Socio-economic and demographic determinants of pregnancy pressure among married women in Nepal: An analysis of autonomy and ethnic disparities

Ranju KC[1], Ramesh Adhikari[1], Aarti Chaudhary[1], Abhishek Karn[1]

[1]Center for Research on Education, Health and Social Science, Kathmandu

Presented By:

Aarti Chaudhary

CREHSS, Kathmandu

Introduction

- In Nepal, by tradition, family life and marriage are generally controlled by patriarchal norms, sanctions, values, religious caste levels, ethnic groups, financial status and gender differences (Mattebo, Sharma et al. 2016).
- The average age at marriage among women aged 25–29 is 18.5 years which contains approximately 50% of newly married women who become pregnant in the first year of marriage (NDHS 2016).
- The pressure on married women to become pregnant can be influenced by various factors, including autonomy in household decisions, age, ethnicity, education, fertility status, and economic status.

Introduction

- Autonomy impacts women's ability to negotiate reproductive choices and access family planning resources causing them to face pressure to become pregnant (Adhikari, R., et al, 2009).
- In Nepal, preference of son is very high , especially among illiterate and poor people (Dawadi, Bhatta et al. 2024).
- Ethnic disparities are pronounced in Nepal, with Dalit, Muslim, and Madhesi women experiencing higher odds of reproductive pressure compared to Brahmin/Chhetri women (Bhandari R., et al, 2019).

Objectives

General Objective:

- Socio-economic and demographic determinants of pregnancy pressure among married women in Nepal

Specific Objectives:

- To determine the association between socio-demographic factors and pressure for pregnancy among married women.
- To determine the effect of women's autonomy on the pressure for pregnancy.

Methodology

- The study used 2022 Nepal DHS data for secondary analysis
- **Study population:** The study population was currently married women aged 15 to 49 years. A total of 11,180 respondents were taken for the study.
- **Sampling:** NDHS followed multi-stage cluster sampling procedure to represent the all seven province. The analysis is confined to 11,180 currently married women aged 15-49 years. The detailed description of methodology is included in the report of NDHS 2022 (MoHP et al., 2023).

Methodology

- **Dependent variables:** Pressure on respondents to become pregnant
- **Independent variables:** Age group, ethnicity, education, province
  - Women's autonomy in household decision (No autonomy, Moderate autonomy, High autonomy)
  - Fertility status (have both son and daughter, no daughter but have son, no son but have daughter, not having son and daughter)
  - Place of residency (urban vs. rural)
  - Ecological belt (Mountain/Hill/Terai), current work status
  - Wealth index

