



## Socio-economic and Demographic Profile of the Women in the District of South Salmara Mankachar, Assam

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**Abstract:** The present paper attempts to examine the socio-economic and demographic profile of the women living in the district of South Salmara Mankachar. The study is based on a primary survey. The primary data were collected at the individual level from married women in the working age group 15-16 years by filling out structured questionnaires. Through a multistage sampling procedure, 400 households were selected, and the total sample covered 506 respondents. The study deals with various indicators like age, level of education, employment level, income patterns, Religion, and caste to know their detailed scenario, causes, consequences, and circumstances of the existing socio-economic condition. We also include household-level characteristics to calculate the wealth Index using principal component analysis (PCA) to make some inferences regarding the people's standard of living in the region. The study suggests that there is a need to improve the economic status of women through the promotion of livestock rearing, participation in self-help groups (SHGs), and engagement in other income-generating activities. Such measures would enable women to achieve economic independence and enhance their capability to lead lives they have reason to value. A successful study on women's living conditions can improve the efficiency of policy measures to carry out interventional and welfare measures.

**Keywords:** Women; Socio-economic profile; Demographic characteristics; Occupational Status; Wealth index

### 1. Introduction

Socio-economic and demographic profile refers to the characteristics and attributes of individuals or populations within a specific group or community, providing a

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comprehensive understanding of people's backgrounds, lifestyles, and societal position. Moreover, socio-economic status is a way through which we can determine the level of material upliftment of backward classes, who face various forms of vulnerability. So, this paper provides a special focus on the study of the socio-economic and demographic status of women in the district of South Salmara Mankachar, which is an essential aspect of the discussion as it significantly influences their well-being, autonomy, and participation in development processes. Women's access to education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making opportunities is often shaped by socio-economic conditions and demographic factors like age, marital status, and fertility (Sen, 1999). However, in India, due to traditional patriarchal structures and kinship norms that continue to limit women's autonomy, which also affects demographic behaviours such as fertility and age at marriage (Dyson and Moore, 1983). Recent evidence highlights that despite improvements in education and health, women continue to face structural disadvantages. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2021) shows persistent gaps in literacy, labour force participation, and access to reproductive health services. Moreover, in Assam, it displays that according to NFHS-5, women's maternal health is poor (215 per 100000 live births) across India (97 per 100000 live births), because women are suffering from anaemia. The study of women's living conditions in Assam reveals significant socio-economic challenges and disparities. **Nayak and Mahanta (2015)** highlighted that women in Assam continue to face low economic independence, restricted access to financial resources, and limited participation in decision-making despite gradual improvements in literacy. A study on **missing tribal women in Golaghat district** found that nearly 72 per cent were illiterate and over 95 per cent were dependent on their husbands for household decisions, though almost all were engaged in economic activities such as cultivation and weaving (Doley, 2022). Further, **Roy and Barua (2022)**, using PLFS data, showed that women's labour force participation in Assam is strongly influenced by education, caste, and marital status, with rural women concentrated in informal sectors such as agriculture and tea plantations. Another study confirms wage disparities, where the female-to-male wage ratio in rural Assam is only 0.55, reflecting entrenched socio-economic inequality (Karnik and Bhatt, 2024). Such disparities underline the importance of analysing women's socio-economic and demographic conditions to design gender-sensitive policies to reduce inequality and enhance women's empowerment (Desai and Andrist, 2010; Kabear, 1999). So, empowering women through education, autonomy, and economic participation generates intergenerational benefits, improving child health, nutrition, and poverty reduction (Drèze and Sen, 2013). Moreover, Socio-economic

and demographic factors are essential for achieving inclusive growth and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. Existing reviews of the literature give a clear view of the prevailing situation in rural areas, and it will further enhance positive changes in the present condition in the study area. For this purpose, the main objective of this paper is to examine the socio-economic and demographic profile of the women, and how these factors influence women's living conditions in the district of South Salmara Mankachar.

