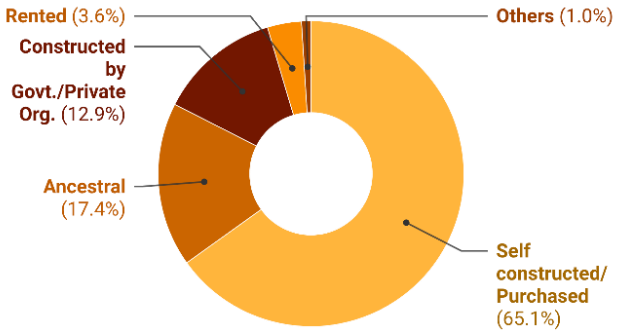


3.8 Housing Characteristics and Amenities

3.8.1 Ownership of House

Approximately **65.1%** of households own houses that are self-constructed or purchased, while **17.4%** live in ancestral homes. About **12.9%** of houses were constructed under **government or private organization initiatives**, indicating the reach of housing welfare programs like *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana*. Only **3.6%** of households live in rented accommodation, reflecting the rural dominance of home ownership (figure 3.5).

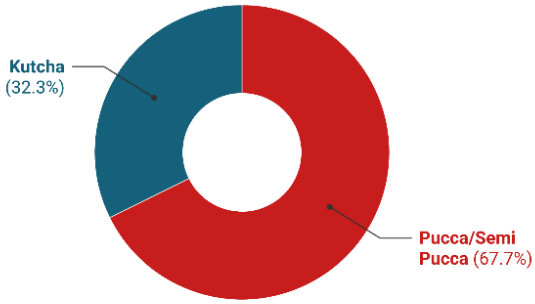
Figure 3.5 Distribution of Households by Ownership of House



3.8.2 Type of House

In terms of housing structure, **67.7%** of households live in **Pucca or Semi-Pucca** houses, while **32.3%** reside in **Kutcha** dwellings (figure 3.6). The substantial share of permanent housing suggests gradual improvement in living standards and infrastructure.

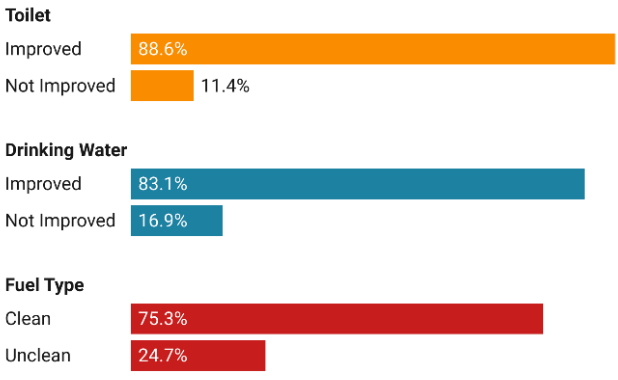
Figure 3.6 Percentages of Pucca/Semi Pucca or Kutcha House



3.8.3 Sanitation Facilities

Among the surveyed households, **88.6%** has reported having **improved toilets**. However, around **11.4%** still lack improved facilities, often relying on unimproved or shared latrines (figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7 Distribution by Type of Toilet Facility, Drinking Water, and Cooking Fuel



3.8.4 Drinking Water Source

About **83.1%** of households have access to **improved drinking water sources**, while **16.9%** rely on unimproved or distant sources (figure

3.7). This reflects moderate success of infrastructure development.

3.8.5 Access to Clean Fuel

A significant **75.3%** of households use **clean cooking fuels** (such as LPG or electricity), whereas **24.7%** continue to depend on solid fuels like firewood, cow dung, or coal (figure 3.7).

3.9 Distribution of HHs by Wealth Quintiles

The wealth distribution chart reveals stark disparities between rural and urban areas in their economic composition. Rural areas exhibit a more polarized distribution, with 22.0% of the population in the poorest quintile and 16.2% in the richest, suggesting significant economic inequality with populations concentrated at both extremes and relatively smaller middle-income groups. In contrast, urban areas show a dramatically different pattern, with 45.6% concentrated in one quintile (indicating a large middle-to-upper income segment), while only 8.3% fall in the poorest category. This urban-rural divide suggests that urban areas have greater economic stratification with wealth concentrated in upper categories, whereas rural areas maintain a more distributed but economically polarized structure (figure 3.8).

3.10 Regional Distribution of Households

The state's geographical diversity is represented across the sample:

- **Lower Assam**[2] accounts for the largest share (**37.8%**),
- followed by **Upper Assam (24.5%)**,
- **Central Assam (16.8%)**,
- **North Assam (12.1%)**, and
- **Barak Valley (8.9%)** (figure 3.8).

These proportions align with population density patterns and economic activity zones. Lower and Upper Assam, being more agriculturally productive and industrially active, host a greater share of households.

Figure 3.8 Distribution of Households by Wealth Quintiles

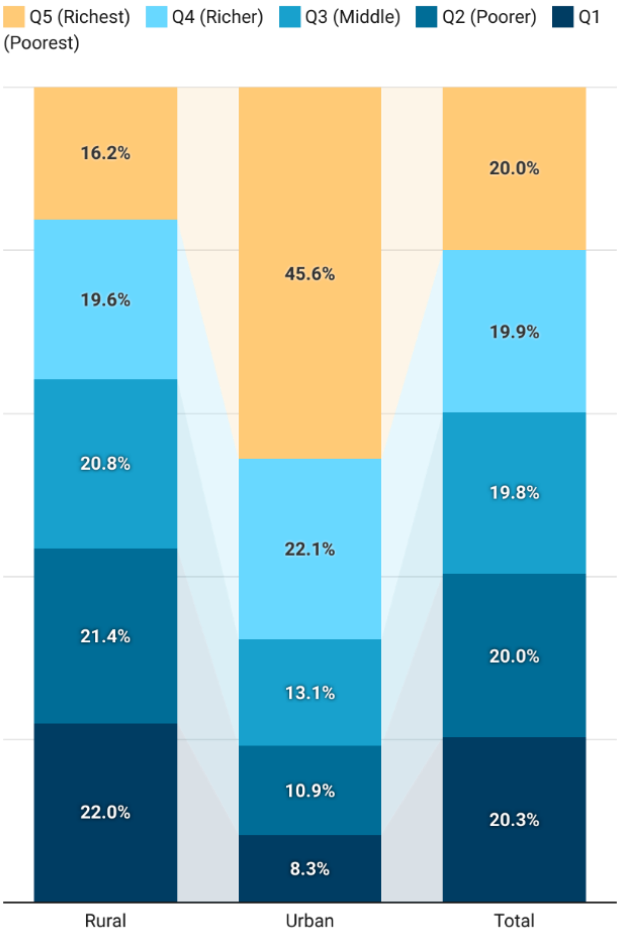


Figure 3.8 Distribution by Administrative Divisions

[2] *Districts were grouped into five administrative divisions — **Barak Valley** (Cachar, Hailakandi, Karimganj); **Central Assam** (Dima Hasao, East and West Karbi Anglong, Hojai, Morigaon, Nagaon); **Lower Assam** (Baksa, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Chirang, Dhubri, Goalpara, Nalbari, Kamrup Metro, Kamrup Rural, Kokrajhar, South Salmara, Bajali, Tamulpur); **North Assam** (Darrang, Udalguri, Sonitpur, Biswanath); and **Upper Assam** (Charaideo, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Jorhat, Lakhimpur, Majuli, Sivasagar, Tinsukia).*

Table 3.1: Demography of surveyed households, Assam, 2024-25

Characteristics	Estimates
Average Household Size	4.51
Avg. Number of Females in the HH	2.45
Avg. Number of Males in the HH	2.04
Avg. Age of HH Head	45.81

Table 3.2: Characteristics of surveyed households by place of Residence, Assam, 2024-25

Background	Rural (%)	Urban (%)	Total (%)
Ethnicity			
Assamese	30.3	36.3	31.0
Bengali	33.2	40.6	34.1
Bodo	5.8	2.1	5.3
Karbi	2.6	1.4	2.4
Nepali	2.3	2.4	2.3
Others	14.7	14.4	14.6
Tea Garden	11.2	2.9	10.1
Social Group			
General	38.8	45.4	39.6
Other Backward Class (OBC)	34.9	28.3	34.0
Scheduled Caste (SC)	8.5	18.4	9.8
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	17.8	8.0	16.6
Religion			
Christian	3.5	1.2	3.2
Hindu	66.0	81.7	68.0
Muslim	30.4	17.0	28.7
Others	0.1	0.2	0.1
Type of Family			
Joint/Extended	28.0	23.0	27.4
Nuclear	71.9	77.0	72.6
Ownership of House			
Ancestral	17.6	16.0	17.4
Constructed by Government/Private organization	13.8	7.4	12.9
Others	1.0	0.5	1.0
Own constructed/Purchased	66.7	54.3	65.1
Rented	0.9	21.9	3.6

House Type			
Kutcha	34.6	16.9	32.3
Pucca/Semi Pucca	65.4	83.1	67.7
Improved Toilet			
Not Improved	11.9	7.9	11.4
Improved	88.1	92.1	88.6
Improved Drinking Water			
Not Improved	17.1	15.7	16.9
Improved	82.9	84.3	83.1
Access to Clean Fuel			
Unclean	27.5	6.1	24.7
Clean	72.5	93.9	75.3
Wealth Quintile			
Poorest	22.0	8.3	20.3
Poorer	21.2	10.1	20.0
Middle	21.0	13.9	19.8
Richer	19.7	22.1	19.9
Richest	16.2	45.7	20.0
Division			
Barak Valley	8.9	9.2	8.9
Central Assam	16.6	17.8	16.8
Lower Assam	37.0	43.1	37.8
North Assam	13.0	5.7	12.1
Upper Assam	24.5	24.2	24.5
Total Number (HH)	**12981**	**1912**	**14893**

CHAPTER 4 : RESPONDENT'S CHARACTERISTICS

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the socio-demographic profile of respondents covered in the ASEMA Study. Understanding these background characteristics helps contextualize subsequent analyses on marriage and related behaviours. The discussion below summarizes key features such as age composition, marital status, education, caste, religion, ethnicity, type of family, contraceptive use, wealth status, and regional distribution.

4.2 Age Composition

The sample consists of women aged 15–30 years. About **28 percent** are aged **15–19, 32 percent** are **20–24**, and **39 percent** are **25–30 years**. The proportion of older respondents (25–30 years) is slightly higher in urban areas (43 percent) than in rural areas (39 percent), indicating that urban samples capture a relatively more mature cohort.

4.3 Marital Status

A majority of respondents are **currently married (61.5%)**, followed by **never married (37.5%)**. A small share is **widowed (0.5%)** or **divorced/separated (0.6%)**. Marriage is thus nearly universal by age 30, reflecting the persistence of early and near-complete marriage among women in Assam. Urban areas show a somewhat higher proportion of never-married women (46%) than rural areas (36%), consistent with delayed marriage in urban settings.

Figure 4.1 Age of Respondent

Percentage distribution of respondents by age

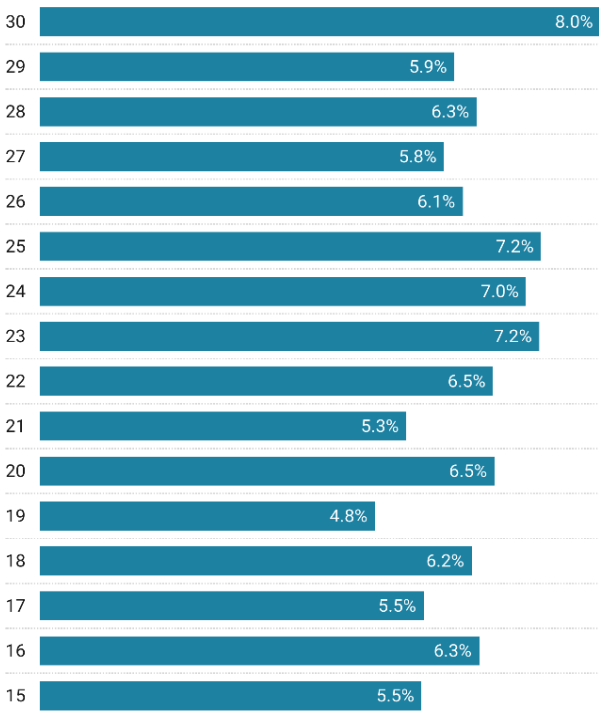
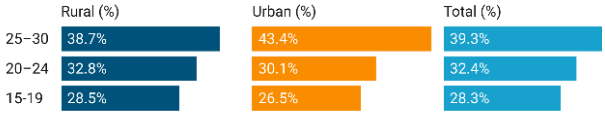


Figure 4.2 Age of the Respondents by Residence

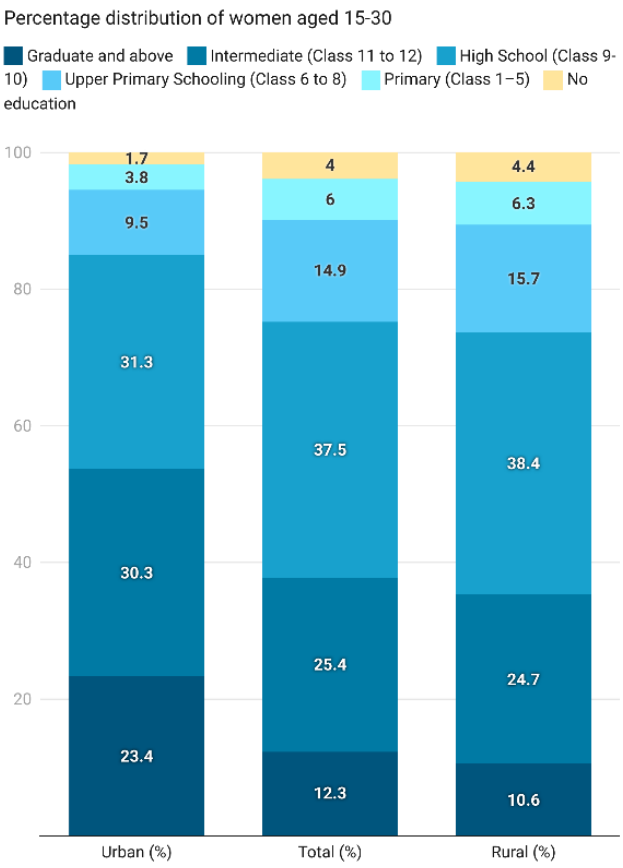


4.4 Educational Attainment

Educational attainment varies but remains concentrated below higher levels:

- **Seventy-eight percent** of women have education **below Class 12,**
- **Twelve percent** have completed **graduation or above,** and
- **Four percent** have **no formal education.**

Figure 4.4 Education of Survey Respondents



Educational attainment is notably higher in urban areas, where **23 percent** are graduates or above compared to **10 percent** in rural areas. This urban–rural gap illustrates persistent disparities in access to education for women.

4.5 Ethnic and Linguistic Composition

A majority of respondents belong to Assamese and other native communities based on how they reported, which together account for 58.0 percent of the sample. Bengali respondents form the second largest group at 34.1 percent, while the remaining 7.9 percent belong to other ethnic groups. This composition reflects the demographic structure of Assam, where indigenous and long-settled communities coexist with a substantial Bengali population.

Language use within households shows a strong predominance of monolingual communication. More than four-fifths of respondents (82.1 percent) report speaking a single language at home, while 17.9 percent live in multilingual households. Among single-language households, Assamese is the most commonly spoken language (38.1 percent), closely followed by Bengali (35.4 percent). Tea Garden or Adivasi languages account for 6.6 percent, while Bodo (4.9 percent), Garo (3.7 percent), Missing (3.2 percent), Karbi (2.4 percent), and Nepali (1.7 percent) represent smaller but socially significant linguistic groups.

Multilingual households exhibit clear patterns of language mixing. The most common combination is Assamese and Bengali (35.6 percent), followed by Assamese with Tea Garden or Adivasi languages (21.4 percent). Other combinations-including Assamese with Bodo, Garo, Missing, Nepali, and other languages-together constitute a notable share, indicating regular cross-linguistic interaction in everyday life.

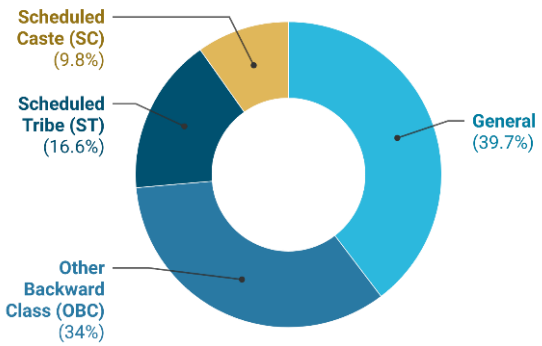
4.6 Caste Distribution

Caste composition indicates a diverse social mix-

- **General category:** 39.7 percent
  - **Other Backward Class (OBC):** 34.0 percent
  - **Scheduled Caste (SC):** 9.8 percent
  - **Scheduled Tribe (ST):** 16.6 percent

Urban areas show a higher share of **General (45%)** and **SC (18%)** groups, while **OBCs** and **STs** dominate rural areas. The data thus reveal a distinct urban concentration of upper and middle castes.

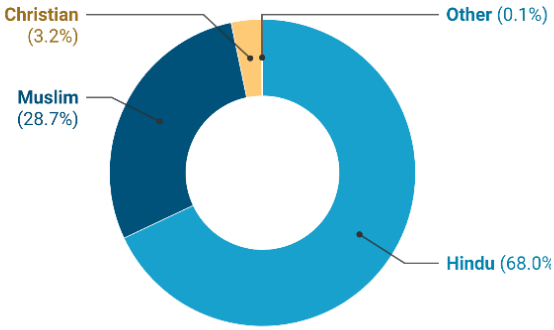
Figure 4.6 Distribution of Respondents by Social Groups



4.7 Religious Composition

Religion-wise, the sample is predominantly **Hindu (68%)**, followed by **Muslim (28.7%)** and **Christian (3.2%)**, with negligible representation from other faiths. Hindus are more concentrated in urban areas (**82%**) compared to Muslims (**17%**), reflecting the demographic distribution of Assam's districts. Christians form small pockets mainly in tribal and hilly areas.

Figure 4.7 Religious Composition of Respondents

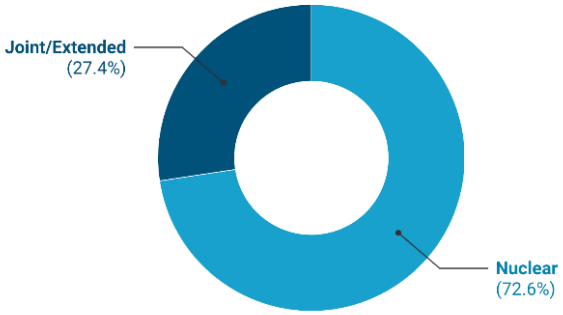


4.8 Type of Family

Most respondents live in **nuclear families (73%)**, while **27 percent** live in **joint or extended households**. Urban areas record a higher share of nuclear families (77%), compared with 72 percent in rural regions, reflecting modernization and smaller household structures in towns and cities.

Figure 4.8 Type of Family

Percentage distribution of respondents by their type of family



4.9 Contraceptive Use

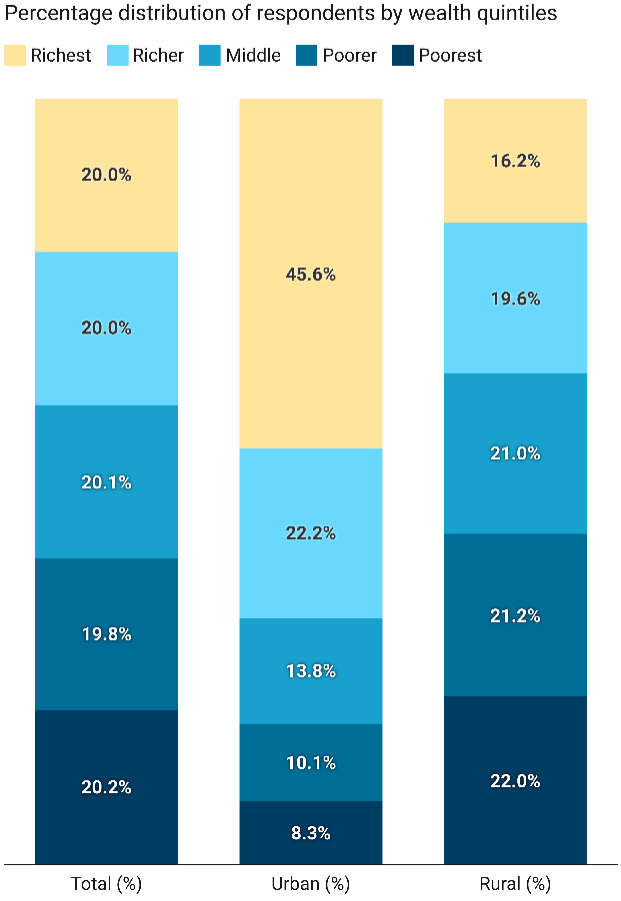
Almost all married women reported **current contraceptive use (97.9%)**, with minimal rural–urban difference. However, **ever-use of contraception** is slightly higher among rural women (52%) compared with urban (47%), suggesting earlier exposure or differing reproductive intentions. Non-use remains negligible (<3%).

4.10 Wealth Quintile

Wealth distribution shows that **rural households** are concentrated in the lower quintiles:

The **poorest two quintiles** together represent **42 percent** of the rural sample, while in urban areas, **45.6 percent** belong to the richest quintile This indicates clear economic stratification between rural and urban respondents.

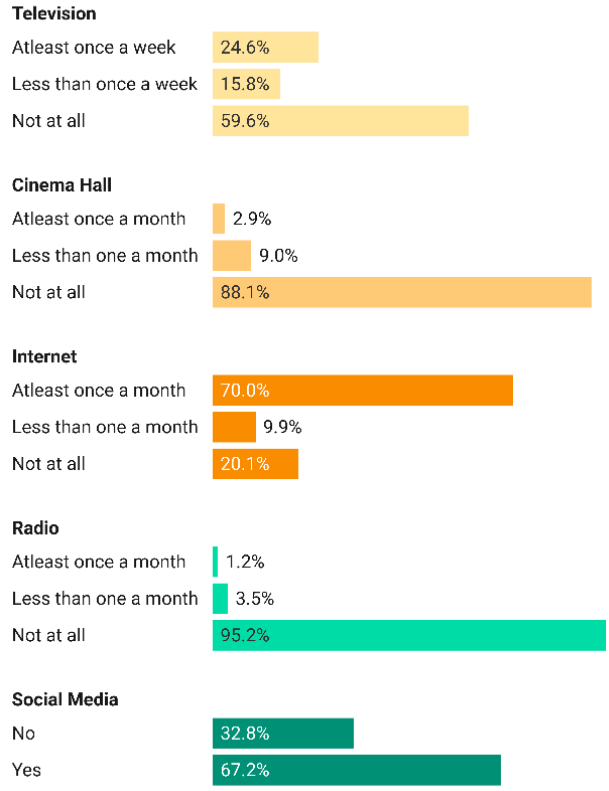
Figure 4.9 Distribution of Respondents by Wealth Quintile



4.11 Media Exposure

The sample is heavily skewed toward individuals who report some level of media exposure. Only a small share of the population falls into the "no exposure" category, accounting for roughly **13.8 percent** of the sample. In contrast, a much larger proportion reports either low or high exposure, at **43.9 percent** and **42.3 percent**, respectively. This means that **about 86 percent** of respondents have at least some engagements with media sources. The near-equal distribution between low and high exposure groups suggests a broad spread in the intensity of media use, but with limited complete isolation from media.

Figure 4.10 Exposure to Mass Media



4.12 Regional Distribution (Division)

Respondents are distributed across Assam's five administrative divisions:

- **Lower Assam:** 37.7 percent
- **Upper Assam:** 24.4 percent
- **Central Assam:** 16.9 percent
- **North Assam:** 12.1 percent
- **Barak Valley:** 8.9 percent

Urban respondents are more concentrated in **Lower Assam** (43%) and **Central Assam** (18%), while rural representation is higher in the northern and upper regions.