Methodology

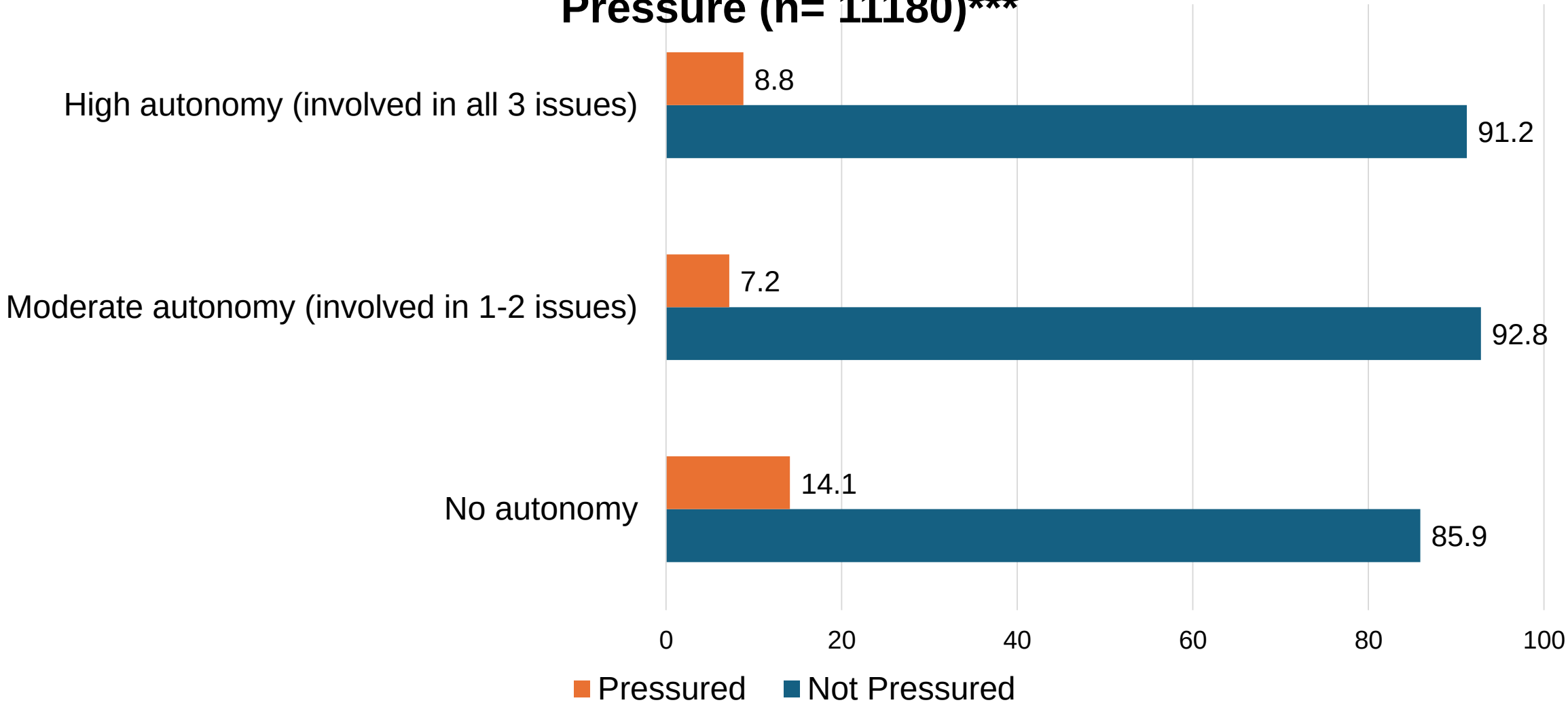
Statistical Analysis

- Descriptive analysis was performed to describe the socio-demographic variables.
- To explore the association between independent variables and the dependent variable, both bivariate (Chi-square test) and multivariate analysis (binary logistic regression) were conducted.
- The results of the regression analysis were presented as crude odds ratio (COR), adjusted odds ratio (AOR), and 95% CI.
- All the analysis was performed by IBM SPSS.

Result

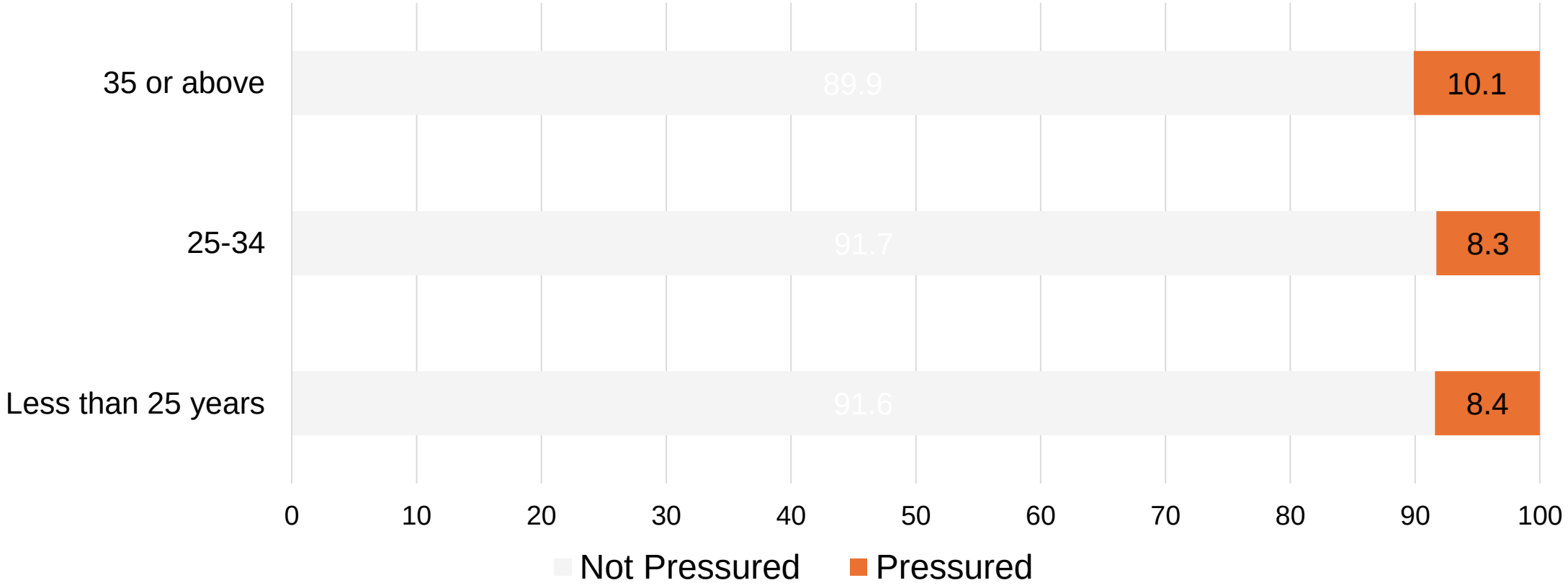
Status of Pregnancy Pressure among Women (n= 11180)