## 2. The Study Area

The state of Assam is divided into 34 districts, including the South Salmara Mankachar district. This district is located in the southern part of Lower Assam and is bordered by Bangladesh in the west and Meghalaya in the south-east. The headquarters of this district is Hatsingimari, which is situated about 245 km from Gauhati. Earlier, this district was a subdivision of the Dhubri district. The total area of South Salmara Mankachar district is 684.2 square kilometres, and the population density is 811.3 people per square kilometre. This district has one subdivision, which includes three development blocks. According to the 2011 census, the total population in the district

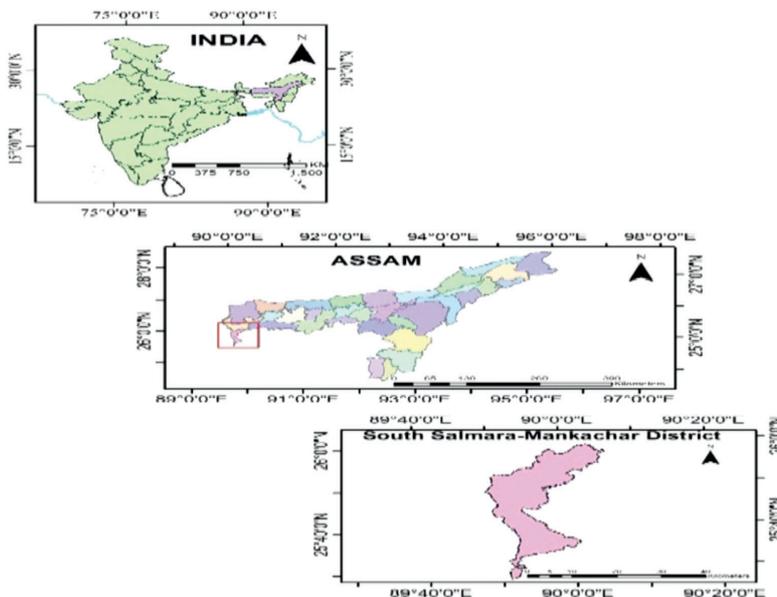


Figure 1: Map of South Salmara Mankachar District

Source: Survey of India (not in scale)

is 5,55114 with 2,73087 females and 2,82027 males. In the case of Religion, 95.19 per cent of the population were Muslims, whereas the Hindu population is about 4.49 per cent, and the remaining 0.3 per cent were Christian. The literacy rate in this district is about 50.76 per cent, where males were 55.46 per cent and 46.26 per cent were 46.26 per cent.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Data Sources

Socio-economic and demographic characteristics are essential for analysing the behavioural patterns of the population. For this purpose, the present study aims to analyse the socio-economic and demographic attributes of the women and their patterns across the study area in the district of South Salmara Mankachar. The data was based on a primary survey. Information was covered at both the household and individual levels. However, in the present exercise, the unit analysis was performed on married women at the personal level. Data are represented in a cross-sectional tabulation and again represented somewhat differently in clustered bar charts.

#### 3.2 Composition of the sample size

The study was conducted in three Community Development Blocks, such as Mankachar, Fekamari, and South Salmara, under the South Salmara Mankachar district. Through a multistage random sampling procedure, 400 households were selected from the three blocks. A purposive sampling was taken to choose Gram Panchayats (GPs), and Villages from each block to attain the expected sample size. Finally, 10 villages were selected with purposive sampling, and 40 households were randomly selected from each of the selected villages. Therefore, the total number of households is 400 (10 x 40), and the sample size is 506. Table 1 shows the distribution of total households and total individuals across the sampling units.

