
Subject: Re: Change in age of women for domestic violence module

Posted by fred.arnold@icf.com on Thu, 24 Aug 2023 14:13:45 GMT

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You are correct that NFHS-5 includes only women age 18-49 in the domestic violence section of the woman's questionnaire. Women age 15-17 were not included. There is a clear and compelling reason that this decision was made. The Government of India has a law called the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO) Act. The Act focuses on children, which includes anyone under 18 years of age. The act requires anyone who comes to know about a child who was a victim of a sexual offence to promptly contact the police and provide them with that information. If women age 15-17 had been included in the domestic violence section of the NFHS-5 questionnaire, the interviewer would be required by law to promptly inform the police of any instances of sexual violence based on the respondent's answers to the domestic violence questions. Any interviewer who did not contact the police in such a circumstance would be liable to prosecution under the law. If the interviewer informed the implementing agency about this situation, then the implementing agency would also be liable to prosecution if the police were not informed.

Informing the police about instances of sexual violence would not be ethical for the following reasons:

1. The informed consent statement at the beginning of the woman's questionnaire indicates that "All of the answer you give will be confidential and will not be shared with anyone other than members of our survey team. Under the circumstances, informing the police about instances of sexual violence would violate that assurance and would be unethical.
2. Breaching the standard assurance of confidentiality clause in NFHS-5 if the police were contacted would also violate the NFHS-5 policy documents that were provided to the Institutional Review Board committee for review.

The NFHS-5 final report (Page 642) indicates that comparisons over time cannot be made for women age 18-49. Although it would be possible to make comparisons of domestic violence between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 for women age 18-49 by excluding women age 15-17 from NFHS-4, any comparative analysis for women age 18-49 should be clearly explained in the text.