Women's autonomy in household decision by Pregnancy Pressure (n= 11180)***



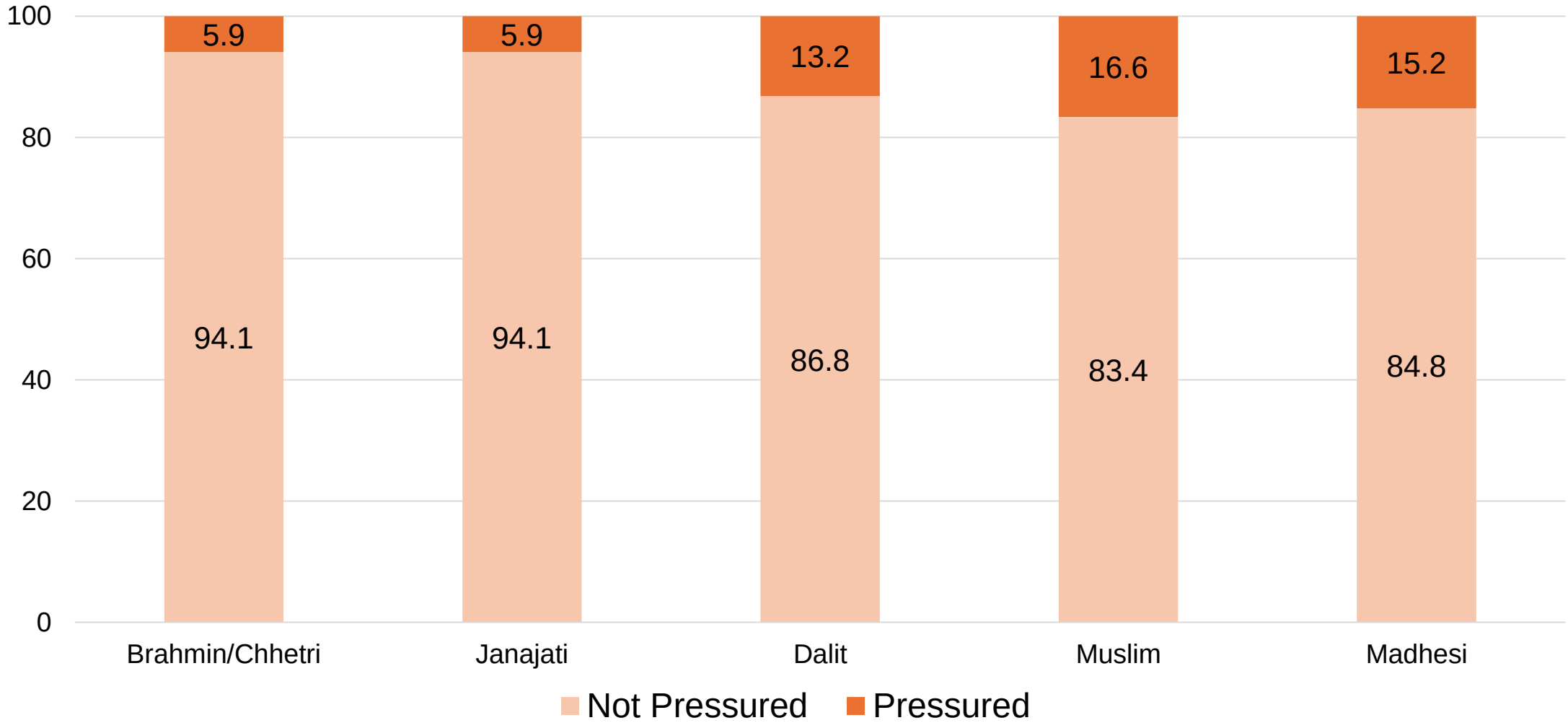
Chi-square significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=***