**Table 1: Distribution of households and individuals across the sample units in the district**

Block	Number of households		Number of Individuals	
	Frequency(n)	Percent	Frequency(n)	Percent
Mankachar	200	50.0	252	49.8
Fekamari	120	30.0	144	28.5
South Salmara	80	20.0	110	21.7
Total	400	100.0	506	100.0

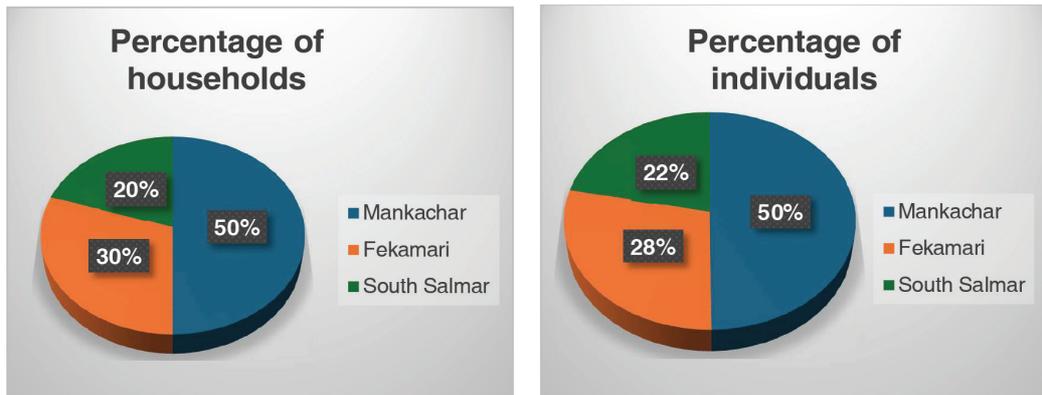


Figure 2: Percentages of Households and Individuals

#### 4. Objectives of the Study Area

- To discuss the socio-economic and demographic status of the women in the study area.
- To analyse women's living conditions in the study area.

#### 5. Results and Discussion

##### 5.1. Socio-Demographic Profile of the Sample Units

The socio-demographic attributes of the women are an essential part of interpreting their livelihood patterns in the study area. Factors such as age, marital status, Religion, caste, education, relationship to the head of the household, and family size (shown in Table 1) were covered (including three blocks in South Salmara Mankachar district, which are described below.

Table 2: Characteristics of the subjects, including three blocks in the district of South Salmara Mankachar

Characteristics		Block						Total	
		Fekamari		Mankachar		South Salmara			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age	15-24	29	20.1	40	15.9	13	11.8	82	16.2
	25-34	61	42.4	106	42.1	46	41.8	213	42.1
	35-44	43	29.9	70	27.8	37	33.6	150	29.6
	45 & above	11	7.6	36	14.3	14	12.7	61	12.1

Characteristics		Block						Total	
		Fekamari		Mankachar		South Salmara			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Marital status	Married	138	95.8	233	92.5	99	90.0	470	92.9
	Widow	6	4.2	12	4.8	8	7.3	26	5.1
	Divorced/ separated	0	0.0	7	2.8	3	2.7	10	2.0
Religion	Hindu	102	70.8	154	61.1	38	34.5	294	58.1
	Muslim	42	29.2	98	38.9	72	65.5	212	41.9
caste	Gen	50	34.7	101	40.1	73	66.4	224	44.3
	OBC	6	4.2	67	26.6	6	5.5	79	15.6
	SC	88	61.1	69	27.4	31	28.2	188	37.2
	ST	0	0.0	15	6.0	0	0.0	15	3.0
Education	Illiterate (0 schooling)	17	11.8	55	21.8	28	25.5	100	19.8
	Primary (1- 5 schooling)	23	16.0	37	14.7	18	16.4	78	15.4
	Middle (6- 8 schooling)	32	22.2	39	15.5	28	25.5	99	19.6
	Secondary (9- 10 schooling)	52	36.1	84	33.3	23	20.9	159	31.4
	Higher Secondary (11- 12 schooling)	9	6.3	20	7.9	8	7.3	37	7.3
	Post higher secondary (above 12 years of schooling)	11	7.6	17	6.7	5	4.5	33	6.5
Relationship with the head of the household head	Respondent	4	2.8	6	2.4	3	2.7	13	2.6
	Wife	139	96.5	237	94.0	101	91.8	477	94.3
	Daughter	0	0.0	7	2.8	4	3.6	11	2.2
	Daughter-in-law	1	0.7	2	0.8	2	1.8	5	1.0
Family size	less than or equal to five	90	62.5	166	65.9	61	55.5	317	62.6
	more than five	54	37.5	86	34.1	49	44.5	189	37.4
Total		144	100.0	252	100.0	110	100.0	506	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2024)

