

Health indicators show improvement



Family Health Survey 2015-16 (NFHS) show a marked improvement on various health and nutrition parameters over the past decade.

As chart 1 shows, the percentage of women in the age group of 20-

24 years who are married by the age of 18 has declined from 47.4 per cent in 2005-06 to 26.8 per cent in 2015-16. A similar decline is also observed among those aged 15-19 years who are already mothers or pregnant. The fertility rate too has fallen to 2.2 in 2015-16, down from 3.4 in 1992-93.

But curiously, this decline coincides with a fall in the use of contraceptives. As chart 2 shows, with the exception of condoms and pill usage, there has been a decline in various other methods.

The infant mortality rate and the under-five mortality rate continue to decline. As shown in chart 3, over the past decade, the under-five mortality rate has declined to 50 per 1,000 live births, down from 74 a decade ago.

Antenatal care has increased, though as shown in chart 4, differences exist across social strata. It continues to be higher among the more educated, affluent women.

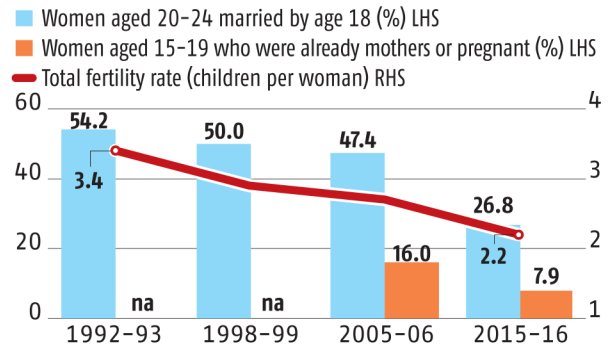
On institutional births, the change is staggering. Over the ten-year period, institutional births have gone up from 39 per cent in 2005-06 to 78.9 per cent in 2015-16 as seen in chart 5. Child immunisation rates have also soared, rising to 62 per cent in 2015-16, up from 43.5 per cent a decade ago.

On child nutrition the record is mixed. As seen in chart 6, while the percentage of children under five who are stunted and underweight has gone down, that of those suffering from wasting and severe wasting has increased.

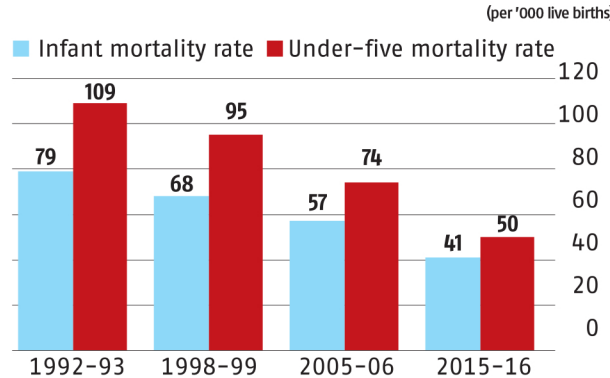
While many have questioned the efficacy of government interventions in the health sector, a preliminary reading of these results suggests that various government interventions have worked. But a comprehensive analysis of the results is needed to examine interventions in areas where progress has been slow.

ISHAN BAKSHI

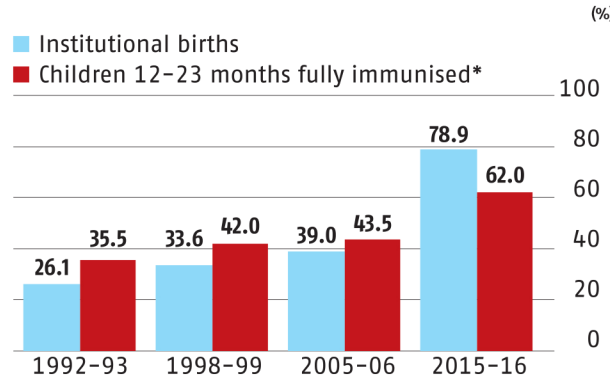
1: MARRIAGE AGE FOR WOMEN RISES, FERTILITY RATE FALLS



3: INFANT MORTALITY RATE CONTINUES ITS DOWNWARD TREND



5: INSTITUTIONAL BIRTHS REGISTER SHARP RISE, IMMUNISATION RATES ALSO RISE



*BCG, measles, and 3 doses each of polio/DPT

2: HOUSEHOLDS LESS CONSCIOUS ABOUT FAMILY PLANNING

Family Planning (currently married women, age 15-49) Current use (%)

	1992-93	1998-99	2005-06	2015-16
Any method	40.7	48.2	56.3	53.5
Any modern method	36.5	42.8	48.5	47.8
Female sterilisation	27.4	34.1	37.3	36.0
Male sterilisation	3.5	1.9	1.0	0.3
IUD	1.9	1.6	1.7	1.5
Pill	1.2	2.1	3.1	4.1
Condom	2.4	3.1	5.2	5.6

4: ANTENATAL CARE MORE WIDESPREAD AMONG MORE EDUCATED AND AFFLUENT MOTHERS

% of mothers who had at least four antenatal care visits at the time of the last birth in the past five years

EDUCATION

No education	28
Primary education	45
Secondary or more	63

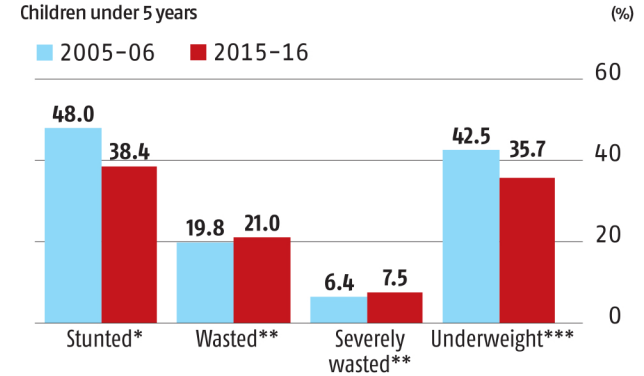
SOCIAL GROUP

Schedule Caste	49
Schedule Tribe	46
Other Backward Class	48

WEALTH

Lowest quintile	25
Second quintile	44
Third quintile	57
Fourth quintile	66
Highest quintile	73

6: BUT MIXED RECORD ON NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN



* height-for-age; **weight-for-height; ***weight-for-age