Age group of women by Pregnancy Pressure (n= 11180)**



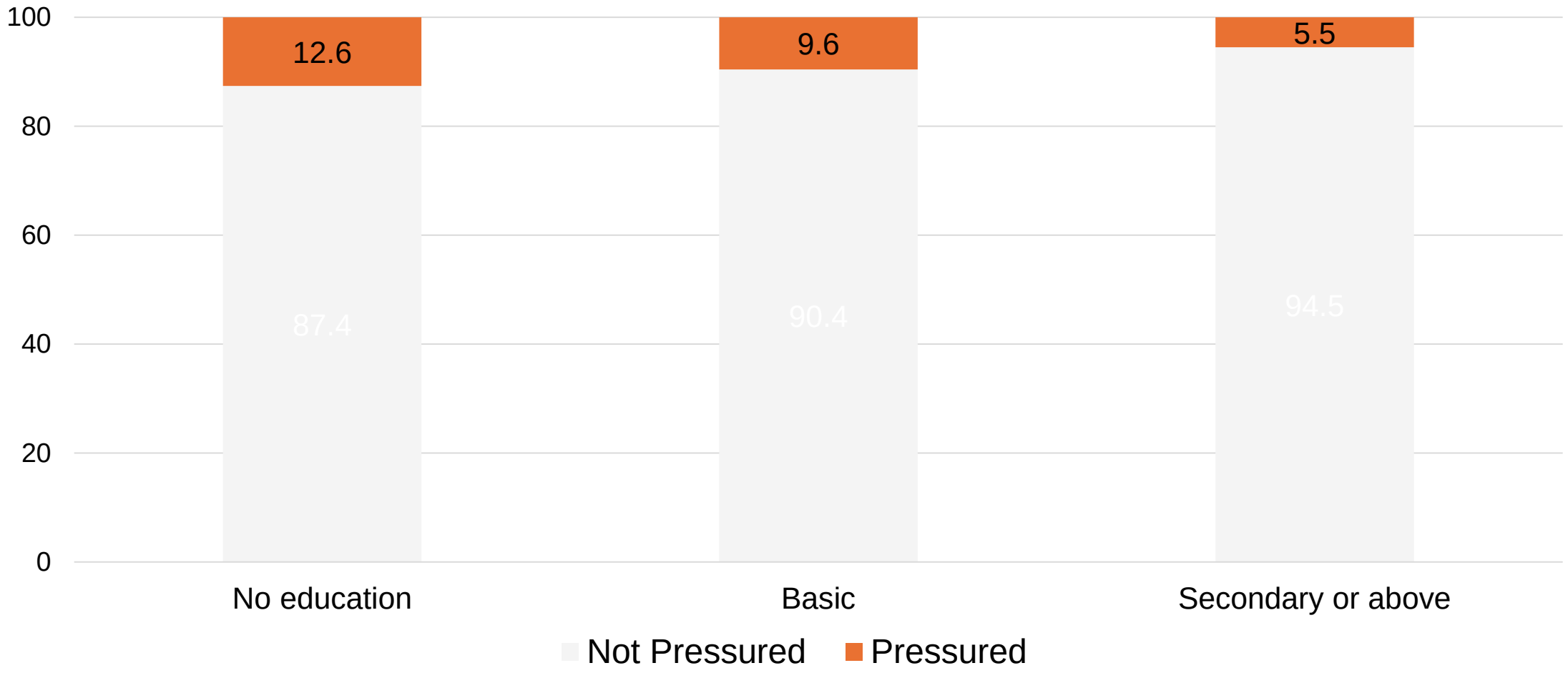
Chi-square significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=***

Ethnicity by Pregnancy Pressure (n= 11180)***



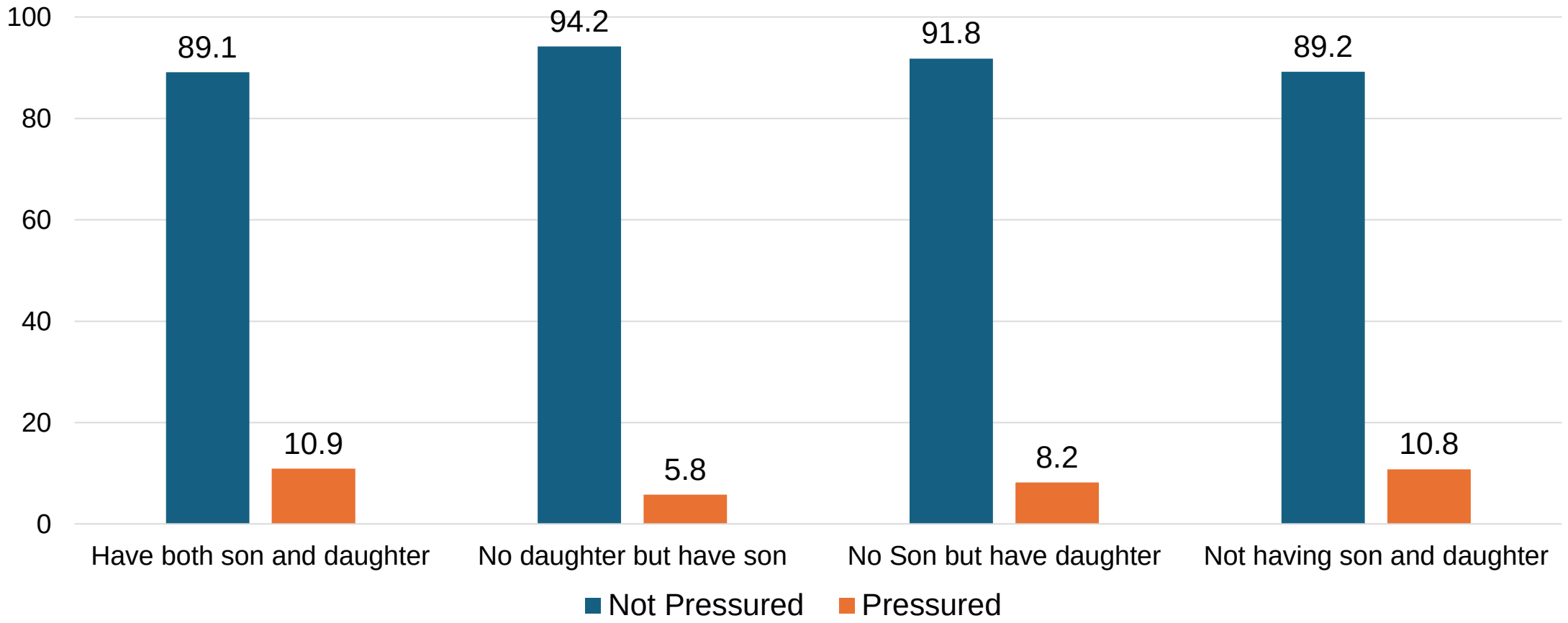
Chi-square significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=***

