

# Reading Tables

Social and medical sciences rely on tables, charts, and figures to show study results, national and sub national data, and population-based information. Journalists must be able to read and interpret these tables to report accurately. Tables also provide a lot of information, not necessarily described in the text of a report that can improve stories and yield new ideas. With this document we will learn about how to read tables and for this we will be using tables from the Bangladesh DHS 2011.

## Example 1 : Current Use of Contraception A Question Asked of a Subgroup of Survey Respondents

### Step 1

Read the title and subtitle. They tell you the topic and the specific population group being described. In this case, the table is about current use of contraception by currently married women age 15-49. This is a subgroup of survey respondents.

### Step 2

Scan the column headings—the top horizontal row. They describe how the information is categorized. In this case, each column represents a contraceptive method: any method, any modern method, and any traditional method. The last column lists the number of women interviewed.

### Step 3

Scan the row headings—the first vertical column. These show the different ways the data are divided into categories based on population characteristics. In this case, the table presents contraceptive use among married women by their age, number of living children, urban-rural residence, division of residence, educational level, and wealth. Most of the tables in DHS reports will be divided into these same categories.

### Step 4

Look at the very last row at the bottom of the table. These percentages represent the totals of all married women age 15-49 who are currently using a method of contraception. In this case, 61.2% of currently married women age 15-49 are currently using any method of contraception, 52.1% are using any modern method, and 9.2% are using any traditional method.

### Step 5

To find out what percentage of married women with no education are currently using a modern contraceptive method, draw two imaginary lines, as shown on the table. This shows that 50.2% of married women age 15-49 with no education are currently using a modern method of contraception.

Table 5 Current use of contraception

Percent distribution of currently married women age 15-49 by contraceptive method currently used, according to background characteristics, Bangladesh 2011

Background characteristic	Any method	Any modern method	Any traditional method	Number of women
<b>Age</b>				
15-19	47.1	42.4	4.7	1,925
20-24	57.9	53.4	4.5	3,396
25-29	65.8	60.0	5.8	3,262
30-34	70.7	61.0	9.8	2,532
35-39	71.7	56.9	14.8	2,081
40-44	63.6	46.0	17.7	1,937
45-49	43.1	30.4	12.8	1,501
<b>Living children</b>				
0	32.5	26.8	5.7	1,268
1	55.7	49.8	5.9	3,740
2	68.5	60.3	8.2	4,886
3	68.3	57.6	10.7	3,365
4+	60.5	46.5	14.0	3,377
<b>Residence</b>				
Urban	64.0	54.0	10.0	4,292
Rural	60.3	51.4	8.9	12,343
<b>Division</b>				
Barisal	64.7	54.5	10.1	952
Chittagong	51.4	44.5	6.9	3,015
Dhaka	61.0	51.1	9.9	5,334
Khulna	66.7	56.1	10.6	1,996
Rajshahi	67.3	58.3	9.1	2,526
Rangpur	69.4	60.7	8.7	1,927
Sylhet	44.8	35.2	9.6	884
<b>Education</b>				
No education	61.4	50.2	11.2	4,379
Primary incomplete	64.2	53.5	10.7	3,056
Primary complete	59.6	50.5	9.1	1,963
Secondary incomplete	59.0	52.9	6.1	5,176
Secondary complete or higher <sup>2</sup>	63.4	53.2	10.3	2,061
<b>Wealth quintile</b>				
Lowest	61.5	52.9	8.6	2,975
Second	62.9	53.8	9.2	3,267
Middle	61.4	52.1	9.3	3,372
Fourth	59.5	50.6	8.9	3,457
Highest	60.8	51.1	9.8	3,564
<b>Total</b>	61.2	52.1	9.2	16,635

**Practice:** Use this table to answer the following questions (answers are upside down, below): (a) What percentage of married women age 40-44 are using a traditional method of contraception? (b) In which division are married women least likely to use modern method of contraception? (c) Compare married women with no living children to married women with four or more living children—which group is more likely to use any contraception?