4.13 Summary

The ASEMA study samples represents a young, rural population of women aged 15–30 years. Most are married, educated up to secondary level, and belong to Hindu or Muslim households. The socio-demographic

composition shows visible urban advantages in education, wealth, and delayed marriage, while rural respondents are more likely to belong to lower caste or tribal groups. This profile provides essential context for understanding the marital and social patterns discussed in subsequent chapters

Figure 4.11 Distribution of Respondents by Administrative Divisions of Assam

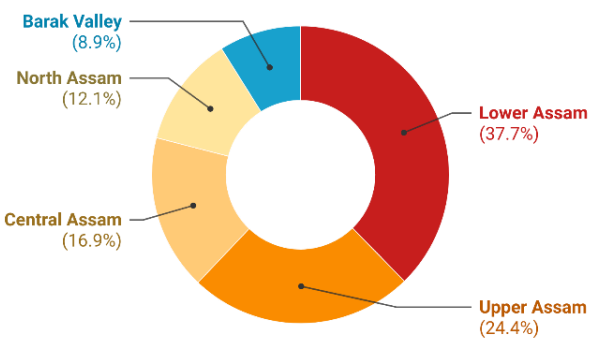


Table 4.1: Characteristics of the respondents, Assam, 2024-25

Background	Rural % (n)	Urban% (n)	Total % (n)
Age Group			
15-19	28.5 (3710)	26.5 (509)	28.3 (4219)
20–24	32.8 (4260)	30.1 (577)	32.4 (4837)
25–30	38.7 (5033)	43.4 (832)	39.3 (5865)
Marital Status			
Divorced/Separated	0.5 (66)	0.9 (18)	0.6 (84)
Married	62.8 (8166)	52.4 (1005)	61.5 (9171)
Never married	36.2 (4707)	46 (883)	37.5 (5590)
Widowed	0.5 (59)	0.6 (12)	0.5 (71)
Highest Education			
Graduate and above	10.6 (1372)	23.4 (446)	12.3 (1818)
High School (Class 9-10)	38.4 (4963)	31.3 (597)	37.5 (5560)
Intermediate (Class 11 to 12)	24.7 (3188)	30.3 (579)	25.4 (3767)
No education	4.4 (563)	1.7 (32)	4 (595)
Primary (Class 1–5)	6.3 (813)	3.8 (72)	6 (885)
Upper Primary Schooling (Class 6 to 8)	15.7 (2029)	9.5 (182)	14.9 (2211)
Ethnicity			
Assamese	30.3 (3941)	36.3 (696)	31.1 (4637)
Bengali	33.2 (4308)	40.5 (776)	34.1 (5084)
Bodo	5.8 (757)	2.1 (40)	5.3 (797)
Karbi	2.5 (331)	1.4 (27)	2.4 (358)
Nepali	2.3 (299)	2.3 (45)	2.3 (344)
Others	14.7 (1905)	14.4 (276)	14.6 (2181)
Tea Garden	11.2 (1451)	2.9 (55)	10.1 (1506)
Social Group			
General	38.8 (5018)	45.3 (867)	39.7 (5885)
Other Backward Class (OBC)	34.8 (4502)	28.3 (541)	34 (5043)
Scheduled Caste (SC)	8.5 (1096)	18.4 (352)	9.8 (1448)
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	17.8 (2305)	7.9 (152)	16.6 (2457)
Religion			
Buddhist	0 (6)	0.1 (1)	0 (7)
Christian	3.4 (447)	1.2 (23)	3.2 (470)
Hindu	66 (8548)	81.7 (1560)	68 (10108)
Muslim	30.5 (3947)	17 (324)	28.7 (4271)
Others	0.1 (12)	0.1 (1)	0.1 (13)
Family Type			
Joint/Extended	28.1 (3649)	23 (442)	27.4 (4091)
Nuclear	71.9 (9345)	77 (1476)	72.6 (10821)

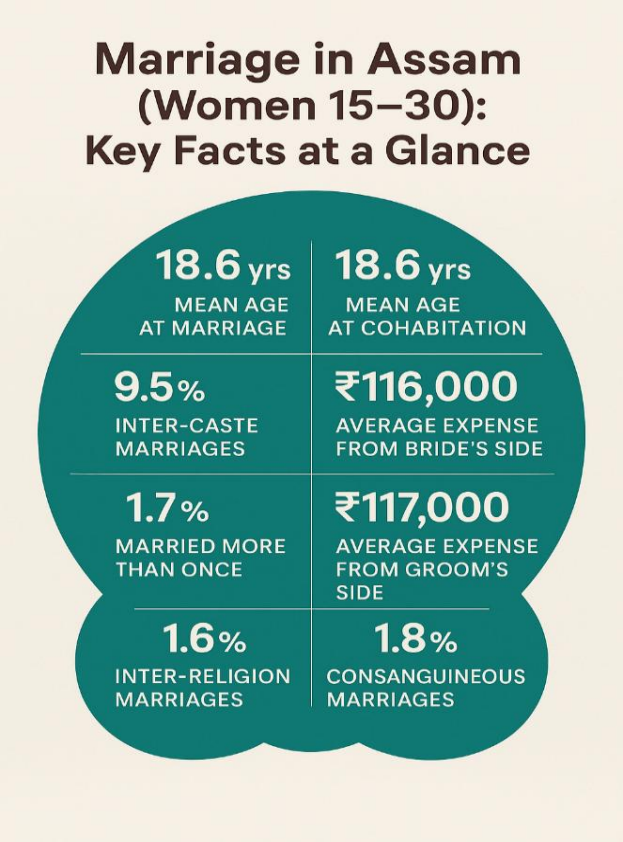
Currently Using Any Contraceptive method			
No	2.3 (296)	1 (19)	2.1 (315)
Yes	97.7 (12685)	99 (1893)	97.9 (14578)
Ever Used Any Contraceptive Method			
No	47.8 (6204)	53.3 (1022)	48.5 (7226)
Yes	52.2 (6776)	46.7 (894)	51.5 (7670)
Wealth Quintile			
Poorest	22 (2858)	8.3 (159)	20.2 (3017)
Poorer	21.2 (2758)	10.1 (194)	19.8 (2952)
Middle	21 (2727)	13.8 (265)	20.1 (2992)
Richer	19.6 (2555)	22.2 (425)	20 (2980)
Richest	16.2 (2105)	45.6 (875)	20 (2980)
Division			
Barak Valley	8.9 (1152)	9.1 (175)	8.9 (1327)
Central Assam	16.7 (2174)	17.9 (344)	16.9 (2518)
Lower Assam	36.9 (4801)	43.1 (826)	37.7 (5627)
North Assam	13 (1693)	5.8 (111)	12.1 (1804)
Upper Assam	24.5 (3183)	24.1 (462)	24.4 (3645)
Total Number (n)	**13003**	**1918**	**14921**

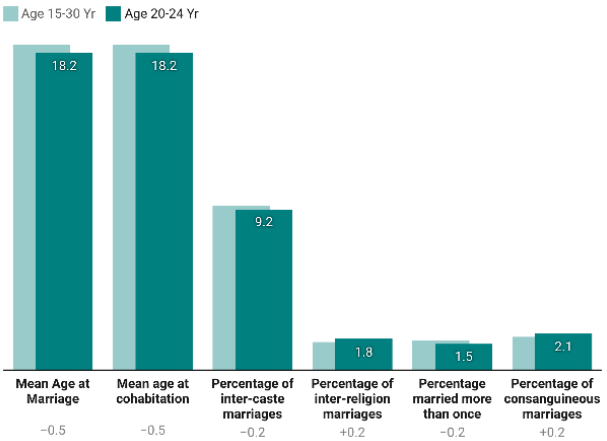
CHAPTER 5 : MARRIAGE PATTERNS AND PRACTICES

5.1 Introduction

Marriage in India represents a complex social institution, deeply rooted in tradition, kinship, and caste systems. While the institution has undergone significant transformations over recent decades-driven by education, urbanization, and economic shifts-it continues to reflect strong social hierarchies and gender norms. Understanding the prevailing patterns and practices of marriage offers critical insights into gender relations, social mobility, and the persistence of cultural boundaries.

This chapter presents an empirical account of marriage characteristics among women, focusing on **age at marriage, cohabitation, inter-caste and inter-religion marriages, marital expenses, and consanguinity in Assam**. The analysis is based on individual-level data collected through the ASEMA study. The findings illuminate both traditional continuities and emerging changes in marriage practices across socio-economic strata.





5.2 Age at Marriage

The age at marriage remains a pivotal indicator of women's autonomy and well-being. Early marriage, or *child marriage*, continues to be a major concern, with lifelong implications for education, health, and empowerment. In Assam, the mean age at first marriage among women aged. 15–30 years is **around 18.6 years,** suggesting that many marriages continue to occur relatively early in life.

The early onset of marriage not only limits women's educational and occupational prospects but also has long-term implications for reproductive health and intergenerational well-being. The mean age at cohabitation, at approximately 18.6 years, closely mirrors the age at marriage, indicating minimal delay between marriage and the start of conjugal life.

Across socio-economic groups, the age at marriage varies modestly.

- Women from **urban areas** marry later (**19.7 years**) than those from **rural areas** (**18.5 years**).
- By caste, **OBC (19.1 years)** and **Scheduled Tribe (18.9 years)** women marry slightly later than **General caste (18.1 years)** and **SC (18.7 years)** women.
- By religion, **Hindu (19.1 years)** and **Christian (19.2 years)** women marry later than **Muslim women (17.5 years)**.

- The mean age at marriage rises consistently with economic status, from **17.8 years among the poorest** to **20.2 years among the richest quintile**, showing clear wealth gradients.

Figure 5.1 Mean Age at Marriage by Caste and Religion

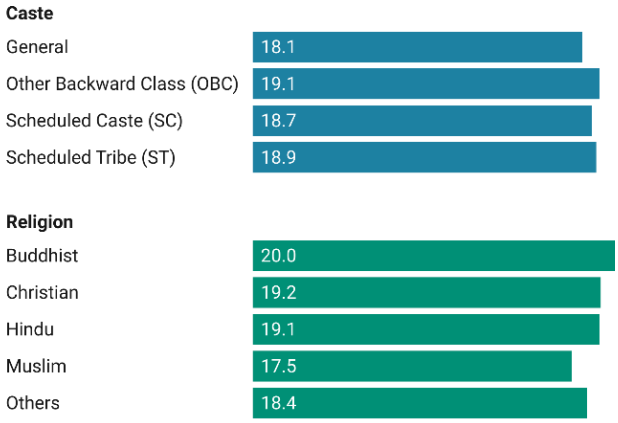
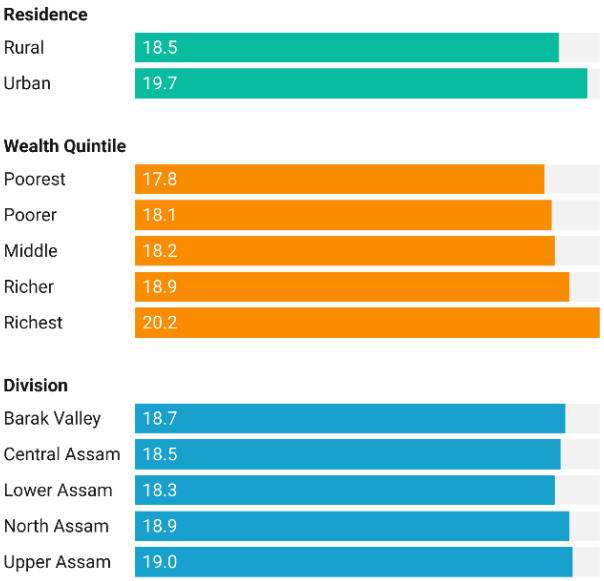
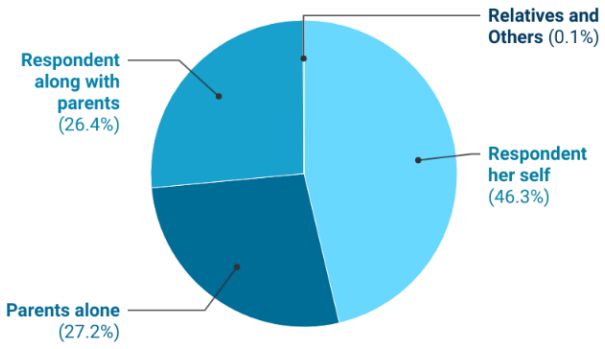


Figure 5.2 Mean Age at Marriage by Residence, Wealth Quintile and Administrative Division



5.3 Decision about Choosing Partner

Figure 5.3 Who Chooses the Partner for Marriage?



5.4 Patterns of Endogamy and Inter-group Marriages

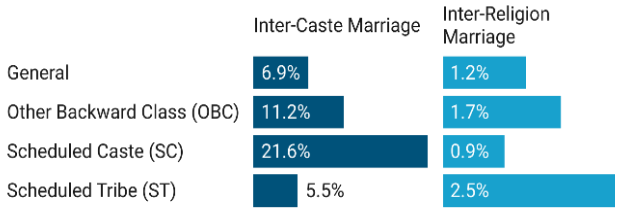
Marriage in Assam remains predominantly **endogamous**, with strong adherence to caste and religious boundaries. Only **9.5 percent** of marriages were reported as **inter-caste**, while **inter-religion marriages** accounted for a mere **1.6 percent** of unions.

These low figures demonstrate that caste and religion continue to serve as powerful structuring principles in marital decision-making. Inter-group marriages- particularly inter-religious unions-remain socially sensitive and are often met with family or community disapproval. This pattern highlights the endurance of traditional social closure in the Assamese marriage system, even as education

and urbanization expand opportunities for social mixing.

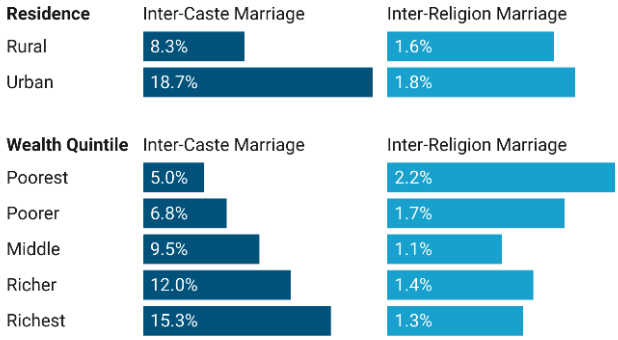
Figure 5.4 Inter-Caste and Inter-Religion Marriage

Percentage of respondents experienced inter-caste/religion marriage



- Inter-caste unions are most frequent among **Scheduled Castes (21.6%)**, followed by **OBCs (11.2%)**, while they are lowest among **Scheduled Tribes (5.5%)**.
- Inter-religion marriages are rare across all social groups, slightly higher among **Christians (18.6%)** but below **2 percent** among Hindus and Muslims.
- Urban areas show nearly **double the rate of inter-caste marriage (18.7%)** compared to rural areas (8.3%).
- By ethnicity, **Assamese (18.3%)** and **Bengali (6%)** speakers show the widest contrast,

Figure 5.5 Inter-Caste/Religion Marriages by Residence and Wealth Quintile



indicating that mainstream groups are more open to inter-caste alliances than smaller linguistic communities.

These patterns confirm that caste and religion continue to define marital boundaries, with only gradual social relaxation in urban and affluent contexts.

5.5 Marital Order and Consanguinity

Marriage continues to be a largely **once-in-a-lifetime** institution in Assam. Only **1.7 percent** of respondents reported being **married more than once**, underscoring the social and cultural value attached to marital permanence.

Consanguineous marriages, or unions among blood relatives, were reported by **1.8 percent** of respondents. While relatively rare, their presence suggests the persistence of certain customary practices, often justified by family trust or the desire to maintain property within kin groups. **Consanguineous marriages** prevalence varies by social and economic background: Consanguineous marriages are thus slightly more common among **Muslims**, **Bengali speakers**, **Lower Assam residents**, and **poorer households**, while they remain rare among **tribal** and **urban** groups. These patterns suggest that kin-based marriage preferences persist in a few communities but have largely declined across the state.

5.6 Marriage Expenditures

Marriage remains a major financial event for both families. The **average expenditure from the bride's side** is about **₹116,098**, while the **groom's side** spends approximately **₹117,205**. These figures vary significantly across social and economic groups:

- By caste, **General** and **OBC families** report the highest spending (₹1.12–1.35 lakh), while **ST households** spend less than ₹60,000 on average.

Figure 5.6 Consanguineous Marriage by Social Group and Religion

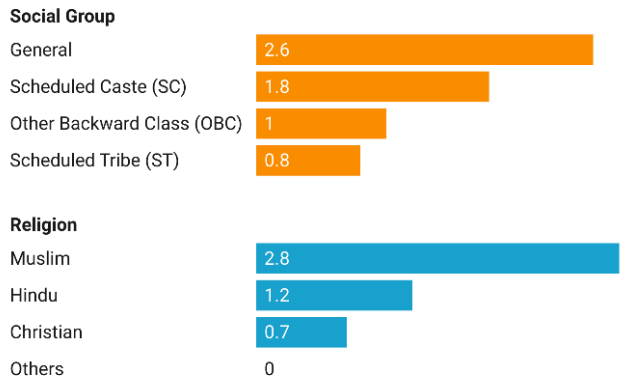


Figure 5.7 Consanguineous Marriage by Residence, Wealth Quintile and Administrative Divisions

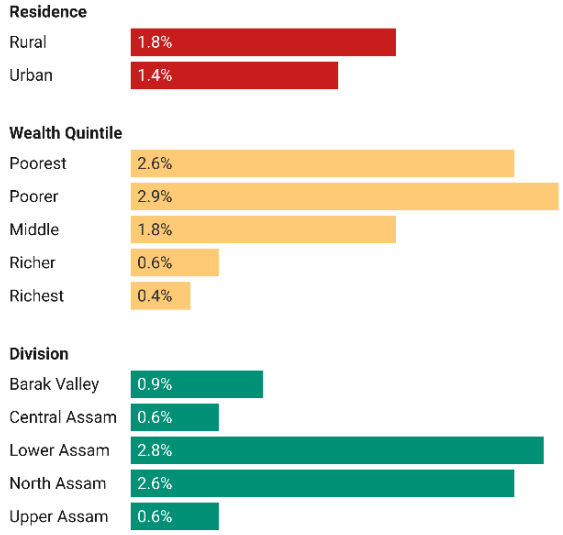
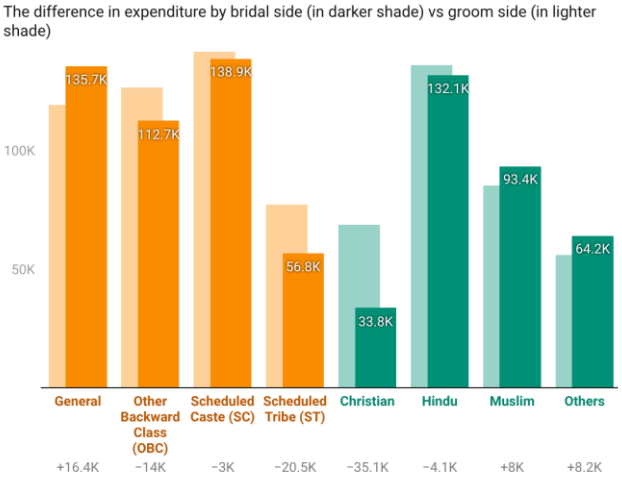


Figure 5.8 Marriage Expenditures by Social Group and Religion



- **Urban families** spend nearly **₹2.08 lakh** (bride's side) compared to **₹1.05 lakh** in rural areas.
- **Wealthier households** spend almost **₹2.76 lakh**, while the poorest spend around **₹52,000**, reflecting clear economic gradients.
- Among ethnic groups, Assamese families incur the highest marriage costs (₹1.60 lakh), whereas Tea Garden communities spend the least (₹29,892).

Table 5.1: Pattern of marriage across different age group, Assam, 2024-25

Indicators/Estimates	Age Groups			
	18-29	20-24	18-30	15-30
Mean Age at Marriage	17.01	18.17	18.61	18.63
Mean age at cohabitation	17.06	18.16	18.6	18.62
Percentage of inter-caste marriages	5.1	9.2	9.5	9.4
Percentage of inter-religion marriages	1.2	1.8	1.6	1.6
Percentage married more than once	1.2	1.5	1.7	1.7
Average expense from bride's side	90074	86790	116098	116448
Average expense from groom's side	100854	96427	117205	117453
Percentage of consanguineous marriages	1.4	2.1	1.8	1.9
Choice of husband				
Respondent along with parents				26.4
Respondent herself				46.3
Parents alone				27.2
Relatives				0.1

Table 5.2: Marriage pattern by socio-demographic characteristics, Assam 2024-25

Mean age at marriage (years), prevalence of inter-caste marriage, Inter-religion marriage, and consanguineous marriage by background characteristics of the respondents.

Background	Mean Age at Marriage	Inter-Caste Marriage (%)	Inter-Religion Marriage (%)	Consanguineous Marriage (%)
Ethnicity				
Assamese	19.2	18.3	1.2	1.6
Bengali	17.9	6.0	0.8	2.4
Bodo	19.0	4.6	3.6	1.8
Karbi	18.5	1.3	2.1	0.4
Nepali	19.3	8.4	0.5	1.1
Others	18.8	7.5	2.0	0.6
Tea Garden	18.6	3.7	4.1	1.6
Social Group				
General	18.1	6.9	1.2	2.6
Other Backward Class (OBC)	19.1	11.2	1.7	1.0
Scheduled Caste (SC)	18.7	21.6	0.9	1.8

Scheduled Tribe (ST)	18.9	5.5	2.5	0.8
Religion				
Buddhist	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Christian	19.2	4.5	18.6	0.7
Hindu	19.1	13.6	0.8	1.2
Muslim	17.5	1.4	1.3	2.8
Others	18.4	10.0	90.0	0.0
Residence				
Rural	18.5	8.3	1.6	1.8
Urban	19.7	18.7	1.8	1.4
Wealth Quintile				
Poorest	17.8	5.0	2.2	2.6
Poorer	18.1	6.8	1.7	2.9
Middle	18.2	9.5	1.1	1.8
Richer	18.9	12.0	1.4	0.6
Richest	20.2	15.3	1.3	0.4
Division				
Barak Valley	18.7	4.8	0.8	0.9
Central Assam	18.5	8.9	1.2	0.6
Lower Assam	18.3	9.6	1.4	2.8
North Assam	18.9	10.9	3.1	2.6
Upper Assam	19.0	10.6	1.7	0.6

CHAPTER 6 : CHILD MARRIAGE

6.1 Prevalence of Child Marriage in Assam

Child marriage, defined by **UNICEF** as *a formal marriage or informal union in which at least one of the partners is below the age of 18 years*, represents a severe violation of human rights and a major public health concern (UNFPA, n.d.; UNICEF, n.d.; United Nations, 2015). It disproportionately affects girls, curtailing their education, health, and social development while perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty and gender inequality. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.3 explicitly targets the elimination of child, early, and forced marriage as part of the global commitment to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Despite legal prohibitions under the *Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006*, and growing awareness through national campaigns, the practice continues to persist in India-particularly in states with entrenched socio-cultural norms, low female literacy, and extreme poverty levels. Assam is among the states where child marriage remains a significant social issue, especially in rural and marginalized communities.