Education by Pregnancy Pressure (n= 11180)***



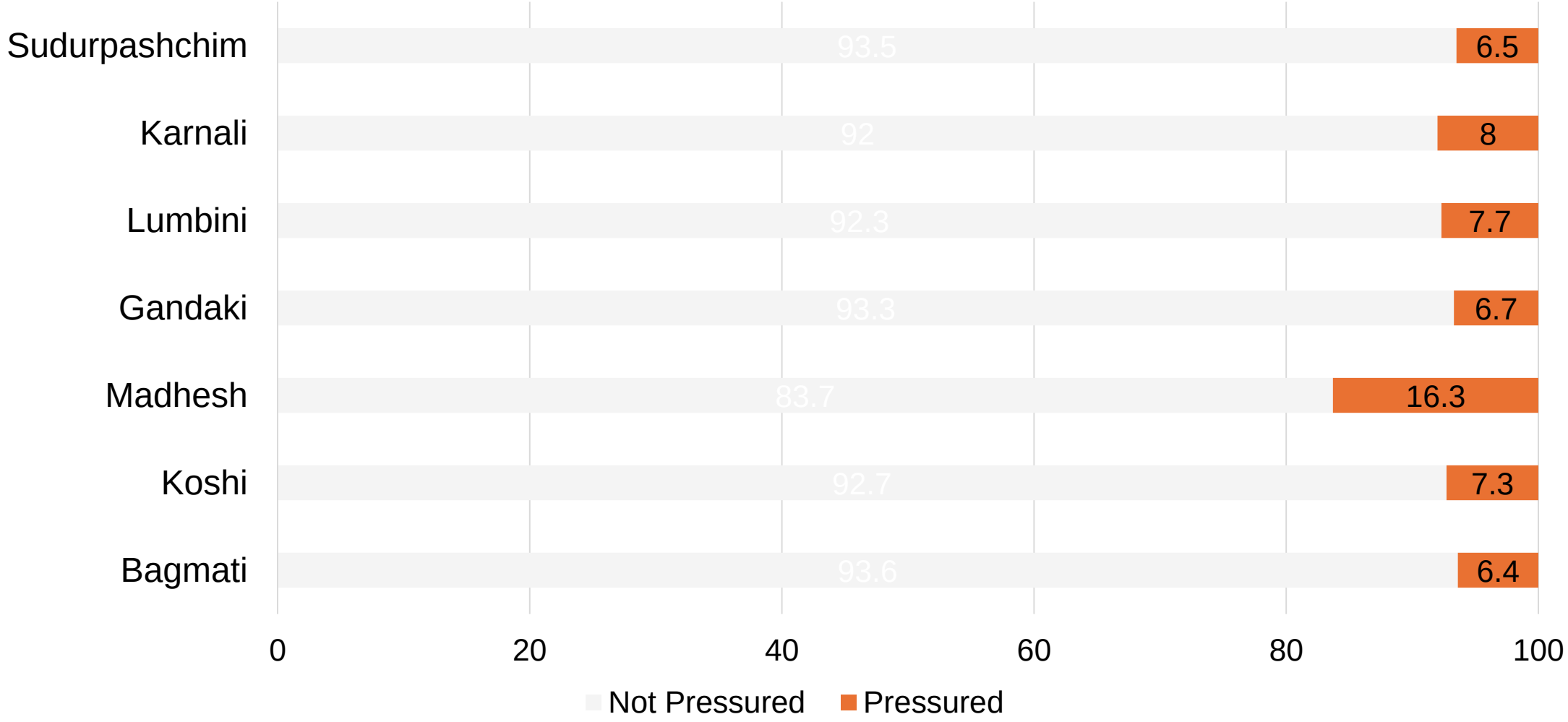
Chi-square significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=***