# Reading Tables

## Example 2: Treatment for Diarrhoea A Question Asked of a Subgroup of Survey Respondents

### Step 1

Read the title and subtitle. In this case, the table is about treatment of children under five who had diarrhoea during the two weeks preceding the survey.

### Step 2

Scan the column headings—the top horizontal row. In this case, the columns display the different treatment of children who had diarrhoea during the two weeks preceding the survey: percentage for whom advice or treatment was sought from a health facility or provider, percentage given fluid from oral rehydration salt (ORS) packet, and percentage given oral rehydration therapy (ORT), as well as the number of children with diarrhoea.

### Step 3

This table shows that there were 388 children under age five with diarrhoea during the two weeks preceding the survey (last number on bottom right). Once these children are divided into the background characteristics, there may be too few cases for the percentage to be reliable. For example, look at the percentage of children in Sylhet and Khulna who were given ORT. The percentage in Sylhet (87.6) is in parentheses. In Khulna, there is no number, only an asterisk. In DHS tables parentheses around a number means that data were collected from fewer than 50 children (unweighted). Readers should use this number with caution since it may not be accurate. An asterisk in a table means that data were collected from fewer than 25 children (unweighted)—too few to provide a reliable measurement.

### Step 4

When parentheses or asterisks are used in a table, the explanation will be noted under the table. If there are no parentheses or asterisks on a table, you can proceed with confidence that enough cases were included in all categories that the data are reliable.

Table 22 Treatment for diarrhoea

Among children under five who had diarrhoea during the two weeks preceding the survey, percentage for whom advice or treatment was sought from a health facility or provider, percentage given a fluid made from oral rehydration salt (ORS) packets, and percentage given oral rehydration therapy (ORT) by background characteristics, Bangladesh 2011

Background characteristic	Percentage for whom advice or treatment was sought from a health facility/provider	Percentage given fluid from ORS packet	Percentage given ORT	Number with diarrhoea
<b>Age in months</b>				
<6	(43.6)	(46.1)	(46.1)	25
6-11	30.1	73.4	76.2	73
12-23	27.0	75.7	77.7	109
24-35	22.6	88.5	91.3	63
36-47	9.7	81.6	89.0	65
48-59	25.3	84.5	86.3	52
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	24.8	82.2	84.1	215
Female	24.9	71.9	76.3	173
<b>Residence</b>				
Urban		84.4	86.5	70
Rural	45.4	76.1	79.3	318
<b>Division</b>	20.3			
Barisal	*	*	*	23
Chittagong	19.8	77.4	78.2	115
Dhaka	26.2	87.6	91.4	104
Khulna	*	*	*	20
Rajshahi	19.0	56.0	61.8	51
Rangpur	(30.9)	(80.8)	(86.8)	37
Sylhet	(35.3)	(84.7)	(87.6)	38
<b>Mother's education</b>				
No education	19.0	78.7	83.0	73
Primary incomplete	22.3	77.4	80.1	97
Primary complete	19.0	78.9	83.9	68
Secondary incomplete	29.0	73.0	75.3	114
Secondary complete or higher	(41.4)	(87.8)	(87.8)	35
<b>Wealth quintile</b>				
Lowest	19.5	81.2	84.2	108
Second	17.2	83.4	84.3	75
Middle	21.5	71.2	74.0	97
Fourth	(25.3)	(67.6)	(77.1)	49
Highest	49.4	82.3	83.3	59
Total	24.8	77.6	80.6	388

**Note:** Figures in parentheses are based on 25 to 49 unweighted cases. An asterisk indicates that a figure is based on fewer than 25 un-weighted cases and has been suppressed

**Practice:** Use this table to answer the following questions (answers are upside down, below): **(a)** Is care seeking more common for urban or rural children? **(b)** What percentage of children age <6 months were given fluid from ORS packet? **(c)** What percentage of children in Barisal were given ORT?

a) Urban—45.4%; b) 46.1%; however, this figure is in parentheses which means that the figure is based on less than 50 children with diarrhoea, so it must be used with caution; c) the asterisk means that the number cannot be determined because less than 25 children had diarrhoea in Barisal.