Overall Prevalence

In the present study, based on household-level data from **4,837 women aged 20–24 years, 1,221** were reported to have been married before reaching the legal age of 18 years. This corresponds to a **child marriage prevalence rate of 25.2% in Assam.**

The results thus reaffirm that approximately **one in four women in Assam** were subjected to

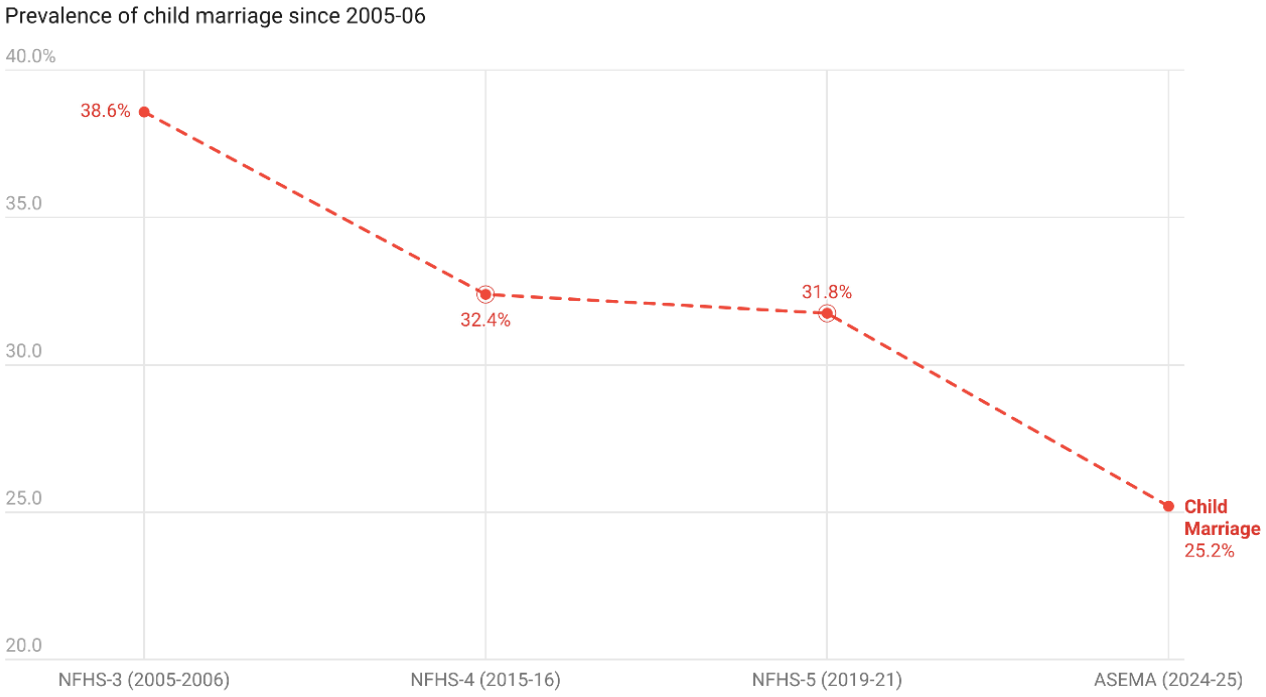
early marriage, highlighting the persistence of gendered social norms and structural vulnerabilities.

An examination of temporal trends in the prevalence of child marriage in Assam reveals a consistent decline over the past two decades. The Figure presents the comparative estimates from the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) and ASEMA study, covering the period from 2005–06 to 2024–25.

According to NFHS-3 (2005–06), nearly 38.6% of women aged 20–24 years had been married before the legal age of 18 years. This figure declined modestly to 32.4% in NFHS-4 (2015–16) and 31.8% in NFHS-5 (2019–21). The ASEMA study

This downward trajectory indicates gradual but persistent progress in reducing early marriage practices in the state. The reduction is likely attributable to a combination of policy interventions, expansion of educational opportunities, and increased access to government welfare schemes directed toward

Figure 6.1 Trend in the Prevalence of Child Marriage in Assam



adolescent girls and young women. Programmes such as Majoni, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and conditional cash transfer initiatives under the Arunodoi and Assam Amrit Abhiyan schemes may have indirectly contributed by enhancing girls' educational retention, awareness, and economic security.

6.2 Ethnic Differentials

Child marriage prevalence shows substantial variation across ethnic communities. The **Bengali community** reports the **highest prevalence at 33.9%**, indicating a deeply entrenched practice of early marriage. Further disaggregated analysis within the Bengali community revealed substantial religious variation in child marriage. Bengali Muslim women exhibited a markedly higher prevalence (40.5%) compared with their Bengali Hindu counterparts (18.9%).

By contrast, the **Assamese (18.6%)** and **Nepali (18.6%)** communities exhibit comparatively lower levels, suggesting gradual social change and educational advancement. Among tribal groups, **Bodo (19.5%)** and **Karbi (26.8%)** communities show intermediate prevalence levels, reflecting localized cultural traditions. Interestingly, the **Tea Garden community (22.8%)**-historically marginalized and economically deprived, continues to experience moderate levels of child marriage. Overall, community-based differences highlight that cultural heterogeneity and economic marginalization jointly shape early marriage practices in the state.

6.3 Religious Differentials

Religion plays a critical role in shaping marital norms. The data show stark disparities: **Muslim households have the highest prevalence (38.7%)** of child marriage, nearly twice the state average. In contrast, **Hindu households** record **19.2%**, while **Christian (18.8%)** and **Others (25%)** remain comparatively lower.

Figure 6.2 Prevalence of Child Marriage Among Major Communities

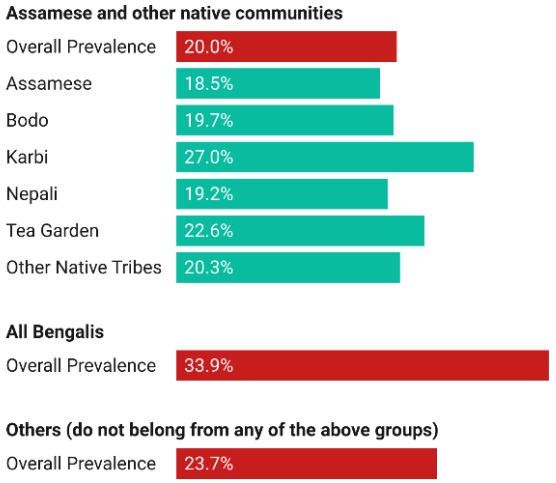
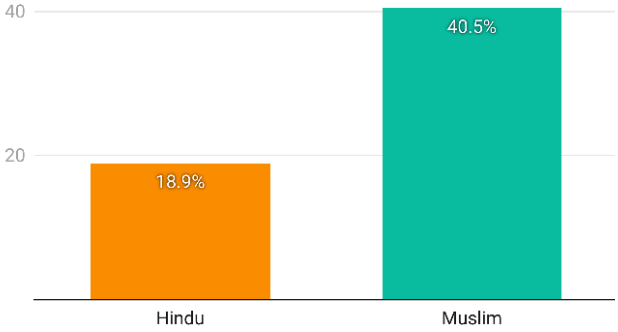


Figure 6.3 Prevalence of Child Marriage by Religious Groups Among Bengali Community



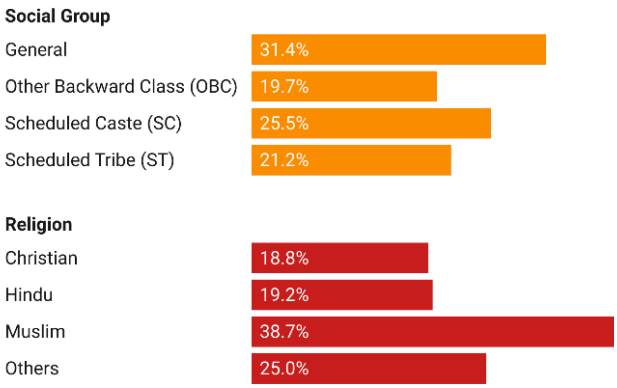
The high prevalence among Muslims may reflect religious belief and patriarchal family structures prevalent in certain districts of Lower Assam. In contrast, Christian communities-primarily located in hill districts-have benefited from greater educational exposure and community awareness programs. These differences underscore how religious norms, educational attainment, and women's autonomy interact to influence marriage timing.

6.4 Caste Differentials

The prevalence of child marriage is highest among General caste households (31.4 percent), followed by Scheduled Castes (25.5 percent), Scheduled Tribes (21.2 percent), and Other Backward Classes (19.7 percent).

The higher prevalence among the General caste becomes easier to understand when looking at how child marriage varies within caste by religion. Figure 6.5 shows that a large numbers of child marriages in the General category occur especially Muslim girls (38.8 percent) followed by Hindu (17.6 percent) and, while Christian and "other" religions report no cases.

Figure 6.4 Child Marriage by Social Group and Religion



This internal composition matters: General caste households include a sizeable share of Muslim families in Assam, and this subgroup shows the highest child-marriage prevalence across all caste - religion combinations in the graph. In other words, the overall rate for the General caste is pushed upward not because the caste itself is uniformly vulnerable but because one religious subgroup within it experiences markedly higher early marriage.

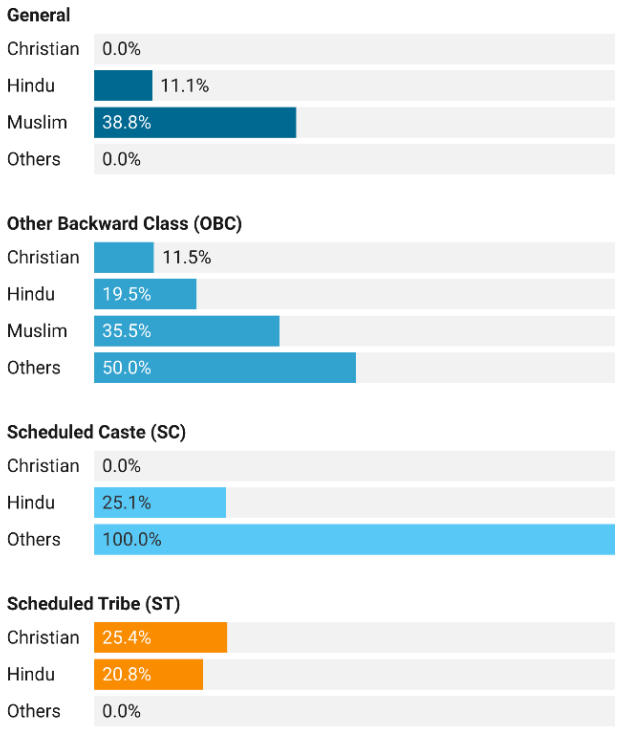
This pattern highlights a crucial point: caste alone does not drive the higher prevalence

among General households. The intersection of caste and religion-particularly the concentration of high-risk Muslim families within the General category-shapes the observed pattern. Cultural norms around early marriage, gender expectations, and community-specific marriage practices likely reinforce this elevated risk. Thus, the "General caste disadvantage" in child marriage is not a simple caste effect; it reflects a layered social reality where caste, religion, and cultural norms interact to produce the observed pattern.

6.5 Family Structure Differentials

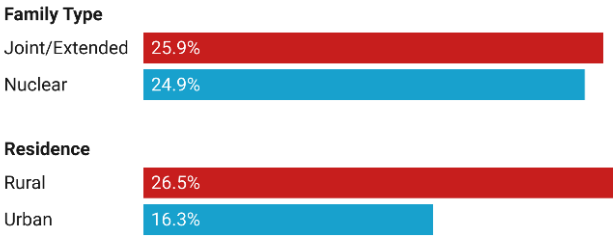
Family structure shows minimal but notable differences. **Joint or extended families** report a **25.9%** prevalence of child marriage, slightly higher than **nuclear families (24.9%)**. Joint family systems, particularly in rural contexts, often reinforce patriarchal decision-making

Figure 6.5 Child Marriage by Religion within Each Social Group



where elder family members influence the timing of marriage. Nuclear households, being smaller and often more education-oriented, may exhibit greater flexibility and awareness regarding legal and health implications of early marriage.

Figure 6.6 Prevalence of Child Marriage by Type of Family and Their Place of Residence



6.6 Residential Differentials

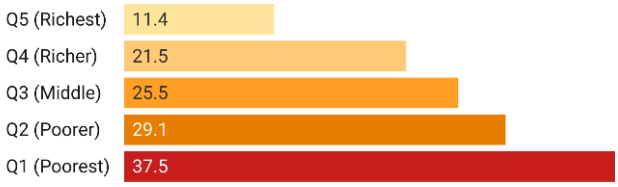
The prevalence of child marriage in Assam shows a pronounced **rural–urban divide.** The data reveal that **26.5% of women in rural areas** were married before the legal age of 18 years, compared to only **16.3% in urban areas**. This differential underscore the continuing rural concentration of child marriage, shaped by poverty, lower educational attainment, and enduring patriarchal social structures.

Rural households often face structural disadvantages like, limited access to schooling for girls, weak enforcement of legal frameworks, and deeply rooted cultural norms that view early marriage as a means of safeguarding family honour or reducing economic burden. Economic insecurity and lack of livelihood opportunities for women further reinforce the cycle of early marriage in rural settings.

6.7 Economic Differentials (Wealth Quintiles)

Economic status demonstrates a clear inverse relationship with the prevalence of child marriage. The **poorest quintile (Q1)** shows an alarmingly high **37.5%** prevalence, followed by **29.1% (Q2)** and **25.5% (Q3)**. The rate declines sharply to **21.5% in Q4** and only **11.4% in the richest quintile (Q5)**.

Figure 6.7 Prevalence of Child Marriage by Wealth Quintiles

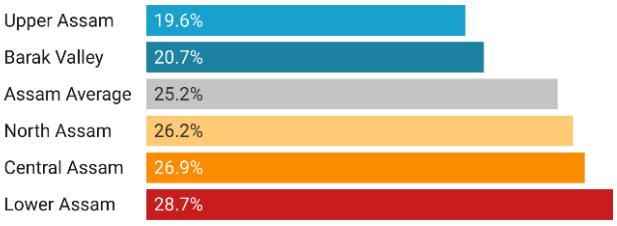


This gradient vividly illustrates the structural linkage between poverty and early marriage. Poor households often perceive marriage as a means to reduce economic burden or ensure social protection for daughters. Conversely, wealthier families are more likely to delay marriage, allowing for continued education and better economic prospects. These findings reaffirm that economic empowerment and poverty alleviation are vital strategies for eliminating child marriage.

6.8 Regional (Divisional) Differentials

Marked spatial disparities are observed across Assam's five administrative divisions. Child marriage is most prevalent in **Lower Assam (28.7%)**, followed by **Central Assam (26.9%)**, **North Assam (26.2%)**, **Barak Valley (20.7%)**, and **Upper Assam (19.6%)**.

Figure 6.8 Prevalence of Child Marriage by Administrative Divisions



6.9 District-wise Differentials in Child Marriage

District-level analysis reveals substantial spatial variation in the prevalence of child marriage across Assam (figure 6.9, 6.10, table 6.2). Figure 6.10 shows the estimated prevalence of child marriage in each district. Since these figures are derived from sample survey data, the hatched areas in the bars represent the margin of error, indicating the range within which the true prevalence likely falls.

While the **state average stands at 25.2%**, the rates vary dramatically-from as low as **11% in Jorhat** to as high as **40.8% in Dhubri**. Such wide inter-district disparities point to the influence of localized social, cultural, and economic factors that either reinforce or mitigate the practice.

High-prevalence districts

The highest levels of child marriage are concentrated in **Lower Assam**, particularly in the districts of **Dhubri (40.8%)**, **Darrang (40.1%)**, and **South Salmara (39.0%)**. These are followed by **Chirang (35.2%)**, **Morigaon (35.0%)**, **Dhemaji (33.8%)**, and **Kokrajhar (32.1%)**. These districts share common characteristics: a large rural population, lower levels of female education, higher rates of poverty, and limited access to formal employment. The predominance of patriarchal norms and the

cultural acceptance of early marriage as a protective or economic measure continue to sustain this practice.

Dhubri, in particular, stands out as the **worst-performing district**, where over two in five young women were married before reaching 18 years. This is consistent with previous findings from NFHS-5 that identify Dhubri, Goalpara, and South Salmara as child marriage hotspots due to their socio-religious composition and economic vulnerabilities.

Moderate-prevalence districts

A second cluster of districts - including **Goalpara (30.9%)**, **Barpeta (31.7%)**, **Bongaigaon (26.1%)**, **Nagaon (29.8%)**, and **Hojai (26.5%)** - display moderately high prevalence. While these regions are undergoing socio-economic transition, residual traditional norms and limited programmatic penetration continue to drive early marriage.

These districts often exhibit medium literacy levels and mixed occupational structures, where migration and agricultural dependency play significant roles in family decision-making. Economic insecurity and dowry practices may also influence early marriage in these transitional zones.

Low-prevalence districts

In contrast, the lowest prevalence rates are observed in **Jorhat (11%)**, **Majuli (15.2%)**, **Sonitpur (14.0%)**, **Dima Hasao (14.7%)**, **Nalbari (15.0%)**, and **Golaghat (15.7%)**.

Regional clustering

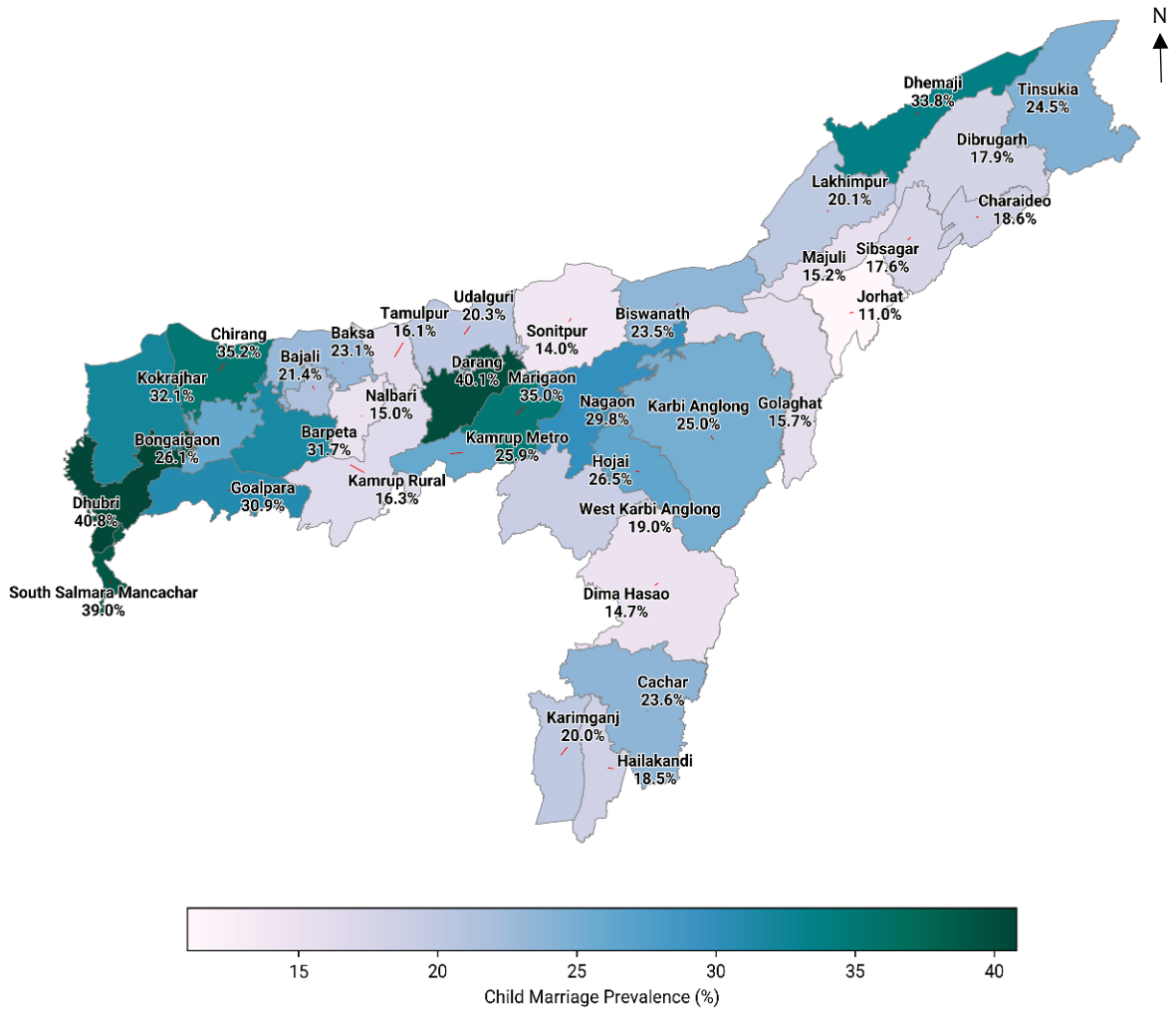
Spatially, the pattern of child marriage in Assam aligns closely with the socio-economic geography of the state:

- Lower Assam (e.g., Dhubri, Goalpara, Darrang, South Salmara) –high prevalence, deeply entrenched norms, and religious-cultural influences.
- Central Assam (e.g., Morigaon, Nagaon, Hojai)- Moderate prevalence, transitional economy, persistence of traditional practices.
- Upper Assam and Hill districts (e.g., Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Sonitpur, Dima Hasao) - Low prevalence, reflecting socio-economic advancement and exposure to education.

6.10 Change in the prevalence of child marriage since 2021 to 25

The comparison between NFHS 2019-21 and ASEMA 2024-25 reveals considerable progress in most districts, though some areas experienced concerning reversals. Notable improvements include Hailakandi's dramatic decline from 33.14% to 18.5%, Nalbari's reduction from 28.66% to 15.0%, Jorhat's fall from 25.16% to 11.0%, and Nagaon's decrease from 41.62% to 29.8%. Bongaigaon also showed substantial progress, declining from 43.09% to 26.1%. However, several districts moved in the opposite direction: Chirang increased from 31.18% to 35.2%, Kamrup Metropolitan

Figure 6.9 Prevalence of Child Marriage Across Districts of Assam



increased from 21.25% to 25.9%, Dhemaji climbed from 32.5% to 33.8%, and Tinsukia went from 20.65% to 24.5%. Despite overall declines, some districts continue to report extremely high rates, with Dhubri at 40.8%, Darrang at 40.1%, and South Salmara Mancachar at 39.0%, indicating persistent challenges that require urgent, targeted interventions (table 6.3, figure 6.11).