Fertility status of women by Pregnancy Pressure (n= 11180)***



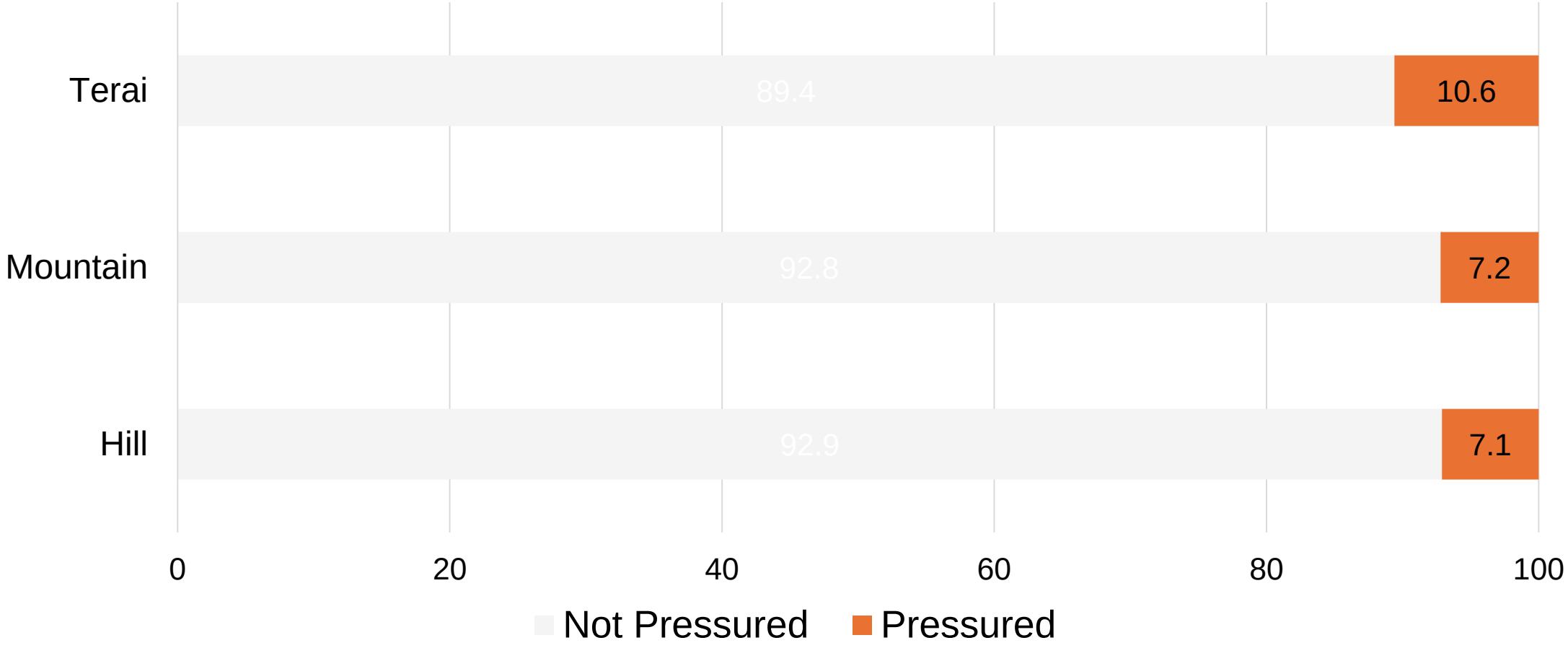
Chi-square significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=***

Province by Pregnancy Pressure (n= 11180)***



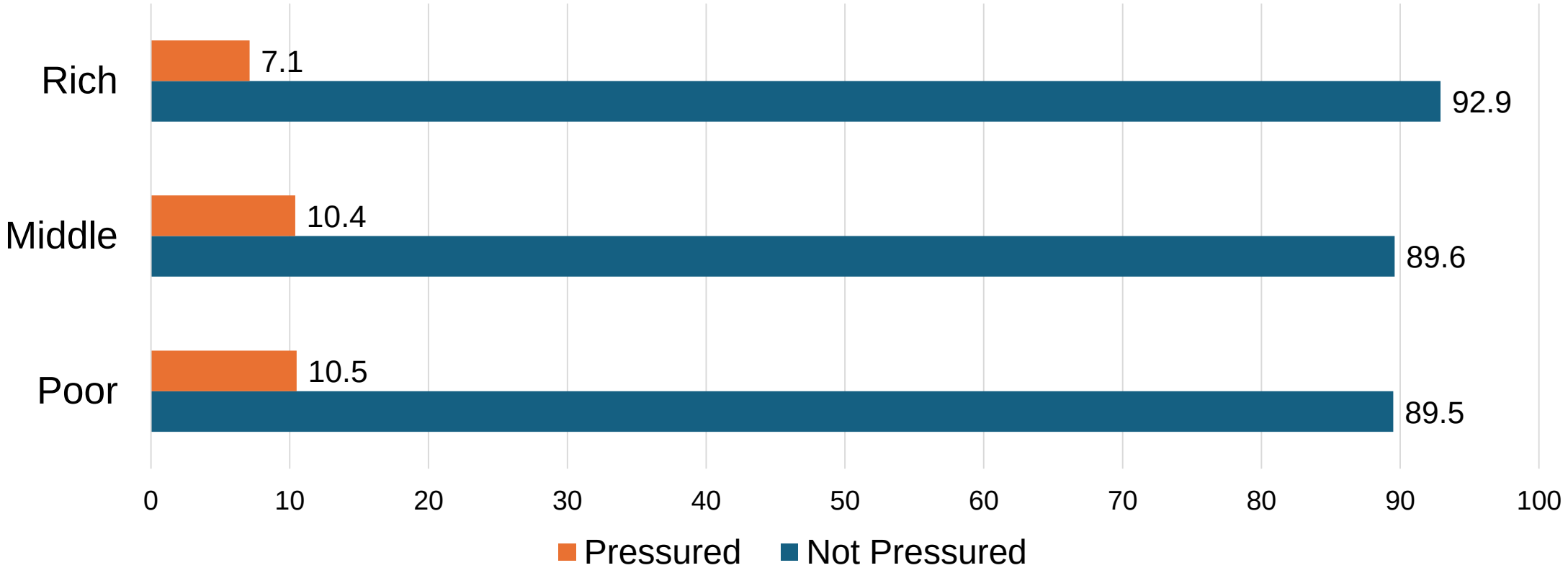
Chi-square significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=***