# Reading Tables

## Example 3: Prevalence and Prompt Treatment of Fever A Question Asked of a Subgroup of Survey Respondents

### Step 1

Read the title and subtitle. In this case, the table is about two separate groups of children: (a) all children under age five and (b) children under age five who had symptoms of acute respiratory infection (ARI) in the two weeks preceding the survey.

### Step 2

Identify the two panels. First identify the columns that refer to all children under five (a), and then identify the columns that refer only to the children under five who had symptoms of ARI in the two weeks preceding the survey (b).

### Step 3

Look at the first panel. What percentage of children under five had symptoms of ARI? It's 5.8%

### Step 4

Answer the following questions to understand how prevalence and treatment of ARI among children vary in Bangladesh: Now look at the second panel. How many children under five are included in this group? Only 486 or 5.8% of 8,395 children under five who had symptoms of ARI. The second panel is a subgroup of the first

- What are the lowest and the highest percentages (range) of children with symptoms of ARI within the divisions? Prevalence of ARI ranges from a low of 4.6% in Dhaka to a high of 7.4% in Chittagong.
- Look for patterns: Does prevalence of ARI or treatment of ARI vary within specific populations? For example, is there a clear pattern of ARI prevalence or treatment by wealth? By mother's level of education? By gender? The prevalence of ARI is highest among the poorest households and lowest among the wealthiest households. Treatment of ARI follows the opposite pattern—much higher in the wealthiest households than in the poorest household. The same patterns are found with mother's education. Male children are slightly more likely to have symptoms of ARI than girl children (6.6% vs. 5.0%) but much more likely to receive medical treatment and antibiotics than girls.

Table 21 Prevalence and treatment of symptoms of ARI

Among children under age five, the percentage who had symptoms of acute respiratory infection (ARI) in the two weeks preceding the survey and among children with symptoms of ARI, the percentage for whom advice or treatment was sought from a health facility or provider and the percentage who received antibiotics as treatment, according to background characteristics, Bangladesh 2011

Background characteristic	Among children under age five:		Among children under age Five with symptoms of ARI:		
	Percentage with symptoms of ARI	Number of children	Percentage for whom advice or treatment was sought from a health facility or provider	Percentage who received antibiotics	Number of children
<b>Age in months</b>					
<6	6.2	816	(39.8)	(39.1)	51
6-11	7.4	864	42.8	41.8	64
12-23	6.9	1,547	41.4	78.0	106
24-35	6.1	1,545	36.1	62.4	95
36-47	4.9	1,866	29.8	76.1	91
48-59	4.5	1,757	22.7	61.0	98
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	6.6	4,271	39.5	75.7	281
Female	5.0	4,124	29.3	65.6	205
<b>Residence</b>					
Urban	4.8	1,871	54.3	77.5	89
Rural	6.1	6,524	30.9	70.1	397
<b>Division</b>					
Barisal	7.0	464	40.1	69.8	33
Chittagong	7.4	1,946	24.3	69.5	144
Dhaka	4.6	2,601	38.0	72.2	121
Khulna	6.4	767	45.4	73.5	49
Rajshahi	5.5	1,087	31.1	73.6	59
Rangpur	5.4	891	46.6	71.0	48
Sylhet	4.9	639	43.2	72.3	32
<b>Mother's education</b>					
No education	6.9	1,689	25.4	63.4	116
Primary incomplete	6.4	1,526	28.6	76.3	98
Primary complete	5.4	1,050	31.5	78.7	57
Secondary incomplete	5.2	3,112	39.7	70.6	161
Secondary complete or higher	5.4	1,017	58.4	74.7	55
<b>Wealth quintile</b>					
Lowest	7.3	1,965	24.7	69.4	143
Second	5.4	1,700	30.3	73.9	92
Middle	5.9	1,631	28.8	66.0	97
Fourth	4.8	1,617	46.2	67.4	77
Highest	5.1	1,481	57.9	83.3	76
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.8</b>	8,395	35.2	71.4	<b>486</b>

# Reading Tables

## Example 4: Knowledge of AIDS Comparing Data and Understanding Patterns

### Step 1

Read the title and subtitle. In this case, the table is about knowledge of AIDS among ever-married women and men age 15-49 in Bangladesh. This is an example of a table with two different populations.