Figure 6.10 Prevalence of Child Marriage with Confidence Interval, 2024-25

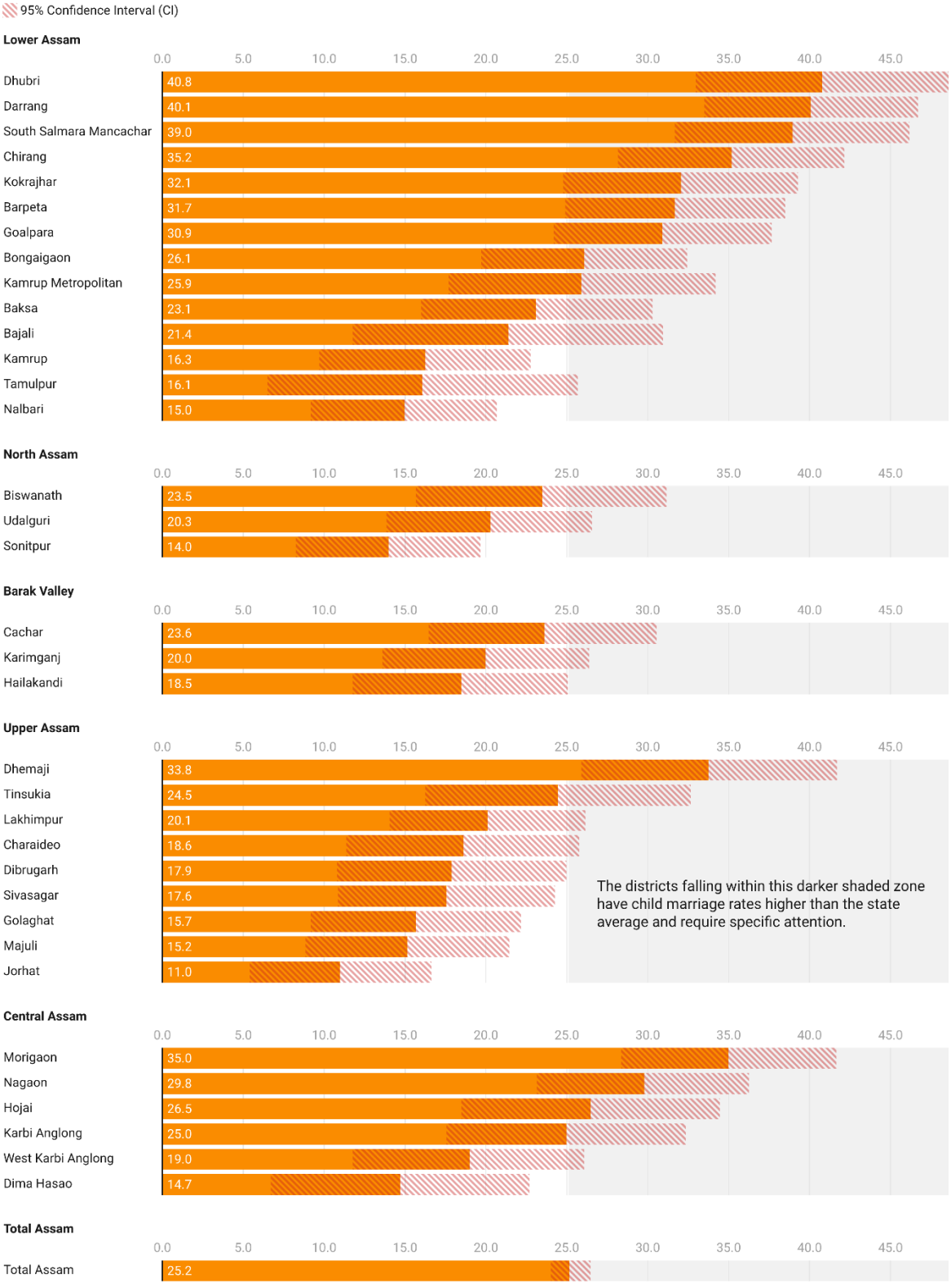


Figure 6.11 : Change in the prevalence of Child Marriage in the districts of Assam from 2021 to 2025

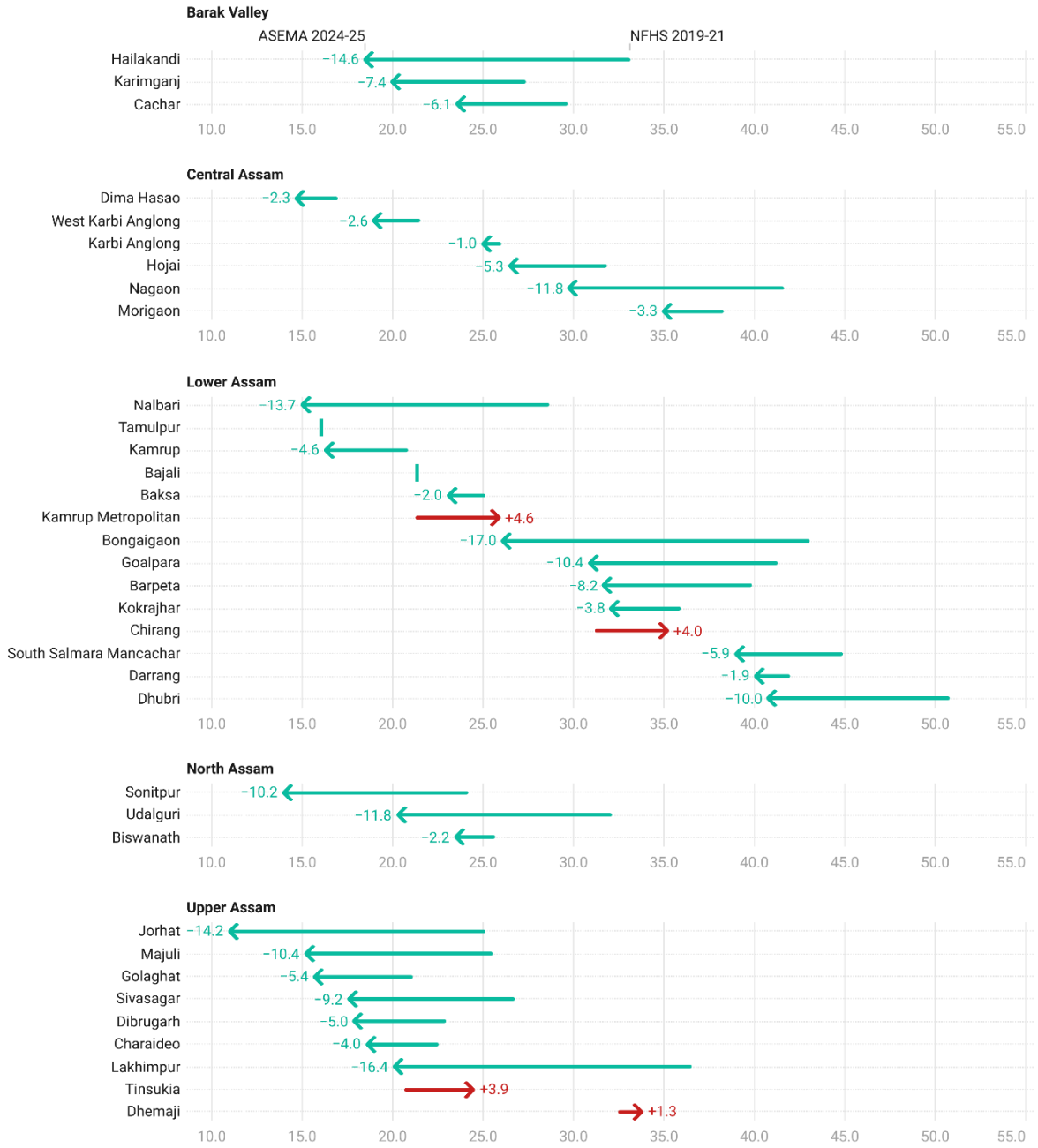


Table 6.1: Prevalence of Child marriage by socio-demographic background, Assam, 2024-25

Background	Child Marriage (%)
Ethnicity	
Assamese	18.63
Bengali	33.94
Bodo	19.50
Karbi	26.79
Nepali	18.56
Others	22.45
Tea Garden	22.81
Religion	
Christian	18.75
Hindu	19.21
Muslim	38.69
Others	25.00
Social Group	
General	31.44
Backward Class (OBC)	19.69
Scheduled Caste (SC)	25.48
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	21.15
Family Type	
Joint/Extended	25.93
Nuclear	24.89
Wealth Quintile	
Q1 (Poorest)	37.50
Q2 (Poorer)	29.09
Q3 (Middle)	25.49
Q4 (Richer)	21.53
Q5 (Richest)	11.38
Residence	
Rural	26.46
Urban	16.29
Division	
Barak Valley	20.71
Central Assam	26.91
Lower Assam	28.68
North Assam	26.16
Upper Assam	19.59

Table 6.2: Child Marriage in the districts in Assam, Assam, 2024-25

Districts	Child Marriage (%)	95% CI (Low–High)
Barak Valley		
Cachar	23.6	16.5–30.6
Hailakandi	18.5	11.8–25.1
Karimganj	20	13.6–26.4
Central Assam		
Dima Hasao	14.7	6.7–22.7
West Karbi Anglong	19	11.8–26.1
Karbi Anglong	25	17.6–32.4
Hojai	26.5	18.5–34.5
Morigaon	35	28.4–41.7
Nagaon	29.8	23.2–36.3
Lower Assam		
Dhubri	40.8	33.0–48.6
South Salmara	39	31.7–46.2
Darrang	40.1	33.5–46.7
Chirang	35.2	28.2–42.2
Kokrajhar	32.1	24.8–39.3
Bongaigaon	26.1	19.7–32.5
Barpeta	31.7	24.9–38.5
Baksa	23.1	16.0–30.3
Nalbari	15	9.2–20.7
Bajali	21.4	11.8–31.0
Goalpara	30.9	24.2–37.7
Kamrup (Rural)	16.3	9.7–22.8
Kamrup Metro	25.9	17.7–34.2
Tamulpur	16.1	6.5–25.7
North Assam		
Udalguri	20.3	13.9–26.6
Sonitpur	14	8.3–19.7
Biswanath	23.5	15.7–31.2
Upper Assam		
Dhemaji	33.8	25.9–41.7
Lakhimpur	20.1	14.1–26.2
Tinsukia	24.5	16.3–32.7
Dibrugarh	17.9	10.8–25.0
Charaideo	18.6	11.4–25.8
Sivasagar	17.6	10.9–24.3
Jorhat	11	5.4–16.7
Majuli	15.2	8.9–21.5
Golaghat	15.7	9.2–22.2
Total Assam	**25.2**	**24.02-26.5**

Table 6.3: Change in the prevalence of Child Marriage in the districts of Assam from 2021- 2025

District	NFHS 2019-21 (%)	ASEMA 2024-25 (%)
Cachar	29.69	23.6
Hailakandi	33.14	18.5
Karimganj	27.42	20.0
Dima Hasao	17.02	14.7
Hojai	31.84	26.5
Karbi Anglong	26	25.0
Morigaon	38.3	35.0
Nagaon	41.62	29.8
West Karbi Anglong	21.55	19.0
Bajali		21.4
Baksa	25.15	23.1
Barpeta	39.9	31.7
Bongaigaon	43.09	26.1
Chirang	31.18	35.2
Darrang	41.99	40.1
Dhubri	50.83	40.8
Goalpara	41.33	30.9
Nalbari	28.66	15.0
South Salmara Mancachar	44.91	39.0
Tamulpur		16.1
Biswanath	25.68	23.5
Sonitpur	24.21	14.0
Udalguri	32.12	20.3
Charaideo	22.58	18.6
Dhemaji	32.5	33.8
Dibrugarh	22.94	17.9
Golaghat	21.12	15.7
Jorhat	25.16	11.0
Lakhimpur	36.55	20.1
Majuli	25.57	15.2
Sivasagar	26.76	17.6
Tinsukia	20.65	24.5
Kamrup	20.88	16.3
Kamrup Metropolitan	21.25	25.9
Kokrajhar	35.92	32.1

CHAPTER 7 : PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE AND GENDER NORMS

7.1 Overview

Marriage and family formation remain deeply gendered institutions in Indian society. In Assam, as in much of South Asia, attitudes toward marriage, fertility, and appropriate gender behaviour continue to reflect hierarchical social structures. Norms that encourage early marriage for girls, valorise sons, or tolerate multiple wives are not isolated traditions; they are expressions of a broader patriarchal logic that regulates women's autonomy and reproductive choices. Understanding these perceptions is critical because cultural expectations often translate into measurable demographic and health outcomes-early child-bearing, high fertility, and constrained decision-making for women. This chapter examines how individuals perceive ideal ages of marriage for boys and girls, the preferred number and sex of children, and beliefs surrounding polygamy. Each dimension is analysed across ethnicity, caste, religion, wealth quintile, place of residence, and administrative division to expose the social gradients that shape gender norms in Assam.

7.2 Preferred Age of Marriage for Boys and Girls

Perceptions about the ideal age of marriage reveal clear gender asymmetry across every social group in Assam. Respondents consistently endorsed **earlier marriage for girls** than for boys, reinforcing traditional expectations about gender roles and readiness for family life. results reveal a consistent gender gap in the perceived ideal age of marriage. For **boys**, nearly half of respondents (48.7%) identified **25–29 years** as the appropriate age, followed by 29.8% preferring **18–24 years** and 21.4% **30 years or above**. In contrast, for **girls**, the majority (63.1%) favoured **18–24 years**, while 33.9% preferred **25–29 years**, and only 2.4% believed marriage should occur after 30.

Among those who were married **before age 18**, early-marriage ideals persist. Within this group, **45.5**% preferred **25–29 years** and **40.5**% favoured **18–24 years** as the ideal age for boys' marriage. For girls, **75.9**% endorsed **18–24 years**, and **21.9**% chose **25–29 years**. This indicates that while overt support for child marriage has largely disappeared, **attitudinal continuity across generations** sustains the idea that girls should marry earlier than boys. Breaking this intergenerational cycle requires cultural change through education and community dialogue, not merely legal enforcement (figure 7.1).

By Ethnicity

Among **Assamese respondents**, almost half (47.8%) viewed 25–29 years as the ideal age for men to marry, and 33.9% preferred marriage at 30 years or above: only 18.3% favoured marriage below 25 years. In contrast, nearly half of Assamese respondents (49.1%) considered **18–24 years** as ideal for women, with another 46.6% favouring 25–29 years. Among **Bengali speakers**, 44.8% reported 18–24 years and 43.6% reported 25–29 years as the ideal for men, while 77.4% preferred

Figure 7.1 Preferred age for marriage of child

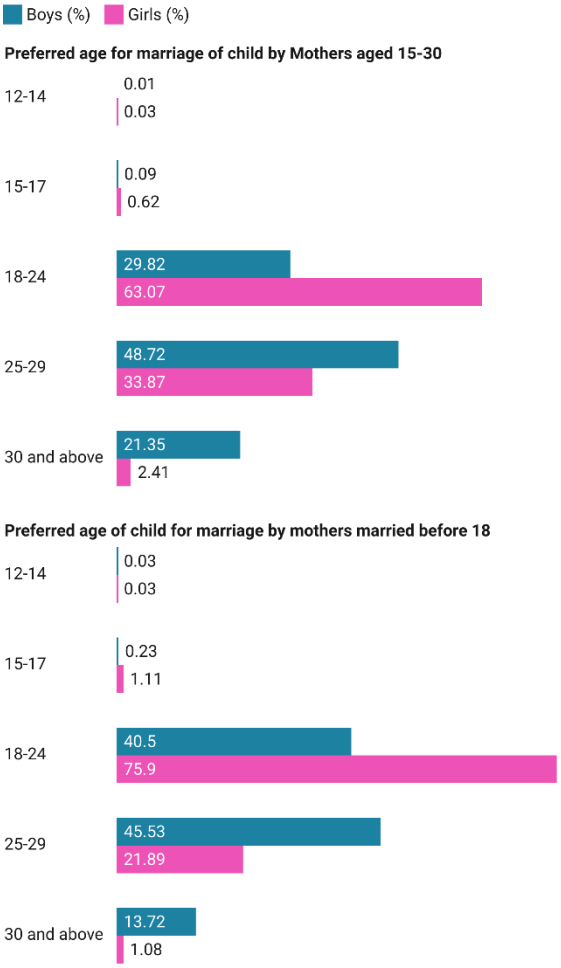
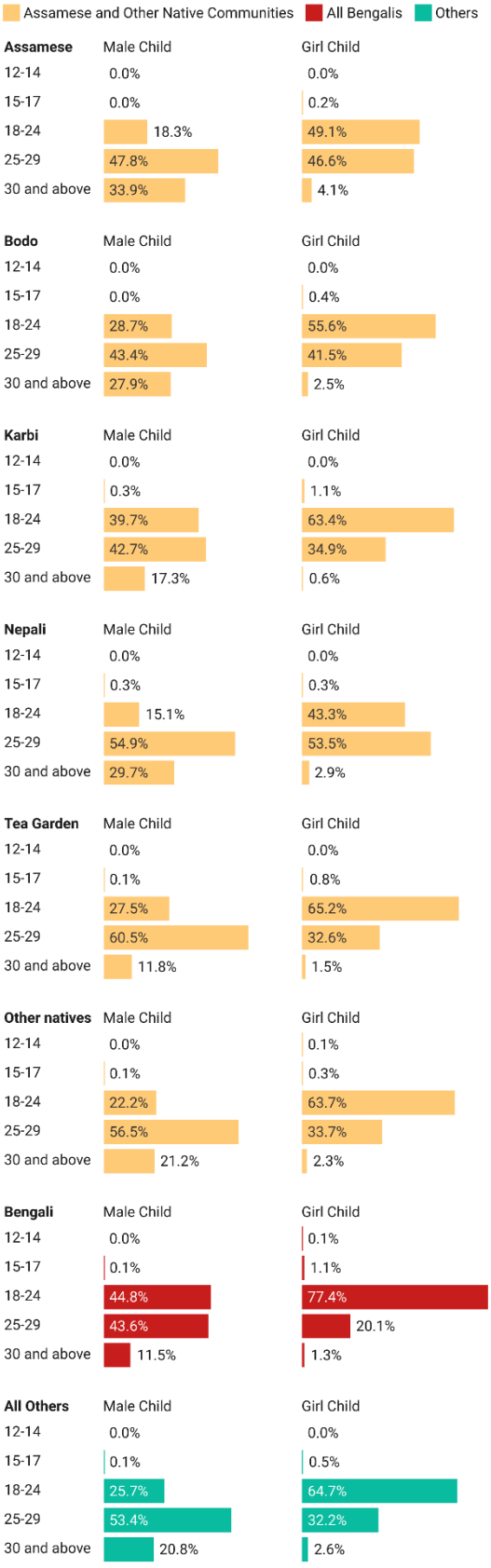


Figure 7.2 Preferred Age of Marriage of Child by ethnicity of Mother



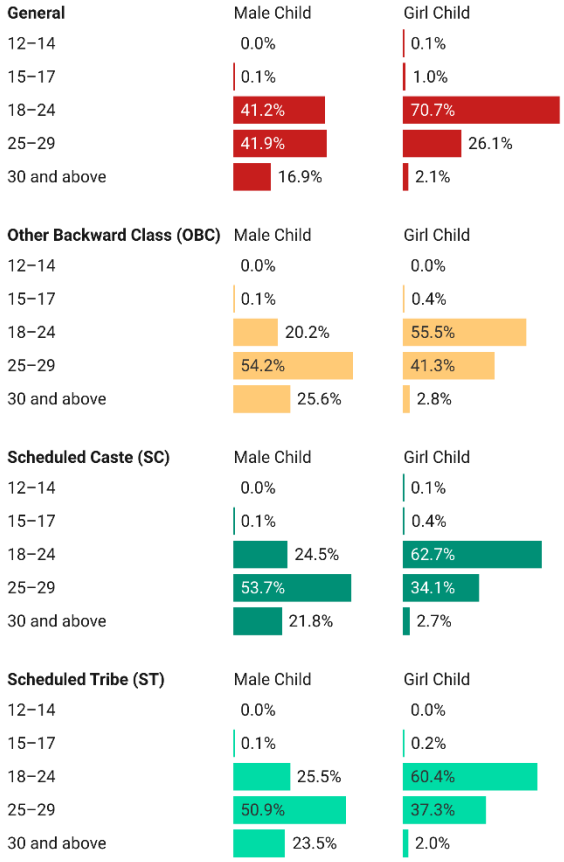
18–24 years for women and 20.1% favoured 25–29 years. **Bodo respondents** displayed a moderate pattern: 43.4% preferred 25–29 years for men and 55.6% preferred 18–24 years for women. Among **Karbi**, 39.7% indicated 18–24 years and 42.7% 25–29 years for men, while 63.4% preferred 18–24 years for women. **Nepali respondents** tended to support later marriage: 54.9% viewed 25–29 years as ideal for men and 53.5% for women, indicating relatively narrow gender differences. For **Tea-Garden communities**, 60.5% favoured marriage for men at 25–29 years, whereas 65.2% considered 18–24 years appropriate for women. Across all groups, the **average preferred marriage age for men is around five years higher** than for women.

By Caste

A similar pattern emerges by caste. Among **General-caste respondents**, 41.2% considered 18–24 years and 41.9% 25–29 years ideal for men, with 16.9% preferring marriage at 30 years or above. For women, 70.7% endorsed 18–24 years, 26.1% 25–29 years, and only 2.1% 30 years or above.

Among **OBCs**, 54.2% viewed 25–29 years as the right time for men to marry, and only 20.2% preferred below 25 years. For women, 55.5% favoured 18–24 years and 41.3% 25–29 years. **Scheduled Castes** reported 53.7% in favour of 25–29 years for men and 62.7% preferring 18–24 years for women. **Scheduled Tribes** followed closely, with 50.9% endorsing 25–29 years for men and 60.4% preferring 18–24 years for women.

Figure 7.3 Preferred age of Marriage of Child by Social Group of Mother



Across caste groups, the **modal preference for men falls within 25–29 years** and for women within **18–24 years**, but higher-status groups (General caste) lean toward slightly later marriage for both sexes.

By Religion

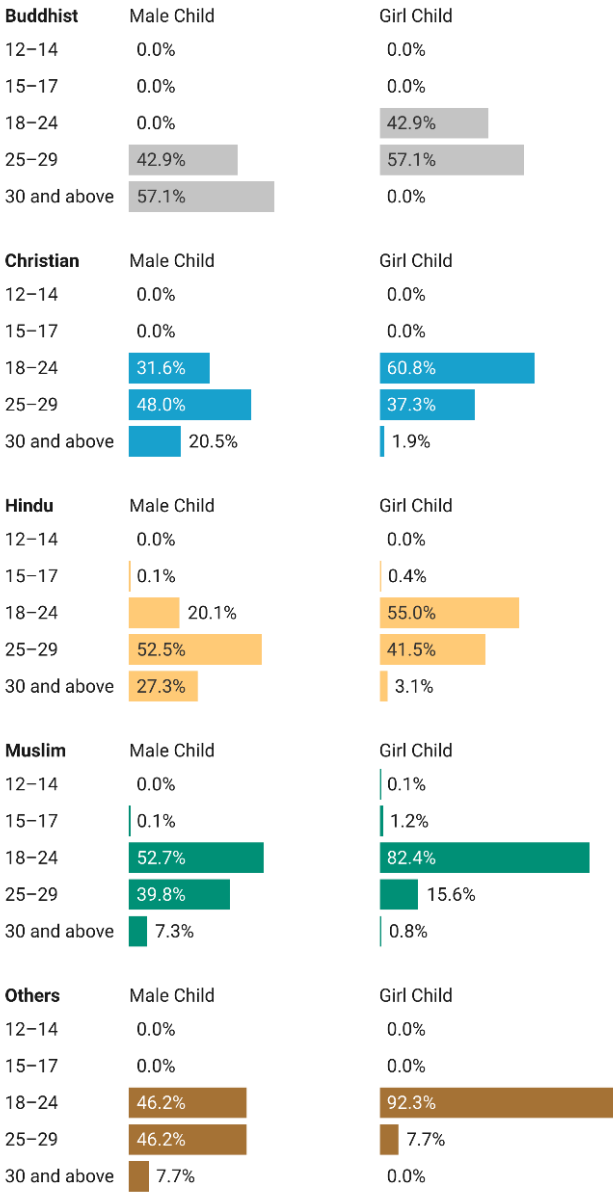
Religious affiliation produces pronounced contrasts. Among **Hindus**, more than half (52.5%) considered 25–29 years as the ideal for men and 27.3% opted for 30 years or above; for women, 55.0% preferred 18–24 years and 41.5% 25–29 years.

Among **Muslims**, 52.7% viewed 18–24 years as appropriate for men-earlier than other groups-and only 7.3% preferred marriage after 30 years. For Muslim women, an overwhelming **82.4%** supported marriage at 18–24 years, with just 15.6% preferring 25–29 years and 0.8% above 30 years. **Christians** showed later ideals: 48.0% for men and 60.8% for women preferred 18–24 years, followed by 47.9% of men and 37.3% of women preferring 25–29 years. Overall, **Muslim respondents reported the earliest ideal marriage ages**, while **Hindus and Christians showed more delayed preferences**, reflecting religious differentials in gender and family norms.