Ecological regions by Pregnancy Pressure (n= 11180)***



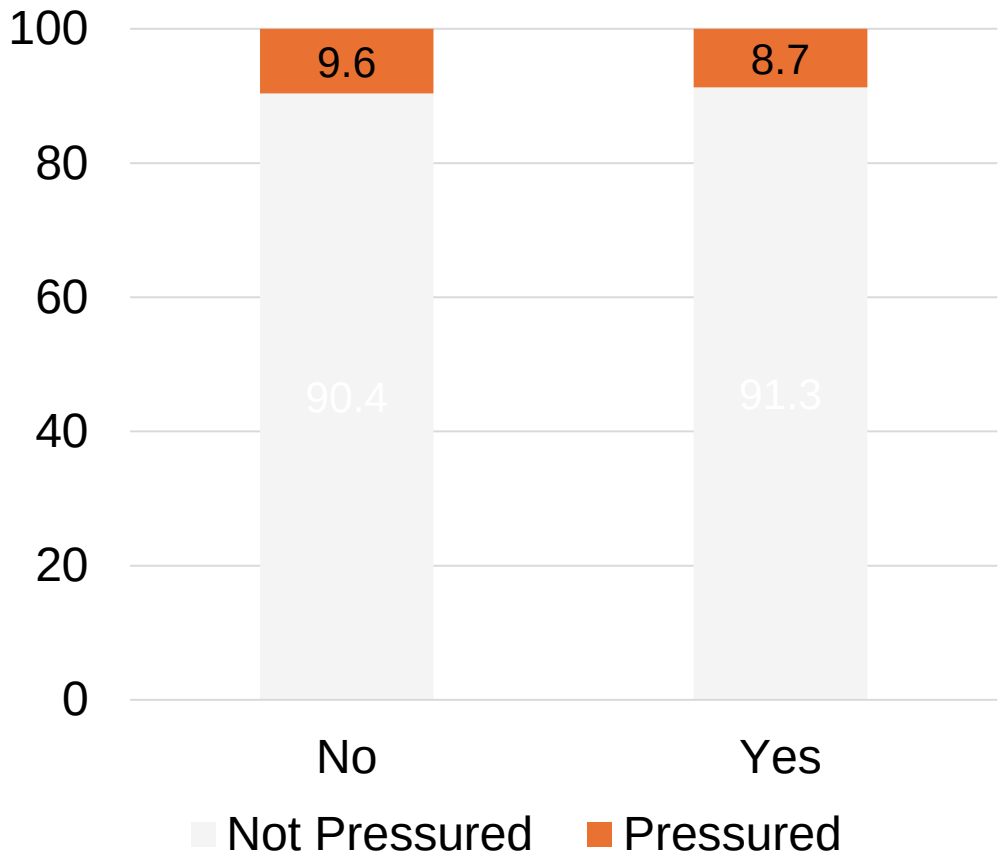
Chi-square significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=***

