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Emerging Social Issues Division

Social Policy and Population Section

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Article **Women's Autonomy and Uptake of Contraception in Pakistan**

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Abstract Data from the Pakistan Fertility and Family Planning Survey are used to explore women's autonomy and current use of contraception among a nationally representative sample of 7,584 married women. Consistent with earlier studies, findings indicate that Pakistani women enjoy very limited autonomy. Women's mobility, particularly beyond their immediate neighbourhood, is severely restricted. Further, although the majority of women participate in household decisions, far fewer are final decision makers. Despite this general picture, significant heterogeneity between subgroups was found. The importance of life-cycle factors for increasing female autonomy in this setting is confirmed. Large differentials between language groups and urban and rural residents are also documented. Indicators of autonomy are found to be significantly associated with current use of contraception, even after controlling for various potential confounding factors, though the effects are quite small. However, the study findings point to the importance of gender inequality being more broadly defined in determining fertility control behaviour.

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