### Step 2

Identify the two panels. First identify the columns that refer to women (a), and then identify the columns that refer to men (b). Both panels represent percentage of women and men who have ever heard of AIDS and the number of women and men interviewed.

### Step 3

Scan the row headings—the first vertical column. These show the different ways the data are divided into categories based on population characteristics. This table presents knowledge of AIDS by age, marital status, urban-rural residence, division of residence, educational level, and wealth. The data in these categories will help you understand how knowledge of AIDS varies throughout the country. Most of the tables in DHS reports will be divided into the same categories.

### Step 4

Answer the following questions to understand how knowledge of AIDS varies throughout the population:

- What are the lowest and the highest percentages of women and men who have heard of AIDS (range) within the divisions? Knowledge of AIDS among women ranges from a low of 54.9% in Rangpur to a high of 79.1% in Khulna; among men, from a low of 77.0% in Rangpur to a high of 94.8% in Khulna.
- Look for patterns: Does knowledge of AIDS vary within specific populations? For example, is there a clear pattern of knowledge of AIDS by age? By wealth? By education?
- Compare different groups: Do men know more about AIDS than women? Is one age group more knowledgeable than any other?

### Step 5

Why is this important? Program managers can use this information to develop effective programs. For example, women are clearly less knowledgeable about AIDS than men, and residents of Rangpur are less informed than men and women in other divisions. Women and men with no education and those who are living in the poorest households are the least likely to know about AIDS. Education programs should be targeted towards these populations.

Table 27 Knowledge of AIDS  
Percentage of ever-married women and ever-married men age 15-49 who have heard of AIDS, by background characteristics, Bangladesh 2011

Background characteristic	Ever-married women		Ever-married men	
	Have heard of AIDS	Number of women	Have heard of AIDS	Number of men
<b>Age</b>				
15- 24	77.3	5,484	90.2	270
15- 19	75.1	1,970	*	21
20- 24	78.5	3,514	91.2	249
25- 29	74.7	3,394	92.0	621
30- 39	67.2	4,900	90.0	1,285
40- 49	55.3	3,971	82.3	1,215
<b>Marital status</b>				
Married	69.9	16,635	87.7	3,360
Divorced/separated/widowed	57.0	1,114	(81.5)	31
<b>Residence</b>				
Urban	85.6	4,619	95.6	949
Rural	63.3	13,130	84.5	2,442
<b>Division</b>				
Barisal	70.7	1,002	87.1	174
Chittagong	68.6	3,222	86.4	519
Dhaka	75.1	5,736	92.0	1,095
Khulna	79.1	2,139	94.8	430
Rajshahi	62.9	2,646	84.9	556
Rangpur	54.9	2,039	77.0	442
Sylhet	58.1	967	82.3	175
<b>Education</b>				
No education				
Primary incomplete	40.3	4,912	70.4	890
Primary complete <sup>1</sup>	59.3	3,264	86.4	823
Secondary incomplete	71.8	2,062	94.1	305
Secondary complete or higher <sup>2</sup>	88.4	5,383	96.8	758
<b>Wealth Index quintile</b>				
Lowest	43.1	3,250	71.3	654
Second	53.6	3,487	81.0	666
Middle	69.6	3,567	90.9	647
Fourth	81.2	3,664	94.3	726
Highest	93.2	3,781	99.2	699
Total 15-49	69.1	17,749	87.6	3,392

Note: Figures in parentheses are based on 25 to 49 un-weighted cases. An asterisk indicates that a figure is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases and has been sup-pressed