By Wealth Quintile

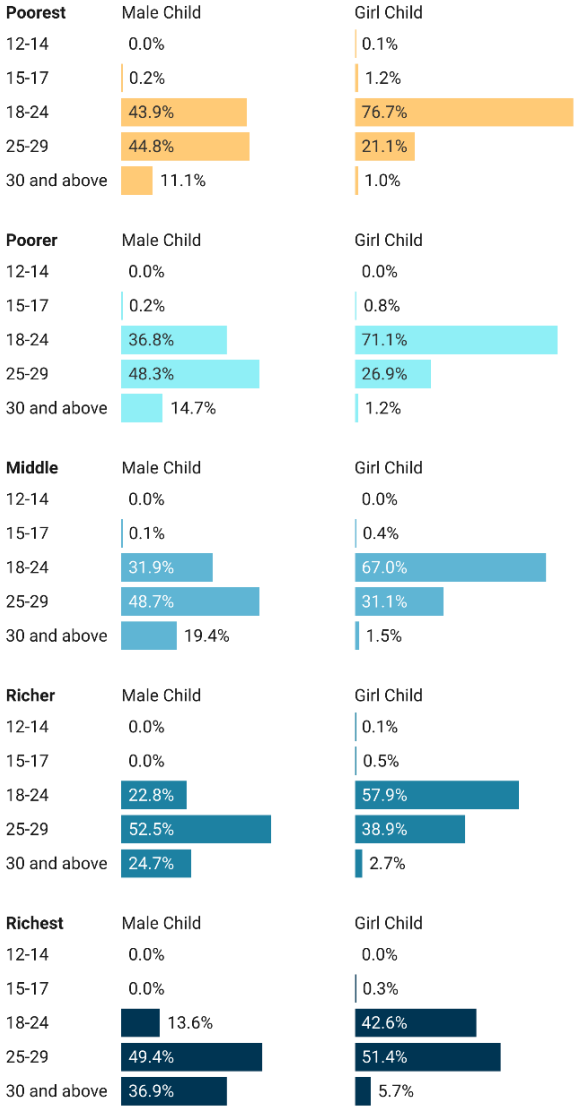
Economic position significantly affects marital ideals. Among the **poorest quintile**, 43.9% of respondents preferred 18–24 years for men and 44.8% 25–29 years; for women, **three-quarters (76.7%)** endorsed marriage between 18–24

Figure 7.4 Preferred age of Marriage of child by Religion of Mother



years. As wealth increases, the perceived ideal age shifts upward. In the **second quintile**, 48.3% preferred 25–29 years for men, whereas 71.1% supported 18–24 years for women. In the **third quintile**, 48.6% preferred 25–29 years for men and 67.0% 18–24 years for women. Among the **fourth quintile**, 52.5% preferred 25–29 years for men and 57.9% 18–24 years for women, while in the **richest quintile**, 49.4% endorsed 25–29 years for men and a majority (51.4%) supported 25–29 years for women. This gradient suggests that wealthier households favour later marriage for both sexes, and particularly a delay in marriage for women-evidence of the influence of socio-economic development and education.

Figure 7.5 Preferred Age of Marriage of Child by Wealth Quintile of Mothers

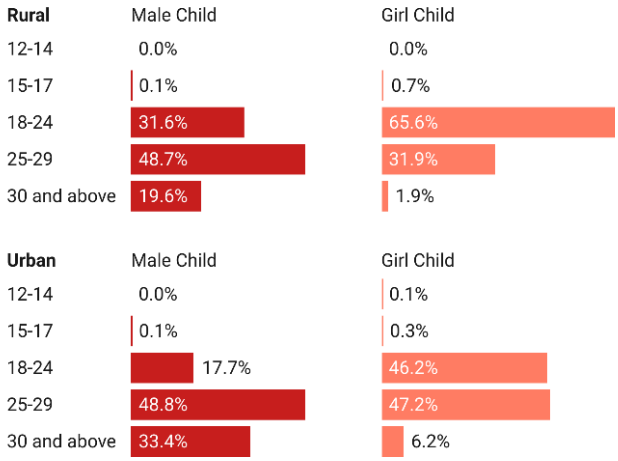


By Place of Residence

Differences between rural and urban residents are striking. Among **rural respondents**, nearly half (48.7%) preferred 25–29 years for men and 31.6% below 25 years, while only 19.6% supported 30 years or above. For women, **65.6% of rural respondents** considered 18–24 years ideal and 31.9% 25–29 years.

In contrast, **urban respondents** showed later ideals: 48.8% favoured 25–29 years for men, but 33.4% preferred marriage for men above 30 years. Among urban women, the age distribution was balanced-46.2% preferring 18–24 years and 47.2% 25–29 years-indicating a gradual normative shift toward delayed marriage in cities.

Figure 7.6 Preferred Age of Marriage of Child by Place of Residence of Mother

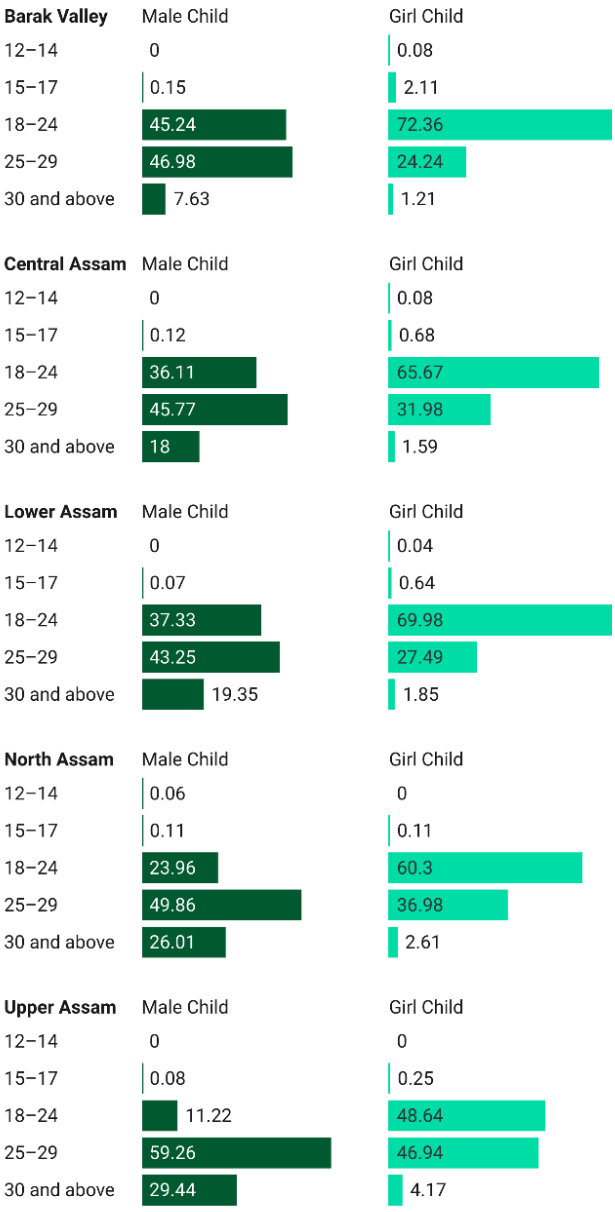


By Division

Regional differences reinforce the social gradient. In **Upper Assam**, 59.3% viewed 25–29 years as the appropriate age for men and 29.4% favoured 30 years or above; for women, 48.6% endorsed 18–24 years and 46.9% 25–29 years. In **Central Assam**, 45.8% preferred 25–29 years for men and 18% 30 years or above, while 65.7% of respondents preferred 18–24 years for women. **Lower Assam** displayed an earlier pattern: 37.3% favoured 18–24 years and 43.3% 25–29 years for men; for women, nearly 70% endorsed 18–24 years. **Barak Valley** mirrored this early-marriage orientation, with 45.2% supporting 18–24 years for men and 72.4% for women. In **North Assam**, the ideal marriage age for men peaked at 25–29 years (49.9%), while 60.3% preferred 18–24 years for women.

Taken together, Upper and Central Assam lean toward later marriage, whereas Lower Assam and Barak Valley continue to uphold earlier ideals, reflecting the socio-economic and educational disparities across regions.

Figure 7.7 Preferred Age of Marriage of Child by Division of Stay of Mothers



7.3 Fertility Ideals and Son Preference

The **mean ideal number of children** reported in Assam is **two**, confirming near-universal adherence to the two-child norm. This

convergence reflects the state's demographic transition and improved access to education and family planning. However, gender bias in fertility ideals remains. About **9.8%** of respondents expressed a **preference for sons**, either by specifying more sons than daughters or mentioning only sons.

Difference in Ideal Number of Children by socio-economic background

Across ethnic communities, the mean ideal number of children ranged between **1.89 among Assamese** and **2.3 among Karbi** respondents. Fertility ideals were relatively high among **Bengali (2.08)**, **Bodo (2.03)**, and **Tea Garden (2.03)** groups, while **Nepali** respondents reported an average of **1.94 (table 7.5)**. The relatively lower mean among Assamese and Nepali groups aligns with higher educational attainment and urban exposure, whereas the elevated figures among Karbi and Bengali respondents suggest the persistence of pro-natalist values in certain communities.

Differences across **caste groups** were modest but consistent: **Scheduled Tribe respondents (2.07)** reported the highest mean ideal number of children, followed by **General caste (2.05)**, **Scheduled Caste (1.96)**, and **OBC (1.95)** respondents. These gradient parallels the socio-economic hierarchy, where fertility ideals decline with increasing access to education and economic opportunity.

By **religion**, the mean ideal number of children was highest among **Christians (2.14)** and **Muslims (2.12)**, followed by **Others (2.08)**, **Buddhists (2.00)**, and **Hindus (1.96)**. The slightly higher fertility ideals among Christians and Muslims are consistent with patterns observed in national surveys, where religious differentials often reflect both cultural and socio-economic variations.

Economic status shows a clear linear pattern. The **poorest quintile** reported a mean of **2.10**, which declines steadily to **1.92** among the **richest quintiles**. Similarly, **rural respondents** reported a higher mean (2.02) than **urban respondents (1.92)**, reflecting the influence of modernization and family planning exposure in urban areas. Regional variation follows a comparable trajectory: **Upper Assam (1.89)** and **North Assam (2.01)** report the lowest means, while **Central Assam (2.10)** and **Barak Valley (2.06)** show slightly higher values. Overall, the convergence around the two-child ideal suggests a near-complete fertility transition in Assam, with social and regional disparities gradually narrowing (table 7.5).

Difference in son preference by socio-economic background

Despite the transition toward smaller families, gender bias persists in reproductive ideals. At the state level, **7.6%** of respondents exhibited **son preference**, defined as those reporting more ideal sons than daughters or mentioning only sons. While the proportion is relatively low, it represents a residual form of gender inequality embedded in fertility intentions.

Ethnic differences are evident: **Karbi respondents** recorded the highest son preference at **12.6%**, followed by **Bengali (8.4%)**, **Bodo (8.0%)**, **Tea Garden (7.4%)**, and **Others (7.5%)**, while **Assamese (4.1%)** and **Nepali (4.7%)** groups showed the lowest levels. By **social group**, **Scheduled Tribe (8.5%)** and **General caste (8.0%)** respondents reported higher son preference than **OBC (5.4%)** and **Scheduled Caste (4.7%)** groups.

Figure 7.8 Son Preference by Ethnicity and Social Group

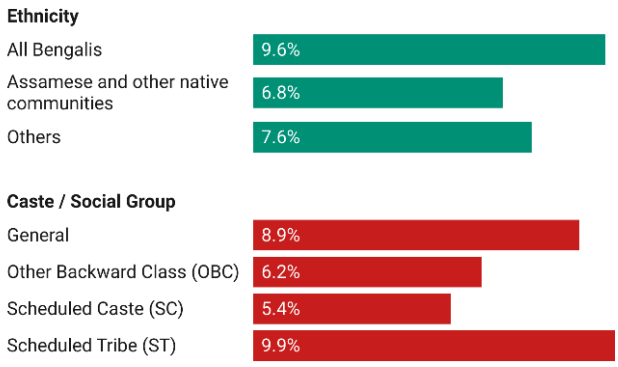
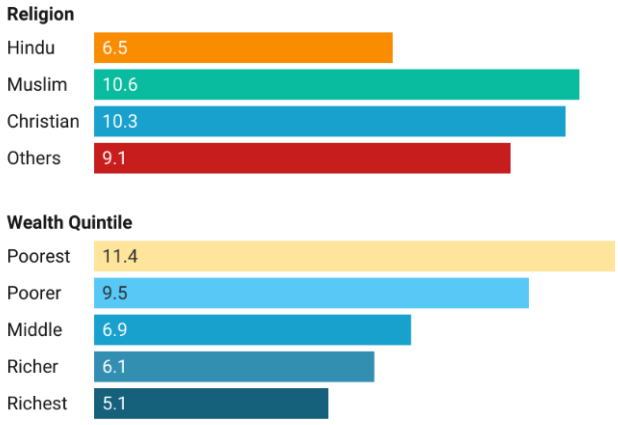


Figure 7.9 Son Preference by Religion and Wealth Quintile



Among religious groups, the prevalence was highest among **Muslims (9.6%)**, followed by **Christians (8.9%)**, **Others (7.7%)**, and **Hindus (5.6%)**, while **Buddhists** reported no cases of son preference.

The persistence of son preference across most groups, though subdued, reflects the enduring perception of sons as providers of financial and social security. Socio-economic patterns reinforce this interpretation. The proportion expressing son preference decreases steadily from **10% among the poorest** to **4.4% among the richest** quintiles.

Rural residents (7.1%) were more likely than urban residents (5.4%) to show such preference, indicating that gender bias weakens with modernization and education. Regionally, **Barak Valley (9.3%)** and **Central Assam (8.3%)** exhibited relatively higher levels, whereas **Upper Assam (4.8%)** showed the lowest.

7.4 Attitudes toward Polygamy

Attitudes toward polygamy provide an important lens for understanding gender power dynamics and marital norms in Assam. The ASEMA 2024–25 survey reveals an overwhelming rejection of polygamy among respondents. At the state level, only **2.2%** agreed that *"a man can have more than one wife,"* while **97.8%** disagreed, indicating that **monogamy has become the near-universal social standard.**

Differences by **ethnicity** show that acceptance of polygamy remains marginal across all groups. It is slightly higher among **Bengali respondents (3.3%)**, followed by **Assamese (1.9%)**, **Karbi (1.7%)**, **Nepali (1.5%)**, and **Bodo (1.4%)**. The lowest acceptance levels were reported among **Tea Garden (1.2%)** and **Other ethnic groups (1.3%)**. These figures suggest that while the practice is socially disapproved across communities, a few traditional or conservative subcultures continue to express limited tolerance toward plural marriage.

Religious affiliation shows the most visible contrast. **Muslim respondents (4.2%)** were more likely to agree that a man could have more than one wife, consistent with religious allowance for polygamy under specific circumstances. However, even among Muslims, the vast majority rejected the idea, indicating a strong normative shift toward monogamous unions. Among **Hindus (1.3%)**, **Christians (1.5%)**, polygamy is virtually unacceptable, reflecting alignment with contemporary legal and social values. Economic and spatial patterns further

Figure 7.10 Son Preference by Place of Residence and Administrative Division

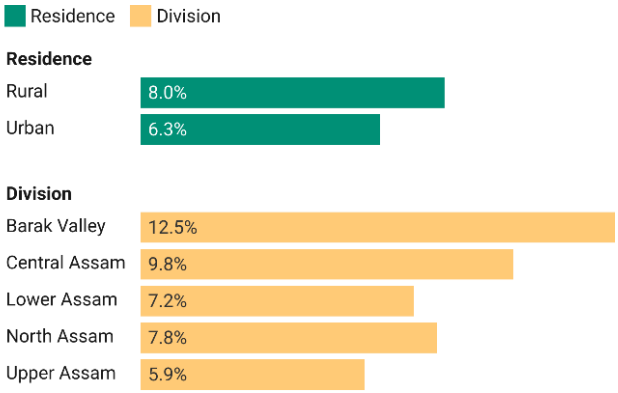


Figure 7.11 Attitude Towards Polygamy by Ethnicity and Social Group

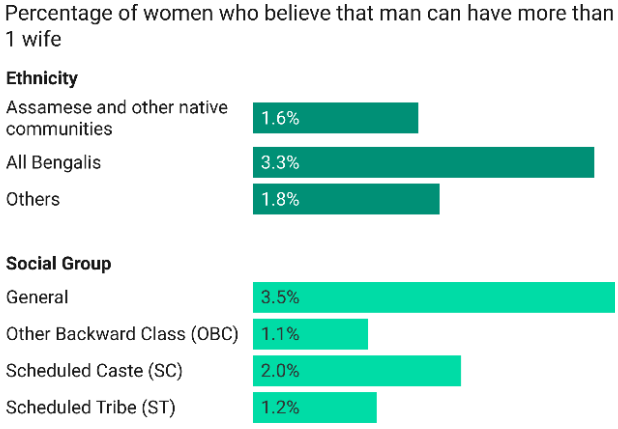
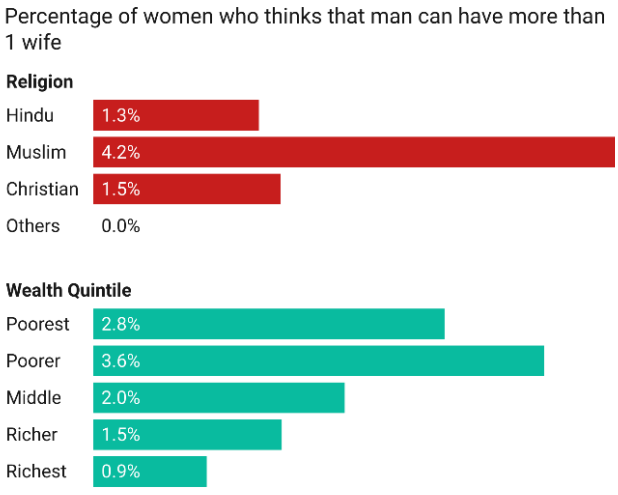


Figure 7.12 Polygamy Attitude by Religion and Wealth Quintile

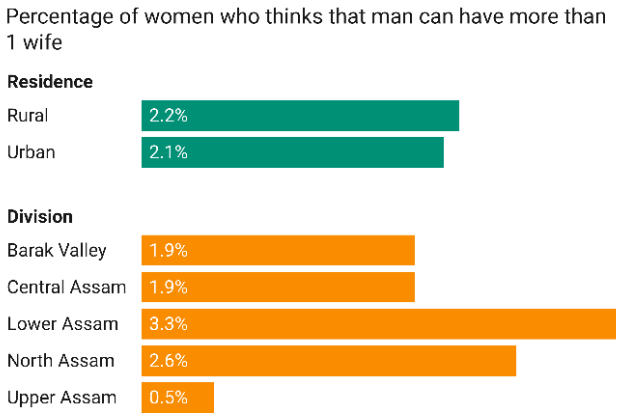


reinforce the marginal status of polygamy. The percentage of respondents agreeing with it declines steadily with wealth-from **3.6% among the poorer** to just **0.9% among the richest** quintiles.

Urban–rural differences are negligible (2.1% in urban vs. 2.2% in rural areas), suggesting that economic security, more than geography, drives attitudinal change.

Regionally, **Lower Assam (3.3%)** and **North Assam (2.6%)** recorded slightly higher acceptance, while **Upper Assam (0.5%)** reported the lowest levels, corresponding to greater literacy and urbanization in that region.

Figure 7.13 Polygamy Attitude by Place of Residence and Administrative Division



7.5 Socio-Demographic Differentials in Children Ever Born Among Women Aged 15–30 Years in Assam, 2024–25

Among ethnic groups, Karbi women recorded the highest CEB (1.89), followed by Bengali (1.68) and Tea Garden (1.65) women, while Assamese women had the lowest (1.36). By caste/social group, General category women had the highest CEB (1.64), whereas OBC women had the lowest (1.46). Religiously, Muslim women had the highest CEB (1.74), followed by Christian (1.66), while Hindu and

Others both recorded the lowest (1.47). A clear inverse relationship is observed across wealth quintiles, with the poorest women having the highest CEB (1.76) and the richest the lowest (1.32). Rural women (1.58) had higher CEB than urban women (1.41). Among divisions, Barak Valley recorded the highest CEB (1.80) and North Assam the lowest (1.44) (Table 7.8)

. **Table 7.1: Preferred age for marriage of children, Assam, 2024-25**

Indicators	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Preferred age for marriage of children by Mothers aged 15-30		
Preferred age		
12-14	0.01	0.03
15-17	0.09	0.62
18-24	29.82	
25-29	48.72	33.87
30 and above	21.35	2.41
Preferred age of children for marriage by mothers married before 18		
Preferred age		
12-14	0.03	0.03
15-17	0.23	1.11
18-24	40.5	75.9
25-29	45.53	21.89
30 and above	13.72	1.08

Table 7.2: Polygamy attitude, average ideal number of children and son preference by women aged 15-30 in Assam, 2024-25

Indicators	Estimate
Percentage of women who thinks Man can Have more than one wife	2.16
Mean Ideal Number of Children	2.01
Prevalence of son preference	7.57

Table 7.3: Preferred age of marriage of boy child according to women aged 15-30 in Assam, 2024-25

Percentage of women reported the preferred age for marriage of a male child

Background	Preferred Age				
	12-14	15-17	18-24	25-29	30 and above
Ethnicity					
Assamese	0.0	0.0	18.3	47.8	33.9
Bengali	0.0	0.1	44.8	43.6	11.5
Bodo	0.0	0.0	28.7	43.4	27.9
Karbi	0.0	0.3	39.7	42.7	17.3
Nepali	0.0	0.3	15.1	54.9	29.7
Others	0.0	0.1	22.2	56.5	21.2
Tea Garden	0.0	0.1	27.5	60.5	11.8
Social Group					
General	0.0	0.1	41.2	41.9	16.9
Other Backward Class (OBC)	0.0	0.1	20.2	54.2	25.6
Scheduled Caste (SC)	0.0	0.1	24.5	53.7	21.8
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	0.0	0.1	25.5	50.9	23.5
Religion					
Buddhist	0.0	0.0	0.0	42.9	57.1
Christian	0.0	0.0	31.6	48.0	20.5
Hindu	0.0	0.1	20.1	52.5	27.3
Muslim	0.0	0.1	52.7	39.8	7.3
Others	0.0	0.0	46.2	46.2	7.7
Wealth Quintile					
Poorest	0.0	0.2	43.9	44.8	11.1
Poorer	0.0	0.2	36.8	48.3	14.7
Middle	0.0	0.1	31.9	48.7	19.4
Richer	0.0	0.0	22.8	52.5	24.7
Richest	0.0	0.0	13.6	49.4	36.9
Residence					
Rural	0.0	0.1	31.6	48.7	19.6
Urban	0.0	0.1	17.7	48.8	33.4
Division					
Barak Valley	0.0	0.2	45.2	47.0	7.6
Central Assam	0.0	0.1	36.1	45.8	18.0
Lower Assam	0.0	0.1	37.3	43.3	19.4
North Assam	0.1	0.1	24.0	49.9	26.0
Upper Assam	0.0	0.1	11.2	59.3	29.4

Table 7.4: Preferred age of girl child by Women aged 15–30 by Socio-demographic Characteristics, Assam, 2024–25

Percentage of women reported the preferred age for marriage of a female child

Background	Preferred Age				
	12-14	15-17	18-24	25-29	30 and above
Ethnicity					
Assamese	0.0	0.2	49.1	46.6	4.1
Bengali	0.1	1.1	77.4	20.1	1.3
Bodo	0.0	0.4	55.6	41.5	2.5
Karbi	0.0	1.1	63.4	34.9	0.6
Nepali	0.0	0.3	43.3	53.5	2.9
Others	0.1	0.3	63.7	33.7	2.3
Tea Garden	0.0	0.8	65.2	32.6	1.5
Caste / Social Group					
General	0.1	1.0	70.7	26.1	2.1
Other Backward Class (OBC)	0.0	0.4	55.5	41.3	2.8
Scheduled Caste (SC)	0.1	0.4	62.7	34.1	2.7
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	0.0	0.2	60.4	37.3	2.0
Religion					
Buddhist	0.0	0.0	42.9	57.1	0.0
Christian	0.0	0.0	60.8	37.3	1.9
Hindu	0.0	0.4	55.0	41.5	3.1
Muslim	0.1	1.2	82.4	15.6	0.8
Others	0.0	0.0	92.3	7.7	0.0
Wealth Quintile					
Poorest	0.1	1.2	76.7	21.1	1.0
Poorer	0.0	0.8	71.1	26.9	1.2
Middle	0.0	0.4	67.0	31.1	1.5
Richer	0.1	0.5	57.9	38.9	2.7
Richest	0.0	0.3	42.6	51.4	5.7
Residence					
Rural	0.0	0.7	65.6	31.9	1.9
Urban	0.1	0.4	46.2	47.2	6.2
Division					
Barak Valley	0.1	2.1	72.4	24.2	1.2
Central Assam	0.1	0.7	65.7	32.0	1.6
Lower Assam	0.0	0.6	70.0	27.5	1.9
North Assam	0.0	0.1	60.3	37.0	2.6
Upper Assam	0.0	0.3	48.6	46.9	4.2

Table 7.5: Mean Ideal Number of Children among Women aged 15–30 by Socio-demographic Characteristics, Assam, 2024–25

