

## Family Planning behaviour in Maharashtra

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### BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Maharashtra is the third most populous state of India. According to 1981 census, Maharashtra had a total population of 62.8 million, constituting 9.4 per cent of India's population. Maharashtra also stands third among the major states, in respect of per capita state domestic product and in respect of energy generation and consumption. As regards education, Maharashtra comes next to Kerala State. Among the major states of India, Maharashtra has the highest proportion of urban population. It also leads in the family welfare programme and couple protection rate. By March 1985, 40.8 per cent of eligible couples in Maharashtra were protected by sterilization, 7.4 per cent by IUD and 3.5 per cent by other methods according to official statistics.

The Population Research Centre (PRC) at the Gokhale Institute, Pune (Maharashtra) has been conducting evaluation studies of the Family Welfare Programme in different districts of Maharashtra State for the past six years. This is being done following the broad guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. Independent and unbiased assessment of the family planning and welfare programme is made periodically by the PRC on the basis of these surveys.

In Maharashtra, until as recently as 1983, more than 90 per cent of the contracepting couples were protected by sterilization, either of the husband or of the wife. Sterilization, has proved to be the most effective and acceptable method for limiting family size. Other methods of contraception were also promoted time and again in the government programmes but without the desired results. Sterilization, due to its greater acceptance and effectiveness, has contributed substantially in bringing down the birth rate, when other methods of contraception are not widely used.