**Age of the Respondent:** In the **Indian context**, the **working age group** is generally defined as the population between **15 and 59 years** of age (Census of India, 2011; NSSO reports, 2021) We have taken the working age group of women as 15-60 years and categorised them into four groups: 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, and 45 and above. Though the study is based on married women, and legal marriage is 18 years old according to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. However, we found a proportion of married women who got married before they were 18 years old. The study reveals that the overall percentage of the women's age group within 25-34 years is the highest (42.1%) among other age groups of women (shown in Fig. 3). Moreover, if we look at the block-wise, in Mankachar block, the middle age group of women shows a larger percentage than the younger and older age groups.

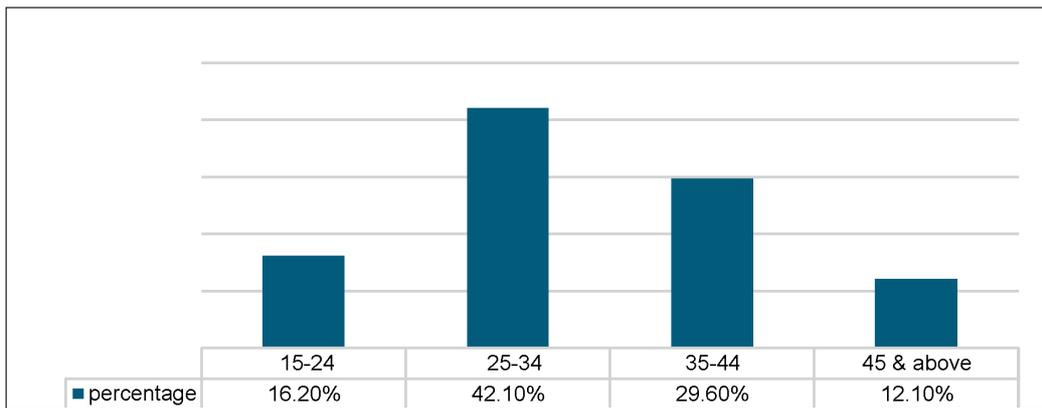


Figure 3: Age group of the women in the overall district

**Education level of the respondents:** Education is an important social factor for development purposes. Respondents' education level is divided into six categories, like illiterate (0 schooling), primary (1-5 schooling), middle (6-8 schooling), secondary (9-10 schooling), higher secondary and above ( $\leq 12$  schooling). Figure 5 shows that 80 per cent of women have an education, whereas 20 per cent of the women have no education, which means they are illiterate. About 15 per cent of women completed primary schooling, 19 per cent of women have upper primary education, 31 per cent completed their secondary schooling, and 6 per cent have higher education. If we look at the block-wise, the South Salmara block has the highest percentage of illiterate women (25%) among other blocks. Fekamari block has performed well, constituting 36 per cent of women being educated in secondary schooling as compared to different blocks, as shown in Figure 5.