Background	Mean Ideal Number of Children
Ethnicity	
Assamese	1.9
Bengali	2.1
Bodo	2.0
Karbi	2.3
Nepali	1.9
Tea Garden	2.0
Others	2.0
Caste / Social Group	
General	2.1
Other Backward Class (OBC)	2.0
Scheduled Caste (SC)	2.0
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	2.1
Religion	
Hindu	2.0
Muslim	2.1
Christian	2.1
Buddhist	2.0
Others	2.1
Wealth Quintile	
Poorest	2.1
Poorer	2.1
Middle	2.0
Richer	2.0
Richest	1.9
Residence	
Rural	2.0
Urban	1.9
Division	
Barak Valley	2.1
Central Assam	2.1
Lower Assam	2.0
North Assam	2.0
Upper Assam	1.9

Table 7.6: Percentage of Women with Son Preference by Socio-demographic Characteristics, Assam, 2024–25

Background	Percentage with Son Preference (%)
Ethnicity	
Assamese	4.6
Bengali	9.6
Bodo	9
Karbi	15.8
Nepali	5.4
Tea Garden	8.8
Others	8.7
Caste / Social Group	
General	8.9
Other Backward Class (OBC)	6.2
Scheduled Caste (SC)	5.4
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	9.9
Religion	
Hindu	10.3
Muslim	6.5
Christian	10.6
Others	9.1
Wealth Quintile	
Poorest	11.4
Poorer	9.5
Middle	6.9
Richer	6.1
Richest	5.1
Residence	
Rural	8
Urban	6.3
Division	
Barak Valley	12.5
Central Assam	9.8
Lower Assam	7.2
North Assam	7.8
Upper Assam	5.9

Table 7.7: Percentage of women who believe that man can have more than one wife by Socio-demographic Characteristics, Assam, 2024–25

Background	Thinks man can have more than one wife (%)
Ethnicity	
Assamese	1.9
Bengali	3.3
Bodo	1.4
Karbi	1.7
Nepali	1.5
Tea Garden	1.3
Others	1.2
Caste / Social Group	
General	3.5
Other Backward Class (OBC)	1.1
Scheduled Caste (SC)	2
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	1.2
Religion	
Hindu	1.5
Muslim	1.3
Christian	4.2
Others	0
Wealth Quintile	
Poorest	2.8
Poorer	3.6
Middle	2
Richer	1.5
Richest	0.9
Residence	
Rural	2.2
Urban	2.1
Division	
Barak Valley	1.9
Central Assam	1.9
Lower Assam	3.3
North Assam	2.6
Upper Assam	0.5

Table 7.8: Socio-Demographic Differentials in Children Ever Born Among Women Aged 15–30 Years, Assam, 2024-25

Background	Children Ever Born
Ethnicity	
Assamese	1.36
Bengali	1.68
Bodo	1.44
Karbi	1.89
Nepali	1.47
Tea Garden	1.65
Others	1.6
Caste / Social Group	
General	1.64
Other Backward Class (OBC)	1.46
Scheduled Caste (SC)	1.47
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	1.6
Religion	
Hindu	1.47
Muslim	1.74
Christian	1.66
Others	1.47
Wealth Quintile	
Poorest	1.76
Poorer	1.66
Middle	1.55
Richer	1.44
Richest	1.32
Residence	
Rural	1.58
Urban	1.41
Division	
Barak Valley	1.8
Central Assam	1.69
Lower Assam	1.54
North Assam	1.44
Upper Assam	1.48

CHAPTER 8 : AWARENESS AND ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AND ITS CONNECTION WITH AGE OF MARRIAGE

8.1 Introduction

Welfare schemes are the cornerstone of India's social development strategy, aiming to improve the living standards of disadvantaged groups through targeted interventions in health, education, livelihood, and social protection. Assam, like other states, implements a wide range of such schemes tailored to its socio-economic context-ranging from *Ayushman Bharat* and *PM Awas Yojana* to gender-focused initiatives such as *Majoni* and *Swanirbhar Nari*. However, awareness alone does not guarantee utilization. Actual access depends on eligibility, administrative efficiency, documentation, and people's perception of relevance. This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of household **awareness and access to government schemes**, explores reasons for lower participation in specific programs, and examines how key welfare initiatives contribute to reducing **child marriage** in Assam.

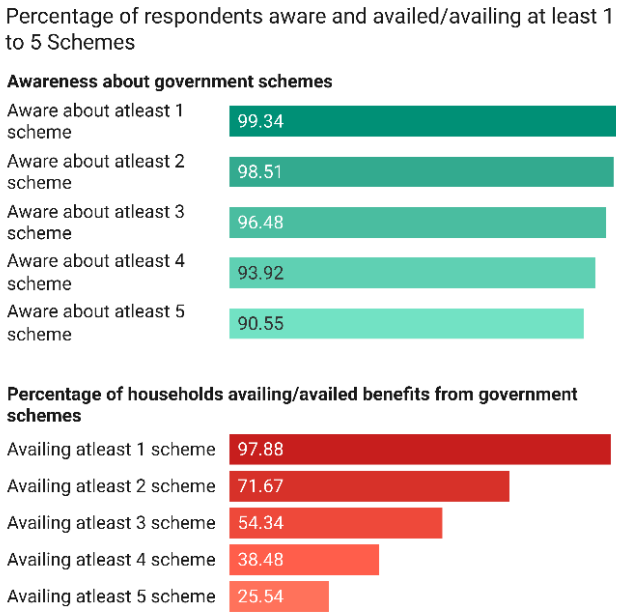
8.2 Awareness about Government Schemes

Awareness levels among surveyed households are remarkably high. Almost every household (99.3%) is aware of at least one welfare scheme, and more than 90% know about five or more.

8.3 Availing Benefits from Government Schemes

While awareness is near-universal, actual participation declines as the number of schemes increases. Nearly 98% of households benefit from at least one program, and 25% reported availing benefits from five or more.

Figure 8.1 Awareness and Availing of Schemes



Although the majority of households have accessed at least one benefit, fewer are engaged in multiple programs. The decline reflects the effect of eligibility filters, documentation demands, and the targeted nature of most schemes. Only 12% of households reported not availing any scheme.

8.4 Scheme-specific Awareness and Utilization

The comparison of awareness and availing rates across individual schemes reveals interesting contrasts. Some, like *Ayushman Bharat* and *PM Kisan*, show both high awareness and participation, while others, such as *Majoni* and *Arunodoi*, have large.

awareness but lower availing, pointing to design or eligibility constraints.

- *Ayushman Bharat* leads both in awareness (90%) and access (60%), reflecting its universal eligibility.
- *Arunodoi* has extremely high awareness (93%) but lower availing (25%)-likely due to income eligibility and bank linkage requirements.
- *Majoni* (82% aware; 14% availing) indicates strong recognition but limited coverage among eligible adolescent girls.
- Education-linked schemes (e.g., *Anundoram Baruah Laptop*, *Scholarships*) show expectedly lower availing because they target narrow age groups.

8.5 Why Availing Rates Are Lower for Some Schemes

Not all welfare programs are intended for universal participation. Lower availing rates often reflect **eligibility design rather than implementation failure**.

- **Eligibility Restrictions:** Many programs target specific groups- students (*Gyan Deepika*), widows (*Widow Pension*), mothers (*Matri Vandana Yojana*), or farmers (*PM Kisan*). Awareness is widespread, but only a subset qualifies.
- **Conditional Transfers:** Schemes such as *Majoni* or *Na Bowari* require meeting behavioural conditions (e.g., remaining unmarried until 18, continuing education). These conditions limit but refine the target population.
- **Administrative Barriers:** Households report challenges such as documentation, digital registration, and delayed payments, especially in remote rural areas.

Thus, differences in availing rates largely reflect **targeted inclusion**, not lack of demand.

8.6 Gender and Social Protection Programs

Assam's gender-focused programs-*Majoni Scheme*, *Swanirbhar Nari*, *Widow Pension Scheme*, and *Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan* aim to enhance women's economic and social empowerment.

- *Majoni Scheme* shows high awareness (82%) but modest availing (13.6%).
- *Swanirbhar Nari* and *Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan* remain low both in awareness (<10%) and utilization (<1%), revealing outreach gaps.
- The *Widow Pension Scheme* (66% aware; 3% availing).

8.7 Awareness of schemes and child marriage

Child marriage declines steadily as awareness of government schemes increases. Among girls from households aware about only one scheme, the prevalence of child marriage is about 44 percent, reflecting that minimal awareness alone does not ensure protection and may even be concentrated among already vulnerable households. Beyond that point, however, the pattern is consistently downward: awareness of two schemes corresponds to roughly 34 percent child marriage, three schemes to about 30 percent, and four schemes to just under 29 percent. At the highest awareness level five or more schemes - child marriage falls to 25 percent.

Together, this suggests that deeper, more comprehensive awareness of welfare programmes is associated with substantially

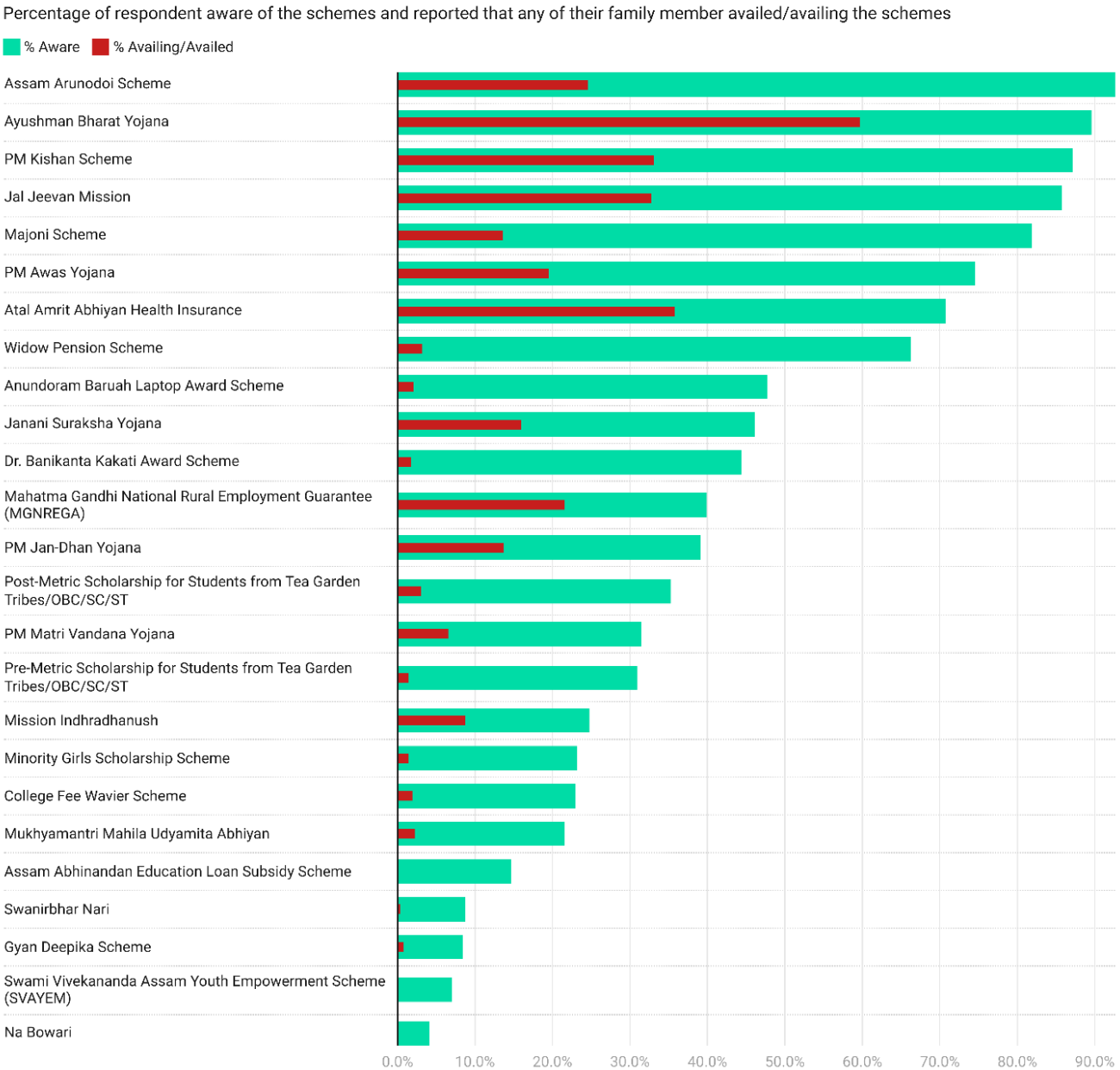
lower likelihood of early marriage, whereas shallow or partial awareness may not be sufficient to produce protective effects.

8.8 Availing of schemes and child marriage

The relationship between availing government schemes and child marriage shows a non-linear pattern. Women from households that availing between one and three schemes displayed a moderately higher prevalence ranging from 26.1 to 28.0 percent. This suggests that partial or limited engagement with welfare programmes may be characteristic of households that remain socio-economically vulnerable and thus still experience structural pressures contributing to early marriage.

However, the prevalence declines again among households availing four or more schemes (23.2–23.4 percent), indicating that deeper integration with multiple welfare initiatives may translate into better access to resources, information, and social protection mechanisms

Figure 8.2 Awareness and Availing of Govt. Schemes



that help delay marriage. Overall, the pattern highlights that the protective influence of government schemes becomes more evident only when households benefit from a broader bundle of interventions rather than isolated or minimal support

Figure 8.3 Awareness, Availing Schemes and Child Marriage

Prevalence of child marriage among aged 20-24 women by awareness and availing schemes

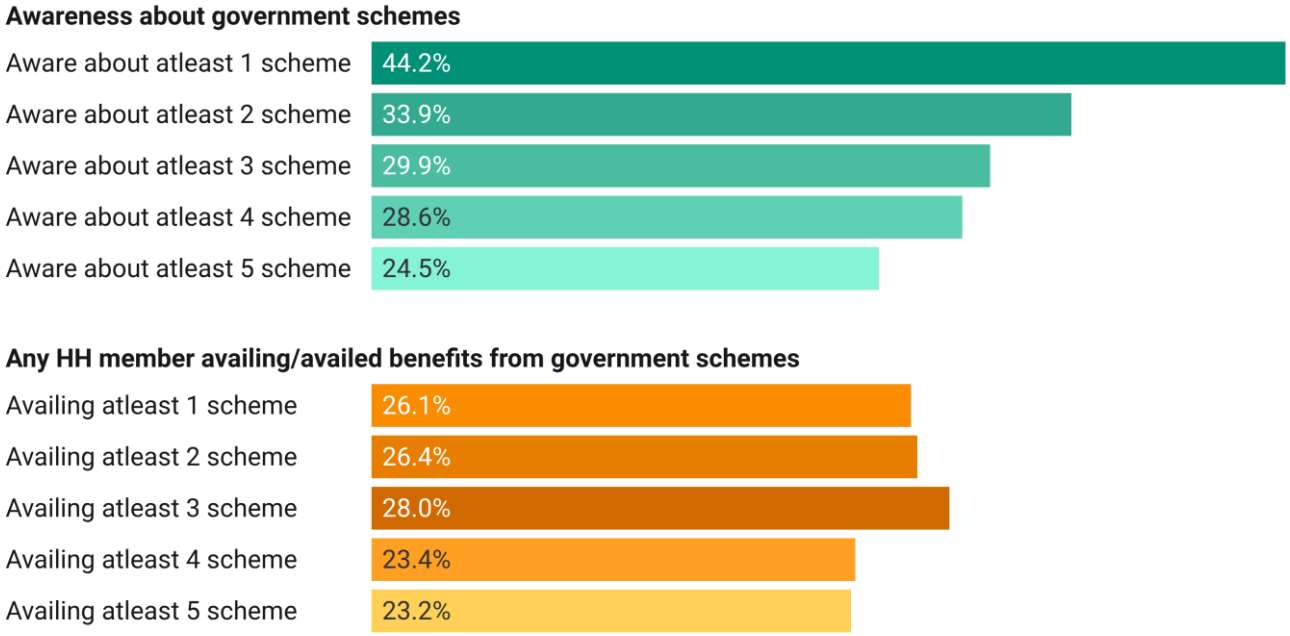


Table 8.1: Awareness and getting advantage of different Govt. schemes by women aged 15-30, Assam, 2024-25

Scheme	Aware%	Availing/Availed%
Atal Amrit Abhiyan Health Insurance	70.79	35.82
Swanirbhar Nari	8.81	0.42
Assam Abhinandan Education Loan Subsidy Scheme	14.72	0.10
Assam Arunodoi Scheme	92.67	24.70
Gyan Deepika Scheme	8.52	0.93
Anundoram Baruah Laptop Award Scheme	47.79	2.18
College Fee Wavier Scheme	23.04	2.05
Na Bowari	4.17	0.03
Post-Metric Scholarship for Students from Tea Garden Tribes/OBC/SC/ST	35.33	3.02
Pre-Metric Scholarship for Students from Tea Garden Tribes/OBC/SC/ST	31.10	1.49
Minority Girls Scholarship Scheme	23.22	1.55
Swami Vivekananda Assam Youth Empowerment Scheme (SVAYEM)	7.02	0.13
Dr. Banikanta Kakati Award Scheme	44.37	1.81
Majoni Scheme	82.03	13.58
PM Kishan Scheme	87.22	33.13
Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan	21.63	2.22
Mission Indhradhanush	24.80	8.81
Ayushman Bharat Yojana	89.65	59.77
PM Jan-Dhan Yojana	39.17	13.72
PM Awas Yojana	74.59	19.56
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA)	39.94	21.62
Jal Jeevan Mission	85.81	32.78
Widow Pension Scheme	66.27	3.24
PM Matri Vandana Yojana	31.47	6.55
Janani Suraksha Yojana	46.14	16.08

Table 8.2: Prevalence of child marriage by awareness and availing of at least 1 to 5 schemes, Assam, 2024-25

Awareness and Availing Schemes	% Respondents	Child Marriage (%)
Awareness of Government Schemes		
Aware of at least 1 scheme	99.34	44.2
Aware of at least 2 schemes	98.51	33.9
Aware of at least 3 schemes	96.48	29.9
Aware of at least 4 schemes	93.92	28.6
Aware of at least 5 schemes	90.55	24.5
Availing Benefits from Government Schemes		
Availing at least 1 scheme	97.88	26.1
Availing at least 2 schemes	71.67	26.4
Availing at least 3 schemes	54.34	28
Availing at least 4 schemes	38.48	23.4
Availing at least 5 schemes	25.54	23.2

CHAPTER 9 : DETERMINANTS OF EARLY MARRIAGES

9.1 Introduction

Early marriage remains one of the most persistent barriers to women's wellbeing in Assam. While earlier chapters documented its prevalence and socio-economic patterns, understanding why some girls become vulnerable to early marriage and others do not is essential for interpreting these patterns in a meaningful way. Child marriage is not a random event; it emerges from an interaction of structural disadvantages, cultural norms, household characteristics, and regional contexts that shape opportunities and constraints for young women.

9.2 Review of Literature

Early marriage has been widely examined as a structurally embedded phenomenon shaped by economic deprivation, limited educational opportunities, social norms, and spatial inequalities. The literature is remarkably consistent on one point: child marriage is rarely an isolated household decision. It is produced through the interaction of structural constraints and normative expectations that shape girls' life trajectories from an early age.

Socio-economic disadvantage is one of the strongest and most consistently documented determinants of early marriage. Comparative evidence from low- and middle-income countries shows that poverty increases the likelihood of early marriage by reducing the perceived returns to girls' education and by encouraging families to view marriage as a strategy for economic security (Parsons et al., 2015; Jensen & Thornton, 2003). In the Indian context, analyses based on the National Family Health Survey repeatedly demonstrate a steep wealth gradient, with girls from the poorest households facing significantly higher risks of marrying before age 18 (International Institute for Population Sciences & ICF, 2021).

Education is widely recognized as the most powerful protective factor against early marriage. Numerous studies show that each additional level of schooling substantially reduces the probability of child marriage, with secondary education playing a particularly decisive role (Raj et al., 2009; Delprato et al., 2017). Education delays marriage through multiple pathways: it raises aspirations, strengthens agency, increases exposure to alternative social norms, and improves future economic prospects. At the same time, early marriage itself disrupts schooling, creating a reinforcing cycle of disadvantage. Evidence from India suggests that the association between education and delayed marriage remains strong even after controlling for household wealth and place of residence (Sekhri & Debnath, 2014).

Caste, ethnicity, and religion influence marriage timing through their links with social stratification, cultural norms, and access to state resources. Studies from India find higher prevalence of early marriage among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, though these differences are often mediated by poverty, lower educational attainment, and geographic marginalization (Desai & Andrist, 2010; Paul, 2019). In Assam, ethnic heterogeneity adds an additional dimension. Community-specific kinship systems, inheritance practices, and norms surrounding female sexuality shape acceptable ages at marriage, suggesting that ethnicity operates not merely as a cultural

marker but as a structural determinant embedded in local social organization.

Household structure and family environment have also been shown to matter. Girls living in larger or joint families may experience stronger normative pressures to conform to traditional marriage practices, while nuclear households sometimes exhibit greater flexibility in marital decision-making (Malhotra et al., 2011). Parental education, especially maternal education, is consistently associated with delayed marriage of daughters, reflecting both attitudinal change and enhanced capacity to invest in girls' human capital (Field & Ambrus, 2008).

Mass media exposure and information access constitute another important pathway. Exposure to television, radio, newspapers, and digital media has been linked to lower odds of early marriage, even after accounting for wealth and education (Jensen & Oster, 2009; Paul & Chouhan, 2020). Media exposure increases awareness of legal norms, expands perceived life choices, and contributes to the diffusion of norms favouring delayed marriage. This mechanism is particularly relevant in settings where formal enforcement of marriage laws is weak.

Geographic and regional context plays a critical role in shaping marriage practices. Child marriage shows strong spatial clustering, reflecting shared norms, levels of development, institutional capacity, and access to services. District- and region-level variation often persists even after adjusting for individual and household characteristics, indicating the importance of place-based effects (Goli et al., 2015). Studies from Northeast India emphasize that state- or district-level averages mask substantial intra-regional heterogeneity, reinforcing the need to account for administrative divisions in empirical analyses.

Finally, the literature situates early marriage within broader gender and power structures. Patriarchal norms that prioritize girls' roles as wives and mothers, concerns over premarital relationships, and anxieties about family honour continue to drive early marriage decisions (Kabeer, 2011). Global syntheses by organizations such as UNICEF emphasize that legal prohibitions alone are insufficient unless accompanied by social norm change, educational expansion, and economic opportunities for young women (UNICEF, 2021).

Taken together, existing research frames early marriage as a structurally produced outcome shaped by socio-economic position, education, household context, and regional location. This body of evidence supports a multivariable analytical approach that moves beyond descriptive patterns to identify independent determinants. The present chapter builds on this literature by empirically examining how these factors operate within Assam, a context marked by pronounced social diversity and regional inequality.

9.3 Method

This chapter focuses on identifying the determinants of early marriage using both descriptive and multivariable statistical approaches. The analysis begins by testing whether key socio-demographic characteristics-such as ethnicity, caste, religion, wealth, education, family type, and media exposure-are significantly associated with child-marriage outcomes. These bivariate comparisons establish whether broad group-level disparities exist.

The second step uses a multivariable logistic regression model to examine the independent contribution of each factor when others are held constant. This approach allows us to move beyond surface-level differences and evaluate structural drivers such as educational attainment, economic status, household environment, and geographic location. Because marriage practices often cluster within cultural or spatial boundaries, the model also incorporates administrative division to capture regional variation.

Together, these analyses provide a grounded understanding of the forces that shape early marriage in Assam. By isolating the most influential predictors, this chapter lays the empirical foundation for designing targeted interventions and for interpreting the broader social pathways that sustain early marriage across different communities.

9.4 Determinants of Child Marriage in Assam

The multivariable analysis highlights several demographics, social, and regional factors that shape the likelihood of child marriage. **Education emerges** as the most influential determinant. Individuals with any level of formal schooling are significantly less likely to experience child marriage than those with no education, and the protective effect intensifies with higher educational attainment. High school education reduces the odds by more than half, while intermediate and **higher education almost entirely eliminate the risk**. Age, household size, media exposure, and type of family do not exert an independent influence.