Wealth index by Pregnancy Pressure (n= 11180)***

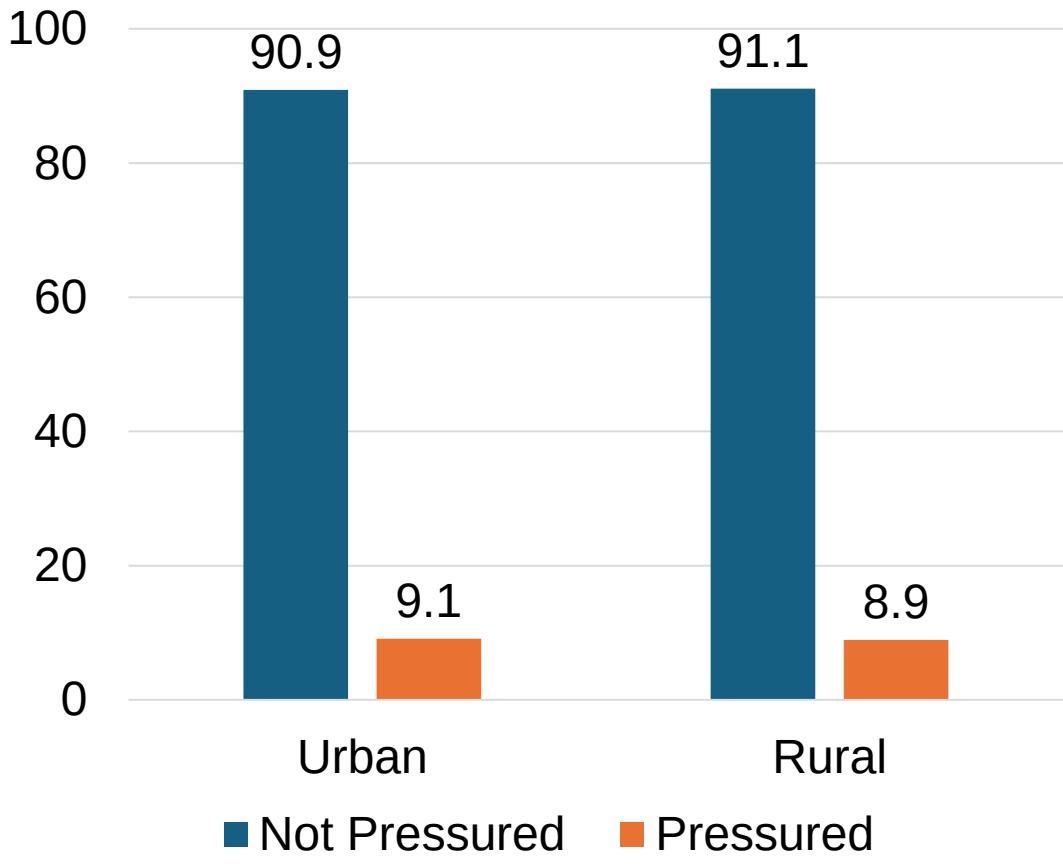


Chi-square significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=***

Working status of women by Pregnancy Pressure (n= 11180)



Place of residence by Pregnancy Pressure (n= 11180)



		Model I			
				95% CI	
			cOR	lower	upper
Women's autonomy in household decision	No autonomy (ref)		1.00		
	Moderate autonomy (involved in 1-2 issues)		.468***	.392	.560
	High autonomy (involved in all 3 issues)		.586***	.498	.689

*Logistic regression significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=****

		Model II			
				95% CI	
			aOR	lower	upper
Women's autonomy in household decision	No autonomy (ref.)		1.00		
	Moderate autonomy (involved in 1-2 issues)		.631***	.520	.765
	High autonomy (involved in all 3 issues)		.744**	.619	.895
Age group	Less than 25 years (ref.)		1.00		
	25-34		1.430**	1.151	1.777
	35 or above		1.724***	1.354	2.196

*Logistic regression significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=****

		Model II			
				95% CI	
			aOR	lower	upper
Ethnicity	Brahmin/Chhetri (ref.)				
	Janajati		.906	.732	1.123
	Dalit		1.810***	1.431	2.291
	Muslim		2.087***	1.495	2.913
	Madhesi		1.948***	1.498	2.533
Education	No education (ref.)		1.00		
	Basic		1.016	.857	1.204
	Secondary or above		.704**	.566	.875

*Logistic regression significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=****

		Model II			
				95% CI	
			aOR	lower	upper
Fertility status	Have both son and daughter (ref.)		1.00		
	No daughter but have son		.687***	.569	.829
	No Son but have daughter		1.093	.892	1.340
	Not having son and daughter		1.554**	1.199	2.014
Province	Bagmati (ref.)		1.00		
	Koshi		1.050	.793	1.390
	Madhesh		1.550**	1.138	2.110
	Gandaki		.961	.708	1.304
	Lumbini		1.017	.765	1.353
	Karnali		.943	.666	1.336
	Sudurpashchim		.938	.666	1.320

*Logistic regression significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=****

		Model II			
				95% CI	
			aOR	lower	upper
Wealth index combined	Poor (ref.)		1.00		
	Middle		.931	.778	1.116
	Rich		.749**	.623	.901

*Logistic regression significant at <0.05= *, <0.01=**, <0.001=****

(In addition to variables in the table, place of residence, ecological region, and employment status were also adjusted in model-II)

Major takeaways

- This study highlights that pressure for pregnancy is deeply rooted in cultural, familial, and societal expectations.
- Women with lower autonomy face greater pressure from husbands and family members to conceive.
- Factors such as ethnicity, education, wealth, and fertility status significantly influence this pressure, with marginalized groups of women experiencing higher expectations.
- The study also shows that women with secondary or higher education, greater decision-making power, and better economic status are less likely to face such pressure.

Conclusion

- Program working for women also need to address the pressure for pregnancy.
- Women’s autonomy need to be increased through education, financial independence, and awareness campaigns which can help to reduce pregnancy pressures.
- Policymakers and health professionals should focus on empowering women, promoting reproductive rights, and challenging traditional norms that reinforce early and pressured childbearing.
- Strengthening support systems, including counseling services and community-based interventions, can play a crucial role in ensuring informed and voluntary reproductive choices for women.

References

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Thank you!!!

I am Aarti Chaudhary, a Public Health Graduate and I am affiliated with Center for Research on Education, Health and Social Science. I am presenting our study focused on pregnancy pressure among married women in Nepal, aiming to highlight status of pressure faced by women to get pregnant.