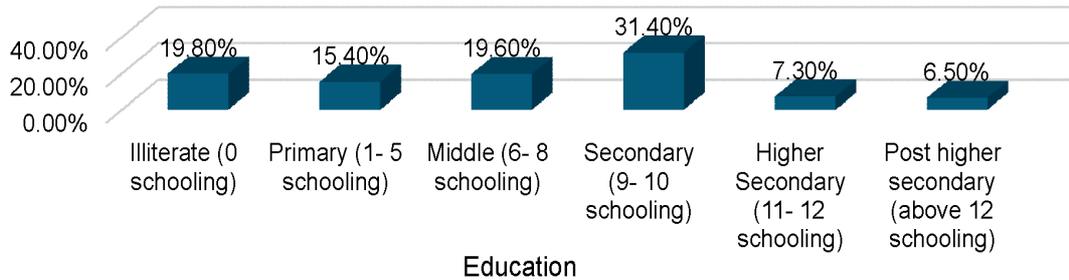


Figure 5: Education Level of the Women in the District

**Marital Status, Relation with Head, Family Size, Religion, and Caste: There are three categories of marital status: married, widowed, and divorced/separated. It demonstrates that 93% women are married, whereas a small number of women are found as widows (5.1%) and separated (2%). If we see the relation to the head of the households, about 94 per cent of the women have a relation with the head as wives. Only 2.6 per cent of the women are the head of the household. Regarding family size, it reveals that 62.6 per cent of the households have less than five children, which is the highest. Consequently, 37.4 per cent have more than five children. It is assumed that the size of the family is declining. Regarding Religion, 58 per cent of the women belong to the Hindu community, whereas the Muslim community is about 42 per cent. Similarly, caste/ ethnicity in the district seems that most women belong to the General category (44%), the SC category is about 37 per cent, the OBC category is 15 per cent, and 3 per cent is the ST category, as shown in Figure 6.**