Ethnic and social group differences are largely muted, with most communities showing similar likelihoods of child marriage compared with Assamese households. The only exception is the Tea Garden community, where the odds are substantially lower. Social groups such as OBC, SC, and ST do not display meaningful associations after adjustment. **Religious affiliation shows a more pronounced effect. Individuals belonging to Muslim households have markedly higher odds of child marriage** compared with Christians, while other religious categories do not differ significantly from the reference group.

Economic status shows limited differentiation. Only individuals in the **richer wealth quintile exhibit a modest decline in the odds of child marriage** relative to the poorest. The most prominent disparities appear across administrative divisions of the state. Compared with Barak Valley, all other divisions – Central, Lower, North, and Upper Assam – show significantly higher odds of child marriage, with the strongest elevations observed in North and Upper Assam. These regional differences point to substantial spatial variation in the determinants of child marriage.

Table 9.1: Determinants of Child Marriage: Adjusted Odds Ratios (OR) from Multivariable Regression Analysis, Assam, 2024-25

Predictors	OR	95% CI - Low	95% CI - High	p
(Intercept)	0.17	0.04	0.71	0.02
Age	1.02	0.97	1.07	0.52
Education				
No Education	1.00			
Primary (Class 1–5)	0.74	0.48	1.13	0.17
Upper Primary Schooling (Class 6 to 8)	0.70	0.48	1.02	0.06
High School (Class 9-10)	0.41	0.28	0.59	0.00
Intermediate (Class 11 to 12)	0.08	0.05	0.12	0.00
Graduate and above	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00
Ethnicity				
Assamese	1.00			
Bengali	1.01	0.80	1.29	0.91
Bodo	0.80	0.49	1.31	0.38
Karbi	1.25	0.68	2.30	0.47
Nepali	1.12	0.60	2.03	0.71
Others	0.93	0.69	1.24	0.63
Tea Garden	0.43	0.31	0.60	0.00
Social Group				
General	1.00			
OBC	1.21	0.88	1.68	0.24
SC	1.38	0.96	2.01	0.09
ST	1.27	0.82	1.95	0.28
Religion				
Christian	1.00			
Hindu	1.41	0.86	2.38	0.18
Muslim	3.15	1.74	5.84	0.00
Others	1.94	0.25	10.59	0.47
Residence				
Rural	1.00			
Urban	0.87	0.66	1.15	0.341
Type of Family				
Joint/Extended	1.00			
Nuclear	1.12	0.92	1.36	0.28
Wealth Quintile				
Poorest	1.00			
Poorer	0.96	0.76	1.19	0.69
Middle	0.99	0.82	1.19	0.90

Richer	0.79	0.67	0.94	0.01
Richest	0.99	0.84	1.17	0.93
Household Size	1.02	0.97	1.08	0.42
Media Exposure				
No Exposure	1.00			
Low Exposure	1.02	0.83	1.27	0.83
High Exposure	0.82	0.63	1.06	0.12
Division				
Barak Valley	1.00			
Central Assam	1.92	1.39	2.66	0.00
Lower Assam	2.51	1.88	3.37	0.00
North Assam	3.03	2.14	4.32	0.00
Upper Assam	2.95	2.09	4.20	0.00

CHAPTER 10 : CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Summary of the Study

This study examined the prevalence, patterns, and determinants of child marriage in Assam using primary data from the ASEMA study (2024–25), with comparative reference to successive rounds of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS). The core objective was to understand how individual, household, socio-cultural, and regional factors shape the persistence of early marriage, particularly among women married before the age of 18.

Methodologically, the study employed descriptive analysis, bivariate comparisons, and multivariable regression models to identify individual- and group-level determinants of child marriage. District- and division-level analyses were undertaken to uncover spatial clustering and regional heterogeneity, while additional attention was given to perceptions of ideal age at marriage, gender norms, media exposure, and awareness and availing of government schemes.

The findings demonstrate that child marriage in Assam has declined substantially over time, from NFHS-3 to NFHS-5 and further in ASEMA (2024-25), yet remains unacceptably high in specific socio-economic, religious, and geographic contexts. The study identifies clear gradients by education, religion, wealth, division, and gendered attitudes toward marriage. Importantly, it highlights that awareness of government schemes is nearly universal, while actual availing varies sharply, and that higher exposure to schemes and information is associated with lower levels of child marriage.

Beyond Assam, this study holds broader relevance for India and other high-prevalence states. It provides a granular, evidence-based framework to identify who is most at risk, where child marriage is concentrated, and which social mechanisms sustain it. Such insights are critical for designing targeted interventions and for monitoring progress toward national and international commitments to eliminate child marriage.

10.2 Conclusion

Synthesis of Key Findings

The study establishes that child marriage in Assam is not evenly distributed across the population but is structured by intersecting social, economic, cultural, and geographic factors. Although overall prevalence has declined, early marriage persists most strongly among women with low educational attainment, poorer households, certain religious communities, and in specific districts of the state, particularly Lower and North Assam.

Gender norms play a vital role. While marriage for boys is socially preferred at later ages (25–29 or beyond), marriage for girls is overwhelmingly considered appropriate between 18 and 24 years, reinforcing a narrow and gendered transition into adulthood. These norms persist across ethnic and caste groups, indicating that legal minimum age alone has limited power without normative change.

Spatial analysis reveals clear district-level clustering, with some districts consistently exhibiting prevalence rates far above the state

average. This spatial concentration suggests that child marriage is embedded in local social ecosystems rather than driven solely by household-level poverty.

Addressing the Research Questions

The study directly addressed its initial research objectives by:

- Estimating the current prevalence of child marriage in Assam using a UNICEF-recommended denominator.
- Identifying individual-level determinants such as age, education, religion, household size, and media exposure.
- Examining group-level differences by ethnicity, caste, wealth, and residence.
- Mapping district- and division-level variation to identify geographic hotspots; and
- Assessing the role of awareness and availing of government schemes in shaping marriage outcomes.

Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the field by moving beyond national averages and offering district- and division-level evidence on child marriage. It demonstrates that progress is possible-evidenced by the consistent decline from NFHS to ASEMA-while also showing that progress is uneven. The findings provide actionable insights for policymakers, administrators, and civil society actors working to eliminate child marriage through targeted, context-specific strategies.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, self-reported age at marriage may be subject to recall bias or social desirability bias, particularly in contexts where child marriage is legally prohibited. Second, some subgroups-such as certain religious minorities or smaller ethnic groups Buddhist and Christian, have limited sample sizes, which may affect the precision of estimates. Despite these limitations, the study offers robust and policy-relevant evidence.

10.3 Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

I. Target High-Risk Groups and Regions

Interventions should prioritize districts and divisions with persistently high prevalence, particularly in Lower Assam and North Assam. Within these regions, efforts must focus on girls from poorer households, low-education backgrounds, and communities where early marriage remains socially normative.

II. Strengthen Education-Centred Interventions

Education emerges as the strongest protective factor against child marriage. Policies should prioritize retention of girls beyond higher secondary education through scholarships, conditional cash transfers etc. Preventing school dropout at the higher secondary level is critical. So, we need mandatory education for all girls till 12^{th} standard.

Policy efforts should focus on ensuring that **all children-regardless of religious or community background-receive a common, standardized core education** that prioritizes formal schooling

outcomes such as literacy, critical thinking, life skills, legal awareness, and gender equality. This does not imply restricting religious instruction but rather ensuring that **religious education does not substitute or replace formal schooling**, especially during the critical secondary education years.

III. Engage Religious and Community Leaders

The analysis shows that child marriage prevalence is significantly higher among Muslim households, even after controlling for education, wealth, family structure, and other socio-economic factors. This indicates that religion-specific social norms and marriage practices play a key role in sustaining early marriage in certain communities. Consequently, targeted engagement with Muslim religious leaders (Imams, Madrasa teachers, and local religious committees) is essential.

Interventions should focus on collaborating with religious institutions to reinterpret marriage practices in ways that are compatible with both religious teachings and legal frameworks. Faith-based messaging that emphasizes girls' education, health, and well-being-as well as the permissibility of delaying marriage within religious doctrine-can be a powerful tool for normative change. Such engagement must be participatory and respectful, avoiding stigmatization while directly addressing the communities where the risk remains highest.

IV. Combine Legal Enforcement with Community Engagement

Legal provisions against child marriage must be enforced consistently, but punitive approaches alone are insufficient. Legal action should be complemented by community monitoring systems, counselling services, and family-level engagement to prevent covert or informal marriages.

V. Sustain and Deepen Govt. Programmes

The observed decline in child marriage from NFHS to ASEMA suggests that government programmes, particularly those related to education, health, and social protection-are having an impact. These efforts should be sustained, expanded, and better integrated, with stronger mechanisms to ensure that awareness translates into actual availing.

VI. Improve Information and Media Outreach

Media exposure is associated with lower odds of child marriage. Expanding access to information through digital platforms, and local language campaigns can accelerate normative change.

10.4 Future Research

Future research should build on this study by adopting a longitudinal or repeated cross-sectional design. Periodic data collection at five-year intervals-similar to NFHS but with greater state-level depth-would allow for rigorous monitoring of trends, evaluation of policy impact, and identification of emerging risks. Integrating qualitative research would further enrich understanding of household decision-making processes, gender norms, and the lived experiences of girls at risk of early marriage. Sustained investment in such empirical evidence is essential for achieving the long-term

goal of eliminating child marriage in Assam and across India.

References

Delprato, M., Akyeampong, K., Sabates, R., & Hernandez-Fernandez, J. (2017). On the impact of early marriage on schooling outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southwest Asia. *International Journal of Educational Development, 55*, 42–55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2015.06.001

Desai, S., & Andrist, L. (2010). Gender scripts and age at marriage in India. *Demography, 47*(3), 667–687. https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.0.0118

Field, E., & Ambrus, A. (2008). Early marriage, age of menarche, and female schooling attainment in Bangladesh. *Journal of Political Economy, 116*(5), 881–930. https://doi.org/10.1086/593333

Goli, S., Rammohan, A., & Singh, D. (2015). The effect of early marriages and early childbearing on women's nutritional status in India. *Maternal and Child Health Journal, 19*(8), 1864–1880. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-015-1700-7

India Child Protection Network. (2024). *Assessment of child marriage trends in Assam (2021–2024)* [Report].

International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) & ICF. (2021). *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019–21: India*. IIPS. http://rchiips.org/nfhs/

Jensen, R., & Oster, E. (2009). The power of TV: Cable television and women's status in India. *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 124*(3), 1057–1094. https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.2009.124.3.1057

Jensen, R., & Thornton, R. (2003). Early female marriage in the developing world. *Gender & Development, 11*(2), 9–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/741954311

Kabeer, N. (2011). Between affiliation and autonomy: Navigating pathways of women's empowerment and gender justice. *Development and Change, 42*(2), 499–528. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2011.01703.x

Malhotra, A., Warner, A., McGonagle, A., & Lee-Rife, S. (2011). *Solutions to end child marriage*. International Center for Research on Women.

National Crime Records Bureau. (2023). *Crime in India 2023*. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. https://ncrb.gov.in/

Parsons, J., Edmeades, J., Kes, A., Petroni, S., Sexton, M., & Wodon, Q. (2015). Economic impacts of child marriage: A review of the literature. *Review of Faith & International Affairs, 13*(3), 12–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2015.1075757

Paul, P. (2019). Effects of education and poverty on the prevalence of girl child marriage in India. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 54*(2), 278–292. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909618792830

Paul, P., & Chouhan, P. (2020). Association between mass media exposure and child marriage in India. *Journal of Biosocial Science, 52*(4), 488–503. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021932019000622

Raj, A., Saggurti, N., Balaiah, D., & Silverman, J. (2009). Prevalence of child marriage and its effect on fertility and fertility-control outcomes of young women in India. *The Lancet, 373*(9678), 1883–1889. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(09)60246-4

Sekhri, S., & Debnath, S. (2014). Intergenerational consequences of early age marriages of girls: Effect on children's human capital. *Journal of Development Studies, 50*(12), 1670–1686. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2014.936397

UNICEF. (2021). *Child marriage: Latest trends and future prospects*. https://www.unicef.org/reports/child-marriage

UNICEF. (n.d.). *Child marriage*. https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage

UNICEF. (n.d.). *Child marriage* [Data]. https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/

UNICEF Assam. (2023). *Floods, displacement, and child marriage vulnerability in Assam*. https://www.unicef.org/india/

UNFPA. (n.d.). *Child marriage*. https://www.unfpa.org/child-marriage

United Nations. (2015). *Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls* [Target 5.3]. https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5

Vikram, K., Visaria, A., & Ganguly, D. (2023). Child marriage as a risk factor for non-communicable diseases among women in India. ***International Journal of Epidemiology, 52***(5), 1303–1315. **https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyad051**

World Health Organization. (2024). *Child marriage and maternal health risks*. https://www.who.int/

Appendix

Appendix 1: Access to Improved Toilet by socio-demographic background, Assam, 2024-25

Background	Rural	Urban	Total
Ethnicity			
Assamese	93.0	93.4	93.1
Bengali	86.0	92.5	87.0
Bodo	89.4	85.0	89.2
Karbi	96.7	100.0	96.9
Nepali	93.3	97.8	93.9
Others	83.6	86.2	83.9
Tea Garden	83.0	96.4	83.5
Social Group			
General	87.2	90.6	87.7
Other Backward Class (OBC)	89.3	94.1	89.8
Scheduled Caste (SC)	90.3	92.3	90.8
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	86.8	92.8	87.1
Religion			
Christian	85.5	100.0	86.2
Hindu	89.5	93.5	90.1
Muslim	85.3	84.6	85.3
Others	83.3	100.0	84.6
Type of Family			
Joint/Extended	92.7	94.8	93.0
Nuclear	86.3	91.3	87.0
Ownership of House			
Ancestral	84.9	95.4	86.1
Constructed by Government/Private organization	87.1	85.1	86.9
Others	93.4	100.0	93.8
Own constructed/Purchased	89.0	95.9	89.8
Rented	88.9	82.5	83.9
Wealth Quintile			
Poorest	52.3	33.3	51.3
Poorer	95.6	87.0	95.0
Middle	99.0	98.4	98.9
Richer	98.9	97.6	98.7
Richest	99.7	99.5	99.6
Division			
Barak Valley	93.1	98.3	93.8
Central Assam	89.4	94.1	90.1

Lower Assam	85.4	86.8	85.6
North Assam	87.2	94.5	87.6
Upper Assam	89.8	97.2	90.7
Total Number	**12981**	**1912**	**14893**

Appendix 2: Access to clean fuel by socio-demographic background, Assam, 2024-25

Background	Rural	Urban	Total
Ethnicity			
Assamese	88.4	96.1	89.6
Bengali	69.1	93.9	72.9
Bodo	75.3	87.5	75.9
Karbi	57.4	88.9	59.8
Nepali	88.3	100.0	89.8
Others	68.4	92.7	71.5
Tea Garden	43.6	74.5	44.8
Social Group			
General	73.9	93.1	76.7
Other Backward Class (OBC)	72.6	94.2	74.9
Scheduled Caste (SC)	76.5	96.3	81.3
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	67.3	92.1	68.9
Religion			
Christian	56.6	91.3	58.3
Hindu	75.3	95.9	78.5
Muslim	68.3	84.9	69.5
Others	58.3	100.0	61.5
Type of Family			
Joint/Extended	75.7	95.7	77.8
Nuclear	71.3	93.4	74.3
Ownership of House			
Ancestral	73.1	92.8	75.4
Constructed by Government/Private organization	63.9	91.5	65.9
Others	47.1	100.0	50.7
Own constructed/Purchased	74.5	94.7	76.6
Rented	76.9	93.5	89.9
Wealth Quintile			
Poorest	23.4	55.7	25.1
Poorer	59.6	84.6	61.4
Middle	94.8	96.4	94.9
Richer	96.6	99.1	97.0

Richest	98.4	99.9	98.9
Division			
Barak Valley	60.4	94.3	64.9
Central Assam	72.8	94.4	75.8
Lower Assam	75.7	93.1	78.3
North Assam	72.5	96.3	73.9
Upper Assam	71.9	94.4	74.7
Total Number	12979	1911	14890

Appendix 3: Access to Improved Water Source, Assam, 2024-25

Background	Rural	Urban	Total
Ethnicity			
Assamese	89.4	84.1	88.6
Bengali	86.3	86.1	86.2
Bodo	79.4	92.5	80
Karbi	36	51.9	37.2
Nepali	77.6	73.3	77
Others	75.2	80.4	75.8
Tea Garden	79.2	100	79.9
Social Group			
General	88.8	84.6	88.2
Other Backward Class (OBC)	83.4	89.2	84
Scheduled Caste (SC)	81.8	82.1	81.9
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	69.6	69.7	69.6
Religion			
Christian	71.6	65.2	71.3
Hindu	80.7	84.5	81.3
Muslim	88.9	84.3	88.6
Others	75	100	76.9
Type of Family			
Joint/Extended	82.5	83	82.6
Nuclear	83	84.7	83.3
Ownership of House			
Ancestral	83.5	87.2	83.9
Constructed by Government/Private organization	83.3	88.7	83.7
Others	90.4	80	89.7
Own constructed/Purchased	82.7	84.3	82.9
Rented	70.9	80.9	78.7
Wealth Quintile			

Poorest	76.7	78	76.7
Poorer	81.4	80.3	81.4
Middle	84.9	81.2	84.6
Richer	86.8	86.3	86.7
Richest	86	86.4	86.1
Division			
Barak Valley	66.2	94.3	69.9
Central Assam	74.1	75.4	74.3
Lower Assam	86.9	82.5	86.3
North Assam	83.8	87.2	84
Upper Assam	88.3	89.6	88.5
Total Number	12981	1912	**14893**

Appendix 4: District Wise Access to Improved Toilet Facility, Assam, 2024-25

District	Rural	Urban	Total
Barak Valley			
Cachar	92.7	98.0	93.9
Hailakandi	91.3	100.0	91.7
Karimganj	95.7	98.0	96.0
Central Assam			
Dima Hasao	95.4	100.0	96.6
Hojai	99.1	98.6	99.0
Karbi Anglong	95.6	98.7	96.1
Morigaon	81.2	89.7	81.9
Nagaon	84.6	78.2	84.0
West Karbi Anglong	87.4	92.0	87.7
Lower Assam			
Bajali	84.7	89.6	85.6
Baksa	90.9	84.0	90.5
Barpeta	85.7	88.5	85.9
Bongaigaon	90.2	97.3	91.2
Chirang	85.1	96.0	85.7
Dhubri	75.9	82.9	76.9
Goalpara	91.8	93.3	92.0
Kamrup (Rural)	88.9	90.0	89.1
Kamrup Metro	82.7	81.6	81.8
Kokrajhar	76.8	88.5	77.4
Nalbari	89.6	88.0	89.4
South Salmara	83.0	84.0	83.0

Tamulpur	87.4	88.5	87.6
North Assam			
Biswanath	90.7	95.5	91.0
Darrang	84.8	77.8	84.6
Sonitpur	88.7	100.0	90.1
Udalguri	85.8	94.7	86.1
Upper Assam			
Charaideo	92.0	96.0	92.3
Dhemaji	77.9	98.0	80.0
Dibrugarh	93.7	98.7	94.7
Golaghat	95.9	100.0	96.3
Jorhat	95.3	96.7	95.7
Lakhimpur	88.0	98.0	89.0
Majuli	87.8		87.8
Sivsagar	93.1	91.5	92.9
Tinsukia	90.0	98.6	91.7
Total Number (HH)	**12981**	**1912**	**14893**

Appendix 5: District wise Access to Clean Cooking Fuel, Assam, 2024-25

District	Rural	Urban	Total
Barak Valley			
Cachar	66.9	96.0	73.5
Hailakandi	51.0	95.8	53.4
Karimganj	65.4	90.0	68.3
Central Assam			
Dima Hasao	68.3	97.3	75.8
Hojai	78.6	94.4	81.5
Karbi Anglong	70.5	98.7	75.3
Morigaon	81.2	87.2	81.6
Nagaon	78.0	94.5	79.7
West Karbi Anglong	53.7	80.0	55.6
Lower Assam			
Bajali	85.1	100.0	88.0
Baksa	80.5	68.0	79.7
Barpeta	78.3	92.3	79.0
Bongaigaon	76.0	97.3	79.0
Chirang	74.1	92.0	75.1
Dhubri	71.5	90.8	74.1
Goalpara	64.9	93.3	69.0

Kamrup (Rural)	89.2	100.0	90.7
Kamrup Metro	89.3	93.6	92.8
Kokrajhar	64.4	88.5	65.7
Nalbari	90.9	92.0	91.1
South Salmara	70.3	88.0	71.2
Tamulpur	71.4	92.3	74.1
North Assam			
Biswanath	71.5	95.5	72.9
Darrang	78.9	100.0	79.7
Sonitpur	74.0	100.0	77.2
Udalguri	64.7	84.2	65.5
Upper Assam			
Charaideo	72.3	96.0	73.9
Dhemaji	75.4	95.9	77.5
Dibrugarh	72.7	94.7	77.1
Golaghat	73.8	88.9	74.9
Jorhat	86.6	97.5	89.9
Lakhimpur	75.4	94.0	77.2
Majuli	74.8		74.8
Sivsagar	71.1	91.5	73.3
Tinsukia	39.9	91.3	50.0
Total Number (HH)	**9411**	**1795**	**11206**

Appendix 6: District Wise Access to Improved Source of Drinking Water, Assam, 2024-25

District	Rural	Urban	Total
Barak Valley			
Cachar	73.0	93.1	77.5
Hailakandi	56.8	95.8	58.8
Karimganj	71.0	96.0	74.0
Central Assam			
Dima Hasao	24.3	38.7	28.0
Hojai	92.4	97.2	93.2
Karbi Anglong	73.0	85.3	75.1
Morigaon	93.5	82.1	92.6
Nagaon	92.1	94.5	92.4
West Karbi Anglong	37.4	40.0	37.6
Lower Assam			
Bajali	95.0	79.2	92.0
Baksa	93.0	92.0	93.0

Barpeta	94.6	92.3	94.5
Bongaigaon	81.6	66.2	79.4
Chirang	75.9	84.0	76.4
Dhubri	95.6	94.7	95.5
Goalpara	74.9	94.7	77.7
Kamrup (Rural)	88.0	88.0	88.0
Kamrup Metro	86.7	73.9	76.5
Kokrajhar	80.4	100.0	81.4
Nalbari	94.9	90.0	94.4
South Salmara	95.2	100.0	95.4
Tamulpur	64.6	84.6	67.2
North Assam			
Biswanath	74.5	95.5	75.6
Darrang	93.3	83.3	93.0
Sonitpur	74.9	84.0	76.0
Udalguri	88.0	89.5	88.1
Upper Assam			
Charaideo	80.9	100.0	82.1
Dhemaji	90.8	100.0	91.8
Dibrugarh	99.0	100.0	99.2
Golaghat	86.9	100.0	87.9
Jorhat	76.8	81.7	78.3
Lakhimpur	82.0	82.0	82.0
Majuli	98.2		98.2
Sivsagar	85.4	76.6	84.4
Tinsukia	95.4	91.3	94.6
Total Number (HH)	**10760**	**1612**	**12372**

ASEMA

Title

A Study of Marriages in Assam (ASEMA) / অসমত এক বিবাহৰ অধ্যয়ন

Identification

1.1) Interviewer ID / সাক্ষাৎকাৰ লওঁতাৰ আইডি

1.2) Interviewer Name / সাক্ষাৎকাৰ লওঁতাৰ নাম

1.3)Interview date / সাক্ষাৎকাৰৰ তাৰিখ

1.4) Cluster ID / ক্লাষ্টাৰ আইডি

1.5) District ID / জিলাৰ আইডি

1.6) PSU ID / পিএচইউ আইডি

1.7) PSU name / পিএচইউ নাম

1.8) Type of PSU / পিএচইউৰ ধৰণ

- ◯ Rural
- ◯ Urban

1.9) Household ID / ঘৰুৱা আইডি

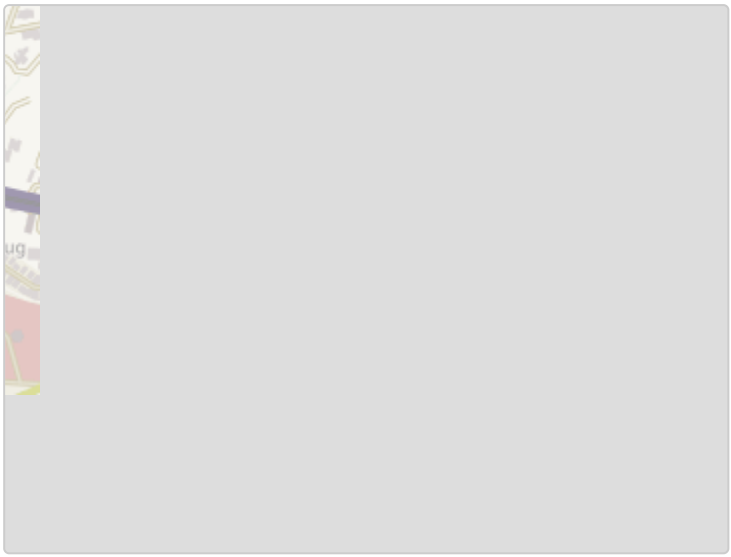
1.10) Geo-Coding / অৱস্থান

latitude (x.y °)

longitude (x.y °)

altitude (m)

accuracy (m)



1.11) Age of the respondent? (Women; in completed years) / উত্তৰদাতাৰ বয়স?