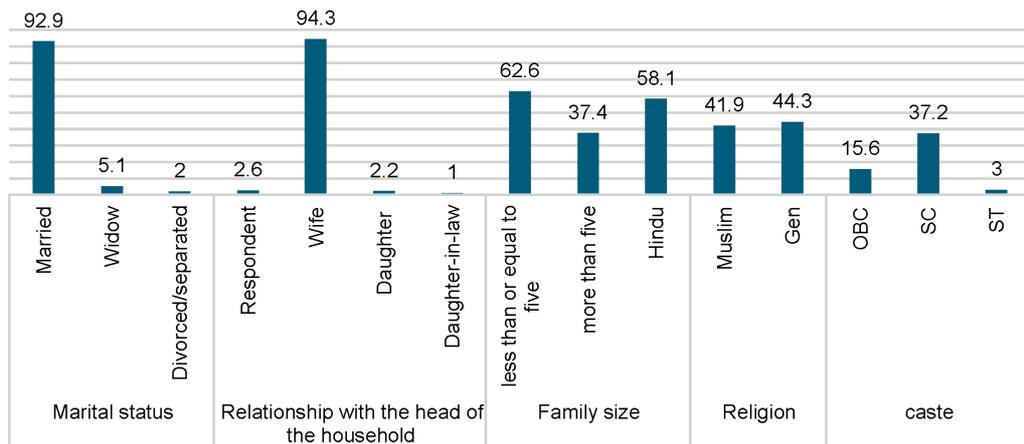


Figure 6: Marital Status, relation with Head, Family size, Religion, and Caste

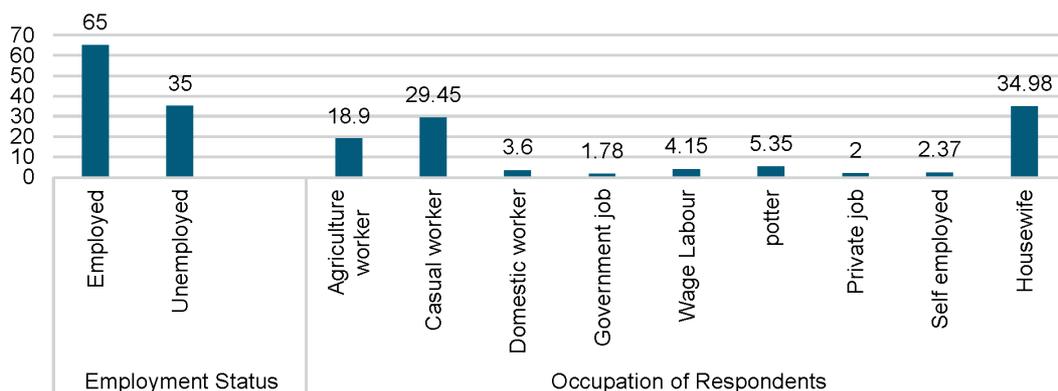
## 5.2. Economic Profile of the Sample

Along with the population's socio-cultural and demographic characteristics, the women's economic status is significant in understanding their household conditions in the study area. The economic profile of the household, apart from occupational characteristics and income earning, is reflected by general characteristics of the household and ownership of land, livestock, and other durable assets. Table 3 represents the household characteristics in the study area. We have collected information on the occupational status of the women individually, as well as the principal source of income of the household's head across the study area, which is shown in Table 3. The following table shows that most women are employed (65%) rather than unemployed (35%). Though agriculture is the main occupation of the women, the majority of the women are casual workers (29.45%), whereas 18 per cent of women are involved in agriculture, and a few respondents are engaged in government jobs (2%). About 35% of women are homemakers (in fig.7). If we see the women's income level individually, about 53.2% of the women's income is below Rs. 2000 (per month), whereas 32.6% of the women's income is within Rs. 2001-4000, despite many bank accounts (75%). About 11.7% of the women get the Arunodoi Scheme (Rs. 1300 per month), who are especially widows, aged & disabled, and it is the primary source of income for them. Interestingly, most women (72%) were involved in Self Help Groups (SHGs). On the other hand, if we look at the household head's income, it depicts that the majority of the household heads' income level is about Rs. 5000 -10000, because most of them were labourers (48.4%). Only a few persons (4%) have an income level of more than 3,0000 as shown in Figure 8.

**Table 3: Distribution of economic status in South Salmara Mankachar District**

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent (%)</i>
Employment Status	Employed	329	65.0
	Unemployed	177	35.0.
Occupation of Respondents	Agriculture worker	96	18.9
	Casual worker	149	29.45
	Domestic worker	18	3.6
	Government job	09	1.78
	Wage Labour	21	4.15
	potter	27	5.35
	Private job	10	2.0
	Self employed	12	2.37
Housewife	177	34.98	

Characteristics	Sources	Frequency	Per cent (%)
Income of the respondents	Below 2000	269	53.2
	2001 - 4000	165	32.6%
	Above 4000	72	14.2
Income of the households	Below 1000	38	7.5
	1000 - 5000	11	2.2
	5001 - 10000	245	48.4
	10001 - 15000	150	29.6
	15001 - 20000	28	5.5
	20001 - 25000	5	1.0
	25001 - 30000	9	1.8
	Above 30000	20	4.0
Scheme	Not benefit	423	83.6
	Arunodoi	79	15.6
	old age pension	4	.8
	Total	506	100.0
SHG	No	140	27.7
	Yes	366	72.3
	Total	506	100.0
Own Bank Account	No	124	24.5
	Yes	382	75.5
	Total	506	100.0



**Figure 7: Employment and occupational status of the women, including three blocks in the district**

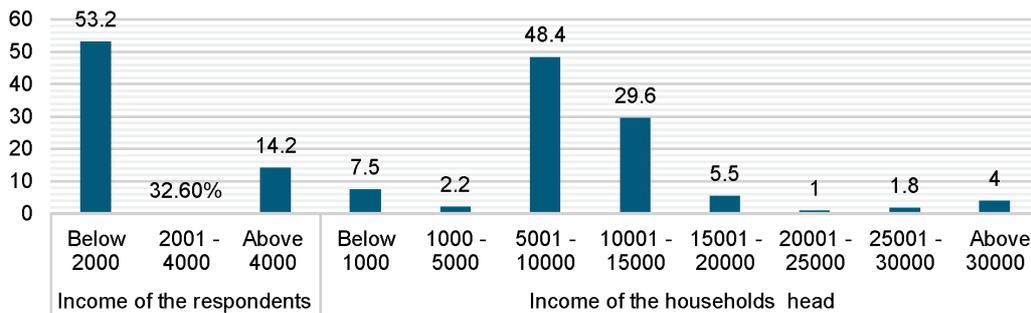


Figure 8: Income level of both respondents and households head in the district

### 5.3. Household Level Characteristics

Table 4 represents the household characteristics of the respondents in the study area. It seems that most respondents have a semi-pucca house (49.8%) and 44.7 per cent have a pucca house, whereas 5.5 per cent of the households have a kaccha house. Ninety-seven per cent of the respondents prefer living in their home rather than renting. The present generation shows that most families are nuclear (79%) rather than joint (20%). Moreover, 53 per cent of households have a toilet, i.e., a sanitary toilet, but still 42 per cent use a kaccha toilet, whereas 4.5 per cent do not yet have a toilet. About 75.1 per cent of the respondents have a separate kitchen. Let's talk about the source of water. Most households (73%) collect their water from a tube well rather than a tap, and more than half of the families (62.5%) drink purified water, whereas 37 per cent do not drink purified water. Around 96.7 per cent of households have electricity, and most respondents use LPG gas for cooking rather than firewood, kerosene, etc.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of households by household characteristics in the district

<i>Household characteristics</i>			
<i>Items</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
House	Pucca	226	44.7
	Semi pucca	252	49.8
	Kuccha	28	5.5
Family type	Nuclear	400	79.1
	Joint	106	20.9
Live	Own house	491	97.0
	Rent	15	3.0
Room	1 - 2	285	56.3
	3 & above	221	43.7

<i>Household characteristics</i>			
<i>Items</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Toilet	Non	23	4.5
	Sanitary	268	53.0
	kaccha	215	42.5
Kitchen	No	126	24.9
	Yes	380	75.1
Source of water	Tab	115	22.7
	Tube well	371	73.3
	Well	20	4.0
Purified water	having	316	62.5
	Not having	190	37.5
Electricity	No	12	2.4
	yes	494	97.6
Cooking fuel	LPG	390	77.1
	Fuel wood	114	22.5
	kerosene	2	0.4
	Total	506	100.00

### *5.3.1 Household Ownership of Durable Assets*

Table 5 shows the household ownership of assets in the study area. It depicts that most households commonly have assets such as mobile phones, televisions, bicycles, chairs, tables and clocks, but other durable assets of households, like bikes, cars, refrigerators, solar inverters, etc, are found to be rare.

Suppose we see the respondents' assets, such as livestock (cow, goat, chicken, etc.), as one type of rural phenomenon, for agricultural needs and other products. In this respect, it also shows that less than 30 per cent of the women are engaging in livestock. Other assets include jewellery and a sewing machine, where 42 per cent of the women have jewellery and 20 per cent have a sewing machine. Land ownership is an essential indicator of economic status and the respondents' capacity in rural areas. From the above table, it seems that most women do not have their own land; only 14.4 per cent of the respondents have land, which they use to cultivate cash crops like paddy, jute, and vegetables for self-consumption.

**Table 5: Household Ownership of Durable Assets in the study area**

<i>Household Assets</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Smart/mobile phone	No	17	3.4
	Yes	489	96.6
TV	No	106	20.9
	Yes	400	79.1
Refrigerator	No	442	87.4
	Yes	64	12.6
Bicycle	No	201	39.7
	Yes	305	60.3
Motorbike/Scotty / Toto	No	350	69.2
	Yes	156	30.8
Car	No	495	97.8
	yes	11	2.2
Ownership of land	Non	9	1.8
	Father	5	1.0
	Father-in-law	71	14.0
	Husband	361	71.3
	Mother	3	.6
	Mother-in-law	38	7.5
	Respondent	19	3.8
	Total	506	100.0
Cow	No	419	82.8
	Yes	87	17.2
Goat	No	416	82.2
	Yes	90	17.8
Chicken	No	320	63.2
	Yes	186	36.8
Jewellery	No	292	57.7
	Yes	214	42.3
Sewing machine	No	405	80.0
	Yes	101	20.0
Own land	No	433	85.6
	yes	73	14.4
	Total	506	100.0