Consent Form / সন্মতি প্রপত্র

» Adult Consent Form / সন্মতি প্রপত্র

Namaste!

My name is _ and I am working as a Field Investigator at "A Study of Marriages in Assam (ASEMA)" at International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai. It aims to explore the dynamics of marriages in Assam.

I will be asking questions about your household and views on early marriages. This interview will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Whatever information you will provide will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for research purposes only. Any personal identifiers that could reveal your name and identity would be removed before the results of the study are made public or shared between people other than the main researchers working on the project.

Your participation is voluntary and is totally based on your willingness to share information on questions asked. You can withdraw from the interview at any time after having agreed to participate. You are free to refuse to answer any question that is asked during the interview. However, I hope that you will take part in this survey since your participation is important. I would very much appreciate your participation in this study. The findings of this study can help to improve the life of adolescent girls and women in the state of Assam.

If you have any questions about this study, you may ask me or contact the person given below.

Director,
ASEMA,
International Institute for Population Sciences,
Mumbai – 400088
Ph. No. – 022-42372888

Do you want to participate in the study? আপুনি এই সাক্ষাৎকাৰ অংশগ্রহণ কৰিব বিচাৰে নেকি?

- Yes / হয়
- No/ নহয়

» Parental Consent Form for Minor / 18 বছৰৰ তলৰ উতৰদাতাৰ সন্মতি প্রপত্র

Namaste!

My name is __ and I am working as a Field Investigator at "A Study of Marriages in Assam (ASEMA)" at International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai. The study is in collaboration with the Government of Assam. It aims to explore the dynamics of marriages in Assam.

I will be asking your daughter/daughter-in-law/niece questions about your household and her perceptions on marriages. This interview will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Whatever information daughter/daughter-in-law/niece you will provide will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for research purposes only. Any personal identifiers that could reveal your name and identity would be removed before the results of the study are made public or shared between people other than the main researchers working on the project.

The participation is voluntary and is totally based on the participant's willingness to share information on questions asked. She can withdraw from the interview at any time after having agreed to participate. She is free to refuse to answer any question that is asked during the interview. However, I hope that she will take part in this survey since her participation is important. I would very much appreciate her participation in this study. The findings of this study can help to improve the life of adolescent girls and women in the state of Assam.

If you have any questions about this study, you may ask me or contact the person given below.

Director,
ASEMA,
International Institute for Population Sciences,
Mumbai – 400088
Ph. No. – 022-42372888

Relation with the respondent

- Father/Father-In-Law
- Mother/Mother-In-Law
- Sister/Brother/Sister-In-Law/Brother-In-Law
- Guardian

Do you want to participate in the study? / আপুনি এই সাক্ষাৎকাৰ অংশগ্রহণ কৰিব বিচাৰে নেকি?

- Yes / হয়
- No/ নহয়

Primary Information

2.1) Name of the Household Head / ঘৰুৱা মুৰব্বীৰ নাম

2.2) Name of the Respondent / উত্তৰদাতাৰ নাম

_____

2.3) Sex of the respondent / উত্তৰদাতাৰ লিংগ

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Other

2.4) Which caste community/ethnic group do you belong to? / আপুনি কোন জাতিগত দল বা জনগোষ্ঠীয়

- ◯ Assamese / অসমীয়া ভাষী
- ◯ Nepali / নেপালী ভাষী
- ◯ Bengali / বাংলা ভাষী
- ◯ Tea Garden / চাহ বাগিচা
- ◯ Bodo / বড়ো ভাষী
- ◯ Karbi / কার্বি ভাষী
- ◯ Others / অন্যান্য

Specify/ নির্দিষ্ট কৰক

_____

2.5) Which social group do you belong to? / আপুনি কোনটো সামাজিক গোটৰ?

- ◯ Scheduled Caste (SC)
- ◯ Scheduled Tribe (ST)
- ◯ Other Backward Class (OBC)
- ◯ General

2.6) What is the religion of the head of the household? / ঘৰৰ মুৰব্বীৰ ধর্ম্ম কি?

- ◯ Hindu
- ◯ Muslim
- ◯ Christian
- ◯ Buddhist
- ◯ No religion
- ◯ Others

Specify / যদি অন্যান্য হয়, তেন্তে নির্দিষ্ট কৰক

_____

2.7) Which language do you speak at home? / ঘৰত আপুনি প্ৰধানকৈ কি কি ভাষা কয়?

- [ ] Assamese / অসমীয়া
- [ ] Bengali / বাংলা
- [ ] Nepali / নেপালী
- [ ] Tea Garden / Adivashi / চা বাগিচা
- [ ] Bodo / বড়ো
- [ ] Karbi / কাৰ্বি
- [ ] Garo / গাৰো
- [ ] Mising / মিচিং
- [ ] Others / অন্যান্য

Specify/ নিৰ্দিষ্ট কৰক

_____

2.8) Please tell the number of people who live generally and eat meals in this house? (in the last six months) / অনুগ্ৰহ কৰি এই ঘৰত সাধাৰণতে বাস কৰা আৰু আহাৰ খোৱা লোকৰ সংখ্যা কওঁক? (যোৱা ছয় মাহত)

_____

Household Roster / ঘৰুৱা ৰোষ্টাৰ

Household Characteristics / ঘৰুৱা বিবৰণ

4.1) Ownership of the house / ঘৰৰ মালিকীস্বত্ব

- ( ) Ancestral
- ( ) Own constructed/Purchased
- ( ) Rented
- ( ) Constructed by Government/Private organization
- ( ) Others

» 4.2)Type of house

4.2) Type of house / ঘৰৰ প্ৰকাৰ

- ( ) Pucca
- ( ) Semi Pucca
- ( ) Kaccha
- ( ) Thatched
- ( ) Others

Specify

_____

4.3) Number of rooms in the house / ঘৰৰ কোঠাৰ সংখ্যা

_____

» 4.4) Does your household have:

» » Durable consumer goods

Sewing Machine

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Inverter

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Mixer/Grinder

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Television

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Air Cooler

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Electric Fan

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Chair and table

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Telephone/Mobile Phone

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Refrigerator

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Air-Conditioner

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Washing Machine

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Computer/ CD Player

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Bed/Mattress/Furniture

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

GasStove

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Blanket/Quilt

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

» » Transport

Tractor

-

_____

Cycle

-

_____

Motor cycle/scooter

_____

Animal driven cart

-

_____

Car/Jeep

» » Animals

Cow

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Buffalo

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Goat/Sheep

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Hen

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Horse

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

» » Machine/Tools used by Artisans and Servicing class

Power loom

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Hand loom

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

» 4.5) Cooking fuel

What type of cooking fuel does your family use? / আপোনাৰ পৰিয়ালে কেনে ধৰণৰ ৰন্ধন ইন্ধন ব্যৱহাৰ কৰে?

-

- [ ] LPG
- [ ] Kerosene
- [ ] Electricity
- [ ] Cow dung
- [ ] Coal/Charcoal
- [ ] Wood/Agriculture waste
- [ ] Others

Specify

_____

4.6) Does your house have separate kitchen? / আপোনাৰ ঘৰত পৃথক পাকঘৰ আছে নেকি?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

» 4.7) Source of drinking water

What is the main source of drinking water for your house? / আপোনাৰ ঘৰৰ বাবে খোৱা পানীৰ মুখ্য উৎস কি?

- ◯ Hand pump
- ◯ Tap
- ◯ Tube well
- ◯ Well
- ◯ Pond/river/stream
- ◯ Other

Specify

_____

» Toilet facility

4.8) Does your house have toilet facility? / আপোনাৰ ঘৰত শৌচাগাৰৰ সুবিধা আছে নে?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

4.9) If yes, what type of toilet facility / যদি হয়, শৌচাগাৰৰ সুবিধাৰ প্ৰকাৰ?

- Flush toilet
- Pit toilet
- Dry toilet
- Others

Specify

_____

4.10) If no, Where do you go for toilet? / যদি নহয়, আপুনি শৌচাগাৰৰ বাবে ক'লৈ যায়?

- Go outside
- Public/Community toilet
- Shared among household

» Type of Family

4.11) What is the type of the family? / কেনেকুৱা পৰিয়াল?

- Nuclear
- Joint/Extended
- Others

If others, specify

_____

Media Exposure / সংবাদ মাধ্যমৰ প্ৰভাৱ

5.1) Do you read a newspaper or magazine? / আপুনি বাতৰি কাকত বা আলোচনী পঢ়ে নেকি?

- At least once a week
- Less than once a week
- Not at all

5.2) Do you watch television? / আপুনি দূৰদৰ্শন চায় নেকি?

- Atleast once a week
- Less than once a week
- Not at all

5.3) Do you go to watch cinema? / আপুনি চিনেমা চাবলৈ যায় নেকি?

- Atleast once a month
- Less than one a month
- Not at all

5.4) Do you use the internet? / আপুনি ইণ্টাৰনেট ব্যৱহাৰ কৰে নেকি?

- ◯ Atleast once a week
- ◯ Less than once a week
- ◯ Not at all

5.5) Do you listen to radio? / আপুনি ৰেডিঅ' শুনিছেনেকি?

- ◯ Atleast once a week
- ◯ Less than once a week
- ◯ Not at all

5.6) Do you have any social media account (Facebook/WhatsApp/Other)? / আপোনাৰ কোনো ছ'চিয়েল মিডিয়া একাউণ্ট আছে নেকি (ফেচবুক/হোৱাটছএপ/অন্যান্য)

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Population and Health / জনসংখ্যা আৰু স্বাস্থ্য

6.1) What is your current age? / আপোনাৰ বৰ্তমান বয়স কিমান?

-

_____

6.2) What is your current marital status? / আপোনাৰ বৰ্তমানৰ বৈবাহিক স্থিতি কি?

- ◯ Never married
- ◯ Married
- ◯ Widowed
- ◯ Divorced/Separated

» 6.3) Multiple marriages

Have you married more than once? / এবাৰতকৈ অধিক বিয়া হৈছে নেকি?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

If yes, How many times? / যদি হয়, কিমানবাৰ?

_____

6.4) How old were you when you first got married? / যেতিয়া আপুনি (প্ৰথম) বিবাহ পাশত আৱদ্ধ হৈছিল তেতিয়া আপোনাৰ বয়স কিমান আছিল?

_____

6.5) How old were you when you first started living with your husband? / যেতিয়া আপুনি প্ৰথমে আপোনাৰ স্বামীৰ লগত সহবাস আৰম্ভ কৰিছিল তেতিয়া আপোনাৰ বয়স কিমান আছিল?

_____

» Who chose your husband?

6.6) Who chose your husband? / আপোনাৰ স্বামীক কোনে বাছনি কৰিছিল?

- Your self
- You along with your parents
- Parents alone
- Relatives
- Others

Specify

_____

6.7) What was your caste before marriage? / বিয়াৰ আগতে আপোনাৰ জাতি কি আছিল?

- Scheduled Caste (SC)
- Scheduled Tribe (ST)
- Other Backward Class (OBC)
- General

» 6.8) Religion before marriage

What was your religion before marriage? / বিয়াৰ আগতে আপোনাৰ ধৰ্ম কি আছিল?

- Hindu
- Muslim
- Christian
- Buddhist
- No religion
- Others

Specify

_____

6.9) How many wives does your husband have? / আপোনাৰ স্বামীৰ কিমানগৰাকী পত্নী আছে?

_____

6.10) Age at (first)marriage of spouse? / স্বামীৰ বিবাহৰ বয়স?

_____

6.11) Is your husband blood related to you? / আপোনাৰ আৰ আপোনাৰ স্বামীৰ মাজত তেজৰ সম্পৰ্ক আছে নাকি?

- Yes
- No

» 6.12) What was the approximate cost of the marriage? / বিবাহৰ আনুমানিক ব্যয় কিমান আছিল? (in INR)

Bride side

-

Groom side

-

Total

-

» Fertility and Mortality

6.13) Have you ever been pregnant? / আপুনি কেতিয়াবা গৰ্ভৱতী হৈছে নেকি?

- Yes
- No

» » Pregnant Women

6.14) Have you ever given birth? / আপুনি কেতিয়াবা সন্তান জন্ম দিছে নেকি?

- Yes
- No

» » » 6.15) How many children have you given birth to? / যদি হয়, আপুনি কেইটা সন্তান জন্ম দিছে?

Total / মুঠ

Sons / পুত্ৰ

Daughters / কন্যা

_____

6.16) Where was your last child born? / আপোনাৰ অন্তিম সন্তান ক'ত জন্ম হৈছিল?

- In Home
- In your parent's home
- In other's home
- In Primary Health Centre
- In Government Hospital
- In Private hospital and Nursing home
- Other

6.17) Have you ever had a pregnancy that miscarried, was aborted, or ended in a stillbirth? / আপোনাৰ কেতিয়াবা গৰ্ভপাত বা মৃত সন্তান প্ৰসৰ কৰিছিল নেকি?

- Yes
- No

6.18) Did any pregnancy end in last five years (January 2019 or later) / যোৱা পাঁচ বছৰত (জানুৱাৰী 2019 বা তাৰ পিছত) আপোনাৰ কোনো গৰ্ভপাত হৈছিল নেকি?

- Yes
- No

6.19) Did that pregnancy end in miscarriage/abortion or stillbirth? / সেই গৰ্ভধাৰণ গৰ্ভপাত হৈছে নেকি বা মৃত সন্তানজন্মত হৈছে নেকি?

- Miscarriage/Abortion
- Stilllbirth

6.20) In last five years, have you given birth to a boy or girl who was born alive but later died? / যোৱা পাঁচ বছৰত আপোনাৰ লৰা বা ছোৱালী সন্তানৰ মৃত্যু হৈয়াছে নাকি, যে জন্ম হোৱাত জীৱিত আছিল?

- Yes
- No

6.21) How many children died in last five years? / যদি হয়, যোৱা পাঁচ বছৰত কিমানটা শিশুৰ মৃত্যু হৈছে?

_____

» » » 6.22) At what age did, he/she die? / যদি মৃত্যু হয়, তেন্তে তেওঁ কিমান বয়সত মৃত্যুবৰণ কৰিছিল?

6.23) When you got pregnant, did you want to get pregnant at that time? / যেতিয়া আপুনি গৰ্ভৱতী হৈছিল, আপুনি সেই সময়ত গৰ্ভৱতী হ'ব বিচাৰিছিল নেকি?

- Yes
- No

6.24) How many months pregnant were you when you came to know about your pregnancy? / গর্ভধাৰণৰ বিষয়ে গম পোৱাৰ সময়ত আপুনি কিমান মাহৰ গর্ভৱতী আছিল?

_____

6.25) Was this pregnancy registered? / এই গর্ভধাৰণ পঞ্জীয়ন কৰা হৈছিল নেকি?

- Yes
- No

6.26) Did you face any complications during pregnancy? / গর্ভাৱস্থাৰ সময়ত আপুনি কোনো জটিলতাৰ সন্মুখীন হৈছিল নেকি?

- Yes
- No

6.27) If yes, what kind of complicacy? / যদি হয়, কেনে ধৰণৰ জটিলতাৰ সন্মুখীন হৈছিল?

- Vaginal Bleeding
- Convulsions
- Prolonged labor
- Severe abdominal pain
- High blood pressure
- Others

6.28) Is there any death of women in your household due to complications in pregnancy? / গর্ভাৱস্থাৰ জটিলতাৰ বাবে আপোনাৰ ঘৰত মহিলাৰ কোনো মৃত্যু হৈছে নেকি?

- Yes
- No

» Contraception

» » Have you ever used?

6.29) Have you ever used any kind of contraception methods?

- Yes
- No

6.30) If Yes, which methods have you used? / যদি হয়, আপুনি কোনবোৰ পদ্ধতি ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিছে?

- [ ] Female Sterilisation
- [ ] Male Sterilisation
- [ ] IUD/PPIUD
- [ ] Injectables
- [ ] Pill
- [ ] Condom/Nirodh
- [ ] Female condom
- [ ] Emergency contraception
- [ ] Diaphragm
- [ ] Foam/jelly
- [ ] Standard days method
- [ ] Lactational amen. method
- [ ] Rhythem method
- [ ] Withdrawal
- [ ] Other modern method
- [ ] Other traditional method

» » Currently using?

6.31) Are you currently using any kind of contraception methods? / আপুনি বর্তমান কোনো ধৰণৰ গর্ভনিৰোধক পদ্ধতি ব্যৱহাৰ কৰি আছে নেকি?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No

6.32) Which methods are you using? / যদি হয়, আপুনি কোনবোৰ পদ্ধতি ব্যৱহাৰ কৰি আছে?

- [ ] Female Sterilisation
- [ ] Male Sterilisation
- [ ] IUD/PPIUD
- [ ] Injectables
- [ ] Pill
- [ ] Condom/Nirodh
- [ ] Female condom
- [ ] Emergency contraception
- [ ] Diaphragm
- [ ] Foam/jelly
- [ ] Standard days method
- [ ] Lactational amen. method
- [ ] Rhythem method
- [ ] Withdrawal
- [ ] Other modern method
- [ ] Other traditional method

6.33) Are you aware of any government schemes mentioned in the list

- [ ] Atal Amrit Abhiyan Health Insurance
- [ ] Swanirbhar Nari
- [ ] Assam Abhinandan Education Loan Subsidy Scheme
- [ ] Assam Arunodoi Scheme
- [ ] Gyan Deepika Scheme
- [ ] Anundoram Baruah Laptop Award Scheme
- [ ] College Fee Wavier Scheme
- [ ] Na Bowari
- [ ] Post-Metric Scholarship for Students from Tea Garden Tribes/OBC/SC/ST
- [ ] Pre-Metric Scholarship for Students from Tea Garden Tribes/OBC/SC/ST
- [ ] Minority Girls Scholarship Scheme
- [ ] Swami Vivekananda Assam Youth Empowerment Scheme (SVAYEM)
- [ ] Dr. Banikanta Kakati Award Scheme
- [ ] Majoni Scheme
- [ ] PM Kishan Scheme
- [ ] PM Ujjwala Scheme
- [ ] Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan
- [ ] Mission Indhradhanush
- [ ] Ayushman Bharat Yojana
- [ ] PM Jan-Dhan Yojana
- [ ] PM Awas Yojana
- [ ] Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA)
- [ ] Jal Jeevan Mission
- [ ] Widow Pension Scheme
- [ ] PM Matri Vandana Yojana
- [ ] Janani Suraksha Yojana

6.34) Are you or your household members availing any of the government schemes mentioned in the list

- [ ] Atal Amrit Abhiyan Health Insurance
- [ ] Swanirbhar Nari
- [ ] Assam Abhinandan Education Loan Subsidy Scheme
- [ ] Assam Arunodoi Scheme
- [ ] Gyan Deepika Scheme
- [ ] Anundoram Baruah Laptop Award Scheme
- [ ] College Fee Wavier Scheme
- [ ] Na Bowari
- [ ] Post-Metric Scholarship for Students from Tea Garden Tribes/OBC/SC/ST
- [ ] Pre-Metric Scholarship for Students from Tea Garden Tribes/OBC/SC/ST
- [ ] Minority Girls Scholarship Scheme
- [ ] Swami Vivekananda Assam Youth Empowerment Scheme (SVAYEM)
- [ ] Dr. Banikanta Kakati Award Scheme
- [ ] Majoni Scheme
- [ ] PM Kishan Scheme
- [ ] PM Ujjwala Scheme
- [ ] Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan
- [ ] Mission Indhradhanush
- [ ] Ayushman Bharat Yojana
- [ ] PM Jan-Dhan Yojana
- [ ] PM Awas Yojana
- [ ] Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA)
- [ ] Jal Jeevan Mission
- [ ] Widow Pension Scheme
- [ ] PM Matri Vandana Yojana
- [ ] Janani Suraksha Yojana
- [ ] Not availing any of this

Perceptions on Demographic outcomes / জনসংখ্যাৰ ওপৰত ধাৰণা

» 7.1) At what age would you want your children to get married? / আপোনাৰ সন্তানে কিমান বয়সত তেওঁলোকৰ / তেওঁলোকে বিয়া কৰোৱা /হোৱাৱটো বিচাৰে? ?

Boy / ল'ৰা

- ◯ 12-14
- ◯ 15-17
- ◯ 18-24
- ◯ 25-29
- ◯ 30 and above

Girl / ছোৱালী

- ◯ 12-14
- ◯ 15-17
- ◯ 18-24
- ◯ 25-29
- ◯ 30 and above

» 7.2) According to you what is the ideal number of children? / আপোনাৰ মতে সন্তানৰ সংখ্যা কিমান হব লাগে ?

Total / মুঠ

_____

Sons / পুত্ৰ

_____

Daughter / কন্যা

_____

» Can a man have more than one wife?

7.3 According to you, can a man have more than one wife?/ আপোনাৰ মতে পুৰুষৰ এজনীতকৈ বেছি ঘৈনীয়েক ৰাখিব পাৰেনে?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

How many?

_____

7.4 According to you, should girls get dowry in marriage? / আপোনাৰ মতে ছোৱালীৰ লগত যৌতুক দিব লাগে নে?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Remarks

List of Contributors

Principal Investigators

Dr. Nandita Saikia, Professor, Department of Public Health and Mortality Studies, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, India

Dr. Srinivas Goli, Associate Professor, Department of Fertility & Social Demography, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, India

Dr. Hemkhothang Lhungdim, Professor, Department of Public Health and Mortality Studies, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, India

Research Officers

Mihir Adhikary

Pratik Neve

Glory Narjinary

Junior Research Officers

Uddipta Sharma

Pankaj Bora

Karuna Boro

Mufijur Rahman

Field Investigators

Aarzoo Minara, Arifa Sultana, Asha Daimari, Baby Das, Bandana Haloi, Benisha Daimari, Bhanita Choudhury, Bhaswati Das, Bindubai Gorh, Bonasri Dutta, Bonita Boro, Dimpi Sarma, Farhina Akhtar, Geeta Mochahari, Girina Rani Brahma, Heema Basumatari, Himasri Das, Hiramoni Deka, Hiramoni Kalita, Jahanara Khatun, Jimpi Neog, Jyotishmita Das, Karabi Dutta, Krishna Das, Lakhi Talukdar, Manju Saikia, Mariam Nihar, Minakshi Kalita, Minakshi Kumari, Moonme Baruah, Namita Malakar, Nibedita Tinikuria, Nibha Devi, Nilufar Wahid, Parbati Chetry, Parishikha Bora, Pompi Choudhury, Purnima Saikia, Rimi Chutia, Rupi Bathari, Sabita Das, Saima Akhtar, Selisha Basumatary, Sharjelyn Teronpi, Siddatun Muktahar, Smita Hasnu, Sumi Sarmah.

A Study of Early Marriage in Assam (ASEMA), 2024-25

Photo: By GPhoto15 - Own work, CC BY 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=180359826