### 5.3.2. *Wealth Index/ Standard of Living Index*

We constructed the wealth index to assess the living conditions of the people in the study area based on household assets. Such household assets are house type, source of drinking water, toilet facilities, sanitation facilities, electricity, cooking fuel, television, room facilities, ownership of total land, ownership of irrigated land, and ownership of durable goods, etc. (using the technique applied by IIPS and ORC Macro in 2000 and 2007). To study socio-economic differences among women, we applied Principal Component Analysis (PCA) using the data of household assets to create the wealth index (Gwatkin et al., 2003; **Falkingham** and Namazie, 2002). PCA was used to generate factor scores of household assets, which emerged as the standard procedure for constructing wealth or standard of living indices in survey-based research and was widely applied in academic and policy contexts. PCA was carried out using the SPSS software (Version 27).

**Table 6: Construction of wealth index**

<i>Wealth Index</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent (%)</i>
Poor	131	25.9
Middle	276	54.5
Richest	99	19.6
Total	506	100.0

After constructing the wealth index (or standard of living index) using the PCA technique in SPSS, the households were categorised into three groups: poor, middle, and richest. Out of a total of 506 respondents, 25.9 per cent (n = 131) belong to the “Poor” category, while the majority of respondents, 54.5 per cent (n = 276), belong under the “Middle” category. The “Richest” group comprises 19.6 per cent (n = 99) of the total sample. However, the overall trend shows that the sample is primarily characterised by a middle-class family, with comparatively fewer households at the extreme ends of the wealth spectrum. The distribution shows that more than half of the respondents come from middle-class families, implying a predominance of homes with moderate economic standing. The proportion of respondents in the poor class (25.9%) is slightly higher than that in the richest group (19.6%), demonstrating that wealth is unequally distributed in the study population. However, the overall trend shows that the sample is largely characterised by a middle-class family, with comparatively fewer households at the extreme ends of the wealth spectrum.

## 6. Conclusion

From the above discussion on the socio-economic and demographic profile of the women in the study area, it is evident that most women belong to the 25–34 age group, which constitutes a significant proportion compared to other age groups. This reflects that the respondents are in a phase of life where they are economically and socially active. The living conditions of women in the study area can be enhanced through the wealth index. This distribution highlights that most households in the study area maintain a moderate level of economic well-being, with relatively fewer respondents belonging to poor economic conditions and suffering from poverty and affluence. The higher share of middle-category households suggests a predominance of average living conditions, though the substantial proportion of poor households also reflects the presence of economic vulnerability. Women's education requires significant attention; however, higher education for women is very rare, as a considerable share of respondents reported that their children have no formal education. Although the standard of living of the respondents is predominantly in the middle category, the economic status of women remains unsatisfactory, with 35 per cent not engaged in any financial activities, even those women involved in economic activities; however, their income is very low. Moreover, while the state government provides support through the 'Arunodoi Scheme' (per month 1300), only 15.6 per cent of women reported receiving its benefits, whereas the remaining respondents did not get such benefits, highlighting a gap in program outreach.

The study suggests from this investigation that women, particularly those from economically and socially weaker sections, and also with a low level of income in the households, were found to have foremost problems, which appear to be limited livelihood options for the women in the study area.

Therefore, there is a need to improve the economic status of women through the promotion of livestock rearing, participation in self-help groups (SHGs), and engagement in other income-generating activities. Such measures would enable women to achieve greater economic independence and enhance their capability to lead lives they have reason to value. A successful study on women's living conditions can improve the efficiency of policy measures to carry out interventional and welfare measures to improve their socio-economic well-being.

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